



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

SOUTH ATLANTIC ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE



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ANNUAL REPORT

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CHARITY REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Charity Name: South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI)

Charity Registration Number: 1173105 (England & Wales)

Registered Office
Falkland House, 14 Broadway
London
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Principle Office
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Falkland Islands

The Trustees listed below were Trustees for the whole year ending 30 June 2025 and at the date this report was approved unless stated otherwise:

C. Peter Judge MBE, Chair
Prof Stuart Piertney
Prof Richard Sanders
Tracy Satherley
Dr Amandine Gamble (appointed 1 June 2025)
Dr Gary Nichols (appointed 1 June 2025)
Prof Christopher Evans (appointed 1 June 2025)

Amanda Curry Brown (resigned 14 January 2025)

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1 Barrack Street
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ABOUT SAERI

OUR VISION

Is to be an internationally recognised research institute, delivering world-class environmental research from the Falkland Islands that informs the effective stewardship of our planet.

OUR MISSION

Is to grow a sustainable environmental research institute in the Falkland Islands through partnership working to build capacity and inform the delivery of global environmental stewardship.

OUR CORE VALUES

Innovation

To provide sound leadership, deliver excellent outputs, strive for innovation and seek to collaborate at all times

Identity

To retain its Falkland Islands identity

Integrity

To display integrity and responsibility at all times

Inclusivity

To ensure inclusivity throughout our processes

Accountability

To hold ourselves and each other to account

Safety, Care & Respect

To always show Safety, Care and Respect to each other

“I am immensely proud of how the organisation has evolved. The professionalism, adaptability and commitment of our staff, supported by effective governance and leadership, have positioned SAERI well for the future.”



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

SAERI is now an established and stable presence in the international research community. I am proud of our research and discovery. We are anchored in our community.

I have heard SAERI confused with large, UK government funded research institutions. As you look out of the window on Ross Road in Stanley and out to sea through the Narrows and beyond, it is difficult to imagine how this confusion could occur. We operate from the deeply beautiful Falkland Islands. We understand better than many, the challenges and joys of operating from a small jurisdiction. It is this understanding which makes our team so effective in delivering science with impact. It is also this impact which makes supporting SAERI so rewarding.

We have launched our first direct fundraising activities. It is now possible to support our work directly through the donating link on our website. I encourage you to donate. Every penny we raise goes directly to our work and our work has real value and impact.

Living in a smaller jurisdiction demands resilience and this year has been another defined by resilience. We have faced a challenging and increasingly competitive global funding environment. Anticipated major grants were not awarded as UK funders' budgets shrank but we are small and well managed and we have adapted and continued to deliver.

The leadership team has demonstrated both strength of purpose and clarity of direction. While pressures in the wider funding landscape have persisted, the organisation has responded proactively, building on the lessons of the previous year and focusing on strengthening its long-term sustainability.

Central to this has been a shift toward increased diversification. Across both SAERI and its subsidiary, SAERI (Falklands) Ltd, we have expanded our portfolio of commissioned research, consultancy and data services. The establishment of South Atlantic Laboratories Ltd marks an important milestone in this journey, creating new opportunities to apply our scientific expertise while generating more stable, unrestricted income streams.

Encouragingly, these efforts have not come at the expense of scientific excellence. SAERI continues to deliver high-quality, impactful research, supporting policy, conservation and sustainable management across the South Atlantic and beyond. Our growing cohort of early-career researchers and students remains central to this success, reinforcing our role in developing the next generation of environmental scientists.

This year has also highlighted the importance of strong partnerships. Collaboration with government, industry, and international research organisations continues to underpin our work and amplify our impact.

I am immensely proud of how the organisation has evolved. The professionalism, adaptability and commitment of our staff, supported by effective governance and leadership, have positioned SAERI well for the future.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence: more resilient, more diverse in our income, and firmly focused on delivering world-class environmental science from the Falkland Islands.

You can support us directly. If you do, your funding will reach our scientists in the Falkland Islands and extend our work. Please join us in making a real impact through science for our community.

C. Peter Judge MBE,
Chairman of the Board



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S STATEMENT

This year has been one of resilience, ambition and confidence in SAERI's future. In an increasingly competitive and uncertain international funding landscape, we have not only sustained delivery, we have strengthened our foundations and expanded our reach.

Global grant funding continues to tighten, with heightened competition and shifting priorities across major donors. Rather than retreat, we have responded strategically. We have broadened our income base through commissioned research, consultancy, and data services; strengthened partnerships with government and industry; and enhanced the role of unrestricted income in supporting innovation and institutional development. Our subsidiary, SAERI (Falklands) Ltd, remains central to this resilience, enabling investment in infrastructure, technology, and scientific leadership.

2024/25 has also been marked by outstanding scientific achievements. From advancing freshwater climate baselines under DPLUS206 to informing sustainable fisheries through DPLUS168 seal-fishery research, from the first ever tracking of Southern Giant Petrels in the Falklands to biodiversity discoveries on the Jason Islands, our projects are delivering real-world impact. Internationally, our marine biosecurity work with South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands reinforces SAERI's reputation as a trusted scientific partner.

These successes are a testament to our exceptional Project Managers and research teams, whose expertise, adaptability and professionalism allow us to deliver complex programmes in challenging environments. They are supported by an outstanding cohort of PhD students whose work on peatlands, seabirds, zooplankton, invasive species and freshwater systems is shaping the next generation of environmental leadership in the South Atlantic.

As climate pressures intensify and ecosystems respond to global change, the importance of applied science has never been greater. SAERI stands at the interface between research and decision-making, ensuring that evidence informs fisheries policy, land management, biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation.

Looking ahead, we are developing an ambitious new five-year strategy centred on financial resilience, partnership growth, and scientific excellence. A key pillar of this future is the Sub-Antarctic Science Facility initiative, a transformative opportunity to elevate research infrastructure and position the Falkland Islands as a leading hub for environmental science.

As climate pressures intensify and environmental risks evolve, SAERI's role at the interface of science and decision-making remains critical. We are now developing our next five-year strategy, centred on income diversification, partnership growth and infrastructure development, including progression of the Sub-Antarctic Science Facility initiative.

I thank our Trustees, staff, partners and funders for their continued commitment. Together, we are ensuring that science from the Falkland Islands continues to inform sustainable management across the South Atlantic and beyond.

Dr Paul Brickle
Chief Executive Officer

"Looking ahead, we are developing an ambitious new five-year strategy centred on financial resilience, partnership growth, and scientific excellence."





MEET THE TEAM

SAERI'S BOARD



C. PETER JUDGE MBE
Chairman



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Trustee



PROFESSOR RICHARD SANDERS
Trustee



MRS TRACY SATHERLEY
Trustee



PROFESSOR CHRIS EVANS
Trustee
(Started June 2025)



DR AMANDINE GAMBLE
Trustee
(Started June 2025)



DR GARY NICHOLLS
Trustee
(Started June 2025)



MISS AMANDA CURRY BROWN
Trustee
(Resigned 14 January 2025)

SAERI'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



DR PAUL BRICKLE
Chief Executive
Officer



DR ALASTAIR BAYLIS
Deputy Director -
Science



ELAINE BOYD
Head of Business
and Finance



OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

Objectives for 2024-2025

June 2025 saw the end of the five-year plan that was launched in 2020, while SAERI marked its 8th year as an independent Charity.

Reflecting on the last five years, we recognise that our first Strategic Plan was ambitious. While many targets have been successfully completed, others are still in progress. While 2024 brought strong progress, our priorities had to shift mid-year toward essential organisational restructuring. Business planning was inevitably deprioritised following the loss of two senior staff members, and our focus turned to securing grant funding and weathering a period of uncertainty. These challenges were layered on top of the pressures experienced during the COVID era. Throughout all of this, our strong governance framework proved invaluable, providing clarity and stability when it was most needed. Looking ahead, establishing a robust general reserve must remain a high priority, particularly given the inherent risks of grant-based income. Despite financial pressures driven by changing economic conditions, global pandemics, and organisational transitions, SAERI has continued to achieve and deliver with remarkable success, demonstrating resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to its mission.

In 2020 five headline objectives were highlighted:

Objective 1 – Pathways to Impact

Objective 2 – Science, Research & Quality Assurance

Objective 3 – Size and Performance

Objective 4 – Business Plan & Reputation

Objective 5 – SAERI (Falklands) Limited (SFL)

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

Objective 1 – Pathways to Impact

As a research organisation operating in a small and remote environment, SAERI faces natural constraints on the number of grant-funded projects that can be developed and delivered at any one time. These limitations inevitably affect the potential for rapid growth in organisational revenue. However, financial scale alone does not reflect the breadth or significance of SAERI's impact.

SAERI has delivered substantial and sustained impact in the area of environmental stewardship. Through its research, data management and advisory roles the Institute contributes directly to evidence-based decision-making and long-term environmental monitoring in the South Atlantic and beyond.

The Institute has significant international presence with active projects and partnerships across the Caribbean, South Georgia, and Namibia as well as collaborative networks extending throughout the European Union, Chile, Uruguay, and other UK Overseas Territories. This global reach is achieved with a relatively small core team and often leads external partners to assume SAERI is a much larger organisation.

In addition to academic and environmental outcomes SAERI delivers a strong positive economic impact within the Falkland Islands. The Institute provides local employment and educational opportunities and attracts visiting students, researchers, and collaborators who contribute to the local economy through accommodation, hospitality, transport, and tourism activities. Taking into account these direct and indirect effects it is estimated that for every £1 invested in the SAERI Group between £10 and £14 is returned to the Falkland Islands economy.

SAERI continues to operate at the intersection of economic impact, academic excellence, and organisational sustainability. Balancing these three dimensions is an ongoing strategic challenge.

Objective 2 – Science, Research and Quality Assurance

Over the 2020–2025 period, SAERI has made meaningful progress against its strategic ambitions, while also learning important lessons about scale, focus and sustainability.

We did not achieve three fully self-sustaining focal areas, and in practice the “ecosystems” strand has been more prominent than anticipated due to the CEO and Deputy Director –Science being established marine ecologists. That said, the original focal areas remain conceptually valid and still offer potential. When the strategy was written, the global funding and policy landscape was very different, and the level of ambition reflected that context. The ambition itself was not misplaced, but moving forward we need to be pragmatic about what can realistically be sustained within a more constrained operating environment.

Notably, SAERI has strengthened its scientific infrastructure by establishing specialised laboratories in Genomics and Sclerochronology, significantly enhancing in-house research capability. These investments position us well for higher-value analytical work and new collaborations.

Income diversification remains a priority. Opportunities such as accredited field courses, modular Master's components, or deeper partnerships with universities to attract students and post-doctoral researchers should be driven by clear strategic purpose; asking not just what we can offer, but why and to what end.

Governance and advisory structures require renewed momentum. The regional Science Committee met infrequently and would benefit from revitalisation. Relationships with the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (MAERI) and St Helena Research Institute (SHRI) remain important. The former warranting particular attention, the latter continued constructive engagement.

Overall, while not all structural ambitions were fully realised, SAERI has built stronger foundations, expanded technical capacity, and is well placed to refine its strategy with clarity and realism.

Objective 3 – Size and Performance

SAERI's size and performance directly influences the scope and consistency of what can be delivered. As a small organisation primarily funded through project-based income, overall turnover fluctuates in line with the timing, scale, and duration of active grants and projects.

Throughout the last 5-years annual income has ranged between approximately £1M to £1.6M. While this represents a strong level of activity, it remains below the long-term target turnover of £3 million. The impacts of Covid and the subsequent global economic downturn significantly affected the funding landscape over the five-year strategic period and contributed to these constraints.

Despite this volatility, SAERI has maintained a relatively stable workforce, with staff numbers ranging between 12 and 18, including 5 to 6 tenured positions. Overall staff retention has remained strong, reflecting careful financial management and a commitment to organisational continuity.

Income recoveries and donations from SFL have increased, supporting progress towards the strategic objective of covering core operational costs. Looking ahead to the next five-year period, there is a clear need to further diversify income streams, review and potentially increase overhead recovery rates, and improve the identification of early indicators of both financial and organisational risk and opportunity.

Organisational size remains a critical consideration. SAERI must retain sufficient capacity to deliver meaningful impact and withstand periods of reduced income, while avoiding excessive administrative burden or loss of agility.

ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES (continued)

Objective 4 – Business Plan and Reputation

SAERI made steady progress under Objective 4, strengthening its organisational foundations and reinforcing its reputation, even if not every ambition was delivered in the way originally envisaged.

Comprehensive annual business planning did improve over the period, with clearer budgeting, forward planning and internal accountability. While not every objective was consistently framed in fully articulated SMART terms or cascaded seamlessly across all levels of the organisation, there has been a marked shift toward more structured planning and performance oversight. The challenge ahead is less about creating new systems and more about sharpening alignment, ensuring that annual priorities, individual responsibilities and strategic direction are tightly connected and measurable.

In governance terms, SAERI has maintained high standards. Board oversight has remained constructive, audit performance strong, and financial procedures robust. Human resources and administrative systems are well documented and systematically applied. Induction processes are in place, policies are reviewed annually, and compliance with financial controls has been consistent. These are quiet but significant achievements that underpin institutional credibility.

Communications have improved, although a fully articulated communications strategy, clearly differentiating engagement with stakeholders, scientific peers and the wider community remains an area for refinement. Reputation has grown through scientific output, partnerships and technical capability, but “world-class” status is an aspiration that requires continued focus, visibility and strategic positioning.

Overall, SAERI has strengthened its institutional backbone. The next phase is about integration, clarity of message and purposeful visibility, building confidently on solid organisational foundations.

Objective 5 – SAERI (Falklands) Limited (SFL)

SFL is a fully owned subsidiary of SAERI, established to engage in commercial activities that not only provide a platform for applying SAERI’s research in real-time but also contribute to the Institute’s financial sustainability by donating profits back to SAERI to cover core costs. The strategic vision for the subsidiary is to ensure that a significant portion, if not all, of SAERI’s core expenses are funded through donations and revenue recoveries. Over the past 5 years SFL has donated £145,000 to SAERI and SAERI has recovered £410,787 from SFL. These are large amounts but only accounts for 12% of SAERI’s income, however this remains an increasing trend.

SFL has become the go-to organisation for Environmental Baseline Surveys & Descriptions, and Environmental Impact Assessments in the Falkland Islands. SFL will continue to diversify its income stream, both within the Falkland Islands and across other Overseas Territories.

A new joint venture, South Atlantic Laboratories Ltd, providing fish and squid ageing services to the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) was set up and recruitment was completed. Work will start in the 2025/26 financial year.

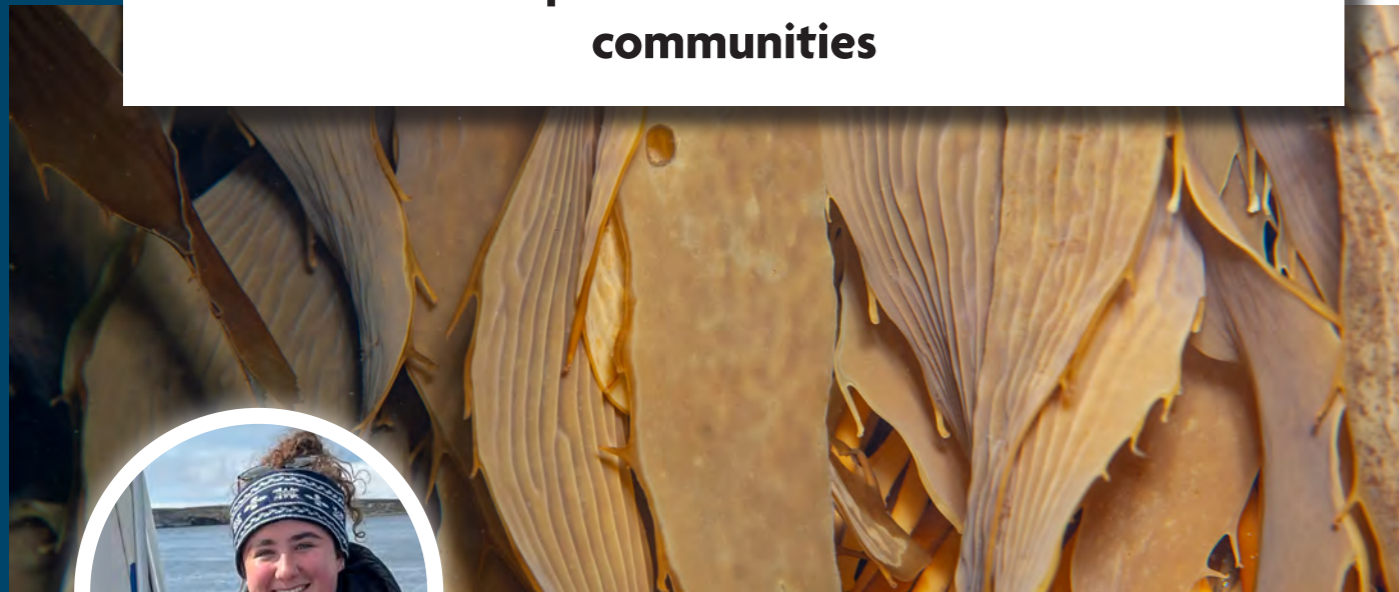


ACADEMIA

© Dani Thompson



PhD: Investigating the threat of non-native hitchhikers on kelp rafts to shallow Antarctic marine communities



Lydia Brackwell

Territories : Sub-antarctic and Antarctic

Start date: October 2023

End date: June 2027

Core Funding bodies: The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Panorama DTP, John Cheek Trust, Shackleton Scholarship Fund

Affiliations: University of Hull, British Antarctic Surveys (BAS), SAERI

OVERVIEW

The Falkland Islands are fringed by dense but poorly characterised kelp forests (*Macrocystis pyrifera* and *Durvillaea antarctica*), which provide ecosystem services valued at ~£2.69 billion, including carbon storage, nutrient cycling, fisheries nurseries, and coastal protection. Kelp are ideal indicators of ecosystem change, yet their biodiversity, ecological function, and resilience to environmental change remain largely unstudied. Lydia's research establishes baseline datasets for kelp-associated biodiversity, investigates community responses to kelp detachment, and evaluates the capacity of key raft-associated species to tolerate environmental change. By integrating field data, CT-scanning, behavioural experiments, and thermal sensitivity assays, the project aims to inform conservation policy and management strategies for Southern Ocean biodiversity under current and future climate scenarios.

Key Achievements

- » Completed a 10-week field season in the Falkland Islands, with the assistance of Shallow Marine Surveys Group, collecting specimens and data to support the first two chapters of the doctoral thesis.

- » Analysed kelp holdfasts, revealing abundant and diverse faunal communities; early results indicate species identity and exposure regime influence community composition.
- » Collaborating with international experts to confirm species identifications and strengthen biodiversity assessments.
- » Developed a thermal sensitivity experimental design under the guidance of eco-physiologist Dr. Simon Morley; UK-based proof-of-concept currently underway.
- » Applied CT-scanning techniques to model holdfast habitat heterogeneity and quantify biodiversity metrics.
- » Presented preliminary field season results at the Marine Biological Association's 2025 Postgraduate Conference and led a half-day workshop on science communication, researcher roles, and professional growth.
- » Secured £14,420 in funding to support continued fieldwork, including renewed support from the Shackleton Scholarship Fund and John Cheek Trust, with additional awards from the Falkland Islands Government Environmental Studies Budget and the Sir Philip Reckitt Educational Trust.
- » Developed expertise in marine fieldwork, biodiversity assessment, experimental design, and professional development.

PhD: Invasive Earwigs in the Falklands: How big is the threat?



Stephen Gillanders

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: 2023

End date: 2026

Core Funding bodies: Falkland Islands Government – Environmental Studies Budget, Seafish (Falklands) limited, Shackleton Scholarship Fund, John Cheek Trust, University of Aberdeen

Affiliations: Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Queen's University Belfast, University of Aberdeen, SAERI

OVERVIEW

First detected in the Falkland Islands in the 1990s, the European earwig (*Forficula auricularia*) is now widespread across urban and wild habitats. While earwigs are considered horticultural pests and a public nuisance, their ecological impacts remain largely unstudied. This project investigates the invasion history, population dynamics, and potential effects of earwigs on native fauna and flora, addressing questions such as distribution limits, invasion origins, and changes in invertebrate community composition associated with earwig presence. The research integrates field surveys, specimen collection, DNA analysis, and phenological monitoring to provide the first comprehensive assessment of this invasive species in the Falklands.

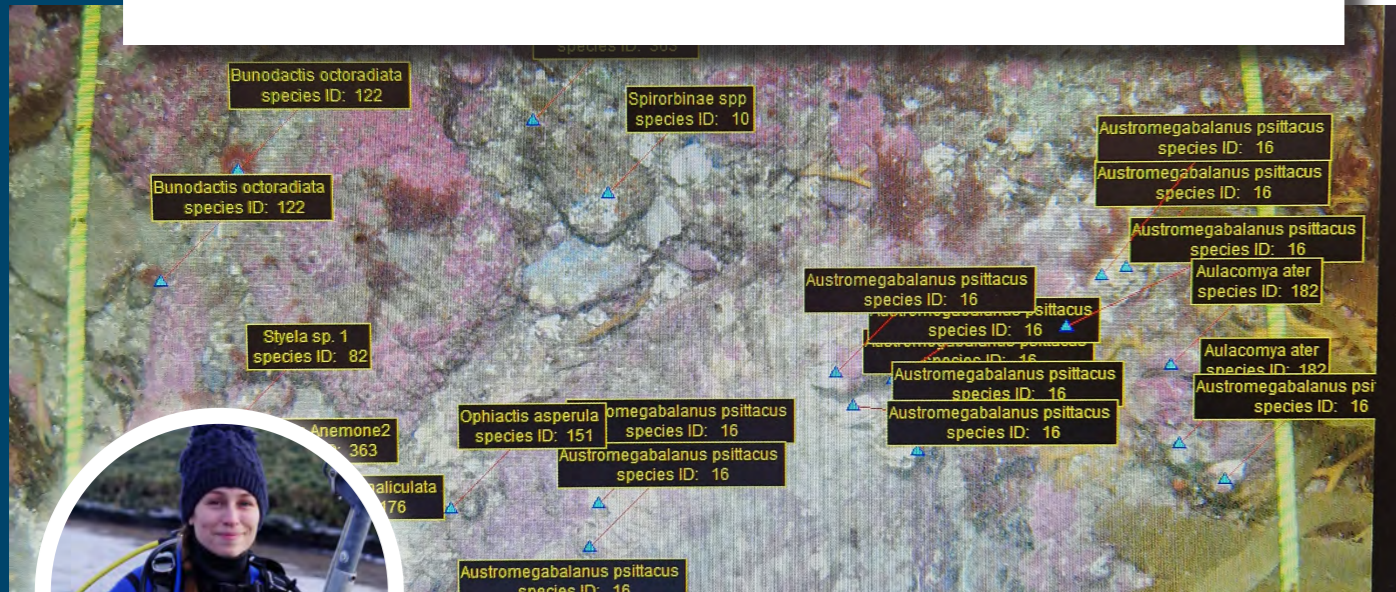
Key Achievements

- » Completed all fieldwork for the project, sampling a total of 426 locations and collecting 1,481 earwigs, alongside 14 months of phenological data.
- » Presented project findings at the International Congress of Entomology.

- » Initiated specimen processing and analysis, including sending samples from the second field season to the UK for identification and DNA extraction.
- » Investigated ecological impacts of earwigs on native invertebrate communities, identifying which groups may be most affected by their presence.
- » Explored the invasion history of earwigs in the Falklands, contributing to understanding of their origin and spread.
- » Engaged with local perspectives on earwigs, highlighting their role as an emblematic, if controversial, component of Falkland's invertebrate fauna.
- » Developed skills in field entomology, invertebrate ecology, biodiversity monitoring, and molecular analysis.



PhD: Shallow Sub-tidal Ecology and Biogeography of the Falkland Islands



Amy Guest

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: February 2021

End date: 2027

Core Funding bodies: Falkland Islands Government - Community Development Scheme (FIG CDS), John Cheek Trust, RBC Ltd., Shackleton Scholarship Fund

Affiliations: University of Aberdeen, SAERI

OVERVIEW

This project investigates the ecology and biogeography of shallow sub-tidal ecosystems in the Falkland Islands, integrating field surveys, genetic analyses, and multi-disciplinary collaborations. By combining DNA barcoding of key species with in situ ecological observations, the research aims to characterise population connectivity, community composition, and biodiversity patterns, contributing to the understanding of sub-tidal ecosystem function and resilience in the region.

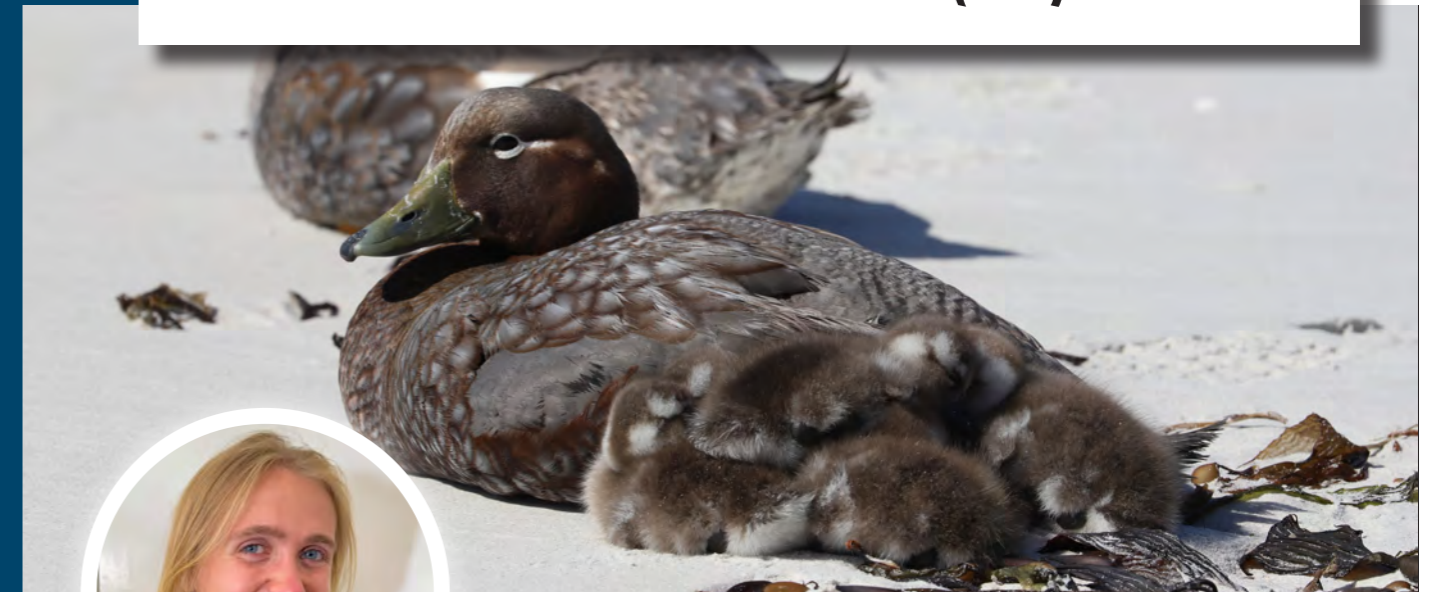
Key Achievements

- » Completed four months of laboratory work at the University of Aberdeen, extracting DNA from 214 starfish tissue samples collected across Chile and the Falklands, and generating genetic barcodes for the 'Phylogeography' chapter.
- » Used traditional 'salting out' DNA extraction, gel electrophoresis, DNA purification, and bespoke barcoding kits to process all samples.



- » Joined Research Vessel Dagon as a local observer, collaborating with scientists from the University of Western Australia and Kelpie Geoscience to study seafloor ecology and oceanography at the Falkland Escarpment.
- » Co-hosted two volunteers, Jessica and Molly, assisting with counting invertebrates in extensive quadrat photography from field surveys.
- » Attended the annual Aberdeen Biological Sciences Postgraduate Conference online, engaging with other PhD students and presenting project progress.
- » Developed skills in marine fieldwork, molecular biology, deep-sea research, and scientific collaboration.

PhD: Ecology of the Falkland Steamer Duck (FSD)



Alix Kristiansen

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: November 2022

End date: November 2025

Core Funding bodies: Deakin University, Falkland Islands Government - Environmental Studies Budget, Shackleton Scholarship Fund

Affiliations: Deakin University, Ghent University, SAERI

OVERVIEW

Falkland steamer ducks (FSD) are one of four steamer duck species, but their ecology remains poorly understood, with most previous research focusing on morphology. This project investigates FSD population size, breeding success, habitat use, and trophic ecology, combining field observations, phenology monitoring, DNA analysis, and stable isotope analysis. By integrating these approaches, the research aims to determine breeding areas, assess habitat quality, and understand dietary variation across age, sex, and location, providing critical insights for species management and conservation.

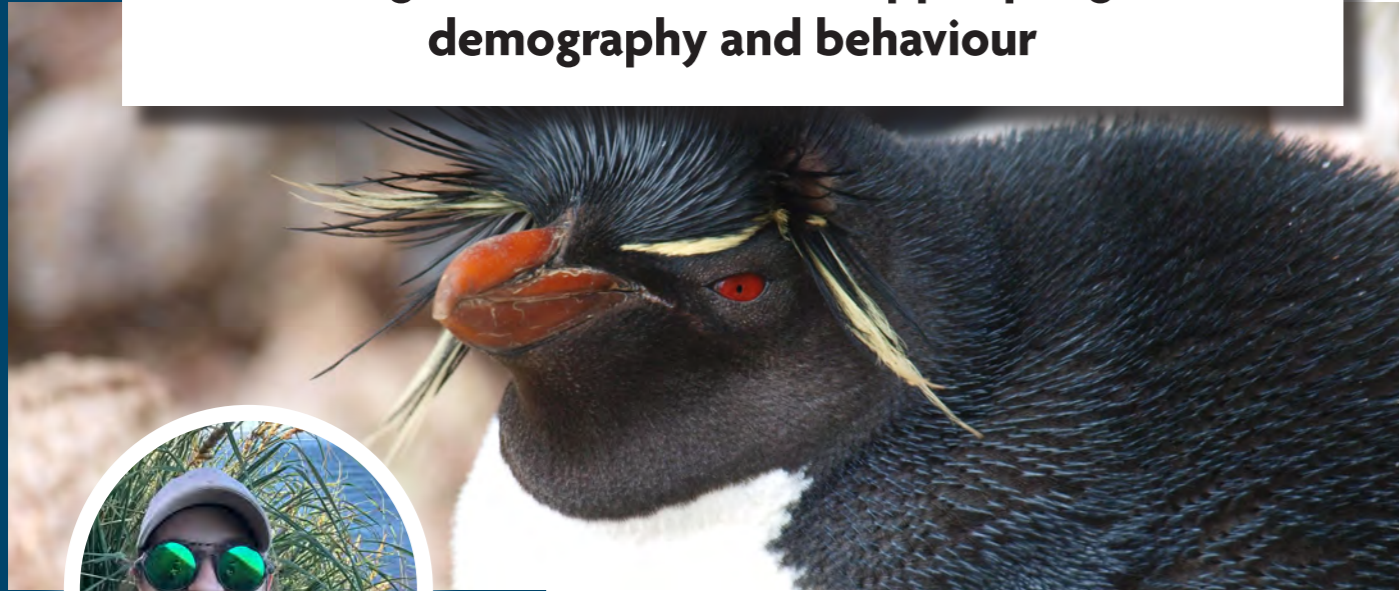
Key Achievements

- » Completed all laboratory work and advanced data analysis for multiple project chapters.
- » Successfully transferred 51 scat samples to the Roslin Institute for DNA extraction and preparation, and collaborated with Liege University to process 182 additional samples, totalling 214 samples for the diet chapter.

- » Prepared samples for stable isotope analysis to investigate temporal and spatial variation in FSD diet, with potential differentiation by age, sex, and location.
- » Analysed phenology monitoring data from the 2023-2024 austral summer, contributing to understanding breeding success and activity patterns.
- » Identified environmental factors influencing behaviour, including distance to ponds, kelp, and roads, and their impact on the FSD activity budget.
- » Drafted manuscripts for multiple chapters and continually updated analyses in preparation for publication.
- » Developed skills in laboratory techniques, molecular ecology, stable isotope analysis, field ecology, and ecological data analysis.



PhD: Impacts of anthropogenic environmental change on southern rockhopper penguin demography and behaviour



Diane Pavat

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: October 2024

End date: March 2028

Core Funding bodies: QUADRAT/NERC
Additional funding from Falkland Islands Government – Environmental Studies Budget, Shackleton Scholarship Fund, Watt Fund (Aberdeen)

Affiliations: University of Aberdeen, SAERI

OVERVIEW

Southern rockhopper penguins (*Eudyptes chrysocome*) in the Falkland Islands have undergone dramatic declines, with environmental variability—such as sea temperature shifts and prey availability—driving changes in diet, foraging behaviour, and population dynamics. This project investigates how these environmental changes affect multiple colonies, integrating over 10 years of archival data with new fieldwork using biologging (GPS and time-depth recorders), stable isotope analysis, and demographic monitoring. The research aims to identify drivers of behavioural and population change, predict responses under future climate scenarios, and inform marine spatial planning and conservation strategies.

Key Achievements

- » Conducted first field season on Hummock and Saunders Islands (Nov 2024–Jan 2025), visiting the Falkland Islands for the first time and working with penguins for the first time, while also supporting surveys of Magellanic penguins, Falkland Island shags, sooty shearwaters, and short-eared owls.

- » Deployed 17 GPS tags and 11 time-depth recorders; collected blood and feather samples for stable isotope analysis.
- » Began processing 340 archival feather samples to study long-term diet and foraging ecology, starting the laboratory part of the work.
- » Started analysis of demographic and tracking data, integrating environmental variables for modelling population responses.
- » Secured £4,450 in competitive funding from the Watt Fund and Shackleton Scholarship Fund for future fieldwork.
- » Attended Cromarty field training with QUADRAT and specialist Earth observation data training at Space Park Leicester.
- » Visited British Antarctic Survey offices to collaborate with project partners.
- » Attended first Seabird Group Conference in Coimbra, Portugal, and passed first-year viva.
- » Developed skills in wildlife handling, biologging, and seabird field research.

PhD: Sheep vs Sea Lions – Quantifying the human impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and carbon stock of Falkland Island peatlands



Katy Ross

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: September 2021

End date: May 2026

Core Funding bodies: CENTA (NERC), Georgia Seafoods, Shackleton Scholarship Fund.

Affiliations: UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), University of Leicester, Natural History Museum, CENTA (NERC), SAERI

OVERVIEW

Falkland Island peatlands cover ~4,529 km² (43% of land area) and provide significant carbon storage. Land use, including grazing, drainage, and pasture improvement, likely contributes to emissions of ~1,149,326 t CO₂e yr⁻¹, yet no direct measurements have been published. This project quantifies greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions under varying land uses, investigates microbial and organic geochemical drivers of carbon flux, and assesses erosion losses. By upscaling these findings, the research provides insights into carbon cycling, land management impacts, and conservation strategies for Falkland Island peatlands.

Key Achievements

- » Paused PhD to undertake a 2024–25 R&D Fellowship with DEFRA, investigating the feasibility of reducing emissions from lowland agricultural peat in the UK through a transition to paludiculture. This included evaluating emissions reduction potential, engaging with peatland researchers across Europe, assessing crop markets, and estimating land area requirements to meet market demand.

- » Returned to the Falklands in February 2025 to assist with the Rural Business Association Land Recovery Workshop, delivering a two-day session to conservationists, landowners, local government, and researchers.
- » Delivered educational sessions at Peaty Pals and the local secondary school to inspire awareness and interest in peatland science and conservation.
- » Completed two technical reports for DEFRA on emissions reduction potential through paludiculture.
- » Progressed writing and analysis of PhD thesis chapters and papers, incorporating fieldwork, microbial, geochemical, and erosion datasets.
- » Developed expertise in peatland biogeochemistry, GHG flux measurement, microbial ecology, land-use policy, and public engagement.



PhD: Seasonal variations in the zooplankton and ichthyoplankton community composition for the near-shore environment of the Falkland Islands



Rhian Taylor

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: October 2022

End date: March 2026

Core Funding bodies: University of Aberdeen, Fortuna LTD, Darwin Initiative, Shallow Marine Surveys Group, Falkland Island Government (Falkland Island Fisheries, Environmental Studies Budget), Falkland Island Fishing Companies Association (FIFCA), Shackleton Scholarship Fund

Affiliations: University of Aberdeen, SAERI

OVERVIEW

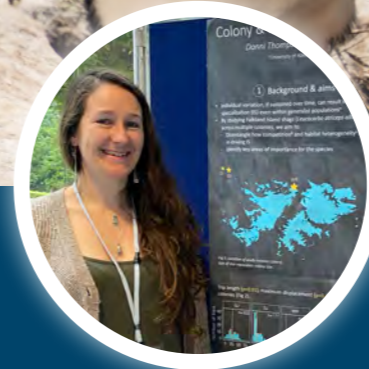
Zooplankton play a critical role in marine ecosystems, transferring energy through the food web, and coastal kelp forests may provide important nursery habitats for larval fish. Despite this, few studies have examined Falkland's zooplankton or their seasonal variability. Rhian's research combines morphological and DNA barcoding approaches to improve understanding of zooplankton and ichthyoplankton community structure, assess seasonal changes, generate a reference database for the Falklands, and explore phylogenetic relationships in closely related species such as the rock cod genus *Patagonotothen*. This work provides foundational data on Falkland's marine biodiversity and predator-prey dynamics.

Key Achievements

- » Completed the first full year of lab-based PhD research at the University of Aberdeen, focusing on DNA barcoding to identify zooplankton and ichthyoplankton species.
- » Updated project objectives to include a dedicated chapter on the *Patagonotothen* genus, addressing morphologically identical larvae through phylogenetic analyses.

- » Identified multiple chaetognath predator species previously grouped as a single morphospecies, refining understanding of zooplankton community structure.
- » Generated new DNA barcode records for Falkland's species, including some species represented for the first time in the global database.
- » Recorded rare taxa, including mantis shrimp larvae (Stomatopoda), not previously documented in the Falklands.
- » Analysed community composition and seasonal patterns, confirming distinct seasonal groupings in the zooplankton community.
- » Conducted phylogenetic analyses of closely related species, providing insights into species relationships and highlighting regions requiring further investigation.
- » Progressed analysis and writing in preparation for final PhD submission, transitioning focus from laboratory work to synthesis and interpretation.

PhD: Drivers of individual foraging behaviour specialisation in a model seabird, the Falkland Islands Shag (*Leucocarbo atriceps albiventer*)



Danni Thompson

Territories : Falkland Islands

Start date: October 2022

End date: March 2027

Core Funding bodies: QUADRAT/NERC

Affiliations: University of Aberdeen, SAERI

OVERVIEW

Individual variation in behaviour is a key driver of ecological and evolutionary processes and has important implications for species conservation. This project investigates how intraspecific competition and environmental variation influence individual specialisation in foraging behaviours of Falkland Islands shags (*Leucocarbo atriceps albiventer*).

Using GPS and time-depth recorders, alongside dietary analyses of regurgitates, stable isotopes, and DNA metabarcoding, the research quantifies individual foraging locations, dive behaviours, and diet composition. Data are integrated with extrinsic environmental factors in advanced statistical models to identify the drivers of individual specialisation. Tracking data are also used to highlight key areas of ecological importance, providing insights for marine spatial planning and conservation management. Understanding the consistency and plasticity of individual foraging strategies will clarify how behavioural differences affect survival, reproductive success, and population-level vulnerability to anthropogenic threats.





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1 July 2024– 30 June 2025 (in alphabetical order)

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9. Moya, F., Hernández, J., Suazo, M.J., Saucède, T., Brickle, P., Poulin, E. and Benítez, H.A. (2024). Deciphering the hearts: geometric morphometrics reveals shape variation in *Abatus* sea urchins across subantarctic and Antarctic seas. *Animals*. 14(16), p.2376.
10. Mystikou, A., Asensi, A.O., Peters, A.F., Kytinou, E., Amin, S.A., Brickle, P., van West, P. and Küpper, F.C. (2024). Rediscovery of the rare *Cladochroa chnoosporiformis* Skottsberg from the Falkland Islands and its merger with *Utriculidium durvillei* Skottsberg. *Botanica Marina*. (0).
11. Pillar, H.R., Hetherington, E., Levin, L.A., Cimoli, L., Lauderdale, J.M., van der Grient, J.M., Johannes, K., Heimbach, P., Smith, L., Addey, C.I. and Annasawmy, P. (2024). Future directions for deep ocean climate science and evidence-based decision making. *Frontiers in Climate*. 6, p.1445694.
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14. Sequeira, A.M., Rodríguez, J.P., Marley, S.A., Calich, H.J., Van Der Mheen, M., VanCompernelle, M., Arrowsmith, L.M., Peel, L.R., Queiroz, N., Vedor, M. and Da Costa, I., et al. (2025). Global tracking of marine megafauna space use reveals how to achieve conservation targets. *Science*. 388(6751), pp.1086–1097.
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ENVIRONMENTAL DATA SOLUTIONS

FALKLAND ISLANDS FOCUS

In 2025, SAERI's EDS Centre provided key services to FIG and the wider Falkland Islands, including:

- » Weather station infographic provision – Providing the Environment Department monthly infographics related to weather data for publication on the FIG website.
- » Supporting the establishment of the Environment Department's weather station network, replacing Weddell Island data logger and providing download training on Bleaker Island.
- » Agricultural mapping support – Providing GIS services to the Department of Agriculture, including updating farm boundaries and source-to-market travel analysis on meat production.
- » Expanding the application of UAVs for environmental monitoring and research. This includes the purchase of more capable UAVs and better quality photogrammetry, thermal and LIDAR cameras, and refining work flows for data processing.
- » Improving stability and security of the Falkland Islands Data Portal – following a period of downtime, IP address relaying was reviewed and resolved to get the data portal back online. Rate limiting introduced to block IP addresses making excessive requests; likely bots. Automated removal of fake user accounts from data portal. Updating of SSL security certificate.
- » Employment of a GIS apprentice – developing local skills in data management, linux, python and GIS.
- » Regular updates of continuous datasets – predominantly the AIS data received from Sure and Weather data downloaded from the weather station at the Department of Agriculture.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

SAERI's EDS Centre has continued to expand its international reach, supporting multiple UKOTs and global initiatives:

- » St. Helena Data Portal – With JNCC funding, SAERI are hosting St. Helena data via the Falkland Islands' data portal, strengthening technical capacity and data sharing across the region.
- » EMODNet Anguilla – Providing GIS and data management expertise, including the development of customised training materials.
- » NIMPA+ Data Portal and WebGIS delivered – NIMPA+ have received a data portal following the Falkland Islands' model, supporting data sharing, transparency and collaborative working across the region.
- » Ongoing NIMPA+ GIS support – Provision of mapping support for reports as well as the utilisation of NAMCOB's new SMART monitoring application for the NIMPA islands.
- » Delivered basic GIS training in Namibia – QGIS training delivered to attendees and partners of the NIMPA+ conference, held in Windhoek, Namibia.
- » Knowledge Exchange Platform – A virtual forum where GIS practitioners from SAERI-affiliated projects share expertise and best practices through monthly discussions and collaborative initiatives.
- » Data sharing collaboration with HX Expeditions – HX Expeditions are providing CTD data from their ships that operate in the Antarctic region, which are accessible via the Falkland Islands data portal.



DATA MANAGER Scott Leadbetter

Scott Leadbetter joined SAERI in April 2025 as a GIS Officer and Database Manager.

He holds a first-class honours degree in Geography from the University of Birmingham, awarded in 2018. Since then, Scott has built extensive experience in GIS roles across the Civil Service and Local Government, including positions with the Ministry of Defence and Forest Research. His work has focused on drawing insights from spatial and non-spatial datasets to support informed and positive decision-making.

Scott is excited to take on this new challenge and looks forward to collaborating with Data Portal users both in the Falkland Islands and internationally.

SCIENCE AT SAERI



“By investing in technology, building skills locally, and strengthening partnerships internationally, SAERI continues to ensure that science from the Falklands informs decision-making and conservation on a global stage.”



DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE REPORT

It gives me great pleasure to reflect on another period of growth, innovation, and impact for SAERI. From our base in the Falkland Islands, we have continued to deliver science that not only advances global understanding but also directly supports local decision-making, conservation priorities, and sustainable resource management.

Climate-related impacts are increasingly shaping our research priorities. The Falklands are becoming drier, with ponds and lakes drying out for the first time in living memory. To address this, SAERI is establishing a freshwater baseline using satellite imagery and field monitoring to assess risks to water security and biodiversity. In parallel, our peatland carbon project is measuring greenhouse gas fluxes at over twenty sites. This research, part of a large collaborative partnership, will enable us to better understand the current state of Falkland Islands peatlands, and will ultimately inform any future national carbon accounting schemes. The dieback of diddle-dee heathlands – critical for soil stability and grazing – has also become a pressing concern. SAERI is trialling remote sensing methods to detect affected areas and assess environmental drivers, providing the basis for management strategies to better understand the scale and drivers of dieback.

Internationally, SAERI is working with the British Antarctic Survey to reduce the risk of invasive marine species reaching South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Monitoring vessels in Stanley and testing the tolerance of native species to SGSSI conditions will strengthen biosecurity measures for these globally significant waters. Meanwhile, our Environmental Data Solutions Centre continues to expand, delivering agricultural mapping in the Falklands, hosting the St Helena Data Portal, and providing training and GIS support in Namibia and Anguilla.

While this brief summary is only a snapshot of SAERI's amazing year in science, what unites all our work is a commitment to applied science, innovation, and collaboration. By investing in technology, building skills locally, and strengthening partnerships internationally, SAERI continues to ensure that science from the Falklands informs decision-making and conservation on a global stage.

This year has shown once again the vital role that SAERI plays as a science hub for the South Atlantic. Our research is not abstract: it informs fisheries policy, guides land management, protects wildlife, and prepares communities for a changing climate. I am grateful to our staff, partners and funders for their dedication and support, without which none of this would be possible. Together we are ensuring that science from the Falklands continues to resonate far beyond these shores.

Dr Alastair Baylis
Deputy Director – Science

© Shallow Marine Surveys Group

Tracking the movements of Falkland Islands Southern Giant Petrels (DPL00080)

Territories : Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: Funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus Local

Project Partners: Oregon State University (OSU)

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/understanding-wildlife-population-connectivity-and-potential-routes-of-disease-transmission-dpl00080/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Alastair Baylis



PROJECT OFFICER (OSU)
Dr Rachael Orben

OVERVIEW

The Falkland Islands are home to >40% of the global Southern Giant Petrel population and they are a common sight from land, as they soar along the coast looking for food. Like albatrosses, Southern Giant Petrels forage for fish and squid, but they also are adept predators and play a key role in food webs as scavengers. Their ability to quickly travel long distances and preference for eating dead things makes them likely to play a role in disease transmission. However, the Falkland Islands Southern Giant Petrel population remains virtually unstudied.

With support from the UK Government Darwin Plus Local scheme, we undertook a scoping study to develop methods to track the movements of Southern Giant Petrels. By deploying satellite tags to monitor the movements of Southern Giant Petrels at-sea, we hoped to better understand the connectivity of the world's largest population of Southern Giant Petrels, both within the Falkland Islands, and between the Falklands, South America and the Southern Ocean. In turn, this information will inform the potential role of Southern Giant Petrels in disease transmission and as key scavengers.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Deploy satellite tags to monitor the movements of Southern Giant Petrels at-sea to inform the potential role of Southern Giant Petrels in disease transmission and as key scavengers.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The first challenge was of course, catching Southern Giant Petrels. While in South Georgia you can easily approach Southern Giant Petrels, in the Falklands they are very wary of humans – especially humans carrying satellite tags. It took some trial and error, but by targeting efforts where Southern Giant Petrels were feeding on carcasses we were able to approach and capture birds effectively with minimal disturbance.

In total, we deployed 10 satellite tags as part of the scoping study (Fig 1). As expected, SGPs showed short-localized movements within the Falklands archipelago, with individuals foraging across East and West Falkland. Unexpectedly, we also documented multiple, often long-distance, pelagic foraging trips over the extent of the Patagonian shelf, including potential land-based foraging on the South American coast. As wide-ranging scavengers, the findings highlight Southern Giant Petrels are likely to play a significant role in connecting wildlife populations, both within the Falklands, and between the Falklands and South America. The pilot study supports the development of a larger HPAI-focused study on avian scavengers, which is planned to commence in the 2025/26 summer season. This research was funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus Local scheme. We're indebted to Megan Tierney for providing support and expertise in fieldwork.

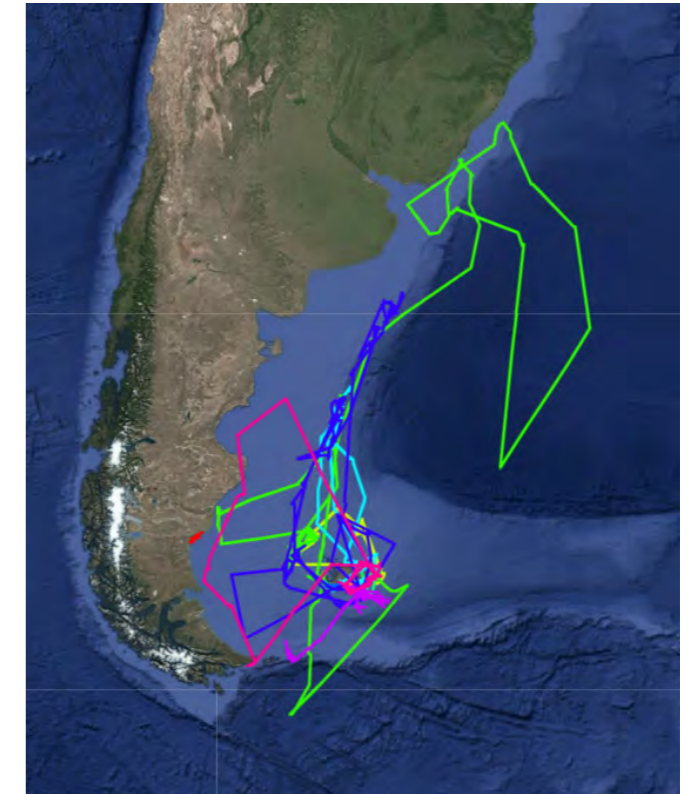


Figure 1 - We tracked the movements of 10 Southern Giant Petrels from the Falkland Islands – the first time the species has been tracked in the Falklands! View the interactive map at the following link: <https://my.wildlifecomputers.com/data/map/?id=673353f013a54786680d888a>

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- » Very first tracking of Southern Giant Petrels in the Falkland Islands!
- » 10 tags successfully deployed.
- » The findings highlight Southern Giant Petrels are likely to play a significant role in connecting wildlife populations, both within the Falklands, and between the Falklands and South America.



Survey of Elephant and South Jason Islands for burrowing seabirds and plants (DPL00098)

Territories : Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: Funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus Local



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Alastair Baylis



PROJECT PARTNER
Simon Browning



PROJECT PARTNER
Naomi Cordeiro (Green Hound LTD)

OVERVIEW

The Falkland Islands remote tussac islands are near-pristine terrestrial habitats, harbouring significant biodiversity. However, these wildlife refugia's are at risk from a drying climate and increased prevalence of wildfires. Many of these publicly owned treasures have not been systematically surveyed. Therefore, we lack knowledge of what is being protected, or at risk of being lost.

We will undertake the first systematic population surveys of prions and petrels at two important national nature reserves, Elephant Jason Island and South Jason Island.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » Undertake systematic surveys of near-pristine and remote tussac islands.
- » Gather ecological data to inform conservation priorities.
- » Support long-term management and protection of these sensitive habitats.



YEAR IN REVIEW

During December 2024, a team of nine researchers undertook a 2-week expedition to survey Elephant and South Jason Island. The aims of the survey were to undertake a systematic survey burrowing seabirds, aided by a bird detection dog. We also undertook a plant survey, and will create high-resolution 3D maps of the islands – all providing baseline data in support of management and conservation.

During hundreds of km of survey, the team uncovered some significant ecological findings. Both Elephant and South Jason were confirmed to host small breeding populations of burrowing seabirds, including Wilson's Storm-petrels and Thin-billed Prions. However, the team also suspects breeding populations of Fairy Prions and the threatened White-chinned Petrel (based on burrow size), a species of conservation concern – but they were not able to confirm the presence of these species. In addition, both islands were identified as nationally important sites for endemic plant species, with exceptionally rich plant biodiversity.

In particular, South Jason Island was found to support a high density of the threatened endemic Hairy Daisy (*Erigeron incertus*), further underscoring the island's ecological value. The inclusion of a trained bird-detecting dog, significantly enhanced the team's ability to locate and verify seabird burrows. This successful trial sets a precedent for future use of detection dogs in remote island biodiversity surveys, offering a powerful tool for conservation work in similarly challenging environments. This was a rare and privileged opportunity to camp and conduct in-depth fieldwork on these remote islands. The data gathered during the expedition is an important baseline, and aid in the protection of the unique biodiversity of the Jasons Islands Group.

This research was funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus Local. (DPL00098 – Survey of Elephant and South Jason Islands for burrowing seabirds and plants). We are indebted to Aiden and Kim from Seaquest, and to Adam Smyth, Daniel Biggs, Rachael Orben and Megan Tierney who volunteered their time. The expedition team was Simon Browning, Naomi Cordeiro, Rachael Orben, Steve Brown, Megan Tierney, Adam Smyth, Daniel Biggs, Odin Rumianowski, Alastair Baylis, and Missy the bird sniffer dog.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- » **Discovery of breeding seabirds:** Both Elephant and South Jason Islands host small breeding populations of Wilson's Storm-petrels and Thin-billed Prions, with evidence suggesting possible breeding of Fairy Prions and the threatened White-chinned Petrel.
- » **Rich plant biodiversity:** Surveys revealed nationally important plant communities, including high densities of the threatened endemic Hairy Daisy (*Erigeron incertus*) on South Jason Island.
- » **Innovative survey method:** The use of a trained bird-detection dog greatly improved seabird burrow detection, setting a precedent for future biodiversity surveys on remote islands.



Understanding increased Falkland Islands seal bycatch to inform bycatch Action Plan (DPLUS168)

Territories : Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: Funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus

Project Partners: Falkland Islands Fishing Companies Association (FIFCA) and Falkland Islands Government Department of Natural Resources

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/dplus168/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Alastair Baylis



PROJECT OFFICER (SAERI)
Dr Javed Riaz

OVERVIEW

Understanding Seal-Fishery Interactions in the Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands are home to globally significant populations of seals and seabirds, including more than 50% of the world's South American fur seals. Historically, seal bycatch in Falkland Islands fisheries was low, with only 13 incidental mortalities recorded between 1998 and 2016. However, in 2017 interactions in the Loligo squid fishery rose dramatically, with over 140 mortalities in a single season—an increase of more than 900%. Despite the introduction of Seal Exclusion Devices (SEDs) across the fishery, interactions have remained at unprecedented levels and are now also being reported in the finfish trawl fishery. The causes of these increases remain unclear, compounded by a lack of baseline information on seal foraging ecology.

To address this, SAERI in collaboration with DNR-Fisheries and the Falkland Islands Fishing Companies Association (FIFCA), launched DPLUS168: Understanding Increased Falkland Islands Seal Bycatch to Inform Bycatch Action Plans. The project aimed to improve understanding of seal-fishery interactions and deliver recommendations to support sustainable fisheries and marine governance.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » Collect baseline data to improve understanding of seal-fishery interactions in the Falkland Islands.
- » Identify spatial and temporal overlap between seal foraging areas and fishing grounds.
- » Inform management and mitigation strategies to reduce bycatch and support sustainable fisheries.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

- » **Seal-fishery overlap:** Tracking of 74 South American fur seals (Fig. 1), combined with fisheries catch data, revealed significant overlap between fur seal foraging areas and commercial fishing grounds, especially in the southern Loligo Box and western finfish trawl zones. (Fig. 2)
- » **Patterns of interaction:** Analyses of five years of observer data and environmental datasets showed interactions were most frequent in the southern Loligo Box, particularly during high-yield trawls.
- » **Foraging ecology:** Stable isotope analysis identified sex-specific feeding strategies. Males forage at higher trophic levels with broader diets, while females specialise more narrowly. Long-term trends revealed shifts in diet linked to changes in prey availability, fisheries dynamics, and environmental variability.

These findings highlight the complex and evolving nature of seal-fishery interactions. While fur seals appear to exert limited direct influence on the wider marine food web, changing fishery pressures and environmental shifts are altering their foraging behaviour. The project provides critical evidence to guide the development of bycatch action plans and strengthen the Falkland Islands' commitment to sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation.

Seal-Fishery Interactions at a Glance

- » >50% of the world's South American fur seals breed in the Falklands.
- » 900% rise in seal bycatch in 2017 (140+ mortalities in one season).
- » 74 seals tracked >> showed strong overlap with Loligo & finfish fisheries.
- » Males at higher risk: diet shifts tied to fishing pressure & prey changes.

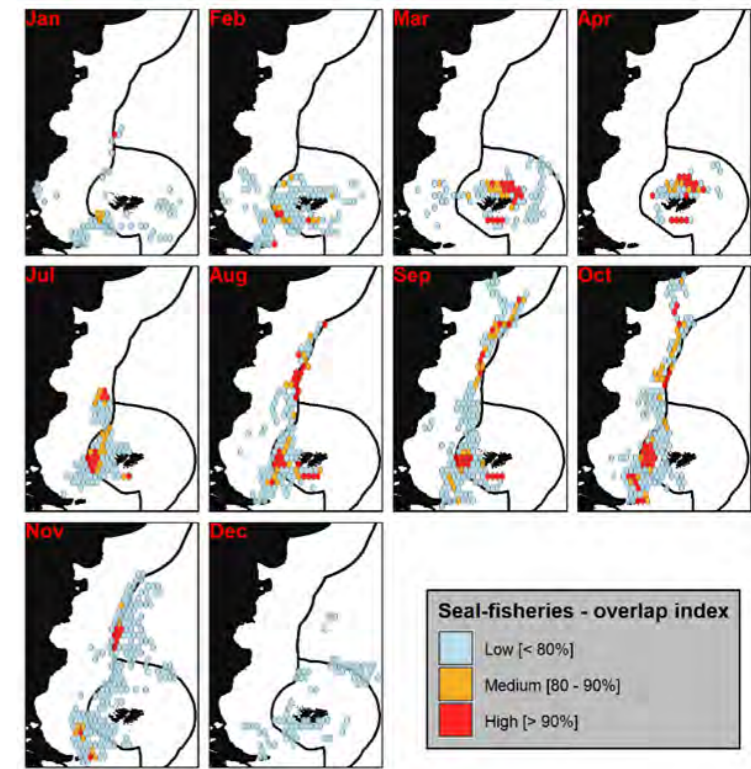


Fig. 2 - Spatial overlap between seal tracking data and commercial fishing activity. These areas are identified as low, medium and high risk for seal-fishery interactions, according to each month of the year. Classifications are based on a quantitative approach integrating the amount of time seals spend and the extent of fishing activity recorded in particular areas.

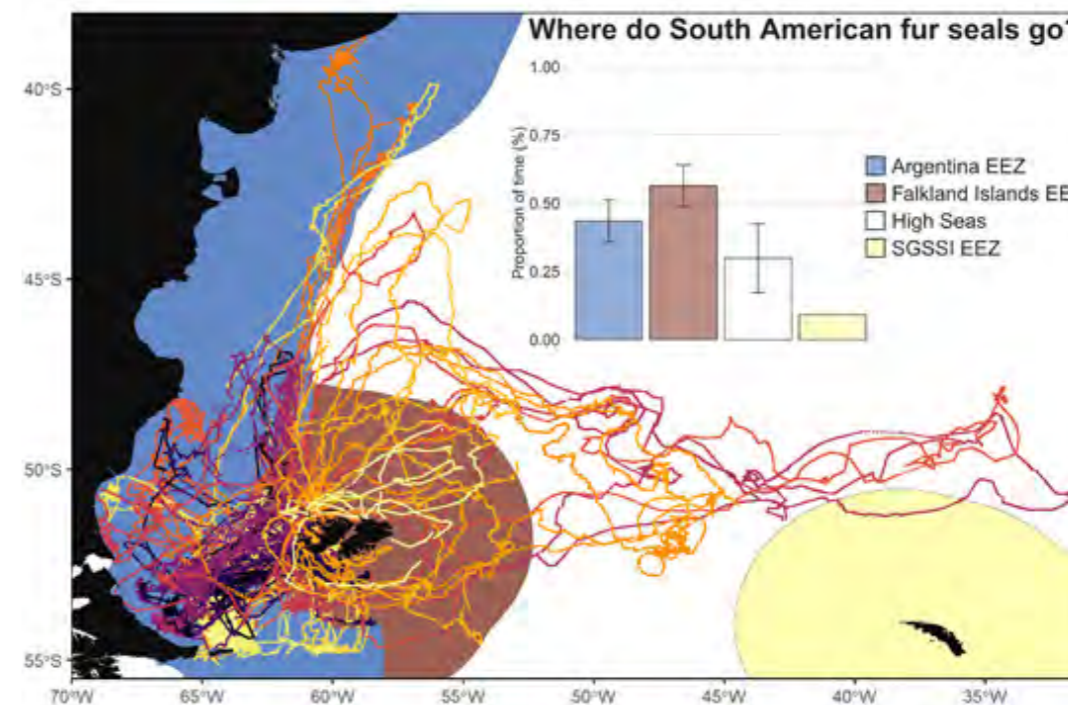


Fig. 1 - Example Map displaying the tracking data of 74 South American fur seals tagged at the Falkland Islands, and how their movements overlap with maritime boundaries in the region.



Climate impacts on FI past, present and future freshwater dynamics (DPLUS206)

Territories : Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: Funded by the UK Government through Darwin Plus and Falkland Islands Government

Project Partners: UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKceh)

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/dplus206-climate-impacts-on-falkland-islands-past-present-and-future-freshwater-dynamics/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Nyein Thandar Ko

OVERVIEW

Small Island territories and nations often lack the capacity to influence climate change at a global level. However, they can play a vital role in local mitigation and adaptation by better understanding risks and impacts on natural systems. The climate of the Falkland Islands is becoming increasingly dry. Lakes and ponds, once stable, are now susceptible to complete desiccation, an unprecedented phenomenon until recently. This was evidenced during SAERI's DPLUS116 project (2020–2022) through fieldwork and engagement with landowners.

The causes of this drying trend remain uncertain due to limited baseline data but are likely driven by a combination of a prolonged regional drought, affecting much of South America for over a decade and considered the most severe in the last millennium together with the impacts of climate change and land management practices. With clear evidence that the FI climate is changing and already altering hydrological systems, attention has shifted toward water security, adaptation, and mitigation.

Freshwater systems in the Falkland Islands cover extensive areas. They play a critical role in sustaining terrestrial biodiversity, regulating peatland hydrology and carbon storage, and providing water for people and livelihoods. Establishing a freshwater baseline is therefore an urgent requirement for guiding management and policy.

The project seeks to understand how climate change is affecting freshwater systems in the Falkland Islands, past, present, and future. With water security emerging as a growing concern, we are collecting detailed data on soil moisture and surface water, assessing the influence of land use, and modelling future scenarios. Using freely available satellite imagery (Landsat, Sentinel-1, and Sentinel-2; resolution 10–30 m), we are identifying vulnerable habitats and areas most at risk. To support adaptation and resilience, we will also convene a workshop to explore opportunities for improved monitoring and mainstreaming findings into land management and policy.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » Develop a report card on terrestrial climate change impacts.
- » Establish a freshwater baseline using satellite imagery to assess past and present freshwater dynamics (surface water extent and soil moisture).
- » Develop future modelling and scenario projections.
- » Convene an adaptation, mitigation, and resilience workshop.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Fieldwork was carried out at three key freshwater monitoring sites between May and June 2025:

- » Moody Brook – 16 May 2025
- » Malo River – 23 May 2025
- » Long Pond – 10 June 2025

At each site, we retrieved time-series data from BaroSCOUT and LevelSCOUT loggers, which have been recording water levels and pressure since 2022 under the previous SAERI Project - *DPLUS116 - Falklands wetlands and aquatic habitats: baselines for monitoring future change*. These datasets are vital for understanding seasonal and long-term freshwater dynamics under changing climatic conditions. To ensure continuity, new loggers have been installed, enabling us to monitor environmental changes more accurately and assess the resilience of freshwater systems.



KEY STATISTICS

- » Changes in surface water areas across the Falkland Islands from 1999 to 2021 were determined using Global Surface Water (GSW) Explorer datasets (Landsat 5, 7, and 8; 30 m resolution).
- » Sentinel-1 imagery enabled estimation of soil moisture index at ~10-day intervals (2016–2021) across the Falkland Islands and surrounding islands, including Weddell, Bleaker, and Saunders.



Improving risk understanding and protocols for inspection of vessels to mitigate the spread of marine invasive non-native species to South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands

Territories : South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands

Funding organisations: Funded by the Government of South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands

Project Partners: British Antarctic Survey (BAS)

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/improving-risk-understanding-and-protocols-for-inspection-of-vessels-to-mitigate-the-spread-of-marine-invasive-non-native-species-to-south-georgia-south-sandwich-islands/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Siobhan Vye

OVERVIEW

Through surveying vessels, conducting experiments, and holding stakeholder workshops, the project aims to improve understanding of the risk of introduction of marine non-native species from vessels visiting South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and develop risk management options to prevent the arrival of marine non-native species into the territory.

Previous work by SAERI identified the types of vessels that travel to South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) that pose the greatest risk of introducing marine non-native species. This project will build on this understanding by monitoring vessels at the port in Stanley (Falkland Islands), where most vessels bound for SGSSI depart from. The monitoring will focus on biofouling (growth of marine life on areas of the vessel) and vessel biosecurity protocols (how growth and transport of marine life is managed). This information, combined with a review of biofouling risk management worldwide, will generate recommendations for future marine biosecurity for the territory.

In collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey, the project will also investigate the tolerance of marine species native to the Falkland Islands to the environmental conditions of SGSSI to identify if they could successfully establish in the territory now or in the future.

The project will also look to raise awareness with key stakeholders about the risk posed by marine invasive non-native species and the steps they can take to minimise the chance of any future introductions.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » To improve understanding of how the risk of introducing marine non-native species to SGSSI is influenced by vessels' biofouling and ballast water management regimes.
- » To work with stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of marine biosecurity and develop recommendations for improving marine biosecurity for SGSSI.
- » To identify whether marine species native to the Falkland Islands can tolerate the environment conditions at SGSSI and could pose a risk to the territory's marine ecosystems if introduced.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Over the winter, the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands marine non-native species project has been focused on completing the final remaining outputs and data analysis and interpretation. All the data and information collected over the past 11 months is being pulled together to draw useful conclusions and recommendations for marine biosecurity for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The project managed to survey a number of extra vessels and worked with stakeholders to better understanding the constraints and opportunities for marine biosecurity in the region. Furthermore, the project was presented at the Open Science Conference in Pucón, Chile, organised by the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research.

Stakeholder perspectives for marine biosecurity measures

Policy and management measures are much more effective where there is good stakeholder engagement and buy-in. To complement the review of biofouling management policies that had been completed earlier in the project, a workshop was organised to collect stakeholder ideas and perspectives on how feasible different types of measures were for sectors & organisations operating in the region. The workshop was held in person and online, with participants from government, research and tourism sectors. The workshop was well attended, with valuable input and discussions from participants.

Trips to Pucón and beyond

Supported by additional funding from the Shackleton Scholarship Fund and the John Cheek Trust, Project Manager, Siobhan, travelled to Pucón, Chile, to present the findings of the project at the Open Science Conference, organised by the Scientific Committee of Antarctic Research (SCAR). Under the snowcapped Villarica Volcano, researchers from around the globe working in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica gathered to share knowledge, with subjects spanning from the impacts of climate change to the health implications of working in Antarctica.

Siobhan also took part in the Visiting Scientist Programme support through the Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic Fund, spending time on board the National Geographic Endurance to conduct further monitoring for marine non-native species to take place at visitor sites around South Georgia.

The end of the project

In December, the project wrapped up its work and delivered the results of the work and a set of recommendations to improve marine biosecurity to the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- » Delivery of project findings to GSGSSI
- » Attendance at SCAR
- » 13 vessels surveyed
- » 2 experiments
- » One international conference
- » 17 questionnaires returned
- » 2 additional grants secured



Improving Falkland peatland GHG data: understanding carbon sequestration and offsetting feasibility

Territories : Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Falkland Islands Government (FIG)

Project Partners: British Antarctic Survey (BAS), Falklands Conservation, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH)

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/improving-falkland-peatland-ghg-data-understanding-carbon-sequestration-and-offsetting-feasibility/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Rosanne Broyd



FORMER PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
April 2024 - March 2025
Dr Valeria Mazzola

OVERVIEW

The Falkland Islands are home to some of the largest peatland carbon reserves globally. However, climate change and extensive livestock grazing are posing significant threats to this delicate ecosystem. These pressures may reduce the peatlands' ability to capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) through peat formation and could lead to greenhouse gas emissions in certain areas. Supported by Defra and the Falkland Islands Government, this project is analysing carbon dynamics at over 20 sites to identify emission drivers and build a scientific foundation for developing a Falkland Islands-specific carbon code.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » Assess the greenhouse gas dynamics (CO₂, CH₄, and N₂O) of Falkland Islands' peatlands across various locations and times.
- » Gather key environmental and climate data, including rainfall, soil moisture, temperature, and water table levels.
- » Provide a solid scientific foundation for developing a Falkland Islands-specific Carbon Code.
- » Support national greenhouse gas inventory reporting and guide decisions for a future carbon offsetting scheme in the Falklands.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Over the course of the reporting period, fieldwork remained at the core of the project. Since its inception, our 23 flux chamber sites have been visited nearly 200 times, resulting in the collection of over 2,700 measurements to date. Meanwhile, the flux towers distributed across the islands have required ongoing maintenance, but they are now operating efficiently and reliably.

In February 2025, we welcomed the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) team, including Ross Morrison and Chris Evans, to SAERI for an in-depth discussion on project progress and an intense training in flux tower data analysis. This collaboration has led to our first preliminary insights into water and carbon dynamics across key Falkland habitats, including tussac, whitegrass, and diddledee-dominated stands. These initial findings were presented at the Land Recovery Workshop in Stanley on February 6th and 7th. Organised by RGB and Professor Jim McAdam from Queen's University Belfast, the workshop provided an excellent platform to discuss project developments and the potential for a Land Recovery Programme.

In late March 2025, Valeria presented the project's progress to our funders, DEFRA, highlighting the latest results from the flux chambers and drawing comparisons with data from the flux towers. This presentation marked an important milestone in demonstrating the progress of the project and reinforcing the value of long-term data collection.

Unfortunately, we said goodbye to Dr Valeria Mazzola at the end of March 2025, marking the conclusion of her valuable contribution to the project. We are grateful for her leadership during a key phase of fieldwork and analysis. We were, however, delighted to welcome Dr Rosanne Broyd in June 2025, who has since taken on the role of project lead. Her arrival ensures continuity and brings renewed momentum as the project moves into its next phase.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- » Intensive fieldwork including chamber GHG flux measurements, environmental monitoring, Eddy Covariance towers maintenance/data collection, vegetation surveys and collection of peat depths.
- » Specialised training in flux tower data analysis, led by the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), resulting in initial key findings on soil water dynamics and GHG fluxes across three major peatland habitats in the Falklands.
- » Presentation of preliminary findings by Valeria at the Land Recovery Workshop (6th-7th February 2025) and to DEFRA, alongside continued scientific outreach, including radio interviews.



Providing Caribbean Expertise in European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) Seabed Habitats – Phase 5

Territories : Caribbean Region

Funding organisations: European Commission, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

Project Partners: The Finish Environmental Institute (Syke) leads a consortium of 15 partners and subcontractors (including SAERI). On Anguilla, the key partner is SAERI's sister institute MAERI and Anguilla Government.

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/emodnet-seabed-habitats-phase-5-caribbean/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Marcin Gorny

OVERVIEW

Seabed habitat data is critical for effective marine management and conservation, but it is often hard to obtain, standardise, and analyse. Given the importance of habitat data to stakeholders around the world, in the last few decades a concentrated effort has been made to consolidate benthic habitat datasets in a single location with standardised classification system and open accessibility. In Europe, this has been largely accomplished thanks to the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet), a network of organisations who work together to observe the sea, collect and process the data according to the international standards, and make that information freely available as interoperable data layers and data products. The project is being implemented across the European Union and United Kingdom including UK overseas territories and EU outermost regions in the Caribbean. The Caribbean part of the project aims to collate and upload to EMODnet local benthic habitat data, standardise benthic habitat classification systems in the region and build capacity across the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (MAERI) for GIS and marine data management to work towards the long-term goals of EMODnet for making more marine data findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- » Provide Caribbean expertise in the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODnet) Seabed Habitats project by assisting in the development of the Caribbean-focused standardised EUNIS classification system, and in acquiring the best available environmental data layers for the target areas of the Caribbean.
- » Build MAERI's capacity in the area of marine spatial data management and benthic habitat mapping by providing support and training and the establishment of an environmental database to centralise environmental data.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The Marine habitat specialist Marcin Gorny was recruited in December 2024 and started working on data collection, formatting and submission to EMODnet alongside work on review of benthic habitat types in the Caribbean, review of existing habitat classifications and the draft classification schema for the region. Some of this work is described in key highlights.

The EMODnet Caribbean seabed habitat workshop which was suggested and initially planned to be held in Anguilla in June 2025 was moved to May 2026, but the preparations already started. Two visits to Anguilla were carried out by marine specialist, both spanning for about two months, during which the discussions with local stakeholders were held, the local datasets were collected, and the data management and capacity building was also discussed.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Benthic habitat types in the Caribbean

The documentation and the literature review of main types of the shallow water benthic habitat types was prepared listing the types of the habitats, main geomorphological features, types and zones of coral reef and main characteristic of species communities.

Alongside the description of habitat types the review of the classification schemas used in the region was conducted. Throughout the duration of the project, including both Phase IV and V around 100 benthic habitat maps for the Caribbean Region were identified. However, many of these maps belong to map series for example the Nature Conservancy Caribbean Benthic Habitat Maps and thus share the same classification system. Taking this into account, 18 of distinct classification schemas were identified and used in the analysis. All these classification schemas were listed and analysed against the previously identified features and types of the habitats (for example geomorphological types, coral reef zones, species communities etc.). The review comprises also the habitat feature matrix where all the schemas are compared to show which components are used in each of them. From the 26 compared habitat features the most often classified ones were corals and un-colonised sand bottom which were used in all the schemas except for Allen Coral Geomorphic maps. Seagrass, Algae and Rock bottom were also often listed and appear in at least 10-14 classifications. The features used the less often in the classifications include more detailed habitat classes like divisions of corals (hard, soft, dead), artificial classes (for example dredged areas) and any additional information like percentage of cover, species composition. The geomorphological features were also rarely covered in most of the classifications alongside the hierarchical classifications which were implemented at least partially in only a few products. The output of this exercise highlighted the necessity of creating the standardised and hierarchical classification for the Caribbean region.

Draft Classification schema for the Caribbean

One of the main planned outputs of the EMODnet work in the region is developing the standardised classification

schema for the Caribbean tropical seabed habitats together with crosswalks and reclassification of existing products to the EUNIS schema. The initial work on this classification schema was conducted and the first draft results were developed. This work will be continued through the next project phase including consultations with experts and local stakeholders. The results will be presented in the next annual report along with the next steps planned for developing such classification schema.

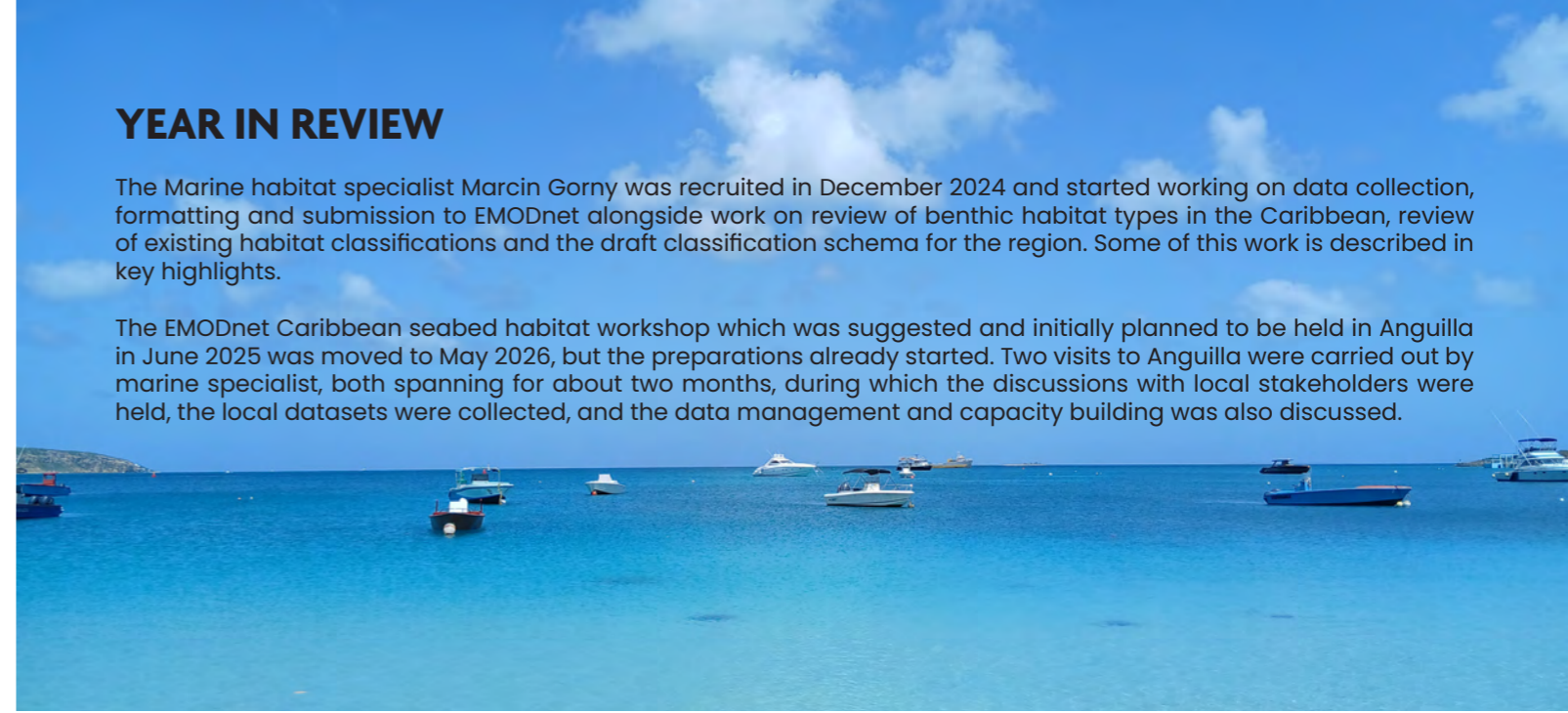
Data Formatting

In Phase V the decision has been made to extend the area covered by the project to the entire Caribbean Region, including areas previously not included or included only partially. Therefore, we put the stress on collecting and formatting data from Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands and western part of the region. Through the year several new benthic habitat products (c. 40) were identified from various sources (databases, portals, reports and scientific papers) from which 15 was already acquired, prepared, and will be uploaded to the EMODnet network at the end of August 2025.

Additionally, we acquired the new high-resolution (10m) mangrove dataset for the entire region which allowed for updating the new Mangrove Essential Ocean Variable dataset by adding also some newly acquired local mangrove data and extending it to the whole Caribbean region including all the islands on the Caribbean Sea and Southern Gulf of Mexico.

MAERI

The Mid-Atlantic Environmental Research Institute is a partnership comprised of JNCC, the Anguilla Community College (ACC), the Government of Anguilla (GOA), and SAERI. Presently MAERI experiences issues due to lack of funding and capacity. In the current work we focused on building the foundation for developing MAERI and transforming it into the research institute capable to lead the EMODnet work in the Caribbean Region. Several topics were discussed during Marine Specialist Marcin Gorny's presence on the island. SAERI CEO Dr Paul Brickle also visited Anguilla in late June and the meetings with Minister and Governor Office were held. The future of MAERI was discussed, data management, research and capacity building exercises were identified and the funding model for MAERI was proposed. Additionally the framework for data management system was discussed.



PARTNER PROJECTS

Strengthening and expanding Namibia's MPA network (NIMPA+)

Territories : Namibia

Funding organisations: Blue Action Fund

Project Partners: Namibia Nature Foundation (Project leader), SANCCOB Blue Marine Foundation, GRID Arendal COSDEC Benguela, NAMCOB

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/strengthening-and-expanding-namibias-mpa-network-nimpa-plus/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Alastair Baylis



PROJECT OFFICER (SAERI)
Scott Leadbetter

OVERVIEW

Namibia's coast hosts one of the most productive marine regions in the world, renowned for its highly productive waters, it is the lifeblood of the entire coastline. The Namibian Islands' Marine Protected Area (NIMPA) is located within an Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area (EBSA) and covers the upwelling centre of the Benguela Current. It is home to globally significant populations of seabirds (such as African penguins and bank cormorants), marine mammals (such as Cape fur seals) and other marine species. Despite being Africa's second-largest marine protected area (MPA) with a surface area of around 9,500km², NIMPA only covers 1.7% of Namibia's waters and is under threat from overfishing, pollution, mining, climate change, ineffective management and a society disconnected from marine values.

To address these issues, a consortium comprising NNF, Blue Marine, GRID, SANCCOB, SAERI, COSDEC-Benguela and NAMCOB is working with the Namibian government to develop and implement a management framework for NIMPA. The project will also develop innovative strategies for sustainable resource use, supporting small-scale fisheries, gleaners and entrepreneurs, improving their economic benefits while protecting one of the world's most important marine ecosystems. The project will also inform the designation of two new MPAs (Namibe and Cape Fria EBSAs) located near the Angolan border in Namibia, setting the stage for a brighter future for the country's priceless marine biodiversity.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

SAERI is a consortium partner, the main focus of our input is on the evidence base for NIMPA and the new MPAs. This includes developing an information management system for the NIMPA. We will also provide specialist expertise in Management Planning, Seabirds and Fisheries.

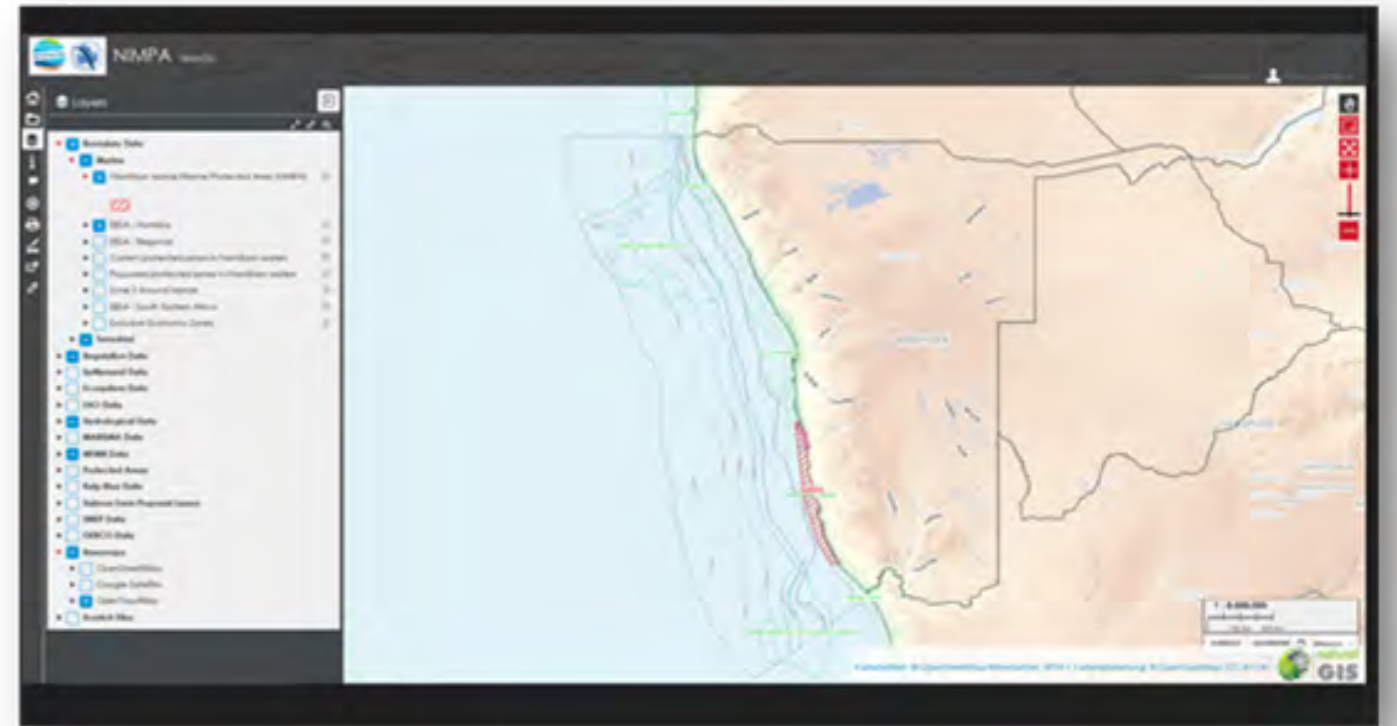


Fig. 1 - The webGIS page developed for NIMPA. The webGIS developed should greatly enhance marine spatial planning and conservation, by providing an interactive platform to explore and discover data.

YEAR IN REVIEW

- » SAERI has advanced the NIMPA data portal and webGIS platform to help managers visualise and access spatial data.
- » The data portal will improve data sharing, discovery, standardisation, and quality control.
- » The webGIS provides an interactive platform to explore, map, and use data for marine spatial planning and conservation decisions.
- » Next steps include delivering in-country training and preparing the hand-over of the portal and webGIS pages.



SELINA: Science for Evidence-based and Sustainable Decisions about Natural Capital

Diddle-dee dieback: developing remote sensing solutions to quantify and understand areas at risk

Territories: Falkland Islands

Funding organisations: SELINA (SELINA receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101060415). Falkland Islands Government – Environmental Studies Budget (ESB)

Project Partners: Leibniz University Hannover leads a consortium of 50 partners (including SAERI). In the Falkland Islands, the key partners in the project are the Falkland Islands Government – Department of Agriculture

Project URL: www.south-atlantic-research.org/selina/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Evan Landridge

BACKGROUND

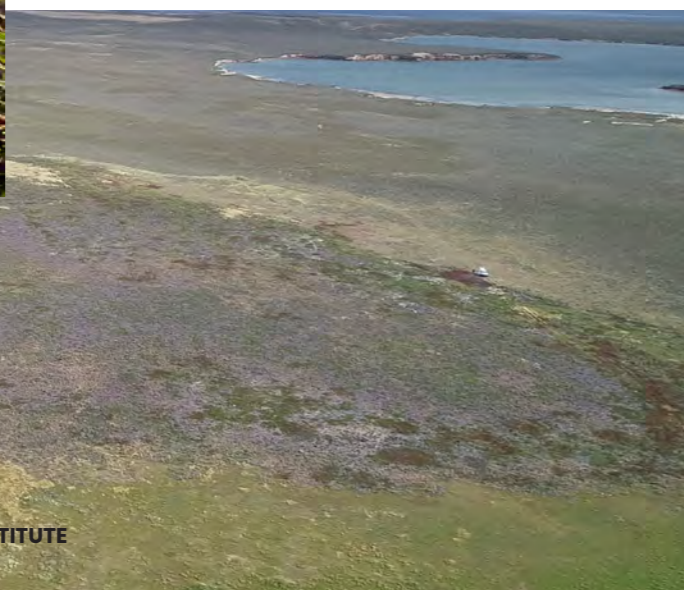
SELINA will provide guidance for evidence-based decision-making that supports the protection, restoration, and sustainable use of our environment. Through a collaboration of experts from 50 partner organisations, SELINA will set new standards for international cooperation to promote Ecosystem Services (ES), Biodiversity (BD) conservation and enhance Ecosystem Conditions (EC).

Providing robust practical information and recommendations to stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, SELINA will pave the way towards the transformative societal change required to achieve the ambitious goals of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the Green Deal.

SELINA receives funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101060415. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the EU nor the EC can be held responsible for them.

SAERI's ROLE

SAERI will be delivering on Work Package 3 and 4 with a strong focus on delivering project outcomes that have impact on government policy and decision making. SAERI will be working closely with the Falklands Islands Government Department of Agriculture to develop new ideas, strategies and science for better land management, ecosystem services that align with the long-term Falkland Island sustainability goals.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

It is estimated that diddle-dee (*Empetrum rubrum*) heathlands cover a quarter of the Falkland's vegetated land area. Diddle-dee provides important ecosystem services such as soil stabilisation and provides habitat for other plant and animal species. In many areas diddle-dee is the main source of feed for livestock.

In previous years farmers and land-managers have reported extensive and expanding areas of dieback in diddle-dee heathlands. The cause of dieback is still unknown but potentially exacerbated by external stresses such as drier soils and changes in rainfall.

Affected areas exhibit a stereotypical bronze/orange colour in the leaves before dying back completely where the entire plant becomes grey and dry. After death, the risk of soil erosion and land degradation increases due to the reduced vegetation cover. The potential flow on effects includes reduced grazing potential and loss of habitat for birds and invertebrates.

Presently there is little understanding of the extent of the issue, its progression over time or appropriate management responses. A coordinated response is required to understand the extent of dieback, factors controlling its progression and temporal trends in its development.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Trial and evaluate the ability of supervised pixel classification of multispectral satellite imagery bands to detect areas affected by diddle-dee dieback. This will include testing the ability to successfully differentiate between healthy and dead diddle-dee as well as other vegetation and non-vegetation classes using predefined classification algorithms.
2. Classified imagery of dieback (and all else) will be compared with existing geospatial datasets such as topography (elevation, slope, aspect, etc) and existing soil datasets such as pH, peat depth and organic matter.
3. Depending on the success of objectives 1 and 2, a model will be developed to identify locations that are at risk of experiencing dieback. This model will be based on the relationships (if any) between dieback and the underlying environmental and topographical results of step 2.

YEAR IN REVIEW

My year in review begins in 2025 with most of my time focussed on the Environmental Studies Budget (ESB) project that aims to map diddle-dee dieback using remote sensing. This project has given me the opportunity to learn how to operate specialist drones to capture and process imagery. As part of the project, I was fortunate to work with landowners and plan a fieldwork trip to the West Falkland Islands to collect ground truthing data. The project has successfully used satellite imagery to detect diddle-dee dieback and compare its occurrence with other environmental features.

The project is now in its final stages, but progress and results have been presented at the Rural Business Association (RBA) Farmers Week. I also had the opportunity to discuss my project and findings with Falklands Radio.

KEY STATISTICS

- » Satellite imagery can be used to classify and map diddle-dee dieback in the Falkland Islands.
- » Mapping results estimate diddle-dee dieback to be occurring on approximately less than 5% of classified land.
- » Diddle-dee dieback is not occurring in response to any one, or combination of, topographical or soil factors.



TRICUSO - (Three Research Infrastructures together: Carbon Uptake Southern Ocean)

Territories : South Atlantic and Southern Ocean

Funding organisations: European Union – Horizon Europe

Project Partners: International consortiums lead by NORCE, including major European ocean observing infrastructures and research institutions, including ICOS, EMBRC, Euro-Argo and partner oceanographic institutes across Europe and the South Atlantic region

Project URL: www.tricuso.eu/



PROJECT LEAD (SAERI)
Dr Paul Brickle

BACKGROUND

TRICUSO aims to improve understanding of the Southern Ocean carbon sink and its role in regulating the global climate. The project seeks to enhance the entire ocean carbon observation “value chain” by developing improved sensor technologies, expanding the number of observation platforms, and strengthening data integration and governance for ocean carbon monitoring. By increasing the density and quality of observations in the Southern Ocean, TRICUSO aims to reduce uncertainty in estimates of ocean carbon uptake and support global climate monitoring initiatives such as the World Meteorological Organisation’s Global Greenhouse Gas Watch.

TRICUSO is a four-year Horizon Europe research project (2025–2028) bringing together leading oceanographic research infrastructures and international partners to transform the way ocean carbon uptake is measured and monitored. The project connects major European observing systems and deploys a multi-platform approach including research vessels, autonomous floats, uncrewed surface vehicles and sensors mounted on ships and racing yachts to expand observation coverage across remote parts of the Southern Ocean.

SAERI’S ROLE

SAERI plays a key role in supporting field operations, providing logistical coordination for the Southern Ocean deployment and facilitating collaboration between project partners working in the South Atlantic region.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The project commenced in January 2025 with a consortium kick-off meeting in Southampton, United Kingdom, bringing together the international partner institutions to establish governance structures and coordinate the project’s scientific and operational plans. Over the first year, project teams developed work programmes across multiple research themes including observation technologies, data integration and the deployment of new sensing systems.

During this initial phase, SAERI worked with consortium partners to support planning for Southern Ocean field deployments, including preparations for instrument testing and ocean observations in the South Atlantic sector. These activities will contribute to expanding observational capacity in one of the least-sampled regions of the global ocean and improving understanding of how the Southern Ocean absorbs and stores atmospheric carbon.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership and collaboration are at the core of SAERI's way of working. Partnerships are crucial for achieving our goals and we greatly value our strong network of global partnerships. At home in the Falkland Islands, and in the countries where we work, we have strong partnerships with in-country organisations and look forward to continuing to work and thrive together.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

In the Falkland Islands, we work closely with government and industry partners, recognising that effective cooperation underpins both our day-to-day operations and the future of our research. Our team provides logistical support and specialist expertise to researchers across the South Atlantic, ensuring that projects are carried out to the highest standard. Working in often challenging environments, we prioritise safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness so that both staff and collaborators can deliver impactful science.

CONSORTIUM PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

We continue to partner and work closely with our consortium projects:

- » **NIMPA+** which is led by the NNF and funded by the Blue Action Fund.
- » **SELINA** (Science for Evidence-based and sustainable decisions about Natural capital) which is funded by the European Commission and led by the University of Hannover.
- » **EMODnet**, an EU funded marine habitat classification project.
- » **TRICUSO** (Three Research Infrastructures together: Carbon Uptake Southern Ocean).

More detail on these can be found in our project pages.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

SAERI is committed to strengthening existing relationships and developing new international collaborations. We have established Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with key partners, fostering a framework for effective cooperation. Notably, three of these MoUs support our active role in developing sister institutes across other United Kingdom Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and leading a strategic alliance in South America. We have also signed a strategic and collaborative MoU with the University of the Republic, Uruguay.



Austral Earth Observation Alliance (AEOA)

SAERI continues to lead the AEOA by providing both the Chair and Secretarial roles. The partnership includes key institutions such as the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Universidad de Magallanes (UMAG) Universidad Santo Tomás (Santiago) and Universidad de Chile.



St Helena Research Institute (SHRI)

SAERI collaborates closely with SHRI, offering expert guidance on GIS and geospatial data management and serves as an advisory member on the SHRI Council.



Mid-Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (MAERI)

SAERI collaborates closely with its MAERI partners—the Anguillan Department of Natural Resources, Anguilla Community College, and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee—to advance the development of the Institute. This collaboration extends to the EU-funded EMODnet project, which has a SAERI Project Manager based in Anguilla from December 2024. This project is being extended till October 2026.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

August 2024 – SAERI attended the SCAR Open Science Conference, Chile

Researchers from the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) contributed to the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Open Science Conference, held in Pucón. The conference is one of the leading international gatherings for Antarctic and Southern Ocean science, bringing together researchers from across disciplines to share new findings and strengthen collaboration within the global polar research community.

SAERI researchers were involved in nine conference papers. These contributions reflected the breadth of research undertaken by the Institute and its collaborators, spanning topics such as marine ecology, predator ecology, ecosystem monitoring, and the links between Antarctic and sub-Antarctic environments. The work presented highlighted how research conducted in the South Atlantic region contributes to broader understanding of Southern Ocean ecosystems and environmental change.

SAERI was represented in person at the conference by Dr Siobhan Vye and PhD student Lydia Brackwell, who attended to present research, engage with international colleagues and participate in discussions across the programme. Their participation provided an important opportunity to showcase SAERI-led research and strengthen existing collaborations with partners working across the Antarctic region. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate SAERI's growing engagement with the international Antarctic research community and the importance of South Atlantic science in informing global understanding of polar environmental change.

September 2024 – Dr Paul Brickle attended PRADO, Uruguay

Representatives from the Falkland Islands participated in the Expo Prado in Montevideo, Uruguay, an important regional agricultural and trade exhibition that brings together government, industry and research institutions from across South America. Attendance provided an opportunity to strengthen links between the Falkland Islands and Uruguayan partners in areas including fisheries, agriculture and environmental science.

Dr Paul Brickle, representing SAERI attended and engaged with several Uruguayan scientific institutions to explore opportunities for collaboration in marine and environmental research. Discussions focused on strengthening scientific exchange, sharing expertise on South Atlantic ecosystems and developing partnerships that support regional understanding of marine biodiversity and fisheries resources. These interactions helped reinforce the Falkland Islands' commitment to international scientific cooperation across the South Atlantic region. This trip strengthened the MoU between SAERI and the University of the Republic. A number of grant ideas were formulated and some studentships.

January 2025 – Dr Paul Brickle attended the launch of TRICUSO, UK

TRICUSO (Three Research Infrastructures together: Carbon Uptake Southern Ocean) is a Horizon Europe-funded international research partnership designed to strengthen marine science collaboration, build research capacity, and enhance data integration across island and coastal regions.

In January 2025, SAERI participated in the inaugural meeting of the TRICUSO consortium, hosted at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton. The meeting marked the formal launch of the Horizon Europe-funded TRICUSO project, bringing together international partners to establish governance structures, refine project objectives, and agree delivery frameworks for the programme.

As a consortium partner, SAERI contributed to discussions shaping the scientific direction and collaborative approach of the project. The meeting provided an important opportunity to strengthen relationships with European research institutions and to position the South Atlantic within a broader international research agenda.

Engagement in TRICUSO reflects SAERI's continued commitment to international collaboration and to ensuring that research from the South Atlantic territories contributes to, and benefits from, global scientific initiatives. Participation in the Southampton meeting reinforced SAERI's role within a major European research consortium and highlighted its growing presence in internationally funded programmes.

March 2025 – Amy Guest, SAERI PhD Student – Exploring the Deep Aboard the RV Dagon

Amy Guest represented SAERI and FIG as a local observer and scientist on four-week expedition aboard the RV Dagon. Working alongside the crew from Inkfish, the University of Western Australia, and Kelpie Geoscience, Amy assisted with deep-sea deployments and retrievals, often in challenging weather conditions. The team explored depths of 3,000–6,000m along the Falkland Escarpment and into the Argentine Basin, using landers equipped with CTDs, eDNA samplers, water collectors, and baited camera traps.

Highlights included observing deep-sea species, such as grenadiers, amphipods, and other invertebrates, as well as witnessing the deployment of the submarine Bakunawa. All the data that was collected data has been shared with the FIG-SAERI IMS-GIS database. Amy will have the opportunity to contribute as a co-author to research papers that will be published in due course.



May 2025 – Evan Langridge attended SELINA workshop in The Azores, Portugal

Evan Langridge, SELINA's project manager attended a Thematic Workshop in the Azores, Portugal, The Workshop focused on integrating ecosystem services analysis from WP3-5 with project partners, stakeholders, and members of the SELINA Advisory Board, and to address decision-makers' needs. The extracurricular activities during the Workshop days will include invitations to the forest services and directorate of the environment, visiting forest-managed areas - forest certification towards sustainability, and altitude peat bogs and remnants of native forest.



June 2025 – Dr Paul Brickle attended the UK Parliament, UK

Dr Paul Brickle from SAERI was invited to speak at a special roundtable discussion in the UK Parliament organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). He joined other leading scientists to highlight scientific work in the South Atlantic and the Falklands, particularly emphasising SAERI's collaborative international research efforts.

At the Falkland Islands Government Annual Reception in Parliament, themed around "The Falkland Islands as a globally significant centre for environmental research and biodiversity", Dr Paul Brickle also represented SAERI and spoke about the Falklands' scientific contribution.



June 2025 – Dr Paul Brickle in Anguilla for the EMODnet Project

Dr Paul Brickle travelled to Anguilla to contribute to the ongoing EMODnet (European Marine Observation and Data Network) Seabed Habitats project and support regional collaboration. During his visit, Paul worked alongside the Anguilla Department of Natural Resources and project partners to review progress on habitat mapping and data collection, while also exploring opportunities to strengthen links with stakeholders in neighbouring islands such as Saint Martin. A key focus of his trip was to identify ways in which SAERI's sister institute, MAERI, could expand its role in the region, building capacity for future research and conservation initiatives. His visit highlighted SAERI's continued commitment to advancing seabed habitat mapping and supporting evidence-based marine management across the Caribbean.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Outreach and education are central to SAERI's mission and long-term vision. By hosting community events, school engagement activities, and internship opportunities, SAERI inspires the next generation of environmental scientists while building local research capacity across the Falklands and wider South Atlantic region. These initiatives not only provide young people with valuable experience and pathways into environmental careers but also strengthen the connection between science and society. By fostering skills development, creating opportunities for hands-on learning, and encouraging participation in research, SAERI helps ensure that knowledge and expertise are cultivated locally, supporting both the community and the sustainability of environmental research into the future.

November 2024 - Year 10 Work Experience: Laura Bates

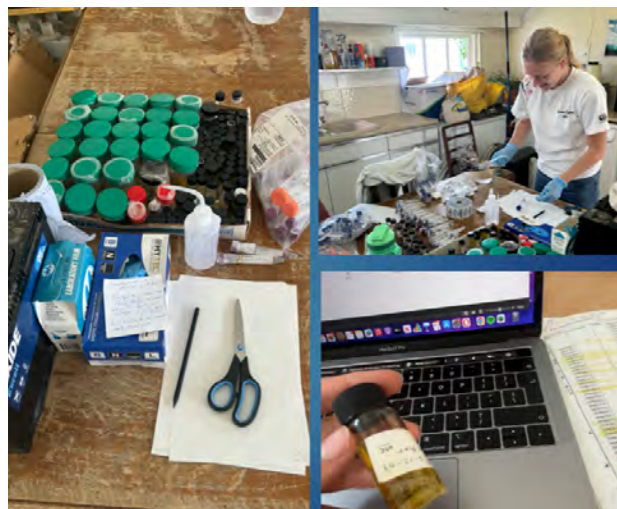
SAERI hosted Laura Bates from the Falkland Islands Community School (FICS) for her Year 10 Work Experience placement. Laura gained experience across several projects, supporting PhD student Amy Guest with marine photo analysis and species identification as well as a fun trip to explore intertidal habitats through rock pooling. She also joined Dr Valeria Mazzola in the field to measure gas fluxes for peatland research and observed Dr Al Baylis demonstrate animal tagging techniques. The week provided Laura with a diverse introduction to SAERI's research.

January 2025 - March 2025 - University of Plymouth Work Placement: Sophie Reeves

Sophie Reeves spent 3 months with SAERI on a work placement as part of her Ocean Science and Marine Conservation degree at the University of Plymouth. Sophie researched Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems (BRUVs), exploring their applications, and reviewing advances such as long-endurance prototypes that could improve marine monitoring. She also processed over 100 biological samples collected from Ascension Island in 2012, which involved repackaging, preserving, and preparing them for transfer to the Natural History Museum in the UK. This experience that developed her skills in data organisation, sample handling, and logistical coordination.

Sophie assisted with kelp rafting experiments and helped test research drones to better understand their potential for environmental monitoring. Each of these activities gave her practical experience in scientific field methods directly linked to climate change, marine ecology, and conservation. She also contributed to SAERI's long-term resources by helping to organise and categorise over 7,000 images in the institute's archive, improving accessibility for future research and reference.

Her placement provided an interesting mix of office based and laboratory work, and field experience, broadening her knowledge of marine and environmental science while strengthening her technical skills. SAERI is proud to support early-career scientists in gaining the practical experience needed to pursue future research and conservation careers.



May 2025 - July 2025 - Cardiff University Internship: Molly Roberts

Molly Roberts joined SAERI for a two-month internship. During this time, she was provided the necessary resources and datasets to progress her dissertation project, which focuses on kelp habitats and their associated macrobenthic assemblages within the Falkland Islands. She developed key skills in ecological data analysis and habitat assessments and practical experience in PhotoQuad software. This analysis of seabed imagery enhanced her abilities in marine species identification and broadened her understanding of benthic community structures, helping to build a solid foundation in ecological research for future work in marine science.

May 2025 - Year 10 Work Experience: Ashan Molligoda

SAERI hosted Ashan Molligoda from Braunton Academy in Devon for his Year 10 Work Experience placement in the Falklands office. Ashan assisted with the Diddle Dee and Freshwater projects, gaining experience in fieldwork techniques such as drone use and freshwater monitoring. He also completed an independent research assignment on South Atlantic marine mammals, developing skills in scientific investigation and communication.

June 2025 - World Oceans Day Outreach Event

To celebrate World Oceans Day 2025, SAERI partnered with local organisations to host a community event at the Parish Hall, highlighting our deep connection to the sea and the importance of marine conservation. The day featured interactive displays, games, hands-on activities, and even tastings of local made toothfish pate, with stalls from Shallow Marine Surveys Group, Falkland Islands Government Fisheries Department, Falklands Conservation, Falkland Islands Fishing Companies Association (FIFCA), Consolidated Fisheries Limited, Falklands Outdoors, and Salmon Free Farming. A highlight was SMSG's showcase of shallow marine creatures, offering a fascinating glimpse into the Falklands' hidden biodiversity. We thank all our partners, supporters, and the local community for making the event both educational and enjoyable.



FELLOWSHIPS

SAERI has a Senior Research Fellows and Regional Research Associates scheme which has four core goals:

- » To secure, for the benefit of SAERI, the skills, advice and guidance of scientists who are in a position to support and promote the institute and its aims.
- » To build research capacity within the region through providing an international platform for OT-resident scientists to engage in research and research outputs and to further develop their environmental science careers.
- » To broaden and strengthen the SAERI network, and forge long-term sustainable collaborations between individuals and institutions.
- » To assist fellows and associates in their search for funding to develop or sustain South Atlantic research (when research falls within SAERI's strategic science strategy) and through logistical support.

Our Senior Research Fellows are renowned international environmental scientists that contribute to SAERI's scientific excellence.

Regional Research Associates are environmental scientists who are resident in the South Atlantic (or in other UKOTs where we work) who have undertaken, as a minimum, an undergraduate degree in environmental sciences. Regional Research Associates have a particular interest in SAERI's focal areas of research, and include students who have undertaken their university research project in collaboration with either SAERI or another Sister UKOT research institute, or UKOT resident students who have completed their degrees and have returned to the region.

In addition, promising early-career scientists, or scientists who are not residents of the UKOTs but have a keen interest in research in the region are Regional Research Associates. SAERI will support Regional Research Associates through regular communications to keep them connected with research initiatives and opportunities in the region and beyond. SAERI will also provide advice on further tertiary education opportunities on request, and will provide a platform for regional research associates to share the research that they undertake more widely.

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOWS:



DR PAUL BREWIN



DR JUDITH BROWN



DR MARTIN COLLINS



DR MICHAEL GOTTFREID



DR MICHAEL HARTE



DR VLADIMIR LAPTIKHOVSKY



DR ALISTAIR LAVERY



DR TABITHA PEARMAN



DR HASEEB RANDHAWA



DR NICOLA WEBER



DR SAM WEBER

REGIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATES:



NAOMI CORDEIRO



DR TERESA DARBYSHIRE



GIOVANNI MANGHI



NESS SMITH

THANK-YOU

We are deeply grateful to all those who have funded, supported and collaborated with SAERI over the past year. Our success continues to be driven by the strength and breadth of our partnerships. These relationships, established through international visits, academic research, conferences, and ongoing professional engagement are vital to advancing our mission.

Our partnerships create meaningful opportunities for research within the Falkland Islands, the wider South Atlantic region, and beyond. We are proud to work alongside a diverse network of researchers, institutions, funders, and supporters, who help us address some of the most significant scientific and environmental questions of our time. With funding and collaboration from more than 60 organisations, we remain committed to delivering high-quality, impactful science through trusted and enduring partnerships.

FUNDING ORGANISATIONS



PARTNERING ORGANISATIONS

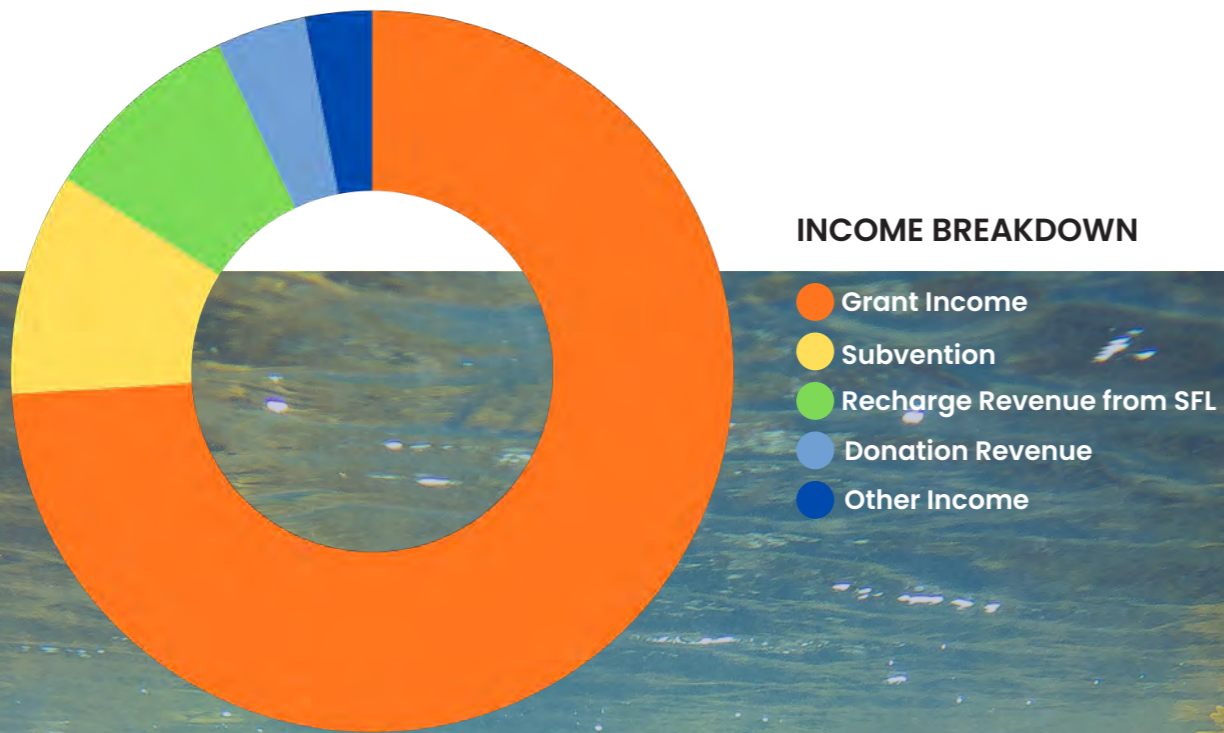


FINANCIAL REVIEW



FINANCIAL REVIEW

This financial review reflects a year of transition within a changing funding landscape, particularly in relation to UK government priorities. While external pressures have influenced project timing and income flows, SAERI has remained financially resilient, supported by strong governance and prudent management. Continued focus on diversifying income, strengthening partnerships, and developing commercial activities ensures the organisation is well positioned to sustain and grow its scientific impact in the years ahead.



PRINCIPAL FUNDING SOURCES

SAERI remains heavily reliant on grant funding, which accounted for 74% of total income during the reporting period. Historically most of this funding has been provided through the UK Government’s Darwin Initiative, however the funding world is evolving. Approximately half of grant income was secured through Darwin, representing around 37% of total grant income.

Increased involvement in EU-funded projects including TRICUSO, SELINA and EMODnet, alongside collaborative work with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, has reduced SAERI’s reliance on a single funding stream and strengthened the resilience of the organisation.

SAERI Group’s expenditure was distributed across multiple geographic regions, including the Falkland Islands, the Caribbean, the South Atlantic, and Southern Africa, aligned with the locations of active project delivery.

Recharge Revenue from SFL

In accordance with the requirement for all inter-entity transactions to be conducted at arm’s length, the year included the following categories of goods and services provided by SAERI to SFL:

- » Staff time and resource charges
- » Equipment usage fees, where charity-owned equipment was utilised for consultancy purposes.
- » SFL’s proportional contribution to Group insurance
- » Shared services fee in line with the existing Operating Agreement
- » Office space usage by SFL consultants, recharged accordingly
- » These arrangements ensure transparency, compliance, and alignment with good governance practices in managing the relationship between the Charity and its subsidiary

Falkland Islands Government Subvention

SAERI is grateful for the continued support of the Falkland Islands Government through its subvention process and its contribution to the Data Centre. This support remains an important element of the Institute’s financial stability and operational effectiveness.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) is a registered charity in England and Wales (Charity No. 1173105). It is governed by a Trust Deed and operates in accordance with its charitable objectives, which are:

1. The advancement of education and research;
2. The advancement of environmental protection or improvement; and
3. The promotion of sustainable development.

The Charity operates through a Group structure, which includes one wholly owned trading subsidiary (SFL) and one-part owned trading subsidiary of SFL, called SALL. This new subsidiary was created this year. South Atlantic Laboratories Ltd (SALL) is a commercial laboratory, offering a range of scientific services to industry and the local community. This is a joint venture company. It is expected to turn a profit within 6 years.

An arm’s length relationship is maintained to ensure appropriate governance, enabling the subsidiaries to donate profits in support of the Charity’s core activities. This arrangement supports the strategic aim of reducing reliance on public funding provided through government subvention.

Trustee Recruitment, Induction and Training

Trustees serve for a 3-year period and may renew by mutual agreement. Trustees are sought through advertising or through recommendations. A formal application is submitted, and they are approved or rejected at Board Meetings after careful review from current Trustees. New Trustees receive an induction presentation, including access to relevant governance documents, policies, and sector-specific briefings. An existing Trustee mentors the new Trustee for the first year.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

SAERI enters the forthcoming period with a clear strategic focus: to consolidate recent progress, strengthen financial resilience and continue delivering high-impact science from a Falkland Islands base while expanding its reach across the wider South Atlantic and Caribbean regions. The challenging external funding environment of recent years has reinforced the importance of income diversification, operational efficiency and strategic discipline. While competitive grant funding will remain a core element of SAERI's model, the organisation is committed to achieving a more balanced and sustainable income profile over the medium term.

A central priority will be increasing unrestricted income streams to reduce reliance on grant funding and, over time, on government subvention. Commercial delivery through SAERI (Falklands) Limited (SFL) is expected to play an increasingly important role in this transition. The agreement for the appointment of a full-time Environmental Consultant strengthens in-house capacity, reduces reliance on subcontractors and is anticipated to improve profitability and increase contributions toward core costs. In parallel, the launch of South Atlantic Laboratories Ltd (SALL) provides a further diversified revenue stream through fisheries-related laboratory services and creates opportunities to support emerging industries in the Falkland Islands and beyond.

Internationally, SAERI will consolidate and expand its footprint across other Overseas Territories and coastal regions. In the Caribbean, where SAERI is already delivering marine habitat mapping and natural capital-related projects, the organisation intends to deepen partnerships with territorial governments and regional bodies. The aspiration is to establish a more formalised regional presence or hub model over time, enabling greater continuity of delivery, improved responsiveness to local needs, and the development of locally embedded capacity. This approach mirrors SAERI's founding mission: building research and environmental stewardship capacity within and between Overseas Territories.

SAERI will also continue exploring its role as an Antarctic Gateway and Sub-Antarctic training centre, building on increasing levels of scientific visitation and the Islands' strategic geographic position. Strengthening infrastructure, partnerships and training opportunities would enhance the Falkland Islands' standing as a centre for polar and sub-polar research while generating wider economic benefits.

Investment in people and organisational resilience will underpin all future plans. Recruitment, retention and professional development of high-calibre staff remain essential to maintaining research quality and delivery performance. SAERI will continue to operate as a lean, well-governed organisation, maintaining robust financial controls, adherence to its Reserves Policy, and careful management of working capital requirements.

The overarching strategy for the forthcoming financial year is therefore one of measured growth, regional expansion and consolidation. By strengthening commercial activity, expanding fundraising efforts and building strategic partnerships across the South Atlantic and Caribbean, SAERI is positioning itself for long-term sustainability while continuing to deliver world-class environmental research from the Falkland Islands.



© Shallow Marine Surveys Group

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

		UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS
		2025	2025	2025	2024
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
INCOME FROM:					
Donations and legacies	3	108,744	575,328	684,072	875,272
Other trading activities	5	342,464	-	342,464	339,563
Other income	6	2,738	23,905	26,643	76,415
Total income		453,946	599,233	1,053,179	1,291,250
EXPENDITURE ON:					
Raising funds	4	193,325	-	193,325	226,280
Charitable activities	7	293,463	566,360	859,823	1,177,834
Total expenditure		486,788	566,360	1,053,148	1,404,114
Net income/(expenditure)		(32,842)	32,873	31	(112,864)
Transfers between funds	21	98,320	(98,320)	-	-
Net movement in funds		65,478	(65,447)	31	(112,864)
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:					
Total funds brought forward		176,537	229,082	405,619	518,483
Net movement in funds		65,478	(65,447)	31	(112,864)
Total funds carried forward		242,015	163,635	405,650	405,619

The Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

The notes on pages 84 to 101 form part of these financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

		2025	2024
	Note	£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Intangible assets	14	-	537
Tangible assets	15	131,276	142,269
Investments	16	1	-
		131,277	142,806
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	18	297,854	98,955
Cash at bank and in hand	25	271,406	326,287
		569,260	425,242
Creditors : amounts falling due within one year	19	(294,700)	(162,429)
Net current assets		274,560	262,813
Total assets less current liabilities		405,837	405,619
Provisions for liabilities	20	(187)	-
Total net assets		405,650	405,619
CHARITY FUNDS			
Restricted funds	21	163,635	229,082
Unrestricted funds	21	242,015	176,537
Total Funds		405,650	405,619

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 17 April 2026 and are signed on behalf of the Board by:



C. Peter Judge MBE
Chairman

CHARITY BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

		2025	2024
	Note	£	£
FIXED ASSETS			
Intangible assets	14	-	537
Tangible assets	15	113,822	139,756
Investments	16	2	1
		113,824	140,294
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	18	80,285	46,325
Cash at bank and in hand		260,554	309,246
		340,839	355,571
Creditors : amounts falling due within one year	19	(123,813)	(122,082)
Net current assets		217,026	233,489
Total assets less current liabilities		330,850	373,783
Total net assets		330,850	373,783
CHARITY FUNDS			
Restricted funds	21	163,635	229,082
Unrestricted funds	21	167,215	144,701
Total charity funds		330,850	373,783

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 17 April 2026 and are signed on behalf of the board by:



C. Peter Judge MBE
Chairman

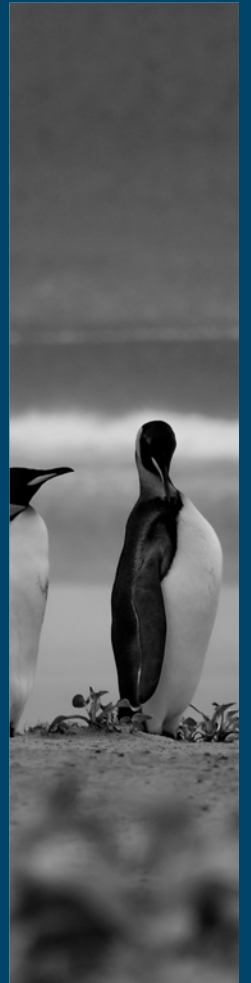
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

		2025	2024
	NOTE	£	£
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Net Cash used in operating activities	24	(17,543)	(117,806)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(37,338)	(25,335)
Net Cash used in investing activities		(37,338)	(23,355)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(54,881)	(143,141)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		326,287	469,428
Cash and Cash equivalents at the end of the year	25, 26	271,406	326,287



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SOUTH ATLANTIC ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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King Penguins © Sophie Crossley-Hardeman