

The Amphibians and Reptiles of the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas



Working for amphibians and reptiles since 1989

Notes for Contributors – March 2009

1. Background. The Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT) is a UK based charity dedicated to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles. One area of interest is the varied and important herpetofauna that is collectively supported by the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas. Basic species and ecosystems inventories are essential for the formation of overarching biodiversity conservation strategies – the HCT felt that the collation and production of such an inventory to cover the herpetofauna of all of the British territories would serve as a useful contribution to those involved in the conservation of these areas.

These notes accompany version 1 of the report entitled “*The amphibians and reptiles of the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas: species inventory and overview of conservation and research priorities*”. They are intended to provide guidance to anyone wishing to contribute to the final version of the report. This first “work in progress” version, completed in March 2009, has been compiled by the HCT, with the generous financial support of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), in order to facilitate this consultation process.

No single body can produce a document of this scope without assistance, especially from people within the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies themselves. At present, a lot of information is missing from this first version of the report and it will no doubt also contain mistakes. Consequently, this consultation process is being carried out to seek additional information from relevant experts, as well as corrections, additions and suggestions for improvements. It is ultimately hoped to include contributions from as many of those who are interested in this subject as possible and, therefore, for the HCT to simply act as the editor of the final version.

When completed, it is hoped that this report will become a useful resource for everyone concerned with the conservation of the amphibians and reptiles of the various territories and dependencies that come under the jurisdiction of the UK or the British Crown. This may include government departments, NGOs, universities, natural history societies and any other interested parties, especially within the territories and dependencies concerned. The final report will therefore be made freely available on the websites of the HCT, JNCC and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF). In addition, the report will guide future work by the HCT in this area, especially as we collaborate with our European partners to promote significantly increased support and funding for herpetofauna conservation in the various overseas territories of European Union member states.

2. Notes about Contributing to the Final Report. Version 1 of the report should be viewed as working document that provides a basic framework to which your information can be added. Please feel free to make any suggestions to improve this structure. At present, the report contains five main sections:

1. Background. This summarises the main aims and reasons for producing this report. Any comments on the need for such a report in the first place would be gratefully received.

2. Species Inventory. Contains species checklists for all territories, a simple ranking of the conservation status of all indigenous and introduced species and, as an appendix, a summary of recent taxonomic changes to the herpetofauna. This is the basic information upon which everything else is based, and should therefore be as accurate as possible, so the HCT is seeking corrections or comments for this section. In view of the taxonomic instability prevailing for many groups of amphibians and reptiles, and the fact that no single set of names will ever be “correct”, some of the most recent name changes included here will not be universally accepted. On the other hand, it can only hinder conservation efforts if politicians and funding bodies are confronted with a plethora of confusing names and contradictory species lists. One of the aims of this consultation is to therefore to obtain feedback from as many herpetologists as possible in order to produce a standardised, generally accepted nomenclature for the herpetofauna of the UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas.

3. Territory Accounts. These include some background information about each territory or dependency, a checklist of the herpetofauna present, some notes on the status of each species (where known) and a list of the key references. An attempt has also been made to indicate the priority species of conservation concern, plus any introduced species that may actually or potentially be a problem. At the moment, these accounts only contain sparse information as much of what needs to be added can only come from within the territory or dependencies concerned. The HCT is therefore seeking people who live and work in the

territories to act as co-authors of their relevant account. General comments, additions and corrections are also welcome. Additional sections that could be added to the territory accounts include the main habitats present, threats, a summary of protected areas, relevant legislation and some general recommendations.

4. Species Accounts. These include further notes, plus references and recommendations, for the priority species identified in the territory accounts. These species are divided into four groups: i. priority species of international conservation concern; ii. priority species of local conservation concern; iii. introduced species of conservation concern; iv. species that have become extinct in the UK Overseas Territories. Much more information is required for each species, especially local knowledge. Until this is obtained, the choice of species included in each of these groups will remain somewhat arbitrary. Selected references are listed for each species, although these are not complete (a literature search has also been carried out for all other species in the territories).

5. Recommendations. Suggestions are made for various survey, research and other conservation related activities. These recommendations are simply meant to indicate, especially to potential funding bodies, the kind of work that is still needed. Please make any additional recommendations that you feel would enhance herpetofauna conservation in the territories. Naturally, no single body could undertake to do everything in this list, but the ideas put forward will hopefully lead to new projects by many different bodies.

General Contributors. Contributions of any length are being sought along with any other feedback you feel would enhance the final report. Send any information or comments to Paul Edgar at UKOT@herpconstrust.org.uk. Please ensure to specify how you would like to be listed in the Acknowledgements section, and as a contributor in any specific territory or species account, and also whether you would like your contact details to be included or not.

Co-authors. Please also contact us if you would be willing to co-author any sections of the report that would benefit from being produced in more detail.

3. What Else is Needed. In addition to the general contributions outlined above, the following are also needed.

References. All references that are relevant to individual territories and species, plus specific subjects such as taxonomic changes, amphibian declines, etc, are being collected as PDFs. Copyrights allowing, these will all be made freely available on the HCT website as a resource to aid conservation work and research. Therefore, PDFs of the references already listed would be gratefully received, as well any additional papers, unpublished survey reports, species action plans, management plans, theses, publicity or educational material you have available.

Photographs. A few of the author's photographs are already included in the report for illustrative purposes. However, many more are required that show individual species, plus habitats, landscapes, protected areas, specific threats, introduced species and so on. Please contact us if you have any original photographs you would be happy to be used in the final version of the report. Full credit will of course be given but unfortunately there is no budget to pay for photographs at this stage.

Maps. The maps included in this version of the report have been provided courtesy of JNCC and the UKOTCF, although maps for the Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas have yet to be obtained. The HCT and UKOTCF will be producing a set of new maps showing for the final version of the report. It is also hoped to include a few other maps showing specific things such as the distribution of particular species, so please contact us if you have any other maps that might be relevant.

Website Links. Since we also aim to include a list of websites as an appendix in the final report, please let us know if there any relevant websites you would like listed.

4. Consultation Process Deadline. The deadline for contributions to the final report is 30th June 2009 (i.e. after the UKOTCF's conference on Grand Cayman) but please do get in touch anytime before this with information, suggestions or questions. It is hoped that the final version will subsequently be made available to everyone during August 2009.

5. The Future. It is anticipated that the information collected in the final report will be updated on a regular basis beyond 2009. In particular, it would be useful to be able to readily communicate any urgent threats to critically endangered species, changes to the conservation status of priority species, successful projects, lessons learned and the inevitable taxonomic changes. If there is enough interest, a working group/e-mail forum could be established to keep everyone informed about herpetofauna conservation activities in the territories, with perhaps a newsletter being periodically published on this subject. Any thoughts on this would also be welcome.