



# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

January 2012



## **REMINDER: RESTRICTED ACCESS AT CENTRAL BASIN PROPEROUS BAY PLAIN**

We would like to remind you that vehicular access into the Central Basin is not permitted. The whole of Prosperous Bay Plain is currently designated as National Forest Land under the Forestry Ordinance of 1954. It is an offence to use any motor vehicles on any Forest Land, unless on a defined track. Although much of Prosperous Bay Plain will be developed for the Airport Project, we have tried to ensure that most of the central basin will remain untouched. Please help us to keep it special. If you have been out to Prosperous Bay Plain recently you will have noticed that new signs have been erected in the area. These are to show you the restricted areas of access and which routes to use.

## **Relocation of the Environmental Planning and Development Section**

The Environmental Planning and Development Section now forms part of the Environmental Management Directorate and our Office has been relocated to the first floor of Essex House. We can be contacted via the Essex House switchboard on telephone number 2270.

Email addresses are as follows:

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## **DWARF BITTERN FOUND**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012 a Dwarf Bittern was picked up by Mr Paul Herne 575m downstream at New Bridge. It was taken to the government Senior Veterinary Officer – Mr Joe Hollins, who carried out an examination. It was found that the bird was extremely thin, and that the left wing had been broken earlier, and had then healed naturally in a twisted position back to front. It was clear the bird was having difficulty surviving and would never fly again, so it was then put down. This is the third recorded sighting of a Dwarf Bittern on St Helena. A short report about the sighting can be found on the African Bird Club bulletin written by Chris Hillman.



Picture taken by Rebecca Lawrence

## **Update on OTEP Bastard Gumwood Project**

Since the OTEP Bastard Gumwood project was started in July 2011, a number of activities have been carried out successfully.

At High Hill, three contracts for the following works are already completed. They are:

- Improved access to the Bastard Gumwood site.
- Vegetation clearance for a cleared boundary to erect a fence line.
- Erection of a rabbit proof fence to exclude stock and rabbits from the site.

At this site there are approximately 105 associated plants that have been planted. They are made up of boxwoods, rosemary, ebonyes, small bellflower, tufted sedge and hair grass. There are about 20 Bastard Gumwoods at the Nursery and 14 more at Woodlands in readiness for planting at this site. Planting has been temporarily suspended during the current hot dry spell.

Work at Botleys has also commenced. A rope ladder has been purchased and is now in use. Monitoring of this tree at Botleys is carried out by the Bastard Gumwood Restoration Officer- Mr Andrew Darlow. Last week Andrew and the ANRD Nursery Officer Vanessa Thomas climbed down the cliff to inspect the tree and to collect ripe seed. They will continue with weekly visits and should be able to collect pollen to cross-pollinate with the Bastard Gumwood Tree at Pounceys.

Monitoring at Drummonds Point site takes place once a week by the Environmental Conservation Section staff of ANRD and Andrew Darlow. Biological control is taking place at this site for the control of the Jacaranda bug, using the predatory beetle *Hyparaspis pantherina*. Root drenching takes place when needed for the root mealy bug. There are approximately 200 Bastard Gumwoods and over 1000 associated plant species established there. The area planted is being gradually extended as more plants become available. The largest of the planted Bastard Gumwoods has now reached almost 2m in height.

The frame of the pollination tent at Pounceys has now been erected. Due to the effects of our changing climate the flowering season is later than the last season therefore the insect proof material has not been erected. At present there are approximately 5 flowering heads that have started to flower. One flower head that is open has been bagged so that no pollinators such as the bee or hover fly can pollinate from any other *Gumwood*. The material will be erected over the whole tree by the end of January and daily visits to hand pollinate will start.

A small tree which is called BG71 is also producing flowers at Barren Ground and is being hand pollinated to increase seed set. It is not yet known if this is a pure Bastard Gumwood or a hybrid but genetic tests are being carried out in the UK to try and find out.

**Environmental Planning & Development Section of the Environmental Management Directorate**

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