



# UKOTCF

## Europe Territories Working Group (ETWG) e-Newsletter

October 2016

Number 4

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### Inter-Island Environment Meeting 2016

This year's Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) was held on Guernsey at the impressive Castle Cornet, St Peter Port. With the general theme being 'designations', UKOTCF Conservation Officer Sarah Barnsley, had the chance to hear about the diverse conservation projects of the Channel Islands. The conference was the latest in a series of meetings that began in 2000. These aim to bring together conservation practitioners, government representatives, and anybody interested in the environment, to discuss both progress and issues that require addressing



*Castle Cornet – location of the IIEM 2016 conference (Photo: Sarah Barnsley)*

The keynote speech was given by Paul Buckley of the RSPB, who gave an update on the latest *State of Nature Report*, published the week prior to IIEM. The report is the product of a partnership of organisations, working together to deliver an assessment as to the status of biodiversity in the UK and its Overseas Territories. It provides a stark warning, with figures indicating that 56% species have shown a decline since 1970, and only 44% have shown an increase. There is hope however, and the report is careful to note this. For example, the UK is exceptional in terms of the amount of volunteer work that is carried out.



*Herm, Jethou & the Humps Ramsar Site (Photo: Sarah Barnsley)*



*Herm Island with view of Sark in the distance (Photo: Sarah Barnsley)*

The following conference presentations were a clear indication that the Channel Islands have stepped up to the mark in terms of trying to address the challenges facing our natural world. It was inspiring to hear about the variety of protected areas in the Islands, from Sark being a Dark Sky Community, to the newly designated Ramsar Site: Herm, Jethou & the Humps. Everyone had the opportunity to visit the latter on the first day of the conference – a chance to experience the uniqueness of Herm Island and also the warmth and hospitality of the hosts and guides.

It was exciting also to hear about the education and awareness-raising projects in the islands. These included Jersey's Barn Owl Conservation Network providing students with the opportunity to help install owl and kestrel boxes in their school grounds, and the Alderney Wildlife Trust's (AWT) LIVE project which provides online learning. Through this project, children can enjoy viewing footage from live Puffin webcams and have their questions answered through class video chats with the AWT.



*John Pinel (Head of Natural Environment / Principal Ecologist for the States of Jersey) presenting at IEM 2016 (Photo: Sarah Barnsley)*

The importance of getting children outdoors and exploring nature was highlighted during the meeting as being an area of concern. Projects like those outlined above play a key role in enabling that to happen, and people across society must continue to get involved so that the importance is truly understood. This essential message was reiterated by Roland Gauvain of the Alderney Wildlife Trust in the conference summary: there is a need for engagement with stakeholders, schools, etc. Other points identified were the need for robust and appropriate data as well as the need for greater links between the Channel Islands.

## Gannet Tagging In Alderney

Alderney Wildlife Trust's collaborative Track A Gannet (T.A.G) project uses miniature GPS tracking devices to follow the movements of individual birds from the island's Northern Gannet colonies. The devices use mobile phone data to transmit the positions of the birds, allowing researchers to build a picture of the birds' life cycles, feeding habits and interactions. This information is crucial to our understanding of the potential impacts of offshore developments on seabirds. Normally, gannets fly between 300-500km on a fishing expedition. However in June 2016 one bird undertook an epic journey of 2,700km from Alderney to Scandinavian waters and back in less than a week – the longest foraging trip ever recorded for an adult of this species! To read more about the project and view a real-time map of the tagged birds, visit

[www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk/t-a-g/](http://www.teachingthroughnature.co.uk/t-a-g/)



*A tagged gannet (Photo: Jenni Godber)*

## Gibraltar Balloon Release



*National Day balloon release in 2013. The release of 30,000 balloons will no longer be a part of National Day celebrations in Gibraltar (Photo: InfoGibraltar)*

Gibraltar has been celebrating its National Day since 10th September 1992 and a mass balloon release has been the highlight of the National Day celebrations for many years. In April it was announced that the release of tens of thousands of red and white balloons would no longer be a part of the celebrations. The decision comes after nearly a decade of campaigning by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and other local organisations to end the polluting practice. UKOTCF also lent its support to the campaign.

## Akrotiri Marsh Restoration – an update

The 2-year Darwin Initiative-funded project to restore a flagship wetland in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri is entering its final 6 months. Akrotiri Marsh, which covers an area of around 150 hectares, has been unmanaged for the last 20 years, resulting in the overexpansion of reeds and the consequent loss of bird and plant diversity. Through the implementation of on-site conservation actions as well as awareness raising actions and creation of visitor facilities, the project aims to increase economic activities for local people and act as an example for the future management of other wetlands. Recently the project has been working to revive the traditional practice of soft basketry weaving, in collaboration with project partner Akrotiri Environmental



*Harvesting sedges and rushes from Akrotiri marsh for use in traditional basket weaving (Photo: Akrotiri Marsh Project)*

Education Centre. Basket weaving used to provide income for residents of Akrotiri village, although it has been replaced with other contemporary items in recent times. The practice contributes to the conservation of the wetland, through sustainable harvesting of natural materials. Through the conservation of basketry-plant habitats, running training lessons and the collection of basketry materials, the project has transferred valuable knowledge to a new generation in order to prevent the loss of this traditional craft and help restore valuable wetland habitat. More information about the project can be found at [www.akrotirimarsh.org/en/home](http://www.akrotirimarsh.org/en/home)

## 2016 State of Nature Report

This year's State of Nature report has for the first time included contributions from the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. First published in 2013, the report is produced by the RSPB in collaboration with 25 research and conservation organisations, and gives an overview of both the state of nature and some of the conservation actions being undertaken across the UK. The report is available here:

[www.bto.org/sites/default/files/publications/state-of-nature-report-2016-uk\\_0.pdf](http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/publications/state-of-nature-report-2016-uk_0.pdf)

## Gibraltar's Gorham Cave Complex Receives UNESCO World Heritage Site Status

In July 2016 Gibraltar's Gorham Cave complex was inscribed on to UNESCO's World Heritage list. The steep limestone cliffs on the eastern side of the Rock contain four caves with archaeological and paleontological deposits that provide evidence of Neanderthal occupation over a span of more than 100,000 years. The Government of Gibraltar had its proposal for the cave complex to be included in the UK World Heritage Tentative List accepted in 2011, and intense research and preparatory activity has been undertaken since then to make the bid a success. The site provides exceptional evidence of Neanderthal cultural traditions, including the hunting of birds and marine animals for food, the use of feathers for ornamentation and the presence of abstract rock engravings. Scientific research on these sites has already contributed substantially to debates about Neanderthal and human evolution.



*Excavations in the back chamber of Gorham's Cave  
(Photo: Clive Finlayson, Gibraltar Museum)*

## Official Launch of Jersey National Park

In May 2016 Jersey National Park was officially launched through a series of events in conjunction with the Jersey Heritage Festival. The launch comes after 7 years of work and collaboration on the island to reach this final stage of designation, through public consultation, stakeholder workshops and the establishment of a Working Group. Jersey National Park extends over an area of approximately 30 miles (48km) of Jersey's coastline, Les Ecréhous,



*Jersey National Park area (Image: Jersey National Park website)*

Les Minquiers and Pierres De Lecq or Paternosters. National Park status recognises the intrinsic value of the island's environment, and provides residents and visitors with a unique opportunity to enjoy, preserve and take pride in a coastal environment steeped in history, and rich in agricultural and natural diversity. It is hoped that National Park status will boost interest in the island and allow Jersey to further realise its tourism potential through public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of natural surroundings. More information can be found at

<http://jerseynationalpark.com>