

FORUM NEWS 31

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• www.ukotcf.org

Conference identifies tourism development as a major threat to regionally endangered species

The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB) the largest single regional organization devoted to biodiversity conservation, held its 16th meeting in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico in July 2007. The 5-day conference focused on the impact of global climate change on Caribbean birds and its people, and the increasingly politically charged threat of hotel development to native biodiversity, among other issues. Leading organizations present, including representatives from Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Montserrat, described the state of affairs as a crisis.

The meeting was stunned by reports of what appears to be an unprecedented move by some Caribbean governments to change the legal status of previously protected remnant conservation sites in order to facilitate built development. In Bermuda, there is an increasing use of Special Development Orders to approve building projects, by-passing the normal planning requirements, especially the need for environmental impact assessments. An SDO has been granted (August 2007) for a controversial Jumeirah Hotel to be built in Bermuda on a coastal woodland site. The plan includes the removal of the cliffs which

provide a natural sea defence as well as being the nest site for seabirds. (See also page 18.)



Southlands Coast, Bermuda, part of the area designated for development

Andrew Dobson, President of the SCSCB and past-president of the Bermuda Audubon Society, remarked that the situation is a massive leap backwards at a time when the conservation of both forest and coastal areas, especially mangroves, is critical to mitigate climate change impacts. He noted that the trend would only undermine the Caribbean's reputation as an environmentally friendly destination, and set the region up for an intensive battle with global conservation advocates. Andrew Dobson also said "Caribbean forests will suffer significantly more from climate change if catalysed by short-

sighted development, and the biodiversity they house will be among the greatest casualties because over 85% of Caribbean's natural forests have already been destroyed by human action."

For further details contact Andrew Dobson at: adobson@warwickacad.bm

First review of progress on the Environment Charters

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) has completed the first compilation of information on progress in implementing the Environment Charters (and their equivalents in the Crown Dependencies and those UKOTs without Charters). This is available as a 19-page pdf file on the Forum's website (www.ukotcf.org)

Background

The Environment Charters were signed in September 2001 between the UK Government and the Governments of UK Overseas Territories. Most of the global biodiversity for which the UK is responsible is found in the UKOTs rather than in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Under multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), it is the UK government which lodges - and is accountable for - international commitments, but the legislature and executive of each territory which are responsible for local implementing legislation and its enforcement. The Environment Charters are intended to help implement the shared responsibilities and commitments of the UK Government and the Government of each Territory for the conservation of the environment.

The Charters include Commitments by both the UK Government and the Government of the UK Overseas Territories concerned. One of UK Government's Commitments in the Charters concerns providing funding to help benefit the environments of the Territories and thus support the Territories in fulfilling some of their commitments under the Charters. The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), and its predecessor the Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories (EFOT), were established to address part of this financial commitment.

For these Commitments to have real meaning, there must be some means of assessing progress in their implementation. UKOTCF, recognising this need, has been putting considerable effort into developing a set of measures to achieve this end. Some of this work by UKOTCF was supported by OTEP, which also recognised the need for an assessment mechanism. In addition, requests for information about progress in the implementation of Environment Charters and MEAs have been received by UKOTCF from various people in the UK and UKOTs, including FCO and DFID. UKOTCF is able to remain independent and impartial in this exercise as, although the idea for the Charters originated from suggestions from UKOTCF, the Forum is not a party to the Charters. It has used its wide network and volunteer time extensively in developing a progress assessment mechanism.

Developing a set of measures or indicators has not been simple. UKOTCF had not drafted the Charters, and they are not structured in a way that makes assessing progress easy. The key was to find measures which related to real progress in meeting the commitments, but would not require too much effort to gather. UKOTCF put a great deal of time and effort into consulting and working on this. Draft measures were published in *Forum News* in early 2006, inviting further comments and contributions of information to help populate the tables generated. No adverse comments were received, and some favourable feedback was provided by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Her Majesty's Government's (HMG's) statutory advisor on nature conservation. For some parts of some Commitments it is relatively easy to find measures; for others it is very difficult. Some



Environmental education and capacity building. Local students work with visiting, volunteer specialists to study the endemic species of the Turks & Caicos Islands.

information, available annually for other purposes, is readily accessible; for others, a cumulative measure, updated every few years, might be more feasible. Both these sorts of information have been allowed for, so as to minimise effort and be cost-effective.

Recognising that it is much easier to comment on a draft than to start from a blank sheet of paper, UKOTCF presented the version of data collated by then in the papers for the *Biodiversity That Matters* conference in Jersey in October 2006 (organised by UKOTCF and supported by OTEP). This gave the opportunity to invite further contributions and enquire whether there were blockages which could be addressed. There was general agreement from UKOTs that it was important that the Territories and other parties supply information to update these. There were also requests to provide forms designed for the supply of information rather

than for summarising results. This was done by UKOTCF early in 2007.

The important function of collating this information was made even more urgent by the investigation in early 2007 on *Trade, Development and the Environment: the role of the FCO* by the House of Commons Select Committee on Environmental Audit (Report 23 May 2007). When preparing supplementary evidence to address questions put to their Minister by the Committee, FCO officials asked UKOTCF about progress on its review on implementation of the Charters. Following this, the FCO Minister's supplementary memorandum to the House of Commons EAC stated (with a slightly optimistic interpretation of UKOTCF's estimate of the timescale): "Your committee also asked about an assessment of the Overseas Territories Environment Charters. The UKOTCF is currently gathering information on the progress in implementing the Environment Charter Commitments for each Territory (or the equivalent for those Territories without Charters). The Forum intends to publish a progress report towards the middle of this year. The FCO will use that information, in consultation with Whitehall colleagues and the governments of the Overseas Territories, to carry out a review of the Environment Charters which have now been in place for five years."

In this context, UKOTCF put a great deal of further effort into helping and encouraging UKOTs to provide information, stressing that it was not necessary for each to answer all the questions. However, it was difficult simply to cut out some areas of the form, because of the structure of the Charters and the fact that different territories had made most progress at different rates in different areas. Those territories without Charters were also invited to take part. The information gathering forms have been designed so that, after the initial hard work in this first cycle of reporting, any subsequent updating report will not require much effort. It is very satisfying to note that, of the 21 entities that constitute the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies, responses have been received from or on behalf of 19. This was despite some confusion and extra work generated when some of the bodies which had originally asked UKOTCF to undertake this review circulated other questionnaires related to the Environment Charters to the territories, without consultation.

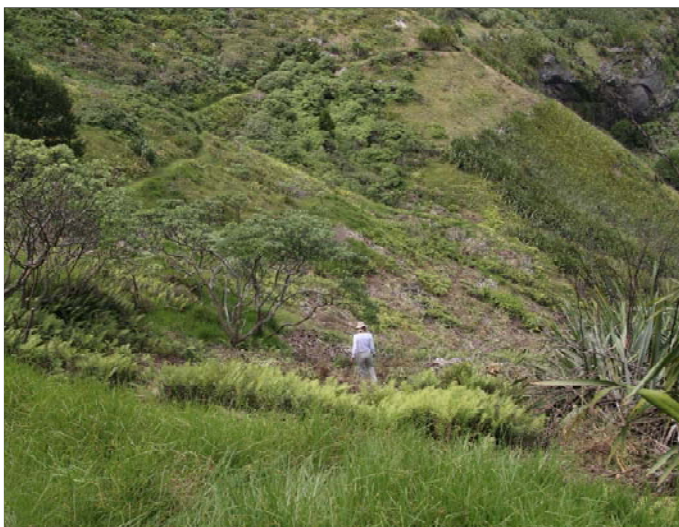
Acknowledgements

UKOTCF is grateful to all those who helped develop and commented on the indicators, and OTEP for part support for some of the earlier stages of the work. The contributions of those who then supplied information on progress were, of course, essential and UKOTCF gratefully acknowledges these. In line with the Environment Charters themselves, responses were welcomed from both governmental and non-governmental bodies, and these had indeed been integrated in several cases. We are grateful to the governmental departments and/or the statutory bodies of the following for their responses: Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the Turks & Caicos Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Montserrat, Ascension Island, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and the Pitcairn Islands, as well as from the governmental departments from the following Crown Dependencies which do not have Environment Charters: the Isle of Man and Jersey. We are grateful too for contributions from non-governmental bodies in some of these, as well as for: British Indian Ocean Territory, Gibraltar (which has its own Environment Charter, rather than one with HMG), Guernsey, Alderney and Sark.

Notes on the information

UKOTCF has not received information from HMG in respect of the UK Commitments in the Environment Charters, nor from those UKOTs which are directly administered by UK Government: British Indian Ocean Territory, British Antarctic Territory, and the

Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas. The first of these has an Environment Charter (and UKOTCF is grateful to its Associate Member NGO, the Chagos Conservation Trust, for supplying some relevant information), and the other two do not. Officials at the Cyprus SBAs indicated that they had hoped to find time to supply information but were not able to treat it as a priority; UKOTCF hopes that priorities will soon allow this and will then add this to the report. The lack of information from HMG means that the second half of the report (relating to HMG Commitments) is very incomplete, relying on information supplied by the territories or available elsewhere. UKOTCF has been informed by FCO that, although it had no problem in principle with the indicators, HMG did not have the resources to report on the implementation of its own commitments. This is despite it having been one of those originally asking UKOTCF to develop a report on implementation of the Charters, and having reported to Parliament that FCO would use UKOTCF's report as a basis on which to carry out its own review of the Environment Charters. UKOTCF hopes that HMG will identify soon the resources needed to provide information on its fulfilment of its Commitments. Meantime, UKOTCF (despite very limited resources) will continue to try to collate any available information, by utilising its network and volunteer time.



Restoration of threatened species and ecosystem on St Helena: Clearance of introduced, alien, invasive flax (right) allows assisted recovery of threatened endemic vegetation (left). More resources are needed to apply this proven technique to wider areas.

The inclusion of a territory in the report does not imply that it has signed an Environment Charter with the UK. However, the progress report has wider purposes. In order to fulfil MEA requirements, HMG often needs to report implementation throughout UK territory, and frequently asks UKOTCF for help in respect of the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies (CDs). Therefore, for efficiency, all UKOTs and CDs are included in the tables.

Because of the major collation exercise involved, the different ways different territories operate, and the problems noted above, this report will inevitably include some errors. UKOTCF welcomes information to correct errors or fill gaps. This should be sent to the email address below.

Some findings from the report

Within Commitment 1, it is notable that most UKOTs have a governmental/NGO group to develop and manage a strategy for action. However, there are still major challenges in many areas in implementing, monitoring and reporting on the strategies, and in funding the participation of NGO partners.

Under Commitment 2, the Pitcairn Islands, Tristan da Cunha and possibly South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands do rather well in protecting a very high proportion of their land as nature reserves or other protected areas. All the other territories (except Guernsey) have less than the internationally recommended proportion of their land as protected areas. About half the territories have increased the protected area since the Charters were signed in 2001 and most of the others have no change (including some which are actively working on legislation to allow an increase). Disappointingly, one UKOT has decreased the total area of protection, in order to allow more built development. There are quite varied patterns in respect of: operating species conservation action plans; reviewing and correcting gaps in legislation; and in dealing with and preventing alien invasive species.

Progress is particularly difficult to assess in Commitment 3, dealing with integration of environmental considerations in social and economic processes. There is a mixed picture, both within and between territories.

Commitments 4 and 5 deal with environmental impact assessments, development planning and the openness of these processes. There is a great deal still to be done in almost all territories to meet these commitments.

Under Commitment 6, there is generally a good sign-up to most relevant multilateral environmental agreements, and most of those territories not included in CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity are known to be working on this. However, despite recent progress in all the five Crown Dependencies, eight UKOTs have still not designated their first Wetland of International Importance as they are required to do under the Ramsar Convention, and almost all have areas identified as qualifying for designation, but not yet so protected. Also contrary to the Convention, some territories are suffering damage to wetlands, both designated and not.

Under Commitment 7, a few territories, notably Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, St Helena, Gibraltar, the Isle of Man, Jersey (and probably the Falkland Islands and some of the other Crown Dependencies – but information is lacking) have made substantial progress in biodiversity survey and monitoring, but much more is needed in these and others.

Pollution matters, under Commitment 8, present a rather mixed picture.

Under Commitment 9, environmental issues are included in most (but surprisingly not all) school curricula, with environmental site visits included in a good number, but rather few cases of the Environment Charter itself being taught.

Under Commitment 10, both government departments and NGOs in most territories are producing a range of environmental publications, but rather few have a programme in place to promote their Environment Charter and its implementation strategy.

Overall, nearly 6 years after the Charters were signed, considerable progress is shown in a range of Commitments, but a great deal remains to be done – and some important elements seem to require some urgent attention. Many of these could be achieved at rather small cost.

Information on progress and implementation of UK Government's Commitments is rather more patchy and has had to rely on information from some of the territory governments and other bodies. That HMG does not have the resources to supply the information is concerning. UKOTCF and the stakeholders in the territories hope that this will be rectified rapidly.

UKOTCF remains ready to receive and collate additional submissions, and will use these to compile updates to enable assessment of further progress, at a later date.

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NET-BIOME project:

NETworking tropical and subtropical Biodiversity research in OuterMost regions and territories of Europe in support of sustainable development

UKOTCF has worked with partners linking the French, Spanish, Portuguese and Netherlands Overseas Territories and Outermost Regions to secure support for the coordination of biodiversity research in tropical and sub-tropical areas, from the European Commission (EC). This is the first time that the EC Research budget has been deployed to Overseas Territories, and the first time that a project has included both Overseas Territories and Outermost Regions (which are normally dealt with by separate Directorates-General of the EC).

This major achievement has depended greatly on the efforts of the French Overseas Region of Réunion over several years. The main purpose of the budget-line involved is to increase coordination of research within the European Union. Because Réunion is part of metropolitan France (despite being in the Indian Ocean), it was able to initiate an application to this fund. At a later stage, Réunion personnel realised they could widen the project to include other outermost regions, of France and also of Spain and Portugal, and even to overseas countries and territories, even though at that stage the latter could not initiate an application. The last point was realised at a very late stage before the deadline, so that, for practical reasons, Réunion was unable to bring in all the UK Overseas Territories as individual initiative partners. To overcome this difficulty and ensure that these could be linked to the network, the existing project partners asked UKOTCF to become a partner. UKOTCF agreed, provided that it could involve the UKOTs themselves increasingly in the work. As one aspect of this, Gerard Gray (Director of Environment, Montserrat) joined the Advisory Board. This offer by Réunion to link to UKOTs was very generous, especially noting the very large amount of work done already by Réunion personnel to attempt to secure this funding. During 2006, it looked unlikely that the application would be successful, and the partners were beginning to think about an application to a future programme starting in a later year. However, further efforts by Réunion personnel and colleagues in mainland France managed to secure the last of the funding in the budget-line for the project, which is now getting started.

NET-BIOME recognises the particular problems faced by the territories, such as isolation, climate change, world economic forces, low critical mass, poor access to information, difficulties in coordination of research between the territories, between the regions and the EU, and also with third parties.

The core priorities of the project, which will run over 4 years, are to:

- ⊙ Collect, exchange and provide access to information on research programmes, researchers and results by building an interactive information system;
- ⊙ Design a joint strategy profile including the analysis of barriers to cooperation and of common strategic issues and good practices;
- ⊙ Develop joint activities such as clustering of regionally funded research projects, mutual access to facilities and human resources, specific cooperation agreements;
- ⊙ Enlarge the network at the European and international levels and set up a European programme and permanent forum on tropical biodiversity.

It is recognised that not all of these are fully applicable to UKOTs, because of their small population sizes and limited facilities, but the potential in many areas is great.

The initiative is ambitious and complex, and the partners are still clarifying the work. In this, they are already consulting widely. Because of the complexity, and because some elements cannot start without input from others, different components of the project will start at different times over the next 18 months, one of the first being the recruitment of coordinating personnel, so that the other aspects can be set up smoothly.

Meanwhile, other preliminary measures are in progress. For example, there was a recent wide consultation, including organisations working in tropical and sub-tropical UKOTs, on the way that research projects could be classified. Other consultations will follow, as work gets underway.

It is important to note that NET-BIOME is not itself a funding mechanism for projects. It has no funds for this purpose. Its role is to help identify biodiversity research in the tropical and sub-tropical Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union, and to enhance co-operation and coordination. Nevertheless, a result of the initiative will be to identify major gaps in biodiversity research throughout the Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories in this zone. This in itself will support arguments for funding for studies to fill these needs. Through this indirect route, NET-BIOME should help encourage future funding for projects – by making clear the needs integrated over most of the (sub-)tropical territories.

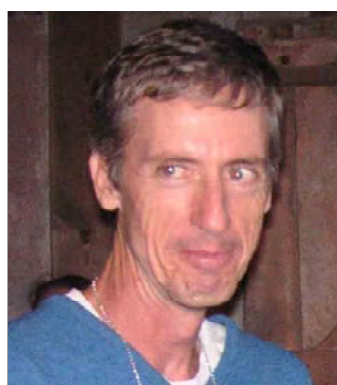
We thank those who have commented on consultations already made, and look forward to increasing collaboration.

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UKOT conservationists honoured

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum would like to congratulate Fred Burton and Cathy Hopkins on being awarded MBEs in the Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Frederick James Burton: For services to the conservation of endangered species in the Cayman Islands.



Fred has had a long association with the Forum, serving on Council until 2006. In addition to his long and invaluable contributions in Cayman, he has helped greatly in spreading skills to other UKOTs, for example by taking part in all the UKOT conferences and leading the satellite-based vegetation mapping in the Forum's programme with TCI National Trust. He is now the director of

the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme on Grand Cayman, and remains involved in the Forum's Wider Caribbean Working Group.

Mrs Margaret Ann Catherine Hopkins: For public service and services to the community in St Helena.

Cathy has supported the Forum for many years, from when she was UK representative for the St Helena Government, and later as an elected Councillor. At that time, as Chairperson of St Helena's Environmental Advisory Consultative Forum, Cathy worked closely with the Forum team facilitating the development of St Helena's strategy to implement the Environment Charter. Although Cathy has recently retired as Executive Director of St Helena National Trust, we are pleased that she will continue to support the Trust as the Heritage Society Representative on the Trust Council and remain a member of the Southern Oceans Working Group of the Forum.



The South Georgia Wandering Albatross

The South Georgia wandering albatross population has sustained another drastic decline. Information published on the South Georgia website and from recent television programmes has highlighted the plight of this species and forms the basis of the article. On Bird Island, where scientists have been monitoring the population for over 30 years, a total of 779 nests were counted in January 2007. After correcting for early season failures, this equates to an estimated total of 802 breeding pairs. That is a decline of 49 pairs compared to last season and of 125 pairs since this breeder group last bred in the 2005 season. (This species has a 2-year breeding cycle.) A similar trend was recorded in the Bay of Isles, also on South Georgia.

Dr Richard Phillips from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) said that analysis of long-term Bird Island data - from ringing-recovery records (both at sea and from other sites at South Georgia), fisheries observer reports, satellite tracking data and annual censuses - may provide some of the answers behind the drop. Given the routinely high breeding success of this species, it is unlikely that ocean regime shifts or changing availability of fishing discards is having an impact, and that an increase in adult and juvenile mortality on



Wandering Albatross over its breeding grounds, against the glaciers of South Georgia

longlines is almost certainly the root cause of the population declines.

Robin Snape, BAS Zoological Field Assistant at Bird Island, reported that half of wandering albatross chicks on Bird Island had ingested longline hooks. Despite the achievements of the well managed South Georgia longline fishery succeeding in reducing mortality of seabirds to almost zero, a new diet sampling programme at Bird Island has highlighted the shocking extent of longline hook ingestion by wandering albatrosses. More than 50% of wanderer chicks had ingested longline hooks, fed to them by their parents. Diet samples contain large hooks from longline fisheries, usually with small pieces of line attached. These were most likely to have been consumed in discarded bait and offal thrown overboard by longline vessels, which the adult birds routinely follow at sea. The hooks are then brought back and fed to the chick along with the other food.

Sadly, as wandering albatrosses are so wide ranging, they forage far outside of the South Georgia area and come into conflict with bad fishing practices that are responsible for the continuing decline in the South Georgia population, and the decline of seabird populations worldwide. Indeed, the Bird Island population has almost halved since the early 1970s when longline fishing began to operate at large-scale in the Southern Ocean.

In 2004 the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) adopted a conservation measure making removal of hooks from offal mandatory. Although compliance has taken some time to achieve, discard of hooks is now considered to be rare in CCAMLR waters. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case elsewhere, and the practice of irresponsibly discarding hooks in used bait may be typical of poorly governed fisheries. It is also likely that the vessels responsible are not employing other simple, cheap, and effective methods that help protect seabirds.

In South Georgia's regulated fishery the effectiveness of simple practices (such as: greater line weighting; only setting lines at night; and the use of a streamer or 'tori' line that discourages scavenging birds from coming close to the longlines during setting) has been clearly demonstrated. In the South Georgia Fishery Zone seabird mortality on longlines has been reduced to almost zero for a number of years now

The introduction of mitigation measures in the pelagic and demersal fisheries around the Falklands and South Georgia has proved to be very effective in reducing seabird mortality. Adoption of similar mitigation by other regional fisheries management organisations would be of huge benefit to albatrosses and petrels, and would help stop the disastrous decline of South Georgia's wanderers.

*For further information contact Sally Poncet, South Georgia Surveys
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UKOTCF new council member

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum would like to thank Juliet Rose for her services to Council. Juliet has decided to step down due to pressures of work of her new employment. However she hopes to remain active on the Southern Oceans Working Group and involved also in some of the Forum's education initiatives.

Council has co-opted Liz Charter to replace Juliet on Council. Liz Charter is Chief Wildlife & Conservation Officer for the Isle of Man. Her career in nature conservation spans 30 years, working first as a freshwater ecologist with the former Nature Conservancy Council. She established the successful Orkney Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group where she worked for 10 years as an adviser, publishing a handbook for farmers and introducing whole-farm nutrient balances to reduce pollution to lochs. Nine years ago she and her family moved to the Isle of Man to set up the statutory nature conservation office within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. She is familiar with the conservation issues of small islands, and with international conservation agreements, working within and outside the EU and for government and an NGO. Liz maintains her wetland involvement and has attended the last two Conferences of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention. Most recently Liz has become chairman of the UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group. In her spare time she leads botanical tours and plays the flute.



Gouliot Caves and Headland - Sark's first Ramsar site.

Designated on 9th April 2007, Sark's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention consists of the Gouliot Headland and La Moie de Gouliot, a large sea stack connected to the headland at low water. On the west coast of Sark, in the Channel Islands, it includes the famous Gouliot Caves that cross the headland three times from north to south with other openings to the west. These caves have long been noted for the amazing variety of invertebrate life, especially sponges, hydroids, sea-anemones



The Seigneur of Sark, Michael Beaumont, speaks at the opening of Sark's first Ramsar site

and sea squirts that can be found on their walls at low spring tide; many of the species cannot be found elsewhere in Western Europe. This virtually unique assemblage of marine life is a consequence of Sark's cliffs and geology interacting with a huge tidal range of 10m at spring tides. The caves extend from above high-water mark to below low-water, with a very rich fauna. Much of this fauna occurs only sub-tidally in other places. It is the largest such cave system in Europe that can be visited on foot. Before the invention of the aqualung, this was one of the few places where sub-marine life could be examined *in situ*. Because of this, these caves are the site where many of these animals were first described and studied in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Sue Dale, underwater



Mike Freeman, Jersey Government, and Rosanne Guille, a Sark wildlife watercolour artist, lead the way up the headland above the caves

photographer and diver, who helped with the BBC *Coast* series, said, "in Victorian times many visitors took specimens rather than photographs but, from the dives I have done, the caves have recovered their wildlife. We must not let this happen again; from now on the only things to take from the caves are photographs."

The site includes also the headland above the caves, which contains many typical coastal ecosystems including coastal grassland and hard rock. These habitats support many rare and endangered species of plants, lichens and a remarkable diversity of the invertebrates.

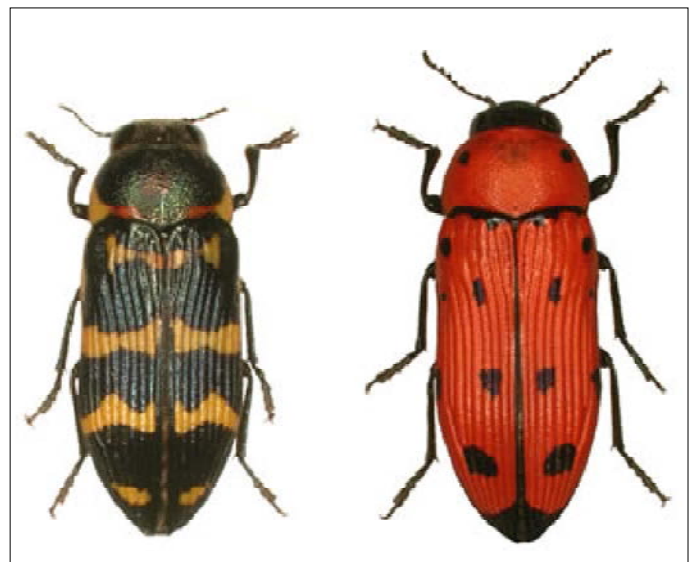
To commemorate the designation, La Société Sercquaise held a celebration on Saturday 14th April. The Seigneur of Sark, Michael Beaumont, attended the celebration as well as a number of off-island celebrities, including the environment ministers from Jersey and Guernsey, and many environmentalists from both islands, including Charles David, botanist from the Société Guernesaise and Richard Hocart, its President.

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New Beetle Described from Gibraltar

A beetle species has been rediscovered on the Rock of Gibraltar. The last record for this species was a 100 years ago. The species is a jewel beetle named *Buprestis (Yamina) sanguinea*, an attractive and rare insect that is found in North Africa and Iberia. A paper on the beetle species, authored by Charlie Perez and Keith Bensusan of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS), appeared in a recent issue of the journal of the Andalusian Entomological Society 'Boletín de la Sociedad Andaluza de Entomología' (2006). Such is the importance of the find that images included in the paper were used as the journal's cover design. The paper commented on the find and speculated on future areas of research in the species, including its taxonomy. An extensive review of the species has been published by the authors, together with Antonio Verdugo, in the prestigious journal of the 'Sociedad Entomológica Aragonesa'. Mr Verdugo is an Andalusian entomologist who is an authority on buprestid beetles and a friend of his co-authors. The article reviews the taxonomic status of *Buprestis sanguinea* and divides it into four sub-species. The beetles from Gibraltar are ascribed to the newly described *Buprestis (Yamina) sanguinea calpetana*. It is named after the Rock's latin name (Calpe) and has so far only been recorded from Gibraltar.

For further details contact Charlie Perez email: cperez@gonhs.org





Successful Project proposals 2007

The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum continues to provide a Communication Strategy for OTEP. This is the seventh of a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of the Forum, the content of this supplement is as agreed by the Forum with FCO and DFID.

The fourth round of bidding remained extremely competitive in relation to the funds available. This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes those projects that were successful as well as a number of reports from projects funded in earlier rounds. OTEP welcomes jointly funded projects, so that some articles could equally occur in the OTEP supplement or the main section of *Forum News*, as indeed in this issue.

Anguilla: An assessment of the potential for rat eradication on Dog Island (ANG401)

Dog Island is globally important for its populations of seabirds and nesting turtles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that introduced rats

are a problem for nesting seabirds, turtles, other reptiles and native vegetation, and this warrants further investigation. Acting on a request from the Anguilla National Trust, the project will assess the impacts of rats on the native flora and fauna of Dog Island and explore the feasibility of eradicating them.

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Anguilla: Enhancing marine protected areas management in Anguilla – Phase I (ANG402)

In 1993, five marine parks (MPs) were established in Anguilla. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Government of Anguilla (DFMR, GOA) is currently responsible only for enforcing Park regulations. Although the Department is not technically responsible for their management, the DFMR has adopted the role informally – but management is minimal.

In an effort to improve the Marine Park system through better management and information (and as a first phase in a two-phase project), the Anguilla National Trust (ANT) and the DFMR have collaboratively developed a project that will assess the status of the ecological integrity of the marine Parks and other key nearshore sites. Furthermore, the project will assess socio-economic conditions and stressors affecting the Parks. Increasing public awareness to raise the profile of the important coastal environment within Anguillian society is integrated throughout.

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Surveying on Dog Island, Anguilla



Corals in Shoal Bay Anguilla

Anguilla: Anguilla National Biological Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2006 & Beyond (ANG403)

The Government of Anguilla needs to embark upon the preparation of its National Biological Diversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) as part of the Government's renewed commitment to sustainable environmental management of the country's limited natural resources. The NBSAP will also facilitate our obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will be extended to Anguilla in the near future.

In Anguilla, information regarding biological resources is extremely limited. The NBSAP will collate essential information through a participatory process, on the status of biological resources, benefits, threats to and loss of biodiversity and the



Frigate birds Anguilla

causes of these threats and losses, and gathering information needed to define national priorities for biodiversity conservation.

An assessment of key sectors (namely: Land Use and Environmental Planning; Agriculture /Forests/Wildlife; Fisheries, Marine and Coastal Areas; and Tourism) will lead to a clear identification of the value and benefits of biodiversity, and adverse impacts on biodiversity, as well as an identification of the gaps in management and recommendations leading to the development of a National Biodiversity Strategy and an Action Plan.

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Bermuda: Saltus Island Project (BDA401)

The Saltus Island Project is a Woodland Management Scheme and environmental education initiative, first established in 2002 in conjunction with the Bermuda National Trust. The flora of the 3.2-acre island in Hamilton Harbour was becoming dominated by fast growing introduced species. The project aims to manage the woodland on the island, controlling the invasive species and planting native and endemic plants. Senior 9 (age 13) students from Saltus Grammar School, visit the island twice per month. During their first visit students learn the fauna and flora of the island. Once complete students work to remove invasive species, create paths, plant native/endemic species and create compost. In addition Senior 7 students (age 11) are given germinated endemic trees to monitor and grow until ready for planting when they make their visits two years later.



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Bermuda: Environmental Valuation: Tools and Capacity-Building for Integration in Policy (BDA402)

Increasing development and lack of enforcement for environmental infractions, place intense pressure on Bermuda's natural resources.

This project seeks to address the lack of environmental consideration in current policy and decision-making, by providing a means of recognizing the value of the range of ecosystem services provided by Bermuda's environment. The close collaboration of a dedicated Bermuda-based project manager and economic experts of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) will ensure appropriate application of existing economic tools and approaches and enable the training of local personnel for long-term sustainability. Initial consultation with stakeholders will provide the framework for economic valuation, including the identification and prioritising of ecosystem services. Critical ecosystems such as mangroves and coral reefs, as well as services provided by, for example, arable land and good water quality will be considered. The purpose of this valuation is to inform stakeholders and policy makers on the benefits and costs of conserving ecosystems based on reliable and objective information. The first year of the project will focus on data gathering and analysis; the second year will focus on building public and government awareness through the dissemination of information, and promoting the integration of established ecosystem values into policy and decision-making.

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British Indian Ocean Territory: Monitoring Seabird Populations of Barton Point IBA & Eagle Island (BIO401)

The principle aim of the Project is to establish a critically required base line of data covering the avian breeding populations of the recently rodent-cleared Eagle Island. This will be collected using robust census techniques in order to provide repeatable, quantifiable results to compare future monitoring against. This long-term monitoring will provide the information required to assess the effect of rat eradication on breeding populations and is in full accordance with the Non-Native Invasive Species theme.

The secondary aim is to complete the monitoring of breeding seabird populations inhabiting Barton Point Important Bird Area on Diego Garcia. This Project was successful in securing OTEP funding in 2006 (see BIO301) but the venture was cancelled due to military commitments taking priority at the time the survey was planned. This Project will provide the first set of repeatable counts from the most accessible of the Chagos IBAs. Future monitoring of Barton Point could yield an easily gathered (in Chagos terms) set of data that, when compared with this Project's results, may provide "an indicator of the health" of the seabird colonies throughout the Chagos more difficult to access.

Both of these missions substantially contribute to the "Environmental information" theme.

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Masked Boobies have a thriving colony in the Three Brothers Island, BIOT.

Regional Project –submitted by the Cayman Islands: Scoping Study for GSPC Targets 1 & 2 in the Caribbean (CAY402)

Scoping Study for Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) Targets 1 & 2 in the Caribbean will utilize a network of UK, UKOT and non-UKOT conservation expertise and botanical resources to address:

GSPC Target 1) working lists of plant species
GSPC Target 2) assessments of conservation status ...throughout the Caribbean.

Where possible, existing information will be aggregated, and freely disseminated through an accessible central web-based repository, towards strengthening regional and international networks and maximising information sharing.

Where information gaps are identified, bespoke assessments of the individual requirements of nominate countries will be undertaken, in order to determine their needs for attainment of GSPC Targets 1 & 2.

The results of the Scoping Study will be published on the web, and used in the formulation of a proposal to a suitable international funding agency (eg Conservation International, EU), towards facilitation of achievement of GSPC Targets 1 & 2 in nominate capacity-limited countries, through a targeted Implementation Project.

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Dr Martin Hamilton, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Tel: +44 (0)208-3325441, m.hamilton@rbgkew.org.uk

Falkland Islands: Falkland Islands Plants Conservation Project (FAL201)

This Project will implement a Plant Conservation Strategy for the Falkland Islands.

A pilot scheme of rotational grazing will be put in place to demonstrate sustainable use of native pasture. The effect of this on plant biodiversity, and agriculture will be monitored. This trial will serve as a model to extend to other farms across the Falkland

Islands. A detailed survey of endangered plant species and priority habitats will be undertaken. This will inform species and habitat action plans, and identify areas that require special consideration within development planning. An assessment of invasive non-native plants will be conducted to inform a programme of effective control. These measures will address the protection of plant biodiversity whilst enhancing the quality of life and livelihood opportunities for the rural community, who will be closely involved in project implementation.

Areas not covered in the existing Falklands plant atlas will be surveyed and areas of botanical significance studied at a finer scale. Important Plant Areas will be defined and habitat maps produced. The Falklands Seed Bank will be set up and Herbarium further developed. These actions will support the establishment of long term biodiversity monitoring described within the draft Falkland Islands Conservation & Biodiversity Strategy.

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Falkland Islands: Beaver Island Group Restoration Project (FAL403)

The Beaver Island Group is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA, FK002) and is a prime example of un-grazed remnant habitat in the Falkland Islands. The key threat to the biodiversity of Beaver Island Group is invasive species, namely rats and foxes.

The Beaver Island Group Restoration Project will enable:

1. Habitat restoration of endemic and native wildlife habitats and species on seven islands in the southwest sector of the Falklands.
2. Develop the skills and economic opportunities of Falkland Islands farmers.
3. Develop the capacity and operational plan to attempt an eradication of invasive species on the largest island, in the longer term.

This proposed project is thus part of a larger programme to restore habitat on all twelve islands (4 to 3,900 ha) that compose the Beaver Island Group. The Beaver Island Group Restoration Project will focus on the eradication on seven islands (4 to 300 ha) of rats and on one island additionally of foxes by local operators with previous eradication experience, with the assistance of local farmers under contract.

The largest island cleared of rats in the Falkland Islands currently stands at 305 ha and foxes have not been removed from any of the eight islands with foxes. Foxes are present on the land of five farms in the Falkland Islands. The proposed project will provide the experience and skills required to assess the feasibility of eradicating foxes from the largest island in the Beaver Island Group, and also nearby Weddell Island.

The potential for the Beaver Island Group to act as an island restoration showcase for local and international visitors is envisaged. Land-based and cruise vessel tourism provides significant opportunity for environmental education and a basis for sustainable diversification of Falkland Island farmers who are economically the least well off community sector in the islands.

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Montserrat: Economic valuation of Montserrat's Centre Hills (MNT402)

The economic valuation of terrestrial natural resources in the Centre Hills is a critical component in efforts to plan for the sustainable use and management of Montserrat's natural environment. The project aims to inform policy-makers about the value of these resources, along with the costs and benefits of management and use scenarios in order to support sustainable human activity and livelihoods. It will do this by responding to questions such as "What is the true cost of water?", "What would be the long-term cost of not protecting Montserrat's endangered species?", and "How will local communities benefit from tourism development in the Centre Hills?" The project will also help to establish systems of sustainable financing for conservation in Montserrat, which is of key concern to the emerging management plan for the Centre Hills.

As there is currently no expertise in Montserrat to carry out certain portions of this study, three external consultants will be brought in to work with Montserratian counterparts to provide training and expertise, coordinating research efforts, and facilitate the development of a comprehensive report. These consultants include an environmental economist, ecologist, and an environmental policy expert.

The results of the report will be included for consideration, along with other research (social, biological, ecological, legislative), in the development of Montserrat's first protected area management plan, which will cover an area of the Centre Hills forest.

Stephen Mendes, Centre Hills Project, Tel: +1 664 491 3088, Email: centrehills@candw.ms



On a track in the forest of the Centre Hills, Montserrat

Pitcairn: Developing a plan for Pacific rat eradication on Henderson Island, (PIT401)

Henderson Island is a World Heritage Site, supporting a large array of endemic and threatened flora and fauna in a nearly pristine ecological community. It is one of the most important sites for biodiversity in the UKOTs.

By far the most significant ongoing problem for the biodiversity value of the island is the continued presence of Pacific rats. These are thought to have contributed to enormous historic reductions, and to be driving ongoing declines, in several of the globally important seabird populations – including the endangered endemic Henderson petrel. Their wider impact on the island's ecology is not known, but is likely to be large and negative.



Current information suggests that an eradication of rats from Henderson may now be technically feasible. This project will combine local expertise with

rodent eradication expertise to assess whether this is the case, to determine the preferred methods and actions, to make a preliminary estimation of cost, and to evaluate the biodiversity benefits. If the feasibility study is positive, the team will then produce an operational plan for the eradication of Pacific rats from Henderson Island, which would permit an application for funding and a call for tenders to be made.

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St Helena: Conserving St Helena's Gumwoods (STH404)



Gumwoods at Peak Dale

This project will provide much needed investment for conservation of the endangered St Helena Gumwood at two key sites: Peak Dale, where the largest remnant of woodland survives with approximately 1000 trees; and the Millennium Forest, a community forest restoration project, where about 6000 trees have been planted by the public.

Improved infrastructure and organisational management of Peak Dale Gumwoods and the Millennium Forest will enable the forests to realise their potential as places of inspiration & education that engages people in conservation. This will promote the successful long-term survival of these two contrasting unique and valuable forests as places of large-scale habitat restoration.

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Tristan da Cunha: Managing alien plants on the outer islands of Tristan da Cunha (TDC403)

Alien plants occur on all four main islands of the Tristan da Cunha group. However, the three outer islands (Gough, Nightingale and Inaccessible) remain in a largely unaltered state, despite the long-term presence of a number of invasive plant species. These islands remain at continuous risk of the introduction of new alien plants as result of visits by Tristan Islanders, scientists, managers and tourists. Sources for new arrivals are via visiting vessels from continental ports and from the main island of Tristan, which supports many alien plant species that do not occur on the outer islands.

The project has three broad aims, corresponding to three of the key thematic areas:

1. Environmental governance

Production of a quarantine manual to guide the Tristan da Cunha Natural Resources Department in reducing the risk of new alien plant introductions to the outer islands.

2. Capacity building

Enabling Tristan Natural Resources Department (TNRD) staff to identify alien plants, assess the likely level of risk of establishment, plan and institute eradication efforts, and operate a system of quarantine procedures for vessels and personnel visiting the outer islands.

3. Non-native invasive species

Continued and new efforts to eradicate selected species of alien plants, including follow-up monitoring on all three outer islands, guided by an alien plant management plan.

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Tristan da Cunha: Restoration of the Sandy Point area by the eradication of the Logan berry plant (TDC404)

As a request from the Tristan Government as part of the commitments made in the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Natural Resources Department have been tasked with eradicating the Logan berry plant from an area known as Sandy Point. The plant is an invasive species and was introduced to Sandy Point as a source for fruit by planting. It has had a devastating impact on the natural environment and poses a threat to the yellow-nosed albatrosses and the burrowing petrels. If it continues to expand its range to the mountain area, it will cover the mosses endemic to Tristan. The plant is also providing a source of food and a safe haven for rodents. Overall, the biodiversity of this area has been damaged and will be under further threat until the spread of Logan berry is stopped. The project proposal includes the eradication of Logan berry, and establishment of fruit trees to provide an alternative source of fruit for the people of Tristan.



Logan Berry plant

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Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels, Co-ordination of fisheries bycatch issues, South Atlantic (XOT401)

The UK is party to the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS). The UK and the Overseas Territory Governments of Tristan da Cunha, Falkland Islands, GSGSSI, and British Antarctic Territory believe that better co-ordination of activities taken forward across the territories and in the UK will contribute significantly to fulfilling all our obligations under the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) and CMS. The project is intended to ensure that all reporting needs are met; implementation plans are in place; data compilation and validation is up to date; the UKOT's are suitably represented at FMO's including ACAP's Meeting of the Parties. Furthermore that all the involved UKOT's are working appropriately and together with the International IUU task force.

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Valuing the Environment – A Training Workshop for Caribbean Overseas Territories (XOT402)

This project will organise and run a regional workshop for the Caribbean Overseas Territories on how to undertake and use economic valuation of the environment to support effective, integrated and sustainable decision-making. The principle output will be a regional economic valuation capacity-building workshop, which will provide an opportunity to learn, share experiences and address concerns.

The workshop will be particularly useful for supporting the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and Montserrat who intend to undertake their own economic valuation studies in 2007-2009, but have limited local expertise and experience in this area. The workshop is also of interest to the British Virgin Islands and Anguilla.

After the workshop, the lessons and experiences from Caribbean Overseas Territories will be used to build on previous work developing a toolkit for valuing the environment in small islands¹. Assuming that funding is received to develop this toolkit, a draft version will be commissioned for completion by April 2007. The lessons and experiences of the Territories will later be incorporated as case studies in a final version by April 2009, which will be published and disseminated across the Overseas Territories and other small islands states and territories.

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¹ At the time of project proposal, an application for funding to develop a valuation toolkit in the financial year 2006-07 was awaiting approval by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID). This second application to fund a regional valuation workshop is based on the assumption that the toolkit will be funded for completion by April 2007. If funding is not received for the toolkit, this proposal for a workshop would need to be significantly revised. [Funding was received.]

Overseas Territories Environment Programme Fellows: Capacity Building for the Environment (XOT403)

Three OTEP Fellowships will be offered to citizens of the UKOTs to study for an MSc in Conservation and Biodiversity at the Centre for Ecology and Conservation at the University of Exeter, UK. As part of their training, OTEP Fellows will conduct a 6-month research project, in their home country, of direct relevance to conservation and biodiversity plans within their UKOT.

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Environmental Education linked across territories: web discussions and virtual tours (XOT406)

There is little public awareness, either within UKOTs or in mainland UK of the biodiversity importance of the UKOTs, and the challenges they face. The need to make information available to a wide audience, both the general public and within the education system was underlined at the Jersey Conference 'Biodiversity that Matters' in October 2006, by a wide range of participants. Also, the students at the conference raised the idea of a student/ young person's online discussion forum, as a way of raising interest and awareness specifically for young people, and volunteered to help run it. This



project would create an education / public awareness section of the UKOTCF website, which would provide links to educational and public awareness materials in UKOTs and UK. It would also provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, and virtual tours of the territories, as a way of increasing knowledge and understanding about them to as wide an audience as possible. Strong elements of the forum would be led by young people throughout the territories using a format that they are familiar with. Additionally this would be a convenient way of making available appropriate basic information about the territories.

Mrs Ann Pienkowski, Tel/Fax: +44 1733 569325, Email: apienkowski@clara.co.uk; Dr Juliet Rose, Tel: +44 1225 835698, Email: jrose@edenproject.com

Identification guide to the major Caribbean reef species (XOT407)

At present there is no good or comprehensive source of identification for the main reef occupiers and builders of Caribbean reefs, namely corals, soft corals and sponges. This is extraordinary, given the popularity of the Caribbean as an area for research, especially of the kind which uses countless 'amateur' divers for data gathering. Some popular books have many errors, and are incomplete. Most of the detailed taxonomic literature is obscure and of little help to fieldwork.

At present, many reef surveys are being done throughout the Caribbean region, and have been done recently. Most record several species by name, but almost all leave many important reef components as e.g. Sponge 1, 2 or 3 or soft corals A, B, C... etc. Someone working in say the BVI cannot therefore assume his/her Soft Coral 6 is the same as the Cayman Island survey's Soft Coral 6. Indeed, it probably is not the same. Thus no cross-regional comparisons can be made.

This proposes a compilation resulting from fieldwork in (mainly) BVI and Bermuda (and non-UKOT locations). A draft has been finished, which comprises almost all Atlantic corals, most dominant sponges and most soft corals found on reefs. This includes nearly 200 species using 1,000 photos, with descriptions of each species. Example pages are at:

www.2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/bio/research/ee/ee/people/charlessheppard/images/

It is currently at a stage where (a) more specialists need to examine and correct it, and (b) it needs translation to html language for www delivery.

It is already translated into Spanish for wider Caribbean uses (see example pages).

Its structure will readily accommodate additional biological groups (and languages) when wanted, but the three groups included in the draft are the three key reef builders and space occupiers.

Within the web version, hyperlinks will be prominent, directing users to sites of current, active Caribbean reef programmes. This is entirely compatible with the overall aim of providing a service to reef research in many places. Further, the directed sites will be asked to provide similar hyperlinks to this site.



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The following articles give summaries of progress or completion of a range of OTEP projects already active.

Completion of the New Island Reserve Management Plan

The management plan for the New Island reserve, an OTEP funded project, which has been running for the last two years, has now been completed. The New Island South Conservation Trust, recently renamed the New Island Conservation Trust since its acquisition late in 2006 of the whole of New Island, is a leading biological and conservation research establishment in the Falkland Islands.

In Falkland terms, New Island is a medium sized island. It is eight miles in length, but in many parts less than a mile wide, and embraced by some 50 miles of rugged coastline. New Island is relatively remote, being situated at the western extremity of the Falkland archipelago and on the edge of the Falkland Current. It is this position, which



The west cliffs of the New Island reserve

makes it an Important Bird Area (IBA). New Island has the distinction of having been operated as a wildlife reserve for 36 years and remains the only purpose designed and built facility for conservation research in the Falklands.

Its remote situation, 147 miles from Stanley and centred in one of the Islands' richest wildlife areas, presents a unique site for research, and for the field scientists who work on the reserve. A total of eight scientific personnel worked on the reserve in the 2006- 2007 season. On the other hand, its remoteness gives it an element of isolation from some public activities and recognition for its research. The award of an OTEP grant in 2005 to the New Island Conservation Trust (NICT) was not only of financial importance, but of immense value in bringing attention to the work it does.

The OTEP-funded project embraces several aspects of the NICT work. The continuation of its work on non-native species has been possible, the result being that at least two scientific papers will shortly be published covering some six years of work. Continuing long-term monitoring and study of black-browed albatross has been made possible. The importance of this work on the New Island reserve, with its 29 years of monitoring data to support its findings that the populations of this species are increasing, is of immense value. The monitoring of other Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels (ACAP) species, in particular white-chinned petrels, is also a long-term programme and, in 2006, was part of joint census work with another conservation organisation, the Falkland Conservation Trust.

The history of New Island goes back to the late 1700s when it became an important base for early American whalers. Part of that history

remains on the island in the form of an old stone building, the origins of which go back to a Captain Charles Barnard who was marooned on the island in 1812. With the help of the OTEP grant, this building is now fully restored as a museum and visitor centre. Not only does it fulfil the New Island Conservation Trust's memorandum, which embraces the conservation of historical buildings, the building now offers an important educational facility and centre for the wildlife tourists who visit New Island on specialized cruise vessels.

Of particular importance has been the funding, by OTEP, of the completion of a management plan for the New Island reserve. Entitled "New Island, Falkland Islands- A South Atlantic Wildlife Sanctuary for



A section of the interior of the Barnard Building & Visitor Centre" on the New Island reserve.

Conservation Management" This is now available as a PDF (available on www.ukotcf.org) and will shortly be available as a soft back. Containing 160 pages, it is heavily illustrated in colour and is not only a plan for the islands future, but traces the islands history and development over 200 years.

Ian J Strange MBE, New Island, Falkland Islands. Email: furseal@horizon.co.fk www.newislandtrust.com

Environmental education - links across territories

The importance of environmental education and the raising of public awareness of environmental issues was highlighted at the 'Biodiversity that Matters' Conference, Jersey 2006. Following discussions of issues and needs in the conference session, participants from several territories, with the help of the enthusiastic team of Jersey students, identified the initial ways of addressing these.

A successful application was made to the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) (see summary of Project XOT406 on p. 11). The short time between the conference and the OTEP deadline meant that this was the only project arising out of the conference discussions to be supported in this OTEP round.

This project, running over 2 years, will make use of UKOTCF's website to provide an environmental education section, with 3 strands:

1 – an environmental education resources section, where people can be made aware of ideas and materials for environmental education, and these can be shared. This should help the development of environmental education programmes and materials tailored to a particular locality, by allowing people to build on existing work, especially from other UKOTs.

2 – a "virtual tour" of each territory. Knowledge and understanding of the UK Overseas Territories within the metropolitan UK is very poor, so this would help raise awareness there, as well as enabling people from the territories to get to know more about their "sister" territories.

3- an e-discussion forum (not a chat room) for the sharing of information, concerns and issues between the territories. This was a particular wish of the students who helped develop the ideas for the project, and would be targeted initially at young people.

The form of the e-discussion forum was decided after consultation, particularly with some of the students who participated so



Ann Pienkowski (right) and Juliet Rose lead the discussions on environmental education at the conference in Jersey.

enthusiastically in the Jersey conference. If you would like to be part of piloting this before it goes on general release, please contact Ann (below).

Meantime, we are gathering material and references for the resources strand, and collecting and compiling material for the virtual tour section. Please contact Ann if you have any information on environmental education resources relevant to UKOTs, or you have any thoughts on content for a virtual tour of your territory. In addition, the project would be pleased to know about any photographs or video which could help develop this strand.

For more information: Ann Pienkowski, apienkowski@clara.co.uk

Strategic Planning Workshops in Montserrat

Despite continuing volcanic disruptions, both the Montserrat National Trust (MNT) and the Government's newly formed Department of the Environment have given serious thought to taking forward environmental matters in Montserrat in a strategic way, building on existing work. In 1995 the Soufriere Volcano destroyed the main area of the endemic Montserrat Oriole and other globally important fauna and flora, as well as making two-thirds of the island an exclusion zone. How Montserratians and their visitors should use the parts of their island remaining safe and accessible is a key question.

Emergency measures have been taken to conserve threatened species in their remaining habitat in the Centre Hills, and other work has developed from this, including a Darwin Initiative-funded project to lay the foundations for creating the Centre Hills National Park (see *Forum News* 28). The concept of strategic planning more generally for the environmental aspects of Montserrat's future came out of discussions between the Montserrat National Trust, the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), Montserrat Government departments and others in 2005. A successful application for funding was made by UKOTCF and MNT to the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP Project MNT302) to provide strategic planning training and development, and two workshops took place to deliver this in January and May 2007.

This exercise was timely, as the Department of the Environment had just been established, so discussion and clarification of roles



and responsibilities of government and NGO organisations would facilitate efficient co-operative working. The workshops were planned to enable development of a draft strategic plan for Montserrat National Trust for the next five years, building on previous work, alongside considering strategic planning for the Department of the Environment. It was particularly important for these discussions to take account of the requirements and responsibilities related to Multilateral Agreements, the Environment Charter, the St Georges Declaration of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, the National Environment Management Strategy, and the Sustainable Development Plan, and link these with the work of the Centre Hills Project and Montserrat National Trust's key objectives.

The first workshop, held in Montserrat in January 2007, included participants from Anguilla, both from government and the Anguilla National Trust. Sharing experiences between territories was of enormous value, particularly in discussing ways of dealing with challenges. A major focus was on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). At the Opening Ceremony, the Minister of Agriculture, Housing, Lands and Environment, the Hon Margaret Dyer-Howe, stressed the importance of MEAs to Montserrat. The workshop went on to discuss in detail four of the MEAs considered to be of high priority to Montserrat, namely the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on Biological Diversity, with some consideration too of other MEAs. A field trip to the Centre Hills, organised by Stephen Mendes and his team from the Centre Hills Project, was a very effective way of relating discussions in the workshop to the situation on the ground, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Participants then gave some thought to attributing values to the environment (and not just financial value), both in a wide context and taking examples from Montserrat and Anguilla. The last phase of this workshop took the outputs from discussions earlier in the week to begin work on developing a strategic plan for an environmental organisation, with Montserrat National Trust being the case study.

In the interval between the first and second workshops, the initial outputs were circulated for comment, edited, and used by UKOTCF, the Montserrat National Trust and the Montserrat Department of the Environment to provide the basis for the second workshop. This workshop was able to review the status of MEAs in Montserrat and the structure and function of the Department of Environment. In addition, presentations were made on existing and newly started projects which were of relevance in developing a strategic plan. A presentation and discussion of desirable revisions of the Montserrat Sustainable Development Plan provided valuable context. The draft strategic plan for Montserrat National Trust was developed through discussion in a very participatory way. From this, four outline priority project proposals were developed which would, if resources can be secured, take forward in a very positive way key objectives of the draft strategic plan.

The facilitators would like to recognise the hard work and commitment of the workshop participants in taking a very active role in the discussions which resulted in concrete and valuable workshop outputs. They thank particularly: Gerard Gray, Director of Environment and President of MNT for help in the structural planning and conduct of the meetings; Eudora Fergus, Executive Director MNT and her staff for behind-the-scenes work; HE Mrs Deborah Barnes-Jones, then Governor, for support; Chief Minister Hon Lewis Lowell and Minister Hon Margaret Dyer-Howe for support and personal participation by both in parts of the first workshop; the Department of the Environment; the Centre Hills Project; UKOTCF; and OTEP. The workshop reports are available

on UKOTCF website
www.ukotcf.org

Further information from the facilitators: Mike and Ann Pienkowski, UKOTCF
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Saltus Island Project

Project Description

The Saltus Island Project is a Woodland Management Scheme and environmental education initiative, first established in 2002 in conjunction with the Bermuda National Trust. The flora of the 3.2 acre island in Hamilton Harbour was becoming dominated by fast growing introduced species. The project aims to manage the woodland on the island, controlling the invasive species and planting native and endemic plants. Senior 9 (age 13) students from Saltus Grammar School visit the island every month. During their first visit, during the fall term, students are given a guided tour to learn the fauna and flora of the island. After this, students work to remove invasive species, create paths, plant native/endemic species and create compost. In addition, Senior 7 students (age 11) are given germinated endemic trees to monitor and grow until ready for planting when they make their visits two years later.

OTEP Funding

OTEP provided funding for the project through the second bidding round to the tune of \$11,000 over a two-year period ending March 31st 2007. The monies received were used to purchase a small boat to transport staff and equipment to and from the island. In addition tools, equipment, staff training and trees were bought with the remaining funds.



Aerial views of Saltus Island taken in 2000 and again in 2006 showing some of the clearance of invasive species.



Project Progress

Whilst the project is ongoing, the OTEP funds have been vital during a transition time for the management of the island. During the first couple of years students were working primarily to create paths into the dense woodland and then to start clearing an area of land. When OTEP support was secured, the team were in a position to start the whole-scale planting of trees on the island. The project continues to gain support in the local community and has just been nominated for a National Trust award; the team are equally pleased to have just secured more funding from the OTEP in the fourth bidding round.

Steve Briggs, Saltus Grammar School, Email: sbriggs@saltus.bm



A timeline of the 19th-century abolitionist movement in Britain, showing the progression from the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act to the final abolition of slavery in 1833.

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Further details will appear in future issues of *Forum News*, but more frequent updates will be made on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org). In addition to work being conducted jointly with Cayman Islands Department of Environment on logistics and confirming arrangements for these, the results of a very wide consultation on preferred conference topics are being followed up in the early stages of programme development.

The Conference will provide a forum for government environmental agencies and NGOs to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships in support of conservation in the UK Overseas Territories, the Crown Dependencies, and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems. The conference will aim to draw from similarities and differences between the territories, to provide insights from experience on how to solve particular, commonly-faced problems, so that participants leave the conference better equipped to tackle the problems covered.

- The third session looked at tools and cases studies. The main tool that was considered was the UKOT invasives database, and how it might be improved. Case studies were presented on the Gough Island mouse eradication feasibility study, where mice are currently eating young albatross chicks alive, invasive problems in the Falkland Islands and in the Cayman islands where 3 invasive species have 3 native counterparts making public awareness incredibly difficult.

There were lively discussions and interesting thoughts on the way forward. All of the information will be fed back to the participants and governments and NGOs in the Overseas Territories, and working groups will be formed to move forward some of the key action areas identified.

*For more details about the workshop please visit
www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4079 or email:
tara.pelembe@jncc.gov.uk.*

- The first, a general overview, looked at the way in which invasives work in the UK might have relevance to the UKOTs; potential funding sources, and possible methodologies for strategic prioritisation.
- The second session considered current and potential future regional invasive species projects in the UKOTs. Presentations on current projects included St. Helena's EU 9th EDF funded, RSPB managed, South Atlantic

Frances Marks joined the Forum as the Forum's coordinator in the summer of 1999. Attending the *Breath of Fresh Air Conference* in London gave her the opportunity to meet many of the key people in the UKOTs. She went on to help organise three more very successful conferences, in Gibraltar, Bermuda and Jersey. As well as the general day-to-day business of the Forum, Frances has been responsible for gathering stories for *Forum News* and would like to thank all of you who have contributed so freely and helped by sending in articles and the many pictures that she has asked for.

Working only part time for the Forum, Frances has had the opportunity to explore other environmental issues closer to home, and has for the last five years been involved in work to do with recycling and some climate-change issues. She has recently started work with Resource Futures as Community Action Group Project Officer, working with local groups in Oxfordshire to help reduce, reuse and recycle waste. She is leaving the Forum as she wants to devote more time to local environmental issues and will be heavily involved, as British Trust for Ornithology regional representative, in the BTO bird atlas that starts in earnest this winter. She still hopes to visit some of UKOTs and looks forward to watching developments in all the Territories. We all thank Frances for her hard work and commitment, and wish her well in her new challenges.



Invasive species project, RBG Kew's work in the Caribbean, and CABI's GEF regional Caribbean project. It also considered a review of invasives in the tropical Atlantic that had relevance to the UKOTs.

Another British endemic about to go globally extinct?

Two years ago, in *Forum News* 27 (August 2005), the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum noted that “Spending figures indicate that the British Government values conservation of globally important biodiversity in UK Overseas Territories 5000 times less important than that in Great Britain.

“The Forum has long been concerned that the British Government’s spending on conservation in the UK Overseas Territories is ridiculously low. We commend the on-going support from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and welcomed the joining with this two years ago by the Department for International Development to establish the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). UKOTCF has highlighted and supported this fund, but all concerned recognise that only very small projects can be supported by it. The British Government’s main budget for conservation is managed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Amazingly, none of this budget is committed regularly to UK Overseas Territories.”

“The British Government enters international commitments on behalf of both itself and UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. These include the international conventions on conservation (sometimes called multilateral environmental agreements). The British Government shares responsibility for this globally important biodiversity. The British Government is party to some fine words here, but there is little hard evidence of its commitments.

“This is even more vital because most of the UK’s globally important biodiversity is located in UK Overseas Territories and not in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Examples of this are well known and can be found on the Forum’s web site (www.ukotcf.org). One very conservative estimate is that there are at least ten times as many endemic species in UK Overseas Territories as in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.”

“However, the level of support for its responsibilities in UK Overseas Territories is derisory. The work over the past decade and more by UKOTCF (which struggles along with no core funding from UK Government despite undertaking much voluntary work for it) and the success of the small projects funded by OTEP, its FCO fore-runners and the NGOs have demonstrated what can be done with very limited funding.”

“UKOTCF has been pointing this out, perhaps in too civilised a manner, to UK Governments for over a decade. It really is time for UK Government to act. Almost incredibly, species which occur in UK Territory and nowhere else in the world are still going extinct – most recently the St Helena Olive which went extinct in November 2003. Several other species are on the brink. This is a disgrace, and the lack of action by UK Government is a breach of its commitments under its own international commitments. As always the UKOTCF is keen to work with UK Government in any way possible to change this situation and ensure long-term survival of the UK’s most precious biodiversity.”

Now comes the disturbing news that yet another species endemic to UK territory is close to global extinction (see the article by Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks MBE below).

Meanwhile, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee this year concluded in its report “*Trade, Development and the Environment: The Role of the FCO*”: “Although DEFRA does provide

some direct and indirect support, the level of this does not fill the specialist environmental gaps that are apparent in the UKOTs. ... We recommend ... that ... DEFRA should be given joint responsibility towards the UKOTs. This should be reflected in an updated UK International Priority, to include environmental protection alongside security and good governance in the UKOTs. This will also have to be reflected in DEFRA’s Comprehensive Spending Review settlement. Finally, as part of the Environment Charter review, the case for larger and more routine funding must be explored. Given that the Treasury is currently conducting a spending review, it is imperative that this funding analysis feeds into, and influences, the Treasury’s ultimate decision as to spending allocations for FCO, DFID and DEFRA [from Paragraph 83]. It continued [Paragraph 84]: “If the Government fails to address these issues it will run the risk of continued environmental decline and species extinctions in the UKOTs, ultimately causing the UK to fail in meeting its domestic and international environmental commitments. Failure to meet such commitments undermines the UK’s ability to influence the international community to take the strong action required for reversing environmental degradation in their own countries, and globally.”

How many more species for which UK is responsibly have to be lost to the world before UK Government and its Department for the Environment (Defra) provide the modest regular budget which would be needed to stem this, and start to meet UK’s international commitments?

Can we save the bastard gumwood from extinction?

The bastard gumwood was formerly common on St Helena, on dry areas around 400 - 520 m above sea level and principally associated with dry gumwood woodland. It was used as a fuel wood and it is likely that regeneration was prevented by browsing livestock. The bastard gumwood was thought to have become extinct by the end of the 19th Century with the last known trees growing at Longwood, Black Field and Horse Pasture. However Stedson Stroud rediscovered a single tree growing out from a cliff at the southern edge of Horse Pasture in 1982. This tree was destroyed

by a gale in 1986 and the species became extinct in the wild. Before this, cuttings and seedlings were successfully raised after many different attempts and over successive years by George Benjamin, Quentin Cronk and Simon Goodenough so that, by 1988, 17 plants were growing at Pounceys. By 1995 they ranged in height from 1.3 to 2.5 m but lacked vigour and were probably suffering from inbreeding depression.

Today there are just two trees left at Pounceys. One very poor specimen and one healthier individual, seen in the photo before the September gales. Sadly, after the high winds of two weeks in early September 2007, the small individual has been severely wind damaged and is in very poor health and only tiny amounts of green leaf are visible in the centre of the leaf rosettes. The larger tree has also been hit hard by the wind and has lost some of its greenery, the roots have been loosened and the tree has fallen slightly. It has been given some support with wood props.



One of the remaining bastard gumwood trees

Urgent action is now being taken to see if it is at all possible to save the small tree and reinvigorate the health of both trees. These are the only Bastard Gumwoods that we know of in the world. There may be one or two others growing in a hybrid seed orchard (Bastard Gumwood x False Gumwood) at Barren Ground but their provenance is not confirmed.

The hybrid seed orchard may now provide the only way of saving the bastard gumwood, but keeping the true species type will be important if a back crossing programme is going to be implemented. This will take years of methodical and sustained effort.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew have offered support in terms of micro-propagation but there is a problem in getting good quality material in the form of cutting or seed to Kew if they are going to have any chance of establishing it in culture. However, if material can be successfully established in culture, it could prove to be an extremely successful way of re-establishing many individuals and make the difference between extinction or survival.

In an article lamenting the death of the last St Helena Olive in November 2003, Rebecca Cairns-Wicks wrote "As we reflect on the Olive and the many other species of critically endangered endemics we are reminded of historic environmental mis-management but also (that) our ability to save these acutely rare species is affected by our continuing inability to provide continuity in conservation." We have not learnt enough from the Olive. Despite rhetoric, conservation is not fully appreciated as an essential component of the island's sustainable social and economic development, which will bring added value to future tourism and although significant progress has been made in the conservation of some species and habitats, conservation remains inadequately equipped and resources spread too thinly to conserve all the island's acutely rare flora and fauna and I wonder how future generations will consider our environmental management record and whether they'll thank us for leaving them with a lesser flora. I hope it won't be the case and we can indeed turn this desperately sad situation around.

Nurse Leila's House Purchased

The house of Nurse Leila Yates, on West Church Street in West Bay, has been purchased by the National Trust for the Cayman Islands. This original wattle and daub house, framed in and resting on ironwood posts, is over 100 years old and is an important historical structure, not only for what it is but for the story it tells. Irskie Leila Yates was born in West Bay in 1899. She delivered her first baby in 1921 and continued as a district midwife until retiring in 1972. During that time she is said to have delivered over 1000 babies and many of them in her own home.

The house, originally situated near Mr Prentice's shop on Boggy Sand Road, was moved to its present site in 1917 due to beach erosion and damage from a hurricane. The Trust was approached in April 2007 by Maria Bernardi and Eleni Strompolos, sisters who had upgraded the house in the hope that the Trust could continue to preserve the house in memory of such an important woman in Cayman's history. Thanks to the generosity of Maples Finance Ltd, the Trust was able to purchase the building and surrounding yard in June 2007. Legal services for the transaction were generously donated by the firm Stuarts Walker Hersant.

Nurse Leila's home is one of few standing examples of historic architecture and construction in the West Bay area. The Trust will begin a careful restoration of the house as it looks toward a long-term use for the building. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands aims to preserve natural environments and places of historic significance in the Cayman Islands for present and future generations.

National Trust for the Cayman Islands P.O. Box 31116 SMB, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands Tel +345-949-0121 Email info@NationalTrust.org.ky www.NationalTrust.org.ky

Boobies get a boost

Little Cayman's red-footed booby colony will have a little more breathing room thanks to the purchase of an additional 136 acres adjoining the Booby Pond Reserve in Little Cayman.

"The purchase brings the reserve to a total of 334 acres under protection for future generations of all Caymanians," said Trust General Manager Frank Roulstone. "The expansion also protects many rare and endemic plants and animals." Most of the land is rocky dry scrubland and adds real diversity to the area presently under protection which is mostly wetland. "The boobies are not the primary beneficiary of this expansion except that it does give them a little more breathing room in the event the colony continues to grow," he said.

The colony of red-footed booby in Little Cayman is of international significance and some years ago the area was declared a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The colony represents about 30% of the total population of red-footed booby in the entire Caribbean. Boobies are notoriously shy of human disturbance and now nest on only the most undisturbed or uninhabited islands. The area is also prime nesting grounds for man o'war birds (magnificent frigatebirds) and waterbirds including West Indian whistling ducks.



The Sister Islands Rock Iguana nests within the new reserve

But the true beneficiaries are rare and endemic animals such as the Sister Islands rock iguana, the tiny Little Cayman ground boa, Little Cayman green anole lizard and the Lesser Cayman galliwasp. The newly acquired land also supports native birds such as the "Chip Chip" (vitteline warbler) and banana bird. Much of the vegetation consists of rare and endemic plants specially adapted to this harsh, hot and dry environment.

The purchase was made possible by private sector funding including a significant anonymous donation and a donation from Maples Finance



The Cayman Green Anole Anolis maynardi is an unusual lizard found only in the Sister Islands, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac

Ltd. Mr Roulstone said that he was pleased that the land had been purchased. However protected areas still represent less than 5% of the total land area of Little Cayman, far below the accepted international standard of 12%. Land held in trust for the people of the Cayman Islands on all three islands is now over 2500 acres

Frank Roulstone, General Manager, National Trust for the Cayman Islands, Email:froulstone@nationaltrust.org.ky

TCI declares Year of Environment as it faces many challenges

The Government of TCI has declared 2007 the Year of the Environment. The Year began in April with the opening of the displays in the Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR) National Environment Centre (NEC). TCI Government received major funding some years ago from UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to establish this facility. This makes the second major environmental display opening in TCI within a few months, following the launch by Turks & Caicos National Trust (TCNT) in November 2006 of its Middle Caicos Conservation Centre (MCCC), supported by OTEP, UKOTCF, TCI Government and other local organisations and individuals (*Forum News 30*).

In early August, TCI's Environment Charter Working Group, established by TCI Government but including other local stakeholders as well as UKOTCF, reviewed progress on key



Mrs Judith Campbell, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Natural Resources, (right) chairs the meeting of the TCI's Environment Charter Working Group with Ben Body, Governor's Staff Officer (centre), and Dr Mike Pienkowski, Chairman UKOTCF (left), among the participants.

priorities which were established in TCI's strategy for action to implement the Charter and which were confirmed in 2006.

Some concern was expressed that the electronic boundaries of the Protected Areas, prepared some years ago with OTEP funding, had still not been transferred to the Land Information System and so were not available to inform land-use decisions. Surprisingly, it was reported that a Cabinet decision was required and still awaited for, this even though the Protected Areas had been declared in the early 1990s and the maps did not involve changing their boundaries. Participants were also disappointed that the transfer of over 500 acres of land to TCNT decided some years earlier and confirmed by the Minister in November 2006 (*Forum News 30*) had still not been implemented. Both these measures had been planned to help make the Protected Areas effective. The need for this was underlined in July when TCI Government, without consultation or announcement, mistakenly allocated a large area of the Conch Bar Caves National Park (one of the areas to be transferred to TCNT and already being managed by them) for agricultural development. TCNT discovered the error only as a bulldozer started clearing some of the globally threatened tropical dry forest ecosystem. The Agricultural Department were concerned as soon as they heard of the problem and immediately stopped the work but, by then, about 10 acres (4 ha) of the forest within the National Park had been cleared. Concern remains that the need for water for the agricultural development (which is now

proceeding with extensive forest clearance – including some of the threatened Caicos Pine area (see below) – immediately outside the National Park boundaries) will damage the water ecosystem within the caves of the National Park. There appears to be no Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for this major development. Heavy machinery was being used to quarry and remove large quantities of rock from the area just outside the Protected Area now being cleared for agriculture. This was being trucked to help build the new causeway linking North and Middle Caicos, presumably because the quantities needed and sources had been mis-estimated. It is not clear whether the rock sources were included in the EIA for the causeway project, and there must be some concern at the consequent lowering of the new agricultural area in a zone subject to flooding.

The Review and Re-Assessment of the TCI Protected Area System, commissioned by the Government of the Turks & Caicos Islands from Nautilus Consultants Ltd was finalized in September 2006. The review strongly supports the rationale and the range of existing protected areas, and recommends several new sites, extensions to others, some changes in status, and the de-designation of one protected area. The Working Group heard that Cabinet had noted the report but, rather than adopt the recommended changes in protected areas as a whole, which had been the original purpose, it was proposed to consider it site by site. Noting that TCI appeared to be the only UKOT whose total area of protected areas had decreased since the Environment Charters were signed, the view was expressed that, to avoid strengthening the impression that TCI was losing protected areas, it would be sensible to address some new sites and extensions to existing ones before any further reductions in area or the proposed de-designation. The high priority of giving protection to the internationally important Grand Turk salinas and wells, which were suffering continual piecemeal destruction, had previously been noted by the Working Group, and these were obvious early cases to consider.

The Working Group were pleased to note that TCNT and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew had fulfilled its request to develop a plan for the first stage of a long-term rescue of the national tree, the Caicos Pine. This occurs in just three islands of TCI but had been devastated, with only a few individual plants surviving, by a disease probably introduced on imported Christmas trees. A decision was still awaited as to whether the TCI Conservation Fund would support the modest costs of this urgent work.



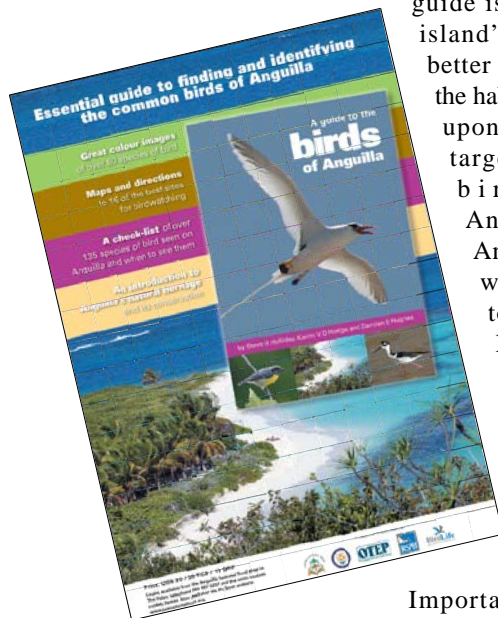
Vulnerable tropical dry forest in the Conch Bar Caves National Park, Middle Caicos destroyed in error on the instructions of Turks and Caicos Islands Government.

The Working Group repeated its earlier encouragement to make EIAs readily available electronically; the present unnecessary limitation to examination of physical copies in the Planning Department effectively failed to fulfil Environment Charter commitments. The Working Group looked

forward also to the implementation of public reporting of the uses to which the Conservation Fund (a tax on accommodation and meals, generating income particularly from visitors).

A Guide to the Birds of Anguilla

The *Bird Watching Guide for Anguilla* was launched on 25th May 2007 at the historic Wall Blake House. It was produced by the Anguilla National Trust, with OTEP support, to complement recent publications on reptiles and plants. The guide was written by Dr Steve Holliday of the Royal Society for Birds, Mr Karim Hodge, Director of the Environment in Anguilla, and Mr Damien Hughes, Anguilla National Trust Executive Director. The main aim of the



guide is to promote the island's bird life and a better understanding of the habitats they depend upon. The book is targeted at visiting birdwatchers, Anguillians and Anguilla's schools, with proceeds going to the Anguilla National Trust.

The full-colour guide features photographs of birds and bird-watching sites on Anguilla, including its Important Bird Areas.

There is a section on bird identification and information on the Anguilla National Trust.

Bird-watching is now an integral component of a new heritage tour programme run by the ANT in collaboration with the island's tourism industry. The tours visit the new bird-watching facilities at the protected area at East End Pond.

For further details and how to order contact: Anguilla National Trust, PO Box 1234, The Valley Tel+ 264 4975297 email:ananat@anguillanet.com

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: status, structure and strategy

Preamble

Recent discussions have shown that, perhaps because of personnel turnover, some of those involved with the Forum may have an incomplete picture of its status, structure, strategy and activities. In the following article, Oliver Cheesman, on behalf of Council, has condensed several UKOTCF documents to address the first three of these elements.

Status & Structure

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF, the Forum) exists to promote the conservation of the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage of the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies of the United Kingdom (UKOTs/CDs)*.

The Forum is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO), a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Members of the UKOTCF Council are directors of the company and trustees of the charity, and are responsible for governance of the Forum, in accordance with its Memorandum and Articles of Association, its charitable objectives, and company and charity law. Individuals are elected to serve on Council by the Forum's

member organisations (formally, the members of the company), who guide the Council in setting the strategic direction and policy of the UKOTCF. As a small organisation able to pay for very little core work, UKOTCF depends heavily on the voluntary efforts of its Council members and a wider network of skilled volunteers. UKOTCF attempts to maintain an appropriately wide range of expertise and experience among Council members. These include scientists, conservation practitioners, personnel from UK and UKOT/CD member organisations, former government personnel (including former governors of UKOTs), and individuals who have special knowledge of particular UKOTs or other relevant skills.

The Forum endeavours to maintain good working relationships with governments in the metropolitan UK and the UKOTs/CDs. However, the Forum is principally an umbrella body for conservation-orientated NGOs, and most of its member organisations fall into this category, be they based in Britain, or in the UKOTs/CDs.

Member organisations come together regularly under the auspices of the UKOTCF, at Forum meetings, joint meetings between the Forum and the UK Government, at workshops and conferences organised by the Forum, and within Forum Working Groups (WGs). The latter are established by Council, which is responsible for setting their Terms of Reference, appointing their officers and approving their membership. Initially, Forum WGs tended to have a single Territory remit, but have evolved an increasing regional focus (reflecting the growth of within-territory capacity for conservation, and the consequent basis for cross-territory working and sharing of experience). Currently, the Forum has a Southern Oceans WG, a Wider Caribbean WG and a Europe Territories WG.

Strategy

UKOTCF activities are centred on four main strategic elements:

1. Helping local people in each Territory to form a conservation-orientated NGO, where one does not already exist. (This has now been achieved for all those UKOTs where the human population is large enough for an NGO to be viable).
2. Helping local NGOs to secure their long-term viability by developing and enhancing technical and management capacity. (In practice, such capacity building often embraces local governmental conservation bodies as well as NGOs).
3. Working with local bodies to achieve conservation through effective partnerships: identifying local priority needs (and common needs across Territories), developing strategies and skills to address these, securing resources, and implementing and managing projects.
4. Raising awareness in Britain of the UKOTs/CDs, their biodiversity, their conservation needs, and the shared UK-UKOT/CD responsibility for them.

Elements 1 to 3 follow logically in sequence but, in practice, overlap in time. In some cases, the Forum leads work in its own name; in others, the lead is taken by a Forum member organisation. In either case, priorities need to be determined primarily by member organisations based in the UKOTs/CDs, and relevant partners will then be drawn in via the Forum network to help address those priorities.

* The 16 UK Overseas Territories are: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks & Caicos Islands in the Caribbean; Bermuda in the North Atlantic; Ascension Island, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha, Falkland Islands, South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands and British Antarctic Territory in the South Atlantic; British Indian Ocean Territory; Pitcairn Islands in the Pacific; and Gibraltar and the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas in Europe. The Forum also works closely with the Crown Dependencies (the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark). Like the UKOTs, they are territories of the British Crown, but not represented in the UK Parliament nor funded through the British domestic budget.

advertisement

Expedition vessel visiting British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia, Tristan da Cunha (including Gough), St Helena and Ascension

Friends of UK Overseas Territories and others often ask the Forum how they may visit some of the more remote territories, especially those in the South Atlantic. There are several ways to visit some (*RMS St Helena* for that island; Antarctic cruises to BAT and South Georgia etc). However, once a year, the small specialist Russian expedition vessels on long-term charter to the Dutch company Oceanwide Expeditions, travel the route above, the "Atlantic Odyssey". In 2009, departure from Ushuaia at the southern tip of South America will be on 8th March, with arrival at Ascension on 7th April (or Cape Verdes on 14th April for those going on to there). The ships, which have only about 50 passengers, follow the best International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO) standards and are welcomed at their ports of call, providing an element of the income from sustainable tourism. Wildlife viewing opportunities at sea and at the landfalls are excellent. For this particular voyage, anyone making contact with the company via UKOTCF would lead to a contribution to UKOTCF work at no extra cost to themselves, if they eventually book. Prices are not cheap, starting from US\$ 6750 [about GB£ 3400 at current rates], which include all meals, boat trips etc, but not flights to the boarding point or from the disembarkation point. So, if you would like to take part in the voyage of a lifetime, which has developed a superb reputation in the time that it has been running, please enquire via UKOTCF (pienkowski@cix.co.uk or +44 1733 569325) without initial commitment. Places tend to be booked up quite early. Please note that the final arrangement will be between the customer and Oceanwide, not with UKOTCF, but UKOTCF people who have been on previous *Atlantic Odysseys* can testify to their quality.



Leopard seal and expedition vessel, British Antarctic Territory



I wish to become a Friend of
the Overseas Territories at the
following support level for the year:

Or please
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Mail to UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, 12b High Street,
Wendover, Bucks, HP22 6EA, UK or if you are using a card, you may fax to
+44 1733 569325. Website: www.ukotcf.org Email: fmars@ukotcf.org

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Photographs courtesy of: Rebecca Cairns-Wicks; Andrew Dobson; Martin Hamilton, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Frances Marks; Mike Pienkowski; Frank Roulstone, National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Charles Sheppard; Ian Strange; Edward Thorpe; Stuart Wynee, DFMR Anguilla; and Colin Wilkinson.