

Island Conservation Society continues to do their best in regards to Seychelles' biodiversity conservation

Compiled by R. Nicette

Island Conservation Society promotes the conservation and restoration of island ecosystems of Seychelles, the sustainable development of islands, and awareness of their vulnerability and vital importance to the planet's biodiversity. Founded in 2001, ICS runs conservation centers on five islands across Seychelles, with more planned for the future when funding permits.

"There is so much we do not know, have not seen, or do not understand about the environment of Seychelles. Working and living on the remote islands of Seychelles has taught our team to be grateful to nature and that saving our biodiversity is key to this. Every new discovery, every new understanding of a marine species, such as the bonefish and the Giant Trevally on Alphonse, reminds us that our projects to learn more about the world around us are worth it. Our work entails saving many of the critically endangered species, several of which have disappeared in the inner islands of Seychelles. We do this to ensure that the next generations have data on all these species which can help to en-



Bijoutier Island (Credit to ICS)

sure their protection in many more years to come. Our wish is that Seychellois would find joy in saving what is ours - the way our team does," said Sharon Meriton-Jean PR & Communication Officer at ICS.

ICS also states that Biodiversity Day is a reminder of the importance of protecting our planet and preserving its natural wonders for future generations. One of the highlights of their work is Silhouette Island's unique ecosystem and biodiversity. From critically endangered, restricted flora species such as *Trilepisium gymnanthrum*, (*Bouskia* in Creole), with only 5 known

mature individuals in the world, and *Impatiens gordonii*, (*Belzamin sovaz* in Creole), found in the ravine forest on Silhouette to the rarest bat in the world, the Seychelles sheath-tailed bat, with less than a 100 individuals left in the world. This high level of endemism is a testament to the biological diversity of the region and highlights the importance of preserving this special place for future generations to enjoy and learn from. The ICS team salutes the conservation team and all the partners who are working tirelessly to protect these rare species and their surrounding habitats.



Red Footed Booby (Credit to ICS)

Unlike usual years, this year ICS was not able to hold specific activities to celebrate biodiversity day, as the teams are all on outer islands working hard with rare endemic species, such as monitoring the Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) on Farquhar, at Ile du Sud, where a large colony resides. In April, the ICS team marked 120 nests to monitor the breeding success of this inquisitive seabird. The brooding parents take turns to stay in the nest and protect the egg or chick, scaring off anything threatening their progeny! About a month later, the team will go back to check the nests and measure the chicks' wings in order to extrapolate their fledging date.



The team monitoring Red Footed Booby (Credit to ICS)

The Island Conservation Society (ICS) is also happy to announce their arrival on Astove and Cosmoledo Atoll, located within the Aldabra Group, over 1000km southwest of Mahé. Both Astove and Cosmoledo are raised coral atolls and like Aldabra host exceptional biodiversity. The team's objectives are to undertake habitat assessments and remove invasive alien species (IAS) such as cats and vegetation, in efforts to reintroduce land bird species, undertake seabird censuses, and start long-term monitoring of native and indigenous plants and animals. This marks the beginning of a very lengthy mission and while it may take some time before the centers are fully operational, it is a historic step in the right direction for conservation.