

TITLE OF PROGRAMME: MAURITIUS KESTREL CONSERVATION PROJECT

By **Mauritian Wildlife Foundation** [NCSR Reg No: NCSRF/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, and 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 and incubate eggs, as well as 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 500 individuals due to intensive support given. 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 Mauritian Wildlife Foundation's (MWF) 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, with the nest boxes maintained and replaced when required, and has been healthy and stable 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 constantly monitored, and after an island wide survey a drastic reduction was found in kestrel numbers in this population. MWF resumed monitoring on the West Coast in 2008. The findings 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 more nest boxes in suitable habitats and releasing hand-reared birds from these boxes, the aim is to introduce individuals to these secure nesting sites (as an alternative to cliff cavities which are exposed to predation) and to increase breeding pairs.

The field team harvested 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 (GDEWS) in Black River under the supervision of experienced hand-rearers. 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, 2021 and 2022, 37 birds were released in Brise Fer, with both sites being within the Black River Gorges National Park. To prevent overharvesting of the East Coast population, the hand rearing was suspended in 2023 and will be assessed in 2024 with possible alternative actions such as egg manipulation techniques which would increase productivity without impacting negatively on the East Coast population. To support the above actions, the genetics of populations is being studied by our overseas university partners to identify if certain specific genes need to be introduced into the sub-populations. The latest scientific findings illustrate 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 and support from a Manager and Head Office.
- Infrastructure: Use of two equipped field stations.
- Equipment: One jeep, four motorbikes, four sets of climbing equipment, three laptops, four GPS units, bird ringing equipment, blood sampling equipment, incubators and brooders.
- Other: Consumables, food for hand rearing and laboratory tests on blood samples.

BUDGET 2024-2025

Description	Budget (Rs)
Project Staff Cost	2,293,560
Transport and Travel	765,200
Equipment and Materials	520,420
Handrearing & Release Costs	-
Other Operation Costs	136,920
Total Operational Cost	3,716,100
Administration Cost	500,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	4,216,100

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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