

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum: Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories

*Raising awareness
about the wealth of
biodiversity in the
UK Overseas
Territories*

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



CONSERVATION FORUM

The UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum exists to promote the co-ordinated conservation of the diverse and increasingly threatened plant and animal species and natural habitats of UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs). It aims to do this by providing assistance in the form of expertise, information and liaison between non-governmental organisations and governments, both in the UK and in the Territories themselves.

Founded in 1987, the Forum has gained worldwide support and recognition as being the best source of information and expertise on conservation in UK's Overseas Territories by both Governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Forum priorities are:

To raise public awareness about the wealth of biodiversity in UKOTs, and potential threats

To facilitate the implementation of international conservation conventions

To promote compilations of existing data, surveys of biodiversity and ecological studies, to inform plans for sustainable use and conservation

To assist the development of biodiversity targets and action plans to achieve these for each UKOT

To network information amongst UK and its Overseas Territories conservation groups, governments, educators and environmentalists

To support conservation groups in the UKOTs, and to publicise conservation activities and successes

To facilitate design and management of projects

To seek funding for projects in the UKOTs and for Forum activities

The Forum produces a newsletter *Forum News* and other publications, including *UK Dependent Territories: A Conservation Review* (an analysis of conservation progress and requirements), as well as information in other media. Our web-site can be accessed at: <http://www.ukotcf.org>

The Territories support habitats for animals and plants found nowhere else in the world, such as the Cayman parrots and several endangered Caribbean iguanas. Many Forum projects involve studying these little known areas to aid their protection and survival.



Photographs courtesy of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library.

Production of this board was supported by WWF-UK.



This booklet provides an introduction to the remarkable biodiversity of UK's Overseas Territories, and the work of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and its partner organisations to conserve this heritage. The booklet is based on a series of interpretation boards, including three introductory ones and one each for fifteen individual UK Overseas Territories. Summary information is included on the sixteenth UK Overseas Territory and the three Crown Dependencies. More information on these and the other territories is available on the Forum's web-site (www.ukotcf.org)

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CONSERVATION FORUM

Turks & Caicos Islands (TCI) lie SE of the Bahamas and 145 km north of Hispaniola. About 500 sq km of land is divided between 120 low islands and cays situated on shallow banks. Eight of the islands are home to 22,000 people; the majority reside on Providenciales, a major tourist destination. The Turks & Caicos National Trust is the membership-based voluntary organisation working to protect the natural, historical and cultural heritage of the Islands.

The East Caicos, Middle Caicos and North Caicos wetland complex forms probably the best example of its type in the Caribbean. It is also one of the most natural amongst the 125 wetlands of international importance listed under the Ramsar Convention by the UK Government. On Providenciales, the wetlands have suffered severe environmental degradation, the result of rapid development for real estate and tourism, although areas of value remain through the protected area and National Parks system. An even greater threat to the natural environment is posed by proposals for major developments on the uninhabited islands—prime habitats for unique species such as rock iguana and the remaining breeding sites for turtles.

Work is underway by the TCI National Trust and the TCI Government to explore the potential for environmentally sustainable development, but further help is needed. The adoption of an eco-tourism approach would help to prevent the destruction of the natural habitat and safeguard biodiversity, cultural heritage and natural beauty of the Islands for present and future generations.

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Photographs courtesy of Michael Gore FRPS & Mike Plankowski.

*Turks & Caicos Islands:
Superb Wetlands where
the Land meets the Sea*



A superb complex of natural coral reefs, tidal flats, mangroves and marshlands provide a haven for wildlife, and the natural basis of fisheries and tourism. The islands provide a home for at least 14 unique plants, reptiles (including the rock iguana pictured), and an unknown number of invertebrates, as well as the vulnerable reddish egret and West Indian whistling duck (pictured).



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CONSERVATION FORUM

Montserrat, one of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean, lies 43 km SW of Antigua and 64 km NW of Guadeloupe. The volcanic island, 17 km long and 11 km wide, is mountainous, with streams and waterfalls amongst dense tropical vegetation. The rugged coastline offers no all-weather harbour, although several anchorages are sheltered by the island from the prevailing trade winds.

Montserrat is known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean due to a combination of historical Irish influences and the lush greenness of the landscape. The Montserrat National Trust, founded by ordinance in 1970, has been involved in activities aimed at conserving the natural and cultural heritage of Montserrat.

On 18 July 1995, the Soufriere Hills volcano in the south of the island became active for the first time in 350 years. Increased pyroclastic activity killed 19 people on 25 June 1997. The capital, Plymouth, was destroyed after the Gages wall was overtopped in August 1997. Half of the island has been evacuated and much of it will probably remain uninhabitable for the next decade or more. The effects of the eruptions on the island's plants and animals are being studied where circumstances allow. Extensive monitoring of the Montserrat oriole - the National Bird - the mountain chicken and other important key indicator species, is ongoing. The Montserrat galliwasp has been sighted for the first time in over 30 years and more scientific research into habitat is necessary. Since volcanic activity began, the human population on the island has declined from approximately 11,000 to about 4,500. Volcanic activity has declined since March 1998. A sustainable development plan has been developed for Montserrat and it will be important to integrate environmental aspects into the island's redevelopment.

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Photographs courtesy of Sara Cross, Montserrat National Trust and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum Library. Painting by Tracy Redfern.

Montserrat: The Caribbean's Emerald Isle



Despite its small size, Montserrat supports at least 132 tree species, 59 species of birds and 13 mammals.

The Montserrat oriole (pictured) is found nowhere else. Also restricted to Montserrat are the galliwasp (pictured) and another (unnamed) lizard. The endangered and edible 'mountain chicken' (a frog) is found only on Montserrat and Dominica. Several other species are restricted to Montserrat and some nearby islands.

