

# Celebrating The Wildlife Trusts' global conservation impact in Seychelles

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The Wildlife Trusts is the grass roots conservation movement in the UK. We also have a legacy of directly saving unique species as far away as the southern hemisphere over the last nearly half century. This global conservation impact is celebrated with the publication of a new book telling the story of 40 years transforming the Seychelles' island of Aride, purchased by The Wildlife Trusts in 1973 with the generous support of chocolate family scion and conservation champion Christopher Cadbury.

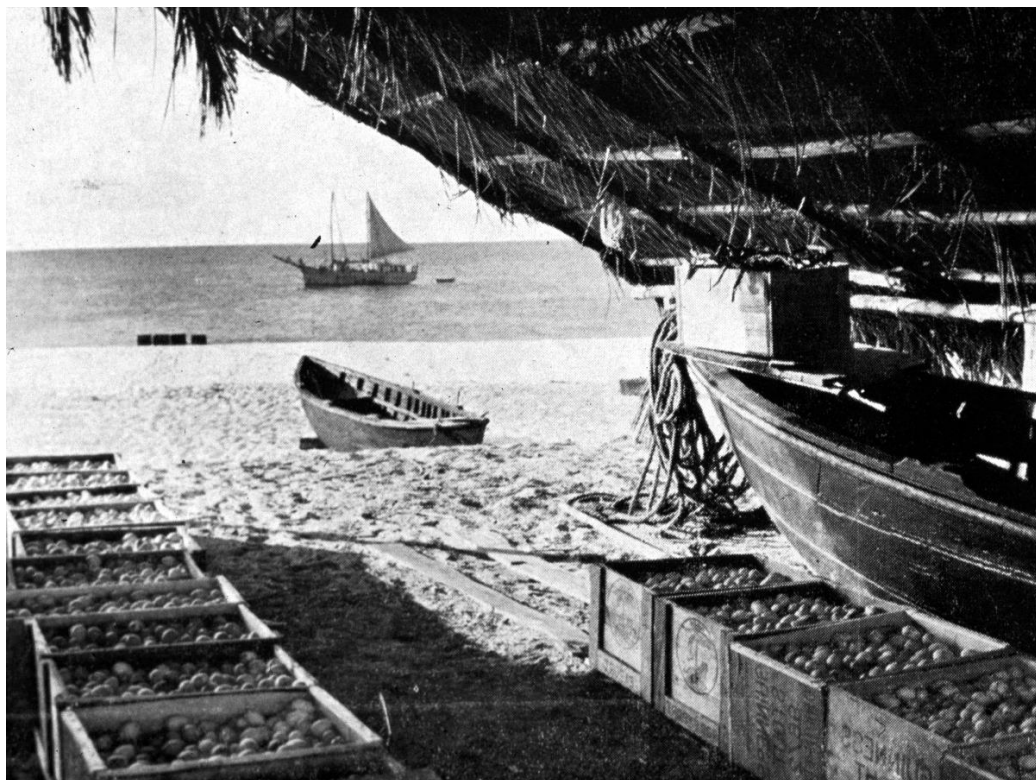


The Seychelles islands, just south of the equator in the western Indian Ocean, conjure up images of the exotic tropics, honeymooning royalty such Prince William and Kate, and remote wildlife jewels. The wildlife of Seychelles is extraordinary. Today, Seychelles is one of the world's conservation success stories. The Wildlife Trusts and UK conservationists played a pivotal role in this, saving a number of the world's rarest land bird species from extinction.

Aride Island is now the best example of native ecology in Seychelles through painstaking work led by Stoke-born Briton Adrian Skerrett, who for many years was the volunteer representative of The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) in the country. The native forests have been restored, with the Wright's Gardenia tree found only on Aride, and now host vital populations of Seychelles Magpie Robin and Seychelles Fody – both once amongst the most threatened land birds in the world. Eggs of the Sooty Tern colony were formerly harvested from the island. Today, all wildlife is completely protected and Aride is one of the most important seabird nature reserves in the Indian Ocean.

More recently, there has been restoration of the freshwater marsh and establishment of a new population of the restricted range Seychelles Black Mud Terrapin (translocated to the island by helicopter no less). The island also has a solar power system breaking new ground in state-of-the-art technology through the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), British High Commission, Australian High Commission, and Japanese multi-national Sharp Corporation.

Adrian Skerrett co-edits this new book “Aride Island – Tread Lightly” with RSWT stalwart Tim Sands (author of the Wildlife Trusts' landmark history tome “Wildlife in Trust”). The book was launched to coincide with the Queen's 90th birthday at the British High Commission in the hills above Victoria, one of the world's smallest capital cities, on the 16th June.



The book tells the intertwined conservation stories and social history of Aride Island. Early visitors to the island included artist and Victorian traveller Marianne North – her painting of the island is on display at the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, London. Aride has transformed from a 19th Century leper colony and plantation settlement to one of the world's most important tropical island nature reserves in the 21st Century.

“Conservation has blossomed through the hard work and opportunities made possible by The Wildlife Trusts in the UK” explained Island Conservation Society chairman Adrian Skerrett.

Over 40 people who have contributed to the success story of Aride give a flavour of island life and conservation projects across four decades. Information boxes scattered across the text cover every aspect of the island's unique flora and fauna. Current island manager, Seychellois native Uzice Samedi, sets out a vision for the future in the concluding chapter.

The Wildlife Trusts handed over to local charity the Island Conservation Society in 2001 but continues to have a supporting role through Tim Sands and other Wildlife Trusts champions.

“Aride Island – Tread Lightly” will be available soon from specialist publishers [www.boco.org.uk](http://www.boco.org.uk).

Discover more about the Island Conservation Society, Seychelles, at [www.islandconservationseychelles.com](http://www.islandconservationseychelles.com) and about Aride Island at [www.arideisland.com](http://www.arideisland.com).

Adam Moolna is part of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's team in northern England and was responsible for Aride Island during 2012-13 whilst running the Island Conservation Society.