



UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) e-Newsletter

August 2010

Number 3

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Welcome to the third SOWG e-Newsletter, which is designed to keep you informed of activities related to UKOTs in the Southern Oceans. If you have any contributions or suggestions to make for subsequent issues, please send them to Catherine Quick cquick@ukotcf.org.

Marine Protected Area to be established

The UK's new coalition Government has indicated its intention to press ahead with the establishment of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) covering the Chagos Archipelago. The declaration of an MPA in the British Indian Ocean Territory was announced under the previous UK administration, in April, following a public consultation which attracted very wide support for the measure. Responding to a Parliamentary Question in the House of Lords on 29th June 2010, Lord Howell of Guildford (Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office) confirmed that "the intention to go ahead with the MPA is in place".

"The territory's quarter of a million square miles is Britain's greatest area of marine biodiversity," said Lord Howell, who went on to provide an assurance that "The territory's administration will work with interested organisations and regional Governments to increase awareness of the environmental and scientific importance of the territory".



*An endemic BIOT
Clown fish.
(Photo: Chagos
Conservation
Trust)*

The declaration of the new MPA does not, in itself, cost anything. However, there are concerns over funding to support management of the MPA, and to ensure that illegal fishing is prevented throughout the reserve. With regard to the cost of maintaining a patrol vessel for surveillance duties, Lord Howell noted that "The overseas territories division is in discussion

South Georgia Heritage Trust Habitat Restoration Project

South Georgia Management

IUCN Profile

with a number of foundations and charities which have offered to meet that requirement for a five-year period."

The political context is complex, and needs to consider relations with Mauritius, which claims sovereignty over the Territory, and the Chagossian community, which is currently fighting in the European Court of Human Rights for its right to return to the islands.

UKOTCF made a submission to the consultation, supporting the MPA, recognising also that reconsideration of details would be necessary should exiled Chagossians ever resettle in the islands. UKOTCF therefore welcomes the announcement noting that, whatever the future arrangements for the Archipelago, it is sensible to conserve the exceptional marine systems - for their intrinsic value, for study, as a source area for the stocks fished off East Africa, and as a resource for sustainable use should there ever be resettlement.

South Georgia Heritage Trust Habitat Restoration Project

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands have announced that, following stakeholder consultation, conditional approval has been given to the South Georgia Heritage Trust for the first phase of the Habitat Restoration project to proceed in February-April 2011. This first stage of the project aims to eradicate rats from the Thatcher, Mercer and Greene peninsulas on South Georgia, with later stages addressing the other areas. It is a major undertaking and, if successful, should result in a dramatic increase in the numbers of ground nesting birds, amongst other benefits. For more information see <http://www.sght.org>

South Georgia Management Options

The Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands announced:

"[We are] seeking comments on the options for reindeer on South Georgia. A discussion document, which includes: the history of reindeer on the Island; a summary of the impacts reindeer have on native species and habitats; and a discussion of management options, is hosted on this website. You can download the discussion document at http://www.sgisland.gs/index.php/%28h%29South_Georgia_Newsletter%2C_July_2010".

"After reading the discussion document, GSGSSI is encouraging individuals to fill in a brief optional questionnaire. More general comments are also welcome.

The deadline for comments is September 3rd, 2010. Comments should be sent to Darren Christie, Environment Officer GSGSSI by email to env@gov.gs".

IUCN Profile Ascension

Stedson Stroud, Conservation and Sea Fisheries Officer, Ascension, was recently contacted by the IUCN Species Programme. This year has been designated the International Year of Biodiversity by the UN. Stedson was asked to provide information on the conservation efforts on Ascension

Invasives Species International

throughout the year. This is an excellent opportunity to showcase all of the department's conservation activities. The department said that they hope to reach out to a wider audience through the IUCN network.

For more information:

http://www.iucn.org/iyb/iucn_action_22/our_scientists

Invasive Species International

Landcare Research, an organisation which has supported many successful invasive species projects in New Zealand, established Invasive Species International (ISI) in 2008 in response to growing international demand for technical expertise and research services. In particular, they have been involved with the planning of mouse eradication efforts on Gough Island, Tristan da Cunha.

Their goal is to use their significant experience in the eradication or control of invasive plants and animals, and their extensive network of contacts to assist overseas organisations to achieve their invasive species objectives.

Following on from a conference held at the end of 2009, which was attended by several representatives from UKOTs, the ISI have produced a newsletter which may be of interest to those working on invasive species in the UKOTs.

The first newsletter is available <http://www.isinz.com/newsletter/issue1.asp> and you can subscribe at <http://www.isinz.com/newsletter/subscribe.asp>.

Post-Reunion Canaries meeting

Post-Reunion Canaries meeting (Canarias2010)

At the Reunion conference in 2008, a follow-up meeting had been announced, to be held in the Canary Islands in 2010. This was being organised by the Canary Islands Government with support from IUCN, to take place in September, under the working title *Biodiversity and Climate Change in Islands: New Developments*. UKOTCF responded to a consultation in January with a note offering to support and participate in the meeting, despite concerns over timing, and offering to help facilitate input and involvement from the UKOTs. However, the meeting has now been cancelled for financial reasons in the changed economic climate. It is expected that a follow-up meeting will be organised in a later year.

UK Parliamentary Developments

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www.parliament.uk

There is likely to be continuing interest in the UKOTs in the new parliament. The Commons select committees on Foreign Affairs and on Environmental Audit published important overseas territories reports in the last parliament and are expected to return to the subject.

In addition to the Select Committees, there are also All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) for many territories. Apart from the Overseas Territories

APPG (Chair, Andrew Rosindell MP Conservative - Romford) there are groups for three SOWG territories: Chagos Islands APPG (Chair, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Labour - Islington North), Falkland Islands APPG (Chair Derek Twigg MP Labour - Halton) and St Helena APPG (Chair Bob Russell MP, Liberal Democrat - Colchester).

Overseas Territories Environment Programme Awards 2010

The following projects in our region were awarded funding in the recent round.

An Action Plan for the Conservation of Falkland Island Rockhopper Penguins (OTEP FAL702)

This project will produce a Species Action Plan for the southern rockhopper penguin in the Falkland Islands. It will progress priority conservation actions for this Vulnerable (IUCN 2009 *Red List*) seabird, with its rapidly declining populations, and will address recommendations from the International Rockhopper Penguin Workshop (2008) that have implications across its breeding range. The capacity of Falklands Conservation to advise government and industry on mitigation measures and undertake direct conservation activities will be substantially enhanced.

Project Leader: Craig Dockrill, Chief Executive Officer, Falklands Conservation, info@conservation.org.fk

Maintaining the World Heritage Status of Henderson Island, Pitcairn Islands (OTEP PIT703)

RSPB and partners are preparing for an operation to eradicate rats from Henderson Island. This project will provide resources to employ and equip the leaders of an expert eradication team. If the operation is successful, it will contribute to preservation of the island's World Heritage status and secure the long term future of Henderson's endemic wildlife and breeding seabirds which are threatened by Polynesian rats through predation, competition for food and/or broader ecosystem change. Though uninhabited, Henderson is valued by the Pitcairn Islanders, who will gain widespread recognition for supporting the eradication, and potentially increased revenue from responsible tourism. The Pitcairn Government, and especially the Natural Resources Division, will be key partners in this project.

The reef, beach, beach-backing vegetation and plateau on Henderson Island



*Photo: Dr
Mike
Pienkowski*

Project Leader: Clare Stringer, International Officer UKOTs, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, clare.stringer@rspb.org.uk

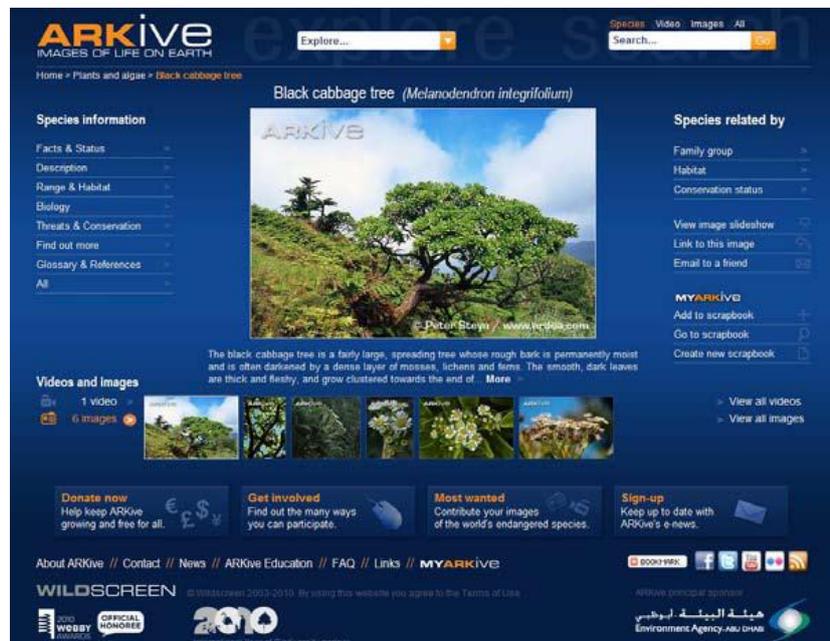
Identifying Important and Vulnerable Marine Areas for Conservation at South Georgia (OTEP SGS 701)

This project will identify important and vulnerable marine habitats at South Georgia that require conservation in order better to preserve the unique characteristics of this fragile ecosystem. Based on this information, the project team will liaise with the Government of South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI), the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (Polar Regions Unit), the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators, NGOs and fishing companies, to develop a representative and comprehensive network of marine protected areas. This will benefit GSGSSI in the sustainable management of the South Georgia Maritime Zone, through the conservation of habitats and species in the context of climate variability and change, and pressures from local, sustainable fisheries and tourism.

Project Leader: Dr Phil Trathan, British Antarctic Survey, pnt@bas.ac.uk

ARKive – UK Overseas Territories Chapters (XOT 701)

Utilising the world's best wildlife films, photographs and audio recordings, Wildscreen will create the UKOT Chapter on ARKive (see www.arkive.org). A minimum of 200 audiovisual species profiles will be created for free use online, with a selection of species profiled on an accompanying free DVD, so that these engaging resources can be used by UKOT environmental educational establishments, especially primary and secondary schools, within all territories. This unique multi-media communications and educational resource will help increase knowledge and understanding of the UKOTs' threatened and endemic biodiversity as well as its value in terms of the essential ecosystems services it provides.



Project Leader: Harriet Nimmo, Wildscreen, harriet.nimmo@wildscreen.org.uk

Ascension Conservation Quarterly

The latest edition of Ascension Island Government Conservation Department's excellent newsletter has been published. Volume 29 includes articles on: rediscovery of an endemic fern, department visit to Kew, invasive species conference in New Zealand, seabird restoration update, volunteering and more. The newsletter is available to download from the AIG Conservation Department website www.ascensionconservation.org. However, if you would like to subscribe free of charge to receive the newsletter directly, please send a request and your mailing address to natasha.williams@ascension.gov.ac

News and newsworthy

News and newsworthy

Forum News 36 has now been published. A full colour version is available to download from ukotcf.org/forumnews36

Here are some headlines from www.ukotcf.org:

UNESCO World Heritage to discuss Henderson

UK Government announce airport for St Helena

Next SOWG Meeting

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Details of the next meeting will be sent presently.

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