



## New Conservation Ordinance Celebrated

Five hundred years after the discovery of the South Atlantic island of Tristan Da Cunha, the unique wildlife of the UK Overseas Territory will receive greater protection, thanks to a new Conservation Ordinance.

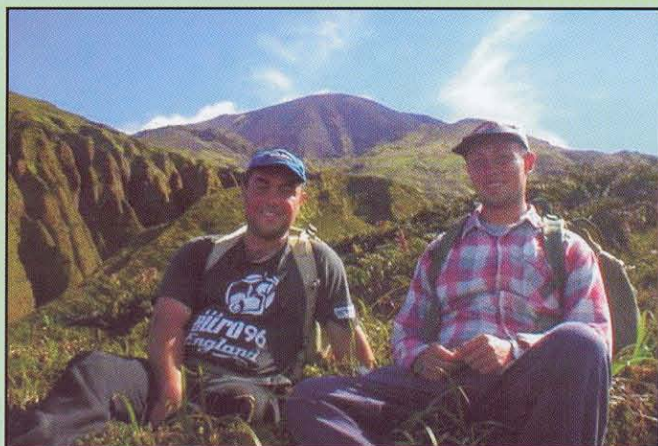
*The photograph left, from Janice Hentley shows the ceremony, on the 9th of February, celebrating the 500th anniversary of the islands' discovery, when Sarah Saunders from the RSPB presented the new Ordinance to Anne Green, the Chief Islander in the presence of His Excellency the Governor of St Helena and Dependencies, Michael Clancy, Administrator Mike Hentley, and James Glass, Head of the Tristan Natural Resources Department.*

The author of the ordinance, John Cooper, of the University of Cape Town and a Tristan honorary conservation officer, said: "We hope this ordinance will take the environmental protection of Tristan da Cunha and its outlying islands into the first half of the new century: it really is a major achievement. Among many other matters, it results in the creation of seven new reserves for rockhopper penguins on the main island of Tristan. The Islanders should be proud of their conservation achievements that this new ordinance marks"

UK Biodiversity Minister Jim Knight said the new ordinance was good news for all of Tristan da Cunha's important wildlife, and particularly for three globally-threatened species of albatross. "The UK is determined to do everything we can to protect albatrosses throughout the world, both in our own territories and elsewhere. I am delighted that Tristan da Cunha has taken this important step and we will be working with them to ensure they can be included in ACAP as soon as possible. The UK has been an instrumental partner in developing international efforts to protect and conserve albatrosses, and some UK's Overseas Territories, including Tristan da Cunha, are at the front line of the fight to save these magnificent birds." Tristan contains ten species of bird found nowhere else in the world, including two species of albatross and the spectacled petrel, another seabird, which are all threatened with global extinction. Of the remaining seven endemic land birds, only the Tristan thrush is not considered to be in danger of extinction. Dr Geoff Hilton, an RSPB international biologist, said: "The albatrosses and petrels are falling victim to the longline fishing industry. The baited hooks of international fishing vessels are fatally attractive to these birds, which become hooked and drown in their thousands - an estimated 100,000 albatrosses, of 21 species, have been dying on longlines every year. Meanwhile on land, the rats and mice, inadvertently introduced by shipwrecks, over the years are preying on many of the birds, and other less noticeable wildlife."



*Rare wildlife images: above an albino Great Shearwater (Petrel) chick found on Nightingale Island, & below the majestic Tristan Albatross (Gony) as seen from the RMS St Helena & photographed by Simon Dunstan.*



*Tristan's first Conservation Officer Simon Glass is pictured above with Matthew Green on a Darwin Project habitat mapping project. They are sat on the edge of The Base, with Hottentot Gulch to the left and Nellie's Hump & The Peak beyond.*

The new ordinance entitled 'Conservation of Native Organisms and Natural Habitats (Tristan da Cunha) Ordinance 2006' replaces a previous conservation ordinance drafted in 1976 by Sir Martin Holdgate and the late Dr Nigel Wace. Sir Martin attended the presentation ceremony on Tristan, and expressed his approval of the new ordinance, which he said 'is a great step forward for the Territory and for its human and animal inhabitants'. Sarah Sanders, the RSPB's UK Overseas Territories Officer, said: "The earlier ordinance served Tristan for over a quarter of a century but became increasingly inadequate as Tristan moved forward, accepting its responsibilities under international agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)".

Tristan da Cunha is now asking the UK Government that it be included within ACAP as soon as possible, and it is expected that this will take place by the time of the Second Session of ACAP's Meeting of the Parties, planned to be held in the second half of this year.

*Edited article from the RSPB Press Release February 2006.*