

# UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2015 - March 2016

## Report of Council

### Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum promotes awareness of, and conservation of, the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage of the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs). It works in partnership with a wide network of bodies in the UK and UKOTs/CDs, many of which are Forum member and associate organisations, as well as individuals with relevant expertise. In the context of the general ongoing activities and new initiatives during the reporting period, UKOTCF has this year focused on several areas outlined below.

An important role of the Forum has always included building capacity in UKOTs and CDs, facilitating the exchange of expertise between territories, identifying common interests and needs, and finding ways to overcome these. Territories have long stressed the high value of the occasional (mainly 3-yearly) conferences for practising conservationists, and called for another to be organised.

This year, after several years of searching for resources and planning, the conference of conservationists returned to Gibraltar. This was where the first conference of this type to be organised took place in 2000: *Calpe 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise* (Calpe being the Roman name for Gibraltar). Several participants had attended previous conferences in this series, and others were visiting for the first time. An incredible amount of work went in to organising the conference in little over a year. Ideally, a planning period of about

two years is needed. However, funding and its timing were limiting factors in the amount of preparation time available. That said, on 11th-15th July 2015, 118 participants and accompanying persons were welcomed to Gibraltar. This was made possible with funding and other resourcing from HM Government of Gibraltar and UKOTCF, and some additional support from Defra and JNCC, enabling colleagues from across the UKOTs to attend as supported participants. A vast amount of voluntary time was donated by UKOTCF personnel to organise this conference together with that donated by Treweek Environmental Consultants, the Government of Gibraltar and the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society. It follows the first conference held in London in 1999, the second (actually the first in terms of when the organisation of it started) in Gibraltar in 2000, the third in Bermuda in March 2003, the fourth in Jersey in October 2006 and the fifth in the Cayman Islands in 2009.

UKOTCF helped the conference host, Hon. Dr John Cortés, Gibraltar's Minister of Health, Environment and Climate Change, to organise, the day after the conference, the first meeting of Environment Ministers (or their equivalents) from the UKOT and CDs. Ministers have expressed a desire to continue to meet on an annual basis. The next Ministers' meeting is expected to take place in Montserrat in 2016. The Minister of Montserrat has requested some help from the Forum to support this initiative and some preparatory work has begun. Some of this involves providing a sound basis of



Views from the conference (from top left): Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director, UKOTCF, Hon Dr John Cortés MBE MP CBiol CEnv, Minister for Health, the Environment, Energy and Climate Change, and Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia, Deputy Chief Minister chat before giving the opening speeches; Liz Charter, UKOTCF Chairman at the closing event thanks the many involved; the four Ministers or equivalent giving speeches in the conference: Hon Claude Hogan, Minister of Agriculture & Environment, Government of Montserrat; Dr Hon Kedrick D. Pickering, Deputy Premier and Minister for Natural Resources & Labour, British Virgin Islands; Hon Richard Ronan MHK, Minister of the Department for the Environment, Food and Agriculture, Isle of Man Government; and Victor Brownlees, Chief Executive, States of Alderney; illustration from the key-note lecture by Dr Cortés, in which he expounded his theory that the name Gibraltar comes from the Arabic Jebel Taer (the Mountain of Birds), rather than from Jebel Tarik (Tarik having been the Moorish chieftain who took Gibraltar in 711); swift, abundant breeding bird over Gibraltar in summer; lower row: opening reception; first session. Photos: HM Government of Gibraltar; UKOTCF.



progress and needs in meeting environmental commitments in UKOTs and CDs.

A review of progress in meeting the commitments as set out in the Environment Charters, as well as to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi targets, was conducted. This process is fundamental to working out whether progress is being made to meet commitments, and to reviewing the needs to complete or continue work, as appropriate. This exercise involved extensive research online as well as consultation with those working on-the-ground in the UKOTs. The full report was published online in April 2016 after the end of the reported year.

The sixth book in the series *Birding in Paradise* was published in October, and launched that month at a Reception kindly hosted by the Governor of Montserrat, H.E. Elizabeth Carriere. It describes where to go birding on Montserrat and where to view some of the other heritage features. The book has over 90 pages, with full colour maps and photos – taken over a period of over 20 years. It is available from the Montserrat National Trust (MNT) on island. The proceeds of the book will be shared between the Forum and its partner the Montserrat National Trust. It is available for mailing elsewhere in the world and for download as a pdf, by purchase from [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

The *Britain's Treasure Islands* project was the culmination of four years of journeys by adventurer and filmmaker, Stewart McPhearson with a camera team, to visit all of the UK's Overseas Territories. It has several elements: a 3-part (or 4-part, depending on the broadcasting network) television series, mini documentaries on all the UKOTs, (which will be available on [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org) and elsewhere for free use), and a book. This was an ambitious attempt to raise awareness of the UKOTs, their outstanding importance to wildlife, and UK's shared responsibility for them. Such TV broadcasts are something that UKOTCF has been trying to encourage for many years, and so UKOTCF has provided a great deal of help. Forum personnel have donated significant resources over the last year. These have included general advice, fund-raising to cover the costs of expert editing for the free-to-view shorts, provision of stills for the video and especially the book and talks, a great deal of time commenting on scripts and texts, and provision of video material to fill gaps in Stewart's coverage. This all provided an opportunity to use the knowledge of UKOTCF personnel to fill-in gaps in images, recordings and text, while recognising that the author's journey was at the core of the story. In the process, it became apparent that much of the video by Ann Pienkowski, whilst never intended for this purpose, was some of the best (or the only) available for some UKOT situations. Therefore, she has started to edit into short presentations some of her material. Links to these, as well as to the *Britain's Treasure Islands* shorts will

be appearing on [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

UKOTCF has, for some years, tried to encourage a strategic approach



More views from the conference: the closing dinner in St Michael's Cave inside the heart of the Rock, with the Gibraltar Corps of Drums. Photos: Mervin Hastings



in the UK Government's support for conservation in the UKOTs. Recently, it has worked with JNCC and other NGOs to set up a joint group to address this, UKOTCF providing one of the Chairmen and part of the Secretariat for this. Some progress has been made, albeit rather slowly.

UKOTCF continues its work on environmental education and awareness raising. This includes much in-territory work linked to the situations exemplified above. In addition, we continue to add to the territories included in our series of *Virtual Tours* ([http://www.ukotcf.org/1\\_vTours/intro.cfm](http://www.ukotcf.org/1_vTours/intro.cfm)) and have started adding new videos made by Ann Pienkowski (see above).

## Conference, Working Groups and wider networks

In July, the sixth conference in the series (following those organised in London, Gibraltar, Bermuda, Jersey, and Grand Cayman) returned to Gibraltar. Participants included: conservation workers, scientific researchers, representatives of civil society environmental groups and governments environment departments from across the UK Overseas Territories, as well as some territory environmental ministers or equivalents. The meeting took place over 5-days with a packed programme including sessions on sustainable use of terrestrial and marine resources, action plans, monitoring and recording of biological records, physical planning and environmental education. The aim of the conferences has always been to provide an opportunity to exchange best practice, discuss successes, explore innovations and forge partnerships, with the overall aim to ensure that the wildlife, and the ecosystems of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is secured for future generations by the people.

The conference was organised by UKOTCF and the Government of Gibraltar, with support from the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS). Participants totalled 118 persons (up to ministerial level), from seventeen UK territories, as well as nine other countries. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) provided some support for UKOT Government representatives to attend, and also held a closed meeting on the proceeding day of its Research and Training Steering Committee.

A reception at the stunning Garrison Library was held in the evening of the arrivals day, with opening speeches by: Deputy Chief Minister, Hon. Dr Joseph Garcia MP; Minister for Health, the Environment, Energy and Climate Change, Hon Dr John Cortés MBE MP CBiol CEnv; and UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director, Dr Mike Pienkowski. The first full day included a field trip to allow for some informal discussions as well as a little recovery time for those who had travelled long distances to get to Gibraltar. The dolphin safari took most people on a voyage out in to the straits where they saw some seabirds and to their surprise several close encounters with common dolphins *Delphinus delphis*. A smaller party visited the Upper Rock Nature Reserve and other sites, where they could see some of the efforts to restore areas of endemic species such as sea lavender *Limonium emarginatum*, candytuft *Iberis gibraltarica* and campion *Silene tomentosa*.

All participants were invited to display posters at the event and a session was organised to allow presenters to answer questions. This gave all an opportunity to showcase their work even if they were not giving one of the brief presentations used to start debate in the main conference programme.

The following 3-days were full with two sessions per day, chaired by representatives from the UKOTs and CDs. Speakers presented results from areas where real progress had been made and lessons learned. Each session ended with a period for questions to the speakers and wider discussion.

A special lecture was given by Hon. Minister Cortes in the evening of the second day. This gave an account of the natural environment of Gibraltar, and allowed him to review conservation



progress in Gibraltar from the time of the 2000 conference, when he had been the local organiser, as well as local and international ecologist, Director of the Botanic Gardens, and Secretary-General of GONHS.

A selection from Stewart McPherson's film *Britain's Treasure Islands* was shown to participants on the penultimate evening to give a preview of what the final versions would look like.

On the final half-day, summaries from all the sessions were given and further discussions held, with interventions from those ministers and equivalents present for that day or throughout. That evening, the Government hosted the closing dinner in the magnificent St Michael's Cave in the heart of the Rock.

The full proceedings have been published and are available on [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org). The presentations are available in the style of scientific journals accompanied by images in full colour, discussions and all speeches on the opening and closing days.

Face-to-face regional working group meetings were held on each early morning and several additional workshops were organised. The first of the latter was a clinic, which focused on the process of signing up to Multilateral Environment Agreements. This involved: Liz Charter from the Isle of Man Government, who had led the process for Isle of Man joining the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2014; Jennifer Lee, Environment Officer for South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands who had led the process leading to their ratification in 2015; and Clare Hamilton, Head of International Biodiversity Policy at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to give an account of the processes required for sign-up.

Jo Treweek, an international expert in Environment Impact Assessment, Environmental Audit and Strategic Planning, again kindly gave a *pro bono* workshop on EIAs, on the day immediately following the conference.

Also on that day, the separate meeting of Environment Ministers from the UKOTs and CDs (or their equivalents) was held (see above).

All the hard work involved in the preparation of the conference and the participants' views on how the conference might impact their work, was documented in the questionnaires. Some examples of these are:

*"I did very much enjoy the conference and working with everyone. Thank you for doing all the organising in the run up to and during the conference; everyone was saying how smoothly it went!"*

*"I had not met many of those I have worked with for several years. It was great to have the opportunity to meet them face-to-face. The conference has definitely helped with working relationships."*

*"[I] have continued to correspond with experts in the field on relevant matters that have helped local understanding of issues. [I] would never have met those people or be comfortable contacting them without the UKOTCF)"*

The full record of feedback is included in the proceedings.

Despite the large size and high quality of production, the conference proceedings were published in less than 6 months after the conference, thought to be a record. Participants and those others who are part of the Forum's networks have been notified of these and provided with the link.

It was particularly pleasing to see some of the participants, who had travelled very large distances involving long sea-journeys (perhaps for the last time for some, given that an airport is due to open soon on St Helena), using the time off-island to receive training and or carry out project work whilst in the UK. The Forum has always encouraged and helped arrange this. In addition to the experiences of Isabel Peters, Chief Environmental Officer for St Helena Government (see *Forum News* 44), several other conference participants visited project partners, for example at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

In part due to the involvement of Maya Doolub of Elms Consulting (a partner of the Carbon War Room) and the recognition by participants at the Gibraltar conference of the need to share more information on renewable energy, one of the recommendations from the July conference was the establishment of a working group. As part of this, the Forum (and also the FCO) had supported a side-meeting, organised by Maya Doolub, at the Caribbean Energy Forum conference in October in Miami. Participants included: UKOT ministers, governments, utility companies, donor bodies, the EU and CARICOM. There appeared to be some appetite for sharing of best practice and some good examples, which were already in progress. Maya, together with UKOTCF Council,

continue to work towards the establishment of a UKOTCF working group on climate-change and renewable energy.

The activities of the Forum's Southern Oceans, Europe Territories, and Wider Caribbean Working Groups during the year are summarised in later sections of this report.

In January, Forum personnel attended a meeting with the UK Overseas Territories Association at Gibraltar House. The proposed meeting of Environment Ministers was discussed as well as several other initiatives, including the Environment Charter review, and the *Britain's Treasure Islands* project.

## Projects and other in-territory help to our partners

UKOTCF receives regular requests for assistance from its member and associate organisations to help identify, design, resource, manage and implement projects, often involving the development of strategic partnerships between member organisations and sometimes with others. Other projects in which the Forum is involved provide a co-ordinating role for activities across several Territories. There are very few funding sources for which the Forum is eligible. However, it seeks actively new sources of funding. Details of funds that territories could be eligible for are circulated. In addition, checks are made with those where their eligibility requirements are ambiguous.

Income generated via projects provides an important source of funding for the Forum, although this relies on Council members and others providing their time to project work for no charge or at well below market rates. Some of the projects operating during the reported year, in addition to the conference, are noted below.

The book *Birding in Paradise – The Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat* was published in October. At the launch, kindly hosted by the Governor, H.E. Elizabeth Carriere, and attended by Hon. Premier Donaldson Romeo, as well as several other Ministers, 35 signed copies were sold. The proceeds from the purchase of the book will be split between the Montserrat National Trust and UKOTCF. To date around 150 hard copies have been sold in the Trusts' shop as well as online and through UKOTCF's website. There are several ways in which the book can be purchased: a downloadable copy from Sellfy [www.sellfy.com/ukotcf](http://www.sellfy.com/ukotcf), Amazon, NHBS and the UKOTCF's website [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

In March, the first of a new series of video shorts was published. It is about Montserrat, and was launched just before St Patrick's Day; as part of Montserrat's Irish heritage, a national day there for which there are annual celebrations. Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator, Ann Pienkowski, using her footage recorded over the years, edited the videos. The video has a link on the [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org) home-page and can be accessed directly at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJydGp\\_Ydw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJydGp_Ydw). The link has been circulated to partners on Montserrat and others for wide use.

The Forum, partnering with the Montserrat National Trust led a successful application to the Darwin Initiative titled: *"Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services"*.



*At the launch of the guide-book to bird-watching and other heritage sites in Montserrat, kindly hosted by Governor H.E. Elizabeth Carriere (second from right, sportingly dressed in the colours of a Montserrat oriole), she shares a joke with the authors of the book: (from left) James "Scriber" Daley, Sarita Francis, Catherine Wensink, Ann Pienkowski and Mike Pienkowski. Photo: Tony Bates*



The two-year project, starting formally at the start of the financial year in April 2016, involves several other partners: the Government of Montserrat, Montana State University and Treweek Environmental Consultants (working *pro bono*). The rationale of the project is to enhance the prospects of survival of Montserrat's endemic and other rare wildlife by the most ecologically sound method of maximising habitat range. It looks also to strengthen management capacity in conservation bodies. To do this, it has several more specific aims, including to:

- introduce effective planning and Environmental Assessment, and building local capacity on this;
- increase conservation efforts, especially by the local community;
- enhancing the availability for local use of biological data already collected, as well as stimulating interest by residents and visitors in collecting more; and
- working with all stakeholders to examine the opportunities and challenges of making more use of the two-thirds of the island with access restrictions due to volcanic activity.

The idea of the last is to develop a plan which has the support of all stakeholders, such as former land-users, land-owners, farmers, Montserrat Volcano Observatory, Royal Montserrat Police Service, etc, as well as conservationists. Outcomes could include the maintenance and recovery of remaining forests in the Exclusion-Zone, as well as other activities sustaining livelihoods – but this will be decided by agreement during the project. The other aspects of the project are also intended to facilitate sustainable tourism, valuing the environment and involving more local people in using it sustainably for livelihoods without compromising its role in biodiversity conservation.

Several other project bids were submitted during the year; these aimed to meet the needs identified by partners in territories. The projects focused on engaging the local users of the environment to become champions for conserving it. The most notable bid was one to EU BEST 2.0, for Montserrat and TCI. Funds to carry out this work are still sought. Several successful bids for work in the UKOTs have now been announced by the BEST 2.0 secretariat: medium projects: on invasive species across all Caribbean UKOTs; on Anguilla aiming to conserve and protect sea turtles; a Pacific Biodiversity Blue Belt group including Pitcairn; and small grants for: BIOT on environmental interpretation and education; two for St Helena on gumwood forest restoration, and Peaks National Park trails and interpretation; on Tristan restoration and biosecurity at Nightingale Island; and on Falklands site-based conservation for sei whales *Balaenoptera borealis*.

UKOTCF aims to help its partners where time and resources allow. Requests are made often through regional working groups but also directly. For example, member organisation, Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS), thought the time was right to raise the issue more prominently of the long-held tradition in Gibraltar of releasing balloons on their National Day, a potentially polluting activity, especially in the marine environment. They wanted to suggest more appropriate ways to celebrate the National Day, recognising that support from outside of Gibraltar could help with this. The full support of the Forum was given to GONHS for the campaigning proposed. It is pleasing to see that the decision has now been made by the event organisers to look for alternatives to balloons.

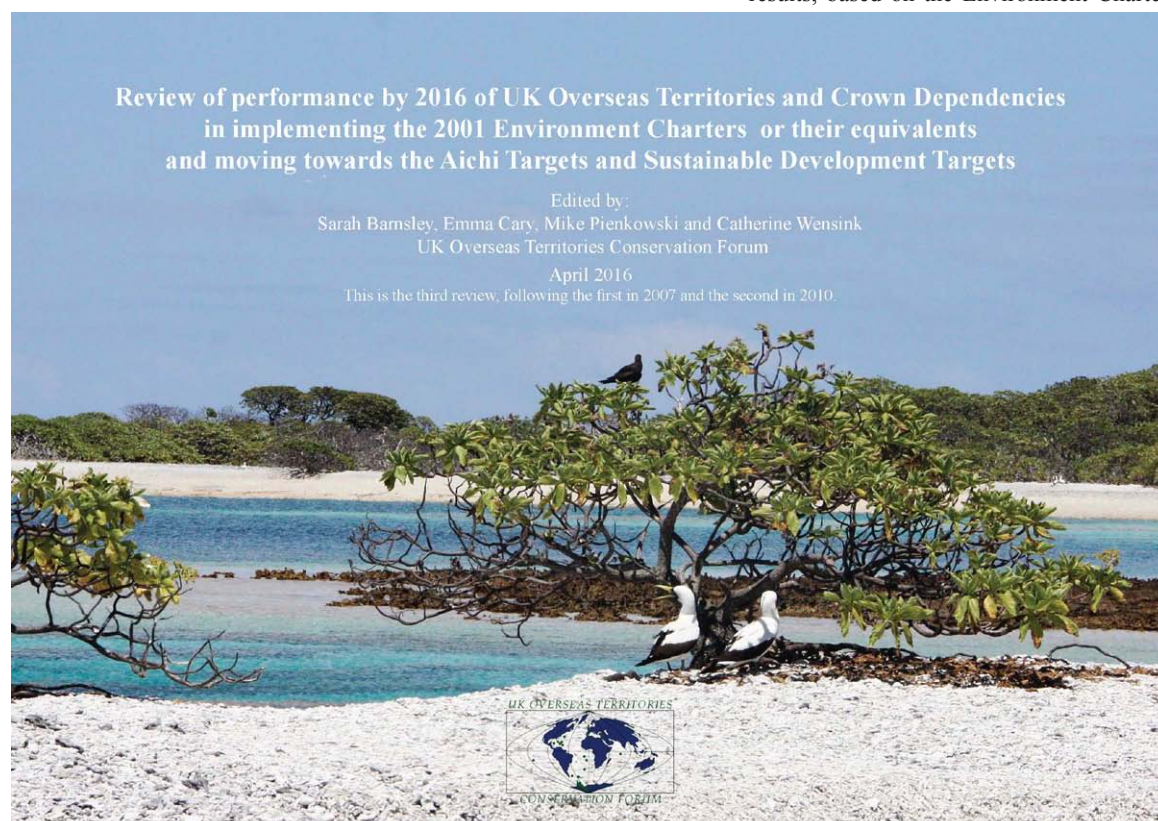
## Environment Charter and conservation concerns

This initiative aimed to collate information from the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on progress towards implementing the 2001 Environment Charters signed by the Territories and the UK Government (or the equivalent international commitments for those territories without Charters). At the same time, we tried to assess progress towards the Aichi Targets, internationally agreed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other Conventions. Late in the year-long process of collecting and checking information, the UN Sustainability Goals became available, and an attempt has been made to relate to the relevant ones of these also.

To minimise the loading on very busy colleagues in the territories, personnel (working most of the time in an unpaid voluntary capacity) gathered the initial drafts using published material, information gathered for other purposes, and the Forum network. Clearly, it was important that those working on-the-ground should check this and so, for 9 months after the initial collations, several rounds of consultations were undertaken, by email, remote communications and using the gathering of the conference in July. Limitations on time available to territory partners mean that the report ([www.ukotcf.org/charters/progress.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/charters/progress.htm)) includes some errors and omissions despite best efforts to minimise these. UKOTCF will note any reported. The report exists as three parts. To keep as full a set of information as possible openly available, the Appendix in the full version will show our working tables. These are organised in relation to the Environment Charter Commitments, with some subdivisions to relate also to the Aichi Targets.

The main part of the report includes: some background to this review and its predecessors; the derivation of another way of summarising the results, based on the Environment Charter/Aichi Targets classification,

together with the structure of the conclusions and recommendations of the conference in July, and areas of shared interest identified by a series of meetings between NGOs and UK Government in 2014-5. The main part of the report then summarises the results for each territory using this classification. This is followed by a summary of cross-territory results on main further needs, an analysis requested by some of the territories to aid future common planning. We did not attempt a formal analysis of progress by UK Government in meeting its own Commitments under the Environment Charter. This is because, in both previous reviews, UK Government found it difficult, partly because of the structure of those Commitments, to assemble information on progress. Instead, the review,



Title page of the report on progress in the implementation of the Environment Charters and towards the Aichi Targets





The event on Britain's Treasure Islands, organised by Stewart McPherson and UKOTCF at the Royal Geographical Society. Above: Stewart lectures on the making of his videos. Right Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF) and Stewart answer questions after Stewart's lecture and a short presentation by Mike. Photos: Catherine Wensink; Dr Colin Clubbe.



and the discussions that it will assist, is intended to help UK Government to support the priority needs that are identified.

A shorter 10-page summary has been produced also, as a stand-alone document, as well as being included within the full report.

## Awareness raising and information management

Throughout the year (and before and after), major contributions of time have been dedicated to supporting Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* project, recognising that this was an opportunity to raise the profile, in the UK and beyond, of the UKOTs and their exceptionally important wildlife. This involved helping to raise funds for, supplying content for and commenting on the 10-minute video shorts for each territory, advising on the television series *Britain's Treasure Islands*, and editing the accompanying book chapters (although editorial control remained with Stewart).

In addition, an event at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London was organised by Stewart, with substantial help and funding from the Forum, in March. Tickets for the event were purchased online and over 300 attended. In order to celebrate some of the work being undertaken by UK based non-government organisations in support of the UKOTs, some displays were set out in the Map Room. These included Durrell, Buglife, NHBS, Great British Oceans (an initiative including Blue Marine Foundation, Pew, RSPB and Marine Conservation Society). The Forum held a raffle with prizes sponsored by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Zoological Society London, Durrell and UKOTCF. Honorary Executive Director, Dr Mike Pienkowski, introduced Stewart's talk and, after the lecture, gave a 10-minute overview of some of the conservation work in territories, as well as helping to answer some of the questions posed in the Q&A session.

*Forum News 44* was published in January. It led with articles on the conference.

Dr Phoebe Carter, a previous volunteer with the Forum, continued to publish articles on the UKOTs, with one in *Forum News 44* on her impressions of the conference, and another article about sea-turtle conservation in the Cyprus SBAs in the 40th anniversary edition of the Ministry of Defence's *Sanctuary* magazine (see Europe Territories WG section below).

Wildscreen is a wildlife conservation charity that shares images of life, via its Arkive website, from around the world, including many images from the UKOTs. For its Valentine's Day campaign they asked people to 'show their love' for endangered, but underloved, species by voting for them in a poll. They asked conservation organisations, including UKOTCF, to nominate a species that they work with, or is related to their organisation, and which is underappreciated – in order to get it some much-needed media coverage, and highlight its most interesting and important qualities. Throughout the two-week voting period, they released a blog series featuring each of the nominated species to try and get it extra votes, and they added information about the organisations working to conserve the species too. The Arkive website is visited by over 1.2 million people per month, so the overall aim was to get the often overlooked species a lot more press and gain support for their conservation. The Forum nominated the Turks and Caicos pygmy boa *Tropidophis greenwayi* but was pleased to see nominations for the Montserrat mountain chicken *Leptodactylus*

*fallax*, a frog, (from Durrell), which came 7th in the poll, and the Chagos coconut crab *Birgus latro* from Chagos Conservation Trust. The feedback on the campaign included the most frequent comments that people really enjoyed hearing stories about species that they had never heard of, and also the various ways species are being conserved.

UKOTCF has continued to keep its member and associate organisations (and its wider network of contacts) informed of relevant developments, including funding opportunities, consultations and internal activities, through e-mail circulations and other contacts.

The website and the Facebook page continue to be important sources of information and publicity and have been used to promote events such as the RGS event. The Forum has over 500 Facebook 'likes' and 500 Twitter 'followers' who are regularly receiving information on the UKOTs/CDs. Over the year of this report, the average number of unique visitors to the website was 2,829 per month (reaching over 10,000 in March). The average number of hits was 63,526 per month.

Many inquiries from interested persons, researchers with specific questions on matters relating to the UKOTs, are received. UKOTCF endeavours to respond to all such requests, as time allows.

Several relationships with institutions in the UK are continuing to develop: for example, student volunteers carrying out conservation actions in association with Writtle College and course development and internships with Sheffield Hallam Business School. As universities are now required to show the impact of their work, relationships with bodies such as UKOTCF are likely to grow.

## Consultations

One of the roles of the regional hubs as part of the BEST III consortium was to develop ecosystem profiles for each of the Overseas Territories of European Union Member States, in order to identify key biodiversity areas and areas of investment for future European Union funds. This could be particularly important, given that only one round of calls for project proposals is expected under BEST 2.0. As well as extracting information from the Forum's website, a key resource on the UKOTs, the BEST hubs asked the Forum to comment and review the profiles for all Caribbean UKOTs, Pacific (Pitcairn) and Polar/Sub polar regions (British Antarctica and South Georgia), which it endeavoured to do.

Following the conference in July, a submission was made to the Energy and Climate Change Committee inquiry into priorities for holding the UK Government to account. The submission outlined the need for UK's Overseas Territories to access the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change's experience as they work on appropriate strategies to develop renewables and the market for renewables, de-carbonize their economies and adapt to climate change. Approximately six years ago, the Caribbean Overseas Territories were assisted by the UK Government to develop Climate Change Policies through a UK Department of International Development funded project, which drew on the experience and expertise of the Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change. However, many of the Territories are still struggling with prioritising and implementing the actions outlined in these policies.

As part of the UK Government's commitment to ensure accountability, value for money and transparency of public bodies, Departments are required to review their sponsored Non-Departmental Public Bodies

(NDPBs) every three years in order to ensure that the functions of individual NDPBs are still required and that the NDPB model is fit for purpose and offers taxpayers the best value for money. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) has a UK remit so a triennial review is undertaken jointly by Defra and the Devolved Administrations, as part of Defra's programme of Triennial Reviews. It was carried out under Cabinet Office guidance, and reviewed the functions and form of the JNCC, at alternative delivery models for the functions the JNCC delivers. It concluded that the JNCC should be retained, and reviewed the control and governance of the JNCC to ensure it is in line with the recognised principles of good corporate governance. UKOTCF was asked to contribute to the review. It highlighted JNCC's involvement in the conference and its efforts to work on database and attempts to link governmental and NGO work, something which the Forum has encouraged JNCC to do, but noted that some of the increased constraints placed by UK Government on JNCC appeared to be having the effect of preventing JNCC doing what UK Government asked it to do.

## Influencing policy

One of the aims of the Gibraltar Conference, and of periods of consultations before and after, was to work up some conclusions and recommendations. This would not be a formal agreement, as this would have been inappropriate for a conference which was not based on formal representatives. Instead, a set of overall conclusions and recommendations were developed as a summary in good faith of points which received general agreement from those experienced in the subject areas concerned. The conclusions and recommendations are, of course, not binding on anyone – but do represent some indications of best practice. The full conclusions and recommendations are at: [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2015conf/SustainingPartnerships2015Concl&Rec.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2015conf/SustainingPartnerships2015Concl&Rec.pdf).

Forum personnel have continued to attend the IUCN Europe Round-table meetings where possible, although short-notice and difficult timing for UK personnel continue to present problems, including high travel costs resulting from these problems. In September, this involved a meeting in Brussels. In February, a summary was supplied for their meeting. A group is looking at monitoring progress since the Guadeloupe conference in 2014 and the BEST scheme.

The Forum made a submission to the consultation by the Turks & Caicos Islands Government Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs on the proposed amendments to TCI National Parks Ordinance. In common with local partners, it welcomed strongly the proposed extensions to the protected areas, which are well justified, but expressed some concern by some proposed deletions, which appear to relate to earlier erroneous actions by some, rather than to scientific evidence.

## Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies

UKOTCF personnel have ensured that UKOTs and CDs were not overlooked in other quarters, using a range of opportunities. They met regularly with the FCO Director for Overseas Territories, Dr Peter Hayes. The Forum is continuing to explore ways in which it can assist FCO with good governance on environmental aspects in the UKOTs.

Forum personnel were invited to give a second presentation to desk officers and section heads at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on biodiversity in the UKOTs, the role of the UKOTCF network and related matters. This was to try to address the lack of corporate memory recognised in FCO related to a high turn-over of staff. Some of the desk officers asked some interesting questions during the discussion, including on the issue of *Sargassum* in the Caribbean, the content of briefings given to Governors and the process for doing this and experience in engaging with local communities in the territories. UKOTCF stressed the importance of long-term relationships with partners in the UKOTs and the need for continued dialogue on environmental matters.

Regular meetings continued to be held with Defra officials on various matters, including in relation to the Gibraltar conference, which received some support for earlier preparation stages from Defra and some support from its agency, JNCC, for travel and participation by some UKOT governmental personnel – although, unfortunately, cuts in JNCC's budget



*Catherine Wensink (second from right) provides environmental expertise to the panel on Overseas Territories at a meeting of the Young Fabian Society in Parliament, at the invitation of Catherine West MP, Shadow Minister for the Overseas Territories (fourth from left).*

at a late stage reduced the planned support. UKOTCF found ways to offset some of these cuts, especially as some bookings had already been made.

Liaison with the Department for International Development (DFID) has been interrupted because DFID terminated its only post (which had already been reduced to half-time) concerned with environmental matters in the UKOTs. UKOTCF shares the concern of the UKOTs, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee and others about this serious gap in the Department responsible for most UK expenditure in the UKOTs. However, it has met with officials of DFID based on Montserrat several times, who expected to support ensuring that the environment is at the heart of decision-making.

The Forum was invited to take part in the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group Liaison Meeting. The Group itself is an inter-departmental meeting chaired by Defra, several times per year. A short afternoon meeting involved also NGOs, to discuss the Government's commitment to marine protected areas as set out in the manifesto, invasive species work and an overview of the Gibraltar conference that had been held earlier in the year.

The Forum took part in a one-day workshop in May organised by JNCC for the Joint NGOs/JNCC UKOT/CD Group. Half of the workshop was on the development of a database for UKOT biodiversity information, and the other to consult a wider group of UK bodies (generally with less involvement in UKOTs/CDs) on the draft priorities for support by UK bodies for UKOT/CDs developed by the main group.

Forum personnel met with both the Gibraltar Governor and the St Helena Governor-designate in March. It continues to meet, whenever possible, with Governors before they take up office to brief them on environment issues.

UKOTCF personnel attended the annual reception for participants in the Joint Ministerial Council (of UKOT premiers, chief ministers or other ministers or equivalents with UK ministers) in December. As well as highlighting the need to address climate change and the importance of marine resources, their Joint Communiqué welcomed "the creation of a Territories' Environment Ministers Council" which the Forum helped the Government of Gibraltar to initiate, and will continue to help Ministers build on.

## Coordinating with others

UKOTCF aims, where possible, to link with organisations with potentially complementary remits to try to explore ways of collaborating. Examples include: the Executive Committee of IUCN's National Committee for UK (where the Honorary Executive Director continues to serve, providing regular updates on UKOT/CD activities); Friends of the British Overseas Territories, an organisation bringing together UK students and UKOT students studying in the UK; the International National Trusts Organisation – a similar body to the Forum in that it brings together members of the National Trusts from around the world at a 3-yearly conference; the Pitcairn Environment Group, which discusses the work of many NGOs currently working on Pitcairn, as well as others.

## Organisational development

Effort continues to be put into exploring new funding opportunities



from a wide variety of sources in order to give some stability to the organisation. This is not just to enable the Forum to continue supporting its Member and Associate organisations and meeting requests, but also to look for funds for them to continue their work. One of the ways in which it can make donations go further is the with the use of Gift Aid, which is a UK initiative which enables the Forum to claim an additional 25p on each £1 donated provided that they are UK tax-payers.

An informal communications group has met several times during the year to work in support of officers on various aspects of the Forum's communications relating to its website, social media, press etc.

The Forum has been extremely fortunate to have the continued support of Sarah Barnsley and Emma Cary. They have both driven forward several initiatives as our part-time, largely unpaid, Conservation Officers. These initiatives include: the Environment Charter review; as secretaries of the Southern Ocean Working Group and Europe Territories Working Group respectively; assistance at the conference; communications as well as many other tasks.

In summer 2015, Jamie Woodward, undertook a 3 month unpaid placement with UKOTCF as part of his undergraduate course in Business and Tourism at the Sheffield Hallam University Business School. He attended the conference as part of the core team, where he was able to assist with a variety of different tasks, as well as learn all about the UKOTs.

In 2015, Mr Bruce Dinwiddy and Mrs Patricia Saxton retired from the Forum Council. Bruce, former Governor of Cayman, returned for the first time to that territory at the conference in 2009. The respect he had there was clearly evident from Caymanians and conference participants. Chairmen, the Honorary Executive Director and the Forum Manager are particularly grateful to Bruce for his wise advice whenever requested. Bruce served for most of his time on Council also as Chairman of the Wider Caribbean Working Group.

Pat has been instrumental in the development of the series of guides developed with the Turks and Caicos National Museum and the project which received funds for the Royal Bank of Canada Blue Water Project, which saw a new garden at the new museum site at Providenciales dedicated to showcasing rainwater harvesting technique and use of native, crop and medicinal plants for sustainable use of island resources.



*UKOTCF Conservation Officers, Sarah Barnsley (left) and Emma Cary (right) at the Gibraltar conference, which they helped organise.*

*Photo: HM Government of Gibraltar*

Long before her Council role, Pat was a strong supporter of UKOTCF, both in respect of her Turks & Caicos home and wider application of her skills as a successful business-woman.

Their years of dedication to the Forum and its partner organisations, have seen it through some very difficult, as well some exciting, times. Their donated time and support has made things happen that otherwise would have not.

## Acknowledgements

UKOTCF Council would like to thank the individuals and representatives of Member and Associate organisations who have given numerous hours of voluntary time to the Forum, both in the UK and the Territories. These included: Sarah Barnsley, Keith Bensusan, Natasha Bull, Faye Burfoot, Dr Phoebe Carter, Emma Cary, Lian Camilleri, Dr John Cortés, Clive Crisp, Felix Driver, Sera Fromow, Rhian Guillem, Dr Jennifer Ballantine Perera, Charlie Perez, Caroline Prentice, David and Ann Quick,

Pat Reynolds, Bryan Ritchie, Dr Eric Shaw, Dr Liesl Torres, Stephen Warr, Jamie Woodward, as well as much time donated by Catherine Wensink. Although all Council members donate time to UKOTCF, Council would like to acknowledge the very large quantities donated by Mike and Ann Pienkowski, on which UKOTCF depends. The Forum would also like to thank existing *Friends of the UK Overseas Territories*, and encourage those who have an interest in the UKOTs/CDs to join. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance as project grants and donations, from HM Government of Gibraltar, players at EVE\_NT, HM Government of the United Kingdom, and other contributors, including individuals. The Forum is grateful also to member organisations and others for allowing meetings to take place at their offices during the year, particularly HM Government of Gibraltar and the Government of the British Virgin Islands.

Thank you, Bruce Dinwiddy and Pat Saxton for all that you have contributed; we will miss working with you.

## A correction

In last year's report we incorrectly stated that goat eradication had taken place on Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands. Actually, work had been undertaken on Great and Little Tobago National Parks, islands near Jost Van Dyke.

## UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2016

	2016 Unrestricted Funds	2016 Restricted Funds	2016 Total Funds	2015 Total Funds
<b>Incoming Resources</b>				
Voluntary Income	195,633	133,278	328,911	318,963
Investment Income	49	-	49	25
<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities</b>				
Project Income		42,195	42,195	173,081
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>195,682</b>	<b>175,473</b>	<b>371,155</b>	<b>492,069</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>				
Charitable Activities	152,938	266,226	419,164	415,099
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	7,011	-	7,011	7,144
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>159,949</b>	<b>266,226</b>	<b>426,175</b>	<b>422,243</b>
<b>Net incoming/outgoing resources</b>	<b>35,733</b>	<b>(90,753)</b>	<b>(55,020)</b>	<b>69,826</b>
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2014	16,953	95,708	112,661	42,835
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2015	52,686	4,955	57,641	112,661

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time and expenses of £311,215 (2015: £313,250).

# Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

## Introduction

WCWG met 4 times during the year, via Skype in April and October, and physical meetings in July at the “*Sustaining Partnerships*” conference, and (informally) in Jamaica at the BirdsCaribbean meeting a few weeks later. The meeting planned for February had to be postponed for unavoidable personal reasons. Throughout the year WCWG responded to requests for information and advice about the Caribbean UKOTs.

After 9 years of highly valued service as WCWG Chairman, Bruce Dinwiddie stood down at the Gibraltar Conference. Boyd McCleary, who had been sharing the Chair with Bruce for some months, took over at the Conference. However, matters following on from the Conference gave the opportunity for UKOTCF to work on establishing a new UKOTCF Working Group about Climate Change and Renewable Energy; Council asked Boyd to Chair in this challenging role, so that he stood down as Chairman of WCWG early in 2016. Dace McCoy Ground, a long-standing member of UKOTCF Council with wide and varied experience of working in the Caribbean UKOTs, is the new Chairman of WCWG. UKOTCF and the WCWG Secretary thank Bruce for his long service, and Boyd for his significant contributions to WCWG during his briefer time as Chairman, and his continued passing on of items to inform WCWG.



## Cross-Territory

The WCWG meeting at the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference held in Gibraltar, July 2015, consisted of short presentations from representatives from each of the Wider Caribbean Territories, and other cross-territory project managers. Additionally, wider discussions were held on the purpose of WCWG, how its function could be improved, and resource and funding implications. Many of these discussions are summarised in the Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference. A well-supported idea was that WCWG should continue, and extend, its discussions related to particular themes. Minutes were circulated to all who attended this session.

An informal meeting of WCWG was held at the BirdCaribbean meeting in Jamaica in July 2015. Participants who had also attended the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference reported on this, and all agreed on its success and importance. Minutes were circulated to all who attended this meeting, as well as members of WCWG.

## Coral Reef Monitoring

The Secretary of WCWG was asked to involve WCWG members in the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) questionnaire on what was needed to improve the monitoring of coral reefs. As a result of the WCWG circulation of this request and associated information, the involvement of UKOTs in the GCRMN and Waitt programme was increased, following UKOTCF facilitation of attendance of some WCWG representatives at the GCRMN meeting in Curaçao in August 2014.

## Invasive Species

Reports were received on the BEST-funded (until December 2015) RSPB-led project on invasive species. Under this project, rat eradication and monitoring had been carried out on Dog Island, Anguilla. In Montserrat, feral animal culling had been conducted, together with watershed management and control measures related to a possible tick threat. In Cayman, the project had been involved in green iguana control. The Little Cayman community had been involved in biosecurity measures to protect the endemic rock iguana. In TCI, the problem being addressed was the rat and cat threat to rock iguanas on Little Water Cay.

## Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, work in the Caribbean UKOTs

A report was received on this work. UKOTs were still a strategic priority to 2020. Red-listing was a core activity. The ex-situ conservation through the Millennium Seedbank continued. RBG Kew personnel are developing new techniques in GIS, and are looking at identifying Tropical Plant Important Areas. Capacity-building in territories was a core programme for RBG Kew.

## Sargassum

Many Caribbean Islands, including the UKOTs had been severely impacted by Sargassum seaweed in the summer of 2015. This issue was raised at several WCWG meetings, including the *Sustaining Partnerships* Conference. In March 2016 Richard Branson hosted a regional meeting in BVI, in partnership with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Caribbean Council and the OECS, to discuss possible cost-effective solutions to the problem.

## Britain's Treasure Islands

WCWG members made significant contributions to the WCWG territories featuring in the films, book and mini-documentaries of Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* project. The WCWG Secretary donated a good deal of her video to support the mini-documentaries (as did other partners such as the TC Reef Fund), and UKOTCF Honorary Executive Director donated many still photos for the book and the video shorts. He and the UKOTCF Manager devoted a great deal of time to fundraising through a Kick-Starter project for employing professional editors for the mini-documentaries, editing the book text, and organising an evening presentation at the Royal Geographical Society.

## Lionfish control

There have been many discussions in WCWG meetings on the invasive lionfish problem. Bermuda's work on lionfish control (part-funded by Darwin Plus) had resulted in a dedicated website and a Lionfish Task Force. WCWG has made members aware of this very useful source of information.

## Anguilla

In addition to the above, Anguilla is taking forward its first Ramsar site designation of a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, for the island of Sombrero. This is important, amongst other things, for seabirds and an endemic lizard. There are critical threats on the mainland of Anguilla to the Lesser Antillean iguana, and a re-introduction programme is being considered. As a result of WCWG's circulation of the GCRMN request for information, Anguilla Fisheries Department had responded, and been invited by the project co-ordinator SPAW-RAC to join the GCRMN-Caribbean initiative Basecamp Forum.



*Brown booby about to land on the cliff-top at the breeding colony on Sombrero. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*





*Bermuda land snail  
Poecilozonites  
bermudensis, thought  
extinct but recently  
rediscovered in the centre  
of an urban environment.  
Photo: Mark Outerbridge,  
Department of  
Conservation Services,  
Government of Bermuda*

## Bermuda

Protected species conservation work, in many cases with international partners, is ongoing, for example for the skink, Governor Laffan's fern, and the re-discovered Bermuda land snail, as is invasive plant removal, especially from protected areas. RBG Kew is involved with Red-listing of the 9 endemic plant species. There are concerns about proposals to widen shipping channels through the reef, and about coastal development in relation to the Americas Cup yachting race, to be held in Bermuda in August 2017.

The first island hatchlings of green turtles for 100 years occurred in August 2015. The nest was believed to be the result of a translocation project conducted in Bermuda between 1968 and 1978, when eggs from Costa Rica were buried in the area. This demonstrates the need for long-term projects and funding.

## British Virgin Islands

Many conservation projects are ongoing in BVI, often with the involvement of international partners, local NGOs and the Government Conservation & Fisheries Department, as well as the National Parks Trust. These projects include seabird monitoring, studies of the movements of some seabird species from breeding colonies, vegetation mapping, updating legislation (including for climate-change) and setting-up a climate-change trust fund. GIS is proving to be a particularly valuable tool in several respects.

Island Resources Foundation (IRF) has produced the Environmental Profile for Tortola, following those for Jost Van Dyke, Virgin Gorda, and Anegada. After decades of valuable work in the Virgin Islands, IRF was closing down operations ("sun-setting") early in 2016, but has taken steps to pass on information as appropriate.

## Cayman Islands

A major step forward in environmental conservation in the Cayman Islands was the passing of the National Conservation Law. Throughout 2015-16, the National Conservation Council has been taking forward regulations to implement the National Conservation Law.

There has been much discussion and consultation about the proposed cruise-ship dock development in George Town, with some challenges as the regulations for Environmental Impact Assessment, needed to implement this aspect of the National Conservation Law, are not yet in place.

Work continues on coral reef monitoring and coral nursery establishment, with the Dept. of Environment and Central Caribbean Marine Institute, and other local partners including dive-operators.

The Department of the Environment and the National Trust for the Cayman Islands continue to work closely together, for example on control of the invasive green iguana, a threat to the endemic rock iguana.

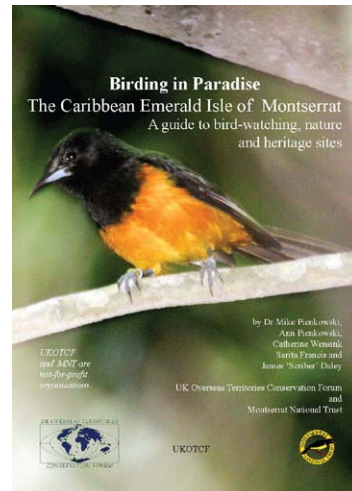
## Montserrat

UKOTCF worked with the Montserrat National Trust and the Department of Environment, as well as Montana State University and Treweek Environmental Consultants on a successful Darwin Plus application *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services*, to start in April 2016.

In October, UKOTCF visited Montserrat to launch the book *Birding in Paradise – The Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat: A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites*, produced by UKOTCF and co-authored by Mike & Ann Pienkowski and Catherine Wensink of UKOTCF, Sarita Francis, Executive Director of the Montserrat National Trust, and James 'Scriber' Daley, of the Montserrat Forestry Team and Scriber's

Adventure Tours. The launch, hosted by Her Excellency the Governor, was very successful, and the book has been very well received. Secretary of WCWG produced a short video *Montserrat – Birding in Paradise* to accompany the book. This video is now available on YouTube, with a link from [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

Since the start of the project in 2015, the *Blue Halo Initiative*, co-ordinated by the Waitt Institute (and facilitated by UKOTCF), has been working with the Government of Montserrat as well as other local partners in order to develop a sustainable fisheries management plan for the island. So far, detailed surveys of the marine environment have been



conducted during the *Montserrat Expedition 2015*, stakeholder meetings as part of a Listening Tour, the use of *SeaSketch*, a platform for collaborative ocean GeoDesign, to record spatial data and maps, as well as the publication of a report on *Montserrat's existing ocean laws* drafted by the Environment Law Institute.

*New guide (cover and a few pages) to bird-watching and other heritage sites in Montserrat, published by UKOTCF & Montserrat National Trust, available from [www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Monserrat/index.htm](http://www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Monserrat/index.htm)*



## Turks and Caicos Islands

The "Greening the Economy" workshop, funded by JNCC in 2015, had identified the need for a new NGO which would take forward actively environmental conservation issues. The Turks and Caicos Reef Fund is taking on this role, as its mandate does not exclude terrestrial areas, especially as what happens on the land in TCI is critical to the health or deterioration of the coral-reefs. The government-backed proposal for a mega-trans-shipping and cruise port on East Caicos, the largest uninhabited island in the Caribbean, is of great concern. Following the JNCC-funded habitat-mapping project, recent research work, part-funded by RSPB, has revealed the huge biodiversity importance of East Caicos, both terrestrial and marine. UKOTCF, which studied East Caicos and



other areas of TCI with local and international partners over several years earlier, has had wide discussions with local partners on further needs for conservation actions in TCI, especially involving local communities and local stewardship – and is seeking funding for this essential work. Darwin Plus funding for the *Caicos Pine Recovery Project* is coming to an end, and it is hoped that TCI Government will find the resources to continue this very successful and vital work.

*Part of the rich tropical dry  
forest of East Caicos.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*



# Report of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

The first SOWG meeting of the year (*photo below*) was held during the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference held in Gibraltar in July 2015. New Chairman Nigel Haywood opened the meeting, which saw a wide participation, thanks to people using the opportunity of the conference to attend.



The two subsequent meetings were held via Skype. The first of these, in September 2015, also had very good attendance. The development of a SOWG project roaming document arose from this particular meeting. Many thanks go to David Blockley from SAERI who produced the initial document. This was then circulated by SOWG Secretary Sarah Barnsley to the rest of the Working Group. The idea was to have a roaming document that lists projects being carried out in the Southern Oceans UKOTs, allowing SOWG members to know of current and future projects prior to meetings.

Attendance was not as high during the third meeting of the year – probably due to its being during the main field season in the Southern Oceans. Despite this, several group members unable to attend did provide some useful reports. We are grateful to all who participated in the meetings, including those who supplied notes of issues to raise or reports, especially when they could not participate in the meeting itself.

Cross-territory projects/activities included Bicentennial celebrations for the Islands of St Helena, Ascension and the Tristan archipelago, and the appointment of Lisa Phillips as their first female Governor (taking up post a little after the year reported). The South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute added metadata for several UKOTs to their Metadata Catalogue for the South Atlantic UK Overseas Territories. JNCC held a biosecurity workshop on Ascension Island.

The Southern Ocean Territories all featured in Stewart McPherson's *Britain's Treasure Islands* series.

Research and consultations were also conducted for each of the Territories as part of the review of progress towards the implementation of the Environment Charters.

## Ascension Island

The start of 2016 saw the exciting announcement of the forthcoming creation of a marine reserve around Ascension Island, which will be 234,291km<sup>2</sup>. An area of 52.6% of Ascension's waters will be closed to fishing, and policing of a tuna-fishery will be carried out in the other 47.4%.



*Ascension Island parsley fern* *Anogramma ascensionis*.  
Photo: Ascension Island Government Conservation Department

Ascension has had successful outcomes this year in the conservation programmes for several endemic species. The 2016 annual plant census showed that 47 of the mature Critically Endangered *Pteris adscensionis* ferns, that were planted two years previously, were healthy and producing their own spores. There were also 144 confirmed Ascension frigatebird *Fregata aquila* nests on the mainland for the 2015/16 nesting period.

The Island has recently featured on an episode of BBC Radio 4's *Costing the Earth* series, which covered among other aspects, the greening of Green Mountain and the work being carried out to address invasive species issues.



*Flying male frigatebird showing inflated display throat pouch.*

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## British Antarctic Territory



*The Monaco Assessment Group, with HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco.*

Photo: Eric Mahon/Palais Princier

June 2015 saw a meeting of Antarctic and biodiversity experts in Monaco, the aim of which was to investigate the extent to which conservation of the biodiversity of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean goes towards meeting global targets, as agreed under the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*. An outcome of the meeting was *The Monaco Assessment*, which is a statement by the meeting participants, on conservation in the Antarctic and Southern Ocean region in the context of the aforementioned *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity*.

The British Antarctic Survey has continued to conduct much scientific research. One research expedition, being led by BAS in conjunction with scientists from the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR), is the *South Orkneys – State of the Antarctic Ecosystem* project. This started in August 2015 and is due to end in August 2016. The expedition itself took place in early 2016 and involved researching the biodiversity both within and outside the newly established South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf Marine Protected Area. In April 2015 an article reported the discovery of new deep-sea starfish family: *Paulasterias tyleri*, found in the waters surrounding a hydrothermal vent in the East Scotia Ridge.



*Eight-armed starfish on the East Scotia Ridge.*

Photo: ChEsSo



## British Indian Ocean Territory

The final expedition of a series of three for the Darwin Initiative project '*Strengthen the World's Largest Marine Protected Area, Chagos Archipelago*', was completed in April 2015.

The Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) has a new Director, Helen Pitman. CCT was also awarded a Darwin Initiative grant for its '*Creating a Terrestrial Action Plan for the Chagos Archipelago*' project. A Terrestrial Action Plan for the BIOT Administration will be developed through this. The Chagos information portal (ChIP) is now live, but still underdevelopment – this intends to gather as much scientific information from the archipelago as possible in to one location.

## Falkland Islands

There is a huge amount of work taking place in the Falklands. A *Falkland Islands Development Plan (2015-2030)* was instituted, putting strong policy in place in terms of sustainable development and growth and planning decisions. *Planning (EIA) Regulations 2015* were enacted in June 2015. EIA legislation is now also in place. An *Offshore Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance* document was finalised in October 2015 and approved by Executive Council. An *Energy Strategy* was approved for the Falkland Islands by Executive Council in November 2015.

A biodiversity workshop was held. The *Falkland Islands Biodiversity Framework (2015-30)*, and supporting *Ecoregions to Sites Strategy* was finalised in December 2015 and approved by Executive Council in January 2016. Discussions were carried out regarding the restructuring of biodiversity action planning.

The SOWG Chairman commenced his study into the genetics of environmental factors in the conservation of the Falklands fritillary *Issoria cytheris*, which can be used for the biodiversity action plan.

ExCo approved the extension of the UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity to the Falkland Islands.

Trialling for the use of biological control for European earwigs was carried out. Falklands Conservation have continued various work programmes with work areas including raptor control, habitat restoration, lower plants and southern giant petrels. SAERI have also continued with various initiatives covering areas such as marine spatial planning, holistic farming and the BEST initiative.

## Pitcairn

Progress has been ongoing regarding designation of the Pitcairn Marine Protected Area.

A six-month RSPB research expedition was carried out on Henderson Island. The first phase began in May, with the second scientific team taking over in August for Part II. Funded by the Darwin Initiative and the David & Lucile Packard Foundation, one of the main goals of the project was to gain a greater understanding of rat density and movement ranges on Henderson.

## South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

A new *SGSSI Strategy 2016-2020* was published. This sets out the agenda for delivering "the highest standards of environmental stewardship and governance." A draft National Biodiversity Action Plan was produced and sent out for consultation. The NBAP was then launched in March. Work on a Legislative Review was carried out.

Regarding invasive species, the *Island Invasives Conference 2017*, which is being organised in Dundee, Scotland, by the South Georgia Heritage Trust, was announced. March 2016 saw the launch of the *South Georgia Non-Native Plant Management Strategy 2016-2020*.

Updates continued to be provided regarding the South Georgia Heritage Trust Habitat Restoration Project. While the baiting phase of this was completed before the start of the year, the final monitoring phase has yet to begin. A new book '*Reclaiming South Georgia, The defeat of furry invaders on a sub-Antarctic island*' was produced to raise funds for the monitoring phase.

Work continued for the *SG Future Science* programme which involves looking at environmental science in and around SG and what sort of facilities / infrastructure are / would be needed to help facilitate some of these research activities.

## St Helena

This has been a busy year for St Helena with the first plane landing at the Island's new airport in September. Calibration tests were then conducted. Various environmental and ecological issues have been addressed throughout the course of the Airport project. Executive Council approved planning permission for a change of use of the current Bradleys workers camp (under the airport project) to a holiday park. Environmental issues will need to be addressed at the detailed planning stage.

St Helena's first comprehensive piece of environmental legislation, the *Environmental Protection Ordinance 2016* was brought into force on 29 February 2016. Work continued towards a Climate-change policy for SHG and several Waste Management manuals were completed. Various improvements were made to waste management services.

The *Bugs on the Brink* project, a collaboration between the St Helena National Trust and Buglife, to conserve St Helena's endangered invertebrate species, continued. Ten invertebrate species new to the island were discovered. While this discovery included some invasive species, it also included Basilewsky's crane fly *Dicranomyia basilewskyana* and Lelup's centipede *Lamycetes lelupi*, both of which are endemic species. Work for three Darwin-funded projects also continued.

Rebecca Cairns-Wicks, stalwart and former President, returned to the St Helena National Trust as Head of Operations/Community Forest Project Manager. SHNT continues to carry out a lot of important conservation work on the island, e.g. a workshop bringing together main stakeholders in invertebrate conservation on St Helena to begin building an island-wide conservation action plan.

Regarding marine resources, a fisheries science protocol was developed and a marine environment tourism accreditation scheme was written, consulted on and approved by the Environment and Natural Resource Committee. Marine life interaction guidelines were produced and consulted on. Training plans and other literature were also produced. Work commenced for ecosystems service assessment. Various monitoring programmes and surveys were carried out. Whale shark research was completed.



*Boeing 737 of Comair, in British Airways livery, on its trial flight over the runway at St Helena. So far, wind-shear problems have delayed the introduction of scheduled flights.*

## Tristan da Cunha

Biosecurity and addressing invasive species issues continue to be a focus area for the Tristan group of Islands, e.g. work towards the eradication of mice on Gough Island and the eradication of the New Zealand Christmas tree and *Sagina procumbens*. Trevor Glass received biosecurity training on St Helena. One biosecurity concern was the arrival of grasshoppers from a cargo but thankfully these did not survive the winter.

Research continues on Gough Island and includes seabird monitoring, annual monitoring of breeding success, survival, and population counts, among other field work for 14 breeding species.

Regarding marine resources, work towards a Marine Management Plan for the Tristan Maritime Zone was carried out. It is hoped that this will be finalised by June 2016. Work towards putting in place *Operation Management Procedures & Harvest Control Rules* for all the islands continued - this should be completed by the end of July 2016.

The lack of sufficient in-Territory resources to take all of the management actions necessary to conserve the biodiversity of the islands continues to be an issue. It was noted also in one of the SOWG meetings that Tristan can be held back by internet problems due to narrow bandwidth.

A review and update of TdC's conservation legislation and policy commenced.

# Report of UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

The Europe Territories Working Group held a face-to-face meeting in July at the *Sustaining Partnerships* Conference in Gibraltar. This meeting was open to all conference delegates and benefited from a wider participation than usual.

After discussions at the conference, it was decided that the ETWG would restructure its meetings to take a more thematic approach. It was hoped that this would stimulate more discussion on key topics and help with the sharing of experiences and best practice between members. For its September and January meetings, the Working Group focused on funding, invasive species, conventions and charters and transboundary issues. The group's most recent meeting in February was reserved for discussion recommendations from the *Sustaining Partnerships* conference.

## Bailiwick of Guernsey

The Guernsey Assembly passed the Biodiversity Strategy almost unanimously in December, and the Environment Services Unit gained a small amount of funding for the Strategy to be implemented. The Strategy formulates a joined-up approach to the environment in Guernsey, meaning the environment will be brought into the heart of decision-making and will be considered alongside economic, social and health benefits.

In October, it was announced that the proposed new Ramsar Site at Herm, the Humps and Jethou had been designated, and the sites have been formally designated under the Ramsar Convention as Wetlands of International Importance. The islands are important breeding areas for sea-bird species such as puffin *Fratercula arctica*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* and shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, and it is hoped that the designation will provide opportunities for increased community involvement, education and environmental initiatives at the site.

The Environment Department is working with La Société Guernesiaise to reintroduce traditional grazing to some public grassland areas. There are few areas of valuable dry grassland habitat on the island and the grazing of the Conservation Herd hopes to recreate favourable conditions for a larger variety of wild flowers and insect populations. Grazing has been established on Port Soif Common to try to encourage the return of the skylark to the area, by re-establishing the habitat required for these ground-nesting birds to breed there (grass tussocks).

## Alderney

The States of Alderney and the Alderney Wildlife Trust hosted the annual Inter-Island meeting over two days in October 2015. It was attended by UKOTCF Conservation Officer and Secretary of the Europe Territories Working Group, Emma Cary, with Council Member and Blue Marine Foundation Trustee Dr Tom Appleby who gave a presentation on governance in the marine environment. The meeting saw 2 days of high quality presentations on marine, terrestrial and ornithological topics, with discussions emphasising the importance of information sharing



Participants in the annual Inter-Island Environment view part of Alderney's Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance.

Photo: Emma Cary

between small islands. Emma was able to hold several discussions with colleagues in order to introduce the Working Group and explore joint ways of working and sharing information in the future.

## Sark

After its designation as the world's first Dark Sky Island in 2011, Sark Astronomy Society has been working hard to secure funds for an astronomical observatory on the island. In October, the hard work paid off, as the specially designed observatory was officially opened by Dr Marek Kukula, Public Astronomer from the Royal Observatory Greenwich. The new observatory has a fully retractable roof and houses star-charts and books, as well as several telescopes.

## Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas

On 30 December 2015, the SBAs announced the designation of five SACs in the SBA official gazette. The designation was preceded by public consultation on the proposals. The five SAC areas designated are: Akrotiri, Episkopi, Cape Pyla, Dhekelia and Agios Nikolaos.

Dr Phoebe Carter successfully published an article about sea turtle conservation in the Cyprus SBAs in the 40th anniversary edition of the Ministry of Defence *Sanctuary* magazine, with facilitation by UKOTCF's Catherine Wensink. The article is available here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/469631/15-07-275\\_Sanctuary\\_Magazine\\_FINAL\\_lowres\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/469631/15-07-275_Sanctuary_Magazine_FINAL_lowres_.pdf)

## Isle of Man

In October, the Biodiversity Strategy was unanimously agreed by Tynwald (the Manx parliament). *Managing our natural wealth, 2015-2025* is the first Biodiversity Strategy and identifies 3 overarching aims: to manage biodiversity change to minimise loss, to maintain and where necessary restore or enhance native biodiversity, and actively to involve society in understanding, appreciating and safeguarding biodiversity.

In November 2015, the Fisheries Strategy was also agreed by Tynwald. *Future Fisheries* is a 5-year strategy for the sustainable development of the Isle of Man's sea fisheries and marine environment. Sea fisheries are worth £13 million to the Manx economy. The Strategy identifies ways of securing sustainable, thriving and well-managed fisheries providing high-quality products whilst continuing to protect and respect the marine environment.

In March 2016, the island and the territorial waters around it were adopted into UNESCO's network of Biosphere Reserves. Biosphere Reserves are learning sites for sustainable development, promoting solutions which reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use. Reserves are nominated by national governments and remain under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are located.



Hill of the Isle of Man, part of the whole-island Biosphere. Photo: Paul Marriott



## Gibraltar

Gibraltar's Environmental Research and Protection service was featured in the BBC Radio 4 programme *Costing the Earth* in September, recorded largely in association with the UKOTCF-organised conference and looking at marine conservation across several territories. The programme investigated the work being undertaken by the Gibraltar Department of the Environment to protect marine habitats and prevent overfishing in Gibraltar's waters. New Marine Protection Regulations, based largely on a study commissioned via UKOTCF a few years earlier, have allowed the Territory to push forward with ambitious marine projects, and the implementation of effective patrol and enforcement measures is helping to secure a sustainable future for its marine resources. The programme is available to listen to here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069rvb8>.

Gibraltar has been celebrating its National Day since 10th September 1992, with a mass balloon release as the highlight of the celebrations for many years. It was recently announced that the release of tens of thousands of red and white balloons would no longer be a part of the celebrations. The decision comes after nearly a decade of campaigning by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society and other local organisations to end the polluting practice. UKOTCF also lent its support to the campaign and welcomes this responsible approach by the celebration organisers.

## Bailiwick of Jersey

A collaboration between States of Jersey, National Trust for Jersey and Durrell Wildlife called *Birds on the Edge* has had success with the return of breeding chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* to Jersey; for the first time in 100 years there has been a wild chough chick bred on Jersey – this has taken 5 years since the initial release of choughs on the island.



*Choughs on Jersey.*

*Photo: Bea Denton, Birds on the Edge*

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## Membership

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations linked to a particular UK Overseas Territory or Crown Dependency: Alderney Wildlife Trust; Anguilla Archaeological & Historical Society; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; UK Antarctic Heritage Trust; Chagos Conservation Trust; National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI; Jost van Dykes Preservation Society, BVI; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Central Caribbean Marine Institute; Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas; BirdLife Cyprus; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; La Société Guernesiaise; Société Jersiaise; National Trust for Jersey; Isle of Man Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture; Montserrat National Trust; Pitcairn Natural Resources Division; St Helena National Trust; La Société Sercquaise; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands; Turks & Caicos National Museum; Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

UKOTCF's current Member and Associate organisations not linked to a single Territory: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation; Army Ornithological Society; Royal Air Force Ornithological Society and Royal Naval Birdwatching Society.

