

Marine debris recycling initiative on Desroches supports animal welfare body

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Marine debris washing ashore is a never-ending and laborious issue tackled by government, non-governmental and private sector organisations and affects all beaches across the Seychelles. Apart from the unappealing look of a littered beach, rubbish can pose serious threats to marine and terrestrial life. Sea turtles can become entangled in rubbish or ingest pieces of plastic causing them to drown, or rubbish can obstruct their nesting attempts on beaches. Likewise, seabirds and other terrestrial creatures can become trapped or entangled in rubbish and die as a result.

Since July 2016 the Island Conservation Society (ICS) team on Desroches Island has initiated a recycling programme to separate PET (polyethylene terephthalate), glass and aluminium cans from general waste produced by the inhabitants of Desroches Island and from marine debris washed ashore.

The bulk of recyclable items comes from the monthly beach cleans that are organised by ICS and joined by staff from Desroches Island Development Limited (DIDL) and Islands Development Company (IDC).

ICS receives an overwhelming response from the partners on Desroches to help with this mammoth task, sometimes with turnouts of up to 40 people.

At the end of each beach clean, staff sort through all the rubbish that has been collected and separate it into the three recycling groups mentioned above.

To increase the efforts of recycling, ICS also sorts out general waste that comes from IDC and DIDL.

After three months of collections, ICS obtained enough recycling (36 bin liners) to send back to Mahé on a freight barge. Local NGO, Sustainability 4 Seychelles (S4S), provided advice and the contacts on Mahé for the collection of the recyclable materials. ICS coordinated with a local Mahé firm, DE Recycling.

DE Recycling representative, Leroy Ernesta, explained the recycling process: “Once on Mahé DE Recycling sends the PET bottles to another local partner, where the bottles are put through a flaking machine and then sent to India to be recycled into new PET bottles or used to make other product such as sports clothing. We crush the aluminum drink cans into bales and send directly to India where they are melted to make new drink cans or other aluminum products.”

ICS is currently sourcing other local firms to recycle the glass and aluminum food cans that are also collected by the team.

From the haul ICS and partners collected 3450 PET bottles and aluminum drink cans and raised a total of R1,725. The funds raised were then sent to a local animal welfare group, the SSPCA (Seychelles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). SSPCA fights to educate people on the need to sterilise their pets. They tackle the serious problem of stray and abandoned dogs on Mahé, which are not only a possible danger to children and tourists, but also to endangered sea turtles (digging up eggs or disturbing them from laying).

Judith Strashoon, the chairman of the SSPCA and her colleague Jimmy Marie informed ICS that the funds donated will support their current project to build a Centre for Animal Welfare in Seychelles (CAWS) in Providence.

The donations will help them buy materials to construct over 100 kennels for housing strays, a hospital, operating theatre, laboratory, x-ray facility and offices.

ICS and everyone who took part are very happy with the success of their first recycling mission and urge others to help SSPCA to reach its target of R500,000 needed to finish their project.

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ICS, Desroches Island

