

# Beaver Island Group

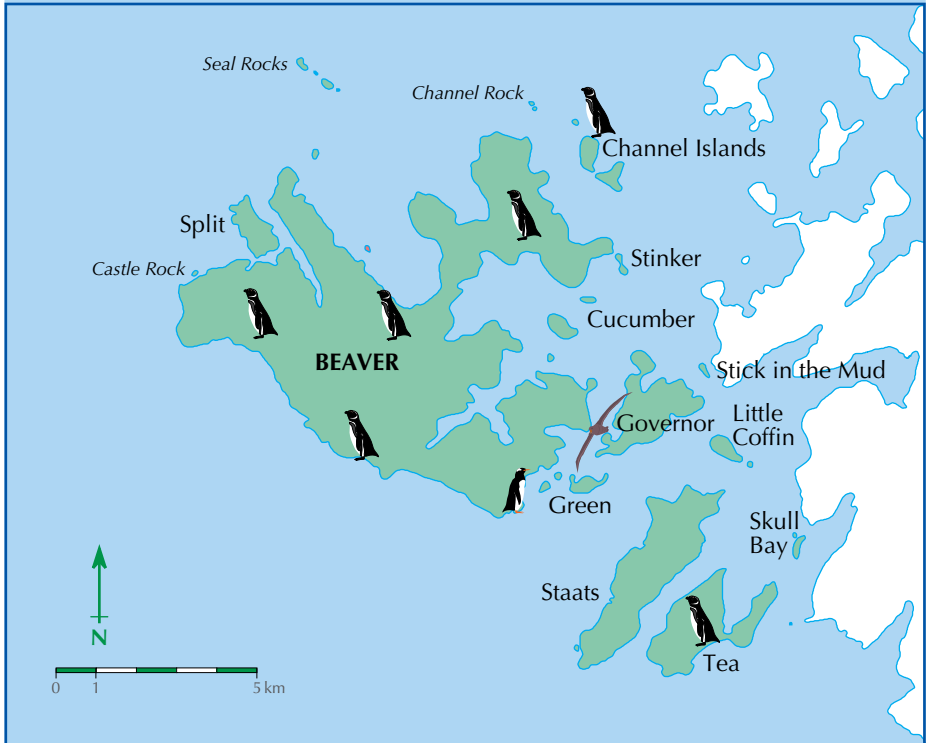
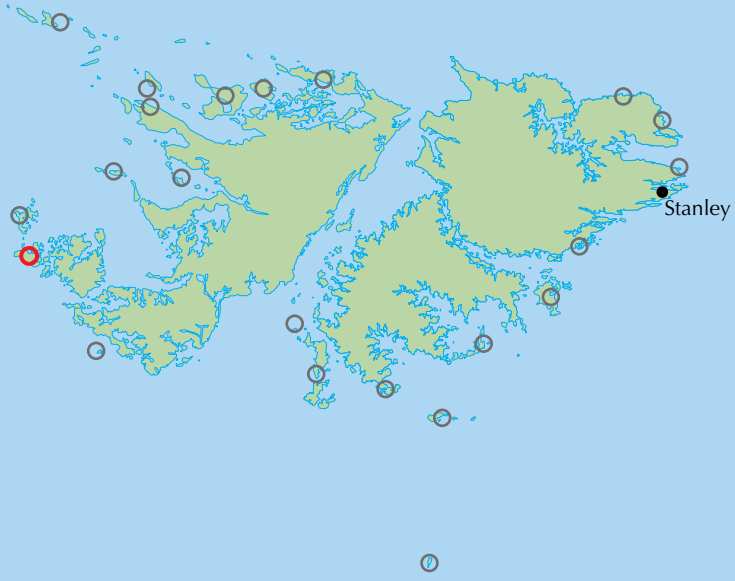
Ref number	FK02
Admin Region	Falkland Islands
Co-ordinates	51°51'S, 61°15'W
Area	Beaver Island* (4,856 ha), Split* (70 ha), Governor* (220 ha), Staats* (500 ha), Tea* (310 ha), and a few smaller islands [* = rats present]
Altitude	0–234 m
IBA categories	A1, A2, A4ii
Status	Privately owned by S. Poncet, Beaver Island.

## Site description

This group of islands lies west of Weddell Island and West Falkland. Beaver, Split, Staats and Tea Islands all have spectacular west-facing sheer cliffs and deeply indented coastlines. There are generally very steep slopes above eastern coasts with rocky shores, a few sand beaches and sheltered coves. Inland the islands are mountainous with many peaks exceeding 150 m and some above 200 m. Most of the smaller islands are low-lying.



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FK02	Beaver Island Group	Breeding (pairs)	Notes
Criteria	Key species		
A1	Southern Giant Petrel <i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	300	Governor 2003
A1, A4ii	Gentoo Penguin <i>Pygoscelis papua</i>	2,850	Beaver 2001, dropped to 500 in 2003
A1	Magellanic Penguin <i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	2,000 (approx)	Breeding on most islands
A2	Falkland Steamer Duck <i>Tachyeres brachypterus</i>	245 (approx)	Breeding on most islands, 140 pairs on Beaver

### Birds

See table above for details of key species.

At least 40 species have been recorded, of which 34 are known to breed. Thin-billed Prions breed on Channel Rock and Hecate Rock but the population has not been assessed. Striated Caracaras breed on Stick-in-the-mud, Rookery Island and Hecate Rock, and Ruddy-headed Geese are present but their populations are too small to qualify. Local subspecies recorded are Black-crowned Night-heron, Upland Goose, Kelp Goose, Dark-faced Ground-tyrant, Falkland Thrush, Falkland Grass Wren and Long-tailed Meadowlark. Cobb's Wren has not been found on any of these islands in recent years, due probably to the widespread occurrence of Norway Rats. Few Upland Geese, oystercatchers, Magellanic Snipe or songbirds breed on Beaver Island due to the presence of foxes and rats.

### Other species of interest

About 100 Southern Sea Lion pups are born annually on Stick-in-the-mud Island, north of Governor Island, and 35 on Beaver Island (Stinker Point), while non-breeders haul out on Tea, Green, Split and other islands in Beaver Bay. The western cliffs of Beaver Island are home to a few hundred breeding South American Fur Seal. The scarce Adder's-tongue Fern *Ophioglossum crotalophoroides* occurs on Beaver Island. Tea Island has a population of the unidentified purslane (*Calandrinia*), possibly a new endemic plant. Additional endemic plants found in this group of islands include Clubmoss Cudweed *Chevreulia lycopodioides*, Vanilla Daisy *Leucheria suaveolens*, Lady's Slipper *Calceolaria fothergillii*, Smooth Falkland Ragwort *Senecio vaginatus*, Hairy Daisy *Erigeron incertus*, and Coastal Nassauvia *Nassauvia gaudichaudii*.

## Conservation issues

Beaver Island is currently farmed to a minimal level with sheep and reindeer, and this activity would not be expected to have an adverse effect on any of the IBA qualifying species. The main issue affecting Beaver, Tea and Staats is the presence of Patagonian Foxes *Dusicyon griseus*, which were introduced in the 1930s for trading in furs. Foxes have a significant negative effect on the resident birds and their presence probably explains the absence of breeding Upland Geese. An eradication programme has been under way for about 10 years.

Rats are numerous on Beaver and Governor Islands, and also present on Tea, Staats, Stick-in-the-mud, Green, Split and Channel Islands. They have been eradicated from Rookery, Rat and Cucumber Islands, and these islands will be closely monitored for signs of recolonisation by several bird species. All visitors should be informed about the dangers of introducing alien species to the islands.

Staats Island contains the Falklands' only population of introduced Guanaco and overgrazing has depleted the Tussac grass. This island could benefit from fencing, control and replanting. Tussac is currently being replanted in fenced paddocks on Beaver Island. Governor, Tea, Green, Rookery and Split Islands were stocked with sheep until the late 1970s but there is good potential for long-term regeneration of the vegetation. It is very important that the Falkland Islands Countryside Code is followed (see Appendix 1), particularly to guard against the risk of fire.

## References

Clausen (2001), Huin (2001), Kerr (1994), Poncelet (1998); Thompson (2003), Towns and Broome (2003), Woods (2002a).

Long-tailed Meadowlark ALAN HENRY

