



Saving Our Special Nature of Montserrat Project

Newsletter 1, July 2016



Male Montserrat oriole, Montserrat's national bird on red heliconia, Montserrat's national plant. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Foreword

Welcome to the first issue of the newsletter about the new project entitled "Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services." This is a good and reasonably concise title for technical use - but is a bit of a mouth-full for everyday use. So we thought that, for the latter, we might try something shorter - but meaning much the same thing, as well as trying to capture also the wider aspects. You see it above. It has not escaped our notice that it does lend itself to an abbreviation relevant to the urgency and importance of the matter: *SOS Nature of Montserrat*.

In this first issue, we focus on the background to the project, mention its main elements, and its launch. We start to introduce both some of the partner organisations and members of the joint team. We will focus on some of the other organisations and individuals in the next few issues. We plan these to be approximately quarterly. Please feel free to show or forward these to others. If anyone sees these and would like to be added to the circulation list, please send your email address to cwensink@ukotcf.org.

For more information on the project, the main contacts are:

Dr Mike Pienkowski & Catherine Wensink, UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: m@pienkowski.org cwensink@ukotcf.org www.ukotcf.org

Nicolas Tirard & Mrs Sarita Francis, Montserrat National Trust: nicolas.tirard@gmail.com mnatrust@candw.ms

Montserrat sees start of project on conservation and the island's future

May 2016 saw a series of meetings and planning activities in Montserrat, supported by others in UK and USA, to set up a new 2-year project *Maximising long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services*. The project is part-funded by UK Government's Darwin Plus: Overseas Territories Environment & Climate Fund, and is a partnership coordinated by UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). Other project partners include: Montserrat Government (Department of Environment; DoE); Montserrat National Trust (MNT); Treweek Environmental Consultants; and Montana State University, USA (MSU).

Hon Claude Hogan, Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment said: "Montserrat welcomes collaboration with international partners and recognises that such partnerships are often fundamental in order to take new and innovative work forward. We have worked with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for over 20 years and value its role in coordinating activities both locally in

the UK Territories and beyond. Montserrat will continue to need some buoyancy and hands-on support from especially UKOTCF and other UK partners in the short to medium-term. This will require some staff and technical persons to travel between Europe and the Caribbean, but



(From left:) Dr Mike Pienkowski (Honorary Executive Director of UKOTCF), Hon Claude Hogan (Montserrat's Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Lands, Housing & Environment) and Mrs Dulcie James (President of Montserrat National Trust) celebrate the Memorandum of Understanding that they have just signed.

Photo: Ravo Ratianimarina, MNT



Ann Pienkowski (UKOTCF Honorary Environmental Education Coordinator; left) and Sarita Francis (Montserrat National Trust Executive

Director) talk about the project on Rose Willock's Saturday programme on Radio ZJB (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).

that will deliver the capacity support we need at the right times for this project to be successful; and also allow us to gradually mainstream the lessons learnt and the transfer of skills, know-how and best practices that will ensure the sustainability of the outcomes from this project.”

Dr Mike Pienkowski, Honorary Executive Director of the UKOTCF, explained that “the linking rationales of the project are both to help increase this local capacity and to give the best chances possible for Montserrat’s unique and rare species of wildlife to survive in the long term. This is done most effectively by allowing the range to be as extensive as possible – something of a challenge in a small island, especially one which has lost a great deal of its vegetated area to the volcano in the short term. The wildlife is important not only in its own right and for the quality of life of Montserratians, but also as a major draw for tourists, increasing in the future to the benefit of Montserrat.”

Mrs Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF Manager and Senior Conservation Officer, added “One of the ways that this will be achieved is by making available to Montserrat the data, initially on invertebrate animals, collected by various institutions over the years. Dr Mike Ivie, an old friend of Montserrat from MSU, will be leading this work, and will visit in mid-2017 to show

how to use the computer system, as well as to collect more information and enthuse local persons who might like to take part. Dr Ivie has discovered that, despite its much smaller size, Montserrat is even richer in insect species than Dominica.”

A second element of the programme will be more time donated by world expert on environmental impact assessment, Dr Jo Treweek, and her colleagues, to continue the programme started early in 2015 in helping integrate environmental aspects into physical planning.

Mrs Sarita Francis, MNT Executive Director, noted that: “Montserratians will be welcome to participate and learn from all these elements, but a further component is being designed to be centred on their volunteer efforts to enhance the native wildlife in their local areas. MNT and UKOTCF colleagues are out in the field at present developing these options, which will be announced soon.”

Hon Minister Hogan added: “As well as these project elements which will be active throughout the 2 years, there is a further important component which will be concerned mainly with planning future activities. The reason that we are being so slow – and careful – is that this is an attempt to work out how best Montserrat should use the south in the medium to long term. This is important both for Montserrat’s wildlife and for its economy. Obviously, there are lots of constraints, as well as opportunities, to be taken into account – and lots of people have interests and views. The aim is to listen to and consider all these, and try, over two years, to reach a consensus plan, against which we can then try to secure outside resources to help Montserrat make the most of this for its future. After all, doing nothing is also an option – but one which is unlikely to be the best for Montserrat.”

Dr Pienkowski noted “There will be lots more from the project over the coming months, both to keep Montserratians informed but, even more importantly, to invite their views and participation in the various elements of the project.”

Did you know...?

This project centres on Montserrat’s special nature – especially its native plant and animal species. Many of these occur nowhere else in the world. So, if Montserrat loses them, they will become extinct and so no-one in the world will ever enjoy seeing and hearing them again. So we all want to avoid that.

But not everyone, even on Montserrat, knows all of these special plants and animals, some of which occur only on Montserrat while others depend on Montserrat to provide some of their essential needs. One of the special animals which most Montserratians will recognise is the Montserrat oriole (see photo on page one with a male oriole on one of Montserrat’s special plants, the red heliconia).

In this series of articles, we want to highlight a few of the many other special animals and plants of Montserrat. If you want to see even more of these, many of the birds and mammals, plus a few of the insects and plants, can be seen in the book *Birding in Paradise: The Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat – A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites* (by Mike & Ann Pienkowski, Catherine Wensink, Sarita Francis & James ‘Scriber’ Daley). This can be purchased (EC\$27 or US\$10) on island from Montserrat National Trust or by post or download from www.ukotcf.org/birding-in-Monserrat/index.htm.

Did you know that over 100 different birds are found on Montserrat?

Many live here permanently, but some are passing though. Even though they are not here all the time, Montserrat may still be important for their survival, as they depend on food or other resources here then and perhaps less available elsewhere. While the Trust and Department have worked for many years to ensure the survival of the oriole, they look after the island’s natural areas also so that those birds that are seasonal residents or less frequent visitors continue to have somewhere to feed and, for some, nest.

Every year, around November to February, a special little bird visits the island. It is very brightly coloured and loves to sing. Its name, the Antillean euphonia, is a fitting tribute to its sweet calls. It likes to



Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

come to Montserrat to eat mistletoe but will feed also on yellow prickple, balsam, gumtree and lilac. So make sure that these are found in your garden, so that this little visitor has somewhere to eat when on island.

Did you know that, when the survey of the Centre Hills was carried out in 2008, researchers found that there were over 1240 species of insects there?

Montserrat is famous for its brightly coloured national bird and flowers, but have you ever lifted up a rock or looked under the leaves to discover the wonders by your feet?

Many of the 1240 species are not found anywhere else on the earth. We call these endemic species. The number of endemic insect species found on Montserrat is thought to be 8 times higher than that of larger Dominica.



Thonalmus, one of Montserrat's endemic beetles; larvae feed on rotten wood, day-flying adults are common in the forest. Photo: Dr Michael Ivie, Montserrat State University

Insects are very important for the island as they are not just a food source for the orioles, mountain chickens and galliwaps, but they are important for your food also. They recycle nutrients in the soil making it even more fertile than the volcano itself does. They may also help make life for us slightly more comfortable in other ways: dragonflies, such as the red darter (photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski) capture and eat huge numbers of mosquitoes.

Other species of non-native insects, have been



accidentally introduced by humans, and can be pests. So we need to keep a close look at any insects to look out for these invaders. Through this project we are hoping to provide more information on Montserrat's special insects.

Did you know that we have our very own orchid found only on Montserrat?

Orchids are found all over the world. They are often very brightly coloured and sweet smelling. When the Montserrat orchid blooms, its beautiful yellow petals are a vision. They also match the bright colours of our famous oriole!



Photo: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Orchids rely on a special relationship with fungi, which help them to grow. The fungi live in roots of the orchid, which gives them protection. This is called a symbiotic relationship as both the orchid and the fungi get some benefit from their close association. This orchid usually grows on trees or, less frequently, on rocks, so its roots have no contact with the soil. The leathery leaves can be hard to spot before the plant comes into flower.

This species is rated as Critically Endangered, because it is restricted to a small area on the island of Montserrat, where much of its natural habitat has been destroyed or damaged, either by volcanic eruptions or human activity. In 2006, RBG Kew conservationists rescued several plants of the endangered Montserrat orchid from dead trees on the volcano-ravaged island of Montserrat and installed them in the security of the island's botanic garden.

Each year, the Trust celebrates our beautiful flowers at its flower show. Look out there and in the wild for this and some of the other orchid species found only in Montserrat and nearby islands.

Montserratians explore options for the future of the south

In May, as one of the components of the new project, 20 people took-part in the first workshop examining possible options for the future of the south of the island.

The project is based on the fact that, despite two-thirds of Montserrat being zones of restriction due to volcanic activity, Montserrat remains hugely important for endemic species (i.e. ones that occur nowhere else in the world). Earlier part-Darwin-funded work centred on the Centre Hills. This project takes a strategic view of the whole island – needed to identify and minimise pressures, and ensure that the natural resources are safeguarded, thereby also underpinning economic recovery.

This particular element of the work seeks, over the 2 years of the project, to develop by consultation a widely shared vision and initial plan for the future use of the south, emphasising (but not limited to) restoration of natural ecosystems. This is because of both their intrinsic importance and their potential value to Montserrat's future economy. This project will not implement the plan but is aimed at providing a sound basis for seeking the resources for that.

Invitations to participate were circulated widely. **Sarita Francis** welcomed all to the workshop, being hosted in the meeting room

of the Montserrat National Trust. **James Boatswain** opened the workshop with a prayer.

In opening the workshop, **Minister Hon. Claude Hogan** acknowledged that we all know that we depend on our natural environment – for our water-supply, for fishing, for farming, for our high-value tourism business, for our quality of life and for many other things. Montserrat is special because it is home. It is special also to the rest of the world because it supports species of plants and animals which occur nowhere else in the world; if they are lost in Montserrat, they are extinct everywhere.

He noted that Montserrat welcomes collaboration with international partners and recognises that such partnerships are often fundamental in order to take new and innovative work forward. Montserrat has worked with the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for over 20 years and values its role in coordinating activities both locally in the UK Territories and beyond.

He said that the Government is pledged to respect and reap the benefits of the 'economic value of every nook and cranny' on the island, which has been devastated by a volcanic eruption since 1995, but has found coping mechanisms, UK and general



UKOTCF Conservation Officers, Sarah Barnsley (standing, centre) and Emma Cary (standing, right) facilitate the first of a series of workshops on the future options for the south of the island (Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF).

international support to recover and rebuild. This project supports objectives as set out in Montserrat's Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) 2008-2020, its Physical Development Plan (PDP) and the Conservation and Environmental Management Act 2014 (CEMA), key documents for ensuring the sustainable use of Montserrat's precious natural resources. It will ensure also that we make good progress in meeting our commitments under the St Georges Declaration, and the Environment Charter and will show our aspiration to be exemplary custodians of our globally important biodiversity under the Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Minister stressed from the start that no-one here is rushing into anything in relation to the Hazard Level System Zones and, in fact, this project is not expecting to do any major works in the south during its 2 years duration. What it is trying to do is to take on board everyone's views and concerns, and attempt to work progressively to develop a plan that we can all share for the Southern Hills. This could add to the tourism product, and the outcomes from such a plan could enrich Montserrat. It was obvious that, if we do not work together to do that, we will miss an opportunity and we will also shirk our shared responsibilities to future generations of Montserratians.

Dr Mike Pienkowski said that UKOTCF are very pleased to work with colleagues in the Ministry, the Department of Environment, and the Montserrat National Trust on this successful application to UK Government's Darwin Plus Programme. The project has been worked up, and outside funding and in-kind support for it secured, from the UK Government, our other project partners, Montana State University (USA), Treweek Environmental Consultants (UK), and UKOTCF. The GoM/MNT/UKOTCF team are now very pleased to be starting the various aspects of this project here in Montserrat.

He summarised the rationale of the project as to give unique and other important species the best chance of survival, and to increase the capacity on island to achieve this. The best way of avoiding the extinction of any species is to maximise its range.

Montserrat is, of course, already small. The new project relates to this: "Maximizing long-term survival prospects of Montserrat's endemic species and ecosystem-services."

The project addresses the needs in several ways. Several elements concern how we give the best opportunities to our special native animals and plants to survive alongside us in the north of the island, as well as ensuring continued natural ecosystem services to ourselves. This workshop, however, concentrated on the challenging issue in the project of making the best use of the south, and taking account of all the constraints.

He noted that there are very important areas of remaining forest in the south, for example at Roche's. And there are many other aspects in the south of great potential importance to Montserrat, and to the world beyond.

Dr Pienkowski stressed that the team wanted to start deliberately with all the stakeholders to find a way of building a plan together over the two years of the project. He added that: "To achieve these ends, the project needs to learn from all stakeholders their desires for the south and their concerns. It is recognised that the desires of some may initially conflict with the concerns of others. In some cases, this may simply be due to misunderstandings that we can resolve. In others, they may be more substantive. However, by sharing these views, we can start to identify ways of modifying approaches to make them compatible with each other. No-one expects this to be easy. However, if we do not start a process of sharing our wishes and concerns openly, progress will not happen." He encouraged all to take the opportunity to participate in this workshop and its follow-up, both by putting forward their ideas, and allowing others to put forward theirs. He thought that, probably, no-one would agree with everything that some others say but, by the end of the project, we should have a plan that we can all agree to – and, by achieving that, we would have a chance of getting outside support to implement the plan.

Mike Pienkowski introduced **Sarah Barnsley** and **Emma Cary** (UKOTCF volunteers, who had been working on the review of progress on the Environment Charters and towards the Aichi



*Northern part of the
Roche's area.
Photo: James 'Scriber'
Daley*

this, especially help with zoning, but that it needs ground-truthing, so will need access.

It was noted that the lands in the south are historically more fertile than in the north, and therefore have the ability to be very productive. Suggestions of how to best use the non-forest areas included farming and pastureland, harvesting fruit such as guava and the planting of fruit trees, charcoal production (for the control of casuarinas and acacia as well as economic benefit), and use of existing tree cover

Targets which had just been published, and is available on the UKOTCF website at www.ukotcf.org) to facilitate the next stage of the workshop. Participants were invited to introduce themselves, which they did.

For the first aspect of the workshop, participants were asked to consider the question: “**why would it be good to carry out work in the south?**” – the question was deliberately broad to draw out as many ideas as possible and generate discussion. The facilitators noted that we would move to consider in the next question the problems we would need to overcome. In response to a question, it was clarified that we are considering the whole of the south, although those interested in biodiversity would naturally tend to focus on Roche's. Participants were asked to each write one point in answer to this question. These were then discussed in detail and in turn. A few aspects are mentioned below.

The primary consideration appeared to be biodiversity conservation. Many participants mentioned particular species that they felt were part of Montserrat's identity and that could benefit from work in the south. These included the Montserrat oriole, mountain chicken frog and Montserrat orchid. In addition to individual species, the recovery of ecosystems as a whole was seen as a benefit, such as through the protection of degrading areas, and the regeneration and restoration of tropical forest. Participants recognised the importance of the ecosystem services provided by the forest, such as the island's pure water supplies and drainage, and the need for an assessment of the water-table to enable long-term survival of these services. It was noted that the water supply is being threatened by the breakup of forest due to activities of feral livestock, as is forest regeneration in Roche's.

Participants were keen to stress the importance of an overall assessment of the south to establish the status of different areas (vegetation, zoning, invasives, access etc). The use of satellite imagery was proposed as one means of achieving this. It was noted and welcomed that UKOTCF's Manager, Catherine Wensink, is investigating use of satellite imagery in this context. Participants recognised that a lot can be done with

for both cocoa and shade coffee plantations.

Other points made included:

- Boosting food production by using land in the south would decrease reliance on imports.
- Increasing the scope of tourism on the island through organised tours, heritage sites, nature trails and reserves were proposed.
- These reserves could also develop employment opportunities through ranger roles and tour guiding, and increased local involvement.
- There is further scope for the cultivation of endemic species for use in private gardens [an aspect which is potentially an extension of part of the project in the north of the island].
- Improving access and infrastructure are essential considerations, both for Montserrattians and tourism activities.
- Some areas are accessible by sea at present although this is challenging.

The majority of participants were in agreement that there was huge potential for the conservation of biodiversity.

The next section of the workshop focused on the **constraints and issues which might be faced when doing more in the south**. Participants were asked to each write one point relating to this. These, and ideas on how they might be addressed, were then discussed more fully.

The majority of points raised by participants referred to the issue of access to the south, including safety aspects. For any work in the south, there needs to be improved access, transportation and infrastructure. As discussed earlier in the workshop, an essential requirement is an overall assessment of the south before any work takes place. Different areas will be good for different things, and an overall assessment would generate a map with information on different zones and ownership details. Consultation was seen as integral to defining zones and negotiating access, both at authority and landowner level. Under the Conservation and



On this and following pages: views during visits to the Roche's. Photos: James 'Scriber' Daley

Silver Hills, or worse, with erosion, a reduced water-catchment and increased feral livestock and invasive species issues. Taking no action would result in a loss of species biodiversity and missed opportunities. The potential for improving the situation in the south was widely acknowledged, with participants citing the example of the reforestation programme

Environmental Management Act (CEMA), part 7, designation of protected areas is possible. None of these designations require government to take land away from owners – but rather form a partnership, with incentives for the landowner (such as property tax relief). This already happens in the Centre Hills and may act as an incentive for landowners in the south to become involved.

Work would require collaboration with the Montserrat Volcano Observatory and the Police to assess levels of volcanic activity, risk and the safety of doing more in the south. The need to assess the impact of existing activities such as sand-mining was also discussed, as was the linking of any new activities to area planning, ensuring the involvement of Physical Planning from the start.

Alongside the aspects of access, risk and safety, feral livestock was perceived as a major issue. This would need to be addressed at an early stage to enable the advancement of environmental work. As a minimum requirement, it was decided that preventing feral livestock from advancing into new areas was important, as well as monitoring of the situation.

Constraints identified include human and financial resources, such as the cost of transporting materials to the south, the need for scientific skills and other expertise, and the lack of historical data for comparison.

The Minister asked **James 'Scriber' Daley** to describe what the south looks like and how it feels, and Scriber provided a most helpful description of the various areas, as well as the changes taking place or likely.

With this background, participants considered: **what**

will happen if we do nothing in the south?

Participants discussed how, if nothing was done in the south, the area would become like

carried out 20-30 years ago in the Silver Hills, which demonstrated that fencing an area led to vegetation returning. As one participant put forward: 'why not do more in the south?'

Mike Pienkowski ended the workshop by summarising the next steps and thanking participants for their input. He introduced **Nicolas Tirard** as the Project Officer just appointed to work out of MNT. Mike noted that, after the workshop, one activity would be to prepare, for participants and others interested, a report of this workshop, based on the comments and notes being taken during the session, for which he thanked his UKOTCF colleagues. He added that the UKOTCF team and Montserrat partners would start to explore ideas, and may come back to participants with questions to clarify or for further ideas. It was expected to have another workshop late in the year.

He explained that the team expect to develop this cycle throughout the two years of the project, with workshops about half-yearly and other work in between. It was recognised that the aim is to have developed, by the end of the two years, a plan that all participants can feel comfortable with. He pointed out that, if that can be done, we can start to look for funding and other resources to start to implement our joint plan. The meeting agreed that, if we are not agreed, that would be hopeless to try to proceed, even though doing nothing in the south is a decision which would have serious negative consequences.



Roche's Yard, looking northward to Centre Hills and Silver Hills

SOS Nature of Montserrat team

In this regular section of our newsletter, we introduce some of the team working on the project. In the first few issues of the newsletter, we will obviously be tending to cover those involved in planning and developing the project. In later issues, we envisage that the balance will change to include more of those implementing the project on the ground.

Sarita Francis OBE

Executive Director, Montserrat National Trust

Sarita holds a BA in Geography and Linguistics and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education from the University of the West Indies; as well



as Diploma and Certificate in Environmental Management from Manitoba Institute of Management, Canada and ICCE, UK, respectively; and Certificate of Public Service Law, Commonwealth Secretariat.

Sarita Francis took up the position of Director of the Montserrat National Trust in 2013 after retiring as Deputy Governor in the Montserrat Public Service.

Her career in the Public Service spans some forty years during which she worked in Education as a Geography Teacher and Deputy Principal until 1993. She served as Montserrat's Director of Housing from 1999 to 2001, where she developed a Housing Register for displaced persons and Housing Allocation Criteria, as well as coordinating the development and implementation of the Housing Strategy for Montserrat and implementing a Housing Strategy.

Mrs Francis was appointed Permanent Secretary to the Office of the Chief Minister in 2001, and was responsible for Government Business, Sports, Information, Culture, Protocol & Regional Affairs, as well as coordinating relationships and communication with the Governments of the Caribbean, British Government, other Overseas Territories and the European Union.

She was promoted to Chief Establishment Officer/Deputy Governor in 2007 and was instrumental in delivering the Public Service Reform Programme across Government. Mrs Francis played a pivotal role in the implementation of the changes brought about by the New Montserrat Constitution in 2008. She was responsible for providing strategic leadership to the Montserrat Public Service and creating, within Government as a whole, structures, systems, and processes which foster and facilitate planning, performance measurement, and accountability as well as the development, co-ordination, integration, implementation, communication and evaluation of Government policy, and providing timely advice to the Governor and Executive Council.

As Deputy Governor and Head of Public Service (2009-2012), Sarita also deputised for the Governor of Montserrat in his absence from the island, as well as chairing the Disaster Management Committee which plans and implements strategies for Disaster Preparedness, Response and Mitigation, and managing Consular

matters including processing Passport & Permanent Residence and British Overseas Territories.

Sarita Francis became involved with the Montserrat National Trust in 1985, and headed the Environmental Education Committee. In 1994, she was transferred to the Trust to work on Environmental Education. She was President of the Trust during the height of the volcanic crisis and had to assume management of the organization and was instrumental in relocating the Trust Office and Museum from Plymouth to its new headquarters in Olveston.

Apart from her years of voluntary service to the Trust, Sarita has served on many Boards including the Montserrat Tourist Board, the Bank of Montserrat and Credit Union Boards, and UWI Guild of Graduates. She is a member of the Cultural Centre Committee and the Montserrat's Arts Council. Sarita has one son, Dion, who is a Civil Engineer and Director of his Company, Engineering Design and Construction (EDC) Ltd, in Montserrat.

Dr Mike Pienkowski

Honorary Executive Director, UKOTCF

Mike donates most of his time, unpaid, to running UKOTCF, to enable it to achieve its aims in supporting territory conservation bodies, by remaining engaged with its member organisations at all levels from policy to on-the-ground projects.

Mike holds a PhD in Zoology, from Durham University, on the feeding ecology and behaviour of visually foraging shorebirds (plovers) as compared to tactile foragers; and comparative breeding



Mike, in a rather colder UKOT

biology in Britain and Greenland, 1973-1976; and a BSc in Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia (UEA) 1969-72.

He has been involved in research and conservation for over 50 years, and in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies for over 20 years. Early research and conservation work was on waders (shorebirds): organiser and leader of Cambridge-London Iceland Expedition 1970, UEA Expedition to Morocco 1971, and UEA Expedition to Tarfaya 1972, to study migration systems and conservation requirements of coastal birds; joint organiser, scientific co-ordinator and leader of advance party and base-camp team for Joint Biological Expedition to NE Greenland 1974; Chairman of international conference in the Ukraine in 1992, resulting in the Odessa Protocol on international co-operation on migratory flyway research and conservation.

He held research posts at Durham University 1973-1984 centring on coastal ecology, ecology & behaviour of coastal birds and migration systems. He joined the Nature Conservancy Council (UK Government's then nature conservation agency and adviser) as Head of Ornithology; amongst many other initiatives, he established and managed the successful programme to re-introduce red kites to England and Scotland

(Chairman JNCC/RSPB project team 1987-95). He chaired also the sea-eagle reintroduction team 1988-92. He managed and expanded the *Seabirds at Sea Team*, initiated a first programme on what became known as High-nature-value Farm-land (where traditional approaches beneficial to wildlife are maintained), and negotiated and managed the major UK Government contracts with, and supervised the work of, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (1984-91).

He was also a leader in perhaps the largest conservation struggle in Britain in recent decades, the natural peat-bogs of northernmost mainland Scotland. This was ultimately successful but at the cost of losing what had probably been UK's most successful official conservation body, NCC. The story has recently been told more fully than before in a chapter in the book *Nature's Conscience* (edited by Thompson, Birks & Birks, Langford Press, UK 2015): pp 401-440 *The Flow Country: battles fought, war won, organisation lost* by David Stroud, Tim Reed, Mike Pienkowski & Richard Lindsay.

He became Assistant Chief Scientist of NCC in 1990, and was simultaneously Head of the Implementation Team (1990-1) for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (NCC's successor body). As JNCC's Director Life Sciences 1991-95, he was responsible also for overall resource planning and management.

Co-Chairman international conference on lead-poisoning in wetlands, Brussels 1991; Chairman UK Government's group to end the use of gunshot lead in wetlands; and a member of Steering Group for Special Programme on large-scale processes in ecology & hydrology, for Natural Environment Research Council/ Scottish Office (1994-9).

In scientific publication, Mike has written or edited 11 books, and written well over 200 published scientific journal papers and articles. Senior Editor of the international *Journal of Applied Ecology* (1994-9) and, earlier, *Ringing & Migration* and the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* (now *Wader Study*).

Mike has worked on various roles in the voluntary sector (e.g. Head of International Legislation & Funding Department, RSPB 1995-1997; Director, European Forum on Nature Conservation & Pastoralism 1998-2001.) Voluntary roles include Vice-President & Council, British Ornithologists' Union (1991-2003); Programme Committee, WWF-UK (1992-2002); Council, British Ecological Society (1993-1999); Council, Wetlands International (1988-1998); President, International Wader Study Group (1992-2009); Environment Committee, Institute of Petroleum (1994-5); Vice-President, Advisory Committee on Agriculture & Environment to Directorate-General Agriculture, European Commission (1999-2001); UK Executive Committee, IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) (2006-present); Expert Panel advising Ministers in UK Dept of Culture, Media & Sport on UK's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites (2010-11); previously consultant to FCO & DFID on Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP).

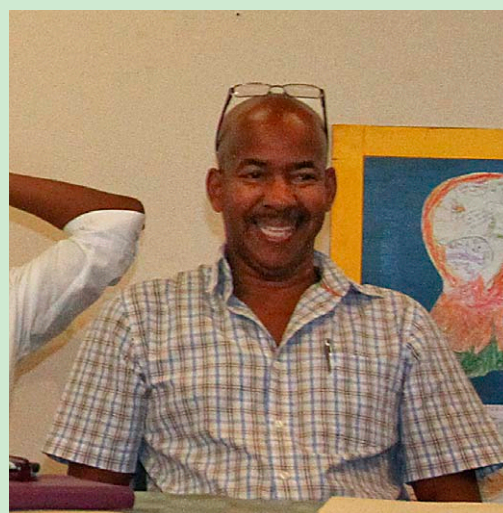
Dr Pienkowski has managed UKOTCF's programme over 20 years, and involved in projects in Montserrat for most of this time. He has managed projects in support of several UKOTs as well as cross-territory, e.g. facilitator to the Governments of the Turks & Caicos Islands and of St Helena on the development of pilot strategies to implement Environment Charters, with advice on this given also to Falkland Islands, Ascension, Pitcairn, Alderney and others. Consultant to UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to review actual and potential Ramsar Convention Wetlands of International Importance in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (2004-5); Expert consultant to the Ramsar Convention on

Wetlands of International Importance (2001-2). He co-ordinated the successful application to the EU Regional Fund for the project on Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies (MPASSE) to provide major funding for the British Virgin Islands, TCI and the Cayman Islands. He was also the British lead in securing EU Research funding for Net-BiOME, a project embracing French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and British overseas entities in coordinated biodiversity research in EU Overseas entities. He led NGO effort, in support of FCO (and later DFID and Defra) in developing the Environment Charter agreements between HMG and the UKOTs. He led pilot facilitation of local strategy development to mainstream these, and later collated and publishing information from the territories to monitor implementation.

Mike has been an External Examiner for: University of Durham BSc degrees in Environmental Sciences (1995-1999); and higher degree examiner or consultant for the Universities of Simon Fraser (Vancouver), Cape Town, Durham, Anglia and Wales.

Gerard A L Gray

Director of Environment, Montserrat Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Land, Housing and the Environment



Mr Gerard Gray participates in a workshop on Environmental Impact Assessments, Montserrat. Photo: Catherine Wensink

Gerard Gray has an MSc (Distinction) from the University of East Anglia, UK, in Applied Ecology and Conservation, 2000, where he worked on *Population Census and Breeding Season Habitat Selection of Cetti's Warbler (Cettia cetti)* at *Strumpshaw and Buckenham Nature Reserves, UK*. Previously, he earned a BSc (Hons) from the University of New Brunswick, Canada, in Silviculture, 1990; and a Diploma (Hons), from Jamaica School of Agriculture, Jamaica, in Tropical Agriculture, 1981.

Since 2006, he has headed the Environment Department, with the role of optimising the conservation and use of environmental goods and services in support of national sustainable development.

Previously, he was Director of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Montserrat (2000-2004) and then Technical Manager, Montserrat Tourism Development Project.

He has previously been Coordinator or Main Project Partner on two successful Darwin projects, concerning feral livestock control and mountain chicken conservation, as well as working in field survey and establishment and maintenance of nature trails.

Catherine Wensink

Manager & Senior Conservation Officer, UKOTCF

Catherine holds a BSc in Zoology from Queen Mary College University of London and an MSc in Conservation Biology from Manchester Metropolitan University. During these years, she studied marine invertebrates, herbivores in Kenya and the management of protected areas in Tanzania. She has worked for the Environment Agency in the UK and for the World Conservation Union IUCN Office for Europe in Brussels, where she was involved in the organisation of the important conference in Paris in 2006 on Biodiversity in European Development Cooperation – which involved a strong element on Overseas Countries and Territories.

Since 2007, she has worked with UKOTCF on a variety of projects. Some highlights include: major roles in the organisation of two conferences for conservation practitioners from all the UK Overseas Territories in Cayman (2009) and Gibraltar (2015), organising several receptions in UK Parliament and the Royal Geographical Society to raise awareness of the UKOTs and providing technical advice on the recent *Britain's Treasure Island* book. Specifically for Montserrat, she has led on a series of projects involving the use of traditional methods of rainwater harvesting to showcase sustainable use of natural resources for this and another territory, and facilitated many partnerships for



A stick insect finds Catherine in the forest in Montserrat

example between Montserrat and the Waitt Foundation. She made several visits to the island in 2015, and was one of the authors of the guide to natural and other heritage sites *Birding in Paradise: The Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat – A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites*, as well as contributing to publications on other islands.

While still undertaking her UKOTCF role, Catherine spent 2011 in Bonaire, Dutch Caribbean, assisting local NGOs there while improving her Dutch. Catherine has two small children and enjoys teaching them about the environment. They have visited several of the UK Overseas Territories together and she brought them to Montserrat in 2015. Her son talks about Montserrat all the time and the little plane he took to get there. Forum News 43 featured an article with him wearing his Mountain chicken T-shirt at the British Bird Fair. She hopes he will be a good ambassador of Montserrat given that his birthday is on St Patricks Day.

Ann Pienkowski

Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator; and Secretary Wider Caribbean Working Group

Ann hunts birds in the forest for video photography.



Ann holds a BSc in Biological Sciences from the University of East Anglia, and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education from the University of

Durham. She has participated in research on shorebird migration at Durham University, on a project led by the late Professor Peter Evans, and research on curriculum development at Moray House College of Education, Edinburgh.

Ann worked as a primary school teacher in Peterborough from 1986 until her “official” retirement in 2010. Combining her interests in ecology and education, she voluntarily took on the role of Environmental Education Co-ordinator for UKOTCF in 2006, and has worked particularly with partners in the Turks and Caicos Islands but also elsewhere in the UKOTs/CDs to develop environmental education resources.

These have included the curriculum-linked “Wonderful Water” environmental education materials for the Turks and Caicos Islands, which used examples from TCI to deliver required objectives for upper primary and lower secondary schools in TCI. She has produced the Virtual Tours for Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, BVI, and Pitcairn, and has trained other UKOTCF personnel on the production of further Virtual Tours.

Since October 2010 she has been Secretary of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group. She has organised and chaired the Environmental Education and Public Awareness sessions at the UKOTCF-organised conferences in Cayman in 2009 and Gibraltar in 2015.

Ann’s other interests include ski-ing, walking and video photography.



From left: James 'Scriber' Daley, Johan Wensink and Isla Wensink, after a successful walk along the Oriole Walkway.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Nicolas Tirard

Project Officer, Montserrat National Trust

*Nicolas on the Silver Hills,
Montserrat.*

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Nicolas holds a Masters degree in Agronomy from the École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Toulouse, France (ENSAT), and a Masters in Education from the Université Montpellier, France. During his degree at ENSAT, he worked with Réseau tortues marines in Guadeloupe to develop a protocol for monitoring sea-turtle populations. The protocol has since been followed through a volunteering programme. He has personally volunteered



there in 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009. He has worked as a secondary school biology and geology teacher and as a plant nursery manager in France.

He moved to Montserrat in 2012. While on island he has been very busy. He is the co-founder of Montserrat Hydroponics Ltd, which aims to introduce the technique of hydroponics to Montserrat. Hydroponics is the process of growing plants in sand, gravel, or liquid, with added nutrients but without soil. The technique can be used to produce vegetables with no significant impact on the environment. It requires few resources to implement. For example, it uses recirculated rain water, takes up little space and does not require pesticides. He has been working with farmers and the Montserrat Community College to transfer his knowledge and skills. He has authored a book about the trees of Montserrat and has been a volunteer in the Montserrat National Trust botanic gardens, initially providing guided tours and later to provide a listing of names and descriptions of all the plants displayed in the gardens.

He is a PADI rescue diver and enjoys organizing hiking and fishing tours.

SOS Nature of Montserrat project partner organisations

In this regular section of our newsletter, we will profile, in turn, the organisations which are partners in the project.

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF), a not-for-profit charity, brings together conservation organisations in the UK Overseas Territories and supporting ones in Britain and elsewhere. Most of its wide network of experienced personnel work unpaid to respond to requests from the Territories, including Montserrat. UKOTCF is the only body dedicated solely to addressing all aspects of conservation across the UKOTs.

The UKOTs and CDs support 94% of unique global biodiversity for which the UK is responsible under international agreements. Since 1986, UKOTCF has worked with civil society and governments to overcome threats to the unique habitats and species of the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs).

The UKOTs and CDs support far more endemic species (those found nowhere else) than the UK itself and are home to extraordinary and rare ecosystems.

UKOTCF is the only UK-registered charity (no. 1058483) focussing solely on protecting and promoting the environments across all the UKOTs & CDs. It does this by providing expertise, information, and liaison between non-profits and governments, both in the UK and in the Territories themselves, as well as planning and managing projects together with local partners. The Forum's main challenges are: to help its territory partners both to secure local understanding of the value of wildlife and heritage and to conserve this; to raise awareness in UK and achieve a proper level of funding from UK Government for conservation in UK territories; and to secure adequate resourcing for the Forum. Tremendous progress has been made in these areas but much remains to be done.

Many of the UKOTs are small islands, so the pool of resources is naturally smaller. This makes collaborations with external

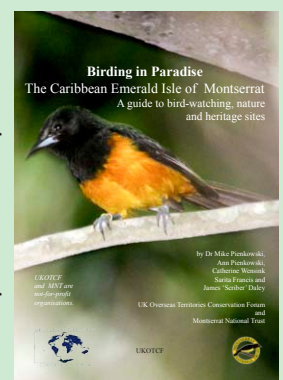
partners an important part of taking new initiatives forward.

We collaborate with governments and non-government organisations in the UKOTs & CDs by supporting their work and meeting requests for assistance. Many of these make up our membership.

In 2015, we brought together over 100 UKOT/CD conservation workers, and some ministers, in Gibraltar for a conference planning new initiatives. We provide support also through projects.

UKOTCF has supported conservation in Montserrat for over 20 years. Projects have included:

- Planning and securing support for the present project
- Producing a guide booklet and, separately, a video on bird-watching and other heritage sites on Montserrat: *Birding in Paradise: The Caribbean Emerald Isle of Montserrat – A guide to bird-watching, nature and heritage sites.*
- Securing the pro-bono services of a world expert on environmental impact assessments, and providing with her a course for decision-makers and technical personnel to improve the incorporation of environmental considerations in physical planning





Participants in the latest working conference of conservation practitioners and decision-makers of UK Overseas Territories & Crown Dependencies, organised by UKOTCF and HM Government of Gibraltar, July 2016. Photo: Juan Carlos Teuma, Gibraltar Government Press Office

- Working with the Department of the Environment, the Fisheries Unit and the National Trust, to help design projects and secure funding, including for the National Trust to preserve and index historical documents, and to capture rain-water to demonstrate wise water-use in gardens.



- Including Montserrat personnel in networks to exchange expertise and best practice in conservation matters - including supporting Montserrat attendance at UKOTCF-organised conferences for UKOT conservation practitioners every few years; involving Montserrat personnel in UKOTCF's Wider Caribbean Working Group, via Skype and email throughout each year
- Including material on Montserrat on www.ukotcf.org, especially via the Virtual Tour of the territory
- Linking UKOTs (alongside the overseas entities of other European Union member states) into the biodiversity programme Net-BiOME, so that Montserrat was able to benefit in one of the funded projects despite UK Government not contributing to the research fund
- Facilitating training and planning for implementing international commitments

- Co-ordinating discussions following the start of volcanic activity as to which organisations could contribute to emergency programmes, leading to several still-current conservation and research projects
- Securing funding for, and initiating, a study by Montserratian partners on biodiversity survey & planning
- A previous UKOTCF Co-ordinator spending a year volunteering on Montserrat in the 1990s helping to develop the National Trust
- Securing other grant funding, specialist volunteer help, specialist advice and other assistance for Montserrat conservation bodies
- Establishing the international importance of Montserrat sites, under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The majority of UKOTCF's work is donated by committed individuals, but some funding is necessary to cover costs, to allow this work to take place. Donations can be made at www.ukotcf.org. (This includes facilities to make donations via PayPal. Payments are specified in British pounds, but your card issuer will convert to your own currency.) If you wish to explore larger contributions, please contact UKOTCF's Director or Manager/Coordinator (see Contact Us on www.ukotcf.org).

