First records of Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* and Gadwall *Mareca strepera* for Seychelles

Christophe Mason-Parker[a], Rebecca Filippin[a] and Adrian Skerrett[b]

Premières mentions de l'Anserelle de Coromandel *Nettapus coromandelianus* et du Canard chipeau *Mareca strepera* pour les Seychelles. Un mâle adulte de l'Anserelle de Coromandel *Nettapus coromandelianus* a été observé à Mahé, Seychelles, le 27 juin 2024 et photographié au même endroit le 23 juillet, après quoi il n'a plus été revu jusqu'à ce qu'un mâle, probablement le même individu, maintenant en plumage d'éclipse, soit observé au même site du 10 au 16 décembre 2024. Le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois a accepté cette mention comme la première de l'espèce pour l'archipel. Du 26 novembre au 10 décembre 2024, quatre Canards chipeau *Mareca strepera*, deux mâles et deux femelles, se trouvaient dans la zone humide de l'Intendance, Mahé. Neuf individus, trois mâles, trois femelles et trois femelles ou oiseaux de première année, étaient présents sur le même site du 3 janvier jusqu'à environ le 12 février 2025 ; un seul mâle était toujours présent le 23 février. D'autres Canards chipeau ont été rapportés de Coëtivy (trois individus, le 23 décembre 2024), Aride (une femelle, le 23 décembre 2024) et Anse à la Mouche, Mahé (une femelle du 4 au 5 janvier et un oiseau de première année du 2 janvier au 21 février 2025). Ces mentions ont été acceptées par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme les premières du Canard chipeau pour l'archipel.

We document the first records for Seychelles of Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* (on Mahé) and Gadwall *Mareca strepera* (at several locations).

Cotton Pygmy Goose

The Intendance wetlands, Takamaka district, Mahé, lie within the grounds of the Cheval Blanc Seychelles Resort. The resort has appointed the Marine Conservation Society Seychelles (MCSS) as environmental consultants. On the morning of 27 June 2024, during an MCSS tour of the wetlands, CM-P & RF noted a small duck they did not recognise in the middle of the largest pool. As it was more than 50 m away and they lacked binoculars, a positive identification could not be made. On 23 July they observed the bird at the same location. On this occasion photographs were taken (Figs. 1–2) and the bird was subsequently identified as an adult male Cotton Pygmy Goose in breeding plumage based on its small size, blackish forehead and crown, blackish-green collar at the base of the neck, blackish upperparts glossed green, white head-sides, neck and underparts, grey-washed flanks, and black bill (Carboneras & Kirwan 2020). It was not seen again despite regular visits by MCSS staff aware of its earlier presence.

On 10 December 2024, AS visited the Intendance wetlands with S. Agricole and

Figures 1–2. Adult male Cotton Pygmy Gooose *Nettapus coromandelianus* in breeding plumage, Mahé, Seychelles, 23 July 2024 (Christophe Mason-Parker)

Anserelle de Coromandel *Nettapus coromandelianus*, mâle adulte en plumage nuptial, Mahé, Seychelles, 23 juillet 2024 (Christophe Mason-Parker)

Figure 3. Adult male Cotton Pygmy Gooose *Nettapus coromandelianus* in eclipse plumage, Mahé, Seychelles, 10 December 2024 (Adrian Skerrett)

Anserelle de Coromandel *Nettapus coromandelianus*, mâle adulte en plumage d'éclipse, Mahé, Seychelles, 10 décembre 2024 (Adrian Skerrett)

observed a small, pale duck feeding in floating vegetation, mainly White Water Lillies *Nymphaea alba*, and frequently diving underwater for several seconds (Fig. 3). Its mainly off-white head, neck and body, finely mottled below, identified it as a Cotton Pygmy Goose. However, unlike the earlier sighting, the unglossed greyish-brown upperparts and black line through the eye indicated that it was an adult male in eclipse plumage, the large white patch in the primaries and the white face and nape ruling out an adult female or immature. The bird was last seen by S. Agricole on 16 December.

Cotton Pygmy Goose is widely distributed across the Oriental Region to north-east Australia, where it frequents well-vegetated freshwater pools, lakes and lagoons with much floating and submerged vegetation (Carboneras & Kirwan 2020). It has been recorded as far west as Jordan (Bashford 1997), Oman (where it is a somewhat regular visitor in November–March: Mlodinow *et al*. 2025) and Socotra (Porter & Suleiman 2022), with a claimed record from south-east Turkey (Kirwan *et al*. 2008).

The June–July 2024 sightings were accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) as the first for Seychelles. SBRC noted that, considering the exceptional occurrence of the species, the December sightings presumably concerned the same individual.

Gadwall

On 26 November 2024, CMP photographed four unidentified ducks at Intendance wetlands and sent the image to the SBRC. On 9 December, Anthony Bentley, Island Manager of Aride Island Nature Reserve, observed the same ducks there, identified them as two adult male and two adult female Gadwall and submitted the record to SBRC. Next day, AS photographed the Gadwalls at the same site (Fig. 4). On 3 January 2025, CM-P reported that nine Gadwalls were present. The following day, AS confirmed that there were three adult males, three adult females and three either female or first-year birds. CM-P reported that all except one of the birds departed around 12 February. On 23 February AS confirmed that a single adult male was still present (Fig. 5).

Figure 4. One male (centre) and two female Gadwalls *Mareca strepera*, Intendance, Mahé, Seychelles, 10 December 2024 (Adrian Skerrett)

Canard chipeau *Mareca strepera* mâle (au milieu) avec deux femelles, Intendance, Mahé, Seychelles, 10 décembre 2024 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 5. Male Gadwall / Canard chipeau *Mareca strepera*, Intendance, Mahé, Seychelles, 23 February 2025 (Adrian Skerrett)

Figure 6. Male Gadwall / Canard chipeau *Mareca strepera*, Coëtivy, Seychelles, 23 December 2024 (Dr Girish Menon)

On 23 December 2024, Dr Girish Menon photographed a duck on Coëtivy, a low-lying coral islet 280 km south of Mahé, and sent pictures to AS, who confirmed it was a Gadwall (Fig. 6). Later the same day G. Menon reported that three Gadwalls were present and sent photographs of one of the new arrivals. All of the photographs were submitted to SBRC. The first bird was clearly a male, with a large white speculum and a chestnut patch in the wing (Fig. 6). The second had grey-brown plumage and a grey breast, some orange on the bill-sides and no chestnut wing patch, indicating an immature male, whereas the age and sex of the third remained unknown. The record was accepted by SBRC as one adult male, one first-calendar-year male and one unaged/unsexed.

On 23 December 2024, A. Bentley and other staff at Aride Island Nature Reserve observed a duck they identified as a female Gadwall on Aride, 56 km north-northeast of Mahé, and sent a photograph to SBRC. The identification was confirmed on the basis of the brownish plumage with finely spotted/streaked greyish head, white speculum and orange bill-sides.

On 4 January 2025, AS photographed a female Gadwall at a wetland adjacent to Le Cheval Resort, Anse à la Mouche, Mahé (Fig. 7). The following day the bird was seen at the same site by S. Agricole. On 26 January, AS visited a wetland adjacent to Anchor Café, Anse à la Mouche, Mahé, where local residents Keith & Greg Berke had reported an unidentified duck present since 2 January. AS confirmed this also was a Gadwall, aged as a first-year based on it having a brighter plumage than a female, with greyer head- and neck-sides producing a greater contrast with the body. According to K. Berke the last sighting at Anchor Café wetland was on 21 February.

Gadwall breeds across northern temperate latitudes, moving to lower latitudes in winter. Southern breeders are mostly sedentary, but the easternmost populations winter south to the Indian Subcontinent and west to the Caspian and Black Seas, with smaller numbers in Africa, regularly south to Ethiopia and more exceptionally Kenya (Leschack *et al.* 2020). SBRC has accepted the sightings from Intendance (Mahé), Coëtivy, Aride Island and Anse à la Mouche (Mahé) as the first records of Gadwall for Seychelles.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Sebastien Gillard, General Manager of Cheval Blanc Seychelles, for permission to access Intendance wetland, to Keith Berke for access to the Anchor Café wetland and to Anthony Bentley, Dr Girish Menon and Greg Berke for submitting their

Figure 7. Female Gadwall / Canard chipeau *Mareca strepera*, Canopy Resort wetland, Anse à la Mouche, Mahé, Seychelles, 4 January 2025 (Adrian Skerrett)

photographs to the SBRC. The members of SBRC are thanked for their expertise that helped to identify, age and sex the birds. Special thanks to Ron Demey and Guy Kirwan whose comments greatly improved this note.

References

Bashford, R. 1997. The first Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus* in Jordan. *Sandgrouse* 19: 142–243.

Carboneras, C. & Kirwan, G. M. 2020. Cotton Pygmy-Goose (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), version 1.0. In del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D. A. & de Juana, E. (eds.) *Birds of the World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.copgoo1.01 (accessed 23 July 2024).

Kirwan, G. M., Özen, M. & Demirci, B. 2008. Turkey Bird Report 2002–06. *Sandgrouse* 30: 166–189.

Leschack, C. R., McKnight, S. K. & Hepp, G. R. 2020. Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), version 1.0. In Billerman, S. M. (ed.) *Birds of the World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.gadwal.01 (accessed 21 January 2025).

Mlodinow, S. G., Kirwan, G. M., Hansasuta, C. & Pyle, P. 2025. Cotton Pygmy-Goose (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), version 2.0. In Keeney, B. K. (ed.) *Birds of the World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.copgoo1.02 (accessed 1 March 2025)

Porter, R. & Suleiman, A. S. 2022. Birds of the Socotra Archipelago, Yemen: an annotated checklist. *Sandgrouse* 44: 262–324.

[a]*Marine Conservation Society Seychelles, PO Box 384, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles. E-mail: mcssoffice@gmail.com*

[b]*Seychelles Bird Records Committee, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles. E-mail: sbrcsecretary@gmail.com.*

Received 28 October 2024; revision accepted 3 March 2025.