UKOTCF
Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) e-Newsletter

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Editorial

Celebrating Success

It has been a year since the last eNewsletter, not because UKOTCF and colleagues in UKOTs have been idle, more that we have all been doing a great deal. WCWG has held regular meetings via Skype, and colleagues have told us that they find the information in the minutes interesting and useful.

However, we also know that the WCWG eNewsletter (which has also a wider audience) is appreciated by many, and we aim to get back to more frequent production.

Many of the discussions held in WCWG address issues of concern, and it is very important that we continue to raise these. However, there are many successes and achievements. So this issue of the WCWG eNewsletter celebrates some of these successes.

If we have missed one of yours out, please let us know so that we can put it in the next eNewsletter.

Some of the recent news and issues from the territories are reported in this eNewsletter. Comments and news items for future issues, and WCWG meeting discussions, are very welcome. Please email apienkowski@ukotcf.org

Ann Pienkowski, Secretary UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group.

UKOT/CD Gibraltar Conservation Conference 2015 Announced

Following many requests from the territories, UKOTCF and HM Government of Gibraltar are delighted to announce that the next UKOTCF conference will be held in Gibraltar in July 2015.

The Conference – "Sustaining Partnerships", with the theme of conservation and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities, will be held in Gibraltar from 11th to 15th July 2015.

A view of Gibraltar harbour and airport from the Rock.
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

The conference is being organised by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and HM Government of Gibraltar, with the support of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society. It will be the sixth such conference, following the first held in London in 1999, the second in Gibraltar in 2000, the third in Bermuda in March 2003, the fourth in Jersey in October 2006 and the fifth in the Cayman Islands in 2009. The proceedings of the Gibraltar, Bermuda, Jersey and Cayman conferences can be seen at **www.ukotcf.org**

The conference will provide a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. It is hoped that Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems will benefit from learning about one another's history and experience of planning and delivering conservation initiatives.

The overall aim is to draw on similarities and differences in experience across the territories, to provide insights into common challenges, leaving participants better equipped to address local needs.
The core of this conference will be six half-day workshops. Each will address a topic (which will generally cover also several other cross-cutting themes, such as invasive species and climate change). In the course of discussions over several years, involving UKOTCF's regional working groups and other fora, many suggestions for conference topics have been discussed with partners. The topics selected attempt to cover those most needed as priorities, bearing in mind also other opportunities to discuss various topics.

The topics are:

- *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Resources*
- *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Resources*
- *Renewable energy*
- *Environmental education & awareness*
- *Implementing Biodiversity Action Plans in the context of Environment Charters, Aichi Targets etc (and including environmental monitoring)*
- *Using informed decision making to manage development sustainably (including physical planning, environmental impact assessments etc)*

Dolphins in the Straits of Gibraltar
Photo courtesy Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society GONHS

Iconic species, like Barbary macaque and dolphins can be important in sustainable tourism, environmental education & awareness, and informed decision making regarding sustainable development.

Barbary macaque on the Rock of Gibraltar
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

These six main sessions will be supported by a 2-hour session by eac of UKOTCF's regional working groups (Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans, Europe Territories); on this occasion attendance at these will be open to all conference participants. These should give the opportunity to discuss topical issues as well as taking regional perspectives on the main session topics and other matters. On the first morning of the conference, one session will be devoted to a field-visit (probably with a marine/coastal focus given the likely seasonally viewable features), with the triple purpose of: introducing some local issues to participants; giving the chance to recover after long travel; and allowing participants to get to know each other to make the later sessions highly effective.
It is planned also that the final main session of the conference will include participants at decision-making level, including ministers. It is envisaged that this will start off by presentations from each session of its conclusions and recommendations.

More information is available at **www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2015conf/ConfAnnouncement.pdf**
and updates will be posted on **www.ukotcf.org**

Turks and Caicos Islands

Guidebooks to bird-watching and other heritage sites

Guide booklets on bird-watching in the Turks and Caicos Islands have been published by UKOTCF and its partner, the Turks & Caicos National Museum, in June 2014.

Birding in the Turks and Caicos is covered in this **"Birding in Paradise"** series of booklets, one for each of the main islands, and includes maps, photos, local features, illustrations, and information.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum has been helping governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in TCI for the last 17 years, and the book authors have been involved personally throughout this period. These booklets describe where to go birding in the Turks and Caicos and where to view some of the other heritage features. Each book (of between 48 and 60 pages, with full colour maps and photos) contains:

- Forewords by the TCI Director of Environment and Maritime Affairs (Kathleen McNary Wood) and the TCI Director of Culture (David Bowen).
- Note about supporting conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.
- Introduction about the purpose and nature of the booklet.
- Practical information about getting there, facilities (in more detail for the family islands than for Providenciales, which has this information available in many other publications), other sources of information etc.
- Heritage and wildlife tours around various parts of the island, in total covering most of the island. On most islands, this is a driving route (with some optional bits of walking) linked to the map.
- Maps of the island, showing recommended routes and main features.
- Sections on visiting some special features of each island.
- Fully illustrated sections on the water-birds, land-birds, and sea-birds of each island are either integrated in the tour or included as separate sections.
- A little section on simple geology, which helps understand the landscape.
- A section on geography and history.

Booklets may be purchased at many local outlets in TCI and via the link below, either as printed versions sent by post, or as downloadable pdf versions, designed to suit tablets but readable on computers and any other device that can read pdf files. (A free pdf-reader application is available from Adobe **http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/**.) Pricing is in GB pounds, but your credit card supplier will convert this to your local currency in your statement.

www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Turks-and-Caicos/birding-in-turks-and-caicos.cfm

Wise-Water-Use Garden

Following its work on rainwater harvesting for the botanic gardens with Montserrat National Trust, and continuing with its environmental education work in TCI, UKOTCF has worked with its partner, the Turks & Caicos National Museum (TCNM), to design and resource a project to develop a garden displaying traditional crops and native medicinal plants irrigated

Two of the interpretive signboards, with the developing wise-water-use garden in the background.
Photo: Ann Pienkowski

with rainwater, thus reducing the need for fertilizers and city water produced via desalination powered by imported diesel. The project aims to help the TCI decrease dependence on water that is produced by expensive and environmentally costly diesel-powered desalination and promote awareness of the environment, as well as to use local traditional plants and methods to make the best use of this water.

The new wise-water-use garden demonstrates rainwater harvesting from roofs, garden irrigation and use of native and other medicinal plants adapted to local conditions, and is situated at the TCI National Museum's historically accurate recreation of a typical 1800s Caicos family dwelling at its site in Providenciales. It was opened on Thursday 12 June 2014 by the Governor, His Excellency Peter Beckingham.

Interpretive signage explains the natural water systems in TCI, how the wise-water-use garden works, and how everyone can help conserve water. The project is linked to the 'Wonderful Water' curriculum and course, developed by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (www.ukotcf.org) with the TCI Education Department, and already in use in the Islands' schools.

Visitors to the site will be able to find out about the use of the 'three-sisters' crop systems used by both the original Taino Indian inhabitants and again in the post-plantation era. This was centred on beans to capture nitrogen so avoiding the need for artificial fertilizers, corn which also provided support for the beans, and sweet potato or pumpkin, also to provide ground cover minimising water-loss.

The water-wise-garden is a joint initiative by RBC Royal Bank, Turks & Caicos National Museum (**http://tcmuseum.org**), and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

Officially opening the garden, Governor Peter Beckingham said: "This illustrates the fascinating gardening practices which were traditional in the Caicos Islands for hundreds of years. Given how relevant these still are today, I welcome this collaboration between a local non-profit, its UK-based non-profit partner, and an international commercial organisation."

Patricia Saxton, Director of the Turks & Caicos National Museum Foundation expressed her appreciation to RBC and the project partners, noting that the Turks and Caicos National Museum is focused on historical and environmental conservation. In its Grand Turk headquarters, the Museum, its Botanical Garden and its Science Building rely only on rainwater harvesting and air conditioning run-off for water-provision.

Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director of UKOTCF said: "The Wise-Water-Use for Gardens Project will raise awareness of water-supply issues, encourage water-saving measures, and demonstrate the use of rainwater-harvesting for food-crops and of native plants in landscaping as significant measures to save water."

Cutting the ribbon to officially open the Wise-Water-Use Garden are (left to right) Mrs Sanfra Foster, Manager RBC TCI; HE Governor Peter Beckingham, Mrs Patricia Saxton, Director Turks and Caicos National Museum, and Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF. Photo: Ann Pienkowski

Anguilla

Dog Island Rat-Free

Dog Island is a low-lying, uninhabited rocky island 13 km northwest of the main island of Anguilla. It is one of the Caribbean's most important seabird islands, with nine breeding species including globally significant populations of sooty terns, brown boobies, laughing gulls, magnificent frigate birds, brown noddies, masked boobies, and red-billed tropicbirds. It is used also by migratory waders, nesting sea turtles, and four terrestrial reptiles endemic to Anguilla. Rats had badly degraded Dog Island's ecosystem, suppressed the regeneration of native flora, and resulted in predation on eggs, chicks, and other small animals. The Anguilla National Trust, in partnership with the Anguilla Government Department of Environment, the owner of Dog Island, Fauna and Flora International, the Seabirds Keystone initiative of the US National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and RSPB, embarked on a rat-eradication programme in 2011, following a rat-eradication feasibility study in 2007, funded by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP).

Frigatebirds on Dog Island, before the rat eradication programme.
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

Regular monitoring was carried out following the end of the rat-eradication programme. The monitoring programme was a very intensive exercise, involving 167 permanent bait-stations, which were checked every 6 weeks over a 2-year period. This regular monitoring did not reveal any signs of rats, and Dog Island was officially declared rat-free on Biodiversity Day, 22 May 2014.

The Anguilla National Trust is now looking at the impacts that the rats had on Dog Island's biodiversity, with nesting seabird, land-bird, reptile and vegetation assessments. For example, seabird surveys following the rat eradication found a globally important population of Red-billed Tropicbirds (Reference: Bright, J.A., Soanes, L.M., Muhkida, F., Brown, R., & Millett, J. (*2013. Journal of Caribbean Ornithology.*)

Bermuda

Jeremy Madeiros awarded Blue Turtle Award

Jeremy Madeiros, Senior Terrestrial Conservation Officer with the Department of Conservation Services, has been awarded the prestigious Blue Turtle Award (2013) for the Cahow Translocation Project, helping to preserve the endangered Bermuda cahow.

Launched in 2009, the Blue Turtle Award is an annual award given by the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) for nature conservation work undertaken by an individual or group of individuals, from an Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency, who have made a valuable contribution to nature conservation in their Territory or Dependency.

The cahows nest only on the islands of Bermuda, and were thought to have originally numbered more than half a million birds, but they were catastrophically affected by the arrival of humans on the island in the early 1600s. This impact was due both to direct hunting by the settlers and by invasive predators, such as rats, cats, dogs and pigs, introduced by man. After less than 20 years of settlement, the cahows had declined by the 1620s to the point where they were thought to be extinct, a belief that persisted for almost 350 years until the rediscovery in 1951 of a tiny remnant population on four tiny offshore islets. Since 1960, a conservation and recovery programme has been in place that has addressed and controlled most threats to the species. The programme was administered by Dr David Wingate until his retirement in 2000, since which it has been administered by Jeremy Madeiros, Senior Conservation Officer in the Bermuda Government Department of Conservation Services.

Jeremy began the Cahow Translocation Project in 2004, after recognising that the greatest threat to this nocturnal ground-nesting bird was erosion and storm damage at their nesting sites. From 2004-2008, he translocated 102 near-fledged chicks from their original nests to artificial burrows on Nonsuch Island Nature Reserve, located off the south-east coast of Bermuda. His work over the last 14 years has included spending hundreds of nights, working in difficult conditions, hand-feeding chicks, until they were ready to fledge.

Jeremy was nominated for his work by the Bermuda Audubon Society, and the JNCC review committee noted his dedication to nature conservation in Bermuda over the last 23 years and, in particular, his work over the last 14 years to conserve one of the world's most endangered seabirds.

Success of the Cahow Translocation and Recovery Project

The project (see previous item) has enabled the breeding population to begin a slow, but accelerating increase from only 18 pairs producing a combined eight chicks annually in the 1960s to a new record number of 105 breeding pairs in 2013, producing a total of 53 successfully fledged chicks.

Increased knowledge and public interest in cahows has been brought about from several films, documentaries and books that have been completed, highlighting the conservation and recovery work being carried out on the species.

Cahow chick on the 28 May 2014, just before leaving the nest.
Screen shots from the infrared burrow cam, developed by JP Rouja of LookTV (see below)

The main threats to cahow include the erosion and flooding of the present nesting islets by storm activity and continuing sea-level rise, predation by rats and other invasive species swimming to these islets, a lack of sufficient numbers of suitable nest-burrows or rock-crevices, and nest-site competition with the longtail or white-tailed tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus catsbyii*.

Some of the highlights for the 2013 Cahow nesting season include:

- The new nesting colony of cahows established on Nonsuch Island by the translocation of chicks between 2004 and 2008 continues to grow, with 12 pairs established in nest burrows and laying eggs. From these, five chicks hatched and successfully fledged out to sea. New pairs and prospecting activity were noted in two additional nests, and a total of 29 of the translocated birds have so far returned to Nonsuch as adults, in addition to three non-translocated Cahows attracted to the new colony by the returned translocated birds.
- The total breeding population of cahows has reached 105 nesting pairs, numbers which almost certainly have not been seen since the early 1600s.
- Despite the impact of hurricanes Raphael and Sandy in the autumn of 2012, little damage and erosion to nesting burrows was recorded, and there appears to have been little effect on breeding success in the 2012-2013 breeding season.
- A second translocation of 14 cahow chicks to Nonsuch Island from the four original nesting islets to artificial nest burrows was made. Hand-feeding on fresh anchovies and squid resulted in 12 chicks fledging successfully out to sea
- The biggest surprise of the season was the discovery that cahows have naturally colonized Southampton Island, located to the southwest of Nonsuch Island and only 80 metres from the largest present cahow nesting colony on nearby Horn Rock. Three nesting pairs were discovered using deep rock crevices near the northern end of the island.
- For the first time, an infrared burrow cam, developed by JP Rouja of LookTV, was installed in one of the cahow nest burrows on Nonsuch Island, and weekly video updates were posted on a website to allow school groups and the public to follow the development of a cahow chick named Backson, from hatching to departure out to sea. Burrow cam went live for the 2014 season. To view visit **http://blog.lookbermuda.com/CahowCam**

For information about the cahow cam project visit:
http://bernews.com/2013/04/cahow-cam-live-streaming-from-nonsuch-island/

British Virgin Islands

National Parks of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI)

The NPTVI has been having a very busy year with so many special projects ongoing, but this has also meant great botanical findings, new areas of the seabed mapped, and the construction of infrastructure for select national parks.

Botanical Research

NPTVI is collaborating with the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew on a Darwin Plus project entitled, *'Conserving plant diversity*

View of Ginger Island, taken on Cooper Island, whilst mapping plant species as part of the Darwin Plus project being undertaken by RBG Kew and NPTVI. Ginger Island has also been assessed as part of this project. Photo: National Parks Trust of the Virgin Island (NPTVI)

and establishing ecosystem based approaches to the management of forest ecosystems in the British Virgin Islands'. (2013-15)

NPTVI and Kew are mapping the BVI's terrestrial ecosystems using GIS to inform gaps present within the proposed protected area network, in order to inform the creation of a draft management plan for forests, based upon the IUCN ecosystem based approach. This will also lead to the identification of new areas for inclusion in the BVI Protected Areas System Plan and provide baseline data that will inform the creation of a dynamic decision support tool for conservation management. The ex-situ conservation role of the JR O'Neal Botanic Gardens (JRONBG) is being strengthened as more threatened native species from forest ecosystems are incorporated into the collections.

Progress on mapping the distribution of threatened species has been extremely successful, with Kew and NPTVI recording these finds in the GIS. When a threatened species is encountered DNA samples and a herbarium specimen are also collected, in addition to live material whenever possible for the JRONBG. The NPTVI and Kew team have conducted two field sessions and been successful in discovering new populations of threatened species on Tortola, such as *Eugenia sessiliflora, Bastardiopsis eggersii*. When Kew is not in country the NPTVI team goes into the field every week and has continued to make great progress, locating the first record of *Zanthoxylum thomasianum* on Tortola, the first modern day record of *Croton fishlockii* on both Tortola and Beef Island. Exploration of the islands in the southern cays of the BVI is ongoing and each week reveals more exciting botanical finds! Kew provides support even from a distance, with the creation of a Dropbox account that allows NPTVI staff to upload photos for the Kew team to assist with plant identification.

Marine Mapping

Another Darwin Plus project was successfully started this year in partnership with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), which is an Executive Agency of the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Entitled, *'British Virgin Islands MPA and hydrographic survey capacity building'.*

NPTVI has made a strong commitment towards marine conservation including the development of a Protected Areas System Plan, which aims to protect 33% of the near-shore marine habitat types. However the maps of the shallow marine habitats were produced from dated aerial photographs. Large areas remain unexplored and acoustic methods could be utilised to improve knowledge of these areas.

Hydrographic surveyor working with United Kingdom Hydrographic Office on the National Parks Trust vessel whilst conducting high resolution bathymetry surveys this July/Aug 2014. Photo: Cefas

The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) publishes over 3,500 navigational charts worldwide. These charts are based on best available data, however in some areas the best available data are 19th century lead line observations. The BVI is known as one of the 'sailing capitals of the world', but is also one of the UK Overseas Territories where charts still rely heavily on lead line observations from mid 19th and early 20th century.

A recent super-yacht grounding released 30 tons of lead shot into the marine environment, and highlighted the need for improved navigational charts to protect safety of lives at sea, whilst at the same time protect the marine environment from future navigational disasters.

Technology has moved on from using lead lines to observe depths. Sonar systems can map entire swathes of the seabed and produce highly accurate maps which can be trusted by mariners and contribute to saving lives at sea.

This summer the Cefas team spent six weeks mapping an area of the Sir Francis Drake Channel from the Wreck of the Rhone Marine Park across to Hans Creek, Beef Island using a Cefas-owned Multibeam Echosounder (MBES) system mounted on the NPTVI vessel. An underwater camera system also collected video and still images of the seabed. The imagery will be analysed by the Cefas team back in the UK and maps will be produced to display benthic habitat types. This data will be shared with the BVI's National GIS network for multi-department use and the direct management of marine resources. NPTVI hopes that greater areas of the BVI's seabed can be mapped using this technology, revealing an insight into the diverse underwater resources that are yet undiscovered.

Developing Site Infrastructure

NPTVI is a cross territory partner with the Turks and Caicos National Trust, the National Trust of the Cayman Islands and the UKOTCF on a European Union funded project entitled, '*Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies*'. This project started officially in 2009 and will end on December 31st 2014, but within these last four months the majority of the project activities will finally take place! Three visitor centres will be constructed on three islands, including Sage Mountain National Park on Tortola; the Copper Mine National Park on Virgin Gorda and the Anegada Rock Iguana Headstart Facility on Anegada. A section of the historic ruins at the Copper Mine National Park will also be restored and interpretation and signage developed for the three visitor centres. An article about the MPASSE project can be seen in Forum News 37 (**www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/37.pdf**)

The patrol boat purchased as part of the MPASSE project, whose application to the EU for funding was coordinated by UKOTCF. Photo: NPTVI

Earlier this year a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices study was conducted by a consultant hired through this project, which aimed to interview visitors and residents. The findings will be analysed and form the basis of a Communications Plan for the NPTVI.

NPTVI has learnt a great deal about managing an EU funded project throughout this process and anticipates that this final phase of the project will be completed on time so that the facilities will be ready for the 2015 visitor season.

Shark Sanctuary

A nurse shark in the waters off BVI. Photo. The Pew Charitable Trust

The British Virgin Islands recently became the third in the Caribbean (after Honduras and the Bahamas in 2011) to declare a shark sanctuary. The decision was made official on May 22 2014. The designation protects rays also.

The ban on shark fishing covers nearly 31,000 square miles (80,117 square kilometres) of water and also prohibits the sale and trade of shark products on the islands.

Announcing the decision, Kedrick Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister for Natural Resources and Labour, recognized the importance of sharks to oceans and reef ecosystems, as apex predators. Sharks play an important role in maintaining the balance of the ocean environment by regulating the variety and abundance of species in the food chain, including maintaining healthy populations of commercially important species of fish.

The British Virgin Islands are home to a variety of shark species, many of which are classified as threatened, or near-threatened, with extinction. Some of the sharks that inhabit the waters around the island chain include the oceanic whitetip, scalloped hammerhead, tiger and Caribbean reef sharks.

Cayman

Cayman National Conservation Law passed

In December 2013, the National Conservation Law was passed in the Legislative Assembly. The draft National Conservation Law had been under consideration by successive governments for over ten years. The fact that it had not previously been enacted had been noted in UK's fifth national report to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity as the single most detrimental element to the future maintenance of biodiversity in the Cayman Islands. For example, an Environmental Protection Fund collecting $4-5 million a year from tourists for the purposes of preserving the natural environments of the Cayman Islands could not be disbursed effectively without appropriate regulations, which were waiting the enactment of the National Conservation Law. It is expected that the necessary regulations will be put in place this year, so that grants from the Environment Protection Fund could begin, focusing on genetic diversity.

The Cayman Island section of UK's Fifth National Report to the UN on CBD notes also several other important developments for biodiversity protection in the Cayman Islands for which the passing of the National Conservation Law is required:

- Consultation on environmental implications of projects, plans, policies and actions
- Species protection, eg for Cayman's native plants (including the National Tree and the National Flower) and the majority of native animals
- A legal framework to provide for the establishment and management of a national system of protected areas on land
- Updating and overhaul of conservation legislation, bringing it into line with the requirements of various MEAs (Multilateral Environmental Agreements), including the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) to which Cayman is signed up.

In July 2014, the government issued a statement that they were about to implement the National Conservation Law. The Cayman Islands Environment Minister Wayne Panton said that the government had been waiting on a pair of amending bills that were required before the law could take effect. These include the Animals Law and the Plants Law, and these amending bills should be in place by August. The aim was to have the entire national conservation law in effect by the autumn.

The National Flower of the Cayman Islands, the banana orchid.
Photo courtesy Cayman Islands Government

National Trust for the Cayman Islands road route success

The Mastic Trail
Photo: Oliver Cheesman

The original gazetted route for the east-west arterial road across Grand Cayman would have had a very detrimental effect on National Trust for the Cayman Islands properties, including the Mastic Trail, Salina Reserve and Colliers Wilderness Reserve. The first stage of the proposed East-West Arterial Corridor would have affected the Mastic Reserve and a portion of the Central Mangrove Wetland. The more easterly part of the road would impact the Salina Reserve and Colliers Wilderness Reserve, protected areas where the endangered blue iguanas are released. The development of sustainable visitor facilities at the latter is receiving funding from the EU under the *"Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies (MPASSE)"* project.

The Trust was not opposed to the new road *per se*, but was concerned about the route, and suggested that sections of the road be rerouted to avoid environmentally sensitive areas. The Trust has successfully negotiated with Government for the road to be re-routed to minimise its impact on protected areas, and for mitigation measures where required. The Mastic Trail will now be diverted at the southern head, and although the Trust will lose around three acres, the government has agreed to hand over a similar amount of crown land in the area as compensation.

The Trust described the negotiations over the re-routing of the road as historic, as it was the first time that Government had listened to Trust concerns and recognized the importance of doing what it could to conserve important land and eco-systems

Premier Alden McLaughlin said government had also talked to the Trust about reviewing the planned route on to East End to avoid the Colliers Wilderness Reserve and the Salina Reserve, both critical habitat for the blue iguanas.

Any kind of major development, particularly so close to the Botanic Park and in what remains of Cayman's dwindling natural habitat supporting the islands' endangered endemic flora and fauna, is an on-going battle for the Trust and other conservationists. However, on this occasion the Trust was pleased and relieved that it was able to persuade Government of the importance of the habitat the road would have threatened.

Christina Pineda, the Trust's Executive Director said that the talks between Government and the National Trust had been a real success. The Trust had been concerned that the road would cut through wetlands which feed dry forest in the area, but this had now been avoided. The integrity of the Mastic Reserve had been protected, and loss of Trust land minimised. The Trust was heartened to know that the Government saw the value of the National Trust preserving land. Additionally, the road developer had made commitments to help develop a proper trail head for the Mastic Trail.

Montserrat

The Montserrat National Trust mid-year Newsletter provides an interesting update on Trust activities.
http://montserratnationaltrust.ms/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/MNT-Mid-Year-Newsletter-2014.pdf

The following two items are based on articles in the MNT Newsletter.

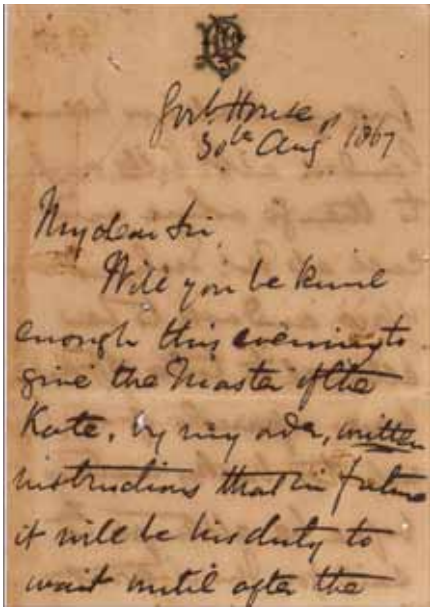
MNT receives Endangered Archives Grant

MNT has been awarded a grant from the British Library to address endangered archives on Montserrat. Catherine Wensink (UKOTCF Co-ordinator) had helped to get this started, and the submissions had been prepared with the assistance of Bob Conrich (Anguilla Historical and Archaeological Society) and Nigel Sadler (previously a Director of the Turks and Caicos National Museum, and now an independent consultant).

This grant is normally issued where the archives are under threat of rapid deterioration.

Montserrat's archives have suffered from harsh environmental conditions, natural disasters and a general indifference to preserving the country's documents. Some of these documents and photographs have information on family history and important historical events. There are newspapers and legal documents such as deeds, court cases, and reports which would assist researchers in putting together information on the island's history.

The Public Library, National Trust, government departments, churches and families possessing documents that are deteriorating rapidly can benefit from this initiative. The Pilot Project will firstly identify the archives, their location and condition of storage. Some of the materials will be selected and the visiting archivist, Nigel Sadler, will then train at least two persons to handle properly, scan and record these digitally. This process will ensure easier access for documentation and research.



Example of a document which will be preserved as part of the Endangered Archives Project.
Photo: Montserrat National Trust

Mountain chicken release 2014

The Montserrat National Trust collaborated with the Department of Environment and other stakeholders during this year's release of captive bred mountain chickens from Jersey and London Zoos into the forests of Montserrat. This was the fourth release of mountain chickens (frogs) *Leptodactylus fallax* into their former habitat. The 52 frogs, on arrival from the UK by plane in June, were housed initially at a temporary holding facility at the Montserrat National Trust premises. This allowed them to recover from the long journey, and also enabled experts to assess their health and ensure they were in the best possible condition prior to the release. They were released into the wild a few days later, and are being tracked by radio-tags.

During the eruption of the Soufriere Hills volcano, large areas of forest habitat were being destroyed, and, in 1999, 13 frogs were sent to Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in Jersey, the Channel Islands, for safe-keeping. More disaster struck in 2009 when there was the discovery of the deadly chytrid fungus which started to threaten the lives of many frogs on island, and so a second group of frogs was captured and sent to Jersey.

Various awareness and conservation education activities were conducted around the release, with the aim of informing the public about project activities, raising awareness about the mountain chicken and chytrid fungus, and fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the mountain chicken frog.

The mountain chicken is found only on the islands of Dominica and Montserrat. It thrives best in wet areas that are heavily forested and reaches an elevation of 1000 feet, but can sometimes be found lying around just below that level near ghauts and streams. They are one of the largest native frogs found in the Lesser Antilles.

The mountain chicken has been a very important species for Montserrat. In the past the frog legs were hunted and served as a delicacy in many local restaurants.

An exhibition was mounted in one of the rooms at the MNT with a dual purpose: -

- to introduce the mountain chicken frog to visitors and tell the story of this frog in Montserrat
- to introduce the work of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Department of Environment together with international partners to save the mountain chicken frog from extinction.
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The first annual Mountain Chicken Day was held at the Montserrat National Trust Botanic Garden on Saturday 13 September. Activities included the official launch of the mountain chicken poetry competition, a short film about mountain chicken work in Montserrat, an update on the recent release of mountain chickens back into the wild in Montserrat, and activities for children including face-painting, a treasure hunt and crafts corner.

The day was a resounding success, enjoyed by all who visited, including the Governor's wife, Mrs Sujue Davis. A video link with Dominica added to the interest and furthered public awareness of the Mountain Chicken Project

The Mountain Chicken display at MNT Headquarters.
Photo: Montserrat National Trust

Mountain Chicken.
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

UKOTCF *Annual Report April 2013 - March 2014* available to download

UKOTCF's report for the year April 2013 to March 2014 is expected to be available to download from **www.ukotcf.org** in late September.


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UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

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Report of Council

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