

# UNITED KINGDOM

## Gough and Inaccessible Islands

### Brief description

The 14-km<sup>2</sup> Inaccessible Island was added to the Gough Island Wildlife Reserve, in the South Atlantic, first inscribed in 1995. The site, now called Gough and Inaccessible Islands, is one of the least-disturbed island and marine ecosystems in the cool temperate zone. The spectacular cliffs of each island, towering above the ocean, are free of introduced mammals and homes to one of the world's largest colonies of sea birds. Gough Island is home to two endemic species of land birds, the gallinule and the Gough rowettie, as well as to 12 endemic species of plants, while Inaccessible Island boasts of two birds, eight plants and at least ten invertebrates endemic to the island.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** 1995, 2004

#### Agency responsible for site management

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Website: not provided

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** N (iii) (iv)

#### Justification as provided by the State Party

**(1994):** Gough is of outstanding universal value because:

- Uninhabited oceanic islands are one of the few habitats in the world that remain relatively undisturbed and are therefore of special conservation significance. Gough is the largest scarcely modified cool-temperate island ecosystem in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is the least disturbed major temperate oceanic island of its size in the world, and provides an interesting southern temperate Indo-Atlantic contrast to southern subtropical Pacific Henderson Island. Gough compares favourably with more southerly islands of the Southern Ocean with which it shares certain faunistic

characteristics and with which it is generally compared.

- The virtually undisturbed condition of Gough makes it particularly valuable for biological research. Gough is strictly managed as a Wildlife Reserve, with research and weather monitoring the only activities permitted on the island.
- Gough supports two endemic landbirds, a flightless rail, the Gough Moorhen *Gallinula comeri*, and the Gough Bunting *Rowettia goughensis* in the monotypic genus *Rowettia*. Gough is included in the Tristan da Cunha Priority One Endemic Bird Area as defined by ICBP. Eight invertebrate species are known to be endemic to the island. Gough also supports over 30 plant species which are endemic to the Tristan da Cunha island group. Several vascular plant species are unique to Gough, together with eight species of bryophytes.
- Gough is one of the most important seabird colonies of the world. The Tristan da Cunha group as a whole provides the only breeding place for the seabirds of a much wider range of climatic zones in the South Atlantic than is found with comparable islands in other oceans. The range of species includes the Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*, which breeds all around the Antarctic continent to the pantropical Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*. Following the extensive habitat modification on Tristan daCunha island, Gough is now the largest undisturbed island in the group and holds the largest proportion of most seabird species. Twenty seabird species breed on the island. The Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta* is endemic to the Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands and virtually the entire population breeds at Gough. Gough is the main breeding station for a subspecies of Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos chlororhynchos*, and subspecies of Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans dabbenena*. About half the world's total population of the Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* breeds at the Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands, with around one quarter on Gough. Almost half the global population of the Northern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome moseleyi* breeds on the island. Gough also supports a large proportion of the world populations of the White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, White-bellied Storm Petrel *Fregeta grallaria* and races of Great or Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica* and Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*.

v. Gough is an island of outstanding natural beauty. The island represents the eroded core of a Late Tertiary volcano. Gough is scenically beautiful with spectacularly precipitous cliffs around much of the coastline and mountains rising to 910 m above sea level.

**As provided in IUCN evaluation**

(1995): EVALUATION:

Gough Island is one of the least disturbed major cool-temperate island ecosystem in the South Atlantic Ocean, and is also one of the most important seabird colonies of the world (criterion iv). The island has high scenic qualities with spectacular sea-cliffs around much of the coastline (criterion iii). Two endemic land birds are found at Gough, the Gough moorhen and the Gough finch. Gough is included in the Tristan da Cunha Priority One Endemic Bird Area, as defined by Bird Life International. The island is home to 12 endemic plant species in addition to other threatened species. Gough's undisturbed nature makes it particularly valuable for biological research, with weather monitoring being the only other activity permitted on the island. The nomination meets all conditions of integrity (assuming that the adjacent marine area is included in the site) and should thus be inscribed on the World Heritage List under natural criteria iii and iv.

(2004): The proposed extension is in line with the recommendation of IUCN and the World Heritage Committee at its 19 th session (Berlin, 1995). IUCN, therefore, recommends the World Heritage Committee:

(i) to extend the World Heritage site to include the neighbouring Inaccessible Island and the surrounding marine zone extending out to 12 nautical miles, and

(ii) to extend the marine zone around Gough Island from 3 nautical miles to 12 nautical miles, to bring the boundaries of the World Heritage site in line with those of the Nature Reserve. The extended World Heritage site would thus include a terrestrial area of 7,900ha and a marine area of 390,000 ha.

IUCN also recommends the World Heritage Committee to approve the proposed name change as proposed by the authorities of the UK; that is to Gough and Inaccessible Islands World Heritage Site.

**Committee Decision**

(1994): The Committee made no statement.

(2004): **Decision 28 COM 14B.17**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Approves the extension of the **Gough Island Wildlife Reserve**, United Kingdom, to include the neighbouring Inaccessible Island and the surrounding marine zone extending out to 12 nautical miles;

2. Also approves the extension of the Gough Island marine zone from 3 nautical miles to 12 nautical miles, to bring the boundaries of the World Heritage property in line with those of the Nature Reserve;

3. Further approves the change of name proposed by the State Party to **Gough and Inaccessible Islands**.

4. Commends the State Party on its policy of conservation-based fishery management in the waters around Gough Island;

5. Invites the authorities to maintain the current tight regulations and strict enforcement over illegal fisheries;

6. Encourages the State Party to extend its ratification of the Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels to include the Tristan da Cunha Archipelago.

The property now includes the following land and marine areas:

Name	Land area (ha)	Marine area (ha)
Gough Island	6500 ha	230,000 ha
Inaccessible Island	1400 ha	160,000 ha
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7900 ha</b>	<b>390,000 ha</b>

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- A statement of significance has been drawn up as part of the Management Plan. The State Party will discuss and agree a revised statement of Outstanding Universal Value which will be submitted in due course for consideration by the World Heritage Committee
- No change required to UNESCO's official description of the site

**Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined but none needed
- Fishing and other activities are prescribed within the 12 nm marine boundary to the Site,

and out to the 200nm EEZ limit. However, Tristan lacks the necessary infrastructure to enforce this legislation (specifically the lack of a blue water patrol facility). Also, many of the birds breeding on the islands range much further than the boundary zones around the site

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
  - Introduced House Mice are now known to be significant predators of seabird chicks, and will, if uncontrolled, gradually reduce the biological value of the site. Identifying effective control measures is a key conservation priority
- Sagina procumbens, an aggressive alien plant accidentally introduced during the 1990s, could also degrade the integrity of the site if current control measures prove inadequate
- These anticipated changes affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the site as identified at the time of the inscription

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- The entire site is a legally-declared nature reserve, with IUCN strict category 1 status. The island part of the reserve is zoned, with most of the area set aside as a wilderness zone, with strict limits on allowable activities. Most human activities are confined to a small logistic zone with strict limits on allowable activities. Most human activities are confined to a small logistics zone surrounding the meteorological station
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Review measures and controls: need to improve existing Sagina procumbens control measures; need to identify and implement effective control/eradication of introduced House Mice
- Local level of action. Timeframe: continuing

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- Strict Nature Reserve (no tourism allowed on the island, but vessels are allowed to visit the marine portion of the reserve)

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- Steering group formally set up on 01 / 01 / 1994 to advise Tristan's Natural Resources

Department on conservation-related matters, and arrange an annual environmental inspection of the site and the operation of the South African meteorological Station

- No site manager but none needed
- Management under contractual agreement between the State Party and a third party
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; international (given the necessity for close liaison with South Africa).
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Management Plan for the site currently being revised; South African National Antarctic Programme initiating a risk assessment review of the quarantine procedures; Continuing research into the impact of house mice and appropriate control/eradication measures.
- Timeframe: continuing

### **5. Management Plan**

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 09 / 1995 (revised: 12 / 2004)
- Annual environmental inspections of the South African meteorological station and associated logistical operations identify potential problem areas, which are then remedied where possible. The most significant long-term threat is posed by accidental introductions of alien species, and there is constant review of quarantine procedures
- Effective
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Tristan government through its Natural Resources Department with advice from Gough Island Nature Reserve Advisory Committee

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- The South African government (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT)), as part of its operation of the meteorological station, provides most of the management support. The South African DEAT also provides support in kind (support of environmental inspection). Some funds have been raised from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to tackle specific management issues

(assessment and initial implementation of Sagina control)

- No funding drawn in through World Heritage Fund
- Insufficient (Sagina procumbens control being inadequately maintained)

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: not provided
- Also: IUCN

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, interpretation, visitor management
- Average: management, promotion, education
- Staff resources are inadequate
- One member of the South African team acts as conservation officer in a voluntary capacity, but the level of involvement varies, and there is no quality control of actions. The annual environmental inspector also is usually a voluntary position (duration 5 weeks)

### **8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques**

- Staff training and facilities: Nothing formal; inspectors and conservation officers are briefed in Cape Town prior to annual relief visits to the site, and conservation officers trained on site during the 3-week long relief period by the inspector
- Training needs: The role of voluntary conservation officers needs to be formalised, and ideally rewarded financially to place greater onus on them to perform their duties diligently. To effectively implement Sagina control measures, conservation officers need to undergo training in rope work to allow them to access all affected sites
- No training on site management for stakeholders

### **9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: 40 visitors (2003). Trend: Constant (landing by permit only)
- Visitor facilities: The site is not open to visitors, but tour ships visit the waters around the island each year  
Access to Gough Island is prohibited unless prior written approval has been obtained from

the Administrator of Tristan da Cunha and landing sites are restricted to that area of coast adjacent to the meteorological station. It is suggested that signs be erected on the island, indicating the conservation objectives, and that detailed, informative literature be produced for any permitted visitors to the island. There are no visitor facilities

- Visitor facilities are adequate
- Visitor needs: none
- There is a tourism/visitor management plan for the site: The current management plan specifically precludes landings by tourists. Activities by visitors to the meteorological station are prescribed in the management plan

### **10. Scientific Studies**

- There is no agreed research framework / strategy for the site
- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises
- 1- Risk assessment for field workers at Gough Island has been conducted in terms of a joint RSPB/University of Cape Town research project. 2- Several studies have described the island's terrestrial biodiversity, most notably the vertebrates, macro-invertebrates and vascular plants. 3- A monitoring protocol for threatened birds has been designed, and is currently being implemented. Informal monitoring and regular inspections also are made for alien organisms arriving at the island
- Studies used for management of site: The invertebrate survey demonstrated the inadequacy of past measures to prevent arrival of new alien organisms with imported materials, and provides a baseline against which the efficacy of new control measures can be assessed

### **11. Education, Information and Awareness Building**

- No signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities. Inadequate: visitors. Businesses and local authorities: not provided
- There is no education strategy for the site: Currently limited to voluntary briefings prior to departure from Cape Town and on board ship en route to Gough Island. Tristan studies at school on Tristan da Cunha

- Need for awareness raising: Improved education of visitors to the site. Arrangements are currently being made for the production and installation of plaques commemorating inscription for both Gough and Inaccessible Islands
- No website available
- Local participation: none, although more effort should be made to involve local Tristanians

## 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

### Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 24<sup>th</sup> (2000)
- World Heritage Committee sessions: 23<sup>rd</sup> (1999); 24<sup>th</sup> (2000)

### Conservation interventions

- The main action has been an attempt to eradicate the newly-arrived alien plant *Sagina procumbens*. Research has been focused on the abundance, distribution and impacts of alien species, notably invertebrates and House Mice. There also has been an increase in biodiversity conservation research and monitoring since the site's inscription.
- Present state of conservation: Adequate

### Threats and Risks to site

- Accidental introduction of alien species proposes the greatest threat to the site (House Mice pose probably the greatest threat to the biological integrity of the site, impacting heavily on the terrestrial ecosystem, through predation of native invertebrates, seeds and seabird chicks). Unregulated fishing activities throughout the South Atlantic Ocean (in the waters around the site extending out to the foraging range of marine birds and mammals from the island) causes unsustainable mortality of some breeding seabird species
- Emergency measures taken: Eradication of house mice. Also: Improved quarantine measures should slow, if not altogether halt, the arrival of alien species at the island. Several international initiatives are underway to reduce the mortality of seabirds on longlines, and other negative fishery-bird interactions. Timeframe: long-term

## 13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- There is no formal monitoring protocol administered by the managing authority. The

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), in conjunction with the University of Cape Town, has initiated a monitoring programme for threatened birds at the island. This programme needs to be enlarged to include vegetation structure and other key indicators of ecosystem health, and formalized, perhaps through the annual inspection process

## 14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation. Also: Educational - raising awareness of the importance of the site
- Strength of management: 1- Management of human activities has been improved considerably to reduce negative impacts and reduce the risk of further accidental introductions. 2- Major survey of macro-invertebrate fauna (first since initial survey in 1956). 3- Monitoring protocols for threatened bird species established. 4- Identification of novel threats to the island's ecosystem posed by introduced House Mice
- Weaknesses of management: 1- Extremely remote, with difficult access, makes management difficult (although isolation is also a benefit). 2- Lack of skilled expertise on Tristan da Cunha to manage the site, and currently no direct input from Tristan or UK government towards day-to-day management of the site. 3- Lack of continuity at highest level in Tristan government (Administrators replaced on 3-year cycle) leads to inconsistent commitment to management

### Future actions:

- Need a formalized commitment by Tristan and UK to manage the site effectively
- No WH Funding is sought. No timeframe provided