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Seychelles Islands Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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CEO's Message

Throughout 2022, the Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), with the steadfast support of the newly appointed Board of Trustees, has worked tirelessly to protect and advance the exceptional natural heritage of Seychelles. This year marked a pivotal moment, whereby SIF engaged in extensive stakeholder consultations that culminated in the finalisation of the Vallée de Mai Management Plan. This comprehensive document provides a strategic roadmap for future conservation efforts and ensures these actions align with the aspirations and needs of the local community. It represents a significant step forward in safeguarding these irreplaceable ecosystems for Seychelles.

None of this progress would have been possible without our staff's incredible dedication, innovation, and teamwork. Their unwavering commitment to our mission has driven impactful collaborations, creative problem-solving, and the advancement of critical conservation priorities. As we close the year, we do so with immense gratitude for their contributions, as well as a renewed determination to foster awareness and support for our natural heritage, both locally and internationally.



Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley
with signed float on Monaco
Explorations © SIF

This year also saw remarkable internationally collaborative milestones such as the London Royal Society Symposium, its follow-up event in Seychelles, and the transformative Monaco Expeditions. These initiatives brought together the passion and expertise of past, present, and future scientists, reinforcing our shared vision and charting a clear path forward. Among our critical priorities is the ambition to eradicate invasive rats and cats from Aldabra, an essential step toward ensuring the resilience of this unparalleled UNESCO Marine World Heritage Site. With the collective strength of our team, partners, and supporters, we are poised to continue building a future where Seychelles' natural heritage is recognised as an irreplaceable and invaluable source of life and inspiration for all.

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Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley
Chief Executive Officer, Seychelles Islands Foundation

2 Highlights of 2022



© State house Seychelles



Patron appoints new board of trustees

The 21st of February saw the appointment of a new Board of Trustees by the President of Seychelles and SIF's Patron, Wavel Ramkalawan. The board includes both local and internationally based individuals, whose ideals and concerns align with the conservation of wildlife and bring relevant expertise and knowledge to the management of the organisation.



© Michelle Risi



Aldabra 50th anniversary research symposia

Following several postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, the research symposium entitled, "50 years of navigating the tides of science and conservation to build a resilient future for an exceptional atoll", took place on Thursday 21st April 2022, at the Royal Society's Carlton House Terrace in London. Furthermore, a local rendition of the symposium was held on Tuesday 31st May 2022 at the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education Auditorium, in Seychelles.



© SIF



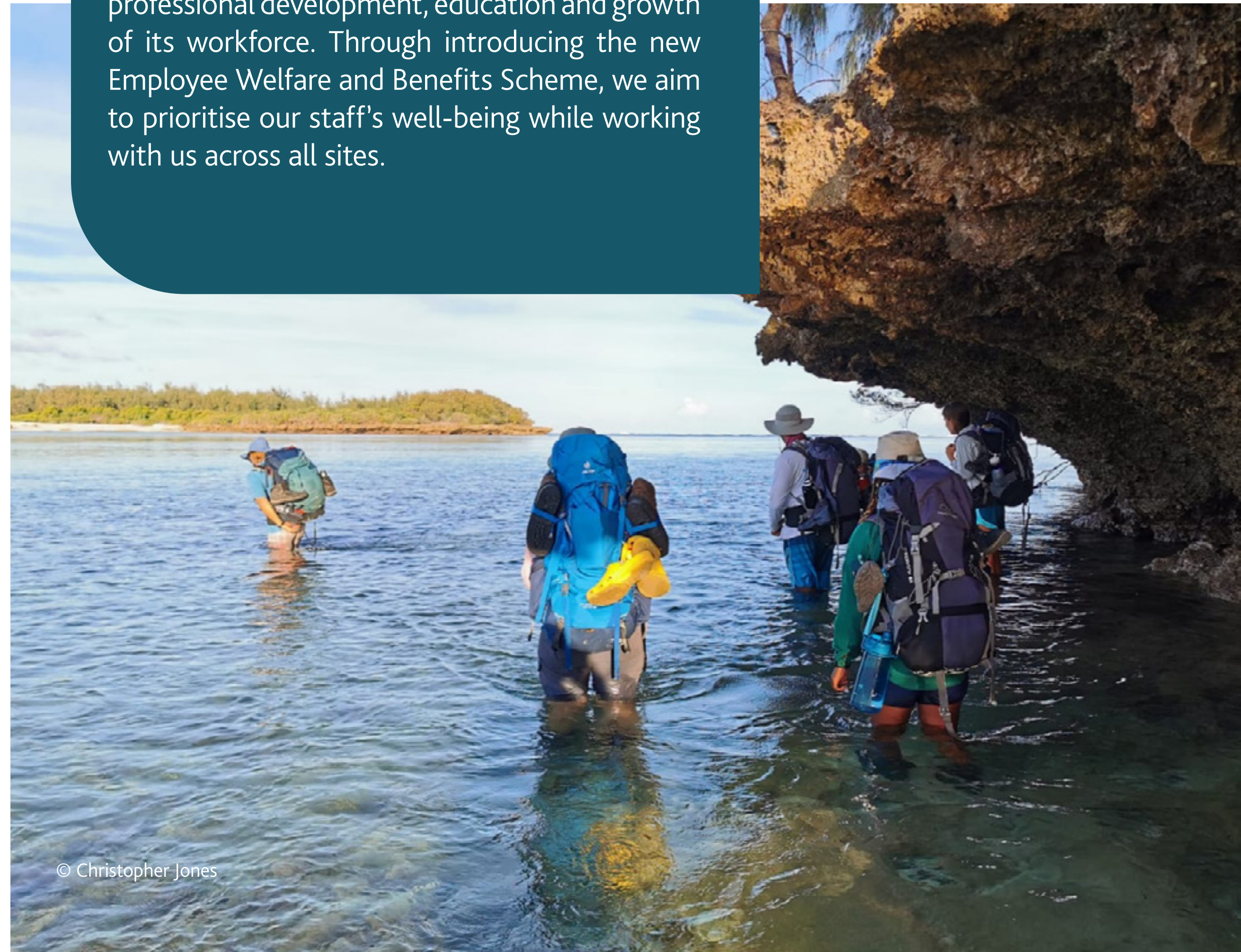
Yellow crazy ant numbers finally hit zero

After three years of continuous control, yellow crazy ant (YCA) numbers have finally hit zero in the Vallée de Mai! As a result of this groundbreaking achievement, we're finally starting to see native fauna making a comeback, with more endemic species being sighted like the white slugs and geckos.



SIF launches new staff welfare policy

In 2022, SIF made a strong commitment to the professional development, education and growth of its workforce. Through introducing the new Employee Welfare and Benefits Scheme, we aim to prioritise our staff's well-being while working with us across all sites.



© Christopher Jones



© Aruna Sunassee



A new management plan for Vallée de Mai

The management plan for the Vallée de Mai UNESCO World Heritage site has been revised and updated. This document is essential for guiding the protection and management of the Vallée de Mai and will help to ensure that the ecological and social values of the site are at the heart of any decision-making.



Headway on red-footed booby research

The first of two planned red-footed booby censuses was completed in August to estimate the south-east season breeding peak. The count of more than 14,000 pairs, is a substantial increase in the population since the previous census in 2000 and indicates that Aldabra's population may be the largest recorded in the Indian Ocean.



© Fotonatura



Reaping the investments of the David Stoddard Scholarship

On 22nd June, Annabelle Constance, the first recipient of SIF's David Stoddart Scholarship, successfully defended her doctoral thesis, marking the culmination of her four-year PhD at the University of Zürich. Now newly appointed as SIF's Science Coordinator, Dr Constance joins a group of few Seychellois women with a PhD in ecology and conservation.



© SIF



Revitalising the vanilla plantation

After not being in use for several years, the Fond Ferdinand team has begun to revitalize the vanilla plantation. The cultivation of vanilla can provide economic benefits and support the local economy.



© SIF



Tracking the black parrot through new technologies

The Praslin research team collared and radio-tracked black parrots on Praslin for the first time! This is part of ongoing research to better monitor and study their movements and behaviours.



© Jake Krauss



Monaco Explorations

Three SIF staff participated in the Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean research expedition aboard S.A. Agulhas II. The research vessel was stationed in Aldabra's waters from the 19th of October to the 26th of October, with numerous scientists collecting data on corals, turtles, plastic pollution, and other projects.

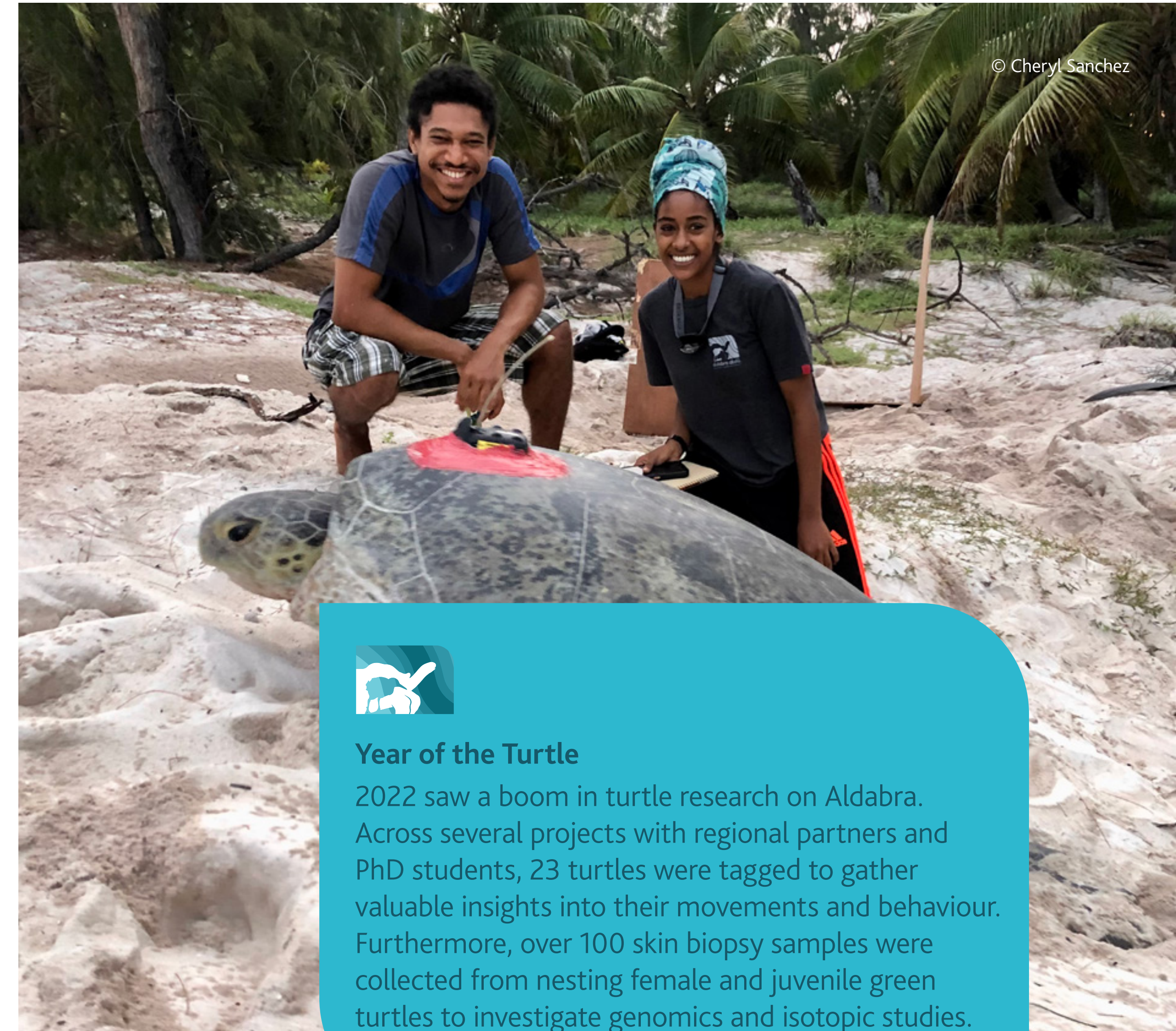
© SIF



SIF's CEO attends the UN Ocean Conference

After two years of delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second UN Ocean Conference took place in Lisbon, Portugal, from the 27th of June to the 1st of July. SIF's CEO, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, participated in the conference, sharing our experience in managing a Marine Protected Area (MPA) and one of only 50 Marine World Heritage Sites.

© SIF



© Cheryl Sanchez



Year of the Turtle

2022 saw a boom in turtle research on Aldabra. Across several projects with regional partners and PhD students, 23 turtles were tagged to gather valuable insights into their movements and behaviour. Furthermore, over 100 skin biopsy samples were collected from nesting female and juvenile green turtles to investigate genomics and isotopic studies.



Beekeeping was introduced at Fond Ferdinand

In partnership with a local beekeeper, a beehive was established for honeybee cultivation alongside training opportunities for staff. Honeybees are essential pollinators, and their cultivation helps to support the health and diversity of local ecosystems and crop pollination.



© Ricardo Valmont



© Michelle Risi



Giant tortoise genome decoded

For the first time, researchers from the University of Zürich have decoded the genome of the Aldabra giant tortoise, a significant scientific milestone in the understanding of these magnificent reptiles.

3 SIF Board



SIF Patron appoints new Board of Trustees

On February 21st, a new Board of Trustees was appointed by Seychelles' President and SIF Patron, Mr Wavel Ramkalawan. The board features a mix of local and international members, united by their dedication to wildlife conservation and equipped with diverse expertise to guide the organization's effective management and achieve our objectives.

Board of Trustees

Honourable Bernard Georges

The new chairman, Honourable Bernard Georges, is the Leader of Government Business in Seychelles' National Assembly, a lawyer by profession, he has his law firm, Georges & Co Attorneys and a long-standing interest in wildlife and conservation.

Ms Marie-May Jeremie

One of our past trustees and ally to SIF, Ms Marie-May Jeremie is the Director General for the Biodiversity Conservation and Management (BCM) Division in the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change & Environment (MACCE).

Mr Guy Esparon

Serving as Island Manager for Aldabra Atoll from 1999 to 2003, Mr Guy Esparon is already familiar with one of our UNESCO World Heritage Sites. He currently works as an international expedition guide.

Mr Bernard Jackson

Past Trustee and long-time supporter of SIF's work, Mr Bernard Jackson has been the Managing Director of MCB Seychelles since 2015.

Ms Sheriffa Morel

Ms Sheriffa Morel is the Director for Policy, Planning & Fisheries Economic Intelligence Section under the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy.

Mr Romano Laurence

Mr Romano Laurence is based on Praslin and has been working with Pirogue Investments for the last 10 years, he also manages his own business. During his time with Kokonet, he developed Seychelles' first Voice-over IP service, which was trialled at its beginning stages on Aldabra.

Ms Isabelle Ravinia

Ms Isabelle Ravinia is the Business Development, Marketing and Trading Officer at the Seychelles Parks & Gardens Authority. She is a passionate conservationist with over nine years of experience in protected area management.

Professor Lindsay Turnbull

Prof. Lindsay Turnbull is an Associate Professor and Fellow of The Queen's College at the University of Oxford. She is an ecologist with a research focus on plants and has been an active member of SIF's board for the last nine years and was highly instrumental in setting up our well-known Aldabra Clean-Up project to remove marine debris from Aldabra.

Dr Anna Spenceley

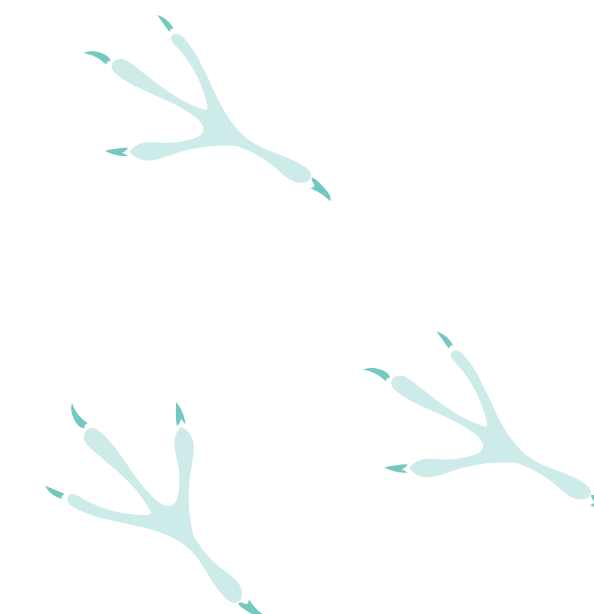
Dr Anna Spenceley is a tourism expert and leading authority in sustainable and responsible tourism and has over 20 years of international experience in over 30 countries, including Seychelles.

Sir Tim Smit

Sir Tim Smit is the Executive Vice-Chair and co-founder of the award-winning Eden Project in Cornwall, an educational charity and social enterprise. He has been an SIF trustee for the past nine years and has made numerous contributions to raising awareness of Aldabra internationally.

Colonel Jean Attala

Lieutenant Colonel Jean Attala is the Commander of the Seychelles Coast Guard.



Professor Nick Graham

Prof. Nick Graham is a Royal Society Research Fellow based at Lancaster University. He works mainly in the Indian Ocean with a focus on the Seychelles and the Chagos Archipelago. Working with Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) and other local organisations, he leads the long-term coral reef research programme which has collected more than 20 years of data on Seychelles reefs in the inner islands.

Mr Paul Rose

Mr Paul Rose is the Expedition leader for the National Geographic Pristine Seas Expedition, which has included surveying Aldabra's marine ecosystems. He is an experienced television presenter and radio broadcaster, and his work includes BBC National and Local Radio, BBC World Service, World Radio Switzerland, US National Radio and more.

Mr Aurèle André

Mr Aurèle André is the General Manager of Francois Leguat Reserve in Rodrigues, a 'rewilding project' that is coupled with ecotourism. He is also the chairperson of the Association du Tourisme Réuni (ATR) and a founding member and chairperson for the Centre d'Animation et d'Education pour la protection des tortues marine (CARET).

Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley

Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley is the Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Islands Foundation and an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees. She has led SIF, Seychelles' longest-running environmental organization, for the last 15 years.



The Seychelles Islands Foundation and its members would like to congratulate our new Board of Trustees and wish them well during their three-year tenure. With their guidance and support, SIF will continue to fulfil its mandate of managing and protecting our two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and Fond Ferdinand.

Members of the SIF Board with Minister Flavien Joubert and former CEO of SIF, Mr Lindsay Chong-Seng at the Aldabra 50th London Symposium © The Royal Society



First AGM in three years

In September, the members of the new Board of Trustees gathered for the first time in their tenure at the Vallée de Mai UNESCO World Heritage Site for the 40th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the organisation.

The AGM was a hybrid event, attended virtually by overseas trustees and SIF staff on Aldabra from 30th September to 2nd October 2022. The board discussed SIF's long-term strategic priorities, comprising major undertakings such as the planned Aldabra rat and cat eradication, the construction of Aldabra House and the future development of Fond Ferdinand.

The SIF Board presents certificates to the long-serving staff of the organisation at the 2022 AGM © SIF.



Although the three-day AGM had a packed programme, the trustees had the opportunity to conduct hikes at Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand. Through directly witnessing the importance of the sites they have been appointed to conserve, the meetings proved to be productive and in the best interest of the sites.

Marc Jean-Baptiste, Site Manager of Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand, guides the trustees on a tour at Fond Ferdinand © Elsa Pool.



Chairman, Bernard Georges and trustee, Guy Esparon enjoying the view at the Vallée de Mai © Elsa Pool



A big thank you to the outgoing Board

We cannot embark on this new tenure without, once again, thanking our previous Board of Trustees and looking back on their last three years of hard work and dedication in protecting the Seychelles two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Aldabra Atoll and Vallée de Mai.



The outgoing SIF Board
of Trustees on Aldabra
Atoll © SIF

The various research, conservation, education, outreach and management work undertaken by SIF and the many achievements could not have been achieved without the following individuals:

Mr Maurice Loustau-Lalanne,
Outgoing Chairman & long serving Trustee

Mr Bernard Jackson, long-serving Trustee

Mr Calvin Gerry, Trustee

Ms Veronica Lanza, Trustee

Prof. Lindsay Turnbull, long-serving Trustee

Ms Lyndy Bastienne, Trustee

Mrs Marie-May Muzungaile, Trustee

Mr Patrick Lablache, long-serving Trustee

Prof. Peter Edwards, long-serving Trustee

Ms Sherin Francis, Trustee

Mr Selby Remie, Trustee

Prof. Stephen Blackmore, long-serving Trustee

Sir Tim Smit, long-serving Trustee

Dr Victorin Laboudallon, long-serving Trustee

Many members of the outgoing board of trustees have been instrumental in achieving massive projects, like the implementation of Aldabra's solar system and the Aldabra Clean-Up Project © SIF





4 Aldabra Research Station 50th Anniversary



Officials, stakeholders and scientists gather to mark 50 years of *“one of the world’s greatest surviving natural treasures.”*

On Thursday 21st April 2022, officials and scientists involved in the protection and management of Aldabra Atoll attended the research symposium, ‘Aldabra: 50 years of navigating the tides of science and conservation to build a resilient future for an exceptional atoll’.

A collaborative effort by SIF and the Royal Society, the symposium was a hybrid event taking place in London, with a virtual option, celebrating a momentous milestone for Seychelles. The Aldabra Research Station celebrated its 50th year of continuous operation last year on 30th June 2021, making it one of the longest-running tropical research stations in the world. After over half a century of research, the symposium focused on what is needed to address climate change and biodiversity loss, showing the lessons learnt from conserving this exceptional atoll and providing insight into the incredible scientific work and dedication of an African Small Island Developing State.

The opening of the ceremony featured representatives from the Royal Society and Seychelles. Professor Yadvinder Malhi CBE FRS, from the University of Oxford and Royal Society Fellow, commented, “It is pleasing to see the Royal Society and SIF working together in today’s programme, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the station, to look back on research that has been done, but also to draw attention to the importance of the scientific work still going on.”



Professor Yadvinder Malhi CBE FRS
© The Royal Society



“I am proud, as a Seychellois, that we have continued to protect the atoll, and that despite being a nation that has struggled for prosperity, we did not sell out. We recognised early and continue to recognise the value of our natural heritage.”

Minister Flavien Joubert,
Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment
for the Republic of Seychelles

Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change &
Environment, Mr Flavien Joubert at the London
Symposium © Romano Laurence

Seychellois students studying in the UK with SIF Staff and Board Members at the London Symposium. Their in-person attendance was sponsored by the British High Commission in Seychelles, representative, Mrs Katy Lynch, 3rd from right. © Romano Laurence



With support from the British High Commission in Seychelles, SIF was able to secure funding for an additional five Seychellois scientists and staff to join the Seychelles delegation, and ten Seychellois students studying environmental subjects in the UK to attend the event as future pioneers for conservation in Seychelles.



Old and new familiar faces gathered to hear about 50 years of research, whilst also looking into the future of conservation for this exceptional atoll. © Royal Society

SIF's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, took on the last scientific talk of the evening, and shared warmly, "It has been an experience, in itself, to share this day with so many of you who have been giving their whole life to the atoll. We thank you for that."

"I don't think I can leave this topic without thanking every scientist, every one of you, who have given so much to Aldabra over the years. Who saved it from a fate worse than death, and who are here today still, and are contributing with your presence and insights to the continuing work that Aldabra faces."

– Bernard Georges,
Chairman of the SIF Board of Trustees



© The symposium was an incredible blend of past and future and well-received by attendees, with over a thousand people tuning in across the globe © The Royal Society

Over 140 people attended the in-person event at the Royal Society Carlton House Terrace, with a further 1000 people tuning in to the symposium online via YouTube from around the globe since then.

[Watch the symposium](#)

[Read a recap](#)

Aldabra Research Station 50th anniversary celebrations close with local symposium



Following the international research symposium, SIF hosted a local rendition of the symposium on 31st May at the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) Auditorium at Mont Fleuri. President Wavel Ramkalawan, Patron of the Seychelles Islands Foundation, inaugurated the ceremony, recounting personal anecdotes from his own time on the atoll in last year's diplomatic corps visit, and gave thanks to all who played a role in the protection of Aldabra, from 50 years ago until now.

The Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan, the board of trustees and SIF staff pose together for a souvenir photo at the local symposium © State House Seychelles

“The story is a very simple one; there was the political commitment to protect Aldabra, then it was followed by saying: we cannot keep it for ourselves, it would not have been fair for Seychelles to have kept Aldabra for herself”.

– President Wavel Ramkalawan



The Patron gave a compelling speech at the local symposium © State House Seychelles



SIF staff with trustees were extremely proud to pull off two symposiums just one month apart! © SIF

“I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart [...] I am impressed, I am grateful and I am recharged from a symposium like this”, and reminded us all that “from small islands come big ideas”.

- Ambassador for Climate Change and Small Island Developing State Issues for the Republic of Seychelles, Ronny Jumeau, congratulates SIF in his closing speech.



Unveiling Aldabra 2070



The Aldabra 2070 Painting by Julian Pender Hume © Julian P. Hume



Dr Nancy Bunbury, Consulting Director of Research and Conservation at SIF, took us on a journey to imagine a rat and cat-free Aldabra at the London Symposium © Romano Laurence.



The painting was unveiled at the Aldabra 50th London symposium © The Royal Society.

At the 50th anniversary symposium of Aldabra's research station in London, an incredible highlight was the unveiling of Aldabra 2070, a visionary painting by palaeontologist and paleo-artist, Julian Pender Hume. Commissioned by SIF for the occasion, the artwork envisions Aldabra following the eradication of invasive rats and cats, offering a glimpse into a restored, thriving Aldabra, 50 years into the future.

Aldabra is often labelled "pristine," yet the long presence of invasive mammals has profoundly affected its biodiversity. Aldabra 2070, grounded in research and expert contributions, captures a future teeming with life: rejuvenated seabird

colonies, flourishing land and marine ecosystems, and enhanced coral resilience. It vividly illustrates the transformative and proven impacts of invasive species removal, from nutrient-rich guano inputs to increased connectivity between the land and sea.

The artwork was unveiled at the symposium, aiming to inspire dialogue and promote action. It serves as both a scientific visualisation and a rallying call for the resources and collaboration needed to restore Aldabra's natural ecological balance.

Seychelles delegation visits the London National History Museum

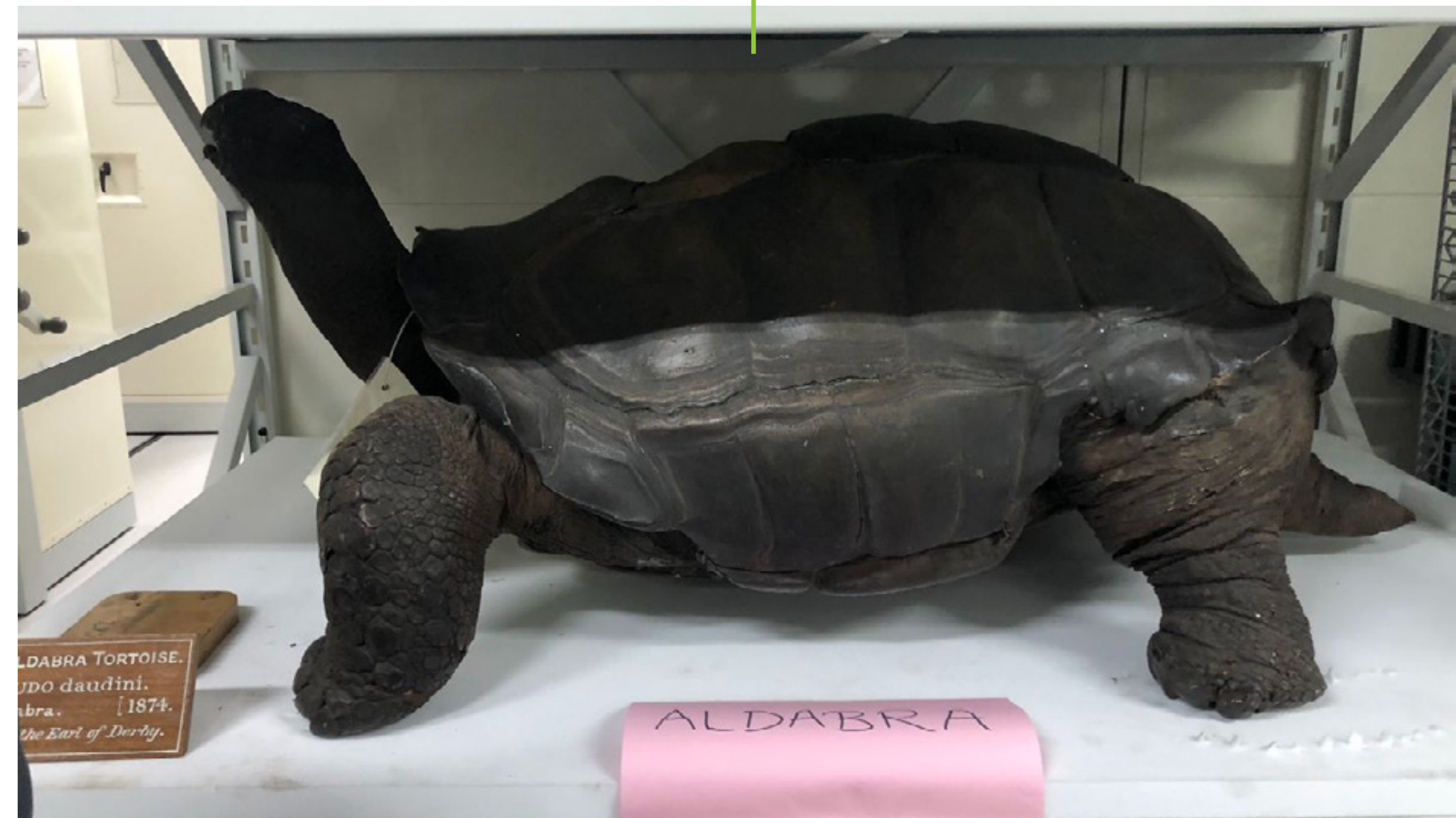
During their visit to London to attend the Aldabra Research Station 50th anniversary symposium, the Seychelles delegation had the pleasure of visiting the Natural History Museum in London and received a behind-the-scenes guided tour of the collections.

The National History Museum was involved in the early Royal Society expeditions to Aldabra in the 1960s when the research station was in its infancy. Among the exhibitions were archives of drawings and letters from early expeditions to Aldabra, as well as samples, like tortoise carapaces and embalmed species.

The Seychelles delegation on a private guided tour of the National History Museum © Cheryl Sanchez



A preserved Aldabra giant tortoise at the National History Museum in London, UK © Cheryl Sanchez



5

Vallée de Mai



5.1 Science and Conservation

Radio tracking black parrots for the first time.

MSc student, Jake Krauss, joined the Vallée de Mai team to conduct some research work on the Seychelles black parrot (*Coracopsis barklyi*) and its movements around the island.

Jake has been trying to re-sight as many parrots as possible around Praslin to build a comprehensive picture of where the parrots move. He successfully collared six parrots (1 fledgling and 5 adults), and upon his departure, the research team continued radio tracking and collecting data from the collared birds until each collar's battery died. Of the six deployed collars, one fell off very quickly. The other five remained attached and the team were able to successfully locate each bird several times.



Jake Krauss admiring the view of the Fond Ferdinand viewpoint during fieldwork ©Jake Krauss.



An exciting highlight of this research happened when one collared parrot led the trackers to a new unknown nest. The tracked bird was thought to be a “helper” at the nest and this situation presented the team with the unique opportunity to collar and radio track the breeding female just before her chick fledged. The team was then able to track the female as she foraged for food for her chick, plus the helper at the nest, and then hopefully, to be able to follow her as her newly ringed fledgling started to accompany her.

A collared black parrot ready to be tracked! © Jake Krauss

Our Assistant Field Research Officer, Terance Payet, in search of signals © Irma Dubois



A ringed black parrot can be identified by the colours of the rings on its legs © Jake Krauss.

We have never been able to monitor, ring and track a female parrot plus her fledgling, plus a nest helper before, so this is a valuable and exciting chance to collect important information on black parrot breeding ecology.

Yellow crazy ant control continues with great success



The first baiting team of the year © Jessica Constance



Science Officer, Corianna Julie, filling the liquid bait stations in Fond Peper © Mara Rivolta

This year's first yellow crazy ants baiting occurred between the 21st and 25th of March, with 24 staff fully involved with baiting. Baiting aimed to reduce overall yellow crazy ant (YCA) abundance and distribution at Vallée de Mai and Fond Peper.

Their presence in Vallée de Mai has proven to be a dire threat to the coco de mer palm forest ecosystem, as well as to other unique endemic species. Therefore, baiting is carried out twice a year using the commercial insecticide, Fipronil, used in both solid and liquid forms. In the first baiting, 22.6 hectares of land was baited, including the Vallée de Mai, Fond Peper and the Buffer Zone.



The baiting team is ready to take on the second baiting challenge! © SIF

The second baiting of the year took place from the 3rd to the 7th of October and targeted the Vallée de Mai buffer zone, firebreak and certain areas inside the southern part of Vallée de Mai. This decision was taken as a result of regular monitoring, which showed the absence of yellow crazy ants inside the Vallée de Mai. Fond Peper was left unbaited for this deployment, given that yellow crazy ants have not been recorded nor observed there since August 2021.

The latest skink and crab survey shows promising results

Six months after the last survey, the Vallée de Mai research team geared up and embarked on the first skink and crab survey for 2022. Drift fences, funnel traps, and pitfall traps were set up by the team, with the dual aims of evaluating the impacts of invasive yellow crazy ant control on skink and crab abundance, as well as collecting information on the abundance and distribution of these endemic species, including the Seychelles skink, Gardiner's burrowing skink, Brauer's burrowing skink and the endemic freshwater crab.

The survey results show an apparent increase in crabs between August 2019 and March 2022, which may be linked to the decrease in yellow crazy ant abundance at the site. Meanwhile, skink abundance has remained similar throughout the same period.



Vallée de Mai Science
Coordinator, Jessica Constance
showing the team how it's done
© Corianna Julie

Science Officer, Corianna Julie,
measuring a crab for the skink
and crab survey © SIF



Another black parrot breeding season draws to a close.

After a slow start, the 13th monitored black parrot breeding season kicked off in full swing at the end of 2021, and over five weeks, the team counted 19 active nests across Vallée de Mai, Fond Peper and Fond Ferdinand.

Unfortunately, this season several nests were lost to rat predation, and with heavy rain and strong winds earlier in the year, a couple of nests were also lost to storms. A nest containing four eggs was also abandoned by the mother, probably due to its proximity to the Vallée de Mai path and the disturbance from visitors and guides. Furthermore, at least three chicks that fledged early were suspected of being predated on the forest floor, possibly due to cats.

At the end of the season, we recorded 12 chicks fledging from 11 nests.



Black parrots breeding season draws to a close in 2022 © Jake Krauss



As the chicks grow stronger, they begin climbing up and down the inside of the cavity. This chick has managed to reach a hole in the cavity wall and is taking its first look at the world outside. © Monica Griffith

LEFT: Black Parrot Officer, Monica Griffith, monitoring an active nest in a cavity © SIF/Monica Griffith



RIGHT: Two big chicks patiently waiting for their new house to be built after losing their nest to a storm. They could not fly yet so they were placed on a branch to keep them safe until they could be placed in the new nest. © Monica Griffith



Leaf litter surveys

We had the pleasure of hosting Professor Peter Edwards from ETH Zürich, who looked at the decomposition of coco de mer leaf litter on the forest floor of the Vallée de Mai, as well as leaf increment on Curieuse Island.

The research team joined Prof. Edwards on a week-long expedition in the forest, whereby they collected and weighed coco de mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*), palmiste (*Roystonea oleracea*) and vakwa parasol (*Pandanus hornei*) leaf litter. To assess the decomposition timeline, they placed leaf samples and tea bags on the forest floor. The Research team then moved to Curieuse, an island 2km north of Praslin, and the only other island where coco de mer trees occur naturally.



Field Research Officer, Irma Dubois, weighing the leaf litter under the guidance of Professor Edwards © SIF



Placing leaf litter samples on the forest floor © SIF

5.1 Site Management and Sustainable Tourism

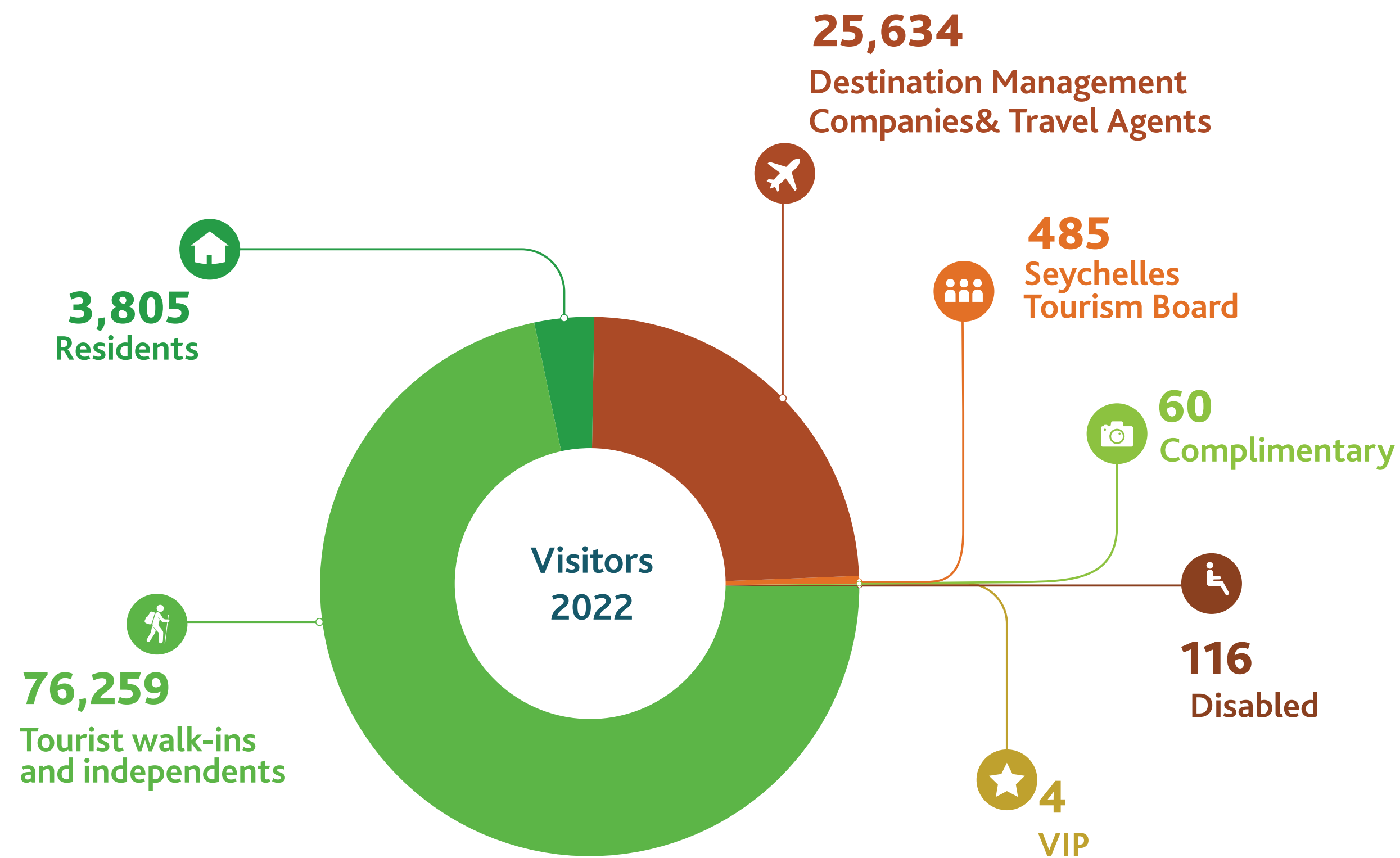
The Vallée de Mai breaks visitor record in August.

In August, we hit record-breaking numbers of tourists visiting the Vallée de Mai, with Seychelles having 29,366 visiting the country in that month, and a staggering 38% (11,283 tourist visitors) visited the Vallée de Mai. This is the highest monthly number of tourists ever recorded for this unique UNESCO World Heritage site.

These visitor numbers are an incredible achievement for the organisation, given the flight and travel restrictions for the past two years. Moreover, these figures illustrate the Vallée de Mai's contributions to tourism to the local Praslinois businesses and economy.

The Vallée de Mai Visitor Centre saw record-breaking figures in visitors in 2022 © Sebastian Mühlrig





Visitor Numbers

With over 100,000 visitors recorded in 2022, the Vallée de Mai is steadily recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw drastic reductions in tourism globally.

To date, 2018 holds the record of receiving the highest number of visitors, with a total of 118,121, while in 2022 we received 106,356 visitors, making up 31% of total arrivals in Seychelles. Once again, the Vallée de Mai is one of the most visited natural sites in Seychelles and continues to attract over one-third of visitors to Seychelles.

Furthermore, we saw a rise in resident visitors, doubling from 1,784 in 2021, to 3,805 in 2022, as local restrictions eased and educational visits from school trips were safely hosted again.

New project to enhance sustainable tourism management for conservation



The new POS systems will enhance our visitor statistics and increase accuracy © SIF.

The latest addition to our project portfolio began this year, titled “Establishment of a Sustainable Tourism Management System for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Vallée de Mai”. The project is supported by the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust (NFIT), a financial partner of UNESCO, and is taking place in Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand over the next one and a half years.

The project aims to modernise visitor and scientific monitoring of the sites, which will also aid in the long-term enhancement of our management and conservation efforts. The project additionally focuses on improving scientific research and introducing citizen science through an application, allowing visitors to record wildlife sightings directly on their phones, and actively contribute to monitoring.

We are certain that this project will substantially improve the sustainability of tourism at these sites, making site management a key element for climate change adaptation.

Gearing up for the fight against forest fires

The Frankilinia Project is making good headway with our team gearing up to protect the Praslin palm forests against fires, a leading threat that could destroy irreplaceable coco de mer populations along with coexisting endemic tree species.

In October, five field staff in Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand attended a week-long forest firefighting training conducted by the Ridge to Reef Project, in collaboration with the Seychelles Fire and Rescue Services Agency (SFRSA). Team communication was central to the course, as well as the execution of drills and familiarisation of the equipment. Participants also learnt a variety of theoretical and practical topics involving the impacts of forest fires.



The team at Fond Ferdinand ready for their forest fire fighting training © SIF

The project also enabled SIF to successfully purchase a range of much-needed firefighting equipment such as frontline fire swatters, hoses, fuel tanks and head-to-toe safety gear from Vallfirest, The Wildfire Company, which will strengthen organisational capacity to fight forest fires at Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand.

Meanwhile, since many fires are started by people, SIF continues to maximise efforts in spreading awareness of the impacts of fires on endemic forests to the local community in a combined effort to protect the vulnerable coco de mer habitat.

Forest fire is a leading threat to the vulnerable coco de mer forest on Praslin © SIF.



A sample of firefighting equipment purchased under the project © Marc Jean-Baptiste.

Hundreds of coco de mer nuts planted under the SIF scheme

Two years ago, SIF introduced the coco de mer planting scheme, aimed at bolstering the resilience of this iconic endemic species across the islands. The initiative also seeks to foster a sense of stewardship among islanders, empowering them as custodians dedicated to conserving and preserving the coco de mer for future generations.

Any Seychellois citizen can apply to plant up to five coco de mer nuts on their property. This will expand the distribution of the coco de mer across other islands in Seychelles and foster our nation's ownership of our flagship species.

Homeowners, organisations and businesses can apply to plant a coco de mer on their property © Marc Jean-Baptiste.



So far, over 500 coco de mer nuts have been planted under the scheme across four islands, Mahé, Praslin, La Digue and Cerf Island. Of these, 33 nuts have germinated under the scheme, but with more planting planned, we're hoping for an increase in germination!

Would you like to plant your own coco de mer tree?

Send us an email at info@sif.sc to request an application form.



SIF's CEO, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, planting a coco de mer for the plant at home scheme. © SIF



Schoolchildren on Praslin getting involved in the planting scheme © SIF

Grand reopening of the Chameleon souvenir shop

This year, the team celebrated African World Heritage Day with a variety of engaging activities, including the grand reopening of the newly refurbished Chameleon souvenir shop. First closed in 2020, the shop has been transformed with a fresh, modern look to enhance the visitor experience.

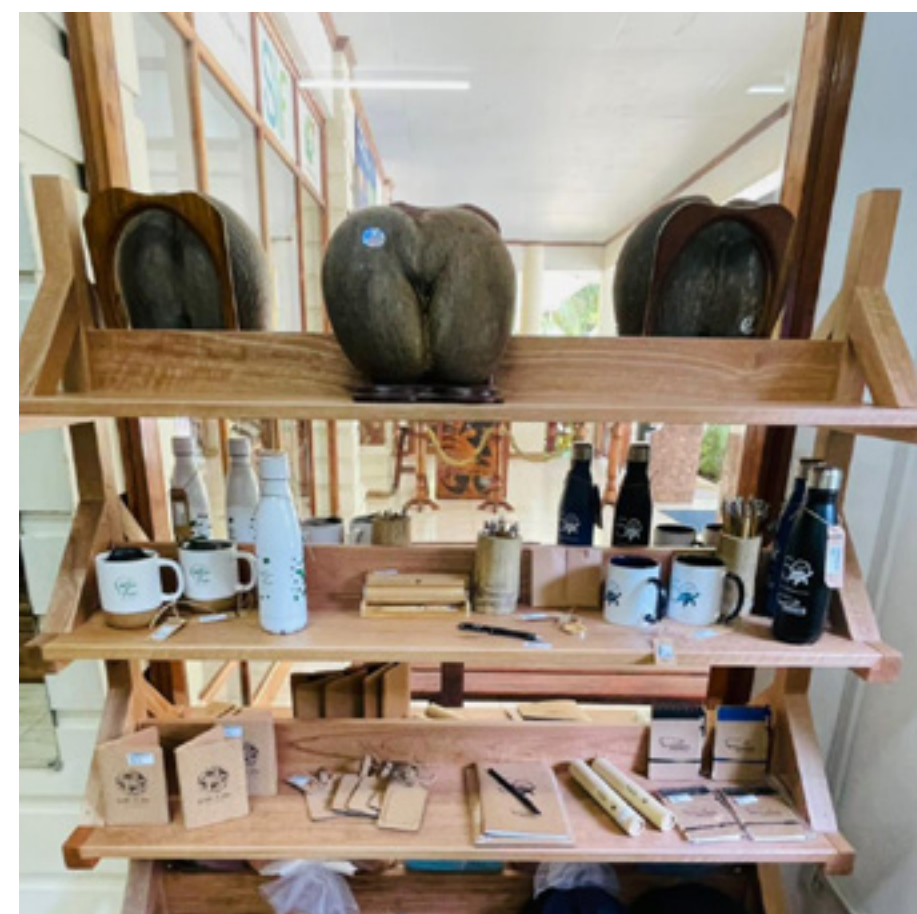
The shop features a range of items celebrating SIF's three managed sites—Aldabra, Vallée de Mai, and Fond Ferdinand—highlighting their unique biodiversity and raising awareness of their iconic species. Visitors can browse an assortment of products, including artwork, garments, soft toys, books, postcards, magnets, and keyrings, all offered at competitive local prices.

SIF has also introduced a new line of eco-friendly souvenirs, such as reusable water bottles, bamboo stylus pens, eco-cotton and natural fibre bags, as well as cork-based items like mugs, luggage tags, and passport holders, which have proven popular with both locals and tourists.

All photos © Dylis Cedras



Vallée de Mai Visitor Centre Supervisor, Elna Stravens, and Sales & Marketing Officer, Dylis Cedras, open the new shop © SIF



Site Manager, Marc Jean-Baptiste officially launched the celebrations, joined by local artisans, tour guides, Friends of Vallée de Mai, and visiting tourists and residents, marking a vibrant and meaningful commemoration of African World Heritage Day.

Celebrating African World Heritage Day at the Vallée de Mai © SIF



5.3 VIP Visits

Hon. Kenyatta, President of Kenya, visits the Vallée de Mai

In July, the Vallée de Mai UNESCO World Heritage Site had the honour of welcoming His Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya. He was accompanied by SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan, the Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change, and Environment, Hon. Flavien Joubert, along with their delegation.

The group enjoyed a private tour of the iconic site, guided by Site Manager, Marc Jean-Baptiste. As they explored the lush forest, they were introduced to its unique biodiversity, including the world-renowned coco de mer trees and other endemic flora and fauna that make the Vallée de Mai a global treasure.

President Kenyatta and his delegation enjoyed a private tour of the Vallée de Mai © Maria Brioché.



'A great gift to mankind. Congratulations to all whose efforts protect it for future generations.'

– the message written in the visitor book by His Excellency, Hon, Uhuru Kenyatta.

UPPER RIGHT: Playing the fan-favourite game, guess the weight of the coco de mer! © Maria Brioche

BELOW: His Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta signing the visitor book © Maria Brioche.



United Nations World Tourism Organisation's Regional Director visits Vallée de Mai.

We were delighted to welcome Mrs Elsie Grandcourt, United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Regional Director for Africa, to the Vallée de Mai. She was accompanied by Mrs Sherin Francis, Principal Secretary for Tourism, along with several delegates from across the African region.

During her visit, Mrs Grandcourt described the Vallée de Mai as "an excellent example of conservation of the country's natural assets," highlighting its significance as a model for preserving Seychelles' unique biodiversity.



Mrs Grandcourt with a coco de mer nut © SIF

A souvenir picture with the UNWTO Regional Director for Africa and delegation © SIF





Planting at
the Vallée de
Mai © SIF



Princess Theodora
with the Friends of
Vallée de Mai club
© Maria Brioché

H.S.H Princess Theodora and Green Teen Team Foundation join in SIF's outreach

We were honoured to host H.S.H. Princess Theodora of Liechtenstein, founder of the Green Teen Team organization, during her visit to the Vallée de Mai.

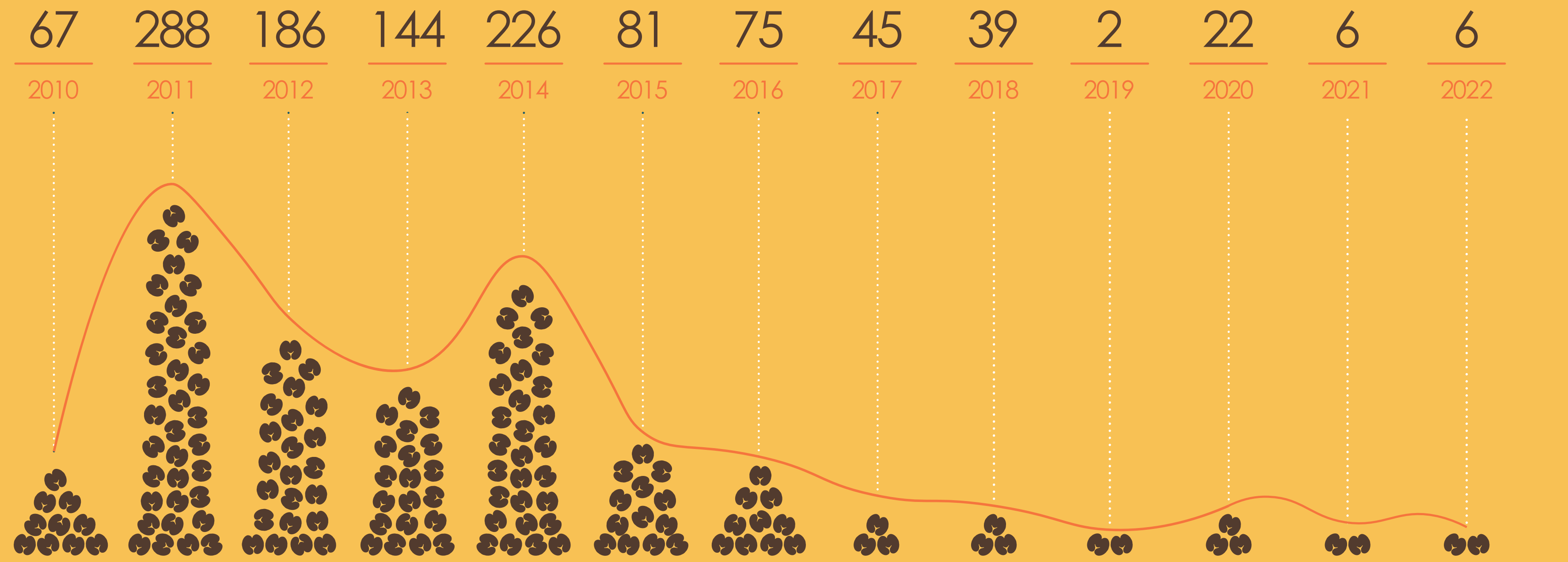
Princess Theodora and her delegation were warmly received by the Site Manager, Marc Jean-Baptiste who introduced her to the team.

Following the introductions, the Princess was accompanied by Education and Outreach Programme Officer, Maria Brioché, and a group of enthusiastic students from the Friends of Vallée de Mai Club at Grand Anse Primary School. Together, they participated in a symbolic and meaningful planting of native species, marking a memorable moment of connection and conservation.

Coco de Mer Stats

There was a total of six poached nuts in the Vallée de Mai/ Fond Peper area in 2022, occurring throughout the latter part of the year in June, July, August and November, all poached nuts were still in the jelly-nut stage and hadn't begun germination. However, in Fond Ferdinand there were no instances of poaching.

Furthermore, in 2022, 218 nuts were collected from the Vallée de Mai for souvenir sales and planting under the coco de mer plant-at-home scheme. This year, 408 coco de mer nuts were sold at the Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand, and 192 were sold at the SIF Head Office as souvenirs.



6 Aldabra Atoll



6.1 A Tribute to Mazaren:

Aldabra and Seychelles mourned the unfortunate passing of Antonio Constance, widely known by his nickname 'Mazaren', a well-known Seychellois conservationist who, during his 87 years, visited all 115 islands of Seychelles.

Mazaren has been an impactful figure within regional and international island conservation fields and was among the group of Seychellois involved in the setting up of the Aldabra research station in the 1970s.

Extract from Aldabra and the Aldabra Research Station
by Professor David Stoddart © The Royal Society.

line of visitors and residents on Aldabra. Our Europeans and Americans have worked in lonely, difficult and occasionally hostile conditions to achieve the results we are about to discuss, and whatever they have done has been made possible by the strength, loyalty and good humour of Antonio Constance (Mazarin), Harry Charles, and Georges Larue and our other Seychellois Aldabrans. In spite of what has been done over the last 10 years, however, I think it will be felt at the end of this Discussion that even in so simple a system as that of Aldabra we have now only reached the stage where the truly interesting questions can be defined, and I hope it will be possible to look forward to several decades more of continuing research and conservation on this remarkable island.



Mazaren worked on Aldabra for over a decade and was among the first Seychellois to scuba dive © Stills from the film Aldabra by Claude Pavard (1981)





An Aldabra Christmas in 1976, Mazaren, sits 2nd from right © Professor Stephen Blackmore.

Throughout his conservation career, he wholeheartedly supported and advocated the protection of our islands and the endemic species that inhabit them. He was especially fond of the Aldabra giant tortoise, astonished by Aldabra's wild population size, and kept a few as pets at his home. With his love for tortoises also came a long friendship with Dr Jeanne Mortimer, with whom he travelled to many outer islands in Seychelles to carry out research and surveys on turtles and tortoises.

He spent over a decade on Aldabra, where he met his wife, Alda, who was raised there. He then continued his journey on other outer islands, namely Cosmoledo, where he led the fishing activity, and later Desnoeuf, where he oversaw the collection of bird eggs.

The Seychelles Islands Foundation would like to thank Mazaren for his enormous contribution to the conservation of Aldabra and Seychelles as a whole. His presence, passion and vigour will be missed by many, and his story will inspire future conservationists for decades to come.

6.2 Science and Conservation

Aldabra's first climate vulnerability assessment completed, a first step for adaptation and justice for our atoll.

In January, our Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung funded project, named "Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Justice for Aldabra", came to a successful closure after eight months of implementation.

The project aimed to understand the ever-growing implications of climate stressors on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Aldabra. The assessment indicated three climate stressors that will impact the key values of Aldabra, namely; extreme temperature events, drought (severity, duration, frequency), and storm intensity and frequency.



This project aimed to understand how Aldabra will be affected by climate change impacts in the future © Martin van Rooyen.



Through a series of three workshops, encompassing five sessions, the CVI assessment concluded that Aldabra's OUV Vulnerability was assessed as Moderate (on a three-point scale from Low to High). This indicates a potential for some loss or alteration of some attributes that constitute the OUV.

The project has been eye-opening, especially regarding how vast climate change implications can be at both small and large scales. Although the project has ended, fighting for justice for Aldabra continues, but this project will act as a stepping stone towards a better understanding of Aldabra's vulnerability, and enhance our knowledge and communications on climate change and its implications for Aldabra.

Aldabra Atoll is one of only 50 UNESCO Marine World Heritage sites worldwide. © Cheryl Sanchez



Digital workshops connecting the CVI and SIF team on Mahe, Aldabra, Australia and UK! © SIF



Studying Seychelles' last dugongs

A new exciting project commences this year, supported by the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), to conduct the first baseline population assessment of dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) on Aldabra Atoll.

The two-year project titled “The Last Dugongs in the Seychelles: baseline population assessment of *Dugong dugon* at Aldabra Atoll”, is supervised by Dr Christophe Cleguer from the Centre for Tropical Water & Aquatic Ecosystem Research (TropWATER) at James Cook University (Australia) and kickstarted in June 2022.

The project enables aerial surveys of dugongs in Aldabra's lagoon and at its seaward reefs, contributing to regional efforts that aim to determine dugong habitats and migratory routes. Additionally, we aim to raise awareness about the Aldabra group as the only known dugong habitat within the Seychelles. SIF is thrilled to finally have the opportunity to study Seychelles' remaining dugongs and contribute to their local, regional and international protection.

Until now, dugongs on Aldabra have been studied opportunistically, the new project aims to understand Aldabra's and the region's understudied population © Sebastian Cowin.



© Daig Romain.



Ten turtles tagged for Indian Ocean sea turtle (IOT) project

Following the installation of a receiver station network across Aldabra, the research team has been actively deploying GPS satellite tags on juvenile turtles in the lagoon. Under the guidance of project managers from IFREMER (L'Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer), ten tags have been successfully deployed—six on green turtles and four on hawksbills. The captures and tagging took place in the eastern and western parts of the lagoon, and two turtles tagged in the east were later spotted near Middle Camp, their tags still securely in place.

Brian and Martin
installing the
solar panel for
the tower at Anse
Malabar © SIF.



This collaborative effort between SIF and IFREMER, as part of the Indian Ocean Turtle (IOT) project, is a groundbreaking step in studying the movements of juvenile turtles within the lagoon using the innovative LoRA network, which enables long-range data transmission with minimal energy consumption. In addition to tracking turtle behaviour, the project will provide valuable insights into the impact of tidal patterns on turtle movement and serve as a testing ground for cutting-edge tagging technology.

View the turtle migration routes from Aldabra:

[View here](#)

The latest route
of tagged turtles
© My Wildlife
Computers



Aldabra Science
Coordinator, Luke
A'Bear, releasing a
green turtle © SIF



Tagged green turtle off to sea © SIF



Emma and Martin preparing to tag a hawksbill © SIF

Counting the Giants

Distance transect monitoring has been carried out across the entire atoll, with our research team counting tortoises and recording their distance from a transect line using range finders. A total of 18 transects were surveyed, covering key tortoise habitat types such as tortoise turf and open scrub. The data collected will be combined with other monitoring information to estimate the population of Aldabra tortoises. This data will also enable us to track changes in the population over time, especially in response to significant threats such as climate change, invasive species, and plastic pollution.

Researchers conducting a tortoise transect and measuring the distance of the tortoise using a range finder © Christopher Jones.



Genomics testing of the Aldabra giant tortoise

SIF has partnered with researchers from the University of Zürich—Dr Gözde Cilingir and Prof. Christine Grosse—on a research project focused on the conservation genomics of the Aldabra giant tortoise. As part of this project, blood samples are collected from tortoise hatchlings and later analysed at the university to study paternity.

The team on Aldabra has identified nesting tortoises and secured the egg chambers with wooden enclosures covered by wire mesh. These enclosures are designed to protect the hatchlings for sampling and prevent predation. Nests are then checked daily as eggs typically hatch within 70 to 160 days, depending on the temperature, with warmer conditions leading to faster hatching. Once the hatchlings emerge, blood samples are collected and sent to Zürich for further analysis.



The Aldabra giant tortoise is an iconic endemic on Aldabra Atoll, yet there is still much more to learn about them! © Dennis Hansen



The Aldabra giant tortoise creates egg chambers to nest © Christopher Jones.



Once the tortoise has finished nesting, a wooden enclosure is placed on top of the site to prevent predation © Elma Balette.

Blue carbon assessed on Aldabra.

Seychelles' mangrove forests serve as natural carbon sinks, helping the country offset its carbon emissions and combat climate change. The "Blue Carbon Assessment for Mangrove Systems" is the first nationwide study in Seychelles, aimed at determining the carbon offset potential of the country's mangrove habitats. The findings will be included in the Seychelles' updated 7th Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

This project is being led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change, and Environment, under a contract awarded to the Blue Carbon Lab at Deakin University in Australia, with funding from the World Bank through the SWIOFISH3 Project.

Since nearly 80% of Seychelles' mangroves are located on Aldabra, significant efforts have begun to collect soil cores and measure above-ground biomass. The field team, composed entirely of Seychellois and led by Dr Barry Nourice, have the necessary skills and experience to carry out this incredible work. The soil samples will be analysed to assess the percentage of organic carbon and calculate the carbon stock per area, which will help determine the mangrove habitat's carbon storage potential for the country.



All Seychellois Blue Carbon Field Team members on their way to Aldabra from Assomption. From left to right; Mr Hendrick Youpa, Ms Jill Esparon, Dr Barry Nourice, Dr Ameer Ebrahim, Ms Fatima Sinon and Mr Jean-Pascal Charlette © Dr Ameer Ebrahim



© Dr Ameer Ebrahim



Trekking the Aldabra terrain to one of the survey sites and carrying out the coring within the mangrove habitat © Dr Ameer Ebrahim



Blue Carbon project team members and the Aldabra Island staff members © SIF

Red-footed booby census kicks off

Due to logistical challenges, Aldabra's breeding population of red-footed boobies has not been surveyed in the past 20 years. Historically, the atoll's population has exhibited two nesting peaks when most active nests are incubated by adults; one peak has been in August–September and another around February–March. However, it is unclear whether the population still follows this cycle.

Since its last evaluation, Aldabra has the second largest red-footed booby population in Seychelles © Martin van Rooyen.

Juvenile boobies were not shy to get close and personal with the census team! © Michelle Risi

August saw an atoll-wide red-footed booby census © Michelle Risi



© Christopher Jones

The Aldabra research team visited all known breeding colonies to identify suitable sites for monthly monitoring, determine nesting peaks, and establish the optimal time for an atoll-wide census. During these monthly visits, all active nests were recorded and categorized by status—whether an adult is incubating an egg, or a chick falls into one of three age categories. The breeding success rate is calculated by dividing the number of chicks almost ready to fly by the number of adults recorded on eggs earlier in the season.

When signs indicated that the next breeding peak was approaching in July, the team quickly began planning the census for August. Two teams surveyed the eastern part of the lagoon, and on the next suitable tide, one team focused on the less populated west side. Although logistical setbacks delayed counts for a day, the census was completed on September 3rd.

The current tally stands at over 14,000 pairs, which is exciting as it represents roughly half of the population. The census will be repeated next year for a more accurate estimate. We eagerly await the completion of the survey in March 2023, which will help confirm whether Aldabra hosts the largest red-footed booby population in Seychelles!

Where do the red-footed boobies go?

After completing the first half of the red-footed booby census on Aldabra, the SIF team aimed to determine where the population forages by attaching GPS loggers to the birds. This would us to identify ocean hotspots and areas where many individuals regularly return to forage.

After a week of intensive deployments and retrievals, the team successfully collected 20 GPS tracks from 14 birds on Aldabra, marking the first such data for this study site. The birds were tracked from a colony on the west side of the lagoon, with their tracks generally heading in a north-westerly direction. Most birds travelled within 150 km of the colony, while two individuals ventured over 400 km north of Aldabra.

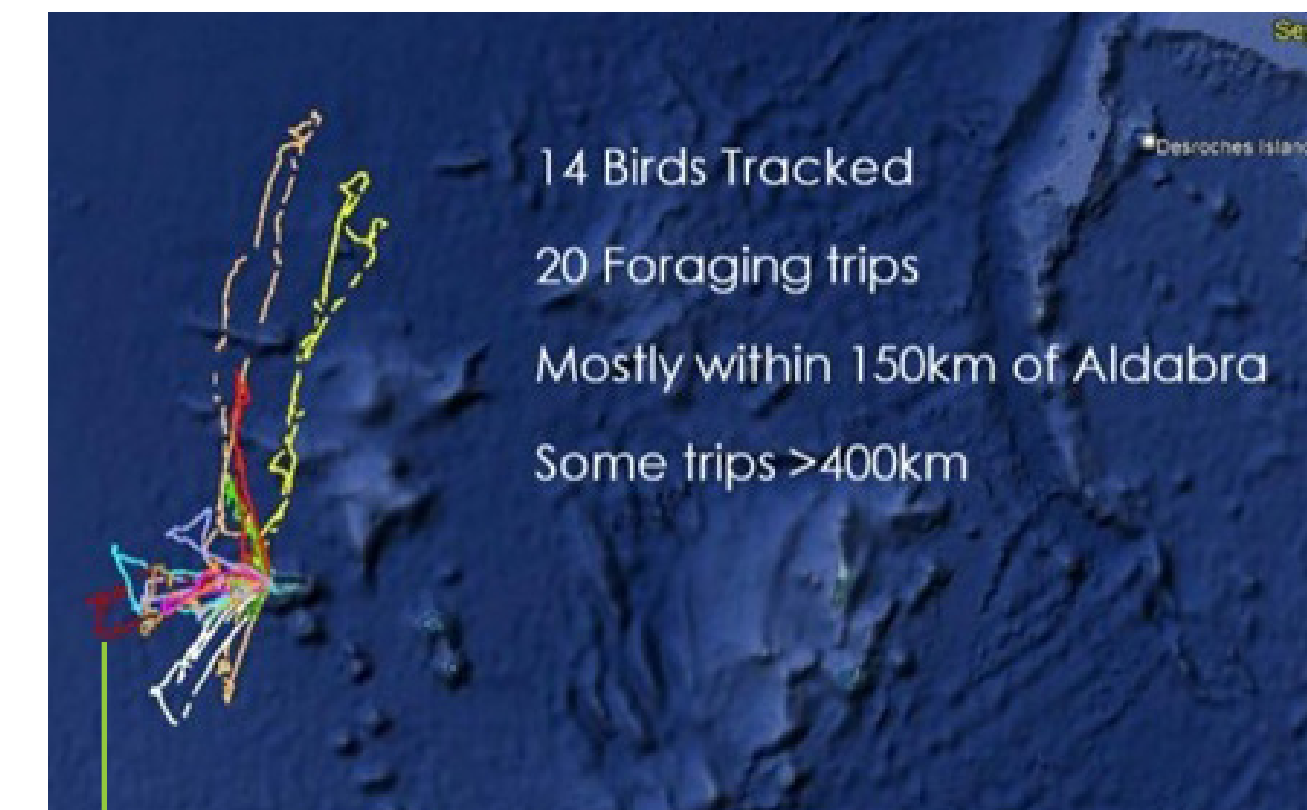
[Watch here](#)



Deploying a miniature GPS logger (not much bigger than an average coin) on a red-footed Booby with specialised Tesa™ tape © Christopher Jones



Aldabra Science Coordinator, Christopher Jones, weighing a red-footed booby before release © Michelle Risi



Preliminary results of ecological movement © SIF

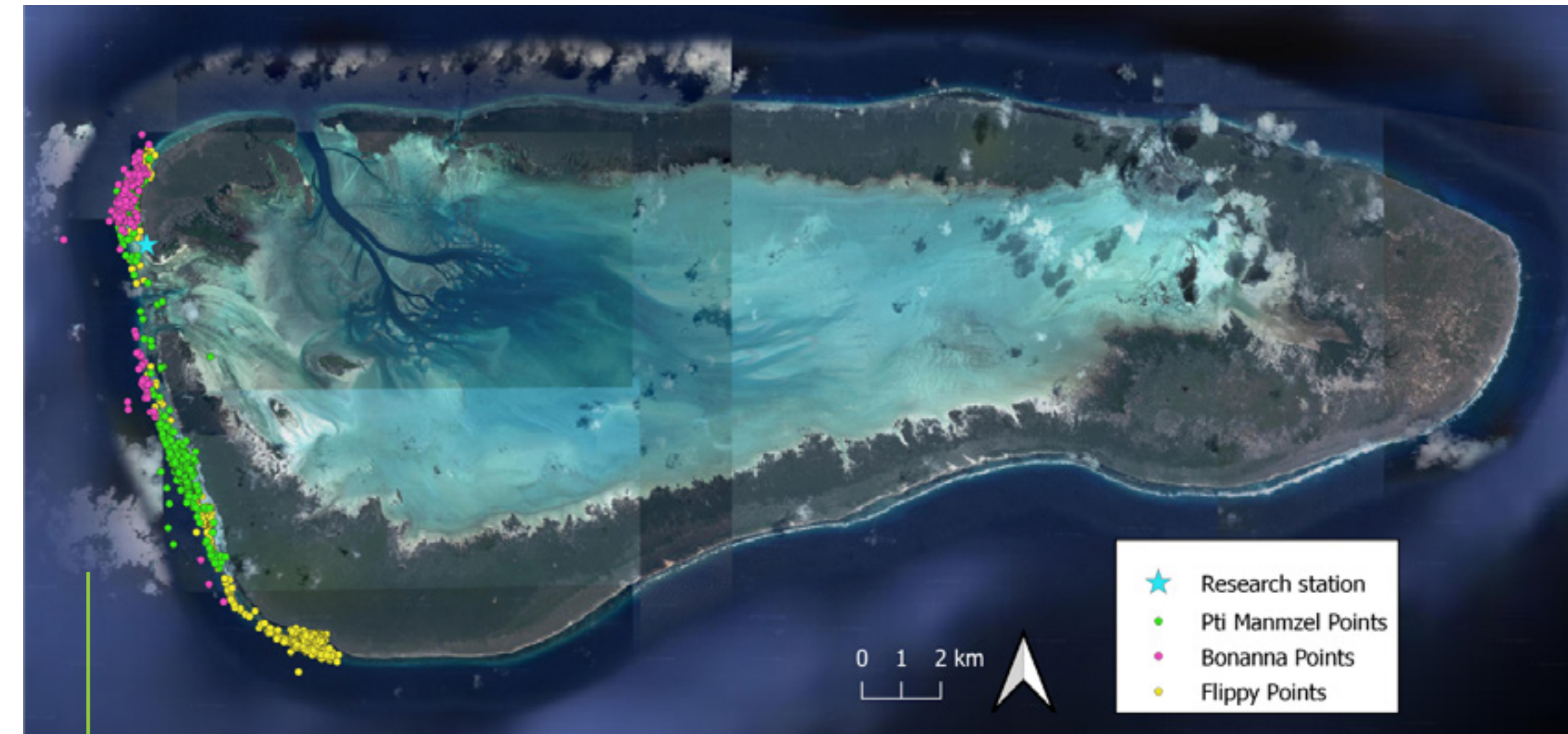
Aldabra turtle satellite tagging

Research from the Chagos has revealed that female turtles may be nesting more frequently than previously thought. Since population estimates are typically based on the number of females emerging to nest, this new insight suggests that turtle breeding populations may be smaller than originally realised. To improve breeding population estimates for Aldabra, SIF partnered with the University of Pisa PhD student, and former Aldabra Science Coordinator, Cheryl Sanchez.

In January, Cheryl and the team deployed GPS satellite tags on three nesting females. These tags provide highly precise location data, allowing us to track when a turtle is on the beach nesting and determine how many times she nests during the season. To ensure accurate data, the team focused on deploying the tags on first-time nesting turtles of the season.

For three weeks, the dedicated Aldabra team spent every night on Settlement Beach, ensuring they encountered every single nesting female. Flipper tags were applied to each female for identification, and the GPS tags were only deployed on newly encountered turtles. This “saturation tagging” approach was demanding but successful, as the team managed to encounter every nesting female during this period.

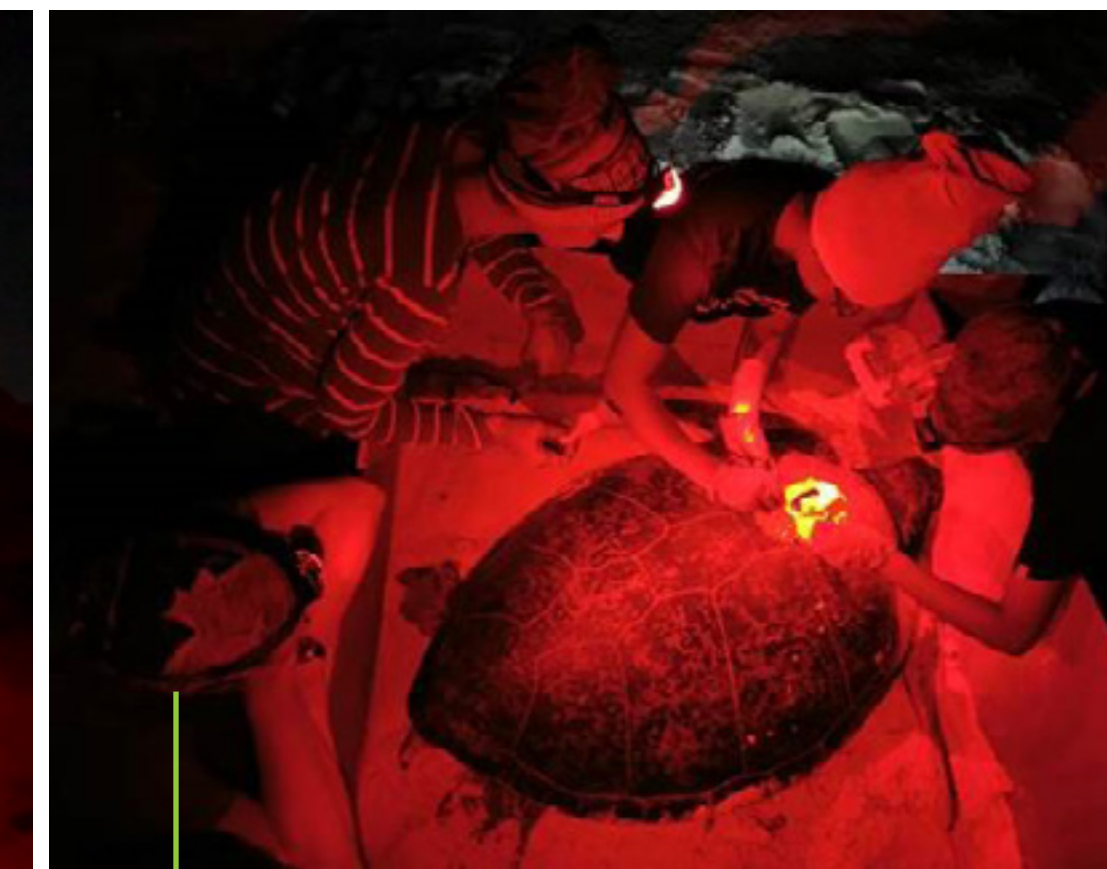
By the end of January, the three GPS tags were successfully deployed, and the turtles were named Flippy, Pti Manmzel, and Bonanna.



The raw locations of the three turtles transmitted by the GPS satellite tags. All three turtles have been staying along the west coast of Aldabra in between nesting. © Cheryl Sanchez



Our Aldabra Science Coordinator, Christopher Jones, applying a flipper tag to a green turtle after she nested © Cheryl Sanchez.



Deployment of a satellite tag on Pti Manmzel. © Cheryl Sanchez

Preliminary results of hotspots so far © Cheryl Sanchez

Using drones to count megafauna

Through February and March, we took to the skies with a DJI© Phantom Pro Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), as part of visiting researcher and past Aldabra Science Coordinator, Cheryl Sanchez's PhD research. The team pre-programmed grid transects for the UAV to fly at an altitude of 50 metres, with the camera pointing straight down and taking a photo every 2 seconds. The resulting photos will be examined in the upcoming months, and will certainly show many turtles, sharks, rays, and dugongs in Aldabra's lagoon.



Turtles in the shallows of the Aldabra lagoon © Cheryl Sanchez



Sebastian Cowin, Skipper and researcher, Cheryl Sanchez, carrying out the surveys © SIF

A dugong spotted in the Aldabra lagoon © Cheryl Sanchez



© Cheryl Sanchez

Aldabra staff joins the Monaco Explorations expedition to Aldabra.

Three SIF staff—Veronique Banane, Corianna Julie, and Ella Nancy—participated in the Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean research expedition from October 11th to 29th. Departing from Mauritius aboard S.A. Agulhas II, the team travelled first to La Réunion and then Aldabra, where they conducted research alongside 80 scientists from around the world.

The team was part of an international master's course in collaboration with Sorbonne University, where they learned oceanographic techniques and trained in using scientific equipment such as the CTD (which measures conductivity, temperature, and density, along with other oceanographic properties) and the planktoscope. They took part in plankton sampling throughout the Indian Ocean, as well as plankton identification and microplastic sampling. The SIF team also played a crucial role in conducting biosecurity checks for researchers disembarking on Aldabra.



The Seychelles delegation aboard Monaco Explorations © Monaco Explorations



From left to right:
Corianna Julie, Ella
Nancy and Veronique
Banane represented
SIF on the Monaco
Explorations trip © SIF.

The expedition also marked the start of a new project for Aldabra: the use of a remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) to explore and document marine life at greater depths. This project was a milestone, as the ROV explored depths ranging from 40 to 700 metres—areas that had not been studied before.

Upon returning to Mahé, the team engaged in communications activities, including radio interviews and contributions to newspaper articles. Senior Project Officer, Veronique Banane and Science Officer, Corianna Julie, presented their findings from the deep-water ROV explorations at a local seminar.



Science Officer, Corianna Julie and Senior Project Officer, Veronique Banane showcased preliminary findings at a local seminar © SIF.



A dumbo octopus captured by the ROV in Aldabra waters © Monaco Explorations

Communications for change project comes to a close.

The Communications for Change project (C4C) began in April 2021 and ran for a year, aiming to bridge the gap between science and the public by consistently communicating the marine monitoring work being conducted on Aldabra.

The key milestones and achievements of the C4C project included:



A video on the implications of sea level rise for Aldabra and Seychelles.

[Watch here](#)



A short film created on the Aldabra Reef Monitoring (ARM) Programme, depicting the progress of monitoring and its findings.

[Watch here](#)



A new satellite dish was installed on Aldabra to enhance connectivity with the national and global community.

More key achievements include:



Aldabra reef monitoring season completed with improved marine equipment



8 virtual sessions hosted by SIF were conducted to inform and educate the public on climate change and its impacts, marine work and Aldabra's biodiversity.



Initiation of a Seychelles Marine Research Diver Database, which is available for anyone living in Seychelles to sign up to volunteer on Aldabra.

[Visit](#)

Over 240 samples were collected from
Aldabra's reefs © Dr Anna Koester



SeyCCAT coral reef connectivity project concludes.

The Coral Connectivity Project, launched in February 2020, ran for two years to map coral reef connectivity throughout the Seychelles archipelago and identify crucial source reefs for coral larvae. By tracing the pathways of coral larval dispersal, the project aimed to provide essential data to inform the management of Seychelles' coral reefs. This information will assist in more effective planning and resource allocation for both management authorities and government agencies.

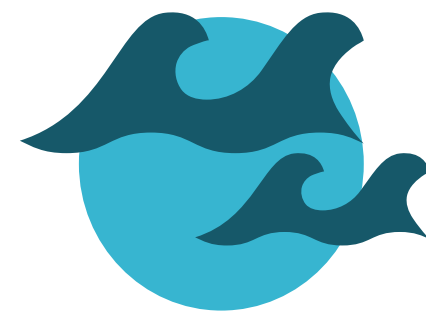
The project's key achievements include:



A total of 241 coral fragments were collected from 19 reef sites across 12 different islands in Seychelles.



DNA extraction, sequencing, and whole genome mapping of the *Porites* samples was completed, followed by bioinformatics and population genetics analyses.



An ocean current model for the Western Indian Ocean was developed with a 2-km resolution, covering 25 years (1993-2018), processed on supercomputers at the University of Oxford.



Simulations were run, releasing billions of virtual coral larvae at reef sites to predict coral dispersal pathways.



Key source reefs in Seychelles were identified.



[Watch here](#)

The findings were presented at both international and local symposiums.



The results were compiled into a scientific publication, a final project report, and an information dissemination strategy.



April Burt, former Aldabra Science Coordinator, and Jude Brice, Island Manager, collecting samples © SIF

SIF partners with a national project to implement the Seychelles marine spatial plan



SIF has secured funding through the Ocean5 project to support the implementation of the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan (SMSP). As part of this initiative, the Aldabra Special Reserve has been expanded from 439 km² to 2,559 km².

Over the next two years, SIF will review the existing management plan for Aldabra and update it to align with the standardized management framework developed under this project. This process will include a comprehensive review of related documents, the creation of new policies and regulatory protocols for SIF, and the implementation of progress tracking for objectives and strategies, all with the guidance of a consultant.



To launch the project, SIF conducted a Management Effectiveness Assessment of the current management plan in May. Current and former management team members gathered to discuss challenges, successes, and identify gaps in the existing plan. The workshop was generously hosted by Hilton Northholme, providing an ideal setting for focused, in-depth discussions.

The team gathered for the Management Effectiveness Assessment of the Aldabra Management Plan © SIF.

Two Aldabra research PhDs completed!

Through collaboration with PhD or MSc students, SIF is able to explore research outside its routine monitoring programmes, and the data collected can then be used to inform targeted management decisions for more effective conservation of the sites. In the past few months, we have seen the completion of not one, but two PhDs focussing on Aldabra.

In June, Annabelle Constance, SIF's newly appointed Science Coordinator, successfully defended her doctoral thesis, marking the culmination of her four years of PhD at the University of Zürich.

Annabelle's proposal had four original research questions related to the mangroves and coastline of Aldabra Atoll with the overall aim of advancing research to support their protection. As the first recipient of the David Stoddart Scholarship, she now joins a tiny group of Seychellois women with a PhD in ecology and conservation.

Dr Constance defending her PhD thesis at the University of University of Zürich. © Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley



Annabelle navigating through the mangroves of Aldabra during fieldwork © Jake Letori.

Secondly, April Burt, a former Aldabra Science Coordinator, also successfully defended her PhD thesis at the University of Oxford. April's research was co-developed with SIF and aimed to better understand the barriers that practitioners face in achieving their conservation and management objectives, as well as generating information needed to inform two major threats to island ecosystems: plastic pollution and coral mass mortality events.



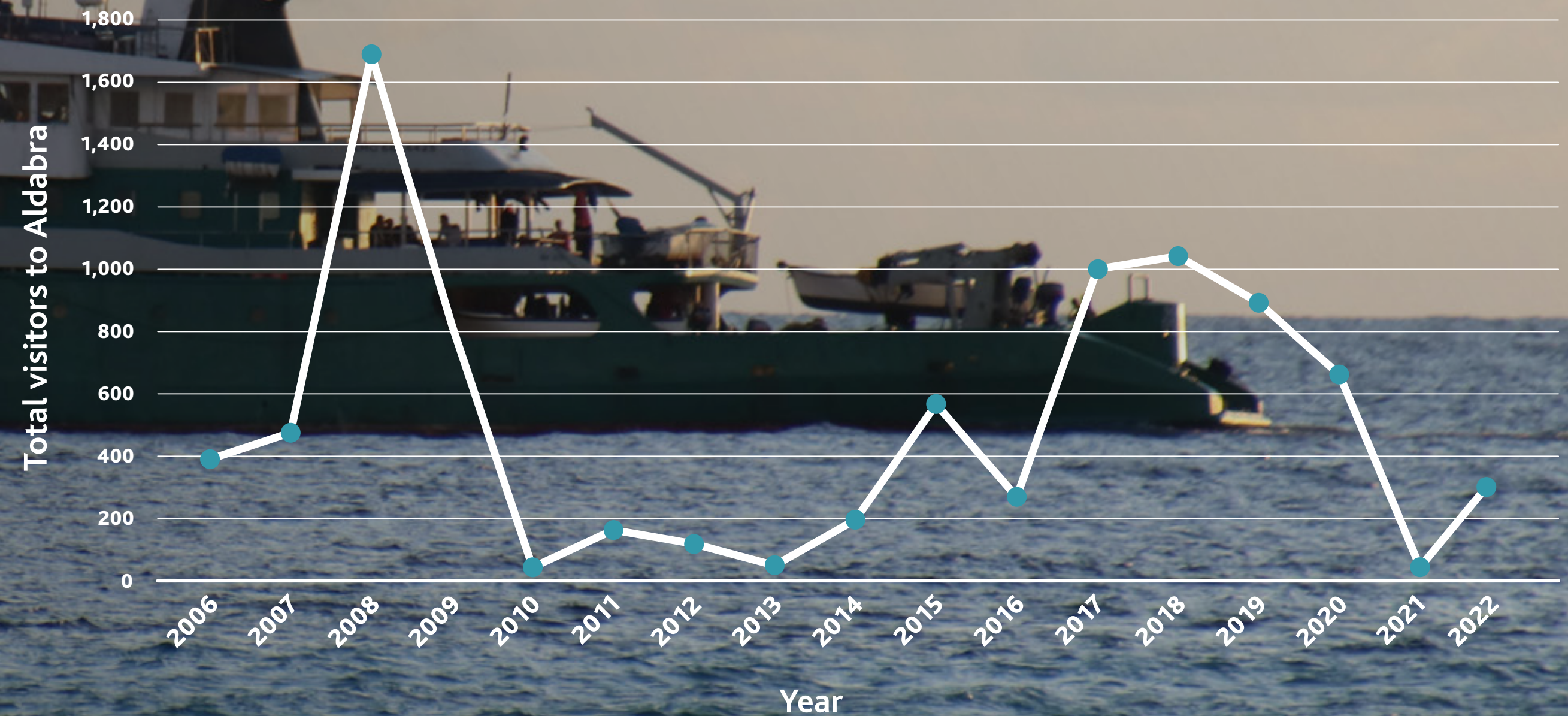
Dr April Burt at her PhD defence at the University of Oxford, UK © April Burt

6.2 Island Management and Sustainable Tourism

In 2022, Aldabra experienced a significant recovery in tourism, with visitor numbers rising to 295 from a historic low of just 34 in 2021. This marked a nearly ninefold increase, reflecting the gradual easing of global travel restrictions and renewed interest in tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic. The growth can be attributed to improved accessibility to the site as cruise ships returned to Seychelles.

This resurgence not only brought much-needed financial relief to sustain Aldabra's costly operations and conservation but also underscores the resilience and sought-after appeal of tourism in locations with high biodiversity. While the numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels, the upward trend in 2022 signals a positive step towards recovery.

Visitor number recover post- COVID-19





Stacking the shelves of the new shop © Rickpert Woodcock

The Aldabra shop has been undergoing renovations since May 2021, a project primarily led by the logistics team, which includes our skippers, electrician, mechanics, and logistics technicians, with support from the research team. Originally constructed in the 1970s from corrugated aluminium sheets and a steel frame, the building had become unstable over time. Heavy rains often caused flooding, and the space grew too small to accommodate the regular influx of supplies.

'Kot Biskwi' opens its doors on Aldabra



Shopkeeper and Logistic Assistant, Alvin Bonnelame, ready to receive the team at "Kot Biskwi" © Rickpert Woodcock

The shop was also a biosecurity concern, prompting the decision to demolish and rebuild it entirely. This was a significant undertaking that required long hours of work over an extended period, but the project was successfully completed in just ten months, by February 2022. The new shop, named "Kot Biskwi," honours our most famous Aldabra giant tortoise, Biskwi, who is a frequent visitor—especially when new supplies are delivered by the supply boat!

Aldabra's solar energy system turns 10!

The inauguration of the PV system in 2012 © Richard Baxter



PV System in 2022 © Christopher Jones.



The old engine room on Aldabra was replaced with a battery system © Christina Quanz.



© SIF



After nearly a decade of dreams and talks, followed by an additional four years of planning and building, solar power light finally started to shine on Aldabra on the 31st of March 2012.

In 2022, Aldabra's hybrid photovoltaic (PV) system celebrates its 10th anniversary. Something that was once thought impossible for Aldabra, has now reached an exciting milestone. Although 10 years might not sound like long for a PV system, in an environment as harsh, hot and salty as Aldabra's, where engines and other technological equipment degrade rapidly, it is a massive achievement.

To note, Aldabra's 25-kWp PV system was customised with a battery system and a small soundproof backup diesel generator. In 10 years, the PV system has produced 357,000 kWh and avoided 374 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, with the atoll's diesel demand reducing by 97% - only 5 drums of fuel per year! On top of this, SIF's investment into energy-efficient appliances reduced Aldabra's power demand by 60% and avoided an additional 574 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

[Watch here](#)

PV system upgrade

Following the 10th anniversary of Aldabra's solar system, it became clear that an upgrade was necessary to ensure the system could continue providing clean, renewable energy for another decade. With support from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, SIF invested in a new battery backup system and replaced outdated solar panels and battery inverters, significantly enhancing the system's capacity. Presentations and on-site training sessions were conducted with the Aldabra team to build local expertise for commissioning and maintaining the system and its components.

This upgrade has positioned Aldabra to better address the challenges of the climate crisis and provides hope and inspiration for other organisations in Seychelles and the region, encouraging greater climate awareness regarding the impact of appliances, daily activities, and the potential of renewable energy alternatives.

Trevor and Thomas replacing old inverters with new ones © Christina Quanz



PV upgrade parts on the way from Mahé on the biannual supply boat © SIF.



Aldabra's first sustainability survey

With the appointment of a Sustainability Officer at SIF, an internal sustainability survey was finalised and conducted with Aldabra staff to assess current sustainable practices and gather valuable recommendations for more practical and sustainable solutions.

A presentation was held to highlight the importance of sustainability and the staff's role in its implementation, while also providing context on existing sustainable practices, such as the solar system and energy efficiency initiatives. Over 90% of staff expressed that climate change was personally important to them and believed that both present and future generations would be affected. Additionally, most felt that SIF was making strong efforts in sustainable practices, particularly in waste management and energy efficiency. The discussions from the presentation and survey results will be used to shape the new Aldabra Sustainability Guidelines, ensuring that the highest environmental standards are upheld both on-site and across SIF.

Aerial view of the Aldabra Research Station's PV system located on Picard © SIF



The Aldabra team regularly sort their waste leading up to the arrival of the supply boat © Joey Latsha.



Farewell to Island Manager and an Aldabra icon

After nearly 14 years on Aldabra, outgoing Island Manager, rare species finder and Aldabra legend, Jude Brice, bids farewell to the atoll in May, leaving with some incredible personal and organisational achievements.

Jude began his career with SIF as a Skipper on Aldabra in 2008 and was later promoted to Senior Skipper, holding this role for several years. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find anyone who knows Aldabra's waters as well as him.

Island Manager, Jude Brice, began his journey with SIF in 2008 © Martin van Rooyen.



In 2016, Jude took on the challenge of becoming the Aldabra Island Manager, responsible for running all Aldabra operations, management of staff and visitors, supporting the research team and enforcing regulations to protect Aldabra against threats like illegal fishing and poaching. We thank Jude for his dedication towards Aldabra over many years, a dedication truly reflected in his hard work during his time with SIF.



A young Jude Brice starting his Aldabran life ©SIF

The ultimate navigator of Aldabra's waters © Adam Mitchell



6.4 VIP Visit

H.S.H Prince Albert II and the Monegasque delegation visit Aldabra

Alongside the Monaco expedition, we were thrilled to welcome the Monaco delegation to Aldabra Atoll, which included His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, Prince of Monaco, members of the press, officials from the Palais Princier de Monaco, CEO of the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco Robert Calcagno, world record-holding freediver Pierre Frolla, as well as Designated Minister Jean-Francois Ferrari, Minister Flavien Joubert, and SIF's CEO, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley.

Souvenir picture of the Monegasque delegation on Aldabra ©
Nicolas Mathys – Zeppelin for Monaco Explorations



The delegation travelled to Aldabra via a chartered flight to Assumption, then transited via a Seychelles Coast Guard Vessel. Their visit was packed with activities, including a snorkelling trip at Passe Dubois, a sunrise cruise in the lagoon, and a terrestrial tour of Picard, which featured a visit to the Old Settlement ruins. Aldabra staff were able to present information on the long-term monitoring programmes conducted over the years, marine monitoring efforts, and future projects such as the rat and cat eradication, SIF's largest undertaking to date.

A ceremonial signing of a letter of intent between the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco and SIF took place at the Aldabra research station, further solidifying the partnership between the two organisations and the Monaco Explorations Indian Ocean Mission of 2022.

H.S.H Prince Albert II meets with the Seychellois team onboard the research vessel © Nicolas Mathys – Zeppelin for Monaco Explorations



The ceremonial signing of the letter of intent © Nicolas Mathys – Zeppelin for Monaco Explorations



“With all my thanks and gratitude for this incredible opportunity to visit this amazing atoll, a very special and unique place in the world. Thank you for all your passion, determination, and commitment to Aldabra, and of course to this region and beyond. We are thrilled and proud to be your new partners and to work closely to make our global oceans’ ecosystems healthier, balanced, and more resilient.”

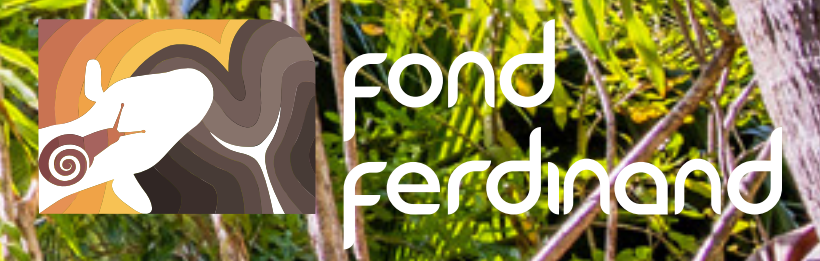
- H.S.H Prince Albert II

H.S.H. Prince Albert II presents SIF's CEO, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley with a medal © Nicolas Mathys – Zeppelin for Monaco Explorations



7

Fond Ferdinand



7.1 Science and Conservation

All adult male coco de mer trees marked!

As part of the project “Increasing the Resilience of Seychelles’ Flagship Tree Species, Coco de Mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*),” funded by the Franklina Foundation, SIF is conducting a new population census of coco de mer, covering both reproductive and immature trees in the Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand.

The Fond Ferdinand team marks a coco de mer tree with white paint © Ricardo Valmont.



As a preliminary step to the full census, the marking of all male coco de mer trees in Fond Ferdinand was a significant undertaking, completed over the course of a year from October 2021 to September 2022. This challenging task required staff to navigate difficult terrain, including climbing steep boulders, walking along cliff tops, and sliding down leaf-covered slopes.

Although time-consuming, this exercise is essential to assess the coco de mer population estimate for the sites © Ricardo Valmont.



Fond Ferdinand commences black parrot monitoring.

Rangers from Fond Ferdinand have been actively involved in the black parrot monitoring programme this year, expanding the scope of the longstanding monitoring efforts to a wider area.

The team has been trained to assess natural cavities for their suitability as parrot nests, identify signs that a cavity may be in use, listen for breeding calls, and detect new nests. They also learned how to look for clues of predation at failed nests. The monitoring got off to a great start when Fond Ferdinand rangers themselves discovered a new nest after observing specific behaviours from a female parrot. Upon closer inspection, they found not one, but two chicks in the nest.

This marked the first time that Fond Ferdinand rangers participated in black parrot monitoring, and it proved to be a great success. The black parrot team benefitted from additional staff support, while the rangers gained valuable new knowledge and experience.



Black Parrot Officer, Monica Griffith, showing the Fond Ferdinand team correct handling of parrots © SIF

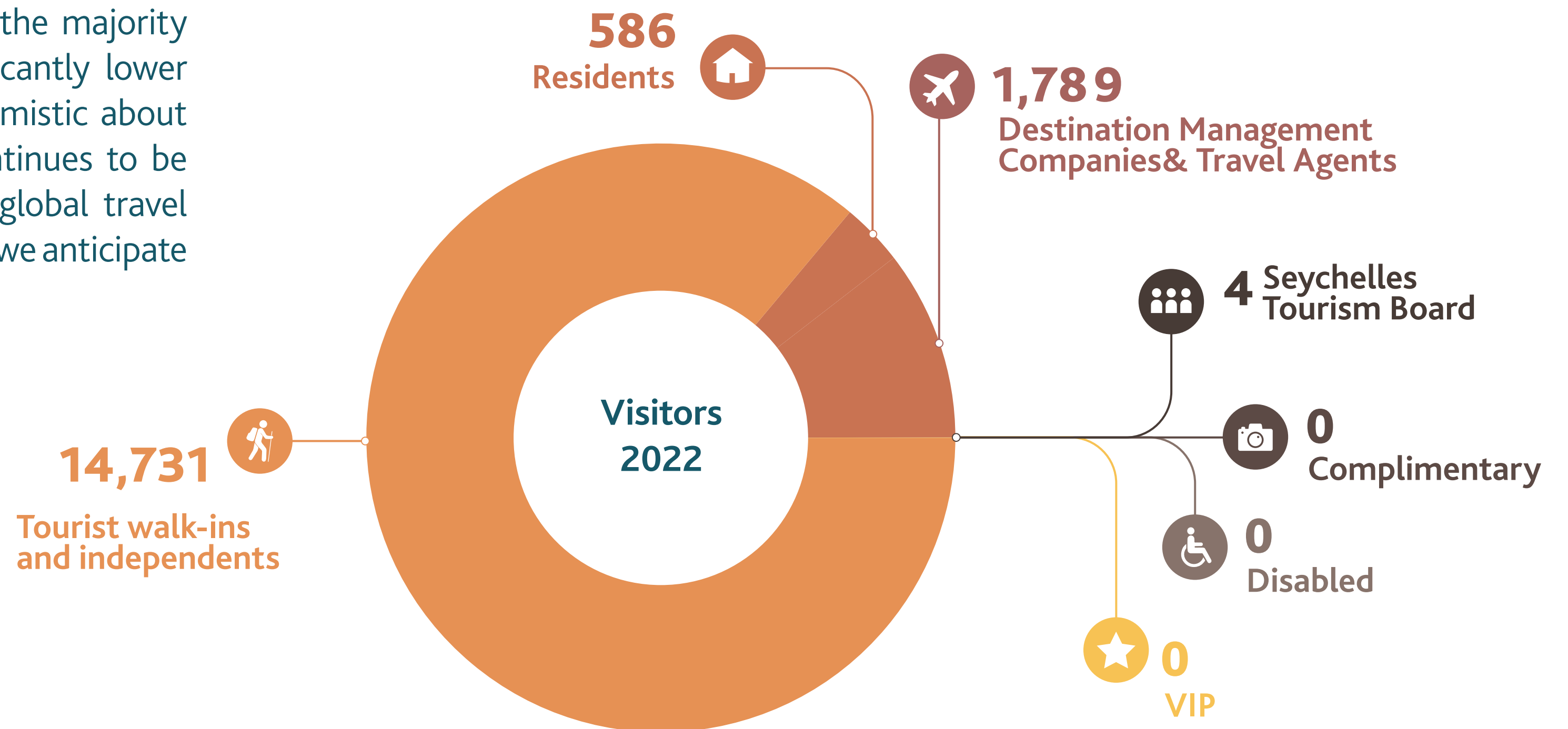


Fond Ferdinand Rangers, Walter and Ricardo fledging their first chicks © Nigel Valmont



7.2 Site Management and Sustainable Tourism

Fond Ferdinand welcomed 17,110 visitors in 2022, with the majority being walk-in tourists. While this figure remains significantly lower than that of its counterpart, Vallée de Mai, we are optimistic about the growing interest in Fond Ferdinand. As the site continues to be developed and Seychelles regains its prominence as a global travel destination following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, we anticipate an increase in visitor numbers in the coming years.





©SIF

Revitalising the vanilla plantation

After several years of inactivity, the Fond Ferdinand team has embarked on revitalizing the vanilla plantation. Vanilla cultivation is not only a valuable agricultural activity but also holds significant potential for economic growth. By re-establishing this plantation, the team aims to generate income and create sustainable livelihoods for the local community. The project will also contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the region's agricultural heritage while promoting environmentally friendly farming practices. Additionally, the success of the vanilla plantation can help strengthen the local economy by supporting local farmers, creating jobs, and fostering the growth of related industries.



The field team getting to work on the renewed vanilla plantation © SIF

Beekeeping at Fond Ferdinand

A partnership has been established with a local beekeeper to promote honeybee cultivation, offering valuable training opportunities for staff. Honeybees play a crucial role as pollinators, and their cultivation supports the health and biodiversity of local ecosystems. By fostering honeybee populations, this initiative helps enhance crop pollination, leading to improved agricultural yields and the overall resilience of the environment. The partnership also provides staff with hands-on experience in sustainable beekeeping practices, contributing to their professional development and the long-term conservation of the area's natural resources.



Tour guiding training for Praslin staff

The Fond Ferdinand staff recently completed basic tour guiding training, made possible through the support of the Seychelles Tourism Academy (STA). The three-month training programme was primarily conducted via Google Classroom, where the team received modules and research topics.

Throughout the course, staff dedicated many hours of their time, often sacrificing their days off, to acquire this new skill. Christelle Nibourette, a Vallée de Mai Sales Clerk and trainee expressed her gratitude for the opportunity, saying, “It was such a great honour to have had the chance to enhance my knowledge. I especially enjoyed the customer services training, which has given me more confidence in liaising with visitors.” Another trainee, Julianna Ally, a Visitor Attendant at Fond Ferdinand, also shared her appreciation, explaining that the training has boosted her confidence and improved her ability to deliver excellent service to visitors.

Congratulations to the participants who completed their Basic Tour Guiding course, facilitated by the Seychelles Tourism Academy © All photos contributed by SIF



Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley presented the certificates to the team at Fond Ferdinand © SIF.

8 Communications

Media Summary



A comprehensive list of news items can be obtained upon request via email to info@sif.sc in line with the Seychelles Islands Foundation Communications Effectiveness Assessment (CEA 2022).

Social Media Analysis 2022

In 2022, all of SIF's social media platforms showed notable growth in key metrics. On Facebook, reach increased by 44%, boosted by engaging content such as the "Tortoise Swimming" post with 38,923 views. Similarly, Instagram saw its reach grow by 50% to 135,946, while followers increased modestly by 2.2%, reflecting strong audience engagement.

On X (formerly Twitter), followers rose by 12.9%, though impressions declined significantly from 276,183 to 126,748, potentially due to changes in platform dynamics and algorithm changes in the rebrand. YouTube experienced a mixed year; while subscriber growth was strong (+30%), total views plummeted by 88%, with fewer videos posted compared to 2021. Despite some declines, overall, the platforms demonstrated engagement and follower growth, driven by strategic content and viral posts.



239 Times posted

138,135
Accounts reached

Followers

10,566

Most viral post:

Tortoise swimming in
Aldabra lagoon

[Click here](#)



214 Times posted

135,946
Accounts reached

Followers

7,860

Most viral post:

Hermit crab in a
plastic shell

[Click here](#)



273 Tweets posted

126,748
Accounts reached

Followers

126,748

Most viral post:

Aldabra 50th symposium

[Click here](#)



20 Videos posted

1,546
Accounts reached

Subscribers

282

Most viral post:

Tortoise swimming in
Aldabra lagoon

[Click here](#)

8.2 Education and Outreach

SIF celebrates the 10th anniversary of holiday camp



The end of 2021 marked a significant milestone—ten years since the inception of the SIF Holiday Camp at Vallée de Mai. What started as a small initiative with a few children, some of whom were children of SIF staff, has grown over the years into a much-anticipated event. Thanks to increased publicity and word-of-mouth referrals, the camp is now held twice a year and has become a popular fixture for schoolchildren in Praslin.

Over the past decade, the SIF Holiday Camp has welcomed more than 720 participants, providing over 57,000 hours of childcare during school holidays, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the SIF team. While the pandemic forced the cancellation of both 2021 camps, it provided an opportunity for reflection on the camp's significance. To capture its lasting impact on participants, organisers, partners, and the local community, SIF produced a short video celebrating the camp's success and importance.

[Watch here](#)

Aldabra connects with local schoolchildren for the C4C Project.

As part of the Communications for Change project, funded by the Seychelles Climate Change Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), the Aldabra team held a virtual classroom session via Zoom on March 11th. This session marked the final virtual event under the project, which aims to strengthen communication efforts and bridge the gap between the community and our work on Aldabra. During the online classroom, we engaged with secondary school students to discuss the Aldabra Reef Monitoring Programme.

The session was attended by students from various schools across Seychelles, with a focus on upper-secondary students to inspire their future studies in the environmental field. To conclude, the members of our team direct from Aldabra, Dr Anna Koester, Marine Researcher and Emma Mederic, Assistant Aldabra Science Coordinator, answered questions from students eager to learn more about working with SIF and the opportunities on Aldabra.

[Watch here](#)

The session was streamed live to our YouTube channel © SIF



Planting mangroves for Earth Day!

In celebration of Earth Day and this year's theme, 'Invest in Our Planet', we focused on accelerating solutions to combat climate change and its far-reaching implications. To mark the occasion, the research team at Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand, along with staff from the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority (SPGA), came together on Curieuse Island for a hands-on environmental initiative.

The team planted 100 propagules of the red mangrove (*Rhizophora mucronate*), under the expert guidance of Mr Terence Mahoune. A quarter of the propagules were carefully submerged in mud, contributing to the restoration of mangrove ecosystems. In addition to planting, the team collected litter along the Baie Laré trail and in surrounding mangrove areas, furthering efforts to reduce waste and protect the natural environment.



Prior to planting, the team conducted a cleanup activity on Curieuse with SPGA staff. © Maria Brioche

Field Research Officer, Maria Monthly, planting a propagule © Maria Brioche



International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem

July 26th marked the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, a day to celebrate mangrove species and the incredible benefits they provide to our planet! To celebrate mangrove ecosystems, SIF organised an exciting activity with primary Eco-School students at the Ephelia Constance Resort, where all seven endemic species of mangrove occur. Our Education and Outreach Programme Officer, Ms Maria, first conducted a presentation on endemic mangroves, their importance and where they occur in Seychelles. Aldabra, with nearly 1700 hectares of mangroves, has the largest mangrove habitat in the Seychelles and was listed as a Wetland Site of International Importance under the RAMSAR Convention in 2009.



Education and Outreach Programme Officer, Ms Maria, conducting a presentation on Aldabra's mangroves
© Mara Rivolta



© Mara Rivolta

Following the presentation, students and teachers were taken on an interactive tour of the mangrove forest with Markus from the Ephelia Green Team. To increase the resilience of the mangrove ecosystem in our community, the students plunged their feet and hands in mud while planting yellow mangrove propagules in the Ephelia Mangrove Nursery. Through protecting and planting more endemic mangroves, we cherish and value the species that live within them and further increase the resilience of our islands against the implications of climate change.



SIF partners with MCSS and GVI for the virtual classroom on sharks

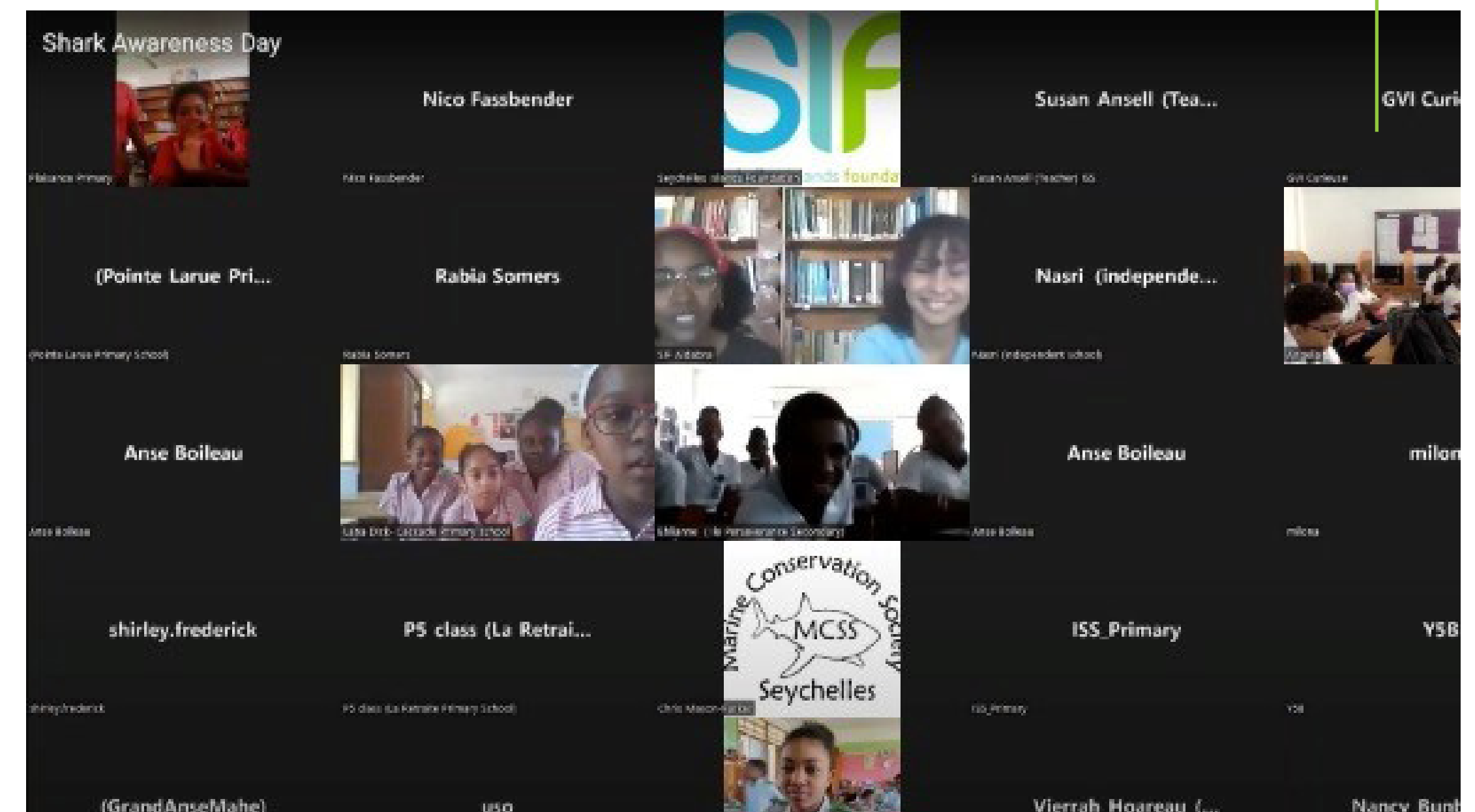
To celebrate shark species and the crucial part they play in our oceans, SIF teamed up with Marine Conservation Society Seychelles (MCSS) and GVI Curieuse on the 14th of July for Shark Awareness Day.

Members of our Aldabra team, Emma Mederic, Assistant Aldabra Science Coordinator and Georgette Savy, Assistant Field Research Officer, kicked off the virtual classroom with a presentation on the shark species found in Aldabra's waters; from blacktip reef sharks that are commonly spotted in the shallow waters of the lagoon, to regular hammerhead aggregations during the south-east season.

We then had the pleasure of hosting Joel Louise, the Science Officer at GVI Curieuse, who gave an overview of their Sicklefin Lemon Shark Research Programme. We learnt more about lemon sharks and their ecology, as well as GVI's pit tagging programme! For the last presentation, we were joined by Rabia Somers, Programme Coordinator for MCSS, who gave us some interesting facts about the world's biggest fish, the whale shark. MCSS began its pit tagging programme in 1996 and provided the first indication of whale shark regional movements in the Western Indian Ocean.

Watch here

Emma Mederic, Assistant Aldabra Science Coordinator and Georgette Savy, Assistant Field Research Officer, joined us from Aldabra © SIF.



Mahé and Praslin roadshows mark World Ozone Day

The Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change, and Environment (MACCE) hosted two engaging roadshows on Mahé and Praslin to mark the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, celebrated on September 16th. SIF proudly participated in both events, where members of the public explored stalls featuring sustainable practices, energy-efficient appliances, and eco-friendly refrigerants. The Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) further amplified the roadshows' reach by livestreaming them on the radio.

On Mahé, SIF's Head Office team brought Aldabra closer to the community by raising awareness about the significance of clean, sustainable energy in everyday life. They highlighted key projects such as the construction of the photovoltaic (PV) system on Aldabra and the Climate Justice for Aldabra: Increasing Energy Efficiency of the Research Station initiative, funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Christina Quanz, SIF's Projects Coordinator, shared a remarkable milestone: the PV system, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, has prevented over 384,248 kg of CO₂ emissions while supplying over 90% of the research station's electricity needs through solar power!



The SIF Team
at the Mahé
roadshow © SIF



Project Officer, Veronique Banane,
welcoming VIPs to the SIF staff and
explaining our Climate Vulnerability
Index Assessment for Aldabra © SIF



Visitors make their way to the SIF stall to learn more about Aldabra energy efficiency solutions © Mara Rivolta.



Assistant Field Research Officer, Terance Payet, made the feed the parrot game himself © SIF.

On Praslin, the team shifted the focus to the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, featuring research and monitoring efforts at Vallée de Mai. Displays highlighted studies on the Seychelles black parrot and the iconic coco de mer, sparking curiosity and lively “Feed the Parrot” game and the crowd-favourite “Guess the Weight of the Coco de Mer,” which drew enthusiastic participants eager to estimate the size of these massive nuts. Discussions among visitors. Attendees also enjoyed interactive games, such as the fun-filled.

These roadshows underscore the vital role of public awareness in fostering community empowerment and driving meaningful change in the fight against climate change.



VIP guests visit the Vallée de Mai stall © SIF

All sites join World Clean-Up Day activities.

In September, the Aldabra team undertook a comprehensive clean-up of Settlement Beach, collecting a total of 47.5 kg of debris. This relatively low amount reflects the seasonal dynamics of marine debris accumulation, with most waste during the southeast season gathering along Aldabra's southern coast. The collected debris was transported by boat back to the station and will be sent to Mahé for proper disposal.

On Praslin, the Fond Ferdinand staff joined forces with the Vallée de Mai team for a collaborative clean-up effort around their respective sites. Over two days, the team cleared litter from roadside boundaries stretching from Vallée de Mai to Nouvelle d'Ecouverte. Most of the waste collected consisted of littered beverage containers, including alcohol bottles, juice cartons, and aluminium cans.

World Clean-up Day harnesses the power of people to achieve incredible things by joining together. Its beauty lies in cooperation and collaboration: building bridges between disparate communities and including all levels of society.





PUC



VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

WORLD ENERGY DAY

SIF and partners host a virtual classroom for World Energy Day

World Energy Day is celebrated each year on the 22nd of October and highlights the importance of sustainable energy consumption. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7), this day fosters discussions around making energy accessible, efficient, and sustainable for all.

SPEAKERS:

- **CHRISTIAN FLEISCHER** - CONSULTANT
- **CYNTHIA ALEXANDER** - PRINCIPAL OFFICER, SEYCHELLES ENERGY COMMISSION
- **BRIGITTE PAYET** - COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER & **GINO LEON** - GRADUATE ENGINEER (RENEWABLE ENERGY), PUC
- **CHRISTINA QUANZ** - PROJECTS COORDINATOR, SIF

Watch here

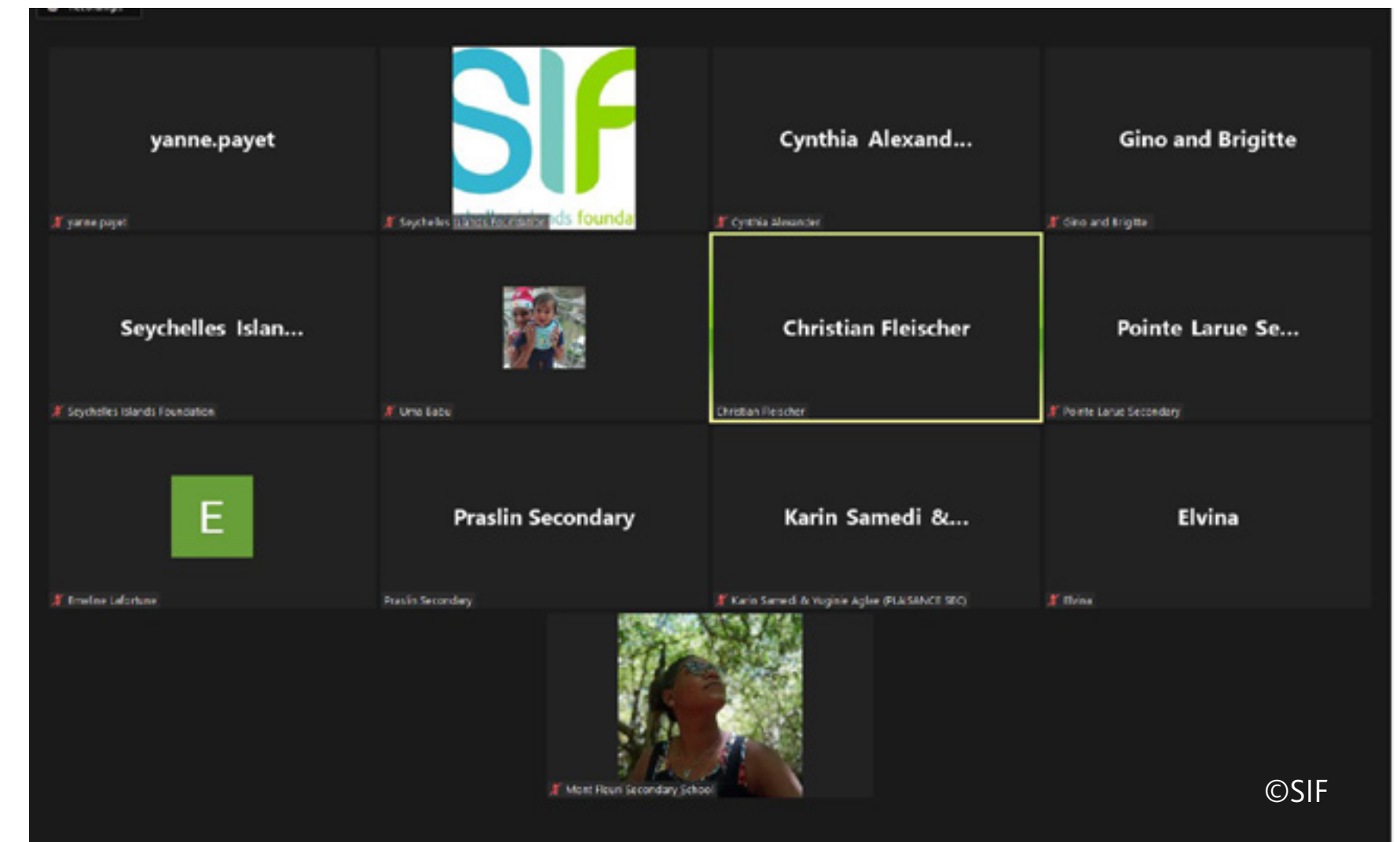


Learn about sustainable energy practices with us!

FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2022

1.15 PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83614026545>



©SIF

SIF sites on Praslin host Festival Kreol

The Creole Festival, held annually in October, is a vibrant celebration of Seychelles' rich culture, heritage, and diversity. This year marked the 37th edition, featuring a variety of cultural activities at both Fond Ferdinand and Vallée de Mai.

At the Vallée de Mai Visitor Centre, traditional artefacts were showcased, each telling a story of their practical use in Creole heritage. Among them was the “larap mayok,” a metal sheet with multiple perforations, nailed to a wooden handle for grating cassava to make traditional dishes like “galet,” “koudpwen,” and “penpen.” Another artefact that sparked recognition was the “boulwar,” a precursor to the modern electric kettle.

© Romano Laurence



The week's highlight was a delightful Creole buffet hosted at Fond Ferdinand. Prepared by SIF staff and partners, the feast brought together various collaborators and senior citizens, offering a warm and memorable celebration of Creole culture and community spirit.

© All photos contributed by Romano Laurence



SIF connects pre-schoolers to Aldabra



Montessori International School was selected to participate in a year-long project, focused on the 'Atolls of Seychelles', an initiative supported by the CNN Call to Earth programme. As such, SIF was approached by the school to conduct a presentation on the various species found on the atoll, as well as the threats they face.

Held at Labriz Gastrolounge, Bel Ombre, ten preschoolers aged 4 to 6 actively engaged with the videos and contents of the presentation.

Aruna Sunassee, Communications,
Education and Outreach
Coordinator gave a short
introduction to SIF and Aldabra ©
Montessori International School.

9

Scientific Publications

Soil nutrient content and water level variation drive mangrove forest aboveground biomass in the lagoonal ecosystem of Aldabra Atoll.

Led by Dr Annabelle Constance reveals that Aldabra's 1,720 ha of mangroves store over 66,000 tonnes of carbon—the highest in Seychelles. This storage, equivalent to 243,000 tonnes of CO₂, represents nearly half of Seychelles' annual fossil fuel emissions, underscoring Aldabra's vital role in climate change mitigation.

[Read here...](#)

Chromosome-level genome assembly for the Aldabra giant tortoise

For the first time, researchers from the University of Zürich have decoded the genome of the Aldabra giant tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*), aiding in prioritising conservation efforts and guiding rewilding initiatives.

[Read here...](#)

An International Assessment of the Barriers influencing the effectiveness of island ecosystem management

Research led by former ASC, Dr April Burt finds that the main barriers to effective management of island ecosystems were perceived to result from poor conservation policy implementation and law enforcement.

[Read here...](#)

Green turtle population recovery at Aldabra

A new paper published by a team of researchers from the University of Exeter and the Seychelles Islands Foundation, confirms the continued increase of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) at Aldabra.

[Read here...](#)

Long-term changes in adult size of green turtles at Aldabra Atoll

New research led by Dr Jeanne Mortimer analyses Aldabra turtle monitoring data based on > 4500 individual measurements over 21 years (1996-2016).

[Read here...](#)

10 Staff Achievements & Welfare

A new staff welfare scheme was implemented.



As Seychelles' longest-running environmental organisation, SIF has grown significantly over its 43 years of dedicated service, continually enhancing its staff support. Recently, new employee benefits have been introduced, including a five-year service award of SCR 10,000 with a certificate, complementing the existing 10-year service award. Maternity leave has also been extended to six months on full pay, and paternity leave has been increased to 20 days, reflecting SIF's commitment to employee well-being.

SIF staff across Head Office, Vallée de Mai, Fond Ferdinand and Aldabra can benefit from the new scheme. © SIF

Vallée de Mai Science Coordinator selected for DESMAN

Vallée de Mai Science Coordinator, Jessica Constance, was selected to join the famous Durrell Endangered Species Management (DESMAN) course, run on an annual basis at Jersey Zoo in the UK. DESMAN is a well-respected qualification and intensive training course that is recognized across the globe and designed to equip conservation professionals with a range of skills to manage and participate in conservation-based projects. The course takes place over 12 weeks and is supported by the University of Kent and the Durrell Conservation Academy.



Vallée de Mai Science Coordinator, Jessica Constance, on the DESMAN Course in Jersey, UK © Jessica Constance

Terance Payet wins Professor David Stoddart's scholarship.

Assistant Field Research Officer from Vallée de Mai, Terance Payet was awarded SIF's Professor David Stoddart Scholarship, with which he plans to undertake a part-time Bachelor's (BSc) degree in Environmental Science at the University of Seychelles (UniSey). This scholarship is offered on an annual basis to all Seychellois with a keen interest in biodiversity conservation. All of Terance's tuition fees will be fully funded by SIF for the duration of the undergraduate course.

Terance Payet receives Professor David Stoddart Scholarship award
© Aruna Sunassee.



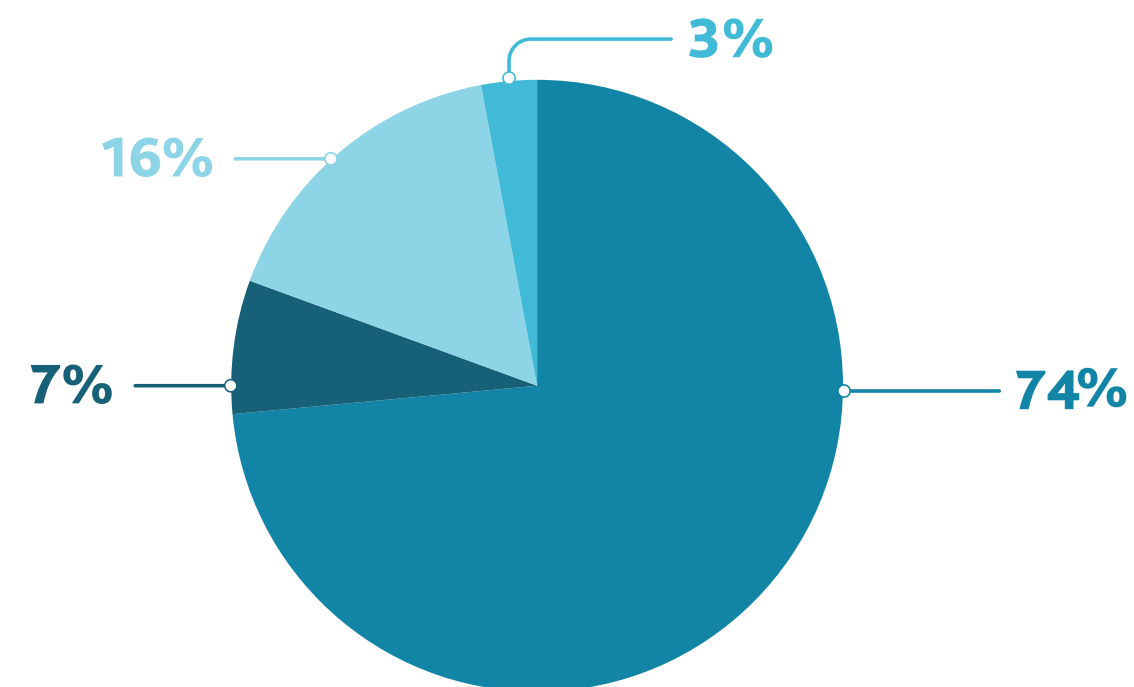
Celebrating two Head Office Graduates

We extend our congratulations to Samia August, Assistant Human Resources & Admin Officer at Head Office and Adrianna Volcere, Accounts Technician, who graduated from the Guy Morel Institute on Friday 26th August. Their graduation was held at Berjaya Beau Vallon Hotel where Samia was awarded with a Diploma in Human Resources Management and Adrianna, a Diploma in ACCA Diploma in Accounting and Business.



11 Finances

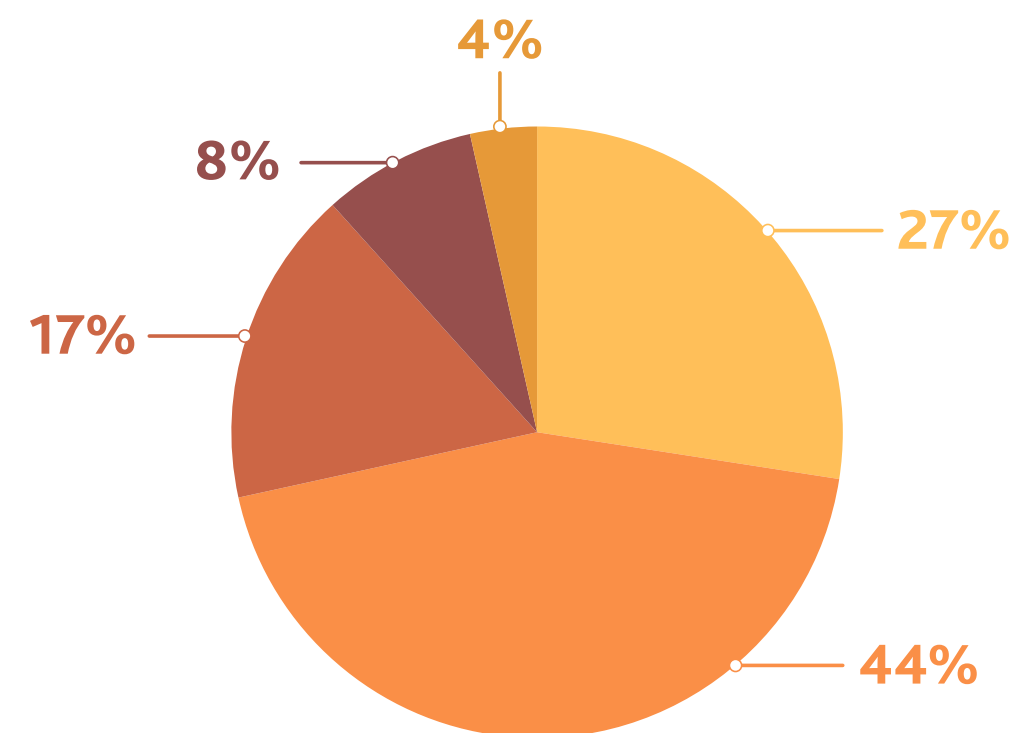
Revenue



Total **SCR 65,442,583.00**

Income from VDM, FF & Aldabra	48,112,541.00
Income from Project Activities	4,618,126.00
Income from Financial Instruments	10,790,672.00
Inventory Adjustments	1,921,244.00

Expense



Total **SCR 44,390,790.00**

Net Surplus **SCR 21,051,793.00**

Direct Cost	12,184,192.00
Employee Cost	19,586,477.00
Operational & Marketing Cost	7,442,296.00
Expenses for Project Activities	3,612,760.00
Other Expenses	1,565,065.00

Thanks and acknowledgements

Our thanks to...

The Patron of the Seychelles Islands Foundation and President of the Republic of Seychelles, Wavel Ramkalawan.

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- German Commission for UNESCO
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- Ministry of Education
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- Seychelles Fishing Authority
- Seychelles Coast Guard
- Island Development Company
- Island Conservation Society
- Seychelles National Meteorological Service
- Simon Taylor
- Global Vision International (GVI) Seychelles
- Seychelles Police Force
- Seychelles People's Defence Force
- Seychelles Fire & Rescue Services Agency
- Indian Ocean Turtle project, La Reunion

Our Research Collaborators

Prof. Peter Edwards (ETH Zürich, Switzerland)
 Dr Lindsay Turnbull (Queen's College, University of Oxford, UK)
 April Burt (Queen's College, University of Oxford, UK)
 Noam Vogt-Vincent (Earth Sciences, University of Oxford, UK)
 Dr Lori Lach (James Cook University, Australia)
 Prof. Brendan Godley (University of Exeter, UK)
 Prof. David Newbery (University of Bern, Switzerland)
 Dr. Olivier Bousquet (Météo-France & Laboratoire de l'Atmosphère et des Cyclones, France)
 Anna Koester and Prof. Christian Wild (University of Bremen, Germany)
 Dr Wilfredo Falcon (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 Dr David Gower (Natural History Museum, London, UK)
 Dr Jim Groombridge (Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK)
 Dr Dennis Hansen (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 Philip Haupt (Rhodes University, South Africa)
 Dr Christopher Kaiser-Bunbury (University of Exeter, UK)
 Dr Jim Labisko (DICE, University of Kent, UK)
 Dr Simon Maddock (Natural History Museum, London, UK)
 Dr Arpat Ozgul (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 Dr Gabriela Schaepman-Strub (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 Annabelle Constance (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 F. Gözde Çilingir (University of Zürich, Switzerland)
 Dr Janske van de Crommenacker (University of Groningen, Netherlands)



The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF), is a non-profit charitable organisation that was established as a public trust by the government of Seychelles in 1979. SIF manages and protects the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Aldabra Atoll and the Vallée de Mai as well as the Fond Ferdinand reserve. It has the President of Seychelles, Wavel Ramkalawan, as Patron.

SIF is managed by a Board of Trustees of 15 members who are appointed by the President. This board represents individuals and organisations from both Seychelles and overseas who are concerned with the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, and bring relevant expertise and knowledge to the management of SIF.

SIF is the longest established local organisation working in nature conservation in Seychelles and has taken a pioneering management approach by twinning the two sites. The foundation is mandated and dedicated to ensuring that the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Seychelles are well-managed protected areas where conservation, research, education and tourism are sustainably balanced. A major focus is on scientific research to direct, support and improve the evidence base for conservation management of the unique biodiversity and ecosystems of these two very different sites.

To successfully operate and protect two World Heritage Sites which are more than 1000 km apart, each with their specific set of challenges, SIF relies on income generated primarily by entrance fees and sales from the Vallée de Mai. This is supplemented by project funding, grants and donations. Aldabra does provide some direct income through visitor impact fees but piracy in the Western Indian Ocean, and now Covid, has compromised this source of revenue in recent years. SIF's work with and management of these sites will continue to be dependent on visitor numbers and the generosity of our supporters and funders for the foreseeable future.

If you are passionate about the work we do and want to help, then there are several ways you can get involved!



SPREAD THE WORD

Help us share our exciting updates by interacting with our pages on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and signing up for a our e-newsletter.



VISIT VALLÉE DE MAI & FOND FERDINAND

There is no better way to truly understand and support our work than by exploring the sites. Your entrance fees go towards the conservation and management of both Seychelles' World Heritage Sites, the Vallée de Mai and Aldabra Atoll, and the Fond Ferdinand Reserve.



ATTEND EVENTS

We often need assistance at our outreach events. If you have some free time and want to get involved, we would welcome your support and/or participation in these events, give us a call or email for more information. Check out our Events page for details of upcoming events.



JOIN US

A great way to contribute is to work for SIF, either as a paid member of staff or as a volunteer. Check out our Jobs page for more details.



MAKE A GIFT

If you would like to make a financial donation to SIF contact info@sif.sc. Your support could purchase some of the vital equipment required for our work.

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