

Know your species

Name

Mauritius pink pigeon (*Colomba mayeri*)

Status

Classified as Endangered the population varies between 350-390 birds. It has been reduced to a small population for at least 150 years. In 1990 the population declined to 9-10 wild individuals (all ringed) and population forecasts at the time predicted that it would be extinct by 2001.



Distribution

Sub-fossil records and earlier counts suggest that the species was distributed island-wide, at all altitudes. There was a rapid decline in distribution in the latter half of the twentieth century due to forest destruction in the upland areas. Currently there are five sub-populations, four of which are introduced. Four of these sub-populations are in the Black River Gorges National Park, the fifth being based on isle aux aigrettes. The wild population is in Pigeon Wood. All populations fluctuate in size some of which crashing to very low numbers.

Biology/Ecology

The species feeds on flowers, fruits and leaves of native trees, there being some co-evolution of plants and pink pigeons. However, it will take some exotic plants. It lives in primary and secondary native forest, preferring the best areas of native forest. It may breed year-round but with a peak from June-December. It lays 1-2 eggs, fertility levels being low (c50%). Eggs hatch after 14 days and are parent-fed on "crop milk". The species can produce multiple broods, though there are very high rates of nest failure. Assuming animals reach adulthood they can potentially live for over a decade (in captivity they have been known to live for over 20 years).

Threats

- Habitat destruction and degradation
- Predation on adults by cats, mongooses, monkeys
- Predation on eggs and young by rats, monkeys, mynah birds
- Seasonal food shortages during dry months and due to competition from monkeys rats and exotic birds
- Disease- trichomoniasis, leucocytozoans, avian pox
- Cylcones