

Pitcairn

24° 21' 41" S, 128° 18' 58" W

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Pitcairn

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Basic facts and Figures

Note 1 The Governor of Pitcairn is the Wellington (New Zealand) based British High Commissioner. An appointed Governor's Representative resides on the island for one year secondments.

Location	Pitcairn has high volcanic steep slopes and a maximum altitude of 329m. The territory lies 1,570km West of Easter Island and 5,350km North East of New Zealand.
Area	A total land area of approximately 47km ² . Pitcairn is 5km ² .
Number of islands	Four: The main island, Pitcairn and three uninhabited islands - Henderson Island (World Heritage Site), Ducie Island and Oeno Island.
Population	Fifty-six permanent residents. Part of the population is made up of Government contracts/secondments from the New Zealand police, school teachers and social workers.
Topography	Pitcairn's origin is volcanic with steep slopes and cliff faces with volcanic soils varying from red to black in different locations. Landscape is dominated by coconut palm trees, Norfolk pine trees, banana trees, breadfruit trees and a wide variety of trees.
Main economic sectors	The island's economy is dependent on subsistence agriculture and fishing. A large percentage of residents are employed by the Government ¹ with a small stream of private enterprise.

Legislative and Policy Framework

Multilateral environmental agreements

Pitcairn has been included in the UK's ratification of 12 MEAs. Status of ratification of key MEAs is:

Multilateral Environmental Agreement	Included in ratification?
Convention on Biological Diversity	✗
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species	✓
Convention on Migratory Species	✓
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	✓
World Heritage Convention	✓

National environmental legislation

Pitcairn has five environmental ordinances implemented by the Government of Pitcairn Islands (GPI) and Natural Resources Division that are of environmental interest. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of those legislative documents.

National environmental strategies

Pitcairn has an Environmental Charter that was signed with the UK Government in 2001. The most important environmental strategies for the GPI are the guidelines and strategies set out in the Pitcairn Islands Environment Management Plan 2008 and Henderson Island Management Plan 2004-2009.

Protected Areas

Henderson Island is listed as a World Heritage Site <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/487>

Pitcairn Harbour © Dr Noeleen Smyth

Research Priorities

- How to sustain past efforts to eradicate the invasive Roseapple *Syzygium jambos*.
- Managing future water availability and how it might be affected by climate change, tourism and changes to water use patterns.
- Baseline survey information on plant species, invertebrates and marine species.



Institutional Arrangements

Government: The Pitcairn Island Council is responsible for the local government and administration of internal affairs. The Island Council comprises: the Island Mayor (elected every three years), the Island Secretary, Deputy Mayor, four Councillors (elected annually), a Governor's appointee (Councillor) and the Governor's Representative (ex-officio member). There are currently two Pitcairn Island posts that deal with environmental matters, those of Division Manager Natural Resources and Director of Biosecurity.

Ecosystems and Habitats

Terrestrial: Henderson Island remains little disturbed. There is relatively little human influence because of its remoteness and inhospitable nature.

Marine: Two-thirds of Henderson Island is surrounded by coral reef. The islands of Oeno and Ducie are small atolls. The coral reefs are well developed in Oeno and Ducie. See Appendix 2 for further information on Henderson, Oeno and Ducie islands.

Coconut crab © Dr Noeleen Smyth

Species

The flora of Pitcairn includes 81 species of indigenous vascular plants, of which 10 are endemic (Kingston & Waldren 2005, Kingston 2010). The territory is home to 28 species of nesting bird, most of which are seabirds. Approximately 90% of the global population of Murphy's petrel (*Pterodroma ultima*) nest on the island of Ducie (Sanders 2006). A population of Green turtles uses East Beach on the Island of Henderson as a breeding ground. On the whole, Pitcairn's biodiversity has been little documented.



Summary of the 2008 IUCN red listed species for Pitcairn.

Critically endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable	Near Threatened	Extinct (Extinct in the wild)	Lower risk/ conservation dependent	Data Deficient
1	9	30	24	0	4	10

Threats

Invasive species: On Pitcairn, the introduction of invasive species has damaged indigenous species. The invasive Roseapple *Syzygium jambos*, introduced as a source of fuelwood to the island, is now outcompeting the native forest species *Meterosideros collina* and *Homalium taypau* through much of the centre of the island. *Syzygium jambos* forms monospecific stands which contain few native species. The total species diversity was found to be adversely affected by its presence (Kingston & Waldren 2005, Smyth 2008 & 2010). Feral goats have seriously affected the local coastal habitat where there is much evidence of grazing of the *Pandanus tectorius* coastal fores.

Land use and human impacts: Much of the local woods, used for fuel, building and carving for export have also been over-exploited.

Projects

The Pitcairn Island Government has undertaken a number of internally and externally funded environmental projects over the last five years, including the roseapple clearance project, and the *Abutilon pitcairnense* recovery project.

Case Study: Abutilon pitcairnense recover project

Dates: Ongoing

Abutilon pitcairnense recovery – this is a partnership project with the Pitcairn Island Government and the National Botanic Gardens Dublin. Pitcairn Islanders are working at collecting and recording data on island, on pollinators, growth rates, numbers propagated. Work at National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin, in Ireland is focussing on the genetic fingerprinting of seedlings obtained from a clonal collection at the gardens.



Native *Abutilon pitcairnense* © Dr Noleen Smyth

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Project Partners

The Pitcairn Islands Government works closely with some international organisations on environmental issues including National Botanic Gardens Dublin, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and JNCC.

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Appendices

All Appendices referred to in this chapter are available at

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5752>