

# Conservation

## Desroches tortoises receive a new sanctuary

The captive Aldabra Giant Tortoises of Desroches have a new 5\* sanctuary of their own to go along with the recently opened 5\* Four Seasons Resort, constructed with a partnership of Desroches Island Development Limited (DIDL) and Islands Development Company (IDC), advised by Island Conservation Society (ICS).



Baby tortoise

The tortoise breeding programme was initiated by ICS in 2010 after an additional 46 tortoises were brought from Silhouette, supplementing the 9 which had previously been introduced from Aldabra. The new sanctuary replaces the old breeding pen which housed a selection of fine breeding specimens which have been steadily populating Desroches since 2011, managed under ICS. Although the old enclosure proved success-

ful, the vegetation was not ideal for tortoises, solely composed of coconut palms. This uniform habitat is not ideal for tortoises as it does not produce edible fruit or leaves and falling coconuts can break their shells.

The new pen is a spacious 2ha, situated within a patch of semi-mature rehabilitated broadleaf woodland which provides significantly more shade and food, including fruit of Bwatorti (*Morinda citrifolia*) and Bwakasan

(*Guetarda speciosa*). Visitors are welcome to explore the 400 metre native tree trail with 15 information points and two cabanas containing informative panels and a washroom.

Vegetation rehabilitation is ongoing on the Island and within the pen. The work is being carried out by IDC and ICS, an activity which was mobilised and funded by the GOS- UNDP-GEF Outer Islands Project (OIP). The vegetation management specific

to the tortoises included the removal of exotic plants and thinning of coconut palms. Irrigation points ensure there is lush opportunities for grazing when in the dry periods and a large pool provides plenty of water for drinking and bathing.

Located within the sanctuary is the new juvenile tortoise pen where hatchlings and adolescent tortoise are kept for safety until they are large enough to be released into the wild (around



Native Tree Trail



Toilet

15kg). Here visitors can join ICS for tortoise feeding and learn all about the conservation and research which is carried out on the island.

Through careful monitoring of nests and nurturing hatchlings in predator proof enclosures, ICS has been able to increase the population to over 160 individuals. As the population increases, tortoises from Desroches can be used to populate other islands and enhance genetic diversity of

the species.

The Conservation Management plan of Desroches also supported by ICS partners and the GOS- UNDP-GEF Outer Islands Project facilitates the innovation behind these activities and confirms that having a clear targeted conservation plan gets things done when approached with supportive partners.

**Mathew Morgan**  
ICS Conservation Officer

**26 JANUARY**



**INDIA**

**HAPPY REBUBLIC DAY**

**COME AND ENJOY OUR SPECIAL THALI PROMO**

VEGETRIAN THALI MENU

**400.-**



NON VEGETRIAN THALI MENU

**450.-**

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