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**Project Rufus:**

***In situ* conservation of the *Pteropus rufus* fruit bat in the Sainte Luce littoral forest, southeast Madagascar**



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**SEED Madagascar**

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## **Executive Summary:**

Project Rufus is an *in situ* *Pteropus rufus* (Madagascan Flying Fox) conservation project, which aims to enhance the long-term survival of the species through collaborative research and local conservation awareness-raising in Sainte Luce, southeast Madagascar. The project builds the capacity of the local community to implement a community enforced protection area (Exclusion Zone), increasing *P. rufus* population numbers, as well as ecotourism opportunities and sustainable conservation funding.

## **Target beneficiaries:**

Project Rufus targets the four local communities in the Mahatalaky Rural Commune using the S6 forest fragment, one of three community use forest fragments in Sainte Luce. The S6 forest fragment is the site of the *P. rufus* roost and consequently the Exclusion Zone, which prohibits logging and the hunting of *P. rufus*. The loss of access to approximately 44 ha of a 141 ha forest is recuperated through a sustainable source of ecotourism income provided by the Exclusion Zone. Through community and stakeholder meetings a community management plan was agreed, splitting the management of the S6 forest fragment, Exclusion Zone and the sustainable ecotourism income equally between these four communities.

Local conservation awareness-raising targets the community of Sainte Luce. The younger population are presented with conservation based educational topics through a local conservation club, Club Atsatasaky, whilst the wider population are educated through events such as the World Environment Day celebration. Education posters have been distributed to four schools in the four target communities across the Rural Mahatalaky Commune.

## **Objectives:**

The three main objectives of Project Rufus:

1. Build local, national and international knowledge and capacity to ensure sustainable protection for *P. rufus* and its habitat.
2. Increase population numbers of *P. rufus* by safeguarding and sustainably managing its habitats.
3. Generate sustainable income through eco-tourism for ongoing *P. rufus* conservation.

## **Activities:**

- Community surveys on *P. rufus* hunting and consumption
- Six community meetings with four local communities and four stakeholder meetings
- Establishment of a patrolled and community enforced *P. rufus* protection zone; Exclusion Zone rules written into local customary law
- Construction of an elevated, camouflaged bat roost viewing platform
- Financial training for the Miaro committee
- Planting of 100 fig and guava trees
- *In situ* research, involving GPS tracking, dietary analysis, and biannual population census
- Training and capacity building of local guides in monitoring and habitat analysis of *P. rufus*
- Educating the community about *P. rufus* and the importance of conserving its habitat through World Environment Day celebrations, and weekly environmental education sessions