



Quarterly Newsletter

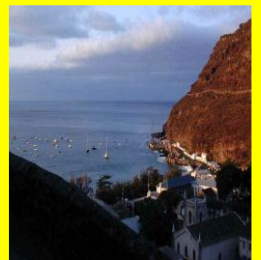
Issue 5 - September 2013



Hello and welcome to EMD's quarterly newsletter. It's been another busy quarter with lots of interesting work streams being undertaken; we're moving forward with getting our environmental policy frameworks in place, these will be essential in setting the parameters in which EMD will work; We've started restoration works at the landfill this was a great team effort and thanks and well done to all who got involved; And there's been lots happening in the marine environment.

Enjoy the read and if you have any comments or queries do get in touch.

Isabel Peters
Ag. Head of EMD



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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES OUT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Environmental Management Division has been working on developing a number of environmental policies as identified in the National Environmental Management Plan. Once implemented these policies together with the new Environmental Protection Ordinance (currently in the final stages of drafting), will provide the overarching framework for environmental management on the island. Policies have been drafted in line with SHG's Policy Management Process and key stakeholders were consulted with and inputted into the drafts. The next stage in the process is to have the policies approved for public consultation by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

At the first Environment and Natural Resources Committee meeting on the 12th September 2013, three draft policies were presented. These were:

- **The Peaks National Park Management Development Plan** – This policy was required under the Land Development Control Plan; all twenty three of the islands National Conservation areas requires a development plan which will have legal status and shall direct the conservation and restoration of the islands natural heritage. The Peaks area offers the island's community essential services, one of which is a water catchment area; which provides a considerable amount of the islands water for drinking and irrigation purposes.
- **Environmental Research Permitting Policy** – This policy will allow us to manage environmental research on St Helena. It will ensure that all research is conducted to high environmental, social and ethical standards. Researchers will be required to provide their results and conclusions to the people of St Helena.
- **Underwater Blasting policy and procedures** - This policy has been created to protect St Helena's internationally important populations of Cetaceans (whales and dolphins). It is based on scientific data and provides a set of procedures for underwater blasting, including a closed season.

The Committee approved these three draft policies to go out for public consultation and this will now run for a month. As part of the consultation we have planned radio talks and a public meeting (date and time to be announced). If you would like a copy of any of the draft policies please contact Cherilee Thomas at Essex House on telephone number 2270 or email cherilee-thomas@enrd.gov.sh. All comments on the drafts should be sent to Cherilee by no later than 14th October 2014.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

- ❖ In July we said goodbye to: Environmental Risk Manager: Ian Rummary. Ian was elected as a member of our islands Legislative council. Congratulations to Ian, and we wish you well in your new role.
- ❖ In August we said goodbye to: The Head of EMD, Tara Pelembe and Environmental Risk Advisor, Glen Westmore. Both Tara & Glen are returning to the UK at the end of their contracts. We would like to wish them well in their future endeavours.

VISITORS

- ❖ Razi Latif, DFID's OTD Environment & Climate Adviser was on island from 2nd – 10th September for a familiarisation visit.
- ❖ Dr Pete Mayhew of the RSPB, in Scotland came to the island and worked with the Marine Team on St Helena's Seabird tracking project.

AND DEPARTURES

- ❖ Elizabeth Clingham, Marine Conservation Officer left the island on the 26th September to attend the International Whale Shark Conference in Atlanta.



Horse Point Landfill Restoration Project Update

On 5th July members of EMD, SHNT and Basil Read worked on site at Horse Point to commence a restoration project, through planting of endemics.

400 plants (200 Gumwood and 100 each of Ebony and Hair Grass) were planted within a 20m x 20m area on the site, the results of which will determine the possibility of further restoration as the need arises.

Measurements of the plants have been recorded as follows;

29 th July 2013			
Group	Type	Height	Leaves
1	Gumwood	40cm	30
1	Ebony	12cm	16
2	Gumwood	42cm	26
2	Ebony	9cm	9
3	Gumwood	36cm	21
3	Ebony	12cm	10

2 nd September 2013			
Group	Type	Height	Leaves
1	Gumwood	48cm	58
1	Ebony	12.5cm	24
2	Gumwood	47cm	50
2	Ebony	10cm	24
3	Gumwood	39cm	51
3	Ebony	13.5cm	22

To date the restoration project has been successful.

Belinda Thomas, the Nursery Officer at St Helena National Trust said...*'the plants have grown a few inches over the past 6 weeks and are doing very well, they are standing up against the wind and there are no signs of rabbits so far. The site is looking very GREEN'.*

Mike Durnford
Environmental Risk Manager (Designate)



Hair Grass



Measuring the Gumwood tree at the landfill



Research project for rare, threatened Endemic Ferns

The Environmental Management Division Nursery at Scotland has secured a grant for a research project to develop propagation techniques for rare threatened endemic ferns here on St Helena.

Ferns are often difficult to grow in cultivation. Over the next year a climate controlled propagation unit will be set up in the nursery for long-term propagation. The project funding will allow us to purchase equipment to create a sterile working environment; this will reduce contamination, a major cause of death of developing sporelings.

The project will aim to develop successful propagation protocols for St Helena's 14 native fern species, eleven of which are globally threatened. The protocols will then be used in on-going species recovery programmes.

The eleven threatened fern species include eight critically endangered endemics and three indigenous species. Each of these will be assessed initially for the cultivation approaches most likely to succeed (based on existing knowledge and literature searches).

Using established guidelines, the spores from each species will be collected. These will be grown in a number of replicated experimental trials incorporating different light and humidity levels to determine which method works best.

On completion the propagation methodology will be publically available via the EMD web pages.

The EMD nurseries staff are grateful to JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) in the UK for the funding grant.

Vanessa Thomas
Nurseries Officer

Like Us On Facebook!

Check out EMDs **NEW** St Helena Conservation facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/sthelenaconservation>

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN EMD

July:

- ✓ From the 01 July - 09 August EMD had the pleasure of having the following work experience students in the division: Harley Williams, Kayleigh Harris, Megan Young & Travis Francis
- ✓ On 5th July members of EMD (including work experience students Kayleigh Harris and Harley Williams), SHNT and Basil Read worked on site at Horse Point Landfill to carry out tree planting which is part of the restoration project.

August:

- ✓ On the morning of Wednesday, 14th August the Environmental Management Division in partnership with Enterprise St Helena and the Saint Helena National Trust hosted 'St Helena Science' at the newly opened Business and Information Centre at The Canister, in Jamestown.
- ✓ On the mornings of the 19th & 20th August EMD hosted councillor visits. These visits were to give councilors an insight into the work that EMD does

September:

- ✓ On the morning of the 18th September a small group of Prince Andrew School, Year 9 students visited EMD as part of their careers pathway programme.



St Helena's Seabird Tracking Project

The tracking project is a joint collaboration between the Marine Section of EMD, Enterprise St Helena (ESH) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). It aims to identify the foraging ranges of St Helena's seabirds namely red-billed tropicbirds and masked boobies. It has built on previous trial work completed last year by visiting scientist Dr Steffen Oppel. This year Dr Pete Mayhew of the RSPB came to St Helena to kick start the project and help build capacity on island to keep the project running for years to come. This is what he had to say about his experience;

"I work for the RSPB in Inverness, Scotland and was lucky enough to join the EMD Marine Team on my sabbatical for 2.5 weeks in late August/early September. We have been using small (20g) GPS tags which are taped to the tails of seabirds to record the location of the bird at set intervals, normally every 100 to 300 seconds. This information is crucially important to seabird and fishery scientists as, for the first time we can locate key fishing areas for our threatened seabirds and then discuss with fisherman how to manage an area for both fish and seabirds.

I had expected to spend most of my time catching and tagging masked boobies. But they are having an awful breeding season with most nests failing, possibly due to poor food supply this year (this may also link with changes in fish availability noticed by local fisherman). We did manage to get one logger back off a booby – it had travelled 40 km east of St Helena but didn't look like it had fed.

So we moved our work onto red-billed tropicbirds. The loggers were mounted on the birds' tails and the time interval set so as to maximise battery time. It was with some trepidation that we anxiously awaited the return of the first bird. Four days after deployment the bird was found back in its nest cavity. The logger was rushed back to the office to be plugged into the software that reads the location data. It had worked and a wee bit of seabird science history had been made – the first time we knew where tropicbirds fed! Of the 5 loggers retrieved – all had been heading to the seamounts north of St Helena – principally the Cardno Seamount approximately 320 km north - about a third of the way to Ascension! Much more work needs to be done on this and the team are already deploying more loggers but it's an important start.

I had a busy and hugely enjoyable time on St Helena. Highlights (apart from the tagging projects) included a visit to catch storm petrels on Egg Island (including seeing dolphins by the boat), walks to Lot's Wife Ponds, Blue Point and Sugarloaf. The nest of a wirebird performing its broken wing display and many passionate discussions about conservation of St Helena's endemic flora and invertebrates with a range of deeply committed conservationists. But my abiding memory will remain the friendliness of the EMD team and everyone I met on this lovely isle. It was hard not to feel a wee bit emotional on the RMS as I steamed out of Jamestown enroute to Ascension and another adventure."





Darwin Marine Biodiversity and Mapping Project update

The last few months have been very varied for the Darwin marine project ranging from collecting more samples to stakeholder meetings to drafting policies. We targeted specific groups of animals for collecting which has included sponges (over 30 different samples photographed and preserved) and bryozoans (a colonial encrusting animal – see photo). Taxonomic experts will be looking at these samples under electron microscopes and identifying them from their skeletal structures. We have held initial stakeholder meetings to discuss dive tourism and sports-fishing and will now be taking the ideas to wider consultation. A draft underwater blasting policy (a set of procedures to protect cetaceans i.e. whales and dolphins from blasting operations conducted in or near the marine environment) is currently out for public consultation. These will all feed into the Marine Management Plan for St Helena which will help protect St Helena's unique marine environment.

Judith Brown,
Darwin Marine Biodiversity & Mapping
Project Manager



Two bryozoans found under rocks – each tiny “square” is an individual animal

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. 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



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