

## Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust



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|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project</b>    | <b>Lake Alaotra conservation work</b>              |
| <b>Location</b>   | Alaotra, Madagascar                                |
| <b>Dates</b>      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> July – 18 <sup>th</sup> July, 2027 |
| <b>Group size</b> | 8                                                  |

### Aim and context of the project

Established by author and conservationist Gerald Durrell in 1959, Durrell's aim is for more diverse, beautiful and resilient natural landscapes in which species can thrive, and people can enjoy a deeper connection with nature.

Durrell have been working with communities across their sites in Madagascar for the last four decades, enhancing the wellbeing of nature-dependent households to support resilient and sustainable livelihoods alongside biodiversity conservation. To achieve this, Durrell work with local communities and partners to rebuild damaged ecosystems through reforestation and the removal of invasive plants and animals, restoring key species and ecological functions, thereby creating more diverse and resilient landscapes for both wildlife and people.

The volunteer opportunity will enable volunteers to contribute directly to conservation livelihood efforts in Madagascar, while introducing volunteers to the impact that Durrell's JOA-funded work has had in one of the world's poorest countries.

### Project details

Lake Alaotra is Madagascar's most important rice producing region and inland fishery, producing 300,000 tonnes of rice per year, around 10% of Madagascar's annual yield. It is also a vitally important habitat for wildlife found nowhere else on earth including the Critically Endangered, locally endemic Alaotran gentle lemur and the Endangered Meller's duck. The hills surrounding the lake were forested but have mostly been cleared to provide charcoal and farmland, causing severe erosion (lavaka gullies) and lake siltation. Poor management, and traditional monoculture cultivation of rice have gradually reduced annual productivity, resulting in more land being burnt each year for agriculture to maintain livelihoods with devastating impacts on biodiversity. Weak and inconsistent fishery management, as well as reliance on fisheries in times of financial hardship and shocks, has resulted in overfishing, which now constitutes a considerable threat to food and financial security in the region.

The volunteer programme will start in Madagascar's capital city, Antananarivo, at the headquarters of Durrell Madagascar. Here, volunteers will receive a comprehensive introduction to Durrell's work and a cultural orientation to life in Madagascar. Volunteers will then travel to Alaotra, in eastern Madagascar, where the volunteer work will take place.

**Responsibilities/activities:** Across six days, volunteers will work alongside local community members to support conservation activities to improve the quality of Lake Alaotra and the surrounding environment, directly improving the habitat of threatened species, and seeing firsthand how conservation livelihoods projects work to support local communities. Exact activities will be determined closer to the time, depending on need and weather conditions, but tasks may include the removal of invasive plants, clearing of canals, hoeing and clearing of reforestation areas, seedling nursery work, and establishing firebreaks around reforested areas.

**Accommodation:** The volunteer team will stay in basic living arrangements with shared facilities. More information on accommodation will be confirmed in due course.