THE MARINE AND FISHERIES CONSERVATION SECTION

QUARTERLY CATCH

JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2025

www.sainthelena.gov.sh

The third **QUARTERLY CATCH** for **JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2025** is here!
Take a look below to see the work we've been doing this quarter.

The Marine and Fisheries Conservation Section (MFCS) team, in line with the vision of the Marine Management Plan 2023-27, aim to conserve, protect and restore the rich biodiversity and unique natural ecosystems of St Helena's Marine Protected Area (MPA) with use of its natural resources managed in accordance with its International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category 6 sustainable use principles now and for future generations.

It's been a busy and fulfilling quarter for MFCS, with key projects and scientific work going well and some highlights along the way:
Ongoing work in areas such as ichthyoplankton studies have continued steadily. MFCS has also been actively engaging with stakeholders. This has included hosting an accredited marine tour operator training session for the St Helena National Trust's marine team and the island's tourism marketing team.

Additionally, we've transitioned to using iRecord, a citizen science platform that enables members of the public to contribute to marine conservation by recording and identifying species found in and around St Helena's MPA.

We have also completed the first phase of a socioeconomic survey aimed at understanding public priorities for our MPA. This valuable feedback will help shape future management decisions.

St Helena has recently been featured in two major international publications, one by the Marine Megafauna Movement, focusing on the research of migratory mega fauna, like the whale sharks that visit St Helena's waters, and the Cord et al report, entitled Biogeography and evolution of reef fishes on tropical Mid-Atlantic Ridge islands.

We have also been given the opportunity to be proudly represented at both the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) Conference and the International Environmental Assessment (IEA) Symposium, taking place in October and November respectively.

IN THIS ISSUE

MFCS HOSTS MARINE TRAINING TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Recently, MFCS delivered an accredited marine tour operator training session for members of the St Helena National Trust's marine team and the island's tourism marketing team. The session focused on strengthening participants' understanding of the policies, legislation, and best practices that guide sustainable marine tourism on St Helena.


MARINE TOUR OPERATOR TRAINING

The training highlighted the importance of compliance, awareness, and clear communication in ensuring that visitors experience the island's natural heritage in a way that is both enjoyable and environmentally responsible.

By building this knowledge, the teams are now better equipped to promote St Helena's commitment to sustainable marine tourism, ensuring that the island's rich ocean environment remains healthy and well-managed for the future.

IRECORD ST HELENA: SUPPORTING CONSERVATION THROUGH CITIZEN SCIENCE

St Helena has recently transitioned to a new online platform that brings together wildlife records from across the island, making it easier than ever to record, manage, and share biodiversity information in one place. Designed to support research and conservation efforts, iRecord St Helena allows users to submit their wildlife sightings, which are then verified by experts and added to a growing database.

By joining the iRecord community (visit: www.irecordsthelena.edu.sh), individuals can contribute valuable data, explore interactive maps and graphs of their records, and play an active role in protecting St Helena's unique biodiversity.

The website is managed by the St Helena Research Institute, and the initiative aligns with the objectives of the BEST 2.0 Plus programme. This EU funded programme promotes biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystem services in Overseas Countries and Territories, helping to advance climate change adaptation and sustainable development goals.

MARINE FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION SECTION: LABORATORY FACILITIES

The Marine Fisheries and Conservation section houses a fully equipped laboratory with dedicated wet and dry lab spaces, supporting a wide range of scientific and technical tasks. The wet lab features sinks with retractable taps for easy washing, drying racks, and ample bench space for handling samples and equipment.


WET LAB


DRY LAB

The dry lab is equipped with a fume cupboard, high quality microscopes, a laboratory oven, and controlled storage for specimens and materials, including both fridge and freezer space. Additional outdoor washing facilities are available separately from the main wet and dry lab areas, helping to maintain cleanliness and efficiency within the lab.

Both spaces are well organised and designed to support safe and efficient workflows, providing a professional environment for conducting a diverse range of scientific work. These facilities are also available for use by visiting researchers and scientists, if you would like more information, please get in touch.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN MARINE CONSERVATION: RESULTS FROM SOCIOECONOMIC SURVEY

As part of the long-term monitoring of St Helena's Marine Protected Area (MPA), a recent community questionnaire was carried out to better understand how people use the MPA and what value it brings to the island. This survey supports the St Helena Marine Management Plan 2023-27, which sets out how the island's unique marine environment will be conserved and managed for current and future generations. The responses provide important insights into the social, cultural, and economic importance of the MPA, helping to assess whether the plan is achieving its goals.

Encouragingly, the results show an overall increase in public knowledge and awareness of the MPA compared to a similar survey conducted in the past. This is a positive sign that community engagement and outreach are making a difference. A summary of the findings has been compiled in a dedicated report, which will help guide future planning and support continued improvement in marine management.

ST HELENA FEATURED IN GLOBAL EFFORT TO TRACK AND PROTECT MARINE MEGAFAUNA


GREEN TURTLE


GALAPAGOS SHARK


HUMPBACK WHALE


WHALE SHARK

A major international study involving nearly 400 scientists under the MegaMove project has revealed that a third of the ocean's largest animals, such as sharks, sea turtles, and whales, are at risk of extinction. Using over 12,000 movement records collected over 30 years, the study tracked more than 110 species across nearly 72% of the ocean, making it one of the most comprehensive efforts to understand marine megafauna behaviour.

St Helena was one of the locations included in this global study, with its surrounding waters playing an important role for several marine megafauna species. Many of the animals highlighted in the research, including whale sharks, humpback whales, and various species of sharks and turtles, are known to frequent the island's waters.

The research shows that these animals rely on about two thirds of the ocean for critical behaviours such as migration, feeding, and breeding. However, more than 75% of these key areas overlap with harmful human activities, including fishing, shipping, pollution, and climate change.

Scientists emphasise that alongside marine protected areas, additional actions such as regulating fishing practices, reducing pollution, and improving international cooperation will be key to giving these ocean giants a better chance of survival. Protecting marine megafauna is not just about conservation targets. It is about making informed, practical decisions that reduce harm and help ocean life thrive for generations to come.

To read more visit: www.science.org/stoken/author-tokens/ST-2660/full

ST HELENA'S MPA: A NATURAL LABORATORY FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY

Here on St Helena, we are fortunate to be part of a truly special marine environment, recognised for its unique isolation and rich biodiversity. Along with Ascension and St Peter and St Paul's Rocks, St Helena sits proudly on the Mid Atlantic Ridge, serving as a natural laboratory where scientists study how marine life moves, lives, and evolves in some of the most remote ocean habitats on Earth.


ST HELENA WRASSE


ST HELENA BUTTERFLY FISH

Because of this unique environment, St Helena, together with Ascension and St Paul's Rocks, was chosen to be part of an international study that highlights the important role our waters play in supporting marine life. Our long period of isolation has helped shape a distinctive marine community around our shores. While Ascension and St Paul's Rocks have their own unique marine life. St Helena also supports numerous species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

What makes our marine environment even more remarkable is how ocean currents and natural factors influence the variety of species that visit and inhabit our waters. Though Atlantic currents generally flow east to west, many fish species travel from the western Atlantic to our islands, creating vital underwater links across vast distances.

Whether species reach us depends on many factors including their size, swimming behaviour, development, and local water conditions such as temperature and habitat.

ST HELENA TO PARTICIPATE IN EU HORIZON 2020 MISSION ATLANTIC SYMPOSIUM ON INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT

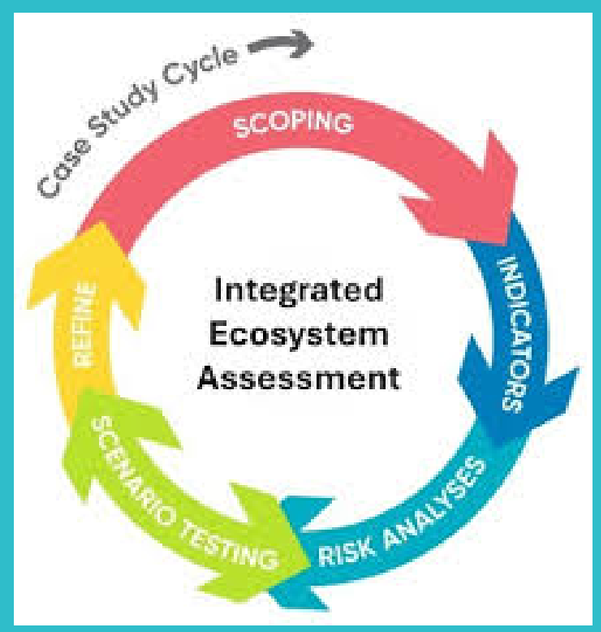
The symposium "Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for a Sustainable Future," part of the EU Horizon 2020 Mission Atlantic project, will take place on 17th and 18th November 2025 in Copenhagen, Denmark and St Helena will be proudly represented at this important event. The gathering brings together scientists, marine stakeholders, resource managers, and policymakers to advance the use of Integrated Ecosystem Assessments (IEAs) across the Atlantic.

The symposium aims to review progress, share lessons learned, and discuss challenges in implementing IEAs. Key topics include integrating fisheries into ecosystem based models and improving engagement with users of these assessments, helping to enhance tools and strategies for sustainable ocean governance.

Mission Atlantic, the broader initiative behind the symposium, focuses on assessing risks to Atlantic ecosystems from climate change, human activities, and natural hazards. IEAs provide a holistic approach to managing marine environments by combining biological, physical, and human data to inform policy and conservation efforts.

With Atlantic ecosystems facing growing threats like warming, pollution, and overfishing, IEAs are crucial for prioritising conservation actions and supporting sustainable resource use. This symposium reinforces international commitments to ocean health while highlighting St Helena's significant contribution to these global efforts.

Studying marine life around St Helena, Ascension, and St Peter St Paul's Rocks has helped the scientific community better understand how species spread, adapt, and sometimes become unique to specific islands. This knowledge is essential for appreciating our ocean's richness and protecting these precious ecosystems as they face global challenges. Our island's marine environment is something to be proud of, and through ongoing research and conservation, we remain committed to safeguarding it for generations to come.



ST HELENA CONTRIBUTES TO INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION FORUM FOR UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES 2025

OVERSEAS TERRITORIES
CONSERVATION.UK

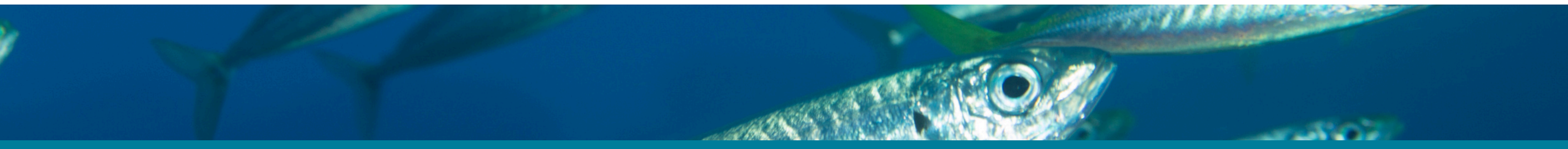
St Helena will be proudly taking part in the upcoming UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) conference, which will be held online from 13th to 16th October 2025. This international event brings together participants from across the UK's Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to share experiences, ideas, and practical solutions for protecting our unique natural environments.

The conference is organised by the UKOTCF, a UK based non-profit organisation that supports conservation in all UK Overseas Territories, including St Helena. With many of these places home to rare and irreplaceable biodiversity, the forum provides an important opportunity for communities, conservationists, government staff, and organisations to come together and work towards shared environmental goals.

Key topics at the forum will include how to build capacity in small and remote territories, how to secure long term funding for conservation, and how to make better use of technology and data to monitor and protect wildlife. Sessions will also explore how local conservation efforts contribute to wider international targets.

Unlike a traditional conference, this event is designed to be practical and forward looking. Rather than a series of stand-alone presentations, it will focus on generating useful recommendations and actions that can directly support conservation work in the territories. It will also be accompanied by a new publication reviewing nearly 40 years of conservation across the territories, featuring contributions from experts and practitioners, including those from St Helena.

This is an important opportunity for the island to be part of a wider network of conservation work and to ensure that St Helena's voice is included in discussions shaping the future of environmental protection across the UK's Overseas Territories



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