

How our island overcame an environmental crisis through solidarity

On Thursday 6 August 2020, oil started leaking from the MV Wakashio, a Japanese bulk carrier that ran aground near the reefs at Pointe d'Esny, in the South-East lagoon of Mauritius, affecting the fauna and the flora of the region.

Solidarity as a way forward

A wave of solidarity quickly took over Mauritius: locals came together from all corners of the island to help. Groups of volunteers formed to build barriers out of nylon mesh, hair, straw and plastic bottles, working day and night to get booms as fast as possible to the Mahebourg region. Our artisans at Beachcomber Hotels, also participated in making floating booms from sugarcane straw. Hair salons started giving out free haircuts to encourage people to donate their hair for a good cause; food and clothes were collected for the families of the fishermen whose jobs were suddenly threatened by the oil spill.

310km of intact coastline

The fuel in the boat's tanks was managed to be pumped by the authorities with the assistance and expertise of France, limiting the damage caused to the lagoon, coastline and ecosystem. Only 880 out of the 4,180 tonnes of oil carried by the MV Wakashio leaked from the ship, and 460 tonnes were recovered from the sea. The rest was pumped from the ship's tanks before it was split in two.

Following the prompt efforts of everyone – the authorities and the public – only 10-12km of coastline was affected by the oil spill. The main beaches and the Blue Bay Marine Park have not been impacted. The remaining 310km of coastline remains intact to the great relief of the authorities, inhabitants, ecologists, environmentalists and tourism operators.

Fauna and flora conservation missions

As for the flora and fauna of the South-East region, including Ile aux Aigrettes, home of endangered birds and geckos, and Ile de la Passe, sanctuary of some threatened reptiles, local conservationists hurriedly set up rescue missions and called for volunteers to help take part in conservation activities.

Three globally threatened reptile species found on islets of the South East coast of Mauritius, were thus moved by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) to mainland Mauritius, and later airlifted to Jersey Zoo. Rare plants, baby tortoises, bats and endemic birds were also moved from Ile aux Aigrettes and the other islets so they could be placed under specialist care, for their conservation.

These missions all proved to be successful, and Ile aux Aigrettes was reopened to the public on 07 December.

Beachcomber's commitments to the environment

At Beachcomber, we are committed to achieving best sustainability practices and behave responsibly to further protect the environment of our beloved island.

This is why we have endemic plants on our grounds, to reduce irrigation needs. Planting of endemic trees in our gardens is also encouraged as part of specific events. We also have our own

beehives at Royal Palm, with home-made produced honey served to our Guests. This initiative will be further extended to other hotels of the group as well.

As a commitment to reduce food wastage, two of our hotels are currently engaged in FoodWise project with carefully selected food left over from our buffets, donated to nearby communities. We plan on implementing this project in our other hotels as well.

In fact, all of these measures form part of our 52 commitments towards the environment; and we look forward to welcoming you soon so you can witness and be part of them! In the meantime, you can read more about the 52 commitments here: <https://bit.ly/3qKGmK4>

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ABOUT BEACHCOMBER

Beachcomber Resorts & Hotels is the pioneer and long-standing leader of the Mauritian tourism industry. Since the creation of Park Hotel in 1952, a collection of eight resorts have emerged over the years, including the mythical Royal Palm Beachcomber Luxury Mauritius in 1985, which is widely recognised as the industry reference for luxury holidays on the island. The collection of eight resorts offers a choice of accommodation options ranging from rooms and apartments to suites and villas. Each hotel is imbued with its own history and character, embodying an image of discrete luxury.

Corporate Social Responsibility – Fondation Espoir Développement Beachcomber

Fondation Espoir Développement Beachcomber (FED) was established in 1999. Its three main social inclusion programmes are:

1) Projet Employabilité Jeunes

This programme offers hospitality training to young school drop-outs.

2) Beautiful Local Hands

This project provides assistance and support to local craft producers.

3) Community projects

FED has a decentralised structure with regional committees that implement projects reflecting local needs.

EarthCheck Certification

Sustainable development and environmental protection are tangible issues for the Group, which has implemented energy-saving and renewable energy-friendly practices, among others. All Beachcomber hotels have achieved the EarthCheck Benchmarked Silver status for their ongoing commitment to responsible environmental practices.

