

Saint Helena Conference 2018 Diverse Island Environments

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2018 Diverse Island Environments

The first St Helena international conference 'Diverse Island Environments: A multi-disciplinary view of islands' was held in late January, early February 2018, and was sponsored by Georgia Aquarium, South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) and Enterprise St Helena . The conference brought together local and international researchers covering varied topics including economics, fisheries, renewables, terrestrial flora and fauna and marine environment among others.



First day of conference had two Saint Helenian as keynote speakers, Professor Dan Yon, Associate Professor at Toronto University and Dr Cilla McDaniel who specialises in social policy planning and psychotherapy. Dr Cilla's presentation "Transnational Villagers: Perspectives of Home." was particularly emotional and was focused on St Helenians who live and work abroad but, despite distance and time, their hearts remain in the place of birth. During the presentation, the concept of 'home' was

explored in depth from the perspective of someone who had moved from St Helena and lived in many places around the world.



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On the second day of conference marine life and fisheries topics were addressed and keynote speakers, Elizabeth Clingham talked about the fishing industry of St. Helena and Dr Alistair Dove from Georgia Aquarium who presented 'The whale sharks of St Helena in a global context'. Another very interesting presentation was 'St Helena one-by-one' given by Julie Thomas and Adam Baske of International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) on the progress of one-by-one fishing on St Helena. A good and much appreciated night of entertainment was sponsored by the IPNLF team who invited conference attendees for a degustation of their own fresh catch of a variety of St Helenian's fishes.



The third day of presentations focussed on 'Renewables and Terrestrial Environment', with presentations like 'Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas (BEST)' a European Union funding facility for Overseas Territories; 'Renewables on St Helena' presented by Barry Hubbard and, a presentation that generated a great deal of excitement 'Emerging Saint Science and Scientists' given by Science Teacher Steve Coates and Prince Andrew School students. The talk centred on the importance of the marine environment on St Helena and highlighting the issue of plastic waste and how micro plastics enter the food chain and are harming the marine life.

On Saturday 3th of February the first group of conference researchers and attendees left the island and a new group arrived for the second and final week of the conference.



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The theme for day four of conference was 'Terrestrial Flora and Fauna' and kicked off with keynote speaker Professor Quentin Cronk, Associate Professor at University of British Columbia. Among the speakers Jason Yon presented 'A Holistic Assessment of the Supply, Storage and Consumption of Energy as we Transition to a Renewable Future' with his colleague Samuel Wilkinson and, Tara Pelembe presented 'SAERI: South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute'.

The final day of conference centred on 'Marine Environment and Environmental Economics'. Professor Alasdair Edwards gave a very informative and interesting presentation on Fishes of St Helena, and Nick Mallos from Ocean Conservancy talked at length about a subject that is very much in vogue right now 'Marine Plastics'. The closure of the conference included thanks and the acknowledgement of participants, attendees, sponsors and partners of the conference. The closing sessions were hosted by Tara Pelembe representing SAERI, Dr Al Dove representing Georgia Aquarium and Helena Bennett on representation of St Helena Tourism and Enterprise St Helena.



Each week of conference had two days of field trips and all the attendees were invited to participate. There was a variety of trips like a 'Guided Walk to Diana's Peak with the St Helena National Trust', 'Marine Wildlife Cruise' where the participants had the opportunity to see and swim with whale sharks, 'Commercial fishing with local fisherman' a sacrificed but rewarding experience where people joined the fishermen at 4 am and came back to the island around midday with their catches; during this trip they were able to experience the unique pole and line fishing method of St Helena. 'Visit to SHAPE', St Helena's Participation in Enterprise (SHAPE) is a non-profit organisation that assists to provide a supportive environment for vulnerable adults on St Helena to develop their skills for employment. The trip consisted in visit SHAPE's Recycling Centre and the SHAPE Centre itself to find out more about this wonderful enterprise. And 'Wirebird Tour & Millennium Forest with the St Helena National Trust', this 3 hrs trip consisted in a visit to the Millennium Forest, an ecologically important area on the island and birdwatch St Helena's national bird and only endemic land bird in their natural environment, the Wirebirds.

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