

# SEA LION ISLAND

Home to elephant seals, southern sea lions –  
and three species of penguin



BirdLife  
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IMPORTANT  
BIRD AREA



[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)

# SEA LION ISLAND



The Falkland Islands archipelago lies 350 km (280 miles) to the east of the South American continent. It consists of two large islands, East and West Falkland, and more than 750 small islands and islets.

**Sea Lion Island** lies 17 km (10 miles) to the south of mainland East Falkland. Sea Lion Island is reached by a 40 minute flight from Stanley or Mount Pleasant Complex with the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS), or by Zodiac beach landings from visiting cruise ships.





# About Sea Lion Island

Sea Lion Island, 905 ha (2,236 acres), is owned by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation. For many years it was a sheep farm but due to the decline of the wool market this became uneconomic. It is now the premier wildlife tourism site in the Falkland Islands. The Island has the most southerly hotel in the Falkland Islands and is run by Wild Falklands Ltd. For further information:

[www.sealionisland.com](http://www.sealionisland.com)

The Sea Lion group also includes Brandy, Whisky, and Sea Lion Easterly islands. These are owned by the Antarctic Research Trust. [www.antarctic-research.de](http://www.antarctic-research.de)

The Island is made up of two flat, rocky plateaux joined by a broad sandy beach. It has large stands of **tussac grass** around the coastline.

With the reduction in grazing, 56 species of flowering plants now thrive here including the endemic **vanilla daisy** and **coastal nassauvia**. It is the only known site in the Falklands for the **Fuegian violet**. There are no invasive mammals to predate ground-nesting birds, which thrive here. It is notable as the most important breeding site for elephant seals in the Falklands.

Its wildlife status is formally recognised under the international Ramsar Convention and it qualifies as an Important Bird Area (FK15), a global standard set by BirdLife International. Sea Lion Island is a National Nature Reserve.



**Please follow the guidelines**

MAINTAIN A DISTANCE of **6m (20ft)** between you and any wildlife at all times.



WILDLIFE HAVE RIGHT OF WAY AT ALL TIMES. Do not block wildlife from returning or entering the sea.



no smoking

TAKE CARE on steep slopes and slippery rocks.



no fires

BE AWARE of biosecurity. Do not introduce invasive species to the area.

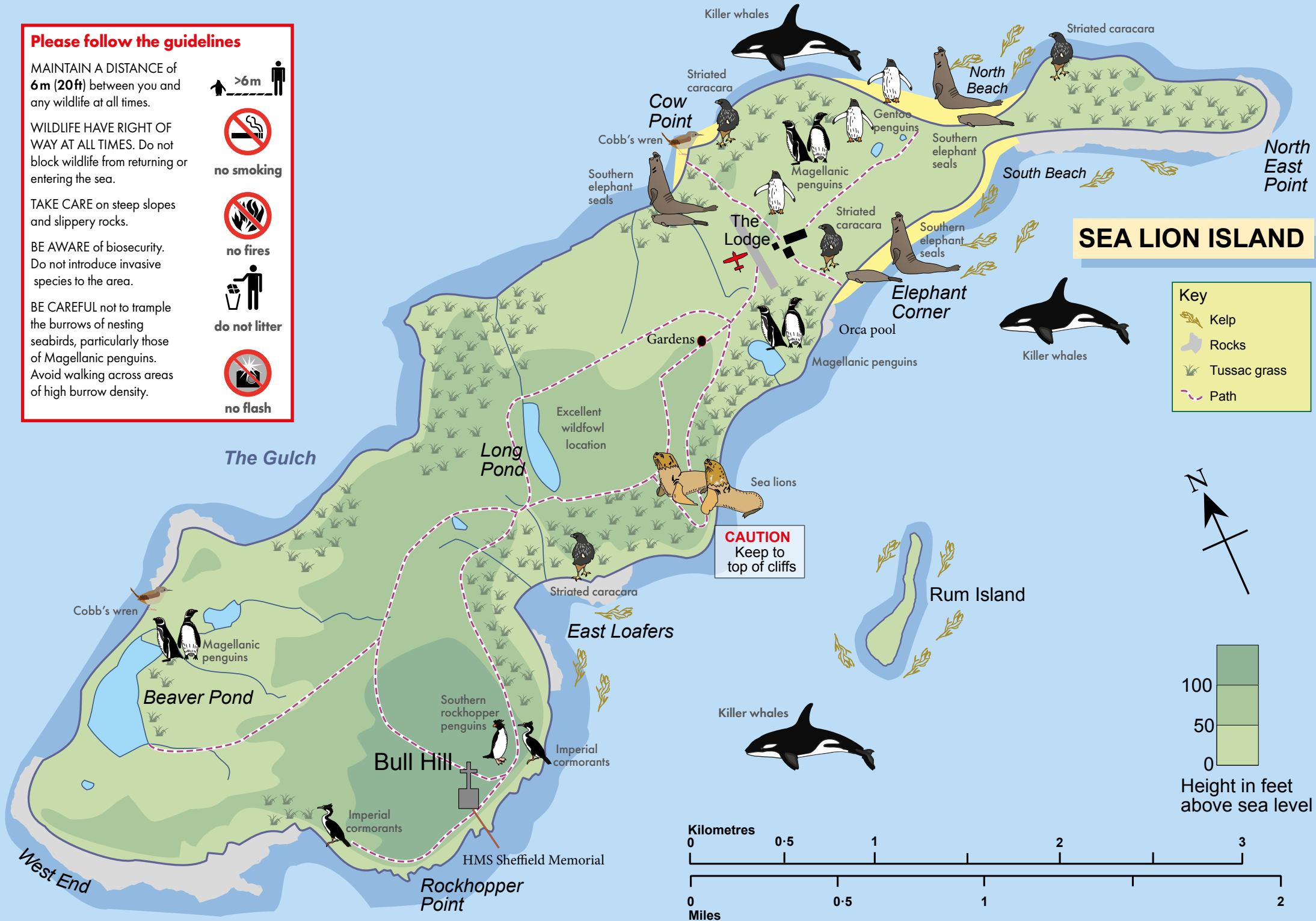


do not litter

BE CAREFUL not to trample the burrows of nesting seabirds, particularly those of Magellanic penguins. Avoid walking across areas of high burrow density.



no flash



# Elephant Seals and Sea Lions

Sea Lion Island holds 95% of the Falklands southern elephant seal breeding population. Over 1,000 individuals may be found here at the height of their breeding season in October. Adult bulls are huge – growing up to 4.5 m (15ft) long and weighing up to 3.5 tonnes.

The breeding season begins when the adult bulls arrive in the second week of September. The cows arrive about a week later and form harem groups. Around 500–550 pups on average are born on Sea Lion Island each year in early October. The female feeds her pup on very rich milk for about 23 days during which time the pup will quadruple in weight. The female then mates and leaves for sea again. After moulting, most of the adult bulls will have left by the end of November.

From late November yearlings and non-breeders come ashore to moult, and some animals can be seen here until April. In the winter months most adults stay at sea. They have been known to travel as far away as the Antarctic Peninsula, Argentine coast and are occasionally seen on the coast of Brazil.

Sea Lion Island has long been an important site in the Falklands for breeding southern sea lions. Sea lions have suffered steep declines throughout the Falklands – in the 1930s over 80,000 pups were born each year in the Islands, compared with only 2,000 in the early 1990s.

On Sea Lion Island they still breed in small numbers around the coast. They sometimes prey on penguins, but their main food is octopus, squid, lobster krill and fish. Be especially alert when walking through tussac grass where these large animals often haul out.

The Elephant Seal Research Group currently run long-term monitoring of the seals and killer whales at Sea Lion Island: [www.esrg.org](http://www.esrg.org)



Elephant seal pup

Southern elephant seals



Southern sea lions





# Killer whales and penguins

**Killer whales** are annual visitors seen here from October to February. Because of the deeply shelving coastline, this is one of the best places in the Falklands to see them. They hunt penguins and seals at the edge of kelp beds just offshore. They can travel at up to 55 kmh (35 mph). It is one of the most wide-ranging mammals on earth.

The killer whale is the largest member of the dolphin family. It has distinctive jet-black, brilliant white and grey markings with a huge dorsal fin on the male. They are typically seen in close-knit family groups known as pods. Members of a pod stay together for life. Two pods of killer whales have been identified off Sea Lion Island. The first consists of three large females, two juveniles and a small calf. The second pod includes two large males with three to four females. You can often see them at very close range, on the seaward side of outcropping rocks. There is an on going photo identification project at Sea Lion Island recording the killer whale activities.

**Gentoo penguins** live on Sea Lion Island all year round. The Falkland Islands are one of the most important locations in the world for this species. Two large round eggs are laid from late October. The chicks will be ready to go to sea by the end of March.

**Magellanic penguins** are known in the Falklands as the jackass penguin because of their braying call. They arrive here in September, but have left by April to migrate north as far as Brazil. They breed in underground burrows.

**Southern rockhopper penguins** are the smallest of the Falkland penguins and come here to breed on cliff tops in October. They feed on fish and squid. Their numbers have declined globally over many years, but the Falkland Islands still hold important breeding populations.



Gentoo penguin



Magellanic penguin



Southern rockhopper penguin



Killer whales

# Bird checklist for Sea Lion Island

Sea Lion Island is especially important for small ground-nesting birds that thrive due to the lack of introduced predators. Cobb's wren, unique (endemic) to the Falklands, and tussacbird are especially common and easy to spot.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> King penguin                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Silver teal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Tussacbird (FI ENDEMIC)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gentoo penguin                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey vulture           | <input type="checkbox"/> Dark-faced ground-tyrant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Macaroni penguin                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Variable hawk            | <input type="checkbox"/> Correndera pipit         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern rockhopper penguin        | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern caracara        | <input type="checkbox"/> Austral thrush           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magellanic penguin                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Striated caracara        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sedge wren               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern silvery grebe             | <input type="checkbox"/> Peregrine falcon         | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobb's wren (FI ENDEMIC) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern giant petrel              | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowy sheathbill         | <input type="checkbox"/> Black-chinned siskin     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sooty shearwater                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Magellanic oystercatcher | <input type="checkbox"/> White-bridled finch      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock shag                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Blackish oystercatcher   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imperial cormorant                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Two-banded plover        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black-crowned night-heron          | <input type="checkbox"/> Rufous-chested dotterel  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kelp goose                         | <input type="checkbox"/> White-rumped sandpiper   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upland goose                       | <input type="checkbox"/> South American snipe     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ruddy-headed goose                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown skua               |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Falkland steamer duck (FI ENDEMIC) | <input type="checkbox"/> Kelp gull                |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crested duck                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Dolphin gull             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chiloë wigeon                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown-hooded gull        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speckled teal                      | <input type="checkbox"/> South American tern      |   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Short-eared owl          |   |



To prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases, you are asked to comply with a few simple measures when travelling around the islands: make sure all of your clothing, equipment and luggage is free from soil, animal faeces, seeds, insects and rodents, and scrub your footwear before each visit to a new wildlife site or seabird colony. If you have any questions about biosecurity, or wish to report diseased wildlife, please speak to the landowners or call the Department of Agriculture 27355 / Falklands Conservation 22247 for advice.

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Falklands Conservation works to conserve the wildlife of the Falkland Islands. To find out more about us and how you can support what we do, visit us at Jubilee Villas, Ross Road, Stanley or go to our website:

[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)

Information about other areas of outstanding wildlife and scenery, can be found in *A Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands*.



# FALKLANDS CONSERVATION

*Partnering with the local and international community to conserve the Falkland Islands' natural environment.*

Falklands Conservation rely on donations and public support to carry out our work in the Falkland Islands. If you would like to join those already supporting our work, please consider becoming a member or adopting a penguin via our website

**[www.falklandsconservation.com](http://www.falklandsconservation.com)**

Or contact [ukadmin@conservation.org.fk](mailto:ukadmin@conservation.org.fk) for more options.

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