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in Seychelles

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Infrastructure

Short Abu Dhabi visit comes with huge implications for Seychelles development

by G J Pool

The communication from State House was rather short and terse but the ramifications could be enormous for Seychelles.

The press release simply said: "The President of the Republic, Mr Wavel Ramkalawan will lead a high-level delegation to Abu Dhabi, UAE to undertake discussions on the development of two major national projects which includes the

Seychelles Port and the Airport developments.

"Members of the delegation accompanying the President will include the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Mr Sylvestre Radegonde, the Minister for Trans-

port, Mr Antony Derjaques, the PS of Finance, SS Patrick Payet, the Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA) Mr. Gary Albert and the Chief Executive Officer of Seychelles Ports Authority (SPA), Mr Sony Payet".

"To all intents and purposes, the President's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have been informed that the powers that be in Abu Dhabi are ready to put the plans on the table and take a serious look at it.

And you're talking of huge national commitments from both the governments of Seychelles and Abu Dhabi, whatever comes out from the talks.

We would be remiss to even hint at the scope of the discussions in the next few days, if only through lack of knowledge of the full agenda and not wishing to be impolite to our hosts.

But, we need to raise a few pertinent points if only to keep our Presidential team on their guard and well grounded.

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• Port Victoria and Airport on the agenda

Parliament Forum

Seychelles voice leads discussions at Seminar for Parliamentarians in China

• **Leader of the Opposition Pillay heads delegation**

The "Seminar for Parliamentarians from English-Speaking African Countries" took place in Beijing, China, from 19th to 28th April 2023, China, under the theme "Missions and Tasks of Chinese and African Legislatures in National Modernization".

Attending countries included Seychelles, Somalia, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, and Lesotho.

Despite being the smallest attending country, the Seychelles delegation demonstrated a high

level of engagement and awareness of the discussions taking place and offered a great deal of attentive dialogue throughout the exchange.

Seychelles was represented by the Leader of the Opposition Hon. Sebastien Pillay acting as head of delegation, who was accompanied by Hons. Sandy Arissol, Norbert Loizeau, Wilbert Herminie.

In his opening remarks, the Vice Chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing



• LOTO Sebastien Pillay (far right) leads delegation

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Sylvestre Radegonde

Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et du Tourisme à République des Seychelles
Studied at Université de Westminster
Lives in Victoria, Seychelles
From La Réunion, Beau Vallon, Seychelles

Social Media Alert

Fraudulent Social Media Accounts in the name of Minister Sylvestre Radegonde

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism has informed the public that Minister Sylvestre Radegonde does not have any Facebook Account.

In recent months there have been two Social Media profiles and accounts created on Facebook in the name of Minister Sylvestre Radegonde.

The Public are therefore cautioned to refrain from communicating and engaging with these fake accounts.



Louis Sylvestre Radegonde

Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, at Gouvernement Seychelles
Lives in Victoria, Seychelles
From Victoria, Seychelles
See Louis Sylvestre's About info

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Marine Life

Fighting over food – How do Juvenile sharks share?

Sharks command the food chain. Their sensational sensory abilities mean these active predators have little trouble locating their prey and they play an important role in marine food webs. For the most part*, sharks don't need to worry about being eaten.

But life is tough for juvenile sharks. Immediately after being born, they must learn to look after themselves. And instead of ruling the roost, these pups seek shelter from their own – adult sharks and large predatory fish that prey on the young.

And how does a juvenile shark escape some of the fastest, fiercest fish in the sea? It's simple really – they go where their predators can't. For the first few years of their life, some species of juvenile sharks spend their time in 'nursery areas', which generally contain shallow water that their larger counterparts can't get into.

These sanctuaries for shark pups aren't just appealing to one species. Sometimes more than one shark species will co-exist in these nursery areas, growing up seemingly in harmony. But resources, namely food, are finite.

So, how exactly do shark pups that may potentially use the same resources co-exist? This is very question that former Save Our Seas Foundation Project Leader Dr Ornella Weideli asked when pursuing her PhD.

After falling deep into the field of shark research at Bimini Biological Field Station in The Bahamas during her Master's research, Ornella developed an interest in the dietary behaviour of sharks.

In her words, 'I wanted to not only understand what juvenile sharks eat, but also how their behaviour may change if they are sharing their nursery ground with another, ecologically similar juvenile shark species.'

Do these two shark species spend time in slightly different areas within the nursery, or simply eat slightly different things? If so, how exactly does this work?

To find answers, Ornella and the team at the SOSF-D'Arros Research Centre got to work at the near-pristine St Joseph Atoll, Seychelles.

'The lagoons here are home to a large population of not just one, but two juvenile shark species: the blacktip reef shark and the sicklefin lemon shark,' explained Ornella, 'and so it really is the perfect location to study how these two species are sharing space and food.'

Theory suggests that the key to a peaceful co-existence seems to be to reduce competition, and therefore conflict, between the species. The slightly smaller blacktips seem to be subordinate to the larger lemon sharks, which Ornella and her team at the CRI-OBE investigated in captive experiments. But competition is complex...

To find out how this hierarchy affects juvenile shark behaviour, the team actively tracked individual sharks' movements and behaviour in the lagoon. On foot



· Lemon shark ©Rainer von Brandis Save our Seas Foundation

or by kayak, they tracked the sharks, recording where they spent their time and where they searched for food – hard work in the heat of the Seychelles sun!

By flushing the sharks' stomachs (without harming the young animals), Ornella was also able to analyse the stomach contents of 115 blacktip and 188 lemon sharks to find out what the juveniles had been eating.

Not surprisingly, fish were the diet of choice for both species: 84.6% of the stomach contents of blacktip reef sharks were fish (with crustaceans and cephalopods accounting for the remainder), compared to 94.2% in lemon sharks!

But the difference came in the fish species they ate – blacktips showed broader diets, eating 32 different species, compared to 17 different fish species found in the stomachs of lemon sharks. It seems as though this may be because the juvenile blacktips spent more time in deeper, risk-

ier habitats, as a result of being the subordinate species.

The results support the initial hypothesis – to avoid competition, subordinate sharks eat food of poorer quality when there's a dominant competitor around! 'To me it's incredibly fascinating that different species of shark already show diverging diets at this young age,' said a delighted Ornella.

'We've assessed for the first time the competitive ability in two co-existing shark species, enabling us to provide evidence that niche partitioning (basically, how sharks share) is at least partially driven by competition between species,' she continued.

So, what do their results mean for sharks further afield? Juvenile sharks in shallow coastal waters are vulnerable to local and global threats – like fishing pressure and habitat loss – which are driving population declines.

What happens if these threats reduce the abundance of the fish that the juvenile sharks feed on, or restrict their habitat? This could increase competition between species, impacting on the subordinate sharks more severely.

Gaining a deeper understanding of how sharks share space helps us to be better equipped to protect these spaces for the future.

*Orcas have been known to prey on white sharks!

**References: Ornella C. Weideli, Ryan Daly, Lauren R. Peel, Michael R. Heithaus, Mahmood S. Shivji, Serge Planes & Yannis P. Papastamatiou. Elucidating the role of competition in driving spatial and trophic niche patterns in sympatric juvenile sharks

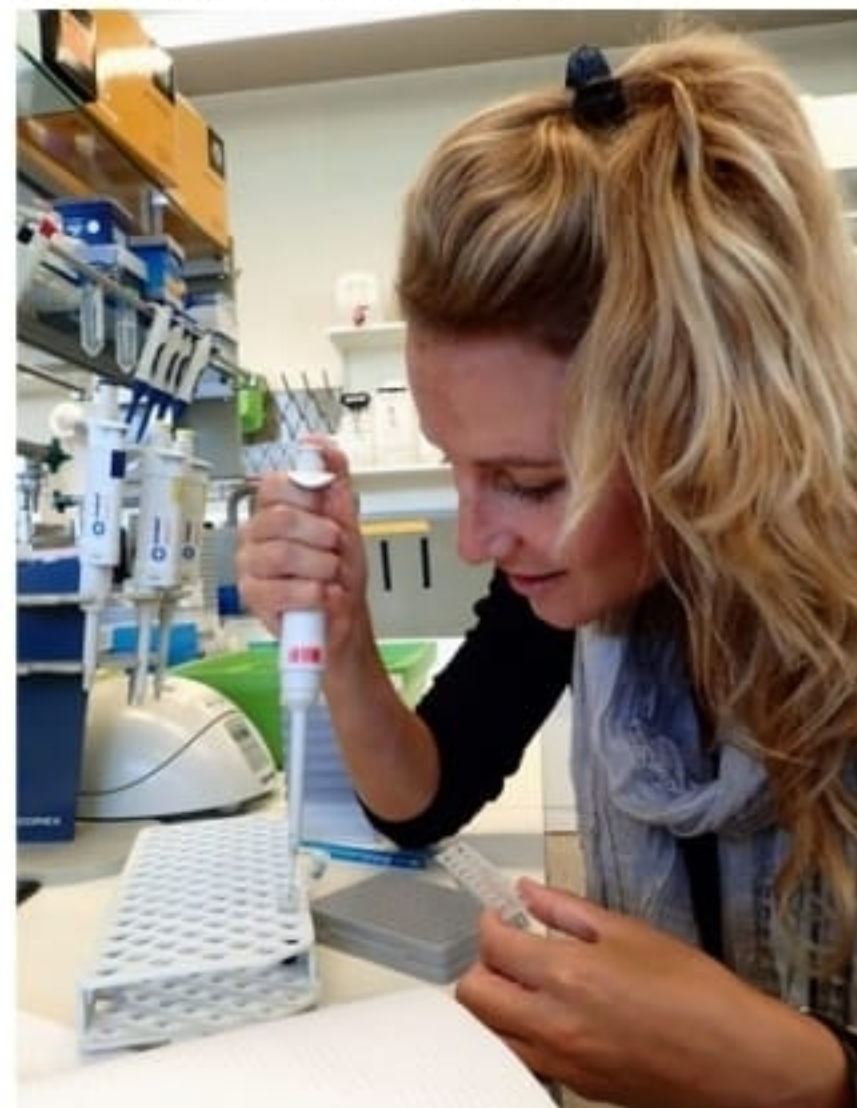
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