

island resources

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30th ANNIVERSARY
1972 — 2002

In early 1972—30 years ago—the ISLAND RESOURCES FOUNDATION was founded in the Caribbean, dedicated to the premise that islands are special places, with particularly fragile environments and exceptionally vulnerable development options.

Looking back, from the perspective of three decades, it is astonishing to recall how new environmental planning was as a legitimate development concern throughout the insular Caribbean in 1972. Or how little understood were the special needs and vulnerabilities of developing island states, both in the Caribbean and globally. One has only to remember that when founder Ed Towle launched Island Resources Foundation:

◆ **THE UNITED NATIONS HAD NOT YET ESTABLISHED AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY OR AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.**

THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP) WAS ONLY ESTABLISHED FOLLOWING THE UN CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS HELD IN STOCKHOLM IN JUNE OF 1972.

◆ **IN THE INSULAR CARIBBEAN, ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FOCUSED ON THE ENVIRONMENT WERE MOSTLY IN THE FUTURE.**

THE CARIBBEAN'S ONLY REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION, THE CARIBBEAN CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, WAS IN ITS INFANCY.

◆ **THE INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY HAD NOT YET RECOGNIZED "THE ENVIRONMENT" AS A KEY SECTOR FOR REGIONAL ASSISTANCE IN THE CARIBBEAN.**

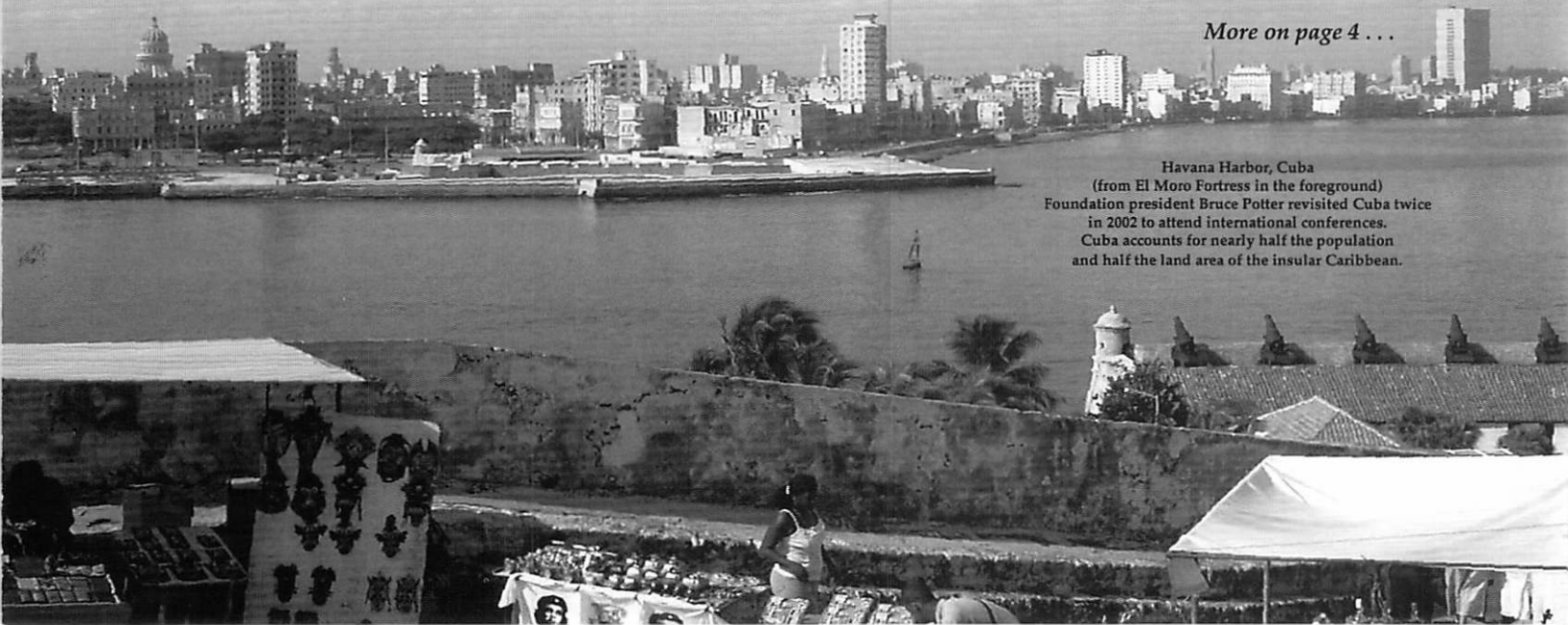
"COUNTRY ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILES" TO GUIDE BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AID PROGRAMS IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN WERE NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL 1991.

◆ **THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY HAD NOT YET RECOGNIZED THE SPECIAL VULNERABILITY AND DEPENDENCY ISSUES THAT INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEWLY EMERGING SMALL ISLAND STATES.**

A UN CONFERENCE ON THE NEEDS OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL 1994, ALMOST TWO DECADES AFTER IRF'S FOUNDING.

More on page 4 . . .

Havana Harbor, Cuba
(from El Moro Fortress in the foreground)
Foundation president Bruce Potter revisited Cuba twice
in 2002 to attend international conferences.
Cuba accounts for nearly half the population
and half the land area of the insular Caribbean.



Island Resources Foundation —



(Above) Olasee Davis from the University of the Virgin Islands (St. Croix campus) and IRF's Jean-Pierre Bacle at the Coral World reception in January. In the photo to the right, IRF's president Bruce Potter (left) is shown with Syed Syedali of the VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (St. Croix).



At a January reception, Island Resources Foundation introduced its facility at **Coral World** (St. Thomas) to the environmental community of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Created as an NGO reference center and a community education/learning facility, the IRF library housed at Coral World focuses on the marine/coastal environment of the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is currently open only by appointment (call Sandra Tate at 775-6225), but with the assistance of interns and volunteers, we expect to increase hours and access in 2003. The Reference Center is unique in the Territory—one researcher from the University of East Anglia (UK) recently wrote that he had “never seen such a thorough collection of references held by an NGO.” And of course this researcher had not yet seen the Foundation’s primary environmental information collection, now a part of the **H. Laverty Stout Community College** in Road Town, British Virgin Islands.

Also in 2002 . . .

✓ Island Resources Foundation recently donated its extensive reference collection on South Pacific islands (principally environmental policy materials) to the **Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS)**. In turn, the Institute introduced IRF to a recent graduate, **Hillary Nobles**, who earned her Master’s Degree in International Environmental Policy from MIIS. Hillary had previously worked as an intern in the Maldives islands, and joined IRF in 2002 as an intern assigned in November to the Foundation’s facility in St. Thomas. Here she is also assisting Coral World with its educational activities. As noted above, **Coral World**—a unique marine life park and underwater observatory—is home to the Foundation’s NGO reference center in St. Thomas.

✓ Recognizing that most of the world’s coral reefs have not been adequately studied and that current risk assessments are based on best available, but limited survey data and anecdotal evidence, the **World Resources Institute (WRI)** launched a project in 1996 to examine the state of the world’s coral reef ecosystems. More recently, in 2002, WRI began an analysis of threats to the coral reefs of the wider Caribbean (the *Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean* project). Island Resources Foundation is working under contract with WRI as a part of this regional effort, which is a component of the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN).

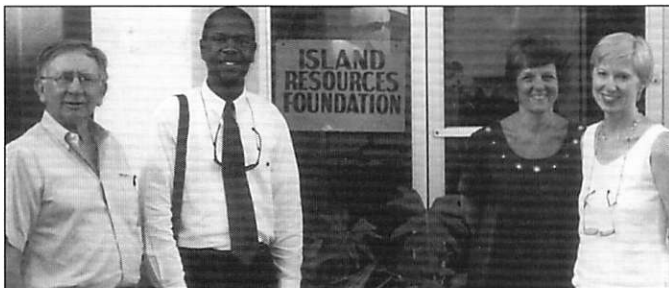
✓ In a related effort, IRF completed a study in 2002 that examined the use of conventional aerial photography, in combination with GIS-based image analysis, to document historical and extant distribution of *Acropora palmata* (Elkhorn) coral colonies. Using five study sites in the USVI, the results were documented in a September report authored by **Jean-Pierre Bacle** for the U.S. Geological Survey. The report concludes that it is possible to interpret and delineate extensive, densely aggregated stands of *A. palmata* with a moderate level of accuracy. However, there are limits in the accuracy of interpretation that can usually be attributed to the scale and quality of available images, as well as the prior training and experience of the photo interpreter.

✓ In August, Island Resources Foundation completed a major report (165 pp.) describing the current state of the marine environment in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This “resource description” provides background for current efforts by the local government to create new marine protected areas. Special emphasis was placed on 41 sites identified as priorities by one or more previous surveys and studies, with the ecological significance of each assessed on the basis of currently available information.

IRF’s work was part of a larger **Virgin Islands Marine Park Project** coordinated by the University of the Virgin Islands, with IRF’s input directed by **Bruce Potter**, assisted by **Jane Israel** and **Dr. Dagmar Sigurdardottir**. A detailed chronology of previous marine protection initiatives in the Virgin Islands (dating back to 1930) was prepared by **Edward Towle**, and is also available as an IRF occasional paper.

In Partnership . . .

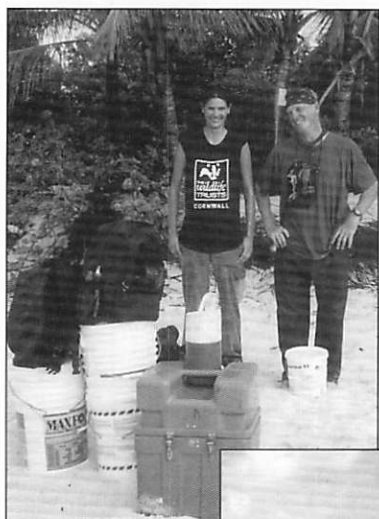
The **Antiguan Racer**, the world’s rarest snake, was teetering on the brink of extinction when it was rediscovered in 1995 by Antiguan conservationist and IRF staffer **Kevel Lindsay** and a visiting researcher. The racer was once plentiful on mainland Antigua before being killed off by the mongoose in the days when sugar was the island’s main industry. Since its rediscovery on the offshore island of Great Bird, this harmless and almost shy snake has been reintroduced to several Antiguan offshore islands. Success was a result of a unique partnership formed to secure the snake’s survival by Antigua’s Environmental Awareness Group, the Government’s Forestry Unit, Fauna and Flora International (UK), Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (UK), Black Hills State University (US), and **Island Resources Foundation**. Learn more about this extraordinary effort by visiting the project’s website at www.antiguanracer.org.



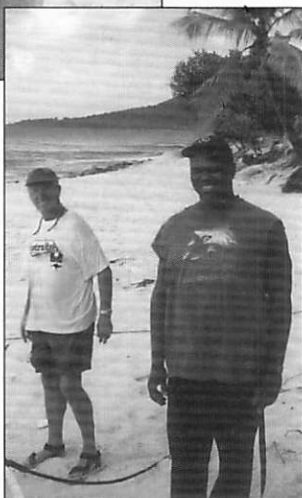
Pictured (left to right) Ed Towle, **Joseph Smith-Abbott** (director of the BVI National Parks Trust), Judith Towle, and **Barbara Lausche**, in front of the IRF office in Tortola. Lausche was in the BVI under the auspices of Island Resources Foundation to assist the **National Parks Trust** in updating its protected areas legislation. The British Virgin Islands was ahead of most Caribbean islands when, in 1961, it enacted a National Trust Ordinance that created the Parks Trust and initiated the present system of parks. However, according to Lausche, both international law and scientific advances have moved ahead of the extant law, which needs to be revised and updated. With funding provided by the UK Government, Lausche is working with the Parks Trust to address this problem. By year’s end, a new ordinance had been drafted and is under review by Government, with opportunities provided for stakeholder input.

Snapshots from 2002

Invasive Species



Above, Karen Varnham, invasive species specialist, and IRF's Jean-Pierre Bacle organize supplies on the beach at Sandy Cay in preparation for the first phase of a rat eradication and monitoring program. 90 bait stations were established on the 14-acre island, with care taken that the poison used did not kill other island fauna. Additionally, the eradication was carried out in November and December when the sea bird population is at its lowest.



Roy Thomas (l), for 3 decades the horticulturist at Sandy Cay, with Junior Cookley from Jost Van Dyke, current caretaker at Sandy Cay.

During the final months of 2002 Island Resources Foundation undertook a prototypic rat eradication and monitoring program for Sandy Cay in the British Virgin Islands. This invasive species control effort is the first of its kind in the BVI, and similar initiatives are likely to follow.

As a part of field research carried out by the Foundation at Sandy Cay in 2001, scientists concluded that the island had acquired a significant and growing population of black or tree rats, *Rattus rattus* and that their presence was having a negative effect on the island's ecosystem. With support of the island's owner Laurance Rockefeller, a project team was assembled under the leadership of IRF's Jean-Pierre Bacle with Karen Varnham, an ecologist from the UK who had carried out a similar program in Antigua. A bait grid was established for the entire island in November, which was maintained and monitored until there was no further evidence of bait consumption by rats.

Varnham and Bacle are convinced no rats are left on Sandy Cay. But because there is a risk of rats returning to the island from visiting pleasure boats, a longer-term monitoring program has been put in place, in cooperation with H. Lavity Stoutt Community College.



Participants at the **Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA)** Workshop for Sub-Region 3 (Greater Antilles), held in Havana, Cuba, September 2002, one of eight such international assessment and planning forums attended by IRF's president **Bruce Potter** in 2002 (Bruce is second from the right in the back row). The GIWA, a program led by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), will produce a comprehensive and integrated global assessment of 66 water areas worldwide, including identification of key issues facing the aquatic environment in **transboundary waters**.

The issue of improved management for "**transboundary ecosystems**" (for example the shared waters that separate the U.S. and British Virgin Islands) is one of particular interest to IRF's chairman **Edward Towle**. Towle is exploring long-term collaborative structures that would link parallel governance systems, NGOs and professional institutions from across the U.S. and British V.I. to exchange research, monitoring data and management strategies for their politically separate, yet ecologically shared marine "**commons**".

Personalities

Congratulations to **Jacqueline and Larry Armony** of **St. Kitts**, recipients of the **2002 McFarlane Environmental Leadership Award**, which includes an unrestricted cash grant of \$1,000. The Armonys join an expanding roster of Caribbean environmentalists who have been similarly acknowledged since 1987, when the Award was first established by Island Resources Foundation to recognize individual conservation leadership in the insular Caribbean. **Judith Towle**, IRF vice president, has written of the Armonys, "Jackie and Larry share a love of country that makes them passionate in defense of its history, its culture and its natural landscapes. Their combined energy has achieved results that seemingly would require the resources of legions rather than a single, matrimonially linked team of two."

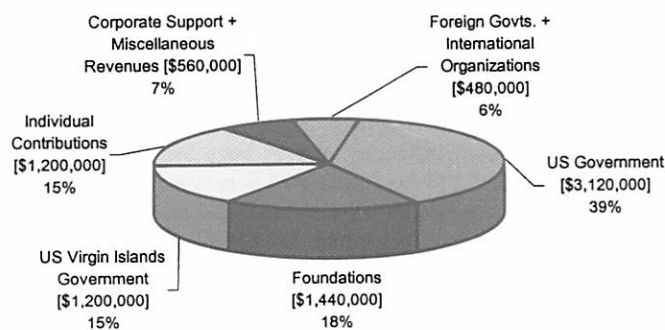
For most of 2002 **Dr. Christopher Howell** (pictured below)—no stranger to IRF or the BVI—coordinated operations at the Foundation's Tortola office. Chris's special interest in the BVI dates to the 1970s when research for his Ph.D. dissertation focused on tourism carrying capacity in the British Virgin Islands. In 1975 Chris was one of IRF's first interns. Twenty-seven years later, he was back in the BVI with IRF where his activities focused on impact assessment and mitigation strategies for damaged or threatened environments.



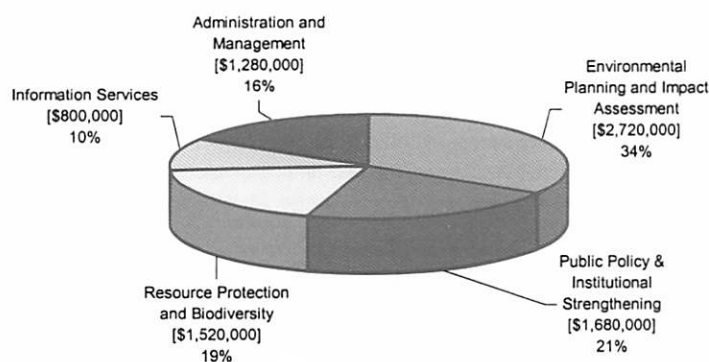
Pictured below at a January meeting of Island Resources Foundation's Board of Trustees is **Dr. LaVerne Ragster**, for 9 years a member of the Foundation's governing board and, since September, **president of the University of the Virgin Islands**. Dr. Ragster's wise counsel and unfailing support have long been appreciated by Foundation staff and board alike, as was her direct participation in IRF's NGO Institutional Development Program for the Eastern Caribbean in the early 1990s. All at IRF wish her well in this challenging new post.



Revenues and Sources of Support 1972 - 2002



Program Services and Management Costs 1972 - 2002



In 1972, amid opportunities mixed with uncertainties, a new development assistance organization, **Island Resources Foundation**, was instituted.

The Foundation began as a small non-government organization and remains so 30 years later. Initial donations from Laurance S. Rockefeller and American and Eastern Airlines provided seed funding, which in three decades has grown to **over \$8 million** in externally funded revenue and support—a respectable but not excessive sum.

The staff has also remained small, never exceeding a dozen full-time persons. Like the islands it serves, the Foundation continues to be challenged by its small size. At the same time, we note that size has also been a virtue, permitting us to focus on and sustain one central mission — *to know and understand the insular condition*.

Thirty years ago only a handful of institutions worldwide recognized that there are differences in insular and continental systems. Failure to understand these differences would have unanticipated and undesirable consequences for islands as they emerged from a colonial past to confront new economic, social and institutional challenges. Island Resources Foundation was one of the first institutions to begin to assemble a body of work and experience that specifically assisted island states—particularly those in the Caribbean—as they confronted ever more complex choices about the use and development of a limited resource base.

The Foundation is no longer quite so exceptional, nor does it stand quite so alone in promoting the uniqueness of the island condition, the vulnerabilities of island environments, and the special qualities of island life. Yet, in this our 30th Anniversary Year, we want to celebrate our proud past while looking ahead to a promising future. We also take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to all who have assisted us throughout the three decades now gone by.

FUNDING FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS DECREASED IN RECENT YEARS, WHILE UNRESTRICTED CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE FALLEN BELOW PROJECTIONS. MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS REMAIN A KEY RESOURCE FOR OPERATING FUNDS. PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT, WHILE THIS NEWSLETTER IS STILL IN YOUR HANDS, TO SEND A CONTRIBUTION — IN ANY AMOUNT — IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Accomplished along the way

- ◆ 200 independently funded projects executed, three dozen island states and territories assisted worldwide, over 150 publications disseminated, 50 student internships supported, 25 electronic mail lists moderated, a 75-member network of island specialists established.
- ◆ The majority of all funded projects the result of independent Foundation initiatives that resulted in NEW ideas and NEW funds coming into the Caribbean.
- ◆ Pioneered coastal area planning keyed to small-island conditions, especially for island states with expanding tourism sectors.
- ◆ Amassed a considerable body of hands-on experience in institutional strengthening, especially on behalf of public-sector agencies and NGOs in the English-speaking insular Caribbean.
- ◆ Advanced technical expertise in biodiversity program planning and management for highly stressed insular environments.
- ◆ Developed an exceptionally effective capacity to assemble, assess, and interpret complex scientific information in formats useful for decision-makers.
- ◆ Established an impressive track record of sound environmental impact assessments for infrastructure and development projects within a small-island context.
- ◆ Provided leadership for broader utilization of environmental information technologies in insular areas.

Words of congratulation from Dr. Franklin McDonald, director of Jamaica's National Environmental and Planning Agency on the occasion of Island Resources Foundation's 30th Anniversary [in correspondence with IRF president Bruce Potter on June 1, 2002]

"Ed, Judith, yourself and many of the persons who have been associated with the IRF over the years have made a very significant contribution to awareness building and capacity creation related to past challenges facing the Caribbean in environmental management and to challenges still facing us as we struggle with the concept of 'sustainable development'."