

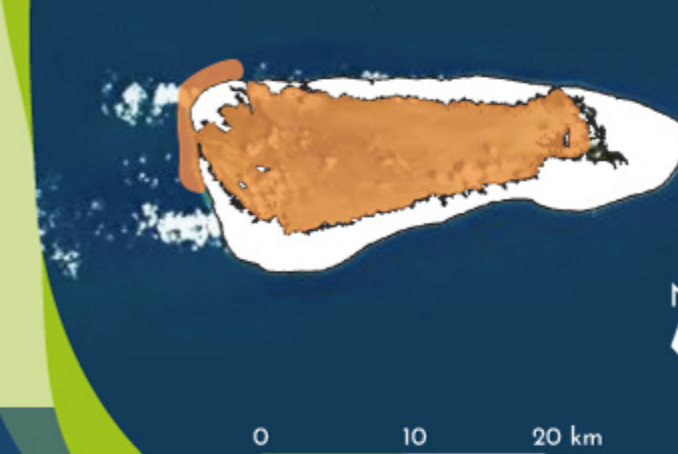
The Dugong Aldabra, Seychelles

Historically, it is believed that dugongs were present around many islands in the Seychelles¹. However, over the past 50 years, observations have been limited to the **Aldabra Atoll**. The **Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF)**, the managing body of Aldabra Atoll, a UNESCO World Heritage site, initiated studies in 2022 to gather information about their numbers and status.

Distribution

There is very little information available on the population status, distribution, and ecology of dugongs in Seychelles. Dugongs are primarily observed within the semi-enclosed lagoon of Aldabra, but they have also been spotted in shallow waters offshore. Between 1970 and 2009^{2,3}, 31 dugong sightings, each involving 1 to 4 individuals, were recorded. From 2010 to 2018, SIF recorded 42 dugong sightings, including **adults and several juveniles**. These observations suggest that Aldabra may be a potentially important site for the species⁴, possibly for **reproduction and/or as a nursery**.

Key Observation Areas



Habitat

Aldabra hosts **dense seagrass meadows** on the outer reefs, with 14 km² dominated by seagrass communities and 1.5 km² of communities dominated by macroalgae with interspersed seagrass⁵. In lower density, seagrass is also present within the lagoon and is primarily found in mixed communities with macroalgae.

Phanerogam species include *Cymodocea serrulata*, *Halodule uninervis*, *Halophila ovalis*, *Thalassodendron ciliatum* et *Thalassia hemprichii*.

IUCN
VU

I am vulnerable
to extinction

Primary Threats

Although the Aldabra population lives in an isolated and protected area, there is currently no knowledge about potential migration routes. Therefore, threats such as entanglement in fishing gear, illegal hunting, and boat collisions can be significant.

It is estimated that **513 tonnes of marine debris** remain on Aldabra, posing a threat to dugongs through ingestion and entanglement in debris⁶. With rising sea surface temperatures and seagrass displacement due to climate effects, the dugong population and their habitats are even more endangered.



Pollution



warming of
the waters

* International Union for Conservation of Nature, an intergovernmental organization that assigns species conservation statuses.

Monitoring Method

The Seychelles Islands Foundation (SIF) has launched a project called «**The Last Dugongs of Seychelles**», funded by the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), aimed at creating a strong knowledge base about the Aldabra dugong population.

Aerial surveys are conducted using a drone, and images are taken along predefined transects. The images captured by the drone are then analyzed to count dugongs, as well as turtles, sharks, and rays.

The analysis of images collected in 2023 has counted at least 19 individuals, including calves. However, further studies need to be undertaken to better understand the distribution of dugongs on Aldabra.

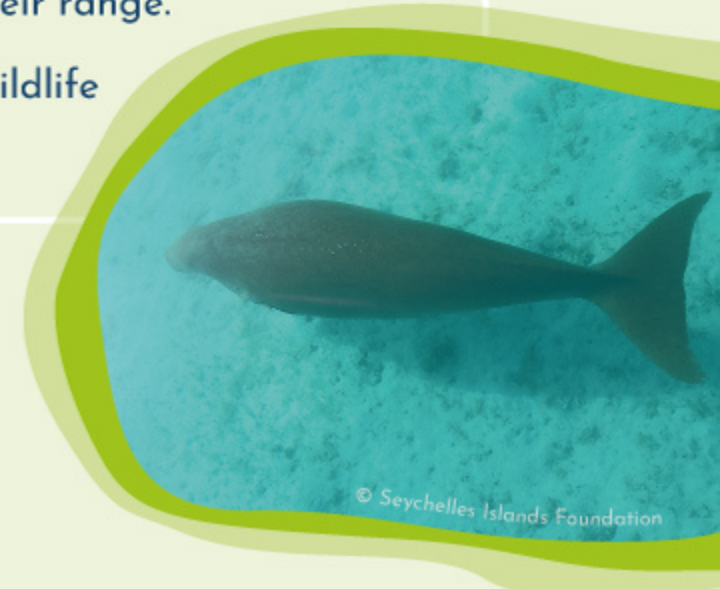
Did You Know?

The protection of dugongs is covered by Seychellois fisheries law from 1986. To further promote conservation actions for the dugong population and improve their long-term survival, Seychelles signed the Dugong MOU in 2010, a protocol for the conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats throughout their range.

The SIF project could contribute to amending the Seychellois Wildlife and Birds Protection Act of 1991 to include dugongs.



© Romain DAIG



© Seychelles Islands Foundation

