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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL TRUST PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES MANAGER DESIGNATE
Following the Completion of His Master's Degree Paul Watler is Promoted

MONDAY, 16 AUGUST – The National Trust for the Cayman Islands has promoted Paul Watler to the position of Environmental Programmes Manager Designate. This advancement comes shortly after he received his Master's degree, and the National Trust congratulates Mr. Watler on this achievement.

“We at the Trust are very proud of Paul's accomplishments. He's not only a gifted scientist, but also serves as a wonderful example of success in a career not traditionally pursued by Caymanian youth,” said Frank Balderamos, General Manager of the National Trust.

Mr. Watler's degree programme was funded through the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Environment Programme. He studied with the Centre for Ecology and Conservation at the University of Exeter's Cornwall Campus. The year-long Master's of Science in Conservation and Biodiversity afforded him the chance to hone his research skills while allowing him access to the experience of acknowledged experts.

“I am delighted to report that Paul was awarded an MSc with merit,” reports Dr. Brendan Godley, Programme Director and Associate Professor of Conservation Biology at the University of Exeter. “Paul was a pleasure to have in the class and always brought good humour and a pragmatic insight into the difficulties of island conservation into our discussions. He has been a credit to the Cayman Islands and the National Trust. I am sure he will go on to having a great impact into the conservation of the heritage of the Cayman Islands.”

The OTEP fellowship awarded to Mr. Watler covered his tuition as well as provided a stipend for room and board. The National Trust also contributed, granting Mr. Watler an additional stipend and study leave in order to pursue this opportunity.

The OTEP is a joint programme of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development to support environmental management in the UK Overseas Territories. With an eye to building capacity in OTs, the fellowship offered by OTEP required Mr. Watler to return home to carry out the research portion of the Master's course.

For his project, Mr. Watler chose to examine the foraging patterns of bats. His thesis, *Effects of Habitat Modification on the Foraging Activities of Insectivorous Bats, on the Island of Grand Cayman* was published in issue 6 of the Department of Environment's monthly bulletin, *Flicker*.

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Mr. Watler had this to say about his experiences: “OTEP even sponsored my return to Cornwall for graduation! It was an incredible feeling—almost like winning a race. The Master’s course was quite comprehensive, with a variety of different modules. Experts would tell us firsthand about the techniques they utilized in the field. We were taught how to assess properties of ecological importance, and there was even a two week field trip to South Africa. I’m glad that I returned home to perform my research. It’s good to know that my efforts related directly to conservation in Cayman, and were in some small way supportive of Cayman’s natural heritage.”

The National Trust sent Mr. Watler to Cayman Brac recently, where he assisted Dr. Frank Rivera-Milan of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service with the Brac Parrot Survey. In the coming months, the National Trust will task Mr. Watler with drafting management plans for environmental properties and enhancing its recreational areas.

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Editors Note:

Photo attached – Paul Watler at his graduation in July.