

Putting Kagu on the Map

Title Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (SCO - BirdLife in New Caledonia) have received support from the USFWS Wildlife Without Borders - Critically Endangered Species Conservation Fund to help save their national bird from extinction. Kagus are listed as Endangered by BirdLife International on behalf of the IUCN Red List, and is the only living member of the family Rhynochetidae. Physical features of Kagu that make it distinct from other birds include its dramatic displays with its strikingly banded wings. As with many bird species endemic to the Pacific, Kagu evolved without mammalian predators and its lifestyle - it is flightless and ground-nesting - makes it highly susceptible to predation, particularly by recently introduced mammals such as dogs, cats and pigs. SCO have been striving to improve knowledge about the birds of New Caledonia, and is involved in the projects to protect both the birds and the habitats upon which they depend. In 2008, SCO compiled a ten year Kagu Recovery Plan. This newly funded project deals with a crucial aspect of the Kagu Recovery Plan, namely the documentation of its distribution and density in priority areas. The most robust method for determining this (the first step in aiding their recovery) is to monitor Kagu calls using sound recorders. These are favored because Kagus are found in remote difficult-to-access forested areas, and only call for short periods of the day. SCO have tested the recording equipment to ensure its efficacy and now urgently need funds to undertake island-wide surveys in areas where Kagus have previously been recorded. SCO will also train local 'Kagu Listeners' - members of the local communities - to collect additional data and increase the capacity for on-the-ground conservation of the species. Funds from the USFWS Critically Endangered Animals Fund amounts to about half of the total project costs, and will be used to implement some of the Kagu Recovery Plan's most important aspects, through:

1. Assessment and monitoring of Kagu populations at four Kagu refuges
2. Raising awareness and enabling local communities to protect Kagus.
3. Establishing community Kagu monitoring.

This project is a vital part of a wider program of work to save the Kagu (which includes funding from The BBC Wildlife Fund) from extinction by identifying new locations which will become a focus for additional conservation actions, and increasing the capacity of local people to help conserve this charismatic species and national emblem of New Caledonia. [Click here to subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter.](#)