

Conservation

Fascinating creatures lurking beneath the undergrowth

Two German students spent a couple of months researching grasshoppers and crickets in Seychelles, with the help of the Island Conversation Society.

By LUCY NEUMANN AND DOMINIK SCHWAB



The subject of much interest by the students.

After getting the opportunity of doing some field work in Seychelles it took us only a few seconds on these breathtaking islands to know that going there was one of the best decisions we have ever made.

We are Lucy Neumann and Dominik Schwab, students of biology at the University of Trier, Germany and we were sent by Dr Axel Hochkirch to Seychelles to do research on insects. This was done in collaboration with the Island Conservation Society (ICS) of Seychelles. Our aim was to investigate the Orthoptera-Fauna of the granitic Inner Islands, especially their distribution on Mahé and Silhouette. Orthoptera is a group of insects which include mainly grasshoppers and crickets.

What we have discovered after eight weeks of jungle observation on these small islands was very impressive. Thanks to their isolation Mahé and Silhouette islands harbour

several unique species which occur only in their forests, the so-called "endemic species". Many other species we found were either limited to the whole group of granitic Seychelles or at least to the region of the western Indian Ocean. So it was completely like discovering unknown land for two Europeans like us.

After more than six weeks of investigation in the Morne Seychellois National Park, one week on Silhouette and one week on Ste Anne, we have seen almost 30 different species. They occurred in grasslands at sea level as well as up in the mountains. Some of them live on palm leaves while others are borrowed in the litter or underneath dead tree trunks. Some of them are herbivorous while others are predators for smaller insects. And even in their size the Orthoptera of Seychelles are quite diverse. The smallest cricket we observed was about 4 mm compared to the biggest bush



Lucy Neumann and Dominik Schwab are two students of biology from the University of Trier in Germany.

cricket with a whole length of almost 8 cm and antennae of about 15 cm. Most of the endemic species can only be encountered in the high altitude mist forests which for us meant a lot of hiking or sometimes even climbing. But it was really worth it!

Our stay was definitely highlighted by a sleep over in the rainforest of Silhouette and reaching the highest point of Seychelles at the summit of Morne Seychellois. Both these trips were organized and made possible by Pat Matyot, a local naturalist. So thanks a lot, Pat!

As a conclusion we would like to thank the Island Conservation Society (ICS) and their teams on Aride and Silhouette for making trips to these is-

lands possible, and especially Seychellois entomologist Pat Matyot, Pierre-André Adam and Dr Gérard Rocamora and his family for their support during these two months. We are also grateful to the ministry of Environment for supporting and facilitating our work, and to the Beachcomber Resort on Ste Anne for providing accommodation for the last two weeks. Last but not least, we thank the Seychellois people for making our time here as pleasant and intense as it was. Back in Germany we will write up the results of our work, so that the data we have gathered can be used by conservationists in Seychelles to protect the fascinating Orthoptera that you have here as well as their habitats.



All this will be featured in the students' works back in Germany.

Marlin magazine

Michael Bouchereau Arnephie wins reader's choice awards

Seychellois artist Michael Bouchereau Arnephie has been declared the winner of Marlin Magazine's 2015, marlin offshore art gallery competition. The designer had to battle 67 other artists worldwide before winning the reader's choice award; readers could vote for their favourite artist online by "liking" his artwork on the magazine's Facebook page.

Michael Bouchereau Arnephie's "sailfish mackerel hunt" has recently been declared the grand winner of the reader's choice award in Marlin Magazine - a popular U.S sports fishing magazine that is followed by more than 382,000 readers worldwide. A keen sports fisherman, the artist has recently taken to illustrating some of the oceans' most graceful predators such as marlins and sailfishes. This is depicted by his winning work of art which illustrates a sailfish pursuing a shoal of mackerel.

It is unfortunate that we could not reach the artist at the time of publication, but Mr Bouchereau Arnephie did tell TODAY in a previous interview that, "Marlin magazine has many subscribers, so I think that the exposure will be good for us as a tourism destination and the big game fishing industry." The



Sailfish Mackerel Hunt, the winning portrait that will soon be published in Marlin Magazine.

well known graphics designer employs a highly defined form of art using a combination of Photoshop and Corel draw to illustrate his latest works of art. He considers digital media to be quicker, more versatile, with the possibility in achieving higher detail - despite still supporting the old fashioned way of applying paintbrush to canvas.

A committee member of the Seychelles Sports Fishing Club (SSFC), the graphic designer graduated from the Seychelles polytechnic in 1986 with a diploma in fine arts and later worked as an independent fashion designer in Australia for well-known brands such as Hang Ten, Ocean Breeze, and Slazenger Sportswear. He is also credited for designing logos that have appeared on Air Seychelles' domestic aircraft, Zil Air helicopters, Creole Travel services and the Seychelles Petroleum company amongst others.



Michael Bouchereau Arnephie's love for fishing is clearly depicted in his works of art (Photo credit, SNA).