



ASCENSION ISLAND

CONSERVATION ON ASCENSION ISLAND



TURTLES



Ascension Island has the second largest nesting population of the green turtle in the entire Atlantic Ocean, with over 25,000 nests annually.

The population was severely depleted by harvesting of nesting females for meat during the 19th and early 20th centuries, but is recovering strongly after decades of protection. Data gathered from a long-term monitoring programme shows that, since 1977, numbers of nests on Long Beach have increased exponentially from around 1,000 per year to more than 10,000. The best way to see Ascension's turtles is to join a guided 'turtle tour' run by the Ascension Island Government Conservation Department.



PLANTS

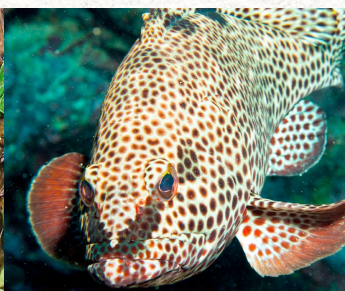


The vegetation of Ascension Island has undergone vast ecological change that mostly resulted from plant introductions in the 19th century.

Changes continue to the present. At the suggestion of Sir Joseph Hooker, and with encouragement from Charles Darwin, the Island now boasts over 400 introduced plants ranging from large trees to shrubs and annual herbaceous plants. There are at least 25 plants that are native to Ascension – this includes ten endemic species, of which seven are still alive.



MARINE



Ascension Island harbours globally important marine biodiversity, representing a unique assemblage of western and eastern Atlantic flora and fauna.

Until recently, comparatively little was known about Ascension's inshore marine life. This changed after an expedition led by the Shallow Marine Survey Group in 2012. The Ascension Island Government Conservation Department is continuing to carry out monthly biodiversity surveys to gather more information on the marine life and how this changes over the course of the year, for example identifying times when different species are spawning. These data, as well as being highly informative, will play an important role in ensuring that our marine life and fish populations are maintained and properly managed for future generations to enjoy.



SEABIRDS



Ascension Island is the most important seabird nesting site in the tropical Atlantic and is one of the most important warm-water seabird stations in the world.

It supports 11 species of breeding seabird, including the endemic Ascension Island frigatebird and the Atlantic's largest nesting population of sooty terns. The present seabird population is thought to be only a fraction of what it was prior to man's colonisation of the island in 1815, when there are estimated to have been millions of seabirds nesting in large colonies on the mainland.



Ascension Island Conservation Department/Tourist Office

Tel (+247) 66359 | Email conservationenquiries@ascension.gov.ac | Web www.ascension-island.gov.ac