

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Raso Lark *Alauda razae*



Raso Lark (© René Pop/www.rarebirdseyearbook.com).



Background

Raso Lark is restricted to the very small (7 km²), arid, uninhabited island of Raso in the Cape Verde Islands. The population size fluctuates and since the 1960s estimates have returned figures between 50-250 individuals. These fluctuations are primarily attributed to rainfall, a prerequisite to breeding. It lives on level plains with volcanic soils and is associated with small vegetated patches along stream-beds. The lark's dependence on precipitation renders it highly susceptible to droughts when populations can fall to extreme low levels. Therefore climate change represents a long-term threat, as does the accidental introduction of invasive mammals.

Actions being implemented

1. Surveys have shown a remarkable **population recovery** from 65 birds in 2004 to over 450 now. This is the highest number recorded since the species was described to science and has also been accompanied by a reduction in sex ratio skew.
2. Ecological **research** has indicated that rainfall is the most important factor influencing breeding success. The population recovery has been attributed to good rainfall in 2009 and 2010.
3. The practicalities and desirability of a possible **translocation project** are being investigated. As long as the species remains confined to Raso, downlisting is unlikely.



Monitoring of Raso Larks occurs during field visits to its arid island home (© Paul Donald).

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