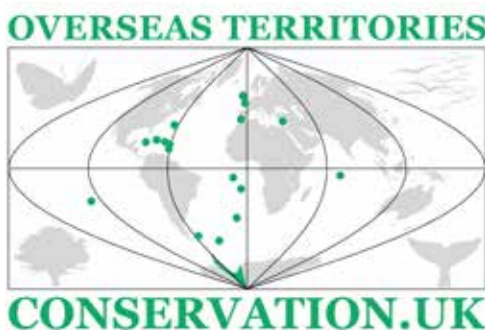




UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2025 - March 2026

Report of Council

Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) exists to promote awareness and conservation of the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and associated heritage of all the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs). It remains the only organisation devoted solely to this purpose.

Although conservation faces many uncertainties, as does the rest of the world, there is much to celebrate in terms of achievements and innovation across the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Our seventh UKOTCF conference, which took place this year online, demonstrated this.

It was encouraging to see strong engagement with the latest Darwin Plus Local round, but disappointing that, in the same year of 2025 that the UK Government launched its UKOT Biodiversity Strategy, that there was no call for Darwin Plus Main grants - lifelines to many organisations in the UKOTs for medium and longer term stability. Conservation bodies are worried that, at the time of writing, there is no indication of a call for 2026, although there was a call in 2025 and an announcement for one in 2026 for the Darwin Initiative. Whilst we welcome the latter for foreign countries, it seems bizarre to many that the UK Government has broken its long-term commitment to support conservation in its Overseas Territories, where it shares responsibility for environmental conservation with the under-resourced territories themselves.

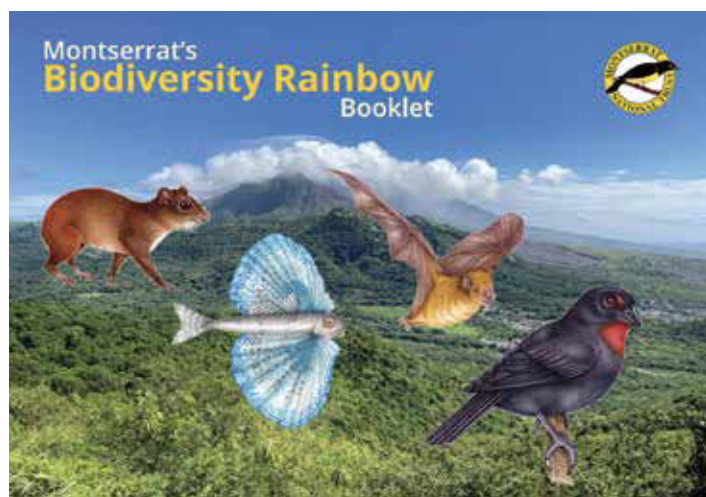
With this gap, we have continued to search for new avenues as conservation cannot wait – not that our alternatives could fill this gap. The launch of EcoMatch, a new conservation match-making initiative, marks an important step in connecting Territory-led projects with mission-aligned funders. Discussions with the Rufford Foundation regarding support for early-career conservationists in the UKOTs, a potentially transformative

development for building long-term local capacity, have led to wider discussions about youth engagement. Policy engagement remained central, with continued advocacy for the publication and implementation of the UK Government's UKOT Biodiversity Strategy, launched in November 2025. We provided information to the 7th National Report to the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity.

Consideration is being given to where UKOTCF could add value to the work undertaken by organisations and individuals in the UKOTs in support of international targets, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework Targets. Internationally and regionally, partnerships were strengthened, including: active participation in the 25th anniversary of the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IEM) hosted by the Manx Wildlife Trust in the Isle of Man; and closer working links with The Wildlife Trusts. The award of a further grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation is very welcome as UKOTCF looks ahead to our 40th year which we will celebrate during late 2026 and much of 2027.

Organisational Development

UKOTCF's Council met three times during the year, maintaining a strong focus on governance, risk-management, and long-term sustainability planning for the organisation. In addition to these overarching responsibilities, the Council engaged with a series of regional and specialist working groups, which provide detailed input on areas such as biodiversity-strategy, environmental education, communications



Above: Front cover of the colour activity book, part of the Montserrat Biodiversity project (DPLUS192).



Looking for Funding?

Looking to Fund a Project?

Contact us

hello@ukotcf.org

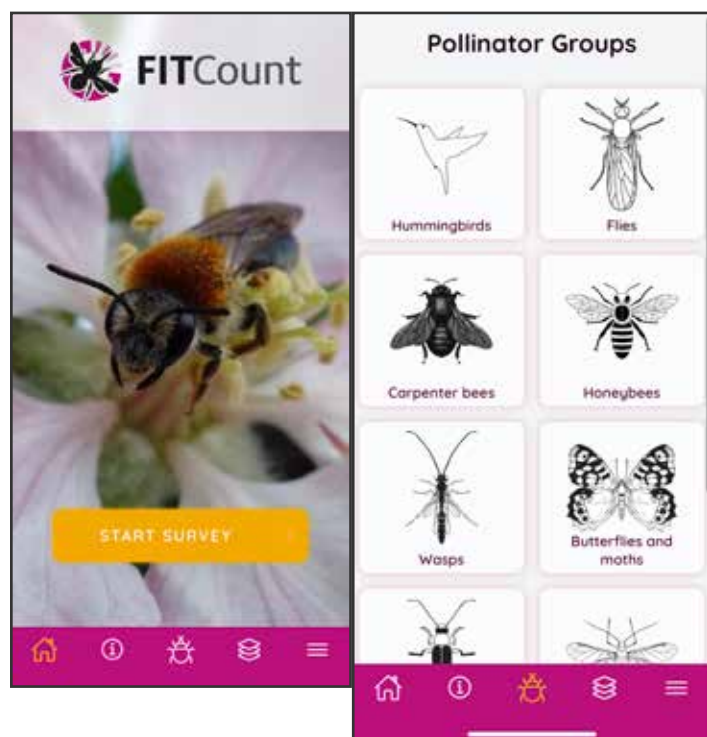


Illustrations by
Lizzie Harper
with the
Montserrat
National Trust

Above: artwork produced during DPLUS192

Below left: Flower-Insect Timed Counts home-screen

Below right: page from FIT Count app, adapted for Montserrat and showing types of pollinators.



and funding. These working groups enable in-depth consideration of operational and strategic issues, ensuring that Council decisions are informed by expert advice and practical insights from across the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Together, the Council and its working groups facilitate a structured approach to organisational oversight, helping to safeguard both the effectiveness and resilience of UKOTCF's programmes and projects into the future.

The Senior Projects and Conservation Officer continued to support coordination between partners, data-management initiatives, and policy-engagement. To help manage the growing scope of activities and provide additional strategic guidance, a Vice-Chairman was appointed.

During the year, UKOTCF has been exploring the potential for collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts, a first stage being the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the aim further to strengthen

biodiversity conservation across the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. The MoU could provide a formalised framework for joint initiatives, knowledge-exchange and capacity-building, enabling both organisations to leverage expertise, networks, and resources more effectively. The potential partnership could facilitate coordinated responses to conservation challenges such as invasive species, habitat-restoration and community-engagement, while promoting best-practice approaches across the UKOTs and CDs. The intention is to explore options carefully and gradually, but both partners see great potential.

Projects

Several projects have continued during the year alongside core activities. These include the UKOTCF online conference in October, the UK Government-funded project on Montserrat, continuing writing and editing of a book celebrating the wildlife of the territories and 40 years of conservation efforts, and a platform designed to match funders and conservation projects.

The UKOTCF online Conference took place 13th-16th October 2025. It aimed to share practical conservation experience, explore financing and technology solutions, and address future challenges collaboratively. Preparatory sessions and planning meetings ensured broad participation from across regions. Thematic sessions included: financing conservation, applying new technologies, strengthening capacity, and delivering biodiversity targets. The 3rd Sir Richard and Lady Dace Ground Lecture was confirmed as a keynote element. A full account was given in *Forum News* 43 published and circulated in November. The proceedings have been published and are available on UKOTCF's website.

The Darwin Plus project in Montserrat *Biodiversity & Well-being Toolkit* (DPLUS192) continued to integrate biodiversity conservation with human well-being and sustainable development. UKOTCF and MNT worked together throughout the year with two periods of prolonged activity in July 2025 and February 2026. Two newsletters were published.

In February 2026 activities involved a combination of biodiversity-surveys, herbarium-development, educational outreach, and stakeholder-engagement. The fieldwork included Flower-Insect Timed Counts (FIT Counts), surveys and biodiversity recording via iNaturalist, building baseline-data for flora and fauna. These surveys were supplemented by botanical data-collection, with Quentin Groom from Meise Botanic Gardens joining to support herbarium-development, specimen-processing, and data-management. Over the following days, surveys focused on areas of conservation concern, such as Bottomless Ghaut, Silver Hills, and trails around the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, recording species-transitions between tropical dry forest, mesic, and elfin

zones. Endemic species and rare plants were a particular focus, with collected specimens processed, digitised, and linked to data-portals such as PlutoF and GBIF.

Site visits to cultural heritage locations, including Richmond Hill's restored sugar-mill and windmill, allowed the team to explore the integration of biodiversity-conservation with heritage-restoration. Multiple planning and review meetings were held with the Montserrat National Trust (MNT), Department of Environment (DoE), and other partners, to assess survey-results, coordinate project-outputs, and discuss new initiatives, including potential future projects. Remote collaborations included discussions with Prof. Donald McClelland on plant data, and Dr Alan Gray (UKCEH) provided input on ecosystem-integrity assessments and cross-island project-synergies. Education and community-engagement were central components of the visit. UKOTCF's Catherine Wensink delivered a keynote at the Higher Education Evening, while sessions with Year 6 students and primary educators at Lookout and Brades introduced the Biodiversity Rainbow toolkit, embedding biodiversity-education into the local curriculum.

Monty's Messenger and Montserrat Children's Society events engaged children with biodiversity-activities and conservation-awareness, including bird-focused and art-based sessions and a competition celebrating creativity. These activities complemented efforts to disseminate project-outputs, such as the Biodiversity Toolkit and educational resources, to wider audiences including local teachers, the Governor's Office, and community-stakeholders.

The Montserrat National Herbarium is fully functioning and the team from Meise, together with Montserrat National Trust and DoE partners, are using it to dry specimens or to freeze them for processing later and digitisation so they can be shared for wider research purposes.

A notable project highlight was the growth in biological recording through the iNaturalist platform, with observations increasing from around 1,000 to over 10,000. This substantial rise reflects increased engagement in recording biodiversity and the growing contribution of participants to documenting species across the territories. The expanded dataset provides valuable information for conservation, supporting improved understanding of species-distribution and biodiversity-trends.

The Darwin Plus project DPLUS155, known as *Adopt a Home for Wildlife*, funding for which ended in October 2024, was assessed by an independent assessor who gave it an 'A' rating, recognising the project's strong progress, effective delivery, and positive outcomes. The assessment highlighted the project's contribution to conservation-priorities and its successful implementation. This positive evaluation provides a strong foundation for future funding opportunities and demonstrates the value of continued investment in this area of work.

An ongoing project which is nearing completion is the work on UKOTCF's forthcoming publication celebrating the natural heritage of the Territories and Crown Dependencies. The title of the book is expected to be *The Nature of Britain's Fragments of Paradise: wildlife and its conservation in UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. Chapters covering terrestrial and marine biodiversity, conservation mechanisms, invasive species, sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience were refined and image curation and design has progressed. Some sponsorship discussions continued. Publication is anticipated in late 2026 with a launch in London being discussed.

Awareness raising and information management

Over the past year, *Forum News* issues 62 and 63 highlighted a broad range of UKOTCF activities and conservation initiatives across the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Coverage included comprehensive summaries of the UKOTCF October 2025 conference, reflecting ongoing dialogue on biodiversity, environmental policy and collaborative projects, as well as the introduction of new UKOTCF team members. Several articles showcased innovative conservation efforts, including turtle-protection in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, invasive species control in Bermuda, the Caribbean, and Jersey, and the restoration of Île Vache Marine in Chagos. *FN63* reported also on the UKOTCF EcoMatch initiative supporting conservation funding, the forthcoming UKOTCF book on UKOT & CD wildlife, and continued research on St Helena and Ascension spiders. Marine and terrestrial biodiversity received attention through studies of Pitcairn Island humpback whales, the fourth Pitcairn expedition fostering practical conservation, coral conservation in UKOTs, and mapping plant pathogens threatening endemic trees in St Helena. Other highlights included horticultural capacity-building at the Gibraltar Botanic Garden and in Montserrat, environmental education linkages between UKOTs, judicial and policy developments such as the Cayman Islands Nature Conservation Act

Front pages of Forum News 63 & 64



appeal, and recognition of individual contributions, including tributes to Dace Ground, Iain Orr and Myrtle Ashmole, and congratulations to awardees under Darwin Plus Local projects. The issues also emphasised global and regional engagement, featuring Antarctic research vessel visits, South Atlantic plastics

initiatives, and insights into UK government positions on UKOT constitutional matters. Through this coverage, the Forum News issues reflected UKOTCF's multifaceted approach to supporting research, conservation, education, and governance, celebrating both scientific achievements and community-driven initiatives across the territories.

SOS Nature of Montserrat published its 19th issue in September, highlighting ongoing conservation and community initiatives coordinated by the Montserrat National Trust and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, in partnership with the Government of Montserrat and other stakeholders. While the Darwin Plus-funded *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* project (DPLUS155) has concluded, there is strong hope that its legacy will continue under the leadership of local adopters, supported as far as possible by MNT and UKOTCF. Meanwhile, the Darwin-funded DPLUS192 project, *Delivering Biodiversity and Human Well-being Gains for Montserrat's Sustainable Development* (the *Biodiversity Toolkit*), was then approaching the final six months of its funding cycle. This issue showcased a series of articles from a multidisciplinary UKOTCF team working alongside Montserrat colleagues in June-July 2025, reflecting the practical and collaborative nature of the project. Topics ranged from studies of Montserrat's national bird, the Montserrat oriole, and national plant species, to new publications on common grasses, Earth Day gardening initiatives at the hospital, activities at the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, MNT's youth

Gibraltar Minister Prof. John Cortes gives evidence to UK Parliament's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Nature (HM Government of Gibraltar)

programmes, local research stations, and a commemorative Thanksgiving service in London marking 30 years since the Soufrière Hills Volcano eruption. The issue demonstrates the project's integrated focus on biodiversity, education, cultural heritage, and community engagement, illustrating the diverse ways that conservation work supports sustainable development on Montserrat. Issue 20 was published on the last day of DPLUS192.

Project outputs and news items are disseminated through a combination of website-maintenance and social-media engagement. The UKOTCF website has been actively maintained to ensure that reports, datasets, educational materials, and updates from projects such as DPLUS192 are easily accessible to stakeholders, partners and the wider public. The website serves also as a central repository for outputs from fieldwork, publications, and community-engagement activities, helping to ensure transparency and long-term accessibility of project-data. On social media, the Forum has adapted to changing platforms, moving away from X (formerly Twitter) and exploring new channels to reach audiences. BlueSky has been tested as an alternative, and posts on LinkedIn have been prioritised to provide more of a UKOTCF profile on this professional platform. This is allowing us to reach key audiences to share project news, highlight team-achievements, and engage with institutional partners. These channels together support broader awareness of conservation-initiatives, foster community-engagement, and strengthen networks across the UKOTs and CDs.

Influencing policy

UKOTCF met with RSPB's Head of UKOTs in early June to discuss ongoing efforts to protect Darwin Plus in the cuts feared in Defra's budget in the spending review. Some Parliamentary questions were asked with regards to Darwin funding and answered here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-06-02/hl7976>. UKOTCF continued to press this point throughout the year, through various routes, including meeting Toby Perkins MP, Chair of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee, with some progress early in the following year.

UKOTCF personnel attended an event marking the 30th anniversary of the volcanic eruptions on Montserrat in July. The new Director of FCDO's Overseas Territories and Polar Directorate and the new Governor of Montserrat attended.

In January 2026, UKOTCF prepared a detailed submission to the House of Lords Inquiry into the 2023 Communiqué, highlighting the ongoing environmental and biodiversity challenges faced by the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. A draft was sent to Member and Associate Organisations, as well as some key collaborators who had been unaware of the submission, and received some feedback which was incorporated. The submission emphasised the global significance of the Territories' ecosystems, which host a disproportionately high proportion of the UK's endemic species and provide critical ecosystem-services such as fisheries, storm-protection, and carbon-sequestration. It called for continued and enhanced support through mechanisms such as Darwin Plus, noting the urgency of reinstating regular funding-cycles to enable effective conservation and sustainable development. The submission also stressed the importance of integrating UKOT priorities into broader UK environmental and climate policies, ensuring that commitments made in international agreements are delivered fully in the Territories. Additionally, UKOTCF highlighted the value of local expertise, community-led conservation-initiatives, and collaborative projects, recommending that future UK government strategies recognise explicitly and support these contributions. Through this engagement, UKOTCF sought to ensure that the House of Lords Inquiry reflects both the global biodiversity responsibilities of the UK and the practical needs of the



Territories in meeting conservation-targets.

The ninth and tenth meetings of the Council of UKOT & CD Environment Ministers (or equivalents) took place during the year by Zoom, with UKOTCF continuing to provide the secretariat. and host the meetings online. These meetings continue to play a vital role in coordinating environmental management and climate-change actions across the Territories. Discussions covered progress toward the Global Biodiversity Framework targets, marine governance and the 30-by-30 target, battery disposal and environmental safety, plastic pollution coordination, and conservation priorities in the Chagos Archipelago. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to conserving environmental capital and integrating environmental considerations into government decision-making, supported through Environment Charters and alignment with international agreements.

Other discussions included extension of relevant international agreements to Territories and CDs where requested, and the inclusion of local experts within UK delegations to international Conferences of the Parties was also discussed. The critical importance of sustained funding, particularly via Darwin Plus, was emphasised, noting the gap created by the absence of the usual 2025 call for applications and the uncertainty over future funding. In this context, initiatives such as UKOTCF's EcoMatch were welcomed for matching conservation projects with corporate and philanthropic support, alongside examples such as the Isle of Man Blue Carbon Project and partnerships in Guernsey and the Crown Dependencies. Presentations from Lloyds Bank and Sustainable Futures at Atkins Réalis highlighted the potential for climate-finance and long-term corporate engagement to supplement public funding.

The Council recognised also the vital role of local conservation leaders in maintaining community-engagement over successive generations, with examples including Marine Conservation Society's Community Voice Method, Environment Systems Ltd's use of Earth observation for prioritising conservation, and the Isle of Man's Blue Carbon initiative. The strong contribution of local and UK authors to UKOTCF's forthcoming book *The Nature of Britain's Fragments of Paradise*, to be published in autumn 2026, was celebrated as an important tool for raising awareness of the global significance of UKOT biodiversity.

Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies

Over the year, UKOTCF maintained engagement with UK Government departments and agencies, notably Defra officials, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and other agencies. Key areas of joint work included the development and use of biodiversity information-systems, such as the GBIF portal, which enables the collection, management and dissemination of species-data from the Territories. JNCC provided some support for an official representative from each territory and more from ODA-eligible territories at the UKOTCF conference, thereby facilitating their contributions to global biodiversity discussions. Additionally, collaboration extended to thematic initiatives, including the Coral Reef Working Group, ensuring that UKOT priorities are integrated into wider UK and international conservation strategies. These activities reinforced UKOTCF's role as a bridge between local territorial expertise and UK governmental frameworks, fostering coordinated approaches to research, monitoring, and practical conservation action.

UKOTCF provided input to both the JNCC-coordinated international



Above: taking advantage of the Isle of Man's hosting of the annual Inter Island Environment Meeting of Crown Dependencies (right), (from left) Ann Pienkowski, Mike Pienkowski, Jodey Peyton, Craig Bennett, Catherine Wensink and Leigh Morris start discussions on closer working between UKOTCF and the Wildlife Trusts, to benefit the objectives of both.

reporting on the Convention on Migratory Species and the 7th report to the Convention on Biological Diversity throughout the year, and were able to fill in some gaps and provide details on specific areas relevant to UKOTs and CDs.

Working for partners and responding to requests

Regional Working Groups (Wider Caribbean, Europe Territories, Southern Oceans) met regularly throughout the year. Reports from the groups are provided in later sections. Emerging thematic groups continue to discuss important topics such as invasive species and engagement with communities.

The Ant Working Group continued its active programme during the year, expanding participation to include a wider range of experts, researchers, and practitioners from across the UKOTs and CDs. Building on previous work, the group hosted a series of technical sessions focused on the identification and management of invasive ant species, sharing best practices, recent research findings, and practical mitigation-strategies. These sessions facilitated knowledge-exchange between local conservation teams, academic researchers, and governmental agencies, helping to strengthen capacity for early detection, monitoring, and control of invasive ants. By fostering collaboration and providing a platform for technical guidance, the Ant Working Group has reinforced UKOTCF's commitment to supporting evidence-based interventions that protect vulnerable native species and habitats from the ecological impacts of invasive ants.

UKOTCF explored the potential for a Working Group for botanic gardens and native plant nurseries to support in situ and ex situ plant conservation, education, and capacity-building. This is now initiated and called the Conservation Horticulture Working Group (CHWG). It aims to provide a collaborative forum for sharing expertise in plant-propagation, nursery-management, and horticultural best practices, with a particular focus on endemic and threatened species. By linking botanic gardens, local nurseries, and conservation projects, the group aims to share knowledge and skills, and enhance the availability of healthy plant material for habitat-restoration, community-engagement, and environmental education initiatives. A well-attended exploratory meeting was held in December 2025 and those attending were subsequently asked to fill in a short questionnaire, intended to be used to shape the group into something useful for all. These early discussions have emphasised knowledge-exchange, training opportunities, and coordination of nursery-based research, laying the groundwork for a networked approach to horticulture that strengthens both conservation outcomes and local skills development in the Territories.

UKOTCF attended the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society AGM. This helped to renew links with the organisation and identify a small funding programme open to the UKOTs. Information about the programme was subsequently circulated to relevant working groups.

UKOTCF was interviewed for Radio Falkland Islands on Endangered Species Day in May. The interview highlighted several species found on the Falkland Islands, some of the threats and challenges facing them, and



discussed ways in which greater public understanding and engagement can contribute to their protection.

Our networks

Throughout the year, UKOTCF maintained active engagement with key national and international networks, including the IUCN-UK National Committee and its Protected Areas Working Group, as well as the annual Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IEM). Participation in these networks has helped to ensure that conservation initiatives in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are aligned with global environmental commitments and best-practice approaches. By contributing expertise, sharing lessons learned, and fostering dialogue between local practitioners and international bodies, UKOTCF strengthens both the effectiveness of on-the-ground conservation work and the Territories' contribution to broader biodiversity and sustainability goals.

UKOTCF's extensive and diverse network of organisations across the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies was central to the success of this year's conference. The strength of the network, comprising local conservation organisations, government departments, research institutions, community-groups, and individual experts, ensured that the event was both rich in content and well-coordinated. Members of the network contributed as presenters, facilitators, and rapporteurs, sharing their knowledge, experiences and insights on a wide range of topics, including biodiversity-monitoring, invasive-species management, climate-adaptation, and sustainable development. The collaborative nature of the network allowed for seamless organisation of sessions, workshops, and discussion groups, while ensuring that the unique perspectives and priorities of each Territory and Crown Dependency were represented. Beyond the conference itself, the network provided an essential forum for ongoing knowledge-exchange, mentoring and support, strengthening partnerships that underpin practical conservation-action across the Territories. By mobilising this wide-reaching community of expertise, UKOTCF demonstrated how a connected network of stakeholders can deliver both high-quality events and lasting impact, reinforcing the role of the network as a vital mechanism for sharing best practice, fostering collaboration, and advancing biodiversity and sustainability objectives across the UKOTs and CDs.

UKOTCF attended a reception at the Speaker's House of the Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle through its links with the UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA). The event celebrated the work of St Helena's cloud-forest restoration. At the event, the FCDO announced that a £300,000 grant would be provided to support the project continuing, given the uncertainty around UK funding via the Biodiversity Challenge Funding (Darwin Plus).

A virtual panel event, organised by the Marine Conservation Society, was held alongside the UN Oceans Conference in France. The session included participation from representatives of several Caribbean UK Overseas Territories, including the Cayman Islands Government, the Montserrat NGO Fish 'N' Fins, and the Turks and Caicos Islands Government, providing an important forum to share experiences and perspectives on



Prof. Helen Roy speaks at the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) plenary meeting.

marine conservation across the region.

During the year, UKOTCF Council member Leigh Morris, departed the Manx Wildlife Trust (leaving it in very safe hands with new CEO, Graham Makepeace-Warne) and took up a new role within the Wildlife Trust's Central Team as Head of International. Leigh attended the IUCN World Conservation Congress in October, primarily on behalf of The Wildlife Trusts, held this time in Abu Dhabi; it is held typically every 4 years. It brings together governments, NGOs, scientists and community-leaders from around the world to discuss pressing global conservation challenges and set priorities for action under the IUCN Programme. Main sessions were on indigenous people, education, and business and finance. This had provided UKOTCF with a detailed and useful briefing summarising key sessions, outcomes, and opportunities relevant to the UK Overseas Territories and some useful contacts to follow up with including GLISPA (a global organisation on islands) and reconnecting with IUCN-BEST folks continuing to fund conservation in the European Overseas Territories. UKOTCF now attends GLISPA meetings online and there is enthusiasm from BestLife2030 to re-connect to UKOTs when possible.

Co-ordinating with Others

Meetings were held with academic institutions, NGOs and funders to strengthen collaboration on biodiversity-monitoring, climate-resilience and conservation-finance. UKOTCF was supporting partners on a European [Union] Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action proposal on decolonising museum and other collections (with the idea of bringing in UKOTs and CDs in the wider outreach if successful). This was submitted over the summer. UKOTCF is interested in how these link researchers across Europe and is potentially to be involved in another ongoing COST Action on sustainable development on small and medium islands and this is continuing.

UKOTCF met Lloyds Bank to discuss potential support for the UKOTs. Lloyds is having conversations across the UKOTs and the FCDO. These conversations led to a presentation by Lloyds at the recent conference, which helped to strengthen connections across the Territories, including new links between Lloyds and the Falkland Islands.

Links with INTO (International National Trusts Organisation) were renewed during its meeting held at Canada House in London in July. The meeting provided an opportunity for networking and sharing experiences among conservation and heritage organisations. Discussions included the role of young trustees and the importance of building capacity for future leadership within trusts. Representatives from several UK Overseas Territories were also present, including delegates from the Cayman Islands and St Helena, providing an opportunity to strengthen connections and discuss ongoing and potential areas of collaboration.

UKOTCF's Dr Jodey Peyton undertook a visit to the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla in January and February 2026. The visit allowed also engagement with members of the Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) in the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla. During the visits, biological recording was undertaken using the iNaturalist app,

contributing additional observations and data from the territories visited as well as an opportunity to meet with organisations working in the UKOTs.

UKOTCF participated in the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) stakeholder-day and plenary meeting held in Manchester in February 2026, where delegates from around the world came together to advance scientific assessments and recommendations on biodiversity and ecosystem services. IPBES 12 provided a valuable forum for sharing insights, strengthening the science-policy interface, and discussing key issues such as biodiversity-loss, ecosystem-restoration, and the integration of nature-related considerations into decision-making. During the week, the *IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment* report was finalised, examining how businesses depend on, and impact, nature. Approved by representatives from over 150 countries, this first of its kind global assessment highlights the deep interconnections between the private sector and biodiversity, setting out actionable insights for how companies, investors and policymakers can measure, manage and reduce harmful impacts while promoting nature positive practices. This report links well to our ambitions to connect more with corporates to support work in the UKOTs and will hopefully drive more interest in EcoMatch. The IPBES Business and Biodiversity Assessment, officially titled *Methodological Assessment of the Impact and Dependency of Business on Biodiversity and Nature's Contributions to People* – is available on the IPBES site and can be accessed via the report's DOI and associated materials, including the Summary for Policymakers and full chapters, through the IPBES repository

UKOTCF continues to act as a bridge between grassroots conservation practitioners and high-level policy processes, ensuring that local experience informs national and international decision-making. Requests from researchers for interviews or perspectives on matters relating to the natural environment are often received. It always does its best to respond to such requests.

Acknowledgements

UKOTCF Council warmly thanks the many volunteers, partner organisations and individual supporters who contributed time, expertise and financial support throughout the year. We are particularly grateful to those who provide sustained voluntary leadership and institutional memory, and to our member and associate organisations across the UKOTs and CDs. The contribution of donated time remains substantial and critical to our effectiveness.

We also thank the UK Government's Biodiversity Challenge Funds, Garfield Weston Foundation, Joint Nature Conservation Committee and individual donors for their financial support. In particular, we are very grateful to: the British Association of Nature Conservationists (BANC); M&G Piel Inc., in memory of Lady Dace McCoy Ground; HM Government of Gibraltar; and Dr Mike & Mrs Ann Pienkowski – for sponsoring the publication of our forthcoming book on the nature of UKOTs & CDs and its conservation.

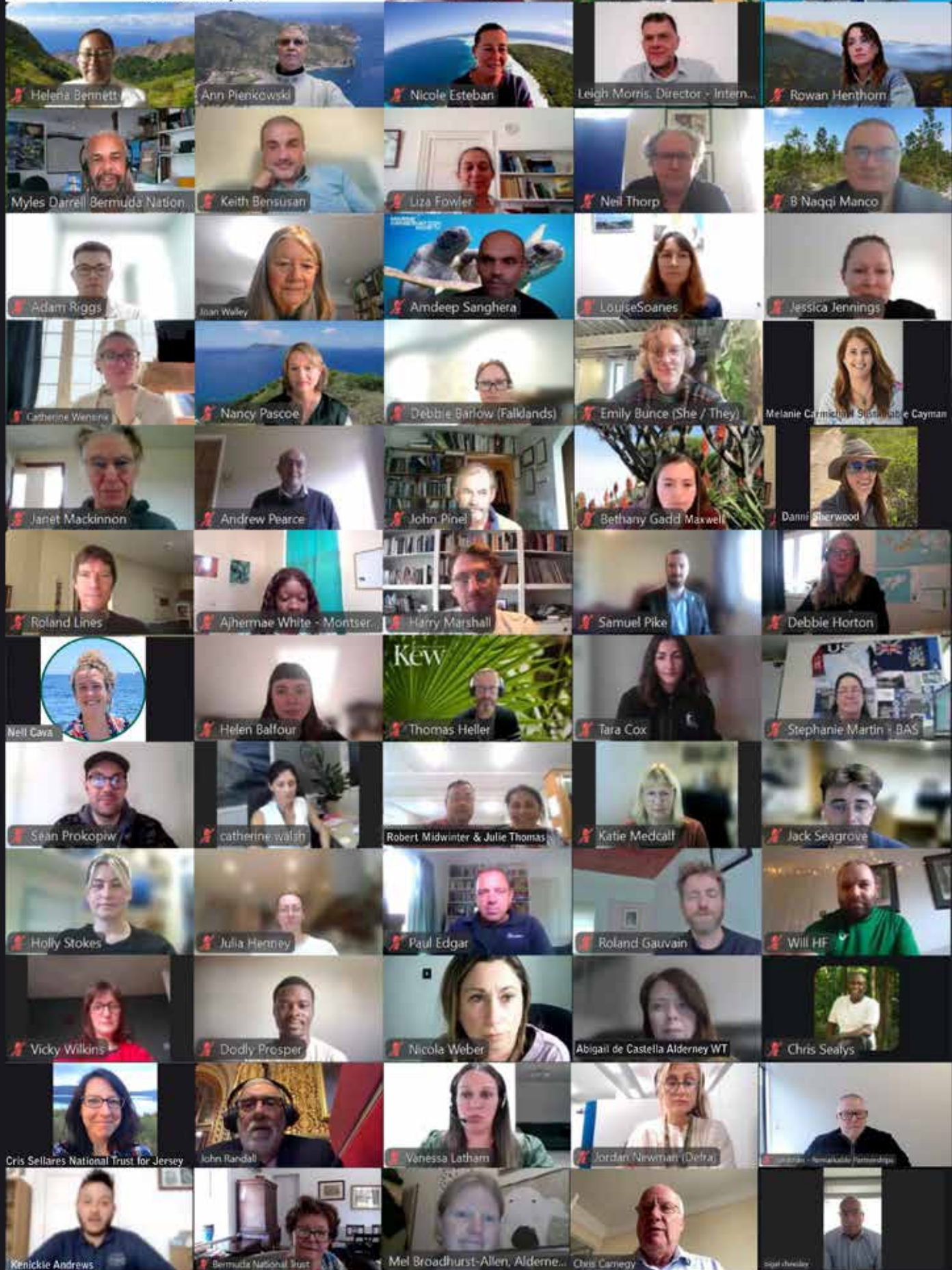
We were deeply saddened to lose another valued friend and supporter this year. Lady Dace McCoy Ground made a lasting contribution to conservation, and her dedication, insight, and generosity was sorely missed by all who worked with her. A full obituary celebrating her life and achievements is included in *Forum News* 63, highlighting the many ways she championed biodiversity, community engagement, and environmental stewardship throughout her years of involvement, and supplemented in *Forum News* 64. We would like to express great thanks too for a generous donation from M&G Piel Inc in memory of Lady Dace McCoy Ground

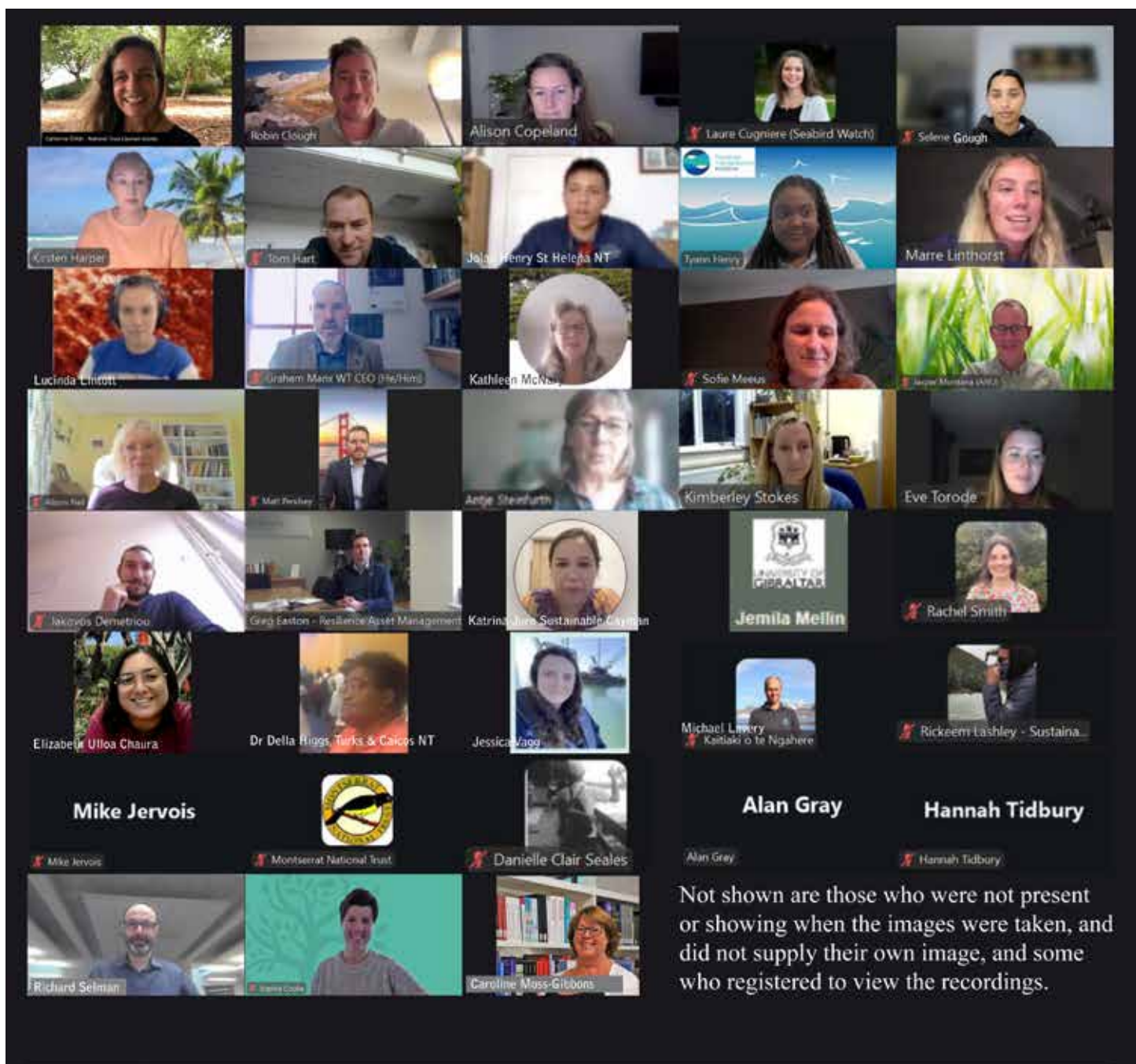
Following two pages: Some of the participants in UKOTCF's conference 2025



UKOTCF's 7th conference on
conservation and sustainability
in UK Overseas Territories,
Crown Dependencies and other
small island entities
By Zoom
13th to 16th October 2025

Some Participants





Not shown are those who were not present or showing when the images were taken, and did not supply their own image, and some who registered to view the recordings.

We are pleased to acknowledge financial support for this conference from anonymous donors and these following organisations:



UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2026

	2026 Unrestricted Funds	2026 Designated Funds	2026 Restricted Funds	2026 Total Funds	2025 Total Funds
Incoming Resources					
Voluntary Income	164,288	69	67,139	231,496	166,732
Investment Income	1,956	4,930	-	6,886	3,789
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities					
Project Income	828		157,681	158,509	2,133
Total Incoming Resources	167,072	4,999	224,820	396,891	172,654
Resources Expended					
Charitable Activities	157,578		227,480	387,900	141,409
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	11,121		2,000-	13,121	10,422
Total Resources Expended	168,4991		229,480	401,021	151,831
Net incoming/outgoing resources	(1,427		(4660)	(4,130)	20,823
Transfers between funds					-240,544
Gain (loss) on revaluation of investments		10,457		10,4574	
Net Movement in funds	(1,4271	12,414	(4660)	6,327	-219,721
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2025	165,420	304,130	16,872	486,422	385,141
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2026	163,995	316,544	12,212	492,749	165,420

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time and expenses of £187,970 (2025: £243,835).

Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

We would like to start this report with our deepest condolences to the family of Lady Dace Ground, who passed away in autumn 2025. As well as the Chairman of the Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG), Dace was a UKOTCF Council member and passionate supporter of conservation on the UKOTs. She is much missed.

WCWG held four online meetings via Zoom, in May, September and December 2025 and March 2026. As with all the UKOTCF working groups, the WCWG continues to provide links between 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. One area of concern expressed by many WCWG members was the continuing uncertainty of the Darwin Plus grant provision. Other areas of common concern included invasive species, inappropriate built development and habitat-loss. On a positive note, community-engagement and raising public awareness have contributed to some conservation successes, for example cat-management in the Cayman Islands. The reports below give a few examples of the hard work by colleagues in the Wider Caribbean UKOTs.

Anguilla

In February, visiting experts from the UK and the Caribbean gave an opportunity for Anguilla National Trust to show-case the exceptionally important environmental work that is being undertaken. The visitors were there as part of a horizon-scanning workshop with local experts to identify potential future invasive species to Anguilla. This workshop is just a part of the work on invasive-species management on Anguilla. For more than ten years Anguilla National Trust has been working to reduce the impacts of invasive species. Other news from Anguilla included reporting on the Fountain National Park. The Fountain National Park is enclosed by a pest-proof, storm-resistant fence, is invasive species-free and is a critically important sanctuary for some of Anguilla's native and most at-risk species, including a rare snake. Anguilla National Trust also hosted a special private screening of the wildlife documentary *Saint Lucia: Into The Wild*, with film producer Lyndon John (RSPB). The video was a homage to the amazing biodiversity in St Lucia. As part of a project, run by the Anguilla National Trust in collaboration with the Fisheries Unit



Stone wall built for conservation provides a home for endemic reptiles at Anguilla National Trust Fountain National Park

in the Department of Natural Resources and Dr Matthew Witt from the University of Exeter, marine scientists have installed listening stations in the waters around Anguilla to track signals from tagged Caribbean reef sharks.

Bermuda

Bermuda National Trust is working with the Government on several invasive-species initiatives for the island, including the recent discovery of fire-ants. They are working also, together with the Species Recovery Trust and Buglife, to deliver a project to update an inventory on the invertebrates of the island. This work is being led by Danni Sherwood, Senior Conservation Officer for the Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation Project who visited the island last year to undertake surveys and engage in multiple events with the public. Each year there is a Youth Climate Summit in Bermuda, and 2025 saw their largest ever turnout with several 100 trees being planted. This event was



UKOTCF and NPTVI on Sage Mountain, Tortola, BVI

supported financially by a new charitable foundation called The Roots. Bermuda National Trust, with the Buy Back Bermuda campaign, opened a new reserve, High Point Nature Reserve, to the public. It continues to engage volunteers in reserve-management, and the community and schools more widely with many events, such as the Annual Children's Walk.

British Virgin Islands

The National Parks Trust for the Virgin Islands has been running a hugely successful People & Skills project that is seeing the upskilling of several staff in the organisation in plant-conservation techniques. NPTVI also finished two Darwin Main projects in 2026, one looking at managing invasive species on some of the outer islands, and the other that developed biodiversity metrics for BVI: a comprehensive plant-checklist; and sequences of the DNA of all the angiosperms for BVI, enabling them to produce a tree of life. This makes it possible to look at the phylogenetic relationships between different species, and understand which species contribute most to the biodiversity in BVI and where that contribution is happening. The project also assessed for red-listing the entire flora of the Islands.

Visitor centres impacted by Hurricane Irma have now re-opened, with new merchandising to generate further income. Trail-maps and interpretive signage, developed by Colin and Debbie Clubbe, have been installed in the botanic garden and Sage and Gorda Peaks.

Cayman Islands

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands, the Department of Environment and other stakeholders have been tackling the problem of cat-predation on the endemic iguanas and globally important seabird colonies, with support from the community, thanks to an effective public-awareness campaign.

The Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Garden, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Sustainability and Environment, opened a native-plant nursery, through a Darwin Local grant in 2026. This will support further the plant-conservation work in the Cayman Islands. following a public consultation process that showed a lot of public support. Hemmington Forest on Cayman Brac is set to become the Cayman Islands' first formally designated national park. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands held a COP30 Talk in 2025. This free event was hosted by COP30 Youth Ambassadors, Amber Ebanks and Soleil Parkinson, as well as Dejea Lyons, who represented the Cayman Islands at the annual international climate conference that took place in Belem, Brazil.

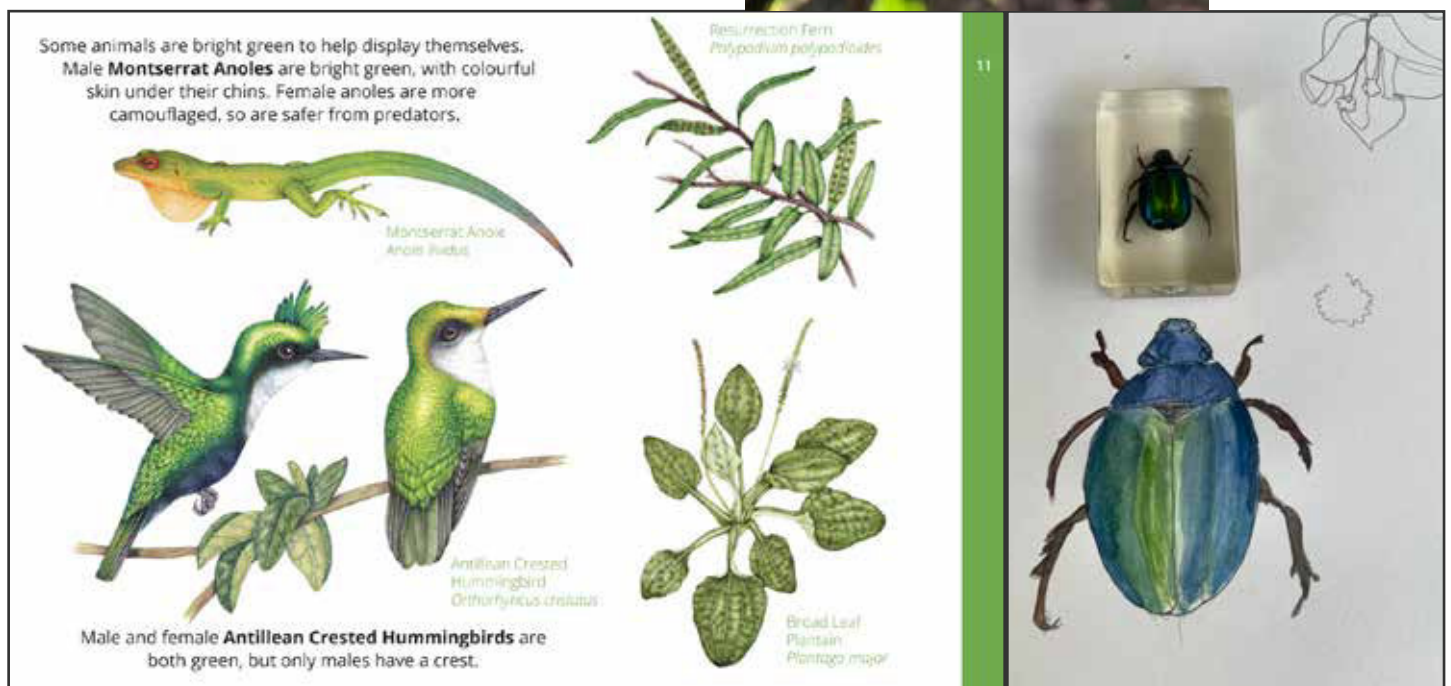
Montserrat

2026 saw the final months of the *Biodiversity and Wellbeing Toolkit* project



(led by Montserrat National Trust and UKOTCF) that focused on developing and disseminating a range of practical resources to support engagement and learning around biodiversity and wellbeing. Jodey Peyton (UKOTCF), Sofie Meeus and Quentin Groom (Meise Botanic Garden) worked with Montserrat National Trust and the Department of

Stick-insect in dry forest on Montserrat, with Jodey Peyton and Quentin Groom surveying in background.



Left: example page from the Montserrat Colouring and Activity Booklet.
Right: from art classes by Lizzie Harper in February 2025 as part of DPLUS192

Environment to develop further the Montserrat National Herbarium. In March 2026, UKOTCF attended the Montserrat National Trust's AGM and received an award for 30 years of service to Montserrat's biodiversity through its conservation work. Island Solutions is running a Darwin Local project on the bats of Montserrat. This one-year project is seeking information on the bats species present and their locations. Montserrat Volcano Observatory is a partner in Ex-X: Expecting the Unexpected, a major international research project led by the University of Bristol. The project aims to improve the detection and understanding of dangerous escalations in volcanic activity and includes work on Soufrière Hills Volcano as well as other volcanic systems in the Eastern Caribbean. Finally, Mike and Ann Pienkowski were invited to, and attended, the Montserrat Memorial Service on 26 June, held in the Westminster Methodist Central Hall, London, commemorating the loss of life caused by the eruption of the Soufrière Hills Volcano, and celebrating the recovery since. As well as being an occasion for reflection, it was also very uplifting and joyful.

Turks and Caicos Islands

The government native-plant nursery is currently under construction at the government farm which means that plants for pine-reforestation and other native-plant protocols and conservation can be grown. This work will incorporate also material produced by the UKOTCF-led *Wonderful Water* Environmental Education project. Several delegates from both Government and the National Trust are planning to attend the *Botanical Bridges* Conference in the Dominican Republic where they will meet other UKOT delegates (e.g. attendees from the Bermuda Zoological Society) and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew UKOTs team.

The TC Reef Fund has acquired new premises for their coral biobank, raising large amounts of funding from businesses and the local community to enable this. Sponsorship from rum businesses enable their research work on East Caicos reefs to continue. In addition, TCRF's successful public education and awareness programmes continue. The Turks and Caicos National Trust has been working hard to re-open successfully their historic cultural and important biodiversity sites, which had been impacted by financial constraints caused by covid restrictions.

Report of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

The Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) held three online meetings via Zoom, in May and October 2025 and January 2026. Below is a summary for each of UKOTs; further information can be found on the UKOTCF website.

Ascension

There has been a lot of activity in the marine team on Ascension, including the Annual Review of the MPA Marine Management Plan and the continuation of the acoustic array monitoring for different shark species. It has also been busy on the terrestrial side, with 2025 marking the 20th Anniversary of the Green Mountain National Park. Dr Adam Sharp visited in 2025, as part of the Supporting Atlantic Territories Invertebrate Conservation Project to help set up monitoring for invertebrates in the newly designated protected areas on the north and south coasts. The endemic plant team has been surveying for rare endemic ferns, receiving training from Kew's *in vitro* propagation specialists to support the conservation of the Critically Endangered ferns. Ascension Island Government (AIG) continues work with CABI on invasive-plant management.

British Antarctic Territory

Amongst current research, a new project started to map the current and changing biodiversity around Rothera Station on the western Antarctic Peninsula. This project has a focus on understanding how much carbon is drawn out of the atmosphere by the animals living on the sea-floor. Polar scientists issued a stark warning, as part of a conference held at the Royal Society in September 2025, that dramatic and extreme changes in Antarctica are happening faster than expected. They warned that the consequences of these changes will have a global impact. UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) Head of Buildings and Conservation, Ruth Mullett, travelled with expert consultant Gordon Macdonald to the Antarctic Peninsula to collect a range of data at five designated historic sites, including four managed by UKAHT as part of project *A climate change risk assessment for Antarctic heritage*, which aims to understand better the vulnerabilities of heritage sites to the impacts of climate-change.

British Indian Ocean Territory

The Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) was successful with its Darwin bid to deliver the *Healthy Islands Healthy Reef* programme by carrying out a rat-eradication across four islands in the northeast Peros Banos group. The work was done using heavy-lift drones by a company that came from New Zealand, along with Dr Grant Harper, a rat-eradication expert. They undertook their first trip in 2025. Alongside the baiting work, baseline surveys for plants and feeding damage from invertebrates were also carried out. CCT held a members' talk on plants in the Chagos by Kew's Dr Colin Clubbe in October. ZSL launched a data-platform, working with Havard Dataverse to signpost all published and unpublished data-sets for

the Chagos Archipelago. The Manta Trust has been continuing its work researching mobulids in the Indian Ocean and training trainers in mobulid identification techniques.

Falkland Islands

Falklands Conservation won a Darwin Strategic grant for the New Island Restoration Project. The Falkland Islands Government (FIG) Environment Department is a partner, together with RSPB. The project aims to eradicate rats, mice, rabbits and cats using aerial bait-drops. It is the first time that such a large eradication will be attempted in the Falklands. The Hill Cove Mountains National Park was designated officially on 30 September 2025. Located on West Falkland, the 12,000 hectares of remote mountainous terrain provide space for people to access



Front page of issue 63 of Chagos Conservation Trust's Chagos News, reporting the recent expedition work.

the outdoors and protect over half of all native plant species that occur in the Falklands. The Falkland Islands Pollution Prevention and Waste Management Strategy was approved in August 2025 and will enable solutions to waste-management be put in place. FIG updated its Avian influenza Falkland Islands Government Biosecurity Guidance Booklet. SAERI PhD students' ongoing research ranges from looking at coastal zooplankton to the invasion ecology of earwigs.

Pitcairn

CEFAS led a successful expedition to Pitcairn, looking at a range of different systems, including: corals, collecting samples to understand the coral's symbiotic algae and explore their adaptability to climate-change; mapping to validate satellite-based reef-habitat classifications; exploring the biogeochemical status of surface waters, which can be indicative of ecosystem functioning and health; fish populations; habitat-use and ecosystem dynamics; and local seabird populations to show the important role these birds play in maintaining island-biodiversity. CEFAS ran also a series of webinars around research on Pitcairn and the Marine Science Base. There is increasing interest in the native and endemic plant populations on Pitcairn and the outer islands, and it is hoped this will continue in the next year.

Saint Helena

UKOTCF congratulates its former Council member, Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks on her election as Chief Minister of St Helena.

On the terrestrial side, St Helena received funding approval for their *Cloud Forest* Darwin project; this will mean that the project can continue for the next three years. This project will include invasive-plant

management and removal, and continue the work on water-security. 2026 saw the start of the *Wirebird Census*, which was part of the three-year Grasslands project that finished in March. Work has started on monitoring coastal seabirds using drones and AI. There were several publications on invertebrates on St Helena in the last year, including on the discovery of eight new *Opogona* (moth) species and a checklist of stowaway spiders. The whale shark surveys are continuing and St Helena National Trust is working with a consortium of researchers in the Atlantic to monitor their movements. The second MPA Marine Management Plan Annual Report was released – another significant milestone in the ongoing commitment to protect and enhance this important area. The Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) has digitised over 120 volumes of books dating from 1834.

South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

GSGSSI published a new Terrestrial Protected Areas Research and Monitoring Plan in June that will help to guide scientific activities on the islands. Work is ongoing on managing invasive non-native plants in South Georgia, with the Indigena team. On the marine side, sound-traps were deployed in Cumberland Bay both to monitor presence of whales and also look at how ship-noise may impact wildlife in the area. Additionally, there was more research undertaken as part of the Hungry Humpbacks project led by BAS. The giant A23a iceberg, the largest and oldest in the world (weighing nearly a trillion tonnes), split from Antarctica's Filchner Ice Shelf in 1986. This iceberg has been drifting with the currents of the Southern Ocean towards South Georgia since 2020 but appears to now be grounded. SGHT hosted a *Whale of a Weekend* event in June 2025. This event featured a variety of activities from creative workshops to science-themed talks.



Whale Shark Rhincodon typus feeding in plankton-rich waters surrounding St Helena, taking advantage of the island's productive marine ecosystem and accompanied by remoras (Echeneidae) that attach to its body, benefiting from leftover food and transportation (Flora Tomlinson-Pilley). This is one of the very many photos included in the book on The Nature of UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies in preparation for over 4 years and due for publication late in 2026.

Tristan da Cunha

The company Indigena has been working with RSPB on Inaccessible Island to remove invasive New Zealand Flax. A University of Exeter PhD

student, Becca Nicholls is undertaking her PhD looking at Porgi fish, as she is interested in understanding impacts of this invasive fish on the local ecosystem including the lobster populations.

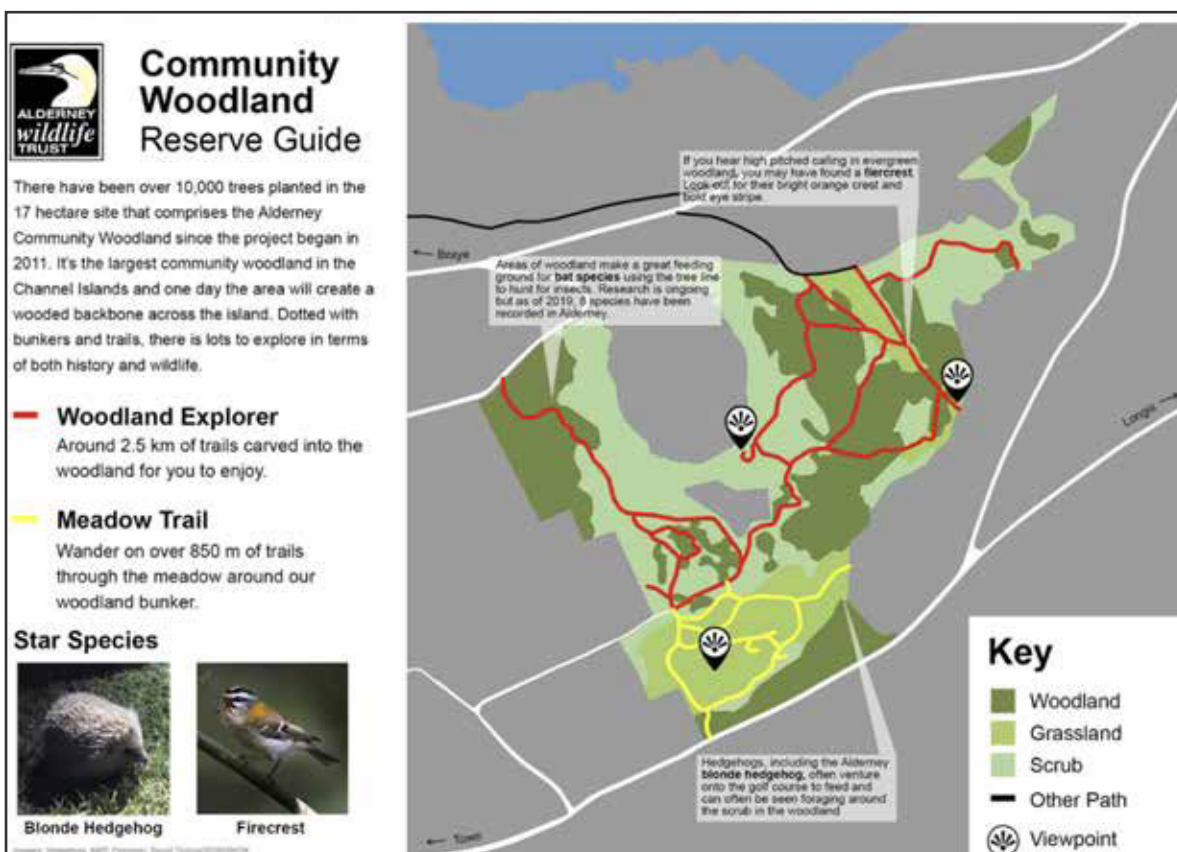


Photos from Becca Nicholls' field-work expedition to Tristan da Cunha November 2025 - March 2026. Left to right from top left: 1. The local fivefinger species, which is abundant; 2. The orange island's patrol vessel. 3. View of Tristan da Cunha from drone; 4. The Marine Research RHIB 'Jasus tristani' used during Becca's fieldwork; the equipment being lowered over the side is a Niskin bottle used for the eDNA water collection. 5. Northern Rockhopper penguin. 6. Boat being removed from the water due to the weather conditions of the island. Photos copyright Becca Nicholls and Rob Kelly.

Report of UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

Conservation collaboration across the European Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies includes shared learning, coordinated action, and practical-knowledge exchange. A key milestone was the 25th anniversary of the Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM), hosted for the first time in the Isle of Man, in September; this brought together practitioners, scientists, and policymakers from across the territories to share experience and develop common approaches to biodiversity challenges.

Alongside this, UKOTCF has continued to evolve its network through the development of new thematic working groups, including areas such as conservation horticulture and ant



From the website of Alderney Wildlife Trust



Minister for Environment, the Hon Prof John Cortes visited the site of the Nautilus Project's seagrass nursery at the North Mole, Gibraltar in November (Copyright HM Government of Gibraltar)..

ecology, reflecting the growing need for specialist collaboration across taxa and disciplines. These groups provide a platform for targeted expertise-sharing and joint problem-solving across island systems.

There has also been growing interest in strengthening youth engagement across the network. This includes exploration of new opportunities to connect young people across territories, building on initiatives such as the Manx Wildlife Trust's recently launched internship, which makes best use of a donation of a property on island to support early-career conservationists gain experience while minimising their living costs. These developments reflect a wider commitment to building capacity, fostering future conservation-leaders, and deepening long-term collaboration across island communities.

Alderney

Conservation work on Alderney is carried out by the Alderney Wildlife Trust, with a focus on seabirds, marine mammals and habitat-restoration. A full census of northern gannet colonies was completed for the first time since 2023. The results indicate a modest increase in numbers, with some variation across sites following previous impacts from avian influenza. Surveys combined traditional ground-counts with drone-technology, with productivity recorded at key sites such as Les Étacs. Following successful trials, drone-based monitoring is now being adopted as a standard method, and a formal protocol is being developed. Overall, it has been a positive year for seabirds, alongside continued grey seal monitoring using methodologies shared with other island partners.

Significant progress has also been made on the Alderney Wildlife Trust's 2025–2030 Sites and Reserves Strategy, including the development of a prioritised list of key habitats and species to guide future survey and conservation work. This will help strengthen long-term monitoring and improve understanding of ecological change. Work is underway also on a new Drone Code of Conduct to ensure responsible use around sensitive wildlife-sites, as well as the *Once in the Future Woodland* initiative, which aims to restore and expand resilient woodland habitats in response to local community-priorities and climate-change.

Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas

Research activity in the SBAs remains strong, with PhD researchers working at sites such as Akrotiri contributing to biodiversity studies, including insect ecology and invasive species research. Several students and collaborators presented their findings at events such as the UKOTCF conference, highlighting the continued importance of academic partnerships in advancing understanding of the region's ecosystems.

Gibraltar

Wildlife-monitoring has highlighted ongoing changes in key species. Yellow-legged gull populations, which have long been managed due to their proximity to the airport and wider environmental impacts, have shown a marked recent decline. This is believed to be linked in part to disease, and the situation is being monitored closely through continued annual surveys across both urban and natural areas.

Invasive species remain a major focus. The common myna *Acridotheres tristis* has established as breeding in Gibraltar, and targeted control measures are now being implemented to prevent further spread. Meanwhile, monitoring of the tiger mosquito *Aedes albopictus*, which were first recorded in Gibraltar in 2018, continues, supported by the UK Health Security Agency, with current data suggesting populations remain stable but requiring ongoing vigilance due to public health risks.

Significant progress has been made also in marine habitat-restoration, particularly seagrass-recovery. Funded through Darwin Plus support, work by the Nautilus Project, is underway to re-establish historic seagrass-beds such as *Posidonia* and *Zostera*, with experimental nursery systems and planned transplants forming part of a longer-term restoration and potential Marine Protected Area approach.

Guernsey

The extension of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to Guernsey was finalised, marking the culmination of a long process and strengthening of the island's alignment with global biodiversity targets. This achievement is an important step forward for environmental governance.

Marine and coastal monitoring have continued to expand, including a two-year volunteer-led seabird-survey programme conducted at sea in collaboration with French partners. The Balearic shearwater has been adopted as a flagship species, while broader monitoring records also other seabirds and marine wildlife to build long-term baseline data for the Channel Islands.

Invasive-species management has been a major focus, with Asian hornet numbers remaining high across the region, although coordinated trapping-efforts have improved queen-capture rates compared with previous years. Work continues on other invasive non-native species, alongside



development of a strengthened marine biosecurity plan. This comprehensive guidance covers ballast-water, biofouling, and invasive-species risks across fisheries, aquaculture and recreational boating, and forms

Balearic Shearwater.
Photo: Chris Gomersall, 2020VISION



Liz Charter, Isle of Man, speaks on fungi at IEM.

the basis of a number of publications.

Progress is being made also on Marine Spatial Planning, supported by updated habitat-mapping and blue-carbon assessments, which are helping to inform future decisions on marine protected areas and offshore development.

On land, new agricultural support schemes are encouraging more regenerative farming practices through biodiversity-focused payments and advisory support.

The Guernsey Nature Commission plays an important coordinating role in advancing biodiversity-monitoring, conservation-planning, and cross-sector engagement across the island, supporting delivery of key environmental priorities.

Isle of Man

Work has advanced on the *Manx Blue Carbon* project, extended to the end of 2025, with findings already informing future policy and marine-management. Research into seabed-habitats, including the Western Irish Sea Mud Belt, have highlighted the ecological importance of temporarily closed areas, including increases in species such as *Nephrops* (Dublin Bay prawns). These findings are supporting discussions on potential long-term marine protection-measures and improved fisheries-management.

Other research activity includes surveys of lichens, grasslands, and peat-habitats, many of which have revealed internationally significant biodiversity-value.

New monitoring, biosecurity-measures, and invasive-species action-plans are being strengthened to address some of the major challenges on island.

A new Marine Nature Reserve centred on important eelgrass-habitats is being considered along the east coast. Alongside this, the Island's Biodiversity Strategy is being updated to align with the Global Biodiversity Framework, with Biodiversity Action Plans now covering around 60 priority species and habitats.

On land, the Manx Wildlife Trust has significantly increased its land-holdings and is working actively towards the Island's "30 by 30" nature-protection target, alongside major woodland-restoration and tree-planting programmes. Monitoring projects report encouraging recovery in species such as Manx shearwaters, curlews and grey seals, following successful invasive-species eradication-efforts on key sites such as the Calf of Man.

Offshore wind and marine policy-development are also progressing, alongside continued efforts to integrate environmental data into long-term planning.

Jersey

A central focus has been the emerging State of Nature Report for Jersey due in 2026, which aims to provide the first comprehensive overview of current knowledge on species and habitats. While progress has been



Peatland restoration on the Isle of Man

strong, delivery has been influenced by elections. Engagement with NGOs is ongoing to shape the final structure and content.

Marine conservation has seen important developments, including the launch of updated Ramsar Site management-plans (2025–2029) and ongoing work to strengthen marine protected areas, which now cover a significantly larger proportion of Jersey's waters. Monitoring and enforcement efforts continue alongside research into maerl-beds, eelgrass-habitats, and eDNA-techniques.

At the same time, several environmental challenges remain under active review. These include contamination in water-systems with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) — a large group of man-made chemicals often called "forever chemicals", ongoing biosecurity risks such as foot-and-mouth-disease controls, and pressures on freshwater ecosystems such as St Ouen's Pond, where water-quality and fish-mortality have been concerns.

Broader initiatives include the emerging Jersey GeoPark project, green infrastructure planning, and habitat-connectivity work led by partners such as the National Trust. Across all areas, collaboration between government, NGOs and research institutions remains central, with growing emphasis on coordinated monitoring, data-sharing, and long-term ecosystem-resilience.

Sark

Progress has been made in conservation and habitat-management on Sark, reflecting strong collaboration between local groups, government and external partners.

An amendment to the Cutting of Hedges (Sark) Ordinance, 2009, was passed by Chief Pleas, formally protecting roadside-hedges by banning cutting during the bird breeding-season (1 February to 31 August). A new "Summer Maintenance" period (1–25 June) has also been introduced, allowing careful trimming of banks and verges to a height of no less than 10 cm. This approach aims to support wildflowers and ground-nesting bees while controlling invasive species. La Société Sercquaise has long supported these measures and welcomed their adoption.

Work to address Asian hornet incursions has continued, with coordinated support from Guernsey specialists. Five nests have been successfully destroyed, including one requiring a specialised coastal operation. A public fundraising effort has also supported the purchase of radio-tracking equipment to improve nest-detection.

In parallel, habitat-mapping work comparing current data with surveys from a decade ago has provided new insights, including a reassessment of species-rich grasslands using the UKHab classification system. Seabird monitoring is also advancing, with drone and AI methods supported by external funding. Marine surveys have identified previously unrecorded eelgrass-beds, contributing to discussions on strengthening marine protection around the island.

Report of the UKOTCF Ant Working Group

The UKOTCF Ant Working Group met five times between April 2025 and March 2026. These meetings are designed to provide a platform for UKOT and CD personnel to meet and review concerns around invasive ants and share methodologies and research as it arises. The membership of the group is primarily comprised of experts from UKOTs, CDs and UK, but includes also a wider membership of experts from around the world, including Australia, Argentina, French Polynesia, Greece and Hawai'i. Recent discussions have indicated a strong interest in applying for funding for a capacity-building and awareness raising project on ant-biosecurity and the Chairs and Secretary are exploring this.



Important ant taxa found in Akrotiri peninsula, Cyprus: the non-native *Monomorium exiguum* (photo: Prof. Lech Borowiec) (A), the endemic *Temnothorax akrotiriensis* (photo: Prof. Lech Borowiec) (B), the endemic *Oxyopomyrmex pygmalioni* (AntWeb CASENT0922693; photo: Michele Esposito) (C), and the invasive non-native *Wasmannia auropunctata* (photo: Prof. Lech Borowiec) (D).

Report of the UKOTCF Conservation Horticulture Working Group

This group was created by Council towards the end of the reported year, as addressed in other parts of this report.

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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.

You can HELP

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www.ukotcf.org.uk/become-a-friend-of-the-ukots/

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