

NEWSLETTER

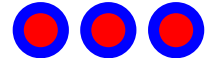


New Island Restoration Project in Rodrigues



One of the many sea birds living
on Ile Aux Cocos
Photo: MWF Rodrigues

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation is specialised in the restoration of small islands. MWF became again involved, in July 2006, with the conservation of Ile aux Cocos (15ha) and Ile aux Sables (8ha), two important island nature reserves in the lagoon of Rodrigues. The island's vegetation communities have been damaged by invasive exotic plants & coastal erosion. The breeding seabirds are often disturbed by inadequately controlled tourist activity. The implementation of the conservation management plans involve inter alia study of the sea-birds & the setting up of a nursery for growing of plants to restore the vegetation. Plants will also be provided by the local community nurseries. Workshops have started with stakeholders in order to establish strategies for eco-tourism & education. The project is funded by the UNDP-GEF/SGP.



RARE PLANTS

During weeding on Ile aux Aigrettes in July 2006, a rare endemic plant, the *Ochrosia borbonica* (Bois Jaune) was found by Ashok Khadun MWF Islets Coordinator. The species is critically endangered (IUCN Red List). This finding has brought the population up to four mature trees known in the wild. The plant bears fruits (see photo) and is now being monitored by the nursery staff on the island for propagation.

The *Zornia vauhaniana*, a small endemic plant was rediscovered by MWF botanist J.C. Sevathian in July 2006 in the South of Mauritius. This coastal species was thought to be extinct in this locality due to the former sand extraction activity in the area. Several patches bearing flowers & fruits were surprisingly found along the road. Some seedlings were collected and planted in the nursery on Ile aux Aigrettes for propagation. This species is also noted critically endangered (IUCN Red List).

Photo: J.C. Sevathian

Ochrosia borbonica



The Restoration of Island Reptiles

The natural Mauritian ecosystem is unique & its stability was once underpinned by one of the richest diversities of reptiles in the world. However, since the sixteenth Century reptile populations have been severely depleted & fragmented, such that many important ecological links & food webs integral to native ecosystem stability have been lost. Remnants of these past reptile communities can still be found on a few offshore islands, most notably Round Island. Some 30 years ago it was recognised that there was a need to restore the offshore islands so that these rare reptile populations could be re-established back within their former range. Over the past three decades the Forestry Service, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the National Parks Conservation Service have been the driving forces behind island surveys, reptile research and island restoration. Thanks to all of this hard work we are now ready to initiate the first reptile translocations.



Telfair's skink (Leiolopisma telfairi)

Funded by the Darwin Initiative, work is currently underway to translocate Telfair's skink from Round Island to Ile aux Aigrettes and Gunners Quoin, Bojer's skink from Ilot Vacoas to Ile aux Fouquets, & Durrell's night gecko from Round Island and the lesser night gecko from Ilot Vacoas to Ilot Chat. The first of these translocations will start in October this year. Each translocated population will be closely monitored to determine health, survival & recruitment, utilisation of their new environments, such as habitat and diet, and their impact upon resident terrestrial native & non-native vertebrate populations.

Text & photo: Nick Cole

Proposed developments on Mauritian & Rodriguan islets

MWF is following development projects on offshore islets (Flat Island, Gabriel Island, South Rodrigues) with great attention. These islands are safeguards for endangered endemic fauna & flora. Unplanned developments may cause irreversible damage to these islands, their biodiversity and their potential use for future conservation works.

NUMBERS !



M_{WF} has started the busy bird breeding season this month & biologists have again come from all over the world to help. One of the objectives of each project is to increase bird population size as all birds in MWF projects are listed in the IUCN Red List.

Year 2006

Olive White-eye (*Zosterops chloronothos*) **270**



(CR)

Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco punctatus*) **900**



(VU)

Pink Pigeon (*Columba mayeri*) **360**



(CR)

Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*) **300**



(CR)

Mauritius Fody (*Fodia rubra*) **350**



(CR)

* Critically Endangered:(CR): Vulnerable: (VU) - IUCN Red List

NUMBERS



Photos: F.Maingard, C.Kaiser,C Griffiths

COUNTING BATS

NUMBERS

Rodrigues Fruit Bat (*Pteropus rodricensis*) surveys were conducted in June 2006 to monitor the population response following cyclone Kalunde in March 2003.

A training workshop on bat biology and survey techniques was held for the Rodrigues personnel of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the Forestry Service so that the standardized protocol is understood by all those involved in these surveys. At June 2006, the Rodrigues Fruit Bat population was estimated at 4,000 bats in total. The study also suggests that cyclones have a fairly major effect on population numbers, but can recover given adequate protection and habitat.

The survey & workshop was funded by North of England Zoological Society, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, & Philadelphia Zoological Society & the work was facilitated by Rodrigues Regional Assembly, Francois Leguat Project & the many volunteers who showed a keen participation in the surveys. MWF was impressed by the spirit of pride Rodriguans show in their fruit bat, and hopes that such feelings can be fostered in Mauritius as well. MWF hopes that Mauritius will seriously investigate alternatives to fruit bat culling.

NAME A PARROT

The company Catovair, the local funder of the Echo Parakeet program launched a national drawing & naming competition among the Mauritian school children. Three Eco Parakeet chicks were to be named & in order to create awareness about this endemic bird a drawing of the bird in its natural environment was also requested. The competition was very successful almost 2000 drawings were received. The winners were: Sandesh Saddul, Tania Naigum, Emilie Wong Chong & the three names retained for the Eco Parakeet chicks were: Zoliver, Lolita & Bocato.



The Echo Parakeet program is also funded by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, North of England Zoological Society, World Parrot Trust & National Parks & Conservation Services (Mauritius).



MWF needs funds to continue its work, Should you wish to help MWF in its conservation work you are welcome to make a donation:

- Send a Cheque or postal order, made payable to The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Grannum Road, Vacoas, Mauritius, **OR**
- Send a direct credit, Beneficiary Bank: The Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd.- Port Louis – Mauritius Swift BIC: MCBLMUMU / Account Number: 010204792 / Account Currency: MUR **OR**
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Issue no._____ Expiry date:_____ Signature:_____

Please include your full name and contacts including e-mail address, with all donations.

Please address your correspondence or questions to:

The Fundraising Coordinator -e-mail: lrffray@mauritian-wildlife.org

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation
Grannum Road - Vacoas, Mauritius

Acknowledgements.

Grateful thanks to all volunteers who help MWF to achieve its mission everyday.

Special thanks to all our funders without whom no results can be achieved: In Alphabetic order

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