

Island Conservation Society - Aride Island

Poaching activity on Aride Island Nature Reserve continues to threaten key species

Poaching has been a problem on Aride Island since it was given the status of Special Reserve in 1979 and this year has been no exception.

Contributed by Estella Snowden from ICS & MAECC

Aride is home to nine different species of breeding seabirds including the world's largest population of Lesser Noddy (*Anous tenuirostris*) and Tropical Shearwater (*Puffinus bailloni*). Aride's Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) colonies are the only ones known to use forested areas for their nesting grounds.

Poachers have been coming to the island to steal eggs from Sooty Terns to sell for a profit. This has had severe impacts for Aride's colonies as their breeding is seasonal and therefore their opportunity to reproduce is very limited.

More recently however, poachers have been targeting Aride's Tropical and Wedge-tailed shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*) populations. The poachers come late in the evening to rip these ground nesting birds from their burrows and kill them for meat, including vulnerable chicks. They leave bags soaked in blood and empty water bottles in their wake.

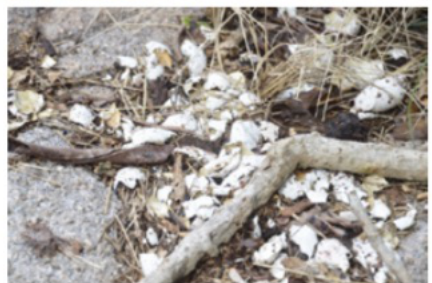
This year there have been at least ten poaching events on the island. A database is being used to track incidents, targeted locations, and areas where poachers are gaining access to the reserve. Island Conservation Society has been working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change (MAECC) and the Seychelles Coast Guard to develop a plan to target poaching activity both on the island and in the surrounding 1-kilometre Marine Protected Area.

The regulations in place which forbids such acts include:

• **Regulation 4 (1) and (2) of the Wild Birds Protection Regulations 1966 states that;**

No person shall shoot, kill or take, or purchase, sell or exhibit for sale, or export, any bird declared to be protected under regulation 3 (of the Wild Birds Protection Regulations 1966).

ICS in collaboration with MAECC and the Seychelles Coast Guard aim to prosecute any individuals in violation of these regulations. Anyone with information pertaining to poaching or the illegal sale of seabirds is encouraged to contact the ICS Head Office at 4 375 354.



Smashed Sooty Tern Eggs found near the colony: poachers destroy eggs to encourage birds to re-lay and then return to steal freshly laid eggs and the birds chances at reproduction. (Photo credit: Estella Snowden)



Water bottles and trash left behind by poachers. (Photo credit: Megan O'Brien)