

# UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2024 - March 2025

## Report of Council

### Overview

*The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum exists to promote awareness of, and conservation of, the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage across the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs). It is the only body devoted solely to this. For well over 30 years, it has worked in partnership with a wide network of bodies in the UK and UKOTs/CDs, many of which are Forum member and associate organisations, as well as individuals with relevant expertise. We work with some of the most vibrant communities with some of the most unique and precious biodiversity in the world. Our team, made up of some paid staff and many volunteers, fulfils a wide variety of roles in support of the dedicated conservation bodies in the UKOTs and CDs.*

*This year saw completion of the UK Government part-funding (under the Darwin Plus Biodiversity Challenge Fund: Securing Montserrat's threatened species & natural capital through community-action, DPLUS155) of the Adopt a Home for Wildlife project on Montserrat. The project showed encouraging signs of community action but also highlighted the need for targeted conservation actions, particularly on managing some troublesome non-native invasive plant species and identifying what they are. The project showed the importance of multidisciplinary approaches throughout with researchers and conservationists working in partnership with government department, non-governmental organisations, and the community. Participants plan to continue as much as possible of the work despite the ending of grant support.*

*Events, field workshops, and volunteer-driven activities involving young people are all designed to foster a stronger public connection to natural*

*spaces in the second Darwin Plus Biodiversity Challenge Fund currently underway. Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development (DPLUS192). A highlight this year had to be the Higher Education Event that took place on Montserrat in November. Education and outreach plays a significant role in this project, as it always has for UKOTCF. As the 2030 Sustainable Development goals creep closer, this work is creating a bottom-up approach to environmental stewardship.*

*As a conservation body, we must celebrate achievements, but also address ongoing challenges. While significant progress has been made—from technological innovations in monitoring to strengthened institutional collaborations—there is still an urgent need to address persistent issues such as habitat-fragmentation, climate-change impacts, and species-decline. UKOTCF has long called for sustained, long-term investments in research and community outreach to ensure that conservation actions remain both effective and adaptive and has made several representations this year to the new government via inquiries and spending reviews.*

*The receipt of a core grant from a charitable foundation and the funding which will result from Bob Conrich's generous legacy improved significantly the organisation's financial standing, allowing the best use to be made of the experience and dynamism of some additional personnel to help achieve all we outline here.*

### Organisational Development

An application for a fourth grant was made to the Garfield Weston Foundation this year (and awarded after the reported year). In the previous year it supported ongoing work, including: the organisation of the remote



*Two Montserrat residents key to maintaining the legacy Adopt a Home for Wildlife after the end of Darwin Plus funding. Left: Tim Orton has pioneered novel approaches to replacement of invasive plants and the challenging exercise of restoration of the globally threatened tropical dry forest. Here, he points out to Mike Pienkowski the tiny self-sown seedlings of a range of trees growing in the shade of neem trees, the latter 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. Later, when the seedlings no longer need their shelter, the neems are removed (Photo: Ann Pienkowski). Right: Norman Cassell has life-long experience in horticulture. Here, he explain his garden, combining nature, fruit and amenity trees to provide a wellness experience to visitors, to Leigh Morris (Photo: Montserrat National Trust).*







Five arrivals and a sad departure. Above, from left: Helena Bennett (Director of St Helena National Trust) and Myles Darrell (Head of Natural Heritage at Bermuda National Trust) were elected to UKOTCF Council; Dr Jodey Peyton (who has long volunteered for UKOTCF) joined as UKOTCF's Senior Projects and Conservation Officer. We were sad to record the death of Iain Orr (who, as a diplomat, could put on a very formal appearance, but he did not stand on dignity, as here in field-trip mode at a UKOTCF conference). Iain collaborated closely with UKOTCF around the turn of the millennium; at the time, no other UK government or agency was closely involved with the UKOTs, and UKOTCF brought together the NGOs interested in conservation. An obituary is in Forum News 62.

Left: Also joining were two new UKOTCF Associate organisations from the Channel Isles, Jersey Marine Conservation and Guernsey's Nature Commission.

meetings of the UKOT/CD Environment Ministers' Council; UKOTCF's seminars for conservation practitioners on avian flu; support capacity in the UKOTs, including support for NGOs, young people (e.g. through higher education via new work with the Jersey International Centre for Advanced Studies (JICAS); respond (and encourage those in UKOTs to respond) to UK Parliamentary inquiries; expanding on work of Darwin-Plus and other projects.

At the AGM in November, Peter Beckingham stepped down from Council after 6 years of service. At the same time two new Council members were welcomed. Helena Bennett from the St Helena National Trust and Myles Darrell from the Bermuda National Trust.

Helena Bennett is a born and raised St Helenian or "Saint" as the people of St Helena refer to themselves. Growing up on St Helena Island surrounded by the ocean, marine conservation was Helena's first love and spent most of her earlier years volunteering in marine protection.

Helena is a qualified Internal Audit Practitioner and played a key role in St Helena's auditing arena. Helena was central in setting up St Helena Government's Internal Audit Office, introducing governance and ethical assessments, and the initial risk-management framework. However, the ocean which is St Helena's biggest tourist attraction remained a priority to Helena and, after 11 years of auditing, she joined the Economic Development Agency as its tourism manager and later the Director of Tourism. Here, Helena was able to work with the government and private sector in developing tourism-industry best practices and developed tourism products focused on St Helena's natural, built and cultural heritage. When the economic development project came to an end, Helena was successful in the competition for the position as Director within the St Helena National Trust, an organisation that Helena spent over 10 years volunteering as a council member. With the remit of the St Helena National Trust being to promote, conserve, educate and advocate for St Helena's natural, built and cultural heritage, Helena is focusing on ensuring longevity of project outputs, increasing the importance of the built and cultural heritage and developing a forum youth advocacy in conservation.

Helena is also the Chairperson for the Liberated African Advisory Committee, which is working on interpreting the island's role in slavery and the abolition of the transatlantic slave-trade. She sits as a member

of the St Helena Heritage Society Board, a member of the St Helena Research Council whose purpose is to authorise and oversee research on St Helena, and a member of the St Helena Cloud Forest Project Strategic Board, a CSSF-funded project, whose role is to ensure the multi-partner project adheres to the goals of improving the water security and wildlife for St Helena. With a current Darwin-Plus project combatting plastic pollution in the South Atlantic, Helena also supports the UKOT plastics pollution network.

Myles Darrell, the Head of Natural Heritage at the Bermuda National Trust, is a horticultural enthusiast and environmentalist with a commitment to environmental protection and conservation. He also has a keen interest in the traditions of agriculture, gardening, and growth and a passion for his island home.

Myles was voted a Bermudian of the Year in 2023 for these works and his dedication to the community. In 2024, he was honoured as the Bermuda College Roche Science Week Speaker. His BSc degree in biology – with a strong focus on co-constructed, contextualized environmental science learning – was followed by a graduate diploma of teaching secondary science from Waikato University in New Zealand.

Most recently, Myles' primary focus has been on the conservation of Bermuda's native and endemic flora, including advocacy for their unique habitats. Engagement of the community in conservation work is also a key part of his role, and in this capacity he regularly leads field-work for corporate volunteer groups, community groups and students of all ages. His hope is that promoting knowledge of the environment will translate into caring for our natural heritage to protect it for future generations. When he is not working in the community, Myles spends time in the garden and enjoying his family, wife Sara and their two teenage daughters, who he says are his greatest source of motivation.

We welcomed two new associate organisations to our network. Jersey Marine Conservation (JMC) is an independent non-profit organisation, established in 2011, to protect and preserve the marine environment around Jersey in the Channel Islands. JMC was developed through the Société Jersiaise's Marine Biology Section with support from the Association of Jersey Charities and UK Marine Conservation Sea Search. The entirely volunteer-run organisation had built an impressive database of over 20,000 marine records by 2024, documenting vital habitats, including seagrass-meadows, maerl-beds, kelp-forests, and archaeologically significant wreck-sites. JMC conducts extensive educational outreach,





*Education is a key part of both Adopt a Home for Wildlife and Biodiversity and Well-being Toolkit projects (supported by Darwin Plus grants 155 and 192, respectively). Left: Tree Planting at Montserrat Community College as part of the visit by Beth Penhallurick, Education Officer from the Manx Wildlife Trust. Above: Group photo of the young people present at MNT's Higher Education Evening*

coastal clean-ups, and innovative monitoring programmes using thermal drones and baited remote videos. The organisation collaborates with numerous academic and environmental partners, provides formal training in survey methodology, and supports university research. It received recognition for its contributions to marine conservation with UK National Biodiversity Network 2020 award.

The Guernsey Nature Commission is a charity in Guernsey, dedicated to promoting and protecting the island's natural environment. It plays a key role in ensuring that the island's ecosystems, wildlife, and natural habitats are preserved for future generations. This includes promoting sustainable practices among local communities and businesses, conducting research, and raising public awareness about the importance of conservation. As part of Guernsey's broader environmental strategy, the Nature Commission works to direct progress related to the States of Guernsey Strategy for Nature. Its primary mission is to enhance the natural environment of Guernsey and Herm within a generation. It aims to do this by: reporting on State of Nature for Guernsey and Herm, public engagement and education and raising awareness, data collection and managing the Guernsey Biological Records Centre.

Throughout 2024, diverse models to facilitate funding for conservation work have been explored, with discussions on the potential for a match-making facility between projects that require funding and funders who may want to help deliver international targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Biodiversity Framework. The ideas are simple, but if they work could be impactful. Plans and trials are well advanced and the intended launch is expected in 2025.

We give thanks to the generosity of the late Bob Conrich who, in addition to his strong support in life for UKOTCF and its important work, supported the Forum in his will after passing in 2021. It specified that the net proceeds of the sale of assets be passed to UKOTCF to support its work. For various reasons, it has taken some time to receive the first part of this income but this recently happened. UKOTCF Council decided that the best way of honouring Bob's wishes is to invest these funds so that the income from these can be used for many years to contribute to funding of some of the key activities for which other funding has proven difficult to resource, but which Council knew Bob supported.

## Projects

The grant-funding for *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project on Montserrat came to an end in September 2024. Some of the local participants intend to continue the project, MNT and UKOTCF offering what support they can. The project aim is to encourage individuals, organisations, community groups and businesses to maintain and protect a public or private space, in partnership with the Montserrat National Trust (MNT). It collected information on plants and insects and provides opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts. The project website (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife-main/>) details all of the achievements of the project to date, of which there are many, including: land-management; enhancing biological records, from local and international experts and citizen-scientists; building capacity through workshops and events and outreach. Some aspects of the project which have been most successful have been the knowledge gained, the biological records obtained and the galvanising of the community, including young persons. The relaunch of the Monty's Messengers club (for primary-

school-age) and the Montserrat Heritage Radio Show were particular highlights, now used widely by others working on conservation on the island of Montserrat as tools for communicating important messages. These have been taken forward by the Montserrat National Trust and will continue into the future. As with all project reports submitted by the grantee to UK Government Darwin Plus, they are independently reviewed to establish if outputs have been achieved. The report was awarded an 'A' which means that its objectives were met. Comments included: "This was an ambitious and complex project which has made significant progress over the past three years for which the project team should be congratulated." This was pleasing given some of the challenges the project faced. It was pleasing to see that some similar initiatives are being taken forward by the Tourist Board in early 2025.

In the year, Council Member and Chief Executive Officer of the Manx Wildlife Trust, Leigh Morris, volunteered again to visit Montserrat in August; this coincided with a repeat visit from entomologist David Clements. Leigh's purpose was to again help build horticultural skills within the Montserrat National Trust. Leigh's article which details his visit and the support provided to the Trust can be found in *Forum News* 62 (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/newsletters/forum-newsvers2/>).

In June, personnel visited Montserrat as part of the Darwin-Plus-funded project *Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development* (DPLUS192) or its working title *Biodiversity and Well-being Toolkit* or just *Toolkit*. Several partners in the project were part of the visiting team, which included UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) and Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium. Reports on some of these activities are provided in the newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/newsletters/project-newsletter-1/>).

In November, Beth Penhallurick, Education Officer from the Manx Wildlife Trust, visited Montserrat to explore further linkages between the secondary schools on Montserrat and the Isle of Man. A full report written by Beth, as well as a blog written by Leigh Morris following his trip in August 2024 to work within the botanic garden and the wider community on horticulture (for both DPLUS155 & 192), can be found in the newsletter *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/newsletters/project-newsletter-1/>).

UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO), through Youth United Nations Global Alliance, contacted UKOTCF and asked for a series of short clips from young persons for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation's [Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#)'s next meeting. The theme they were asked to talk about was biodiversity and farming. Officers from the Manx Wildlife Trust had arranged for some short videos to be sent (with consent forms) in Isle Man and these were sent to UN FAO, which they were very pleased with. The video was published online in March (although the young people are not identified, the boy and girl in the exchange about wild garlic at about 1min55 are in the Isle of Man): [https://youtu.be/sK\\_hXfkbsb4](https://youtu.be/sK_hXfkbsb4).

Working with a number of authors and co-authors, UKOTCF has throughout the year and earlier drafted (and re-drafted) parts of its publication aimed at celebrating *The Nature of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. It is now well advanced. Chapters have been carefully crafted and range across terrestrial flora and fauna, marine diversity, conservation arrangements and mechanisms, human communities and sustainable livelihoods, invasive species and



restorations, managing marine resources, climate-change and looking ahead. Image sorting has begun. Intended publication date is difficult to judge, but may be late 2025 all being well. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

## Awareness raising and information management

*Forum News* 60 was published and circulated in July. Articles include: meet the Adopters in *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* (DPLUS155); registration for avian flu webinar in September; new species of pseudoscorpions on Ascension Island; Celebrating Turks and Caicos Reef Fund's achievements; updates on other Darwin Projects (DPLUS188, 192, 196); environmental education on St Helena; linking with UKOTCF member organisations; UKOT/CD Environment Ministers' Council meeting statement (May 2024). *Forum News* 61, published in October, included articles on: UKOTCF's joint work with Montserrat National Trust, other organisations and individuals in Montserrat on several projects including *Adopters of Wildlife Homes*; surveys of several invertebrate animals; the Montserrat National Herbarium; new to science: 2 spider species on Ascension and a centipede from the Chagos Islands; UKOTCF existing and new Associate organisations, the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society and the Nautilus Project; sharks at Ascension; and the "Blue Belt" programme; open letter calling for environmentally sustainable approach to development in Cayman; celebration of the lives of the late Mr Cedric Osborne OBE, Order of Distinction of Montserrat, and the late Mr Bob Cornich of Anguilla; special offer on UKOTCF-published book on major conservation success; first announcements of a UKOTCF online conference in October 2025, and of an online conference on St Helena 27 & 28 November 2024; summary of UKOTCF webinar on avian influenza held in September 2024; new UKOTCF Ant Working Group; news of UK Government's announcement about sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago; an update on plastic pollution; experiences of a visitor in the Pitcairn Group and Awards under Darwin Plus main projects Round 12. At the end of the reported year, issue 62 was near completion for publication in April.

Three issues of *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* were published throughout the year. Issue 16, in June, included articles on: meet the Adopters, Tim and Dwayne; from Montserrat to Montana – entomology

travel with David; Biodiversity & Well-being toolkit; Montserrat Secondary School visit; citizen-science on Montserrat; Monty's Messengers' natural history collection at Little Bay; MNT's AGM and medicinal plant book pre-launch; MNT's Tea Party; and a visit to Elvis' farm. Issue 17, published in September 2024, included articles on: celebrating the work of *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*; lepidoptera (butterflies) & heteroptera (true bugs) surveys June – July; an introduction to new members of the team. Finally, issue 18 was published in March 2025 and included articles on Monty's Ambassadors (a youth group), building environmental education links between UKOTs & Crown Dependencies; new light shed on Montserrat's tarantulas after more than 120 years; art and nature provide wellness to the community on Montserrat; environmental education resources for Montserrat; an update on the Montserrat Herbarium; medicinal plants of Montserrat – Illustrations vs Reality; Flower Insect Timed Counts – measuring the abundance of pollinators in Montserrat; the scale insects of Montserrat; building horticulture capacity in Montserrat (part 2).

## Influencing policy

Two meetings of the Environment Ministers' Council of the UKOTs and CDs took place during the year. In May 2024 and in March 2025 via Zoom. They were the eighth and ninth meetings of the Council of UKOT & CD Environment Ministers (or equivalents). Previous meetings took place in Gibraltar in 2015, Alderney in 2017, the Isle of Man in February 2018, and online in April 2021, October 2022 and May 2023. The full agreed statements from the meetings are available on UKOTCF's website (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/environment-ministers-council/>).

Around 30 persons attended the meeting in May via Zoom. Through coordination with officers of Defra, the then UK Defra Minister Rebecca Pow MP attended with several officials for part of the session. Several presentations were given including: Defra's work on disposable vapes legislation; the principal investigator on the Faraday Institute's SafeBatt project, on the safety of Lithium-ion batteries; work on plastic waste coordinated by Ascension Island Government, St Helena National Trust, St Helena Government and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL); Blue Belt initiative from UK FCDO; and the 30-by-30 initiative on Sark. The statement was circulated to participants and online (link above).

The second meeting took place in March 2025 with over 30 persons attending. Defra officers were particularly helpful again in arranging for the UK Defra Minister for Nature, Mary Creagh MP (and formerly a Chair of the Environment Audit select Committee) to attend part of the meeting. A statement was circulated shortly afterwards and made note of the presentations and discussion which included: a further presentation on Faraday Institution's ReLiB and SafeBatt projects about safe disposal of Li-ion batteries; a presentation from global lawyers DLA Piper on their pro bono work, and its potential relating to international conventions, implementation plans, nature finance, training resources for civil servants and identification of gaps in legislation; an update from Sark which had taken up the invitation in our earlier meetings from the IUCN-UK Protected Area Working Group and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum to extend the analysis of the UK's contribution to the Global Biodiversity Framework target of protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030, known as 30-by-30, to an example UKOT or CD. To end was a presentation on the environmental importance and conservation needs of the Chagos Archipelago (British Indian Ocean Territory) from the NGO Chagos Conservation Trust and the Scientific Advisor to the BIOT Administration.

With a General Election taking place in July 2024, some changes in Members of Parliament and Ministers took place. In fact, out of 650 MPs elected, 350 had never been an MP previously. UKOTCF Council took the opportunity to create a deliberately eye-catching postcard sent to all elected MPs together with a letter outlining some of the opportunities and challenges. At the same time, letters were sent to the new Ministers in Defra and FCDO and to the newly elected Chair of the Environment Audit Select Committee. Part of the letter to FCDO called for:

"The territories need support, as agreed with UK Government in the Environment Charters, in: joining UK's ratification of environmental international agreements, such as the Conventions on Biological Diversity, on Migratory Species and on International Trade in Endangered Species, where they have not already done so; in reaching international targets for biodiversity including, but not limited to, the Global Biodiversity Framework Targets (GBF) and the Sustainable Development Goals in

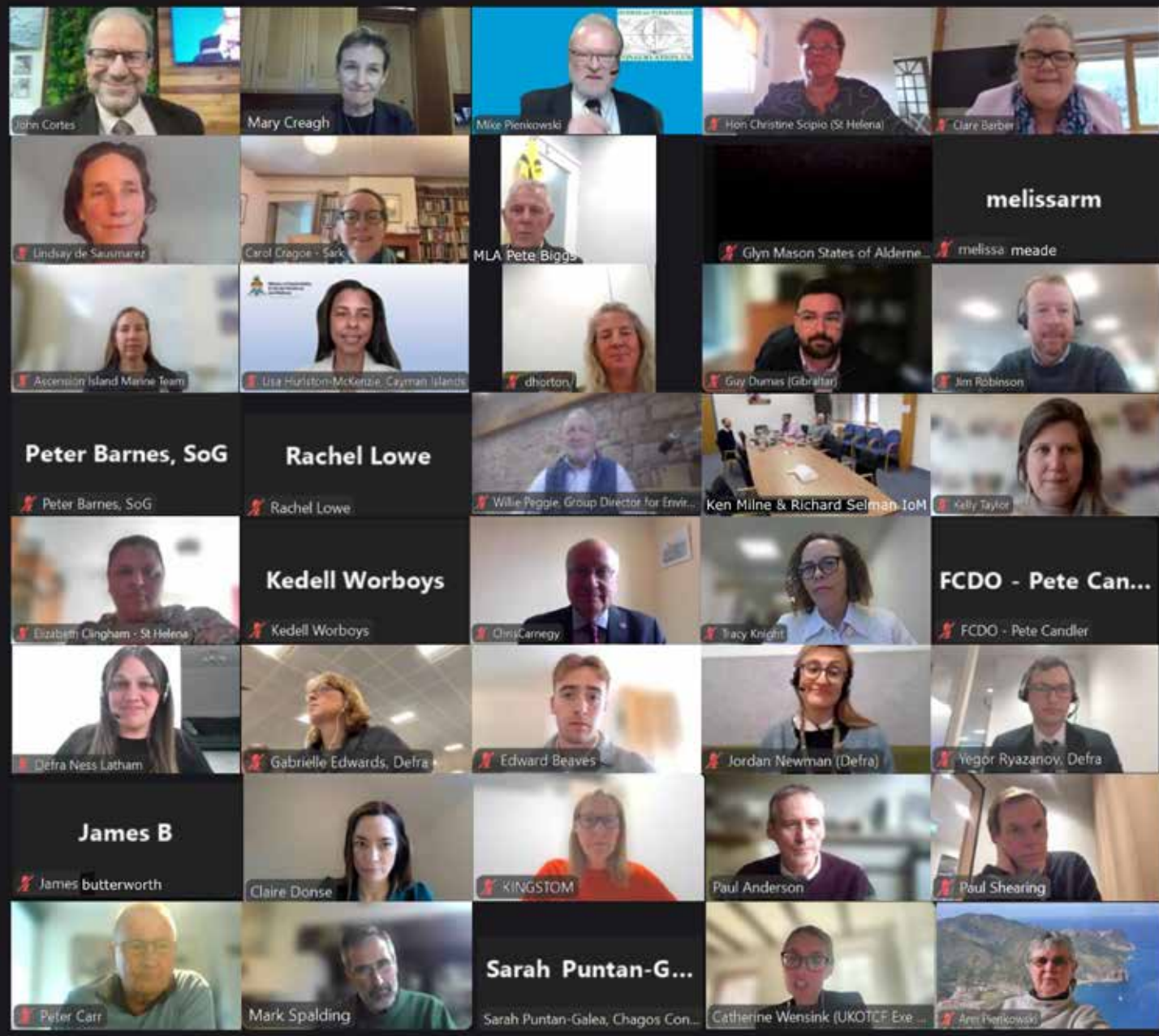




Council of Environment Ministers  
(or equivalents) of  
UK Overseas Territories  
and Crown Dependencies:  
9<sup>th</sup> meeting,  
Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
Zoom hosting by:  
UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum  
(UKOTCF)



## Participants



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. Above are some of the participants, including Hon. Prof. John Cortés, Minister for Education, the Environment, Sustainability, Climate, Heritage, Transport and Technical Services, Gibraltar; and Hon. Mary Creagh MP, Minister for Nature, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), UK. For full listing, see Forum News 62.

UKOTs and CDs; incorporating biodiversity strategies; in the designation of Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance and World Heritage Sites; and in high ambitions of UK on climate-change and green-energy transition and new agreements such as the Global Ocean Treaty, also known as the High Seas Treaty, and the Global Plastics Treaty.

"It is important to ensure that official and NGO bodies in the UKOTs and CDs are consulted at the start of planning policies, rather than tagging them on at the end to policies primarily shaped in GB & NI, and to invite UKOT and CD representation as part of UK delegations to COPs. If UK is able to boast as 12th coral-reef nation and its importance for endemics, UKOTs should be given seats at the table.

"During the 37 years that UKOTCF has been helping the conservation organisations in the UKOTs, the extremely cost-effective projects part-funded by UK funds (currently Darwin Plus) have demonstrated to the public of the world UK's addressing its treaty commitments in respect of these uniquely important areas of sovereign UK territory. Prior to the UK exit from the EU, UKOTs were eligible for BEST funding. Now this is no longer the case, the UKOTs are even more reliant on the one main funding stream of Darwin Plus. As a minimum, there is a need to maintain current levels of Biodiversity Challenge Funding [Darwin Plus] and to raise ambition by increasing support, e.g. from UK Research & Innovation, but reduce bureaucracy in applications and reporting. Cost-effectiveness would be increased by making the presumption that





The UKOT/CD Environment Ministers' Council underlined the global biodiversity importance of the Chagos Archipelago and congratulated Chagos Conservation Trust, BIOT Administration and their partners, including volunteers from the bases, on their work to

conserve and restore the area. The Ministers' Council recommended "We do not wish to enter into the political aspects of the future of the Chagos Archipelago. However, whatever the future of the Chagos Archipelago, we, as fellow overseas territories, consider it essential to maintain the work to conserve the ecology of the area. This is not just for nature conservation reasons, but also because of its economic importance to surrounding nations, as outlined above. If the Archipelago remains as BIOT, we expect UK Government to maintain this. If it is transferred to Mauritius, we urge UK and Mauritius governments to agree a gradual transition in respect of conservation. This is because, Mauritius may be limited in resources, is over 2000km from Chagos (about the same distance as from London

to Agadir in south Morocco) with no existing transport link, and without experience of management of the area – so that a progressive hand-over period would be of obvious benefit to all." The images are from the island of Vache Marine where, here, Dr Peter Carr and St Andrews University PhD student Hayley McClellan on Vache Marine in November 2024, were censusing breeding seabirds and checking the absence of rats. This island is one of several in the Peros Banhos group where a natural ecology has been restored by removing rats. Also shown are some of the 25 pairs of Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* breeding on Vache Marine then (Photos: BIOT Administration and Chagos Conservation Trust).

funding for a project that is proving successful is extended to build on success, rather than requiring funded projects to be totally innovative. A restoration is needed of support for umbrella and networking bodies of which UKOT and CD bodies are members/associates, e.g. by funding conferences organised by umbrella bodies. DCMS needs to direct its Lottery funding bodies to open access for funding in UKOTs. "Blue-Belt" marine conservation funding should be maintained but made more open for access by non-government organisations that provide so much technical and practical support. An equivalent "Green-Dot" funding is needed to bring conservation of terrestrial wildlife (which includes most UKOT endemics) up to comparable levels, for nature-based, scalable solutions, especially for most threatened habitats. We are highlighting the importance of UK funding support in the upcoming UK Government Spending Review.

"UK Government must remain aware of, and alert to, the pressures on ministers and officials in several territories that their main source of income (due to UK-approved tax-systems) is taxation dependant on the built development of land; this is a perverse incentive against implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and environmental conservation, despite the natural environment being a key asset supporting the economies.

"We have, over the years, advised UK ministers and officials in FCDO, Defra, and other ministries – and remain very ready to do so. One area that we were able to make a significant impact was to provide briefings on environmental matters to Governors-designate before taking their new roles in the UKOTs. In the past, the Directorate leading on UKOTs would contact us directly to request such assistance. However, this system seems to have broken down somewhat. Despite our best efforts to engage with the previous government, we were excluded. UKOTCF had also previously been invited to various networking events organised by FCDO that were very useful for keeping in contact with officials, similar organisations to our own as well as others. Our Executive Director and Chairman seem, for example, to have dropped off the list of invitees to the receptions of the Joint Ministerial Council, and some UKOT Ministers have expressed regret at missing us.

"We would like to rebuild our long-established long-term strategic relationship with UK Government, which seems to have weakened over recent years for unknown reasons, but this may in part be due to FCDO staff turnover and a reduction in its direct involvement in most UKOT environmental matters. We have started a rebuild with Defra officials, who we know value this for various reasons, including corporate memory

and the links with territory bodies, amongst others."

Council looks forward to feedback from the new government's ministers, and the UKOTs and CDs stand ready to assist in ways UKOTCF has suggested or in response to specific UK government requests.

UKOTCF recognises the potential for Select Committees of the House of Commons to influence government policy and, with this in mind, submitted at the end of 2024 evidence to UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Select Committee's inquiry on governance in the marine environment, highlighting some of the concerns previously raised in earlier inquiries.

UKOTCF's submission has been uploaded to the EASC website (<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/134763/pdf/>). The main recommendations were:

*A: The UK Government should publish the [UKOT Biodiversity] strategy without delay to ascertain whether it is fit-for-purpose and aligns with international treaties relating to the environment.*

*B: The UK Government and all Departments negotiating and implementing international treaties relating to the environment must work with UKOTs and CDs on extension of these, where requested, and offer support in working towards this including drafting local legislation to implement international commitments, where this could be a barrier to progress. Furthermore, the UK Government should liaise with stakeholders (such as the South Atlantic Plastics Network), which also includes other UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, as a way to expand its reach and assert tangible global leadership to the benefit of UKOTs and CDs.*

*C: The UK should consult each UKOT and CD on whether they would wish to have international agreements extended to them (e.g. ICCAT, the Ballast Convention). Ensuring that UKOTs and CDs are represented at high-level meetings such as Conference of the Parties (COPs) would provide a route by which the UKOTs and CDs could make informed decisions on whether to explore ratification of international treaties.*

*D: Governments cannot do everything and should make best use of, and support, the continued building of non-government organisations, which at times can be quicker to mobilise resources or can act in the long-term interests of inhabited UKOTs communities.*

*E: The UK Government should maintain and increase the level of support for UKOTs through its Biodiversity Challenge Funds: Darwin Local, Main and Strategic to reflect GBF targets to mobilise resources. They provide support for coordinated action to implement*



*international treaties, at local level. It is this mechanism that allows the UK to demonstrate it not only has fine words but it supports action to protect globally important environments.*

Part two of the new UK Governments Spending Review, the process the government uses to set all departments' budgets for future years, was accepting evidence in February. UKOTCF's submission focused on the importance of UK Government funding, especially through the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to meet its international targets. The results of the review are not expected until the summer.

## Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies

Early in 2025, personnel met with the Coral Conservation in the Overseas Territories (C-COT) to understand if there were helpful ways to collaborate with them as they continue their networking in support of those working on coral conservation in the UKOTs. This meeting was followed up with JNCC, founder of the C-COT group, to discuss joint ways of working particularly on data-management and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. Further conversations with the National Biodiversity Network and Defra, major contributors to the GBIF were also held.

UKOTCF were asked to provide some material for the UK's 2024 UK National Ramsar Report, which was being prepared in July for the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15) taking place in July 2025 in Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe). Some time was spent on this report, compiled by the JNCC, to ensure that non-government organisations contributions to wetland conservation were included.

## Working for partners and responding to requests

Meetings of the Wider Caribbean Working Group were held in June, September and November 2024 and February 2025; Europe Territories Working Group in July, September and November 2024 and February 2025. Southern Ocean Working Group in May and September 2024 and January 2025. The new Ant Working Group met in September & November 2024 and January & March 2025.

In May, UKOTCF visited Sark to work alongside Carol Davidson Cragoe (La Société Sercquaise) on possibilities for meeting the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity's Global Biodiversity Target 3, sometimes called the '30-by-30 target'. This involved a series of preliminary discussions with the Sark community focussing on biodiversity, important habitats and how these could be protected and managed effectively on Sark. They met with members of La Société Sercquaise, Environment Committee Conseillers of the Chief Pleas and four Sark land-owners.

The 'project' aims to investigate what opportunities there are for Sark to protect some of the special sites and species found there. It used experience gained during the work on Montserrat to discuss area-based conservation in a small island situation. It is being conducted under the auspices of La Société Sercquaise, the only natural history and heritage society on Sark. This is largely a voluntary organisation with limited resources. It holds biological (and other) records, thus is a major data-holder for the island. La Société Sercquaise has access to Digimap (an online service that provides access to allow digital map-data to be created). It can provide up-to-date data layers and mapping capabilities, although this is carefully managed and not publicly accessible.

An initial meeting was held with La Société Sercquaise volunteers about areas of importance for species, habitats and what data are held and where. Meetings were then held with two Conseillers of the Chief Pleas. After that, some meetings with supportive land-owners were held.

In 2022-4, UKOTCF undertook a wide consultation with our member and associate organisations, members of our regional working groups and others in our network to seek their views on both logistics and topics for a possible UKOTCF conference. Amongst respondents, there was unanimous support for it. Whilst many would have liked a physical conference, resources for this proved unavailable. So it was decided that UKOTCF would hold an online conference, aiming to repeat the success of 2021. The conference will run from Monday 13 to Thursday 16 October 2025 (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/online-conference-2025/>). The sessions, based on suggestions will be on the following topics: sharing experiences, including both practical conservation and building capacity (two sessions planned due to high interest); financing/resourcing; using technology and



*UKOTCF's current work with the Crown Dependency of Sark:*

*Left: exploring the lanes.*

*Right: Leaving Sark after trip in May 2024*

*Photos: Catherine*

*Wensink.*



data to inform and monitor conservation process and novel approaches to address threats to biodiversity; achieving biodiversity & sustainability targets; identifying and preparing for future challenges and opportunities. A poster presentation session will enable a wider range of topics to be discussed. The conference will include the 3rd Sir Richard and Lady Dace Ground Lecture.

## Our networks

During the year UKOTCF developed the idea of a working group for ants, especially invasive ones, given the interest from across the UKOTs. The inaugural meeting took place in September 2024. There are 25 persons in the group so far. It has not been limited to those in the UKOTs and includes experts in Poland and Guyana. This is a reflection of international work and collaboration needed for this type of specialist work. Another meeting took place in November and a special presentation evening in March.

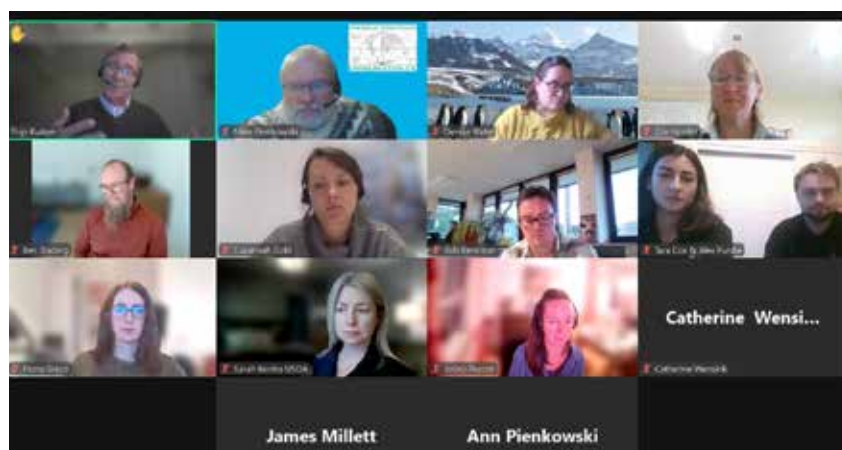
The planned UKOTCF webinar on avian flu took place in September. *The status and impacts of Avian flu in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies* webinar received over 100 registrations with broad interest from various organisations and locations around the world. At any one time, around 50 persons were online. A link to the recording was shared with registered participants. Some positive feedback from participants was received. All thought it was a good way to network and get in touch with experts in the field (e.g. the keynote speaker was from Erasmus University and others from US Aid).

The Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IEM) 2024 was held in St Helier, Jersey, in September 2024. The theme of the meeting was: Delivering Science and Policy into Action, specifically how to ensure that policies and strategies, guidance and research findings translate to positive action for the environment. Leigh Morris attended IEM and represented UKOTCF. Planning started for the 2025 IEM, which will be in the Isle of Man for the first time; UKOTCF and UKOTs will be participating (see [www.mwt.im/IEM25](http://www.mwt.im/IEM25)).

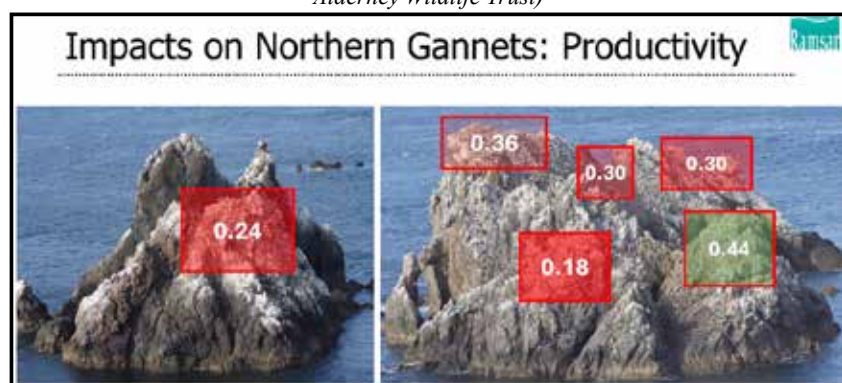
UKOTCF continues to play its part in the IUCN-UK National Committee ExCo; a way to maintain links with the UK conservation community. Personnel are continuing to work with the IUCN-NCUK's Protected Areas Working Group to investigate opportunities for UKOTs & CDs to participate.

Similarly, UKOTCF attends the UKOTs & CDs Plastic Pollution Steering Group, part of a Darwin Project being undertaken on Ascension and St





Above: The panel and organisers of the UKOTCF knowledge sharing webinar, 30 September 2024: The status and impacts of Avian Flu in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Below: Local differences in impacts across Alderney's colony (from the presentation: The status and impacts of avian flu in the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies: An update from the Channel Islands – by Tara Cox and Alex Purdie, Alderney Wildlife Trust)



Helena, supported by the Zoological Society London. This is a good way to follow some of the work on the UN Treaty on Plastics under development.

## Co-ordinating with Others

A meeting of the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership, run by organisers from the Plymouth University Marine Laboratory, took place in September to look at climate-smart marine spatial planning in the UKOTs. Around 100 attendees were there, including a good turn-out from the UKOTs.

UKOTCF has linked with the UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) several times throughout the year, including on the Ministers meeting. A meeting was held with UK Montserrat representative, Kei-Retta Farrell, with some very good ideas of how to energise the office, including working more closely with diaspora and ways to collaborate.

Additional meetings were held with the Caribbean-Coral Overseas Territories network following its workshop in London in November, the RSPB in December and the Environment Funders Network in January.

## Acknowledgements

UKOTCF Council would like to thank the individuals and representatives of member and associate organisations who have given numerous hours of voluntary time to the Forum, both in the UK and the Territories including: Leigh Morris, Beth Penhallurick and Robin Clough. Although all Council members donate time to UKOTCF, Council would like to acknowledge the very large quantities donated by Mike and Ann Pienkowski, on which UKOTCF depends and to Lady Dace Ground for continuing support to the Forum. Council thanks Peter Beckingham who stood down from Council at the AGM. The Forum would also like to thank its member organisations and individual supporters who support us via our *Friends of the UK Overseas Territories* membership. Those who have an interest in the UKOTs/CDs are encouraged to join us. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance from the UK Government's Darwin Initiative and the Garfield Weston Foundation and other anonymous donors, the latter including Council members. Finally, Council remembers with great fondness Iain Orr, a stalwart of nature and culture who sadly passed away recently. Iain will be missed. A full tribute is included in *Forum News* 62.

## UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2025

	2025 Unrestricted Funds	2025 Designated Funds	2025 Restricted Funds	2025 Total Funds	2024 Total Funds
<b>Incoming Resources</b>					
Voluntary Income	166,732	67,449	118,954	353,135	450,131
Investment Income	3,789	2,304	-	6,093	2,634
<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities</b>					
Project Income	2,133		215,396	217,529	268,582
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>172,654</b>	<b>69,753</b>	<b>334,350</b>	<b>576,757</b>	<b>721,347</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>					
Charitable Activities	141,409		368,423	510,225	390,166
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	10,422		-	10,422	85,122
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>151,831</b>		<b>368,423</b>	<b>520,647</b>	<b>398,678</b>
<b>Net incoming/outgoing resources</b>	<b>20,823</b>	<b>69,753</b>	<b>-34,073</b>	<b>56,110</b>	<b>322,669</b>
Transfers between funds	-240,544	240,544			
Gain (loss) on revaluation of investments		-5,774		-5,774	
<b>Net Movement in funds</b>	<b>-219,721</b>	<b>304,523</b>	<b>-34,073</b>	<b>50,336</b>	
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2024	385,141		50,945	436,086	113,417
<b>Balance carried forward at 31st March 2025</b>	<b>165,420</b>	<b>304,523</b>	<b>16,872</b>	<b>486,422</b>	<b>436,086</b>

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time and expenses of £243,835 (2024: £175,330).



# Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

Wider Caribbean Working Group met four times, via Zoom, in the period April 2024 – March 2025, in June, September and November 2024 and February 2025. Discussions were wide-ranging. A few examples from an active year are given below.

Information-sharing, communication and networking are a key part of the work of Wider Caribbean Working group. For example, WCWG was able to connect the Manta Trust with Caribbean UKOTs.

In this period, colleagues shared information and sought views on:

## ***Bird 'flu webinar 30 September 2024***

Bird 'flu has not yet been noted in the Caribbean UKOTs, although it has been verified in North and South America, so migrating birds are clearly at risk. UKOTCF organised a webinar on 30th September 2024: *The status and impacts of Avian flu in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. A recording can be accessed by contacting UKOTCF Executive Director Catherine Wensink ([cwensink@ukotcf.org](mailto:cwensink@ukotcf.org)).

## ***Threats to coral reefs.***

Corals have been severely impacted by rising sea-temperatures, resulting in coral bleaching, and by stony coral tissue loss disease. WCWG has continued to engage with Coral Conservation Overseas Territories (CCOT). There is now the prospect of another invasive non-native species which could seriously impact corals in the Caribbean. Pulsing *Xenia Unomia* sp. is an invasive soft coral reported in Venezuela (released from aquaria where it is used to filter water). It has taken over sea-grass beds and degraded reef areas in Venezuela. In 2023 it was found in Cuba and Puerto Rico, so threatens Caribbean UKOTs also. Noting and monitoring for this potential threat increases the chance of dealing with it effectively. It is difficult to manage as it breaks up easily and can regenerate from fragments. It can survive for long periods and spreads easily.

## ***Other invasive non-native species***

These have been widely discussed throughout the year, particularly regarding methods to eradicate or control. Discussions have included the impact of feral cats, invasive plants, marine invasives. Some of these are noted under the relevant territory section. Proposals to introduce alien species for commercial reasons, such as swimming pigs and scorpions for beauty treatment in TCI fortunately did not receive permission.

## ***The importance of funding under the Darwin Plus and Darwin Local schemes***

Some of the positive outcomes from these funding schemes are given in the Territories section. However, there are concerns that these funds could be affected by UK Government spending cuts.

## ***Marine Turtle Recovery and Action Plans***

The Marine Conservation Society has continued its programmes for marine turtle recovery and engagement with local communities, in Montserrat, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands. Action plans address nest-protection and fishery-control, and highlight the value to local communities of tourists visiting to view turtles.

## ***Effective planning controls***

The importance of having effective planning controls, and the problems caused by lack of, or flouting of, these was raised. Examples cited included ground-clearing without permission, or permission not required by law. However, successes in overturning environmentally damaging planning permissions were also noted, for example in Cayman and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

## ***Economics of development and tourism***

The heavy reliance on development to drive the economies of Caribbean UKOTs was raised in the context of insensitive tourism-driven development. In several instances much income is derived from duties on imports, especially building materials (a perverse incentive, in economists' terminology), and fees for work-permits for non-residents.

## **Territories**

### **Anguilla**

Several projects funded under Darwin Plus ended during the reporting period. One of the outputs from DPLUS125 *Protecting Anguilla's biodiversity by building capacity in invasive plant management* was a Horticulture Code of Practice. It provides specific guidance and advice



*Horticulture Code of Practice. Department of Natural Resources (DNAR), Government of Anguilla*

for the responsible use, trade, and importation of plants, with the aim to reduce the introduction and spread of invasive non-native plants. It is targeted to anyone involved in the use and trade of plants in Anguilla, from home gardeners to commercial landscapers, garden-centres and other suppliers. The guide was distributed to major hotels and resorts, aiming to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices in managing invasive plant species, ensuring environmental health, and supporting responsible horticultural practices within the hospitality sector. The guide can be downloaded at [https://gov.ai/document/2024-11-20-024428\\_623169138.pdf](https://gov.ai/document/2024-11-20-024428_623169138.pdf).

Funding for DPLUS131 A "B-Line" to Re-wilding: *Anguilla's Pollinators Project* focussed on birds, bats and bugs as pollinators ended in June 2024. Thousands of pollinator-friendly trees were planted across the island, with community and private-sector partners, with the aim of enhancing habitats to support pollinators. The Government of Anguilla has drafted a national pollinator strategy and a pesticide policy, to support its focus on food security.

Funding for DPLUS158 *Piloting a new solution for invasive species in UKOTs* ended in March 2025. The project aim was to create the UKOT's first "mainland island" by constructing a high-tech, pest-resistant, storm-proof barrier around Fountain National Park, remove multiple harmful invasive alien species, manage the site as a bio-secure wildlife-sanctuary and visitor-attraction to ensure long-term sustained benefits for Anguilla's biodiversity and people. After the removal of rodents, species re-introductions and rewilding began, for example endangered *lignum vitae* trees planted, and a female endangered Anguilla Bank racer, found in a garden, was relocated to the park.

### **Bermuda**

There have been many conservation success stories in the reported year, as well as the environmental challenges resulting from some development plans. The pollution and invasive species management at Spittal Pond Nature reserve, funded under the Darwin Plus Local scheme (DL00017) has improved water-quality, and community-support has resulted in all of the ponds on Bermuda undergoing water-quality monitoring.

Advocacy work regarding the future of Southlands Park (a large park-





Annual Children's Nature Walk at Spittal Pond Nature Reserve

space, part of which the Bermuda Government wants to give to a local developer) has resulted in the Parks Commission being reinstated.

An intensive and extensive study of invasive and native plants is ongoing. Some aspects of this study have included

bird-dispersal of invasive non-native species and the propagation of the endemic and threatened Wild Bermuda Bean, whose range has seen significant expansion as a result.

## British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands had a number of projects funded by Darwin Plus coming to completion in the reporting year.

Funding for DPLUS180 *Integrating climate change resilience into protected area design and management* ended in March 2024, but the outputs were made available afterwards, and were very well received. More about this work, the outputs and story map can be seen at <https://www.bvinpt.org/climate-change> and a webinar at <https://youtu.be/8NEwuEPLAno>



The Climate Change website created by the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and Environment Systems, an output of DPLUS180

DPL00043 *Caribbean flamingos as a flagship species for wetlands conservation* ended in September 2024. Nesting did not occur on Anegada during this season, so the ringing of flamingos to look at regional dispersal could not occur. However, the project helped better understanding of the fluctuations in nesting behaviour and identified other limiting factors. The project also successfully raised public awareness about flamingos throughout BVI, threats from invasive species such as cats, bird-strikes, and the need to avoid disturbing nesting flamingos.

## Cayman Islands

Funding for DPL00005 *Expanding the ex-situ propagation project for Cayman's Dendrophylax Ghost Orchid* finished in March 2024. The project involved ex-situ propagation by hand-pollinating flowers of the Grand Cayman endemic ghost orchid *Dendrophylax fawcetti*, raising



Sister Island Rock Iguana *Cyclura nubila caymanensis*, native only to Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, from the video made for the Sister Islands Partnership Programme for invasive species management (<https://youtu.be/CKq5ABWv5Ps>). Cayman Islands Department of Environment.

seedlings in sterile flasks of nutrient-rich media and rescuing orchids from forest lost to development. This project is now being taken forward to augment the wild populations.

Funding for DPL00059 *Permanent survey plots for baseline and long-term woodland ecological assessment* ended in March 2024. This project set up permanent survey-plots in the Woodland Preserve in the QEII Botanic Park on Grand Cayman to allow for long-term comparative assessment of the native vegetation in the Cayman Islands. The final report published in November 2024 demonstrated the long-term value and sustainability of this project. The mapping and marking of over 600 individual trees with tags that can withstand the elements will permit long-term monitoring of mortality, growth-rates and changes in community-structure over many decades.

Feral cats have devastated the native iguanas, other lizards and birds. After much public awareness work, feral-cat eradication on Little Cayman has resulted in increasing numbers of the affected species. Feral-cat control has also taken place around the Brown Booby nesting-site on Cayman Brac. The community has been mainly supportive of mandatory spaying and neutering, and restrictions on importing cats.

The proposed East-West Arterial Road, which will cut through the Central Mangrove Wetland and will open up further land for development, has been widely opposed. This and other development issues have caused the National Conservation Council and the National Conservation Law, which had been successful in overturning planning decisions where they would impact protected areas, to be put under negative pressure from the Cayman Government.

## Montserrat

Funding for DPLUS155 *Securing Montserrat's threatened endemic species and natural capital through community-action (Adopt a Home for Wildlife)* ended in September 2024, but local "Adopters" are continuing to pursue the work of the project with support from UKOTCF and the Montserrat National Trust. The final videos about the Adopters and their Wildlife Homes were published on YouTube (see <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/key-projects/adoptahomeforwildlife/> and next page).

DPLUS192 *Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development* (known as *The Toolkit*), is due to finish in March 2026. Several visits by specialists were made to take forward the project's main aim of achieving community-involvement towards sustainable development on Montserrat. Project activities are noted in the *Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat* newsletter available at <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/project-newsletter-1/>.

## Turks & Caicos Islands

Funding ended in March 2025 for DPLUS181 *East Caicos Wilderness Area: Protecting the Caribbean's largest uninhabited island*. East Caicos has been identified by many surveys over decades as biodiversity rich, including both terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Still only 18% is protected since the establishment of the North, Middle and East Caicos Ramsar Site in 1990, despite recommendations for expansion and sustainable use in the management plan produced by UKOTCF in 2002 (see [http://ukotcf.org/pubs/tci\\_ramsar.htm](http://ukotcf.org/pubs/tci_ramsar.htm)). Over many decades many inappropriate built development projects have been proposed. This latest





conservation project has engaged with the local community, especially on local communities' views and ideas, including a Community Voice film *East Caicos – Our Past, Our Present, Our Future*.

The coral reefs in TCI have been very badly affected by stony coral tissue loss disease, as well as rising sea-temperatures and damage caused by illegal yacht-anchoring. The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund have established a land-based coral nursery, and are using this facility to engage with local residents, local schools and visitors. It is also treating corals affected by SCTLD when its resources allow. TCRF has also drawn attention to another invasive species of concern, the Indian Seagrass *Halophila* which can overpower native seagrass. It was quite hard to identify, but there has been a possible finding.

The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund, with community support, was successful in overturning a planning decision for a development on South Caicos which was in breach of three ordinances. The development would have destroyed critical habitat for endangered species and bird-migration as well as needing to dredge through the coral reefs in a National Park.

Somewhat alarmingly, TCI was showered with rocket debris when a Space X rocket exploded over TCI on 16 January 2025.

Above: Thumbnails of 8 out of the 29 videos made about Adopters of Wildlife Homes. These videos can be viewed on UKOTCF's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@ukotcf4676>.

Right: Alizee Zimmerman, cleaning corals in TCRF's land-based coral-nursery. This is to prevent nuisance algae getting out of hand.



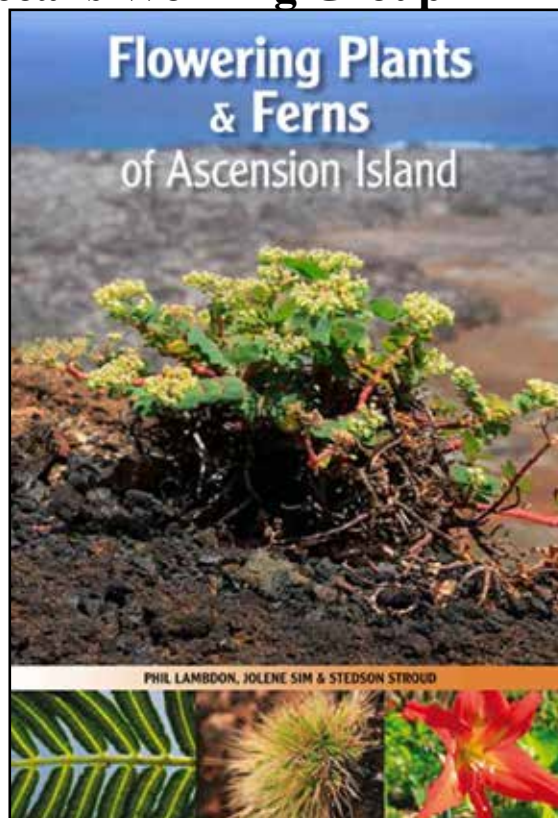
## Report of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) held three online meetings via Zoom, in May and September 2024 and January 2025. As with all the UKOTCF working groups, SOWG continues to provide links between UKOT personnel and a wider stakeholder group to facilitate and enhance the exchange of information and reports between group members on topics where there is a shared interest.

Below is a summary of conservation and scientific updates for each of the SOWG territories; further information can be found on the UKOTCF website ([www.ukotcf.org.uk](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk)), or by browsing the UKOTCF Newsletters (<https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/newsletters>) to read more about work being undertaken in the Territories.

### Ascension

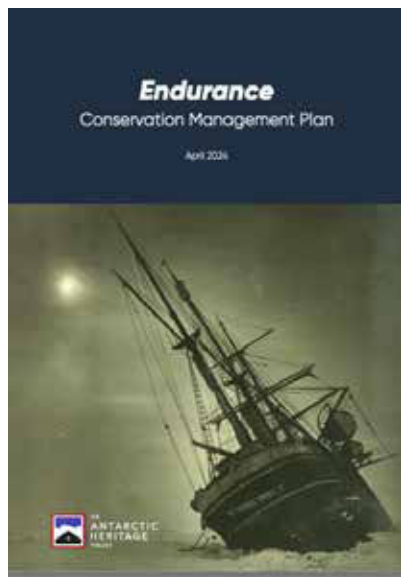
Ascension Island Government shared their conservation successes over the last year through the Darwin Plus grant scheme. The resulting project work included removing invasives from Green Mountain, developing barcodes of the species present, developing management-plans for rare invertebrate species, developing merchandise promoting conservation and supporting endemic plants. AIG has also been busy maintaining paths and hiking trails. 2024 was a census year for the green turtles on Ascension and so more surveys than usual were undertaken. AIG, alongside project partners across several UK universities and institutions, has also been tagging Galapagos and silky sharks. The Letterbox Reserve was expanded along the south coast of Ascension and, with new drone technology, the birds there can be monitored. A new book *Flowering plants and ferns of Ascension* (<https://www.nhbs.com/flowering-plants-ferns-of-ascension-island-book>) was recently released and a new paper on pseudoscorpions of Ascension was published by Danni Sherwood ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380297519\\_David\\_and\\_Goliath\\_on\\_the\\_pseudoscorpions\\_of\\_Ascension\\_Island\\_including\\_the\\_world's\\_largest\\_Garypus\\_titanus\\_Beier\\_1961\\_and\\_a\\_new\\_minute\\_Neocheiridium\\_Beier\\_1932\\_Arachnida\\_Pseudoscorpiones](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380297519_David_and_Goliath_on_the_pseudoscorpions_of_Ascension_Island_including_the_world's_largest_Garypus_titanus_Beier_1961_and_a_new_minute_Neocheiridium_Beier_1932_Arachnida_Pseudoscorpiones)). She also described two new spider species, more information on which can be found at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381853156\\_A\\_new\\_species\\_of\\_Thallumetus\\_Simon\\_1893\\_the\\_first\\_dictynid\\_from\\_Ascension\\_Island\\_Araneae\\_Dictynidae](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381853156_A_new_species_of_Thallumetus_Simon_1893_the_first_dictynid_from_Ascension_Island_Araneae_Dictynidae) and [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381853302\\_First\\_record\\_and\\_new\\_species\\_of\\_the\\_hitherto\\_American\\_endemic\\_genus\\_Hibana\\_Brescovit\\_1991\\_from\\_Ascension\\_Island\\_Araneae\\_Anyphaenidae](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381853302_First_record_and_new_species_of_the_hitherto_American_endemic_genus_Hibana_Brescovit_1991_from_Ascension_Island_Araneae_Anyphaenidae).



### British Antarctic Territory

There was quite high fur-seal pup mortality (up to 40%) in some places along the South Georgia mainland coast due to avian flu. The picture was very varied, however, with Bird Island, off South Georgia, having one its best pup seasons in recent years. The UK Antarctic Heritage





Trust (UKAHT) project, with Darwin Plus funding, completed work on creating environmental management-plans for Port Lockroy and Damoy Hut; these will allow UKAHT to work with greater awareness of environmental considerations at historic sites. Two information papers were published on the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty website (<https://www.ats.aq/devAS/Meetings/DocDatabase?lang=e>), IP088 on climate risk-assessment, and IP064 on penguin surveys using Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS). UKAHT also created a heritage

and biological conservation management-plan for the Endurance site (<https://www.ukaht.org/latest-news/2024/protecting-endurance-our-conservation-plan-for-shackleton-s-iconic-ship/>). There were several publications including authors from British Antarctic Survey, Government of SGSSI (GSGSSI) and Tristan da Cunha, including Humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* return to Cumberland Bay, South Georgia, one century after the peak of whaling (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mms.13050>).

## British Indian Ocean Territory

Chagos Conservation Trust was successful in reaching the second stage of the Darwin Plus main Round (2024) with their *Healthy Islands, Healthy Reefs* project but, due to UK budget reviews, no final outcome has been announced at the time of writing. The CCT AGM and post-AGM event was held at the Zoological Society London (ZSL) on Thursday 20 March (with online links), where several guest speakers talked about their work on the islands. *Chagos News* (<https://chagos-trust.org/news/chagos-news-2025-is-out-now>) was published in January 2025 and other publications for the region include a publication on tracking seabird migration in the tropical Indian Ocean (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.10.060>), a



paper that looked at what sharks do when corals bleach (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/sep/09/sharks-deserting-coral-reefs-climate-crisis-heating-oceans-study>) and the large food-chain disruptions that occur during these bleaching events. CCT launched its online Members' Talks (<https://chagos-trust.org/news/cct-launches-online-members-talks>) with the first presentation by Dr Sam Perkins from the US arm of the CCT: 'Scaling coral reef conservation: biodiversity assessment from orbit'. ZSL was involved, with other teams, in multiple projects looking at turtles nesting, seabird monitoring, mantids (with the University of Plymouth) and plastics, including the work by a PhD student on the source of plastic pollution in the Chagos (<https://www.zsl.org/news-and-events/feature/big-brands-impact-small-islands>). A new website (<https://records.gov.io/>) for Historical Chagossian Records was launched by the BIOT Administration to provide public access to historical Chagossian records. The records were made between 1878 and 1971 by those involved in the administration of the Chagos Archipelago. They were retained by the BIOT Administration following the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965.

## Falkland Islands

Falkland Islands Government (FIG) launched several consultations in 2024, for pollution and waste management, energy transition to renewables and a proposed National Park. Wildfire training was given by the Forestry Commission in UK and WildfireTaC ([www.WildfireTaC.com](http://www.WildfireTaC.com)). Training (both practical and theory training) was given to people on Stanley and in rural communities on how to manage wildfire. FIG's Environment Department completed its second year of habitat-restoration on the FIG-owned Gid's and Middle Islands in May. Also, following stakeholder workshops in 2024, FIG is working towards Marine Managed Areas (MMAs), and is drafting a policy to secure marine managed areas around its coastline. SAERI is working on a large peatland project with Falklands Conservation, FIG, the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and BAS, to try to understand the peatlands on Falklands and whether they are acting as a carbon-store or carbon-sink. SAERI was working also on a Darwin Plus project, Data-driven approaches to agricultural adaptation (<https://www.south-atlantic-research.org/2024/03/20/data-driven-approaches-to-agricultural-adaptation/>). Publications include: *Identifying marine invasion threats and management priorities through introduction pathway analysis in a remote sub-Antarctic ecosystem* (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.11299>); *Seal-fishery interactions in the Falkland Islands—operational and environmental factors drive resource competition* (<https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/icesjms/fsae161/7916773>); *Coastal connectivity of marine predators over the Patagonian Shelf during the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak* (<https://nsojournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ecog.07415>).

## Pitcairn

Pitcairn's waters are now globally recognised as a Global Sanctuary for Endangered Sharks (<https://www.visitpitcairn.pn/the-pitcairn-blog/pitcairn-recognised-as-global-sanctuary-for-endangered-sharks>). Henderson and Ducie Islands were designated as Important Shark Ray Areas (ISRAs) by IUCN, protecting species like grey reef and Critically



Grey Reef Shark patrols over the coral reef and below SV Southern Cross, Ducie Island. Photo: Capt. Paul Green



Endangered whitetip reef sharks. RSPB visited Henderson in the build-up to a second attempt at rat-eradication there and on Pitcairn itself (this having been successful on Oeno and Ducie some decades ago). Birds on Henderson were doing quite well but there is no magic bullet on what should be changed during the second eradication attempt as opposed to first. There was a drought before the first attempt and when that broke early, the rains meant that there were a lot of trees flowering and fruiting, which meant that there was more natural food available for rats; this made it possible for a handful of rats to avoid the bait. It is very difficult to prepare for this sort of weather scenario. The Island Council of Pitcairn Islands adopted its Inaugural Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (<https://www.sprep.org/news/pitcairn-islands-adopts-inaugural-invasive-species-strategy-and-action-plan>) for the Island on 25 September 2024; this paves way for the protection of the unique biodiversity and ecosystems of the Pitcairn Islands, as well as of local crops critical for the community's food security.

## Saint Helena

St Helena National Trust (SHNT) is managing grasslands on St Helena for wirebirds and cattle pasture. Invasive non-native species (rushes) are being removed as part of this work and SHNT is undertaking invertebrate surveys. Results show that wirebirds are coming back into grasslands but the recent census showed that the population decreased by 3% because of road accidents. DPLUS154, a joint project between JNCC, St Helena Government, SAERI Falklands Limited and SHNT is developing management-plans for St Helena's Nature Conservation Areas. SHNT also manages invasive myna birds and are now working on seabird management and monitoring. Two new-to-science St Helena pirate spiders were found in 2024 (<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2024/february/new-species-pirate-spiders-discovered-south-atlantic-island.html>). The invasive and endemic surveys are ongoing and the annual survey report has been published. SHNT also undertook analyses for red-lists for 103 endemic species. 2,208 endemic plants were grown and planted out in the live gene-bank. There is a continuation of monitoring for the water in the cloud-forest, and the Peaks were still closed during 2024 due to the pathogenic *Phytophthora* being found. Results confirmed recently that the endemic whitewood is susceptible to the pathogen, but the endemic dogwood is not. Whale sharks arrived in St Helena but not at the usual time. Normally they are seen January-February, but this year they were seen late February to May and very sporadically. SHNT is working in a consortium of countries from the west coast of Africa to the Azores, tracking the movement of the species in the Atlantic. SHNT is hoping that the project might have answers on where the St Helena whale sharks go for the rest of the year. SHNT was present at the UN Ocean Decade conference as part of the plastics project. SHNT has been talking with islanders for feedback on how the island can reduce plastic waste. There was an open day for the Millennium Forest held in May. This community forest relies on donations, with funds being raised through a nursery. SHNT had a visit from Commonwealth Heritage Forum which wants to help St Helena with built heritage conservation and putting together the conservation management-plan for Jamestown and with raising funds for an interpretation centre to restore the number one building used by the liberated African establishment in 1850. SHNT was successful also to receive funding for the second endangered archive from the British Library. SHNT will be digitising records from the Crown Colony period, after the East India Company had left the island.

## South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

An independent review showed that the Marine Protected Area is very successful and that the waters are exceptionally well managed. There are now new 'no-take zones' established, with an additional 166,000 km<sup>2</sup> added, meaning that 36% of the MPA is now no-take zone. These no-take zones broadly map the marine mammal areas. The entire land-mass is a terrestrial protected area and Government of SGSSI (GSGSSI) will have an overarching management-plan for both marine and terrestrial. The tooth-fish fishery run by the GSGSSI has been re-certified as sustainable by MSC, with a 96% score. This fishery has now been sustainable for over 20 years. The 3rd decadal albatross survey was undertaken all around the island of South Georgia. Surveyors undertook counts of wandering albatross and observed 565 active nests; it is thought that, if it was not for bird flu, the numbers would have been slightly higher. Surveyors used this opportunity to survey and spray non-native vegetation in the area.



Scientists fly an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) at South Georgia in the Hungry Humpbacks project. Photo: Amy Kennedy

Following the invasive plant management work, seven invasive non-native plant species have moved to being classed as historic / extinct. The Hungry Humpbacks project (<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2024/february/new-species-pirate-spiders-discovered-south-atlantic-island.html>) is measuring seasonal foraging intensity at South Georgia and the goal is to undertake the science that informs the successful management of the South Georgia MPA. This work builds on previous DPLUS projects and has a lot of support from GSGSSI. SAERI is two-thirds of the way through the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands marine non-native species project. It has been collecting data, e.g. hull-surveys of vessels operating in the seas around SGSSI and questionnaires from visiting ships. The SG Heritage Trust hopes to establish a long-term wildlife count monitoring programme in SG, in cooperation with several partners. There were no baseline population data for the seabirds for SG but there is anecdotal evidence of the recovery of several species (e.g. pipits and pintails) which were the main native species affected. However, prions and petrels are quite difficult to count, because they are burrow-nesters. SGHT want to try to establish some baseline population-counts now, so the impacts of avian flu and climate-change can be quantified in future.

## Tristan da Cunha

During surveys for the Tristan Starchy or Tristan Thrush (Tristan da Cunha main island's only remaining native land-bird), large areas of invasive Procumbent Pearlwort were found. There is concern that as Pearlwort has reached the peak on Tristan and it could also get into the highlands of Gough, where there would probably be a greater impact than in the lowlands. This work emphasises the need for effective biosecurity measures within islands as well as between islands. The first confirmed record of White Tern at Tristan was made on 1st March 2024, of a bird that was seen perched on one of the houses at the Patches. The closest population is St Helena which is where this bird probably came from. A PhD student at the University of Exeter, along with Cefas and the Fishmongers Company, will be doing an ecosystem assessment of the Tristan da Cunha's island fisheries for her PhD work which started in October 2024. The main goal of the project is to develop a long-term monitoring framework to establish the baselines on status of the key fisheries species and evaluate spatial distribution and potential impacts of the marine invasive species and how they could be affecting their target fishery of the lobsters there. A new administrator, Philip Kendall, started in July 2024. Four young Tristanians, with the support of CEFAS, RSPB and the Blue Belt Programme, took part in an intensive summer training programme with Young Ocean Champions in the UK.



Tristan Thrush. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



# Report of UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

Members of the group provided presentations at the avian webinar held in September 2024 organised by UKOTCF. See: <https://www.ukotcf.org.uk/other-territory-support/seminars-training/webinar-invasive-species/>.

Members of the group often connect outside meetings including on issues such as land-management and marine spatial-planning. Below we provide an overview of the year in each of the Europe Territories.

Several territories reported that they had been engaging with HMG to see where their own environmental targets could align and contribute to the UK's international targets (UN CBD's Global Biodiversity Framework).

The UKOTs, Gibraltar and Cyprus, benefited from UK Government funding via its Biodiversity Challenge Funds, Darwin Local (not available to Crown Dependencies). This notably includes: a project, led by the Nautilus Project, to develop an app which reports and tracks orca sightings and encounters across the world; and the restoration of Posidonia habitats in Gibraltar, including some new facilities.

Throughout the year, participants reported working on invasive species plans, marine spatial-planning and on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in planning and seabird monitoring, forming partnerships with researchers at the Oxford Brookes University.

An MSc student from the University of Gibraltar gave a presentation on her research project which took place on the Isle of Man over the summer.

The UN Plastics Treaty discussion took place this year, but have been extended into 2025 as no agreement has been made. Some territories have been considering implications of the Treaty.

## Alderney

Alderney Wildlife Trust (AWT) gave a presentation at the avian flu webinar in September, highlighting the impact of avian flu on seabird colonies around the island.

AWT started their Alderney State of Nature Project by identifying the island's key species and habitats. The first public consultations took place to foster engagement with the project and community involvement in biological recording.

The Trust also developed its educational programme to provide opportunities to learn about, and engage in, environmental work from infant all the way through life. AWT regularly works with St Anne's School, providing practical activities for children to get involved in activities such as observations, insect-sampling, collections and linking with artwork and creating things inspired by nature.

A Marine Invasive and Non-Native Species (INNS) strategy has been launched by AWT. Implementation is focussing on monitoring, outreach (e.g. check, clean and dry for boats) and potentially control/ mitigation. On other invasives species, a high number of Asian hornets were found in Alderney during the year, with a far higher density of hornets compared to Guernsey and Jersey. There were sightings of the Australian flatworm during the year. The States of Alderney and AWT produced an information note and are urging the public to provide information on sightings and prevention of spread.



Webinar still from AWT

## Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs)

Local NGOs raised some concerns during the year around the management of Lady's Mile Beach in Akrotiri Peninsula; an area of significant ecological value. Terra Cypria – The Cyprus Conservation

Foundation – and BirdLife Cyprus issued a post which called on the Sovereign Base Areas Administration to enforce existing legislation for the area, including removal of amenities at night, correct assessments and licensing of events and “entertainment ancillary to the business of operating a restaurant”. Furthermore, they called for the enactment and implementation of the Ordinance for the Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife for the Akrotiri Special Area for Conservation, as well as the Ordinance for the Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species for the Akrotiri Wetlands Special Protection Area.

The three-year project focused on the restoration and sustainable management of habitats in Akrotiri and Cape Pyla ended in 2024. The project aimed to “protect, manage, and restore environmentally degraded areas while promoting Akrotiri as an eco-tourism destination for wildlife observation and enjoyment”. Outputs from the project included: development of a reed management plan for Zakaki Marsh with local stakeholders, development of a marketing strategy for local beef of Akrotiri Marsh, drainage channel clearance, and actions to conserve rare plants. Over 500 participants attended events ([see visitakrotiri.cy](http://see.visitakrotiri.cy)).

Melpo Apostolidou became Director of BirdLife Cyprus in early 2025, taking over from the late Martin Hellicar.

## Gibraltar

A Biological Recording Centre, based at the botanic gardens, is being established for Gibraltar, with the aim to centralise data. It is primarily for internal use and the garden's own records, but may expand to include other data-collections in future work.

Some drop-down surveys (using BRUVs) were conducted through the UK Government's Blue Belt Programme. Some training had been received in the use of BRUVs. Using this technology, it will be possible to count fish and estimate their sizes.

The Park 2 Park project began; this aims to encourage children to transform an area to enhance urban space which contributes towards biodiversity conservation and a better quality of life. Participants go through the process from concept design to build, culminating in a pop-up park that takes the place of a parking space for a week. More private/public partnerships are being sought to fund nature-based projects like this as they have public appeal, and are easier to sell. A database of projects that private sector could use towards credits is being considered.

Renewal of links between Gibraltar and partners in Morocco are being fostered, particularly with the University of Tetouan, supporting more collaboration with the University of Gibraltar.



The new Flora of Gibraltar site launched, including an interactive key to search for plants, without expert knowledge and based on features. It contains all the information contained in the old site on each species. Eventually, it will include fungi and lichens of the Rock. <https://www.gonhs.org/news/269-flora-of-gibraltar>





*Participants in the 2024 IEM in Jersey.*

## Jersey

Jersey hosted the Inter Island Environment Meeting at the start of September 2024. The general theme was “Delivering Science and Policy into Action”. Presentations are available here: <https://iiem.events>

On Asian hornets, to date a 50% reduction had been seen in captured queens – although the previous year was a high bench-mark. There had been some more interest in the UK, especially given recent sightings there.

Marine Mission, an evening of talks and exhibitions on the theme of Wetlands from a Jersey perspective, took place for a second year. It was a unique opportunity for many stakeholders from both government and a number of NGOs to present some of their work.

Jersey Marine Conservation continues to undertake research and practical conservation on island. Research includes use of drones with thermal sensors to investigate grey seal populations, and DNA sampling of maerl and sea-fans to understand more about these species. While a 3-year study on environmentally friendly mooring buoys has concluded, some issues being looked at include the impact of these mooring systems on seagrass and ongoing maintenance costs.

The Jersey International Centre for Advanced Studies currently has several students from Antigua studying in Jersey. JMC is helping to teach survey techniques which can be deployed elsewhere

Some discussions are being had on whether GeoPark status should be explored for Jersey.

## Isle of Man

During the year, the Isle of Man government launched the first set of Biodiversity Action Plans, “BAPs” (<https://www.biosphere.im/our-projects/baps>). It has been working on new regulations for the ban of disposable vapes and continuing to work on its net-zero targets, including a move towards renewable energy generation.

The Blue Carbon project, a partnership with DEFA, the National Oceanography Centre (NOC) and Swansea University is developing understanding of blue carbon on the Isle of Man. Mapping work is assessing where important carbon sequestration is taking place on island. One recently completed PhD looked at where carbon is. Another is looking at mud and fisheries management. Results of these will be available sometime in 2026. This will feed into a Marine Spatial Plan process.



*With funding from Aviva, the Manx Wildlife Trust aims to restore a temperate rainforest at Glen Auldyn, which will become the biggest nature reserve in the Isle of Man. Manx Wildlife Trust [www.mwt.im](http://www.mwt.im).*

MWT continues to look at wallaby numbers and their impact on IoM biodiversity. A more extensive survey to establish a more accurate count is being considered. Initial surveys by drone made it possible to count goats on the NE side of the island as well as the wallaby population. This gives an evidence base for future discussions about the long-term management of wallabies and other grazers.

As part of the Aviva funded temperate rainforest project, 300 acres of land have been acquired. A tree-nursery has been established to provide a source of trees for the carbon-capture scheme. A woodland carbon-code has been developed, making it possible for high-integrity carbon-credits to be sold over the next 25 years to corporate businesses.

Team Wilder, supported by funding from the gaming industry, continues its Community Gardening work. Furthermore, the Certificate in Gardening has been sharpened up and is running through the MWT Education Officer. Materials have now been created to engage gardening, including via the wider Wildlife Trust movement. 10 Wildlife Trusts will pilot it in 2025. Version 3 course will include handbook and films.

An exciting opportunity to provide every child in year 5 (9- & 10-year-old children) with an outdoor experience in their outdoor learning centre has started. The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture has provided some more funding to expand this across other school-ages. Part of this work involved teacher-training resources. The idea of the programme in general is to develop several opportunities to engage with young people throughout their formal school education, to reinforce messages and foster appreciation for nature. MWT has facilitated the twinning of the Montserrat Secondary School and a School on the Isle of Man. MNT's Education Officer went to Montserrat in November, in association with UKOTCF, and facilitated links there. Continuation of this work is being explored.

MWT's work was recognised during the year when it received the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS), bestowed to them by his Majesty King Charles III, the Lord of Mann.



*Leigh Morris, CEO on behalf of the Manx Wildlife Trust, accepts the King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) .*

## Guernsey

The States of Guernsey are looking at developing frameworks for delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), particularly in small jurisdictions with similar challenges.





*Guernsey State of Nature report*



*Above: path down to Dixcart Bay, Sark, filled with bluebells (and three-cornered leeks; an invasive plant – good to eat), below. Photos: Catherine Wensink..*

The Invasive Non-Native Species Action Plan for Guernsey aims at preventing INNS entering and establishing, through early detection and rapid response. For this, a top-10 red-alert list has been created. The intention is to work with the other Channel Islands to create a single list for all. Those selected are intended to be easy to identify. A consultation was held and communications materials developed.

A State of Nature report has now been produced. Guernsey Nature Commission will deliver a Strategy for Nature based on this. It focusses on monitoring and surveying, and developing a communication plan.

The marine biosecurity plan for the island is complete. Outputs include: (1) a public document providing advice and guidance to limit introduction of Invasive Non-Native Species and preventing the spread of species that have already arrived; (2) a technical document for areas around harbours and those visiting on boats to provide advice on potential risk of introducing pests and diseases.

Guernsey is at the start of marine spatial plan (MSP) process. Currently it is gathering evidence on benthic habitats and activities taking place in the marine environment and this will be collated into a blue carbon report to inform the MSP.



*Juvenile Kittiwake seen on Sark in May 2024: Copyright Sue Daley*

## Sark

La Société Sercquaise prepared a report for the Environment Committee of Chief Pleas in July, on an initial review of nature protection on Sark. La Société undertook some preliminary studies to see if there is an opportunity for Sark to be part of the global “30-by-30” initiative which aims to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and marine areas by 2030.

The States of Guernsey has provided support in updating the habitat survey of Sark first undertaken in 2013 using new methodology. UKOTCF, of which Société Sercquaise is an associate organisation, are involved in 30-by-30 initiatives elsewhere and visited Sark to speak with stakeholders.

La Société, working with States Digimap in Guernsey, produced a map showing that 11% of Sark’s landmass lies below 25m, and 20% is at or below 50m. This is also where many of the most sensitive habitats are located. La Société noted that “there are also areas above 50m that are too steep to be useable by humans, but which are good habitats. This suggests



that it would be possible to reach or exceed the 30% target for nature conservation on land simply by looking at the most sensitive habitats around the cliffs and coasts.” Further study and consultation continues on island.

Société Sercquaise continues to take part in the research for the Pollinator

Project; a cross Channel Islands project in its fifth year of this exciting seven-year project.

Five adult pairs of kittiwakes were seen displaying courtship behaviour and carrying nesting materials in May, following a round-the-Island bird survey by wildlife volunteers. This could be the first breeding since 1946.

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## Report of the UKOTCF Ant Working Group

The UKOTCF Ant Working Group was launched in September 2024 due to interest from several CDs and UKOTs on invasive ants. This group is led by Rhian Guillem and Keith Bensusan (below) from Gibraltar, with UKOTCF providing the secretariat for this. The group, with representatives from eleven CDs and UKOTs (plus eight other countries around the world) met four times in 2024/25, discussing topics such as survey tips, management advice, legislation around invasive ants and potential funding projects. On 31st March, the group received a guest lecture by an



invasive ant expert from Hawai'i talking about how to manage little fire ants.



*Pheidole parva*, one of the introduced ant species recorded during surveys in 2022 as part of DPLUS151 Building knowledge of invasive non-native species on Diego Garcia. This species has a cosmopolitan distribution and is probably invasive © Rhian Guillem, Gibraltar Botanic Garden

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*Other Council Members:* Helena Bennett; Dr Keith Bensusan; Myles Darrell; Sarita Francis; Lady (Dace McCoy) Ground; Dr Nigel Haywood; Dr Kathleen McNary; Leigh Morris; Andy Pearce; Lord (John) Randall; Joan Walley.

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## Membership

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations linked to a particular UK Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency: Alderney Wildlife Trust; Anguilla Archaeological & Historical Society; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; UK Antarctic Heritage Trust; Chagos Conservation Trust; National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI; Jost van Dykes Preservation Society, BVI; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Central Caribbean Marine Institute; Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas; BirdLife Cyprus; Falklands Conservation; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; The Nautilus Project; La Société Guernesiaise; Guernsey Nature Commission; Société Jersiaise; National Trust for Jersey; Jersey Marine Conservation; Isle of Man Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture; Manx Wildlife Trust; Montserrat National Trust; Pitcairn Natural Resources Division; St Helena National Trust; La Société Sercquaise; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands; Turks & Caicos National Museum; Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations not linked to a single Territory: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation; Army Ornithological Society; Royal Air Force Ornithological Society and Royal Naval Birdwatching Society.

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## You can HELP

UKOTCF does not charge for Forum News - nor for many other services it provides for UKOT/CD conservation. However, we have few core resources. If you enjoyed this newsletter (and even if you didn't), please consider contributing by joining UKOTCF's Friends of the UKOTs. See:

[www.ukotcf.org.uk/become-a-friend-of-the-ukots/](http://www.ukotcf.org.uk/become-a-friend-of-the-ukots/)

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