

# The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories

*Raising awareness  
about the wealth of  
biodiversity in the  
UK Overseas  
Territories*

## UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



## CONSERVATION FORUM

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum exists to promote the co-ordinated conservation of the diverse and increasingly threatened plant and animal species and natural habitats of UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs). It aims to do this by providing assistance in the form of expertise, information and liaison between non-governmental organisations and governments, both in the UK and in the Territories themselves.

Founded in 1987, the Forum has gained worldwide support and recognition as being the best source of information and expertise on conservation in UK's Overseas Territories by both Governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Forum priorities are:

*To raise public awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in UKOTs, and potential threats*

*To facilitate the implementation of international conservation conventions*

*To promote compilations of existing data, surveys of biodiversity and ecological studies, to inform plans for sustainable use and conservation*

*To assist the development of biodiversity targets and action plans to achieve these for each UKOT*

*To network information amongst UK and its Overseas Territories conservation groups, governments, educators and environmentalists*

*To support conservation groups in the UKOTs, and to publicise conservation activities and successes*

*To facilitate design and management of projects*

*To seek funding for projects in the UKOTs and for Forum activities*

The Forum produces a newsletter *Forum News* and other publications, including *UK Dependent Territories: A Conservation Review* (an analysis of conservation progress and requirements), as well as information in other media. Our web-site can be accessed at: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

The Territories support habitats for animals and plants found nowhere else in the world, such as the Cayman parrots and several endangered Caribbean iguanas. Many Forum projects involve studying these little known areas to aid their protection and survival.



Photographs courtesy of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library.

Production of this board was supported by WWF-UK.



This booklet provides an introduction to the remarkable biodiversity of UK's Overseas Territories, and the work of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and its partner organisations to conserve this heritage. The booklet is based on a series of interpretation boards, including three introductory ones and one each for fifteen individual UK Overseas Territories. Summary information is included on the sixteenth UK Overseas Territory and the three Crown Dependencies. More information on these and the other territories is available on the Forum's web-site ([www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org))

# Some facts & figures about UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES and their natural history



**The British Indian Ocean Territory contains the Great Chagos Bank which is the largest atoll in the world. BIOT has 60sq. km. of land area within an ocean area of 54,500sq. km**



**19 taxa of reptile are endemic to the Cayman Islands including 2 subspecies of Rock Iguana which are subject of a conservation programme. The native Crocodile (Crocodylus actutus) is now extinct around the islands**



Anegada Rock Iguana (*Cyclura pinguis*)

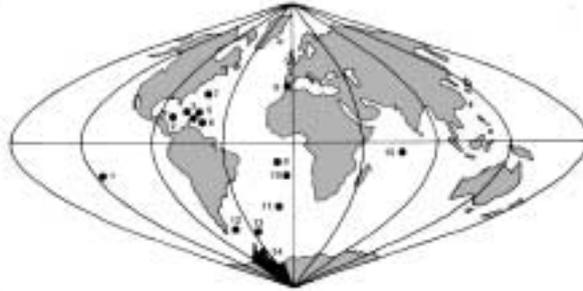
**18 Species of whales, porpoises and dolphins have been recorded around the Falkland Islands**

Islands are fragile ecosystems and are under threat from introduced predators such as cats and rats and non-native weed species especially on St. Helena and Ascension

**The Falklands endemic wolf (*Dusicyon australis*) was hunted to extinction in 1876**

**The permanent resident populations range from 50 in Pitcairn, 313 in Tristan da Cunha up to 12,000 (pre volcano) in Montserrat and 59,000 in Bermuda**

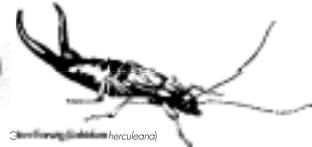
1. Pitcairn Is.
2. Cayman Is.
3. Turks & Caicos Is.
4. British Virgii
5. Anguilla
6. Montserrat
7. Bermuda
8. Gibraltar
9. Ascension
10. St. Helena
11. Tristan da C
12. Falkland Is.
13. South Geo
14. British Antarctic Territory (BAT)
15. British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)
16. Channel Islands & the Isle of Man



So far about 500 endemic invertebrates are known to science from the UK Overseas Territories. Of the 160000 species of insects 10000 are endemic



Mountain Frog (*Rhinophrynus dorsalis*) (Montserrat)



Giant Crab (*Gecarcinus lateralis*) (Channel Islands)



Ascension Frigate Bird (*Fregata aquila*)

There are 16 known endemic bird species in the UK Overseas Territories, including the threatened Ascension Frigate Bird (*Fregata aquila*)

Knowledge of the biodiversity of the UK Overseas Territories is incomplete and more baseline taxonomic research is needed

**There are more than 200 endemic plant species throughout the UK Overseas Territories, with most occurring on St. Helena (46 species). This includes endemic Olive, Rosewood & Ebony trees which are some of the rarest species in the UK Overseas Territories**



St. Helena Rosewood (*Euclea pyramidalis*)  
Rosewood (*Euclea pyramidalis*)

**Apart from military or scientific personnel, the British Antarctic Territory, South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands and the British Indian Ocean Territory are uninhabited, as are many of the smaller islands of the UK Overseas Territories**



Ascension Hedgehog (*Chaetodon affinis*)

**59 of 126 species of moss on Tristan da Cunha are endemic**



Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

The Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) is known to nest within seven UK Overseas Territories: Anguilla, British Virgin Is., Cayman Is., Turks & Caicos, BIOT, Ascension & Henderson Is. (Pitcairn)

For further information about membership and the work of the UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CONSERVATION FORUM please contact:  
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Illustrations: Robin Buddens

## UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



## CONSERVATION FORUM

Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) lie SE of the Bahamas and 145 km north of Hispaniola. About 500 sq km of land is divided between 120 low islands and cays situated on shallow banks. Eight of the islands are home to 22,000 people; the majority reside on Providenciales, a major tourist destination. The Turks & Caicos National Trust is the membership-based voluntary organisation working to protect the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Islands.

The East Caicos, Middle Caicos and North Caicos wetland complex forms probably the best example of its type in the Caribbean. It is also one of the most natural amongst the 125 wetlands of international importance listed under the Ramsar Convention by the UK Government. On Providenciales, the wetlands have suffered severe environmental degradation, the result of rapid development for real estate and tourism, although areas of value remain through the protected area and National Parks system. An even greater threat to the natural environment is posed by proposals for major developments on the uninhabited islands—prime habitats for unique species such as rock iguana and the remaining breeding sites for turtles.

Work is underway by the TCI National Trust and the TCI Government to explore the potential for environmentally sustainable development, but further help is needed. The adoption of an eco-tourism approach would help to prevent the destruction of the natural habitat and safeguard biodiversity, cultural heritage and natural beauty of the Islands for present and future generations.

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Production of this board was supported by WWF-UK and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
London

# *Turks & Caicos Islands: Superb Wetlands where the Land meets the Sea*

A superb complex of natural coral reefs, tidal flats, mangroves and marshlands provide a haven for wildlife, and the natural basis of fisheries and tourism. The islands provide a home for at least 14 unique plants, reptiles (including the rock iguana pictured), and an unknown number of invertebrates, as well as the vulnerable reddish egret and West Indian whistling duck (pictured).



Photographs courtesy of Michael Gore FRPS & Mike Plankowski.

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## CONSERVATION FORUM

Montserrat, one of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean, lies 43 km SW of Antigua and 64 km NW of Guadeloupe. The volcanic island, 17 km long and 11 km wide, is mountainous, with streams and waterfalls amongst dense tropical vegetation. The rugged coastline offers no all-weather harbour, although several anchorages are sheltered by the island from the prevailing trade winds.

Montserrat is known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean due to a combination of historical Irish influences and the lush greenness of the landscape. The Montserrat National Trust, founded by ordinance in 1970, has been involved in activities aimed at conserving the natural and cultural heritage of Montserrat.

On 18 July 1995, the Soufriere Hills volcano in the south of the island became active for the first time in 350 years. Increased pyroclastic activity killed 19 people on 25 June 1997. The capital, Plymouth, was destroyed after the Gages wall was overtopped in August 1997. Half of the island has been evacuated and much of it will probably remain uninhabitable for the next decade or more. The effects of the eruptions on the island's plants and animals are being studied where circumstances allow. Extensive monitoring of the Montserrat oriole - the National Bird - the mountain chicken and other important key indicator species, is ongoing. The Montserrat galliwasp has been sighted for the first time in over 30 years and more scientific research into habitat is necessary. Since volcanic activity began, the human population on the island has declined from approximately 11,000 to about 4,500. Volcanic activity has declined since March 1998. A sustainable development plan has been developed for Montserrat and it will be important to integrate environmental aspects into the island's redevelopment.

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Photographs courtesy of Sara Cross, Montserrat National Trust and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library. Painting by Tracy Redburn.

# Montserrat: The Caribbean's Emerald Isle



Despite its small size, Montserrat supports at least 132 tree species, 59 species of birds and 13 mammals.

The Montserrat oriole (pictured) is found nowhere else. Also restricted to Montserrat are the galliwasp (pictured) and another (unnamed) lizard. The endangered and edible 'mountain chicken' (a frog) is found only on Montserrat and Dominica. Several other species are restricted to Montserrat and some nearby islands.

