



Quarterly Newsletter

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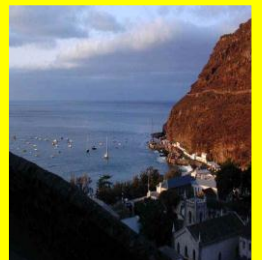


It's been a busy three months for EMD with some significant achievements and milestones reached. Notably the launch of the Peaks National Park, signing of the Horse Point Landfill redevelopment contract and start of the construction works, recording of the 1000th seed collection by the Terrestrial Conservation team, the success of the Darwin Plus bids and the signing of the Refuse Collection Vehicle contract.

I would like to thank my colleagues in EMD, SHG and the partner organisations and volunteers who we work with for all their hard work, enthusiasm and efforts in 2013 and I look forward to working with them in 2014. The next 12 months will be even busier; continuing to support the Air Access team as the airport project reaches its most intensive delivery period; working on the Darwin projects; developing, consulting on and revising environment policies; collaborating on conservation projects and helping to protect the environment we live in.

I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Ben Sansom
Head of EMD



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SIGNING OF CONTRACT WITH BASIL READ – REDEVELOPMENT OF THE HORSE POINT LANDFILL SITE

The 1st November, saw the start of another project as SHG signed a contract with Basil Read for the redevelopment of the Horse Point Landfill Site.

The signing of the contract was completed by Basil Read's Island Director, Deon De Jager and SHG's Acting Attorney General, Frank Wastell. The signing of the contract was witnessed by the Acting Head of EMD, Isabel Peters in the presence of Environmental Risk Manager, Mike Durnford (Solid Waste Project Manager), Project Manager (Construction Phase), Bill Scanes and Senior Environmental Health Officer, Georgina Young.

The redevelopment of the Horse Point Landfill Site will significantly reduce the risk of bird strikes to aircraft and has been designed to better manage the existing landfill site. This includes construction of a waste reception building, civic recycling centre, internal road infrastructure and procurement of specialist vehicles, which are key measures required to better manage the solid waste.

During the project Basil Read will be able to utilise spoil from the airport construction. This can be used on areas which have been used for the disposal of waste. It is anticipated that during restoration works access to the site will at times need to be restricted, these times will be communicated to the public via the media.

CHICKS, CHIPS AND SNIPS

As some readers may know cats can have a dramatic effect on the survival of bird populations. Whether a cat is domestic or otherwise it is a sad fact that they can cause a lot of damage. Recently as part of the Seabird Tracking Project run by the Marine Section of EMD it has become evident that cats are a main cause of nesting failure (54%) in red-billed tropicbirds at the Ladder Hill colony. The cats seem to have a particular taste for downy chicks which is why the Marine Section has set up some traps at key areas of the colony. If you own a cat and it doesn't wear a collar and it isn't Micro chipped then we encourage you to please get it micro chipped so that we can return your pet in the unlikely event it is caught in a trap. In fact it is now law that your pet cat should be micro chipped and licensed by 7 months of age. Micro chipping only costs £3 which goes to the



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SPCA. **Cats can be chipped at ANRD during the drop-in clinic between 1.15pm and 3.15pm on Wednesday afternoons, or by contacting the SPCA warden Julie Balchin on 24369.** We also encourage cats to be neutered – they lead happier, longer, healthier lives and make cleaner, better pets – and the chip can be inserted at the same time. If a cat is neutered, the license is free and issued once for life. Neutering costs £5 for a male, and £6.50 for a female. Contact veterinary surgeon **Joe Hollins on 24724** to arrange this and for further information.



1000 COLLECTIONS AND STILL COUNTING

A conservation milestone was passed on the 21st November 2013. The Terrestrial Conservation Section recorded its 1,000th collection since the inception of St Helena's endemic seed bank. The seed bank operates under protocols developed in conjunction with the Millennium Seed Bank in the UK. Following a training visit from Tom Heller, a professional botanist at the MSB, in February 2009 the first collection was logged.

Seed collections are an important component of the conservation team's effort in protecting and restoring our endemic flora. The seed bank fulfills two main roles in the conservation of the unique and often threatened endemic plant species of our island.

- Firstly, it provides a working store of seed for propagation work in the nursery including the restoration and maintenance of the remaining endemic populations in the wild. Additionally and increasingly we are cultivating plants from our initial collections to act as seed plants for further work and thus decreasing our impact through wild seed harvesting.
- Secondly, the seed bank acts as a safeguard against extinction events of populations or entire species of our endemic plants. The infilling of Dry Gut as part of the airport construction project is a good example. Just days before the first load of rock was tipped we discovered a previously unrecorded population of neglected sedge. By collecting the seed remaining on this group of 200 plants we have hopefully secured the population's genetic future while its original site is buried under many metres of rock.



The set up at the nursery at Scotland follows the same principles as those employed at MSB but on a much small and simpler scale. Harvested seed is cleaned and allowed to dry out before being further desiccated over silica gel. Once the water content of the seed has been reduced it can be sealed in moisture resistant bags and refrigerated. Once stabilised under these conditions it is possible to keep seed viable for decades, even centuries!

The seed bank at Scotland is the result of hundreds of hours of walking, searching, collecting and, the painstaking work of processing the seeds. The nursery staff are grateful to the many volunteers who have contributed in any way to assisting us to maintain this important safeguard of our island's natural heritage.

Vanessa Thomas, Nurseries Officer

Andrew Darlow, Bastard Gumwood Restoration Officer



DARWIN PLUS 'RARE PLANT CENSUS' PROJECT

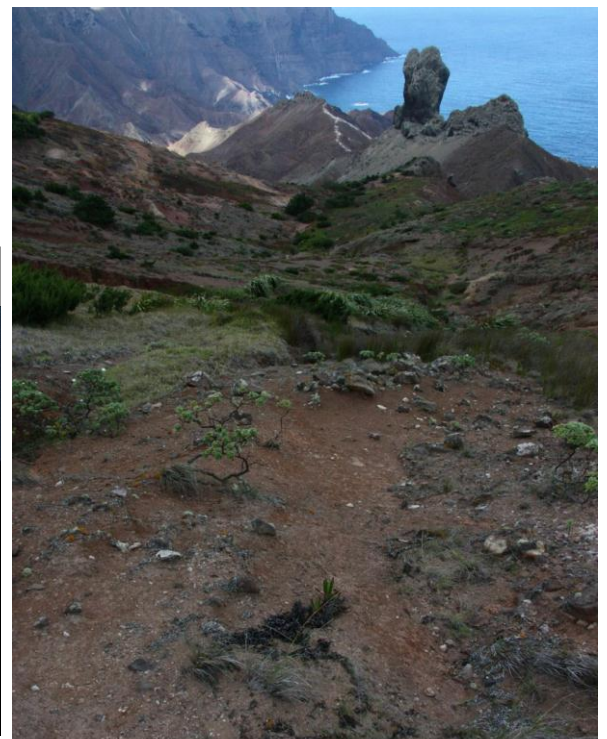
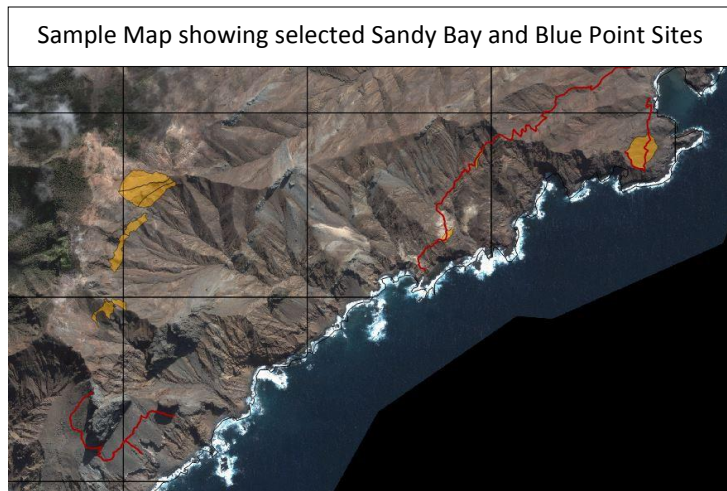
The St Helena Nature Conservation Group (SNCG) was awarded Darwin Plus funding in April to undertake a rare plant census on the island. The main aim of the year-long project, led by SNCG's Dr. Phil Lambdon, is to undertake surveys at known sites of St Helena's rare plants (all endemic and some rare natives), to gain an idea of population sizes, current status and threats. The data from these surveys will be used to inform plant assessments for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>). The Red List is a global database that assesses species population status and risk of extinction. Currently, less than half of St Helena's rare plants have been formally assessed, and those that have are out of date, so there is a desperate need for this data. Up-to-date Red List assessments will help inform biodiversity action plans and help in prioritising island conservation efforts.

Over the past few months approximately 30% of the sites identified have been surveyed. The focus so far has been concentrated on drier, lowland and middle-altitude areas, in order to survey the winter annual species before they disappear!

There is still a lot more surveying to do before the data for each species can be written up into formal Red List assessments and submitted to IUCN. Once approved, the up-to-date assessments will be published on the IUCN Red List site.

For more information on the project please visit the project website (<http://www.shncg.org/endemic-plant-survey/>) or contact Shayla Ellick at EMD (shayla-ellick@enrd.gov.sh).

Images courtesy of Dr. Phil Lambdon.



Scrubwood Area at Blue Point



EMD APPRENTICESHIP PROPOSAL

Proposal: The Environmental Management Division (EMD) would like to offer an apprenticeship scheme so young people can gain valuable skills and experience for a career in conserving St Helena's threatened species and habitats, both terrestrial and marine.

The scheme would ideally be suited to people aged 16 years or older. Apprentices will explore all aspects of EMD's remit, including time with the Environmental Assessment and Advocacy and Environmental Risk Management Sections. However, the main focus will be with EMDs Terrestrial Conservation and Marine Sections.

Terrestrial Conservation: The Terrestrial Section is comprised of the Habitats team, the Species team, the Terrestrial Conservation Advisor and the Species Conservation and Environmental Research Officer.

The Habitats team works in the Peaks National Park on endemic cloud forest restoration, maintenance and monitoring, and conservation of endemic fauna. The Species team run the Endemic Nursery, collect and store seed, and propagate globally threatened species for restoration. They also undertake endemic and native habitat restoration, maintenance and monitoring at sites around St Helena.

The apprentice will gain a range of skills including: species identification; seed collection, sorting and storage; invasive weed clearance; habitat maintenance; cloud forest restoration; propagation techniques; survey and monitoring skills; and first-hand experience of terrestrial conservation techniques.

Marine Conservation: The Marine Section consists of four staff, a marine team manager, a marine conservation officer and two marine conservation assistants. Day to day activities include field and laboratory work, data analysis, report writing and awareness raising covering the conservation of the marine environment.

Monitoring is a large component of the work and the team run several seabird monitoring schemes as well as a marine biodiversity and habitat mapping project funded by the Darwin Initiative.

The apprentice will gain experience in seabird monitoring and tracking using data loggers, bird handling and ringing skills, fish and invertebrate identification; fisheries science including fish dissections and fisheries observation work; laboratory skills including designed experiments, microscope work and data collection, analysis and presentation.

A training package will be agreed between the apprentices, the Work Development Coordinator and EMD. The apprenticeship should provide a recognised qualification as well as practical experience for a career in conservation.

The apprentices: EMD are looking for bright, practically minded young people with a strong interest in the conservation of St Helena's native species and habitats. The most important qualities for these opportunities are enthusiasm and a positive approach to work.

If interested please contact: David Higgins or Judith Brown on 22270, or by email: david-higgins@enrd.gov.sh



LAUNCH OF THE PEAKS NATIONAL PARK

His Excellency Governor Capes officially launched the Peaks National Park on World Tourism Day, 27 September 2013.

Attended by Councillors, school children, SHG officials, members of ESH, Saint Helena National Trust and members of the public the launch took place at 10am with an opening speech from Terrestrial Conservation Advisor and Trainer, Dave Higgins.

Dave welcomed everyone to the launch and expressed his appreciation for attendees' interest in conservation on St Helena. He went on to talk about the launch of the Peaks National Park as part of the development of 23 National Conservation Areas for St Helena. These NCAs will extend to over 40% of the Island. Dave then handed the floor over to Governor Capes for his opening remarks.

In his speech Governor Capes remarked on the hard work that has been done since 1996 when the area around Diana's Peak was proclaimed St Helena's first National Park. Since then much hard work has been done to preserve the tree fern and other endangered species. Governor Capes said:

"As we prepare for the arrival of air access... it is right that we should raise awareness of the priceless asset we have in St Helena's natural beauty and take steps to ensure that we preserve it for the generations to come. By clearly defining the boundaries of our national parks and setting out clearly what may, or may not be done within those boundaries we will retain a place that all who live here can be proud of and enjoy.

Following this Governor Capes and Councillor Gavin Ellick each planted a tree within the National Park. The day continued with refreshments and various exciting activities organized by the Nature Conservation Team, the St Helena National Trust and Tourism. Activities included tree planting for school children, workings of the Peaks Nursery, Flax Weaving with SHAPE and showing attendees the important but dangerous task of getting rid of flax. Also on offer was a walking tour around the Peaks and a chance to see some of the endemic invertebrates found there.

The theme of World Tourism day for 2013 is: Tourism and Water: Protecting our Common Future. This theme is especially relevant to St Helena after the 2013 drought. The Peaks National Park offers potential for converting flax slopes into native and endemic habitats. This would capture more water from low cloud and deliver it to reservoirs for human consumption. Presently, this can only happen slowly as the land needs to be managed for a long period of time whilst native vegetation becomes established. However, the Peaks National Park management will aim to establish more areas of typical St Helena vegetation.

On the success of the launch, Dave commented:

"A number of organisations deserve our thanks including the St Helena National Trust and Tourism; special thanks go to all who joined us on the day. The next 18 months will see further development of National Conservation Areas. The designation of these biodiversity hotspots will help meet the goal of a sustainable and green Island. Anyone interested in our work can contact me on 22270 or david-higgins@enrd.gov.sh"



St Helena Sightings Reminder

Remember to report your sightings of ringed seabirds, whale, dolphin, turtle, unusual seabird and unusual land birds. The marine section can be contacted at Essex House, Jamestown on telephone 22270 or a message can be left on the environmental hotline number 22790. If leaving a message remember to leave your contact details should we have additional questions.

Your sightings and any pictures of your sighting can also now be posted on our facebook page:

www.facebook.com/sthelenaconservation

You should:

1. Note the date and time of your sighting.
2. Note the species and how many were present— remember a description or photo can be useful if you don't know the name.
3. Note the location of your sighting.
4. Unless you wish to remain anonymous, please leave your name and contact details should we have additional questions.

This information is continually being used to further our scientific knowledge of seasonal visitors and occurrences of different species. This data allows better informed conservation measures to be put in place for the various species.

Leeann Henry
Marine Assistant

CLOSED SEASON FOR SPEAR FISHING

The Closed Season for Spear Fishing is

1ST OF JANUARY 2013 TO 31ST OF MARCH 2013

**SPEAR FISHING IS NOT ALLOWED AT ANY TIME
OR PLACE IN ST HELENA'S WATERS DURING THIS PERIOD.**

The Spear Guns (Control) Ordinance CAP 91 states that during the closed season, no person shall have a spear gun in his possession on or within twenty metres of any tidal water or upon any beach or foreshore or whilst swimming or whilst in any vessel.

The aim of the closed season is not to stop people from enjoying the sea, it is to respect our oceans and it's resources; During this period most fish are at the spawning stage and it is therefore necessary to put measures in place to allow marine life a chance to breed and to grow into sustainable resources.



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