

St Helena Cloud Forest Project update: April - June 2024



The St Helena Cloud Forest Project is a highly collaborative multi-year project working to implement the Peaks Management Plan for St Helena's 'Peaks National Park'; a globally significant area for biodiversity which is also vital for St Helena's long-term water security. Key actions across the first four years of the project include monitoring and research to inform and secure the island's water security and climate change adaptation efforts; improving, restoring and creating cloud forest habitat to increase areas for mist capture and ensure the conservation of associated species; and supporting the sustainable development of St Helena by developing opportunities through ecotourism, education, sustainable land use and conservation training.

What happened under each pillar?

Biodiversity

- The teams based at the Peaks continued to be busy with the restoration of sites and paths at Taylors, Diana's Peak and Wells. Tracking and recording tree health and pathogen spread also continued. In addition:
 - ◇ Refurbishment of the Peaks nursery continued with works to upgrade the facility in line with new phytosanitary protocols
 - ◇ A standardised rodent baiting programme is in place as part of ongoing rodent control methods
- At Scotland's endemic nursery:
 - ◇ Seed collection, banking and sowing continued
 - ◇ Planting and maintenance of cloud forest species in living gene banks around the island took place, including the commencement of planting within the new gene bank at Girlings
 - ◇ Limited propagation continued, in addition to micro-propagation of ferns in the lab
 - ◇ Soil sterilising for sterile growing medium continued, and the larger capacity steriliser has now arrived on-island
 - ◇ Upgrades to the No.2 Shade House and standing out area were completed to new phytosanitary standards for pathogen free propagation.
- At the St Helena National Trust, important invertebrate monitoring, control, and assessment work continued, including:
 - ◇ Completion of the year 3 annual invertebrate survey (delayed to this quarter due to access limitations)
 - ◇ Monitoring of the rare endemic Golden Sail Spider
 - ◇ Day and night surveys for the Spiky Yellow Woodlouse
 - ◇ Invasive control efforts including further deployment of control for the Common Wasp, and scoping for the wasp commenced within restricted areas
 - ◇ 106 Red List Assessments completed and uploaded to the IUCN's portal for final review before publishing later this year
 - ◇ Y2 Annual Invertebrate Report drafted and circulated for review
 - ◇ Methods agreed for a study on pollinators within the cloud forest, to be trialled over this year

Refurbishing the shade house at the Peaks Nursery



Spiky Yellow Woodlice
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Water security and climate change

- Regular water and climate monitoring by Connect Saint Helena and the Bottom Woods Met Office continued throughout this period. Monthly climate data from automatic weather stations and mist and rain gauges were collected, and maintenance carried out on equipment. Water level and flow monitoring continued.
 - ◇ Real-time data from the automatic weather stations can be accessed via: <https://wow.metoffice.gov.uk/> (pan to St Helena).
- Connect's Water Resource Monitoring Technician completed a capacity building trip to the Netherlands and the UK for further training on geophysics surveys, use of the equipment, data processing and interpretation.

Telemetry upgrades to rain and mist monitoring network site



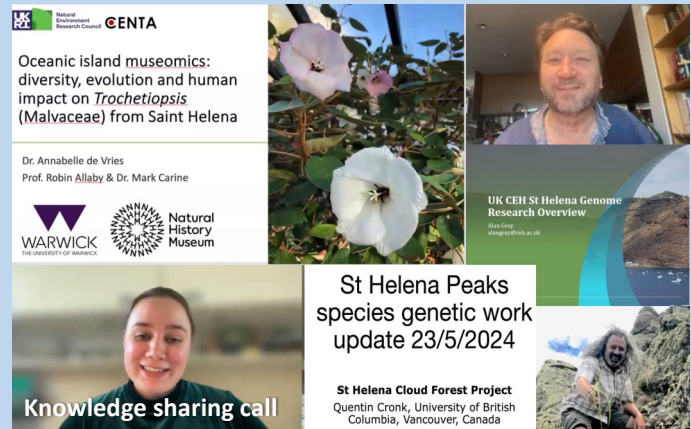
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- Equipment procured by Connect Saint Helena and the Met Station at Bottom Woods has begun arriving on island, and telemetry equipment to upgrade the mist & rainfall monitoring network is being installed, as well as a new Land Cloud Base Recorder is in operation.

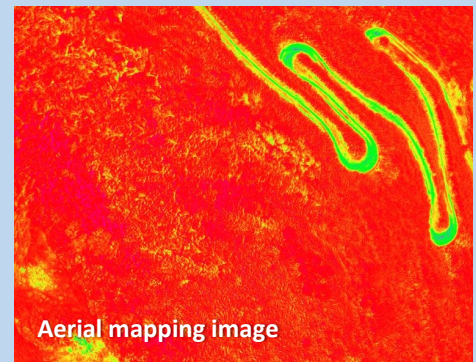
Socio-economic

- Filming with Capricorn Studios and primary school students who produced their versions of the project films, which will be available later in the year
- Material continued to be drafted for the St Helena Cloud Forest Secondary Education Pack and will be further refined following a meeting between the Trust's Education Officer and the Head of Prince Andrew School
- Work continued on aerial surveying of priority cloud forest compartments, a vital tool in assessing cloud forest habitat whereby multispectral data on the land surface is collected and collated in order to analyse factors such as tree health, the spread of pathogens, and track habitat expansion. Surveys are approximately 60% complete
- A knowledge sharing call on various workstreams researching the genetics of Peaks plant species was held



What's coming up July to September 2024?

- Propagation of cloud forest species for living gene banks and restoration work, and germination trials of cloud forest species to commence
- Maintenance of restored habitat, invasive clearance works, and infrastructure repairs will continue on the Peaks, at living gene banks and the Scotland nursery
- Ongoing water and climate monitoring. Finalisation of reports on island's water resources and water balance, using data collected over a number of years
- Preparation and planning for a water pillar focused webinar later in the quarter
- Completion of invertebrate survey reports, and further work on the secondary education pack
- Completion of aerial mapping of cloud forest habitat to assess tree health, pathogen spread and habitat expansion



Project Outreach

- A film with a series of comments from project partners and team members 'Restoration Notes' was finalised by Capricorn Studios – <https://youtu.be/70v2Hs2Dbg8>
- The Y3 Q4 update was published on the project's webpage (https://www.sthelenatourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/23-24_SHCFP_Q4.pdf) and in the local papers
- Two articles (focused on water and pathogen work) were drafted for the St Helena Connection (Friends of St Helena publication), which is expected to be published early Q2
- The St Helena National Trust hosted a radio show on Saint FM on 28 June focused on the invertebrate team and their work
- Project represented at 'St Helena Showcase' event hosted by St Helena Tourism
- Briefing and site visits to unrestricted sites for FCDO and Green Overseas



- Watch the Cloud Forest project films on YouTube:

- ◇ [Biodiversity](#)
- ◇ [Water Security](#)
- ◇ [Socio-Economic](#)
- ◇ [Partners Involved](#)
- ◇ [Capacity-Building](#)
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