

Attempted stick-insect predation by a wasp

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On Tuesday 12th March 2002 a wasp was observed attacking a stick insect at Jardin Marron on Silhouette island, Seychelles. The observation was made at 13:45hrs within 3 metres of the stream at the top of Jardin Marron, on the vertical side of a dead fallen tree approximately 12cm diameter at the trunk base and 75cm above the ground.

A stick insect *Carausius seychellensis* (Bolivar, 1895) was observed being attacked by a single yellow wasp *Polistes olivaceus* (De Geer, 1773). The wasp flew toward the head and placed its body in a curved attacking position. The wasp had to adjust and re-adjust as the stick insect moved sideways and also reversed approximately 10cm down the trunk as the wasp was flying around. The wasp did not get a firm grip on the stick insect and flew off to the top of a stick 0.5m distant. The wasp cleaned its head and antennae, returned to the stick insect and attacked again. This time the attack was noticeably less aggressive and lasted approximately 15 seconds as opposed to the initial attack of 30 seconds. The wasp flew off again, stayed flying around in the immediate vicinity 3-5m distant, returned, landed on the same stick but approximately 30cm away. Meanwhile the stick insect had continued reversing and had covered another 5cm. The wasp did not attack a third time, cleaned itself again and flew off. It did not return for at least the next five minutes.

NOTES

Corals of Silhouette island, Seychelles

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In 2000 the dredging of a harbour at La Passe, Silhouette island, broke up a section of the fringing reef. In December 2001 a collection of corals found on the beach at La Passe was made. 14 families and 37 species were collected and identified from 'Corals of the World' (Veron & Stafford-Smith 2000). This included species from a range of depths.

Gorgonia

Corallium cf. *nobile*

Tubipora musica Linnaeus, 1758

Octocorallia

Acroporidae

Acropora hemprichii (Ehrenberg, 1834)

Acropora divaricata (Dana, 1846)

Acropora formosa (Dana, 1846)

Acropora robusta (Dana, 1846)

Montipora digitata (Dana, 1846)

Agaricidae

- Coeloseris mayeri* Vaughan, 1918
- Gardineroseris plumulata* (Dana, 1846)
- Leptoseris papyracea* (Dana, 1846)

Caryophyllidae

- Heterocyathus aequicostatus* Milne Edwards & Haime, 1848

Euphyllidae

- Euphyllia glabrescens* (Chamisso & Eysenhardt, 1821)

Faviidae

- Cyphastrea microphalma* (Lamarck, 1816)
- Favius favius* (Forskål, 1775)
- Favia laxa* (Klunzinger, 1879)
- Favia pallida* (Dana, 1846)
- Favia speciosa* Wells, 1954
- Favia stelligera* (Dana, 1846)
- Goniastrea minuta* Veron, 2000
- Leptopora phrygia* (Ellis & Solander, 1786)

Fungiidae

- Cycloseris patelliformis* (Boschma, 1923)
- Fungia puisnani* Veron & Vantier
- Fungia repanda* Dana, 1846

Heliopoidae

- Heliopora coerulea* (Pallas, 1766)

Mussidae

- Symphyllia recta* (Dana, 1846)

Oculinidae

- Galaxea fascicularis* (Linnaeus, 1767)

Pectiniidae

- Echinophyllia echinata* (Saville-Kent, 1871)

Pocilloporidae

- Pocillopora damicornis* (Linnaeus, 1758)
- Pocillopora eydouxi* Milne Edwards & Haime, 1860
- Pocillopora verrucosa* (Ellis & Solander, 1786)
- Seriatopora hystrix* Dana, 1846
- Seriatopora guttatus* Veron, 2000

Poritidae

- Porites nigrescens* Dana, 1846
- Porites profundus* Rehberg, 1892
- Porties rus* (Forskål, 1775)

Siderastreidae

- Psammocora contigua* (Esper, 1797)
- Pseudosiderastea toyami* Yabe & Sugujama, 1935

Of the species identified the Caryophyllidae are of particular interest. Two specimens of

Heterocyathus aequicostatus were collected. This zooxanthellate Indo-Pacific species has previously been recorded from Aride although the Indian Ocean records are omitted from Veron & Stafford-Smith (2000) and there is some confusion over the identity of the Indian Ocean species. In Seychelles two other species have been recorded: *H. alternatus* Verrill, 1865 (Poivre) and *H. sulcatus* (Verrill, 1866) (Aride, Poivre and D'Arros). In addition *H. hemisphaericus* Gray, 1849 is recorded from the Indian Ocean. As with other member of the genus, *H. aequicostatus* is associated with the commensal sipunculan worm *Aspidosiphon corallicola* Sluiter.

References

Veron, J.E.N. & Stafford-Smith, M. 2000. *Corals of the World*. 3 vol. Cape Ferguson/AIMS.

NOTES

Osteological finds on Trois Mamelles mountain extends the known ecological range of the extinct endemic Mauritian tortoise *Cylindraspis* sp.

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This note reports the find of *Cylindraspis* bones made by the author on the south facing flank of the Trois Mamelles mountain in 1996 at latitude 20° 18' 31" S and longitude 57° 26' 43" E. A large number of small fragments of carapace and possibly of plastron, a humerus and a femur were uncovered in deposits under a rock overhang on a ledge at an altitude of 480m together with a rich collection of snail shells. Many of these shells belong to long extinct species, testifying to the old age of the deposit. Similar deposits have indeed been dated at 2,500 to 1,000 years (Griffiths 2000). Samples of the bones were sent to the Natural History Museum, London for identification which was unfortunately not possible beyond genus level (pers. comm. N. Arnold).

Mauritius had two endemic species of land tortoise of the genus *Cylindraspis* (Austin & Arnold 2001). These were *C. triserrata* and *C. inepta*, both described by Gunther in 1873 who originally placed them in the genus *Testudo*. Both went extinct in the 18th century as a result of the combined action of hunting by humans and predation by introduced vertebrates (Cheke 1987). Historical records mentioned the abundance of tortoises in coastal areas and on several islets around Mauritius. There were however no records of endemic tortoises living far inland away from the coastal lowlands although a closely related species was known to have done so on nearby Réunion island (Cheke 1987).

As reported in the literature, *Cylindraspis* bones were subsequently uncovered at 17 sites over Mauritius, 11 of which are in the lowlands below 50m above sea level (Fig. 1.).