The find reported here thus represents the highest confirmed altitude (480m) at which *Cylindraspis* bones have until now been uncovered in Mauritius. The site is also 7.9 km from the nearest coastline which makesit the second most inland locality for *Cylindraspis* on the island after Camp de Masque (11.5km from the nearest coast).

This find provides evidence that the Mauritian tortoises did not keep to the coastal areas or lowlands but instead also ventured far inland till fairly high altitudes. They could thus have been an important biotic factor impacting on the inland vegetation communities via seed dispersal and herbivory.

References

Arnold, E. N. 1979. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond.* **286B**; 127-145.

Arnold, E. N. 1980. *J. Zool. Lond.*. **191**; 33-47.

Austin, J. J. & Arnold, E. N. 2001. *Proc. R. Soc. Lond.*. **268B**; 2515- 2523.

Bour, R. 1984 Maurit. Inst. Bull. **10** (1)

Cheke, A. S. 1987. An ecological history of the Mascarene Islands, with particular reference to extinctions and introductions of land vertebrates. *In Studies of Mascarene Island Birds* Ed. A. W. Diamond. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK. p 5-100.

Griffiths, O. L. 2000. *Moll. Res.* **20 (2)**; 37-50.

NOTES

First results of radio-tracking black mud turtles *Pelusios subniger parietalis*

J. Gerlach
133 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 7BX, UK
PO Box 207, Victoria, Mahé , SEYCHELLES
[*jstgerlach@aol.com*]

The Seychelles subspecies of the African black mud turtle *Pelusios subniger parietalis* is endemic to the Seychelles islands where it is found on 5 islands: Mahé, Cerf, Praslin, La Digue and Fregate. Both this subspecies and the Seychelles yellow-bellied mud turtle *P. castanoides intergularis* are Critically Endangered due to habitat loss, predation and invasion by alien water plants (Gerlach & Canning 2001). Declines continue with the recent loss of small populations on Cousin island and possibly also Curieuse, these are probably stochastic losses and highlight the vulnerability of fragmented populations.

The Seychelles Terrapin Conservation Project of The Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles aims to provide these species with a secure future. The project recorded the first successful captive breeding in 2000 for *P. subniger*, since then 23 hatchlings have been reared and eggs of *P. castanoides* have been obtained.

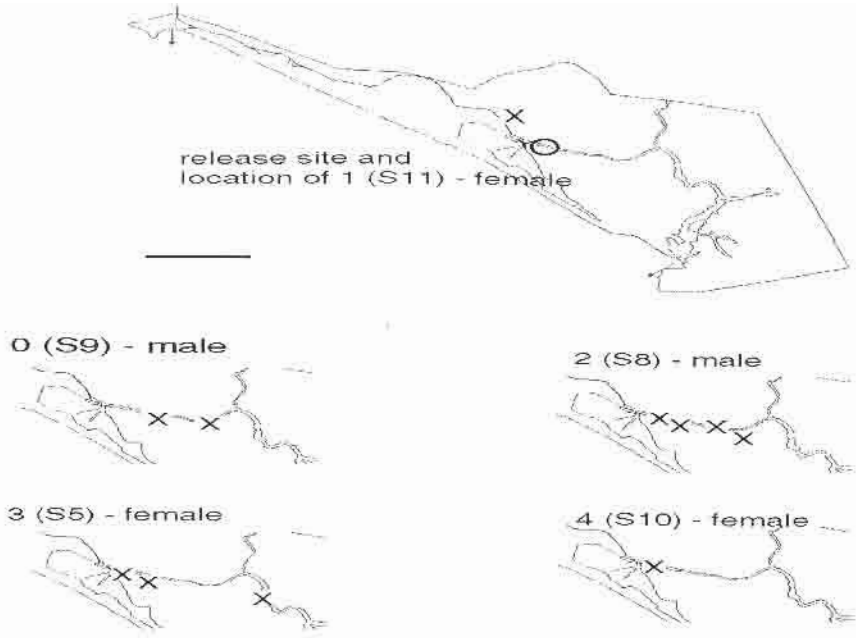

Fig. 1. Terrapin movements at Grande Barbe 13th March - 11th May 2002, scale bar 250m.

In March 2001 the first experimental release of *Pelusios subniger parietalis* was carried out on Silhouette island. This island used to support mud turtles until the 1930s when they were eaten by the resident human population. This threat is no longer significant and the island has the best potential to support large populations of these species. The experimental release of 5 adults was used to test release methods and to obtain data on habitat preferences and use through radio tracking. The terrapins were released in the Grande Barbe marsh, the largest semi-natural marsh left in Seychelles. All 5 were fitted with radio tags funded by the British Chelonia Group. The results of monitoring showed that all the terrapins had settled in specific areas within a few days; 1 about 30m from the release site in a freshwater stream, the other 4 around the release site, with overlapping ranges in part of the stream prone to occasional salt-water incursion. One buried itself on land for a day but otherwise all have stayed in the water, with no over-land dispersal. The pattern of movement over 2 months is shown in Fig. 1. In the first week of release three terrapins moved over 200m (terrapins 0, 1 and 2), the other two stayed within 20m of the release site. For most terrapins there was a decrease in movement after 2 weeks of release; terrapins 0, 1 and 4 appeared to have settled into areas of approximatley 10m of river. In the last two months of monitoring reported here (April-May) terrapins 0, 1 and 4 remained in the same positions, terrapin 2 had moved only 20m but terrapin 3 (intially the most sedentary individual) moved 300m. These results suggest that

terrapins will move only a limited distance from the release site, although some apparently settled individuals will move some time after release, these differences do not correlate to size or sex. These results provide valuable data on movement and habitat selection and are highly encouraging for the potential to establish new populations through reintroduction.

Monitoring will continue as long as the tags last which should provide 6 months of data. The data collected have been used in the preparation of the 'Seychelles Terrapin Action Plan' (Gerlach 2002) and will influence future releases with the aim of establishing new, secure populations.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the British Chelonia Group for funding the project, to the Sussex University School of Geography field course for assisting in tracking in March and to Mo Van der Merwe for tracking in May.

References

Gerlach, J. (compiler) 2002 Seychelles Terrapin Action Plan. *Phelsuma* **10A**

Gerlach, J. & Canning, L. 2001 Range contractions in the Critically Endangered Seychelles terrapins (*Pelusios* spp.). *Oryx* **35**: 313-221

NOTES

A new record of an alien pond weed (*Elodea canadensis*) in Seychelles

J. Gerlach
133 Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 7BX, UK
PO Box 207, Victoria, Mahé , SEYCHELLES
[*jstgerlach@aol.com*]

In December 2001 Canadian pondweed *Elodea canadensis* Michaux (Hydrocharitaceae) was observed growing on Mahe island. It was present in the shallow, heavily polluted streams of the town of Victoria and in ornamental ponds. This species is an introduced member of an American genus which has beend widely introduced and causes considerable ecological problems in water courses in Europe. Although there are no published records of this species from Seychelles it has apparently been present for a number of years (D. Dogley pers. comm. to R. Gerlach). So far it does not seem to have been widely dispersed unlike other imported water weeds such as water lettuce *Pistia stratiotes* Linnaeus, if it does spread beyond Victoria it has the potential to cause major ecological problems in streams and marshes.