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ENVIRONMENT

World Ranger Day 2022 –July 31 | 30 July 2022

'To protect nature, we must protect the rangers who defend it'

Across the globe, rangers are dedicated professionals protecting and managing key biodiversity areas. From land to the sea, rangers in Seychelles are at the forefront of conservation of our biodiversity. Established in 2001, the not-for-profit organisation, Island Conservation Society (ICS) has expanded the presence of rangers on many outer islands of Seychelles.

From the distant atoll of Farquhar to the special nature reserve of Aride, rangers have become the first line of defence against illicit activities that could have otherwise gone unnoticed. For months, they endure living far away from their loved ones without the luxuries most of us take for granted. These voids are filled only with long hours of patrols before the crack of dawn or dusk and constant monitoring and tallying.

Whenever required, rangers are also spokespersons and advocates of nature, echoing the long lists of best practices, defying changing trends and encouraging enforcement of national laws, even when it infringes on tourism activities – the bread and butter of our economy. Yet, many Seychellois men and women have chosen to dedicate their lives to this profession.

On World Rangers Day on July 31, the Island Conservation Society (ICS) honours some of its rangers– the real custodians and unsung heroes of the environment of Seychelles.

Vanessa Dufresne, Silhouette island

"It's been almost two years since I became a conservation ranger. First, I was on Aride island special nature reserve, where I learned more about the different bird species. On Silhouette island, I extended my skills into turtle monitoring and bird census. I am also actively involved in creating more awareness about conservation projects through the hotels and visiting school children and other groups. Most of all, I look forward to our yearly coral monitoring activity on Silhouette.

"Learning about benthic macro-fauna ecosystem or micro-organisms that marine life feeds on has been a real eye-opener to a new and previously unknown world to me. My love for nature has grown immensely through my career as a conservation ranger. I feel privileged to work in such a unique biodiversity hotspot, and most of all, to be part of the ICS team on Silhouette island has been an adventure. My message to all young people who want a career in conservation is gaining experience is the key, and you must never limit yourself to what you already know and like."

Steve Esther, Aride island

"I am a 36-year-old Praslinois ranger and boatman based on Aride island. My work entails weekly and monthly monitoring of different aspects of flora and fauna of the special nature reserve. Such activities have increased my knowledge about the environment and, I am sure, have also enhanced visitors' experience when I take them around for a tour of the island.

"I know the best place for good photo opportunities and have lots of information to share, especially about the white-tailed tropicbird – one of my favourite birds. I also ensure that other staff have all the supplies they need to live comfortably whilst on Aride. The most challenging part of my job is ensuring that visitors and staff of Aride arrive and leave safely. There are risks involved in this simple operation of manoeuvring a boat full of passengers, so I always have to be focused and alert. Every time I beach the boat safely, especially in challenging sea conditions I know I am doing a good job."

Ricky Adeline, Aride island

"I could have chosen to work anywhere, but Aride island is the seabird citadel of the Indian Ocean, so I was intrigued. It is also closest to Praslin, so I felt I would not be too far from civilisation. As a senior ranger of the special nature reserve, my primary role is to monitor the different species of birds and pick out any irregularities or discrepancies from decades of data collected by other conservation rangers before us.

"I am also at the forefront of the battle against illegal wildlife poaching on Aride. We advocate against such activities through educational and awareness programmes about the importance of the species that live here. We are also at the mercy of nature here on the island, but at the moment, we have a courageous team of young men and women, most of them are Seychellois. If you're into nature, Aride island is the most amazing place to work as a ranger."

Jaymee Clarisse, Silhouette island

My passion for conservation started in secondary school when I participated in various marine educational programmes. Later, I volunteered with the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) and the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA), where I acquired basic skills in diving and coral identification.

"Since I joined ICS as a conservation ranger, I have also developed a keen interest in terrestrial conservation. We are actively involved in monitoring different trails, developing plant propagation techniques in our nursery, interacting with species such as the Aldabra giant land tortoises and implementing various conservation programmes and projects. One of the tasks I enjoy the most is our regular monitoring in the forest of Silhouette, where we hike up the trail of *Jardin Maron* after sunset to monitor frogs, chameleons, snakes and other creatures that only come out at night. There is never a dull moment when you are in the mysterious forest with other conservation rangers, especially at night."

Annie Gendron, Farquhar atoll

"I have worked on three islands already, namely Aride island special nature reserve, Alphonse island and recently, I was transferred to the ICS centre on Farquhar atoll. On a day-to-day basis, I am actively monitoring different species such as sea turtles, coconut crabs and seabirds. During our regular patrol around the main Island of Farquhar, we also monitor coastal erosion and marine litter. There is always something happening on the atoll that keeps us all on our toes – it can vary from the constant clearing of invasive plants or the less tedious recording of fish catch.

"We spend a lot of time keeping data on all the activities on the different islands of the atoll and ensuring we have all the required equipment to do so. I am proud to be a conservation ranger because it has given me the chance to protect and explore the unique biodiversity of Seychelles. As a Seychellois, I am in a unique position to make sure that the younger generation also gets the chance to see and explore our beautiful country."

Contributed by ICS

About Island Conservation Society

Island Conservation Society (ICS) promotes the conservation and restoration of island ecosystems of Seychelles, the sustainable development of islands, creates awareness of their vulnerability and vital importance to the planet's biodiversity.

Founded in 2001, ICS currently runs conservation centres on five islands across Seychelles, with more planned for the future when funding permits. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.islandconservationseychelles.com> or find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Annie Gendron, conservation ranger on Farquhar atoll



Jaymee Clarisse, conservation ranger on Silhouette island



Ricky Adeline, conservation ranger on Aride special nature reserve



Steve Esther, conservation ranger on Aride special nature reserve



Vanessa Dufresne, conservation ranger on Silhouette Island

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