



Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year

La Vallée de Ferney Newsletter

ISSUE NO 1 - DECEMBER 2010

Dear readers,

We are currently in an era where environmental protection and biodiversity conservation are the leading factors that will determine our society's future survival. This is why CIEL Group in collaboration with the Government of Mauritius sought to protect one of the last remaining extents of rainforests from further damage and so was born La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust in 2006. A non-profit making endeavour, La Vallée de Ferney has evolved positively since, and we are now proud to present to you the first issue of its newsletter.

At La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust, we all take our commitment to the environment very seriously. I congratulate everyone in the chain for their dedication and contribution in making this long term project work. A special mention goes to Bertrand Adam for the brilliant work undertaken in the setting up of our field station.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all sponsors, native tree adopters, local and international guests and researchers who have all in one way or the other contributed to the conservation efforts being carried out at La Vallée de Ferney.

My best wishes to all for the New Year and long live La Vallée de Ferney!

Arnaud Dalais

Trust Chairman La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust

Help us help nature

About Us

La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust is a private-public non-profit making institution aiming to protect the less than 2% remaining primary forest of Mauritius from extinction.

La Vallée de Ferney (VDF) is a Forest & Wildlife Reserve covering some 200ha of land. Given the poor conditions of Mauritian forest due to invasion of alien plants and animals, deforestation and drastic climatic changes, major conservation efforts have and are being initiated to try restore the forest to pristine state.

Projects currently in the pipeline are:

- Weeding out invasive species and re-introducing native plants from the VDF nursery
- Re-introducing Pink Pigeons and Echo Parakeets & releasing land tortoises in Conservation Zone
- Restoring natural habitats within the reserve, with full cooperation and approval from the National Parks and Conservation Service.
- Carrying out research to learn more about the rich biodiversity of the surrounding forest

The Trust also seeks to educate local citizens on their natural heritage and encourage the international community to discover rich biodiversity of the VDF forest. Guided and non-guided tours are organized daily at the Valley for this purpose and funds obtained from these visits are invested back into conservation work.

For more information on conservation projects, please contact :

Pricila Iranah

Conservation Coordinator

La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust
mail: conservation@valleedeferney.com

Members of La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust Committee

Arnaud Dalais
Trust Chairman & Trustee
Chairman, CIEL Group

Mr Albert Koenig
Trustee, LPG Engineer
Shell Mauritius

Mr Christian Marot
Trustee, Sugar Estate Manager
Deep River Beau Champ Sugar Estate

Mrs B Payneandee
Trustee, Assistant Secretary
Ministry of Agro-Industries and Fisheries

Mr Bertrand Adam
Project Coordinator
La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust

La Vallée de Ferney
Conservation Trust

CSR Accreditation No.: N/1214



Weeding out of invasive alien plants in the forest

Forest restoration is an intentional activity whereby conditions are created for an ecosystem—in this case a native rainforest—to return to a near-pristine state. With an extent of over 200 hectares, the state of health of the reserve of La Vallée de Ferney is relatively good but should not be allowed to worsen. As such removal of invasive alien plant species (e.g. Traveller's Palm, cinnamon, strawberry guava, etc) is a necessary first step. Following this only will native species have enough room and less competition for resources in order to reestablish themselves and offset the risk of extinction through habitat degradation.

Indeed, very simple conservation actions like weeding alien plants are enormously more judicious a way to spend conservation dollar because it is beneficial to hundreds of species in one go. This principle lies at the heart of the second major project in-the-pipeline for the Trust, which will equally see the opening of a new trail alongside a newly weeded area of the forest. This new trail will promote further the pedagogical role of the Trust in addition to opening up access to an as-yet unexplored part of the valley.

In terms of weeding out of invasive plants, the Trust is looking at employing tested techniques like "cut and herbicide" or "drill and herbicide" depending on the plant types. Should funding be obtained, the new trail is set to be open towards the end of 2011 with a significant extent of weeding undertaken. This would enable the future release of endemic birds to be sustainable. Funding bodies interested in this major project are invited to email our Conservation Coordinator on conservation@valleedeferny.com.

Outlook

A brand new fieldstation is set to open in end Jan 2011 for high level ecological research at Ferney.

Forest restoration will only be effective once weeding out of invasive alien plant species is underway, and this is the major project for next year.



Conservation in Focus

La Vallée de Ferney is set to see a new dawn with the upcoming opening of its living, outdoor laboratory—the fieldstation. Designed to respect the environment in all aspects, it will serve as a base and showcase for intensive work on the flora and fauna of the forest of Ferney and surrounding Bambou mountain range. Structured with modified second-hand shipping containers, the fieldstation ecological footprint is close to zero and this is further helped with a roof design that spares the use of air conditioning. The adjacent land will see an arboretum set up with an organic vegetable garden, use of composting and waste sorting. The site has been set to capture rainwater for non-consumptive use. In addition we now hope to be able to fund the set up of photovoltaic panels and a solar water heater, allowing us to use a renewable source of energy and set a firm foot towards the Maurice Ile Durable concept. This fieldstation is set to become a model of green living and green architecture of its kind for the Mascarenes. With its setup, projects that will now be given a push are the release of endemic birds into the forest reserve, long term monitoring of vegetation, amongst others. Being a public-private partnership, such a conservation project is in line with Governmental plans on biodiversity conservation. For note, Bambous forests are already home to the Kestrel following a prior release programme by the MWF.

The fieldstation in-the-making; Nov 2010

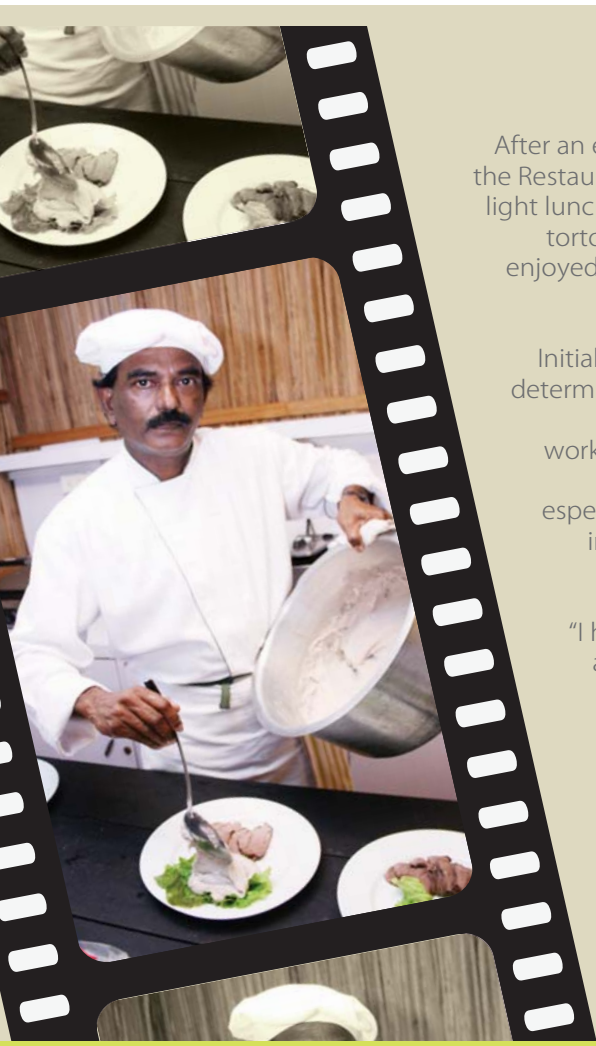


"Fieldstations are places where we can read the book of life in the language in which it was written."

James Kirchner, U.C. Berkeley

DONATIONS

We welcome donations that would help us sponsor the purchase and setting up of photovoltaic panels on our fieldstation. We are also open for bookings from international research institutes. Please email on conservation@valleedeferny.com for details.



Behind the Scenes

After an enlightening walk around the Valley discovering the region's rich fauna and flora, the Restaurant – initially a hunting lodge - is the obvious final stop for many. Be it to have a light lunch or to relinquish a specialty dish, guests are served in a pleasant setting with the tortoise pen and the forest as a charming backdrop. But behind the succulent dishes enjoyed at the Lodge is of course the man who devotes his time to their preparation. So let's meet the chef Raju Dorasami!

Initially an attendant on the sugar estate, Raju shifted to the F&B industry as waiter. His determination to succeed and training undertaken at La Plantation Resort and Belle Mare Plage Resort allowed Raju to rise in culinary ranks to become a chef. Raju started working for CIEL & Nature seven years ago. Initially posted at Domaine de l'Etoile, Raju joined La Vallée de Ferney since 2009. Our chef specialises in Mauritian cuisine especially venison, seafood, wild boar and palm. Being a native of Ferney, Raju grew up in the forest surrounding the Valley and says he is happy the Valley got saved from devastation.

"I have really good memories of my childhood here. My friends and I used to come around here often when we were younger. It was a relief to know they cancelled the highway project," confided Raju.

Father of two, Raju enjoys spending time with his family and adds that though he loves cooking, he prefers to have someone else cook for him and pamper him with good meals at home! A preference I'm sure we all understand!

Visit la Vallée de Ferney and have lunch on site to encourage our conservation work.

Call now on 729 1080 | 729 1095

Conservation Blog

Dried plants and so much more

50 years already have gone by since Dr R.E. Vaughan established the Mauritius Herbarium, now hosted by the MSIRI in Reduit. First curator since its inception in 1960, Dr Vaughan has left us with a legacy which is today a must for biodiversity conservation, not only in Mauritius but in the whole of the Mascarenes. For reminder, a herbarium is a collection of preserved plant samples which are systematically arranged for future generations. The Mauritius Herbarium, today houses some 25000 dried plant samples with around 150 type samples used directly in the identification of new species. In 1989 was initiated an arboretum on the grounds of the MSIRI which now hosts some 100 native plant species.

The Herbarium also houses some 500 wet collections and a 100 wood collections, in addition to being the initiator of the "Flore des Mascareignes" project. The latter is an updated descriptive series of the initial Flora of the Mascarenes published in 1877. Thanks to this project, between 2003 and 2010 alone, 13 thought-extinct taxa, were rediscovered with probably 4 new endemic and one new plant species found and described. The 9th December 2010 saw the MSIRI stand proud of its parenthood of the Mauritius Herbarium with the opening of an exhibit in the Jean-Espitalier Noel Exhibition Hall showcasing the work undertaken by the Mauritius Herbarium in all its complexity as well as the fruits of



their labour. We can only hope that the MSIRI will endeavour to make this exhibit a permanent feature, for it testifies how essential and forward-thinking the Herbarium team is. Congratulations to Dr Baider and her team!

Photo Gallery 2010



1

Dr Hennequin and team from Université Pierre et Marie Curie - study of ferns in the Mascarenes



Visit of Sarah Outen and family to Ferney following her solo rowing across the Indian Ocean

3



2

Team from CIRAD (Reu) for a study on Sapotaceae in Mascarenes

4

Dutch team of paleoecologists visiting Ferney in the middle of work on Mare aux Songes

Help us help nature

6

Visit of COMESA Bank Governors in Oct 2009

5

Visit of Malika Virah Sawmy of WWF Madagascar and Johannes Ebeling, Carbon Consultant (with families)





2010 International Year of Biodiversity

Over-production and consumption are undermining the very essence of our ecosystem. The rich biodiversity of our planet has been plundered for so long that we have already lost major segments of our natural resources. An estimated 40,000 species are currently vulnerable to the risk of extinction globally. To celebrate the variety of life on earth and the significance of biodiversity in our lives, the United Nations decreed 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB). Diverse countries have participated in this venture.

La Vallée de Ferney is the official partner of the IYB in Mauritius. Since the island is ranked 3rd country in the World with the highest level of extinct species, conservation work is crucial to avoid losing further flora and fauna. Affiliation to IYB is one proof of La Vallée de Ferney Conservation Trust's commitment in preserving the natural heritage bestowed to the Island. Though the year draws to an end, working to preserve our biodiversity is a never-ending task which remains crucial for our survival.

For more information on the International Year of Biodiversity, please visit the IYB website at <http://www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/>

Did You Know ?

Black Ebony Diospyros Tesselaria (Ebenaceae), an evergreen, with very hard wood and bark covered by small plaques, reaching up to 20 metres in height.

Endangered species, endemic to Mauritius, found in mid-altitude forests. The Black Ebony is a dioecious plant! The male tree produces pale pink flowers whilst the female ones are white..

Male flower of Diospyros Tesselaria



www.valleedeferny.com

Adopt* a native tree of

LA VALLEE DE FERNEY
www.valleedeferny.com

and help preserve the endemic fona and flora of Mauritius.

*A symbolic adoption for the fundraising event and giving no rights of ownership on the tree adopted.

Word from our Native Tree Adopters



"I am a nature lover at heart. Adopting a tree has been my way of contributing to the fabulous work being undertaken at La Vallée de Ferney "

Samuel F. Juan-Catalan
Spanish Instructor, Spain
Adopter of a Bois Banane

Everyone usually adopts children. Since I love nature, I thought why not adopt a tree, since it's a living thing with a right to live as well"

Nitishah Naugah
Speech & Language Therapist, Mauritius
Adopter of a 'Bois de Natte

