



# FORUM NEWS 21

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biodiversity documentation throughout the UK Overseas Territories. Many Territories are actively developing checklists of key taxa, documenting threats to biodiversity, developing management plans and promoting environmental education. All these have been key elements of the Darwin Initiative project in BVI that will be completed in February 2002. The benefits of identifying key taxa and regular monitoring have recently been highlighted during a routine visit to Gorda Peak National Park (GPNP) on Virgin Gorda, BVI.

Earlier workshop activities during the three and a half-year Darwin project identified several plant species of international conservation significance, including BVI endemics and several Puerto Rican bank species threatened across the region. Two species of particular importance were highlighted during project fieldwork. *Zanthoxylum thomasianum* (Rutaceae) and *Calyptanthes kiaerskovii* (Myrtaceae) are both large woody shrubs/small trees of the forest understory. *C. kiaerskovii* is a BVI endemic documented during the Darwin project and comprising only 36 individuals in GPNP. No seedlings were discovered. *Z. thomasianum*, a Puerto Rican bank endemic and

## Threatened Species Flower in British Virgin Islands

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has become an important instrument for promoting conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing. Stressing the need for inventory and monitoring of biodiversity at a local, national and international scale, the CBD has catalysed much activity in

known from about 300 individuals, is on the US Federal Endangered Species list. Three adults and one seedling were discovered in GPNP during earlier fieldwork representing the only occurrence of this species in the BVI. A routine monitoring programme for these species was established.

During a routine monitoring visit to GPNP at the end of November 2001, both species were discovered in fruit. For *Z. thomasianum*, this represented the first documented fruiting in BVI. We now know that two of the adults are female. The third known tree had no

flowers on it. Because we have one young seedling, the third known tree must be male, or there are more trees to be discovered. The mystery continues. Although we documented the first known flowering of *C. kiaerskovii* during an earlier workshop, only few fruits were seen. However, many trees were laden with fruit in November 2001 indicating how unpredictable fruiting can be and highlighting how much we still don't know about the phenology of tropical trees; another reason for routine monitoring.

Fruits were collected of both species and brought to the JR O'Neal Botanic Garden in Tortola. We hope to get both species into cultivation and use them initially as part of an educational display of endemic and threatened species of BVI being developed

at the botanic garden. In the longer term this will form part of an integrated conservation strategy for these species being developed by BVI National Parks Trust and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.



Colin Clubbe handing over samples of *Calyptanthes kiaerskovii* to Tracey Omar, Curator and Arona Dewindt, Head Gardener, at the JR O'Neal Botanic Garden.



Fruiting tree of *Calyptanthes kiaerskovii* in Gorda Peak National Park.

Colin Clubbe, c.clubbe@rbgkew.org.uk  
Raymond Walker, spiceray@hotmail.com

## Environment Charter for the UK and the Overseas Territories

Foreign Office Minister Baroness Amos and senior representatives of Overseas Territories signed a set of Environmental Charters on 26 September 2001. The Charters set out, for the first time the mutual responsibilities of the UK and Overseas Territories regarding the environment. For background on the Charter process please see the Forum website: [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org) - also to view an example of the Charter and both Government and Territory commitments. Speaking in advance of the signing ceremony, Baroness Amos said: "The adoption of this Environment Charter by the UK and the Overseas Territories is a powerful indication of the importance we attach to the environment both locally and globally. It represents our shared commitment to working together for the future health of our environment. The document is a real achievement because not only does it set out the principles, which will guide us, but also it contains some real long-term commitments which will make a practical difference to our environment. The environment, after all, is critical to future prosperity, well-being, and even survival, of many of the Overseas Territories and their communities. Both global and local actions are needed. This document shows how we can all contribute."

The Charter sets out ten Guiding Principles (listed in text box) which express the key environmental commitments that the international community has adopted. The UK government has recognised the circumstances of each OT vary considerably from those with no resident population (eg SGSSI), very small populations (eg Pitcairn) to those with bigger populations and a wider range of local resources and skills. Some already have groupings that bring together a variety of stakeholders in the main local environmental issues. It is for each territory to establish the most suitable framework to develop action plans that link the shared principles of the OT Environment Charter to the needs of each territory.

The Forum is pleased that the Environmental Charters have been signed, and looks forward to the actions which will be necessary if these are to result in real environmental progress on the ground which will be the test of success of the process. The Forum has promoted this partnership approach since it first raised the issue several years ago (see *Ecos* in Forum website for background).

### Guiding Principles

- 1 To recognise that all people need a healthy environment for their well being and livelihoods and that all can help to conserve and sustain it.
- 2 To use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations.
- 3 To identify environmental opportunities, cost and risks in all policies and strategies.
- 4 To seek expert advice and consult openly with interested parties on decisions affecting the environment.
- 5 To aim for solutions which benefit both the environment and development
- 6 To contribute towards the protection and improvement of the global environment
- 7 To restore and safeguard native species and habitats, and control or eradicate invasive species.
- 8 To encourage activities and technologies that benefit the environment
- 9 To control pollution, with the polluter paying for prevention or remedies.
- 10 To study and celebrate our environment heritage as a treasure to share with our children.

We were pleased that UK Government took up many of these ideas in its 1999 White Paper on the Overseas Territories. As to implementation, the Forum has long recognised that many Overseas Territories have underlined the need for facilitation in carrying the issue forward. It has been asked by Government to explore the needs and possibilities for this with the Territories although, sadly, resources for this have not yet been forthcoming. The implementation of the charter cannot be done simply by setting deadlines in London for already over-stretched personnel in the Territories. It is a process which takes time and resources. The Forum hopes that the signing of the charters will lead to the increased funding to help meet these needs.

### New Proposal Project for Montserrat

In October 2001, Colin Clubbe from RBG, Kew and Sara Cross of UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum visited Montserrat to collaborate with the Montserrat National Trust in the development of a Darwin Initiative project. This involved working collaboratively with the Trust and other sectors of Montserrat society to integrate a range of information and objectives identified during two previous visits in 2001 into the project framework. The proposal is entitled "Forest conservation, sustainable management and education: building Montserrat's capacity"

Its objectives are:

- To assist Montserrat in protecting biodiversity by training key personnel to assess status and distribution of forest flora.
- To enable the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in northern Montserrat.
- Training of key staff and volunteers to translate the biodiversity information gathered into accessible forms for a wide range of users.
- To develop a management plan and mechanisms for long term monitoring of key forest ecosystems.
- To increase the capacity and skills base of the island to sustain biodiversity conservation and ecotourism in the longer term.

If the project is funded, the MNT will be able to recruit a Conservation Officer for three years. The forestry department will also be heavily involved in the work, which will be integrated with the physical planning, lands and surveys and education departments. The Montserrat National Trust will also be able to address the resurrection of key environmental committees through the work being carried out. The project will also complement the work currently being undertaken by RSPB on the endemic Montserrat Oriole

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### New Year Honours

Congratulations to Dr Barbara Erica Gibbs who has an MBE for services to the environment and the community, Montserrat. Apart from many other contributions to the Montserrat community associated with her medical profession, Erica has given a tremendous amount of her time and support to the Montserrat National Trust since its establishment in 1970, and serves as Executive Secretary on its Management Council.

Congratulations also to Rudolph Agnew, knighted in the same list for services to international human rights and conservation. Sir Rudolph is Chairman of WCMC 2000 which underpins the operations of Forum member organisation UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

## Restoring Tussac Islands in the South Atlantic

*New Zealand conservation consultant Derek Brown looks at the current rat eradication projects in the Falklands.*

You don't have to be mad for this, but it helps. Why else would someone willingly live in a tent on a tussac island in the cold, with only sea-lions and rats for company? It must all be for a very good cause, I keep telling myself. And it will be - if successful in eradicating rats from the few islands selected, there will be significant conservation benefits.

Rat eradication was developed in New Zealand in the mid 1980s. Since then it has been used successfully on over 100 islands world-wide Ascension Island, as an example, is one of the next islands being considered for rat eradication. Large islands have successfully been done, with the largest being 11,300 hectare Campbell Island.

It is almost certain that rats got to islands in the Falklands by 'human-assisted' means, either hitching a ride on boats (particularly with sealers or whalers), or from shipwrecks. They may even have been cast adrift on whale carcasses after processing, washed up on the tides, rats included, on nearby islands.

Removing introduced pests has become a major focus of conservation agencies in New Zealand, creating pest-free sanctuaries for wildlife. Many species simply cannot cope with rats. A similar situation occurs in the Falklands, though thankfully not as serious - no species are in imminent danger of extinction through predation. However, many species are restricted to rat-free islands remaining. The Cobb's or house wren and smaller seabirds such as storm petrels are found only on islands free of the large Norway rat, the species most commonly found in the Falklands. Other

birds such as the tussacbird and sooty shearwater survive in very low numbers on rat islands.

Eradication is very different to rat control measures employed around towns. It can occur only where re-invasion by swimming rats is not possible, and is limited to islands offshore. It requires a different 'mind-set' to focus on killing not just one or two problem rats, but every last rat in the population. Key information is necessary for success - firstly, the best time of year to apply the poison, and how much bait to use. Secondly, use a bait irresistible to rats and such a bait has been developed in New Zealand. Thirdly, bait needs to be spread



*A Falklands Conservation fieldworker checks a bait station on an offshore island nature reserve for signs of rat feeding*

systematically over the entire island, ensuring it is available to every rat. Lastly we rely on an intriguing aspect of rat behaviour - they seem to share information about food resources - once one rat feeds on the bait others are far

more willing to accept it. It is a straightforward technique, but there are potential pitfalls and problems to be cautious of. If one mistake is made then all the time and effort will be for nothing as the surviving rats will repopulate and be harder to fool next time. It is important these first few island rat eradications are successful otherwise interest and funding sources could dry up.

We are experimenting with two different techniques here - one involves using bait stations set out in a grid system over the whole island, and the bait stations get refilled every day until the rats are all gone. The other method, 'hand-broadcasting', involves walking predetermined routes over the whole island, throwing out a measured amount of bait every few metres until the entire island is covered.

There is a small chance of accidental poisoning but so far we have not detected any negative effects in the Falklands. Fortunately most rats die in underground burrows, making them inaccessible. The baits are also dyed a blue or green colour, which most birds don't recognise as a 'food'

colour. If such 'non-target effects' occur they are likely to be very temporary, with populations rapidly expanding after rat removal. From a pragmatic conservation viewpoint the loss of a few birds may be 'acceptable' if the overall population benefits in the long term.

By carefully observing what happens in this project we can refine the techniques for any future eradication projects that may be considered in the Falklands or in other overseas territories. We hope this work is the first step in a major conservation initiative in the Falklands. If so, then maybe living in tents, tussac bog-hopping and dodging sea lions will be worthwhile. Let's hope so. The Falklands contains spectacular wildlife that deserves as much help as it can get to preserve it for future generations.

For further details contact Becky Ingham at Falklands Conservation, P O Box 26 Stanley, Falkland Islands. [conservation@horizon.co.fk](mailto:conservation@horizon.co.fk)

### Montserrat National Trust AGM

Montserrat National Trust held its AGM on 5 December 2001 and produced its first Annual Report since 1995. Stephen Macnamara, MNT Director said, "the growth of the Trust in the past 2 years has been recognized as being unique in the 30 year history of the Trust by members and sponsors alike. I think the Trust still has a lot to do, but the past two years were a great start." AOB included discussions about where the Trust could be even more active in Environmental Awareness.

It was clear to all that attended that the Trust is active again and meeting the challenges.

Stephen Macnamara, MNT Director, [mnatrust@candw.ag](mailto:mnatrust@candw.ag)

## World Heritage Convention in relation to the Overseas Territories

Following the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum's AGM on 18 October 2001, Adrian Phillips gave a presentation on the implications for the UKOTs of the World Heritage Convention. The World Heritage Convention is an international treaty which was signed in 1972 and now has 164 'State Parties'. It is overseen by the World Heritage Committee, serviced by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and advised by The World Conservation Union (IUCN - for natural sites) and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS - cultural sites).

The rationale for the World Heritage Convention is that some natural and cultural places are so important that they should be considered as part of a heritage of all humankind, in perpetuity. Their protection, as World Heritage sites, moreover is a shared responsibility. In October 2001 there were a total of 690 World Heritage sites.

What are the benefits of World Heritage designation? World Heritage status enhances the recognition given to a site, and so increases attention given to its management and protection. It may also give access to international and national funds (WH Fund, UN Foundation, Global Environment Facility etc.). And it may encourage international solidarity in protection, attract international tourists and international build co-operation. It is a requirement that WH sites should be the subject of a management plan.

World Heritage Management Plans must involve all stakeholders and their preparation should be built around a consensus-building process. They should endeavour to balance conservation access, local community, and sustainable economic use so as to help prevent threats and enhance World Heritage values. Above all they should be usable by site managers.

Once on the list, a WH site is monitored and its conservation status is reported to the World Heritage Committee. This can be helpful in conservation terms. For example, as a result of having World Heritage Status, El Viscaïno, in Mexico (a Gray Whale sanctuary) was saved from industrial development, and Angkor Wat in Cambodia received international assistance for a threatened masterpiece.

There are currently three World Heritage sites in the UK Overseas Territories. Two are natural sites: Henderson Island, Pitcairn, one of the world's least altered raised atolls; and Gough Island, South Atlantic, one of the world's least disrupted island ecosystems. St George, Bermuda is a cultural site. Other sites in the Overseas Territories being considered for nomination as possible World Heritage sites are Fountain Cavern, Anguilla and Gibraltar Fortress.

A number of experts have suggested that the UK should nominate South Georgia and the Chagos Archipelago as WH sites, but as yet the UK Government appears to be resisting this on political grounds. Possibly there are more sites that should be included. The questions for the OTs are 1) are all potential sites on the list? and 2) how should World Heritage Status of existing sites be used to promote conservation? (See article on Inaccessible Island on next page).

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### Gough Island Terrestrial Invertebrate Survey (GITIS)

The Gough Island terrestrial invertebrate survey (GITIS) has been cataloguing Gough invertebrate species since September 1999. Dr Alex Jones who has recently returned from Gough and has prepared an interim report for Tristan da Cunha Administration and UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the survey work being carried out on Gough. (See *Forum News 20* for more details)

While at the submission of this report the survey is only midway to completion, preliminary results have identified a significant conservation threat to Gough's native species in the form of accidental introductions of non-native species. In fact, so many invertebrate species have been introduced to Gough that they now equal or exceed the number of native species in many groups. Comparisons between the invertebrate species lists recorded thus far by GITIS with those recorded on Gough in a previous survey by Martin Holdgate in 1955-56 indicates that many introductions have occurred on Gough during the last 46 years, probably as a result of the requirement to supply the island's meteorological station.

The impact that introductions may have on an island's indigenous communities can be potentially devastating. These indirect threats can lead to long-term changes in local community structure and biodiversity, affecting all native fauna and flora. It is not only invertebrate introductions that pose a conservation threat to Gough. Introductions of alien plants have been shown to threaten Gough's biodiversity and the ever-present



*Gough, Lowland *Phylica* Fernbush Vegetation*

threat of rats arriving on Gough would certainly be an environmental catastrophe.

To preserve Gough's unique biodiversity the threats posed by the accidental introduction of alien species need to be taken seriously and all possible precautions must be taken to minimize the risk

of human mediated introductions. It is vital that protocols concerning the control of imported materials to Gough, detailed in the management plan for the Gough Island wildlife reserve, are understood by all visitors to Gough and strictly adhered to.

#### **Full report from Dr A G Jones**

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## Inaccessible Island management plan

Inaccessible Island is one of three main islands in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago in the central South Atlantic. It is a globally important site for biological conservation, supporting at least 20 endemic species, as well as more than 70 other species restricted to the Tristan-Gough island group. Although utilised by humans in the past, Inaccessible remains in a largely pristine condition and is one of the few temperate oceanic islands free of introduced mammals. A complementarity analysis recently identified Inaccessible as one of the key islands necessary to conserve biodiversity at Southern Ocean islands, and recommended that the island be considered for World Heritage status (Chown et al. 2001).

In 1997, Inaccessible Island and its surrounding waters out to 12 nautical miles were proclaimed a Nature Reserve. In order to enhance further the island's conservation status, a management plan for the nature reserve has been written by Peter Ryan (Percy FitzPatrick Institute, University of Cape Town) and James Glass (Chief Islander and Head of Tristan's Natural Resources Department). The management plan calls for Inaccessible Island to be managed as a Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area (IUCN Category I). It sets guidelines to minimise visitor disturbance, and, where feasible, to redress past human impacts. Special attention is given to preventing the introduction of non-native animals, plants or other organisms. However, it is intended that well-managed access to the island continue to be allowed for Tristan residents, and that responsible, sustainable exploitation of marine resources be permitted in the waters of the Nature Reserve.

The management plan was published by the Tristan da Cunha Government with funding provided by WWF-UK. It consists of two main sections: a description and resource inventory, and management policies with guidelines for management. Appendices include a bibliography, copies of relevant legislation, lists of scientific visits and the main biota, as well as visitor guidelines and application and reporting forms for visitors. Implementation of the plan rests with the Administrator and Island Council of Tristan da Cunha.

### References:

Chown, S.L., Rodrigues, A.S.L., Gremmen, N.J.M. & Gaston, K.J. 2001. World Heritage Status and conservation of Southern Ocean islands. *Conservation Biology* 15: 550-557.

Peter Ryan

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## Gibraltar host BirdLife International Conference

Less than a year after hosting the conference *Calpe 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise*, Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society organised the European Partnership Meeting of BirdLife International in September at the John Mackintosh Hall. One hundred and twenty delegates from 38 European countries attended to discuss the BirdLife Programme and such issues of European concern as agriculture, forestry, and long-line fishing. During the meeting, held during GONHS' 25th anniversary year, the hosts signed up as full Partners of BirdLife International, after being involved in the organisation and its predecessor, the ICBP, since 1982

John Cortes

GONHS: [www.gibnet.gi/~gonhs](http://www.gibnet.gi/~gonhs)

## Ascension Island Seabird Restoration Programme

In *Forum News 20* we reported that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had made available £500,000 to support a two-year project to restore the seabird breeding colonies on Ascension Island. Richard White has been recruited as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Conservation Officer and arrived on the island from the UK at the end of October. Tara George, the Ascension Island Government Conservation Officer, arrived from St Helena in December.



Richard White, RSPB Ascension Island Conservation Officer

Richard and Tara will continue the work of the seabird-monitoring programme initiated by Norman Ratcliffe of the RSPB. They will also prepare for the arrival of the Wildlife Management International Ltd team of invasive species specialists from New Zealand in January 2002. That team of eight staff will be based on Ascension for a year to work on a programme to control the feral cats and black rats on the Island.

The initial aim of the seabird monitoring programme is to assess the size of seabird populations in 2001-2002 *i.e.* prior to the removal of cats. The main focus of the census is to produce a current estimate of the Ascension frigatebird population. This has required a high-tech approach to marking individual birds. Frigatebirds have very short, feathered, legs and as a result conventional ringing is not the most appropriate way to mark birds. The solution is to use a technique that implants a tiny microchip under loose skin in the nape of the bird, in the same way that a pet might be tagged for identification. As a result, a microchip reader has been added to the more familiar fieldwork tools of binoculars and a notebook.

An understanding of the current size of seabird populations on Ascension is essential to monitoring the success of the restoration programme. While the recolonisation of mainland Ascension by frigates and boobies may be viewed as a success, the real success of the 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.

This season's sooty tern census conducted by John Hughes of the Army Ornithological Society and the RSPB produced a total of 150,000 pairs. It was noticeable that the number of dead birds found in the vicinity of the colonies was much lower than in recent years. Hopefully, the returning adult birds in April 2002 will find the Wideawake Fairs free of cats for the first time in 200 years.

To contact Richard and Tara email: [conservation@atlantis.co.ac](mailto:conservation@atlantis.co.ac) or write to: Ascension Island Seabird Restoration Programme  
Georgetown, Ascension Island, South Atlantic ASCN 1ZZ

## Final field season of the Forum's Darwin Initiative in Turks & Caicos



At the time of writing, we are part way through the second and final season of fieldwork for the Darwin Initiative project on

Developing Biodiversity Management Capacity in the Turks & Caicos Islands (run by the Forum, CABI and Turks & Caicos National Trust). This included further studies on bats by Dr Tony Hutson (UK) and Tim McCarthy (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburg, USA), as well as some work on birds and on co-ordinating the draft management plan by Mike Pienkowski.

Project Officer Bryan "Naqqi" Manco coordinated the team's being joined in their work by local colleagues. These included the senior science students and their teacher from North Caicos High School (who showed remarkable fortitude in relation to peak mosquito activity – a less pleasant feature of the biological richness of the area), as well as field staff of the Department of Environmental and Coastal Resources.

In parallel with this, work has continued on mapping. An accurate map showing the distribution of different habitats and ecosystems within a site is fundamental to effective management planning. Fred Burton, with help from Mike Pienkowski, is leading on the production of such a map for the Turks & Caicos Islands Darwin Project. The starting point is a satellite image. There is a great deal of information in this, and the first step is to analyse and classify this. Then the distribution of plant communities and other habitats needs to be checked in the field, a process known as "ground-truthing". Further analyses towards a final version of the map are nearly complete, and work is in hand to add roads, reserve boundaries, trails etc, as well as in printing preparation, with grids, scales, labels and the like.

All these aspects, including scientific results, mapped information and local knowledge, will be drawn together into the draft



Photograph of bats roosting in a cave 'chimney' taken to help count the population

management plan. As for all other aspects of the project, this is being developed in consultation with local residents.

The people of Middle Caicos, with the Turks & Caicos National Trust, aim to use the island's past to create a future in an environmentally conscious way. Not yet spoiled by the trappings of large-scale development, the island has managed to maintain its own strength of culture and character, but need new approaches to sustain this. The people of Middle Caicos have thrived for several centuries by living in harmony with the land and sea, a precedent they actively strive to maintain. The Middle Caicos Eco-tourism Project is an effort to help them continue to do just that. This local community-based programme, prompted through the TC National Trust, seeks to give the financial and physical support needed to promote eco-tourism activities on the island. Some elements are already getting into place. These include: the Crossing Place Trail, a coastal trail that formerly provided a means of communication between the islands; re-opened trails through regenerating scrubland to remnants of prosperous Loyalist Era plantations; and more ambitious trails through woodland and wetland to Lucayan sites, dating back to the early 1400s.

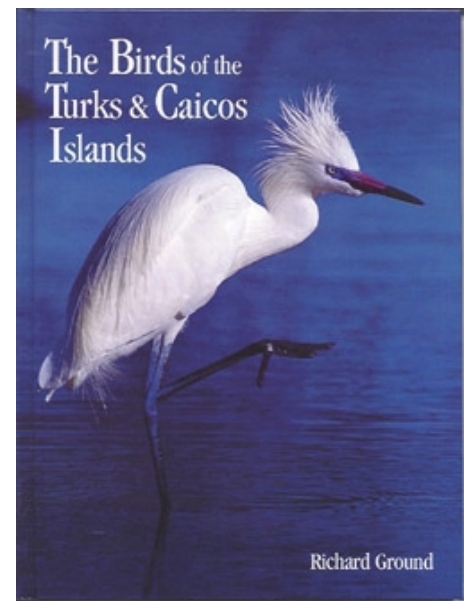
The next stage of the work, after the current Darwin Initiative project will be to implement the draft management plan. This will add the results of the Darwin project to the pilot aspects of the Middle Caicos Eco-tourism project, to provide an integrate programme with the potential to fulfil local aspirations, employment possibilities and economic sustainability, while protecting the internationally important conservation sites – which have some of the most superb wetland transitional ecosystems anywhere.

This will depend on finding support for the implementation phase, including the adding interpretation and safety features to the trails which have been reopened, adding new viewing opportunities, making use of the old school building given by TCI Government to TC National Trust to provide an interpretative centre, guide-training, further educational work, and provision for visitors. Especially given the patience of the local people while the project was planned, funding obtained and the scientific information gathered, it is vital that this work continues to implement the plan without a gap. Accordingly, funds to support this are being sought urgently including a further application to the Darwin Initiative to help carry its present results through to application.

Further news on the project can be found in issue 2/3 of the project newsletter *DarWiN* available from the project and on the Forum's web-site ([www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org): go to Territories and then Turks & Caicos). Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman. [pienkowski@cix.co.uk](mailto:pienkowski@cix.co.uk)

## The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands

The Darwin Initiative project has been pleased to collaborate in the production of a major new book *The Birds of the Turks and Caicos Islands*, which was launched at the AGM of the Turks & Caicos National Trust. The book is hard cover, 96 pages with 236 full colour pictures. While it concerns mainly birds, there is a section on habitats which also covers butterflies, moths and reptiles. The purpose of the book is two-fold: to serve as an educational tool for local people, especially children, to learn about their natural heritage, and to introduce visitors to the fauna of the TCI. In furtherance of the first objective, the Trust is giving a copy of the book to every school in the country. In tourism terms, we believe the book will help to attract tourists as some 51 million people in the United States alone call themselves bird watchers. In line with the objectives of the project, it is hoped that it will also encourage visitors to visit other Islands in addition to the main tourist resort of Providenciales, as it describes locations on other Islands which are particularly good for birdwatching.



The book was written and the photography done by Richard Ground, the Chief Justice of the TCI. Mr Ground's wildlife photographs have been published in many magazines over the last dozen years, and he produced a book on the wildlife of the Cayman Islands while he was Attorney General there. The lay-out and management of the publication process was done by his wife, Dace. They have donated the book to the Trust. The publication of the book was made possible by a generous donation from Robin and Sheila Laing, long-time residents of Grand Turk, and by an interest-free loan from the Conservation Fund, a new fund based on a visitor tax. Books can be purchased from the Trust office directly, as well as from local shops, at US\$20.00 each. For those in UK, the Forum plans to obtain a small stock to ease purchase in sterling.

## Launch of *A Visitors Guide to the Falkland Islands*

Ben Fogle, star of UK TV programme *Castaway 2000*, said at the launch of *A Visitors Guide to the Falkland Islands*, "I have had a life long desire to go the Falklands, so when I was given the opportunity to go to any destination in the world I chose the Falklands". Dipping into the guide it is easy to see why. Falkland Islander, Debbie Summers was on hand to sign copies at the launch that was held on 14 November 2001 in London. Becky Ingham, Conservation Officer, Falklands Conservation said "The wildlife and unspoilt landscapes of the Falklands are the biggest reasons to visit the Falkland Islands so conservation and sympathetic development of our environment are vitally important. Research has found that many visitors are generally unaware of environmental conditions and often lacked essential information, for example, flash photography down a penguin burrow can lead to desertion of the nest".

Jim Stevenson of RSPB reviewed the Guide for *Forum News*:

RSPB has supported Falklands Conservation for many years and we have watched it grow from a tiny operation based in London to an amazingly effective conservation organisation which, while it wisely retains a foot in the UK, is now a integral part of the scene in Falklands.

Almost all of the visitors to Falklands come by cruise ship. Arriving at Stanley they walk through the new visitor centre, which is also the office of Falklands Conservation. What a brilliant move! Falklands Conservation has space to set out their wares and a chance to influence almost every visitor.

Part of the trick of this kind of business is to give people the best experience you can, without destroying the very thing they come to see. This is tricky when your visitors turn up a hundred or more at a time and the sites are scattered around 700 islands in the windy South Atlantic.

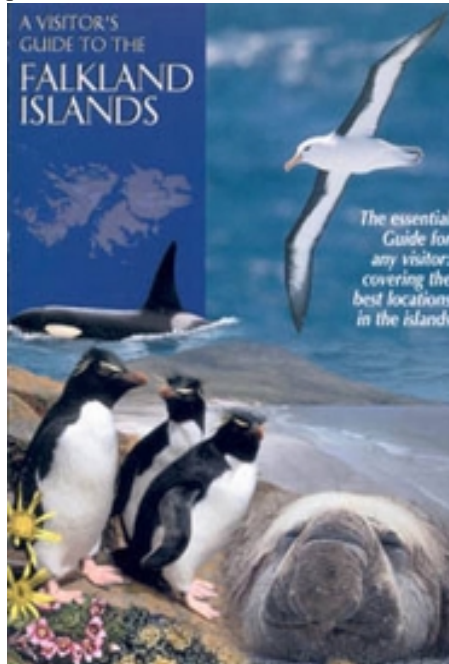
The book is hardback, portrait format and spiral bound; ideal for the pocket and for windy days in the field. Inside the covers there is a map and a "countryside code" designed to remind visitors how to behave. The book is full of information on photography, safety, history, the people and cover 13 of the best sites in the islands.

Each site gets four or five pages of maps, photos and information. Many of the key species are illustrated, but you will need field guides as well, especially for the birds. There is also a useful checklist of the flora and fauna you are most likely to see.

Author Debbie Summers is a local girl who has studied tourism in the Falklands as part of her dissertation for Leeds University. She has certainly put her studies to good use, for the Tourist Board, Falklands Conservation and for the tourists whose visits will be greatly enhanced through this book.

Copies of the guide cost £9 plus postage charges can be ordered by contacting Falklands Conservation at 1 Prince Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, UK, tel/fax +44 208 343 0831 or email [info@falklandsnature.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@falklandsnature.demon.co.uk) Website <http://www.falklandsconservation.com/>

Alternatively P O Box 26 Stanley Falkland Islands



*A Visitors Guide to the Falkland Islands*



Picture on right by  
Servitre A. Morley  
Age 11 Turks & Caicos

## TCI triumphs in international competition

An international competition was organised by the Mangrove Action Project ([www.earthislandinstitute/map](http://www.earthislandinstitute/map)) to produce a 2002 calendar *In Mangrove There is Life*. The calendar includes contributions from Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, New Caledonia, Ecuador, Vietnam, Brazil, Turks & Caicos, India, Bangladesh, US Virgin Islands, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Kenya. TCI organiser was Turks & Caicos National Trust ([www.tci.mall.tc/nationaltrust](http://www.tci.mall.tc/nationaltrust)) The web link for ordering the calendar is [www.earthisland.org/map/calendar.htm](http://www.earthisland.org/map/calendar.htm). The winning picture and two poems from TCI are reproduced below.

### Mangroves Are Important

Come! Visit the island of the Turks & Caicos  
Where you can see  
the beautiful attractions  
Of the mangrove trees that  
adorn our shores.

They are so important to us  
we wished there were more.  
They are very attractive  
but also very strong.  
For they protect us  
through those ocean storms.  
Their prop-roots keep standing tall  
They act as giants against the shore walls.  
The Mangroves provide a  
home for small fishes  
To keep them good for tasty dishes  
For turtles to breed and birds to nest  
Their roots and branches  
are certainly the best.  
They protect, beautify and provide  
These are important things in our lives.  
So Islanders, be proud of this blessing  
For God has given us  
one of his finest dressings.

*By Maxwell Handfield*

*11 years old*

*Adelaide Oemler Primary*

*Turks & Caicos Islands*

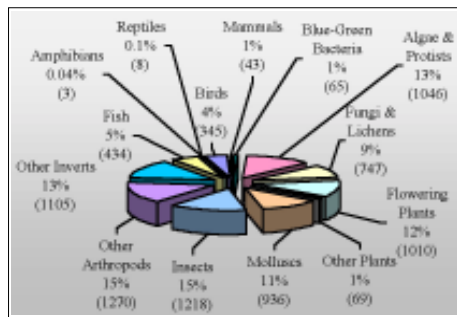
### The Mangroves

The Mangroves are trees  
That make the world beautiful  
Birds make their nest in them  
Sea creatures live among their prop-roots  
The mangrove provide our world.  
The Red mangroves are the most beautiful  
The white though rare is outstanding  
Among them all birds fly from  
East to West In order to take a rest  
These beautiful trees are very rare  
They attract tourist from far and near  
To our world  
The Turks and Caicos.  
Beautiful by nature  
*By Tatiana Handfield*  
*9 years old*  
*Adelaide Oemler Primary*  
*Turks & Caicos Islands*

## A Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Bermuda....from classrooms to pulpits.

Since its discovery in 1503, humans have viewed Bermuda from a series of divergent perspectives: a treacherous island to be avoided, a land of plenty, a strategic outpost, a beautiful place to vacation, a secure place to do business. Today, like many island communities, Bermuda's economy, through tourism, recreational activities and international business, is intrinsically dependent on the health of its natural habitats. Moreover, as many of the 8,000 plus species found in this island archipelago are at the extreme limits of their geographical distribution, the status of the Island's biodiversity is not only critical to the well-being of Bermuda and

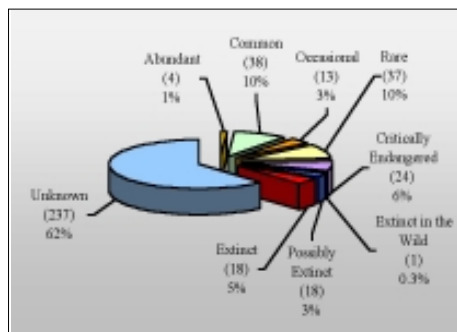
The numbers in brackets in both graphs represent the number of species



*The composition of Bermuda's marine and terrestrial flora and fauna*

its people, but also serves as an important barometer of climate-driven global trends.

However, Bermuda's natural heritage is under threat. Progressive displacement of endemic and native species by introduced species has been exacerbated by the ongoing encroachment on natural habitats. Particularly on land, the sheer magnitude of the human population (a resident population of 60,000 inhabits a total land mass of 55 km<sup>2</sup>) has forced the remaining natural communities to occupy



*The status of Bermuda's endemic species*

small and, in many cases, marginally productive habitats. 13.7% of Bermuda's land area is covered with concrete and 100% of the population is deemed to be urban. Many of Bermuda's native and endemic species (over 250 are known) are threatened.

Widespread recognition across Bermuda of the need for a coordinated community-based plan for the conservation of the Islands' unique natural heritage prompted the launch last year of an initiative to develop a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). With support from the UK Government's Darwin Initiative, in partnership with the Bermuda Government and Fauna and Flora International, Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo (BAMZ) and its partner organization, the Bermuda Zoological Society (BZS) are strategically placed to coordinate this initiative. As a government facility, BAMZ is directly plugged into the local policy-makers, whilst the non-adversarial role adopted by the BZS, coupled with a membership comprising 17% of the entire Bermuda population, ensures widespread trust and extensive outreach capabilities.

Under the guidance of a steering committee whose members range from government and NGO representatives to educators and local business people, and with a firm commitment from the Bermuda Government (development of the BSAP was included in the Throne Speech at the opening of Parliament last year), two strategic planning workshops held this year. After being presented with information on the status of the Island's



*Joseph Furbert taking down ideas from a group of key stakeholders (businessmen and clergymen) at one of the BSAP planning workshops.*

biodiversity in the form of a colourful 103 page Biodiversity Country Study produced by BAMZ/BZS, an eclectic group of planners, educators, scientists, resource managers, business people and clergymen focused on prioritising the issues facing our biodiversity, identifying constraints and opportunities for conservation, and developing an overall aim and objectives, and set of guiding principles. Perhaps just as importantly, the workshops provided a chance to exchange ideas and explore creative solutions as well as new partners to build on the very strong foundations that already exist to conserve our biodiversity. Following on

from these workshops, key individuals were asked to form working groups to develop specific actions and activities to meet the objectives. A draft plan should



*Heather De Silva giving the sermon at the Anglican Cathedral in Bermuda on the BSAP*

be ready early in 2002. As part of this process, we are working to ensure that the necessary programmes and policies are in place to have ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity extended to Bermuda in April 2002.

The development of a publicity campaign has been a concurrent activity. School visits, public lectures, and articles in local print media have been frequent; currently a promotional campaign for TV, radio and cinema is being developed. Perhaps the highlight in recent weeks was the invitation extended to BZS staff member Heather De Silva, to give the broadcast sermon at the Anglican Cathedral on the BSAP. Given such opportunities, we hope that this Plan will truly have the blessing of the wider community.

Annie Glasspool  
Project Leader, Bermuda Biodiversity Project  
Bermuda Zoological Society  
bamzcare@ibl.bm





## The rediscovery of a rare bat in the Cayman Islands

A colony of Caribbean endemic bats, *Phyllops falcatus* (White-shouldered or Fig-eating Bats) have been discovered living in a patch of virgin forest on Grand Cayman. This species has not been seen in the Cayman Islands since 1906 despite repeated efforts by visiting biologists to find it.

It was a thrilling and memorable experience for all of us to find this elusive animal still surviving here and even more wonderful to see pregnant and lactating females indicating a healthy breeding colony. These bats have a slow, clumsy flight pattern and a need to hide under the trees to evade flying predators.

Anne Louise Band who discovered the bats suggests that they are marooned in the small forest patch. She doubts that they could migrate across open and developed land to other habitats, even if there were any other suitable forests nearby which there are not.

Among the people assisting Annie that night was Ms. Gina Ebanks Petrie, the Director of the Cayman Islands Department of Environment. Ms. Petrie told us that this forest was the only place on the entire island that she had approved as an environmentally sound place to quarry for fill. She has since changed this recommendation, but the fact remains that it is only a recommendation. This property is in private hands and the owners definitely plan to develop it. There are over two hundred acres involved, divided among more than two-dozen owners.

The worrying issue here is that, although the species is protected under Cayman Law, its habitat is not. One of the goals of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands is to protect habitat and this forest will be placed on the priority list of recommendations for national protected areas that is being developed by Fred Burton as part of his biodiversity survey (a major project that is almost finished). Inclusion on this list will not stimulate the Cayman Islands government to protect the land in any way; it will still be up to conservation groups to purchase it from the owners if it is to be saved for these endemic bats and other wildlife.

*Phyllops falcatus* is found only on Haiti, Cuba and Grand Cayman. The other two host countries are far less stable politically, so this could be the last chance to save this species from extinction.

Lois Blumenthal  
Bat Conservation Programme Director  
National Trust for the Cayman Islands  
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*Phyllops falcatus* White-shouldered or Fig-eating Bat

## Status of Blue Iguanas in Grand Cayman

by Bina Mani, originally published in the *Caymanian Compass* on 19th November 2001.

Experts from all over the world are deeply concerned about the highly precarious position that Grand Cayman's beloved indigenous native, the blue iguana, is in. Make no mistake, one expert stresses, without human intervention, starting now and into the future, the magnificent blue will be extinct in the wild.

An action plan to help drag the critically endangered reptile, Grand Cayman's largest land animal, from extinction is presently being drawn up.

A meeting, hosted by the National Trust, of the Iguana Specialist Group of IUCN'S Species Survival Commission had 40 participants, including 32 from overseas, taking a long and critical look at the extant situation with Grand Cayman's endemic species and the possible way forward.

The participants, from both the Caribbean and farther afield, attended the conference, which was inaugurated by the Governor, Mr Peter



*Iguana specialist group photograph*

Smith on Saturday 10 November. Local participants from the Departments of Environment, Agriculture, Environmental Health and the National Trust joined a smaller group of overseas participants on Tuesday to help map out the recovery strategy.

"Having reviewed your programme and the current status of Grand Cayman iguanas, there is no question in the (Iguana Specialist) Group's mind that the Blue is in very large trouble," Mr Quentin Bloxam, Zoo Programme Director of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in Jersey said on Friday.

The Durrell Trust's whole philosophy is to save species from extinction and offers some \$1 million directly in funds to overseas projects, he revealed.

He highlights the need for urgency with the blue iguana, "although the National Trust has dragged it back from extinction and has done fantastic work" in conservation and breeding efforts.

The National Trust's iguana specialist, Mr Fred Burton, who is currently fine-tuning the action plan with Mr Bloxam, indicates the overall goal of the plan for the next five years is "To restore a wild population of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana sufficient to remain viable in the long term."

The plan takes a three-pronged approach to the blue iguana's recovery, indicates Mr Burton. This includes:

- Establishment of a designated protected area for the Blue Iguana where the species is known to be most prevalent in the wild;
- The possible reintroduction of the indigenous animal to the western part of the island where it would be "very desirable" to have another population; and
- Continuation of captive breeding at the Botanic Park to build up numbers and to ensure that the population of the animals in the Park goes up.

## Proceedings from *Calpe 2000* Conference published on Forum website

*Calpe 2000* conference in Gibraltar was a landmark occasion for the Forum, with excellent representation from the OTs, mostly the voluntary sector, but also some key government people. Without a doubt, the most important, measurable outcomes are related to progress over the environmental components of the Government's 1999 White Paper. Beyond that, I feel that we all learned a great deal from each other, and I constantly found myself realising that most of the problems we have, we share. And it's not just the UK Overseas Territories; speakers from France, Spain and the Seychelles all echoed the problems of small island states in trying to conserve their wildlife.

Our hosts, Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, and the Gibraltar Government, were marvellous. What an amazing powerhouse GONHS is with John Cortes at the helm. As for Gibraltar itself, I think we all have our own memories. We share the amazing experience of the final dinner in the huge cavern beneath the rock, as well as the memories of guided tours, field sessions and much debate.

My own gem was the wonderful day I spent with Ijahnya Christian, Director of Anguilla National Trust and local school children in the botanical gardens. This was a return to my roots as an environmental educator, before I was promoted to being a project manager. Possibly this is the greatest value of such conferences; that we touch base with what its all about, people and the environment.

The proceedings of the conference form a massive volume, but you can view/download/print the entire thing on the Forum's web site [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org). I was pleased to see that the proceedings were produced in full. So often, they are edited down to the level where they cease to be useful, but this time, we have a remarkable manual of all the deliberations of the conference, produced under a year from the date of the conference. Take a look.

Jim Stevenson RSPB

## British Indian Ocean Working Group

In certain quarters, scepticism persists about the actuality as well as the causes of global warming. Data presented by Dr Charles Sheppard to the AGM of the Friends of the Chagos on 4 October 2001 were thus of general significance as well as special interest to his audience. Using unpublished data on island elevations measured by the Joint Services Expeditions of the 1970s, and applying sea surface temperature data from the Hadley Data Centre as well as Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change sea level projections, he showed that several important trends are likely which will further debilitate the reefs:

a) Temperature will steadily rise and cause more frequent temperature surges above the critical 29.9°C value which devastated the Chagos corals in 1998. Consequences of this would include mortality of the main reef building corals.

b) There will be an increase of the sea level of about 5 - 20 cm by 2020, and more than double this by the end of this century. Given the island elevations and profiles, there is likely to be increased inundation of the islands.

Because many of BIOT's low-lying islands have depressions in their centres which dip to sea-level or below, rising sea levels are likely to cause greater pressure on their fresh water lenses. Storm surges will more frequently cause shore erosion, due to the increased water depth over the reef flats. Both could increase the salination of the islands. These data, of course, will be made available to the team undertaking studies into the feasibility of resettling the northern atolls.

Nigel Wenban Smith, Chairman  
Friends of Chagos UKOTCF British Indian Ocean Territory Working Group

## Bird Conservation Priorities

RSPB has produced a research report *Bird Conservation Priorities in the UK Overseas Territories*. (RSPB Research Report No 1: 124 pp S/B 2001)

The status of the world's birds is in constantly changing, usually for the worst. BirdLife International reports :

A shocking one in eight (or c.12%) of all bird species have a real risk of becoming extinct in the next 100 years. That is a total of 1,186 bird species. Most worryingly, 182 are Critical, meaning that they have only an estimated 50% chance of surviving over the next 10 years or three generations. "

The UK Overseas Territories have 47 species of birds of global concern. 33 of these are globally threatened and 14 are "near threatened." Two species are Critical; the Montserrat oriole and the spectacled petrel, (Tristan/Gough). Four are "endangered"; Tristan albatross, Henderson petrel, Bermuda petrel (Cahow) and St. Helena plover.

The remaining 27 species are classified as vulnerable.

Of the 47 listed, 22 are endemics to the Overseas Territories and a further 15 have their most important sites in the Territories.

RSPB's Conservation Science and Global Programmes staff have put the report together in order to prioritise RSPB's research and conservation work, but this will be a useful document for other



*Montserrat Oriole*

NGOs and for Governments and their advisors. It contains mini-species action plans and important information about the key sites these species require.

It is a very useful report and constitutes a thorough review of our current knowledge, much of which was unpublished previously. Hopefully it will be available on the web eventually. It would be greatly improved by the addition of colour pictures of the species concerned. Perhaps a poster "The Endangered Birds of the UK Overseas Territories" would be a good idea?

[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

## Martin Drury's Visit to St Helena

Martin Drury, recently retired Director-General of the National Trust and now Executive Committee Member of the Forum, offered his expertise in assisting St Helena in setting up their own National Trust. He sent this report of his visit to *Forum News*.

My wife and I spent just over three happy and interesting weeks in St Helena from 22 November 2001. She taught in the Prince Andrew School. My brief was to 'facilitate' the creation of a St Helena National Trust, working with the Steering Committee.

My programme was well prepared by Rebecca Cairns-Wicks on behalf of Lynette Bloomfield, chairman of the Steering Committee and co-ordinator of the project, whose return from the UK was delayed by her partner being taken ill. She arrived in St Helena on 7 December.

I spent my first week briefing myself and taking soundings. I had meetings with the Governor, the Acting Attorney-General, Councillors and other interested individuals. I attended meetings of all but two of the NGOs which are combining to form the NT. The Fishermen's Association and the Dive Club did not meet during my visit, but I talked to the chairmen of both. I addressed an Assembly of the pupils and teachers of Prince Andrew School and gave a public talk. I also walked a great deal in the wild parts of the Island with Stedson Stroud and saw as much as I could elsewhere, including many 'heritage' buildings, the new museum building in Jamestown, areas of endemic vegetation, the wire-bird and the thriving Millennium Forest (of the gumwood). On one of our walks Stedson, John Price and I found seven young plants of the endemic boxwood, of which, I think, only one other has been recorded since the 1790s!

I learned that the Steering Committee wanted to be in a position to announce the formation of the National Trust in May 2002 during the Quincentennial Celebrations. We therefore decided to focus on five specific objectives, so that the Steering Committee could support the announcement in May with statements that

- the National Trust Ordinance had been signed and enacted by the Governor;
- a Patron, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Acting Director had been appointed and that the post of Director was being advertised;
- the Trust's office and head quarters had opened (preferably in a good building in Main Street, Jamestown);
- the Trust would be concentrating its efforts initially on four projects chosen to represent the breadth of its brief e.g. environment, education, the built heritage and culture;
- 100 members had been enrolled.

Thanks to Lynette Bloomfield and Alan Nicholls, the Acting Attorney-General, the NT Ordinance has been drafted and approved by the Legislative Council. It was signed by the Governor on 5 December and is therefore now in force. Some progress has been made towards the other four objectives. For example, we identified individuals who would be generally welcomed if they were to accept invitations to serve as Officers and we tentatively identified four good and varied projects. A great deal remains to be done, however, by May 2002.

We managed not to get hung up on the issue of funding before deciding what we wanted to do, but indications from the FCO suggest that the five objectives, if achieved, would meet most of

the criteria for start-up funding from their Environment Fund (current constraints permitting). The critical matter of long-term sustainability is unresolved and will only have a chance of resolution if - or when - the Trust has generated local enthusiasm and has some achievements behind it. There is already a good deal of enthusiasm among members of the constituent NGOs; the challenge is to extend it to those who do not yet know what a National Trust can do for the people of St Helena, so that we can then seek support from outside funders.



*Architectural heritage, intact 18th Century street in Jameston*

## Quincentenary (Q5) Celebrations

"Discover St Helena: discover the land the sea and the people"

The Quincentenary Celebrations Committee (QCC) on the Island have been working very hard and have produced programme of activities to take place through out the year 2002.

The main objectives of the QCC are:

- To directly contribute to creating an awareness of St Helena as a potential tourist and inward investment destination;
- To organise events and activities that will best portray St Helena's past; create an awareness of the present and generate interesting and lasting benefits for the future;

A commemorative brochure is being produced for sale, which includes the story of St Helena from 1502 to date as well as contributions on various aspects of life on St Helena. Four different T shirts are on sale depicting the Q5 logo as well as a photo mosaic poster consisting of 2002 photographs of people and landscapes of the Island.

The St Helena Government has arranged for a special issue of coins and stamps.

Celebration of the British Connection will take place from 24 April to 1 May 2002. During the week, events and activities will be geared towards traditions and lifestyles that have been inherited from the British but subsequently refined and developed into what is now seen as being traditionally St Helena.

The main Q5 celebrations will be during the period 13<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May. A countdown laser show and dance will lead into St Helena Day on 21 May when, as is the tradition, the day will start with an Ecumenical Service in the Grand Parade.

For a full calendar of events visit the Q5 website at [www.sthelena2002.com](http://www.sthelena2002.com)

## New project to investigate marine turtle status in the Caribbean Overseas Territories

Last November, UK Fisheries Minister Elliot Morley announced a new research project, which aims to assess the status and exploitation of marine turtle populations in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories. The 3-year initiative, known as *TCOT* (Turtles in the Caribbean Overseas Territories), is headed by the University of Wales's Marine Turtle Research Group, MTRG and the UK charity Marine Conservation Society, (MCS).

*TCOT* is part-funded by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (DEFRA) and involves a coalition of organisations, including the Cayman Island Department of Environment and the Cayman Turtle Farm. The partnership will work with local expertise in Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands to help establish long-term and participatory field research programmes, including habitat monitoring, genetic stock analysis and socio-economic surveys. By the end of the project, the team intends to make recommendations for the conservation and management of Caribbean marine turtle populations.

The team is currently contacting those who have a special interest in Caribbean marine turtles and their habitat, local fisheries and local tourism. If you would like to participate in this project or have useful information, please contact Dr Brendan Godley, *TCOT* Project Coordinator, at Marine Turtle Research Group, School of Biological Sciences, University of Wales, Swansea SA2 8PP, UK.

E-mail: [mtn@mtrg.u-net.com](mailto:mtn@mtrg.u-net.com) Tel: +44 1792 554139, Fax: +44 1792 295447

Peter Richardson, MCS Species Policy Officer



*TCOT will work with local partners to establish participatory monitoring programmes at turtle rookeries in the Caribbean Overseas Territories*

## Forum's database goes live

During 2001 the Forum has developed the mechanics for a database for Overseas Territories environmental information. This is now live and operational within the Forum's website ([www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)). The Forum is very keen to encourage as many people as possible to have a go at entering data, as the database can only be a useful tool if it contains a comprehensive range of information about each Overseas Territory. It is the chicken and egg situation; people will only find the database useful when it has plenty of information to access. Data inputters need not be too concerned about the way their information looks: all new information is assessed before it is published in the open database.

To encourage data input, we suggest that new users try to put some information into the **sites module** first, as it is probably the most straightforward to use. The other modules are projects; information sources, funding sources and conservation priorities. There are comprehensive instructions on how to use each section on the website. You will need your own special password, obtainable from Mike Pienkowski at

[pienkowski@cix.co.uk](mailto:pienkowski@cix.co.uk). If you find that once you have started entering data, you run into problems, then anyone at the Forum Secretariat will be pleased to help you overcome them.

Any sites which you consider have an importance for wildlife should be included, whether they have a level of protection, or not. The module will guide you as to the kind of information to add in describing the site, and there is an option to write free text, so that you don't have to be constrained by keywords or fields.

**We want to make this database a valuable and useful resource for anyone interested in the environment of the UK Overseas Territories. We need your data to help you !! See below for contact details.**

## Bermuda Conference

22 to 27 March 2003 have been identified as the probable dates for an environmental conference to be held in Bermuda, following the success of the Forum's conference with Gibraltar partners. The theme of the conference, putting biodiversity in the mainstream will cover the following topics: Environmental charter and strategic planning; managing conservation organisations; implementing management plans; and climate change and other pollution related issues. Further details will appear shortly on the Forum website and in the next issue of *Forum News*.

### Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

The Friends of the UK Overseas Territories was launched by popular request in 2001 to allow individuals who care about what is happening in the Overseas Territories to be more formally allied with the Forum, and to show their interest and support by being members. Membership in the "Friends" is an easy way of expressing your support for the Forum's work; every member makes the Forum's voice stronger.

The UK OTs contain valuable and vulnerable environmental treasures; help support them by becoming a 'Friend'. Enclosed in this issue of *Forum News* you will find a leaflet for that purpose. If you have already joined then please pass the leaflet to a friend. Further supplies of the leaflet are available on request.

Correspondence to: Frances Marks, Forum Co-ordinator, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5LF UK Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1608 644425

WEB-SITE: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

Photographs courtesy of: John Binns, Colin Clubbe, Martin Drury, Annie Glasspool - Bermuda Zoological Society, Alex Jones, Geoff Halliday, Peter Richardson, Mike Pienkowski, Courtney Platt of Island Images

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