

A new species for Silhouette

François Baguette, who is the Island Conservation Society's Conservation Officer on the island of Silhouette, reports of another exciting discovery:

Under the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) project that started on Silhouette Island in July 2016, Key Biodiversity Area explorations are organized on a regular basis. In collaboration with partners, the Island Conservation Society (ICS) attempts to reduce knowledge gaps about species interaction in Silhouette National Park.

In this context, the ICS Team, accompanied by Dr. Bruno Senterre, an expert botanist, started a 2-day exploration to the northern slope of Mont Dauban. The team left the village of La Passe early morning to start the trail to Anse Mondon, an old village located in the North of the island. From there, the real exploration through the tropical forest started, up along the northern slope of the 2nd highest peak of Seychelles. After a few hours of exploration, the team was rewarded by the sighting of rare species like *Trilepisium gymnandrum*, *Polyscias seychellarum*, *Goodyera sechellarum* or *Phaius tetragonus*.



Asplenium petiolatum (F Baguette)



A. petiolatum close up (B Senterre)

But the real discovery occurred the next day, walking down the Machabee River. Located on the trunk of a *Latanyen fey* (*Phoenicophorium borsigianum*), surrounded by mosses at 1.5m above the ground, the team discovered the first known individual of *Asplenium petiolulatum* on Silhouette Island! This rare species of fern was previously known from only 3 individuals in Seychelles, growing on Mahé Island (Kapisen 19, p.22). It lives in ravine forest at mid altitude, and as for many of the fern species in Seychelles very little is known about it.

Asplenium petiolulatum is also recorded from Madagascar, Reunion, Comoros and Mauritius. The characteristics of the Silhouette specimen correspond well with that proposed in the "Flore des Mascareignes" (Badré 2008). However, *Asplenium* being a very difficult and broad genus (700 species), the identification as "*A. petiolulatum*", proposed by B. Senterre, is preliminary and will require more detailed taxonomic investigation in order to verify or to correct. More exploration should also be done to improve our knowledge on the species distribution and its morphology in Seychelles, which will help with verifying the species identity. At present, only four individuals from two locations are known in Seychelles.

Reference

Badré, F. (2008) Flore des Mascareignes: Ptéridophytes 1, Psilotacées à 26, Marsiléacées. IRD Editions. 462 pp. http://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/ed-06-08/010047723.pdf