

Island Conservation Society My one-month internship on Silhouette island with ICS

As a student currently completing a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences at the University of Seychelles, it is required that I attain work-based experience as part of the University programme. With my passion for conservation, I joined the Island Conservation Society's (ICS) team on Silhouette Island for a month-long internship from mid-July.

Contributed by Maryssa Samedy,
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It was the experience of a lifetime! I would not only put into practice what I had learned at university but would now acquire new skills. The first week of work was quite exhausting as I had never worked full-time in conservation, but as the second week rolled in, the morning routines and daily patrols began to feel like clockwork.

Although daily monitoring is consistent, like each sunrise is a bold, new experience, such was my experience during the daily monitoring on each day - fresh and adventurous. I quickly became agile in the regular, and vigorous hikes across the island. Each hike would be fresh new learning of our amazing endemic plants on Silhouette. I felt more than lucky to sight the sheath-tailed bats, (*Coleura seychellensis*) a critically endangered

species found only on Mahe and Silhouette as their only habitat in the world. They roost in quiet caves, that only catch glimpse of sunlight throughout the day. The experience beguiled me to fall in love with conservation even more.

I was struck at how the island community is devoted and will-



Tortoise morphological data collection



Grand Barbe trail



Tortoise morphological data collection



Old hut at Grand Barbe



Tortoise food collection

ing to protect the environment. On the journey to Grand Barbe, the hardest trail on the island, which is a 12km walk to the other side of the island, I was in wonderment to meet a couple in their 80s, Abdul Jumaye and Elvire Dubois, residing there. I was amazed that they chose to live in such isolation, secluded in the quiet life, in the company

of the wondrous flora and fauna of the surrounding forest. They still live in a wooden A-frame house, a solid remnant of the last ones of the old village that used to exist at Grand Barbe, surrounded by breadfruit trees, typical to Silhouette's history. Of course, being residents of over 30 years I had just met a treasure of stories. I sat down with them, mesmerised by stories I would never read from any book and anecdotes about how life used to be when the village existed. Of course, they would proudly account on how they can still walk, at their age for three good hours to La Passe and how they can still catch fish and octopus for their dinners.

A short and sweet month working alongside the ICS rangers, who were more than ready to teach all they could, I quickly learned how to collect and enter data and the long-term monitoring techniques that come along with it. After a month-long exposure, I can proudly say that my knowledge of flora and fauna species has deepened.

I had many highlights during this short experience but the honour of assisting in feeding a small baby Blue Pigeon (*Alectroenas pulcherrimus*), that had fallen out of her nest is one I would remember always. We named the distressed Blue Pigeon, Teroline. That was a cherishable moment.



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