

FORUM NEWS

CONSERVATION NEWS 1 NGO FORUM FOR THE UK DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

JANUARY 1989

CONSERVATION COORDINATOR APPOINTED

The NGO Conservation Forum for the UK Dependent Territories was created in 1987 following the launch of the BANC/WWF-UK report, *Fragments of paradise. A Guide for Conservation Action in the UK Dependent Territories*. The Forum is an informal group which aims to harmonise conservation activities in the Dependencies and to promote further conservation initiatives. The Forum will serve primarily as a liaison body between Forum members, the UK Government, and voluntary organisations and governments in the Dependent Territories.

The Forum has appointed a coordinator, Sara Oldfield, to work on a part-time basis. Financial support for this post is provided initially by four of the Forum's members, the British Association of Nature Conservationists (BANC), International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) British Section, Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and World Wide Fund for Nature UK

(WWF-UK). Sara will work from home but will have the use of the office facilities of the ICBP Secretariat in nearby Cambridge.

Part of the coordinator's job will be to maintain up to date information on conservation in the UK Dependencies and to keep everyone in touch. This first news-sheet summarises various recent conservation activities. Please help to make the news-sheet effective, by sending your comments, suggestions and conservation news to Sara Oldfield, 22 Mandene Gardens, Great Gransden, Nr Sandy, Beds SG193AP. Tel. 0767-7558.

WWF-UK PROJECT SUPPORT

Conservation in the UK Dependent Territories is one of the themes of WWF-UK's current conservation programme. The overall goal is to ensure that all the UK Dependencies have the means to effectively conserve their wildlife and ecosystems through policies implemented at governmental level and supported by the activities of local voluntary bodies.

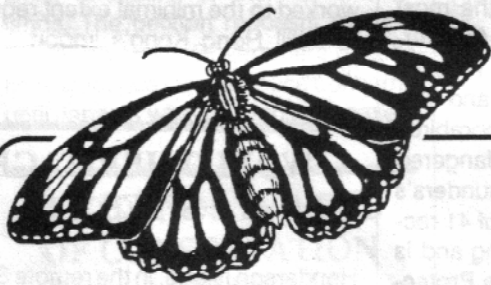
WWF-UK is currently funding a range of projects which fall within the scope of its De-

pendent Territories theme. Several projects involve species research being carried out in the Falklands through the Falklands Island Foundation. Others are designed to boost the much needed protected areas systems in the dependencies. Designation and development of protected areas is taking place in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos with WWF-UK support.

For more details of WWF-UK's work in the dependencies please contact WWF-UK, Panda House, Cattleshall Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1XR, or Sara Oldfield.

ST HELENA: NATURAL TREASURY

A one-day symposium was held at London Zoo on 9 September 1988 to discuss the unique natural heritage of St Helena. St Helena has already been in the news this year because of Project Hercules, an expedition by the Zoological Society of London to search for the endemic giant earwig *Labidura herculaena*. The expedition received widespread publicity in the UK. Sadly extensive fieldwork did not locate the earwig, which is now pre-



Black-veined Tiger
(Hong Kong)

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sumed extinct. However, the recent symposium drew attention to the many other natural treasures of St Helena which are worthy and, in most cases, in urgent need of effective conservation.

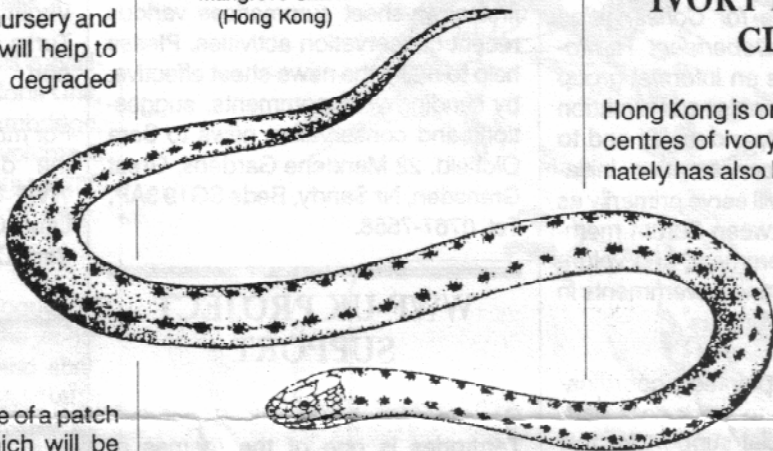
The endemic flowering plants of St Helena are being rescued in a project which sets an example for the battered floras of oceanic islands throughout the world. The endemic plants propagation project was set up with a grant of £7,000 from WWF-UK in 1984 and continued with support from Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and the Government of St Helena. Plant species on the brink of extinction are being propagated in a nursery and when replanted in the wild will help to prevent further erosion in degraded areas. The technical expertise of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew helped to ensure the success of the project and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society supported initial ecological studies on the island. A small grant from WWF-UK has recently enabled the purchase of a patch of abandoned pasture which will be used for the reintroduction of propagated plants to the wild.

The ecology of St Helena's only surviving endemic landbird, the wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae*, is currently being studied in a 14-month project which commenced in September 1988. The biology of the wirebird has remained poorly known compared to that of its close relatives. Although the wirebird is not thought to be endangered at present, it is hoped that a fuller understanding of the species's requirements will ensure its conservation in the long term. The research is supported by WWF-UK, ICBP, and the Peter Scott Trust for Education and Research in Conservation, and is administered by the British Trust for Ornithology.

In a declaration resulting from the recent symposium, attention was drawn to the need to survey the lower plants of St Helena and to investigate the status of island's invertebrates. A call for a survey of St Helena's seabirds was also made. The most striking message to emerge from the symposium was that the natural history of St

Helena has contributed significantly to the development of scientific thought on a scale comparable to that of the Galapagos Islands. Despite its importance as a natural treasury, St Helena is only just beginning to receive the conservation attention it deserves. Copies of the declaration can be obtained from: Paul Pearce-Kelly, Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London, NW1 4RY. Tel. 01-722-3333.

Mangrove Snake
(Hong Kong)



MAI PO MARSHES - A SECURE FUTURE?

Mai Po Marshes, located on the southern shore of Deep Bay, is the most important area in Hong Kong for international wildlife conservation. The area of mangroves, reed beds and fish ponds supports migrating shorebirds and populations of the endangered Dalmatian pelican and Saunders's gull. Mai Po Marshes is one of 41 recognised SSSI's in Hong Kong and is listed under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance. Part of the area has been acquired by WWF-HK to create a nature reserve and education centre.

Despite the protection given to Mai Po Marshes, the Deep Bay area as a whole faces many threats. In response to public pressure, the Chinese Government has announced that a proposed airport adjacent to the reserve will not be built, but a large rubbish dump is planned. Development pressures on both sides of the border are immense.

A proposal was recently developed by WWF-HK, to include Mai Po Marshes in the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Unfortunately, the Hong Kong Government has decided that it will not be appropriate to put the proposal forward. Nevertheless, Ramsar requires the parties to the Convention to promote the wise use of all wetlands in their territories and this obligation remains for Mai Po, Hong Kong's only significant wetland.

HONG KONG IVORY LOOPHOLE CLOSED

Hong Kong is one of the world's major centres of ivory carving and unfortunately has also been a main centre for illegal ivory trade. Now, under legislation which took effect on 5 August 1988, controls have been introduced on the import of worked ivory to Hong Kong. Previously, import controls covered

only raw ivory. Unscrupulous traders exploited this situation to launder worked or semi-worked ivory of dubious origin. One trader based 65 Chinese ivory carvers in Dubai, UAE (a country not party to CITES regulations) where thousands of tusks were worked to the minimal extent required to fulfill Hong Kong's import conditions.

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Henderson Island, in the remote South Pacific Pitcairn group, is likely to be the first World Heritage site in the UK Dependencies. This small raised coral atoll is of outstanding scientific interest as it remains undisturbed and supports unique habitats and many endemic species. The island's four landbirds are all endemic and the Henderson crane, known as the 'black guardian of the island', is a symbol of this pristine environment.

The designation of World Heritage

status obliges countries to take all steps necessary to protect listed sites. A special fund has been created under the World Heritage Convention to protect the areas which are recognised as being of outstanding universal value.

One of the areas administered by the UK which must surely be considered as an outstanding area of natural heritage is the Chagos Archipelago in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Excluding Diego Garcia, the uninhabited Archipelago forms the largest expanse of totally undisturbed reefs in the Indian Ocean. The reefs are actively growing and support a rich marine fauna including the endemic coral *Ctenella chagius* and nesting populations of the endangered green and hawksbill turtles.

Unfortunately BIOT is not included in the UK ratification of the World Heritage Convention at present. The Forum is, however, discussing ways to secure the long term conservation of the Chagos islands, with the Marine Conservation Society taking the lead

WHALE PETITION IN THE FALKLANDS

As part of an anti-whaling campaign, a petition with over 900 names has been delivered to the acting Governor and Chief Executive of the Falkland Islands. The petition requests that the Falkland Islands Government refuses fishing licences to Japanese concerns until Japan's whaling industry ceases.

WETLANDS IN NEED OF CONSERVATION ACTION

There are still no designated Ramsar sites in the UK Dependencies although a number, including Mai Po Marshes, have been proposed. In the Caymans, time is running out for the wetlands. Five sites have been proposed for Ramsar listing but now only one is likely to be put forward as others have already been developed. Meagre Bay Pond, an Animal Sanctuary on Grand Cayman, could become the Caymans'

first Ramsar site.

Four sites are being considered for Ramsar listing in Bermuda. These are Lover's Lake, Spittal Pond, Paget Marsh and Warwick Pond. In the Turks and Caicos, WWF-UK, together with the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and Department of the Environment of the UK Government, has supported a major survey of the islands' wetlands with a proposal for listing one Ramsar site. The proposed Ramsar site covers parts of North, Middle and East Caicos. The area selected includes prime examples of marshland, mangrove swamp, salt pond, lagoon and salinas which together provide a remarkable range of unspoiled wetland habitats.

Designation of an area as a Ramsar site does not prevent utilisation of the area provided that the integrity of the wetland is not threatened. A Ramsar listing for Turks and Caicos should create great interest in the islands for natural history tours, with bird-watching adding to the attractions of the coral reefs.

Wetlands form over half the land area of Turks and Caicos and are of vital importance both ecologically and economically. In addition to proposing the Ramsar site the report of the wetlands survey calls for (i) revision of conservation legislation; (ii) designation of priority sites as National Parks; and (iii) policies for the wise use of wetlands through planning and development controls.

INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS - IN A NUTSHELL

The UK Government's commitment to conservation is increasingly reinforced by ratification of international conservation conventions. These form common standards for the world's shared wildlife resources and set the basis for national legislation. The four main conventions are:

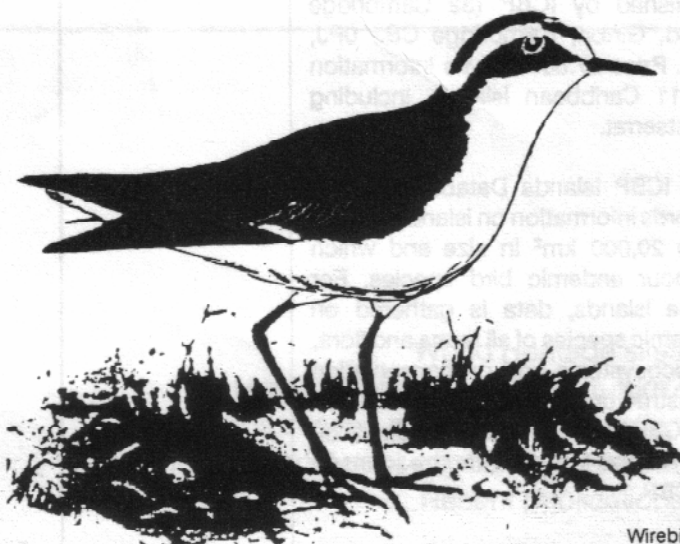
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention)

Not all the Dependencies are included in the UK's ratification of each Convention - a situation which needs attention - and implementation remains a problem. The Forum will work to ensure that the UK's obligations under the international agreements are fully met with in the dependencies.



Wirebird
(St Helena)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Fragments of Paradise. A Guide for Conservation Action in the UK Dependent Territories.

Written by Sara Oldfield for BANC and WWF-UK, this report is published by Pisces Publications, Brasenose Farm, Eastern By-Pass, Oxford, UK. The report costs £10 including postage.

Coral Reefs of the World

Volume 1: Atlantic and Eastern Pacific
Volume 2: Indian Ocean, Red Sea and Gulf
Volume 3: Central and Western Pacific

Published in 1988 by IUCN, this is available from the IUCN Publications Unit, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 0DL, UK. The price per volume is £25 (US\$45) and for a complete set £80 (US\$100), with an additional 17½% to cover postage by sea.

This major publication catalogues all the significant coral reefs of the world, their geographical context and ecology, their current condition and status in legislation, and prescriptions for their conservation and sustainable use. The work was commissioned by UNEP's Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre OCA/PAC) and compiled by the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre.

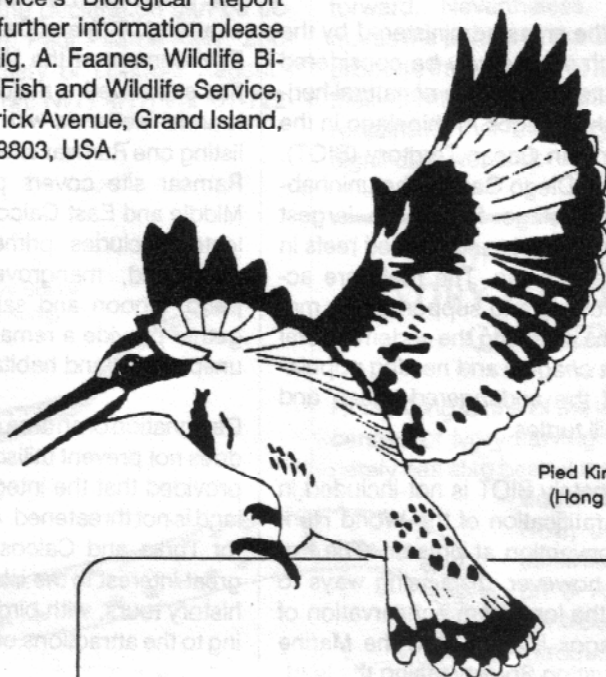
Biodiversity and Conservation in the Caribbean: Profiles of selected islands.

This report by Timothy Johnson is published by ICBP (32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK). Price £7.80. It gives information on 11 Caribbean islands, including Montserrat.

The ICBP Islands Database Project records information on islands smaller than 20,000 km² in size and which harbour endemic bird species. For these islands, data is gathered on endemic species of all fauna and flora, on ecosystems and on conservation infrastructure. Further information on the ICBP Islands Database Project can be obtained from Dr Timothy Johnson of ICBP.

The Society for Caribbean Ornithology

is preparing an annotated bibliography of the literature on birds in the West Indies. The region covered will follow the faunal area outlined in the most recent edition of James Bond's *Birds of the West Indies*. The bibliography will be published in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Report Series. For further information please contact Craig A. Faanes, Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2604 St Patrick Avenue, Grand Island, Nebraska 68803, USA.



Pied Kingfisher
(Hong Kong)

Production of this news-sheet was supported by the British Association of Nature Conservationists (BANC), International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) British Section, Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and WWF United Kingdom (WWF-UK).



Produced by the Nature Conservation Bureau, Thatcham, Berks.