

## New Conservation Department Created in Tristan da Cunha (TDC202)

Partly funded by OTEP, the Tristan da Cunha Government has recently created the Tristan Conservation Department (TCD). The new Department is separate from the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, with Trevor Glass as Head of TCD, Norman Glass as Assistant and Kirsty Green as Clerk.

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## Eradication work on Gough continues (TDC302, TDC502 and TDC601)

Newly received support from OTEP has enabled ongoing conservation work on Gough Island, Tristan da Cunha, to be continued and expanded. The project titled "Preparations for the eradication of mice and *Sagina* from Gough Island" (OTEP project TDC601) aims to step up efforts to control and eradicate the introduced plant Procumbent Pearlwort *Sagina procumbens* and continue with planning and preparations for the future eradication of house mice *Mus musculus*. The project is being managed by the RSPB in collaboration with Tristan da Cunha's Conservation Department. The recent visit of the South African research vessel, the *S. A. Agulhas*, to Gough Island in September 2009 placed two new RSPB fieldworkers, Kalinka Rexer-Huber and Graham Parker, both from New Zealand, replacing Henk Louw and Paul Visser, who had been on Gough for the previous 13 months (under OTEP project TDC502). During the course of the *S.A. Agulhas*'s visit, Kalinka and Graham received training and instructions from Peter Ryan, from the University of Cape Town, on the detailed work plans for the coming year. Work plans relating to



## MONTSERRAT BOTANIC GARDEN LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN

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DRAWN BY JEEUN SONG-DUSOIR

in the rainy season and dry up in the dry season with vegetation along their banks changing as one moves from the top of the Centre Hills to low lying areas.

- The Orchid House displays the endemic orchid along with other orchids found on Montserrat.
- The Medicinal Garden was installed with plants traditionally used for medicinal purposes.
- The Composting Unit produces compost for the plant beds from the dead leaves,
- The croton patch, the hibiscus patch and palm walk and some walkways were installed.

Not every feature on the Master Plan could be installed within the time of the project and with the funds given. But the Trust continues to maintain the garden and seek funds to add new features. It is developing into an education tool and a delightful place for residents and visitors to Montserrat.

The Trust is grateful to OTEP for funding the project.

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John Cooper spraying stripped areas of ground at Snoekgat.





*Tristan Conservation Officer Norman Glass descending cliff*

the planned future mouse eradication include the capture and captive care of the critically endangered Gough Bunting and endangered Gough Moorhen. Without captive populations, both species could be at risk from an eradication operation.

Work during the September visit also targeted *Sagina*, which has infested areas of cliffs close to the South African meteorological station, and will present a major risk to Gough Island's unique vegetation if it were to escape to upland areas of the island. With the support of Norman Glass, from Tristan da Cunha's Conservation Department, specialist rope-access work from Donovan Willis, and able assistance by Dalton Gibbs and John Cooper (all from South Africa), work to eradicate the plant was stepped up during September with all areas of coastal cliffs checked and any plants in the infected areas removed and sprayed with herbicides. Following pilot work during 2008 to test a new method of clearing and stripping soil, a new high-pressure water-pump was purchased, positioned by helicopter within a *Sagina* area distant from the base, and successfully installed during the relief voyage. The new pump is being used to blast soil from infected areas with salt water. As well as stripping the soil from the cliffs, germination trials have shown that the salt water kills and prevents new *Sagina* plants from emerging. Continued stripping of soil and spraying is planned throughout the coming year.

Our thanks go to the South African National Antarctic Programme and Titan Helicopters for supporting the September work, to the Tristan Island Council for supporting this conservation project, and to OTEP for funding.

*Richard Cuthbert, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Richard.Cuthbert@rspb.org.uk*

## **Restoration of the Sandy Point area by the eradication of the Loganberry plant (TDC404)**

The Sandy point project was funded by OTEP to enable the people of Tristan da Cunha to: eradicate the Loganberry *Rubus loganobusacc*, produce their own fruit and build a research hut where studies can be carried out. The Loganberry was taken from Diars Garden by Upton and planted at Sandy Point in 1953. It then began to spread and became a pest; growing over the apple orchards and covering the gulches making footpaths very dangerous. In 2007, the Darwin team went to Sandy Point to eradicate it. This was a great task and now the Loganberry is at least 99% under control. Following efforts to control and eradicate Loganberry from Sandy Point, the ground had been cleared sufficiently to allow for the re-planting of fruit trees.



*Vigorous growth of Loganberry *Rubus loganobusacc*  
Photo: Trevor Glass*

The once productive orchard appears to be in an advanced state of decline with many trees dead or dying. The main reason seems to be the old age of the trees and a long history of neglect; there has been no pruning for many years, if ever, and the fruit on the remaining apple trees were very small, probably as a result of this. In addition, woolly aphid and mealy bugs occur and probably weakened the trees further, although individuals that were still alive displayed lush foliage.

In order to re-stock the area with new trees, a large number of different young fruit trees were ordered from Cape Town, including apple, pear and peach. A total of 52 apple trees were fit to be planted, all of which were either of the 'Royal Gala' or 'Golden Delicious' variety. Due to the good quality of the soil it was not necessary to add any compost. The trees were spread out evenly across the slope in front of, beside and behind the existing research hut. The insect pests are more likely to be a threat to the new trees and so they have been sprayed with Spray-kill, to kill aphids, moths and white fly. Hopefully these measures will mean that the new trees will be producing fruit in the New Year.



*Darwin team members Matthew Green and Simon Glass planting a tree. Photo: Trevor Glass*

The existing hut was built in 1980 where the Agriculture team used to spend some time in the summer cutting down pine wood for fencing poles and replanting young trees. At the moment, with the cost of fuel prices and the rebuilding of the harbour, this has come to a halt as it is much cheaper to order the pine wood from South Africa. Hopefully, after this project we will be able to start bringing pine up to the Settlement again.

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