



COUSINE ISLAND
SEYCHELLES



March Newsletter

2021

Where nature thrives and man is a silent observer.

4° 20 MINS 55.73 SOUTH / 53° 38 MINS 53.24 EAST

A Conservation Sanctuary

Balance & Harmony

The month of March is a time of change on Cousine Island. The Wedge-tailed shearwaters (*Puffinus pacificus*) have started to fledge and leave their nests indicating the end of their breeding season. This is only the second breeding success monitoring of wedge-tailed shearwaters on the island. Once all nests have fledged or failed, we will be able to do our first comparison in breeding success of this species. Both lesser (*Anous tenuirostris*) and brown (*Anous stolidus*) noddies have started to return to the island and have been seen pairing up and collecting nesting material. This signals the start of their breeding season which usually runs from June to October. The Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) nesting season seems to be coming to an end as there have been no new nests laid since the 6th of March, however, we are still having females undertaking exploratory crawls. There has been a large number of hatchlings released during the season (14 115 to date) which is always exciting.

Spotted Sea Hare (*Aplysia dactylomela*)

The spotted sea hare (*Aplysia dactylomela*) is a nocturnal sea slug found worldwide in tropical to warm temperate waters. Irregular black rings cover its body which differentiates it from others in its genus and is where it gets its name from. Generally, its colouring is pale yellow to green, although this varies greatly according to the type of food they consume, which is mostly algae. It is common to find this species at night, crawling on tidal platforms of mixed sand and rock on Cousine Island but during the day they are quite inactive remaining under rocks and in crevices. If a spotted sea hare is disturbed, it will squirt violet purple ink which is thought to be an irritant to fish and other predators, although harmless to humans. Interestingly, spotted sea hares are hermaphrodites, which means they are both male and female and can mate with any other sea hare that passes by.

