



UKOTCF

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Editorial

Despite all the challenges, especially in these financially difficult times, it is good to be able to report in this newsletter many successes. The rat eradication on Dog Island, Anguilla, looks to have been very successful, providing the opportunity for an increase in the number of breeding seabirds on this important site. In Bermuda, the increase in the number of breeding cahows to over 100 pairs is certainly something to celebrate. The importance and success of properly managed marine protected areas is demonstrated by the healthy Nassau Grouper population in Cayman, as a result of direct long-term protection of the spawning grounds. Discussions about, and plans to take forward, marine protected areas around Bermuda and in the Caribbean show an understanding of the need for international co-operation to protect the marine environment. It is to be hoped that the United Kingdom Overseas Territories will have the opportunity to join the Caribbean Marine Mammal Sanctuaries Initiative currently being undertaken by the French and Dutch Caribbean countries, and others. Species recovery actions for the Montserrat mountain chicken and the Turks and Caicos Pine are coming up with positive results.

Inappropriate built developments often have negative impacts on biodiversity, especially on small remnant critical habitat. It is encouraging that development proposals for Devonshire Marsh in Bermuda have been turned down by the Minister of Environment. Issues around the granting of a Special Development Order (SDO) for the Tucker's Point development in Bermuda, have been taken up by the Bermuda Ombudsman. One of the Ombudsman's points was that the Environment Charter Commitments require the Bermuda Government to have an Environmental Impact Assessment conducted prior to granting planning permission for such developments. The Environment Charters, signed in 2001 between UK Government and UKOT Governments, provide a sound framework for taking forward biodiversity and conservation issues jointly between UK and UKOT governments. The recently-available Cayman Islands Biodiversity Action Plan notes that its Environment Charter requires new legislation to be drafted and adopted. Adoption of this legislation, the Cayman National Conservation Law, is still pending after several years.

Comments and news items for future issues, and WCWG meeting discussions, are very welcome. Please email apienkowki@ukotcf.org

Ann Pienkowski, Secretary UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group.

Anguilla

News from Anguilla National Trust

The Anguilla National Trust's excellent Facebook page has some great photos and information about recent events and activities. These include monitoring for sea turtle nesting activity, and counts in May of the breeding sooty terns on Dog Island, following the rat eradication. These counts were conducted by ANT and the Youth Environmental Society of Anguilla

Small Hawksbill Turtle tracks, Anguilla.
Photo: Anguilla NT



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The Anguilla Dolphinarium

Bermuda

Good news for Devonshire Marsh



The Firefly reserve in Devonshire Marsh contains very large Bermuda Cedars and Palmettos. It was restored by the Bermuda Audubon Society to improve its habitat value for waterbirds.

The Sargasso Sea



(YESA). Sooty tern nests were counted within 28 sample plots. These data will be used to estimate the total population based on the size of the entire colony, which was mapped the previous week. This involved a great deal of work, and the contribution made by YESA was vital.

There were also visits by two naturalist / photographers (Stewart McPherson and Simon Vacher) who are travelling to several UKOTs, documenting and filming the wildlife that makes the UKOTs so special. After Anguilla they were travelling on to Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

www.facebook.com/#!/axanationaltrust

The Anguilla Dolphinarium

There are dolphinarium throughout the world, with several in the Caribbean. They are a topic of hot debate, with diverse viewpoints. Some label them as dolphin prisons, and many have expressed concern about the ecological effects of dolphinarium, for example on water quality outside of the dolphinarium. The dolphinarium in Anguilla closed a few years ago after many protests about it, and a proposal to open a new one has been the subject of such debates. Much concern has already been expressed after a recent brief news announcement on Twitter that the new dolphinarium in Anguilla is scheduled to open in July 2012.

Bermuda

Good news for Devonshire Marsh and the adjacent Bermuda Audubon Society Nature Reserve

Devonshire Marsh, despite recognition of its environmental value and zoning restrictions (and its being a proposed Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention), was threatened by an industrial warehouse development. Controversial acceptance of planning appeals resulted in the resignation of former environment minister Walter Roban, and put the spotlight on two other ministers Wayne Furbert and Zane DeSilva who were involved in two planning applications affecting Devonshire Marsh. Local conservation bodies fought against this development, and the Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Task Force (BEST) produced a 14 minute video as part of their campaign. The video can be viewed at <http://bernews.com/2012/03/video-devonshire-marsh-under-threat%E2%80%9D/>

The current environment minister, Marc Bean, has now overturned the planning appeal decision, so it would appear that, for the present, Devonshire Marsh is saved. The Royal Gazette article:

www.royalgazette.com/article/20120504/NEWS01/705039880 gives more information.

The Sargasso Sea – proposed marine reserve in Bermuda’s EEZ

The Sargasso Sea is a huge area of water in the central North Atlantic Ocean that turns clockwise due to movement of the ocean currents it is bound by. The free-floating mats of algae (*Sargassum* spp.) that aggregate within this gyre support high biological diversity and hosts life at the surface for birds, in the water column for marine fauna and on the sea floor as well. Several of the associated species have life-history patterns and ecologies specifically adapted to the floating weed including an endemic pipefish, a snail and a crab. In addition, the Sargasso Sea provides important shelter, nurseries, spawning and feeding grounds for many pelagic species of turtles, birds and fish. For example, species of eels from European and North American rivers migrate to the Sargasso to spawn. Although a portion of the Sargasso Sea is within Bermuda’s jurisdiction, most of it lies in the international high seas, making the protection and management of this unique ecosystem particularly difficult.

The Sargasso Sea Alliance (www.sargassoalliance.org) is a partnership led by the



Bermuda Alliance for Sargasso Sea

Tucker's Point Special Development Order and the Bermuda Ombudsman

Celebrating the Success of the Cahow Breeding Programme

Bermuda Conservation Department Lifeboat Project



Government of Bermuda, in collaboration with scientists, international marine conservation groups and private donors, who all share a vision of protecting the unique and vulnerable ocean ecosystem of the Sargasso Sea.

The Blue Halo is how the proposed marine reserve is being described.

www.bermudabluehalo.org/#!bermuda_blue_halo_home/mainPage

The proposed marine reserve will encompass much of Bermuda's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) within the Sargasso Sea. The proposed reserve around Bermuda will have an inner and outer ring. In the inner ring (the area that is closest to Bermuda), activities such as fishing and recreation will be allowed. The idea is not to affect Bermudians who earn their livelihood through marine activities (both commercial and recreational). The outer ring, however, will encompass the reserve. This is the "halo" concept. However, the actual size of the reserve will be determined through public consultation.

The Bermuda Alliance for Sargasso Sea has produced a colourful and informative educational pamphlet about the Sargasso Sea and its importance. The pamphlet can be downloaded from

http://www.bnt.bm/Environmental_and_Conservation/documents/_BASSSargassoSeaEducationalPamphletFINAL.pdf

Tucker's Point Special Development Order and the Bermuda Ombudsman

The controversial issue of the granting of a special development order (SDO) for Tucker's Point, Bermuda, has previously been raised and reported by UKOTCF and partners in Bermuda (WCWG eNewsletters 5, 6, 8 and news items on the ukotcf.org website). In February 2012, the Ombudsman for Bermuda, Ms Arlene Brock, concluded that the Bermudan Government had acted unlawfully by failing to require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) prior to sending the draft Tuckers Point Special Development Order (SDO) to the House of Assembly. Recently, the Ombudsman has given a robust response to the Bermuda Government's comment on her report, concluding "I find the continued challenge to my jurisdiction inappropriate and many of the responses to the Recommendations inadequate or even unresponsive". It will be interesting to see how this matter develops, but it is encouraging that international law and the Environment Charters are being used as a basis to challenge planning decisions, and highlight the importance of developments being preceded by environmental impact assessments. . For more news about this matter see the Bermuda Royal Gazette, for example:

www.royalgazette.com/article/20120608/NEWS07/120609980

Celebrating the Success of the Cahow Breeding Programme

In celebration of 100+ breeding pairs of Cahows, the Bermuda Audubon Society is selling special Cahow prints by Chris Burville. This is a limited edition, signed by Chris. The print is for sale at \$100 or the framed print for \$200. Please email info@audubon.bm if you would like to place an order.



Bermuda Conservation Department Lifeboat Project

The Bermuda Conservation Department Lifeboat Project aims to save some of Bermuda's threatened endemic species. The latest species to be targeted under this project is the Bermuda skink. The plan is to collect six pairs of Bermuda skinks, and fly them to Chester Zoo in the UK. The skink is Bermuda's only endemic terrestrial vertebrate, and it is estimated that there are less than 5,000 of these critically endangered species in Bermuda today. They are found only on islets in Castle Harbour and there are a few fragmented populations along South Shore. Find out more about the efforts to save the skink, and other species which have

Bermuda National Trust Environmental Video Competition for Earth Day



A scene from the film Plastic Bag
The text reads: It is estimated that the amount of plastic pollution in the world's oceans is nearly 100 million tons.

British Virgin Islands

First flowering of *Metastelma* at Kew



***Metastelma* in flower at RBG Kew**
Photo: RBG Kew

Virgin Gorda Environmental Profile



already benefitted from the Lifeboat Project, at www.conservation.bm

Bermuda National Trust Environmental Video Competition for Earth Day

The journey of a solitary plastic bag from supermarket to the ocean is the subject of a winning short film by Bermuda High School student Lara Hetzel.

Lara entered her four-minute environmentally conscious film *Plastic Bag* in the Earth Day Video Competition recently launched by the Bermuda National Trust in partnership with Greenrock. The film is from the perspective of the plastic bag as it is being blown into the wind and into the ocean, and includes some statistics and facts about pollution and plastic bags.

Learn more, and view Lara's film at:

<http://bermudasun.bm/main.asp?SectionID=9&subsectionID=910&articleID=58586>

British Virgin Islands

First flowering of *Metastelma* at RBG Kew

The small island of Anegada is home to a number of endemic plant and animal species. Members of Royal Botanic Gardens Kew's UKOT team have been studying the plants on Anegada for over 10 years. One of these unique species is *Metastelma anegadense*, a scrambling thin-stemmed plant belonging to the milkweed family, Apocynaceae. It is commonly known as wire wist, reflecting the use of the stems as a natural string.

During fieldwork on the island in July 2011, Martin Hamilton and Michele Sanchez collected some tiny wire wist seedlings which had established themselves in a vulnerable position alongside a path. The seedlings were rescued, and transported to RBG Kew. Within six months of their arrival, the first of the wire wist seedlings had grown large enough to begin flowering - the first time that flowers have been recorded for this species outside its native environment.

The full article can be read at:

www.kew.org/news/kew-blogs/ukots/first-flowering-of-metastelma.htm

Virgin Gorda Environmental Profile

The production of the Virgin Gorda Environmental Profile was part-funded by an OTEP small projects grant in 2011. This was part of the British Virgin Islands Environmental Profile Programme, which had previously resulted in the production of the Environmental Profile for Jost Van Dyke. [The Environmental Profile for Jost Van Dyke can be downloaded from:

www.jvdgreen.org/Final_Profile.html

The completed Virgin Gorda Environmental Profile was launched in early June 2012. The profile, with about 250 pages, details the state of the islands' natural, cultural and other assets:-

Chapter 1: Introduction to the environmental profile islands (Eustatia, Mosquito, Necker, Prickly Pear, Saba Rock, The Dog Islands, Broken Jerusalem, Fallen Jerusalem, Round Rock

Chapter 2: The institutional environment

Chapter 3: Natural hazards and environmental risks

Chapter 4: Biodiversity resources: the terrestrial environment

Chapter 5: Coastal and marine resources

Chapter 6: Historical heritage resources

Chapter 7: Pollution threats

Chapter 8: Protected areas and resource conservation

Chapter 9: Directions for the future

Addenda list all of the marine species known to be found in the waters adjacent to

Virgin Gorda and the adjacent islands, and list all of the plant species known to be found on Virgin Gorda and the adjacent islands.

For further information, contact:

Island Resources Foundation 123 Main Street, Road Town Tortola, British Virgin Islands
Tel. and Fax: 284.494.2723

or

Island Resources Foundation 1718 P Street Northwest, Suite T-4 Washington, DC 20036
USA Tel: 202.265.9712 Fax: 202.232.0748 irf@irf.org

or check the website www.irf.org

Bird Introductions to Necker Island



*Flamingos on Anegada
Photo: Mike Pienkowski*

Bird Introductions to Necker Island

Richard Branson has announced on his blog (<http://www.virgin.com/richard-branson/blog/necker-animals--scarlet-ibis-success>) news about the re-introduction to his island in the BVI, Necker Island, of three bird species: flamingo, scarlet ibis and roseate spoonbill. He notes that 70 young flamingos were born this year, and the first scarlet ibis chick produced in BVI for over 100 years.

It should be noted that the first successful re-introduction of a nesting colony of flamingos in the British Virgin Islands occurred on Anegada and was supported by Dr Henry Jarecki, the owner of Guana and Norman Islands in the BVI. Eighteen birds were introduced in 1992 and began breeding 5 years later. The population now numbers around 200.

Cayman

Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies



Participants at the MPASSE meeting in the Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park

Cayman

Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies

The project steering group of the EU-supported MPASSE project met in the Cayman Islands at the beginning of June 2012. This project includes Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and UKOTCF. UKOTCF originally drafted this proposal at the request of the Territories in 2003, but issuing by the European Commission of contracts for partners was not completed until early 2011.

All three territories will be developing conservation measures or visitor facilities in protected and other vulnerable areas on their islands, whilst UKOTCF is providing technical guidance and environmental monitoring.

In Cayman, the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands has so far used the project to extend the protected area for Blue Iguanas in the east of Grand Cayman, through granting of a leasehold from government for a peppercorn rent, and land purchase. Plans for visitor facilities in this area are imaginative and innovative. Participants in the meeting were very impressed with Cayman's effective deployment of resources, and the fine example the team there are setting in environmentally sensitive development.

Cayman Islands National Biodiversity Action Plan Online



Section on Seagrass Beds from the Cayman National Biodiversity Action Plan

Cayman Islands National Biodiversity Action Plan Online.

This is a very comprehensive plan. The introduction includes a section on biodiversity, including the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Cayman Islands. It also notes that government commitments under the Cayman Islands Environmental Charter require that new legislation be drafted, towards providing a framework for the conservation of national biodiversity, and the implementation of MEAs, such as Ramsar, SPAW and the CBD, to which the Cayman Islands is signatory. This new legislation (the National Conservation Law) has been pending approval for over ten years. The National Conservation Law and the delays in this process were reported in WCWG eNewsletters 4 and 6.

Sections on habitat plans encompass marine, shoreline and terrestrial habitats. There are species action plans for marine species (invertebrates, fish, reptiles), shoreline

Nassau Grouper



There is a species action plan for the Nassau Grouper in the Cayman Islands National Biodiversity Action Plan

Montserrat

Mountain Chicken Restoration Project Update



Tents were used for a 'soft' release so frogs were introduced to the forest gently.

Photo: Mountain Chicken project, Montserrat Dept of Environment

species (plants, invertebrates, freshwater fish), and terrestrial species (plants, invertebrates, reptiles, birds, mammals).

Each section can be downloaded from the Cayman Department of Environment website:

www.doe.ky/nbap/?page_id=10

Nassau Grouper

The Nassau Grouper is under threat throughout the Caribbean. In the winter of 2002, REEF (Reef Environmental Education Foundation), in collaboration with the Cayman Islands Department of Environment, began a study of the Nassau grouper spawning aggregation off the western tip of Little Cayman. (See the Grouper Moon project at www.reef.org/groupermoonproject)

In 2003, an eight-year fishing ban was introduced at Nassau group spawning sites in the Cayman Islands to protect the species. In 2011, a film about the plight of the Nassau Grouper in Cayman by Cayman resident Dr Guy Harvey (The Mystery of the Grouper Moon see, www.youtube.com/user/WeSpeakFish) contributed to a groundswell of public support for an extension of this ban for a further 8 years, which was granted.

Recent scientific evidence shows that this ten-year effort to protect the spawning aggregation sites for the endangered Nassau Grouper has resulted in a growing and healthy population of the species on the reefs near Little Cayman, demonstrating the importance of legal protection in species recovery.

A more detailed report can be read at

www.caribbeannewsnow.com/news/newspublish/home.print.php?news_id=10549

Montserrat

Mountain Chicken Restoration Project Update

The critical situation of the Montserrat chicken (actually a frog, *Leptodactylus fallax*), and the ex-situ breeding and return project, were reported in WCWG eNewsletters 4 and 5.

In January 2012 the second batch of froglets was returned to Montserrat, and were released at the end of that month. All the released frogs were implanted with tiny transmitters, enabling them to be tracked.

Intensive radio tracking of the released frogs was carried out until the end of April 2012. Whooping calls recently heard at night in the areas where the frogs were released could be a sign of breeding behaviour. However, they could also be due to the rainy season.

Challenges remain. Twelve of the 33 frogs released this year have died, and the batteries of the radio transmitters inserted into the surviving frogs have lost power after transmitting data for three months, making it harder for scientists to track them. Of the 64 other frogs released last year, nine have died from the fungus and the last one was seen in November, but Sarah-Louise Smith, project coordinator with the island's Department of Environment, said that she believes that some might have moved elsewhere because they can cover great distances in a limited time. For example, one frog travelled 3,000 feet in only a couple of hours. The chytrid fungus remains a potent threat. Cane toads and tree frogs in Montserrat are still carrying the fungus but are not affected by it. Scientists are awaiting results to determine the prevalence of the fungus compared to 2009, when it killed hundreds of frogs. However, it has been decided to continue the ex-situ breeding and re-introduction despite the expectation that some of the frogs would succumb to the disease.

A fuller account can be read at:

www.caribbeanbusinesspr.com/news03.php?nt_id=71276&ct_id=1 and there is more



*Mountain Chicken tadpoles feeding on infertile eggs:
Photo: BBC film*

New National Museum for Montserrat



Sarita Francis Honoured

Turks and Caicos Islands

Caicos Pine Controlled Burn

information on the blog at www.mountainchicken.org

Amazing BBC film - Mountain Chicken feeding tadpoles

The *ex-situ* breeding programme for the Mountain Chicken has enabled a remarkable film to be made of the tadpoles being fed by the female frog. Unusually for amphibians, the mountain chicken breeds in underground burrows and not in water. The tadpoles feed exclusively on infertile eggs produced by the female. This activity has been captured on film for the first time. You can watch the film at www.bbc.co.uk/nature/life/Leptodactylus_fallax#p00kdg1d

New National Museum for Montserrat

Montserrat's new National Museum, built at Little Bay, was opened in March by the Earl and Duchess of Wessex. The island had been without a museum for over fifteen years. The previous museum, set up in a historic sugar mill and run by the Montserrat National Trust, was located in the danger zone when Plymouth was evacuated due to volcanic eruptions in 1996. However many items were salvaged by Trust volunteers, assisted by several overseas and regional organizations, including the Museum Association of the Caribbean.

The museum's opening exhibition is named Crossing Stitches. It includes cotton production and export during the first half of the 20th century, and features historic photos. It contains also examples of fine embroidery work, some dating back to the 1920s.

Staffing the museum is now a major challenge for the Montserrat National Trust, with staff and volunteers now stretched to man both the museum and the Trust headquarters in Salem, with its gift shop, botanic garden and photographic exhibition. Volunteers are greatly appreciated, says Trust Director Lady Eudora Fergus, and she is appealing for additional volunteers to assist with manning the museum.

A fuller account of the museum and its exhibits can be read at:

www.caribbeannewsnow.com/montserrat.php?news_id=11141&start=0&category_id=22

Deputy Governor Ms Sarita Francis Honoured

Deputy Governor Sarita Francis was awarded the OBE (Order of the British Empire) in the Queen's New Year's Honours list for her public service to the Government and people of Montserrat, and for her work with the Montserrat National Trust where she had served as president. Ms Francis received her reward at Buckingham Palace in May, from HRH the Princess Royal.



Turks and Caicos Islands

Caicos Pine Controlled Burn

The Caribbean Pine, which covered the pine yards in Middle Caicos, North Caicos and Pine Cay, has almost been wiped out by the pine tortoise scale, an insect from North America that was first identified in 2005. In its home territory, this insect (which sucks the sap from the pine trees) is normally controlled by predators and cold winters. However, in the TCI, this pest knows no predators, and the warm weather has permitted it to breed and spread uncontrollably.

Local and international officials conducted a controlled burn in the pine forest on Middle Caicos to see if the widely used method can help save the country's national tree, the Caicos variety of the Caribbean Pine.

The Caicos Pine Recovery Programme, managed by the Department of Environment



Controlled Burn, Middle Caicos Pine Yards, to investigate burning as a mechanism for controlling the invasive pine scale insect.

TCI National Museum Receives Funding for Renovations



Guinep House, the home of the Turks and Caicos National Museum in Grand Turk
Photo: Mike Pienkowski

Gilbert the Turtle



Gilbert before its release with namesake Gilbert Jennings and Amdeep Sanghera (right), MCS Turks and Caicos Project Officer
Photo: MCS Turks and Caicos Project

TCI Election Date

and Maritime Affairs (DEMA) and funded by the UK Government’s Overseas Territories Environment Programme has been working for the last three years to save and conserve the Caribbean pine tree. Project Manager Bryan Naqqi Manco has spearheaded this effort at the government farm on North Caicos, where he has been assisted by the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) Kew in London and the US Forest Service. Pine yards in the Bahamas and in North America have a natural cycle that involves periodical forest fires that enhance the health of the ecosystem. While forest fires are often thought of as catastrophic, they are required by pine yards to prevent other plant species from taking over. Management of these habitats in the Bahamas and North America often involves carefully managed controlled burns of sections of forest.

In May 2012, local and international officials conducted a controlled burn in the pine forest on Middle Caicos to see if this widely used method can help save the country’s national tree, the Caicos Pine.

The burn was done on two separate plots of an acre and was conducted by three senior environmental burn scientists from Georgia and Florida, Joe O’Brien, Ben Hornsby and David Grimm from the US Forest Service.

TCI National Museum Receives Funding for Renovations

The Turks and Caicos National Museum is pleased to announce that it has received funding from the Infrastructure Fund/TCIG to do some much needed renovations to Guinep House, the lovely structure from the early 1800s that houses the Museum. In addition to these renovations, the Museum will be adding a tea garden between the Museum and the Science Building to serve high tea and provide a lovely garden setting for guests.

Phase II of the Botanical and Cultural Garden has also started, which will include a market garden and outdoor classroom to promote healthy eating to school children on Grand Turk and to provide home grown vegetables and herbs for the tea garden.

The Providenciales Branch of the TCNM is also pleased to announce that they have received funding for an outdoor park, aptly named the Caicos Heritage House Park Project, which will showcase life in the Caicos Islands. This park will include an exact replica of a thatched roof house late 1800s, and also ship building examples from that era to the present day. The Park is located just steps away from the proposed new Providenciales Branch at Grace Bay Village.

For information on these and news about the Museum please visit their website at www.tcmuseum.org

Gilbert the Turtle

Gilbert is a sub-adult green turtle captured at Southern Bush, just south of the Windward Going Through passage between Middle and East Caicos. The turtle was too young to tell accurately whether it was a male or female, but was thought more likely to be a male. Gilbert was captured by TCI Turtle Project Officer Amdeep Sanghera on a sampling trip with TCI turtle fishers Gilbert Jennings and Dave Clare. The turtle is fitted with a Sirtrack Fastloc tag to determine its fine scale movements in its tidal foraging habitat. The purchase and deployment of this tag is supported by the National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth, with additional project support from the People’s Trust for Endangered Species.

On 23 June Gilbert was near the north west point of the Little Bahama Bank, very close to the Gulf Stream, which flows northwards. Use this link

www.mcsuk.org/conservation_in_action/Marine%20turtles/Tracking%20turtles/Gilbert to follow Gilbert’s progress.

TCI Election Date 9 November 2012

There will undoubtedly be many interesting developments over the next few months, as TCI gets ready for a return to elections on 9 November 2012.

Cross Territory and General

Dutch and French Caribbean Co-operation on Marine Mammal Sanctuary

Cross-Territory and General

Dutch and French Caribbean Countries Co-operate on Marine Mammal Sanctuary

At a meeting, organized by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (EL&I) on June 4th and 5th in St. Maarten and including representatives from the Dutch Islands, the French Islands, the USA, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela, it was agreed to develop joint initiatives and programmes for research on and protection of whales and dolphins. This builds on the marine mammal action plan of the regional protocol for the protection of species and areas, the SPAW Protocol.

The French marine mammal sanctuary and the Dutch Caribbean Islands have been doing research on marine mammals around the French and Dutch Windward Islands. This collaboration will be continued. One outcome of the meeting was that before the end of 2012, the Netherlands will set up a marine mammal sanctuary for whales and dolphins in Dutch Caribbean waters.

Joint surveys are planned, around the Windward and Leeward Islands, to find out where cetaceans such as humpback whales, sperm whales and orcas are found, and in what numbers.

Another proposal is to set up a regional network of underwater microphones, to map the sounds made by whales and dolphins, and register noise from ships and speed boats. It is known that noise pollution from boats can disturb the communications of whales with each other. For more information read the article at:

www.todaysexm.com/2012/06/08/caribbean-whale-sanctuaries-intensify-cooperation/

Whales, like the humpback whale, often migrate thousands of kilometres from cold northern waters in summer to the tropical Caribbean Sea in winter, so that international cooperation is necessary for effective protection. Several of the UK Overseas Territories also have important marine areas for whales and dolphins. For example, the Mouchoir Bank in the Turks and Caicos Islands is where humpback whales calf. Anguilla shares the same waters as St Maarten. It is to be hoped that this valuable regional co-operation can be extended to include the relevant Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom.

Island Lists of West Indian Amphibians and Reptiles

Includes sections on:- Bahama Islands and Turks & Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Lesser Antilles

Download from:

www.flmnh.ufl.edu/bulletin/vol51no2.pdf

Island Lists of West Indian Amphibians and Reptiles

Richard Ground Honoured



Photo courtesy Bermuda Audubon Society

Richard Ground Honoured

Congratulations to Sir Richard Ground - his knighthood has just been announced, in June 2012. The award is mainly in respect of his distinguished legal career as Chief Justice in Bermuda until retirement this year, and previously TCI, and Attorney General in Cayman. To conservationists, he is perhaps better known as an outstanding wildlife photographer. His photos are published in *Creator's Glory: Photographs of the Wildlife of Grand Cayman Island* (1989), *The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands* (2001), and *Birds of Bermuda* (2004). His wife, Lady Ground (Dace to most of us), has made major contributions of effort in support of conservation in Cayman, TCI and Bermuda, and is a Council member of UKOTCF.

STOP PRESS: The first of the virtual tours (covering Montserrat, TCI and Pitcairn) are now live on www.ukotcf.org following a long period on the test development site.