From **Mauritius** to **Madagascar**: building regional capacity for biodiversity conservation and monitoring

2018

**Madagascar**
2-13 April (field school) & 15-19 April (classroom)

**Mauritius**
13-31 August (field school) & 3-7 September (classroom)
Course overview
The course "From Mauritius to Madagascar: building regional capacity for biodiversity conservation and monitoring" is the focus of a new three year Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) project aiming to increase regional capacity for biodiversity conservation in the Western Indian ocean.

Technical skills for fauna/flora monitoring and ecosystem/species recovery will be developed through two separate field school training sessions conducted each year for the next three years: three weeks in Madagascar and five weeks in Mauritius, including one week in a classroom-based setting in each country.

This eight week funded course will provide participants with different field-related experiences, together with the theory and human resource management skills needed to become more effective conservation leaders. It is a unique opportunity to learn directly through exchange of skills and understanding with organisations that have a track record of conservation success in the Western Indian Ocean islands.

The programme is delivered by Durrell Conservation Academy, headquartered in Jersey, and Durrell Conservation Training Ltd (DCT) a not-for-profit training organisation based in Mauritius (part of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust) in partnership with the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) and Association Vahatra.

Two individuals per cohort will be selected after each eight week course for a place on the following 6 month Post Graduate Diploma in Endangered Species Conservation Management, delivered annually in Mauritius by Durrell Conservation Training Ltd.

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND (CEPF)
CEPF is a global programme that provides funding and technical assistance to civil society including non-governmental organisations and other private sector partners to protect critical ecosystems. The CEPF focuses on biodiversity hotspots - the Earth's biologically richest yet most endangered areas.

DURRELL CONSERVATION TRAINING Ltd (DCT)
Durrell Conservation Training Ltd (DCT) is a biodiversity conservation training organisation established on Mauritius to build capacity for conservation across the Western Indian Ocean. DCT was registered in Mauritius in 2014 and now delivers a Post Graduate Diploma in Endangered Species Conservation Management (validated through the University of Middlesex, UK); multiple short, accredited vocational training courses for Mauritian government and local wildlife organisations across Mauritius; and organisational effectiveness assessments on Madagascar and Comoros (both linked to existing CEPF funded projects). DCT is officially recognised as a training provider up to postgraduate level, by the Tertiary Education Commission of Mauritius and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority. We deliver much of our practical, field conservation training through our partnership with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) and the National Parks and Conservation Service of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security of Mauritius, both of which DCT has existing MoUs. Durrell, established by naturalist Gerald Durrell in 1963, has a proven track record of saving species from extinction, and nearly 40 years' experience of delivering conservation training, and has been working in Mauritius since the late 1970's.

MAURITIAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION (MWF)
The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) is a non-governmental, non-profit conservation agency working in Mauritius, Rodrigues and offshore and outer islets to save threatened endemic local flora and fauna. It was established in 1984 under the initiative of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and other conservation organisations. The conservation work in
Mauritius began as a species orientated program concentrating on a few critically endangered species, including the Mauritius Kestrel and the Pink Pigeon. In 1996, the organization expanded its operations to habitat restoration, including the management of native forests and small islands. The Foundation is now perfecting whole ecosystem management and restoration. It also has captive breeding programmes for animals, and manages endemic plant nurseries. MWF also runs education and ecotourism programmes.

ASSOCIATION VAHATRA
Association Vahatra was created 10 years ago to continue aspects of a capacity building project previously associated with WWF Madagascar and known as the Ecology Training Programme. One of the main aspects of the association is the advancement of science on Madagascar, with a strong emphasis on Malagasy post-graduate students, focusing on the application of field studies to advance conservation. Over the past decade, the four scientific members of the association have been supervisors or committee members for more than 350 Malagasy DEA, Master’s and PhD students, conducted field schools for several hundred participants, and actively involved in a range of other activities including public science education, publication of scientific papers and books, biological inventories of numerous sites on Madagascar, and preparation of animal specimens for a range of different studies. Further, the scientific members have designed monitoring programs for different institutions dealing with management and conservation of protected areas and provided scientific support for managers working in conservation of biodiversity.

Who is it for?
The course is designed for young or more experienced conservationists from the Western Indian Ocean region (country members of the Indian Ocean Commission). No specific minimum academic level is required to apply for this course but the goal is to have a good mix of young graduates (BSc level with one-two years professional conservation experience) and more experienced conservationists (no tertiary training, with five years and more conservation experience in the region). It is important that participants are comfortable in both English and French languages. All candidates must be eager and promising conservationists, and have willingness to transfer skills to peers.

What is the course content?
During the course you will cover topics such as:
- ‘Hands on’ biodiversity inventory and monitoring skills
- Habitat management
- Endangered species and ecosystem recovery
- Invasive species management
- Ex-situ conservation
- Community based conservation
- Protected area management
- Conservation project management and fund-raising
- Scientific writing skills

All selected participants (15 per cohort) will be enrolled on a three week biological skills training programme in Madagascar organized by Association Vahatra. This consists of a two week field skills training course, camping at Ambohitantely in the Central Highlands, and a one week classroom-based training in Antananarivo. These different training sessions will be presented by a range of different scientists and conservationists, in either French or English, and it is important that the participants are comfortable in both languages. All participants will then participate in a further five weeks endangered species and ecosystem recovery training in Mauritius, where they will be embedded within field teams led by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, working on offshore islet (Ile aux Aigrettes) and mainland field
sites (Black River Gorges National Park, Bambou Mountain range/ Vallée de Ferney). During the final classroom-based week in Mauritius, participants will attend a three day “training the trainers” course providing them with the skills needed to train others on their return to work.

Course learning objectives
The programme advances your understanding of and experiences in:

- How to identify common and typical vegetation and habitat types, plants and animal species
- How to conduct conservation assessments
- How to collect, prepare and care for field specimens of flora and fauna
- Understanding the importance of the relationship between scientific knowledge, picking the correct methodologies and the management of biodiversity
- Understanding the importance of advancing conservation in your home countries
- The management of habitats and ecosystems, including community-based conservation management
- How to conduct invasive species management and implement island biosecurity procedures
- Intervention techniques designed to protect threatened species, including captive breeding as an ex-situ conservation tool
- Project management skills including scientific reporting and writing fundraising proposals

Course leaders

David DERAND
David is responsible for leading and developing DCT conservation training programme in Mauritius and Indian Ocean islands including Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles. He joined Durrell Conservation Academy in September 2017, having previously worked for 20 years in the environment and conservation sector. David holds an MSc in Marine Environmental Protection from the University of Bangor/UK as well as an Engineering Diploma in Tropical Agronomy from CNEARC/France. He previously established the Reunion Island marine reserve educational programme, coordinated Cousin Island special reserve science programme and spearheaded coral reef restoration in the Seychelles, and also achieved the first aerial invasive alien species eradication in French Polynesia.

Aurélie HENSHAW
Aurélie previously worked with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF). She has extensive species conservation experience having worked on the passerine project, pink pigeon project, the Round Island restoration project and she was co-ordinator of the echo parakeet project. She completed Durrell’s Endangered Species Management Graduate Certificate (DESMAN) in 2013. Aurélie was involved with the PGDip course in 2013, and joined DCT Ltd in 2015 as Training Coordinator. Aurélie has helped develop and deliver training designed to build the capacity of course participants as conservation professionals.
Course faculty

Steve GOODMAN
Steve has been actively involved in different research and scientific projects on Madagascar for close to three decades, including aspects on the ecology, biogeography and systematics of birds and mammals on the island and neighbouring areas in the Western Indian Ocean. He holds a Ph.D. from The University of Hamburg, HDR from the University of Paris, and Docteur Honoris Causa from The University of Antananarivo. He has been active in publishing different research projects in the form of scientific papers, books and monographs. He also holds the post of MacArthur Field Biologist at The Field Museum of Natural History.

Marie Jeanne RAHERILALAO
Marie Jeanne specializes in the ecology, biogeography and systematics of Malagasy birds, and has been conducting research for more than 25 years. She is Professor in the Department of Animal Biology at The University of Antananarivo. Together with Steve Goodman, she is the co-editor of a journal, Malagasy Nature, published by Association Vahatra, and dedicated to scientific work on Madagascar and neighbouring islands, as well as a guide series on the Malagasy biota. She earned her Ph.D. from The University of Antananarivo.

Achille RASELIMANANA
Achille is a well-known herpetologist that has been conducting scientific work and publishing the results for nearly 25 years on the systematics, taxonomy, biogeography, and ecology of Malagasy reptiles and amphibians. He is Professor in the Department of Animal Biology at The University of Antananarivo. His PhD is from the same university and also presented his HDR at The University of La Reunion. He is the former Biodiversity Programme Officer of WWF Madagascar and conducted his PhD post-doc at Yale University.

Voahangy SOARIMALALA
Voahangy is a specialist of the endemic and introduced small mammals of Madagascar and has been actively involved in research on these animals for more than 25 years. She is the co-author of a book in French on this topic. Voahangy holds the post of Professor at The University of Fianarantsoa. She earned her PhD from The University of Antananarivo. Together with Steve, Achille and Marie Jeanne, she is one of the founding members of Association Vahatra, and cumulatively these four individuals have more than a century of field experience on Madagascar.

Vikash TATAYAH
Vikash has been closely involved in biodiversity conservation for over 20 years. He conducted his doctoral research on the Round Island Petrel. He is currently the Director of Conservation and Board Member of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF), the sole terrestrial ecosystems conservation NGO on Mauritius and Rodrigues. He oversees all the conservation programmes of the
Nicolas ZUEL
Nicolas has worked for the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation since June 2003; he started as a volunteer on the Round Island restoration project. In September 2003 he was hired as the first Mauritian Round Island warden. In January 2004 he was made Round Island Head warden. His role included management of volunteers and maintenance of field station, monitoring of seabird and reptile populations, plant restoration work: propagating and planting, and invasive species management. In September 2005, he started a PhD on the Ecology and conservation of an endangered reptile community on Round Island. The thesis focused on the food web ecology, population biology and plant-reptile interactions of the reptile assemblage. In July 2009, he rejoined the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation as Fauna Manager where he manages over 35 field staff working on fauna conservation projects including the Mauritius pink pigeon, Mauritius kestrel, Echo parakeet, Mauritius Fody and Olive white-eye, involving bird reintroductions, species recovery and invasive species management, and organise induction courses for new staff. He advises on flora projects that have links with fauna projects. Design and monitoring of field experiments and studies. He is responsible for project planning, budget management and implementation, hiring of staff, liaising with government officials, public relations, and assisting with funding applications.

Venue and Field Stations
Classroom-based learning takes place at Association Vahatra and Parc zoologique et botanique de Tsimbazaza in Antananarivo and at Middlesex University Mauritius Branch Campus, Cascavelle, in Mauritius.

Participants’ practical skills are developed at the following field sites on Mauritius and Madagascar.

Plaine Lelievre - Mauritius
This was the first camp to be established (1987) and is found in the upland native forest within the Black River Gorges National Park. Until 1993, staff lived in tents and cooked under a canvas tarpaulin. The tin-roofed cooking area was built mid-1993 and the wooden house with three rooms and an office was completed in July 1996 by the NPCS. In peak season a team of 8-10 field staff working on the Pink Pigeons, Echo Parakeet and Flora projects are based at this field station. Students from the University of Mauritius are in residence from time to time while they carry out studies linked with their thesis. This is where most of the Echo Team are based. The forest of Brise Fer holds some of the best remaining native forest on Mauritius.

Bambous Mountain Range - Mauritius
MWF flora staff advise on the restoration which is ongoing in the conservation management area of 175 ha. Re-introductions (Kestrel, Pink Pigeon, Echo Parakeet and passerines) to the Ferney Valley have been carried out by MWF in the past few years. The field station has been built by the Ferney Valley Trust in the Bambous mountain range. It is supplied with electricity and running water and three to four MWF field staff work there on a continuous basis.
Ile aux Aigrettes - Mauritius

Ile aux Aigrettes, Mauritius, sits within a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and is also an established Nature Reserve, hosting a unique lowland coastal forest assemblage. A wide range of conservation activities are undertaken on Ile aux Aigrettes, including terrestrial and seabird reintroduction, flora conservation, reptile (including analogue tortoise) reintroduction, conservation education and eco-tourism. This works sits within an established island restoration plan. It is therefore an ideal training site, providing exposure to a range of conservation work that can then be applied within and beyond KBAs elsewhere. The field station has two bedrooms, an office, a well fitted kitchen and a bathroom, as well as a bunkhouse that can cater for 6 people. The island also boasts an endemic plant nursery, a Visitor’s Centre, bird management aviaries and baby tortoise head-starting/fruitbat display aviaries.

Ambohitantely Special Reserve - Madagascar

Ambohitantely is composed of a series of fragmented montane forests about three hours’ drive from Antananarivo, which has been the site of different faunistic and floristic studies that provide considerable insights to themes that will be covered during the training course. Further, the scientists associated with Association Vahatra has been conducting field schools at the site since the mid-1990s. While some infrastructure has been installed at the site, which is a short walk to montane forest, the camping site should be considered as rustic. Food will be prepared at the site by local staff and there will be scientific training sessions from an assortment of individuals working on different aspects of Malagasy field science and conservation.

Cost and Booking Information

The course fees and all related expenses including airfares, accommodation (at field stations and in town in Madagascar and Mauritius), food and local transportation are paid for by CEPF for selected participants.

Not included is payment for visas in dollars (US) or euros on arrival at the airport (both in Madagascar and Mauritius) and the obligatory subscription of health and repatriation insurance for the duration of the training. These remain the responsibility of each participant.

How to apply?

EMAIL your CV and covering letter Ref CEPF to: academy@durrell.org

Please outline what you hope to gain from the course and include two letters of reference.

Closing date 31 January 2018

Selection will be made by a group of regional researchers and conservationists. All applicants will be notified of the associated decisions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT +44 (0)1534 860037 OR EMAIL academy@durrell.org