



# FORUM NEWS 36

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## Progress on Pitcairn

The sight of the Pitcairn longboat appearing around the northeastern end of the island and battling its way through the waves towards us was one of those incredible events which encapsulates a truly memorable experience.

We have worked, at a distance, with Pitcairn colleagues for many years, so the opportunity actually to visit Pitcairn in February 2010 was not to be missed. For two landlubbers like us, the three-day sail from French Polynesia to Pitcairn in a 20m ketch was another unique adventure. The *SV Southern Cross* served us well and, despite our lack of experience in such vessels and some rather wild seas, we had a memorable and exhilarating trip. The unseasonable weather conditions made the whole trip somewhat more challenging than anticipated – northerly winds (they are usually from the east or south-east), with huge swells (usually at a right-angle to the wind). These conditions plagued our visit, especially as the landing sites on all islands are on the normally sheltered – but now exposed – northern sides. Our departure from Mangareva (the southeastern-most settlement in French Polynesia) was delayed while we ascertained that the major cyclone, which had flooded and closed Tahiti's international airport hours after we had left there for Mangareva, was not actually heading for us.

A day and a half out of Mangareva, we anchored for a day off Oeno, the low coral atoll which is the westernmost of the Pitcairn group. The swells and winds made a landing impossible, so we began to be concerned about getting on to Pitcairn itself.

After an overnight journey, our first sight of Pitcairn was at dawn, about 20 miles out. As we watched it get closer, we could appreciate what an excellent location Fletcher Christian had chosen for the Bounty mutineers and their companions to settle,

and remain unseen for decades. It rises solidly out of the ocean, with sheer cliffs and pounding waves. The swells and unfavourable winds prevented us from anchoring in Bounty Bay and we sailed around to the southeastern side. So the longboat came to us, and our concerns that we would not be able to land were unfounded – at least after a series of interesting transfers from yacht to rubber dinghy to longboat. This was our first experience of the fantastic hospitality and friendliness which is typical of Pitcairn.

Carol and Jay Warren, our hosts, immediately made us feel like part of their family. Through their guided tours, and discussions with themselves and other conservation staff and island officers, including Simon Young and Leslie Jacques, we discovered more



*Red-tailed Tropicbird at the breeding colony on Pitcairn Island*  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



*One of the smaller waves crashes on to the reef surrounding Oeno Island.*  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



*Adamstown and Bounty Bay come into view, as the longboat rounds the rocks.* Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



*Green Turtle at sea off Oeno Island  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

about the challenges the island faces, and how enterprising Pitcairners are working to address issues. A major constraint is the small number of people available to undertake work and projects. There are currently just over 50 people living on island, and everyone we met had at least two jobs. Another constraint is the high cost of transport of people and freight, and the infrequency of transport links. Currently, a visit overseas means a long absence from Pitcairn.

We were able to spend two three-day periods on Pitcairn, broken by a visit to the others islands (see below). In these periods, we discussed many matters with the Islanders, as well as seeing something of the island and its wildlife.

### **Some current issues**

There is a lot going on in Pitcairn. Managements plans have been produced for the Pitcairn group as a whole (*Pitcairn Islands Environment Management Plan 2008*) and for Henderson (*Henderson Island World Heritage Site Management Plan 2004–2009*). These are available on UKOTCF's web-site ([www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Database/GeneralInformationModule/PitcairnManagePlanNoPicsOct2008.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Database/GeneralInformationModule/PitcairnManagePlanNoPicsOct2008.pdf); [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/henderson.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/henderson.pdf))

Some priorities currently being explored for the management of Henderson are resident wardening (by Pitcairn Islanders on a rotation basis) and the crucially important rat eradication project there being co-ordinated by RSPB. Various aspects of this are reported in *Forum News* 35: 19, and in this issue (pp. 3, 16-17).

Invasive species are a problem to which there is no easy solution – particularly in such an isolated place, and with limited available human resources. On Pitcairn itself, as well as the rats and mice, there are the invasive rose apple, grab-a-leg plant, and feral goats (causing massive destruction to endemic plants and cultivated fruit plants). Despite this, we were amazed by the quality, variety and amount of fresh fruit which the island produces. Passing cruise ships are also aware – while we were there, a visiting cruise ship radio-ed ahead to place an order for 500kg of bananas, as well as other fruits, which the island was able to supply.

The designation of Oeno and Ducie as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention is another initiative that Pitcairn would like to take forward. These sites were identified in the review of potential UKOT Ramsar sites, conducted by UKOTCF in 2005, and UKOTCF is helping progress designation in response to a request from Pitcairn's Natural Resources Division.

A big development, planned to start shortly, is the new harbour development at Tedside (Western Harbour). Unfortunately, the cruise ship season is quite short, from September to February. (It stops for the Pacific typhoon season around Tahiti and further west, where the ships are heading.) Often, cruise ship passengers cannot land at Pitcairn because of poor weather conditions. It is hoped that having an alternative harbour will help address this, and that increased tourism will result.

Ideas for alternative energy sources are a current hot topic. DFID expects to sign a design and installation contract for a wind power system in 2010. During our visit, we were also able to contribute to a project proposal for a feasibility study for domestic solar power; this also fulfilled Pitcairn's request for guidance on grant-application preparation generally.

Water is another concern. Brown's Water, which used to supply water to the majority of households, as well as being on the list of potential Ramsar sites, has been reduced to a trickle. This is causing problems for the newly established nursery (for native and fruit plants), as well as domestic water usage. Households now have to rely on rainwater.

Surprisingly in the context of climate change, funding for the weather station has been ended. The 50 years of records are one of the first things that managers of most projects request, and Pitcairn is seeking urgently the approximately £2000 per year needed to keep this work going.

### **Henderson and Ducie**

After three days on Pitcairn, we rejoined the *SV Southern Cross*, now moved round to Bounty Bay. We learnt afterwards that our transfer by inflatable from the jetty to the yacht (in one of the magnificent swells which accompanied every landing or transfer we made) was the subject of something resembling a sports commentary for the Islanders gathered to bid us farewell on our six-day voyage to Henderson and Ducie Islands.

After a half-day trip, seeing Henderson made us fully appreciative of the incredible biodiversity value of this island. At one time, most of the Polynesian islands, and especially similar raised atolls or volcanic peaks, would probably have had a flora and fauna like this – but now Henderson remains as the most pristine and unspoilt. Many of the others, including the many islands of French Polynesia, have lost nearly all their native flora and fauna.

*A pair of Kermadec Petrels in display flight over the breeding grounds at Ducie Island. Several species of petrels breed on Ducie, Henderson and Oeno Islands, in some cases constituting major parts of the world populations.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



*Continued on back page*



# Restoration on Henderson Island World Heritage Site

Even though Henderson Island is one of the world's most remote and hard-to-reach places, its wildlife is under severe threat from the impacts of invasive Pacific rats *Rattus exulans*. Nesting seabird numbers have already dropped from an estimated 5 million pairs before rats arrived, to only 40,000 pairs today.



*Henderson Petrel on its nesting grounds on Henderson Island.*

*Photo: Alve Henricson*

Working closely with Dr Mike de L Brooke (former Chair of UKOTCF's Pitcairn Working Group), RSPB is now fundraising for a project to eradicate rats from the island: this will cost around £1.7 million, and a government contribution of £500,000 is being requested. Even in these tough economic times, removing rats from Henderson represents exceptional value for money – there are four Globally Threatened endemic land birds on Henderson, and it is the only known nesting site of the Endangered Henderson petrel. Henderson is also a World Heritage site: on average, UK World Heritage sites have received over £11 million each from Lottery funds, but this money is not available to UKOT sites.

We need to have funds secured by 31 August 2010 if the operation is to go ahead in 2011, so time is running out!

*If readers would like to know more about the Henderson project, please see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/projects/details.asp?id=tcm:9-241934>, or contact Jonathan Hall ([jonathan.hall@rspb.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.hall@rspb.org.uk))*

## New UKOTCF Associate organisations

UKOTCF welcomes two new Associate organisations: the Pitcairn Natural Resources Division (NRD); and the Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre (of the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas).

### Pitcairn Natural Resources Division

Pitcairn NRD has joined the Forum following UKOTCF's visit to Pitcairn (see pp. 1-2, 20), to help improve the flow of conservation-related information to and from Pitcairn. The global importance of the Pitcairn Islands and some issues there are outlined in the above articles. Pitcairn NRD is responsible for conservation and environmental matters in the island group.

### Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre

*Thomas Hadjikyriakou (Manager) and Koula Michael (Teacher) describe the AEEIC and its work:*

The Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre (AEEIC), is located within the Western Sovereign Base Area (SBA), in Akrotiri village, Cyprus. It was established by the SBA Administration in temporary accommodation in 2004, and is the

result of cooperation with many stakeholders, such as the local community, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), NGOs and others.

The Centre is active in many fields, but currently the main focus is environmental education. In 2008, with a decision of the Council of Ministers of RoC, it became the second centre on island to join the network of environmental education centres run by the Ministry of Education, and managed by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The Centre staff, together with a full time teacher assigned by the RoC Ministry of Education, deliver environmental education programmes to school children from all over Cyprus on a daily basis, in line with the school curriculum. Eleven educational programmes are offered to students and other groups of people, covering a variety of themes, which introduce participants to the significant environmental and cultural aspects of Akrotiri Peninsula, one of the most important environmental areas in the eastern Mediterranean. Programmes cover themes such as rare and endangered plants, bird migration, the marine environment, sea turtles, and basketry amongst others, and are offered in both Greek and English to about 6000 children every year.



*School students look at the exhibits at the Centre and participate in the botany educational programme. Photos: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*



*Basketry lesson at AEEIC. Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*

At the same time, the Centre is open to visitors, Cypriot and international, who have a chance to find out about the unique wildlife and historic value of the area. The Centre is also participating in European programmes, such as Leonardo da Vinci, where University students and others, from Cyprus and other European countries, share practical experiences and skills in many disciplines, including conservation, culture, forestry, and archaeology. The focus of all these programmes is conservation within the SBAs, integration with the local community and promotion of European values and culture.

On the training side, the Centre organised basic botany classes, basketry lessons, map reading, chainsaw training, amongst others. It has also assisted many graduate and post-graduate students who have chosen subjects from the local environment for their dissertation work. In addition, the Centre and the rest of the SBA Environment Department organise various events at the Centre and the local village of Akrotiri, such as the celebration of World Wetlands Day every year in early February. They deliver also presentations at various fora, publish articles in magazines and prepare documentaries for audiences in Cyprus and abroad.

The number of groups and visitors are increasing and there is more demand every year. The Centre is currently operating beyond its capacity. As was the initial plan and agreement with

all the stakeholders, the Bases acquired a suitable piece of land, still within Akrotiri village, with good access and views towards the salt lake, for a purpose-built Centre to facilitate the different users and especially the educational programmes. Due to financial constraints on the Bases, the building is now delayed. An application to OTEP in the 2009/10 round, for funding part of the cost towards the preparation of the building, was not successful. It is worth mentioning that all the other stakeholders having Centres, or planning to have Centres in the network soon, have increased their buildings' sizes or prepared new suitable buildings. For example, Salamiou village has just finished its new building, and the Forestry Department enlarged its existing Centre at Athalassa, and is also currently building a new Centre at Cape Greko in the east of the Island.

We hope that, in the very near future, the new building will become a reality, to satisfy the purpose of the Centre, and fulfil the SBAA/MOD obligations towards the local Community Authorities, Ministry of Education and other RoC Ministries and Departments, Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, NGOs and other organisations in Cyprus and abroad. This way the successful operation of the Centre can be continued and improved further.

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*University students building a bird hide with reeds.  
Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*

## **New government – new broom?**

Will UK's new coalition government<sup>1</sup> sweep clean in their policies on UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and take a genuine interest in safeguarding their biodiversity, or will it be a case of more of the same sweeping under the carpet?

There is a certainly an urgent need for change, to safeguard the beleaguered biodiversity that is the responsibility of the UK Government but lies beyond British domestic shores. It is true that, in its early years, the previous Government showed distinct signs of acknowledging the responsibility that UK Government has, under Multilateral Environmental Agreements, for biodiversity and other environmental matters in the UKOTs and CDs. This was recognised in the 1999 White Paper on UKOTs and the Environment Charters

<sup>1</sup> The General Election in May 2010 saw the Labour Government that had been in power since 1997 replaced by a new kind of administration. Largely because of the UK's voting system, coalitions are not a regular feature of the political landscape, at least in Westminster. However, after a few days of fevered negotiations, in the wake of an inconclusive election result, the UK found itself with a Government comprising a coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

that resulted from this. However, with changing ministers and officials, and despite the continuing effort of UKOTCF and those in UKOTs, UK Government's interest in fulfilling these international responsibilities declined and tended to return to the legal fiction that UKOT Governments were solely responsible – even in the case of uninhabited UKOTs where the local government consists entirely of UK-appointed officials! Of course, former Ministers can point to some minor changes in funding arrangements – initially FCO's Environment Fund for Overseas Territories (absentmindedly cancelled by UK Government within a year of referring to it in the Environment Charters). After much effort by UKOTCF and the UKOTs, this was restored and then merged with previously delayed DFID funding, as the Overseas Territories Environment Programme. Most recently, there has been ear-marking of some DEFRA money and establishment of the Challenge Fund under the Darwin Initiative (see p. 11) – no significant new or additional funds though. There have been some good projects funded by UK Government in the UKOTs but, bearing in mind the scale of the problem, nowhere near enough. This is especially so, given the relative global importance of biodiversity in the UKOTs compared to that in Britain itself. Whilst these funds can support small



projects, it remains true that, unlike the rest of UK territory (and other countries), there is still no larger fund to address necessary species recovery programmes or other moderately sized projects in these most globally important parts of UK territory. To cite but a few examples, one of the world's rarest lizards is Grand Cayman's blue iguana, and St Helena holds numerous endemic genera of plants and invertebrates, with one of these going globally extinct this decade and others hovering on the edge.

Institutional arrangements did begin to change under the previous Government. Initially, only FCO worked with UKOTCF to support conservation in the UKOTs. Later, DFID became involved and then JNCC, with eventually a greater involvement of DEFRA in UKOT/CD matters over the last couple of years. This was welcome, but was unfortunately offset by a marked decline in interest and environmental capacity at the FCO, and a decreased preparedness of UK Government officials to work with NGOs. Amongst other things, these effectively ended the regular twice-yearly joint meetings between the Government and UKOTCF and its partners, which had been beneficial to conservation and to both sides (and maintained NGO involvement) for a number of years. There seems also to have been a reduction of any certainty as to the role of DFID. And what of the role of the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (now with added Olympics!) which has responsibility for World Heritage Sites? Their response in January 2010 to the consultation on this issue was less than forthcoming or helpful with respect to the UKOTs, despite their responsibility for the National Lottery, which has been suggested as a source of badly needed funds for World Heritage Sites in the UKOTs as it has been within Britain (see p. 9). Advice received originally from the Heritage Lottery Fund was that UKOTs were not eligible for funding on legal grounds. In fact, their "ineligibility" now appears to arise only as guidance from senior officers or possibly the Trustees. There appears to be no legal impediment to Lottery funding of UKOT projects, even beyond World Heritage Sites.

Some new funds have been allocated to JNCC for work in the UKOTs. This was a result, at least partly, of the efforts of UKOTCF, which pushed hard for extra resourcing in its evidence to various House of Commons Select Committees. Although these Committees all agreed with UKOTCF that more needed to be done for biodiversity in the UKOTs, there has been relatively little action as a result. But back to JNCC. UKOTs/CDs now form a substantially larger part of their work programme than hitherto, drawing on this enhanced funding. Sadly, this seems to have put them in competition with NGOs, rather than seeking cooperation with them as was once the case. This is bad enough, but we now see the work of the NGOs seemingly duplicated by JNCC, which is confusing, time-wasting, a poor use of resources, and irritating to partners in the UKOTs/CDs themselves.

Further evidence of a breakdown in communications between Government and NGOs can be seen in the recent production of the *United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy*, drafted by JNCC but without the benefit of broad consultation, formal or informal. For this, we should perhaps not lay the blame at JNCC's door but at DEFRA's from whence this instruction presumably came. This is a very different approach from that used in the development of previous major policy documents on the UKOTs, and must be seen as a retrograde step. If other countries can put their similar documents out to wide consultations, why can't we? One wonders how well this sort of attitude will fit with the new Government's expressed desire to involve voluntary groups more. It would be interesting to see a cost-benefit analysis undertaken, to look at the relative costs of using a quango to do

work rather than an NGO, especially where the work was already part of the NGO's work programme but not fully progressing for want of funding.

We really look forward to working with the new Government and, of course, with JNCC, in a spirit of cooperation to achieve the best for conservation in the UKOTs/CDs. We look forward in particular to meeting the new Ministers, and their officials in all departments with relevant responsibilities.

### **Who are the key players?**

A few days after the new Government took office, ministerial appointments were announced. Needless to say, Forum personnel were watching closely, to see who would take over key roles in relation to UKOTs/CDs. Like all ministerial appointments, these are subject to change at short notice. However, the new incumbents at the time of writing are summarised below.

In the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), Henry Bellingham replaces Chris Bryant as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibilities including Overseas Territories (and also climate change). Mr Bellingham has a background in the law and finance.

In the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Richard Benyon replaces Huw Irranca-Davies as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibilities including biodiversity. Mr Benyon is a farmer, and formerly served in the military.

In the Department for International Development (DFID), Alan Duncan replaces Mike Foster as the Minister of State leading on Overseas Territories.

Elsewhere, Lord McNally is Minister of State responsible for Crown Dependencies in the Ministry of Justice, and John Penrose is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for heritage in the Department of Culture, Olympics, Media & Sport (formerly the Department of Culture, Media & Sport).

Under the new administration, of course, shifts in policy will be even more important than changes in ministerial personalities, and the wider economic climate will be an important factor here. The Government has made it clear that substantial cuts in public spending will be a priority. However, it has also emphasised the importance that it attaches to the role of bodies, such as NGOs, that comprise civil society. Detailed indications of specific policies in most areas are yet to emerge, as has the new Government's general disposition towards the UKOTs/CDs. It is to be hoped that, in its difficult budgeting programme, the Government recognises that global extinctions are not reversible.

The Forum will be taking early opportunities to emphasise with the new Government the importance of the UKOTs/CDs, their biodiversity, as well as wider natural and cultural heritage, and the UK's responsibilities towards these. We will also be exploring how the new Government intends to take forward the previous administration's *United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy*, and (in particular) the role that it sees for NGOs in developing and implementing the ideas outlined in this document.

*Dr Chris Tydeman, UKOTCF Chairman*

# South Atlantic Invasive Species project – wrapping up invasions

After three action-packed years, the EU-funded South Atlantic Invasive Species (SAIS) project that was coordinated by RSPB has come to an end. The final report (in four large volumes) has been despatched to the European Commission, and we can all rest easy knowing that all of the invasive species problems in the South Atlantic have been solved... Of course – in reality, there is much more to be done, and all of the South Atlantic Territories will be working on invasive species in the coming years.

The SAIS project included activities to address the invasives problem at all levels – from education of children and the community, to reviews of legislation and policy, to practical actions in the field. Through the project, training courses were carried out, new equipment was deployed, and information was recorded to allow measurement of future ecosystem changes. There are fewer invasive plants, and fewer rats – the project has contributed to several eradications, which will avoid future expenses in-Territory. A South Atlantic Invasive Species Strategy has been drafted, and is now awaiting sign-off from each of the partner governments in the region. Hopefully, this will provide a strong basis for future invasives work, and any future regional project.

Now that the dust is beginning to settle on the project, it's a good time to reflect on lessons learned – I have set out my top five below. Hopefully these will be of use to other future managers of EU-funded regional projects in the UKOTs.

1) It takes time to get started. Recruiting the project team and holding local workshops, forming stakeholder groups in-Territory, finding office space and equipment, collating background information, and getting the contract signed all took time. The first year of the project was almost all taken up with set-up, meaning we only had two years to achieve the majority of our (ambitious) goals. A longer timeframe is definitely desirable for invasive species projects. But...

2) It's great if you can start running while you're still learning to walk. We weren't starting from scratch on invasives work in the South Atlantic, and many local conservation managers had ideas for actions that we could progress even while we were still drafting initial action plans. Being able to show some practical results early in the project built confidence that we weren't just going to shuffle paper for three years, and that we were willing to listen to what the partners actually wanted. And everyone loves to use a backpack sprayer!



*Phil Lambdon giving a botanical school talk on St Helena.  
Photo: Tom Belton*



*Opening the South Georgia Quarantine Store.  
Photo: Brian Summers*

3) Things will be more complicated than you've hoped, but perseverance pays off. It's great to receive project funds, and the EU has the ability to fund major projects in the UKOTs which very few other funders (even the UK Government) don't do very often. However, the rules attached to use of funds can be very complex – we had quite a long battle to receive permission to employ project staff through Ascension Island Government, but we received great support from the Island's Administrator and FCO, and eventually permission was granted. Sometimes the baffling logistics of moving people and equipment between islands was daunting (and frustrating), but it's all worth it when things go well, and the work starts to pay dividends. For example, we heard last year that a king bird (tern) bred at the Patches on Tristan for the first time in living memory, and this is attributed to the rat control that Karen Varnham (UKOTCF Council Member) set up. To get Karen to Tristan involved liaising with the military, Tristan Government and cruise companies – but she's left a real legacy on-island, and made a dent in the returns on Ratting Day!

4) Listen to your project partners (and get as many other organisations involved as you can). At our first project workshop on Ascension, it became apparent that botanical expertise would be badly needed in the project team. The UKOTs team at Kew were approached, and subsequently provided a huge amount of support and mentoring to various botanical staff. Many of the partner organisations had already considered their priorities for the project, and it has been satisfying to see some of these translated into realities – for example, construction of a quarantine store on South Georgia, co-funded by SAIS and OTEP.

5) Build on and around other projects. There were many other projects related to invasive species underway in the UKOTs at the same time as SAIS. By making small additional contributions to their work, we were able to increase the outputs of each project, and use resources extremely efficiently. OTEP, Darwin and the EU, as well as JNCC and other funds, all have the potential to add value to biodiversity conservation projects in the UKOTs, and can complement each other perfectly.

There are many other lessons that we've learned in the course of SAIS, along with many others that were practical (does rabbit repellent really work?), and logistical (how do you ship a chipper to St Helena?). Managing the SAIS project was a great introduction



SAIS Strategy workshop attendees on Ascension Island. Photo: Clare Stringer

to work in the South Atlantic UKOTs, and I hope to be involved in many other successful projects in the coming years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the SAIS project partners – the St Helena Government, Ascension Island

Government, Tristan da Cunha Government, Falkland Islands Government, Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Falklands Conservation, and the St Helena National Trust. We could not have achieved anything without a strong partnership, and great cooperation from all agencies involved.

For more detail on the issue of invasive species in the UKOTs (especially the South Atlantic), a DVD film *Invaders of the UK Overseas Territories* has been produced, and a DVD with the final SAIS project

report, and other reports and documents is also available. If you are interested in obtaining either of these, please contact:

Clare Stringer, International Officer UKOTs, RSPB  
([clare.stringer@rspb.org.uk](mailto:clare.stringer@rspb.org.uk) / 01767 693015).

## Island Invasives: Eradication and Management – a New Zealand conference

In February this year, I attended a conference in Auckland, New Zealand on island invasives, where I presented a paper entitled *Earth, fire and water: applying novel techniques to eradicate the invasive plant, Procumbent Pearlwort Sagina procumbens, on Gough Island, a World Heritage Site in the South Atlantic*. The paper, co-authored with colleagues from Australia, the Netherlands, Tristan da Cunha and the United Kingdom, engendered interest, and a useful suggestion of a new technique to trial was made by a conference participant. As well as mechanical removal and dumping at sea, plants, seeds and their sites are treated with herbicide, killed by application of hot water from a specially-designed boiler and by flame from hand-held gas torches. New techniques adopted include using a portable pump to generate a high-pressure jet of water that strips affected areas of soil and peat down to bed rock and the application of salt water that has been shown to inhibit germination.

Other papers on invasives in UKOTs presented at the conference included:

- Rhon Connor (Department of Environment, Anguilla) & Karen Varnham: Of rats and birds: creating a seabirds' paradise on Dog Island, Anguilla.
- Richard Cuthbert (RSPB) and colleagues: The impact of invasive house mice and plans for their eradication at the UK Overseas Territory of Gough Island, Tristan da Cunha.
- Clare Stringer (RSPB) and colleagues: Developing a regional invasive species strategy for the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories.
- Karen Varnham (University of Bristol) and colleagues: Involving the community in rodent control on Tristan da Cunha.

In addition, UKOT posters were:

- Sally Poncet (Beaver Island Landcare Group, Falklands) and colleagues: A decade of eradications in the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.
- Clare Stringer and colleagues: Improving “internal” biosecurity in the Falkland Islands – a pragmatic approach.

The five-day conference was held at the University of Auckland under the auspices of the University's Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity ([www.cbb.org.nz](http://www.cbb.org.nz)) and IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group ([www.issg.org](http://www.issg.org)). I found it a most enjoyable and well-run conference that allowed like-minded researchers and managers to come together to meet and to discuss what really matters: protecting islands from the outside world. An excellent choice of excursions was offered, giving delegates the opportunity to see New Zealand's world-leading alien eradication programmes in action on islands in the Hauraki Gulf.

Visit [www.cbb.org.nz/conferences.asp](http://www.cbb.org.nz/conferences.asp) for information on – and abstracts from – the *Island Invasives: Eradication and Management* Conference. Submitted manuscripts are currently undergoing a peer-review and editorial process prior to their publication in a proceedings volume.

I thank the Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch University for part-funding my attendance, and Nigel and Claudia Adams for their kind hospitality in Auckland.

John Cooper, Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa



# South Georgia rodents – the end is nigh?

South Georgia lies about 1400 km east-south-east of the Falkland Islands, in tempestuous Antarctic seas, and occupies an area of roughly 3500 km<sup>2</sup>. The landscape is striking, and partially ice-bound, with more than 20 mountain peaks exceeding 2000m and numerous glaciers overlooking the Tussac-dominated lowlands.

Captain Cook was the first explorer to land on South Georgia, in 1775. His expedition was soon followed by generations of whalers and seal-hunters, who exploited the natural resources of the island remorselessly and relentlessly for nearly two centuries. Their impacts on the animals they hunted were profound – millions of seals and hundreds of thousands of whales were slaughtered. Evidence still remains of the hunters' activities, amongst the deserted settlements on South Georgia, which supported some 2000 people when whaling was at its peak, but now has no permanent human presence. Populations of whales and seals have recovered to varying extents, since over-exploitation and wildlife protection measures brought an end to industrial-scale hunting. However, the legacy of the hunters is apparent on South Georgia in other ways. Their ships accidentally introduced rodents which, despite the harsh conditions, multiplied and spread through the vegetated parts of the island. They now occupy areas throughout most of the north-eastern coast, and the southern coast at the north-western end of the island. The brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*, in particular, has had an appalling impact on ground-nesting birds, as a prolific predator of eggs and chicks. Like the seals before them, millions have been killed. Various important seabirds, including smaller petrel species, have been affected, as well as landbirds, notably the South Georgia pipit *Anthus antarcticus* (which is unique to the island). Many species have now been virtually excluded from areas where rats occur – 70% of its former habitat, in the case of the pipit.



Endemic South Georgia pipit.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Careful studies have suggested that it is feasible technically to rid South Georgia of rodents. In recent years, the size of islands on which eradication projects have been successfully undertaken has gradually increased. South Georgia is many times larger than any other tackled to date,

and might be a step too far if local conditions were not unusually favourable in a number of ways. Rodents are present at lower densities than on most islands, and there are fewer native animals to compete for bait. Crucially, glaciers, mountains and coastal inlets provide natural dispersal barriers in the landscape that confine rodents to discrete areas. However, as the global climate warms, the glaciers are retreating. As they do, separate pockets of the rodent population will be able to merge, making the task of eliminating them much harder. In addition, the rats may spread to currently uninfested areas.

With the clock ticking, over the last five years, the South Georgia Heritage Trust has been co-ordinating studies, developing plans and raising funds for rodent removal. Proposals have been submitted to the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands for approval, which was conditionally granted in early June 2010. The Operational Plan for 2011 seeks to eradicate rodents from Greene and Thatcher Peninsulas, and a headland west of Mercer Bay, three blocks of land on the north coast of the island. From a logistics base to be established at Grytviken, the work is to be



Glaciers, mountains and coastal inlets divide South Georgia into smaller "islands" of unglaciated land. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

undertaken during February and March, when weather conditions are most favourable. This will be the first phase of an island-wide eradication to be completed by 2014. It is intended to spread poisoned bait by helicopter, augmented with bait distributed by hand around settlements.

A thorough Environmental Impact Assessment, undertaken as part of the preparations for this project, notes possible risks to the endemic South Georgia pintail *Anas georgica georgianus*. Fortunately, trials suggest that this bird is not readily attracted to the poisoned bait, but careful monitoring is part of the programme to ensure that risks to this non-target species in particular are minimised. The non-native reindeer present on South Georgia may also take bait intended for rodents. However, the removal of reindeer is already being considered, as part of a separate exercise. Also, helicopter flights have the potential to disturb other wildlife, including penguin and petrel colonies, but it is intended that particular care will be taken when operating in areas occupied by such species.

As well as marking a major achievement in the global effort against invasive species, providing important lessons for other islands, the removal of rodents from South Georgia promises to trigger recovery of the local environment to something approaching its natural condition. The eradication of rats will pave the way for millions of birds to return to breed on South Georgia, in some cases from the small, rat-free offshore islands to which they have been confined by predation pressures on the mainland. Recovery is also expected to be seen in the native vegetation, and in populations of often overlooked groups such as invertebrates. This would be an important step in the restoration of native biodiversity in one of the UK's most spectacular and remote Overseas Territories.

The Operational Plan for the first phase of this project can be found at: <http://sgisland.gs/download/SGHT/SGHT%20Operational%20Plan%204%20April%202010.pdf>

The Environmental Impact Assessment can be found at: <http://sgisland.gs/download/SGHT/EIA.pdf>



Pair of endemic South Georgia pintails. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



# World Heritage Sites: UK review and UKOTs/CDs

Sites designated under the World Heritage Convention are of 'outstanding universal value' for their cultural or natural heritage or both. There are 28 World Heritage Sites (WHSs) designated by UK, but only four are for natural features and one for both cultural and natural. Only three of the 28 are in UK Overseas Territories, two natural (Henderson Island, Pitcairn; Gough & Inaccessible Islands, Tristan da Cunha) and one cultural (Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda). There are no designated WHSs in the Crown Dependencies.

In late 2008/early 2009, the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) [now Department of Culture, Olympics, Media & Sport, DCOMS] consulted on issues relating to the World Heritage Convention. UKOTCF made a submission, raising points relevant to UKOTs/CDs. With very little announcement (and apparently no notification to those who had made submissions), the report arising from the consultation and a UK Government response were subsequently published.

The report of DCMS's consultants, *World Heritage for the Nation: Identifying, Protecting and Promoting our World Heritage*, and included the following:

## 2.6 POLICY FOR WORLD HERITAGE IN THE UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES (OTs) and CROWN DEPENDENCIES (CDs)

*The Review has highlighted the fact that policy issues for the OTs and CDs are rather different to those for mainland UK Sites.*

*It is felt that:*

- *WH status has particular importance to the OTs/CDs, which are easily overlooked, both in the UK and internationally.*
- *the natural and cultural heritage of the OTs is often very distinctive from, located far away from, and (particularly in the case of biodiversity) of greater international importance than that of the 'domestic' UK. The arrangement by which potential WHSs in the OTs and CDs are nominated under the UK Tentative List is in some respects seen as problematic, as it may not fully take into account the different context that applies in these territories, in particular with regard to protection regimes.*
- *the concept of managing UKOT sites as if they were WHSs has been advanced, and even enshrined in relevant documents, for South Georgia and Chagos archipelago.*

*However,*

- *of the over £268 million allocated to WHSs since 1994, none has been allocated to Sites on the UKOTs*

*it was felt that DCMS is spending very little on Sites on the OTs because it believes that they are the responsibility of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The FCO, however, has little biodiversity expertise and few resources to support conservation work*

## 7.3.3 THE UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES and CROWN DEPENDENCIES

*It was pointed out that the OTs and CDs are a special case, with natural Sites in the OTs urgently requiring increased funding for their management because of problems of invasive alien species. OT administrations such as Tristan da Cunha and Pitcairn Island do not have the budgets to deal with these problems. Without these resources, it was felt that there is the real possibility that Sites will be eligible for listing on the WH in Danger List.*

*It was suggested that:*

- *there should be increased resources allocated to the OTs through the opening up of National Lottery funds, not currently available to them.*

*- confusion in the lottery bodies between UKOTs/CDs (which are UK territory) and Commonwealth countries (which are not) needs to be addressed.*

In January 2010, the UK Government published its response.

UK can nominate up to two sites per year, but plans to propose designation of fewer than this. No site can be nominated for WHS status unless it is on the nation's 'Tentative List' (TL). UK last revised its TL in 1999, and now proposes to issue a new TL in 2011. In order for a site to be considered for this, an application form needs to be completed. These forms and guidance became available in mid-March 2010, and had to be returned by 11 June! This short time-slot, following over a year's review by Government, did not of course allow much time for hard-pressed personnel in UKOTs and CDs to address the under-representation of sites in their territories. Furthermore, sites on the 1999 TL which had not yet been designated needed to re-apply to stay on the new TL. This included two proposed sites in the UKOTs, both cultural (Fountain Cavern, Anguilla; The Fortress of Gibraltar).

In order to facilitate participation by UKOTs/CDs in this exercise, UKOTCF advised those which had undesignated sites on the current TL and those where UKOTCF was aware of interest in possible designations. A note was also put on the home-page of [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org), where the consultation report and the UK Government

response were also posted, as some problems with the DCMS web-site caused these documents to become unavailable during much of the short period for applications.

Aware of the lack of in-house expertise on UKOTs/CDs available to the Department, and of the new Government's wish to make more use of NGOs, UKOTCF remains available to assist DCOMS with consideration of proposed additions to the TL and to promote World Heritage status for UKOT/CD sites.



*Spectacled Petrel, one of two bird species breeding only on Inaccessible Island, and of several only on the World Heritage Site of Gough and Henderson Islands, Tristan da Cunha. More funding is urgently needed for conservation work to safeguard the unique wildlife of this Site. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

# Chagos Marine Protected Area announced

The front page of *Forum News* 35 reported the public consultation by UK Government over a Marine Protected Area for the Chagos Archipelago. Formally constituted as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), the archipelago consists of 55 tiny islands which sit in a quarter of a million square miles of the world's cleanest seas. On 1st April 2010, the then UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, announced the creation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the British Indian Ocean Territory. This will include a 'no-take' marine reserve where commercial fishing will be banned.

Marking the announcement, David Miliband said: "I am today instructing the Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory to declare a Marine Protected Area. The MPA will cover some quarter of a million square miles and its establishment will double the global coverage of the world's oceans under protection. Its creation is a major step forward for protecting the oceans, not just around BIOT itself, but also throughout the world. This measure is a further demonstration of how the UK takes its international environmental responsibilities seriously.

"The territory offers great scope for research in all fields of oceanography, biodiversity and many aspects of climate change, which are core research issues for UK science.

"I have taken the decision to create this marine reserve following a full consultation, and careful consideration of the many issues and interests involved. The response to the consultation was impressive both in terms of quality and quantity. We intend to



*Endangered Coconut Crab, Chagos Archipelago. Many respondents to the consultation noted the urgent need also for ecological restoration and conservation on the land areas. Photo: Chagos Conservation Trust*

continue to work closely with all interested stakeholders, both in the UK and internationally, in implementing the MPA.

"I would like to emphasise that the creation of the MPA will not change the UK's commitment to cede the Territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes and it is, of course, without prejudice to the outcome of the current, pending proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights."

The FCO statement continues: "The Chagos Islands have belonged to Britain since 1814 (The Treaty of Paris) and are constituted as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Only Diego Garcia, where there is a military base, is currently inhabited (by military personnel and employees).

"The idea of making the British Indian Ocean Territory an MPA has the support of an impressive range of UK and international environmental organisations coming together under the auspices of the Chagos Environment Network to help enhance the environmental protection in BIOT. Also, well over 90% of those who responded to the consultation made clear that they supported greater marine protection.

"Pollutant levels in Chagos waters and marine life are exceptionally low, mostly below detection levels at 1 part per trillion using the most sensitive instrumentation available, making it an appropriate global reference baseline.

"Scientists also advise us that BIOT is likely to be key, both in research and geographical terms, to the repopulation of coral systems along the East Coast of Africa and hence to the recovery in marine food supply in sub-Saharan Africa. BIOT waters will continue to be patrolled by the territory's patrol vessel, which will enforce the MPA conditions."

UKOTCF made a submission to the consultation, supporting the MPA, recognising also that reconsideration of details would be necessary should exiled Chagossians ever resettle in the islands. UKOTCF therefore welcomes the announcement noting that, whatever the future arrangements for the Archipelago, it is sensible to conserve the exceptional marine systems - for their intrinsic value, for study, as a source area for the stocks fished off East Africa, and as a resource for sustainable use should there ever be resettlement.

At the time of writing, it is not known whether or when the new UK Government will put in place the legislation to implement the MPA.

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## Concerns continue about Jersey's first Ramsar Site

*Forum News* 34: 11 reported the threat to Jersey's first Wetland of International Importance designated under the Ramsar Convention from pollution associated with a proposed new waste incinerator.

In March 2010, the States [Government] of Jersey established a management authority for Jersey's four Ramsar Sites. This follows a scrutiny panel finding that the incinerator's impact had not been assessed fully by the States. The four sites designated under the Convention are the South-East coast, plus three newer offshore reef Sites. The Government said that the voluntary organisations who helped establish the Ramsar sites had been invited to join the new management team.

However, in June 2010, the local NGO, Save Our Shoreline (SOS), alleged that the Chairman of this new team had opposed

the Ramsar designation of the three newer Sites. SOS reported also that Jersey's authorities have applied for water discharge permits for contaminated and cooling water, the latter 12°C above sea temperature, equivalent to 24 Olympic swimming pools being emptied into the Ramsar Site every day. SOS points out that, under Article 3.2 of the Convention, the Secretariat should be given prior notice of such impacts on a Ramsar Site, but that this has not happened.

Things are more positive in some other territories. Colleagues in Pitcairn and Bermuda have requested UKOTCF help in advancing Ramsar designations of some of the proposed sites identified in the 2005 review that Defra commissioned from UKOTCF ([www.ukotcf.org/pubs/ramsarReview.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/pubs/ramsarReview.htm)). UKOTCF is supplying this further assistance on a voluntary basis.



## New Books

### The State of Wildlife

The book *Silent Summer: The State of Wildlife in Britain and Ireland* was published in May 2010 by Cambridge University Press. This includes a chapter on UKOTs (and, to some extent, CDs). The book is listed at about £30, but can be obtained via internet retailers for about £20.

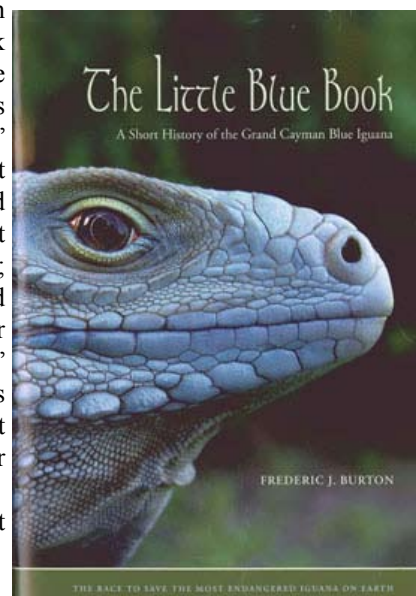
### UKOTs in Important Bird Areas in the Americas

Also published in May 2010, *Important Bird Areas Americas* provides a summary of 2450 IBAs described until 2009. This is an impressive compilation, representing a participative consensus on the most important sites for bird conservation in these two continents and the nearby islands. Sites have now been identified in all 57 countries or territories in the region. The book includes chapters on the Falklands and on the six UKOTs in the Wider Caribbean. These are condensed versions of the material already published by RSPB for UKOT IBAs and by Birdlife International for Caribbean IBAs. However, the new Caribbean UKOT chapter is useful in that it corrects some mapping errors uncorrected by the editors of the earlier books. Purchase details are not available at the time of writing, but the chapters are downloadable at [www.birdlife.org/action/science/sites/americas\\_ibas/americas-ibas-downloads.html](http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/sites/americas_ibas/americas-ibas-downloads.html)

### Blue Dragon

Published by IRCF (International Reptile Conservation Foundation) in April 2010 is *The Little Blue Book: A Short History of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana*. Award-winning conservation biologist Fred Burton has written a new book about saving one of the most endangered reptiles on Earth. The publishers' blurb: "a true story about the rescue of a noble and charismatic iguana that almost suffers extinction; an engaging read and a beacon of hope for conservation of reptiles" may well be true as Fred is the author. Listed at about US\$20; 180 pages; colour illustrated.

More information at [www.ircf.org/lbb/](http://www.ircf.org/lbb/)



## Darwin Initiative supports more UKOT projects

*Forum News* 34 reported announcements made at the UKOTCF-organised Cayman conference (in June 2009) by then Defra Biodiversity Minister Huw Irranca-Davies. These included plans under the UK Government's Darwin Initiative, for an ear-marking of funds for UKOT projects and the establishment of a new mechanism, the Overseas Territories Challenge Fund (to support scoping studies to help develop UKOT proposals for the main Darwin Initiative). Successful applications to the main Darwin Initiative (under its Round 17) were announced earlier this year, and the results of bids to the Challenge Fund have just been made available. So, this is a good time to review the range of work supported most recently by Darwin in the UKOTs.

### Main awards

Five Round 17 projects involve activities in UKOTs. There is support for Durrell's on-going work to help Montserrat address threats (including the pathogenic chytrid fungus) to the Critically Endangered mountain chicken frog *Leptodactylus fallax*. Enhancement of local capacity for biodiversity conservation is the focus of an award to the St Helena National Trust. In Cayman, a team led by John Turner (University of Bangor) will work towards enhancing the marine protected area system. Rodent eradication is the theme of a project led by RSPB for the Falklands, South Georgia and Tristan da Cunha. Finally, British Antarctic Survey will lead on a project to map the benthic biodiversity of South Georgia. In addition to these main awards, a post-project grant to the University of Swansea will support further work on the protection of galaxiid fish from invasive salmonids, including in the Falklands.

### Challenge Fund awards

Seven projects have attracted support under the new Challenge Fund, encompassing a broad spread of UKOTs. In the Caribbean, the TCI Government's Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (see p. 12) have a project to advance the implementation of management plans and expand the designation of Ramsar

sites (Wetlands of International Importance). In the Pacific, Southampton University will be helping to develop a community-led marine management action plan for the Pitcairn Islands. In the Indian Ocean, the Zoological Society of London will lead on a project to enhance management of the BIOT marine environment. Invertebrate conservation is the focus of a project for St Helena, led by Buglife in collaboration with their former Biodiversity Projects Manager, Jamie Roberts - now Director of the St Helena National Trust. Three projects based in Territories further south in the Atlantic are concerned with larger animals. In the Falklands, British Antarctic Survey will lead a project on sea-lions, and Falklands Conservation will be undertaking work to enhance conservation of raptors by reducing conflicts with sheep farming. The final project, led by the Institute of Zoology, encompasses the Falklands, South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands and British Antarctic Territory, and seeks to develop a system for automating seabird counts from standardised photographs contributed by volunteers.

Further information on the Darwin Initiative is available at: [darwin.defra.gov.uk](http://darwin.defra.gov.uk)

## British Birdwatching Fair 2010

UKOTCF will again have a stand at the British Birdwatching Fair, at Eggleston Nature Reserve, Rutland, Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd August 2010.

The Fair is the world's first and largest international birdwatching event, and includes also much on other wildlife. For those who can tear themselves away from UKOTCF's stand, there will be hundreds of other stands selling the latest products for wildlife enthusiasts. You'll find everything, from scopes to sculptures, binoculars to bird food, eGuides to eco-holidays - as well as a programme of lectures. Why not drop in if you are in UK?

More information at [www.birdfair.org.uk](http://www.birdfair.org.uk)

# UKOTs in international conference on the benefits of nature

UKOTCF gave one of the main talks at the international conference *Nature-What's in it For Me?*, which centred on the benefits which nature provides for humans. The event, organised by the UK Committee for IUCN, was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in April 2010.

The talk, entitled *Ecosystem management for human well-being in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*, gave the opportunity to introduce the UKOTs and CDs to an audience of leading conservatists and others from Britain and across the global IUCN network. This included not just the outstanding world importance of wildlife in the UKOTs, the threats to it and the actions being taken. It addressed also cases in which UKOTs provide an example to others of conservation for sustainable use as well as other cases of more challenging situations.

The feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive, but, despite there being some representatives participating in the conference from the business, health and academic sectors, some of the observations made were around 'conservationists still talking to themselves'.

Accordingly, in addition to the usual outputs of the conference, Chris Mahon (Chair, IUCN UK National Committee) and his colleagues produced, in time for International Day of Biodiversity 22nd May, and as a contribution to 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, a less conventional output. This presents a few key messages, inspired by the conference, in a simple, readable, and attractively visual form, not aimed at 'the usual suspects' but at a wider audience. The report can be seen at [www.iucn-uk.org](http://www.iucn-uk.org).

*The conference participants in front of the venue, Dynamic Earth, in front of Arthur's Seat, the ancient volcanic plug in Edinburgh (bottom). Below: Mike Pienkowski gives the UKOTCF presentation. (Photos: Paul Clarke, RSK Group)*



## Nevis helps out the Caribbean UKOTs

On 1-5 March 2010, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) and the Commonwealth Foundation partnered with the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society (NHCS) to implement a workshop under the Darwin Initiative *Building civil society capacity for conservation in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs)* project. The five-day event was held at the Mt Nevis Hotel and concerned primarily learning techniques for successful funding strategies and other methods that grass-roots organizations within the region have used to establish and develop their programmes.

Also included were field trips around Nevis to meet with local stakeholders, tour museums and environmental areas of interest. The aim of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), including the National Trusts, in the five Caribbean UKOTs (Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and Turks & Caicos Islands) to support implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in their respective Territories. The project sought also to strengthen links between organisations in the UKOTs and similar ones in other Caribbean islands. These include NHCS, which was used during the workshop as a model of what could be accomplished by a small grass roots community organization. (Readers may know Paul Diamond as the voluntary Director of Sandwatch. His day-job is as NHCS Senior Technical Officer - and he made a great facilitator for this workshop.)

A short video interview with Nicole Leotaud, Director of CANARI, taken during the workshop can be found at [www.youtube.com/user/NevisHistorical](http://www.youtube.com/user/NevisHistorical)





# Biodiversity-related projects involving TCI's Department of Environment & Coastal Resources

Despite many challenges currently facing the Turks & Caicos Islands, the Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR) continues to work to safeguard and improve the TCI environment. Following a recent visit, Ann Pienkowski has been advised of a large number and variety of projects, either on-going or in the pipeline, which DECR is taking forward. These are summarized below. UKOTCF welcomes the renewed contact with DECR, and the opportunities that this offers for UKOTCF, through its volunteer network, to continue its long-standing support for environmental work in TCI.

## Ongoing DECR projects with international partners

**TCI National Vegetation Mapping Project / Terrestrial Habitat Mapping Project:** Mapping is underway of terrestrial plant communities (using an internationally recognized numerical system), geological formations, historical and cultural features, and other features of interest for use by TCI Government (TCIG).



(Funded by UK Government via the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, JNCC.) This builds on earlier work on North, Middle and East Caicos by UKOTCF and its partners, with support from the Darwin Initiative ([www.ukotcf.org/territories/turksCaicos.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/territories/turksCaicos.htm))

*Dry tropical forest and scrub, such as here on East Caicos, represents one of the most globally threatened ecosystems.*

*Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

**Caribbean Hub cross territories lionfish monitoring, eradication, and awareness raising:** This project is aimed at supporting the efforts of UK Overseas Territories in combating invasive Pacific lionfish *Pterois volitans*, through raising awareness, equipment purchase and promotion of lionfish as food. The project hopes to control the increase and spread of this species. (In partnership with the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands, with funding from UK Government via JNCC)

**Building capacity and awareness to save the National Tree of the Turks and Caicos Islands** (OTEP TCI 703 – see also p. 17 of this issue of *Forum News*): Ongoing project to protect the Caicos pine *Pinus caribaea* var. *bahamensis* from extinction, involving habitat management through various silvicultural treatments, genetic studies, increasing understanding of pine and scale insect range (GIS mapping), establishment of long-term monitoring of tree populations on each island, eventual re-introduction, building public awareness, and increasing international understanding of pine scale infestations. (Project partners are Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) Kew, The Nature Conservancy, Bahamas National Trust, Bahamas Department of Agriculture, and US Forest Service. The need was identified during earlier project work coordinated by UKOTCF and supported by OTEP, which led to the identification

of the invasive pest. Consequent work was begun with funding from the TCI Conservation Fund, and managed by Turks & Caicos National Trust (TCNT). The continuing project now has three years of funding from OTEP.)

**Iguana Monitoring:** Ongoing work monitoring relocated and source populations of Turks & Caicos rock iguanas *Cyclura carinata carinata*, including reproductive rates, individual animal records, population levels, impacts of mammal populations and development, and genetic studies. (Project partners are San Diego Zoo, Caribbean Wildlife Foundation, and Fort Worth Zoo, with some funding from San Diego Zoo and Caribbean Wildlife Foundation.)

**Snake & Lizard Genetic Studies:** Genetic sampling continues of TCI's endemic reptiles, including the curly-tail lizard *Leiocephallus psamodromus*, sphere-toed (dwarf) geckos *Sphaerodactylus caicosensis* and *S. underwoodi*, barking gecko *Aristelliger hechti*, pygmy boas *Tropidophis greenwayi*, and rainbow boa *Epicrates c. chrysogaster*, to establish theories of origin and speciation in the region. (Project partners are San Diego Zoo, the University of Tennessee and R. Graham Reynolds.)



*Pygmy boa: this species (comprising two subspecies) is unique to TCI. At about the size of a pencil, this is the smallest constrictor in the world. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

**Marine Turtle Conservation Project:** This project studies the genetic makeup of the turtle species found in TCI, along with their nesting habits and geography. The project looks also at the take of turtles and their consumption by the public. (Project partners are the Marine Conservation Society and the University of Exeter.)

**Rescue and Collection of Endemic and Endangered Plant Species for Biodiversity Conservation:** This project aims to collect and/or rescue at least 20 endemic and endangered terrestrial plant species from natural habitats that are in immediate danger of being destroyed. The coordinate system for the location of collection/rescue will be recorded and indicated in the National GIS/ Terrestrial Habitat map. It also aims to develop species-specific propagation procedures for all rescued plants and finally to grow them in the DECR's Plant Biodiversity Conservation Nursery. (Funded by UK Government via JNCC)

**Implementation of Management Plans and Expansion of Ramsar Designations:** This is a project scoping and writing proposals to review and refine TCI Ramsar sites, with new inclusions based on earlier recommendations ([www.ukotcf.org/pubs/ramsarReview.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/pubs/ramsarReview.htm)), including Salinas and seabird cays. It will result in a fully developed Darwin Initiative grant application. (Funded by UK Government via the Darwin Initiative, Overseas Territories Challenge Fund.) This builds on earlier collaborations, including the 2005 review of potential and actual Ramsar sites when UKOTCF worked with DECR colleagues and others. It draws also on work by UKOTCF, DECR, TCNT and others on development and implementation of management plans.



Flamingoes are amongst the many resident and migrant species which depend on the Grand Turk Salinas and other internationally important wetlands in TCI. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

### Ongoing DECR project with external funding

**Development of an Energy Conservation Policy and Implementation Strategy for the Turks and Caicos Islands (OTEP TCI 701):** See summary on p. 17 of this issue of *Forum News*.

### Ongoing TCI Government DECR-resourced projects

**Coral Reef Monitoring:** This is an ongoing effort to track and monitor the health of the Turks & Caicos reefs.

**Reef Ball Project:** A restoration effort being undertaken in the islands since 2000 utilizes reef balls. In 2007, there were two sites with reef balls: Bight Park and Beaches, Providenciales. In 2008, the project was expanded to include Governor's Beach, Grand Turk. The project enhances the natural reef systems in the area and reduces the pressure on the natural systems as well as creating new snorkelling attractions.

**BioRock project:** This project seeks to restore corals reef in TCI. The technology behind the BioRock® is simple, and works by submerging a negatively charged cathode framework made up of construction-grade steel (in any desired shape) and a positively charged anode. With the structure in place, a low-voltage electric current, which is no risk to swimmers or divers, runs from the shore and across the steel, causing white limestone (calcium carbonate) to crystallize from seawater on to the framework. From here, stressed, bleached and damaged corals are attached to the reef using simple steel tie wire. The advantage of this technology is that corals transplanted to these structures grow faster and can survive exposure to higher temperatures, 16-50 times more than corals in a natural setting. This is particularly important given the impacts facing many coral reef ecosystems due to rising sea temperatures from global warming. One of the projects has been in place since 2006, and the second since 2007. (Funded jointly by the Conservation Fund, Oasis Divers Grand Turk and DECR.)

**Increasing Biodiversity of Coral Reefs by creating an *Acropora* nursery:** This project extends one of the existing BioRock projects to include a nursery area for *Acropora* corals and thus increase coral biodiversity in the Turks & Caicos Islands. It involves the collection of fragments of elkhorn *Acropora palmata* and staghorn *Acropora cervicornis* corals for transplantation on to new BioRock structures (already built and installed) where growth will be monitored. (This project extension enabled by funding from UK Government via JNCC.)

**Fin-fish biometrics data collection:** This project is focused on the collection of biometric information (full length of fish, fork length, individual weight, species name and where it was caught). It is hoped to use this information in the future to assess stocks of fish in TCI. This project was started in 2006.

**Establishing the Grand Turk Salinas as protected sites:** Desktop and field studies on the biodiversity, historical, socio-cultural, and ecotourism values of Salinas in Grand Turk to support their formal and effective protection. (DECR, in collaboration with other TCIG Departments.) UKOTCF has donated time, expertise and images to develop interpretative materials and to provide technical advice in support of this.

**Climate Change Policy:** To create a climate change policy for TCI, by DECR in collaboration with other TCIG Departments.

**Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA), Climate Change:** This seeks to build regional capacity to collect and analyze data and expand the overall knowledge base on climate change impacts and associated physical, social, environmental and economic vulnerabilities. The VCA methodology was developed to provide useable decision support information and tools to assist decision makers in matters related to climate change.

### Proposed DECR projects awaiting funding decisions or seeking funding

**Seed collection project:** Long-term conservation storage through seed banking of native plant species from TCI, focusing on national and regional endemic species; also seeking alternative long-term protection for species with recalcitrant (not-storable) seeds. (Project partners RBG Kew. Currently no funding, but potential support from RBG Kew Millennium Seed Bank)

**"Adopt a Mangrove" Climate Change and Restoration Project:** Project on mangrove-planting, public awareness and support for mangrove habitats. (Pardee, Ltd./Marsha Pardee)

**Invasive Alien Species (IAS) net:** This is project implementation and sharing network, aimed towards the integrated control of key invasive alien species in the Caribbean UKOTs. (Project partners: JNCC, BVI, Cayman, Anguilla, Bermuda, TCI; submitted on 20 March 2010 to EU.)

### Potential future endeavours for DECR include:

Wetland Monitoring - Monitoring water quality, bird use, and other aspects of wetlands, including factors that may lead to disease risks in birds;

Bird Monitoring - Establishing a regular bird monitoring programme for TCI, including outreach to encourage public volunteer monitoring efforts.



Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets at North Wells, Grand Turk - one of TCI's important wetlands. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski





The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum continues to provide aspects of communication management for OTEP. This is the twelfth in a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of UKOTCF, the content of this supplement is as agreed by the Forum with FCO and DFID.

This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes summaries of the projects that were successful in the 2010 bidding round as well as a report from a project funded in an earlier round. OTEP welcomes jointly funded projects, so that some articles could equally occur in the OTEP supplement or the main section of *Forum News*, as is the case in this issue.

Further information on some projects (including outputs in cases where these have been supplied by project managers) can be found in the OTEP section of [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

## Successful Project Proposals 2010

At the time of going to press in June, OTEP had not confirmed final approval for the project marked \* which had been approved in March subject to individual conditions.

### Enhancing CITES implementation in Anguilla (OTEP ANG 701)

This project will enable effective implementation of Anguilla's Trade in Endangered Species Act (TESA), the local legislation that gives effect in Anguilla to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora (CITES), and compliance with CITES requirements. Current TESA implementation is minimal. In order to effectively implement TESA and comply with the complex requirements of CITES, Anguilla has identified the need to build the capacity of its officials in a way that is tailored to the island's specific needs.

*Karim Hodge, Director, Department of Environment, Government of Anguilla, [karim.hodge@gov.ai](mailto:karim.hodge@gov.ai)*

### Organic Soil Amelioration for Enhancing Anguilla's Agricultural Adaptation to Climate Change (OTEP ANG 703)

This project will develop an effective policy document that describes the most sustainable land management practices for commercial and traditional agricultural production. These will develop current farming practices to increase crop yields and soil stability, reduce water use, and diversify crop production, to increase overall food security. The practices outlined within the document will promote agriculture's contribution to national GDP, the conservation of arable land, the provision of a more diverse economy and the enhancement of national agricultural resilience to climate change.

*C. Andre Samuel, Coordinator, % Karim Hodge, Director, Department of Environment, Government of Anguilla, [karim.hodge@gov.ai](mailto:karim.hodge@gov.ai)*

### Seagrass Restoration: A Tool for Mitigating Loss of Ecosystem Services (OTEP BER 703)

Climate change is exacerbated by the loss of carbon storage capacity through human activities. The significant decline of seagrass meadows, critical marine carbon sinks, calls for restoration measures.

This project aims to: improve the health and extent of Bermuda's seagrass meadows; provide the tools for mitigating local coastal development activities impacting seagrass meadows; increase awareness of local decision-makers, enabling more sustainable policies.

*Dr Samia Sarkis, Department of Conservation Services, Government of Bermuda, [scsarkis@gov.bm](mailto:scsarkis@gov.bm)*



*Seagrass meadow, Walsingham Bay, Bermuda.  
Photo: Dr Anne Glasspool*

## Capacity-building for Environmental Education through Curriculum Development and Teacher Training, British Virgin Islands (OTEP BVI 701\*)

This project aims to foster enhanced environmental stewardship and subsequent resilience to climate change's effects through a greater understanding of the critical relationship between marine and coastal environments and the economy. By providing access to on-water, hands-on training, and by developing a BVI-specific coastal ecology curriculum, this project will build capacity for marine sciences education and integrate local marine culture/heritage with ecological principles. Outputs will provide a basis for sustainable marine sciences programmes both in the BVI and other Caribbean UKOTs.

*Susan Zaluski, Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society,  
susan@jvdps.org*

## Glass Furnace, British Virgin Islands (OTEP BVI 702)

The production of a glass furnace will reduce glass waste, create employment and promote skills development, enhance community awareness that waste is a resource, and initiate funding for future green initiatives in the British Virgin Islands.

*Charlotte McDevitt, Green VI, mcdevittcharlotte@yahoo.co.uk*

## Cayman Sharks and Dolphins: Managing the Resource (OTEP CAY 701)

This project will investigate the movements of reef shark species around the Cayman Islands, the effects of attracting reef sharks for shark-watching tourism, the feasibility of tracking larger potentially dangerous sharks to provide a real-time alert system at sensitive tourist areas, and the occurrence of specified cetacean species in offshore sea areas. The study will greatly assist the Cayman Islands to protect these key components of their marine biodiversity and support sustainable, economically beneficial use of these iconic species.

*Dr Mauvis Gore, Marine Conservation International, mauvisgore@netscape.net*

## An Action Plan for the Conservation of Falkland Island Rockhopper Penguins (OTEP FAL702)



*Rockhopper Penguins swim at New Island, Falkland Islands.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

This project will produce a Species Action Plan for the southern rockhopper penguin in the Falkland Islands. It will progress priority conservation actions for this Vulnerable (IUCN 2009) seabird, with its rapidly declining populations, and will address recommendations from the International Rockhopper Penguin Workshop (2008) that have implications across its breeding range. The capacity of Falklands Conservation to advise government and industry on mitigation measures and undertake direct conservation activities will be substantially enhanced.

*Craig Dockrill, Chief Executive Officer, Falklands Conservation,  
info@conservation.org.fk*

## Integration of Renewable in Small Isolated Grid, Montserrat (OTEP MNT 701)

This projects aims to engage a consultancy to review the national grid and advise Montserrat Utilities Limited (MUL) on the most cost effective strategies required to enhance its infrastructure to accommodate renewable energy sources. Recommendations should include the relevant technologies required to develop and integrate renewable energy sources and the resource skills and capacity to implement an effective system. Proposals will be developed for funding, including tender documentation for necessary equipment. A pricing structure suitable for these developments with reference to the small customer base will also be developed.

*Peter White, Montserrat Utilities Limited, peter.white@mul.ms*

## Clean Love, Montserrat (OTEP MNT 704)

This project aims to promote the growth of healthy trees and shrubs through elimination of invasive *Cuscuta* sp. (Love Vine) at a time when Montserrat has experienced significant loss of vegetation and needs to preserve natural plants and promote local food production.

*Rev. Dr. Joan Delsol Meade, Montserrat Christian Council,  
joandelsol\_meade@hotmail.com*

## Maintaining the World Heritage Status of Henderson Island, Pitcairn Islands (OTEP PIT 703)

RSPB and partners are preparing for an operation to eradicate rats from Henderson Island. This project will provide resources to employ and equip the leaders of an expert eradication team. If the operation is successful, it will contribute to preservation of the island's World Heritage status and secure the long term future of Henderson's endemic wildlife and breeding seabirds which are threatened by Polynesian rats through predation, competition for food



*The plateau (raised atoll) at the north end of Henderson Island, above the reef, beach and beach-backing vegetation.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



and/or broader ecosystem change. Though uninhabited, Henderson is valued by the Pitcairn Islanders who will gain widespread recognition for supporting the eradication, and potentially increased revenue from responsible tourism. The Pitcairn Government, and especially the Natural Resources Division, will be key partners in this project.

*Clare Stringer, International Officer UKOTs, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL. Tel: +44 1767 693015, clare.stringer@rspb.org.uk*

## **Identifying Important and Vulnerable Marine Areas for Conservation at South Georgia (OTEP SGS 701)**

This project will identify important and vulnerable marine habitats at South Georgia that require conservation in order to better preserve the unique characteristics of this fragile ecosystem. Based on this information, we will liaise with the Government of South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI), the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (Polar Regions Unit), the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators, NGOs and fishing companies, to develop a representative and comprehensive network of marine protected areas. This will benefit GSGSSI in the sustainable management of the South Georgia Maritime Zone, through the conservation of habitats and species in the context of climate variability and change, and pressures from local, sustainable fisheries and tourism.

*Dr Phil Trathan, British Antarctic Survey, pnt@bas.ac.uk*



*King Penguin in feeding areas at sea off South Georgia.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

## **Development of an Energy Conservation Policy and Implementation Strategy for the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI 701)**

This project aims to develop a National Energy Policy and Implementation Strategy. It will focus on reducing the islands' dependence on fossil fuels, and increase energy-efficiency by promoting energy-efficient technologies and usage. The Policy document will be the first step towards aligning Government's policies, legislation, procedures and guidelines in a systematic approach for fostering wide public support. It is expected that more sustainable patterns of power consumption and production will be established for the benefit of TCI's population, the TCI Government and business community.

*Wesley Clerveaux, Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR), Turks & Islands Caicos Government, wclerveaux@gov.tc*



*Caicos Pine trees killed or damaged by the introduced pest, Middle Caicos. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

## **Building capacity and awareness to save the National Tree of the Turks and Caicos Islands (OTEP TCI703)**

This project aims to implement measures to avert the extinction of the critically endangered Caicos Pine *Pinus caribaea* var. *bahamensis*, the TCI National Tree, and maintain the ecological integrity of the Pine ecosystem. More specifically: to control the pine scale insect, to propagate healthy pine seedlings, enhance local capacity, collate important data, and provide basic infrastructure to support the project. A systemic insecticide program and the use of controlled fire will be implemented as management tools.

*Wesley Clerveaux, Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR), Turks & Caicos Islands Government, wvclerveaux@gov.tc*

## **Integrated Biodiversity Management Planning on Tristan da Cunha (OTEP TDC 701)**

The project will aim to continue capacity building efforts within the new Tristan da Cunha Conservation Department (formed in 2009). The Tristan Biodiversity Action Plan (2006-2010) will be reviewed and updated, and management plans will be developed for Tristan da Cunha (in specific areas) and Nightingale (for the whole island) through an island-led and managed process. Training will be delivered to Conservation Department staff and members of the Darwin team (Tristanians who received training in conservation work during a Darwin Initiative project on Tristan).

*Clare Stringer, International Officer UKOTs, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL. Tel: +44 1767 693015, clare.stringer@rspb.org.uk*



*Tristan Thrush  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*





## ARKive – UK Overseas Territories Chapters (XOT 701)

Utilising the world's best wildlife films, photographs and audio recordings, Wildscreen will create the UKOT Chapter on ARKive (see [www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org)). A minimum of 200 audio-visual species profiles will be created for free use online, with a selection of species profiled on an accompanying free DVD, so that these engaging resources can be used by UKOT environmental educational establishments, especially primary and secondary schools, within all territories. This unique multi-media communications and educational resource will help increase knowledge and understanding of the UKOTs' threatened and endemic biodiversity as well as its value in terms of the essential ecosystems services it provides.



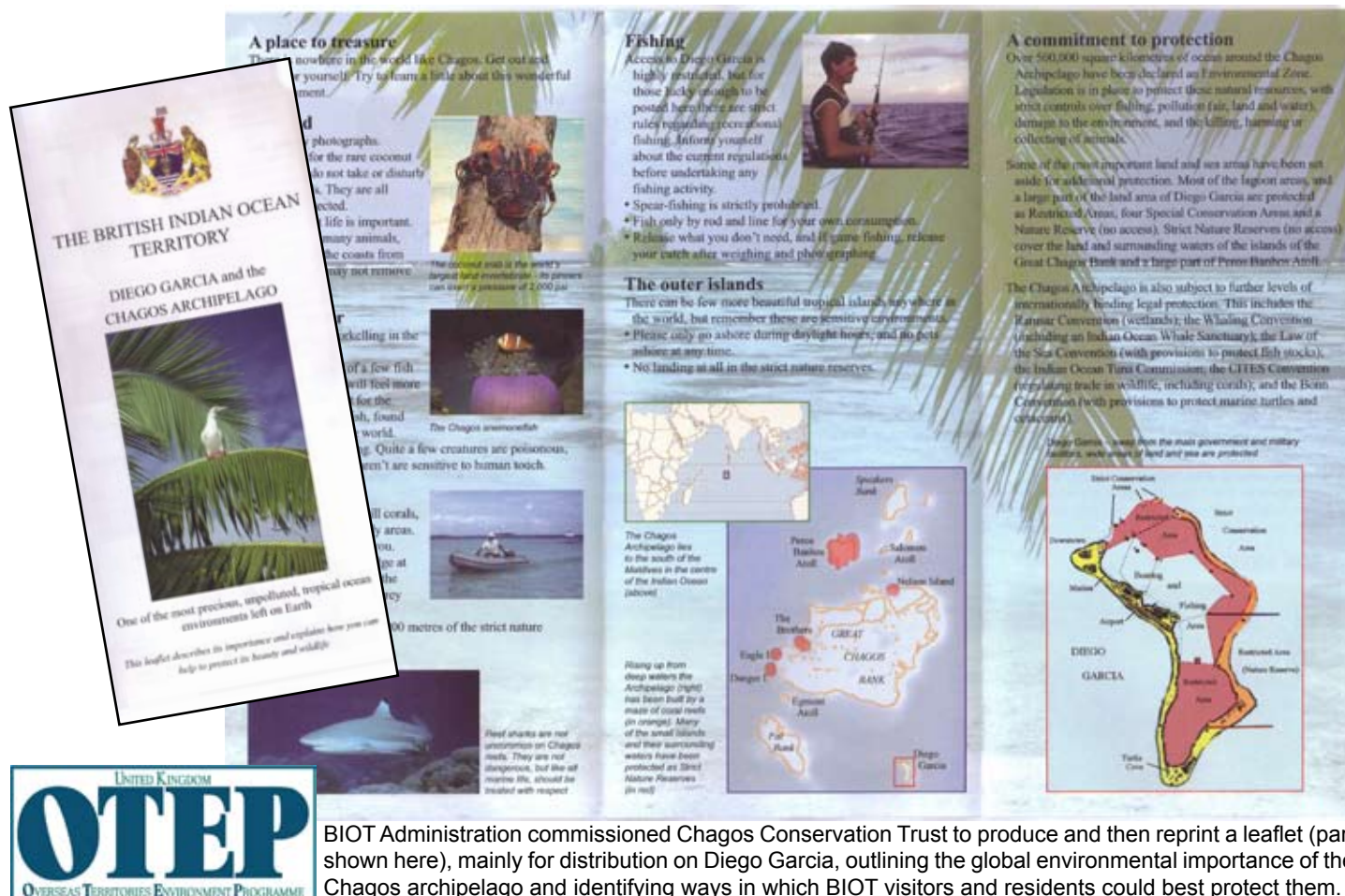
Harriet Nimmo,

Wildscreen, [harriet.nimmo@wildscreen.org.uk](mailto:harriet.nimmo@wildscreen.org.uk)

Introductory screen for an example species in Arkive: St Helena's Vulnerable and endemic Black Cabbage Tree

## Summary of completion for an earlier OTEP project

### BIOT Environmental Information Leaflet, British Indian Ocean Territory (OTEP BIO501)



BIOT Administration commissioned Chagos Conservation Trust to produce and then reprint a leaflet (part shown here), mainly for distribution on Diego Garcia, outlining the global environmental importance of the Chagos archipelago and identifying ways in which BIOT visitors and residents could best protect them.







*Henderson Fruit Dove (left) and flightless Henderson Rail, two of the Island's endemic bird species*  
Photos:  
Dr Mike Pienkowski



Despite a tricky and extremely wet landing, in heavy swells, Mike managed to get ashore on Henderson. In 2½ hours (rather than the 2-3 days originally planned), with the help of Pitcairner Pawl Warren, he was able to find and photograph three of the four endemic land birds. The seas around Henderson are rich in corals and fish, and are visited by Humpback Whales. About 6-8 individuals were resident off Henderson Island for a period of six weeks in August – September 2009, generating 91 sightings.

Onward then another 1½ days' motor, to Ducie – so far east that it is Easter Island's nearest neighbour. This low coral atoll is incredibly important for breeding seabirds. As on Oeno and Henderson Island, the petrels and shearwaters even nest on the

encouraged actively, and new developments such as the Eco-trail provide enhanced visitor experiences. The conservation of endemic species is given a high priority, as exemplified by the plant *Abutilon pitcairnense*, found only on Pitcairn Island. This species was considered extinct for many years, and was re-found as recently as 2003 by islander Carol Warren; see *Forum News* 35: 24 for news of further work on this species.

Local enterprises are flourishing, and much use is made of the internet for marketing and communication. Pitcairn is also looking to the future with consideration of alternative energy sources. It is extremely important that the UK Government continues to give the Pitcairn Islanders the support they identify as being necessary, to help their initiative and enterprise to flourish, and to enable them to safeguard their unique and incredibly important environment. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that although the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport have provided over £268 million to World Heritage Sites in the UK since 1994, none has been allocated to Sites in the UKOTs (see p. 9).

Pitcairn now has a buzz and dynamic atmosphere. The Islanders produce some of the best honey in the world (which can be purchased online or from Fortnum and Mason's), and have thriving arts and crafts industries, selling on cruise ships and through their websites. We look forward to continuing to work with them on helping to conserve their unique wildlife which, together with their cultural heritage, is the basis of the future economy and well-being.



*Humpback Whales close to Henderson Island. Photo: Steve Darroch*

ground rather than in burrows, as there are no predators. Therefore, it is incredibly important that the island is kept free from invasive rodents, following the successful removal of introduced Pacific rats from here and Oeno in 1997. This island is relatively frequently visited by cruise ships en route from Easter Island to Pitcairn and Tahiti, so some recognition in support of protection, e.g. through Ramsar designation, is important.

### Some impressions

Back on Pitcairn after our visit to the remote, uninhabited islands, we were able to follow up the earlier discussions. It is very encouraging to be able to report so many positive developments and initiatives for the Pitcairn Islands. Ways of implementing the environmental Managements Plans are being pursued actively. Designations of further sites as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention are underway. Sensitive tourism is being

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*Gray Reef Shark patrols over the coral reef and below SV Southern Cross, Ducie Island. Photo: Capt. Paul Green*