

# FORUM NEWS 26

FEBRUARY 2005

www.ukotcf.org

## “Biodiversity That Matters”

A conference on conservation in  
UK Overseas Territories  
and other small island communities  
Jersey 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006

### Organised by:

**UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum,  
with the support of the Overseas Territories  
Environment Programme, and hosted by the  
Jersey conservation bodies**

Jersey will host an international environment conference from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006, with a focus on UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small islands.

The conference is being organized by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum in consultation with the Environmental Department of the States [Government] of Jersey, the Société Jersiaise, the National Trust for Jersey and the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. It is supported by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development. It will be the fourth such conference following the first held in London in 1999, and the second in Gibraltar in 2000 and the third in Bermuda in March 2003. The proceedings of both the Gibraltar and Bermuda conferences can be seen at [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental agencies and NGOs to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. It is hoped that Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems will benefit from each other's experiences and history of planning and conservation initiatives, as well as from holding the conference in Jersey.



*Michael Freeman, Jersey Government, Quentin Bloxam, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF discuss arrangements for the forthcoming conference.*

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

- Education and raising awareness of conservation issues in the UKOTs
- Environment Charters and strategic planning
- Integration of conservation and sustainable livelihoods
  - Terrestrial
  - Marine, including fisheries
- Obtaining and Using Resources (not just money)
- Species conservation issues:
  - Turtles in the UKOTs
  - Dealing with alien invasive species

The provisional outline programme is available on the Forum's website [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org), where more details and booking forms will be added later.

The arrival and departure days for the main conference will be Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2006 and Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006. However, to take advantage of the bringing together of persons with these interests, two optional additional workshops are being planned before and after the main conference:

1. Arriving on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October, for a 2-day

workshop on Biodiversity and Impact Assessment in Small Island States, on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October.

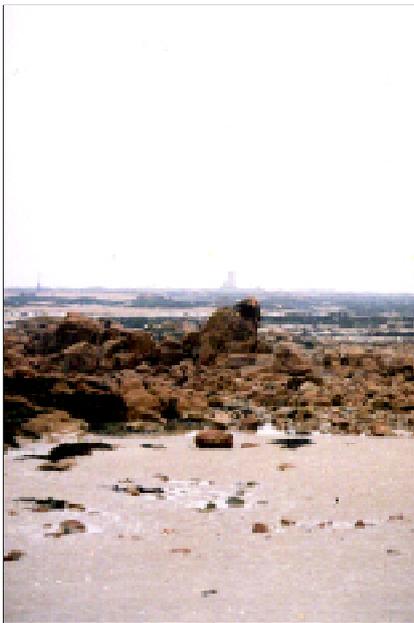
2. Remaining after the conference, for a 1-day workshop on bird monitoring, on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October, departing on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Further information on these workshops is given later in this announcement and on the website.

### The Conference Venue

The conference will take place at a hotel on the south coast of Jersey. It is expected that accommodation, meals and meetings will be held at the hotel, although a few events and the conference dinner will be held elsewhere (see below). The hotel is situated in a biologically, historically and archaeologically interesting part of the island. Without imposing on the main programme it is planned that optional 1-hour early morning walks for delegates who wish to explore will be organised.

The introduction to Jersey on the Sunday afternoon will include a walk on the seabed, a 3-hour, 3-mile journey across one of the most unusual intertidal habitats on the planet. With each low tide, the Bailiwick of Jersey doubles in size, due to the huge tidal amplitude of several metres. Take a guided walk across part of “the other half of the Crown Dependency” with marine



*Jersey shoreline at low tide*

biologist and “professional walker” Andrew Syvret. Of great cultural and historical significance to Jerseyfolk, this area was designated as the Channel Island’s first Ramsar site in 2000. It is home to an astonishing variety of life. Be prepared to get wet to the knee as you wander through boulder-fields, oyster farms, lagoons, wave-cut platforms, sand banks and saltwater-filled gullies.

On one evening, the National Trust for Jersey has kindly agreed to host a “Vin d’Honneur”, a Jersey tradition, at the historic farm, Hamptonne, in the heart of Jersey’s countryside. The building dates from the 1830s and is the most recent of the three houses to be built. The rooms are extremely high and are typical of those found in the large houses being built in St Helier (Jersey’s capital) at this time. This building houses the exhibition which tells the story of how rural life has changed in the island in the 90 years since the Great War. One of the buildings is used as a cider barn and contains an apple crusher, a twin-screw apple press and barrels as well as other farm tools. The cider-making equipment is all in working order and is used every October to produce our own cider.

The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust are hosting the final afternoon and evening dinner of the Conference. Delegates will be shown the zoo, with some behind the scene glimpses of the work of the Trust, and will be able to chat to some of the staff about their work

### Costs

The costs for the main conference (arriving Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October and leaving on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October) will be approximately

GB £ 650 per person in a room shared with one other or approximately GB £ 900 per person for a single occupancy room. This rate covers accommodation, transfer from airport, transfers to other conference venues, field visit, tea/coffee breaks, all meals including the conference dinner, and conference costs. Participants should budget to meet personally the costs of drinks and any additional costs such as telephone calls, gratuities and laundry.

The Conference has budgeted to assist the costs of one NGO participant from each Territory and one government representative from each of those which cannot meet the cost themselves. The Forum will contact these separately. It is hoped that it will be possible to meet most of the costs of those attending the preceding and following workshops.

### Acknowledgements

The organisers are grateful for contributions to the funding and other support of the conference from:

The Overseas Territories Environment Programme of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

The Environmental Department of the States of Jersey

The Société Jersiaise

The National Trust for Jersey

The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment) ‘Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Project’ (CBBIA), funded by the Dutch Government.

### 2-day workshop: Biodiversity and Impact Assessment in Small Island States

The main purpose of the workshop is to review capacity-building needs for biodiversity and impact assessment in Small Island States, to provide guidance on the integration of biodiversity and impact assessment (EIA and SEA) and to explore opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity as a key issue of concern for developers, planners and decision-makers.

The workshop is organised by IAIA (the International Association for Impact Assessment, [www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org)) through its ‘Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Project’ (CBBIA). This project is funded by the Dutch Government and builds on work carried out by the IAIA to support the biodiversity-related global conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Impact Assessment (EIA and SEA) has an important role in implementing these Conventions and for helping to ensure that development is planned and implemented with biodiversity ‘in mind’ (eg see: <http://www.biodiv.org/impactAssess/index.html>)

The workshop is intended for participants having to commission, undertake or review impact assessments or who are involved in planning for biodiversity conservation and want to gain a better understanding of impact assessment. It is open to anyone with a professional interest or involvement in biodiversity planning and management, development planning or impact assessment.

Workshop participants will be invited to join the CBBIA network to exchange ideas and information on an ongoing basis. Follow-up will be organised through IAIA’s Biodiversity and Ecology Section and its listserv as well as through the IAIA international newsletter and the IAIA’s newsletter.

**1-day workshop on bird monitoring, on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October, departing on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October**

The RSPB are negotiating to have a one-day workshop on bird monitoring after the main conference. Details are still to be confirmed. Monitoring of key bird species and sites is a crucial part of the conservation process. Some UK Overseas Territories conduct highly successful monitoring schemes, while in others there is very limited capacity to monitor birds effectively. Effective dissemination of the outcomes of monitoring programmes to decision-makers is also vitally important. We propose to hold a 1-day monitoring workshop, which will identify current gaps in monitoring coverage, determine how best we can share expertise and experience among Territories, and jointly ensure that the measures required to increase capacity and co-ordination of monitoring outputs are achieved.

**The UK Overseas Territories wreath of remembrance**

Each year on the Sunday closest to Armistice Day (11 November), Remembrance Sunday is held to honour those who died in conflicts throughout the world. In London, the day is focused around the ceremony held at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Since the first ceremony in 1919, wreaths have been laid around the base of the Cenotaph in memoriam. These are normally made of Red Poppies; however, one wreath stands out from the rest.

The UK Overseas Territories wreath is unmistakable amongst all the others because it does not contain a single red poppy. It is traditionally made from a representative selection of plants that occur in the Territories and so has a distinctive green and purple colour scheme. The foliage that provides the green base colour of the wreath is the Bermuda Juniper *Juniperus bermudiana*. There are a number of different flowers in the wreath, but the distinctive purple colour is provided by *Cattleya bowringiana*, ‘the Chocolate Box Orchid’ from the Cayman Islands.

For at least 40 years, members of Kew staff have carefully crafted two UKOTs wreaths for Remembrance Sunday. The smaller of the two is placed in the Kew Memorial whilst the larger wreath is delivered to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It is placed on the Cenotaph by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs as a mark of respect to those from the Territories who died in battle. The finished wreath is actually quite heavy. As it has to be carried for some length of time before it is laid on the Cenotaph, there have been comments from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that it would be much appreciated if it could be made a little lighter!

Over the years a number of Kew staff members have had the responsibility of making the wreath. In the 1980s there was a custom of holding a competition to see who could make the best wreath and the one selected went to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to be laid on the Cenotaph. This practice died out however, as plant material became too scarce. Today the wreath is designed and constructed by Roselle Andrews and Richard Helliwell. Due to the tender nature of many of the plants, the majority of the wreath construction is focussed on the two days before the ceremony. This makes timing and teamwork a must and causes a rise in stress levels!

Since the first wreath was made at Kew, many British Territories have moved to independence. In the early 1960s there were thirty-two territories, including areas in Africa and South-East Asia, whereas today there are sixteen. This has drastically reduced the range of material available for the wreath. For this reason, each year the staff struggle to find suitable quantities of quality material. Now the garden staff associated with the wreath are asking for assistance from the remaining Territories to acquire material. **If there are any plants that the Territories would like to see represented in the wreath, the team at Kew would be delighted to know.**

The UKOTs Wreath is an important symbol for the relationship between the UK and the Overseas Territories; however, it plays a more significant role as a memorial to those brave soldiers who gave the greatest sacrifice for the rest of us. Please contribute your plant knowledge to help ensure the wreath tradition carries on for another 40 years!

Further information: *Martin Hamilton* [m.hamilton@kew.org](mailto:m.hamilton@kew.org) or *Lynsey Crellin* [l.crellin@kew.org](mailto:l.crellin@kew.org). Alternatively, write to: **The UKOT Programme, RBG, Kew, The Herbarium, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3AB.**



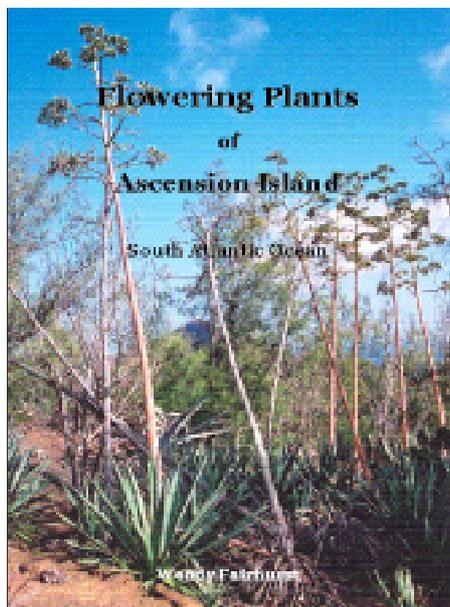
Anguilla	<i>Fuchsia</i> spp.	Slipper spurge
Bermuda	<i>Juniperus bermudiana</i>	Bermuda juniper
British Antarctic Territory		Moss species
British Indian Ocean Territory	<i>Apocynon</i> spp.	Burm's morning glory
British Virgin Islands	<i>Biscaya patersoniana</i>	Panama's plantain
Cayman Islands	<i>Cattleya bowringiana</i>	Chocolate box orchid
Falkland Islands	<i>Espositia nigra</i>	Crossberry
Gibraltar	<i>Oliva europaea</i> <i>Chamaecyparis</i> spp. <i>Myrica</i> spp.	Olive Dwarf fan palm Common myrtle
Montserrat	<i>Artibeus leucotis</i>	Hooker's anthurium
Malta, Barbados, Ducie and Oona Islands	<i>Misophora macrocarpa</i> <i>Cordia</i> spp.	Mango St. Joseph's coat
St. Helena	<i>Muhlenbergia angustifolia</i> <i>Antigonon leptopus</i> <i>Trochetopanax</i> spp. <i>Croton</i> spp.	Small bell flower Old Father live-for-ever St. Helena ebony Scribnerwood
South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands		Moss species
Turks and Caicos Islands	<i>Ruellia</i> spp.	Scarlet bush

*The UKOTs wreath & the list of the territories and representative plants used to construct the wreath.*

## Flowering Plants of Ascension Island

By Wendy Fairhurst

I wish I had this book when I lived on Ascension and studied its flora. It would have saved hours of my time. Ascension is geologically young with a meagre endemic and indigenous flora, and for historical reasons which the book explains has enjoyed



and suffered from two hundred years of introductions. The result is a strange mix of plants from all over the globe, which the enquirer is unlikely to find, described in any one book – that is until now!

Designed for residents and curious visitors, the book describes in non-technical

language about 200 species, in alphabetical order by families and a detailed index allows searching by family, genus, Latin binomial and common name. The appeal for the non-specialist is that every plant is illustrated by colour photographs taken in flower and where appropriate in fruit. I remember hours spent matching descriptions in opaque language in scientific papers with actual plants, a case where a picture really is worth many words. A welcome feature is the inclusion of the majority of the few surviving endemics. The casual visitor who may not know Devils Riding School from Devils Cauldron would benefit from a sketch-map to complement the location given under each photograph.

This chunky A5 format guide bridges the gap between Ashmoles readable and monumental but scarcely pocketable *Natural History*, and the academic paper. It will find its way into the knapsack of the serious explorer of the islands hills and valleys, while armchair browsers can identify colourful shrubs and trees of the islands amenity areas. The book would interest the visitor to other tropical or subtropical islands, like St Helena or Madeira, with mixed introduced flora, and is a valuable addition to the limited literature on the Ascension's non-endemic plant life.

Reviewed by John Packer who was a founder member of the Heritage Society, wrote *The Ascension handbook* in 1968 and *Contributions towards a Flora of Ascension Island* in 1997 and was responsible for sending many plants specimens to Kew Gardens. The book is available from **Geoffrey Fairhurst, 82 Birkdale Road, Bedford, MK41 8AX e-mail [Geoffrey.Fairhurst@bopenworld.com](mailto:Geoffrey.Fairhurst@bopenworld.com)** Price £15 plus postage.

## Tristan da Cunha Biodiversity Project

The main objective of this project is to increase local people's control, ownership and involvement in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in Tristan da Cunha. At the suggestion of the then Chief Islander, James Glass, the project was set up as a partnership between the Tristan Island Government and the RSPB. The funding is from the UK Darwin Initiative, and the project started in May 2003 and finishes in April 2006.

The main aim of the project is to produce a biodiversity action plan for Tristan da Cunha, which has the backing and support of all the islanders. A socio-economic study of Tristan has been carried out to ensure that local priorities and concerns are taken into account when the biodiversity action plan is drawn up. The plan is being written on Tristan, with many islanders actively involved in its production. It is recognised that many of the conservation projects identified in the plan will require funding and expertise from elsewhere, but at the end of the project Tristan will have increased capacity to manage and provide staff for such projects.

The islands of Tristan da Cunha have a unique assemblage of flora and fauna, much of which has been studied only relatively recently. The offshore islands of Gough and Inaccessible are perhaps best known as two of the world's most important seabird breeding sites, and much of the conservation work in Tristan has concentrated on these two islands. The main island of Tristan is one of the few of the subantarctic islands that are inhabited, with a population of about 300. A large part of the project involves carrying out survey work on the islands of Tristan and nearby Nightingale to bring the level of knowledge of these islands up to that of Inaccessible and Gough.

The project is being managed by collaboration between RSPB project staff and the Tristan Natural Resources Department. A team of twelve Tristan Island Government employees are working with the project, seconded from their jobs as necessary. At the end of the project this team will have trained in several aspects of biological fieldwork, so that for any future conservation project on Tristan there will be qualified personnel available on Tristan.

The fieldwork aspect of the project to date has concentrated on producing habitat maps for Tristan and Nightingale, mapping the distribution of alien species, seal population surveys and seabird monitoring. For the second field season the seabird and seal work has been continued, but in addition some marine survey work, in particular seaweed sampling, has been carried out. An entomologist will join the team for the next three months to make collections of invertebrates from Tristan and Nightingale.

One of the main threats to the wildlife of Tristan is introduced species, and the project will look at ways of controlling the species that are already here, and investigate methods of

preventing further alien introductions. The first major study of the flora and fauna of Tristan was carried out on a Norwegian expedition in 1938/39. Comparing back to the papers written then, it is becoming apparent that there have been a considerable number of alien species colonising since then, particularly from South Africa. Rats were introduced to Tristan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and these are continuing to cause declines in the breeding seabird population of Tristan. The project has discovered that numbers of several seabird species have declined in the last two decades.

There has been a very positive attitude to the project on Tristan – many islanders have worked with the project or have been involved in some way. The project hopes to link Tristan with overseas agencies and organisations, particularly in the UK and South Africa, so that further collaborative projects like this can take place, and there is much enthusiasm in Tristan to be involved in future conservation projects.

*Alison Rothwell, RSPB, alisonrothwell@uuplus.com*

## International award for Ascension Island conservation

The front page of *Forum News 25* highlighted the success of the seabird restoration project on Ascension Island. The Forum was delighted at the early success of a project which it had promoted for many years, and for which it eventually facilitated funding of £500,000 from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to Forum-member-organization RSPB to implement this work. A key result was the initiation of Ascension Island Government's own Conservation Department, dynamically led by Tara George.

On 14<sup>th</sup> December in the Map Room at FCO, Tara was presented with this year's Marsh Award for International Bird

Conservation by Mr Brian Marsh of the Marsh Conservation Trust, in recognition of the early success of this work.

At the time of its first human settlement in 1815, Ascension was thought to host 20 million individual seabirds, including the Ascension Frigatebird, a globally threatened species found nowhere else in the world. Introduced feral cats exterminated native land-birds and devastated seabird populations by about 98%, to around 400,000 individuals, mostly confined to offshore stacks and inaccessible cliffs.

The Ascension Seabird Restoration Project has, since 2001, removed feral cats from Ascension Island. So far, the Ascension Seabird Restoration Project has encouraged 203 pairs of five species of seabird, including Brown Noddies, Masked Boobies and Red-billed Tropicbirds, to return and nest on mainland Ascension Island.

At the presentation, Tara George said, "Many species on the UK Overseas Territories are threatened by non-native species. The project marks a landmark in conservation, as Ascension is the largest, inhabited island where feral cat removal has been attempted. I'm delighted to receive this award. It recognises the efforts that have been made on Ascension Island and might provide encouragement to other conservationists battling to overcome seemingly insurmountable problems."

Foreign Office Minister of State for Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Douglas Alexander, MP said, "The project has been a great success and will make a crucial contribution to the conservation of the world's breeding seabird populations and the natural history of the island." Graham Wynne, the RSPB's chief executive, commented, "The UK Overseas Territories, including Ascension, are astoundingly rich in wildlife, including many species found nowhere else on earth."

The annual Marsh Award for International Bird Conservation is given by RSPB to individuals on the basis of either lifetime achievement or an exceptional contribution to the field of bird conservation. In 2003, the award went to Dr Alexander Kozulin, Conservation Director of Achorva Ptushak Belarusi (APB) for his work on conserving the Aquatic Warbler in Belarus. It is the first time that the award has been presented to a conservationist from a UK Overseas Territory.

The Forum adds its congratulations to Tara and her team, with added best wishes to her as she returned to Ascension after the presentation, in time for her wedding four days later.

*Sarah Sanders, International Officer (UK Overseas Territories) RSPB, Sarah.Sanders@rspb.org.uk*



*Brian Marsh, Tara George and Graham Wynne, the RSPB's chief executive*



## Further Successful Projects 2004

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is providing a Communication Strategy for The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). This is the second of a series of supplements to Forum News as part of this initiative. Although Forum News itself is under the editorial control of UKOTCF, the content of this supplement is as agreed by UKOTCF with Department for International Development (DFID) and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). OTEP is a joint programme of DFID and the FCO to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The initial successful projects in the first bidding round were described in Forum News 25. The following pages summarise the applications that were successful in the first round after undertaking further work invited by OTEP which reconsidered them in June 2004. The second round is being considered as we go to press and will be reported later, as well as on the OTEP pages of [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)

### **Anguilla: ACRAMAM – Anguilla Coastal Resource Assessment, Monitoring and Management Project**

The project improves the quality, timeliness and flow of environmental information from field and maps to decision makers' desks. Improvements in both creation of extensive resource inventory plus monitoring of key marine and coastal resources will feed into an organised spatial information framework that can be easily tapped by stakeholders for producing annual and quarterly reports, assist in environmental impact assessment, be used in both strategic and short term planning and in raising public awareness. A key element will be working alongside stakeholders in designing, training in, and implementing procedures that shape their existing work programmes and streamline routine operations.

Mr Karim V.D. Hodge, Director of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources  
Parliament Drive, P.O. Box 60, The Valley, Anguilla, BWI Tel: +1 264-497-2518 Fax: +1 264-497-3389  
Email: [karim.hodge@gov.ai](mailto:karim.hodge@gov.ai)

### **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT): Environmental monitoring for improved conservation management**

The project covers core funding for a conservation research visit in 2006, plus preliminary work to implement the Chagos Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) and obligations in the Environment Charter.

Effective implementation of the CCMP depends on information and responsiveness to it. Data gathering is difficult in Chagos, but can be achieved with an expedition approach. Recent brief visits showed massive habitat degradation and change. Chagos is a biological pivot in the Ocean, important also to other heavily impacted countries. This limited, multidisciplinary programme would collect the research information needed for its conservation.

Dr Charles Sheppard, Dept Biological Sciences, Warwick University, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. Tel: +44 2476 524975, Fax: +44 2476 524619. Email: [cshppard@bio.warwick.ac.uk](mailto:cshppard@bio.warwick.ac.uk)

### **Gibraltar: Gibraltar Biodiversity Project**

The project aims to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the Territory. It will achieve this by consolidating current knowledge of well known groups, expanding this knowledge as much as possible, analysing current and new information with a view to identifying hotspots, categorising threats, and preparing such an action plan for conservation action and environmentally sustainable development in the Territory, while promoting understanding and appreciation of biodiversity among the Community and young people in particular.

Dr John Cortes, General Secretary, The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, Jews' Gate, Upper Rock Nature Reserve, PO Box 843, Gibraltar. Tel + 350 72639, Fax + 350 74022 Email: [jcortes@gonhs.org](mailto:jcortes@gonhs.org)

### **South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands: Environmental Management Plan**

The Project proposes to undertake a comprehensive 5 year review of the South Georgia Environmental Management Plan as required by the 2000 edition. It aims to involve assessment of progress since 2000 and focus on works yet to be completed. The process will include broader consultation with stakeholders and pay particular attention to implementation of the Environment Charter. The resultant Plan will identify key policy decisions and redefine priorities for Government of South Georgia in management of the Territory.

Gordon Liddle, Government House, Stanley, Falkland Islands, Tel: +500 27433 Fax: +500 27434, Email: [Gordon.Liddle@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Gordon.Liddle@fco.gov.uk) or [gov.house@horizon.co.fk](mailto:gov.house@horizon.co.fk)

## **St Helena: The establishment of a monitoring scheme and awareness programme for seabirds and turtles at St Helena**

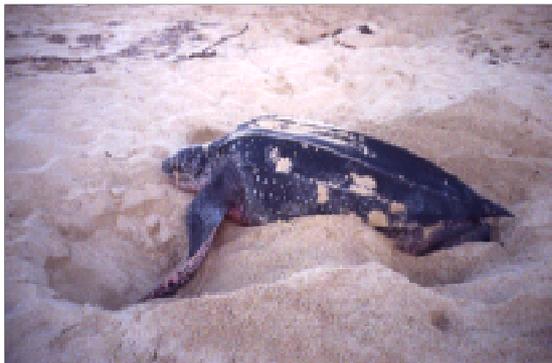
*The project will gather baseline data on the seabirds and turtles of St Helena, which at present is not available. Another major component is aimed at raising public awareness on these species with offshoots that should stimulate interest in the marine environment as a whole.*

*A preliminary survey will be conducted to determine the extent of the seabird colonies, leading to local personnel conducting monthly surveys on the seabirds to determine breeding season and population status, along with the establishment of a sightings scheme for turtles. Data collected will contribute to both local and global knowledge along with fulfilment of Multilateral Environmental Agreements extended to St Helena.*

*Emma Bennett, Marine Scientific Officer (MSO), Fisheries Section, ANRD, Scotland  
St Helena Island, South Atlantic Ocean, STHL 1ZZ Tel: +290 4724 Fax: +290 4900  
Email: fishdir@anrd.gov.sh*

## **Multi territory: Marine turtles, the UKOT Environment Charters and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements**

*The project will progress the conservation, research and management of endangered marine turtle populations and their habitats, while using conservation issues relevant to marine turtles to promote and highlight the importance of the Environment Charters and Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the UKOTs. Earlier HMG-funded projects related to marine turtle conservation in the Territories have focused on*



*Leatherback Turtle Dermochelys coriacea  
disguising nesting site*

*establishing the status of resident/nesting marine turtle populations and, where appropriate, have assessed the status of marine turtle exploitation and conservation in the Territories. These projects have identified a clear need for increased marine turtle conservation and management capacity within project partner institutions, and in all cases a need to integrate marine turtle management into Territory obligations under the Environment Charters and Multilateral Environmental Agreements. This project will continue and build upon ongoing HMG-funded collaborative fieldwork in Anguilla, Ascension, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands to increase local capacity for monitoring of*

*key species with a view to facilitating effective marine turtle conservation and management and will where possible harmonise efforts in the British Indian Ocean Territory. An extensive educational component in print, online and through teacher interaction will interface with existing education programmes carried out by Territory project partners, as well as Foreign and Commonwealth Office efforts through the "Breath of Fresh Air", which recognised the important role marine turtles play in the biodiversity, culture and economies of many of the UKOTs.*

*Dr Brendan J. Godley and Dr Annette C. Broderick, Marine Turtle Research Group,  
Department of Biological Sciences, University of Exeter, Prince of Wales Road,  
Exeter, EX4 4PS, UK . Tel: + 44 1872 865 389 Fax: +441392 263700 E-mail: bgodley@seaturtle.org*

## **Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and Turks & Caicos Islands: Preparing for and adapting to climate change in the Caribbean**

*The project will raise the profile of climate change issues in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories through knowledge building, training and network-building. The project will guide Caribbean UKOT national planners through a learning process to increase their understanding of the science of climate change, the potential impacts of climate change on their states, and how they can learn from past adaptation to other environmental hazards. A manual on 'preparing for and adapting to climate change in small island states' will be produced. The science of climate change, adaptation strategies and lessons learned from on-going Tyndall Centre and CPACC research will be shared with government planners throughout the project, culminating in a final end-of-project 2-day training workshop in the Cayman Islands.*

*Dr Emma L. Tompkins, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK.*

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## **All Territories: International conference to develop capacity and exchange experience in biodiversity action planning and related areas in UKOTs and other small countries 2006**

*The conference will bring together government, Non Governmental Organisations and other organisations in UK Overseas Territories, and others who are stakeholders in conserving the environment in these and some similar small countries. The conference is intended as a working meeting to develop capacity, exchange information on best practices, take forward conservation issues that have already been identified and to plan positive actions, as well as integrating conservation into other sectors of the economies, especially in the context of sustainable development and international commitments.*

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## Was our Annual Report too interesting?!

Despite our best efforts, it is often difficult to make Annual Reports exciting reading. It was therefore rather surprising – and at first gratifying – to hear that our latest one had been passed around for keen reading by colleagues in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development. I was less happy when I discovered that they were upset. We have a close working relationship with FCO and DFID colleagues, and I am pleased that they felt this was close enough to tell us.

It seems that our governmental friends had read some meanings into our words which were never intended. This related to parts of the second paragraph on the front page in which we discussed the difficulties of maintaining Forum activities without any core support from HMG, and also raised the problems created for the Forum and UKOT NGOs by the frequently changing funding schemes for environmental work in the UKOTs. I want to make clear that no criticism was intended – nor was it made – of the committed officers in FCO and DFID with whom we work directly. The fact that such close working colleagues could misunderstand our intention made it clear to both me and our government friends that we need to explain our points more fully. So here goes. I stress that this is not the first of a series of amplifications to annual reports!

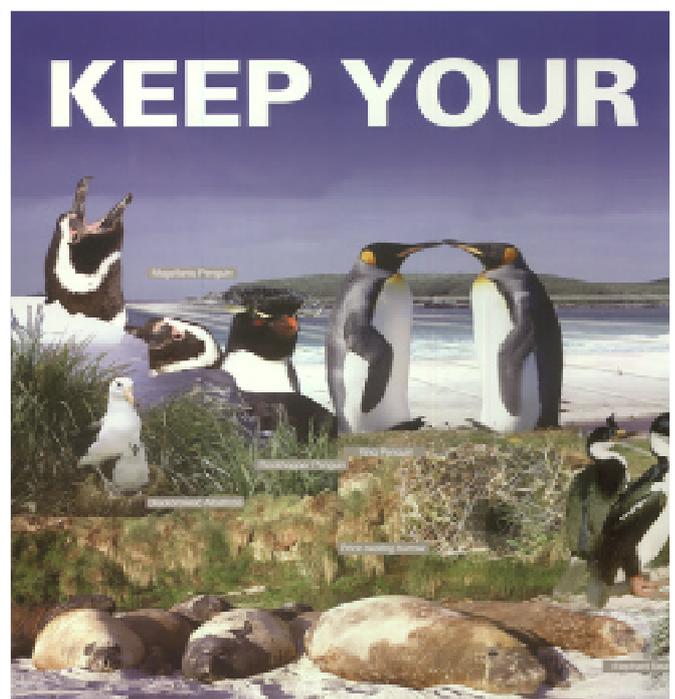
A first point to note is that an ever-present problem of annual reports is that their formal requirements mean that they are read at least six to eighteen months after the events reviewed. We actually tried to underline this point this year by using a photograph from work in the current year, rather than the reported one, and captioning it to that effect. It was particularly unfortunate that this information was lost from the caption after the last proofs had been checked!

A second problem is that the turnover of staff in all organisations, but especially government departments, means that some important points are lost from institutional memory. So, here is an attempt to put that right on a few key features.

We need to provide a little history – and indeed, throughout, it is important to distinguish between how we got to where we are and the situation inherited and improved by current incumbents. In 2002, just after making a formal commitment in the Environment Charters signed with most of the UKOTs to meet the UK's responsibilities using the Environment Fund for Overseas Territories, FCO decided to abolish the Fund. This was obviously not a decision by those FCO officers with whom we work most closely, but was taken at elevated levels possibly far removed from an understanding of the consequences. As a result, a great deal of time of Forum personnel was redirected over the next couple of years into pointing out these consequences and the need to re-instate the fund. At the same time, efforts – which had already run for several years – were continued to encourage DFID to start their equivalent fund, announced in 1999 but not by then implemented. A great deal of effort was spent also in

helping operate first an interim fund and then the new OTEP fund. This was a successful effort, and we pay credit too (see below) to the role of FCO and DFID officers in persuading their colleagues and developing a new joint fund. However, all this has a cost, and some elements of it constitute running to stand still. We have to remember that the funding announced by UK Government in 1999 came into play in full for the first time only in 2004. In the interim, FCO had first made a commendably rapid start with their fund but then discontinued it, before being persuaded to re-start it. Work that the Forum had to put into this represents the same amount of work not deployed to direct conservation, with the consequent risks of loss of reputation with funding and other bodies. Because of what appears to outsiders as an obsession for rapid turnover of staff, without consideration of the circumstances, this sort of problem tends to recur, but it is expensive in terms of public resources and in the voluntary resources of the Forum. Indeed, in the five years from 1999 to 2004, the FCO funding support to UKOT environmental work was changed substantially three times. It is doubtful that there really needed to be four totally different systems, all directed essentially to the same purpose, in such a short time. When added to staff-turnover in FCO at 1-, 2- or 3-years, the proportion of training/familiarisation to effective work becomes questionable. There is also another hidden cost in that, when the Forum needs to give prolonged and detailed guidance to the Government on effective systems, it feels somewhat inhibited from applying itself for funding from the sources that it is advising on, even though there may not be any formal request that it refrain from doing so.

We need to understand the lessons to be learnt from history in order to make things work better in the future. As will be fully evident from many recent reports in *Forum News* and the Forum's Annual Reports, as well as elsewhere, current



FCO and DFID officers have worked hard to reverse the previous losses and improve the situation further, culminating in the establishment of the joint FCO/DFID OTEP. This is already building strongly on the previous successes of FCO's Environment Fund for Overseas Territories. These complement the major efforts of the NGOs. Indeed, the working together by all partners is one of the great success stories of recent years. We may have challenges over mechanisms, but this has never damaged the spirit of co-operation.

A second point that Forum Directors had to make as part of their legal responsibilities was the state of funding of the core Forum activities. From the start of the Forum (and long before I was involved in it), there had been an expectation both on the part of government officials and NGOs that the government would make a contribution to its core costs. This was partly in recognition that many of its activities effectively contribute to the role that government and NGOs share. Indeed, at first hearing descriptions of the Forum's activities, many individuals (from government or elsewhere) assume that it is a government-funded body. Although, over the years, various UK government officials have considered the possibility of contributing towards the Forum's core costs, they have never found a mechanism to do so. This is particularly unfortunate in that other sources of funding are scarce. The low awareness in UK of UKOTs means that most UK funding sources, whether government department, special funds such as the national lottery, charities or industry, do not include support for UKOTs. As a result of this, the Forum has to depend largely on volunteer effort. Over the past few years, the time on core work that it could actually pay for has declined from one full-time person equivalent to about one-fifth of a full-time person equivalent. It is rather

surprising that the Forum can function at all, and the Directors have a duty to flag this.

In part, this problem is due to the fact that the lead UK spending Department on environmental matters and international commitments, Defra, has no budget for conservation work in the UKOTs - which are where most of UK's globally important biodiversity lives.

In its publications and other statements, the Forum has repeatedly congratulated FCO and DFID on the major breakthrough of establishing a joint fund, in OTEP, and has also commended the operators and funders of particular projects. The Forum has also welcomed its joint working on particular projects with Defra, FCO and DFID. We are all fortunate in the dedicated and committed officials currently and recently in the relevant posts in those Departments. We cannot escape from the fact, however, that the whole area is grossly under-funded. Indeed, we are legally required to note this and some underlying reasons. Almost as alarming as the under-funding is the lack of continued commitment to the small funds that are available. Such uncertainty is not conducive to the cost-effectiveness that those of us who are UK tax-payers expect of government departments deploying our money.

In other words, we need the senior decision makers in UK Government Departments to be more aware of their responsibilities and commitments – and the assets that they have both in their own staffs and in NGO partners – when making their strategic funding decisions.

*Mike Pienkowski, Chairman*

**A poster produced by Falklands Conservation to help promote awareness of distances to be kept from wildlife to minimise disturbance and stress to the animals.**



# Review of existing and potential Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies

Following the update on this project in *Forum News 25*, the final report on this important project has now been submitted to, and accepted by, UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). As this issue of *Forum News* goes to press, work is in hand on the various detailed annexes to the report, including continuing work with colleagues in the territories on maps and descriptions of the various sites. It is expected that the main text of the report will be available on the Forum's web-site early in 2005. This article is based on the summary of the report.

UKOTCF and the editor of the report are grateful to the many colleagues working currently or previously on UK Overseas Territories or Crown Dependencies for their help in many ways, as well as to personnel at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Defra and the members of the UK Ramsar Review Steering Group.

The work depended heavily on the participation of the various stakeholders in each territory, including specialists, NGOs and government departments. We are pleased that UKOT and CD governments were involved, in many cases as the lead partner, in the detailed review for almost all territories. The four exceptions related to UKOTs without in-house environmental expertise.

There are 21 entities amongst the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, with separate governments. These Governments are responsible for domestic matters (with some exceptions in some cases), while the UK Government is responsible for foreign relations. Because UK enters some international conventions on nature conservation, there are shared responsibilities for some aspects. All but one (British Antarctic Territory) of these 21 entities are included in UK's ratification of the "Ramsar" Convention on Wetlands.

In order to fulfil its commitments under the "Ramsar" Convention, UK arranged to review its suite of existing and potential Wetlands of International Importance, in the context of the priority ecosystems identified by the Conferences of the Parties. This review is particularly relevant for UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), because:

- In global biodiversity terms, these are the most important parts of UK sovereign territory;
- In the last few years (partly as a result of UKOTCF encouragement and advice) those UK territories not previously included in UK's ratification have joined (except British Antarctic Territory, for which the Antarctic Treaty covers many relevant aspects);

- More of the priority ecosystem types (e.g. mangrove, coral, sea-grass beds, peatlands, caves etc) are relevant to UKOTs rather than metropolitan UK;
- For historical reasons there is under-coverage of Ramsar sites in the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies;
- Because of very poor coverage in studies in the past and recent progress in some aspects, the existing list of proposed sites (depending mainly on information about 20 years old) is out of date.

The review includes the Crown Dependencies. Although their constitutions and situations are somewhat different from those of the UKOTs, there are some similarities in respect of their relationships to UK.

The review in Great Britain and Northern Ireland was conducted by a separate, but related, process.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum was contracted by Defra to undertake the review in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, using its experience of the diverse situations in UKOTs so that the sensitivities of local workers, governments and other organisations are respected and their knowledge made available and integrated. UKOTCF is a charitable company, bringing together as member organisations conservation and science bodies in UK and the UK Territories, as well as a wide network of voluntary collaborators and governmental bodies. On a voluntary basis, the Forum has led for several years on promoting Ramsar issues in the Territories.



*Amongst the tree-ferns during a brief lift of the cloud in the cloud-forest of St Helena's Peaks: one of the more unusual wetlands amongst those recommended for Ramsar status in the Review.*

Approaches used included the following elements.

1. Utilise the Forum's network of contacts to collate information in a cost-effective way, and to reinforce consultation procedures with governmental and non-governmental bodies in the Territories.
2. Establish the presence of priority and other important wetland habitats and species in each territory.

3. Establish the degree to which this interest is covered by already designated sites.
4. Collate information on other potential sites and consider which of these should be added to the list of proposed sites.
5. Identify which existing Ramsar Information Sheets need updating, collate available information and update RISs.
6. Assemble initial draft information in RIS format where available for proposed sites.
7. Where practicable, identify the management status of designated sites, to identify any additional major needs.
8. Note any major gaps in information relevant to this exercise, so as to assemble an approach to encourage and direct future work.
9. Use existing and additional contacts with UKOT and CD governments, including where appropriate facilitation of the Environment Charter process, to encourage programmes of designation in the UKOTs and CDs.

The main text of the report gives the background and the approach used. It then considers each territory in turn, before coming to some general issues. The coverage by designated and proposed Ramsar sites is reviewed. This part includes also the additional information needed to review the factors reported previously as adverse factors in relation to designated sites. This information is needed in relation to UK's report to the Ramsar Conference of the Parties (CoP) in 2005. The Annexes (which are being finalised) will update Ramsar Information Sheets and provide maps for existing sites, and provide drafts for potential sites identified (as complete as possible in relation to the differences in actual status of potential sites).

Prior to the project, 15 Ramsar sites had been designated in the UK Overseas Territories. The previously existing list of proposed Wetlands of International Importance in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies included about 20 areas. This was known to give very inadequate coverage to the wetland types and globally important wildlife populations dependant on the UKOTs and CDs. As a result of this review, the number of potential Ramsar sites has risen to 76 (in addition to the 15 already designated). Also, there are proposals to extend certain sites, and a few cases in which the need for additional sites has been recognised but present survey information does not allow definition even in a preliminary way. The report demonstrates also a move to a pattern reflecting better the wetland nature of the various areas and their global biodiversity importance.

**Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF** ([pienkowski@cix.co.uk](mailto:pienkowski@cix.co.uk))

## Buy Back Bermuda

The Bermuda National Trust and Bermuda Audubon Society have launched a joint initiative to buy properties that are ecologically and environmentally significant. The passage of time and development pressures have seen Bermuda's legacy of open space come under threat. Bermuda is just 22.5 square miles and open space is disappearing at a staggering rate. The two organisations are working together to preserve some of this small north Atlantic archipelago for future generations.

The campaign, *Buy Back Bermuda*, has chosen a property of 2.86 acres that includes beachfront, a freshwater pond and pasture at Somerset Long Bay. If the Trust and the Audubon Society are able to raise the required \$1.7 million, this property will become the third and final piece of an existing nature reserve.



*Long Bay, Sandys, Bermuda*

The site will need to be restored and enhanced in accordance with the Bermuda Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. This project will achieve the objectives laid out in the Plan by improving biodiversity education and public awareness, increasing community participation in ecologically responsible behaviours and increasing the area of fully protected nature reserves. To achieve this, the management plan includes upgrading existing perimeter fencing, enlargement of the pond to create shallow water areas and mudflats for specific micro-ecosystems, reduction and management of the pasture area to prevent over-grazing and enhancement of habitat diversity. The site will benefit from being replanted with native woodland and made accessible to the public via an interpretive nature trail.

The Trust and Audubon are delighted to be able to prevent this significant property from being developed into private housing and are asking the public and private sectors to help raise the required funds to preserve this area of Bermuda; one of the few remaining unspoiled open spaces.

If you would like to contribute to the Buy Back Bermuda campaign, please contact the **Bermuda National Trust**, [palmetto@bnt.bm](mailto:palmetto@bnt.bm)

## Status of Cayman Islands Bats after Hurricane Ivan

Hurricane Ivan hammered Grand Cayman for 34 hours on September 11 and 12, 2004. Surprisingly, all but one of the 27 bat houses mounted on utility poles stood through the storm and *Molossus molossus* (Velvety Free-tailed Bats or Pallas's Mastiff Bats) survived inside them. These bats were able to emerge on the 13th and found plenty of mosquitoes and other insects over the following days and weeks. Though most of the bat houses are now slightly tilted, and some will need to be repainted after the blast of wind borne sand, the roofs held and the structures seem undamaged. Lois Blumenthal, Bat Conservation Director for the National Trust in the Cayman Islands, is very pleased that all the hard work of volunteers and of Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd (CUC) resulted in thousands of bats being saved in the bat houses during this immense storm. Bats still living in attic spaces would have been lost, as many buildings in Grand Cayman had their roofs destroyed.



Ms. Blumenthal is not optimistic, however, about the fate of the fruit, nectar and pollen-eating bats of the island. "Most of these

Close up of a bat house bats roost in foliage, and the trees on the south coast were stripped completely bare. Even if the bats managed to survive the storm itself, they may have starved to death afterward. I'm also concerned about the cave-dwelling bats in low-lying areas like the Lower Valley Forest. There was extensive flooding, so even the insect-eating *Macrotus waterhousii* (Big-eared Bat) may have suffered population losses."



Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd erecting a bat box

Dr Theodore Fleming, a renowned fruit-bat expert from the University of Miami in Florida, has been studying Cayman's four species of fruit and nectar bats, as well as insectivores *Macrotus waterhousii* and the Grand Cayman endemic *Eptesicus fuscus* (Big Brown Bat). He and his team will be coming to Grand Cayman in March of 2005, exactly one year from his last visit. Dr Fleming will be mist-netting in the same areas he worked last year to compare population densities. It is also hoped that Bat Conservation International's Anne Louise Band will be able to return soon. Ms Band has extensive documentation of all Cayman Islands bat populations and has been visiting the Cayman Islands for many years.

There is no reason to be optimistic about what this data will show, laments Ms Blumenthal. The Cayman Islands Bird Club estimates

that we may have lost 70% to 90% of our birds, many due to starvation after the storm. Though the northern side of the island was not as badly damaged, some of our fruit bats, notably the very rare Caribbean endemic *Phyllops falcatus*, (White-shouldered or Fig-eating Bat) do not commonly travel outside their normal feeding range. Though a few *Phyllops falcatus* have been recorded on the northern side of Grand Cayman, it was thought that the largest population was in Lower Valley on the south coast.

New data and information about Cayman Islands bats and their recovery will be posted on the Cayman Islands National Trust website – [www.nationaltrust.org.ky](http://www.nationaltrust.org.ky) as well as [www.caymanwildlife.org](http://www.caymanwildlife.org) Ms Blumenthal may be reached at [blu@candw.ky](mailto:blu@candw.ky) or through [info@nationaltrust.org.ky](mailto:info@nationaltrust.org.ky) Information will also be posted on [Caribbean-bats@yahoo.com](mailto:Caribbean-bats@yahoo.com) for members.

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