

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The Falkland Islands (population 2,500) lie in the South Atlantic on the equivalent latitude to London, about 650km off the coast of South America and 1600km from Antarctica. This remote archipelago of 700 islands covers an area half the size of Wales. Falklands Conservation (www.falklands-nature.demon.co.uk) is an active conservation charity based in the Islands devoted to protecting their unique wildlife. Its work is supported by the Falkland Islands Government, RSPB and WWF-UK, and members in both the Falklands and UK.

Sheep farming has led to considerable reductions in the abundance of native plants such as the giant tussac grass, a very important habitat for birds and insects in a treeless landscape. Felton's flower (*pictured below*), which grows nowhere else in the world, has become almost extinct in the wild through over-grazing. Efforts to replant tussac grass and Felton's flower have begun.

In the surrounding seas large scale commercial fisheries compete with seabirds for fish and squid. Penguins (*pictured middle; king penguin*) take other prey in addition to commercial species but a recent survey revealed declines in four of the five breeding species. Off the South American coast, long line fisheries are a threat to black-browed albatrosses (*pictured top*).

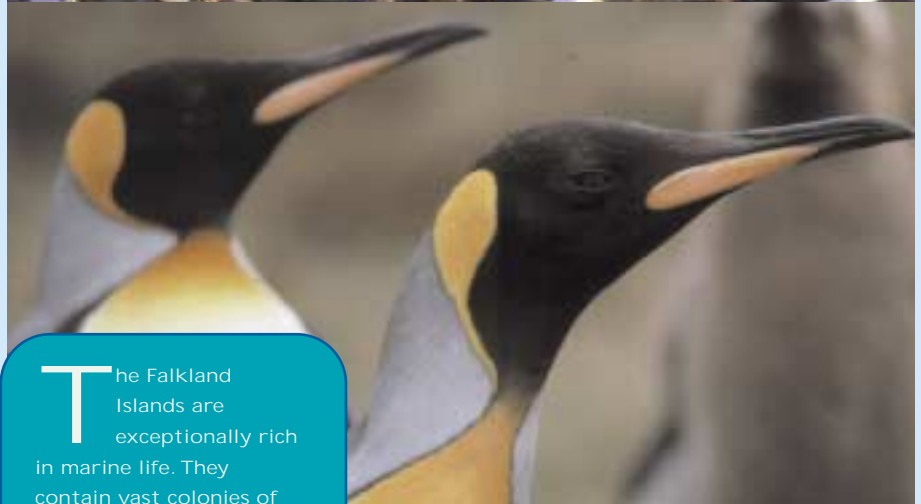
Oil exploration around the Islands is a recent issue of conservation concern. It could have a serious impact on an area of exceptional marine life. Penguins, which cannot fly, are especially vulnerable to oil pollution.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (www.ukotcf.org) brings together non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and institutions in UK and the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). It promotes the co-ordinated conservation of the diverse and increasingly threatened plant and animal species and natural habitats of the UKOTs. It does this by providing assistance in the form of expertise, information and liaison between NGOs and governments, both in the UK and in the UKOTs.

Production of this board was supported by RSPB (the UK partner of BirdLife International) and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Falkland Islands: Wildlife Haven in the South Atlantic



The Falkland Islands are exceptionally rich in marine life. They contain vast colonies of seabirds - 85% of the world population of black-browed albatrosses, and the largest concentration of rockhopper penguins. They are breeding grounds for sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals, and fifteen species of whale and dolphin occur in the surrounding seas.

Photographs courtesy of PhotoMill Picture Library (Acriman/PRA), N. Woods & Tony Chatter

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South Georgia lies 1300 km SE of the Falkland Islands, and the South Sandwich Islands (SSI) a further 760 km SE. South Georgia is mountainous with many glaciers, permanent ice covering almost half of its total land area of 3755 km². Part of the old whaling station at Grytviken has been converted into the South Georgia Museum. The South Sandwich Islands consist of an uninhabited 240 km chain of active volcanic islands.

There are estimated to be 53 million birds on South Georgia. The most numerous is the macaroni penguin with more than two million breeding pairs. It is an important nesting site for the largest seabird in the world, the wandering albatross. There are further large seabird colonies in SSI, with chinstrap penguin in vast numbers.

Licensed commercial fishing for fin-fish, squid and krill takes place in the surrounding seas. Two British Antarctic Survey research stations at Bird Island and King Edward Point undertake marine research to understand the biology of the Southern Ocean and support a sustainable fishery. Much remains to be discovered about the sea-bed communities. The Environmental Management Plan for South Georgia provides a framework for waste management, protected areas and control of alien species. Rats threaten seabird and pipit populations so it is important the eradication programmes are implemented. It is important that the UK Government provides modern conservation legislation to support the Plan. Visitors from cruise ships are increasing but regulations are in place to ensure minimum disturbance.

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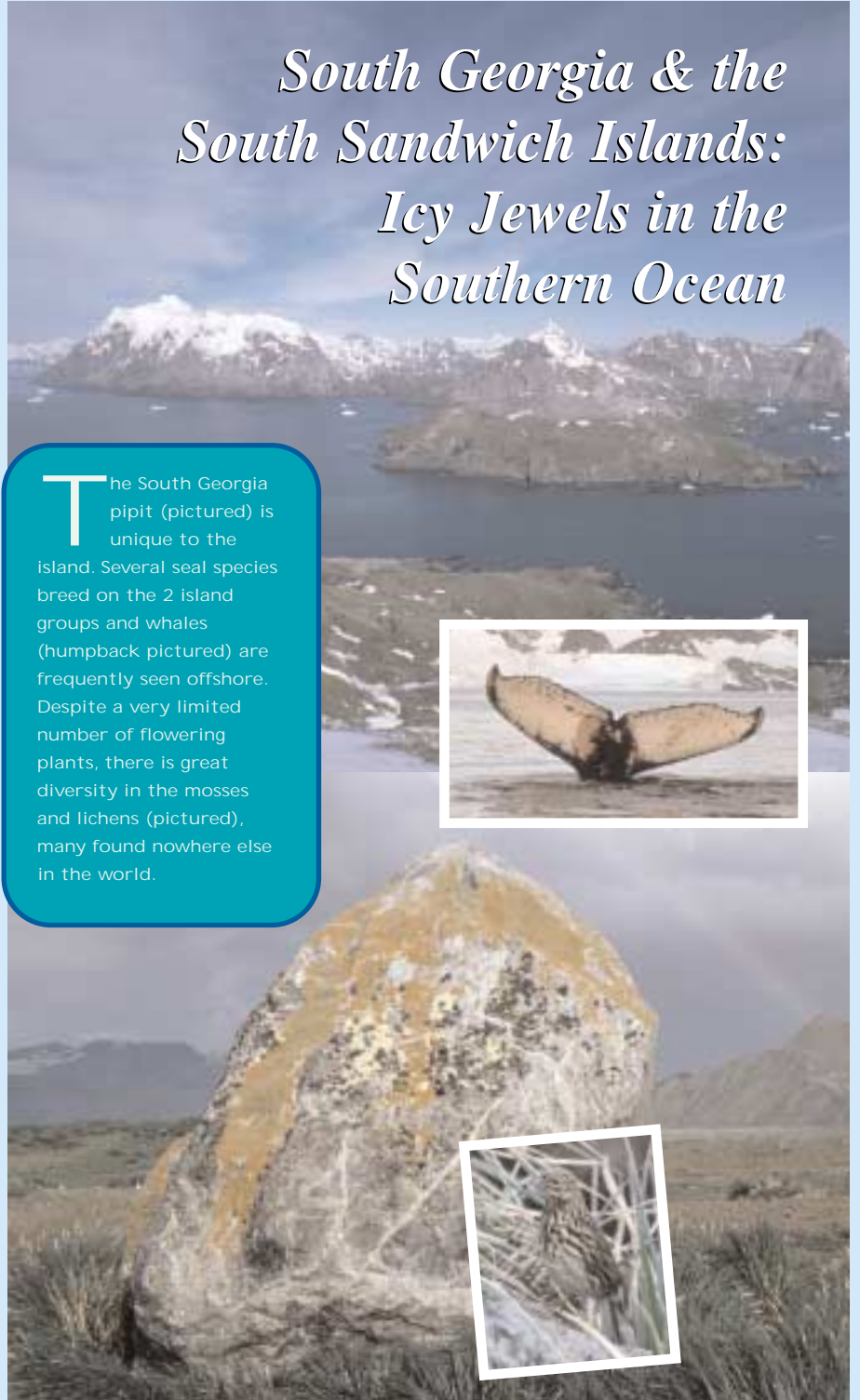
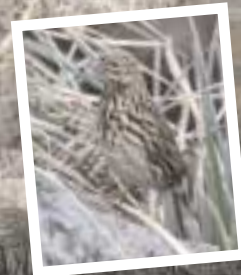
Production of this board was supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Photographs courtesy of Pete Bucktrout, R. I. Lewis-Smith, David Walton (British Antarctic Survey).

South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands: Icy Jewels in the Southern Ocean

The South Georgia pipit (pictured) is unique to the island. Several seal species breed on the 2 island groups and whales (humpback pictured) are frequently seen offshore. Despite a very limited number of flowering plants, there is great diversity in the mosses and lichens (pictured), many found nowhere else in the world.



British Antarctic Territory: Life in the Frozen South



On land, although vegetation is sparse, there are many types of lichen, moss and algae. In the surrounding seas, vast amounts of krill (pictured) provide the basis for rich marine life. This includes whales, seals and very large numbers of birds especially petrels and penguins, inhabiting the islands and coastal areas of the Peninsula. Adélie (pictured) and emperor penguins both breed on the continent itself.

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This Territory consists of all the land, including the Antarctic Peninsula, and the Southern Ocean, south of 60° S between 20° and 80° west, an area of 1,709,400km². Although the UK claim overlaps with those of Argentina and Chile, the Antarctic Treaty provides an internationally agreed regime for the area, recognising its importance as an area for peace and science. There is no permanent population but the British Antarctic Survey have two year-round and one summer-only research stations here. Many other countries also have research stations in this region. The Southern Ocean offers unique opportunities for understanding evolution in marine systems.

The Protocol for the Protection of the Antarctic Environment, enacted as the Antarctic Act 1994, provides a licensing regime for all activities in the Territory by British nationals. This legislation also covers environmental monitoring and impact assessment, waste management, oil spills and protected areas and species. Management of commercial fishing is by international agreement through the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Annual meetings of the Treaty and CCAMLR provide a forum for monitoring environmental activities and fishing. Major current issues include management of increasing tourism, proposals for the southern ocean whale sanctuary and climate change.

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Photographs courtesy of Pete Bucktrout, Chris Gilbert (British Antarctic Survey), Michael Gore (FRS)

Pitcairn Islands: Nature's Bounty in a Remote Pacific Outpost



Despite isolation, the unique wildlife of the Pitcairn Islands needs a helping hand. Some endemic plants (e.g. the tree fern and aillihow pictured) survive in remnants of indigenous vegetation on Pitcairn Island. Globally important seabird populations (including Murphy's petrel, pictured) on the other islands are threatened by Pacific rats. A female green turtle hauls ashore to nest on Henderson Island.



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Pitcairn Island is best known as the haven for the mutineers from HMS Bounty over 200 years ago. This group of four small, varied South Pacific islands range from Pitcairn itself (4.5km²) to Henderson Island - a 37km² raised coral atoll and the largest island - and low-lying coral atolls of Oeno and Ducie. The nearest land masses are over 4,500km away, New Zealand to WSW and South America to the east. Only Pitcairn is inhabited; the small community of less than 50 lives at Adamstown, isolated by more than a day's sail from its nearest neighbours in French Polynesia, around 500km NW.

Pitcairn biodiversity and conservation needs have become better known in recent years following a major scientific expedition in 1991-92. The indigenous vegetation of Pitcairn Island is confined to small, isolated patches. Now that a small nursery has been established on Pitcairn, sustained restoration effort is needed to safeguard these remnants and the endemic plants they support.

The other islands support a range of endemic plants and animals. The 'chicken bird' (a jet black, flightless rail confined to Henderson Island - a World Heritage Site) seems to be less vulnerable to predation by rats than are the petrels. Of special concern is the recently described Henderson petrel.

Darwin Initiative and other UK funds have helped develop local conservation skills and support a successful rat eradication programme on Oeno and Ducie.

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The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) comprises the 55 islands of the Chagos Archipelago. The land area is only 44km². But, below the territorial seas lie over 20,000km² of coral reefs - a pristine treasure store of marine life. The Archipelago lies at the centre of the Indian Ocean, its only human inhabitants now being military personnel on the southernmost island, Diego Garcia.

The biological importance of the Chagos Archipelago is two-fold. First, its isolation and low level of human impact make it ideal for the study of tropical marine ecology, undistorted by pollution. Second, ocean currents bring larvae from the Indo-Pacific basin which then develop into adulthood and release progeny to regenerate the depleted stocks further west.

Through control of commercial fishing, legislation to protect the environment and the application of International Conventions, the Government sets a protective framework, treating the area with all the strictness applicable to World Heritage Sites. Within this, the Friends of the Chagos, a charity formed to promote conservation of the Territory's diverse and delicate ecology, helps establish conservation priorities. Its main challenges are to assist the regeneration of indigenous flora and fauna and to minimise human damage.

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British Indian Ocean Territory: Nature's Stepping Stones

The islands are home to large colonies of sea birds, as well as to the unusual coconut crab (illustrated) and provide nesting sites for green turtles and the more endangered hawksbill (illustrated).

Photographs courtesy of David Dixon, Ilek Jackson/WWF-UK, Anne and Charles Sheppard

THE OTHER UK TERRITORIES OUTSIDE GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

The **British Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on Cyprus** comprise parts of Cyprus which remained British territory when the Republic of Cyprus was created in 1960. They cover 98 square miles, 47.5 around Akrotiri, the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) and 50.5 around Dhekelia, the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). The administration of the Bases is driven by three main policy objectives: effective use as a military base; full co-operation with the Republic of Cyprus; and protection of those resident or working in the Bases.

The SBAA is responsible for protection of the environment in the bases and works closely with the relevant Cypriot Republic departments, e.g to protect breeding loggerhead and green turtles on the beaches within the WSBA. The most important wetland on the island of Cyprus, Akrotiri salt lake, lies within the WSBA and is proposed as a Ramsar wetland site of international importance (greater flamingoes pictured). Rare endemic orchids, colonies of birds of prey and various reptiles and amphibians are also found within the Bases, as well as many migrant songbirds. Two major problems are: shooting in both the ESBA and WSBA, particularly around Akrotiri salt lake, and netting and trapping of small migrant song-birds on migration in the ESBA in spring and autumn. These practices are illegal in both the Republic of Cyprus and the SBAs (whose laws mirror those of the Republic).



Michael Gore FRPS

Maura Mitchell



The three **Crown Dependencies** (below) have some similarities in status to the UK Overseas Territories.

The **Isle of Man**, in the Irish Sea nearly equidistant from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, is 53 km long with an area of 572 km². Its human population is about 75,500. More than 40% of the Island is uninhabited hill land.

The Isle sits within a rich marine ecosystem supporting puffin, Manx shearwater, grey seals and basking sharks (pictured) - possibly under threat of extinction from hunting. Once the tail and fins are cut-off (for shark fin soup) the shark, sometimes still alive, is thrown back into the sea. Terrestrial ecosystems range from hill-land to coastal heath. Much of these and the intervening agricultural land retain elements of traditional farming methods, important for orchids, the protected Langness grasshopper, and many different bird species, including the biggest hen harrier roost in Western Europe, peregrine, long-eared and short-eared

owls, and chough, a bird now restricted to certain uplands and coastal fringes of Europe.

The Channel Islands, about 20 km from the northwest coast of France, formed part of the Dukedom of Normandy which conquered England in 1066. There are two separate dependencies.

A & R Prell



The **Bailiwick of Guernsey** includes the island of Guernsey and the neighbouring islands of Alderney, Sark, Brecqhou, Herm, Jethou and Lihou. It has a total land area of 78 km² with a population of 62,000.

With its mild climate, Guernsey boasts nearly 2000 species of plants and a diverse range of invertebrates, many absent from the UK. There are dramatic cliffs with nesting seabirds, and maritime grassland with the rare Glanville fritillary butterfly, cliff-top scrub supporting many species of migrant bird, steep wooded valleys running down to the sea, and quiet, rural lanes. The characteristic earthbank hedgerows are home to endemics such as Guernsey vole, greater white-toothed shrew and Guernsey fern (pictured). The island's 10-metre tides provide a large littoral zone, supporting a wide range of marine species and many species of waders (shorebirds). Dune grassland and fragments of threatened wet meadow habitat provide summer display of orchids and other wildlife.

To improve the Island's biodiversity further, local authorities have implemented a new system of farm subsidy. This programme aims to make farming less intensive and encourages farmers to undertake various conservation measures.

Owing to the large tidal range (up to 12 m), the land area of the **Bailiwick of Jersey** increases 40% from 117 km² to 163 km² at low tide. On the southeast coast there is a large, intertidal area (pictured) designated as a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance which is rich in bird-life and other marine fauna and flora. Jersey's geographical position partly explains the large number (33) of UK Red Data Book species supported. Species include four reptiles (two lizards, the green and wall, not found in the UK), two amphibians (including the agile frog, which is not found in the UK,

the red squirrel, several invertebrates rare or not recorded in UK, and a rich lichen flora, not to mention the rich marine life.

A biodiversity strategy is being developed which includes habitat and species action plans. In addition to the inter-tidal, important habitats include dunes in the west and coastal heath-land on the southwest and north coasts.

With the high density of population (88,000 residents and approximately 600,000 visitors per year), 20% of the island is urban; 54% is farmland and the still considerable 26% semi-natural habitats. Jersey is extremely well connected to the outside world, because of the needs of the finance industry and tourism. However, there is a residual isolationist sentiment, political complacency and resistance to the responsibility to preserve biodiversity.

More information on these four territories, and the others, can be found on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org).

Andrew Syvret



Friends of the UK Overseas Territories



How does the Forum work to conserve the treasure trove of biodiversity found in the Overseas Territories?

- By supporting local people in their efforts to conserve their own environmental resources
- By helping non-governmental organisations (NGOs) find international funding for their work
- By providing strategic assistance to the Overseas Territories, both governments and NGOs
- By coordinating the support of UK member bodies in providing specialised technical assistance to enable local people to carry out conservation projects
- By raising awareness in the UK about the Overseas Territories and our responsibility to them
- By providing regional support by expert Working Groups
- By representing NGOs on international bodies such as the Ramsar Committee

The Forum supports local organisations because they create a sense of ownership of the resources to be protected and they create pride in the local people in their own national treasures. They are the most effective environmental educators, and unlike international bodies, they will always be there. That's why the Forum concentrates on empowering local people and giving them the tools and information they need to do the work themselves.

Four good reasons to become a Friend



1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the Overseas Territories.
2. You understand that the only way to guarantee their protection is to build local institutions and create environmental awareness in the countries where they are found.
3. You care about what is happening in the Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date by regular copies of Forum News and the Forum's Annual Report.
4. You understand that the Overseas Territories are part of Britain, and therefore are not eligible for most international grant sources - but neither are they eligible for most domestic British ones, so help with fundraising is essential.

I wish to become a Friend of the Overseas Territories at the following support level: £15 £50 £100 £500

I wish my company to become a Corporate Friend at the following support level: £150 £500 £1,000 £5,000

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend

Company name for Corporate Friend

Address

Tel _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Friends subscriptions can now be paid by credit/debit card as well as by UK cheque.

This means that payments from various countries can be made easily; your card company will handle the exchange and include the equivalent in your own currency in your regular statement.

Either: I enclose my cheque made out to UKOTCF for the amount indicated above

Or: Please charge the amount indicated above to my card:

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Send to: UKOTCF, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 5LF, UK Fax: +44 1733 569325

*Raising awareness
about the wealth of
biodiversity in the
UK Overseas
Territories*

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The Forum is currently supported by the following international conservation and scientific organisations:

British Ecological Society
British Microbial Biodiversity Association
British Ornithologists' Union
CAB International
Fauna and Flora International
National Trust
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
World Wide Fund for Nature
Zoological Society of London

Member organisations for individual UK Overseas

Territories and Crown Dependencies are:

Anguilla National Trust
Ascension Heritage Society
Bermuda Audubon Society
Bermuda National Trust
Bermuda Zoological Society
Friends of the Chagos
British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust
National Trust for the Cayman Islands
Falklands Conservation
Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society
La Société Guernesaise
La Société Jersiaise
National Trust for Jersey
Manx Chough Project
Montserrat National Trust
St. Helena National Trust
National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands

Photographs courtesy of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library.

Some of the world's most pristine coral reefs surround several of UK's Overseas Territories, providing the basis for their economies. Animals throughout the world's oceans depend upon breeding grounds in these islands.



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