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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Le Pouce Mountain Screwpine

The **Le Pouce Mountain Screwpine**, *Pandanus pseudomontanus*, is not currently listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™; however, its conservation status has been potentially assessed as ‘Critically Endangered’. It is unique to the island of Mauritius and, since it is known only from two male plants in the Le Pouce Mountain Nature Reserve, it faces an extremely high risk of extinction.

The Screwpine’s habitat is at the edge of a small patch of wet forest surviving on the mountain’s flank. This forest was largely destroyed in the 19th century (Charles Darwin made reference to this deforestation in his diary during his stop in Mauritius). Rats, an invasive alien in Mauritius, are known to destroy the seeds of certain Screwpine species and may have contributed to the decline of the plant.

With no female plant known, the only chance for the survival of this species could be through cloning and sex change attempts (which have been successful with another unique Mauritian plant). This will require close collaboration with adequately equipped and staffed foreign institutions, and should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

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