

Inaccessible Island Nature Reserve Management Plan

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This management plan for the Inaccessible Island Nature Reserve takes account of the provisions of the Tristan da Cunha Conservation Ordinance, 1976, as amended (1984, 1986 and 1997), and the Tristan da Cunha Fishery Limits Ordinance, 1983, as amended (1991, 1992, 1997).

A draft of the management plan was made available for comment to the Tristan community, members of the Gough Island Nature Reserve Advisory Committee, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, and H.E. the Governor of St Helena. This plan is a modified version of that draft, having been altered in the light of observations made.

The management plan is dedicated to the people of Tristan da Cunha for their foresight in conserving Inaccessible Island. The plan and associated visit to Inaccessible Island in 1999–2000 was funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature, United Kingdom.

(The term ‘Administrator’ when used in the plan means the person appointed by H.E. the Governor of St Helena to administer the Government of Tristan da Cunha.)

Approval

This management plan was approved by the Government of Tristan da Cunha in Council at its 290th meeting on 28 February 2001. The decision was reported in the Government Gazette, bringing the management plan into effect, on 5 March 2001.

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Foreword

by **Brian Baldwin**

Administrator, Tristan da Cunha

Of all the islands of the Tristan Group, Inaccessible, befitting its name, is now the least disturbed by man. As the human population of the world expands almost without check, places such as Inaccessible are few and far between and under constant threat from alien invasion. It is important, therefore, that, where physical isolation offers a defence against such encroachment, these places should be carefully managed and protected both for research, and the enlightenment and enjoyment of current and future generations.

I am, therefore, pleased to welcome this carefully constructed management plan for Inaccessible Island. Not only can it serve the ideals mentioned above, but it will also guide and encourage the Tristan islanders in their efforts to protect their unique islands. The well-being of Tristan's community is based on sustainable harvests from the sea, which can only be achieved by careful management of all the features which contribute towards an ecological balance between the needs of Tristan's human inhabitants and the natural world surrounding them.

The Tristan Government will continue to do all it can to secure this balance on which both sides ultimately are interdependent.

My thanks go to the authors of the plan and to the Island Council for approving its implementation.



*Brian Baldwin
Administrator
Tristan da Cunha
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Special thanks are due to Mr Brian Baldwin, Administrator of Tristan da Cunha during 1998–2001, for constant enthusiasm and support. He also kindly allowed access to the Tristan Government archives and unpublished material. Many people on Tristan helped realise the visit to Inaccessible Island in 1999/2000, especially the team that built and transported the hut to Blenden Hall.

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Peter Ryan conducted this work while on sabbatical leave; he is grateful to the University of Cape Town for this opportunity.

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Summary

Inaccessible Island is one of three main islands in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago in the central South Atlantic. It is uninhabited, and is a British Possession, forming part of the Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha. In 1997, Inaccessible Island and its surrounding waters out to 12 nautical miles were proclaimed a Nature Reserve in terms of the Tristan da Cunha Conservation Ordinance (1976, as amended 1997).

Although utilised by humans in the past, Inaccessible Island remains in a largely pristine condition and is one of the few temperate oceanic islands free of introduced mammals. It is home to some 300 native plants and animals, including two birds, eight plants and at least ten invertebrates found nowhere else. The island also

supports more than 70 other plant and animal species restricted to the Tristan–Gough island group. Very little is known of the microscopic biota. More than 250 species have been recorded from the marine environment surrounding the island, including 60 species endemic to Tristan–Gough. Consequently Inaccessible Island is a resource of great conservation and scientific research significance.

This management plan sets guidelines for controlling human activities in order to conserve Inaccessible Island's indigenous biota and natural environment to the greatest degree possible.

Principal management objectives for the Inaccessible Island Nature Reserve are:

1. To conserve and maintain the indigenous biological diversity, including genetic diversity, species diversity and the diversity of ecological processes.
2. To minimise interference with natural processes and the destruction or degradation of natural features through human actions. This includes *inter alia* preventing the introduction of animals, plants, other organisms or their propagules.
3. To maintain scenic features and geological structures and processes.
4. To restore and rehabilitate, where feasible, damage due to local human actions.
5. To protect historic sites and artefacts without conflicting with objectives 1–4.
6. To promote an awareness through education of the intrinsic value, significance and vulnerability of Inaccessible Island and its biota.
7. To promote research relevant to objectives 1–6, and allow research not in conflict with these objectives.

These objectives do not affect any current use of Inaccessible Island by Tristan islanders. It is intended that well-managed access to the island continues to be allowed for Tristan residents, and that responsible, sustainable exploitation of marine resources be permitted in the waters of the Nature Reserve.

This management plan for the Inaccessible Island Nature Reserve has been produced in conjunction with the Tristan da Cunha Government. It consists of two main sections: a description and resource inventory, and management policies with guidelines for manage-

ment. Appendices include a bibliography, copies of relevant legislation, lists of scientific visits and the main biota, as well as visitor guidelines and application and reporting forms for visitors.

Implementation of the plan rests with the Administrator and Island Council of Tristan da Cunha. Specialist advice on the application and revision of the management plan, as well as with environmental management of and research at Inaccessible Island, is available from a group of international experts.

Introduction

Inaccessible Island in the South Atlantic Ocean is one of the least disturbed temperate oceanic islands in the world, and is largely free of the effects of human activities and introductions (Wace & Holdgate 1976). It is one of three main islands in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago. Administratively, Inaccessible forms part of the United Kingdom's Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha. It is uninhabited, and the only current economic activity is fishing for Tristan Rock Lobster *Jasus tristani* around the island.

Inaccessible Island, and the waters to 12 nautical miles (22.2 km) from shore, were declared a Nature Reserve on 27 February 1997 in terms of the Tristan da Cunha Conservation Ordinance (1976, as amended 1997; Appendix 2). This status confers considerable protection upon the island and its biota. The aim of this management plan is to formalise further the protocols for managing human activities at Inaccessible Island.

Dingwall (1995) highlighted the need for management plans for Subantarctic and adjacent cool temperate islands. The decision to produce a management plan for Inaccessible Island resulted from informal discussions in the late 1990s between the Administrator of Tristan da Cunha, Brian Baldwin, the Chief Islander and Head of the Natural Resources Department at Tristan, James Glass, and Peter Ryan, conservation biologist from the University of Cape Town and Honorary Tristan Conservation Officer. This is the second management plan for an island in the Tristan-Gough group, with one for Gough Island having been adopted in 1993 (Cooper & Ryan 1994). The management plan for the Inaccessible Island Nature Reserve is simi-

lar to that for the Gough Island Wildlife Reserve (renamed a Nature Reserve in 1997), but there is one key difference. Since the publication of the Gough Island Management Plan, Tristan has established a Natural Resources Department, providing the appropriate personnel and infrastructure (including a fisheries patrol vessel) to implement the plan. Tristan also now has an internet connection, which greatly enhances outside communication with the management agency on the island.

Funding for the production of this management plan was provided by the World Wide Fund for Nature, United Kingdom. An essential part of the preparation of the management plan was a three-month research expedition to Inaccessible Island by Peter Ryan and Coleen Moloney from November 1999 to February 2000. This built on information obtained during a six-month expedition to the island ten years previously (October 1989–March 1990). Support for the 1999/2000 field season was received from WWF-UK and the National Geographic Society. The visit formed part of Peter Ryan's sabbatical leave from the University of Cape Town.

We reviewed the scientific and historical literature relating to Inaccessible Island, and a bibliography is appended (Appendix 1). The management plan consists of two main sections: a description and resource inventory, and management policies with guidelines for management. The first draft of the management plan was submitted for comment in March 2000. The final version was accepted by the Tristan da Cunha Government on 28 February 2001.



Plate 1. Inaccessible Island from the west.