



UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) e-Newsletter

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Number 1

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Cayman Conference 2009
www.ukotcf.org

Welcome to the first SOWG e-Newsletter, which we hope will help to keep you informed of activities related to UKOTs in the Southern Oceans. This will probably be sent out quarterly, but depending on input and feedback from Working Group members, it may be produced more frequently.

Cayman Conference 30th May-5th June

The Cayman Islands hosted an international environmental conference from 30th May to 5th June 2009, organised by UKOTCF with the support of the Cayman Islands Department of Environment and the National Trust., and of OTEP

This latest UKOTCF-organised conference provided an opportunity for government environmental bodies and NGOs to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships, so that UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems could learn about one another's history and experience of planning and conservation initiatives. It followed on from earlier conferences held in London (1999), Gibraltar (2000), Bermuda (2003) and Jersey (2006).

For the first time in this series of conferences, the event was attended by a UK environment Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In his address, Mr Irranca-Davies announced that the next round of the Darwin Initiative would see "potentially over £1.5 million being ear-marked for Darwin projects in the Overseas Territories." The conference, which attracted delegates from all over the world, warmly welcomed the Minister's announcement, and its recognition of the specific geographic and resource constraints affecting the UKOTs.

For more information see www.ukotcf.org

SOWG Facebook page

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SOWG Meetings and Skype

OTEP Successful Projects 2009

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SOWG Facebook page

One idea that stemmed from the SOWG meeting at the Cayman conference, on how to share information across the Southern Ocean UKOTs, was to use a Facebook page. As an experiment, this has been set up. For those that have a Facebook account, please contact cquick@ukotcf.org and you can be added to the SOWG page as a member.

SOWG Meetings and Skype

Another suggestion arising from the Working Group's meeting at the Cayman conference was that dates for SOWG meetings for the next two years might be agreed upon in advance, to allow for better planning. We are exploring this option, alongside the structure of the meetings themselves. As we plan to use Skype increasingly for remote participation in future meetings, please supply your Skype name to cquick@ukotcf.org

OTEP Successful Projects 2009

Green Mountain National Park education and visitors centre (ASC 601)

The AIG Conservation Department, together with Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, are currently developing (and will deliver by the end of this proposed project) species action plans for all endemic



plants found on Ascension. The object of the project is to provide an Education/Visitors centre in the middle of the National Park. This will provide the general public, visitors,

students and school children with a facility to learn about the National Park and Ascension's biodiversity.

Training will be provided at the centre, by the Conservation Department, on the importance of the conservation and monitoring of threatened (and control of invasive) plant species, horticultural protocols, red-listing, and collections management. The centre will also be used by researchers and students who visit Ascension to carry out work on the endemic plants and other species. For more information contact Stedson Stroud, Ascension Island Government, stedson.stroud@ascension.gov.ac (Photo: Old Red Lion Building the site of the new visitors centre, Mike Pienkowski)

Baselines for climate change: an emperor penguin census in British Antarctic Territory (BAT 601)

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Emperor penguin, *Aptenodytes forsteri*, populations are useful environmental indicators due to the birds' extreme reliance on sea-ice as a breeding platform. Great concern exists in the media and from NGOs regarding the future of emperor penguin populations, due in large part to warming trends documented in the BAT, and in particular close to the Antarctic Peninsula. The project will use satellite remote sensing imagery to estimate relative adult bird abundance at all the emperor penguin colonies located in the BAT, Antarctica.

Modern up-to-date information about the locations of emperor penguin colonies will be used to ensure adequate imagery. Remote sensing technology is logistically less intense and less costly than aerial or ground censuses when the objective is to document penguin presence and/or large emperor penguin population changes (e.g., such as potentially may occur with regional climate change). This analysis will provide a baseline population estimate for this species for future comparison. For further information contact: Peter Fretwell, British Antarctic Survey, p.fretwell@bas.ac.uk

Identifying important and vulnerable marine areas for conservation in British Antarctic Territory (BAT 602) *

This project aims to provide technical support and stakeholder input for the identification of important and vulnerable marine areas in waters off British Antarctic Territory. This will be a key contribution to work being undertaken by British Antarctic Survey to design networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean. For further information contact Dr Phil Trathan & Prof Eugene Murphy, British Antarctic Survey, pnt@bas.ac.uk / ejmu@bas.ac.uk

A Bird-watching Guide to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIO 601)

This project will produce a bird-watching guide to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The aim of the book will be to



raise awareness and promote the conservation of the archipelago's birdlife, primarily to the human population living on Diego Garcia but also in the UK, USA and other Overseas Territories. It will be a full-colour guide with photographs featuring all the birds regularly seen in BIOT and its waters (Photo: Red-footed Booby, taken on Diego Garcia, Lt Chris Patrick RNBWS). It will also

include chapters on the importance of BIOT ecologically in an international context; a brief history of the human occupation of the atolls; the designated Important Bird Areas and Strict Nature

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Reserves and a chapter dedicated to bird-watching on Diego Garcia. For more information contact: Major Peter Carr RM, peter.carr.uk@fe.navy.mil

Environmental monitoring for improved conservation management (BIO 602)

BIOT Administration needs further data on the condition of its marine and island habitats to facilitate and improve environmental management. It has made available its ship at no cost for two weeks in February 2010 for this purpose. Conservation in BIOT is guided by information gained from visits, especially in response to changing climate which has especially important implications in these low lying, vulnerable atolls, and sustained poaching of resources. Key elements needed now are (1) measurements of reef recovery and mortality given effects of climate change, (2) location and extent of shoreline erosion given changing reef health and sea level rise, (3) high-frequency deep and surface water temperature records to help explain item 1, (4) coral coring for trends and magnitude of climate change effects, (5) repeat counts of target food species given apparently ongoing poaching.

As well as BIOT's needs, Chagos now has a high international profile in scientific terms, and its data is increasingly used for international conservation planning in this ocean. For more information contact: Professor Charles Sheppard, Dept Biological Sciences, Warwick University charles.sheppard@warwick.ac.uk

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Falkland Islands Native Plants Programme (FAL 601)

This Project will advance conservation action necessary to protect the native plants and habitats of the Falkland Islands, in particular those that are threatened or endemic. It builds on previous projects, which have significantly improved knowledge of the distribution and status of these key species.

It will focus on 15 identified Important Plant Areas, at the same time setting up monitoring systems and implementing both species and habitat action plans. It will develop a national vegetation classification system to enable improved co-ordination and understanding between the conservation and agricultural communities. There will be a special effort made to encourage restoration of native plant habitats supported by a small-scale plant and seed nursery. A long-term monitoring programme of tussac grass will be set up at sites which have been replanted, sites which are being used as winter-feed for livestock and also where natural recovery is taking place after removal of grazing. It will take forward the study of lower plants, notably lichens, which are an exceptionally rich part of the Falklands flora. It aims to develop a greater awareness of the Islands' native plants. For more information contact: Ann Brown, Falklands Conservation, ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk

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www.falklandsconservation.com

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ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk

Cobb's Wren Conservation Project (FAL 602)

The Cobb's Wren Conservation Project will address the conservation needs for Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes cobbi*, an endangered (rated as *Vulnerable*) endemic bird of the Falkland

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Islands. It will involve surveying islands for which there are no known data on Cobb's Wren (Photo: FIG Environmental Planning Department), eradication of rats from islands where these rodents are known to be present and implementation of

biosecurity plans, thereby securing for the long term future, the rodent free status for islands of special importance to Falkland Islands biodiversity. For more information contact: Sally Poncet, Beaver Island Farm, sallyponcet@horizon.co.fk or sallyponcet2004@yahoo.co.uk

Ocean climate and rockhopper penguin foraging strategies (FAL 603)

The population of rockhopper penguins has dramatically declined on the Falklands Islands. The main cause for this decline is believed to be marine environmental changes, but it remains unclear what factors play the key role. Advanced logger technology enables us to monitor foraging behaviour of seabirds in combination with environmental conditions, often with greater accuracy and time resolution and at a much lower cost than ship-based surveys. This knowledge will form part of a monitoring programme for Falkland Island marine biodiversity and will help to identify appropriate conservation measures. (Photo: Georgina Strange, Design In Nature, NICT)

We aim to contribute to the protection of marine biodiversity in the SW Atlantic (1) by providing crucial information about the



foraging behaviours of rockhopper penguins, a focal species in the Species Action plan of the Falkland Islands. (2) by setting up a monitoring scheme at New Island, and proposing ways of

comparative data collection around the SW Atlantic rockhopper penguin colonies (3) by enhancing knowledge on ocean climate and its influence on different parts of the marine food chain. We will combine data loggers, transponder technology, and techniques of diet assessment at the rockhopper penguin colony of New Island. For more information contact: Ian J. Strange, M.B.E & Georgina Strange, New Islands Conservation Trust, furseal@horizon.co.uk

Illustrated field guides to the flora of St Helena (STH 601) *

This project will produce two complete illustrated guides to the flora of St Helena. The guides will describe in an accessible manner the endemic, indigenous and introduced (1) higher plants and ferns and (2) the lower flora (bryophytes & lichens) found on St Helena. (Photo: Andrew Darlow) Simple keys using

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non-technical terms and photographic images will assist non-specialists to identify the flora that they encounter. Background information on the plants including their abundance, distribution, ecology, invasiveness and conservation issues will inform and educate a wide audience. For more information contact: Andrew Darlow, Secretary, St Helena Nature Conservation Group, adarlow.sais@cwimail.sh



Preparations for the eradication of mice and *Sagina* from Gough Island (TDC 601)

The Gough/Inaccessible World Heritage Site (WHS), in the Tristan da Cunha group, is one of the most important biodiversity sites in the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) as recognised with designation as an Alliance for Zero Extinction Site, Important Bird Area, Endemic Bird Area and Ramsar site. The key threat to biodiversity on Gough is invasive species, in particular the House Mouse *Mus musculus*, and the plant *Sagina procumbens*. The project will establish baseline biodiversity monitoring in advance of mouse eradication, so that ecological benefits of eradication can be fully assessed. The project will clear remaining areas of soil and vegetation from the *Sagina* affected areas of cliff, make substantial progress on controlling this plant and determine what further action is required to achieve full eradication. For more information contact: Dr Richard Cuthbert, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK richard.cuthbert@rspb.org.uk

Participatory Management Plans for Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island (TDC 602)

This project will produce a revised Management Plan for the Gough/Inaccessible WHS through the active participation of all major stakeholders including local residents, Tristan da Cunha Government, UK Government bodies, international conservation NGOs and relevant experts. This will not only produce a more thorough revision of the guidelines based on emerging science, but also stronger mandates to ensure the necessary actions are implemented. The project will also review the Tristan Biodiversity Action Plan (2006 – 2010) with Tristan da Cunha on the range of activities currently undertaken on Tristan and Nightingale, so that subsequently an updated management plan can be produced to take forward conservation actions from 2010. For more information contact: Dr Richard Cuthbert, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK richard.cuthbert@rspb.org.uk

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*At the time of circulation in July 2009, OTEP had not confirmed final approval for the projects marked **