

Save our Seychelles Sheath-tailed bat day on Silhouette

20-June-2016

The Island Conservation Society Silhouette team recently arranged an educational day out for the Wildlife Club of Anse Royale, Mahé.

This follows a display organised by Island Conservation Society(ICS) on Silhouette during the 2016 *Carnaval International de Victoria* to promote awareness of the Sheath-tailed bat(*Coleuraseychellensis*).

Silhouette Island hosts one of the last populations of this critically endangered bat. It is one of the most endangered animals in the world with fewer than 100 believed to exist. It was probably common throughout the granitic islands in the past, but it has declined drastically and is now extinct on most islands. Silhouette hosts one of the last viable populations and one of the last chances to secure the survival of the species.

In total, 14 enthusiastic children ranging in age from 7 to 17 years, together with six teachers and parents joined the event. These numbers show us that the youth are keen to learn more about this critically endangered species and that the work ICS is doing to protect the species is not going unnoticed by the younger generation. Therefore, we have hope that in the near future some of the youths will be joining us in the fight to ensure the continued survival of the species.

The aim of the visit to Silhouette was to give the children a more detailed explanation of the work ICS does and in particular what ICS is doing to protect the bats. A presentation and short documentary was shown to the children with pictures of how the work is being done, the equipment we use and so on. The presentation was very interactive with the children asking many questions about the bats.

Afterwards, a walk in the new Silhouette Native Plant Trail was organised to show where the bats feed and live. This activity was particularly welcomed by the members of the club, though it was a hot Saturday morning, which shows us again how motivated the club is to ensure that knowledge is passed on about the survival of the species. Throughout the walk many questions were being thrown our way, such as;

- How many babies do one bat give birth to?
- Do they fight with the fruit bats?
- Why don't they fly out during the day also like the other big bats?

The answers are that each bat has one young at a time, they do not fight fruit bats as they do not compete for food or territory and they hunt at night because they rely on sonar rather than sight to locate their prey.

The visit was very fruitful, whereby kids learned new ways to help protect the species, how to educate their family and friends on the importance of the species and also the

importance of protecting the environment for the survival of all the Seychelles endemic species.

To see youngsters, teenagers, and adults so enthusiastic and interested about protecting one of Seychelles' most threatened species is very encouraging to us. It proves that by educating people and sharing our knowledge, the chances of survival of the Sheath-tailed bats surviving in Seychelles still exist.

Contributed by Benny Moncherry



Members of the wildlife club with their teachers and parents during the walk in the new Silhouette Native Plant Trail

