

# UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG) e-Newsletter

December 2009

Number 2

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## Marine Protected Area in BIOT: Public Consultation

**Welcome** to the second SOWG e-Newsletter, which is designed to keep you informed of activities related to UKOTs in the Southern Oceans. If you have any contributions or suggestions to make for subsequent issues, please send them to Catherine Quick [cquick@ukotcf.org](mailto:cquick@ukotcf.org).

## Marine Protected Area in British Indian Ocean Territory: Public Consultation

The Foreign Secretary, David Miliband has announced that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has published a consultation which will assess whether a Marine Protected Area is the right option for the future environmental protection of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Mr Miliband announced: "In March 2009, the Chagos Environment Network presented their vision of *The Chagos Archipelago: its Nature and the Future* which advocates the creation of one of the world's greatest natural conservation



areas. This is a remarkable opportunity for the UK to create one of the world's largest marine protected areas and double the global coverage of the world's oceans benefiting from full protection.

We want to use this consultation to help us assess whether a marine protected area is the right option for the

future environmental protection of the British Indian Ocean Territory. This document explains the issue on which we would like your views, and the ways in which you can send them to us. I strongly encourage you to participate in this consultation."

William Marsden, Chairman of the Chagos Conservation Trust, said "Britain has a rare opportunity to protect this marvelous, yet fragile, natural environment, by creating a conservation area comparable in importance with the Galapagos Islands or the Great Barrier Reef and of great benefit for people. We hope it will be very widely supported." Alistair Gammell of the Pew Environment Group

Website:  
[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)  
[www.chagos-trust.org](http://www.chagos-trust.org)

**Grant awarded for botanical  
species recovery work in  
Pitcairn**

Websites  
[www.botanicgardens.ie](http://www.botanicgardens.ie)  
[www.mbzspeciesconservation.org](http://www.mbzspeciesconservation.org)

**Darwin Initiative Overseas  
Territories Challenge Fund**

added "Establishing a large-scale protected area for the Chagos Islands and its waters would be a conservation legacy almost unrivalled in scale and significance anywhere in the world's oceans. The UK has the unique opportunity to protect an entire ecosystem and its marine life."

According to the FCO, if the proposed Marine Protected Area is established, around half of the highest quality coral reefs in the Indian Ocean would be safeguarded; if the entire proposed area were to be declared a no-take zone, this would establish the world's largest site with that status, more than doubling the global area with full protection.

Details of how to respond to the consultation (which closes on 12 February 2010) can be found in the full document at:  
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/21153320/mpa-consultation-101109>

Copies of *The Chagos Archipelago: its Nature and the Future* are available from the Chagos Conservation Trust: [www.chagos-trust.org](http://www.chagos-trust.org)

## Grant awarded for botanical species recovery work in Pitcairn

Noeleen Smyth from the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin has received a grant from the Mohammed Bin Zayed Conservation Fund for \$20,000 in order to continue species recovery work on Pitcairn. The work will focus on the Yellow Fatu, *Abutilon pitcairnense* (pictured) which is one of five species identified as



critically endangered on the island. For further information visit [www.botanicgardens.ie/herb/pitcairn.htm](http://www.botanicgardens.ie/herb/pitcairn.htm).

The MBZ fund is a significant philanthropic endowment established to: provide targeted grants to individual species conservation initiatives; recognise leaders in the field of species conservation;

and elevate the importance of species in the broader conservation debate.

For further information visit [www.mbzspeciesconservation.org](http://www.mbzspeciesconservation.org)

Congratulations Noeleen! This could potentially be a funding source for other UKOTs and should be discussed at the next SOWG meeting.

## Darwin Initiative Overseas Territories Challenge Fund

Applications are currently being invited for Scoping, Fellowship and UK Overseas Territories Challenge Fund grants under the UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Darwin Initiative. For further information on how to apply visit <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/apply/challenge>. The OT Challenge Fund "offers an opportunity to carry out longer-term and more ambitious scoping projects,

Website

[www.darwin.defra.gov.uk](http://www.darwin.defra.gov.uk)

### Ascension Conservation Quarterly

Website

[www.ascensionconservation.org](http://www.ascensionconservation.org)

### Book: A Penguin's World

Email

[furseal@horizon.co.fk](mailto:furseal@horizon.co.fk)

### OTEP Project Updates

designed both to assess the likely degree of success of a main project, and to carry out some pilot implementation work as well. This is intended to ensure that main projects are better grounded, and have a much greater chance of sustained success.”

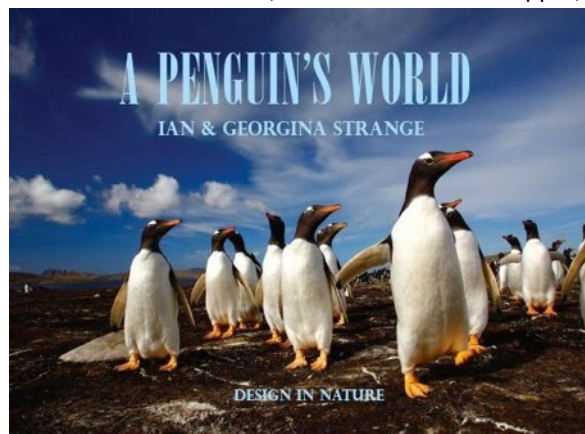
The deadline for proposals is February 19<sup>th</sup> 2010.

## Ascension Conservation Quarterly

The latest edition of Ascension Island Government Conservation Department's excellent newsletter has been published. Volume 27 includes articles on; volunteering, climate change and plant ecology, rat eradication on Tea Island, a seabird restoration update and much more. The newsletter is available to download from the AIG Conservation Department website [www.ascensionconservation.org](http://www.ascensionconservation.org). However, if you would like to subscribe free of charge to receive the newsletter directly, please send a request and your mailing address to [natasha.williams@ascension.gov.ac](mailto:natasha.williams@ascension.gov.ac)

## *A Penguin's World* by Ian Strange & Georgina Strange

*A Penguin's World* is a collection of photographs and descriptive text detailing the extraordinary lives of the six species of penguins found in the Falkland Islands. The chapters include an overview of the life cycles of several species found in the Falklands, such as the Rockhopper, Macaroni, Royal, Gentoo,



Magellanic and King penguin. The accompanying text demonstrates the importance of habitat in their breeding and foraging behaviour as well as some of the challenges that threaten all penguins' existence such as global changes in sea temperature and climate.

This A5 size, hardback book with dust jacket has 80 pages in full colour. It is available in the Falkland Islands, but copies are also available in the UK and postage overseas can be arranged. Please contact Ian Strange directly for more information [furseal@horizon.co.fk](mailto:furseal@horizon.co.fk). The cost is £9.99 / US\$18.00 / €12 plus any postage that may be required. ISBN: 978-0-9550708-2-2

## OTEP Project Updates

**Henderson Island, Pitcairn Islands: Preparations for rat control (PIT501).** Mike Brooke from the University of Cambridge recently returned from Henderson Island, where a previous OTEP-funded feasibility study and draft operational plan for the eradication of rats (PIT401) had highlighted three main areas of concern: the potential competition for bait between rats and land crabs (which occur at high densities in vegetation behind the island's beaches); the risk to the

Henderson rail as a non-target species arising from aerial bait drops; and the possible impact of bait on Henderson's endemic land snails. Over six weeks of fieldwork between August and September 2009, the expedition team tested different densities of non-toxic dyed bait and established that, despite high crab



densities (>1000 crabs per hectare), all rats were able to access and feed on bait pellets. After testing different techniques, the team had captured 20 Henderson rails and had successfully held these birds for four weeks in captivity, paving the way for a similar approach during a rat eradication (Photo: Mike Brooke, measuring and weighing one of the captive Henderson rails (photo © Nick Torr). Trials with toxic bait pellets and had revealed no significant snail mortalities, indicating that this group of animals was not at risk from

an eradication. These results had removed the last remaining obstacles for rat eradication, and the challenge is now to raise the necessary funds to carry out this priority operation.

Brief updates on the following projects; The Critical Species Programme, St Helena (STH501), Field Guides for St Helena (STH601), Managing alien plants on the outer islands, Tristan da Cunha (TDC403), Participatory Management Plans for Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island (TDC602), Plant Conservation Project, Falkland Islands (FAL401), Native Plant Programme, Falkland Islands (FAL601) can be found in the minutes of the SOWG meeting 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

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