

Restoring the integrated terrestrial native habitat and seabird community of Ile aux Aigrettes

***7th WIOSAP PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE
DARES SALAAM, TANZANIA
29TH JANUARY 2025***

Mauritian Wildlife Foundation

Why the Project

- **Objective:** To restore coastal forest habitat on Ile aux Aigrettes, specifically ‘seabird habitat’, and restore terrestrial and near-island marine ecosystem functioning through the attraction of seabirds. The project enables Mauritians to learn about their natural heritage and the importance of biodiversity conservation and remain a global leading example of island conservation and restoration.



- **Where: Ile aux Aigrettes, Mauritius**



Partners:

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (technical support)

World Health Organisation (co-funder)

MOL International Fund (co-funder)

Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
(National Focal Point)



Key Achievements

- 13.14 ha has been completely weeded once, including 1 ha which have been weeded partly; 4.9 ha has been re-weeded. In effect, over 14 ha has been weeded.
- 1 ha of habitat suitable for returning seabirds has been identified, mapped, and weeded. Planting of seabird friendly plant species has started in this area.
- A second update of bio-security protocol for visitors and staff to Ile aux Aigrettes has been circulated to key staff.
- Presentation and training session was conducted with MWF Eco-tour and Education staff on the updated bio-security protocol and the seabird project.
- c. 2000 plants have been planted in newly weeded areas and vegetation gaps.
- 50 seabird decoys have been completely refurbished. 52 decoys were deployed, and the seabird call playback system has been activated.
- A monitoring plan was written and monitoring for returning seabirds is being conducted.
- 21,145 visitors visited Ile aux Aigrettes during the project period to learn about the ecosystem restoration work conducted on the island.
- Numerous local/international partners, researchers, students were exposed to the project including University of Mauritius, Ida Davis Family Foundation, Franklinia Foundation, British High Commission, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust Interns.
- Project presented in Florida, Miami, US to a joint Bertarelli Foundation/Re:wild event on Rewilding.



Experi
others



Zealand scientists working to rescue the New Zealand Fairy Tern *Sternula*

Deployment of seabird decoys



Key Lessons Learnt

- Project faced both COVID-19 and Wakashio oil spill – flexibility allowed project to be completed.
- Seabird restoration has variable success

PNAS RESEARCH ARTICLE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE

Tracking the global application of conservation translocation and social attraction to reverse seabird declines

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- African penguins breeding in De Hoop for the first time in 15 years



Adult penguins at De Hoop. Picture: Christina Hagen

- Seabird restoration can take years to be successful!



- Impactful projects are those that leave a legacy, such as the WIOSAP project.

Project Sustainability

- Habitat quality improved and area restored, supporting plants and animals to a greater degree.
- Seabird attraction and call play back equipment and tree poppers (for weeding) still functional.
- Staff training in seabird attraction, weeding and biosecurity reinforced.
- Camera traps still functional for detection of returning seabirds, Asian Crows, and Madagascar Tenrecs.
- The video clips and articles (both online and in print) are resources used beyond the project, and available as a conservation, education, and training resource for local and international viewers.
- Panels on Ile aux Aigrettes explains the seabird rewilding component of the project to all visitors.
- Upgraded biosecurity protocols reduces chances of incursions of invasive alien species, and improves ability to detect and control, if not eradicate these species.
- Vastly improved capabilities and opportunities for experience sharing in habitat restoration, seabird conservation, biosecurity, to local, regional and international conservation scientific communities.
- Biosecurity Protocol and videos explaining various strategies for habitat restoration and seabird restoration methods, is made freely available electronically.

