LIVINGSTONE’S FRUIT BAT & MONGOOSE LEMUR
Comoro Islands

The Comoros islands are home to what is likely to be the most threatened fruit bat in the world, as well as one of the only populations of wild lemurs outside Madagascar.

The Livingstone’s fruit bat (Pteropus livingstonii), is one of the largest fruit bats in the world. The bats roost in large trees, with only one of 21 of identified roost sites found to be free of human pressure. The resulting small population size means that the species has being upgraded to Critically Endangered on the IUCN’s Red List. Bristol Zoo maintains a breeding population of Livingstone’s fruit bats as well as supporting research into their conservation genetics. Our support in the wild has been ongoing since 2008 and is now channelled through the local NGO Dahari. Our work with Dahari has prioritised protection of the remaining roost sites as part of its conservation strategy working to shape sustainable and productive landscapes with Comorian communities.

Mongoose lemurs (Eulemur mongoz) are found living in the wild only on Madagascar and the Comoros archipelago. Almost certainly introduced to the Comoros by human activities, these geographically separate populations are indistinguishable from one another. The Comoros island mongoose lemurs therefore represent a valuable insurance population of this Critically Endangered species.

Among those conditions leading to the decline of the mongoose lemur are the same deforestation issues affecting the Livingstone’s fruit bat, but other threats are evident such as unsustainable hunting, and hybridisation with the red lemur. One limitation to the recovery of this species is the slow recruitment rate; females rear only a single progeny per year. Despite a successful captive breeding program, to which Bristol Zoo is a contributor, the survival of wild populations is currently uncertain.

Five year objectives:
• Support the role of a Comoros-based Biodiversity Scientist at Dahari.
• Determining diet and investigating feeding ecology and dependence on host trees
• Investigating roost fidelity for the fruit bats and range ecology for both bat and lemur species
• Analysing and mitigating primary threats to population persistence in concert with community initiatives
• Continue to contribute to the ex situ breeding populations of these species at Bristol Zoo Gardens and Wild Place Project

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Long-term population monitoring
Locating roosts and estimating range and population size

Conservation breeding
Maintenance of an insurance population ex-situ with potential for reintroductions (main photo)

Habitat Restoration
Supporting the establishment of mature forested areas around roosts

Conservation genetics
PhD student working on the conservation genetics of the species

Building capacity
Training of local staff in field research methods

Promoting pro-conservation behaviour
Using community engagement and interpretation internationally

Policy, advocacy and action planning
Prioritising threats and creating an action plan for the Livingstone’s fruit bat