

## Covid-19 leads to enhanced ties between maritime academy and Aride Island | 18 September 2020



T-Rex, the Aldabra giant tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*)

As Covid-19 continues to impact many industries in Seychelles, the conservation sector has not been left unscathed. Aride Island, managed by Island Conservation Society (ICS), has struggled with the loss of funding from tourism as well as the departure of many volunteers. One positive to arise however, is the expansion of an internship programme between ICS and the Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA). When Aride lost a majority of its volunteers, SMA professor Michael Barbe responded to the call for assistance and began sending more students than in previous years. Thanks to this collaborative internship programme, Aride's scientific monitoring programmes have been able to continue.

Two of these SMA interns, Kiran Bhageerutty and Jean-Yves Lesperance, arrived in August and both are working towards an Advanced Certificate in Fishery Science and Fish Technology. Kiran enjoys photography and "anything to do with the ocean". Jean-Yves's interest in conservation comes from seeing what happens when conservation is not a priority and how an area can thrive with proper management. Some of the work Kiran and Jean-Yves have been involved in includes monitoring Aride's Seychelles Magpie Robin population, analysing invertebrate pitfall traps, patrolling the beach for nesting sea turtles, and cleaning up beach debris.

Kiran says that he has enjoyed monitoring the Seychelles Magpie Robins (*Copsychus sechellarum*) as well as rescuing seabirds from *Pisonia grandis* seeds. These seeds are very sticky and when a bird accidentally gets entangled, it cannot free itself and will die if left unassisted. This phenomenon has earned this tree the nickname bird-catcher tree. Jean-Yves has been interested in island conservation for some time and this experience has provided a

hands-on opportunity to see what it takes to work in the field. His favourite animal on the island is the Aldabra giant tortoise(*Aldabrachelys gigantea*) named T-Rex.

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Photo credits: Kiran Bhageerutty



[Jean-Yves Lesperance assisting in ringing a Seychelles Magpie Robin](#)



[Kiran Bhageerutty helping repair water stations for Seychelles Magpie Robins \(\*Copsychus sechellarum\*\)](#)



[Wright's skink \(\*Trachylepis wrightii\*\)](#)