

**STA01 – St Andrews Bay**

*54o 26’S, 36 o 11’W*

Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

Site inventory

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| **Summary** |
| *Large exposed bay which is home to South Georgia’s largest king penguin colony and largest aggregation of breeding elephant seals* |

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| ***Objectives*** | * Sustainable tourism
* Environmental monitoring
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| ***Current Restrictions*** | * One ship at a time, and a maximum 3 ships per of which no more than 2 should carry more than 200 pax
* Max 100 pax ashore at one time - 1:20 visitor to guide ratio
* Non-tourist activities require a Regulated Activity Permit
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| **ENVIRONMENT** |
| **Physical** |  |
| Latitude/longitude  | 54o 26’S, 36 o11’W |
| Location description | 30 km southeast of Cumberland bay, St Andrews Bay is a long, exposed bay at the terminus of the Heaney, Buxton and Cook glaciers |
| Topography and geology | The shallow bay runs 3 km in a north-south direction. Behind the sandy beach is a raised outwash plain which extends several kilometres inland and is dissected by braided glacial streams. At the former snout of the Cook glacier there is a large lagoon. Several large, fast flowing rivers transect the site. The geology at the site is from the Sandebugten formation. |
| Description of landing beech(es) | The heavy surf in the bay can make landing on the main beech difficult but to the far north of the bay just behind Clark Point there is a sheltered landing point |
| Extent of site | The majority of use is focused on the landing beach and glacial outwash plain extending 500m to 1 km inland. To the north the site is bounded by the steep slopes of Mount Skittle, to the south it is bounded by the headland of Doris Bay. |
| **Wildlife** |  |
| Common Name | Scientific Name | Present | Breeding | Description of Distribution |
| Seals |
| Antarctic Fur seal | *Arctocephalus gazella* |[x] [x]  Most breeding is restricted to the northern end of the bay and in relatively low numbers. Large numbers of juveniles haul out and are found across the outwash plain. |
| Elephant Seal | *Mirounga leonina* |[x] [x]  Largest elephant seal breeding beach on South Georgia with at least 6,000 breeding females. |
| Leopard Seal | *Hydrurga leptonyx* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Weddell Seal | *Leptonychotes weddellii* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Penguins |
| Gentoo Penguin | *Pygoscelis papua* |[ ] [x]  Sparsely distributed on the beach and seaward edge of outwash plain |
| King Penguin | *Aptenodytes patagonicus* |[x] [x]  Largest colony on South Georgia with at least 150,000 breeding pairs located to the south of the beach. Loafing and moulting birds found across much of the coastal strip |
| Macaroni Penguin | *Eudyptes chrysolophus* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Chinstrap Penguin | *Pygoscelis antarcticus* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Albatross |
| Wandering Albatross | *Diomedea exulans* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Black-browed Albatross | *Thalassarche melanophris* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Grey-Headed Albatross | *Thalassarche chrysostoma* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Light-Mantled Albatross | *Phoebetria palpebrata* |[x] [x]  Breeding pairs to north of Bay above Clark Point |
| Petrels |
| Southern Giant Petrel | *Macronectes giganteus* |[x] [ ]   |
| Northern Giant Petrel | *Macronectes halli* |[x] [ ]   |
| Giant Petrel spp. | *Macronectes spp.* |[x] [ ]  Found in low numbers scavenging near king penguin colony and on beach front |
| Cape Petrel | *Daption capense* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Snow Petrel | *Pagodroma nivea* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Blue Petrel | *Halobaena caerulea* |[ ] [ ]   |
| White-chinned Petrel | *Procellaria aequinoctialis* |[x] [x]  Breeding in the tussock on the lower slopes of Mt Skittle to the north of the bay |
| Wilson's Storm Petrel | *Oceanites oceanicus* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Black-Bellied Storm Petrel | *Fregetta tropica* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Grey-Backed Storm Petrel | *Garrodia nereis* |[ ] [ ]   |
| South Georgia Diving Petrel | *Pelecanoides georgicus* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Common Diving Petrel | *Pelecanoides urinatrix exsul* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Other Birds |
| South Georgia Pipit | *Anthus antarcticus* |[ ] [x]  Occasionally seen/heard on beach especially in vicinity of Clark Point |
| South Georgia Pintail | *Anas georgica georgica* |[ ] [x]  Low numbers, occasionally seen in tussock at periphery of site |
| Speckled Teal | *Anas flavirostris* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Snowy Sheathbill | *Chionis albus* |[x] [x]  In abundance around the king penguin colony |
| Brown Skua | *Stercorarius antarcticus* |[x] [x]  Common in the vicinity of the king penguin colony. Estimated to be at least 20 breeding pairs |
| Kelp Gull | *Larus dominicanus* |[ ] [x]  See in low numbers around the beach area.  |
| Antarctic Tern | *Sterna vittata georgiae* |[x] [x]  Large breeding colonies on the glacial outwash plane to the north of the bay |
| Blue-eyed Shag | *Phalacrocorax atriceps georgianus* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Antarctic Prion | *Pachyptila desolata* |[ ] [ ]   |
| Fairy Prion | *Pachyptila turtur* |[ ] [ ]   |
| OTHER |  |[ ] [ ]   |
| **Vegetation** |  |
| Habitat description | The large outwash plane is mostly sparsely vegetated with fellfield habitat and patches of dry grassland. Closer to the coast the ground becomes more enriched and short mixed grassland with abundant Poa annua becomes more common. At the peripheries of the site at Clarke Point there is dense tussock vegetation that is now thriving in the absence of reindeer grazing |
| HERITAGE |
| General description | The abundance of elephant seals means the site likely hosted a range of sealers during the 19th Century, however little evidence remains of their presence. In 1929 the Kohl-Larsen expedition camped at the site and filmed king penguins, being the first to observe and document the complex king penguin breeding cycle. More recently in 1981-82 Annie Price and Cindy Buxton spent time filming in the bay and built the field hut which remains there today |
| Reference # | Item description | Location |
| **Buildings** |
|  | Field hut | A 2-berth field hut was built by BAS in 1981 at the north end of St Andrews Bay, initially for use by an Anglia TV wildlife documentary team in 1981-82. The hut is about 200 m inland from the beach; it is currently maintained by GSGSSI for the use of KEP residents. |
|  **Historic artefacts** |
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| **Historic events** |
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| PRESSURES |
| Historic invasive (rodent, reindeer) | Historically both rats and reindeer were present. |
| **Invasive plants** |
| *Poa annua* | Common in area around king penguin colony and elsewhere on beach fringes in lower density |
| *Cerastium fontanum* | Low densities throughout outwash plain |
| *Taraxacum officinale* | Rare |
| **Known sensitivities** |
| Sensitive species | During October and November when elephant seals are breeding care should be taken to avoid disturbance. King penguins are susceptible to disturbance during the moult and fledging |
| Sensitive habitats | Tussock slopes at Clark Point arefragile due to white-chinned petrel burrows |
| **Known impacts** |
| Pollution | None recorded |
| Trampling/path formation | None recorded |
| CURRENT VISITOR INFOMATION |
| Category | Suitable for category 2 vessels (<500 pax). Max. 3 ships per day with no more than 2 carrying more than 200 |
| Visitor numbers | 100 visitors ashore at any one time with a 1:20 experienced guide to guest minimum ratio |
| Activities | Most commonly used for small boat landings or zodiac cruising |
| Highlights | Large king penguin colony against mountainous scenery. Elephant seal bulls during breeding season |
| **Limitations** |  |
| Closed areas | King penguin colony and 10 m buffer zone |
| **Seasonality** |  |
| Restrictions on landing | One ship at a time, max 3 ships a day with no more than 2 cat 2 vessels. Max 100 pax ashore at one time. 1:20 visitor to guide ratio |
| Wildlife considerations |  Follow wildlife code of conduct. Extreme care should be taken during elephant seal breeding season |
| Rivers/streams |  Several large fast flowing glacial melt water streams transect the site. Flow is highly variable and at times may prohibit access to parts of the site.  |
| Snow/weather considerations | Exposed site. Potential for avalanche on slopes of Mt Skittle. Beach is open and is subject to strong waves. |