

FORUM NEWS 22

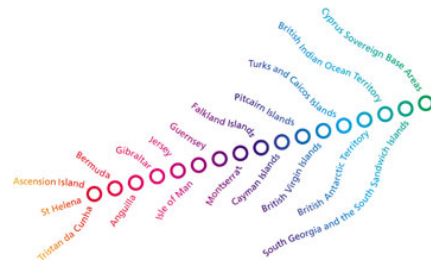
DECEMBER 2002

www.ukotcf.org

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A Sense of Direction

**A conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small islands and communities
Bermuda 22nd-27th March 2003**



The conference is being organized jointly by the Bermuda National Trust, the Bermuda Zoological Society, the Bermuda Audubon Society, the Bermuda Ministry of the Environment and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. It will be the third such conference following those held in London in 1999, and in Gibraltar in 2000. The proceedings of the Gibraltar conference can be seen at www.ukotcf.org

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental agencies, NGOs and others to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. It is hoped that Overseas Territories and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems will benefit from Bermuda's experiences and history of planning and conservation initiatives. Bermuda hopes to learn from the success of environmental programmes tried and tested elsewhere.

The main topics have been determined after wide consultations amongst conservationists working in the Overseas Territories. The sessions will be:

- Conservation issues of Bermuda and conference initiation by field visit
- Environmental Charters and strategic planning

- Managing conservation organizations
- Implementing management plans
- Climate change
- Dealing with invasive species

The conference will take place at the Elbow Beach hotel. Accommodation in the conference hotel for the whole period of the conference (arriving Saturday 22nd March and leaving on Thursday 27th March costs either \$543.50 (shared room) or \$1087 (single occupancy). To this must be added the costs of lunches, continental breakfasts, airport transfers, coffee breaks, field trips, conference materials, etc. These latter costs total about \$1100 per participant. Recognising the high cost especially to small NGOs, the organisers have arranged to help participants by finding resources to subsidise all participants. In the case of small participants from small NGOs, the conference cost of \$1100 may be waived entirely. The organisers are grateful for contributions to the funding of the conference (see page 3).

Participants should budget to meet separately the costs of drinks, additional costs such as telephone calls, and evening meals, although it is envisaged that participants will be invited to a complimentary meal on at least one evening. Participants are also advised to book their flights to Bermuda as early as possible, because flight costs tend to increase nearer the date of travel.



A Sense of Direction

Bermuda will host an international environment conference from 22nd to 27th March 2003, with a focus on UK Overseas Territories and other small islands.

Organised by:

Bermuda Ministry of Environment, Bermuda National Trust, Bermuda Zoological Society, Bermuda Audubon Society and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE PROGRAMME

Saturday 22 March

Arrival day and set up displays

Sunday 23 March

Conservation issues of Bermuda and conference initiation by field visits.

An Introduction to Bermuda's environment by Amanda Outerbridge (*Bermuda National Trust*), Andrew Dobson (*Bermuda Audubon Society*), Wayne Carey (*Vice-President, BNT*) and Jack Ward (*Director, Dept of Conservation Services*). Followed by a tour of Bermuda with visits to Gibbes Hill Lighthouse (best view of development across the Island) Spittal Pond (pictured below) and Nonsuch Island.

Official opening of the conference by The Premier of Bermuda, The Hon. Jennifer M. Smith, DHumL, J.P., M.P.

Key note speaker David Suzuki (David

include a range of areas, states of progress and Govt/NGO viewpoints etc.

Topic 2: Managing conservation organisations

Establishing a National Trust in St Helena
Harnessing volunteers in Gibraltar
How to evaluate your organisation's effectiveness as a conservation organisation, using the Bermuda Ministry of the Environment as a case study

Falklands Conservation — awareness raising in tourists

The Netherlands Antilles

Collaborating through the Forum's web/database

In the late afternoon there will be an open joint meeting of the Forum regional working groups.

Tuesday 25 March

Topic 3: Implementing management plans

A management plan for the built heritage

Site management by a small community:
Gough/ Inaccessible Island management Plans

Species conservation plan from French Caledonia

Ascension — focus on dealing with invasive species

Cayman blue iguana management plan

A conservation plan involving sustainable

development of local community - Turks & Caicos

Inter-country plan — marine turtles in the Caribbean

A conservation plan from Jersey

Introduction to the forthcoming review of potential Wetlands of International Importance

Introduction to field workshops

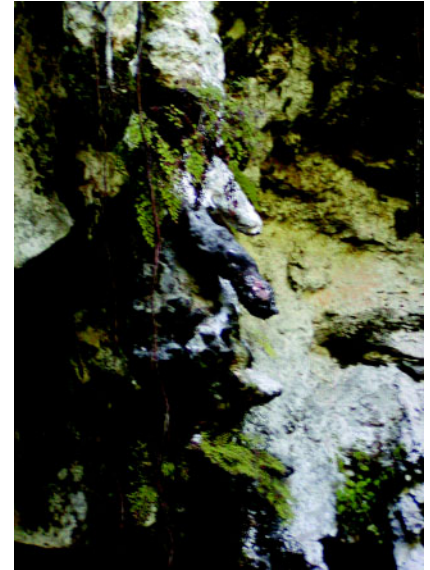
The conference to divide into small groups, each to visit one of Bermuda's interesting sites to make a structured effort

at developing a plan for aspects of management.

Reception at Government House

Wednesday 26 March

Wrap up the previous day's session by summaries and discussion



Bermuda has an extensive system of marine caves. These caves harbour over 60 of Bermuda's rare endemic species many of which are critically endangered

Topic 4: Climate change

Scientific overview of climate change implication as it relates to small islands
British Indian Ocean Territory — island flooding and coral death related to changes in sea levels and the temperature.

Effects of increased storm activity and sea levels in Bermuda on coastal nesting birds

Topic 5: Invasive species

Panel discussion on dealing with invasive species (with involvement from CABI Bioscience, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, FFI and Bermuda Zoological Society)

Wind up and conclusions

Conference dinner at Fort Hamilton

Thursday 27 March

Departure



Spittal Pool

Suzuki Foundation, Canada)

Monday 24 March

Welcoming address: The Hon Dennis Lister, Minister of the Environment.

Topic 1: Environmental Charters and strategic planning

Review of progress in different UKOTs in implementing the Environmental Charters and getting biodiversity into other sectoral plans — including obstacles so that we can discuss overcoming these.

Examples from different OTs, trying to



Bermuda's mangroves are the most northerly in the world. Mangroves have been heavily impacted by human activities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

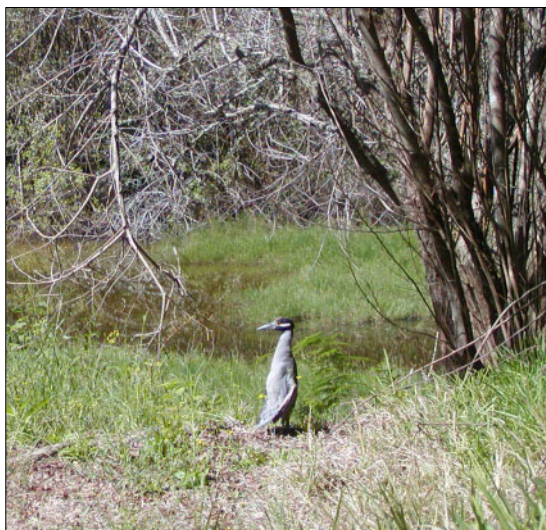
The organisers are grateful for support from:
The Government of Bermuda
The Environment Fund for Overseas Territories of the
UK Foreign and Commonwealth
Office

Bank of Bermuda Foundation
Capital G
Fidelity Investments

BOOKINGS

A full detailed programme and booking form is available on the Forum's website www.ukotcf.org
Places for the conference are limited by physical constraints.

Anyone who wishes to participate should complete and return the booking form as soon as possible. Alternatively contact Frances Marks at Tel +44 1608 644425, email: fmmarks@ukotcf.org or Starla Williams +1441 292 2770 email starla@srgbda.com



*Yellow-crowned night heron
Nyctanassa violacea*

Book Review

A Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda by Andrew Dobson

Three weeks after my arrival in Bermuda, I had the pleasure of meeting Andrew Dobson. Prior to that I had been staggering around the island in search of green patches shown on my *Handy Reference Map of Bermuda*. Needless to say I only saw 30 species during this period. If only I had a copy of *A Birdwatching Guide to Bermuda*, I would have seen so much more!

Andrew's aim was two-fold: to provide a guidebook for visiting birders and to open the eyes of local people to the wonderful opportunity to watch birds in Bermuda.

These aims have been successfully achieved. This book is everything a bird-finding guide should be, very informative and extremely detailed. The quality of the book is first rate. The text is clearly laid out and the two sets of bird and habitat photos add to its visual appeal.

The bulk of the text focuses on the birding locations. Seventy-five sites are described. Detailed notes are given about the most likely species to be seen, birding highlights, rarities, access, amenities and other attractions. Clearly drawn maps also show the location of every site. Two chapters that will be particularly useful to both local and overseas birders are *Birding through the seasons* and *Finding sought after birds*. This information will enable birders to plan excursions more efficiently and home-in on those tricky species that too frequently elude us.

As a result of this book, birders will find that there are fantastic opportunities to see birds in Bermuda. It puts Bermuda on the global bird map! Andrew should be congratulated on producing such a splendid book and I thoroughly recommend it, not only birders, but also to anyone who has an interest in learning more about Bermuda's natural history.

Book Review by Steve Rodwell (Ornithologist)

This guide has been written for both Bermuda residents and tourists. In his foreword, Dr David Wingate says, Andrew has also unveiled the extraordinary diversity of

bird life and birding opportunity that awaits residents of Bermuda who have any inclination to become interested in natural history. I would venture to say that it is probably the most comprehensive guide to bird finding for any area outside Great Britain .

A conservation section focuses on ways in which we can all help the breeding success of longtails (tropic birds) and bluebirds. For the visitor there is advice on travel and accommodation.

A full, annotated bird checklist is provided as well as information on other wildlife species. Superb colour photos

compliment the text. The book forms part of a highly acclaimed series by Arlequin Press.

In the UK contact Arlequin Press, 26 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1SW, Tel: 01245 267771 www.arlequinpress.co.uk

If you have any questions regarding the book, please email: info@audubon.bm

\$19.95 per book. Cheques payable to Bermuda Audubon Society (Add \$5 for surface mailing to addresses outside Bermuda)

The Bermuda Audubon Society will benefit from the book sales. Mail your order to: Mr A Dobson, Bermuda Audubon Society, P.O. Box HM 1328, Hamilton HM FX, Bermuda

Launch of the Saint Helena National Trust

The St Helena National Trust was launched on the 21st May 2002, the day Saints celebrated 500 years since the discovery of their Island by Portuguese navigator Joao Nova Castella. The launch was celebrated simultaneously at the Trust's new office on the first floor of Broadway House in St Helena, where over 50 guests were encouraged to find out more about the Trust whilst enjoying a glass of wine, and at the Durbar Rooms of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. His Royal Highness the Duke of York agreed to be our Patron and attended the launch in the UK. In his address he fondly remembered his visit to the island in 1984, and its warm friendly people. Martin Drury, who had visited St Helena during November and December 2001 on behalf of the Forum to advise on the establishment of the Trust, was at the UK launch and gave a short speech on its significance.

St Helena, said Martin, is a place of striking and glorious extremes: one of the remotest inhabited islands in the world with a landscape of extraordinary variety and beauty: the volcanic moonscape of the cliffs and coastal gullies, the green, sheep-grazed valleys of the interior, and high above, the three peaks, clothed with their ancient forest of tree-ferns and cabbage trees and brushed by the cloud that rolls in from the Atlantic. St Helena has well over a hundred indigenous plants — most of them rather strange-looking things to the non-botanist. Its single town is an intact and unspoiled example of 18th-century architecture and town-planning, and from many of the forts and batteries which survive everywhere on cliffs and hilltops, 18th-century guns still point out to sea, or lie rusting where the soldiers of the East India Company left them; and scattered on the ground outside their walls you will find fragments of clay pipes and Chinese porcelain, tunic buttons, badges and the necks and bases of 18th-century wine bottles. And, as if all this were not romance enough, there is there is the ever-present, brooding spirit of Napoleon — or General Bonaparte, as the British rather priggishly insisted on calling him.

But, these unique natural and historic treasures are intensely fragile. In spite of the valiant efforts of a few individuals and the staff of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, many of the endemic plants are on the verge of extinction and some are already lost. The pastoral agriculture that created and sustains the inland landscape is barely viable. Only one flax mill survives with its machinery intact and the machines are rusting and their wooden parts crumbling. And, if you look carefully at the handsome 18th-century houses that line the main street of Jamestown, you will see signs of insidious decay and of repairs carried out in modern, damaging materials.

So, this is why it is such an important step forward that St Helena now has its own National Trust. It is a great international movement that gives people a stake in the future of their heritage and natural

environment and the opportunity to play a part in safeguarding both for future generations.

We have identified four inaugural projects that show the breadth of the work of the Trust. Two new projects the restoration of a Flax Mill and a Schools Project and two established projects, The Millennium Forest and The St Helena Museum.

The successful appointment of Mrs Barbara George as the Trust's first Director was finalised on the 11th September 2002. Barbara was formerly head of Maths and Science at St Helena's secondary school, Prince Andrew School. She is an historical researcher who has published several books and booklets on local history.

We are grateful to the Foreign Office, which has generously agreed to fund the running of Trust for its first year. We are also grateful to the St Helena Government and the UKOTCF for their assistance in the establishment of the Trust.

Eighty Saints have already joined the St Helena National Trust, a remarkable figure for an island where incomes are low. But, if we are to tackle our inaugural projects, we need members, because the more members we have, the easier it will be to raise money from grant-giving bodies. We are aiming to enrol the equivalent of 5% of St Helena's population (250 members). So, please mark this 500th anniversary by joining the National Trust —

and we will then really be on our way.

Overseas annual membership rates are £15 ordinary, £25 family and £250 for Corporate (Group/Society/Organisation) membership which will entitle you to receive a membership card, a tree planted in your name in the Millennium Forest and regular newsletters giving up to date information about the Trust, events and activities. *The St Helena National Trust, Broadway House, Jamestown, St Helena Island, South Atlantic Ocean, STHL 1ZZ*

Visit us at our website www.sthnatrust.org or email sth.natrust@helanta.sh.



*Opening of the National Trust Office on 21 May 2002
Left to Right Honorary Members: Jessica March MBE and George Benjamin BEM, President Gilbert Yon, Bishop John Salt and back Isabel Peters and H.E. the Governor David Hollamby and Mrs Hollamby*



National Trust Director Mrs Barbara George (centre) signing her contract with Vice President Stedson Stroud and member Isabel Peters

Historic and Cultural Preservation in the Turks and Caicos

Wade s Green Plantation



Entrance to Wade s Green

Wade s Green Plantation is an 18th Century Cotton Plantation, near the quiet settlement of Kew, on the island of North Caicos, in the Turks & Caicos Islands. This site, with a number of ruins in reasonably good condition, is frequented by

locals, tourist and school groups. The site never ceases to amaze its visitors.

The Government of the Turks & Caicos Islands has agreed to give the Turks & Caicos National Trust a 99-year lease on the property. The National Trust had already been working at Wade s Green for a number of years. The site is of great historic importance to the country, and is interesting to those with an interest in historic sites, wildlife, native vegetation or even those who like to explore new and exciting things, seeing that there are quite a few acres of property to investigate.

The area is very fertile and for a long time it was so overgrown that people could not visit. During the first phase of maintenance of the plantation, the National Trust cleared paths and erected informative signs on the site.

In September 2001 the National Trust held an official opening of the second phase of work done to help preserve and develop the plantation into an attraction site.



One of the ruins

- The natural vegetation was studied, and an identification and labelling process was carried out. Signs were installed to enable visitors to learn about the history of the cotton plantation and to learn both the local and Latin names of the natural vegetation surrounding the site.
- A brochure was developed and published to distribute to visitors, which records the history of Wade s Green Plantation.
- A tower was erected to give visitors a panoramic view of the site, as well as the surrounding cays and islands on the western side of North Caicos.

Since the beginning of 2002 work has been ongoing on the site.

- A field/farm was recreated so that visitors can see some of the ground provisions, grown on the site during the 18th Century, and have continued up until today within the local community to supply their households.
- Buttons have been designed as a pass for visitors into the site depicting a part of the Plantation s

history, the sugarcane.

- A gate was erected to assist with monitoring the visitors to the site and to reduce vandalism of the property.
- Some landscaping has also been incorporated on the site to enhance the overall presentation of the Plantation.

A visit to the Wade s Green Plantation is a very memorable one if you are interested in the historic, cultural and natural heritage of the Turks & Caicos Islands. The plantation is an actual learning classroom and the Turks & Caicos National Trust will continue to strive to protect and maintain the Plantation, so that it can be enjoyed, by both the tourist and local visitors.



Signage on the vegetation

A recent discovery of the joint programme of work by the Trust and the Forum is that the area surrounding the plantation holds the only high Tropical Dry Forest in the Turks and Caicos Islands, which provides a habitat for plants and animals that exist nowhere else in the islands.

In spring 2002, the field staff of the National Trust found the endemic Caicos Islands Gecko *Aristelliger hetchi* living and reproducing on the site. The species had not been recorded anywhere since a reptile survey over forty years ago.

In September of 2002 the National Trust s Conservation Officer joined a research team from Fairchild Tropical Gardens, which currently houses the TCI National Herbarium Collection, to collect further specimens. Over 150 species were collected and several new records for the Turks and Caicos Islands were made from the Wade s Green Plantation Site.

Botanical exhibits including regional tropical dry forest tree species have been incorporated into the site.

An off-site Heritage Breed Poultry Project was established to help preserve the Dominique Fowl, and Internationally E n d a n g e r e d

Heritage Livestock Breed. This fowl, the first pure-breed domestic bird developed in the New World, still exists on North Caicos and will be incorporated into the Wade s Green Plantation site in a special exhibit.



The Great House Ruins

Turks & Caicos National Trust (tc.nattrust@tcitway.tc)

Invasive Species in the UK Overseas Territories

Sean Murphy from CABI gave a presentation, on behalf of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, at the joint meeting between the Forum and the UK Government on 11 July 2002 on invasive alien species (IAS). His presentation highlighted the challenges and opportunities of prevention and management of IAS. IAS represent the second most important threat globally to biodiversity (second only to habitat loss) and the primary threat to biodiversity on islands. Many of the UKOTs are experiencing problems with IAS, particularly rats, feral cats, and invasive plants species, for example the Mexican thorn.

Globally, IAS have been a problem in agriculture for well over a century. The UKOTs are particularly threatened; being islands, they have many delicate and unique ecosystems. IAS contribute to social instability and economic hardship, placing constraints on sustainable development, economic growth and environmental conservation. The direct costs of IAS to a single country can run into millions of dollars annually. Failure to address the underlying causes of biological invasion and mitigate the impacts of IAS will result in the loss of numerous species and genetic resources, significantly altering ecosystems and limiting development options. Addressing this complex, global scale problem requires cooperation and coordination among governments, industries, non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental bodies and technical experts. Working together it is possible to safeguard human livelihoods and biological diversity.

Challenges for the UKOTs include creating an enabling environment to address policy issues, cross sectoral linkages, raise public awareness of the threats posed by invasive species and introduce practical preventative frameworks. Opportunities have arisen in the UKOTs to share experiences in regard to mitigation of IAS. Certain programmes, such as rat eradication on islands in South Georgia have proved successful.

Sean Murphy explained that CABI was one of the partners in the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP). CABI was in partnership with Scope and IUCN in GISP. Their goal was to improve national and regional capacity (scientific, technical and technical) to prevent and manage IAS problems worldwide. GISP have produced many publications dealing with various issues related to IAS; for example, CABI on behalf of GISP have produced a Toolkit of Best Prevention and Management Practices

Discussion that followed the presentation highlighted the following points:

- UKOTs, as small territories, were particularly vulnerable to invasive species, geographically, politically and economically
- Invasive species are a critically important issue in the UKOTs
- The strategies that UKOTs should be developing as the next stage of the Environmental Charter process would be an important way of reviewing needs in this area within each UKOT

- It is a common issue but there is little coordination at present
- Greater use of the Forum website could be made to provide material to raise the awareness of the problem that was considered to have important biological and economic repercussions. There is a discussion group at www.ukotcf.org
- UKOTs needs collaboration and cooperative assistance
- There are important quarantine approaches
- Relevant to potential DFID involvement
- In many cases, measures can be designed in advance to minimise the problem

Visit the GISP website: <http://jasper.stanford.edu/gisp/>

Rat Eradication success at Grass Island, South Georgia

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands two-year research programme to investigate the feasibility of rat eradication at South Georgia came to a close in April 2002 when Grass Island in Stromness Bay was officially declared rat-free. This was a collaborative programme with the Department of Conservation (DOC), New Zealand (NZ), who provided full access to DOC's network of eradication specialists through the Islands Eradications Advisory Group (IEAG). Ian McFadden and Andy Cox, both members of the IEAG and experienced eradication practitioners, worked with Sally Poncet, project co-ordinator for the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Grant Dixon, Ken Passfield, Leiv Poncet, Mark and Fraser Carpenter completed the field team.

The aim of the Grass Island baiting and monitoring programme which began in November 2000, was to determine the effectiveness of the New Zealand approach under South Georgian conditions. The bait was a cereal-based pellet containing 20 ppm of Brodifacoum, broadcast by hand following a grid system to ensure complete coverage. The baiting team included A. Cox, I. McFadden, S. Poncet, G. Dixon, K. Passfield and L. Poncet working from the charter vessel Golden Fleece. Oil-soaked pinewood gnaw sticks were positioned to monitor the post-baiting presence of rats. Pre- and post-baiting abundance and distribution surveys of the island's bird population show that there has been no measurable impact of the poison-baiting on the bird population.

A second island, Jason Island at the western entrance to Cumberland Bay was also baited. Lying only 35 metres from the mainland, it was anticipated that rats would eventually invade by swimming, despite the low seawater temperatures. In April 2002, two rats were trapped on the island but also present were four South Georgia Pipits, the first time that this species has been recorded on the island, the nearest population being on rat-free Right Whale Rocks 9 km away at the eastern entrance to Cumberland Bay. With pipits now confined to offshore islands and the rat-free mainland areas of South Georgia's south coast

only, habitat restoration through rat eradication provides valuable new nest sites for this endangered native species.

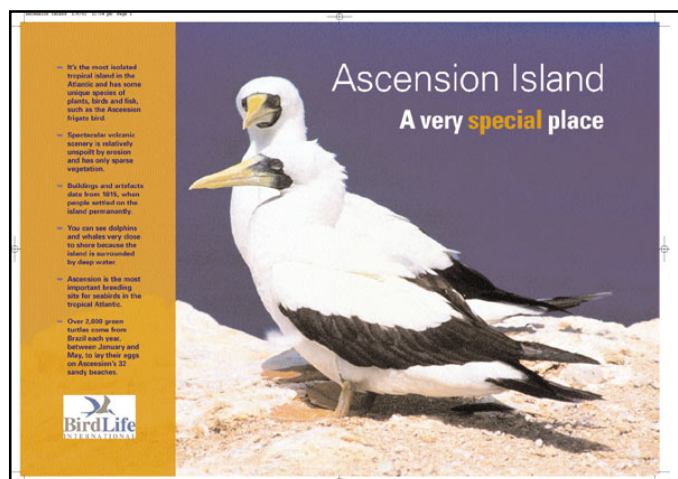
The research programme also included studies to assess the feasibility of rat eradication at more extensive mainland areas such as Greene Peninsula, considered to be the most suitable site for further eradications. The range of rats inland over non-vegetated ground and the effectiveness of glaciers as barriers to migration were investigated, with fieldwork carried out by Mark and Fraser Carpenter. Analyses of rat skull morphology by Palaeocol Research NZ, and of DNA by the University of Canterbury NZ, from tissue samples collected from two sites separated by glaciers, indicate that should rats be successfully eradicated from Greene Peninsula, or any glacially isolated site on South Georgia, there is a very low probability of re-invasion, providing the glacial barriers are maintained.

The research has also highlighted the threat that current glacial retreat may pose to South Georgia's remaining rat-free mainland areas and their populations of penguins and seabirds. Over the last 100 years, global warming has resulted in a 0.6°C rise in South Georgia's average annual temperature and a recession of most glaciers. As icecaps shrink and new shorelines are exposed, the likelihood of invasion of rat-free areas by rats is a matter of concern. The success of the Grass Island eradication trial and the lessons learned from the associated research have provided valuable insights into dealing with re-invasions and has opened the way for further eradications on mainland South Georgia.

Sally Poncet, Project Co-ordinator
sallyponcet@yahoo.com

Ascension Island - A very special place

Posters available from RSPB, International Division,
The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL UK
at £1 plus postage and packing



Pearls of the Seven Seas

Members of the general public were given a rare chance to see the magnificent rooms at the Grade 1 listed Foreign and Commonwealth Office building and find out more about Britain's Overseas Territories on 2nd July 2002.



Baroness Amos at the Overseas Territories Open Day at the Foreign and Commonwealth

The Open Day was part of the London String of Pearls Golden Jubilee Festival. The theme of the day was the *British Overseas Territories, Pearls of the Seven Seas*. Visitors were given the opportunity to savour the sights and sounds of: the Town Crier from Bermuda, a recital from a poet from Anguilla, steel band and performances

from the London Gospel Choir. There was also a wealth of information on the Territories environment, history and culture.

Baroness Amos, Minister for the Overseas Territories said in her opening address, 'The British Overseas Territories have one significant factor in common: their continuing link to and relationship with the UK. Our relationship is one of partnership, as we face together the reality and challenges of the modern world'.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum staged a display of all eighteen display boards in the fine Locarno suite. Members of the Forum, RSPB, CABI, Falklands Conservation, Friends of the Chagos and WWF joined together to add to the display and show members of the general public the environmental needs of the UK Overseas Territories. Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman, gave a talk entitled *Britain's Rarest Wildlife: Nature Conservation in the British Overseas Territories*, to a group of interested listeners.

The day was a worthwhile learning experience giving the opportunity to find out more about the environmental, cultural and historical diversity of the British Overseas Territories.

Visit the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum website at www.ukotcf.org

New full members of the Forum

For historical reasons, there are at present two categories of member organisations of the Forum: full (or supporting) member organisations largely based in UK; and associate members (organisations in Overseas Territories or Crown Dependencies). (There is now also the new grouping of individual and corporate supporters as the Friends of UK Overseas Territories.) Following enquiries from several associate members as to whether they could change their status to that of full members, the Executive Committee made clear that they would welcome applications for such changes in status — while stressing that the associate member category will continue unchanged for any UKOT NGO organisation which wishes to maintain that status. The Forum was simply responding to a request from those associate members that wish to change.

The present 2-tier situation arose because the Forum was originally totally funded by the then full member organisations. The situation has now changed considerably, partly as a result of the success of the Forum s operation. Here are some of the key points.

- Only full (supporting) members (those who pay subscriptions — in practice, previously only UK member organisations) - have a vote at the AGM.
- Whilst this may have been appropriate at an earlier stage, the success of the Forum and its partners in helping many UKOTNGOs to develop means that the situation has moved on.
- Originally, the supporting member subscriptions met 100% of the Forum s funding. However, now, this element of income constitutes only about 10% of the Forum s income. Much of the rest comes from the funding of projects usually jointly developed with UKOT member organisations.
- A high proportion of UKOTs now have at least one independent NGO, which is active in conservation, and as a partner of the Forum.
- Partly as a result of the Forum s activity, the relationship between all member organisations is increasingly much more of a partnership than a 2-tier arrangement.

Already, five UKOT member organisations have decided to become full members of the Forum. These are: Falklands Conservation, Turks & Caicos National Trust, Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, Bermuda Zoological Society and Friends of the Chagos. Traditionally, *Forum News* profiles new member organisations. Although these members are not new, we are pleased to have an opportunity to include some profiles in this issue, and we hope to follow with those for the other organisations soon.

Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) continues its conservation and research activities. Bird migration monitoring remains a key component of the work, covering daily counts of bird of prey passage, ringing of passerines, and regular cover of seabird movements. Two short-toed eagles *Circaetus gallicus* have been fitted with satellite transmitters and are being tracked during their migratory movements. A full inventory of lepidoptera is currently being worked upon. GONHS is seeking support from outside bodies in completing an invertebrate and lower plant inventory.



Barbary macaque

Conservation work has included the preparation of a major report on the conservation problems within the Upper Rock Nature Reserve, presented to the Gibraltar Government, to which a reply is awaited. Practical conservation projects have included the removal of about 500 square metres of the invasive exotic *Carpobrotus edulis*, with the support of the MOD, from a prime wildlife site on Windmill Hill Flat.

GONHS continues to manage the Barbary macaques, a difficult task given the pressure put on these animals by tourists. Major improvements to the feeding and watering sites have been costed, and funds are now being sought for these works. Research into the species continues in collaboration with Zurich University, the German Primate Centre and the Chicago Field Museum, and a major conference on the macaques (Calpe 2003) is planned for next year, with Gibraltar Government support.

GONHS continues to work closely with groups in Spain on a wide range of environmental issues, including those that concern the populations on both sides of the border, specifically air and sea pollution.

The latest issue of the Society s Journal *Alectoris*, has been published, being a monographic issue on the Gibraltar Funnel-web spider *Macrothele calpeiana*. The Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory Report is due to resume

publication shortly with a summary of 2001 observations and short communications on birds. At the same time, the website is being re-vamped, with a page on the macaques shortly to be introduced. The site, now at www.gonhs.org, also includes recent observations, press releases, news on activities, and species lists.

Falklands Conservation

Falklands Conservation is delighted to join the Forum as a full partner.° It looks forward to playing a full part in the Forum's active programme, both developing a closer relationship with the UK conservation movement and bringing to it a special perspective and experience.

This is the charity that takes action for nature in the Falkland Islands.° It is the only conservation organisation concerned with protection of wildlife throughout an archipelago of over 700 islands in the South West Atlantic.° They contain exceptional wildlife, largely based on a rich marine ecosystem and are internationally renowned for their spectacular colonies of seabirds - notably albatross and penguins - but



Ann Brown Falklands Conservation UK Secretary promoting the UKOTs at the FCO Open day in July

have 14 endemic plants and are important location for the Southern Sea Lion and Elephant Seal.

Falklands Conservation, set up 23 years ago by Sir Peter Scott, undertakes research° and surveys (most recently a census of the black-browed albatross), has a long term project monitoring seabirds at sea in the waters around the Islands, owns 16 island nature reserves, runs a nature club for young Islanders, undertakes environmental assessment studies, and takes direct action by eradication of rats from key bird areas and re-planting the native tussac grass.° It has recently published the highly acclaimed Visitor's Guide to the Falkland Islands incorporating a Falklands Countryside Code.

The charity receives a generous grant from the Falkland Islands Government, but relies heavily on public donations and support from its members to undertake much of its work.° It is based at the Jetty Visitor Centre in Stanley, with a second small office in London.° More information can be found on their web site at:°

Changes at the Forum

It will be no secret to regular readers that raising funds for the Forum's work is a continuing struggle. A major part of the Forum's activities are undertaken by people donating their time and skills, but there is no way that some direct costs can be avoided. Approximately 10% of the Forum's income comes from the subscriptions of its member organisations; the rest has to be secured elsewhere. This has always been difficult, partly because funding for work for UK Overseas Territories falls neither in UK domestic budgets nor via international aid — it is missed by both. Despite the Forum's efforts, UKOTs, their immense biodiversity importance - and UK's share of responsibility for them - are not widely perceived in UK. The economic situation is made worse in that many charitable and other organisations have themselves suffered severe declines in their income available for contributing because of the state of the investment market. The Forum's Executive Committee has recently reviewed future budget scenarios. As directors and trustees for a charitable company, the members of that committee have severe responsibilities placed on them as to their decision making. In order to ensure the survival of the Forum and to give it the opportunity to get past this difficult time, the Executive Committee has had no choice but to make some very difficult decisions. The Forum was suffering severe difficulties in funding core activities. As a consequence, the Executive Committee had recently had to make severe cuts to its budget, including more than halving the budget for paid work. Very sadly, it could no longer afford the role of Director for Development, and Sara Cross is leaving that role as this issue of *Forum News* is prepared.

All participants in the Forum who know Sara will wish to thank her for her efforts and wish her well in the future. Prior to joining the Forum, Sara had worked in ornithological research and in personnel management and training. In 1990, she embarked on a period of travelling in the Caribbean and offered her voluntary services to the newly formed Cayman Islands National Trust — who rapidly grabbed the opportunity Sara followed this by embarking on a 3-month voluntary post with the Montserrat National Trust. During this time, she secured funding from FCO and WWF to enable her to continue working in Montserrat for a year during which time the Montserrat National Trust was able to develop into a self-supporting body in the pre-volcanic period. Having returned to UK, she was snapped up by the Forum in 1993 to take over the role of Co-ordinator, which was becoming vacant at that time. Since 1993 she has (apart from two short maternity breaks) filled the role of Co-ordinator and then opted to take on the task of Director for Development for the Forum. This period has seen a tremendous development of the effectiveness of the Forum, especially in fulfilling its 5-year plan agreed by its member bodies in 1996. Sara was the mainstay of the Forum throughout most of this period, and the successful progress was, in no small measure, due to her efforts and commitment.

The joint meeting of the Forum member organisations with Government bodies in July was able to record its recognition of Sara's role in taking forward heritage conservation in the UKOTs, by warm applause. Sara can be contacted at her new email sara.cross@patraiko.com

Cayman blue iguana: Battle against extinction

In a document issued by Fred Burton, Director of the Blue Iguana Conservation Project for the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, on 22 June 2002, a shocking picture emerges. The range occupied by the Cayman blue iguanas *Cyclura nubila lewisi*, has halved in the last nine years. Even within the core range still occupied, the population has plummeted. From an estimated 100-200 animals in 1993, the population has declined to approximately 10 - 25 individuals with only one location showing breeding. The conclusion is this wild population will be functionally extinct within 5 years unless immediate steps are taken to protect it, or bring it into captivity before the last wild animals are eaten by feral predators or squashed by cars. This places the blue iguana in the frightening position of being one of the most critically endangered reptiles on earth.

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands, long aware of the precarious status of the island's endemic iguanas, established a captive breeding programme in 1990 and has been producing a



Cayman Island blue iguana *Cyclura nubila lewisi*

small number of animals for a number of years. However, though some progress has been made in breeding, little natural habitat remains in which to release them.

In November 2001, the World Conservation Union - Iguana Specialist Group (IUCN-ISG) produced the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana Species Recovery Plan, detailing wide-ranging conservation measures. The stated purpose of the plan is to restore a wild population of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana sufficient to remain viable in the long term. The plan is made up of a number of objectives, some of which have already been undertaken.

1. The most critical objective of the plan is to establish a protected area sufficient to support a wild population of 1,000 animals; the area will be formally managed and will be open to the public for nature tourism activities. To this end, the surveys of existing wild habitat and relict populations have already been conducted and produced the disturbing statistics that have served to increase the urgency of the remaining proposed conservation measures. International fundraising efforts are desperately needed to provide money for securing land and restoring habitat.
2. A part of the blue iguana's former range on Barker's Peninsula is to be restored and restocked. This area will be protected by the Cayman Island Government as a National Park.
3. Enhancements are to be made to the existing iguana habitat in Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park. This includes a sup-

portive feeding regime, the creation of additional nesting areas, and feral animal control measures.

4. Renovation and expansion of the existing breeding facility, improvements to nutrition and husbandry, as well as recruitment and training of new staff are necessary so that a sufficient number of animals will be available for reintroduction into portions of the blue iguana's former range and for restocking the new reserve.
5. Through the American Zoo Association (AZA) Iguana Species Survival Plan (SSP) a genetically diverse captive population of 225 iguanas is to be established as a hedge against extinction in the wild.
6. The final objective is crucial: to secure sufficient financial, technical, and human resources to implement this action plan.

The Species Recovery Plan has many strengths as well as weaknesses. The blue iguana is a popular conservation symbol in the Cayman Islands and is legally protected (the Animals Law of 1976). International support for *Cyclura* conservation from zoos and conservation foundations already exists, but a deeper commitment, particularly from warm-climate southern zoos in the US is desperately needed. Disturbed habitats with the potential to be restored are available within existing protected areas. The blue iguana appears to be adaptable to such man-modified habitats and, with intensive management, these areas should be appropriate for restocking.

On the negative side, the eradication of introduced predators is very expensive, as is land acquisition and habitat conversion. The restocked population at QE II Botanic Park experiences a 60% nest failure rate and outstanding nutritional issues still exist. The facility is somewhat distant from schools and from most volunteers. Without a constant education effort, public interest and concern quickly fade.

Field surveys and improvements to the breeding facility are already underway. The diet for animals at the breeding facility now incorporates ZooMed[®] pellets, thanks to a grant from the International Reptile Conservation Foundation. Raised beds have been planted to grow fruit and native plants. An area has been cleared to accommodate an expansion of breeding cages, and overgrown vegetation around existing cages has been cut back to afford more light penetration (the iguanas' daytime activity periods had been shortened as a consequence of overshadowing). The Blue Iguana Fund, which has funded a large portion of efforts to conserve *C. n. lewisi* to date, is now exhausted, and further progress will depend on the acquisition of additional new sources of funding.

What can you do to help? For those wishing to donate to the project or wanting more details see below for contact names.

John Binns, Treasurer, International Iguana Foundation
International Reptile Conservation Foundation jbinns@cyclura.com

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A visit to the Anguilla National Trust

It doesn't take long in the UK Overseas Territory of Anguilla to find out why visitors keep going back; it's the people. They have the gift of making you feel at home. Anguilla is also a well-kept secret, so it is not over-run with tourists, especially outside of the high season, from December to March.

The Anguilla National Trust occupies a prime site in an attractive building, at the hub of island life, in The Valley. The building was once a museum, and the Trust has plans to use some of the artefacts stored there to attract visitors to their office. It sounds a simple thing to do, but the reality of daily life in Anguilla makes things much more complex, and challenging.



Children from Anguilla out birdwatching under the guidance of RSPB Global Programmes Officer Jim Stevenson

For a start, there is already a cultural museum, in another part of the island, run as a private enterprise, but it is usually firmly closed. Then there is the fact that the tourists tend not to leave their resorts much; indeed, there are not many attractions designed to lure them away from the beach. The tourism infrastructure isn't highly developed in Anguilla; there are no national parks or marine parks either.

There is a growing awareness of the need for environmental planning, including the need for protected areas. A few years ago, when Beal Aerospace wanted to build a rocket launching facility on Sombrero Island, public opinion polarised. The National Trust was placed among the antis, with the Government largely on the other side of the fence. Today we see a government that would like to be more green, but a large sector of the electorate still sees no value in biodiversity or protected areas so it would take a brave politician, with a good majority, to raise the issue.

The Trust recently completed a Darwin Project in partnership with WWF UK. The project has laid the way for new protected areas to be created by producing draft legislation, sensitising the public and training the technicians. Engaging landowners remains a problem.

Ijahnya Christian, who is the Trust's Director, says that the root of the problem lies in local landownership patterns. Landowners take a very traditional view of their

property rights and see any kind of interference as a threat.

What we need is a few good, local examples which demonstrate that protected areas can actually make money and create new jobs. We now have the opportunity to do just that.

Big Spring is a small cave with a number of Amerindian petroglyphs that make it an important heritage site for the region. Nearby, in the village of East End, there is a freshwater lake that has the potential to be a good place for nature study, particularly bird watching.

Karim Hodge of the Anguilla National Trust said, 'I'm sure we can do a good job of managing these sites, but, in order to create income we have to get visitors to go there, that will make all the difference.'

With help from the RSPB, a pilot eco-tourism project is being planned for early in 2003. This will involve the use of a minibus to take tourists to Big Spring, East End and other sites. The Trust will also offer cultural specialities such as a traditional breakfast and story telling. If the pilot scheme proves successful, a full-scale project will be developed, but this will need

start-up funding in the first year to buy a bus and train guides.

Jim Stevenson: RSPB jim.Stevenson@rspb.org.uk
www.rspb.org.uk

Cayman brown booby management Plan

The management plan to conserve the brown booby colony and its habitat on Cayman Brac 2002-06 has been published. The author Patricia E Bradley has worked with the Department of Environment and Sister Islands District Administration in conjunction with the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, BirdLife, RSPB and produced the plan with the aid of a grant from the Environment Policy Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and funding from the RSPB.

The plan identifies and prioritises the actions necessary to arrest the decline on the brown booby *Sula Leucogaster leugaster* colony and protect the breeding habitat to ensure long-term survival. The management plan recommends regular monitoring of brown booby population dynamics. It is proposed to increase local efforts to control rats and feral cats, and to seek international funding for a major island-wide eradication effort, which would benefit brown booby, white-tailed tropicbird, other birds and reptiles, and allow an head-start iguana release programme to be initiated.

Copies of the plan can be obtained from RSPB, the Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, UK

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories



**Empowering people to
conserve their heritage**

The Friends of the UK Overseas Territories was launched by popular request in 2001 to allow individuals who care about what is happening in the Overseas Territories to be more formally allied with the Forum, and to show their interest and support by being members. Membership in the Friends is an easy way of expressing your support for the Forum's work; every member makes the Forum's voice stronger.

Five good reasons to become a Friend

- You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the Overseas Territories
- 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.
- You believe the Forum's approach in empowering local people is the best long-term solution for the preservation of heritage resources which enrich us all
- You care about what is happening in the Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date through regular copies of *Forum News* and the *Forum's Annual Report*.
- You understand that the 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 to NGOs in the UKOTs.

Donation from:



In recognition of the involvement of Nigel Crocker as Treasurer of the Forum, his employer, The Royal Bank of Scotland Group, has kindly made a donation as part of its Community Cashback initiative, which seeks to assist organisations, and particularly charities, with which employees are actively participating.

This is especially welcome having regard for the involvement of companies within The Royal Bank of Scotland Group in the financial industry in a number of Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. These include the European centres of Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man and Gibraltar and Caribbean centres of Bermuda and Cayman. Indeed, there is a special relevance in the case of Bermuda, it being the venue of the Forum's 2003 Conference.

Resources for conservation matters are always limited and corporate contributions of this nature are very welcome. They assist our efforts to highlight environmental issues at local government level within each Overseas Territory as well as through our regular meetings with FCO and other UK government departments with responsibilities for the Overseas Territories.

Friends subscriptions can now be paid by credit/debit card, as well as by UK cheque.

This means also that payments from various countries can be made easily; your card company will handle the exchange and include the equivalent in your own currency in your regular statement.

I wish to become a Friend of the Overseas Territories at the following support level:

- £15 £50 £100 £500

Name

Address

Telephone Fax

E-mail

Signature: Date:

Either:

I enclose my UK cheque made out to: UKOTCF for that amount

Please mail with your cheque to:

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 5LF, UK

Or: Please charge this amount to my card:

- American Express Delta
 Master Card JCB
 Solo Switch Visa

Card number: / / /

Expiry date: / (month/year).

If used: Valid from: Issue number:

Please mail to UKOTCF, 15 Insall Road,
Chipping Norton, Oxon. OX7 5LF, UK;
or fax to +44 (0) 1733 569325

Correspondence to: Frances Marks, Forum Co-ordinator, 15 Insall Road,
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WEB-SITE: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

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