

# BLEAKER ISLAND

Wonderful wildlife on a Falkland farm



BirdLife  
**IBA**  
IMPORTANT  
BIRD AREA



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

# BLEAKER 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.

## Visitor Accommodation

Constructed in 2011, **Cassard House** provides high quality accommodation for eight people in four ensuite bedrooms. The house has solar-powered underfloor heating and hot water, triple glazing, high insulation levels, a large conservatory and a heat recovery unit.

The nearby **Cobb's Cottage** (named after Arthur Cobb, farm manager and naturalist, who lived on the Island from 1906 to the 1920s) has two twin ensuite bedrooms, a sun lounge, full central heating, TV/radio and WiFi.

Both units have fully equipped kitchens, provided bed linen and 24-hour power, and are available on a self-catering or full board basis. They are located within easy walking distance to penguins, cormorants, seals and wildfowl.

## Booking enquiries to:

Tel: +500 32491

Email: [bleakerisland@horizon.co.fk](mailto:bleakerisland@horizon.co.fk)

Website: [www.bleakerisland.com](http://www.bleakerisland.com)



# About Bleaker Island

Bleaker Island was first known as Long Island (and referred to as such on the chart compiled by the *Beagle* survey of which Charles Darwin was a part in 1834). It subsequently became Breaker Island, after the large waves that crash against it, but since at least 1857 it has been called Bleaker Island – although it is far from bleak.

The island covers 2,070 ha (5,155 acres) with a varied coastline of low cliffs, sloping bedrock beaches, wide sandy bays and sheltered coves. It is 20 km (12½ miles) long and never more than 3.2 km (2 miles) wide, with gentle hills, the highest point being Semaphore Point 27 m (89 ft), north-east of the settlement.

For many years the Island was owned by the Falkland Islands Company and it has been a sheep farm for over 100 years. Now privately owned, and under organic sustainable management, it has 1,000 sheep and a nucleus of 55 Hereford breeding cows (imported from Chile in 2004). Here wildlife and domestic animals happily co-exist.

Extensive greens around the Island provide excellent pasture – naturally fertilised by geese

and seabirds. An extensive tussac grass fringe of 4 km (2½ miles) is found on the eastern coast of the island near the settlement and is a haven for songbirds and sea lions. Other bare and eroded areas have been fenced and are being replanted with tussac. Established tussac areas are managed sustainably to provide winter fodder for cattle. The farm is organic, using no fertilisers or drugs.

Flowers on Bleaker include the **yellow** and **dog orchids**, **lady's slipper**, **common violet** and **vanilla daisy**. **Queen of the Falklands fritillary** butterflies breed in the Pebbly Bay area, feeding on native violet flowers. Forty different breeding birds have been recorded, including **Magellanic**, **southern rockhopper**, **macaroni** and **gentoo penguins** and a very large colony of **imperial cormorants**.

**Peale's dolphins** reside in the bays south of the settlement year round. **Sea lions** are found on Bleaker in the summer months. **Sei whales** can be seen frequently off the island in late summer and autumn.



# BLEAKER ISLAND

## 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.

TAKE CARE on steep slopes and slippery rocks.

LEAVE GATES as you find them.

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

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



no smoking



no fires



do not litter



no flash

## LAMBING SEASON

The lambing season is from **October to December**. During this time visitors are asked to take extra care not to disturb ewes as they may abandon lambs if startled.

### KEY

- Hiking route
- Pond
- Stream
- Kelp Beds
- Tussac
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Cruise Ship Anchorage
- Airstrip
- Wire Fence
- Gate



The yellow orchid is protected by law.



The lady's slipper is endemic to the Falkland Islands.



Avoid areas where Magellanic penguins are nesting underground.





# Exploring Bleaker Island

The northern end of Sandy Bay (cruise ship landing beach) teems with **gentoo penguins**. There are 2,000 breeding pairs on Penguin Hill. An easy short walk south from Sandy Bay to Long Gulch will reward the visitor with good views of many Falkland breeding birds. Watch out in particular for **Magellanic penguins**, **southern** and **striated caracaras**, **brown skuas**, **ruddy-headed geese** and **two-banded plovers**. **Snowy sheathbills**, a non-breeding visitor, can be seen particularly around the colonies of penguins and imperial cormorants.

Between Sandy Bay and the Settlement lies Big Pond. This and the two smaller ponds to the north are popular with **Chiloë wigeon**, **southern silvery** and **white-tufted grebes**, **speckled** and **silver teal** and **Falkland steamer duck**. **Black-necked swans** also breed here occasionally.

On the south-east facing coast, among the tussac plantations (watch out for **Sedge wrens**), is a deep fissure in the cliffs known as the Long Gulch. It is a favourite spot for an impressive number of seabirds which breed on the rocky ledges. Because it is an area inaccessible to rats, **tussacbirds** can also be found here.



Crested caracara



Snowy sheathbill



White-tufted grebe

## Bird checklist

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

# Seabirds of Bleaker Island

This Island is particularly important for its colonies of cormorants. Over 8,000 pairs of **imperial cormorants** breed in the main colony in the centre of the Island. During the breeding season these handsome birds develop a bright blue eye-ring, deep orange caruncles and a recurved crest on their forehead, which all diminish as the season progresses. The Long Gulch is favoured by the smaller **rock shags**, often seen as solitary feeders in kelp patches.

Seven sub-colonies of **southern rockhopper penguins** (about 720 pairs) breed along the southern side of the Long Gulch. They climb up very steep cliffs with ease bounding together with both feet and using their bill for support in difficult places. They are summer visitors and will leave their colony in April to spend the winter at sea. A single pair of **macaroni penguins** (with golden yellow head plumes and a larger bill) can sometimes be seen amongst the rockhoppers, with the **king penguin** also an occasional visitor. There is one large colony of **gentoo penguins** on Penguin Hill. They will approach sitting observers if you avoid sudden movements, but will panic and rush away if approached too closely. **Magellanic penguins**, which nest in 2 m (6 ft) deep underground burrows, can be found right across the island.

**Southern giant petrels** nest at a number of sites along the Adventure Sound coast. When breeding (from September to December with young fledging in late March), these large birds are very sensitive to disturbance and must not be startled or approached any closer than 200 m. They are scavengers which seek out carcasses of dead seals, penguins, sheep or whales – and are an excellent indication of beach strandings.

Bleaker Island qualifies as an Important Bird Area (FK04), a global standard set by BirdLife International.



Southern rockhopper penguin

Imperial cormorant colony



# Protecting wildlife from invasive species



**Tussacbird** (above), still occasionally found on Bleaker Island, is particularly threatened by rats accidentally introduced in the 1980s whose presence has led to a reduction in the number of Falkland songbirds. However, the offshore islands of North Point, Halt and Sandy Bay remain rat-free and support populations of the endemic **Cobb's wren**. It is hoped that rats can be eradicated from the main island and wildlife diversity restored to its former level. It is vitally important that invasive species are prevented from spreading to new islands in the Falklands archipelago. In the absence of trees, native ground-nesting bird populations can be devastated by rodent predation.

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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