

Improving habitat for endemic fauna (birds and reptiles) and seabirds on Ile aux Aigrettes

Overview Financial Year 2023



- 11.4 Ha of the island was weeded (including 2.0 Ha re-weeded) under the funding.
- 175 plants were planted from over 16 species.
- 98.5 km of rat lines were cut and rats eradicated.
- 54 Madagascar Tenrecs were trapped in 395 bait stations over a total of 1541 trap nights.
- 334 Asian House Crow observations were made, and four nests were destroyed.
- 1857 Mauritian adults with 391 children, and 702 school children on educational tours visited Ile aux Aigrettes in 2023 and were exposed to the seabird project while visiting the Ile aux Aigrettes plant nursery (where there is a display of the project). The creation of the open vegetation (of which the native grass is an important component of seabird nesting) and attraction using seabird decoys are explained to the visitors. We also provide talks to other company staff as part of Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Over 40 Mauritian and expatriate staff and volunteers discovered the project through the internal induction course.

Removal of exotic plants

1. Weeding on a daily basis
2. Removal of various Invasive species
3. Re-weeding

Area weeded figures for 2023 below.

Month	Year	Grid size/m2	Total area in hectares
April	2023	156.25	1.6
May	2023	156.25	1.3
June	2023	156.25	1.8
July	2023	156.25	1.7
August	2023	156.25	2.15
September	2023	156.25	0.35
October	2023	156.25	2
November	2023	156.25	0.25
December	2023	156.25	0.25
TOTAL			11.4

Control of Tenrecs

54 tenrecs were trapped in 395 bait stations over a total of 1541 trap nights.



Photo of a tenrec

Mauritian endemic reptile populations at end December 2023: 50 Telfair's Skink, 250 Gunther's Geckos. Günther's geckos (hatching success for breeding season 22/23 was 97.4% compared to 2 previous years at 55.6% and 69.0%). Ornate Day gecko population remains robust, although the reintroduced Telfair's skink population now consists of mostly old individuals.

Fifty-four tenrecs were caught on Ile aux Aigrettes in 2023. However, any restocking of the Telfair's skink population can only resume when there are no tenrecs remaining on the island.



Photo of a Telfair's Skink on Ile aux Aigrettes

Seabirds

Over the year, several seabirds were rescued and successfully released from Ile aux Aigrettes.

- 19/04/23 A fledgling Wedge-tailed Shearwater was rescued by a fisherman who found it floating in the sea at Mahebourg. Released on the 26/04/23
- 23/04/23: A fledgling Wedge-tailed shear water was rescued from 16eme Mille, Forest side, it was found in the garden of a member of the public. Released on the 24/04/23
- 25/04/23 A fledgling Wedge-tailed Shearwater was rescued in the sea by a fisherman near Ile aux Aigrettes. Released on 27/04/23
- 25/04/23 An adult White-tailed Tropicbird was rescued in Moka in the garden of a member of the public. Released 28/04/23
- August 09/09/23 An adult White-tailed Tropic bird was rescued at Vallee Pitot. The White-tailed Tropicbird was released on 13/09/23.
- 17/09/23 A Red-tailed Tropicbird was handed over from a Cargo ship that arrived from Malaysia. It was rescued and subsequently released on 21/09/23



Seabirds rescued and released on Ile aux Aigrettes

Control of Crows (Decoy ladder trap)

Crows are competitors to the endemic birds. 334 Asian House Crow observations were made, and four nests were destroyed in the 1st part of 2023.

334 crow sightings were recorded and four nests destroyed. The Control of crows were beneficial to the Günther's geckos which started laying eggs in September 2023, the benefit of this will only be realised mid 2024, whose egg survival is monitored seasonally. At end of December 2023: Pink Pigeon 12. Mauritius Fody 290. Mauritius Olive White-eye 55, which also benefited from the crow control.



Flock of crows near the mainland

Planting of suitable endemic plants for seabird breeding areas

60 vetivera (*Chrysopogon argutus*) were planted in the Seabird areas on Ile aux Aigrettes in 2023. The total number of vetiver collected and 1st potted from May 2023 to December 2023 was 237. The nursery inventory as at 27th Dec 2023 was 161 plants, due to deaths of some potted plants. We intend to plant about 80 *Chrysopogon argutus* in the seabird areas in 2024.



Planting of the Chrysopogon argutus on Ile aux Aigrettes