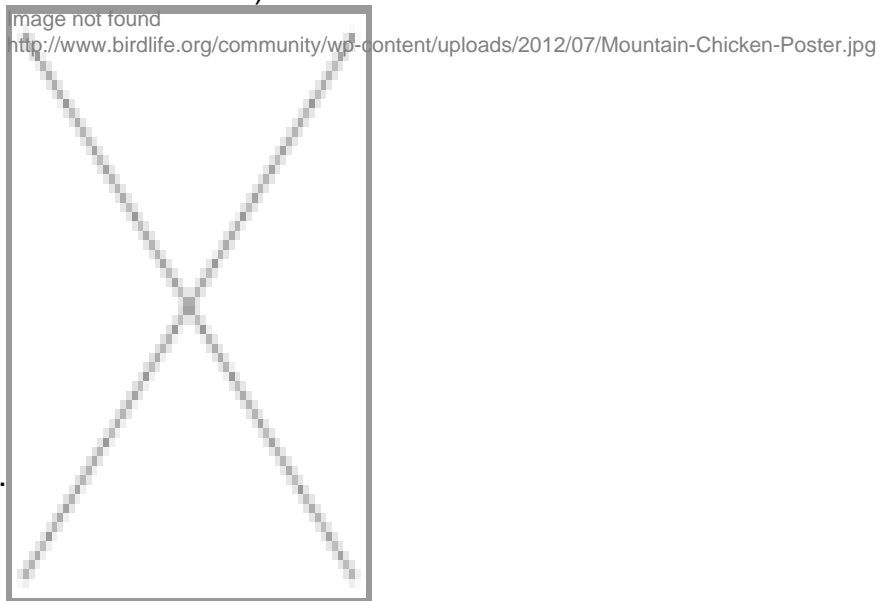


Mountain Chicken's portrait

Title

The **Mountain Chicken Project**, funded by the UK government's Darwin Initiative and executed by the Department of Environment of Montserrat and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, is pleased to announce the publication of a poster and a brochure aimed at raising awareness of the **Critically Endangered Mountain Chicken *Leptodactylus fallax*** on Montserrat.

The Mountain Chicken is a terrestrial frog surviving only in small populations within the **Centre Hills** and **Northern Forested Ghauts** Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Montserrat (where it co-occurs with the Critically Endangered **Montserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi***), and in **Morne Trois Pitons** National Park (also an IBA) in Dominica. It has cultural significance for Montserratians and Dominicans but is now under threat of extinction. The frog has faced many pressures over the years including hunting, habitat loss, impact of volcanic activity, exposure to increasing populations of invasive species, such as rats and feral pigs, and decimation by the chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) that has caused the extinction of hundreds of



amphibian species worldwide.

The poster's main image shows a healthy Mountain Chicken showing its moist textured skin, coloration and markings on the hind legs ? which distinguish it from the invasive Cane Toad. A series of inset pictures and accompanying text briefly describe the lifecycle of the frog, the two islands where remaining populations are still found, its diet and the effects of the deadly skin disease chytridiomycosis.

The 7-panel brochure folds out into a poster that briefly describes the frog's habitat and its preferred dietary habits, and includes a picture of a healthy Mountain Chicken. The brochure also explains how frogs benefit mankind through insect control, and the benefits of frogs to

scientific research.

Montserrat's Department of Environment has embarked on a recovery project that aims to develop a long-term strategy to manage the species. The project is being implemented with the assistance of overseas partners including Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Zoological Society of London, Parken Zoo and the North of England Zoological Society. Activities involve intensive monitoring of the surviving frogs in Montserrat, release of captive-bred animals, and research on the dynamics of the disease ? all of which will inform crucial management decisions. Once developed, the long-term strategy will also be used to inform the management of Dominica's Mountain Chickens.

The posters and brochures will be distributed to schools and government institutions and displayed in frequently visited public areas. Additionally, electronic copies are available online at www.gov.ms and www.mountainchicken.org.

The Department of Environment would like to thank the public for its support of the Mountain Chicken Project and appeals to the public to contact the Department at 491 9278 if they have seen the Mountain Chicken or heard its distinct call.

Gerard A L Gray **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT** 25 June 2012