

The BVI Beacon

The light that comes from wisdom never goes out.

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Road Town, Tortola, BVI

Thursday, April 4, 2003

2 Sections, 32 Pages — 5

BVI JOURNAL

Progress in theft case

Police appear to be close to making an arrest in the case of the theft of several items from a boat moored off Cooper Island. A police spokeswoman confirmed that some items resembling those stolen from the boat a few weeks ago have been recovered, but no arrest has been made at this time. There have been several reports of boats being burgled while moored or anchored off islands on the south side of Sir Francis Drake Channel. On March 14, a tourist was stabbed by a man who boarded his chartered catamaran. Police would not say if the investigation has identified any suspects in that case. There have also been a series of armed robberies in which suspects have fled the scene in boats.

No Siren this week

The BVI Beacon's entertainment guide, *The Siren*, is not included in this week's paper. Instead it has been incorporated into *The Semaphore*, a publication this newspaper has produced in conjunction with the Royal BVI Yacht Club. It is available free at locations wherever *The Beacon* is sold as well as at the BVI Spring Regatta Village at Nanny Cay Marina. *The Siren* will return next week.

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Man, mom on trial for murder

• Victim stabbed to death after dice game turned ugly

BY CRAIG CORDES

A High Court jury this week is hearing the trial of a Long Bush man and his mother who are jointly accused of murdering a neighbour after the man assaulted a member of their family.

The Crown opened its case against Kuanda Cornwall and his mother, Claudette Cornwall, Monday with the testimony of Ronald Hughes, who said that he witnessed the events surrounding the murder and tended to the dying victim, who was repeatedly stabbed in the chest with a foot-long kitchen knife.

Fateful night

Elmarlon Hermon, 33, of Fresh Water Pond, was killed on the evening of Jan. 4, 2002 — the sole murder in the territory that year. According to police, the chain of events was set in motion when Mr. Hermon slashed Mr.

continued on p. 18



SAILING AWAY: *Pipedream*, a Sirena 38 skippered by Chris Haycraft, rounds a mark at the Ro International Regatta last weekend. See story on page 11.

Turtle grant for BVI

BY BEACON STAFF

The BVI will start studying turtles on Anegada through a \$256,000 grant from the United Kingdom's prestigious Darwin Initiative.

The money will be channelled through Great Britain's University of Wales, which is co-operating with the BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department to develop a biodiversity plan for Anegada. The programme will last for three years.

According to Alan Mills, geographical information systems officer for C&F, the money will be used to study not only turtles, but birds and vegetation as well.

Conservation and Fisheries officers will be partnering with officials from the Kew Gardens in London, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Marine Turtle Network at the University of Wales.

One of many

The project is one of 34 that the Darwin Initiative will fund at

a cost of \$3.1 million. The money is part of a \$6.4 million scheme to help developing countries conserve their natural resources.

"The Darwin Initiative is part of the UK's commitment to tackle biodiversity problems at an international level," said Mr. Morley. "We are supporting these important projects aimed at saving species and ecosystems by putting in even more money."

Long-term benefits

The Darwin Initiative was first announced at the Rio de Janeiro Summit, Brazil in 1992. It is a biodiversity grant programme, run and funded by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Projects are selected which will provide long-term benefits to the region after the conclusion of U.K. contributions, and which would not otherwise be carried out without the funding.

Stuck in the middle with you

• UK report spotlights minister, PS relations

BY CRAIG CORDES

After scouring the territory's public service last year, a UK government consultant held one, lingering issue above all others: Far more often than not, the elected, "non-permanent" ministers and their governor-appointed, "permanent" secretaries just don't get along.

"By far the most concerning issue which confronts the BVI government at the current time is the almost total breakdown in the relationship between ministers and ... permanent secretaries," wrote Chris Cooper of the Centre for Management and Policy Studies in the UK Cabinet Office last July.

"In the BVI, the relation has broken down and is characterised by widespread and mistrust and suspicion."

Mr. Cooper's report, commissioned by the governor's office to assess the far-reaching F Service

Development Programme, touched on several issues — from ties to stakeholder groups like the Civil Service Association to pension law — no issue was given more prominence than the one above.

Further, according to several level government sources, there has been little change in the nature of their interaction,

continued on p.



Left: Flamingos will be one of the species studied by scientists who are conducting intensive research into the biodiversity of Anegada. (Photo provided) Right: Residents will help out researchers in studying birds and other animals on Anegada. (Photo provided)

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Darwin project launched

*• Initiative to study
Anegada's biodiversity*

BY BEACON STAFF

This week scientists from the Marine Turtle Research Group of the University of Exeter, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the U.K. in collaboration with BVI National Parks Trust, BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, launched a new Darwin Initiative project to assess the biodiversity of Anegada.

Anegada hosts a globally important coral reef system and is a regionally important area for nesting and foraging sea turtles and birds. Anegada is also the home to some plants found nowhere else in the world. The project aims to document and monitor the birds, plants and sea turtles of Anegada and to provide institutional strengthening and capacity building whilst promoting the uniqueness of Anegada and creating environmental awareness. One of the fundamental aims of this project is to involve the local community as much as possible and to provide the community with all the information they need to make informed decisions about man-

aging biodiversity in Anegada.

The project has already started in earnest with training courses, involving the U.K. based scientists, the three local partner groups and several members of the Anegadian community, in all aspects of biodiversity monitoring commencing this week at the new Marine Science Centre at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College. Further training workshops and fieldwork techniques in botany, bird census methods and sea turtle research will continue into early next week in Anegada itself. More activities are planned for the future and will include liaison with the local schools to talk about environmental awareness and the biodiversity in Anegada.

CAPE AIR

BEEF ISLAND - SAN JUAN SPECIAL



Puerto Rico

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The BVI Beacon

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LIAT still seeking EC\$21 million

ROSEAU, Dominica, CMC - Regional carrier LIAT is continuing to seek regional support to stay afloat.

During a promotional visit here on Friday, Director of Corporate Development David Stuart said the company immediately needs 21 million EC dollars (US\$7.7 million) to keep flying over the next few months.

Stuart said the airline was presently going through turbulent times but he was confident of a bright future for LIAT in serving the region.

"The Caribbean is still seen as a safe haven and even after the September 11 (2001 terrorist attacks on the United States) people from Europe have continued to travel to the

Caribbean, with LIAT carrying 80 per cent of (traffic from international airlines). We also note that 75 per cent of LIAT travelers are indigenous Caribbean people," he said.

He also stated that the war in Iraq has had no immediate effect on the company.

In recent times, LIAT has called on regional governments to intervene in regulating the aviation sector. It has also accused the Antigua-based Caribbean Star of predatory pricing.

CARICOM governments are the main shareholders in LIAT and for years have assisted the airline in coping with financial woes.

UK HELP FOR ANEGADA TURTLES

The BVI's Anegada Turtle Project is to receive a US\$256,000 injection over the next three years from the United Kingdom (UK)'s prestigious Darwin Initiative.

The money will be channelled through Great Britain's University of Wales, which is cooperating with the BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department to develop a biodiversity plan for Anegada.

UK Minister for Nature Protection Mr. Elliot Morley announced on March 24 that the Darwin Initiative will fund an additional 34 projects at a cost of US\$3.1M, as part of a US\$6.4M scheme which helps mostly developing countries conserve their rich biodiversity resources, using UK expertise in a partnership approach.

"The Darwin Initiative is part of the UK's commitment to tackle biodiversity problems at an international level," said Mr. Morley.

"We are supporting these important projects aimed at saving species and ecosystems by putting in even more money.

"This year we will be spending US\$6.4M, up from US\$4.8M last year, on Darwin projects, both new and existing," he added.

The Darwin Initiative was first announced at the Rio de Janeiro Summit, Brazil in 1992. It is a biodiversity grant programme, run and funded by the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DeFRA).

UK Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair announced extra funding for the Darwin Initiative in August 2002, which will take the annual budget to US\$11.2M by 2005.

The projects help developing countries to fulfill commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

disposal of waste.

During the meeting agreed that signs would be placed at ports of entry, guesthouses, and leaflets for distribution on SAR.

It was also agreed that a simulation would be conducted with key personnel from the Holberton Hospital with regular contact with SAR.

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- ◆ THE ROTARY CLUB OF ROAD TOWN meets every Tuesday 12:30 at Fort Burt Hotel- Road Town
- ◆ THE BVI RED CROSS meets at its Headquarters on the 2nd Monday of every month
- ◆ FOOD ADDICTS ANONYMOUS meets every Thursday at 5pm - Tel 54477

◆ CADA - Drug Prevention Information - referrals - meeting schedules - films - speakers - books - posters Tel: 4943125 - Fishlock Road - Road Town

◆ BVI PHILATELIC SOCIETY: if you collect stamps, coins, phone cards Call 494-7789 - e-mail: issun@candwbvi.net

◆ BVI CANCER SOCIETY meets monthly on the second Tuesday of every month at the BVI Red Cross 5:30pm tel: 496-9999

◆ ANTE-NATAL CLASSES are held every Tuesday 12-12:30pm at the Road Town Health Clinic

◆ THE LIONS CLUB OF TORTOLA meets every Tuesday at the Lions Den, Johnson's

Auto

ANTIGUA from page 33
The guidelines call for the various health institutions on the

10,000 Watts of



Award will protect variety of life

Scientists at the University have been awarded funding to help protect species and ecosystems in one of the largest unspoilt areas of the Caribbean.



Dr. Godley examines a juvenile hawksbill turtle which are plentiful in Aneгада's coastal waters

Dr Brendan Godley and Dr Annette Broderick, who are part of the Marine Turtle Research Group, from the University's School of Biological Sciences will receive a Darwin Initiative grant of more than £160,000 to produce an action plan for the island of Aneгада over the next three years and to recruit an additional member of staff.

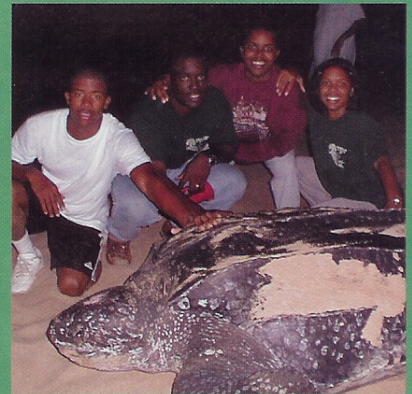
The project, which is due to start in October, aims to protect the variety and balance of life on Aneгада, one of the British Virgin Islands, probably one of the least developed large islands in the Caribbean. It hosts regionally significant turtle and bird populations and includes global endemic plants among its fauna.

"Aneгада is under extreme development pressure. The main

objective of this project is to carry out a detailed assessment of the island's coastal biodiversity leading to an action plan and the creation of ways to monitor the plan in the future," said Dr Godley. The project will be a partnership between a wide range of local stakeholders and UK-based specialists at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The Darwin Initiative, run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, selects projects to provide long-term benefits to developing regions which would not otherwise take place without funding.

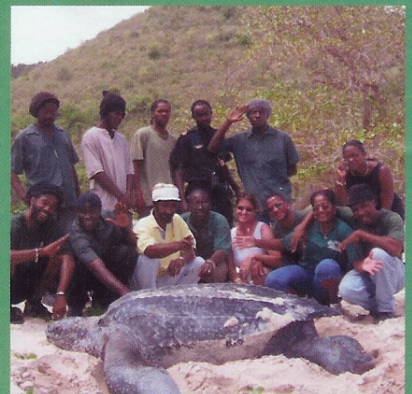
The University project was one of only three schemes chosen from Wales within the current round of applications.



Staff from British Virgin Islands Conservation and Fisheries Department who have already had success with turtles in Tortola, the most populated island in the British Virgin Islands

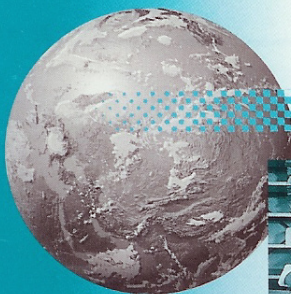


Extensive unspoilt dune systems are still present in Aneгада



Staff from British Virgin Islands Conservation and Fisheries Department

- The Darwin Initiative was first announced at the Rio Summit in 1992
- Projects are selected which will provide long-term benefits to the region after the inclusion of the UK contribution, and which would not otherwise be carried out without the funding



International Courses 2003

Kew's international courses programme has been busy this summer with the Herbarium Techniques course running in June and July, closely followed by the Plant Conservation Techniques course in August and September. For a change, the British summer was notably hot and dry, with UK temperature records being broken in early August. But despite the heat, the courses flourished, with participants enjoying the opportunity to undertake field trips without needing waterproofs and wellington boots!

In keeping with the courses' tradition, there were participants from all over the world – from as far apart as the Falkland Islands and Papua New Guinea. Anna Asatryan from Armenia who took part in PCT represented the 99th country to attend one of RBG Kew's Higher Education and Training courses since they began in 1987. We welcome them all to the growing network of Kew's International Diploma Course alumni. The participants of the Herbarium Techniques Course introduce themselves on pp2–3. Look out for a report on the Plant Conservation Techniques Course in *on COURSE* 8.

Herbarium Techniques Course 2003



Course participants

Back row (left to right): **Alifereti Naikatini** (South Pacific Regional Herbarium, Fiji), **Homero Vargas** (National Herbarium, Ecuador), **Professor Simon Owens** (RBG, Kew), **Naqqi Manco** (Turks and Caicos National Trust, Turks and Caicos Islands), **Billy Bau** (Forest Research Institute, Papua New Guinea), **Professor Peter Crane** (RBG Kew), **Edgley César** (Brazil), **Alexy Seregin** (Moscow State University, Russia), **Raymond Walker** (National Parks Trust, British Virgin Islands)

Front row (left to right): **Monicah Kabelo** (National Museum, Botswana), **Alison Mahoney** (Minnesota State University Mankato, USA), **Angela Severin** (Ministry of Agriculture, St Lucia), **Lillian Kidd** (Falkland Islands National Trust, Falkland Islands), **Tonji Nana Félicité** (Herbier National, Cameroon)

Plant Conservation Techniques Course 2003



Course participants

Back row (left to right): **Colin Clubbe** (RBG Kew), **Joseph A Betzler** (Zoological Society of San Diego's Botanical Conservation Center, USA), **William Hamisy** (National Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Tanzania), **Dan Shepherd** (Resource Conservation Program, Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, USA), **Suranjan Fernando** (Central Environmental Authority, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka), **Professor Vernon Heywood** (University of Reading, UK), **Solofa Rakotoarisoa** (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Madagascar), **Kaliamoorthy Ravikumar** (Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions, Bangalore, India)

Front row (left to right): **Liz de Keyser** (RBG, Kew), **Anna Asatryan** (Institute of Botany, Yerevan, Armenia), **Anthony Mapaura** (National Herbarium and Botanic Garden, Zimbabwe), **Rita Ngolan** (Kilum-Ijim Forest Project, Bamenda, Cameroon)

UK gives grant to finance study of Anegada's coastal habitat

The BVI has received a \$256,000 grant to begin a new coastal biodiversity study on Anegada.

The funds will come from the UK's Darwin Initiative. UK Minister for Nature Protection Elliot Morley last Monday announced that the initiative would provide an additional \$3.1 million in funds to 34 projects worldwide. The BVI's new survey of coastal habitats on Anegada is one of these.

"We are supporting these important projects aimed at saving species and ecosystems by putting in even more money," Morley said.

In the past, the National Parks Trust received grant funds for a biodiversity study on Virgin Gorda and Anegada.

This new grant will be implemented by the Conservation and Fisheries Dept, the National Parks Trust and H. Lavity Stoutt Community College.

-Susanna Henighan

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Inside

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Anegada's treasures

Darwin Initiative recording island's unique flora, fauna



Above, Simone Lettsome of the National Parks Trust with a juvenile hawksbill turtle on Anegada. At left, one of the island's distinctive flamingoes. Scientists from the United Kingdom are teaming up with local agencies to conduct an inventory of the island's unique plants and animals. The work is part of the Darwin Initiative and will span more than two years. Local agencies including the National Parks Trust, Conservation and Fisheries, the Governor's Office and H. Lavity Stout Community College are partners with the programme. • Photo courtesy of Darwin Initiative.

Case or no case?

Court to rule on whether Smith has a case to answer

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Beached whales die on St. Martin

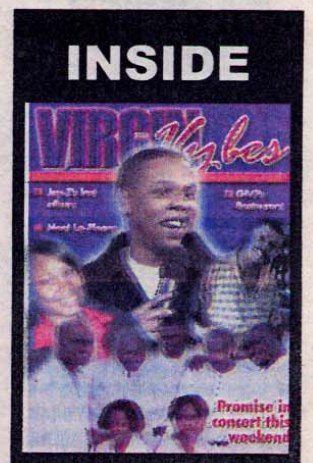
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Skelton: 2004 budget will be late

Page 3

Live and let live: World AIDS Day

Page 4




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Mapping Anegada's natural treasures

Island the focus of intense research project

By SUSANNA HENIGHAN
Staff Writer

There is treasure hidden in Anegada's scrubby brush, swimming along its shores and flying in its skies.

Not gold or silver. Treasure of a totally different kind: natural treasure.

Take for example the hawksbill turtle, an endangered sea turtle that uses Anegada's beaches as nesting sites.

Or consider pokemeboy, a critically endangered tree that grows only on Anegada and nowhere else in the world.

The British government is funding a major research project on Anegada to learn more about the unique species of turtles, plants and birds that live there.

The funding is through the Darwin Initiative, a programme aimed at helping countries rich in rare species take steps to protect them.

Named for the famous scientist who pioneered the theory of natural selection, the initiative came out of the 1992 Rio Summit on the environment, where environmentalists determined that loss of biodiversity is one of the major threats facing the planet.

Every year, the Darwin Initiative makes grant funds available to projects in countries from Bhutan to Mongolia. The goal is to protect rare species by strengthening local agencies' capacity to monitor and study them.

A buzzword of the programme is biodiversity, a concept that

simply put means the variety and variability of life on earth, Dr. Colin Clubbe of Kew Gardens explained.

Clubbe is one of four scientists from the UK who have been in the territory this month laying the groundwork for the two-and-a-half year programme.

"If we lose the species that are unique to Anegada, that's a species that's gone. Extinct is forever," Clubbe said.

The Anegada research programme was chosen for funding through a competitive application process. The decision reflects both the importance of Anegada and the Darwin Initiative's approval of the way a previous Darwin programme was administered here. That Darwin focused on rare species at Gorda Peak and on Anegada. It was coordinated by the National Parks Trust.

The new grant means some \$275,000 in funds will be available to support monitoring, training and education surrounding Anegada's wildlife.

Survival of Anegada's rare species is important not just in the context of the British Virgin Islands, but in the global context as well.

"Anegada is a Caribbean wilderness," Clubbe said. "The Caribbean has lost more than 70 percent of its primary vegetation. In global terms, it is ranked third of 25 global hotspots."

Anegada is also home to the third largest continuous reef in the world, but far less is known about it than other large reefs, such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

"Anegada is the third largest continuous reef in the world, but it



Raymond Walker and Keith Grant of the National Parks Trust, and Dr. Colin Clubbe of Kew Gardens, press a sample of a rare plant in preparation for filing it away as a specimen as part of the Darwin Initiative on Anegada. • Photos courtesy of Darwin Initiative.

is relatively poorly understood," Joseph Smith-Abbott, director of the National Parks Trust, said.

He hopes that this research project will help scientists learn more about Anegada's reef.

The NPT is one of several local partners that will help carry out the research and benefit from training. Other local partners are the Conservation and Fisheries Department, H. Lavity Stouff Community College and the Governor's Office.

During their two-week stay here, Clubbe and the other British scientists spent several days training officials from those partner agencies how to monitor the species that are being studied.

The hope is that by the end of the initiative, the territory will have a cadre of trained scientists that can continue monitoring the endangered species.

"Building local capacity, that is what this whole thing is about," Bertrand Lettsome, chief

conservation and fisheries officer, said.

The initiative was launched on Oct. 1, 2003 and will continue until 2006. In addition to the training, scientists have already begun tagging and measuring turtles in the Anegada area.

They have also started a habitat map of the island, which will give scientists a much clearer picture of resources of the island and where they are located.

They are also collecting samples of rare plants that live on Anegada, so records and samples can be kept at Kew Gardens in London, and also at a herbarium planned for the J.R. O'Neal Botanic Gardens in Road Town.

Clubbe said one of the goals of the project is to give residents of the territory a clearer idea of how valuable Anegada and its natural resources are.

"You preserve what you value," he said. ■

HM Customs gets serious

By StandPoint Staff

If you're setting aside money for Christmas shopping, don't forget to save some for Her Majesty's Customs as well.

Customs Comptroller Wade Smith is warning residents that Customs will step up surveillance activities during the busy Christmas shopping season, GIS has reported.

"Research has shown that the day after Thanksgiving is one of the biggest shopping days of the

Officials warn holiday shoppers, charter companies to pay up

year," Smith said.

Customs wants its share of that cash.

Residents who ride the ferry should be prepared to honestly declare all their shopping, while those in private boats must clear in and out of Customs, Smith said.

He also urged boat operators to have plenty of the new Customs declaration forms on hand to speed

up the process.

Meanwhile, Smith is also reminding charter boat companies that their annual commercial and recreational licences fees are past due, GIS has reported.

Smith said if boat charter companies do not pay up their dues, Customs will have "no alternative but to impose the appropriate penalties on the delin-

quent operators."

The law gives Customs authority to detain the boat until the arrears and a fine of up to \$5,000 is paid.

A few boat companies have already learned this the hard way. Assistant Comptroller for Enforcement Dean Fahie said two companies were fined a total of \$15,000 this week.

In light of this, Smith said Customs is appealing to all charter companies to come in and pay their licence fees immediately. ■

Alfred Blackburn Smith Nature Reserve was officially opened in February 2003. This 8.7-acre reserve is one of the last remaining tracts of undeveloped Bermuda upland forest supporting unusual plants such as Box Briar, Darrell's Fleabane and Turnera. White-tailed Tropicbirds (Longtails) nest on the coastal side of the reserve while the woodlands on the lee-side of the hilltop provide habitat for a variety of bird-life. The Society has already carried out much restoration work. As part of its management plan for the reserve, the removal of invasive species and the planting of native and endemic species continue today through working parties from the Bermuda Audubon Society and Bermuda Zoological Society, and horticultural trainees from Bermuda College.

In May 2003, the Bermuda Audubon Society also acquired the ten small islands situated in Harrington Sound known as "Cockroach Island". These massive rockfalls from the nearby Abbot's Cliff have historical, cultural and environmental significance in one of the most scenic areas of Bermuda. The Audubon Society has pledged to remove all invasive plant species, replant with indigenous plants and install nesting boxes for Longtails. For more information on these reserves, read the society's newsletter Vol. 14 No. 2 (Summer 2003) at www.audubon.bm

Just prior to the Forum's conference, Colin Clubbe (RBG Kew) and Karen Varnham (invasive species consultant) ran a workshop on invasive species as part of Bermuda's Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. Bermuda's invasive species problems are extreme, and the introduction of alien invasive species is still the greatest threat to Bermuda's biodiversity. The one-week workshop, well attended by all sectors of society, identified awareness raising and import controls as key needs.

British Virgin Islands

A three-year project, entitled the *Darwin Initiative Assessment of the Coastal Biodiversity of Anegada, BVI*, was submitted and approved on behalf of the University of Exeter, with UK partners RBG Kew and RSPB, with local partners including the BVI Conservation and Fisheries Department, BVI National Parks Trust (NPT) and the H. Lavity Stouff Community College. This project will commence in October 2003 and will include assessments of marine turtles, plants and birds on Anegada.

The NPT's Anegada Rock Iguana *Cyclura pinguis* rehabilitation programme continues to address the recovery of this critically endangered and endemic species on Anegada. However the primary threats to project success include feral cats and habitat loss within the proposed protected area. The NPT has participated in a number of public meetings to discuss these on-going issues.

The Island Resources Foundation (IRF) completed a Resource Characterisation and Management Plan of the privately owned island of Sandy Cay, in order to address future management requirements, which may include the NPT.



The scrambling cactus Leptocereus quadricostatus growing on limestone cays in Anegada

The NPT reviewed and updated its principal act, the *BVI National Parks Ordinance*, through funding provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Upon the Act's approval, anticipated for 2003, the BVI will fulfil requirements found within regional and international agreements.

A red-listing workshop, comprised of NPT and RBG Kew personnel, identified five critically endangered and two endangered plants that are Puerto Rico bank endemics. These listings have been submitted to the IUCN for inclusion in the 2003 Global Red List of Threatened Species.

The island restoration of Great Tobago National Park, a regionally important habitat for the endangered Magnificent Frigatebirds *Fregata magnificens*, continues. The NPT has constructed two artificial nesting platforms to promote the expansion of the colony, whilst removal of feral goats is an on-going activity to ensure complete eradication. However rat predation is expected to escalate following the decline in the goat population.

Cayman Islands

The Grand Cayman Blue Iguana project is proceeding successfully, and will be the model on which other iguana protection and breeding projects in the Region will be based. Barkers National Park in West Bay has been established as Cayman's first National Park. The nature project on Little Cayman, funded by FCO, comprising a series of viewing platforms with interpretive signs overlooking all the wetlands, has been completed. This project, again, is one which can be a model for other Territories

On Cayman Brac, trails and a forest boardwalk have been established as avitourism sites. The Department of Tourism have asked for a proposal for a similar project on Grand Cayman and are taking a stand at the UK Bird Fair in August to encourage avitourism.

Sadly, there has been no progress on acquiring the Central Mangrove Wetland as a Ramsar site. Proposals have been put to CIG for the establishment of a series of "Heritage Sites" to protect small but environmentally important areas.