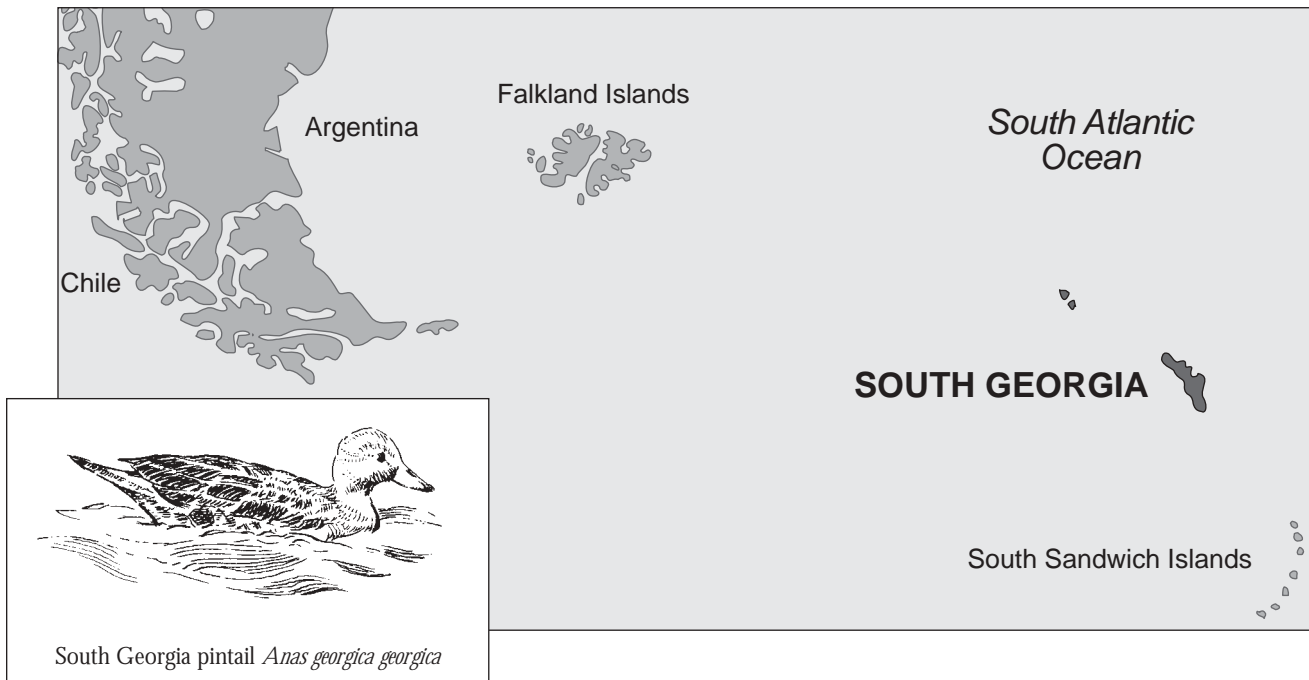


# 13: South Georgia



South Georgia pintail *Anas georgica georgica*

## Introduction

South Georgia is an isolated sub-Antarctic island lying between  $53^{\circ} 56'$  and  $54^{\circ} 55'$  S, and  $34^{\circ} 45'$  and  $38^{\circ} 15'$  W. It is about 1,400 km from the Falkland Islands and 1,550 km from the nearest point on the Antarctic continent. In addition to the main island, there are smaller islands, islets and rocks. Clerke Rocks to the south east and Shag Rocks to the north west are included in the territory. South Georgia is the second largest of the sub-Antarctic islands. Its total land area is 3,755 km<sup>2</sup>.

South Georgia is very mountainous, rising to over 2,934 m. The backbone of South Georgia is formed by two mountain ranges, Allardyce and Salveson. Of these ranges 13 peaks rise above 2,000 m, the highest being Mount Paget at 2,934m. The south east of the island is higher than the north west, with much steeper, almost vertical slopes. Ice fields and glaciers surround these mountains. Ice and permanent snow cover over 50% of the island.

South Georgia has no permanent population. The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) maintains a base on Bird Island, and there is a garrison at King Edward Point. At the beginning of 2001 the garrison will be withdrawn, and the UK's presence in the territory will be replaced by the British Antarctic Survey. Fishing operations occur in the vicinity of South Georgia. Currently, this interest is focused on toothfish *Dissostichus eleginoides* replacing an earlier interest in pelagic harvesting of krill. Tourism has developed in recent years. South Georgia is part of the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Dependency. The dependency is administered by a Civil Commissioner based in the Falkland Islands (who is concurrently the Governor of the Falkland Islands).

Only a summary of international obligations, legislative provisions relating to nature conservation, and key contacts are provided here. Comprehensive information on the biodiversity of this territory is researched by, and is available through, the British Antarctic Survey.

## International obligations relevant to nature conservation

- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling
- Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)

## Implementation

**The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR):** provides a legal framework for the management of fisheries south of the Antarctic Convergence. Because of the ecosystem approach taken by CCAMLR, commercial fishing must take into account not only of the impact on the target species, but also on those which are its predators and prey. This approach ensures that the implications of fisheries on the whole food chain are considered. Any harvesting and associated activities in the area south the Antarctic Convergence are governed by the conservation principles laid down in Article II of the Convention.

## Protected areas

- **Falkland Islands Dependencies Conservation Ordinance 1975:** conservation and protection of the flora and fauna is regulated by this Ordinance. Under it, sites may be designated as Specially Protected Areas, protected in order to preserve their ecological systems, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Cooper Island is listed as a Specially Protected Area in Schedule A. Bird Island and Annenkov Islands are listed as Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Schedule B. Entry into these areas is by permit only.

Any additional area may be designated as a Specially Protected Area if it is:

- a representative example of a major land, freshwater, or coastal marine ecological system;
- an area with a unique complex of species;
- an area which is the type locality or only known habitat of any native plant or invertebrate species;
- an area which should be kept inviolate so that in future it may be used for purposes of comparison with localities that have been disturbed by man.

Two areas, King Edward Point and Bay of Isles, are designated *Areas of Special Tourist Interest* and are open for tourism and recreation. All other parts of South Georgia are closed to access other than by permit.

New legislation may stem from the South Georgia Management Plan being prepared by the British Antarctic Survey for the administration of the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Dependency (BAS in prep.).

A 200 nautical mile Maritime Zone was declared around South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in 1993 which makes provision for, amongst other things, the management and conservation of fisheries, mineral resources and control of whaling activities.

## Species protection

**Falkland Islands Dependencies Conservation Ordinance 1975:** under this Ordinance, it is an offence to kill, wound, capture, molest or export any native mammal or native bird; or collect or destroy any native plant, except under permit.

## Key names and addresses

Assistant Commissioner and Director of Fisheries,  
Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich  
Islands, Government House, Stanley, Falkland  
Islands. Tel: 27433; fax 27434;  
e-mail: gov.house@horizon.co.fk

British Antarctic Survey (The Director), High  
Cross, Madingley Rd, Cambridge CB3 0ET. Tel:  
01223 321400; fax: 01223 32616;  
web site: <http://www.nbs.ac.uk>.

## Conservation agencies

South Georgia is administered by the Commissioner of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands who is also the Governor of the Falkland Islands. Local administration of conservation regulations is delegated to the resident Marine Officer, Magistrate (Garrison Commander) and to the Director of the British Antarctic Survey.