



FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS 11. UK DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM FEBRUARY 1995

AS 1995 BEGINS, it is an opportune time to reflect on the activities that the Forum has been involved in over the past year. The development work sponsored by the Darwin Initiative has been the main core focus for the Co-ordinator's time.

CONSERVATION STRATEGY

At the beginning of 1994, a survey was conducted into the status and needs of NGOs in the Dependencies and the information gathered from this has been a foundation for the development of the Forum's Conservation Strategy for the UK Dependent Territories. The strategy is to be finalised for publication in the spring and launched at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It is a product of months of collaboration between Forum Sponsoring organisations and will be endorsed by each as a way forward into the 21st century. The Conservation Strategy details each Forum Sponsor's remit and how it will play a role in working for conservation in the Dependencies over the next few years. It also contains a section of Priority Actions

needed to develop the Forum itself so that it can remain viable and to increase its efficiency, as well as recommending key activities needed to further conservation programmes and legislative requirements for species and habitat protection in the Dependent Territories. A full report of the NGO survey will be included in the Strategy, as well as a comprehensive series of Territory by Territory conservation recommendations, which illustrate the wealth of biodiversity and important habitats that occur in the Dependencies.



MEETINGS

In addition to the Conservation Strategy, the Forum held four half-day meetings to discuss issues and action projects last year, and met Government Representatives from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Department of the

Environment, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Overseas Development Administration (ODA) for two half-day meetings, where we were able to represent concerns and interests of Dependent Territory NGOs. The Forum's newly formed Executive Committee also met four times last year, and were thus able to tackle a greater volume of work over the year behind the scenes than had previously been accomplished with just the quarterly Forum meetings.

CORE SUPPORT GROWS

Core support for the Forum increased last year, with the British Association of Nature Conservationists (BANC) and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) becoming Sponsors. We hope to increase our level of core support further this year, by inviting more conservation organisations to become involved in our work with environmental projects and issues in the Dependent Territories. A full list of Forum Sponsors can be found on the back page.

ENVIRONMENTAL MISSION TO THE CARIBBEAN DEPENDENCIES

At the end of November the Forum Co-ordinator visited the Cayman Islands, Turks & Caicos Islands and Anguilla as part of a UK team conducting an environmental review of the Dependent Territories. The other members of the team were Frances MacLeod of the Environment Science & Energy

Department of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Dr. Barry Blake, recently appointed Environmental Advisor to the ODA at the British Development Division for the Caribbean in Barbados. The team met a wide cross-section of local people involved with and working in the environmental field and were involved in lively discussions about pertinent issues, including Ramsar, threats from development, sustainable marine resources, institution building,

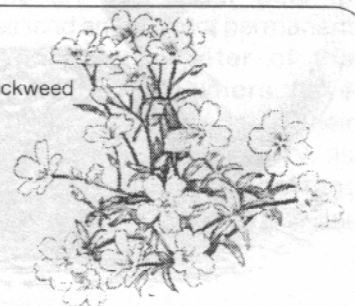
projects, and ecotourism. Although the visit was relatively brief, it enabled the team to identify individual needs and common areas of concern. As a result, a number of activities are in the pipeline for 1995, including a CITES workshop, a GIS mapping workshop, environmental education and awareness programmes, project support for NGOs and assistance with drafting model conservation legislation which can be readily adapted to suit the particular needs of each island.

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INACCESSIBLE ISLAND – A NEW NATURE RESERVE

On 15th March 1994, the Island Council of Tristan da Cunha agreed that Inaccessible Island should be declared a nature reserve (Tristan Times, March 1994). This very significant step goes a long way towards ensuring that Inaccessible Island remains one of the least disturbed temperate oceanic islands in the world.

A British Dependent Territory, Tristan da Cunha and nearby Gough Island lie midway between Africa and South America in the central South Atlantic Ocean. Inaccessible Island is one of three main islands in the Tristan group. It is globally important for its many endemic terrestrial species and as a breeding site for seabirds. Literally millions of seabirds of at least 16 species breed on the island, including the northernmost population of Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. The spectacled form of Whitechinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* only breeds at Inaccessible Island. The world's smallest flightless bird, the Inaccessible Island Rail *Atlantisia rogersi*, also is entirely restricted to the island, and there are

three other endemic landbirds shared with other islands in the Tristan group. The islands have been called a miniature Galapagos because of the radiation among the endemic *Nesopiza* finches. Inaccessible Island also is home to a large number of endemic plants and invertebrates, notably weevils and snails.

Inaccessible Island is uninhabited, and has no introduced mammals, and only a handful of introduced plants and invertebrates. Consequently it has one of the most intact of oceanic island ecosystems. The greatest threat facing the island and its biota is the introduction of alien animals and plants. In terms of the new nature reserve, Tristan islanders will retain the right to collect driftwood and guano from the island, but other access will be restricted and all living resources will be protected. Taken together with Gough Island, which is already a reserve, some 44% of the land area of Tristan is now set aside for conservation – surely among the highest proportions conserved by any country! The Tristan islanders are to be congratulated for taking this important conservation measure.

SOUTH GEORGIA WHALING MUSEUM

Towards the end of the 1980s there was concern at the deteriorating state of the abandoned whaling stations at South Georgia. In 1991 a clean-up team dealt with large quantities of fuel oil, asbestos, sulphuric acid and other hazardous materials. Deterioration of the station was being greatly exacerbated by looting and vandalism, so Nigel Bonner, the advisor to the clean up team who had been Sealing Inspector at South Georgia during the 1950s, suggested that the presence of a museum would help check further depredations. A start was made in 1991 by refurbishing the Manager's house at Grytviken, the original whaling station. Artefacts were collected and put on display and visitors from cruise ships, naval vessels and other ships were shown around the remains of the station. In August 1994, Nigel Bonner died suddenly, leaving the museum securely established and proving to be of great interest to the increasing numbers of visitors to South Georgia. He has been succeeded as Director by Robert Burton who became familiar with South Georgia while serving with British Antarctic Survey.

FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS

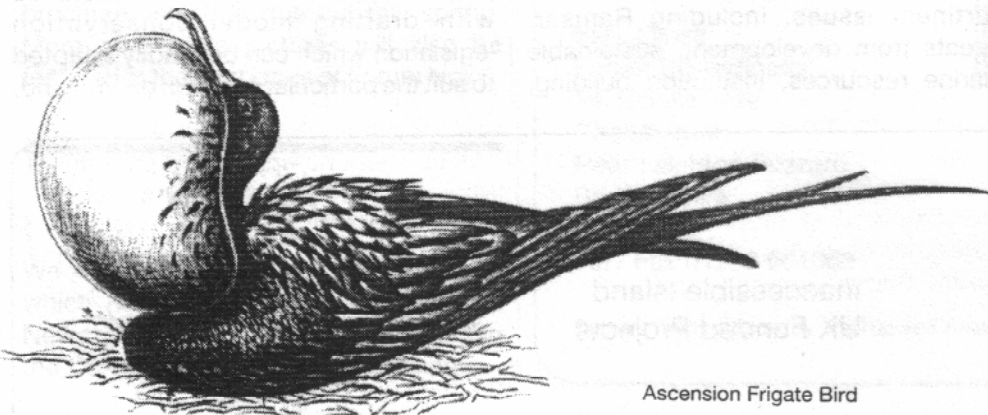
Nineteen ninety four was a productive year for UK funding of conservation projects in the Dependencies. The Forum played an active role in making recommendations to the UK Government for projects and for co-ordinating funds from its Sponsors.

The annual Foreign Office Assistant Under Secretary's Project Budget (AUSPB) yielded £30,000 for the following projects in August: Ecological Restoration on

Ascension, which was jointly funded by the FCO, RSPB and WWF-UK; Production and Publication of a Bird List for the Turks & Caicos Islands by the TCI National Trust; and a Mountain Chicken and Bat survey in Montserrat, jointly funded by FCO and the Flora & Fauna Preservation Society. The National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands has now produced the bird list and the other two projects are due to be carried out during the summer of 1995.

Money from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in the Autumn allowed the production of Biodiversity profiles for the

Dependent Territories (see article in this issue). Towards the end of 1994, the Foreign Office were also able to allocate AUSPB funds totalling £60,000 for the following projects: to the National Parks Trust, British Virgin Islands, for the production of their endowment fund brochure; to the Forum for the purchase of a computer and upgrading of their Dependent Territories database; to the British Antarctic Survey for a GIS mapping project on South Georgia, and to Falklands Conservation for the production of an advisory document to update environmental legislation in the Falklands and to conduct pilot surveys on plants, invertebrates and selected wetland and coastal sites in the Falklands. The deadline for project submissions for the 1995 AUSPB monies is June 1995. WWF-UK is currently funding projects which are underway in Anegada (BVI), Montserrat and the Turks & Caicos Islands, as well as the work in Ascension, mentioned above. WWF-UK identifies priorities for funding in close association with the Forum and is currently developing an outline programme for the financial year starting July 1995.



Ascension Frigate Bird

GOUGH PROPOSED FOR WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

In October 1994, the UK Government submitted a nomination to include Gough in the World Heritage List, to Unesco. Justification for such listing stated in the nomination, includes the fact that Gough is the largest scarcely modified cool temperate island ecosystem in the South Atlantic Ocean; it is the least disturbed temperate oceanic island of its size in the world; it supports two species of endemic land birds and a range of endemic plants and invertebrates; and is one of the most important seabird colonies of the world. The recently introduced Management Plan for Gough submitted with the nomination provides for the strict management of Gough as a Wildlife Reserve. If the nomination is successful, Gough will be the second World Heritage site in the UK Dependent Territories. The first, Henderson Island in the Pacific, was declared in 1988.

NATIONAL TRUST'S ISLANDS IN TIME CAMPAIGN

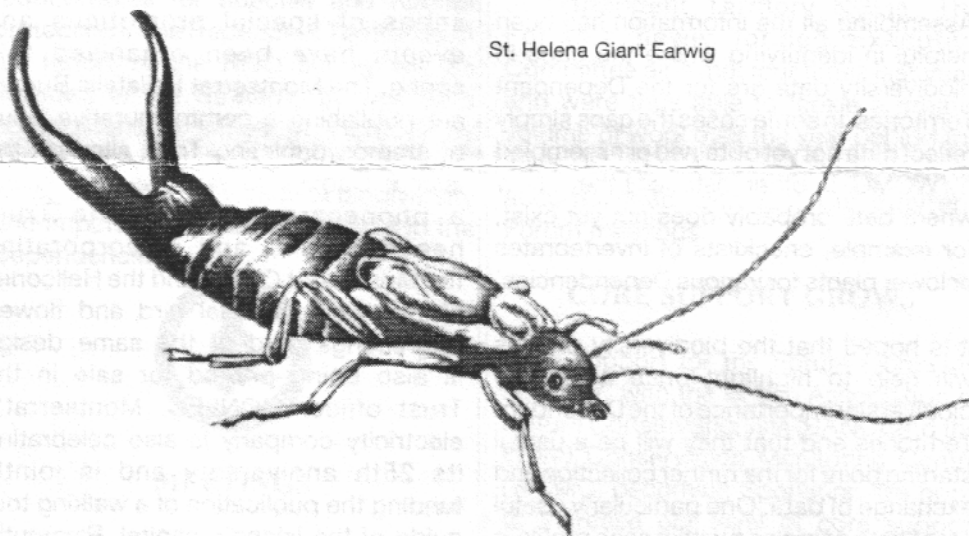


The National Trust for the Turks & Caicos Islands launched its Islands in Time campaign late in 1994, with the objective of establishing the National Trust as a major force for conservation and historic preservation in the Turks and Caicos Islands. A key concept of the campaign is that economic development, historical preservation and thoughtful management of the country's natural assets can go hand in hand and be mutually complimentary. The Trust's capital campaign focuses on eight discreet projects, with a common theme of preserving the islands natural and historical heritage. It is hoped that campaigning for these projects will raise US\$600,000 over a two year period. When this money is raised, US\$250,000 will go into an endowment fund to perpetually generate income through interest earnings. This interest will then provide secure and dependable income to maintain and upgrade completed projects and to ensure that the National Trust has the capability to sustain itself as it develops. For more information about the Trust and/or its Islands in Time Campaign, write to: The National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands, P.O. Box 261, Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos Islands, British West Indies.

ST. HELENA ENDEMIC INVERTEBRATES STAMP ISSUE

On July 6th this year the St. Helena Post Office will release a set of four postage stamps and a souvenir sheet featuring five endemic species of the Island's invertebrates. Species featured on the stamps are the Blushing Snail, the Golden Sail Spider, the Spiky Yellow Loodlouse and the St. Helena Shore Crab. The presentation sheet also features the Giant

Earwig. The issue will be called "Endemic Invertebrates" and the designs are taken from the St. Helena Nature Conservation Group's educational poster, drawn by Mr. Ian Loe with technical assistance from Paul Pearce-Kelly, Chair of the St. Helena Working Group and of the Zoological Society of London. Further details about these and other stamp issues featuring wildlife of the UK Dependent Territories will be published in a full article in the next edition of Forum News.



St. Helena Giant Earwig

BOOBY COLONY IS THE CAYMAN ISLANDS FIRST RAMSAR SITE

Little Cayman, the smallest of the three Cayman Islands is host to the Territory's first Ramsar site, designated in 1994. The site consists of 200 acres of swamp fringed by black and white mangrove which runs into mixed dry green evergreen thicket vegetation and is home to an important breeding colony of the Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. This colony, of an estimated 5000 pairs is possibly the largest in the Western Hemisphere. Other breeding birds present include 100 pairs of Magnificent Frigate Birds *Fregata major* and Black-necked Stilts *Himantopus mexicanus*. The site is known locally as the Booby Pond and Rookery and is also an important feeding ground for migrant waders and several species of wintering herons; Snowy egrets *Egretta thula*, Little Blue Heron, *Egretta caerulea* and Tri-coloured Herons, *Egretta tricolor* being most numerous. In addition to the birds, a population of the endangered

Little Cayman Rock Iguana *Cyclura nubila caymanensis* is present in the sanctuary; only about 1000 individuals of this race of the Cuban Rock Iguana remain. The designation of the Booby Sanctuary has been made possible with a grant of £10,000 from the British Government and money raised by the Governor's Fund for Nature, a charitable Trust established in September 1993 by Governor Michael Gore. To date, US\$250,000 has been donated to the fund, the money being used to purchase land for nature conservation. The Governor's first priority was to ensure the security of the Booby Colony. Funds have been allocated to compensate land owners who are no longer able to develop their land and to erect permanent signs around the perimeter of the sanctuary. Many landowners have agreed to donate those parts of their property falling within the sanctuary, as the Booby Colony is an important feature on Little Cayman and a popular tourist attraction.

BIODIVERSITY PROFILES

The World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), a supporting member of the Forum, has prepared a series of biodiversity profiles for the UK Dependent Territories, commissioned for the UK Government by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The profiles represent a rapid compilation of the data held on species, habitats, protected areas and wildlife trade, by WCMC. Their preparation was undertaken in association with the Forum and involved incorporation of data held in the Forum's files and database.

Assembling all the information has been helpful in identifying where the gaps in biodiversity data are for the Dependent Territories. In some cases the gaps simply reflect data not yet obtained or assembled by WCMC. In other instances they show where data probably does not yet exist, for example, checklists of invertebrates or lower plants for various Dependencies.

It is hoped that the biodiversity profiles will help to highlight once again the biodiversity importance of the Dependent Territories and that they will be a useful starting point for the further collection and exchange of data. One particularly useful set of data contained within each profile is a table showing those species which are found within the Territory and which are included under international conservation conventions. This information should be valuable in reviewing and updating local legislation – a priority need for most Dependencies.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations of Gibraltar Chickweed, Ascension Frigate Bird and St. Helena Giant Earwig in this newsletter were drawn by Robin Budden. Robin has drawn a series of illustrations featuring the wildlife of the Dependencies for the new Forum brochure, which is due out this spring. More of Robin's pictures will also be featured in the next issue of Forum News.

COMMENTS

We welcome any comments or articles which may be of interest from Forum News readers. Please send your letters to the Co-ordinator at the address below.

MONTSERRAT NATIONAL TRUST CELEBRATES IT'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Montserrat National Trust, which was inaugurated on 1st February 1970. In commemoration of the occasion and to demonstrate that the Trust is still very much alive and kicking, a series of special promotions and events have been organised this spring. The Montserrat Philatelic Bureau are publishing a commemorative issue of stamps depicting Trust sites on the Island; Cable and Wireless are issuing a phonecard depicting the Trust headquarters and incorporating the Montserrat Oriole, and the Heliconia, Montserrat's national bird and flower. A greetings card of the same design is also being printed for sale in the Trust office. MONLEC, Montserrat's electricity company is also celebrating its 25th anniversary and is jointly funding the publication of a walking tour guide of the Island's capital, Plymouth, with the Trust. In addition to the above promotions, the Trust has planned a week of events between March 5th to

11th. These include a cocktail party at Government House, daily radio promotions and discussions, a beach barbecue, a concert and a 25th anniversary awards ceremony at the Trust AGM, with the Chief Minister, the Hon. Reuben Meade and Mr. Paul Butler from the RARE Center for Tropical Conservation to give speeches. For further details about the Trust's 25th Anniversary celebrations, please contact: Montserrat National Trust, Box 363, Plymouth, Montserrat, West Indies.

PUBLICATIONS

The Cayman Islands, Natural History and Biogeography

edited by M.A. Brunt and J.E. Davies. Monographiae Biologicae 71.

In the course of the last century a considerable amount of scientific work has been carried out in the Cayman Islands, the results of which are widely distributed. This book brings all this scattered information together, to present a coherent account of the biogeography and ecology of the islands, as an easily available reference source and as a foundation on which future work can be based.

Published August 1994, 576pp.

Hardbound ISBN 0-7923-2462-5. £214.50/US\$320.00

Production of Forum News was supported by the British Association of Nature Conservationists (BANC), the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society (FFPS), Plantlife, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), World Wide Fund for Nature United Kingdom (WWF-UK) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).



PLANTLIFE



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