

- its eyes, and is pale green in colour.
3. *Ocypode ryderi*, Kingsley 1881. Several individuals were seen along the eastern beach of the island. A single male specimen was collected off the north-east beach on the 26 March 2003. In appearance, it is similar to *O. cordimana*, but can be easily distinguished by its larger size, overall white/pink colouration, mauve/dark red joints, and lack of brushes on the inner edge of the propodus. The straight line carapace length and width of the collected specimen was 40.9mm and 47.3mm respectively. The only other published Seychelles locality for *O. ryderi* is Cousine Island (De Bruyn 2002), although the species was also observed on Silhouette in April 2003 (J. Gerlach pers. comm.).

### Acknowledgements

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### References

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## NOTES

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### Inconclusive published and museum bird records from Seychelles

Adrian Skerrett and the Seychelles Bird Records Committee

Since its inception in 1992, Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) has assessed all known published records of birds recorded in the Republic of Seychelles. Frequently, published sources have involved records of a particular species new to Seychelles, some of which have never been subsequently recorded. In assessing these records, it has not always been possible to confirm identification. As a result, there are now a number of species listed in the published literature attributed to Seychelles, whose occurrence in Seychelles SBRC has not been able to confirm. At the Tenth Annual Meeting of SBRC in 2001, it was agreed that it would be valuable to publish a list of these inconclusive records. It was also agreed that inconclusive museum records should also be published.

In assessing records, every effort has been made by SBRC to contact observers and obtain the fullest possible details. However, in the case of records earlier than 1992, the intervening years (or sometimes decades) have inevitably meant that further details are not available or perhaps notes have been lost.

In order to maintain the highest standards of assessment, SBRC has sometimes found it necessary to classify such records as “not accepted”, which does not necessarily imply that the Committee believes a mistake has been made, but that the available evidence

is inconclusive. SBRC have taken a cautious line, so that records with a minimum of detail (often no detail) fall into this category. This is because as we all know, the best observers can sometimes make a mistake. Also, our knowledge of bird identification in general and our knowledge of what species occur in Seychelles in particular have both evolved considerably since the original sightings were made. As a result, possible confusion species were not always taken into consideration by the observers. Inconclusive records may be re-assessed in the light of new evidence. For example, the first record of green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* was a published record, which was not accepted on first circulation but in the light of subsequent sightings of this species was later re-circulated and accepted.

Where a specimen exists, all known museum records have been double-checked either by a member of the committee or where this has not been possible (due to the location of the museum), by a person nominated by the committee. In general, this has confirmed the original identification but in two instances, museum specimens have been of surprising species, where it is believed it may be possible that a mistake has been made.

The following list, in taxonomic order, details all published and museum records of species whose occurrence in Seychelles is currently classified as inconclusive by SBRC.

**British storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*** - Illustrated in Penny (1974) and described in main text as “possible in Seychelles”. No records have been considered by SBRC.

**Black-bellied storm-petrel *Fregatta tropica*** - Illustrated in Penny (1974) and described in main text as “Some records in nearby waters, just possible”. No records have ever been considered by SBRC.

**African darter *Anhinga rufa*** - One around Research Station and at West Channels, Aldabra 16 July-16 September 1972 (Frith 1974). There have been no subsequent records.

**Squacco heron *Ardeola ralloides*** - One at Cousin 4-5 March 1982 and one at Bird Island 7 November 1982 (Phillips 1982). There have been no subsequent records, though Indian pond-heron *A. grayii* has been recorded. Also, Madagascar pond-heron *A. idae*, which breeds at Aldabra, has been recorded as a vagrant in the granitics. Given the scarcity of *Ardeola* records, these sightings have been accepted as “*Ardeola* sp”.

**Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*** - Listed in the Addendum of Feare & Watson (1984) as a record contributed second hand. Details could not be traced. There have been no further reports of this species.

**Lesser spotted eagle *Aquila pomarina*** - Listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984) with a caveat that this was immature and could not reliably be separated from greater spotted eagle *A. clanga*. Neither species has been reported subsequently.

**Tawny eagle *Aquila rapax*** - A skull of this species at the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK is labelled as “caught off Seychelles” (by J. Batty). The bird was presented alive to London Zoo on 25 March 1901 by Lord Rothschild and died on 29 November 1903. The identification has been confirmed, but the label details were too vague to confirm the record. In addition, the conventional wisdom is that the species does

Also listed for Aldabra in Penny (1974) and in Feare & Watson (1984). There are no accepted records of this species.

**Red knot** *Calidris canutus* - One at Victoria mudflats 21 January-31 July 1972 and 2 February-14 March 1973, possibly the same individual (Feare & High 1977). Also listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984). There have been no subsequent reports of this species, though there have been records of great knot *C. tenuirostris*. The record has been accepted as “Knot sp”.

**Red-necked stint** *Calidris ruficollis* - One at Victoria mudflats, 17 February 1973; one at the sooty tern colony, Bird Island, 13-14 November 1972 (Feare & High 1977). Also listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984). Some birdwatching groups to visit Seychelles have also listed this species in trip reports but no further details of sightings have been obtained by SBRC. There are no accepted records, though three other stint species are known to occur.

**Jack snipe** *Limnocryptes minimus* - One at Bird Island 3 September 1973 (Feare & High 1977). Also listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984). There have been no subsequent reports.

**Stone curlew** *Burhinus oedicemus* - Listed in Feare & Watson (1984) as a record contributed second hand. The two observers concerned are no longer alive and though it is known photographs were taken, these have not been traced. There have been no further reports of this species.

**Grey phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* - Listed in Penny 1974. The observer is no longer alive and no details can be traced. There have been no further reports of this species.

**Damara tern** *Sterna balaenarum* - Small terns on Bird Island were identified as this species by Mountfort (1971). This and other reports were described in Penny (1974) with sightings attributed to Cousin, African Banks and Bird and with possible breeding in the Amirantes. However, Feare & Bourne (1978) considered reports erroneous and probably referable to little tern *S. albifrons* or more likely Saunders’ tern *S. saundersi*. No records of Damara Tern have ever been considered by SBRC, which accepts the analysis of Feare & Bourne (1978). Saunders’ tern is treated as an annual species while little tern has been recorded as a vagrant. Neither species has ever been recorded as breeding in Seychelles.

**Brown-headed gull** *Larus brunnicephalus* - Listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984). There have been a number of other reports, but none have ruled out confusion species, notably black-headed gull *L. ridibundus* and grey-headed gull *L. cirrocephalus*. The only small gull recorded with certainty is black-headed gull. However, some reports have failed to rule out other possibilities and in 1997, SBRC created a new category of record, “Black-headed/Brown-headed/Grey-headed Gull,” to classify such reports pending a clearer picture emerging.

**Grey-headed gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* - Listed as recorded at Farquhar Atoll at an unknown date in Feare & Watson (1984). The report was published second hand and the original observer is unknown. There have been no subsequent reports of this species, but see comments under brown-headed gull, above.

**Horsfield’s bronze-cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx basalis* - A specimen of this species is held at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, labelled “from the Seychelles” and the collector given as Galbraith. The identification has been confirmed, but

details were considered too vague to confirm that it had actually been collected in Seychelles, well outside the normal world range for this species.

**Pallid swift *Apus pallidus*** - Listed as recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984) with a caveat that this sighting did not rule out a pale Common Swift *A. apus. pekinensis*. There have been no subsequent reports of this species.

**Mottled spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*** - Two at the Old Settlement, Aldabra 7-8 December 1972 and one 3 January 1973 (Frith 1974). There have been no subsequent reports of this species. The identity of these birds was questioned by Feare (1979), who reported a sighting of little swift *Apus affinis*, a possible confusion species (a sighting accepted by SBRC).

**Red-capped lark *Clandrella cinerea*** - Listed in the Addendum of Feare & Watson (1984) as a record contributed second hand. The original observer of this second hand report could not be traced. This African species is not migratory and is considered very unlikely to reach Seychelles.

**Richard's pipit *Anthus richardi*** - Listed as *Anthus novaseelandiae* recorded in Seychelles in Feare & Watson (1984). The record to which it related when circulated within SBRC was not conclusive. There have been no subsequent reports.

**Yellow-throated longclaw *Macronyx aurantiigula*** - Listed as recorded in the Amirantes in Feare & Watson (1984) and in Penny (1974). The original observer of this second hand report could not be traced. This African species is not migratory and is considered very unlikely to reach Seychelles.

In addition to the above, unpublished records of the following species have been considered by SBRC but details proved inconclusive and to date no records have been accepted:

Leach's storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Western reef heron *Egretta gularis*

Humblot's heron *Ardea humbloti*

Grey teal *Anas gibberifrons*

Northern teal *Anas crecca*

White-rumped sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Kentish plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Asiatic dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Pomarine skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Kelp gull *Larus dominicanus*

Great black-headed gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

Olivaceous warbler *Hippolais pallida*

Olive-backed pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Spotted munia *Lonchura punctulata*

In summary, there are published references to 20 species whose occurrence in Seychelles SBRC considers to be inconclusive. There are two other species where museum specimens occur, attributed to Seychelles, where SBRC considers it possible a mistake may have been made. Finally, there are a further 15 species that have been considered by SBRC where details have proved insufficient to confirm a first record for Seychelles.

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### The presence of *Scolia ruficornis* in Seychelles (Scoliidae: Hymenoptera)

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The Scoliid wasp *Scolia* (*Discolia*) *ruficornis* Fabricius was introduced to Seychelles as a biocontrol agent for the palm damaging rhinoceros beetle *Oryctes monoceros* (Greathead 1971). Subsequent to its introduction over 30 years ago there have been no published records of *S. ruficornis*.

In 2001 three scoliid wasps were observed on Silhouette island by R. & G. Gerlach. One of these was caught and is preserved in the collection of the Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles. The specimen was compared with published descriptions of African and Oriental scoliidae and was thought to be close to *S. ruficornis*, although differing in several respects. The identification was subsequently confirmed by Dr. T. Osten of the Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde, Stuttgart. In 2002 the same species was observed on La Digue and Bird island. A specimen collected on Bird island is more typical of continental *S. ruficornis*. There appear to be interesting differences between these specimens and typical *S. ruficornis*, research is continuing into the morphological diversity of the Seychelles population.

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