

JUL - SEP 2012
ISSUE 01

EUROPEAN TERRITORIES WORKING GROUP

ETWVG



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 01 \ JUL - SEP '12



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WELCOME

Welcome to the First ever European Territories Working Group (ETWG) e-newsletter! This newsletter has taken a long time to set up but will now be available quarterly. Each issue includes updates from the Isle of Man, Channel Islands, Gibraltar and the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas. Each e-newsletter spreads awareness of conservation programmes in place in each of the European territories with exciting news updates on their progress following implementation. As the e-newsletter is in its early stages, any suggestions for inclusion in future letters is appreciated, please contact felixdriver@hotmail.com In this e-newsletter there is exciting news from the Isle of Man, a development that has taken a long time to achieve.

ETWVG



LOCATION; Ramsey Shore, Isle of Mann
SOURCE: JAMES CUBBON

ISLE OF MAN



ISLE OF MAN AND THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

August 2012 sees the culmination of years of work to get the Convention on Biological Diversity extended to the Island. At last, after our lengthy self-assessment, an overwhelmingly positive public consultation, agreement in the Council of Ministers and acceptance by JNCC and DEFRA, it has finally happened. On 6th August the CBD is to be extended to the island, the first UK territory to be added since 1992.

MARINE RESERVE

Motions are in place to establish a Marine Nature Reserve in Ramsey Bay. The main features that would be protected in the proposed Reserve include an extensive horse mussel reef in the Ballacash Channel off the Point of Ayre, Maerl beds in Ramsey Bay and eelgrass meadows off Port Lewaigue. Zoning of the proposed reserve means that conservation priorities have been identified and zones of greater and lesser protection will be proposed, marrying conservation with sustainable use for economic gain. It will include a Fisheries Management Zone and a Conservation Zone to protect some of the features of conservation importance. Although a no-take zone had originally been proposed, this has been dropped following representations from bait-takers. However, there will still be zones that are protected from more damaging practices.

TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

An economic assessment of terrestrial ecosystem services was recently carried out on the Isle of Man. This was in contrast to a newspaper headline on the island, which stated: "Economy or Ecology: you can't have both". The study was carried out by Hong Kong-based Luke Brander and looked at all habitats on the island, taken from a twenty year habitat survey. It included factors such as visitor numbers, water protection and flooding prevention. The model, once finalised, estimated the value of ecosystem services on the Isle of Man at £42 million. Although the study was not exhaustive, it was a serious attempt to explain in monetary terms the services that are provided free to the Isle of Man by the environment. It would be extremely interesting to see similar studies carried out for other Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.

WILDLIFE LEGISLATION MEETING ON THE ISLE OF MAN

A meeting on Conservation Legislation was held on the Isle of Man in March. Representatives from Manx Heritage, Manx Wildlife, the Police's Wildlife Crime Officer and delegates from other Crown Dependencies spoke for a day and a half about matters such as species and habitat conservation, European legislation, CITES and the duty of government officers to look after biodiversity. A delegate from Northern Ireland also attended and spoke about biodiversity responsibilities in Northern Ireland, including their final ratification of legislation using 'the Scottish Wording', which provides the strongest wording in favour of biodiversity conservation.

ISLE OF MAN AT MONTREAL MEETING

A recent CBD meeting held in Montreal, Canada was attended by Liz Charter, the Principal Biodiversity Officer of the Isle of Man's Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture. This followed an invitation to attend circulated by JNCC to its group on the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Whilst at the meeting, Liz presented a poster about the Isle of Man's Marine Reserve.



CYPRUS SBA

CYPRUS SBAs UPDATE:

The SBAA Environmental department are currently very busy updating their environmental plan. However a recent article in the Sanctuary magazine entitled 'Biodiversity Conservation within the Sovereign Base areas of Cyprus' was published. This article includes background information of the SBA's as well as interesting species counts, management processes and future concerns and pressures of the SBA's.

This article can be accessed at: http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/media/pdf/d/k/MOD_Sanctuary.pdf

UPDATE AT WESTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA (WSBA):

The SBAA Environmental department organised and conducted the Marine Turtle Survey at WSBA between 2010 and 2011 though published in January 2012. As well as the SBAA, surveillance was undertaken by additional bodies listed in the report. Concern over high levels of green and Loggerhead turtle mortality on WSBA beaches implemented the need for a survey to assess greater understanding of localised communities and the possible threats of localised activities such as fishing industries on their existence. For more information see:

http://www.sba.mod.uk/docs/eco/20120206-turtlesurvey-u-eco_V1.3.pdf

AKROTIRI ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INFORMATION CENTRE (AEEIC)

Thomas Hadjikyriakou, Manager of the AEEIC recently reported the following progress over the last 6 months:

- Implementation environmental programmes for about 3000 children.
- AEEIC has started offering 3 day education programmes for children.
- Implementations of education programmes for about 150 University students.
- 3 University Students doing practical research work at Akrotiri.
- AEEIC implemented and participated in 3 actions of the European Union lifelong learning programs.
- Completed a research project on birds and habitats association at Akrotiri peninsula.

Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories are invited to nominate their exceptional groups or individuals as regards conservation efforts for the annual Blue Turtle Award. This award is organised by JNCC and for 2010 the AEEIC was nominated!



CHANNEL ISLANDS

Contact:
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Jersey, Guernsey, Aldeney, Sark



SOMETHING NOT QUITE RIGHT

In December 2011 the British Trust of Ornithology launched a survey to collect information about abnormal plumages in avian fauna. This is centred on pigmentation irregularities, anecdotal reports show that birds can turn up in gardens with a variety of unusually-coloured feathers. Reasons for these abnormalities can be due to leucism and albinism (where there is loss of the pigment melanin), melanism (in which the amount and/or distribution of dark-coloured melanin pigment is often elevated), erythrism (where a chestnut-red pigment replaces certain other pigments) and flavism (where there is an excess of yellow pigment). Both erythrism and flavism are thought to be rare compared with leucism and melanism. Having a plumage that differs from the norm (such as the dunnock *Prunella modularis* in the above photo) is more often than not disadvantageous and will reduce the individual's chance of survival as it will stand out to predators. For further information you can visit: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/about/background/projects/plumage>

As this is being carried out for British garden birds only at the moment, it would be interesting to see if any abnormal plumages are being noted across the European territories. If you have seen any abnormal plumages please email us and send us a picture.

Jersey

NEW MONITORING TRIAL

In November last year the National Trust for Jersey acquired a remote wildlife camera trap using funds from the Royal Bank of Canada's 'Bluewater project'. The purpose of acquiring such a camera was to help the countryside team to better monitor and understand the bird life within the reed-beds at two of their wetland sites. In particular the team was keen to focus on some of the reed-beds more secretive birds such as water rail *Rallus aquaticus* and bittern *Botaurus stellaris*. Within the initial two months, the monitoring of Jersey's wintering bitterns proved so successful that the decision was made to purchase another three camera traps. The new traps have been able to continue the previous trend, catching passing migrants, some of the wetlands marsh harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and new behaviour not previously recorded in Jersey before, such as bittern swimming. This year they have confirmed the breeding of ocharad *Aythya farina*, shoveler *Anas clypeata* and water rail. Water rail were only confirmed as a breeding species in 2010, this year due to the monitoring via camera trap have revealed that in May 2011 they have bred again with great success with one of the pairs having five young. One of the island's ornithologists has said 'It is fantastic to be able to gain this much insight in to what is normally such a secretive bird that so little is known about.'

Update: The cameras have been active for their second winter and keep adding new species on to their capture list as well as continually providing information on the target species. With the winter of 2011-2012 showed a lot of bittern activity. Their presence seems to be increasing each year. Now that the trial is proving to be successful future plans are afoot to develop the monitoring and to use the information to adjust management plans to better improve the habitat in some of Jersey's most precious eco-systems.





Bittern, Jersey



Basking Shark, Isle of Man



Tompot Blenny



GIBRALTAR

CORTES ELECTED MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

Long-standing General Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) and Council Member of the UKOTCF, Dr John Cortes was recently elected to Government in Gibraltar. John had never stood for election and this is his first experience in parliament. John stood as a candidate for the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party (GSLP) and forms part of the GSLP/Gibraltar Liberal Party Alliance government. He did extremely well in what was an incredibly close election and received the second most votes out of the thirty candidates that stood for election, only seventy-five votes fewer than Gibraltar's new Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo. Indeed, many attribute the Alliance's victory in part to John's popularity with the electorate, which affectionately dubbed him 'the Gardener' in reference to his former role as Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens.

Following the election on the 8th December 2011, Dr Cortes was appointed Minister for Health and the Environment by the Chief Minister and now heads two important and indeed interlinked ministries. The reaction from those in Gibraltar with biological interests and environmental concerns has of course been positive, and there are strong expectations that John will address many of Gibraltar's environmental problems and conservation issues effectively. The new Government has made a number of environmental commitments in its manifesto, such as:

- "Green" port services
- To reduce Gibraltar's carbon footprint with an aim to making the territory carbon neutral
- An environmental filter on all Government decisions, to be conducted by the Department of the Environment
- A stronger tree planting and protection programme
- Regulation of fishing and diving activities
- A review of policy documents relating to environmental issues and the publication of a management plan for the Upper Rock Nature Reserve

It is also committed to extending openness and transparency in government and has already, for example, made the meetings of the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) and the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) public, both of which John Cortes sits in. This is a new and exciting challenge for John, who certainly has the necessary knowledge and energy to make a real difference to Gibraltar's environment.

NEW GENERAL SECRETARY FOR GONHS AND DIRECTOR FOR THE BOTANIC GARDENS

John Cortes had to resign his position as Council Member and General Secretary of the GONHS as soon as he announced his candidacy, in order for the organisation to remain independent of any political party. Following John's resignation, the new GONHS Council was elected in January 2012. Charles Perez was subsequently appointed as the new General Secretary of the organisation. Many of those with links to the UKOTCF will know Charlie from his participation at meetings, or will recognise his name from Gibraltar-related publications on biodiversity and conservation. Charlie has been involved in the study and conservation of Gibraltar's wildlife. An ornithologist since childhood, Charlie quickly expanded his interests to include Butterflies & Moths (Lepidoptera), for which he is producing a catalogue of species from Gibraltar. More recently, Charlie has expanded into other insect orders, most notably beetles (Coleoptera), which he has been cataloguing with Keith Bensusan, with whom he has produced a number of publications. The pair also co-authored 'Upper Rock Nature Reserve. A Management and Action Plan' and Charlie then produced Gibraltar's 'Biodiversity Action Plan'. It was therefore no surprise that he was enthusiastically nominated and appointed General Secretary.



GIBRALTAR

Although he had to resign from GONHS Council, John Cortes still remains an active member of the organisation. He is also still a council member of the UKOTCF.

Upon being elected to Parliament, John also had to resign from his professional position as Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens. In this he is succeeded by Dr Keith Bensusan, who until then had been Deputy Director of the Botanic Gardens. The Gibraltar Botanic Gardens are building a collection of plants from the UKOTs in order to help raise awareness on the Rock of the other Territories and their wildlife. Keith is also closely involved with the UKOTCF, being the Secretary of the Europe Territories Working Group.

GONHS FACEBOOK PAGE

The GONHS Facebook page has become increasingly popular since its inception, attracting new members to the organisation and encouraging those who join the group to post items, questions, photographs of plants or animals for identification, or take part in general discussions. It is an excellent way for the GONHS Council to keep in touch with its membership and those interested in Gibraltar's wildlife. All UKOTCF members and affiliates who are interested are welcome to join the group, which can be found by searching for 'GONHS (Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society)' on Facebook.



EDITORIAL TEAM

Piers Sanguan Channel Islands

Keith Bensusan Gibraltar and Isle of Man

Felix Driver Cyprus SBA & ETWG Newsletter Coordinator

A Note from the designer

I am proud to be involved in the production and design of the new ETWG newsletter and to be associated with the valuable work that the UKOTCF promote and spearhead globally. This newsletter should be moulded by the aims and mission statement of ETWG readers. Please contact **felixdriver@hotmail.com** regarding any improvements/changes that need to be made for future editions pending your approval of this initial issue.

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