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Here is the first eBulletin for 2017, so we hope that the year has started well for you. It certainly seems that there is a lot happening: thanks for keeping the news flowing. Articles, reports, links, photos are welcome at any time. Please send items for the eBulletin to WCWG Secretary, Ann Pienkowski (apienkowski@ukotcf.org). Back copies of WCWG eNewsletters and eBulletins are available for free download from:

www.ukotcf.org/WGnewsletterlist/WGNewsletterslinks.pdf.

Anguilla

Iguana Research and Conservation

The Anguilla National Trust is partnering with the St Barths Territorial Environmental Agency (ATE), and the St Eustatius National Parks (STENAPA) for research and conservation action on the native Lesser Antillean iguana.

It is hoped that a regional approach to Lesser Antillean iguana conservation will be used as an example for future species conservation action and of how island territories and conservation agencies can work together to multiply conservation impact. Funding is coming from the European Union BEST (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories), and the project will run for 18 months.

More information can be found on the Anguilla National Trust Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/axanationaltrust/>

Anguilla – An Island Parish

The television programmes on Anguilla in the *Island Parish* series, are currently being broadcast by BBC, and at present available (in UK) on the BBC iPlayer. Alongside a wide variety of views of life on Anguilla, the series features very positively the work of the Anguilla National Trust and the Fisheries Department. A clip on turtle tagging on Scrub Island can be seen at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04mb3b7>



Tagged Lesser Antillean Iguana: Photo Anguilla National Trust



The Governor of Anguilla, HE Christina Scott, and Anguilla National Trust Executive Director, Farah Mukhida, tagging a turtle. Photo: Anguilla National Trust

Bermuda

Bermuda CahowCam – live viewing experience of the critically endangered Bermuda Cahow



Screen shot of Cahow E0197 with egg

The CahowCam is a collaboration between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Nonsuch Expeditions. You can watch the cam live at <http://allaboutbirds.org/cahows>

A particular highlight of this nesting season was filmed on 11 January 2017 when the female banded E0197 returned to the same nesting burrow she has used for the last six years and, within an hour or so of arriving, she laid a single egg. You can view this event at www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsytL10_hlY&feature=youtu.be and learn more about Nonsuch Island's environs (including the cahow) at:

<http://nonsuchisland.com>

Glyphosate monitoring study report published

Following concern that roadside weed spraying with glyphosate could be damaging, its use was temporarily suspended and a monitoring study was carried out.

The study found that there was no reason to continue the ban on the use of this glyphosate for public health reasons. The report can be accessed at:

www.gov.bm/sites/default/files/Glyphosate%20Monitoring%20Study%20Draft%20Report%20Nov%202016.pdf

British Virgin Islands

Visitor Centres open at Copper Mine and Sage Mountain National Parks



The visitor centres at Copper Mine National Park (above) and Sage Mountain National Park (right).

Photos: National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands

The National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (NPTVI) have now opened two visitor centres, developed under the long-running and often frustrating partly EU-funded project *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies (MPASSE)*, coordinated by UKOTCF: Sage Mountain in December, and Copper Mine in February. The third, in Anegada, will be opened in March. Further information about the project can be found in Forum News 37, December 2010.

(www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/37.pdf) and the proceedings of the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference held in Gibraltar in July 2015, (page 47 of Sections 4-8:

www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2015conf/SustainingPartnershipsSS4to8.pdf)

Tropical Important Plant Areas update

A team from RGB Kew, including Colin Clubbe, have been in BVI for the last field work under the Darwin-Plus-funded project. This two-year project is an international collaboration, led by the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands and RGB Kew, with the Government of the Virgin Islands, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and regional partners U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico and the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus Herbarium.

see www.facebook.com/NPTVI/posts/1236189633164822 for more information.



Colin Clubbe undertaking plant survey work on Prickly Pear Island. Photo: NPTVI

Cayman Islands

Central Caribbean Marine Institute (CCMI) BEST funding to improve Lionfish Management

CCMI has been awarded 100,000 euros from the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories (BEST) small projects grant for work on lionfish. Acoustic tagging will be used to track movements. An issue with the lionfish is that they retreat to deep areas from where they are difficult to cull. A principal output from this project will be the creation of a publicly accessible database and map of the lionfish population in Little Cayman. This database will allow stakeholders to access information on spatial and temporal patterns of the lionfish population, in order to select appropriate times and locations for removal efforts. This should result in optimal protection of coral-reef biodiversity from this immediate invasive threat. Training workshops will be scheduled to convey the material in the database to essential stakeholders and help advance removal efforts across the Cayman Islands. This information can be used to update the management plan for lionfish in the Cayman Islands as well as contribute to action plans throughout the Caribbean.



Live streaming of lionfish dissection. Photo: CCMI

As part of CCMI's education programme, a video of a live dissection of a lionfish can be seen from their Facebook page

www.facebook.com/reefresearch/videos/1552548388107959/

Darwin Plus award for research on Parrot Fish

CCMI has been awarded a Darwin Plus grant – *Protecting herbivorous fish to conserve Cayman Island coral reef biodiversity*. A particular focus is on parrot fish, which are especially important for keeping coral reefs clear of algae. Another aspect will be education, via live-streaming from underwater. CCMI is partnering with the Cayman Department of Environment on this project.



Parrot fish. Photo: CCMI

Proposed protected areas under the National Conservation Law (NCL)

The first twelve sites have been proposed for protection under the NCL. The nominations for Grand Cayman are: Barkers, Viday Cay, Western Crown Mangrove Cays, Salt Creek Mangroves, Central Mangrove Wetland, Lower Valley Forest.

Those proposed for Little Cayman are: Preston Bay Shrublands and Ponds, Booby Pond Nature Reserve, Tarpon Lake, North Coast Wetlands, Crown Wetland 82A/17, East Interior

Nominations for Cayman Brac will appear in the second set of nominations, later this year. This is because most of the Cayman Brac nominations involve privately owned land or complex Crown land situations, both of which



**Terrestrial Protected Area Nomination:
Crown lands in the Central Mangrove Wetland, Grand
Cayman**



**Terrestrial Protected Area Nomination:
Booby Pond, Little Cayman**

require preliminary discussions before the Council can decide whether to advance them.

The consultation documents can be accessed via:

<http://doe.ky/terrestrial/protected-areas/proposed-protected-areas>

Cayman Government buys area of coastline

Smith Cove and the surrounding areas have been purchased by the Government for US \$5.4 million. Minister Kurt Tibbetts stated that the area is going to be kept as natural as possible, while providing amenities for the public to use the area. In October 2016, a public petition was started after news that the land next to Smith Cove was going to be developed, putting access to the public beach at risk. See



**Smith Cove and surrounding area.
Photo: Cayman27**

<https://cayman27.ky/2017/02/smiths-cove-now-properly-protected-govt-pays-us-5-4-million-for-property/>

for more information.

Montserrat

Update on UKOTCF-led Darwin Plus project *Maximising the long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem services of Montserrat*



**A view across Carr's Bay.
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski**

**Many birds have to feed amongst
rubbish at Carr's Bay.**



**Migrant semipalmated plover
has to feed amongst the
carelessly discarded human
garbage at a pool at Carr's
Bay.**

Photo: Nicholas Tirard

The *Adopt a Home for Wildlife* programme has started very positively. This programme allows individuals, organisations, community groups and businesses to agree to maintain and protect a public space for a year at a time. Several volunteer individuals and groups have already “signed up”. These include Julian Romeo, a hardware store owner, who is adopting the beach in Carr's Bay and probably the ghaut of Nantes River. Another such volunteer is Dwayne Hixon, also a hardware store owner, who has been involved with the Montserrat National Trust in cleaning Runaway Ghaut.

Another part of the project, enabling access to Montserrat invertebrate database information, is being undertaken by Dr Mike Ivie, of Montana State University. Planning is underway for the team to visit Montserrat in June, to undertake training workshops on use of the database, as well as further field work.

Planning to incorporate environmental considerations into physical planning is another project element which is going well. World experts Dr Jo Treweek and Jennifer Hruza donated their time to conduct meetings, analysis and feedback in Montserrat in November-December, to support local colleagues in relevant government departments in taking this aspect forward. They are undertaking follow-up analysis and developing recommendations.

The second stakeholders' workshop to explore future options for the south of Montserrat included a wide range of government and civil-society participants. Discussion covered a wide variety of topics, including: safeguarding sensitive species; protecting valuable/sensitive areas from degradation; research and rediscovery; harvesting invasive plant species; small agri-business; protection of water supply; lionfish control / hunting; opportunities for young Monserratians, tourism opportunities. Discussions were positive, and outcomes very encouraging for the development of an agreed future plan.

BEST funding for Montserrat National Trust Endemic and Native Plant Nursery

Montserrat National Trust has been successful in obtaining a small Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories (BEST) grant, to establish a plant nursery for endemics and key native species. This fits well with many aspects of the Darwin Plus project, and UKOTCF had advised on the bid for this complementary project. There are several goals for the project:

- To promote the use of native species for landscaping in an effort to reserve and value the local biodiversity, and reduce the use of resources (native species are adapted to the local conditions and do not require as much water and fertilizer as some imported ones).
- To allow the restoration of degraded ecosystems by making sure native species are available for replantation.
- To increase the population size of several endemic species (island or regional endemics) by planting them in private gardens or public spaces, therefore reducing the risk of disappearance of those species.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) Awarded Grant to Study East Caicos Coral Reefs

TCRF has been successful in obtaining an EU small BEST (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories) award of 50,000 euros to continue survey work in East Caicos, for a project titled *Understanding East Caicos KBA's Corals and Coasts: A Key to Safeguarding TCI's Future*. The project will be spearheaded by Don Stark of TCRF, in association with Kathleen McNary Wood of SWA Environmental and Marsha Pardee of MerAngel Ecological Services.

The project will be looking particularly to identify key reef areas leading to subsequent designation of conservation zones.

East Caicos is one of the largest remaining uninhabited islands left in the Caribbean and tropical Atlantic regions. It has some of the most pristine stands of critically endangered staghorn *Acropora cervicornis* and elkhorn *Acropora palmate* corals seen anywhere around the TCI, and study of all the reefs around East Caicos has only just started.



*Critically endangered elkhorn corals off East Caicos.
Photo: Kathleen Wood*

Coral Reef Nurseries established at North West Point Marine National Park

As reported in WCWG eBulletin 15, the Turks and Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) is a partner in a BEST-funded project, led by St Maarten Nature Foundation, to restore elkhorn *Acropora palmata* and Staghorn *A. Cervicornis* corals, by establishing coral nurseries. TCRF has already installed and populated a coral nursery in the sea at North West Point Marine National Park, together with signage.

An article about this project can be read at:

<http://www.timespub.tc/2016/09/project-resca/>



*Coral fragment attached to the ladder rungs. Within six months to a year they will grow into larger corals.
Photo: Don Stark, TCRF*

Sustainable finance for protected area management

Dr John Claydon, the Director of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands (DECR), has identified financial needs and potential revenue streams to secure a sustainable finance stream for the management of their protected areas in TCI, with the assistance of Wolfs Company. Dr Claydon presented the project results at the 69th Annual Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute Conference in November 2016. The factsheet **Sustainable finance for nature management based on tourism value of TCI ecosystems** can be accessed via the following link:

<http://wkics.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=ca476aed91a2be6872fac56b4&id=56238c530b&e=cc7bff4b07>

An extract from the factsheet is produced below:

The economy of TCI depends for a substantial part on tourism. And tourism depends on the natural resources of TCI. The natural capital of TCI is therefore a very important source for a healthy local economy. However, the investments in natural capital are rather limited. Relatively small additional investments are required to improve the financing of the institutions and organisations in charge of conserving and managing natural capital in TCI. TCI's legal framework provides possibilities for these additional investments from existing revenue streams, including the possibility of ring-fencing or earmarking them to guarantee a long term sustainable income source.

- ✓ Investing in natural capital is crucial to a healthy TCI economy.
- ✓ In 2015 the hotel and restaurant sector would contribute approximately 38.75% of TCI's GDP.
- ✓ The tourism value generated by TCI's natural capital has an economic value of USD 45.5 million per year.
- ✓ The financial needs for an optimal nature conservation by TCI's government alone are approximately USD 2.6 million per year.
- ✓ The additional investment needed for the protection and conservation of TCI's natural capital would be covered by a reallocation of 1.80% of the existing tourism related revenues (around USD 1.1 million of USD 61.5 million).
- ✓ There is in principle financial and legal potential to reallocate at least a small percentage of the existing tourism related revenues. The reallocation of government revenues can help fund investments that must be made in protected area management.

It is very encouraging that the newly elected TCI Government pledged to re-instate the Conservation Fund in their election manifesto. Previously a 1% tourist and accommodation tax went into the Conservation Fund and was used for environmental work. This had enabled small to medium environment and conservation projects, and had worked well despite some administrative issues. Unfortunately the fund was cancelled by UK Government while TCI was under direct UK rule. Since then, as Dr Claydon has pointed out, environmental and conservation work in TCI has been severely underfunded.

Meetings Announcements

Island Invasives 2017 – Dundee

The Island Invasives Conference is from Monday 10 July to Friday 14 July 2017. The meeting is focussed on invasive alien species on islands, their impact and management, and is hosted by the University of Dundee and the South Georgia Heritage Trust. It follows on from meetings held in New Zealand in 2001 and 2010. Meeting in Dundee will allow greater participation of people from Europe and North America, and bring together experts and those thirsty for knowledge in diverse fields covering the invaders and invaded. Since the last meeting in 2010, much has been learned about the damage caused by, and how to control or eradicate, an increasingly diverse range of invasive species. This will be an opportunity to share that knowledge, and to be inspired by what has been achieved by passionate and dedicated conservationists around the world.

More information can be found at <http://www.islandinvasives2017.com/>

BirdsCaribbean - Cuba

The next BirdsCaribbean conference will be held in Cuba 13-17 July 2017. This will be a good opportunity for the Caribbean UKOTs to get together. Details will be on the BirdsCaribbean website shortly. Check this link:

<http://www.birdscaribbean.org/category/news/cuba-meeting-2017/>