



NEWSLETTER



Lesser Night Gecko (*Nactus coindemirensis*)

First Lizard Translocations in the Indian Ocean

The night geckos were once widely distributed throughout the Mascarenes, but are today restricted to a few Mauritian islands. Only three species remain, all on separate islands. Previous research in Mauritius demonstrated that the night gecko's catastrophic reduction in range was caused by the introduced common house gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*. Unfortunately there are very few islands left that are house gecko free and it is currently impossible to eradicate this highly invasive species once it is established. Ecological comparisons and interaction experiments between the Lesser and Durrell's night gecko support the notion that they once coexisted. Nevertheless, there is a need to test their long-term co-existence in the present time; hence the release of both species on Ilot Chat before a large-scale translocation takes place.



This October the Lesser Night Gecko (*Nactus coindemirensis*) and Durrell's Night Gecko (*Nactus durrelli*) were translocated to Ilot Chat as part of the Darwin Initiative translocation release programme. Ilot Chat is a small coralline islet (0.08ha) positioned about 450m south of Treize Cantons in Grand Port. Thirty adult individuals of each species and of equal sex ratio were released. Since the gecko releases the translocation team have visited the islet each month to monitor the populations. Each gecko is identifiable from its unique markings and allows the team to follow the progress of each individual. Although it is still early days, both species appear to be thriving and several of the females that were gravid upon initial release have laid and many have newly developing eggs.

As part of the Darwin Initiative to restore island reptile communities the Reptile Translocation Team is made up of staff from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, National Parks & Conservation Service and MWF who also co-sponsor the project with the Darwin Initiative.



20 years Conservation work on Ile Aux Aigrettes celebrated by releases of the Olive White-eye & the Telfair skink

Twenty years of conservation work on Ile aux Aigrettes was celebrated on the 9th December 2006 by an official release of 39 Tefair skinks (*Leiopisma telfairii*) & of 4 Olive White-eyes (*Zosterops chloronothos*) on the predator free island Ile aux Aigrettes, south of Mauritius. The Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Regional Co-operation Mr. Dulloo, did the releases. The event evoked lots of local interest.



The aviary being opened to release the birds

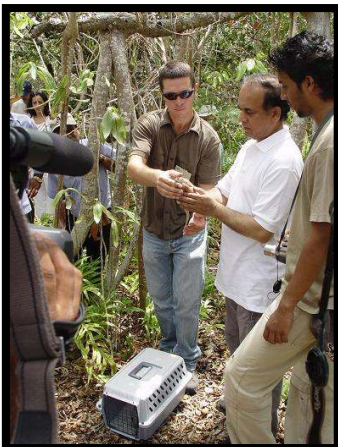
The Chester Zoo, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust & MWF hand-rearing team successfully reared four Olive White-eyes in the 2005-2006 season when the contents of two nests were rescued. Eggs from wild nests of Olive White-eyes were also rescued during this breeding season in the mainland forest & were brought down to the *GDEWS. The eggs hatched & the chicks were fed by hand. Four of these chicks were released on 9th of December. A small number of Olive White-eyes may stay at the *GDEWS aviary to establish a captive population of birds to provide an additional source of birds for further introduction programmes, whilst allowing parallel captive studies to gain a better understanding of the species biology and management requirements.

*Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary



Photo: F. Mainga

Olive White-eye (*Zosterops chloronothos*)



Dr Nik Cole Project Manager of the reptile release programme is explaining to the guests the release of the Telfair skink while holding one in his hand.

*Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary

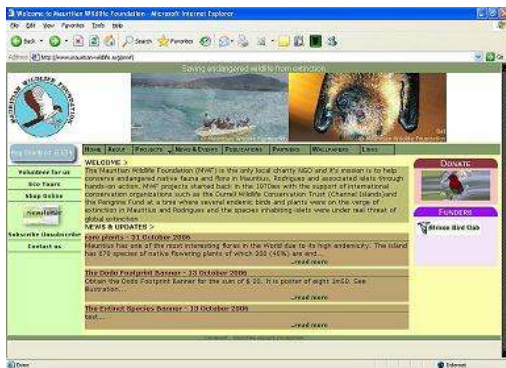
The little things that make a big difference



✿ Mauritius has an incredibly important insect fauna; in beetles alone there are almost 500 species that are found no-where else in the world. “There is an urgent need to monitor these populations and implement conservation strategies to ensure that they’re not lost forever” says Dr. Sarah Donovan, Project leader, University of Plymouth a MWF partner & sponsor of this project.

Insects take the stage in Mauritian conservation

MWF held a three-day workshop at the University of Mauritius in September 2006. This workshop successfully concluded a three-year project awarded to MWF through the UK Darwin Initiative in conjunction with the University of Plymouth, UK. British entomologists joined local scientists and stakeholder institutions to discuss taxonomic issues on this vital but often neglected group of animals and to brainstorm about future conservation strategies on the group.



MWF has a new web-site!

✿ A new web-site has been developed jointly with the Echo Parakeet sponsor IBL Aviation & Other Services.

You are welcome to comment, please send your comments by e-mail to:

executive@mauritian-wildlife.org

Happy reading on:

[www: mauritian-wildlife.org](http://www.mauritian-wildlife.org)

Eco-Tourism

Ile aux Aigrettes at the first SETIL (Salon du Tourisme des Iles de L’océan Indien) held on the 9th and 10th October 2006). This event, held at the Swami Vivekananda International Centre at Pailles Mauritius, had the participation of many local travel agents & tour operators as well as those from other countries in the Indian Ocean. Ile aux Aigrettes was marketed at this International travel fair. More tourists are today attracted to activities related to Eco tourism showing indigenous fauna and flora. It is largely recognised that Ile aux Aigrettes has all necessary ingredients to lead the way forward in conservation education awareness in Mauritius.

Ile Aux aigrettes is Winner of the 2005 Global Vision Award in Ecological Conservation



Ile Aux aigrettes Team at the fair

Official Launching of “Dodo Foot Print” & the “Mini-bronzes” at the Blue Penny Museum

This launching took place in the beautiful surroundings of the Blue Penny Museum in Port Louis in the presence of the Honorable Minister of Agro-Industry, Fisheries & Natural Resources Dr A. Boolell, MWF’s President, board members, stakeholders & wildlife friends. The sale of the items was not only to raise funds but also to draw attention to the tragedy of extinction and to inspire a deeper understanding of the vital need for conservation. A big thank you to Mr. Alain Huron, Curator of the Blue Penny Museum, for his advice and assistance in making this event a great success and to Gallery Pangolin who created the original bronzes in 2004. The life-size bronzes as well as the smaller versions & the dodo-foot print can be viewed at the permanent exhibition on Ile aux Aigrettes.



Dodo head in bronze

From Highway to Nature Park

The Ferney Valley is now open to the public. Since 2001 when the first plans were made to construct a highway through one of the few remaining indigenous forests in Mauritius (less than 2% remains), many efforts have been made to save the forest by different stakeholders. Today Mauritians and tourists alike can now enjoy this beautiful area where the remnants of many endemic species still can be seen.

MWF is acting as a consultant in conservation on this project & with the owners of the area plans have been made to continue conservation efforts in the years to come: Eradication of invasive alien plants species that still threatens the endemic flora will be an on-going activity. The Mauritius Kestrel population is still being monitored there by MWF & future plans are being made to reintroduce endemic birds such as the Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet and the Mauritius Fody.



RARE PLANTS

During vegetation survey on Piton Grand Bassin in November this year a new individual of the endemic plant species *Elaeocarpus bojeri* (Bois dentelle) was found on the summit of this peak. This find has brought the population of this species to 3 individuals left in the wild. Further propagation of the Bois dentelle will be carried out in our nurseries and will be planted in the field gene bank in Pigeon Wood.

MWF needs funds to continue its work, should you wish to help MWF in its conservation work you are welcome to make a donation:

- Send a Cheque or postal order, made payable to The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Grannum Road, Vacoas, Mauritius, **OR**
- Send a direct credit, Beneficiary Bank: The Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd.- Port Louis – Mauritius Swift BIC: MCBLMUMU / Account Number: 010204792 / Account Currency: MUR **OR**
- With your Credit Card / Switch number: **ONLY** for MasterCard, VISA and AMERICAN EXPRESS, C.V.C NR (MasterCard)_____ C.V.V NR (VisaCard)_____ Issue no._____ Expiry date:_____ Signature:_____

Please include your full name and contacts including e-mail address, with all donations & address your correspondence or questions to:

The Fundraising Coordinator
The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Grannum Road - Vacoas, Mauritius
e-mail: traffray@mauritian-wildlife.org

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to all volunteers and funders who in 2006 helped MWF in its mission to save the endangered Mauritian Wildlife.

Funders: In Alphabetic order

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Administration & Consultants Ltd	Darwin Initiative UK	IBL staff association	Peregrine Fund
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Agricultural Society of Western Australia	David Ah Sue	Kathrada & Sons	Philadelphia Zoo
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