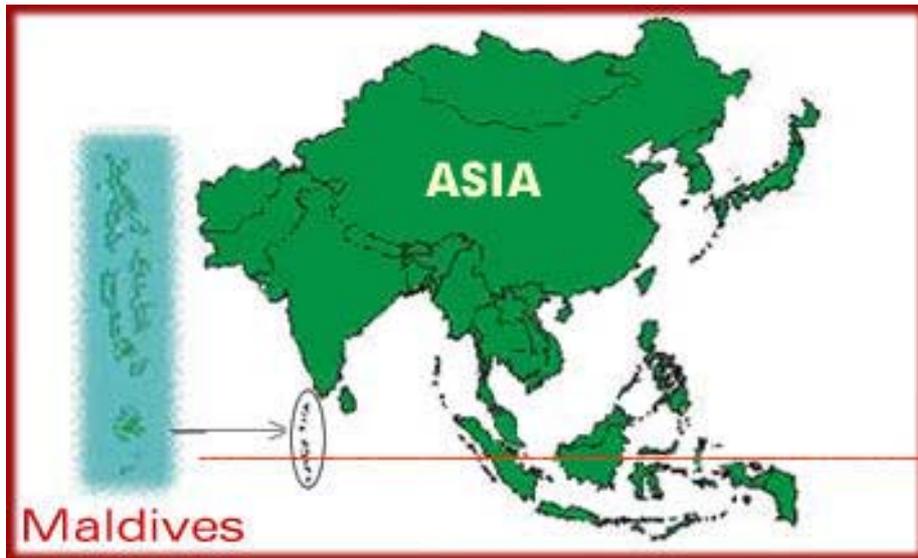


Republic of Maldives 6 t/m 20 January 1999

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Around 144 species of birds have been recorded in the Republic of Maldives; many of these birds are stragglers and only few birds breed over here. Situated in the Indian Ocean between 72 degrees 33' 40" East to 73 degrees 45' 20" East and 7 degrees 06' 38" North to 0 degrees 42' 31" South, this is one of the smallest countries in Southern Asia, and is roughly



south-southwest of India. The total area including land and sea is about 90,000-sq km. of which about 2% are land. The length of the archipelago is 823 km while it is 130 km at its greatest width. The population is 310,764 (July 2001 est.), and the capital is Malè, situated in the North-Malè-Atoll, the capital city has a population of 70.000

and is 1.5 sq. km., and is probably the smallest capital city in the world.

The Maldives is a chain of coral atolls formed upon minor elevations on the Chagos-Lacadeive submarine plateau, which ascends from the deep Indian Ocean. The plateau has provided a base for the reef building corals, from where they have risen to the surface. There are a total of approximately 1,190 coral islands grouped into 26 atolls (200 inhabited islands, plus 80 islands with tourist resorts), with an average elevation of about 1.6 meters above mean sea level. All of them are surrounded by natural reefs, which serve as the only protection against rough seas. The islands are generally flat with very few mounds. There are no hills, mountains or rivers. Some of the larger islands have small fresh-water lakes while others have brackish water with mangroves along the edges. The lowest point is the Indian Ocean 0 m and the highest point is an unnamed location on Wilingili island in the Addu Atoll this is 2.4 m. high.

Treats for the island are depletion of freshwater aquifers threatens water supplies, global warming and sea level rise (80% of the area is one meter or less above sea level) and coral reef bleaching.

The language spoken is Maldivian Dhivehi (dialect of Sinhala, script derived from Arabic), English spoken by most government officials, and the Rufiyaa is the currency over here. Tourism, Maldives largest industry, accounts for 20% of GDP and more than 60% of the Maldives' foreign exchange receipts. Over 90% of government tax revenue comes from import duties and tourism-related taxes.

Almost 400,000 tourists visited the islands in 1998. Fishing is a second leading sector.



The Maldives were long a sultanate, first under Dutch and then under British protection. The Maldives became a republic in 1968, three years after independence (26 July 1965). A visa is not required for the Maldives.

During 1999, vaccination against yellow fever, cholera and tetanus was not necessary but could not harm to take it

The Climate is tropical; hot, humid; dry, and has a Northeast monsoon from November to March and rainy from the Southwest monsoon from June to August. Take care for the sun because it's almost right above when shining, because you're very close to the equator.

Transportation and accommodation

The cheapest way to fly to the Republic of the Maldives is to take a charter for example from Amsterdam (NLG 1500, --) and take a package this can be either a week Sri Lanka and a week Maldives ore two weeks Maldives. In total it took for me about NLG 2200, --. This includes breakfast and supper. Notice that drinks and food other than breakfast and super are not for free, and prices are fairly high.

On the island where you're staying you got chances to get out on snorkelling trips ore sightseeing trips, these are not expensive and can bring you some nice species.

Avifauna



While looking on Internet and various other sources I couldn't find any birdreports from the Maldives. The only information I could collect was in species chapters from the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent from Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp. In here I could see that in total 144 species ever where recorded, and most of these species included shorebirds and stranglers. Few breeding birds can be here like Crab-plover, Lesser Frigatebird, White Tern and Audubon's Shearwater as the most spectacular breeders.

The species ever recorded at the Maldives are the following:

Cotton Pygmy-duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Garganey, Common Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Hoopoe, Indian Roller, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, European Bee-eater, Indian Cuckoo, Eurasian Cuckoo, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Asian Koel, Rose-ringed Parakeet (introduced), Himalayan Swiftlet, White-throated Needletail, Common Swift, Pallid Swift, House Swift, Short-eared Owl, Rock Pigeon (Feral Birds), European Turtle Dove, Oriental Turtle-dove, Spotted Dove, White-breasted Waterhen, Watercock, Common

Moorhen, Common Coot, Pintail Snipe, Swinhoe's Snipe, Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwitt, Bar-tailed Godwitt, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper. Terek Sandpiper, Turnstone, Sanderling, Little Stint, Temmincks Stint, Long-toed Stint, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Greater Sandplover, Lesser Sandplover, Caspian Plover, Sociable Lapwing, Crab-Plover, Oriental Pratincole, Brown Skua, South Polar Skua, White-eyed Gull, Sooty Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Heuglin's Gull, Pallas's Gull, Brown-headed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Greater Crested Tern, Roseate Tern, Black-naped tern, Common Tern, Little Tern, Saunder's Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern, White-winged Tern, Brown Noddy, Lesser Noddy, White Tern, Osprey, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Pallid Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, Common Kestrel, Amur Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, Peregrine Falcon, White-tailed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, Red-footed Boony, Brown Booby, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Indian Pond Heron, Little Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, Yellow Bittern, Cinnamon Bittern, Black Bittern, Great Bittern, Greater Flamingo, Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Great White Pelican, Great Frigatebird, Lesser Frigatebird, Bulwer's Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Audubon's Shearwater, White-faced Storm-petrel, White-bellied Storm-petrel, Rufous-tailed Shrike, Brown Shrike, House Crow, Eye-browed Trush, Indian Robin, Northern Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Common Starling, Sand Martin, Plain Martin, Barn Swallow, House Martin, House Sparrow (introduced), Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Tree Pipit and Red-throated Pipit. From these 3 are introduced, also I saw 2 new species for the Maldives: Rain Quail and Citrine Wagtail.

Day to day account

I went with a girlfriend up to the Maldives for a relaxing holiday, and combine it with snorkelling and diving. The Maldives is well known for the fascinating coral reefs and the hundreds of species of fish that can be found there. Also I did my best to see as many bird-species as possible, although the number of birds are very low. Despite that I saw 7 new lifers over here. We stayed at the island Lohifushi situated on the eastern side of the North-Malè-Atoll. This island is about 800 meters long and 350 meters wide, and is about 20 km from the capital city Malè.

The temperatures where around 25°C during our stay during daytime and it cooled down to 18°C during the night. Most days where sunny in the morning, and overcast in the afternoon. We had no showers during our stay. And no windy days at except for the last day.

6 January

We depart from Amsterdam in the early Morning and flew to Muscat (Oman) and from there we went to Colombo (Sri Lanka) and from there to the Maldives (an 8 hours flight). The stop at Muscat was in the night and nothing was seen from the plane. The stop a Colombo was productive and brought me **Hill Swallow**, **Oriental Skylark**, **Cattle Egret**, **Common Kestrel**, **House Crow**, **Common Myna** and **Red-rumped Swallow** during the hour stop we had. Three new species for me.

We landed at Hulule where the international airport from the Maldives is situated. Here we stepped into a small boat (motordhoni) to go our final destination our holiday island. The sea-ride with this small boat took a 1.5 hours of travelling. Despite little wind the trip was rough because some times it has to cross some lagoons between some atolls. We arrived at the island Lohifushi where we booked our accommodation. A quick walk around the island brought me one birdspecies a nice **Cinnamon Bittern**. This was a new species for me.

7 January

After a good night of sleep, I went up and circled around the island (it took ten minutes). Few birds were seen during this round and few birds proved to be resident. In total 2 **Whimbrels**, a **Pallid Swift** together with a **Little Swift**, 2 **Barn Swallows**, 1 **Common Sandpiper** and 4 **White Terns** were seen. Also a few resident **Asian Koels** were present. The last one was a new species. The rest of the day was just relaxing for reading and sleeping. It was clear to me that it was hard working on the island to see any birds at all, most of the times there are no birds at all in the sky.

8 January

This morning I started off with sea watching and I saw in two hours of counting the endless streams of water only one bird a **Lesser-crested tern** (a new ssp for me). Sea watching in the rest of the week produced no seabirds at all! Further exploring the island brought me a few **Grey Herons** (they looked paler than our European birds, maybe because the amount of sun) and a **Common Sandpiper** and few calling **Asian Koels**. The last one was a new species for me.

9 January

(Picture of the soccer-field, where the waders are stayed overnight)



As I heard in the previous day few people mentioned to me that on the soccer-field in the centre of the island in the early morning various birds are present, so I was planning to check this out this morning. And the birds didn't let me down. I found at close distant few **Pacific Golden Plovers**, **Lesser Sandplover**, **Greater Sandplover**, about 15 **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Eurasian Oystercatcher** and some **Common Sandpipers**. While walking back I had a close encounter with a **Rain Quail** who was running in front of me (this bird was seen also by various other people that day). A trip around the island brought me a hunting **Oriental Pratincole**, few **Barn Swallows**, **Grey Heron**, about 5 **Little Heron**, **Asian Koel** and some **Whimbrels**.

10 January

This morning I got up early and went directly to the soccer-field where I could see again **Lesser** and **Greater Sandplovers** (Lesser are more common), **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Whimbrel**, **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Common Sandpiper**. Also few **Little Herons**, **Grey Heron**, **Barn Swallow** and **Asian Koel** could be seen today.

11 January

Again in the early morning to the soccer-field over here the regular species were encountered but 3 **Kentish Plovers** were a surprise. Also few **Lesser Sandplovers**, **Pacific Golden Plovers**, **Whimbrel**, **Ruddy Turnstone** and **Common Sandpiper** were seen here. Around the island I found **Barn Swallows**, **Grey Herons**, **Asian Koel** and **Little Heron**.

Today I went out diving and snorkelling, it was really great in the fantastic house-reef of the island, like in previous days many species of fish were around and also some Reef-sharks.

12 January

Only the commoner species mentioned in previous days were seen. Also 3 **Greater Sandplovers** were again on the soccer field. The birds are here until the tourist start walking to the restaurant for breakfast and then they depart to an unknown location for me.

13 January

In the early morning a quick check of the soccer-field brought again the same species as in the earlier days, also the same birds than normal could be found on the rest of the island. On the end of the morning I went out by boat onto the coral reef and few nice birds were seen a small group of **Saunders's Terns**, about 10 **Lesser Noddy's**, few **Black-naped Terns** and about 5 **White Terns** were my part. Snorkelling brought me a unforgettable sight of thousands of different fishes on the reef (inner- and outer reef visited)

14 January

An Indian Pond Heron was present today, and also the commoner species were seen, like mentioned in previous days.



15 January

Only the commoner species were seen (commoner species: **Lesser** and **Greater Sandplover**, **Whimbrel**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Asian Koel**, **Barn Swallow**, **Little Heron** and **Grey Heron**).

16 January

See for list 15 January!

17 January

A quick check in early morning produced at the soccer field a nice **Indian Pond Heron**, and as real surprises two **Caspian Plovers** between the commoner species.

18 January

The same **Indian Pond Heron** as yesterday was still doing rounds around our house as I saw this bird as my first one today. The normal things were seen at the soccer-field and also both **Caspian Plovers** were still around. Today only the commoner birds were seen during the rest of the day.



19 January

Today the last full day at The Maldives and except for the normal species like **Lesser** and **Greater Sandplover**, **Pacific Golden Plover**, **Barn Swallow**, **Grey Heron**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Little Heron**, **Turnstone**, **Common Koel** and **Whimbrel** I located a fine first year male **Citrine Wagtail**. This bird I could study for a short time before it flew off to the next island.

20 January

Today we packed every time and departed early from the island. Because of strong winds there was some swell on sea and the trip was pretty rough. After 1.5 hours of travelling we arrived at the airport and soon afterwards we departed from this fabulous island-group. Before we left a nice group of 8 **Caspian Plovers** waved us goodbye at the airport. On the flight back we had a night stop at Muscat and arrived late at night in Holland back.

Used Literature

Clement J.F., 2000. Birds of the World: a Checklist. Verona
Grimmett R, Inskipp C & Inskipp T, 1998. Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Somerset
Gstaltmayr H, 1998. Marco Polo Malediven. Houten

Birds recorded at the Maldives

Birds bold marked are new species, and new ssp are marked on the ssp.

1. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea cinerea*
2. **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii*
3. Little Heron *Butorides striatus chloriceps*
4. **Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
5. **Rain Quail** *Coturnix coromandelica*
6. Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralagus ostralagus*
7. Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*
8. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
9. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrius seebohmi*

10. Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus* **pamirensis**
11. Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* **crassirostris**
12. **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus*
13. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus variegatus*
14. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres interpres*
15. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
16. Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* **bengalensis**
17. Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* **mathewsi**
18. **Saunders's Tern** *Sterna saunderii*
19. **Lesser Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris tenuirostris*
20. White Tern *Gygis alba* **candida**
21. **Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea scolopacea*
22. Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* **pallidus**
23. Little Swift *Apus affinis* **galilejensis**
24. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica rustica*
25. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* **werea**

Sri Lanka

26. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* **coromandus**
27. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* **objurgatus**
28. **Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgulga gulgulga*
29. **Hill Swallow** *Hirundo domicola*
30. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* **hyperythra**
31. **House Crow** *Corvus splendens protegatus*
32. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis melanosternus*