

## Editorial

Welcome to the third issue of *Mediz* newsletter, a publication produced by the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA).

This edition has a new section 'Upcoming events' where activities that are being undertaken by SNPA will be announced.

If you would like to contribute an article or suggest ways to improve the publication, please do so as your support is welcome. Please contact Ms. Sylvanna Antha (s.antha@snpa.sc) for more details.

Happy Reading.

### Content

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Combating Alien Invasive Species</i>	1-2
<i>Making their voices heard: SNPA listens to the concerns of boat operators</i>	2
<i>Sea Turtle monitoring: SNPA staffs and GVI participate in turtle monitoring workshop</i>	3
<i>SNPA contributes to environment education in schools: donation of books to strengthen marine education</i>	4
<i>USD 30,000 for SNPA</i>	5
<i>RTK-DGPS Training</i>	5-6
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	6

## Combating Alien Invasive Species: SNPA gives SIF a helping hand

It is a well known fact that invasive alien species (IAS) are considered the greatest threat to island biodiversity. This is partly attributed to their abilities which make them the fastest growing and more competitive plant species in any habitat. With the right environmental and growing conditions, they can easily outcompete and displace the slow growing endemic species.

Because of the threat they pose to native species especially in the Praslin National Parks, the Seychelles Island Foundation applied for funding from the EU to control and eradicate where possible, the more prominent IAS. SIF is carrying out the project in partnership with SNPA.

This partnership was formalized under a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in December 2012 to provide a framework to facilitate cooperation between



Mr. Matatiken (CEO for SNPA) and Dr. Frauke Fleischer Dogley (CEO for SIF) as they seal the agreement for cooperation

SIF and SNPA for implementation of various activities. These include conducting research in IAS and forest resilience and developing management strategies for areas of palm forest habitats, among other activities.

The overall objective is to develop and implement a holistic, integrated, operational strategy, including appropriate prioritisation and actions to limit the spread and reduce the impact of IAS in Seychelles World Heritage Site.

The three year project is expected to mainstream IAS threat in management and education through inclusions of recommendation into the management plan and educational activities.

### **Making their voices heard: SNPA listen to the concerns of Boat Operators**

A meeting hosted by the Minister for Environment and Energy, Prof. Rolph Payet, along with the SNPA board was held at the Baie Ste Anne Baha'i centre, in December 2012, with boat owners from Praslin and La Digue.



The purpose of the meeting was to listen to the concerns raised by the boat operators regarding constraints encountered during excursions to Curieuse, Ile Coco and St Pierre. These included inadequate mooring facilities, the state of the BBQ facilities, illegal taxi boats and inadequate guides amongst others issues.

The CEO of the Authority was able to inform the boat operators where the constraints were and what the Authority was doing to alleviate these problem. It was clear that a lot of issues were caused by the boat operators themselves, and as a result the Authority will be stricter with regards to its facilities.

Given that illegal taxi boats – unlicensed boats – was the most discussed issue during the meeting, it was agreed that the SNPA would seek the help of the police and the Seychelles Licensing Authority to find ways to deal with this issue.

Following the meeting, the Authority worked on a strategy to deal with the issues raised by the operators. The strategy takes into account some of the suggestions made by members of the boat operators and addresses issues of coral protection, multi-stakeholder involvement in the decision making process, upgrading the status of the facilities, potential discount on daily tickets, reducing bad practices and illegal boat activities, and ensuring continuous supply of water. A copy was forwarded to all operators and a newsletter on the progress of activities was also circulated to them.



## Sea turtle monitoring: SNPA Staff and GVI Volunteers participate in Training workshop

Many of the beaches on Curieuse Island are visited by sea turtles during the turtle nesting and breeding season. These include hawksbills and green turtles. The Authority monitors the movement of the sea turtles during each breeding season as part of their turtle conservation and monitoring programme. Turtles are tagged and specific measurements taken. The information are recorded and analysed to understand habitat utilization, the size of the population, nesting behavior and population trends. Staff must be properly trained to enable them to accurately collect the necessary data.

At the beginning of the 2012-13 hawksbill nesting season, a group of SNPA staff including some GVI volunteers under the leadership of Dr. Jeanne Mortimer, met in a workshop on Curieuse to learn about the biology and conservation of sea turtles, methods to identify turtle species, sea turtle evolution, natural history and threats, as well as their value to human and ecosystems. The training was delivered through power point presentations and discussion. The aim was to prepare the participants for the 2012-13 hawksbill nesting season.

Participants visited major nesting beaches especially Grand Anse and Anse Papaie. In addition, they were able to assess the physical condition of the beaches and vegetation and to examine the green turtle body pits. Following the training a number of recommendations were made through a report to the Management of the Authority.

As a result of the training, there has been an improvement in the quality of data from 2012-13 nesting season. With the assistance of GVI, we are also updating the database from 2007 onwards in order to produce a report and publication on the population dynamics and trends of the nesting populations of Curieuse Island.



Participants of the sea turtle workshop on Curieuse Island. Missing from this photo are Ritval Pillay (SNPA) and Lee Bush (GVI)

The participants who benefitted from the training are Mr. Devis Monthy, Jason Bastilde, Roland Quatre, Ritval Pillay (SNPA) and April Burt (Science Coordinator 2012), Rachel Walls (Science Coordinator for 2013), Esme Bebb (Scholar) and Lee Bush (Expedition Staff), plus five GVI volunteers.

## Seychelles National Parks Authority contributes to environmental education in schools: donation of books to strengthen marine education



The Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) donated a set of books to the facilitators of the Eco-school programme. It was witnessed by a number of teachers that sit on the Eco School committee. The event took place during the first committee meeting.

The meeting was held at the Ministry of Education, on the 17<sup>th</sup> January and present were the eco-school facilitators from 35 schools (both primary and secondary). The aim was to discuss the upcoming environmental activities for this year. Eco-school is a programme whereby teachers and students become aware of the different environmental issues and help the schools to become more environmentally friendly. Students can participate in environmental base competition such as Clean up the World, and SUBIOS.

**Reflection from the sea; Thinking through the marine and Coastal System** is the title of the book presented by Ms. Patsy Theresine from the Research section. The book was sponsored by the organization Coastal Oceans Research and Development in the Indian Ocean East Africa (CORDIOEA). This organization takes part in programs to evaluate and respond to the degradation of corals in countries in East Africa.

The book is very resourceful and will guide the eco-school facilitators so that they can prepare different activities with their members. It sets out activities that can be carried out in different sessions based on maritime and coastal environment, and will help the student to understand, actively take part in activities and to create awareness for the sustainability of our environment.





## USD 30,000 compensation for SNPA

The Marine Parks Authority, now SNPA, used to own a small building at Ile Ronde (Round Island). Round Island is a small island located close to Moyenne in the heart of the Ste Anne Marine National Park. The building was used as an information centre and a ranger's quarter, but following the lease of the island by the Government to Enchanted Seychelles the Authority had to move off the island.

For several years, no consensus could be reached on the issue of compensation. However, after some meetings between the CEO of SNPA and the Executive Director of Enchanted Seychelles, a decision that benefitted both parties was reached. It was agreed that Enchanted will compensate the Authority with USD 30,000.



The CEO of SNPA and Executive Director of Enchanted Seychelles sealing the deal

According to Mr. Matatiken and Mr. Shah, the settlement of this compensation will help to pave way for new opportunities to strengthen the partnership between SNPA and Enchanted Seychelles



## RTK-DGPS Training

For many years organisations in the Seychelles have been undertaking beach profile monitoring. This monitoring help gain a better understanding of sand movement along beaches, depletion and replenishment cycles of sand and the impact of monsoonal change on the sand movements. These will be useful in providing a better understanding of the impact of climate change on our coastal habitats. The methods used by all organisations for conducting profiling, is using Abney level and beach profiling poles. The data collected is added to a database which generates a 2D graph representing the profile on a given date.

Recently, the Marine Conservation Society Seychelles (MCSS) acquired a new set of equipments used to conduct beach profiling. This new method is called Real Time Kinematic – Differential GPS (RTK-DGPS). Not only can beach profile graphs be produced using this method, but it also provides digital elevation models and contour maps of the beach.

Since SNPA staffs conducts beach profile monitoring in the marine parks, they were curious to learn the new technique and experience the use of this new equipment. Through ongoing collaboration between these two organisations, training was organised by MCSS for the SNPA staff on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

This very comprehensive training by Jonathan and Uzice from MCSS was attended by both the SNPA research staffs and park rangers who normally assist in the beach profile monitoring in the MPAs. It is hoped that in the future, SNPA can acquire some of these equipments to map beaches within MPAs and to produce bathymetric maps, as these can be useful in helping towards better management of our MPAs.

### **Upcoming Events**

- ‘SNPA has set up a new programme called ‘Discover Snorkelling’ to teach Seychelles students to snorkel and discover the amazing life beneath the waves. This programme is expected to be carried out every school holiday, with secondary students from around Mahe, Praslin and La Digue.
- A school cartoon competition has been launched by the SNPA in collaboration with Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and the Zoological Society of London – EDGE Programme. The aim of the competition is for students (primary and secondary) to share messages on the importance of coral reefs, threats reefs are facing and how to prevent loss of coral reefs. The cartoons will be used in an exhibition towards the end of the year.

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