



# FORUM NEWS 19

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## Calpe 2000: LINKING THE FRAGMENTS OF PARADISE

**An international conference on environmental conservation in small territories**

28 September to 1 October 2000, John Mackintosh Hall, Gibraltar.

Sponsored by the Government of Gibraltar, organised by the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society, with the support of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

‘I thought the conference was excellent; wonderfully organised, and so many great people in attendance. Indeed one of the most productive conferences I have attended. Thank you for all your efforts.’ This quote from Annie Glasspool was echoed by many of the delegates who attended the Gibraltar conference which was designed to be of help in some of the conservation priority issues identified by workers in small territories. The conference was deliberately participatory for all, rather than segregated into speakers and audience. The exchange of experience was a key factor in the success of the meeting.

Ijahnya Christian from Anguilla sent the following message to *Forum News*, her calypso mentioned is included in this issue of *Forum News* as well as extracts from the conference conclusions which give an explanation to the children’s workshop to which Ijahnya refers. A full version of the conference conclusions is available to view on the Forum web site: [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)

‘I am very thankful for the Forum’s role in affording me the opportunity of participating in *Calpe 2000*. The first hand experience of conservation on a rock that is even more rock than Anguilla was quite impressive and I was particularly motivated by the successes of revegetation initiatives there. The video on conservation in St. Helena and the risks taken to conserve endangered flora there was nothing short of inspiring and made the task of conservation in Anguilla seem less daunting. I really need a copy of that video for use in our public awareness processes here. This aptly demonstrates the value of coming together and sharing experiences and solutions. I am always amazed at how many of the challenges are common to the countries in spite of geographical, socio-economic and cultural differences.



*Jim Stevenson and a group of Gibraltar school children, having spent a day learning about conservation issues, perform at Calpe 2000*



*Deputy Chief Minister Keith Azopardi at the opening of Calpe 2000*

The stars of the workshop at the Conservation Park were the children, followed by Jim Stevenson. Of course I was excited by the park itself and think that it is a wonderful way to manage the products of breaches to CITES. The realities of funding for the sustainable development of that kind of venture were clear though one hopes that there will be no such products. Jim is really very skilled in facilitating learning in the most creative ways and should be cloned so he could do much more of that around the world, while keeping his job at RSPB. I secretly wanted to be one of the children in Jim’s group especially as I was a bit daunted at working with children of that age group. However, their interest and enthusiasm augurs well for the future of the park and illustrated the value of prioritising work with schools. I am sure that much of what was done that day would have been taken home and shared with parents and I hope the children will continue to have a relationship with the park. My only claim to fame therefore is the Iguana Calypso that I hope you will publish.’

# CALPE 2000: Linking the Fragments of Paradise

An environmental conference, sponsored by the Government of Gibraltar, organised by the Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society, with the support of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum

Throughout the meeting, a small team kept track of the proceedings. Sara Cross (Director for Development, UKOTCF) led the team with Sheila Brown Braithwaite (Permanent Secretary, British Virgin Islands Ministry of Natural Resources & Labour), with support from John Cortes (General Secretary, GONHS), and Mike Pienkowski (Chairman, UKOTCF). Additional contributions were sought from others.

The contributions from the conference are being gathered together, for publication on the web site and in print. The Conclusions are available on the Forum web site [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org). A précis of the conclusions presented by Sara and Sheila is published below.

## TAKING THINGS FORWARD

For many of the OT delegates who were at the meeting in London *A Breath of Fresh Air* just over a year ago, one of the major issues was how conservation action could be taken forward. At that meeting much was spoken of what was referred to as the Environmental Charter for the Overseas Territories (and, for the benefit of those people, we will briefly outline the progress made at a governmental level on the Charter process, shortly). However, the essence of what we are talking about can be encapsulated in the term Strategic Environmental Action Planning, and this is applicable to all small territories, and has been a major theme of the conference in Gibraltar.

The 1999 London conference was extremely valuable in drawing together so many enthusiastic, committed and normally widely dispersed people. We already knew that *Calpe 2000*, was in the early planning stages, and were extremely glad of that. This was because we believed that it would provide an excellent opportunity for all participants to report on progress they had made in developing those ideas for action which generated so much enthusiasm 15 months previously. We hoped also that it would encourage further exchange of ideas and networking with the additional participants from small territories who indeed have made such a valuable contribution to the knowledge we have all gained during our time in Gibraltar.



*John Cortes, Sara Cross, Sheila Brown Braithwaite and Mike Pienkowski*

As mentioned, we will now turn briefly to the Environment Charter process, in response to questions from many OT delegates. In October 1999, the Environment Policy Department of the Foreign Office, after an extensive period of wide consultation, generated a statement of draft key principles, which were aspirational statements, related to various existing international agreements and written in deliberately accessible language. The draft key principles were sent to all OT Governments for comment, in time for the first Consultative Council meeting of Ministers. Feedback from the Territories to date has been slow, with only a few comments having been received by the FCO. However, government officers and NGOs in several of the OTs have flagged up the need to take forward in parallel some work to illustrate how these key principles would translate into real actions. This process would also help clarify the principles themselves. Consultations with several OTs have made clear that more facilitation is needed to assist people in the Territories to kick-start the process of developing their own action plans, up to now on hold due to the lack of time and human resources. Several OTs are discussing with the Forum the ways in which this facilitation might most usefully be provided, and FCO has indicated that it is supportive of this approach.

During the *Calpe 2000* conference, it was apparent that environmental education and public awareness are vital tools for the realisation of the value of environmental resources both in protected areas and in small islands as a whole. The conference illustrated many arenas and methods which participants are employing to get the message across, from island-wide campaigns and focused public meetings, to developing materials with which teachers can be trained to integrate environmental messages into the school curriculum. One of the pertinent messages was that all Territories must instil in their own people a sense of pride in their unique flora and fauna. Schemes such as the National Trust [for England, Wales, & Northern Ireland] school guardianship programme, which involves children learning hands-on ecological skills directly from professionals in the field, should be encouraged and developed wherever possible. BVI has a similar programme involving the Department of Agriculture, where children are taught how to grow vegetables using small plots of land, whilst developing a



*Delegates from Turks & Caicos Islands  
Royal Robinson, Ethlyn Gibbs-Williams, Dace McCoy-Ground, Delton Jones  
and Bryan Manco*

sense of responsibility and awareness for the environment. These experiences can make a significant impression on young minds, and thus are important to the long-term sustainability of the Territory's landmass. The performance by the Gibraltar school children was excellent. They obviously were not put off by the short period of time given to prepare. (See Ijahnya Christian's comment) The calypso was very catchy and taught us about the iguana in a simple but very interesting way. Their inclusion added a very welcome flavour to the proceedings as a whole, and again we would like to thank all those involved, including the children, for their efforts.

The immense value of information networking cannot be stressed enough. The advent of electronic communications in the form of email and the Internet has brought us all much closer together, simply by allowing us to share our experiences with ease and at low expense. The development of a database for environmental information in the Overseas Territories has the potential to draw us together even further, and will empower us to work together and pool our efforts to make things happen constructively.

The database has the potential to be a marvellous mechanism for enhancing over-stretched capacity, and we strongly encourage everyone to use it, give us feedback on it, and to encourage its future development, in line with your most pressing information needs. The more pertinent information we can include, the more powerful a tool the database will be. We see it being useful to conservationists, tourists, governors, politicians or potential developers, as a means of finding out just how important the territories are for their biodiversity interest.

The wide range of presentations of the Saturday morning session showed how different islands try to ensure that their protected areas remain just that — protected.

The St. Helena Millennium forest project showed us how an inspirational idea, again fostering national pride for an endemic species could generate a huge commitment from local people to participate in setting up a long-term environmental project.

The power of largely volunteer effort with limited financial resources was evident throughout the conference, in the form of GONHS. Their achievements were particularly clear during the field trips as well as the presentations and discussions. They have a mature relationship with Gibraltar Government which seeks their advice, contracts work to them, respects their views and often follows their advice. Even when it cannot, it values the input of ideas and arguments. Many conference participants indicated how they admire — and even envy — the immense commitment of time which constitutes the strong volunteer team and

effectiveness of GONHS. We are sure that many will try to take up many of the ideas.

A frequently repeated message in several sessions was the importance of owning land in order to ensure long-term conservation. In some situations, this is not an option. For example, GONHS cannot do this but are able to perform miracles as managers; however, we think that they would be the first to admit that ownership would make many things easier. Those territories with National Trust type legislation have a particularly

helpful mechanism available for governments to enlist the resources of NGOs. Lands given by governments to National Trusts can be declared inalienable, so that the NT cannot treat this land as an ordinary disposable asset, but must safeguard it in trust for the people. Such transfers of land by government tend to attract further contributions by private individuals and organisations, making this a very cost-effective investment by government. It is also important to ensure an income stream for site-management. Sunday morning's discussion presented one strong route. Conservation Funds can be one of the few popular taxes. At least

part of these can be earmarked for the organisations managing protected areas. Again, there are extra benefits in that NGOs managing such protected areas can often draw in matching

funding from both domestic and international sources, as well as major volunteer effort.

Something of a consensus evolved in discussion of the management of dedicated environmental funds in several OTs. The most successful examples involve an environmental tax being placed in a statutory fund separate from general government funds, managed by a Board with representation from government, NGO and private sector interests.

Openness and accountability, strong and unambiguous legislation, and a constructive relationship between environmental NGOs and local governments are seen as key elements. Relative access between government and NGO agencies to grants from such funds is an ongoing concern needing resolution in several OTs.



*Rebecca Ingham and Debbie Summers from Falklands Conservation*



*Stedson Stroud from St. Helena Island*



*Isabel Peters talking about the St. Helena Millennium Forest Project*

## What Next? Further Opportunities

We need to keep in touch, in order to benefit from our shared learning; this is increasingly easy with modern communications. For example, do please use the Forum's database. We should also think about meeting again — not too soon, because it is exhausting to organise these meetings! More importantly, however, we must allow ourselves enough time to apply our new ideas and achieve conservation, before devoting time to exchanging this knowledge. Probably, about two years' time might be about right. Several places may be interested in being the venue. We are aware that Bermuda has already expressed some interest, but so too have other places. One plea from the Forum: if hosts want the Forum to be involved, please get in touch early — as Gibraltar kindly did — because we all suffer from restricted human capacity!

In terms of other actions, we all need to push forward the initiatives and ideas we note above, and others. Indeed, one important area which embraces many others concerns strategic environmental planning. This really means sorting out our priorities, working out the responsibilities of the various stakeholders in achieving these; and using this process to make sure that these actions happen, including:

1. Development of user friendly, dynamic management plans;
2. Seek to update our legislation to make it more effective and enforceable;
3. Persevere to ensure that Trust funds are used as intended;
4. Expand education initiatives wherever possible, especially involving the users;
5. Encourage the consistent use of EIAs for development initiatives;
6. Continue and expand the ongoing dialogue with the UK Government to impress upon them the obvious need for adequate funding and technical assistance to ensure that UK's OTs can work towards achieving sustainable livelihoods through the environmental sector of their economies;
7. NGOs must continue to provide policy makers with full detailed information to avoid perceived distrust.

So, let's not forget the enthusiasm of the *Calpe 2000* meeting. Let us build upon that enthusiasm and direct our efforts into working on the ideas outlined above to use the experience of the meeting to progress conservation.

## IGUANA CALYPSO

(to the tune of Caribbean folk song  
Mathilda)

(Chorus)

Iguana, iguana  
Iguana come from Venezuela  
To Gibraltar  
(repeat)

One day I'm sitting in the sun  
Like a nice iguana gentleman  
Next day I'm inside a knapsack  
Across the ocean

(Chorus)

Well I survived a hurricane  
Lightning, thunder, wind and rain  
Floated on logs 'cross the water  
To reach Anguilla

(Chorus)

I want to be left alone  
In my warm tropical home  
Please don't buy me for plenty money  
Or you'll be sorry

(Chorus)

Ijanya, *Calpe 2000*

## DEVELOPING BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AROUND THE RAMSAR SITE IN THE TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS.

The Darwin Initiative Project to develop biodiversity is progressing well, jointly led by Turks and Caicos National Trust, CABI and the Forum. The background to this project, appointment of project officer and related work by TCNT running small business workshops for local people are all described in the project's first newsletter, available on request or downloadable from the Forum's web-site [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org): click Territories on the side menu; click Turks & Caicos; the link to the newsletter is at the bottom of that page, together with a link to download Acrobat Reader (needed to view the newsletter and some other pages) if you do not already have that loaded.

In November, specialists on plants, reptiles, amphibians and birds visited, and major ground-truthing was done to classify vegetation types with the help of remote sensing. At the request of UK and TCI Governments, the opportunity was taken to start work on producing an accurate map of the Ramsar site. Early in 2001, the second group of specialists will be present to work with local residents, on plants, insects and bats. The government has agreed to transfer a disused school to the Trust to act as an environmental centre on Middle Caicos (and base for the later stages of the Darwin work, and any follow-up); the Trust is seeking funds to allow repair and implementation.



*Conference delegates were able to visit the Barbary macaques. Gibraltar supports the only wild monkey population in Europe. The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society are responsible for their well being*

## THREAT FROM SPACE AVERTED

October 24, 2000

This week Texas multimillionaire Andy Beal announced the winding up of his attempt to break the US and French governments' dominance of the very lucrative space launching business.

In 1998 Beal Aerospace announced its intention to launch satellites into space from the Caribbean using their own rockets made in their plant at Houston. After investigating a number of sites, Beal decided to assemble his rockets in the US Virgin Islands and launch them from Sombrero Island, an almost uninhabited small island, which is part of Anguilla, an Overseas Territory of the UK. Both of these sites seemed ideal at first and politicians in both St. Croix and Anguilla were very keen on the project. The general public were largely unaware of the issue until conservationists were alerted that an environmental impact assessment was under way.

At this point, RSPB, working with the Anguilla National Trust, stepped in to draw attention to the international importance of this isolated island for seabirds, lizards and other biodiversity. Since the UK Government would have been required to licence each launch, we raised questions concerning the UK's responsibilities for biodiversity conservation as well as issues about security and liability. RSPB closely studied the Environmental Assessment Beal had commissioned and it was clear that for the impact on biodiversity at least, it was grossly inadequate. To get better information on the island's importance, we organised a team comprising an ornithologist, Tony Murray, an entomologist, Dr Michael Ivie from the University of Montana and Dr Jenny Daltry, a herpetologist from Fauna and Flora International, to visit Sombrero. They found the island far more important than anyone had guessed, recording a number of species that are possibly new to science.

Ijanya Christian of the Anguilla National Trust was outspoken on the way the Sombrero proposal had been dealt with locally and she is compiling a study of the lessons learned. "I believe that a fundamental flaw in the entire process stems from a seeming inability to appreciate value in terms other than economic value, and an understanding of development that is synonymous with revenue-generating potential. In fact, the Sombrero case reminds me of the argument, raised some time ago, that the sixth form at Albena Lake-Hodge Comprehensive School should be abolished because someone thought it was not economically viable".

"It is neither wise nor prudent to begin the development application process with the signing of agreements. In future we may need to require more than a prospective investor's dollars, or the scientific credentials of his or her experts; we may also need character references. Of course, the would-be investor may require the same of us."

Jim Stevenson, who lead the campaign against Sombrero on behalf of the RSPB stated: "When Beal Aerospace established its criteria to select an ideal location as a launch site, none of them gave any consideration to avoiding damage to important biodiversity. If it had, Sombrero would never have been targeted as a location. The environmental assessment commissioned by Beal dealt inadequately with impacts on biodiversity. Again if it had been done properly, much time and money could have been saved. The world will probably never know whether these omissions were a deliberate attempt to bulldoze over the world's heritage in pursuit of a fast buck, or just ignorance? Either way not taking biodiversity seriously from the outset has certainly cost Andy Beal dear."

He went on to remark "It would be nice to see that concerned local people could on their own be successful in closing down an environmentally unsound project on their doorstep, but when confronting large industry with overwhelming and international resources, local citizens need the kind of help that I am delighted RSPB was able to provide. Together environmentalists in Anguilla, St. Croix, Guyana, the USA and the UK, have worked to raise awareness of and finally to see off Andy Beal's plans. We are all relieved to see the back of this project."

Jim Stevenson

RSPB International Officer  
Global Programmes

## UPDATE ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN ANGUILLA

A WWF/Darwin funded project

The implementation of the Darwin capacity-building project in Anguilla has given new life and action to the development of Big Spring, a ceremonial Arawak site in the community of Island Harbour. The Darwin project is supporting a community co-management approach to resource management that has engendered a partnership between the Anguilla National Trust, the Government of Anguilla and the Island Harbour Community represented by the Big Spring Action Committee. With the departure of former consultant Tom McCarthy, a young Canadian former volunteer, Valerie Green was hired as Big Spring Project Co-ordinator to maintain the momentum of this initiative. Her work has produced a flora listing for the site and a public awareness brochure on protected areas that will be used to stimulate national discussion on a system of protected areas for the island. The Big Spring Project is also providing a fillip for action on the part of the Government of Anguilla to develop legislation for the establishment of parks and protected areas in fulfilment of a major objective of the Darwin project.

Other linkages demonstrate the timeliness of the Darwin project. At the national level it enabled the Trust to make a strong contribution during workshops in July and September 2000, to design a National Environmental Management Strategy (NEMS) for Anguilla. The process is being co-ordinated by the Government of Anguilla office of the Parliamentary Secretary (Environment) with technical assistance being provided by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States - Natural Resources Management Unit. In December 2000 recommendations for legislative development from the feasibility study for the development of the Fountain Cavern were also reviewed and integrated into the overall considerations for a legislative package. The Fountain Cavern has been included on the UK list of sites nominated for UNESCO World Heritage listing. At the regional level the Trust's Executive Director is bringing new learning experiences to the process from her participation in two CANARI (Caribbean Natural Resources Institute) regional workshops to review participatory approaches to resource management. The first of these workshops was held in Antigua in July 2000 and the second will be held in Tobago in January 2001. The Darwin project will also support the participation of the Trust's Associate Executive Director Karim Hodge in a Ramsar Workshop in Trinidad and Tobago in December 2000. The project's new consultant is Floyd Homer of Trinidad and Tobago, who has extensive experience of working with Governments, NGOs and communities in the Caribbean region and who began to make very useful inputs to the legislative review even before he got the job.

Ijanya Christian

# BAT HOUSES IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

## THREE PROBLEMS, ONE SOLUTION

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has discovered that their bat house project does more than provide habitat for important, misunderstood native wildlife. It also pleases people who have been struggling with the problem of bats in their roofs, and reportedly keeps mosquitoes at bay.

“This has been a ‘win-win’ project from the very beginning,” comments Mrs Lois Blumenthal, Director of the Bat Conservation Program there. “Our prison woodshop builds the bat houses and volunteers help us paint them and install them on donated utilities poles. The generous contributions of these poles by Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd (CUC) have been crucial to the success of the program. Utilities poles are ideal for bat houses because they are strong enough to stand up to high winds and tall enough to be very attractive to the bats.”

The bat house project has gone hand in hand with a public education campaign involving all media. Lectures with a slide show have been presented to schools, condominium associations and service clubs. As work progressed, it became clear that Velvety Free-tailed Bats *Molossus molossus* living in roof spaces are a major problem for residents in the Cayman Islands. Tropical bats are active year round. Caribbean roof spaces are usually small and often inaccessible. This, combined with high humidity, creates a serious odour problem when large colonies inhabit a roof space. It is simply not practical or reasonable to attempt to convince citizens to live with this situation.

Previously, people dealt with bat problems by attempting to kill the bats, or by other misguided and ineffective means. The Trust has introduced the use of exclusion devices that effectively work as ‘one-way doors’. Bats can leave, but they can not return again. Excluded bats often colonize new bat houses installed nearby. Sometimes a number of bats from a colony being excluded, are caught and ‘seeded’ in a bat house. However, many bat houses that have not been ‘seeded’ are also occupied within a few months after being erected.

People who have installed bat houses in their gardens report that they have fewer mosquitoes. It is thought that the echolocation sounds made by the bats may signal mosquitoes to avoid the immediate area. A study is being carried out by the Cayman Islands’ Mosquito Research & Control Unit to see if the facts support this hypothesis.

It is known that bats play very important roles in healthy ecosystems, yet often even scientists overlook them. Caribbean bats pollinate hundreds of indigenous and endemic plants, they disburse seeds throughout forests, and are a major control of insect population – not only mosquitoes, but also moths and beetles and their larvae, many of which are crop pests. Some species eat cockroaches, katydids and other larger insects. Even fruit bats make 25% of their diet from insects found on and around fruit trees, thus helping to protect the very crops they also damage. Fruit bats eat overripe fruits missed by pickers and wild fruits that would otherwise rot and provide breeding grounds for fungus, fruit flies and other pests. In places where fruit bat populations have been eliminated, fruit losses actually increased, sometimes to the point where the farming of soft-skinned fruits had to be abandoned. Fruit bats are too large to use the bat houses, which are designed for insect-eating

species. Separate initiatives are being taken to assist farmers to use environmentally sound methods to protect their soft-skinned fruits from fruit bats.

Vampire bats are not present in the Cayman Islands. On some Caribbean Islands, however, these tiny bats are considered to be a pest to domesticated animals. Of the nearly 1,000 species of bats, only three are known to feed on blood. Knowing the difference between vampire bats and other more beneficial species is very important when



*Raising two triple-wide bat houses mounted back to back on a Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd pole. This ‘double-triple’ can hold up to 1200 insect-eating free-tailed bats*



*Velvety Free-tailed Bat Molossus molossus*

dealing with this problem. Mistakes can be disastrous. In some places, tragic eradications of insect-eating bats as well as fruit and nectar-eating species have disrupted entire ecosystems. Because bats reproduce so slowly, these mistakes cannot be reversed.

Bats are not rodents and are more closely related to monkeys than to mice. They produce only one pup per year and are known to live up to thirty years. Their

low reproductive rate makes bats particularly vulnerable to extinction, especially those species that roost in large colonies.

The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has accumulated a large body of information on Caribbean bats and their conservation. They are very interested in sharing what they have learned with other islands that may have the same species and the same problems. The director of the program is willing to visit other islands to help launch bat conservation projects. Consideration is being given to the formation of a Caribbean Regional Bat Conservation Group, and perhaps a regional workshop could be held in the Cayman Islands.

A very comprehensive study guide about Cayman Islands bats has been published and could be adapted to other Caribbean islands. This study guide includes several appendices including copies of media coverage obtained for the programme and information sheets distributed in schools as well as brochures addressing specific bat problems for the general public. It is available through the National Trust for the Cayman Islands.

Email the Bat Conservation Director at [blu@candw.ky](mailto:blu@candw.ky) for copies of the materials developed for the public and more detailed descriptions of the various aspects of the program. Visit the National Trust for the Cayman Islands website at [www.caymannationaltrust.org](http://www.caymannationaltrust.org) for more about Cayman Islands’ bats and to see most of our brochures and information sheets.

# BOTANICAL WORK ON ANEGADA IDENTIFIES SPECIES OF GLOBAL CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE

The Darwin Initiative project *Integrating National Parks, Education and Community Development*, managed by the BVI National Parks Trust (BVINPT), is now in its final funding year. The focus of current activities is the flat limestone island of Anegada. Plant-focussed workshops were completed in April and November 2000. The workshops, organised by Raymond Walker, BVINPT Darwin project manager, concentrated around the Western Salt Ponds, declared a Ramsar site in May 1999. Workshops facilitators were Colin Clubbe (RBG Kew, UK), Mike Gillman (Open University, UK) and Pedro Acevedo (Smithsonian, USA).



*Flower of Metastelma anegardensis.*  
*This vine occurs only on Anegada and Tortola*

Workshops brought BVINPT staff, plus staff from the Ministries of Conservation & Fisheries, Town & Country Planning, and Agriculture, and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College together for training in plant identification, rapid assessment and conservation planning. They also provided a forum to debate biodiversity issues and to collect data that will support the planned establishment of a protected area incorporating the Ramsar site plus a suitable terrestrial buffer zone, based on habitat and species information.

Results from the workshops have caused a great deal of excitement. At the habitat level this area represents an excellent example of relatively undisturbed dry

Caribbean forest. This is important because this biome type has been recognised as globally threatened due to habitat loss throughout the Caribbean. The area also contains several species of global conservation significance. *Acacia anegadensis*, endemic to Anegada, is a spiny tree found mainly on limestone. *Metastelma anegardensis*, a vine found predominantly in the sand dunes is endemic to Anegada and Tortola with the Anegadian populations being the more important. Population studies of these two species indicated that they are both relatively widespread within the proposed protected area and in this case conservation of the habitat is likely to provide adequate protection for these species. In addition, Anegada represents the most important global genepool for two other species. *Cordia rupicola* is locally abundant and outside Anegada known only from a single small population in Puerto Rico. Prior to the November workshop *Malpighia woodburyana* was known from less than 50 individuals from disjunct populations across the region. Workshop participants were delighted to find a thriving population of 74 on one of the limestone cays in Flamingo Pond. The total species list for the proposed protected area stands at 132 and includes many other species of regional significance. This information will feed into the Management Planning workshop in January 2001 which will be facilitated by Mike Appleton from FFI, the other main UK-based project partner.

Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew

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or contact Raymond Walker, BVI Project Co-ordinator pceast@bvinationalparkstrust.org

# MONTSERRAT ORIOLE

Research on the Montserrat oriole continues apace, but as yet there is no good news about the species' status to report. Prior to the volcanic eruption, the oriole probably occupied about 30km<sup>2</sup> of Montserrat's hill forests, but the destruction of the southern forests by the Soufriere Hills volcano means that the species is now entirely restricted to about 14km<sup>2</sup> in the Centre Hills. Census and monitoring work carried out since 1997 by RSPB and the Montserrat Ministry of Agriculture, Trade & Environment (MATE) has detected a large, unexplained decline in the oriole population *within* the surviving Centre Hills forests. This decline is over and above the complete loss of more than half of the species' range, and the species is now one of only two critically endangered birds in the UK Overseas Territories. The cause of the decline is unknown, and it is true to say that at present we are hampered by our limited knowledge of the oriole's ecology.

During 2000, the RSPB and MATE have worked with Professor Michael Ivie from the University of Montana to investigate the idea that a shortage of insect food, caused by the effect of ash falls in the Centre Hills, might be responsible for the oriole's decline. We have also examined breeding success, and survival of adult birds ringed in 1998. In November, an intensive programme to mark orioles was conducted. This will pave the way for large-scale investigations of oriole ecology in 2001. Nest cameras will be used to determine whether nest predation is a significant limiting factor, and to identify the predators. Juveniles will be radio-tracked, in order to monitor their survival after leaving the nest. As we establish the reason for the population decline, we can begin to try out potential conservation measures.

Report from Geoff Hilton RSPB  
www.rspb.org.uk



*Nancy, Tomal and Monique*  
*Survey work on Low Cay, Anegada, BVI*

# EDUCATING TO SAVE SEA TURTLES

The Bermuda Turtle Project organises another successful course on the biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles  
By Jennifer Gray, Bermuda Aquarium Museum Zoo (BAMZ) Head Aquarist & Bermuda Turtle Project Co-ordinator

The goal of the Bermuda Turtle Project is to conserve sea turtles through research and education. From August 7-19, 2000, those words were once more transformed into action in a productive research field session combined with the finest style of learning one can experience.

The project now has 40 records of sea turtles tagged in Bermuda, which have travelled overseas and been captured in distant waters. The majority of them show up in Mosquito Keys, Nicaragua, one of the grandest feeding grounds known for green turtles of all sizes. Others have been captured in Venezuela, Cuba, Dominican Republic and other islands of the Caribbean. Distressingly, all of these long-distance recaptures, were animals that were killed for their meat and the tags turned in later for the offered reward. This is only one example of the many problems facing sea turtles and it highlights the need for international co-operation in their ultimate protection.

This year, the course run by the Bermuda Turtle Project focused on an effort to share our knowledge and our project with individuals from sea turtle range states. With money generously donated by Chevron International Limited, students from developing countries were selected to travel to our breathtaking island for a unique in-water learning opportunity.

## International Co-operation

Chevron-sponsored students were chosen by Karen Eckert, director of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST), based on the needs of their homelands and the devotion of the individuals or their organisations to sea turtle conservation. The Bermuda Turtle Project course fit nicely into the WIDECAST mission 'to reverse the declining trend in wider Caribbean sea turtle populations by promoting a region-wide capability to design and implement scientifically sound sea turtle conservation measures'. Hedelvy Guada, Gijs van Hoom and Dean Domacasse were the WIDECAST candidates of choice.

Ben Godsall, a high school student from the United Kingdom; Tamara Collins, a biotechnology student from Massachusetts;

and Elizabeth Metz, an employee from the Mote Marine Lab in Florida, were attending students sponsored by the Friends of the Bermuda Aquarium.

Our Bermuda Biodiversity Project summer students, Matt Hammond, Micha Simons and Neil Cattell, joined Janice Blumenthal,



*Hedelvy Guada holding a green turtle*

a college science major from the Cayman Islands, to fill the course.

## Class Work & Fieldwork

Lectures and discussions were held daily either in the classroom or on the research vessel, as it cruised to the day's sampling site. Topics included reproductive biology, physiology, population genetics, conservation problems and solutions, as well as observations at nesting, feeding and developmental habitats. Field research took place at 11 different sampling sites on the Island's north platform. For the most part, green turtles, the focus of our study, are found on the sea grass flats along the coast, and dispersed among the ledge flat reefs of the North Shore.

## Hawksbill and Green Turtles

Hawksbill turtles, like green turtles, arrive in Bermuda as juveniles and spend a portion of their life here in what we call a 'developmental habitat'. We presume they

depart from our waters before reaching maturity to mature and reproduce elsewhere. Little is known about the hawksbills presence here, as they live in close association with the reef, often tucked away out of view in reef crevices or under ledges when not out dining on their preferred diet of sponge.

The team captured a total of 66 sea turtles this session, ranging from a 24-cm. hawksbill to a 60.1-cm green turtle. Twenty-five of these turtles had been previously tagged by the project. One individual was first tagged in the same location 10 years ago. Another was tagged in 1993, following a treatment and recovery period at BAMZ, which undertakes wildlife rehabilitation.

Days of inclement weather saw a re-evaluation of our float plan from offshore to inshore sites. On one such day, when thunderstorms would not let-up, we instead headed to the aquarium for an applied lesson on sea turtle anatomy. Stranded dead specimens collected over the year at BAMZ were salvaged from the freezer, defrosted and laid out for necropsies. After a demonstration animal was dissected and assessed the students paired up to perform their own necropsies under the direction of the course instructors.

By the end of the two-week period, there were many tales and sagas to be recounted: the most memorable involved a two-foot remora or shark sucker, which found its way into the swimsuit of an unwary snorkeller. There were also many bruised and scratched limbs, burnt, peeling and exhausted bodies, and weary fact-filled brains. Still, all were wearing very big smiles as they each received certificates for successful completion of the course. When asked for single words to describe their experience the students responded with "exciting", "exhilarating", "awesome", "informative", "worthwhile", "fun", "rewarding" and "unforgettable!"

For more information on the Green Turtle Project: [www.bamz.org](http://www.bamz.org)

## ASCENSION ISLAND

The Fort Hayse Museum on Ascension Island now has some dangerous inhabitants. A shark with snapping jaws and a hungry octopus have recently taken up residence along with four other interactive displays designed by the children of Two Boats School. Seven and eight year olds at the school took part in a project discovering more about the wildlife on Ascension with Rachel Sharp (RSPB Education Officer).



*Discovering what the shark ate for dinner*

The children's designs were produced professionally by artist Mike Langman in the UK. As a celebration of the arrival of the new exhibits, the museum put on a special open morning attended by more than 150 people. Children proudly showed their parents how to inflate the Frigatebird's pouch or discover the life-cycle of the Wideawake terns. Many people came to the museum who, despite living on the island for many years, had never before visited.



*Jerrylee Peters trying to make his gecko catch a fly*

While on Ascension Island Rachel continued her work with Two Boats School leading bird watching field trips for junior and senior students and leading demonstration lessons on migration, threats to Ascension Island's Seabird and a discussion on the control of cats. The RSPB are looking at how to support the school with better resources on the local environment.

Rachel Sharp  
RSPB

Rachel visited Ascension Island between 10 to 18 October 2000  
[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

## CAMPAIGNING FOR ALBATROSSES IN 2001

In late January 2001 delegates from 20 countries with interests in the Southern Ocean will gather in Cape Town, South Africa for the second meeting to finalize an Albatross and Petrel Conservation Agreement under the terms of the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (see *Forum News* 18: 3 of May 2000). The first successful meeting was held in Hobart, Australia in July 2000 and a deal of consensus was achieved, so it is hoped that the Cape Town will lead to the rapid adoption of an Agreement. A report of the Australian meeting along with the draft texts may be found at [www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/wildlife/conventions/albatross/index.html](http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/wildlife/conventions/albatross/index.html).

The Agreement's draft Action Plan sets out tasks and activities for signatory nations to take to improve the conservation status of albatrosses and petrels in the Southern Hemisphere. The species to be covered are those most severely affected by longline fishing, but the Agreement will also cover conservation issues such as eradicating alien predators at breeding islands, managing ecotourism, and reducing the effects of pollution (both chemical and entangling plastics). Collaboration of research and management activities and engendering support for developing nations will be an important part of the Agreement.

Within a month of this meeting, the Committee on Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization will meet in Rome, Italy to hear progress on the adoption of National Plans of Action to reduce seabird mortality from longline fishing. To date, no country has formally adopted a National Plan, but activities are underway in a number of countries. New Zealand and the USA have draft plans out for public review and revision, and work has commenced on plans in Brazil, Canada, Japan, Norway and South Africa, as well as in others.

BirdLife International will also be active in saving seabirds in 2001. In August 2000, BirdLife's Seabird Conservation Programme launched its "Save the Albatross Campaign: Keeping the World's Seabirds off the Hook" at the British Birdwatching Fair. The full proceeds of the Fair, GBP 122 000, will go towards the costs of running the Campaign in 2001 and 2002. The Campaign has four major objectives: seeing National Plans of Action operating in longlining nations, the adoption of a strong Albatross and Petrel Agreement, halting the pirate fishing that kills so many birds in the Southern Ocean, and encouraging regional fishery agreements to take an "ecosystem approach" that takes account of seabirds.

BirdLife will employ a Campaign Manager to run the Campaign in early 2001. Priority target countries for action include longlining nations in Asia and South America.

In the UK Overseas Territories, Falklands Conservation is contributing to the Campaign by its work with albatross censuses and at-sea studies, garnering the information required on which to base sound management decisions. In the Tristan da Cunha group, government observers have started to go out on foreign-licensed longliners, and a researcher is studying Tristan and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses on Gough Island in relation to longlining. It is expected that as 2001 progresses, more and more BirdLife partners will become involved with what is planned to be a truly global Campaign.

Let's hope that by the end of 2001, albatross and petrel populations are on the mend, due to the combined efforts of both governments and non-governmental organizations.

John Cooper

Coordinator, Seabird Conservation Programme, BirdLife International  
[www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/seabirds](http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/seabirds)

## DARWIN INITIATIVE FALKLAND ISLANDS FLORA PROJECT

The Falkland Islands have an interesting vascular flora that, despite being a fundamental resource, has been relatively poorly studied. The Queens University of Belfast, supported by Falklands Conservation and funded by the Darwin Initiative, are addressing the urgent need for baseline research. Significantly the project is the first thorough and systematic study of the status and distribution of the Falkland Islands ever undertaken. Given the small size of both the Falkland Islands and the vascular flora, the Darwin Project is in a somewhat enviable position, in that it can be expected to achieve representative coverage of the whole country.

The first season of fieldwork (October 1999-April 2000) has been completed highly successfully and we already have a much clearer picture of the status and distribution of the flora. Survey work was carried out in 20% of 10km grid squares adding substantially to data collected previously on a more *ad hoc* voluntary basis. Highlights of the recording programme have included:

- rediscovering species not seen for substantial periods of time including 10 native species not recorded since at least 1964.
- discovering that some species previously considered very rare are in fact substantially under-recorded and much commoner than previously thought. Such species include Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle chamaemorus*, Bristle Sedge *Carex microglochin*, Red-haired Filmey-fern *Serpilopsis caespitose* and Antarctic Mountainberry *Gaultheria antarctica*
- adding substantially to the known alien flora. The total number of aliens now nearly equals the native flora, though fortunately many species are either very rare or (hopefully!) extinct.

The unbiased approach taken in recording taxa as well as recording for a full 6-month season has undoubtedly been responsible for many of the above discoveries. This is well illustrated by Bristle Sedge *Carex microglochin* which is a member of an under-recorded group of plants, and only becomes obvious late in the season. We collected more records for this species in one week than had been made in the previous 211 years of botanical activity in the Falkland Islands.

The significant dataset already collected (*c.* 16 000 individual species records) means that we are already in a position to start interpreting the status and distribution of >90% of the flora. However, there is another field season yet to go and future activities will include:

- continued recording activity.
- producing the first representative atlas of the Falkland Islands flora.
- helping to establish a national herbarium for the Falkland Islands - this will be an important resource that will help the Falkland Islands become self-sufficient in botanical expertise.

Community involvement in the project has been high and the authors look forward to further developing this over the coming year. Further information on the project can be obtained from the authors at the addresses cited below.

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Falklands Conservation  
P O Box 26, Stanley  
Falkland Islands

Email: conservation@horizon.co.uk



*Pale Maiden Olsynium filifolium* occurs on mass in spring and turns the heathlands white

## NEW PUBLICATIONS St. Helena and Ascension Islands: A natural history

Philip and Myrtle Ashmole

In preparing this book the Ashmoles have delved into the historical records, consulted many other scientists, and searched for and photographed the native plants, birds and invertebrates.

For any naturalist, questions abound. How did the islands originate? How did their unique species arise? What lessons can we learn from the saga of destruction? How can we care for the remaining wildlife in the face of human activities? The authors address these and many other fascinating questions.

Available at £30 from Anthony Nelson, P O Box 9 Oswestry, Shropshire, SY11 1BY, UK

## The Endemic Flora of St. Helena

Quinten Cronk

Colour Plates by Lesley Ninnes

An account of the plants and ferns of St. Helena.

Available at £30 from the publisher, Tony Nelson or Dorothy Evans, 3 Barns Hay, Old Marston, Oxford. OX3 0PN, UK Tel: +44 (0)1295 730421

## Flowering Plants of the Falkland Islands

Robin W Wood

Falklands Conservation

This book contains detailed information on the most important flowering plants of the Falkland Islands. There are easy-to-follow descriptions with definitive line drawings and close up colour photographs to help with the identification of forty-six beautiful and distinctive plants.

Order your copy from Falklands Conservation, 1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, UK. Tel/Fax +44 (0)202 8343 0831

Falkland Conservation members can obtain a copy for £7, Non members £12.

## THE ST HELENA MILLENNIUM GUMWOOD FOREST PROJECT

The St Helena Millennium Gumwood Forest Project is a community conservation initiative to recreate a native habitat and celebrate the Millennium. The Project involved the planting of an entire forest. All Island residents were encouraged to be involved, by each planting a tree. The planting of young trees has brought new life to a barren and degraded wasteland and will provide the basis for an amenity site and a legacy for future generations

### *Why plant Gumwoods?*

On St Helena, tree planting often marks special events and occasions. As an island just recovering from the effects of deforestation and with a highly threatened native flora, it seemed fitting to mark the Millennium with tree planting, and even more so with the planting of an endangered endemic species, the gumwood *Commidendrum robustum*, an arborescent member of the compositae family. Gumwood forests once covered approximately 1/3 of the island but quickly disappeared after the arrival of man and his associated animals. Today only one small remnant of Gumwood forest remains with less than 1000 individuals.

In 1977 the Gumwood was named as St Helena's National Tree, although prior to the Millennium Forest project few islanders were familiar with it; and many would have been unable to identify a Gumwood tree, or if they could, would not appreciate its value in terms of the world's biodiversity. The adult Gumwood has a crooked branched frame and rough bark with an overall umbrella shaped canopy. The seedlings are of a different shape to the adult trees being tall and slender and much straighter with larger leaves.

The Millennium Forest is situated in an area called Horse Point, which is on the north-east side of the island. The surrounding scenery is breathtaking with some of the island's most spectacular geological features. However the site before the project began, was adjacent to the island's refuse dump, used as such and seemed the most unlikely place to want to plant a forest. The area is dry and dusty with an annual average rainfall of 400mm and littered with gullies caused by severe soil erosion that followed deforestation.

It is not too late to get involved in this project. Tree planting will continue in the next season, July to September 2001  
Millennium Gumwood Forest Project Steering Committee:

Email: [rebecca@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:rebecca@sainthelena.gov.sh) or [isabel@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:isabel@sainthelena.gov.sh)



*The official start to planting in the Millennium Forest began on 4 August 2000. This date was chosen as it was HM Queen Mother's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Governor of St. Helena planted a tree for the Queen Mother in a zone of the forest that was named after her and yes it does have 100 trees!*



*Young gumwood tree Commidendrum robustum*



*Over 4000 trees have been planted in the forest by persons on island, for friends and relatives overseas and for those who have bought trees to be planted on their behalf.*

## BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES

A wholly new framework is in prospect for consideration of environmental issues in the British Indian Ocean Territory. On 3 November this year the High Court quashed the ordinance by which those living in the Territory before 1973 were not allowed to remain in it. The BIOT government is now seeking further advice from consultants on the implications and feasibility of re-settlement.

One of the questions which is bound to be high on the agenda is how to maintain the commitment to treat the area with no less concern for natural heritage considerations than places actually nominated as World Heritage Sites. In a sense the BIOT Government starts with a clean sheet of paper, since they have no existing Management Plan for what the British Government equally accept to be an area of global significance. How the BIOT government will meet this challenge is still unknown. It is early days. What is clear already is that the Forum and its constituent organisations can bring to bear a wealth of experience and expertise to help the BIOT government in the task ahead.

The Friends of the Chagos held their Annual General Meeting in October, before the Court made its judgement. The Association thus focused more on the achievements of the preceding year than on the one now beginning. The Administrator of the BIOT Government presented a summary of the actions it had taken during the year, as did the Friends' chairman on behalf of the Association. He emphasised their efforts to monitor the impact of commercial and recreational fishing and highlighted the need for further scientific examination of the effects of massive coral mortality on the health of the reefs and the fish populations they sustain. It still remains to be seen whether this research will be funded. Plans to revive the indigenous flora and fauna of Eagle Island by eradicating the introduced population of rats were mentioned and so too was a forthcoming survey - the first ever - of the cetaceans inhabiting Chagos waters. The evening left little doubt that sustained effort was required for the world's least polluted habitat to retain that distinction.

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

# STRING OF PEARLS

## Launch of DVD/Video

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office was open to the general public on selected days during the summer of 2000. In July the Overseas Territories were responsible for mounting a series of displays in the magnificent rooms of the FCO to entertain visitors and encourage them to learn more about the Territories. The Forum had the opportunity to display all fifteen of their information and Territory Display Boards and chat to the public about the work being done both in the UK and in the OTs. The Town Crier from Bermuda dressed in his splendid regalia was flown to the UK for the occasion.



*Baroness Scotland, FCO Minister for Overseas Territories*



*Bermuda's Town Crier in front of the Forum's display Boards*

The highlight of the afternoon was the launch by Baroness Scotland of the video and DVD, 'A Breath of Fresh Air'. This video/DVD, narrated by Nick Ross was produced for the FCO by E.T.V. from a conference on the environment jointly organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, held in London in July 1999. It is aimed at teenage school groups to encourage debate and discussion. Some of the topics included are wetlands, mangroves, alien species, turtles and tourism. How can we all turn words into actions?

The DVD and video in PAL or NTSC are available from:  
Iain Orr, Biodiversity Team ('TeamBio'), EPD, K230  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO),  
King Charles St, London SW1A 2AH, UK  
T:44[0]20 7270 2942 Fax 7270 4076 Mob: 07769 693 019  
E-mail: iain.orr@mail.fco.gov.uk  
Web-site: [www.fco.gov.uk/environment](http://www.fco.gov.uk/environment)

The highlight of the afternoon was the launch by Baroness Scotland of the video and DVD,

The database part of the Forum website is now live. A number of people took the opportunity to receive training in entering information at the Calpe Conference and since. Visit the site on [www.ukotcf.org](http://www.ukotcf.org)

Correspondence to: Frances Marks, Forum Co-ordinator, 15 Insall Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5LF, UK

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Photographs courtesy of Lois Blumenthal, Colin Clubbe, Jennifer Gray, Michael Gore FRPS, Frances Marks, Courtney Plat, Rachel Sharpe/ RSPB, FCO/P Tsui, Environment Planning and Development Section, DEPD, St. Helena Government

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Supporting Members of the Forum are



# JERSEY SITE IS DESIGNATED A RAMSAR CONVENTION WETLAND OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

The United Kingdom has designated, as its 160th Wetland of International Importance, "South East Coast of Jersey, Channel Islands" (3210ha) in the Bailiwick of Jersey, a Crown Dependency of the UK. Amongst the largest intertidal reef sites in Europe, this site 22km off the coast of France comprises various habitats: reefs, boulder fields, mud, sandy and shingle shores not covered by water at low tide, combined with shallow tidal lagoons, sea grass beds and a large number of outlying reefs. The site provides important winter habitat for waders and wildfowl and produces a rich and diverse range of biotopes and some uncommon species assemblages. The flora and fauna are characterized by a number of limit-of-range species at both the northern and southern margins of their distributions. Fishing is of great cultural, social, and traditional importance to the population, and a wide range of non-exploitive recreational activity is very important within the site. Effects of inorganic waste disposal and sewage discharge are seen as potential threats. This is the 1042nd Ramsar site globally.