



Silhouette Island

Green turtle rescued in the nick of time

Last Wednesday, a green turtle was discovered stranded, dehydrated and weakened on Silhouette island. She was rescued in the nick of time by rangers of the Island Conservation Society (ICS). This is a moving account of the rescue operation by the ICS.

CONTRIBUTED BY ANGELA STREET, ICS



Miracle: the green turtle on her way to the open sea.

In a tiny cove on the eastern side of the island, lies Silhouette's smallest and most inconspicuous beach,

"Anse Cimitière", part of the area known as "Ramasse Tout", famous for its exposed slabs of volcanic rock and its fierce surf. There is sand here, but only a shallow layer, making this beach extremely inhospitable to nesting sea turtles. Yet, a few still give it a try.

On 20 August, international visitors Nicolas and Karolina Leclerc reported a that a turtle was stranded, high above the cove. ICS Conservation Officer Angela Street headed out to investigate the situation, accompanied by a very enthusiastic Nico-

las. At the top of the rock-strewn hill that leads to the beach, we found an utterly exhausted Green Turtle, eyes closed, head sunk into the ground, who looked for all the world as if she was ready to join the corpses in the nearby cemetery. Her track through the Casuarina grove and scrub brush was exceptionally long and winding, and was littered with half-dug pits--this turtle had given it her all in a valiant attempt to deposit her egg clutch, but had been defeated by the unyielding terrain, and was now on her last lap.

In contrast to Hawksbills, which in Seychelles tend to be daytime nesters, green turtles nest primarily in the dead of night. This unfortunate individual had

been exposed to direct sunlight for almost seven hours and may have been on land for 16 or more hours. We began gently hydrating the turtle, to revive her. Gradually, she opened her eyes, and when at long last she lifted her head, we knew she would hang on until more support arrived.

On winged heels, ICS Conservation rangers Nigel Boniface and Jean-Claude Camille arrived on the scene, somehow mustering enough energy after spending a full day crisscrossing the island to now lead the rescue operation. The turtle's carapace was cooking, the margins around the scutes starting to splinter-- we needed to get her back to the sea, and quickly.

Spared a premature death from either poaching or natural causes, this turtle will return to Silhouette, and, by now, has likely already laid the eggs that

will contribute to the next generation of sea turtles. Our sincere thanks to the Leclerc's for their invaluable assistance with the rescue.

ICS would like to thank our partners on Silhouette for their continued support. La Briz Resort and Spa and the Island Development Company.

The turtle was too weak to walk, and too heavy to lift. Firmly grasping her front flippers, the rangers pulled her a short distance, then paused to see if she would try to walk. She could do little more than flail. Through a combination of dragging and herding, while helping her around a never-ending series of obstacles, the rangers--who between them have over 16 years of experience in turtle conservation--expertly and swiftly moved her to the beach.

We backed away. She was still so very tired, but gulped for air as we held our own breath, watching, waiting. . . Finally, as the waves lapped her face, she launched herself forward to the sound of our rousing cheers. Her head popped up once in the surf, and she was gone.



Helping hand: the roots are a big obstacle to the weakened turtle.



Rangers had to guiding her to the beach.



After almost seven years in the sun, the turtle's head is hydrated.

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