

## Conservation introductions of Seychelles fody and warbler to Denis Island, Seychelles

**T**he Seychelles fody (*Foudia sechellarum*) and Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*) are two of eight endangered endemic bird species, both currently listed as “Vulnerable” on the basis of their very small ranges (BirdLife International, 2000.) The goals of the five-year Action Plans for both species are “Down listing” from ‘Vulnerable’ to ‘Near Threatened’. The objective of the Seychelles Fody Action Plan is to increase the range to six islands and the population to 2,000 mature individuals by 2006, and the objective of the Seychelles Warbler Action Plan is to increase the range to five islands and over 3,000 individuals by 2006.

In January 2004, 47 Seychelles fodys were moved from Frégate Island to Denis Island to establish a breeding population on Denis. In May and June, 58 Seychelles warblers were moved from Cousin Island to Denis Island to establish a breeding population. The successful establishment of populations of fody and warbler on Denis will greatly improve the conservation status of both species. In fact it should lead to down listing of the Seychelles fody to near threatened, a significant

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conservation management achievement. One further translocation would be required to down list the warbler.

Denis is outside the known natural range of both species; however the distribution of bird species prior to human settlement in the Seychelles is very poorly known and therefore not necessarily accurate. In addition there are currently very few islands free of mammalian predators that could support translocated populations of Seychelles fody and Seychelles warbler. Denis is within the inner island group, approximately 50 km from the other central Granitic populations, and the Seychelles fody can thrive on coralline islands, as indicated by the population on D'Arros.

Denis was identified as a suitable island for both species on a number of criteria: a large area of native forest exists including 30 ha of restored native forest where dense coconut has been removed and replaced with native species; mammalian predators are absent following the eradication of cats in 2000 and rats in 2002; the range of foods and favoured tree species exploited by both birds are present on Denis; and island tenure and management practice is appropriate to endemic bird populations.

The translocations were undertaken just prior to the main breeding seasons, when birds do not have dependent juveniles and when they are at their heaviest weights. The translocated individuals were a mix of independent juveniles and adults with a sex ratio of c.50% male and c.50% female. Birds were caught in mist nets, transferred by airplane (fody) and helicopter (warbler) and released immediately on arrival. It is too soon to be sure of the establishment of self sustaining breeding populations, however early signs are very positive. Both species are breeding successfully and juveniles of both species have

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been observed. Monitoring of the translocated populations is ongoing and we hope to be able to report two conservation introduction successes in the near future.

The fody translocation was a joint project between Nature Seychelles, Denis Island and Frégate Island and the warbler translocation a joint project between Nature Seychelles, the Warbler Study Group (Universities of Groningen, Netherlands, and East Anglia, UK) and Denis Island. The translocations were approved by the Seychelles Government. Funding was received from the Seychelles Environment Trust Fund, a Rufford Small Grant and African Bird Club.

#### References

BirdLife International (2000) Threatened Birds of the World. Barcelona and Cambridge, UK: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.

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## Re-introduction of saddleback to Boundary Stream Mainland Island, New Zealand – returning a predator vulnerable species to the mainland

The management of the previously endangered saddleback (*Philesturnus rufusater*; *tieke*) is one of New Zealand's conservation success stories. The saddleback is a medium-sized forest passerine and a member of the New Zealand wattlebird family Callaeidae. Saddleback have two distinct geographical sub-species: *Philesturnus rufusater* in the North Island and *Philesturnus curunculatus curunculatus* in the South Island. Saddleback feed on invertebrates, spending a significant proportion of the time on the ground and often nesting in low cavities. These characteristics make them vulnerable to predation and have largely contributed to their decline. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, saddleback had become extinct on the mainland. Formally widespread across the country, numbers were decimated by rats, mustelids and cats. Only 500 North Island saddleback were left, found only on Hen Island, and 36 South Island saddleback remained on Big South Cape Island. Successful transfers by the Wildlife Service and later the Department of Conservation resulted in changing North Island saddleback's status from endangered to a total population of over 7,000, and the South Island sub-species to 1,200. Until recently, saddleback were restricted to ten off-shore islands, one lake island and a population within the predator-proof fenced Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington.

Boundary Stream Mainland Island (BSMI) is a 800 ha Scenic Reserve in the Hawke's Bay. It is intensively managed by the Department of Conservation as a "mainland island" where pests and predators are controlled to near zero numbers by trapping and poisoning. North Island robin, North Island brown kiwi and North Island kokako have already been successfully re-established in the reserve. The Department of