

Gran Kaz Casino sponsors bird study

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Caption: Ms Mortimer accepts the cheque from Ms Dupres

Gran Kaz Casino has donated R100,000 to the Alphonse Foundation which will be used to study the Red Footed Booby (*Fou Bet*), a big bird that flocked in thousands on an island in the Alphonse group of atolls last year.

Satellite transmitters will be put on them to track their movements.

The large flat red footed seabird has mostly white plumages with black or brown flight feathers.

Lying in the south west of Mahé, the Alphonse group of atolls comprise the islands of Alphonse, St François and Bijoutier.

The cheque was presented by Meggy Dupres, corporate operations manager of Gran Kaz, to Jeanne Mortimer, board member of Alphonse Foundation.

The presentation took place yesterday afternoon at the Gran Kaz Casino on Francis Rachel Street in the presence of the casino's chief executive C. J. Laurent and other staff.

"Last year while our conservation team were camping out on St François, a swarm of boobies just flew in. It was between one hundred thousand to half a million of them and nobody was expecting that and so we want to learn more about them," said Ms Mortimer.

"We know that there is a population of these birds breeding in their tens of thousands on some other Seychelles islands such as Aldabra, Cosmoledo, Farquhar and also in some other French islands like Tremolin and Europa where they occur in small numbers but with this huge group to come in, makes you wonder what is going on with this population in the region," she added.

CEO Laurent congratulated the Alphonse Foundation for doing a good job in conservation, saying it's not easy to get funds, especially for eco-tourism projects.

"It's very, very difficult and it's our pleasure at Gran Kaz to donate something, at least, to help the Foundation with its efforts because it is doing an amazing job," said Mr Laurent.

Thanking Gran Kaz for the donation, Ms Mortimer said: "It's wonderful that Gran Kaz is interested in the environment of the outer islands and it is definitely something which is worthwhile. Thank you."

The Alphonse Foundation is an association put together to manage the environment on Alphonse, St François and Bijoutier islands. It comprises representatives from the Islands Development Company, Island Conservation Society, the Alphonse Island Resort and representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change.