

Seychelles Bird Records Committee

Annual Report for 2023

Compiled by Adrian Skerrett, from assessments by SBRC committee members : Michael Betts, John Bowler, Ian Bullock, Tony Disley, Rob Lucking and Craig Nisbet

The year in figures:

- This report covers sixty-one reports of vagrant species received and circulated to Seychelles Bird Records Committee members in six batches in 2023 plus a batch of eleven vagrant reports carried forward from 2022 to 2023.
- Seven of these 72 reports were not accepted (four identified by SBRC as annual migrants, two as a breeding species and one classified as unproven due to lack of detail).
- Seven reports were identified by SBRC as a species other than the one being reported, but still a good vagrant record.
- Three reports submitted as unidentified were duly identified as vagrants by SBRC.
- There were reports from Mahe (13), Farquhar (13), Alphonse (7), Coëtivy (6), Desroches (5), Praslin (3), Cousine (2), Cosmoledo (2), Platte (2), Aldabra, Astove, Silhouette, St Francois, Remire, Bancs Providence, D'Arros, Denis, Bird, Cousin, Frégate, Poivre and 7 reports at sea.
- Two new species for Seychelles were recorded, American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* and Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* bringing the total number of species recorded in Seychelles to 285.

Thanks to the following lead observers and photographers in chronological order of circulation: Eric Dempsey, Chris Narty, Peter Kaestner, Simon Colenutt, Alexey Pavlushkin, Alexandra Kolmaer, Philip Lymbery, George Curd, Elena Levorato, William McNeely, Gail Fordham, Francis Godley, Annie Gendron, Michael Betts, Steve Agricole, Nasreen Khan, Annabelle Cupidon, Christophe Gouraud, Steve Agricole, David Tipling, Steve Lebon, Peter Bono, Melissa Schulze, Simon Buckingham, Graeme Risdon, Jake Letori, Chris Feare, Adrian Skerrett, Nikita Pothin, Girish Menon, Robert Mileto, Stuart Morton, Guillaume Calcagni, Kaeleah Andrew, Detlef Strencke, James Savage, Henriette Grimmel, Dominique Dina, Greg Berke, Olivier Coucelos, Joe Cockram, Graeme Risdon, Mike Sylvia and Tammy Godding.

Also, special thanks to Island Conservation Society, Seychelles Islands Foundation, Islands Development Company, Save our Seas Foundation - D'Arros Research Centre, Denis Island, Cousine Conservation and ebird.org.

The following records have been accepted:

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*



Photos: Elena Levorato & Annabelle Cupidon (above); Girish Menon (right)

One adult, probably male, at Bombay Beach and the IDC village, Desroches on 22-23 October 2022 (E. Levorato, A. Cupidon, W. McNeely).

One 2cy near the airstrip, Coëtivy on 5-6 January 2023 (G. G. Menon).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 77

Cuculus sp.

One at western Alphonse on 22 December 2022 (G. Fordham).

Number of Seychelles records in this category to 31 December 2023: 36

Common Swift *Apus apus*

One at the IDC village and the tortoise sanctuary, Desroches on 23 November 2022 (A. Cupidon).

Photo: Anabelle Cupidon

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 51



Lesser Moorhen *Paragallinula angulata*



One immature at the airstrip, Rémire on 25 February to 5 March 2023 (C. Gouraud).

Photo: Christophe Gouraud

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 3

American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*



One adult at Northeast Point marsh, Mahe on 23-30 September 2022 (F. Godley).

American Purple Gallinule breeds southeast USA & central America, resident or migrant to South America. It is vagrant to Canada, Galapagos, Tierra del Fuego, Britain, Portugal, Cape Verde and Cape Province, South Africa. *This is the first record for Seychelles and the world's most easterly record*

Photo: Francis Godley

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*

One adult non-breeding between the Coastguard accommodation and the coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar on 15 December 2023 (W. McNeely and E. Levorato).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 20

Photo: Elena Levorato and William McNeely



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

One at Lemuria Resort, Praslin on 15 September 2000 (S. Buckingham).
Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 13.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*



One adult non-breeding at the airstrip, Coëtivy on 20-21 November 2023 (G. Menon).

Photo: Girish Menon

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 3

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*



Photos top left to bottom right: adult non-breeding, adult male non-breeding, adult female non-breeding; William McNeely & Elena Levorato

One adult non-breeding at the IDC village, North Island, Farquhar on 11 September 2023 (W. McNeely, E. Levorato).

One non-breeding adult female at the IDC village, North Island, Farquhar on 29 November 2023 (W. McNeely, E. Levorato).

One adult non-breeding male between the Coastguard accommodation and the coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar on 15 December 2023 (W. McNeely and E. Levorato).
Number of

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 44

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*



One adult at the airstrip, Bird Island on 20-21 September 2023 (R. Mileto, G. Jessie and 11 Naturetrek guests including S. Morton).

Photo: Stuart Morton

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 8

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

One on Cousin on 20 March 2023 (S. Agricole).

Photo: Steve Agricole

Considered an annual visitor until December 2015; 16 subsequent records to 31 December 2023



Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*



Six pratincoles including at least two Oriental and one Collared at the airstrip, Coëtivy on 15 October 2023 to 05 November 2023 (G. G. Menon).

Photo: Girish Menon



Two adults at the Cosmic Lagoon, St Francois on 10 November 2023 (K. Andrew).

Photo: Kaeleah Andrew/ICS



Two pratincoles including at least one Collared at the airstrip, D'Arros on 22 November 2023 (H. Grimmel, R. Bullock).

Photo: Henriette Grimmel

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 36.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*



Two adults at the airstrip, Alphonse on 11 November 2023 (K. Andrew, J. Coupland, C. Narty).

Photo; Kaeleah Andrew/ICS



One 1cy at Farquhar on 13 November to 4 December 2023 (E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

Photo: William McNeely



Six pratincoles including at least two Oriental and one Collared at the airstrip, Coëtivy on 15th October 2023 to 05 November 2023 (G. G. Menon).

Photo: Girish Menon



Two non-breeding adults between the Coastguard accommodation and the coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar on 15-18 December 2023 (W. McNeely and E. Levorato).

Photo: William McNeely

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 32

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* or Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

One at Seychelles International Airport, Mahe on 20 November 2023 (G. Calcagni)

Number of Seychelles records in this category to 31 December 2023: 4



**Black-winged Pratincole
*Glareola nordmanni***

One adult breeding at the airstrip, Alphonse on 5-25 April 2022 (C. Narty, A. Gendron).

Photo: Chris Narty



Four at the coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar 4-22 November 2022 (A. Gendron).

Photo: Annie Gendron



One adult at Menai, Cosmoledo 6-10 April 2023 (D. Tipling).

Photo David Tipling

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 27

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*



One at 7.42384°S, 50.30574°E (about 250 nautical miles east northeast of Aldabra) on 13 May 2022 (P. Kaestner).

Photo: Peter Kaestner

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 10 (including 4 geolocator records)

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*



One adult at 7.77563°S, 43.90488°E (about 167 nautical miles northwest of Aldabra) on 5 November 2023 (J. Cockram).

Photo: Joe Cockram

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 2

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*



One, probably 2cy, at Victoria harbour, Mahe on 19-26 February 1995 (G. Risdon).

The nominate race of this species is resident in South America. *C. c. poiocephalus* breeds at scattered locations in sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar. It disperses throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

This is the first record for Seychelles.

Photo: Graeme Risdon

There is a published report from Farquhar that pre-dates the formation of SBRC in the Feare & Watson chapter on migrant birds in Stoddart's *Biogeography and Ecology of the Seychelles Islands*. Unfortunately, the original report cannot be traced for assessment.

SBRC has accepted 6 records as “Black-/Grey-/Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus/cirrocephalus/ brunnicephalus*”.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*



One adult breeding *C. h. delalandii* at Point Dot, Alphonse on 11 December 2023 (K. Andrew).

This is the first Seychelles record in breeding plumage.

C. h. delalandii breeds in southern and eastern Africa and in Madagascar.

Photo: Kaeleah Andrew/ICS

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023:10

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* and Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi*

Six *Sternula* terns including at least four Little Terns and one Saunders's Tern at South Island, Poivre on 5 December 2017 (M. Betts).



**Four Little Terns (two left & two right) & one Saunders's Tern (centre).
Photo: Michael Betts**

Feare and Bourne (1978) identified the first arrivals and late departures of small terns observed at Bird Island in 1972, 1973 and 1976 as Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi*. Since then, the consensus has been that Saunders's is the default option for small terns observed in non-breeding plumage in Seychelles. It was also assumed that Saunders's Tern and Little Tern are virtually indistinguishable in non-breeding plumage due to overlapping features. SBRC examined specimens at Tring Natural History Museum at its 2004 Annual Meeting and minutes record that "...it was considered that it was not possible to safely separate Little Tern and Saunders's Tern in winter plumage". However, Oscar Campbell and Killian Mullarney (2022) published new criteria. It transpires that museum specimens have been confused and need to be re-assessed.

Re-assessment of sightings throughout Seychelles is on-going. Meanwhile, it can be said the conventional view that Saunders's Tern is a fairly common annual migrant throughout Seychelles and Little Tern as a rare vagrant is no longer valid. The current evidence suggests that Little Tern is an annual migrant in the granitic islands, but Saunders's Tern has been recorded. The situation in the outer islands is reversed with Saunders's Tern an annual migrant and Little Tern considerably less common. On Bird Island so far, only Saunders's Tern has been recorded.

SBRC is appealing for photographs from throughout Seychelles in order to make a more accurate assessment.

Mullarney, K. and Campbell, O. 2022. Identification of Saunders's Tern and Little Tern, with special emphasis on juvenile and winter plumages. *Dutch Birding* 44: 165-198,

Feare, C.J. and Bourne, W.R.P. 1977. The occurrence of "Portlandica" Little Terns and absence of Damara Terns and British Storm Petrels in the Indian Ocean. *Ostrich* 49: 64-66.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

One adult at the north beach, Denis Island on 14 July 2023 (C. J. Feare).



Photos: Red-tailed Tropicbird at Cosmoledo 19 July 2023 (left) and 12 September 2023 (right). Jake Letori

One race *indicus* at Grand Ile, Cosmoledo on 19 July 2023 (J. Letori, A. Hector).

One at Grand Ile, Cosmoledo, possibly the same individual as previous record, on 12 September 2023 (J. Letori, A. Hector).



One adult at the beach, Platte on 18 August 2023 and presumably the same individual 1 November 2023 (D. Dina).

Photo: Dominique Dina

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 18

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*



Twelve on a track heading southeast about 10-20 nautical miles south of Desroches on 12 May 2022 (6 seen at 6.47am; 5 at 7.48am; 1 at 9.03am) (P. Kaestner).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 8

Photo: Peter Kaestner

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui*



One at 7.42384°S, 50.30574°E (about 250 nautical miles east northeast of Aldabra) on 13 May 2022 (P. Kaestner).

One at 9.05418°S, 49.389265°E (about 170 nautical miles east of Aldabra) on 20 May 2022 (P. Kaestner).

One off Bancs Providence on 8 May 2023 (A. P. Skerrett, G. Savy, B. Georges).

Photo: Peter Kaestner

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 11; these are the first sight records, the previous 8 being geolocator records.



Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*.

One at 10.18827°S, 51.19889°E (2 nautical miles east of Farquhar) on 13 March 2023 (C. Gouraud). Accepted with caveat re 'Comoros Petrel'.

This is the 2nd Seychelles record of this species with a caveat;

Photo: Christophe Gouraud

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 2

14 records have been accepted as *Bulweria sp.*

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One, probably juvenile, at the beach North Island, Farquhar on 12-22 December 2022 (W. McNeely, E. Levorato).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 3 south of the Amirantes (annual to Amirantes and eastward).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*



One adult breeding at Frégate on 14 May to 25 June 2022 (A. Kolmaer, M. Hellicar).

Photo: Aleksandra Kolmaer



One adult non-breeding at Ton Mark's, Northeast Point, Mahe on 11-20 November 2023 (A. P. Skerrett, S. Agricole and 2 cruiseship passengers).

Photo: Adrian Skerrett

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 22

Indian Pond-heron *Ardeola grayii*



One at the marsh, Kempinski Resort, Mahe on 12-24 July 2022 (P. Lymbery, H. Lymbery)

Photo: Philip Lymbery



One adult at the marsh, Kempinski Resort, Mahe on 5 October 2022; possibly the same individual as above (P. Bono)

Photo: Peter Bono



One adult non-breeding at Kempinski Seychelles Lodge, Baie Lazare, Mahe on 11 September 2023 (J. Savage, R. Mileto, G. Jessie and 10 Naturetrek guests).

Photo: James Savage



One at the swamp/solar site, Cousine on 4-14 December 2023 (T. Godding, C. Marques).

Photo: Tammy Godding

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 13

Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae*

One non-breeding adult or immature at the airport road, Astove on 23 April 2023 (J. Letori, A. Hector).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 10 east of Aldabra

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*



Three at the IDC village and coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar on 15 March to 4 April 2023 (A. Gendron, E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

Photo: Elena Levorato and William McNeely



One adult non-breeding near the air-strip, Coëtivy on 1 November 2023 (G. G. Menon).

Photo Girish Menon

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 15

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One at Anse a la Mouche, Mahe 23 January 2022 to 5 March 2023 (G. Berke).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 7

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*



One at Platte on 17 December 2023 (D. Dina).

Photo: Dominique Dina

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 10

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*



**Photos: North island (left), Banc de Sable (right);
Willian McNeely**

One adult at the forest edge near the coconut plantation, North Island, Farquhar on 4 December 2023 (E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

One at Banc de Sable, Farquhar on 26 December 2023 (E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 36 east of Aldabra group, where it is an annual visitor.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*



One female or 1cy at the air-strip, Desroches on 25-27 November 2023 (N. Khan, J. Poynton).

Photo: Nasreen Khan

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 15

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*



One adult female at the west of Bancs du Sable, Farquhar on 29 November 2023 (E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

Photo: William McNeely

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 6 in southern atolls and islands (annual visitor to the Amirantes and eastward).

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*



One 1cy at Alphonse on 22 December 2022 (G. Curd).

One 2cy on Cousine Island on 4 January 2023 (M. J. Schulze).

**Photos: George Curd (above);
Melissa Schultze (right)**

*Number of Seychelles records to 31
December 2023: 57*



Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*



One 1cy at Ton Mark's marsh, Northeast Point, Mahe on 26 November 2022 (S. Agricole).

Photo: Steve Agricole

*Number of Seychelles
records to 31 December
2023: 35*



Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

One at the north end of the airstrip, Alphonse on 3 May 2023 (C. Narty).

Photo: Chris Narty

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 51

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*



One female or immature at the Settlement, Picard, Aldabra on 1-2 May 2023 (N. Pothin, A. Cupidon).

Photo: Annabelle Cupidon

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 8



**Western Yellow
Wagtail *Motacilla
flava***

One at the airstrip,
Alphonse on 28
April 2022 (G.
Curd).

**Photo: George
Curd**



Two including at
least one Icy at the
airstrip, Coëtivy on
3-4 December
2023 (G. G.
Menon).

**Photo Girish
Menon**

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 67

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

One at Baie Cipailles, Silhouette on 22 November 2022 (N. Khan).

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 41

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*



One probably adult at the airstrip, Desroches on 24-30 January 2022 (E. Levorato, W. McNeely).

Photo: William McNeely

Number of Seychelles records to 31 December 2023: 54