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# Building Environmental Education Links Between UKOTs & Crown Dependencies

*A report on the collaborative environmental education efforts of Montserrat and the Isle of Man during November 2024 to support the delivery of Darwin Plus Project 192*



**Author:** Beth Penhallurick

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## Introduction

My name is Beth Penhallurick, and I am the Education Officer at Manx Wildlife Trust (MWT), the Isle of Man’s largest wildlife conservation charity. Hosted by the Montserrat National Trust (MNT)—a leading organization dedicated to conserving Montserrat’s natural environment and cultural heritage—I worked closely with the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing, and Environment (MALHE). Together, we enhanced existing environmental education programs and explored new opportunities for cross-territory collaboration.

## School Twinning Program

A highlight of my visit was the launch of a school twinning initiative between Ballakermeen High School in the Isle of Man and Montserrat Secondary School. The program aims to foster connections between young people in UKOTs and Crown Dependencies, encouraging the exchange of cultural and environmental knowledge. By sharing their experiences and discoveries, students can develop a deeper appreciation of their heritage and broaden their understanding of environmental opportunities.

The twinning program is structured around a UN Award for Biodiversity, known as the YUNGA Biodiversity Challenge Badge, which offers participants an internationally recognized accreditation. During my visit to Montserrat Secondary School, I collaborated with MNT Conservation Officer Chris Sealys and Youth Coordinator Sandrae Thomas to introduce students to the program and complete their first YUNGA biodiversity activity. This activity involved a bioblitz of the school grounds, during which students catalogued species in an iNaturalist folder. The folder serves as a shared digital resource that students from both Montserrat and the Isle of Man can view and contribute to, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

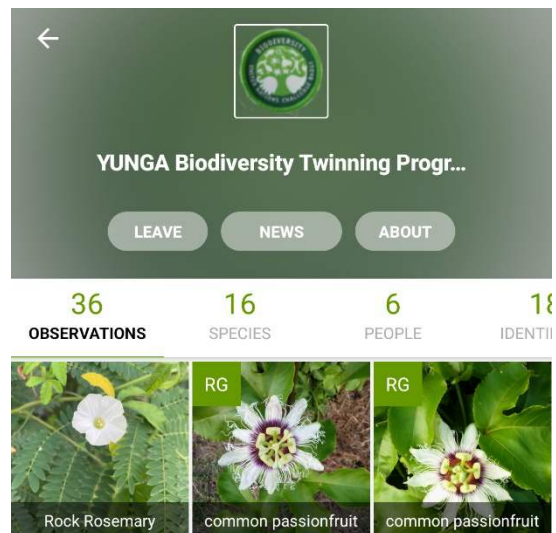


Figure 1: iNaturalist Twinning Project Page

Later, students visited MNT for a video call with their counterparts in the Isle of Man. During the session, Montserratian students shared their bioblitz findings and discussed their island’s unique wildlife, while learning about Manx biodiversity. These interactive calls are scheduled monthly, with students working towards completing the YUNGA award by the

end of the 2024/25 academic year. This will allow for a program review in Summer 2025 and the consideration of future training opportunities.



*Figure 2: Montserrat Secondary School Students at MNT for a video call with Manx students*

## **Engagement with Local Schools**

During my visit, I delivered a series of engaging educational sessions at all three primary schools and Montserrat Community College, emphasizing the importance of integrating environmental education into the curriculum.

After a productive meeting with MALHE, the MNT team and I developed a lesson on food chains, focusing on local biodiversity through creative activities. Trialed at Brades Primary School, the lesson was designed to be easily adapted for various age groups. Highlighting Montserrat’s unique biodiversity ensures that the next generation grows up with a strong appreciation for its value and the need for its conservation.

Assemblies were also delivered at St. Augustine Primary School and Look Out Primary School. These



*Figure 3: Meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment (MALHE)*

assemblies focused on highlighting the key species of Montserrat and the Isle of Man. Students were asked to vote if they thought each species is found in Montserrat, the Isle of Man or both and this brought up interesting conversations of migration, non-native invasive species, and endemic species. It also made the students aware of the wildlife across over UKOTs and Crown Dependencies as well as the projects in place to conserve it.



*Figure 4: Food Chain Lesson at Brades Primary School*



*Figure 5: Assembly at Lookout Primary School*



*Figure 6: Wildlife Activity at St Augustine's Primary School*

My visit to Montserrat Community College included a meeting with the executive team to discuss the upcoming Higher Education Evening and its focus on career pathways in the environmental sector. Thanks to Chris Sealys' expertise, students also planted native fruit trees on campus, initiating discussions on how to make the college grounds more wildlife-friendly.



*Figure 5: Tree Planting at Montserrat Community College*

## **Supporting Youth Initiatives**

In addition to working with schools, I also collaborated with MNT's youth programs: Monty's Messengers (ages 4–12) and Monty's Ambassadors (ages 13–25).

For Monty's Messengers, Chris Sealys and I led a tour at the MNT gardens, focusing on medicinal plant identification. Children created teabags using dried native plants, leaving with both tea and an identification booklet to continue their learning at home. This group is vital in igniting the interest of young conservationists who now have the option to progress to the Monty's Ambassadors youth group once they reach their teens.



Figure 8: Monty's Messenger holding his teabag made from native medicinal plants



Figure 9: The Monty's Messengers group holding their homemade teabags at MNT

The Monty's Ambassadors group has an executive team made up of the young people themselves who are given the guidance and authority to make youth-led decisions for the group. During my visit, the newly formed Monty's Ambassadors group met at MNT for a social evening of games and food which was an opportunity for the executive team to gauge the interests and ambitions of their peers for future activities.

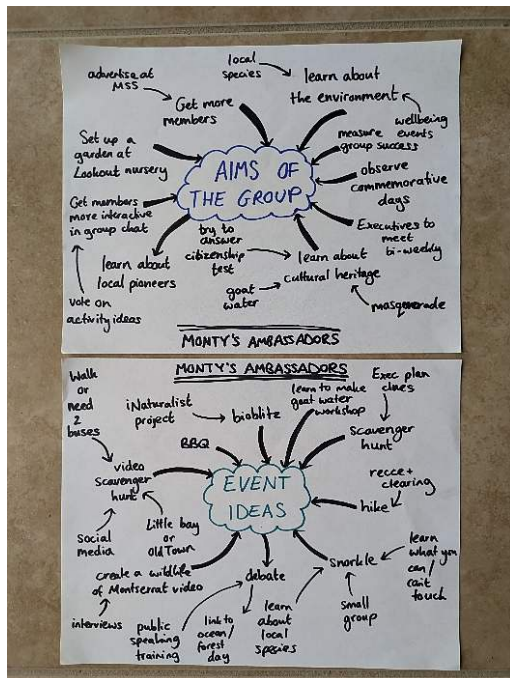


Figure 10: Mind maps of ideas from the Monty's Ambassador Execs Meeting

The MNT staff and I later met with the Executive team at the Montserrat Museum to have their first official planning meeting. During the meeting the execs were asked to first consider the aims of the group to ensure the young people's goals, and the conservation focus of MNT were aligned. They were then asked to consider what events they could feasibly run to achieve these aims. The mind maps you can see to the left are a clear example of the high capability of young people when they are given the space and respect needed to express their ideas.

Youth Coordinator Sandrae Thomas and I also accompanied the young executive team on ZJB Montserrat Radio to share the group's aims with the island community in the hope of raising awareness and recruiting fellow young people.

## Conservation Careers

During my trip I participated in two major events hosted by the Montserrat National Trust.

On November 14, 2024, I joined local experts as a panelist for the "A Call to Action: Youth and the Future of Conservation of Montserrat's Environment and Cultural Heritage" discussion, exploring how young people can shape the future of Montserrat's conservation efforts. My responses aimed to highlight the importance of international collaboration and the role of the mainstream education system in inspiring environmental action from a young age.

On November 21, 2024, I delivered a keynote address to local students at MNT's Higher Education Evening, highlighting the wide range of careers available in the environmental sector and a variety of paths the young people could take to build such a career. Following the talk, young people were encouraged to walk around and engage with the stalls set up by many of the key Montserratian organizations. Numerous sectors were represented including tourism, agriculture, and conservation to highlight the need for cross-sector collaboration to conserve our environment.

The event was a success with over 30 young people and many significant Montserratian organizations in attendance. A big thank you to Sandrae Thomas and the entire MNT team for their outstanding effort in organizing such an inspiring and informative event for the young people of Montserrat.



*Figure 6: Pannel at the "A Call to Action: Youth and the Future of Conservation of Montserrat's Environment and Cultural Heritage" discussion*



*Figure 7: A Group photo of all the young people present at MNT's Higher Education Evening*

## Building Relationships with the Montserrat Community

Beyond schools and youth initiatives, I also engaged with the wider Montserrat community through two appearances on local radio. The first being a live conversation with local icon Basil Chambers at ZJB Radio to share about the collaborative initiatives between the Isle of Man and Montserrat through UKOTCF and the second being a recorded program with the Monty's Ambassadors Executive team to promote young people in conservation.

My itinerary also included a visit to the Disaster Management Coordination Agency (DMCA) and the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO) to find out what qualifications and skills young Montserratians will need to secure jobs at these vital organizations and ensure their longevity. I was accompanied by MNT Youth Coordinator Sandrae Thomas who will seek to use this information to inform the training available to the young people of Monty's Ambassadors.



*Figure 9: Beth on ZJB Radio Montserrat*



*Figure 8: Monty's Ambassadors on ZJB Radio Montserrat*

## Looking Ahead: Strengthening Environmental Education Links

Visiting Montserrat was an invaluable opportunity to share knowledge, strengthen environmental education efforts, and build lasting connections between the Isle of Man and Montserrat. My thanks must go to the incredible UKOTCF and the MNT team for kindly supporting the trip and valuing inter-island collaboration.

Looking ahead, the call for young voices within the environmental sphere is evident. Therefore, establishing and connecting youth-led initiatives across all UKOTs and Crown

Dependencies could create a vital network, empowering the next generation to build on current efforts and drive conservation into mainstream policy, action, and education.