



## Editorial

"During the latter half of 2016 the Seychelles National Parks Authority has continued with key activities that are part of its performance enhancement program. Three major training sessions have been successfully delivered targeting especially marine parks operations, activities under the Protected Areas Finance project have accelerated with consultants now in place, two staff have gone for overseas training, and major investments into SNPA facilities have started. Thanks to the energy of our staff and tremendous support of partners, the SNPA has been able to remain active, on track and highly visible. In this issue of the newsletter we celebrate these key achievements that are helping to lay the foundation for SNPA's future. Happy reading"

Chief Executive Officer  
Mr Flavien Joubert

## Anse Major Development Project

Anse Major is a secluded beach found on the North West coast of Mahe in the Morne Seychellois National Park. Many tourists travel the trail from Danzil Belombre to get there. The view of the surrounding sea along the trail is simply spectacular. Being such a remote but popular destination many have seen the importance of upgrading the facilities found on that beach. One such person is Businessman Peter Clarke who lives not far from the beach. Mr Clarke and associated business partners is working in collaboration with the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) to improve facilities there. The project which has started, consist of toilet facilities, barbeque area and an open shed.

Such development will bring much relief to the many park users that frequent the area. On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June a short ceremony was held at Belombre near the 'La Scala' restaurant to unveil an information board about the Anse Major trail. In attendance were the CEO of SNPA, Mr Peter Clarke and his business associates, the District Administrator, staff of SNPA and students from the district's school. After speeches made by SNPA's CEO and Mr Peter Clarke the new information board was unveiled. The students were then given a guided tour of the trail by SNPA staff where they learnt about endemic and invasive plant species.

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Partners pose in front of new information board

## Curieuse Silent Witnesses

In November 2015, a young juvenile tortoise was discovered at Grand Anse, Curieuse. It had no tracking number or previous markings. An exciting discovery, because it is very rare to discover a “new” tortoise on the island. There was no doubt that it was a young tortoise. The tortoise was tagged and marked with the number 128. #128 lived in the tortoise nursery located at the Rangers headquarters on Curieuse, along with 27 other small tortoises. That is, until July 8<sup>th</sup>, when 25 hatchlings went missing. Only 3 tortoises were left behind following the robbery, including #128.



The hatchlings that were stolen

In 2013, the existing tortoise nursery had undergone some modifications to protect tortoises from rat and human interference. By May 2015, only 11 hatchlings lived in the nursery, but as of November 2015 there were 28 juvenile residents. Park Officer, Anto Suzette, manages operations on Curieuse, and he was shaken by the incident. The nursery is close to his heart, and he has worked hard to ensure the number of hatchlings on the island is continually increasing. Global Vision International (GVI) was collecting data on these tortoises to study their growth rate; important information to gather for the conservation of this species. Alan Grant, the GVI base manager on Curieuse, was crestfallen to see all their hard work and dedication vanished into thin air.

Despite the theft, SNPA is determined to increase the population of giant tortoise on Curieuse. This theft was a terrible incident and measures are being taken to ensure that it does not happen again. SNPA has offered a reward of SCR5000 to anyone with concrete information related to the whereabouts of these tortoises. To date, no one has come forward with any information. SNPA has intensified its effort to collect hatchlings from the wild and is continually looking at ways to improve the security of the tortoise nursery. By November 2016, a total of 33 hatchlings had been collected.

## Reducing stress from reefs after the bleaching event; COTS removal continues

For the first time in the history of Crown of Thorn Starfish (COTS) outbreak in Seychelles, full time divers are employed to remove them from reefs. Starting October and for a period of 2 months, SNPA has contracted the services of 2 divers. The project is made possible by funding from COI. Though we do not presently have an outbreak, SNPA believes that the project will be of great benefits to corals that were impacted by the bleaching event in April this year. To increase the recovery of corals, the various stresses they face should be reduced if not removed. COTS prefer to feed on branching corals, especially the Acropora species. These species are very prone to bleaching and most of them died in April/May. Even if their preferred food is scarce, COTS can still be found on reefs though in lower numbers. Nowadays they are feeding on the few remaining corals (massive and encrusting). This project which is mostly targeting the North-West Mahe region (where they are mostly encountered). It will help in coral recovery and also in delaying a future COTS outbreak. Most of the COTS removed were from Northholme (Glacis) and Fisherman's cove (belombre) and the most frequent class size encountered is between 25cm-40cm. The two divers (both passionate about the marine world) have tackled the eradication with zeal and are excited about the contributions they are making towards conservation and they look forward to contributing further to marine conservation.



The coral eating starfish still a problem



## Training for Acoustic tagging in sharks

Staffs from Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), Global Vision International (GVI) and SNPA were trained using acoustic tags in sharks. The training, delivered by Dr. Jude Bijoux took place at the SFA lab on Mahe, in July. This training forms part of the Lemon Shark Tagging Project which is ongoing In Curieuse Marine National Park. The project has moved onto its second phase, which includes the use of acoustic tags, to better understand the movement of lemon shark (*Negaprion acutidens*) pups. The new method of tagging, will provide more real time data on the pups, which are found inside the mangrove and old turtle pond, on Curieuse. During phase one, sharks were tagged with a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag. For this season, a record number of new sharks have been PITT tagged, 101 by November 25<sup>th</sup>. The project, the first of its kind for Curieuse, is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year and aims to gather baseline data on the vulnerable fish.

Participants look on as Dr Bijoux makes an incision



## Park Users Advised to Respect the Environment

Situated in Baie Ternay Marine National Park, on the north-west coast of Mahe, Anse Du riz is one of the most remote beaches on Mahe. The Seychelles public and other visitors use this beach for barbecues or picnics, because of its seclusion. However, this creates several issues due to the fact that; first and foremost fires are lit and sometimes cannot be contained. This creates a threat to the surrounding vegetation, with the risk of burning down vegetation. An example of this is the burning of a mature takamaka tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), which was observed by Assistant Park Officer Paul Lavigne., Traces of fire could be spotted on many different trees.



The burned down takamaka tree

Littering has also become an issue on this beach. This is regardless of the constant educational and sensitization campaigns that have taken place over the years. Garbage is seen on all parts of the beach and Seychelles National Parks Authority staffs have to constantly come back and clean up the beach.

The SNPA is taking steps to resolve these issues. It should be noted that the Authority can, and will, prosecute any individual not following proper directives. SNPA would like all park users (boat operators, tourists, picnickers) to use the beaches within the marine parks in a manner that does not harm the ecosystems or other park users. SNPA appreciates those who make the effort to understand the importance of conservation and is hopeful that these incidents will cease to happen.



## Upgrading for improved education and awareness

SNPA has received funding from ETF to install new information boards in all the National Parks under its mandate. Many of the boards that had been previously installed have succumbed to the elements over the years, and it is essential to install new ones, as a way to enhance visitors experience to our parks. The new boards (19 in total) are made from more durable materials and they promise to last for decades. The information centre at the Veuve Reserve on La Digue also received a consignment of new information materials. These items were produced through a donation from a French Couple who fell in love with the reserve upon their visit last year. The materials produced include posters, information boards, identification guides and bird baths. Furthermore, a new boardwalk will soon be constructed in the reserve. This is a much needed facility which will make the tour around the lowland bird sanctuary, much more comfortable for visitors, especially during the rainy season, when the wetland area becomes inundated. With the aim of improving its educational facilities, SNPA hopes to see renovation of the Doctor's house completed soon, so that the national monument can re-open its doors to visitors once again.



New materials for Veuve Reserve

## New US Consul mesmerized by Curieuse National Park

At the beginning of November this year, the New US Consul to the Seychelles, Mrs. Jennifer Barr, visited the Curieuse National Park. Mrs. Barr who is very passionate about the environment, made the tortoise nursery her first stop. Assistant Park Officer, Jason Basthilde, told her about the history of the island, and the endemic and coco-de-mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*). Mrs. Barr, later visited the mangrove habitat, and learned about the Lemon shark tagging project which



Souvenir photo in front of nature's treasure

started in 2014. The view point on Curieuse gave her a better perspective of the vastness of the mangrove, also with views of the bay, and other neighbouring islands. She was also fascinated by the 'sculptured' boulders along the beaches, "They are too beautiful to be real!" she explained. She ensured that she took many photographs as proof of her visit to this truly beautiful island.

The US consul had many questions and the staffs were happy to provide answers. She said that the country is doing a remarkable job when it comes to protection of the environment. This was an encouraging remark for SNPA staff who sometimes feel that their hard work goes unnoticed.

## Strengthening Environment officers legal capabilities

In an effort to widen different Environmental Organisation's knowledge on Law Enforcement, a seven day workshop was held in November, at the Seychelles Police Academy (SPA). The workshop was organised by the Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) in collaboration with the Protected Area Finance and Outer Islands Projects. In attendance were representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (MEECC), (SNPA), Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) and other Protected Area Agencies. The workshop began with a small opening ceremony, with the CEO of SNPA explaining the importance of Law Enforcement, followed by group photo.

The workshop covered various topics, ranging from different Environmental regulations, such as, the Coco-de-mer Decree, Environment Protection Act (EPA) and the National Park Nature Conservancy Act. In addition, the environment officers learnt about various Enforcement procedures, such as Judges Rule, Constitutional rights of an arrestee and Interrogation, amongst many more. Most of the sessions were delivered by instructors from SPA. The end result was- more confident environment officers, able to execute better Law Enforcement practices. "I have learnt a lot from the workshop, as I am sure others have. Whether you work at SFA, SNPA or other agencies, the training catered for everyone's field of work". Remarkd a young participant from SNPA. The last item on the program was a guided visit to the Court. Each participants received a certificate presented by CEO of SNPA Mr Joubert and Commandant of the Academy Mr Wirtz.



Commandant of SPA, Mr Wirtz presenting SFA participant with her certificate

## Celebrating our cultural heritage

Each year SNPA organizes a special gathering for its staff to celebrate the creole culture. This year the event took place at Cap Ternay. The morning was spent clearing the road of overgrowths. The highlight of the day was the creole lunch which is always appreciated by staff. It was also time to say farewell to Forestry staff Mr Ronny Marie who had chosen to go work on Seychelles Largest Atoll- Aldabra.



## Raft race for charity

The annual Raft Race for Charity, organized by SNPA and GVI, took place at Baie Ternay Marine Park on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October and saw a record breaking number of participants. Fourteen rafts were lined up on the beach of Baie Ternay, to compete in the much anticipated race. Teams from Ephelia Resorts, SNPA, MCSS, GVI, NSC, S4S, GIF and Four seasons were all determined to grab this year's trophy.

The race is organized in order to raise funds for the President's village at Port Glaud. It also aims at raising the visibility of the Baie Ternay Marine Park and stresses on the importance of recycling. The weather was just perfect for the race and for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, SNPA clinched first place followed by Ephelia who were really pleased with their accomplishment.

"It was our first participation and we are convinced of victory next year" commented an Ephelia participant. SNPA attributed their win to their good coordination and experience. The race, well covered by the media, ended with barbeque and presentation of prizes to the winners. GVI won the cup for the most inventive raft, which they made from an old bath tub. Though last to complete the race, they demonstrated their creativity and skills at recycling.



GVI with their 'Most inventive raft'

## Sea Turtle Festival

SNPA had been awarded a certificate of recognition for its dedication towards sea turtle conservation, from The Seychelles Sea Turtle Festival Committee. The Marine National Parks are some of the most important turtle nesting grounds in the country and SNPA is determined in its endeavor to protect sea turtles. The award ceremony took place on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> August followed by a family fun day, the next day at Beau Vallon. An impressive crowd turned up for the event. Since last year SNPA concentrated its activities in the sea, this year, the focus was on kids artwork. SNPA had prepared some turtles from "papier machee" for kids to paint. While the kids were busy, the parents learnt about what SNPA is doing in terms of marine conservation, especially that of the endangered sea turtles.



## ‘Karnen Lanatir’ for education and awareness

Education and awareness is an integral part of the work that SNPA does. The year 2016 saw SNPA as an active participant in the environment radio program ‘Karnen Lanatir’. The program has enabled the Authority to highlight the work being done in the National parks, providing the public with more information on the conservation work being undertaken by SNPA. Listeners have been made more aware of the initiatives and programs of the Veuve Reserve, conservation works concerning the giant tortoises and coral reefs, as well as what goes on in the Morne Seychellois National Parks. The media is an important partner for SNPA, and it is important to work together, especially where education and awareness is concerned. SNPA is happy with the support received from the press in 2016 and plans on building on this partnership in the future.



SBC journalist Rajelle, recording in Curieuse Marine Park

## More SNPA staff proceeds on overseas training

SNPA currently has 3 staffs undertaking studies at Master's Level, in two countries overseas. On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2016, James Mougall and Allen Cedras left Seychelles for the University of Kent in UK. James is studying Conservation Project Management, while Allen is studying Conservation and Rural Development. Both trainings are funded by the Authority with the collaboration of the DARWIN Initiative. The two gentlemen received their travel documents from CEO Flavien Joubert, in a short ceremony at Eden Bleu on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. The Authority wishes its staffs success in their studies and await their return so that they can continue to contribute towards the work that SNPA is carrying out, as part of its mandate to manage Seychelles Protected Areas (PAs). Meanwhile, Miss. Gilberte Gendron is also undertaking her Masters at a university in Canada.



Allen And James receiving their travel documents at Eden Bleu

## Building institutional capacity for well managed marine parks

The Seychelles National Parks Authority (SNPA) held a training and strategic workshop this week in Curieuse Marine Park, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> August, to develop visionary goals and objectives for the parks and a bold plan of action to build staff leadership in moving toward those goals. The workshop included representatives from SNPA and three other conservation agencies: Global Vision International (GVI), Island Conservation Society (ICS), and Seychelles Island Foundation (SIF).

Seychelles is deeply committed to the conservation of the ocean and its marine life. This commitment is shown by the establishment of 6 marine national parks and the race to increase protection of our marine areas from 1% to 30%. While this commitment places Seychelles high on the global conservation scorecard, it is equally important to ensure that enough resources and capacity exists to manage the marine parks. In fact, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) has emphasized that protected area management is a global challenge.

According to the CEO of SNPA, Mr. Flavien Joubert, *'any strategy to maintain Seychelles marine parks must systematically address staff capacity issues and all aspects that will ensure that SNPA delivers on its mandate'*. Toward this end SNPA has embarked on an ambitious programme to build institutional capacity for better marine parks management.

The workshop was delivered by experts from Kenya, the United States of America, and the Seychelles with regional experience in strategic marine park management and discussed setting goals and objectives, marine monitoring protocols, socio-economic monitoring, and planning and assessing impact of conservation actions. At the end of the workshop, participants from each agency planned steps that they would take over the next year to improve marine management in all marine parks. With the resulting strategic partnerships, professionalism, passion and a shared vision as drivers of the new adaptive management strategy, SNPA aims to be a regional model in effective marine park management.



Workshop in full swing on Curieuse island

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