



UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report 2001/02

Chairman's Report on behalf of the Executive Committee

This report covers the period from July 2001 to June 2002. The Forum has had a year of mixed achievements. It has continued to establish good working relationships with Government and has managed to maintain a high level of regular contact with UK Government to mutual advantage.

Forum personnel have made visits to Turks and Caicos, to complete a 5-year programme of capacity development and the Darwin Initiative project, and to initiate implementation of the management plan for the major Ramsar wetland and surrounding areas there, as well as develop ideas with the TCI Government and National Trust for strategic planning in the context of the Environment Charter. In Montserrat, Forum personnel have assisted in the development of major project proposals. Executive Committee member, Martin Drury went to St Helena to advise in the setting up of the St Helena National Trust, the launch of this taking place in London and St Helena on 21 May. David Taylor and other Executive Committee members have visited the Falkland Islands in various capacities. Jim Stevenson has visited Ascension to establish the RSPB-led restoration project there. As this report period ends, plans are being made for Mike Brooke and a colleague to visit Pitcairn in connection with the management plan for Henderson Island World Heritage Site. Work is proceeding with Bermuda in organising an environmental conference to take place in March 2002.

Funding has continued to challenge the Forum during the year, making it very difficult to meet all the requests for assistance from the UKOTs and others. Applications to charitable trusts have been minimally successful. This is possibly due in part to the current financial state of world markets. However, another important ele-

ment is the low awareness throughout UK that the UKOTs are British territory and hold its most valuable – and threatened – biodiversity. As a consequence, work relevant to these parts of UK is treated as if foreign and ineligible for funding from many sources. However, because the

UKOTs are British territory, neither are they eligible for most international aid to developing countries. The lack of implementation of the DFID fund for environmental work promised in the 1999 White Paper on UKOTs is a continuing disappointment. So was the outcome of the Darwin Initiative funding this year, a second year of no awards to UKOT projects, so that Darwin support to UKOTs has actually declined since the year of the White Paper. The

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Environment Fund for Overseas Territories has

sational difficulties. The Forum is working with FCO staff to maximise the effective use of this fund. It was thus particularly disappointing that FCO indicated late in the year, and without consultation, that this separate fund established as a valuable consequence of the White Paper was being merged into funds not specifically for UKOTs. The Forum has been working closely with UKOTS to encourage implementation of their commitments under the Environmental Charters resulting from the White Papers and signed in September 2001. Therefore it is particularly disappointing that DFID, DEFRA and FCO are giving such negative signals in response of UK's commitments.

On a more positive note five associate member organisations of the Forum in the UKOTs took up the invitation to become full subscribing members of the Forum. The Friends of the Overseas Territories is slowly attracting subscribers and various Forum member organisations and friends have been actively distributing leaflets to gain memberships.

Within each section below progress is reported and priorities highlighted for the coming year.



HRH Duke of York at Launch of the St Helena National Trust at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office



A Saturday morning bird-walk on Anguilla, with Jim Stevenson from RSPB and Karim Hodge from the ANT. (photo by Jackie Barlow, FCO.)

been the one financial commitment in the White Paper which has been met, and has been largely successful despite some organi-

Relations and links with UK Overseas Territories and UKOT NGOs

Some of the Forum's associate member organisations had previously expressed interest in becoming full subscribing member organisations of the Forum. The Executive Committee considered that this would be an appropriate reflection of the changing nature, and success, of the Forum, with UKOT organisations taking an increasing share of the role in guiding the Forum's direction. This view was endorsed by the Forum at its AGM. Five UKOT member or-

ganisations have already accepted the invitation to transfer to full membership of the Forum, Falklands Conservation, Turks & Caicos National Trust, Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, Bermuda Zoological Society and Friends of the Chagos. Several other members are considering a transfer to full membership. There will be no change in the Forum's support for those organisations retaining associate status. The Société Jersiaise formalised their relationship as an associate member with the Forum.

As noted in the Overview, Forum officers continue to work closely with the staff and Council of the Turks and Caicos Island National Trust, and the TCI Government. In October 2001, Colin Clubbe from RBG Kew and Sara Cross visited Montserrat to collaborate with the Montserrat National Trust in the development of a Darwin Initiative project proposal. This involved working collaboratively with the Trust and other sectors of Montserrat society to integrate a range of information and objectives identified during previous visits in 2001 into the project framework. Unfortunately the proposal was unsuccessful. However, Forum members continue to work with Montserrat on conservation issues.

Mike Pienkowski visited Bermuda to discuss with Bermuda NGO and Government partners details of an environmental conference that is to take place in Bermuda 22-27 March 2003. 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. Overseas Territories and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems will benefit from Bermuda's experiences and history of planning and conservation initiatives. Bermuda hopes to learn from the success of environmental programmes tried and tested elsewhere. The main topics, determined after wide consultations amongst conservationists working in the Overseas Territories, will be:

- Conservation issues of Bermuda and conference initiation by field visit
- Environmental Charters and strategic planning
- Managing conservation organizations
- Implementing management plans
- Climate change and other pollution-related issues

It is hoped that at least one government and one NGO representative from each UKOT will be able to attend.

Martin Drury, Executive Committee member of the Forum and recently retired Director-General of the National Trust, visited St Helena to offer his expertise in assisting in setting up the St Helena National Trust. A good deal of enthusiasm among members of the constituent NGOs and the support of the Territory's Government resulted in the St Helena National Trust being launched on 21 May 2002, jointly at a

function in the presence of HRH the Duke of York in London, while celebrations took place in St Helena marking the Quincentenar.

Relations with UK Government and government agencies

The Forum has maintained regular contact with UK Government at head of department level, and above. In addition to frequent ad-hoc meetings at various levels, the twice-yearly main meeting of the Forum and its member organisations and Government Departments has been made more effective, with the establishment of a number of interim meetings and updates between the major meetings. The Permanent Secretary of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office has indicated to his senior staff the impor-



The steel band perform in front of the Forum's display boards at one of the open days at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

tance that he attaches to the meeting. Nicola Brewer, Director for Global Issues, John Ashton Head of Environment Policy Department, and Alan Huckle, Head of Overseas Territories Department, participated in the meeting between the Forum and Government on 17 January 2002. There was also senior attendance from the Ministry of Defence, Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

With the attendance of Nicola Brewer, the Forum had the opportunity to express its concern about funding for the implementation of the Environment Charters particularly in the light of the non-implementation of DFID funding. Unfortunately, financial cuts in DFID have meant that the 1999 White Paper commitment has not been implemented, despite the recognition that this fund was to provide small compensation for the fact that UKOTs, although developing countries, are not eligible for support from the Global Environmental Facility, the international funding mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity – simply because they are British territory, and therefore not classed as developing.

The Forum has expressed concern regarding the fragmentation of the FCO's Environment

Fund for Overseas Territories, which had been proving successful. The Forum has worked closely with FCO to ensure the effectiveness of the funding. The Forum has severe doubts about dividing such a small fund. This could result in problems of inflexibility and lack of appropriate local expertise. However, the Forum was not consulted on the merging of the fund with non-UKOT funds announced a few weeks later.

The 2002 Darwin Initiative grant application round was disappointing, with no UKOT or Forum project proposal receiving funding – despite encouragement from the Darwin Initiative to the Forum to submit a proposal relating to the TCI work. As no Darwin project was funded for UKOTs in 2001, this would be the

second such year – a serious setback after the earlier progress. The Darwin Initiative funding had been a lifeline to work in several UKOTs.

The Forum is currently working with FCO to raise the profile of UKOTs with other Government Departments. The Forum and FCO have worked with the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (which leads on World Heritage Convention matters amongst other issues), to address the lack of a

management plan for Henderson Island, Pitcairn, and to develop proposals to extend the WH Site status at Gough Island to Inaccessible Island, Tristan da Cunha, in conjunction with the inhabitants. The Forum has also discussed with DEFRA inclusion of UKOTs in various reviews. At the request of DEFRA and the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Forum co-ordinated input from the UKOTs to UK's report to the Ramsar Convention Conference of the Parties.

The Forum Chairman, accompanied by colleagues, has briefed the newly appointed Governors Designate for Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, and Pitcairn, and the Commissioner for British Antarctic Territory and British Indian Ocean Territory, as well as further meetings with others. These early briefings have proven effective in demonstrating to Governors sources of advice at the Forum, its members and local partners. They have made them aware also, at an early stage in their term, of existing research projects, and the potential for other such projects which could benefit from UK Government funds, and be of value in addressing key questions relevant to effective government.

Conservation Priorities

Foreign Office Minister Baroness Amos and senior representatives of Overseas Territories signed a set of Environmental Charters on 26 September 2001. The Forum has been involved in the Charter concept from the earliest ideas for this before the 1999 White Paper. The Charters set out the mutual responsibilities of the UK and Overseas Territories regarding the environment. The Charters set out ten guiding principles, which express the key environmental commitments that the international community has adopted. It is for each Territory to establish the most suitable progress that will be necessary if these are to result in real environmental progress on the ground.

The next major stages in the development of the Environmental Charter process are the production of strategic action plans. UKOTs have indicated that a major need is for facilitators to work with local groups. The Forum is exploring with FCO ways of addressing this need.

Many of the activities addressed in other sections of this report address conservation priorities, which is an overarching concept.

Public Awareness and Publicity

One challenge common to work with various government departments and a wider public is the lack of understanding that UK is responsible for its Overseas Territories and that these are important in biodiversity terms. As part of the long, slow process of correcting this, the Forum has prepared a series of display boards, which have been widely used at various venues and are playing a part in celebrating the Queen's jubilee at the FCO open days. The remaining three Territory boards, Bermuda, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and British Antarctic Territory, were produced this year. The original fifteen boards have also been reproduced for wide dissemination in booklet form and on the Forum's website. A booklet incorporating also the three new boards will be produced. In addition to the boards, web-versions for Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man and Cyprus Sovereign Base areas have been produced for the website.

The Forum has raised the profile of UKOTs by various news items and the publication of its newsletter *Forum News 20* (published at the end of June 2001) and *21* (February 2002). This highlighted the work of Forum members in the UKOTs and remains an avenue for the exchange of information between the UKOTs. *Forum News* is published also in PDF format on the Forum's website.

Information Management

The database part of the Forum's website became live in January 2001 and is proving helpful to many of the UKOT partners and other users. A number of Forum members have been

trained in data entry, and momentum for inputting data is increasing. A new module addressing sites and topics has been added, and material is beginning to be entered. FCO requested that the Forum's website host a Bulletin Board to exchange views between the Territories on environmental issues stimulated by the *Breath of Fresh Air* teacher's pack. Although FCO have not yet been able to arrange for the use of the board for the purpose they originally planned, the Forum is developing the facility as a discussion group for general topics within those interested in the UKOTs. Member organisations which are generally unable to attend meetings have identified this need. The first two volunteer moderators of discussion groups within the facility have been identified, for invertebrate



Display board featuring
British Antarctic Territory

conservation and dealing with invasive species. Other volunteers in moderating discussion groups are being sought.

The Forum's web-site is being used also for publication of key documents, making them widely available with immediacy. The proceedings of the Gibraltar conference *Calpe 2000* were published in this way, within a year of the meeting. Other recent examples include Tristan da Cunha's management plan for Inaccessible Island.

Working Groups

Forum working groups have met on a regular basis and have established good contacts between the Territories themselves and with Territory government representatives. A review of guidelines on working procedures has resulted in more effective management of the groups. Reports from the Groups follow this overall report. The Forum has also been active in promoting conservation action, including progress towards designation of a Ramsar site, in the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, not currently covered by a Working Group.

Organisational Development

Although the Forum has remained on budget, it has to be recognised that, with a very low core income and almost no new project income during the year, the Forum's core work is depleting its meagre reserves built up over the previous two years. Forum members, led by the new Chairman of the Fundraising Committee, Dace Ground, have made considerable efforts to attract new funding. However, this has proved to be of limited success, as noted in the Overview. Fund-raising efforts are continuing. The Executive Committee has made the necessary decision to cut costs markedly at the start of the Forum's new financial year, so that the Forum can plan a

longer-term future. Until other means of funding are found, paid work has had to be reduced to maximise the prospects of a long-term future for the Forum and its important work. Sadly, this has meant ending the role of Director for Development, and the Forum pays tribute to the efforts of Sara Cross, latterly in this role and previously for several years as Co-ordinator. We wish her well in the future, and hope that her involvement in UKOTs will continue in some form.

Friends of the Overseas Territories was launched last year in response to requests from individuals to subscribe to publications and support the Forum's work. It has slowly been gaining subscriptions, with circulation of leaflets by member organisations and groups associated to the Forum. Certain other conservation bodies have indicated an interest in joining the Forum, and this is being explored.

The Forum's 5-year business plan has been completed successfully in respect of a remarkable number of its elements, long-term funding being the most notable exception. Following this, plans are being developed to resource a new review of the Forum's ways of working.

Acknowledgments

Many hours of voluntary work have been contributed by the Forum's Executive Committee members and other participants, including member organisations in the UK and the UK Overseas Territories. The Forum would like to thank these, as well as the following, in addition to its Member Organisations, for support via contracts, grants, donations in funds and kind, or in other ways during the year: all the Friends of the UKOTs for joining and their interest in the Forum; British Airways Assisting Conservation; ESRI; Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Norbellis Foundation; Russell and Mary Foreman 1980 Charitable Trust; William Haddon Charitable Trust and anonymous donors.

Report of the UKOTCF South Atlantic Working Group

There were again four meetings, three under David Taylor's Chairmanship and one under Ann Brown who was appointed Vice Chairman. Frances Marks took over as Secretary from Dorothy Evans.

SAWG has generally retained the same regular membership with one or two changes, though, disappointingly, WWF has ceased to be represented. The Group continued to be quite systematically informed on developments in the Territories and has received personal reports from visitors and researchers in the field. David Taylor, Ann Brown and Jim Stevenson have paid visits to the Falklands, while Martin Drury, Dorothy Evans and John Price, a new member, have all spent time on St. Helena.

Rebecca Cairns-Wicks (who is now Acting Project Coordinator of the National Trust) of St. Helena and Juliet Rose, a conservation researcher on St. Helena, visited the Group, as did Dr Alex Jones, researcher on invertebrates on Gough Island.

With the formation of the South Georgia Association in December 2001, South Georgia is now represented separately at SAWG by Roger Huxley who is their Treasurer.

The Forum year in the South Atlantic has been quite eventful. Ascension is in the throes of receiving a new constitution, while St Helena celebrated its 500th Anniversary in May 2002 and the Falklands the 20th Anniversary of the War in June 2002. Tristan da Cunha continues its recovery from the hurricane of 21 May 2001.

SAWG probably spent more time on discussing St Helena than anywhere else because of the developments taking place there, but developments and problems in all the Islands were all in the forefront of members' minds at some point or other. In St Helena the Group was able to offer practical help in the shape of Martin Drury's visit to assist in the setting up of the National Trust.

Falkland Islands

The considerable media coverage of the Falklands, marking the twenty years since the War, has described the growth of tourism there without saying much about the environmental implications. Falklands Conservation in the islands has responded to the problem by publishing an excellent visitors' guide to accessing the wildlife of the various islands without harming it. The

provision of a wardening service for the much visited king penguins at Volunteer Point is a further practical initiative. Their attractive office in the Visitor's Centre on the waterfront in Stanley is an important feature of the educational aspect of their work.

At the same time, Falklands Conservation continues to initiate and raise funds for the research work needed to underpin local conservation policies. Research that is in progress or planned covers sea birds, sea mammals, insects and plants. The society's Seabirds at Sea Team funded by the Falk-

lands Conservation has become a full member of the Forum.

South Georgia

SAWG welcomed the formation of the South Georgia Association 'to encourage interest in South Georgia and the conservation of its natural and cultural heritage.' It will doubtless monitor progress with the implementation of the Environmental Management Plan (on which the Group had a presentation by Dr David Walton of the British Antarctic Survey in October) and SAWG looks forward to collaborating with it.

St Helena

The Group's main focus in relation to St Helena has been on the formation of the National Trust. Here the Forum has played the important supportive and facilitative role it follows in many UK Overseas Territories by recruiting Martin Drury to visit St Helena in November and December 2001 to advise on the Trust's formation. The National Trust Bill was enacted on 5 December 2001 and the official launch of the Trust took place in May 2002, forming part of the 500th Centenary Celebrations.

The coming into being of the Trust occurs at a particularly apposite time in St Helena's history with the population having voted 'yes' in principle to the construction of an airport which would, of course, have massive social, not to mention environmental, implications. The precise basis on which the airport is to be financed and built has yet to be decided but it is bound to have implications both for insects and bird life, both of which are being carefully studied.

In the meantime there have been a number of initiatives generally supportive of the environment. St Helena has always taken seriously the obligations of the Environmental Charter, and the Environmental and Development Planning Section of Government has issued an environmental questionnaire to assess public awareness of environment issues. The Integrated Conservation Management Project has been initiated to provide baseline data surveys of flora and fauna, terrestrial and marine, so that sites of ecological, biological and geological interest can be identified and managed. This larger-scale project will require funding from outside St Helena. The impending airport scheme



Display board featuring South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

land Islands Government have been investigating seabird mortality on long-liners and other trawlers in Falklands waters; one practical outcome of this has been the development of a bird-scaring device which looks promising though it still has to undergo broad scale testing. A black-browed albatross marking project on Steeple Jason (given publicity on the BBC Today radio programme) is also expected to throw light on the interaction between the birds and the fishing fleets. Research into the worrying deaths of Magellanic penguin, apparently resulting from starvation or dietary changes, continues. A plant atlas is nearing completion while further funds are being sought for a sea lion survey and a survey of invertebrates.

The FCO-funded Rat Eradication Project has been successful in eradicating rats in a number of small tussac islands, hopefully with beneficial effects for their bird population, including threatened species. The project is expected to last several

makes all this work of critical importance. Schools environmental work continues with the Schools Dolphin Project to 'enhance awareness and promote interest in the St Helena dolphins amongst St Helenians, visitors to the Island and eventually worldwide.' There is an ongoing Hydrology Catchment Management Study conducted by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Wallingford.

John Price, a SAWG member, visited the Island and, on his return, presented a short paper *The State of Species Conservation on St. Helena*.

Ascension

Conservation on Ascension, previously very much on the basis of voluntary funding and activity, has benefited enormously from the FCO grant to RSPB for the co-ordination of the Seabird Restoration Project. Richard White, the RSPB Conservation Officer on the island, arrived at the end of October. At the same time the Ascension Island Government has appointed a Conservation Officer, Tara George.

The Seabird Restoration Project involves assessing the size of seabird populations prior to the feral cat eradication which is the other part of the Project. The Old Bakery from which the Conservation Officers operate, furnished with much local support, has become a focus for conservation on the Island, attracting local and visitor inter-



est. A Conservation Group has been set up to hold monthly events. The Darwin Initiative has funded a four-year study of turtles. Draft legislation has been produced to permit the designation of national parks, nature reserves and sanctuaries.

At the same time constitutional changes in Ascension, with the new requirement to pay taxes, appear to have unsettled the population so that apparently uncontroversial measures with a conservational purpose, such as gelding donkeys, are encountering opposition. It would be sad if the considerable conservation benefits of the FCO grant, which had owed much to the efforts of SAWG member, Jim Stevenson, were adversely affected by this unrest. At the same time the Ascension conservation programme has been criticised in the local press by the ornithologist, Bernard Stonehouse, who led an expedition to the island over 40 years ago and his allegations have in turn been answered in the press by SAWG member, Philip Ashmole.

Tristan da Cunha

Tristan da Cunha has shown remarkable, but typical, resilience in recovering from last year's hurricane which is likely to preoccupy the small work force of 146 (men and women) for some time to come. Much rebuilding work has been done, although the work on the Prince Philip Hall has yet to commence. The people were extremely lucky to avoid fatalities. The toll on wildlife will never be known. A particular post-hurricane problem has been the clearing of rubbish from Nightingale Island. It had been hoped to obtain the assistance of HMS *Endurance* but they apparently had no space and eventually six longboats sailed after Easter to do the work.

In the meantime the Inaccessible Nature Reserve Management Plan has been printed (and made available also on the Forum's web-site www.ukotcf.org). It is hoped that Inaccessible may be able to share in the World Heritage status of Gough Island, an exercise in which the Forum is involved. Dr Alan Jones, who regularly visits SAWG, has sent the results of the Gough Island Terrestrial Invertebrate Survey to the Tristan Administration, an important contribution to future conservation policy on the Island

Brown Boobie

While the recolonisation of mainland Ascension by frigates and boobies may be viewed as a success, the real success of the RSPB coordinated Seabird Restoration Programme will be judged by whether the seabird populations have increased in size, rather than merely spreading out to take advantage of the available space on the mainland.

Report of the UKOTCF British Indian Ocean Territory Working Group

The themes that predominated last year continued to pre-occupy the Group. A second feasibility study on **possible resettlement of the northern atolls** has been undertaken and the consultants' report is awaited. A **Ramsar site** was designated, but covered part of the island of Diego Garcia, rather than a substantial proportion of the whole Archipelago, as originally promised in 1997. The issue was pursued through the Forum, but without success. On the other hand, the BIOT Government committed itself to preparing the long-sought environmental **Management Plan**. New studies undertaken by Dr Charles Sheppard showed the likelihood of continued and accelerating rises in sea levels and sea surface temperatures, with consequent adverse effects on biodiversity and habitability. Actual temperatures approached, but did not exceed the levels encountered in 1998.

Against this background, the Friends of the Chagos made preparations for discussion of these issues at a **symposium** to be held in conjunction with their next AGM on 3 October 2002. Their aims are to increase awareness of the complexities involved in any decision to re-populate some atolls and to ensure that requisite levels of protection are not put on hold in the interim. Among measures to enhance biodiversity, progress was made in eliminating **feral cats** on Diego Garcia as a preliminary to ridding the island of **rats**. Plans to achieve rat-free status for the rest of the Archipelago made limited progress. Levels of **commercial and recreational fishing** continued to be kept under close observation, although there was no apparent damage to stocks consequent upon the destruction of reef habitat through coral mortality.

In general, the year under review was marked by continued vigilance, rather than any significant new developments; but the level of safeguards remained far from adequate to ensure protection of the archipelago's fragile ecosystem from the prospective pressures on it.

Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

WCWG met four times. Contact has been enhanced through our email news-group.

Thanks to the Darwin Initiative and the Environment Fund for Overseas Territories, projects were active in all Caribbean Territories. It will be important to keep up the momentum by putting in high quality applications for the next rounds.

Many of us met at the Society for Caribbean Ornithology Conference in Cuba, and this was particularly productive in launching the "Wondrous West Indian Wetlands" education programme, in planning our work on Important Bird Areas and in launching a new Caribbean Bird Festival, which celebrates the region's resident and endemic birds. We look forward to our own conference in Bermuda next March.

Also referring to last year's report, in July 2001 there was a further eruption of the Soufriere volcano on Montserrat following heavy rain and this destroyed some active oriole nests. The bird's reproductive output is very low and, without some intervention, a decline in numbers of 20% per annum is predicted. This is primarily due to predation by rats. However also in July 2001 a RSPB/Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Housing and Environment (MALHE) team discovered a remnant, high-density population of orioles only a mile or so from the volcano, although the forest patch is too small to hold a sizeable population. The current total population estimate is 200-400 pairs with a few pairs in a captive breeding project at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in Jersey. The Montserrat oriole is listed in the new global red data book as critically endangered with a 50% chance of extinction within ten years.

Taking the Territories in alphabetical order, the following are the main issues covered during the year under review

Anguilla

Anguilla has completed its National Environmental Management Strategy document in keeping with the OECS Environmental Charter and the UK Environmental Charter.

Two major goals of the Darwin Initiative Project, which was completed in September 2001, are still not achieved:

* A system of protected areas has not been designated because private landowners, who own 95% of land in Anguilla, require that their land generates revenue and are not convinced that this will happen to land designated as nature reserves. They want attention to be focused on conserving the marine environment.

* Draft legislation to create Parks and Pro-

TECTED AREAS has not been approved by the Executive Council. Indeed, the matter still needs to be put forward for public consultation, and landowners are not likely to agree to the proposals. However, it is essential that this legislation is passed so that important areas such as Sombrero Island are properly protected.

On a positive note, Big Spring, an Amerindian ceremonial site, is in the process of being developed as a properly managed visitor attraction. A second site, East End Pond, with bird watching facilities and trail, is in the process of being established by the Environmental Officer in the Physical Planning Department. This all demonstrates the capacity building achieved by the Darwin team.

These projects provide an opportunity to show landowners that protected areas can earn income and generate jobs. A pilot eco-tourism project, based on taking visitors to these sites, is being planned for 2003.

Anguilla National Trust would like to establish a natural history museum and seeks funds and technical expertise to get this off the ground. They also seek an Advisor to assist them



Display board featuring Bermuda

Bermuda

A new NGO/Government forum, called ECO, was formed to promote better collaboration.

The Bermuda Darwin Project has one more year to run, but has already resulted in a draft Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). The Bermuda Zoological Society has been leading this project in partnership with the Bermuda Government, Fauna and Flora International and a committee of local people. An important early step has been the

publication of a Biodiversity Country Study; a colourful 103 page document which provides an overview of the status of Bermuda's biota, identifies the most critical issues facing the conservation of the Island's biodiversity and attempts to place these in the context of the social and economic needs of the community.

Preparations for the UKOT Conference are continuing by Bermuda Government, National Trust, Zoological Society and Audubon Society with the Forum. There is great excitement in Bermuda about the opportunity of sharing some of the challenges and successes the island faces.

The recent discovery of a large new cave at a private quarry has prompted much excitement. With over 80 species of endemic species (mainly crustaceans) already recorded in Bermuda's caves, this could prove a fruitful find.

As part of the move towards signing up to the Biodiversity Convention, Bermuda Zoological Society have employed an environmental lawyer to develop an Endangered Species Act and legislation regarding bio-prospecting, which is currently unregulated.

The endemic Bermuda petrel or cahow has had a record year; the Chief Conservation Officer, Jeremy Madeiros, has recorded 38 fledged chicks.

Educators in Bermuda were critical of some inappropriate images in FCO's Breath of Fresh Air Pack; as a result, some changes to the content will be made.

British Virgin Islands

The Darwin project integrating National Parks, Education and Community Development, managed by BVI National Parks Trust (BVINPT) in collaboration with the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew (RBGK) and Fauna and Flora International (FFI), was completed successfully at the end of 2002. Sixteen workshops were undertaken over three and a half years, comprising field exercises and data collection, classroom sessions and public consultation. Participants were from National Parks, Government ministries, NGOs, community groups and statutory bodies. As a result, capacity within the National Parks Trust has been improved, as has communications between the various bodies involved with biodiversity conservation.

Gorda Peak National Park (GPNP) on Virgin Gorda and the Ramsar site on Anegada, were investigated in depth, and management plans

were drafted. Plant lists have been provided and an action plan was produced for the endangered Anegada rock iguana *Cyclus pingus*. A draft strategy was prepared for the management of tourists and tourism related activities in parks and protected areas.

Plans to improve the J R O'Neal Botanic Gardens are under way.

Cayman Islands

The National Trust has completed the purchase of 63 acres to extend the Ramsar site on Little Cayman. The seabird nesting area at Booby Pond is now protected within the Nature Reserve.

The annual meeting of the IUCN Iguana Specialist Group was held in Grand Cayman, supported by a grant from the FCO's Environment Fund for the Overseas Territories. After the meeting, members of the group stayed on to develop a recovery plan for the Grand Cayman blue iguana. 44 of the 76 captive bred blue iguanas have been released in the QE II Botanic Park where they are now reproducing. Whilst the iguanas in QE II Botanic Park are doing well, a new survey of the unmanaged wild population of blue iguanas in eastern Grand Cayman has revealed that the population has plummeted from about 2-300 in 1993 to less than 25 individuals now. This wild population will be functionally extinct within 5 years unless immediate steps are taken to manage it.

A bat, not seen in the Cayman Islands for almost 100 years, has been rediscovered on Grand Cayman. The white-shouldered or fig-eating bat *Phyllops falcatus* was found in a small area of remnant forest which is destined for development.

The Cayman Islands Government has drastically cut its financial support, which has caused a crisis in the Trust. However, the Government has promised to maintain near normal financial support next year.

On Cayman Brac, the Trust has acquired a headquarters in a small traditional home, which has now been renovated. A brown booby management plan has been completed and is being printed by the RSPB. The plan has been endorsed by the Department of the Environment and Sister Islands Administration.

On Little Cayman, a grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) has enabled the CINT to improve visitor facilities and interpretation at Booby Pond, the Cayman Islands only Ramsar site.

Draft legislation, prepared by the Cayman Islands Department of Environment to implement the SPAW protocol to the Cartagena Convention, is now well advanced and is expected to be put to the Legislative Assembly later this year. There are also promising indications that the

Cayman Islands Government may soon establish a new National Park in the Barkers area of Grand Cayman.

Montserrat

In addition to the work on the Montserrat Oriole, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew (RBGK) has been helping the Montserrat National Trust (MNT) to establish the new botanic garden where sustainable "backyard" gardens will demonstrate how to provide a family with food, medicinal plants etc. from a small plot.

Montserradians, have been enthused by a recent study of the arthropod biodiversity of Montserrat carried out by Professor Michael Ivie and MSc student Katy Marske from the University of Montana.

Brendan Godley (Marine Turtle Research Network) has started his Darwin project on turtles in the region with a visit the island early this year.

An important discovery was made by Kevin Buley from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. He found that a population of feral pigs was expanding in the south of the Centre Hills. This is a **major** and **urgent** invasive species issue, raising threats to Mountain Chickens, Galliwasp, numerous other species, and the ecosystem itself.

Turks and Caicos Islands



Ann and Mike Pienkowski out on bird survey work in TCI with Richard Ground author of The Birds of Turks and Caicos.

The Darwin Initiative project, of the Forum, CABI and Turks & Caicos National Trust (TCNT), on "Developing Biodiversity Management Capacity around the Ramsar Site in Turks & Caicos Islands" was completed. The work this year included two main phases of fieldwork, and training for students from high schools and staff of the TCI government department responsible for the environment. Project newsletter *DarWiN in TCI* number 2/3 has been widely circulated and is on the Forum's website (www.ukotcf.org). At the request of the Governments of UK and TCI, the Fo-

rum and TCNT produced the first accurate map of the Ramsar site (the fourth biggest that UK is responsible for, and one of the most pristine), based on satellite imagery.

The local community meetings on Middle Caicos were continued, including one to discuss the contents of the management plan for the area, the main output from the work. The draft management plan was discussed with TCNT's Council in June. Arrangements have been made for a presentation on this later in the year to the Executive Council (i.e. Governor and Ministers), and to hold a workshop for technical officers in government departments and other organizations.

It is important that the plan is carried through to implementation without a gap, and funding has been sought to initiate this. Unfortunately, applications to several agencies have been unsuccessful. However, FCO's Environment Fund for Overseas Territories has contributed enough funds to keep the project active at a low level. This is being combined with substantial unpaid specialist time.

At the request of BirdLife International and RSPB, the Forum and TCNT are conducting the work on Important Bird Areas in TCI. Fieldwork was undertaken in June 2002 to fill the major gap in information, the remote seabird cays.

The TC National Trust AGM was attended by no less than 300 people, an excellent indication of growing support. Launched at the AGM was a beautiful photographic guide to *The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands*, produced by Richard and Dace Ground, on behalf of the TC National Trust. Copies can be obtained from the TCI National Trust (price US\$ 20 plus P&P; in the UK, from the Forum, price £15 plus post and package- see www.ukotcf.org).

The Trust continues its many environmental education projects, including a newsletter, junior membership, summer camps and other activities.

TCINT has become the first Forum associate member in the Caribbean to become a full member

In conclusion, this year has been a busy one for all of us with a lot of progress being made in identifying problems and devising strategies to counter them. Finding funds to put all these plans into action remains the biggest challenge for us in 2003.

Report of UKOTCF Pitcairn Working Group

It is probably fair to say that this has been a frustrating year. The combination of the need to address social problems on Pitcairn and of uncertainty about how tourist proposals for the Island might evolve has understandably occupied Government officers during the year. Inevitably this has made it difficult to make headway on conservation issues.

1. Tourist developments. The outlines of major development proposals emanating from the Wellesley consortium of New Zealand businessmen were given in last year's report. In mid-2001 the British Government felt that the proposals were still short of financial and practical detail, and therefore asked the consortium to develop a more refined plan. This process is still underway at the time of writing. Meanwhile Ministerial assurances have been given to, inter alia, the Royal Society and the RSPB that any developments on the Islands would be subject to the most rigorous independent environmental assessment. While this scrutiny is most obviously necessary for the outer islands of Oeno, Ducie and Henderson, it is also vital on Pitcairn itself to ensure that the benefits that the Islanders hope to enjoy from any developments are not outweighed by undue or unanticipated environmental costs. There also exist other preliminary proposals to improve tourist links between French Polynesia and Pitcairn in a manner that would have very limited environmental impact.

2. Rat eradication. There is no progress to report on a third attempt at rat eradication from Pitcairn itself. Funding remains elusive. Fortunately the rat situation on the Island is less worrisome than in 2000.

3. Henderson Management Plan. When Henderson Island was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1988, it was on condition that the British Government proceed to develop a Management Plan. However the draft plan of 1995 has made little progress towards agreement since that date. Now that UNESCO has been alerted to the fact that this designation condition has not been met, the Government is keen to secure an agreed Plan. To this end, plans were well advanced for the Group Chairman and another expert to visit Pitcairn in July 2002 to discuss with the Islanders what amendments are needed to transform the draft Plan into a version acceptable to all interested parties, although unrelated local factors on the island have since delayed this visit for some months.



Pitcairn Islanders remove miro logs from the North Beach on Henderson Island. One role for a Henderson Management plan is to indicate how this activity, the basis for the Islanders' carving, can be confirmed sustainably.

Officers and Contact Points

First contact on any issue should normally be the Forum Co-ordinator: Frances Marks, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5LF, UK Tel: +44 1608 644425; Email: fmarks@ukotcf.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Chairman: Dr Mike Pienkowski, 102 Broadway, Peterborough PE1 4DG, UK. Tel/fax/answerphone: +44 1733 569325; email: pienkowski@cix.co.uk

Members: Ann Brown - Fred Burton - Dr Rebecca Cairns-Wicks - Dr Colin Clubbe - Nigel Crocker - Martin Drury - Michael Gore - Dr Dace McCoy Ground - Jim Stevenson - David Taylor

WIDER CARIBBEAN WORKING GROUP Chairman: Michael Gore, Tel/Fax: +44 1372 372248; Email: gore@clara.net Secretary: Jim Stevenson, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1767 680551; fax: +44 1767 683211; email: jim.stevenson@rspb.org.uk (in case of difficulty: stella.rumbles@rspb.org.uk)

SOUTH ATLANTIC WORKING GROUP Chairman: Ann Brown, 1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, UK Tel/fax: +44 208 3430831, Email: ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk Secretary: Frances Marks, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton OX7 5LF, UK Tel: +44 1608 644425; Email: fmarks@ukotcf.org

PITCAIRN WORKING GROUP Chairman: Dr M de L Brooke, Department of Zoology, Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3EJ, UK. Tel: +44 1223 811059; fax: +44 1223 336676; email: mb10005@cus.cam.ac.uk Secretary: Jim Stevenson, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1767 680551; fax: +44 1767 683211; email: jim.stevenson@rspb.org.uk (in case of difficulty: stella.rumbles@rspb.org.uk)

BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES WORKING GROUP (represented by FRIENDS OF THE CHAGOS) The headquarters of the Friends is at 20, Lupus Street, London, SW1V 3DZ, UK Tel: +44 27 834 3079. The current office bearers are: Chairman: Nigel Wenban-Smith Tel/fax: +44 27 267 1798; Secretary: Simon Hughes Tel/Fax: +44 27 738 7712.

The Forum is a non-profit organisation, registered as a limited company in England and Wales No. 3216892 and a Registered Charity No. 1058483. Registered Office: 12 High Street, Wendover HP22 5EA, United Kingdom. Information and advice given on behalf of the Forum are provided on the basis that no liability attaches to the Forum, its Directors, officers or representatives in respect thereof.

Photographs courtesy of Jackie Barlow (FCO), Michael Brooke, Oliver Cheesman, Mike Pienkowski, Jim Stevenson (RSPB)

Membership

The current UK members of the Forum are:

British Microbial Biodiversity Association (BMBA); British Ecological Society (BES); British Ornithologists' Union (BOU); CAB International (CABI); Fauna & Flora International (FFI); The National Trust (NT); Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBG Kew); Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB); World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC); World Wide Fund for Nature UK (WWF-UK); Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

Current members of the Forum in the UK Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies are:

Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Heritage Society, Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; Bermuda Zoological Society; Friends of the Chagos; British Virgin Islands National Parks Trust; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Falklands Conservation; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; La Société Guernesaise; Société Jersiaise, National Trust of Jersey, Manx Chough Project; Montserrat National Trust; St. Helena Nature Conservation Group; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands.