

2

Nature conservation in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies



Providing science-based advice on nature conservation issues in the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is an important and developing area of JNCC's work

JNCC's new strategy (see Introduction) reaffirms the importance to the organisation of nature conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. While most of the 14 Overseas Territories and three Crown Dependencies are relatively small in area, they support unique ecosystems and a large number of rare and threatened species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. The main threats to biodiversity in the Territories and Dependencies are non-native species, climate change and habitat loss through development.

If the UK is to make a full contribution to the Convention on Biological Diversity target to significantly reduce the current rate of global biodiversity loss by 2010, action in the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies is essential. JNCC contributes to the action needed by working closely with the governments of the Territories and Dependencies and with relevant UK departments – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development, Defra and the Ministry of Justice.

In 2007, JNCC identified nature conservation research priorities in the Territories and Dependencies. These included biodiversity monitoring and survey work and the impact of invasive species. Over the past year, JNCC has made considerable efforts to develop links with academia to address these research priorities.

A key aspect of this work has been the development of an Overseas Territories training and research programme in collaboration with the University of Reading. It aims to increase training and capacity building opportunities for individuals and organisations in the Territories, increase access to UK-based research and advisory expertise, and enhance knowledge transfer between Territories.

The programme is being driven by a steering committee made up of representatives from the Overseas Territories, which held its first meeting in January 2009. The programme has made contributions to two Territory research projects – one on red-footed booby *Sula sula* in the Cayman Islands, and another on coral reefs in the Turks and Caicos Islands. For further information, visit www.jncc.gov.uk/UKOTCD



Réunion landscape

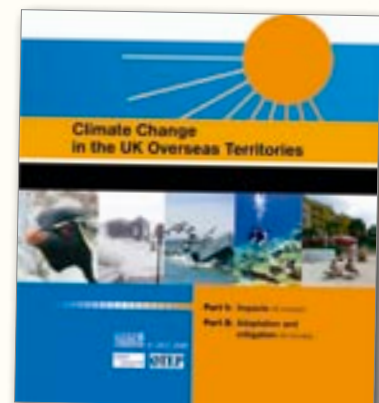
Climate change in the UK Overseas Territories – a suite of resources

In July 2008 JNCC participated in 'The European Union and its Overseas Entities: strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss', a conference initiated by the French Presidency of the EU. The conference was held on the Indian Ocean island of Réunion.

Nine of the UK Overseas Territories were represented and JNCC was represented by Overseas Territories Officer Tara Pelembe and Environmental Economics Adviser Deanna Donovan. The event focussed on the need to develop

partnerships at regional and international levels to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

During the conference JNCC launched *Climate change in the UK Overseas Territories: an overview of the science, policy and you*, an accessible guide to climate change science, mitigation and adaptation. The book and supporting DVD highlight climate change impacts throughout the Territories, such as increased dengue fever outbreaks on Pitcairn Island, coral bleaching



in the British Indian Ocean Territory and increased cyclone intensity in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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Defra provided JNCC with additional funding for work in the Overseas Territories in 2008/09. This funding has supported the instigation of a scholarship to support a student from the Overseas Territories to study a first degree in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of Reading. The scholarship is being managed by the UK Overseas Territories Association.

Defra funding has also supported a study of rockhopper penguin *Eudyptes moseleyi* populations on Tristan da Cunha, and has enabled JNCC to contribute to other projects in the Territories, including overviews of priority invasive species, geoconservation priorities, and amphibians and

reptiles. Defra also part-funded the JNCC co-ordinator post in support of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels on the Falkland Islands.

JNCC's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies team was strengthened during the reporting year by the appointment of Nikki Chapman as Overseas Territories Fundraising Officer. The one-year post has been funded by the Department for International Development and the role involves identifying possible funding sources for nature conservation work in the Overseas Territories and giving support to funding applications by personnel in the Territories.

Island heather

Limonium bahamense

During the reporting year, additional funding was secured from Defra for a number of conservation projects in the Overseas Territories. One project this funding has supported is vegetation mapping on Turks and Caicos Islands, led by the islands' government. Accurate maps will support development planning by identifying areas of the islands important for rare and endangered species.

The Turks and Caicos are a group of more than 40 islands that form part of the Bahamas Archipelago. They are low-lying and more than half the land area consists of wetlands. Nine plant species are endemic to the islands, including the Turk Island prickly pear *Opuntia x lucayana* and island heather *Limonium bahamense*.

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The UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies



The 14 UK Overseas Territories and three Crown Dependencies make a very significant contribution to global biodiversity. For example, of 26 priority species covered by the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), a dozen breed on UK Overseas Territories in the south Atlantic. The fourth meeting of ACAP's Advisory Committee was held at Cape Town, South Africa, in August 2008.

JNCC was represented at the meeting by Mark Tasker (vice-chair of the Advisory Committee) and Anton Wolfaardt (ACAP co-ordinator, UK south Atlantic Overseas Territories). Progress was achieved in a number of areas, including the development of a co-ordinated approach to interacting with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), the development of a prioritisation framework, and agreement amongst Parties to propose the listing of the three north Pacific albatross species on Annex 1 of the Agreement at the next session of the Meeting of Parties.

Map © JNCC

South Atlantic

- British Antarctic Territory
- Falkland Islands
- St Helena and its associated islands, Tristan da Cunha and Ascension
- South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

Pacific

- Pitcairn Islands

Indian Ocean

- British Indian Ocean Territory

Wider Caribbean

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Montserrat
- Turks and Caicos Islands

Europe

- Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas
- Gibraltar
- Bailiwick of Guernsey (Crown Dependency)
- Bailiwick of Jersey (Crown Dependency)
- Isle of Man (Crown Dependency)



Southern giant petrel *Macronectes giganteus* and wandering albatross *Diomedea exulans* on nests.
Bird Island, South Georgia

The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) is a multilateral agreement which seeks to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for species listed in Annex 1 of the Agreement, such as the southern giant petrel and wandering albatross shown here breeding at Bird Island, South Georgia. The UK, including on behalf of the relevant Overseas Territories (Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich

Islands, the British Antarctic Territory and Tristan da Cunha) ratified ACAP in 2004, soon after the Agreement was formally established. Priority actions include reducing incidental bycatch of these seabirds in longline and trawl fisheries, and managing actively the critical threats at breeding sites, such as at Gough Island, where introduced house mice threaten the survival of the endemic Tristan albatross and other species.

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