



The Black Parrot *National Bird of Seychelles*

The Vallée de Mai is home to the enigmatic Seychelles Black Parrot which is one of the flagship species of this unique UNESCO World Heritage Site. Although the national bird of Seychelles, the Black Parrot was only recently officially classified as a distinct species. After five years of intensive research the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) is pleased to confirm that this new status has been recognised at an international level this month. This new status will ensure that the Seychelles Black Parrot receives stronger conservation protection and attention to safeguard its future.

The Seychelles Black Parrot is part of a small group of parrots (Coracopsis species) found only in the Western Indian Ocean. The Seychelles Coracopsis was long suspected to be a distinct species due to differences in ecology, size and calls. Until recently, however, genetic evidence to confirm this species' distinction was lacking. Now, following intensive research on the breeding and ecology of the Seychelles Black Parrot by SIF, in partnership with genetic researchers at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) in the UK, this gap has been filled and a decision

by taxonomic experts at BirdLife International has been reached to officially recognise the Seychelles Black Parrot as a distinct species from the other parrots in the group! The species will now undergo an assessment for the internationally recognised IUCN Red List. The Seychelles Black Parrot has a global population of 520–900 birds, all of which occur on Praslin Island. It is the only endemic parrot found in Seychelles and despite not being as colourful as other parrots it is a beautiful and fascinating bird. It is also known for its melodious calls which can be heard echoing throughout the Vallée de Mai. Unfortunately due to the limited range of Praslin Island, small population size and limited good quality habitat the parrot is threatened and requires full protection. The several threats the parrot is facing include anything that might endanger or reduce the remaining palm forest habitat, such as fire, poaching or development, since the parrots depend on mature native palm forest to breed and feed. This dependence means that the continued protection of the ancient palm forest of the Vallée de Mai is essential to the parrot's survival. There are many treasures to be found on a visit to the Vallée de Mai but seeing the Seychelles' only endemic parrot is most definitely a highlight. Spotting them in the high canopy of the palm forest can be difficult, but taking one of SIF's free guided tours will certainly help you in this search and you may be rewarded with a glimpse into the lives of these captivating birds.



Photo credit; P Woods



Black Parrot chick growth



Photo credit; SIF

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