

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories

Raising awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum exists to promote the co-ordinated conservation of the diverse and increasingly threatened plant and animal species and natural habitats of UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs). It aims to do this by providing assistance in the form of expertise, information and liaison between non-governmental organisations and governments, both in the UK and in the Territories themselves.

Founded in 1987, the Forum has gained worldwide support and recognition as being the best source of information and expertise on conservation in UK's Overseas Territories by both Governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Forum priorities are:

To raise public awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in UKOTs, and potential threats

To facilitate the implementation of international conservation conventions

To promote compilations of existing data, surveys of biodiversity and ecological studies, to inform plans for sustainable use and conservation

To assist the development of biodiversity targets and action plans to achieve these for each UKOT

To network information amongst UK and its Overseas Territories conservation groups, governments, educators and environmentalists

To support conservation groups in the UKOTs, and to publicise conservation activities and successes

To facilitate design and management of projects

To seek funding for projects in the UKOTs and for Forum activities

The Forum produces a newsletter *Forum News* and other publications, including *UK Dependent Territories: A Conservation Review* (an analysis of conservation progress and requirements), as well as information in other media. Our web-site can be accessed at: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

The Territories support habitats for animals and plants found nowhere else in the world, such as the Cayman parrots and several endangered Caribbean iguanas. Many Forum projects involve studying these little known areas to aid their protection and survival.



Photographs courtesy of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library.

Production of this board was supported by WWF-UK.



This booklet provides an introduction to the remarkable biodiversity of UK's Overseas Territories, and the work of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and its partner organisations to conserve this heritage. The booklet is based on a series of interpretation boards, including three introductory ones and one each for fifteen individual UK Overseas Territories. Summary information is included on the sixteenth UK Overseas Territory and the three Crown Dependencies. More information on these and the other territories is available on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org)

Some facts & figures about UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES and their natural history



Slender Chelidonium (*Chelidonium lineare*)

The British Indian Ocean Territory contains the Great Chagos Bank which is the largest atoll in the world. BIOT has 60sq. km. of land area within an ocean area of 54,500sq. km



Coconut Crab (*Birgus latro*) [BIOT]

19 taxa of reptile are endemic to the Cayman Islands including 2 subspecies of Rock Iguana which are subject of a conservation programme. The native Crocodile (*Crocodylus actutus*) is now extinct around the islands



Anegada Rock Iguana (*Cyclura pinguis*)

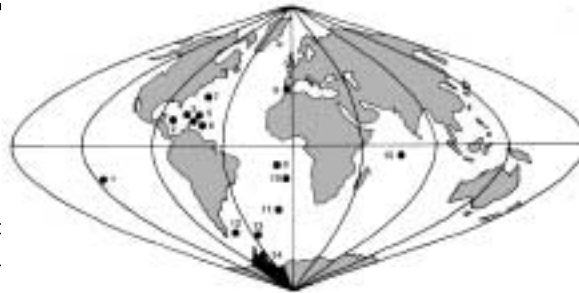
18 Species of whales, porpoises and dolphins have been recorded around the Falkland Islands

Islands are fragile ecosystems and are under threat from introduced predators such as cats and rats and non-native weed species especially on St. Helena and Ascension

The Falklands endemic wolf (*Dusicyon australis*) was hunted to extinction in 1876

The permanent resident populations range from 50 in Pitcairn, 313 in Tristan da Cunha up to 12,000 (pre volcano) in Montserrat and 59,000 in Bermuda

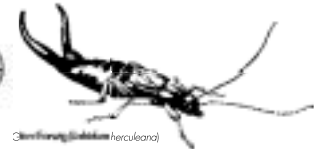
1. Pitcairn Is.
2. Cayman Is.
3. Turks & Caicos Is.
4. British Virgin
5. Anguilla
6. Montserrat
7. Bermuda
8. Gibraltar
9. Ascension
10. St. Helena
11. Tristan da C
12. Falkland Is.
13. South Geo
14. British Antarctic Territory (BAT)
15. British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
16. Channel Islands & the Isle of Man



Knowledge of the biodiversity of the UK Overseas Territories is incomplete and more baseline taxonomic research is needed



Mountain Frog (*Scaphiophrynus falklandicus*) [Montserrat]



St. Helena Hercules Mantis (*Mantodea herculeana*)

Apart from military or scientific personnel, the British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory are uninhabited, as are many of the smaller islands of the UK Overseas Territories



Ascension Frigatebird (*Fregata aquila*)

There are 16 known endemic bird species in the UK Overseas Territories, including the threatened Ascension Frigate Bird (*Fregata aquila*)

There are more than 200 endemic plant species throughout the UK Overseas Territories, with most occurring on St. Helena (46 species). This includes endemic Olive, Rosewood & Ebony trees which are some of the rarest species in the UK Overseas Territories



St. Helena Rosewood (*Procris pyramidalis*)



Ascension Hedgehog (*Erethiceus dorsalis*)

59 of 126 species of moss on Tristan da Cunha are endemic



Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

*The Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is known to nest within seven UK Overseas Territories: Anguilla, British Virgin Is., Cayman Is., Turks & Caicos, BIOT, Ascension & Henderson Is. (Pitcairn)*

For further information about membership and the work of the UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM please contact:
The Co-ordinator, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, Oxon, OX7 5LF, United Kingdom. Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1608 644425. Visit our website at: www.ukotcf.org
Illustrations: Robin Buddens

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



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Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) lie SE of the Bahamas and 145 km north of Hispaniola. About 500 sq km of land is divided between 120 low islands and cays situated on shallow banks. Eight of the islands are home to 22,000 people; the majority reside on Providenciales, a major tourist destination. The Turks & Caicos National Trust is the membership-based voluntary organisation working to protect the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Islands.

The East Caicos, Middle Caicos and North Caicos wetland complex forms probably the best example of its type in the Caribbean. It is also one of the most natural amongst the 125 wetlands of international importance listed under the Ramsar Convention by the UK Government. On Providenciales, the wetlands have suffered severe environmental degradation, the result of rapid development for real estate and tourism, although areas of value remain through the protected area and National Parks system. An even greater threat to the natural environment is posed by proposals for major developments on the uninhabited islands—prime habitats for unique species such as rock iguana and the remaining breeding sites for turtles.

Work is underway by the TCI National Trust and the TCI Government to explore the potential for environmentally sustainable development, but further help is needed. The adoption of an eco-tourism approach would help to prevent the destruction of the natural habitat and safeguard biodiversity, cultural heritage and natural beauty of the Islands for present and future generations.

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Photographs courtesy of Michael Gore FRPS & Mike Pienkowski.

Turks & Caicos Islands: Superb Wetlands where the Land meets the Sea

A superb complex of natural coral reefs, tidal flats, mangroves and marshlands provide a haven for wildlife, and the natural basis of fisheries and tourism. The islands provide a home for at least 14 unique plants, reptiles (including the rock iguana pictured), and an unknown number of invertebrates, as well as the vulnerable reddish egret and West Indian whistling duck (pictured).



UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



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Montserrat, one of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean, lies 43 km SW of Antigua and 64 km NW of Guadeloupe. The volcanic island, 17 km long and 11 km wide, is mountainous, with streams and waterfalls amongst dense tropical vegetation. The rugged coastline offers no all-weather harbour, although several anchorages are sheltered by the island from the prevailing trade winds.

Montserrat is known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean due to a combination of historical Irish influences and the lush greenness of the landscape. The Montserrat National Trust, founded by ordinance in 1970, has been involved in activities aimed at conserving the natural and cultural heritage of Montserrat.

On 18 July 1995, the Soufriere Hills volcano in the south of the island became active for the first time in 350 years. Increased pyroclastic activity killed 19 people on 25 June 1997. The capital, Plymouth, was destroyed after the Gages wall was overtopped in August 1997. Half of the island has been evacuated and much of it will probably remain uninhabitable for the next decade or more. The effects of the eruptions on the island's plants and animals are being studied where circumstances allow. Extensive monitoring of the Montserrat oriole - the National Bird - the mountain chicken and other important key indicator species, is ongoing. The Montserrat galliwasp has been sighted for the first time in over 30 years and more scientific research into habitat is necessary. Since volcanic activity began, the human population on the island has declined from approximately 11,000 to about 4,500. Volcanic activity has declined since March 1998. A sustainable development plan has been developed for Montserrat and it will be important to integrate environmental aspects into the island's redevelopment.

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Montserrat: The Caribbean's Emerald Isle



Despite its small size, Montserrat supports at least 132 tree species, 59 species of birds and 13 mammals.

The Montserrat oriole (pictured) is found nowhere else. Also restricted to Montserrat are the galliwasp (pictured) and another (unnamed) lizard. The endangered and edible 'mountain chicken' (a frog) is found only on Montserrat and Dominica. Several other species are restricted to Montserrat and some nearby islands.



Photographs courtesy of Sara Cross, Montserrat National Trust and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library. Painting by Tracy Redfern.

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The three low-lying Cayman Islands are strung along a submarine mountain ridge south of Cuba, west of Jamaica. The rapidly increasing human population is concentrated in Grand Cayman. Environmental conservation is shared between the National Trust for the Cayman Islands and the local Department of Environment.

The Cayman Islands are clothed in subtropical dry forests and mangrove wetlands, supporting diverse life typical of the Greater Antillean region.

Economic success and exponential population growth are taking a toll on the Cayman Islands, with ongoing deforestation threatening areas such as mangrove wetlands and ancient dry forests on all three islands. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands is working to establish a protected area system, giving priority to areas rich in biodiversity. Land owned by the Trust is protected in perpetuity. Trust nature reserves include the Booby Pond Nature Reserve on Little Cayman, a "Ramsar" Conservation Wetland of International Importance, home to 20,000 red-footed boobies. The Brac Parrot Reserve protects forest important for nesting of Cayman Brac's critically endangered parrots. The Salina Reserve, Mastic Reserve and Central Mangrove Wetland (pictured) on Grand Cayman protect a wide range of pristine forest environments. The Trust works also to preserve species like the endangered blue iguana, which is making a comeback from the brink of extinction thanks to captive breeding and restocking of protected habitat. In the marine environment, the government's Department of Environment manages an extensive system of Marine Parks, monitors coral reefs and works on sustainable harvest policies.

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Photographs courtesy of Frederic J Burton and Michael Gore 1995.

The Cayman Islands: The Future of Unique Forests Hangs in the Balance



Some 17 plant species (such as the orchid pictured), 7 reptiles (e.g. Grand Cayman blue iguana) and 30 land snails are among those listed as unique to Cayman, along with many unique subspecies of forest birds (such as Grand Cayman parrot) and spectacular coral reefs.



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An archipelago of 60 islands and cays, BVI is located 60 miles east of Puerto Rico and has a population of 19,842 people. Established in 1961, the British Virgin Islands National Park Trust is a non-profit, statutory body, which manages national parks and designated marine and terrestrial protected areas. The Trust also administers several environmental programmes including marine conservation and biodiversity conservation programmes.

BVI has environmental legislation for the protection of the territory's natural resources, the most recent of which is the Fisheries Act of 1997 which regulates fisheries activities throughout the islands. The Territory is a signatory to several international environmental agreements such as the Convention of Biological Diversity, the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and the "Ramsar" Convention on Wetlands amongst others.

Full enforcement of legislation is hindered by the lack of adequate facilities and manpower. Development of marinas along the coastal areas has been an on-going issue in the territory. Mangroves and sea grass beds are destroyed and reefs are smothered to make way for the tourism-related infrastructure as development continues to compete with the environment on which it is based.

The Trust has managed several internationally funded biodiversity programmes. A recent one is a Darwin Initiative funded programme, which includes training in the management of terrestrial biodiversity.

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Photographs courtesy of Glenn Gerber, Jim Scheiner and National Parks Trust.

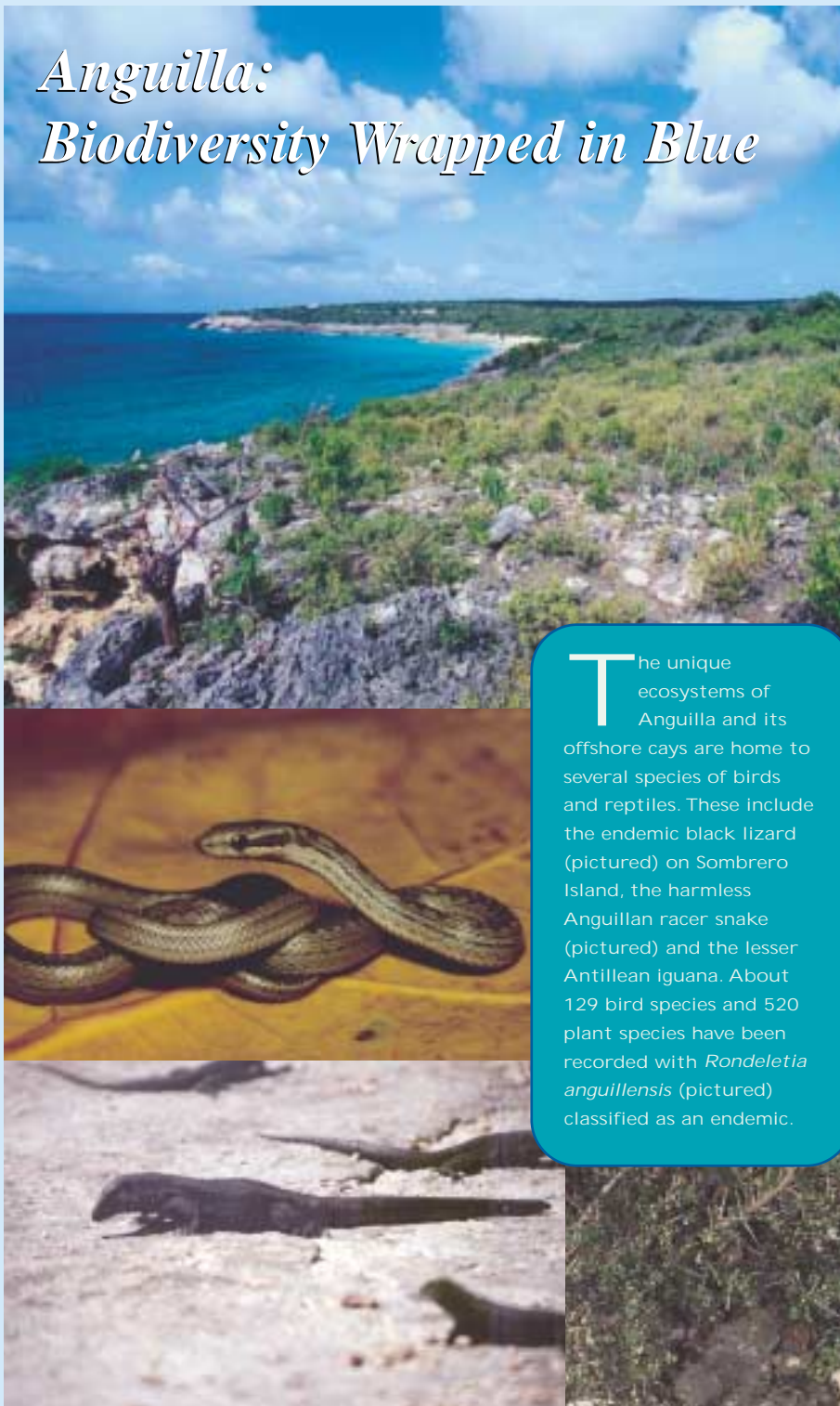
British Virgin Islands: Diversity Abounds in Nature's Little Secrets



The islands support a number of endemic and threatened species of international importance, such as the critically endangered endemic Anegada rock iguana. Eighteen roseate West Indies flamingoes were reintroduced to Anegada in 1992 where a colony of 51 flourished by 2000. BVI also possesses a number of globally significant plant species, some of which occur only on one or two islands, such as pokemeboy and *Calypttranthes kiaerskovii*.



Anguilla: Biodiversity Wrapped in Blue



The unique ecosystems of Anguilla and its offshore cays are home to several species of birds and reptiles. These include the endemic black lizard (pictured) on Sombrero Island, the harmless Anguillan racer snake (pictured) and the lesser Antillean iguana. About 129 bird species and 520 plant species have been recorded with *Rondeletia anguillensis* (pictured) classified as an endemic.

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Anguilla the most northerly of the Leeward Islands is located 18.3° north by 63° west. Its name derived from its eel-shape. The coral limestone island's area is 91km², together with several offshore islands and cays. Anguilla is home to 13,527 people (estimated 1999). Tourism and off-shore finance are the major contributors to the island's economy.

The Anguilla National Trust is charged with ensuring that the natural resources of the island are protected as well as the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the island. The Trust has close links with Forum member organisations such as FFI, RSPB and WWF-UK which help it to build its resources base for the conservation of Anguilla's biodiversity. The work done by other local organisations, such as the Anguilla Beautification Club (Environment) and the island's School Environment Clubs, also plays a part in the promotion of environmental awareness.

The Anguilla National Trust, through its conservation programme, is collaborating with its regional and international partners, with the major goal of developing a system of parks and protected areas. Inventories of the island's bird life are in progress. Of utmost importance are Anguilla's salt ponds. These wetlands are habitat for various bird species, which include the endangered roseate terns, least terns and red-billed tropic birds, a species of special concern. During hurricanes and periods of heavy rains, they act as flood control areas.

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Production of this board was supported by RSPB (the UK partner of BirdLife International) and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

THE ANGUILLA
NATIONAL TRUST



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Photographs courtesy of Clem Gerber, Thomas McCarthy, Ivor Hodge (Kandid Photos) and the Department of Physical Planning.

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The isolated island chain of Bermuda is located in the western North Atlantic 965 km east of Cape Hatteras, USA. With a total land area of just 55 km², the UK's oldest Overseas Territory comprises over 150 limestone islands that sit on the largest of three volcanic seamounts formed about 110 million years ago. Influenced by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, Bermuda's shallow-water platform covers an area of about 1000 km², and supports the northernmost coral reef system in the world.

Despite a long history of conservation, the Island's conservation agencies are faced with a challenge. Bermuda's low-rolling hills are largely suburban in character, supporting a resident population of over 60,000 concentrated on the 7 largest islands. Economic growth, based on tourism and international business, attracts 500,000 visitors each year. The pressure for development, coupled with the ever-increasing problem of introduced species, pose an escalating threat to the fragile ecology of the Island.

Organisations such as the Bermuda Audubon Society and Bermuda National Trust have focused on the acquisition, restoration and management of critical habitats, most notably wetlands, as well as conservation advocacy. The Bermuda Zoological Society meanwhile has concentrated on promoting environmental education and community participation in *in-situ* research and conservation activities. All work closely with the Bermuda Government's conservation efforts.

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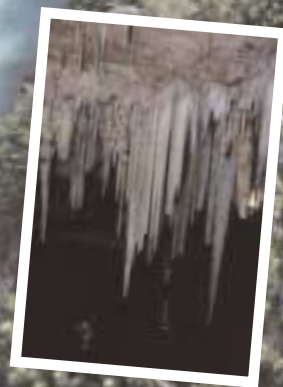
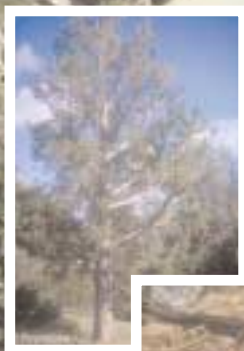


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Photographs courtesy of Bermuda Government Information Services: Stephen Bairdridge, Richard Ground, Martin Thomas.

Bermuda: An Oasis of Life in an Oceanic Desert

About 250 of over 8,000 plant and animal species known from Bermuda are unique. Many of these are found in the extensive network of submerged caves (inset) and, like the fabled cahow and Bermuda skink (both pictured), are critically endangered. Others, such as the Bermuda cedar (pictured), nearly wiped out in the 1940s by an introduced scale insect, are more common, due to island-wide planting schemes.



Gibraltar: A Crossroads for Wildlife



Soaring birds (like this short-toed eagle) pass over twice a year. Gibraltar's waters are home to dolphins and many other animals; many traverse the Straits between Mediterranean and Atlantic. Species confined to Gibraltar include sea-slugs, snails and plants (e.g. Gibraltar candytuft in the main picture). Within Europe, Barbary macaques (the famous "apes") are unique to Gibraltar.



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Gibraltar is a narrow peninsula 7km long attached to Iberia by a low, sandy isthmus. A Mediterranean wildlife community survives on the impressive limestone cliffs and slopes with their scrub, patches of woodland, caves and rocky shoreline. A steep cliff rises from the Mediterranean on the east to 398 metres. On the west the Rock slopes more gradually through scrubland, with the city (where most of the 28,000 people live) nestled at the foot, partly on land claimed from the sea. To the south are a series of stony terraces.

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, a Partner of BirdLife International and of the Forum, is the membership-based voluntary organisation working to study, protect and manage the fauna and flora.

Urban development has been dramatic since the early 1900s. This continues, with loss of natural habitat. Important plant and animal species are protected and much of the Mediterranean scrub and cliffs are within a nature reserve. There is a continuing need to extend protection to other sites including the sea.

A longstanding problem is commercial net-fishing and seabed-raking in territorial waters by Spanish fishermen, with an adverse effect on marine life.

Environmental impacts that need management include intense use of land and sea for tourism, and sea and air pollution from industrial activities in the region. Exotic invasive plant species present problems; there is potential for work in habitat restoration and re-introduction of plants and animals to restored or newly protected areas.

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Photographs courtesy of Leslie Linares, Eric Shaw and Albert Yome.

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Ascension Island lies in splendid isolation, just south of the equator, in the middle of the Atlantic. It has spectacular volcanic scenery. Because of its remoteness, it was not settled until the 19th century when Napoleon was held captive on the neighbouring island of St Helena, 1,300 km away. At that time, the main island, though very barren, held huge populations of seabirds. However, rats soon arrived by ship, and donkeys and cats were deliberately introduced. In an effort to beautify the island, many tropical flowers were planted. The result of all these introductions was the rapid decline in seabird numbers so that, today, most can nest only on smaller islets off-shore. The only residents are those working there under short-term contracts for the military and civilian organisations which have operations there. The local voluntary conservation organisation is the Ascension Heritage Society.

The main threats to the island's conservation interests are twofold: public ignorance or disinterest in the value of Ascension's biodiversity; and spread of introduced species, particularly mesquite thorn, cats and rats.

Currently, two globally endangered birds, Ascension frigatebird (pictured) and red-footed booby, are threatened. The recently introduced Mexican thorn bush threatens Ascension's green turtle population (pictured), the surviving unique desert flora and fauna and some geological features.

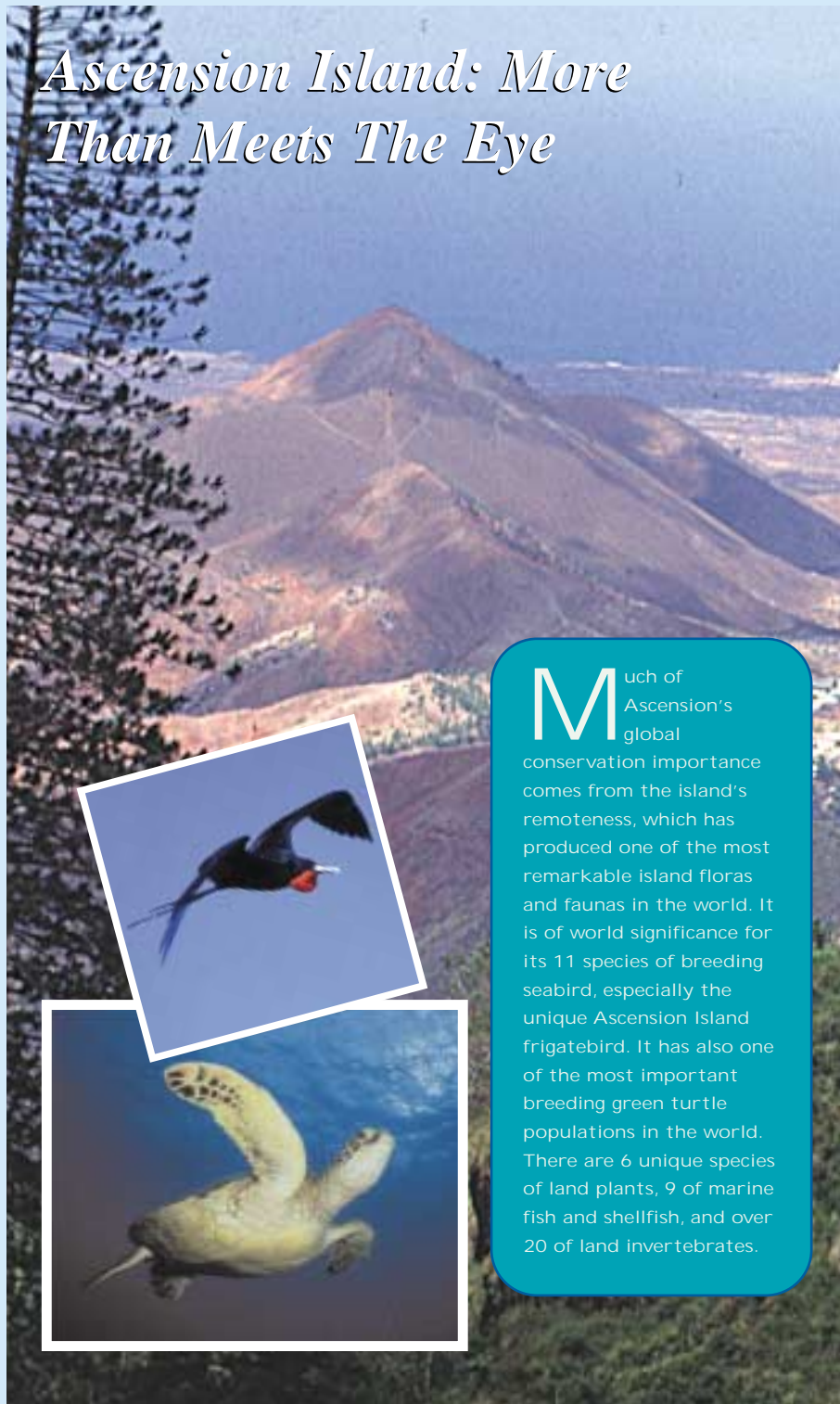
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Photographs courtesy of Jan Stevenson (RSPB) & National Museums of Kenya.

Ascension Island: More Than Meets The Eye



Much of Ascension's global

conservation importance comes from the island's remoteness, which has produced one of the most remarkable island floras and faunas in the world. It is of world significance for its 11 species of breeding seabird, especially the unique Ascension Island frigatebird. It has also one of the most important breeding green turtle populations in the world. There are 6 unique species of land plants, 9 of marine fish and shellfish, and over 20 of land invertebrates.



St Helena: Fragments of a Lost World

St Helena's isolated position in the South Atlantic has given rise to an unusual and remarkable land and marine flora and fauna. Of the 60 known native species of plant, 45 occur nowhere else (including the white ebony flower, pictured). Of 1100 land invertebrates, 400 are unique to St Helena. At least six unique land birds once occurred on St Helena, only one (the wirebird, pictured) survives today. Ten shore fishes are found only around the island, and 16 more are found only here and at Ascension.



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St Helena, 122 sq km, has a resident population of 5010. It lies 1,960km from the SW coast of Africa and 2,900km east of South America. The nearest land is Ascension Island, 1300 km north. The Environmental Conservation Section of the St Helena Government Agriculture and Natural Resources Department has been the lead agency in environmental conservation. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the St Helena Nature Conservation Group and the Sandy Bay Environmental Centre, are increasingly active in the development of conservation and education.

Massive destruction of native plants and animals followed the Island's discovery in 1502. Deliberate introductions of alien plants and animals have caused further declines of habitats and species. Remaining, scattered patches of native vegetation are too small to have preserved all the plants of the varied habitats. Six species have become extinct, and several survive only in cultivation. Small population sizes and alien species are the greatest threats to the survival of St Helena's land plants and animals. Reasons for the decline of wirebirds are being studied.

The activity most affecting the marine environment is fishing. St Helena's unique fishes are not important commercially. However, fishing effort directed at lobsters, glass eys and groupers has impacted the inshore nutrient cycling systems. Quotas are now set for the grouper fishery after recognition of a danger of over-fishing.

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Photographs courtesy of Rebecca Cairns-Wicks

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Tristan da Cunha, rising to over 2000m above sea level, is miles from anywhere in the South Atlantic Ocean. With its neighbouring islands of Nightingale and Inaccessible, and Gough Island, 300km to the SE, it warrants a mention in the Guinness Book of Records as the most isolated inhabited island in the world, being over 1,900km from St Helena and 2,400km west of Cape Town.

Only the island of Tristan da Cunha itself is inhabited. At the start of the millennium, the population (which has never exceeded 300 throughout the previous 184 years of occupation) totalled 284.

Being isolated and devoid of all living organisms at its volcanic origin, the evolving flora and fauna of the island hold a special interest for scientists and visitors. The Tristan Government is keenly aware of the need to live in balance with its environment because the economy of the community is dependent on sustainable harvests of lobster and fish. The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for administering the Island's strict environmental policies. Over 40% of Tristan's territory is a declared nature reserve and Gough Island is a World Heritage Site.

There are no indigenous terrestrial mammals. Man has left his mark on the main island and the introduction of rats and mice in the 1880s destroyed much of Tristan Island's indigenous bird life. Fortunately the islands of Nightingale and Inaccessible remain rodent free and are home to several unique indigenous land birds. Continual education of new generations of Tristanians is required to safeguard their special environment.

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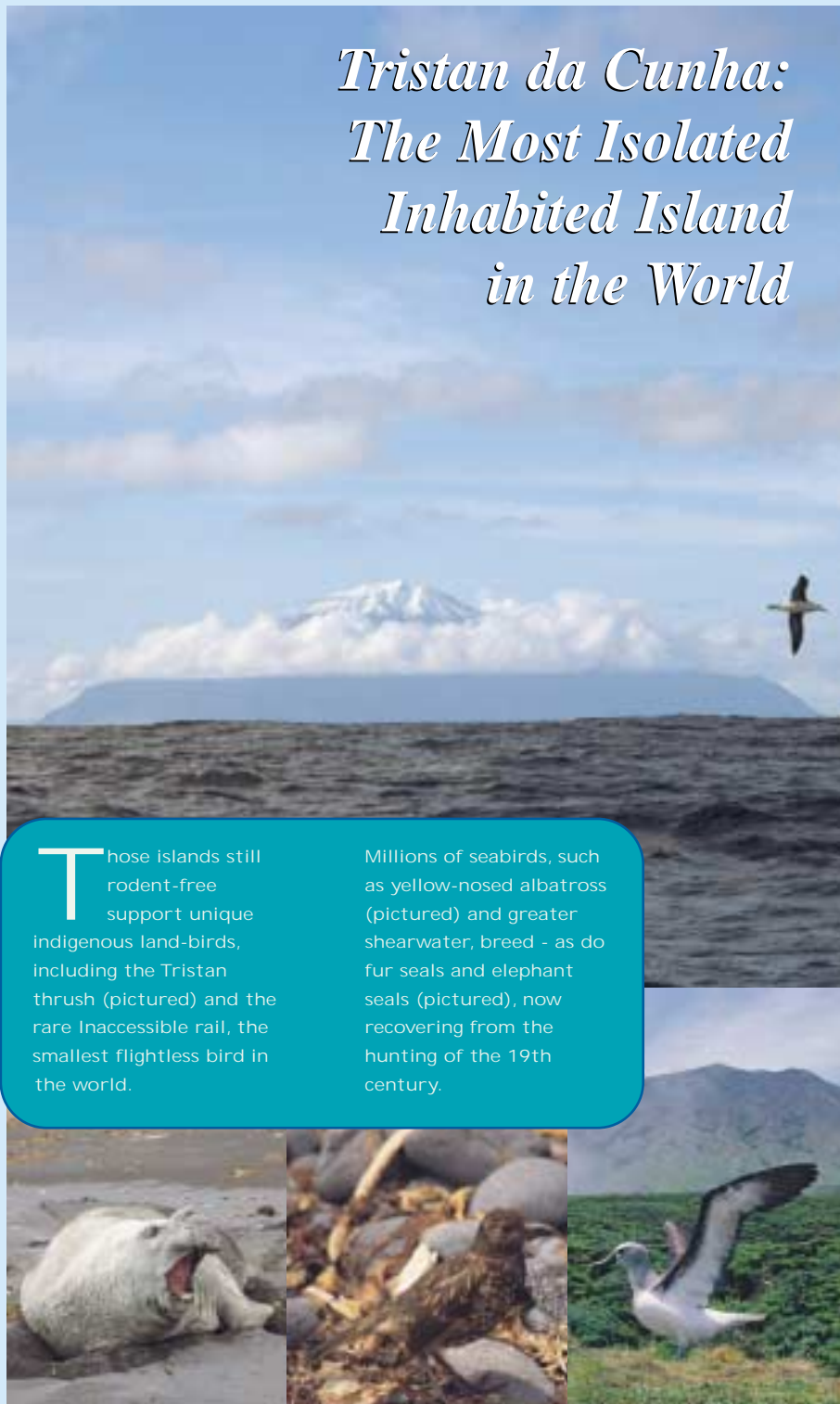
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Photographs courtesy of Brian Baldwin.

Tristan da Cunha: The Most Isolated Inhabited Island in the World



Those islands still rodent-free support unique indigenous land-birds, including the Tristan thrush (pictured) and the rare Inaccessible rail, the smallest flightless bird in the world.

Millions of seabirds, such as yellow-nosed albatross (pictured) and greater shearwater, breed - as do fur seals and elephant seals (pictured), now recovering from the hunting of the 19th century.



UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The Falkland Islands (population 2,500) lie in the South Atlantic on the equivalent latitude to London, about 650km off the coast of South America and 1600km from Antarctica. This remote archipelago of 700 islands covers an area half the size of Wales. Falklands Conservation (www.falklands-nature.demon.co.uk) is an active conservation charity based in the Islands devoted to protecting their unique wildlife. Its work is supported by the Falkland Islands Government, RSPB and WWF-UK, and members in both the Falklands and UK.

Sheep farming has led to considerable reductions in the abundance of native plants such as the giant tussac grass, a very important habitat for birds and insects in a treeless landscape. Felton's flower (*pictured below*), which grows nowhere else in the world, has become almost extinct in the wild through over-grazing. Efforts to replant tussac grass and Felton's flower have begun.

In the surrounding seas large scale commercial fisheries compete with seabirds for fish and squid. Penguins (*pictured middle; king penguin*) take other prey in addition to commercial species but a recent survey revealed declines in four of the five breeding species. Off the South American coast, long line fisheries are a threat to black-browed albatrosses (*pictured top*).

Oil exploration around the Islands is a recent issue of conservation concern. It could have a serious impact on an area of exceptional marine life. Penguins, which cannot fly, are especially vulnerable to oil pollution.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (www.ukotcf.org) brings together non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and institutions in UK and the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). It promotes the co-ordinated conservation of the diverse and increasingly threatened plant and animal species and natural habitats of the UKOTs. It does this by providing assistance in the form of expertise, information and liaison between NGOs and governments, both in the UK and in the UKOTs.

Production of this board was supported by RSPB (the UK partner of BirdLife International) and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Photographs courtesy of PhotoMill Picture Library (Arcman/PRA), N. Woods & Tony Chaler

Falkland Islands: Wildlife Haven in the South Atlantic



The Falkland Islands are exceptionally rich in marine life. They contain vast colonies of seabirds - 85% of the world population of black-browed albatrosses, and the largest concentration of rockhopper penguins. They are breeding grounds for sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals, and fifteen species of whale and dolphin occur in the surrounding seas.



UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

South Georgia lies 1300 km SE of the Falkland Islands, and the South Sandwich Islands (SSI) a further 760 km SE. South Georgia is mountainous with many glaciers, permanent ice covering almost half of its total land area of 3755 km². Part of the old whaling station at Grytviken has been converted into the South Georgia Museum. The South Sandwich Islands consist of an uninhabited 240 km chain of active volcanic islands.

There are estimated to be 53 million birds on South Georgia. The most numerous is the macaroni penguin with more than two million breeding pairs. It is an important nesting site for the largest seabird in the world, the wandering albatross. There are further large seabird colonies in SSI, with chinstrap penguin in vast numbers.

Licensed commercial fishing for fin-fish, squid and krill takes place in the surrounding seas. Two British Antarctic Survey research stations at Bird Island and King Edward Point undertake marine research to understand the biology of the Southern Ocean and support a sustainable fishery. Much remains to be discovered about the sea-bed communities. The Environmental Management Plan for South Georgia provides a framework for waste management, protected areas and control of alien species. Rats threaten seabird and pipit populations so it is important the eradication programmes are implemented. It is important that the UK Government provides modern conservation legislation to support the Plan. Visitors from cruise ships are increasing but regulations are in place to ensure minimum disturbance.

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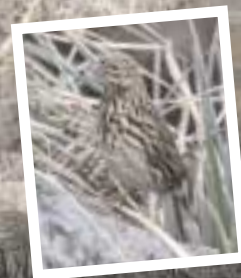
Production of this board was supported by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Photographs courtesy of Pete Bucktrout, R I Lewis-Smith, David Walton (British Antarctic Survey).

South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands: Icy Jewels in the Southern Ocean

The South Georgia pipit (pictured) is unique to the island. Several seal species breed on the 2 island groups and whales (humpback pictured) are frequently seen offshore. Despite a very limited number of flowering plants, there is great diversity in the mosses and lichens (pictured), many found nowhere else in the world.



British Antarctic Territory: Life in the Frozen South

On land, although vegetation is sparse, there are many types of lichen, moss and algae. In the surrounding seas, vast amounts of krill (pictured) provide the basis for rich marine life. This includes whales, seals and very large numbers of birds especially petrels and penguins, inhabiting the islands and coastal areas of the Peninsula. Adélie (pictured) and emperor penguins both breed on the continent itself.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

This Territory consists of all the land, including the Antarctic Peninsula, and the Southern Ocean, south of 60° S between 20° and 80° west, an area of 1,709,400km². Although the UK claim overlaps with those of Argentina and Chile, the Antarctic Treaty provides an internationally agreed regime for the area, recognising its importance as an area for peace and science. There is no permanent population but the British Antarctic Survey have two year-round and one summer-only research stations here. Many other countries also have research stations in this region. The Southern Ocean offers unique opportunities for understanding evolution in marine systems.

The Protocol for the Protection of the Antarctic Environment, enacted as the Antarctic Act 1994, provides a licensing regime for all activities in the Territory by British nationals. This legislation also covers environmental monitoring and impact assessment, waste management, oil spills and protected areas and species. Management of commercial fishing is by international agreement through the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Annual meetings of the Treaty and CCAMLR provide a forum for monitoring environmental activities and fishing. Major current issues include management of increasing tourism, proposals for the southern ocean whale sanctuary and climate change.

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British
Antarctic Survey



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Photographs courtesy of Pete Bucktrout, Chris Gilbert (British Antarctic Survey), Michael Gore FRS

Pitcairn Islands: Nature's Bounty in a Remote Pacific Outpost



Despite isolation, the unique wildlife of the Pitcairn Islands needs a helping hand. Some endemic plants (e.g. the tree fern and aillhow pictured) survive in remnants of indigenous vegetation on Pitcairn Island. Globally important seabird populations (including Murphy's petrel, pictured) on the other islands are threatened by Pacific rats. A female green turtle hauls ashore to nest on Henderson Island.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

Pitcairn Island is best known as the haven for the mutineers from HMS Bounty over 200 years ago. This group of four small, varied South Pacific islands range from Pitcairn itself (4.5km²) to Henderson Island - a 37km² raised coral atoll and the largest island - and low-lying coral atolls of Oeno and Ducie. The nearest land masses are over 4,500km away, New Zealand to WSW and South America to the east. Only Pitcairn is inhabited; the small community of less than 50 lives at Adamstown, isolated by more than a day's sail from its nearest neighbours in French Polynesia, around 500km NW.

Pitcairn biodiversity and conservation needs have become better known in recent years following a major scientific expedition in 1991-92. The indigenous vegetation of Pitcairn Island is confined to small, isolated patches. Now that a small nursery has been established on Pitcairn, sustained restoration effort is needed to safeguard these remnants and the endemic plants they support.

The other islands support a range of endemic plants and animals. The 'chicken bird' (a jet black, flightless rail confined to Henderson Island - a World Heritage Site) seems to be less vulnerable to predation by rats than are the petrels. Of special concern is the recently described Henderson petrel.

Darwin Initiative and other UK funds have helped develop local conservation skills and support a successful rat eradication programme on Oeno and Ducie.

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Photographs courtesy of Michael Brooke and Stephen Waldren.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) comprises the 55 islands of the Chagos Archipelago. The land area is only 44km². But, below the territorial seas lie over 20,000km² of coral reefs - a pristine treasure store of marine life. The Archipelago lies at the centre of the Indian Ocean, its only human inhabitants now being military personnel on the southernmost island, Diego Garcia.

The biological importance of the Chagos Archipelago is two-fold. First, its isolation and low level of human impact make it ideal for the study of tropical marine ecology, undistorted by pollution. Second, ocean currents bring larvae from the Indo-Pacific basin which then develop into adulthood and release progeny to regenerate the depleted stocks further west.

Through control of commercial fishing, legislation to protect the environment and the application of International Conventions, the Government sets a protective framework, treating the area with all the strictness applicable to World Heritage Sites. Within this, the Friends of the Chagos, a charity formed to promote conservation of the Territory's diverse and delicate ecology, helps establish conservation priorities. Its main challenges are to assist the regeneration of indigenous flora and fauna and to minimise human damage.

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British Indian Ocean Territory: Nature's Stepping Stones



The islands are home to large colonies of sea birds, as well as to the unusual coconut crab (illustrated) and provide nesting sites for green turtles and the more endangered hawksbill (illustrated).

Photographs courtesy of David Dixon, Jack Jackson/WWF-UK, Anne and Charles Sheppard.

THE OTHER UK TERRITORIES OUTSIDE GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

The **British Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on Cyprus** comprise parts of Cyprus which remained British territory when the Republic of Cyprus was created in 1960. They cover 98 square miles, 47.5 around Akrotiri, the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) and 50.5 around Dhekelia, the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). The administration of the Bases is driven by three main policy objectives: effective use as a military base; full co-operation with the Republic of Cyprus; and protection of those resident or working in the Bases.

The SBAA is responsible for protection of the environment in the bases and works closely with the relevant Cypriot Republic departments, e.g. to protect breeding loggerhead and green turtles on the beaches within the WSBA. The most important wetland on the island of Cyprus, Akrotiri salt lake, lies within the WSBA and is proposed as a Ramsar wetland site of international importance (greater flamingoes pictured). Rare endemic orchids, colonies of birds of prey and various reptiles and amphibians are also found within the Bases, as well as many migrant songbirds. Two major problems are: shooting in both the ESBA and WSBA, particularly around Akrotiri salt lake, and netting and trapping of small migrant song-birds on migration in the ESBA in spring and autumn. These practices are illegal in both the Republic of Cyprus and the SBAs (whose laws mirror those of the Republic).



Michael Gore FRPS

Maura Mitchell



The three **Crown Dependencies** (below) have some similarities in status to the UK Overseas Territories.

The **Isle of Man**, in the Irish Sea nearly equidistant from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, is 53 km long with an area of 572 km². Its human population is about 75,500. More than 40% of the Island is uninhabited hill land.

The Isle sits within a rich marine ecosystem supporting puffin, Manx shearwater, grey seals and basking sharks (pictured) - possibly under threat of extinction from hunting. Once the tail and fins are cut-off (for shark fin soup) the shark, sometimes still alive, is thrown back into the sea. Terrestrial ecosystems range from hill-land to coastal heath. Much of these and the intervening agricultural land retain elements of traditional farming methods, important for orchids, the protected Langness grasshopper, and many different bird species, including the biggest hen harrier roost in Western Europe, peregrine, long-eared and short-eared

owls, and chough, a bird now restricted to certain uplands and coastal fringes of Europe.

The Channel Islands, about 20 km from the northwest coast of France, formed part of the Dukedom of Normandy which conquered England in 1066. There are two separate dependencies.

A & R Prelli



The **Bailiwick of Guernsey** includes the island of Guernsey and the neighbouring islands of Alderney, Sark, Brecqhou, Herm, Jethou and Lihou. It has a total land area of 78 km² with a population of 62,000.

With its mild climate, Guernsey boasts nearly 2000 species of plants and a diverse range of invertebrates, many absent from the UK. There are dramatic cliffs with nesting seabirds, and maritime grassland with the rare Glanville fritillary butterfly, cliff-top scrub supporting many species of migrant bird, steep wooded valleys running down to the sea, and quiet, rural lanes. The characteristic earthbank hedgerows are home to endemics such as Guernsey vole, greater white-toothed shrew and Guernsey fern (pictured). The island's 10-metre tides provide a large littoral zone, supporting a wide range of marine species and many species of waders (shorebirds). Dune grassland and fragments of threatened wet meadow habitat provide summer display of orchids and other wildlife.

To improve the Island's biodiversity further, local authorities have implemented a new system of farm subsidy. This programme aims to make farming less intensive and encourages farmers to undertake various conservation measures.

Owing to the large tidal range (up to 12 m), the land area of the **Bailiwick of Jersey** increases 40% from 117 km² to 163 km² at low tide. On the southeast coast there is a large, intertidal area (pictured) designated as a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance which is rich in bird-life and other marine fauna and flora. Jersey's geographical position partly explains the large number (33) of UK Red Data Book species supported. Species include four reptiles (two lizards, the green and wall, not found in the UK), two amphibians (including the agile frog, which is not found in the UK), the red squirrel, several invertebrates rare or not recorded in UK, and a rich lichen flora, not to mention the rich marine life.

Andrew Syvret



A biodiversity strategy is being developed which includes habitat and species action plans. In addition to the inter-tidal, important habitats include dunes in the west and coastal heath-land on the southwest and north coasts.

With the high density of population (88,000 residents and approximately 600,000 visitors per year), 20% of the island is urban; 54% is farmland and the still considerable 26% semi-natural habitats. Jersey is extremely well connected to the outside world, because of the needs of the finance industry and tourism. However, there is a residual isolationist sentiment, political complacency and resistance to the responsibility to preserve biodiversity.

More information on these four territories, and the others, can be found on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org).

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories



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

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

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

Four good reasons to become a Friend



1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the Overseas Territories.
2. You understand that the only way to guarantee their protection is to build local institutions and create environmental awareness in the countries where they are found.
3. You care about what is happening in the Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date by regular copies of Forum News and the Forum's Annual Report.

4. You understand that the Overseas Territories are part of Britain, and therefore are not eligible for most international grant sources - but neither are they eligible for most domestic British ones, so help with fundraising is essential.

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

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

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend

Company name for Corporate Friend

Address

Tel _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Send to: UKOTCF, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 5LF, UK Fax: +44 1733 569325

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

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

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

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

☐ American Express ☐ Delta ☐ JCB
☐ MasterCard ☐ Solo ☐ Switch ☐ Visa

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Raising awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The Forum is currently supported by the following international conservation and scientific organisations:

British Ecological Society
British Microbial Biodiversity Association
British Ornithologists' Union
CAB International
Fauna and Flora International
National Trust
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
World Wide Fund for Nature
Zoological Society of London

Member organisations for individual UK Overseas

Territories and Crown Dependencies are:

Anguilla National Trust
Ascension Heritage Society
Bermuda Audubon Society
Bermuda National Trust
Bermuda Zoological Society
Friends of the Chagos
British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust
National Trust for the Cayman Islands
Falklands Conservation
Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society
La Société Guernesiale
La Société Jersiaise
National Trust for Jersey
Manx Cough Project
Montserrat National Trust
St. Helena National Trust
National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands

Some of the world's most pristine coral reefs surround several of UK's Overseas Territories, providing the basis for their economies. Animals throughout the world's oceans depend upon breeding grounds in these islands.

Photographs courtesy of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library

Production of this board was supported by WWF-UK.



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