

FORUM NEWS 23

A Sense of Direction

A conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small island communities



Delegates representing 12 UK Overseas Territories, the 3 UK Crown Dependencies and other small island territories gathered together at the Elbow Beach Hotel in Bermuda from 22 to 27 March 2003 to attend *A Sense of Direction*, a conference on conservation.

On the first day delegates were treated to a very useful introduction to the island and conservation issues on a tour of Bermuda, which included Nonsuch Island. Plenary sessions included presentations related to Environmental Charters and strategic planning; the Foreign and Commonwealth office element to this section was particularly useful, even if some aspects were not encouraging. Delegates found presentations on managing conservation organisation and climate change challenging. The conference broke into smaller groups to visit actual sites to discuss implementing management plans.

A participatory session dealing with invasive species drew much discussion from the floor. The full summary of the conference is published on pages 2-7 and the proceedings of the conference will be available on the Forum website shortly: www.ukotcf.org.

News from Bermuda continuing after the conference has been very positive. TV, radio and newspaper items included Joseph Smith-Abbott, Executive Director of the BVI National Trust, commenting on the importance of Hungry Bay mangroves and the need for protection, Colin Clubbe from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew speaking on invasive plants and the need for local nurseries to promote native and endemic species, and Brendan Godley of Marine Turtle Conservation research group, amongst many others.

The Royal Gazette published several articles including *Government unveils biodiversity plan*, with comment from Bermuda Government's Dennis Lister, Annie Glasspool and Jack Ward from the Bermuda Zoological Society. A second article *A long way from Pitcairn* mentioned where some of the delegated had travelled from as well as a photo of the



Bermuda Minister of Environment, Dennis Lister, Andrew Dobson (Bermuda Audubon Society for the conference organisers) and Valerie Caton (FCO)

cheque presentation from Dennis Lister, Bermuda Minister of Environment, and Valerie Caton, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Andrew Dobson on behalf of conference organisers, and there was much further coverage.

Avon Carty, President of the Anguilla National Trust, told *Forum News* that, despite the cancellation of her scheduled flight from Anguilla to San Juan, Puerto Rico, the resulting confusion, dismay and decision to try any possible route and mode to get to Bermuda, via various ferries and flight connections, she eventually got to Bermuda in the originally scheduled time frame.

She said "And it has been worth every harried and frenetic moment of the journey. From the overcast breaking of Sunday morning perfect for a day island-tour to a rather sunnier Wednesday, the last day of *A Sense of Direction*, the conference

has been an extremely positive and memorable experience. Informative and well-presented addresses by experienced presenters gave me hope that, in spite of the challenges the Anguilla National Trust is facing, we are not alone. Others have, and have had, the same experience.

The frustration and challenges are seemingly universal. Some of experienced presenters gave me hope that, in spite of the challenges the Anguilla National Trust is facing, we are not alone. Others have, and have had, the same experiences. The frustration and challenges are seemingly universal. Some of the main issues seem to be limited funding, lack of human resources and the need for education of all stakeholders.

“Having said that, unless an immediate



Jay Warren, Pitcairn

injection of funds, and some process for sustainable funding, is put in place, the Anguilla National Trust is doomed to failure. There is much to do and no financial or human resources to do it. The political will, or lack thereof, is a real threat to the work and existence of Anguilla National Trust. The conference allowed for networking and relationship building, but much needs to be done locally so that the full benefit potential of these built relations can be derived.”

Jay Warren, Conservation Officer from Pitcairn, had one of the longest journeys to the conference, but wished to add his thanks to the hosts and all the organisers who planned the conference and arranged funding and all his travel details, as well as the Pitcairn Administration in Auckland, so that he could attend the conference in Bermuda. Jay said, “This is the first international conference that I have attended. I enjoyed the field trips and the presentations from the other Overseas Territories. Pitcairn is only a small island, 2 miles long and one mile wide. However, I realised that other

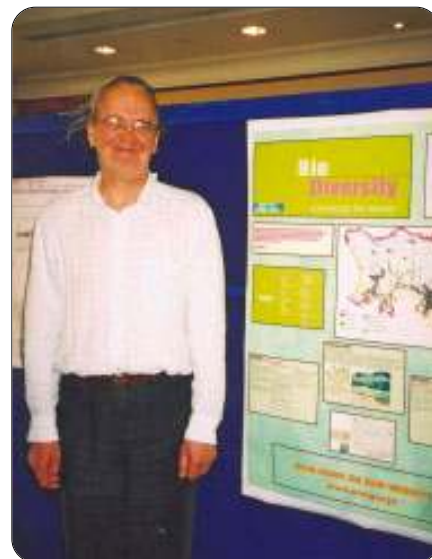
UKOTs have the same problems as we have and the same problems we are going to face in the future. “The conference gave me the privilege to meet and talk to members of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about funding and other needs. It has been a great learning experience for me, but now when the names of people are mentioned I will know who they are.”

Mike Freeman, ecologist for the Jersey Government, sent *Forum News* some of his thoughts on the conference. He commented on David Suzuki, guest speaker at the conference. Mike said, “You’ll recall that David Suzuki asked why economics did not include consideration of things like clean air and water. The response was that such things were ‘externalities’. David, quite rightly pointed out that this seriously diminished the power of economic theory when approaching in a complete way the major environmental problems faced by us co-inhabitants of this fragile planet.

“Does anyone consider that the ecological, environmental and conservation community tend to ignore any important factors when defining problems and formulating solutions? I am thinking, for example, of such issues as local history, culture, the shadow of empire and ethnicity. While recognising that it is necessary to simplify issues to clarify the problems, I do wonder whether we simplify too much at times. Depending on discussions, I wonder if ‘externalities’ in ecology or conservation might become one of the themes of the next conference. I am offering to moderate a discussion on the website.

“Andrew Syvret, representing La Société Jersiaise, and I are going to do our best to raise the sponsorship so that in 2006 we may all be able to meet again in Jersey. Think of it! You will be able to see, the subject of Andrew’s presentation, an ormer *Haliotis tuberculata*, and it might even eat lettuce for you! Although the economic climate is not encouraging, we will see what we can do and keep you informed.” To contact Mike, email m.freeman@gov.je

The conference was organised by: Bermuda Ministry of Environment, Bermuda National Trust, Bermuda Zoological Society, Bermuda Audubon Society and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) with the support of: the Government of Bermuda, the Environment Fund for Overseas Territories of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Bank of Bermuda Foundation, Capital G, Fidelity Investments and XL Foundation



Mike Freeman, Jersey Government

Conference conclusions

Preamble

This conference was designed to be of help in some of the priority issues identified by workers in small territories. The conference was deliberately participatory for all, rather than segregated into speakers and audience, because exchange of experience was a key. For this reason, the organisers wanted to capture rapidly some of the main conclusions arising from discussions. Throughout the meeting, a small team kept track of these. This was led by Dace Ground, Turks & Caicos, UKOTCF, with the help of: Denise Dudgeon & Joeline Foster, FCO; Sarita Francis, Montserrat National Trust and Permanent Secretary Montserrat Chief Minister’s Dept; Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF; and Jack Ward, Bermuda Department of Conservation Services. Isabel Peters, of St Helena Government was to have been part of this team, but was unable to attend the conference due to illness; she kindly provided some comments to help some aspects. Participants were encouraged to draw the attention of members of the team throughout the conference to points they thought important to include in the conclusions.

In the final session of the conference, Dace Ground presented the first draft of the conclusions. This was then discussed and approved by the conference. The version given below incorporates additional points made in that discussion.

The contributions from the conference are being gathered together, for publication on the Forum’s web site. As a first element, here are the conclusions.

Stakeholders/Public Awareness and Education

In everything we are doing all over the world, stakeholder participation is an important factor. In projects as diverse



Susan Larson, Bahamas National Trust with Mike Pienkowski UKOTCF chairing the session

as developing Bermuda’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to convincing independent tour guides in the Falkland Islands that conservation will improve their livelihoods, consultation early and often means the results work for the community and the community has a sense of ownership of both the resource and the product.

This was really clear in the case of the Biodiversity Management Plan centred on the Turks and Caicos Ramsar site; the community told the experts what they wanted: the preservation of their communities and way of life as well as the environment, and that drove the development of the plan, and is the reason for its deep support in the community. Brendan Godley used his very real respect for the turtle fishermen and all they know as the means to defuse their suspicion that he was there to shut them down. The Bahamas Trust takes its guidance as much from the great depth of local knowledge as from experts and they have people asking for more protected areas, a pretty amazing feat. The same trick worked in Tristan, where the image will stay with us for a long time of Gough Island as the Trojan horse, creating pride of the local people in the declaration of World Heritage status and converting them to support for other protected areas.

It is no news to anyone here that public education and awareness are essential to every aspect of concern, from global warming to protecting penguins from clumsy humans. In the case of the penguins and their neighbours, Becky Ingham told us how Falklands Conservation are addressing the

growing numbers of cruise ship visitors and the environmental concerns this is raising – by placing their office where the liners arrive at Stanley and, at sensitive sites, introducing interpretation and guidance. Our workshops identified many education opportunities in the protected areas all over Bermuda, and each of us has similar opportunities at home. It was interesting to learn that ten years on, the programme carried out by the conservation NGO RARE in Cayman has left lasting benefits in the conversion of the indifferent majority to conservation values. A similar programme is being carried out in New Caledonia, and the sense of pride created by a new NGO in a local parakeet has helped to ensure its survival and inspired the awakening of an environmental consciousness.

Environment Charters

This was the first formal review of the Charters since they were signed in September, 2001. We heard from Valerie Caton about the UK government’s priorities for the Charters for the coming year and the various funds available to the UKOTs for environmental projects. Valerie invited participation from the UKOTs in the SPAW (Specially Protected Areas for Wildlife) Protocol of the Cartagena Convention, in the Sustainable Tourism Initiative and in the workshop connected with the “White Water to Blue Water” initiative.

Since the Charters were the product of so much work by the institutions represented here, we were delighted to see from the tables developed by Denise Dudgeon that progress on implementation is being made. Each of the UKOTs is responsible for developing a strategy for action which will identify what it needs to implement



Gerard Gray, Montserrat



Joseph Smith Abbott, British Virgin Islands

the Charter. Until that is done, it will be harder for the UK Government to carry out its own Charter commitments to maximum effect.

Each UKOT will have a different approach to this: Bermuda’s Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan is an excellent example. The FCO is funding both the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and the Falkland Islands to carry out two contrasting approaches which will serve as models for other UKOTs. The TCI exercise [see following article] will also result in a guidance document which we hope will help other UKOTs in this process.

We also heard about a Charter implementation process in Montserrat (a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, OECS) which is also implementing their St George Declaration on the environment, and learned that the two are entirely compatible and implementing both is a feasible task - at least it is if you’re Gerard Gray, and even he is worried about funding. Anguilla and British Virgin Islands (BVI) are also members of OECS and signatories to both charters.

Whilst welcoming the increasing involvement of the Crown Dependencies in the Forum, on the official side we should also note the long-standing problem experienced by the Crown Dependencies: they link into UK Government through a different route and fall into a gap which means no Environment Charter and no external sources of funding for conservation projects.

The conference appreciated the strong commitment by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office to the UKOTs and the Environmental Charter process

by the attendance of senior and supporting staff from both Environmental Policy Department and Overseas Territories Department – in what was clearly a challenging week for FCO. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of representation of the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The Managing Director of Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) indicated that, as statutory adviser to Defra, JNCC would ensure that they were briefed on the important issues of the conference, and FCO personnel indicated that they would brief UK Government (HMG) colleagues generally, and it was suggested that the Forum send the conclusions to the UK Minister leading in this area.

Funding

The UK Government has specific commitments to the UKOTs, as mentioned in the Charters, and funding is a matter of great concern. The DFID fund promised in the White Paper is only now being created, and at about 40% of the annual level originally announced, with a total over the years of about 2/3 the level promised in 1999. The UKOTs are unable to access many kinds of international funding, and amalgamation of the separate FCO Environment Fund for Overseas Territories (EFOT) into a wider global fund, although providing access to more funding, also results in the UKOTs having to compete against larger and better resourced countries. It was unnerving for the UKOTs to learn that the fund which is specifically mentioned in the UK's Charter Commitment 8 as the source of funding for Charter implementation had ceased to exist as a guaranteed resource only eighteen months after the Charters were signed. Experience has not taught us to be optimistic about this amalgamation: problems over the years with trying to access global funds were what led to the creation of the EFOT in the first place in 1999.

This first year of the amalgamated fund, however, seems to be going well: there is a strong likelihood that the UKOTs will attract more than the half-million pounds in this year's funding round than previously allocated under the EFOT. The FCO urged more feedback

from the UKOTs on project success stories to help secure more funding in future, and urged the UKOTs to liaise with Staff Officers and the FCO, as well as the Forum, for advice on putting together high quality bids. (We should note that the Forum's database module on projects provides a convenient means of gathering and reporting data while the project proceeds. The headings were based on those then in use for EFOT applications; although EFOT's headings have since changed, the module can readily accommodate the information in its varied fields.)

The UKOTs' concerns about the loss of our dedicated fund are alleviated at present by the incredibly supportive attitude towards the UKOTs now current in the FCO. We can only hope that this will carry on through the staff changes that must inevitably come, but we know that corporate memory is not very effective. The conference encouraged the Forum to write to HMG on the need for a specific fund to support the Environmental Charters.

We were also glad to learn that there will be FCO help for UKOTs accessing EU funding. Given that the EU preference is for a few large projects, much of the small-scale work we do will not rise to that level, but if the EU could be convinced to give Fred Burton the \$8 million needed to take Cayman's

for a permanent funding source is universal, and in the Bahamas, at least, we learned that many donors are happy to donate substantial funds on the guarantee that their funds will be used only to generate income and never be spent. We know that is not true of many institutional donors, but the Bahamas Trust has encouraged all of us that an endowment is an achievable goal. Of course, we all join Catherine Leonard in wishing that these parts of UK territory could access the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund. But since that is not so likely to happen, we heard a call for a focus on fundraising at the next meeting.

Successes

Valerie Caton urged us to tell about our successes, and we certainly heard a lot of success stories, starting with our tours of Nonsuch Island, the kind of success that left every one of us awed and inspired. We heard about a cat eradication programme in Ascension which had sea-birds nesting on the main island before the programme was even completed. We heard about species revival programmes bringing the cahow, the Cayman Blue Iguana, and the Uvea parakeet back from the brink of extinction. We heard about how one park director in the BVI went on a course about the use of Information Technology databases and from that

developed a comprehensive monitoring system for managing a system of 20 terrestrial and marine parks. We learned how an adaptive management approach over a period of centuries has kept Jersey's beloved ormer on tables throughout the Channel Islands

(and who would have thought a spinach-eating mollusc would be a comforting pet for a Jersey student away from home!)

Success stories teach us a lot about best practice, and other people's trials and errors, i.e. the "lessons learnt" also teach us a great deal. We need to report on our



David Wingate on Nonsuch Island showing conference delegates a cahow nestbox

blue iguana off the endangered species list, every one of us would celebrate.

We heard about other funding approaches, notably the Bahamas' enviable endowment fund, the ultimate in sustainability, and about the Netherlands Antilles' efforts to create an even larger endowment. The desire



Amanda Outerbridge (Bermuda National Trust), with Andrew Dobson (Bermuda Audubon Society), Jack Ward (Bermuda Dept of Conservation Services) and Wayne Carey (BNT), introduce Bermuda's environment

failures as well as our successes, and we thank Tara George for leading the way. Sometimes best practice is best practiced in the breach: in the Bahamas when a huge amount of park area was offered, we learned that seizing the moment and getting the parks designated, even if they are going to be paper parks for a long time, can be the smart thing to do. Science and management schemes can come later. The lesson we learned was to temper the need for science with basic pragmatism: *Carpe Diem!*

Success stories also come from international cooperation. Fred Burton told us what can come out of two days with the right set of scientists when conserving Cayman's "Blue Dragon" is the job. But we also saw that in the case of the international body charged with developing appropriate management for Caribbean sea turtles, that the international body could not do the job without its local partners.

Valerie's plea for success stories underlines one of the basic principles of successful fundraising: tell your donors what you are doing with their money and they will give you more.

Economic impacts

David Suzuki told us that traditional economists would consider all of the forgoing as "externalities" but we did learn some things that they might consider relevant, like the job multiplier the UK National Trust has documented: between five and nine community jobs for every job directly created by the Trust. Over and over, from Middle Caicos to New Caledonia, we learned that conservation creates jobs and

s u s t a i n s communities.

David Suzuki also reminded us of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)'s standard that 12% of land should be s p e c i a l l y protected, and we saw some pretty a m a z i n g achievements on that score, from the Bahamas 20% to Tristan's

fantastic 44%.

Institutional Issues

We learned a great deal about the different institutional arrangements people have come up with to achieve conservation goals and cope with special problems. The Bahamas and the BVI have Trusts which are closely aligned with government, in which the governments seem almost to have delegated responsibility for legislation. Another model is the Bermuda Aquarium, an unusual and highly effective combination of a government department supported by an NGO. St Helena is the newest National Trust among us, its creation aided by both the FCO and the Forum.

We were surprised and delighted to learn that Bermuda reorganised its Environment Ministry using a checklist developed by the Forum.

Over and over we heard about the importance of exchanging information and expertise. People are concerned

about the same work being repeated and lessons not being shared – this came up strongly in the discussion about invasives, where the need to maintain contact and share experiences was felt to be especially important. That, of course, is one of the Forum's central roles, as well as capacity building, and with better resources for the Forum itself, more can be done in more UKOTs. One key tool for information exchange is the Forum's database which is designed as a means of helping people in the UKOTs make the most of their very limited time. The information module, for example, could be used to advise the UKOTs of



Catherine Leonard, The National Trust, celebrates her birthday

the expertise available in the UK and other UKOTs and to post model legislation. Database entry needs the time to enter information but that can be done by copying-and-pasting from, for example, your newsletters. Recycle your work for future use!

There was also discussion of the use of existing capacity of the Forum's website for discussion groups or chat rooms. This needs volunteers interested in the relevant topics to act as moderators.

From the Isle of Man we learned of an approach for the perennial problem of the limited staff resources of small territories. Two particular points were the structured approach to deciding between conflicting priorities and the development of integrated biological records systems and land use information to aid planning and decision-making.



Liz Charter, Isle of Man

Challenges

We learned a lot about sustainable use, from the ormer fishery in Jersey and sea turtles in the Caribbean to the use of fanner grass in Middle Caicos. And we became aware of the need to consider the sustainability of conservation efforts themselves.

Like stakeholder consultation, the problem of invasive species came up in many presentations. If we had not thought of humans as an invasive species before, we certainly do now. Nick Bates told us that we are such a successful invasive species that we can consider

Fred Burton in Cayman is learning about habits of iguanas in the wild by watching released captive-bred iguanas.

Climate change is another challenge, and we learned more than we wanted to know about the impact on coral reefs. We learned that conservation of high latitude reefs such as those in Bermuda, even more important than we had thought and that the need to prevent overfishing and pollution is heightened by the ongoing stress of global warming. The situation in British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is particularly grim. And if that is not bad enough, David Wingate tells us that global warming has already had a negative impact on nesting

development in the Turks and Caicos Islands. We hope that when the current strategy for action for the Environment Charter is fully in place, this will lead to more sustainable decisions.

JNCC Conclusions

Representatives of Joint Nature Conservation Committee (the UK Government's statutory advisor on nature conservation) offered some comments for the wrap-up and the committee thought them so interesting and potentially valuable that we have included them verbatim:

UKOTs provide one of the few opportunities to resolve some of today's biodiversity challenges by an ecosystem-type approach – considering the joined-up components and impacts. The learning from projects/pilots would be of significant value to more developed and complex parts of the world. The UKOTs can therefore be considered as an opportunity for investment with two major benefits:

1. to meet obligations under Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEA)s, or global conventions
2. to provide cost effective and transferable solutions to global environmental problems

However, investment will only be attracted if there is confidence and belief that real benefits/gains are likely. To ensure this, not only direct funding will be needed, but also the appropriate levels of scientific and business skills. There are likely to be special requirements for project planning and management, resource management and negotiating skills. These should not be regarded as an overhead as they are critical to the long-term success and permanent adoption of new approaches by stakeholders and particularly those with governance responsibilities. Should a proposal of this nature be made, JNCC would be willing to make some investment.



Ann Brown and Becky Ingham, Falkland Conservation

ourselves now to be in the Anthropocene Era.

But since invasive species are such a universal problem, we spent the final afternoon listening to each other sharing an endless variety of problems associated with this. We recognised that Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are a major threat to biodiversity – second to habitat loss and fragmentation, but still the number one threat to biodiversity on islands. This is clearly demonstrated in Bermuda where IAS are a huge problem with about 95% of the islands' flora and fauna being introduced. We debated three components of the problem: awareness raising, control of already introduced aliens and preventing future introductions. If ever there were a subject rich with both successes and failures, as well as endless management, this is it. Just the thought of a million Brazil Pepper seedlings each year on Nonsuch Island alone leaves one limp.

We also learned that nearly extinct natives can teach us about themselves, if you know how to listen. David Wingate told us how the plants themselves are teaching him about the pre-colonial Bermuda landscape, while

seabirds in Bermuda, and active intervention is essential. It is difficult to see any solution without changes in the energy policies of certain major developed countries. It was suggested that a letter should go from this conference to HMG on the importance of climate change to islands.

Another major challenge which we could address more easily is illustrated by the introduction of intensive cruise liner



Annie Glasspool leads discussion of management plans at Hungry Bay

Bermuda

And finally, we got to know a bit about Bermuda, its great beauty as well as its problems. Bermuda's Minister for the Environment told us at the outset that we are all visionaries like David Suzuki. While most of us know just how low our visionary energy is most of the time, we did learn about true visionaries like Olivier Robinet in New Caledonia, and we had the great privilege of meeting Bermuda's genuine visionary, David Wingate. And we heard over and over about the importance of highly-dedicated individuals in progressing conservation all over the world.

The workshops on Bermuda taught us about the challenges of management here, and we hope some of our ideas will be of help to the Bermuda site managers. The unique opportunity to secure Cooper's Island for conservation management seemed the most pressing issue. The restoration of this island is strategically important in the context of the management of adjacent protected areas of international importance, and would not only be a huge win for biodiversity but also give Bermudians a major area for recreation and generally for enhancing the quality of island life. Generally it was felt that the protected areas in Bermuda – even those that are degraded – have significant recreational and educational potential and should be top priorities for conservation and management.

Future conferences

Do we need them? Are they useful? If we do want future meetings, then we need some good solid reasons for them, and we need a venue.

And of course you didn't need me to read this to you, as we all know that all you have to do to learn anything under the sun is to log on to Forum's website, that would be www.ukotcf.org...

New Year Honours

Congratulations to Dr John Cortes, who received an MBE for services to ecology & conservation in Gibraltar in the New Year's Honours list 2003.

Apart from many contributions to Gibraltar's community John has worked tirelessly for conservation issues and is currently Director of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. We had hoped to celebrate his achievement in Bermuda; however, due to an accident a few days before the conference John was unable to attend but everybody wished him a speedy recovery – which we are pleased to report is happening.

A pilot project to develop a strategy for action to implement the Environmental Charter

On 26 Sept 2001, the UKOTs and HMG signed Environmental Charters, which include statements of principles and undertakings by both parties in respect of integrating environmental conservation into all sectors of policy planning and implementation. The first undertaking of the UKOTs was to formulate a detailed strategy for action, and HMG's first undertaking was to help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management. Informal feedback from several Territories both to the FCO and the Forum indicated that the first need was for facilitation in developing these strategies for action.



Ethlyn Gibbs-Williams (Executive Director, Turks & Caicos National Trust) and Michelle Fulford Gardiner (Deputy Director, TCI Dept of Environmental and Coastal Resources), who reported on the Environmental charter pilot study at the Bermuda conference.

The Forum has been working closely with the FCO from the inception of the idea of Environmental Charters through to their adoption, and therefore has a strong background in this area and a great desire to see the Charter process succeed. The Forum's also has a long track record of capacity building and facilitating work within the

UKOTs, and FCO agreed to fund this pilot exercise.

Consultations facilitated by the Governor of Turks & Caicos Islands and the Minister for Natural Resources resulted in approval by the Executive Council of TCI that this UKOT should be the pilot, and confirmed the facilitators as Dr Mike Pienkowski and Mrs Dace Ground of UKOTCF, working with a local committee, chaired by Mrs Michelle Fulford Gardiner of TCI's Department of Environmental & Coastal Resources.

Round 1

In a first round of consultations, in October/November 2002, the emphasis of work was on the following aspects:

- a) analysis of the Environmental Charter documents to produce a structure for planning and, in the immediate future, for interviewing stakeholders, together with consultations to identify those stakeholders;
- b) undertaking interviews with stakeholders, with the objectives of (i) identifying current activities which contribute to Environmental Charter commitments and any perceived gaps; and (ii) identifying current awareness of the Environmental Charter and the issues it addresses;
- c) a workshop of key stakeholders to verify the approach, check and further collate the information on current relevant activities, and start to identify gaps, both substantive and of information; in particular, the purposes of the Workshop were, for each of TCI's 11 undertakings in the Environmental Charter:
 1. agree on "desired outcomes"
 2. identify the most important response mechanisms
 3. identify ongoing projects that address the issue
 4. identify gaps
 5. identify key issues for investigation/evaluation.
- d) between and after interviews and workshop, review and analysis by the facilitators in consultation with key local players, build a matrix of information in order to refine the ongoing programme and the structure of the draft plan.

Early challenges in structuring the strategy for action required under Commitment

1 of the Environmental Charter were finding ways to address the following points:

- (i) the various documents which constitute the Charter and its annexes are arranged in several dimensions, rather than a common list or a nested hierarchy;
- (ii) the commitments consist of a varying mixture of objectives, in some cases with indications of methods to achieve these; and
- (iii) several commitments are complex and different commitments address policies and practices at various levels.

Round 2

During a second round, in January/February 2003, the emphasis was on (a) filling the major information gaps identified in the first round, particularly undertaking major work on legislative aspects and multilateral environmental agreements, (b) using a workshop-centred approach to



At the TCI Environment Charter Working Group, Dace Ground, Mike Pienkowski and Governor Jim Poston

develop headline action points from the matrix developed in the previous round, and (c) presenting the approach to Executive Council and agreeing the proposed timetable of the stages involving ExCo.

The project Chairperson Mrs Michelle Fulford Gardiner, the Permanent Secretary Natural Resources Mr Terry Smith, and UKOTCF facilitators Dr Mike Pienkowski and Mrs Dace Ground, attended Executive Council on 29th January. Ministers expressed strong support and encouragement for the project and its development into an integrated part of TCI procedures. They took note of the proposed remaining stages of the project, welcoming further presentations as appropriate, and in particular the expectation that a recommended strategy for action would come before them in August, with a final version (from this establishment phase), modified in the light of any revisions necessary, probably in November.

Future stages

The next workshop is being held on 29th April, with the main purpose of discussing priorities between the activities in the initial strategy for action. Following the completion of the development stage of the strategy late in 2003, it is envisaged that its monitoring, updating and implementation will be integrated into normal recurrent activities in the TCI Governmental system, and its NGO partners.

At the end of the development stage, the Facilitators will prepare some guidance notes on the process, to be available to other UKOTs. The facilitators are also advising a second Environment Charter project about to start in the Falklands Islands. Liaison will be maintained and any further early lessons learnt there will be incorporated in the guidance notes early in 2004.

Mike Pienkowski, pienkowski@cix.co.uk

Latest publications

Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories, the booklet published by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum to raise awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in the UKOTs has been republished. The booklet provides an introduction to the remarkable biodiversity of the UKOTs and the work of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and its partner organisations to conserve this heritage. The booklet is based on a series of interpretation boards, including three introductory ones and one each for fifteen individual UKOTs. Summary information is included on the sixteenth UKOT and the three Crown Dependencies. This set of boards has been built up slowly and is now complete.

More information on the territories is available on the Forum's website www.ukotcf.org or by sending a stamped addressed envelope to:

The Coordinator at 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5LF, UK

The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is pleased to announce that there is a stock of the very popular *The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands*, at their UK office. A purchase can be made by contacting fmarks@ukotcf.org or +441608644425. The book was launched at The Turks & Caicos National Trust AGM in November 2001 and featured in *Forum News 21*. The book (actual size about 19 cm x 25 cm; 7.5 in x 10 in) is hard cover, 96 pages with 236 full colour pictures. Whilst it concerns mainly birds, there is a section on habitats which also covers butterflies, moths and reptiles.

The book was written and the photography done by Richard Ground, the Chief Justice of the TCI. The lay-out and management of the publication process was done by his wife, Dace. All proceeds of the book will be donated to the Trust. The publication of the book was made possible by a generous donation from Robin and Sheila Laing, long-time residents of Grand Turk, and by an interest-free loan from the Conservation Fund, a new fund based on a visitor tax.

For the convenience of those in UK, the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is handling UK sales for Turks & Caicos National Trust. Price in sterling is £17.50 including postage within UK. (Prices if sent to other countries reflect the postage rates – see order form on www.ukotcf.org). Payment to UKOTCF can be made by card (American Express, Delta, JCB, MasterCard, Solo, Switch, Visa) or UK cheque. (Books can be bought from the Trust office directly, as well as from local shops, at US\$20.00 each.)

Cetacean by-catch from pelagic pair trawls around the Channel Islands

Dolphins and porpoises that live in the waters around the Channel Islands are under threat from giant nets used by high seas trawlers hunting sea bass which gather to breed in the English Channel north and west of the Channel Islands.

Although strictly protected under the Jersey Conservation of Wildlife Law, the killing is taking place outside Jersey's territorial waters. In recent years increasing numbers of dolphins have been found dead on the beaches of Jersey and Guernsey, and there is naturally concern about this. In previous decades each island would see one or two animals washed up on its shores per annum, in 2000 Jersey alone recorded 15. In France and the UK in the same year more than 1000 dead marine mammals were found.

The Société Jersiaise, a society concerned among other things with the natural history of the Island and the conservation of the Island's environment, co-ordinates the efforts of several enthusiasts who voluntarily monitor and record strandings and mortality of marine mammals and have reported their concerns to the States of Jersey, the Island's government.

The bass spawning areas in the central and western English Channel attract much trawling activity in the early months of the year. Fishermen from France, the UK, Holland and Denmark reap rich rewards using a fishing technique called pelagic pair trawling to exploit spawning aggregations of bass which can be sold for

a good price, since bass is a trendy dish in restaurants.

Pair trawling works like this: two powerful trawlers drag a large net with a circumference around the mouth of up to 1km between them. In the bass fishery the nets are towed rapidly and stretch very nearly from seabed to surface. Up to 25 tonnes of bass can be taken in one haul. Other fish such as mackerel or scad are taken in far greater volume. Unfortunately the dolphins which are hunting the target species often get caught in the nets and drown simultaneously. Evidence from post-mortems shows that frequently fishermen cut and dismember the dolphins, to remove the animals from the net's meshes or to disguise the reason for the deaths and in the hope that the corpses will sink. Needless to say dolphins are not the only casualties with basking sharks, sunfish and turtles also being taken. In terms of the bass, the UK Government's own scientists at the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs have warned that such unsustainable exploitation of spawning populations may in the near future lead to stock collapse.

In 2002 the UK Government acknowledged the scale of the problem and promised to modify the vast nets with hatches that would allow dolphins to escape. However the efficacy of such escape routes is open to debate and they will only work if the trawlers are not going too fast. In addition, at present it appears that only UK fishermen will be obliged to follow this instruction.

At the request of concerned Channel Islanders, this issue was raised at the January 2003 meeting between the Forum, UK government and representatives of the overseas territories. The response by UK representatives underlines the difficulties that small overseas and dependent territories encounter when faced with a situation which, though it occurs outside their territorial waters, has a major impact on them.

The practice of pair trawling is banned in most US waters and some other parts of the world because of unacceptable bycatch levels. In Britain it is illegal to use the nets if the

mortality of any non-targeted species exceeds 1.7% of its population. Unfortunately English Channel dolphin populations are not well understood but marine mammal scientists have suggested that current bycatch rates are greatly in excess of this level.

A ban on pair trawling in the English Channel can only be imposed at European level and



Unidentified Cetacean St Brelade Jersey

the vast majority of vessels exploiting the bass are French in origin. The European Commission is demanding that independent observers be based on the fishing vessels to provide evidence that dolphins are killed in their nets. Although the UK government has placed some observers on its own boats, technical problems have prevented much evidence being gathered so far. The French government is denying there is a problem and refusing to place observers on their boats. The EU is putting forward proposals to fit acoustic devices to nets to save porpoises, but logically, such indiscriminate and effective fishing practices surely have no place in the English Channel and should be banished from Europe's territorial seas. In the meantime Channel Islanders, like the inhabitants of SW England and NW France can only watch as more mutilated dolphins are washed up on their beaches.

Andrew Syvret

Société Jersiaise

T: +44 (0) 1534 485201 M: + 44 (0) 7797 718472

Mike Freeman 01534 601475 and e-mail: m.freeman@gov.je

Collections and research at Kew on UKOT species

The Economic Botany Collections (EBC) at Kew, some 77,500 specimens strong, comprise a great array of economically significant plants or plant products gathered over the last 150 years, mainly from what are now countries of the Commonwealth. Still growing, and partly on permanent exhibition in Kew's *Plants+People* exhibition, they provide a good insight into Kew's imperial role as a global botanical entrepôt: collecting plants and information about them, distributing them, cultivating them, and all the while training or employing armies of botanists, horticulturalists and agriculturalists to display or develop them.

A current curatorial aim is to improve access to the EBC, and to stimulate research and use. To this end here we describe, in brief, material from the UK Overseas Territories, with an emphasis on their richest source, St Helena. We also include a summary of recent research on the genus *Phyllica*. We welcome enquiries and visitors.

St Helena

Over 60 items come from species endemic to St Helena. Most were collected by J.C. Melliss (author of *St Helena – A Physical, Historical and*

Topographical Description of the Island, published in 1875) in the second half of the nineteenth century, and were in the British Museum until 1983. Among them are small pieces of wood from species such as the extinct green ebony *Trochetiopsis melanoxylo*n and the tree of bastard gumwood *Commidendrum rotundifolium* which was blown down at Longwood in 1897. There is also a small piece of wood collected in 1997 from the last wild specimen of St Helena's olive *Nesiota elliptica*.



Spirit collection of leaves and flowers of Commidendrum rugosum (Economic Botany Collection (EBC) no. 51476) from St Helena

The collection also contains a dried plant of *Pelargonium cotyledonis* and spirit preserved parts of *Hydrodea cryptantha* and *Hypertelis acida*, as well as fruits of *Wahlenbergia linifolia* and a stem of the tree fern *Dicksonia arborescens*.

There are also artefacts from about 25 introduced species, ranging from a piece of wood from the weeping willow *Salix babylonica* planted over Napoleon's grave, to a table mat made from seeds of an *Erythrina* species, as well as plants with aspirations to economic importance such as coffee *Coffea arabica*, cotton bolls *Gossypium* sp. and two fibre species, *Phormium tenax* (for whose introduction to St Helena Kew was responsible!) and *Alpinia zerumbet*.

Other UK Overseas Territories

From Tristan da Cunha, there is a stem of the fern *Blechnum boryana* (donated by "Milne, HMS Herald") and from Nightingale Island a small piece of wood of *Phyllica arborea*. From the Falkland Islands there is a large dried plant – 90 cm across - of the native *Azorella caespitosa* and also one of *Myrtus nummularia* (once used as a tea substitute by sealers) and gum resin

Table 1. List of specimens of St Helenan endemics in the Economic Botany Collections, listed by family in alphabetical order. Nomenclature follows Cronk (2000).

IUCN categories: LR-nt, lower risk – near threatened; VU, vulnerable; EN, endangered; CR, critically endangered; EW, extinct in the wild; E, extinct.

| Family | Species | Date collected | IUCN category | No of Specimens | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| | | | | Wood | Stems, leaves, etc. | |
| Aizoaceae | <i>*Hydrodea cryptantha</i> | 1868 | R | | 2 | |
| | <i>*Hypertelis acida</i> | 1868 | VU | | 1 | |
| Campanulaceae | <i>*Wahlenbergia linifolia</i> | 1868 | CR | | 1 | |
| Compositae | <i>*Commidendrum robustum</i> | 1868 | EN | 7 | 1 | |
| | <i>C. rotundifolium</i> | 1898 | EW | 3 | | |
| | <i>*C. rugosum</i> | 1868 | VU | | 1 | |
| | <i>*C. spurium</i> | 1868 | CR | 3 | 2 | |
| | <i>*Lachanodes arborea</i> | 1868 | CR | 3 | | |
| | <i>*Melanodendron integrifolium</i> | 1868 | VU | 2 | 1 | |
| | <i>*Petrobium arboreum</i> | 1868 | EN | 4 | | |
| | <i>Pladaroxylon leucadendron</i> | 1868 | CR | 4 | 1 | |
| | Dicksoniaceae | <i>Dicksonia arborescens</i> | ? | LR-nt | | 1 |
| | Frankeniaceae | <i>*Frankenia portulacaefolia</i> | 1868 | R | 5 | 1 |
| Geraniaceae | <i>Pelargonium cotyledonis</i> | ? | VU | | 1 | |
| Rhamnaceae | <i>Nesiota elliptica</i> | 1997 | EW | 1 | | |
| | <i>Phyllica polifolia</i> | 1862 | CR | 1 | | |
| Rubiaceae | <i>*Nesohedyotis arborea</i> | ? | EN | 2 | 1 | |
| Solanaceae | <i>*Mellissia begoniifolia</i> | 1868 | CR | 3 | 1 | |
| Sterculiaceae | <i>Trochetiopsis erythroxylo</i> n | 1892 | EW | 3 | | |
| | <i>T. melanoxylo</i> n | 1862–1932 | E | 8 | | |

*Cronk, Q.C.B. 2000. *The endemic flora of St Helena*. Anthony Nelson, Oswestry. *Collected by J.C. Melliss.

from *Bolaz gummifera*. There is a limited collection of material from plants endemic to Bermuda, including plaits made from leaves of Palmetto palm *Sabal blackburnia* and several small pieces of wood of *Juniperus bermudiana*, including one given by a General Lefroy in 1873. Attached notes to this specimen state that the largest known sound tree on the island at the time had a diameter of 39". There is a brush and some rope made from *Coccothrinax proctorii* endemic to the Cayman Islands. The Liverpool Exhibition of 1907 is the source of many of the 42 items, mainly parts of crop plants, from Montserrat. The oldest from there is some fibre of plantain *Musa* sp., dated 1856. From Gibraltar there is a piece of wood from rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* which has been sawn and hinged and dates from the Great Exhibition of 1851. Predating even this, however, are

two small and undecorated pieces of tapa cloth made on Pitcairn from paper mulberry *Broussonetia papyrifera*. One of them was made in 1837 by mutineers' wives Mrs Christian and Mrs Young, by then the sole survivors of the original settlers after the mutiny on *HMS Bounty*, and the other was made by a daughter of a third mutineer, George Stewart. Both samples were given separately to crew members of visiting ships and were donated to Kew in 1858. Thus came to an end the tale that links Kew's first, and still most famous, botanical voyage – with its aim of bringing breadfruit from the South Pacific to the Caribbean – with an episode more notorious in Britain's naval history than any other.

Pamela Taylor and Julia Steele
Centre for Economic Botany, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE. Julia.Steele@rbgkew.org.uk, 020 8332 5771.

South Georgia Association

Notice of a conference on The future of South Georgia: a programme for the next 10 years Organised by the South Georgia Association To be held in Cambridge, UK 18-20 September 2003

This three-day event will bring together people who are interested in discussing sustainable and environmentally sound development of this very special island. A programme of presentations and discussion is being prepared.

Topic include the South Georgia Management Plan; the exploitation of marine resources in South Georgia waters and the establishment of a sustainable regime; heritage and information as well as sessions on tourism, governance and finance.

Submission of poster papers will be welcome To record your interest and receive further information, write to

The secretary, The South Georgia Association, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB1 2ER, UK secretary@southgeorgiaassociation.org

St Helena represented at Eden Project

At Eden we have found islands to be valuable models with which to engage the public on global issues such as climate change and sustainability on a scale that people do not find overwhelming. Part of our Humid Tropics Biome at Eden focuses on Oceanic Islands. Here we showcase rare and interesting plants from some of the worlds most isolated regions. Island plants have provided us with a wealth of educational material derived from on their ecological and cultural value. Included in our display is a section featuring plants from St Helena such as *Trochetiopsis ebenus*, the St Helena Ebony. We use this display to tell our visitors about St Helena's pioneering community and non-governmental contributions to the conservation of local highly endangered species. The story of the Millennium Gumwood Forest in particular, provides an excellent example of what can be achieved through local participation in conservation. Eden has been an enthusiastic supporter of the St Helena National Trust and we were delighted to be able to meet up with its director Barbara George and show her the project.

As a result of a previous visit by Rebecca Cairns-Wicks, Eden and the National Trust are putting together a

range of St Helena products for sale in the Eden Shop. Currently we sell a limited edition print of the St Helena Ebony by artist Meriel Thurstan. All profits from the sale of the print go to the National Trust for the conservation of endemic plants. In the future we hope to include picture frames made from introduced species such as Wild Mango and Black Olive, St Helena coffee, and



Barbara George (right) from St Helena National Trust visits the Eden Project with Juliet Rose (left)

Aloe baskets and bags. Having seen the full range of Eden products Barbara has returned to the island with even more ideas to extend their conservation-based product range.

Barbara's new role encompasses all

aspects of the island's heritage so we took time to visit some of Cornwall's heritage sites. The Lost Gardens of Heligan and Lanhydrock House are two of Cornwall's most successful tourist attractions. Both have managed to effectively conserve and restore their sites while maintaining a tourist interest and encouraging local involvement.

Eden, Heligan and Lanhydrock provided Barbara with useful insight into ways of presenting exhibits and interpretational frameworks for visitors.

At Eden we consider the St Helena National Trust to be an extremely important and worthwhile

initiative. We believe that St Helena will be better placed to meet its many future challenges if the Trust's potential and enthusiasm is fully supported.

Juliet Rose j.e.rose@reading.ac.uk

Nature Tourism on the Sister Islands of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman

The nature tourism initiative on the Sister Islands of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman arose in response to a US Fish and Wildlife Service analysis of the expenditure by US citizens on wildlife-related recreation in 1996. They were staggering figures – more than 77 million people spent over US\$100 billion per annum, 62 million were wildlife-watchers and 17 million of these travelled from home to bird-watch! In 1997, the Cayman Islands Government agreed to fund development of land-based nature tourism infrastructure on Cayman Brac under the Sister Islands District Administration.



Patricia Bradley on a viewing platform

The project, now in its sixth year, was extended to Little Cayman in 2000, where it is funded by an FCO Environmental Fund for Overseas Territories grant of £65,000.

Cayman Brac was particularly suitable to begin a low-impact project because it is relatively pristine with 70% of its natural forest intact. The population of only 1600 people enjoys a flourishing cultural life. Little Cayman has about 90% of its inland forests and wetlands in a pristine state. With a resident population under 150 and air access by small aircraft on a gravel strip, it is ideal for visitors content to explore on foot and bicycle. Although designed primarily for nature tourism, the some 35 'heritage sites' on each Island represent all aspects of the cultural, historic and natural life that, especially on the Brac, remain closely interwoven.

The project aims to be sustainable - to create jobs for the younger generation while protecting the flora and fauna and cultural life. To date, one permanent local post, of nature guide, has been created, to be followed by a heritage house manager in mid-2003; technical expertise, skilled and casual labour are also employed regularly. Schools throughout the Cayman Islands are using the forest and wetland trails as a natural laboratory to teach students the intrinsic and economic value of sustaining Cayman's natural heritage.

On the Brac, most sites revolve around the dominant topographic feature, the central limestone plateau: 'the bluff'. Twelve kilometres of walking and hiking trails were cleared, improved and signed for use by naturalists, bird watchers, botanists, photographers and school groups. Four are on 200-year-old bluff footpaths through dry forest. A fifth, the Lighthouse Footpath, retraces the three-mile route of the early lighthouse keepers along the 144 foot-eastern bluff edge beside a unique xeric shrubland and breeding colonies of brown booby and white-tailed tropicbird. Recognising the

value of the seabirds, the FCO and RSPB funded a separate research project to produce a management plan to sustain the brown booby colony. This recommends creating a National Park to protect the birds and the associated biodiversity of the bluff.

Birding is one of the main attractions, with over 200 species, 80% of which are migrants. Several endemic races are a must including the Brac parrot *Amazona leucocephala hesternana* which breeds in the National Trust's 180 acre Parrot Reserve, red-legged thrush, loggerhead kingbird and thick-billed vireo (shared with Grand Cayman), Greater Antillean grackle and vitelline warbler (only found on the Cayman and Swan Islands). Little Cayman, with wetlands comprising 40% of its area, has excellent waterbirds now easily visible from a series of viewing platforms newly constructed on mangrove-fringed lagoons. The star attractions are a growing population of West Indian whistling-duck breeding island-wide and 5000 pairs of red-footed booby (the largest colony in the Caribbean) and 200 pairs of magnificent frigatebird on the Cayman Islands' only Ramsar site, Booby Pond.

Each Island has a small museum and an interpretative centre. Cultural and historic sites include houses, boat yards, accessible caves (many still used as hurricane shelters), the mass grave from the catastrophic 1932 hurricane, and, on Little Cayman, remains of the 1880s phosphate industry (mule pen, railway) and 17th century site of the first settlement in the Cayman Islands. All have interpretative signage; other sites describe the life history of birds (boobies, frigatebird, parrot), faunal biodiversity and forest and wetland ecology.



Interpretative sign for Jackson Pond. The image on the sign is built up with 12-15 ceramic layers each fired to 1500°C and then sealed with clear glass.

We followed the US Parks Dept recommendation to use enamelled ceramic panels, guaranteed to be resistant to the sun, fire and salt air. Panels are designed, using drawings (some generously donated by the authors and publishers of the new *The Birds of the West Indies*), archival material and photographs, in Cayman and manufactured in the US by Winsor Fireform of Tumwater, Washington State.

A website naturecayman.com has just gone online, articles from visiting journalists and ornithologists are coming on stream and a new initiative, Family Week, July 13-20, aims to promote the Brac as a family/ child destination. All Forum readers welcome!

Patricia E Bradley, Nature Tourism Consultant to Cayman Brac
pebrad@candw.ky

Flower Bat Expert Visits Cayman Islands

Internationally recognised flower bat expert Dr Theodore Fleming visited the Cayman Islands this March. He and his team focused on several rare and endemic Caribbean species with a special emphasis on cave-dwelling bats and the web of ecological interactions between plant-visiting bats and their food plants.

“We now have a detailed understanding of the ecological importance of plant-visiting bats in neotropical ecosystems. This information has played a crucial role in recent campaigns to conserve tropical bats” Dr Fleming commented. Tropical bats are important to pollination and seed dispersal of native plants as well as an important natural predator of moths, beetles, mosquitoes and other insects.

Dr Fleming took tissue samples as part of his genetic study of Caribbean Phyllostomid bats, particularly the Buffy Flower Bat *Erophylla sezekorni* and the Big-eared Bat *Macrotus waterhousii*. This work is in the preliminary stages, but will elucidate historical migration patterns in the Caribbean.

The Cayman Islands’ elusive Buffy Flower Bat lives only in caves and pollinates local plants and trees, including Agave, Calabash and Silk Cotton. Dr Fleming used radio transmitters in an attempt to determine the feeding range and roosting locations in the densely vegetated Lower Valley Forest.

In keeping with his strong belief that biologists should contribute to conservation efforts in the countries they visit, Dr Fleming appeared twice on local television, was featured in several newspaper articles and his visit culminated with a well attended slide show. He focused on the importance of native forests and undisturbed caves for the survival of the Caribbean’s endemic bats.

Dr Fleming’s visit follows the research of Wildlife Biologist, Anne Louise Band, who rediscovered the White-shouldered bat within the Lower Valley Forest. Efforts to save this forest are being intensified as a result of the information gained from these two significant research projects.

Lois Blumenthal

**Bat Conservation Project Director,
National Trust for the Cayman Islands:
blu@candy.ky or ntrust@candw.ky**

Ancient Forest Threatened

The Lower Valley Forest on Grand Cayman is one of the last remnants of the disappearing ancient Caribbean *Ficus* forests. It supports the threatened White-shouldered Bat *Phyllops falcatus*, which is only found on Grand Cayman, Cuba and Haiti, as well as four other rare or endemic bat species and is important to birds and other wildlife.

The Cayman Islands are very isolated and not part of the Eastern island chain. Migrating birds have been finding Wild Figs *Ficus aurea* and other wild fruits here to sustain them for millennia. The loss of this forest would be a severe blow to them, as well as to indigenous birds.



Antillean Fruit and Nectar Bat Brachyphylla nana, an obligate cave dweller, pollinates numerous Caribbean plants and also disperses seeds throughout native forests

Ricklefs, comprised ornithologists from the Smithsonian Institution, Cornell University and Missouri University was assisted by Patricia E. Bradley... All the breeding species listed were mist-netted during the two-day study, as were 70% of the migrants. This old growth forest is a remnant of large areas of forest once found on Grand Cayman and its avian, botanical and faunal diversity identifies it as a site of special scientific and conservation interest that should be preserved.”

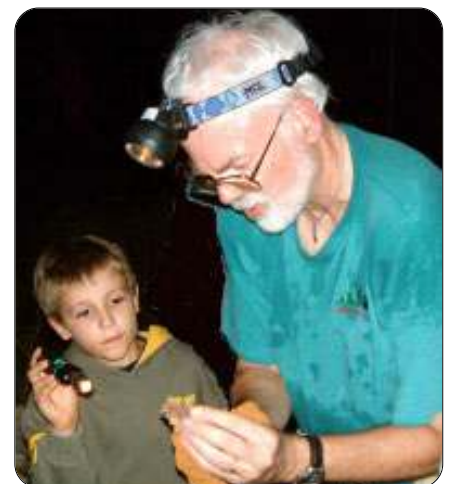
The native plant diversity within this forest is also significant. Mature native trees such as Ironwood *Chionanthus caymanensis*, Pepper-Cinnamon *Canella winterana*, Headache Bush *Capparis cynophallophora*, Wild Jasmine *Tabernaemontana laurifolia*, Spanish Elm *Cordia genascanthus*, Candlewood *Amyris elemifera*, and so many others flourish here.

The Lower Valley Forest is divided into two sections by a pasture. Over 300 acres (125 hectares) on the northern edge are separated into twenty private lots varying from 149 acres to small house lots of only .33 of an acre. The southern portion – about the same size but closer to the sea - is immediately threatened by a large housing development. This area is an important buffer zone. The salt-tolerant trees protect the more inland part of the forest from sea spray.

It is hoped that successful negotiation with the Cayman Islands Planning Department will result in the removal of some universally applied requirements for roadbeds and filling and that developers can be convinced of the value of leaving the dramatic native landscaping in place. This will mitigate the emergency, but it will still be necessary to purchase a substantial portion of this forest for conservation if the White-shouldered Bat is not to become extinct in the Cayman Islands and for this important migrating bird foraging ground and native bird habitat to remain intact.

**Lois Blumenthal
Cayman Wildlife Connection
www.caymanwildlife.org.ky**

Patricia E. Bradley, resident ornithologist and author of *Birds of the Cayman Islands*, has documented 53 species of birds, including 12 endemic races using this forest. She wrote, “The forest proved a major site of Cayman Islands avian diversity during field work undertaken on Grand Cayman as part of a Caribbean study on the molecular phylogeography of West Indian birds. The team, led by Professor Robert



Dr Ted Fleming and young Mattie Troyer examine a rare White-shouldered Bat Phyllops falcatus caught in the Lower Valley forest.

Goodbye Jim..... Hello Sarah!

Jim Stevenson claims to have had several previous lives before he joined the Forum in the early nineties, where he has served as an Executive Committee member and worked tirelessly on a number of working groups. He has been a teacher on Salisbury Plain, an Education Officer with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Arundel, and RSPB warden in Scotland, a ranger-trainer in the Seychelles and the RSPB's man in East Africa.

When he took on the RSPB's work in the UKOTs, Jim says that he discovered a whole new world of islands, birds to see, and species of fish to catch! At first the accent was firmly on the South Atlantic, and there was institutional resistance to any involvement in the Caribbean or beyond; that is until Andy Beale came along.

Mr Beale wanted to launch satellites from the tiny Anguillan Island of Sombrero, which is now known to be an Important Bird Area. Because rocket launches are covered by the "Outer Space Act", licences have to be issued by the UK Government and Jim therefore set about lobbying as part of a successful effort to stall the project. This campaign opened the doors to RSPB involvement in the Caribbean and to a happy ongoing relationship with Anguilla. Jim visited the island in 2002 and commented, "I came here to look at the birds, but the biggest asset the island has is its people who, in a matter of a few hours, made the island seem like a second home to me." This thought brought on the idea of a small tourism project that will receive FCO funding this year.

Jim's biggest headache must have been the FCO-funded project to eradicate feral cats from Ascension Island. This has been a highly sensitive issue but it will be a lasting tribute to Jim's efforts if seabirds continue to recolonise the island.

After over 18 years with the RSPB, Jim Stevenson has moved to Paxton Pits Nature reserve in Cambridgeshire where he is the Senior Ranger for the local district council.

Jim said, "I have had a wonderful time in RSPB's International Division, but I have found that the amount of travel that the job requires has put increasing pressure on my family. I'm really pleased to have found an outdoor job in conservation, close to home, but I am going to miss my friends in the Forum and around the World. The fondest memories are of beautiful islands and friendly people, oh and big fish! Thanks for everything".

Sarah Sanders has replaced Jim at the RSPB, starting with a baptism by fire at the conference in Bermuda. Nevertheless, despite jumping in at the deep end, the warm welcome she received and the visit to Nonsuch Island was an inspirational introduction. She is looking forward to the work that lies ahead. Sarah started as a teacher in London but has spent a number of years in West Africa as a teacher trainer with Voluntary Service Overseas and assisting the biodiversity section of a forestry project. Following a stint at DFID in



Sarah Sanders, newly appointed International Officer, RSPB, at the Bermuda Conference

London on the Latin America and OTs desk she has just returned from a placement with the biodiversity team at the UNDP-Global Environmental Facility regional office in Slovakia. Sarah can be contacted at:

Sarah.Sanders@rspb.org.uk

Falkland Islands Sea Lion Survey

In January 2003, the Sea Mammal Research Unit from St Andrews University sent a two-man team to the Falkland Islands to conduct the second census of Southern sea lions *Otaria flavescens*. The number of breeding sea lions has increased significantly, by over 25%, since the first census, which took place in 1996. The majority of breeding sea lions were recorded on offshore islands, with large colonies on the mainland being limited to Seal Bay on East Falkland and White Rock on West Falkland.

Following the death of many thousands of penguins around the islands in the early part of the summer, it was reassuring to see that there were relatively few dead pups around the sea lion colonies. There had been some fears that if the deaths were linked to a red tide event in the Falklands, it might travel further up the food chain and begin to affect sea lions. No traces were seen of this and all animals appeared in good health. This, and the population increase, is excellent news following reports of recent severe declines in the Southern sea lion population off the South American coast.

The survey provided a rare opportunity to circumnavigate the Falklands archipelago, which comprises 782 islands, and record additional information. Most sea lion counts were carried out from a small boat, but sometimes the team landed on individual islands to ensure they had counted all the sea lions and pups. During these brief landings, observations were taken to detect which of the islands were rat-free (judged by the presence of Cobb's wrens and Tussacbirds) and where possible, assessments of breeding populations of birds were made.

The Falkland Islands Sea Lion Survey was supported by funding from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (Environment Fund for Overseas Territories). Euan Dunn, Marine Policy Advisor with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, accompanied the team for the last week of the survey.

Falklands Conservation: www.falklandsconservation.com

Red-Listing Workshop Lists Seven Threatened Plant Species for the BVI

A red-listing workshop was held at the JR O'Neal Botanic Garden, Tortola, British Virgin Islands in December 2002. Seven plant species of global conservation significance were evaluated against the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. Five were listed as Critically Endangered, two of which have been extirpated from one of the two islands where they had previously been found. A further two were listed as Endangered. The workshop was a collaborative venture between the BVI National Parks Trust and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. Colin Clubbe from Kew facilitated the workshop; the other members of the red-listing team were Joseph Smith-Abbott, Raymond Walker, Nancy Woodfield (BVINPT) and Ben Pollard (Kew).

The plant species had been identified during fieldwork



The BVI Redlisting Team. From left to right: Ben Pollard, Raymond Walker, Nancy Woodfield, Joseph Smith-Abbott, Colin Clubbe

undertaken for the Darwin Initiative project completed in 2002 which had centred on two islands, Virgin Gorda (largely within Gorda Peak National Park) and Anegada (mostly around the western Ramsar site). As part of the biodiversity assessment, a plant checklist was compiled and distribution data collected for each area. A number of endemic species were identified and targeted for more intensive investigation. Endemism was categorised at a BVI or Puerto Rican Bank level. BVI endemics occur only in BVI and may be single island endemics whose global distribution is limited to one island, or multiple-island endemics occurring on more than one island in BVI. Puerto Rican Bank endemics occur across this biogeographic region and may be found in the British and US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Workshop participants were relatively familiar with red-listing procedures and so we were able to get straight down to debating the finer points of the assessment procedures. Determining numbers of locations is always a testing point when dealing with small islands: Anegada is 38 km² and

Virgin Gorda is 21 km². For islands this small, threatening events are likely to affect the whole island and so all sub-populations of a species will be threatened. This puts single island endemics at particular risk of extinction. Lively debate and a wide-ranging consideration of actual and potential threats enabled us to list seven species with confidence.

A BVI endemic vine, *Metastelma anegadense* (Asclepiadaceae) could not be re-located on Tortola and is thought to have been extirpated. It now only remains on Anegada and was listed as Critically Endangered. Also Critically Endangered is *Cordia rupicola* (Boraginaceae), a woody shrub found only in Anegada, reported as having been extirpated from Puerto Rico.

Three further endemics listed as Critically Endangered were *Acacia anagadensis* (Fabaceae) a small tree found only on Anegada, *Calyptanthes kiaerskovii* (Myrtaceae), a small tree limited to Virgin Gorda, and the scrambling cactus *Leptocereus quadricostatus* (Cactaceae), found on Anegada and Puerto Rico. Two Puerto Rican Bank endemic trees were listed as Endangered: *Calyptanthes thomasiiana* (Myrtaceae) and *Zanthoxylum thomasiianum* (Rutaceae), both of which are on the US Federal Endangered List.



Acacia anegadensis growing in the sand dunes at the western end of Anegada

These listings have been submitted to IUCN for authorisation and inclusion in the 2003 Global Red List of Threatened Species. For other Puerto Rican Bank endemics we need a better idea of their distribution in the USVI or Puerto Rico before an assessment can be made. This highlights a need for a Puerto Rican Bank workshop that includes the necessary expertise from other parts of the region. Action is being taken by the BVI National Parks Trust to ensure the long-term conservation of these species of global concern.

Colin Clubbe c.clubbe@rbgkew.org.uk
Raymond Walker spiceray@hotmail.com

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories



How does the Forum work to conserve the treasure trove of biodiversity found in the Overseas Territories?

- By supporting local people in their efforts to conserve their own environmental resources
- By helping non-governmental organisations (NGOs) find international funding for their work
- By providing strategic assistance to the Overseas Territories, both governments and NGOs
- By coordinating the support of UK member bodies in providing specialised technical assistance to enable local people to carry out conservation projects
- By raising awareness in the UK about the Overseas Territories and our responsibility to them
- By providing regional support by expert Working Groups
- By representing NGOs on international bodies such as the Ramsar Committee

The Forum supports local organisations because they create a sense of ownership of the resources to be protected and they create pride in the local people in their own national treasures. They are the most effective environmental educators, and unlike international bodies, they will always be there. That's why the Forum concentrates on empowering local people and giving them the tools and information they need to do the work themselves.

Four good reasons to become a Friend



1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the 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 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 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.

I wish to become a Friend of the Overseas Territories at the following support level: £15 £50 £100 £500

I wish my company to become a Corporate Friend at the following support level: £150 £500 £1,000 £5,000

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend _____

Company name for Corporate Friend _____

Address _____

Tel _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Send to: UKOTCF, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 5LF, UK Fax: +44 1731 569325

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

Either: I enclose my cheque made out to UKOTCF for the amount indicated above

Or: Please charge the amount indicated above to my card:

American Express Delta JCB
 MasterCard Solo Switch Visa

Card Number _____

Expiry date: / (month/year)

If used: Valid from / Issue number _____

Correspondences to: Frances Marks, Forum Coordinator, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5LF, UK.
Tel/fax: +44 (0)1608 644425

WEBSITE: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

Photographs courtesy of: Lois Blumenthal, Patricia Bradley, Colin Clubbe, Michael Gore FRPS, Frances Marks, Mike Pienkowski, Courtney Platt, Hew Prendergast, RBG Kew, Juliet Rose, Andrew Syvret. Please note that photographs are copyright.

The Forum is a non-profit organisation registered as a limited company in England and Wales No 3216892 and registered Charity No 1058483. Registered Office: 12 High Street, Wendover, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5EA, UK
Information and advice given on behalf of the Forum is given on the basis that no liability attaches to the Forum, its Directors, officers or representatives in respect thereof.

Produced by Kopyrite 01608 646566. Printed on paper made from sustainable forests.