

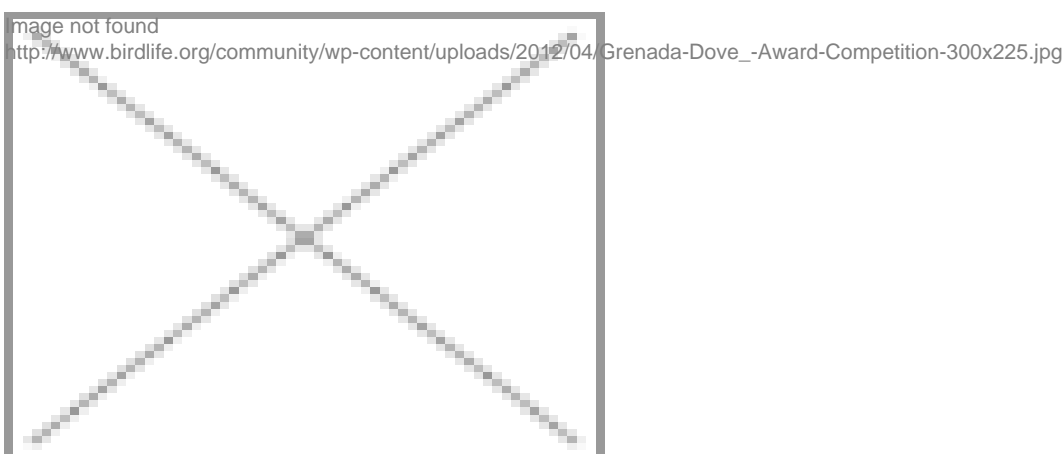
Government protects critical habitat for the Grenada Dove

Title

In August 2011, the Government of Grenada's Cabinet approved the protection of the last piece of government-owned Grenada Dove habitat through the addition of approximately 100 acres (c.40 ha) of the **Beausejour Estate** to the adjacent **Perseverance Protected Area and Dove Sanctuary**. This extremely positive move towards the conservation of Grenada's national bird – the Critically Endangered **Grenada Dove** *Leptotila wellsi* – now requires a survey and then legal designation by the Grenadian Parliament.

Grenada Dove is endemic to the island and is clinging onto survival with a population estimated at just 132 individuals. The bird's extremely small population has declined due to habitat loss and fragmentation caused by habitat clearance for residential housing, roads and other developments, hurricanes, fire, grazing pressure and predation by invasive species. According to Bonnie Rusk of the Grenada Dove Conservation Program and the BirdLife Species Guardian, "the Grenada Dove population is clearly tied to the availability of suitable habitat, which continues to decline. Without adequate habitat protection now, the population will quickly decline towards extinction".

Grenada, at the 8th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the CBD (COP 8), pledged to effectively conserve at least 25% of its marine and terrestrial ecosystems by 2020 (the Grenada Declaration). In 2010, the Government of Grenada's Cabinet approved the new System Plan for Parks and Protected Areas to help meet this obligation. **Grenada's six IBAs**, four of which are identified as critical habitat of the Grenada Dove, are included in this System Plan. With the Government's protection of the crown lands at Beausejour Estate – which supports 40% of the west coast Grenada Dove population – all remaining dove habitat is on private lands. The newly-protected area at Beausejour includes land suitable for reforestation and habitat creation, and provides a protected corridor to the adjacent Perseverance Protected Area and Dove Sanctuary.



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During 2011, the Grenada Dove Conservation Program and the Forestry and National Parks Department (responsible for terrestrial national parks and protected areas) ? with funding from BirdLife and [Save Our Species \(SOS\)](#), a joint initiative of the Global Environment Facility, IUCN and the World Bank ? carried out a comprehensive legislative review to fully understand Grenada?s laws related to private lands identified for protection. A significant area of privately-owned land has been identified for formal protection in the new System Plan for Parks and Protected Area (for the Grenada Dove and other species) making the legislative review both critical and timely. ?This review proved extremely informative and outlined not only the current laws addressing private lands, but also made recommendations for addressing the legislative gaps.? ? said Mr. Aden Forteau, Chief Forestry Officer, Forestry and National Parks Department.

The review exposed the fact that currently there is no legislative mechanism to declare private lands identified for protection as a national park, protected area or other designation except through compulsory acquisition by government, voluntary partnerships with landowners, or outright purchase by a conservation organisation. The extant Dove habitat which is found on private lands is divided into hundreds of residential or agricultural parcels. Many are up for sale but the high prices involved puts them out of reach of the government in terms of acquisition.

All remaining Grenada Dove habitat is vulnerable to development and loss promoting further population decline until suitable incentives for conservation can be determined, or finances for purchase or government acquisition are found.