

# FORUM NEWS 24

FEBRUARY 2004

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## TCI completes and adopts the first Strategy for Action to implement an Environment Charter

*Forum News 23* reported the first stages of the one-year project facilitated by the Forum. This aimed to help the Turks and Caicos Islands fulfil its first commitment under the Charter: to develop a strategy for action to implement the Charter. This was not just for TCI, but to serve as a model to help other UK Overseas Territories go through their own processes.

Following the report in *Forum News 23*, another workshop was held of stakeholders, drawn from across government, NGOs, business groups and civil society generally. This worked to agree priorities from the structured lists of requirements to meet the Charter commitments, developed in earlier stages. The facilitators from the Forum, Mrs Dace Ground and Dr Mike Pienkowski, then edited the earlier agreed documents to produce the first draft strategy for action, which was checked with stakeholders.

We then discovered that the process the team had developed was even more robust than designed. A general election held in April 2003 ended in a very close result which was challenged in the Court. The resulting legal and administrative processes and by-elections for some constituencies took four months to resolve, before a new Government took office in August. The intervening time, which clearly could not be used for framing new policies, was not wasted. Facilitators worked on clarifying various details with stakeholders and removing internal inconsistencies, which inevitably arise in novel processes developed through several workshops and reviews. The open nature of the process, involving widely drawn participants, meant also that advisors of both the



*Hon. Michael Misick, Chief Minister of the Turks & Caicos Islands, at the launch of OTEP at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, where he said "This funding reflects the partnership on the ground between the TCI Department of Environment & Coastal Resources and the TCI National Trust, which has been reaffirmed through the TCI's implementation of the Environment Charter. The Department and the Trust have in the past received project development support from DFID and the UK OT Conservation Forum, itself part-funded for these projects by the FCO. It is hoped that OTEP will continue to assist the coordination and prioritisation of environment projects in the TCI."*

previous and the new Governments were well-informed and had in many cases participated in the process. Accordingly, it was found that the environmental priorities of the new governing party were to be found in the draft. The only adjustment necessary, after detailed checking against their Manifesto and the Speech from the Throne, was the bringing forward of a small number of already included items to add to the high priority category. The slightly revised draft strategy was checked with stakeholders.

The facilitators, the Chairperson of the Environment Charter Working Group Mrs Michelle Fulford Gardiner and the Permanent Secretary Natural Resources and Chief Minister's Office Mr Kingsley Been presented the strategy for action to the new Chief Minister and Minister for Natural Resources and

Tourism, the Hon Michael Misick, in late November 2003. The Chief Minister put this to Executive Council in December 2003, where it was adopted as policy for the Turks and Caicos Islands. This does not mean that all the actions in the strategy are automatically approved in detail. However, it provides an approved structure to guide the priorities for work by departments and others, including the preparation of proposals where individual actions require Executive Council approval.

This marks the end of the pilot project, but only the start of the process for TCI. Already there are plans to incorporate the management of the implementation of the strategy into regular procedures and planning budgeting rounds across government, with full NGO participation. The TCI Environment Working Group (a government appointed body with NGO representation) has already acted in a way envisaged by the Charter and the new Overseas Territories Environment

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# UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme

*The Forum welcomes the re-instatement of a fund in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) to continue to meet UK Government Commitments in the Environment Charter, and welcomes also the start of the corresponding funding from the Department for International Development (DFID) originally indicated in the White Paper of 1999. The Forum congratulates both Departments in running their funds in combination in a way which will be more efficient with the time of hard-pressed personnel in the UKOTs, and looks forward to helping make the best use of these resources. The note below is based on the introduction to OTEP issued by FCO/DFID.*

The UK Overseas Territories Environment Programme, more commonly known as OTEP, was officially launched in December 2003, and is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). OTEP will provide a source of funding for activities to take forward the implementation of the Environment Charters and to support environmental and sustainable management more generally in all the UK Overseas Territories. Bids against the programme budget for project funding will be accepted from UK Overseas Territories' governments, NGOs, community-based organisations, individuals, educational institutions and the private sector. Bids may also be submitted by UK-based organisations, NGOs and academic institutions provided that they have been developed in collaboration with partners in the territories. Bids will be assessed on a competitive basis, against published selection criteria, by a panel of independent specialists. Technical support will be provided for project preparation, where needed.

The goal of the programme is to enhance the quality of life and livelihood opportunities for the inhabitants of all of the UKOTs through the sustainable use (or protection, where necessary) of environmental and natural resources, whilst securing global environmental benefits within the scope of the core principles of the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEA). It will assist the island communities in taking ownership of and responsibility for the issues, by helping them to assess problems and to promote sustainable solutions to them through national strategic planning processes and action at the local level.

By the end of the programme in March 2007, both HMG and most, if not all, of the UKOTs should be able to demonstrate that measurable progress has been made towards meeting their respective commitments to the Environment Charter process and to achievement of wider environmental goals. The UKOTEP will facilitate this through the provision of advice, support, and a source of funding for projects.

The programme will build upon and augment the earlier

FCO Overseas Territories Environment Fund. It will also activate the DFID commitment in the 1999 White Paper: *Partnerships for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories* to "provide additional assistance to the poorer territories in addressing global environmental concerns". It will work within the framework of the UKOT Environmental Charters; and it will benefit from a joint approach between DFID and FCO, with effective pooling of their resources.

The programme will be managed jointly by DFID Overseas Territories Department and the FCO Environment Policy Department (working closely with FCO Overseas Territories Department) supported by a London-based management committee. This committee will interface with national focal points and steering committees in the UKOTs (including through governors', administrators', or commissioners' offices), as appropriate. Other government departments will be consulted according to their respective competences and capacity to provide technical input and other resources. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) are involved already.

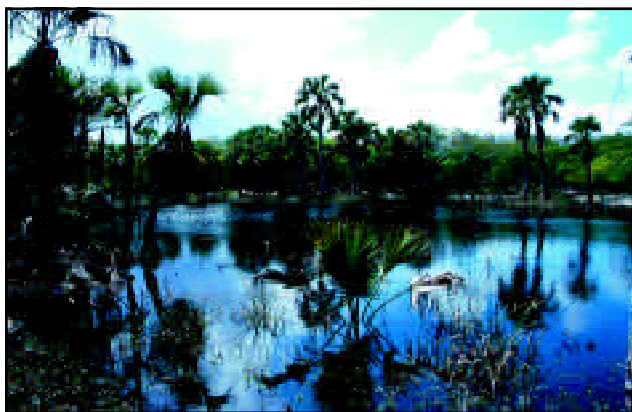
There will be one main bidding round each year, timed so that new activities will come on stream at the start of each financial year. A supplementary bidding round may be held later in each year to accommodate promising bids on which further work was recommended by the assessment panel and to respond to unforeseen challenges arising outside the main bidding period.

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum has been closely involved in FCO-funded initiatives to date. The Forum, as well as its member organisations and working groups, will remain actively engaged under the reformulated and expanded programme. The Forum, for example, was contracted to implement the Environment Charter Pilot Project in the Turks & Caicos Islands; it facilitated the March 2003 biodiversity conference in Bermuda; and it has provided technical input to the FCO's bid assessment process under previous environment funds. There already is a mechanism for liaison between the Forum and HMG through six-monthly meetings.

FCO's Environment Policy Department has committed £500,000 to environmental projects in the UKOTs for the current (2003/04) financial year under previous funding arrangements, and has secured an additional £1,000,000 (£500,000 in each of FYs 2004/05 and 2005/06) from its Global Opportunities Fund. The DFID contribution of £1,500,000 will be from the DFID UKOT regional budget line over the period FY2003/4 to FY2006-07.

## ***Implementation of the Plan for Biodiversity Management and Sustainable Development around Turks & Caicos Ramsar Site gets under way***

The Forum has been working closely for several years with its member organisation, the Turks and Caicos National Trust, on a major programme to develop effective conservation management and sustainable use to the benefit of the local communities of Middle and North Caicos. This area includes the East, Middle and North Caicos “Ramsar” Convention Wetland of International Importance, which is the fourth largest of some 160 designated by UK and its Territories. Its natural ecosystem transitions and mosaics are some of its outstanding features. These, and their ease of viewing through facilities being developed by this programme, were described by a recently visiting Ramsar official as “even better than Costa Rica” – something of a gold standard in eco-tourism!



*View from one of the field-roads under development of one of the seasonal fresh-water ponds which burst into life when the water-table in the limestone rock reaches the surface.*

In the period 1999 to 2002, the Trust and the Forum, together with Forum member organisation CABI Bioscience, the local communities, and several volunteer specialists worked, with part support from the UK Government’s Darwin Initiative, to produce the *Plan for Biodiversity Management and Sustainable Development around Turks & Caicos Ramsar Site* (available at [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)). This describes the biodiversity interest and the existing sustainable traditional uses of this. Its operational sections centre on the need to establish an infrastructure of trails (called “field-roads”, the local term), visitor centre and related facilities. These would be required if local people are able to establish small businesses to service high-quality low-intensity tourism, rather than suffering loss of control of their environment and valued way of life to external companies pursuing the intensive development, involving the pursuit of short-term profit at the cost of long-term sustainability that has destroyed so many previous paradises.

Funding paradise-conservation is not easy. Although our *Plan* has been widely acclaimed and is being used as a model by economies as diverse as Puerto Rico and Cuba, funding its implementation has suffered from the usual problem of the very few financing sources available to UKOTs. However, we are nothing if not persistent and versatile – and elements have been put together from various sources. TCI Government have donated an old school building in Bambarra, Middle Caicos, to act as an eco-centre. The Trust has gathered, and is pursuing commitments for funding from TCIG, the Conservation Fund (a tax on tourist accommodation and meals), and the Norbellis Foundation to renovate the building. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Forum and its senior volunteers have resourced the starting of work on the field-roads.

TCI Government has just recognised the work of the Trust and the Forum in two ways. It has placed at the top of its priorities for funding from DFID/FCO’s new Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) the project which would complete the initiation of the implementation of the *Plan*, allowing the programme to move towards a self-sustaining basis. It has also approved the transfer to the Trust of certain Crown Lands on which some of the field-roads are situated. Under the Trust’s Ordinance, they will be declared inalienable and therefore protected in Trust for TCI and its future citizens.

The Trust and the Forum will continue to work in partnership with the local communities on Middle and North Caicos and the TCI Government, especially its Protected Areas Department within the Department of Environmental and Coastal Resources. TCI has a good list of protected areas, with more to add but, until recently, their management was not resourced. The Protected Areas Department is centring its valiant efforts to get to grips with managing some of the much-used marine National Parks, while the TC National Trust leads on some terrestrial, wetland and historic sites. The recent decision by Government entrusts the National Trust, supported by the Forum network, with taking the lead, in partnership with the local communities, in managing the key natural and cultural features that will underpin sustainable tourism and thereby the economies of Middle and North Caicos. We must work together to make this exciting opportunity happen.

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# Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds Meeting

## “Birds – Winged Ambassadors for Caribbean Conservation”

Forum member organisation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, part-funded 10 participants, representing each of the Wider Caribbean UKOTs, to attend the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) in Tobago from the 21<sup>st</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2003. With a packed agenda, covering 3



*Participants of the SCSCB in Tobago*

main themes: Avitourism; Invasive Species; and Conflicts between Birds and Agriculture, it was a busy week.

In the scientific papers session, Jeremy Madeiros gave an update on the recovery of the Bermuda petrel, Gerard Gray spoke knowledgeably about his research into the decline of the forest thrush on Montserrat, and Clive Petrovic discussed the status of the house sparrow on the British

Virgin Islands, which has steadily increased since its first recording in 1995. In preparation for the invasive species workshop, Andrew Dobson spoke about the serious threat posed by invasives to birds on Bermuda and suggested some solutions to ensure the survival of native species. During the session on the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program in the Caribbean, Patricia Bradley described the IBA process and outlined the activities taking place on the Cayman Islands. Mike Pienkowski reported on the development of a plan for biodiversity management and sustainable development around the Turks & Caicos Ramsar site.

The above presentations demonstrated that there is a lot happening on the UKOTs that can contribute to biodiversity conservation in the Wider Caribbean as a whole. Many participants signed up to SCSCB working groups to assist in taking the work of these groups forward. Particular interest was expressed in engaging in regional SCSCB initiatives such as the West Indian Whistling Duck/ Wetlands environmental education programme, the Caribbean Endemic Bird Festival and the Caribbean Waterbird Conservation Plan.

The next meeting will be in 2 years time on Guadeloupe. See you there!

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## Hurricane Fabian hits Bermuda

On 5th Sept 2003 Bermuda was in the middle of Hurricane Fabian - one of the worst storms in 100 years a category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 100-120 mph and gusts to over 150 mph. Andrew Dobson, Vice Chairman of the Bermuda Audubon Society said, “Hundreds of houses have had roof and structural damage. Unfortunately there were four fatalities when cars were swept off the causeway. The Causeway - the link to the airport, was predictably breached in at least two places.” He went on to say, “Plants eventually recover, property can be re-built, but lost forever is a massive amount of South Shore coastline. More than just cliff collapse - for those of you who have visited Bermuda: the Natural Arches have gone; half of Gurnet Rock collapsed into the sea; Nonsuch Island has been divided into two at the former saltwater pond. Horseshoe Beach has been eroded back and the dune that divided the bay from ‘Baby Beach’ has gone!” Annie Glasspool of the Bermuda Zoological Society said

that the hurricane had helped to remove many of the casuarina trees that are invasive, while many of the endemic trees had survived. The hurricane destroyed a lot of the artificial burrows needed for the Bermuda petrel *Pterodroma cahow*, known locally as the cahow, to breed. Fortunately these endangered seabirds were not at the nesting grounds when the hurricane struck. Jeremy Madeiros of Bermuda’s Department of Conservation Services and a band of volunteers have worked tirelessly to restore the artificial burrows before the cahow returned in November. This event underlines the importance of plans to try to help the cahows re-establish on some of the larger (and higher) islands, from which they were excluded by earlier human actions.

*For more details contact the Bermuda Audubon Society on [www.audubon.bm](http://www.audubon.bm), Bermuda Zoological Society [www.bamz.org](http://www.bamz.org) and Bermuda Government [www.gov.bm](http://www.gov.bm)*

# Turtles in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories update

Coordination of the Turtles in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (TCOT) project has kept the Marine Turtle Research Group (MTRG) and the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) busy during 2003.

As a major contribution to the TCOT aim of assessing the status and exploitation of marine turtles in the Caribbean



*TCI Fisherman, Gilbert Jennings with hawksbill turtle taking part in ongoing TCOT genetic sampling fieldwork*

UK Overseas Territories and Bermuda, socio-economic questionnaire surveys were launched in all six territories this year. By October, TCOT staff had initiated or completed the surveys in collaboration with the Anguilla Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the British Virgin Islands Conservation and

Fisheries Department, the Turks and Caicos Islands Department of Environment and Coastal Resources and the

Government of Montserrat. Volunteer Jennifer Constable launched the TCOT socio-economic survey in Bermuda while the Cayman Islands Department of Environment began their survey enlisting the help of students from the Cayman Islands Community College.

In August, five conservation and fisheries officers from Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands benefitted from additional training when they attended the Bermuda Turtle Project's annual *International Field Course in the Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles*. During the course the participants discussed scientific papers with turtle experts Drs Peter and Ann Meylan and were further trained in turtle capture, tagging, measuring and genetic sampling. With a grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Environment Fund, MCS were able to fund the officers' attendance of the course as a contribution to TCOT.

Meanwhile, genetic sampling and tagging of wild captured turtles continued in each territory and Dr Angela Formia at the University of Cardiff has already completed the analysis of some green turtle samples. TCOT will produce final reports for each territory by October 2004. The reports will include marine turtle population status assessments as well as territory-specific conservation and management recommendations.

TCOT is funded by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the FCO with support from Cheltenham and Gloucester.

For more information contact TCOT on [info@tcot.seaturtle.org](mailto:info@tcot.seaturtle.org) or go to [www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/tcot](http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/tcot)

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## Review of existing and potential Ramsar sites in UK Overseas Territories

In order to fulfil its commitments under the "Ramsar" Convention on Wetlands, UK is reviewing its suite of existing and potential Wetlands of International Importance, in the context of the priority ecosystems identified by the Conferences of the Parties. This review is particularly relevant for UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs), because:

- In global biodiversity terms, these are the most important parts of UK sovereign territory;
- In the last few years (partly as a result of Forum encouragement and advice) those UK territories not previously included in UK's ratification have joined (except British Antarctic Territory, for which the Antarctic Treaty covers many relevant aspects);
- More of the priority ecosystem types (e.g. mangrove, coral, sea-grass beds etc) are relevant to UKOTs rather than metropolitan UK;
- For historical reasons there is under-coverage of Ramsar sites in the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies;
- Because of very poor coverage in studies in the past and recent progress in some aspects, the existing list of proposed sites (depending mainly on information about 20 years old) is out of date.

The review will include the Crown Dependencies. Although their situations are somewhat different from those of the UKOTs, there are some similarities in respect of their relationships to UK.

On a voluntary basis, the Forum has led for several years on promoting Ramsar issues in the Territories, including: facilitating the inclusion of remaining Territories in UK's ratification; promoting the first designations in BVI, Bermuda, BIOT and Cyprus SBAs; providing the map and first full Ramsar Information Sheet for the large Ramsar site in Turks & Caicos Islands; helping to develop and implement a management plan for that site; and collating most of the UKOT information for HMG's national Ramsar report to 2002 Conference of the Parties. As this issue of *Forum News* goes to press, we have heard that UK's Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), which leads on Ramsar issues, is contracting the Forum to undertake this review during the next year.

It would be extremely expensive to visit all or most of these to complete this review. Therefore, to be cost-effective, the project will need to make use of existing Forum networks of local and other contacts, as well as utilising any opportunities of visits for other purposes. The Forum is starting consultations, mainly by email, with many of its network. Others, who may have information to offer, are welcome to contact Mike Pienkowski ([pienkowski@cix.co.uk](mailto:pienkowski@cix.co.uk)).

## The World Heritage Site Nomination Process

In 1988, Henderson Island became the UK's first Overseas Territory (UKOT) to become a World Heritage Site, followed by Gough Island Wildlife Reserve in 1995 and the town of St George, Bermuda in 2001. All three sites were considered by the World Heritage Committee to have *outstanding universal value* and both the UK and the international community are committed to protect and preserve their values for all humanity.

So how did these sites achieve World Heritage status and what does it mean for them?

The concept of World Heritage covers both natural and cultural heritage and is set out in the World Heritage Convention. This set up the World Heritage Committee, under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO) and it is the Committee which decides whether a site has the necessary values for inscription on the World Heritage List. The Convention also places duties on all the countries to protect and conserve such heritage.

To be nominated for consideration by the World Heritage Committee for inscription as a World Heritage Site it has to be on a State's Tentative List. This is a list of sites which the State consider might have *outstanding universal value*. The UK last reviewed its Tentative List in 1999 and has so far nominated seven of the twenty five sites on the list, as countries are only allowed to nominate one site each year.

Once a country has decided to nominate a site, a Nomination Document and Management Plan have to be developed and submitted to UNESCO. This is a significant undertaking and involves local consultation and academic research to justify the assertion that the site has the necessary values for inscription and also to ensure that there will be adequate management of the site. It is estimated that this process currently takes on average three years or more in the UK. The World Heritage Committee assessment process for each nomination then takes a further 18 months and includes a professional impartial evaluation of the nomination documentation and a site visit. At its annual meeting, the Committee considers the nominations and evaluations and decides whether to inscribe the property on the World Heritage List.

Now is a good time for UKOTs to start thinking about sites that may meet the criteria for nomination as a World Heritage Site. The World Heritage Committee is keen to encourage the nomination of under-represented regions – such as the Caribbean and Pacific Regions and there are some types of natural sites that are missing from the list. There are two sites in the UK Overseas Territories on the tentative list – The Fountain Cavern, Anguilla and The Fortress of Gibraltar – which we hope to nominate in the near future. However there is the potential to have sites added to the Tentative List and also to participate in trans-boundary nominations where a site covers the land or sea area of a number of countries.

Interested in finding out more?

Contact Antonia Carr-Locke at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Tel: + 44 207 211 2341 or click onto [www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk) or <http://whc.unesco.org/>.

## Kew Awarded World Heritage Site Status

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, a Forum member organisation, was awarded World Heritage Status on 3 July 2003. The United Nations Environmental, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO) World Heritage Centre in Paris recognised the importance of Kew as an internationally unique cultural landscape, its significance to the science and utilisation of plants, and the remarkable collections of plant diversity from all over the world, including many UK Overseas Territories.

Professor Peter Crane, Director of Kew said, "At Kew, ground-breaking science and vital conservation work is only made possible by a wonderfully rich heritage. Not only do the gardens provide opportunities for public enjoyment and enrichment, but also the behind-the-scenes scientific work based on unrivalled collections is important to help maintain the environment for future generations. Being awarded World Heritage Site status is hugely exciting for us. It is a stamp of approval that puts us in the company of the best of the best and it brings with it increased prestige and public awareness. But most importantly, it embodies a commitment to maintain an organisation and place that is truly special – and world class. Crucially for our staff, this recognition supports what we have already achieved as well as what we plan to do in the future." With its new status, Kew joins other sites of outstanding universal value across the world, from Henderson Island UK's first Overseas Territory site, to the Taj Mahal and UK's Tower of London.

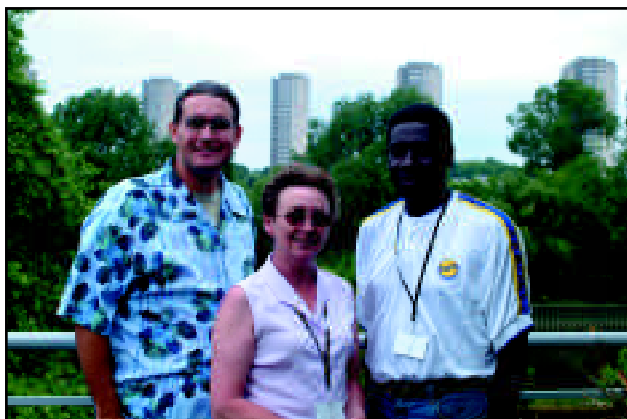
Kew is a major international visitor attraction and is located in 132 hectares of landscape gardens. During 2002 more than a million people visited the gardens, including more than 122,000 children who visited with their parents or in school groups. Many other *virtual visitors* gained access to the resources of Kew via the website [www.kew.org](http://www.kew.org).

## Inaccessible

Plans are advanced to extend the World Heritage Site of Gough Island in the Tristan da Cunha territory to include also Inaccessible Island, both being of global importance for biodiversity. Unfortunately, a technical problem prevented this decision being taken formally at the WH Committee in 2003, but this designation should now occur in 2004. The Forum congratulates Tristan da Cunha personnel and co-workers from the University of Cape Town on the production of the management plan for Inaccessible Island, which can be downloaded from the Forum's website database [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

## UKOTs Participate in Herbarium Techniques Course at Kew

We had good UK Overseas Territories representation on our Herbarium Techniques course this summer. Bryan Naqqi Manco (TCI National Trust), Lillian (Ginge) Kidd (Falkland Islands Herbarium) and Raymond Walker (BVI National Parks Trust) (left to right below) were amongst 12 participants from 12



countries worldwide who attended this intensive 2-month programme.

Herbaria are vital components of the biodiversity frontline and this year's course targeted participants from countries who were either establishing new herbaria, as is the case on BVI and TCI, where young herbaria are getting going, as is the case with Falklands, or countries reinvigorating old collections. What united all the participants was a desire to develop herbaria and reference collections as an aid to fighting the conservation battle.

The course aims to give all participants a good grounding in all the elements needed to collect, mount, store and maintain good plant specimens and is a good mixture of practical and theory elements. It is held in Kew's herbarium where participants can get lost amongst the 7 million specimens that have been built up over the last 150 years by collectors and collaborators from all over the world. In fact course participants helped us celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Herbarium in 1853. Participants even got an opportunity to try out their design skills as one of the course assessments involved designing a new herbarium for a theoretical island and required decisions to be made on location, facilities and to produce outline drawings.

Unfortunately we do not have the funds to construct, but the quality of many of the submissions was so high that we would like to see them built!

Course participants join an increasingly large network of alumni who are working round the world on related problems and issues and who can share their experiences via OnCourse, the newsletter we produce twice a year. Herbarium Techniques is part of a capacity building programme that Kew runs as a

key component of our efforts to provide training opportunities to the worldwide community of conservation practitioners. Other courses include Botanic Garden Management and Plant Conservation Techniques. We also run in-country programmes at the invitation of our international partners. Full details can be found on our website.

Our next course is Botanic Garden Management being held at Kew 5 July-27 August 2004.

Information about this course and the whole programme can be obtained from:

*Colin Clubbe*

*Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3AB, UK*

*Email: [c.clubbe@kew.org](mailto:c.clubbe@kew.org)*

*Internet: [www.kew.org/education/highered.html](http://www.kew.org/education/highered.html)*

## World Atlas of Seagrasses

The World Atlas of Seagrasses, prepared by Forum member organisation, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), provides the first ever global estimate, 177,00 sq km, for seagrasses world-wide, a group of about sixty species of underwater marine flowering plants. The findings give new urgency to protect and conserve these important habitats, which are threatened by runoff of nutrients and sediments from human activities on land, boating, land reclamation and other construction in the coastal zone, dredge-and-fill activities and destructive fisheries practices.

"Seagrass beds have been needlessly destroyed for short-term gain without real analysis of the values that the intact ecosystems bring to coastal society," said Mark Collins, Director of UNEP-WCMC. "Physically they protect coastlines from the erosive impact of waves and tides, chemically they play a key role in nutrient cycles for fisheries and biologically they provide habitat for fish, shellfish and priority ecotourism icons like the dugong, manatee and green turtle. And yet, despite these important attributes, they have been overlooked by conservationist and coastal development planners throughout their range. The Atlas provides important material towards a much-needed Global Marine Assessment, another key objective of the World Summit on Sustainable Development."

Illustrated throughout with colour maps, photographs, and tables, the Atlas was written by a team of international collaborators, covering seagrass ecology, scientific studies, changing distributions, threatened areas and conservation and management efforts for twenty-four regions of the world.

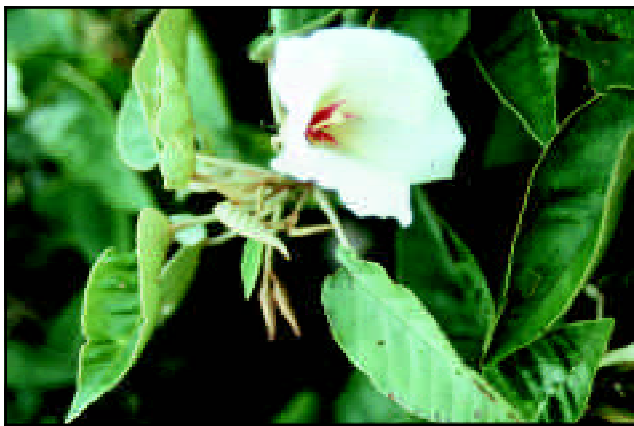
*The World Atlas of Seagrasses is available from:*

*<http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/10168.html> or further details [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)*

# Extinction and rarity in the South Atlantic Islands Highlighted

The Red List of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It uses a set of worldwide criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies. The overall aim of the Red List is to convey the urgency and scale of conservation problems to the public and policy makers, and to motivate the global community to try to reduce species extinctions. The Red List is based on information supplied by IUCN's Species Survival Commission (SSC), a network of 7,000 experts on plants, animals and conservation issues, and data from a number of partner organisations.

The headquarters of IUCN reported on 18 November 2003 on the South Atlantic Island Plant Specialist Group. This group, chaired by Forum Council member Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks, who lives on St Helena, is one such network that brings together experts on the



*St Helena Olive Nesiotia elliptica believed to have become extinct since the publishing of the 2003 Red List*

Islands of St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension and the Falklands. The conservation action and the plight of the floras of the South Atlantic are highlighted. These four island groups in the South Atlantic have developed their own unique suites of animals and plants that are extremely vulnerable to human disturbance. As on many other islands around the world, habitat destruction, introduced grazing animals and predation and competition by invasive species are unrelenting. Invasive species have caused the extinction of four of Ascension's plants that are found nowhere else on Earth. The Red List tells us that human activities are leading to a swathe of extinctions that could make these islands ecologically and aesthetically barren.

The IUCN's highlight of the South Atlantic Island floras is a stark reminder of the fragility of our island ecosystems and the continuing threats to their survival. But this is good news if we can turn the situation around by stimulating greater awareness, and understanding, lobbying for more support and converting this into effective action on the ground to reduce future threats. The Red List Assessments of threat are made annually; our success (the success of our islands) will be measured by reducing the level of threat assigned to our species in the coming years.

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*For more information:*

*The 2003 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is available as a searchable database on its own website: [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org).*

*The 2003 Red List Media Kit is available online at: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/RedList2003/English/newsreleaseEn.htm>*

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## Medalling with Plants

Every spring in the UK the Royal Horticultural Society presents the world famous Chelsea Flower Show to celebrate horticultural excellence. The show is televised and covers everything from introducing new plants to elaborately constructed show-gardens. The week-long show sees thousands of visitors every year and therefore as you might expect every Chelsea Flower Show has a first-aid tent. This year however saw the first ever first-aid stand for plants. Featuring plants in bandages, plant x-rays and trained staff on hand, the *Species Recovery Unit* was actually in the Life Long Learning section of the show. The exhibit was designed to showcase the conservation work carried out on islands in collaboration with Reading University, the Eden project and the Darwin Initiative.

The St Helena Boxwood and Ebony were displayed alongside plants from the Seychelles and the Canary Islands. Visitors were genuinely fascinated by their uniqueness. For some it was the first time they had seen plants from these islands. Everyone who visited the stand left with a sense of appreciation for the unique ecological heritage of these small islands and the efforts that were being employed to preserve our global biodiversity.

The visitors were not the only ones who were impressed. The judges awarded a prestigious Silver-Gilt medal to the *Species Recovery Unit* for the inspiring and engaging way it presented the importance of conservation work on small islands to the British public.

*Juliet Rose [j.e.rose@reading.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.rose@reading.ac.uk)*



## St Helena's endemic invertebrates – forty years on

Nearly forty years ago, in 1966 and 1967 to be precise, members of two expeditions from the Belgian “Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale” made an exhaustive study of the invertebrates of St Helena. Previous to this there had been studies of some groups, most notably by J C Melliss, Thomas and Edith Wollaston and Arthur Loveridge. The Belgians’ results were published in their museum journal during the following years, some in English and others in German or French. An analysis of these publications has enabled us to calculate that out of about 1037 invertebrate species described from St Helena (excluding fossils), about 400 are endemic. This is in contrast to the much younger island of Ascension, where less than 30 endemic species are known.

Whilst the endemic plants of St Helena and the wirebird, an endemic plover, have been much studied during recent decades, attention to the invertebrates has been

minimal. Admittedly such flagship species as the giant earwig and giant ground beetle have been highlighted, due primarily to the work of Paul Pearce-Kelly of the Zoological Society of London, but neither of these conspicuous species has been seen during the last 46 years. Most of the other endemic invertebrates have been ignored.

Invertebrates are much harder to study than plants. Very few stand still. Most are hard to identify in the field, and are often so small that a microscope is necessary. Guides and descriptions may be in languages other than English, and are often full of taxonomists’ jargon and in obscure publications. Popular books are often geographically based and give scant attention to rare species while specialist books are hard to find. Added to this, invertebrate specialists usually concentrate on their “own” group, and do not attempt to identify rare species from other groups. It is not surprising that most people stick to plants.

Most of the endemic invertebrates of St Helena have been found in the humid high part of the island where there are remnants of the endemic vegetation. However, on Prosperous Bay Plain, in the arid area in the east of the island, some 55 endemic species have been found. More than 20 of these have been found only here and nowhere else on the island, and

this is precisely the area where it is proposed to build an airport.

This is why we have been asked by the St Helena Government to make a study of the invertebrates of the area concerned. The project is funded by the FCO’s Environment Fund, and we acknowledge also the support from the Forum in arranging this. We are delighted to be back in St Helena, and to be working in an area that holds a particular fascination for us. We have started by studying the sites that were sampled so long ago by the Belgians, as closely as we can identify them. This should give us a



*A mogoplistine cricket recently discovered by Philip and Myrtle Ashmole and not yet described*

reasonable idea of how many of these endemic invertebrates survive. They already have human-induced problems to contend with, including predatory introduced animals (e.g. mice, a large centipede and scorpions) and also collecting by homebuilders of the loose surface rocks that provide crucial shelter for animals in this hot

climate. Although these problems all existed four decades ago it seems likely that eventually they will take their toll of some endemic species. When we have studied these sites we will extend our work to nearby areas that are not likely to be disturbed by airport construction. In this way we hope to be able to ascertain if there are other areas where this unique assemblage of endemics can survive more or less intact, as well as providing information that can be input into the design of any airport to minimise negative inputs, if possible.

We will be working here for three months, and during that time hope to be able to give a training opportunity to interested Saints who might be able to take the work forward as necessary after we leave. We will produce an interim report when we leave but our final report will be later and will depend on input from many specialists in the various groups of invertebrates. This will then form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment relating to the airport.

Don’t hold your breath for rediscovery of the Giant Earwig – our best guess is that it is extinct!

Ref: *St Helena and Ascension Island: a natural history*. Philip and Myrtle Ashmole (2000). Anthony Nelson, Oswestry. ISBN 0 904614611

*Myrtle and Philip Ashmole* [Philip.myrtle@ashmole.org.uk](mailto:Philip.myrtle@ashmole.org.uk)

# South Georgia Association Conference

The Conference took place from 8 to 20 September 2003 at the British Antarctic Survey offices, Cambridge, UK. A number of excellent speakers took part including the Commissioner Howard Pearce. The South Georgia Government was represented throughout the meeting and a good cooperation with the commercial sectors, fisheries and tourism was evident. Mike Pienkowski introduced the Environment Charter. Then, with the help of participants, combined the model scheme generated in the pilot exercise in the Turks & Caicos Islands with the information generated in the conference, to undertake the first stages of developing a strategy to implement the Environment Charter for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. It will be up to the Government of SGSSI as to whether to develop this further or use another route to produce a strategy.

In addition, the Forum mounted a display of the Territory posters and was represented also by Frances Marks, Forum Coordinator, and David Taylor, Forum Council member. Also on Forum Council, Ann Brown, UK and Company Secretary for Falklands Conservation and Chairman of the South Atlantic Working Group represented Falklands Conservation, as did Jan Creek, councillor from the Falkland Islands.

The key conservation issue was the decline of the albatross. The fisheries industry was working on mitigation measures that resulted in significantly reducing albatross fatalities – at an estimated overall cost of reducing the overall income by 40%. However illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing was a problem, and this must be addressed, both for conservation and to support the responsible approach by the licensed fishery. The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) had been created to establish internationally agreed measures to maintain the populations of all species of the Southern Ocean marine ecosystem. Argos Georgia Ltd was working on a tamper-proof vessel position monitoring system. Such a device would be a key to monitoring fishing vessels.

Fur seal populations had dramatically increased and, on some sites, seals were encroaching on albatross nesting areas as well as being hazardous to landing tourists. Site-specific management may help to alleviate the problem. However at present no work was being done in this area.

The south-west side of the Island is still rat-free.

However, with noticeably evident glacial shrinkage, rats may cross the mountain barrier from the rat-infested north coast. This would be disastrous for the Falkland pipit, a South Georgia endemic.

Marine debris, particular after the wrecking of three boats in April 2003, was evident. Sterling efforts were made to save lives and clear up the oil spillage but considerable debris and two wrecked boats remain.

The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands intended to instigate staggered port entry to collect licenses next year in an effort to prevent a reoccurrence of this event. Plastic marine debris and human rights issues on certain vessels were also discussed.

There was enthusiasm and expertise, particularly from a Norwegian contingent on the cultural heritage of the Islands. There was some concern that the South Georgia Government had agreed to spend its total reserves (£6 million) to clear asbestos from the derelict whaling station at Grytviken.

The management Plan for South Georgia was due for review in 2004, and wide consultation would be important. There might be

possibilities for integrating this with the consultations on the tourism management plan recently commissioned by the Government of SGSSI and just submitted – and possibly also the development of a strategy to implement the Environment Charter.

## Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels

South Africa became the fifth country to ratify the global Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) guaranteeing its entry into force on 1 February 2004. Australia, Ecuador, New Zealand and Spain had already ratified ACAP. The Treaty requires signatory states to take specific measures to reduce seabird by-catch from longlining, which is considered a primary cause of the population decline in the majority of albatross species. All the world's albatross species face varying risks of extinction according to the recent BirdLife upgrading of the World Conservation Union Red List of globally threatened species. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is urging the UK Government including the relevant UKOTs to ratify the treaty as soon as possible. It is a pity that procedural complications have been allowed to delay ratification by UK and its Overseas Territories, especially when UK was one of the nations promoting this Agreement. The Forum hopes that HMG will sort these matters out in the near future.



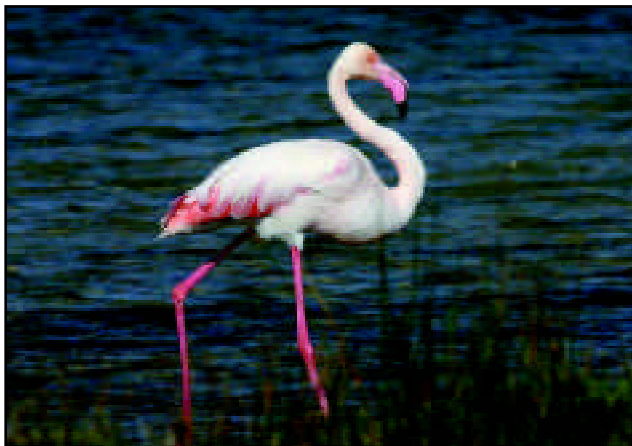
*Yellow-nosed albatross* *Diomedea c. chlororhynchos*

## Akrotiri Salt Lake becomes Cyprus's first Ramsar site

The Cyprus Government and the British Sovereign Base Areas Administration (SBAA) have agreed to create a Ramsar site comprising the Akrotiri salt lake and its environs to protect this environmentally important wetland. This provides a wintering ground for up to 30,000 Greater Flamingos and is a staging point for many species of birds on their migrations between Europe and Africa. Accordingly UK Government has formally designated this as a Wetland of International Importance.

The vision of the SBAA for the future of the area is primarily based on the Ramsar principles for conservation and wise use (sustainable human activities compatible with nature conservation) of wetlands and their supporting systems.

The SBAA is working with the Cyprus Government in the preparation and implementation of a Management Plan. They are involving all those people concerned,



*Greater Flamingo at Akrotiri Salt Lake - one of more than 20,000 which winter on the Lake.*

particularly local landowners, to ensure that the biodiversity of the area is maintained while at the same time allowing wise use of its resources.

The Management Plan will cover the whole of the Akrotiri Peninsula. The Ramsar site forms the core of the Plan and will be afforded maximum protection. Wardens are being recruited from the local population and a Visitors Centre will be built overlooking the lake.

As well as the wintering population of Greater Flamingos, large numbers of ducks and waders winter on the lake and many others use it as a staging point on their migrations. Included within the site are several shallow pools which are of particular importance to migrating waders.

The announcement of the creation of this site is the result of discussions between officials of the Cyprus Government and the SBAA over several years, with encouragement and help from the Forum, and is a major step forward for wildlife conservation in Cyprus.

Michael Gore CVO, CBE [gore@clara.net](mailto:gore@clara.net)

## Birthday Honours

John Topp said that he was surprised and delighted to be awarded an OBE for environmental conservation, in the Queen's Birthday Honours. As a Royal Navy officer, John was the Representative of the Commissioner British Indian Ocean Territory, BIOT for two years 1984-6 and lived in Diego Garcia. While there Sara Oldfield wrote asking for a contribution to her excellent book *Fragments of Paradise*. On his return to London, John said that he got together with Sara, David George, Sue Wells, Tony Hutson and John Taylor and, over several bottles and meetings at 20 Lupus Street, produced a World Heritage Site proposal for Chagos. When John retired from the Royal Navy he started *Friends of Chagos*, which has just become the *Chagos Conservation Trust*, and registered it as a Charity in 1992. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also asked John to be their Conservation Consultant for Chagos. The FCO was unable to give his fee direct to the charity so paid him a nominal sum which covered his expenses. John did the job for 10 years and then he said "I retired on the grounds that 10 years was a round number, and being now 65, I had been there, done that and got the T-shirt." He firmly believes in leaving on the crest of a wave and not waiting to be pushed and thought it was time to get a new mind on the subject.

Congratulations are extended also to Sukey Cameron, Representative at the Falkland Island Government in London, who was awarded an MBE. Sukey Cameron has been the Government's Representative since 1990, and she heads the team of six Falkland Island Government employees, all located at Falkland House, London.

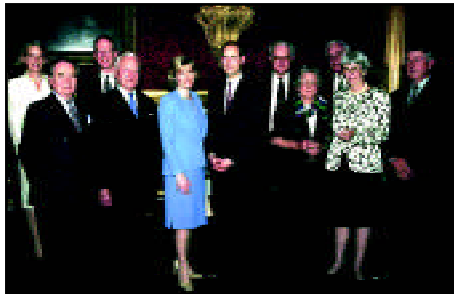
### Chagos Conservation Trust

At an Extraordinary General meeting of the Friends of the Chagos that was held on Tuesday 7 October 2003, the name of the association was changed, by unanimous agreement of those present, to **Chagos Conservation Trust**. William Marsden the Chairman of the association had explained that the reason for the name change came about because, in trying to attract further international expert involvement, it had been pointed out that *The Friends* name did not indicate the objectives or area of activity of the group. Several of the comparable organisations concerned with conservation in other UK Overseas Territories have "National Trust" in their title.

# Cayman Quincentennial celebrations reach London

The celebrations marking 500 years since the discovery of the Cayman Islands were marked by a special reception at St James's Palace on 28 May 2003. The reception, hosted by the Cayman Islands Representative in London, Mrs Jennifer Dilbert and HE The Governor Mr Bruce Dinwiddy, was attended by both the Earl and Countess of Wessex, who circulated among the 220 guests.

During a brief speech, Mrs Dilbert was delighted to



*(l-r) Mrs Dinwiddy, Mr John Owen, HE The Governor, Mr Thomas Russell, HRH The Countess of Wessex, HRH Prince Edward, Mr Kenneth Crook, Mrs Crook, Mr Peter Lloyd, Mrs Lloyd, Mr Peter Smith*

introduce the five former Governors present; Mr Kenneth Crook CMG, Mr Thomas Russell CMG CBE, Mr Peter Lloyd CMG CVO, Mr John Owen CMG MBE, Mr Peter Smith CBE. Present Governor Mr Dinwiddy, who was accompanied by his wife Emma, went on to describe how far the Cayman Islands had evolved from that first sighting by Columbus.

Prince Edward then addressed guests, and paid tribute to the warm welcome he had received in the Cayman Islands. He said the Cayman Islands were naturally blessed, and every effort should be made to balance tourist revenue with environmental concerns.



*The Forum's Chairman speaks with HRH The Countess of Wessex*

## continued from page 1

Programme to be the group agreeing which priority projects are submitted from TCI for OTEP funding.

Looking back on this intensive year of work, it is pleasing to record that TCI participants (including some rather doubtful at first) have commented how useful they found the process, and how working together with a range of persons with different interests and backgrounds brought them to a shared ownership of the strategy they developed as a team. Some even remarked that it had wider benefits than environmental, because personnel from such a wide range of ministries, as well as outside bodies, rarely have the chance to meet and discuss such basic issues.

Throughout this year, and before, we have been asked for advice from other UKOTs embarking on, or considering, Environment Charter strategy-development exercises. We have tried to give advice based on our experience. With the completion of the TCI pilot development phase, we can now move to complete the other role of our project, the provision of general guidelines to other UKOTs. These will be completed shortly, and will be available on the Forum's website early in 2004. These will not be a recipe book of how to do the job, not least because every UKOT is different. We also believe that facilitation of some sort will be necessary to manage the process anywhere. However, we do believe that the Guidelines will be a valuable tool to help facilitators and participants. The frameworks developed, after trials of several options, should significantly reduce the work required by other UKOTs in producing the strategies which are their first commitments under their Charters – and which should greatly aid the effectiveness of future environmental efforts.

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Photographs courtesy of: Philip & Myrtle Ashmole, Cayman Islands Government, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Michael Gore, Mike Pienkowski, Juliet Rose, Peter Richardson, Peter Ryan

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