



Introduced ring-necked parakeet eradicated from Seychelles!

Seychelles has made history by becoming the first country in the world to eradicate an established population of the highly invasive ring-necked parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) from the wild. Over 500 ring-necked parakeets, or 'kato ver', have been culled since the project's inception in 2011, and the last known wild parakeet was culled in the Morne Blanc region of Mahé in August 2017, with no evidence of any remaining wild birds in more than a year and a half since then. With the final phase of monitoring completed, this ground-breaking eradication can now be declared successful. The ring-necked parakeet is one of the most successful invasive birds in the world; it is the most widely introduced parrot species, with breeding populations in nearly 40 countries outside its native range.



Highly invasive ring-necked parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
© SIF

In Seychelles the parakeets posed a serious threat to Seychelles' national bird, the endemic

Seychelles black parrot (*Coracopsis barklyi*), which occurs only on Praslin. Although the ring-necked parakeets occurred only on Mahé, with one individual culled each on Silhouette and Praslin, if they had established a population on Praslin they would probably have aggressively competed with black parrots for nesting sites. Moreover, ring-necked parakeets carry a lethal parrot virus that may have spread to and impacted the black parrots, as has happened with echo parakeets in Mauritius. The ring-necked parakeet eradication was therefore conducted with the primary aim of protecting the Seychelles black parrot.



Ring-necked parakeet field observation © SIF

SIF stated the national initiative to eradicate the species from the wild in 2011, partnering with the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Seychelles Police Force and the Seychelles People's Defence Force. Their support, plus essential funding from the European Union, the Environment Trust Fund Seychelles, and the Global Environment Facility, secured the success of the eradication. The eradication was carried out in three phases; (1) an initial trial and monitoring phase to trial and identify suitable culling methods and assess the parakeet population size and movements; (2) a 3-year intensive eradication phase during 2013–2016, when almost all of the population was

targeted and culled, using shooting (primarily) by expert avian hunters; and finally (3) a follow-up and monitoring phase to track down the handful of parakeets that remained.

An essential component of all phases of the eradication was a public information campaign, with members of the public supporting the team and providing information on parakeet sightings throughout the project. This public participation was especially useful in targeting the last elusive birds. After more than 7 years of eradication efforts, all of the staff and volunteers involved, including the dedicated members of the public, have achieved a remarkable feat which cements Seychelles' reputation as a pioneer in invasive bird management.

The importance of the eradication was further confirmed in September 2018 with the publication of research confirming the presence of beak and feather disease virus (BFDV) in ring-necked parakeets from Mahé. The research analysed blood samples collected by SIF from black parrots and ring-necked parakeets and detected BFDV in nearly 50% of the ring-necked parakeet samples but in none of the black parrot samples. Another key finding was that the Seychelles strain of BFDV is most closely related to the UK strain, suggesting that the virus entered the country - and subsequently infected the wild parakeet population – via a parrot or parakeet imported from the UK. Although it is worrying that the wild parakeets on Mahé carried BFDV, their eradication has resulted in a safer situation for the Seychelles black parrots and given them their best chance at remaining free of introduced pathogens. Given the extensive introduced range of the ring-necked parakeet, and the interest in controlling its populations in other countries and islands, our hope is also that this successful Seychelles eradication will provide the inspiration and methodological information required to facilitate its control elsewhere.

SIF annual general meeting held on Aldabra



Annual General Meeting in full swing © SIF

The annual general meeting (AGM) of the SIF board of trustees took place on Aldabra from the 8th to the 12th March. The location for the AGM alternates between the Vallée de Mai and Aldabra each year. This was the first AGM for the new board which was appointed at the end of last year. Although some trustees have been members for many years, some are new to SIF, and for some it was their first visit to Aldabra. The new board are extremely enthusiastic and are already involved and engaged in protecting Aldabra and the Vallée de Mai. The trustees were able to meet all of the Aldabra staff and were lucky to be on the atoll at the same time as the Aldabra Clean-Up Project, a timely coincidence that was poignant because the project was partially conceived at the AGM two years ago and provides a powerful example of the importance of the board members visiting both UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



SIF trustees exploring the mangroves © SIF

The board members had a very productive AGM, with important presentations and fruitful discussions. Once again Aldabra House was a hot topic of discussion. The project has been declared a project of national importance by the Cabinet of Ministers, and will be a vital development in increasing the numbers of locals and tourists alike who are able to experience Aldabra as a remote-access visitor attractions on Mahé. However, after submitting the project plans to the Planning Authority last year, the project received an objection from the Department of Transport over the planned upgrade to the Providence road and the access and layout of the site. The project has therefore stalled as we await clarification from the government on how to proceed. At the AGM the board agreed that there is no other suitable site on Mahé for a project of this scope, and the costs associated with starting the project again at a different site are so high, that if this issue cannot be resolved, Aldabra House will not be able to go ahead. We hope that with guidance and direction from government a way forward will be identified and this nationally important project can proceed.



SIF board of trustees meeting with the ACUP team in the field © SIF

On a lighter note, the board also resolved that the Aldabra chapel should be restored. The chapel is a beautiful old building that dates from the time of permanent settlement on Aldabra. The building was built using traditional methods and mangrove as well as casuarina wood, however, over the years it has been damaged by Aldabra's harsh climate and it is now becoming urgent to conduct restoration work.

The trustees stressed that it should be restored using traditional methods so that the character of the building is preserved. We look forward to rejuvenating this precious part of Aldabra's history.

The Vallée de Mai was also discussed and the board focused in particular on the two greatest threats currently facing the site. The yellow crazy ant invasion of the Vallée de Mai poses a substantial threat to a range of endemic species, and this invasive alien species urgently needs to be controlled, which will be a priority this year. The recent poaching of giant bronze geckos from the wild is also extremely worrying, and SIF and the Ministry of Environment are urgently working to increase the national and international legal protection of the species.

Paper published on globally important islands to be prioritised for eradications

SIF has contributed data to and co-authored a recently published paper showing that nearly 10% of island extinctions can be prevented through the eradication of invasive mammals on 169 islands. The new research, published in PLoS One, reports on a globally collaborative study showing that eradications of invasive alien mammals, such as rats, cats and goats can have a major contribution towards stemming the global extinction crisis by identifying 107 islands that could have eradication projects initiated by 2020, and 62 islands where projects could be initiated by 2030. These actions would benefit 9.4% of the Earth's threatened island species.



Aerial view Aldabra Atoll © Camerapix

The paper, titled “Globally important islands where eradicating invasive mammals will benefit highly threatened vertebrates”, presents biological and geographic data compiled for 1279 islands with information on threat status of native species on these islands. Feasibility of eradicating invasive alien mammals was also assessed. In total, 54 experts, representing more than 40 institutions from around the world, contributed to the assessment, including whether these eradications would be feasible to initiate before 2020 or 2030.

Despite there being around 465,000 islands in the world, islands total only a small fraction (5.3%) of our planet’s land area, yet they also host a disproportionately higher rate of extinction (75% of known bird, mammal, amphibian and reptile extinctions since 1500 have been on islands) and endangerment (islands host 36% of critically endangered bird, mammal, amphibian and reptile species) relative to their area, than continents.

Invasive alien species are a major driver of species extinctions on islands, and many island species are threatened as a direct consequence of invasive alien species, particularly invasive mammals, which devour eggs, young and even adults of native animals and plants, spread invasive seeds, and destroy vegetation. Eradication of invasive mammals from islands is a powerful and proven conservation tool, with more than 1200 invasive mammal eradications attempted on islands to date, with an average success rate of 85%, resulting in many remarkable restoration success stories, including the recovery of threatened species. Investing limited conservation funds on islands therefore provides a high return on investment.

Aldabra appears in the list of eradications assigned to being feasible by 2030 and planning and research has already started for this huge project. Although Aldabra is often described as ‘pristine’, this is inaccurate as introduced rats and cats are having serious impacts on its native species and have shaped the biodiversity and, almost certainly, the habitats there today. A rat

and cat eradication on Aldabra would therefore have untold benefits for the native biodiversity, from obvious and immediate impacts, such as improved breeding success of landbirds and seabirds, and increased abundance of small reptiles and invertebrates, to the realms of exciting and longer-term possibilities, such as re-establishment of long-missing native sea- and landbird populations, and improvements in nutrient cycling, resulting in even higher quality and more resilient terrestrial and marine habitats and communities. We can only speculate on the potential outcomes of such an eradication at the moment, but we do know that they will be dramatic, impressive and incredibly positive for Aldabra’s conservation.

The citation for the paper is: Holmes ND, Spatz DR, Oppel S, Tershy B, Croll DA, Keitt B, et al. (2019) Globally important islands where eradicating invasive mammals will benefit highly threatened vertebrates. PLoS ONE 14 (3): e0212128. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0212128>

Paper on SIF bird eradications published in Island Invasives conference proceedings



Island invasives:
scaling up to meet the challenge

Proceedings of the
international conference on island invasives 2017

Edited by C.R. Veitch, M.N. Clout, A.R. Martin, J.C. Russell and C.J. West



Island Invasives publication © IUCN

Another new paper, led by Nancy Bunbury, SIF's director of research and conservation, describes lessons learned from the suite of recent invasive bird eradications by SIF. The paper is based on Nancy's presentation at the third Island Invasives conference held in 2017 in Dundee, Scotland and has been published in a proceedings of the conference by the IUCN. Management and eradication techniques for invasive alien birds remain in their infancy compared to invasive mammal control methods, and there are still relatively few examples of successful bird eradications. Since 2011, SIF has conducted five separate eradication programmes for invasive birds on three islands. Target species were prioritised according to the threat posed to the native biodiversity of Aldabra and the Vallée de Mai. Red-whiskered bulbuls (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) and Madagascar fodies (*Foudia madagascariensis*) occurred on Assumption, the closest island to Aldabra, which, at the time, had no known introduced birds. The growing population of ring-necked parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) on Mahé posed a threat to endemic Seychelles black parrots (*Coracopsis barklyi*) on Praslin, as reported earlier in this newsletter. In 2012, red-whiskered bulbuls and Madagascar fodies were detected on Aldabra, so an additional eradication was started. All five eradications used a combination of mist-netting and shooting. The intensive part of each eradication lasted three years or less. On Assumption, 5279 red-whiskered bulbuls and 3291 Madagascar fodies were culled; on Mahé, 545 parakeets were culled; and on Aldabra 262 Madagascar fodies and one red-whiskered bulbul were culled. Each programme underwent 1–2 years of follow-up monitoring before eradication was confirmed, and, with the announcement of the ring-necked parakeet eradication in this newsletter, all five eradications have been successful. None of these species have previously been eradicated in large numbers from other islands and the results offer a positive outlook for the future of invasive bird control. The key challenges and insights gained from these eradications can be used as a basis to advance the field of invasive

bird management and to initiate the development of best practices for practitioners considering invasive bird eradications elsewhere.

The citation for the paper is: Bunbury N, Haverson P, Page N, Agricole J, Angell G, Banville P, et al. (2019) Five eradications, three species, three islands: overview, insights and recommendations from invasive bird eradications in the Seychelles. In: Veitch, C.R., Clout, M.N., Martin, A.R., Russell, J.C. and West, C.J. (Eds.). Island invasives: Scaling up to meet the challenge. Proceedings of the international conference on island invasives 2017. Occasional Paper SSC no. 62. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xiv + 734pp.

SIF Vacancies

We have several vacancies at the head office on Mahé, and in the Vallée de Mai which need to be filled urgently. We are actively seeking Seychellois applicants for all of the positions. Details can be found on our website at <http://www.sif.sc/jobs> or contact HR on 432 17 35 if you are interested in any of the following positions:

Mahé:

- Projects & Science Coordinator

Vallée de Mai:

- Visitor Attendant
- Field Worker
- Sales Clerk



Black parrot breeding season comes to an end

Well, the black parrot breeding season has finally come to an end! On the 15th March the final chick left its nest in Vallée de Mai bringing the total (known) fledglings this season to 18 from 12 nests. Although most of the successful nests were in Vallée de Mai, a couple of birds also fledged in the wider Praslin National Park area and also in Fond Ferdinand. The team is now faced with the challenge of trying to spot the fledglings in the canopy of the coco de mer forest and identifying them.



This fledgling got a bit too confident and forgot to hold on tightly to the branch while reaching for fruit, nearly falling out of the tree just after this picture was taken. It turns out their famed acrobatic skills are due to practice, not natural ability! © SIF

After leaving their nests, fledglings are still seen with their parents, learning what to eat and where the best food can be found. As difficult as it can be to spot a fledgling parrot, it is extremely rewarding to catch a glimpse of the young ones as they try to make their way in the world – and even more so as, just like a baby learning to walk, they are still a bit clumsy, often over-balancing as they navigate around branches, requiring lots of frantic wing-flapping to remain upright! They certainly still have some growing up to do before we can expect to see them laying their own eggs in two or three years' time.



It's a long way down! © SIF

Tackling the increasing yellow crazy ant invasion in Vallée de Mai

Since the alarming discovery a few months ago that yellow crazy ants are now present throughout Vallée de Mai in higher numbers than ever before, and are having significant impacts on a range of native fauna, there has been an even greater focus on yellow crazy ants within SIF.

Leading the charge is project officer, Lorraine Cook, who is conducting research and consulting with international experts to identify the best options for monitoring and controlling yellow crazy ants within the Vallée de Mai. Control will involve using a pesticide that is designed to be highly attractive to yellow crazy ants and it is already apparent that to be effective, efforts will need to be highly intensive on a scale never before seen in the Vallée de Mai. In preparation, Lorraine, along with Vallée de Mai staff members

Julio Agricole, Shanone Adeline and Terance Payet, recently completed a pesticide handling course at the Seychelles Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture. This will enable all staff to use pesticides safely and in accordance with the law.



SIF staff attending pesticide use training © SIF

Furthermore, due to the concerning decline of endemic white slugs and snails in the Vallée de Mai, which are most likely affected by the yellow crazy ants, the research team has recently implemented mollusc and gecko monitoring throughout the reserve to assess their distribution and abundance and determine whether their numbers increase after ants have been controlled.

Education and outreach is also an important aspect of SIF's focus on yellow crazy ants. Vallée de Mai staff, Maria Brioche and Emmanuel Morel have been travelling around schools on Mahé and Praslin to spread the message about yellow crazy ants to illustrate the problems that invasive alien species can cause. They have so far reported excellent engagement and feedback from pupils of all ages. So far they have been to nine schools and around 400–500 pupils have seen the presentation. SIF plans to complete the presentations in all schools in Seychelles by end of July.

Dealing with yellow crazy ants and preventing their further spread is a true team effort for SIF, involving Vallée de Mai and Head Office. This may be one of the most challenging invasive alien species problems SIF has had to tackle so far and we will be reporting on project progress over the coming months.



Presenting about the impacts of yellow crazy ants with a group of students © SIF

Night safari in Vallée de Mai with Lemuria staff

SIF organised a night safari in the Vallée de Mai reserve for the staff of the Lemuria Resort on Praslin, the resort being one of SIF's close partners. A night safari is a tour of the Vallée de Mai at night and is the perfect opportunity to discover the reserve at night and see the nocturnal species that make this reserve their home.



The participants trying to spot the nocturnal species in the Vallée de Mai © SIF

The guided night tour took place on Wednesday 20th March. During the tour the staff learned more about the coco de mer and the other palms found in the Vallée de Mai. They were fascinated to learn about how pollination of coco de mer takes place. The Lemuria staff were very excited to see a Seychelles chameleon, which is rarely seen during the day. They also saw other species like the giant bronze gecko, tree

frogs, crickets and even birds sleeping in the trees. They were amazed by the size of the giant bronze gecko as this was the first time most of them had seen one.

World Meteorological day

To commemorate World Meteorological Day on the 23rd March, a group of primary five pupils from schools on Praslin visited the Vallée de Mai. The aim of the visit was to teach them about different weather instruments and how the automatic weather station at the Vallée de Mai works. The session started with a presentation by research team member, Shanone Adeline, who explained the different weather aspects and gave an overview of climate in the Seychelles. The students then watched a video on the different weather instruments, focussing on those used by the meteorological officers on Mahé.



The students school pupils learning how to make weather instruments with used paper cups and straws © SIF

World Water day

World Water day is celebrated each year on 22nd March to highlight and celebrate the importance of water. The theme for World Water day this

year was “Leaving no one behind” and focused on those people who still do not have access to safe drinking water and solutions to this issue. To help school children reflect on the theme for this year, a visit was organised to the PUC water treatment station at Nouvelle D’écouverte attended by primary five pupils from the schools of Praslin. The goal was to teach children about the water treatment process and for them to view first-hand the procedures necessary for providing safe drinking water to their homes.



The students pupils learning about water treatment at the PUC water catchment at Nouvelle D’écouverte © SIF



Aldabra Clean-Up Project update

On the 29th of March the Aldabra Clean-Up Project team of volunteers touched down on Mahé. SIF Board Trustee and Aldabra Clean-Up Project co-founder, Prof. Lindsay Turnbull, who helped manage the Aldabra Clean-Up Project in-situ was also on-board the returning flight. The team was welcomed back by family members and SIF Chief Executive Officer, it was an emotional but happy reunion after the five-week life-changing expedition.



Collecting marine debris washed up on Aldabra © SIF

The expedition was divided in two phases, of which the first dealt with the collection of marine debris from the southern Grande Terre beaches of Dune d'Messe, Dune Jean-Louis and Cinq Cases, and the second concentrated on moving the collected waste from shore to vessel, demanded a great deal from the Aldabra Clean-Up Project volunteers. Most of the expedition was spent at field camps with very basic living

conditions. Normal working days consisted of waking up at 5:00 AM and leaving the camps at first light, walking up to an hour to reach the further beaches, cleaning beaches all morning, taking a lunch break and rest before resuming cleaning, and finally returning to camp at last light to make contact with the other team and the main research station at 7:00 PM. Whilst collecting, the team also sorted the marine debris into four categories; fishing gear (including buoys, ropes, fish aggregating devices and nets), flip flops, PET bottles, glass bottles and miscellaneous fragments.



*Loading of collected waste to be shuttled to the barge
© SIF*

On top of collecting waste, the team were tasked with conducting beach surveys to understand the composition of the waste and the work effort needed to collect the waste. The team also had to document their experiences, shooting footage of what they saw and did, as well as recording personal accounts and group discussions to provide insights and in-field perspectives for the project's feature documentary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt-xMAI6eaQ>) and social media. The team also had the chance to engage with the Sky News team as part of its Ocean Rescue programme, taking part in two, one hour long shows and several smaller pieces which has amplified the success of the project's awareness objective to new heights (<https://news.sky.com/story/deep-ocean-live-tonnes-of-plastic-and-thousands-of-flip-flops-threaten-wildlife-on-coral-atoll-11669828>).

While the volunteers worked along the shorelines of Aldabra, the SIF team had spent

time preparing the field camps and joined the teams on camp, helping with waste collection, transport and supplying the camps with additional food and drinks. This was in addition to the incredibly busy schedule of the season which included hosting the winning group of Eco-Schools pupils and SIF's annual general meeting, as well as other activities. Moreover, along with the Seychelles People's Defence Forces, based on the Seychelles Coast guard vessel Etoile the team were indispensable in moving the waste from shore to supply vessel.



Loading the marine debris onto the barge © SIF

These efforts resulted in over 25 tonnes of marine debris being collected and at least 20 tonnes brought to Mahé. The fact that not all the collected waste was removed from Aldabra is testament to the difficulties such an operation faced. For instance approximately two-thirds of the waste collected at Cinq Cases, one of the most inaccessible areas of Aldabra, had to be left behind as the pick-up operation had to be aborted when large waves caused flooding of an SIF boat, which needed to be recovered.

With the return of the volunteers to Mahé and arrival of the collected waste on the 1st April, there is still much to be done with the collected waste to be stored in a secure and sheltered area to allow interested parties to take part in its repurposing, reuse and recycling.

The team and SIF staff were treated to a fantastic presidential welcome, and the experience they had on Aldabra during this intensive and hugely challenging project will stay with them for the

rest of their lives. SIF CEO Dr Fleischer-Dogley remarked ““We worked tirelessly as a large group, with diverse professional backgrounds, beliefs, and social settings as ONE team for ONE GOAL - to clean the most beautiful place in the world. Despite the cuts, burns, headaches, pains in your muscles and days you did not want to get up again - you all became ONE TEAM with the most empowering story: that CHANGE is possible.”



Group photo of the Aldabra Clean-Up volunteers, the Aldabra staff and the Seychelles coastguard after a successful expedition © SIF

Eco-Schools trip to Aldabra

Conservation work is not easy, especially in a place as isolated as Aldabra. On Aldabra, the tides rule the world, and they wait for no one. Additionally, the terrain is very tough and inhospitable. It's not an easy place for humans to work, let alone live, however, it is one unique, extraordinary place! To visit Aldabra, and to even work on Aldabra is a privilege. For those working on Aldabra, it is exciting to share all they know and all they've seen to help inspire others to continue protecting her. There is therefore a time of the year that all staff really look forward to – when the winning Eco-school pupils visit Aldabra!

In March, 12 pupils and four teachers from the inner islands joined the SIF Aldabra team on Aldabra for five days. These students are winners of the national Eco-school competition, which is coordinated by the Environmental Education Unit at the Ministry of Education. The students participate in environmental activities and projects throughout the year aiming to make

their schools more environmentally friendly. The pupils present their achievements to a panel of judges each year and the winners are awarded a trip to Aldabra by SIF!



The Eco-schools group arriving on Assumption © SIF

The pupils ranged in age from 10 to 16 and were from different schools on Mahé and Praslin. They participated in a range of activities to help them learn about the station on Aldabra, the conservation and monitoring work being conducted on Aldabra, and to be able to see as much of Aldabra as possible in the short time they are on the atoll. For the conservation monitoring work, pupils joined rangers on sea turtle track monitoring (they even saw a nesting green turtle leaving the beach!) and learned the different methods used by the giant tortoise monitoring programme. Other activities included



The pupils learning about sea turtle track monitoring and a lucky encounter on a nesting female green turtle going down the beach! © SIF

discovering the importance of mangroves, seeing the lagoon at high and low tide for comparison, and identifying sea birds and fish. The group was also able to camp for a night at

the north-eastern field hut, Middle Camp, on the east edge of the island of Malabar. This hut is visited monthly by rangers to conduct various monitoring activities, and the children were able to visit the frigatebird breeding colony and snorkelled in the mangroves.



The students pupils snorkelling in the lagoon © SIF

The pupils were also taught about the threats that Aldabra is and will be facing. They took part in a beach clean of Settlement Beach to see the type of trash washing ashore and to learn more about what they can do to help with the very pertinent threat of marine plastic pollution. They then repurposed the trash by creating stunning sculptures and mobiles, which now decorate the station.

The pupils' energy, enthusiasm and excitement for Aldabra was very refreshing and contagious to the Aldabra staff; hopefully these eco-minded students will become ambassadors for Aldabra and the wider environment by sharing their experiences, and one day lead conservation and environmentally-friendly initiatives in the Seychelles, maybe even on Aldabra. The group even helped to paint one of the water harvesting tanks with seabirds, which will keep their visit fresh in the minds of Aldabra staff. A huge thanks again to the wonderful teachers and pupils of this group for visiting Aldabra and creating lifelong memories for all!

Nekton Deep Ocean Expedition on Aldabra and Sky News coverage

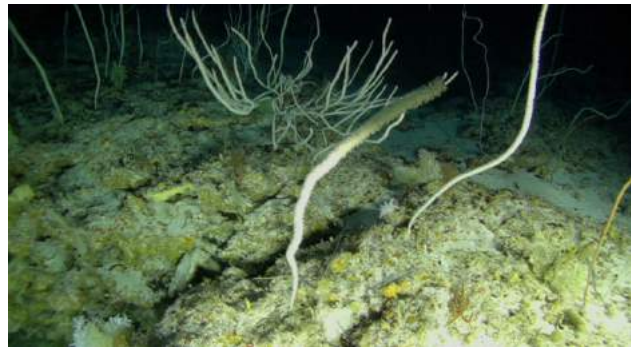
Aldabra's deep sea areas have been explored for the first time by the Nekton Deep Ocean Expedition. Starting in March, deep sea scientists used a range of high-tech equipment to monitor and document Aldabra's deep sea communities and made some exciting discoveries! Very little research has been undertaken deeper than 30m across Seychelles' vast ocean territory. Themed First Descent: Indian Ocean, the Nekton Expedition in Seychelles is surveying for the first time Seychelles' deep waters with the objective to establish a baseline of marine life and the state of the ocean in the Seychelles. The research is focused from the surface into the bathyal zone (200–300m), home to the greatest range of biodiversity but also substantially impacted by human activities.



Submersibles were used to document the deep sea communities around Aldabra (© Nekton)

Two sites around Aldabra, in the north and the west of the atoll, were surveyed. A conductivity-temperature-depth instrument was deployed down to almost 450m to measure several parameters of the water column. This equipment has loggers to measure the temperature, salinity, light, pressure and conductivity of the seawater. A multiple-beam echosounder, which is a type of sonar used to map the seabed, was used to document the shape and bathymetry of the ocean floor down to 500m. Remotely operated vehicles and submersibles conducted video transects of the seafloor to document the communities living at various depths. Some specimens of these communities were also

collected for museum curation and further taxonomic research. One exciting discovery from Aldabra was the first sighting of a sixgill shark at 300m!



Deep sea corals at 120m © Nekton

To share the excitement and engage the public in the expedition, the submersible dives around Aldabra were broadcasted live on Sky News. Deep Ocean Live was aired on three consecutive days from 18th to 21st March and showcased images of the deep sea community around Aldabra to the widest audience across the globe for the first time. It was also a great opportunity to showcase the plight of marine plastic pollution on the atoll and the efforts of the Aldabra Clean Up project.

SIF's science and projects coordinator, Jennifer Appoo, joined the Nekton expedition for two weeks. Jennifer received training and assisted with the data collection and even got the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join a submersible dive to 250m!



Jennifer with the other Seychellois participants on the Nekton Expedition © SIF

For Jennifer, the most amazing part was seeing the transition of communities from

shallow to deep waters. She was also fascinated to see the organisms living in complete darkness down at 250m. Jennifer describes her experience in the submersible as one of the most amazing moments of her life! The Nekton Expedition will continue to survey other areas in Seychelles' Outer Islands which will also be a first for these locations. We look forward to hearing about more exciting discoveries!

The SIF Newsletter can be downloaded at www.sif.sc/downloads, or subscribe to the mailing list at www.sif.sc

Articles contributed by: *Jeremy Raguain, Cheryl Sanchez, Jennifer Appoo, Nancy Bunbury, Lynsey Rimbault, Monica Griffiths, Lorraine Cook, Maria Brioche.* **Edited by:** *Jennifer Appoo, Nancy Bunbury, Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, Sophie Adams*