

TITLE OF PROGRAMME: MAURITIUS KESTREL CONSERVATION PROJECT

By **Mauritian Wildlife Foundation** [NCSR Reg No: NCSR/2017/0158]



PROJECT TECHNICAL SHEET

Project Type	Species Conservation
Start of Project	1973
Scientific name	<i>Falco Punctatus</i>
Species	Small bird of prey
Location	Bambous Mountains, Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary, Black River Gorges National Park and surrounding areas
Priority Area	Environmental & Sustainable development - Biodiversity
IUCN status	Vulnerable

OBJECTIVES

Prevent population decline of the Mauritius Kestrel by attaining a viable, stable or increasing population and increase the distribution of the birds.

ACTIVITIES BEING IMPLEMENTED

- Scientific research of forest habitat, agriculture, bird numbers, effects of climate change, food provisioning, predation, territory selection, genetics.

- Provide Predator-proof nest-boxes and erect boxes in new areas for birds to lay their eggs in.
- Ring a maximum number of wild birds in both populations.
- Monitor the breeding activity of the wild population.
- Harvest & incubate eggs, and hand-rear birds at the Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary for release in suitable habitats in the West coast area.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

- Mauritius Kestrel, Mauritian Biodiversity.
- Mauritian population and its future generations, school children, tourists and the world at large.
- Republic of Mauritius, regarding meeting national biodiversity targets (e.g. the National Biodiversity and Strategy Action Plan 2006-15) and fulfilling obligations towards international biodiversity conventions (e.g. Rio Conventions, Aichi Targets, Millennium Development Goals).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Mauritius Kestrel *Falco punctatus* is unique to Mauritius and is one of the nine endemic bird species still left on the island. The species was saved in-extremis with an increase from just four birds in 1974, including a single breeding female, to a peak of about 600 individuals. It has become a world conservation icon, recognised as the most successful recovery programme in the world for an animal species and the programme remains MWF's proudest achievement.

However, because of the degradation of the Mauritian native forests, the kestrels are now found only on the eastern and western part of the island - where they continue to face the effects of habitat degradation and predators. The eastern population has been monitored constantly since the re-introduction of birds from 1988 to 1993, the nest boxes maintained and replaced when required and this has resulted in a stable and healthy population for the past decade.

For CSR activities and more information please contact the Fundraising Manager or email fundraising@mauritian-wildlife.org

Thank you for considering our appeal.

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However, the western sub-population was not monitored constantly and, after an island wide survey found a drastic reduction in kestrel numbers in this population, MWF resumed monitoring on the West Coast in 2008. The survey sadly confirmed the disappearance of introduced kestrels from the Moka Mountain Range.

The recent monitoring of all populations has enabled us to identify the management which is required to reverse the downward trend in numbers in the west. The key measure is placing nest boxes in suitable habitats and releasing handreared birds from these boxes to introduce birds to these secure nesting sites (as an alternative to cliff cavities which are exposed to predation) to increase breeding pairs. The field team harvest eggs and/or chicks from nest-boxes in the eastern population. The eggs and chicks are hand-reared at the Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary in Black River (GDEWS) under the supervision of experienced handrearsers. The juvenile birds are then moved to nest boxes in the new release sites for a period of adaptation before leaving the box to go into the forest. In 2016, 2017 and 2018 a total of 47 Kestrel chicks were hand-reared in GDEWS and released in Bel Ombre and in 2019 (15) and 2021 (16) birds were released in Brise Fer, both sites in the Black River Gorges National Park. No handrearing was carried out in 2020 due to the covid19 pandemic and the closure of borders to expert staff from abroad. Further releases are planned for 2022.



To support the above actions the genetics of the populations is being studied by our overseas university partners to identify if certain bird's genes need to be introduced into the other sub-population. The latest scientific findings illustrates that there is no room for complacency, and we still need to look after the Mauritius Kestrels.

REPORTING AND FINANCIALS

PROJECT DATES

The programme is continuous but the level of project activity is assessed yearly to adjust to the project aims and requirements. Annual report & other reports delivery is as per agreed timeframe with main funders.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Human Resources: One project coordinator, four conservation biologists, one releaser and two hand rearers, and support from a Manager and Head Office.
- Infrastructure: Use of two equipped field stations.
- Equipment: One jeep, six motorbikes, five sets of climbing equipment, three laptops, five GPS units, bird ringing equipment, blood sampling equipment incubators and brooders.
- Other: Consumables, food for hand rearing and laboratory tests on blood samples.

BUDGET 2022-2023

Description	Budget (Rs)
Project Staff Cost	1,898,725
Transport and Travel	917,200
Equipment and Materials	476,065
Handrearing & release Costs	1,249,081
Other Operation Costs	236,460
Total Operational Cost	4,777,532
Administration Cost	450,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	5,227,532

ANY LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTION IS MOST WELCOME.

If excess funds are raised, they are carried forward to the next year of the project.

A full and detailed project and budget write-up can be given to you on request

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