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Inter-island nesting by hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) in Seychelles

P.M. Hitchins, O. Bourquin* & S. Hitchins
Cousine Island, P.O. Grand Anse, Praslin, SEYCHELLES
*P.O. Box 10001, PMB 33, Saipan, MP 96950-8901, USA

During studies on hawksbill turtles conducted on Cousine Island, Republic of Seychelles, during 1965 – 1999 (Hitchins *et al*. 2003), 45 turtles originally tagged on other Seychelles' islands (Cousin and Aride) were recovered from Cousine. Regrettably there are some details not available to us regarding these recoveries, and possibly of other recoveries made on other islands in the Seychelles. The number of recoveries of turtles tagged on other islands and the seasons during which they were recovered are given in Table 1. Records of five turtles tagged on Cousine and which have been found on other islands are shown in Table 2. These records indicate that some 50, out of a breeding population of 162 females (147 tagged individuals, and an estimated additional 15 untagged nesting individuals), or 31% of the population, will breed on more than one island in the Seychelles

Although these records are unfortunately minimal, they show that a fair number of nesting individuals moved freely from island to island if, perhaps, the conditions on the originally chosen nesting beaches were unsuitable for one reason or another.

This opportunism is clearly a good survival mechanism. Because of the restricted nesting areas on the small islands, and the reported high degree of disturbance on the beaches of the larger islands, (Mortimer 1984 & in press) any protected beaches are of great importance to the survival of turtles in the Seychelles. The 40 granitic islands of the Seychelles are clustered between latitude 4-5º S and longitude 55-56º E, and none of the islands are more than 90km apart. These distances are easily travelled by hawksbills, adults being able to travel at least 1936km (Meylan 1999). Frazier (1984) had reported hawksbills tagged on Cousin apparently attempting to nest on Praslin, an island a few kilometers away from Cousin, and both Diamond (1976) and Garnett (1978) found that although Seychelles hawksbills showed a strong tendency to return to the same area to renest, some might renest on nearby islands. It now appears that opportunistic nesting by hawksbill turtles in the Seychelles is of greater magnitude than earlier observations indicate. There appear to be no other published records of hawksbill turtles nesting other than on the beaches where they were previously recorded.

Table 1 Turtles recovered from Cousine originally tagged on other islands

Seasons	**Numbers of turtles**	
	Cousin	**Aride**
1992/93	1	
1993/94	2	1
1994/95	3	
1995/96	4	1
1996/97	1	
1997/98	11	1
1998/99	11	
Totals	**42**	**3**

Table 2 Use of other nesting beaches by turtles tagged on Cousine. * = L. Tideman, pers. com. N = nests, E = emergences

Turtle no	History of emergences
3	1993/4: 28/10/93 - N1, Cousine; 14/11/93-16/12/93 - N3, Aride
	1997/8: 26/10/97 - Tag added, A, no other details available; 9/12/97 - N, Aride
14	1994/5: 19/12/94 - N1, Cousine, no other records for the season
	1996/7: 26/11/96-12/1/97 - N4, Cousine
	1998/9: 23/12/98 - N, Cousine: 7/1/99 - E, unable to climb dune crest, Cousine
	9/1/99 - N, Cousin*: 21/1/99 - E, Cousine: 22/1/99 - N, Ce: 6/2/99 - N,Cousine.
56	1997/8: 16/11/97 - N,Cousine : 28/11/97 - N, Cousin*
89	1998/9: 4/12/98 - E, Cousine : 5/12/98 - N, Cousine: 20/12/98 - N, Cousin*.
1023	1997/8: 5/11/97 - N, Cousine : 19/11/97 - N, Cousin*

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NOTES

Ghost crabs (*Ocypode* spp.) of Bird Island, Seychelles

James M. Lawrence
21 Venus Street, Atlasville, 1459, SOUTH AFRICA

This article provides a brief overview of the ghost crab (Crustacea; Ocypodidae; *Ocypode*) species observed on Bird Island (3°43'S; 55°13'E), Seychelles between 21 March 2003 and 26 March 2003. This low-lying coral island lies on the northern rim of the Seychelles bank (Braithwaite 1984) and is the northern-most island. The following species were seen:

1. *Ocypode cordimana* (Desmarest, 1825). This steel-blue/grey species was regularly seen along the western beach crest in the evening. Several were also observed digging burrows on the north east beach. This species has been previously recorded on Bird Island by Haig (1984).
2. *Ocypode ceratophthalmus* (Pallas, 1772). Of the three ghost crab species seen, this was the most visually abundant. In the evening they were regularly seen digging burrows on the western beach. It is easily recognized by the plums or horns above