

Sooglossus gardineri (Boulenger, 1909)

Diet was studied from 186 dissected Mahé specimens (Mitchell & Altig 1983). Main dietary items comprised sciarid fly larvae (40.6%), ants (22.0%) and mites (18%).

Sooglossus sp.

In captivity this undescribed Silhouette species eats termites (*Nasutitermes nigratus*), only small individuals were eaten. It is probable that in the wild small invertebrates such as mites and Collembola are consumed.

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NOTES

New records for some vertebrates in Seychelles

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The last overview of the vertebrate fauna of Seychelles with distribution records was in the relevant chapters of Stoddart (1984). Since then, the birds in particular have continued to draw attention (e.g. Skerrett *et al.* 2001), and the Netherlands Indian Ocean Programme has added to our knowledge of the distribution of fishes in Seychellois waters (Egmond & Randall 1994), but there have been relatively few new distribution records for other groups. The following are records collected over the past year based on personal observations and on animals found by others and identified by me.

Satyrichthys sp. (Order Scorpaeniformes: Family Peristediidae)

Fishes of the family Peristediidae, commonly known as armoured searobins or armoured gurnards, have not been reported from the waters around Seychelles up to now. Smith & Smith (1963) listed "*Peristedion*" *adeni*, now treated as *Satyrichthys adeni* (Lloyd, 1907) as one of the species "not yet found at Seychelles but likely to be there". Polunin (1984) did not include any member of the family in his list of additions to the known Seychellois fish fauna; and none was reported by Egmond & Randall (1994) in their report on the fish collected by the Netherlands Indian Ocean Programme in 1992-1993.

On 28th February 2001, while fishing on the Correira Bank at 57° 09.189 East and 06° 29.726 South, Noël Jumeau caught a specimen of *Elops saurus* Linnaeus,

1877 ("somon" in Seychellois Creole) at a depth of 118 metres using a drop line (Jumeau pers. comm.). Inside the stomach of the fish he found several specimens of what I have identified (based on the descriptions and figures in Froese & Pauly (2001)) as a species belonging to the genus *Satyrichthys*, which has a well-developed preopercular spine as one of its diagnostic features. It is obviously not *S. adeni*, having longer bony processes on the upper jaw than that species. Superficially, it resembles *S. rieffeli* (Kaup, 1859) from where the Indian and Pacific Oceans meet between northern Australia and Indonesia (Russel & Houston 1989) and *S. engyceros* (Günther, 1872) from around Japan and Hawaii (Masuda *et al.* 1984). The two specimens shown to me measured 12.5cm and 15.5cm respectively in total length (from tip of bony process to tip of caudal fin).

Hippocampus hystrix Kaup, 1856 (Order Syngnathiformes: Family Syngnathidae)

Smith & Smith (1963) included *Hippocampus kuda* Bleeker, 1852 in their list of fishes likely to be found in Seychelles. Smith (1968) wrote: "Though the Seychelles are in such warm seas, no seahorses have ever been found there; we could not find them there either..." Polunin (1984) did not include any Seychelles record for the group. During the Netherlands Indian Ocean Programme in 1992-1993 seahorses were discovered in the outer, coralline, islands: *H. hystrix* was found to the south-east of Bird Island, and *H. whitei* Bleeker, 1855 and an unidentified species *H. sp.* were collected to the west of Poivre (Egmond & Randall 1994; Randall & Egmond 1994). *H. hystrix*, the "thorny seahorse", is now known to occur around the granitic islands of Seychelles as well. On 27th January 2001 Guy Esparon caught a specimen (8.2cm in length), identified by me (after Froese & Pauly 2001 and Randall & Egmond 1994) as belonging to this species, in a fishtrap off Anse Royale on the east coast of Mahé (Matyot 2001). On 11th July 2001 I found a considerably smaller (3.1cm) specimen, of *H. hystrix* under a *Pisonia grandis* tree on Île aux Récifs. It was still fresh and lay near other fish, such as flyingfish (Order Beloniformes, Family Exocoetidae), that had been dropped by lesser noddies *Anous tenuirostris tenuirostris* and white terns *Gygis alba monte* nesting in the tree. There were also pieces of the sea grass *Thalassodendron ciliatum* that had been dropped by lesser noddies. It is not known if the seahorse had been caught alive as prey or whether it had been picked up already dead by a lesser noddy that had mistaken it for a piece of sea grass that could be used as nesting material.

Hemidactylus mercatorius Gray, 1842 (Order Squamata: Family Gekkonidae)

Cheke (1984) was the first to point out that a specimen of "*Hemidactylus mabouia*" collected on Mahé during the first Percy Sladen Trust Expedition in 1905 (Boulenger 1909) was actually *H. mercatorius*. He also noted that there had not been any recent records of the species on Mahé, although the species was known to occur in the outer, coralline islands and it has been suggested that the specimen may have been collected on one of the outer islands (R. Nussbaum pers. comm.).

It is now clear that *H. mercatorius* is present on Mahé. I first noticed a gecko that was very different from the common *Gehyra mutilata* Wiegmann, 1835 on sev-

eral occasions near a light at night at the television station of the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) at Hermitage in 1995 (exact dates not recorded). It had tubercles on the body, suggesting that it could be a *Hemidactylus*, but the identity could not be confirmed because the animal was very shy and immediately withdrew into a hole in the ceiling every time I tried to approach it. At the beginning of March 1997 SBC staff at the radio station at Union Vale discovered a spider, which I subsequently identified from a photograph as *Rhitymna valida* (Blackwall, 1877) (Family Heteropodidae), feeding on a gecko on the trunk of a palm tree (Anon. 1997). From the photograph it was obvious that the gecko belonged to the genus *Hemidactylus*, but a more precise identification was again not possible. On 11th April 2001 Bérard Hoareau caught a gecko, a gravid female, in a store at the headquarters of the Seychelles Public Transport Corporation (SPTC) at the New Port in Victoria and I identified his catch as *H. mercatorius* on the basis of the combination of distinctive dorsal tubercles, divided toe pads and regular pattern of W-shaped dark bars down the back. A week later I captured another *H. mercatorius* in a toilet at the SBC TV station at Hermitage. This individual was later released at the same site and its behaviour observed on several occasions. Unlike *G. mutilata*, it frequently climbs down walls and ventures on the ground but is much more shy, scurrying away into holes and cracks at the slightest disturbance, which may account for the lack of recent observations noted by Cheke (1984). In captivity *H. mercatorius* feeds readily on small moths belonging to the family Pyralidae, on the cockroach *Pycnoscelus indicus* (Fabricius, 1775), winged termites (Order Isoptera) and the bush cricket *Conocephalus iris* Serville, 1838. Prey items are almost invariably swallowed head first.

Gehyra mutilata Wiegmann, 1835 (Order Squamata: Family Gekkonidae)

The skink *Mabuya sechellensis* is the only lizard that has been previously reported from the small granitic island of Île aux Récifs between Mahé and Frégate (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1948; Nussbaum & Brodie, unpublished). I found a single specimen of *G. mutilata* on a wall inside the deserted building there on 10th July 2001. The building is used as a "camp" by visiting wildlife rangers.

Ramphotyphlops braminus Daudin, 1803 (Order Squamata, Family Typhlopidae)

R. braminus is also to be added to the herpetofaunal list for the island of Île aux Récifs. On 13th July 2001 I found a specimen there under a stone at the top of the south-facing slope of the hill where sooty terns *Sterna fuscata*, brown noddies *Anous stolidus* and bridled terns *Sterna anaethetus* nest.

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NOTES

A first Seychelles record of the ghost-pipefish *Solenostomus cyanopterus*

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The ghost-pipefish *Solenostomus cyanopterus* (Bleeker, 1854) (Syngnathidae) is widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific, with western Indian Ocean records from Zanzibar, the comores, Madagascar and Mauritius (and was included in a list of species expected to occur in Seychelles waters by Smith & Smith (1963). There are no published records of this species from Seychelles.

On 4th July 1985 two ghost-pipefish were found in *Sargassum* weed growing at the base of a boulder on the reef flat at Mare Angalise, Mahe. One was an adult female (total length 105mm) and the other an adult male (114mm) with eggs in its brood pouch. These individuals were identified by Dr. Alwyne Wheeler of the British Museum (Natural History) as *Solenostomus cyanopterus* although the colouration of both individuals differed from descriptions, being light green with black spots and brown fins, and with bright blue ocelli on the dorsal fins (rather than brown with black ocelli). On 10th July 1986 a juvenile (51 mm) was found in the same habitat and locality. This individual was the more typical dark brown, but with green ocelli.