

Mangroves for Mankind

Restoring Mangroves habitats at the sanctuary in Roche Caiman

Mangroves are an important coastal habitat in tropical countries like the Seychelles. They provide a buffer between the sea and the land, helping to moderate the impact of strong tides and climate change. Seven mangroves species are found in the Seychelles, two of which were growing in Roche Caiman, the red and white mangroves. With efforts to restore lost species in the area, Nature Seychelles have introduced the puzzle nut mangrove and an additional species to the site, successfully grown in their nursery, using seedlings collected from the Port Launay mangrove area with the permission of the National Parks Authority

Nature Seychelles, a leading environmental NGO in the country has been actively engaged in environment protection activities since 1998 and is responsible for a wetland sanctuary in Roche Caiman, situated on the outskirts of the capital of Victoria, on the main island of Mahe. Nature Seychelles also manages the island of Cousin, a designated and protected nature reserve.

A demonstration site with a difference

This project demonstrates how to recreate a mangrove habitat at an urban site with an artificial setting. The non-governmental organisation simply wants to show that the benefits of mangroves can be achieved anywhere on the coast so as to encourage more people to create this important habitat or better still to protect the remaining habitats within the community.

This mangrove work being undertaken will provide a demonstration site that integrates restoration with community education and recreation, showing how mangroves function and how restoring essential habitats elsewhere can be achieved.

Contribution of the Small Grant Project

There is already a wetland nature reserve at the site and the project is actively reprofiling this site and recreating a new mangrove habitat. The water flow is being made more tidal to make conditions more favorable for mangroves. The shape of the wetland has



Children have fun digging water channels though at times having their feet sunk deep into the mud @ Nature Seychelles, Aug 2013

has greatly changed to encourage mangrove growth and other aquatic life to thrive. Mangroves need a good balance of sea and fresh water to survive, therefore a new channel has been dug out controlling the amount of seawater entering the sanctuary, thus managing water flow on the site. The aquatic *Typha Javanica*, which out-competes and edges out the mangroves has been reduced considerably in these areas

Local groups' involvement

Some local groups have been involved in helping to create this new site through activity days, volunteering and training. A more natural coastal landscape benefits everyone, as it increases their resilience to climate change. The amount of natural coast in Seychelles is very small so it is a priority for the population to help protect themselves from change in the future.

Local people benefit from being involved in the project, particularly the 16 adult participants including 3 ladies from vulnerable groups who have been taught new skills through a conservation training

programme which has been carried out as part of the project. At least 100 school children are also very active participants in the Nature Seychelles MFF project and are doing a fantastic job in rehabilitating the mangrove sanctuary at Roche Caiman by foraging for seeds with enthusiasm and wading right into the mud to plant them.

Reprofiling the landscape; major transformation to the Sanctuary

The project has amazingly transformed the sanctuary into an area where mangroves are thriving under favorable condition. Careful planning has taken such factors as competition from Typha grass into consideration during the reprofiling of the landscape to enhance the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process. Local and resident birds, including herons, yellow bitterns are frequent users of the spot and Nature Seychelles looks forward to welcoming migrant birds to the site during the migratory season.

Ditches, pools and wader scrapes have been created and being maintained for birds

Promoting mangroves education

Apart from planting mangroves, the project educates people about mangroves importance for coastal and shoreline protection, for prevention of erosion, for filtering of pollutants and trapping of sediments from land, and the role they play as valuable nursery areas for fish and invertebrates, and as a home to a variety of species.

Nature Seychelles is carrying out this project under the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) regional programme of which Seychelles is also a member. They have received help from local and external partners such as Sun Excavators as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility contribution to the

Sanctuary and the voluntary service of the US Navy.

The future for the Sanctuary at Roche Caiman

MFF appreciates of the efforts made by nature Seychelles to transform the wetland into a site that enhances learning in an outdoor classroom setting where adults and children enjoy conserving nature and where they can come back after many years to see their contribution to improving the environment. The results of this project serve as an inspiration for replication and to bring on more partnership into achieving the conservation targets especially with the support of the MFF National Coordinating Body.



Nature Seychelles is implementing this MFF funded small grant project from June 2012 to October 2013.

For further information about MFF, contact Lyndy Bastienne on email lyndy.bastienne@iucn.org or visit the website www.mangrovesforthefuture.org

To know more about the project and how you can participate contact nature@seychelles.net or visit www.natureseychelles.org

