

RESCUED FROM THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION:

Conservation Success Stories

The Seychelles Warbler



The story of the Seychelles warbler is a fairy tale come true.

Scientific name: *Acrocephalus sechellensis*

Creole name: Timerl Dezil

Distribution: Cousin, Cousine, Aride and Denis

World Population: 3,500

Conservation status: Vulnerable

The sex of the Seychelles warbler chicks is determined in part by the environment. Where there is plenty of food, more females are produced.

The endemic Seychelles warbler, is a charming little bird that compensates for its plain appearance with a beautiful song.

In 1959, the Seychelles warbler was one of the world's rarest birds, classified as Critically Endangered with extinction. The establishment of coconut plantations in Seychelles had resulted in massive levels of habitat destruction. As a consequence the warbler had been wiped out from most of its original range. Only one population of **just 26 birds** survived in a mangrove swamp on the tiny island of **Cousin** - now a special reserve managed by Nature Seychelles.

Conserving the Species

Cousin was bought by the International Council for Bird Preservation (now Birdlife International) in 1968 and managed as a nature reserve to save the warbler. Habitat restoration was carried out which involved the gradual elimination of coconut trees by removal of all seedlings allowing the natural vegetation to regenerate on Cousin Island. The population rapidly increased, reaching a total of 320 birds in 1982.

Translocation

The Seychelles Warbler was then transferred to other islands by Birdlife International and Nature Seychelles to establish new populations in order to secure its long-term survival.

Today the species are well established on the four islands of Cousin, Cousine, Aride and Denis with a total population of 3,500. Their conservation status has been greatly improved by these translocations.

Research

Our understanding of the biology and habitat requirements of the species has been greatly enhanced by more than 20 years of intensive and ongoing studies involving several universities and numerous graduate students and researchers.

The Fairy Tale Continues...

On the Verge of Extinction

The Seychelles Magpie-robin is an endemic bird of the granitic Seychelles. It was historically recorded on at least seven islands. Between the 1950s and 1980s, the whole world population was restricted to Frégate Island and at times came perilously close to extinction, as low as 12 birds, classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Animals. The main cause was loss of habitat and the introduction of alien predators.

Great Recovery

In 1990, it became so urgent to save this bird from extinction that a recovery programme was implemented to reverse its fatal decline. The programme implemented conservation measures in parallel with research on the species.

After a series of intensive conservation efforts such as habitat restoration, supplementary feeding, nest box provision and translocations to new islands by BirdLife International, Nature Seychelles and collaborating island management, the species has made a wonderful recovery.

Saved but not Safe

The Seychelles Magpie-robin has been saved from the danger of extinction and is now thriving on the four islands of Frégate, Cousin, Cousine and Aride. Their conservation status is now classified as Endangered. There are still many threats to the species, such as disease, and it still remains one of the rarest birds in the world.

SMART

The implementation of the recovery programme is now carried out by the Seychelles Magpie-robin Recovery Team (SMART) coordination by Nature Seychelles. For more information, please contact SMART coordinator at science@nature.sc

The Seychelles Magpie-robin



The story of the Seychelles Magpie-robin is one of the world's greatest conservation success

Scientific name: *Copsychus sechellarum*

Creole name: Pi Santez

Distribution: Frégate, Cousin, Cousine and Aride

World population: 170

Conservation status: Endangered

The Magpie-robin spends a lot of time feeding on the ground, so it is especially vulnerable to predators.