



UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2010 - March 2011

Report of Council

Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) promotes awareness of, and conservation of, the rich and unique biodiversity, natural environment and related heritage of the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs). It works in partnership with a wide network of bodies in the UK and UKOTs/CDs, many of which are Forum Member and Associate organisations, as well as individuals with relevant expertise and government institutions. Aside from the general ongoing activities during the reporting period the Forum has this year focused on several main areas, in particular:

- Work on enhancing policies of UK Government (UKG) and the European Union towards conservation in the UKOTs and CDs (including evidence to Parliamentary select committees, submissions to consultations by Government, discussions with the UK Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the continuity of the new UKOT emphasis in the Darwin Initiative, work to persuade the UK Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to continue to promote the designation of World Heritage sites and to give proper consideration to proposed sites in the UKOTs and CDs), continuing to advise UKG on the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) projects. (It is worth noting also the implementation announced towards the end of the reported year by the European Union (EU) of a pilot



The Baths National Park, Virgin Gorda, British Virgin Islands, is one of the sites being addressed in the MPASSE project. Here, the enormous visitor numbers arriving by either land or sea is one of the main challenges. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

funding mechanism for protected areas in the Overseas Countries & Territories (OCTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs) of the EU – an idea originally suggested to the Commission several years ago by UKOTCF and its partners in Bioverseas – the joint initiative with French and Netherlands umbrella bodies for their overseas territories in addressing European Union institutions)

- Help to individual territories on project development, preparation of materials for designations of Wetlands of International Importance, and other issues as exemplified in later sections

Achievement, after more than 7 years of voluntary effort, of the issuing by the European Commission grant contracts for the project Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies, so that work could start in the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos, albeit now with a very shortened time window for the work itself

- The OTEP-supported Wonderful Water project, jointly with the Education Department of the Turks & Caicos Islands, to develop a curriculum and course materials on all aspects of water on these dry islands, working with teachers so that the material can be incorporated in upper primary and lower secondary schools

Fundraising: discussions have been held with various potential funding bodies to seek to include UKOTs and CDs in their coverage, and a



Students from Clement Howell High School work with Head of Science of H.J. Robinson High School, Ms Cordelia Creese, and UKOTCF's Environmental Education Co-ordinator, Mrs Ann Pienkowski, as part of the teachers' workshops introducing the Wonderful Water curriculum and course material, in the Turks & Caicos Islands.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

number of applications have been drafted for several projects but also core funding. Efforts have continued to promote funding of projects in UKOTs through the UK Heritage Lottery Fund, from which they are currently barred

In early 2011, the third and final report was sent to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) in respect of its grant over the past three years. The central focus of this was to support the development of the core administrative and managerial capacity of UKOTCF, facilitating aspects of the Forum's institutional development whilst enabling it to undertake more effectively a range of activities. The final year of the EFF grant enabled further progress to be made in relation to core activities. These have included re-allocation of supporting officer roles for the regional working groups, utilizing both paid personnel and volunteers, and the development of a new parliamentary liaison role. Significant progress has been made also in refining UKOTCF's approach in relation to membership development, with an Action Plan produced and four new Territory-based Associate organisations recruited. A draft Action Plan for fundraising was developed, and a preliminary portfolio of prospective projects was prepared. Future potential funders are being investigated and several project proposals have been prepared and submitted to funding sources, and others are in development. UKOTCF is most grateful for the financial support provided by EFF. The improvements to structure and processes that have taken place in the last three years will be long-lasting and leave the UKOTCF better equipped in meeting its priorities to its members and associate organisations.

Particular effort has been directed at developing plans for a UKOTCF volunteer programme, which will serve the dual purpose of reinforcing UKOTCF's core capacity whilst providing for the deployment of specialised volunteers on placements and secondments with in-Territory bodies, assisting in their institutional capacity building (another core function of the Forum). A considerable momentum of UKOT-based support has been built for this initiative, and funding to support it is being sought from various sources.

During 2009, UKOTCF sought funding for the sixth UK Overseas Territories conference, following the first held in London in 1999, the second in Gibraltar in 2000, the third in Bermuda in March 2003, the fourth in Jersey in October 2006 and the fifth in Grand Cayman in May/June 2009. UKOTCF had significant support from its partners in the UKOTs and CDs for a conference in 2012. An initial proposal was the subject of discussion with UK Government (UKG), which then did not respond substantively for over a year. Shortly after the end of the reported year, UKG indicated that it would discontinue contributing to these conferences, despite the views from UKOTs on their effectiveness and value. UKOTCF seems best placed to organise a conference of this type as it has the

A view of a UKOTCF conference from a participant

Predicting in advance the outputs (except in a rather mechanical sense) and the outcomes of a conference of this nature is rarely sensible. However, a strong record of accomplishments has now been achieved by UKOTCF and its partners in and through these conferences, which provide evidence of their efficacy. For all the UKOTCF-organised conferences, we gather feedback from participants as to the use they make of them, and analyses of these are provided to the bodies contributing to funding. Some of these analyses are available in the published proceedings. Many of the most important outcomes are intangible, or arise from contacts established by participants during formal sessions or in the margins of the meeting without necessarily being apparent to the conference organisers. This is epitomised by feedback on the Cayman conference received from one participant:

'From this conference, I have: launched the OTEP invasives species databases and awareness project, received requests for copies of Cayman's Biodiversity Action Plan from other OTs, received project suggestions towards reaching specific NBAP targets (for Ghost orchid), seen the results of a cross-territories GSPC initiative in which we partnered with Kew, received the offer of expert assistance to establish a National Collection of insects, met with partners to advance the UKOT regional ENTRP EU bid and obtained exposure for my grant writing book which benefits myself (of course), but will, hopefully, benefit others. I would say that I don't do things "differently" as a result of the conference – I do things which I could not do "at all" before – e.g. the cat control project. Before Jersey, I did not know how to do this so I did not do it - at Jersey I networked to find someone who could help. With low capacity, things which I cannot do I tend not to do at all, rather than try to do them badly. As such the conference helps me do "more" rather than do "better".'

experience of five previous conferences, which have been assessed by UKOT conservationists as invaluable in helping implement effective work on the ground. UKOTCF was concerned to see the proposed organisation of a UKOT biodiversity conference in 2012 as a novel item in the work-programme of a UKG agency and without the involvement of the Forum. If UKG are to organise such a conference instead, it would be a shame and a major step backwards, wasting the resources and expertise that UKOTCF has built up over the past twelve years.

Several other examples of changes in government policy over the past year have seen previously joint efforts by UKOTCF and UK Government either being cancelled by Government or taken in-house by them, with loss of cost-effectiveness; this seems a rather negative approach, not really in line with the "Big Society" propounded by the new Government. However, UKOTCF

does welcome the greater awareness by this Government of UK Overseas Territories generally, and through the National Security Council, as well as the intention of DEFRA (announced after the end of the reported year) to maintain an emphasis on UKOTs in its Darwin Initiative funding, and by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International (DFID) to continue the OTEP small project fund.



Valuable future exchanges lost?: Cayman Conference 2009 in session. Photo: Thomas Hadjikyriakou

Influencing policy

UKOTCF made several submissions to consultations in 2010 including submissions to: DEFRA's consultation on the Natural Environment White Paper, the European Commission's consultation on the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee's (FAC) consultation on the role of FCO in UK Government.

Several years ago, UKOTCF and its French and Netherlands partners in Bioverseas indicated to the European Commission the need for a scheme to make support available for conservation in the Overseas Countries & Territories (OCTs) of European Union (EU) Member States and also those Outermost Regions (ORs) not covered by the EU's conservation directives. This would be a voluntary scheme inspired by the statutory *Natura 2000* sites series within the EU itself. At the meeting was Mr Ladislav Miko (now Deputy Director General of the European Commission's DG SANCO (Health and Consumer Policy), previously acting as Director for Nature of the European Commission's DG Environment). He extended the idea at the July 2008 conference on *The European Union and its Overseas Entities: Strategies to counter Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss*, held in La Réunion under the French Presidency of the EU and attended by UKOTCF.

Paragraph 13 of the Message from Réunion Island said:

"There is an urgent need for EU Member States and the European Commission, together with the ORs and OCTs, to establish a voluntary scheme for the protection of species and habitats, inspired by the *Natura 2000* approach. This scheme should be easily accessible, flexible, adapted to the local situation, balance conservation and development needs, as well as take into account existing mechanisms and tools. The implementation of the scheme should be based on local commitment and shared financing."

Mr Miko then led the development of this concept as BEST, the voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas. In October 2010, at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, France and the United Kingdom jointly announced this scheme. Mr Maurice Ponga, and Mr Elie Hoarau, both Members of the European Parliament elected for overseas constituencies, were instrumental in securing funding for 'preparatory action'. UKOTCF welcomed the announcement from the European Commission, on 1 March 2011, that the Commission is to make available €2 million to fund pilot projects under BEST, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in ORs and OCTs. The European Commission plans to launch a call for proposals in May 2011 for projects that wish to apply for funding. The projects will showcase the scheme and will prepare the ground for a governance structure with a view to longer term support. The scheme will build on existing sites and networks and take on board previous projects.

The Forum and others - especially the House of Commons Environmental Audit and Foreign Affairs Select Committees - have been trying for years to raise the profile of UKOTs' biodiversity. Under the previous government, there was an acceptance of the need for greater cross-departmental cooperation. An early sign of this was the attendance of a DEFRA Minister at the UKOTCF-organised conference in Grand Cayman in 2009 and further in setting up (between DEFRA, FCO and DFID) the Inter-Ministerial Group on Biodiversity. Another step was the drafting (with DEFRA again in the lead) of the *United Kingdom Overseas*

UKOTCF's Co-ordinator, Catherine Wensink, is spending most of 2011 in Bonaire, an overseas territory of the Netherlands and base of our corresponding organisation, the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance. While continuing in her UKOTCF role, Catherine is also helping DCNA and other local organisations. This is proving invaluable in developing increased co-operation. One



such organisation is Echo (www.echobonaire.org), conserving parrots, such as the Yellow-shouldered Amazon Parrot. Photo: Dr Sam Williams

Territories Biodiversity Strategy, although this latter turned out to be mainly a listing of separate departmental roles, with a short and very general section on "strategic priorities" which lacked any engagement with specific needs in individual territories or any timetable for addressing them. In action terms this did not represent progress from documents of over a decade earlier and, indeed, was something of a backward step in that the strategy document did not involve consultation with civil society nor credit for the lead taken by NGOs in these matters over many previous years. In policy terms it did at least provide a linkage between Government Departments although follow up in producing action plans has been interminably slow and once again ignored any input from outside government and its agencies. In the reported year, UKOTCF hosted a seminar (see below) to explore these limitations, now apparently recognised by UKG. UKOTCF followed this up by discussions with DEFRA as to how UKOTCF expertise could be used to help make the strategy more structured, and will be holding a workshop to progress this in 2011.

It may be considered progress that Secretary of State, Caroline Spelman's, speech at the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010, mentioned one example of biodiversity in the UKOTs: £200,000 funding for an initiative to save the endangered Henderson petrel in the Pacific. However, she did not mention that this is a UKOT project and just used it to announce a grant. It was a perfect opportunity to highlight UK responsibility for so much biodiversity and it seemed to be omitted almost in embarrassment, despite a prior briefing from UKOTCF to DEFRA.

In November 2010, Council representatives attended a joint meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Groups on Overseas Territories and on Zoos & Aquaria. It was encouraging that Richard Benyon MP, DEFRA Minister for Natural Environment & Fisheries, participated in the meeting. Both of these APPGs are chaired by Andrew Rosindell MP, who has done much to raise the profile of UK Overseas Territories in Parliament, in some cases jointly with UKOTCF. Rob Thomas of UKOTCF Member organization, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, gave a presentation on behalf of the British & Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), drawing on material from the Forum and stressing the key role of UKOTCF, both in overall coordination and in developing the capacity of local organizations in UKOTs. In the presentations, the importance was evident of the conclusions of the 2008 House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee inquiry on *Halting Biodiversity Loss*, UKOTCF

submissions to which were key. Andrew Rosindell indicated that another meeting should be held in 2011. UKOTCF will be supportive in such a meeting.

Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies

As noted earlier, in September 2010, UKOTCF brought together representatives from UK Government, UK NGOs, UK Representatives of UKOTs, and other institutions in order to discuss the UK Government's *UKOTs Biodiversity Strategy*, which was published in 2009. UKOTCF acknowledged the value of the document in providing leverage within UK Government for a joined-up approach between Ministries, and for keeping UKOTs biodiversity on the political agenda, as was now being stressed by officials. However, UKOTCF stressed that the document itself implied (including in the ministerial Foreword) that it represented much more than this.

It purported to advance a framework for biodiversity conservation in the UKOTs, although it was clearly inadequate for this purpose, and seemed to say to other stakeholders including NGOs "this is UK Government's solution, now you can join in". Reflecting on the very different perceptions of the *Strategy* from inside and outside UK Government, it was questioned whether these would have arisen if the regular, joint meetings between UK Government and UKOTCF had not been discontinued unilaterally by FCO.

An offer to invite UKOTCF to participate in a meeting of the cross-departmental officials group was welcomed, but some considered that it would have been more useful to re-establish a mechanism for regular meetings between UKOTCF Members and Associates with UK Government Departments and other stakeholders. The invitation to UKOTCF to participate in the meeting was, in the event, limited to attending for only a few minutes, to give a presentation, and UKOTCF declined. Real discussions involving UKOTCF would benefit Government Departments as well as NGOs, for example, in ensuring that future NGO submissions to Select Committee inquiries were most helpfully targeted. Improved communications could bring other benefits, including UKOTCF contributions to briefings ahead of ministerial visits to UKOTs, and reinstating routine arrangements for meeting new Governors taking up posts in the Territories (on which some progress has been made – see below). UKOTCF intends to continue to organise at least one meeting per year which brings together NGOs, UKOT representatives and UK Government officials, following on from the seminar noted above and that held in 2009 on Environment Charters.

The new UK Government's freeze on spending had an immediate and disappointing impact on the UKOTs. For several years, UKOTCF has hosted a set of web-pages through its website, to disseminate information for the FCO/DFID joint Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP). This agreement meant that project reports and articles relating to OTEP projects were reported in *Forum News*. This meant that the Programme's value was readily demonstrated and its results made widely available, both topically and readily found later by structured searches. The public announcement of a freeze on new communications spending (in any media) for 2010/11, may be extended further. In addition, DFID received specific (and not time bound) instructions from Cabinet Office on websites, namely that they cannot commission third parties to build or continue independent project websites. They have instructed that any



From a time when UK Government liked to share the expertise of the NGOs. UKOTCF then Chairman and a senior FCO official jointly chair one of the twice-yearly joint meetings between UKOTCF, its member organisations, UK Government departments, and UK Overseas Territories UK representatives. Photo: FCO

websites that exist outside the DFID domain must be reviewed and either closed down or moved on to the DFID domain. Whilst the primary motivation may be to save money spent on expensive consultants, it seems perverse to lose also cooperative projects with NGOs which helped establish programmes and provide cost-effective, non-commercial services.

UKOTCF will strive to keep the existing web-pages active, at UKOTCF expense with the note that funding is no longer being received from FCO & DFID, and will endeavour to keep adding the outputs of OTEP projects and details of new projects as they become available. Whilst, without resourcing, UKOTCF cannot commit to this or its priority, UKOTCF will attempt to do this, provided of course that DFID & FCO continue to supply information on new projects and to encourage grant-holders to supply information to UKOTCF on the outputs of projects.

UKOTCF personnel continue to ensure that UKOTs and CDs were not overlooked using a range of opportunities. Most notably in 2010, Mike Pienkowski was invited to be part of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Expert Panel to consider potential sites which had been put forward for inclusion on the UK's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites and to advise the Minister. He appears to be the only one of the nine panel members with specific expertise in the natural sciences and the UK Overseas Territories. The panel met on several occasions from November to February. The details of the panel's discussions are confidential, but much is now in the public domain, including its recommendations, which were accepted by the Minister in March. Six sites from the UKOTs and CDs had been submitted for consideration, and three of these were included in the new Tentative List, with the possibility of one other later becoming part of a cross-national site in the future.

UKOTCF has held informal meetings to brief new Governors, Administrators Designate and their staff prior to taking up post, as and when UKOTCF was advised of these new appointments, as well as some subsequent follow-up meetings. In September, UKOTCF personnel met with Governor-Designate Falkland Islands and Commissioner-Designate South Georgia Government and South Sandwich Islands, Nigel Haywood, as well as participating in various meetings and other consultations of the Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands. In March, UKOTCF Officers met the Governor-Designate of Montserrat, Adrian Davis.

UKOTCF participated in a range of meetings and events hosted



*A view of St Helena, with (inset) the Redwood, one of the many species of plants and animals that occur on St Helena and nowhere else in the world. St Helena would make an outstanding World Heritage Site, even compared with many of the existing WHSs, which are all, by definition, outstanding.
Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

programme. The UKOTCF website is regularly updated with publications and news items. The additional facilities developed under the Environmental Education project such as the virtual tours have continued to be developed throughout the year. Currently they are being populated with information received from various sources particularly partners in the territories. The funding for the project has ended. However, development of the tours continues on a voluntary basis.

UKOTCF has continued also to keep its Member and Associate organisations (and its wider network of contacts) informed of relevant developments, including funding opportunities, consultations and internal activities, through regular e-mail circulations. Issues of the eDigest were sent to all Member and Associate organisations in January 2010, November 2010 and March 2011. The inception of the eDigest came from the need to report to members on some of the discussions in Council meetings as well as other matters. This has proved to be popular with members because, for those that are not involved in UKOTCF activities on a daily basis, it gives them an idea of what is happening in the territories. In addition, in August 2010, UKOTCF again used the British Bird Watching Fair, an event that attracts 15-20,000 visitors annually, as a platform for raising awareness of the UKOTs and the important biodiversity that they

support. Considerable effort was made when setting up the stand to attract members of the British public to discuss the UKOTs. The message about the UKOTs seems to be getting through as they are now engaging in positive discussions rather than needing so many explanations of where and what the Territories are.

by other organisations. The Chairman served on the OTEP Assessors Panel, and held meetings with JNCC. The Executive Director continues to serve on the UK Executive Committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN-UK), which works in partnership with UKOTCF on UKOT/CD issues. Contacts with the Headquarters of IUCN were rather less satisfactory than with IUCN-UK. Problems included IUCN-HQ apparently forgetting its earlier relationship with UKOTCF (although using, without credit, material provided by UKOTCF and other partners in Bioverseas), not noticing all the earlier work in UKOTs by UKOTCF and its partners, commissioning work about UKOTs without consulting, and being disinclined to accept comment on the resulting flawed report. Work continues to correct these failings.

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Organisational developments

Oliver Cheesman has been Secretary of the UKOTCF's Wider Caribbean Working Group since 2002. For nearly three years, he has also been the Forum's Development Director, and Oliver has found it increasingly difficult to maintain both roles. Consequently, the Wider Caribbean Working Group Secretary role was passed to Ann Pienkowski, also the Forum's Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator. During his time as WCWG Secretary, Oliver had built up strong links with Members, Associates, and individuals with an interest in the Caribbean UKOTs. Through

Working Groups and wider networks

The activities of the Forum's Southern Oceans, Europe Territories, and Wider Caribbean Working Groups during the year are summarised in subsequent sections of this report.

Awareness raising and information management

Forum News 36 was published in July 2010, and *Forum News* 37 in December 2010. As well as reporting on UKOTCF's work, and other issues and activities relevant to conservation in the UKOTs/CDs, these featured reports from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) projects, under the Forum's then agreement with DFID/FCO to make available information on this important



Catherine Wensink, UKOTCF Co-ordinator (right) with prize-winners at UKOTCF's stand at the 2010 British Bird Fair. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski



*Dr Oliver Cheesman studying insects and their food plants on the flats near Big Pond, Middle Caicos, Turks & Caicos Islands.
Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

his personal contacts, and research activities, he was able to share with colleagues in the Caribbean and elsewhere much interesting and valuable information. He initiated the Group's eNewsletter to keep everyone informed, and to share information regarding the Caribbean UKOTs. UKOTCF thanks Oliver for supporting Ann as she takes over the WCWG Secretary role. Ann has already met or made contact with many people involved in the Caribbean UKOTs as part of her Environmental Education role.

In further sharing out of demanding tasks, Dr Keith Bensusan (of Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society) was welcomed as Secretary of the Europe Territories Working Group, relieving Dr Colin Hindmarch whose commitment to the Net-BIOME project was leaving little time for this. Rob Thomas (of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland) joined Karen Varnham as joint Chairpersons of the Southern Oceans Working Group, allowing Iain Orr to further develop the role of Parliamentary liaison officer, to foster the relationship between UKOTCF and UK Parliament. UK Overseas Territories have their own identity and governing structure and are not represented in the UK Parliament; however, they form part of the nation-state of the UK. Part of the role of UKOTCF, on behalf of its Members and Associates is to raise awareness in the UK about the Overseas Territories and our responsibility to them. This includes in UK Parliament, whose Select Committees (as noted elsewhere) have played a key and valuable role.

During the year, funding available to UKOTCF for the Development Officer role came to an end. Although Council kept this role going for much of the year on other funding, it reluctantly recognised that it was no longer able to continue the role after the end of the reported year. Council recorded its thanks to Dr Oliver Cheesman for his work in this role, together with earlier roles, including as representative of a Member organisation, as a Council member, and as WCWG Secretary. Council expressed its hope that there will be other roles for Oliver in UKOTCF in the future.

Projects

The Forum continues to help its member organisations to identify needs for, design, resource and implement projects, often involving the development of strategic partnerships between Member and Associate organisations, and sometimes others. Other projects in which the Forum is involved provide a co-ordinating role for activities across multiple (sometimes including non-UK) Territories. An element of some income generated via projects

provides an important source of funding for the Forum, although this relies on Council members and others providing their time to project work at well below market rates. Some of the projects operating during the reported year are noted below.

The first meeting of the EU funded project *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* took place in TCI in late 2010. The partners in the project are National Trust for the Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos National Trust and the National Parks Trust for the [British] Virgin Islands. After securing this funding, UKOTCF's main continuing roles in the project are to advise UKOT partners on technical issues, and to monitor work done. The project activities are aimed to address two challenges: the threats to critically endangered ecosystems and the lack of alternative types of economic development to high-impact ones (including tourism). The project will combine management of protected areas and stimulation of land-based eco-tourism, which is currently under-developed, in order to ensure biodiversity protection. The second meeting was held by Skype in February 2011, with considerable work continuing outside the meetings.

After some delay in OTEP confirming its funding from the 2008/9 round, the *Wonderful Water* project began in November 2009. UKOTCF and the Turks and Caicos Islands Education Department are collaborating over developing a curriculum and linked teaching programme on water systems in TCI for upper primary and lower secondary pupils. Draft curriculum and pilot materials have been prepared on the theme of Wetland Ecosystems in TCI. In February 2011, workshops were held in TCI to introduce teachers to these draft materials so that they could try them out with their students. Feedback and comment as these materials are trialled will inform the development of the other *Wonderful Water* teaching materials. Over 40 people attended the workshops in Grand Turk and Providenciales. As well as being introduced to the project and the materials, participants observed a demonstration lesson on feeding relationships, being delivered by Ms Cordelia Creese, one of the project partners in TCI, to a group of Grade 8 students. Additionally, teachers from Enid Capron Primary School, Providenciales, gave a presentation on one way in which they were planning to use the materials at the primary level. The demonstration and presentation, together with the draft teaching materials, were very well received. The participants were enthusiastic about the project, and some reported that they too had learnt something about TCI Wetlands.

Earlier project work by students at H J Robinson High School, Grand Turk, had featured the need for conservation of the salinas, and was reported in *Forum News*. UKOTCF, too, had long called for this, as had many bodies in TCI, including the National Museum, which is working with UKOTCF to implement interpretative trails. It was pleasing that the first of these salinas received protected status early in 2011, TCI Government's statement making particular mention of *Forum News* and the students' work.

The Net-BIOME project, supported by the EU's research budget reached a key stage, securing funding from most of the partner countries and regions to launch a call for bids. Sadly, UK Government could not be persuaded to contribute, so that applications from UK/UKOT bodies and about UKOTs are largely ineligible. Nevertheless, UKOTCF has continued, alongside several of the project partners, to contribute to all aspects of the work. The European Commission has agreed that the project can continue for a year longer than originally approved, to February 2012, within its existing budget, and detailed planning has gone into bringing matters to completion in the final year.

Working for our members

UKOTCF was delighted to welcome as new Associates: Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre, Jost van Dyke Preservation Society, Turks and Caicos National Museum and the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund. Profiles of each organisation can be found on UKOTCF's website.

Jamie Roberts, Director of the St Helena National Trust, organised the launch of the St Helena National Trust Strategy, held at the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in London on 28 September, while visiting the UK. He was assisted by Iain Orr, Joint Chair of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group and UKOTCF Council member, who made sure that the reception was well attended by those with an interest in the future of St Helena. The Governor of St Helena, H.E. Andrew Gurr, together with Bob Russell MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for St Helena, gave very supportive remarks. Andy Pearson provided a fascinating account of recent archaeological explorations of the slave depots linked to St Helena's role in the Royal Navy's fight against the slave trade. The strategy is available online at www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Reports/StHelenaNationalTrustVision.pdf or on the St Helena National Trust website: www.nationaltrust.org.sh. In July, the UK International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell announced the go-ahead for an airport on St Helena "on the basis that it will provide best value for the British taxpayer and meet our obligations to this British Overseas Territory." The airport will bring visitors to the islands which is currently accessible via a week-long boat journey from South Africa (or 2 days from Ascension), revitalizing the economy particularly the tourism sector. This will be an extremely challenging time for the National Trust as well as for the small number of St Helena Government conservation staff. UKOTCF will offer support wherever it is needed.

During the year, UKOTCF helped several member organisations identify possible funding sources and make applications for project work. In some, such as Turks & Caicos National Museum's botanic garden (and that organisation's joint work with UKOTCF on bird trails), funding was achieved. Inevitably, in others it was not. The latter included interesting proposals for *Protecting the Habitats and Wildlife of the Akrotiri Wetland*, in collaboration with Wetland Link International (WLI) and the Akrotiri Environmental Education & Information Centre (AEEIC). The objectives of the project are: to establish an interpreted field trail encompassing key habitats within the Akrotiri wetlands; to develop curriculum-linked, field trip follow-up packs for school parties and to develop wider awareness raising materials, linking habitat protection to wise use of water. For this and others, UKOTCF will keep trying.

UKOTCF has provided some material and introduced to relevant partners in the territories the ARKive project. This is an initiative of Wildscreen, a not-for-profit organisation in the international wildlife media industry. ARKive is an online visual database. In 2010, ARKive was awarded a grant by OTEP to create a series of web pages for species found in the UK Overseas Territories.

The UKOTs on-line herbarium, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, aims to facilitate cost-free, easy access to plant diversity information for all UK Overseas Territories. The website <http://dps.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/UKOT/Home/Index> enables access to a virtual herbarium that was initially populated by the UKOT herbarium specimens held at RBG Kew and further supplemented by field images of plants linked to the specimens/species. In May 2009, Kew launched a beta version of the South Georgia webpage with an example database, during the UKOTCF Conference in the Cayman Islands. The webpage and database were well received and has been the model for developing workflow for the project over the past year.

Following the campaign to create an MPA in BIOT, the Pew Foundation is looking to support the development of MPAs around several other UKOTs. UKOTCF met with representatives from Pew early in November 2010 and will continue to explore areas of common interest.

UKOTCF responded to a request from Member organisations in Bermuda to raise in UK the issue of Bermuda Government using the Special Development Order procedure – intended for matters of "national priority" – to circumvent normal planning procedures

and the sustainability principles enshrined in Bermuda's planning law. Although the SDO was resisted in Senate, the Government reintroduced the SDO at only one day's notice so that the Order was passed. Only very small areas of natural habitat survive in Bermuda. The building of private homes and hotel rooms at Tucker's Point will be on land previously protected from development for environmental reasons, and includes pristine hills and endangered woodland on top of a network of ancient underground caves, which serve as a safe haven for numerous unique life forms, many critically endangered, in the most extensive remaining tracts of forest left that pre-date settlement. Below these hills are globally important caves joined by extensive passageways which sustain a disproportionate amount of diverse and unique wildlife and flora. In Bermuda's caves, more than 60 endemic species have been identified. Due to the vulnerability of these ecosystems to threats, such as development, 25 of these species have been listed as critically endangered. The area is within a proposed Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, of which Bermuda is included in UK's ratification. Concern has been expressed that failures to pay back large commercial loans, including one of over £100 million from HSBC Bermuda, are behind the Special Development Order. As this raises issues of international commitments and governance, as well as suggestions that the matter is being driven by the needs of a UK-based multinational bank, it is appropriate that concerns are raised in UK as well as in Bermuda.

Acknowledgements

The Forum Council would like to thank the individuals and representatives of Member and Associate organisations who have given numerous hours of voluntary time to the Forum, both in the UK and the Territories. The Forum would also like to thank existing Friends of UKOTs, and encourage those who have an interest in the UKOTs/CDs to join the scheme, which was started at the request of individuals who wished to support UKOTCF's work. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance as project grants and donations, from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and other organisations. The Forum is also grateful to Member organisations and others for contributions in kind, including hosting meetings at their offices during the year, particularly the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Zoological Society of London, and Foyle's Bookshop.



From Kew's online herbarium: *herbscan* of *Acacia anegadensis* (*Leguminosae*) collected in 1919 on Anegada, BVI.
Photo: RBG Kew

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum
Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 March 2011

	2011	2011	2011	2010
	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
Incoming Resources				
Subs and donations	155,170	42,770	197,940	164,704
Investment Income	43	-	43	67
Sundry Incoming Resources	273	-	273	181
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities				
Project Income	-	75,847	75,847	116,152
Total Incoming Resources	155,486	118,617	274,103	281,104
Resources Expended				
Charitable Activities	152,299	123,614	275,913	355,312
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	17,980	1,158	19,138	22,929
Total Resources Expended	170,279	124,772	295,051	378,241
Net incoming/outgoing resources	-14,793	-6,155	-20,948	-97,137
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2009	78,443	14,139	92,582	189,719
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2010	63,650	7,984	71,634	92,582

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time of £156,438 (2010: £122,738).

Report of the UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

During the year ETWG met once by Skype and also the ETWG chairman participated, on behalf of both UKOTCF and the Isle of Man Government, in the Channel Islands Interisland Meeting held on Guernsey in October 2010. This has now become a very successful annual event for exchanging information, sharing knowledge and conservation ideas and updating on important issues, such as ecological impact assessments for offshore renewables. This event was convened by ETWG member Charles David, of La Société Guernesaise, and held at Les Cotils Centre in St Peter Port. Representatives from all the Channel Islands attended as well as representatives of JNCC, RSPB and BTO. Reports from various projects together with wide ranging discussions ensured it was a very valuable and informative event. There was an opportunity at the end of the day to discuss the Europe Territories Working Group and its role.

Funding availability to Europe Territories

While sources of funding continue to be developed for UKOTs, most recently the BEST European fund, eligibility for territories such as Gibraltar and Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, which are within the EU or adopt EU laws, appears unlikely in this case. Crown Dependencies continue to be excluded from most metropolitan UK and Overseas Territories funds (OTEP, Darwin etc). Having said that, JNCC is now making small sums available to all UKOTs and CDs for training (up to £1,000 per territory) and research (up to £3000 per territory). The Isle of Man NGOs have made good use of the training grants in 2010 and 2011. The Isle of Man now obtains a sum (£1.5m over 5 years) from the UK's Big Lottery Fund which is administered through the Manx Lottery Trust (a Delegated Partner of the Big Lottery Fund). Applicants need to prove the project is "beneficial to the community" as there are no environmental criteria. UKOTCF applied on behalf of the Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre in Cyprus SBA, to another fund. This was to part-finance a project

to establish an interpreted field-trail within the Akrotiri wetlands, to develop associated curriculum-linked educational materials and to develop wider awareness raising materials, linking habitat protection to wise use of water. These wetlands are a Ramsar site. Unfortunately this application was not successful.

Bailiwick of Jersey

During the year, States of Jersey have created a new 'Natural Environment Team' to manage local conservation and biodiversity issues. Officers are currently reviewing *Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000*, which provides species protection legislation, with a proposal to include habitat protection. The development of a Jersey / Channel Islands local Biological Records Centre is being investigated. A local invasive species strategy is being developed. Ramsar site management continues to be discussed and there remain matters of concern about development and the SE Jersey Ramsar site. A new collaborative project between National Trust for Jersey, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Department for the Environment has been established to conserve or restore farmland bird populations such as stonechat, after the local extinction of curl bunting and yellow hammer populations.

Bailiwick of Guernsey

As described above, Guernsey hosted the Inter-Island meeting held in October. This was reported on pages 13-14 in *Forum News 37*, which is accessible online at: <http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/fNews/37.pdf>. At this meeting, Guernsey reported on the completion of Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Guernsey, Herm & Jethou in 2010. In autumn 2011, the Red Data Book for Guernsey should be published by the Guernsey Biological Records Centre. This is seen as the first step in producing a Biodiversity Strategy for the island. The Guernsey Biological Records Centre is a joint venture between Government (Environment Department) and



Ramsey Bay, Isle of Man, with (inset) underwater eel-grass beds, one of its key features. Photos: Isle of Man Government

NGO (La Société Guernesiaise). The Centre has a website: <http://www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg/iim>

Isle of Man

Since the Isle of Man Wildlife and Conservation Division was dissolved in March 2010 and biodiversity officers integrated into Forestry, Fisheries and Agriculture there have been various changes. Most positively, the Manx Fish Producers Organisation has proposed a 40 km² Marine Nature Reserve in Ramsey Bay, which will be closed to scallop dredging and queenie trawling. The consultation document for the proposed nature reserve can be accessed online: <http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/daff/Wildlife/ramseybayfullconsultationdocumen.pdf>. The Department name was changed to the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture and environmental protection staff joined from another department, and their Minister took charge. The designation of Ramsey estuary as an Area of Special Scientific Interest has been reversed following this change of Minister, who felt that the designation “process was unfairly biased towards the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA)”.

A subcommittee on Biological Recording has been set up under the Manx Conservation Forum. The subcommittee has set up a partnership and signed a Statement of Intent towards establishing a single biodiversity database for the Isle of Man. A ‘bioblitz’ recording event has been planned. The introduction of the psyllid bug *Aphalara itadori* to control Japanese knotweed on the Isle

of Man is being discussed. This follows trials conducted in the UK, where the bug is proving more difficult to introduce than hoped due to weather conditions during last spring. A new agri-environment scheme is being proposed for the Isle of Man which, if enacted, could have significant benefits for threatened wildlife, including the birds grey partridge and yellowhammer. A consultation document is available online: <http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/daff/Consultations/agrienvironmentschemeconsultation.pdf>

Isle of Man Government has written to the UK Ministry of Justice requesting that the Isle of Man be included in the UK’s ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). A three-year Marine Spatial Planning project began in 2010 amid considerable interest in offshore renewables in Manx waters.

Gibraltar

The Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society has been concerned that the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), and in particular Defence Estates, are no longer engaging with GONHS in the way they were. Some conservation issues at MOD sites could have been overcome easily had contact been taking place between the two parties on a regular basis. There was an MOD conservation group of which GONHS formed a part, but this is no longer the case. It is concerning that Gibraltar Government had not wished to be represented on the JNCC UKOT/CD steering group.

Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas

Trapping migrant birds on the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) continues to cause concern. There had been some improvement in past years but the autumn 2010 migration was particularly hard hit, with a report of a 75% increase in mist net use and an 89% increase in lime-stick setting compared to autumn 2009. Birdlife International reports “an estimated toll of around 1.4 million birds within the Famagusta and Larnaca districts”. This is described as “an ecological disaster, especially when the non-selective nature of trapping is taken into account. Trappers are making hundreds of thousands of Euros by selling blackcaps and other birds to be served up as illegal, expensive ambelopoulia delicacies.” UKOTCF continues to seek ways of encouraging the SBA authority to take robust action against the illegal trappers operating on its land.

Report of the UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

Cross-Territory activities/projects

The South Atlantic Invasive Species Project (SAIS) funded by the 9th European Development Fund (EDF-9) came to an end in December 2009. Further funding for work on invasives in the South Atlantic is now being sought. Some effort is being made to lobby at EU level so that invasive species work in the South Atlantic can continue following several recent unsuccessful bids. The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have made available some funding for work on invasives that began in October.

Following a call by the new UK Government for greater cooperation between the South Atlantic Territories, the establishment of a South Atlantic Territories Cooperation Forum (SATCF) was agreed by elected members and UK representatives of St Helena, Ascension Island, the Falklands, and Tristan da Cunha. Several Skype conference call meetings have taken place, chaired by Tara Thomas, St Helena Councillor and Deputy Chairperson for the Home & International Committee. Through this cooperation, it is

hoped that some aspects of the successful South Atlantic Invasive Species Project would continue. Meetings are expected to take place every two months or so.

Ascension

The OTEP-funded project *Endemic Plants Conservation Project*, of Ascension Island Government Conservation Department, together with Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, is developing species action plans for all endemic plants found on Ascension, improving seed bank collections, and updating IUCN Red listings. The team were astonished to rediscover and successfully propagate, in 2010, the endemic parsley fern *Anogramma ascensionis*, previously thought to be extinct (see www.kew.org/news/kew-blogs/how-we-saved-ascensions-endemic-parsley-fern.htm). In February 2011, a set of stamps was issued to commemorate the rediscovery.

The OTEP-funded *Green Mountain National Park Education and Visitors Centre* project was completed in May 2010. The main objective of this project was to provide an education and visitors

centre in the Green Mountain National Park, for the general public, visitors, researchers, scientists, students and school children on Ascension. The ground floor has been converted into a display area, on the *Endemic Plants and South Atlantic Invasive Species* projects, as well as other future exhibitions. Some of the posters collected at the UKOTCF-organised Cayman Conference in 2009 are displayed here. A section is to be utilised by the Heritage Society to demonstrate the historic significance of Ascension and promote and encourage people to use the walks and facilities available in the Park. There is also a small office on the ground floor, a workshop and storage area. The first floor has been converted into a lecture theatre and a classroom facility. The regular newsletter from AIG *Conservation Quarterly* was published in June and December and is available to download at www.ascensionconservation.org.ac

St Helena

In July 2010, the UK Department for International Development (DIFD) announced the go ahead of the airport on St Helena, subject to certain conditions. A Memorandum of Understanding between the St Helena Government and DFID was signed on 20 December 2010. The subsequent development of the island will have a major socioeconomic impact on the islanders as well as the environment as the island is opened up to tourists and developers. As part of the package agreed with the UK Government to secure an airport for the island, St Helena is now developing new Protected Areas. The emphasis is on protecting the island's natural and built heritage in order to develop its tourism, whilst allowing development where it is appropriate. An evidence base is currently being prepared locally before a Protected Areas expert is brought in to develop a comprehensive Protected Areas network, following which legislation will be drafted.

A full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken prior to the award of a contract for the proposed new breakwater at Jamestown on St Helena, which will be funded primarily by the 10th European Development Fund. This is significant progress given that many tourists each year leave St Helena disappointed having been unable to step foot off the cruise ships on to the island, due to the inadequacy of the current breakwater. Expressions of Interest are now being sought and Terms of Reference for the contractor carrying out the EIA are being finalised.

A Marine Scientific Officer has joined the St Helena Government within the Directorate of Fisheries in 2010, after the position was vacant for over two years. Five bids were prepared for OTEP, including: rat control; reduce, reuse, recycle from the department of health; restoration of the endemic bastard gumwood tree; creating a mechanism for recycling, engaging the mentally and physically disabled; and Wirebird predator control. The last three listed were funded. St Helena's Tourism Development Project contains a component to develop volunteerism, and UKOTCF will look to work with this and other partners under its Overseas Territories Volunteer Programme, for which funding is currently being sought.



Ascension stamps commemorate the re-discovery and conservation of the Parsley Fern.

St Helena National Trust's Strategy launch at the Royal Society of Arts in London on 28 September 2010 is described in the report of Council above (p. 7).

The Millennium Forest, a project managed by the National Trust with the aim of restoration of the islands Great Wood, received the Blue Turtle conservation award from JNCC in March 2011. The success of the Millennium Forest has come from strong community involvement. A new Millennium Forest visitor centre and nursery is expected to open in 2011. The National Trust began work on its successful Darwin Challenge Fund project in 2010. The project aims to increase local capacity to conserve St Helena's threatened native biodiversity, and will run over three years, until 2013.

In March 2011, St Helena made the new UK Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. St Helena was put

forward as a 'mixed site' (both for its natural and cultural heritage) but DCMS's Expert Panel felt that, while the case for its inclusion as a natural site was convincing, that further work could lead to its inclusion as a cultural site also. Sites will now have to undergo a feasibility study to see if they are ready to develop a full nomination for World Heritage Status. World Heritage is seen by many as vital for developing tourism on St Helena. The application was submitted by St Helena National Trust, as part of a partnership including Government and local politicians. The government of St Helena had some last-minute concerns about the cost associated with a WHS proposal. However, voluntary support would be available from outside St Helena, including support from UKOTCF, to develop the proposal should St Helena require it.

Tristan da Cunha

At the annual Overseas Territories Consultative Council (OTCC) in London in November, Henry Bellingham MP, Minister for the Overseas Territories, agreed to provide assistance for Tristan da Cunha's harbour. This work is now going ahead. The islanders hope that the improvements will be long lasting, as the harbour is essential for their livelihoods. Had the decision not been taken, it would have had a massive impact on the islanders as well as hampering conservation efforts.

Waste management continues to be a problem on Tristan. Previously, rubbish was buried underneath volcanic ash; this was unsatisfactory due to the smell, not to mention being unsustainable. However, an environmental impact assessment has now been carried out and there are plans for an incinerator. This will help to keep the rat population down, and the current improvements have already seen breeding birds returning to the mainland.

JNCC has provided funding for the purchase of filming equipment for the Tristan school, and the children have been busy making films to be shown at a festival in Scotland. UKOTCF has responded to a request to investigate working with the school on Tristan to develop teaching materials in the context of Tristan's environment, based on those developed in the Falkland Islands.



Part of MS Oliva, broken up against the immensely important wildlife island of Nightingale and islanders at Tristan attempt to clean and release oiled Rockhopper Penguins, held in the island's swimming pool. It is unclear why the modern ship hit the island if the crew were on watch. Sadly, most penguins did not survive, and several endemic species were badly affected too.

Photos courtesy of Chris Bates, Tristan da Cunha Government representative in UK

The OTEP-funded project *Integrated Biodiversity Management Planning* began in 2010. A team working on Gough (led by Richard Cuthbert, RSPB), is carrying out further research on the mice which have been witnessed preying on the Gough bunting. John Cooper (University of Cape Town) is also conducting research for the plan. A team of ten is on the island until next year, removing invasive *Sagina* plants. Kirsty Green, the clerk from the Tristan Conservation Department, visited RBGK, RSPB as well as to Northern Ireland as part of a training scheme. Communication difficulties, especially with email, still exist but there have been discussions with DIFD which included plans to upgrade to a faster connection.

In March 2011 the *MS Oliva*, a 75,300 tonne bulk carrier *en route* from Santos in Brazil to Singapore, carrying 65,000 tonnes of soya beans, ran aground on Nightingale Island, Tristan da Cunha. Fortunately, all 22 crew were rescued. Bad weather caused the *MS Oliva* to break up and heavy oil, as well as the cargo, leaked from the ship and surrounded Nightingale's coast. A team from Tristan Conservation Department, already on Nightingale for other work, made an initial assessment of the damage to Nightingale's seabirds. Unfortunately the oil spread to Inaccessible Island, a World Heritage Site, home to the flightless rail which is not able to escape the oil and has to continue feeding in areas that have been affected by the spill. Several dead fur seals were reported in the area. There has been great concern for the tens of thousands of rockhopper penguins, of which around 1,500 have been taken to Tristan and are being rehydrated, cleaned, warmed and fed by the islanders, but many thousands have been killed. There is now a major concern for the islands' economy which is based around the commercial craw-fishing (for Tristan rock lobster) industry. The entire industry is based upon the lobsters' pristine habitat and is sold as a luxury item in Japan for weddings and other formal occasions. Lobster is also exported to Australia and the United States and is awaiting EU certification. The full extent of the damage to the lobster larvae and the kelp beds they mature in and what impact this disaster has had on the fishery will not be known for some time. There was another threat from rats particularly to Inaccessible and Nightingale island, (currently rat free) as they may have been onboard the ship and could have travelled ashore. Immediately following the ship's collision, members of the conservation team that were on Inaccessible laid bait and traps following the protocol that had been developed by Karen Varnham (UKOTCF Council member and Joint Chair of SOWG) and RSPB.

UKOTCF will be following the developments on Nightingale closely and will offer its support to the Islanders in any way they can. Whilst the actions of the islanders, their Administrator and conservation personnel, and the ships that rescued the crew were

exemplary, it is not clear that the cross-departmental actions of UK Government were as supportive as one might expect.

British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)

On 1 April 2010, the then UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, announced the creation of a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the British Indian Ocean Territory. UKOTCF Associate organisation, Chagos Conservation Trust (CCT) and others are now working with the UK Government to provide for the proper management of this world resource. The marine reserve will include a 'no-take' marine reserve where commercial fishing is banned. At the end of October 2010, the last remaining fishing licences expired and therefore all legal fishing ceased. To help make up for the loss of revenue from tuna licences, the Blue Marine Foundation has raised a substantial contribution from the Bertarelli Foundation to support the indispensable work of the enforcement vessel. Poaching still continues in BIOT waters, showing the importance of the vessel. From October when the last fishing licences ran out to the end of November 2010, six Sri Lankan fishing vessels were caught fishing, taken to Diego Garcia, detained, and their Masters put in front of the Magistrate. Four subsequently paid their fines and were allowed to leave with their vessels, minus their fishing equipment; two did not pay and hence their vessels were kept as well as their fishing equipment.

CCT and partners are working closely with Chagossian groups in the UK, including the provision of training in conservation skills for young persons from the community who may wish to work on the protected area. The declaration of the MPA was, of course, without prejudice to the continuing legal action between some Chagossian groups and UK Government, and the topic continued to raise lively debate in Parliament and elsewhere.

A scientific ship-borne research expedition to the Chagos Archipelago in 2010 included the collection of data on which to base Special Plant Areas, (along the lines of Special Bird Areas) conducted by Colin Clubbe of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. They are developing a systematic method of assisting natural restoration from coconut monoculture to native hardwood trees and prioritising islands on which to enhance conservation efforts. The return of native vegetation is occurring naturally, but extremely slowly, although in Diego Garcia and because of conservation measures, the Red-footed Booby colony which prefers natural vegetation has already expanded to become the Indian Ocean's largest colony. Studies on coconut crabs have shown that the Chagos has the densest population of this species in the world (up to 600 per hectare, many of them huge). Some concern has been expressed about the extent of works changing the nature of the existing Ramsar site at Diego Garcia.

Falkland Islands

In September UKOTCF colleagues had an opportunity to meet the new Governor designate (and also Commissioner for South Georgia), Nigel Haywood. Mr Haywood has taken recent biological training, and it is encouraging that he has such a keen interest in biodiversity and conservation. UKOTCF personnel had had the opportunity at the British Birdwatching Fair to renew acquaintance with Sarah Brennan, the new UK Executive for Falkland Conservation. Until recently, Sarah was the Editor of the quarterly magazine *Birds* at RSPB, and was previously head of the RSPB's Creative Service's publishing team for seven years. Liaison has continued on several points.

South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI)

In September a series of meetings took place with key GSGSSI officials while they visited the UK. This included: a presentation of the public reindeer management consultation, a consultation on the SGSSI government and HMG strategies for SGSSI, a meeting for UKOTCF personnel with Governor-Designate Falkland Islands and Commissioner-Designate SGSSI, Nigel Haywood; a meeting mainly on scientific aspects, hosted by British Antarctic Survey.

Scientists from the Shallow Marine Surveys Group (SMSG) surveyed 46 sites over three depth zones along the north coast of South Georgia, with over 2270 specimens of marine invertebrates collected.

Pew Environment is developing a proposal for a large marine protected area in South Georgia, although the Government of SGSSI has yet to take a view on this. Pew reports that currently smaller fish than normal are being caught which, from a conservation point of view is worrying, and fishing licences are not being renewed by commercial fishermen. Professor Alex Rodgers from Oxford University (previously of Zoological Society London and British Antarctic Survey) has been commissioned to write a report giving an account of the status of South Georgia marine waters. Pew questions the economic and ecological sustainability of the krill and ice-fish industry, in spite of Marine Stewardship Council certification. Krill is an important link in the food chain because it is a main food source of many larger species. In the Southern Ocean, one species, the Antarctic krill *Euphausia superba* makes up an estimated biomass of over 500,000,000 tonnes; over half is eaten by whales, seals, penguins, and squid.

Towards the end of the reported year, the South Georgia Heritage Trust achieved outstanding success in the pilot year of rat eradication from the first parts of South Georgia. A report will appear in the next *Forum News*. Next year, monitoring and reviews of approach will be undertaken, before moving on to complete the eradication in the following years.

Pitcairn Islands

RSPB has been successful in raising funds of over £1.7m to carry out a rat eradication programme on Henderson Island to safeguard the Henderson petrel eggs and chicks. The main eradication work will start in August 2011. UKOTCF has donated use of photographic images to assist the campaign.

The species recovery work on *Abutilon pitcairnense* (yellow fautoo) continues at the National Botanical Gardens, Glasnevin, Republic



One of South Georgia Heritage Trust's helicopters disperses poisoned bait to remove rats from South Georgia, in order to reinstate native wildlife. Photo: Prof. Tony Martin

of Ireland, and on Pitcairn Island, with Carol Warren propagating and noting possible pollinators in the wild with support from the Mohammed Bin Zayed Conservation Fund. NBG commissioned the botanical artist Susan Sex to illustrate a plate of the endemic flower, *Abutilon pitcairnense*, which featured in Curtis Botanical Magazine in November 2010. The artist has also prepared a plate for the islanders. A set of stamps have also been issued which, along with the plate, will hopefully raise further funds for conservation work on Pitcairn.

During a visit by UKOTCF to Pitcairn just before the start of the year, a request was made by the Conservation Department to update the paperwork for designations of Oeno, Ducie and possibly Henderson as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This has been done. UKOTCF looks forward to comments from Pitcairn Council as to how to proceed.

The Pew Environment Group is exploring the feasibility of creating a large Marine Reserve in the Pitcairn Islands, whose several islands are spread over a large area. During a visit, meetings were held with the island councillors and all 53 islanders, who were generally supportive. Permission has been granted to develop a proposal, in conjunction with the Darwin Initiative project being developed by Professor Terry Dawson, supported by UKOTCF. The planned proposal would designate 100,000km² as a no-take zone. The concerns raised were based around the idea that fishing would be prohibited and that enforcement would present a problem. Commercial fishing licences have been previously granted by the Pitcairn Government but fishermen have not returned to the Islands, and if so, they have done illegally. Issues of scientific research and enforcement are being considered and a formal proposal will be put forward to the Pitcairn Council next year.



Pitcairn postage stamps featuring the Endangered Yellow Fatoo *Abutilon pitcairnense*

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 £.....

OR: I wish my company to be a Corporate Friend of the UK Overseas Territories at annual level: £150 £500 £1,000 £.....

Name of individual Friend or contact person for Corporate Friend:

Company name of Corporate Friend (if relevant) :

Address:

Telephone: Fax: Email:

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.*

Report of UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

The Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) met three times during the year, on each occasion at the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG), Kew. Building further on enhancements made to WCWG communications in recent years, Skype was used to facilitate remote participation in meetings, and three issues of the WCWG e-Newsletter were circulated amongst Group members, helping to provide continuity and disseminate information of general interest between physical meetings. After eight years in the role, Oliver Cheesman stood down as WCWG Secretary in September 2010, and his place was taken very ably by Ann Pienkowski, also UKOTCF's Honorary Environmental Education Co-ordinator (and well known in this capacity to partners in the Caribbean UKOTs).

Each year brings new reminders of the vulnerability of Caribbean islands to extreme weather events. In 2010, Bermuda suffered the considerable impacts of Hurricane Igor, and BVI experienced extensive damage at the hands of Hurricane Earl. Such occurrences re-emphasise the threat of global climate change, under which more frequent extreme events are predicted, and the importance to coastal communities of habitats such as mangroves, which provide natural protection against storm surges but are so often stripped away by construction projects. Unsustainable development practices and habitat destruction of this kind were amongst recurrent themes in WCWG discussions during the year. For example, the Group was concerned to hear, not for the first time, about the perceived inappropriate use of a Special Development Order (SDO) to advance construction in Bermuda (this time, at Tucker's Point), despite local objections, and the ongoing controversy and local concern over developments proposed for Beef Island and Nail Bay in BVI. There was frustration also in the Cayman Islands, where major developments continued to be proposed without an effective Environmental Impact Assessment process, thanks to further delays to a long awaited Conservation Law, despite considerable efforts to advance this during the year.

On a more positive note, after seven years of frustration and hard work by UKOTCF and its partners, the EU-funded *Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies* (MPASSE) project finally got under way in 2010, with TCI hosting the first Steering Committee meeting in October. The project links work in TCI, BVI and the Cayman Islands, serving the dual purposes of conserving threatened ecosystems through improved management of protected areas and the development of enhanced facilities for ecotourism, demonstrating that intact habitats represent economic as well as environmental assets. Further details of this project are



Damage to BVI's Botanic Gardens caused by hurricane Earl.
Photo: Nancy Pascoe

outlined elsewhere in this report, and formed the lead story in *Forum News* 37. The painfully protracted process required to bring this project to fruition means that the work programme (originally scheduled to be undertaken in three years, plus another two in which to finalize reports and accounts) must now be completed in a little over two years.

The continuing spread and increase in numbers of the Pacific red lionfish *Pterois volitans* in Caribbean waters provided a reminder, as if one were needed, of the environmental threat posed by invasive species. There was disappointment during 2010, when a proposal to the EU for a regional project on invasive species, developed by the Cayman Islands Department of Environment (DoE) with support from JNCC, was turned down. This would have built on earlier work funded by OTEP, to integrate information on non-native species in the UKOTs into the Global Invasive Species Database and produce tailored awareness-raising materials for a number of UKOTs. Fortunately, it was possible for DoE to implement part of the work proposed to the EU with funding from JNCC, resulting in the establishment of an on-line Caribbean Hub for information sharing (www.caribbeanhub.net), which is developing into a very useful regional resource.

Another on-line facility which WCWG has been delighted to see progress during the year is the UKOTs Virtual Herbarium, being constructed with OTEP funding by RBG Kew. Alongside work to clarify taxonomic information, specimens from the UKOTs held in Kew's physical herbarium, and associated data, are being digitized under this project and made available through a web-based portal (<http://dps.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/UKOT>).

Anguilla

Concerns noted by WCWG in relation to environmental threats and damage in Anguilla during the year included the impacts of illegal sand mining and deterioration in the condition of local reefs revealed by the Anguilla Marine Monitoring Programme. The Territory benefited from two new OTEP projects during the year: one to support sustainable land and soil management to enhance the adaptation of Anguilla's agricultural sector to climate change; and the other to support CITES implementation. The latter project included a successful 1-week training workshop, involving local stakeholders and representatives of RBG Kew (the UK CITES technical authority for plants), JNCC (the UK CITES technical authority for animals) and DEFRA (the UK CITES administrative authority). Amongst its other activities, the Anguilla National Trust has continued its work with the Anguilla Sea Turtle Conservation Group, monitoring and raising awareness of turtles and their conservation needs. In September 2010, the Anguilla DoE launched a project aimed at educating the general public about invasive species ecology, threats and management.

Bermuda

A visit to Bermuda by UKOTCF representatives in May 2010 resulted in very useful discussions with local NGO and governmental environmental bodies, strengthening WCWG linkages and UKOTCF's wider network. Local issues raised included measures to advance the development and implementation of management plans for terrestrial nature reserves, and designation of further Ramsar sites. The marine environment will benefit also from the award during the year of a major OTEP grant for work in Bermuda towards restoration of seagrass habitats and the important ecosystem services that they provide. On an even larger scale, WCWG discussed the plans of the Sargasso Sea

Alliance, led by the Bermuda Government, to establish a major, deep-ocean protected area around the Territory. There were also reports of further successes under longstanding work to conserve the endemic cahow (Bermuda petrel) *Pterodroma cahow*, with five chicks reported hatching on Nonsuch Island this year.

British Virgin Islands

WCWG has been delighted to hear reports of conservation work on-going in BVI, including under the auspices of the Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society (JVDPS, which became a UKOTCF Associate organisation in 2010) and the National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands (formerly the BVI National Parks Trust, a long-standing UKOTCF Member organisation which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2011). JVDPS activities include environmental education initiatives, as well as work to control invasive species including feral cats, mongooses and non-native plants. RBG Kew has maintained its strong links with partners in BVI, including through visits to conduct survey work which this year extended



Jost Van Dyke. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

to areas such as Prickly Pear Island, where no botanical work had previously been undertaken. As well as filling important gaps in baseline biodiversity data, this work has immediate practical value, information collected in the field on hand-held computers being used to update local systems used, for example, by the National Parks Trust in relation to planning applications. Towards

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Membership

The current UK and international Member and Associate organisations of the Forum are:

Amphibian & Reptile Conservation; British Ecological Society; British Microbial Biodiversity Association; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Royal Zoological Society of Scotland; Zoological Society of London; Army Ornithological Society; Royal Air Force Ornithological Society and Royal Naval Birdwatching Society.

Current Member and Associate organisations of the Forum for individual UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are:

Alderney Wildlife Trust; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; Bermuda Zoological Society; National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands, BVI; Jost van Dykes Preservation Society, BVI; National Trust for the Cayman Islands; Chagos Conservation Trust; Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas; Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society; La Société Guernesaise; Société Jersiaise, National Trust for Jersey; Isle of Man Department of Environment, Food & Agriculture; Montserrat National Trust; Pitcairn Natural Resources Division; St Helena National Trust; La Société Sercquaise; South Georgia Association; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands; Turks & Caicos National Museum; Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

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the end of the year, however, WCWG was concerned to hear of plans by Sir Richard Branson to import lemurs to Mosquito Island, apparently in an attempt to further the conservation of these Madagascan species, despite local objections and the potentially negative impacts on BVI's indigenous biodiversity.

Cayman Islands

A major Darwin Initiative project got underway in Cayman during the year (see Forum News 37), led by Dr John Turner of Bangor University and arising from discussions held at the UKOTCF-organised *Making the Right Connections* conference in June 2009. The project will conduct a comprehensive analysis of Cayman's Marine Park network, including assessment of the ecological resilience of coral reefs, the representation of different marine habitats under protection, the value of protected areas in restocking fisheries, and the impact of various activities on the marine environment. Back on dry land, WCWG has been pleased to hear of progress in the work of RBG Kew in collaboration with local partners, including in collecting seed from Cayman's endemic and other rare plants for integration into Kew's Millennium Seed Bank. There was also controversy during the year, over reports of the experimental release of genetically modified mosquitoes on Grand Cayman, apparently taking advantage of a lack of regulations which would have impeded such releases elsewhere.



Caicos Pine seedlings being grown as part of the restoration work, following devastation of the stands of the national TCI tree by invasives Pine Tortoise Scale Insect, introduced by humans. Photo: Dr Eric Salamanca

Montserrat

Limited local capacity and poor transport links have remained key challenges. Despite this, Montserrat National Trust hosted successfully a workshop under the CANARI/Commonwealth Foundation *Building Civil Society Capacity for Conservation in the Caribbean UKOTs* Darwin Initiative project in March 2011. Particular conservation concerns during the year have included the on-going impact of chytrid fungus on the mountain chicken *Leptodactylus fallax* (the focus of a project funded by the Darwin Initiative in 2010 and led by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust) and the impacts of feral livestock on the wider biodiversity of the Centre Hills. Although limited by available resources, the Montserrat National Trust has invested considerable effort into further developing the Botanic Garden, which is being used successfully for school visits. Water management is one of the main issues here, including the need to harvest rainwater, but also to limit the damage caused by heavy rains as a result of poor drainage.

Turks & Caicos Islands

WCWG was pleased to hear of excellent progress under UKOTCF's OTEP-supported *Wonderful Water* curriculum development project (in conjunction with the TCI Education Department), and noted the potential of this project to provide a template for environmental education activities in other UKOTs. RBG Kew continued its valuable work with TCI partners, in plant red listing, seed banking and under the Caicos Pine Recovery Project which received very welcome support from OTEP in 2010. Visits to TCI by UKOTCF personnel during the year helped to strengthen WCWG linkages, including through the recruitment of the Turks & Caicos National Museum and the TCI Reef Fund



Flamingo, Great Egret, Black-necked Stilts and White-cheeked Pintails feed in Red Salina, Grand Turk, recently protected and featuring in the new UKOTCF/ Turks & Caicos National Museum nature trails.

Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

as new UKOTCF Associate organisations. Working with the Museum, modest funding was secured for the development of bird watching trails, which UKOTCF had been planning since 2005 (since when the TCI Government financial difficulties had prevented promised funding). There was also welcome news of protection being extended to some Salinas on Grand Turk, and likely increased involvement for UKOTCF in the next stages of *Management Plans Implementation and Ramsar Designation Expansion in TCI*, a Darwin Initiative Challenge Fund project led by the local Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (DECR).

WW Secondary Phase PT DRAFT - January 2011
Ecosystems








Biodiversity

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is short for Biological Diversity, and means the variety of living things. Our earth contains an amazing number of different kinds of living things. So far, scientists have found more than 1,700,000 (1.7 million) species. These include:

- 950,000 species of insects
- 270,000 species of plants
- 19,000 species of fish
- 10,500 species of reptiles and amphibians
- 9,000 species of birds
- 4,000 species of mammals

The rest are molluscs, spiders, fungi, algae and micro-organisms.

Some examples of the wonderful biodiversity of TCI. Can you recognise a plant, insect, fish, reptile, bird, mammal?

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A page from one of the draft course books in the pilot UKOTCF/ TCI Education Department Wonderful Water project