

Mantas, Dolphins & Coral Reefs – A Maldives Cruise

Naturetrek Tour Report

27th January – 6th February 2023



Giant Clam



Bandos Resort Beach



A Soldierfish with Cleanerfish



Melon Butterflyfish

Tour report and images by Jenny Willsher



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Summary

For centuries the Maldives was a place to avoid if you were a seafarer due to its treacherous reefs and this may have contributed to its largely unspoilt beauty. Now those very same reefs attract many visitors to experience the amazing diversity of marine life that they offer. The idyllic vista of palm-fringed, golden sandy beaches, multiple shades of turquoise and blue seas and the thrilling prospect of the abundant sea life makes for a wildlife paradise.

We had a very enjoyable week in and around this intriguing chain of coral islands. After a brief stay in the lovely Bandos Island Resort, which gave us time for some snorkel practice, we boarded the MV Keana, our base for the next week. We soon settled into the daily routine of early morning and evening snorkels, daytimes searching for cetaceans or relaxing, and the evening talks by Chas Anderson, our local Maldives expert. His 30+ years of experience here made for some fascinating and enlightening presentations, drawing on his seemingly bottomless knowledge of all things in and around the Maldives. Dolphin sightings were almost guaranteed – Indo-Pacific Bottlenose, and the acrobatic Spinner Dolphins. The paucity of other cetaceans was disappointing, but we were hampered by very unusual north-westerly winds and atypical ocean currents which is associated with the development of an El Nino year. The diversity of colour, shape and size of the reef fish and other marine life, and their almost indifference to our presence, was amazing and delightful.

All this was complimented by the unobtrusive efficiency and care of the crew on both the MV Keana and its accompanying dhoni.

The good humour and enthusiasm of the group contributed enormously to the enjoyment of the trip.

Day 1-2

Friday 27th - Saturday 28th January

UK to Bandos Island Resort, North Male Atoll

Our direct overnight flight from the UK arrived in Male mid-morning and we were quickly aboard a water taxi to Bandos Island. The staff welcomed us to the resort with a refreshing cold drink and made every effort to get us to our rooms quickly and arranged a table in the Sea Breeze Restaurant for the whole group to eat together later. Some chose to spend the day catching up on sleep while others relaxed or had a practice snorkel.

Later we met for dinner at a candlelit table on the open deck of the Sea Breeze restaurant, meeting those of the group who had travelled separately. Our pre-dinner entertainment included five Whiptail Stingrays which had gathered to be fed on fishy scraps from the kitchen. They were joined by two Black-tipped Reef Sharks and a Grey Heron. As we enjoyed a delicious meal, fruit bats from the island colony flew over us and a few fish could be seen in the water, under the deck.

Day 3

Sunday 29th January

Bandos to MV Keana

We woke to a classic Maldivian day of warm sunshine, waving palms and turquoise seas, though a heavy downpour was a surprise! After an early snorkel for some we enjoyed breakfast from the excellent buffet. The omelette chef was quite an entertainer as he juggled the cooking of at least three omelettes at once, and the variety of other dishes on offer was very tempting - cereals, fruits, waffles and curries. We then had a little time to swim or explore the island with its lovely exotic trees of Frangipani, Flame Tree, Bougainvillea, Oleander, Hibiscus and the huge Banyan tree near the restaurant which was still decorated with a few Valentines Day decorations from last year!

The few birds on the island included the vocal Asian Koel, Maldivian House Crow, Grey Heron, Common Myna, White-faced Water Hen and Common Sandpiper. In the large trees behind the restaurant was a small colony of huge noisy Fruit Bats.

Late morning we gathered in reception to await the arrival of Chas on the dhoni – this local type of boat would be ferrying us about over the next week into the shallow water over the reefs. Once our luggage was stowed on board we headed out of the harbour and away from Bandos Island to where the Keana was moored in Male Harbour. A few Black-naped Terns were sitting on the harbour wall.

Chas welcomed us on board and went through the house rules – the first being that we shed our shoes! He then introduced us to a few of the crew - most importantly, (to quote Chas!) Thomas the barman, Hugo our snorkel buddy, and sunny Saiful, the dining room manager.

After lunch the boat moved south into South Male Atoll. We moored near the island of Guraidhoo where we had our first of many snorkels from the boat. Chas warned us that it was not the best of reefs but it was a chance to practice getting on and off the dhoni. We were accompanied by Hugo who became an invaluable support to the least confident swimmers in the group. The rest of us who were snorkelling enjoyed our time in the water and sightings included a Hawksbill Turtle, Black-tipped Reef Sharks, Reef Octopus, and the first of many of the reef fish that we would get to know over the next week including yellow and black striped Convict Surgeonfish, bright blue and yellow Powder Blue Surgeonfish, (this would probably be the most most familiar fish we would see – sometimes in large numbers), Moorish Idol, orange and white Squirrelfish, large eyed Soldierfish, yellow and black Longnose Butterflyfish, and the charming little Maldivian Anemonefish (think of Nemo from the cartoon film but with only one stripe!) which could be seen defending its anemone 'home'.

Chas sensibly does not offer to do a fish checklist as it could be an interminable evening of trying to identify “the blue fish with the yellow tail” or “the little green one with the red fins” etc, etc! There are over 1,000 species of reef fish, some yet to be identified and juveniles and adults of the same species can look entirely different! And some even change sex at some stage in their development.

The first of Chas's pre-dinner talks was on Dolphins:

Spinner Dolphin is the commonest of the eight species seen in the Maldives and it is not entirely clear why they spin – perhaps to rid themselves of sucker fish (ramoras) or to communicate with others.

Their long thin snout contains approximately 200 small teeth. They hunt at night using sonar to locate deepwater fish that come up to the surface at night. They are normally light and dark grey in colour but when very active their bellies look pink because blood vessels near the surface helps them cool down. To sleep they are able to close one half of the brain at a time.

Bottlenose Dolphins (larger than Spinners) – two species - Indo-Pacific, which are commonly found inshore, and Common which are found offshore.

Pantropical Spotted Dolphin – second commonest, not obviously spotted, more freckled, smallish with a pale face and dark saddle, associates with Yellowfin Tuna.

Striped Dolphin – same size as Bottlenose, has dark eye-to-anus stripe.

Risso's Dolphin (named after a Frenchman), can be up to 8ft long, often look grey/white around the head due to many scratches from fighting, tall fin, peculiar V-shaped crease from blowhole to rostrum which has earned them the unfortunate name of "Bumface"! Often seen "logging" - floating in formation on the surface.

Rough-toothed Dolphin – distinctive slope-headed shape, oceanic, feeding on big fish

Frazer's Dolphin – sometimes called Small-snouted or Sarawak Dolphin. Can be common in the Maldives in huge flocks, small compact body, dark lateral stripe.

Suitably inspired and excited by thoughts of the week ahead we later met at the bar for drinks before dinner provided by the cook Kumar and his assistants, and efficiently supervised by the always smiling Saiful. We relaxed for a while in the tropical breeze on deck as the boat rocked gently, before retiring to bed. A spotlight on the back of the boat had attracted a cloud of plankton which in turn attracted murmurations of small fish.

Day 4

Monday 30th January

South Male Atoll to Faaufu Atoll

Tea, coffee, biscuits and bananas were available before our early morning snorkel. We added Oriental Sweetlips to our favourites amongst the reef fish and it was a good example of how different the juveniles can be as a small cream and brown fish turned out to be a juvenile of this species, the adult being a large fish with horizontal black and white stripes on the body and black and yellow dotted fins. This is one of the bigger fish we saw along with various Parrotfish with their amazing, mostly green patterns, and then the lovely shoals of dark blue Redtooth Triggerfish that seem to flutter in the water, and strange shaped Unicornfish. More Hawksbill Turtles were seen, Black-tipped Reef Sharks, Spotted Eagle Ray, a Moray Eel and more Anemonefish including Clark's Anemonefish which is mostly black with white stripes. A small group of Spinner Dolphins were seen before we upped anchor.

After breakfast we moved out of South Male Atoll, heading south-west into the central channel between the East and West chains of atolls. The deeper channel gave us a better chance of seeing cetaceans and bigger fish such as tuna, sailfish and flying fish. We had the occasional sighting of Sailfish, Spinner Dolphins and a small group of Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphins.

Our evening snorkel just inside the Faafu Atoll provided new delights such as streams of fish, small shoals of Blue-green Chromis darting in and out of their chosen reef home, lethargic Sea Cucumbers, bright blue-lipped Giant Clams and red, blue or Cushion Starfish and a White-tipped Reef Shark. And hearing the Parrotfish munching on the corals.

As the light faded just before 7 o'clock, we made our way to the top deck for Chas's evening talk, which was on Corals. There are approximately 200 species, their different colours depending on different types of chlorophyll. Coral is a unique combination of animal, vegetable and mineral and is the base structure for the whole of the Maldives. We would become aware of some damaged areas of the reef. This was due to a major bleaching in 2016 when an El Nino event raised the water temperature by two degrees C. Under stress corals expel their algae. Seaweed then colonises the structures, but this is often grazed off by the fish. Parrot fish are important grazers as they eat and then expel the coral as sand so really the islands are mounds of Parrotfish poo! They are a protected species in the Maldives.

Day 5

Tuesday 31st January

Faafu Atoll to Dhaalu Atoll

Our morning snorkel was over a beautiful coral garden which had more sponges and sea squirts, where many familiar fish were seen but also an Octopus, Lionfish and Lobster. After breakfast we moved out of the atoll into the deep ocean heading south to Dhaalu Atoll. The water was choppy at times but we spotted the occasional sailfish and some flying fish.

Just inside Dhaalu Atoll we watched a small pod of Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin. Our evening snorkel included a feeding frenzy of Powderblue and Convict Surgeonfish. These fish are so called because they have two sharp scalpel-like spines on their tail stocks. Unicorn fish, which are in the same family, are also armed in this way, having four spines. Other sightings included Squirrelfish and Soldierfish, which have large eyes as they are nocturnal feeders and are predominantly red or orange in colour and the large Titan Triggerfish which can be quite aggressive if provoked. There were also Butterflyfish with their various colour combinations of yellow, black and white, including Threadfin, Collared, Raccoon, Scrawled, Longnose and Schooling Bannerfish. A Hawksbill Turtle was also seen. It was difficult to extract ourselves from this constantly changing marine world where another new creature might be hiding behind the next bit of coral!

We later gathered in the lounge for our evening talk from Chas which was about the origins of the word Atoll. This is the only Maldivian Word in the Oxford English Dictionary, It was brought to us by the almost unbelievable adventures of a French explorer, would be merchant, Francois Pyrard de Laval, who travelled to Maldives hoping to make his fortune in trading spices but after a ten year period of misadventures sadly drank himself to death when he eventually returned home.

Day 6

Wednesday 1st February

Dhaalu Atoll to Meemu Atoll (South)

During our morning snorkel, off Kurali Island, many enjoyed watching an octopus as it oozed its way between the coral, changing from purple to plum to grey as it went. Reef sharks and Hawksbill Turtle were also seen. There were fleets of blue Lunar Fusiliers, and many non-fishy species such as grey blotchy Sea Cucumbers and various starfish including blue-black Crown-of-Thorns Starfish, pink Thick-armed Starfish and Cushion Stars.

After breakfast we moved out of Dhaalu Atoll into the open sea, heading East. We occasionally slowed for small groups of Spinners but they seemed to want us to speed up so they could bow ride. The adults can spin many times and it was fun watching some young ones try it too.

We anchored that evening in Meemu Atoll and were welcomed by more Spinners. We snorkelled off a small island, enjoying another beautiful coral garden on the edge of a steep 'dropoff' which always had the potential for bigger things! And more sharks and another turtle were seen.

Our evening talk from Chas was about Beaked Whales. He told us a complex story of serendipitous discoveries of skulls and bones - some in a gift shop in Male! They are an elusive group of species, being able to dive for up to two hours but they can also be curious and come close to the boat. He passed around a tooth from a Longman's Beaked Whale and suggested there was still so much more to discover about this enigmatic group of cetaceans.

Day 7

Thursday 2nd February

Meemu Atoll, South to North

We started the day with a second snorkel off Kurali Island and all agreed it was one of the best with a huge variety of fish including the improbably coloured Clown Triggerfish with its black and white polka dot belly and deep yellow lips. It managed to avoid being photographed sadly.

We then made our way out into the deep ocean travelling up the east side of the atoll and after a rather quiet, hot day we moved back into the atoll mid-afternoon.

It was lovely to get back in the water and we enjoyed seeing more octopus, lionfish and Hawksbill Turtles. Also many Maldivian Anenomefish, were seen, some with families of small ones, and the black Clarke's Anenomefish. Confiding Cornetfish swam quite close to us.

Large groups of Oriental Sweetlips floated below us, shy Collared Butterflyfish hid under the coral and Pufferfish and Boxfish were seen.

Our evening talk from Chas was about tuna fishing which has been part of Maldivian life for centuries and is an important economic activity in the Maldives, being one of their major exports. Yellowfin Tuna has the highest value flesh and most is exported to the USA and Japan. A popular tuna product exported to Sri Lanka is a dried form which was available at Male airport! Spotted Dolphins often follow tuna shoals which are a useful marker for

fishermen. Tuna are line-caught with special unbarbed hooks which facilitates an easy release of the fish when they are flicked on board the boat. The Skipjack Tuna is a revered fish – its real name is not spoken because of local myths about its origins. It is associated with its following of Lesser Noddies.

Day 8

Friday 3rd February

Meemu Atoll to Vaavu Atoll

Early risers saw a few Spinners nearby and witnessed small tuna feeding on the plankton cloud that regularly gathered under the lights at the back of the boat. We all started the day early as the dhoni was taking us to the nearby island of Dhiggaru, a small fishing community. The village was relatively quiet as it was Friday- a day of prayers in this Muslim community. We explored the village, taking in the racks of drying tuna, the various community facilities including school, health centre and local magistrate. Feathery Casuarina or Australian Pine provided shade for communal gathering places and individual gardens had a variety of ornamental and crop trees including Coconut Palms, Breadfruit Trees, Bananas, Papaya, Frangipani, Oleander and scarlet flowered Firebush. We then spend the day out in the deep ocean, ever hopeful for bigger cetaceans, before looping back to enter Vaavu Atoll.

We anchored off Anbara Island where we were treated to an extended snorkel as we did not swim this morning. The dhoni tied up to an old landing stage and we could return whenever we wanted to. The reef is another beautiful coral landscape with easy access to the beach. Large shoals of small fish played around the landing stage, sometimes forming curtains around us. We could all indulge in our favourite species or habitat, or sit on the beach and fantasise! Perhaps we should have had a group Desert Island Discs session that evening!

This evening, with reference to his book, Reef Fishes of the Maldives, Chas talked through the major families and their more conspicuous members that we were now becoming more familiar with.

Day 9

Saturday 4th February

Vaavu Atoll - South to North

We started the day with our usual early snorkel, returning to Anbara Island. The early morning sun cast a different light on the reef, and we had another very good snorkel, and some of us were very reluctant to get out of the water!

After breakfast, we reluctantly left our island idyll, and headed east, out of Vaavu, but returning further north. Mid-morning, we stopped for a Spinner Dolphin display. About 200 dolphins were either spinning or bow-riding around us.

Mid-afternoon we anchored off Alimatha Resort Island. After the peaceful idyll of Anbara this looks and sounds rather brash, but we are to swim with Nurse Sharks! Chas reassured us they are 'gummy' so no threat to us. They are fed regularly here. We were soon in the water and below and around us were 20-30 golden brown Tawny Nurse Sharks. A Spotted Eagle Ray and Black-tipped Reef Sharks were also seen.

Luckily the Keana moors some distance from Alimatha for the night!

Our evening talk from Chas was a fascinating story of the Globe Skimmer Dragonfly, or Wandering Glider. He started his talk by referring to the strange weather we have experienced this week which could mean the development of an El Nino year. The prevailing winds should have been in the North West but have been in the North East and the accompanying atypical ocean currents may well be responsible for our lack of cetacean sightings.

Chas became interested in Globe Skimmers when he noticed swarms of them in the Maldives, which is not an obvious habitat, having no fresh surface water. His research discovered that this rather unassuming insect managed an amazing migration using the monsoon winds, from the Himalayas, down through India and the Maldives to East Africa - a journey of some 6,000 miles. This creates an attendant migration of the Amur Falcon, Eurasian Hobby and Rollers.

Day 10

Sunday 5th February

Vaavu Atoll to North Male Atoll

We started the day with a nearby feeding frenzy of Lesser Noddies and Black-naped Terns and a Manta was seen from the boat. We tried to make the most of our last snorkel before we sadly were now heading back to North Male, seeing a small group of Spinners along the way. We reached Male mid-afternoon and six of the group took up the offer of a brief look at Male city. Hugo was our guide and after purchasing postcards and souvenirs, we enjoyed the experience of wonderfully colourful fruit and vegetable markets, tasting curry leaves, Screw Pine fruit, spicy banana crisps and a delicious coconut candy. The fish market had a fascinating array of fish.

Back on the boat we met up pre-dinner to mull over the highlights of the trip - favourite moments, favourite fish, favourite locations. Jenny thanked the crew for their attentive care for us during the trip, whether it was delivering us safely to the reef, hauling us back out of the water, mixing cocktails, cooking and delivering all the delicious food or unobtrusively housekeeping our rooms. Terry thanked Chas for the amazing experience of this unique trip, enriched hugely by Chas's encyclopaedic knowledge of the Maldives which he had shared so wonderfully with us.

Jenny thanked the group for their enjoyable company and reassured them that, despite some individuals best efforts, they won't be featuring in her book of Worst Travel Clients! Chas then talked to us about other trips he does to The Seychelles, Bali and Komodo and Indonesia, which all sounded tempting!

Day 11

Monday 6th February

Male to Heathrow (Male to Perth via Singapore for Jen)

Sadly, it was time to say our farewells and head for home. The dhoni ferries us to the airport and we resign ourselves to the long flight home but with a wealth of wonderful memories to mull over.

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Species lists

Fish

Common name	Scientific name	
Black-tipped Reef Shark	<i>Carcharinus melanopterus</i>	Seen daily
White-tipped Reef Shark	<i>Triaenodon obesus</i>	Seen regularly
Nurse Shark	<i>Nebrius ferrugineus</i>	20-30 seen near Alimatha Resort
Manta Ray	<i>Manta alfredi</i> (formerly <i>birostris</i>)	One seen from dhoni
Spotted Eagle Ray	<i>Aetobatus narinari</i>	
Feathertail Stingray	<i>Pastinachus sephen</i>	
Whiptail Stingray	<i>Himantura fai</i>	5 seen from restaurant on Bandos
Silver Hardyhead	<i>Hypoatherina barnesi</i>	Seen off back of the boat
Slender Lizardfish	<i>Saurida gracilis</i>	
Reef Lizardfish	<i>Synodus variegatus</i>	Sits on rocks, easily overlooked
Needlefish	<i>Tylosaurus crocodilus</i>	
Smooth Flutemouth	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>	Also known as Cornetfish
Trumpetfish	<i>Aulostomus chinensis</i>	
Splendid Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis botche</i>	
Blotcheye Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis murdjan</i>	
Violet Soldierfish	<i>Myripristis violacea</i>	
Crown Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron diadema</i>	
White-tail Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron caudimaculatum</i>	
Sabre Squirrelfish	<i>Sargocentron spiniferum</i>	
Common Lionfish	<i>Pterois volitans</i>	Seen regularly
Spotfin Lionfish	<i>Pterois antennata</i>	
White-line Lionfish	<i>Pterois radiata</i>	
Squaretail Coral Grouper	<i>Plectropomus areolatus</i>	
Black-saddle Coral Grouper	<i>Plectropomus laevis</i>	
Peacock Rock Cod	<i>Cephalopholis argus</i>	
Vermilion Rock Cod	<i>Cephalopholis miniata</i>	
Slender Grouper	<i>Anyperodon leucogrammicus</i>	
Lunar-tailed Grouper	<i>Variola louti</i>	
Camouflage Grouper	<i>Ephinephelus polyphekadion</i>	
Four Saddle Grouper	<i>Epinephelus spiloticeps</i>	

Common name	Scientific name	
Blacktip Grouper	<i>Ephinephelus fasciatus</i>	
Yellow-tailed Basslet	<i>Pseudanthias evansi</i>	
Orange Anthias	<i>Pseudanthias squamipennis</i>	Seen in large numbers on some days, can change colour in deeper water
Bluefin Jack	<i>Caranx melampygus</i>	Sometimes in large numbers
Rainbow Runner	<i>Elagatis bipinnulata</i>	
Striped Remora (Slender Suckerfish)	<i>Echeneis naucrates</i>	One attempted to attach itself to one of the group!
One-spot Snapper	<i>Lutjanus monostigma</i>	
Kashmir Snapper	<i>Lutjanus kasmira</i>	Yellow and grey stripes, seen in large shoals
Two-spot Red Snapper	<i>Lutjanus bohar</i>	
Blackspot Snapper	<i>Lutjanus fulviflamma</i>	
Humpback Red Snapper	<i>Lutjanus gibbus</i>	
Blacktail Snapper	<i>Lutjanus fulvus</i>	
Midnight Snapper	<i>Macolor macularis</i>	
Black-and-white Snapper	<i>Macolor niger</i>	
Lunar Fusilier	<i>Caesio lunaris</i>	
Yellow-back Fusilier	<i>Caesio xanthonota</i>	
Neon Fusilier	<i>Pterocaesio tile</i>	
Striped Fusilier	<i>Pterocaesio trilineata</i>	
Variable-lined Fusilier	<i>Casesio varilineata</i>	
Oriental Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus orientalis</i>	Common, seen in juvenile form too
Harlequin Sweetlips	<i>Plectorhinchus chaetodonoides</i>	
Blackspot Emperor	<i>Gymnocranium harak</i>	
Gold-striped Emperor	<i>Gnathodentax aureolineatus</i>	
Orange-striped Emperor	<i>Lethrinus obsoletus</i>	
Orange-finned Emperor	<i>Lethrinus erythracanthus</i>	
Two-lined Monocle Bream	<i>Scolopsis bilineatus</i>	
Yellowstripe Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys flavolineatus</i>	
Yellowfin Goatfish	<i>Mulloidichthys vanicolensis</i>	
Yellow-saddle Goatfish	<i>Parupensis cyclostomus</i>	
Barred Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus trifasciatus</i>	
Dash-dot Goatfish	<i>Parupeneus barberinus</i>	
Bennett's Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon bennetti</i>	
Spotted Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon guttatissimus</i>	

Common name	Scientific name	
Collared Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon collare</i>	
Double-saddle Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon falcula</i>	
Klein's Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon kleinii</i>	
Raccoon Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon lunula</i>	
Madagascar Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon madagaskariensis</i>	
Blackback Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon merlannotus</i>	
Meyer's Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon meyeri</i>	
Oval butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon trifasciatus</i>	
Triangular Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon triangulum</i>	
Chevron Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon trifascialis</i>	
Teardrop Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon unimaculatus</i>	
Yellow-head Butterflyfish	<i>Chaetodon xanthocephalus</i>	
Long-nose Butterflyfish	<i>Forcipiger flavissimus</i>	
Very Long-nose Butterflyfish	<i>Forcipiger longirostris</i>	
Black Pyramid Butterflyfish	<i>Hemitaurichthys zoster</i>	
Reef Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus acuminatus</i>	
Indian Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus pleurotinia</i>	
Schooling Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus diphreutus</i>	
Masked Bannerfish	<i>Heniochus monoceros</i>	
Blue-face Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus xanthometopon</i>	
Emperor Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus imperator</i>	
Regal Angelfish	<i>Pygoplites diacanthus</i>	
Multispine Angelfish	<i>Centropyge multispinis</i>	
Hybrid Angelfish	<i>Centropyge spp.</i>	
Forster's (Blackside) Hawkfish	<i>Paracirrhites forsteri</i>	
Green Damselfish	<i>Amblyglyphidodon batunai</i>	
Blackfoot or Maldivian Anemonefish	<i>Amphipron nigripes</i>	
Clark's Anemonefish	<i>Amphipron clarkii</i>	
Sergeant Major	<i>Abudefduf vaigiensis</i>	
Chocolate-dip Chromis	<i>Chromis dimidiata</i>	
Golden Chromis	<i>Chromis ternatensis</i>	
Blue-green Chromis	<i>Chromis viridis</i>	Seen regularly
Humbug Dascyllus	<i>Dascyllus aruanus</i>	

Common name	Scientific name	
Indian Dascyllus	<i>Pomacentrus indicus</i>	
Threespot Dascyllus	<i>Dascyllus trimaculatus</i>	
Neon Damselfish	<i>Pomacentris caeruleus</i>	
Redbreasted Maori Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus fasciatus</i>	
Napoleon Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus undulatus</i>	
Bird Wrasse	<i>Gomphosus caeruleus</i>	
Checkerboard Wrasse	<i>Halichoerus hortulanus</i>	
Adorned Wrasse	<i>Halichoerus cosmetus</i>	
Rockmover Wrasse	<i>Novaculichthys taeniourus</i>	
Blunthead Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma amblycephalum</i>	
Six-barred Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma hardwicke</i>	
Fivestripe Wrasse	<i>Thalassoma quinquevittatum</i>	
Cleaner Wrasse	<i>Labroides dimidiatus</i>	
Barred Thicklip Wrasse	<i>Hemigymnus fasciatus</i>	
Blackeye Thicklip Wrasse	<i>Hemigymnus melapterus</i>	
Slingjaw Wrasse	<i>Epibulus insidiator</i>	
Bicolour Parrotfish	<i>Cetoscarus bicolor</i>	
Roundhead Parrotfish	<i>Chlorurus strongylocephalus</i>	
Bullethead Parrotfish	<i>Chlorurus sordidus</i>	
Bridled Parrotfish	<i>Scarus frenatus</i>	
Dusky Parrotfish	<i>Scarus niger</i>	
Greencheek Parrotfish	<i>Scarus prasiognathus</i>	
Eclipse Parrotfish	<i>Scarus russelii</i>	
Yellowbar Parrotfish	<i>Scarus scaber</i>	
Spot-tailed Sandperch	<i>Parapercis hexopthalma</i>	
Brown-blotched Sandperch	<i>Parapercis millepunctata</i>	
Maldivian Sandperch	<i>Parapercis signata</i>	
Maldives Triplefin	<i>Helcogramma maldivensis</i>	
Circular Batfish	<i>Platax orbicularis</i>	
Coral Rabbitfish	<i>Siganus corallinus</i>	
Moorish Idol	<i>Zanclus cornutus</i>	
Powder-blue Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus leucosternon</i>	
Lined Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus lineatus</i>	

Common name	Scientific name	
Elongate Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus mata</i>	
Convict Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus triostegus</i>	
Night Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus thompsoni</i>	
Yellowfin Surgeonfish	<i>Acanthurus xanthopterus</i>	
Lined Bristletooth Surgeonfish	<i>Ctenochaetus striatus</i>	
Humpback Unicornfish	<i>Naso brachycentron</i>	
Vlaming's Unicornfish	<i>Naso vlamingii</i>	
Orange-spine Unicornfish	<i>Naso lituratus</i>	
Sailfin Tang	<i>Zebrasoma desjardini</i>	
Sailfish	<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i>	
Flying Fish	<i>Exocetus spp</i>	
Long-nose Filefish	<i>Oxymonacanthus longirostris</i>	
Clown Triggerfish	<i>Balistapus conspicillum</i>	Conspicuous black and white polka dot belly and yellow lips
Yellow-margin Triggerfish	<i>Pseudobalistes flavimarginatus</i>	
Titan Triggerfish	<i>Balistapus viridescens</i>	
Red-toothed Triggerfish	<i>Odonus niger</i>	
Indian Triggerfish	<i>Melichthys indicus</i>	
Half-moon Triggerfish	<i>Sufflamen chrysopterus</i>	
Yellow Boxfish	<i>Ostracion cubicus</i>	
Saddled Sharpnose Pufferfish	<i>Canthigaster valentini</i>	
Reef Pipefish	<i>Corythoichthys haematopterus</i>	

Mammals

Scientific name	Common name	
Spinner Dolphin	<i>Stenella longirostris</i>	
Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops aduncus</i>	Small groups seen occasionally

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	seen regularly
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>	seen on Bandos
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	"
Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	seen regularly
Lesser Noddy	<i>Anous tenuirostris</i>	seen in large numbers at times
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	seen occasionally
Saunders's Tern	<i>Sternula saundersi</i>	seen regularly
Black-naped Tern	<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>	"
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>	seen and heard regularly
Maldivian House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens maledivicus</i>	"
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	seen on Bandos

Others

Common name	Scientific name	
Fruit Bat	<i>Pteropus giganteus ssp maldivarum</i>	seen on Bandos
Hawksbill Turtle	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	seen regularly
Common Spiny Lizard	<i>Coletes versicolor</i>	"
Ghost Crab species	<i>Ocypodinae spp</i>	"
Swimming Crab species	<i>Portunidae spp</i>	"
Lobster species		"
Reef Octopus		"
Sea Cucumbers		"
Giant Clam		"
Sea Squirts		seen occasionally
Violet Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	seen occasionally around the boat
Small Blue Butterfly		seen once on the boat
Globe Skimmer Dragonfly	<i>Pantala flavescens</i>	"