



Our Island, Our Environment, Our Responsibility

Monthly Newsletter From The
Environmental Management Directorate

September 2012

Future looking up for Bastard Gumwood (*Commidendrum rotundifolium*)

In late 2009 conservation staff on the island were alarmed when the world's last known pure bastard gumwood at Pouncey's was struck by gales. Props were placed under the tree to support it and with help from DEFRA an intensive programme was initiated to try and save the species from extinction.

Measures included: the construction of a mesh cage to ensure only pure seed was produced – bastard gumwood hybridises with its sister species false gumwood, daily visits to hand pollinate flowers within the cage, these became daily visits to collect seed as they developed. With poor seed viability, only 1 or 2 seeds per 1000 germinating, the propagation of seedlings was the next challenge. Continued efforts, funded in part by DFID and FCO through the OTEP programme, led to the establishment of a recovery site at Drummond's Point, near the Heart-Shaped Waterfall in May 2010.

Last month the first of the newly planted trees flowered. As these trees are growing well away from other gumwoods the flowers are unlikely to be pollinated from false gumwoods, meaning insects can carry out the work in place of laborious daily visits by conservation staff and volunteers.

Little is known about the bastard gumwood and its ecology, the tree has been extremely rare or critically endangered for over 200 years, so the production of flowers at such an early stage is brilliant news.

Seed from the new flowers will be collected and its viability assessed. We hope that this seed will allow us to grow further seedlings.

Everyone who has contributed in any way to this project is thanked for helping to put this endangered endemic tree one step further away from extinction.

Contributed by:

Vanessa Thomas (Nurseries Officer, DANR) & Andrew Darlow (Bastard Gumwood Recovery Officer)

Staff Achievements

This month the following staff undertook emergency first response (EFR) training

Ian Rummery
Mike Durnford
Glen Westmore
Elizabeth Clingham
Gareth Johnson
Leeann Henry
Lourens Malan
Jeremy Henry
Darrel Leo



Bastard Gumwood at
Drummond's Point site



First flowers of Bastard Gumwood



Introducing - Environmental Assessment

Environmental Assessment is the process by which an activity, be it a project, programme, policy or piece of legislation is looked at in terms of the impacts, both positive and negative that it will have on the environment.

The environment being defined as “everything around us” means that we look at the impacts on....everything, so this includes as appropriate: **Land and Land use**, what is the land being used for now and how will this be impacted; **Biodiversity**, our endemic and native plants and animals both on land and in the sea, and also impacts on invasive species, whether it be getting rid of them (a positive impact) or helping to spread them a (negative impact); **Water**, including potential for contamination, loss of natural water courses and impacts relating to how the water will be supplied; **Air** quality, relating to odours, dust generation, gas emissions, which could also contribute to climate change; **Landscape and Visual Amenity**, will it have an impact on views, open spaces; **Built and archaeological heritage**, will it disturb or destroy sites or buildings of historic significance; And the environment does include us so we also consider the impacts on **people**.

Impacts are assessed for **significance** and **mitigation measures** are then designed to avoid or lessen negative impacts or to enhance positive impacts.

In the Environmental Assessment and Advocacy (EAA) Division we currently manage and or undertake both formal and informal types of environmental assessment. Formal types of assessment include **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** which is aligned to the planning process and follows a set process; We have also started to do **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** which is usually used to assess plans and or programmes, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) - an SEA with a Social Assessment, was done of the current Land Development Control Plan. For projects funded by overseas donors, including DFID and the EU, a form of environmental assessment is usually required, for DFID funded projects an **Environmental Screening Note** is included in the project documents. An environmental assessment of all existing policies has also recently been done. And there are a number of ways in which we do **informal environmental assessments** that are used to make “day to day” decisions on whether a particular activity has an environmental impact.

To ensure consistency and transparency we are now working on developing an **Environmental Assessment and Monitoring Framework** to include all of the existing types of environmental assessment but to establish beyond this **what** will need to be assessed, **how** it will be assessed and the **criteria** for each type of assessment.

If you would like more information on Environmental Assessment, and or would like to discuss how or if your activities should include an environmental assessment, contact Isabel Peters, Manager,

September 2012

This month in EMD

- The Solid Waste Management Strategy went out for consultation and responses were positive.
- The Weather Hazard Impact Profile research project will be starting to determine how extreme weather has affected the island in the last 10 years. This is part of a larger project looking at how climate change may affect St Helena Government.
- We have begun looking at ways that we can support ‘green’ practices within government and the private sector.
- The Marine Section has still been heavily engaged in the completion of data analysis reporting and in the formulation of the project proposals for new work.

Staff Focus

This month we welcome Glen Westmore Environmental Risk Management Advisor

Glen says,

“St Helena is an extraordinarily beautiful place but even in only a few weeks I’ve seen how easily the environment can be spoilt by problems like pollution and litter. Some people don’t realise that looking after the environment doesn’t just mean caring for endangered plants and animals and conserving designated areas, it also means protecting the land we use to grow food, the water we drink and the air we breathe.



Key areas for the economic stability of the Island like fisheries and tourism also rely on a well-managed and healthy environment so it’s important for people’s livelihoods too. I am looking forward to helping set up the systems which ensure that Saints get to enjoy this unique environment for many generations to come.”

We also welcome **Ross Henry, Dane Wade** and **Robert Mittens** who have joined the Terrestrial Conservation Team.

EMD would also like to wish Leslie Benjamin who is in Cape Town on a medical referral the best of luck and a speedy recovery.

