

# FORUM NEWS 60

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## Meet the *Adopters* of Wildlife Homes in Montserrat's *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project



*Tropical dry forest on Garibaldi Hill from house and garden of Wildlife Home 01 (All photos by Ann & Mike Pienkowski)*

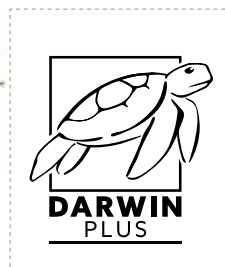
[ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife/](http://ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife/); scroll down to Project Update) and others will follow. MNT has drawn attention to some of these in social media.

The *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project arose from an earlier 2-year project in

*Adopt Home for Wildlife* is a project which aims to protect Montserrat's unique biodiversity, ecosystems and natural capital through community action. It is being led by the Montserrat National Trust on island and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, which coordinates support from partners. *Adopters* are those local people or groups who volunteer and are accepted to manage an area of land (*Wildlife Home*) within the project. A network of sites across the island is being established where action takes place to improve conditions for biodiversity and, where possible, opportunities for people to improve livelihoods and well-being are provided. Preliminary ecological surveys of the sites are conducted and, with this information, a management plan is developed between the *Adopter* and the project partners. Management plans have been agreed for the first 10 Wildlife Homes and additional ones are being developed. Ann and Mike Pienkowski of UKOTCF visited Montserrat for the first half of December 2022. Much of the time was spent filming and interviewing *Adopters* on their sites (*Wildlife Homes*) – and, subsequently back in UK, editing to make many published videos. Some of these have now been published online (<https://www.>

2016-18. In the first year of that project, we identified what we now call *Wildlife Homes* as an approach to address some of the key challenges and opportunities of conservation in Montserrat. In the second year, we tested this successfully on a small number of pilot sites with our first *Adopters*. Three of those first sites stayed with us during the following three years while we tried to secure funding to employ local project officers, key to continuing. They became Wildlife Homes 01 (Ventana, Garibaldi Hill), 02 (Belham River Mouth) and 03 (Cork Hill) in the continued new phase of the project. There are a number of videos about these (and a few other pilot sites) from the first phase still available. There are links to these at: <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/sos-montserrat/>. We shall soon be adding new videos on these sites (to <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife/>), but meanwhile enjoy these videos of those who helped get the work started.

In *Forum News* 58 and 59, we outlined some of the *Wildlife Homes* and *Adopters* for which videos had by then been published. In this issue, we continue this series, for two of our longest-standing







*Above: at WH01, Tim Orton has been experimenting with the challenges of regenerating tropical dry forest in areas with a huge thickness of ash covering the older rock and soil. In the cleared area, Tim has been trying all sorts of techniques to allow native plants to survive. He has nurtured several young trees, and noticed that some growing very slowly for several years, have suddenly grown (tall young trees on the right of picture). He suspects that their roots have at last reached through the new ash to the old soil below.*

*Below: Young trees growing in the shade do better. Invasive species can then later be removed after the native saplings are sufficiently well grown in their shade. For example, Tim has killed this invasive tree (in centre of image below) by ring-barking.*

*Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



**Wildlife Homes.** Much fuller versions of these can be read in our newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* 16, pages 2-12 (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/SOSnatureNewsletter15a.pdf>)

### **Wildlife Home 01: Ventana, Garibaldi Hill**

One of the most threatened ecosystems in the world is tropical dry forest. It is also one of the slowest to regenerate after damage. The project – and Montserrat – are fortunate that Tim Orton is the owner of a relatively intact piece of tropical dry forest and, as part of the project, aims to protect, and where needed, restore it. It serves as a great example, and it would be wonderful if other parts of the very limited remaining areas of tropical dry forest on Montserrat could be appreciated and protected, perhaps by the Government as nature reserves. Much of the tropical dry forest around Garibaldi Hill in Montserrat is unprotected and in danger of being cleared for building. Conserving these habitats is needed to protect unique, endemic species and so they can continue to support communities by providing ecosystem services and socioeconomic value.

Because the ecosystem is naturally dry (and therefore slow growing) and prone to drought (and consequent sapling death), this is one of the most challenging ecosystems to restore – and

Tim points out that he will not see the end of the process, but wants to set the process well on the way for Montserratians. Other individuals can help too. Many of the settlements of Montserrat are on what was originally tropical dry forest, probably because this may have been the most comfortable zone in which to live. That means that conditions in many gardens are still suitable for the plants native to tropical dry forest. Therefore, planting patches of native trees and bushes, and allowing natural processes to continue as these establish over longer periods of time, can be significant contributions to the conservation of Montserrat's special features.

Tim's experimental work is helping us learn the best ways of helping this ecosystem slowly recover. This is novel work, so it provides opportunities for learning and adapting management techniques.



*Above: In December 2022, Tim points out to Mike the tiny self-sown seedlings of a range of trees growing in the shade of neem trees planted for shade by the original builder of the house. Neem has its uses but is non-native to Montserrat and highly invasive. Therefore, unless it is needed and well managed, it is best removed. Although Tim uses also seedlings from the project nursery and cuttings, he prefers seedlings because this maximises natural genetic diversity. To allow the self-set seedlings to start, grass-cutting needs to be prevented in the relevant areas.*

*Below: Tim leaves the native seedlings but removes the neem seedlings.*



*In March 2024, after a good year for rain, Tim shows Mike the same seedlings, now well grown. Tim plans to give them more space to grow by removing the lower branches of the neem trees but retaining the higher ones to maintain the shade. Eventually, with the native young trees strong and well grown, he will remove the neem trees completely, possibly by ring-barking.*





In order to try to give his latest young plants in the open (left) a better chance of survival, Tim is experimenting with planting a tube alongside the stem (close-up below) so that water can be supplied closer to the roots. Tim has found that this works well for some species, including pribby, but is more variable for e.g. cedar.



The site is located on Garibaldi Hill, and covers approximately 0.02 km<sup>2</sup> (or 2.44 hectares). It is predominantly tropical dry forest but the site grades from tropical dry forest to the north and west of the site to lawn surrounding the house.

This site was the first one to join the 1-year pilot for this scheme in 2017. Indeed, discussions between UKOTCF, MNT and Mr Orton just before this were instrumental in developing *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* as an approach to conservation of native species of plants and animals in the challenging situation of an island on which about 2/3 of the land could not be accessed.

Between the lawn and forest is an area of land which has been partially cleared of acacia trees. Mr Orton removed the acacia trees which are an invasive species on the island and were dominating the area. He is keen to work with the *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project to replace the acacia with native species suitable for the area, with advice from project partners.



Some species, in some situations, do not respond to efforts to help them. Soil-testing is in progress to investigate.



In the original, cleared, area, Tim's efforts, helped by rain in the last couple of years, have been successful in some trees growing, and producing fruit, like the gum tree below. These seeds and the increasing shade should help new seedlings to establish and grow.



Anywhere, tropical dry forest consists of slow-growing species (adapted to low rainfall). The challenges here are exacerbated by the 30cm or more of volcanic ash deposited between 1997 and 2010. Although, after many years, volcanic ash results in rich soil, in its fresh state, it soaks up water without making it available to plants, making it extremely difficult for saplings to establish. Some of the experimental approaches that Tim has already investigated are noted later.

Acacia previously was prolific in certain areas of the site making it more difficult for native species to thrive. The clearance of this area has opened up the area to potential colonisation by invasive species like Wild Tamarind *Leucaena leucocephala* if not managed. We learnt from this that it might have been better to thin the Acacia (which acts as a pioneer species), and under-plant with native species, in order to give the latter shade, which is the state in which these forest trees normally establish.

Young trees growing in the shade, or partial shade, of the forest do rather better than in the open. Invasive species can then later be removed after the native saplings are sufficiently well grown in their shade. For example, Tim has killed a large non-native and invasive tamarind tree by ring-barking, to provide shade for native saplings to develop. The greatly reduced leaf-cover, even before the tree died, allowed the lower storey of young (mainly self-seeded) native trees to thicken considerably. The survival rate for seedlings inside the forest shade has proven very much better; so Tim suspects that ground temperatures may be the main problem with re-establishing areas from bare ground. Hopefully, that means that the survival rate will increase as the older trees start to shade the ground.

Tim noted that the established forest did not seem to have suffered any ill effects from several months of drought. Tim had mentioned previously that 'self-seeders' grew more vigorously than planted ones. Tim noted that: "that was before the months-long drought conditions we experienced over a couple of years recently. Those that became established prior to then are still doing better than





Some areas are very steep: we had to move from the video interview site above to prevent falling over. While cutting paths to move on the slope, Tim realised that these could be used as terraces for the trees. This may be applicable also to other steep Wildlife Homes.



the relocated trees from the same period. It would seem that seedlings need more than a single year of good conditions to be able to survive in the longer term. It is important to clarify that I am mainly referring to those in the open, unshaded areas I am trying to re-establish. Those within the shade of the forest have fared much better.”

Tim has noted that the rate of growth of saplings which survive is extremely slow for some years but then, in some cases, starts to boost. It seems likely that this occurs when the saplings’ roots reach through the new ash to the earlier soil. As a consequence, Tim is now trying a variety of techniques to get water to the roots of new plantings. Some of these, and other approaches are explained in the photos and captions.

## Wildlife Home 02: Belham River Mouth, Old Road Bay

Our other long-standing Wildlife Home is at the other extreme from the stable and slow-growing tropical dry forest – highly dynamic coastal wetland. Such ecosystems are subject to rapid change due to storms and (less so in the Caribbean than many other places) tides. Plants and animals tend to be fast growing in the nutrient-rich and well watered habitats. Coastal wetlands are rare in Montserrat, partly due to its high, steep coastal slopes but



Dwayne Hixon looks at migrant shorebirds attracted to the shallow wetland he recreated at Belham River Mouth (now Wildlife Home 02), replacing rare habitat lost by volcanic action and inappropriate human development. From one of the videos noted above. (All photos: Ann & Mike Pienkowski)



Above: Part of the golf course, with part of the usual flock of foraging Cattle Egrets.

Below: The excavated old dock, now serving as a bridge over the link between the upper and lower parts of the Belham River Mouth.



also because of infilling by volcanic lahars or (as in the case of Pipers Pond) inappropriate built development.

WH02 is located around Belham River Mouth and stretches from Old Road Bay to Isles Bay. The land at this site has been covered and extended into the sea by pyroclastic flows and lahars, most of which were recorded in the period from 1999 to 2006; and a deep layer of ash covers the land. A golf-course existed previously near the Belham River Mouth, close to this site, but this is now under a considerable depth of ash. Alien invasive Australian Pine *Casuarina* colonised the bare ash-covered ground on the site.

Under the site also is an old stone jetty. As our pilot study (2016-18) was starting, Mr Hixon excavated to find the jetty, and water-shore-birds soon found the water-filled excavations. Mr Hixon also cleared all but a few *Casuarina* trees from the coastal (western) part of the forest, the part he manages. 75% of the site (0.6km<sup>2</sup>) is a developing golf course. The eastern side of the golf course is scrubby with thick vegetation. To the west, the course is flanked by a narrow stretch of beach and the sea beyond. The west side of the golf course is where most of the small ponds (see below) have been re-excavated in a few places; they lie approximately at right-angles to the coast, and take the form of narrow, twisting creeks – which resemble the natural form.







Above: Ponds at two different levels in one of the smaller pond complexes.  
Below: Towards the seaward end of the large pond.



There is also a larger re-excavated pond in this zone. The site is an important wetland area, regenerated by Mr Hixon's excavations.

Within the UKOTCF/MNT/GoM pilot project, Mr Hixon agreed to remove the *Casuarina* (which both shades out other vegetation and poisons it via root secretions, as well as being unstable in storms), and has done this in the area that he controls. The area is managed as a golf course. Grass is kept short, and large trees mostly prevented from growing except for some for shelter. This will require continual management to prevent *Casuarina* from recolonising. Based on experience elsewhere, effective management could use cattle, provided that they do not avoid grazing the invasives and do not focus only on native species. This would need to be reviewed throughout. Rough areas and edges of golf fairways can be developed using native vegetation such as shrubs and herbaceous plants, creating important wildlife refuges. Mr Dixon has agreed also to keep or plant, as far as possible, natural vegetation and trees on the greens for both shade and ornamentation and, when an alternative is needed, using non-invasive traditional vegetation. The area is quite exposed and so some discussion is needed to ensure adequate shade is provided, if possible by native trees, for those utilizing the area.

Even in some areas where the Australian Pine has been cleared, other invasive plants have colonised, such as Castor Oil plants *Ricinus communis* and Wild Tamarind *Leucaena leucocephala*. The latter two plant species are particularly prevalent on the edges of the site, presenting a risk of invasion further into the site. However, the management recommendation of regular maintenance of the golf course via mowing/ grazing minimizes the risk. Control and clearance of *Casuarina* spp and Castor



Smooth-billed Anis favour the north-eastern part of the golf course, where they can rest and hide in the bushes but emerge to forage on the grassland. These extended family parties of a species of cuckoo are often heard before being seen: their range of calls is remarkable.

Oil plants continues, particularly at the edges, to prevent recently cleared plants recolonising the area. This can be mitigated by planting native species such as Sea Grape (which has started, using seedlings from the project nursery, and these are growing well) and those providing shade.

Dwayne Hixon plans to plant Flamboyant Trees *Delonix regia* as a nod to the old golf course, destroyed by the volcano. This has local support due to the historic significance. Although not native to the Caribbean, *D. regia* is considered an iconic species, found throughout the Caribbean in art, on postage stamps and is the national flower of St Kitts and Nevis. Planting should be in one specific small area and careful management to stop spread will be needed as this species is an aggressive invader of tropical dry forest areas.

Any lights placed in the area of the new building should point inland, to avoid causing problems for nesting and hatching sea turtles, which forage and nest on Montserrat. We understand that Mr Hixon intends to take this into account. In addition, it is important that any sand moving operations at or near the beach avoid turtle nesting periods. The beach is a turtle-nesting location. That is one reason why the building is set back from the beach. Monitoring of turtle activity has recently taken place as part of a project between the Government of Montserrat, Exeter University and the Marine Conservation Society, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Housing, Lands & Environment, and which was planned in part through our pilot project (Darwin Plus Project; DPLUS106).



Great Egret and Snowy Egret pass each other while both hunt fish near the seaward end of the big pond.



*Common Gallinule in one of the smaller pond complexes. Note the enormous toes which allow the bird to walk on soft, and even floating, surfaces.*



In accordance with that MNT/UKOTCF/GoM pilot study (2016-18), ponds have been re-excavated at the site, providing wetland habitat for migrating and resident water- and shore-birds. The ponds have been excavated at different levels, so that standing water and the invertebrates and plants are available at a range of levels of the water-table. The restoration of the wetland was encouraged initially by UKOTCF and MNT, and then short-term funding from a grant to RSPB (via Darwin Plus), and then continued under MNT/UKOTCF *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*.

The site is an important recreational area which is still being developed. It has mixed uses, including (as stated) a golf course, wildlife watching, coastal walks and a sandy beach with several picnic areas. The management of the wetland area that has already taken place offers a stop-over for migratory birds as well as resident wildlife. The management plan recognises the uses of the area and wishes of the site-manager and aims to enhance its use by the public and visitors alike. The wishes of the Adopter are well expressed in a series of videos of interviews from the pilot project with some of the project team, viewable from links in <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/videos/>.

Some further improvements to the area for tourism and leisure opportunities are possible, e.g. golf-course promotion linked to wildlife in the area and or well-being walks when the golf course is not in use. The site could benefit from a nature trail and leaflet (possibly as a pdf or online access via scanable QR codes). The leaflet could also address etiquette issues. For example, those involved in looking at nature etc should avoid interfering with golfing activities; some of this could be achieved by early morning visits, which tend anyway to be most productive and comfortable. Similarly, the leaflet could explain to golfers the nature importance of the site, possibly even suggesting names based on plants or animals for each fairway/hole.

The restored wetland areas are the main reason that the site was included in the pilot study because of the current rarity of this ecosystem in Montserrat, following both covering by volcanic ash and inappropriate development activities by humans. However, the drier areas are becoming of increasing interest as studies proceed.

Provided from the project nursery at MNT Botanic Garden, native Sea Grapes *Coccoloba uvifera* that are characteristic of dry thickets have already been planted around the wetland area, as noted above. This was done as an exercise for Monty's Messengers, the club for primary-school-age children, which this project helped MNT to re-start after a several year break due to volcanic activity. Other native species appropriate for planting at this site to create Dry Scrub/Shrubby Vegetation/Dry Thicket include: West Indian



*Green Heron – more often seen as a brief glimpse as it flies away.*

Mahogany, *Swietenia mahagoni* (also important for shade in exposed areas) and potentially the endemic Pribby *Rondeletia buxifolia*, as a natural border.

The sides of this large pond were initially too steep for most shorebirds to use as feeding areas, and the potential for making these sufficiently less steep were limited because of the greater area that this would require. Nevertheless, Mr Hixon is keen to generate shallower slopes, and this is to be welcomed. At times, the smaller narrow ponds in the golf course are more used by water- and shore-birds

With the ash-soil and rapid plant growth, the ponds that have been re-created tend to silt up. Also, while some degree of cover is important for breeding birds and some species at other times, some of the migrant shorebirds need more sparsely vegetated areas due to their adaptations to lower predation risks. Therefore, dense areas of Castor Oil plants need to be cleared from around the pond, and dense reed-mace (sometimes called bull-rushes) from the pond, as well as desilting of the ponds are needed to maintain usage by these birds. The management plan concluded that it would probably be best to do this on a rotational basis, so that as wide a range of states of vegetation and silting is available at a variety of levels, at any one time. In a more natural system, this would be the result of weather, sea and other natural processes. Some initial surveys have shown there to be interesting freshwater invertebrates and so rotational management will ensure mixed habitat is maintained continuously for a wide range of species.

The freshwater ponds, following some preliminary assessments, seem to be important habitat for freshwater invertebrates and associated species. Where infilling and vegetation filling are happening, these will need some excavation periodically to ensure these habitats remain viable in wet and dry seasons. When this is done, it must be done with care since Common Gallinules (also known as Moorhens) regularly nest in the reeds. Nests can be destroyed and chicks can be killed if this is not done carefully. Some allowing of vegetation to grow to allow some cover around the ponds should be a priority management action built into the rotational management, with clear areas as part of the rotation also.

This rotational work had started when, in late 2023, severe storms broke through the separation between the sea and the large pond as well as flooding other areas with sea-water. Since then, the ponds have become isolated from the sea again and the sea-water has become brackish. The break-through of the sea and the salt-water intrusion had the effect of a more natural clearing of the excessive vegetation and silt than the human intervention previously envisaged. With time, the waters will become less saline, and the vegetation regrow excessively - until the next storm breakthrough. However, if this does repeat, we will have a rather more natural situation, and probably one less expensive to manage.

Most of the bird species present before the storm are still





*Flock of Cattle Egrets forage, rest and preen on the golf course.*

represented (and all but the first bird photo in this article were taken in this new situation in March 2024), even though their distribution between the pools may have changed. For example, the Common Gallinules were formerly centred in the overgrown vegetation of the large pool, but are now concentrated in one of the smaller pools where similar vegetation has developed. Such a dynamic situation is typical of more natural coastal wetlands and the ever-changing patterns are of interest in themselves.

## Videos

Videos on Wildlife Home 01 (Garibaldi Hill), WH07 (Lawyers Mountain, and WH13 (Hibiscus Drive) have been added recently to the web-page on this project (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife/>), which already included links to

videos on several other Wildlife Homes. Some other videos will be added in coming weeks.

Videos on the sites (including what are now WH01, 02 & 03) which developed the technique in the pilot project in 2016-18 can be seen from links in <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/sos-montserrat/>, and some of these and a wider range at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/videos/>. This last site includes a link to an updated version of the video *Montserrat Birding in Paradise*. The original version of this was made in 2016, in association with the book produced by UKOTCF and Montserrat National Trust *Birding in Paradise, the Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat. A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites*. See [www.ukotcf.org.uk/books-for-sale/](https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/books-for-sale/) for more information and to purchase printed or digital copies.

## UKOTCF webinar on avian flu - 30 September 2024

Since the beginning of 2022, the increasing intensity of highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of seabirds and many of other species in the Northern Hemisphere, around the Atlantic, Pacific Ocean and Southern Africa. Avian influenza Type A viruses (bird flu viruses) do not normally infect people, but rare cases of human infection have occurred with some bird flu viruses, mainly involving persons working closely with poultry or other birds.

Following interest from UKOTCF regional working groups, we reviewed, in *Forum News* 59: 13, reports from UKOTs and CDs of this disease. We are delighted to announce that we are hosting a webinar on avian flu with invited speakers from across the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies, as well as further afield. Avian flu has killed millions of birds worldwide, severely impacting populations in Europe and the US, and has been found in the Southern Ocean

territories in the last year, affecting wild mammals as well as birds. The aim of the webinar is to share experiences and best practice in regard to surveying and research and also pragmatic tips like how and when to manage carcass removal or allowing tourist trips.

The webinar aims to have a speaker session and a panel discussion where experts will debate some of the most pressing challenges and where hope can be found. We welcome your participation.

Further information and a link to register will be available in late July at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/webinar-avian-flu/>. Please note that this will be a few weeks after the publication date of this issue of *Forum News*. Please contact Jodey Peyton ([jpeyton@ukotcf.org](mailto:jpeyton@ukotcf.org)) if you would like to know more about this event.



*Images at Zeebrugge, Belgium, from Wouter Courtens (Research Institute for Nature and Forest), one of the contributors: left: colony of Mediterranean gulls with dead juvenile; centre & right: dead birds, mainly Sandwich and common terns.*

# Size matters: two new species of pseudoscorpion discovered on Ascension

Pseudoscorpions are arachnids, related to spiders and their relatives – including true scorpions of course – and are typically small species a couple of millimetres long. On the remote island of Ascension, five pseudoscorpions were known to be endemic, only four having official names including *Garypus titanius* the world's largest species. A recent study by Sherwood *et al.* (2024) has completed a taxonomic revision of Ascension's pseudoscorpions, funded by the DPLUS135 grant: *From pseudoscorpions to crickets: securing Ascension Island's unique invertebrates*, funded by the Darwin Plus Initiative of United Kingdom Government, and administered by Ascension Island Government, supported by the Species Recovery Trust.

The study revealed that the fifth pseudoscorpion could be classified as a new species of *Neocheiridium*, amongst the smallest pseudoscorpions in the world, less than a millimetre in size! It was described as *Neocheiridium ashmoleorum* in honour of Philip and Myrtle Ashmole, the world-famous invertebrate ecologists and conservationists who dedicated many years to research on Ascension and neighbouring Saint Helena. The four other previously known species were able to be studied, and it was noted that more than half of the unique pseudoscorpion species on Ascension Island are endemic to the islet of Boatswain Bird Island, a tiny habitat that is important for sea birds (the pseudoscorpions live in the guano). The biggest surprise, however, was discovery, on the mainland of Ascension, of a sixth species which lives under pebbles on the coastline. This species was also described as new to science: *Garypus ellickae*, named after Jacqui Ellick, a Saint Helenian conservationist who spent years on Ascension working to save its fauna and flora. As its genus suggests, it is closely related to the world's largest species *G. titanius* but is a little smaller, nonetheless it still has the accolade of being amongst the largest!

With the island hosting 100% endemic pseudoscorpions, it is critically important that they and their habitat be conserved. Like other endemic species on Ascension, they face risks from invasive species. The Ascension Island Government Conservation directorate is leading on the critical work to conserve flora and fauna, and their habitats, on the island. This has recently involved



*Garypus ellickae* (top) and *G. titanius* (bottom) Photo: Danni Sherwood

the creation of new protected areas specifically to conserve endemic species.

## Citation:

Sherwood, D., Grignet, V., Harvey, M.S., Sharp, A., Wilkins, V., Ashmole, M. & Ashmole, P. (2024) David and Goliath: on the pseudoscorpions of Ascension Island, including the world's largest, *Garypus titanius* Beier, 1961, and a new, minute, *Neocheiridium* Beier, 1932 (Arachnida: Pseudoscorpiones). *Natura Somogyiensis* 42: 131–150.

## Link:

[https://researchgate.net/publication/380297519\\_David\\_and\\_Goliath\\_on\\_the\\_pseudoscorpions\\_of\\_Ascension\\_Island\\_including\\_the\\_world's\\_largest\\_Garypus\\_titanius\\_Beier\\_1961\\_and\\_a\\_new\\_minute\\_Neocheiridium\\_Beier\\_1932\\_Arachnida\\_Pseudoscorpiones](https://researchgate.net/publication/380297519_David_and_Goliath_on_the_pseudoscorpions_of_Ascension_Island_including_the_world's_largest_Garypus_titanius_Beier_1961_and_a_new_minute_Neocheiridium_Beier_1932_Arachnida_Pseudoscorpiones)



*Garypus ellickae* by Adam Sharp

## Montserrat EcoPlay

Donations to fund the EcoPlay building to provide a base for environmental and other activities for young people in Montserrat are going well but more are needed. UKOTCF continues to assist by providing a route for donations. Whilst donations from Montserrat can be paid directly to MNT, this is difficult for payments from overseas. Accordingly these can be made via UKOTCF's website, where contributions can still be received via PayPal at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/eco-play-montserrat/>.



# Turks and Caicos Reef Fund – celebrating some achievements

The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund have been in the forefront of monitoring, documenting and treating Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) since early 2020. As a non-governmental organisation, its work relies on grants, sponsorship and donations. With a grant from the John Ellerman Foundation and support from other sponsors, TCRF established an *ex-situ* gene banking programme in 2022. This was established to preserve the genetic diversity of the most threatened coral species. This is important, not just because of the devastating effect of SCTLD, but also due to loss of corals from severe coral bleaching events caused by increased sea temperatures as a result of global warming. This year, NOAA (US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has declared the onset of the 4th global mass bleaching event, underscoring the profound impact of warming oceans on coral reefs worldwide. Coral bleaching, a phenomenon exacerbated by rising sea temperatures, poses a significant threat to the health and vitality of marine ecosystems globally.

After some initial problems, TCRF now has a thriving stable *ex-situ* system, which houses coral fragments rescued from development. The facility, at South Bank Marina, is supported by Live South Bank and the developer Windward TCI. As well as an important

research facility, it is a popular visitor destination, also hosting school visits. A recent addition to the bio bank was a pillar coral. These incredible corals are facing a serious threat from SCTLD as well as from climate-change-induced thermal bleaching. Pillars are critically endangered on the IUCN Red List.

TCRF has set up also *in-situ* coral nurseries, and is using in-water shading techniques to mitigate against coral bleaching.

The expertise of the Executive Director of TCRF, Alizee Zimmerman, is recognised internationally. Alizee is frequently asked to give presentations at international workshops and conferences. Most recently, she attended the AGGRA (Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment) MPACONnect/NOAA Workshop in Florida in June on Coral Rescue Guidance, with information on the Coral Research & Development Accelerator Platform (CORDAP).



Above: the research facility. All photos: Turks & Caicos Reef Fund



Above and below: school children enthused at the facility



Bleached corals

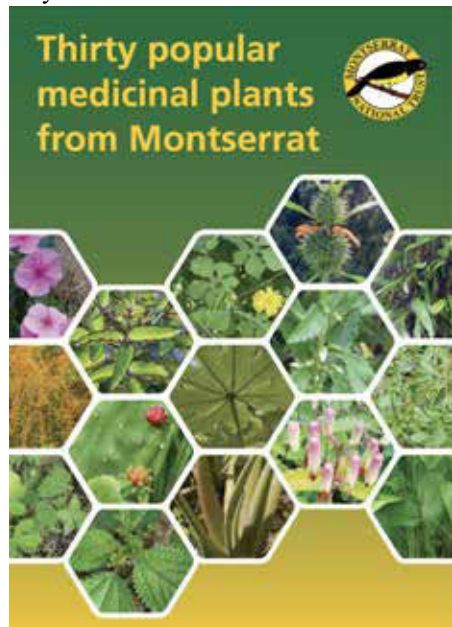


In-situ coral nursery



# Updates on DPLUS192: Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development

It has been a very busy first year for the DPLUS192 team. We have made rapid progress in the development of many of the outputs for the project. During a busy and successful two-week trip in February, Montserrat National Trust launched their new medicinal plant booklet: "30 popular medicinal plants from Montserrat" (below). This booklet is a celebration of the work of the Montserrat National Trust team and the contributors. The booklet gives information on common medicinal plants and how they are used on island.



Over the last six months, the team has also developed nine management options for supporting biodiversity, sustainability and wellbeing. These options were developed based on consultations with Montserratians about what they feel are important things to do for people and biodiversity on Montserrat. We also worked with the Species Recovery Trust to come up with a list of important

plants for pollinators, and other experts on Montserrat to create a guide to how to establish each option. Now we have the options, we will start to trial them at five sites around Montserrat. During the February 2024 trip, the Montserrat National Trust identified a trial site, the National Museum of Montserrat. The Montserrat National Trust is now working to secure a further four sites. As well as management options, we also included recommendations on how to evaluate the success of the options. The Museum will host the Toolkit option: *Grow a tea bush garden*. This option gives recommendations of the plants to grow and how success can be monitored. As part of the monitoring of success for biodiversity, we will use the adapted butterfly monitoring application *Butterfly Monitoring Scheme*. This biodiversity evaluation work is being led by Marc Botham of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

Other celebrations of the project include a draft infographic (right) of an idealised garden, based on the inspirational work of Elvis Gerald, Advisor in the Department of Agriculture and *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* Project Officer. The infographic (on which the project team worked with botanical artist Lizzie Harper and the Field Studies Council on the illustrations and design) shows all the different plants that can be grown on Montserrat to support people for food and wellbeing as well as supporting biodiversity. Meise Botanic Garden has been busy with Chris Sealys at the Montserrat National Trust and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew to repatriate almost 400 herbarium specimens, originally from Montserrat but rescued from Plymouth following the devastating volcano. The Montserrat National Trust now hosts a herbarium cabinet which will enable Montserrat to support researchers in learning more about the plant species on Montserrat. Meise Botanic Garden is visiting the Montserrat team in

June and July to develop further the collection and discuss data management and collection curation.

Finally, we are delighted to update on the success of the Montserrat National Trust in securing a Darwin Local Grant for a Youth Coordinator project. This work will support the DPLUS192 option of developing the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance

**YUNGA Montserrat**

Formed in 2009, the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) is a partnership between United Nations agencies, civil society organisations and other entities that work with children and young people. YUNGA acts as a gateway for children and youth from around the world to participate in the activities and initiatives of the United Nations. YUNGA provides children and young people with opportunities to have a greater role in society, raise awareness of environmental and social issues and influence positive behaviour changes.

YUNGA Montserrat is a partnership lead by the Montserrat National Trust between organisations across the island which organise environmental events and/or initiatives. This includes the college, schools and youth groups. They enable young people on Montserrat to enjoy, learn and care for the natural environment.

**The YUNGA Badges & the Sustainable Development Goals**

YUNGA has developed a series of badges based on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Young people complete these badges and think about how they can change their behaviour for the better. On Montserrat events and initiatives are being developed in order to work towards the YUNGA Biodiversity badge.

The YUNGA Montserrat Biodiversity badge covers SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land.

**How to get a YUNGA Biodiversity Badge?**

There is no time limit for completing the badge. We hope that you enjoy attending environmental events on the island of Montserrat.

Young children in primary or infant school can complete this badge with the help of an adult.

SIGN UP AS AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BY CLICKING BADGE OR CONTACT Montserrat National Trust at [info@montserratnationaltrust.mt](mailto:info@montserratnationaltrust.mt)

badges (below). The aim of these badges are to help young people engage with biodiversity and wellbeing on Montserrat.

So in summary, it has been a hugely rewarding first year and we are really looking forward to working on more outputs for the rest of 2024.

## MONTSEERRAT GARDEN DESIGN

This design is modelled on a real back-yard garden on Montserrat. It is possible to create everything you need to live a happy and healthy life. \* means good for pollinators

**WOODY PLANTS**  
A variety of shrubs and small trees can create shade, food and medicines and lessen storm damage

- 1 Lemon
- 2 Bayleaf\*
- 3 Pomegranate\*
- 4 Gumbark
- 5 Papaya
- 6 Rainfall bush
- 7 Dwarf banana
- 8 Banana
- 9 Barbados cherry
- 10 Sugar cane
- 11 Mulberry
- 12 Plantain
- 13 Paracetamol bush
- 14 Thyme\*
- 15 Marjoram\*
- 16 Broadleaf mint
- 17 Mint
- 18 Rosemary\*
- 19 Basil
- 20 Tomato
- 21 Pepper
- 22 Lettuce
- 23 Tridax daisy\*
- 24 Sweet potato
- 25 Melon
- 26 Squash
- 27 Ylang ylang\*
- 28 Avocado\*
- 29 Dragon fruit\*
- 30 Noni\*
- 31 Pumpkin
- 32 Spring onion
- 33 Marigold\*
- 34 Parsley
- 35 Coriander
- 36 Sorrel
- 37 Ginger
- 38 Compost heap
- 39 Mounds of soil
- 40 Water butt
- 41 Irrigation

**COMPANION PLANTS**  
This enables different plants to benefit from being planted with another e.g. maximising space, managing pests and improving success

**OPEN AREA**  
Leave space for seasonal growth, like sorrel for Christmas

**VEGETABLE PLOT**  
Mulch the soil below each plant and don't plant families together as they have the same pests

**GARDEN CARE**  
The garden can thrive with some simple measures e.g. goats will be deterred by certain plants or a prickly hedge, such as the sweet lime

Created for the DPLUS192 Biodiversity and Well-being Toolkit project (2024 v1). Design by MNT, UKOTCF & MAHE. Illustrations by Lizzie Harper. Layout by Field Studies Council.

Logos: MNT, UKOTCF & MAHE, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Field Studies Council.



# Habitat restoration at Great and Little Tobago National Parks, BVI

Great and Little Tobago Islands are uninhabited National Park Islands internationally recognised as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and a Tropical Important Plant Area (Great Tobago only). Their diverse and endemic floral habitats are highly threatened by feral goat grazing and competition from invasive non-native plants.



*Feral goat on Great Tobago*

Great Tobago has been designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International. It contains the Caribbean's third largest population of nesting seabirds. It is the only nesting site in the BVI for magnificent frigatebirds. Other nesting species include white-tailed tropicbirds, roseate terns, brown pelicans, laughing gulls, and brown boobies.



*Above: frigate birds in the air; below: frigate bird colony*



*Tropic bird on nest*

Feral goats are a major problem as they eat all the vegetation, preventing regeneration of trees and limiting the nesting habitat of the frigatebirds.



*Sparse vegetation due to the presence of feral goats*

An EU BEST-funded goat eradication in 2013-2015 removed over 700 goats and reduced the population to c.40 via three hunting trips by specialists from DEFRA's Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA). One local NPTVI staff member was trained to finish off the eradication post-project, but their solo capacity, and the strict regulatory requirement to always have a Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF) Officer present meant insufficient hunting days were achieved before the next breeding season. NPTVI then aimed to complete the eradication with funding from DPLUS 043 (2016-18) but this was interrupted by the category 5 Hurricane Irma in 2017, which destroyed much of NPTVI's equipment and infrastructure. The goat population subsequently recovered to an estimated 700+ individuals.

A 3-year project started in April 2023 (DPLUS196) with the objective to remove all the feral goats and emergent invasive plants from both islands, enabling their ecosystems to recover, develop local plant eradication capacity and thus increase their climate resilience. The project is led by Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), with partners Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew), Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF), Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA), National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI). Nutshell Productions, an independent film producer, will lead on production of pre-eradication baseline film footage in order to document the islands' recovery.

As well as the feral goats, at least four non-native invasive plant species are competing with native endemic flora on Great Tobago. Removing the goats, and thus the grazing pressure, could allow these non-native invasive plants to flourish. Lessons learnt from





Above: Tom Heller from RBG Kew discusses soil collection methods with NPTVI Terrestrial Wardens Jahkoy Gordon, Simeon Cabral and Senior Warden Keith Grant. Behind is a fallen tree, a remnant from hurricane Irma.



Left: Senior Warden Keith Grant collects a soil sample that will be sent to Kew for seedbank analysis.

Terrestrial Warden Jahkoy Gordon learning safe chainsaw techniques from Indigena's Mike Gibbs.



the previous attempts make project partners confident that the goats can be eradicated this time, and with the removal of non-native invasive plants, the objective of habitat restoration will be achieved.

An important part of the habitat restoration is to remove non-native plants so that when the grazing pressure of the goats is removed, these invasives do not take over.



A new sign on Great Tobago highlights the importance of the island for breeding frigate birds, and explains why viewing is only permitted from the sea.

NPTVI Wardens have received chainsaw training under the supervision of Mike Gibbs and Brad Myer of Indigena Biosecurity International.

RBG Kew and the team from NPTVI have recently been carrying out intensive field work. Steep slopes, high temperatures and lots of cacti make fieldwork at this park very hard work. The work has included surveying vegetation plots, monitoring for invasive plants, and collecting soil samples for seed analysis. The latter is

important as it might indicate what plants will regenerate when the goats have been eradicated.

This ambitious project, with many partners, has made an impressive start.

## Update on Darwin Plus Hungry Humpbacks South Georgia 2023/24 Field Season

Jen Jackson, Stephanie Martin, Amy Kennedy, Fredrick Christiansen, Nico Lewin, Joanna Kershaw, Henry Slessor, Penny Clarke, Bob Pratt, AJ Houston and Louie Day

This summer an international team of researchers worked on the BAS-led research project *Hungry Humpbacks: Measuring seasonal foraging intensity at South Georgia*. The project was supported through matched funding by South Georgia Heritage Trust, Friends of South Georgia Island, and a Darwin Plus grant for UK Overseas Territories.

Whales are the largest krill predators in South Georgia (SG), yet their impacts on krill stocks are poorly understood. Recent whale surveys have revealed high summer abundance and extended

use of SG waters into winter, which coincides with use by a krill fishery. To better understand how whales impact krill, this project measures how whale foraging intensity varies across the feeding season in SG. This is achieved using drones to measure body conditions and satellite tracking of diving rates to measure season-specific krill consumption.

The summer season was split into two survey efforts based at King Edward Point (KEP). From mid-November 2023 until mid-January, a drone pilot, Nico Lewin, and an assistant, Penny







*Above: Hungry Humpbacks Team;*

*Below: Nico Lewin carries equipment through the valley between Maiviken Hut and Maiviken Bay. Photo Penny Clarke*



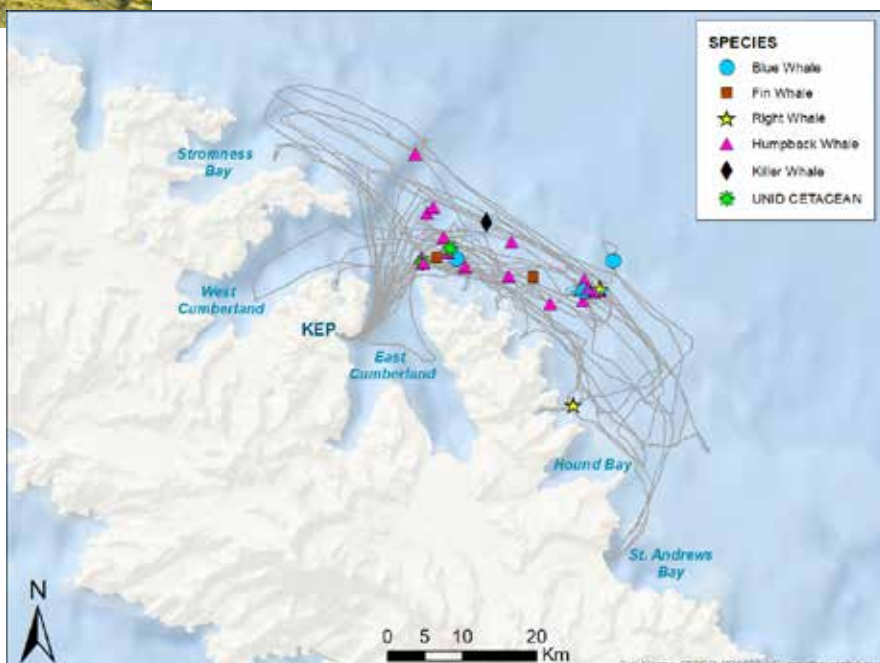
Clarke, surveyed from the cliffs off Sappho Point and used the Maiviken Hut for overnight stays on several occasions. This involved 14 km round-trip hikes carrying heavy equipment in challenging weather conditions. Despite equipment failures, they recorded images of one humpback whale out of the four animals they observed.

The six-person boat-based team arrived at KEP in mid-January with five scientists and one dedicated jet boat driver who had overwintered in previous seasons. The two KEP boaties greatly supported the team when conducting surveys from Stromness to St Andrews using the station's jet boats and the RIBS (rigid inflatable boats) out to five nautical miles. Most whales were sighted in January and February before the breakup of iceberg D-30A to the north, which brought large tabular icebergs close to shore in the team's survey area.

The team had a very busy season! Over 2,200 km of visual transect data were conducted, and 34

cetacean sightings were recorded during the field season. Drone images and identification photos were collected from humpback whales, southern right whales, Antarctic blue whales, fin whales, and Antarctic killer whales. Biopsy samples for genetic, hormone, and isotype analysis were collected from humpback whales, southern right whales, and an Antarctic blue whale. A particular highlight was 12<sup>th</sup> February, when the team observed a southern right whale mum and calf pair plus an Antarctic blue whale mum and calf pair within two miles of each other!

The main focus species for the season consisted of humpback whales, but the swell conditions were too rough to attempt any satellite tagging when humpback whales were in the area. The team successfully tagged a southern right whale (named "Disco" after Discovery House, where the team stayed at KEP) on 9<sup>th</sup> March. The tag continues to transmit, and Disco's movement can be followed at this website: <https://www.bas.ac.uk/project/south-georgia-right-whale-project/>. You can see more highlights on their



*Boat team survey tracks and whale sightings*





Photo: Fredrik Christiansen



Photo: Fredrik Christiansen



Photo: Fredrik Christiansen

Drone images of a humpback whale, southern right whale mother and calf, and Antarctic blue whale mother and calf

Instagram page: @hungry humpbacks.

Now that the South Georgia fieldwork has finished, the team is back at BAS in Cambridge busy analysing all the data. An ambitious season contributed to the overall project aim of

obtaining scientific evidence to improve the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Island's capability to sustainably manage its krill fishery by incorporating the level of impact that whales, the largest krill predators, have on the fishery.

## St Helena school-pupils enthuse on invertebrates

**Sheena Benjamin, St Helena National Trust**

St Helena is a small British island (47 square miles) in the South Atlantic Ocean with a population of approximately 4,500 people. The island hosts over 420 endemic terrestrial invertebrate species, making it a location of immense global importance.

Many of these endemic species are under threat from invasive alien invertebrate species. The St Helena National Trust (Trust) facilitates endemic invertebrate recovery and re-establishment of their associated ecosystem functions. This is done by testing and establishing invasive invertebrate control methods, with the focus on three of St Helena's most invasive species, the common wasp *Vespula vulgaris*, big-headed ant *Pheidole megacephala* and the springbok mantis *Miomantis caffra*.

Led by the Trust with a team of four local staff, supported by international partners, the project increased local capacity and knowledge. Public engagement is a big part of any project on a small island. Under this project, activities have included information stalls, workshops and citizen-science programmes, achieving community buy-in.

How do we ensure that, on completion of the project, the opportunity is still there to learn about the project?

As a UKOT, St Helena follows the UK National Curriculum. However, many of the examples or case studies that are covered are UK-based. The island's Education Directorate and their schools, fully supported by the Trust's various programmes, are



Joint session with biosecurity team



Bug hunt in public gardens





*Left: Christy Jo running session at Trust.*

*Right: Identification work using microscope*



working towards incorporating more local and outdoor learning Science, Geography and Environmental Education, Art and more!

The citizen-science invasive invertebrate pack continues to build on the learning in the local invertebrate work. It provides support through an array of ideas from background information, lesson-plans, worksheets, resources and practical lessons and games. The activities are suitable to slot into current lessons and be delivered by the class teacher, with sessions delivered as interactive class-based learning or outdoor learning.

On St Helena, from a young age, children are introduced to the term endemic and are aware of both animal and plant examples. Previously, the focus was predominately on the island endemics. By adding native and invasive species and becoming more familiar with what species fall into these groups, this pack has provided a more balanced look at what is in St Helena's ecosystems.

For bugs, this meant that our children knew about the spiky yellow woodlouse, golden sail spider, blushing snail and many more. However, they were unable to name any pest or 'villains' in the bug world and what impact they would have on the bug 'heroes'. This project and citizen-science programme filled that gap.

Although the citizen-science programme is aimed at schools or educational events, they have been utilised by youth groups such as Girl Guides and the Church Brigade who have both used the pack to support their badge work. New to many of the leaders, the information bits proved very helpful.

With three primary schools with about 300 pupils, and one secondary school with just over 200 students, the Trust has a good working relationship with the schools and are able to work closely with all four schools. Ensuring that, whether it was through an assembly or class lesson, we were able to reach every primary school-child during the roll-out of this pack.

Invertebrates comprised an area on which teaching staff needed support. The Trust team led many sessions, then team-taught



where needed, with a view to teachers then being able to run sessions independently. Much of the time needed was to build confidence to use the material.

Teachers have been very gratefully for the support, especially with bug hunts and identification; practical activities have made participants able to identify bugs on their door-step

*Left: School session in the field. Right: Trust session using booklet.*

and to categorise them as endemic, native or invasive. Once the Trust had completed an activity on wasp-traps, school monitors were very eager to check, record and feedback their findings.

We also looked at other barriers to staff delivering sessions; these included lack of pooters, containers and identification sources. We were able to support this. This has seen the number of sessions that are being delivered in school increase, in turn building staff confidence.

Well received was a small bug specimen collection for each school. Children are able to observe up-close a bee and a common wasp – beginning to see the difference and sort animals into groups, or to see the actual size.

In all, the programme was very adaptable, with a wide age-range of children using the material, from Early Years making wasps to A-level Biology students learning and researching about ants. There have been some incredible pieces of work and displays from this.

For the children who were really interested, the team started a Young Entomologist Club or Bug Club for the school holidays. This is the second year of bug club and these budding entomologists remain dedicated, even becoming biosecurity officers for a day during one of their sessions.

With continued support and guidance, we hope to see continued use and participation of this citizen-science programme.



*School session on wasps*





# Synergy between UKOTCF member organisations

In November, Leigh Morris, CEO of Manx Wildlife Trust (and UKOTCF Council member) visited Gibraltar. Here, he reports on his visit. His blog can be read also at <https://leigh3666.wordpress.com/2023/12/10/ux-ui-in-gibraltar/>.



*Gibraltar from the air*

At the end of November, I spent a week in the UK Overseas Territory (UKOT) of Gibraltar, as a guest of one of Manx Wildlife Trust's (MWT) corporate partners [BetVictor Group](#) (BV). The trip was organized by Kim Alcantara, Director of Legal at BV, and their champion of Environmental Social Governance (ESG).



*Views of Gibraltar*



BV employs c.600 people at their office at the [World Trade Centre](#)

in Gibraltar (that has a TT motorbike ridden by John McGuinness, in their reception!), with their sister company Mayfly having an office in the Isle of Man (IOM). I've learnt that BV are one of many companies who have offices in the IOM and other Crown Dependencies and/or UKOTs. One of the Trustees of MWT, Magnus Grinneback, also sits on the Boards of BV and Mayfly, and Magnus connected me to Kim, who has recently joined the board of MWT's trading arm, Wildlife Limited (WLL).



*Above: Kim Alcantara with author. Below: Motorbike*



I had previously pitched an idea to Kim about how their staff could help MWT, and perhaps more widely The Wildlife Trusts (TWT), and other environmental organizations. In short, on-line gaming companies employ many people who are highly skilled at digital branding, marketing, and income generation online, and my ambition is that MWT harness this expertise to deliver a transformational change to our digital journey to benefit conservation. Kim bounced the idea off their BV user experience/user interface (UX/UI) team, who were immediately enthusiastic and wanted to take up the challenge. They saw this as a great way to deliver ESG/volunteering and at the same time, develop their teamwork and wider transferable digital skills. Kim found some budget to fund my trip and we set the dates for the end of November.



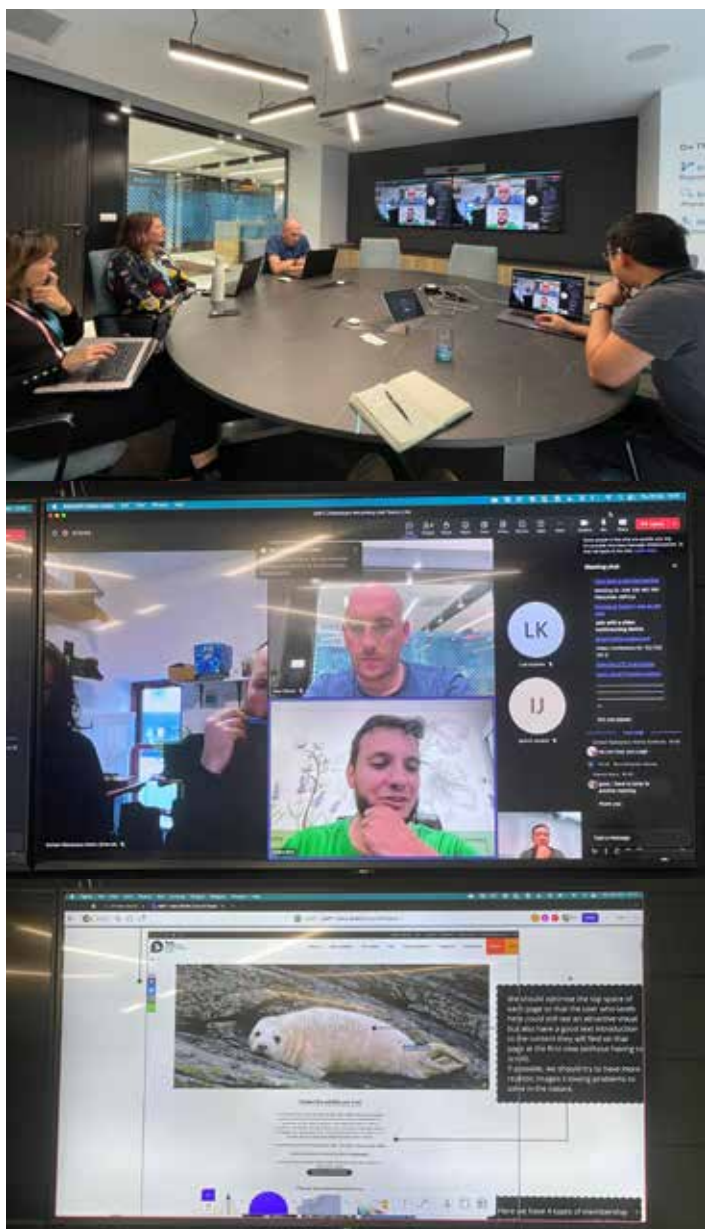
I'd had some interactions with the BV team in the weeks leading up to my visit and sent them an outline scope of how I thought they may wish to be involved. On my first day in Gibraltar, we met collectively (some in person and others joining via Zoom from Spain and Ukraine) so I could hear their initial thoughts and ideas, and we agreed a plan of action for the week.

We all reconvened at the end of the week, this time joined on Zoom also by Graham and Ali from MWT, who have oversight of our MWT digital communications. What was immediately apparent was the amount of work that the BV team had carried out, including a detailed analysis of the MWT website, benchmarking against similar charities, the creation of three digital personas to test the digital journey, and making clear recommendations on how MWT could drive more traffic to, and actions on, our website. I had high hopes for what the UX/UI team could deliver, and they went far beyond my expectations. Delightfully, their team are keen to stay involved and I'm aiming that this becomes a fantastic example of how corporate volunteering can make a huge positive difference, by utilizing their core work skills to deliver significant benefits for both the charity and conservation. The BV team each get one day a year that they can volunteer for a charity, but I discovered that most of the staff don't currently use their day.



Beyond my number-one goal of engaging with the BV UX/UI team, I had a useful and interesting week in Gibraltar. Kim was keen that my visit stimulated more enthusiasm from the whole BV team towards ESG, the Gibraltar natural environment and about using their volunteer time to help. To this aim I did two lunchtime talks to some of their team about conservation in the IOM and other UKOTs, and both Kim and I were delighted at the interaction from the team. What was particularly nice was when I put up a slide showing the Mayfly team volunteering with MWT on the Calf of Man, one of the ladies on my slide was in my audience and she proceeded to give a better advert for volunteering with MWT than I ever could!

*Below and top right: Bet Victor UX/UI*



*Above and below: Bet Victor Lunchtime talk*





Gibraltarian Dr Keith Bensusan is a colleague on the [Council of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum \(UKOTCF\)](#) and he chairs the UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group. Keith has a key role in conservation in Gibraltar, as the Director of the [Alameda Botanical Garden](#), two other amenity gardens and a team with oversight of the management of Gibraltar's macaques and yellow-legged gulls.

I'd met Keith several times in Zoom meetings, but this was the first time face-to-face, and he was an excellent host. Following him taking me on an orientation tour on my first morning, I was given a tour of the botanic garden and small zoo within it. This reinforced my opinion that visitor attractions that showcase both plants and animals (i.e. biodiversity) have an important role. It's a botanic garden that is an integral part of Gibraltar, and engagement with people is one of their key goals. Particularly good to see were the outdoor theatre and the brand-new children's garden that is set to open soon.

*Below, next column and next page: Botanic Gardens & Zoo*



Keith was keen to get my opinion about the botanic garden nursery, including their resources and staffing. We discussed the need for a clear collections policy, nursery production list, and appropriate staff roles to deliver both well. I enjoyed the conversation, and





*Below: Botanic Gardens Nursery*



hope that our chat helped, and look forward to commenting on the draft documents Keith is going to send. It was great to join the latest UKOTCF Council meeting online, sat side by side with Keith in his office.

*UKOTCF Council meeting*



One evening Keith led me on a walk up the Mediterranean Steps to the summit of the Rock (the steep route!). Fantastic views, lots of close encounters with some of the c.200 macaques living there, and a great insight on the local flora and fauna.

*Below and next page: Walk up The Rock*







I was keen to meet [John Cortés](#), the [Minister of the Environment](#), and a past member of the UKOTCF Council, who I'd heard speak at conferences, but never met. Keith arranged for me to join him and the Government vet (Mark Pizarro) for their weekly meeting. Topics on the agenda were the macaques and domestic dog management. Interesting to hear how the Gibraltar government manage the macaque population with contraceptives, ensuring that there is a sustainable and healthy population of this iconic Gibraltar species, but preventing the population growing to a point where they cause nuisance within the town. Also, interesting to learn that the Gibraltar government issues dog licences, holds a DNA registry for all pet dogs, and has a team that collects dog poo samples, does DNA analysis, and is able to issue fines to any dog owners who don't clean up after their pets.

Keith invited me to join him and [Dr Rhian Guillem](#) (an entomologist based at the Alameda Botanic Garden) at 6am one morning to "collect seagull poo from the airport runway before the days flights commenced". I was intrigued! We were driven onto the runway by a member of RAF personnel (Gibraltar airport is managed by the RAF), and by means of torchlight and the car headlights, we spent



Above: Professor John Cortés (centre right), colleagues and the author  
Below: Macaque



Below: Dr Rhian Guillem



the next 1-2 hours on the runway collecting samples of dropping and regurgitated pellets from Yellow-Legged Gulls, which roost in large numbers on the tarmac. The samples are being sent to researchers in Spain to analyse them for microplastic, as part of a wider southern Spanish peninsula project.

Another business that has offices in both Gibraltar and the Isle of Man is Deloitte, and I was pleased to accompany Kim to meet Arianna Costa, a Senior Manager at [Deloitte Gibraltar](#), and Catherine Walsh, the Energy Officer for the Department of



*Collecting sea gull poo*



the Environment, Gibraltar Government. Great conversation, reinforcing in me once again the tremendous opportunity the environmental sector has currently to work positively with corporate businesses across the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies. It was particularly interesting to speak to Catherine about environmental education in schools, as Catherine is part of a working group that is looking to embed environmental issues within the Gibraltar curriculum, as is the direction of travel in the IOM that is being developed by MWT's Education Officer, Beth Penhallurick. Following my trip to Montserrat for UKOTCF earlier in 2023, MWT is now looking to set up a link between the Montserrat Secondary School and one of the schools in the IOM, and, after speaking to Catherine, it is possible that we might also link to Gibraltar. Maybe the start of a UKOTCF school/youth forum linkage across all the territories?!



*Deloitte Meeting*

Although it isn't quite an island, Gibraltar's history and culture are intrinsically linked to the marine environment that (almost) surrounds it. The [University of Gibraltar](#) was founded in 2015 and has an [MSc programme in Marine & Environmental Science and Climate Change](#), coordinated by [Dr Awantha Dissanayake](#), which is already recruiting students from around the world. I'd previously met Awantha on-line to discuss seagrass restoration, and was delighted to be invited by him to do a talk for the MSc students' course about the IOM, UKOTCF and other territories that I've lived and worked in. This proved to be very enjoyable with lots of questions and interest, and I met up with two of the students later in the week to be quizzed some more.



*Above and top of next page: University talk*





Kim introduced me to Lewis Stagnetto, who set up the marine conservation NGO, [The Nautilus Project](#) (TNP), in Gibraltar in 2016. Another enjoyable and interesting meeting, as Lewis gave me his thoughts on the key marine issues for Gibraltar, including the invasive algae (*Rugulopteryx okamurae*) which is, according to Lewis, “everywhere underwater now” and is outcompeting local biodiversity, the oil pollution from the ships, and the raw untreated sewage that is all deposited into the sea as a conservation issue. In addition to Lewis’ post-graduate research into plankton, TNP carries out a great deal of marine education in the Gibraltar schools, and it might be possible to link some of the MSc students to their work.

*The Nautilus Project*



I enjoy diving in new places, and on my last full day in Gibraltar, I joined the local operator [Dive Charters](#), for two shore dives on the wrecks that have been sunk in Camps Bay to create an artificial reef. I was impressed at the marine life, including fan corals, octopuses and nudibranchs, but disappointed to see the large amount of *Rugulopteryx okamurae* present. It’s certainly a case of living with these algae now, rather than trying to eradicate

it. Was good to buddy up with Vivienne, one of the MSc Marine students, who certainly has a good eye for spotting nudibranchs!

*Below and next page: Scuba Diving*



It’s always interesting to experience a new culture, particularly in the UK territories, which in Gibraltar is influenced heavily by Spain. The recent census showed there are c.38,000 people living in Gibraltar, but every day this number increases hugely by 10-17,000 (estimates vary) people who travel into Gibraltar from





Spain to work. Accommodation is at a premium in Gibraltar, and even if you can find a place, typically it is 3/4 times more expensive to live in Gibraltar than Spain. There isn't much space in Gibraltar for development, and so the options are to build upwards, and

outwards into the sea. The majority who commute in from Spain drive to the border, park up and then cross into Gibraltar for the day. Among these commuters there are a great many who have an electric scooter and use that for the last part of the journey. There are certainly lots of electric scooters in Gibraltar!

*Commuting*



It was an enjoyable and useful trip. The work with BV is exciting and will hopefully have a significant positive impact for MWT (and possibly even more widely). It's always interesting to visit a new UKOT and learn something about their environmental and conservation issues, and this improves my wider understanding of the UK territories and therefore my ability to contribute usefully as a member of the UKOTCF Council. This time in particular there were some extremely good comparisons to be made with, and potential learning for, the IOM and MWT.

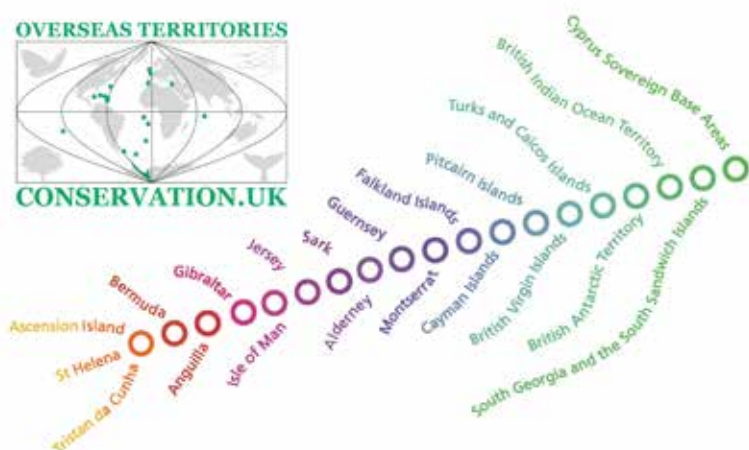
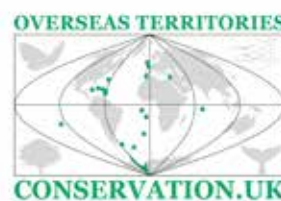
*Gibraltar views*





# Council of Environment Ministers (or equivalents) of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies: 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, Wednesday 15th May 2024

Zoom hosting by:  
UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum  
(UKOTCF)



## Eighth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting, 15th May 2024

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.

On the next page is the image of those participants present when the "group photo" was assembled, with their names below on this page and the next.

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

On the next page, some of the participants; From left to right, by rows from the top:

**Hon. Prof. John Cortés**, Minister for Education, the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change, Heritage, Technical Services and Transport, Gibraltar

**Dr Mike Pienkowski**, Chairman, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (Secretariat)

**Hon. Clare Barber**, Minister of Environment, Food and Agriculture, Isle of Man

**Conseiller Dr Carol Cragoe**, Chief Pleas and La Société Sercquaise, Sark

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

**Ms Tracy Knight**, Head of Turks and Caicos Islands Government London Office

**Mr Mike Jervois**, Head of Environment, Falkland Islands

**Mr Glyn Mason**, Waste and Recycling Officer, States of Alderney

**Ms Chanelle Petty Barrett**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Sustainability, Innovation and the Environment, Anguilla

**Mrs Catherine Wensink**, Executive Director, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (Secretariat)

**Hon. Christine Scipio**, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources, St Helena, and colleagues

**Mrs Kedell Worboys**, St Helena UK Representative

**Mr Jim Robinson**, Director Natural Environment, States of Guernsey

**Ms Carencia Rouse**, Director of Environment, Anguilla

**Mr Guy Dumas**, Gibraltar UK Representative

**Ms Jodey Peyton**, Conservation Officer, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (Secretariat)

**Anguilla UK Office**

**Hon. Josephine Connolly**, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Heritage, Maritime & Gaming, Turks and Caicos Islands, and colleagues

**Hon. Minister Katherine Ebanks-Wilks**, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Cayman Islands

**Ms Angela Burnett**, Environmental Officer, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, [British] Virgin Islands

**Dr Tasha Ebanks Garcia**, Cayman Islands Government Representative to the UK

**Dr Ken Milne**, Director of Environment, and **Dr Richard Selman**, Head of Ecosystems, Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture, Isle of Man

**Mr Simon Renton**, Environmental Protection Unit Manager, Department of Environment Food & Agriculture, Isle of Man

**Ms Tessa Smith**, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change [British] Virgin Islands

**Ms Angela Horton**, [British] Virgin Islands UK Office

**Ms Melissa Meade**, Chief Natural Resources Officer, Anguilla

**Hon. Rebecca Pow MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary, Defra

**Ms Ness Latham**, Devolution Team, Defra

**Ms Dora Hannyngton**, Biodiversity in the OTs team, Defra

**Ms Jasmine Parkinson**, Biodiversity in the OTs team Defra

**Ms Becca Jeffree**, Plastics Pollution, Defra

**Ms Suzanne Stafford**, Disposable Vapes, Defra

**Mr Yegor Ryazanov**, Devolution team, Defra

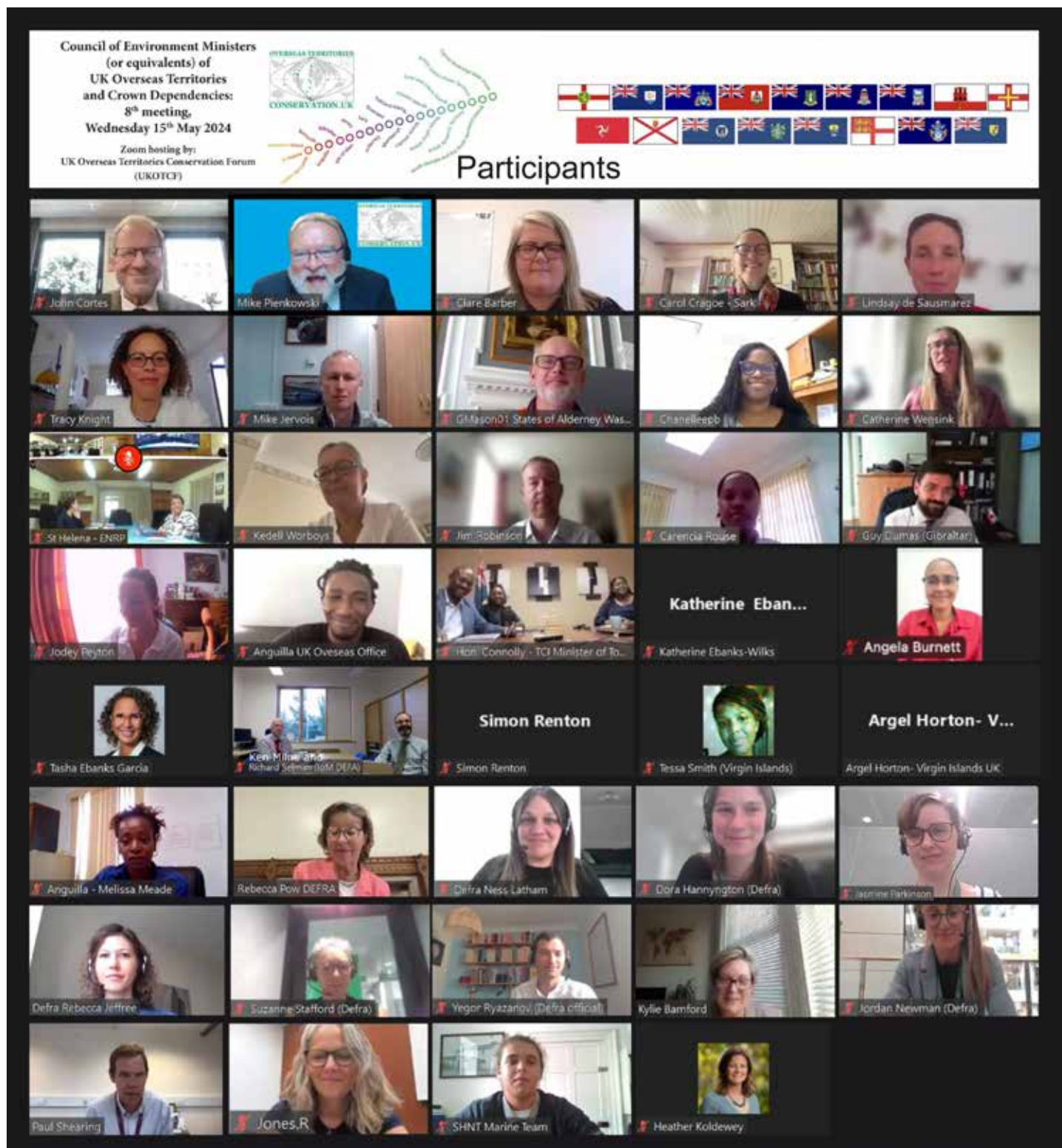
**Ms Kylie Bamford**, Head of Marine Conservation, FCDO

**Ms Jordan Newman**, Biodiversity in the OTs team, Defra

**Professor Paul Shearing**, Principal Investigator on the Faraday Institution's SafeBatt project

[continued on next page]





## **Eighth UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Environment Ministers' Council Meeting, 15 May 2024 (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.

We welcomed the participation of UK Defra Minister Rebecca Pow MP with her officials, updating on the pleasing progress on the international treaty on plastics, and the progress both in UK and the UKOTs and CDs towards restriction of single-use plastics and single-use vapes, while noting also the problems in affording

recycling in small territories.

We received the update we had requested following the presentations on the work on plastic waste coordinated by Ascension Island Government, St Helena National Trust, St Helena Government and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) which we received at our previous meeting. Awareness is clearly important and educational material for children has been supplied, and brainstorming with retailers on St Helena has proven very constructive in terms of ideas for replacement, re-use and recycling. Research in British Indian Ocean Territory has



identified practical approaches to concentrating effort in time and space to make it most effective on turtle nesting, and in recycling locally mixed types and erosional states of plastic waste to produce a plastic replacement for plywood – this approach being of great interest to several of our territories.

We heard from Professor Paul Shearing, Principal Investigator on the Faraday Institute's SafeBatt project, on the safety of Lithium-ion batteries, and noted the importance, to both the environment and health, of separating such batteries from general waste, especially if the latter is to be incinerated.

We welcomed an update on the Blue Belt initiative from UK FCDO, on the evolution of the programme from its initial emphasis concentrating on large oceanic protected areas to include more flexible elements to address some of the identified needs of a range of UKOTs.

We commended Sark for taking up the invitation in our earlier meetings from the IUCN-UK Protected Area Working Group and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum to extend the 30-by-30 analysis from UK to an example UKOT or CD, and received a progress report. Several territories offered their experience in integrating the natural environment into physical planning procedures.

We welcomed the 28 places in the UK delegation made available to territories for the UN Climate Change Conference in November-December 2023, and noted that there would be 14 such places in the smaller UK delegation at the next conference. We are pleased at the progress in these numbers over the situation in earlier years but note that further progress is needed in terms of inclusion of territory personnel in UK's high-level negotiating team and in discussions about this prior to the conference.

We underlined the value of these meetings, which give us the opportunity to discuss issues and approaches shared by the participants as elected environmental leaders in the UKOTs and CDs, and thanked UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for continuing to organise these meetings; we asked them to organise the next, by remote communications in the autumn of 2024, on a date to be decided later once other constraints become clearer.

## Main Text

1. We, the portfolio holders for the environment in our respective territories or dependencies, held our eighth Environment Ministers' Council meeting by Zoom on Wednesday 15th May 2024. 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.

2. The UKOTs boast some of the world's most delicate and complex ecosystems and habitats, with at least 3,300 species which occur nowhere else in the world. Collectively, they harbour a truly staggering amount of biodiversity, which in turn provides them with many goods and services (e.g. fishing, tourism, storm-protection, renewable energy supply). In terms of endemic species (i.e. those occurring nowhere else), proportions of other species supported, sensitive ecosystems and threatened species, they hold even greater importance than that of the metropolitan UK. In fact, an estimated 90% of the biodiversity for which UK is internationally responsible is in the UKOTs, rather than in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. 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 vital to the delivery of UK's global environmental promises.

4. 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. We are pleased to see changes and resourcing so far through the Darwin Plus programme to start to address this, but note that some key aspects, particularly terrestrial conservation, still lag behind in funding.

5. We again recall our governments' commitments to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by choosing to be included in various international environmental agreements. 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.

6. We welcomed the participation in one session by UK Defra Minister Rebecca Pow MP with her officials. We appreciated her update on the progress on the international treaty on plastics, which might be ready for signature in November, and her invitation to engage with her officials in the near future to ensure that the views of UKOTs and CDs be incorporated in the drafting. The approach, taking full account of minimising usage, avoiding problematic and non-recyclable plastics, and potential re-use was widely welcomed. Minister Pow invited CDs and UKOTs to join in UK's ratification of the treaty, once finalised, and we agreed to consider this actively in our administrations.

7. In domestic law and practice, we recognised that the progress in restriction of single-use plastics being made in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, described by Minister Pow has great parallels with the efforts in many of our territories. In this context, we welcomed Minister Pow's commending of Guernsey's huge first-year progress via a reduce-reuse-recycle campaign. We appreciate also Minister Pow recognising and noting the point made by Sark that, with the opposite of economies of scale, appropriate treatment of some waste is beyond the resources especially of the least populated territories, and that help is needed, by greater producer responsibility, financial assistance or other means,

8. We appreciated too a presentation by Defra official Suzanne Stafford on progress towards a ban on disposal vapes in the domestic UK nations, following a public consultation showing huge support for such a move, especially in view of the inefficient use of critical resources, problems and costs of disposal, and various risks. As is the case in several UKOTs and CDs, whilst



initial concerns related to health, the negative environment effects have become increasingly apparent. In England, legislation is planned for this summer, with the ban on supply starting on 1 April 2025, after a 6-month transition period. Several UKOTs and CDs noted that they were already moving through similar processes.

**9.** Later in the meeting, we received the update we had requested following the presentations on the work on plastic waste coordinated by Ascension Island Government, St Helena National Trust, St Helena Government and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) which we received at our previous meeting. This time, we heard from Matthew Owen and colleagues at the St Helena National Trust on their work on surveying the waste, its sources (being mainly from overseas on windward side of the island), and identifying ways of addressing the problems. Awareness is clearly important, and educational material for children has been supplied physically on St Helena and Ascension and digitally to Tristan da Cunha. A brainstorming physical meeting with retailers on St Helena proved very constructive in terms of ideas for replacement, re-use and recycling. Work on fish-sampling for gut contents to assess the marine problem is planned. Rachel Jones, of ZSL, updated the work at Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory, on surveying the plastic waste in time and space, using this to relate, for example, to minimising its impact on turtle nesting and identifying approaches to reduction and recycling. Success was reported in drastically reducing, through awareness-raising, single-use water bottles, and in a feasibility study to explore local recycling of mixed types and erosional states of plastic waste (mainly from beach collection) to produce locally a plastic replacement for plywood, which is cheaper than the latter and waterproof. The press and other equipment needed fit in two 40 ft shipping containers. Whilst the costs of operating this are not ideal in BIOT, there is great potential here for several territories and other small states, and several of us will be exploring further.

**10.** We are grateful to Professor Paul Shearing, Principal Investigator on the Faraday Institute's SafeBatt project, for meeting the request from our previous meeting for a presentation on Lithium-ion batteries and the current work to improve the already high safety levels. Discussions stressed the importance, to both the environment and health, of separating such batteries from general waste, especially if the latter is to be incinerated. We recognised the challenges this posed to small territories and agreed that we need to consider this further, and also to work with Professor Shearing, his colleagues and others to develop best-practice guidelines for small territories.

**11.** We welcomed the offer of an update on the Blue Belt initiative from Kylie Bamford of UK FCDO. This described the evolution of the programme from its initial emphasis concentrating on large oceanic protected areas to include more flexible elements to address some of the identified needs of a range of UKOTs. In the future, consideration is being given to including also aspects related to climate-change, tackling marine litter, carbon storage and other priorities identified by territories, alongside compliance and enforcement.

**12.** We commended Sark for taking up the invitation in our earlier meetings from the IUCN-UK Protected Area Working Group and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum to extend the 30-by-30<sup>1</sup> analysis from UK to an example UKOT or CD. We

<sup>1</sup> by 2030 at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, ... and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes,...

were pleased to receive a progress report and noted the interesting analysis on how much land is effectively already protected simply because it is unsuitable for human use. While commending this starting point and the moves to confirming protected status, we noted the need to ensure that any key ecosystems not covered by this approach are covered eventually too. Several territories offered their experience in integrating the natural environment into physical planning procedures.

**13.** We heard reports from colleagues who had participated in the UN Climate Change Conference in November-December 2023 in Dubai. We welcomed the 28 places in the UK delegation made available to territories, and noted that there would be 14 such places in the smaller UK delegation at the next conference. We are pleased at the progress in these numbers over the situation in earlier years. We note that further progress is needed in terms of inclusion of territory personnel in UK's high-level negotiating team and in discussions about this prior to the conference. The size of the UK pavilion and prior notice of events there might also benefit from more consideration. UKOTA is picking up some of these points.

**14.** We underlined the value of these meetings, which give us the opportunity to discuss issues and approaches shared by the participants as elected environmental leaders in the UKOTs and CDs, with also possibilities to invite to certain sessions within the meetings UK ministers to enable time-efficient discussion, as well as to invite in certain sessions UK government officials or our own, and NGOs or others, to provide presentations on, and discuss, particular topics. We thanked UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for continuing to organise these meetings and asked them to organise the next, by remote communications in the autumn of 2024, on a date to be decided later once other constraints become clearer.

#### **Appendix: List of Ministers and other lead representatives participating**

**Alderney:** Mr Glyn Mason, Waste and Recycling Officer (on behalf of States Member Lin Maurice, Chair of the General Services Committee, States of Alderney)

**Anguilla:** Hon. Quincia M. Gumbs-Marie, Minister of Sustainability, Innovation and the Environment

**Bermuda:** Mr Drew Pettit, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs (on behalf of The Hon. Walter H Roban, JP, MP, Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs)

**[British] Virgin Islands:** Ms Angela Burnett, Environmental Officer in the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Ms Tessa Smith, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, and colleagues (on behalf of Premier and Environment Minister, Hon. Natalio D. Wheatley)

**Cayman Islands:** Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

**Falkland Islands:** Mr Mike Jervois, Biodiversity Protection Advisor (on behalf of Hon. Pete Biggs MLA, portfolio holder for Environment and Public Infrastructure)

**Gibraltar:** Hon. Prof. John Cortés, Minister for Education, the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change, Heritage, Technical Services and Transport

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

**Isle of Man:** Hon. Clare Barber MHK, Minister for the Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture

**Jersey:** Apologies from Deputy Steve Luce, Minister for the Environment

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**Montserrat:** Apologies from Ms Kei-Retta Farrell, UK Representative for the Government of Montserrat

**Pitcairn:** Apologies from Mr Simon Young, Mayor of Pitcairn

**St Helena:** Hon. Christine Scipio, Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Planning

**Sark:** Conseiller Dr Carol Cragoe, (representing Conseiller Helen Plummer, Chairman of Agriculture, Environment and Sea Fisheries Committee of the Chief Pleas of Sark)

**Tristan da Cunha:** Apologies from Mr James Glass, Chief Islander

**Turks and Caicos Islands:** Hon. Josephine Connolly, Minister of Tourism, Environment, Heritage, Maritime & Gaming

## 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 (but now lost to UKOTs because of Brexit). 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 few years ago. We were shocked when *Arkive* closed down due to lack of funding. This had 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 advisors 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 some project grants awarded in the last few years which restore part of this.

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 some very generous donation from certain Council members and others which helped hugely in recent years.

### 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)). However, even if you do not, there are several ways in which you could help: see <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/donate/>.



*Some of the species that UKOTCF's joint projects with partners in Montserrat have assisted: left: 3 island endemics (Montserrat oriole with large caught insect, Montserrat galliwasp lizard, pribby bush); right: 3 regional endemics (purple-throated Carib and Antillean crested hummingbirds and Criically Endangered mountain chicken frog. Photos (galliwasp) Beano; (others) Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF.*