



Seychelles Islands Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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CEO's Message

As I look back on this past year, a wave of pride washes over me. It's been an extraordinary time for the Seychelles Islands Foundation, one that saw incredible work across all our sites. It was a year marked by significant achievements, new initiatives, and innovative work on projects that we had only hoped for in past years.

The 40th anniversary of the Vallée de Mai as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been a true highlight of 2023 and continued into 2024 with its conclusion. The year-long celebrations, culminating in the official closing ceremony in February, were a testament to the enduring importance of this magical place, not just to SIF, but to the Special Events Committee, who guided the celebrations. This campaign grew beyond its surface mission to recount 40 years of UNESCO World Heritage status and reinforced Seychelles' national and individual commitment to preserving Vallée de Mai, through an extensive communications campaign to reach the community.

This year also saw the start of something rather ambitious, yet a dream for many years: the Rat and Cat Eradication (RaCE) feasibility study for Aldabra. This project, made possible through the generous support of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and SeyCCAT, is the boldest undertaking for SIF to date. If successful, it will guide one of the largest invasive mammal eradication efforts ever conceived, and I have no doubt that it will have a transformative impact on Aldabra's vulnerable ecosystem. The challenges are considerable in the years ahead, but the potential rewards – a thriving atoll, with the potential to be an instrumental part of a resilient Seychelles – are more than worth it.

It was a year marked by significant achievements, new initiatives, and innovative work on projects that we had only hoped for in past years.

Although the Vallée de Mai anniversary has passed, SIF is now gearing up to celebrate a historical milestone in Seychelles' history. In 1895, Fond Ferdinand became the first property to be purchased by the Seychelles (then Colonial English) government to preserve the coco de mer palm. To think back to those first crucial steps to protect this endangered species is truly humbling. This anniversary is not just a celebration of big actions by a small island nation; it's a reaffirmation, dating back 130 years, of our commitment to safeguarding the coco de mer.

With so many exciting moments in merely twelve months, it would be impossible to list every single accomplishment, big or small. The team's work, which goes beyond the highlights of this report, underscores our commitment to the conservation and education of Seychelles' natural heritage. This year has truly demonstrated the power of collaboration. From our dedicated staff and Board of Trustees to our invaluable partners in government, NGOs, and the international community, it is through shared vision and collective action that we can achieve real and lasting goals.

The future of Seychelles' natural heritage is bright, and I am immensely proud to be a part of its journey.

Frauke Fleischer-Dogley

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



2 Highlights of 2024



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The launch of SIF's strategic priorities

On SIF's 45th anniversary, February 15, we unveiled the official Strategic Priorities for 2024–2030. These priorities focus on understanding, safeguarding, and inspiring engagement in the protection of Seychelles' natural heritage amid global climate and biodiversity crises, developed through extensive consultation with the SIF team, the board of trustees and partners.

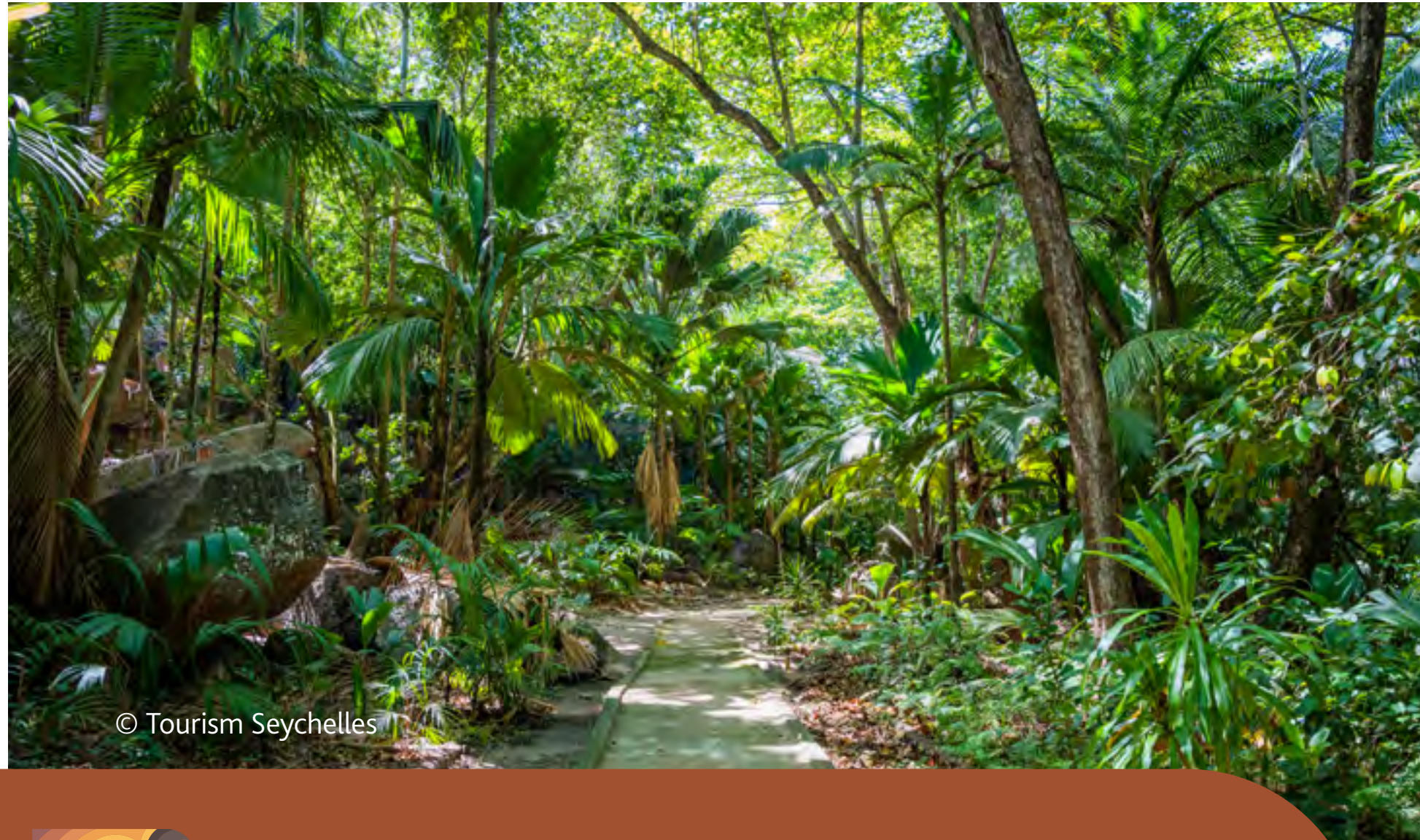


© Romano Laurence



Drawing a close to the Vallee de Mai 40th anniversary as UNESCO World Heritage with an official ceremony

The closing ceremony of Vallée de Mai's 40th anniversary celebrations was a vibrant culmination of a year-long series of events honouring its UNESCO World Heritage status. From captivating cultural performances to heartfelt speeches by SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan and SIF Chairman Hon. Bernard Georges, the event highlighted the enduring importance of this iconic site.



Celebrating natural and cultural heritage in 130th celebrations

In February 2025, Fond Ferdinand will celebrate 130 years of coco de mer protection, following the first purchase by the Seychelles government in 1895. To mark this occasion, an anniversary campaign, inclusive of a commemorative logo and a series of activities are planned for next year.



Aldabra Atoll awarded with 7th international designation

Aldabra Atoll has been officially designated an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA) by the IUCN, marking its seventh international recognition. This new status highlights Aldabra's crucial role in marine biodiversity conservation and supports efforts to protect threatened species in the Western Indian Ocean.



The launch of the Vallée de Mai Visitor Science App

We publicly launched the Vallée de Mai Visitor Science App, an innovative tool designed to engage visitors in conservation efforts through citizen science. The launch featured a guided tour with SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan, SIF board members, and esteemed guests. The app offers visitor information, an English audio guide, and detailed content on endemic species. A key feature allows visitors to record their sightings, contributing directly to the site's conservation and monitoring efforts.

[Download here](#)



A dive into SIF's marine research at the Seychelles Marine Science Symposium

SIF made a significant impact at the Seychelles Marine Science Symposium, hosted by the Blue Economy Research Institute of the University of Seychelles (BERI). With over 200 delegates from 83 organisations, the symposium featured 8 different research speakers highlighting Aldabra, focusing on topics such as climate change, marine plastic pollution, coral reef connectivity, and conservation management.



© Romano Laurence



SIF launches its Giveback Programme and policy

In 2024, we launched our Giveback Programme, guided by a newly developed Giveback Policy initiated by the SIF Board of Trustees. The policy emphasises social development, community wellbeing, and conservation efforts. Key achievements included 61 hours of community service over the year, three successful blood drives on Praslin involving staff, businesses and tourism establishments, donating towards the 7th December Disaster Fund, and further supporting local groups in environmental education initiatives.



Aldabra ranks second among Marine World Heritage Sites

Between September 2022 and April 2023, UNESCO led an environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling campaign across 25 countries, including Aldabra Atoll UNESCO Marine World Heritage Site, seeking to enhance our understanding of ocean biodiversity. In results, Aldabra ranked second among all other Marine World Heritage Sites for species diversity and abundance.



© Imran Ahmad Bin Rayat Ahmad



© Romano Laurence



Fire prevention & contingency plan for our Praslin sites

At the official ceremony of the 40th anniversary celebrations of Vallée de Mai's designation as UNESCO World Heritage, we proudly presented our Forest Fire Prevention and Contingency Plan to the Patron of SIF, President Wavel Ramkalawan. This comprehensive plan includes early detection systems, risk analysis, and coordination strategies to mitigate fire risks at Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand.



© Kiara Worth



CEO attends 14th COP on Conservation of Migratory Species

Chief Executive Officer, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, represented Seychelles and the African region at the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP14) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in February. Under the theme “Nature knows no borders,” the conference tackled key challenges facing migratory species, including habitat loss, overexploitation, and climate change. Significant resolutions included deep-sea mining regulations, bycatch reduction measures, and Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs), with Seychelles playing a pivotal role in the discussions. Moreover, Seychelles was proudly elected as an alternate member of the Standing Committee and Scientific Council for the African region!



© SIF



Coco de mer census completed across all sites

The successful completion of the coco de mer population census across Vallée de Mai, Fond Ferdinand, and Fond Peper marks a significant milestone for SIF. Vallée de Mai continues to hold the highest population, with 5,497 adult trees, followed by Fond Ferdinand and Fond Peper. The census, which began in January 2023 and included a juvenile and seedling survey, provides critical data to support ongoing conservation efforts.



The RaCE is ON!

SIF received a grant from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), facilitated through the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) to implement the Rat and Cat Eradication (RaCE) feasibility study. The project aims to assess the feasibility of the eradication, accounting for Aldabra's complex terrain, flora, and fauna. It marks the first step towards one of the world's largest invasive mammal eradications.



© Anna-Louisa Dogley



© Adam Mitchell



Gecko and mollusc population increases after yellow crazy ants control!

The Praslin research team's bi-annual mollusc and gecko survey revealed remarkable recovery following YCA control efforts, with a fourfold increase in mollusc and gecko populations across Vallée de Mai and Fond Peper. These results underscore the success of restoration efforts and highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring for continued recovery.



Expedition Visits Aldabra

This year we welcomed the OceanX research vessel to the outer islands of Seychelles. On Aldabra we achieved the deepest ROV dive in Aldabra's history (1500m), advanced mapping of the atoll's seafloor, and a live-streamed submersible broadcast to the World Economic Forum in Davos!



© Dr Annabelle Constance



New species has been discovered in the Vallée

The Praslin Research Team encountered a new finding! A small terrestrial snail found during monitoring, marking the first sighting of *Ennea gardineri* in the Vallée de Mai, a species endemic to Seychelles.



© Shanone Hibonne

© AudePhotoGraph, Courtesy of the Consulate of the Republic of Seychelles in Monaco



Des Seychelles À Monaco event raises over 30,000 EURO for Eco-School Trip

In June, we proudly participated in the Des Seychelles à Monaco event in Montecarlo, Monaco. This prestigious event featured a charity auction, part of a gala dinner held under the high patronage of H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco, which raised significant funds for the Trip of a Lifetime and the Aldabra Eco-School Trip.

© Ádám Plézer



Aldabra Management Plan updated under the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan

Under the Oceans5 project “Enabling the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan,” SIF successfully participated in the development and trailing of a template management plan for the Seychelles Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The project concluded in March, with a final comprehensive, and reviewed management plan ready and published.

© Nikita Pothin



The second Aldabra Clean-Up Project comes to an end!

The second Aldabra Clean-Up Project (ACUP II), funded through the Ocean Conservancy, concluded successfully in 2024, removing in total 23.5 tonnes of marine debris from Aldabra Atoll. Supported by the Seychelles Defence Forces, La Digue Glory, the coast guard vessel Saya de Malha, and the Landscape and Waste Management Agency, the project highlighted the global challenge of marine pollution. To raise awareness, SIF launched The Price of Plastic, a short documentary on the project, to emphasize the need for international action.

[Watch here](#)



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SIF Head Office

Celebrating 45 years of conservation with the launch of SIF's Strategic Priorities

On the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the Seychelles Islands Foundation on the 15th of February, we launched a document outlining the strategic priorities for 2024–2030. The document was drafted over many months, and developed through extensive consultation within the foundation, and engagement with SIF's partners. The newly established priorities are focused on understanding, safeguarding, and inspiring engagement in the protection of our natural heritage, particularly in light of the dual climate and biodiversity crises

The Strategic Priorities were launched digitally on the 15th February 2024, SIF's 45th anniversary © SIF



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024 - 2030



www.sif.sc



Handover of the Strategic Priorities document to SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan by the SIF Board of Trustees © SIF

The comprehensive document not only covered our areas of focus for the next few years, but outlines the **Vision and Mission** of our work, as well as highlighting the core values of the organisation.

[Read the Strategic Priorities here](#)

Highlights from the Annual General Meeting



The 42nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Aldabra from the 14th to 19th April 2024. This exceptional meeting occurs each year to gather local and international members of SIF's Board of Trustees and engage in discussions of the management of the three managed sites.

This year, the SIF Board unanimously decided to disseminate the various decisions and highlights from AGM 2024 – which were shared earlier in the year through the monthly SIF Newsletter and a press conference with local media.

The SIF Board of Trustees with Aldabra staff at this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) © SIF

Decisions and highlights from AGM 2024

Relocation of the Aldabra Research Station

Built in the 1960s, the station on Picard faces risks from coastal erosion and storms. A committee will explore relocating the station to ensure continuity in monitoring and research while safeguarding staff and equipment.

RaCE (Rat and Cat Eradication)

The AGM featured discussions on the RaCE project, which has entered its feasibility phase. Supported by SIF funding and a Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) grant, experts have begun preliminary studies to assess the possibility of eradicating invasive rats and cats from Aldabra.

Fond Ferdinand Development

Fond Ferdinand's history dates back to 1895, marking the first steps toward coco de mer conservation. In February 2025, SIF will celebrate the 130th anniversary of this milestone, raising awareness of the site's importance. Plans include developing marketing assets, engaging tourism stakeholders, and launching new site developments.

Aldabra House Project

After evaluating potential locations, SIF has decided to proceed with the original plot for Aldabra House. Plans will be submitted to the planning authority, with construction expected to begin within the year. Aldabra House aims to bring Aldabra closer to the public through immersive experiences and exhibitions.

The SIF Giveback Programme

To formalise SIF's commitment to community support, the Board decided to develop and establish a new giveback policy. This follows the success of the Vallée de Mai's 40th anniversary campaign, which included a SCR 100,000 donation to Praslin's emergency response services. The policy will inform and guide future initiatives to benefit local communities.



The board in front of the refurbished Aldabra Chapel - at its near completion since it was decided to renovate in the 2023 AGM. © SIF

Following a successful AGM, the Board has scheduled the next meeting to coincide with the 130th anniversary, with a focus on highlighting SIF's newest site, Fond Ferdinand, mandated to the foundation in 2020.

The SIF Board of Trustees visiting the Old Settlement © Romano Laurence



Formalising the SIF Giveback Programme through policy and implementation.

SIF has long been dedicated to supporting local communities while championing the conservation of Seychelles' natural heritage — Vallée de Mai, Aldabra Atoll, and Fond Ferdinand Reserve. In early 2024, SIF formalised its commitment through the launch of the SIF Giveback Programme during the closing ceremony of the Vallée de Mai's 40th anniversary celebrations, where SCR 100,000 was donated towards Praslin's emergency response services.

Furthermore, spearheaded by the Board of Trustees and the SIF Team, a Giveback Policy was drafted and implemented to guide the programme's future initiatives.

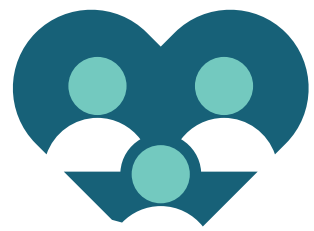
The new policy focuses on **three core objectives**:

- To promote social development through initiatives centred on education, sports, healthcare, culture, and arts.
- To enhance the wellbeing of vulnerable groups through dedicating volunteer hours.
- To support conservation efforts, including renewable energy adoption and clean technology advancements in schools.

The SIF Giveback Campaign was formally initiated through the 40th anniversary of Vallée de Mai's inscription as UNESCO World Heritage. © Romano Laurence



In 2024, the SIF Giveback Programme supported the below initiatives:



Conducted 66 hours of **community service**, including maintenance work at the Grand Anse Home for the Elderly, such as painting and compound cleaning.



Assisted and supported the **Children's Day** celebrations for students of the Centre for the Exceptional Child on Praslin.



Donated SCR 100,000 to the Ministry of Health for emergency response equipment on Praslin.



Supported victims of the December 7th disaster fund by donating SCR 100,000.



Organised three **successful blood drives** on Praslin, involving participants from the SIF Team, tourism establishments and the local community.



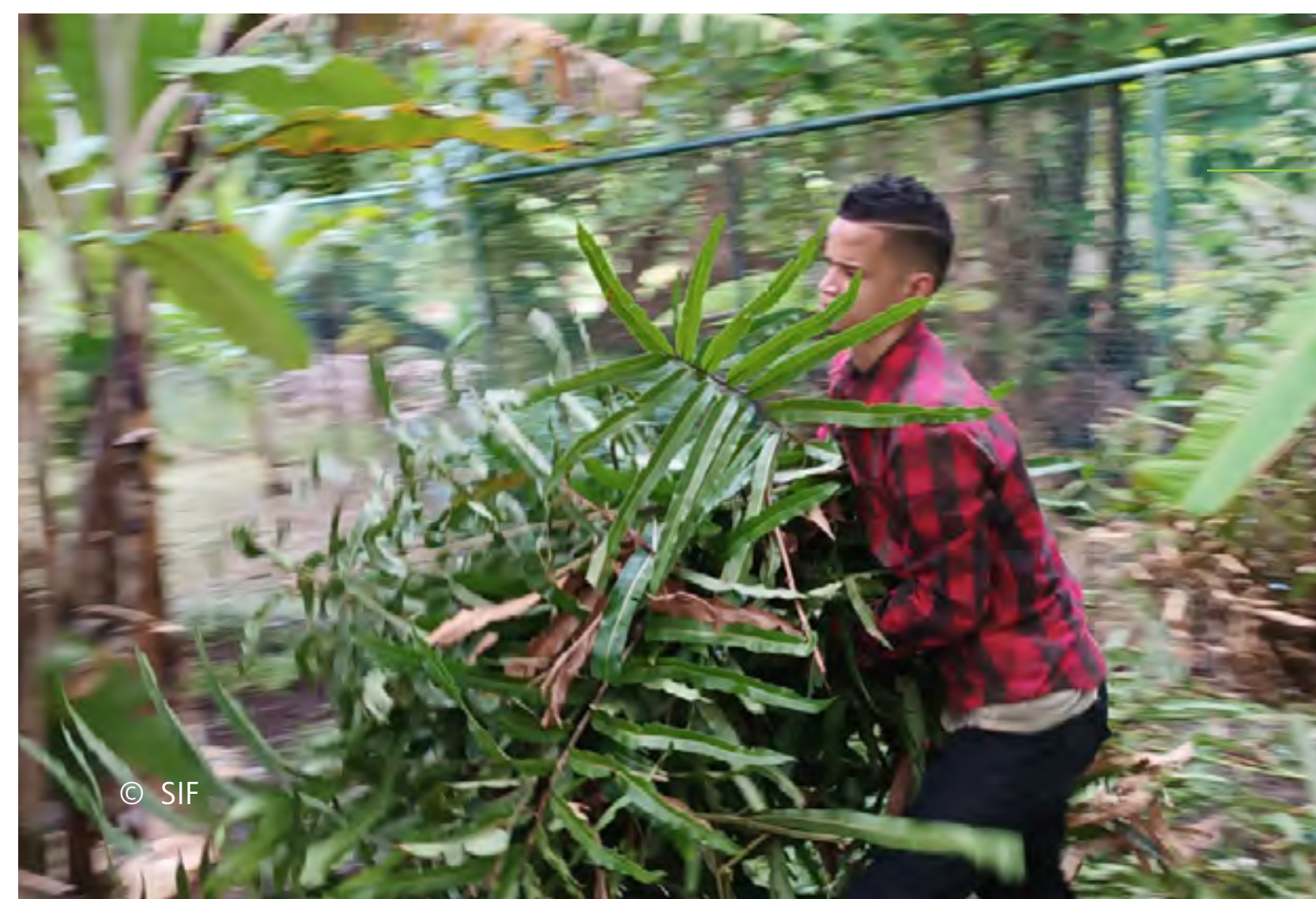
Supported the SALS Green Footprints Club by sponsoring **branded t-shirts** to empower the student-led environmental group in its mission to promote sustainability.



Organised a free variety show for the Praslin community.

Through the Giveback Programme, we aim to strengthen community bonds to natural heritage sites, promoting environmental stewardship, whilst also enhancing access to essential services. We are proud that this year we formalised our commitment to positively impacting the lives of the local community.

Snapshots from the various giveback initiatives that took place throughout the year.



SIF joins Des Seychelles à Monaco event in Montecarlo



In June, the Seychelles Islands Foundation was represented by Chief Executive Officer, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley and SIF Trustee, Romano Laurence at the prestigious Des Seychelles à Monaco event in Montecarlo, Monaco.

Organised by the Honorary Consul of Seychelles to Monaco, this month-long event in June, celebrated the islands' rich cultural and biological diversity through engaging activities.

The Seychelles delegation in Monaco © AudePhotoGraph, Courtesy of the Consulate of the Republic of Seychelles in Monaco

Building on the 2022 Monaco Explorations mission, Des Seychelles à Monaco continued efforts aligned with environmental education commitments, supporting initiatives like the Aldabra Eco-School Trip. Throughout June, visitors enjoyed exhibitions, mission documentaries, Creole cuisine and workshops, all culminating in a private gala dinner and charity auction on June 29th, Seychelles Independence Day.

Under the patronage of His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco, the gala dinner marked the first time SIF participated in a fundraising event of this kind. The success of the gala and auction not only allowed us to secure funding for the Aldabra Eco-School Trip, but also provided valuable insights into philanthropy, potentially diversifying our future funding opportunities.



Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley meets H.S.H Prince Albert II of Monaco again following the Monaco Explorations mission in 2022 © AudePhotoGraph, Courtesy of the Consulate of the Republic of Seychelles in Monaco



We extend our gratitude to the Honorary Consul of Seychelles to Monaco, Mr Jean-François Noaro, for creating this platform for Seychelles and to his dedicated team, for including SIF in this incredible experience!



Consulat de la République
des Seychelles à Monaco

André PhotoGraph

PHOTOGRAPHIE
& VIDÉASTE

Donation of coco de mer nut to Oceanomania

A key moment of the Des Seychelles à Monaco event was the donation of a coco de mer nut to the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Dr Fleischer-Dogley presented the iconic seed, sourced from Seychelles' native coco de mer palm, which was added to Mark Dion's Oceanomania, the world's largest marine curiosity cabinet.

This donation provided an opportunity for us to share this cultural emblem and piece of Seychelles' natural heritage with global visitors of the museum.

The coco de mer, also known as the 'Sea Coconut' has now a permanent place in the exhibition © Courtesy of the Consulate of the Republic of Seychelles in Monaco

Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley presents the coco de mer nut to the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco
© AudePhotoGraph,
Courtesy of the
Consulate of the Republic
of Seychelles in Monaco



© AudePhotoGraph,
Courtesy of the
Consulate of the Republic
of Seychelles in Monaco



SIF develops new Animal Ethics and Welfare Protocol

The wellbeing and ethical treatment of species under SIF's management have always been incredibly important to our work. Our research often involves the routine handling of animals, particularly as we undertake long-term projects on several of Seychelles' threatened species, such as the Seychelles black parrot (*Coracopsis barklyi*) and green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). These efforts require adherence to international best practices when working with and handling wildlife.

In June, we finalised the new Animal Ethics and Welfare Protocol, a comprehensive document developed through extensive literature review and consultations. Led by Science Officers, Laura Montano and Camilla Labonte, the protocol was crafted with input from the entire research and monitoring team, ensuring broad relevance across all the managed sites.



The team delicately handles black parrot fletchlings once they are old enough to ring
© Monica Griffith

The new protocol will also establish guidelines for eradications and invasive species control
© Martin Cagnato



The protocol outlines a clear framework for animal handling, focusing on three key areas:

1. *Animal Care*

Guidelines for dealing with sick, injured, orphaned, or distressed animals, with an emphasis on ensuring the safety of staff.

2. *Research and Photography*

New policies govern research and photography involving animals. A mandatory pilot assessment is now required for any research using live animals to assess and mitigate undue stress to the animal.

3. *Invasive Alien Species*

Addressing the need for conservation measures, the protocol covers humane strategies for managing invasive species, an especially critical concern as SIF undertakes feasibility trials for a rat and cat eradication on Aldabra.

Through this protocol, we aim to establish clear guidance for staff on the ethical treatment of animals, whilst setting a standard for other environmental organisations in Seychelles and the wider region.

Handling of certain animals requires additional equipment, like gloves.
© Christophe Mason Parker



Exploring Seychelles' hidden underground networks



This year, SIF has been awarded a USD 10,000 grant from the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks (SPUN) to study mycorrhizal fungi in Seychelles' UNESCO World Heritage sites using advanced DNA analysis techniques. SPUN is a science-based initiative dedicated to safeguarding mycorrhizal fungi, which play a crucial role in regulating the Earth's climate and ecosystems. These fungi form symbiotic relationships with plant roots, helping plants absorb essential nutrients in exchange for sugars.

The coco de mer produces the largest seed in the plant kingdom © James Warwick

We are eager to see how mycorrhizal fungi play a role in Seychelles' largest mangrove extent on Aldabra Atoll © Martin van Rooyen

While research on mycorrhizal fungi in Seychelles is limited, their potential role in supporting the islands' unique ecosystems is significant; they may aid the extraordinary growth of species like the coco de mer in Vallée de Mai, and contribute to nutrient assimilation within Aldabra's mangrove forests, especially where seabird-derived nutrients are less prevalent, highlighting the need for further investigation into their contribution.

We look forward to discovering more on these underground networks as the project progresses.

The thick palm forest of the Vallée de Mai
© Christophe Mason Parker



Introducing SIF's new Deputy CEO



SIF is pleased to announce the appointment of Geralda Desaubin as SIF's first Deputy CEO. Geralda brings an impressive background in finance, economics, administration and management. Her expertise will play a key role in supporting SIF's mission.

Geralda holds a bachelor's degree in Finance, Economics, and Investment from the Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland, as well as a Master of Business Administration with a focus on strategic planning from the University of West Scotland. Throughout her career, she has held significant roles, including at the Central Bank of Seychelles, the Ministry of Finance, and as CEO of the Agency for the Prevention of Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation. Her extensive experience in financial management and leadership will be invaluable in guiding SIF through future challenges and opportunities.

Ms GERALDA DESAUBIN joins SIF as the new Deputy CEO © Elvis Alphonse

5

Vallée de Mai

vallée
de mai

4.1 Vallée de Mai 40th Anniversary

Vallee de Mai celebrates 40 years of UNESCO World Heritage with official ceremony



On February 8th, the Vallée de Mai Visitor Centre hosted the closing ceremony marking 40 years since the site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Originally planned for December 9th, 2023, the event was postponed in solidarity with those affected by the calamities caused by the flooding and explosion on December 7th.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of SIF's patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan, First Lady Mrs Linda Ramkalawan, Members of the National Assembly, Ministers, SIF's board of trustees, District Administrators, staff, and other stakeholders. It celebrated a shared commitment to conserving the Vallée de Mai and its unique natural heritage.

Special guests included SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan, First Lady Linda Ramkalawan, Members of the National Assembly, Ministers, SIF's board of trustees, District Administrators, staff and other stakeholders © Romano Laurence

Many heartfelt words were shared at the ceremony from SIF's Patron and the Chairman of the SIF Board



President Wavel Ramkalawan greets our Praslin team



All photos by © Romano Laurence

In his speech, President Ramkalawan underscored the need for collective action in safeguarding the Vallée de Mai and thanked the 40th anniversary committee, board of trustees, and all SIF staff for their incredible commitment to this site. He called on Seychellois, particularly Praslinois, to embrace their role as guardians of this treasure, urging them to end poaching and help preserve the palm forest for future generations. SIF's Board of Trustees Chairman, Hon. Bernard Georges, echoed this sentiment, stressing the need for lasting stewardship.



The Variety Show on Praslin was a great success in bringing the community together! © SIF

The milestone was celebrated throughout 2023 with various events coordinated by the anniversary committee. Among the year's events, the variety show stood out as a vibrant tribute to the Vallée de Mai's four decades of heritage. Held at the Grand Anse Praslin Football Field on Praslin, the show featured a dynamic programme of drama, live music, and dance performances. These acts narrated a journey through the Vallée de Mai, blending culture and conservation. Featuring local band Island Vibrations and Praslinois artists, the team delivered unforgettable performances, creating a fitting celebration to Vallée de Mai's legacy.





Presentation of emergency response equipment to the Ministry of Health © Romano Laurence

As the ceremony closed, we unveiled three exciting initiatives!

Firstly, SIF presented a donation of emergency response equipment to the Ministry of Health, purchased for the Praslin hospital.

Secondly, we presented the Fire Prevention & Contingency Plan, developed under a project supported by the Franklina Foundation, to improve management and response to potential forest fire incidents in Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand.



Site Manager, Marc Jean-Baptiste hands over the Fire Prevention and Contingency plan to SIF's Patron, President Wavel Ramkalawan © Romano Laurence



Project Officer, Cheyenne-Mae Chang-Yunn showcases the new Visitor Science app to our VIP guests © Romano Laurence

Lastly, we officially launched an interactive Visitor Science app designed to deepen visitor engagement. By scanning a QR code after purchasing the entry ticket, visitors can explore fourteen stations in the palm forest with an audio guide, log their species sightings and contribute to ongoing research and monitoring.

The campaign for the 40th anniversary of Vallée de Mai's World Heritage status served as a profound reminder of its irreplaceable value and the collective responsibility to safeguard it for future generations.

4.2 Science and Conservation

Exciting results from the mollusc and gecko survey

Each year the Praslin research team continues its monitoring of the Vallée de Mai and Fond Peper against the impact of invasive yellow crazy ants (YCA). The bi-annual mollusc and gecko survey, a key component of this effort, has played an essential role in documenting the recovery of native species over the years.

Prior to the survey, all team members underwent a mollusc and gecko identification familiarisation test. This ensures they are well-prepared for the survey methods and identification of species. The survey began shortly after, and in just one day the research team completed the Vallée de Mai, then moving to Fond Peper. Typically, these surveys take a full week, but with favourable weather conditions and additional staff helping, this survey was completed in just three days.

Molluscs are important pollinators in the coco de mer forest © Lindsay Chong Seng



© Christian Laporte

Field Research Officer, Ella Nancy, carefully observing for species in the canopy © Maria Monthy



Dwarf bronze gecko (*Ailuronyx tachyscopaeus*) © Markus Roesch



The surveys revealed significant trends in the abundance of molluscs and geckos species. In the Vallée de Mai, the team observed 377 geckos and molluscs, while Fond Peper recorded 310 sightings. Following five years of sustained control, data trends show a fourfold increase in the populations of molluscs and geckos across the two sites. Notably, we have recorded 600% increases in the populations of the Praslin snail (*Pachnodus pralinus*) and the dwarf bronze gecko (*Ailuronyx tachyscopeaus*). Furthermore, the team also spotted the rare *Priodiscus serratus*, suggesting that yellow crazy ants control measures may have created a more favourable environment for these species.

Successful completion of the coco de mer population census

SIF has reached an important milestone with the successful completion of the coco de mer population census across SIF managed sites, including Vallée de Mai, Fond Peper, and Fond Ferdinand. Funded by the Franklinia Foundation through the project “Increasing the resilience of Seychelles’ flagship tree species coco de mer *Lodoicea maldivica*,” the census, which first began in January 2023, has significantly bolstered our capacity to manage this emblematic species.

The team undertaking the coco de mer census at Fond Ferdinand © SIF

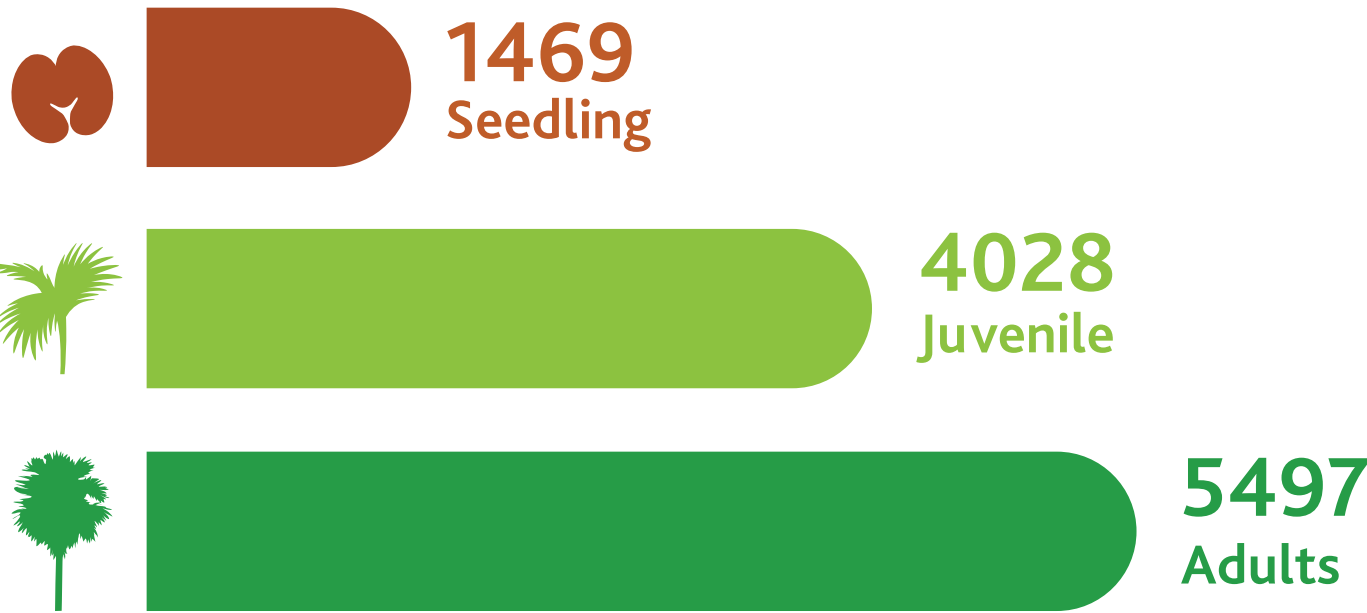


Following the adult population census, the team completed the coco de mer juvenile and seedling survey across all three sites, allowing for a wider picture of the number and distribution of the coco de mer palm.

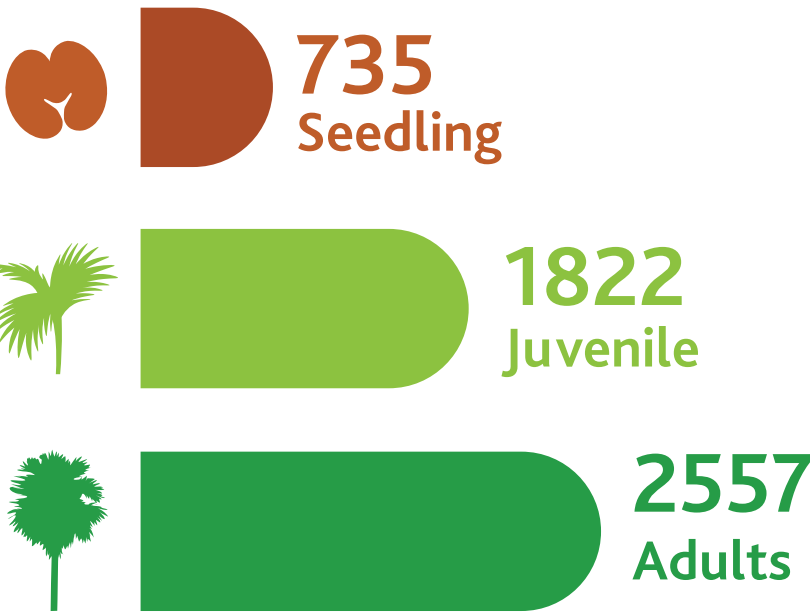
Findings suggest that the coco de mer population has increased since the last census in 2004. The survey also identified areas for potential planting and highlighted locations that require enhanced security measures and invasive plant removal. In addition to these findings, the census provided valuable demographic insights, including the species' distribution, aging, and reproductive characteristics, and can lead the way to update its conservation status on the IUCN Red List.

Results from coco de mer population census

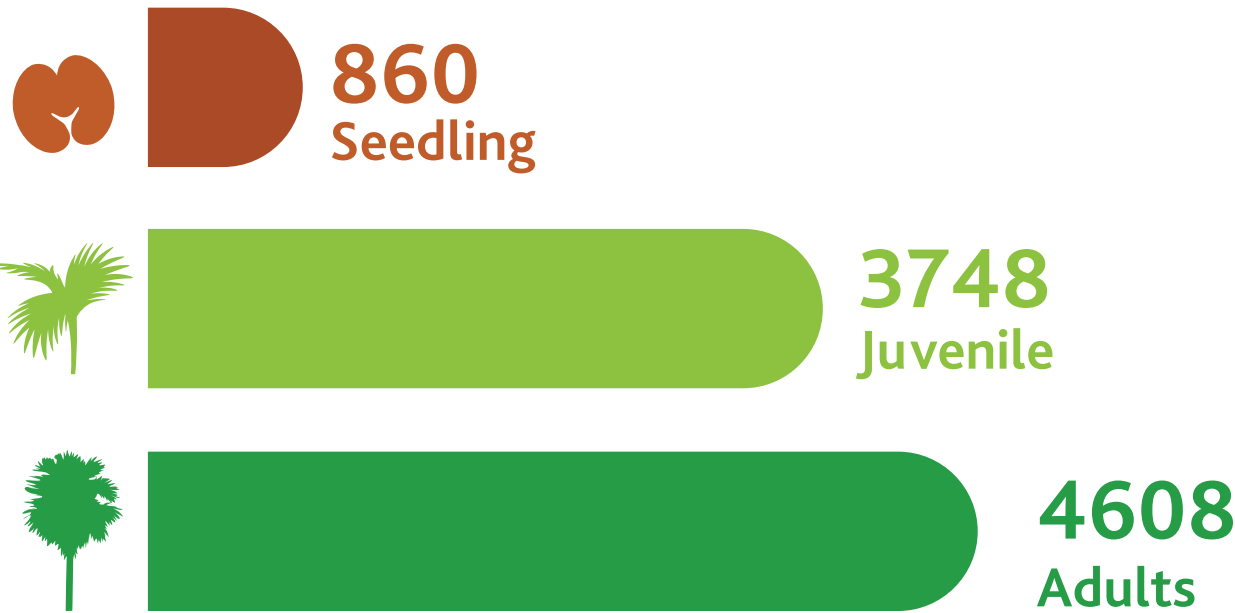
Vallée de Mai



Fond Peper



Fond Ferdinand



Oxford Plot study begins

This year, the Praslin research team carried out the Oxford Plot Vegetation Survey in the Vallée de Mai. The relative abundance of tree species composing the palm forest has been monitored via the 'Oxford Plots' study through permanently marked quadrats. These surveys were first established in 1985, with follow-ups in 1998 and 2009. Plants play a crucial role as primary producers in the food chain, providing essential benefits like producing oxygen, regulating climate impacts and nutrient cycling.

Now, fourteen years on, the team is repeating the survey in six Oxford plots (each 20x20 meters), monitoring and recording every plant within them. Vallée de Mai stands as one of the last remaining natural palm forests in Seychelles. Unfortunately, in spite of legal protection, it still faces threats such as forest fires, poaching, and biodiversity loss due to invasive alien species.

In addition to monitoring the fauna and plant phenology, understanding the forest's structure, composition, and regeneration is essential to grasp how it supports the species within it.

Marked Oxford plot in the
Vallée de Mai
© Shanone Hibonne



The Praslin research team collecting
data © Shanone Hibonne



Measuring out the plots
© Shanone Hibonne

Herpetofauna monitoring across Praslin's palm forests

Praslin's palm forests, supporting a variety of endemic herpetofauna (a group comprising reptiles and amphibians), are undergoing intensive monitoring to better understand and protect these unique species.

Since 2017, we have periodically monitored herpetofauna, however, to improve population estimates, the team, led by PhD student Markus Roesch, have now implemented new survey methods across Vallée de Mai, Fond Peper, and Fond Ferdinand. To address the challenge of low observation rates with previous transect methods, the team trialled area, transect, and path searches at various times, incorporating a dependent double-observer approach.

Bronze eyed gecko (*Ailuronyx seychellensis*) resting on a coco de mer nut © Markus Roesch



Markus (left) and Ella (right) using the double observer method to spot herpetofauna © SIF



The Seychelles day gecko (*Phesulma astriata*), though more common than the bronze geckos, was also being surveyed © Markus Roesch

Initial surveys, focusing on seven endemic reptile species including bronze and day geckos, and chameleons, revealed the dwarf bronze gecko as the most frequently encountered, followed by the Seychelles giant and small day geckos. Despite challenging weather, 99 survey hours were completed, with path transects proving most effective. Notably, Critically Endangered giant bronze geckos were observed in Fond Ferdinand, highlighting the importance of habitat conservation. The team recorded 957 observations.

Building on these results, the monitoring protocol will be updated in 2025, expanding surveys across all three sites to refine population estimates for all three bronze gecko species. Future surveys will also include rainy season monitoring to assess seasonal population dynamics.

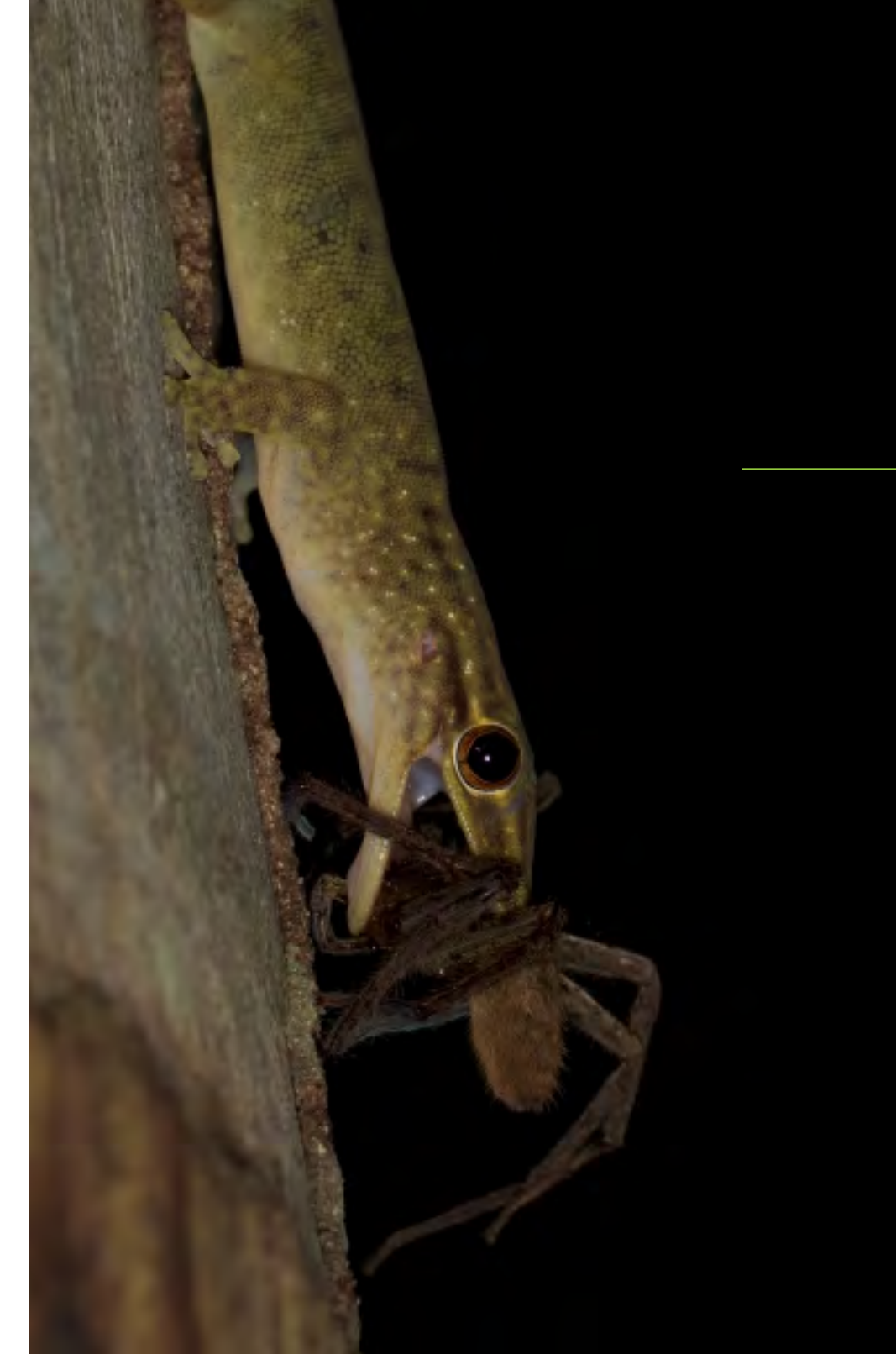
Markus Roesch will provide training, supported by The Rufford Foundation, to ensure consistent and effective long-term monitoring.

What's on the menu for the Seychelles bronze geckos?

PhD student, Markus Roesch, has additionally investigated the diets of the Seychelles bronze geckos this year. Traditional methods, such as observations or analysing stomach contents can be extensively time-consuming. Using molecular techniques, it is possible to precisely identify and quantify prey items in animal droppings. Markus collected droppings from all three species, the giant bronze gecko, the bronze-eyed gecko and the dwarf bronze gecko, in Fond Ferdinand, Fond Peper and the Vallée de Mai. Some undigested prey items could be observed by eye, such as coco de mer pollen or cockroach wings.

This research is essential to increase our understanding of the environmental needs of a rare and endemic species, like the Seychelles geckos. Furthermore, by identifying their diet, we can better determine their role in this ecosystem's food web, ultimately enabling us to conserve and protect the wider palm forest.

This work is supported by The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.



Dwarf bronze gecko (*Ailuronyx tachyscopaeus*) feeding on a spider © Markus Roesch



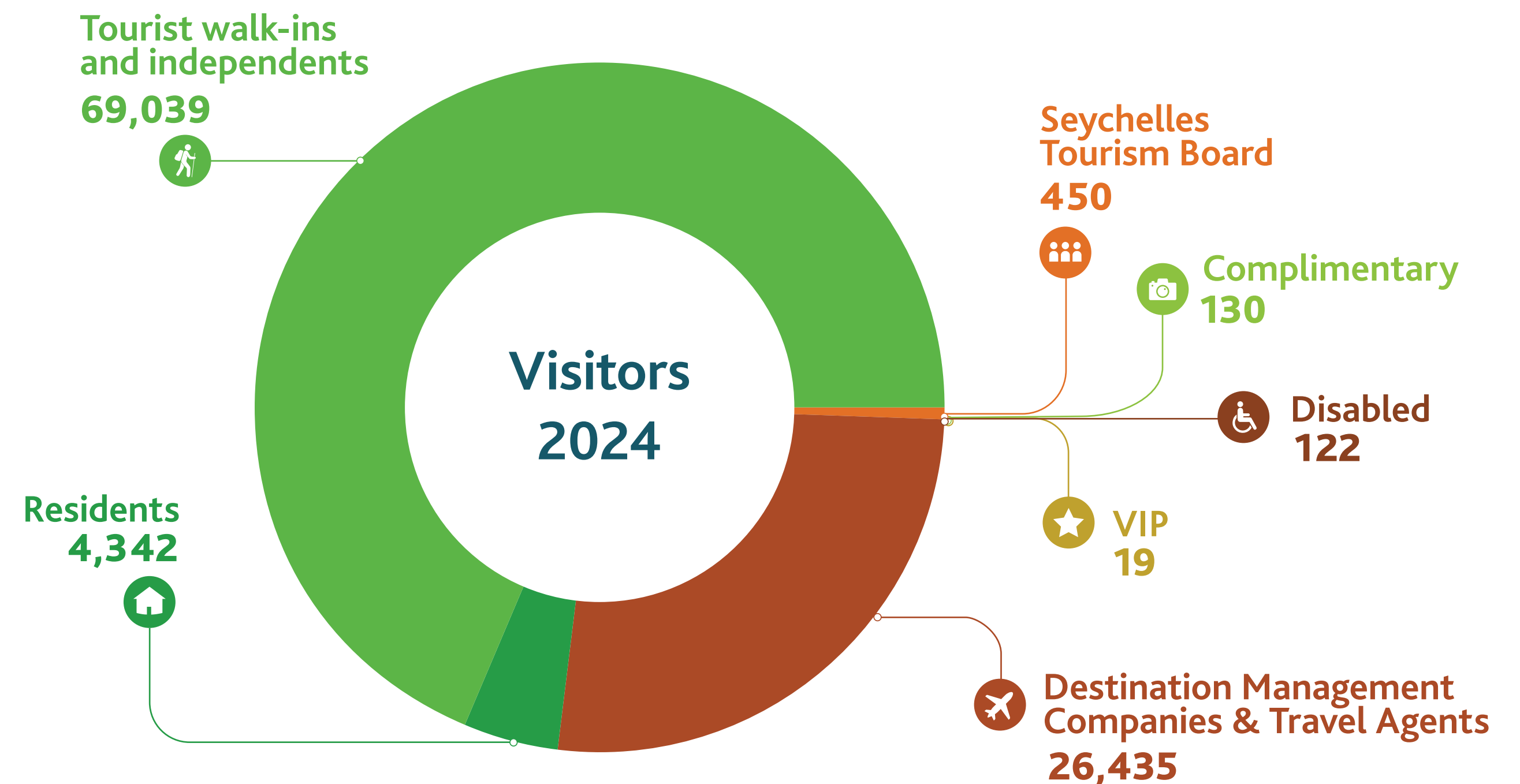
The giant bronze gecko (*Ailuronyx trachygaster*) is an important pollinator of the coco de mer © Markus Roesch

4.3 Site Management and Sustainable Tourism

Visitors to the Vallée de Mai

Visitor numbers at the Vallée de Mai saw a slight decrease in 2024, with a total of 100,536 visitors compared to 106,692 in 2023. While overall numbers dipped slightly, the proportion of resident visitors remained relatively stable, indicating continued local engagement with the site.

A minor shift occurred within tourist categories, with slightly fewer walk-in and independent visitors and a small decrease in those coming through DMCs and Travel Agents, while VIP visits rose notably. These figures suggest a possible shift in tourist travel patterns and highlight the importance of engagement strategies to maintain visitor numbers to support the site.



Vallée de Mai recognised once again with international travel awards

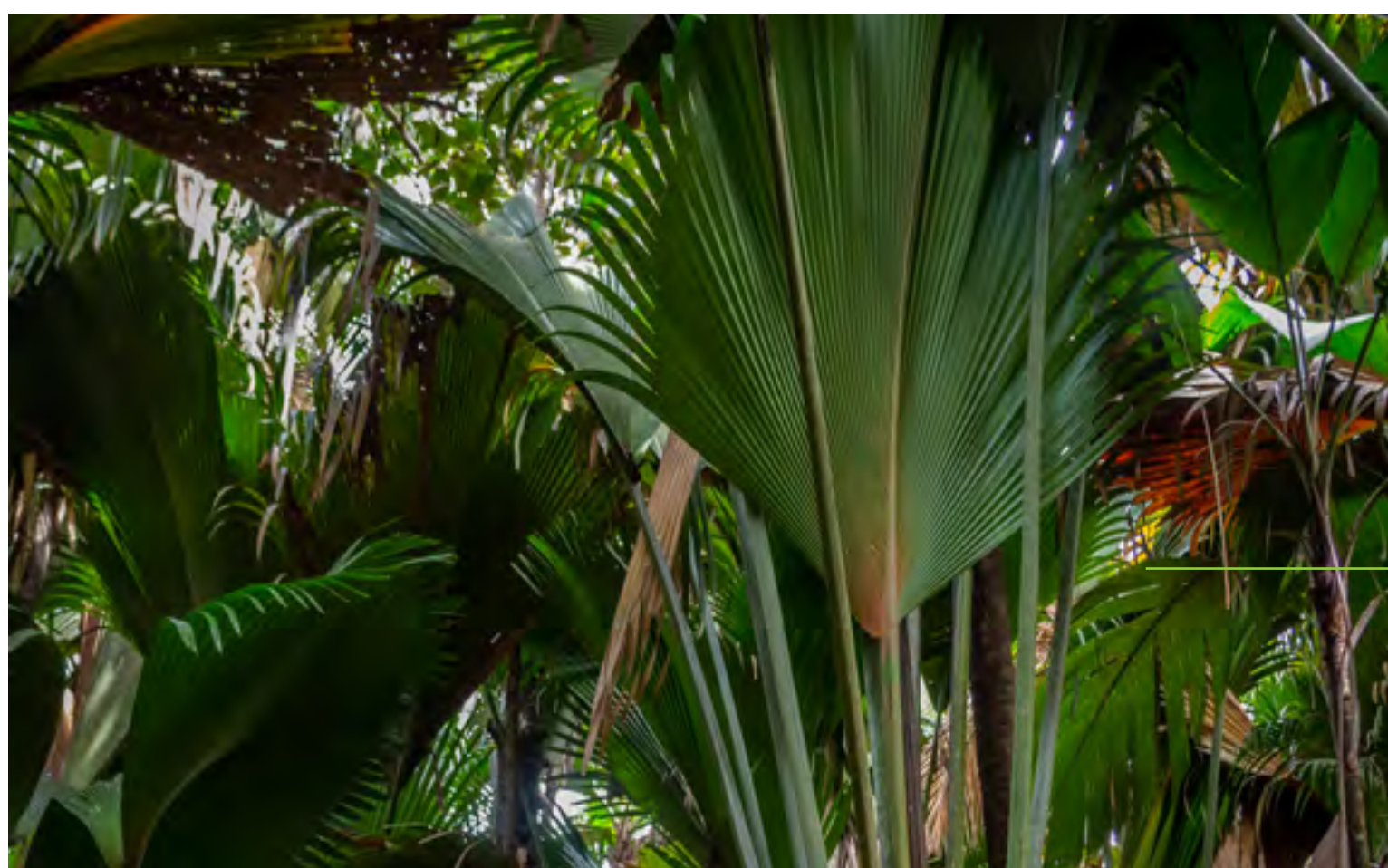


The Vallée de Mai has been recognised as a top natural attraction, earning the TripExpert Experts' Choice Award for the second consecutive year, and consistently received the TripAdvisor Traveller's Choice Award over many years.

These accolades solidify its position as a must-see destination in the Seychelles, loved by nature enthusiasts and travellers seeking unique experiences beyond the sandy coasts. Our "Garden of Eden," with one of the world's last intact palm forests, transports visitors to prehistoric conditions of the Seychelles islands.

These ongoing successes underscore the importance of continued investment in conservation, ensuring that the Vallée de Mai remains a key attraction for sustainable tourism. We would like to extend our congratulations to our team at the Vallée de Mai, who are all contributors to these accolades!

Franklinia project to boost resilience of coco de mer ends



The coco de mer census across all SIF-managed sites was a major output of the project © Martin van Rooyen

The project's primary objective was to enhance the resilience of coco de mer and mitigate threats to its survival. Key accomplishments included a comprehensive population census of coco de mer across SIF-managed sites. Additionally, a customised online database and digital data collection application were developed to streamline and improve the efficiency of future population surveys.



Our team are now registered as trained forest firefighters © SIF

Another significant achievement was the development of a Forest Fire Prevention and Contingency Plan, which outlines strategies for managing fire risks at Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand. The plan includes early detection mechanisms, risk analysis, and a framework for effective coordination in the event of a fire. Through the project, we were also able to procure specialised firefighting equipment to implement the plan. This eventually led to our Praslin staff registering as trained forest firefighters and national volunteers, strengthening Praslin's preparedness and resilience.

The Coco de Mer Anti-Poaching March was an incredible highlight for this project © Romano Laurence



The Coco de Mer Anti-Poaching March
© Romano Laurence



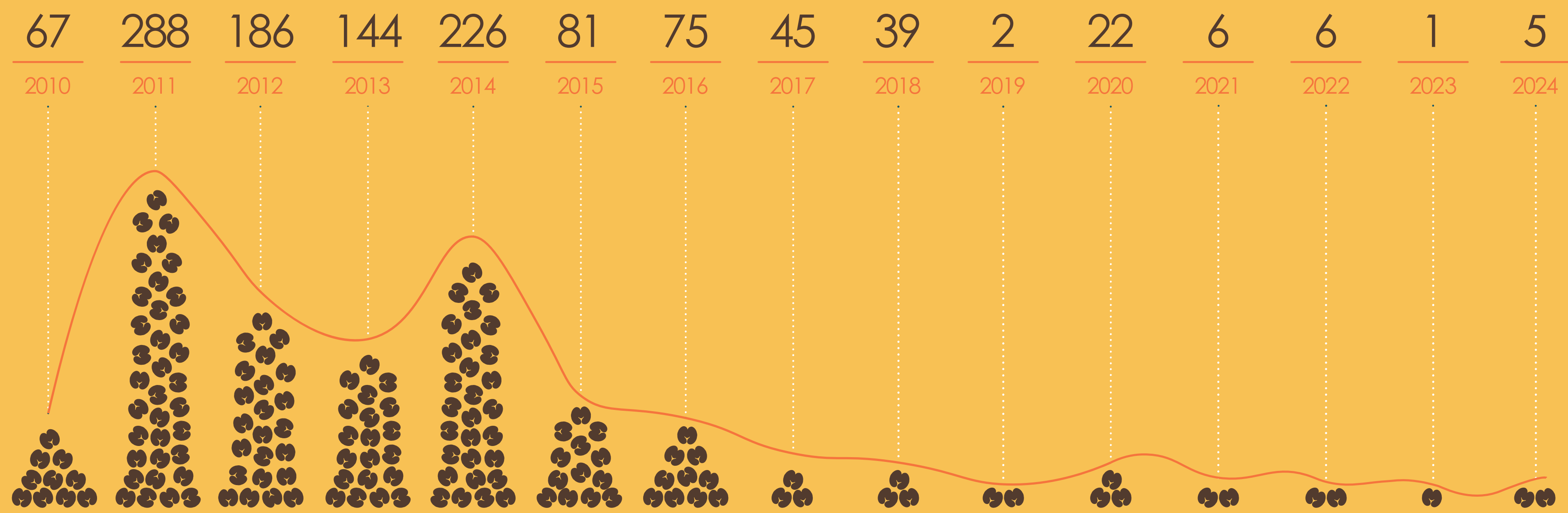
In addition, other achievements under the project include the development of an internal poaching response protocol to increase the effectiveness of our surveillance and reduce response time when poaching occurs. Furthermore, we developed educational activities and collaterals to raise awareness on the threats to the coco de mer, such as the Coco de Mer Anti-Poaching March, a series of infographics and two educational videos.

Lastly, the successes and milestones brought about during the project would not have been possible without the support of various stakeholders. We extend our deepest gratitude to all stakeholders for their commitment to enhancing the conservation efforts of Seychelles' flora.

[Check infographics here](#)[Watch Msye Voler Koko](#)[Watch coco de mer video](#)

Coco de Mer Stats

During the year, 427 nuts were collected: 248 from the Vallée de Mai and 179 from Fond Ferdinand. Unfortunately, five nuts were lost to poaching incidents, three from the combined Vallée de Mai and Fond Peper area and two from Fond Ferdinand. Furthermore, in 2024, a total of 395 coco de mer nuts were sold across the sites, 172 were bought from the Fond Ferdinand shop and 223 from the Chameleon Souvenir Shop at the Vallée de Mai.



5

Fond Ferdinand



5.1 The Road to 130 Years of Coco de Mer Protection

Fond Ferdinand is set to mark a significant milestone in February 2025—130 years of dedicated protection for the queen of the palms, the coco de mer. The site, acquired by the Seychelles government in February 1895, was the first government-owned stronghold dedicated to safeguarding this species. This purchase marked a critical step in the preservation of the coco de mer, made decades before the Seychelles Islands Foundation even existed.

To commemorate this momentous occasion, a series of celebratory activities and engaging initiatives are in the works, including our unveiling of the commemorative logo that will highlight this legacy. A range of events will follow throughout the year, aimed at involving both the community and visitors in the ongoing conservation efforts for the coco de mer and the broader biodiversity at Fond Ferdinand.

Fond Ferdinand was the first site to be purchased by the government to protect the coco de mer © Tourism Seychelles



Of Coco De Mer Protection



As part of the build-up to the 130th anniversary, Fond Ferdinand hosted familiarisation tours for Destination Management Companies and tourism stakeholders in September. These tours provided an exclusive opportunity to showcase the site as a natural destination, as well as its significance in Seychelles' conservation history. To commemorate this momentous occasion, a series of celebratory activities and engaging initiatives are in the works, including our unveiling of the commemorative logo that will highlight this legacy. A range of events will follow throughout the year, aimed at involving both the community and visitors in the ongoing conservation efforts for the coco de mer and the broader biodiversity at Fond Ferdinand.

With 130 years of coco de mer protection at Fond Ferdinand on the horizon, we continue to spearhead initiatives to preserve extraordinary species for natural heritage. This anniversary celebration promises an exciting turn ahead, as we strengthen the bond between Seychelles' natural treasures and the people who care for them.



On the road to 130 years of coco de mer protection, we hosted several familiarisation visits and are aiming to plant 130 coco de mer at Fond Ferdinand to celebrate! © Elsa Pool



© Elsa Pool

5.2 Site Management and Sustainable Tourism

Visitors to Fond Ferdinand

Fond Ferdinand experienced a slight decrease in overall visitor numbers in 2024, with a total of 17,372 visitors compared to 17,611 in 2023. While tourist walk-ins and independent visits, though still the largest category, decreased to 15,200, the most significant change was a substantial increase in resident visitors, rising to 1,985. This suggests successful engagement with the local community.

Conversely, visits facilitated by Destination Management Companies (DMCs) plummeted significantly, dropping to a mere 119. This drastic reduction in DMC-led tourism requires further investigation and strategic intervention. As Fond Ferdinand approaches its 130th anniversary in 2025, we aim to revitalise this vital partnership and encourage greater DMC and Tour Operator engagement. Combined with the planned anniversary campaign, these efforts aim to boost visitor numbers for 2025.



Fond Ferdinand awarded its second Travellers' Choice award



We are incredibly proud that Fond Ferdinand has once again been recognized as a top natural attraction in Seychelles © Tourism Seychelles



Fond Ferdinand again has been recognised in Tripadvisor's® Travellers' Choice® Awards for 2024, marking a second consecutive year of distinction. This award, based on reviews and ratings collected over the past year, shows our commitment to providing memorable visitor experiences to the site.

“Travellers' Choice honours businesses that consistently demonstrate a commitment to hospitality excellence. This means Fond Ferdinand has made such a memorable impact on its visitors that many of them took the time to go online and leave a great review about their experience. People rely on Tripadvisor's Travellers' Choice seal to help them navigate the myriads of things to see, eat, and do across the globe. We hope this recognition continues to drive business to Fond Ferdinand in 2024 and beyond.”

- John Boris, Chief Growth Officer, Tripadvisor

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our visitors for their wonderful reviews and to our dedicated staff who make this possible. Being included among travellers' favourites this year is a significant achievement for us.

Sailing Ripple Effect crew joins fire prevention efforts



A firebreak is a cleared strip of land that serves as a barrier, slowing or halting the spread of fires by removing vegetation that could serve as fuel to the fire © Kenneth Pointe

Fond Ferdinand, a biodiversity-rich site, has long struggled with fire threats, dating back to the early 1800s. To safeguard its wildlife and soil stability, a firebreak was first established in 2006 as a barrier against the spread of fires. This ongoing effort includes the regular maintenance of the firebreak, which spans 8,175 m² and plays a crucial role in our fire prevention strategy.

On October 7th, a team of five volunteers from the Sailing Ripple Effect crew joined Fond Ferdinand's field workers in clearing overgrown vegetation and invasive plants along the firebreak. From 6:30 am to 10:30 am, the group worked together with machetes and gloves to trim the area, making a valuable contribution to the maintenance of this fire control measure.

In addition to the physical firebreaks, Fond Ferdinand also employs SIF's comprehensive Forest Fire Prevention and Contingency Plan to manage risks, close monitoring of weather conditions, community engagement in fire prevention and awareness, as well as capacity building for staff.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Sailing Ripple Effect crew for their support and also invite the community to take an active role in preserving our environment!

[Learn more](#)

The Sailing Ripple Effect crew proudly celebrating their work at Fond Ferdinand on that day © SIF



Clearing the firebreak is no easy feat! © Jim Nibourette



Fond Ferdinand trails undergo maintenance



The recent maintenance of the Fond Ferdinand trails has been successfully completed, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable experience for visitors. Essential repairs on the main trail were promptly carried out following safety concerns raised by the management team. Thanks to the efforts of the Property Maintenance Supervisor and the dedicated field team, the trail stability has been significantly improved.

The team used sturdy electricity poles donated by Public Utilities Corporation (PUC), reinforced with concrete and rocks, employing innovative techniques to secure the paths. Following these upgrades, visitors can now enjoy a smoother and safer hiking experience throughout the site.

Before and after of the Fond Ferdinand trail © Jim Nibourette

6

Aldabra Atoll

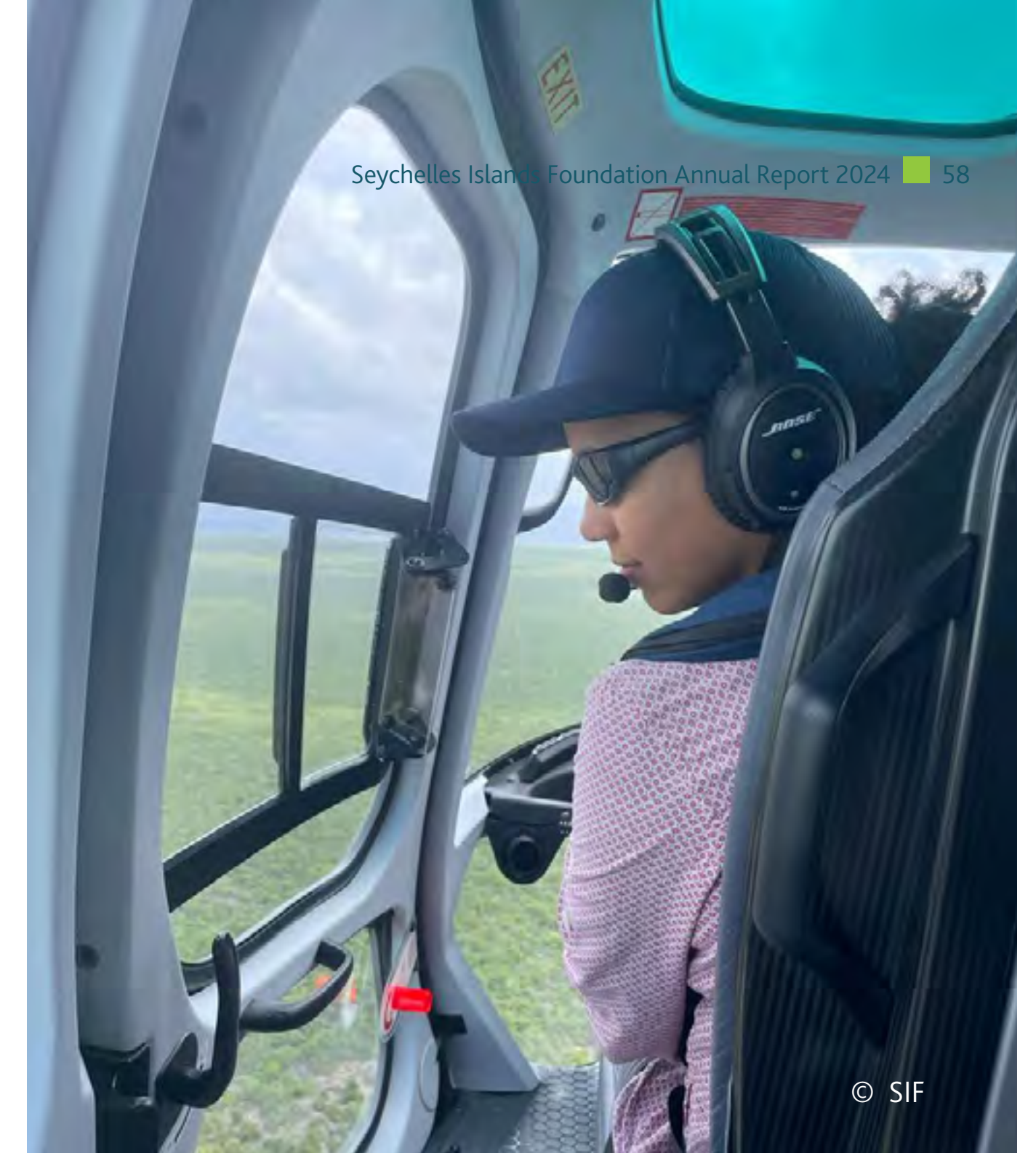


6.1 Science and Conservation

The OceanX expedition visits Aldabra Atoll

From January 14th to February 11th, OceanX's research vessel embarked on a remarkable mission focusing on deep-sea exploration in the Seychelles' outer islands. This month-long expedition covered Aldabra, Assomption, Poivre, Alphonse, D'arros, St Joseph, and the Amirantes Trench. Four SIF staff, Sebastian Cowin, Ella Nancy, Dr Anna Koester, and Dr Annabelle Constance, joined a team of 19 Seychelles-based researchers to lead the scientific objectives of this extraordinary voyage, in collaboration with the crew aboard the vessel. The expedition was the result of five months of planning and collaboration between OceanX, the Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment (MACCE), SIF, UniSey, and other local conservation stakeholders.

The Seychelles delegation exploring
Aldabra from above © Ella Nancy



The expedition accomplished the deepest dive in Aldabra's history, reaching 1500 m using a Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle (ROV). These dives employed visual sampling technologies to explore habitats at various depths (500 m, 750 m, 1000 m, and 1500 m) off Aldabra's southern coast, shedding light on the diversity and abundance of fish, plants, and invertebrates inhabiting these depths.

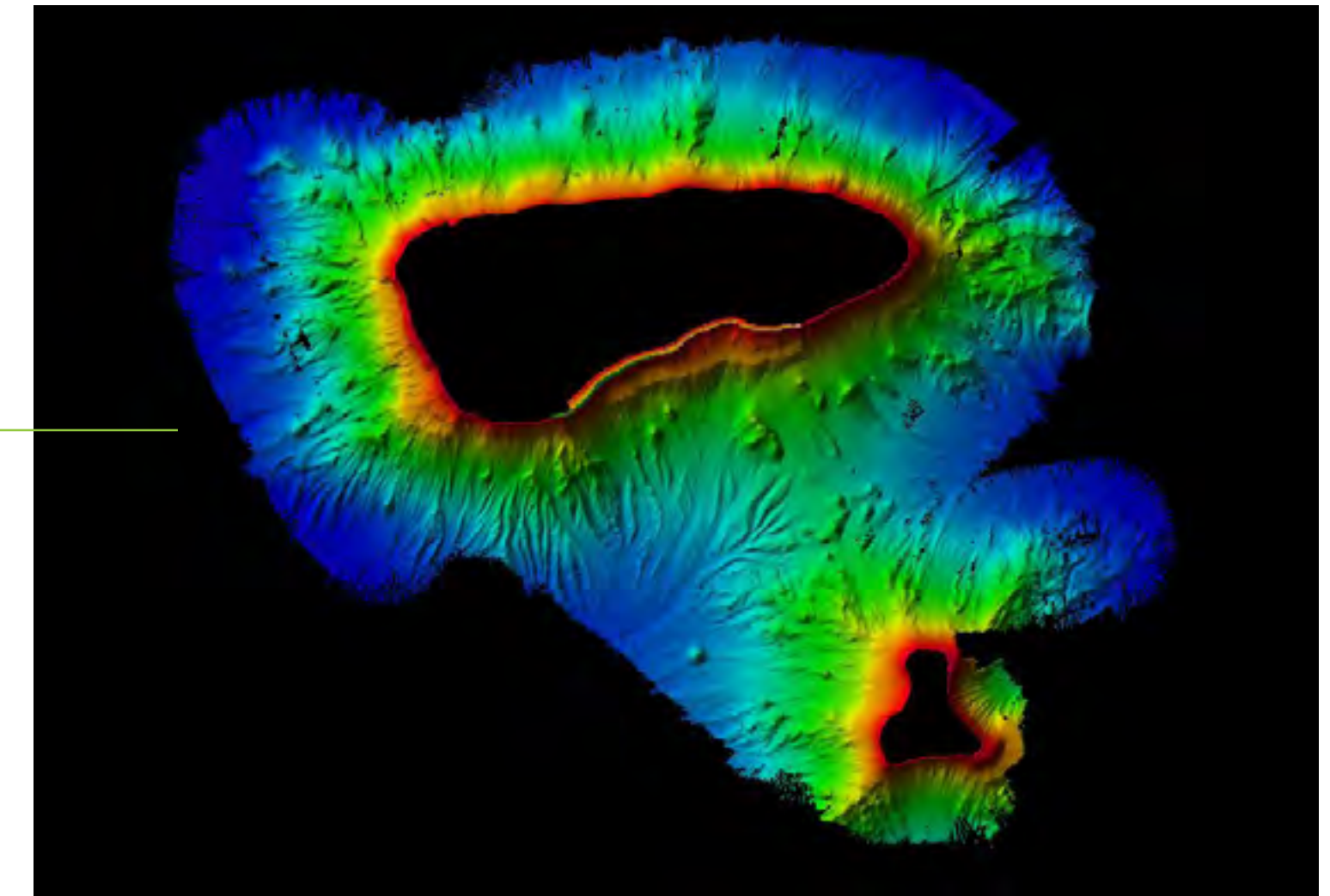
Furthermore, the team created the most comprehensive and advanced bathymetry map of Aldabra using acoustic technologies. Bathymetry measures seafloor depth and provides detailed maps of underwater topography and substrate characteristics. Over just six days, the team mapped an impressive 2334 km², equivalent to 15 times the size of Mahé. This exercise revealed Aldabra's unique geology, including its foundation atop a volcanic summit rising nearly 4000 m from the ocean floor.

On their trip, OceanX live streamed directly from a submersible at 300m depth to the World Economic Forum in Davos. This broadcast aimed to raise awareness and inspire action for ocean exploration and conservation. The livestream reached a global audience, including leaders, influencers, and decision-makers, garnering over 4 million views on TikTok.

This expedition marked a significant achievement for Seychelles, advancing our understanding of Aldabra's deep-sea environments and paving the way for better protection of these ecosystems.

[Watch here](#)[Watch here](#)

Aldabra and Assumption's
Bathymetry map © OceanX



ROV footage of an octopus at 500m
from the OceanX expedition
© Dr Annabelle Constance

The Rat and Cat Eradication (RaCE) Feasibility Phase begins!

Early this year SIF's CEO, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, joined other Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) grantees for the signing of agreements at the SeyCCAT headquarters. SIF received a grant for the Rat and Cat Eradication (RaCE) feasibility study, marking the first step towards one of the world's largest invasive mammal eradications, including the third largest for rats on tropical islands and the largest in mangrove forests.

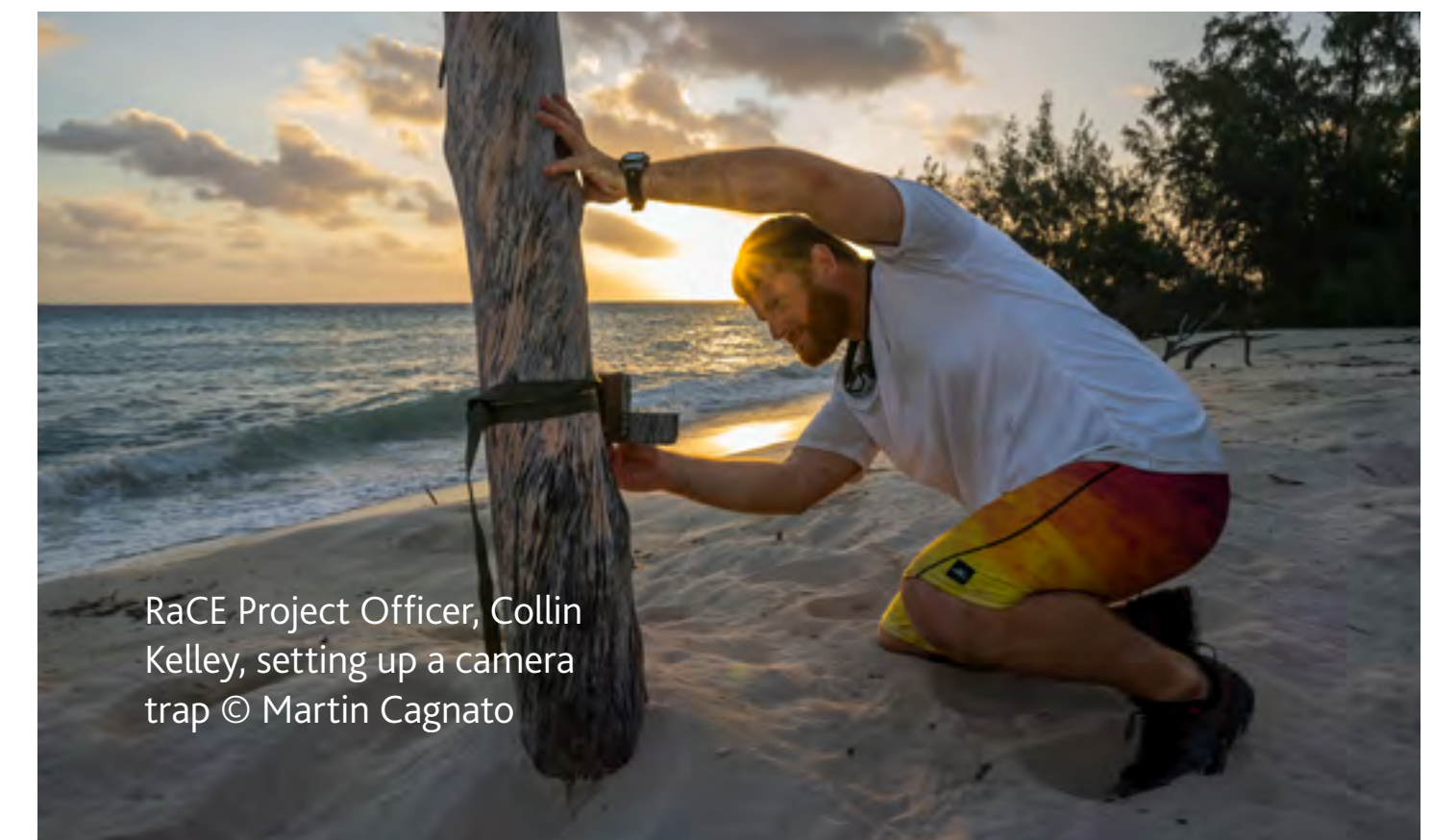
The study also seeks to improve understanding of ecosystem processes, functions, and connectivity while fostering community engagement on the project.

Navigating Aldabra's unique, yet tricky terrain will be a major part of the Feasibility Study © Martin Cagnato

CRITICAL **ECOSYSTEM**
PARTNERSHIP FUND



CEPF Grant Signing
© Anna-Louisa Dogley



RaCE Project Officer, Collin Kelley, setting up a camera trap © Martin Cagnato

Gathering public opinion through surveys



SIF is aware of the potential controversy and pushback that invasive species eradication initiatives can face, having previously undertaken successful efforts to control and eradicate species like the ring-necked parakeet, yellow crazy ants, and feral goats on Aldabra. To ensure transparency and community involvement, this year we launched a series of public surveys. Starting with social media campaigns and later expanding to outreach events, these efforts have allowed us to gather valuable data on public opinions and concerns regarding the RaCE project.

Why eradication?

Invasive alien species such as rats and feral cats have devastating impacts on island ecosystems and are the largest driver of population declines and extinctions. These species degrade ecosystems, reducing their resilience to climate change. Removing invasive mammals is a crucial nature-based solution to support ecosystem adaptation and recovery, but eradication success depends on extensive, site-specific monitoring to guide strategies and methodologies.

Over the year, the RaCE Feasibility Team has achieved ...



482
rats sampled



84 days camping
over 5 months



21 km² of
transects cut



17 reports
completed



10 km monitored
for cat habitat use



47 hour
weeks



8 new protocols
developed

What's next?

Our RaCE feasibility project represents the very first step towards achieving one of the largest invasive mammal eradications in history. With continued efforts and collaboration, this project will bring significant benefits to Aldabra's ecosystems, improving their resilience to climate change while deepening our understanding of invasive species removal. SIF remains committed to transparency and welcomes feedback, ensuring a collaborative path forward for this initiative.



Aldabra Atoll designated as an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA)

In a significant development for SIF this year, Aldabra Atoll has been officially designated as an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This marks Aldabra's seventh **international designation**, placing it among nine ISRAs in Seychelles.



© Rebecca Scott



Each year Aldabra witnesses hammerhead shark aggregations as these species migrate through © Annabelle Cupidon

ISRAs are critical habitats that are vital for the survival of sharks, rays, and chimaeras, helping to safeguard these species from global risks, such as illegal fishing, habitat loss and climate change impacts. Aldabra's ISRA designation covers six shark and ray species, including the blacktip reef shark, tawny nurse shark, sharp tooth lemon shark, scalloped hammerhead, spotted eagle ray, and the reef manta ray. The designation is based on evidence from opportunistic sightings documented over many years by our staff, volunteers, and visiting researchers.

Although ISRAs do not carry the same legal weight as a Marine Protected Area (MPAs), they are instrumental in attracting attention from policymakers and stakeholders, helping drive effective conservation strategies. Aldabra's new designation as an ISRA joins it with a select group of globally recognised areas that play a crucial role in preserving biodiversity.



The Important Shark and Ray Area is the 7th international designation for Aldabra © Stephen Jean Louis

A large grey reef shark is swimming horizontally across the frame, slightly above the sandy seabed. To its left, a sea turtle is partially visible, swimming in the same direction. The background is a dark, textured reef wall. The lighting is focused on the shark, highlighting its sleek body and fins.

With 60%

of reef sharks and rays globally at risk of extinction, Dr Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, CEO of SIF, stressed the significance of this designation in refocusing efforts on the conservation of reef sharks and rays.

Insights and achievements from the Aldabra Dugong Project

We are delighted to announce the successful completion of our project The Last Dugongs of Seychelles in May. Funded by the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), the project was implemented on Aldabra to acquire baseline population data for this last remaining population of dugongs in the Seychelles. Conducted in collaboration with Murdoch University and the Aquatic Megafauna Research Unit (AMRU) in Australia, the project lasted two years.

The project aimed to complete the first baseline population assessment for dugongs in Seychelles © Terence Mahoune



The team flying the drone for the first time © Christopher Jones



Initial results revealed that Aldabra hosts a population of approximately 23 individuals, consisting of adults and juveniles grazing primarily on the atoll's seagrass. While this number may seem small, the presence of juveniles alongside adults suggests that Aldabra could support a viable breeding population.

A key objective of the project was to raise awareness about the little-known dugongs locally and regionally. The project featured prominently at national and international events, such as the Special Session on Dugongs at the WIOMSA Africa Conference in South Africa, the inaugural Seychelles Marine Science Symposium, World Ocean Day Fairs, and classroom outreach activities for Endangered Species Day.

[Learn about dugongs](#)[Learn about Aldabra's dugongs](#)

Surveys were completed using
unmanned aerial vehicles in the Aldabra
lagoon © SIF

The discovery of a new population of the Aldabra banded snail

The Aldabra banded snail (*Rhachistia aldabrae*), was initially found commonly across the atoll in the early 1900s, as described by early researchers – then, fell into drastic decline a century later. The last live observation was thought to be in 1997, after which the species was declared extinct in 2007. In an extraordinary turn of events, the snail was rediscovered in 2014 in the remote western region of Malabar Island. Subsequent expeditions identified a second population on western Grande Terre in 2021, though the species' range remained extremely limited.



It's been incredible to discover new habitats of this once-thought-extinct species © Martin van Rooyen



Both photos © Roderic Mahasoa

In April, SIF began the feasibility study for the rat and cat eradication on Aldabra, which involves exploring rarely visited areas of the atoll. Within the first week of fieldwork at Anse Mais camp, the RaCE team encountered shells and live individuals of the Aldabra banded snail, confirming a new population on western Grande Terre! This marks the second confirmed location of the snail on Grande Terre, alongside the Malabar population.

Exploring Aldabra's hidden biodiversity with eDNA

Between September 2022 and April 2023, UNESCO led an environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling campaign across 25 countries, including Aldabra Atoll UNESCO Marine World Heritage Site, seeking to enhance our understanding of ocean biodiversity in these sites.

On Aldabra, eleven eco-school students in 2023 joined the Aldabra team to collect 20 seawater samples from five distinct sites: Bras Monsieur Clairemont, Île Esprit, Polymnie, Settlement Beach, and West Grande Terre.

Collecting and processing samples during the Aldabra Eco-School Trip
© Aruna Sunassee



© Aruna Sunassee

The Aldabra team processing the eDNA samples © SIF



© SIF

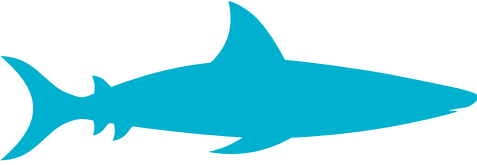

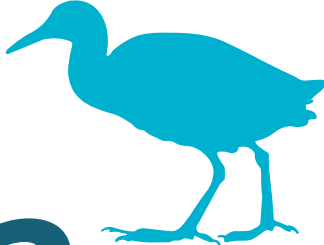

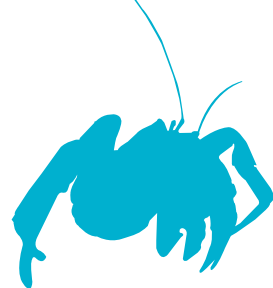
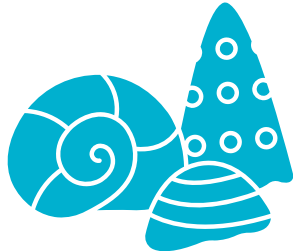
The eDNA analysis revealed 372 fish species, comprising approximately 78% of all species identified from the samples. Notably, 86 species had not been documented on Aldabra through previous methods. Among these were four species at risk of extinction: the Endangered honeycomb stingray and Vulnerable round-jaw bonefish, the Endangered leopard whip ray, and the Endangered porcupine ray.

This survey demonstrates the immense potential of eDNA technology in uncovering hidden biodiversity. By combining eDNA with traditional methods, we can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of marine ecosystems, including smaller and often overlooked life forms. Aldabra ranks second among all other Marine World Heritage Sites for species diversity and abundance, an amazing feat for Seychelles!



86 Newly recorded species

Explore results

 <div>388 Fish species <small>including 13 sharks & rays)</small></div>	 <div>5 Mammal species</div>	 <div>3 Bird species</div>	 <div>1 Turtle species</div>
 <div>68 Crustaceans</div>	 <div>82 Molluscs</div>		

Highlights from the ARM Survey

In November, the Aldabra Reef Monitoring (ARM) programme kicked off with initiating the season's surveys. This year, the team focused on bridging the data gap between traditional manual fish counts and the stereo-video surveys, these comparative surveys are key to refining our ARM methodology.

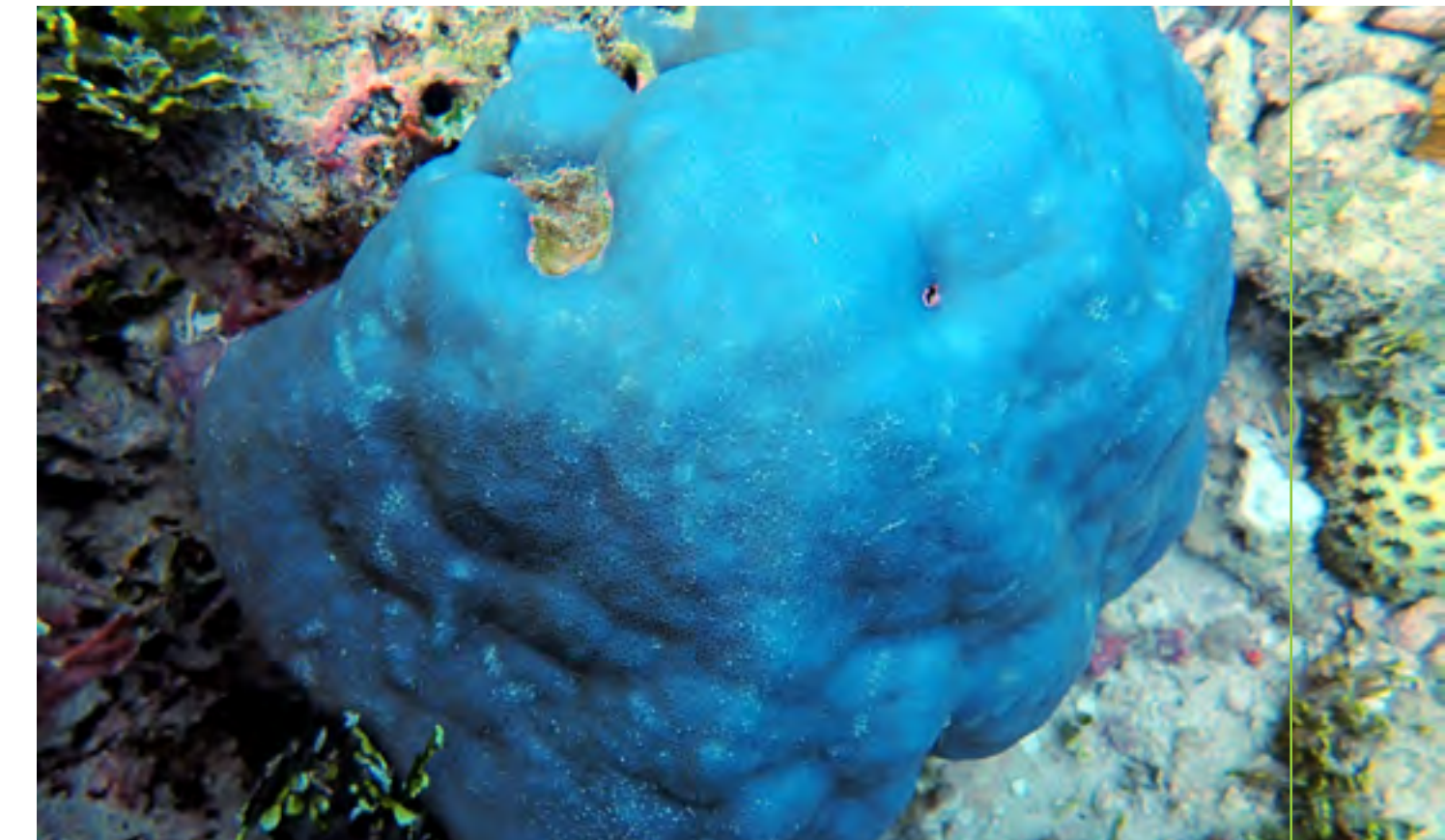
We began documenting the impacts of the 2023/2024 coral bleaching event. Early observations indicate that stress-tolerant coral species have fared well, while many colonies of sensitive genera have succumbed. Notably, the southern reefs of Aldabra appeared to have experienced higher coral mortality compared to other locations. These findings underscore the critical role of the ARM programme in monitoring climate-related changes.

The Aldabra Reef
Monitoring Season 12 Team!
© Victoria Buckland



© Victoria Buckland

Corals showing signs of heat stress at Aldabra in January 2024, with a pale, bleached and fluorescent blue coral, all of which being usually creamy/brown in colour © Dr Anna Koester



© Dr Anna Koester

Initial surveys for long-term vegetation protocol



To further understand Aldabra's plant life, the research team has been working on a long-term vegetation monitoring protocol. This initiative is essential for tracking changes in plant composition, biomass, and productivity across Aldabra's four islands, especially in anticipation of the potential rat and cat eradication. Through the implementation of the new protocol, SIF aims to gather precise data that will monitor the health of Aldabra's ecosystems over time.

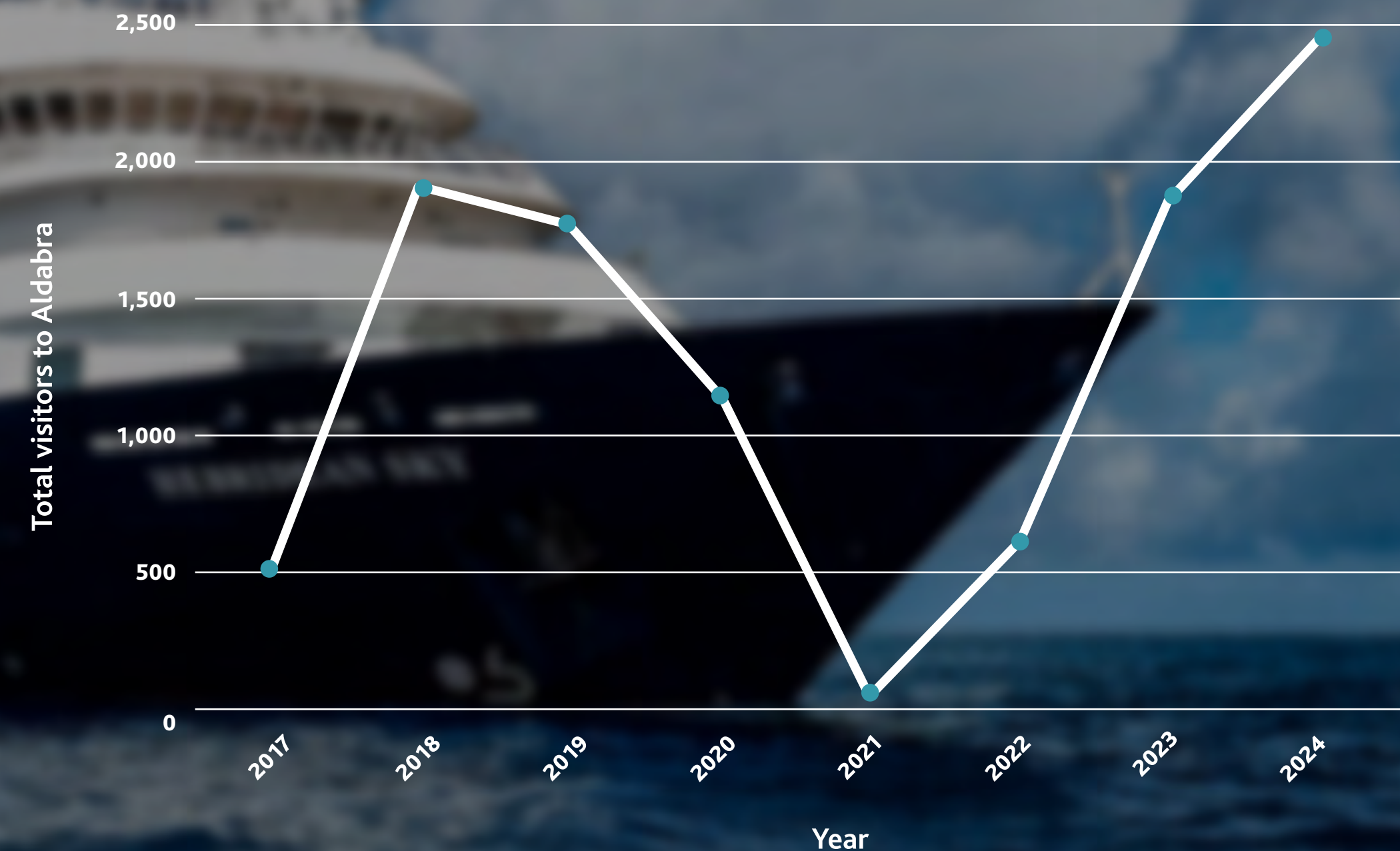
The team surveying on Picard to finalise the protocol © SIF

6.2 Island Management and Sustainable Tourism

The intended outcomes of tourism activity on Aldabra during the tourism Northwest season (November to May) are a more informed public that understands and appreciates the atoll's conservation work, and the addition of financial resources to effectively manage the operations of the site and the Aldabra research station.

The visitor data for Aldabra Atoll reveals a dynamic tourism pattern over the past years. With an initial surge in visitors abruptly interrupted by a sharp decline due to the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, demand from vessels has increased over the recent years, with visitor numbers rebounding from 2022 onwards and reaching record highs in 2023 and 2024. This resurgence, while positive for Aldabra's capacity to self-sustain its operational costs from revenue generated through impact fees, underscores the critical need for proactive island management and sustainable tourism practices.

To ensure that reserve regulations are maintained, a maximum of 120 people are permitted on land at a time, and SIF staff accompany all visit activities.



Strengthening Aldabra's Management Plan



The Aldabra Management Plan has been reworked
under the Oceans5 Project © Ádám Plézer



Under the Oceans5 project “Enabling the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan,” SIF successfully participated in the development and trailing of a template management plan for the Seychelles Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). These efforts, conducted through organisation-wide workshops, resulted in a comprehensive update of the Aldabra management plan and operational procedures while aligning them with the template developed by SeyCCAT.

While SIF already had a robust management plan for Aldabra, this project provided the opportunity to thoroughly review and enhance the existing framework. A management effectiveness assessment and a gap analysis helped identify areas for improvement, particularly following the recent expansion of the Aldabra MPA. Notably, new sections were added to address the pelagic ecosystem and deeper reef habitats surrounding Aldabra.

6.3 Aldabra Sightings

Flamingo flamboyance

Aldabra is home to the world's only oceanic island population of the greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). First recorded on the island in 1882, the population has since been confirmed to be breeding, with sightings of chicks in 1995, 2007, and 2012. These birds are typically seen in the southeast of Grande Terre, around brackish pools in Cinq Cases. In June, a team witnessed a flamboyance of 27 flamingos feeding in one pool, including several juveniles, indicating active breeding.

© Simon Watkins



6.3 Aldabra Sightings

Humpback whales

Our yearly visitors have returned! Aldabra's waters are visited each year by migrating humpback whales, which can grow up to 16 meters long and weigh 36 tons. These whales travel from the Antarctic feeding grounds to the Indian Ocean for mating and calving. Between July and October, they are often seen from Settlement Beach, where staff eagerly observe their breaching, tail slapping, and occasional singing. The whales' songs, audible up to 20 km away, are believed to serve a breeding purpose. The first sighting each season is always cause for great excitement.



7

Communications, Education and Outreach

7.1 Communications



74 *Newspaper
Articles*



38 *National Television
& Radio features*



12 *International
features*



15 *Newsletter*



7 *Press
releases*

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 2024).

Social Media Analysis 2024

This year's analysis reveals a generally positive trend in follower growth across all platforms, with a notable surge in engagement and reach on Facebook. This success on Facebook is largely attributed to our most viral video - harnessing over 300,000 accounts reached. This, coupled with an effective content strategy, showcases how organic content even surpassed the reach of paid advertisements when the audience connects with the content consumed.

Our X account (formerly Twitter) has seen a significant decline in audience engagement over the past two years due to rebranding, feature limitations, and a shift towards a paywall, driving users to other networks and reducing reach for non-paying accounts. Consequently, we are exploring a transition to Bluesky, recognizing its open-source and user-centric benefits. A key learning is the inefficiency of posting identical content across platforms (excluding LinkedIn), emphasizing the need to tailor content to each platform's unique audience and algorithms for optimal performance.



196 Times posted

Page visits
19,900

Accounts reached
548,700

Followers
11,200

Highest viewed post:

Coconut crabs
laying eggs

[View here](#)



202 Times posted

Page visits
5,300

Accounts reached
41,800

Followers
8,474

Highest viewed post:

42nd anniversary of Aldabra's
Inscription as a UNESCO
World Heritage Site

[View here](#)



126 Tweets posted

Impressions
N/A

Followers
2,012

Highest viewed post:

Guess the species

[View here](#)



28 Videos posted

Accounts Reached
13,692

Subscribers
374

Highest viewed post:

Our flagship species:
the coco de mer

[View here](#)

7.2 Education and Outreach

Our Education and Outreach efforts in 2024 highlight a significant surge in activity and a refined focus on student engagement. For the first time, we have also recorded our outdoor learning hours, underscoring a commitment to experiential learning.



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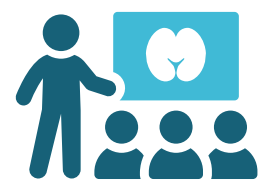


© Montessori School



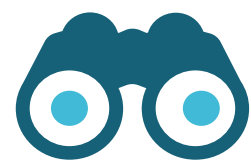
Hours taught & people reached

7,129 individuals reached through education and outreach



124

Total hours taught in classroom



438

Total hours taught outdoors



3222

Total number of students reached through education and outreach

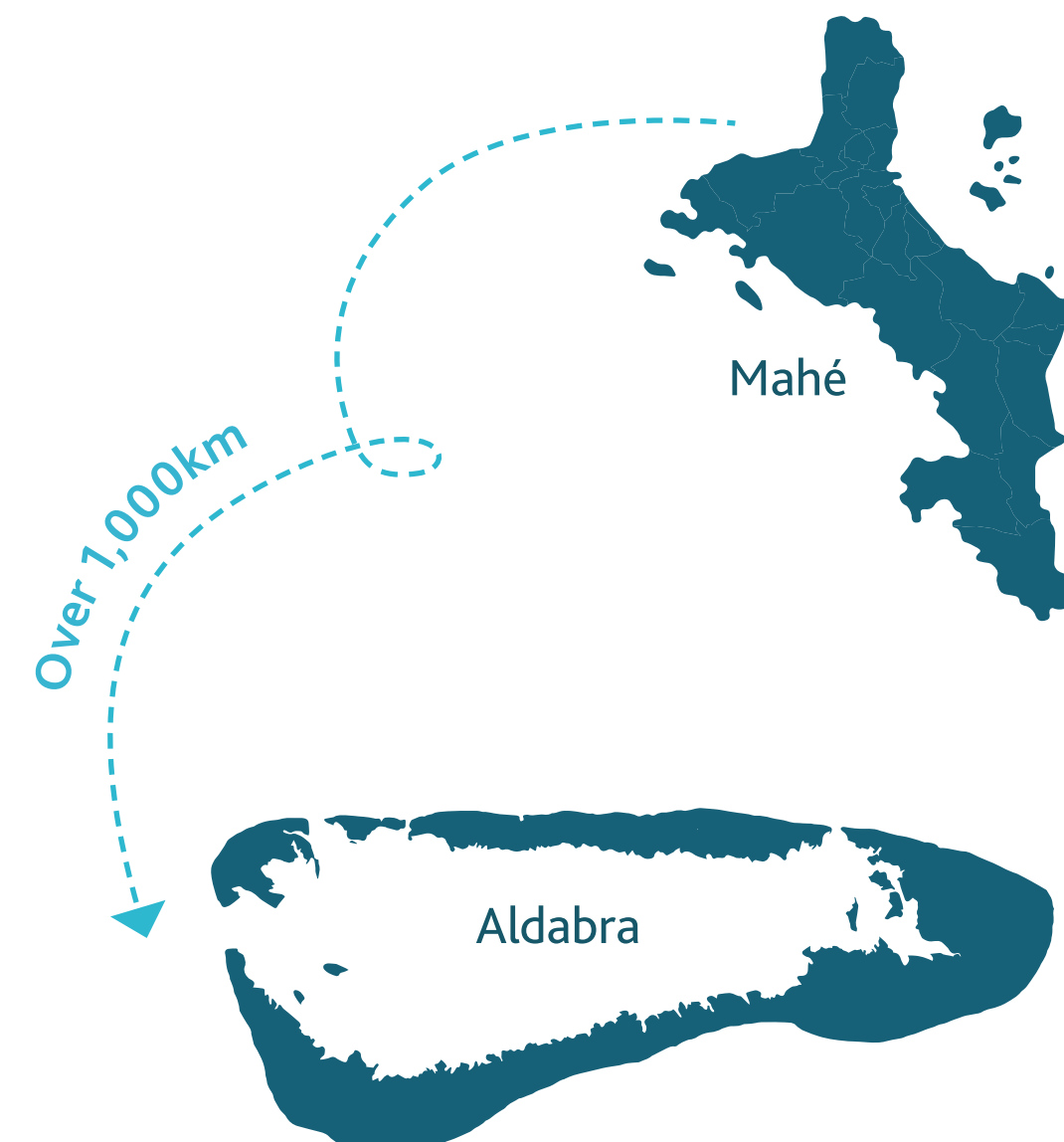


3907

Total number of adults reached through education and outreach

Educational Activities

In 2024, the Vallée de Mai continued to serve as a central hub for education, outreach, and conservation on Praslin. Educational activities were implemented across SIF-managed sites on the island-Vallée de Mai and Fond Ferdinand—with a noticeable increase in engagement and programme delivery at Fond Ferdinand.



Note: Indoor settings include art workshops, talks, and similar activities. Outdoor settings cover theme day events, camps, fairs, clean-ups, and Eco-Schools initiatives.

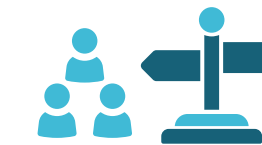
79 Outreach Activities



7 VIP Visits



21 Coordinated visits requests by schools



19 Coordinated visits requests by organisation

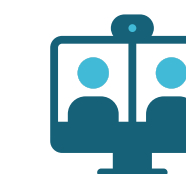


32 SIF initiative participation in outdoor settings*

15 Educational Activities



7 SIF initiative/participation in indoor settings*



1 Virtual classroom



7 Presentation requests by schools

Aldabra welcomes 16 eco-warriors for annual Eco-School Trip

The Trip of a Lifetime, a new adventure for the 16 eco-warriors embarking on the annual Eco-School Trip to Aldabra Atoll, offering students and teachers a blend of conservation, adventure and education. In April, the group immersed themselves in the atoll's wildlife: they learned to ID insects on the back path, counted turtle tracks at sunrise and watch the red-footed boobies head out to fish at La Gigi. Over a couple of days, they created their team's totems and competed in a treasure hunt, completed a beach clean-up activity (and later transformed the debris into new life!) and visited Middle Camp. The experience culminated in a heartfelt farewell, with songs, dances and poems in a short ceremony. We are proud to support the Aldabra Eco-School Trip since 2000, because we know that although you've left Aldabra, it never truly leaves you.

All photos © Joey Latsha



Highlights from the Education and Outreach Team



Students from the Centre for the Exceptional Child discovered the wonders of the Vallée de Mai, leading to a creative art workshop. © SIF



Teamwork makes the dream work! Students, PUC, MACCE, and SIF united to clean the Nouvelle D'Ecouverte river for International Day of Action for Rivers © SIF



In honour of Endangered Species Day, talented students at Fond Ferdinand painted a powerful message about threatened species like the black parrot and coco de mer. © SIF



For Earth Day, we hosted a virtual classroom themed "Planet versus Plastics" via Zoom, engaging 329 students from Mahé and Praslin with SIF's Corianna Julie and Ocean Pledge's Diony Lalieu discussing plastic pollution and solutions. © SIF



Participating in the Danny Faure Foundation's Ocean Fair in June for World Ocean's Day, SIF raised awareness about ocean sustainability with an interactive fishing game, BRUV species identification, and our SeyCCAT-funded "Last Dugongs of Seychelles" project featuring a "Spot the Dugong" game. © SIF



Through the Montessori International School, SIF was invited to participate in CNN's Call to Earth Guardians programme, a global initiative to inspire students to engage with environmental protection. © SIF

8

Scientific Publications

New insights into the foraging habits of white-tailed tropicbirds in the Indian Ocean

Researchers have gained new understanding of the foraging habits of white-tailed tropicbirds, tracking the birds from two different populations, one from Aride Island and the other from Aldabra Atoll, the study found significant differences in their foraging behaviour. Tropicbirds from Aride travelled nearly twice as far as those from Aldabra.

[Read here...](#)

Seabirds boost nutrients in mangroves and nearby coastal habitats

New research reveals how seabird populations play a crucial role in maintaining healthy mangrove ecosystems. The study demonstrates a strong connection between seabirds nesting in mangroves and the nutrient status of these forests. It suggests that conservation efforts aimed at increasing seabird populations in mangrove areas could greatly benefit both the health of mangroves and the wider biodiversity, with positive impacts on local communities as well.

[Read here...](#)

Turtle movement patterns on Aldabra

A long-term study at Aldabra Atoll examined the movement patterns of immature green and hawksbill turtles using capture-mark-recapture data collected over 40 years. The research revealed that green turtles showed less site fidelity compared to hawksbill turtles, with green turtles actively avoiding three sites. The study found no correlation between site fidelity and either season or turtle size. By contrast, hawksbill turtles exhibited site fidelity to two specific sites.

[Read here...](#)

Tracking green turtle foraging habits in the Indian Ocean

A new study led by former Aldabra Science Coordinator, Cheryl Sanchez, combined satellite tracking and skin samples to identify key foraging areas of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) nesting at Aldabra, the second-largest green turtle nesting site in the Western Indian Ocean. The results showed that Aldabra's nesting turtles forage in two primary areas: the East African coast (Tanzania and Somalia) and northern Madagascar, with slightly more heading towards East Africa. This pioneering research, the first of its kind in the region to use both satellite tracking and stable isotope analysis, reveals that the foraging habitat of Aldabra's nesting green turtles extends beyond legally protected areas, reaching across Seychelles, the Western Indian Ocean, and East African coastal regions.

[Read here...](#)

Enhancing atoll island resilience through natural accretion processes

Atoll islands are often seen as vulnerable to sea level rise due to their low elevation, but their true vulnerability lies in the loss of their ability to naturally accrete, or build, in response to rising seas. This study highlights the importance of geophysical processes in maintaining atoll islands which have evolved to accrete vertically at a pace matching changing sea levels. Global marine degradation and local impacts are disrupting these processes, making atoll islands more susceptible to erosion.

[Read here...](#)

The coral superhighway: new study reveals reef connectivity

Researchers from the University of Oxford and Seychelles practitioners have uncovered a surprising link among isolated coral reefs across Seychelles, revealing that ocean currents act as a “coral superhighway” to disperse larvae among distant islands. By identifying major larval sources and dispersal patterns, the study offers valuable insights for prioritising conservation strategies such as marine protected areas and reef restoration to enhance regional reef resilience. This collaborative effort, supported by the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust’s Blue Grants Fund, sets a new benchmark for coral reef connectivity and long-term ecosystem health.

[Read here...](#)

Growth and ageing patterns of the coco de mer

Through monitoring leaf production and internode length in seedlings, juvenile, and mature male and female plants of the dioecious coco de mer palm (*Lodoicea maldivica*) on Praslin and Curieuse Islands, researchers revealed significant differences in leaf production rates and internode growth. Seedlings showed slower leaf production intervals compared to mature palms. The study also estimated plant age, revealing that some of the tallest palms could be centuries old, with those on Praslin reaching up to 442 years and on Curieuse up to 232 years. The findings emphasise the species' vulnerability to disturbances, particularly fires, due to its slow growth rate and the decline in regeneration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[Read here...](#)

A renaissance of atoll ecology

This research paper explores the unique ecosystems of the world's atolls, highlighting their complex geology, ecology, and biogeography. Atolls are structures made up of islands, coral reefs and lagoons, all of which depend on marine productivity for the formation and maintenance of their island communities. The paper discusses how atoll species communities maintain dynamic equilibrium with surrounding ocean conditions. The study also emphasizes the impact of past human disturbances and the threat of global change, positioning atolls as a critical focus for conservation and ecological restoration efforts.

[Read here...](#)

Post-nesting migrations of green turtles from Aldabra

A recent study led by Heather Richards, a former Aldabra Science Coordinator, has revealed the remarkable migratory journeys of green turtles nesting at Aldabra Atoll, one of the largest turtle rookeries in the Western Indian Ocean. Using satellite tracking and flipper tag data spanning decades, researchers found that turtles travel from 743 to 2,552 km to foraging grounds in Tanzania, Madagascar, Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Seychelles. Over 40% of these turtles reach areas within or near Marine Protected Areas, underscoring the critical role of MPAs in their conservation.

[Read here...](#)

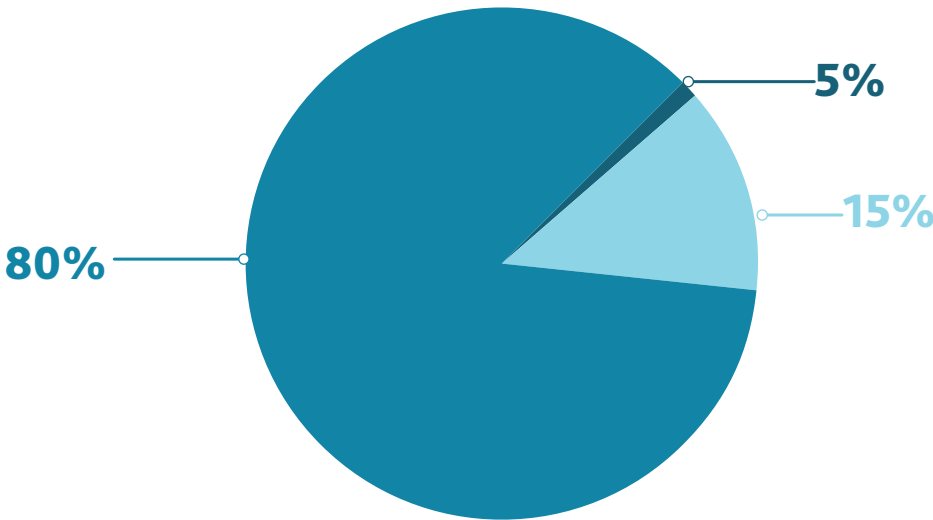
Study reveals minimal change to Aldabra's shoreline over 51 years

A study led by SIF and Universität Zürich reveals that Aldabra Atoll's shoreline has remained remarkably stable despite rising sea levels in the Western Indian Ocean from 1960 to 2011. Using historical aerial and satellite imagery, researchers conducted the first comprehensive analysis of shoreline responses on raised atolls over 51 years. The findings show that 61 percent of the shoreline remained unchanged, 12 percent experienced accretion, and 12 percent eroded, with an average change of just 0.25 ± 0.36 meters per year—far below global atoll averages. Lagoon shorelines underwent more rapid changes than the erosion-resistant ocean shorelines, while sandy beaches, including turtle nesting sites and the research station, were affected by erosion.

[Read here...](#)

9 Finances

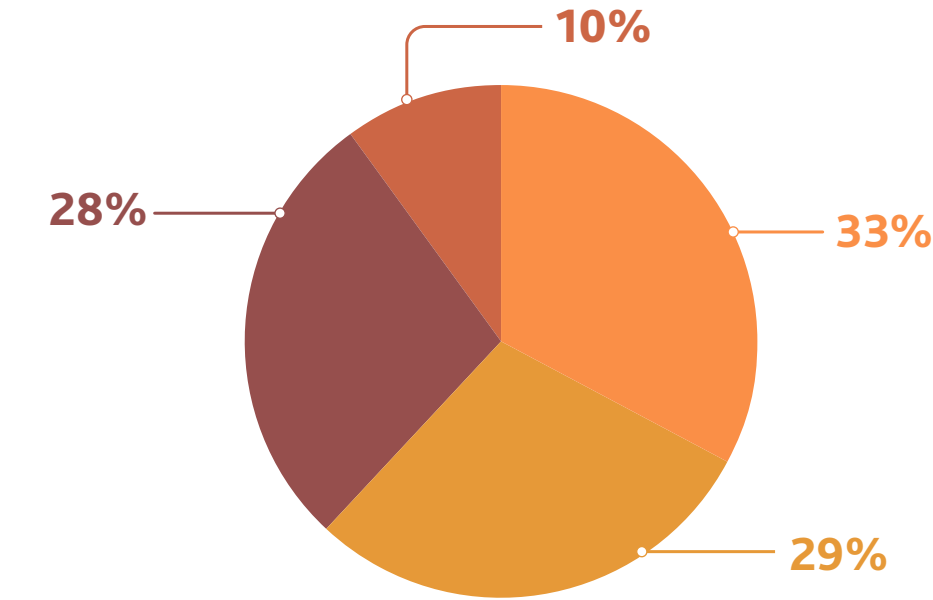
Revenue



Total **SCR 80,461,697.00**

Income from VDM, FF & Aldabra	68,909,569.62
Income from Project Activities	1,110,439.38
Income from Financial Instruments	10,441,688.00

Expense



Total **SCR 66,117,099.00**

Net Surplus **SCR 14,344,598.00**

ALD- Operational and Staff cost	18,397,510.00
FF- Operational and Staff cost	6,926,931.00
HQ- Operational and Staff Cost	19,033,880.00
VDM- Operational and Staff cost	21,758,778.00

Disclaimer: Please be advised that the figures presented above are unaudited.

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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- Seychelles National Meteorological Service
- Simon Taylor
- Global Vision International (GVI) Seychelles
- Seychelles Police Force
- Seychelles People's Defence Force
- Seychelles Fire & Rescue Services Agency

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- 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)
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- Dr Jim Labisko (DICE, University of Kent, UK)
- Dr Simon Maddock (Natural History Museum, London, UK)
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- 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 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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