

Managing threatened species: Understanding the factors limiting the recovery of the endangered Pink pigeon.

By the 1970s the formerly widespread endemic Pink pigeon was restricted to one area of forest on Mauritius and numbered just 10-20 individuals. The pigeon had declined due to the loss of its forest habitat and the negative impact of a suite of introduced predatory mammals. In the mid-1970s a species recovery programme was initiated. By 2000 five sub-populations were established, totalling almost 400 individuals and reintroductions ceased. Since 2000 the total population has fluctuated markedly (320-400), as have each of the sub-populations following their initial establishment. The pigeon population therefore appears to be relatively unstable and overall the population has not increased as expected. The mechanisms and ultimately the causes behind these fluctuations remain unclear and currently this undermines the ability of the recovery programme to effectively manage the pigeon and achieve its goal of a viable population of 600 pink pigeons in the wild.

Using an individuals' based data set, across the five sub-populations the studentship will explore the population dynamics and demography of the Pink pigeon in order to understand the demographic drivers (i.e. the key demographic components including productivity and mortality) of population trends over time. The aim is to provide a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms involved in the apparent population fluctuations and hence the factors currently regulating the pigeon population(s). Mechanistic population models could then be used to guide future management decisions.

We are looking for a student with a strong academic record, including a first or upper second BSc and an MSc in a relevant topic. An interest in population ecology and the management of threatened species are essential and prior experience of field work on research or conservation programmes overseas would be advantageous. The studentship will start in October 2009.

Applicants should send a CV and covering letter to Malcolm Nicoll at m.a.c.nicoll@reading.ac.uk

This is a four year BBSRC DTG funded Studentship that will be conducted at CAER with some time spent in the 'field' working with the Pink Pigeon Recovery Programme in Mauritius. Supervision will be provided by Dr. Malcolm Nicoll and Prof. Ken Norris. The studentship is supported by two CASE partners the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and The North of England Zoological Society, with further in-country logistical support and the long-term data set provided by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

Deadline 21st November 2008. Interviews will be conducted in the 1st week of December.