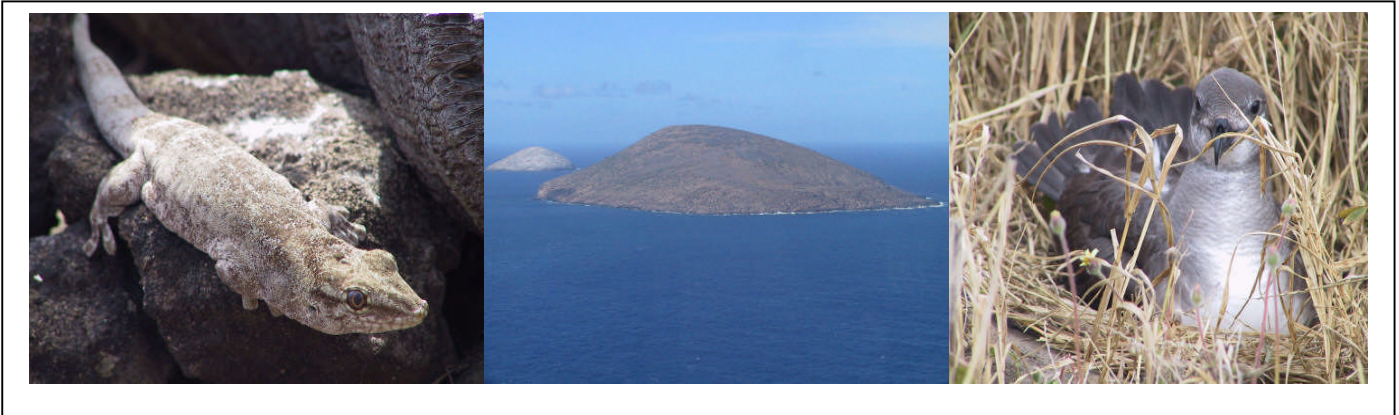


VISITING ROUND ISLAND



PHOTOS: STEVE CRANWELL

IMPORTANT

THIS DOCUMENT MUST BE READ AND UNDERSTOOD BY ALL THOSE VISITING ROUND ISLAND

Round Island has become the last home of many species that are unique in the world. This is because certain invasive species have never made it to the island. Our management work depends upon us keeping invasive species out.

IF YOU DO NOT FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN THIS DOCUMENT YOU ARE JEOPARDISING THE UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY OF ROUND ISLAND

Setting the Scene

Round Island is an offshore islet, situated 22.5 km off the north-east coast of Mauritius, it is the second largest of Mauritius' offshore islands with an area of 214 ha and high point of 280m. Round Island was classified as a Nature Reserve in 1957; it is administered jointly by the National Parks and Conservation Service (NPCS) and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

Access to the island by boat is very difficult as the island has a completely rocky shoreline and the sea is usually very rough. There is one main landing rock where, during calm sea conditions, small inflatable boats can approach near enough to unload equipment and personnel – unfortunately it is quite some distance and a reasonable uphill hike to the field station. The only reliably safe and easy access to the island is by helicopter.

The weather on the island can be characterised as being warm and windy. The driest period extends from September to November during which time droughts are frequent. The wettest period is concentrated between December and March which is also the time when tropical cyclones can occur, associated with winds that sometimes exceed 250 km/h and with rainfall of high intensity. Temperatures on Round Island vary – autumn and winter months usually fall in the range of 22 to 30°C whereas in summer the temperature can soar to 50°C in the open.

The island is a basaltic volcanic cone, probably dating between 25,000-100,000 years. Slopes are generally steep, particularly on the upper third of the island. Over half of the island is covered in bare rock.

Round Island supports the last remnant of a lowland palm rich community that formerly covered the dry lowland areas of Mauritius. The palm community is made up of several species of palms that are endemic to Mauritius. The hurricane palm is Critically Endangered with only one surviving wild individual on Round Island. The Round Island bottle palm is also restricted to Round Island and is now regenerating well on the island. *Latania loddigesii* is the major palm covering extensive areas on the western and northern slopes. The Round Island population of screw pine, or 'Vacoas', is the largest remaining population of this species. With the disappearance of the hardwood forest, only two native hardwood species, *Gagnebina pterocarpa* and one individual of *Fernelia buxifolia* managed to survive. Recently a number of other hardwood species have successfully been re-introduced to the island.

Round Island is internationally famous for its reptile community. Seven to eight species of reptiles still exist on Round Island; all of these are endemic taxa to Mauritius. Four to five species are now restricted to Round Island, Guenther's gecko, Telfair's skink, keel scale boa, burrowing boa (possibly extinct), and Durrell's night gecko. Known reptile extinctions from Round Island include giant tortoises.

Round Island is also an internationally important seabird island. It has the only Indian Ocean breeding colony of trinidad petrel. The taxonomic position of this petrel is still unresolved and it may prove to be an endemic race. Round Island has the largest colonies of wedge-tailed shearwater, red-tailed tropic bird and possibly also the white tailed tropic bird in the Mascarenes and these colonies are of international importance. Breeding Bulwer's petrel and black winged petrel have also recently been found on Round Island, the only known breeding ground for these species in the Indian Ocean.

Unlike many small tropical oceanic islands around the world, Round Island has still retained many of its original elements and is the only relatively large island, in the Mascarene group, free of introduced mammals. It is also one of the very few remaining elevated tropical islands in the world that is rodent free. The island has a largely intact bird and reptile community and is free of all introduced mammals and other alien exotic vertebrates are restricted to house sparrows and barred ground doves and the occasional vagrant such as the red whiskered bulbul. The numbers of introduced insect species is thought to be low but this is not based on reliable information. The risk of introducing alien vertebrates, particularly house geckos and small rodents and also persistent weeds and invasive insects such as ants are a growing concern especially now the island is permanently manned and visits to the island have increased.

Mauritian Wildlife Foundation has rostered permanent wardens on the island. They have the day-to-day responsibility for running the island. While on the island they are responsible for your health and safety and you should abide by any reasonable instructions given during your stay. Please read the guidelines detailed below – they set out the basic quarantine, safety, housekeeping and other general rules that will ensure your stay on the island is harmonious and that the risk of harm to yourself is minimised. **More importantly**, following these procedures will reduce the risk that unwanted animals or plants find their way to Round Island.

Quarantine

So far rodents, house geckos, insect pests and major woody weeds have not been able to reach Round Island, probably due to the large distance that separates the island from mainland Mauritius and difficult access. However their introduction to the island is a real possibility if precautions during visits to the island are not adequately taken. The biodiversity of the island is very vulnerable to **any alien species introduction**. Rodents, in particular rats, could cause mass extinction of the reptiles, birds and plants - as has been the case on mainland Mauritius and other islets. The survival of reptile community is dependent on the absence of such predators.

**ANY LIVE PLANT OR ANIMAL MATERIAL BROUGHT
ONTO ROUND ISLAND IS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING
AN IRREVERSIBLE ECOLOGICAL DISASTER**

IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT YOU OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PROTOCOL:

A Planning the trip

In making the preparations for your trip to Round Island:

1. Appoint a trip leader
2. Advise MWF Round Island Warden/Islets Coordinator who the trip leader is, together with a list of the other members of the party, at least one week prior to your planned departure date (*contact details at end of this briefing paper*).
3. Ensure each party member has a copy of this briefing paper and is fully aware of the quarantine and other procedures detailed in it, including the self audit quarantine check requirement.
4. Obtain a plastic quarantine-packing drum from the Islets Coordinator /RI Warden for each member of the party to stow their personal effects for transportation to Round Island and more drums for food and other items. It is advised to use one drum per visitor.
5. If you have any items that cannot be packed into one of these drums, the Islets Coordinator /RI Warden must be advised – **AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR** to the planned departure date. Suitable quarantine provisions for the item(s) concerned will then be made. If appropriate quarantine measures for the item cannot be guaranteed – **it will not be permitted to go to the island**.
6. Obtain from the Islets Coordinator /RI Warden details of the departure point and time. Also get details of the time and place (quarantine facility) at which the party will meet. At this meeting point the party will receive a full briefing for their trip to the island. You must have read and understood this briefing document before this meeting. You will be asked about this. All personal gear, expedition equipment etc will have its official quarantine check. Ensure you have your self-audit check sheet available.
7. The official quarantine check should take place 12 to 24 hrs prior to the planned departure time. After quarantine drums have been checked and “**Approved for**

Travel” they must remain sealed in the quarantine facility/secure area until it is time to depart.

8. Any equipment, food, personal gear not properly quarantined and checked off by the Islets Coordinator / RI Warden will **NOT GO** to the island.

B Before you leave home

The island is rodent-free and has a minimal number of introduced weeds and invertebrates – we want it to stay that way.

1. **Before** leaving home check all gear is clean and free of dirt, insects, animals and seeds. Pay particular attention to boots, laces, pockets and Velcro. No dirty gear is to be taken to the island i.e. scrub your boots, coat, etc at home before you pack. Place all personal gear into the quarantine drum provided.
2. You must complete the quarantine form, (attached), as you pack your gear – this will remind you to check everything. Please pack coat, footwear and socks at the top of your quarantine drum so that they can be easily checked.
3. **DO NOT BRING GAITERS.** They are a very effective way of transporting weed seeds. There is a supply of gaiters on Round Island.
4. Do not wear or bring trousers with turn-ups. Seeds, animals and eggs can lodge in the turn-ups and present a quarantine hazard
5. You will not need to take day-packs or a large pack to the island – these are available there. Round Island also has three good quality two person tents – so there is no need to take additional tents to the island. 5 sleeping bags are also provided.
6. After any contact with other animals in aviaries or zoos, wild animals or birds elsewhere, (including domestic and farm animals), thoroughly clean and disinfect all items of clothing and equipment – avoid taking any of these items to Round Island where possible.

C Food Selection & Packing

Transportation of food items to Round Island perhaps presents the highest potential risk of introduction of exotic species – including rats, mice, house gecko and giant African land snail eggs, invertebrates and unwanted fruit and vegetable species please take particular attention to this section and ensure you follow the advice diligently.

The foods listed in Table 1 below **must not be eaten within 48 hours** of the planned departure day - those listed in Table 2 **are not to be taken** to Round Island.

Table 1

FOOD NOT TO BE EATEN 48 HOURS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE DATE		
Tomatoes	Framboise Marron (<i>Rubus rosifolius</i>)	Framboise marron/piquant loulou (<i>Rubus alceifolius</i>)
Guava (<i>Psidium cattleianum</i> & <i>Psidium guajava</i>)	Marrow	Passion fruit (<i>Passiflora</i> spp.)

Table 2

FOOD NOT TO BE TAKEN TO ROUND ISLAND		
Tomatoes	Framboise Marron (<i>Rubus rosifolius</i>), marron/piquant loulou (<i>Rubus alceifolius</i>)	Jamrosa (<i>Syzigium jambos</i>)
Guava	Papaya (<i>Carica papaya</i>)	Marrow
Passion fruit (<i>Passiflora spp.</i>)	Chou Chou (<i>Sechium edule</i>)	Thyme
Kiwifruit	Fresh chilli	

Food preparation:

1. Remove all unnecessary packing (boxes etc) from around selected food items.
2. All fruit should be inspected to ensure there are no wormholes, rot or insects – if in doubt wash in a dilute sterilising solution (e.g. Milton). Any suspect fruit items should be binned.
3. Similarly all vegetables should be cleaned. **Wash off ALL DIRT**. Check each vegetable for insect-holes, insects, seeds, dirt and eggs. Remove outer leaves of cabbages. Remove outer shells of garlic and onions.
4. Vegetables such as cauliflower, leeks, broccoli, lettuce, etc present higher risk of containing unwanted dirt, seeds, insects etc and should not be taken unless you have taken extensive measures to ensure they are totally free of foreign matter. The RI Warden/Quarantine Officer will check these items prior to being packed in a quarantine drum.
5. If you are bringing your own food from home – please advise the warden. These items will need to be checked, and questions asked of their origin. **YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO TAKE GOODS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN OPENED.**

D Departure Day

Arrive early at the pre-arranged departure point/quarantine facility. The following procedure will occur:

1. A quarantine inspection of **all gear** will be carried out at the departure point/Quarantine facility. This will involve checking your self-audit form and inspecting your gear. The inspection will usually only involve checking high-risk items e.g. footwear, coats, pack pockets etc but if a risk is identified you may have to empty out your entire quarantine drum. Each person is entitled to one drum for personal belongings.
2. All vehicles, used for the transport of people, personal gear, provisions and any other items associated with the expedition, will be thoroughly cleaned beforehand. There should be **NO** opportunity for contamination of Round Island bound people or materials from the vehicle.

3. On arrival at the departure point the Quarantine Officer/RI Warden will brief all party members on final quarantine checks. A briefing will also be given on safety when using helicopters, or boats – which ever is required. All quarantine drums / other equipment travelling to the island will be given a final check before being loaded onto the transport.
4. The “helipad” area from which we take off at Petit Raffray is surrounded by weeds. Do not walk or set down items that are going to Round Island in this area. If you need to go to the toilet use those in the adjacent building.
5. If your footwear gets dirty between leaving home and arriving at the departure point a brush and water will be available for you to re-clean them prior to loading. You should also give your clothing a final check over for seeds, insects, soil etc.
6. The Quarantine Officer/RI Warden will be responsible for ensuring the quarantine integrity of the transport – helicopter/boat and their crew.
7. N.B. the helicopter/boat **will not wait** while you clean your gear at the last minute and you will not be allowed to go to the island if everything is not up to standard, so for everyone’s sake make sure you do your part.
8. If you feel unwell and not fit to travel, please inform the warden immediately.

E On Arrival at Round Island

On arrival at the island:

Helicopter

1. Please make your way directly to the Round Island field station, unless you are asked for assistance with unloading/loading of the helicopter.
2. Do not open any blue quarantine drums, bags, boxes, etc until you are inside the field station on the island and have been told to do so by the Round Island Warden.
3. If you find any seeds, soil, insects, geckos, eggs etc in/on your gear (you shouldn’t but it may happen) please advise the warden immediately and dispose of in the rubbish container (which will be sealed and taken back to the mainland for dumping). Do not throw away!
4. Any incursions must be noted in the Round Island incursion notebook.
5. You will receive a briefing on hazards, rules and planned activities.

Boat

1. Follow the instructions of the Coast Guard Crew/Boat Crew. Landing on the island by boat can be hazardous, and usually people and gear get very wet. Ensure items that must stay dry are appropriately packed in sealed drums, sealed bags etc.
2. Remain alert at all times to the possibility that there may be a stowaway pest on board the boat. Should you see anything leave the boat near the shore of the island – report what it was and where it was heading, immediately to the RI Warden.
3. Do not unpack any items from the quarantine drums, bags etc unless the RI Warden approves such action. All quarantine drums, bags, equipment etc must

be transported to the secure area of the RI Field station before being unpacked.
This is essential!

REMEMBER

- Read and be familiar with all the requirements of this briefing paper.
- Complete Self Audit Quarantine Check sheet before leaving home. All GEAR MUST BE CLEAN
- Only take permitted fruit and vegetable items – inspect and wash all other perishables thoroughly.
- If in Doubt – ASK – either the Round Island warden(s) or the Quarantine Officer.

discuss these with the Warden.

- The warden is the one that manages the work on the island. You should follow his/her instructions and advices.
- Heteropogon*, *Mikania* & *Chromolaena* sites. There are several areas that have contained individuals of these species that if they spread could threaten our restoration work on Round Island. These patches have been clearly marked. Please do not walk on them as this could result in you spreading these weeds and jeopardising our efforts. These areas will be shown to you by the Round Island warden. Try when possible to follow the marked paths.
- Some areas on the island are dangerous to travel or explore, especially on your own. In particular the crater and the extremely slippery shoreline are hazardous. Other locations to be mindful of are shearwater-breeding areas. The soil is very fragile and you will readily collapse the shearwater burrows. You must seek the warden's advice if you plan to visit any of these areas.
- Smoking - is only permitted on the field station deck, nowhere else on the island. Round Island can be very dry for long periods. A loose cigarette butt could start a fire, which could jeopardise all we have worked for. **Fully extinguished** butts are to be disposed of in the special butts rubbish can.
- Wildlife - have the right of way and should not be unnecessarily disturbed or handled. Keep your distance from birds; nesting petrels in particular are quite nervous. Large skinks will approach you – do not chase or handle. **Camera ownership is not an exemption.**
- Water is a precious commodity on Round Island. It is the warden's right to control the daily amount of water use. Always ask the warden before using water and use it sparingly – especially for washing. If your trip is for a week or less there should be no need to do any laundry.
- Food has been purchased for a period of two weeks, thus consideration should be given to the fact that these supplies last the two weeks.
- Before plugging any electrical apparatus ask the warden for the green light.
- All equipment and tools are the warden's responsibility. Ask for approval before using them and replace them where you found them after use.
- Plants, rocks, feathers, dead things etc – please leave them where they are. Bring rubbish, food scraps, seeds/pips, peelings etc from trips in the field back to the field station for disposal.

Safety

The reserve is entered at your own risk; however we request that you comply with these safety rules.

- ❑ Helicopters – Ensure you attend the safety briefing. Do not approach unless instructed by the pilot or crew.
- ❑ Never approach the helicopter from the back. The rear rotor blade is low and cannot be seen when spinning.
- ❑ Fire – contain or extinguish small fires if you can do so safely. Otherwise raise the alarm and assemble all people at the helipad. Familiarise yourself with the emergency procedures and the location and operation of fire extinguishers in the field station.
- ❑ Out of bounds – water filter, solar power system, gas cylinders, battery bank and battery charging facilities. The Wardens will look after these.
- ❑ The island has an up to date and extensive first aid kit. Please seek the warden's advice on matters of first aid – and always advise if any of the medical supplies are used.
- ❑ All personal medicine used on a regular basis should be brought with you. Please inform the wardens of any serious medical conditions or allergies which you suffer from.
- ❑ Please ensure that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used when using hand tools, scrub-bars, generators, poisons etc. It is compulsive to follow the warden instructions and safety notice when using these tools. If you are not familiar with the correct operation or use of any of these items – **DO NOT USE THEM!**
- ❑ The exposed rock slab over which you will travel to get around the island is quite soft. Be especially careful near rock outcrop edges and ledges – **DO NOT** stand on the edge – the rock will collapse under your weight.
- ❑ You should bring sturdy footwear that provides good ankle support. A sun hat, sunglasses and plenty of sun block.
- ❑ Fishing – the island has a fishing rod. Fishing from the coastal rocks is very dangerous. You must be accompanied by the warden if you are going to go fishing, or, at the warden's discretion, with at least one other person.
- ❑ Swimming. There are a number of rock pools around the shores of the island used for swimming. The open sea is usually too rough. Access to and use of these pools can be very dangerous depending on the state of the sea and the tide. Please seek the warden's advice before going swimming – and **always** leave intentions on the white board in the field station.
- ❑ When travelling alone around the island – **you must** – take an activated radio beacon with you, leave your intentions on the white board in the field station and be back before sunset.

Housekeeping

Round island field station has gas cooking facilities, limited 12, 24 and 240 volt power supply, electric lights, 4 bunks, a small office and tools/hardware storage area. The island has VHF radio comm.'s with MWF Office,

**EFFECTIVE QUARANTINE
THEY CAN BE DONE, THEY MUST BE**



MWF house and the other MWF field stations + 2 handheld VHF radios. A radio link phone to the main Mauritius Telephone network is installed which allows full telephone access together with internet and e-mail. The island also has a modern and hygienic composting toilet.

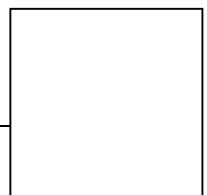
- ❑ Telephone/Internet – priority for computer/phone use is for Round Island related projects – please be reasonable in their use.
- ❑ Living is communally based; everyone is expected to take his or her turn. Please tidy up after yourselves, and remember water is limited.
- ❑ The field station is the warden home so while you are in the field station make as if you are being hosted at someone else's place, thus behave accordingly.
- ❑ At first site some people may think that the staff on Round Island is not caring for the house as the roof area is full of spider's webs. The spiders are deliberately left as they keep the numbers of moths and flies down in the house.

Contact Names and Addresses

Contact	Phone	Fax	E-mail
MWF Office	697 6097/6117/6137	697 6512	executive@mauritian-wildlife.org
MWF House	483 6013		
Round Island Wardens	508 1797		mwfril@intnet.mu
Round Island Mobiles	250 6967		
Quarantine Officer – Jean-Claude Sevathian	466 7780 788 8522		jcsevathian@mauritian-wildlife.org
Islands Restoration Manager - Ashok Khadun	418 7695 763 7261		akhadun@mauritian-wildlife.org
Fauna Manager – Vikash Tatayah	698 8839 250 6970		viktat@intnet.mu

IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT YOU ARE NOT CLEAR ABOUT PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH THE ROUND ISLAND WARDEN OR ONE OF THE PEOPLE NAMED ON THE ABOVE LIST AND THEY CAN CLARIFY THINGS FOR YOU.

ENJOY YOUR STAY ON ROUND ISLAND: HELP KEEP IT UNIQUE



ROUND ISLAND SELF AUDIT QUARANTINE CHECK SHEET

Name:		Date	Trip Duration:	days	Transport:	<i>Helicopter/Boat</i>
Purpose of trip to Round Island:						
Personal Effects – REMEMBER Scrub footwear, remove all traces of dirt, remove seeds from laces/lining. Remove foot bed and clean inner. Coat, clothing, socks – wash thoroughly, pick seeds out socks etc, check ALL pockets – clean. Gaiters/Putties – check Velcro – remove all seeds. Clean thoroughly						
Item	Have you checked it? (tick)	Checked by Quarantine officer	Comments/Signature/Date			
Boots						
Other footwear						
Gaiters/Putties						
Socks						
Clothing						
Parka						
Other Equipment and Food – REMEMBER						
Only take permitted fruits and vegetables – ARE THEY THOROUGHLY CLEANED? Remove excess packaging Have all items, research equipment, etc been thoroughly checked and cleaned – ARE YOU SURE THERE IS NO RISK? Are all items in secure no-risk sealed quarantine containers?						
Item	Have you checked it? (tick)	Checked by Quarantine officer	Comments/Signature/Date			
Field Equipment						
Food Stores						
Vegetables						
Fruit						