

Partnership for Seychelles iconic bird

Title Nature Seychelles (BirdLife Partner) and the Seychelles National Park Authority (SNPA) have joined forces to work on a new project to help protect one of Seychelles iconic bird species ? Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher, *Terpsiphone corvina*, locally known as Vev. To formalise this partnership, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed on 19 October 2011 at the Nature Seychelles headquarters at Roche Caiman by the CEOs of the two organisations Dr. Nirmal Shah and Mr. Denis Matatiken. Present at the signing were Mrs Barbara Barallon, the District Administrator for La Digue the stronghold of the Vev, and Mr. Flavien Joubert, Director General in the Department of Environment. The advocacy and education project, to be carried out on the Island of La Digue, is part of BirdLife's **Preventing Extinctions Programme** and is supported by **Viking Optical Ltd, the species champion** who are helping raise the vital funding needed for the conservation of this bird. It will see work carried out on La Digue with schools and local communities and will build on the success of previous projects by helping to engage the local community in activities to protect the bird. "Partnerships are crucial for conservation and have been used to save most of Seychelles endangered birds. The combined effort of conservation NGOs, government, businesses, and the community is probably the most powerful tool available to us to address conservation issues in Seychelles", said Dr. Nirmal Shah. "This is a good example of partnerships between government, NGOs and communities where all stakeholders are involved in conservation", said Mr. Matatiken. "Conservation is everyone's business and the little that we can all do contributes to the conservation of a species." The project also has the approval of the La Digue Development Board, an important partner in saving the flycatcher and its habitats. The Vev, one of the most beautiful and iconic birds of Seychelles, is still **Critically Endangered** because of its small population and small range limited mostly to La Digue. It is the only Seychelles bird still listed as Critically Endangered - Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, Seychelles White-eye *Zosterops modestus*, Seychelles Scops-owl *Otus insularis* and Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis* have all been downlisted as a result of conservation action. A previous collaboration funded by the Darwin Initiative and which brought together the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, Nature Seychelles, the La Digue Development Board, Denis Island Development Limited, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, resulted in the successful translocation of 23 birds to Denis Island to create "a safety net" population there. The translocation **succeeded in establishing a second breeding population of flycatchers on Denis** and marked a major milestone in the "Species Action Plan for the Flycatcher," aimed at removing it from the endangered list. The new project will focus on further enhancing the population on La Digue which is threatened by habitat loss, invasive alien species and encroaching urbanisation.