

Julius Kipng'etich has been Director, Kenya Wildlife Service, since December 31, 2004, when he took over a scandal-plagued organisation with a deficit of Ksh 500 million.

Which is the biggest challenge you have had to deal with at the helm of KWS?

Managing negative energy amongst some employees has been one of my biggest challenges in this organisation. As a manager sometimes you fail to understand why somebody cannot see the obvious that progress is good for everybody, some people have a very strong "I" and "Me" factor that makes them see everything only from their prism and no other; but these people are now slowly realizing and understanding that everyone can be a winner – the win-win situation – and that that is the best option for an organisation.

What major milestones have you achieved since you joined KWS as its Director?

The awards that KWS has bagged under my tenure as its Director are testimony to our zeal and drive and especially now that we are the first wildlife organisation in Africa that is ISO 9001:2008 Certified.



Photos: Courtesy KWS

KWS DIRECTOR JULIUS KIPNG'ETICH SPEAKS

Our aspiration is to become a world class organisation and we have continued to put in place systems that will ensure KWS gets to that threshold.

Compared to Rwandan, Tanzanian and even Ugandan parks, KWS parks are some of the cheapest conservation zones in the region.

What is your take of this and what are you planning to do?

Yes we agree, we have a challenge in price compared to the rest of the region and we have therefore commissioned a pricing study that will guide us in pricing our products appropriately based on the market dynamics.

Even the latest tariff changes that people have seen are simply



WHERE DO YOU SEE KWS AND THE FACE OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN THIS COUNTRY AND THE REGION IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS?

This falls squarely on Vision 2030. By 2030, the country's human population is expected to have hit the 60 million mark. In the next 20 years barring any catastrophe, wildlife numbers will be up.

We hope that rhinos will have made a healthy recovery close to 2,500; another wish is that we will have reached our optimal elephant numbers and that our lion numbers will reach about 5,000, so that their survival is guaranteed. I am also hoping that some of our endangered antelope species will not have gone extinct like the Sable, the Hirola and the Roan. I hope they will have reached a meta-population that will ensure their survival.

The other thing is that by that time we will have accounted for all our biodiversity. Currently we don't know what our parks hold, by that time we should have a clear picture of our biological wealth.

I am also hoping that we will have created a gene and seed bank for all our biodiversity. And more so I am hoping that Kenya will be at the cutting edge of wildlife science in Africa and the world.

a small part of the bigger plan to synchronize our prices with the dictates of the region tourism market. Our hypothesis is that we are still cheap when we are compared to our neighbours whose prices are much higher. So each park should be priced according to the dictates of demand and supply.

Looking at the regional conservation agencies and the fact that KWS shares certain protected areas with Uganda and Tanzania, what are your plans under the regional EAC integration plan and what future do you see in this trans-boundary arrangement?

We would like to see greater partnership and alliance within the eastern Africa region and not just East Africa because our wildlife is cross-border. We would also like to help some of the countries in this region that have challenges in wildlife conservation and specifically three countries – Ethiopia, Sudan and DRC.

I would like to see Kenya provide leadership in wildlife conservation in the region and greater collaboration in all aspects of wildlife conservation and management in this region. We have good working relations now with Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda but we want to extend that goodwill to our neighbours like Sudan and the rest.

Tanzania has designated hunting areas, and so does Uganda which has been experimenting to find ways of opening parts of its protected areas to hunting; what is the way forward for Kenya?

I don't see Kenya lifting the 1977 ban on game hunting any time soon because the same basic reasons that contributed to the ban in 1977 have not changed. We don't have a proper monitoring system in place and in any case, there is not much wildlife to hunt anywhere in the country.

Kenya has in the last decade seen the rise in private sanctuaries that, to some extent, complement the work of KWS, while at the same time rivalling KWS for visitors. What is your take of this and how do you plan to reconcile the difference?

We support private sanctuaries and community conservancies, all of them. This is simply because the State through KWS cannot cover

the whole gamut of conservation needs in the country, we simply don't have the capability to tend to every aspect of it on our own.

What I would like to see, however, is a regulatory framework that will see these conservancies and private sanctuaries revealing in totality what they have in their regions, such as how much they are making, so that we can have a clear idea of how they are run.

In actual fact, there is need for greater transparency within this subsector; the public needs to know how much they raise in terms of funds and what is the value these organisations are adding to the greater wildlife conservation arena.

I would also like to see these conservancies and sanctuaries registered as companies and not as trusts so that they can pay taxes so that everyone helps carry the Kenyan load by contributing through the payment of taxes.

The threat of global warming is real: snow on the caps of Kilimanjaro and Mt Kenya continue to recede, floods and long stretches of drought are experienced countrywide. How does KWS as an organisation plan to mitigate this growing challenge?

Some aspects of global warming we have control over, others we don't. Things like forest cover, level of pollution on our roads and in our rivers, we can exert some measure of control; all we need to do is influence government policy on alternative energy sources so that people look at the alternative energy sources.

At a personal level, I would like to see a greater migration of our people to such things as more use of solar and wind energy, they should be encouraged to use more green and eco-friendly energy sources than they have in the past.

It is also important that many Kenyans should get urbanized by moving towards non-agricultural sources of creating wealth and this is what will reduce the pressure on land. There are countries that don't depend on agriculture. We will then shift to the service industry where we have our competitive edge and so we meet these challenges of climate change and therefore change those we can.

At the global level, we then drive Kenya's agenda and influence against those countries that pol-

lute the earth. We use forums to advocate on the global impact of the changes and their impact on our people. We are happy President Obama of the USA is with us.

What is KWS doing about the field of Bio-prospecting?

Bio-prospecting is where the new opportunities for KWS, and in fact Kenya as a country generally, lie and we have barely started and we think intellectual property rights are a resource that we need to tap.



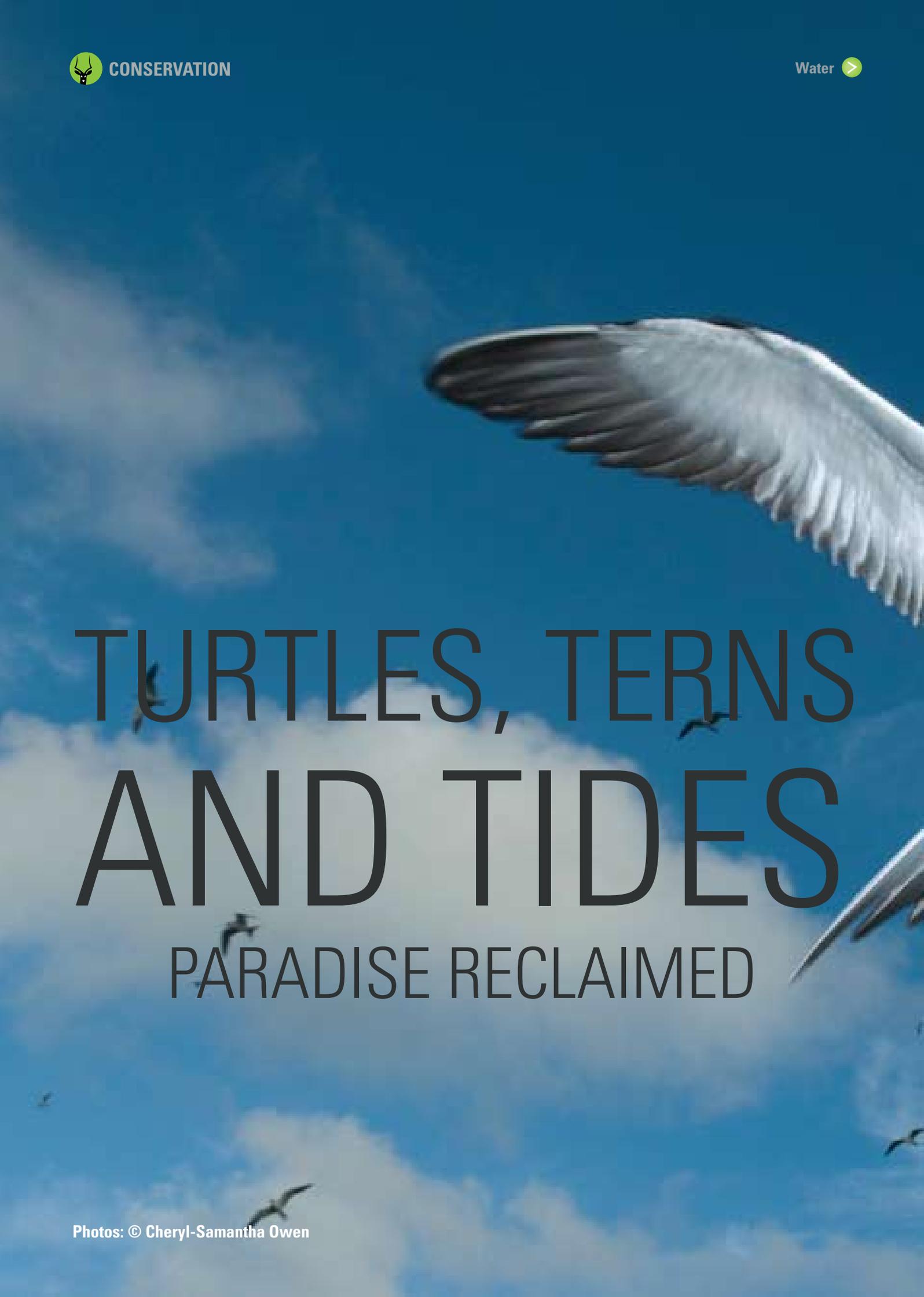
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KWS has now employed the best biotechnology scientist in Kenya and he is already beginning to have a very clear path of where we need to go. Once we have an enabling institutional and legal framework, we will be able to go places.

We are therefore hoping that is the new frontier for revenue earning for the country and income generation for the people. We have begun by setting guidelines on aloe farming, we are now working on guidelines on commercial use of sandalwood and many other species.

We want to link with people who do similar businesses both locally and internationally. We are also building internal capacities to do research. We are projecting to undertake the building of two modern laboratories in the 2009-2010 financial year, where we are planning to build a forensic lab and a genetic lab. ●

– Gichuki Kabukuru
Corporate Communications
Officer, KWS



TURTLES, TERNS AND TIDES

PARADISE RECLAIMED



In that golden hour before sunset that only the tropics can set alight, I left the rustic comfort of my chalet and walked barefoot across the island to its deep north. An area of about 20 hecaters, this to my mind is where the real heart of the island lies.

Hop-scotching along the sandy path to avoid the prickly casuarina seeds waved down from the swaying foliage above, I notice that these trees are all that separates the inland island from the idyllic white beach beyond, as here on Bird Island there are no concrete walls or sprawling buildings blocking the tide, unnaturally forcing the sand to re-route and altering original coastal vegetation.

My eyes turn from the dreamy turquoise sea to a flurry of grey feathers – ducking and scurrying along. I remind myself to take the beach route on my return and steer clear of this particular brown noddy, whose chick-guarding post is taken very seriously.

At this time of year, in the middle of the southeast monsoon, blindfolded and even with ears plugged, the tern colony is impossible to miss. Incessant calls take to the air in dissonant renditions of a scripted “wideawake”, leaving no doubt as to their whereabouts. Nothing, not even the cacophony, had prepared me for what spilled out at the end of a long narrow path through the coastal scrub. Over 1.5 million Sooty Terns, *Sterna fuscata*, sat, hovered, circled, soared and flew. This highly pelagic seabird avoids landing on water, as it is unable to swim, and returns to Bird Island en masse each year from May to September to breed and fledge its chicks. In what must surely be nature’s most spectacular bird symphony, the sounds crescendoed with the setting sun until their cries literally resonated through me. Had I been on the island in March and April when the terns start to gather in increasingly large numbers, before they land and establish individual territories, I would have seen



another phenomenon: a swirling mass of hundreds of thousands of birds, patterning the sky with long stretched out wings as they surf the rising thermal currents. At the latter end of the breeding season the sky is speckled with fledglings flying erratically over the water; like learner pilots they stick close to the wings of their parents, dipping to the ocean's surface to collect seaweed and imitating the adults darting over shoals of fish bubbling near the surface.

Bird Island is the most northerly island of Seychelles Archipelago and is a very young coral cay, little more than a sandbank that may have emerged between 2,000 to 4,000 years ago following a fall in sea levels. The island's 170 acres sit perched on the northern rim of Seychelles Bank, and a snorkel about 1km out from the island reveals the dramatic ledge, where the sea floor changes abruptly from light to dark

Overleaf: Spending most of the year at sea far from land, Sooty Terns are normally only seen inshore on breeding islands.

Above: Fairy Tern chicks cling patiently to the bare branch of their birth while their parents hunt for them at sea, ferrying back a beak-full of fish several times a day.

as the shallow water drops from about 12m to dark, black depths, and manta rays rise up to feed on sunlight-soaked plankton. Mahé, the main island of Seychelles, is 111km away, a 30-minute flight, and from a bird's eye view this golden orb surrounded by a sea of azure jewels is but a smudge in the grandeur of the Western Indian Ocean.

In 1776, a passing ship reported that the island was "covered with birds innumerable", suggesting that early visitors to the island would have been immersed in a similar experience. The island's history, however, has not always favoured its feathered friends, and when Bird Island was bought by its current owner in 1967 most of the Sooty Terns had all but vanished. Lust for guano with the removal of 17,000 tons of this white gold between 1896 and 1906, which was

shipped for use as fertilizer to the sugarcane fields of Mauritius, left the island bare. A coconut plantation was then established together with cash crops such as papaya and cotton that covered the Sooty Tern's precious breeding ground. This was a disaster for the colony as the terns use bare ground to lay their eggs in a shallow scrape with little or no lining and nest densities are greatest in open areas with only 30-50% vegetation cover.

In the last 40 years under a concerted conservation effort, involving careful management of the vegetation to bring back the breeding colony, the silence has vanished and the number of Sooty Terns has successfully increased from 18,000 in the 1960s to over 750,000 pairs today. Studies have shown that many of the same adults return to Bird Island each year and chicks return as adults to breed at their natal colony.



BIRD ISLAND CALENDAR

January/ February

Weather: NW wind - very hot and still - occasional rain showers - good sunsets.

Ocean: Calm and clear - excellent snorkeling.

Hawksbill Turtles: Laying in large numbers. Peak hatching period between January and March. Turtles emerge from the nest and enter the water.

Brown or Common Noddy Terns: Nest throughout the year, but January to March is the first peak breeding season. Courtship rituals, nest building and incubating the eggs. Hatching starts second week of February.

Migrant Birds: A good variety of migrant and vagrant birds.

January 2007

150 Frigatebirds, 26 Grey Plovers, 10 Lesser Sandpipers, 12 Greater Sandpipers, 1 Crab Plover, 48 Whimbrels, 250 Turnstones, 8 Sanderlings, 25 Curlew Sandpipers, 3 Golden Plover, 2 Ringed Plover, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 4 Greenshanks, 25 Crested Terns, 85 Bridled Terns, 150 Saunders Little Terns, 0 Common Sandpiper, 1 Red-footed Booby, 0 Eurasian Curlew, 10 Moorhens, 1 Grey Heron, 1 Tree Pipit, 1 Common Snipe, 1 Red Throated Pipit, 1 Isabelline Wheatear, 1 Amur Falcon

February 2007

355 Frigatebirds, 29 Grey Plovers, 8 Lesser Sandpipers, 10 Greater Sandpipers, 1 Crab Plover, 54 Whimbrels, 225 Turnstones, 8 Sanderlings, 25 Curlew Sandpipers, 3 Golden Plovers, 2 Ringed Plovers, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 3 Greenshanks, 15 Crested Terns, 95 Bridled Terns, 210 Saunders Little Terns, 0 Common Sandpiper, 1 Red-footed Booby, 1 Eurasian Curlew, 10 Moorhens, 1 Grey Heron, 1 Tree Pipit

March/ April

Weather: Very hot and still – doldrums period - good sunsets.

Ocean: Very calm and clear - excellent snorkeling.

Hawksbill Turtles: The last few eggs hatch and enter the water.

Sooty Terns: Begin to gather in small numbers over the island in preparation for breeding. Gradually increase in numbers, flying over northern end of island. Towards end of April they begin to land in the colony.

Lesser Noddy Terns: Start to arrive in preparation for their breeding season. Circa 8,900 nesting pairs.

Migrant Birds: As the winds begin to change, migrants that have been on the island for the European winter begin to change into their summer plumage in preparation for returning to their northern breeding grounds.

March 2007

Not available.

April 2007

230 Frigatebirds, 25 Grey Plovers, 9 Lesser Sandpipers, 8 Greater Sandpipers, 0 Crab Plovers, 48 Whimbrels, 250 Turnstones, 8 Sanderlings, 27 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Golden Plovers, 1 Ringed Plover, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 4 Greenshanks, 18 Crested Terns, 62 Bridled Terns, 80 Saunders Little Terns, 0 Common Sandpipers, 0 Red-footed Boobys, 0 Eurasian Curlews, 1 Red-billed Tropic Bird

May

Weather: SE wind begins to blow - gets slightly cooler as the wind starts.

Ocean: Varies, but snorkeling is still good.

Green Turtles: Lay throughout the year, but are more common from June to September. Lay at night.

Sooty Terns: From mid-month they start to land in the evenings – each day they land earlier until by the end of the month they are present all day on the ground. Some may lay in the central areas of the colony late in the month.

Lesser Noddy Terns: The eggs start to hatch and parents feed their chicks.

Migrant Birds: Odd squalls bring in migrants passing the island on their journey north.

Once the SE sets in some migrants leave.

Some migrants stay throughout the year (these are probably juvenile, non breeding birds).

May 2007

195 Frigatebirds, 22 Grey Plovers, 11 Lesser Sandpipers, 9 Greater Sandpipers, 1 Crab Plover, 48 Whimbrels, 230 Turnstones, 8 Sanderlings, 26 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Golden Plovers, 1 Ringed Plover, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 4 Greenshanks, 15 Crested Terns, 78 Bridled Terns, 20 Saunders Little Terns, 0 Common Sandpipers, 0 Red-footed Boobys, 0 Eurasian Curlews, 1 Red-billed Tropic Bird

June

Weather: The SE blows steadily - comparatively cooler.

Ocean: On the west coast the sea is calm - June to September the water visibility is not clear. Snorkeling is still possible.

Sooty Terns: The majority of eggs are laid. Egg laying is usually synchronous, with eggs being laid over a 10 day period. Incubation = 28 days.

Brown or Common Noddy Terns: Nest throughout the year, but June to September is the second peak breeding season. Courtship rituals, nest building and incubating the eggs. Birds that did not breed earlier in the year now begin their courtship rituals and by the end of the month they are incubating their eggs.

Migrant birds:

June 2007

176 Frigatebirds, 4 Grey Plovers, 8 Lesser Sandpipers, 3 Greater Sandpipers, 0 Crab Plovers, 10 Whimbrels, 21 Turnstones, 3 Sanderlings, 8 Curlew Sandpipers, 0 Golden Plovers, 0 Ringed Plovers, 0 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Greenshank, 15 Crested Terns, 95 Bridled Terns, 0 Saunders Little Terns, 0 Common Sandpipers, 1 Red-footed Booby, 0 Eurasian Curlews, 1 Red-billed Tropic Bird

July

Weather: SE winds are well established - pleasantly cool (27°-28°) - very dry and rain unlikely.

Ocean: On the west coast the sea is calm - water visibility is not clear. Snorkeling is still possible.

Sooty Terns: First eggs begin to hatch. Late afternoon parents come in with food and chicks fed. If the first egg is lost, 14 days later another is laid. Adults can be incubating eggs until the end of the month.

Brown or Common Noddy Terns:

Towards the end of the month the first chicks begin to hatch.

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The eggs are a delicacy in Seychellois culture, but over-collecting and the killing of adults and chicks have led to a steep decline and even extinction on several other islands. Bird Island, in keeping with its nature-based tourism philosophy, has managed to keep the balance right and supply Mahé with a sustainable number of sooty tern eggs each year. This in turn helps stem the trade in stolen eggs and satisfies traditional culture.

Although their sheer numbers make them the stars, Sooty Terns are not the only inhabitants that make Bird Island a conservation and tourism success story. At least 20 other species can be seen throughout the year. Due to its northerly location, Bird Island is the first landfall for many migratory birds and vagrants that are sometimes blown off course during westerly squalls that occur in the months most affected by the changing monsoon winds.



CONSERVATION



Water



> Water



Far left: **Vulnerable to the elements, even in the tropics, adult Fairy Terns fluff out their lower breast feathers to give a warm, stable nest to their young.**

Left: **The beach is a place full of surprises; wait long enough and everything, including this Noddy Tern, lands or takes off there.**

Below left: **Bird Island is also home to a few Aldabra giant tortoises, one of which is Esmeralda. At 200 years old and weighing 320 kg, it is possibly the largest, heaviest and oldest tortoise in the world.**

Below right: **Lesser Noddy Terns start to arrive in March and April in preparation for the breeding season. There are about 8,900 nesting pairs on Bird Island.**

Below: **Author photo – Conservation and marine biologist Cheryl-Samantha Owen is also a wildlife photographer and author who specialises in documenting marine life in Africa's oceans. Her work for the Save Our Seas Foundation sees her on the conservation frontline, raising awareness globally about the importance of the oceans and their creatures.**





The incessant calls of Sooty Terns take to the air in dissonant renditions of a scripted "wideawake", leaving no doubt as to the colony's whereabouts. Egg laying is usually synchronous, and the majority of eggs are laid by June. The first eggs begin to hatch in July, and the colony's noise crescendoes each afternoon with parents bringing food to their chicks.

Below: Fish dropped by flurrying birds are a delight for scavenging crabs.

A total of over 15,000 pairs of Brown Noddy Terns, *Anous stolidus* are found on the islands of Aride, Cousin, Cousine and Bird, with the latter holding the largest population. Almost every one of the 24 chalets has a nesting Noddy Tern around the corner. Courtship involves nodding heads to one another, of particular amusement to Japanese guests, but as I discovered, they are very aggressive towards intruders near their nest sites. Unlike the Lesser Noddy Tern, *Anous tenuirostris*, which nests only in trees, Brown Noddies make themselves at home at the base of coconut palms and even in coral cavities and ledges. The introduction of rats to various islands in Seychelles has devastated the populations of many bird species, and their eradication along with rabbits on Bird Island has contributed to the successful breeding of Brown Noddies, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and White-tailed Tropicbirds.

For more information visit www.saveourseas.com

startling against a vivid blue sky and whose translucent wings make it appear almost invisible when the heavens are white. The midnight blue line that runs along its black bill and the charcoal black ring around its eyes look as though Cleopatra herself decorated these terns. Fairy Terns lay a single egg on a bare branch. It looks very precarious but the adults sit patiently behind the egg with their lower breast feathers fluffed out, falling away backward as they fly off in search of fish. After about 21 days the egg hatches and the newborn chick arrives with well developed claws to cling to the branch of its birth, while the adults ferry back small blue and silver fish several times a day, carrying up to six lined neatly in their bills.

Once upon a time in the pristine seagrass beds around Bird Island a character that fuelled the imagination of sailors and sparked the myth of mermaids really did exist, giving the island title "Ile aux Vaches", island of the cows. The Dugong, *Dugong dugon* was once common around the islands of Seychelles, but hunting, fishing-related fatalities, and habitat degradation, combined with its long lifespan (50+ years) and slow rate of reproduction have made it all but a ghost in these waters for the past 100 years. Listed as endangered

to extinction on the IUCN red list, they have until recently only occurred in Madagascar, Mozambique and the Comores. Since 2001 Dugong sightings on the Aldabra Atoll, a World Heritage Site, indicate that these shy marine mammals might be returning. If they could repopulate Aldabra's waters and be allowed safe passage north, Bird Island's healthy marine environment would be an ideal habitat for their reintroduction.

Although no siren's song serenaded me on my walk back from the colony I did hear the scrunching sound of beach excavation, and as I squinted through the darkness the large shell of a Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas* gradually appeared, masked by a spray of sand. This is one endangered species that has found its way to the safety of Bird Island, and on nights throughout the year, especially between June and September, they clamber onto the beaches above the high tide to nest and lay between 100 and 200 eggs.

Like the Sooty Terns, mature turtles often return to the same beach from which they hatch, and Bird Island has a wealth of healthy seagrass meadows, upon which adult turtles almost exclusively feed. After this female dug her egg chamber and started to lay, the

For more information on Bird Island, tel. (+258) 22 4925, fax (+258) 22 5074, email reservations@birdislandseychelles.com or visit www.birdislandseychelles.com.



Like here, on what feels like a far-away, lost paradise is akin to stepping through the pages of a well-cherished book of fables, with fairy tale characters appearing from over the blue yonder. One such character is the Fairy Tern, *Gygis alba*, the world's only pure white tern, whose angelic appearance is



island's resident ecologist gathered the guests to watch as she buried her clutch and returned to the water. As part of the island's conservation programme female turtles that come ashore are tagged and nests are monitored, contributing to a wider turtle monitoring project within Seychelles. There are no lights on the grounds, which can cause nesting green turtles and their hatchlings to become disorientated and lose their way back to the sea.

Bird Island also hosts a good population of the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle, whose sharp, curving beak enables it to feed on sea sponges and toxic jellyfish. Perhaps because it is one of the few places where it is undisturbed by humans, this is the only known place in the world where Hawksbill Turtles come ashore during daylight hours to nest and lay. Peak laying is from November to mid-February and hatchlings start emerging about 58 days after the eggs are laid.

In the emerging lexicon of ecotourism, it is difficult to differentiate between genuine projects guided by conservation principles and those buried under glitzy marketing.

Pollution, overexploitation, conflicting use of resources and other harmful consequences of human development are serious and sharply increasing threats to the marine ecosystem of Seychelles. The conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of Seychelles is essential for the development of its two major economic sectors, tourism and fisheries. As such the cumulative degradation of the marine environment caused by a combination of natural and anthropogenic disturbances, including the indirect effects of global climate change (coral bleaching) is a serious problem.

In a world where damage and destruction to the marine habitat through dredging and land reclamation have seen the destruction of whole mangrove forests, coral reefs and seagrass beds in favour of luxury five star resorts and real estate developments, Bird Island offers an escape to a place that truly is in peace and harmony with Nature. ●

– Cheryl-Samantha Owen

BIRD ISLAND CALENDAR (CONTINUED)

August/ September

Weather: SE still blowing steadily - cooler by comparison to NW - less humidity.

Rainy days are common.

Ocean: Rough - poor visibility - snorkeling is not good.

Sooty Terns: Towards end of August and beginning of September the earlier chicks start to fledge.

Brown or Common Noddy Terns: The majority of chicks start hatching during the 1st week of August. By the middle to end of September the majority have fledged.

Migrant Birds;

August 2007

112 Frigatebirds, 5 Grey Plovers, 4 Lesser Sandpipers, 6 Greater Sandpipers, 0 Crab Plovers, 22 Whimbrels, 57 Turnstones, 2 Sanderlings, 7 Curlew Sandpipers, 0 Golden Plovers, 0 Ringed Plovers, 0 Bar-tailed Godwits, 1 Greenshank, 8 Crested Terns, 66 Bridled Terns, 35 Saunders Little Terns, 1 Common Sandpiper, 7 Red-footed Boobys, 0 Eurasian Curlews, 1 Red-billed Tropic Bird, 20 Moorhens, 1 Brown Booby, 2 Grey Heron

September 2007

210 Frigatebirds, 16 Grey Plovers, 9 Lesser Sandpipers, 10 Greater Sandpipers, 0 Crab Plovers, 42 Whimbrels,

210 Turnstones, 8 Sanderlings, 18 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Golden Plovers, 0 Ringed Plovers, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 2 Greenshanks, 15 Crested Terns, 310 Bridled Terns, 210 Saunders Little Terns, 1 Common Sandpiper, 21 Red-footed Boobys, 0 Eurasian Curlews, 0 Red-billed Tropic Birds, 30 Moorhens, 0 Brown Boobys, 0 Grey Herons, 1 Blue Pigeon, 1 Little Stint, 1 Mascarene Martin

October/ November/ December

Weather: SE begins to lessen - hot. NW winds set in by November and it is much warmer - showers possible. Good sunsets.

Ocean: Calm and clear - excellent for snorkeling and swimming.

Hawksbill Turtles: Start emerging from the ocean to lay their eggs in October. The number increases daily until mid-November to mid-December, when three or four per day nest and lay. Eggs laid in October start to hatch at the beginning of December. Peak laying is November to mid-February. Hatchlings start emerging circa 58 days after the eggs are laid and continue to hatch until April.

Sooty Terns: Virtually all gone by the end of October.

Migrant Birds;

Best time of year for unusual sightings and number of species. Migrants and vagrants start to fly in.

BIRD ISLAND: THE LAY OF THE LAND



BIRD ISLAND MAP KEY

- Sooty Tern, *Sterna fuscata*
- White-tailed Tropic Bird, *Phaeton lepturus*
- Brown/Common and Lesser, Noddy *Anous stolidus* and *Anous tenuirostris*
- Frigatebirds *Fregata ariel*, *Fregata minor*