CANARI CAPACITÉ CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

Contributions to Conservation in the Caribbean

CAPACITÉ – ISSUE 14

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In this our final issue of Capacité we present the results of a few of the initiatives supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) between 2010 and 2016. The initiatives and organisations supported in the region have been wide-ranging and some of the outcomes have indeed been game-changing, as Michele Zador of the CEPF Secretariat points out in her article that summarises the results of the Fund's investment in the region.

Invasive species removal in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic have given native and endemic species a fighting chance on two off-shore islands and new working partnerships have been established between Island Conservation and groups in those countries. The efforts of The Bahamas National Trust on San Salvador have led to the declaration of a national park system there. And together with the national park declaration achieved by Island Conservation under its CEPF-funded project, The Bahamas is now at its 10% target for marine habitat protection under the Convention for Biological Diversity. The efforts of the Clarendon Parish Development Committee and Benevolent Society in Jamaica have raised the profile of a little known, but very significant key biodiversity area. And thanks to collaborative efforts of organisations in Haiti and France, one of the world's most threatened conifers, the Ekman juniper, is benefitting from in vitro culture that could stave off its extinction.

How the years have gone by! It has been our pleasure supporting the work of the CEPF and our partners throughout the region. We are delighted that the CEPF has decided to reinvest in the Caribbean and look forward to welcoming them back. We at CANARI remain committed to conserving the biodiversity of the region for the well-being of its people and resilience of its island nations. We look forward to continued collaboration and partnership with all the organisations we have worked with over the past six years.

The Regional Implementation Team (RIT) in CANARI

The **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund** (CEPF) is a joint programme of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank.

The programme was launched in August 2000 and since then has supported civil society to conserve critical biodiversity in 22 hotspots, committing over US$151 million in grants. CEPF is investing US$6.9 million in the Caribbean islands between October 2010 and July 2016.

Inside this issue:

Highlights of the CEPF's Contribution to Conservation in the Caribbean Islands Biodiversity Hotspot

- Regional Implementation Team, CANARI

Highlights of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's (CEPF's) investment in the Caribbean islands hotspot between 2010 and 2016 include:

- **Improved management of 25 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) covering 593,967 hectares** through the development, approval and implementation of participatory protected area management plans with the meaningful involvement of local communities and resource users. Plans and implementation actions incorporated strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Jamaica.

- **Strengthened legal protection status** of eight KBAs in The Bahamas, Dominican Republic and Haiti and laid the foundation for the creation of Haiti's first municipal reserve.

- Laid a foundation for **innovative financing** through:
  - development of the Caribbean's first forest carbon offset project that is designed to benefit smallholders and cocoa farmers in the Dominican Republic;
  - development of the Dominican Republic's first private protected area; and
  - economic valuation of water resources to support a collective and participatory payment for ecosystem services (PES) system involving Santo Domingo's water authority.

- **Improved management of invasive alien species (IAS) through building capacity of key local civil society organisations and communities** in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Saint Lucia and The Bahamas resulting biosecurity plans and systems, successful eradications, increased populations of endemic and endangered species, and increased tourist visits and revenue.

- **Strengthened organisational capacity of key local civil society organisations** including in how to successfully develop, implement and manage biodiversity conservation projects and effectively communicate about and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation.

- **Increased local community capacity and national attention** to make a case for protected areas and mitigate the impacts of a proposed port development project and potential mining concessions in Jamaica.

- **Supported a RIT that is a local (Caribbean) civil society organisation** which has been working in the Caribbean islands for over 30 years. Having the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) serve as the RIT was a key strategy for sustainability of CEPF's investment as CANARI continues to support stakeholders working on biodiversity conservation in the region even after CEPF's investment has concluded.

For details of the CEPF's contribution to conservation in the region, please see the results of the Caribbean islands log frame here: http://www.canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CEPF-CAR-Final-Logframe-Report-June-2016.pdf

CEPF in the Caribbean in Numbers

US$6.9 million investment

77 grants (30 small grants, 47 large grants)

25 key biodiversity areas (KBAs) covering 593,967 hectares have demonstrable improvements in their management as guided by management and operational plans

8 new protected areas created covering 111,496 hectares

68 civil society organisations (CSOs) received grant support

78% of funds committed went to local and regional Caribbean CSOs

2 sustainable funding mechanisms established

5 co-management arrangements established/supported at the site and corridor levels

9 public-private partnerships that mainstream biodiversity conservation created

58 CSOs have strengthened institutional capacity

23 stakeholder partnerships and initiatives created/strengthened

A Message of Appreciation from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Secretariat

- *Michele Zador,* Caribbean Islands Hotspot Grant Director, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

On behalf of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Secretariat, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to you for your commitment, hard work, intelligence, and collaborative spirit in the course of implementing CEPF's investment strategy in the Caribbean islands hotspot.

Michele Zador planting a tree in the Reserva Privada Zorzal, the Dominican Republic's first private protected area. ©CANARI

It seems it was only yesterday when I met with almost 200 conservationists from throughout the Caribbean as part of local consultations to prepare the ecosystem profile for the hotspot. These meetings provided an excellent opportunity for CEPF to learn about the hotspot and to ensure that our investment strategy reflected your priorities. But, indeed, we held these meetings seven years ago, in 2009!

In our early conversations, I urged you to take full advantage of the flexibility that CEPF would bring to conservation funding, to be creative, and to build your institutional and management capacities in order to strengthen the Caribbean's own foundation to undertake conservation initiatives. While CEPF's funding was relatively small in comparison to the needs at hand, collectively we could work together to achieve big results. A lot has happened since those early days.

Between 2010 and 2016, CEPF funded 77 grants valued at $6.9 million in eight countries – Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Sixty-eight organizations benefited directly from our funding, of which 46 groups were Caribbean-based.

However, these numbers do not tell the full story of your accomplishments: Twenty-five of the Caribbean's most important key biodiversity areas (KBAs), covering nearly 600,000 hectares – some of which top lists of global conservation priorities – now count with tangible management improvements that are ameliorating real threats. Hundreds of communities are actively engaged in managing their KBAs and as a result, are deriving direct benefits to their livelihood and welfare. The institutional and fund raising capacities of community and island-based environmental groups in all eight countries have improved in important ways. Caribbean groups are accessing new donor funding because of these improved management systems.

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Moreover, you achieved truly innovative, game-changing results: Haiti now counts with its first marine and municipal reserves to protect its fragile biodiversity. The Caribbean piloted its first carbon credit project in the Dominican Republic, which is now being replicated. The Jamaican conservation community, in partnership with international groups, developed an innovative model to ensure that infrastructure projects sited in vulnerable ecosystems undergo transparent, democratic decision-making processes to take environmental and social sustainability into full account. Partners in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, The Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic have developed new approaches to empower local groups to take full leadership to combat the scourge of invasive alien species. The partnerships forged not only within the Caribbean conservation community, but also with the private sector and governments, serve as global examples of how to build broad collaboration for sustainable development.

In looking back at the last seven years, I ask myself whether you used CEPF funds as we had set out. Have Caribbean capacities been cultivated through creative approaches to achieve important conservation results for long-term sustainability? It is tremendously gratifying to answer this question with a resounding "Yes!" CEPF resources have been used judiciously and effectively to achieve strategic gains that I believe will serve the environmental community well for many years.

As we embark on closing this first investment phase, we in the Secretariat wish all our partners great success in achieving their missions towards ensuring the well-being of the people and biodiversity of the Caribbean for many years to come. Please keep us informed should new results and impacts emerge from your CEPF-supported work.

Michele Zador with some members of the Regional Implementation Team (RIT). Left to right: Leida Buglass, RIT Country Coordinator, Dominican Republic; Anna Cadiz-Hadid, RIT Manager; and Paul Judex Edouarzin, RIT Country Coordinator, Haiti. *©CANARI*

As we actively pursue reinvestment in the region, we do not bid you farewell, but only say "see you later". We look forward to continuing our work in the Caribbean islands biodiversity hotspot and building on results and achievements to date.

Building Momentum Towards Invasive Species Removals in Two Caribbean Countries

- Coral Wolf, Island Conservation

ISLAND CONSERVATION
Preventing Extinctions

Many native and endemic species across the Caribbean are threatened by invasive species, but the region just got safer for some important native species in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, thanks in part to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

Island Conservation's mission is to prevent extinctions by removing invasive species from islands. We focus on removing this threat because it allows native populations to rebound and seriously degraded habitats to be restored. In the past two and a half years, with the support of CEPF, Island Conservation, along with our local conservation partners – The Bahamas National Trust and Grupo Jaragua in the Dominican Republic – conducted concurrent projects examining the possibility of removing invasive species from two Caribbean islands: Booby Cay and Alto Velo. While invasive species removal studies and plans were central components and accomplishments of both projects, Island Conservation is even prouder of some of the other outcomes made possible with CEPF's support.

Booby Cay, located east of Mayaguana in The Bahamas, is home to the IUCN Red Listed Critically Endangered Bartsch's Iguana (*Cyclura carinata bartschi*). This species' population is in decline and threated by habitat loss and invasive species across much of its range. The small Bartsch's Iguana population on Booby Cay is impacted by invasive rats. Using the body of science that draws on the approximately 1,000 successful eradications worldwide to date and our track record of working on more than 50 of those, we worked with the project partners to develop a science-based feasibility assessment for removing the invasive rats and implemented communications and outreach activities to raise awareness about this threat. Through this project, The Bahamas National Trust staff gained capacity in invasive species management planning and developing and implementing strategic communications campaign plans. /→

In June 2014, ten Bahamas National Trust staff participated in a two-day communications planning workshop held in Nassau and led by Island Conservation. ©The Bahamas National Trust

Communications activities included conducting meetings with government officials, organising with the local Mayaguana communities, and attending school events to inform the government and the public of the value of protecting Booby Cay. Island Conservation and The Bahamas National Trust successfully built support for protection of the Cay, and on the last day of the grant contract, August 31, 2015, the Bahamanian government responded by designating Booby Cay as a national park. This protected area designation is a critical first step in protecting the Bartsch's Iguana from habitat loss and prompts additional invasive species management planning by The Bahamas National Trust.

A view of Booby Cay. Insert: The Critically Endangered Bartsch's Iguana (Cyclura carinata bartschi) is found only on Booby Cay, The Bahamas. ©Island Conservation

Alto Velo Island, within Jaragua National Park, Dominican Republic provides critical habitat for three species of endemic reptiles, including the Alto Velo curly-tailed lizard (*Leiocephalus altavelensis*). For this project, Island Conservation and Grupo Jaragua partnered to: create an operational plan for removing invasive goats and rats, and feral cats; develop a biosecurity plan to prevent new invasions; and identify potential funding sources to continue the work. One of the highlights of the Alto Velo project was a Memorandum of Understanding signed between Island Conservation and the Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales of the Dominican Republic (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources) to support offshore island restoration projects, demonstrating the government's and partners' interest and responsibility to effectively manage invasive species in the country.

As a result of this work, Island Conservation staff gained valuable insight on how to effectively catalyse conservation action with local partners who have yet to establish invasive species removals as a priority. We found that the success of the project was reliant on two key factors. One, identifying and including partners that can and must contribute to the project implementation, and two, early and effective communication with partners. Island Conservation continues to partner with Grupo Jaragua and The Bahamas National Trust with aims to strengthen our relationships and conservation 'wins' with these two strong, local conservation organisations in the region.

A view of Alto Velo. Insert: The Alto Velo Least Gecko (Sphaerodactylus altavelensis) is endemic to Alto Velo. ©Island Conservation

Improving Protection of Key Biodiversity Areas in The Bahamas: San Salvador Island

- Lakeshia Anderson, Parks Manager and Parks Planner, The Bahamas National Trust

National Parks are the greatest legacies to be left behind for future generations. For more than half a century, The Bahamas National Trust (BNT) has protected and managed land and marine areas for the protection of biodiversity, historic preservation and recreation for the benefit of Bahamians.

Critically Endangered San Salvador rock iguana (Cyclura rileyi rileyi) at Graham's Harbour KBA. *©Sandy Voegeli*

The BNT is committed to establishing partnerships to assist with park management throughout the Bahamian islands. This commitment has spurred the partnership with local conservation organisation, the San Salvador Living Jewels Foundation (SSLJ) and the Gerace Research Centre (GRC), to implement the CEPF-funded project, which aimed to designate two key biodiversity areas (KBAs), Graham's Harbour and Southern Great Lake, as national parks. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Iguana Specialist Group, ranked the Graham's Harbour KBA as the highest priority site of 26 sites in The Bahamas for seabird and iguana conservation, and the Southern Great Lake KBA ranked seventh.

View of the Southern Great Lakes KBA. *©CANARI*

For more than 10 years, scientists, conservation organisations and local community representatives lobbied for the establishment of national parks on San Salvador, however, issues related to private landholdings hindered progress for park designations. The CEPF Project was timely in its alignment with the Government's commitment to expand the Bahamas National Protected Area System to meet international obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

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Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Philip Brave Davis at the ceremony to declare San Salvador's new national parks. ©Lakeshia Anderson

The project provided an opportunity to rebuild momentum for engaging a wide range of stakeholders through activities such as community meetings, fieldtrips to proposed sites, school visits, Public Service Announcements (radio and television), newspaper articles and the production of educational and outreach materials to raise awareness of the significance of the proposed sites. Senior policy makers were key stakeholders in this process, and were engaged throughout the life of the project.

A major accomplishment of the CEPF Project, was the public announcement of the San Salvador National Park System by the Deputy Prime Minister of The Bahamas, The. Hon. Philip Brave Davis. During a celebratory ceremony in April 2015 in San Salvador with local community members, hundreds gathered for the announcement of five new national parks covering 21,031 acres – Graham's Harbour Iguana and Seabird National Park, West Coast Marine Park, Pigeon Creek and Snow Bay National Park, Southern Great Lake National Park and Green's Bay National Park. This achievement, along with subsequent protected area announcements in August 2015, moved The Bahamas to its 10% target for marine habitat protection under the CBD, and halfway to the international goal of protecting 20% of nearshore marine environments by 2020, under the Caribbean Challenge Initiative.

Other major project accomplishments included the development of a draft management plan with the participation of community members and other stakeholders, and capacity building training in biodiversity monitoring that benefited more 18 community members, in addition to Park Wardens from the BNT and Turks and Caicos National Trust. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BNT and the San Salvador Living Jewels Foundation was another major achievement, which seeks to strengthen alliances for the management of new national parks on San Salvador and for improving conservation initiatives on San Salvador.

Promoting Conservation of the Peckham Woods Key Biodiversity Area, Clarendon, Jamaica

- Ann M. Haynes-Sutton

*Endemic Jamaican Laughing Frog (*Osteopilus ocellatus*), Peckham Woods. ©Ann Haynes-Sutton*

Peckham Woods is a little known area of tremendous biological importance in central Jamaica and due to the efforts of the Clarendon Parish Development Committee Benevolent Society (CPDC) its visibility is being raised.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund-supported "*Promoting conservation of Peckham Woods Key Biodiversity Area, Clarendon, Jamaica*" made a very important contribution towards the conservation of this important and under-appreciated key biodiversity area (KBA). Before the project, the biodiversity of this area had never been systematically assessed and due to its small size, it had not been included in national biodiversity planning.

The CPDC brought communities in and around the KBA together with local and international experts and institutions, including the University of the West Indies, the Institute of Jamaica and the University of South Florida Herbarium. They formed a multi-disciplinary partnership that carried out biodiversity and socio-economic assessments and a theory of change exercise. Thus, they determined the significance of Peckham Woods for the community and its importance for biodiversity and assessed the need for conservation.

The project was especially important because it updated knowledge of the status of the biodiversity of this small but unique area, increased local awareness of the importance of the area, established the next steps for conservation and increased the capacity of local botanists. It also set a precedent for the involvement of Parish Development Committees (which are alliances of local government, local business and communities) in biodiversity conservation.

The botanical survey confirmed the outstanding importance of Peckham Woods for endemic plant biodiversity and the long-term persistence of many species, despite the fragmentation of the forests. A total of 490 species of plants occur at the site, of which 35 per cent are endemic to Jamaica. Many of these are severely range limited. Some occur only on a single hilltop at Peckham Woods. Only 55 (11 per cent) of the Peckham Woods plant species have been assessed by the IUCN for Red List status. Of these, 48 are threatened or near threatened, including ten critically endangered or endangered species. This is undoubtedly an underestimate.

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The presence of the very rare and local endemic butterfly, *Atlantea pantoni*, which was otherwise only known to be found in the deep forests of St. James and Trelawny in western Jamaica, and two other rare butterflies was a surprise finding. The team also found five globally threatened endemic species of birds and five globally threatened endemic species of frogs. The presence of high diversity of land snails (including two site endemic species or sub-species) further confirmed the area's importance.

Female Atlantea pantoni butterfly. *©Vaughn Thurland*

These species have survived despite the small size of the 588.44 acres (238.13 ha) core, of which less than half (212 acres, 86 ha) is a Forest Reserve. However, the team found that human activities including fire, charcoal burning, extraction of timber and sticks, farming of crops and livestock are threatening the area. The participants in the Theory of Change workshop noted that the area urgently needs conservation action. The surveys of forest users gave reason for hope: they indicated that the majority of people in the area depend on the forest in various ways and most felt more should be done to protect the forests.

The CPDC reached out to the local community to increase local knowledge of the area's importance through a workshop for educators and a field trip. They produced and disseminated educational materials (including leaflets, a video and information on Facebook). The team also presented the results of the project at a workshop to increase national awareness of the area and engage the wider conservation community.

Unique bromeliad communities on the hilltops of Peckham Woods. *©Ann Haynes-Sutton*

The most important next steps include forming an innovative new partnership between the Forestry Department and the CPDC to extend the area under conservation management by encouraging private landowners in contiguous areas to declare their lands as private forest reserves and provide them with support (possibly through Conservation Agreements or payments for ecological services) to manage their land to conserve and restore biodiversity.

The CPDC will continue to promote awareness of the area and will seek funding to support the partnership with the Forestry Department as well as to complete the biodiversity assessment of the core and buffer areas, assess the feasibility of conservation agreements and of eco-tourism development. They will also present their findings to the National Environment and Planning Agency and explore the options for using Peckham Woods as a pilot project for new approaches to community-based conservation of globally, nationally and locally important small areas with high levels of biodiversity.

Saving the Ekman Juniper and Valuing the Flora of the Forêt des Pins, Haiti

- Elie Desmarattes, HELVETAS, Haiti and Fanch Le Hir, Conservatoire Botanique National de Brest (CBNB)

Members of OPDFM standing next to an Ekman juniper tree ©F. Le Hir

The Ekman juniper (*Juniperus gracilior var. Ekmanii*) is among the threatened conifers of the world. In Haiti, it is found only in the Unit II section of the 14,000 hectare Forêt des Pins Protected Area in the Massif de la Selle, which is part of the Massif de la Selle-Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo binational corridor that straddles Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The corridor is characterised by a high level of biodiversity, with broadleaf forests in the lower reaches and sub-tropical montane forests that mainly comprise the endemic Hispaniolan pine (*Pinus occidentalis)* in the upper reaches. It is one of the last natural forests in Haiti where iconic and endemic species, like the Ekman juniper, survive. Once common in Haiti, only seven mature individuals of the Ekman juniper survive in three localities. The situation in the Dominican Republic is not much different: it is only found in a few locations in Sierra de Bahoruco. The Ekman juniper is classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

Each year, largescale reforestation efforts are undertaken by a community organisation, the Organisation des Paysans pour le Développement de l'Unité II de la Forêt des Pins (OPDFM), the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural – MARNDR (Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development) and an NGO, HELVETAS Haiti. However, these efforts have not been able to help the dwindling Ekman juniper population.

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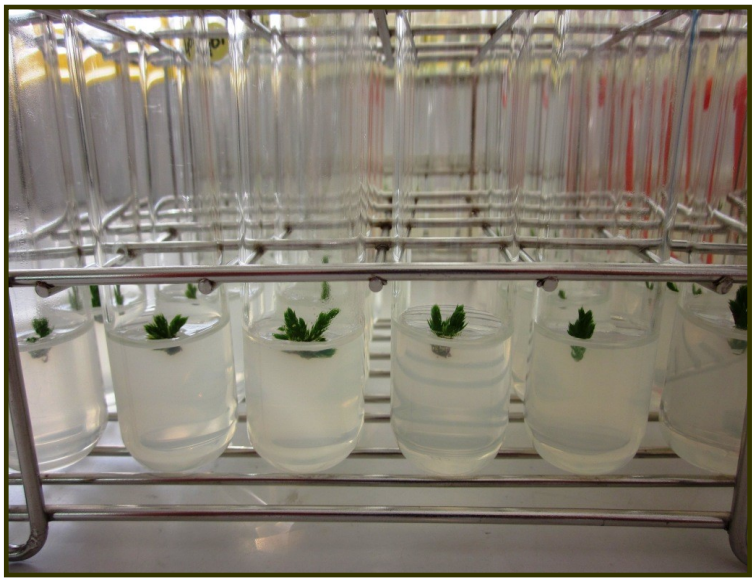
Project objectives

With support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), Arche au Plantes/the Conservatoire Botanique National de Brest (CBNB) set out not only to save the Ekman juniper, but also to develop a better understanding of the flora of the Forêt de Pins and its value through ethnobotanical surveys, and to create an herbarium and an endemic plant garden.

In vitro culture of the Ekman juniper

In response the Ekman juniper's seeming inability to be productive and reproduce in the wild, it was decided to try reproduction through *in vitro* culture in partnership with Vegenov, a biological research institute based in Saint-Pol-de-Léon, France. Vegenov and CBNB experimented with the disinfection and sterilisation of different species of junipers and conifers that are genetically close to the Ekman juniper. CBNB developed a protocol for the collection, packaging and transportation of the plant material in order to ensure that fresh material reached the laboratory.



In vitro Ekman juniper plants. *©C. Gautier*

Several cuttings were collected during field expeditions in 2014 and 2015, with the authorisation of the MARNDR, and then transported to the Vegenov laboratory in Saint-Pol-de-Léon. In all, four different clones were cultured.

Today, about a hundred in vitro plants are at Vegenov. The next stage is to root and adapt the plants to ex vitro conditions. The project partners hope to be able to repatriate this iconic species to Haiti in the coming years.

Other elements of the project

In order to have a better understanding of the flora of the Forêt des Pins, more than 150 herbarium specimens were collected from the protected area. These will enrich the Ekman Herbarium of the Faculty of Agronomy of the State University of Port- au-Prince. Ethnobotanical surveys have identified more than one hundred medicinal plants used by local communities and the creation of a garden of native plants found in the broadleaf forest will help raise public awareness of the need to conserve the biodiversity of these unique environments.

This ambitious project supported by the CEPF through September 2015 has helped to highlight the rich flora of the Forêt des Pins, but also threats to endemic species. We hope that these actions will continue in the future and will be supported by new partners.

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About CANARI

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a non-profit organisation registered in Saint Lucia, St. Croix and Trinidad and Tobago, with its main office in Port of Spain, Trinidad. It has 501(c) (3) status in the United States and charitable status in Trinidad and Tobago.

Our mission is promoting and facilitating equitable participation and effective collaboration in the management of natural resources critical to development in the Caribbean islands, so that people will have a better quality of life and natural resources will be conserved, through action learning and research, capacity building and fostering partnerships.

CANARI's geographic focus is the islands of the Caribbean but its research findings are often relevant and disseminated to the wider region. Our programmes focus on research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, capacity building and fostering regional partnerships.

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