



FrontiersEcoPics

Yorke Bay, Falkland Islands: a question for coastal management

Remote islands, such as those in the sub-Antarctic, represent vitally important oases for coastal megafauna and harbor abundant wildlife. The Falkland Islands are one such biodiversity hub and host a wealth of globally important breeding and foraging locations for animals of higher trophic levels, including gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*) – pictured here coming ashore at dusk at Yorke Bay, which is home to a colony of about 300 penguins. Approximately 34% of the world's gentoo penguins live in various locations across the Falklands (Ecol Appl 2021; doi.org/10.1002/eap.2426).

Yorke Bay is a short (~5-minute) drive from the capital city and main port of Stanley. Before the COVID pandemic, approximately 60,000 tourists visited the islands annually (<https://bit.ly/3KfRQxD>). Even so, Yorke Bay has for years functioned as a de facto protected area due to the presence of unexploded landmines. As remnants from the Falkland Islands War in 1982, these mines did not pose a danger to the penguins but have effectively deterred humans – until recently. In November 2020, Yorke Bay was declared “landmine free” and people could once again visit the beach. Although tourists have yet to return to the islands in pre-COVID numbers, and while the penguins at Yorke Bay currently appear largely undisturbed, the presence of high numbers of visitors has negatively affected Gentoo colonies elsewhere (Biodivers Conserv 2019; doi.org/10.1007/s10531-018-1635-6). Places like this make you wonder – should some safe havens remain off limits?

Narissa Bax^{1,2} and Daniel Bayley¹

¹South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI), Stanley, Falkland Islands; ²Centre for Marine Socioecology (CMS), Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), University of Tasmania, Battery Point, Australia
doi:10.1002/fee.2555



© N. Bax and D. Bayley