

SECTION 3: CURRENT PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION AND RELEVANT LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

Before reviewing the status and threats to the Ascension Island marine turtle population it is worthwhile reviewing the existing laws and legal instruments that may have relevance to sea turtles at Ascension:

A) Legislation on Ascension

There are two local laws under which marine turtles are afforded protection on Ascension Island. These are:

- 1) The Endangered Species (Ascension) Control Ordinance of 1976 (see appendix 1),
- 2) The Wild Life (Protection) (Ascension) Ordinance of 1944 and the Wild Life (Protection) (Ascension) Regulations 1967 (see appendix 2)

The Endangered Species (Ascension) Control Ordinance is designed to control exports and imports of endangered species. The Wild Life (Protection) (Ascension) Ordinance prohibits the killing, capturing or taking of any wildlife within Ascension unless under the control of the governor.

NB As yet no nesting beaches or marine habitats are afforded any official protection.

B) Environment Charter for the UK Overseas Territories

On 26 September Ascension Island and Her Majesty's Government signed the Ascension Island Environment Charter (Appendix 3). This sets out guiding principles and commitments for both Ascension Island and the UK Government relating to the management of the environment.

C) International conventions:

The UK's ratification of the following international agreements covering marine turtles has been extended to St Helena and Ascension Island.

- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention).
- Other international instruments that the UK has not signed which could have future relevance include :
 - Inter-American Convention for Sea Turtle Conservation
 - Memorandum of Understanding under the Convention of Migratory Species Concerning the Conservation Measures for Marine Turtles of the Atlantic Coast of Africa

D) Additional commitments of UK Government

The recent projects undertaken on Ascension, including commissioning this management plan, help to fulfil the obligations of DEFRA (entered into as DETR) and FCO to the following actions of the UK Marine Turtles Grouped Species Action Plan:

“5.1.4, Review current levels and effectiveness of legislative protection of marine turtles in all UK waters, particularly Northern Ireland, and all the UK Overseas Territories, and ensure appropriate protection measures are brought in where gaps are identified by 2005. (ACTION: DETR, EHS, FCO)”

5.5.9, Consider contributing to marine turtle conservation activities of British Overseas Territories through the support of data gathering, collation and exchange. (ACTION: DETR, FCO, NHM)”

and contributes to the following additional action in the same document:

“5.1.6, Provide support, in the form of advice, information sharing, and assistance to build capacity and resist detrimental development, to UK Overseas Territories in order to facilitate the conservation of their marine turtle populations at viable and sustainable levels. (ACTION: DfID, FCO)” (Anon., 1999).