



The Ecotourism Society of Seychelles

*For the Community & by the Community
The Process....*

“Turning Possibilities into Realities”

The Year of Togetherness....

Newsletter No. 6 of 2009 by TESS in accordance to Article 7 Section 3 of its Constitution.

WORLD BIODIVERSITY DAY

22nd May 2009

Patriotism and Biodiversity

The Solutions

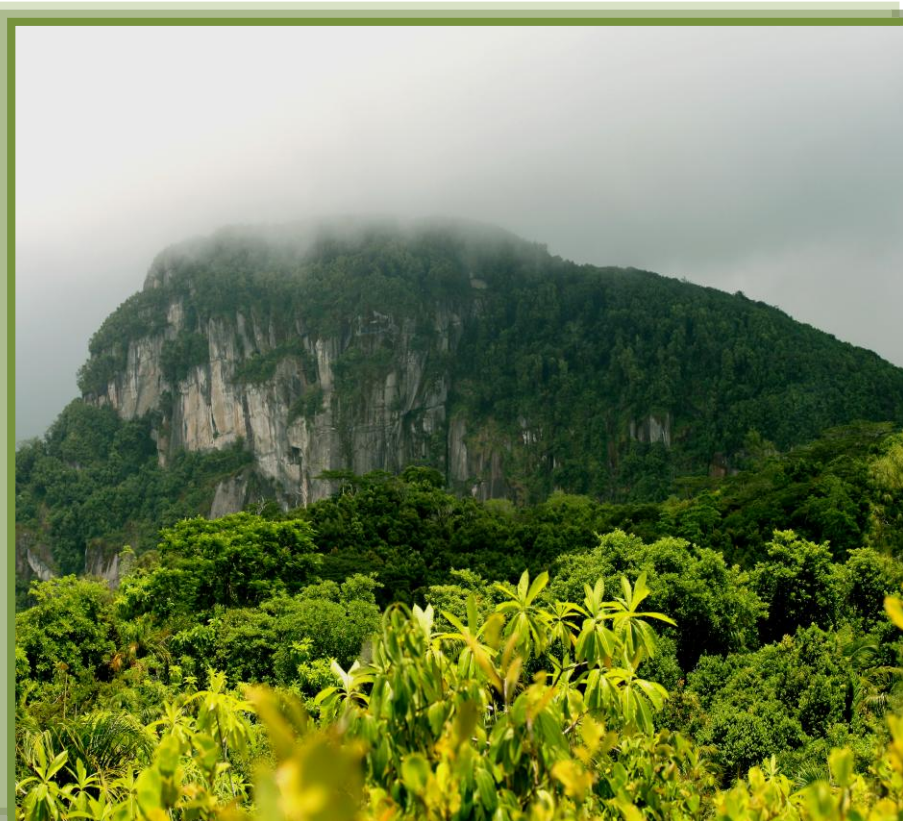


Photo courtesy of Martin Constance

Symbol of Nationalism... Morne Blanc Standing Tall, Proud and Alive

Stocktaking

“In an age of so little left, how much is enough and how much has been lost forever and still being lost and how much has been preserved, managed, restored, revived, protected and enhanced for future generations”
by the SG of TESS

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

“The History of Seychelles”

ILE D'ABONDANCE

Now a Frenchman steps into the Seychelles story. Bertrand François de Labourdonnais was born in St. Malo in 1699 with adventure in his blood. Off to seas at the age of ten, he became a lieutenant in the French East India Company in 1718. He took part in the French capture of Mayyazhi (renamed Mahé) on the Malabar Coast, and adopted the name Mahé de Labourdonnais. After some years as a private trader, he took service with the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa. For eleven years from 1735, he was governor of Ile de France (Mauritius) and Bourbon (Reunion).

The islands to the north-west of the Ile de France intrigued Labourdonnais. They seemed too small to be colonised but were large enough for a British base from which to harry French shipping. And with fresh water, coconuts, fish, timber, tortoise and turtle meat, they would make an excellent stop-over for French vessels plying between his colonies and India. This was an age of intense rivalry between England and France. If only to keep the English out,

Labourdonnais felt he must claim the islands. He despatched Captain Lazare Picault to explore them. Lazare sailed for Seychelles in August 1742, master of a tartane, the Elisabeth, with responsibility also for the fifty-ton Le Charle, captained by Jean Grossin, with a crew of sixteen.

The expedition took ten weeks to find Seven Sisters (or Three Brothers). At last, on 19 November 1742, “a very high island” was spotted. After a night of rainy squalls, and a current running so loudly they feared they were on a reef, dawn showed one island had become two, the second “high, round and rugged”. Picault was still confused about his position. Instinct told him this was Three Brothers, his charts insisted he was in the Amirantes. Wherever he was, the islands warranted investigation and he needed water urgently. The long boat was lowered and landing parties headed for shore.

This first “official” landing on what was to become Mahé, largest of the islands, was made along the west coast, at Anse Boileau, and not at the bay which

now bears Picault’s name, Baie Lazare. They discovered steep land, densely forested and, most importantly, a stream. Further investigation brought several strange types of bird. Along the beaches were coconut palms growing abundantly and there was evidence of many turtles.

To Picault it was a LAND OF PLENTY, so he named it the ILE D’ADONDANCE. Four days later, his holds crammed with filled water butts and coconuts, he departed on 26 November convinced that the uninhabited islands had potential as a base.

Gently northerly winds carried them clear of “Port St. Lazare” and, as they passed the southern tip of the island, they sighted three more to the north-east. Picault’s report made interesting reading but Labourdonnais wanted to know more and required better maps. So, a year later in December 1743, Picault was back aboard the Elisabeth, bound for the Three Brothers. This time he had no sister ship, but he did have a good cartographer.

Analysis

Since 19th November 1742, 266 years ago or so, the time has come for us as a Nation to take Stock of how much of the Abundance of our Biodiversity has already been lost forever, and still being lost and how much has been preserved, managed, restored, revived, protected and enhanced for future generations.

Yes, while we have lost all our crocodiles, we have managed to keep an abundance of tortoises simply because they now remain in relative isolation.

Yes, while my heart bleeds when I see the Sandragon trees bleeding to death, almost to extinction, we are also saddened to see the 100 year old Takamaka trees shedding their last drops of sticky gluey sap. No one can disagree that the abundance of Coconut palms all along the beaches of the granitic

islands which Captain Lazare Picault discovered are quickly vanishing – not because of the newly introduced coconut white flies but because of the many developments that have taken place over the last 35 years or so. Yes, we need to develop and yes there is the need to start replanting as many coconut trees as possible. Today SR25 for four coconuts...is simply not a joke!

As the loss of our unique Biodiversity goes on and on, and now more so due to the introduction of the many varieties of Alien Invasive Creepers, the time has come for us to take stock of what has already been lost so as to protect whatever is left of God’s given gifts of life, to our unique islands, and to our multi-ethnic, multi-culture community – The One, The Only Seychelles Islands which we currently Band as: - *Not just Another place...but...Another World!*

The Important Question of Patriotism in Relation to Biodiversity

In her keynote address for the launching of the Association of Concerned Citizen of Seychelles (ACCESS) on Friday 24th April 2009, Mrs Nichole Tirant-Ghérardi said and I quote.

“When people talk about nationhood and patriotism, many of us are not clear as to what we are referring. But to me, it is clear that the granitic hills and beautiful beaches of Seychelles, however important to me, are not what my patriotism should focus on. I am a patriot when I understand and fully appreciate that I am true to the People that comprise the country in which I live and which we call our own. I cannot be patriotic to a land, to bricks and mortar, to granite and sand and sea. All these things are inert. They exist without a soul, without life!” unquote.

Now, the New Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, Deluxe Edition defines...

Patriot: a person who loves his native country and will do what he can for it.

Patriotic: inspired by, showing or aimed at arousing love for one’s country.

Patriotism: zealous love of one’s country.

In view of the above mentioned definitions, to TESS, such a statement by a highly educated citizen of Seychelles, a respected lawyer, an intellectual, presently serving on numerous boards and committees especially designed to build capacity, awareness and understanding on issues relating to environment, tourism and fisheries..., the pillars of our economy, our livelihood and that

of our children, is left to be considered by one and all concerned. Especially by those of us who are of the view that patriotism has a much deeper sense of meaning for our nation rather than “just being true to the people living in that land” and “the people we call our fellow citizen”.

To TESS this 650 million years old granite Motherland of ours, with her Biodiversity that helps sustain us, her sand and sea which are our treasures must be afforded the patriotic sentiments and unconditional love she rightfully deserves.

Mrs. Tirant-Ghérardi when on to state that “Patriotism must create for us a sense of Nationalism” and “a sense of a community of people we call in our case Seychellois”.

Today TESS would like to register its reservations to such a statement by Mrs Tirant-Ghérardi for by being a strong advocate for the preservation and conservation of our National Heritage comprising of our land, granite, sand, seas and not the least the abundance of our marine biodiversity, we simply cannot consider these assets on which our Seychellois Community is so heavily dependent “as inert, without a soul and without life”.

Inert meaning: incapable of moving; acting, or resisting an opposing force, making no imaginative effort, have to get to move or act and un-reactive to other substances.

The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) 2008

History

Launched in 1992, SGP supports activities of non-governmental and community-based organisations in developing countries toward climate change abatement, conservation of biodiversity, protection of international waters, reduction of the impact of persistent organic pollutants and the prevention of land degradation while generating sustainable livelihood.

Recently TESS has been advised by LUNGOS, the umbrella of Civil Society Organisations, that contrary to set Rules and Procedures pertaining to the SGP, the nominations of the National Steering Committee for potential NGO candidates have to be sent to Mrs Nichole Tirant-Ghérardi, through LUNGOS for them to choose 3 NGO nominations on the committee.

How can someone who could be considered as having reservations to being patriotic to the land, sand, and seas, of the Seychelles Islands, which she considers as being “inert, without a soul, and without a life” be made to be in charge of such a programme worth over US\$ 500,000. That is the question, to which TESS is still awaiting for concrete answers from LUNGOS... but to no avail as yet.

But as a forward looking Civil Society Organisation, TESS has the patience, is confident and convinced that LUNGOS will one day, somehow, give concrete answers to the many outstanding requests for clarification to the members it represents for the benefit of transparency and accountability, whereby enhancing further the Important Role of Civil Society, for Nation Building in the new millennium.

Solutions...
Solutions...
Solutions...!



Merremia peltata - latin vernacular for the creeper

*And now that we take much pride in being identified by the International Community as the country hosting the forth largest forested cover in the world, in doing so we must also take notice that a considerable portion of our territory has already been conquered by Alien Invasive Creepers, threatening the many rare plant and animal species on the brink of extinction, whereby calling for appropriate action **NOW**.*

*In response and to commemorate the **International Biodiversity Day on May 22nd 2009**, TESS will be undertaking an “**Eradication of Invasive Alien Species Activity**” at the Sweet Escott marshland in collaboration with the Department of Environment.*

*Our activity will take place on **Saturday 23rd May 2009 starting at 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.***

As per requirements of the Department of Environment, TESS will eventually take over the management of the wetland area for the development of an eco-trail as a measure to prevent the flourishing of invasive alien species in the area. A detailed management/action plan had been drawn up by TESS which we can share with those interested.

This is a call for assistance from one and all to participate in the planned event for Saturday 23rd May in which ever form possible. DOE will be providing some logistical assistance for the event and the Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles and the JJ Spirit Foundation will be mobilizing their members in the Anse Royale and south region to assist with manpower. We will need as many volunteers as possible to make the activity meaningful and we are counting on your good contribution.

As a token of appreciation TESS is offering a complementary visit to Kot Man-Ya Exotic Flower Garden thereafter.

Counting on your good and continuous support.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME

Knowing full well that not all of us will be able to participate in this particular activity, we take this opportunity to appeal to the local Community, to undertake similar activities not just today but more so on a continuous basis around our homes and other places of our choosing, no matter how TEDIOUS this exercise is.

It is said that “a journey of a thousand miles starts with a first step”. Thus let us all start that necessary first step today for we simply have no other choice at our disposal.

And TOGETHER “yes we can”...!

Have a productive weekend full of thoughts on the importance of our biodiversity for our sustainable livelihood and for the love of the Seychelles Islands.

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Secretary General of TESS

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