



This fabulous Seychelles Scops Owl was the highlight of our enjoyable holiday (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

THE SEYCHELLES, MAURITIUS & RÉUNION

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The undisputable highlight of our recent tour to these lovely islands was the excellent nocturnal observation of a rare, delightful Seychelles Scops Owl in the hill forest of Mahé. It behaved so very well that it easily won a distinct place in our hearts. The splendidly displaying male Rodrigues Fody also scored very well, as did an endearing, very smart male Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher near his nest on La Digue. All the endemic birds of the archipelago of The Seychelles and of the islands of Mauritius, Réunion and Rodrigues were seen very well, with the exception of the extremely difficult and only rarely observed Mascarene (or Reunion Black) Petrel. Although this is one of our more relaxed tours, we did move around quite a bit, as we visited eight different islands and did several exciting boat trips. These western Indian Ocean islands are a true paradise for western tourists and offer exotic holidays on palm-fringed beaches lapping turquoise seas. They are however also one of the world's main centres for bird extinctions as at least 30 species of birds (and a whole range of reptiles) have gone extinct there since man first visited these wonderful islands just 350 years ago. Everyone knows about the peculiar Dodo and maybe the Rodrigues Solitaire, but who has ever heard of Reunion Kestrel, Reunion Swamphen, Broad-billed Parrot, Mauritian Shelduck, Mauritius Night Heron, Red Rail, Reunion Flightless Ibis, Reunion Owl or Hoopoe Starling? Even today, these islands are home to an astounding number of endangered birds and luckily major conservation efforts are in place to try to save these. On this tour we saw no fewer than 18 bird species which BirdLife International considers as being in serious trouble. On our enjoyable circuit of these friendly, welcoming countries we recorded wonderful birds like Round Island and Barau's Petrels, Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds, Reunion Harrier, the splendid Crab-plover, the enchanting White Tern, Sooty Tern, Pink Pigeon, Seychelles and scarce Mauritius Kestrels, Seychelles Black Parrot, Echo Parakeet, Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher, Seychelles and Rodrigues Warblers, Seychelles Magpie-Robin, Reunion Stonechat and Mauritius and Seychelles Fodies. We found a vagrant Heuglin's Gull on the island of Mahé and also greatly enjoyed our amazing encounters with breaching Humpback Whales and rare, attractive Rodrigues Flying Foxes. A variety of colourful, intriguing skinks and geckos added to the overall experience.



The minute Seychelles Kestrel allowed perfect scope studies; An immature Seychelles Bulbul was found foraging in a fruiting bush
(Mark Van Beirs)

The tour started mid-morning at our hotel on the east coast of Mahé, the main island of The Seychelles archipelago. While driving towards the hills, which were shrouded in clouds, we picked up our first endemic as we managed to scope a well-behaved Seychelles Kestrel sitting on top of a post next to the road. This smallest member of the genus *Falco* gave great, much appreciated looks. After this excellent introduction we explored a nice stretch of quiet, rather open woodland where flashy Madagascar Fodies provided lots of colour and modest Seychelles Sunbirds and raucous Seychelles Bulbuls showed well. Elegant White-tailed Tropicbirds and several adorable White Terns sailed overhead. Gaudy Seychelles Blue Pigeons obliged, but we only heard the distinctive calls of a Seychelles White-eye. We waited, scanned and tried to find this rare

endemic but it didn't want to cooperate... Our picnic lunch was interrupted by another Seychelles Kestrel and a small reservoir gave us several rather distant Seychelles Swiftlets. We drove through the centre of the cosy capital Victoria admiring Little Ben, the statue of Queen Victoria and the famous, colourful Hindu temple. As the tide was high, waders proved hard to find at the regular areas, and only Whimbrel, lots of Western Cattle Egrets and a few Grey Herons were noted. On the drives we also added Malagasy Turtle Dove, Zebra Dove and Common Myna to the list. Several bulky Seychelles Flying Foxes plied the skies, even in the middle of the day. We returned to the hotel for a break in late afternoon and after dinner made our way to the dense forested hills of the Morne Seychellois National Park. Under a starry sky we were soon listening to the gruff calls of the rare Seychelles Scops Owl and after just a little bit of coaxing we obtained terrific looks at this cutie. After a while a second bird appeared and we could witness some nice interaction... fantastic stuff! Only one nest has ever been found of this intriguing endemic.



A nicely perched up Seychelles Black Parrot; A Common Greenshank running along a beach (Mark Van Beirs)

The following morning we returned to the central hills of Mahé and patrolled the area where we had always been lucky with the white-eyes before, and sure enough, after some initial frustrating glimpses and some patient hanging about, we obtained excellent views of the rare and unobtrusive Seychelles White-eye. A pair was found foraging in some low bushes and allowed good looks at their white orbital ring and modest plumage. Seychelles Bulbuls, Red Fodies and beautiful Seychelles Blue Pigeons provided more entertainment. After this success, we drove to the coast where we checked several interesting wader sites. Neptune had arranged good tide conditions this time, so we built up a nice list of noteworthy waders. Best of all were the four splendid, attractive and much wanted Crab-plovers that were sedately foraging on the mudflats. They were accompanied by Grey Plovers, a Lesser Sand Plover, Whimbrels, Ruddy Turnstone, a fast-moving Terek Sandpiper and a couple of Common Greenshanks. We also found a lone Saunders's Tern roosting on a sandbar and identified a first winter Heuglin's Gull, a vagrant to these islands. In late morning we transferred to the airport where we were welcomed by a pair of Seychelles Kestrels in the main hall. A short, exciting flight in a Twin Otter took us to the relaxed island of Praslin. After an excellent lunch and our first views of Seychelles Black Parrots, we visited the famous Vallée de Mai. The walk amongst the amazing Coco de Mer Palms was fascinating and we also found a Giant Bronze Gecko and a colourful Green Day Gecko. We admired and held the astounding seeds of the splendid Coco de Mer Palm (the largest and heaviest seed in the world). In late afternoon we explored the surroundings of our hotel where we scoped a pair of Seychelles Black Parrots and had good looks at several fluttering Seychelles Swiftlets. Enormous, impressive Palm Spiders were all over the place and made quite an impression.



An adult White-tailed Tropicbird on its nest; Several Aldabra Giant Tortoises roam all over the island of Cousin (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

A pre-breakfast stroll along the beach only gave us a Common Greenshank, but a bout of sea watching produced dozens of rather distant Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, good numbers of Lesser Noddies and White Terns, a few Brown Noddies and a single Greater Crested Tern. After a filling breakfast and a bit of waiting on the beach (which yielded four Greater Sand Plovers), we boarded a small boat that took us to the nearby, famous seabird island of Cousin. On our leisurely walk on this seabird paradise, which only covers 27 hectares, we explored the different habitats and admired the fantastic spectacle of thousands upon thousands of breeding Lesser Noddies, hundreds of superbly elegant White-tailed Tropicbirds and dozens of adorable White Terns. All the seabirds here are quite fearless of man, so eye-ball to eye-ball views were the norm. Lumbering Aldabra Giant Tortoises were slowly foraging about and we obtained cracking views of the three passerine specialities of the island. Several unassuming Seychelles Warblers were quietly feeding in the lower canopy. After almost going extinct in the 1960s, major conservation efforts have brought them back



The population of the Seychelles Magpie-Robins is being closely monitored (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

from the brink and they now occur and prosper on several other islands. Drably-coloured Seychelles Fodies were acrobatically gleaning twigs and thin branches in search of insects or hopping about on the ground looking for seeds. Several gorgeous Seychelles Magpie-Robins were found a bit more inland and performed superbly. The numbers of this once very threatened species – the population was down to only 23 birds in 1990 – have now luckily increased somewhat. We walked up to the viewpoint which allowed great looks at flying White-tailed Tropicbirds and Common Noddies. A couple of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were found in covered crannies and several Bridled Terns showed well. A single female Great Frigatebird flew past at eye level. On the walks we encountered lots of endearing downy chicks of White-tailed Tropicbirds and quite a few Common Moorhens. A single Malagasy Turtle Dove sporting a reddish head resembled the original endemic subspecies of this taxon. We also found lots of large Wright's Skinks, fair numbers of Seychelles Skinks and from the boat we had a brief look at a Hawksbill Turtle. A glorious visit!



A Wedge-tailed Shearwater on its nest; Bridled Terns breed on the hill of Cousin (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

The 71 hectare large seabird island of Aride is situated c10km to the north of Praslin and is owned by The Royal Society for Nature Conservation. It holds one of the largest seabird colonies in the Indian Ocean, but access during September is often difficult due to the impressive wave action along the beach. We were lucky again this year and managed to get through the pounding surf without getting wet. The main seabird species on Aride are Sooty Tern and Lesser Noddy. Most of the trees held several nests of Lesser Noddies and all the open areas were inhabited by vociferous Sooty Terns which were attending recently fledged youngsters. Brown Noddies and White-tailed Tropicbirds were all over the place and cute White Terns adorned many of the trees. Cheeky Seychelles Fodies accompanied us on our walk and Seychelles Magpie-Robins escorted us through their respective territories. Seychelles Warblers were also regularly encountered. We were lucky enough to discover a Tropical Shearwater in its shallow burrow, allowing intimate views of this lovely tubenose. We walked till the viewpoint on top of the ridge, where good numbers of Great Frigatebirds and a few Lesser Frigatebirds sailed effortlessly past. Several males sported a bright red inflated gular pouch. After this magnificent walk, we enjoyed a hearty barbeque, had another look around, visited the local shop/museum and all too soon had to return. Getting off the island was a bit of a wet affair, but thanks to the expertise of the local crew and the volunteers we got away relatively unscathed. Our boat took us a few kilometres north of the island where we could admire good numbers of Tropical Shearwaters at close range. Dark morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were also about and we encountered several impressive feeding frenzies of Lesser Noddies and Sooty Terns. We had a look at the impressive frigatebird roost on the steep north slope of Aride where several thousands of these kleptoparasites were garnishing the bushes. Most were Great Frigatebirds, but we identified several Lesser Frigatebirds amongst the hordes. The return journey was smooth and a good variety of seabirds escorted us to Praslin. What an extraordinary day it had been!



The modestly-attired Seychelles Warbler has made a great comeback (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

The following morning, we took the first ferry to the island of La Digue and noted several Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, a couple of feeding flocks containing both Noddy species and small numbers of Sooty, Bridled and White Terns at sea. Upon arrival on peaceful La Digue, we boarded a small truck and got dropped off at the famous La Veuve reserve. Minutes later we had already found an occupied nest of the main target of the day, the magnificent Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher. A female was sitting unconcernedly by our presence on her well-built nest, which was situated at eye level in a small bush. We admired her through the scope and after a bit of waiting a glorious male paid a short visit. Although his tail was not really fully grown, he was really attractive. The blue sheen of his plumage could only be seen as he posed in bright sunlight and the intricate facial markings showed well. As we explored the reserve we found more flycatchers, including several males sporting extremely long tails. A truly glorious endemic! A Black-crowned Night Heron was found on his day roost and a couple of small flocks of Common Waxbills flushed as we walked along the quiet roads. La Digue used to be a lovely relaxed island, but recently lots of building and increasing numbers of visitors have ruined the unique atmosphere it once held. In late morning we transferred to a nice hotel for lunch and after a bit of a break in the heat of the day we returned by ferry to Praslin. In late afternoon we took the short flight to Mahé for our final night in The Seychelles.



A female Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher on her beautiful nest (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

While checking in for the flight to Mauritius we were entertained by a Seychelles Kestrel feeding a hungry fledgling in the airport terminal. After an uneventful flight we landed in Mauritius, where most of the lowlands are covered in sugarcane plantations. The scenic hills have retained some original forest, although many introduced trees have spread widely. Most of the birds in the lowlands are also introduced, so on the short drive we noted Malagasy Turtle, Spotted and Zebra Doves, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Common Myna, House Sparrow, Village Weaver and Yellow-fronted Canary. In the afternoon we explored a forested valley in the southeast of the island. It didn't take too long to find our main target, the delightful Mauritius Kestrel. In the 1970s this species was on the very brink of extinction as there were only four birds remaining! It took some amazing determination and a major conservation effort to slowly increase the population and now several hundred birds again adorn the Mauritian countryside. We obtained cracking scope views of this attractive species and paid particular attention to the unusual, bat-shaped markings on the underparts. The population is sadly again decreasing and is now about 180-200, after having been at a maximum of c1,000 birds in 2005! A worrying situation. Several endemic Pink Pigeons were found in the surroundings, allowing

excellent studies. The Pink Pigeon was at one stage also severely threatened and is still being carefully monitored. On our walk we also observed a gorgeous male Mauritius Fody and several Mauritius Grey White-eyes. Huge Greater Mascarene Flying Foxes were patrolling the skies and we also saw introduced Crab-eating Macaques and Rusa (Javan Deer). On the drive to our hotel we flushed a small covey of introduced Grey Francolins.



The population of the Mauritius Kestrel is declining again; The Mauritius Grey White-eye is the most common endemic of Mauritius
(Mark Van Beirs)

In the morning we explored a forested area and a stretch of nearby coast in the southern part of Mauritius. A bout of sea watching gave us some distant Wedge-tailed and Tropical Shearwaters, but best of all were several rather faraway Humpback Whales. The tell-tale blows of these always impressive leviathans were showing all the time and we also saw them wave their long white flippers and even witnessed a couple of breaches. The forest consisted mainly of introduced trees, so the only indigenous birds were Mauritius Grey White-eyes. Introduced Red-whiskered Bulbuls were incredibly common, as were Spotted Doves and Village Weavers. At the forest edge we had good looks at several dainty Mascarene Swiftlets and a family of Grey Francolins. In late morning we transferred to the airport and took a flight east to the small island of Rodrigues, where we landed in mid-afternoon. On the way to our hotel, we stopped in a forested valley in the middle of the island and it only took a few minutes to obtain fantastic views of the two Rodrigues endemics. Several modestly-plumaged Rodrigues Warblers were flitting about in the trees and bushes and showed very well. A brightly-coloured male Rodrigues Fody was displaying continuously to his humble female and performed brilliantly. Overhead we saw several lovely Rodrigues Flying Foxes. These once very threatened animals have obviously made a terrific comeback thanks to the efforts of the Jersey Zoo. We also found Common Waxbill here. After this successful outing we drove to our hotel and enjoyed a relaxed evening.



The two endemic birds of Rodrigues performed very well: Rodrigues Fody and Rodrigues Warbler (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Next morning, another visit to the Solitude valley produced more splendid views of the two endemic passerines. Bright Rodrigues Fodies were showing off in front of us and were dancing fervently, while a party of Rodrigues Warblers were very actively playing about in the nearby vegetation. Afterwards we visited the nature reserve of Grande Montagne which holds a magnificent collection of endemic trees, bushes and plants. We took a guided walk through the reserve and learned about the sad demise and the successful comeback of the endemic flora. The nicely arranged museum told the tragic story of the seven endemic bird species that have disappeared from the island in the 17th and 18th century (a rail, two parrots, two pigeons, a night heron and the famous Solitaire, of which bones of a recently discovered bird in a nearby cave were displayed). We returned to the hotel for lunch, said goodbye to this lovely island and took the afternoon flight to Mauritius. Upon arrival we transferred to our strategically situated base on the west coast.



Several Mauritius Bulbuls and a single male Mauritius Cuckooshrike were found in the Black River Gorges National Park (tour participant Rainer Kopa)



The female Echo Parakeet is easily identified by her black bill (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

The Black River Gorges National Park protects a forested valley and surrounding ridges in the southwest of Mauritius. Most of the original forest has sadly disappeared and some restoration projects are ongoing to try to re-establish the indigenous woodland. We spent the morning on a lovely track offering good views over the gorge. A male Mauritius Fody was singing its heart out in a treetop and several noisy Mauritius Bulbuls offered excellent looks. We heard several Echo Parakeets before we managed to find a perched bird, which was duly scoped. The subtle differences compared to the introduced Ring-necked Parakeet were appreciated. Later we saw several more of these endemic parakeets at close range. About 700 of this once much-threatened species now roam the island. We heard the distinctive song of the endemic Mauritius Cuckooshrike in the distance and eventually found a cooperative male foraging in the mid canopy at the edge of the track. Very attractive Blue-tailed Skinks showed beautifully on the introduced Traveller's Trees (Ravenala). All but one of the Mauritian landbirds were in the proverbial bag, so we made our way to the

northernmost tip of the island to board a boat which took us to the famous offshore seabird paradise of Round and Serpent Island. The god of the ocean must have been in a very good mood as the sea was unusually smooth. Not much was moving till we reached Round Island, which has a surface of 169 hectares and whose highest top reaches 280 meters. The only obvious vegetation consists of small palms. Hundreds upon hundreds of graceful, gleaming white Red-tailed Tropicbirds were patrolling the cliffs and the nearby ocean. Pairs were performing their lovely aerial displays all over the island. We were told numbers reach a maximum in November when several thousand pairs occupy this tiny dot of land! The most interesting species on the island was the Round Island Petrel, of which we observed both pale and dark morphs. Small numbers were zooming over the highest ridges and several birds approached our boat for excellent looks. It has now been established that the Round Island Petrel complex comprises three very hard to differentiate taxa, making for a very complicated taxonomic situation!! After obtaining great looks at the tropicbirds and the petrels we sailed to nearby Serpent Island which has a totally different avifauna. Several thousand pairs of Sooty Terns breed here and fair numbers of Masked Boobies were dotted all over this bare piece of rock. Brown and Lesser Noddies also showed well. On the return sail, we were lucky enough to encounter several Humpback Whales, which gave quite a show. Half a dozen of these impressive mammals obliged by showing off their long flippers, their knobbly back and their impressive fluke! Indo-pacific Bottlenose and Spinner Dolphins provided even more entertainment. A great end of an action-filled day!



Hundreds of gorgeous Red-tailed Tropicbirds were patrolling over Round Island (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

We started our final morning on Mauritius at the edge of the Black River Gorges National Park, where in a stretch of well-preserved forest we managed to observe a couple of Mauritius Olive White-eyes within minutes of arriving. The last Mauritius endemic had surrendered! We were exceedingly lucky, as this unobtrusive species is not doing very well at all. BirdLife International has now changed its status to Critically Endangered! A golf course has recently been built in the remaining core area, and this has obviously had a drastic effect on the already small population! Good numbers of Mascarene Swiftlets could be observed foraging low over a crater lake. A nearby area gave us cracking looks at a very smart Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher. Mauritius Fodies were performing well and several Pink Pigeons obliged at length. Later we obtained more excellent, eye-ball to eye-ball looks at a showy Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher. At a giant statue of the Indian god Shiva we saw several Mascarene Martins inspecting possible nesting opportunities

at a strategic spot under the folds of his garb! At midday we drove to the airport, waved goodbye to Mauritius and flew to the nearby island of Réunion, which radiates a totally different atmosphere.



Both Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher and Reunion Stonechat showed well on our walk in the highlands of Réunion (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

The maquis-like, scrubby highland woodland of the La Roche Écrite Reserve is situated in the northern part of the island and harbours all the endemic passerines of Réunion. On our splendid walk under sunny skies we first encountered small flocks of cute Reunion Grey and attractive Reunion Olive White-eyes. Several Reunion Stonechats obliged ever so well and allowed very close approach. It took a while to find the Reunion Bulbul and eventually we had good looks at its gleaming white eyes. Several Mascarene Paradise Flycatchers were seen well, but the most difficult endemic proved to be the rare, threatened Reunion



Several Humpback Whales showed off their breaching prowess close to the coast in southern Réunion (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Cuckooshrike. We had to walk a couple of kilometres along a well laid out trail before we heard the distinctive voice of the Touit Touit. Only c30 pairs of this Critically Endangered species survive and luckily we managed to obtain good looks at a male at the edge of an open area. A happy group returned to the hotel for a break and in the afternoon we drove to our favourite seawatching venue where we spent the final hours of the day. Good numbers of beautifully-marked Barau's Petrels were zigzagging over the nearby breakers and lots of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters zoomed over the sea. Tropical Shearwaters proved reasonably common. When dusk was approaching the Barau's Petrels approached the coast and gave terrific views. Several were seen flying inland to their inaccessible haunts high on the steep slopes of the volcano. When the sun was almost gone, the famous green flash showed brilliantly.

On the final morning of the tour we drove up to the famous viewpoint at the Piton de Maïdo at an altitude of more than 2200 m. The views into the crater were indeed quite staggering. Good numbers of rather tame Reunion Stonechats were perched up on the bushes and the flowering gorse (introduced, of course) made the dramatic scenery a bit more welcoming. On the drive down several Reunion Harriers showed quite well as they were quartering over the forest. A fitting end to a very enjoyable tour!



Barau's Petrels breed in good numbers in the mountains of Réunion (tour participant Rainer Kopa)



The charming White Tern is often very approachable (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

CR = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

Grey Francolin (introduced) *Francolinus pondicerianus* Several nice observations on Mauritius.

Trindade Petrel ◊ (Round Island P) *Pterodroma arminjoniana* V Great looks around and over Round Island.

Barau's Petrel ◊ *Pterodroma barau* E Hundreds showed very well on our seawatch off SW Réunion.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* Many encounters, both at sea and on land. All were dark morphs.

Tropical Shearwater ◊ *Puffinus bailloni* Regular off Aride and Réunion. Also at the nest on Aride.

Red-tailed Tropicbird ◊ *Phaethon rubricauda* Fantastic encounters with hundreds at Round Island.



White-tailed Tropicbirds (Mark Van Beirs)

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* Regular at all the visited islands. Gorgeous chicks on Cousin and Aride.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A single adult was seen on La Digue.

Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Regular, but not seen on Réunion.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Quite common on Mahé (Seychelles).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers were noted on Mahé (Seychelles).

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* Hundreds were seen well on Aride. Some males showed off their inflated pouches.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Small numbers were noted on Aride.

Masked Booby ◊ *Sula dactylatra* 60+ birds were observed on Serpent Island (Mauritius).

Reunion Harrier ◊ *Circus maillardi* E Good looks at several on our final day on Réunion.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Regularly seen in The Seychelles.

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* Five of these attractive waders were scoped on Mahé (Seychelles).

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* A handful of sightings on Mahé (Seychelles).

Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian P) *Charadrius mongolus* A single bird was identified on Mahé (Seychelles).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultia* Several showed well on Praslin (Seychelles).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* A few encounters.



Curlew Sandpiper; Lesser Noddy (Mark Van Beirs)

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* This migrant showed at several venues, even on inhospitable Serpent Island.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* NT Good looks at several on Mahé and Praslin (Seychelles).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* A single bird was scoped on Mahé (Seychelles).

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Several encounters.

Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's) Gull *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* A 1st winter bird was scoped on Mahé (Seychelles).

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Regular on the seabird islands.

Lesser Noddy ♦ *Anous tenuirostris* The most common seabird of the tour.

White Tern *Gygis alba* The most adorable bird of the tour! Many fantastic observations at close range.



Sooty Tern (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* A single bird was seen on Praslin (Seychelles).
Saunders's Tern ♦ *Sternula saundersi* A roosting bird was scoped on Mahé (Seychelles).
Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Small numbers were noted in The Seychelles and off Mauritius.
Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* Common and noisy on Aride (Seychelles) and Serpent Island (Mauritius).
Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*
Malagasy Turtle Dove ♦ (introduced) *Nesoenas picturatus* Common and obvious on all the visited islands.
Pink Pigeon ♦ *Nesoenas mayeri* E Regular encounters in the forests of Mauritius.
Spotted Dove (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis* Regular.
Zebra Dove (introduced) *Geopelia striata* Very common on all the major islands.
Seychelles Blue Pigeon ♦ *Alectroenas pulcherrimus* A handful of nice views in The Seychelles.



Pink Pigeon (Mark Van Beirs); Echo Parakeet (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Seychelles Scops Owl ♦ *Otus insularis* E THE BIRD OF THE TOUR! Terrific looks in the Mahé forest.
Seychelles Swiftlet ♦ *Aerodramus elaphrus* V Small numbers were seen on Mahé and Praslin.



A male Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Mascarene Swiftlet ♦ *Aerodramus francicus* NT Regular encounters on Mauritius and Réunion.
Mauritius Kestrel ♦ *Falco punctatus* E Excellent scope studies of this threatened species on Mauritius.
Seychelles Kestrel ♦ *Falco araeus* V Great looks at this cute endemic on Mahé (Seychelles).
Seychelles Black Parrot ♦ *Coracopsis barklyi* V Regular around our hotel on Praslin (Seychelles).
Rose-ringed Parakeet (introduced) *Psittacula kramera* (H) We heard one at the airport on Mauritius.
Echo Parakeet ♦ (Mauritius P) *Psittacula eques* E Perfect looks at male and female in the highlands of Mauritius.
Mauritius Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina typica* V A male showed very well in the Black River Gorges NP (Mauritius).
Reunion Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina newtoni* E Good looks at a male on our walk to La Roche Écrite (Réunion).
Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher ♦ *Terpsiphone corvina* CR Fantastic looks at this beauty near the nest on La Digue.
Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher ♦ *Terpsiphone bourbonnensis* We saw it very well on Mauritius and on Réunion.
House Crow (introduced) *Corvus splendens* Just a few were noted on Mauritius
Red-whiskered Bulbul (introduced) *Pycnonotus jocosus* Much too common on most visited islands.
Seychelles Bulbul ♦ *Hypsipetes crassirostris* Good looks on several islands in The Seychelles.
Reunion Bulbul ♦ *Hypsipetes borbonicus* NT This white-eyed endemic eventually showed well in the highlands.
Mauritius Bulbul ♦ (M Black B) *Hypsipetes olivaceus* V Several nice observations in the Black River Gorges NP.
Mascarene Martin ♦ *Phedina borbonica* Seen at Shiva's statue on Mauritius and at the Piton de Maïdo on Réunion.
Seychelles Warbler ♦ *Acrocephalus sechellensis* NT Many excellent encounters on Cousin and Aride (Seychelles).
Rodrigues Warbler ♦ *Acrocephalus rodericanus* NT Several performed very well in the hills of Rodrigues.



Reunion Olive White-eye (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Reunion Olive White-eye ♦ *Zosterops olivaceus* This smart endemic showed very well on our walks on Réunion.

Reunion Grey White-eye ♦ *Zosterops borbonicus* Delightfully common in the highlands of Réunion.

Mauritius Grey White-eye ♦ *Zosterops mauritianus* This lovely endemic showed well all over Mauritius.

Seychelles White-eye ♦ *Zosterops modestus* V It took a bit of effort, but eventually we had excellent looks at two!

Mauritius Olive White-eye ♦ *Zosterops chloronothos* CR Two showed at the edge of the Black River Gorges NP.

Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis* All too common and noisy.

Seychelles Magpie-Robin ♦ *Copsychus sechellarum* E Cracking views of well-behaved birds on Cousin and Aride.

Reunion Stonechat ♦ (Tek-Tek) *Saxicola tectes* Common and so approachable in the Réunion highlands.



Seychelles Sunbird; a female Reunion Stonechat (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

Seychelles Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris dussumieri* Regular on all the islands in The Seychelles.

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Common.

Village Weaver (introduced) (Black-headed W) *Ploceus cucullatus* Fairly common on Mauritius and Réunion.

Red Fody ♦ (introduced) (Madagascar F) *Foudia madagascariensis* Very common, especially in The Seychelles.

Mauritius Fody ♦ *Foudia rubra* E Several males obliged beautifully in the Mauritius highlands.

Seychelles Fody ♦ *Foudia sechellarum* NT Common and well-behaved on Cousin and Aride (Seychelles).

Rodrigues Fody ♦ *Foudia flavicans* NT Amazing eye-ball to eye-ball studies of this pretty bird in the Rodrigues hills.

Common Waxbill (introduced) *Estrilda astrild* Several observations.

Yellow-fronted Canary (introduced) *Crithagra mozambica* A few were noted on Mauritius and on Réunion.



The majestic fluke of a diving Humpback Whale (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

MAMMALS

Crab-eating Macaque (introduced) *Macaca fascicularis* Several sightings of this destructive monkey on Mauritius.

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris* A few were seen while at sea off Mauritius.

Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* c15 showed well at sea off Mauritius.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* Cracking looks at sea off Mauritius and along the Réunion coast.

Rusa (Javan Deer) *Cervus timorensis* We saw several in the southeast of Mauritius.

Greater Mascarene Flying Fox *Pteropus niger* Regular observations on Mauritius.

Rodrigues Flying Fox *Pteropus rodricensis* This attractive species gave brilliant views on Rodrigues.

Seychelles Flying Fox *Pteropus seychellensis* Common and quite impressive all over The Seychelles.



Rodrigues Flying Fox (Mark Van Beirs); Serpent Island (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

REPTILES

Blue-tailed Gecko (B-t Day G) *Phelsuma cepediana* Regularly noted on the Ravenala trees on Mauritius.

Green Day Day Gecko (Seychelles D G) *Phelsuma astriata* Several were seen on Praslin.

Bronze-eyed Gecko (Seychelles Bronze G) *Ailuronyx seychellensis* Good looks on several islands.

Giant Bronze Gecko *Ailuronyx trachygaster* A single showed well in the Vallée de Mai (Praslin).

Seychelles Skink *Trachylepis seychellensis* Regular encounters on several islands in The Seychelles.

Wright's Skink *Trachylepis wrightii* Common on the seabird islands of Cousin and Aride (Seychelles).

Panther Chameleon *Furcifer pardalis* (NL) Hannes saw one of these introduced reptiles on Réunion.

Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* One was briefly observed off Cousin (Seychelles).

Aldabra Giant Tortoise *Aldabrachelys gigantea* Introduced animals were seen on several islands in The Seychelles.



Wright's Skink (tour participant Rainer Kopa); Blue-tailed Gecko (Mark Van Beirs)



La Digue scenery (tour participant Rainer Kopa)

BIRD OF THE TRIP

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Seychelles Scops Owl | 33 points |
| 2. Rodrigues Fody | 15 points |
| 3. Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher | 9 points |
| 4. Echo Parakeet | 8 points |
| White-tailed Tropicbird | 8 points |



White Terns are very obliging photographic subjects (Mark Van Beirs)



The unique seed of the Coco de Mer; Palm Spider (Mark Van Beirs)



On the boat to Round Island (Mark Van Beirs)



Tropical Shearwater; Red-tailed Tropicbird (Mark Van Beirs)



A gorgeous White Tern with its chick (tour participant Rainer Kopa)