

Island Conservation Society

Vegetation makes a difference

Throughout 2018 on Aride Island Special Reserve, a team of Island Conservation Society (ICS) staff were lucky to be part of a training experience focused on vegetation management.

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The objective was to increase the survival of seabirds through improved knowledge of vegetation in protected areas and simultaneously support the Seychelles Magpie Robin population by understanding more about habitat utilisation.

Thanks to the GOS- UNDP-GEF Outer Islands Project ten participants were part of this unique and critical training experience. Over the year, various trainings were executed and techniques learned were employed to improve the islands core wildlife. This fitted in perfectly with ICS objectives and the island's vegetation management plan. Several courses were undertaken in the field and trainees got firsthand experience of all of Aride's flora, enabling participants to collect and classify specimens to species level. At the end of the course they were competent in identifying most common flora on the island. Other trainings involved identification and efficient removal of invasive species to make it suitable for utilization by the critically endangered Seychelles Magpie Robin population and other species.

Vegetation management of na-



Labelling of trees



Seabird entangled with damaging vegetation

tive species like *Pisonia grandis*, was also a key component of the trainings. Crucial areas of *Pisonia* management were identified by participants, particularly in seabird breeding areas, where *Pisonia* has been seen to cause massacres of chicks in Sooty and Roseate colonies, both these species have utilized the newly open areas this year, thus highlighting the enormous success of this specific vegetation removal.

Health and Safety was also an important part of the training as participants used dangerous equipment during invasive removal and when managing native flora. The last part of the training involved implementation of a nursery and replanting ideal species in impoverished areas of the island, in an effort to nourish the soil to increase invertebrate communities. Invertebrates are a key component in the diet of the endangered Seychelles Magpie Robin, these birds reside only in quality habitat with sufficient food, by increasing food availability in other areas, this can

indirectly help increase the Seychelles Magpie Robin Population on Aride. The trainings ensured that participants learned practical skills together, which in turn will lead to improving the islands ecosystem.

Overall the training objectives were met and all believed that the knowledge obtained from the experience would contribute to improved general management of the Special Reserve and to the skills of the staff involved.



Cleared area to allow improved feeding



Staff building signage



Staff assessing vegetation