Overview

This four-week training programme offers a unique opportunity for conservation practitioners, from the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO) Islands, to strengthen and expand their skills and knowledge in key areas essential to effective conservation. Designed to support professional growth, the programme equips participants with the tools and expertise needed to address conservation challenges more effectively and increase their impact on the ground. By building local capacity, it aims to make a lasting contribution to conservation efforts across the region.

Who is it for?

Mid-career conservation practitioners from the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO) region, particularly those based Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros and Réunion. These islands are home to numerous endemic species and unique plant communities, and they face similar conservation challenges, making targeted and collaborative efforts essential.

Key Requirements for Participants

Applicants must:

- Hold at least a first degree in a conservation-related field, or possess a scientific high school certificate with equivalent work experience in biodiversity conservation
- Be currently working or actively involved in biodiversity conservation projects
- Have a good command of English to effectively follow and participate in training sessions

The training aim, objectives and outcomes

The training focuses on key competencies essential for early to mid-career professionals working in wildlife conservation, threatened species recovery, and forest or habitat restoration. Combining both technical and vocational elements, the programme aims to build practical skills in:

- Survey techniques for assessing population abundance and monitoring, providing critical data to guide conservation actions for threatened species recovery
- Statistical analysis, essential for informed decision-making, tracking conservation progress, and evaluating impact
- Design and planning of forest restoration and threatened plant species recovery projects, including monitoring and adaptive management
- Facilitation and communication skills needed to lead conservation projects, manage teams, and collaborate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders

By the end of the training programme, participants will be able to:

- Estimate species population abundance using programme MARK and Distance
- Conduct statistical analyses using software R
- Understand key approaches and strategies for designing, planning, and monitoring forest restoration and threatened plant species recovery projects
- Demonstrate effective communication skills for managing teams and engaging with diverse stakeholders

Expected impact:

- A cohort of at least 11 trained conservation practitioners equipped with advanced technical and soft skills to lead and support impactful conservation actions in their respective countries, resulting in better outcomes for threatened species and habitats across the region.
- Significant improvement in participants' skills and knowledge
- Participants applied the skills and knowledge gained during the training in their professional roles within the year following the programme.

Training programme outline

Week 1: Population monitoring survey techniques
This module introduces participants to key survey design principles and techniques used in population monitoring. Participants will explore the methodologies behind Capture-Mark-Recapture (CMR) and Distance Sampling, learning how to apply these approaches in real-world conservation contexts. They will use Programme Distance to develop, compare, and select models using distance sampling g line transect data, applying both conventional and multi-covariate methods to estimate species abundance. Additionally, participants will use Programme MARK to model CMR data for both closed and open populations, enabling them to estimate critical population parameters such as abundance, survival, and recruitment.

Week 2: Forest restoration and threatened plant species recovery
This module provides participants with a comprehensive understanding of forest restoration and threatened plant species recovery. It will explore core principles, approaches, and strategies for planning, designing, and implementing effective restoration projects. Topics include plant re-introduction techniques, methods for managing invasive species, and approaches for monitoring progress using key ecological indicators. The module will also explore the importance of adaptive management in enhancing restoration outcomes. In addition, participants will learn how to design species recovery plans and evaluate the use of both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* strategies for the conservation of threatened plant species.

Week 3: Statistical analysis of survey data using R
This module equips participants with foundational skills in using statistical software R for analysing conservation data. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how R and RStudio work, learn to write and run scripts, and carry out basic calculations. They will also develop skills in importing, exploring, and interpreting datasets, creating plots, and manipulating core R objects such as vectors and data frames. The module includes hands-on practice in applying basic statistical tests and allows participants to enter and analyse their own data to test differences between grouped variables.

Week 4: Facilitation and communication skills for conservation practitioners
This course will build participants' facilitation and communication skills essential for effective conservation practice. It covers key principles of group dynamics, including group/team development stages. Participants will learn and apply active listening and brainstorming techniques to support creative problem-solving within teams. The course also focuses on practical facilitation strategies for guiding discussions, ensuring balanced participation, and maintaining group focus. Participants will explore common group challenges and conflict types, and gain tools for constructive conflict resolution and collaborative decision-making. Additionally, the training introduces negotiation strategies to help manage disagreements and maintain positive working relationships. Finally, participants will learn how to plan and deliver engaging, interactive workshops and evaluate their effectiveness.

Training programme leaders

Dr Nik Cole, Durrell Islands Restoration Manager

Since 2000 Nik has led and participated on restoration/research projects and programmes in remote island ecosystems around the world. His current role as the Islands Restoration Manager for the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Mauritian Wildlife Foundation has primarily been to restore Mauritian island ecosystems, through the reintroduction of threatened fauna and flora, the management of non-native giant tortoises to restore habitats and the mitigation of threats to island ecosystems, notably the control and eradication of invasive species. The overall aim of his work is to rebuild ecosystem functionality and resilience to enhance the future sustainability of biodiversity. He has led the establishment of additional island populations of threatened species, leading to the downlisting of two species on the IUCN Red-List and prevented species extinction events. His work has involved developing research programmes to support island restoration. He has extensive knowledge of island ecosystems, having written and contributed to more than 70 peer review publications, book chapters, books, technical reports and training manuals. Nik has

mentored numerous Mauritians now in senior government/non-government conservation positions and established/supervised many successful post-graduate degrees. He has brought national experts, local partners, government agencies, academic institutions and international organisations together to focus on island restoration.

Dr Simon Tollington, Durrell Conservation Science Manager

Simon is Durrell Conservation Science Manager has more than 20 years' experience of working in the biodiversity conservation sector as a researcher, practitioner and academic. He spent 8 years at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), University of Kent as a PhD student, Post-Doc and Lecturer. He had also worked as Lead Conservation Scientist at Chester Zoo and Senior Lecturer in Zoology at Nottingham Trent University. Throughout this time, he has worked very closely with colleagues in Mauritius studying the conservation management of species such as the pink pigeon and Mauritius parakeet whilst also contributing to the issues associated with the culling of fruit bats. He has contributed to or led numerous international conservation projects around the world including a genetic assessment of tiger populations in Bangladesh, camera-trap studies of duikers in Kenya and invasive species policy in Europe. He has multiple publications in peer-reviewed journals and has advanced skills in statistical analyses and regularly contribute to teaching, training and supervision of university students at all levels.

Martine Goder, Head of Durrell Conservation Training Mauritius

Martine is the Head of Durrell Conservation Training in Mauritius. She holds a master's degree from the University of Cambridge and is a Chevening Scholar. Before joining Durrell, Martine spent 18 years with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF), where she played a key role in restoring island ecosystems around Mauritius. Her work focused on forest restoration, invasive species management, and the recovery of threatened endemic plant and reptile species. As manager of the MWF Flora Programme, she helped develop the Flora Strategy using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation and led the development and implementation of a management plan for a mainland nature reserve through a BIOPAMA-funded project.

Martine also has extensive experience in conservation education and outreach. She designed and led an EU-funded project to reduce anthropogenic threats on islets and managed MWF's Conservation Education and Community Outreach programme. She

has facilitated numerous workshops with diverse stakeholders and established a collaborative platform involving local communities, NGOs, and government institutions to promote the sustainable use of islet. Throughout her career, Martine has supervised university students and supported research collaborations with international universities, contributing to several peer-reviewed publications. In her current role at Durrell, she manages Durrell Conservation Training Mauritius and leads the development and delivery of training programmes for conservation practitioners across the Southwest Indian Ocean region focused on building regional conservation capacity.

Venue and Accommodation

The training will take place at the Durrell Conservation Training Mauritius facility, located at 71 Floréal Road, Floréal, Mauritius.

Shared accommodation is provided for regional participants.

Cost and Sponsorship

Mauritian participants: Training is offered free of charge.

Participants from Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO) region:

- Full sponsorships are available covering:
    - Training costs
    - Return flights
    - Accommodation
    - Inland transport

Application Details

Applications open on **26 May 2025** and close on **30 June 2025**.

To apply, please send your CV and motivation letter to:

recruitmentmauritius@durrell .org

Contact Information

For inquiries, please contact Martine Goder or Teesha Baboorun via:

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