

FORUM NEWS 56

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Novel project for Cayman, Montserrat and other UKOTs: *From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain – Sharing the colonial histories from the UK Overseas Territories*

UKOTCF, working with other partners, has helped secure a grant from a novel fund for more research work in Cayman and Montserrat, with funding going to the National Trust for the Cayman Islands and the Montserrat National Trust. Some aspects relate to UKOTs more generally. It is a rare case of securing funding for the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) from research, rather than conservation, funds.

Funding is provided under the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) as part of the new call: *Hidden Histories of Environmental Science: Acknowledging legacies of race, social injustice and exclusion to inform the future.*

Our bid was put together in the later months of 2021. Originally, we had hoped to include more UKOTs but, as funding limits



became clear, we realised that a maximum of two UKOTs would allow reasonable funding to be made available to project partners, in particular the territory bodies. The two lead UKOTs are the contrasting ones of Montserrat and the Cayman Islands. However, some elements will bring in other UKOTs, and we hope the project will open further opportunities for Montserrat and other UKOTs.

This collaborative project is led by the UK Centre for Hydrology & Ecology with partners at the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, The Montserrat National Trust, Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium; Leeds Museum & Galleries, and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum. There is more information at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/blue-iguanas-to-blue-vervain/>.

Background

British colonialist policies have had, and continue to have, significant social and environmental impacts throughout the UKOTs and former colonies. UKOTs are UK sovereign territory; their citizens are UK citizens. They have played a vital role in the UK's history and cultural development; they support important archaeological and built heritage sites and are home to the most globally important ecosystems and species for which the UK is



Blue Vervain taken at the Montserrat National Trust Botanic Garden.
Photo: Jo-Diaz Tye/MNT



Blue iguana, carrying individual markers from the Blue Iguana Recovery Project. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

responsible under international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. Each of the 16 UKOTs has a unique history of control and domination by European colonialists, all of which are connected to the imperialist foreign policy and former colonial powers exercised by Britain across the world. While Britain's forced migration of millions of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas was most destructive between 1640-1807, it extended from the early 16th century, and its impacts are still felt today in legacies of racial inequality. During this period, British colonial practices removed cultural artefacts and materials, natural heritage and scientific capital to the UK and other European collections and only now is repatriation of these valuable collections being considered. British colonialism also impacted the UKOTs' environment practices such as deforestation, land-clearance for agriculture, and the mass movement and establishment of non-native species, both deliberate and accidental, leading to significant impacts on ecosystems.

The establishment of invasive non-native species (INNS) has negatively impacted global biodiversity, human health and economies. INNS interact with climate change, being described as a "deadly duo" by the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN), increasing the likelihood of extinction events occurring. However, the mass importation and establishment of non-native species has included species that have had positive impacts. Some introduced species can provide climate regulation and prevent soil erosion, whilst others provide food, textiles and medicines. Medicinal plant use can either involve species brought from their original homelands, or the use of species in the new environment similar to known species from the homeland.

It is evident that human movement, whether free or forced, has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the UKOTs' unique biodiversity and habitats, and the ability of the local communities living there today to conserve them. The UKOTs form ideal case studies because they are spatially discrete 'island laboratories' acutely affected by INNS and climate change but are also home to plants used for positive impacts such as medicine. This project will focus on the current impacts and the role of colonialism on the UKOTs to understand the historical importance of non-native species in shaping the current cultural and ecological climate on the UKOTs. Through two case studies in Montserrat and the Cayman Islands, the project seeks to address three questions relating to re-discovering hidden knowledge on people, plants and animal species to empower data sharing between the UKOTs and UK.

1. What is the role of colonialism in shaping the current perceptions of children and young people in Montserrat of "weeds and bush" known culturally as medicinal plants?
2. What is the role of colonialism in shaping conservation needs and local views on the endemic blue iguana on the Cayman Islands?
3. How are data and materials from the 16 UKOTs represented in overseas museum and herbarium collections, displays and educational materials? How best can they be shared between the UKOTs and UK to ensure equity in data use in informing education, research and nature conservation?

In answering these questions, we seek to address the loss of cultural and ecological heritage in the UKOTs whilst raising awareness of UKOT museum and herbarium collections, highlighting the lack of equity in funding to UKOTs and offering potential solutions to this.

Project Outcomes

Community engagement and raising awareness on Montserrat and Cayman Islands; datasets and paper (UKOTs); tools and processes for data sharing between UKOTs and UK; Cross UKOTs-UK

partnership research opportunities identified.

Project Objectives

Chronicle of environmental history of colonialism (cross UKOTs); datasets on species on Montserrat and Cayman Islands; Interpretation materials and signage; Online UK and UKOTs museum exhibits; Co-developed template on best practice for sharing data across UKOTs, the UK and elsewhere; Creation of knowledge sharing network and catalogue of data and materials from UKOTs.

Key Stakeholders

Our project will work with a range of stakeholders including UKOT NGOs; UKOT government; UKOT scientists; UKOT community (both on and off UKOTs- school children, general public, medicinal plant practitioners, environment officers, farmers and herbalists); UK museum and herbaria curators; UK (global) academics; UK government; UK NGOs.

Success criteria

Increased understanding of Montserratian community members of cultural benefits of medicinal plants; increased awareness of Caymanian community members of impacts of INNS; Establishment of UKOTs-UK Knowledge sharing network; UKOTs aware of and can utilise materials held in UK museum and herbarium collections.

Framework on Best Practice in environmental & other research in UK Overseas Territories

This aspect of the project is being led by UKOTCF. Scientific research underpins conservation of nature and other heritage across the world. Across the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), researchers and conservationists work together to answer questions and understand the natural world. Resource limitations mean that priorities and compromises have to be made on where to focus efforts. To address this, the project is trying to develop a framework of best practice. This is based on understanding environmental research in the context of historical colonialism. It makes recommendations to address existing, and avoid potential future, inequalities, and to assist the pursuit of excellent research and engagement of the wider community including the general public.

Following experience gained during UKOTCF-organised conferences and research by UKCEH, the project team developed a first draft framework, drawing on earlier material and discussions. In particular, these included the conclusions and recommendations of both the online UKOTCF conference in March 2021 "Staying Connected for Conservation in a Changed World" as well as the agreed Statement of the 4th UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting (April 2021).

We circulated this widely to NGO and governmental environmental bodies in the UK Overseas Territories for comment. A second draft which takes account of the comments received from territories, together with further views from the territories expressed at the Blue Belt meeting on World Ocean Day 2022, was circulated to UKOT participants for further checking. This document (after taking account of any further comments) is being circulated in July to those participating in a UKOTCF-organised online workshop in late July, to confirm the Framework and discuss its implementation.

Although the active participants in the workshop in respect of the framework are the UKOT persons, some places are being made

available to non-UKOT persons who have a strong interest and involvement in UKOT environments.

By using the UKOTCF network of links with all Territories and Crown Dependencies, we aim to develop best practices for research and knowledge-sharing to ensure that data and materials from the Territories are researched, used and shared equitably. The workshop will build on themes developed in the meetings

mentioned above to ensure equity in environmental and other research for UK Overseas Territories and in UK funding of it. The framework will then be available to adopt by any organisation which wishes to strengthen equity in environmental work, including the sponsoring Research Councils. We hope that the published output of the workshop helps open doors to wider funding opportunities.

Adopt a Home for Wildlife team get things moving in Montserrat



In *Forum News 55*, we reported that Maddie Heap had responded to our advert for a volunteer to help set up the surveys and management planning for this project in Montserrat and had joined UKOTCF as a Voluntary Conservation Officer. She rapidly arranged to spend 6 weeks in Montserrat in January-February, and worked very effectively with the Project Officers in Montserrat and remotely with UKOTCF and Species Recovery Trust personnel in UK to test the survey methods and get these started on several of the *Wildlife Homes*. Back in UK, Maddie has been drafting management plans for these *Wildlife Homes*, and will continue to work voluntarily on the project. UKOTCF and MNT are very grateful for Maddie's continuing contributions.

First impressions of Montserrat

Maddie writes: Montserrat is stunning. My first observation, in my deliriously tired state being driven from the airport to the guest house was how green and lush the landscape was. All the plants grow so tall and with such vigour, and it was amazing to see tropical fruits like pineapples, guava, avocados and mangoes growing in gardens. It was also my first taste of island life and I couldn't get over the views of the Caribbean Sea from the road.

The peace, tranquility and slower pace was a very welcome change from city life in the UK. On many occasions I would have the beach to myself. It was remarkable to enjoy the warmth of the Caribbean climate without the tourism, sun loungers and parasols. Usually a compromise is required!

It also struck me how friendly a place it is and thought it nice that you wouldn't pass someone without greeting them. I found everyone to be so welcoming, kind and generous.

Survey techniques

Maddie and Catherine here outline the survey techniques.

Valuable biological research does not have to be complicated. It doesn't even have to be carried out by technical experts or trained scientists. In fact, across the world, those with relatively little training can make a valuable contribution towards our understanding of the natural world. This is widely known as 'citizen science' and can produce a lot of meaningful data which we can then interpret to make decisions on how best to conserve nature.

The surveys we are undertaking as part of this project fit very well within this movement. Methods can be undertaken by anyone

even with limited experience or technical knowledge. After all, the project aims to empower people to do something positive for the environment.

They are based on techniques developed elsewhere, but tailored to Montserrat. For each site, two surveys are being conducted: a vegetation survey and an invertebrate survey.

Vegetation surveys

The *Wildlife Homes* vary greatly in size. Where they are quite large, they are divided into zones of roughly equal sizes for consistency. Within these sample areas, 10 random Global Positioning System (GPS) points are generated. Random points are used to avoid bias and for simplicity so that repeat surveys can easily take place with minimal equipment. Google maps system (or similar) is then used to navigate to each exact GPS point. In our surveys we measure out a 5m radius around each point with a tape measure. Within this circular plot, all vegetation is identified, photographed and recorded. The percentage cover of each species is also noted.

After the start-up with Maddie, at the moment Project Officers are carrying out the surveys. Most have some experience in this. However, we are developing a system of identification with information gathered to make it easier for future citizen scientists to carry out surveys also.

Insect surveys

The invertebrate survey method is based on the techniques explored by a large project in the UK, Open Air Laboratories



One of the Project Officers, Ajhermae White, carrying out a vegetation survey at one of the Wildlife Home sites. Photo: Maddie Heap

(OPAL) which formed the Bugs Count Survey. The Project Team includes an invertebrate conservationist, Vicky Wilkins who has been making suggestions and providing assistance. Invertebrates cover many groups all requiring their own micro-habitats. Many of these invertebrates are carrying out important roles within the ecosystem: for example, pollination, nutrient recycling, as well as food for other animals. The survey includes a search over a period of 15 minutes for invertebrates on soft ground surfaces, human-made surfaces and on plants. A simple biological key is used to identify the invertebrate by each group and the number is recorded in a tally chart.

We established early on that the best time to conduct these surveys on Montserrat was early in the morning. So, armed with plenty of coffee, the Project Team has been sifting through the undergrowth looking for some of the islands' most secretive residents.

A very important aspect of developing these techniques is to enable surveys to be repeated easily, with readily available equipment. Some results are available, but have yet to be analysed by the team.

What are we doing with the data? Management planning

Management plans are being developed for each of the sites. These plans include the aims and objectives of the site management, a summary of the surveys, a description of the site and ownership, a risk assessment and a work programme. Results of the survey and consultation with the owner or manager of the site will form the basis for recommendations and objectives set out in the management plans.

The workshop

On 16th February 2022, a workshop for *Adopters* was hosted at Montserrat National Trust. This was an opportunity to bring together the project team, *Adopters*, friends and interested parties to meet and mingle, learn more about the project – current and future stages – and ask questions. Collaboration is integral to the project, to ensure *Adopters* are happy with plans, and that everyone is engaged in the project and learning from each other. Project officers hosted the session and gave presentations on survey techniques, invasive species, propagation and what plants are available to *Adopters* at the Montserrat National Trust plant nursery. More workshops on various topics will be held throughout the project.

Project Officers' continuing work

In the project newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* (12: 4-11), we published extracts from the Project Officers' internal monthly reports to give an indication of their work. Below are a few parts of that and some of the photographs. Note that reports generally report the previous month to the report's date.

Report 1 (December 2021)

Just a few short notes on activities conducted over the past month:

Review of contract protocols read

Project contract signed by MNT

Work-plan developed for Work-experience Intern

Meeting held to discuss work-plan for Project Officers

Work-plan shared with Project Officers as well as Intern.

Weekly supervision of Intern undertaken

Contribution to field work by intern with Mountain Chicken Recovery Project

Contribution to bird count by intern with Department of the Environment

Research of native plants and scientific name by Intern

Forms designed for the collection and tracking of project progress

Minutes recorded for inaugural meeting along with first meeting of Project Officers and Project Leads

Weekly meetings held

Profiles of each Project Officer and Intern drafted and published in Newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat*

Review of criteria for *Adopters* and *Wildlife Homes*

Respond to enquiries on the project for potential *Adopters*

Options for equipment explored and followed up

Propagation of Plants:

Local name	Scientific name	Propagated	Date of propagation
Muaby	<i>Colubrina elliptica</i>	100	9-Nov-21
Coffee	<i>Coffea arabica</i>	93	29-Nov-21
Cocoa	<i>Theobroma cacao</i>	69	29-Nov-21
Lignum vitae	<i>Guaiacum officinale</i>	140	29-Nov-21
Windmill palm	<i>Trachycarpus fortunei</i>	39	2-Nov-21
Scarlet jungle flame	<i>Ixora coccinea</i>	49	17-Nov-21
Sweet basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	29	18-Nov-21
Tarragon	<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i>	38	19-Nov-21
Pribby	<i>Rondeletia buxifolia vahl</i>	34	20-Nov-21
Red Mulberry	<i>Morus rubra</i>	12	21-Nov-21
Flamboyant	<i>Delonix regia</i>	23	26-Nov-21
Velvetleaf	<i>Cissampelos pareira</i>	12	27-Nov-21
Peruvian ragweed	<i>Ambrosia artemisiifolia</i>	43	28-Nov-21
Candyleaf	<i>Stevia rebaudiana</i>	32	5-Dec-21
Boxelder maple	<i>Acer negundo</i>	8	11-Nov-21
	Total	721	

Pictures from the Montserrat National Trust Nursery



Report 2 (January 2022)

The project officers conducted field visits to some current and potential adopters to get familiar with the sites.

Dwayne Hixon at Belham River Mouth, Old Road Bay:

The project officers noted that there were tall castor plants to the east of the pond that could be replaced by some native plants. In the pond, cattails are growing in clusters and spreading. One of the clusters was large and was occupying a significant portion on the pond. A section of this cluster can be removed. During this visit, two migratory ducks were seen in the pond.



Cattails growing in a large area of the pond

Cork Hill (Cork Hill Reunion Committee)

The land in the Cork Hill village has many invasive Java Plum trees which is why it would be good to introduce native trees back into the area.



Java plum trees in Cork Hill

Cherise Aymer at Lawyers Mountain

This residential property in Lawyers Mountain is near the boundary of the Centre Hills Forest Reserve. Cherise was the first person to build her house in this area. The project officers noted at least 4 different plant pests, including: Croton scale affecting the croton plants, citrus aphids affecting a citrus plant and white flies and a scale insect *Icerya seychellarum* affecting a spice guava tree. There was also Black Sigatoka (a fungus) on a young banana tree. Elvis advised Cherise to use soapy water to treat the pests and to treat the Black Sigatoka with a fungicide.

The project officers noted that there were many fruit trees planted closely together on her property which provided a good

environment for the numerous pests to thrive. Cherise was advised to remove a few trees so that the others would have room to grow and to prevent the pests from affecting the trees.

Veta Nicholas in Lawyers Mountain

The original vegetation on Veta's property, also in Lawyers Mountain, was cleared in October 2019, and her house began construction in January 2020. Veta is currently landscaping the yard.

Veta showed the project officers around her property and the trees that she wanted to plant around her property. She was interested in advice on where to plant the trees. The project officers noted some shrubs that were attracting a large number and variety of butterflies. Veta had also planted a few crops; therefore, she was advised not to totally remove the shrub that was attracting the butterflies so that she would have an abundance of pollinators.

Other potential adopters

The project officers visited Carol Osborne to view the area of Cassava Ghaut that she is maintaining, particularly in a specific area of the ghaut.

A visit was made to the *EcoPlay* land (see page 7), and the project officers had a look at the Pribby *Rondeletia buxifolia* that was planted on the border of the land to be used as a hedge.

After this, the project officers went to the future Government House, which will include a *Wildlife Home*, and observed a few



The entrance of the Governor's future residence

invasive plants on the property: neem trees *Azadirachta indica*, Clammy cherry *Cordia obliqua* and a few acacia shrubs. On the plot of land adjacent to the house, the Governor indicated that some of the land will be used for a parking lot and he wanted a kitchen garden in the area below the parking lot. The team recommended that a border to separate the parking lot with some native plant species such as a pribby hedge would attract wildlife to the area of the garden. He was also interested in establishing a herb garden with herbs and tea bushes. The team indicated that the herb garden could be established in an area below the swimming pool. The team also suggested that the tall pine tree (New Caledonia pine tree) in the front of the property be removed and replaced with the Montserrat orchid *Epidendrum montserratense* in its place, creating a centre piece of orchids, *Heliconia* and palm with a water feature.

The team also suggested that the *Ficus* hedge be removed and replace with the Montserrat pribby *Rondeletia buxifolia*. At the border of the land, close to the edge of the cliff, the trees should be pruned and razor grass *Scleria secans* should be planted to hold

the soil in place to prevent further soil erosion.

Other project activities

Work-experience student, Antwone Sinclair, continues to assist with the insect husbandry for the Mountain Chicken Recovery Programme and he has also been planting seeds and maintaining seedlings and slips in the propagation unit of the Montserrat National Trust.

Report 3 (February 2022)

More field-visits to potential *Wildlife Homes*, including:

Field visit to Tim Orton's dry forest at Garibaldi Hill

Tim indicated that he would love for the dry forest to remain forest and have it protected for many years to come. He also indicated that he wants to continue to plant native and endemic trees in his forest and get rid of the invasive plant species. Below is a list of native trees Tim can plant in his forest.

Common name	Scientific name
Spanish cedar	<i>Cedrela odorata</i>
Lignum vitae	<i>Gaiacum officinale</i>
West Indian mahogany	<i>Swietenia mahagoni</i>
Montserrat pribby	<i>Rondeletia baxifolia</i>
Pepper cinnamon	<i>Canella winterana</i>
Fiddlewood	<i>Citharexylum fruticosum</i>
Trumpet bush	<i>Tecoma stans</i>
White cedar	<i>Tabebuia pallida</i>
Birches	<i>Myrcia splendens/Eugenia spp</i>
Barbados cherry	<i>Malpighia emarginata</i>
Sea grape	<i>Coccoloba uvifera</i>

As plant identification continues at Tim's property, the list of plants that can be planted will be proposed. Tim had expressed



Scriber, Ajhermae, Tim & Maddie at Tim's

his desire to know how to identify the plants in his forest. He also wanted to know which ones were invasive and native so that he would know which plants to remove from the area. Therefore, on 17th February Delmaude, Antwone, Maddie and Ajhermae went with James "Scriber" Daley to identify the plants in Tim's forest.

Plant and insect surveys (see above) were started.

Report 4 (March 2022)

Adopters Workshop

On 15th February at 4:30 pm the workshop commenced. There was no electricity at the beginning of the workshop. Notwithstanding,

Delmaude began the introduction to the workshop. During this time, the electricity returned. Next, Madeline gave some information on the work that she has done while on the island and what work she will do for the project when she returns to the UK. After this, Ajhermae gave a presentation on the plant surveys that were conducted and some of the findings. She also gave some information on invasive, introduced and native plants that were recorded during the surveys. Next, Elvis gave a presentation on the invasive plants that can be found on Montserrat. Antwone then gave some information on the work that has been done in the propagation unit and the plants that are available to adopters.

The workshop ended at 6pm and, after this, the attendees and presenters had refreshments and further discussions about future activities for the project. The team also had an opportunity to express their thanks and well wishes to Maddie, Volunteer Botanist, whose stint on island ended later that week.

Other Support

Antwone worked along with Maddie throughout her visit during days when Project Officers were not available to assist with vegetation surveys. The project also continues to support wildlife with the assistance of Antwone to the Mountain Chicken Recovery Project, including conducting surveys of tree-frogs and assisting weekly at the insect facility.

Monthly Report 5 (end March 2022)

Invertebrate Surveys

On Saturday 12th March, Ajhermae and Elvis went to Tim's residence at Isles Bay at around 7:30am to conduct an insect survey. Various types of insects were recorded, including two types of scale-insect species, butterflies, flies, ants and beetles.



Crypticerya genistae scale insect

On Saturday 26th March, Elvis, Delmaude, and Ajhermae went to the *EcoPlay* Park around 7:15am to conduct an insect survey. A wide range of insects were present, including bees, termites, butterflies, white flies, scale insects, damsel fly, moths, wasps, beetles, ants, flies, spiders, grasshoppers, mosquitoes, stink bugs, assassin bugs and worms. The team also observed native bottle bees foraging on a blossoming black birch in the plot, and then a bottle bee hive was discovered in a stink toe tree *Hymenaea courbaril* trunk bordering the plot.

Other Support

The MNT's Propagation Unit was recently refurbished, which is welcome support in the ability to propagate a wider variety of plants. Some of the plants propagated were affected by the relocation during the reconstruction of this Nursery, and this will not remain a problem with the new nursery now established. Antwone has been keeping stock of the plants being propagated and the health of the plants.

Monty's Messengers and fundraising for *EcoPlay*: update

Montserrat National Trust (MNT) launched officially its new children's group *Monty's Messengers*, with a Kids Fundraising Fun Day. This took place on Easter Monday, 18th April 2022 in the Belham Valley Area (near Old Road Bay). The Fun Day sought to establish greater community cohesion through an entertaining and family-orientated experience, while also raising funds for the *EcoPlay* Children's Park (see *Forum News* 55: 5-6).

Director of the Montserrat National Trust, Ms Sarita Francis, said, "The Montserrat National Trust is pleased to be once again involved in the lives of children of Primary School age, in a Group known as *Monty's Messengers*. The concept of *Monty's Messengers* was developed over 30 years ago, but it was dissolved because of the volcano."

Ms Francis mentioned also that young children show improved all round performance when they are interacting with nature. "That is why we are also encouraging the entire population to come on board to assist us with creating a space for children called *EcoPlay*, where children can engage in activities sponsored by the Trust, our partners and the wider community."

The projects *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* and *From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain – Sharing the colonial histories from the UK Overseas Territories* (see above) are integrating with *EcoPlay* to provide mutual support. UKOTCF continues to support fundraising for *EcoPlay* by using its PayPal account to accept UK and US donations. These have resulted so far in contributions totalling over £1817 (over EC\$6000), which has been passed on to MNT. For more information:

<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/eco-play-montserrat/>



Inter-Island Environment Meeting 13-14 October 2022

Based on an invitation from Roland Gauvain, CEO, Alderney Wildlife Trust

The States of Alderney and the Alderney Wildlife Trust are hosting the [Channel Islands-organised] Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IEM) 2022. This will be the 5th time of hosting the IEM for Alderney and, as in 2019, Alderney proposes to see the addition of another *Wilder Islands* workshop event to be held at its conclusion.

The IEM was founded to enable Government bodies, NGOs, environmental managers, and individuals to discuss the status of the islands' environments. Given the dramatic and rapid political and environmental changes the need to communicate, as well as seeking commonality and mutual support, is of ever-growing importance to small independent island jurisdictions.

IEM2022 will be held on the 13 and 14 October and build on the themes of recent years with a focus on sharing knowledge about, and developing best practice in, ecological, environmental and conservation science and how we use our work to inform our actions. Especially in our response to climate change.

The *Wilder Islands* workshops (14 October), which have been made possible in part thanks to the generous support of Charles Asprey, will provide additional opportunities to discuss and develop pan-Island collaborative projects. In this, the organisers are seeking ideas from existing collaborators as well as new proposals to create pan-island collaborations on certain key issues.

The goal will be to identify several issues and/or projects which either already exist and would benefit from discussion with a wider audience, or which attendees would like to see investigated with the aim of creating joint working across the islands. In doing so the hosts are seeking partners, including business and private sponsors, to help resource collaborations which may come out of these workshops.

Anyone interested should get in touch with IEM2022@alderneywildlife.org if they would like to be added to the mailing list and, in order to help develop the programme, ideally indicate:

1. If you would like to attend in person or remotely;
2. If you would like to present at the IEM on the 13 October and if so please give a brief outline of the subject of your presentation;
3. If you have an idea or proposal to be considered for the *Wilder Islands* workshops, please provide a brief outline as well as any other contacts you believe might be interested in such a workshop;
4. As it is hard to access Alderney in person, and to improving the sustainability of the IEM, the organisers are looking for alternative ways to enable attendance of the event both remotely and in person: please let them know if you would like to travel to the island and if so if you would be prepared to consider different ways of doing so.



Left: Looking westward from the mainland of Alderney, over the Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance, with some of the main seabird islands in the distance. Right: Gannet takes off from the water near one of these, the gannetry on Les Etacs. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Dr Richard Axton, MBE – farewell to a great friend of Sark

UKOTCF has many happy memories of working with Dr Richard Axton, both on Sark and when he represented the island at meetings of UKOTCF and of the UKOT/CD Environment Ministers' Council. Here, his colleagues on Sark and particularly of La Société Sercquaise – to whom UKOTCF sends its best wishes for continuing work without Richard – remember him and his enormous efforts for the island.

It is with very great sadness that we announce the passing of Dr Richard Axton, Honorary Director of the Museum and Archive, and leader of La Société Sercquaise since 2005. For forty years, Richard worked tirelessly to preserve Sark's history, environment, heritage and way of life, for which he was awarded an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours list on 7th July 2021.

On working holidays from 1980 until 2002, Richard and his beloved late wife Marie documented the Seigneurie archives, preserving an invaluable resource on Anglo-Norman law and life from Elizabethan times through to the German Occupation. An epic project, thankfully, for which the Axtons' academic language and history specialisms were perfectly fitted. In latter years, Richard continued this interest in Sark language, assisting Martin Neudörfel to come to Sark to document Sarkese with our last surviving speakers.

Fundraising was his particular forte, and he collectively raised more than £300,000 for restoration projects, including founding the Isle of Sark Brewery, and his last and biggest drive, the Sark Community Dairy. For 14 years, he raised annual funds for Sir Barry Cunliffe's archaeological excavations, and enabled publication of 12 years of discoveries. The monograph is available from La Société, and please do get in touch if you would like to support this year's archaeological work.

Much of Sark's public heritage survives due to Richard's determined efforts. He started off securing the old girls' school, seeing it transformed into the Tourist Office and Heritage Room. A hands-on builder and curator, he actively helped restore the 1571 Mill, the Cider Barn, and the Epercquerie Star Fort. Sark Henge was his design for the 450th Anniversary of the 1565 Sark Charter in 2015, and again, he was never happier than with his sleeves



Richard at work on the conservation of the Cider Barn

rolled up. Putting younger conservationists to shame, he was often out on the Eperquarie or in Creux Belet valley, to push back aggressive plant species and let rarities thrive. And he'd readily join in with Conservation Commandos and Sark Community Blooms, thermos in hand.

He had a gift for bringing people together, smoothing over differing opinions to get the best outcome for the community, such as the creation of the Société's Charter, the designation of the Gouliot Caves as a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance, and establishing the Observatory to consolidate Sark as the world's first Dark Sky Island. (Encouraged by UKOTCF, discussions at a conference on Alderney led to Pitcairn becoming the first Southern Hemisphere Dark Skies site.) As the Lieutenant Governor said at his MBE conferral, the citation of everything Richard had done for Sark read more like a novel; it was the most extensive he had seen.

It only skimmed the surface. Richard and his daughter Lucy kindly worked on a whole-island map of the many projects he worked so hard to maintain; we certainly have boat-sized shoes to fill to continue his legacy. La Société, and Sark, miss him terribly.

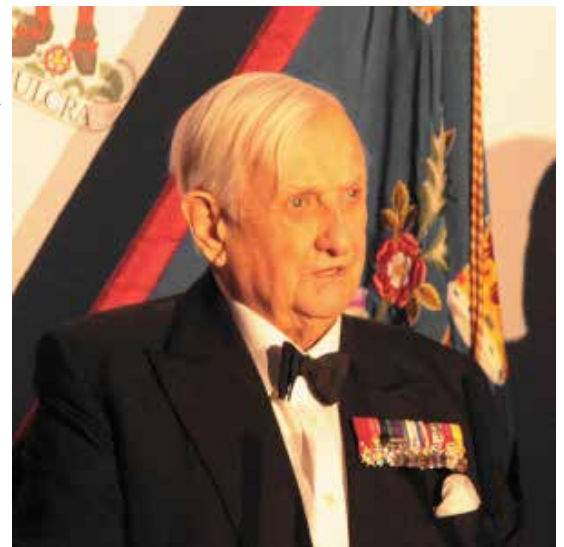
Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB CBE DL 1931-2022

We were saddened to hear of the death on 25th March of Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB CBE DL. While Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Gibraltar, and since, he was a strong supporter of UKOTCF member organisation, Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society. He had been for many years a Friend of the UKOTs (UKOTCF's individual persons' supporting scheme.)

His interest in the environment and conservation is well demonstrated by his roles as: a Life Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (serving twice on Council); a Life Fellow of the Zoological Society of London since 1946 (President 1992); a Life Member and Vice President of Fauna and Flora International; Life Fellow of Linnaean Society of London; Vice President of the Conservation Foundation; Ambassador of the World Land Trust; Chairman of the UK Trust for Nature Conservation in Nepal (and was on the Main Board of the Trust in Nepal); formerly President British Schools Exploring Society and President of Trekforce and Coral Cay Conservation, as well as some 15 other conservation or natural history organisations including Galapagos, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar and WWF Hong Kong. He served as Trustee of WWF-UK from 1988 – 1993 and held the position of Chair of WWF-UK ambassadors from 2002 - 2011.

In his previous and distinguished military career, after completion of National Service and three years at Trinity College Cambridge, Sir John joined the 2nd Gurkha Rifles in 1954. He served a number of tours in Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo and Hong Kong. He later became Commander-in-Chief UK Land Forces, and for 4 years served as the professional head of the Army (Chief of the General Staff) from 1988 and during the first Gulf War.

Our sympathy goes to his wife, son and daughters. There will be a memorial service in September.



Michael Gore CVO, CBE, FRPS 1935-2022

As this issue was being finalised, UKOTCF was saddened to hear of the death of Michael Edward John Gore at the age of 86. Michael served on UKOTCF's Council from 1999 to 2006, and as Chairman of its Wider Caribbean Working Group for about 10 years until 2006. Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman commented "Michael was superbly supportive with wise advice and smoothed matters along with gentle wit and humour. His knowledge of the workings of UK Overseas Territories and UK Government, together with his passion for the environment were key - and his bird photography skills something to aspire to but never match."

Michael had been interested in birds since schooldays and took his first photograph of a bird (a ringed plover) at Pagham in West Sussex in 1950. After training as a journalist, army service took him overseas, including to Cyprus, an island with which he fell in love despite the troubled times of his first experiences there. In his later years, he and his wife spent part of each year at their home in the Troodos Mountains in Cyprus. He was Honorary Chairman of Birdlife Cyprus. While on UKOTCF Council, he spent much effort and many years trying to persuade the Cyprus Sovereign Bases Authority to do something about the illegal bird trapping. We hope that it gave him some satisfaction that, a couple of decades later, they finally did so quite impressively.

In 1963, he transferred to HM Diplomatic Service, serving in Malaysia, Korea, Uruguay (during the Tupamaro uprising), The Gambia (an earlier time when paths crossed, as Mike Pienkowski while an undergraduate sought his advice on locations for a shorebird-study expedition to NW Africa), Kenya, Malawi (Deputy High Commissioner, 1984-87), Liberia (Ambassador Liberia 1988-90, during the civil war), the Bahamas (High Commissioner 1991-92) and the Cayman Islands (Governor 1992-95).

Michael always wanted to make things happen and, while High Commissioner, apparently asked the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) to find him a job to keep him busy. He was offered a governorship of a particular dependent territory (as UKOTs were then called) but he responded by asking if they thought him completely mad. Instead, they offered him Cayman - and that was well suited to him. At the time, FCO had acquired responsibility for UKOTs when incorporating the old Colonial Office - but was not very interested in them. No training was provided to incoming governors and then protocols prevented overlap. Later admitting that he was lost at first, Michael was one of those who rapidly found their feet. He achieved a great deal there, setting the ground for several ideas strongly adopted by later administrations. He is clearly widely respected there.



*Adélie penguins dive into the sea, British Antarctic Territory.
Photo © Michael Gore FRPS*



Michael Gore in his Governor uniform

Both Premier Wayne Panton and current Governor Martyn Roper released statements on 8th July, responding to the news of his death, saying that they were saddened to hear of his passing and offering condolences. Panton said Gore was a dear friend to the Cayman Islands who in his first throne speech had described it as one of the more fortunate countries in the world. In honour of the life of Governor Gore, the Cayman Islands flag and the Union Flag were flying half-mast throughout 8th July, which will be repeated the day of his funeral.

Premier Panton said: "The contributions of Governor Gore to our country are immense and we remember him when we observe the Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary, which contains the freshwater marshes of the Spotts-Newlands area, which is a roosting and breeding habitat for several freshwater bird species."

Governor Roper referenced Gore's passion for the environment and biodiversity, noting that he was a keen ornithologist. Michael Gore was the co-author of *The Birds of Korea* (with Dr Won Pyong-oh) and of *Las Aves del Uruguay* (with A.R.M.Gepp) and author of *Birds of The Gambia*, the definitive works on the birds of the three countries and of *On Safari in Kenya - a Pictorial Guide to the National Parks and Reserves*. He wrote the section on birds for *Between the Sea and the Sky* in the UN publication *Celebration of the Seas, Heritage for the Future*, to celebrate the International Year of the Ocean. His images have been published widely and he had several in Sir David Attenborough's Life series of books and as the Canon advertisement in National Geographic magazine. He also wrote numerous articles on conservation, illustrated with his own photographs of wildlife.

Michael was awarded his ARPS (Associate of the Royal Photographic Society) in 1979 and his FRPS (Fellow) in 1985. He won the RPS Nature Group medal in 1984 and was the overall winner of the Natural History Category in the RPS International Exhibition in 1987. He considered himself fortunate to have been able to visit all seven continents to photograph wildlife. He had been President of the Zoological Photographic Club and was President of the NPP from 2001 to 2013. He kindly gave free use of many of his photographs (which warrant substantial fees professionally) to UKOTCF. His website is: www.wildlife-photography.net.

We offer our deepest condolences to Michael's wife, Monica, and his family.

Celebration of Tristan da Cunha Marine Protection Zone in the House of Commons

The Speaker, The Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, hosted a celebration in the State Rooms, Speaker's House, House of Commons in the evening of 11th May.

The Speaker, in his welcome, noted that no Speaker had yet visited Tristan da Cunha and that his staff had never let him down yet. Chief Islander, James Glass, supported by a video with several Tristanians contributing, spoke about the island and the protection zone, as well as remarking, to the amusement of all, that all houses on Tristan have some similarity to the Speaker's House.

Lord Goldsmith, Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment, provided a video message and Becky Speight, RSPB Chief Executive Officer, and Tim Green, Cefas Deputy Chief Executive Officer, spoke in person.

The attendees enjoyed informal discussions, many meeting in person for the first time following Covid constraints. The Tristan da Cunha community was widely praised for their example in establishing such a protected zone.

In 2020, the community of Tristan da Cunha had declared that 687,247 km² of its waters would become a Marine Protection Zone becoming the largest no-take zone in the Atlantic and the fourth largest on the planet.

The MPZ - almost three times the size of the UK - safeguards one of the world's most pristine marine environments and protects the wealth of wildlife that lives there. It is the gold standard of marine protection, with no fishing or other extractive activities permitted across the whole area. This move makes the Tristan islanders the guardians of the largest no-take zone in the relatively unprotected Atlantic Ocean.



The Speaker (left) and James Glass hold Tristan da Cunha's flag at the event. Photo: www.tristandc.com

The event brought together members of the Tristan community, UK Government, Parliamentarians, NGOs and donors, and attendees included: Dr Philip Rushbrook, Governor of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; Jason & Sue Ivory, Administrator-designate of Tristan da Cunha; several Tristanians currently resident in the UK; and officers of the Tristan da Cunha Association. The event was co-organised by the Tristan da Cunha Government and the RSPB under the Atlantic Guardians project – a Blue Nature Alliance funded project to support Tristan with building a strong and sustainable start to the MPZ through activities such as research and monitoring, capacity building, community engagement, and global profile raising.

Small Island, Big Impact: World Ocean Day event

On 8th June, World Ocean Day, The Royal Society hosted a celebration of the UK Overseas Territories and their work so far across marine conservation and management.

The event was organised by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and opened by the Rt. Hon. Lord Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and the Environment.

Speakers in the main programme included:

Jane Rumble OBE, Head of Polar Regions, UK FCDO

Diane Baum, Head of Marine Conservation, Ascension Island Government

James Glass, Chief Islander, Tristan da Cunha

The Hon. Josephine Connolly, Minister for the Environment, Turks & Caicos Islands Government

Andrew Pettit, Bermuda Director of Conservation Services, standing in for the Hon. Walter Roban, Deputy Premier of Bermuda and the Minister of Home Affairs

Prof. Heather Koldewey, Lead of Bertarelli Foundations Marine Science Programme, Zoological Society of London

Stephanie Martin, Tristan da Cunha Government and Blue Belt Programme UK Overseas Territory Representative

Sue Gregory, Marine Environment & Fisheries Manager, Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands

Kedell Worboys, St Helena Government UK Representative

Prof. Jessica Meeuwig, Co-Founder of Blue Abacus

Sam Elliot, OceanMind

Dan Ward, Marine Management Organisation.

During questions, UKOTCF Chairman, Dr Mike Pienkowski,



Above: Lord Goldsmith opens the meeting with (from left) Heather Koldewey, Drew Pettit, James Glass, Dee Baum & Hon. Josephine Connolly. Below: Minister Connolly stresses the major threat of SCTLTD.

The Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLTD) is the Caribbean's current major threat significantly impacting coral reef biodiversity and live coral cover.

- Response could only be made through local, regional and international partnerships
- In TCI, the Government and its conservation partners (primarily TCRF) have been working on public outreach, disease treatments, alternative treatment research, and safeguarding living samples in isolated nurseries.



Partnerships: TCI's SCTLTD response



congratulated the Territories and the FCDO team on their major achievement. He remarked that terrestrial conservation had now been much more lacking in UK Government funding for some years. Noting some of the points in the Tristan and other presentations, he asked whether there was any chance of a “Green Dots” fund to reflect on land, on which most UKOT endemics depend, the success in the marine areas. The need for this was underlined by Diane Baum, who remarked that the funding discrepancy led to much tension between colleagues, and Heather Koldewey, who noted that conservation on land and sea were inter-dependent and needed to be addressed in an integrated way. Other UKOTs concurred.

Prof. Koldewey stressed in her presentation the inter-relationship between land and sea..



Ministers answer questions on UKOT environment funding

On 20th June, the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee and the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee held a joint meeting on CoP15: the international biodiversity conference in UK Parliament.

Caroline Lucas MP asked Lord Goldsmith: “When you were at the EAC on the subject of biodiversity, I think in January 2021, you said that, given that EU nature funds were no longer available to the Overseas Territories, the Government were looking to how it could improve its offer to them. And I believe that there is a letter of May 2022 where there does not seem to be any indication yet that the Overseas Territories have been told how that funding will be replaced. I wondered if you could give any update on that.”

This seemed to cause some concern amongst the officials who had previously been giving very effective support to the ministers. There was much flicking through papers, with no evident positive outcome. Perhaps one should conclude that the UKOTs are not at the forefront of the minds of senior officials in Defra.

However, Lord Goldsmith seemed to know much of the key information himself. In answering, he made reference to:

- six more UKOTs joining UK’s ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity, listing British Virgin Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, St Helena, Ascension & Tristan da Cunha [UK Government oddly treating these three as one], and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands [this was a little odd as the years of joining of these territories were, respectively, 1994 (the same date as UK itself), 2016, 1994, 1994, 2016; Cayman Islands (1994) was not mentioned];
- the fact that an estimated 94% of UK’s biodiversity is dependent on the UKOTs
- the third or fourth biggest marine estate in the world because of the UKOTs;

- the UK Government’s recommitment to the Blue Belt and an increase in the Darwin Plus fund [see following article];
- the addition of Blue Shield as a sort of half-way house to the Blue Belt, with the first funding going to Bermuda and Turks & Caicos having just joined both the Blue Shield and the Blue Belt.

He speculated that the total available funds might now have more than compensated for the EU funds effectively used by the UKOTs in the past [but this was based, in part, on a misapprehension that EU funds did not actually reach the UKOTs in the past]. He added that this applied to both terrestrial and marine – so it is satisfying that the message about the neglect of terrestrial conservation funding noted in the previous article (and many other fora) has reached through. We look forward to action to correct the lack, especially as the Minister expressed his hope that funding to the UKOTs for these purposes would be “ramped up” to support “the extraordinary work.”

Caroline Lucas then asked about the level of funding for the continued Blue Shield. Lord Goldsmith said that it would not be less than previously. He also mentioned his hope that in the next few weeks UK would work with other nations to develop an initiative against illegal fishing.

Finally, Caroline Lucas noted that research projects on UKOTs tended to be difficult to obtain and recalled that EAC had, in the past, recommended that a portal be set up for UKOTs to post research questions to enable more collaboration between UKOTs and UK universities, and that the Minister had said that this would be looked at. Lord Goldsmith recalled the discussion and confirmed that the query had been passed to colleagues in FCDO, which has the policy lead on UKOTs, He would check on and, if necessary, encourage progress.



*On the Environment Audit Select Committee (EAC):
Caroline Lucas MP (Green Party)*



Witnesses: Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (right); The Right Hon. the Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (centre); with their supporting officials (left and behind)

Photos: parliament.tv

New announcements at the Darwin Initiative

UK's Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) announced on 23rd May new arrangements for the Darwin Plus system (that part of the Darwin Initiative relating to UKOTs, rather than foreign developing countries).

Defra acknowledged that the UK Overseas Territories are unique and globally significant nature hotspots. Made up of thousands of small islands, vast oceans and dense rainforests, these areas support unique wildlife and contain 94% of the UK's biodiversity.

Defra noted that, since 2012, the government has contributed more than £38 million towards 180 projects in the UK Overseas Territories through Darwin Plus, and has committed £30 million over the next three years to support even more environmental projects in these areas.

It was claimed also that funding through Darwin Plus and the Darwin Initiative will help to deliver the commitments set out in the Environment Act to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity and improve species abundance by 10% by 2042.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, International Environment Minister, said: "From rare sea birds to threatened coral reefs and plants, the Darwin Plus initiative is instrumental in protecting and restoring our precious natural environment across the Overseas Territories. This investment will enhance our global capability to respond to climate change, address biodiversity decline and help safeguard the future of these unique habitats for the next generation."

Although, a month after the announcement, a list of projects awarded funding in 2022 was still not available, Defra claimed that habitats and projects set to benefit from the funding include:

- A cross-UKOT camera network to enhance marine predator conservation across the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Polar regions. Drones and timelapse cameras will be used to monitor and gather information on green turtles, endemic frigate birds and masked boobies in the Ascension islands, data which is not currently available and will create effective management plans to protect these species.
- Investment to improve environmental protections for the East Caicos wilderness area. The funding will support the creation of a locally owned resource management plan to safeguard against inappropriate development on the uninhabited island to protect nesting turtles, plant species unique to those islands, and native birds, such as the West Indian whistling duck
- A project to turn the tide on plastic pollution in Ascension and St Helena. Researchers will explore the drivers of plastic pollution and trial innovative solutions to reduce single-use plastic and improve waste management efficiency
- Action to improve the New Island National Nature Reserve in the Falkland Islands and protect the sites' world-renowned seabird colonies from invasive mammals and conserve its carbon-rich peatlands.

Communities in these areas are reliant on the natural environment for their economic welfare and security. This funding injection is intended to provide local people with the skills and tools to manage the natural world and encourage tourism in a sustainable way.

Darwin Plus (also known as the Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund) is a competitive UK government grants scheme which is part of the Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) that provides funding for environmental projects in UKOTs

The funding also supports fellowships for UKOT Nationals to increase their knowledge and ability to meet long-term strategic outcomes for their natural environment.

Defra note that primary responsibility for biodiversity conservation and wider environmental management in the UK Overseas Territories has been devolved to the UKOT governments, who, with the support of the UK government, are responsible for developing appropriate, applicable, and affordable environmental policies, legislation and standards.

Beyond the UKOTs, the Darwin Initiative also provides Overseas Development Aid (ODA) to ODA-eligible countries (on an economic-based scale) to protect biodiversity worldwide. 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the Darwin Initiative. Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has awarded over £164m to more than 1,143 projects across 159 countries.

Defra also started referring to what was previously called Darwin Plus as Darwin Plus Main (Somewhat confusingly, Darwin Main was the title it used previously for the non-UKOT part of the Darwin Initiative). This terminological change was so that it could announce two forthcoming initiatives.

Darwin Plus Local will fund smaller environmental projects up to £100,000, and available exclusively to UKOT-based organisations. Darwin Plus Local will also aim to build in-territory capacity. The first round for Darwin Plus Local will launch by December 2022.

Darwin Plus Strategic will fund larger transformative environmental projects, encouraging greater ambition and collaboration across the UKOTs. These will be £1m-£3m projects. This opens for a non-funded concept-note Round this year (2022/23) followed by invitations to the first funded Round in 2023/24. More details will be shared later this year.

In some ways, these initiatives are a response to a call by UKOTCF and other NGOs some years ago. It is somewhat unfortunate that UKOTCF – which several UKOT bodies stress is essential at present to their proposals – is not eligible to apply for Darwin Plus Local, despite its declared intention of building up local capacity. However, one cannot hope for everything to be right. How effective Darwin Plus Strategic will be remains unknown. One must be hopeful but the devil will, as ever, be in the details of criteria and eligibility.

Blue Belt and Blue Shield

For some years, UKOTCF and others have called for the extension of *Blue Belt* from the initial oceanic UKOTs to others (and, of course, comparable support for terrestrial conservation).

The *Blue Shield* Programme is a new UK Government initiative aimed at tackling the challenges of illegal fishing and unlawful marine activities around the UK Overseas Territories. It will help UK Overseas Territories strengthen the management and enforcement of their oceans.

Announced at the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC), the *Blue Shield* Programme is the latest project funded by the UK Government's *Blue Belt* Programme, which protects over 4 million square

kilometres of ocean around the UKOTs.

The *Blue Shield* Programme will identify and analyse activities that may impact the health and sustainability of UK Overseas Territories' marine environments. Illegal fishing and overfishing can cause significant damage to marine environments threatening the sustainability of fish populations, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of those who fish legally. Effective monitoring and surveillance can help reduce those risks.

The activities surveyed could include illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, commercial and recreational vessel activity, as well as shipping activity.

Through the establishment of compliance and enforcement frameworks, *Blue Shield* will assist the territories to ensure their waters are protected and sustainably managed. Where necessary, *Blue Shield* will also assist them to undertake enforcement action against non-compliance.

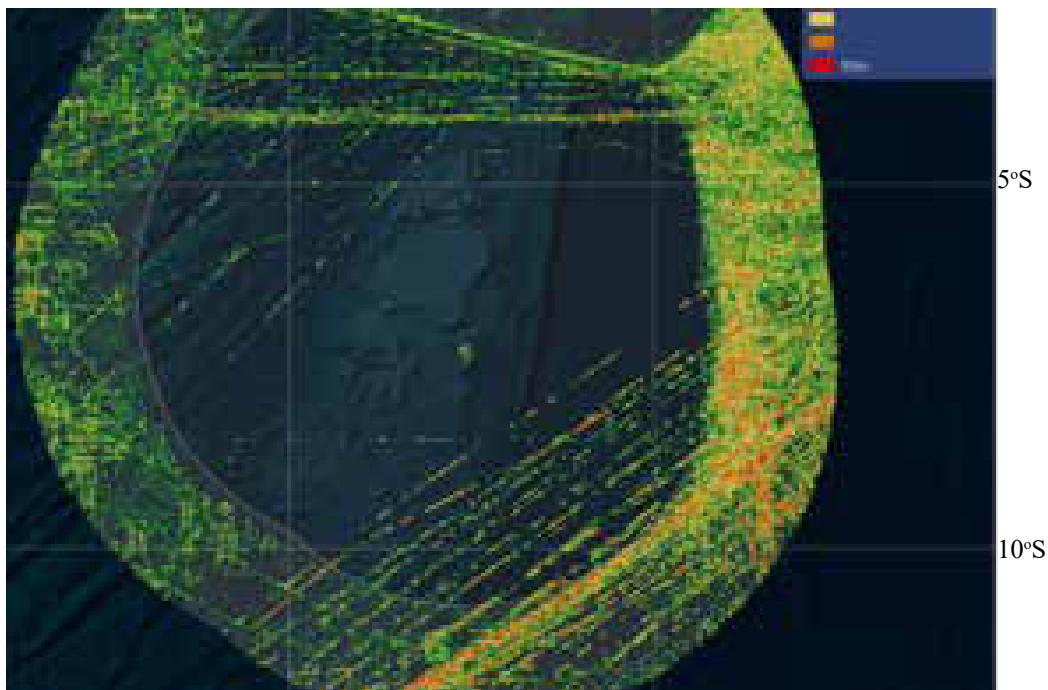
UK Overseas Territories will also be supported through specialist training for on-island staff to build local capacity, as well as providing access to innovative surveillance and enforcement techniques. These include:

- Autonomous drone technology that can monitor vast areas of ocean for human activity and report its findings in real time;
- Passive acoustic units, which once deployed underwater can monitor for the sounds of vessels which have their GPS positioning systems turned off;
- Latest satellite surveillance data can be used to monitor maritime activity across entire Exclusive Economic Zones.

Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister for the Environment, commented: “The new *Blue Shield* Programme will help UK Overseas Territories protect their hugely important marine environments against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing and other damaging activities. The Programme will provide training and will use emerging enforcement technologies such as drones and satellite surveillance.

“I am absolutely delighted that Bermuda is the first Territory to join the *Blue Shield*, and I look forward to an excellent partnership. Bermuda today announced that it would be the first Overseas Territory to join *Blue Shield*. Support provided by the Programme, to combat IUU fishing, and manage vessel activity and marine development projects, will underpin Bermuda’s existing protected areas management approach.”

Honourable Walter Roban, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, Bermuda, commented: “I am very excited for



Heatmap, produced in the surveillance assistance provided to British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) as part of the Blue Belt Programme, and an example of what is offered to UKOTs under the Blue Shield Programme. Photo: Blue Belt Programme/OceanMind About the Blue Belt Programme:

Bermuda to be participating in the *Blue Shield* Programme and I thank the UK Government for their willingness to share vital technology that will help support the surveillance, protection and management of our marine environment.

“Bermuda will continue to align itself with the highest standards needed for the protection of our oceans. Following on from our leading participation in the Sargasso Sea Commission, our *Blue Shield* involvement further strengthens Bermuda’s role as custodian of one of the world’s foremost marine ecosystems.”

The Turks & Caicos Islands have just joined *Blue Belt*, and a range of other UK Overseas Territories are in discussions about joining the Programme

The *Blue Belt* Programme is a UK Government initiative to enhance marine protection and sustainable management of activities in the UK Overseas Territories. UKOTs who protect their waters with the support of this Programme include Ascension Island, the British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, the Pitcairn Islands, St Helena and Tristan da Cunha – covering over 4 million km², an area 17 times the size of the UK and over one percent of the Earth’s entire ocean.

UK Overseas Territories within the *Blue Belt* Programme have access to this important capability, but it is now available via the *Blue Shield* to all other interested Overseas Territories.

This flagship Programme has been central to the UK Government’s ambition of leading action to tackle the serious global problems of illegal fishing, species extinction and climate change. The Programme has underpinned the UK’s 25 Year Environment Plan and supported the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals. More recently, it has supported the UK’s commitment to ensure 30% of the world’s oceans are protected by 2030.

The *Blue Belt* Programme is delivered by the UKOTs with the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO).



A lot of ocean out there to protect: view from one of the tiny islets off Bermuda where nesting Bermuda petrels (cahows) survived unknown for several hundred years. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Biodiversity Challenge funds for UK Overseas Territories

Relating to the information detailed in several of the preceding articles, in May the UK Government announced that the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) will have access to £6.4m of funding across their Biodiversity Challenge Funds.

In response to the UK Government's Call for evidence in 2017, UKOTCF, with others, suggested several ways in which UK Government could better support the UKOTs. Some changes are being launched this year which are based around some of these recommendations. Because of the details in the fund arrangements, they may well have negative implications for umbrella bodies like

UKOTCF, but they may enable some, if not all, of the bodies in the UKOTs to access funds to provide much needed capacity to deliver new projects.

Currently, Darwin Plus Main projects support environmental projects from £100k to £1m. Darwin Plus Fellowships aim to build capacity within UKOTs through training opportunities for UKOT nationals or those with a relationship with an UKOT. New elements of these funds are to be opened soon, as indicated on p. 11.

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands implements UKOTCF recommendation from 2005.

In 2005, in a review partly commissioned by UK Government (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/conventions/ramsar-2/>), UKOTCF recommended protected status for the whole of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Although this has taken rather longer to implement than we would have preferred, UKOTCF is delighted that our recommendation has now been implemented.

On 5th July 2022, the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) announced the designation of the entire landmass of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) as Specially Protected Areas, fulfilling the commitment it made in its *Pathway to Protection*. This Terrestrial Protected Area covers over 3,800 km² and complements the Marine Protected Area, which covers the whole 1.24m km² maritime zone, thus ensuring that the whole of SGSSI lies within a protected area system. GSGSSI said that, together, these Protected Areas will be an exemplar in delivering holistic ecosystem management, sustainable use and world-class protection.

The Specially Protected Areas Order prohibits all entry to the South Sandwich Islands without a permit and lays the foundation for enhanced protection measures across South Georgia which will be the subject of further consultation.

The South Georgia Terrestrial Protected Area is intended to conserve, protect and preserve the ecosystem and restore native biodiversity. It will ensure that activities are managed sustainably and those activities, such as research and media operations are assessed for their impact on the ecosystem and managed accordingly. It will help deliver a sustainable tourist industry so that people will have the opportunity to experience these amazing habitats and develop collective knowledge about the biodiversity of the island. The Government aims to deliver a truly

sustainable visitor experience, supporting this global rarity; an ecosystem in recovery, following the industrial-scale impacts of excessive whaling and taking of other wildlife and the deliberate and accidental introduction of alien invasive species over the last century and more.

Within the next 12 months, GSGSSI, in partnership with stakeholders, will develop a detailed management plan and enhanced regulations for the Protected Areas to ensure that the unique terrestrial ecosystems in the Territory enjoy the high level of protection they deserve.

This announcement is an important step in GSGSSI's vision of 'environmental recovery and resilience through evidence-based sustainable management' as detailed in their stewardship framework *Protect Sustain Inspire* and its *Delivery Agenda*. It will contribute to the UK Government's aims under the Convention on Biological Diversity to press for 30% of land and ocean to be protected across the globe.

His Excellency Nigel Phillips CBE, outgoing Commissioner for South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands said: "*As my tenure as Commissioner of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands drew to a close, I was delighted to sign the Order that designated the entire territory as a Protected Area. This is another step in the implementation of Protect, Sustain, Inspire, the stewardship framework we have developed for the conservation of these unique Islands. To maintain our progress in delivering an "Ecosystem in Recovery" is a passion all in the government hold dear. It has truly been a privilege to lead such a great team and I know they will serve my successor equally well.*"

Amanda Milling, Minister responsible for Overseas Territories, said: *The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich*



King penguin colony in front of glacier at Salisbury Plain. Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski. More information and pictures at http://www.ukotcf.org/1_vTours/tour.cfm?locn=SGSS&tourType=FNI&fullTourFlag=TRU&E&seq=10&dbType=Live&typeSeq=3



Chinstrap penguins display in colony. Around 1.3 million pairs of chinstraps, representing almost 50% of the world's population, and 100,000 Adélie penguins breed on the South Sandwich Islands, as well as many other species.

Islands (GSGSSI) have made tremendous steps to reverse the impacts of unbridled human exploitation to the islands. This move to designate the entire land mass a protected area continues the journey of an ecosystem in recovery and demonstrates the shared commitment to be an exemplar of environmental protection. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue to work closely with GSGSSI to support the implementation of the Terrestrial Protected Area and enhance the protection of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) are a UK Overseas Territory, situated 800 miles SE of the Falkland Islands. The main island of South Georgia is approximately 170 km long and between 2 and 40 km wide and occupies an area of 3,755 km². Mt Paget rises to 2,934 m and is the highest point in all UK mainland and territories outside of Antarctica. The South Sandwich Islands are a chain of eleven small volcanic islands

stretching from 56-60°S, 350-500 miles SE of South Georgia.

SGSSI are of global significance as a relatively pristine and rich environment that sustains major populations of seabirds and marine mammals. The islands are home to about five million seals of four different species, and 65 million breeding birds of 30 different species. Amongst these is the world's only sub-Antarctic songbird, the endemic South Georgia pipit. Eleven of the 30 species of breeding birds on South Georgia are considered by IUCN to be threatened or near-threatened species. Following world-leading habitat restoration projects to remove invasive species such as rats, mice (by NGO the South Georgia Heritage Trust), reindeer (by GSGSSI, with help from the Norwegian Government, as the reindeer were introduced by Norwegian whalers with UK Government approval) and weeds, South Georgia is an ecosystem in recovery and GSGSSI is committed to safeguarding this legacy.

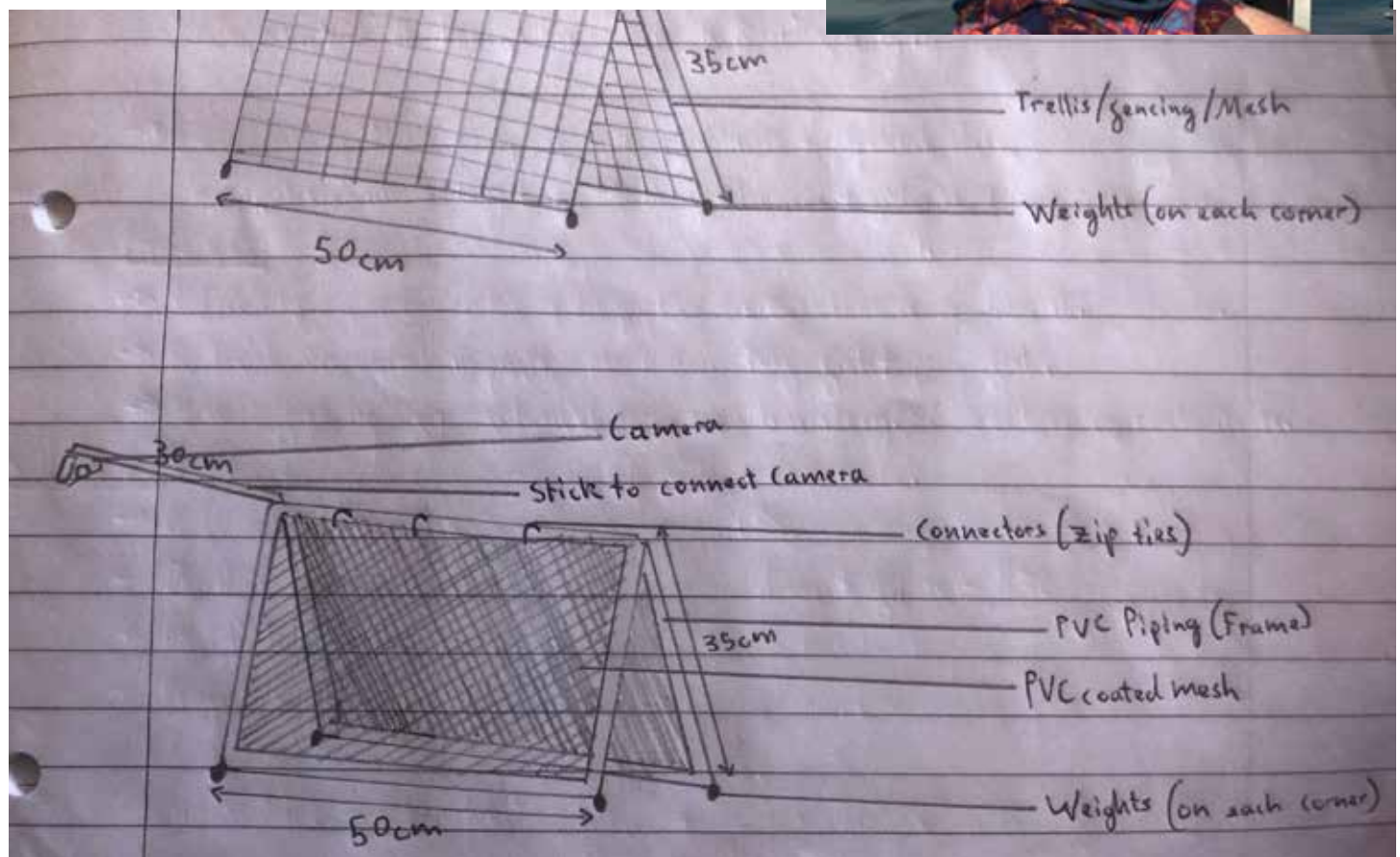
Build it and they will come?

At the end of 2019, a small bursary was created by UKOTCF in association with the Jersey International Centre for Advanced Studies (JICAS), to support a research project undertaken by an MSc student. Jack Hayes was able to use the bursary to support his trip to the Cayman Islands in summer 2022.

His research project has been developed in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government's Department of Environment (DoE). Jack expressed an interest in invasive species management, particularly lionfish, using his diving skills and spending some time overseas to support conservation efforts. Over several months, Jack liaised with the DoE to develop a project. It aims to:

- (1) understand more about lionfish distribution in shallow mangrove and seagrass areas in the North Sound; and
- (2) understand more about their attraction to human-made structures, e.g. piers and sunken discarded items, around which they are known to aggregate. Information gained may have implications for lionfish management in future, especially areas known to be important fish nurseries.

A selection of Jack's images, showing him and his creations designed to understand what type of structures lionfishes are attracted to, are shown on this page and the next, in some cases in place on the seabed.





Marine Biologist Special issue on UKOTs

UKOTCF's invited article *Big ocean, big opportunity, big responsibility* was published in the *Marine Biologist* magazine in January. It provides an overview of the vast marine areas surrounding the UKOTs, the communities that depend on them for many ecosystem services and some of the challenges they face. Beautiful, but haunting images of Stony Coral Tissue Loss

Disease taken by photographer Myriah Wood are included as well as several contributions from colleagues in Bermuda and the Falkland Islands.

The article can be viewed here: https://www.mba.ac.uk/sites/default/files/guba/themarinebiologist_issue_21_ukotcf.pdf.

Speakers from UK Overseas Territories Come Together

The first Commons and Overseas Territories Speakers' Conference (COTSC 2022), took place in May, hosted by UK House of Commons Speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP.

Speakers from Anguilla, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands, and a representative from Gibraltar attended the three-day event. It has been established to foster contacts, share information and experiences.

Following the meeting a communiqué was published. Several parts echo the conclusions and recommendations from the UKOTCF Conference in 2021, notably:

To ensure the voices of the Overseas Territories are heard on issues that impact them but are decided by the UK Parliament,

the UK House of Commons will explore opportunities for direct scrutiny by Territories within the committee mechanism.

We welcome the focus on biodiversity and the climate emergency by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee. We recognise the impact the Committee and other House of Commons Committees play in amplifying the concerns of the UK Overseas Territories on these issues. We welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to these bodies.

The full communiqué can be seen at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2022/may-2022/commons-and-overseas-territories-speakers-conference-2022-communiqué/>

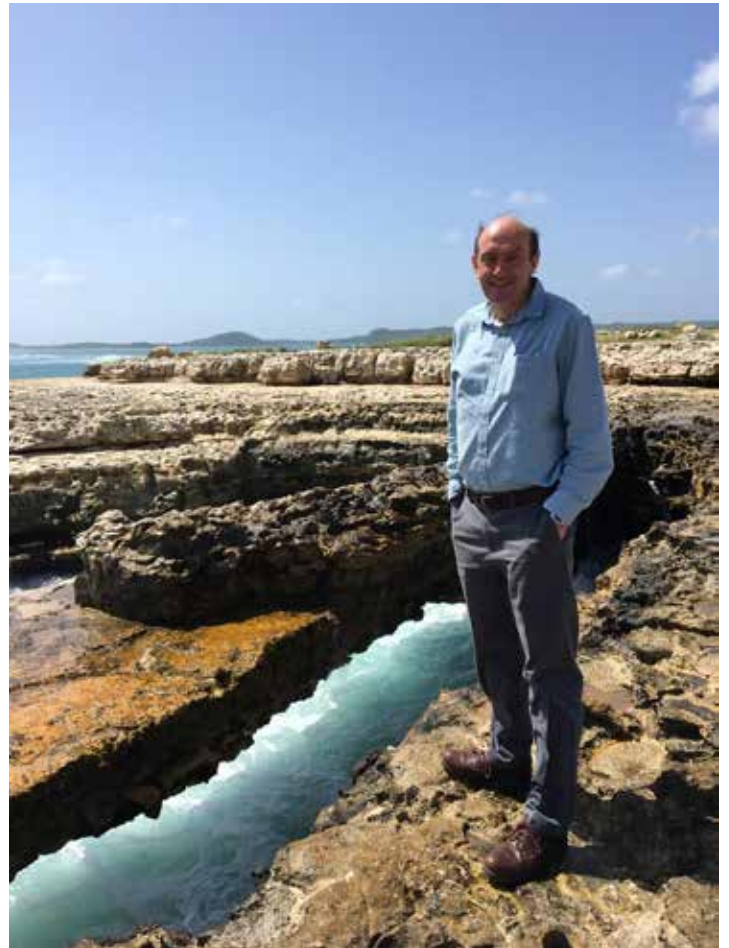
New UKOTCF Council Member: Andy Pearce

We are pleased to welcome to UKOTCF Council Andrew Pearce OBE. Andy retired from the British Diplomatic Service in 2022 after a long, varied career. A scientist by training, Andy studied Chemistry at St Catherine's College in Oxford and briefly worked on potential new, powerful battery materials before joining the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Andy's work with the FCO included postings as: Head of Economic Affairs in South Africa, working with the Mandela Government; Head of Political Affairs in Israel when the Middle East Peace Process was launched and Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated; Chargé D'Affaires in Lithuania during Brexit negotiations; Head of Security for the FCO during the Arab Spring; Deputy Head of Mission in Bangkok during the Asian Tsunami disaster and military coup; and most recently Governor of the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat.

Andy has a life-long love of the natural world. A keen hiker, he has closely explored and observed the natural parks and long-distance paths of the UK; and several other countries, including the wilder parts of Thailand, South Africa, Lithuania and Israel. In Montserrat, he and his wife explored the island intimately, walking every trail, and building a deep affection for the island's unspoilt environment and unique wildlife. As Governor, he gave strong personal support for the conservation agenda, speaking frequently of its importance in Cabinet and publicly, and encouraging stronger British government engagement.

Andy met his wife, Pornpun, a nutritionist, on his first posting to Thailand when he was learning Thai. They have two children. They currently live in Tunbridge Wells in Kent but are planning to relocate to their adopted home county of Cornwall over the coming year.



Andy Pearce at Antigua Blowhole

A flag goes home – UKOTCF links Montserrat and the Falkland Islands in an important exercise in cultural history: an update

In *Forum News* 55:10, we reported UKOTCF's role in aiding Tim Orton's donation of a battle ensign of the Falklands liberation flagship, *HMS Invincible*, to Falklands Museum in Stanley in time for their 40th anniversary display. We are grateful to Andrea Barlow, Director of Falklands Museum, for supplying this photo of the next stage in its journey: *Commodore Jonathan Lett, Commander British Forces presenting the ensign, on its arrival in the Falklands, to Museum Chairman Richard Cockwell OBE. Photo: Falkland Islands Museum.*



City of Stanley

In a very British competition to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee (70 years since her coronation), Stanley (Falklands), George Town (Caymans), Gibraltar, Douglas and Peel (both Isle of Man), along with 34 towns in Britain and Northern Island competed for city status.

Stanley and Douglas were among the 8 winners but, rather surprisingly, Gibraltar was not.

Stanley, with a population of 2458 in 2016, is not quite the least populous UK city; St David's in Wales had nearly 1400 in the 2011 census.

The award is undoubtedly linked to the 40th anniversary of the end of the Falklands War, liberating the islanders after foreign invasion in April 1982, and in memory of the sacrifices made during the conflict.

Pitcairn progress

The 12th meeting of the Pitcairn Environment Group was held online on Thursday 24th March 2022. Participants were:

Simeon Archer-Rand Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas)

Jon Slayer Freelance Filmmaker

Terry Dawson King's College London

Emily Hardman Marine Management Organisation

Johnny Briggs Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy

Katie Gray Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy

Michele Christian Pitcairn Islands Government

Melva Evans Pitcairn Islands Government

Tony Williams Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands Society

Luke Hosty Protect Blue

Robert Irving Sea-Scope Marine Environmental Consultants

Alasdair Hamilton UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Mike Pienkowski UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Mike Brooke University of Cambridge

Blue Belt Programme Update: Expedition to Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands (Simeon Archer-Rand)

The Blue Belt Programme funded expedition to Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands was led by former Administrator Mark Tomlinson. Because of Covid it was near-impossible for scientists from the UK to travel. Members of the Pitcairn community made key contributions towards the research tour.

The objectives of the expedition derived from the recently published Marine Management Plan, and additional aims came from the recommendations given in the Coral Reef Climate Change Report Cards.

The overall intention of the expedition was to monitor the impact of climate change on Pitcairn's near-pristine coral reefs, and collect data on fish prevalence. The marine objectives included;

- Demersal/reef fish density and community structure across the three islands.
- Access the pelagic fish populations within the vicinity of Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands.
- Coral reef assessment (density, coverage, community composition, identify any signs of coral disease, e.g. coral tissue, coral bleaching, damage (storm or human activity) and algae overgrowth).
- Marine mammal observations.

- Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing/suspicious activity.

• The supply ship *Silver Supporter* doubled as a research vessel, where 88 benthic stereo-baited remote underwater video systems (BRUVS) were deployed; 50 towed cameras were dropped, and 3 mid-water BRUVS were deployed. 4.5 TB of video data were captured.

Next steps:

- The BRUV data collected is currently being analysed by Blue Abacus, with results expected by the end of April 2022.
- Particular interest in shark and fish densities.
- Data to be incorporated into coral reef vulnerability/resilience study.
- First point in a long-term monitoring plan of reefs around the marine protected area (MPA).

MPA Management (Emily Hardman)

In October 2021 the Pitcairn Islands MPA Management Plan (2021-2026), which presents ways to ensure effective management of the MPA over the next five years, was published on the Government's website. The Blue Belt Programme is assisting in the development of a Monitoring and Research Plan. Melva Evans was appointed as MPA Officer - a post funded by the Blue Belt Programme - in November 2021.

The Blue Belt Surveillance and Intelligence Hub has continued satellite surveillance of the MPA. The incursions and high risk detections were fishing vessels. The Blue Belt Programme is focussed on building capacity and has financed training, including;

- Coastal fisheries compliance training (The Pacific Community, formerly The South Pacific Commission)
- Stakeholder engagement training (Talking Transformation).

Programme Priorities for Next 3 Years (Simeon Archer-Rand)

- Monitoring and research; fisheries and climate change
- MPA management
- Compliance and enforcement
- Engagement and outreach.

Deputy Governor Update (Alasdair Hamilton)

Despite the pandemic, the past year has seen positive environmental conservation progress.



HMS Spey

In early 2022 the Royal Navy's offshore patrol vessel *HMS Spey* visited the Pitcairn Islands. As well as conducting patrols to deter and defend against IUU fishing, the vessels crew;

- Delivered Covid vaccines;
- Provided dental services and advice on oral care;
- Collected water quality and mapping data from across the MPA, to help scientists understand climate change in the area.

Marine Science Base

Via FCDO, Pitcairn successfully bid into the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). The grant has funded a marine science centre, with lab and limited accommodation, and is situated in between the pastors lodge and cemetery. Equipment has been purchased and is already on-island; The marine science base will be heavily promoted on social media, which the PEG can help to amplify.

(The Ascension Island Government are establishing an environmental DNA (eDNA) laboratory using next generation sequencing (NGS) technology, to conduct efficient and effective biological monitoring of their MPA. This is part-funded by a grant from Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy.)

Joint Ministerial Council (JMC)

The annual UK Overseas Territories JMC brings together political leaders from the UKOTs and UK Ministers. Laura Clarke (Governor of the Pitcairn Islands) attended the November 2021 meeting in London, where the Rt Hon. Lord Zac Goldsmith (Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment) chaired an environment and ocean session. The JMC is an opportunity to stress the importance and uniqueness of Pitcairn's environment to Ministers, who all of the UKOTs rely on for funding. Alasdair plans to attend the November 2022 JMC in person and, whilst in London, could meet with the PEG.

Travel to Pitcairn

Covid-free and with the majority of the community fully vaccinated, Pitcairn will open its borders to visitors from 31st March 2022. *MV Silver Supporter* will operate direct services between Tauranga, New Zealand and Pitcairn for visitors from 3rd April 2022. In addition to carrying essential supplies, the vessel will carry Pitcairn Islanders, contracted workers and a limited number of visitors. Regular passenger services between Mangareva, French Polynesia and Pitcairn are planned to resume in July 2022.



A pair of Kermadec petrels display over Ducie Island, The Pitcairn group supports major parts of the world populations of several petrel species. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski (and among many UKOTCF photos made available for the forthcoming field-guide)

Social Media

A Facebook page focussed on environmental news, similar to the Blue Belt Programme's site, is due to launch but progress is static whilst the person working on it is off island. A highly visual website dedicated to conservation is also planned, and will link to the government's website.

Field Guide to the Wildlife of the Pitcairn Islands (Robert Irving)

Further to other financial contributions, Alasdair secured additional funding to allow Robert to complete the field guide. Photo submissions, with permissions, are welcome. Robert aims to complete the text by the end of 2022. However, there will be a market for the guide as soon as tourists return to the area. Photos of flora along the potential routes tourists will take would be useful.

Philately: The Philatelic Bureau is now run by Tower Mint Ltd. Photos used in the guide might work well as a stamp series. Again, photographer permissions would be required for images used.

Update from The Pitcairn Islands (Michele Christian and Melva Evans)

2021 was a busy year despite the island's border being closed, but Covid didn't stop the advancement of work. As well as the scientific expedition, the island has seen the GPS tracking of birds (with an especially high number found on Oeno and Ducie Islands), and the increase of whale sightings (with mother and calves spotted, along with pods of 3/4).

There is a big difference between the number of shark sightings in 2012 (during the NatGeo expedition) and now. It seems that a significant number of sharks, that cannot be fished, are returning to the waters around Pitcairn, although not in the waters surrounding Oeno. The creation of a marine science base sends out a positive message; the community want Pitcairn's environmental conservation efforts to be globally recognised. The centre will help the community learn/upskill marine and environment issues and become confident ambassadors.

Since undertaking the role of MPA Officer, Melva has been overwhelmed with work. As well as supporting the Blue Belt Programme with the MPA Management and Monitoring and Research plans, she has advanced the Coastal Conservation Regulations to the final review stage (soon to be put into legislation). Melva has also been working with Luke at Protect Blue, an ocean focused creative agency, to raise awareness of the ongoing conservation work being undertaken by the community.

• Funded by Darwin Plus, RSPB have been working with both the Pitcairn Island and Tristan da Cunha Island Governments to strengthen biosecurity capacity and enhance protection from invasive alien species. A first draft report is due the end of March/early April 2022. A Darwin Plus funding application, for a rat eradication project, is currently being processed.

AOB

Repopulation Plan: A steady number of enquiries and applications are coming in, but Covid has changed priorities and there are no longer plans to hold roadshows in New Zealand. Although the long-term population issue remains, the island's environmental profile will also ensure sustainability. Tourism is a mainstay, and the marine science centre will attract scientists and the like.

PEG Support: Over the next few months the PEG can support the island by promoting their conservation efforts via social media and through interested networks. This will include construction of the marine science base and publication of Blue Abacus' data analysis results from the Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands science expedition.

(Thanks to Katie Gray, of Pew, for the meeting notes on which this article is based.)

Record breeding success for recovering Bermuda petrels (cahows)

Jeremy Madeiros, principal conservationist for the Cahow Recovery Project, reports from Bermuda: “From only 18 breeding pairs, making up the entire population of the cahow when the programme began in the early 1960s, the cahow population has now grown to a record number of 155 breeding pairs, up from 143 pairs in 2021. In addition, we can now confirm that there are a record number of chicks this year: 77, compared to the previous record of 73 chicks in 2019.”

Before departure, the chicks begin “their pre-fledging exercise period, coming out of their underground burrows at night to exercise, strengthen their flight muscles, and imprinting on the area surrounding their nest. In their first flight, they will head straight out to sea. This imprinting is instrumental in enabling them to eventually make their way back to the same location, several years from now.”

Remote Nonsuch Island, and the neighbouring islands and rocks total less than 22 acres on the southeast coast of Bermuda, and are the only place on Earth where cahows nest. The critically endangered cahows *Pterodroma cahow* are Bermuda’s National Bird. The chicks take their first flight and headout to sea by mid June, having been fattened up by their parents since they hatched in February and March. Once fledged from Nonsuch, they will probably not touch solid ground again for 3-5 years, wandering over the open ocean in the North Atlantic, feeding on squid, small fish, and crustaceans, and sleeping on the wing.

Cahows were wiped out on Nonsuch Island and all the larger islands of Bermuda by the 1620s due to introduced mammal predators such as rats, cats, dogs, and hogs, and hunting by the early settlers. The 60-year-running Cahow Recovery Project controls and manages threats to cahows on the breeding islands, and has enabled the species to recover from near-extinction. The seabird was thought to be extinct for 300+ years until it was rediscovered nesting in a few remote Castle Harbour islets in

1951, by a team that included a young David Wingate – who was later appointed Bermuda’s first Conservation Officer in order to facilitate their recovery on Nonsuch in the 1960s.

Two separate translocation projects, carried out in 2004-2008 and 2013-2017, succeeded in re-establishing two new nesting colonies in different locations on Nonsuch. These colonies have been so successful that since 2009, when the first returning pair produced a chick on Nonsuch for the first time in 300 years, the Nonsuch colonies have increased to a total of 31 nesting pairs, producing a record number of 16 chicks in 2022.

In addition to a record number of chicks, the 2022 breeding season will also see another first – the fitting of a global location sensor (GLS) tag on a juvenile fledgling bird. Up until this point, the Cahow Recovery project has only fitted a handful of GLS tags on adult birds, giving them insight into where the mature birds went between nesting periods – but no one knew what the birds did during the period after they left Nonsuch for the first time, and returned 3-5 years later to make a nest of their own. Fitting a fledgling with a small GLS tag will provide positional data on what might be termed the cahow’s ‘lost years’.

“This has never been carried out on fledglings before, and their movements during this vital developmental period are completely unknown,” says Madeiros. “This information will be vital in determining whether they are encountering threats at sea – for example, from industrial fishing activities, or areas on the Canadian continental shelf where oil and gas extraction and exploration are taking place.” The tags record daily positions of the birds for up to 32 months – around the time the tags stop recording, the birds are expected back at Nonsuch. The tags do not transmit data live, but rather archive it – so the Cahow Recovery Project will only be able to see the data after the Cahows return and the tag can be retrieved.

Turks & Caicos Islands host climate and biodiversity meeting

On 22nd April, TCI’s Ministry of Tourism, the Environment, Fisheries and Marine Affairs, Culture and Heritage, Agriculture, Religious Affairs and Gaming held a *Climate Change Summit* on Providenciales. It was attended by local and regional government and private stakeholders and saw the signing of the Turks and Caicos Islands Climate Change Charter.

Keynote speaker at the event, Deputy Premier of Bermuda, Hon. Walter Roban, said: “It is important that the same work you have put into attracting development, you put into environmental protection. That the same enthusiasm with which you craft proposals for international development, you must put the same energy into environmental investment and protection, internally and internationally. This is the new philosophy that we must pursue.” He continued to advocate robust environmental policy that would enhance and not hinder the livelihoods of the Caribbean region, including green energy solutions, improved air quality and effective land management. “We, we the Caribbean, must become the strong voices in the campaign for Climate Action... We must become our own advocates in the global fight against Climate Change,” said Roban.

Minister for Tourism and the Environment, Josephine Connolly, said: “Climate change is often an abstract concept to us; one we hear all too often about and yet do not always appreciate the implications of. We are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and yet our voices are not always heard and our concerns noted. We need to start having our own discussions, locally and regionally and my government believes that this

time is now! The Ministry of Tourism and Environment believes that urgent action is needed to come alongside our international counterparts to support the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”

Director of the DECR, Lormeka Williams, stressed that the Climate Change Summit’s objectives were very pressing as globally we inch ever-closer to Earth’s tipping point, namely if global temperatures rise by more than 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, environmental changes could become irreversible.

The later part of the event was informed by technical experts in renewable energy, coral and terrestrial conservation, meteorology and water conservation, including some frequent at UKOTCF’s meetings, such as Bryan Naqqi Manco, DECR’s Acting Assistant Director of Research and Development, and Alizee Zimmermann, Executive Director of Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

The event was livestreamed for the public to tune into, and the entire Summit is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qer7FiJAqU0>.



Stop press: Montserrat update



Mrs Sarita Francis, Executive Director of Montserrat National Trust, opens the event.



Catherine Wensink outlines the Hidden Histories project. (All photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski & Catherine Wensink)



As this issue of *Forum News* was being finalised, a team from UKOTCF and other partners was in Montserrat in July working with local partners (see pages 4-7 for earlier news on these projects). Activities included a launch (attended by both the Environment Minister Hon. Crenston Buffonge and the Acting Premier, Hon. Dr Samuel Joseph) of the Montserrat aspects of *From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain – Sharing the colonial histories from the UK Overseas Territories*, an update and further work on *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*, and some first activities for Montserrat National Trust's new kids' group *Monty's Messengers*, making use of the presence of specialist scientific visitors for work on the other two projects.

Here are some photos from the first day of public events during the visit, 6th July. There will be further information in the next issue of *Forum News*.



Sofie Meeus (left) and Quentin Groom (right) provide an introduction to Bioblitz.



Carol Osborne, Chairperson of the EcoPlay project, receives a cheque for the funds received so far on this project. Contributions can still be received via PayPal at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/eco-play-montserrat/>.



Delmaude Ryan, Admin Project Officer (right), describes progress in the Adopt a Home for Wildlife project, with project Communications Officer Vernaire Bass (left) and Mrs Francis.



Jodiaz Tye describes the forthcoming work on oral histories



Hon. Crenston Buffonge, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & Environment, welcomes the projects.



Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman, outlines the programme of events over the 2 weeks of the visit.



At the end of the event, the new wood-chipper provided by the Adopt a Home for Wildlife project to help make compost, was demonstrated.



**MONTY'S
MESSENGERS
BIOBLITZ**
(Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski)

Left: Monty's Messengers line up, keen for the late afternoon event.

Right: many keen to answer questions from Vernaire Bass.



Vernaire with 2 of the 3 prize-winners in the competition to design a logo for Monty's Messengers.

4- to 7-year-olds make patterned cloths by pounding with flat stone leaves between 2 layers – the traditional Japanese tataki zomé (= hammer dye).

A group of Monty's Messengers learn to prepare plants for herbarium collections, with Quentin Groom and Sofie Meeus.



Monty's Messengers work with David Clements to hunt insects and then view them under a microscope.



UKOTCF needs your help

UKOTCF's only focus is on helping achieve effective conservation, environmental education and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. This has a great advantage in that we always follow the priorities of the territories for conservation, rather than having to decide whether their priorities or those from other places, such as domestic Britain, need our attention.

It also has disadvantages, too. Organisations with wider involvement have income streams relating to those activities, potentially giving some buffering at times when funding for UKOT conservation is limited. As well as focussing on particular projects requested by territories, much of UKOTCF's work is coordinating across territories and pushing for their interests with UK Government. Indeed, the UK Government funds for UKOT conservation (Environment Fund for Overseas Territories, Overseas Territories Environment Programme, and the Darwin Initiative's earmarking some funding for UKOTs) all resulted in part from UKOTCF working with UK Government and Parliament. The same applies in relation to European Union institutions in the setting up of BEST, following years of lobbying by UKOTCF and its equivalent French and Netherlands umbrella bodies for their territories. All this coordinating work is not amenable to fund-raising, as most funders like to focus on local issues and particular projects.

We know our work is valued. For example, two comments we received from UKOTs recently were: "Thanks so very much for keeping us all informed about what's happening across the territories" and "Great meeting... it shows the value of UKOTCF and its WCWG to bring folk together to tackle issues."

This increased current difficulty in raising funds for non-profit organisations providing wide support for others was brought home to us a couple of years ago. We were shocked when *Arkive* closed down due to lack of funding. This made available still and moving images of wildlife provided by photographers, and was much used by many organisations, including IUCN's Red-List (which now lacks images). This loss of funding was despite the high profile of *Arkive* and its support by names such as Sir David Attenborough.

UKOTCF tries to keep its costs very low. Personnel work from home, absorbing office costs (thanks to understanding spouses!). Council members and advisers are unpaid. The Chairman works full-time for UKOTCF but is unpaid for this core work, and his wife donates almost as much. Currently, four others routinely donate large amounts of time to UKOTCF core roles, and many others donate time to projects. In addition, our few paid personnel donate extra unpaid time.

However, some things still need paying for. This was well recognised by UK Government officials in the early part of this millennium, when they recognised that UKOTCF provided support for UKOT conservation that UK Government might be expected to provide (and is done by some other states with overseas territories) but which it could not and still cannot, despite some increase by its agencies in work in the UKOTs.

However, at the time of the financial crisis, in 2009, UK Government's average annual funding support for UKOT conservation paid via UKOTCF fell by 76%, and never recovered. Although it is said that that financial crisis ended (well before the next started), this funding was not restored – and, in fact fell further, so that the decline in UK Government support via UKOTCF for UKOT conservation declined for several years by 100%. We appreciate a small number of project grants awarded in the last year, but income from this

source remains hugely decreased.

Of course, UKOTCF has looked, and continues to look, for other sources of funding – but there are limited opportunities in respect of funding for conservation in UKOTs and CDs. We are grateful for a very generous annual donation from a Council member which helped hugely in four recent years before that had to end.

How you can help

Clearly, if you have links with funding institutions, an introduction would be welcome! Please contact Catherine Wensink (cwensink@ukotcf.org) or Mike Pienkowski (m@pienkowski.org). However, even if you do not, there are several ways in which you could help:

Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

Friends was initiated some 20 years ago, at the request of individuals who wished to contribute to UKOTCF's work. If you would like to join, this is easiest to do online at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/become-a-friend-of-the-ukots/>. The minimum annual contribution remained unchanged at £15 for some 20 years, but larger contributions are welcome, and existing Friends may like to consider an increase. Please note that, if you are a UK tax-payer, UKOTCF can increase the value of your contribution by 25% by reclaiming the tax you have already paid as Gift Aid; the forms include an option for this. There is also a version for corporate supporters.

Other donations

Other donations are probably most easily made via our website (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/donate/>) or contact Catherine (see above).

Donate while you shop - at no cost to yourself

UKOTCF is a charity registered with [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com). This means that, if you buy from a wide range of traders, a small contribution (at no cost to you) is made to UKOTCF. All you need to do is to register UKOTCF as your chosen charity at [easyfundraising.org.uk/ukotcf](https://www.easyfundraising.com/ukotcf). Then, when you are shopping, start at [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com) and select your trader through that site, rather than going directly to the trader's site. There are various settings that you can adjust as to whether or not you want to receive emails from [easyfundraising.com](https://www.easyfundraising.com)

Amazon is no longer in that scheme, but has its own, *Amazon Smile*. On your first visit to smile.amazon.co.uk you need to select UKOTCF to receive donations from eligible purchases. Then, when Amazon recognises you, it will offer to transfer you to Amazon Smile when you enter their site. The same choices and prices are on Amazon Smile.



Two of the subspecies found only on Montserrat.

Left: Forest thrush *Cichlherminia lherminiea*

Right: Ground lizard *Ameiva pluvianotata pluvianota*

Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski