

NEWSLETTER



KOFI ANAN MEETS THE MAURITIUS KESTREL

United Nations International Meeting for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in Mauritius from 6 –14 January 2005. MWF had a direct participation in this meeting. Through Community Village and Civil Society Forum MWF was participating in workshops and conferences where launching tangible outputs and programs to help implement the Barbados programme of actions and support community effort to drive sustainable development were some of the addressed issues. MWF also had successful exhibitions and presentations on the GEF Small Grants Programme in Mauritius for the two projects “Sustainable Use of the Rodrigues Endemic Plants” and the ECHO PARAKEET programme. For these events MWF presented posters describing its work and featuring the names of all donors who had participated in the programmes.



Photo: Leila Mead

Upon his arrival at the Community Village, UN Secretary General, **Mr. Kofi Anan** was welcomed by the Mauritius Kestrel. The photos went all over the world and had of course lots of attention in the local press. The Kestrel costume was donated to MWF by RARE a Conservation Education Fund. Jean-Claude Sevathian from MWF played realistically The Kestrel role.

Aldabra Tortoises roam freely in Mauritius

Eighteen adult Aldabra Tortoises were released to roam free on Ile aux Aigrettes (small islet managed by MWF) after studies of their behaviour in an enclosure. They have been successfully breeding and fourteen eggs have hatched in an artificial incubator. On the other hand two small tortoises approximately one year old were found on the island having hatched in the wild. They were both named after the persons who found them: Dominique and Chris. MWF is very happy about this event because it shows that baby tortoises could hatch safely in the wild in the absence of mammalian predators. It is the first time that tortoises roam freely in Mauritian native forest since the disappearance of the native Mauritian tortoises over 200 years ago.

Mauritius Fody being released

The Mauritius Fody Recovery Programme has been successful beyond expectations. The breeding program at the Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary in Black River produced twenty-five chicks from captive parents and twenty-two chicks from the wild were brought in for hand-rearing. The GDEWS is a joint project of *National Parks and Conservation Service* and MWF. Many thanks to Lara Thick from Chester Zoo and Tracey Williams for having assisted us in the delicate task of hand rearing the Fodies. The hand-rearers woke up every two hours to feed these small birds and to look after them. Forty-five birds were released on Ile aux Aigrettes. Two Fody pairs have successfully raised five chicks on the island. Fifty-five Mauritius Fodies are now living wild on Ile aux Aigrettes.

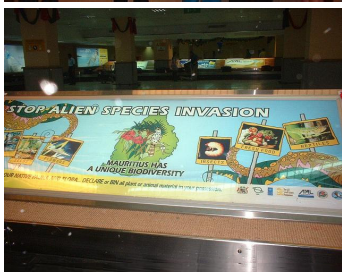


Mauritius Fody being rung before release

Echo Parakeet – numbers up

This season of the Echo Parakeet has been the most successful ever with seventy-one new birds. Forty females laid eggs in the wild. Thirty-five chicks fledged from these nests and three of the chicks fledged from unmanaged cavities. A new release site was set up this season with thirty-six birds released. Twenty-five birds were rescued from the wild and hand-reared in the GDEWS aviary. Eleven chicks were produced by captive birds. They were all released from the new release site into the forest between December'04 to February'05. At present the total Echo population is now estimated at two hundred and eighty birds. A thank you goes to Chester Zoo who sent Paul Morris to help us with the Echo programme.

Biodiversity and Invasive species posters inaugurated at the airport



Photos: Jennifer-Ah King

These posters were designed to raise awareness about the danger of introducing invasive species into the country. The posters were made in collaboration with members of the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) National UNDP Steering Committee and the members of the Invasive Alien Species Committee. This committee comprises representatives of various Ministries, NGOs, the private sector and members of the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) National UNDP Steering Committee. The posters are part of the Pest Proof Fence (Super-fence) Project funded under the UNDP GEF-SGP which was carried out by MWF in collaboration with the National Parks and Conservation Service. The main component of the project was to investigate fence designs in order to exclude all non-flying pest animals in Mauritius. X-Cluder Ltd. from New Zealand was the consultant on this project. A trial fence has been installed and is still being tested. AML Ltd had been an invaluable partner for the successful completion of the project by allowing the display of these posters at the SSR Airport. The inauguration ceremony was held in the VIP lounge at the SSR Airport on Friday 7th January 2005. The unveiling of the posters was to be done by the Honourable Mr N. Bodha, Minister of Agriculture, Food Technology and Resources and Representatives of UNDP.

Plants thought **extinct** rediscovered!

MWF's rare plant surveys of areas for new individuals of critically rare species continue. Exciting recent discoveries include:

Relocation of one *Ficus laterifolia* so now 4 specimens are known.

Seven more *Hubertia ambavilla var ambavilla* were discovered, with this discovery on Mt Cocotte 20 plants are now known.

C*hionanthus broomeana var broomeana*. We only knew of one individual but with the help of Mario Allet from NPCS two more were shown to us in the National Park. Jean Claude (MWF), Kersley Pynee (MSIRI) and Rvd. A. Wiehe found a population of about 50 trees on Deux Mamelles and two more plants on Calebasses Mountain (Port Louis Range).

A probably new *Dombeya* was found by MWF in the Black River Gorges National Park. The Mauritian Herbarium has sent specimens to Paris, as the plant does not seem to resemble either *D. mauritiana* (extinct in the wild) or *D. populnea* (known from only 4 individuals).

Ferney - South Eastern Highway project – Rare plants found



Pandanus iceryi Photo: J.C Sevathian

The government project to build a new highway linking the airport to the hotels in the east is causing concern in Mauritius. The highway is planned to go through the native forest of Ferney. The forest is exceptionally rich, containing over 108 plant species including endangered species such as *Olax psittacorum*, *Poupartia borbonica*, *Sideroxylon grandiflorum*, *Gouinia tillifolia*. Three species also believed to be extinct were found on the proposed route: *Eugenia bojeri* (now known from 3 individuals) and two species of Vacoas (*Pandanus macrostigma*, and *Pandanus iceryi*)

Meetings are being attended by MWF and other stakeholders in connection with this project in an attempt to convince the government to look for a different route in order to avoid destroying this valuable biodiversity.

Rodrigues

World Environment Day

The World Environment Day was celebrated in Rodrigues. MWF attended the Meetings held at the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and participated in an exhibition that lasted for a week. During this exhibition MWF's work was displayed as a way of creating awareness to conservation work in Rodrigues.

Publications – A new snail species named after MWF’s botanist.

A paper describing 10 new species of land snails from the Mascarenes, includes one named after MWF botanist. *Madgeaconcha sevathiani* is the smallest land snail in the Mascarenes and is now believed to be extinct. (Griffiths, O and V. Florens (2004) Molluscan Research 24 161-177)

Comings and Goings

- Yacoob Mungroo Joined MWF on the 1st September 2004 as Flora Manager. He has been working as a research scientist in the Plant Genetic Resources Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture where he was involved in the conservation of Agricultural crop genetic diversity.
- Dave Stepnisky, one of the Round Island staff left MWF for Canada in October 2004.
- Joe Gopal joined the plant team on IAA in September 2004 as volunteer.
- Martine Godder joined the IAA nursery as nursery supervisor in September 2004.
- Christiane Victoire left MWF after having benefited one-month training at Kew Garden.
- Saoud Motala is back to MWF after having successfully completed his MSc in advance Methods in Taxonomy and Biodiversity. The UK Darwin Initiative awarded this postgraduate course to him. This was done in collaboration with the University of Plymouth and with the support of the British Natural History Museum.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to all who have helped with this edition, all MWF staff and volunteers who all have worked very hard in achieving the successful results obtained during the last months. A special thanks to our funders: In Alphabetic order

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Please address your correspondence or questions to:

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

Thank you in advance