

Interesting antics of noddies observed on Aride Island

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The southeast monsoon is the main breeding season of the seabirds in Seychelles, and as usual on Aride this time of year the island is saturated with noisy noddies and Sooty Terns all protecting their eggs and chicks. A hat is needed to protect from ‘Aride snow’ and the occasional small fish falling from above and it is always entertaining to watch the birds and lizards going about their daily lives and their sometimes strange and amusing behaviour.

A few of the interesting occurrences that have happened so far this year are with the noddies. Occasionally a Lesser Noddy chick falls from its nest, but once it is on the ground unfortunately it is abandoned by its parents and rarely survives. While walking on the paths, the workers of the island were getting attacked by an aggressive Lesser Noddy, which is unusual as they are normally very placid. It became apparent that the parents were protecting a fallen chick. Over the last two weeks they have been seen sleeping with and feeding the chick on the ground, taking it under their wings and attacking anything which comes near.

The Brown Noddies always make their nests on the ground, rocks or any flat place, including this year on our bank of batteries for the solar power. A lost chick was brought to a volunteer worker, and not knowing what else to do with it, she tried to find the nest which it had wandered from or get a parent with a failed nest to adopt it. After several adults rejected it, a parent with a chick already under one wing, lifted its other wing and

the chick happily went under. This is surprising behaviour as they never have more than one chick so it may be hard for the parents to feed them both. However, after two weeks both chicks seem to be growing well and the parent is still sitting with one under each wing.

Migla Daugnoraitė, a volunteer on Aride, decided to try to rescue a few fallen Lesser Noddy chicks, something which has not been attempted here previously. Every day when we walk the paths in the forest several small fish can be found dropped by the birds - not something you expect to find in a forest. These are collected, cleaned and fed to her adopted chicks. They are very fussy on what they eat and will not take fish which has been cut up from the freezer. The chicks are easily taking the fish, have accepted Migla as their mum and are growing well. It will be interesting to see if they manage to fledge.



By Melinda Curran and Migla Daugnoraitė

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