



MAURITIAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

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Rodrigues Fruit Bat in flight

Photo: J.de Speville

The Rodrigues Fruit Bat is currently doing well in the wild, thanks to MWF's conservation efforts and the active support of the Rodrigues community and local institutions. With around 70-100 bats left on the island in the 1970s, numbers have today bounced back to nearly 20,000. The combination of successful community engagement programmes and increased forest cover on the island has aided the species' recovery. Nonetheless, it remains listed as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN), with a potential to decline rapidly should conditions change on the island, for example following a strong cyclone. However, the status of the species is currently being reassessed.

The international captive population for the Rodrigues Fruit Bat, known as the 'International Studbook', stems from bats captured by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust founder, Gerald Durrell, along with his assistant,

John Hartley, in the 1970s. This remains an important safety net against the loss of the species in the wild. Thanks to the involvement of Philadelphia Zoo, the captive population has now received an important genetic boost with the transfer of 30 bats from their captive residence in Mauritius to the United States.

In September 2013, Vice-President of Education and Conservation, Kim Lengel, and Philadelphia Zoo vet, Dr Tim Georoff, travelled to Mauritius to take their new charges to America. The purpose was to bring back genetically different individuals into the international captive breeding programme managed by staff at the zoo. MWF staff helped to prepare the bats for the journey by catching them in the late afternoon and feeding them before the next day's early morning flight. It was no mean feat organizing such a transfer which needed to comply with various international regulations. It was also necessary to organize the

feeding of the bats throughout their long trip. When the bats broke their journey at Johannesburg airport they were fed for the next leg of their trip.

Nearly 24 hours after leaving Mauritius, the bats arrived at their new home, where the vet staff weighed each individual and checked them for any signs of ill health. All were alert, in good shape and soon settled into their temporary home at the zoo veterinary hospital.

The bats will remain there for six months to ensure they are all in good health and have not unwittingly carried any diseases. Once this health requirement is satisfied, they will be slowly integrated into the existing captive population, where they will hopefully start to breed and introduce some of their valuable new genes.



Bats in quarantine at Philadelphia Zoo

Photo: K. Lengel

Horticulture training at Ferney Valley by Chester Zoo staff



Mark Sparrow and Paul Shipsides with participants on the course

Photo: Chester Zoo



Pandanus iceryi

Photo: V. Tatayah

Mark Sparrow and Paul Shipsides, both of the horticulture and botany department of Chester Zoo in the UK, were in Mauritius for three weeks in November 2013 to train staff from the private sector and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation in horticultural techniques. Participants obtained a Certificate in Horticultural Practice, approved by the Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh, at the end of the examined course.

Chester Zoo has been supporting flora conservation in Mauritius and Rodrigues for a decade and the Chester team has substantial experience with Critically Endangered plants of the Mascarenes from having cultivated rare Mauritian and Rodriguan species, such as *Zanthoxylum heterophyllum*, at their facility in Chester.

Seven students attended the course to gain skills to help them propagate and grow the Critically Endangered plants of Mauritius. During the first week, students learned about the basics of plant growth, including preparing and watering, soils, seed propagation, taxonomy and identification in the field. In the second week, plant potting, composting and pruning were covered. Tree planting was carried out between heavy downpours that were frequent during the training. With the third and final week came the exam. After just a day's revision all the students undertook a practical exam involving, amongst other things, soil cultivation, seed propagation, plant identification and pruning. We're pleased to say that the students passed with flying colours, enabling them to work, henceforth, with Critically Endangered plants.

The course was delivered at Ferney Valley, which encloses an area of rainforest home to more than a 100 endemic plants and numerous animals, including the Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco punctatus*). Ferney Valley has populations of *Pandanus iceryi* (see picture above) and *Pandanus macrostigma*, plants which had been believed to be extinct but were rediscovered during surveys undertaken to halt a potentially disastrous highway project. A couple of *Eugenia bojeri* plants were also rediscovered in the valley. Populations of each of these three species are classified as Critically Endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, whilst most of the other plant species found in Ferney would be classified as Endangered or Vulnerable. Ferney and the surrounding forests of the Bambous Mountain Range are home to the Endangered Mauritius Kestrel and an important population of Mauritius Fruit Bats (*Pteropus niger*). The site is also frequently visited by the White-tailed Tropic bird (*Phaeton lepturus*) and is assumed to house a wide array of insects and invertebrates not yet described to science.

Octopus fishing communities support conservation

In 2012, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly adopted a similar approach to that used in Madagascar to encourage sustainable fishing practices; in this case for octopus. MWF was among local NGOs that participated in providing alternative work for fishers during the closure.

Octopus fishing is an important contributor to the economy on Rodrigues, with an average per capita consumption equalling around 50 kg per annum. In recent years, however, harvests dropped from over 800 to 200 tonnes and could have declined further without intervention. The European Union funded project helped to reverse this trend by supporting the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), through the SmartFish Programme. Encouraged by the rise in harvests following the first octopus fishing closure in 2012, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, with renewed support from MWF and other NGOs, put in place a second closure period from 5 August to 7 October 2013. For the second year running, MWF has provided work for fishers during this period to ensure they could still secure an income.

With funding support from the IOC and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, MWF was able to provide 100 fishers with work assisting with weeding important native habitat areas at Anse Quitor and Grande Montagne, as well as helping in the Solitude nursery.

“Everyone who worked with the octopus fishers during 2012 and 2013 found it a rewarding experience. The task was hard and challenging as time was limited.

We would have found it difficult to complete work on the targeted three hectares at Grande Montagne in such a short time without the fishers’ support. They helped us test different methods of conservation and we tried new techniques by applying on the spot hands-on procedures. They provided assistance throughout the project in an area that was steep sloped, rocky and covered in invasive alien species, by systematically removing aloes, framboise marronne, bois d’oiseau, jamrosa and pomme singe. They helped us in our daily tasks; thinning with machete, hand weeding and uprooting. Since we did loads of thinning with a chainsaw, they also helped us with the stacking of invasives. The fishers finally assisted with collection of seeds, cuttings and seedlings and even showed us some new plants outside the reserve.

Sensitisation sessions for fishers were held with different organizations also; namely CRAC, Shoals Rodrigues and Befrienders.”

Jenifer Cesar, Senior Nature Reserve Assistant, Rodrigues



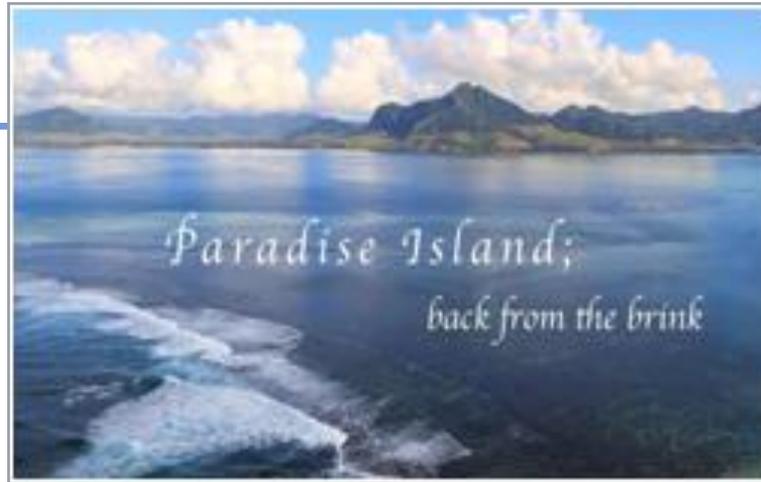
Nursery propagation through cuttings Photo: A. Waterstone



Fishers cutting and stacking invasive plants at Grande Montagne Nature Reserve Photo: A. Waterstone

Spreading the word...

Two new films feature MWF's work on Ile aux Aigrettes



In June 2013, Yasmin White, an Anglo-Mauritian student completing a Masters degree in Wildlife Documentary Production at the University of Salford, UK, arrived in Mauritius to produce a 10-15 minute documentary as part of her coursework. She stayed on Ile aux Aigrettes alongside MWF conservation biologists, filming their work and that of the Ecotour Rangers, who take our visitors round the islet.

Yasmin has produced two films: one on the work carried out on Ile aux Aigrettes and the other featuring our education programme, Learning with Nature.

Both the films are now available to watch via the News and Events section of our website or on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5zhOtJepes>

MWF Files: weekly feature on local fauna and flora in *L'Express*

Since early 2013, MWF staff members have submitted articles about a Mauritian or Rodriguan animal or plant species to be published weekly in the Osmose column of *L'Express* newspaper, under the title MWF Files.

We have grouped these weekly articles by month and you can find them in the News and Events section of our website (www.mauritian-wildlife.org) in a downloadable format.

These articles are highly appreciated by members of the public.





International Volunteer Day

Rodrigues celebrates International Volunteer Day

International Volunteer Day is celebrated on 5 December, every year. On this special day, the invaluable contribution of volunteers is universally acknowledged. MWF Rodrigues seizes this opportunity to thank the many volunteers who help us in our work all year long.

In 2013, MWF organised a fun activity day and an appreciation ceremony at Cotton Bay beach for the 110 volunteers who had participated in our conservation work during the year.

Each volunteer received a MWF goody bag containing posters, educational materials, a field guide to Grande Montagne Nature Reserve and a certificate acknowledging their contribution to our work.



MWF volunteers receiving posters, educational materials and a certificate
Photo: MWF Rodrigues

Job fair and youth training scheme

MWF staff represented the organization at a job fair held in Vacoas in October 2013 at the launch of the national Mauritius Youth Employment Programme (YEP).

This programme aims to provide currently unemployed people, aged between 16 and 30, with an opportunity to participate in a paid work placement. The programme ensures that participants receive half of the salary from the government and the other half from the employer.

MWF presented the opportunities available in wildlife conservation and the range of work being offered by the organization. MWF has already held interviews with potential applicants and offered a few the possibility of a hands-on trial session in the field.

In 2013, the Youth Employment Programme placed more than 4,000 individuals in private companies. The Government's 2014 national budget has provided Rs 275 m to further assist Mauritian youths in obtaining employment. More information can be obtained at www.yep.mu

News and Events



MWF supporters choose a Christmas gift with a purpose

Towards the end of 2013, MWF teamed up with the Rotaract Club of Quatre Bornes to promote the Adopt an Animal for Christmas Project; an initiative aimed at raising funds for MWF's conservation projects. On 30 November 2013, a dozen members of the Rotaract Club of Quatre Bornes, led by their President, Miss Anuja Nababsing, joined MWF's fundraising staff at Phoenix Commercial Centre to devote an entire day to raising awareness around conservation issues and promoting our animal adoption packs. The five species selected for symbolic adoption are the Pink Pigeon, the Mauritius Fody, the Olive White-eye, the Ornate Day Gecko and the Aldabra Giant Tortoise.

Children were invited to make drawings of protected animals, while others indulged in face-painting activities organized by Rotaract members. All children were given a small gift for their participation and invited to have their photo taken with Santa Claus who joined us for the day.

It did not take long for the first adopter to symbolically adopt the Ornate Day Gecko. Thanks to the efforts of the Rotaract members who went canvassing around the shopping centre, the MWF stand enjoyed a good flow of visitors, all keen to learn more about adoptions and MWF's conservation efforts. By the end of the day, MWF and the Rotaract Club had sold 18 adoption packs. The MWF fundraising team seized this opportunity to carry out a survey to obtain feedback on the adoption pack. Following this event, MWF proceeded to further promote the Adopt an Animal for Christmas Project via different media outlets, such as Radio One and in the local press throughout the month of December.

To sustain its fundraising and conservation efforts, MWF still welcomes all those who wish to support our work through adoptions. For more information, please contact us via email on adoptions@mauritian-wildlife.org or call on (+230) 697 6512.



MWF Fundraising team and Rotaract members
Photo: MWF

Rando Raid 2013 – Ride for the Environment

The 11th edition of Rando Raid-Ride for the Environment was held on 3 November 2013. Epic Sport and La Trobe Ltd chose this occasion to raise funds for two NGOs, namely MWF and Reef Conservation. The support was fantastic, thanks to the participants who gathered sponsors to support their race and to the organizers who arranged a raffle for a mountain bike. Donations to MWF were in excess of Rs 100,000.

The winners for this edition were Sébastien Tyack (45 km scratch), Gregory Passée (30 km scratch) and Loic Moonsamy (15 km scratch) on the men's side, and Kimberley Le Court de Billot (45 km scratch), Valerie Gerard (30 km scratch) and Raphaele Lamusse (15 km scratch) on the women's side. The event attracted about 200 participants.



Sebastien Hacques, representative of Epic Sports presenting a cheque to MWF
Photo: Epic Sports

Get involved!



Stay in touch

Follow MWF news on a regular basis via our website www.mauritian-wildlife.org under News and Events, or find us on Facebook at the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation. Also see our new weekly MWF Files on the Osmose page of *L'Express*, regularly on Tuesdays.

Volunteer

If you are over 18 and interested in volunteering for MWF, please visit our website or email us on: volunteer@mauritian-wildlife.org. Expatriate volunteers must be over 21 years of age. Be sure to give details of your availability and which area of volunteering you are interested in.

CSR activities

If you are part of a private company, various activities linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be arranged with MWF, please contact us for more information by email on: fundraising@mauritian-wildlife.org

Visit Ile aux Aigrettes

You can book a visit to the island by
phone: (230) 631 2396
email: reservation@mauritian-wildlife.org
Special tours adapted to your interests can also be arranged.

Donations

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation is an accredited NGO (reg. charity number: 2143) for CSR (NEF reg. N/1070) (www.nef.mu/csr) and is seeking funds for its 20 different projects in 2014.

You can make a donation by cheque or postal order to:

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation,
Grannum Road,
Vacoas,
Mauritius

Or make a bank transfer to:

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation,
Mauritius Commercial Bank, Port Louis,
Account Number: 010204792,
IBAN: U52MCBL0901000000204792000MUR
Mauritius Swift BIC: MCBLMUMU

Please include your full name and contact details, including email address, with all donations and address your correspondence or queries to:

The Fundraising Manager,
Mauritian Wildlife Foundation,
Grannum Road,
Vacoas,
Mauritius

Or email: fundraising@mauritian-wildlife.org

To make a donation, UK residents can email:
fundraising@mauritian-wildlife.org
Attn: Robert Wesley

Adopt

The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation has introduced an alternative approach to raise funds for its conservation projects; you now have the possibility to adopt an animal species for only Rs 1,000 (this is a symbolic adoption that gives no right to the species).

Five animal species are available for adoption:

- Pink Pigeon (*Nesoenas mayeri*)
- Mauritius Fody (*Foudia rubra*)
- Olive White-eye (*Zosterops chloronothos*)
- Ornate Day Gecko (*Phelsuma ornata*)
- Aldabra Giant Tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*)

The animal adoption is valid for one year, commencing from the date the adoption is processed. By supporting our animal adoption scheme you are also contributing to our conservation projects.

To adopt an animal please contact us by
phone: (230) 697 6097, 697 6117, 697 6137
email: adoptions@mauritian-wildlife.org
or online at www.mauritian-wildlife.org

Acknowledgements

We proudly list our funders as at February 2014.



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