



UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Annual Report April 2006 - March 2007

Report of Council

Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum exists to promote the conservation of the rich and unique biodiversity, the natural environment and related heritage in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies of the United Kingdom (UKOTs and CDs) – for the benefit and enjoyment of all people, not only now but also for future generations.

The UKOTs have a global importance of biodiversity but are under threat. Of globally threatened species identified in the 2004 IUCN Red List (updated in 2006), 74 critically endangered species occur in the UKOTs (compared to 10 in metropolitan UK) along with 49 endangered species (12 in metropolitan UK) and 117 vulnerable species (37 in the metropolitan UK). Many of these species are endemic, that is they are found nowhere else in the world. The figures for UKOTs are under-estimates because of incomplete study. In addition, despite relatively little effort on survey to identify the full range of species, there are 39 recorded extinctions in the UKOTs and two species that survive only in captivity. In addition to its intrinsic importance, this biodiversity is of great value, for example as natural storm defence, water catchment, the basis of sustainable tourism, sources of natural medicines etc.

There are few resources available to the small human populations of UKOTs to conserve this wildlife. Invaluable efforts have been made in some UKOTs to glean resources from governmental, NGO, business and personal contributions. UKOTCF is pleased to have worked with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) to help establish and run their Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). This is a successful and invaluable funding source for small projects. However, unlike within Great Britain, no fund is available to

address full conservation actions, such as the recovery or management programmes which are the next necessary stage. Unfortunately, and unlike other European Union countries and the USA for their territories, the UK Government Departments with major responsibilities in these areas, such as Defra, choose not to resource regular activity in UKOTs and CDs, despite these areas holding most of the biodiversity for which UK answers internationally. Current funding is inadequate, both in absolute terms related to need and in comparison with funding to the Great Britain and Northern Ireland part of UK. The main needs to achieve UK's international commitments can be summarised as:

- HMG commitment to continue OTEP
- a separate fund for large-scale conservation projects/ sustainable usage issues
- means of managing projects with increased financial resources
- UKOTCF core funding
- maintaining and enhancing non-financial contributions
- raising awareness in UK of the UKOTs

UKOTCF is supported by grants, donations and subscriptions but, because of a lack of available funding, has to work on a largely volunteer basis. It involves a wide network of organisations and individuals with relevant

expertise, and works closely also with governments in UK and UKOTs, bringing together those organisations and individuals interested in these areas, and works in partnership with local organisations in the Territories.

It has followed a successful strategy of: (1) helping local people form a conservation NGO where one did not already exist; (2) helping that NGO (and often the UKOT government environment department) develop its capacity to manage itself; and (3) evolving into a programme

of jointly run conservation projects. It also helps transfer skills and experience to and between UKOTs, as well as trying to raise awareness in UK of UKOTs, their conservation importance and needs, and UK's shared responsibility in this regard.



Rebecca Cairns-Wicks describing conservation issues for this He-Cabbage, now reduced to a very small number of individuals. This area of High Peak holds the best remaining group of these St Helena endemic plants.



Montserrat oriole Icterus oberi inhabits a small area on the island and has been classified by IUCN as critically endangered.

Relationship with UK government and government agencies

The Forum has maintained its twice yearly meeting with government, jointly chaired by UKOTCF and FCO. The Forum has enjoyed a good working relationship with DFID, FCO and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and has had many informal discussions and meetings, as well as some contacts with Defra and other departments.

The chairman and vice-chairman had a brief meeting with the new head (later director) of FCO Overseas Territories Department, Leigh Turner. The Forum has noted that, with FCO's dropping of environmental posts in late 2005 as well as cuts in posts in the Overseas Territories area, FCO has had increasing difficulties in engaging in environmental matters relating to the UKOTs. UKOTCF has found that it has had to work harder to progress environmental action, despite its own stretched resources. There has been a range of issues centred on development issues, mainly in the Caribbean Territories, which have proved difficult to address. The Forum wants the best environmental practices to be in place and to encourage and help the UKOT Governments and HMG to uphold the Environment Charters. The conference held in Jersey was an opportunity to discuss the Charters, and the Forum has received several enquiries about making more complete the measures of progress on the Environment Charters. The Forum encourages the Territories and other parties to update and commit on these. Although the stresses noted above meant that FCO could not match its strong attendance at the previous Bermuda conference, UKOTCF acknowledges the financial support of FCO, through OTEP, for the conference. UKOTCF welcomed the strong participation from DFID, and the participation of Defra.



UK Government panel (Helen Nellthorp, FCO; Dick Beales, DFID; Eric Blencowe, Defra; Marcus Yeo, JNCC) discuss UK Government support for the Environment Charter objectives with other participants in the Jersey conference.

The Forum has continued to explore with HMG possible funding from the National Lottery. It had been planned that a representative from the Heritage Lottery Fund would attend the joint UKOTCF / Government meeting in January. Unfortunately the National Heritage Memorial Fund representative was unable to attend the meeting but sent a policy statement, indicating that the Fund took the view that there were insufficient funds to cover domestic spending, let alone extend the spending to the UKOTs, and that there was a very pressing need for heritage spending in the UK and that the public lacked an appetite for funding overseas. The Forum and other participants noted that there appeared to be serious misunderstandings on the part of the Fund as to what the UK Overseas Territories were and that their inhabitants are British, the territories are British, and they are part of the British heritage – and not foreign countries. UKOTCF and other parties at the meeting undertook to follow up these points with the Fund.

Working Groups and other links with UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and their NGOs

The conference held in Jersey in October 2006 and organised by the UKOTCF, with support from OTEP and hosted by the Jersey conservation bodies, received good involvement from all the UKOTs, both NGO and governmental, as well as other interested parties.

The first two days of the conference were set aside for an optional workshop on Environmental Impact Assessment, sponsored by the International Association for Impact Assessment. This was well received. The main conference started with an introduction to conservation issues in Jersey, set in context by an opportunity for delegates to visit the first Jersey Ramsar Site which, with Jersey's location in the Baie du Mont St Michel, has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world.

Topics for the conference included environment charters and strategic planning with an overview of progress, examples from several territories on their approaches, and contributions from HMG departments and agencies on how they can help. The conference featured many OTEP-supported projects, demonstrating the importance and success of this small-projects



Delegates from the conference in Jersey walk across the seabed revealed by the low tide on Jersey's first Ramsar site.

fund. The need for reporting progress was stressed, and commitments were made by many to supply information to the UKOTCF exercise collating information on progress.

The invasive species session generated debate, starting with the work based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee report on non-native invasive species in the Overseas Territories – itself arising out of the previous UKOTCF-organised conference in Bermuda. The new EU-funded South Atlantic Invasive Species project has come about as a result of the collaborative efforts between a small number of Overseas Territories working together through UKOTCF's South Atlantic Working Group; the project has secured 2 million Euros in funds to support work on invasive species monitoring and control.

Environmental Education was well covered by a structured review of common needs, supported by a range of projects. These included demonstration of a CD (production funded by OTEP) designed for use by local schoolchildren in BVI. The educational schools programme in the Turks and Caicos whereby children visit local caves and iguana sites and help in plant nurseries collecting and potting seeds of native species was explained. In addition, the

development of science curriculum materials for the Falkland Islands and Ascension, using examples from their own localities, was presented (highlighting the fact the UK curricula have little relevance to pupils in the UKOTs). The inspiring activities for Jersey Environment Week, demonstrated how young people can be enthused. A new, and highly successful, innovation at this



Martin Hamilton, RBG Kew, and Bryan Naqqi Manco, TCNT, recording mortality levels of the TCI national tree Pinus caribea var. bahamensis due to an invasive scale insect Toumeyella parvicornis.

conference was the participation of several senior students from schools and colleges in Jersey. RSPB took the opportunity of the conference to hold a one-day follow-on workshop for invited participants, and also hosted a reception in the main conference to launch the Important Bird Area (IBA) directory for the UKOTs. Several authors were present, including UKOTCF's chairman who had written the section on the Turks and Caicos Islands. RSPB later held a second launch at a reception held by the Cayman Island Government in London. That event provided an opportunity for a number of the Forum's UKOT display boards (produced with the support of FCO and NGO members) to be exhibited.

Other sessions in the main conference covered integration of conservation and sustainable livelihoods in both terrestrial and marine situations, conservation of the built heritage, obtaining and using resources, and species recovery including captive breeding, the last ending with an excellent conference dinner hosted by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. The conference overview and initial conclusions have been placed on the Forum website: www.ukotcf.org and the full proceedings will be published there.

Very preliminary discussions have taken place regarding funding, location and programme for the next conference. This is likely to take place in a Caribbean venue in mid-2009. As ever, lessons learnt at Jersey and earlier conferences will be incorporated in the planning of that one.

The South Atlantic Working Group and the Wider Caribbean Working Group had opportunities to meet at the conference. There was also an exploratory meeting of territories in Europe. The discussions at these meetings helped considerably in the review Council had underway concerning the Forum's Working Groups. UKOTCF established regional working groups as part of its major review of activities in the mid-1990s. These developed from previous single-territory working groups, notably the particularly successful St Helena Working Group. The Forum and its member organisations had decided that the stage had been reached when a regional approach for groups would be more useful than a single-territory one. It was considered that the Forum's role needed to expand to encourage Territory-Territory exchange of views and expertise. In addition, the regional working groups were intended as a way of achieving these ends without adding too much to the

workload of the Forum's voluntary officers and tiny paid secretariat. UKOTCF has undertaken continual monitoring of the ways to make working groups effective. In 1999, after a couple of years of experience of the groups' operations, Council reviewed working arrangements more thoroughly. A paper was prepared and agreed, making some adjustments to procedures. In 2001, Council established a small sub-committee to undertake a further review of the working groups' operations. Council adopted the sub-committee's report in December 2001. Essentially, regional working groups have operated under this arrangement since then. However there were a number of issues that generated a further review which included:

- the need to maintain procedures to keep the membership of groups suitably managed
- the need to ensure that the groups are both effective and remain within the legal constraints on the Forum
- some issues concerned with the operation of the two smaller remaining single-territory groups, for Pitcairn and British Indian Ocean Territory
- challenges (of different types) for both South Atlantic and Wider Caribbean Working Groups in ensuring full communication as well as participation by personnel in the UKOTs
- the possibility of a working group to cover territories in Europe (Crown Dependencies, Gibraltar and Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas).

In trying to address these issues, Council decided that it is important to have a common framework for the general terms of reference for the Forum's regional working groups, but to interpret this flexibly to meet the needs of individual working groups. It was also important to remember that it is UKOTCF which is the legal entity, and the Council the legally responsible decision-making body. UKOTCF is a non-governmental body. This places constraints on it, as does its status as a charitable company.

Following the enthusiasm for establishing a Europe Territories Working Group, and for Pitcairn and South Atlantic participants to work together, Council held further consultations, resulting in the restructuring towards the end of the reported year of UKOTCF Working Groups, so that all UKOTs and CDs fall within the geographical scope of one of the Working Groups: Wider Caribbean, Southern Oceans and Europe Territories. Reports on those groups active in 2006-7 are included below.



Liz Charter, Isle of Man Wildlife and Conservation Division and since appointed chairperson of the Europe Territories Working Group, in discussion with Charlie Perez and Eric Shaw from Gibraltar and Rob Thomas, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

Conservation Priorities

The work on implementation of Environment Charters noted earlier should prove increasingly valuable in identifying major priorities across the territories, complementary to processes within each territory. UKOTCF had planned two years ago to complement this by a scoping exercise of the funding requirements to meet conservation needs of the territories. Unfortunately, the Council member who had offered to coordinate this on a voluntary basis found this year that they were unable to do so. The Forum will continue to explore ways to cover this need.

In relation to particular projects, one role of UKOTCF is to help its member organisations to identify, resource and undertake projects, usually involving joint activities between member organisations and sometimes others. Some of these projects are noted in the Working Group reports below, and these and others appear also in the pages of *Forum News*. The following examples are drawn mainly from cases where UKOTCF is a partner in its own name.



HE Governor Richard Tauwhare at the opening of the Middle Caicos Conservation Centre

The Turks and Caicos National Trust (TCNT) has been working with the Forum for many years to meet the request from the local communities on Middle Caicos to help them look after their internationally important wild animals and plants, while at the same time provide opportunities for small business based on this heritage. The Chairman visited TCI twice during the year to manage and work on various current and proposed joint projects. The opening of the Middle Caicos Conservation Centre

was a notable feature during the November visit; the Centre incorporates displays designed by Dace Ground and Mike Pienkowski of UKOTCF Council and Bryan Naqqi Manco, TCNT senior conservation officer, and videos produced by Ann Pienkowski.

UKOTCF's chairman, with help from Ann Pienkowski, has continued to work with partners in TCI, Cayman and BVI, as well as FCO, to try to secure European Commission funding for more work on nature conservation linked to provision of tourism and education facilities in these UKOTs, a project proposal which has so far taken 3.5 years to migrate through EC procedures.

The Forum has been involved with the Montserrat National Trust (MNT) in the design and implementation of training workshops on international conservation legislation and strategic planning for conservation bodies. The first workshop, facilitated by Mike & Ann Pienkowski, took place in January in Montserrat for MNT Council and staff, and other senior personnel including Governmental as well as other interested stakeholders and personnel from Anguilla.

The Chairman took the opportunity of the participation of Simon Glass, Tristan da Cunha conservation officer, at the conference in Jersey to present him with the first copy of *The Natural History of Tristan de Cunha*. This 44-page photographically illustrated book, by Paul Tyler and Alison Rothwell, was produced by UKOTCF to make the scientific results of the Darwin Initiative project, run by Tristan da Cunha and RSPB, on biodiversity conservation in Tristan available for use by the island's school. It is available for all to read on the Forum's website. This, together with work on the flax mill museum at St Helena, were the results of UKOTCF securing small grants from a fund not previously involved with UKOTs. Explorations of similar opportunities continue.



Mike Pienkowski presents a copy of The Natural History of Tristan da Cunha to Simon Glass at the conference in Jersey

The Forum has been part of a major success in securing EU funds to enable tropical and sub-tropical UKOTs to coordinate biodiversity research with the territories and overseas regions of other European states: France, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. NET-BIOME was established, driven by the French Overseas Region of Réunion, to help coordinate tropical and subtropical biodiversity research programmes in relation to sustainable development in the Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union. UKOTCF was invited to try to link in the UK overseas territories in the tropical and sub-tropical regions to which the project refers. This was a very generous offer, especially noting the very large amount of work done by Réunion personnel to develop this proposal and secure the last elements of the budget of the relevant programme to fund this project, which started at the end of the reported year. During these preparatory phases, the Chairman had been leading for the Forum, in recent months alongside Colin Hindmarch, who joined the Forum Council in October. Both participated in the pre-initiation planning meeting in Paris in February. NET-BIOME recognises the particular vulnerabilities of the territories with respect to climate change and world economic forces as well as the particular problems faced by the territories' isolation, low critical mass, poor access to information, difficulties in coordination of research between the regions and between the regions and the EU, and also with third parties.

The core priorities of the project are to:

- ⊙ Collect, exchange and provide access to information on research programmes, actors and results by building an interactive information system;
- ⊙ Design a joint strategy profile including the analysis of barriers to cooperation and of common strategic issues and good practices;
- ⊙ Develop joint activities such as clustering of regionally funded research projects, mutual access to facilities and human resources, specific cooperation agreements.

Public Awareness and Information Management

Forum News was produced twice during the year, in August 2006 and February 2007. Both issues have included a section on OTEP, not only outlining the projects that have been funded but also containing a number of articles on projects that are now successfully operational. This was part of the communications service which UKOTCF continued to supply for the DFID/FCO OTEP programme. Material on the website has been extended and is being constantly updated. It is important as projects finish that project outputs are available for the website, and project managers are asked to supply relevant papers electronically or links to these.

The Forum website has had a complete redesign, modernising its look so that the pages have easily identified links to the various sections of the website. Various functionality on the site has also been increased. A fault at the ISP resulting in occasional misdirections has been identified, and is thought to have been resolved.

The Forum and the UKOTs have received press coverage in *New Scientist* by Fred Pearce, based on his attendance at the conference in Jersey. Some aspects highlighted funding issues from UK Government, which some considered unbalanced. This resulted in various follow up articles including a comment from DFID in the *St Helena Independent*.

The Forum had a stand at the British Bird Fair at Rutland Water for the second year, improving on the layout of the stand. There was a good level of interest.

UKOTCF has also spoken at a number of venues of various types, widening the pool of awareness of UKOTs and their biodiversity.

Organisational Development

For several years, UKOTCF has been developing links with the nearest equivalent organisations in France and the Netherlands, resulting in the development of a linking initiative. The name “Bioverseas” (with the explanatory sub-title “Initiative for biodiversity and environment in EU ORs [Outermost Regions] and OCTs [Overseas Countries and Territories]) was agreed in December 2006 by the partners in this alliance of nine major umbrella nature conservation organisations in the European Union and those of its Member States with overseas territories. The purpose of *Bioverseas* is to aid efforts at the EU level to help improve the situation for conservation of the uniquely important biodiversity in the ORs (ie overseas territories that are integral parts of Member States, and therefore within the EU) and OCTs (overseas territories associated with EU Member States). OCTs include almost all UKOTs (except Gibraltar [in the EU], Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas [in Europe geographically], and Bermuda [by its own choice]). UKOTCF is one of the partners.

Bioverseas complements the efforts of Territory governments, in the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA). The Chairman and Jean-Philippe Palasi, of IUCN and the secretariat of *Bioverseas*, attended a meeting of OCTA and the European Commission in Nuuk, Greenland in September 2006. The meeting was not focused on the environment, but two of the biggest OCTs, Greenland and French Polynesia, led in identifying biodiversity, marine issues and climate change as big environmental priorities, common to all OCTs. This meeting fed into the IUCN/EU conference on biodiversity and development in Paris later that month, where good progress was achieved in drawing the attention of the European Union and others to these issues.

During the year, a number of internal issues have consumed much more of the limited volunteer time on which the Forum depends than would be ideal. Work is in hand to attempt to resolve these issues and allow a concentration on real conservation issues.

Following the Treasurer’s retirement from The Royal Bank of Scotland, he has been working on strategic planning and the financial needs of the Forum. Financing core activity remains a considerable challenge. For the time being UKOTCF will need to continue to rely heavily on donated time of senior personnel, with



This Great Shearwater, spending the non-breeding season in the fjord at Nuuk, Greenland, provides a striking example of the links between Overseas Countries and Territories of European Union states, then being discussed at the conference in that city. This species breeds only in the Falkland Islands and “mainly” at Tristan da Cunha, with most on Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands (and formerly on Tristan itself).

support from a range of small income items from various sources. Whilst support has been gained from charitable trust and other funding bodies in support of work, there is a need to expand on this. To that end the Chairman and Treasurer have been in contact with other potential funding sources, and these explorations continue. The Treasurer will continue to explore other sources of financial support in the current and future financial periods.

Acknowledgements

The Forum would like to thank the individuals and representatives of member organisation who have given numerous hours of voluntary time to the Forum, both in the UK and the Territories. A number of Friends of the Overseas Territories have converted their subscription renewals to direct debit, which has been appreciated. The Forum would like to thank existing Friends, and encourage those who have an interest in the UKOTs to join the scheme. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance as project grants and donations, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development, and anonymous donors. In addition to these, the Forum would like to thank the following for support in respect of the Jersey Conference: Environmental Department of the States of Jersey, Société Jersiaise, National Trust for Jersey, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment) ‘Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Impact Assessment Project’ (CBBIA), funded by the Dutch Government, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Commonwealth Foundation. The Forum is grateful also to member organisations for allowing meetings to take place at their offices, particularly: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and Zoological Society of London; as well as to the Falkland Island Government for allowing the use of their London offices.

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum
Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2007

	2007 Unrestricted Funds	2007 Restricted Funds	2007 Total Funds	2006 Total Funds
Incoming Resources				
Subs and donations	10,723		10,723	11,397
Investment Income	3,321		3,321	2,582
Sundry Incoming Resources	386		386	200
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities				
Project Income		233,657	233,657	130,280
Total Incoming Resources	14,430	233,657	248,087	144,459
Resources Expended				
Charitable Activities	11,548	213,616	225,164	127,240
Other Resources Expended	14,461	7,209	21,670	21,156
Total Resources Expended before transfer	26,009	220,825	246,834	148,396
less contributions to overheads from projects	- 19,947	19,947		
Total resources used	6,062	240,772	246,834	148,396
Net incoming/outgoing resources	8,368	-7,115	1,253	-3,937
Balance brought forward as at 1st April 2006	48,645	61,761	110,406	114,343
Balance carried forward as at 31st March 2007	57,013	54,646	111,659	110,406

Report of UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

This year, WCWG has met twice in London, and once at the Jersey Conference. The latter provided an all-too-rare opportunity for Working Group members from across the UK and Wider Caribbean Territories to meet face-to-face for discussions. A reinvigoration of the Environment Charter process was seen as a high priority by a number of those attending. In addition to meetings, news and information has been circulated regularly amongst Group members by e-mail. At the Jersey Conference, Michael Gore announced that he would be standing down after ten years as WCWG Chairman. At its November 2006 meeting, the Forum Council were pleased to appoint Bruce Dinwiddy as his successor. Like Michael, Bruce has had a distinguished diplomatic career, including as Governor of the Cayman Islands (see *Forum News* 30).

In addition to activities in individual Wider Caribbean UKOTs (outlined below), a number of valuable cross-Territory initiatives have been progressed by Forum members and partner organisations, and by UKOTCF itself, during the year. The Forum has continued to pursue opportunities for project support and enhanced co-operation within the EU. The *Bioverseas* initiative

(see above and *Forum News* 29 and 30) is a valuable step towards greater co-ordination among those concerned with biodiversity and sustainable development in the Overseas Territories (and similar associated countries) of European nations. The Forum continues also to pursue European Commission support for a specific project addressing conservation and sustainable tourism in TCI, BVI and Cayman, first proposed in 2003.

CAB International (CABI) has recently completed a GEF-funded PDF-A project addressing invasive species threats in the Caribbean region, and is now planning the second (PDF-B) stage of this initiative. Although the GEF funding excludes UKOTs, CABI remain keen to identify mechanisms by which their participation might be supported. During the year, CABI also completed a review of marine invasive species in the Caribbean, and UKOT input to this exercise was facilitated by WCWG. Addressing another major environmental threat, DFID have championed the participation of the region's UKOTs in the work of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, where the exclusion of UK Territories from GEF-funded activities is again a challenge.

Anguilla

Progress on a number of fronts has been reported from Anguilla during the year. Positive legislative developments have included drafting of an Environmental Protection Act, measures in relation to MEAs including CITES, and measures to consolidate the position of the Anguilla National Trust (ANT). OTEP support has been invaluable in the development of new legislation, and it is hoped that FCO will help to maintain momentum in this area if required. OTEP funding has also supported coastal resources management activities, and the production of a bird guide (led by Steve Holliday of RSPB and ANT colleagues). The latest round of OTEP has seen new awards for Anguilla, including support for projects assessing the potential for rat eradication on Dog Island, enhancing marine protected area management, and the development of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

UKOTCF Chairman Mike Pienkowski has maintained Forum links with Anguilla, meeting with the then Governor-designate, Andrew George, who also visited Forum Vice-chairman Colin Clubbe at RBG Kew, during 2006. Early in 2007, Mike was able to welcome Anguilla colleagues, including Karim Hodge (Director of Environment) and Farah Mukhida (ANT) as participants in the Montserrat workshop reported below.

Bermuda



Corals in Shoal Bay Anguilla

In an effort to improve the Marine Park system through better management and information, the Anguilla National Trust and the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources have collaboratively developed a project that will assess the status of the ecological integrity of the marine Parks and other key near shore sites.

During the year, the Bermuda National Trust moved from associate to full membership of UKOTCF. Visits to Bermuda by UK-based colleagues included those by Paul Pearce-Kelly (ZSL), in relation to conservation of endemic snails, and by Martin Hamilton and Daisy Dent (RBG Kew), to provide training in herbarium and horticultural techniques, and the collection of DNA and seed material. The latest round of OTEP has yielded support for further work on the school-run Saltus Island restoration project, and for a project to develop tools and capacity for the integration of environmental evaluation into policy.

Andrew Dobson (Bermuda Audubon Society) is currently President of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB), and has been very active in this capacity, as well as in keeping WCWG colleagues informed of activities in Bermuda. Despite conservation successes during the year, concerns remain

in Bermuda over the environmental impact of proposed developments, including the Southlands hotel, and a new hospital which would encroach on the Botanic Gardens.

British Virgin Islands

This year has seen a new National Parks Act come into force in BVI, and further work is underway on environmental legislation and related activities raising public awareness. The successful Darwin Initiative Anegada project was completed, and good progress has been made on the OTEP-funded project to develop an environmental CD atlas and teaching resource. Although the latest OTEP round includes no new projects specifically focused on BVI, one of the approved cross-Territory projects (development of an identification guide to major Caribbean reef species) is to be led by the BVI National Parks Trust (BVINPT). BVINPT's Raymond Walker was remembered with a commemorative service and tree planting at the J.R. O'Neal Botanic Gardens, and as the posthumous 2006 recipient of the prestigious McFarlane Award for outstanding environmental leadership in the insular Caribbean.

In February 2007, the BVI Government approved the controversial development of a resort and golf course on Beef Island, which is opposed by a coalition of local stakeholders.

Cayman Islands

This year saw the welcome reopening of the Governor Michael Gore Bird Sanctuary, renovated by the National Trust following extensive damage to the site by Hurricane Ivan. The wider Darwin Initiative project *In Ivan's Wake...* has made good progress, including environmental education activities and use of satellite images of marine and terrestrial environments in the development of a comprehensive habitat classification and mapping system. This will underpin the development of a National Conservation Action Plan, the requirement for which is likely to be amongst the



The Blue Iguana Recovery Programme has succeeded in stemming the catastrophic decline of the Grand Cayman blue iguana.

elements of new environmental legislation for Cayman. This legislation, which has been eagerly anticipated, now appears to be imminent.

The OTEP-funded *Red List Assessment of Cayman Islands' Native Flora* (which identifies some 85 species as Critically Endangered) has been completed by Fred Burton, for publication by RBG Kew. Projects for Cayman announced in the latest round of OTEP awards centre on economic valuation of natural resources (led by the DoE and JNCC) and a scoping study for Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) Targets 1 and 2 (which had a regional focus, and will be led by the DoE).

Montserrat

Despite the on-going threat of disruption by volcanic activity, there has been much progress in Montserrat over the last year. In addition to input from RSPB, Durrell and RBG Kew colleagues, the Darwin Initiative *Centre Hills Project* has benefited from the tireless efforts of local personnel. The accounts of their work given by Calvin 'Blacka' Fenton and James 'Scriber' Daley at Durrell during the Jersey Conference underlined the commitment that this project has mobilized. The OTEP-funded project towards development of the Botanic Gardens has also enjoyed considerable local support in Montserrat, and (in May 2006) the island hosted a regional workshop on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, funded by Defra. Participants included Jack Ward from Bermuda and Mat Cottam from Cayman. Colleagues from Anguilla (see above) travelled to Montserrat in early 2007 to participate in an OTEP-funded cross-sectoral workshop for senior NGO and government personnel. Facilitated by Mike & Ann Pienkowski on behalf of the Forum, the workshop addressed MEAs and strategic planning, and will (in its second phase) focus on developing a strategic plan for the Montserrat National Trust and other Montserrat bodies.



Mountain Chicken, the large frog endemic to Montserrat and Dominica

The Government of Montserrat has recently established a Department of Environment, with Gerard Gray appointed as its Director. The Department will undoubtedly play a major role in future activities, and should benefit substantially from the work of the Darwin project and outputs of existing OTEP projects (including that supporting a review of environmental legislation). Three new OTEP projects for Montserrat focus on economic valuation of the natural resources of the Centre Hills (led by Stephen Mendes), Species Action Planning (led by Durrell) and environmental education.

Turks & Caicos Islands

November 2006 saw the opening of the Middle Caicos Conservation Centre (see *Forum News* 30), the latest development under the local initiative (led by the TC National Trust, in partnership with UKOTCF over a number of years) to stimulate small-scale, low-impact ecotourism and as an education facility. At around the same time, the TCI Government confirmed its intention to transfer significant land holdings into the custodianship of the National Trust, and these transfers are keenly awaited. Also during the year, Martin Hamilton and colleagues from RBG Kew made useful progress to develop a Red List for plants in TCI, and provided training in seed banking and other botanical techniques, partly under the TCNT/UKOTCF OTEP-funded project.

Against these very positive developments, elsewhere in TCI the situation is one of considerable concern. An introduced invasive non-native insect pest, now known to be the pine tortoise scale *Toumeyella parvicornis*, has devastated stands of *Pinus caribaea* var. *bahamensis*, the national tree. RBG Kew have been working closely with the National Trust to develop a programme of activities to counter this invasion, but evidence of extensive habitat modification is already apparent in formerly pine-dominated areas. The presentation on this theme given by Bryan Naqqi Manco at the Jersey Conference shocked delegates, and provided a sobering reminder of the environmental threats posed by invasive species in the Caribbean region and more widely.

Report of the UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

At the Jersey Conference an exploratory meeting was held about the issues which a Working Group for territories in Europe might address. Territories represented at this meeting were Gibraltar, Jersey, Alderney, Sark, Isle of Man and Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas. They were assisted by participants from JNCC, IUCN Europe and France, and by Colin Hindmarch, Mike Pienkowski and Nigel Crocker. Particular thanks should go to Aimée Vibert, from Beaulieu Convent School, Jersey for her suggestion of a student-led group linking territories, as well as many other ideas.

Instead of focussing on the potential organisational matters of a Europe Territories working group, three main areas for initial practical collaboration were identified: the development of a database of our areas of expertise and experience available to share; the inclusion of our territorial sea-beds in a pan-European seabed mapping exercise; and an environmental education project to link areas and raise awareness of Overseas Territories in our schools. Identification of sources of funding was also high on the agenda and use of EU funds was mooted as possibility.

Following this energetic start, the Forum's Council formally agreed on 5 March the formation of the Europe Territories Working Group, with Liz Charter, who is Head of Wildlife and Conservation for the Isle of Man as Chairman, and Colin Hindmarch, a Council member, as Secretary.

It was envisaged that the initial activities of the group would be to;

Bring together government and non-Government organisations and promote communication on developing issues;

Harmonise approaches on policy development, intelligence, information and projects,

Develop a coherent and comprehensive knowledge base (database of skills resources and projects completed) that would inform others with similar assignments;

Promote shared initiatives (invasive species, curriculum, large-scale contracts).

It is intended that there should be regular rounds of emails about agenda items. If possible, telephone conferencing will be organised.

Report of the UKOTCF South Atlantic Working Group

Four meetings were held during the year 2006, chaired by Ann Brown, in the UK in April, July and December and an enlarged group meeting in Jersey in October.

Following consultation and discussion, particularly following the enthusiasm at the conference in Jersey for Pitcairn and South Atlantic territories to work together, Council took up the suggestion of creating a Southern Oceans Working Group (SOWG). It was felt that Pitcairn and BIOT have similarities to issues affecting some of the South Atlantic territories, such as remoteness, military bases and uninhabited islands and could benefit from being involved with an active group including other Territories. Council appointed Iain Orr as the first chairman of this new group and Frances Marks as Secretary. Council would like to thank Ann Brown for chairing the SAWG since September 2002.

In addition to the core membership of the group appointed by Council, the group has at times involved a wider participation with invited participants, and this was especially so at the meeting in Jersey to take advantage of the presence of delegates from the Territories at the conference. Participants then included Forum member organisations, government personnel and individuals interested in the South Atlantic. Many people from the Territories have contributed to SAWG activities during the year by email for which they are sincerely thanked. Discussion at the conference meeting highlighted a number of issues, in particular confirmation that the Group's work should be territory-driven. The group did not expect that the reporting from the Territories should be onerous; however, whenever possible, Territories could notify the Group of issues to be drawn to UK Government's attention. They should also inform the Group of items or projects that are not progressing due to a lack of funds or need of support. The Group believes it is important to share information as widely as possible.

International Agreement on Conservation of Albatross and Petrels

UKOTCF was very pleased when the International Agreement on Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) was officially extended to Tristan da Cunha on 13th April 2006. The Biodiversity



Yellow-nosed albatross Thalassarche chlororhynchos and chick on Tristan da Cunha

Action Plan, production of a management plan for Nightingale, revision of the management plan for the Gough Island Nature Reserve and continued monitoring of ACAP species on all the four islands in the Territory are some of the activities that are expected to lead to an improved conservation status for ACAP species.

EU South Atlantic Invasive Species Project

The EU-funded South Atlantic Invasive Species Project started officially on 1 October 2006, with St Helena and RSPB in managing roles. The Forum was very pleased that an initiative, for which SAWG had been instrumental in its conception, had finally come to fruition after more than two years of



Clare Miller, RSPB, and Neil Moore, Central Science Laboratory, discuss eradication techniques at the conference in Jersey.

negotiations. Clare Miller was appointed Project Manager with two regional project officers, Brian Summers based in the Falklands and Andrew Barlow in St Helena.

When Clare Miller addressed SAWG she gave an overview of the targets for the coming year, which are to establish Steering Groups on each of the Territories in order to set priority action plans. The development of a reporting process and work on baseline surveys will also be progressed in the first twelve months. Once the priority exercise is complete, work on the ground will start with demonstration projects. She stated that the project aims to 'increase regional capacity to reduce the impact of invasive species on the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories.' The overall objective of the project is to conserve native biological diversity and therefore enhance economic prosperity and quality of life.

Marine Issues

Delegates at the working group meeting in Jersey felt that marine conservation, including establishing Marine Protected Areas in the South Atlantic Territories, would be appropriate for a future regional project. JNCC was asked to assist in looking at how their knowledge of the marine environment might be enhanced to aid appropriate management including, where necessary, the designation of marine protected areas. SAWG congratulated Tara Pelembe (formerly Ascension Island Conservation Officer) on her appointment as Overseas Territories Officer at JNCC.

Ascension Island

Although the Working Group's main remit is to focus on environmental issues, it considers that the right of abode and other governance issues that have been on-going in Ascension during the year give cause for concern in relation to the environment. UKOTCF has been concerned about the major environmental impacts likely to result if residents of Ascension Island continue to lose the feeling that they have responsibilities for their natural environment. It has been noted that, because humans have degraded the habitat of Ascension, it will need management now and in the future to fulfil UK's international commitments. Without local activity, it would be enormously expensive for HMG to fulfil its international commitments in this regard.

It is encouraging to note that seabird populations have shown increases after the very successful restoration project on Ascension. The last known feral cat was found in February 2004. All pet cats on Ascension are now neutered and micro-chipped. Even a small number of semi-feral cats in evidence during the Army Ornithological Service bird survey proved to be on the cat database, which is getting smaller each year.



Visiting Sooty Terns on Ascension as part of the OTEP-funded Community Environmental Awareness and Citizen programme.

St Helena Airport

Dick Beales advised that Faber Maunsell has been engaged to work on the environmental aspects of the St Helena Airport project and will be working with the contractors throughout the project. All aspects are undergoing a formal EIA process. In addition to their core assessment work, specialist advice and studies have been provided by several experts, for example: Phillip and Myrtle Ashmole on invertebrates; Neil McCulloch on the Wirebird; and Dr Aptroot on lichens. Most of the environmental work on Prosperous Bay Plain is complete but some work still has to be done on the associated developments such as the jetty and haul route.

The initial tender process for airport construction and operation has not resulted in a positive conclusion. As a result a restructured tender invitation process is in progress.

Tristan da Cunha

At the Jersey Conference, UKOTCF was able to hand to Tristan da Cunha participants the first copy of a book designed for the local school to make available the results of the recent Darwin Initiative project (see main Council report).

A negative environmental impact was a severe threat from an oil-rig, that was being transported from Brazil to Singapore, which broke free and was washed up on Tristan. There was a potential threat to biodiversity and fisheries as the rig contained species not known in the area. The rig was eventually towed out and sunk in deep water to minimise the risk. Unfortunately there is no baseline data on the marine environment around Tristan, which illustrates the need for further scientific studies. A lack of procedures to deal with such incidents was also identified, and much effort was required of FCO and other officials to resolve the issue.

SAWG was reminded of the horrors of introduced mice on Gough that were eating young albatross chicks. Rodents were reported to be having devastating impacts on seabird populations on both Tristan and Gough, and there are also concerns for human health. There are, however, plans and it is believed that, despite logistical challenges, it would be possible to eradicate rats from Tristan. The practicality of mouse removal from Gough is being assessed. These had been identified as a high priority at the S Atlantic ACAP Workshop, which was held in the Falklands in March 2006.

Falkland Islands

Falkland Conservation has kept SAWG informed of their many and varied activities during the year. One such activity is publishing a series of four practical leaflets: Marine Mammal Rescue – First Aid Guidelines, Tussac Planting/Management, Invasive Plants – Management and Removal, and Wild Bird Rescue – Handling and First Aid Guidelines.

Falklands Conservation has continued penguin monitoring. The count of king penguin chicks at Volunteer Point in November 2006 totalled 533, the highest ever recorded at this venue since the programme began. Gentoo and Magellanic penguins also had good



6th Form students planting Tussac Grass in the Falklands as part of the OTEP-funded Environmental Education project, Community Environmental Awareness and Citizen Programme, a multi-territory programme involving the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island.

seasons, but rockhopper penguins were the exception with an average year, and a slow decline in numbers noted at some colonies. This is of considerable concern and is likely to be tackled through a collaborative approach involving other researchers, the Falklands Government and other organisations.

Report of the UKOTCF Pitcairn Working Group

Conservation work in the Pitcairn Islands largely involved the continuation of ongoing projects.

The nursery continued on Pitcairn thanks to the hard work of the Pitcairners. However prospects for the next leap forward, involving using the products of the nursery to restore ground cleared of roseapple, received a setback when an application to OTEP was unsuccessful. Because of this and because access to the Island remains so difficult and expensive, the way forward is not clear.

To improve access to Pitcairn, there are plans to enlarge the breakwater in Bounty Bay. At first it seemed that the stone needed would be quarried from Tautama, a site of exceptional archaeological and botanical sensitivity. However, at the time of writing, the proposed quarry site has shifted to the less sensitive Isaacs Valley. Even here, there are environmental concerns, particularly centred on the region endemic *Pisonia austro-orientalis*. The Group very much hopes the Government will honour the Environmental Impact Assessment commitment, made in respect of Tautama, for the Isaacs Valley site.

Drafts of the Environmental Management Plan for the Pitcairn Islands were circulated by Noleen Smyth working for BEC (Botanical, Environmental and Conservation) Consultants Ltd, and received extensive comments. The final draft is scheduled for submission to the Foreign Office by mid-2007.

The text and layout of the visitor leaflets for Henderson, Oeno and Ducie was agreed but unfortunately production has been delayed by staff changes at the High Commission in Wellington.

An application to OTEP to undertake a study of the feasibility of ridding Henderson of rats was submitted under the guidance of Dr Geoff Hilton of the RSPB, with extensive input from Management Committee members. The application was successful and work on the study commenced at the very end of the year, with the Chairman providing local knowledge of Henderson and Dr David Towns of the Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand, providing expertise on rodent eradication.

The Group contributed information to the RSPB to assist that organization's assessment of the costs of a necessary comprehensive conservation programme across the UK's Overseas Territories.

Report of the UKOTCF British Indian Ocean Territory Working Group

The functions of this Working Group were provided during the year, under agreement with the Forum, by its member organisation, the Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT).

For those readers who, like most people, are unsure of the whereabouts and character of BIOT, this British Territory comprises the Chagos Archipelago of 55 tiny coral islands, within the world's largest coral atoll and half a million square miles of sea, in the centre of the Indian Ocean. Only the largest island, Diego Garcia which is the site of a UK/US (mainly US) military 'facility', is inhabited. The rest of the area is considered to be the most pristine tropical marine environment left on the planet.

As mentioned in our report last year, the first big conservation event in 2006/7 was the Chagos 2006 shipboard, scientific and environmental survey of the Chagos, organised by Warwick University with major support from the Government. CCT and others contributed, and participation was international. Its aims were related to understanding, managing and conserving the Chagos; its scientific and general conclusions are currently being published. The expedition found the Chagos coral reefs to be in better condition than at the time of the last survey in 2001.

A second major project was for the habitat restoration of Eagle Island (the second largest island in BIOT but not a pristine one, mainly because of massively destructive, human- imported, black rats). Regrettably rats remain despite the great efforts of the expedition, as does the alluring challenge of restoring a true natural paradise similar to that on other Chagos islands.

For both projects the role of the newly designated 'BIOT Support Vessel' was vital. (The new name for the former 'Fisheries Protection Vessel' is a welcome sign of intent to integrate fisheries management with the new conservation management plan and other objectives.) We also appreciated the contribution to CCT's AGM from MRAG Ltd who manage the fishery regime for the BIOT Government.

Another significant expedition to BIOT was in April 2006 by a group of the Chagossian people, and we were pleased that it went well. CCT very much hopes that the islanders and their supporters share a common interest in the stewardship of the delicate and vulnerable Chagos Archipelago. Any decision that leads to the restoration of human settlement will have profound environmental implications.

For the longer-term future for nature conservation in BIOT, a priority is implementation of our proposals for extensive new Ramsar sites. The Working Group was encouraged by the support for this on 30 April 2007 from Mr Barry Gardiner, Defra Minister. We have also welcomed other indications, for example from JNCC and DCMS, of more 'joined-up' Government in support of BIOT conservation, a cause for which UKOTCF valuably campaigns.



Brown Boobies have a thriving colony in the Three Brothers islands.

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Membership

The current UK members of the Forum are:

British Ecological Society; British Microbial Biodiversity Association; Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust; Herpetological Conservation Trust; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Royal Zoological Society of Scotland; Zoological Society of London; Army Ornithological Society; Royal Air Force Ornithological Society and Royal Naval Birdwatching Society.

Current members of the Forum in the UK Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies are:

Aldemey Wildlife Trust; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; Bermuda Zoological Society; Chagos Conservation Trust; British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Falklands Conservation; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; La Société Guernesiaise; Société Jersiaise; National Trust of Jersey; Isle of Man Wildlife and Conservation Division; Manx Chough Project; Montserrat National Trust; St Helena National Trust; La Société Sercquaise; South Georgia Association; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands.

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Photographs courtesy of: Ali Liddle; Frances Marks; Mike Pienkowski; Frank Roulstone, National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Peter Ryan; Charles Sheppard; and Stuart Wynee, DFMR Anguilla



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