

reached in a couple of hours of scrambling and climbing over guano-covered ledges and cliffs.

The highest of the rocks is about 100 m high and not much more than that wide, several times as long. The rocks were practically without a real covering of vegetation. A sparse growth made up of *Cyperus*, *Bidens*, *Digitaria* and *Portulaca* was present on the non-perpendicular slopes and ledges, almost luxuriant in favorable spots. In the crevices in the rocks *Asplenium*, *Nephrolepis*, and *Cheilanthes* formed tufts. *Solanum nigrum* was present here and there. *Lycium* was seen on the lowest slopes, and a prostrate *Euphorbia* formed mats on one slope on one end of the island. A sterile rosette of *Sonchus* was seen.

Some of the rocks were sparsely covered with lichens. A sterile moss was occasional around seeps. These seeps were evidently highly charged with lime or some other substance that crystallized out around the cracks.

Under the plants and stones was a remarkably large fauna of insects, spiders, centipedes, and isopods. Of the last, 3 species occurred under stones and a species of *Ligia* ran around over rocks, collecting in numbers under overhanging rocks. At least 1 species of centipede, 4 or 5 of spiders, 1 or 2 of ticks, 2 of mites, 1 of *Lepisma*, 1 of *Machilis*, 2 of Collembola, 1 cricket, 1 or 2 of ants, 1 lygeid, 4 species of *Rhynchogonus*, and 1 other weevil all lived under stones and plants. Two or 3 kinds of flies and 2 of moths were seen flying. A louse fly (*Olfersia* sp.?) was abundant on shearwaters.

Birds were more than abundant, but nearly all belonged to a species of gray tern and 2 or 3 of shearwater. A couple of white-tailed tropic birds were seen. The shearwaters were nesting and eggs and young were abundant on small ledges and between tufts of sedges. Burrowing would be difficult here.

The rock is composed of more or less bedded basalt, forming a high core in the center, and the two ends are capped with tilted beds of what is probably tuff (described as "apparently sedimentary rock" in my notes at the time).

No coral was seen. Encrusting calcareous algae colored the lower rocks. Non-calcareous algae were reasonably abundant but badly beaten to pieces by wave action. The waves, even at the "quiet" period of our visit, were several meters high, making landing hazardous, to say the least. Acorn barnacles and chitons were seen on the lower rocks.

Fish of many kinds were abundant in the area and many were caught while the ship cruised around the area near the rock while we worked.

SOME LAND BIRD MIGRANTS IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN

by C.W. Benson

Mr. H.H. Beamish has shown me a colour slide of a bird photographed by him in November 1970 on African Banks, Amirante Islands, at ca. 5°S, 53°E (for an account of the geography and ecology see Stoddart & Poore, ARB 136: 187-191, 1970). Undoubtedly the bird is a *Phylloscopus* species, and on geographical grounds by far the most likely is the Willow Warbler, *P. trochilus*, from which the bird on the slide was indistinguishable. On the African mainland this species is abundant during the palaeartic winter, even reaching as far south as South Africa (Mackworth-Praed & Grant, African handbook of birds, Ser. I, Vol. 2: 1955). According to the same authors, the Chiff-Chaff, *P. collybita*, not certainly distinguishable on the evidence of this slide from *P. trochilus*, migrates almost as far south as the equator, but its occurrence on African Banks seems extremely unlikely. As far as I am aware, this is the first record of a palaeartic breeding sylviid from any island in the western Indian Ocean south of the equator. Indeed

Ripley and Bond (Smiths. Misc. Coll'ns. 151(7): 1966) do not even give any such record from Socotra, although they quote single old records each of *P. collybita* and the Whitethroat, *Sylvia communis*, from Abd-el-Kuri, between Socotra and Cape Guardafui.

Among records of birds received by the Royal Society from J.A. Stevenson on Aldabra, copies of which were transmitted to me by D. Griffin, the following from West Island should be mentioned:

Eurystomus glaucurus, Broad-billed Roller: One seen at 15:00 hrs. on 20 October 1970. Benson and Penny (Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. B260: 517, 1971) give but few records from Aldabra and neighbouring islands.

Oenanthe oenanthe, European Wheatear: One seen at 15:00 hrs. on Wed. 27 January 1971, with a note that there had been a cyclone the previous week. What was presumably the same individual was seen again on 1 and 5 February 1971. Benson and Penny (*op. cit.*: 519) suggest that this species may winter regularly on Aldabra in very small numbers.

HURRICANE LAURA, WITNESSED IN BRITISH HONDURAS

by Arnfried Antonius
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Hurricane Laura was first reported on Sunday, November 14, 1971, in the morning. It was then a mere tropical storm near Swan Island, but in the afternoon it reached hurricane force and was baptized Laura. During the following days Laura first travelled N in the direction of Cuba, then turned W and finally S along the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. It entered British Honduras territory in the early morning of November 20. By about mid-afternoon the hurricane had passed Belize, with wind speeds about 70 knots and thus not doing any harm. In Stann Creek though, things were slightly different. Belize and Stann Creek lay both on the western rim of the hurricane, but as it moved more and more southwesterly, the eye came closer to Stann Creek. Winds blew during the day first from the W, then NW, N, NE, and in the afternoon from the east. The eye was closest then. The winds came from the open sea and reached at least 80 knots. About half the harvest was lost in the extensive Citrus plantations east of Stann Creek, and wave action removed the longest wooden pier of the area.

On Glover's Reef, winds first came roughly from the W with speeds up to 70 knots. Wave action piled up large heaps of *Thalassia* and algae along the lagoon side of the cays without doing damage. The eye passed around noon, creating a two-hour lull. The most violent stroke came after this, with sudden wind forces of 80-100 knots from the NE; this lasted only a few minutes and calmed down to 70-80 knots shortly afterwards, but during this brief time some damage was done to the facilities of a diving resort on Long Cay. The winds sank a 35-foot vessel, blew down one of eight existing cottages, and removed half the tin roof of another hut. Very few coconut trees fell. Underwater, on the eastern and northeast fore-reef slope, broken trunks of *Acropora palmata* up to 20 cm in diameter could be observed here and there, as well as large colonies of *Acropora palmata* and *Diploria strigosa* turned upside down. However, only 2 m to the right or left of them, it was possible to find much younger colonies, very fragile and yet completely unharmed. Therefore, the character of the turbulence must have varied considerably within a space of a few meters.

In the evening, Hurricane Laura was in the Monkey River area and it dissolved and disappeared during the night south of Punta Gorda. Hurricane Laura was at least 100 miles in diameter, slow moving and of moderate force.



Benson, C. W. 1972. "SOME LAND BIRD MIGRANTS IN THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN." *Atoll research bulletin* 162, 10-11.

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