

Book pre-publication offer: page 6

# FORUM NEWS 57

NOVEMBER 2022

• [www.ukotcf.org.uk](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk)

## *Hidden Histories project From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain – Sharing the colonial histories from the UK Overseas Territories facilitates new framework of best practice*

In *Forum News 56* (July 2022), we introduced this project, led by UK Centre for Hydrology & Ecology, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, The Montserrat National Trust, UKOTCF, Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium; and Leeds Museum & Galleries. 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*. There is more information at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/blue-iguanas-to-blue-vervain/>.

As we mentioned in *Forum News 56*, British colonialist policies have had, and continue to have, significant social and environmental impacts throughout the UKOTs and former colonies. UKOTs support important archaeological and built heritage sites and are home to the most globally important ecosystems and species for which the UK is 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.

The establishment of invasive non-native species (INNS) has negatively impacted global biodiversity, human health and economies.

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

As we noted, 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

At the workshop, Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks, Coordinator, St Helena Research



Institute (left) introduced topic 2 and Bryan Naqqi Manco, Assistant Director of Research & Development, Turks & Caicos Department of Environment & Coastal Resources addressed topic 1. Natalie Coles, University of Gibraltar, introduced topic 3 and Luke Harding, National Trust for the Cayman Islands Blue Iguana Programme described public volunteer involvement in topic 4.



**SAVE DATES:** UKOTCF online webinar on terrestrial restoration, particularly dealing with invasive species. Monday 6<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 12 noon to 6pm GMT on both days (see p. 10): details will be on [www.ukotcf.org.uk/our-conferences/](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk/our-conferences/) as available



## Youth Engagement – The Solution

The Trust has started to engage with the youth and the wider public in the following activities to raise its visibility:

- The Trust now has a consistent online presence:
  - We regularly update our website
  - We regularly update our Facebook page and use it to promote our projects, events, our events hall and our botanic
  - We recently launched our Instagram page, as most young people do not use Facebook. This has allowed us to utilise stories, reels etc.
- We make regular appearances on our local radio station and attend interviews with local media houses.
- We currently employ 4 interns and use them to learn more about the younger generation and what makes them tick.
- We have developed relationships with local businesses, so that we can use their photos to promote the use of our spaces.
- We attend local conferences and events as a vendor:
  - ICT Day – showcase our national archives
  - PEMA – showcase our merchandise, plants, projects
- We recently launched Monty's Messengers, which targets children between the ages of 5-8 years old.
  - Logo competition
  - Focus group
  - Fun Day
- We recently engaged with the Youth Parliament, who will assist us with raising funds to build our Ecoplay Children's Park.
- We will host a Higher Education Evening in August.

From Montserrat,  
Vernaire Bass, of  
664Connect, reviewed  
youth engagement and  
Sarita Francis (below),  
Executive Director of  
Montserrat National Trust  
summarised topic 4.



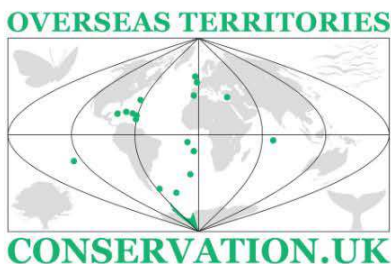
which took account of the comments received from territories, together with further views from the territories expressed at the Blue Belt meeting on World Ocean Day 2022, was circulated to UKOT participants for further checking. A further revision (after taking account of any further comments) was circulated in July to about 40 choosing to participate in a UKOTCF-organised online workshop in late July, which confirmed the *Framework* and discussed its implementation.

The workshop received and discussed also presentations relating to the topics of the *Framework*. 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 built 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* is 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.

Because of the importance of this topic, we are reproducing the *Framework* here. As we know that policy documents are not the most exciting of reads, we break up the text with some illustrations from the workshop. The *Framework* can also be downloaded at: <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Framework-of-bestpractice.pdf>.

The Council of Environment Ministers of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies encouraged all to adopt the *Framework*.



## A Framework of Best Practice to ensure equity in environmental and other research for UK Overseas Territories and in UK funding of it

### Ensuring equity of research knowledge, data sharing and scientific development for UK Overseas Territories research and conservation and capacity building

*Sections 1 and 2, in particular, build on earlier conclusions of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council and the conferences of conservation practitioners in these territories (see Introduction above). In some cases, the wording draws on matters discussed in these.*

#### **1. Towards a more suitable and sustainable framework of decision-making on funding for conservation and research in the UKOTs.**

Decisions on funding priorities and individual grants should be made in an inclusive manner based on recommendations from those with first-hand experience of running projects in the UKOTs. Funding and appropriate decision making should be made available in a number of spatial and geographic scales to

include individual UKOTs and cross-UKOTs. Funding should be made available in a spectrum of temporal scales e.g. with longer-term funding available for projects that cannot reach their potential within a single grant round.

Some specifics include:

- a) Core funding for environmental monitoring is awarded to UKOT conservation bodies, including NGOs and their umbrella body.
- b) The decisions on funding priorities need to restore the inclusion of opinions of those with first-hand experience of running projects in the territories (as was the case in the early 2000s).
- c) The panel advising on the selection of projects to grant-aid

should be restored to its earlier inclusion of mainly those with first-hand knowledge of running projects in the UKOTs (as was the case in the early 2000s) and be balanced in regard to interests, *e.g.* as regards terrestrial and marine.

- d) Funding must be provided for research/development that fulfil international agreements.
- e) Grants must provide funds for research/development that support non-profit organisations doing the work on the ground and those partners which they need in support.
- f) The replacement to the EU Erasmus educational exchange scheme must be of equal benefit to, and should include specifically, UKOTs.
- g) Longer-term funding is given for projects that cannot reach their potential in 3 years – *e.g.* capacity-building, tree-growing and other recovery projects; if grants cannot be provided for this duration, there should be a presumption in favour of follow-up grants that provide extension without gaps, to build on previous successes.
- h) The neglect of funding on terrestrial ecology and conservation in recent years, so as to give resources mainly to marine, must be ended, especially as most endemic species in UKOTs depend on terrestrial environments.
- i) Generally arbitrary priorities for funding are unhelpful and should be avoided as they lead to failures to fund important projects and a divisive situation (*e.g.* marine vs terrestrial; NGO vs official; academia vs conservation bodies); a more integrated approach would better reflect reality.
- j) Reduce delays in implementing policy after the project developing it ends.
- k) Funding applications for UKOTs need to be simpler and more concise, quicker in length of consideration for approval, and fairer in terms of allowing more time for development of cooperative proposals than the time allowed for a panel to consider them – in some schemes the reverse of the present situation.

## **2. Priorities for research and conservation, and planning projects and proposals, are co-produced with local users.**

Research is collaborative and should be co-produced from the beginning with multiple stakeholders. Particularly local actors (*e.g.* governmental or NGO bodies experienced in territory environmental work) should have the main voice in determining where and how cross-territory funds available should be spent, to ensure inclusion of local knowledge.

Some specifics include:

- l) If the lead partner is not based in the UKOT(s) to which the proposal relates, it is essential that local partners are engaged from before the proposal is drafted and throughout the project, with their staffing and other requirements funded within the project budget. UK Government and other potential funders should focus resources on local project officers and on provision by NGOs and others experienced in UKOT work of any technical help needed to capitalise on the considerable local enthusiasm for conservation and environmental initiatives.
- m) Governmental or NGOs experienced in territory conservation work should have the main voice in determining where and how cross-territory funds available should be spent.
- n) Funding should be related to agreed priorities, and the territories should not have to compete for the allocation of such funds through an assessment process external to them and largely removed from local knowledge.
- o) Support should be given to long-term projects involving

knowledge transfer to local NGOs through cooperation with the wider scientific and environmental community.

- p) The UK Government and other potential funders should focus resources on provision by experienced NGOs and others of the technical guidance, and the project officers in-territory needed to capitalise on the considerable local enthusiasm for conservation and environmental initiatives.
- q) UK Government needs to reverse its recent tendency to divert the use of traditional sources of grant-funding from cost-effective and experienced local and supporting UK NGO bodies to support instead UK government agencies and institutions, some of which are not experienced with some territory situations, however experienced they may be generally, and pay more regard to experience and proven success in the Overseas Territories, especially NGOs. The UK Government should revert to the more cost-effective approach of concentrating grant-funding on conservation bodies in the Overseas Territories and their umbrella body, rather than on research institutions and consultancies.
- r) UK Government funding applications need to be less bureaucratic and repetitive, and consideration of projects should not take many months more than the time for application preparation. The assessments should be by those with Overseas Territories project-running experience and not based on box-checking scores.
- s) Ensure core funding for UKOTs in quantifying the monetary and non-monetary value of ecosystem services (*e.g.* water-supply, storm-protection, tourism underpinning, terrestrial food and material supplies, fisheries) and integrating these into policy-making on UKOTs are important.
- t) Ensure core funding to undertake red-listing for species on UKOTs.
- u) Ensure core funding for development of biodiversity indicators to support UKOTs in conservation planning.
- v) Ensure core funding to provide economic evidence of the benefits that the environment provides (*i.e.* environmental statistics as produced in natural capital accounting) should be produced and used as evidence within policy and planning decision-making to manage the environment and its ability to support sustainably territories' prosperity and well-being.
- w) Ensure core funding for a model that addresses the needs of territories for sustainable development planning.
- x) Recognise and support long-term, continuous and adaptive restoration projects as both current and new threats emerge.
- y) Commission a review of previous UKOT funding awards to see the successes of completed projects and outstanding issues of less successful projects to ensure lessons are learned and shared across UKOTs and important gaps are prioritised for filling.
- z) Communication between stakeholders working on a territory is essential to avoid duplication of efforts, and all parties (including UK government agencies) working in the Overseas Territories should be more open to speaking with other stakeholders, especially NGOs, to avoid duplication of effort. They should recognise the capacity constraints on local NGOs, which in most cases depend on voluntary work, and ensure funding to enable their contributions to be built into project budgets, and communication should be encouraged with idea-sharing being undertaken in good faith.
- aa) Ensure financial support for local bodies within territory for projects.
- bb) Ensure significant proportions of funds of new projects are





In topic 5, Rebecca Machin, Leeds Museum and Galleries, addressed the value of collections and getting the information to territories, and Quentin Groom, Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium covered literature access and data collection and retrieval.

awarded to UKOT bodies.

- cc) Ensure core funding to support delivery of International Agreements from across the UKOTs by bodies with experience in doing this.
- dd) Ensure core funding is available to grant writing courses for UKOT staff.

### 3. Projects should be outcome- and benefit-orientated.

The outcomes of the projects lead to balanced positive benefits for the local environmental, societal and cultural systems involved. The projects have been developed through co-production to address users' needs and will therefore provide co-designed solutions. These will address the identified needs by having positive benefits that can be taken up by the communities and systems they address and that are sustainable for a significant time.

Some specific include:

- ee) Measurement of activities (benefits and outcomes) needs to be built into the project.
- ff) Measurement of activities needs to continue after project end.
- gg) The project needs to be adaptable so that if disbenefit or harm is determined to be happening the project can be terminated or altered appropriately.
- hh) The project should be action-orientated to enable implementation by appropriate local groups.
- ii) Where possible, projects should look to identify common themes and lessons that can be shared across the UKOTs (accepting the diversity of the UKOTs may mean this is not possible in some cases) and across other territories with similar needs (while recognising the need for inclusion of local users in any lesson exchanges); some funders already collect this information, but not all share it widely.

### 4. Equitable inclusion of the public, including disadvantaged groups involved in research through participation and education

Inclusion of the UKOT public, especially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups who suffer from structural discrimination. (As defined by the United Nations, this may include young people, women, disabled people and gender-orientation, ethnicity and poverty), is essential if environmental knowledge and its use are to be maintained and developed in the future. This requires funding and access by people at all levels of society to learn about the environment, and includes educational programmes for young people from early years to post-graduate level, teacher-training, and learning resources that utilise UKOTs contexts, as well as

address climate-change, biodiversity-loss and ways of addressing these.

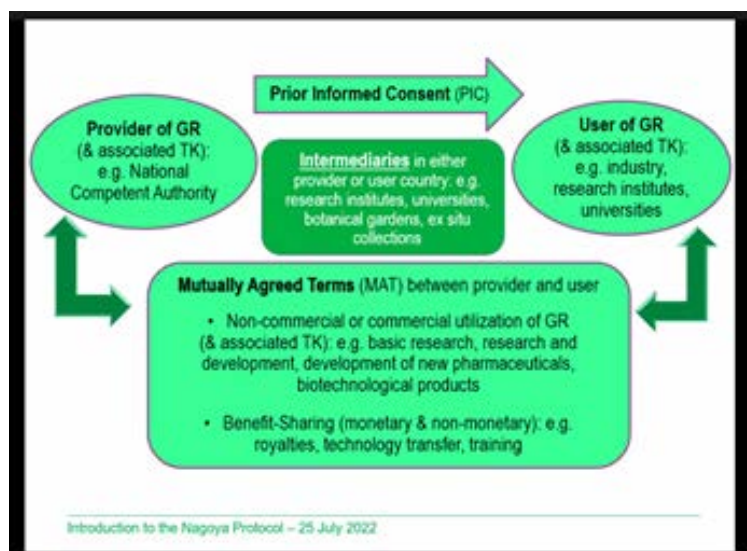
Some specifics include:

- jj) People at all levels of society need to have the same access to learning about the environment and supporting biodiversity.
- kk) Ensure recognition and provision of core funding to support volunteer coordinators on UKOTs is given.
- ll) Ensure core funding to deliver educational programmes for young people on environmental monitoring is given from early years to post-graduate level.
- mm) Ensure core funding to support apprenticeships in taxonomic identification and biodiversity monitoring, with opportunities for cross-territory and UKOT-UK exchange, is given.
- nn) Ensure core funding for teaching and learning resources for teachers (in UK and elsewhere) to use that utilise UKOTs for context and scenarios relating to actual work taking place there.
- oo) Ensure core funding for public education and climate-change adaptation and support to regulate polluters and support measures which will halt the biodiversity crisis and mitigate climate change to escalate a transition to a green economy.
- pp) Ensure that climate-change adaptation topics are integrated into National Curricula and the mass media at all levels.
- qq) Ensure core funding for training for teachers and the development of educational material (including on natural disasters and resiliency) and specific education officers on environmental issues.
- rr) Support given to build and maintain capacity in UKOT bodies and their staff, including to use and maintain new technologies for biodiversity monitoring.

### 5. Knowledge Exchange and Engagement; access to scientific literature, data, results and specimens.

Knowledge sharing through engagement and exchange is key to transformative outcomes within local communities. It is essential that shared access to tools, information, data, scientific literature is made widely and equitably available across the UKOT community and NGOs. Combined with active learning by doing, project outcomes will enable continuous development of local and shared UKOT capability, in turn enabling more effective and efficient future projects, outcomes and benefits.

Some specifics are included in the sections above; other include:



Haroon Mohamoud, UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, outlined the Nagoya Protocol and Access and Benefit-sharing. Prof. Heather Koldewey, Zoological Society of London, spoke on funding, as did Colin MacKechnie, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Topics 1 & 2 were facilitated by Dr Mike Pienkowski and 3 & 5 by Catherine Wensink (both of UKOTCF), while Jodey Peyton (UKCEH) looked after topic 5.

- ss) Core funding is given to allow for UKOT research and conservation staff to access scientific publications currently held behind paywalls.
- tt) Core funding for capacity building in GDPR, Data Management, Stakeholder Engagement and Communication training (as required) is given.
- uu) Core funding for training in use of open source tools like R, QGIS and iNaturalist (as required) is given.
- vv) Core funding for training in museum curation (as required) linked to core funding for infrastructure improvements to allow suitable curation.
- ww) Core funding to ensure cost-effective and best use of resources to facilitate sharing of information.
- xx) Ensure good documentation of materials, including secure storage of data and photographs and potential for off-island storage to deliver good quality biodiversity data for decision-making and monitoring progress.
- yy) Develop protocols for data storage, access to these, and time-restrictions (e.g. to allow analyses and publication).
- zz) UKOT team members involved in the research should be included as paper authors.
- aaa) Ensure that acknowledgements sections are comprehensive and approved by UKOT team before publication.
- bbb) As part of the data management planning of proposal, discussion should be at project inception if materials are going to be collected from the UKOTs.
- ccc) Nagoya Protocol and Intellectual Property Rights must be considered as part of the process of data and material collection.
- ddd) Questions of specimens need to be addressed: practicality of local care and collation; needs, such as air-conditioning; alternatives such as online collections possibly managed out of territory without cost, but making clear territory intellectual property rights. Various approaches are available to consider.
- eee) Ensure a mechanism so that Ministers and senior officials of Territory & UK Governments have regular briefings from NGOs and other local ecological experts on threats to ecosystems (including from natural disasters), legal commitments, local biodiversity issues, progress on existing restoration projects, and opportunities for future work.
- fff) Ensure mechanisms to link organisations that help the UKOTs/CDs make the best use of science and other information for decision-making, when local government or NGO staff may lack technical expertise in the focus area.

## City of Gibraltar

In *Forum News 56* (July 2022), we expressed surprise that Gibraltar had not been made a city, alongside Stanley (Falklands) and Douglas (Isle of Man), in the recent competition.

On 29th August 2022, Gibraltar was confirmed as a city when UK Government admitted that, for 180 years, its Home Office had lost the record that Queen Victoria had granted Gibraltar city status in 1842 - and had only just re-found it. The records were recovered by the holder of the ancient heraldic post of Bluemantle Pursuivant.

We had to recall that UKOTCF had edited a special issue of the journal *Ecos* in 1998, entitled *Dependent Territories - overseas, overlooked?* ["Dependent Territories" was at the time the official name for UKOTs] with its introduction *Paradise mis-filed?*

It seems that some things change only slowly! Belated congratulations, Gibraltar!



Front Left Bastion in the lower town walls, part of the historic city of Gibraltar. Photo Dr Mike Pienkowski



## What else do/did UKOTCF folk do?

In *Forum News 51* (2019), we started an occasional series on what UKOTCF personnel (all of whom are either unpaid or part-time paid) do outside their UKOTCF role. In that article, we outlined the restaurant and bar in central Nottingham, *31K*, run by our Executive Director Catherine Wensink and her husband Lau. We are delighted to report that *31K* survived the close-downs of the last couple of years which ended so many restaurants, and wish Lau and Catherine continued success.

We now dig back into the depths of time, to the mid-1980s when UKOTCF Chairman Dr Mike Pienkowski was Head of Ornithology Branch and later Assistant Chief Scientist at the Nature Conservancy Council, UK Government's then statutory conservation agency and advisor.

As one of several initiatives after taking up that role, Mike worked with colleagues in RSPB, to set-up the experimental re-introduction of red kites in England and Scotland. In the Middle Ages, red kites were common sights across the British countryside and cities, where they kept the streets clear of carrion – and were frequently mentioned in Shakespeare's works. Later changes in attitude led to their extermination in England, Scotland and Ireland and reduced to a tiny population in Wales. They were one of only three globally vulnerable bird species occurring in Britain.

Mike chaired the project team throughout its existence from the mid-1980s until it closed following the outstanding success of the experiment in 1985, by when self-sustaining wild populations existed and were spreading.

Mike has now produced a book which:

- describes why the decision was taken and how it was implemented, with international help.
- examines the success of the experiment, despite many challenges, leading to expansion.
- follows the spread across Britain and to Ireland.
- explores the outcomes, not just for Red Kites, but the example for other species, the fight against illegal persecution and on public attitudes.

Foreword by Rt. Hon. the Lord Randall of Uxbridge PC

In 2020, looking back over more than 30 years of the project, RSPB described the Red Kite project as “the biggest species success story in UK conservation history!”, noting also: “The Red Kite introduction project has been a fantastic example of conservation in action and is the result of really effective partnership working, which we're proud to be part of. It's been amazing to see a species once persecuted to near extinction in this country, brought back and welcomed by local communities, with local economies reaping the dividends of the return of this iconic species. In the 1980s, anyone wanting to see a Red Kite had to make a special pilgrimage to a handful of sites. Today it is a daily sight for millions of people. In a few short decades we have taken a species from the brink of extinction, to the UK being home to almost 10% of the entire world population.”

English Nature's Chairman, Tony Juniper, said “Thanks to this pioneering reintroduction programme in the Chilterns, increased legal protection and collaboration amongst partners, the Red Kite stands out as a true conservation success story. The flagship Red Kite reintroduction project paved the way for further species reintroductions, helping to reverse the historic deterioration of our natural environment and our precious species that inhabit it.”

JNCC, said: “Thirty years ago the reintroduction of a lost species was a radical act. Thanks to pioneering projects like the Chiltern Red Kites, it is now a standard tool in the nature conservation toolkit.” But the project's success was a close-run thing.



Hardback, 240 x 170mm, over 250 pages with colour throughout including over 200 photos and over 40 other illustrations.

The book is due to be published in March 2023, by UKOTCF. *A proportion of the income from each book sold goes towards UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum's charitable conservation activities.*

**There is a pre-publication offer, which gives benefits both to the buyer and to UKOTCF in setting the print-run: Save £9.95 on published price!**

Offer ends 28 February 2023. Those ordering by 31st December 2022 can request a signed copy at no extra cost.

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## New UKOTCF Council Member: Dr Keith Bensusan

Keith is from Gibraltar. He is General Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) and Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens, as well as an environmental consultant through Wildlife (Gibraltar) Ltd. He is also a Research Fellow at the University of Gibraltar and a member of a number of statutory bodies in Gibraltar including the Nature Conservancy Council and CITES Scientific Authority.

Keith has had a lifelong interest in birds. He began birding at a very early age and his interests eventually diversified to other aspects of natural history. This led him to read Zoology, take an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation, and finally a PhD on the ecology of migrant and resident birds around the Strait of Gibraltar. Apart from bird migration and ecology, Keith also has an interest in plants and is a keen entomologist, having worked on a range of groups. He has published on all of these subjects.

Keith has a keen interest in the wildlife of the UK Overseas Territories and its conservation. He finds the parallels and differences between the territories fascinating and believes that interchange of views, ideas and experiences via the Forum is an ideal way of tackling conservation problems effectively. He has been Chair of the UKOTCF's Europe Territories Working Group since 2014.



*Dr Keith Bensusan*

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## New UKOTCF team member: Jack Hayes

Jack holds a BSc in Marine Biology from Swansea University and an MSc in Island Biodiversity and Conservation from the University of Exeter.

His MSc, completed this summer 2022, focused on lionfish densities at shallow-water habitat sites in the North Sound in the Cayman Islands and whether artificial habitats could be used to measure low densities. Jack has worked alongside The Cayman Islands Department of Environment and has particular interests in most things marine, particularly ichthyology, tropical marine ecology, climate change, sustainability and blue carbon. Jack spent most of his MSc studies on the Crown Dependency of Jersey, in the Channel Islands, as his post-graduate course on Island Biodiversity and Conservation was run by Exeter/ JICAS (Jersey International Centre of Advanced Studies).

When studying islands and the particular conservation issues they face he developed an interest in conservation management plans, invasive species and the UKOTs. As a passionate conservationist, Jack is never too far from the sea as he is also a keen surfer.

Jack joins UKOTCF in a part-time capacity. He is taking on the role of Secretary of the Southern Oceans Working Group and a range of other tasks.



*Jack Hayes and associate*



# ***Sustainable Cayman launches new Campaign to save the Central Mangrove Wetlands: *Wetlands Thrive, Life Survives****

The recent court judgment (*National Conservation Council v the Central Planning Authority et al.*) is expected to have a positive impact on the effects of the proposed East-West Arterial Road. The National Conservation Council (NCC) will get a final say on mitigation measures if it determines that aspects of the proposed EWA “would or would be likely to have an adverse effect, whether directly or indirectly, on a protected area or on the critical habitat of a protected species” (s.41(4) National Conservation Law, 2013). NCC can also direct the NRA not to proceed with the project in order to protect such natural assets.

In September 2022, *Sustainable Cayman* launched its website [Sustainablecayman.org](https://Sustainablecayman.org), having received registration approval as a Non-Profit three months earlier. Following on from their campaign in support of the 2022 National Conservation Council Nominations that ended in May 2022, *Sustainable Cayman* has now established a Facebook Group called *Wetlands Thrive, Life Survives*, together with a campaign website page. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness about the socio-ecological importance of the Central Mangrove Wetland, and stimulate discussion regarding the potential benefits and consequences of the proposed East-West Arterial Road. The group intends to provide updates on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and advise the public on opportunities to participate in the public consultation phases.

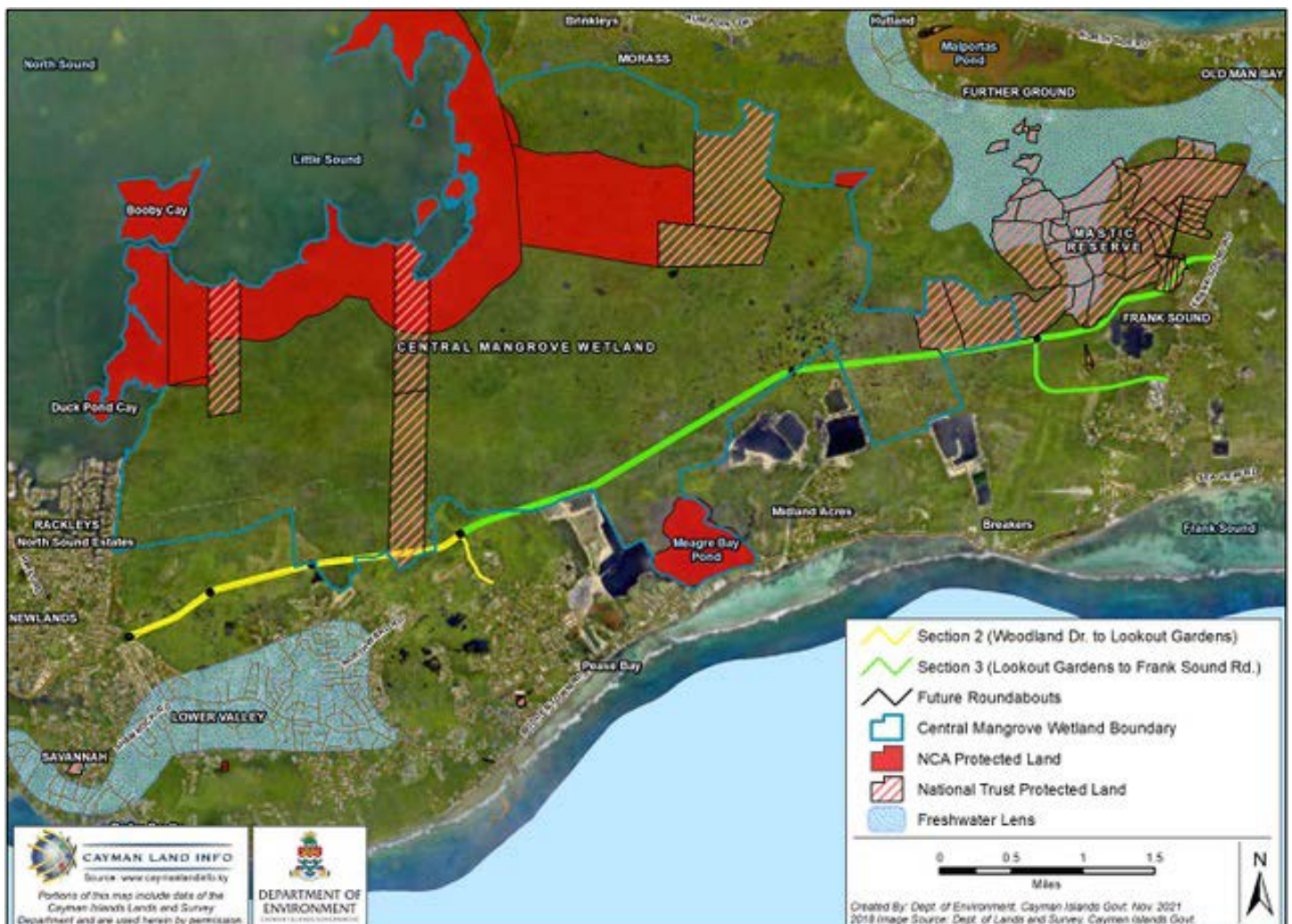
In relation to the court judgement, *Sustainable Cayman* notes that s.41(4) applies to all government entities except Cabinet. In other words, the government can move forward with the project even if the NCC rejects it, based on their professional evaluation; the final

decision lies with Cabinet. *Sustainable Cayman* aims to provide information to the community, landowners, authorities, and businesses affected by the proposed road, and support informed participation in the public consultation phases.

*Sustainable Cayman* asks “Is cutting through our untouched, sacred, limited, salient beautiful Central Mangrove Wetland needed? As quoted by Nik Foster: ‘this 10-mile stretch of pristine, undisturbed habitat is worth more alive and untouched than everyone on this island. We might as well consider ourselves homeless or dead in a couple of years if they remove our Central Mangrove Wetland. Who are we to destroy or alter what we cannot restore?’” Morgan Ebanks is reported as saying that “the proposed road and the developments that would branch off from it could lead to a situation that could be counterintuitive to the goal of improving socioeconomic welfare. The free services that this integrated ecosystem provides are literally priceless to our country. It is time we acknowledge that or suffer the consequences of what we will lose in light of what is called ‘progress’. We need creativity and to have better foresight when planning for the future of our people.”

This item is based on a press release from *Sustainable Cayman*.

Its mission is to promote sustainability and conservation in the Cayman Islands to create healthy communities and a flourishing natural environment. Those interested in finding out more or supporting *Sustainable Cayman*, can contact at: [SustainableCayman@gmail.com](mailto:SustainableCayman@gmail.com) or Facebook [@sustainable.cayman](https://www.facebook.com/sustainable.cayman).





# Turks & Caicos Reef Fund start Gene Bank Pilot Nursery

*UKOTCF has campaigned to complement our local partner, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) to raise awareness and help the fight against awful Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD). Therefore, we were delighted with TCRF's announcement on 5 July 2022:*

TCRF is pleased to announce that the pilot gene-bank coral nursery has been built and is now housing live corals. Funded by a grant from the John Ellerman Foundation in the UK, the pilot project is an effort to create a species survival program for stony corals that have been severely affected by SCTLD. The nursery is located at the TCRF office at South Bank Marina, Providenciales, TCI. The facility was built with the assistance of coral nursery specialists from The Reef Institute of West Palm Beach, Florida, USA and it will be open to visitors.

"SCTLD has exacted a terrible toll on the reefs of the TCI," said TCRF Executive Director Alizée Zimmermann. "With this pilot nursery, we will be able to begin to preserve samples of many iconic coral species that have been the foundation of our reefs. The ultimate goal is to expand our land-based coral nursery programme allowing us to propagate these important reef-building corals and ultimately restore them to the reefs around TCI."

SCTLD is a coral disease that has affected reefs throughout the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean. It is a fast-moving, highly lethal disease with a yet unknown cause. It affects nearly all the major reef building corals and has been identified on all the reefs throughout TCI.

"We were fortunate that we were able to locate and salvage many of the SCTLD-threatened species from the Blue Haven Marina docks that were scheduled to be removed," said Ms. Zimmermann. "This project, in essence, is providing an ark to preserve our reef's genetic diversity. Ultimately, we expect to grow this project into a much bigger nursery programme that will allow us to re-establish many coral species on TCI reefs whose numbers have been significantly reduced due to this disease."

The office is open to the public and interested parties should contact Alizée via email on [alizée@tcreef.org](mailto:alizée@tcreef.org) to arrange a visit. 'Coral Ecology 101' school visits can be arranged as well.

The John Ellerman Foundation was set up as a generalist grantmaking trust in 1971 to focus on the broad philanthropic interests of benefactor Sir John Ellerman, while reflecting changing times. The Foundation's aim is to advance the wellbeing of people, society, and the natural world, by focusing on the arts, environment, and social action. The Foundation supports organizations whose work has reach and significance across the UK. <https://ellerman.org.uk/>

The Reef Institute was founded in 2015 by two veterinarians as Healthy Aquatics Marine Institute of Florida. The two veterinarians had a goal of improving ocean health while teaching students to care about their environment. In 2018, Healthy Aquatics changed its name and identity to The Reef Institute. It was a natural change since the decision had already been made to move the organization towards a mission of coral conservation through education, research and restoration. Today, research and education work in partnership to grow better stewards of the ocean while taking a distinct action to save our seas. Staff scientists direct its research department in endeavours to work towards protection and growth of Caribbean coral in the North Florida Reef Tract. Its education department has grown from humble beginnings of reaching a few hundred students, primarily through field trips to reaching almost 9,000 students annually. <https://www.reefinstitute.org/>



*Above: a young brain coral in the nursery. Below: working on nursery plumbing. Photos: TCRF*



Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is the only active environmental advocacy organization in TCI. It is an organisation that provides funding for education, research and conservation programmes to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, [www.TCReef.org](http://www.TCReef.org). Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. Visitors can also support TCRF by purchasing a rash guard designed each year by a different local artist. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization's [website](http://www.TCReef.org).

## Some recent answers to Parliamentary Questions

Lord Benyon, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, has provided the following answers to written parliamentary questions by Lord Randall:

Question tabled on: 02 November 2022:

To ask His Majesty's Government how many of the proposed UK delegates attending the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Montreal will be from (1) UK Overseas Territories, and (2) Crown Dependencies. (HL3159)

Answer:

As Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I will be attending CBD COP15 as part of the UK delegation, which will be led by Defra Secretary of State Thérèse Coffey. My Department continues to work closely with the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on our plans for the meeting. The current intention is for the delegation to contain eight representatives from the Overseas Territories. We will work closely together to advocate for ambitious global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, including targets to ensure that at least 30% of the global land and of the ocean is protected, ecosystems are restored, species population sizes are recovering, and extinctions are halted by 2050.

Date and time of answer: 16 Nov 2022 at 17:39.

Question tabled on: 03 November 2022:

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Darwin Plus Local fund to build local environmental conservation capacity in UK Overseas Territories will be launched by the end of the year; and whether the Darwin Plus Strategic fund to allow Overseas Territories to collaborate on larger environmental projects will open in 2023. (HL3204)

Answer:

HM Government is committed to expanding the Darwin Plus programme. Darwin Plus Local is planned to open for applications in January 2023, ready to fund projects from April 2023. More information about the development of Darwin Plus Strategic will be published in 2023.

Date and time of answer: 17 Nov 2022 at 11:43.

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### First notice: save the date

**Webinar organised by UKOTCF to meet requests from UK Overseas Territories, Monday 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023, from noon to 6pm GMT on each day**

### **Topic: Terrestrial Restoration, with particular reference to dealing with Invasive Species in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies**

Many of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are islands and so are particularly vulnerable to local extinctions. Invasive species are one of the five main drivers of global biodiversity loss. Across the UKOTs there are teams working on reducing this threat underpinned by research and innovation. This seminar brings together some of those working in the UKOTs on terrestrial ecological restoration. Organised by UKOTCF, supported by its network and other technical specialists, it fulfils several functions. UKOTCF decided to hold, in the years without a full conference, online (or physical) seminars, workshops or lecture series on issues for which its network (especially through its regional Working Groups) had expressed interest. Its Southern Oceans WG has called for a workshop on Invasive Species, and comparing the experience of UKOTs (not just in the Southern Oceans) in these and dealing with them. It is a topic of frequent discussion also in the Wider Caribbean and Europe

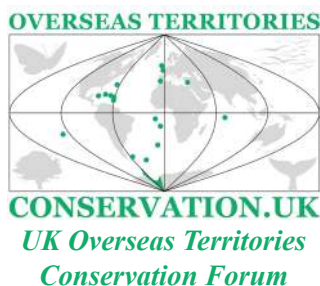
Territories WGs, as well as UKOTCF conferences and other fora. The subject also has a pleasing overlap with some aspects both of *From blue iguanas to blue vervain: sharing the colonial histories from the UK Overseas Territories* project e.g. jointly with UK CEH, Montserrat National Trust, National Trust for the Cayman Islands, Meise Botanic Garden, Leeds Museum. and other projects in which UKOTCF is involved, such as its joint work with Montserrat National Trust and other local partners, e.g. *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*.

The webinar will also feature the second Sir Richard and Lady Dace Ground Lecture, the first having been given at UKOTCF's 2021 conference by Gina Ebanks-Petrie.

Details will be on [www.ukotcf.org.uk/our-conferences/](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk/our-conferences/) as available



# Montserratian students and international scientists comment on their shared experiences during the joint work in July by projects *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* and *From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain*



*Forum News 56* (July 2022) was edited in part as the project teams and some of its leaders were in Montserrat, and we were able to include some material on the launch of the joint work and on the enthusiasm of the young people in Montserrat National Trust's Monty's Messengers. As one of their first activities after reviving after a 20+ year gap during the rude interruption from 1997 by the volcano, they joined the visiting scientists in a junior biobitz and other activities.

Our project newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* (available at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/newsletters/project-newsletter-1/>) featured in its September edition more information on the work in July. Here we give a shortened version of some of that. We feature particularly the thoughts of a high-school local volunteer and also those of a Montserration student home for vacation from university in UK. After that, we have some reflections from two of the scientists visiting, one from each of the two projects. Thanks to all.



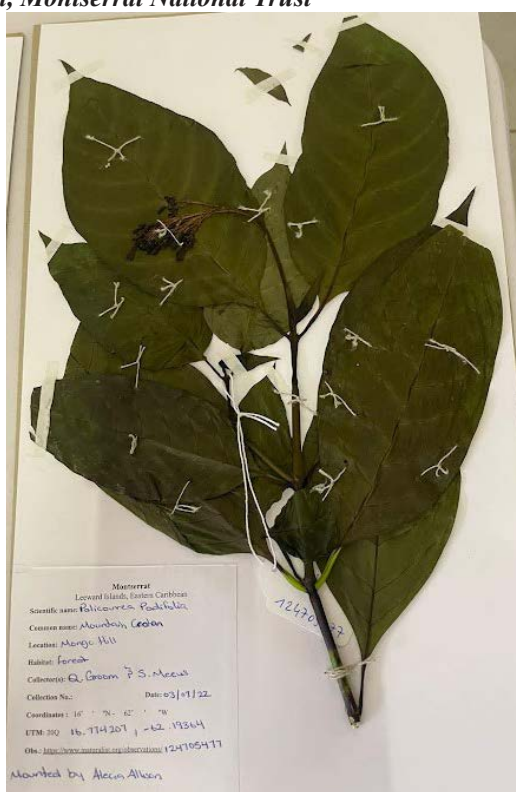
## My Experience during the Herbarium and BioBlitz Training

*Text and photos by Alecia Allison, Student Intern, Montserrat National Trust*

The BioBlitz was quite the experience. Over the short course of time, I managed to grasp an understanding of creating herbarium specimens. This aspect of the workshop has allowed me to strengthen my ability to distinguish different plants via their looks, smell, and various other details. Keen attention was paid to the processing of herbarium specimens whereby plant samples are collected, dried, and mounted with labels. This is an integral aspect as it serves as a guide within the field of research.

Another intriguing aspect of the BioBlitz was the entomology segment. It was fascinating to learn about the different types of insects and their various roles within the ecosystem. The workshop has inspired me to delve deeper into the ecological field. As the Montserrat National Trust, alongside its various other stakeholders, mould me into a well-rounded conservationist, I will do my best in striving for excellence within this arena of work.

The incorporation of apps in the field is pertinent to reach specific goals. Considering this, the iNaturalist app was utilized to aid



Above: Me, at the beginning of the BioBlitz and introducing the iNaturalist app.  
Left: . mountain croton plant which I have mounted.

in the identification of plants, moreover easing the process of identification. In conclusion, the BioBlitz was a stepping-stone for me as it gave me a broader and more independent view of a career with the field of ecology.



## My Experience as a Visiting Intern at Montserrat National Trust during August 2022

by Renee Brade (a young Montserratian student studying in the UK and back in Montserrat on vacation)

I was heartily welcomed to the Montserrat National Trust. I was asked about my career choices and was given tasks that I would enjoy and align with my career path.

I was most interested in the wildlife conservation aspect; so I got an opportunity to work with some of the partners and on some of the projects of the Trust that got me involved in birding, vegetation surveys, propagation, researching medicinal plants, a Children Society Summer School BioBlitz and working with turtles and mountain chickens.

### Birding

While working with the birding team from the Department of the Environment, I discovered that there are more birds in Montserrat than I had originally expected. I observed smooth-billed anis, brown pelicans, great egrets, frigate-birds and even migratory shorebirds, like semi-palated sandpipers and spotted sandpipers. I learnt that birds directly reflect the health of the habitat they are living in. For example, if during a series of observations, we notice fewer and fewer purple-throated Caribs, it could mean that there is a problem with nectar flowering trees.

### Vegetation survey

Vegetation surveys are very important as they highlight vegetation types. They also help us to understand their differences. It also makes us more aware of the wide range of biodiversity in Montserrat and where the different elements can be found. While doing vegetation surveys as part of the MNT and UKOTCF *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project, we used random points at the Adopter's plot which are generated by QGIS, to organise the observations. We then measure a 5-metre radius and take note of all the vegetation that we see in that area. We then categorise them into ground cover, shrubs or trees and estimate their coverage. We go on to research and record their Latin (scientific) and local names as far as possible. The skills gained during these surveys will be used in habitat surveys in one of my university courses.



Propagating plants at the Propagation Unit. Photo: Delmaude Ryan



Renee with Project Officer Ajhermae, measuring the 5-metre radius for a vegetation survey at an Adopter's Wildlife Home.

Photo: Delmaude Ryan

### Plant propagation

In order to propagate vegetation, we gathered cuttings of various types of plants, like lantanas, pentos, and the kangaroo ferns. We then carried them back to the propagation unit where we learnt how properly to cut the plants. We prepared the cuttings by trimming them near the nodes so that they would be able to sprout and grow again. The appropriate amount of soil was then used for repotting of the plants. Then they are placed under the irrigation system to be watered. When the plants have grown to a suitable size, they would be removed from the propagation unit and placed in the nursery where they can be sold to the public or provided to Adopters in *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*. The knowledge that I gained from this experience would be utilised to better any hobbies or interests that I may have in the future.

### Hidden Histories Project

For the Hidden Histories project, we identified and learnt about medicinal plants, including the 15 plants selected for the project. This project was launched to gain and preserve the local knowledge about medicinal plants, such as how to use and prepare them.

I also had the opportunity to learn how to mount a collection of dried plant species on a sheet of paper for the herbarium which would be used for both educational and research purposes in the future.

### Mountain Chicken frogs

The Mountain Chicken recovery programme included:

Feeding insects a selection of pumpkin, spinach, chickpeas and potatoes

Cleaning insect containers

Feeding the insects to the Mountain Chickens

Taking a Headcount of the Mountain Chickens; and

Helping maintain their enclosure.

My overall experience with the Montserrat National Trust was very informative and hands-on. It helped me prepare for the working world and with the university. I was also able to make friends and useful connections, which I can use along the way. Most of all I had fun during the entire experience.

A slightly longer version of this article can be found in [Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat](#), September 2022 edition.



## A herbarium is not just a collection of dead plants

by Dr Sofie Meeus and Dr Quentin Groom, Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium

While a herbarium is a collection of dead plants, these are collected and preserved with the intention of creating a resource that people can use to help them identify other plants and learn what features are useful in identification. However, there are lots of uses for a herbarium, at least 72, apparently: <http://www.virtualherbarium.org/vh/100usesaspt.html>.

Herbaria contain plants that are dried and pressed flat, then mounted on paper with labels that describe their name, and the details of who collected them, when and where. But herbaria can also hold seeds and fruits in containers, basically anything that might be useful to identify plants or to be used in research.

This year we have been working on the [From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain](#) project with the Montserrat National Trust and the Department of Environment to see how Montserrat could build its own herbarium and use it to support conservation and biodiversity monitoring on the island. One of the important themes of the herbarium will be a reference collection to the herbs and bush used in traditional medicine on the island.

As part of the project we ran a workshop on herbarium management and specimen mounting at Montserrat National Trust. Together, we mounted about 50 specimens. These included a variety of species. Some were native plants, such as *Canella winterana* (pepper cinnamon). Some were medicinal plants, such as *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* (blue vervain), while others were weeds, such as *Synedrella nodiflora* (nodeweed). Perhaps one day Montserrat's herbarium will hold specimens of all of the plants that occur, and hopefully it can be used as much as possible to support conservation efforts. Montserrat does not have a flora to help people identify plants, so meanwhile the herbarium can really help, but perhaps one day the herbarium can help someone write a flora of the island.

Right: Sofie demonstrates techniques, and lower right: mounted specimens. Photos: Catherine Wensink. Below: Jodiaz and Anya mounting specimens. Photo: Sarita Francis



## Entomology & Invertebrate Science on Montserrat – UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Visit, 4-15 July 2022

by David Clements

I was lucky enough to be asked to accompany the recent visit by the UKOTCF to the Caribbean island of Montserrat to contribute my skills as an entomologist and invertebrate scientist to the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* and *Hidden Histories* projects being run locally by the Montserrat National Trust (MNT). As a late-career ecologist/entomologist with a lifetime of fieldwork and curatorial experience, I was tasked with helping to develop the skills-base and build on-island capacity to carry out invertebrate surveys, identification and conservation work in the future. Although my professional career has primarily been in ecological consultancy, my first passion has always been for bugs of one kind or another, with many seasons of fieldwork, taxonomic and museum experience both in the UK and abroad. This was to be my first experience of Montserrat, however, as part of a team which also included botanists Dr Quentin Groom and Dr Sofie Meeus, as well as bird-man and all-rounder Dr Mike Pienkowski and the conservation and sustainability specialist Catherine Wensink, and it did not disappoint.

Entomology and invertebrate science on Montserrat – the word 'entomology' technically only refers to insects but, for the purposes of brevity, I'm going to use it to cover all invertebrates as there doesn't currently seem to be a single word which covers them all<sup>1</sup> – is still at a relatively early stage of knowledge and development. Historically the island has been somewhat overlooked by entomologists, although some excellent work has been carried out in recent years by Dr Mike Ivie and colleagues

at Montana State University in the US, particularly in the high forests of the Central Hills area, as part of their studies of the wider Lesser Antilles archipelago, and in the 2016-18 UKOTCF project which piloted *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*.

Nevertheless, knowledge of the invertebrate fauna of the island as a whole is still very patchy with even such normally well-researched groups, such as the butterflies, moths and dragonflies (Lepidoptera and Odonata) being at quite an early and incomplete state of understanding. In keeping with remote and isolated volcanic islands the world over, there is a high probability of



Surveying aquatic invertebrates with local colleagues at Belham River Mouth. All photos in this article: David & Anne Clements

<sup>1</sup> 'Aspondylology' perhaps? My classical Greek doesn't really run that far!



endemic species on Montserrat, especially in the relatively unmodified cloud forest areas which persist on the hill ridges and mountain-tops, and it is therefore important not just for the conservation priorities of the island itself but for the wider world as a whole that the invertebrate fauna is thoroughly audited and understood: you cannot conserve that which is not known to exist, and many of the species waiting to be discovered may turn out to be entirely confined to Montserrat, or to just a few islands of the Lesser Antilles system.

Entomological skills and capacity on the island are currently at an early stage of development, although there is no shortage of enthusiasm or ability. Key local specialists such as Delmaude Ryan of the MNT and Ajhermae White of the Montserrat department of the environment (MAHLE) – both now project officers in *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* – have made good inroads in studying the fauna, despite being somewhat remote from technical support and resources. It is nevertheless to local scientists such as these, and others like them, that we should be looking in the future for specialism and expertise in the study of insects and invertebrates on the island, rather than having to rely on visiting specialists from off-island as has so often happened in the past. The 2022 visit was therefore intended to comprise an early step in helping to build and develop this on-island expertise.

The 2022 ‘tour’ was pretty intensive. In amongst visits to, and surveys of, a dozen or so of the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* sites, whose owners have pledged to undertake conservation management measures designed to optimise them for native plants and fauna, there were also numerous training and capacity-building events. On the entomology side these were to include two ‘bioblitzes’, one for primary school children and one for adults and older students, an invertebrate field survey and identification training day, a higher education evening and a public lecture, although the latter had to be abandoned due to an incidence of covid amongst the study group.

There was also an interview on the ‘MAHLE Vibes’ strand of the local radio station ZJB and liaison with various local organisations and individuals with an interest in the subject. Through the good offices of MNT’s Executive Director Mrs Sarita Francis, and Ms Ernestine Corbett and Stephen Mendes of MAHLE, I was also able to obtain a permit to collect invertebrates on the island while I was there, and so spent any free time sampling in as many habitats as I could visit, collecting insects and other invertebrates for subsequent identification and study.

Although the UKOTCF visit lasted only two weeks, I had arranged to stay on for a further two weeks afterwards in order to permit some more relaxed investigation of the island and visits to key sites of interest. Part of the UKOTCF visit had included the delivery of basic field-survey equipment to MNT such as sweep-nets, collecting tubes and other gear, which happily included a light-trap for surveying moths and other nocturnal insects. I was able to operate this over several nights at my accommodation, despite some high winds and heavy rains at night. Even in that short period, I detected a series of magnificent species such as the Leafy Sphinx *Xylophanes chiron*, the Tersa Sphinx *Xylophanes tersa* and the Tropical Wasp-moth *Horama panthalon*, all of which were hitherto unrecorded on the island. At present these and other finds on the island are being collated photographically using the iNaturalist app (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>), pending the hoped-for creation of a physical natural history collection on the island at some point in the future.

In the meantime, along with Ajhermae White, I co-wrote a simple pictorial guide to the known butterflies of the island for internal recording use by MNT & MAHLE and started work on a photographic database of the moths – a much larger task, and



Two species new to Montserrat. Above: The Leafy Sphinx moth; below: The Tropical Wasp-moth



one which will doubtless need to grow extensively as the studies progress. There is also a simple pictorial guide to the known dragonflies and damselflies in the offing although, as with the butterflies and moths, there is a high probability that this will require frequent updating and expansion in the years to come. The collected material which I now have includes a large number of bee and wasp species (Hymenoptera), as well as several hundred small true-flies (Diptera), a group in which I have a special interest. It is quite likely that these may include hitherto undetected – or perhaps even undescribed – species, as many of them appear to be in relatively obscure and complex families such as the Asteiidae, Ephydriidae and Chamaemyiidae. As an indication, a recently published study of the island’s long-legged flies of the family Dolichopodidae by Justin Runyon (2020: <https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.966.55192>) detected some 63 species, all of which were newly recorded on the island. These include eleven species which were entirely new to science, and six which are thought to be endemic. Clearly, there is much work still to do!

Alongside my work with the UKOTCF visit, I was also able to soak up the atmosphere and landscape of Montserrat itself. This is truly a most beautiful and wild place, with a comparatively small human population and still with very little significant development, with some two-thirds of the island now effectively an impromptu nature reserve following the catastrophic eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in 1997. The smoking remnants of this are still all too visible from the state-of-the-art Montserrat Volcano Observatory. Wildlife has had the chance to reassert itself over much of the island in relative peace and isolation. Whilst there are undoubtedly conservation issues relating to matters such as invasive non-native species, which include all of the domestic and stock animals which had to be abandoned at the time of the eruption and which now range freely across the volcano exclusion zone, this is still a place which doubtless conceals many wonders still to be discovered. I can’t wait to go back!



## Ascension Island updates

Some 20 years ago, UKOTCF was delighted to be able to help find resources to help Ascension set up the seabird restoration programme, removing feral cats and thereby allowing seabirds to spread back from the colonies on tiny Boatswainbird Island to the mainland of Ascension. These include the endemic Ascension Frigatebird. The process also helped Ascension Island set up its [Conservation Department](#). That Department reported in October 2022:

The results are in; we can confirm that 1,581 frigatebird nesting attempts were recorded on the Letterbox Nature Reserve during the height of the nesting season.

Frigatebirds began recolonising the Ascension mainland in 2012 following a feral cat eradication. Since then, the population has grown and in recent years reached a plateau. Last year the birds were impacted by heavy rains at the beginning of the nesting season resulting in a dip of nesting attempts to 1,239. Seabirds are incredibly resilient, however, and signs so far are indicating a bumper year for this species.

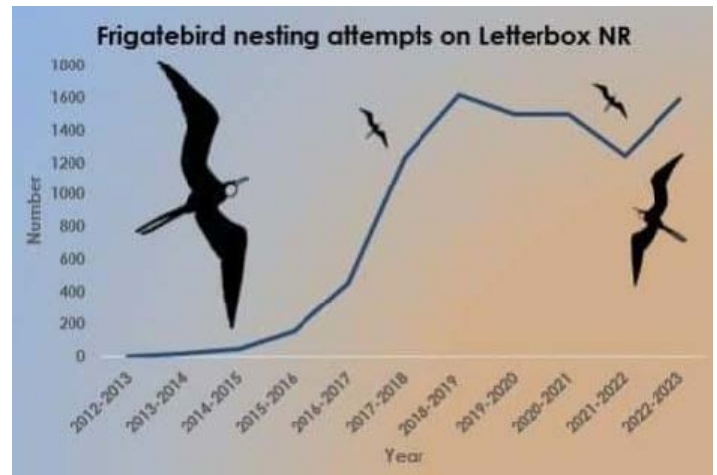
To calculate the number of frigatebirds nesting on nearby Boatswainbird Island, an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (aka drone) was deployed to fly transects above the island. The images will be processed by a specialised computer program to produce the first ever accurate population count for the Ascension frigatebird! This is part of a new Darwin-Plus-funded project: 'A cross-UKOT camera network to enhance marine predator conservation' in conjunction with University of Oxford.

Ascension Island Conservation reported the same month that research vessel *RRS Discovery* had departed from the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton on a 4,000-mile journey across the Atlantic to explore the waters of Ascension's and St Helena's marine protection areas.

Ascension's MPA is one of the largest in the world, covering the entirety of its Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ, all 445,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Much of this area remains unexplored and data-poor. With only 10 days to conduct our surveys, the team focused interest on the south-eastern abyssal plain, Grattan Seamount, Young Seamount and hydrothermal vents along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

On board are a team of scientists and technical crew specialised in deep-sea and pelagic (open-ocean) ecology, fisheries acoustics and hydrography. Using their expertise, Ascension conservationists hope to gather data on their unique marine habitats, collect new specimens for scientific study and map areas of seabed never previously explored.

Around the same time, a team from Zoological Society of London arrived on Ascension Island to launch a new multidisciplinary project working with on-island partners and local communities to understand and reduce the impact of plastic pollution on the marine environment in the South Atlantic.



Male and chick Ascension frigatebirds. Photos: Simon Watkins/ Ascension Island Conservation Department

## Update from Chagos Conservation Trust

*Sarah Puntan-Galea, Executive Director of the Chagos Conservation Trust has provided an update:*

The Chagos Conservation Trust has been busy finalising its Rat Eradication Plan, and preparing for a recce next year to undertake the research needed to write a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) – the next stage in CCT's *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* (HIHR) rewilding project.

Funding has been secured for this, and the expedition will involve partners including ZSL and Oxford University. It will be led by Dr Pete Carr, who is now a full time Project Manager for CCT, and leads on the whole HIHR project.

Next year is the Trust's 30th anniversary year, so we are planning several things to mark it, including updating and relaunching our website, publishing an 'anniversary special' bumper issue of *Chagos News*, and starting a membership and fundraising campaign.

We continue to work with and support Chagossian Voices, who will soon go live with their new website. The community are also involved in CCT's rewilding project, and a representative will join the VMP recce expedition to highlight areas of importance which need restoring. Like the children's cemetery on Eagle Island, which is important to the community to remember lost loved ones, as well as acting as historical archives of past generations.



# Bermuda NT and Clarien Bank partner to plant native & endemic trees

Clarien Bank announced in October 2022 a partnership with the Bermuda National Trust to “plant 100 native and endemic trees per year for the next three years.”

A spokesperson said, “The tree planting initiative, which launches next month, is a core part of the values of Clarien+ – a premium banking service and product offering for qualifying clients – as well as part of Clarien’s wider efforts to support ecological sustainability on the Island. Clarien’s total commitment of \$10,000 a year, for three years, includes the cost of the plant specimens [50 trees including cedars, palmettos and olivewoods, and 50 shrubs], as well as labour and materials for planting and aftercare.

“To ensure this project will benefit the entire community, the plantings will be in three spaces that are all open to the wider public – primarily Scaur Lodge Nature Reserve, which can be accessed by individuals and groups at any time for relaxation, wellness and family activities. Known for its beauty, the Scaur Lodge property is comprised of three open space zonings: Nature Reserve, Woodland Reserve and Agricultural Reserve. According to BNT, the plan is to increase the presence of native and endemic flora within the reserve, which will help to reduce the effects of climate change as well as increase biodiversity.

“Some invasive species removal will also be required to enable planting, which is why Clarien employees and several Clarien+ clients have stepped up to give of their time on two upcoming dates: Friday, November 4th and Friday, March 31st, to get this project off the ground successfully. Other locations for the plantings include Royal Naval Dockyard Cemetery and Watford Island Military Cemetery.”

Michael DeCouto, Clarien’s EVP, Chief Marketing & Digital Officer, said: “We are extremely pleased to be able to partner with Bermuda National Trust and help in its mission of protecting and promoting Bermuda’s unique natural and cultural heritage. Through this three-year tree planting initiative, we look forward to planting trees and shrubs – not only to increase wildlife habitat and improve air quality, but also to ensure the future sustainability



*The Clarien volunteer team still hard at work in early November, with (left) visiting keynote speaker Bryan Naqqi Manco, who set up and has led for some years the programme to restore much of the population of TCI’s national tree, the Caicos Pine. This was after its devastation and about 90% mortality caused by a pest accidentally introduced nearly 20 years ago by human actions.*

of the Island’s native and endemic species.”

Myles Darrell, Head of Natural Heritage, said: “Bermuda National Trust is delighted to partner with Clarien for this initiative. As the owners of a significant amount of open space in trust for Bermuda, much of it publicly accessible, we believe these plantings can benefit the whole community. Drawing on our woodland management expertise, Bermuda National Trust will assist Clarien with the planning, appropriate species selection, planting and after-care, all of which are critical to ensure this long-term project is a success.”

A spokesperson added, “For over 50 years, BNT has sought to fulfill its mission to protect Bermuda’s natural and cultural heritage by acquiring and conserving land, buildings and artefacts across the Island, while also inspiring locals of all ages and walks of life to develop an appreciation for our unique Bermuda habitat. The Trust currently cares for 277 acres of land comprised of 82 properties that represent much of the best of Bermuda’s heritage, including historic houses, nature reserves, islands and coastline, farmland, gardens and cemeteries.

“As part of the launch of this special partnership between Clarien and BNT, the Bank will host a special event in early November for Clarien+ clients featuring keynote speaker Bryan Naqqi Manco, the Assistant Director of Research and Development in the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources from Turks & Caicos Islands. Working as a conservation project manager and ecologist since 2010, Mr Naqqi Manco has become a specialist in the botany and plant communities and has carried out extensive fieldwork documenting biodiversity of the islands including plants, reptiles and birds.

“Clarien+ was launched as a premium banking solution that rewards clients for leveraging the complete suite of products and services available at the Bank.”

For more information: [www.bnt.bm](http://www.bnt.bm) and [www.clarienbank.com](http://www.clarienbank.com)



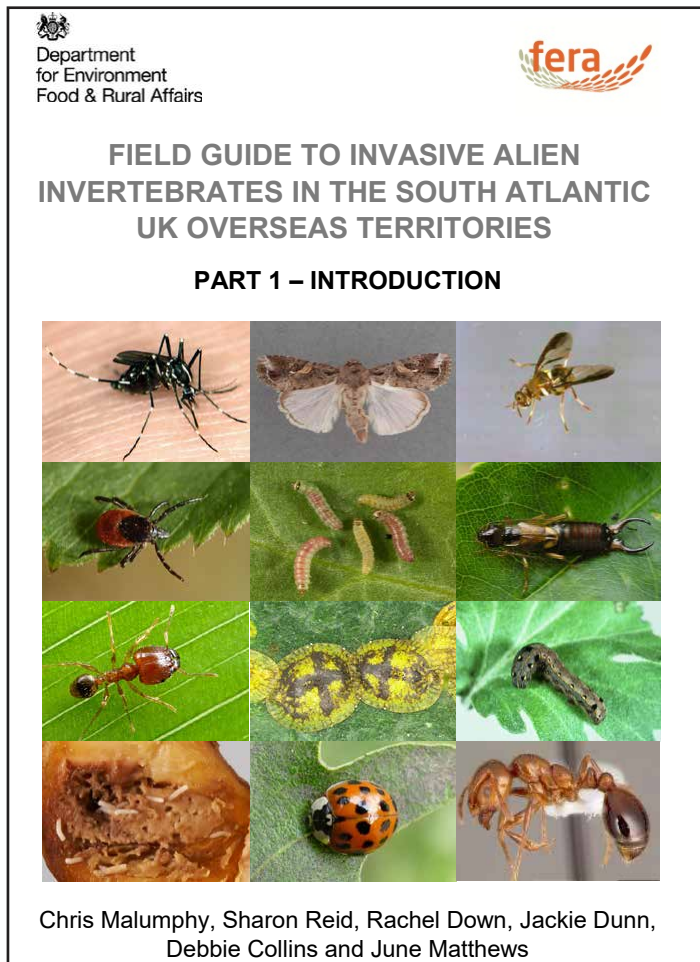
*A team from Walkers Limited helped clear trails of storm debris, and removed over a metric ton of bottles and a ½ ton of domestic waste from the Gilbert Nature Reserve; and then planted more than 100 native and endemic trees, shrubs and ground cover in the reserve. Photos: Bermuda National Trust*



# Field guides and identification

It is important to highlight the work being done in support of the UKOTs. Some of this work sometime is not as visible as it could be. We will do our best to help with this when we know about resources becoming available online. If you have for you would like us to promote or highlight, please do let us know. Listed below the outputs created by UK agency Fera on identification, particularly of invasive species.

## **Field Guide to invasive alien invertebrates in the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories:**



[Part 1. Introduction \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 2. Plant damage and specimen collection \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 3. Termites, beetles, earwigs, flies \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 4. Bugs, ants, wasps, moths \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 5. Invertebrates \(non-insects\) and references \(PDF\)](#)

## **Field Guide to invasive alien plant pests in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories:**

[Part 1 Introduction \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 2 Plant damage and specimen collection \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 3 Insects \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 4 Hemiptera \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 5 Hemiptera - Scale insects \(PDF\)](#)

[Part 6 Other invertebrates, references and annexes \(PDF\)](#)

## **Guide to taking digital photos of specimens for identification (PDF)**

## **Early detection of potentially invasive non-native invertebrates in South Georgia (PDF), and:**

[Annex B - A Key to Common Terrestrial Invertebrate Groups \(PDF\)](#)

[Annex C - A Key to Common Insect Groups \(PDF\)](#)

[Annex D - A4 Poster of Key Pest Groups for Cargo Ships \(PDF\)](#)

## **Field Guide to invasive alien pests of Pitcairn Islands (PDF)**

### **UKOT Plant Pest Fact Sheets**

[Holopothrips tabebuia \(PDF\)](#)

[Mylokerus undecimpustulatus \(PDF\)](#)

[Pseudacysta perseae \(PDF\)](#)

[Praelongorthezia praelonga \(PDF\)](#)

[Paratachardina lobata \(PDF\)](#)

[Phalacrocooccus howertoni \(PDF\)](#)

[Metaleurodicus cardini \(PDF\)](#)

[Bemisia tabaci \(PDF\)](#)

[Aleurotrachelus trachoides \(PDF\)](#)

[Lissachatina fulica \(PDF\)](#)

### **Factsheets for 21 established invasive species of common concern to Anguilla and TCI for either eradication or control:**

[Passer domesticus House Sparrow \(PDF\)](#)

[Chlorocebus aethiops Vervet Monkey \(PDF\)](#)

[Iguana iguana Green Iguana \(PDF\)](#)

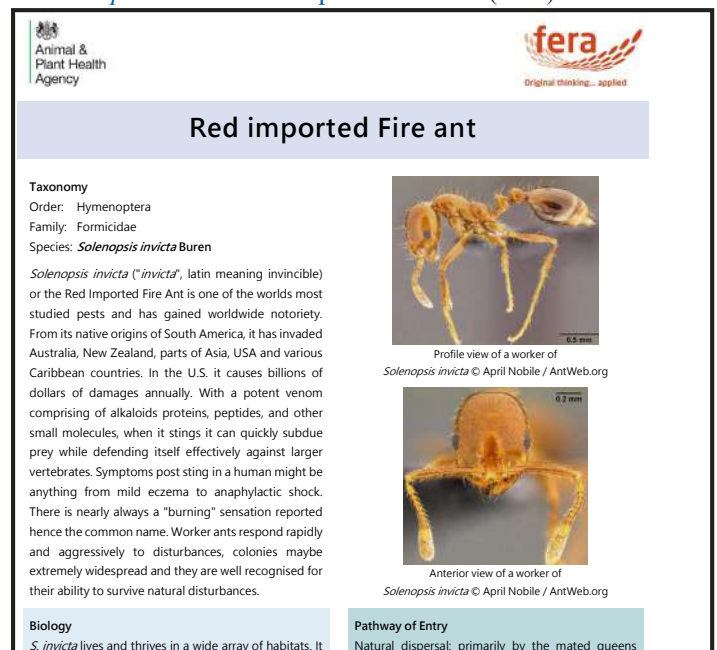
[Trachemys scripta Red-Eared Slider \(PDF\)](#)

[Plutella xylostella Diamond-Back Moth \(PDF\)](#)

[Papilio demoleus Lime Swallowtail \(PDF\)](#)

[Diaphorina citri Citrus Psyllid \(PDF\)](#)

[Solenopsis invicta Red Imported Fire Ant \(PDF\)](#)



[S. invicta lives and thrives in a wide array of habitats. It](#)

#### **Pathway of Entry**

[Natural dispersal: primarily by the mated queens](#)

[Pheidole megacephala Big-Headed Ant \(PDF\)](#)

[Paratrechina longicornis Longhorn Crazy Ant \(PDF\)](#)

[Wasmannia auropunctata Little Fire Ant \(PDF\)](#)

[Nylanderia fulva Raspberry Crazy Ant \(PDF\)](#)

[Cryptostegia madagascariensis Madagascar Rubbervine \(PDF\)](#)

[Tribulus cistoides False Puncture Vine \(PDF\)](#)

[Jasminum fluminense Brazilian Jasmine \(PDF\)](#)

[Washingtonia robusta Mexican Fan Palm \(PDF\)](#)

[Pennisetum setaceum Fountain Grass \(PDF\)](#)

[Tamarix canariensis Tamarisk \(PDF\)](#)

[Lawsonia inermis Henna \(PDF\)](#)

[Scaevola taccada Malaysian Inkberry \(PDF\)](#)

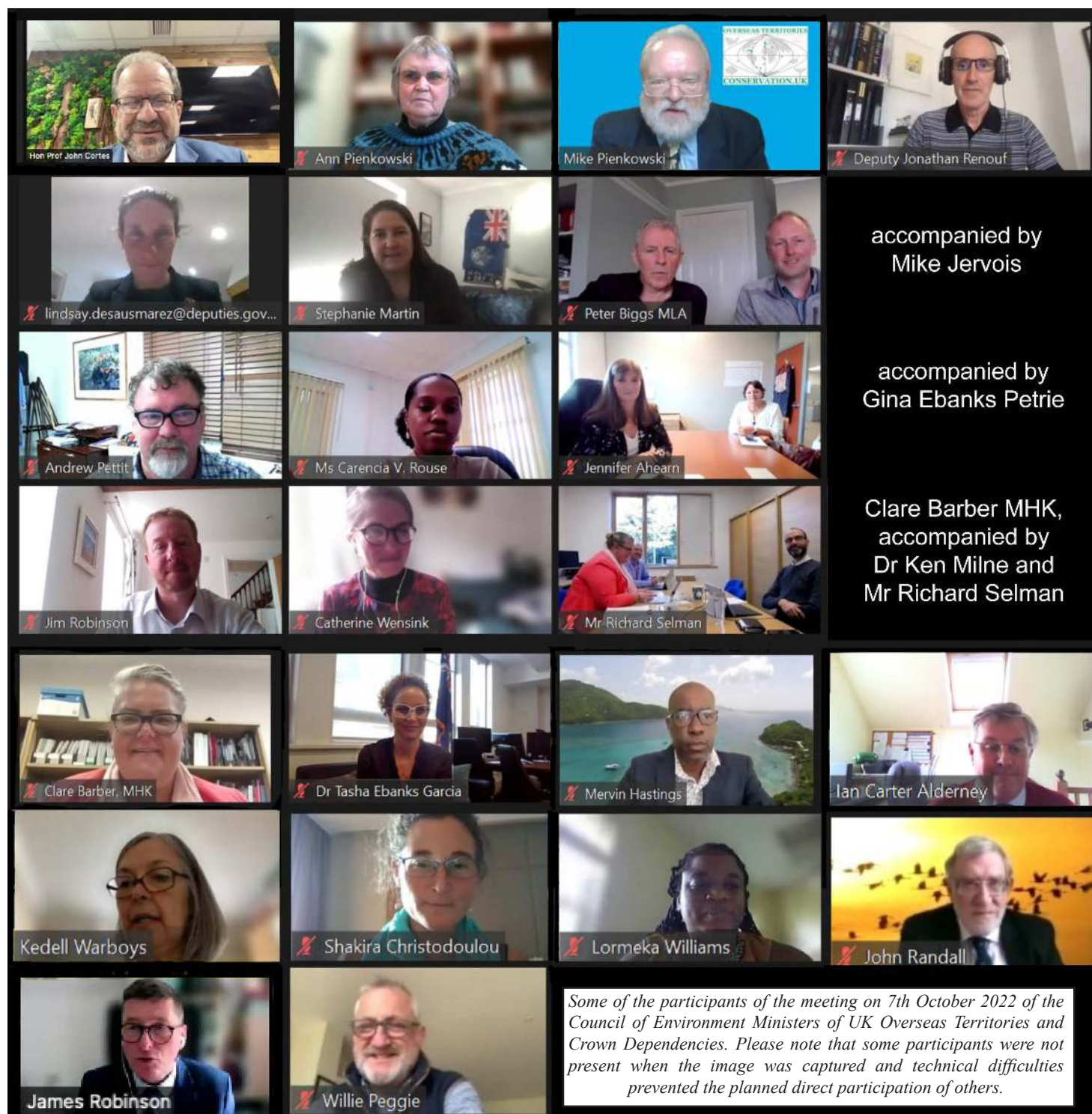
[Leucaena leucocephala Cowbush \(PDF\)](#)

# Fifth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting, 7 October 2022

UKOTCF was pleased to be asked again by the Council of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers (and their equivalents in non-ministerial systems) to provide the secretariat for their meeting and again to host it on UKOTCF's Zoom platform.

We show below the image of those participants present when the "group photo" was taken.

In the main part of this article, we are pleased to reproduce the Council's Statement issued after the meeting (available also [here](#)).



## Fifth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting, 7 October 2022 (by Zoom) – Statement

### Summary

In this Statement, the Council recognises the context of its meeting, stressing the value of, and responsibilities to, the natural environment.

It expresses appreciation of the work of the UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), and welcomes the response

from UK Government on 13th August to our statement and the outputs of the technical conference organised by UKOTCF. In particular, we welcomed the facilitation of the Overseas Territories in Conferences of the Parties of Environmental Conventions, the restoration of biodiversity funding to all the UKOTs and restoring those with UKOT project experience to advisory panels.



We underlined the importance of:

- Maintaining, especially in times of economic stress, the conservation and environmental sustainability of our natural environments, vital to our quality of life and economies, and fundamental to nature-based solutions as cost-effective ways to address many current issues, and to invasive species and biosecurity
- Fighting Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease
- UK's continuing resourcing of the "Blue Belt" and extending to territories in other situations, and the need to restore and increase markedly resourcing for terrestrial conservation, on which depend most of the species for which UK and the territories are uniquely responsible
- Continuing positive engagement by HMG Ministers and Departments with UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies
- The work of the project "From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain" and its "Framework on Best Practice in environmental and other research in UK Overseas Territories", and the need for resourcing of further environmental research on needs identified by the territories
- The support services by territory NGOs and their umbrella body
- The work on championing our biodiversity, including in UK Parliament
- The work of the Protected Areas Working Group of IUCN
- Assessing progress in fulfilling international conservation commitments
- Territory involvement in the Conferences of the Parties of international conventions.

In respect of UK Government's funding of conservation in the Overseas Territories, the Council reiterates the need for this by territory conservation bodies and their umbrella NGO, and underlines some of its earlier calls and raises further ways in which addressing of priorities could make this more cost-effective, including in the context of the loss by the territories of significant EU funding.

## Main Text

1. We, the portfolio holders for the environment in our respective territories or dependencies, held our fifth Environment Ministers' Council meeting by Zoom on Friday 7th October 2022. We continue to fulfil the role recognised by the November 2017 Joint Ministerial Council, which emphasised the importance of meetings of environment ministers in work on environmental management and climate change issues. Since our first meeting, in Gibraltar in 2015, we have faced major challenges. Volcanic eruptions in the Caribbean, followed by the unprecedented hurricanes of 2017, seriously damaged infrastructure and local economies. COVID-19 has had a global impact, but has had a particular impact on those economies, including many represented here, with a high dependence on tourism. The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU has led to a reappraisal of future funding arrangements for environmental work. Since then, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is generating major challenges to economies, energy and food supplies. We welcomed the opportunity afforded by this Council to address our challenges through joint and collaborative working, and to develop common priorities and approaches.

2. We value the support of our UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) in addressing many of our links with UK Government and of UKOTA and of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) in pursuing and facilitating

many environmental aspects important to our territories and their natural and human welfare.

3. The biodiversity of the territories and dependencies we represent is considerable. We have 3,300 endemic species, compared with around 90 in the UK. About 75% of these are globally threatened. Our ecosystems contain some of the rarest, and most threatened habitat types: we have, for example, nearly 5000 km<sup>2</sup> of coral reefs, which makes the UK the twelfth largest reef nation in the world. Our environmental capital has underpinned sustainable livelihoods in our populations for many generations, and can help continued growth in our economies and our living standards, as well as public health. But it is increasingly under threat, and needs both safeguarding and management. We recognise the hard spending choices facing UK and Territory politicians post-pandemic and during the current economic challenges, but note the conclusions of the HM Treasury-commissioned report by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta and the increasing public awareness of the reality of the immediate major threats to human life and well-being caused by biodiversity loss and climate change.

4. We confirm our commitment to conserve our environmental capital, and, recognising its global importance, some territories have chosen to be included in UK's ratification of international environmental agreements. We share with the UK a partnership approach to integrating environmental considerations in government decision-making, marked in the case of most Overseas Territories by individual Environment Charters as envisaged in the 1999 White Paper *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*, on which the 2012 White Paper *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability* is explicitly built. The approach is shared by other territories and dependencies through their commitment to the international agreements in which they are included. The Territories are important to the delivery of UK's global environmental promises, for example in protecting the over 90% of species found only on UK sovereign territory and by the declaration of by far the largest area of UK protected ocean. The Territories are a positive asset to be celebrated, and not a cash drain.

5. We recognise that Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies have materially different relationships with the UK and we further recognise that there are differences between Overseas Territories. These differences are particularly reflected in approaches to funding, which we recognised in our consideration of future aspirations, expectations and obligations. But for all of us, particularly in the light of the major challenges noted above, funding remains the key issue. External funding for initiatives to tackle the priorities we identified in previous meetings, such as unsustainable development, invasive species and the impacts of climate change, remains a challenge. For some of us the EU was a source of considerable funds for project work, technical advice and infrastructure development. While we welcomed Lord Ahmad's statement, following our 2017 Alderney meeting, that there would be an increase in funding for terrestrial and marine projects in the territories through the Darwin Plus programme, and the later comments by Lord Goldsmith, as well as increases in support through the Darwin Initiative and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), terrestrial conservation, in particular, still lags behind in funding.

6. We showed our appreciation to the UK Government for HMG for eventually affording more places than ever to the Overseas Territories at the Climate Conference of the Parties 26 in Glasgow. The work of UKOTA in negotiating the additional places for OTs as part of the UK overflow delegation, the side event at COP "Our Vision for Healthy Oceans - Overseas Territories" and the video shown at COP which showcased the leadership of the OTs in

dealing with Climate Change is acknowledged and appreciated. This gave the opportunity to highlight how precious and vulnerable our natural environments in the Overseas Territories are, and to generate high level engagement on environmental protection. Our differences are what makes us special; our commonalities are what bring us together to share knowledge and experiences. We tried to show UK Government that many seats at the table and many voices should not to be seen as a challenge, but a way to foster partnerships and collaboration, which can be a cost-effective way to do better for biodiversity and the planet. We welcomed this greater level of engagement and look forward to a further move to restore representatives of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to full membership of the core team of UK delegation as in earlier Conferences of the Parties to environmental conventions.

7. We appreciated the response of the Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister of State for the Pacific and the Environment at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs on 13th August 2021 to both our statement and the outputs of the technical conference held earlier that year and organized by the UKOTCF. The reply from our joint Chair:

7a) thanked the Minister and HMG for facilitating participation of the Overseas Territories at the Climate Conference of the Parties.

7b) noted with pleasure our accord on the vital importance of nature-based solutions and working together by UK, UKOTs, officials and NGOs. This will be even greater as we ensure that environment and economic recovery are not pitted against each other as we build back after Covid, this possibility being a real threat.

7c) welcomed, within the Darwin Initiative, the restoration of the biodiversity fund to all the UKOTs by bringing the ODA-eligible UKOTs back into Darwin Plus alongside all the other UKOTs, as well as the commitment to restoring to the Advisory Group more from NGOs with experience of running UKOT projects. Welcome also were the comments on the introduction of a funding stream for large projects (giving potential scope for more innovation involving UKOTs, such as provision for sharing our knowledge and technical expertise), and another that will be limited to UKOT Governments and UKOT-based NGOs, in view of the recent tendency to use Darwin funds for UK Government and commercial bodies, at the loss to NGOs and territory bodies. He felt it important that “UKOT-based NGOs” be considered to include UKOT umbrella bodies which may be physically based in UK, but work largely in the UKOTs, especially where key UKOT bodies have limited capacity or where cross-territory co-ordination would be particularly helpful. Projects run in this way have a strong record of success.

7d) noted pleasure to hear of the additional funding in relation to Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease in the Caribbean, which is destroying the reef-building corals in the Caribbean at an alarming rate. Noted also was the great urgency for further treatment action in the sea to slow this disease down and for land-based coral nurseries, an important requirement for eventual coral-reef restoration. It is to be hoped that some of the financial support is reaching those local NGOs who have borne the brunt so far in some UKOTs. In line with the HMG comments, Defra agencies will need to benefit from the NGOs’ local experience by planning and implementing action in full consultation with local NGOs already active, and share information about how the funds are being spent and allocated, in order to give confidence that the best action possible is being taken.

7e) expressed gratitude for comments on the other main matters, including the terrestrial environment, the Turing Scheme, and

Tristan’s and the Falklands’ fisheries. The Minister’s approach to the Culture Secretary regarding Lottery funds was most appreciated.

7f) looked forward to further continuing support from Her [now His] Majesty’s Government to the Environment Ministers of the Overseas Territories and of the Crown Dependencies, and to continuing positive engagement with HMG Ministers and Departments.

8. We acknowledged the work led by the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) which worked with us to appoint regional co-ordinators to work with scientists and representatives across the UKOTs to bring together information on climate-change impacts on biodiversity and our communities. During this process these impacts were assessed and ranked, based on the proximity urgency and severity of each impact. Priority climate-change issues were identified and published in a peer-reviewed report (<https://www.mccip.org.uk/uk-overseas-territories>). We would welcome comments from HMG on how it will assist the UKOTs in identifying and addressing the impacts.

9. We welcomed the work of the project “From Blue Iguanas to Blue Vervain” as part of the “Hidden Histories” joint programme of the UK Arts & Humanities and Natural Environment Research Councils. This built strongly on the Statement of our 2021 meeting and the outputs of the technical conference organized by the UKOTCF earlier in 2021. We encourage all to adopt the resulting “Framework on Best Practice in environmental and other research in UK Overseas Territories” (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Framework-of-bestpractice.pdf>).

10. We welcomed also the work of the project partners (UKOTCF and UKCEH) and the funding bodies (AHRC & NERC) for arranging for bodies in our territories to be funded from UK research funds and looked forward to this precedent to be expanded greatly in the future to an increasingly equitable situation. We welcomed also the commitment of various UK bodies who are supporting the UKOTs, including the John Ellerman Foundation (JEF), the Garfield Weston Foundation, the People’s Postcode Lottery and the People’s Trust for Endangered Animals, to fund environmental conservation in our territories. We encourage other foundations to join them in helping to conserve the unique and globally important part of the natural heritage for which the UK family is responsible. For over 10 years JEF has been supporting work in UKOTs. Since our last meeting, a dedicated fund has been established which is very welcome and should be supported. This resulted from efforts of the Environmental Funders Network, supported by a secondment from RSPB, and with input from several others.

11. We agreed at our 2021 meeting on the need for national champions to gain international understanding of our biodiversity and the threats to it, and welcome the initiative by UKOTCF, in association with our territory personnel, in seeking champions amongst UK Parliamentarians and others in the public eye. We heard and welcomed an update on progress and of the proposed All Party Parliamentary Group on environmental conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

12. We heard of the work of the Protected Areas Working Group of the UK Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and how this might relate to UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. We welcomed the identified opportunity to make even more use of our protected area data already being collated by JNCC. Making this available (under the same constraints) to the IUCN and UKOTCF for further analysis will greatly enhance the international standing of our protected areas and the information available to us to aid management.

13. We remain concerned about the environmental, social and economic damage caused by invasive species. We note that the



costs of their removal greatly exceed the costs of prevention. Effective action requires wide consultation, stakeholder engagement, especially of active conservation NGOs, and public awareness campaigns. We recognise that long-term biosecurity, together with the development of early warning and rapidly adaptive response systems, needs to be resourced at the local and regional levels to prevent introduction and spread as new threats emerge.

14. At our 2018 meeting in the Isle of Man, we welcomed Blue Belt funding for extensive marine protection around oceanic territories, and recognised also the success of co-operative fishery management alongside marine protected areas. We joined the participants in the recent technical conference “Staying Connected for Conservation in a Changed World” in calling on the UK Government to commit funding to support the continuation and expansion of the Blue Belt programme for the remaining years of the current parliament, in order to (a) provide the necessary financial and technical support to bring about effective and locally-led protection and sustainable management of their large-scale MPAs; and (b) expand the Blue Belt Programme and assistance for UKOTs developing other types of protected areas to other territories, including those not in mid-ocean, as required. Safeguarding vital marine biodiversity and enabling ecosystem recovery will sustain the blue economies of tourism and fishing, enable sequestration of ‘blue carbon’, and improve territories’ climate resilience against increasingly frequent and stronger extreme weather events. Accordingly, we welcome the extension of the Blue Belt programme to develop a complementary “Blue Shield” initiative. Several territories have joined one or both schemes. We wish to see a comparable scheme for terrestrial conservation, on which most of the species found only in our territories depend. Some of our senior officers have expressed concern at the discomfort between their terrestrial and marine staff that this discrepancy in UK support that this has generated, and called for a “green dot” initiative.

15. We again recall our governments’ commitments to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by choosing to be included in various international environmental agreements. We note that, in 2021, the UK Government and UKOTs reached 20 years of the existence of the Environment Charters and their commitments, not created under the Charters but brought together from under other international measures. We again note the invaluable role played by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum’s (UKOTCF’s) “Review of performance by 2016 of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in implementing the 2001 Environment Charters or their equivalents and moving towards the Aichi Targets and Sustainable Development Targets” (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/env-charter/progress/>) which we endorsed at our 2017 meeting. We regret that the UK Government has not provided the modest financial support we sought to enable the updating of this. We are grateful that the UKOTCF is nevertheless trying to undertake an update using unpaid skilled volunteers, and call on all to assist with this.

16. We continue to recognise, as we have done at previous meetings, that conservation workers in our territories benefit from cooperation with NGO bodies experienced in project design and operation, and which can draw on a wide range of expertise. We urge the UK Government to consider supporting such bodies so that they can deploy their skilled volunteer and paid personnel in helping the territories and raising and empowering local capacity. We note that the UK Government has supported working conferences for conservation practitioners, organised by UKOTCF, as an opportunity to share experience and skills; this has led to maximising cost-effectiveness of project funds. We value these working conferences highly, and encourage the UK Government to contribute substantially to such future physical

or online conferences for practical territory conservationists, in accordance with its commitment to ‘promote better cooperation and the sharing of experience between and among the Overseas Territories and with other states and communities which face similar environmental problems.’

17. We agree to consult further after the meeting on our representation and presence at CoPs (UNFCCC CoP27 in Egypt 7-18 November – welcoming the inclusion of Ministers from Gibraltar, BVI, Falklands, Montserrat & Anguilla); CBD CoP15 (second part) in Montreal, Canada 7-19 December), noting the importance of inclusion of our representative in the UK delegation, and noting that 94% of the globally important biodiversity for which UK is responsible depends on the Territories, as well as the considerable in-territory knowledge and expertise which will add value to the UK delegation.

18. We stressed our welcome of the constructive approach by the technical conference organised by UK Overseas Conservation Forum in March 2021 to identify solutions to other aspects of the situation and highlight their following recommendations:

- support should be given to long-term projects involving knowledge transfer to local NGOs through cooperation with the wider scientific and environmental community. The UK Government and other potential funders should focus resources on provision by experienced NGOs and others of the technical guidance and project officers needed to capitalise on the considerable local enthusiasm for conservation and environmental initiatives. We welcome progress made in the recruitment and deployment of citizen-scientists and citizen-conservationists, organised largely by NGOs, to further public ownership of these initiatives while recognising that costs need to be invested to release this major workforce;
- long-term funding is needed also for projects, such as those involving environmental recovery, that cannot be completed within the usual short time-frame. Sustainability cannot be built in a three-year cycle for habitats that take 30 years or more to come to fruition;
- local knowledge is essential in project-development and grant decisions. UK Government agencies were not funded by earlier UK Government grant funds for Overseas Territory conservation, but they are now. The UK Government needs to reverse its recent tendency to divert the use of traditional sources of grant-funding from cost-effective and experienced local and supporting UK NGO bodies to support instead UK government agencies and institutions, some of which are not experienced with some territory situations, however experienced they may be generally, and pay more regard to experience and proven success in the Overseas Territories, especially NGOs. The UK Government should revert to the more cost-effective approach of concentrating grant-funding on conservation bodies in the Overseas Territories and their umbrella body, rather than on consultancies;
- UK government agencies working in the Overseas Territories should be more open to speaking with other stakeholders, especially NGOs, to avoid duplication of effort. They should recognise the capacity constraints on local NGOs, which in most cases depend on voluntary work, and ensure funding to enable their contributions are built into project budgets;
- UK Government funding applications need to be less bureaucratic and repetitive, and consideration of projects should not take many months more than the time for application preparation. The assessments should be by those with Overseas Territories project-running experience and not based on box-checking scores;

- linking organisations help our territories make the best use of science and other information for decision-making, where local government or NGO staff may lack the relevant technical expertise. Whilst the UK government has international responsibility for environmental issues in the Overseas Territories (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee 2013), in practice that responsibility is devolved to the territories themselves. There is, therefore, little or no overall coordination, or mechanism for sharing expertise, which can lead to waste of resources in addressing problems to which solutions have been found elsewhere, and can fail to identify issues which others have seen as priorities. The further development of a loose, consultative structure of mutually reinforcing institutions, along the lines of the UKOTCF with its regional working groups, is a priority, which would be helped by support and recognition by UK government, as well as territory governments.

19. We recognise with thanks the key role that local conservation leaders play in maintaining community motivation throughout the planning and implementation of long-term conservation projects. Their importance cannot be overstated if we are to ensure that community support for conservation projects does not fade over generations, and that future conservation projects will be embraced as readily as those currently being undertaken.

20. We continue to regret that, whilst there is no legal impediment to funding from the UK National Lottery being used in support of the environment in the territories, the policies and procedures of the Lottery funding bodies effectively prevent this. We ask, as we have done in previous meetings, the UK Government to undertake urgently a review of this situation, which would open up new horizons for cooperation.

21. We agree to meet again, probably in 2023 by remote communications, and ask UKOTCF to continue in the role of Secretariat.

## Appendix:

### List of Ministers and other lead representatives participating

Alderney: Mr Ian C. Carter, Chair of Policy and Finance Committee, States of Alderney

Anguilla: Ms Carencia Rouse, Director of Natural Resources (Environment) (representing Minister Hon. Quincia M. Gumbs-Marie)

Bermuda: Mr Andrew Pettit, Director of Environment (representing The Hon. Walter H Roban, JP, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs)

(British) Virgin Islands: Mr Mervin Hastings (representing Hon. Melvin M. Turnbull, Minister for Natural Resources and Labour)

Cayman Islands: Ms Jennifer Ahearn, Permanent Secretary (representing Hon Wayne Panton, Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency with responsibility for Environment)

Falkland Islands: Peter Biggs MLA, Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Gibraltar: Hon. Prof. John Cortés, Minister for Education, Heritage, Environment, Energy and Climate Change

Guernsey: Deputy Lindsay De Sausmarez, President of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure

Isle of Man: Clare Barber, MHK, Minister for Environment Food and Agriculture

Jersey: Deputy Jonathan Renouf, Minister for the Environment

St Helena: Minister Christine Scipio, Minister of Environment (via Mrs Kedell Worboys, St Helena UK Representative)

Sark: Ms Shakira Christodoulou (representing Conseiller Helen Plummer, Chairman, Agriculture and Environment Committee of the Chief Pleas of Sark)

Tristan da Cunha: Ms Stephanie Martin, Environment Policy Officer (representing Chief Islander James Glass)

Turks & Caicos Islands: Ms Lormeka Williams (representing Hon. Josephine Olivia Connolly, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Maritime, Heritage and Gaming)

Technical constraints prevented participation by:

Montserrat: Ms Ernestine Corbett, Director of Environment (representing Hon Crenston C. Buffonge, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & Environment); and

Pitcairn: Simon Young, Island Councillor leading on Environment; however, both of these support this Statement.

## UK extends international treaties on the Environment to Gibraltar

HM Government of Gibraltar announced on 3 October 2022 that the United Kingdom Government has extended the application of two international treaties on the Environment to Gibraltar.

UK Government has amended Article 6 of the London Convention, provisionally extending its application to various Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, including Gibraltar. The Convention aims to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea. Under Article 6, Contracting Parties shall not allow the export of wastes or other matter to other countries for dumping or incineration at sea.

On 22nd September, the UK also extended its ratification to the Paris Agreement on climate change to Gibraltar. The Paris Agreement is a landmark, legally-binding commitment entered into by 196 countries at the COP21 in Paris, in 2015. Its aim is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has worked in close consultation with the UK Government to seek and achieve these important extensions to Gibraltar.

Gibraltar Minister for the Environment, John Cortés, said: "The extension of these important international agreements to Gibraltar demonstrates the strength of the United Kingdom's commitment to Gibraltar and its confidence in Gibraltar as a jurisdiction that is ready, willing and able to do its part as a global actor on the Environment and Climate Change. I'd like to thank the Department of Environment and the Government Law Offices for their work on these important matters."

UKOTCF is aware that Gibraltar has been working for some years to achieve this, and congratulates Gibraltar on its achievement.



[https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/uploads/environment/20211124-Climate\\_Change\\_Strategy\\_Final.pdf](https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/uploads/environment/20211124-Climate_Change_Strategy_Final.pdf)



# Inter-Island Environment Meeting 2022, Alderney, Channel Islands

Alderney Wildlife Trust, with the States of Alderney and KPMG, organised and hosted this meeting on 13-14 October 2022. For the first time in 3 years, the meeting was in person but also online. The almost traditional weather challenges disrupted travel to and in the Channel Islands and especially Alderney – so that some intended physical participants became at least temporarily online ones, in some cases in airport lounges. However, as ever, AWT personnel and speakers coped magnificently to produce an interesting and interactive meeting.

The programme included a range of presentations, and most of these occurred, although in a varied order to overcome the travel constraints: They are listed here in the originally planned structure.

## **Finding Ways Towards Sustainability**

Can Netting be Sustainable? And Where Have All the Big Fish Come From? *Alex Plaster (Marine and Fisheries Officer, States of Jersey)*

Compton Bay Project: Sustainable Farming on a Landscape Scale *Richard Grogan (Head of Isle of Wight AONB Team, IoW Council)*

The Value of Coastal Habitats to Commercial Fisheries in Jersey and the Role of Marine Protected Areas *Samantha Blampied (Marine and Fisheries Data Officer, States of Jersey)*

Wilder Wight Strategy - Nature Based Solutions *Jamie Marsh (Director of Nature Recovery, Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust)*

## **Research Collaboration and Emergency Response**

Avian Influenza in Alderney – Responding to an International Wildlife Crisis on a Small Island *Alex Purdie (Ramsar Officer, AWT) & Dr Phil Atkinson (Head of International Research & Principle Ecologist, BTO)*

Invasive, Non-Native Species (INNS) Guernsey Update *Julia Henney (Biodiversity Officer, States of Guernsey)*

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System *John Horton (Warden, Alderney Bird Observatory & Chair, CIBRS)*

Predator-Exclusion Fences: A Shield for Native Wildlife *Cris Sellares (Project Officer, National Trust Jersey)*

## **Acoustics and Collaborative Wildlife Monitoring**

Where We are With Bats! *Liz Walsh (Government of Jersey)*

Marine Mammal Monitoring With the Use of Acoustic Receivers *Paul Chambers (Assistant Director Marine Resources, States of Jersey)*

A Sound Observation: An Update on the Bailiwick Bat Survey and the Opportunities of Bioacoustic Data *Emily Coule (Acting Senior Environment Services Officer, Guernsey Government)*

YUNGA Guernsey Biodiversity Badge *Dr. Karen Marshall (Head of Science, Ladies College Guernsey)*

## **Collaborative Research and Taking Action For Biodiversity**

Navigating the Network of Wildlife Recording - Citizen Science is Key to Our Success *Liz Sweet (Manager, Guernsey Biological Records Centre)*

FISHINTEL *Thomas Stamp (Plymouth University)*

An Introduction to BLUE MARINE'S Work in Jersey *Freddie Watson (Project Officer, Blue Marine Foundation)*

Confirming the Presence of the Common Eel on Jersey *Bob Tompkins (Société Jersiaise)*

Guernsey's Asian Hornet Strategy - Three Years On *Francis Russell (Invasive Non-Native Species Co-ordinator, States of Guernsey)*

## **Nature-Based Solutions**

Isle of Man Biosphere Nature Recovery Network *Leigh Morris (CEO, Manx Wildlife Trust)*

Carbon Auditing in Small Island Context *Ellen Smith (Conservation Officer, AWT) & Rachel Hall (Climate and Nature-Based Solutions Officer, The Wildlife Trusts)*

Why Now? *Jonathan de Pasquallie (ESG Senior Manager, KPMG in the Crown Dependencies)*

There were also workshops on:

Developing the use of acoustic monitoring techniques (marine and terrestrial) as a tool for species monitoring within the Crown Dependencies *Conveners: Stuart Newson & Phil Atkinson (BT0)*

Environmental Emergency Response Planning across the Crown Dependencies *Convener: Richard Grogan (Isle of Wight Council)*

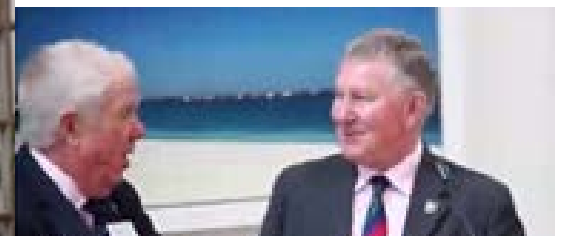
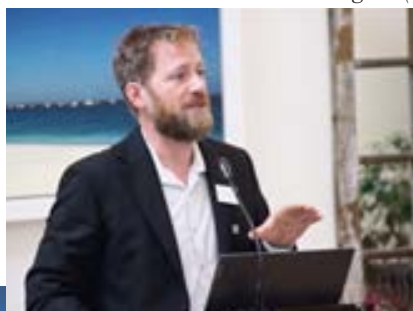
Investigating the future of Environmental Sustainability and Governance (ESG) and how it will impact climate and biodiversity response *Convener: Leigh Morris (Isle of Man Wildlife Trust)*

Collaborative Response to Invasive and Non-Native Species (INNS) *Convener: Francis Russell (States of Guernsey)*

Cross Channel Island Ramsar Meeting *Convener: Alex Purdie (Ramsar Officer, AWT)*

*AWT Chief Executive Roland Gauvain starts the conference  
HE Lieutenant Governor for the Bailiwick of Guernsey, Richard Cripwell  
& Boyd Kelly (Chairman General Services Committee, States of Alderney)  
open the meeting.*

*A panel of speakers answer questions;  
Annie Burgess (States of Alderney Member for the Environment) closes  
meeting*



# 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](mailto:cwensink@ukotcf.org)) or Mike Pienkowski ([m@pienkowski.org](mailto: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](https://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