

Wetlands ecosystems

A ghosted marshland of Silhouette Island



Silhouette Island, with peaks so high that provokes but shame most men, has deterred men from settling on the island to date. Praised for its natural beauty and rich biodiversity and ecological value, its wetlands are not always of interest unless you really are a child of nature.

Contributed by ICS' Silhouette Conservation Team

The young emerging wetland at La Passe just by La Belle Tortue Lodge, right at the foot of Mont Poules Marons, is not a popular destination for visitors and most of the time ghosted by hikers going towards the south of the island.

It is, however, fortunately, filled with details that once seen that way, one can never un-see such beauty it possesses. It is centred by two beautifully-looking palm islands barricaded by fouzer lanmar (*Acrostichum aurem*), coconut trees and mangroves. Nesting grey herons, often chasing moorhens and their chicks, giant mangrove crabs ruling amongst the hermit and blue crabs, a carpet of mangrove whelks, eels, fish and other birds flying overhead are indicators of a healthy wetland ecosystem.

The marshland's water movement, dependent on tides and rain, is minimal. This might have been caused by past minor human interferences, mainly the construction of buildings nearby and the bridge next to La Belle Tortue Lodge which is most of the time blocked in the plateau part of the island. Mangrove dispersal is therefore very poor, with seedlings thriving by the mother trees only, hence why the ICS Conservation team intervened immediately to re-



Aerial view of the marshland



Said and Dylis transplanting the mangrove seedling



One of the volunteers, Lynden, digging a hole for the seedling



Sunset behind Mont Pot à Eau



Aerial view of Grey heron's nest

solve the issue. The team is now dispersing mangrove seedlings on the borders where coconut trees dominate, to stabilise and help create new habitats and resources for the different species; that would otherwise occur naturally.

Another observation is the increasing amount of trash in the marsh. With very limited activity in the area, it is evident that

trash is carried inside the marsh by tides. The Conservation team does regular monitoring of the marsh and removes trash so as to reduce its negative impact on this fragile ecosystem.

Marine pollution is a global issue which can decimate coastal and marine environments such as the ones on Silhouette Island. During regular coastal patrols conducted by the Conservation

team on average around 10 kg of trash is collected weekly. Thus the presence of ICS on Silhouette is key to addressing the former threat on the surrounding marine environments and the variety of species that co-exist within them.

After a hard day's work, we usually immerse ourselves in the beauty of the sun setting behind Mont Pot à Eau. The

still water mirrors the majestic beauty of the sunset standing tall in the pastel painted sky. We sit comfortably reflecting on the work done during the day and how important it is to maintain a lifestyle in support of nature conservation.

Photo credits: Dillys Pouponeau, Said Harryba and Hamed Ghislain.