

## NOTES

### A Visit to Isle aux Vaches Marines

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On 28/5/94 Adrian Skerrett and I visited Isle aux Vaches Marines which is a small (4.7 hectares) rock island situated off the south-west coast of Mahé. We were looking for the presence of breeding seabirds and passed close to Conception and Therese where there were no signs at all. There were many seabirds as we approached Isle aux Vaches Marines, mostly common or brown noddies (*Anous stolidus* (Linnaeus, 1758) and a few bridled terns (*Sterna anaethetus* Scopoli, 1786). We estimated that there were approximately 2000 noddies on the island and many had eggs. The bridled terns were seen on the wing and there was no sign of any nesting activity although the terrain is ideal for them.

The island is a granite outcrop and as such has no soil. It has however been used by seabirds and has been colonised by some plants. Of these the *Ficus* have grown into fairly substantial trees up to 3m high. This island has rarely been visited previously and there are few published records of its flora and fauna.

Land animals included Seychelles skink (*Mabuya sechellensis*), giant millipedes (*Sechelleptus sechellensis*) and the shed skins of the rock crab *Grapsus tenuicrustatus*. The presence of giant millipedes is notable as these have not been recorded on the island previously. Skinks were recorded by Vesey-Fitzgerald (1947) but in the 1950s only *M. wrightii* were noted. These were not seen on this visit which suggests that *M. sechellensis* has replaced the larger sea-bird associated species.

Of the plants *Ficus reflexa* Thunberg and *Ficus avi-avi* Blume were all over the island in crevices but were mostly scattered. A small clump was present on the top plateau with *Cocos nucifera* Linnaeus, 1753. There were several clumps of grass and sedge (Graminae: *Pennisetium polystachyon* (Linnaeus, 1753), *Stenotaphrum micranthum* (Desv.); Cyperaceae: *Mariscus dubius* (Rottb.), *Mariscus ligularis* (Linnaeus)). The fern *Nephrolepis* cf. *biserrata* was present under the fig trees. *Lippia nodiflora* (Linnaeus, 1753) and *Pentodon pentandrus* (Schumacher & Thonn.) were present. *Sarcosemma viminale* Br., 1810 was only seen on rocks near the shore. Specimens were collected of the following species; *Mariscus dubius*, *Pennisetium polystachyon*, *Stenotaphrum micranthum*, *Pentodon pentandrus*, *Mariscus ligularis*, *Sarcosemma viminale*, *Ficus avi-avi*, *F. reflexa* and an unidentified shrub. All are in the collection of the NPTS. The plant list is compared to the collections made by Sauer (1967) and Frazier & Feare in 1973 (Robertson 1989) in Table 1.

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Table 1. Plant lists for Isle aux Vaches Marines

	1967	1973	1994
<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	+	+	+
<i>Paspalum vaginatum</i>	+	+	-
<i>Pennisetium polystachyon</i>	-	-	+
<i>Stenotaphrum micranthum</i>	+	+	+
<i>Mariscus dubius</i>	-	-	+
<i>Mariscus ligularis</i>	+	+	+
<i>Nephrolepis biserrata</i>	-	-	+
<i>Lippia nodiflora</i>	-	-	+
<i>Ficus avi-avi</i>	+	+	+
<i>Ficus reflexa</i>	-	+	+
<i>Pentodon pentandrus</i>	+	+	+
<i>Sarcosemma viminale</i>	+	+	+

### References

- Robertson, S.A. 1989  
*Flowering Plants of Seychelles*. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
- Sauer, J.D. 1967  
*Plants and Man on the Seychelles coast*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Vesey-Fitzgerald, D. 1947  
Reptiles and amphibians from the Seychelles Archipelago. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* (11) 14; 577-583