



# FORUM NEWS 34

JULY 2009

• A colour version of Forum News is available online at [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)

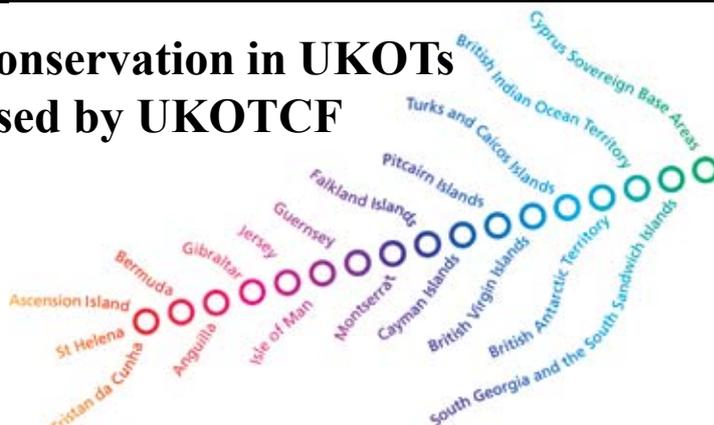
## UK Minister announces funds for conservation in UKOTs at Cayman conference organised by UKOTCF

At the UKOTCF-organised conference in Grand Cayman, UK Biodiversity Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies, announced plans for ear-marked funding and a new ‘Overseas Territories Challenge Fund’ as part of the UK Government’s Darwin Initiative.

The conference warmly welcomed this announcement, but called on the UK Government to do more to help meet the urgent environmental challenges faced in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

The latest UKOTCF-organised conference on conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs/CDs) and other small island communities took place in the Cayman Islands, from 30 May to 5 June 2009. This was the fifth such event, following those held in London (1999), Gibraltar (2000), Bermuda (2003) and Jersey (2006).

For the first time in this series of conferences, the event was attended by a UK environment Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). In his address, Mr Irranca-Davies announced that the next round of the Darwin Initiative would see “potentially over £1.5 million being ear-marked for Darwin projects in the Overseas Territories.” The Minister further announced that the Darwin Initiative would support a new ‘Overseas Territories Challenge Fund’, providing up to around £25,000 each for UKOT-based projects, to enable the development of larger funding bids to the main Darwin



Initiative. Mr Irranca-Davies confirmed also that the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DfID) are committed to continuing their support for their Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP).

The conference, which attracted delegates from all over the world, warmly welcomed the Minister’s announcement, and its recognition of the specific geographic and resource constraints affecting the UKOTs. However, delegates called on the UK Government to do more to help meet the urgent environmental challenges faced in the UKOTs/CDs. Important elements would be the provision of dedicated resources to enable sustained programmes, not just short-term projects, in support of conservation in the Territories; and the identification of a lead department for UK’s support to environmental conservation in the UKOTs/CDs.

In addition to the Minister’s address, the conference discussed key conservation and other environmental issues affecting the UKOTs/CDs. Conference sessions examined implementation of the 2001 Environment Charters, environmental education, climate change, planning and protected areas, raising the profile of conservation, invasive species, enhancing capacity, and joined-up thinking. A summary occurs later in this issue of *Forum News*. Under the general theme of *Making the Right Connections*, the conference aimed to draw on similarities and differences in experience across territories, to provide insights into common challenges, leaving participants better equipped to address local needs. Further information is available at [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org), where full proceedings will be published on later this year.

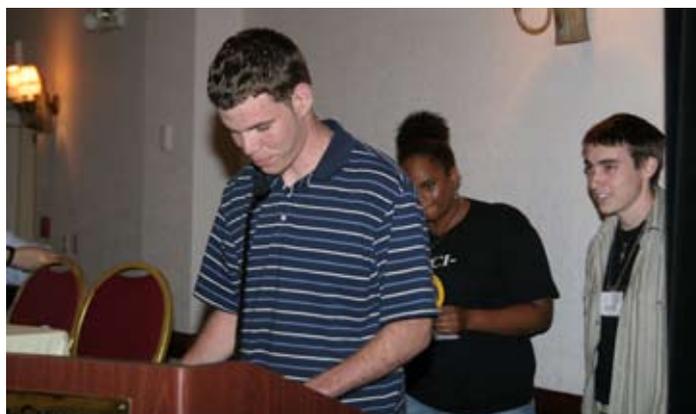


L to R: Mr Eric Blencowe (Head, International Biodiversity Policy Unit, Defra), Mr Huw Irranca-Davies MP (UK Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment, Wildlife and Rural Affairs, Defra), and Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman. Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou

As well as researchers, conservationists, policy makers and other professionals, the conference included contributions from ‘the next generation’ – students from local schools and colleges. Dustin Bodden from the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) Brac Campus, said in the final session “For me, this conference has probably been one of

the most life-changing experiences ever...some of you are mind-blowing, the things that you do...I would really like to thank all the organisers who helped me and my fellow students here. As I've come to see from this conference, a lot of you are actually like super-heroes – not that you are all perfect in everything you do, but what amazing feats some of you achieve with the moderate resources that you have.”

Reflecting on the achievements of the conference, UKOTCF Chairman Mike Pienkowski said “Those working for conservation in the UK’s widely dispersed Overseas Territories rarely have an opportunity to meet in one place to share experience and ideas, let alone with a UK Minister. So, these conferences have become an important part of UKOTCF’s work. It wouldn’t have been possible without the support of the UK Government’s Overseas Territories Environment Programme, the Cayman Islands Government, our partner organisations and all the voluntary effort from within UKOTCF. The Forum will continue to do everything it can to promote protection of the internationally important biodiversity of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.”



Students Dustin Bodden (speaking), Tashara Lewis (hidden), Jodiann Jackson and Piers Sangan give their views in the closing session.  
Photo: Rob Thomas

See first report of the conference (including full text of the address by UK Biodiversity Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies): <http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/2009conf/firstReport.pdf>

## Report on *Making the Right Connections* conference



Banana Orchid, Botanic Gardens Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman

The conference provided an opportunity for government environmental bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders to discuss key conservation issues, to highlight success stories, exchange ideas, and to forge partnerships – so that UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs/CDs) and other small island communities that share similar environmental problems could benefit from learning about one another’s history and experience of planning and conservation initiatives.

Conference participants first visited a range of sites on Grand Cayman, and heard introductory talks on important local environmental issues. At an evening reception hosted by the Governor, His Excellency Mr Stuart Jack, the conference was formally opened by the Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of Cayman Islands Government Business and the Hon. Mark Scotland, Cayman Islands Minister of Environment.

Over subsequent days, participants addressed a range of themes in the main conference sessions, outlined below.

### Progress on Environment Charter implementation

The 2001 Environment Charters outline Commitments made by the UK Government and the governments of most of the UK Overseas Territories, based on the principles of sustainable environmental management. If the Charters are to have value, monitoring of progress in meeting those Commitments is essential. UKOTCF published a first review of progress in 2007, and is now compiling a second review. This relies on input from the territories and from HMG, and UKOTCF is grateful to all those who have contributed. Initial indications highlight both successes and setbacks, and resourcing as a key constraint. A case study showed how St Helena had used its Environment Charter as a key document in its economic development plan. In a process facilitated by UKOTCF, stakeholders developed an environmental strategy, breaking down the Charter Commitments into specific actions. However, resourcing was required to move to the next stage, refining and implementing the strategy.

### Environmental Education

The importance of environmental education was a recurrent theme throughout the conference. This session focused on ways



Gina Ebanks-Petrie (Director of Environment) speaks on Cayman issues to the conference participants at the Botanic Gardens. Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman

of engaging and widening the involvement of young people in environmental issues. Examples of how this had been achieved, particularly in Cayman and the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, were discussed. However, some students reported uninspiring experiences of environmental education elsewhere. Key aspects of successful programmes included effective planning, integration of environmental issues into the wider school curriculum, emphasis on field-based experiences, and involvement of parents and the wider community.



*Joseph Smith Abbott (Director BVI National Parks Trust) speaks in the Planning session, with supporting panel of (L to R) Rob Thomas (rapporteur), Dr Noeleen Smyth (for Pitcairn Is), Stephen Mendes (Montserrat) and Dr John Cooper (session chairman). Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*

### Climate Change – impacts and adaptation

This session heard presentations from South Georgia (where climate change is accelerating the spread of invasive species), the Channel Islands (where *Planet Guernsey* has raised awareness of the issues) and Cayman (a partner in the Caribbean regional Enhancing Capacity for Adaptation to Climate Change project). Key messages included the urgent need to act, while gathering information to refine local responses, rather than waiting for a complete body of knowledge. Various tools and resources were available for planning and policy development, and were best used in an integrated way, maximising their combined value and engaging all levels of society. Often seen as a ‘victim’ of climate change, biodiversity is also part of the solution. Healthy, functioning ecosystems provide services including coastal defence, watershed protection and carbon sequestration, and conservation of biodiversity needs to be considered alongside social and economic factors in responding to climate change.

### Spatial Planning, Protected Areas and International Standards – assets or liabilities?

This session drew on experiences in the Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI), the Isle of Man, Montserrat, Pitcairn, the British Virgin Islands (BVI), the Chagos Archipelago and elsewhere, to assess opportunities and threats to effective planning and the development of protected area networks. The need for transparency, democratic procedures and involvement of civil society was stressed, as was the need for better integration and enforcement of policies and regulations. Lack of resources was often a key constraint. Also emphasised was the value of information networks, for sharing experience, supporting capacity building, and linking to higher-level (including European) policies, programmes and budgets. The desirability of more international protected areas, including Ramsar and World Heritage Sites, within the UKOTs/CDs was noted, with an initial aim that all should support at least one such internationally designated site.

### Raising our P rofile - engaging policy makers and the public

Participants heard broad perspectives, from a British Member of Parliament, a minister of the church, and conservationists from Cayman, Bermuda and BVI. Challenges inevitably included funding (that available was never sufficient, and specific campaigns could draw resources away from day-to-day activities) and communicating in ways that reached the many different audiences involved. Nonetheless, opportunities and support mechanisms existed. Experience showed that campaigning and environmental education worked, that tools like economic valuation could provide new perspectives, and that partnerships often enhanced results. Stronger mechanisms for communicating the concerns of the UKOTs in the UK Parliament were urged, as were new approaches to the relationship between science and religion.

### Invasive Species

In this session, the conference heard about the regional initiative to tackle invasive species in the South Atlantic UKOTs, work underway in TCI and Cayman, and activities being undertaken by JNCC. Subsequent discussions highlighted, in particular, the need for appropriate resourcing, an emphasis on biosecurity, and awareness-raising. As well as greater funding to tackle invasive species, more strategic funding was required, to enable sustained programmes based on integrated approaches and local capacity building. Biosecurity would always represent a good investment, as prevention of unwanted introductions was more cost-effective than control of established invasive species. Policy makers and the public needed to be reminded of the cost of dealing with invasive species, and the impact that they had on cherished local wildlife.

### Enhancing Capacity - how on earth are we going to cope with the workload?

All UKOTs/CDs face serious challenges in handling the work required to protect the environment, as human and financial resources in both governmental and NGO bodies are typically severely limited. In assessing these challenges and means of overcoming them, this session drew on perspectives from Cayman, the Falklands, Ascension Island, and TCI. Participants also heard about work underway in JNCC to identify funding sources, and the role of UKOTCF in supporting capacity building. Experiences, constraints and



*Paul Keetch MP answers questions, flanked by other speakers, from the left, Bertrand Letsome (Head of Conservation and Fisheries Dept, BVI Government) and Samia Sarkis (Bermuda Dept of Conservation) and Bill Samuel (UKOTCF Treasurer), session chairman for Raising our Profile. Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*



*Euwonka Selver describes to the conference some of the challenges currently facing the Turks & Caicos Islands.*

*Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*

opportunities varied between territories, but flagship species, volunteer programmes, strategic partnerships, effective co-ordination (and traditional Ascension Island fish-fries!) were all identified as assets in addressing resource constraints.

### **Joined-up Thinking – institutional arrangements for environmental management**

Presentations and discussions emphasised that a joined-up approach is essential for sustainable development generally, and conservation management in particular. Contributors from Cayman and the Isle of Man, and those with experience in a number of UKOTs/CDs and further afield, highlighted the importance of a range of factors in encouraging joined-up approaches. The role of dedicated, key individuals is often critical, but agreements between institutions can underpin partnership working. Effective information exchange mechanisms are also invaluable, not just in terms of the data that flow through them, but in forming relationships between stakeholders on the basis of a shared resource.

This session also heard from the UK Biodiversity Minister, Mr Huw Irranca-Davies (see above), and welcomed the prospect of a more joined-up approach to UKOT/CD environmental matters within

the UK Government, which has (through its Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity) commissioned JNCC to draft a strategy in this area.

### **Other conference outputs**

The conference prepared a short statement, welcoming the presence of the UK Biodiversity Minister and calling on the UK Government to recognise and deliver its own Commitments to the UKOTs under the Environment Charters, to identify a lead UK department for support of environmental conservation in the UKOTs/CDs, and to provide dedicated resources in order to enable sustained programmes that address pressing conservation needs.

In closing the conference, UKOTCF Chairman Mike Pienkowski thanked those who had provided the main resourcing for the event: the UK Department for International Development (DFID) via the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP), its joint initiative with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO); the Cayman Islands Government, especially its Department of Environment; and UKOTCF volunteers. He also thanked all those in Grand Cayman who had contributed to the success of the conference.

## **Reflections *Making the Right Connections* conference by B Naqqi Manco**

“Networking” has been recharged as a buzz word in the past few years – Internet sites for social and professional networking abound, and are becoming a more common part of professional communication. “Making the right connections” has never been easier – but adding a contact electronically on a professional networking site is not the same as meeting them face-to-face.

The face-to-face contact that the UKOTCF’s conferences have afforded me has been a vital component of my professional networking. During my first year of work with a UKOTCF Member organisation, the Turks & Caicos National Trust, I worked on the logistically remote and low-populated island of Middle Caicos. I often felt alienated in my work there, until I attended the *Calpe 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise* conference in Gibraltar. There, I met colleagues from NGOs and government bodies throughout UK Overseas Territories, as well as other countries. The realisation that my work was part of a much larger and far

more widely spread effort changed the way I thought about day-to-day tasks and long term goals. Suddenly, there was an enormous bank of knowledge from which I could draw on the experiences



*Conference participants chat, and enjoy the actors’ historical performance, at the Mission House. Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou*



Bryan Naqqi Manco speaks on lessons from the Caicos Pine Scale invasive species problem.  
Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou

of others, and this bank of knowledge has increased with each conference I have attended. A particular invasive species is a problem? That fellow I met at the last conference mentioned a way they deal with it in his territory. Recruitment of volunteers seems impossible? But another colleague told me about an idea that worked in volunteer recruitment for her. Our home territories may be quite different, but we are faced with

many of the same problems in conservation and sharing ideas on how we each deal with the problems in our own situations has led to increasingly collaborative work with organisations and government bodies throughout the Territories and in the United Kingdom.

These collaborative efforts were underscored by the number of international partnerships mentioned in the conference's presentations, but I do not believe that such synergistic efforts are made by professional contacts alone. Conservation is a profession mostly rewarding the soul and passion, not the pocket – so our colleagues in conservation tend to have similarly passionate

attitudes toward their own conservation goals. This shared passion forms a common thread that makes the conferences more than professionally valuable. Getting to know colleagues as people, rather than words on a page or photos on a poster, reinforces our commonalities and reminds us that we all may have answers to each other's questions. Even if all of the questions cannot be answered, there will be sympathetic ears to the challenges one faces. *Making the Right Connections*, to me, goes further than professional networking alone. I have met many admirable, kindred, and fun colleagues at the conferences, and wonderful new friends at each one. *Making the Right Connections* in Grand Cayman this year proved as wondrous as ever. Professionally, I was reminded that problems we face in our territory have been solved in other territories, and that there are ever-increasing ways to fill the voids generated by under-funding and capacity limitations. Personally, it was amazing figuring out how a colleague from another territory and I are related through marriage, and fulfilling to celebrate "Nonvascular Friday" (reprised from the Jersey conference in 2006) out to dinner with colleagues as obsessed with botany as I am. I left the conference feeling as though I not only made more of the right connections, but reinforced connections already made. There is a fellowship available in these grand meeting experiences, that does not come from reading a pamphlet or newsletter. When we mix and mingle and begin to know and care about our colleagues in conservation in the UK Overseas Territories, and recognise that our own work is known and appreciated, I believe then the right connections have truly been made.

*B Naqqi Manco, Senior Conservation Officer, Turks & Caicos National Trust*

***We expect to include more items about the conference in Forum News 35.***

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## Double Jeopardy for Gibraltar?

Gibraltar is the only UK Overseas Territory that is also a part of the European Union and, as such, European Directives, including the Habitats Directive, apply to the territory and the adjacent British territorial waters.

In keeping to its obligations under the Directive, the UK Government proposed two sites in Gibraltar as part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. These, the Rock of Gibraltar and the Southern Waters of Gibraltar, were designated Sites of Community Interest (SCIs) in July 2006. This was done on the recommendation of the Government of Gibraltar (which has responsibility for the environment under Gibraltar's Constitution), after the preparation of well researched documentation by the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS), a Member organisation of UKOTCF.

The Kingdom of Spain does not recognise any British waters surrounding Gibraltar, claiming that these were never conceded under the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. In a bizarre move that flew in the face of recent improving links between the UK, Gibraltar and Spain, and without consultation or advising any stakeholder, Spain submitted its own recommendation to the EU to designate an SCI, which it called "Estrecho Oriental" (The Eastern Strait), which took in all of the British waters off Gibraltar, and in fact extended further than Gibraltar's own SCI.

This duplicitous proposal appears to have escaped the attention

of EU and UK Government officials, and the site was declared an SCI by the EU in December 2008.

This fact remained unnoticed, until researchers in GONHS, who regularly monitor developments in conservation in the region, hit upon references in the Spanish press and were able to establish the facts and bring them to the notice of the Gibraltar and UK Governments. The Gibraltar Government is pursuing the matter in both the European Court and the Supreme Court in Gibraltar.

In effect, this "double protection" works against conservation. It gives Spain, as well as Gibraltar, the responsibility for monitoring and protecting marine life and actions that affect it, but there is no jurisdiction by Spain over British waters. Several instances of Spanish Civil Guard vessels approaching Gibraltar vessels have taken place in the past few months, even though Spanish fishermen some years ago pressurised the Gibraltar Government into allowing their vessels into Gibraltar waters, in contravention of the Gibraltar Nature Protection Act. The confusion, it is feared, could result in activities not being regulated.

GONHS is supporting the Gibraltar Government's action in the Courts, and is also calling on the Gibraltar Government to update and implement the Marine Nature Reserve Regulations, published in 1995, but not yet implemented.

*Further information: Dr John Cortes [jcortes@gonhs.org](mailto:jcortes@gonhs.org)*

# Support in Parliament

The recent success of UKOTCF in supplying evidence to House of Commons Select Committees continued in further links with Parliamentarians recently. In late 2008, Andrew Rosindell, a Member of Parliament who is also a Friend of the UKOTs, invited UKOTCF Officers to a meeting at the House of Commons. Mr Rosindell is very interested in UKOTs and conservation, and arranged for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas



*Andrew Rosindell MP introduces the presentation by Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF Chairman. Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman*

Territories to invite the Forum to co-host a reception to help raise the profile of the critical importance of conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and to introduce the work of UKOTCF and its network to MPs and Peers.

This event took place on 27 January 2009 at the Houses of Parliament in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Room in Westminster Hall, the oldest existing part of the Palace of Westminster. The Forum gave a short presentation informing the assembled MPs and Peers (as well as the Environment Minister of the Isle of Man) of some of the issues common to the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies. This was combined with some stunning photographs on a slide presentation of the wealth of biodiversity in the UKOTs. A lively and interesting discussion followed. The several UKOTCF Council Members present were able to address



*MPs, Peers and others mingle to discuss the issues raised in the presentation. Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman*

points raised in informal discussions. UKOTCF thanks all those who attended, as well as Mr Rosindell and his staff, the All-Party Group, the staff of CPA and the caterers. We note that reference was made subsequently in Parliamentary debate to UKOTCF and the importance of conservation in the UKOTs.

*Catherine Quick, Forum Coordinator: cquick@ukotcf.org*

## New UKOTCF Council Members

We welcome the following new Council Members, who were elected at the Annual General Meeting on 11 December 2008.

### Karen Varnham

Between 1998 and 2008, Karen Varnham worked as a self-employed invasive species biologist, specialising in eradicating rats from small islands, and producing reports and desk studies on various aspects of invasive species issues. In May 2008, she began a PhD at the University of Bristol, investigating the impacts of rats on island ecosystems. She is a member of the IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group and also serves on the committee of Cornwall Mammal Group.



*Karen Varnham, at shepherd's hut, Tristan da Cunha*

Karen has extensive experience with invasive species issues, especially in small island nations such as Mauritius, Antigua, St Lucia and Malta, as well as in many UKOTs. This has given her an understanding of the challenges facing conservation work in small and often remote countries, much of which is relevant to the UKOTs. More specifically, Karen carried out an in-depth review of non-native species in the UKOTs and Crown Dependencies for JNCC, producing a report and a database published in 2005. This involved sourcing and reading a great deal of grey literature, as well as contacting and communicating with key people living and working in the UKOTs and CDs. Karen has also worked with many of the Forum's current and former Member organisations, including the RSPB, Fauna & Flora International and the Bermuda Zoological Society.

Karen has visited many of the UKOTs, particularly in the wider Caribbean, including running workshops on invasive species issues in Bermuda and Anguilla, and carrying out fieldwork in Montserrat, Anguilla and BVI. Outside the Caribbean, she has also worked on proposed rat eradication projects in two of the remoter territories, Tristan da Cunha and BIOT. During this time, she has met and worked with many people and organisations with a role in conservation in the UKOTs, forming many good working relationships. She has attended the last three UKOTCF conferences, presenting her work on the non-native species

database at the Jersey conference, and co-chairing the session on invasive species at the Cayman Islands conference in May 2009.

### **Dr Chris Tydeman**

Chris Tydeman is Chair of Trustees of the Herpetological Conservation Trust, a UKOTCF Member organisation. He is an independent consultant dealing with both environment and development issues, specialising particularly in recent years in wetlands management, water supply and sanitation, biodiversity strategies and climate change. He left WWF-UK as Chief Scientist, having spent 23 years there, with secondments to the WWF European Programme and WWF International, before becoming a consultant in 2001. At WWF, he was responsible for the UK Conservation Programme, which included providing financial and staff support to the UKOTCF, as well as Programmes on Freshwater, Marine and Toxic Chemicals.

Chris has extensive policy experience at national, European and international levels, with government, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs; he has held a number of representative positions. These include being on: the UK Secretary of State's Advisory Committee for the Convention on Biological Diversity; UK Government advisory groups on otters and coastal management; both the Standing Committee and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar



*Chris Tydeman (left) and Mike Freeman, at Pedro St James site-visit at the Cayman conference. Photo: Dr Oliver Cheesman*

### **Mike Freeman**

Mike Freeman is Principal Ecologist of the States of Jersey. He started work with the Jersey Government as a Countryside Ranger in 1980, as a member of a team of two people. He is a past Council member of the National Trust for Jersey and a past member of the Executive of the Société Jersiaise. He has organised local volunteer conservation groups and coordinated working holidays

in Jersey with the BTCV. In 1989, he obtained an Open University degree; he is a member of the IEEM and The Society for the Environment.

In his role as Government Ecologist, Mike directed the legal draftsmen responsible for the Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000, wrote the island's Biodiversity Strategy and is responsible for the island's Biodiversity Action Plans. He acted as local coordinator for the 2006 UKOTCF conference in Jersey. Having been involved with environmental issues in Jersey for 28 years, he is very familiar with the relationships between the UK Government and the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, being responsible for the multilateral environmental agreements to which Jersey, through the UK, is a signatory.

Mike believes that the Forum has already made great strides in encouraging the UK to take more responsibility for preserving the valuable biodiversity of the Overseas Territories, and is keen to help in further developing contacts with the UK, raising the conservation profile of the UKOTs and helping to develop communication across the UKOTCF network.

### **Dr John Cortes**

John Cortes is General Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS), a post he has held since the creation of GONHS in 1976. He was last elected to the post in 2007. His employment is as Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Garden, a post he has held since 1991. He is also an environmental consultant with Wildlife (Gibraltar) Ltd. He gained a D.Phil at the Animal Ecology Research Group, Oxford, in 1983.



John has extensive experience in ornithology, ecology, natural history and conservation, having authored, edited and lectured on these subjects. He is, or has been, a member of numerous organisations, including the Gibraltar Development and Planning Commission, the Gibraltar Heritage Trust, the Institute for Campo-Gibraltarian Studies and the Park Authority of the Parque Natural de Los Alcornocales in Spain. Between 2003 and 2008, he directed a European Union Interreg Project in Gibraltar/Morocco. He has wide experience in lobbying and campaigning, having been instrumental in achieving Gibraltar's Nature Protection Act and the creation of an Environment Ministry in Gibraltar. He is experienced also in working within or with both NGOs and Government bodies.

Between 1983 and 1991, John was a civil servant, attaining the post of General Manager of the Gibraltar Health Authority, where he gained experience in public administration, management and handling large budgets. He is a Justice of the Peace, was awarded an MBE for services to ecology and conservation, and is an accomplished director and actor in amateur theatre. John would like to use his varied abilities in furthering the conservation of nature in other territories.

# *The European Biodiversity Action Plan – Counting down to 2010: State of play and the Post 2010 Vision for Europe*

On 11th February 2009, UKOTCF's Chairman attended by invitation a "High-level Roundtable" hosted in Brussels by the European Parliament Intergroup on Sustainable Development (Chair: Scottish MEP Struan Stevenson – who attended the Réunion conference). ("Intergroups" are roughly equivalent to All-Party Groups at the UK Parliament.) In fact, this Intergroup changed its name that morning to the Intergroup on Biodiversity and Climate Change.

The Roundtable was on *The European Biodiversity Action Plan – Counting down to 2010: State of play and the Post 2010 Vision for Europe*. A main reason for UKOTCF's attending was to try to make sure that Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) were not omitted from consideration, especially in respect of post-Countdown 2010 targets. No mention was made of OCTs or Outermost Regions (ORs) in the speeches. This was slightly surprising, as some of the organising bodies were amongst those that had also organised the Réunion conference. Although the Réunion conference was mentioned several times, it was not noted that it related to OCTs and ORs (and this would not have been apparent to most of the participants, who were concerned with the main part of the European Union).

Accordingly, UKOTCF raised a question, drawing attention to the biodiversity importance of OCTs and the need to include them in post-2010 targets. This received considerable and widespread support from other participants. In particular, Mr Ladislav Miko (Director, Protecting the Natural Environment, DG Environment, European Commission) was able to supply some information.

Two UKOTCF Council Members had met Mr Miko a couple of years earlier, along with French and Netherlands colleagues, under the auspices of *Bioverseas*. The *Bioverseas* participants had then put forward the idea of trying to encourage a "voluntary Natura 2000" in the UKOTs. (Natura 2000 is the network of protected sites set up in the European Union, with rather strong protection.) At the Réunion conference in July 2008, Mr Miko had promoted this idea (see *Forum News* 33: 9). He had stressed that it was not a suggestion that OCTs adopt EU legislation, but that they voluntarily implement a system inspired by this. The idea was that the European Union would then provide some financial support. At the time, it was not clear what timescale would be involved.

In response to UKOTCF's question, Mr Miko indicated that he hoped to have a proposal ready before 2010, with a view to early implementation. He noted that he sees this as one of the key things that he wants to achieve while in this post. He indicated that he was speaking with EU Member State governments and OCT governments. These discussions have since resulted in some wider consultations with NGO bodies also.

Whilst many of the speakers were addressing essentially mainland Europe issues, some wider aspects came from others. Perhaps chief amongst these was Pavan Sukhdev, the leader of the current study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). Mr Sukhdev has particularly wide experience for this role, including as Managing Director and Head of Deutsche Bank's Global Markets Business in India, and as an environmental activist. He focused his intervention on the initial findings of the TEEB study. The report, now in its second stage, puts real economic value on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and highlights that in a "business as

usual" scenario the cost of inaction would be huge. Pavan Sukhdev stated that halting biodiversity loss could potentially solve climate change. Removal of natural vegetation is responsible for 34% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In fact, this is the second largest contributor to climate change (after energy generation). Of course, development in several UKOTs tends to involve removal of the vegetation, so we have something of a link here. From our viewpoint, this seems a particularly important fact for some Territory administrations to note. In some cases, whilst the importance of addressing climate change is apparently agreed and even supposedly championed, in some cases there is little sign of action to stop the clearance of vegetation. Doing so might also be a valid route for seeking external support.

Mr Sukhdev believes that conservation could also contribute to alleviating the situation of the poor, who are most affected by environmental changes. Currently, ecological processes are calculated to account for 7% of the GDP in India. Yet, he notes, a more accurate figure, taking into account such ecosystem services as flood and drought control or soil protection, would be 57%. Today, the world faces two crises - an economic and an environmental one. Mr Sukhdev points out that the reality is that we cannot continue the way we are, as we are building an ecological deficit which can result in a geopolitical problem. Current economic models do not assign a value to things that have no price. The GDP was designed to measure human well-being, but it fails to measure all aspects of it. If governments are to manage human well-being, they also need to be able to measure it. The current model was created as a war time mechanism during World War II. However, even its inventor, Richard Stone, emphasized as early as 1984 in his Nobel speech that his model failed to measure environmental issues. Mr Sukhdev pointed out that he is not a pessimist and that we can still move forward. There is plenty of scope for new accounting. We just need to change our metrics. Sukhdev highlighted that \$2.5 trillion is used to support economies. The focus of this support must be placed on the green economy, green infrastructure, and green energy.

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## **Ascension hosts SAIS project regional workshop**

In May, the South Atlantic Invasive Species (SAIS) project, funded by the EU and managed by RSPB, convened a five-day regional workshop on Ascension Island. The aim was to develop a Regional Strategy on invasive species and to discuss related concerns. Around 40 people participated, including representatives of all the UKOTs involved in the project and invasive species experts from the UK, Europe and New Zealand. The meeting was opened formally by the Ascension Island Administrator, Ross Denny.

Presentations given at the workshop highlighted the common challenges, as well as differences, across the South Atlantic UKOTs. Shared concerns included the need for greater resourcing, enhanced biosecurity to prevent unwanted introductions, and control of key invasive species that have already become established, including rodents. A draft Regional Invasive Species Strategy is expected to be available for comment by July, with an official launch expected to follow in November 2009.

# Falkland Islands - A Sailor Spends Six Months Down South

It was the end of July when I stepped out of the jumbo jet and was immediately lashed by a near horizontal sleet storm. Welcome to Mount Pleasant! The temperature hovered around the zero mark, and I was here for the next six months.

Many military personnel have served in the Falklands. I had visited twice before, by ship on both occasions, so to have six months on *terra firma* would be a new experience. The timing of the visit was just about perfect for a keen birdwatcher: from the end of austral winter to the end of summer. I would be here for the full breeding season.

Much has been written about the wealth of wildlife that the Falkland Islands has to offer. What I was not expecting was the wildlife literally on your doorstep. The Mount Pleasant Airfield (MPA) complex itself contained some excellent wildlife sights.

Two months later, I was joined by Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Mark Cutts, a fellow Royal Naval Birdwatching Society (RNBWS) member. His arrival heralded the start of spring, and together we intended to spend as much time out in the field as work commitments would allow. In preparation for our visit, we had been in contact with Robin Woods, the renowned expert on the local flora and fauna and a member of Falklands Conservation. He informed us that a breeding bird survey was taking place, which would be ongoing over the next five years, and our help was enlisted to cover much of the area around MPA and Mare Harbour.

Within the MPA complex, there were two main areas of interest, centred on shallow freshwater ponds. The first was Sand Pond, situated just south of the Medical Centre. The second was Champina Pond, and the adjacent marshes, located near the control tower to the north of the main runway.

Bodies of water on the Falklands can be divided into two simple categories: those with plenty of birdlife on or around them, and those without. The distinction appeared to depend on the presence or absence of the native water milfoil *Myriophyllum elatinoides*, which is a good oxygenating plant and beneficial to all manner of water-borne life. This plant was abundant in the two MPA ponds, which were home to many birds, mainly wildfowl and grebes. White-tufted grebes occurred in ones and twos, whereas the second species, the silvery grebe, tended to occur in flocks of twenty to thirty. Over the Christmas period, at the height of the breeding season, we counted 17 silvery grebe nests on Sand Pond. A few days later, however, a violent storm washed a number of these nests away. Fortunately, the silvery grebe is a resilient little bird, and a count early in January 2007 produced a minimum of 11 chicks on the pond. These were very difficult to see among the mass of water weed, so it is more than likely that most birds survived the storm.

Champina Pond was a favourite site for wildfowl. Six species of duck and two of goose were seen there on most visits, with the most common species being speckled teal, up to 50 of which were seen occasionally. Silver teal were also common to both Sand and Champina Ponds. Flying steamer duck, a relatively rare bird on the islands, was also seen on every visit to Champina. However, we never saw evidence of the steamer ducks breeding, unlike the teal species.

Both upland and ruddy-headed goose were familiar birds on our visits. The upland goose is well known by all airfield personnel, as they are ever present in all areas of the camp - the white male usually in attendance of the brown female. The ruddy-headed goose has undergone a severe restriction of its South American range and is considered to be threatened. The Falklands population, however,



*Striated Caracara feeding flock with the author, Sealion Island*

continues to grow and is now very important in world terms.

The margins of both ponds also produced a number of records of land birds. Grass wrens are common in the surrounding scrub, as are long-tailed meadowlarks - the remarkable scarlet breast of the male always catches the eye. Falkland pipit is another common sight, performing its song-flight around the ponds.

Crested caracaras are among the larger birds of prey breeding on the island, and we were fortunate that a pair was nesting in the complex. A pair raised one chick in the non-native coniferous trees at the west end of the main runway. This was quite an achievement, given that 'extremely noisy' jets passed over the nest site daily. A scarcity of alternative nest-sites probably explained the birds' choice. At the opposite end of the runway, a platform has been erected for a pair of red-backed hawks that regularly nest in the area. The platform was provided (successfully, I'm glad to say) to entice the hawks away from nesting on one of the RAF ground radio aerials. Both these species are regularly encountered, hunting over MPA. Young caracaras have also taken to scavenging, along with turkey vultures and numerous gulls, outside the kitchen areas of the mess, and particularly around the back of 'Ronokes Cafe'.

Over the six-month tour we saw sixty-four species of bird in total, including all those that regularly visit the islands, whether to breed or on migration from the harsh northern winter.

*CPO Steve Copsey, Royal Naval Bird Watching Society. This article is based on one first published in Sanctuary - The Ministry of Defence Conservation Magazine.*

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## ***The Chagos Archipelago: Its Nature and the Future***

The Chagos Conservation Trust hosted a reception at the Royal Society of London on Monday 9 March 2009, to present ideas for a globally significant Chagos Archipelago Conservation Area in the British Indian Ocean Territory. The area is comparable in importance with the Galapagos Islands or the Great Barrier Reef.

The publication *The Chagos Archipelago: Its Nature and the Future*, launched at the event, sets out the case summarised below. It is available from CCT ([www.chagos-trust.org](http://www.chagos-trust.org)).

The British Indian Ocean Territory consists, apart from Diego Garcia, of over 50 tiny coral islands (only 20 square kilometres in all). It is set in over half a million square kilometres of sea in the middle of the Indian Ocean and is administered directly by the UK Government. Only Diego Garcia is inhabited (by defence personnel). The remaining 'Ilois' or 'Chagossians' were relocated

when the base was set up in the 1970s; they now live mostly in Mauritius, Britain and the Seychelles.

The Chagos is the United Kingdom's greatest area of marine biodiversity by far and is probably the most pristine tropical marine environment on Earth. It has the world's largest coral atoll, its cleanest seas and healthiest coral reefs. The area is a crucial refuge, staging post and breeding ground for marine and bird life. The Chagos provides an extraordinary and rare opportunity to protect the natural environment. The preliminary proposal is that the British Government, with the support of other organisations, should create a long-term conservation framework and a Chagos Archipelago Conservation Area in the British Indian Ocean Territory. Drawing on best practice in other sites, this would aim to: protect nature, including fish stocks (benefiting neighbouring countries); benefit science, and support action against damaging climate change; be compatible with security; and provide some good employment opportunities for Chagossians and others.

## Killer fungus reaches Montserrat

Montserrat is home to many rare and threatened species, including *Leptodactylus fallax*, a frog known locally as the mountain chicken. The species is classified as Critically Endangered under the IUCN's 2008 Red List. It has already suffered from hunting (and is said to taste like chicken – hence the name), from the volcanic activity in Montserrat, and from the impact of invasive species such as rats. It is one of the world's largest frogs, weighing around a kilogram, and has already been lost from much of the Caribbean, surviving only on Montserrat and neighbouring Dominica.

The chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* has been spreading around the world for a number of years. It causes a disease known as chytridiomycosis in amphibians, and has devastated many populations of frogs and related species, driving some to extinction. The chytrid fungus arrived in Dominica in 2002, and around three-quarters of the island's mountain chicken population disappeared in little more than a year. It was feared that the disease would spread from Dominica to Montserrat, on frogs accidentally transferred with fruit or other imports.

Disturbing reports of dead frogs were received from Montserrat earlier this year. Sadly, the laboratory established in Dominica by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), with support from the Darwin Initiative, confirmed that chytridiomycosis had reached Montserrat. Dr Andrew Cunningham from ZSL's Institute of Zoology said "If this was killing mammals or birds in the same way that it's killing amphibians, millions would have been spent on it."

Scientists from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust are working with Montserrat Government personnel to survey the impact of the disease on the island's mountain chicken populations. They have also removed a number of healthy frogs into captivity, to form the nucleus of a disease-free *ex situ* population. Prof John Fa,



Mountain Chicken Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

Durrell's Director of Conservation Science, said "We have a major commitment to this species and biodiversity on the island. Now that chytrid is there, this is a major setback and, if evidence from other isolated

populations is anything to go on, we have to act very fast indeed."

Updates on: <http://blog.durrell.org/index.cfm/>

## Bermuda - first Nonsuch cahow hatchling in 400 years

Years of conservation effort and ecological restoration work on Nonsuch Island have been rewarded by the first Bermuda petrel (cahow) chick to be born and fledged there in nearly 400 years.

The endemic Bermuda petrel (cahow) *Pterodroma cahow* was one of Bermuda's earliest victims of invasive species. Pigs introduced by passing Spanish sailors destroyed most of the cahow population in the sixteenth century, years before human settlement. Last seen in the 1620s, the cahow was thought to have been extinct for centuries, until it was rediscovered in 1951, nesting in tiny numbers on some of the smallest and most remote rocky islands at the eastern end of Bermuda. Only pioneering conservation work, led for years by Dr David Wingate, ensured the survival of the species.

Despite being the national bird, the cahow visits Bermuda only to breed, spending most of its life over the open ocean. When a young cahow leaves the deep rock or soil burrow in which the birds nest, it spends three or four years at sea before returning to land. It returns to the same place from which it departed, and sets about establishing a nest of its own.

Nonsuch Island has been a particular focus of the Cahow Recovery Programme. Over many years, the six-hectare site was returned to a condition suitable for the species. Introduced predators were eliminated, natural vegetation restored, and artificial concrete nest burrows installed. Between 2004 and 2008, 105 cahow chicks were hand-reared in Nonsuch burrows, until they fledged and flew out to sea. The first of these returned to the island as fully grown birds in 2008, and were seen prospecting for nest sites. In 2009, the first breeding pairs (at least seven) established nests on



Jeremy Madeiros with 'Somers'  
Photo: Andrew Dobson

Nonsuch; although cahows rarely produce chicks in the first year of nesting, one pair succeeded.

The first cahow chick to be born on Nonsuch Island for nearly 400 years was named "Somers" – it was the arrival of Sir George Somers in 1609 that marked the beginning of

permanent settlement in Bermuda. Just as *Forum News* was going to press, we heard that Somers had fledged, and been seen flying out to sea. The Nonsuch success may have come just in time. The tiny islands where the cahow survived unseen for centuries are increasingly threatened by erosion and rising sea levels. However, Nonsuch Island has the potential to support thousands of pairs.

Jeremy Madeiros, of the Bermuda Government's Department of Conservation Services, who has overseen the Cahow Recovery Programme for the last nine years, said "I'm hopeful that next year we will see more chicks born on Nonsuch and we will then truly have secured a major victory in ensuring the future survival of this most extraordinary bird." Dr David Wingate said "I cannot think of a more perfect success story appropriate to the 400th anniversary of the settlement of Bermuda."

# Threat to Jersey's first Wetland of International Importance

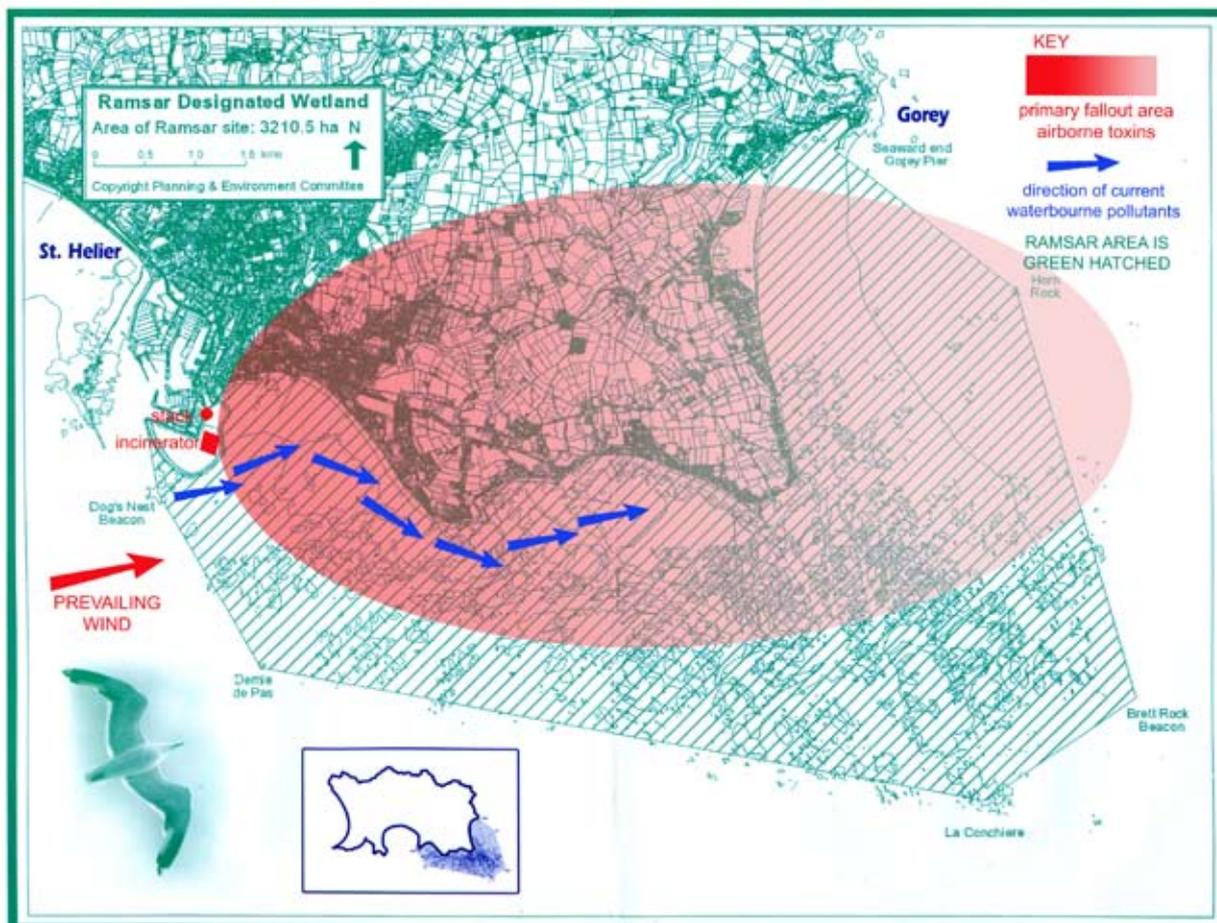
In December 2008, Jersey's South East Coast, the first Ramsar Site designated in the Channel Islands, was listed by Wetlands International [www.wetlands.org](http://www.wetlands.org) as their "Threatened Wetland of the Month". A proposed new municipal waste incinerator on reclaimed land adjacent to the site is causing grave concern to several NGOs on the Island, including the Société Jersiaise and the National Trust for Jersey. A significant number of the general public are likewise uneasy about the environmental implications of the industrial plant, the largest civil engineering project undertaken on the Island to date. Vastly improved local air quality will be welcome - it is stated in the Environmental Impact Statement for the new incinerator that "the current Energy from Waste facility in Jersey is estimated to emit about twenty times as many dioxins and furans as are emitted from all the UK's municipal waste incinerators." However, it is believed also by a range of groups and individuals that the Island's waste management strategy is fundamentally flawed and that construction of the new incinerator on reclaimed shoreline has "opened the window" on a chronic marine pollution issue three decades in the making.

For over thirty years, Jersey has dumped many hundreds of thousands of tonnes of toxic incinerator ash on the waterfront south and east of the Island's capital, St Helier. Historically, this hazardous material was dumped loose onto seashore construction sites; current practice places it within sealed envelopes which are then buried within new "made land". Importantly, the seaward boundary of both disposal sites is formed by a porous rock-armour revêtement, exposed to twelve-metre macrotides and accelerating sea-level rise. Unsurprisingly, large volumes of sea-water flood and drain from these landfill areas with each tidal cycle. In March 2009, Jersey NGO Save Our Shoreline (SOS) published photographic evidence of this process; at the time, it was being aided by deep excavations as construction of the Island's new incinerator began. Alongside their images, SOS produced a leaked

laboratory report confirming that brackish waters collected from the ground-works were highly contaminated with leachate, derived from mixed (bottom and fly) incinerator ash.

Following headline media coverage, growing comment and question as to the suitability of the Environmental Impact Statement relating to the plant and the process adopted in its development, the States of Jersey established a *Scrutiny Panel - Energy from Waste Plant and Ramsar: Review of Planning Process* [www.scrutiny.gov.je/](http://www.scrutiny.gov.je/). Investigations are ongoing and some comfort was secured by campaigners for a full and open enquiry when it was announced that Bioscan (UK) Ltd had been appointed as independent consultants by Scrutiny, at the recommendation of the Ramsar Bureau. Limited government monitoring of surrounding biota suggests that bio-accumulation of toxins is not a problem at this time. However, a potential pollution pathway exists. On a most simple level, it seems hard to reconcile dumping hazardous waste in and adjacent to marine habitats with the Ramsar principle of Wise Use. The option is available of seeking registration under the *Ramsar Montreux Record* of sites under threat.

There are also reasons to be cheerful about Jersey's priceless maritime zones; the National Trust for Jersey recently launched a major initiative, *A Line in the Sand*, demanding better conservation of coastal areas. The States of Jersey adopted an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy in October 2008 and appointed a new Marine and Coastal Officer early this year. However, given that the Island's current Treasury and Resources Minister made the following comment in Autumn 2008 (when Economic Development Minister), "I have said that I believe that as far as future land reclamation is concerned, I think that there could be a case for reconsidering the precise line of the Ramsar line out from St Helier harbour", the route to protecting the future health of the Bailiwick's marine habitats will not be without its challenges!



Andrew Syvret,  
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Shoreline  
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Ramsar Convention  
Wetland of Inter-  
national Importance  
(cross-hatched),  
showing location of  
proposed incinerator  
and stack, direction  
of current and water-  
borne pollutants  
(small arrows),  
prevailing wind  
(large arrow) and  
primary fallout of  
airborne pollutants  
(shaded)



The Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) is a joint programme of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to support implementation of the Environment Charters and environmental management more generally in all the UK's Overseas Territories. The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum continues to provide aspects of communication management for OTEP. This is the tenth in a series of supplements to *Forum News* as part of this initiative. Although *Forum News* itself is under the editorial control of the Forum, the content of this supplement is as agreed by the Forum with FCO and DFID.

This issue of the OTEP supplement to *Forum News* includes summaries of those projects that were successful in the 2009 bidding round as well as a number of reports from projects funded in earlier rounds. OTEP welcomes jointly funded projects, so that some articles could equally occur in the OTEP supplement or the main section of *Forum News*, as is the case in this issue.

Further information on some projects (including outputs in cases where these have been supplied by project managers) can be found in the OTEP section of [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org).

## Successful Project proposals 2009

At the time of going to press at the end of June, OTEP had not confirmed final approval for the projects marked \* which had been approved in March subject to individual conditions.

### Implementation of the Anguilla Energy Policy 2008-2020: (Phase One - Building a Broad Community Movement) (ANG 601) \*

Over the past 18 months, the Government of Anguilla has supported the development of a National Energy Policy. The focus of the Policy is to achieve energy independence for Anguilla, with a dramatic reduction in the island's dependence on fossil fuels over the next twelve years.

If Anguilla is to achieve its goal of energy independence, all stakeholders in society must be drawn into the effort. A broad social movement to attain 'energy literacy' and actively to increase and share knowledge about energy usage on the island is critical among individual residents, young and old, government officials, tourists, and all professional and business sectors.

The Government of Anguilla has thus mandated the National Energy Committee to establish the Anguilla Renewable Energy Office. Working with the Anguilla National Trust, the Energy Committee will hire a Renewable Energy Coordinator to set up the office, develop a comprehensive public awareness campaign, coordinate efforts and inputs by stake-holders from government departments, to NGOs, to the private sector and individuals, work with the Department of Education on renewable energy and efficiency curricula development, and establish model projects to measure and display the impacts of renewable energy and efficiency inputs.

*Farah Mukhida, Executive Director, The Anguilla National Trust*  
[antpam@anguillanet.com](mailto:antpam@anguillanet.com)

### Green Mountain National Park Education and Visitors Centre (ASC 601) \*

The AIG Conservation Department, together with Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, are currently developing, and will deliver by the end of this proposed project, species action plans for all endemic plants

found on Ascension. The object of the project is to provide an Education/ Visitors centre in the middle of the National Park. This will provide the general public, visitors, students and school children with a facility to learn about this important subject.

The centre will provide a permanent base for enabling a sustainable future for the continuation and conservation of the endemic plant project by demonstrating the seed bank collections and updating the current IUCN Red Listings. In addition, horticultural protocols for each species would be outlined and used to improve local collections and further develop ex-situ plant collections.

Training will be provided at the centre, by the Conservation Department, on the importance of the preservation and monitoring of threatened and invasive plant species, horticultural protocols, Red-Listing, collection management and plant material collection. The centre will also be used by researchers and students who visit Ascension to carry out work on the endemic plants and birds.

*Roy Haley, Ascension Island Government, [roy.haley@ascension.gov.ac](mailto:roy.haley@ascension.gov.ac)*

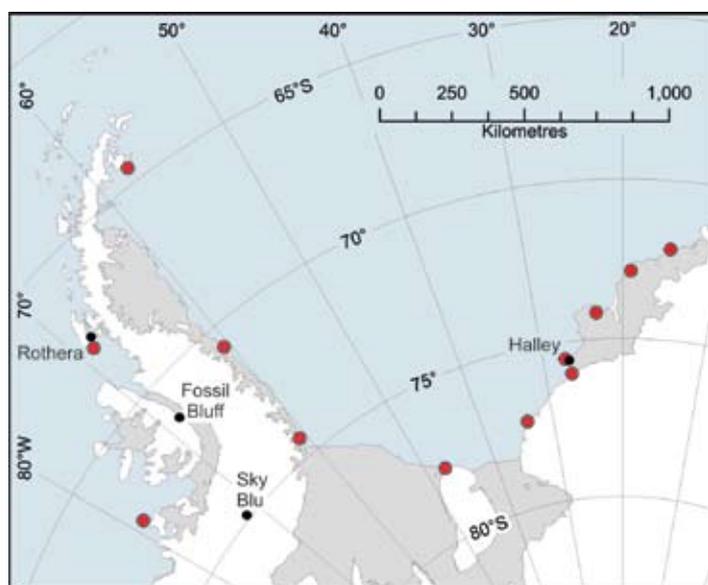


*Gardens and the old Red Lion building, the site of the Education/ Visitors Centre Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

## Baselines for Climate Change: an Emperor Penguin Census in British Antarctic Territory (BAT 601)

Emperor penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri* populations are useful environmental indicators due to the bird's extreme reliance on sea-ice as a breeding platform. Great concern exists in the media and from NGOs regarding the future of emperor penguin populations, due in large part to warming trends documented in BAT, and in particular close to the Antarctic Peninsula. We propose to use satellite remote sensing imagery to estimate relative adult bird abundance at all the emperor penguin colonies located in BAT, Antarctica. We will use standard supervised classification techniques for analysis of high-resolution satellite images of the known colonies in BAT. We will use modern up-to-date information about the locations of emperor penguin colonies to ensure adequate imagery. Remote sensing technology is logistically less intense and less costly than aerial or ground censuses when the objective is to document penguin presence and/or large emperor penguin population changes (e.g., such as potentially may occur with regional climate change). This analysis will provide a baseline population estimate for this species for future comparison.

Peter Fretwell, British Antarctic Survey, [p.fretwell@bas.ac.uk](mailto:p.fretwell@bas.ac.uk)



Emperor penguin colonies in and around BAT  
Image: British Antarctic Survey

## Identifying Important and Vulnerable Marine Areas for Conservation in British Antarctic Territory (BAT 602) \*

This project aims to provide technical support and stakeholder input for the identification of important and vulnerable marine areas in waters off British Antarctic Territory. This will be a key contribution to work being undertaken by British Antarctic Survey to design networks of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Southern Ocean.

The establishment of MPAs in the Southern Ocean is a priority issue for the Antarctic Treaty System, as well as an important UK commitment under other international agreements. Previous work by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and the Antarctic Treaty's Committee on Environmental Protection (CEP) has addressed a range of legal and theoretical issues relating to the establishment of MPAs in the Southern Ocean. There is now a need to develop practical approaches for the identification and implementation of such areas.

Building on a pilot study undertaken for the South Orkney Islands in 2008, British Antarctic Survey is working in consultation with the FCO Polar Regions Unit to establish MPA networks under the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty System for the South Orkney Islands and western Antarctic Peninsula regions. This work is using spatial data on marine biodiversity, ecosystem features and human activities to undertake a systematic conservation planning process, with the aim of establishing protection for sensitive, vulnerable, and scientifically important marine areas.

This proposal is for funds to allow the specific delivery of technical (GIS) support for this work. The role of a GIS expert would be to collate data, develop and maintain a GIS database, undertake spatial analysis to determine species and habitat distributions, and assist with preparing datasets for use with MARXAN reserve selection software. In addition, funds are sought to facilitate the convening of expert workshops, which will be critical in providing stakeholder input to the conservation planning process.

This will be the first project of its kind to be undertaken for British Antarctic Territory, and will provide valuable experience to inform similar work for other areas in the Southern Ocean and worldwide.

Dr Phil Trathan & Prof Eugene Murphy, British Antarctic Survey, [pnt@bas.ac.uk](mailto:pnt@bas.ac.uk) / [ejmu@bas.ac.uk](mailto:ejmu@bas.ac.uk)

## Baseline Marine Ecosystem Surveys To Facilitate Environmental Management in Bermuda (BDA 601) \*

A fundamental impediment to marine resource management in Bermuda is the lack of critical baseline data of the benthic and fish populations present across fore-reef habitats, and within current marine protected areas of the Bermuda Platform. These reef habitats are large, covering over 300 sq. km, and of global significance as preliminary surveys indicate that the Bermuda fore-reef contains some of the healthiest coral and herbivorous fish assemblages remaining in the Western Atlantic.

We propose a comprehensive assessment of the entire fore-reef habitat at 10-m depth intervals across 3 depth zones, and of all spatially-bounded managed marine areas, using standardized methodologies. These new surveys will complement previous baseline surveys of the lagoon and reef crest already completed by our research team. The new information we propose to collect will be critical for the development of future marine zone management plans, and will allow Bermuda to meet its commitments as detailed in the Bermuda Environment Charter, the Bermuda Biodiversity Action Plan, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Local resource managers will collaborate closely with our team on the project, and we will provide educational opportunities to local, UKOT and international students.

Dr Thaddeus Murdoch, Bermuda Zoological Society, [tjmurdoch@gov.bm](mailto:tjmurdoch@gov.bm)

## A Bird-watching Guide to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIO 601)

The project will produce a bird-watching guide to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The aim of the book will be to raise awareness and promote the conservation of the archipelago's birdlife, primarily to the population living on Diego Garcia but also in the UK, USA and other Overseas Territories. It will be a full-colour guide with photographs featuring all the birds regularly seen in BIOT and its waters. It will also include chapters on the importance of BIOT ecologically in an international context; a brief history of the human occupation of



the atolls; the designated Important Bird Areas and Strict Nature Reserves and a chapter dedicated to bird-watching on Diego Garcia.

Major Peter Carr RM, [peter.carr.uk@fe.navy.mil](mailto:peter.carr.uk@fe.navy.mil)

## Environmental Monitoring for Improved Conservation Management (BIO 602)

BIOT Administration needs further data on the condition of its marine and island habitats to facilitate and improve environmental management. It has made available its ship at no cost for two weeks in February 2010 for this purpose. This application funding is for the cost of using, and travel to, the ship, and for the core monitoring work. The total work package totals >£400,000, of which half has been found already.

Conservation in BIOT is guided by information gained from such visits, especially in response to changing climate, which has especially important implications in these low lying, vulnerable atolls, and sustained poaching of resources.

Key elements needed now are (1) measurements of reef recovery and mortality given effects of climate change, (2) location and extent of shoreline erosion given changing reef health and sea level rise, (3) high-frequency deep and surface water temperature records to help explain item 1, (4) coral coring for trends and magnitude of climate change effects, (5) repeat counts of target food species given apparently ongoing poaching.



Monitoring the recovery that is taking place in the Chagos. Unlike many other reefs, recovery of Chagos reefs from the 1998 warming has been exceptionally rapid. Photo: Dr Charles Sheppard

As well as BIOT's needs, Chagos now has a high international profile in scientific terms, and its data is increasingly used for international conservation planning in this ocean.

Professor Charles Sheppard, Dept Biological Sciences, Warwick University, [charles.sheppard@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:charles.sheppard@warwick.ac.uk)

## Cayman Shark and Cetacean Network for Conservation Awareness (CAY 601) \*

The Cayman Islands receive over 1.6 million visitors a year. The islands are fringed with reefs and mangrove, but set on a deep trench that provides an environment suitable for a wide range of shark and ray (elasmobranch), and whale and dolphin (cetacean)



species. Yet there is little information on the distribution of elasmobranchs or cetaceans in the Cayman territorial seas, nor is the opportunity to reach a

very large number of people on marine issues utilised. The project will (1) conduct boat surveys for cetaceans using established visual transect methods, (2) deploy Baited Remote Underwater Videos (BRUVs), supplemented by SCUBA diving, to assess shark and ray populations, (3) collaborate with local fishers to monitor elasmobranch catch or by-catch, and record traditional knowledge, (4) organise and support a Volunteer Observer Network in reporting sighting of sharks and rays, and whales and dolphins, and (5) develop a significant local public awareness and marine environmental education programme. Linked to this latter component, the project will also approach and engage with visiting cruise liners and their passengers, thus grasping a significant opportunity to raise, on a wider scale local and global, awareness of elasmobranch and cetacean conservation issues.

Dr Mauvis Gore, Marine Conservation International, [mauvisgore@netscape.net](mailto:mauvisgore@netscape.net)

## Falkland Islands Native Plants Programme (FAL 601)

This Project will advance conservation action necessary to protect the native plants and habitats of the Falkland Islands, in particular those that are threatened or endemic. It builds on previous projects, which have significantly improved the knowledge regarding distribution and status of these key species.

It will focus on 15 identified Important Plant Areas, at the same time setting up monitoring systems and implementing both species and habitat action plans. It will develop a national vegetation classification system to enable improved co-ordination and understanding between the conservation and agricultural communities. There will be a special effort made to encourage restoration of native plant habitats supported by a small-scale plant and seed nursery. A long-term monitoring programme of tussac grass will be set up at sites which have been replanted, sites which are being used as winter-feed for livestock and also where natural recovery is taking place after removal of grazing. It will take forward the study of lower plants, notably lichens, which are an exceptionally rich part of the Falklands flora. It aims to develop a greater awareness of the Islands' native plants.

Ann Brown, Falklands Conservation, [ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk](mailto:ann@falklands-nature.demon.co.uk)

## Cobb's Wren Conservation Project (FAL 602)\*

The Cobb's Wren Conservation Project will address the conservation needs for Cobb's Wren *Troglodytes cobbi*, an endangered (rated as Vulnerable) endemic bird of the Falkland Islands.

It is a small passerine bird restricted to offshore islands that have remained free of introduced rodents, cats and foxes. As such, it is an excellent indicator species for islands with a high biodiversity and the conservation work identified for the Cobb's Wren Conservation Project will benefit a wide range of other native Falklands wildlife (including plants and invertebrates). Original island habitats will be restored and areas of existing habitat will be enhanced. Our local capacity to monitor wildlife and manage important conservation areas will be en-



Endemic Cobbs Wren Photo: FIG Environmental Planning Department

hanced. Many landowners and a wide cross section of the local community will be involved.

Cobb's Wren Conservation Project will involve surveying islands for which there are no known data on Cobb's Wren, eradication of rats from islands where these rodents are known to be present and implementation of biosecurity plans, thereby securing for the long term future, the rodent free status for islands of special importance to Falkland Islands biodiversity.

Sally Poncet, Beaver Island Farm, [sallyponcet@horizon.co.fk](mailto:sallyponcet@horizon.co.fk) or [sallyponcet2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sallyponcet2004@yahoo.co.uk)  
[http://www.epd.gov.fk/?page\\_id=472](http://www.epd.gov.fk/?page_id=472)

## Ocean Climate and Rockhopper Penguin Foraging Strategies (FAL 603) \*

The population of rockhopper penguins has dramatically declined on the Falklands Islands. The main cause for this decline is believed to be marine environmental changes but it remains unclear what factors play the key role. Advanced logger technology enables us to monitor foraging behaviour of seabirds in combination with environmental conditions, often with greater accuracy and time resolution and at a much lower cost than ship-based surveys. This knowledge will form part of a monitoring programme for Falkland Island marine biodiversity and will help to identify appropriate conservation measures. We aim to contribute to the protection of marine biodiversity in the SW Atlantic (1) by providing crucial information about the foraging behaviours of rockhopper penguins, a focal species in the Species Action plan of the Falkland Islands. (2) by setting up a monitoring scheme at New Island, and proposing ways of comparative data collection around the SW Atlantic rockhopper penguin colonies (3) by enhancing knowledge on ocean climate and its influence on different parts of the marine food chain.



Rockhopper penguin, New Island, Falklands  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

We will combine data loggers, transponder technology, and techniques of diet assessment at the rockhopper penguin colony of New Island.

Ian J. Strange, MBE & Georgina Strange, New Islands Conservation Trust, [furseal@horizon.co.uk](mailto:furseal@horizon.co.uk)

## Illustrated Field Guides to the Flora of St Helena (STH 601) \*

To produce two complete illustrated guides to the flora of St Helena. The guides will describe in an accessible manner the endemic, indigenous and introduced (1) higher plants and ferns and (2) the lower flora (bryophytes & lichens) found on St Helena. Simple keys using non-technical terms and photographic images will assist non-specialists to identify the flora that they encounter. Background information on the plants including their abundance, distribution, ecology, invasiveness and conservation issues will inform and educate a wide audience.

Andrew Darlow, Secretary, St Helena Nature Conservation Group, [adarlow.sais@cwimail.sh](mailto:adarlow.sais@cwimail.sh)



Bat and surveyor in one of the caves which are a crucial part of the freshwater/saltwater systems of the Turks & Caicos Islands.  
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## Environmental Education Curriculum Development concerning Water Resources in Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI 601) \*

This project will develop a curriculum-linked teaching programme on natural freshwater systems, the increasing need for the scarce water resource, and how these needs can be met in TCI. As well as describing the hydrological systems which enable fresh water to be accessed through artesian wells, it will also provide information on rainwater collection and storage. It will provide information on the desalination process, the energy requirements for this and the ecological effects of the process. It will also deal with wise use of water, and water-saving measures.

Ann Pienkowski, Environmental Education Co-ordinator, UKOTCF, [apienkowski@clara.co.uk](mailto:apienkowski@clara.co.uk)

## Preparations for the Eradication of Mice and *Sagina* from Gough Island (TDC 601)

The Gough/Inaccessible World Heritage Site (WHS), in the Tristan da Cunha group, is one of the most important biodiversity sites in the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) as recognised with designation as an Alliance for Zero Extinction Site, Important Bird Area, Endemic Bird Area and Ramsar site. The key threat to biodiversity on Gough is invasive species, in particular the House Mouse *Mus musculus* and the plant *Sagina procumbens*. Mice are driving population declines of endemic land and seabirds, leading to two species being classified as Critically Endangered. *Sagina* has the potential to alter irrevocably the unique upland vegetation of Gough Island, should it spread beyond the current small affected area. Working with Tristan and world experts, this project will prepare for the eradication of mice by testing solutions to protect potential non-target species, including the captive husbandry of the endemic land bird species. The project will establish baseline biodiversity monitoring in advance of mouse eradication, so that ecological benefits of eradication can be fully assessed. The project will clear remaining areas of soil and vegetation from the *Sagina*-affected areas of cliff, make substantial progress on controlling this plant and determine what further action is required to achieve full eradication.

Dr Richard Cuthbert, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK [richard.cuthbert@rspb.org.uk](mailto:richard.cuthbert@rspb.org.uk)

## Participatory Management Plans for Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island (TDC 602)

The UK Overseas Territory of Tristan da Cunha is one of the most important biodiversity sites in the UKOTs, containing the Gough/In-



accessible UK World Heritage Site (WHS), populations of endemic land birds and some of the world's most important colonies of albatrosses and petrels. The main islands of Tristan and Nightingale support also globally outstanding populations of birds and other wildlife, including several Critically Endangered birds. All four islands are subjected to different management regimes and patterns of use, and face their own as well as common threats to biodiversity. In order to provide management guidelines it is essential to provide an up to date Management Plan that recognises newly recognised threats to biodiversity. This project will produce a revised Management Plan for the Gough/Inaccessible WHS through the active participation of all major stakeholders including local residents, Tristan da Cunha government, UK government bodies, international conservation NGOs and relevant experts. This will not only produce a more thorough revision of the guidelines based on emerging science, but also stronger mandates to ensure the necessary actions are implemented. The project will also review the Tristan Biodiversity Action Plan (2006 – 2010) with Tristan da Cunha on the range of activities currently undertaken on Tristan and Nightingale, so that subsequently an updated management plan can be produced to take forward conservation actions from 2010.

Dr Richard Cuthbert, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, UK  
richard.cuthbert@rspb.org.uk

### Invasive Species in UKOTs: Databases and Awareness (XOT 603)

The project builds on the work of the review by Varnham (2006). It updates the Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) with outstanding records from this report and new data from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. The project also addresses complementary initiatives, including production of a UKOTs poster series. There will be one individual poster for each UKOT, illustrating key invasive species for each, to improve the general understanding of invasive species issues in UKOTs.

Varnham, K., (2006), *Non-native species in UK Overseas Territories: a review*, JNCC Report 372, ISSN 0963 8091

Dr Mat DaCosta-Cottam, Cayman Islands Department of Environment, mat.cottam@gov.ky



Getting the message across may need novel approaches: poster heading from invasive species project.

### Achieving GSPC Target 1: the UKOTs On-line Herbarium (XOT 604)

The creation of the UKOTs on-line herbarium will facilitate cost-free, easy access to plant diversity information for all UK Overseas Territories. The website, specifically created through this project, will enable access to a virtual herbarium that will be populated initially by all the UKOT herbarium specimens held at RBG Kew. Data associated with these specimens will be made available via a searchable database, subject to the removal of any Territory-specific sensitive information. The website will be further populated by field images of plants that will be linked to the specimens/species. All species names will be based on internationally accepted taxonomy.



J.D Hooker's 1843 specimen held at Kew of the long-extinct Ascension Island endemic, *Oldenlandia adscensionis*. Photo: RBG Kew.

Changes in taxonomy or conservation status will be up-dated so that Territories have access to the most up-to-date information on their plant species at local, regional and international levels. Key botanical literature will also be made available through this website. All these data will be managed through the BRAHMS database system (<http://dps.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/home/>) where geo-referenced specimens, images, data and literature are held all together and could be easily accessed for the development of field guides. Once established under this project, RBG Kew will maintain this website as part of their core commitment to UK Overseas Territories.

Martin Hamilton, Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, m.hamilton@kew.org

## Summaries of progress or completion for a range of OTEP projects already active

### Enabling the People of St Helena to Conserve the Wirebird (STH301)

The critically endangered St Helena Wirebird *Charadrius sanctaehelenae* is St Helena's only surviving endemic bird. In the period of 2000 - 2006 it suffered a 43% decline in population, with an estimated 208 adults remaining. The main causes were a degradation of its preferred habitat, grazed pastureland, which is under threat from reduced livestock grazing and the subsequent proliferation of invasive plants. In



addition, predation from cats, mynah birds and possibly rats.

Working closely with the St Helena National Trust and Deadwood grazing syndicate, the overall goal of the project was to ensure the long-term survival of the Wirebird. Focusing on three pastures on Deadwood Plain, the main outputs of the project were:

- Increased knowledge of the ecology of the Wirebird available to guide management of the species on dry grassland and inform the airport environmental management plan, mainly:
  - Conservation actions, costs and sites required to restore potential Wirebird habitat in the dry grassland areas;



Wirebird mother settling on eggs.  
Photo: Gavin Ellick, St Helena National Trust

- Establishment of protocols to monitor the status of the Wirebird and vegetation in restored habitat.
- b) Identification and documentation of the territories of the Wirebird that are affected both directly and indirectly by the proposals for the airport and supporting infrastructure.
- c) Development of a national species action plan for the Wirebird at a workshop on St Helena involving all key stakeholders, which outlines the activities required including amendments to legislation and policy to conserve the Wirebird in the wild.
- d) Strengthened technical capacity at the SHNT to monitor the status of the Wirebird.
- e) Increased awareness about the Wirebird both locally and internationally through the preparation of a leaflet and regular press releases.

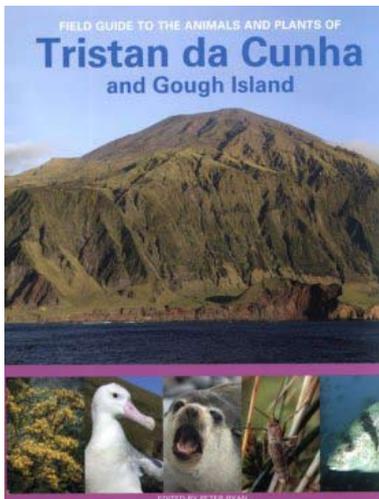
Sarah Sanders, RSPB sarah.sanders@rspb.org.uk

## Field Guide to the Animals and Plants of Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island,

Edited by Peter Ryan (TDC301)

In 2007, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds published *A field guide to the animals and plants of Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island*, in collaboration with the Tristan Island Government and University of Cape Town. The book has been an ambition of the editor, Peter Ryan - an honorary conservation officer for Tristan,

since he spent a summer on Inaccessible in 1989.



The colourful guide aims to be a compact reference to the animals and plants found on the territory. It is illustrated throughout, with more than 400 colour photographs. In addition to the wealth of information on the wildlife found in the islands, it includes a chapter on visiting Tristan - so will be a valuable resource for tourists. It is an outstanding contribution to efforts to conserve Tristan's unique and threatened biodiversity.

The book is an enormous

achievement, as specialists who have visited and undertaken research on the islands contributed chapters voluntarily. It would not have been possible without the support provided by the Tristan Agriculture and Natural Resources Department, the Darwin Team and Tristan community. We are also grateful to the UK Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme for providing some of the funding.

All proceeds from the sale of the guide will go to support conservation activities on Tristan. We hope the guide will encourage readers to learn more about the island and to share the enjoyable experience of watching birds and wildlife in a remote and pristine setting.

The book contains 168 pages and is available direct from NatureBureau, Tel: +44 (0) 1635 550380, post@naturebureau.co.uk at a cost of £12 plus postage, or from Miles Apart @ £13.50 including post and packing ex UK. Copies are also on sale at the Supermarket and Museum on Tristan

Sarah Sanders sarah.sanders@rspb.org.uk

## OTEP Fellows - Capacity building for the environment (XOT403)

The University of Exeter is again hosting three OTEP (Overseas Territories Environment Programme) Fellows on its Master of Science programme in Biodiversity and Conservation: Grant Munro (Falkland Islands), Calvin "Andre" Samuel (Anguilla) and Paul Watler (Cayman Islands). The aim of this OTEP-funded project is to increase capacity within the Overseas Territories to achieve the goals of the Environment Charters and implementation of MEAs.

Based at the University's Cornwall Campus, near Falmouth, the Fellows have completed course work. As they return to their territories to conduct their research projects, and later return to their jobs, we believe that the departments and organisations in which they work will have greater capacity to achieve their conservation goals. In preparing this article I asked the OTEP Fellows to provide a little background about themselves and how they have enjoyed the course so far:

Grant Munro writes:

"Conservation in the Overseas Territories is often under-resourced. Within small government departments or NGOs, human resources are limited and many skills are demanded of an individual to achieve the action and successes that are required.

"Prior to arriving in Cornwall I worked with Falklands Conservation. However, coming to conservation from a background within the fishing industry, I lacked knowledge of much of the science that underpins our conservation efforts and which is essential for effective prioritisation of action.

"As a mature student, the decision to return to study was not easy. However, the course has provided the opportunity to further my scientific understanding whilst always placing this firmly in the context of practical conservation. Furthermore, it has provided an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and to compare and contrast case studies, best practise and experience from around the world to our own particular situations within the UKOTs. The value of this atmosphere of open exchange cannot be over-estimated as, even in these days of e-mail and internet, it is easy to become isolated from new developments and advances. It can both validate what we are doing well and point to where a different approach may increase benefit. Hopefully we have also added some ideas to the mix!

"The course is one of only a few initiatives that have specifically targeted skills development and I have found it to be equally relevant to those who might not be at the start of their career but who, like me, are seeking professional development and an updating of knowledge.

"To accommodate the reversal



of the summer seasons I have been granted an extension to my research which will allow me to return to the Falklands in October to investigate aspects of the previously unstudied inshore cetaceans of the Falklands. In the meantime I shall use the additional time to advance my practical field skills over the UK summer.”



OTEP Fellow C. Andre Samuel at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

C. Andre Samuel writes:

“After completing my undergraduate training in agriculture, I returned to work as a farm manager and later as agronomist at the Department of Agriculture, Anguilla. Still attached to Agriculture, I began working closely with the Anguilla National Trust and the officials at the Department of Environment, with radio shows and small projects inside and outside of work. I was approached by the Director of Environment and given the opportunity to apply for an OTEP scholarship. I was successful and began the motivated journey at the University of Exeter’s Centre for Ecology and Conservation.

“The MSc course has been highly challenging and focuses on the development of individual professionalism and scientific knowledge base. Work in the field of conservation is new to me and it was a bit unknown where I would fit in. This changed immediately when we took a field study course to South Africa where agro-biodiversity is put into action. This tangible incorporation of agriculture, conservation and biodiversity has highlighted my niche in conservation work. At completion, I will return to work at the Department of Environment, in a capacity still pending, but I feel that I have gained the necessary skills to work in the field. I hope to implement comprehensive regimes to conservation work and agricultural practices on the island of Anguilla. My MSc project will be at home and focus on native plant communities and the endemic plant, *Rondeletia anguillensis*. In conjunction with the University of Exeter, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew UKOTs coordinators and scientists will be assisting me in this project. I have already made several visits to Kew for training. I hope to produce a study nothing short of what is expected at the post-graduate level at the University of Exeter”.

Paul Watler writes:

“I was working for the National Trust for the Cayman Islands when I heard about the fellowship offered by the Overseas Territories Environment Programme. Coming from the Cayman Islands, I was somewhat dubious about travelling all the way to the United Kingdom to further my education. Timely advice came from a friend of mine, who reminded me that education is the best investment a person can make. As a result, I chose to apply for the fellowship, and decided that, if I didn’t get it, I would continue working as a Field Officer. My position at that time entailed educational presentations at schools, field trips and nature tours for all age ranges, and site maintenance. The Trust had been without an Environmental Programmes Manager for a few years and, without the knowledge that comes from attaining a Masters Degree, I certainly couldn’t hope to fill the position. Once I complete the course, I will return to the Trust as Assistant to the Environmental Programmes Manager. The experience I gain will enable me to effect a greater impact on conservation in the Cayman Islands, and increase the effectiveness of my work with the National Trust. My studies have at times been quite difficult, and the assignments very stressful. But



OTEP Fellows Paul Watler (left) and C. Andre Samuel (right) at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, with Dr Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew (centre)

each day leaves me feeling as though I have expanded my level of intelligence - I can almost feel my mind growing, as one would witness a sapling spread its branches. I am most grateful for the opportunity provided for me by OTEP. I have learned from a great many worthy instructors and interacted with men and women of expansive intellect. What’s more, I have been privileged to associate with my fellow students. My classmates are true and good, among the finest people I’ve had the honour to meet, and we have grown so close that I count them as brothers and sisters. As I type this, I’m back in the Cayman Islands where I will be working with bats. Specifically, I’m hoping to examine their tolerance to humans and anthropogenic habitat.”

We thank OTEP for supporting this project, and the OTEP Fellows for their participation in the programme – it has been a pleasure to have them on the course.

Annette Broderick, Lecturer in Conservation Biology, University of Exeter. [A.C.Broderick@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:A.C.Broderick@exeter.ac.uk)

## Join UKOTCF at the British Bird Watching Fair

UKOTCF will again have a stand at the British Bird Watching Fair, on Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd August 2009. This event will be held, as ever, at Rutland Water, near Oakham. A wide range of wildlife (not just bird) organisations will be present at the fair, including conservation bodies, travel and equipment companies, booksellers and many others. Full details of the fair are available at [www.birdfair.org.uk](http://www.birdfair.org.uk)

## Seabird book

Published in May 2009, *An Inventory of Breeding Seabirds of the Caribbean* is edited by Patricia Bradley and Robert Norton and has 30 chapters, describing status and threats to seabirds breeding in 25 countries, with 51 maps, and 44 monochrome photographs. UKOT chapters are:

Bermuda (Jeremy L. Madeiros)  
 Turks & Caicos (Michael W. Pienkowski)  
 Cayman Islands (Patricia E. Bradley)  
 British Virgin Islands (E.A. Schreiber & Judy Pierce)  
 Anguilla (Steve H. Holliday & Karim V.D. Hodge)  
 Montserrat (Richard I. Allcorn & J. “Scriber” Daley)

Published by University Press of Florida, ISBN (978-0-8130-3329-7), 8-1/2 x 11, cloth cover, US\$75.00 + \$10 shipping.

# Friends of the UK Overseas Territories

## Four good reasons to become a Friend:

1. You know how valuable and vulnerable are the environmental treasures held in the UK Overseas Territories.
2. You understand that the only way to guarantee their protection is to build local institutions and create environmental awareness in the countries where they are found.
3. You care about what is happening in the UK Overseas Territories and want to be kept up to date by regular copies of *Forum News* and the Forum's *Annual Report*.
4. You understand that the UK Overseas Territories are part of Britain, and therefore are not eligible for most international grant sources - but neither are they eligible for most domestic British ones, so help with fundraising is essential.

EITHER: I wish to become a Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at the annual support level:  £15  £50  £100  £.....

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**Please complete one of options 1 to 4 below. UK taxpayers are requested to complete section 5 also; this will allow UKOTCF to benefit from the tax you have paid, at no additional cost to you.**

1. **UK cheque:**  I enclose my UK cheque made out to UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum for this amount.

2. **Standing Order form:** To: The Manager, Bank Name: ..... Branch Sort-code .....

Bank address: ..... Bank postcode: .....

Please pay: UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum at NatWest Bank, 9 Bank Court, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1FB Sort-code: 60-10-33  
Account number 48226858 the sum of £..... now and a similar sum thereafter on this date annually.

My account number: ..... Name .....

Address: ..... Postcode: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

3. **Standing Order instructions sent:** I confirm that I have sent instructions directly to my bank for a standing order as per option 2 above.

4. **Credit or charge card:** Please charge the amount indicated above to my card now \*and thereafter on this date annually. [Delete the words after \* if you wish to make only a single payment] (If you are based in another country, your card company will handle the exchange and include the equivalent in your own currency in your regular statement.)

American Express,  Delta,  JCB,  MasterCard,  Solo,  Switch/Maestro,  Visa Expiry date: / (month/year)

Card number:    Security number (3 digits, or 4 for Amex) .....

If used: Start date: / If used: Issue number: ..... Signature: ..... Date: .....

5. **UK taxpayers** are requested to sign the following section to allow UKOTCF to recover tax paid:

I want this charity to treat all donations that I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**Send to UKOTCF, Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB, UK;  
if using options 3 or 4, you can fax to +44 2080 207217**

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum is a non-profit organisation registered as a limited company in England & Wales No 3216892 and a Registered Charity No 1058483. Registered Office: Icknield Court, Back Street, Wendover, Bucks. HP22 6EB *This blank form may be copied for others to use.*

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# New Nature Reserve for Cayman's Critically Endangered Blue Iguana and Xerophytic Shrubland

Following the outrageous attack on the threatened iguanas (*Forum News* 33: 11), UKOTCF was delighted to hear some good news. In March, the Cayman Islands Government took decisive action to help save the world's most endangered iguana. Almost 200 acres of government-owned prime dry shrubland habitat in the east interior of the Grand Cayman is being protected, to provide an area for restoration of the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana *Cyclura lewisi*.

The Blue Iguana has become a flagship species in the Cayman Islands, attracting popular and political support for conservation of its habitat.



Adult male Grand Cayman Blue Iguana, free roaming in the QE II Botanic Park Photo: John F Binns

The area of Grand Cayman's unique xerophytic shrubland under protection has just tripled, this in turn helping to protect a range of threatened native plants.

The Grand Cayman Blue Iguana is a sky-blue, herbivorous, giant lizard. Growing to five feet (> 1.5m) in length, these iguanas have a life span comparable to humans. They are entirely unique to the island of Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands, in the north-west Caribbean.

A vegetarian giant with red eyes, this was once Grand Cayman's largest land animal, but Blue Iguanas have suffered a catastrophic decline as humans settled the land. Predation by introduced dogs and cats has been compounded by accelerating habitat loss, and now road kill. By 2002, less than 25 wild individuals remained.

In 2002, the Blue Iguana Recovery Programme (BIRP) was launched, expanding from early captive breeding efforts by the National Trust for the Cayman Islands which started in 1990. Still operating under the aegis of the National Trust, but partnering with the local Department of Environment and the QE II Botanic Park, the BIRP has achieved remarkable progress over the last seven years, bringing the wild population of Blue Iguanas from functional extinction in 2002, to some 250 in the wild by 2009.

Supported also by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and the International Reptile Conservation Foundation, the BIRP first completed a pilot restoration of wild Blue Iguanas in the QE II Botanic Park on Grand Cayman, developing and testing techniques for successful releases. Then, the Programme embarked on large-scale population restoration in the Salina Reserve, a 625-acre National Trust protected area in north-eastern Grand Cayman.

Unfortunately, less than 14% of the Reserve area is suitable Blue Iguana habitat, which severely limits the extent to which a self-sustaining wild population of Blue Iguanas can be restored there. By 2008, the BIRP was in danger of losing momentum, with the Salina Reserve habitat approaching carrying capacity. Without more protected land becoming available, population restoration for the Blue Iguanas was about to stall.

But at the same time, a European Union grant proposal, shared with the Turks & Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands, and initiated by

UKOTCF, came together. In the Cayman Islands, the project promises funds to build a visitor centre for a nature reserve featuring the dry shrubland ecosystem, and the Grand Cayman Blue Iguana. The Cayman Islands Government decision has now supported and enabled that project, by contributing government land to establish the nature reserve itself.

Especially if the Cayman Islands are successful in adding some adjacent land to the new protected area, there may soon be enough Blue Iguana habitat available to raise the wild Blue Iguana population to a level that can be self-sustained in the long term. A tantalizing prospect is in sight, where a captive breeding programme may no longer be needed, where Blue Iguanas of all ages and sizes are roaming free and protected, breeding and sustaining their numbers. without the need for constant human intervention.

From a scenario of little hope in 2002, the BIRP and its partners are now in sight of the kind of success that is all too rare in the world today. The Grand Cayman Blue Iguana can be saved from extinction, and in a few more years the Cayman Islands may be able to boast that they have achieved just that.

Located in the east interior of Grand Cayman, the land is almost completely undisturbed, a wild rocky landscape partially covered with drought-tolerant shrubs. Grand Cayman's xerophytic (dry) shrubland is the primary habitat for a suite of threatened plants, including several that are endemic to the Cayman Islands. The most conspicuous are the endemic and Endangered Silver Thatch palm *Coccothrinax proctorii*, and the large succulent *Agave caymanensis* which, after years of growth amassing a huge stalked rosette, switches into a once-in-a-lifetime flowering extravaganza. The flower spikes can be 6 metres tall, towering over the shrubland canopy, crowned with a mass of orange-yellow, nectar-rich flowers. Recent taxonomic investigation indicates that like the Silver Thatch palm, this *Agave* is unique to the three Cayman Islands. Due to its long generation time, and severe rates of deforestation in the Cayman Islands, *Agave caymanensis* is Critically Endangered.

Conservation of these endemic plants, and an array of regional flora which are also threatened in the Cayman Islands, has been given a huge boost by the protection of the new area. It is a classic "flagship species" success story, where saving a charismatic large animal has required saving a whole environment, thus protecting a range of less conspicuous species that otherwise would be hard to muster this level of attention for.

Frederic J Burton, Director, Blue Iguana Recovery Programme, National Trust for the Cayman Islands.

fjburton@blueiguana.ky Tel: +1 345 916 2418

