

THE SEYCHELLES

MAHÉ, PRASLIN, LA DIGUE & COUSIN

June 24th to July 8th 2018



Bill and Helen Simpson

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TEAM Bill and Helen Simpson

CURRENCY RATES 1GBP = 18 SCR SEYCHELLES RUPEE

AIRPORT PARKING Purple Park and Ride T5, booked via BookFHR.com £59.75 (plus £10 for the 30 hour delay).

FLIGHTS Dep Sat June 23rd 18.00 LHR - SEZ 07.10 Arr Sun 24th BRITISH AIRWAYS DIRECT FLIGHT 10.10 hrs.
Dep Sun July 8th 09.00 SEZ - LHR 16.20 Arr Sun 8th BRITISH AIRWAYS DIRECT FLIGHT 10.20 hrs. **CANCELLED**
Dep Mon July 9th 16.00 SEZ - LHR 22.20 Arr Mon 9th BRITISH AIRWAYS DIRECT FLIGHT 10.20 hrs.
Return flight delayed by 30 hours due to strong cross-winds at Mahe and exceeded crew working hours.
Put up at The Savoy, Beau Vallon overnight just yards away from our previous Coral Strand Hotel.

CAR HIRE Thrifty on Mahe for the first 4 days for £151.92
Excess insurance from insurance4carhire.com £49.99 for Worldwide, multi-trip up to 60 days.

CAT COCOS FERRY MAHE - PRASLIN EURO 110 each (RTN) Upper deck outside.
PRASLIN - LA DIGUE EURO 28 each (RTN)

COUSIN ISLAND Euro 145 each including landing fee SCR 500 (£28) each, but included in the boat tour price.

VISA Not required for UK citizens.

LITERATURE

Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands.....Sinclair and Langrand.
Seychelles.....Bradt.
Internet Trip reports.

SOUND RECORDINGS

Nearly all species from Xeno Canto but not really necessary.

EQUIPMENT

OPTICS.

LEICA 10x32 BN
KOWA TSN-553 Scope.

CAMERAS / LENSES ETC.

CANON EOS 5D Mk III.
CANON 400mm EF f5.6 L USM
CANON extender EF 1.4X II
B+W 77mm MRC Clear UV Haze (010) Filter
Remote Control RC-201
MANFROTTO R190 CX4 PRO tripod with fluid head.

SOUND EQUIPMENT

SAMSUNG GALAXY S Wifi 4.2 MP3 player.
OLYMPUS LS-14 Linear PCM recorder.
RADIOSHACK mini-amplifier speaker.
JBL CLIP Bluetooth speaker.
SENNHEISER medium microphone.

TORCH

LED LENSER M17R
GARMIN ETREX 30x GPS.

COSTS

£1290.68 **Flights** x2
£ 192.69 **Cat Cocos** Mahe - Praslin x2 return. (EURO 110/ each return)
£ 52.40 **Cat Cocos** Praslin - La Digue x2 return. (SCR 470/ each return)
£ 257.78 **COUSIN ISLAND TRIP** x2. (EURO 145/ each return)
£ 151.92 **Car Hire** Mahe x4 days.
£ 59.75 **Purple Parking** LHR T5.
£ 393.10 **Le Relax**, Mahe, Double room x4 nights.
£ 702.00 **Chalets Cote Mer**, Praslin, Double room x5 nights.
£ 756.74 **Coral Strand**, Mahe, Double room x5 nights.

£3857.06 SUB-TOTAL

£ 278.22 SCR 5,100
£ 172.80 SCR 3,100
£ 110.58 SCR 2,000

£ 4418.66 TOTAL

Trip in general

A very easy trip with short distances to travel and easy birds, made more interesting by having to visit the other islands for their endemics. The toughest bird was the White-eye only being seen on one day out of four short visits. I felt I was lucky with the Owl as we never heard any response at the same site two nights later. The rest of the birds were straight forward once on the islands. The weather could have disrupted the Cousin Island trip and it was good to know in advance that the Island is closed on weekends and Public holidays so timing was essential. The weather was largely fine, sunny and hot with a cooling South-easterly wind. It was cooler up in the hills where thicker cloud cover was often present. We only had a few showers although usually overnight. The only real weather related issue was the strong winds on the last day (that didn't seem that strong) that caused our flight to be cancelled.

It was a very expensive country with expensive hotels, although cheaper accommodation and food options were available. The food at all our hotels was very expensive so we ate from the few food stalls and bought our own food from the supermarkets to make sandwiches. This worked out well and we saved ourselves bucket loads of cash! Most hotels seemed to charge 15-20 Euros for a breakfast, 20 for a lunch and 35 for a dinner, and that was our cheaper hotels!!! The inter-island ferries were expensive for what they were and due to their high speed made birding very difficult, at least when we went during the SE Trade winds. I couldn't find anywhere decent to do any seawatching on Mahe when we had a car and Praslin was the same....we always seemed to be in a bay rather than a headland and the birds were miles offshore. I tried 2 miles west of Beau Vallon on the last day which was ok but most of the birds were still very distant. The locals were fine and we felt safe all the time even though we were told by a taxi driver that 10% of the population are drug addicts (5.6% according to the internet!). We did see a few "lost souls" and saw smashed glass at the Mission Ruins lookout car park where we were told there is a car break-in problem, but this never affected our trip. In a nutshell it's an easy, but expensive trip with great scenery and easy birding.

Itinerary

SAT JUNE 23rd Up and away from the Best Western Palm Hotel by midday after trying to sort out the broken rear light cluster from the previous night's anonymous taxi door opener! Checked in ok and away a little after the scheduled departure time.



SUN 24th Arrived Mahe at 07.30, sorted out Thrifty car hire quickly, withdrew 5000 SCR from the airport ATM and swiftly drove to the **Le Relax Hotel by 9am**. A little confusion over the room was soon settled satisfactorily and after unpacking had a few hours kip to catch up. Went out for a drive round and up to **La Misere** for a while and back for the England-Panama match 4-6pm. **Left Helen at 6pm to go up the Sans Souci Rd** returning victorious by 8.40pm!

MON 25th Up at 9am and away after breakfast to **La Misere** again returning in the afternoon. 6 mile run in the evening and an early night.

TUES 26th Snorkelling opposite Le Relax Hotel in the morning followed by a **tour of the southern half of the island with the best bit being Intendance Bay**. Drove up the west coast and up the **Sans Souci Rd** taking in the **Mission Ruins viewpoint** and the **Scops Owl site below the Tea Plantation**...blanks all round so back to the hotel and an early night.

WED 27th Walked around Victoria in the morning, and then Helen stayed at the hotel while **I went back up the west coast up to La Misere and back by 5pm.**



THURS 28th Up early, breakfast and drove back to drop the car off at the airport. Got dropped off by the hire company for SCR 300 at the **Cat Cocos terminal for the uneventful 10.30 ferry to Praslin.** Checked in to **Chalets Cote Mer** and **walked to Baie Ste Marie town and back** stopping to watch the parrots flying around behind the pharmacy.



FRI 29th **Took a morning walk to get better view of the Parrots.** By walking the short distance (10-15 minutes) from the ferry jetty towards Baie Ste Marie and taking the uphill road opposite the large church I was very close to the feeding Parrots and Fruit bats. Later on we took a bus to **Anse Volbert** and booked a tour to Cousin Island with Curieuse and on the way back including bbq lunch for Euro 145 each. This was booked at L'Hirondelle Hotel.

SAT 30th **7am ferry to La Digue** in torrential rain, walking the short 20 minutes to **La Veuve Reserve.** Walked back to meet Helen on the 10am ferry and went back to watch the Paradise Flycatchers again. Dodged lots of rain showers but had a bit of sunshine also. **Back on the 4.30pm ferry.**

SUN JULY 1st Delayed going out due to heavy rain then got the bus to **Anse Lazio** for a few hours swimming. Back for a roadside dinner in Baie St Marie then walked back to the Hotel.



MON 2nd Out on the boat by 9.25am and at Cousin Island by 9.48. Taken ashore and divided into English and French speaking groups and off on a 2 hour circular stroll by the island guides. Not enough time but managed to see all the required species and fantastic views of the breeding birds. Off to Curieuse at 12.15 and had a bbq lunch followed by a snorkel at Ste Pierre Island finishing at 4pm. Bus back and cleaned up and packed for the 9am boat tomorrow.

TUES 3rd Left on the 9.30am ferry back to Victoria and got a taxi (SCR300) to the Coral Strand Hotel in Beau Vallon.

TUES 3rd - SAT 7th Spent the last few days walking around locally going to **Bel Ombre** and **Victoria** and around the northern road by bus. All Bus journeys were 7 SCR regardless of distance.

SUN 8th Up at 5am for the late taxi (SCR 500) to the airport for the delayed flight home....
Flight cancelled due to strong cross winds and overnighted at the Savoy Hotel in Beau Vallon.

MON 9th Up at 05.30 and walked west to viewpoint just west of Bel Ombre for a seawatch 06.50-08.20. Rescheduled flight home at 15.30

Systematic List



1. **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*
Common on all islands, often in pairs. Often flying through the trees at upper elevations on Mahe as if looking for food in the foliage. Lots of pairs on eggs and with near full-grown chicks on Cousin island.
1. **Madagascar Turtle-dove** *Nesoenas picturatus* **INTRODUCED**
Common on Mahe, Praslin, La Digue, 2 on Cousin and swarms on Curieuse.
Although hybridised out of existence (HBWA), the **Seychelles Turtle Dove** was mooted to survive on Cousin (eg Birdquest trip reports etc). Birds seen on all the islands visited looked like Madagascar Turtle Dove with several birds, usually in poor condition or moulting resembling the Seychelles form.
2. **Zebra Dove** *Geopelia striata* **INTRODUCED**
Common on Mahe, Praslin, La Digue and Curieuse.



Mahe



Praslin

3. **SEYCHELLES BLUE-PIGEON** *Alectroenas pulcherrimus* **ENDEMIC**
6+, Jun 24th Le Relax Hotel and common thereafter on Mahe. Often heard and seen displaying in all habitats. Common on Praslin. 2 juveniles feeding in on palm fruits at Beau Vallon.



4. **SEYCHELLES SWIFTLET** *Aerodramus elaphrus* **ENDEMIC**
 C 20, Jun 26th along the west coast distantly over the hills in the evening.
 C20 buzzing round the Fire Station on La Digue gave much better views (above).
5. **Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus orientalis*
 1, heard only at La Veuve Reserve, La Digue.
 Several on Cousin and common on Curieuse. A few on Mahe at Beau Vallon.



6. **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna pacifica*
 2 at Intendance Bay, Jun 26th, 30+ opposite Le Relax on Mahe on 28th early am.
 C15 on the Praslin to La Digue ferry at 7am (photo) and a few on the 4.30pm ferry.
 Hundreds passing west out to sea from Beau Vallon and west of Bel Ombre early mornings.



7. **Green-backed Heron** *Butorides striata degans*
Several on Mahe, Praslin, La Digue

8. **Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis seychellarum*
A few around Victoria on Mahe with birds picking flies off the offal in the market and also a few flying around the outskirts of the town. One of these birds showed red legs and bill.



9. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*
Fairly common on Mahe like this colourful bird at Beau Vallon. A few on La Digue

10. **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*

Only a few identified with certainty on Mahe when the white axillary tabs could be seen (1+ Ad male).



11. **GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** *Fregata minor*

The first to be identified was on the 2nd July from Curieuse Island

2nd and third were from Victoria Harbour on 6th.

Difficult and only identified using the paper by **DJ James in Birding Asia 2004 22-38.**

12. **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

1, Praslin and 1 La Digue.

13. **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

1, Praslin.

14. **Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
1, Beau Vallon.

15. **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*
A few distant ones off Intendance and Beau Vallon Bays, Mahe. Common around Cousin
1+ on the Mahe-Praslin crossing.



16. **Lesser Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris*
Thousands seen when looking out to sea from any island. Often in large feeding groups up to c100 birds.
Abundantly nesting on Cousin, where some had chicks on the ground.



17. **Common White Tern** *Gygis alba candida*
Common in pairs and small groups noted over all islands.
18. **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus*
10+ on the Mahe-Praslin crossing. 1 on the La Digue-Praslin ferry. Several around Cousin.

19. **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*
30 in all, noted just off Praslin and across to La Digue. Common around Cousin and small groups off Beau Vallon
20. **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*
3 identified near Anse Volbert
21. **Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii*
4, Mahe Jun 26th. 4 Praslin



22. **SEYCHELLES SCOPS-OWL** *Otus insularis* **ENDEMIC**
A pair, Jun 24th 1-2 km below the Tea Plantation on the Sans Souci Rd at c 7.30pm after a short struggle.
One bird responded almost immediately but went quiet after 5 minutes then two birds called back vigorous-



ly and were easily located at eye-level where photod over about 5 mins. Look at the size of those un-feathered feet! Both birds were photod together so were assumed to be a pair. Frog-like barking very distinctive as were the huge feet ! Spectacular close views but not seen or heard when tried for two days later.



Praslin



Mahe

23. **SEYCHELLES KESTREL** *Falco araeus* **ENDEMIC**
 2 birds, Jun 25th with the first at Mahe Airport. 1, 26th and 3 together on the 27th.
 1, Baie Ste Marie 28th.
 1, photod on 30th on our balcony roof at Chalets Cote Mer near the ferry Terminal on Praslin showed rather well before flying off to catch something in a palm tree nearby.
 C another 10 in the Beau Vallon area where dawn and dusk were a good time to hear them usually at the top of a tree. Also 1 in the airport terminal check-in hall making a racket on the last morning.



24. **SEYCHELLES PARROT** *Coracopsis barklyi* **ENDEMIC**
 12+, Jun 28th Baie Ste Marie behind the pharmacy in the evening competing with, and losing to the Flying Foxes
 C20 on 29th in the same area where photod. By walking up the side road opposite Baie Ste Marie Church I got much closer to groups of birds feeding on the fruiting trees near the well-wooded gardens. Often in pairs and usually whistling, they were easy to locate.
 1 at Anse Lazio flying overhead.



25. **SEYCHELLES PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** *Terpsiphone corvine* **ENDEMIC**
C5 pairs, Jun 30th La Veuve Reserve, La Digue. Initially hard to find, they were all around the area immediately behind the roadside information Centre. The females were far more inquisitive than the males and two pairs were seen feeding young at the nest.

26. **House Crow** *Corvus splendens*
1, Jun 26th south of the airport on Mahe.



27. **SEYCHELLES WARBLER** *Acrocephalus sechellensis* **ENDEMIC**

5+ Jun 2nd Cousin around the forested edge and easily pushed or squeaked in.

The birds were very inquisitive and often came in very close to check out the sound.

All birds had various coloured leg rings and were very vocal.

None were seen in the forested interior of the island with all birds being seen along the edge of the trees and beach





28. **SEYCHELLES BULBUL** *Hypsipetes crassirostris* **ENDEMIC**
 8+, Jun 24th and thereafter common on Mahe.
 Common on Praslin and La Digue



29. **SEYCHELLES WHITE-EYE** *Zosterops modestus* **ENDEMIC**
 2, Jun 25th at La Misere along the road by the entrance
 to the gardens. The birds were very inconspicuous,
 calling occasionally but not responding to playback.
 This was the only time they were seen despite three
 other 1+ hour visits.

2. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* **INTRODUCED**
 Common and everywhere except Cousin.





30. **SEYCHELLES MAGPIE-ROBIN** *Copsychus sechellarum*
ENDEMIC 3 pairs Jun 2nd Cousin island.

A huge Magpie-robin acting more like a Pitta as the female (?) crept and strutted about on the forest floor trying to attract the male. (the wife was listening to the tour guide who said that it was the female that made the heart shape with wings held slightly out and chased the male (top and right). Also the red leg ring signified being born on the island. These birds were derived from Fregate importations in the early 1990's.





31. **SEYCHELLES SUNBIRD** *Cinnyris dussumieri* **ENDEMIC**
Abundant on Mahe with 20+ noted first on 24th. Note orange pectoral tufts on the male at La Misere (photo top).
Common on Praslin and La Digue
Several on Cousin (lower photo)
3. **Red Fody** *Foudia madagascariensis* **INTRODUCED**
Abundant on Mahe, Praslin, La Digue



32. **SEYCHELLES FODY** *Foudia sechellarum* **ENDEMIC**
 15+, June 2nd Cousin including 3+ males.
 The best place seemed to be by the welcome shack where
 We entered the forest trail. Difficult to get a photo as the
 birds were constantly on the move from the canopy to the
 forest floor looking for food.



Mammals etc



4. **SEYCHELLES FLYING FOX** *Pteropus seychellensis*. Abundant Mahe, Praslin, La Digue
5. **Brown Rat** 3+ Mahe.
6. **Chameleon sp**, 1 dead on Praslin near Anse Lazio.
7. **ALDABRA GIANT TORTOISE** *Aldabrachelys gigantea* **INTRODUCED**
3 on Cousin Island and pens full of them on Curieuse and at some hotels etc.

NEW SPECIES

Species in **RED** are not currently split by HBW Alive. **BOLD UPPERCASE** are Endemics.

1. **SEYCHELLES SWIFTLET** *Aerodramus elaphrus*
2. **SEYCHELLES BLUE-PIGEON** *Alectroenas pulcherrimus*
3. Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*
4. **SEYCHELLES SCOPS-OWL** *Otus insularis*
5. **SEYCHELLES KESTREL** *Falco araeus*
6. **SEYCHELLES PARROT** *Coracopsis barklyi*
7. **SEYCHELLES PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** *Terpsiphone corvina*
8. **SEYCHELLES WARBLER** *Acrocephalus sechellensis*
9. **SEYCHELLES BULBUL** *Hypsipetes crassirostris*
10. **SEYCHELLES WHITE-EYE** *Zosterops modestus*
11. **SEYCHELLES MAGPIE-ROBIN** *Copsychus sechellarum*
12. **SEYCHELLES SUNBIRD** *Cinnyris dussumieri*
13. **SEYCHELLES FODY** *Foudia sechellarum*