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The Seychelles magpie robin *Copsychus sechellarum*: ecology and conservation of an endangered species

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Abstract

In 1977–1978 some 40 Seychelles magpie robins *Copsychus sechellarum*, the entire world population, survived on Frigate island. These lived in 12 territorial groups of up to six individuals. Their range on Frigate was limited by the amount of feeding habitat, specifically bare earth and leaf litter which occurred under mature shady woodland and in cultivated vegetable gardens. Two attempts were made to reintroduce the species to Aride Island in 1978 and 1979. These were unsuccessful and the translocations had to be abandoned when a new threat impinged on the parent population of Frigate in 1980. By 1981 numbers there had declined to 18, with virtually no recruitment, and an increase in the feral cat population was implicated. A successful cat eradication programme by trapping and poisoning was carried out in 1981–1982. By 1983–1984 the population showed a recovery with recruitment

again healthy, although the abandonment of agriculture on FrÃ©gate between 1979 and 1983 had caused a reduction in the amount of feeding habitat and in the carrying capacity of the island to around 25 individuals in eight territorial groups. A range of management options is discussed.



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