



# UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Annual Report April 2012 - March 2013

## Report of Council

### Overview

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum 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. Aside from the general ongoing activities during the reporting period, the Forum has this year focused on several areas which are outlined in the sections below.

**This has been a momentous year, with the Coalition Government publishing the first White Paper on the UK's Overseas Territories since 1999. The 2012 paper explicitly aims to build on the earlier one, which is good news; as is the Prime Minister's language in his foreword: "We see an important opportunity to set world standards in our stewardship of the extraordinary natural environments we have inherited." However, there were also worrying examples in the past year of real weaknesses in policy and little sign of the commitments in the Environment Charters and in the White Paper, to work closely with civil society. There are recent signs both of improved links between Whitehall and NGOs and of continuing problems on the ground. The key development in the next few months will be when the Environmental Audit Committee completes its current inquiry into Sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories. Much of the written and oral evidence to the EAC is already on its website (see <http://tinyurl.com/c7vtajj>). Their report and the government's response to it could make the year ahead extremely positive.**

*UKOTCF-organised workshop in Gibraltar House, London on 2 October 2012 on aspects of UK Government's 2012 White Paper which affect the environment and how to move forward from this. The Proceedings are now available at [www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Consultations/Workshop2012Proceedings06b.pdf](http://www.ukotcf.org/pdf/Consultations/Workshop2012Proceedings06b.pdf). Photo: Ann Pienkowski*



*Wolf spider carrying brood of young, Prosperous Bay Plain, St Helena: the Plain, where the airport is being built is an outstanding centre of global biodiversity for invertebrates, with many endemic species. Conservation bodies did not oppose the airport because this is the only location where this would be feasible. However, a condition was that every possible step would be taken to minimise environmental impact. The failure so far in this DFID-funded project to ensure a start the landscape and ecological mitigation programme when the construction work has already been in progress for 18 months seems to disregard both this and the Prime Minister's commitment in the 2012 White Paper on the Overseas Territories "to set world standards in our stewardship of the extraordinary natural environments we have inherited."*

*Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski*

### Influencing policy

In June, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office published the Government's White Paper the *Overseas Territories: Security, Success and Sustainability*.

In his introduction, Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the "White Paper is the first review of the Overseas Territories since 1999 and it demonstrates the importance the Coalition Government attaches to the Overseas Territories."

"As well as having a responsibility to ensure the security and good governance of the Territories, we want the Territories to be vibrant, flourishing communities that proudly retain aspects of their British identity.

"We appreciate the remarkable diversity of the Territories, each with their own specific attributes,

opportunities and challenges. This White Paper is designed to meet these challenges, to set out ways we can support the Territories and strengthen our engagement with them. It is another major milestone in our long and shared history, and I hope it will mark a new era of engagement between Britain and the Overseas Territories."

The Forum carried out a full analysis of the White Paper, which was summarised in *Forum News 40*. This included some key recommendations:

i) the UK Government re-affirms its commitment to the Environment Charters which form the basis of UK and UKOTs fulfilling their international conservation obligations.

ii) the UK Government increases the funding for UKOT biodiversity conservation, as already recommended by two Select Committees of the House of Commons, instead of its present practice of decreasing the availability of funding to conservation bodies working for the UKOTs, and ensures that UKOT NGOs and their umbrella body, UKOTCF, and other NGOs are again eligible for such funding.

iii) the FCO & DFID restore an open process of reviewing grant applications and return to a system that involves fully the expertise of NGOs (and umbrella bodies like UKOTCF)



working alongside officials to decide on grant funding.

iv) the UK Government engages more with the European Union institutions in order to ensure that UKOTs are not effectively excluded from EU funding for biodiversity conservation – and that, when funding is made available, procedures are simplified.

v) Ministers act on the importance they attach in the White Paper to the UKOTs and direct the National Lottery bodies to give at least equal priority in making grants for UKOTs as for metropolitan UK.

vi) UK Government Ministers instruct their officials and agencies to respond positively to the repeated invitations from UKOTCF, its member organisations and other NGOs, to restore the productive communication and collaborative working that formerly characterised conservation work for the UKOTs.

In response to the publication of the White Paper and the environmental concerns raised by UKOTCF and others, the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) launched a new inquiry on sustainability in the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs).

EAC's previous inquiry in 2008 concluded that: "one of the most important contributions the Government could make to slow the catastrophic global diversity loss currently occurring would be to accept its environmental responsibilities for our overseas territories". The current inquiry is specifically examining: the extent to which UK Government strategy on the UKOTs embodies the principles of sustainable development and appropriately trades-off environmental protection, social development and economic growth; how the UK Government is fulfilling its responsibilities to protect biodiversity in the UKOTs; how the UK Government is helping the UKOTs adapt to the impact of climate change; whether the recommendations in their 2008 Report, *Halting biodiversity loss*, on safeguarding biodiversity and practising joined-up government to further conservation, have been implemented; whether UK Government strategy on the UKOTs is consistent with the conclusions and commitments on protecting biodiversity reached at the recent United Nations Rio+20 conference; how weaknesses in civil society and democracy in the UKOTs impact on conservation; and how the introduction of marine protected areas could safeguard the marine environment in the uninhabited territories.

The Forum's written submission to the inquiry, in November 2012, was one of 19 responses, from a variety of stakeholders. The Committee was so concerned about the issues raised by the various submissions that it took the unusual step of publishing the written evidence received before taking oral evidence and producing its report. This is available from the EAC homepage (<http://tinyurl.com/c7vtajj>). The EAC has invited the Forum to provide oral evidence to the inquiry in mid-April 2013.

Around the same time that the EAC inquiry was launched, the Forum organised a workshop at Gibraltar House in London, which was attended by a wide range of participants from Britain and the UKOTs (including the clerk to the EAC committee) to discuss aspects of the White Paper which affect the environment and how to move forward from this and to address some of the concerns that the Forum's network believes exist



Mr Andrew Rosindell MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Territories, opens the joint reception with UKOTCF at the offices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament on 6 February 2013, and introduces Dr Mike Pienkowski, UKOTCF. Photo: Sir Richard Ground

with the environmental aspects of the White Paper.

The workshop followed on from those previously organised by UKOTCF in 2010 and 2011 on biodiversity strategies, trying to complement the UK Government biodiversity 'strategy' for UKOTs – which was really a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UK ministries, rather than a strategy – and attempting to relate this to other commitments, such as the Environment Charters and the CBD's Aichi Targets. Unfortunately, at a late stage, FCO and DEFRA decided to withdraw from participation in the workshop, so that JNCC also decided to withdraw.

Presentations explored the role of the Environment Charters, which had been largely ignored in the White Paper, the role of JNCC in project management and mainstreaming in the UKOTs, the potential for funding environmental projects in UKOTs such as National Lottery Funding and EU funding through the BEST scheme, the view of RSPB and on-going project work in the UKOTs, Forum/HMG relations, the role of the EAC, and the views of the UKOTs and of NGOs working in the UKOTs. The full [proceedings](#) are available on the Forum homepage.

Also in October, the UK Government announced their new fund for projects addressing the environment and climate change. The Darwin Plus fund aims to bring together the cancelled DFID/FCO-funded Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) and UKOT-related elements of the previously DEFRA-funded Darwin Initiative (including the Challenge Fund). Projects were expected to begin in April 2013. The Forum was initially concerned that, with no limit on the size of grants, it could mark the effective end of small projects, which had provided such excellent value for money in the past. It was also concerned that the Darwin Advisory Committee, making the decisions on which projects to support, had limited experience of working in the UKOTs. In addition, this represents a further disturbing move away from sharing responsibility for UKOT conservation to a situation where HMG is viewing applications relating to UKOTs in much the same way as if they were foreign countries without UK shared responsibilities.

In February, at the invitation of Andrew Rosindell MP, the Forum hosted an evening reception at Westminster Hall in the Houses of Parliament. Around 30 attended (of whom around 15 were MPs or Peers) including Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Joan Walley MP (chair of the EAC). This provided the opportunity to suggest to Ms Walley that EAC contact several UKOT personnel when they were in London attending a workshop at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and that this could be an opportunity for them to give oral submissions. Furthermore, she agreed that it would be sensible to include all relevant UK Government Departments when gathering evidence.

The Forum has contributed to several consultations and publications relevant to the UKOTs. While there are dedicated EU legislative instruments dealing with some major causes of biodiversity loss: habitat change, climate change, overexploitation and pollution, there is currently no comprehensive instrument to tackle invasive alien species. A consultation seeking views on such instruments was subsequently launched by the European Commission. The Forum drafted and submitted a response in April based on Council discussions, and proceedings from the Cayman conference, which dealt with this topic in a session on invasive species.

In January, the Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology produced a briefing to MPs and Peers on *Biodiversity in the UK Overseas Territories*. Input for the publication was sought from industry, academics, regulators, government and NGOs, including the Forum. This report is available on the UK Parliament website.

There were several opportunities to attend meetings at EU level to highlight the UKOTs during the year. In March, the EU made a second call for proposals as part of the BEST initiative. The Commission organised a brainstorming exercise around the time of the call, which meant there was no scope to discuss the modalities before the call. A Forum representative attended the meeting together with a representative of UK Government.

The meeting included a presentation on the first round of BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories), which had been very heavily focused on awards led by French territories (as well as two international organisations with little or no on-the-ground linkage to territories). The Commission are unsure on what the long-term future of BEST is and continue to confuse the present trial period with a full

programme despite stressing that these were different. The DG ENV position now seems to be that a separate BEST fund was not appropriate as DG ENV was not a funding body and that a separate budget line would be difficult to establish; and further that a full BEST scheme was only possible if funded from within existing programmes such as INTEREG and LIFE+ should the latter be agreed. This would make UKOTs ineligible, as all current sources are not available to them. EU officials believe that this is up to the Member States to influence.

The Forum attended also the third Europe Overseas Roundtable on Biodiversity and Climate Change meeting organised by IUCN in December. This included an update on the EU's BEST initiative and results of the 2012 call (which included three projects for work in the UKOTs), a communication and mobilization draft strategy as part of the first round BEST project to resource IUCN in providing a secretariat to the Roundtable and other matters, a discussion on the Europe Overseas and EU invasive species strategy, and a CBD review of its island biodiversity programme of work. UKOTCF helped identify some problems in the operation of the Roundtable and suggest ways of overcoming these.

## **Relations with UK Government and Government Agencies**

UKOTCF personnel have ensured that UKOTs and CDs were not overlooked in other quarters, using a range of opportunities. For example, the Forum's Honorary Director sits on the IUCN-UK Executive Committee and continues to provide them with updates on issues and conservation activities in the UKOTs.

In October, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced that the new Director for the Overseas Territories would be Dr Peter Hayes. The Forum has met with Dr Hayes and had very constructive discussions which bode well for future cooperation. UKOTCF will continue to explore ways in which the Forum can assist FCO with good governance on environmental aspects in the UKOTs.

As part of the work on sustainable management of marine resources around Gibraltar, UKOTCF also had constructive discussions with Hannah Corbett, Head of Mediterranean Department of FCO's Europe Directorate.

UKOTCF Chairman has continued to attend meetings with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and other (GB-focussed) NGOs on the drafting the UK Biodiversity Strategy, and the Chairman and Honorary Executive Director met JNCC's Chief Executive and Director of Evidence and Advice in February. In discussions on JNCC's business plan, it was noted that the agreement to include UKOTs on a schematic diagram of arrangements for a biodiversity strategy for the UK (in the same way as for the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) had yet again been reversed, so that these were again omitted. UKOTCF's Chairman suggested that NGOs can assist Government and are able to do things the latter cannot. For instance, it can propose to UK Parliament Select Committees questions that could address key points. Whilst UKOTCF has great respect for some of JNCC's specialist officers, it retains major concerns about JNCC's performance in respect of its UKOT/CD role, and has made clear the areas which need attention.

Forum representatives attended a workshop organised by JNCC at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in March 2013. Several UKOT Government representatives were present as well as representatives of some NGOs. The workshop aimed to review progress on implementation of the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (2009). UKOTCF provided material in advance of the meeting from workshops it had conducted which had explored what the strategy might consist of.

UKOTCF values good working relationships with UK officials appointed to serve in the overseas territories; and with Ministers and officials in the territories, including when they visit the UK. We are ready to provide full briefing for all those taking up appointments with any environmental responsibilities in the UK or in the territories.

## **Environment Charter and conservation concerns**

Lack of Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs), which are the international standard for considering whether proposed developments should proceed and, if they do, modifications and mitigation for environmental damage, continues to have a major impact in many

UKOTs. For example, the expansion of the airport in the Turks and Caicos Islands may be threatening an underwater cavern system that is the only known site for an endemic genus and family of crustaceans. The entrance to the system lies outside the parcel of land that will be used for development but the situation of the caves themselves is far from clear, because the caves spread widely from these entrances. No-one can say that the development will not impact the caves, although impacting seems likely. The reason that no-one can say this is that (in breach of the Environment Charter) TCI Government (and UK Government, which was running TCI directly for much of the period concerned) failed to require an adequate EIA from the developer. The purpose of EIAs is to avoid getting into such unsatisfactory situations where the impact of a development cannot be predicted. Because of this failure, conservationists in TCI are now attempting to enlist skilled volunteers to undertake rapidly the difficult task of mapping the underground and underwater caves. Such last-minute emergency efforts should not be necessary in a well-governed entity following proper practice.

## **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.

## **Fundraising**

The Forum has directed significant efforts into fundraising both for core funding and for projects on the ground in the UKOTs. This included an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which aimed to address the lack of awareness of UKOTs and their biodiversity through a travelling exhibit supported by the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As applications to HLF are submitted to regional offices in Britain, they are in competition with community projects. This makes it very difficult for projects with a focus on UKOTs to be given high priority. UKOTCF is making clear to Government and to the Environmental Audit Committee that, if these policy and administrative blockages are to be overcome, two things are required. First, DCMS are going to need to accept that the Prime Minister's comments in the White Paper apply to them too, and issue a Ministerial directive to the Funds that work in support of UKOT conservation is to be given the same priority as for projects in Britain. Second, applications relating to Overseas Territories should go to one point, whether a specially briefed local panel or a specially established one.

## **Awareness raising and information management**

*Forum News 40* was published in December 2012. As well as reporting on UKOTCF's work, and other issues and activities relevant to conservation in the UKOTs/CDs, this featured reports from BEST and EU funding, environmental initiatives by Gibraltar's new Government, the importance and vulnerability of woody species and habitats in the UKOTs, Bermuda Ombudsman's underlining that Environmental Charters are binding, confirming that Bermuda Government acted unlawfully, UKOTCF/TCI "Wonderful Water" curriculum and courses in place in Turks & Caicos schools, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Isle of Man, and the UKOT virtual tours.

UKOTCF has also continued 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 e-mail circulations. In addition, in August 2012, the Forum used the British Bird Watching Fair, an event that attracts around 30,000 visitors annually, as a platform for raising awareness of the UKOTs and the important biodiversity that they support.

The virtual tours, which were developed as part of the cross-territory OTEP environmental awareness project, were launched. These virtual tours widen awareness of the UKOTs and CDs and increase understanding of their importance. They draw attention to the biodiversity and cultural value, and highlight the challenges they face and the opportunities to protect and conserve their important features. Links are provided to some organisations based in the UKOTs and CDs. At present full tours are available for British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Pitcairn and the Turks and Caicos. As additional material for the tours is collected it is added to the tours already complete. Further tours will be added in due course.

The Forum contributed by invitation to the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) conference in January on *UK Overseas Territories - Current Programmes and Future Priorities*. The Forum was asked to present its views on the capacity building and local governance/development and conservation process in the UKOTs. Other presentations (available to view on IEEM's website) included: current JNCC programmes and priorities, RSPB views and priorities, habitat mapping in Anguilla, Pew's marine reserve programme, EU policy from BirdLife/Conservation International, marine protected areas in Cayman from Bangor University, control of feral animals on Little Cayman, FERA, stakeholder participation for better management of environment by Dialogue Matters and plant conservation led by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

## Organisational development

At the AGM in 2012, Patricia Saxton, of the Turks and Caicos National Museum, who had been co-opted to fill a vacancy, was elected for a full term. Patricia moved to Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos, in 1998 from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania USA, where she was a sales and advertising executive for over twenty years. Upon arriving in Grand Turk, she realised the need for pure drinking water, and started a business: Island Pure Water. Within two years, she handed the reins of the profitable company over to her husband, Neil. This allowed her to pursue a new career in helping local businesses become more profitable. She also started volunteering as a fund-raiser for the Turks and Caicos National Museum, was instrumental in establishing Rotary in Grand Turk, and was a first responder with the Red Cross. She is a contributing writer for the *Astrolabe* series in the *Times of the Islands* magazine and is a member of the TCI Human Rights Commission. Under her role as Director of the Turks and Caicos National Museum, the Museum has been able to work with the UKOTCF in establishing some of the most innovative bird-trails in the Caribbean, and to create the Cultural and Botanical Gardens in Grand Turk, TCI.

In February, Rob Thomas stood down from Council, because of changes in his role at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. Rob had given a lot of support and contributions over the years, most notably the review by member and associate organisations, as well as later on Council and as Chair of the Southern Oceans Working Group. He also attended the conferences in Bermuda, Jersey and Cayman.

UKOTCF welcomed two new associate members, BirdLife Cyprus and the Anguilla Archaeological & Historical Society (AAHS). BirdLife Cyprus, a non-governmental, non-profit, registered organization works to conserve wild birds, their habitats and wider biodiversity in Cyprus, through research, monitoring, lobbying and conservation and awareness-raising actions. AAHS aims are to protect and preserve Anguilla's shared cultural heritage; document and record findings of archaeological or historical significance on Anguilla; encourage reports of discoveries or research of an archaeological or historical nature on Anguilla, and encourage the passing of supportive legislation on Anguilla.

## Projects

Amongst its other activities, the Forum helps its member organisations to identify, design, resource and implement projects, often involving the development of strategic partnerships between member 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. 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.

Although, funding for the OTEP-supported Wonderful Water project, for the Turks & Caicos Education Department, finished in March 2012, work continues voluntarily. The process for each module involves compiling material from partners and collating information before editing in InDesign; this is not a quick process but it produces a quality product. Modules will eventually be available on the web. Teachers in TCI welcomed the development of the materials and they are being used. Strong material for the curriculum and courses for schools has been collected with a good level of involvement. These included classification



Visitors to the British Bird Watching Fair chat with UKOTCF personnel at UKOTCF's stand. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

of organisms in mangroves, which had been requested by teachers. The education project has supported the conservation of natural and historical sites in TCI directly. The choice of units was based on the level of threat to the wetlands, which have, in part, been protected by the programme. Teachers were given an electronic copy of the material on a USB stick, but these materials will also be uploaded to the website for wider use. Other territories have also shown an interest in the project, and possible collaborations are being explored.

As reported previously, following the request of several territory partners, in the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands, their governments and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UKOTCF coordinated an application in 2003, *Managing Protected Areas by Supporting Sustainable Economies* (MPASSE). In 2012, the project was granted an extension for two years without additional funds. This will allow the UKOT partners a chance to complete their work, despite the many delays of the European Commission in approving the grant and the disproportionately bureaucratic procedures that the Commission insists that partners use. For example, there are strict rules for "Rules of Origin" of building materials. Under the EU regulations, materials should be purchased from the EU, ACP or OCT countries, although in practice it was necessary to source them from the US and seek approval in each case for this.

At the June Steering Committee meeting, which took place in Grand Cayman, there was an opportunity to visit the new protected area and site of the visitor facility for the endangered blue iguana and dry tropical forest at Colliers Point. This work provided an exemplary model for the other partners, involving careful and intensive planning to avoid or mitigate any environmental impacts and using interpretation to foster support for conservation. The contract for BVI was received a year later than for the other territory partners, but a plan is in progress to overcome the consequent challenges. Work in Turks and Caicos has progressed and is expected to be complete within the timeframe. In February, an article submitted by the Forum was published in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism's* special Caribbean edition *To Hell and Back: towards protecting our natural assets through tourism?* This explored the aims of twork on sustainable tourism across several territories.

As a way of addressing the long-standing fishing conflict with Spanish fishermen, in the context of sustainable management of marine living resources in the waters around Gibraltar, the Gibraltar Government set up an independent advisory committee of experts. This also formed the Gibraltar element to a Joint Working Group with the Spanish, to look into the situation and come up with recommendations for a solution consistent with Gibraltar's legislation and conservation aims. Some illegal fishing practices were being used by Spanish fishermen in Gibraltar's waters. The committee included representatives from Forum associate organisation the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS), a member of the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers, and one of the Environment Ministry's officials. In order to have robustness and credibility, one or two experts from outside were needed, and the Minister sought UKOTCF officers' advice regarding experts on marine conservation and fisheries. In addition, the Minister asked Forum representatives to be the second outside nominee. Subsequently the Forum was asked to chair both the



Above and below: pages from UKOTCF's Virtual Tours ([www.ukotcf.org/1\\_yTours/intro.cfm](http://www.ukotcf.org/1_yTours/intro.cfm)) illustrate Montserrat National Trust's botanic gardens and the work supported by UKOTCF and Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Society on capture of rain-water for this (see this page).



Committee and Joint Working Group. In addition, Indrani Lutchman (a very experienced fisheries conservation expert with experience as one of the first fisheries inspectors around Falklands, work for WWF-UK and IEEP, and of drafting recent EU Common Fisheries Policy revisions) was appointed at the suggestion of the Forum.

The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Society made a contribution in response to an application by the Forum to finance improvements to the irrigation system in the Montserrat NT botanic garden. The funds have

been used to purchase two large water storage tanks from the Ministry of Agriculture, and the purchase and installation of downpipe filters and solar pumps.

## Working for our partners

In addition to the work outlined above, in summer 2012 a volunteer from the University of Essex, Felix Driver, spent some time with associate member Akrotiri Environmental Education and Information Centre (AEEIC), facilitated by UKOTCF under its pilot volunteer programme. Funding for this was received from Peter Kirk European Travel Scholarship and the Oakdale Trust. He undertook several projects and assignments both in the office and in the field. His contribution was very valuable to AEEIC in gathering much needed baseline data on resident and migratory species, which can now be used to inform management decisions. The Forum continues to explore volunteer opportunities with its partners.

UKOTCF was pleased to be able to facilitate financial support from Grenadine Escape Ltd, a Caribbean real-estate and yacht chartering agent, to Forum associate the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund for coral reef conservation in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

UKOTCF was pleased to provide some advice over several years to the Isle of Man in its long and, in the reported year, successful process of joining UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Advice and assistance were provided also on international conservation conventions and related matters, as well as organisational and capacity development to various territories.

## 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, and encourage those who have an interest in the UKOTs/CDs to join the scheme. The Forum is very grateful for financial assistance as project grants and donations, from the European Union, Oakdale Trust, Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Society and others. The Forum is also grateful to member organisations and others for allowing meetings to take place at their premises during the year, particularly, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the Falkland Islands Government Office in London and the Gibraltar Government Office in London.

## UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Summary Statement of Financial Activities (including Income and Expenditure Account) for the year ended 31 March 2013

	2013 Unrestricted Funds	2013 Restricted Funds	2013 Total Funds	2012 Total Funds
<b>Incoming Resources</b>				
Subs and donations	141,615	45,275	186,890	199,290
Investment Income	35	-	35	34
Sundry Incoming Resources	389	75	464	261
<b>Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities</b>				
Project Income	-	77,414	77,414	160,112
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>142,039</b>	<b>122,764</b>	<b>264,803</b>	<b>359,697</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>				
Charitable Activities	149,908	135,584	285,492	335,829
Governance Costs and Other Resources Expended	19,729	1,666	21,395	10,988
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>169,637</b>	<b>137,250</b>	<b>306,887</b>	<b>355,914</b>
<b>Net incoming/outgoing resources</b>	<b>-27,598</b>	<b>-14,486</b>	<b>-42,084</b>	<b>3,783</b>
Transfer between funds	-6395	6395	-	-
Balance brought forward at 1st April 2012	42,903	32,514	75,417	71,634
Balance carried forward at 31st March 2013	8,910	24,423	33,333	75,417

Note: Incoming and outgoing resources include donated time of £176,295 (2011: £190,155).

# Report of the UKOTCF Wider Caribbean Working Group

## Introduction

The Wider Caribbean Working Group (WCWG) met five times during the year. Skype continues to provide opportunities for partners to participate remotely, and this is particularly important for colleagues in the Caribbean. Two issues of the WCWG eNewsletter were produced and circulated. There has been much positive feedback on the value of the eNewsletters in keeping members and the wider public informed. It is unfortunate that only two issues have been produced in this financial year, due to the increasing priority that had to be given to fund-raising.

WCWG has been consulted throughout the year for information and advice about the Caribbean UKOTs. These have included providing background information, facilitating contacts, and raising awareness of previous work, and work in progress. WCWG has continued to support the conservation efforts of its partners, by raising awareness of issues in territories and publicising their many successes. Some of these issues and successes are highlighted in individual territory sections.

A continuing theme for discussions throughout the year was the increasing difficulty in securing funding for conservation work in the territories, and the difficulty of accessing international funds, including those from the European Union. Many of the NGOs in the UKOTs have a responsibility for historic and cultural sites, as well as natural ones, and at present the funding opportunities for work in these areas seem to be even more limited than for biodiversity conservation. WCWG has continued to work with partners on funding applications, and was pleased to secure funding for water harvesting in the Montserrat National Trust Botanic Garden.

Inappropriate built developments, lack of effective independent Environmental Impact Assessments, lack of enforcement of existing legislation, and significant gaps in environmental legislation were also considered to be barriers to conservation.

The part-EU funded Management of Protected Areas to Support Sustainable Economies (MPASSE) project, involving UKOTCF, National Trust for the Cayman Islands, National Parks Trust of the (British) Virgin Islands, and Turks & Caicos Islands was granted a no-cost extension of 2 years, and will now finish in December 2014, to allow partners more time to complete actions (see p 4). However, due to financial constraints, UKOTCF's contract could not be extended beyond July 2013.

## Anguilla

WCWG welcomed sharing information with the Policy Officer for the Government of Anguilla London Office. The granting of planning permission for a dolphinarium, which opened at Sandy Point in summer 2012, was controversial, and there were many objections, including from the Anguilla National Trust. Other environmental concerns expressed to WCWG were about illegal sand-mining and illegal beach-hut development. WCWG shared the information with members that, as far back as 2000, UNESCO had supported a workshop in Anguilla about balancing the health of beaches against the threat of unsustainable coastal development. It is disappointing that building on past development of good practice does not seem to occur.

## Bermuda

The work of the Bermuda Ombudsman in respect of the granting of the Special Development Order for Tucker's Point continued, with a key issue being her conclusion that the Environment Charter (which requires Environmental Impact Assessments for such developments) was a legally binding agreement. NGO organisations in Bermuda were active throughout the year and achieved a great deal. The Bermuda National Trust, alongside its environmental and historical conservation work, set up an allotment scheme, encouraging people to start growing their own food. This was very successful, with all 20 allotments quickly taken. A "popular" version of the Bermuda Climate Change report, by Dr Annie Glasspool, has been produced (*Climate Change on the Rock*). The Bermuda Audubon Society and Bermuda National Trust completed restoration work on the Vesey Nature Reserve (purchased in the "Buy Back Bermuda" campaign), ready for opening to the public. The Bermuda Audubon Society also contributed (with the Bermuda Conservation Department) to the natural history summer camp on Nonsuch Island, where the very successful cahow recovery programme is centred, with a record-breaking 101 nesting pairs in summer 2012.

## British Virgin Islands

The National Parks Trust for the Virgin Islands benefitted from a visit of the *Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus* whose crew helped prune trees at Gorda Peak National Park. This is one of the sites being enhanced under the MPASSE project. Other activities in BVI under the MPASSE project included a workshop to update the recovery plan for the Anegada rock iguana, and the development of plans to enhance the visitor experience at the Baths on Virgin Gorda, with installation of new vending booths.

WCWG was made aware of erosion problems, probably caused by overgrazing by feral goats, on Great Tobago, an important frigate-bird nesting site. Additionally, the frigate-birds were subject to mortality caused by monofilament fishing line.

Royal Botanic Garden Kew achieved the first flowering *ex-situ* of the critically endangered Anegada endemic plant wirewist *Metastelma anagadensis*. RBG Kew also contributed to a regional plant conservation workshop in Puerto Rico, which had the aim of promoting collaboration between the US Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

The virtual tour of BVI was completed, and can be accessed from the UKOTCF website.



Slide from UKOTCF Virtual Tours ([www.ukotcf.org/1\\_yTours/intro.cfm](http://www.ukotcf.org/1_yTours/intro.cfm)) on the iguana head-start facility at Anegada, British Virgin Islands.

Photos: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## Cayman Islands

Partners in Cayman expressed concern at the lack of progress in the passing of the National Conservation Bill, which has not yet been done. Another issue was that monies in the Environment Protection Fund (from visitor landing fees) were not accessible for conservation-related environmental work.

A project steering committee meeting of the MPASSE project was held in Cayman in June 2012. The National Trust for the Cayman Islands and its Blue Iguana Recovery Programme hosted this, and presented an innovative plan for the development of a visitor centre in the new Colliers Wilderness Reserve. Minimising the impact on the environment, whilst providing the visitor with a high-quality experience, was at the heart of the plan.

The Darwin-funded project evaluating the existing marine parks in Cayman concluded that these should be extended, and it was hoped that the Cayman Islands Government would support this. UKOTCF gave advice about further protection of wetlands via the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, some sites having previously been identified by the DEFRA part-funded UKOTCF review.

## Montserrat

UKOTCF secured funding for the Montserrat National Trust to extend and update its rainwater harvesting and irrigation system in the botanic garden. In December, the Executive Director of the Montserrat National

Trust retired. UKOTCF had worked for many years with Lady Eudora Fergus, and commends her for her long service to the Montserrat National Trust. UKOTCF has already undertaken discussions with the new Director, Ms Sarita Francis OBE, regarding support that UKOTCF can give to the Montserrat National Trust conservation work.

The wetland area of Piper's Pond was lost as part of the Little Bay development, the new capital of Montserrat. This area was of historical and cultural importance, as well as being the only area of mangrove on Montserrat.

The virtual tour of Montserrat was completed, and can be accessed through the UKOTCF website.

## Turks and Caicos Islands

The Caicos Pine Recovery Programme conducted successful burn trials on pilot plots. The nursery continued to flourish, and re-plantings back into the wild, in carefully selected plots, began.

A re-organisation of environmental government departments resulted in the formation of the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA). UKOTCF had many discussions with DEMA staff and other stakeholders on the challenging issues facing TCI, including lack of human and financial resources, and worked with them on possible



Local personnel and experienced international specialists conduct controlled burning operations as part of the Caicos pine recovery project, Middle Caicos, TCI. Photo: Bryan Naqqi Manco



Dr Mike Pienkowski runs a training session for new guides to the bird-watching trail at Grand Turk Salinas, established by UKOTCF and the Turks & Caicos National Museum. Photo: Ann Pienkowski

solutions.

UKOTCF facilitated sponsorship for the TC Reef Fund, whereby Grenadine Escape Ltd would donate 10% of yacht charter profits to TC Reef Fund.

TC National Museum continued to support the bird tours, established jointly by TCNM and UKOTCF. UKOTCF conducted local guide training for the tours.

UKOTCF was made aware of several issues of concern which could have adverse environmental impacts, and raised these in various fora, including with UK Government. Some of these were the airport development which could impact an endemic remipede family, the proposed dredging of the Leeward Channel, the proposal for a dolphinarium, and the cancellation of the Conservation Fund. UKOTCF pointed out that lack of open Environmental Impact Assessments at the planning and design stage of development proposals had exacerbated environmental problems.

The Turks and Caicos National Trust opened the visitor centre on Little Water Cay. This is part of the EU-funded MPASSE project. UKOTCF personnel were given a tour of the new building, and commended the builder and TCNT on this achievement.

The virtual tour of the Turks and Caicos Islands was updated, and can be accessed from the UKOTCF website.

## Report of UKOTCF Southern Oceans Working Group

The group met twice during the year.

### British Antarctic Territory

In October, UKOTCF attended the Antarctica 100 meeting at the Scott Polar Institute, in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal. This meeting was attended by many of the organisations working to promote and preserve the history of the Antarctic explorers. It was a good opportunity



HRH The Princess Royal discusses with UKOTCF Co-ordinator Catherine Wensink and Robert Stephenson of the Antarctic Circle at the Antarctic Heritage Trust's meeting. Photo: Antarctic Heritage Trust

to meet with associate organisation and organisers, the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, and learn about some of its activities.

### South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

The Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (GSGSSI) announced the establishment of a large sustainable use Marine Protected Area (MPA) covering over 1 million km<sup>2</sup> of the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (SGSSI) Maritime Zone. In January, new spatial and temporal protection measures for the Marine Protected Area were established.

In the terrestrial environment, work on the habitat restoration project continues. The second stage of the rat eradication project has begun, together with the start of the removal of non-native reindeer. Reindeer were introduced by Norwegian whalers in the early 1900s. Since whaling ceased in the mid-1960s, their numbers have increased substantially. This has had a direct impact on the native flora of South Georgia and an indirect impact on native bird species.

UKOTCF attended the South Georgia Stakeholders meeting in September at FCO, chaired by the Polar Regions Unit. Presentations included: an update on strategy implementation, in particular security and sovereignty, sustainable management of the fishery, finance and risk management and environmental stewardship; Government of SGSSI overview of strategy, in particular: finance, legislation, risk management, environmental management, tourism, scientific research, heritage issues, infrastructure projects, stamps and coins; fisheries, especially: tooth-fish, ice fish, and Antarctic krill; MPA workshop; habitat restoration; reindeer management and heritage.

## Falkland Islands

Member organisation, The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, became a partner in the 3-year project *Falkland Islands Raptors – Reducing Conflicts with Rural Livelihoods*. This project received funding from the Darwin Initiative to assess the populations, social behaviour, and socio-economic impacts of several raptor species including one of the world's rarest raptors, the striated caracara *Phalcoboenus australis*. The outputs of the project, including a National Plan of Action for managing conflicts between raptors and rural livelihoods, will enable policy makers to determine the best course of management strategies for reducing such conflicts and protecting raptors.

## Tristan da Cunha

The Malta Transport Centre's Marine Safety Investigation Unit published a report on the safety investigation into the grounding of the bulk carrier *MS Oliva* on Nightingale Island on the 16 March 2011 (as reported in *Annual Report 2010-11*: p. 11 and *Annual Report 2011-12*: p 16).

The investigation found that the primary cause of the grounding was an error in the planned course, which took the vessel directly over Nightingale Island. One of the waypoints along the chartered course was plotted incorrectly which resulted in a course line indicating that the vessel would clear the group of islands by about 10 nm. Radar echoes from the islands were ignored.

The owners of the ship have agreed compensation with the Tristan da Cunha Government. The settlement provides Tristan with resources to continue to monitor the impact of the spill on wildlife, environment and fisheries, and a reserve to offset any future costs relating to the spill.

In recognition of the islanders' efforts to rescue and rehabilitate the many thousand rockhopper penguins, affected by the spill, the RSPB Council created a unique award, a medal to the people of Tristan, which was presented to them at its AGM in October.

## Ascension

Ascension frigate-birds *Fregata aquila* have recently begun breeding again on the main island, following several years after similar re-colonisation by masked boobies *Sula dactylatra*, brown boobies *S. leucogaster*, brown noddies *Anous stolidus*, white-tailed tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*, red-billed tropicbirds *P. aethereus*. These are results of a long-term project, which began in 2001. The aim was to allow seabirds to recolonise the island, by removing feral cats from the island. It has involved many collaborators, including leading roles by UKOTCF and RSPB in seeking funding for many years and in getting the project started. The discovery was made by members of the Army Ornithological Society, together with members of the Ascension Island Government's Conservation Department (UKOTCF Associates), and has excited the conservation community with the possibilities it has for bringing species back from the brink in other UKOTs.

*Conservation Quarterly*, the regular newsletter from Ascension's Conservation Department, which has also launched a refreshed website, continues to provide an excellent account of project activities,



Male Ascension frigatebird with partially inflated throat pouch, near the first nest on the main Ascension Island, December 2012.

Photo: Mark Cutts

programmes and organisational developments. It has been circulated to working group members throughout the year.

## St Helena

The official launch of St Helena's first Environmental Management Directorate took place in April. The Directorate aims to coordinate environmental policy on St Helena. The EMD have developed a National Environmental Plan, which was launched in October.

The results of four years of intensive survey by the St Helena Nature Conservation Group, long a UKOTCF Associate, now as part of the St Helena National Trust, has culminated in the publication of a series of books detailing St Helena's unique plant life.

## Pitcairn

A proposal is progressing for a huge Marine Protected Area around Pitcairn which, because of its huge Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), will make a considerable contribution towards the UK's implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Pew Environment Group has published a report on the marine environment which is available online. In general the report found that the seas around Ducie were remarkably rich and undisturbed, as were Henderson, but Pitcairn was less so, but that is unsurprising given that it is populated. Oeno was the most disturbed, with sharks absent, which was evidence of illegal fishing. Oeno is the westernmost of the group and nearer to foreign population centres.

The recent National Geographic/Pew expedition has made some exciting discoveries including fringing coral reef at depths not seen before. The results of which were presented at the Royal Society in November with a live link with the community on Pitcairn.

UKOTCF met with Simon Young, Pitcairn Deputy Major while he was in the UK for the Joint Ministerial Council meeting. Some on-going issues were discussed with him, such as environmental education and Pitcairn's strategic development plan.



Gray reef shark patrolling over the coral reef, Ducie Island, the remotest of the Pitcairn Group. This and the large variety of wildlife demonstrate the health of this easternmost island of the Group.

Photo: Capt Paul Green, SV Southern Cross

## British Indian Ocean Territory

UKOTCF member organisation, Zoological Society of London, with UKOTCF associate, the Chagos Conservation Trust, ran an environmental training and outreach programme aimed at Chagossian communities in the UK. As part of the project, an open day was held at ZSL London Zoo, where family activities, talks and tours focused on the natural heritage of the Chagos islands and surrounding marine life.

The open days serve as an introduction to the Chagos Environment Training Course. Held over 8 weeks, the course is intended to teach a range of basic practical and theoretical environmental skills to those Chagossians who have a particular interest in activities relevant to the conservation of tropical systems like Chagos.

The Chagos Conservation Trust newsletter gave an account of the February expedition to Chagos. Yannick Mandarin, a course graduate, became the sixth Chagossian to join research teams out in the archipelago. He has assisted Peter Carr with bird surveys and monitoring of parasites in Sooty Tern populations, with a view to discovering more about their mobility and island use.

# Report of the UKOTCF Europe Territories Working Group

During the year, three meetings of the Europe Territories Working Group were held, via Skype. This July saw the publication of the first ETWG newsletter, thanks to the enthusiasm and skills of Felix Driver and his brother Hugo, Piers Sangan and Keith Bensusan, the Working Group's secretary. The seven pages, beautifully laid out, covered each territory's news.



Image of front page of newsletter

## Cross territory activities

On 22 & 23 October, Guernsey hosted JNCC's meeting of the Channel Islands and Falklands conservation officers for a discussion about extending the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to these territories. Liz Charter of the Isle of Man Government (who also chairs ETWG) was able to report on the measure taken to have the Convention extended to the island, which was completed in August 2012. Guernsey Government is

contemplating requesting that the CBD be extended to their island. A delegation from Sark also expressed an interest. A Guernsey resident, Rebecca Kinnersly, had been contracted by JNCC to create a guide to the CBD for small islands. Jersey had the CBD extended to it when the Convention was ratified by the UK in 1992.

Liz Charter (and Mike Pienkowski) also attended the JNCC/DEFRA seminar on the 2009 "Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy", held at RBG Kew on 14th March 2013, reported elsewhere.

## Bailiwick of Jersey

The most significant development this year was the launch of a Conservation Enhancement Scheme. According to the published information "The Countryside Enhancement Scheme is an environmental improvement scheme open to all farmers, growers, land managers, landowners, businesses, charities, societies, groups, schools, States Departments and the general public. The Scheme is funded by the States of Jersey and offers financial incentives that support and reward environmental initiatives through voluntary management agreements designed to look after Jersey's countryside."

Jersey conservationists reported on the very successful use of camera traps (supported by a grant from Royal Bank of Canada's 'Bluewater project') in two of the island's reed beds. The cameras provided evidence of breeding pochard, shoveler and water rail, and were used to observe unusual bird behaviour, bitterns swimming! There seems to be an increase in bittern activity in winter at these wetland sites.

Concern is still being expressed about the erection of weather-recording masts in the first Ramsar site, which some believe could be a precursor to an offshore wind proposal.

A 90-acre headland has been bought by the National Trust to conserve a common swift colony. The Chough release project continues with grazing management of cliff top land.

In 2012, curl buntings returned to the island and bred for the first time in 20 years.

## Bailiwick of Guernsey

With the change in government in Guernsey, there is interest in restarting work on the Biodiversity Strategy, started 10 years ago.

During the autumn, the sudden death of Charles David while working on Sark came as a shock to many working in conservation in the Channel Islands and further afield. Charles had pioneered biological recording in the Islands, as well as being a renowned entomologist and botanist. He will be missed, especially at this time of greater political support for biodiversity in Guernsey.

There are plans that Guernsey's model records centre will be the base for a wider Channel Islands biological recording system, using Charles David's software.

## Alderney

Alderney Wildlife Trust celebrated its 10th Anniversary and launched Puffin Cam on Burhou, an islet off Alderney. May is the month to watch the puffins among the bluebells (see still below). Beached bird surveys and garden moth surveys are among the activities members take part in.



## Sark

The move by the Barclay brothers to plant vineyards on several pieces of land, some close to the Ramsar site, has sparked concern on the island and a greater interest in improving environmental management. The UK Government supported a placement of a senior civil servant (from the Isle of Man) on the island for several months to develop consensus for a more democratic administration. Advice was given by UKOTCF on the recommended path for taking forward environmental initiatives, perhaps leading to a biodiversity strategy and extension of the CBD.



Road through wildlife-rich farmland on Sark. Such landscapes of great biodiversity, cultural and tourism value are threatened by unsympathetic land-use changes. Photo: Dr Mike Pienkowski

## Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas

Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas Administration is updating its environmental plan, and continues to add to its knowledge of biodiversity to back up its environmental policies.

Surveys of loggerhead and green turtle have been published. Felix Driver has been undertaking surveys of Schreiber's fringe-fingered lizard and Eleonora's falcon. Several studies of the rare ghost crabs, which are sensitive to disturbance, are continuing. Beach fauna are vulnerable to ever-increasing pressure from seaside tourism.

During the year, contact has been made with the MOD Environmental Policy Officer and the Working Group looks forward to having more communication with people on the ground at the Base Areas.

UKOTCF welcomed BirdLife Cyprus as a new Associate.



*Felix Driver (left), UKOTCF volunteer, studied the fringe-fingered lizard (above) as part of his efforts in support of UKOTCF Associate organisation, Akrotiri Environmental*

*Education and Information Centre, Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas (see p 5).*

## Isle of Man

Following the extension of the CBD to the Island on 6 August, the Isle of Man Government continues to develop the Biodiversity Strategy in conjunction with the various partners, both within and outside government. Three very successful fungus identification workshops, led by Edinburgh Botanic Gardens trained mycologist, Nev Kilkenny, in the autumn, led to the formation of the Isle of Man Fungus Group. There is also now a University of the Third Age Natural History Group. A Manx biodiversity Facebook site has been started, and this now has 220 members.

During the year, community concerns about the scallop dredging in Port St Mary Bay led to the establishment of a new closed area, with support from the fishing industry. Monitoring of the Ramsey Marine Nature Reserve continues and the Island's Marine Plan is a step closer.

## Gibraltar

The Working Group welcomed the start of participation by members of the Gibraltar Department of the Environment in the ETWG meetings.

Discussions continue between MOD, Dept of Environment and GOHNS over developments such as aerials on Windmill Hill Flats, a site of European importance. Bathymetric survey had been planned during the year to assist in marine conservation policies.

Gibraltar's challenges in respect of marine living resources are reported elsewhere.

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## Membership

The current UK and international Member and Associate organisations of the Forum are: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation; 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 Archaeological & Historical Society; Anguilla National Trust; Ascension Conservation Centre; Ascension Heritage Society; Bermuda Audubon Society; Bermuda National Trust; UK Antarctic Heritage Trust; 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; BirdLife Cyprus; 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; National Trust of the Turks & Caicos Islands; Turks & Caicos National Museum; Turks & Caicos Reef Fund.

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