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The terrible effects of Hurricane Harvey in Texas are ongoing, will be for some time, and our thoughts are with all those affected. It is a powerful reminder of the devastation caused by hurricanes and tropical storms, and brings to the forefront that we are in the hurricane season, and that these extreme weather conditions are going to be affecting us more and more with climate change.

As ever, I am very grateful to everyone who sends me news items and links, please continue to do so.

Stay safe.

Ann

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Turks & Caicos Islands

Caicos Pine Recovery Project latest success

At the end of August, the fourth planting of Caicos pine saplings (the TCI National Tree), occurred in the Diamond Jubilee Pine Yard on Pine Cay. This is a collaborative effort of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR), Department of Agriculture, Meridian Club at Pine Cay, and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew).

157 young trees, grown in the Caicos Pine Recovery Project nursery on North Caicos, were planted. The Diamond Jubilee Pine Yard was established in May 2012 during the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, coinciding with the International Day of Biological Diversity. There are now over 400 healthy young saplings in this restored pine yard.



*DECR Nursery and Field Officer Judnel "Flash" Blaise planting a Caicos pine sapling in the Diamond Jubilee Pine Yard on Pine Cay to facilitate habitat restoration.
Photo: DECR*

Caicos pine's population was reduced by 95% across TCI by the introduction of the invasive pine tortoise scale insect, but Pine Cay's population survived better than those on North and Middle Caicos. The Diamond Jubilee Pine Yard gives DECR and RBG Kew scientists a better understanding of successful methods towards the restoration of this globally imperilled ecosystem and a historically

unique part of TCI's natural and cultural heritage.

Originally supported by the TCI Government's Conservation Fund, the Caicos Pine Recovery Project was kept well funded until 2016 by later grants from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme and Darwin Plus. The project is now supported with staff and transportation from DECR, but currently has no regular recurrent funding. Read the full article at:

<http://magneticmediatv.com/2017/08/157-caicos-pine-saplings-added-to-diamond-jubilee-pineyard-pine-cay/>

TCRF and SWA Environmental workshop on East Caicos

At the beginning of August, as part of their BEST-funded project *Understanding East Caicos KBA's Corals and Coasts: A Key to Safeguarding TCI's Future*, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) and SWA Environmental held a very successful workshop (see WCWG eBulletin 21 July 2017 for more details on this project www.ukotcf.org/WCWG/WCWG_21_Jul2017.pdf).



Participants at the workshop.
Photo: Turks & Caicos Reef Fund

The workshop was very well attended by fishers from South Caicos, TCI Government officials, DECR officials, and water-sport and ecotourism operators. The workshop revealed what activities are currently conducted on East Caicos and in the waters surrounding the island. A goal of the workshop was to identify those areas where traditional uses, such as fishing, occur, in order to ensure that those activities can sustainably continue into the future. Further information about the project and the workshop can be found at:

<http://suntci.com/turks-caicos-reef-fund-and-swa-environmental-workshop-on-east-caicos-a-su-p2923-106.htm>

TCRF - another successful year

WCWG has been delighted to report on the successes of TCRF, which achieves a great deal with a small volunteer team. In addition to the BEST projects, TCRF is involved in coral reef nurseries and gathering baseline data on East Caicos re sustainable use and management (see above). This year, amongst other things, TCRF has:

- Created an *Adopt a Coral* programme to work hand in hand with the RESCQ coral nursery project (see WCWG eBulletin 15 http://www.ukotcf.org/WCWG/WCWG_15_Aug2016.pdf for further information), with the goal of making that project self-funded after the end of the grant-funding.
- Conducted a fund-raising raffle of a trip for two on the TC Explorer II (kindly donated by Explorer Adventures).
- Worked with DECR and the TCIG Department of Culture to host successfully the First Annual Lionfish Festivals on Provo, Grand Turk and South Caicos. (The 2nd Annual Lionfish Festival will be held on 21 October 2017 on Provo and on 28 October 2017 on South Caicos and Grand Turk.)
- Chairman, Don Stark, along with nine TCRF volunteers completed formal training on a scientific technique for coral-reef monitoring, and this now provides TCRF with a team with the skills to conduct routine coral-reef health monitoring throughout TCI, which will begin implementation this autumn.
- Continued to run the boat-mooring programme throughout the TCI. In Fiscal Year 2016/2017, TCRF invested \$14,565 additional into the moorings project, bringing the total invested in TCI marine infrastructure to \$224,813.



Elkhorn corals growing in the nursery. Photo: TCRF

The full Fiscal Report can be read at:

<http://us8.campaign-archive1.com/?u=8a1201589719398d66648fe05&id=41e980bbd0>

Cayman Islands

Newly elected government and the National Conservation Law

Premier Alden McLaughlin has given a clear indication of just how much his new government will be backtracking on environmental protection. During parliamentary questions on Thursday 24 August, Ezzard Miller (North Side) asked what was happening regarding the requests by farmers in his constituency for government to construct farm-roads in North Side after the NCC had recommended Cabinet undertake an environmental impact assessment. The new planning minister, Joey Hew, said that, under section 41 of the law, consultation with the council was mandatory. But Miller said Cabinet was required to consult, not accept, the need for an EIA, at which point the premier intervened with a surprising comment about this part of the law, which is intrinsic to the historic legislation that was steered through Parliament by the Premier's former Cabinet colleague and major PPM donor, Wayne Panton. Premier Alden McLaughlin said "The government thinks that this... provision, which requires this exercise with respect to EIAs by the NCC with respect to road construction, is quite frankly ridiculous. We are in the process of having a review of the Conservation Law, especially around this area and... my view is we need to swiftly make the necessary amendments to these sorts of impediments to continue the proper development of these islands."

The full report on this can be read at:

<https://caymannewsservice.com/2017/08/conservation-law-ridiculous-says-premier/>

Government sticking with cruise port plans

The Premier has revealed that the coalition he is now leading is backing the previous administration's cruise berthing and cargo port plans. Even though the CDP (Cayman Democratic Party) and some of the independents campaigned against this specific project, the minority members of the 'Unity' government have not been able to derail the controversial proposal. Delivering his presentation on the Strategic Policy Statement in the LA Wednesday 23 August, Premier Alden McLaughlin said that tendering would begin next month and also unveiled ideas about trans-shipment business at the new cargo port. Outlining the government's goals to continue supporting the tourism product, he made it clear that the cruise berthing facility, which does not have popular support, is still a key government policy.

The port continues to raise concerns because of the anticipated price-tag, which is now believed to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, the damage to the marine environment and the impact on the local infrastructure. Many people believe also that the benefits of a cruise facility will be enjoyed by only a few key merchants and that the negative impact on the wider overnight tourism product will harm many other stakeholder in the tourism sector.

For the full report see:

<https://caymannewsservice.com/2017/08/unity-govt-sticking-with-cruise-port-plans/>

Turtle poaching in Cayman

At the beginning of August, an adult female wild green turtle, estimated at over 400 lbs, was rescued from poachers after DoE enforcement officers responded to a report in the Eastern Districts. The turtle was found on her back in a tool shed impaled through the neck and flippers by four large hooks. The DoE said the hooks had been attached to a rope and thrown like a grappling hook to capture the turtle at sea, and it appeared she had been hidden in the shed to await being butchered.

Heavy-duty bolt cutters were used to remove the hooks, and the wounds were treated by the Cayman Turtle Centre's veterinarian, Dr Ana Malabia. After treatment, the turtle, estimated to be more than 30 years old, was tagged, measured and released back into the sea by DoE research staff, who are hopeful that she will continue nesting for many more seasons to come.

The owner of the property where she was found was detained for questioning, officials said, adding that this is the fifth report already this season of turtle poaching to feed the illegal meat trade. A report on this incident can be found at:

<https://caymannewsservice.com/2017/08/dae-and-vets-rush-to-save-poached-turtle/>

In another incident towards the end of August, a bound female sea turtle was rescued from poachers in West Bay. A conservation officer discovered three men with the turtle tied, flipped on her back, and ready to load into a pickup truck. The poachers fled, the turtle was freed, tagged and released into the water.

The female turtle as left by poachers in West Bay. Photo: Cayman Department of Environment



The report on this incident can be read at:

www.caymancompass.com/2017/08/21/bound-female-sea-turtle-rescued-from-poachers-in-west-bay/

Planning enforcement issues in Cayman


The chair of the Public Accounts Committee and leader of the opposition, Ezzard Miller, has raised the issue of planning enforcement. Planning, sustainable development and environmental protection are unavoidably interlinked. Sustainable development is a commitment of the Environment Charters (the Cayman Environment Charter can be seen at www.ukotcf.org/pdf/charters/cayman.pdf) and Convention on Biodiversity. The Cayman Environment Charter (whose commitments were jointly agreed and signed by the Cayman and UK Governments) states No. 3: To identify environmental opportunities, costs and risks in all policies and strategies. No. 5. To aim for solutions which benefit both the environment and development.

The article on concerns about planning enforcement can be read at:

<https://caymannewsservice.com/2017/08/pac-challenges-planning-over-enforcement/>

Environment Charter


CAYMAN ISLANDS




Guiding Principles

For the UK government, for the government of the Cayman Islands and for the people of the Cayman Islands

1. To recognise that all people need a healthy environment for their well-being and livelihoods and that all can help to conserve and sustain it.
2. To use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations.
3. To identify environmental opportunities, costs and risks in all policies and strategies.
4. To seek expert advice and consult openly with interested parties on decisions affecting the environment.
5. To aim for solutions which benefit both the environment and development.
6. To contribute towards the protection and improvement of the global environment.
7. To safeguard and restore native species, habitats and landscape features, and control or eradicate invasive species.
8. To encourage activities and technologies that benefit the environment.
9. To control pollution, with the polluter paying for prevention or remediation.
10. To study and celebrate our environmental heritage as a treasure to share with our children.



HP McKenna-Jacob
Chairman
28 September 2001



Valerie Amos
Foreign Secretary
28 September 2001

Commitments

The government of the UK will:

1. Help build capacity to support and implement integrated environmental management which is consistent with the Cayman Islands' own plans for sustainable development.
2. Assist the Cayman Islands in reviewing and updating environmental legislation.
3. Facilitate the extension of the UK's verification of Multilateral Environmental Agreements of benefit to the Cayman Islands and which the Cayman Islands has the capacity to implement.
4. Keep the Cayman Islands informed regarding new developments in relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and invite the Cayman Islands to participate where appropriate in the UK's delegation to international environmental negotiations and conferences.
5. Help the Cayman Islands to ensure it has the legislation, institutional capacity and mechanisms it needs to meet international obligations.
6. Promote better cooperation and the sharing of experience and expertise between the Cayman Islands, other Overseas Territories and small island states and communities which face similar environmental problems.
7. Use UK, regional and local expertise to give advice and improve knowledge of technical and scientific issues. This includes regular consultation with interested non-governmental organisations and networks.
8. Use the existing Environment Fund for the Cayman Islands, and propose a time to other sources of public funding, the purpose of being benefit to the Cayman Islands' environment.
9. Help the Cayman Islands identify further funding sources for environmental projects, such as donors, the private sector or non-governmental organisations.
10. Recognise the diversity of the challenges facing Overseas Territories in very different socio-economic and geographical situations.
11. Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (See Annex 2) and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment (See Annex 3).

The government of the Cayman Islands will:

1. Bring together government departments, representatives of local industry and commerce, environment and heritage organisations, the Government's office, individual environmental champions and other community representatives in a forum to formulate a detailed strategy for action (See Annex 1).
2. Ensure the protection and restoration of key habitats, species and landscape features through legislation and appropriate management structures and mechanisms, including a protected areas policy, and arrange the control and eradication of invasive species.
3. Ensure that environmental considerations are integrated within social and economic planning processes, promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption within the territory.
4. Ensure that environmental impact assessment or equivalent bodies approving major projects and while developing our growth management strategy.
5. Commit to open and consultative decision-making on development and plans which may affect the environment, ensure that environmental impact assessments include consultation with stakeholders.
6. Implement effectively obligations under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements already extended to the Cayman Islands and seek towards the extension of other relevant agreements.
7. Review the range, quality and availability of baseline data for natural resources and biodiversity.
8. Ensure that legislation and policies reflect the principle that the polluter should pay the prevention or remediation, establish effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
9. Encourage tracking, which allows to measure the value of our local environment (natural and built) and to explain in wide within the regional and global environment.
10. Promote publications that spread awareness of the special status of the environment in the Cayman Islands, promote within the Cayman Islands the guiding principles set out above.
11. Abide by the principles set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (See Annex 2) and work towards meeting International Development Targets on the environment (See Annex 3).

British Virgin Islands

BVI floods due to tropical wave

On Monday 7 August, flash floods caused by a tropical wave hit the British Virgin Islands, damaging infrastructure, but fortunately no lives were lost. The aftermath of the storm left authorities with no other option but to cancel Carnival, which was at the height of activities when the storm came.

For more information and photographs see:

<http://viconsortium.com/featured/bvi-experienced-an-unprecedented-17-inches-of-rain-during-recent-storm-outside-help-pours-in/>

<https://www.facebook.com/lyndon.john.79/posts/10155718453309407>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeJ7Q_cmSMY

*Flooding in Tortola.
Photo: Caribbean News Service*



New environmental visitors levy

Visitors to the British Virgin Islands will be helping finance the territory's efforts to protect the environment and develop and maintain tourist sites from 1st September. That's when they will start paying a \$10 environmental and tourism levy.

Visitors who arrive at all ports of entry will be required to pay the tax, which the government says will be used for activities related to environmental protection and improvement, climate change, and the maintenance and development of tourist sites and other-tourism related activities.

Residents, visitors who are two years old or younger, visitors who are in transit and do not leave the airport or port, crews of vessels, foreign government officials, and guests of the government are among those exempted from paying the tax.

<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/media-centre/environmental-levy-takes-effect-september-1>

Bermuda

Status of breeding common tern in Bermuda

Despite its name, the common tern is not common in Bermuda. The migratory bird thrives around the world, but the Bermuda population, which DNA analysis shows to be endemic and distinct, was almost wiped out by Hurricane Fabian in 2003. Since then, a string of direct hits from hurricanes has kept their population dangerously low and, with only 3 breeding pairs, its survival in Bermuda is precarious. However, the three pairs bred successfully this season, so there is hope. Terns typically lay eggs in clutches of three. Nine birds fledged successfully this summer and have been ringed (or banded) for identification.

See the article in the Bermuda Royal Gazette for more information.

www.royalgazette.com/news/article/20170809/local-seabird-back-from-brink-of-extinction



Adult common tern with young. Photo Lynn Thorne

Montserrat

The Montserrat VT slide about rainwater harvesting in the botanic gardens



Montserrat National Trust solar powered rainwater irrigation project

In 2012, UKOTCF secured some funding from the Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust for the Montserrat National Trust to extend and update its rainwater harvesting and irrigation system in the Botanic Garden. As well as increasing the efficiency of the irrigation system, this funding enabled the National Trust to reduce the water costs associated with irrigating the garden, especially during the dry season. (See WCWG eNewsletter 10 at www.ukotcf.org/WCWG/WCWG_10_Sep2012.pdf and the virtual tour for Montserrat – projects/ conservation action section at www.ukotcf.org/1_vTours/tour.cfm?locn=MON&tourType=FULL&dbType=Live)

It is very good that this initiative has been extended through the Solar Powered Rain-water Irrigation Project, which is being launched with a 3-day workshop from September 6-8. This project was funded by the OECS / Global Climate Change Alliance

See the Montserrat National Trust Facebook page for more information

<https://www.facebook.com/MontserratNationalTrust/>

Anguilla



New Governor

The new Governor of Anguilla, Mr Tim Hoy, was sworn in on 21 August. See the link below for the news report of this event.

<http://theanguillian.com/2017/08/lets-get-to-work-governor-tells-anguillians/>

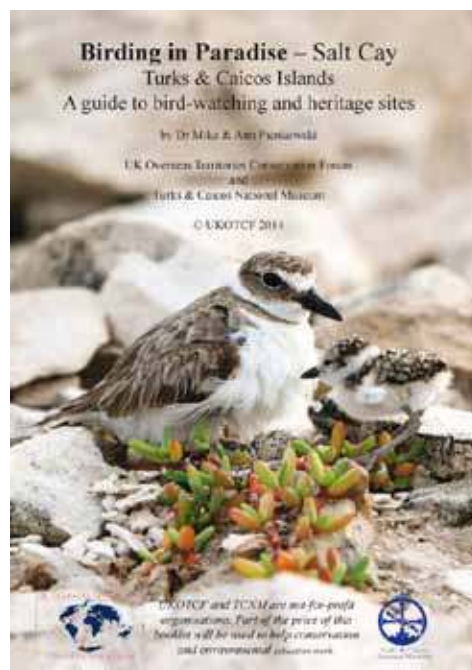
Cross Territory and General

Global Shorebirds Day in early September

The Global Shorebird Count, held every year on the weekend nearest 6th September, is one of the key events of World Shorebirds Day. The Count is intended to raise awareness of the importance of regular monitoring to protect bird populations and conserve their habitats. Even if you have not registered to take part this year, why not get out to a local site and watch the shorebirds, and make a resolution to register next year.

Yvonne Verkuil, chair International Wader Study Group (IWSG), said “The IWSG welcomes the initiative for this World Shorebird Day. We hope that, on this day, people will gather at places where they can observe and enjoy shorebirds, and raise awareness for the vulnerability of the habitats they use. We believe this initiative will stimulate professionals and amateurs to observe and research shorebirds,

The Turks and Caicos Islands are important sites for resident and migrant shorebirds. The front cover of UKOTCF's guide to birdwatching on Salt Cay shows an adult Wilson's plover, on nest, with young. The series of 5 booklets are available from www.ukotcf.org
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



also called waders. The wader research of the IWSG community ranges from observing waders in one's own 'backyard', to extensive long-term studies aiming at a deeper understanding of spectacular phenomena such as long-distance migration, living in extreme environments and variable reproductive strategies."

If you take part in any way in Global Shorebirds Day, why not send in a short article and photos for the next WCWG eBulletin.

For more information on Global Shorebirds Day see:

<https://worldshorebirdsday.wordpress.com/>

Lionfish culling research paper

Smith, N.S., Green, S.J., Akins, J.L., Millar, W., & Côté, I.M: Density-dependent colonization and natural disturbance limit the effectiveness of invasive lionfish culling efforts: *Biological Invasions*: August 2017, Volume 19, Issue 8, pp 2385–2399

This paper compares the effect of different culling frequencies, and the added effect of hurricanes. See the link below for the paper abstract and further information.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10530-017-1449-6>

Green Infrastructure Effectiveness Database

NOAA's (U.S National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Green Infrastructure Effectiveness Database is now live (see the links below).

This searchable online database contains literature sources with information on the effectiveness of green infrastructure to reduce the impacts of coastal hazards, such as inundation and erosion from tropical storms and cyclones, more frequent precipitation events, and sea level rise.

<http://cpo.noaa.gov/News/News-Article/ArtMID/6226/ArticleID/1539/Green-Infrastructure-Effectiveness-Database-now-live>

Link to the database: <https://www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/gi-database>

Contact Kim Penn kim.penn@noaa.gov for more information

Coral Reef Research Group article

Sedimentation is a critical threat to coral reefs worldwide. Major land use alteration at steep, highly erodible semi-arid islands accelerates the potential of soil erosion, runoff, and sedimentation stress to near-shore coral reefs during extreme rainfall events. This article, from the coral reef research group at the Center for Applied Tropical Ecology and Conservation of the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras Campus, was recently published in *Frontiers of Marine Science* and is available online (see link below). The goal of this study was to assess spatio-temporal variation of sedimentation dynamics across near-shore coral reefs as a function of land-use patterns, weather and oceanographic dynamics, to identify marine ecosystem conservation strategies.

Otaño-Cruz A, Montañez-Acuña AA, Torres-López V, Hernández-Figueroa EM and Hernández-Delgado EA (2017) Effects of Changing Weather, Oceanographic Conditions, and Land Uses on Spatio-Temporal Variation of Sedimentation Dynamics along Near-Shore Coral Reefs. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 4:249.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2017.00249>