



CASE STUDY BOOKLET

Valuation of kelp forest ecosystem services in the Falkland Islands (simplified version)

Acronym: MOVE

Title: MAPPING AND ASSESSING THE STATE OF ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES IN THE OUTERMOST REGIONS AND OVERSEAS COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: ESTABLISHING LINKS AND POOLING RESOURCES

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Summary
<p>Kelp forests provide many important ecosystem services to people, including mitigating storm damage, cycling nutrients, and providing commercially-harvestable resources. However, kelp forests' ability to sequester carbon dioxide, and therefore help regulate the climate, has until recently, been overlooked in assessments of the beneficial services they provide. In this study we incorporate updated knowledge on the potential of kelp to sequester 'blue carbon', and use the extensive kelp forests of the Falkland Islands as a case study to assess the value of kelp forest to society through multiple associated ecosystem services. Our analysis shows kelp forests provide a highly valuable range of direct and indirect services, which if managed correctly, will continue to benefit people, both now and in the future. The total estimated value of the Falkland Islands' kelp system is currently equivalent to ~ £2.69 billion per year (or £3.24 million km⁻² year⁻¹). However, the true value of the kelp forest surrounding the Falkland Islands is likely to be higher still, given that our estimate does not account for elements such as associated scientific research, tourism, and cultural services, due to the necessary data currently being unavailable. Similarly, the full value of these highly biodiverse ecosystems in supplying habitat and food to a large range of associated species is crucial, yet extremely difficult to fully quantify. This study illustrates the importance of maintaining kelp ecosystems in a healthy state to ensure they continue to supply valuable ecological processes, functional roles, and ecosystem services, including their overlooked role as significant long-term carbon sinks.</p>



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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the study area

The Falkland Islands, situated in the temperate and sub-polar South Atlantic, comprises two main islands (East and West Falkland) and 776 smaller surrounding islands (Fig. 1). This archipelago is relatively sparsely populated (2020 population = 3,480 or ~ 0.28 individuals km^{-1}) and is isolated geographically. The region is consequently relatively unimpacted by global human pressures (Jones et al. 2018).

The Falkland Islands is one of the UK's 14 overseas territories (UKOTs). As such, if they choose to have the UK's ratification of the Paris Agreement extended to them along with other UKOTs, they will be included in the UK's future accounting and reporting on emissions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC 2015). The surrounding marine area covers 463,897 km^2 within the Exclusive Economic Zone, and includes both shallow and deep sea regions. The waters and coasts are home to a diverse mix of species (Otley et al. 2008) and extensive globally-significant *Macrocystis pyrifera* kelp forest habitat (Beaton et al. 2020). There is also a managed multi-species squid and finfish fishery which has been in place since 1987 and contributes to $\sim 40\%$ of Gross Domestic Product.

1.2 Research questions

This work aims to quantify and estimate the total value of the ecosystem services associated with the Falkland Islands' kelp forests, including their value in sequestering carbon dioxide, known as 'blue carbon'. We use a combination of high-resolution satellite-derived kelp habitat extent predictions along with a large dataset of in-situ density measurements to examine the ecosystem service value of these kelp forests. This work builds on previous analyses in this region, showing extensive kelp assemblages (Golding et al. 2019) and significant economic benefits from the Falkland Islands' natural systems (Bayley et al. 2017, Bormpoudakis et al. 2019, Smith 2019). We focus our analysis on quantifying the direct services of kelp-associated harvested goods, as well as the indirect services of nutrient cycling and climate buffering. Our results are presented to aid management of these important ecosystems and to improve the understanding of their value and benefit to society.

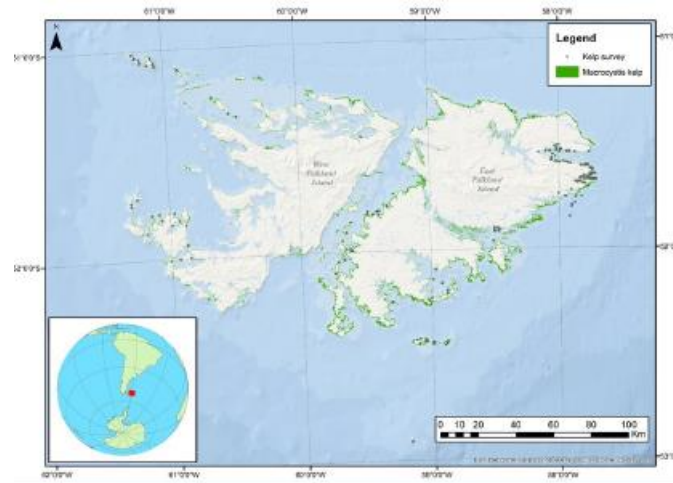


Figure 1 - Mapped distribution of kelp forest (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) across the Falkland Islands, based on habitat modelling undertaken in 2019 (Golding et al. 2019). Site location points of annual benthic surveys of kelp, conducted between 2008 and 2016 are shown (projection: WGS84 UTM zone 21S).

2. Methods and materials

Current kelp distribution was mapped using image classifications based on Sentinel 1 (band 1) and Sentinel 2 (all 10 m bands) satellite imagery; Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) data; and Landsat 8, (band 1) inputs within Google Earth Engine (Golding et al. 2019).

Kelp density was calculated based on field survey data collected from across the Falkland Islands between 2008 and 2016 (Shallow Marine Surveys Group, unpublished data), with a total of 315 surveys conducted between 2008 and 2016 (Fig. 1).

Macrocystis pyrifera thalli mean wet weight (excluding bare stipes) was calculated using values from van Tussenbroek (1993) for spring and autumn and multiplied by the mean kelp density observed from surveys conducted during the same season (Table 1). We use the estimated current biomass of kelp to equate stored carbon in standing kelp stock, rather than daily rates of productivity per species (C m day⁻¹) as used in other studies (Vásquez et al. 2014). This is because turnover of standing biomass is rapid and the total storage value using daily productivity modelled over a multi-year period would likely be an overestimate of total carbon. The mean weight of carbon per metre squared was multiplied by the calculated extent of *Macrocystis pyrifera* within the Falkland Islands to give a total carbon standing stock, then converted to CO₂ using a conversion factor of 3.67 (based on relative atomic weights).

The average net primary productivity (NPP) of *Macrocystis pyrifera* kelp forest (including understory species), is estimated to be in the range 670 – 1300 g C m yr⁻¹, with a mean productivity value of 985 g C m yr⁻¹ (Reed and Bzezinski 2009). Following a global analysis by Krause-Jensen and Duarte (2016), sequestration through burial of Particulate Organic Carbon (POC) in deep waters is estimated as ~ 0.92% of annual NPP; sequestration through export of POC to the deep sea is ~ 2.30% of NPP; and sequestration through export of Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC) is ~ 7.69% of NPP. Sequestration pathway proportions were then multiplied across the current known extent of kelp forest within the Falkland Islands and converted to CO₂e weight.

3. Results and main achievements

Modelling outputs using remote sensing data gave an estimated total coverage of kelp forest surrounding the Falkland Islands of 830.1 km² in 2019 (Fig. 1)

3.1 Carbon storage

The combined total peak estimate of CO₂ equivalent carbon stored in standing giant and understory kelp species within the satellite-derived mapped extent of kelp forest in the Falkland Islands is 0.58 million tonnes. Averaged (central estimate) total sequestration to the deep sea is 0.299 million tonnes of CO₂ annually. Based on non-traded high-series carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) values (BEIS 2019), of £103.9 per tonne CO₂e, present-day standing stock of carbon stored in *Macrocystis* and *Lessonia* kelp is equivalent to £60.27 million. The annual value of carbon sequestered to deep sea sediments is estimated to be approximately £31.07 million per year.

3.2 Nutrient cycling

Coastal algae and seagrass beds were collectively estimated by Costanza et al. (2014) to contribute \$28,916 USD per hectare per year in terms of nutrient cycling services alone as of 2011 (based on the 2007 USD purchasing power parity). Applying these global values, the Falkland Islands are likely to contribute a total of £2.4 billion per year, based on remote-sensed kelp distribution.

3.3 Associated commercial fisheries

Six of the 15 major fisheries within the Falkland Islands were found to be reliant on kelp for some period of their life-cycle, based on current knowledge. This includes the kingclip (*Genypterus blacodes*), Patagonian scallop (*Zygochlamys patagonica*), Patagonian squid (*Doryteuthis gahi*), Red cod (*Salilota australis*), Rock cod (*Patagonotothen* spp.), and Southern blue whiting (*Micromesistius australis*). Collectively, these fisheries total an annual harvest value of £129,291,813 (~ 24% of the total commercial fishery harvest value), and £7,049,575 in licence fees (equivalent to ~ 36% of the total licence revenue) for the Falkland Islands.

3.4 Alginate extraction

Based on the Shackleton (1982) theoretical estimates of the Falkland Islands' viable annual wet tonnage extraction of 350,000 tonnes (i.e. ~ 5% of the Falkland Islands' kelp area impacted), the total dry weight of kelp for export would be approximately 70,000 tonnes, (assuming *Lessonia* spp. dry weight as 20% of wet weight). Applying the Chilean export value of £917 tonne⁻¹ would lead to a (non-use) revenue value of £64.19 million year⁻¹. In the initial Shackleton (1982) economic assessment, Falkland Islands Government (FIG) would receive licence royalties, which would be equivalent to ~ £147,057 year in present value after inflation.

3.5 Cumulative value of assessed kelp services

Table 1 displays a summary of annual and spatial value estimates for all services investigated during this study. Values for other services including tourism, scientific research, culture, and coastal protection are still currently unknown or data-limited in this region, and are therefore not included within the summary.

The total estimated value of the assessed ecosystem services which are provided by the Falkland Islands' satellite-mapped kelp forests in 2020, was ~ £2.692 billion per year (or £3.24 million GBP km⁻² year⁻¹). This overall monetary value is constructed using estimated values of both direct and indirect services provided by the kelp system as a whole. Indirect services included atmospheric carbon stored or sequestered to the deep sea by *Macrocystis pyrifera* and *Lessonia* kelps, as well as nutrients which are fixed or recycled within the kelp forests. Direct services included the harvest value of kelp-associated commercial fisheries and the theoretical harvest value of the kelp itself for alginate chemicals used in industry. Despite the differences created by ecosystem service valuations in different locations around the world, our estimates of total value are comparable to other

studies that attempted complete economic valuation of giant kelp forests elsewhere (Blamey and Bolton 2018, Vásquez et al. 2014).

Table 1 - Summary value estimates of services associated with giant kelp forest in the Falkland Islands in 2020. Overall remotely-mapped kelp extent for spatial estimates = 830.1 km². Blue carbon stock value given assuming the standing stock protected over ten years and applying the future projected CO_{2e} value. Full values for tourism, scientific research, culture, and coastal protection are still currently data-limited or unknown.

Service	Value estimate (£GBP year ⁻¹)	Spatial value estimate (£GBP km ⁻² year ⁻¹)
Blue carbon stock	0.703 million	84,721
Blue carbon sequestration	31.07 million	37,436
Nutrient cycling	2,400.29 million	2.89 million
Associated commercial fisheries value	126.3 million	152,177
Alginate industry (non-use)	64.19 million	77,337
TOTAL	2,692.17 million	3.24 million

The present study provides the first quantified basis for development of contemporary kelp management strategies on the Patagonian Shelf, as well as a value to form a basis from which future estimates can be made under various climate change scenarios.

In terms of the climate buffering benefit from carbon capture, the study showed that the Falkland Islands likely sequesters 0.299 million tonnes of CO₂ annually (at a conservative minimum estimate). This amount represents an additional annual contribution of approximately 0.1% of current UK net emissions (364.1 million tonnes CO_{2e}/year in 2018) towards their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) legally committed to through the Paris Agreement. While the contribution from Falkland Islands kelp is relatively small, this is a year-on-year national-scale positive benefit from simply maintaining the natural habitat at its current extent and condition, even applying our conservative estimates.

This study illustrates that the Falkland Islands' kelp forests supply a range of valuable services to people, which are important both locally and globally. Thanks to the area's geographical isolation and low population, the kelp system currently appears healthy and stable. If future detrimental environmental changes, such as increased local pollution, introduction of unsustainable fisheries, or rapid temperature rise were to occur, we would expect to see declines in terms of habitat distribution and condition. If the system were to decline on a large scale, the loss of direct ecosystem service benefits to the Falkland Islands and the loss of wider benefits to the



world through its indirect services, would be substantial and costly. Close monitoring of habitat extent and active management of local stressors will be key to the long term stability of the system, and ensure continued flow of multiple ecosystems services to society.

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