



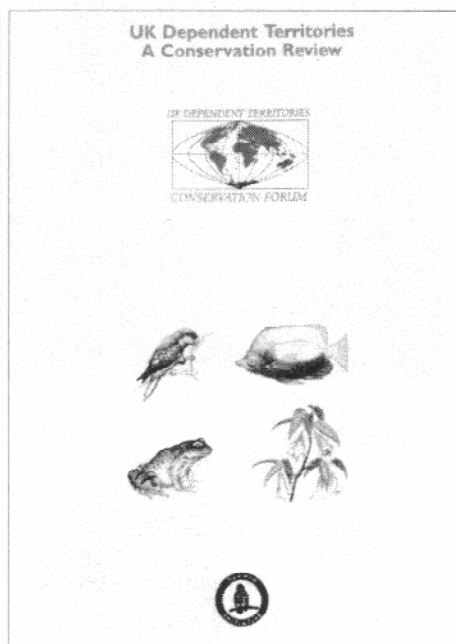
FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS 13. UK DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM JUNE 1996

Conservation Review launch

On 7th March the Forum launched *UK Dependent Territories: A Conservation Review* at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The launch, attended by around 70 people, included presentations introducing the audience to conservation in the Dependencies and to the content and recommendations of the Review. Professor Charles Stirton, Kew's Deputy Director, introduced the event and gave his wholehearted support to the work of the Forum. He commended the work that has been accomplished and urged other organizations to add their backing in order to achieve even more in the future. Posters depicting projects in Gibraltar, Montserrat, the Pitcairn Islands, the Falkland Islands, St Helena and Ascension were on display. The event successfully raised the profile of conservation work in the Dependencies and highlighted what can be accomplished by pooling resources and using a co-ordinated approach to projects.

The publication of the Conservation Review concluded a 2½-year-long Darwin Initiative project, funded by the Department of the Environment. The Forum will now concentrate on the recommendations contained within the Review, most immediately those that lay foundations for future core development activities. Following registration as a company limited by guarantee, we are now in the process of becoming a registered charity. The Forum's Executive Committee is drafting a business plan which will set goals and



determine priorities for the next three years and will be useful for the attraction of core funding. Central to the business plan is the development of the Forum to assist conservation groups in the Dependencies more effectively and to maintain up-to-date information of their needs. Details of how to obtain a copy of the Conservation Review can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

New member organizations

The Forum is delighted to announce a further increase in UK core support, with two major conservation organizations becoming sponsoring members. The British

Ornithologists' Union became a member in March and the National Trust has recently joined our network, initially for a year. The addition of these important and active conservation organizations to our growing membership not only helps the Forum financially, but increases our effectiveness in assisting conservation projects.

A profile of the British Ornithologists' Union follows later in this newsletter.

Pitcairn Working Group

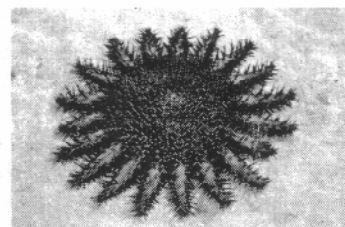
Late 1995 saw the formation of the Forum's newest working group. The Pitcairn Working Group has been established to help advance conservation issues in this group of Pacific Islands. The Group consists of representatives from NGOs, the UK Government, and universities and it is hoped that in due course it will include members of the Pitcairn Island Council and representatives of the British Diplomatic Staff in New Zealand. Issues on the agenda at present include rat-eradication programmes, Ramsar and the development of a restoration programme for the miro woodland on Henderson Island. Anyone with a legitimate interest in the Pitcairn Islands and/or expertise is welcome to join the Group.

Further information can be obtained from: Michael de L. Brooke, Zoology Department., University of Cambridge CB2 3EJ, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1223 336610; Fax: +44 (0)1223 336676; e-mail: mbl1005@cus.cam.ac.uk

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Crown of thorns starfish, British Indian Ocean Territory.

25th Anniversary Ramsar meeting

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance celebrated its 25th anniversary at the meeting of its contracting governments and NGO partners in Brisbane, Australia in March. This international agreement, signed at Ramsar, Iran in 1971, calls for both the listing and special protection of wetlands of international importance, and the wise (environmentally sustainable) use of all wetlands.

The Conference adopted a number of Resolutions and Recommendations, including a recommendation on the conservation and use of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, including mangrove forests and seagrass beds (Recommendation 6.7). This urges Contracting Parties to designate areas for inclusion as Ramsar sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance and requests the Convention Bureau to demonstrate the benefits of becoming a party to the Ramsar Convention to regions currently under-represented, especially in Oceania and the Caribbean (Paragraphs 9 and 11). There will also be



Red-footed booby, photographed in the Cayman Islands.

an emphasis on the Caribbean, and South and Central America in 1999 during the

next Conference of the Parties to the Convention to be held in Costa Rica.

Most of the UK Dependencies (except British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory and Guernsey – currently reconsidering) have opted to be party to the UK's ratification of the Convention, although wetlands have been listed in only three, (North, Middle and East Caicos Islands in the Turks & Caicos Islands listed in 1990, Booby Pond and Rookery in the Cayman Islands in 1994, and Mai Po Marshes and Inner Deep Bay in Hong Kong listed in 1995). Membership of the Convention requires the listing of at least one wetland. The three years leading to the Costa Rica meeting are an excellent opportunity to achieve listing of at least one wetland in each of the Dependent Territories and ensure measures are in place to sustain all wetlands. Such developments towards the Ramsar Conference would be a good way of building on the initiative of the International Year of the Reef, described more fully in this issue of *Forum News*.

Development threats around the Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site

The north-western corner of Hong Kong supports the largest remaining area of wetlands in the Territory, and a variety of habitats can be found, such as mudflats, mangroves, reedbeds, traditional shrimp ponds (*gei wai*) and fish ponds.

In 1993, the Hong Kong Government's Planning Department designated two buffer zones around the Deep Bay wetlands in order to control adverse land-use changes. Within Buffer Zone 1 (adjacent to Deep Bay) development is prohibited unless necessary for conservation or education. Buffer Zone 2 lies further inland, and low density developments are permitted if (i) the development does not compromise the conservation/education value of Deep Bay, Mai Po and Buffer Zone 1, and (ii) the development follows government's planning guidelines for the area. It includes conditions to grade development away from the wetlands, through Zone 2.

In September 1995, the British Government approved the designation of 1500 ha of wetlands around Mai Po and Inner Deep Bay as a Ramsar Site. This area covered

the mudflats on the Hong Kong side of the Bay, as well as most of the land within Buffer Zone 1. There are, however, pockets of private land in both Buffer Zones, bought by developers to build housing estates and golf courses. There are also government projects planned around the Deep Bay wetlands, which could lead to wetland loss. If all of these projects were to be approved, then 42 per cent of the existing fish ponds would be lost. So far, the Town Planning Board has rejected the private sector proposals because they failed to meet the government's planning guidelines and because of their environmental impact. The developers responded by taking their proposals to the high court in Hong Kong. In court, the environmental argument centred on the ecological value of fish ponds. The issue was felt to be so important that the Planning Department has initiated a consultancy study to give an independent assessment of the value of fish ponds. This study will report in mid-1996.

A proposed 98-ha golf course and housing development at Nam Sang Wai has been

rejected by the highest court in Hong Kong, the Court of Appeal, and it is likely that the developer will now take the case to the Privy Council in Britain.

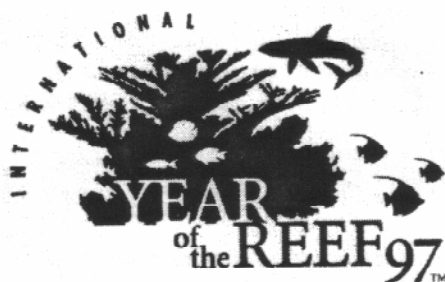
The developments and associated nature reserves are based on accidents of land ownership and are not part of an overall plan. If development is unco-ordinated, reserves will be small, isolated, and ineffectual.

In April 1996, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department will be initiating a nine-month consultancy study resulting in a management plan for the Ramsar Site (under the Ramsar Management Guidance procedure). The consultants appointed will have to talk to all sides (government, developers and NGOs) in order to develop an overall plan for the site. This will be jeopardized, however, if it is ignored by developers with proposals pending in court, and if judgement is made without regard to the Government's efforts to initiate a comprehensive and effective long term land-use plan for the Deep Bay Wetlands.

International Year of the Reef 1997

In 1993, at an international colloquium on the global status of coral reefs, a consensus emerged that many of the world's reefs are in decline. It also became apparent that information on their condition is inadequate. 1997 has therefore been declared the International Year of the Reef (IYOR), and will involve a world-wide assessment of coral reefs. This will document patterns of degradation and identify causes, educate users and the public on the value of coral reefs, and assist in the development of recovery strategies promoting sustainable management of reefs. It will provide a global context for national and regional conservation, an opportunity for publicity and fund-raising and bring together organizations with common aims. IYOR will be launched at the 8th International Coral Reef Symposium in Panama in June 1996.

IYOR will pursue the goals of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), a partnership of nations and organizations seeking to implement international conventions and agreements (such as Chapter 17 of Agenda 21) for the benefit of coral reefs and related ecosystems. It aims to put into practice the actions called for under the ICRI Call for Action and the ICRI Framework of Action. ICRI has organized meetings in coral reef regions to develop Action Plans. These will be presented at the Panama Symposium.



IYOR will have a dual approach: (i) conservation, education and public awareness; and (ii) research, survey and monitoring. Both will contribute to the development of new, more effective coral reef conservation. Scientists and volunteers from the world-wide diving community will carry out survey and monitoring programmes. Further research will develop a better understanding of how reefs respond to both natural and human-induced impacts and their ability to recover. Courses, school curricula, video tapes, brochures and other educational materials will also be produced. The IYOR initiative has no funding of its own, and the emphasis is on promoting collaboration between existing organizations involved in reef management and research.

Coral reefs are found in nine of the 17 UK Dependent Territories: Anguilla, Bermuda,

British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Turks & Caicos Islands, British Indian Ocean Territory, Hong Kong and the Pitcairn Islands. Some of these Territories will have participated in the regional ICRI meetings, such as the Consultation in Coastal Resource Management in the Tropical Americas. This was held in Jamaica in July 1995 and identified a number of priority activities for the region. It is hoped that reef managers, NGOs and others concerned with the health of the reefs in the Dependent Territories will wish to participate in IYOR. The Forum is considering how it can assist in a specific IYOR programme for the Dependencies as a group.

Further information about IYOR can be obtained from:

Vanessa Guest, UK IYOR Co-ordinator, 5 Pendragon House, Port Pendennis, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 3XX, UK. Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1326 316836; e-mail: 101341.16@compuserve.com

Stephen Colwell and Sue Wells, Co-Chairs, IYOR Public Awareness and Conservation Committee, Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL), 809, Delaware St., Berkley, CA94710, USA. Fax: 510 528 9317; e-mail: CoralReefA@aol.com

The IYOR page on the World Wide Web is at <http://www.coral.org.IYOR>

British Ornithologists' Union: a profile

The British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), founded in 1858, is one of the senior ornithological organizations in the world and has an international membership. Its principal aim is to encourage the study of birds in Britain and throughout the world in order to understand their biology and aid their conservation. The BOU supports scientific ornithology, organizes conferences and publishes checklists, books (such as *The New Dictionary of Birds*) and the internationally respected journal, *Ibis*.

The Union has a long tradition of providing financial support for research and expeditions. It administers the David Lack and Landsborough Thomson Trusts, funded by bequests and donations, from which research grants are awarded annually to sponsor scientific and conservation projects.

As a long-established British non-governmental organization, the Union has a particular interest in work carried out in the UK Dependent Territories and was pleased to make a major contribution to the financial support of the Henderson Island Expedition. It has also had an interest in work on Ascension Island.

Most of BOU's support is in the form of small grants (up to a few hundred pounds). Preference is given to Union members and to areas of priority. In recent years priority has been given to supporting work in the countries of eastern Europe and northern Asia. The Union would now also welcome applications relating to the Dependent Territories, strengthening its long-term interest in these areas. The deadline for applications is in January.



British Ornithologists' Union
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For further information and application forms, please contact: Mrs G. Bonham, Administrator, British Ornithologists' Union, c/o Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP, UK. Telephone: +44 (0)1442 890080, Fax: +44 (0)1442 890693.

Publications

The Flowers of Gibraltar

by Leslie Linares, Arthur Harper and John Cortes.

Published for the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, this book includes sections on Gibraltar's climate and vegetation, seasonality, conservation, wild plants and the law. Many of Gibraltar's species are described, with 200 illustrated by colour photographs. The book also contains a glossary, diagrams of parts of flowers and a brief bibliography. It is a field guide that also provides good general information on plants and habitats.

Copies can be obtained for £15.00 plus £2.50 p&tp, from: Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, The Alameda, PO Box 843, Gibraltar, or via the Natural History Book Service, 2-3 Wills Road, Totnes TQ9 5XN, UK.



Gibraltar chickweed *Cerastium gibraltarium*

UK Dependent Territories: A Conservation Review

Compiled by Sara Cross & Sara Oldfield. This is the result of two years' research and collaboration with UK and Dependent Territory conservation groups, academic institutions and individual experts. Published with support from the Darwin Initiative, it outlines practical conservation measures that UK non-governmental organizations believe should be implemented and the Forum's plans for the next five years. The review includes four sections: the work of the Forum and its supporting members; conservation groups in the Dependencies; priority actions over the next five years; and an analysis of recommended projects. Published by UK Dependent Territories Conservation Forum. ISBN 0-9527196-0-6; 80pp, £10.00.

Copies are available from the Forum address on this page.

St Helena – The Lost County of England

A report by the Bishop of St Helena's Commission on Citizenship

This publication, the result of nearly four years' research, explores claims that a wrong has been done to inhabitants of St Helena, part of England since settlement in the 17th century.

For information contact: Dorothy Evans, 3 Barns Hay, Old Marston, Oxford, UK.

Montserrat national parks legislation passed

Despite major volcanic disturbances, Montserrat's Forestry, Wildlife, National Parks and Protected Areas legislation was enacted on 13th February this year. This is the island's first legislation to specifically afford protection to important wildlife habitats. It contains provisions to establish an Environmental Board to oversee the management of park areas, the preparation of a National Forestry Plan and set up an Environmental Fund. The Fund will provide for the management of forested areas, national parks and wildlife protection.

Project planning meetings were held in February, to determine the way ahead for an 18-month biodiversity survey of the island. This £100,000 project, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and managed by WWF-UK, will collect information on Montserrat's biodiversity and develop on-island capacity to use the information for the conservation and sustainable management of resources. It is intended that this will lead to further initiatives in other UK Dependent Territories and in the wider Caribbean.

Conservation action on St Helena

St Helena's first National Park was declared on Commonwealth Day (11th March) this year. Diana's Peak National Park is the island's main water catchment and supports almost all the remaining high-altitude tree-fern and cabbage-tree woodland and associated invertebrate species, including the rare sail spider, spiky woodlouse and species of endemic weevils.

A five-year management plan for the Park has identified priorities such as the removal of invasive weeds (such as *Solanum mauritanium*, *Buddleia madagascariensis*, and monocultures of New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*), and the restoration of endemic species. The extent of tree-fern thicket, once estimated to be 133 ha, is now only 15.7 ha. Species that once covered the area are either extinct (the stringwood *Acalypha rubra*), or survive only in cultivation, (the olive *Nesiota elliptica* and the redwood *Trochetopsis erythroxylon*).

The history, conservation value and species of the peaks are described in a leaflet now being distributed. These have generated much interest in the last remnants of St Helena's endemic forest.

Turks & Caicos Environmental Trust Fund

Legislation passed by the Turks & Caicos Islands' Executive Council will establish an Environmental Trust Fund. Once approved by the Legislative Council, this will add 1% to accommodation tax, to be placed in a special sequestered fund. For the first 5 years of operation, at least 90 per cent of this revenue will be spent on the National Park System. At current levels, this will generate over \$300,000 a year.



Production of *Forum News* is supported by:

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British Ornithologists' Union (BOU)

Fauna & Flora International (FFI)

National Trust

Plantlife

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew,

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK)

Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

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We welcome comments, information and articles that may be of interest from *Forum News* readers.

The next issue will be produced in Autumn/Winter. 1996

