

## FAUNA UNIT

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The National Parks & Conservation Service and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation have been actively involved in conserving several animal species from extinction.

Below is a list of the birds which are native to Mauritius and Rodrigues:

Common Name	Scientific Name	IUCN Status	Origin	Population
<b>Mauritius Kestrel</b>	<i>Falco punctatus</i>	Endangered	Endemic to Mauritius	350-400
<b>Pink Pigeon</b>	<i>Nesoenas mayeri</i>	Endangered	Endemic to Mauritius	400
<b>Echo Parakeet</b>	<i>Psittacula eques</i>	Endangered	Endemic to Mauritius	550-600
<b>Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher</b>	<i>Terpsiphone bourbonensis desolata</i>	Least Concern	Endemic to Mascarene	400-800
<b>Mauritius Olive-white Eye</b>	<i>Zosterops chloronotos</i>	Critically Endangered	Endemic to Mauritius	180-270
<b>Mauritius Black Bulbul</b>	<i>Hypsipetes olivaceus</i>	Vulnerable	Endemic to Mauritius	400-900
<b>Mauritius Cuckoo-shrike</b>	<i>Coracina typica</i>	Vulnerable	Endemic to Mauritius	100-250
<b>Mauritius Fody</b>	<i>Foudia rubra</i>	Endangered	Endemic to Mauritius	240-330
<b>Mauritius Grey-white Eye</b>	<i>Zosterops Mauritianus</i>	Least Concern	Endemic to Mascarene	60,000
<b>Mascarene</b>	<i>Aerodramus</i>	Near Threatened	Native to	NA

<b>Swiftlet</b>	<i>francicus</i>		Mauritius	
<b>Mascarene Martin</b>	<i>Phedina barbonica</i>	Least Concern	Native to Mauritius	NA
<b>Rodrigues Fody</b>	<i>Foudia flavicans</i>	Near Threatened	Endemic to Rodrigues	8,000
<b>Rodrigues Brush Warbler</b>	<i>Acrocephalus rodericanus</i>	Near Threatened	Endemic to Rodrigues	4,000

### **Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary**

The Gerald Durrell Endemic Wildlife Sanctuary (GDEWS), also known as the Black River Aviaries, has been set up in 1976 by the Forestry Service and International Council for Bird Preservation (now Birdlife International) for saving endangered birds and bats, endemic to Mauritius and Rodrigues.

GDEWS also worked on the captive breeding of the Mauritius Kestrels, the Pink Pigeons and the Echo Parakeets. These three species of birds have been saved from extinction by intensive management of the wild population in conjunction with the release of captive bred or captive reared birds from the Aviaries. The centre has also been involved in several other projects like the hand rearing of the Mauritius Fody and the Olive white-eye, both endemic songbirds.

The NPCS funds a range of management costs, animal maintenance costs, infrastructural upkeep and development whereas the MWF provides significant technical assistance and management of collections.

To summarise, the work at GDEWS consists mainly of:

- captive breeding (involving hand rearing) of birds and bats
- rehabilitation of sick/injured or orphaned animals,
- rearing of tortoises,
- provide support to MWF field staff

The GDEWS is a scientific zone restricted to the public.

**Mauritius Kestrel (*Falco punctatus*)**



**Figure 1: Mauritius Kestrel**

The Mauritius Kestrel has a creamy white chest, neck, wing feathers with black markings, chestnut brown head.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park and Bambous mountain range in the East.

**Diet**

Carnivorous; Feed on geckos, dragon flies, cockroaches, crickets, day old chicks, small birds and mice.

## **Threats to Survival**

Loss of habitats (Deforestation), cyclones, predators: Invasive alien species such as **Black rats** *Rattus rattus*, **macaques** *Macaca fascicularis*, small **Indian mongooses** *Herpestes javanicus* and feral cats feed on eggs, young ones and adults. Diseases also are threats.

## **Conservation programs**

- Captive-breeding and reintroduction in the wild
- Restoration of native habitats and forest
- Predator Control

## **Reproduction**

Nest in natural cavities, cliffs and hollow trees and in artificial boxes.

Females lay 2-5 eggs

Incubation: 30 days

Hatchlings fledge at 38-39 days

**Pink Pigeon (*Nesoenas mayeri*)**



**Figure 2: Mauritius Pink Pigeon**

The Mauritius Pink Pigeon has short brown wings and a long tail. Their feathers are pale pink in colour. They have pinkish red bill and feet. The males are usually slightly smaller than the females.

**Habitat**

Found at Black River Gorges and on Ile aux Aigrettes.

**Diet**

Feed on buds, flowers, leaves, fruits and seeds of both natives and exotic vegetation

**Reproduction**

Lay eggs in natural nest on trees

Parents rear young birds

Clutch size- 1-2 white eggs

Incubation: 14 days

After 4 weeks, young birds leave their nest

**Echo Parakeet (*Psittacula eques*)**



**Figure 3: Mauritius Echo Parakeet**

The bird is medium-sized and has a bright emerald-green body with a black ring around the neck; the crown, nape of the neck and long tail have a blue tinge. Mature males have bright red bill while the females have dark bill.

The bird mostly feeds on fruits, flowers and seeds.

The Echo Parakeet Programme is one of the most successful parrot recovery programmes in the world. Its population has increased from 8-12 known individuals in 1986 to over 500 in 2011.

GDEWS has been involved in hand rearing of Echo Parakeets to produce up to fourteen chicks annually, some of which were used in brood manipulations in the wild but most of them boosted the number of chicks released to the wild.

Echo Parakeets are susceptible to a fatal disease called the Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (PBFD), caused by a circovirus. The virus spreads through feather dust, faeces or crop fluids and it is very resistant in the environment. It attacks growing cells and can cause acute immunosuppressive disease depending on the age of the host when infected. The immune compromised birds develop fatal secondary infections. There is no known treatment and control includes euthanasia (Stanford, 2004).

In the recent past years, there has been development of an interferon, a protein that has the ability to interfere with the viral replication and activate immune cells and tested on African Grey Parrots and the results were encouraging (Stanford, 2004). If successful, this vaccine will help save endangered parrots suffering from PBFD worldwide.

**Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone bourbonnensis desolata*)**



**Figure 4: Paradise Flycatcher**

The Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher is also known as the “Coq de bois”. The male flycatcher has a metallic blue head female’s head is dove-grey. The bird is closely related to the Reunion paradise flycatcher.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park and Bras D’Eau National Park

**Diet**

Feeds on insects.

**Olive White-Eye (*Zosterops chloronotos*)**



**Figure 5: Olive-White eye**

The Olive-white eye has dull olive-green feathers above with paler underparts and a white lining around the eyes.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park and Ile aux Aigrettes.

**Diet**

Feeds on insects, nectar and small fruits.

**Mauritius Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*)**



**Figure 6: Mauritius Black Bulbul**

The Mauritius Black Bulbul has a dull plumage comprising various shades of grey. The head is olive-grey, with dark pointed crown feathers. The bill and the legs are pinkish-yellow in colour.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park, Chamarel Bambous South East mountain range

**Diet**

Feeds on insects, nectar and endemic geckos

**Mauritius Cuckoo Shrike (*Coracina typical*)**



**Figure 7: Mauritius Cuckoo Shrike**

The Mauritius Cuckoo Shrike is relatively small and is known as the ‘Merle Cuisinier’. The male has grey feathers above and white below. The female is very different in terms of brownish upperparts.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park

**Diet**

Feeds on stick insects, caterpillars and endemic geckos

## **Mauritius Fody (*Foudia rubra*)**



**Figure 8: Mauritius Fody**

The Mauritius Fody is identified as being the small forest-dwelling songbird. The males have bright red plumage on head and neck during breeding season and the female keeps olive green plumage all year round.

### **Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park and Ile aux Aigrettes

### **Diet**

Feed on nectar flowers, fruits and seeds of natives and exotic vegetation, insects.

### **Breeding season**

Between early April and late June

### **Reproduction**

Lay 2 -4 pale-green spotted eggs Incubated by the female and the male helps to feed the chicks.

Adult undergoes a complete moult.

### **Threats to Survival**

Loss of habitats: Deforestation

Cyclones, predators like black rats and macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) mongoose (*Herpestes auropuncatus*), and feral cats, invasive plants (Goyave de chine) and diseases.

### **Conservation programs**

Captive – breeding and reintroduction programme, habitat restoration, control of exotic predators, supplementary feeding, nest-guarding, establishing new population, control of disease and monitoring of survival and productivity.

**Grey White-Eye (*Zosterops borbonicus mauritianus*)**



**Figure 9: Mauritius Grey white-eye**

The Grey White-eye has a plumage which varies from grey to brown. Their legs are dark grey to blackish.

**Habitat**

Black River Gorges National Park and widespread across the island, Ile aux Aigrettes.

**Diet**

Feeds on insects, nectar and small fruits.

**Rodrigues Fody (*Foudia flavicans*)**



Figure 10: Rodrigues Fody

The Rodrigues Fody is identified by its yellow plumage and slightly reddish appearance on the face.

**Diet**

The bird feeds on plants, insects, spiders, nectar and seeds.

**Rodrigues Brush Warbler (*Acrocephalus rodericanus*)**



Figure 11: Rodrigues Brush Warbler

The Rodrigues Brush Warbler is a small bird with a relatively long bill and a long, graduated tail.

**Diet**

Feeds on plants, leaves and twigs.

## BATS

Of the three species that used to be in Mauritius two are now extinct.

Bats are protected species in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

### (a) Mauritius fruits bats (*Pteropus niger*)

The remaining species is the endemic Mauritian fruit bat (*Pteropus niger*), which is large with golden fur. It roosts in groups in large trees in the forest, and can be seen flying at dawn and dusk in search of food. It feeds on ripe fruit, nectar and pollen. It is an important pollinator and disperser of the seeds of native trees such as ebony. It is also fond of tree crops such as litchis which cause a conflict between farmers and the bats.



Figure 12: Mauritian Fruit Bat

**(b) Rodriguan fruit bats (*Pteropus rodricensis*)**

To constitute a safety net for the Rodrigues Fruit Bat, a small population has been kept at GDEWS since the late 1970's, when the species was the World's rarest fruit bat. The wild population has recovered since the 1970's, not necessitating re-introduction to Rodrigues.



Figure 13: Rodriguan Fruit Bats at GDEWS