



UKOTCF

Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) e-Newsletter

September 2013

Number 11

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Editorial

The production of this WCWG eNewsletter has been delayed for unavoidable logistical reasons, but WCWG has been meeting regularly, and the sharing of information and issues has continued, both through the minutes of meetings and informal exchanges of information. One of the major pieces of work which UKOTCF has undertaken over the last year has been the provision of evidence to the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Select Committee Inquiry into Environmental Sustainability in the Overseas Territory. In consultation with appropriate stakeholders, UKOTCF members and associates, UKOTCF has submitted a large amount of written evidence, and given oral evidence. The written and oral evidence (videos and transcripts) information is available from

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/sustainability-in-the-united-kingdom-overseas-territories/>

The Committee's final report is expected before the end of the year.

Some of the recent news and issues from the territories are reported in this eNewsletter. Comments and news items for future issues, and WCWG meeting discussions, are very welcome. Please email apienkowski@ukotcf.org

Ann Pienkowski, Secretary UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group.

Anguilla

Dog Island - an uncertain future?

WCWG has reported on the progress of the Rat Eradication Project on Dog Island, a proposed Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and one of the Caribbean's most important seabird islands, with nine breeding species including sooty terns, brown boobies, laughing gulls, magnificent frigatebirds, brown noddies, masked boobies, and red-billed tropic birds (see *WCWG eNewsletters 6, 8*). Regular monitoring since the end of the rat eradication programme has



Sooty Terns, Dog Island, Anguilla
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

not revealed any signs of rats, so it appears that the island is still rat-free. The Anguilla National Trust has been looking at the impacts that the rats had on Dog Island's biodiversity, with full nesting seabird, land bird and reptile and vegetation assessments. Results of the seabird surveys will be published later this year. The efforts of the many people and organisations involved in this project look to have been very successful.

So when Dog Island was advertised for sale by Private Islands Online <http://www.privateislandsonline.com/islands//dogislandanguilla> there was understandable concern about its future. The advertisement describes Dog Island thus:

Dog Island is approximately 500 acres in size, contains a fresh water well, a natural marina site and ½ mile long grass airstrip that would be an excellent airport when graded and paved. The island is of rock base, with all building sites located well above sea level. The beach is considered by many to be one of the best in the Caribbean.



The master development plan includes 95 large (1.5 - 3.5 acres each) home sites and a hotel as a suggestion as to how the island might be developed.

With so much of Anguilla already in private ownership, and its environment already heavily impacted by human activities, the possibility of the loss of any of the biodiversity value of Dog Island is worrying.

Anguilla National Trust Save the Sand Initiative



Sand for Sale
Photo: Anguilla National Trust

The effect of sand-mining on coastal ecosystems in the Caribbean can be devastating, and many Caribbean countries, including Anguilla, have legislation to control sand-mining. Sand-mining in Anguilla is illegal and sand-mining activities are punishable by law under Anguilla’s Beach Protection Act, but it still occurs across the island. The effect of illegal sand-mining on the beaches of Anguilla has been highlighted previously by the Anguilla National Trust. While in some instances, sand has been removed from a number of beaches through the use of backhoes and trucks, there are also many cases of sand being removed by individuals by bucket. The latter may be due to the difficulty in obtaining the smaller amounts of sand that may be needed for small-scale construction. Therefore, in an effort to reduce illegal sand-mining activity, the Anguilla National Trust is currently selling sand, sourced legally outside of Anguilla from a reputable retailer, at cost, to individuals who require relatively small amounts of sand for construction purposes. This enterprise is part of the Save the Sand Campaign, a public-private initiative with the Sand Bar and the Anguilla National Trust. Save the Sand seeks to raise awareness about the importance of protecting and preserving Anguilla’s coastal resources, especially the beaches.

The Anguilla National Trust Facebook page has further information on this, and the many other activities which ANT carry out.

Bermuda

Governor Fergusson and Sharon Vesey cut the ribbon.

Vesey Nature Reserve opened

Photo: Bermuda Audubon Society

The Bermuda National Trust and Bermuda Audubon Society continue to pursue protection of Bermuda’s natural and cultural heritage through the very successful Buy Back Bermuda campaign. The new Vesey Nature Reserve was officially opened on Earth Day 2013. This 8-acre property was donated to Buy Back Bermuda by Sharon Vesey in 2009, and since then has been restored as a nature reserve.



The Bermuda National Trust August Newsletter (available to download at <http://www.bnt.bm/documents/AUGNEWSLETTER2013.pdf>) contains further information about this, amongst other items, including annual awards and the Summer 2013 summer camp.

More photos can be viewed on the Bermuda Audubon Society Facebook page

Bermuda Skinks at Chester Zoo

Bermuda Skinks are critically endangered, and declining. They are Bermuda’s only native lizard, and are found in isolated pockets around Bermuda and the offshore islands. These skinks cannot climb trees or plants, because they do not have friction pads, only small claws. They are susceptible to becoming trapped in discarded glass bottles. Destruction of habitat and introduced predators, such as cats, are significant causes of the skinks’ decline. To help



protect the future of the species, 12 skinks have been taken to Chester Zoo, UK, for captive breeding. The objective is to develop a blueprint for captive breeding of skinks, so that in the future a captive breeding programme can be implemented in Bermuda, leading to re-introductions to the wild. Alongside the captive breeding programme, habitat protection, restoration and eradication of invasive species are ongoing to support the skinks on Bermuda, and to ensure that any future re-introductions will have a suitable habitat to return to.

British Virgin Islands

Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society Investigates Frigatebirds

In 2011 Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society first raised awareness of the mortality of frigate birds on Great Tobago, due to accidental entanglement in fishing line (see WCWG eNewsletter 7). JVDPS is now looking at threats to these birds and how to minimize number of deaths in the globally important colony on Great Tobago. To date, JVDPS has started interviews with fishermen, is regularly visiting the colony to remove debris and is working on GPS and satellite-tracking. The latter is part of the Darwin Plus funded project “Using seabirds to inform Caribbean marine planning” being conducted in partnership with Liverpool University, RSPB and the Anguilla National Trust.

BVI Environmental Profiles

Island Resources Foundation (IRF) has now completed the environmental profile for Anegada, following the production of those for Jost Van Dyke and Virgin Gorda. All three profiles can be downloaded from:

http://irf.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2013_06_Profile-Flyer.pdf

IRF is currently seeking funding to compile an environmental profile for Tortola.

An Environmental Profile of the Island
of Anegada, British Virgin Islands



NPTVI and RBG Kew Conserving Virgin Island Plants



*Marcella Corcoran, RBG Kew
showing the bromeliad
Photo:RBG Kew*



Following a recent visit to BVI, RBG botanists, working with colleagues from the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, believe they may have discovered a new species of bromeliad near Sage Mountain National Park. The plant sample will be examined at RBG Kew’s herbarium in London. There, botanists will be able to compare it to similar plants found in the region to see if they can find a match.

Cayman

Blue Iguana Recovery Programme Update



*The first wild hatchling
of 2013 in the Colliers
Wilderness Reserve
Photo: BIRP*

Forty-nine blue iguanas reared in captivity were recently released into protected areas, 20 into the Salina Reserve and 29 into the Colliers Wilderness Reserve. This was a smaller number than previous releases, as the programme is currently focusing on genetic diversity.

There are more than 800 blue iguanas in the wild now, the goal being to release 1000 iguanas. A video of the recent releases can be seen at

<http://www.cayman27.com.ky/2013/09/06/more-blue-iguanas-in-the-wild>

The Colliers Wilderness Reserve is being developed with part funding from the part EU-funded Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies project. Encouragingly, the first wild hatchling of 2013 has been seen in the Colliers’ Reserve (See <https://www.facebook.com/BlueIguanaRecovery>)

Night Turtle Monitoring

The Office of the Governor has granted nearly \$11,000 to the Department of the Environment for night-time surveys of nesting female turtles on Cayman beaches. The grant is the latest disbursement from a £50,000 Overseas Territories Programme Fund supplied to the Cayman Islands and disbursed by the governor among applicants with a worthy social

agenda. Janice Blumenthal, DoE research officer, said the money would enable a night-time monitoring programme.

The Governor-sponsored programme will enable interns, DoE staffers and volunteers, working in groups of two persons and three persons, to walk the beaches at night, tracking and checking nests, locating females, tagging and counting them.

The project will try also to determine how many turtles have returned to the area after their release by the Cayman Turtle Farm. DoE will study each female, seeking the distinctive Turtle Farm markings. Turtles nest on all three islands, including, somewhat surprisingly in view of heavy human usage, Seven Mile Beach, but threats to turtles are increasing. One of the goals of the monitoring programme is to patrol, thus reducing illegal taking of turtles and promote turtle-friendly lighting, as lighting from nearby buildings can disorientate young hatchlings. DoE has already produced information about turtle-friendly lighting for beachfront properties.

A fuller report can be read at:

<http://www.compasscayman.com/caycompass/2013/08/02/Governor-gives-grant-for-sea-turtle-survey/>

Montserrat

New Capital City Development



Master Plan for the new capital city development
The port area on the RHS is in Carr's Bay.
Montserrat Development Corporation

After the destruction of Montserrat's capital, Plymouth, by the eruption of the Soufriere Hills volcano in 1997, plans have been evolved for a new capital city in the northern part of Montserrat. The area around Little Bay was decided upon, and developments in this area have been ongoing for several years. However, there has been considerable discussion, and indeed change of plans, about the coastal area. It has now been determined that the Carr's Bay area will be the site for the cruise ship port and part of the development of the new town centre. Gun Hill may be partially demolished to allow for the new port development to take place, and Piper's Pond will be greatly impacted. The Montserrat Development Corporation (MDC) say they are doing everything possible to ensure that the cannons, currently at Carr's Bay, will be removed and later re-incorporated into the new town development's waterfront location.

In December 2012 Mr John Cox, Director of Infrastructure at MDC, gave a presentation on the progress of the Little Bay Development, and explained the reasons for changing the 2009 master plan. The 40-minute presentation can be viewed at <http://investmontserrat.com/little-bay-development-presentation/>

Interesting points in the presentation are the decision to limit the size of cruise ships which can be accommodated and the need to have a distinctive architectural style, and maintain control of this. The presentation also informs that the MDC are working with the Department of Environment, and it is planned that the mangroves at Pipers' Pond will be kept, as part of a mangrove reserve and botanical garden.



The new capital city development area, 2012. The flat green circle in the centre is the cricket ground.
Photo: Mike Pienkowski.



Carr's Bay Cannons
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

The new Little Bay development plans have not been without their critics, and many Montserratians are saddened about the impact on Piper's Pond, and the destruction of the historic Carr's Bay area. But the economic model for the development, for example anticipated tourism and real estate income, have proved to be more persuasive than conservation and preservation of cultural and historic sites.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Wonderful Water Environmental Education Project Update

The Wonderful Water Environmental Education project was reported in *WCWG eNewsletter 8*. The materials, produced jointly by UKOTCF and the TCI Education Department, with part funding from OTEP, are now being used in TCI schools. The Deputy Director of Education, Mr Mark Garland, reported that teachers and students like the materials, and the materials are relevant for both upper primary and lower secondary students. The materials are available in electronic format, and the preferred method for delivery is via computer projection. The Education Department is currently seeking ways of sourcing more computer projection equipment. Further modules of the Wonderful Water programme, to link with the Royal Bank of Canada supported project (see below), are currently under development by UKOTCF using donated time.

Royal Bank of Canada Blue Water Award

UKOTCF and the Turks and Caicos National Museum have been awarded a grant by the Royal Bank of Canada, under their Blue Water programme. Part of the project, titled "Wise Water Use" will develop a garden displaying traditional crops and native medicinal plants, irrigated with harvested rainwater, thus demonstrating reduced need for fertilizers and city water. City water is expensive to produce as the reverse osmosis plant is powered by imported diesel. The garden will also illustrate the potential for small-scale food production in this arid region. The project builds on the existing work of the Turks and Caicos National Museum botanic garden in Grand Turk, which has examples of all the 9 endemic TCI plants, and is irrigated solely with harvested water. Another important component of the project is to extend the environmental education materials to incorporate wise water use. These materials are currently under development.

Dolphinarium Controversy

The decision to change the law to allow dolphins to be kept in captivity in the Turks and Caicos Islands, with a view to allowing the development of dolphinariums, has generated a huge amount of feeling. A consortium of NGOs has been granted judicial review of the decision of the Governor, while TCI was under direct rule from UK, to change this law, and the court hearings are scheduled to take place in September 2013.

A "Keep Dolphins Free" beach walk was held on 1 September 2013 to highlight the issue. An article about the walk, and the issues of dolphin captivity, can be read at:

<http://tcweeklynews.com/public-beach-walk-to-keep-dolphins-free-p4271-1.htm>

Further information about the campaign, can be found at <http://www.tcreef.org/projects.html>



Jo-Jo is a wild bottlenose dolphin, that has delighted visitors to the Turks and Caicos Islands, especially in Grace Bay, Providenciales, for many years. TCI has also been the release site for three re-habilitated captive dolphins. Visitors and residents delight in seeing Jo-Jo, and TCI has to date had an enviable reputation under its "Beautiful by Nature" strapline. Hence the puzzlement over the law changes which would allow dolphinariums. This photo shows Jo-Jo following the Big Blue Unlimited Boat. Big Blue Unlimited provide eco-tourism experiences of proven quality, and have given a lot of support to UKOTCF activities in TCI.

Mooring Project

The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund and the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs have partnered with local businesses to install large vessel moorings at various locations. The installation of these moorings is expected to reduce reef damage, such as that which occurred in April 2013 as a result of the illegal anchoring of the mega yacht MY White Cloud. For further information see

http://www.tcnewsnow.com/news/newspublish/home.print.php?news_id=6500



*Reef damage caused by the illegal anchoring of the mega yacht White Cloud
Photo: Provo Turtle Divers*

TC Reef Fund Summer Camp

As in many Caribbean countries, the marine environment is extremely important for local livelihoods, including tourism activities. As a threatened environment, it is vital that young people learn about this ecosystem and why it needs protecting. As part of their education programme, the TC Reef Fund supported “fish house building” activities at this summer’s SURFside Ocean Academy Sea Camp. The fish houses, which also have coral fragments attached to them, provide structure for sea creatures to live in. For further information contact Info@TCReef.org

Pam Leach giving instructions on making fish homes
Photos: TC Reef Fund



Cross-Territory and General

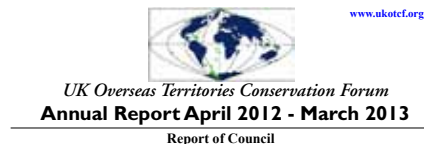
UKOTCF Forum News 41 available to download



The latest colour edition of *Forum News*, number 41, can be downloaded from the UKOTCF website (2.7MB pdf - www.ukotcf.org). The leading article is “*Management of Marine Resources in Gibraltar’s Water*”. Many of the issues raised in the report referred to are of relevance to Caribbean UKOTS, where a healthy marine ecosystem is fundamental to local livelihoods. This edition includes also articles on the rediscovery of a “lost” TCI endemic plant and the winner of the JNCC Blue Turtle Conservation award, Bryan Baqqi Manco, for his commitment to conservation and public awareness raising over more than 14 years in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

UKOTCF Annual Report April 2012 - March 2013 available to download

The 10 page UKOTCF Annual Report in colour is now available for download from the UKOTCF website (1.9 MB pdf). The Report summarises UKOTCF activities over the reporting period, including those of the Wider Caribbean Working Group.



Overview
 The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum promotes awareness and conservation of the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CD). It works in partnership with a wide network of bodies in the UK and UKOT/CDs, many of which are Forum members and associate organisations, as well as individuals with relevant expertise. Aside from the general ongoing activities during the reporting period, the Forum has taken to minimise environmental impact. The Forum has taken to ensure a start the *Antarctica and Ecological Investigation Programme*, when the construction work has already been in progress for 18 months since its disrupted build site and the Prime Minister's commitment in the 2012 White Paper on the Overseas Territories “to set world standards in our stewardship of the extraordinary natural environments we have inherited.”

Influencing policy
 In June the Foreign and Commonwealth Office published the Government's White Paper *Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability*. In his introduction, Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the White Paper is the first review of the Overseas Territories since 1999 and it demonstrates the importance the Coalition Government attaches to the Overseas Territories.
 “As well as having a responsibility to ensure the security and good governance of the Territories, we want the Territories to be vibrant, flourishing communities that proudly retain aspects of their British identity.”
 “We appreciate the remarkable diversity of the Territories, each with their own specific attributes, opportunities and challenges. This White Paper is designed to meet these challenges, to set out ways we can support the Territories and strengthen our engagement with them. It is another major milestone in our long and shared history, and I hope it will mark a new era of engagement between Britain and the Overseas Territories.”
 The Forum carried out a full analysis of the White Paper, which was summarised in *Forum News 40*. This included some key recommendations:
 (i) The UK Government re-affirms its commitment to the Environment Charter which forms the basis of UK and UKOTs fulfilling their international conservation obligations.
 (ii) The UK Government increases the funding for UKOT biodiversity as already recommended by our Select Committee of the House of Commons, instead of its recent practice of decreasing the availability of funding to conservation bodies working for the UKOTs, and ensures that UKOT NGOs and their umbrella body, UKOTCFE and other NGOs are given equal rights for such funding.
 (iii) The FCO & DfID require an open process of reviewing grant applications and return to a system that involves fully the expertise of NGOs (and umbrella bodies like UKOTCF).