



CONSERVATION FORUM

# FORUM NEWS 37

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## Seven years on:

## Protected area project in TCI, BVI and Cayman starts

It seemed to participants a very historic event on 28-29 October 2010 when they gathered for the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee of the European Union-supported *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* project. The project proposal was coordinated in 2003 by UKOTCF, at the request of FCO and the governments and NGOs of the three UKOTs, and submitted at the end of that year.

Although the project passed all its stages for approval, usually involving lots of extra work, problems with European Commission procedures led to a delay of seven years before the various contracts could be signed. (It is interesting to note that the *South Atlantic Invasives Species Project* – often reported in these pages – which also started in discussions within UKOTCF and was funded from the same EU budget, applied 6 months after this project but, despite delays, started and has been completed before the present project reached contract stage.)

It was not surprising, therefore, that the first Project Steering Committee meeting started with thanks to Dr Mike Pienkowski and UKOTCF for continuing to co-ordinate the application, to Mr Delton Jones, TCI Permanent Secretary for Finance and Chairman of the Steering Committee, for his continued support for the project despite his widened responsibilities and the current challenges for TCI, to the three national trusts for their fortitude, and Ms Marlene Lamonth, EU Delegation Project Officer for guiding matters through EU procedures.

The main part of the grant provides support from the European Commission to each

of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and the Turks & Caicos National Trust for the work outlined below, and a similar amount to a consultancy firm to base a consultant full-time in TCI (where the administrative lead for the project lies) to advise on and monitor the UKOTs' implementation of the Commission's own elaborate financial procedures. A much smaller amount is supplied to UKOTCF to be responsible for the coordination of cross-territory activities of a technical nature, give advice in this area, and monitor and report on progress from a scientific/conservation aspect. The Trusts and UKOTCF have to make considerable contributions to the project from other resources.

Challenges remain, especially in that the project was designed to run for 3 years, followed by a couple of years to tidy up all reporting and accounting before the close of spend on the 9th European Development Fund (EDF9) on 31 December 2012. Because of the delays in reaching contract stage, this 3+2 year plan now has to be completed in 2 years. This will be taxing for the 3 UKOT partners, especially in view of the Commission's inflexible tendering and purchasing requirements (which do not vary with the size of a project, so that the ones required of this small project are the same as for a major construction project).

### Background

Like many other UKOTs, the British Virgin Islands (BVI), the Cayman Islands (CI) and the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) are particularly rich in biodiversity (of much greater global importance than that of the UK, despite their small extents). This biodiversity has served to underpin



Grand Cayman blue iguana. Photo: Michael Gore FRPS



Key West quail-dove, one of the special birds at Wade's Green dry tropical forest, Turks & Caicos Islands. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

sustainable livelihoods in these areas for many generations. Biodiversity also provides the potential to underpin continued and raised living standards in such areas, especially through sustainable tourism. These natural assets need both safeguarding and management, in order to provide the features which offer the attractions on which sustainable tourism can be based and which also maintain the quality of life and culture of local communities.

The natural areas on which such sustainable development depends are under threat from non-sustainable developments, which tend to benefit short-term interests and foreign corporations, rather than the long-term interests of local communities and the environment. The development and implementation of reasoned management plans, which also address adequately the potential sustainable economic benefits these areas may offer, are therefore critical. The development of such plans in small island economies, like the UKOTs, is demanding in resources and expertise - and implementation even more so.

The Governments of the UK Caribbean Overseas Territories, indicating their commitments to conserve threatened globally important biodiversity and support those communities who wish to continue sustainable livelihoods based on traditional uses of biodiversity, have joined various international environmental agreements. The Governments are committed to the implementation of environmental programmes geared towards supporting effective biodiversity conservation and making tourism more environmentally sustainable. As such, environmental aspects are integrated into good governance of the territories via their Environment Charters, signed with the United Kingdom in 2001. The Environment Charters are in keeping with the White Paper *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity* in which the UK Government outlined its expectations for good governance in the Overseas Territories of the Caribbean region by encouraging these measures which are needed for the preservation of the environment, the promotion of high standards of financial accountability, respect for human rights and compliance with the rule of law.

Project activities are aimed at two problems, which will be addressed by an integrated approach. One consists of the threats to critically endangered ecosystems and the other is the lack of alternative types of economic development to high-impact ones (including tourism). This project will forge a dual path to biodiversity protection through management of protected areas and stimulation of land-based eco-tourism which is currently under-developed. The elements which constitute this project have been piloted in the BVI, CI and TCI. Each territory will be able to build on these, enhanced by the sharing of expertise and training between the environmental trusts located in the three countries. Linkages will be facilitated by UKOTCF.



*A common Caribbean threat to biodiversity and ecosystem services: built development destroying land and marine ecosystems, in this case at Grand Cayman. Photo: Fred Burton*

### Project purpose and activities

The grant was made in support of the implementation of activities geared at achieving the overall project objective of fulfilling environmental agreements and, in so doing, support sustainable development in BVI, CI and TCI. The purpose of the project is to implement integrated management plans for conservation management and sustainable use of protected areas and their surroundings.

The activity areas are:

- Put in place facilities for conducting ecologically sustainable visitor tours with trained staff to generate self-sustaining income. This will be developed by sharing expertise and experience between the three participating countries.
- Provide and implement the use of environmental educational and public awareness material. This will involve consultations with local people. Materials will be designed to help influence decision-makers, including developers and planning authorities.
- Implement conservation measures to provide increased protection for key vulnerable ecosystems; centering on globally threatened tropical dry forest, combined with the particular features of the country. This will be linked with visitor facilities and educational and public awareness material.
- Develop management plans for key protected and vulnerable areas, which will address species recovery issues, maintenance of biodiversity, control of human-introduced exotic invasive species, habitat restoration and management of visitors and conduct supporting research.
- Sharing of expertise and training between the three territories, to enable efficient and cost-effective implementation of desired outcomes in each territory.



*Participants in the first Project Steering Committee Meeting of the project on Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies on 28th & 29th October 2010 at the National Environment Centre, Providenciales, Turks & Caicos Islands. From the left: Mr David Kerrigan (Technical Assistant for Administration and Finance); Dr Mike Pienkowski (Honorary Executive Director; UKOTCF); the chair of Mrs Ann Pienkowski (Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator; UKOTCF); Ms Marlene Lamonth (Project Manager; European Commission Delegation, Jamaica); Mr Prince Harris (Chairman, Turks and Caicos National Trust); Ms Ethlyn Gibbs (Executive Director, Turks and Caicos National Trust); Mrs Mary Harvey (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment, TCI); Mr Delton Jones (Permanent Secretary Finance and Territorial Authorising Officer, TCI); Mr Fred Burton (Director, Blue Iguana Recovery Project, Cayman); Ms Carla Reid (Chairperson, National Trust of the Cayman Islands); Ms Esther Georges (Deputy Director, National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands); and Mr Joseph Smith Abbot (Director, NPTVI).*

*Photos: Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF*



## Planned activities in the British Virgin Islands

### **Copper Mine Point**

At least two walls are in a dangerous state and need to be stabilised. The old mine shafts were sunk into the hillside above the engine house (right) and these still have openings which need safety work before opening the area for public access. Much of the area needs scrub removal to expose more of the mine structures and associated buildings.

A visitor centre will be installed where there will be no loss of biodiversity. It will provide for two rooms, one a refreshment area/small cafe, the other to be a small office with interpretive materials and collection of entrance fees. The site may require wash rooms.



*Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

### **Gorda Peak**

A gazebo is planned for the existing entrance, in a clearing, and no further removal of vegetation is required. There will be space for trail maps and interpretation boards.

### **Baths**

The area behind the gazebo at the entrance to the site will be fenced off to prevent people walking behind the fee booth to access the trail to Devil's Bay, thereby avoiding payment. Some of the existing signs will be replaced and some trail maps produced.

The Baths has a number of concessionaires who cannot be removed from the area. Their presence on the open beach does detract from the general visitor experience and is damaging the coastal vegetation. It is planned to construct some small vendors' stalls at the back of the site near the beach bar to provide a more permanent place for the vendors to sell their wares.

*Beach at The Baths, busy with visitors from both the yachts and the land access.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



The plan prepared in 2007 will be finalised and implemented during this project period. The plan will include details of the purchase and maintenance of a patrol boat, crucial for the efficient and effective management and monitoring of visitors to the Baths and Devil's Bay area.

### **Sage Mountain**

The existing structure just inside the park gates will be decommissioned, removed and replaced with a similar sized structure, and the existing footprint will not be enlarged. The structure will be used by the wardens as a shelter and office, and for storing trail maps and other interpretive materials.

## **Anegada**

The construction of a visitor centre and a small office within the compound of the head-start facility to provide information about the rehabilitation projects and support the existing programmes on Anegada. In addition, a channel through the mangroves will be cleared.

## Planned activities in the Cayman Islands

### **Existing Protected Areas**

As part of this project, NTCI and its partners will develop and commence implementing formal management plans for the Salina Reserve and the Mastic Reserve. Together with the Cayman Brac and Little Cayman protected areas, and the Cayman Islands' Marine Parks system (which is managed by the Cayman Islands Department of Environment), these will provide a Protected Area System context for a Management Plan for the new protected area (see below).



*Forest at Sage Mountain National Park, Tortola.*

*Photo: BVI National Parks Trust*

### **New Protected Area**

Protected area habitat mapping is a technical step involving interpretation of aerial imagery, and habitat surveys on the ground. The activity will build on habitat mapping work already underway at the Department of Environment (DoE), which will provide a starting point for the more detailed mapping required for this project. In a wider context, this will complement the DoE's current habitat mapping project carried out under the UK Darwin Initiative.

For each protected area, a core planning team will meet with an extensive range of stakeholders and specialists, and progressively refine a detailed management plan for each area. For the new protected area, some priority will be given to site planning to enable location of the proposed visitor centre to be identified. The management plan for the new protected area will prioritize efforts by NTCI and its partners, in efforts towards additional protected land purchase.

Stakeholders to be involved include NTCI, Blue Iguana Recovery Program (BIRP), the Cayman Islands Department of Environment, the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, neighbouring landowners, neighbouring farmers, the hotel and condominium industry in the north and east regions of Grand Cayman, eastern-based tour operators, the Cayman Islands Bird Club, and additional groups whose relevance may become evident during the process. The process will build on local experience developing existing management plans for the Booby Pond Nature Reserve (Little Cayman), the Brac Parrot Reserve (Cayman Brac), concurrent work on management planning for the Mastic Reserve and the Salina reserve, and the DoE's experiences with the Marine Parks system. The new protected area plan will form a component of the Cayman Islands' overall protected area plan which will be developed after passage of the National Conservation Law.

The Blue Iguana visitor centre concept was originally developed with a view to placement at the Blue Iguana captive facility in the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park (QEIBP), but is now seen as far more valuable in association with the new protected area. This will be NTCI's second visitor centre to operate in direct association



*Salina Reserve. Photo: Fred Burton*

with a protected area, the first being at the Booby Pond Nature Reserve on Little Cayman.

The visitor centre will become a new focus for tourism activity in the eastern districts of Grand Cayman, contributing to the island's "Go East" initiative, while showcasing the real meaning of sustainable tourism development. "Go East" is a Cayman Islands Government initiative to decentralize tourism activity in Grand Cayman by encouraging low-impact tourism activities

in the eastern districts. Tourism activity has become so heavily focussed in the George Town to West Bay region of the island that there are carrying capacity problems emerging.

Once established the new protected area will be the site for location of the Blue Iguana and dry shrubland Visitor Centre, and the primary focus for associated tours.

Directed by outputs of the management planning team for the new protected area, BIRP will develop low-impact, unimproved walking trails for management and monitoring, and a public trail system for tour operations, school visits and compatible recreational activities.

The public access trails, together with the visitor centre, will place the new protected area as a key element of sustainable nature tourism activity in eastern Grand Cayman.

Both within and in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre, resources will be deployed to provide an interactive educational experience for visitors to the nature reserve. The detailed concept will be designed and implemented as part of this project, drawing on local and international partners' expertise, supplemented by other specialists as necessary.

Existing full colour interpretive signs for the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme will be also be redeployed from the captive breeding facility at the QE II Botanic Park (which will be phased out), to the new protected area. These will be supplemented by additional directional and interpretive signs specific to the new area. This is an extension of work commenced in the QE II Botanic Park. These displays will link to the Blue Iguana curriculum resources in schools, and to school visits by NTCI education staff.

Senior representatives of all the partners in the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme will meet in a 4-day workshop on Grand Cayman, to update and refocus the Species Recovery Plan for the critically endangered Grand Cayman Blue Iguana. The Protected Area Planning Team for the new protected area will also be represented. The conduct of the workshop will be modelled after other successful SRP workshops for West Indian Rock Iguanas, notably the 2001 meeting in Grand Cayman, and subsequent meetings in the Dominican Republic, Turks & Caicos, and Jamaica. The majority of the planning is conducted in plenary with real-time representation of the discussion via LCD projection.

The extant Species Recovery Plan (created in 2001 and updated in 2005 and 2008) will be updated in late 2011, to bring it into line with actual progress in the new protected area, and to ensure

it remains coordinated with the management plans for the Mastic reserve, Salina Reserve and the new protected area. The new SRP will operate in the context of the national protected area plan.

NTCI will maintain and extend its activities in education and awareness for the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana, and its habitat. Curriculum resources, linked to the Blue Iguana which are already in all schools, will be maintained and updated throughout the project. NTCI education staff will conduct regular class visits to teach about the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana and the protected areas that support them. School-based activities will be tied into the opportunities created by the educational resources at the new protected area, including class visits to the area.

As the new protected area comes into operation, a revenue-generating tour operation will be developed, with appropriate marketing and advertising, linked to start-up of retail operations at the new visitor centre. All retail products will link to educational opportunities in some way, often by advertising the BIRP website, which will also be maintained and enhanced throughout the project and beyond.

NTCI is already heavily committed to environmental education and awareness work. Work under this project will build and extend on this. The Blue Iguana has become a flagship for conservation in the Cayman Islands. Ongoing education and awareness work, linked to this species, will benefit from the strong flagship species effect to generate support for much broader conservation initiatives.

## **Planned activities in the Turks & Caicos Islands**

### ***Bird Rock Point***

TCNT envisages using this site for the summer camp it holds for children each year to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the natural environment. The centre will serve also as a visitor centre and retail outlet. The building is relatively small and will not impact on the visual aesthetics of the open coastal views. Some area of coastal coppice may need to be cleared to make a suitable area for the centre. Four washrooms will be constructed.

The landscaping of the grounds leading up to the visitor centre will be the introduction to a botanic garden. Carefully selected perennials will be fused into the native vegetation and the design around this location. The Trust has no intention of planting any invasive species. The botanic garden will be representative of the native flora. Non-native, but not invasive, species will be exhibited in a specified area.

Access to the site will be constructed by the Government and the local partner RTL Ferry Service to service the new marina site. Some areas of coastal coppice will be cleared for vehicle parking. Development of trails to the coastal section and the interior are envisaged once the vegetation has been cleared. TCNT envisages that the site will attract local concessions (in the area of the marina). Locally made goods and Trust activities will be promoted. Waste collection facilities will be provided on site and will be dealt with in the management plan.

### ***Wade's Green***

Two opinions have been given concerning the treatment of the trees growing inside the Great House. TCNT



*Wade's Green main house. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



will obtain an expert opinion on the best way to manage the resource. The gazebo structure currently in place outside the Great House needs completion.

A visitor centre will be constructed in the current entrance car-park, where there will be no loss of biodiversity. This stone structure will include a refreshment area/small cafe and a small office with interpretive materials and fee-collection. Water supply will be from a system of rainwater collection from the roof, and tank storage will be accommodated in the visitor centre area to be used for general hygiene. Power will be supplied by grid system to service utilities installed in the building. Two washrooms will be constructed. Waste collection facilities will be provided on site. Collection of waste will be dealt with in the management plan.

#### ***Little Water Cay***

A small building will be constructed to house an office for the wardens and provide much needed shelter from the weather. One room will be a visitor reception with educational literature and interpretive displays. One restroom will be constructed. Power will be supplied by solar photo-voltaic power cells to supply minimal energy requirements envisaged (light, fridge, microwave, radio).

Boardwalks along nature trails will be refurbished, and interpretive and directional signage developed and erected at strategic locations. The boardwalk trails are necessary to keep visitors on the prescribed paths and from trampling iguana burrows in the sand. Enhancement of this site will also include out-door exhibits of the wildlife and panels explaining the ecosystems.

A recovery plan for the endemic Rock Iguana, dealing with *inter alia* cat eradication, will be developed and implemented.

A percentage of the fees collected will be utilized to establish a reserve fund. This reserve will be tapped into only under special cases, such as a natural disaster (the site has been affected by two hurricanes within the last decade).

#### ***Cheshire Hall***

A suitable permanent facility will be constructed to accommodate the needs of customers and staff. This centre will be constructed of concrete blocks in the Georgian architecture, typical of buildings constructed during the Loyalist period. The structure will contain offices, restrooms, a gift shop and an efficiency apartment. Special areas for seating and relaxation will also be erected. Additional interpretive and directional signage will be incorporated.

#### ***Conservation management internship/scholarship programme***

A scholarship programme plan, which includes the selection of eligible institutions for participation in the programme, the eligibility criteria for prospective awardees and the appointment of the selection panel, will be completed.

#### ***Additional co-ordinating activities***

In order to stimulate constructive discussion by the Steering Committee, UKOTCF had listed, as questions, some possible areas of common interest arising from examinations of the programmes of all partners. The meeting welcomed UKOTCF's suggestion that the opportunity be taken to use the reporting requirements as an opportunity to set high environmental standards as an example for other developers, even though the latter would obviously normally be developing outside protected areas, rather than within them. For the Commission Delegation, Ms Marlene Lamonth welcomed the suggestion of using the project to help update the EU country strategy profiles (CSPs), which are used as a guide when policy documents are being developed. She encouraged the Territory Governments to approach partners in respect of that. In addition, she noted that the reports from the project were uploaded by the Commission and would be accessible to everyone. This itself helps feed into EU policy. Mr Jones added that environmental information from government bodies and NGOs is looked at when updating the CSPs.

## **Quizzes & Caribbean Cocktails at the British Birdwatching Fair 2010**

This year we decided to do something a bit different to attract people to the UKOTCF stand. On each of the three days, we had a quiz which tested the great British public on their knowledge of the UK Overseas Territories. The winners received books, postcards and drink bottles as well as a year's free subscription as a Friend of the UK Overseas Territories. A flag from each Territory and Crown Dependency displayed on the stand aroused much interest from visitors. This did lead to the question: Where is the flag for Ascension? Have you forgotten it? (Selection of a flag



*Young competition winners receive their prizes while other visitors look on. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



*Caribbean rum punch and conversation at the stand*

was interrupted a few years ago when UK Government cancelled local democracy, but has since resumed.) We also had a cocktail hour which only lasted about 30 minutes due to the success of the breezy beverage. Offering a chilled refreshment definitely helped to raise the profile of the UKOTs, as people couldn't resist the taste of the Caribbean while discussing the plight of the Cayman Island parrot or the Montserrat oriole! Remember: it is a bird-watchers' convention, after all. The final attendance over the three days was announced as 22,400. Both the Friday and Saturday were slightly quieter than last year but Sunday was the busiest ever. We had better be prepared and mix more cocktails for 2011: put 19-21 August in your diary.

# New UK Government talks the talk, but will it walk the walk?

In the last *Forum News* (36, pp 4-5: *New coalition government – new broom?*), we pondered on whether the UK Coalition Government would bring about any significant positive changes for the environment of the Overseas Territories. We are now six months in to the new arrangements, and there are signs of some changes – but more akin to a feather duster sweeping away the cobwebs rather than a new broom. UKOTCF representatives have been active during these first six months in highlighting issues in government fora, meeting officials, lobbying MPs, working with All Party Parliamentary Groups, responding to government consultation documents, and hosting a seminar on the Government's Biodiversity Strategy for the UKOTs (reported on pages 9-11 in this issue of *Forum News*).

One of the major issues regularly on the table has been funding, and no more so than recently with the cuts imposed on government expenditure by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (the UK Finance Minister). At the time of writing, the scale of the cuts for the Departments most involved – Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – were known, but not yet the impact on staffing or funding for ongoing activities. We do know that DEFRA's Darwin Initiative will continue, at an increasing level over the next 4 years, but not whether the earmarking for UKOTs, put in place only last year, will continue. This will provide a good indication of the seriousness of the new Government's positive statements about its commitment to environmental conservation in the UKOTs. The OTEP Assessors Panel has set a date to meet in February 2011 in the anticipation that funding will be available under the call just closed in November 2010. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), it is believed, will fight to maintain its status quo with respect to the UKOTs, but still does not know its budget so as to be able to confirm this. Department for International Development (DFID) funding was ring-fenced by the Government – but only in respect of funding to meet the Millennium Development Goals, and so the situation with respect to the UKOTs is unclear here also.

Some of the Government's emergency measures have already had unfortunate – and possibly unplanned – side-effects. One of its early decisions was to instruct all Departments that external arrangements for web-sites and some other dissemination work be discontinued. As a result, UKOTCF's co-operative arrangement to disseminate OTEP information will not be renewed (although UKOTCF will do its best to continue this important work from its own meagre resources), and OTEP has excluded education and awareness projects from its current call. Whilst the general policy may be sensible to cut down on expensive consultants, it seems daft – and at variance with the new Government's "Big Society" ideas – to sweep up the cost-effective collaborations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including UKOTCF, by the same measure.

UKOTCF has been fighting actively for one additional source of funding that to date has been consistently ruled out, and that is from the National Lottery. Forum representatives have been lobbying the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which has now at least confirmed that it would not be illegal under the Acts of Parliament establishing the lottery to fund projects in the UKOTs, and that the decision not to do so is an administrative one. However, an answer to a recent Parliamentary question has rather confused the issue in respect of access to funded projects; it is interesting to note that, as pressure has been mounting from a wide variety

of sources for a change to fund UKOT projects, so the rules for buying tickets have been tightened – which seems more than just coincidence. This is especially so since the Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport has been undertaking an enquiry into the priorities for Lottery funding. UKOTCF has submitted evidence regarding the validity and priority for the UKOTs, as did other NGOs. Initial thinking, especially amongst the other NGOs, was that a link to World Heritage sites would be obvious and beneficial, as most World Heritage sites within metropolitan UK had received such funding. However, discussions with HLF made it clear that this status was immaterial in judging the worth of a project and it would have to meet all the normal criteria for funding regardless.

Despite this, UKOTCF sees the benefit of a better representation of UKOT and Crown Dependency sites within the World Heritage list, to improve the balance of coverage of UK's outstanding global heritage, and will continue to provide help and advice to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in this regard. The Forum is pleased that its Honorary Executive Director has agreed, on a voluntary basis, to serve on DCMS's Expert Panel reviewing UK's Tentative List of potential World Heritage Sites.

The Forum has been collaborating with the RSPB on lobbying in relation to funding for one World Heritage Site, that of Henderson Island in the Pitcairn Islands. There is a proposed project to eliminate the Pacific rats which are seriously predating the endemic Henderson petrel and other breeding seabirds. This project already had some Government funding (OTEP funding and some from JNCC), but still had a significant shortfall towards the £1.7 million in total. Interestingly, part of the shortfall (some £200,000) was made available by DEFRA and announced by the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP, during her speech to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan. This was within days of the UK Government funding cuts being announced – with DEFRA suffering the worst percentage cuts of any department. UKOTCF had lobbied hard to ensure that the UKOTs were covered by the Secretary of State, in an albeit very short speech, given the global significance of the UKOT's biodiversity. Indeed they were mentioned – but, sadly, not in the overt way we had anticipated. The only mention related to the additional funding for the Henderson Island project – and in such a way that it implied it was merely the UK funding an international project, alongside others. On the plus side, it is clear that the Secretary of State has a genuine interest in biodiversity, and that she took the trouble to attend the meeting in Nagoya at a difficult time – and she actually mentioned one example of biodiversity in the UKOTs. However, this does show a distinct reluctance – still – for DEFRA, and therefore the British Government, to accept responsibility for the amazing biodiversity in the UKOTs. It is as if, by hiding this contrast with the biodiversity in metropolitan UK, the Government hopes that nobody will notice and maybe will not criticise the Government for failing to conserve the biodiversity for which the UK exercises sovereign responsibilities. Needless to say, UKOTCF will miss no opportunity to remind the Government of these responsibilities.

A good opportunity to do so arose in responding to the DEFRA consultation paper *An Invitation to shape the Nature of England*, which invited submissions and comments on future priorities for a forthcoming White Paper on the environment. Some 13,000 responses were logged by the Department, and a summary of those responses is expected in December. The Forum Council members were struck by the title, which seemed to preclude any

interest outside England. However, reading the text revealed some questions that related to international and EU matters, and a short, sharp response was drafted and submitted on behalf of UKOTCF.

We noted that, whilst the Forum was pleased to see a consultation which should strengthen the safeguarding of nature by subsequent improvements in policy through a White Paper, we were concerned at the apparent conflation of DEFRA's responsibilities overall with those relating only to England. *The Nature of England* starts by referring to "our environment" in general, but then reverts almost exclusively to England, that part of the UK for which DEFRA retains sub-national responsibilities. When it comes to multilateral environmental agreements, DEFRA is acting nationally for the UK, including all the sub-national jurisdictions. DEFRA's dual role can easily lead to confusion if it is not explicitly recognised. We hope that the White Paper will address explicitly and clearly those topics where it is addressing national (i.e. all sovereign UK territories) issues and those where it addresses matters that apply purely to England. Also a number of important environmental topics straddle administrative boundaries. For instance, we pointed out that it makes little sense to talk about "England's" rather than the "United Kingdom's" footprint on the natural environment overseas. The four examples given (average water consumption, imports of timber, encouraging palm oil plantations and imports of seafood) all relate to the UK market.

We noted that the crucial area where the White Paper needs to be far clearer than the discussion document is that of biodiversity. The section on "our biodiversity" is largely focused on England, highlighting species "lost from England"; yet the next section on "our seas" is explicitly about "the UK's seas". And there is no mention anywhere in the document of the huge amount of biodiversity of global significance in the UK's Overseas Territories. Distinctions need to be made. First, the biodiversity of truly global significance in the metropolitan UK is largely limited to a number of species (especially birds, plants and invertebrates) where Great Britain & Northern Ireland have a significant proportion of the global population, either year-round, or, for migrants, at particular seasons; only a small number of these are endemic. The associated ecosystems are largely wetlands, especially coastal, marine and peatlands. With the UKOTs, the emphasis is far more on the importance of protecting sites and species that are truly of global significance. It is noteworthy that NGOs with an interest in biodiversity in metropolitan UK have expressed similar concerns around DEFRA's responsibilities for the UK, as compared to England, post-devolution. We will await with interest the summary of responses and the White Paper, to see whether these important issues have been picked up.

It was encouraging that Richard Benyon MP, DEFRA Minister for Natural Environment & Fisheries, participated in the joint meeting, on 15 November 2010, of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on Overseas Territories and on Zoos & Aquaria. Both of these are chaired by Andrew Rosindell MP, who has done much to raise the profile of UK Overseas Territories in Parliament, in some cases jointly with UKOTCF. Rob Thomas of UKOTCF Member organization, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, gave a presentation on behalf of the British & Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), drawing on material from the Forum and stressing the key role of UKOTCF, both in overall coordination and in developing the capacity of local organizations in UKOTs. Dr Tim Stowe, of RSPB, gave a talk centering on the initiative on Henderson Island. In all presentations, the importance was evident of the conclusions of the 2008 House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, for which UKOTCF submissions were key.

Finally, with the FCO there does seem to have been a slight reinvigoration of interest in the UKOTs and, in the case particularly of the Minister of State, Henry Bellingham MP, given the content of his speeches, an interest and concern that includes the environment. In mid-November, at the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, Mr Bellingham emphasised the Coalition Government's determination to improve and strengthen the UK's relationship with the Overseas Territories and to represent their interests in international fora. He made clear also that other Government Departments were now more closely involved in Overseas Territories work. We are not yet clear what this strengthening will entail, nor what form the greater involvement with other Departments will take, but we would most certainly welcome the latter and look forward to working with the FCO in achieving the greater involvement. It is reported that Territory Governments and relevant UK Departments would work together to help manage the natural environment and the impact of climate change in the Territories, including highlighting examples of good practice and successes already achieved in the Territories. Especially in the spirit of the Government's "Big Society" and the fact that UKOTCF agreed some years ago to coordinate information on progress in implementing the Environment Charters, it is to be hoped that this joint working will include more involvement of UKOTCF and its network of UKOT and UK NGOs, rather than less. And back to where we started – on funding. At the FCO reception for the Consultative Council, in his speech, Mr Bellingham especially noted his surprise that Lottery funding was not available for the UKOTs, and hoped that this situation would be changed. So, in one issue for certain, the FCO and UKOTCF are already working to the same ends.

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## St Helena National Trust Strategy launch

The launch of the St Helena National Trust Strategy, held at the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in London on 28 September, was a great success. The Governor of St Helena, H.E. Andrew Gurr, together with Bob Russell MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for St Helena, gave very supportive presentations. Jamie Roberts, Director of the St Helena National Trust, organised the evening while visiting the UK. He was assisted by Iain Orr, Joint Chair of the UKOTCF Southern Ocean Working Group and Council member, who made sure that the reception was well attended by those with an interest in the future of St Helena. Governor Andrew Gurr said: "the presentation was well attended with Saints and supporters. Andy Pearson gave an interesting summary of his work on the slave graves in Rupert's Valley. We may not make much of the Island's part in the abolition of the slave trade, but Andy left us in no doubt that not only was our role vital, but the heritage that we have is truly world class."

The St Helena National Trust strategic vision document is an excellent fully illustrated 18 page brochure - *Saint Helena: Protecting the world heritage of a small island*. It can be downloaded as a pdf file at: [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Reports/StHelenaNationalTrustVision.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Reports/StHelenaNationalTrustVision.pdf).



## New Amphibians and Reptiles report published

Readers of *Forum News* will be well acquainted with some aspects of herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles) in the UK Overseas Territories. Past articles have described the work of Fred Burton and others to save the blue iguana *Cyclura lewisi*, endemic to Grand Cayman (see also pp 1-5), and the threat to Montserrat's mountain chicken frog *Leptodactylus fallax* from the devastating chytrid fungus pathogen. Also familiar will be the importance of UKOTs, including Ascension, BIOT, the Cyprus SBAs and Caribbean Territories, in providing nesting sites for a range of globally endangered turtle species.

As part of its contribution to the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, UKOTCF Member organisation, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation (ARC), has produced a new report. Entitled *The Amphibians and Reptiles of the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas*, and compiled by Paul Edgar, the report provides a complete review of the herpetofauna of the UKOTs and CDs, including the status of each species and a summary of priority conservation and research needs.

A total of 174 species of amphibian and reptile are recorded from the UKOTs and CDs - 135 indigenous species and 45 introduced species, with some overlap in these categories across Territories. Only the UKOTs furthest south in the Atlantic lack a local herpetofauna. Of the indigenous species (comprising 116 reptiles and 19 amphibians), a quarter are endemic to their respective Territories, and nearly half have some status which renders them species of the greatest international conservation concern.

It is not surprising that the highest levels of diversity and endemism are found in the Caribbean UKOTs. (Caribbean islands, in general, are very rich in reptiles, and regional studies of some groups – notably the *Anolis* lizards – have done much to inform our understanding of biogeography and evolutionary biology.) For example, between them, Anguilla, BVI, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and TCI are home to 20 indigenous species of snake, of which a remarkable 17 are endemic forms. Some UKOT reptiles have astonishingly restricted distributions – the lizard *Anolis*

*ernestwilliamsii* and skink *Mabuya macleani* occur nowhere in the world except on BVI's tiny (1.2ha) Carrot Rock island. BVI also has the distinction of being home to a contender for the title of "smallest lizard in the world", in the endemic Virgin Gorda dwarf gecko *Sphaerodactylus parthenopion*, which is barely an inch long when fully grown.

Thousands of miles away from the Caribbean, the Crown Dependencies may support a smaller and less exotic herpetofauna, and (indeed) share many of their species with Great Britain. Nonetheless, there are important populations here. For example, the only surviving colony of the agile frog *Rana dalmatina* in the British Isles occurs in Jersey, which is also home to a distinctive form of the grass snake *Natrix natrix helvetica*, that lacks the yellow "collar" marking which is so characteristic of this reptile in Great Britain.

UKOTCF would like to congratulate Paul Edgar and colleagues at ARC on the completion of this excellent report, which can be downloaded from the UKOTCF website, at: [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Reports/UKOTHerpsReport.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Reports/UKOTHerpsReport.pdf)



Curlytail *Leiocephalus psammodromus*, endemic to the Turks & Caicos Islands. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## Albatross fights for its place - with a little help from its friend



This photograph shows Forum Council member, Iain Orr, making a heavily disguised appearance at Earthwatch UK's 10th Annual Debate. This was held at the Royal Geographical Society on 14 October 2010, the theme being to choose a British environmental mascot. Iain discovered that the candidates were all species from Great Britain, with none representing the biodiversity of Britain's Overseas Territories.

Clare Stringer kindly agreed to loan RSPB's Albatross Campaign costume. Iain was thus able to remind the audience visually - as well as through a question to the panel - that the great majority of endangered species and habitats for which the UK is internationally responsible come from Britain's Overseas Territories. These include one third of the world's albatrosses, which breed on remote islands in the southernmost territories. (See also articles on pages 17, 19-20, 23 & 28.)

Perhaps Earthwatch and others might consider a similar evening to choose a suitable mascot for the UK Overseas Territories. For the record, the candidates (with those arguing their case) at the Earthwatch debate were: Song Thrush (championed by the environmental campaigner, Tony Juniper), Deep-sea Coral (Dr Samantha Burgess, Earthwatch's Senior Research Manager, Oceans), Bluebell (Dr Johannes Vogel, Keeper of Botany, Natural History Museum), Bumble-bee (Dr George McGavin, Oxford University Natural History Museum) and Oak Tree (Professor Stephen Hopper, Director Kew). The winner was the Bumble-bee.

Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman



# UKOTCF seminar on the UK Government's *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy* (2009)

On 23 September 2010, UKOTCF organised a seminar at the Zoological Society of London on the UK Government's *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy*, published in late 2009. The meeting was attended by representatives from UK Government Departments and agencies (Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Department for International Development (DFID), Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)), a UKOT Government Representative, representatives of five UKOTCF Member/Associate organisations and other partners, and UKOTCF officers and Council members.

Dr John Cortés (Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society) set the scene by summarising aspects of the UK Government's past approach to strategic planning and support for biodiversity conservation in the UKOTs, from an NGO perspective (see Box). Dr Chris Tydeman (UKOTCF Chairman) then provided an introductory assessment of the UK Government's *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy* (2009), from a UKOTCF/NGO perspective, which he noted was intended to stimulate a robust and frank discussion, ultimately focused on identifying positive ways forward.

Chris Tydeman felt that the almost total lack of stakeholder engagement in the process of developing the *Strategy* had resulted in a feeling of "us and them" in the NGO community, despite the ministerial Foreword specifically noting the important role of NGOs and other stakeholders. Also, the document was not a strategy by usual standards, but more a statement of aspirations; rather than assisting in decision making, it seemed designed to constrain action, not least by focusing the overarching objective on meeting international obligations. Even then, the document failed to address a number of important international obligations (e.g. various aspects of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the "wise use" provisions under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands). Environment Charters were referred to in the document, but with no specific indication of how their implementation would be advanced.

There were few outputs and no outcomes in the document and there was an absence of clear targets (e.g. achievement of *Favourable Conservation Status*, as in the UK). In many respects, the wording of the *Strategy* was weaker than that of earlier policy documents, including the relevant 1999 and 2006 White Papers; the second of these, for example, committed FCO to "Improve the governance, environment and security of the Overseas Territories and encourage more diversified and sustainable economic development" and "Manage the impact of new international obligations affecting the Overseas Territories" and "Promote biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories with support for local livelihoods and sustainable development". Whilst noting that UKOT biodiversity issues were an important consideration across all relevant UK Government departments, the *Strategy* provided no indication (for example) of how the Department of Communities & Local Government might be engaged in relation to planning issues in the Territories, which were a major concern in relation to environmental management.

With a new UK Government recently in place, it could only be assumed that commitments to funding made in the document were now "on hold" until the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review were announced. However, with the new Government having stressed (under the *Big Society* banner) the importance that

it attached to the role of NGOs and wider civil society, it seemed likely that even more of the work necessary to meet the aspirations of the *Strategy* would fall to the kinds of bodies that had been excluded from its development. If the *Strategy* were to be converted into a meaningful (say) Action Plan, it would be essential for all stakeholders to be engaged in this process.

Discussions revealed that officials of UK Government departments perceived the function and value of the *Strategy* very differently from the NGO community. The document was seen primarily as a formal commitment by Defra, DFID and FCO to work together in addressing UKOT environmental issues; this represented a significant step forward, given that the previous lack of a "joined-up" approach had been heavily criticised. Had a more detailed document been produced, it would have been very difficult to secure cross-departmental ministerial approval, and the opportunity to secure a commitment to a more integrated approach across these three departments might have been lost. Instead, there was now a useful high-level, published document, which could be used to remind ministers of the commitment to a cross-departmental approach, of the importance of the UKOTs, and in arguing (for example) for the continuation of OTEP. The lack of NGO engagement reflected the fact that this was intended to be an inward-looking document, outlining how the UK Government was working and intended in future to work on UKOT environmental issues. Although it had been developed and agreed under the previous administration, there were indications that the new Government would honour the approach to which the *Strategy* committed them. The *Big Society* concept had come only with the new administration, and was not therefore a consideration when the *Strategy* was developed. Officials in Defra, DFID and FCO regarded the *Strategy* as the first step in a process, and were keen to see it built upon. Indeed, with a new Government still settling in, the interdepartmental officials group was currently the driving force behind this building process.

Chris Tydeman re-iterated concerns that the cross-departmental approach, whilst very welcome, did not currently engage all of the relevant departments. If support were needed in persuading UK Government to draw (for example) the Department of Communities & Local Government into the process with respect to planning issues, this was something with which NGOs would be very keen to assist. It was noted that planning was an area where there had long been difficulty in securing support and encouragement from UK Government to UKOTs, except in very specific cases such as the Sombrero Island rocket launch site proposal in Anguilla in the late 1990s.

In terms of specific development of the *Strategy* into (say) an Action Plan, JNCC (who had drafted the *Strategy* on behalf of UK Government) indicated that staff were now working on more detailed ideas concerned with implementation and action, although there was currently no clear timescale for this. Despite the stated overarching goal of the *Strategy* focusing exclusively on international commitments, the forward process was not seen as being limited to these, and would instead be guided by local UKOT conservation priorities. These had already been considered when drafting the *Strategy*, based on an assessment of local priorities undertaken by JNCC. The meeting discussions suggested that this had sought input principally from UKOT Governments, and that government priorities (whether UK or UKOT) were invariably more narrowly focused than those recognised by the NGO community. Conservation NGOs could all too often be seen by

**Box: Setting the scene – a brief historical perspective on previous approaches by UK governments to strategic planning for biodiversity in the UKOTs** (The context for HMG's involvement in strategic planning for biodiversity in the UKOTs/CDs)

A variety of HMG departments have relevant responsibilities:

- FCO – overall policy lead on UKOTs
- DEFRA - Multilateral Environmental Agreements
- DFID – sustainable development issues
- DCMS - World Heritage Convention
- Ministry of Justice - relations with CDs
- Ministry of Defence – interests in Gibraltar, Cyprus SBAs, Falklands, Ascension, BIOT (and previously others)

Historically, this fragmentation of responsibility has been a barrier to strategic approaches, as have HMG's occasional attempts to evade responsibility for environmental protection in the UKOTs altogether; as the Environmental Audit Committee put it in their report on the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*, in January 2007: 'Considering the UKOTs' lack of capacity, both financial and human, we find it distasteful that FCO and DFID stated that if UKOTs are "sufficiently committed" they should support environmental positions "from their own resources".'

The challenge for HMG has been (and remains) to provide leadership and encouragement in environmental protection in the UKOTs (consistent with UK's international responsibilities), and support to UKOTs in overcoming resourcing constraints, without impinging on the authority of UKOT governments or the wishes of local people, including civil society organisations such as environmental NGOs. HMG's attempts to meet this challenge have included the following:

**Late 1980s-2008 HMG/UKOTCF Joint Meetings**

Following the formation of UKOTCF in 1987, these 6-monthly meetings brought together officials of relevant HMG departments, representatives of UK- and UKOT-based NGOs (under the UKOTCF umbrella), and UK representatives of UKOT governments, to address a range of Territory-specific and cross-Territory environmental issues.

**1999 White Paper (Partnership for Progress & Prosperity – Britain and the Overseas Territories)**

HMG had not originally intended to include significant coverage of environmental matters in the 1999 White Paper, but encouragement from UKOTCF and FCO officials of the time led to inclusion of a relevant chapter. This outlined HMG's intention to develop jointly with UKOT Governments a set of Environment Charters, based on ideas earlier advanced by UKOTCF. This was explored further at the 1999 *Breath of Fresh Air* conference in London, organised by FCO with UKOTCF help.

**2000-2009 Conferences**

Following on from *Breath of Fresh Air*, HMG provided substantial support to conferences organised by UKOTCF in 2000 (Gibraltar), 2003 (Bermuda), 2006 (Jersey) and 2009 (Cayman), which provided rare opportunities for stakeholders (governmental and NGO) from across the Territories to meet face-to-face and exchange ideas and experiences.

**2001 Environment Charters**

Signed in 2001, the Charters outlined a set of Guiding Principles, alongside more specific Commitments on the part of HMG and each UKOT Government. As such, they provided a framework for developing strategic approaches to natural resource management in each Territory. (BAT, Gibraltar and the Cyprus SBAs are the only UKOTs without Charters of this type; the CDs were not included in the Charter process, but some, plus Gibraltar, have developed their own, broadly equivalent documents).

**UKOT strategies for Charter implementation / National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans**

Some Territories have strategic plans for Environment Charter implementation, such as those facilitated by UKOTCF (with some FCO support) in TCI (in 2002/3) and St Helena (in 2004/5). Enthusiasm for the development of these strategic plans appeared to wane with the reduction in environmental posts in FCO. However, in a number of Territories, a National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (or similar document) has been developed, guided by the Charter principles. However, work remains to be done in many cases to refine local strategies so that Charter principles and commitments can be turned into action, and support is required locally (in particular) in resourcing the implementation of these strategies. Such points were noted in a review of the Charters, commissioned by FCO from the International Institute of Environment & Development, which reported in 2007. Progress in Environment Charter implementation has been reviewed by UKOTCF (reports published in 2007 and 2009), initially at the request of a range of stakeholders including HMG.

**Financial support to biodiversity project work in (or related to) the UKOTs**

Established in 1999 by FCO, the Environmental Fund for the Overseas Territories (EFOT) provided a desperately needed small projects grant scheme. However, it was nearly lost in 2002, before strength of feeling expressed at the Bermuda conference in early 2003 resulted in its retrieval. In late 2003, funding from DFID (originally announced in 1999 but delayed) became available and was combined with the FCO funding, to become a joint FCO/DFID fund, the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP).

At the end of 2003, DEFRA commissioned UKOTCF to undertake a review (published in 2005) of existing and potential Ramsar sites in the UKOTs/CDs. (This broadly complemented an earlier review of CBD implementation in the Territories, undertaken by UKOTCF with funding from WWF-UK and published in 1998).

From its inception, DEFRA's Darwin Initiative has also supported biodiversity projects in (or related to) the UKOTs. One of the earliest examples was a grant enabling UKOTCF, in consultation with UKOT bodies, to produce *UK Dependent Territories: a Conservation Review* (published in 1996). Since then, Darwin has supported some excellent projects across the Territories. However, it was only in 2009 that an element of Darwin was explicitly earmarked for UKOT projects, and a UKOTs Challenge Fund was introduced to assist in development of Darwin projects.

**Recent steps towards "Joined-Up" Government and a lead role for DEFRA**

Following repeated criticism from parliamentary select committees over its approach to environmental management in the UKOTs, HMG has recently taken a number of positive steps. These include moves towards a more "joined-up" approach, initially through an inter-departmental ministerial group, and then a more focussed officials group. Following some years of declining environmental capacity in FCO, a welcome development was the announcement (in June 2009) that DEFRA would take an explicit lead role for HMG on biodiversity matters in the UKOTs.

At the end of 2009, HMG's *UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy* was published. Much of this reiterates ideas laid down in earlier strategic and policy documents, including the 1999 White Paper and the Environment Charters.

In addition to the points raised, the recent increasing engagement of the EU in environmental issues in Overseas Countries and Territories was noted.



governmental bodies simply as part of a delivery mechanism, and needed to be included in development of policy if civil society was to have any sense of ownership. In addition, any development of the *Strategy* needed to adopt an approach that was more clearly driven by objectives rather than process, if its success were to be meaningfully assessed. Officials stated that UKOTCF would be invited to the next meeting of the interdepartmental officials group, in November, where discussions would involve aspects of the forward process; indeed, it was seen as “essential” by the group that UKOTCF be engaged [although this invitation was not, in the event, forthcoming]. Officials indicated that the group was open to input from other stakeholders, and had previously invited FERA and RSPB to address specific issues. In relation to the need for clear objectives and targets, Iain Orr (UKOTCF, formerly FCO) noted that UK Government had already had successes through its support for a number of important biodiversity conservation projects across the Territories. These would have been easier to present as successes, and as “good news stories”, had it been possible to relate them back to specific UK Government targets. Amongst current activities, the St Helena air access project would be considered much more transparent (and its success in terms of sustainability would be much easier to assess) if clear short- and long-term targets in relation to environmental and other impacts were in place. Dr Colin Hindmarch (British Ecological Society) noted that DFID’s approach focused on assisting UKOTs to meet targets in relation to sustainable development (rather than, say, meeting obligations under Multilateral Environmental Agreements which provided the ostensible focus of the *Strategy*). In doing so, DFID typically drew on a wide range of external expertise, including of NGOs. Participants welcomed a focus on sustainable development, and emphasised the need to link the aspirations of the *Strategy* more clearly to wider policy, including (for example) the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which concentrated on underlying issues such as spatial planning as a means to address drivers of biodiversity loss and environmental change. In relation to the air access project specifically, it was noted that St Helena had a sound 2008 policy on planning, but only limited local capacity to apply this. Capacity constraints applied in governmental and NGO bodies. The challenges faced by the St Helena National Trust were exacerbated by the broad remit of that organisation, covering both natural and built heritage. Many UKOT-based NGOs had broad remits of this kind, and this needed to be recognised, not just in relation to resource and capacity constraints, but in the need for biodiversity-focused documents (like the *Strategy*) to link to policies dealing with overarching and cross-sectoral issues such as sustainable development and tourism.

In the context of those Government Departments (as well as NGOs) not included in the *Strategy* development, William Marsden (Chagos Conservation Trust) noted, in respect of the World Heritage Convention, the internationally agreed need to increase the number of Natural and Mixed (i.e. Natural and Cultural) sites, as well as the need to increase numbers of sites outside Europe. Both aspects should enhance the prospect of UKOT sites achieving World Heritage status. The current DCMS revision of the UK Tentative List was outlined, noting that proposals for this had now closed and would be considered by an independent panel which was to be appointed shortly. However, DCMS anticipated that the new Tentative List might be quite short and include few UKOT/CD sites because of the Convention’s request that European states

such as UK limit their nominations to less than one per year. Dr Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF) noted that the proposals for the new Tentative List were now on the DCMS web-site, although this did not indicate whether each was Natural, Cultural or Mixed. He recalled the request from earlier joint UKOTCF/UK Government meetings that DCMS explore with the World Heritage Convention a recognition that, while obviously needing to be nominated by UK, UKOT sites were actually in the locations that the Convention wished to encourage, rather than geographically in Europe. The meeting noted that this had not been pursued.

It was agreed that it was unfortunate that very different perceptions of the *Strategy* had clearly arisen. UKOTCF acknowledged the value of the document in providing leverage within UK Government for a joined-up approach, and for keeping UKOTs biodiversity on the political agenda, as was now being stressed by officials. However, the document itself implied (including in the ministerial Foreword) that it represented much more than this. It appeared to advance a framework for biodiversity conservation in the UKOTs, although it was clearly inadequate for this purpose, and seemed to say to other stakeholders including NGOs “this is UK Government’s solution, now you can join in”. Reflecting on the very different perceptions of the *Strategy* from inside and outside UK Government, Dr Cortés questioned whether these would have arisen if the regular, joint meetings between UK Government and UKOTCF (noted in his scene-setting, and once found very valuable on both sides for “joining-up” the approaches of UK Government and the NGO community) had not been discontinued. Dr Tydeman welcomed the invitation to UKOTCF to participate in the forthcoming meeting of the cross-departmental officials group, but noted that this was a “one-off” – it would be more useful to re-establish a mechanism for regular meetings between UK Government departments and other stakeholders. These would benefit Government departments as well as NGOs, for example, in ensuring that future NGO submissions to Select Committee inquiries were most effectively targeted. Improved communications could bring other benefits, including UKOTCF contributions to briefings ahead of ministerial visits to UKOTs, or new Governors taking up posts in the Territories. In this regard, it was announced that officials were intending to organise a broad stakeholders meeting on UKOT environmental issues in the spring of 2011; it was possible that this would become a regular, annual meeting. The 2011 meeting might focus particularly on marine issues. Dr Tydeman noted that UKOTCF itself intended to continue to organise at least one meeting per year which brought together NGOs, UKOT representatives and UK Government officials, following on from the current meeting and that held in 2009 on Environment Charters. A possible meeting on aspects of Multilateral Environmental Agreements as they applied to UKOTs was already being discussed for 2011, including involvement of the UK Environmental Law Association.

In closing, Mr Eric Blencowe (DEFRA) welcomed the candid views that had been expressed in relation to the *Strategy*, and Dr Tydeman welcomed the clarification of how the document was perceived by UK Government departments. He looked forward to cooperative and complementary efforts between UK Government and UKOTCF in advancing biodiversity conservation in the UKOTs, which would be ever more important as resources became increasingly constrained.

## New Associate Organisation: Turks & Caicos National Museum

UKOTCF's newest Associate organisation has the following Mission Statement:

The Turks and Caicos National Museum is a not-for-profit organisation aimed at recording, interpreting, preserving, and celebrating the history of the Turks and Caicos Islands and its people.

The Turks and Caicos National Museum is located on the island of Grand Turk in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Established in 1991, it is housed in a lovely Bermudian-style building, considered to be one of the oldest surviving private residences on Grand Turk. Its exact date of construction is unknown, but the style and some documentary evidence suggest it dates prior to 1850.

One of the premier exhibits in the Museum concerns the Molasses Reef Wreck. About 1513, on a reef located on the southern fringe of the Caicos Bank some 20 miles south of the island of Providenciales, a ship sank. This ship, known only as the Molasses Reef Wreck, is the oldest European shipwreck excavated in the Western Hemisphere. The Museum's first floor is dedicated to what archaeologists, scientists, and historians have discovered about this wreck.



*The Turks and Caicos National Museum housed in the Guinep House, named for the large Guinep Tree*

The second floor of the Museum is dedicated to the History of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Some of the very interesting exhibits are its first (pre-Columbian) inhabitants, the Lucayans, along with Slavery and Emancipation, the Salt Trade, the Government, and TCI's famous stamps.

The Turks & Caicos National Museum also has a Botanical and Cultural Garden, which is currently being revamped after the devastation of Hurricane Ike in September 2008. Tours of the Botanical Garden are scheduled to start in December 2010.

Turks and Caicos provides extremely good opportunities for bird-watching, and the Museum is partnering with

UKOTCF to help establish bird-watching tours throughout Grand Turk, especially along the many salt ponds, which also need protecting. These salt ponds are home to a unique variety of birds, and in situations in which water-birds regularly approach people much more closely than almost anywhere else in the world.



*Part of the armaments found on the Molasses Reef Wreck*

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## New Associate Organisation: Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society

UKOTCF welcomes a new Associate organisation, the Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society (JVDPS), British Virgin Islands.

The Society is established for "the preservation of the history, cultural, land and marine environment, and heritage of Jost Van Dyke as an example of the environmental, social and cultural evolution of small islands in the Caribbean."

Development on Jost Van Dyke has been slow compared to its larger nearby neighbours, Tortola and St Thomas. Electricity arrived on the island in 1992, and a water system started operation in 2003. Most of the land on Jost Van Dyke belongs to BVI citizens

and their families, and local laws constrain outside investment. As a result, the island is still lightly developed, but the unwavering pressure for growth is evident. Sensible, sustainable development is not accomplished without the participation of the residents. Laws and enforcement can steer people in the right direction, but real change comes only through changed behaviours and priorities. JVDPS helps residents reinforce the unique, positive characteristics of the island and develop their own vision of sustainability and the future of the island for their families' future.

An important step forward for addressing sustainability was the need to describe the current island. In 2008, JVDPS was successful



in obtaining OTEP funding for *Jost Van Dyke's Community-based Programme Advancing Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development*.

There are three major outcomes of the project:

- The publication of an Environmental Profile
- Establishing a community education programme
- Establishing an island environmental monitoring programme.

The Environmental Profile (completed in September 2009 and available online at [http://www.jvdgreen.org/Final\\_Profile.html](http://www.jvdgreen.org/Final_Profile.html)) provides a description of the natural resources and the current state of the environment for the islands, including identification of those natural features, species or ecosystems requiring special protection. It reviews institutions, legislation, policies and programmes for environmental planning and resource management in Jost Van Dyke (JVD). It also identifies major issues, conflicts, and problems, natural resource management and assesses opportunities for effective responses that contribute to the long-term environmental health of Jost Van Dyke and its nearby "out-islands".

The community education and outreach programme is ongoing. It has included periodic community meetings and school presentations to discuss the Environmental Profile. An overview booklet has been distributed to all island residents, summarizing the Environmental Profile in a format appropriate to a non-technical audience. These pages can be found at <http://www.jvdgreen.org/Quickview.html>

An Environmental Information Centre (open to the public) has been set up and is located at the Jost Van Dyke Preservation Society headquarters at Great Harbour, JVD. The Society is committed to the enhancement and maintenance of the Centre as part of its continuing environment education mission both for residents and island visitors, the latter estimated at over 25,000 per year.



The schools' environmental education programme includes the *Let's Read* project. Primary school students and community members are invited to come to the JVDPS office to select a weekly story from the collection in the Environmental Information Centre. This collection includes many children's stories which focus on the theme of environment. Community members (and visitors) are invited to read to the children. Other curriculum linked materials and lesson plans have also been produced, and are being used at the Jost Van Dyke primary school. JVDPS is also actively involved, with the local school, in the *Sandwatch* programme (see *Forum News* 32, p.11 for an article about the *Sandwatch* programme).

JVDPS is also deeply involved in monitoring and research, and will be looking to increase these activities. JVDPS has been involved in monitoring activities since 2005, including monitoring a rat eradication programme on Sandy Cay (designated as a BVI National Park) and running a voluntary programme to reduce the introduced and invasive mongoose population on Jost Van Dyke.

The Maritime Heritage Programme intends to document historical and cultural information about sailing and shipbuilding, not just through collection of material but in a very practical way.

Maritime Heritage in the Virgin Islands is a rich, 350-year history of innovation, perseverance and heroics. JVDPS's *Maritime Heritage Programme* aims to celebrate and recall this heritage. The keystone of this programme is the construction of *Endeavour II*, a 32-foot wooden island sloop. Guided by an experienced island sailor, this project aims to rekindle awareness of the boatbuilding and sailing prowess that were at the foundation of island life.

*There is much more information on the JVDPS website (<http://jvdps.org/>), and the Executive Director, Susan Zaluski, can be contacted at [susan@jvdps.org](mailto:susan@jvdps.org)*

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## Third Inter-Island Meeting on Guernsey

Since 2008, the Channel Islands have been hosting an Inter-Island meeting to exchange conservation information and ideas. This year, it was Guernsey's turn and there was an excellent representation from around the Channel Islands (around 30 people), as well as the Isle of Man, on October 8th at Les Côtis, in St Peter's Port. The meeting was ably arranged and hosted by Charles David of the Société Guernesaise Biological Records Centre. The morning session kicked off with papers about Guernsey.



First there was an impressive summary of the repeat habitat and land use survey, results and methodology using a PDA to streamline data entry. This was followed by an account of the *Red Data Book* work. There was report on the latest seabird breeding season.

The meeting heard about Guernsey's agri-environment scheme and its good, but reducing, budget. Jersey reported on their coastline restoration project, their Countryside Renewal Scheme for land owners, and protected areas policy. There was report on Alderney's community woodland.

*Some of the participants at the Guernsey Inter-Island meeting 2010. Photo: Richard Lord*

In the afternoon, delegates heard about JNCC's work with UKOTs and CDs, as well as UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group. RSPB reported on the Ramsar site at Burhou. Then the theme turned to marine and renewable energy, starting with the British Trust for Ornithology's perspective on offshore renewable and marine protected areas. There was an update on recent marine conservation developments on the Isle of Man, where fishermen have proposed the first marine nature reserve, in conjunction with scallop conservation. The Strategic Environmental Assessment on tidal energy in the Great Russell (an area of exceptional tidal flows off Guernsey) was described. At the end of the meeting, UKOTCF's council member, Liz Charter, explained the role of the Europe Territories Working Group and invited ideas about future joint work.

Delegates enjoyed the informal opportunities to discuss areas of mutual interest and ask further questions during the breaks. Herm and Sark were both represented. The meeting was treated to an ever-changing seascape and view of Herm from the vantage point of Les Côtils, as the weather changed.

There was general agreement that both government and the Société on Guernsey have achieved considerable conservation success with very limited resources. Charles David did an excellent job of bringing together a full programme of highly topical presentations. Many of these can be seen on the Guernsey Biological Records Centre website <http://www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg/iim>

## Important Bird Areas in Turks & Caicos, the Americas & the world – and progress on the ground

UKOTCF partners were heavily involved in writing the UKOT chapters for BirdLife International's *Important Bird Areas* initiative. These were published in the the IBA book for UK Overseas Territories, launched at the UKOTCF-organised conference in Jersey in 2006.

The Caribbean chapters were included also in the book for that region. Most recently, the chapters for the six Wider Caribbean UKOTs were combined in a chapter on "United Kingdom Overseas Territories in the Caribbean" in *Important Bird Areas: Americas: Priority sites for biodiversity conservation*, published in 2010. This also corrects some mapping errors introduced after the proof stages in the earlier publications. Copies were received by UKOTCF in November, in respect of the Turks & Caicos Islands contribution, and were presented in TCI (see pictures). Mike Pienkowski took the opportunity to thank the other persons and organisations, governmental and non-governmental, in TCI who helped with this work.

For those who cannot manage to carry a physical copy of the new book, the Caribbean UKOTs chapter is available at [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/ukotsIBA2010.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/ukotsIBA2010.pdf)

This new book has allowed the great importance of the natural and semi-natural areas for birds and other wildlife of TCI (and the other Caribbean UKOTs) to be put in the context of the Americas

as a whole, as well as globally. For TCI, these include:  
 Gallery Forest at Wades Green and Teren Hill, North Caicos  
 Fish Ponds and Crossing Place Trail, Middle Caicos  
 North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site  
 Middle Caicos Forest  
 East Caicos and adjacent areas  
 Caicos Bank Southern Cays  
 Grand Turk Salina & Shores  
 Turks Bank Seabird Cays  
 Salt Cay Seabird Cays

Some of these sites are protected, at least statutorily, but others are not yet. One of the latter constitutes the Salinas and Wells at Grand Turk. In addition to being of historic importance, these are internationally important for birds, and a proposed Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. However, the Salinas are under continual loss due to piecemeal reclamation. We understand that the first of these Salinas are now scheduled for protection under local legislation. Protection is still required for other Salinas and Wells at Grand Turk. UKOTCF has been working for some years to improve the interpretation, and awareness, of these areas, to illustrate their importance. Working with UKOTCF Associate organisation, Turks & Caicos National Museum, the first part of the funding has just been secured to implement this. In addition, UKOTCF will be working with DECR, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and JNCC to develop management plans and Ramsar designation for this and other areas.



Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director and author of the TCI section, presents a copy of the book to Chief Executive and Acting Governor of the Turks & Caicos Islands, Mr Mark Capes (centre), with Permanent Secretary of the Governor's Office, Mr Kingsley Been (right), who was Permanent Secretary of Natural Resources when much of this work was done. Photo: Ann Pienkowski



Senior Conservation Officer of the TCI National Trust, helped with much of the field-work. Photo: Ann Pienkowski

Presentation, during a meeting of TCI Environmental Club at the National Environment Centre of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), to Mr Bryan Naqqi Manco (left) who, while



# Net-BIOME's first Joint Research Call : lack of UK Government contribution limits openings for UKOTs

Readers may have seen earlier reports of Net-BIOME in *Forum News* (most recently no. 35), at the Cayman conference in 2009, on [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org) or [www.netbiome.org](http://www.netbiome.org). Net-BIOME is a project supported by European Research Area-Network (ERA-NET) programme of the European Commission's Research Directorate-General. After a proposal some years earlier, Net-BIOME was set-up in 2007 to explore potential for cooperation among European Union's (EU's) tropical and semi-tropical Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries & Territories (OCTs) on biodiversity research in relation to sustainable development and global change.

Net-BIOME is managed by a consortium of eleven partners, including regional and territorial bodies from five Member States and UKOTCF, a non-governmental organisation. Net-BIOME is ground-breaking because it brings together regions (and territories) of EU states, rather than whole states. It also brings together ORs and OCTs which, although geographically and biologically similar in many ways, are normally dealt with by entirely different Directorates-General and funding lines. UKOTCF makes an important contribution to the work of the Net-BIOME and, in the absence of a UK government involvement in the project, has striven to connect the UKOTs with the work of this ground-breaking European initiative. This has included a sustained drive to secure an opening for the UKOTs in Net-BIOME's first Joint Research Call.

The project represents an ambitious initiative, given its novelty and the complexity of relationships, as well as limited capacity in the partner organisations. To begin with, Net-BIOME deals with the apparently contending demands of biological conservation and human activity, and it does this across a diverse constituency scattered over three oceans and differing in linguistic, legal and cultural norms. It then manages this process through an Executive Board of technical staff drawn from the partners, which reports to a Governing Board made up of senior persons from each partner, in many cases local politicians. This management partnership then has to operate in the context of a muddled web of regional, national and European administrative systems.

As might be expected, the project experienced early difficulties. These introduced delays, which were regrettable - but in hindsight, necessary, since they were a formative part of a team-building process that has produced a resilient, sustainable partnership able to deal with the complexities of regional cooperation. So far, this partnership has:

- Established a dialogue both within the partnership and among the wider research community on biodiversity and sustainability issues;
- Delivered an interactive research database that encompasses the needs of its regional actors;
- Developed a suite of common priorities for biodiversity research in the ORs and OCTs using data from the interactive database;
- Developed common procedures as a basis for the launch of a Research Joint Call that attracted the support of 10 funding organisations;
- Set-up a Joint Call Secretariat in Lisbon by removing financial, administrative and legal barriers to cooperation, and securing the support of the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

These are major achievements. Nevertheless, they have not yet addressed a number of important contractual requirements, including the need to establish a long-term programme of tropical and subtropical biodiversity research and develop supporting sustainability plans. Because of the early programme delays, it is unlikely that these demands will be met before the close of the contract in February 2011. However, Net-BIOME's solid achievements have provided a compelling argument for a one-year extension to the project (within its original budget). This has been submitted to the European Commission and is now under consideration. The extension request covers the period March 2011 to the end of February 2012, and involves programme revisions affecting the:

- Monitoring and assessing the Research Joint Call and disseminating its results;
- Development of a European Programme and a European Forum on tropical and sub-tropical biodiversity for the ORs and OCTs;
- Initiation of other joint activities such as institutional capacity and researcher mobility;
- Expansion of Net-BIOME's research network to third countries and reinforcing Europe's links with third countries.

This means that the extension programme will not only allow Net-BIOME to deliver the expected results, but it will provide added value by helping the partnership: strengthen its growing network and coordination structure, maximize the return on the investment already made in the project, and sustain the influence of the project on policy and practice, far beyond the initial expectations of the project.

Unfortunately, UKOTCF has not yet been able to persuade the UK Government to contribute to the Net-BIOME Joint Call funds. The result of this is that the UK Overseas Territories and research organizations in UKOTs and UK have been excluded from the funding benefits of this crucially important common initiative. Technically, this means that, whilst UK and UKOT research groups will still be able to join the Net-BIOME Joint Call research projects, they would need to be fully self-funded. However, some of the Net-BIOME Call partners have generously (but informally) agreed to use a portion of their funds to bring on board non-contributing research partners, where this provides added value. This means that UK/UKOT research organizations may be eligible for Net-BIOME Call funding if they have links with research institutes in the requisite number of ORs or OCTs and are involved in common areas of research.

The Net-BIOME Research Joint Call was launched at the end of November and will be open until 28th February 2011.

As the situation regarding the UKOTs is still developing, the best advice at this stage would be for interested parties to submit a Manifestation of Interest (MoI). Submission is not compulsory, but it would be welcome and may be used to persuade more funders to join the call. MoI will be accepted until 30th December 2010. Submissions should be made to the Net-BIOME Joint Call Secretariat.

For more information visit the Net-BIOME website at [www.net-biome.org](http://www.net-biome.org)

Dr Colin Hindmarch, [colinhindmarch@talktalk.net](mailto:colinhindmarch@talktalk.net)

## Enhancing Cayman's Marine Protected Areas

*Forum News* 36 (p.11) reported a number of awards made for projects in the UKOTs under Round 17 of the UK Government's Darwin Initiative. One of these centres on assessment and enhancement of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) system in the Cayman Islands. The project is led by Dr John Turner of the School of Ocean Sciences at Bangor University, in collaboration with the Cayman Islands Government's Department of Environment (DoE) and The Nature Conservancy.

His Excellency Mr Duncan Taylor, Governor of the Cayman Islands, hosted the launch of the project at Government House, Grand Cayman on 27 October 2010. Speaking at the launch, John Turner recalled that the project had been planned during the *Making the Right Connections* Conference, organised in Cayman by UKOTCF just 18 months earlier.

A network of protected zones (Marine Parks) currently encompasses about 17% of the ocean shelf area of the Cayman Islands, but it is generally held that 30% or more of all representative habitats should be protected if the network is to be effective. If this target is to be met, careful planning is required, based on a detailed knowledge of the different marine habitats, their distribution, uses and vulnerability. The ultimate aim of the new project is to provide scientific evidence to underpin an expanded Marine Park network.

More specifically, the project will: assess the ecological resilience of coral reefs around Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman; assess the extent of representation of different habitats in existing and potential protected areas, using habitat mapping conducted under the earlier *In Ivan's Wake* Darwin project; quantify the value of protected zones as "nurseries" for fish and other organisms which subsequently spread into non-protected areas; assess the impact of recreational, commercial and illegal fishing; and produce options for an enhanced protected area system for stakeholder and public consultation, using data collected by the project and state of the art MPA planning tools.



*Croy McCoy (Senior Research Scientist, Department of Environment, Cayman), James Byrne (Marine Program Director, The Nature Conservancy US) and Dr John Turner (School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor University) underwater in the Cayman Islands.*

Marine Parks were established in Cayman waters in April 1986, the first such protected areas in the Caribbean, providing a system of MPAs which is regionally and internationally well regarded. However, speaking at the project launch, Gina Ebanks-Petrie (Director, DoE) noted that the challenges facing the marine environment in Cayman had changed over the

last 25 years. John Turner described in detail the broadening range of threats to marine biodiversity and associated livelihoods. At a global scale, these include climate change impacts, notably rising sea temperatures (and resultant coral bleaching), ocean acidification, and increasing storm frequency. Regionally, coral and urchin diseases, widespread over-fishing, and reduced water quality from land-based pollution have degraded Caribbean waters, and, locally, significant growth in the resident population and visitor numbers have increased pressure on the marine environment, including through accelerated coastal development and associated habitat loss.

In Cayman, as in other UKOTs, effective protection and management of the marine environment is an economic, as well as environmental, imperative. Local fisheries need to operate on a sustainable basis, if catches and income are to be maintained in the long term. Many visitors are attracted to Cayman by the quality of diving and other "wildlife watching" experiences, so a significant proportion of tourism revenue depends on the health of the local reefs, as well as other habitats and species including sea grasses, mangroves, turtles and seabirds. Coastal protection is another consideration, as the threat of sea-level rise and storm surges increases.

Expansion of the Marine Park system will require amendments to the *Marine Conservation Law*, but it is widely accepted that (after 25 years, and in the face of new challenges) the current system is in need of review. Such work is also timely, as the Cayman Islands consider wider measures for biodiversity protection under a long-awaited National Conservation Bill, which it is hoped will replace out-dated legislation and provide more effective protection for terrestrial (including coastal) habitats and species.



*Cayman Island Governor Mr Duncan Taylor listens as Dr John Turner, School of Ocean Sciences, speaks at the launch event.*

## UK Government increases contribution to RSPB Henderson Restoration Project

At the end of October, Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, announced, at the Convention on Biological Diversity's 10th Conference of the Parties in Nagoya, Japan, that the UK Government would increase its contribution to the fund being raised by RSPB (see article in *Forum News* 36). This brings the total contribution by the British government to £413,000. RSPB are still aiming to raise the outstanding balance of approximately £400,000 before July 2011 in order to ensure the completion of the project.

Henderson Island is a World Heritage Site and is one of the few atolls in the world whose ecology has been practically untouched by a human presence.

Further details on this project, plus a new video showcasing the wildlife of Henderson Island and the devastating impacts of rodent predation, can be found at <http://www.rspb.org.uk/news/details.aspx?id=262476>

# Visiting the Southern Oceans?

One of the most frequent questions UKOTCF personnel are asked at presentations or events about the UK Overseas Territories is “How do we get there?” This is especially the case for the UKOTs in the South Atlantic, mainly without airports.

Many people have experienced some of these places on the Russian survey ships *Professor Molchanov* (see *Forum News* 31) and *Professor Multanovskiy*, previously on long-term charter to the Netherlands-based company Oceanwide Expeditions. This company is well recognised for its high environmental standards. It has been declared the World’s Leading Polar Expedition Operator by the World Travel Awards Committee for 2005, 2009 and, most recently, on 7 November 2010.

In 2009, Oceanwide Expeditions brought into service a new vessel,



*MV Plancius* (left), which has now replaced the older Russian vessels. *MV Plancius* tours these islands (several times each year in the southern summer for various combinations of

South Georgia, the British Antarctic Territory and the Falkland Islands, and once per year in about March for the *Atlantic Odyssey*. The last is a trip from Ushuaia, at the southern tip of Argentina, to the British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha (including Gough Island), St Helena and Ascension Island, with the option of continuing on to the Cape Verde and other North Atlantic islands. The wildlife pictures on this page were taken on a previous *Atlantic Odyssey* by Dr Mike Pienkowski, who thoroughly recommends Oceanwide Expedition’s trips.

*MV Plancius* previously served as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy. Oceanwide Expeditions purchased the vessel and completely rebuilt it as a 114-passenger vessel. It complies with the latest SOLAS (Safety Of Life At Sea) regulations, accommodating 114 passengers in 53 passenger cabins each with private toilet and shower (4 quadruple private cabins, 39 twin private cabins and 10 twin superior cabins). All cabins offer lower berths (either two single beds or one queen-size bed), except for the 4 quadruple cabins (for 4 persons in 2x upper and lower beds).

The vessel offers a restaurant/lecture room on deck 3 and a spacious observation lounge (with bar) on deck 5 with large windows, offering full panorama view. *MV Plancius* has large open deck spaces (with full walk-around possibilities on deck 3), giving excellent

opportunities to enjoy the scenery and wildlife. Importantly, *Plancius* has enough boats to carry all passengers ashore at one time, with specialist nature and other guides:

10 Mark V zodiacs, *Adélie penguin relaxes in the autumn snow fall, British Antarctic Territory.*  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski  
4-stroke outboard engines, and 2 gangways on the starboard side, guaranteeing a swift zodiac operation.



*MV Plancius* is comfortable but is not a luxury vessel. Its voyages in the Arctic and Antarctic regions are still primarily defined by an exploratory educational travel programme, spending as much time ashore as possible. The vessel is equipped with a diesel-electric propulsion system which reduces the noise and vibration of the engines considerably. The 3 diesel engines generate 1230 horsepower each, giving the vessel a speed of 10 - 12 knots. The vessel is ice-strengthened and was specially built for oceanographic voyages. *MV Plancius* is manned by 17 nautical crew, 19 hotel staff (6 chefs, 1 hotel manager, 1 steward-barman and 11 stewards / cabin cleaners), 8 expedition staff (1 expedition leader and 7 guides-lecturers) and 1 doctor.

Oceanwide Expeditions is a corporate partner of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) and has offered to support UKOTCF’s work by a donation in respect of any bookings from persons introduced via UKOTCF. For those wanting to work through a fully bonded UK Tour Operator (to secure full financial protection through the ATOL and AITO schemes) bookings can be made through UK specialist wildlife tour operator ‘The Travelling Naturalist’, which has agreed with UKOTCF to donate 10% of the cost of the above cruises booked with them to support UKOTCF’s work in support of nature conservation in UKOTs. The Travelling Naturalist will also be able to book your flights and any additional travel arrangements. The contributions to UKOTCF’s work noted above are at no extra cost to the persons booking over the published prices.

If you are interested in visiting either the UK Overseas Territories of South Georgia, the British Antarctic Territory and the Falkland Islands – or participating in an *Atlantic Odyssey* expedition cruise to the British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha, St Helena and Ascension Island, please go to [www.ukotcf.org/oceanWide/index.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/oceanWide/index.htm) and complete the form (without commitment).



Left: Elephant seals rest on the beach at Grytviken, South Georgia.

Right: Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, the settlement at Tristan da Cunha, with the 1962 volcanic cone to the left.



Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski



# 4th Global Botanic Gardens Congress, Dublin, 13-18 June 2010

The World's botanic gardens community come together every three years at the *Global Botanic Gardens Congress* organised by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). BGCI is a membership organisation providing a Secretariat for the world's botanic gardens and those working to ensure plants are protected from the many threats facing them today. BGCI has 700 members in 118 countries ([www.bgci.org](http://www.bgci.org)). European institutions with active UKOTs programmes and collaborations, including RBG Kew and the host of the Congress, the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin are BGCI members. Within the UK Territories,



*Abutilon pitcairnense* flowering in cultivation at the National Botanic gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin. Photo: Noeleen Smyth

Montserrat Botanic Garden, QEII BP in Grand Cayman, the Bermuda Botanical Gardens and J R O'Neal Botanic Garden in Tortola, BVI, are all BGCI members. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, no Territory representatives were able to attend the Congress; so, amongst the 370 delegates representing 53 countries, staff from Glasnevin and Kew flew the flag for the Territories.

Noeleen Smyth (National Botanic Gardens of Ireland) helped to co-ordinate a special islands symposium, within which she presented a paper on behalf of her Pitcairn collaborator, Jay Warren, on *Invasive species on islands - getting rid of the stuff that people like with little or no money*. A key outcome of the symposium was the formation of the Global Island Plant Conservation Network ([www.bgci.org/ourwork/islands](http://www.bgci.org/ourwork/islands)). UKOT colleagues are actively encouraged to participate. Delegates were also able to see plants of the Pitcairn Island endemic *Abutilon pitcairnense* which are on display in Glasnevin's magnificently restored curvilinear glasshouse range. The last known wild plant on Pitcairn was killed in a landslide in 2005 and *A. pitcairnense* is IUCN-Red-listed as extinct in the wild ([www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)). Fortunately Noeleen had brought germplasm back to Ireland and there is now a very healthy *ex situ* collection at Glasnevin. In order to spread risks, Glasnevin has donated material to Kew, where we have a healthy *ex situ* population and are eagerly awaiting its first flowering.

Three of Kew's UK Overseas Territories team participated in the Congress: Martin Hamilton, Marcella Corcoran and Colin

Clubbe ([www.kew.org/science/ukots/index.html](http://www.kew.org/science/ukots/index.html)). We had the opportunity to showcase some of the plant conservation work we are undertaking with UKOT partner organisations and individuals. Marcella presented a paper on *Developing Horticulture Protocols for Threatened Plants from the UK Overseas Territories* within the Congress' horticulture theme, drawing on a range of threatened UKOT species in cultivation at Kew. Within the invasives theme, Colin presented a paper on *The role of native species nurseries in mitigating threats from invasive species: case studies from UK Overseas Territories*, with examples from Cayman Islands, TCI and St Helena. Both of these papers will be published in the on-line proceedings. We produced a poster *Capacity Building: responding to changing needs* to highlight some of our training activities and opportunities at Kew ([www.kew.org/learn/index.htm](http://www.kew.org/learn/index.htm)). We also had an opportunity to discuss our exciting OTEP project *The UKOTs on-line herbarium*, which is progressing really well, and we appreciate all the input from our many colleagues in Territories (<http://dps.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/UKOT/Home/Index>).

As discussed at the Congress, BGCI has announced a consultation on the *International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation* ([www.bgci.org/resources/news/0730/](http://www.bgci.org/resources/news/0730/)). Published in 2000, the *International Agenda* is a policy framework for botanic gardens worldwide to contribute to biodiversity conservation, particularly as it relates to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The original document published in 2000 can be downloaded from the BGCI website. The new issues that are addressed in the draft text of the second edition

of the *International Agenda* include the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* and its 16 targets ([www.cbd.int/gspc/](http://www.cbd.int/gspc/)), ecological restoration, the impacts of climate change and the need to strengthen linkages between plant conservation and human well-being. The consultation period ends on 1 January 2011 and all contributions should be sent to BGCI by then. We encourage all UKOT botanic gardens colleagues to contribute to this important discussion forum.

Full details of the Congress and other useful resources can be found on the BGCI website and the full proceedings are now on-line ([www.bgci.org/resources/FourthGlobalBotanicGardensCongress/](http://www.bgci.org/resources/FourthGlobalBotanicGardensCongress/)).

The Congress was a really enjoyable and stimulating, with masses of networking opportunities – enhancing existing friendships and making new ones. Our only regret was that none of our Territory collaborators made it. We will do our very best to ensure that this is not repeated when we all get together again in 2013.

Colin Clubbe, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew ([c.clubbe@kew.org](mailto:c.clubbe@kew.org))



Marcella Corcoran monitoring growth of Montserrat endemic *Rondeletia buxifolia* at Kew for the horticulture protocol. Photo: Colin Clubbe

# South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands

*Forum News* 36 featured an article on the prospects of eradication of rats on South Georgia, as well as a report on the end of the South Atlantic Invasive Species project. Activity has continued, with a series of meetings about South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, while several officials from the Government (GSGSSI) were in London. GSGSSI and FCO are to be congratulated on the high degree of consultation on a range of issues.

These included: a discussion on the consultation on reindeer management on 23rd September 2010, covered for UKOTCF by Karen Varnham; a consultation on GSGSSI & UK Government strategies for SGSSI on 24th September, covered for UKOTCF by Mike Pienkowski; the annual consultation with fishery interests on 27th September (UKOTCF not involved); and a meeting mainly on scientific aspects, hosted by British Antarctic Survey on 28th September, covered for UKOTCF by Bruce Dinwiddy. In addition, on 27th September, Mike Pienkowski, Iain Orr and Oliver Cheesman met with Governor-Designate Falkland Islands and Commissioner-Designate SGSSI, Nigel Haywood.

## Reindeer

Introduced to South Georgia about 100 years ago, these have devastated the natural vegetation in the areas where they occur. This could expand as glaciers retreat, linking “islands” of non-glaciated land. Failure to remove (i.e. kill) the reindeer could also sabotage the rat eradication about to start. A legislation change is needed to allow culling (because, bizarrely, on the whim of the man who introduced them and the then Administrator, they are classed as “native”). UKOTCF and GSGSSI are grateful to several in the UKOTCF network who contributed to the consultation. Some 80% of the responses were in favour of elimination of both herds (the most sensible and practicable solution, and one in line with international commitments). At the meeting, there was also general support and no voices raised against. It is anticipated that GSGSSI officials will submit a recommendation to the new Commissioner to change the legislation, so that removal of the reindeer can be integrated with the rat eradication.

## Strategies for SGSSI

Both GSGSSI and FCO have produced draft strategies for SGSSI. Participants considered that the FCO was less strong on environmental conservation (in contrast to the Environmental Charter which FCO originally drafted), and generally not as supportive of the GSGSSI as one might expect. They felt that the FCO document concentrated on money-making to cover costs, whilst GSGSSI includes this but gives proper weight on primary objectives, environment being strong. It also has clear desired outcomes. FCO, in its report of the meeting, noted from the discussion:

- the importance of SGSSI’s cultural heritage, which had potential to be drawn out more strongly within the strategy.
- whether the current language on the environment reflected the right balance between economic and environmental interests.
- minor inconsistencies of language with the GSGSSI strategy which needed to be addressed to ensure compatibility. It was noted that these were drafting errors and not intentional differences of position.
- the roles and responsibilities of the FCO and GSGSSI, and the intention that the two should dovetail and work together.

Martin Collins presented the draft GSGSSI Strategy, noting that while it focussed on South Georgia, it was important not to

lose sight of the South Sandwich Islands. Highlighting the key elements of the GSGSSI strategy touched on a number of issues relating to governance, environment, fisheries, tourism, science and finance (noting that the GSGSSI was small and therefore had limited capacity), including:

- work to develop MPAs in the context of *The Wildlife and Protected Areas Ordinance* (expected to come into force next year), which would be informed by current research funded by the Darwin Initiative and OTEP (see p. 23), though it was noted that significant marine areas are already protected.
- management of non-native species and bio-security, which will be the biggest challenge to GSGSSI in the next few years, including the rat eradication project starting in 2011 and the reindeer (see above).
- the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) re-certification of the toothfish fishery, which sends a clear message about the management of the fishery. A positive outcome is also hoped for the icefish MSC certification process, although it is expected that this will be with conditions.
- options to expand the scientific research carried out at King Edward Point by opening up the facilities to international scientists (see below).
- the need to look at the industrial heritage and better understand the risks posed by the asbestos and ensure that adequate protection is in place. Longer term, there are plans to renovate Discovery House.
- a review of outreach and publications to ensure they still contain the right messages and information. The visitor guide and DVD are being updated for the new season.
- opportunities to diversify and increase revenue, and the possibility of working with stakeholders on this.

A number of issues were raised in discussion:

- the possibility of GSGSSI signing up to the Convention on Biological Diversity – with some stakeholders expressing the view that there was already sufficient data to underpin implementation, as well as the need to give adequate weight to terrestrial as well as the marine environment.
- the process of handling responses to GSGSSI consultations, in relation to which the intention was publish all comments and feedback on them on the website as soon as other work priorities allowed.
- ways of working with the tourist industry, to make better use of the sector to spread awareness and generate more interest in SGSSI projects. IAATO would be interested in working closely with GSGSSI on this.
- how the Strategy would be reviewed, to assess progress and timelines. This was open to discussion but one means of measuring progress would be through stakeholder engagement.
- the continued effort to minimise the impact of tourism on the environment, and the importance of strict bio-security measures as tourism increases over time. At this stage it remains open to debate as to whether any land based tourism could be accommodated.

The general discussion considered wider issues in relation to the two strategies, during which the following points were amongst those raised:

- FCO and GSGSSI recognised that as SGSSI is uninhabited this increased the significance of consulting with key stakeholders.
- broader issues with Argentina were also raised, including the difficulties posed to the fishing industry from the heightened tensions following the recent hydro-carbon exploration.
- the economic self dependency of SGSSI against the backdrop

of future uncertainties in toothfish Total Allowable Catch, (TAC). UK Government policy was, in the first instance, to encourage diversification and limit any potential liabilities.

- the potential to increase income by chartering out the *Pharos* (Fisheries Patrol Vessel), GSGSSI said they would not impair the important patrol function of the *Pharos* and the preference would be to try to see if it could be used more for research purposes.

In the context of finding other resources, UKOTCF mentioned the possible use of its developing volunteer programme, not just for science/conservation but also for other things. Martin Collins noted that a construction company had advised that a volunteer approach might be the best one for renovating a house for visitor accommodation at Grytviken. Jane Rumble (FCO meeting chair) noted that the new Belgian research station in Antarctica had been built by volunteers.

Jane Rumble outlined the proposed process for taking forward both strategies. Comments and feedback from this meeting would be further considered and the new Commissioner would then be invited to give his comments. The strategies would then be finalised. It was hoped that the final versions would be published before the end of the calendar year.

Stakeholders were invited to come up with some options for the format of continued engagement and future meetings. The initial meeting was widely welcomed and there was support for continued stakeholder engagement. Options discussed included the forming of a smaller 'advisory group' of stakeholders, targeting follow-up meetings to discuss specific issues, and repeating the wider general format in future. It was suggested that a general SGSSI stakeholder meeting would be held every other year, with specific issue-themed meetings held in-between. However, all stakeholders were encouraged to keep in touch with FCO and GSGSSI on issues as and when they arise. The annual meetings were not designed to replace normal regular stakeholder engagement, which all agreed were vital to the delivery of SGSSI objectives.

#### British Antarctic Survey meeting

This was held "to discuss science being done at South Georgia, to

stimulate interest in the scientific opportunities that exist at King Edward Point and provide information on the accommodation, scientific facilities, logistic support, means of reaching the Island etc that prospective scientific visitors will need".

After a brief welcome from BAS's Director, Nick Owens, some political background from Martin Collins (GSGSSI), and an interesting historical account by Bob Burton (South Georgia Association), the day was devoted to presentations on a succession of mostly scientific topics: geology, atmospheric science, oceanography, elephant seals, terrestrial ecology, wildlife biology, benthic ecology, fisheries, a demonstration of the SG Geographic Information System (a mine of information, accessible on [www.ssgis.gov.gs](http://www.ssgis.gov.gs), on SG's wildlife, human history and changing physical environment), and finally King Edward Point Research facilities, accommodation and logistics. Some of these presentations will apparently be placed on BAS's website ([www.antarctica.ac.uk](http://www.antarctica.ac.uk))

King Edward Point Research Station was opened in 2001, operated by BAS on behalf of GSGSSI, to conduct applied fisheries research to assist in the sustainable management of the commercial fisheries in the SGSSI Maritime Zone, and to provide a civilian presence following the withdrawal of the British garrison at KEP in the same year. With scientific research work in support of the fisheries now diminishing, partly for budgetary reasons, BAS are seeking to encourage scientists in other disciplines to come to KEP to do their own research, provided they have a well-founded project, funding and are medically fit. BAS and GSGSSI are breaking new ground in thus offering to open up the KEP facilities to outsiders. Projects will be prioritised if necessary, and there will be lower charges for research supporting GSGSSI objectives. The Royal Geographical Society will welcome proposals for grants for research work in SG. A show of hands at the end of the meeting showed that at least 15-20 attendees would like to do research there.

#### South Georgia wildlife book

UKOTCF Associate organisation, South Georgia Association, is working on a new book on the wildlife of South Georgia, whose eventual profits will be donated to the wildlife restoration work. At SGA's request, UKOTCF personnel are finding and donating use of appropriate photographs.

## Chagos Marine Protection Area And botany joins the scientific work: implemented

*Forum News* 35: 1-2 & 36: 10 reported the proposal and decision to implement the largest marine protected area (MPA) in the world. Implementation has now started, with the end to the issuing of fishing licences in April 2010, and the ending, on 1 November, of existing licences, so that there is now no legal commercial fishing within the 200-nautical mile exclusive zone.

With the loss of income from licensing, the government needs funding for the patrol vessel. Over the next few years, while this is built into ongoing budgets, generous contributions from the Blue Marine Foundation and the Bertarelli Foundation have been very welcome, and other funding is being explored.

The creation of the MPA is without prejudice to the outcome of legal processes relating to the Chagossians. Conservation bodies, including UKOTCF Associate, Chagos Conservation Trust, have been working with the Chagossian community, including through the provision of training in conservation management.

*Dr Colin Clubbe, of UKOTCF Member organisation Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, joined the 2010 scientific expedition to the Chagos Archipelago to survey the state of the native terrestrial vegetation, examine the spread of invasive*



*species and assess the opportunities for restoring native vegetation on abandoned coconut plantations - work to help develop the management plan. Here Colin maps a newly discovered mangrove ecosystem. Photo: Anne Sheppard.*





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 has been providing aspects of communication management for OTEP since the programme started. This is the thirteenth in a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Unfortunately, it seems it will be the last. As a bizarre consequence of a general government policy to end out-sourced communications services, arrangements such as the collaborative one with UKOTCF in

providing the most cost-effective approach, are also being ended (see page 6 of this issue). Despite this, UKOTCF will continue to attempt to cover - from its own resources - publication of OTEP work.

This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes reports of some projects. 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).

Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of the Forum, the contents below of this supplement are as agreed by UKOTCF with FCO and DFID.

## Summaries of progress or completion for a range of OTEP projects already active

### Green Mountain National Park Education and Visitors Centre (ASC601)

The Green Mountain National Park Education and Visitors Centre project came to an end in May this year. The main objective of the project was to provide an education / visitors centre in the

environmental site of importance on Ascension Island and has an international reputation. The ground floor of the building has been converted into a display area to demonstrate the work carried out during the OTEP Endemic Plants Project and the EU South Atlantic Invasive Species Project. A section of the ground floor is being used as an exhibition centre and is open to the various organisations



(Left) Green Point Visitors Centre before the restoration work and after (right)  
Photos: Ascension Island Government Conservation Department



Green Mountain National Park, providing the general public, visitors, researchers, scientists, students and school children from Ascension and the Overseas Territories with an educational facility. It also provides an opportunity for the important conservation work being carried out on Ascension to be demonstrated to the public. Green Mountain National Park is the principle conservation and

on Ascension and the Overseas Territories. Some of the posters collected at the UKOTCF-organised Cayman Conference in 2009 are to be displayed here. A section is to be utilised by the Heritage Society to demonstrate the historic significance of Ascension and promote and encourage people to use the walks and facilities available in the Park. There is also a small office on the ground floor,



Work begins on the interior of Green Point Centre. Photo: Ascension Island Government Conservation Department

a workshop and storage area. The first floor has been converted into a lecture theatre and a class room facility.

The main outputs of the project have been:

- The development of an Education / Visitors Centre in the Green Mountain National Park.
- The renovation of the Red Lion building and conversion into an Education and visitors centre.
- The provision of a facility for education and research for residents of Ascension and other Overseas Territories.
- The improvement of the general facilities for visitors in the National Park.
- The provision of quality displays of the endemic plants and wildlife of Ascension, together with a training facility and a workshop, storage and archiving facility.
- A demonstration of the Park's heritage and the walks available.

The project has been coordinated by the AIG Facilities Management Team and the Conservation Team, who have been responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The project was funded by OTEP, the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, a joint programme of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

Olivia Renshaw, Assistant Conservation Officer  
olivia.renshaw@ascension.gov.ac

## Baselines for climate change: an emperor penguin census in British Antarctic Territory (BAT601)

The emperor penguin *Aptenodytes fosteri* is an iconic symbol of Antarctica. So it may come as some surprise to discover that our previous knowledge of the bird's breeding distribution and population was very poor; but you only have to look at the species breeding behaviour to see why. Emperor penguins are unique as they are the only bird to breed in winter on the vast expanses of sea ice around the coastline of Antarctica. In this environment, with its severe cold (down to -50°C) and wind (often of hurricane force) fieldwork is challenging and expensive.



Figure 1: Landsat image showing guano stains from penguins on the ice. (Image: British Antarctic Survey)

Work on emperors has usually been restricted to colonies near to over-wintering research stations. Monitoring those further away or finding previously unknown

colonies has always been difficult. In our study we set out to use satellite imagery to discover unknown colonies and, if

possible calculate the population at each colony in British Antarctic Territory. The project soon attracted collaborators, and we ended up leading a joint project with US and Australian partners to discover and count all emperor penguins in Antarctica.

The first part of our study was to find all the emperor penguin colonies. We used medium resolution Landsat imagery that is freely available around the whole continent. This imagery has a resolution of 25m in the colour bands and on it penguin colonies show as brown guano stains on the ice. The sea-ice on which emperor penguins breed is just frozen sea water, so unlike glacial ice it has few impurities. The brown stains were unique indicators of emperor colonies (Fig. 1). We spent several months examining imagery from the whole coastline of Antarctica; the results were published in the journal *Global Ecology and Biogeography* in June 2009. In this paper, *Penguins from space: Faecal stains reveal the location of emperor penguin colonies*, a new distribution map for the species was presented, revealing the locations of ten new colonies (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Distribution map for the penguin species

The second part of our study was to count each colony and calculate a total population figure. Here we used the very high resolution Quickbird satellite with a resolution of 61cm (when pansharpened). Quickbird imagery was taken of every colony over a short window in the emperor's breeding season (October/November) when, on average, there is one adult per pair on the ice. Unlike Landsat imagery, the higher resolution Quickbird satellite can isolate penguins from their guano stain. From these images we assessed the area of penguins at each colony, and using ground truthing from 11 sites, calculated a mean density based on a linear regression.

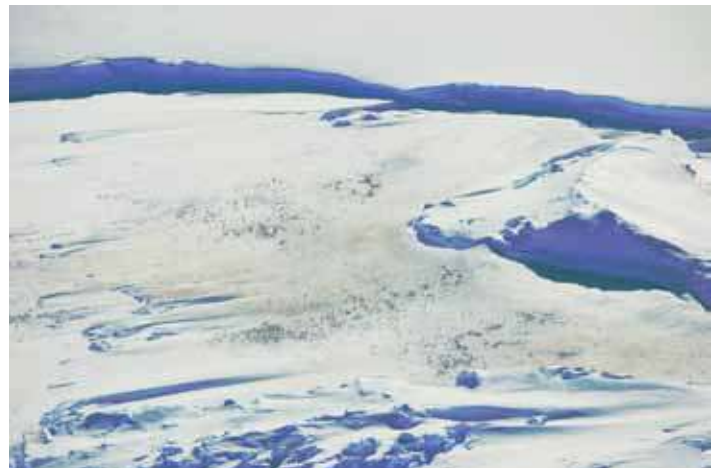


Figure 3: Emperor Penguin colonies. British Antarctic Territory is now known to have 10 colonies (21% of total in Antarctica)



From this we calculated the number of pairs at each site and hence a total population value. Results will be published in an upcoming scientific paper.

What is the outcome for the British Antarctic Territory? We now know that our part of Antarctica has ten emperor colonies (21% of the total number of colonies), four of them newly found (Fig. 3), and over 25% of the world's population of this charismatic animal. This study will provide a baseline to monitor future change.

Peter Fretwell, British Antarctic Survey, ptf@bas.ac.uk

## Identifying marine areas for conservation in British Antarctic Territory (BAT602)

Through a project funded by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme, the UK has been at the forefront of Antarctic marine conservation. Outcomes from the project, led by Dr Phil Trathan and Dr Susie Grant from the British Antarctic Survey, resulted in the designation of the world's first marine protected area (MPA) located entirely within the 'High Seas'. The South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf Marine Protected Area was agreed by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in November 2009.

The MPA covers a large area of the Southern Ocean, south of the South Orkney Islands. The MPA was the result of four years of development work. It is just less than 94,000 square kilometres,



The South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf MPA hosts a rich biodiversity of benthic organisms, comparable to known sites such as the Galapagos.

which is more than four times the size of Wales. No fishing activities and no discharge or refuse disposal from fishing vessels are allowed in the area. This will allow scientists to better monitor the effects of human activities and climate change on the Southern Ocean.

The marine protected area for the South Orkneys includes important sections of an oceanographic feature known as the Weddell Front, which marks the northern limit of waters characteristic of the Weddell Sea and the southern limit of the Weddell Scotia Confluence. The Weddell Scotia Confluence is a key habitat for Antarctic krill, one of the main species harvested in the Antarctic and a key focus for CCAMLR. The MPA also includes important foraging areas for Adélie penguins that breed at the South Orkney Islands, and important submarine shelf areas and seamounts, including areas that have recently been shown to have high biodiversity.

The South Orkneys MPA will thus better conserve marine biodiversity and forms the first link in a representative system of marine protected areas for the Antarctic. Planning to develop the other parts of the system are under active consideration by CCAMLR scientists. The network will help conserve important ecosystem processes, vulnerable areas, and create reference sites that can be used to make scientific comparisons between fished areas and no-take

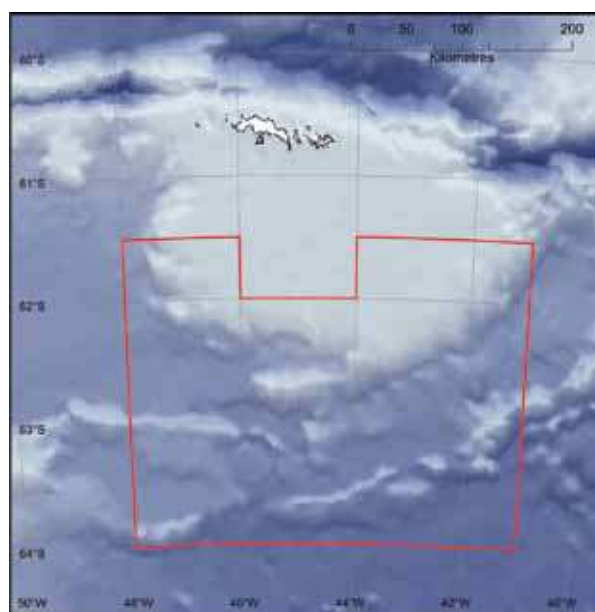
areas. Such networks will become increasingly important as climate change impacts become increasingly evident in the future.

In acknowledgment of the achievement made by CCAMLR, the World Wide Fund for Nature has awarded CCAMLR with a very prestigious award – a *Gift to the Earth* (GtE). The GtE award recognises the commitment of CCAMLR to delivering a representative system of MPAs by 2012, in time to meet the recommendations of the *World Summit on Sustainable Development* in 2002.

CCAMLR entered into force in 1982, all Members of the Commission have fisheries or research interests in the Southern Ocean. The Commission operates as a fisheries management framework for the Southern Ocean, but, unlike a conventional management forum, CCAMLR is an intrinsic part of the Antarctic Treaty System. It therefore has wider conservation responsibilities or the Southern Ocean and the wider Antarctic ecosystem.



Dr Phil Trathan, BioSciences Division, British Antarctic Survey, pnt@bas.ac.uk Example of benthos found in the area. Photos: BAS



Map showing location of the new marine protected area, south of the South Orkney Islands. The new status of the area will be enforced by CCAMLR Member states.

## Ocean climate and Rockhopper penguin foraging strategies (FAL603)

The New Island Reserve and research facilities which the New Island Conservation Trust provides have again been fortunate in receiving funds from OTEP for an important research project. New Island, sited on the far-west side of the Falkland Archipelago and on the edge of the Falkland Current, is in a prime position for such research. Here large numbers of





seabirds breed as a result of this current and the food resources it offers. Rockhopper penguins have suffered a dramatic population decline, which it is believed, is linked to oceanographic conditions.

Several studies are currently investigating the breeding biology, foraging patterns and diet composition of rockhopper penguins at New Island.

The OTEP-funded project *Ocean climate and rockhopper penguin foraging strategies* investigates the foraging behaviour and foraging areas used by breeding rockhopper penguins during different stages of the annual breeding cycle. During the breeding season 2009-2010, 40 individuals were equipped with GPS data loggers during the incubation, guard and crèche stages. These data loggers allow us to identify the different foraging areas used by adults during the breeding season as well as their diving behaviour. Temperature sensors incorporated in the devices, allow us to relate the birds' behaviour to small scale ocean climate. To identify inter-annual differences, we will continue the study during the breeding season 2010-2011. Results will be related to remote sensing data, such as satellite images of sea surface temperature and chlorophyll. So far, we have shown that male rockhopper penguins during the incubation period, forage vast distances away from the colony on the Patagonian shelf, whereas birds of both sexes stay closer to the colony during all other breeding stages. This indicates good food availability around New Island.

Diet composition of rockhopper penguins at New Island is determined mainly by stable isotope analysis. Using different tissues formed during the breeding season (egg membranes, chick down, blood samples), during moult (adult feathers) and during winter migration (toe nails and blood taken on arrival of the birds at the start of the breeding season). These allow us to identify differences in diet composition and areas used for foraging during the non-breeding season.



*Rockhopper Penguins passing through the electronic weigh-bridge being used to gather some of the data for this project. Photo: Laurent Demongin*

Carbon stable isotopes change with latitude, and from benthic to pelagic environments, while nitrogen stable isotopes give information about the trophic level (e.g. fish reflects higher nitrogen isotope levels than crustaceans). To better interpret the isotopic values found in penguin tissues, the Fisheries Department of the Falkland Islands kindly

provided fish and squid samples, one of the main prey species of rockhopper penguins.

Our work on rockhopper penguins at New Island includes also studies on breeding success and chick growth. Nests were followed through the entire season and chicks were weighed from hatching to fledging to obtain growth curves. At the end of the breeding season, we marked a total of 100 chicks with



*Dr Maud Poisbleau and Belgian PhD student, Jeff van Camp preparing to take a Spectrometer measurement from the yellow crest of a Rockhopper. Photo: Georgina Strange, Design In Nature/NICT*

micro-chips. Additionally, breeding adults were also marked with micro-chips during the entire breeding season. These birds can be detected when passing the automatic gateway system at the entrance of the colony which records transit times and masses. Micro-chips have been used on adults and chicks in previous years and the system therefore enables us to calculate return rates of adults and immatures over several years and also records nest attendance patterns and changes in body mass throughout the breeding season. Studies on breeding success and population dynamics are carried out in cooperation with Dr Maud Poisbleau and Laurent Demongin (previously Max-Planck Institute, currently University of Antwerp, Belgium).

The research on rockhopper penguins at New Island is currently funded by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) and by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG; fund QU148/1-ff) and supported by the New Island Conservation Trust and the Max-Planck Institute for Ornithology.

Project partners: Nina Dehnhard (PhD student) & Dr. Katrin Ludynia (Postdoc)

Group leader: Dr Petra Quillfeldt (Seabird Ecology Group, Max-Planck Institute for Ornithology, Vogelwarte Radolfzell, Germany)

Ian Strange & Georgina Strange. New Island Conservation Trust, New Island. [furseal@horizon.co.fk](mailto:furseal@horizon.co.fk)

## Heart Shaped Waterfall – public access and amenities, St Helena (STH502)

The Heart Shaped Waterfall is one of St Helena's most picturesque and iconic natural attractions, cascading one hundred metres down a perfectly heart-shaped cliff. Although close to the capital Jamestown, the waterfall is difficult to get to. The old path is overgrown with invasive scrub, and in places it is steep enough to deter all but the most adventurous. Even Napoleon, who resided less than half a mile away at the Briars, never reached it.

The St Helena National Trust is now opening up access to the waterfall by creating a new footpath and installing six bridges which were due to be completed in September. The new trail includes viewpoints, walkways and interpretation boards. Endemic plant species – including the rare Bastard Gumwood – have already been planted, so that visitors will one day be able to experience how the area might have looked to early settlers.

The Trust was generously donated the land up to the waterfall by the Honorary French Consul in 2007. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme provided the funding to complete this work.

Jamie Roberts, Director St Helena National Trust

[sth.nattrust@cwimail.sh](mailto:sth.nattrust@cwimail.sh)

## Illustrated field guides to the flora of St Helena (STH601)

The flora of St Helena has been described in various accounts since the island was discovered in 1502. Some texts have included drawings, plates or photographs but these have tended to be restricted to key species. The *Illustrated Guides to the Flora of St Helena* project was developed to provide a comprehensive, fully illustrated and accessible guide to the whole of the island's higher plants, ferns, bryophytes and lichens. The project commenced in October 2009, though much of the groundwork had been carried out earlier. The data for the higher plant flora derives from a botanical survey of St Helena carried out under the *South Atlantic Invasive Species Project* in 2008. The field visits of André Aptroot and Martin Wigginton, authors of the lichen and bryophyte sections respectively, were funded by earlier airport mitigation and national park projects.

During the span of the current project, botanist Phil Lambdon, the author of the higher plant book has added an additional 30 plant species to the known list.

The Flora will be published in two volumes and progress is on schedule. The draft text for lichens has been submitted for editing. The longer texts for bryophytes and higher plants are approaching completion.

A picture, it is said, can paint a thousand words. The project aims to provide photographic images for all the species described and has amassed a database of over 5000 high-resolution images. Several thousand more images have been discarded, plagued by the botanical photographer's perennial curses of too much wind and not enough light (of course, we'd never admit to user-error!) A particular challenge has been the acquisition of images for short-lived rare annual species. To capture one of these plants in full glory often involves a day long hike across uncompromising volcanic terrain to a remote location, in the hope that the right time has been chosen.



*Phil Lambdon at work identifying plants collected in the field. Photo: Andrew Dobson*

Another challenge faced by the authors is one of reference. When working in the UK, it is difficult to access live botanical material, particularly endemic species. Conversely, when working in a remote location like St Helena, access to comprehensive reference material is the restriction. Internet search-engines and on-line herbaria assist greatly but to identify confidently less common or very similar species, hands-on access to type specimens, species experts and a library full of botanical texts is necessary. Our project is being greatly supported by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in this respect. Colin Clubbe and the UKOTs team are partners in the project and have generously provided research facilities in the Herbarium at Kew.

The project would not have been possible without considerable voluntary input from the members of the St Helena Nature Conservation Group, who have assisted in project administration, undertaking survey work, taking photographs and editing the texts.

The Flora will be published in mid 2011 and will be available in the UK and St Helena. For further details please contact: a\_darlow@hotmail.com

*Andrew Darlow, Secretary, St Helena Nature Conservation Group, a\_darlow@hotmail.com*

## Invasive Species in UKOTs: databases and awareness (XOT603)

Control of invasive species presents an extraordinary problem for conservation managers. Appropriate action is often impeded by a lack of ready information with which to assess and deal with the discovery of novel species in the local environment. Implementation delays may be further compounded by a lack of public understanding. Shifting baselines and a lack of awareness amongst members of the public can result in well-intentioned efforts



*Surveying lichens during fieldwork  
Photo:  
Andrew Dobson*

geared towards the preservation of "charismatic" invasive species, or the proposal of unrealistic management scenarios. In the face of public outcry, effective conservation strategies may be cancelled, or simply delayed until remedial action is no longer viable.

*Invasive Species in UKOTs: databases and awareness* is a cross-UKOTs project, for completion in October 2010. This project had two main objectives.

The first objective was to improve access and dissemination of UKOT-specific Invasive Alien Species (IAS) information to other UKOTs, and also to countries around the world. This was achieved by updating the Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) with the data contained in *JNCC Report # 372: Non-native species in UK Overseas Territories: a review* (Varnham 2006).

The aim of this element of the project was to promote IAS issues in the UKOTs through establishing representation in the global forum of the GISD, and maximizing the value of the data already collected by JNCC, by making it accessible to a wider audience. Additionally, this facilitated the introduction of UKOT-based conservation managers to the GISD, establishing a UKOT stake in the project, and promoting the GISD as an accessible and relevant information resource. The GISD includes information on the ecology of IAS, links to management case studies, scientific literature and experts in the field. Access to this information can facilitate early and (therefore more efficient) IAS control. Additionally, this information can be used by conservation managers to identify the likelihood of novel species becoming invasive locally. This enables limited resources to be more effectively targeted towards species likely to cause the most problems.

The second objective of the project was to raise public awareness of IAS, and the threats they pose to native species and ecosystems, through the creation of a poster template which could be individualized for each UKOT. A review of IAS posters indicated that many failed to address the fact that often IAS are charismatic species, highly attractive plants and creatures, regarded by the public (at least initially) as a "welcome addition" to local biodiversity. As such, it was decided that the posters should not draw attention solely to the invaders, but instead place them in the context of local species or habitats which they threatened.

A theme of 50s alien horror movies was selected for the posters, towards targeting a wide range of "shifted baselines", and to ensure wall value in the final product. While





not everyone understands the complex issues involved in IAS, most people understand the theme of “Alien Invaders” and this provides a suitable context for the IAS and native species appearing in the poster. It is intended that utilization of this theme will serve to undermine the appeal of charismatic invaders, and promote sympathy for the plight of threatened native species.

An example of the poster for the Cayman Islands is shown. Anguilla, Falklands, St Helena, Turks and Caicos, and the Virgin Islands also participated in the poster project.

Mat DaCosta-Cottam Manager – Terrestrial Unit Cayman Islands Department of Environment mat.cottam@gov.ky

## DIFD relocates to Scotland

The Department for International Development (DFID) is moving its Overseas Territories Department from London to Abercrombie House, DFID’s other headquarter site in East Kilbride, Scotland, resulting in almost total staff turnover. OTD’s Caribbean Team have been based in Abercrombie House since Monday 6 September. Roger Clarke has temporarily relocated to Abercrombie House and will remain in post until December 2010 to minimise disruption and help ensure an effective handover to the new team members. From September, two new advisory staff joined the department – Christine Roehrer, Environment, Climate and Natural Resources Adviser (c-roehrer@dfid.gov.uk 01355 843639) and Drew Tetlow, Governance Adviser (d-tetlow@dfid.gov.uk 0207 023 1040). Drew will relocate to Abercrombie House early next year.



## Remembrance wreath by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

A wreath was laid at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, 12 November 2010, by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, on behalf of the UK Overseas Territories. As usual, the wreath was made by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The Kew wreath is the only wreath of natural foliage laid at the Cenotaph. All other wreaths are made at the Poppy Factory.

Ashley Hughes, resident horticulturist at Kew, designed the wreath featuring an array of colourful plants, taken from Kew’s living collection, and representative of the flora of the UK Overseas Territories. Sprigs and flowers from the finest plants around the Gardens were collected - olive was used to represent Gibraltar, parrot’s plantain to represent the British Virgin Islands and the tussock grass from the Falkland Islands.

This year the wreath included the following:

<i>Pedilanthus tithymaloides</i>	slipper spurge	Anguilla
<i>Juniperus bermudiana</i>	Bermuda juniper	Bermuda
<i>Chiococca bermudiana</i>	Bermuda snowberry	Bermuda
various	moss species	British Antarctic Territory
<i>Ipomoea pes-caprae</i>	beach morning glory	British Indian Ocean Territory
<i>Heliconia psittacorum</i>	parrot’s plantain	British Virgin Islands
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	Gibraltar
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	common myrtle	Gibraltar
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm	Gibraltar
<i>Anthurium hookeri</i>		Montserrat

<i>Rhizophora mucronata</i>	mangrove	Pitcairn Islands
<i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>		Pitcairn Islands
<i>Pelargonium cotyledonis</i>	old Father live-for-ever	St Helena
<i>Trochetiopsis ebenus</i>	St Helena ebony	St Helena
<i>Melissia begoniaefolia</i>	St Helena boxwood	St Helena
<i>Commidendrum rugosum</i>	scrubwood	St Helena
various	moss species	S Georgia & S Sandwich Islands
<i>Hamelia patens</i>		Turks & Caicos Islands
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	tussock grass	Falkland Islands



Remembrance wreath Photo: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



# Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

## Four good reasons to become a Friend:

1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the UK Overseas Territories.
2. You understand that the only way to guarantee their protection is to build local institutions and create environmental awareness in the countries where they are found.
3. You care about what is happening in the UK Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date by regular copies of *Forum News* and the Forum's *Annual Report*.
4. You understand that the UK Overseas Territories are part of Britain, and therefore are not eligible for most international grant sources - but neither are they eligible for most domestic British ones, so help with fundraising is essential.

**EITHER: I wish to become a Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at the annual support level:** ☐ £15 ☐ £50 ☐ £100 ☐ £.....

**OR: I wish my company to be a Corporate Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at annual level:** ☐ £150 ☐ £500 ☐ £1,000 ☐ £.....

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend: .....

Company name of Corporate Friend (if relevant) : .....

Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Fax: ..... Email: .....

**Please complete one of options 1 to 4 below. UK taxpayers are requested to complete section 5 also; this will allow UKOTCF to benefit from the tax you have paid, at no additional cost to you.**

**1. UK cheque:** ☐ I enclose my UK cheque made out to UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for this amount.

**2. Standing Order form:** To: The Manager, Bank Name: ..... Branch Sort-code: .....

Bank address: ..... Bank postcode: .....

Please pay: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum at NatWest Bank, 9 Bank Court, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1FB Sort-code: 60-10-33  
Account number 48226858 the sum of £..... now and a similar sum thereafter on this date annually.

My account number: ..... Name: .....

Address: ..... Postcode: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**3. Standing Order instructions sent:** I confirm that I have sent instructions directly to my bank for a standing order as per option 2 above. ☐

**4. Credit or charge card:** Please charge the amount indicated above to my card now \*and thereafter on this date annually. [Delete the words after \* if you wish to make only a single payment] (If you are based in another country, your card company will handle the exchange and include the equivalent in your own currency in your regular statement.)

☐ American Express, ☐ Delta, ☐ JCB, ☐ MasterCard, ☐ Solo, ☐ Switch/Maestro, ☐ Visa Expiry date: / (month/year)

Card number:             Security number (3 digits, or 4 for Amex) .....

If used: Start date: / If used: Issue number: ..... Signature: ..... Date: .....

**5. UK taxpayers** are requested to sign the following section to allow UKOTCF to recover tax paid:

I want this charity to treat all donations that I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**Send to UKOTCF, Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB, UK;  
if using options 3 or 4, you can fax to +44 2080 207217**

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is a non-profit organisation registered as a limited company in England & Wales No 3216892 and a Registered Charity No 1058483. Registered Office: Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB *This blank form may be copied for others to use.*

Information and advice given on behalf of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum are given on the basis that no liability attaches to the Forum, its directors, officers or representatives in respect thereof. Views reported are not necessarily those of UKOTCF.

# Flying with the Albatrosses: Aerial Photographic Survey

## Falkland Islands 2010

Flyers of a different kind took to the air again in late September and first days of October to carry out further surveys of black-browed albatross colonies throughout the Falkland Islands. Hardly before work had been completed on analysing 2009 aerial photographic surveys, a team of five, all professionals in their own particular field, were flying with, but above, the albatrosses again.

Following the same pattern, the same timing and the same methodology developed over a number of years, the objectives were also the same:

- Refining aerial photographic survey knowledge was one aim: a system which can now be used to count albatrosses precisely, and even define if they are on new or old nests.
- Confirming whether or not this new breeding season in the Falkland Islands has brought back the increasing numbers of potential adult breeding pairs shown by our surveys over the last thirty-five years, was another.

An all-Islands survey was first made in 1986, with a second in 2005. However, aerial photographic surveys by the first author commenced in 1964. These, although not consistent in the numbers and sites of the albatross colonies covered in the Islands, were made in most years. This recent survey was planned to cover all twelve colonies, in order to draw a comparison with the 2005 survey. The earlier surveys, and the trend from 1986 to 2005, clearly showed a large increase in the Islands' albatross population. The results of annual surveys made between 2005 and 2010, although covering only a third of the total sites, have been interesting. Although dips occurred in the population at some sites in some years, the overall trend is for an increasing population.

The process of counting each individual bird on a nest, carried out from digital images on a high-definition screen, is a very slow process. At the time of writing this, eleven of the twelve colonies in the Falklands have been counted and it will be some weeks before the other counts are complete. Over eight hundred images have been taken in order to give a 100% cover of all sites, giving an indication of the task.

With the high upward trend in the albatross population shown in our 1986 to 2005 surveys, our expectation had been for a levelling of the population. This has been seen in one colony of some 27,000 pairs. This, over a period of some eight years, has shown a dramatic increase, but a very small increase, less than 1%, in the last year. However, the other eight colonies counted show increases varying from 6.3 % to 60%.

This aerial photographic methodology was developed specifically to overcome the logistical and practical difficulties of ground

counts in the Falkland Islands. Many black-browed albatross colonies in the Islands are impossible to traverse. The counting unit in our aerial surveying looks at occupied nests at the time adult birds return as potential breeders. It is not designed for, and cannot be specific about, the percentages of those birds which may lay an egg, a counting unit which some bodies may prefer.

The question of which is the correct counting unit is largely academic. What our aerial survey photographs do show in indisputable imagery is that the black-browed albatross

population in the Falkland Islands is presently doing well and is not in decline. Hopefully, this is a rewarding note to all those landowners and individuals who have supported this view from their own observations in the Islands over the years. It has also been especially gratifying that our independent surveys and the methodology used are being recognised and given support, not just by many individuals, but by organisations such as FIFCA (Falkland Island Fishing Companies Association). We can only hope that larger conservation lobbying organisations, who have a strong voice in the conservation world, will see the wisdom in presenting the reality of the Falkland population of black-browed albatross in a better light. Being included continually as part of the declining albatross population view does little to support the conservation efforts that are made in these Islands.



*Black-browed albatross colony at Beauchene West taken during the aerial survey. Photo: Georgina Strange, NICT*



*Black-browed albatross pair  
Photo: Georgina Strange, NICT*



*Georgina Strange photographing from helicopter, with Loadmaster John Smyth.  
Photo: Nina Dehnhard*

Thanks to the other three professionals of British International Helicopters, the Captain and flight of HMS Gloucester, BFSAI (British Forces South Atlantic Islands) for their support; to landowners for their supporting information; and for the help given by the Falkland Island Fishing Companies Association and Monika Egli.

At some time in the next weeks, assistance will be given to the Falkland Islands Government's (FIG) Environmental Planning Department, as part of FIG's commitment to ACAP (Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels).

Aerial survey photographs will be taken of an albatross colony site in conjunction with ground counts. This co-operative effort it is hoped will go some way to understanding aerial counting methodology.

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