

UKOTCF

Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) e-Newsletter

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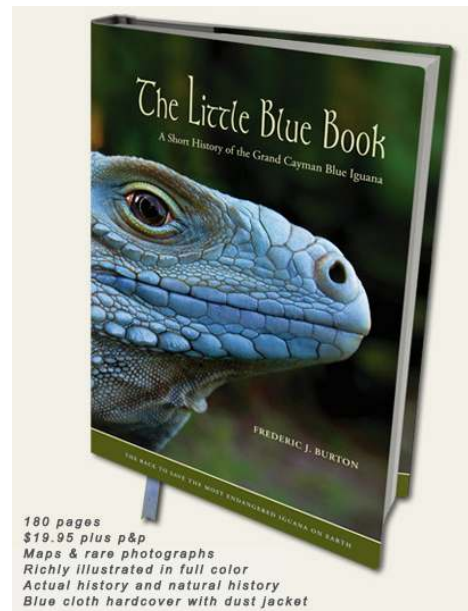
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Cayman Blue Iguana book

Welcome to the second WCWG e-Newsletter, which we hope will help to keep you informed of activities related to UKOTs in the Wider Caribbean region. Input and feedback from Working Group members is always welcome – please e-mail Oliver Cheesman (oliver@dipsacus.org)



Cayman Blue Iguana book published

Fred Burton's *The Little Blue Book – A Short History of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana* has just been published by the International Reptile Conservation Foundation (IRCF). This Critically Endangered Cayman endemic, and the work of Fred and his colleagues to conserve it, will be familiar to WCWG members, and to all those who attended the UKOTCF-organised *Making the Right Connections* conference in Grand Cayman in 2009. It clearly made an impression on UK Environment Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies, who later cited the Blue Iguana as an example of a flagship species that was being used to raise the profile of biodiversity more widely.

Further details can be found at <http://www.ircf.org/LBB/>

Jost Van Dyke *Environmental Profile*

Jost Van Dyke *Environmental Profile* published

Jost Van Dyke, the fourth largest of the inhabited British Virgin Islands, lies to the northwest of Tortola, and has escaped some of the intensity of development seen elsewhere in BVI. It has a relatively small population (less than 300 residents) and “finds itself positioned between a past it does not want to lose or squander and a future that promises more options with expanded growth.” Susan Zaluski and colleagues at the Jost Van Dyke Preservation Society (JVDPS) are implementing OTEP project BVI503 *Jost Van Dyke’s Community-based Programme Advancing Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development*. A major component of this project has been the production of an *Environmental Profile* for the island and its smaller satellites (Little Jost Van Dyke, Sandy Cay, Green Cay and Sandy Spit). This impressive document, produced in partnership with the Island Resources Foundation, was completed at the end of 2009. It provides an assessment of the natural and cultural resources of the islands, including key natural features, sites and species, and the environmental pressures and related issues affecting the maintenance of these resources. The Profile represents a valuable resource, including as a summary of the terrestrial biodiversity of the Jost Van Dyke island group, and as a basis for guiding future local environmental protection.

The *Environmental Profile* can be downloaded in full or in sections from http://www.jvdgreen.org/Final_Profile.html Learn more about the wider project and other aspects of JVDPS’s work via the same website or at <http://www.jvdps.org>

Bermuda *Climate Change* report

Bermuda *Climate Change* report tabled

The Bermuda National Trust report *The Impact of Climate Change on Bermuda* was written by Annie Glasspool and published at the end of 2008. It examines the effect of climate change on Bermuda, and suggests how the Territory can develop strategies to protect it from the resulting threats. In particular, the report considers the economic, social and physical vulnerability of small islands and how they apply to Bermuda. It examines impacts of climate change on global food security and two of the island's most important sectors of the economy, international business and tourism. Specific elements include a study of sea level rise, which threatens Bermuda’s infrastructure through increased flood risk during high tides, with up to 14% of total land area affected. Rising temperatures, heavier rainfall, more intense storms and longer droughts also threaten the island's buildings, transport, waste and sewage, water supply, telecommunications, electricity and other essential services, the wider environment and human health and livelihoods.

The report was tabled in the House of Assembly on 5th February 2010, following a ministerial statement by Dr. the Hon. Ewart F. Brown, JP, MP, Premier of Bermuda, who issued a take note motion on the report for subsequent debate by Members of Parliament.

Cayman Bat Conservation

The Impact of Climate Change on Bermuda can be downloaded from <http://www.bnt.bm/documents/ClimateChangeReport.pdf>

Other recent news from Bermuda includes reports of unusual bird sightings for the Territory (the first record of the purple swamphen, plus unexpected records of American avocets, puffins, Canada geese, and a black-legged kittiwake). Also, further studies on the cahow, which have revealed that these birds make trips of 1500 to 4000 miles to collect food for their young during the breeding season, and range as widely as Canada and the seas off southwest Ireland during the rest of the year. For further information on Bermuda birds, visit the website of the Bermuda Audubon Society <http://www.audubon.bm/>

Cayman Bat Conservation Program

Work continues under the National Trust for the Cayman Islands Bat Conservation Program, led by Volunteer Program Director Lois Blumenthal. Amongst other activities, the Program advises on the issue of bats in the roof spaces of buildings, and maintains a network of "bat houses." The bat house project began in 1993, and provides custom-made accommodation for bats, in specially constructed wooden boxes on tall utility poles - see picture right: delegates at the Cayman conference watch bats



emerging from the bat houses at dusk at the National Trust's Mission House historic site (Photo: O. Cheesman). The 79 bat houses across Grand Cayman currently have a 72% occupancy rate, and six unoccupied bat houses are very new and are expected to be colonised soon. Over 40 of the bat houses have bird nesting boxes attached, and so far 12 of these are being utilized by West Indian Woodpeckers. Bats using the bat houses are all presumed to be insectivorous *Molossus molossus*. The Program's greatest challenge is habitat conservation for the forest and cave-dwelling Cayman bat species that don't use the bat houses.

An educational PowerPoint illustrating details and giving an overview of bat conservation in the Cayman Islands and worldwide is posted on www.caymanwildlife.org as well as a Study Guide for local schools, bat house plans and other materials. Information sheets and other materials are available on the National Trust website: www.nationaltrust.org.ky (under Environmental Programmes / Bats).

Montserrat volcano

More news from Cayman is available in the Department of Environment Terrestrial Ecology Unit's monthly e-newsletter *Flicker*. Recent stories and articles include those on landscaping with native trees, freshwater habitats and their macroinvertebrate communities, the effects of habitat modification on the foraging activities of insectivorous bats (cf. above), and Cayman snakes and scorpions. To subscribe to *Flicker*, contact Co-editor Kristan Godbeer: Kristan.Godbeer@gov.ky

Montserrat volcano activity

Recent weeks have seen some dramatic scenes in Montserrat, courtesy of the Soufriere Hills volcano. An explosion on 8th January 2010 resulted in significant pyroclastic flows, although impacts on the inhabited area in the northwest of the island were limited to some ash-fall. This was followed on the 11th February by a major dome collapse which resulted in further, extensive pyroclastic flows which extended the original northeastern coastline by up to 650m with deposited material around 15m deep. Fortunately, again, direct impacts on the inhabited area were manageable, although the 10km high ash plume was sufficient to disrupt air traffic in neighbouring Caribbean islands.

Regular, detailed updates on the Soufriere Hills volcano can be found at the website of the Montserrat Volcano Observatory <http://www.montserratvolcanoobservatory.info/>