

FORUM NEWS 30

FEBRUARY 2007

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Middle Caicos Conservation Centre opens

The Turks and Caicos National Trust's (TCNT) opening of its Middle Caicos Conservation Centre on 11 November 2006 was attended by HE Governor Richard Tauwhare, Hon Minister Jeffrey Hall (Member for Middle Caicos), District Commissioner Julia Harvey, representatives of the Departments of Environment and Coastal Resources and of the Tourist Board, several foreign guests and a large proportion of the residents of Middle Caicos.



Middle Caicos community members, who have contributed their knowledge of TCI's environment to the programme, gather to cut the ribbon, with Hon Jeffrey Hall (right) and TCNT Executive Director Ethlyn Gibbs-Williams (foreground).

TCNT's mission is to safeguard the natural, cultural and historical heritage of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The Trust has been working with its international partners, the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), for many years to meet the request from the local communities on Middle Caicos to help them look after their internationally important wild animals and plants, while at the same time provide opportunities for small businesses based on this heritage.

The people of Middle Caicos want to maintain their communities and culture. The modern world is driven by built development. Without conservation of the unique wildlife and special areas, both the quality of life of residents and the attraction of these "Beautiful by Nature" islands to visitors will be lost – with consequent damage to the economy also.

Since 1999, a series of meetings, bringing together the local community, TCNT and visiting volunteer international scientists assembled by UKOTCF, agreed and implemented a long-term plan. This involved international fund-raising (especially from UK's Darwin Initiative and Overseas Territories Environment Programme), securing

local contributions (from Government, the Conservation Fund, businesses and individuals), conducting scientific research to identify the features of natural and historic interest and to work out ways of both protecting these, and developing ways of making them available to visitors. The *Plan for Biodiversity Management and Sustainable Development around Turks & Caicos Ramsar Site*, after much discussion with the local community, TCI government departments and other stakeholders, was finalised in October 2002.

Structural repair and refurbishment of the old school building at Bambarra as a visitor and conservation centre and scientific research base was a key part of the implementation of this. Soon to be open to the public, already the Centre's walls are covered with an integrated series of displays on the geography, geology, wildlife, history and culture of the area, as well as live exhibits and an amazingly realistic model of the cave ecosystem. Soon to be added are a mangrove aquarium complete with a tidal cycle, models of plantations, exhibits of artefacts and craft demonstrations, as well as opportunities to



Children from the Middle Caicos Primary School are enthralled by the live animals and the DVD, while HE the Governor and colleagues study the displays and field-road cards.

purchase colourful interpretive guide-cards for the many interpreted walks. These walks along trails, or "field-roads" to use their local name, vary in length and location, some being self-guided while others need local guides, trained by TCNT. They include Haulover Field-road, a short trail through interesting vegetation to a plantation ruin, Crossing Place Trail, a wonderful coastal walk, and Conch Bar Caves.



Continued on back page....

Bioverseas

Forum News 29 reported the formation of the new alliance of nine major umbrella nature conservation organisations in the European Union and those of its Member States with overseas territories. The purpose is to aid efforts at the EU level to help improve the situation for conservation of the uniquely important biodiversity in the ORs [Outermost Regions – ie overseas territories that are integral parts of Member States, and therefore within the EU] and OCTs [Overseas Countries and Territories – overseas territories associated with EU Member States]. UKOTCF is one of the partners. OCTs include almost all UKOTs (except Gibraltar [in the EU], Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas [in Europe geographically], and Bermuda [by its own choice]).

In December, the partners agreed a name for the alliance. The headline title is “Bioverseas”, with the explanatory sub-title “Initiative for biodiversity and environment in EU ORs [Outermost Regions] and OCTs [Overseas Countries and Territories]”. We must commend the creative thinking of the representative from WWF-France for coming up with the main title, and the willingness of all our French (and Netherlands) colleagues to be content with a main title based on English!

The Bioverseas partners have been active over recent months. The following notes are based on a progress report by the Secretariat, Erik van Zadelhoff and Jean-Philippe Palasi.



Erik van Zadelhoff, Jean-Philippe Palasi, Philippe Feldman and Kalli de Meyer take part at the conference in Jersey.

OCTs-EU Forum (Nuuk, 4-8 September 2006)

As foreseen in *FN 29*, Mike Pienkowski and Jean-Philippe Palasi participated in the regular meeting between the authorities of the OCTs and the European Commission. There were three main outcomes of the meeting relevant to this subject:

- Improved relations with decisions makers: It seems that the presentation and also direct contacts helped create a feeling of trust and common interest. On the closing day, most of the final speeches mentioned the positive input from the conservation team, and speakers expressed their willingness to carry on working with us. The importance of the Paris conference (see below) was also underlined by important speakers.

- Environment higher on OCTs / EC agenda: The final political declaration written by the OCTs gives unprecedented importance to environmental issues, mainly biodiversity and climate change.

- Involvement of OCTA for the Paris conference: The Nuuk Forum was also a very good and timely opportunity to prepare the Paris conference directly with the OCTs, linking with the environmental initiatives within OCTA [Overseas Countries & Territories Association, a grouping of the governments of the territories]. The OCTs gave a

mandate to French Polynesia and Greenland to talk in the name of the entire OCTA in the plenary session in the Paris conference.

Conference on Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation (Paris, 19-21 September 2006)

This conference on Biodiversity in Paris was well attended (some 500 participants) and resulted in the Message from Paris being sent to the European Council by the Finnish EU presidency. The text of the relevant one of the four main challenges goes as follows:

Challenge 4: Recognition of Biodiversity in Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs)

The EU should develop a coherent framework for environment in OCTs to promote sustainable management of their important biodiversity areas, and also encourage joint efforts with Outermost Regions including adequate funding mechanisms.

The Message from Paris annexes four bullet points on key issues for OCTs within this challenge that were agreed during the well-attended OCT workshop:

While building on the spirit of the 2006 OCT-EU Forum in Nuuk, (Greenland) and recognizing the global importance of their biodiversity as well as taking into consideration the special responsibility of the EU for its OCTs, and Outermost Regions (ORs):

Participants encourage the European Commission and Member States to:

- *Develop a coherent framework for environment in OCTs, aiming, among others, towards a sustainable management of important biodiversity areas, and allowing joint efforts with Outermost Regions as they are the entities with the most similar stakes within the European Union;*
- *Ensure that adequate funding is given to environmental and biodiversity issues in the OCTs, including an out-sourced small grants facility and improved access to European programmes for local bodies and NGOs in coordination with the local authorities;*
- *Develop joint research programmes focusing on the biodiversity of OCTs and ORs, and also strengthening joint efforts with regional partner countries;*
- *Strengthen both the OCT and the EU positions in the international debate on climate change, by making use of the worldwide and diverse network of OCTs and ORs to evaluate the interactions between ecosystems, climate change and local communities.*

Having OCTs recognised as one of the 4 main challenges for the mainstreaming of biodiversity in European Development Cooperation is a magnificent step forward that could be made thanks to the input from our partnership and from the numerous participants from the OCTs in the conference. The presentations of the Ministers from Greenland and Polynesia in the plenary closing session were especially impressive and really made the case for the OCTs. It is the first time we see such consensus on an ambitious vision, from not only NGOs but also authorities from OCTs, member states and the EC.

The full Message from Paris can be found at <http://www.countdown2010.net/paris2006/MessageEN.pdf>

Partnership Working Party/Consultant Environmental Profiles

Following discussions via the Bioverseas team and at the Jersey Conference, the European Commission asked their consultants preparing profiles of the OCT environmental aspects to inform future Commission actions to invite comments via the Bioverseas initiative. The draft profiles were circulated to UKOTCF member organisations for the territories concerned, and comments received from them have been forwarded to the Commission.

Further European Commission contacts

In December, a Bioverseas team met in Brussels with senior personnel in the European Commission Directorate-General for Environment and with officers from Directorate General for (Overseas) Development to start following up some issues.

South Atlantic Invasive Species Project starts operation

At the Bermuda UKOTCF conference in 2003, the Foreign Office let Forum members know that there was potential to access funding for regional projects through DG-Development of the European Commission. Subsequently, at the Forum's South Atlantic Working Group meeting, it was decided that a priority topic for work in the region was invasive species. Three years later, after a lot of hard work and many delays, the ink is just drying on a three-year contract, and the South Atlantic Invasive Species Project has finally started operation.

The project involves all five Territories in the South Atlantic: St Helena, Ascension, Tristan da Cunha, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, with two non-governmental partners: Falklands Conservation and the St Helena National Trust. St Helena is the lead government for the project, which is being implemented by RSPB. The overall objective of the project is to conserve native biological diversity and therefore enhance economic prosperity and quality of life for people living on the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories.

A project manager, Clare Miller, was appointed in October, and will be based at the RSPB office in Sandy, Bedfordshire, UK. Further recruitment is now underway for two project officers: one to be based in the Falklands, and the other destined for St Helena.

In November, an initial visit to the Falklands and Ascension, and meetings with representatives from the Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands illustrated the wide range of invasive species issues that the Territories face. In the marine environment, baseline information is lacking so that in some cases it is difficult even to assess whether certain species are exotic or native. Invasive introduced plants dominate some landscapes in the Territories, and are causing problems for endemic plants on Ascension and for agriculture on some farms in the Falklands. Introduced mammals



Mexican thorn, one of the highly invasive plants found on Ascension

are having a continuing impact, and the visit included discussions related to rabbits, rats, mice, cats, sheep, reindeer and goats.

Although the approach of the project is regional, it is clear that each of the South Atlantic Territories is unique, and the project may need to operate differently in each. To ensure that the project focuses on the right issues and works in the most appropriate way, a Project Steering Group will be formed for each Territory. This group will be made up of local stakeholders representing governmental and non-governmental interests, and may also include individuals who have had long-term involvement in a particular Territory but do not currently live there.

The project team are now collecting baseline information on the non-native species present in the Territories, along with the systems in place to deal with invasive species and the capacity available to carry out such work. This information will be used to inform workshops involving the members of the Territory Project Steering Groups to develop action plans for each Territory and select the key issues to be addressed during the duration of the project and in the longer term.

Anyone with an interest in receiving more information on the project, or who would like to be involved in the Project Steering Group for one of the Territories is encouraged to contact Clare Miller.

Clare Miller, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1767680551; Fax: +44 1767683211; Email: clare.miller@rspb.org.uk

Seabirds Succeed on Ascension Island - A recipe for success

The Ascension Seabird Restoration Project, implemented by the Ascension Island Government, and assisted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) with £500,000 funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has since 2001 removed feral cats from Ascension Island. Since February 2004, no feral cats have been seen on the island, encouraging the prompt return of the seabirds. Since this date, the island has run an intensive monitoring programme which has confirmed that the island is feral-cat-free.

The Ascension Seabird Restoration Project is a landmark in conservation history because it is the *first* time that feral cats have been removed from an island where people were allowed to retain their pet cats.

When Ascension was first inhabited in 1815, it was thought to host 20 million individual seabirds, including the Ascension frigatebird, a globally threatened species found nowhere else in the world. Human settlement, and especially the invasive species they brought, destroyed most of the seabirds, although fortunately most of the invasives did not reach the stack of Boatswainbird Island. The Forum had long campaigned for restoration, resulting eventually in the FCO funding and the RSPB/AIG-led project. The Administrator of Ascension Island Government 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". Tara Pelembe who runs the Ascension Island Government Conservation Department added, "It would not have been such a success without a team of dedicated staff, and the support of the people of the island".

Sarah Sanders, the RSPB's International Officer for the UK Overseas Territories, commented, "The UK Overseas Territories are astoundingly rich in wildlife and Ascension is no exception. RSPB has made a firm commitment to protect wildlife in the UK Overseas Territories and the success of the Ascension Seabird Restoration Project is evidence that well designed and funded projects can provide new hope for threatened species. At the same time it has shown that the Ascension Island Government is highly capable of managing large projects."

So far, the Ascension Seabird Restoration Project has encouraged 726 pairs of five species of seabird, including brown noddies, masked boobies and red-billed tropicbirds, to return and nest on mainland Ascension Island. A celebration was held on Ascension on Sunday 26 November 2006 to declare the island feral-cat-free.

Sarah Sanders, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1767680551; Fax: +44 1767683211; Email: sarah.sanders@rspb.org.uk

Cayman Islands Bat Conservation Programme

The multi-faceted Bat Conservation Programme of the National Trust of the Cayman Islands is the most successful in the Caribbean region. Since the programme started in 1991, over forty bat houses have been mounted. The programme has worked in partnership with Bat Conservation International (www.batcon.org) to educate the public regarding the importance of bats in the ecosystems and to assist with safe, humane and environmentally sound roof-bat removals. Bats are the only native mammals in the Cayman Islands. They are essential to the natural environment as pollinators, to control insects and to disperse seeds in the forests. Bats are vulnerable to extinction because they bear only one young per year and live in large colonies that can easily be wiped out in one misguided action.

Bat House Project: The species found in roofs and bat houses in the Cayman Islands is the velvety free-tailed bat *Molossus molossus*. They consume millions of insects every night. Bat houses provide vital alternative habitat and help prevent bats from moving into roof spaces. The Cayman Islands Bat House Project gained international attention when the bat houses survived hurricane Ivan with bats safely inside. This was due mainly to our invaluable partnership with Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd (CUC) and the unique bat house design contributed by local carpenter, Ron Moser.



Fly-Outs: The Bat Conservation Programme initiated the very popular interpreted "bat fly-outs" for visitors and residents. Lois Blumenthal points out the bat house, while guests sit back in lawn chairs at sunset, enjoying sangria and tropical mixed nuts (from bat dependent plants) while watching hundreds of bats exit a bat house

While the current bat house design has been very successful there is still a problem with the eventual deterioration of wood and with the interior rough surfaces becoming slick from use. We are currently designing a new prototype and have partnered with the Marriott Hotel Engineering Team to produce several dozen upgraded bat houses next year.

Education: To share better the advancements made during the past 15 years, *The Cayman Islands Bat Conservation Success Story* PowerPoint is distributed via www.caymanwildlife.org. This fully-

captioned and annotated educational tool, which can be adapted to any age from pre-schooler to adult, features beautiful photos and also outlines the details of the programme, including exclusion techniques and our innovative bat house designs. Other education efforts this year included regular press releases and magazine features and a Cayman Island Television Network two-part series highlighting different bat exclusion techniques and explaining how bat houses work. We also seek to educate developers, government and the general public as to the value and importance of protecting caves and the last remaining tracts of undisturbed native forest. Caves and forests provide crucial habitat for most bat species. Not all species of bats can use bat houses. School presentations from pre-schools to college-levels have been popular with students and teachers alike. The *Bats Study Guide* is ready for re-issue and copies will be provided to every teacher as soon as a sponsor is found. We maintain a Caribbean Bats Listserve www.caribbean-bats@yahoo.com and our information can be found on two websites: www.nationaltrust.org.ky and www.caymanwildlife.org. A Cayman Islands Bat Stamp Issue featuring all nine species will be published in 2008.

Research: Population Data: The programme has sponsored several visiting scientists who have collected base-line data over the years. In 2006, with the participation of the Darwin Initiative, long-time Cayman Islands bat specialist, Ms Anne Louise Band of Bat Conservation International, surveyed the impact of Hurricane Ivan on our fragile bat populations.

Other than the spectacular success of the bat house species, the results of the population surveys for Cayman's other bats were discouraging. The fruit, nectar and pollen-eating bat populations crashed after hurricane Ivan as did the big-eared bat, which eats larger beetles. This means loss of significant pollination, seed dispersal and insect control in the forests. Most species are making slow recoveries, but bats' low birth rate makes this a matter of centuries, not years.

One very rare Caribbean endemic species, the white-shouldered bat *Phyllops falcatus* may be extirpated from Grand Cayman. There is still some hope that the species may be found in the less-disturbed forests of North Side, but if none are recorded in the next few years, the number of species on Grand Cayman will be reduced to eight. There are currently nine species of bats in the Cayman Islands and all are Caribbean endemic subspecies. The Cayman Islands have three Caribbean endemic species and one Grand Cayman endemic subspecies.

The white-shouldered bat survives on Cayman Brac along with five other known species and there are three recorded species on Little Cayman. It is possible that other species will be found during future field work on Cayman Brac and on Little Cayman, as they have never been as extensively surveyed as Grand Cayman and were far less impacted by hurricane Ivan. Red bats were recorded for the first time on Grand Cayman only in 2001 after many months of mist-netting in the field.

We are not proprietary with our designs and are extending every effort to make what we have learned here available to the wider Caribbean. When the new bat house design is completed and tested we will post it on our website and publicise it on Caribbean list-servers.

Lois Blumenthal, Bat Conservation Programme Director, National Trust for the Cayman Islands, Box 31116 SMB, Grand Cayman. Email: loisblumenthal@gmail.com Tel: +1345 947-2248 or +1345 916-6784

Cayman Bird Sanctuary re-opens



HE the Governor, Stuart Jack, was present at the reopening of The Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary in Cayman, after it had undergone a complete renovation. The vegetation at the site was almost totally destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, which meant, in effect, very little habitat for the birds.

It has taken more than a year to replenish the site by

planting various kinds of vegetation there, and for the plants to become established. The General Manager of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, Frank Roulstone, said "I was concerned that salt water may have changed the entire ecosystem of the pond so our first step was proper analysis of the water." He added, "We then commenced fundraising and what we have ended up with is an improvement on what we had before."

As part of the improvement, a bird identification sign has been added, and the dirt path has been replaced with a boardwalk made from recycled materials. Also, the addition of benches to the site means that visitors can sit down and enjoy the view. Other improvements include a small car park, and the site has also been made wheel-chair accessible.

Since the devastation of Ivan, both the plants and the birds have returned to the site, and recently, when National Trust member Darvin Ebanks cleared debris from the site, he saw a great number of birds, including whistling ducks, herons, migrating kingfishers and ospreys.

"We still have some work to do. We are slowly ridding the site of invasive plants and replacing them with native ones," Mr Roulstone said. "But the birds, guppies and hickatees are here and Governor Gore's is open again." Governor Gore's Bird Sanctuary is located on Pennsylvania Avenue, off Spotts-Newlands Road, Grand Cayman.

For further details contact Frank Roulstone, froulstone@nationaltrust.org.ky

The UK Overseas Territories Important Bird Area Directory – priority sites for conservation

The UK Overseas Territories Important Bird Area Directory was launched at the *Biodiversity That Matters* conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories organised by UKOTCF in Jersey. It highlights the global importance of the UK's Overseas Territories for birds, including many under the threat of extinction. There are more globally threatened bird species on the UK Overseas Territories than in the whole of Europe.

The Important Bird Area programme is a global programme coordinated by BirdLife International. It aims to conserve the minimum number of sites to ensure the survival of all birds in the wild. Sites are selected using internationally agreed and scientifically objective criteria. To date directories have been produced for Europe, Africa and Asia.

The report identifies 78 priority sites for conservation action. Most of them are selected for species which are threatened by extinction,

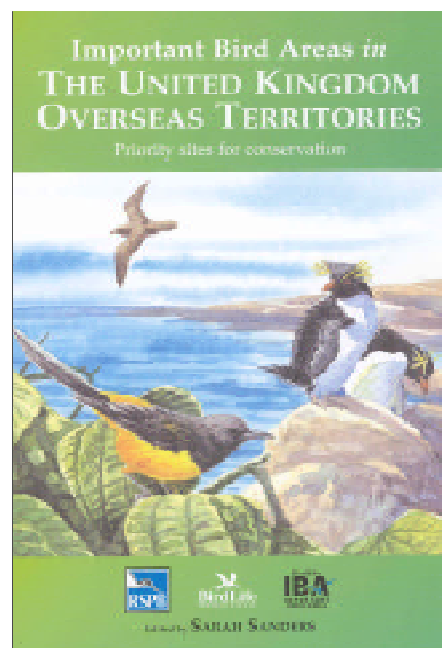
and many are important sites for seabirds. During the IBA identification process it became apparent that the sites selected are often also home to other globally important biodiversity. Worryingly, nearly 60% do not have any formal protection.

The threatened species include seven species of albatross with important nesting populations on the UK Overseas Territories that are affected by the impacts of long-line fishing in the Southern Ocean, particularly in the south Atlantic. With many of the territories being relatively small and remote islands, non-native, invasive plants and animals have had a devastating impact on birds and other wildlife. In particular, introduced rats and mice are having significant effects on both land and seabirds.

The UK Overseas Territories IBA Directory was compiled by scientists, government officials, bird-watchers and conservationists from or strongly associated with each of the territories. It differs from the other Directories in that most of the data collection, site



Some of the many volunteers who have helped compile the Important Bird Areas in the UKOTs, receive their copies at the Jersey conference.



identification and accounts were written by volunteers, so is a tremendous achievement by the territories.

The Directory is only the first step in the IBA process. Now that priority sites have been identified, action needs to be taken at these sites for their conservation. They need to be monitored on a regular basis, given formal protected area designation and to be

considered when making development decisions.

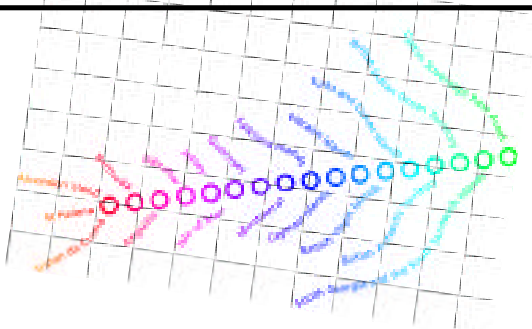
Copies can be obtained from the RSPB. More information: sarah.sanders@rspb.org.uk



The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum continues to provide a Communication Strategy for OTEP. This is the sixth of a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of the Forum, the content of this supplement is as agreed by the Forum with FCO and DFID.

At the Jersey conference, DFID confirmed its commitment to funding a further 3 years of OTEP after March 2007, when its current tranche of funding ends. The fourth round of applications for OTEP projects is under consideration as this issue of *Forum News* appears, and the results should be available before the end of March.

This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes a number of reports from projects funded in earlier rounds. OTEP welcomes jointly funded projects, so that some articles could equally occur in the OTEP supplement or the main section of *Forum News*. In the present issue, some such joint projects (such as the Jersey conference) are included in the OTEP section, while others with part support from OTEP are on other pages (see pages 1, 3, 16).



Biodiversity That Matters: a conference on conservation in UK Overseas Territories and other small island communities

Jersey 7th to 12th October 2006
(with additional workshops
on 6th-7th and 12th October)

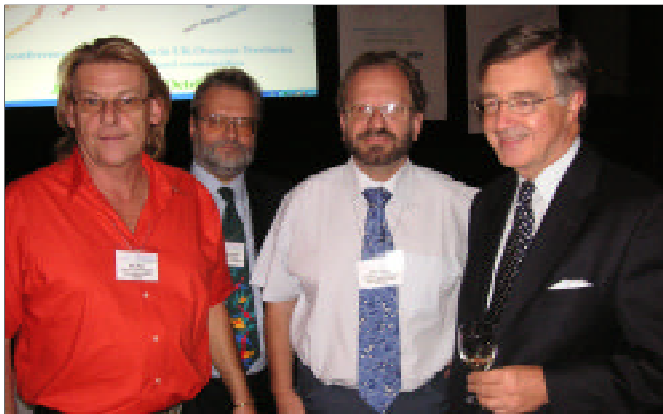
Organised by:

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

The conference overview and initial conclusions have already been placed on the Forum website: www.ukotcf.org and the full proceedings will be produced shortly. *Forum News* has captured a few of these highlights and outcomes of the conference, which are summarized below.

Introduction and Jersey

The Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, opened the meeting with a warm welcome to all. The Minister for Health, Stuart Syvret, spoke about the great complexity of the interaction between the needs of human society and of environmental protection.



Eric Shaw, Mike Pienkowski and John Cortes meet the Bailiff of Jersey, Sir Philip Bailhache, at the opening ceremony of the conference in Jersey.

Mike Freeman, Jersey's Principal Ecologist, talked about conservation in recent times, and the 2005 report, the 'State of Jersey' which had assessed conservation issues from the global right down to the minutely local and even species-level. Work was now in progress on the strategic plan, incorporating five-key environmental priorities: climate change; waste generation; sufficient clean water resources; transport; and countryside and natural history.

Andrew Syvret led participants on a walk on Jersey's sea bed with the underwater landscape exposed at extreme low-tide, which was an amazing and a fantastic introduction to Jersey.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Attendees at the workshop on biodiversity and impact assessment worked through a daunting list of challenges and came up with a set of recommendations (see pages 14-15) to improve capacity and develop the tools needed to produce effective environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments in the UK Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies.

Invasive species

This is an important issue that all the Territories have to deal with, being responsible for a huge amount of biodiversity loss but, because of the size of many of the Territories, a problem that is probably possible to deal with more effectively than on larger land masses.

Karen Varnham was able to update delegates on the JNCC invasives database for the UKOTs and explained how to both use this new tool and, by supplying information on Territory situations, make the tool even more useful.

Clare Miller who had recently been recruited by the RSPB gave details of a new EU-funded project that had evolved both from the last conference and meetings of the South Atlantic Working Group (see page 3 for more details).

One key theme for this session was the question of how to set priorities in dealing with invasives, and several ideas for this emerged to back up the discussion paper:

- An audit of measures that are already in place in each UKOT for invasive species management (the Falkland's biosecurity report has done this to some extent, and the new South Atlantic project will probably cover the other South Atlantic Territories)
- Enhanced information gathering and information sharing
- Better co-ordination of activities, within and between countries
- Rapid response mechanisms.



Delegates walk past the oyster beds that are revealed by the low tide on the Jersey Ramsar site.

Environment Charters

Measuring progress in implementing the Environment Charters is important but not easy. The Forum published its draft measures nearly a year ago. Mike Pienkowski started off by attempting to summarise progress on filling in information on these measures. The measures aim to cover the commitments – or the equivalents by those without charters – by both the UKOTs /CDs and the UK Government. Mike stressed the need for more information from all parties to allow the completion of these measures, to avoid the otherwise inevitable confusion between “no information” and “nothing achieved”. Please send in your information to help complete these tables in the conference papers.

After talks on several aspects from individual territories, it was the turn of the officials from HMG who have been such strong supporters of work in the UKOTs, and whose presence at this meeting was greatly appreciated. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme, established by the FCO and DFID following the encouragement of the Bermuda meeting, has been a tremendous resource also helping to fund the conference.

Phil Mason from DFID praised the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, confirmed that DFID is committed to continued funding for the programme with £1.5 million over the next three years, and explained that some consideration was being given to longer-term projects. Helen Nellthorp of the FCO indicated that OTEP will be focusing for funding in the current round on: Environmental governance; Capacity building; Invasive species; and Climate Change. Eric Blencowe overviewed how the UKOTs fit into Defra's funding programmes. Several UKOTs have benefited from the Darwin Initiative. He noted also Defra's more recent initiative is the World Summit on Sustainable Development Implementation Fund, which is meant to implement the UK's commitment to significantly reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010; and its flagship species fund which focuses on primates, trees and marine turtles. JNCC (UK Government's statutory advisor on nature conservation) indicated that it plans in future to devote more resources to nature conservation in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, in partnership

with UK Government, Overseas Territory administrations and NGOs, to address issues of common interest.

The conference noted that these programmes are wonderful, but more funding is required than they can provide, for some of the larger-scale programmes needed. HMG's officials were clear that greater magnitudes of funding is a decision for Ministers, not officials, but Dick Beales mentioned that DFID was going to commission a study on additional funding sources, as part of HMG's commitment under the Charters to help UKOTs find funding beyond what is provided by HMG.



Bryan Naqqi Manco and Cathy Hopkins enjoying a visit to the National Trust for Jersey Historic Farm, Hamptonne.

Integration of Conservation & Sustainable Livelihoods – parallel sessions

Terrestrial Session

The group worked with the following definition of sustainability: where enhancement of environment, economy and society meet - it recognises the human dimension. A number of case histories were explained which concluded in a number of key points.

- While biodiversity is the critical element, it is not the only element to be considered when it comes to project design in relation to biodiversity.
- Importance of engaging with all stakeholders when undertaking major activities (Government, NGO and the public).
- Creative solutions adapted to local needs should be adopted as a practice.
- Upscaling and mainstreaming – small scale experimental work should serve as a model to apply to larger projects. Mainstreaming is the adoption of biodiversity issues into broader societal issues.
- Invasive species is an issue of concern that is impacting a number of Territories affecting sustainable livelihoods.

Marine Session

John Cooper introduced the session by highlighting the fact that small islands nearly always have a large area of marine responsibility. The problem was how could these be managed and looked after effectively. Although land planning is often in place, there is generally little planning/ zoning of marine environment

Detailed information on where MPAs and Ramsar sites had already been established or proposed was given and the many reasons reserves were established or proposed, including the need to protect coral reefs, were considered. The messages to come out of the review so far were:

- Varying levels of designation across UKOTs
- Higher levels in more prosperous UKOTs (eg Bermuda) or uninhabited ones (e.g, BIOT, BAT) where few vested local interests



- Clear need to tailor protection level to what can be protected “on the ground”: avoid paper parks
- Ramsar a useful tool for inshore areas.

In the final discussion it was stressed that it is necessary to ensure existing and new marine fisheries are managed in a sustainable manner.

Education

This session was the last in a long day, but the discussion was detailed and resulted in four recommendations:

1. The need to develop a mechanism for being able to share resources and exchange ideas and approaches more easily. An education section on the Forum website would provide reciprocal links with territories and other global resources and education sites.

2. Continue to develop environmentally-focused academic programmes at all levels for students and teachers that apply emerging technologies, use local environments within a global context, and foster world-wide networking and professional development.



Shaun Earl and Dick Beales take time to look at posters generated with OTEP funding

3. Raise political awareness and commitment towards solving environmental issues through good governance and accountability and transparency in the decision making process.

4. Through environmental education, raise public awareness, thus empowering communities and stakeholders to influence the decision-making processes.

Resources
On Tuesday afternoon, the

Forum’s Treasurer, Nigel Crocker, chaired a session on resources which opened a lot of eyes about new possibilities for funding and strategies for achieving goals with resources other than money.

The UKOTs face a conundrum in funding – no international funding because of being part of the UK, but no UK funding because they we’re not actually IN the (metropolitan) UK. UKOTCF is actively exploring the possibilities of funds from the European Commission and from the British national lottery funds being made accessible to the UKOTs.

For countries and NGOs with very limited financial resources, John Cortes had excellent advice about using volunteers and various means to use pressure and influence to get people and agencies to do things that in fact benefit everyone.

Posters

There were approximately forty presentations dotted around the walls of the conference rooms. Overall they were impressive and expressed a deep sense of national pride by the authors. From these and the spoken presentations it could be seen that OTEP has a supporting presence throughout the region and the Darwin Initiative continues to do some good work. It is somewhat concerning, however, that these sources for funding are so limited.

Working Groups

Both the Wider Caribbean Working Group and the South Atlantic Working Group had very productive meetings. There was an enthusiastic exploratory

meeting about a possible Europe Territories Working Group, (a group focussing on the Crown Dependencies and UKOTs in Europe, as opposed to one dealing with the Forum’s links to European Union institutions). This group meeting and the actions it proposed contributed greatly from the enthusiasm of the Jersey senior student participants, and they and their fellows also gave the conference an excellent summing-up of their reactions to the conference.

Visit www.ukotcf.org for further details



Students, who had taken an active role in the conference, join delegates for an afternoon visit to Durrell.

Development of Species and Habitat Recovery Plans, and Capacity Building for Implementation, Bermuda

Conservation efforts for the preservation, restoration and enhancement of species and habitats have been ongoing within the Department of Conservation Services Bermuda for many years. However, the approach has been haphazard, lacking cohesion and continuity, and relying mainly on personal interests and readily available resources. The newly enacted Protected Species Act 2003 calls for a more structured approach to the restoration of the species through the listing of species as per IUCN criteria and the development of recovery plans for listed species. This is enabled by a 2-year OTEP grant (2005-2007).

The listing of species is officially complete but was challenging and problematic at times as there is a lack of documented information. On an international level, all endemic species could theoretically be considered threatened, based on Bermuda’s land mass; however, listing had to make sense on a regional level. Some endemics are abundant and very common on Bermuda, making them not only difficult to be accepted by the general public as a “threatened” species, but also making it difficult to justify the use of limited resources for recovery. Other groups of endemic species are extremely data deficient, and for practical reasons were not put on this initial list. Native species were listed based on both their regional and global population status. Furthermore, the list had to be succinct to ensure that all actions recommended in the respective recovery plans could be realistically carried out and achieved. However, this list is a working list, routinely evaluated, and thus enabling the addition/removal of species. Currently, a total of 53 endemic species, of which 23 are cave organisms, and 25 native species are listed. Additionally, 16 sites and all caves have been identified as “Critical Habitats”, designating areas essential to the survival of a threatened species. Severe restrictions are placed on these sites, such as no public access, no building, cutting or removing of any species, etc. Most areas are government owned, and negotiations are in process for the few that are privately owned. Long term management of “Critical Habitats” is the responsibility of Conservation Services.



A total of 21 species-specific or group recovery plans are written for all listed species, by one dedicated staff member in collaboration with respective local "experts". All plans are standardised, and final



Bermuda sedge Carex bermudiana, an endemic plant, listed as "Critically Endangered" under the Protected Species Act 2003

approval is by the Director of Conservation Services. Plans are due for completion by March 2007.

An audit of resources was conducted, demonstrating the needs required for recovery plan implementation. The lack of resources had been in some cases previously recognised and addressed, such as the upgrade of the government plant nursery, completed in August 2006. For others, funds were required and obtained (£ 80,000 to date), thanks to the leverage provided by the OTEP grant. This has enabled the completion of a multi-species hatchery for marine species. Initial studies will be conducted in 2007 focusing on seahorse and conch reproduction, with hands-on workshops for primary and secondary level students.



Green Turtle Chelonia mydas, a native species protected in Bermuda under the Protected Species Act 2003

Emergency actions were outlined throughout the development of recovery plans. One such measure is leading to immediate action in collaboration with Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Millennium Seed Bank for collection and preservation of seed for endemic flowering plants. A workshop led by UK experts and involving concerned environmental NGO's and community groups is currently being organised for 2007. This workshop will result in an identification guide, a standardized survey, collection and record-keeping protocol, and the establishment of a responsible team.

To date, the project has advanced as expected. It is a major step in providing cohesion not only among government departments, but also among all those currently working towards conservation of species, including all environmental NGO's, and Community Groups.

Samia Sarkis, Department of Conservation Services, Bermuda. scsarkis@gov.bm

British Virgin Islands Environmental CD Atlas and Teacher Resource

The British Virgin Islands (BVI) are comprised of over 60 islands and cays, yet over 80% of the population live on Tortola, with schools of varying sizes on three of the sister islands: Virgin Gorda, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke. School visits to the sister islands are not included within the curriculum, so many students never visit the other islands in the BVI and as a result have limited knowledge of the BVI's natural environment. Additionally the teaching of geographic components of social sciences and environmental awareness in BVI schools has relied upon the use of regional and international atlases, which have minimal relevance to the BVI.

In response to this need the BVI National Parks Trust and the Conservation and Fisheries Department have created an informational Environmental Atlas, in collaboration with regional and international scientists as a resource for schools and the general public to create a better understanding of the environments of the BVI. By using an interactive atlas, a series of maps, charts, diagrams, tables, photographs, text and internet links, a dynamic web based CD allows students to explore the real world distribution of the environments of the BVI.

The presentation of the BVI Environmental Atlas on a CD and printed format, rather than a web-based system, evolved as only a few schools within the BVI have access to the Internet. Background research with BVI students and teachers over a period of four years revealed a great demand for teacher resources to compliment the social studies curriculum which had recently been revised.



Sunset over Jost Van Dyke

Content for sections was either created by area experts or drafted by the project managers and edited by area experts so that accuracy was ensured. Video clips also were acquired by the project managers, in addition to clips copied with permission from Dr Peter Mumby of Exeter University from his web site entitled Reef Vid that allows for the downloading of free video clips for education benefit (www.reefvid.org.) An interactive glossary was also created so that technical terms could be used in context within the relevant sections, exposing students to the correct terminology.

The BVI National Parks Trust and the Conservation and Fisheries Department provided all images, text and maps as in-kind contributions, whilst funding for the production costs were sought from the UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). Prior to the creation of the OTEP fund as a potential source of project funding, the BVI Environmental Atlas could not move beyond the compilation phase. The project managers were successful in securing a grant for £40,150.00 which allowed for the production of CDs, printed atlases, posters, a laptop computer and a teacher training seminar to introduce the BVI Environmental Atlas.

Nancy Woodfield Pascoe, BVI National Parks Trust. Email: nkwoodfield@yahoo.com

Mark Hayward, BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department.

Bertrand Lettsome, BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department.



Establishing rat-free habitat in the Chagos

Since David Bellamy's visits to the Chagos Islands in the late 1970s he has promoted the idea of removing introduced black rats from Eagle Island, on the western fringe of the Great Chagos Bank. Rats are known to predate on eggs of both ground-nesting seabirds and marine turtles. Since 2003, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the Chagos Conservation Trust have collaborated to undertake



Cutting transects

UK Forces personnel on Diego Garcia.

After an initial feasibility study in 2003, a full project was developed in 2006 led by FFI. A team was recruited to make the somewhat complicated journey out to Eagle Island. Establishing camp and operations on such an isolated and inhospitable site was a huge challenge in itself. Day to day life in such conditions proved arduous cutting and clearing dense vegetation using machetes for up to 12



Dead rats on beach

the uptake of poison among the rat population.

At the end of this first phase, there were no indications that any rats still survived to breed and repopulate the island. A further survey early in 2007 will confirm that the rat population was successfully eradicated. If this proves the case, it would represent an effective doubling in the area of rat-free habitat in the entire archipelago. Indeed, the prognosis looks positive – as reports



a full-scale rat eradication programme for Eagle Island. This was jointly funded by Defra's Flagship Species Fund and the UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme. In addition, equipment and support were received from Thames Water, Wexas and Syngenta, and vital logistical support was provided by Warwick University's Chagos 2006 research expedition, the Captain and crew of the Pacific Marlin Fisheries Patrol Vessel, the BIOT Administration and the US naval facility and

from passing vessels have already indicated an increase in seabird activity in the vicinity of Eagle Island.

For further information, please contact:

Dr Jenny Daltry, Fauna & Flora International, Great Eastern House, Tenison Road, Cambridge CB2 2TT, UK. Email: Jenny.Daltry@fauna-flora.org

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

As discussed in *Forum News* 28, the purpose behind this project was to establish the breeding season of the seabirds around the island, along with the population status, and running parallel with this was the establishment of a sightings scheme for all marine life around the island, focussing mainly on the turtles.

The project has now been up and running for 2 years and it is anticipated that it will be completed by March 2007.



A red-billed tropicbird downy chick with feathers on Egg Island

The project has been in contact with RSPB who have kindly agreed to assist in the analysis of the seabird data. Regular monthly monitoring of the offshore islands and sea cliffs are proving to show some very interesting results. The picture of a downy with feathers Red-billed tropicbird (locally called Trophy) was taken by one of the work experience youths from the local high school, which is also a positive part of the project. We have seen the progress of this chick through to near fledged, and we hope to see it through until the end.

Another part of this project involves monitoring turtles. This is mainly done through the sightings scheme. However, in April 2006, there was a report of a green turtle *Chelonia mydas* that had been seen laying eggs on one of our beaches. On hearing this, we went to investigate, but could not locate the nest. The problem with St Helena is that there are no longer real "sandy" beaches for turtles to lay their eggs; so in order to assist once the eggs were found they were relocated the next day to an artificial "nest". Unfortunately, after waiting the full period, the nest was not successful. However, we did learn a lot from this experience in case there is a next time.

The sightings scheme is going tremendously well with many people reporting their sightings to us on a regular basis. Many patterns are now emerging as a result of this. Also, public awareness is another important part of the project, and people are becoming more aware of the marine environment around St Helena.

For further information contact us: *Emma L Bennett, Marine Scientific Officer, Fisheries Section, Agricultural and Natural Resources Department (ANRD), St Helena Island, STHL 1ZZ Tel: Tel: +290 4724 or email: fishdir@anrd.gov.sh*

Ascension Environmental Information Operations Utility

November saw the official launch of Ascension's first integrative geographical information system or GIS – The Ascension Environmental Information Operations Utility (AEIOU). At two public meetings at the Conservation Centre in Georgetown, the system was unveiled to islanders.

Funded by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), the AEIOU project was a collaboration not only between Conservation Department in Ascension Island Government (AIG) and two GIS specialists, Dr Edsel Daniel from Vanderbilt University (USA) and independent consultant Alan Mills, UK, but with a wide range of other agencies on island and elsewhere. Everyone supplied ideas and information, and have been instrumental in ensuring data can be integrated from many backgrounds: conservation, built environment, utilities and jurisdiction.

The overarching purpose was to assimilate geographic information for environmental monitoring, management and planning to meet many obligations within Ascension Island's Environment Charter. It also produced a facility for the general public and students at Two Boats School to be able to use layers of data and incorporate their own information with the maps.



Trainees at the Basic GIS Training course at Two Boats School

Project activities ensured AEIOU is less a project-oriented mapping tool, more an integrative toolbox to be used for multiple purposes by many agencies. They included interventions on data, hardware, software, training, steering and applications.

A focus was identifying those applications for geographical information required by all stakeholders, including those international bodies working on island. The widely ranging applications were classified into themes including conservation, planning, marine management and policing. Within these were a series of products (for conservation this included turtle, bird, landcrab and endemic plant monitoring) and for each product; specific outputs were listed (e.g. for turtles we wanted to show number of nesting attempts at beaches for a period, or a comparison of total nesting across seasons).

From this list, requisite datasets were identified. Either they already existed on island or were created within the project. Data were widely sourced. A company called Geosense (UK / South Africa) made a series of digital layers showing coastline, contours and roads from the Ascension Island 1:25 000 map and digitised a land parcel map. Two near cloud-free satellite Quickbird images (resolution 63cm) were acquired and used as a detailed background or to extract new information, such as interpreting buildings and Mexican thorn bush.

GPS-located rat bait boxes and feral cat bait traps were mapped, and information from extensive monitoring programmes which Conservation conduct, including cetaceans surveys, bird nesting and colonies, and locating endemic plant species were integrated. RSPB have given extensive support to establishing robust monitoring databases (through Ian Fisher and Sarah Sanders); in AEIOU some small adaptations were made so they could be dynamically mapped. Similarly, Jacqui Ellick and the Turtle Group have years of nesting records and, in collaboration with Annette Broderick from University of Exeter, a new database was designed to record and archive this

information. More datasets include a rat-monitoring database for Environmental Health, and bathymetry and navigational data were digitised under license from UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton to ensure marine elements of Ascension's environment have a basemap too. Other scientists working on island gave ideas; eg land crab data from Richard Hartnoll of Liverpool University, and the public contribute by reporting ad hoc sightings of hawksbills, dolphins and whales.

Datasets were collated and catalogued so everyone knows the system's information: its quality, extent and currency. A GIS interface based on Arcview software allows staff to easily get to grips with GIS complexities. As well as being able to load any of the 84 data layers, navigate quickly to different locations and create printed maps, it also allows staff to work with the identified products and interrogate databases to show dynamic monitoring information for any period selected. Hence AIG can make maps showing the bird nesting monitoring for a particular week, the turtle nesting for a season, the rat catching for a month. Although primarily focused on environmental applications, bartering of data for services means the system is moving towards an integrated island-wide asset. And the ability for Conservation to have data on jurisdiction, built environment and other people's activities means they can better judge threats to wildlife and ensure environmental issues are aired when other government decisions are being made.

The project is not just a survey or a map. Although many data sets have been specially created during the project's lifetime, it is more important the system is seen as a repository for spatial information and can be used in every day and strategic government – ie getting good information from the field to the decision makers' desks. The consultants spent three weeks on island in November 2006 to install the system, then train personnel in general GIS principles, system use and management.

Additionally, protocols and procedures were documented and taught to ensure the system remains a multi-agency asset. A steering group was formed to guide future management of AEIOU; hopefully expanding the range of datasets and applications so it can become an island-wide information system.



Mark Francis using the AEIOU GIS interface

The system is a fantastic educational resource and the consultants worked with teachers in Two Boats to identify where in the school's geography curricula Ascension mapping could be used. From this an Intranet mapping tool has been developed around a series of themes – eg topography, coasts and beaches, mountains - and students can add map layers, navigate around the island, print out maps and query data.

AEIOU is one of three OTEP funded GIS with similar aims, frameworks and supporting procedures in the UK Overseas Territories (along with Anguilla and St Helena). The aim is now for these territories to share experiences and ideas; indeed agreement has been reached in principle to let the Prince Andrew School in St Helena have a copy of the Two Boats Intranet GIS and vice versa for the St Helena school system.

Alan Mills, Edsel Daniel, Tara Pelembe
Further details from Email:
conservation@atlantis.co.ac



Falklands Conservation Environmental Education Project

The Environmental Education project forms part of an OTEP funded programme entitled Community Environmental Awareness and Citizen Programme. This is coming towards the end of what has been an 18-month multi-territory programme involving the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island.

The main purpose of the project has been to produce environmental education resources and materials for use in the schools in both territories. The schools follow the National Curriculum for England and Wales and although this provides an excellent framework of education it was felt that many areas of science and geography lacked local focus and the resources necessary to teach about local environmental issues. For example children were learning about habitats but often the focus, due to the availability of educational



Reception children enjoy pond dipping.

resources, was on British woodlands and coastal areas, badgers and foxes – instead of penguins and seals!

When I started the project in August 2005, I felt it was essential that I produced material that was going to support and enhance the curriculum rather than add to an already packed timetable. I did not want the resources to be a burden but rather an asset. Having identified the units of work that could be greatly enhanced by local material, I set about designing and producing a wide range of resources with a focus on local plants, animals, habitats and other wider environmental issues. I have produced identification fact sheets for the most common birds, plants, invertebrates and marine species of each territory and these form the basis of many classroom activities. They allow children as young as four to access information about



Ali Liddle enjoys a day out with a group of school children.

local species and can be used throughout the primary age range and by older students studying aspects of species classification and interdependence.

There are lesson plans and suggested activities along with the necessary teaching packs to complete the sessions with small groups of children. Field activities in the local areas have been outlined, ensuring continuity and progression throughout school. In the



Falkland Islands Reception class, ages 4 and 5 now go pond dipping and visit the local beach as part of a project entitled Water. In both territories Year 6 children study the coastal features of a local area and produce walking guides outlining the features and how they have been formed. Year 9 students investigate aspects of photosynthesis and now use local plants as a resource.

Schools now have posters and jigsaw puzzles depicting local wildlife, slide shows linked to various units of work, along with accompanying notes and a photo database for students to use in their work. An art and craft activity book has been produced where every item you make is a penguin. Some of the resources have been adapted and will be placed on the Falklands Conservation website for teachers and students outside of the islands to access and use as a comparative study in their work.

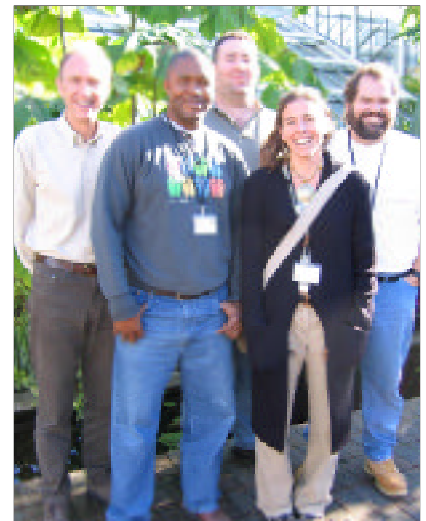
This has been a fantastic project to lead but the long-term success depends very much on the commitment of the staff involved in the actual teaching. So far the feedback has been brilliant, really positive comments and great enthusiasm. It was summed up by one member of staff after she had taught a unit of work entitled Plants and Animals in the Local Environment using the local resources for the first time. "This is what we've needed in school for so long. The children have learnt so much from using the resources and have remembered far more as a result. It's fantastic".

For further details Ali Liddle; email ali.liddle@conservation.org.fk or contact Ann Brown, Falklands Conservation, UK Executive Officer, Falklands Conservation, 1 Princess Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, UK. Tel/ fax: +44 208 343 0831 or Email: ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk

OTEP Fellows awarded Master of Science Degrees

It is a far cry from the warm waters of the Caribbean or the South Atlantic, but for OTEP Fellows; John Bothwell (Cayman Islands), Rhon Connor (Anguilla) and Tara Pelembe (Ascension Island), Cornwall has been their base for the past year. All three were funded by the Overseas Territories

Environment Programme (OTEP) to study for a Master of Science in Conservation and Biodiversity at the Centre for Ecology and Conservation, University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus. In addition to receiving intensive tuition from a range of academics and wildlife experts, in the spring the Fellows returned to their home countries to conduct individual research projects. These projects were designed to directly assist the relevant conservation departments in their efforts to reduce the impacts of loss of biodiversity through a combination of species



As part of the MSc, OTEP Fellows completed a course at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. Pictured left to right Dr Colin Clubbe (RBG Kew), Rhon Connor, Dr Brendan Godley (University of Exeter in Cornwall), Tara Pelembe and John Bothwell.

and habitat research and management. Projects conducted were: *Cayman conchs confounded by cyclones* by John Bothwell; *Distribution, Habitat Association, Species Abundance and Perceptions of Residents towards the invasive Giant African Snail Achatina fulica in Anguilla* by Rhon Connor; *Spatio-temporal patterns of seabird recolonisation of Ascension Island following feral cat eradication* by Tara Pelembe.

I am delighted to report that John and Rhon were both awarded their MSc with merit and Tara with distinction. In addition, John and Tara were awarded the Dean's commendation for outstanding group participation. A fantastic result and a real step forward to building capacity in the UK Overseas Territories.

Dr Annette Broderick, Lecturer in Conservation Biology, University of Exeter Email: A.C.Broderick@exeter.ac.uk

Isle of Man designates first Ramsar wetland

In September 2006 the Ballaugh Currags (pronounced *balaff currucks*) became a Wetland of International Importance, under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The site is typical of many small wetlands known as *currags* on the island in that it is willow scrub with birches, peat bog and pools and species-rich wet grassland. Ballaugh Currags is on very deep peat that formed when a post-glacial lake vegetated over and deep moss peat developed. The site has signs of having been farmland and not that long ago the fields were mainly extensively farmed grassland with sod banks where hollies and royal fern grow. The old slate fence posts survive under the ivy.



John "Dog" Callister, Hon Phil Gawne MHK, Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General of Ramsar, Liz Charter, Chief Wildlife and Conservation Officer with Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Martin Moore, Chairman of the Trustees of Manx National Heritage at the launch of Ballaugh Curragh Ramsar site

The Ramsar site was launched with an event which Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General of the Ramsar Secretariat, attended. The day was wet – appropriately you might say, but it was a warm gathering of representatives of the organisations and landowners in the site who met to celebrate. Manx National Heritage, The Manx Wildlife Trust and the Wildlife Park all own and manage parts of the site. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry take the lead in conservation designations.

It qualifies as a Ramsar site for its considerable congregation of roosting hen harriers in winter, for the extensive curragh vegetation, the pair of corncrake who seem to be becoming regular breeders in the orchid rich wet grasslands.

The Ramsar Review, undertaken by UKOTCF for Defra and the territories, has identified a number of other potential sites including the southern coastline where choughs, peregrines and ravens nest.

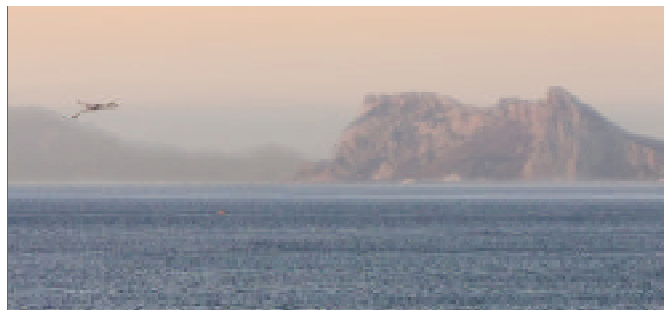
If you want to know more contact Liz Charter, liz.charter@gov.im

Gibraltar habitats declared Community Importance

Following years of work, form filling and meetings, Gibraltar can proudly celebrate the fact that, on 19 July 2006, two large areas of Gibraltar – one terrestrial, another marine, were added to the formal list of European Sites of Community Interest (SCIs). This was the culmination of a procedure started in 1992 in which Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS) summarised those parts of the European Habitats Directive that applied to Gibraltar and submitted to Government details for recognition of Gibraltar sites as part of the Natura 2000 network of European protected areas. This information had to be fed to Brussels through the United Kingdom Government and ultimately resulted in the declaration of 19 July 2006.

The Gibraltar sites join others in the Mediterranean biogeographical region, including several near Gibraltar, such as Los Alcornocales, Laguna de Medina, the Rio Palmones, and further a field Cadiz Bay and the Coco Doñana, declared on the same date.

The Gibraltarian terrestrial site, under the official title "Rock of Gibraltar", includes the whole of the Upper Rock Nature Reserve, adjacent cliffs, the great sand slopes, and Windmill Hill. The marine



site is called "Southern waters of Gibraltar" and includes all the British territorial waters along the southern half of Gibraltar. The criteria for designation, which is obligatory, have included the presence in both sites of habitats and species of importance to Europe, including dolphins and limpets for the marine site and plants and bats for the terrestrial sites. The Rock of Gibraltar site hosts a priority habitat. In addition, the sites qualify as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the 1979 Birds Directive for their resident and migratory species, also both on land and the sea.

Designation gives the sites immediately effective protection, with necessary conservation measures to be implemented within a short space of time when the SCIs convert to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). GONHS will be reviewing its past representations on protected areas and making proposals to the Government on the best ways to achieve the required protection for the SACs and other areas which, while falling outside these, are nevertheless of great importance for biodiversity conservation.

This historic step is to be welcomed wholeheartedly by Gibraltar, as its territory has been clearly included without any political proviso. It recognises the importance of Gibraltar's habitats and wildlife formally at an international scale, and it ensures that these are protected now and in the future.

GONHS is pleased with the designation, and with its efforts in helping to bring this about, and congratulates the Government and its officials for their part in such a significant and historical achievement.

2007 Gibraltar year of the tree



Following its successful *Gibraltar Biodiversity Year 2006*, The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society has decided to

declare 2007 *Gibraltar Year of the Tree*. While its biodiversity work will clearly continue, the Society will dedicate more energy next year to promoting trees, both in an urban setting and as part of our natural habitats. Much of the 2007 programme of activities which is circulated to members and appears on our website, will have trees as a theme.

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, P O Box 843, Gibraltar, Tel: +350 72639 Email: jcortes@gonhs.org

Statement and recommendations from the workshop “Biodiversity and impact assessment in Small Island States” 6-7 October 2006, Jersey

This workshop was held immediately preceding the fourth conference organised by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation



Jo Treweek and Bill Phillips, facilitators for the workshop

Forum and brought together approximately 45 representatives of Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities from around the world.

The workshop reviewed model practices in environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA), and heard several case studies illustrating current approaches being used in small island situations.

The following conclusions and recommendations have been formulated against this backdrop and are intended to reflect the current state of impact assessment approaches in small islands, and offer tangible ways to move forward to improve these practices.

Current status of impact assessment in small island situations

There is no reliable information available about the status of EIA legislation and practice throughout the UKOTs and other small islands. On the evidence available, application of model approaches is best described as patchy, with some territories, dependencies and states demonstrating progress toward greater rigour and transparency in this area. However, for the most part, it is evident that on-going biodiversity loss is being exacerbated by less than adequate or appropriate impact assessment processes.

The key challenges identified by this workshop include the following:

1. Lack of coordinated strategic planning frameworks/processes that integrate biodiversity concerns and a reactive approach to development planning and impact assessment;
2. Weak institutional frameworks in some cases;
3. Lack of information and guidance on good impact assessment processes (with the appropriate checks and balances) that will ensure transparency and accountability;
4. Lack of capacity to provide effective input to EIA, to enforce mitigation requirements and other provisions and conditions or to ensure monitoring and follow-up;
5. Lack of any independent review facility to provide advice on the quality and content of EIAs;
6. Lack of good practice standards, contributing to poor quality;
7. Shortage of capacity and resources to gather and maintain biodiversity-related data upon which to base well-informed EIA decisions;
8. Shortage of advice on how to design and ensure appropriate community participation, involvement and

consultation in impact assessment;

9. Few opportunities for training for those engaged in or assessing EIAs (help is needed to develop skills in valuation techniques, mitigation etc);
10. Sharing of impact assessment experiences and information between island territories, dependencies and states needs to be improved: at present there is no established mechanism for this.



Simon Glass and John Cooper talk about Tristan da Cunha

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated primarily for the attention of the fourth conference of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, the Convention on Biological Diversity (and other relevant multi-lateral environment agreements) and bilateral and multilateral donor organisations:

1. Establish a facility to provide independent review/ advice of EIAs.
2. Pursue development of good practice standards for EIA.
3. Commission reviews of the legislative, policy and administrative processes being applied to biodiversity-related impact assessment in the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies and, as appropriate, develop assistance to modify these to align with model approaches in terms of rigour, transparency and community participation.
4. Pilot SEAs in some UKOTs and other small island communities to align reviews of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and national development strategies.
5. Encourage the adoption of common biodiversity recording methods and improve the availability of the ‘Recorder’ Programme and other relevant programmes to assist UKOTs and other small island communities with the establishment of baseline biodiversity data sets.
6. Collate, develop and provide advice on environmental valuation techniques suitable for application in impact assessment.
7. Continue to develop and refine the CBBIA ‘Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Toolkit’ in collaboration with UKOTs and other small island communities, using it as a mechanism to provide the latest advice on good practice and illustrative case studies (also via an annual CD mail-out).

8. Prepare a range of communication tools to promote and support the application of impact assessment as a tool for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (and make available through the CBBIA Toolkit), to include:
 - One pager or 'bookmark' summarising key aspects of good EIA.
 - Local advice sheets for ecologists on the benefits of EIA.
 - Email or Internet links to support sharing of advice and experiences among small island communities.
 - Guidance for local specialists and surveyors to enable them to maximise their contribution to the EIA process and maintain an independent status.
9. Develop guidance (with documented case studies) on stakeholder and community participation and consultation in impact assessment processes and make these available through the CBBIA Toolkit (also provide advice to communities on how they can get involved).
10. Offer training opportunities in impact assessment through established programmes or new initiatives as necessary, focusing on the particular context of small island states.

For further details contact Jo Treweek, Email: jo@treweek.fsnet.co.uk

UKOTCF Council Members

At the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum's Annual General Meeting that was held in Jersey on 8th October 2006 the Chairman expressed thanks to David Taylor who had retired during the year and also to Michael Gore who had indicated his wish to stand down. Dace Ground and Juliet Rose, retiring by rotation, offered themselves for re-election. In addition, Council proposed Iain Orr and Bruce Dinwiddy for election. Kerstin Swahn and Fred Burton had also indicated that they were prevented by other commitments from completing their current terms of office, and the Chairman thanked them for all their work. Council proposed Geoffrey Fairhurst and Dr Colin Hindmarch for election to fill the remainder of their terms. The persons nominated were elected.

Forum News has procured short profiles for Colin Hindmarch and Bruce Dinwiddy and will bring other Council members' profiles in future editions.

Dr Colin Hindmarch



Colin is an ecologist with a background in horticulture, environmental design and strategic planning. His work in local government (UK) and consultancy has helped to protect and manage historic landscapes, integrate new development into the wider environment, repair and reinvigorate urban fringe landscapes and restore land damaged by mineral extraction and other industrial processes, including that of unsustainable land management practices. This has involved a long-standing,

practical commitment to environmental impact assessment and the development and defence of environmental policy at local, national (UK) and European level.

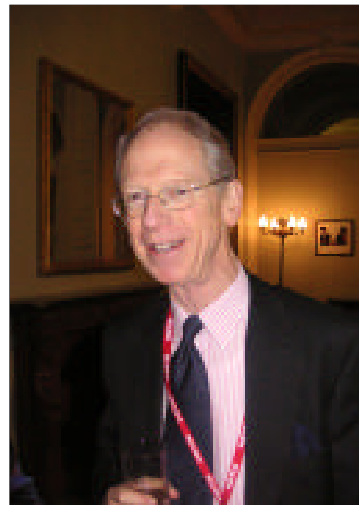
Increasing concerns about the effects of economic activity on ecosystem stability have prompted Colin to explore ways of putting the value of ecosystem services at the core of economic planning. It has also opened his eyes to the importance of ensuring that environmental policies maintain ecological processes, enhance 'connectivity' and safeguard isolated habitats, not least those of oceanic islands. His involvement in the development of the European Union Biodiversity Strategy, for instance, helped to secure a reference to Overseas Territories that now forms the basis of a push to secure a more effective relationship with European institutions.

Colin has represented several non-government organizations on a number of European Commission committees, including the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and the Environment, the Biodiversity Strategy Working Group and the Biodiversity Expert Group, and his work on 'Bird Corridors' has informed Council of Europe thinking on the Pan-European Ecological Network. He currently Chairs the Environment Committee of the Institute of Biology (UK) and is a member of the British Ecological Society's Public Policy Committee. Colin is a Chartered Biologist (UK), a European Professional Biologist (EU), and a Fellow of both the Institute of Biology (UK) and the Institute of Horticulture (UK). He is also privileged to have served the Kew Guild (est.1893) as its President (2004-2005).

Colin and his wife Valerie live in their native Northumbria (UK) and have four grown-up children and seven grandchildren.

Bruce Dinwiddy

Since being elected to Council in October. Bruce has since taken over from Michael Gore as Chairman of the Wider Caribbean Working Group.



Like Michael, Bruce is a past Governor of the Cayman Islands. His interest in environmental issues dates from his time as Overseas Development Institute Fellow in Swaziland (1967-69) and ODI Research Officer in London (1970-73). After joining the FCO, he spent two years as desk officer for Hong Kong, then Britain's most important remaining Colony. His early foreign postings were in Vienna, Cairo, Bonn and

Ottawa. During 1995-98 he was Head of the FCO's African Department (Southern) and non-resident Commissioner of BIOT. He was High Commissioner to Tanzania (1998-2001) before being appointed Governor of the Cayman Islands in May 2002.

While in Cayman, Bruce was acutely conscious of the delicate balance between development and environment in a fast growing small island economy. He took an active interest in environmental issues, including the Blue Iguana programme and conservation of other endangered species. In September 2004 Grand Cayman was ravaged by Hurricane Ivan, the worst storm to strike the islands in living memory. His last year as Governor was taken up with various aspects of the recovery.

Now retired from the Diplomatic Service, Bruce is a UK Friend of Cayman and is very pleased to remain involved, through the Forum, with wider Caribbean and other Overseas Territories. Apart from Cayman, he has visited Bermuda, BVI, TCI and Anguilla. He looks forward one day to visiting Montserrat, which he has so far only seen from the air.

The story of the development of the Centre and field-roads, illustrated by many scenes of wildlife, is told in a 16-minute DVD, the first of a series about the project. As the commentary states "Middle Caicos is at the centre of the largest internationally protected wetland area in the UK Overseas Territories. Many of the plants and animals here



Entrance sign to Haulover Plantation Field-road

live nowhere else in the world. In Middle, North and East Caicos they live in a mosaic of natural wetlands of such global importance that it has been recognised as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention."

Government is playing its part too in safeguarding the wonderful natural and historical environment of the Turks and Caicos Islands. In the same week as the opening of the Middle Caicos Conservation Centre, the Minister for Natural Resources, Hon McAllister Hanchell, confirmed his intention to transfer over 500 acres of land to the Turks and Caicos National Trust for the people of the Turks and

Caicos Islands. These are: the buildings of the former Vera Hamilton

Primary School, which now houses the Middle Caicos Conservation Centre; Wades Green Plantation on North Caicos; Cheshire Hall on Providenciales; Village Pond, Indian Cave, Conch Bar Caves, Garden Pond Field Road, Haulover Plantation Field Road and Crossing Place Trail west from Conch Bar on Middle Caicos. The Minister said: "The TCNT has managed the above-listed natural and historical sites for over a decade. This involved several years of scientific study of the areas in North and Middle Caicos, and subsequently securing funding to develop and maintain nature trails, refurbish buildings and prepare interpretative and educational material. My Government is supportive of the work of the National Trust and will continue to assist this Non Governmental Organization in becoming financially independent of the Government and remaining a voice of the people. My Government and the Ministry of Natural Resources are truly committed to making sure that TCI remains *Beautiful by Nature*."

The Hon Jeffrey Hall, was given a warm welcome as he reported this important step forward during his address at the opening of the Centre.

As well as Little Water Cay, where many visitors have close encounters with the endemic Rock Iguana, and Cheshire Hall which takes us back to Plantation time (both on the island of Providenciales), the TC National Trust welcomes visitors to Middle Caicos, where they can experience an entirely different view of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Contact the National Trust Office in Providenciales (www.nationaltrust.tc) to find out more, and Ann Pienkowski (see below) for a copy of the DVD.

Ann & Mike Pienkowski, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, pienkowski@cix.co.uk

B Naqqi Manco & Ethlyn Gibbs Williams, Turks & Caicos National Trust, tel +1649 941 5710, fax +1649 941 4258, Email: tc.natrust@tcivay.tc

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Recognition for Rebecca Cairns-Wicks

The Forum congratulates Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks on the award of an MBE in the New Year Honours 2007, for services to environmental conservation, St Helena.

Rebecca's work in research and conservation of St Helena's (and wider) unique flora and her current leadership of the Peaks conservation project have been reported in Forum News. She played leading parts also in establishing both an environmental conservation office within St Helena Government and the St Helena National Trust, and serves on UKOTCF's Council, amongst many other roles.

Correspondence to: Frances Marks, Forum Co-ordinator, Witts End, Radbone Hill, Over Norton, OX7 5RA, UK.

Tel: + 44 1608 644425 Email: fmarks@btinternet.com

Photographs courtesy of: Jackie Adams; Ascension Island Government Conservation Department; Bermuda Department of Conservation Services; Nancy Woodfield Pascoe, BVI National Parks Trust; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; GOHNS; Ali Liddle: Isle of Man Wildlife and Conservation Division; Anna Leonard, University of Exeter; Frances Marks; Fieke Molenaar; and Mike Pienkowski.

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