

## Global Ocean Legacy, a project of the Pew Environment Group, visits Pitcairn

*Heather Bradner and Elisabeth Whitebread, with the Pew Environment Group, write about their recent visit to Pitcairn.*

Five years ago, U.S. President George W. Bush delivered a welcome surprise – at least for those of us who work on helping the marine environment. With little warning, he designated the uninhabited northwest Hawaiian Islands as the world's largest, no-take marine reserve. And with that act, he kicked off a new era in ocean conservation.



In late 2006, the Global Ocean Legacy project was established by the Pew Environment Group and its partners to capitalize on what we viewed as a new opportunity to promote the designation of a handful of similar, highly protected reserves in the world's oceans. It was the process of identifying and assessing the world's most unspoiled and spectacular seascapes that led Pew staff to Pitcairn.

Since its inception, Global Ocean Legacy has worked with local citizens, governments and scientists around the world to protect and conserve some of the Earth's largest, most unspoiled and spectacular seascapes. One of those projects helped lead to the designation of the UK's Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean in 2010 as the largest no-take marine reserve in the world.

The Pitcairn Island Group, including Oeno, Ducie and Henderson, is a vast area and a highly compelling region in which to explore a similar groundbreaking initiative. Pitcairn's Exclusive Economic Zone is over 800,000 sq km in area, far larger than any other potential marine reserve in the world, and is unspoiled in comparison to other parts of the ocean. Pitcairn's unique place in the world's maritime history has made it internationally famous, and its relative geographic isolation gives it a unique biology that should be studied and protected. By designating a large sanctuary, in an appropriate area supported by the community, Pitcairn could once again make a mark as home to one of the world's largest, globally significant marine reserves.

Having just returned from the island, we now sit in our offices in Alaska and London staring out at the cool rainy weather of the northern hemisphere's spring, and reflect on how very lucky we were for the opportunity to visit beautiful Pitcairn for ten days in March. We met many wonderful people and made numerous friends as we talked with everyone about the need for greater marine conservation and the general concept of establishing a world class sanctuary in Pitcairn's waters.

We were very appreciative that the Mayor invited us to give a presentation to the Island Council which led to the Council's endorsement of exploring – with us – the concept of establishing a large reserve. That decision only began the process, and we will now start researching the issues that the community relayed to us that were of greatest importance. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the community and the Island Council for their support of the marine reserve concept and look forward to collaborating with the community to explore this ambitious and globally-significant project.

We would also like to thank everyone for their wonderful hospitality and the warm welcome extended to us while we were on Pitcairn. Being able to experience, even for a brief time, that generous spirit and a little of island life will remain a treasured experience.

For more information about Global Ocean Legacy, and to learn more about large marine reserves and their benefits, please visit our website at [www.globaloceanlegacy.org](http://www.globaloceanlegacy.org).