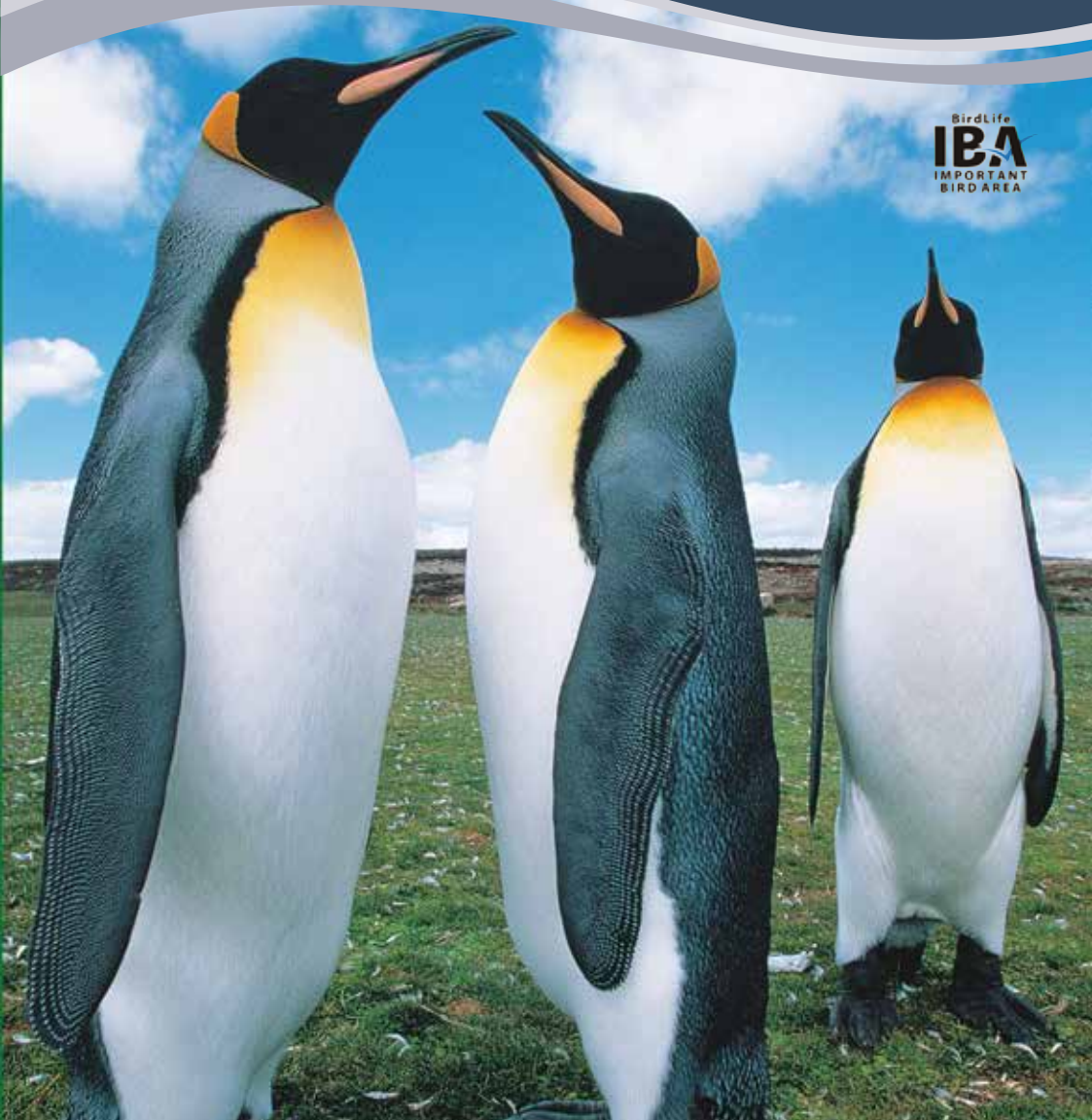


VOLUNTEER POINT

The largest king penguin colony in the Falkland Islands



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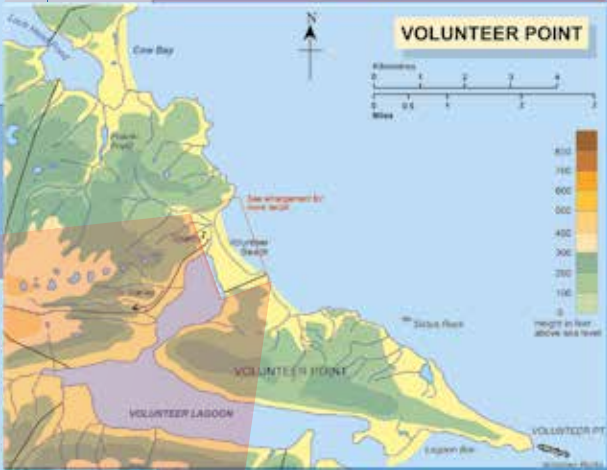
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VOLUNTEER POINT



The Falkland Islands archipelago lies 350km (280miles) 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.

Volunteer Point is an impressive peninsula to the north of East Falkland.



It is a privately owned nature reserve and is reached by a three hour journey from the Falklands capital, Stanley. The drive tests the skills of the most experienced off-road driver due to the softness of the peat.



COVER PHOTO: King penguins

About Volunteer Point

Named after the ship *Volunteer* which called at the Islands in 1815, Volunteer Point is part of Johnson's Harbour Farm. The farm, one of the largest surviving in private ownership in the Falklands (21,853 ha, 52,000 acres) with 10,000 sheep, was established by George Patterson Smith in 1870 and stayed in the Smith family until June 2011. It remains in local ownership.

Volunteer Beach is a 3.2 km (2 mile) long white sandy beach, bordered by high grassy banks leading down to rolling greens. These provide the ideal habitats for three breeding species of penguin: **gentoo, Magellanic and king.**

Other important wildlife areas are the Lagoon Bar and Volunteer Point itself where **fur seals** can be found on the rocks just offshore, but these sites are difficult to reach.

Volunteer Point qualifies as an Important Bird Area (FK21), a global standard set by BirdLife International.

This booklet describes the area around Volunteer Beach, home of the king penguin.

Please follow the guidelines

DO NOT DISTURB King penguins, especially when they are incubating eggs (**Nov–Jan**) as disturbance may cause their only egg to be lost.

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

LEAVE GATES as you find them.

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

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.



The King Penguin Colony

The Volunteer Point colony is the largest breeding group of king penguins within the Falkland Islands, where they are at the northerly limit of their global range.

King penguins have bred here since man's first recorded visit to the Falkland Islands.

In 1769 Thomas Pennant, who brought the first specimen away from the Falklands, called it the 'Patagonian Pinguin'.

Early records suggest that numbers were never very high at Volunteer Point, and by 1870 they had been almost exterminated from the Islands, killed for their oil and beautiful feathers.

However, the former owner observed kings returning in ones and twos at Cow Bay from 1947. Numbers expanded and pairs began

to breed again at Volunteer Point. By 1971 there were about 30 incubating adults and nine chicks present.

Today there are estimated to be about 1,500 breeding adults at the colony and 600–700 chicks are raised each year.

King penguins are increasing throughout their entire range.

They have a circumpolar distribution and also breed at South Georgia, the Crozet Islands and Kerguelen, Heard and Macquarie Islands.

The world population is estimated at two million. It is thought that the Falkland king penguin population expansion may be due to overcrowding further south at South Georgia.



Raising a King Penguin Chick

The breeding cycle of a king penguin takes longer than one year, meaning that a pair can only rear two chicks in any three year period.

Juveniles depart

They will stay at sea for the **next 3 years**, foraging as far south as the Antarctic Polar Front ...

... and will return to Volunteer Point to breed when they are 4–6 years old.

Returning adults

Adults that did not breed in the previous year begin a new breeding cycle.

Incubation period

One egg is incubated on the feet. This is a critical stage, as disturbance to the adults can lead to the egg being lost (eg. by rolling off the feet).



Adults depart

Once the moult is completed, the adults will leave to spend the next year at sea, skipping a breeding season.



Brood period

For 34 days the parents take alternate shifts lasting 4–9 days, with one caring for the chick while the other feeds at sea.



Adult moult

The adults remain on land to moult, starting as soon as their chicks have fledged. The moult takes 24–30 days.

Juvenile moult

Chicks begin to attain their adult plumage and by their second summer are large enough to fend for themselves and will depart for the sea.



Guard period

The chick is never left unattended during this phase, which lasts around 35 days at Volunteer Point.



Winter

At Volunteer Point the chicks stay on land in crèches whilst the adults embark on extended foraging trips, as far south as Antarctica, returning only infrequently to feed the chick. During this time the chick has to fast and will lose up to half its body weight, relying on the fat reserves it has built up during the summer for survival.



Throughout the winter the adults feed at the Antarctic Polar Front on dense shoals of lantern fish

Other Penguins

Over 1,000 pairs of **gentoo penguins** are resident at Volunteer Point. The Falklands are one of the most important sites in the world for this species.

The gentoo population in the Falkland Islands is around 132,000 breeding pairs (2010 census). In some years the gentoo population can crash very suddenly, due to environmental factors. However, the species is very resilient, and numbers have quickly recovered once again.

Breeding commences in October, and the eggs hatch 39 days after being laid.

Sea trips for feeding (mostly squid, lobster krill and small fish) take over two days whilst incubating, but less than half this time when feeding young birds. This reflects the constant need of the young for food and the added pressure on the adults to provide this. Young birds fledge about 83 days after hatching, in early February.

Magellanic penguins are widespread along the entire Falklands coastline, but are only present in the Islands from September to April.



Lobster krill – penguin food

They migrate considerable distances to warmer waters for the winter months. These birds nest in deep burrows, up to 2 m (6 ft) deep.

The birds lay their eggs from mid-October with the average incubation period of 39 days.

There are concerns that Magellanic penguins have declined in numbers in recent years (though accurate figures are very difficult to obtain).

Studies by Falklands Conservation here suggested that a shortage of food when adults are feeding chicks has led to a low survival rate for chicks.



Magellanic penguins (left) and gentoo penguins (right)

The Wildlife of Volunteer Point

The rocks forming the Volunteer Point headland are hard quartz-sandstones. They are among the oldest of the Falklands' sedimentary rocks, which started their existence as sand beds deposited in shallower water at the margin of a large sea.

Plants to be found here include **sea cabbage** along the beach, carpets of **cushion-bog**, the daisy-flowered shrubby **fachine** and tasty **teaberries**.

Over 40 bird species have been recorded in this area including **South American tern**, **rock cormorant**, **dolphin** and **kelp gulls**, **Magellanic** and **blackish oystercatchers** and **kelp**, **upland** and **ruddy-headed geese**.

Frequently seen lying in wait along the shoreline are **southern sea lions**, that will turn a penguin literally inside out with a savage shake. In the summer months, when birds are frequently coming and going from the shallows, several can be seen each day patrolling offshore.



Dolphin gull



South American tern



Sea cabbage



Falkland skua



Teaberry



Ruddy-headed goose



Falklands Conservation at Volunteer Point

Many visitors come to see the penguins at Volunteer Point each year. Falklands Conservation is helping to ensure that here and at other sites throughout the Islands they all enjoy their visit without causing the wildlife undue disturbance or harm.

Measures initiated by Falklands Conservation at Volunteer Point include a car parking area roped off to limit vehicle use and a ring of white rocks arranged around the king penguin colony to mark the recommended distance from which to observe the birds.

In addition, information boards have been provided describing the life and behaviour of king penguins. Monitoring research work is undertaken every year to gain a better understanding of penguin habits, populations and ecology.

By making a donation or sponsoring one of the king penguins at Volunteer Point, you will be directly helping to protect the colonies and continue this important work.



Adopt a king penguin and help us protect these birds in the Falkland Islands

YOU WILL RECEIVE: • Personalised certificate • Newsletters from Falklands Conservation • King penguin photo • Leaflet about the colony • King penguin pin badge • Falklands wildlife magazine
Available from www.falklandsconservation.com, selected retailers or our office in Stanley

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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Falkland Office: Jubilee Villas, Ross Road, Stanley FIQQ 1ZZ | UK Office: The Gatehouse, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL

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

More about Volunteer Point, and 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

Or contact **ukadmin@conservation.org.fk** for more options.

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