



*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.

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## **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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