



UKOTCF

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UKOT/CD Gibraltar Conservation Conference 2015

As reported in our previous newsletter (issue 12 September 2014), a conference – 'Sustaining Partnerships' – with the theme of conservation and sustainability in UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities, will be held in Gibraltar from 11th to 15th July 2015. The conference is being organised by UKOTCF together with the Government of Gibraltar with support from the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society.



The conference will provide a forum for government environmental bodies, NGOs and commercial organisations to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships. It is hoped that Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems will benefit from learning about one another's history and experience of planning and delivering conservation initiatives.

The core of this conference will be six half-day workshops, together with meetings of each of UKOTCF's regional working groups (Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans, Europe Territories) and a field visit the first morning of the conference.

The workshop topics are:

- *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Resources*
- *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Resources*
- *Renewable energy*
- *Environmental education & awareness*
- *Implementing Biodiversity Action Plans in the context of Environment Charters, Aichi Targets etc (and including environmental monitoring)*
- *Using informed decision making to manage development sustainably (including physical planning, environmental impact assessments etc)*

Plans are progressing well with booked or expected participation from governmental and non-governmental conservation personnel representing all UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. A strong contingent of supporting and specialist contributors from both UK and elsewhere is anticipated with many bookings already made. Work continues on the integrated programme and the announcement on the Forum's website will be updated in due course.

The booking form for the conference is available at www.ukotcf.org

New Members of the UKOTCF Council

At the AGM in November, 2014, four new members were elected to the Council. The Council is greatly enhanced by the addition of these members with their huge range of skills and knowledge. More complete details on each can be found on the Forum website (www.ukotcf.org).

Tom Appleby

Based in the UK, Tom is a legal academic specialising in marine and conservation issues. He is a lecturer in law at the University of the West of England and has published extensively on the mechanics of fisheries management and marine conservation. Tom's work has been used by a number of NGOs, governments and other organisations to promote conservation measures which enhance the local environment while promoting sustainable livelihoods, making him a superb fit for the Forum.



Sarita Francis OBE



After retiring as Deputy Governor in the Montserrat Public Service, Sarita took up the position of Director of the Montserrat National Trust in 2013. Her career in the Public Service spanned some forty years during which she worked in education, housing and at the very top of the civil service. Her involvement with the Montserrat National Trust began in 1985, since when she has worked in environmental education and as President of the Trust during the height of the volcanic crisis. Apart from her years of voluntary service to the Trust, Sarita has served on a vast variety of boards and committees.

Nigel Haywood CVO

Nigel retired from the Diplomatic Service in 2014. His last posting (2010-2014) was in Stanley, as Governor of the Falkland Islands and Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. During Nigel's time in Stanley he worked to bring together environmental work in the South Atlantic, as a founding director of the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI). His major environmental concern was South Georgia, establishing one of the world's largest MPAs, and pushing forward, in conjunction with the South Georgia Heritage Trust, one of the most ambitious habitat restorations ever undertaken anywhere. Nigel has an MSc in Biodiversity Conservation from Bournemouth University.



Boyd McCleary CMG CVO

Boyd spent some 40 years in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, serving in Seoul, Ankara, Ottawa, Düsseldorf and Kuala Lumpur before taking up the appointment as Governor of the British Virgin Islands (2010-14). He has had a life-long interest in flora and fauna. As Governor of the BVI, he was heavily engaged in conservation issues such as the head-start programme for the Anegada rock iguana and the eradication of non-invasive species to protect the magnificent frigate-bird colony on Great Tobago. He collaborated closely with the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and local NGOs, with UKOTCF and with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Kew Gardens.

And the WCWG welcomes volunteer Sarah Barnsley...

Sarah joined UKOTCF as a part-time Conservation Assistant in October 2014 and is greatly enjoying learning more about the conservation work that is being carried out in the UKOTs. She brings an MSc in Conservation Science from Imperial College London to her volunteer role with the Forum. Some of her first tasks have included developing the Virtual Tour for Ascension Island and helping to update Conservation Projects on the database. She contributed several articles for this newsletter.



Bermuda

Open Spaces Devastated by Hurricanes



The Horsfield team attacks downed Palmettos Photo: Bermuda National Trust

Just as Bermuda thought it had escaped the hurricane season, it was hit by two hurricanes in the space of a week last October. Hurricane Fay hit first, and took the people of Bermuda totally by surprise - weather forecasters still can get it wrong, it seems. Lack of preparation added to the damage, but the worst damage was to the trees, and especially to the nature reserves with thousands of trees down. Only six days later Hurricane Gonzalo made a direct hit, which vastly compounded the damage.

The Bermuda National Trust estimated its damage at \$260,000, mostly to its nature reserves. Most badly hit were the Paget Marsh and Sherwin reserves, located in the centre of the island. Hundreds of mature cedars and palmettos were down. For Bermuda, which treasures its surviving cedars since a blight in the 1950s killed nearly all of them, this was especially painful. Mujib Swan, the Trust's Conservation Officer, estimates a nearly 40% decline in vegetation biomass, but he's looking at this as an opportunity to address Bermuda's stifling invasive species such as Brazilian pepper and balloon vine by replacing them with native species grown in the Trust's nurseries.



A team of students from Cedarbridge Academy at work at The Trust's Paget Marsh reserve Photo: Bermuda National Trust.



Kevin Horsfield and a team of ten men have cleared the trails at Audubon's Alfred Blackburn Smith nature reserve. Photo: Bermuda Audubon Society

The Trust, which has one Conservation Officer and three Horticulturalists on staff, is running volunteer work parties in the reserves. Individuals, school and office work parties have come out to help. The most recent work party was in the Tivoli Nature Reserve, where a group ranging in age from 16 to 60+ pruned damaged cedars, chainsawed fallen trees and cleared invasive flora.

The Bermuda Audubon Society, whose 60+ acres of nature reserves were similarly damaged, has had the help of professional landscaping firms, Sousa's and Horsfields.



*Clean-up in progress at the Trust's Paget Marsh reserve
Photo: Bermuda National Trust*



*Dr Mark Outerbridge with
the endemic snail
Photo: Bermuda Royal
Gazette*

'Extinct' Endemic Snail found in Hamilton

For decades conservationists believed Bermuda's endemic land snail *Poecilozonites bermudensis* was extinct, a victim of invasive predators which had been intentionally introduced to the island to control a troublesome garden snail. But now, around 40 years after its last sighting in the wild, a healthy colony of these snails has turned up in the heart of Bermuda's capital city in a damp and overgrown alleyway.

Dr Mark Outerbridge, Conservation Service's Wildlife Ecologist, believes that the surviving population of the snail was protected by its location - an urban location isolated from the invasive species which had been introduced into garden habitats. "The fact that there was so much concrete around them probably saved them from the predators that we believe killed the vast majority of the population Island-wide."

The last recorded sighting of this endemic land snail was made in the early 1970s by Stephen J Gould, the well-known paleontologist who had done his PhD as a young man on Bermuda and recorded them as being plentiful throughout the country. But when he returned to Bermuda in the early 1990s their numbers appeared to have taken a dramatic plunge, to the point that he could no longer find one.

A survey conducted in 1988 by two US scientists in Bermuda could find no living trace of *Poecilozonites bermudensis*. And later studies in 2000, 2002 and 2004 seemed to confirm that the animal was extinct. Conservation Services is now working out a survival plan for this endemic, mainly focused on translocation to suitable sites which are now being identified.

British Virgin Islands

Seabird tracking in Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands

In early January 2015, staff from the Anguilla National Trust (ANT) visited Great Tobago National Park in the British Virgin Islands (BVI). They joined the Jost van Dykes Preservation Society (JVDPS) and project partners from the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI) in carrying out seabird fieldwork. GPS transmitters that had been attached to frigatebirds were collected. This was in order to gather data such as where the frigatebirds travel to and where they forage.

Led by the University of Liverpool, the JVDPS, ANT and NPTVI are partners, along with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), in a two year collaborative project entitled '*Using seabirds to inform Caribbean marine planning*'. Funded by the Darwin Initiative, the project has been using GPS technology in order to identify primary feeding sites, and provide comprehensive data as to the at-sea distribution of important seabird populations in Anguilla and BVI. The project also aims to institute and continue supporting self-sustaining, long-term monitoring strategies, and determine current and future threats facing seabirds in both of these territories. All of this information will contribute towards sustainable marine spatial planning in Anguilla and BVI.

Both Anguilla and BVI are home to globally important populations of seabirds. Examples include brown booby *Sula leucogaster* and sooty tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* populations in Anguilla and roseate tern *Sterna dougallii* and magnificent frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* populations in BVI. Unfortunately, seabirds such as these face a multitude of threats, from competition with fisheries to marine pollution and climate change.

The presence of monofilament fishing line in magnificent frigatebird nests in BVI is a good example of a significant threat encountered by seabirds. Tracking of frigatebirds in BVI will help to determine areas where the birds come into contact with this fishing line. April 2014 saw 3 magnificent frigatebirds, Atoya, Clive and Boyd, fitted with satellite tags. A live map of their movements can be seen at <http://www.atlanticseabirds.org/mafr-maps>.

In addition to fitting seabirds with satellite tags, the project involves training staff, in both territories, in seabird monitoring processes. It will also allow long-term monitoring programmes to be set up. In July 2014 a Seabird Monitoring Guide for Anguilla was published, and can be viewed at <http://www.caribbeanseabirds.org.uk/seabird-monitoring-1>.

Great Tobago National Park, where staff from ANT, NPTVI and JVDPS met in January, is the only site in BVI where magnificent frigatebirds nest. Great Tobago is one of the two Tobago Cays, the other being Little Tobago. The two islands are located on the north-western corner of the BVI chain. They have rocky cliffs that continue into the ocean, causing the seabed to slope steeply down, reaching depths of up to 165 feet. Being effectively inaccessible, the Tobago Cays are good sites for seabird nesting.



Trip to Great Tobago National Park to collect GPS transmitters from frigatebirds.

Photo: National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands



Great Tobago National Park has a regionally and globally significant population of magnificent frigatebirds.

Photo: National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands

Cayman Islands

Wetlands Preserved on Cayman Brac

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has purchased 10 acres of wetlands known as The Marshes in Cayman Brac in a bid to protect some of the last remaining wetlands on the island. The funds for the purchase were raised by the Brac District Committee of the Trust and the Trust's Land Reserve Fund. A series of herbaceous and woody wetlands, The Marshes is home to a variety of plant species and wildlife.

This project was especially important to the Brac District Committee because the only remaining animal sanctuary on Cayman Brac – the Salt Water Pond – was recently de-gazetted by the legislature.

Estelle Stilling, chairman of the Cayman Brac District Committee, spearheaded the project. The plan is that The Marshes will become a nature reserve. Paul Watler, environmental programmes manager of the National Trust, noted that "there's not a lot of wetlands for Cayman Brac to begin with, which means just a little protection will support every water bird on the list that's ever been recorded there."

The water levels vary with the seasons, from a range of smaller ponds in the wet season, to a drier landscape in the dry season which still provides provisioning for water birds, crabs and smaller invertebrates on which the birds forage. Waterbirds commonly found in Cayman Brac include the West Indian whistling duck, black-necked stilt, brown booby, belted kingfisher and a variety of herons and egrets.

According to the National Trust, the habitat harbours a wide range of local plant life, including the buttonwood and red mangrove. The Marshes area is also home to species of crabs and shrimps not likely to be found elsewhere on the island. There have been several sightings of an unrecorded species of red shrimp at the aptly named Red Shrimp Hole near The Marshes.

The Trust's plans for the site include researching the red shrimp, removal of invasive species from the site, and replacing them with natives. Another possibility is a viewing deck for bird watching enthusiasts.



*The wetlands of the newest nature reserve on Cayman Brac
Photo: The Caymanian Compass*

National Conservation Law Implementation

As reported in the last WCWG e-newsletter, after ten years of dogged effort by the Cayman Department of the Environment and its many supporters, the National Conservation Law was enacted in December, 2013. The law is complicated and has many aspects, so implementation is likewise a complex business. After some necessary amendment to ancillary laws, the Cabinet commenced Parts 1 and 2 of the National Conservation Law on 12th September. These are the administrative parts of the law, so the Department of Environment have now been able to have the National Conservation Council (NCC) appointed and to start work on the various other processes and mechanisms that will need to be put in place. The NCC is broadly representative, including members from each of the Districts on Grand Cayman and a representative of the Sister Islands, specialists in various conservation areas such as avifauna, and key Government officials.

The Council is meeting regularly and has had its first public meeting where the



*Gina Ebanks-Petrie
Director, Cayman Department of
the Environment*

Guidance Notes for agency consultation with the Council were approved and the Department of the Environment's role in development review formalised. The NCC has retained the right to decide whether or not an EIA will be required for a particular development, based on a Technical Review and recommendation from the DoE. Drafting instructions for EIA Regulations which were developed by the DoE have also been approved by the Council for transmission to Cabinet. The NCC has also recently recommended that Parts 3 (protection of land), 4 (protection of wildlife) and 6 (enforcement and penalties) of the law, as well as Section 50 (Regulations making powers for Cabinet) and the Schedules be commenced so Cabinet papers are being drafted to put those recommendations to Cabinet for a decision.

It is heartening to see conservation work in Cayman finally being put into a proper legislative and administrative construct, and we once again offer our congratulations and encouragement to those engaged in this vital effort.

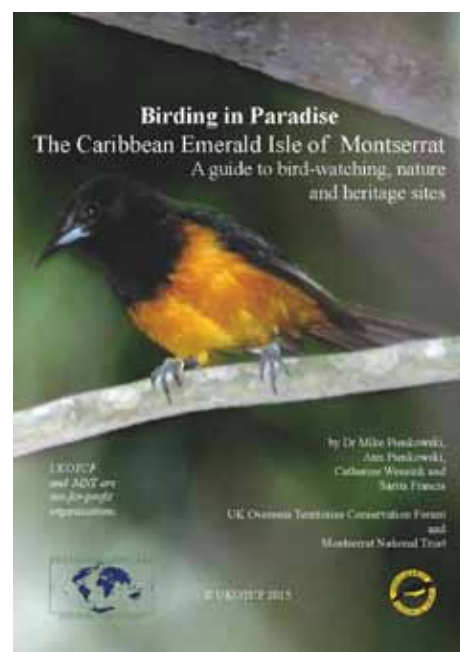
Montserrat

Montserrat Bird Watching and other heritage guide booklet.

In June 2014, UKOTCF launched a series of fully illustrated guide booklets on bird-watching and other heritage features in the Turks and Caicos Islands. These booklets started a series titled '*Birding in Paradise*'. They describe where to go birding in the Turks and Caicos, and where to view some of the other heritage features. Each booklet, with full colour maps and photos, includes practical information about getting there and facilities; heritage and wildlife tours around various parts of the islands linked to maps; sections on some of the special features of each island; fully illustrated information on the different birds and habitats; information on geography and history.

These booklets are available from many local outlets in TCI, as electronic pdf downloads, or by mailorder in the UK (see www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Turks-and-Caicos/birding-in-turks-and-caicos.cfm).

At the request of UKOTCF partner, the Montserrat National Trust, UKOTCF is producing a similar booklet for Montserrat. This is in an advanced stage of preparation, and should be available later this year. Updates on progress will be made online www.ukotcf.org, at WCWG meetings and in future WCWG eNewsletters.



Draft front cover

UKOTCF Montserrat workshop on Environmental Impact Assessment

In January 2015, UKOTCF organised a workshop in Montserrat to help Montserratians steer their future development as they work to replace the capital, Plymouth, destroyed by volcanic eruptions in 1997. UKOTCF and Montserrat are grateful to international EIA expert and long-term friend of the Forum, Dr Jo Treweek, for donating time out of her very busy schedule to lead this workshop. This was organised by UKOTCF's Mike Pienkowski and Catherine Wensink, in conjunction with Sarita Francis (Executive Director, Montserrat National Trust and new UKOTCF Council member) and Gerard Gray, Stephen Mendes and Tracy Lewis (respectively, Director and personnel of Montserrat's Department of Environment).

The workshop opening was honoured with the presence of all four Ministers of Montserrat Government (elected in September 2014), including Premier Hon Donaldson Romero, as well as many other senior and technical personnel from government, NGOs and business. In opening the workshop, Honourable Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Housing, Lands & Environment, committed "the Government of Montserrat ... to pursuing the best environmental standards for the Island. We are aware that the island is ecologically rich, possessing species found nowhere else in the world. We are also cognizant that we as a government and people of Montserrat must be responsible stewards and strike an amenable balance between our use of available resources for ourselves and to ensure a sustainable environment and economy for the island for future generations. Our children and their children must be certain of a share of Montserrat and that is why Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are so important."

He added that “The Government of Montserrat and the Montserrat National Trust welcomes the continued support from NGOs such as the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum who have been supporting us for the past 20 years. We look forward to this continued cooperation – and indeed for it to be strengthened even further. The MNT itself has been working in collaboration with our Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment for the past 43 long years and we thank the expatriate community for standing as stalwarts with that erstwhile body now under the esteemed Directorship of Mrs Sarita Francis. After 43 years they truly need a real Museum looking building at Little Bay, so we are supporting that quest.”

UKOTCF personnel greatly appreciated comments from other ministers that they see EIAs and associated techniques as crucial in their own areas of responsibilities.

Minister Hogan concluded: “The Government of Montserrat wants to set an example in this area of sustainable development planning through the use of EIAs. We value the expert help being provided through this workshop. It will ensure that our natural heritage is considered through the planning and implementation processes, whether for housing, alternative energy, roads, communications or our proposed new hospital. I therefore urge everyone to participate purposefully to make the most of this opportunity over the next two days.”

Participants heeded the Minister’s urging, and took active and enthusiastic part in the workshop discussions over the following two days. The Minister’s commitments were broadcast on Montserrat and Eastern Caribbean radio. The workshop featured on the main Montserrat Radio News on three nights, and a 30-minute extended informal interview with Jo, Catherine and Mike was broadcast in full on another programme.

The workshop had originated in a meeting between UKOTCF officers and senior FCO personnel, in September. FCO had highlighted Montserrat’s urgent request for Environmental Impact Assessment training and had asked if UKOTCF could organise such a workshop. Mike had investigated local interest in a brief visit to Montserrat in October, when he had been in the region for the Guadeloupe conference (see elsewhere in this Newsletter).

Mike had met Montserrat’s new Minister of the Environment at the Guadeloupe conference, and had several lengthy discussions with him. The Minister had expressed concern at the recent and unnecessary destruction (approved before the new Government took office) of Piper’s Pond, Montserrat’s last remaining lowland wetland, and expressed great support for the EIA workshop, linked with the need for Montserrat to have an effective sustainable development strategy.

Arrangements were well advanced when funding anticipated from previous conversations was found to be no longer available for this workshop, although all still wanted the workshop to happen. As UKOTCF does not like to go back on commitments, it decided to proceed with the workshop, using donated specialist time and its very limited resources.

Catherine and Mike used the visit also to strengthen links with other Montserratian partners whom they had helped design projects and seek support, and discuss plans for several future activities, as well as work on the bird and heritage guide (see elsewhere in this Newsletter).



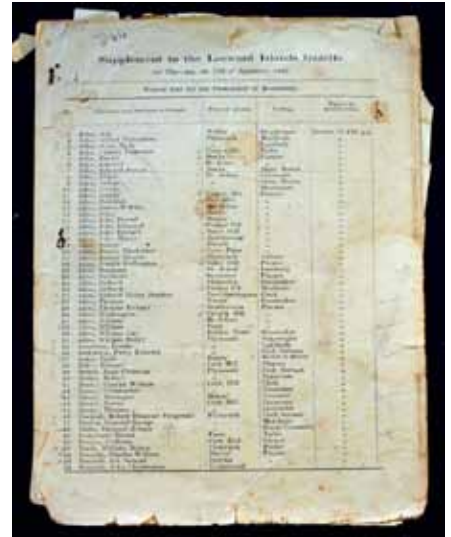
*Hon Minister Claude Hogan opens the meeting
Photo: Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF*

Montserrat Endangered Archives Project Launch

The welcome award of a grant from the British Library to address endangered archives on Montserrat was reported in WCWG eNewsletter 12 (September 2014). It was particularly important for the Montserrat National Trust to receive this award, as Montserrat's irreplaceable archives have suffered from challenging natural climatic conditions, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions.

The Endangered Archives Project was launched officially in November 2014, at the MNT Museum in Little Bay. Speakers at the launch included the Premier Donaldson Romeo, HE Governor Davis and president of Montserrat National Trust, Mrs Dulcie James. The project will first identify the archives, their location and condition. Priority materials will be selected for scanning and digital storage. Nigel Sadler, the archivist, advising the project, will train at least two people to handle the documents properly, and undertake the scanning and recording.

Some very interesting information is already being uncovered and saved, like the 1942 voter's list, pictured right.



UKOTCF's co-ordinator, Catherine Wensink worked with Bob Conrich (Anguilla Archaeological & Historical Society), Nigel Sadler (consultant archivist) and the Montserrat National Trust on the preparation of the successful application. Both MNT and AAHS are Associates of UKOTCF.

Turks and Caicos

A great year for the Turks and Caicos Reef Fund

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is an all volunteer-run organisation that provides funding for education, research and conservation programmes to individuals, organisations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the marine environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands.

2014 was another successful year for TCRF. They have continued to campaign against both the development of a dolphinarium in TCI and damaging dredging in TCI protected areas for marinas. Government and developers claim that such developments will attract more tourists and increase employment opportunities for local people. TCRF counter this by explaining that tourists are attracted to TCI by its unspoilt natural environment, and such developments are actually detrimental to the tourism economy.



*Fabien Cousteau with the Reef Action Team
Photo: David Stone, TCRF*

The TCI government Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA) is severely underfunded. TCRF gives vital support to DEMA through a Memorandum of Understanding. TCRF volunteers have undertaken essential coral restoration projects, especially following damage caused by mega yacht groundings. They are also implementing the mooring buoys project, to enable yachts to anchor safely without damaging the reef. They are working on lionfish control in TCI, and are delivering environmental education to local schools and groups.

In their efforts to educate local young people about the importance of a healthy ocean environment for both the physical and economic well-being of the TCI they arranged a six day visit by Fabien Cousteau, grandson of the pioneering marine conservationist Jacques Cousteau, to TCI in March 2014. Fabien Cousteau firmly believes that by stimulating the interest of young people about the wonders of the ocean realm—much as his grandfather did for many of an earlier generation—they will become better stewards for the oceans. In a very busy 6-day schedule Fabien Cousteau made two formal presentations to groups of primary and secondary schoolchildren, held an informal session with Honours Biology students from the British West Indies Collegiate (BWIC), and a day of scuba diving with a small group of secondary school students from the Reef Action Team at BWIC. He also met with the Governor and the Premier, and helped raise thousands of dollars for the TCRF with a cocktail reception and sunset cruise.



*TC Reef Fund Co-founder Don Stark with Fabien Cousteau
Photo: David Stone, TCRF*

A healthy marine environment in TCI is essential for a sustainable economy in TCI, and the work of the TCRF is vital. They are to be congratulated on their achievements in 2014.

East Caicos Mega Port Development Plan

East Caicos is the largest uninhabited island in the Caribbean. A recent habitat mapping project, funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) reported “East Caicos represents the largest continuous landmass in the Turks and Caicos Islands unfragmented by development, and as such is a critical reservoir of biodiversity on a community, genetic and species level.”

The North, Middle and East Caicos Nature Reserve is also designated as a Ramsar site. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources

East Caicos is a superb complex of natural coral reefs, tidal flats, mangroves and marshlands which provide a haven for wildlife, as well as the natural basis of the fisheries and tourism industries. There are important caves and dry tropical forest. It is clear that the whole of this uninhabited island should be included in the Ramsar site, and this was recommended in a 2005 review of potential Ramsar sites conducted by UKOTCF and funded by DEFRA. However this has not happened, hampered by lack of political will, and the idea of TCI politicians that East Caicos was ripe for development.



*Dry woodland on East Caicos
Photo: Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF*

The Premier of the Turks and Caicos, Rufus Ewing, and Minister of Finance, Washington Misick, first publically announced in 2013 the intention of TCIG to develop a trans-shipping port and cruise centre on East Caicos. The proposal includes a mega cruise port, mega cargo port and mega yacht port with resort facilities, duty free shopping and other tourist attractions. In September 2014 the Minister of Finance stated that the \$19 million awarded to TCI from the EU development fund would go specifically to the development of the deep water port, and that the development would be strategically located to include a second cruise port.

The importance of East Caicos as the most unspoilt wetland complex in the region seems to be completely undervalued. Good governance would dictate that any major development such as this would require an open, transparent and public Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Sadly this has not been the case in previous developments in TCI, and there are concerns that a proper EIA will not be conducted for the current proposal. However, as it has been stated that the EU funds are going to be used to kickstart this project, it is hoped that before any development occurs, a complete, transparent and independent EIA would take place, a requirement of EU-funded projects. Such an EIA should take account of the ecosystem services East Caicos contributes to the broad economy of TCI, and include a costs and benefits assessment. Previous developments, carried out without environmental review, have seriously damaged the environment and economy of TCI.



Tidal flats on East Caicos
Photo: Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF

TCI needs sustainable development - its unspoilt environment is the basis of the tourism industry. The UKOT governments, at the Joint Ministerial Council held in London in December 2014, agreed to take steps “to protect their rich and internationally important biodiversity and to raise awareness of the economic benefits of sound environmental management.” Does the East Caicos port development fit with this commitment?

Anguilla

Anguilla National Trust Rapid Assessment Project

The Anguilla National Trust (ANT) has finished a rapid assessment of the ecosystem services for specific sites across Anguilla. This was as part of the Darwin Plus *Promoting the creation and appropriate management of protected areas in Anguilla and the Cayman Islands* project that commenced in 2013.

The long-term impact of this collaborative project will be to protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services of both marine and terrestrial habitats, through the implementation of protected area networks in the two territories. By project completion, institutional capacity will be increased, networks of protected areas will have been developed, and these will be managed so as

to allow the most valuable and threatened species, habitats, and ecosystem services to persist in the face of climate change. The organisations involved are the National Trust for the Cayman Islands (NTCI), the Anguilla National Trust (ANT), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

The ANT completed the ecosystem services assessment for Anguilla through the use of the Toolkit for Ecosystem Services Site-based Assessment (TESSA). This is a toolkit, developed by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, that equips users with guidance on low-cost ways of evaluating the benefits that people obtain from the natural environment at a specific site. The information produced thus allows appropriate decisions to be made.



Katouche Bay, Anguilla
Photo: Anguilla National Trust

A total of 28 sites has been selected across the two territories for potential designation as protected areas, 13 in Anguilla and 15 in the Cayman Islands respectively. Each of the sites were chosen as priority areas thanks to their overall cultural and ecological value. In Anguilla, the 13 sites were then assessed through meetings with stakeholders, through a Workshop held in March 2014 and through use of TESSA. This was in order to decide which sites supported the provision of ecosystem services to the territory. Five sites have been identified as contributing essential ecosystem services namely, Cove Bay and Pond, Katouche Valley, Rendezvous Bay, Crocus Bay and Road Salt Pond. The main ecosystem services provided at these sites are water regulation, cultural benefits and coastal protection. Outcomes from these assessments can aid stakeholders to better appreciate and understand the importance of natural resources in Anguilla, in addition to the indispensable services that they provide.

Cross Territory

Coral Reef Restoration Collaboration

Coral reefs throughout the world are under threat for many reasons, for example climate change, over-exploitation, invasive species and pollution. The threat lionfish pose to coral reefs is well known. Recent research has shown the importance of parrot fish in maintaining the health of the coral reef, and the impact on the reef by over-fishing of parrot fish.

In the Caribbean, many countries are undertaking mitigation and restoration measures. Discussions during Wider Caribbean Working Group meetings led to the suggestion that people involved in coral reef restoration in the UKOTs should share experiences on projects, information and expertise. UKOTCF's WCWG Secretary co-ordinated several Skype discussions and disseminated shared information including a contacts list. The Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) volunteered to host a workshop for Wider Caribbean UKOT personnel. The necessary funds for travel and accommodation were built into a bid for Darwin Plus funding on coral reef research and restoration, which unfortunately was not successful. Funding for this workshop is currently being sought from other sources.

Meantime, UKOTCF's co-ordinator, Catherine Wensink, received an offer from colleagues in the Dutch Conservation and Nature Alliance (DCNA) for two funded places at the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) workshop for representatives from the UKOTs. Kristi Foster from CCMI and Don Stark from TC Reef Fund attended this workshop, in Curacao in August 2014. Thad Murdoch from Bermuda was also at this meeting. These three reported back on the workshop findings to other stakeholders in the UKOTs, including



These two photos taken five months apart show the success of just one of the outplants from CCMI's coral nursery. For scale, the masonry nail on the right is 5cm from the base - meaning this little staghorn coral has been growing at over 1cm/month on some branches Photo CCMI.

representatives from Anguilla and BVI. The final workshop report has been shared with interested persons in the UKOTs, and it is hoped that this collaboration, both between UKOTs and with other Caribbean countries will continue. The report had noted for the UKOTs that there was the need for funding, standardised methods for data collection, reporting and archiving, and communication across the region. Coral Reefs have huge economic value, in terms of ecosystem services. The challenges faced by small island states and UKOTs in looking after their coral reefs are huge, so co-operation in dealing with the issues is clearly very important. We hope that future collaborations can be resourced, and the UKOTs can continue to co-operate with the GCRMN.

Conference in Guadeloupe, October 2014

This meeting was for Overseas Entities of the EU and followed on from the conference in Réunion in 2008. Both conferences were funded largely by the French Government, French Regions and the EU, and organised by IUCN and the European Commission. Unfortunately, many of the organisational problems of the 2008 conference were repeated this time (despite the early warnings by other bodies); this meant, for example, that tickets did not reach several invited delegates from territories, including the nearest UKOT to Guadeloupe – which can actually be seen from there.

The conference consisted of parallel workshops, and participants had to opt, in advance, for one workshop and attend that for the entire meeting. The one on funding mechanisms, was ably chaired by Joseph Smith Abbott, now Deputy Secretary in the BVI Department of Environment, even though Joseph had not been advised in advance that he would be chairing throughout. Information on future funding intentions was extracted, with difficulty, from European Commission officials. The proposed successor to BEST is likely to be announced sometime in early 2015. The discussions in the workshop had concluded that small projects involving NGOs should be favoured. Many participants were irritated that European Commission officials and others made significant changes, in closed and unannounced meetings, to the conclusions agreed in open sessions.