

Report Of A Birding Trip To
The Seychelles

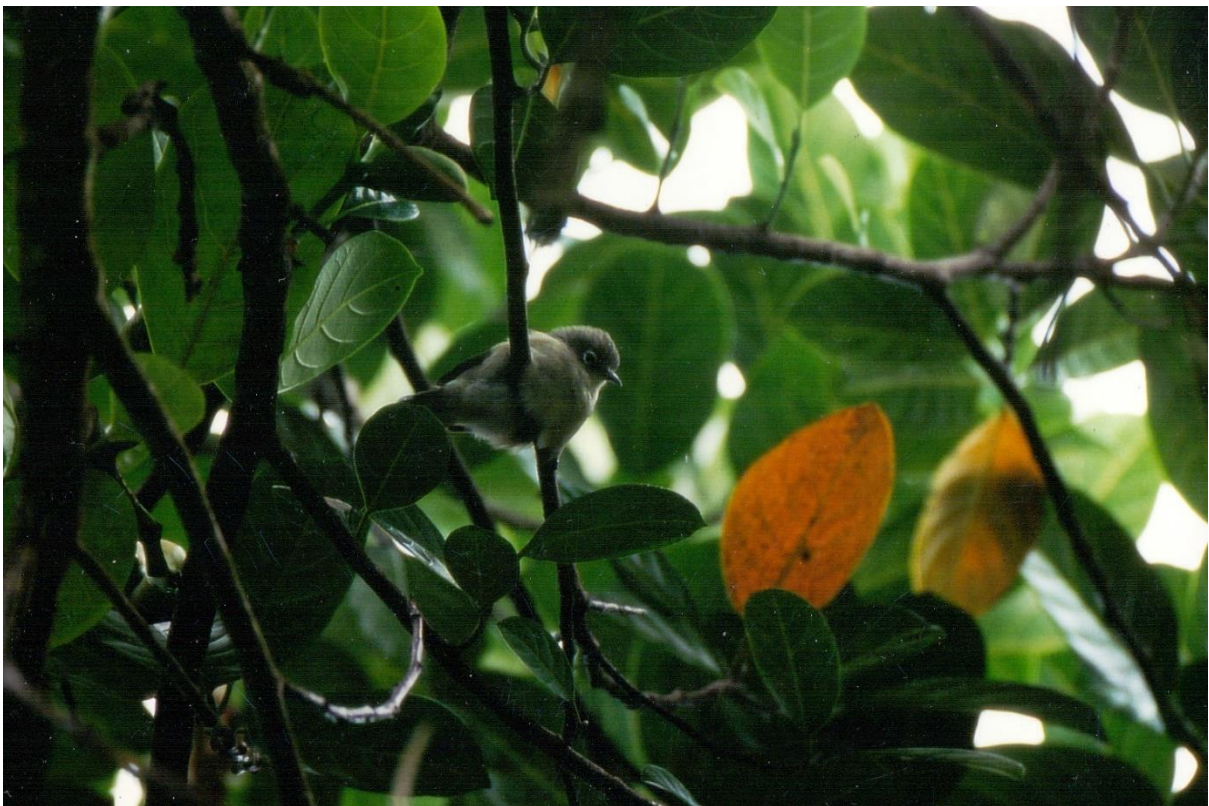
from June 4th till June 17th 2002

Participants:

Jan van der Laan

Marieke Wiringa

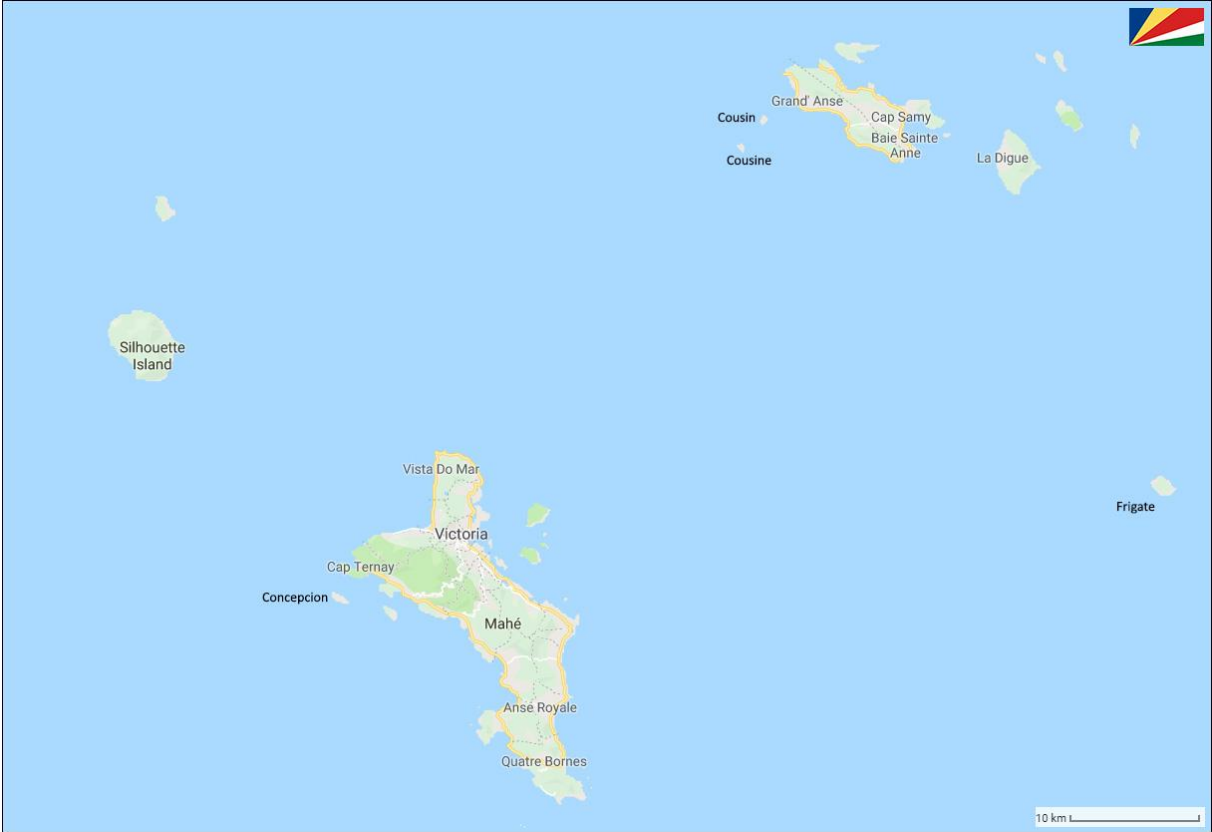
Joop van der Laan



The very rare Seychelles White-eye; 7 June 2002, Cascade, Mahé; © Jan van der Laan



Maps



Map of the Seychelles



Introduction

Between June 3rd and June 17th 2002 I went to the Seychelles for a holiday. I was there with my girlfriend Marieke Wiringa plus our daughter Joop. Our main objective was to have a nice pleasant holiday, but also on the agenda was to see all island endemics plus some photographing. We managed to have it all!

Recommended Literature

For birding I used the excellent Helm field guide *Birds of the Seychelles* by Adrian Skerrett, Ian Bullock and Tony Disley, published in 2001 (ISBN 0-7136-3973-3). This is a very good field guide with a lot of information about identification, distribution and history about the birds of the Seychelles. For back-up I used the *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands* by Ian Sinclair and Olivier Langrand, published in 1998 (ISBN 1-86872-035-7).

The sound recording of the Seychelles Scops-Owl came from the Ip *Systematics Of Smaller Asian Night Birds Based On Voice* by Joe T. Marshall, published in 1978.

For travel guides I used Lonely Planet's *Mauritius, Réunion & Seychelles* published in 2001 (ISBN 0-86442-748-4) and a Dutch Guide *Seychellen* by Dick Houtzager published in 1999 (ISBN 90-257-3093-0).

The Species Accounts

The order and nomenclature of Order and nomenclature follows www.worldbirdnames.org, version 11.2. Species in capitals are endemic for the Seychelles. Species marked with a * are species that I was able to photograph.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following persons: Oscar Endtz, Gérard Rocamora, Adrian Skerrett, Jur en Netty van der Laan, Matty Wiringa, Annet Meijer, Pim Edelaar, Precy and Emilia Vidot, Thomas Edmund and Basil Beaudouin.

Alkmaar, June 2002, updated in September 2019.

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Itinerary

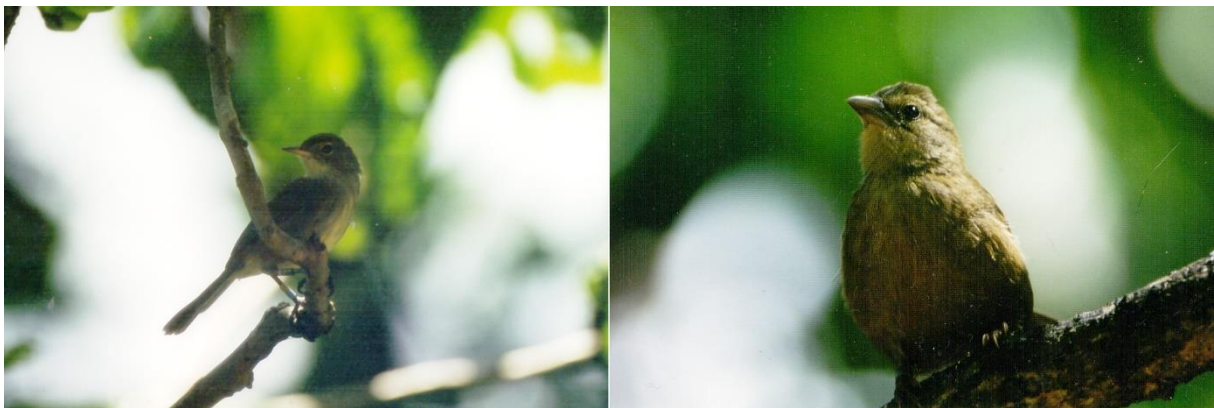
- 3 June (mo)** Departure from **Amsterdam** 17:00 hours with flight AF 1941 (Air France). Arrival at **Paris** 18:10 hours; departure 19:30 hours with flight AF 3862 (Air Seychelles).
- 4 June (tue)** Arrival **MAHÉ** at 7:15 hours; picked-up rental car (Echo Cars, 69 euro each day) and went straight to **Beau Vallon** to the hotel **Romance Villas** for four nights (114 euro). First White-tailed Tropicbirds seen, flying everywhere along the mountains.
- 5 June (we)** **MAHÉ**. Travelled by car around the island. Afternoon visit to **La Misère** for White-eyes.
- 6 June (thu)** **MAHÉ**. Early morning visit to **La Misère** for White-eyes with no success. In the evening to ruins of the **Capucin Mission** along the **Sans Soucis** road for Seychelles Scops-Owl. Two birds heard very well and seen briefly.
- 7 June (fr)** **MAHÉ**. Morning visit with Basil Beaudouin to **Cascade** (87 euro). 5-6 White-eyes seen very well. Kestrel seen briefly but calling for an hour without showing itself. Afternoon in **Victoria**. English football fans were celebrating their victory over Argentina.
- 8 June (sa)** **MAHÉ** → **LA DIGUE**; Cat Coco boat to **Praslin** (365 rps for two adults). Then boat to **La Digue** for 80 rps. Almost everybody sea-sick (except me) and Joop puked all over Marieke. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, both Noddies and Bridled and Sooty Terns seen at both crossings. At La Digue we took the hotel **Villa Authentique** for three nights (118 euro). In the garden a male Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher (but seen shortly) and a tame Fruit Bat (which died later).
- 9 June (su)** **LA DIGUE**. In the morning **Anse Severe**, afternoon **Veuve reserve**. Only male Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher singing at a distant, not seen. Rest of afternoon **Anse Severe**.
- 10 June (mo)** **LA DIGUE**. In the morning **Anse Severe** (Crab Plover seen). During the afternoon I played freelance photographer for a newly wedded Dutch couple. Our ox-car driver showed a nest of Paradise Flycatcher at **L'Union Estate**. Young present in nest, but parents failed to show up. Later in the afternoon I went back with Joop en Marieke to show them the beautiful **Anse Source d'Argent beach**.
- 11 June (tue)** **LA DIGUE** → **PRASLIN**, Boat to **Praslin** at 10:30 hours. Taxi to **Anse Volbert**. There we took the pleasant hotel **L'Hirondelle** (107 euros) for 4 nights.
- 12 June (we)** **PRASLIN**. Morning swim at **Anse Volbert**, afternoon trip to **Vallée de Mai** (entrance 100 rps for us three). Black Parrot easily found near the entrance at 16:30 hours. Walk to the main road and taxi back to the hotel.
- 13 June (thu)** **PRASLIN**. Morning trip to **Cousin** (350 rps). Flying Fish just before Cousin. At Cousin all endemics easily found. Noddies close-by and several nesting Fairy Terns and White-tailed Tropicbirds. Three Aldabra Tortoises also present. Afternoon swim at **Anse Volbert**.
- 14 June (fr)** **PRASLIN**. Swimming and sunbathing.
- 15 June (sa)** **PRASLIN** → **MAHÉ**; morning swim at **Anse Volbert**. 12:45 hours flight to **Mahé** (105 euros for all three) for fifteen minutes. Taxi to **Beau Vallon**.
- 16 June (su)** **MAHÉ**; doing nothing. In the afternoon two Seychelles Kestrels around the bungalow and seen at very close range. Watched Ireland lose against Spain in the World Cup.
- 17 June (mo)** Early morning rise and took taxi to airport for flight from **MAHÉ** at 9:15 hours (AF 3863) to **Paris**. Nice quiet flight with plane half full, so plenty of space. Red Sea beautifully seen plus pyramids, Crete etc. Arrival 17:30 hours at **Paris**. Finally departure at 19:55 (AF 2140) to **Amsterdam** (arrival 20:40 hours).



Left: Seychelles Bulbul; right: Seychelles Sunbird; both on 5 June 2002, Beau Vallon, Mahé; © Jan van der Laan.



Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher: left: male, right: female; both on 8 June 2002, La Digue; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Seychelles Warbler; right: Seychelles Fody; both on Cousin on 13 June 2002; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Lesser Noddy; right: Brown Noddy; both on Cousin on 13 June 2002; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Seychelles Magpie-Robin; right: White Tern; both on Cousin on 13 June 2002; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: White-tailed Tropicbird; right: the Magpie-robin and me; both on Cousin on 13 June 2002; © Jan van der Laan.



Seychelles Kestrel, male, 16 June 2002, Beau Vallon, Mahé; © Jan van der Laan.



01. **SEYCHELLES SWIFTLET** – *Aerodramus elaphrus* *
Daily c 6-10 birds seen on Mahé above our hotel, the Romance Bungalows at Beau Vallon. Only two seen on Praslin on 14th June at Anse Volbert.
02. **Madagasy Turtle-Dove** – *Nesoenas picturata* *
Regularly seen on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue (all grey-headed *picturata* type birds). On Cousin at least 4 brown-headed birds (*rostrata* types) were seen, although the exact genetic status of these birds is still not solved. Alternative views about this matter are described in Skerrett, Bullock and Disley (2001).
03. **Zebra Dove** – *Geopila striata* *
Very common on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue. Introduced somewhere between 1768 and 1865 (Skerrett et al, 2001).
04. **SEYCHELLES BLUE PIGEON** – *Alectroenas pulcherrima*
Fairly common on Mahé. At Praslin only a few individuals were seen in Vallée de Mai. On Mahé, several birds were seen feeding in fruiting trees in downtown Victoria. Unfortunately I could not photograph any.
05. **Common Moorhen** – *Gallinula chloropus* *
13 June c 10 Cousin Island.
06. **Greater Sandplover** – *Charadrius leschenaultii*
04 June 1 along the new road between the airport and Victoria, Mahé.
07. **Whimbrel** – *Numenius phaeopus*
10 June 1 flying north and calling, Anse Severe, La Digue.
15 June 3 feeding at Fond de L'Anse, Praslin.
08. **Red Knot** – *Calidris canutus*
14 June 1 (winter plumage) flying east, Anse Volbert, Praslin
This bird was seen just one meter above my head while I was swimming. If accepted this would be the first record for the Seychelles (Skerrett, Bullock and Disley 2001).
09. **Crab Plover** – *Dromas ardeola* *
10 June 1 (immature) Anse Severe, La Digue.
10. **Brown Noddy** - *Anous stolidus* *
Common at sea between Mahé and Praslin, between Praslin and La Digue and between Praslin and Cousin Island. Also seen in good numbers from the coast of La Digue and Praslin. Seen on nest at Cousin Island.
11. **Lesser Noddy** – *Anous tenuirostris* *
Common at sea between Mahé and Praslin, between Praslin and La Digue and between Praslin and Cousin Island. Also seen in good numbers from the coast of La Digue and Praslin. Seen on nest at Cousin Island.
I thought Lesser Noddies were more common than Brown Noddies (at a rate of 3:1).



12. **White Tern** – *Gygis alba* *
- Common on all visited islands. On Cousin also nearly grown chicks were seen at close range.
13. **Greater Crested Tern** – *Thalasseus bergii*
- One bird in winter-type plumage was seen daily between 11 and 15 June patrolling the Anse Volbert beach during mornings and evenings.
14. **Bridled Tern** – *Onychoprion anaethetus*
- | | | |
|---------|------|------------------------------------|
| 08 June | c 10 | between Mahé and Praslin. |
| | c 20 | between Praslin and La Digue. |
| 10 June | 1 | Anse Source d'Argent, La Digue. |
| 13 June | c 5 | between Praslin and Cousin Island. |
15. **Sooty Tern** – *Onychoprion fuscatus* *
- | | | |
|---------|-------|---|
| 08 June | c 10 | between Mahé and Praslin. |
| | c 100 | between Praslin and La Digue. |
| 13 June | c 50 | between Praslin and Cousin Island. |
| | 2 | calling above the beach of Cousin Island. |
16. **White-tailed Tropicbird** – *Phaethon lepturus* *
- Common, seen daily on all islands. On Cousin several birds were breeding and chicks were in all kind of age plumages.
17. **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** – *Puffinus pacificus*
- | | | |
|---------|------|-------------------------------|
| 08 June | c 10 | between Mahé and Praslin. |
| | c 5 | between Praslin and La Digue. |
| 11 June | 1 | between La Digue and Praslin. |
| 13 June | c 10 | between Praslin and Cousin. |
18. **Greater Frigatebird** – *Fregata minor*
- | | | |
|---------|-----|--|
| 09 June | c 5 | Anse Severe, La Digue. |
| 13 June | c 5 | (all immatures) between Anse Volbert, Praslin and Cousin Island. |
| | 1 | (immature) Anse Volbert, Praslin. |
| 15 June | 1 | Beau Vallon beach, Mahé. |
19. **Lesser Frigatebird** – *Fregata ariel*
- | | | |
|---------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 09 June | 1 | (at least one) Anse Severe, La Digue. |
| 12 June | 1 | (immature) Anse Volbert, Praslin. |
- Several unidentified frigatebirds were seen at Anse Severe, La Digue and between Praslin and La Digue.
20. **Green-backed Heron** – *Butoroides striatus degens* *
- | | | |
|---------|---|--------------------------|
| 06 June | 1 | Beau Vallon beach, Mahé. |
| 07 June | 1 | Victoria, Mahé. |



- 09 June 1 Anse Severe, La Digue.
- 12 June 1 Anse Volbert, Praslin; also on 13, 14 and 15 June.
21. **Western Cattle Egret** – *Bubulcus ibis seychellarum*
The most common heron on Mahé, even present on the Sir Selwyn Clarke Market in Victoria, looking for left-overs.
22. **Grey Heron** - *Ardea cinerea*
Seen almost daily on all island, with about 5 birds maximum each day. Most common on Mahé.
23. **SEYCHELLES SCOPS-OWL** – *Otus insularis*
06 June 2 (pair duetting, also seen) ruins of the Capucins Mission, Chemin Sans Soucis, Mahé.
These birds started calling at 18:45 hours just after dusk just after I played the tape from the Marshall Lp from 1978 (I did it briefly!). Then they started duetting for about a minute and during this, I managed to see them in the light of the torch. They did not like this and they took off to land in the next tree where I was not able to see them anymore. I was too excited to make sound recordings!
24. **SEYCHELLES KESTREL** – *Falco araea* *
07 June 1 (briefly seen but calling for an hour) Cascade, Mahé.
16 June 2 (sitting on the veranda of our bungalow) Romance Bungalows, Beau Vallon, Mahé.
25. **SEYCHELLES BLACK PARROT** – *Coracopsis barkleyi* *
12 June 10 (4 seen, rest heard) Vallée de Mai National Park, Praslin.
Treated as full species based on mtDNA phylogeny and behavior ([Kundu et al. 2012](#)).
26. **SEYCHELLES PARADISE FLYCATCHER** – *Terpsiphone corvina* *
08 June 1 (male) in the garden of Villa Authentique, La Passe, La Digue.
09 June 1 (female) in the garden of Villa Authentique, La Passe, La Digue.
 1 (male, heard singing) Veuve Reserve, La Digue.
10 June 1 (young in nest) L'Union Estate, opposite the Pirate Ship, La Digue.
 1 (female) near entrance of L'Union Estate, La Digue.
27. **SEYCHELLES BULBUL** – *Hypsipetus crassirostris* *
Common on Mahé, La Digue and Praslin. Surprisingly scarce in the gardens of our hotel on Mahé, the Romance Bungalows, Beau Vallon.
28. **SEYCHELLES WARBLER** – *Acrocephalus sechellensis* *
13 June c 8 Cousin Island.
Some birds were very confiding and reacted upon hissing and pishing.
29. **SEYCHELLES WHITE-EYE** – *Zosterops modestus* *
07 June 5 (in one flock) at about 500 meters altitude above Cascade, Mahé.
Gérard Rocamora controlled the group on 8 May 2002 and it consisted of 4 adults and 1 juvenile.



30. **Common Myna** – *Acridotheres tristis* *

A common bird on the Seychelles, especially in hotel gardens. Introduced around 1830, probably already around 1762 (see Skerrett, Bullock and Disley (2001)).

31. **SEYCHELLES MAGPIE-ROBIN** – *Copsychus sechellarum* *

13 June 4 Cousin Island.

According to the BirdLife International guide there were 24 birds on Cousin Island in 2002. In December 2001 the world population was 105 individuals.

32. **SEYCHELLES SUNBIRD** – *Cinnyris dussumieri**

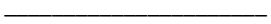
The most common bird on the Seychelles, especially in hotel gardens.

33. **Red Fody** – *Foudia madagascariensis* *

A common bird on the Seychelles, especially in hotel gardens and sometimes entering your hotel room. Most birds were in basis plumage. Skerrett, Bullock and Disley (2001) question the popular belief that this species is introduced.

34. **SEYCHELLES FODY** – *Foudia sechellarum* *

13 June c 20 Cousin Island.





Joop en Marieke during boat trip from Praslin to La Digue; 8 June 2002; © Jan van der Laan.



Joop on the most beautiful beach on earth, 10 June 2002, Anse Source d'Argent, La Digue; © Jan van der Laan.