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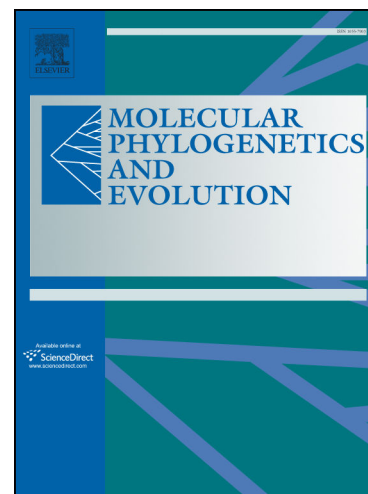
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Genomic SNPs resolve the phylogeny of an ancient amphibian island radiation from the Seychelles

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Highlights

- ddRADseq resolves phylogeny of Seychelles caecilians (Amphibia: Gymnophiona).
- Permitting individual missing data up to 90% benefits phylogenetic inference.
- Paraphyletic genera support transfer of all *Grandisonia* species to *Hypogeophis*.
- Phylogeny supports single origin of diminutive, abbreviated caecilians.

Abstract

Unusually for oceanic islands, the granitic Seychelles host multiple lineages of endemic amphibians. This includes an ancient (>63 million years old) radiation of eight caecilian species, most of which occur on multiple islands. These caecilians have a complicated taxonomic history and their phylogenetic inter-species relationships have been difficult to resolve. Double-digest RAD sequencing (ddRADseq) has been applied extensively to phylogeography and increasingly to phylogenetics but its utility for resolving ancient divergences is less well established. To address this, we applied ddRADseq to generate a genome-wide SNP panel for phylogenomic analyses of the Seychelles caecilians, whose phylogeny has so far not been satisfactorily resolved with traditional DNA markers. Based on 129,154 SNPs, we resolved deep and shallow splits, with strong

support. Our findings demonstrate the capability of genome-wide SNPs for evolutionary inference at multiple taxonomic levels and support the recently proposed synonymy of *Grandisonia* Taylor, 1968 with *Hypogeophis* Peters, 1879. We revealed three clades of *Hypogeophis* (large-, medium- and short-bodied) and identify a single origin of the diminutive, stocky-bodied and pointy-snouted phenotype.

Keywords

ddRADseq, phylogenomics, ancient clade, island biogeography, caecilian

1. Introduction

The Seychelles archipelago in the Western Indian Ocean is a Gondwanan microcontinent that separated from India ~63 *Mya* (million years ago) (Collier et al., 2008; estimates summarised in Gower et al., 2016) and encompasses several montane granitic islands, the largest of which is ~150 km² (Gardner, 1986; Labisko et al. 2022). Fluctuations in sea level during the Pleistocene changed connectivity between the islands and imposed range restrictions on fauna and flora through changes in exposed island area. The last lowstand on the Seychelles was ~21 *Kya* (thousand years ago) during the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), when sea level was 120 (±5) metres below its present level (Miller et al., 2005), which would have connected all major granitic islands. Prior to this, the Penultimate Glacial Period (PGP) caused the last major drop ~140 *Kya* (Colleoni et al., 2016). Such processes make the Seychelles an excellent natural laboratory for studies of biogeography, vicariance and inter-island gene flow. The impacts of these processes are particularly pronounced for terrestrial organisms that cannot easily disperse across sea water, such as amphibians.

The Seychelles are home to thirteen endemic amphibian species, including a radiation of caecilians (Gymnophiona). Distributions of these species vary across the islands, which are of different sizes and distances from each other (Labisko et al., 2022). This provides several opportunities to study the historical biogeography of the Seychelles. Seychellean caecilians comprise a clade of eight species (Labisko et al., 2022; Maddock et al., 2018) in the family Grandisoniidae Lescure, Renous, and Gasc, 1986, which also includes two African species and a clade of peninsular Indian species (Gower et al., 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2011). However, a confident understanding of the diversification of these caecilians is lacking because their taxonomic history is complex, and their phylogenetic relationships incompletely resolved. Until recently, Seychelles caecilians were classified in three endemic genera, but molecular phylogenies have repeatedly indicated that the most-recently described genus, *Grandisonia* Taylor, 1968, is paraphyletic with respect to *Hypogeophis* Peters, 1879 (Gower et al., 2011; Gwilt et al., 2021; Loader et al., 2007; Maddock et al., 2016; San Mauro et al., 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2003, 2002), leading to the proposed synonymy of *Grandisonia* with *Hypogeophis* (Dubois et al., 2021), which we follow here. Thus, we recognise the Seychelles caecilians as comprising two endemic genera, *Praslinia* Boulenger, 1908 which is monotypic and *Hypogeophis* which includes seven species. Seychellean endemics featured prominently in early molecular phylogenetic studies of caecilians, including the first mitochondrial ribosomal (rRNA) phylogeny (Hedges et al., 1993). However, subsequent analyses of these markers (Loader et al., 2007; Wilkinson et al., 2003, 2002), of mitochondrial genomes (Gwilt et al., 2021; Maddock et al., 2016; San Mauro et al., 2014; Zhang and Wake, 2009) and of combinations of mitochondrial and nuclear genes (Gower et al., 2016, 2011; Maddock et al., 2018; San Mauro et al., 2012) have produced multiple alternative topologies with low support for conflicting groups. Despite this, some inferred relationships are consistent amongst studies; *Praslinia cooperi* is resolved as the sister taxa to all other Seychelles caecilians, and *Hypogeophis larvatus* and *H.*

sechellensis are resolved as sister taxa (Gower et al., 2011; Gwilt et al., 2021; Loader et al., 2007; Maddock et al., 2016; San Mauro et al., 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2003, 2002). The lack of a well-supported phylogeny for the Seychelles caecilians is a barrier to understanding their evolution and historical biogeography. The evolution of Seychelles caecilians is of particular interest given their status as the only extant, truly oceanic-island caecilians, their diversity of life-history modes (San Mauro et al., 2014), and morphological diversity that includes three of the smallest extant caecilian species with the fewest vertebrae (Maddock et al., 2018).

High-resolution, genomic scale, single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) offer hope for resolving Seychellean caecilian phylogeny, but it is unclear how useful such data are for inferring ancient divergences (>40 *Mya*) including any within this radiation. Using methods such as double digest restriction-site associated DNA sequencing (ddRADseq; Peterson et al., 2012), SNP datasets are commonly applied to assess phylogenetic relationships of rapidly radiated or recently diverged groups (e.g., Ambu et al., 2023; Bombonato et al., 2020; Ford et al., 2015; Streicher et al., 2014). At deeper evolutionary timescales, the use of RADseq to collect sufficient numbers of orthologous SNPs for phylogenetic inference is made difficult by allelic dropout, in which loci are unsampled due to mutations occurring in the enzyme recognition site (Leaché and Oaks, 2017). However, RADseq data are being increasingly applied to more deeply diverged groups. For example, alignments from RADseq-derived SNPs have been used to resolve species-level relationships in divergences up to ~55 *Mya* in phrynosomatid lizards (Leaché et al., 2015), and 50 *Mya* in flowering plants (Eaton et al., 2017).

For amphibians, these challenges of applying RADseq-derived SNPs are compounded by their large genomes (e.g., Liedtke et al., 2018), which may make recovering enough homologous loci for phylogenetic inference at deeper evolutionary time scales difficult (Rodríguez et al., 2017). These issues can be mitigated by selecting a narrower size range for loci, sequencing at greater depth and by using double-digest RAD library preparation to increase the likelihood that the same locus is sequenced in multiple individuals (Rodríguez et al., 2017; Salas-Lizana and Oono, 2018). Despite the large genomes of amphibians, RADseq phylogenomic studies have resolved genus- to species-level relationships, including up to 10 *Mya* in *Alytes* midwife toads (Ambu et al., 2023) and 16 *Mya* in *Leptopelis* tree frogs (Reyes-Velasco et al., 2018). Diversity in divergence times, significant mitochondrial discordance, large-genome size and recalcitrant nodes make the Seychelles caecilians an interesting case to further challenge the effectiveness of RADseq-derived SNPs in resolving species-level relationships, which motivated our current study. Here, we aimed to resolve the species-level relationships of the caecilians of the Seychelles while also testing the efficacy of RADseq-derived SNPs in resolving phylogenetic relationships in a group with wide-ranging divergences (<63 *Mya*; Gower et al., 2016; Maddock et al., 2018).

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample collection, DNA extraction and ddRAD library construction

A total of 38 samples were sequenced: two individuals of *Hypogeophis montanus*, three individuals of *H. brevis*, five individuals of *H. sechellensis* plus four individuals of each of the other five Seychelles caecilian species and two outgroup species (Table 1). The two outgroup species, *Gegeneophis ramaswamii* (endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India) and *Idiocranium russeli* (endemic to Cameroon) have varying inferred divergence times from the ingroup of approximately 79-103 *Mya* (Roelants et al., 2007; Wilkinson et al., 2002; Zhang and Wake, 2009) and 130-191 *Mya* (Zhang and Wake, 2009), respectively. DNA was extracted using SeraPure paramagnetic beads (Rohland and Reich, 2012) following a protocol detailed in Lambert et al.

(2019) or with a DNeasy Blood & Tissue kit (Qiagen) following the manufacturers protocol. Using a protocol modified from Peterson et al. (2012) samples were cleaned and digested using the restriction enzymes *MspI* and *SbfI*, indexed (by ligating an adapter with a 5' barcode) and PCR amplified (with a 5' barcoded PCR-primer). Changes from this protocol are detailed in the methods and supplementary material of Lambert et al. (2019). Libraries were sequenced on a single 300 cycle Illumina NextSeq 500 run using a high-output kit at the Natural History Museum, London.

2.2. SNP genotyping and filtering

Resulting fastQ data files of sequenced libraries were checked in FastQC v.0.11.9 (<http://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/fastqc/>) and demultiplexed in STACKS v.2.52 (Rochette and Catchen, 2017). Individual fastQ files were trimmed and filtered in Trimmomatic v.0.39 (Bolger et al., 2014). Reads were assembled, mapped and SNP genotyped in dDocent v.2.94 (Puritz et al., 2014) with paired-end assembly, a sequence identity threshold of 0.9 and BWA mapping parameters 1, 4 and 6 for the match score value, mismatch score, and gap opening penalty respectively.

Although there are potentially adverse consequences for improper clustering of putatively orthologous loci, empirical testing using other amphibian RAD datasets found that inferred topologies and their resolution were robust to changes of the intra-sample clustering threshold (Rancilhac et al., 2023). Among the taxa included in tests by Rancilhac et al. (2023), a clustering threshold of 0.89–0.91 maximised the number of parsimony informative sites in the assembly. We therefore applied a clustering threshold of 0.9 to maximise the number of loci recovered without over-splitting, although it should be noted that the crown age of Seychelles caecilians is much older than of the taxa tested by Rancilhac et al. (2023) and so these parameters may not be optimal for our taxa.

For reference contig assembly, we set a minimum coverage threshold of three, both for sequences within individuals and for the number of individuals representing unique sequences. To appropriately balance the possibility of including erroneous SNPs with that of losing variants unique to single species (and therefore a few individuals only) we filtered using VCFtools v.0.1.16 (Danecek et al., 2011) for a minor allele count of two, minimum read quality of 30, minimum genotype call frequency 0.5 (i.e. only sites that are present in 50% of individuals) and minimum mean read depth of two. There was no maximum threshold for missing data per individual.

2.3. Phylogenomic analyses

The Python script *VCF2phylip* v.2.6 (Ortiz, 2019) was used to convert the filtered VCF to PHYLIP format for phylogenetic analyses. IQTREE v. 2.2.0.7 (Minh et al., 2020b) was then used to output an additional alignment without constant sites to apply the ascertainment bias correction (+ASC option). IQTREE2 considers sites which contain only a non-ambiguous code (e.g. C) and any ambiguity code also containing that base (e.g. Y or S) to be constant and therefore removes these from the alignment. Maximum likelihood (ML) analyses were run in IQ-TREE2. We used the inbuilt ModelFinder (Kalyaanamoorthy et al., 2017) to run model selection in IQ-TREE on PHYLIP files with variable sites only (MFP+ASC models) and the alignment including both variable and invariant (according to IQ-TREE) sites (MFP+I models). The ultra-fast bootstrap 2 (Thi Hoang et al., 2017) was applied with 10,000 iterations and with hill-climbing nearest neighbour interchange (option -bnni) and Shimodaira-Hasegawa approximate likelihood ratio testing (option -alrt) with 1,000 iterations to avoid over-estimation of branch support values (Guindon et al., 2010). Site concordance factors (sCF) were calculated with 10,000 quartets to measure discordance in our

dataset by the percentage of decisive sites supporting the resultant topology (Minh et al., 2020a). These analyses were replicated for different permitted levels of missing data per locus (0%, 5%, 10% and 80%) to determine whether analyses converged on the same topology regardless of the amount of missing data.

BEAST2 v.2.7.1 (Bouckaert et al., 2014) was also applied to generate a maximum clade credibility (MCC) tree using Bayesian inference, to assess whether our inferred trees were robust to methodological differences. BEAST2 was run on the unprocessed PHYLIP file produced from the filtered VCF (with no restrictions for ambiguity codes), with three independent runs of the Markov chain each with 20 million generations. We assessed any possible incongruence in the IQ-TREE bootstrap trees by visualising the alternate splits in SplitsTree v.5.0.0 (Dress and Huson, 2004; Huson and Bryant, 2006).

To account for the possibility that any discordance in our trees is due to hybridisation (given the possibility for historic migration between islands) or incomplete lineage sorting (ILS), we applied the species tree reconstruction method SVDQuartets (Chifman and Kubatko, 2014) implemented in PAUP* v.4.0a (Swofford, 2003). Analysis was run on a NEXUS formatted alignment (with no restrictions on ambiguity codes), using exhaustive sampling (38,528 quartets) and with 100 bootstrap replicates. This tree was used as the starting tree for network analysis with SNaQ implemented in PhyloNetworks v.0.16.3 (Solís-Lemus et al., 2017). The table of quartet concordance factors (CF) used as the input was produced using the R function SNPs2CF (www.github.com/melisaolave/SNPs2CF, see Olave and Meyer (2019)). Concordance factors were calculated between species and subsampling 50 alleles per species quartet ($n_{\text{quartets}} = 50$), with 100 bootstrap replicates. The resulting 10,500 quartets were used to infer the network, testing up to three reticulation events ($h_{\text{max}} = 0:3$) with 10 runs each.

3. Results

3.1. RADseq data processing and filtering

For the 38 individuals sequenced, a total of 191,494,502 reads with a phred score greater than 30 were obtained. The number of forward reads per individual ranged from 38,959 to 16,625,293, excluding one *H. sechellensis* individual (SM278) with only 7,355 (forward) reads which was removed from further analyses. After coverage cut-offs were applied, 580,565 sequences remained that were assembled into 130,195 contigs. Across all individuals 1,581,926 variants were called, which following filters applied in VCFtools left 257,353 sites (170,379 were SNPs and the remainder indels). Of the 257,353 sites, 99.97% had a mean read depth >5 and 95.58% >10 . The average percentage of sites unsampled per individual was 22.4% for ingroup samples and 91.8% for outgroups, but this varied greatly from 9.2–90.3% for ingroups and 85.0–96.0% for outgroups (Table 1).

3.2. Tree topology, support and convergence

The PHYLIP formatted alignment for phylogenetic inference in IQTREE2 comprised 129,154 variable sites. The best model according to the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was TVM+F+ASC+R2. The ML bootstrap majority-rule consensus tree was fully resolved and generally highly supported (Fig. 1) with all species-level branches (i.e., those subtending species) having maximal bootstrap proportions and SH-aLRT values. Site concordance factors showed good support, with no branches having an sCF value lower than the 33% expected by chance alone, and

most branches having sCF values over 50% (where the majority of sites support that topology) (Fig. 1). The ML tree placed *P. cooperi* as the sister taxa to all other ingroup species. Three main clades within *Hypogeophis* were recovered: (*H. rostratus* + *H. alternans*), (*H. sechellensis* + *H. larvatus*) and (*H. pti* + *H. montanus* + *H. brevis*). Additionally, *H. brevis* and *H. montanus* were inferred to be sister taxa. The sCF support values for clades within *Hypogeophis* ranged from 36.6% to 84.2%. Within *H. rostratus*, there were well supported internal branches comprising samples from the northern island of Praslin (100 for UFBoot and sh-aLRT, 82.2% for sCF) and the southern island of Mahé (100 for UFBoot and sh-aLRT, 66.0% for sCF). The corresponding splits network (Fig. 2) further illustrates the maximal support for tree-like interspecies relationships with reticulation restricted to relationships within species. The alignment containing both variable and invariant (as per IQ-TREE's consideration of ambiguity codes) sites comprised 170,379 sites. Phylogenetic inference in IQTREE2 with this alignment yielded the same topology as with the variable sites only alignment. Apart from the lower value for the branch leading to the ingroup taxa, support was also similar (Fig. S1).

In the per-locus missing data threshold analyses, the 10% (666 characters), 50% (129,154 characters) and 80% (415,334 characters) permitted missing data matrices recovered the same (inter-specific) topology. Support was similar across these trees (marginally lower for 10% and marginally higher for 80%). However, the lowest supported *Hypogeophis* clade for the 50% permitted missing data tree (*H. larvatus* + *H. sechellensis* + *H. pti* + *H. montanus* + *H. brevis*) had lower support in the 80% matrix (sCF value of 34.9 vs 36.6) (Fig. S2). Analysis of the 5% matrix (161 characters) yielded a mostly resolved tree, but with low support. Unsurprisingly, the data matrix with no missing samples per locus (0%, 21 characters) yielded a generally poorly resolved and supported tree. The outgroup samples had exceptionally high levels of missing SNPs (> 85%: Table 1) and intraspecific internal branches for these taxa were moderately well-supported (mean bootstrap proportions of 68.5% for *I. russeli* and 72.5% for *G. ramaswamii*).

The PHYLIP file without restriction for ambiguity codes for Bayesian inference in BEAST2 contained 170,379 SNPs. The ML topology for the full dataset was largely congruent with the 95% MCC tree generated in BEAST2 (Fig. S3), except that the diminutive, short-bodied Seychelles species (*H. pti* + *H. brevis* + *H. montanus*) were sister to (*H. rostratus* + *H. alternans*) in the BEAST2 tree rather than to (*H. sechellensis* + *H. larvatus*) in the ML tree, but this had lower support (posterior probability of 0.92) than other relationships upon which the two trees agree. The multi-species coalescent tree from SVDQuartets inferred the same species-level topology as the ML trees, with maximum support, except for the branch subtending the clade (*H. larvatus* + *H. sechellensis* + *H. pti* + *H. montanus* + *H. brevis*) which had a bootstrap value of 97% (Fig. S4). The phylogenetic network identified the optimal number of hybridisation events to be two ($h = 2$) (Fig. S5, Table S1), (*G. ramaswamii*: $\gamma = 0.153$; (*H. brevis* + *H. montanus*): $\gamma = 0.0729$; Fig. 3).

4. Discussion

Our results add to a growing number of studies (e.g., Ambu et al., 2023; Bombonato et al., 2020; Secci-Petretto et al., 2023) that demonstrate the usefulness of RADseq SNP data for reconstructing relationships across different temporal and taxonomic scales. Our analyses of RADseq-derived SNPs were able to infer well-supported phylogenetic relationships of grandisoniid caecilians ranging from young (within species) to much older (between ingroup and outgroups >60 Mya) divergences. The ML SNP tree is a fully resolved and highly supported topology that overcomes previous persistent difficulties with incongruence, low-support and incomplete sampling of taxa in inferring interspecific relationships among Seychelles caecilians. Some degree of discordance within *Hypogeophis* is indicated by sCF values. The lowest sCF (36.6, Fig. 1) is for the branch that

subtends the clade (*H. larvatus* + *H. sechellensis* + *H. pti* + *H. montanus* + *H. brevis*). We consider this lower concordance to be likely explained by the correlation between branch length and sCF (Arcila et al., 2021; Burbrink et al., 2020) and thus the higher probability of ILS in this short branch.

The two putative hybridising edges inferred by the network analysis (Fig. 3) explain some of the discordant signal, but both are unexpected and merit further investigation. Hybridisation between the common ancestor of *Hypogeophis* and the *Gegeneophis ramaswamii* lineage implies transoceanic dispersal between Seychelles and India. Taken at face value, this seems implausible but may have occurred when these land masses were closer together. Understanding the timing and plausibility of this event would benefit from analyses including additional Indian grandisoniids. Hybridisation between the lineage leading to *H. alternans* and the common ancestor of *H. brevis* + *H. montanus* is also perhaps implausible given substantial differences in body size, but further basic knowledge of ecology and life history would be helpful in assessing plausibility in this case. Taxa involved in the putative hybridization events had some of the highest missing data levels in our study with *G. ramaswamii* having a mean of 89.3% missing data (n = 4) and one of the *H. brevis* (SM356) samples having 90.3% missing data (Table 1) suggesting that the impact of missing data on the detection of introgression merits further exploration.

Consistent with almost all previous phylogenetic analyses of Seychelles caecilians, *P. cooperi* is inferred to be the sister taxon to all other Seychelles species, and *H. larvatus* and *H. sechellensis* are inferred to be sister species (e.g., Gower et al., 2011; Gwilt et al., 2021; Loader et al., 2007; Maddock et al., 2016; San Mauro et al., 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2003, 2002). The ingroup topology includes three well-supported main clades within *Hypogeophis*, (*H. alternans* + *H. rostratus*), (*H. larvatus* + *H. sechellensis*), and (*H. pti* + *H. montanus* + *H. brevis*), which correspond to large, medium, and small-bodied phenotypes, respectively. The interrelationships of these three clades is the least well supported part of the phylogeny, evident from the low sCFs observed on the branches connecting these three clades (Fig. 1) and the alternative topology recovered in the BEAST2 analysis where *H. rostratus* + *H. alternans* is the sister clade of *H. brevis* + *H. montanus* (Fig. S3). Additionally, a divide between north and south island lineages that has previously been reported for *H. rostratus* based on mitochondrial and nuclear loci (Maddock et al., 2020) is further supported by the Mahé and Praslin branches on the ML SNP tree, although this is based on only four individuals (Fig. 1).

4.1. *Hypogeophis alternans* and *H. rostratus* as sister taxa

We resolved *H. alternans* (the type species of *Grandisonia*) and *H. rostratus* (the type species of *Hypogeophis*) as sister taxa, with full support from UFBoot and SH-aLRT (100%) and with the greatest share of support (47.9%) from sCF (alternate topologies were supported by 30.3 and 21.8% of sites). This grouping is further supported by morphology (these species have the largest body sizes among Seychelles caecilians: e.g., Taylor, 1968). The paraphyly of *Grandisonia* supports the proposal of Dubois et al. (2021) to transfer all *Grandisonia* species to *Hypogeophis*. Our results contrast with previous phylogenetic studies that have not found a well-supported consensus on the relationships of these species (e.g., Gwilt et al., 2021; Loader et al., 2007; San Mauro et al., 2014).

4.2. Monophyly of diminutive and abbreviated *Hypogeophis*

RADseq SNP data strongly support the monophyly of a group of diminutive, short-bodied and pointy-snouted species (*H. brevis*, *H. montanus* and *H. pti*), consistent with a single origin of this distinctive phenotype. This contradicts findings from analyses of mitochondrial 16S rRNA

(Maddock et al., 2018) and mitochondrial genomes (Gwilt et al., 2021) in which the sampled diminutive *Hypogeophis* are not monophyletic. Within this clade, *H. brevis* and *H. montanus* are resolved as sister species supporting findings from 16S rRNA data (Maddock et al., 2018) and reflecting their co-distribution. *Hypogeophis brevis* and *H. montanus* occur only on the large and high southern island of Mahé and presumably diverged from each other within this island, whereas *H. pti* is found only on the northern island of Praslin (Maddock et al., 2017). On Mahé, *H. montanus* is found at higher elevations (718-731m) than *H. brevis* (350-650m) (Maddock et al., 2018). *Hypogeophis brevis* and *H. montanus* are difficult to distinguish based on external morphology, with *H. montanus* possessing a slightly smaller head and more primary annuli (Maddock et al., 2018). However, there is very little discordance in this part of our new tree (Fig. 2) and strong support for the reciprocal monophyly of these two species. In addition, branch lengths in the ML SNP tree indicate substantial genetic distances between *H. montanus* and *H. brevis*, as was found from more limited mitochondrial and nuclear data (Maddock et al., 2018).

4.4. RADseq phylogenomic inference is resistant to missing data

High levels of topological congruence together with high branch support across multiple thresholds of missing data (10%, 50%, and 80%) suggest that the presence of missing data was not problematic (Fig. S2). In contrast, the repeatedly inferred sister-species relationship between *H. larvatus* and *H. sechellensis* (Gower et al., 2011; Gwilt et al., 2021; Loader et al., 2007; Maddock et al., 2016; San Mauro et al., 2014; Wilkinson et al., 2003, 2002) is not recovered at the 0% and 5% missing data thresholds (Fig. S2). This corroborates previous investigations with empirical (Crotti et al., 2019), simulated (Huang and Knowles, 2016) and combined (Rick et al., 2022) datasets that reveal potentially negative consequences of minimising or excluding missing data in RADseq phylogenetics. That our analyses were able to infer strongly supported relationships using a ddRADseq dataset with substantial amounts of missing data extends this observation to evolutionary timescales that are seldom studied with RADseq data. Our results are similar to those from a recent study by Ambu et al. (2023) on *Alytes* midwife toads, whose phylogeny has also been difficult to resolve with mitochondrial or nuclear genes alone or in combination but was resolved with RADseq data. As in our dataset, Ambu et al.'s (2023) result was robust in analyses of larger but more incomplete datasets, but in more stringently filtered smaller datasets topological uncertainty increased.

5. Conclusions

Our ML analyses of SNPs support commonly inferred relationships among Seychelles caecilians (*Praslinia* as the sister taxa to the other Seychelles caecilians, *H. larvatus* and *H. sechellensis* as sister species), but also resolve previously more recalcitrant ones, revealing the close relationship of the diminutive species (*H. brevis*, *H. montanus*, *H. pti*) on the one hand and the larger species (*H. alternans*, *H. rostratus*) on the other and confirming the paraphyly of '*Grandisonia*'. Sampling widely across the genome with RADseq phylogenomics may avoid some of the issues associated with mitochondrial gene studies, including uniparental inheritance and low representation of the entire genome, both of which can warp estimates of a species' ancestry and/or demographic history (Ballard and Whitlock, 2004). Moreover, cytonuclear discordance is prevalent in studies using both nuclear and mitochondrial genes due to, for example, introgression (see Secci-Petretto et al., 2023 and Streicher and Day, 2020). Here, sensitively applied filtering has allowed relationships of disparate age to be resolved from the same dataset, which sets the scene for biogeographic and additional evolutionary investigations that rely on an understanding of how Seychelles caecilians are related. Further work on this system should investigate evolutionary processes within Mahé, including the recentness and/or completeness of the split between *H.*

brevis and *H. montanus*. In addition, comparative phylogeographic studies using fine-scale genomic data could reveal the causes of the disparate distributions of species in the Seychelles including incomplete dispersal, local extinction, and possible intra-island speciation events.

This study used reduced-representation genomic SNP data to produce the best-supported phylogeny of Seychelles caecilians to date, including well-supported clades of large-, medium- and small-bodied *Hypogeophis*. However the interrelationships of these three clades remains less certain, likely due to a short internal branch. The use of whole-genome sequencing (WGS) could dramatically increase the number of phylogenetically informative markers, although given the large genome sizes of Seychelles caecilians (Liedtke et al., 2018), assembly and analysis of these genomes could be problematic (Zhang et al., 2019). There are also some interesting biogeographical patterns in the distributions of the Seychelles caecilians (e.g. single-island species) that could be better understood with molecular dating of the phylogeny, however the requisite nuclear mutation rate is not yet known for caecilians. In addition, morphological data should be investigated for possible synapomorphies of the large-, medium- and small-bodied *Hypogeophis* clades identified here.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Miranda B. Sherlock: Conceptualisation, Investigation, Formal analysis, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Jeffrey W. Streicher:** Conceptualisation, Methodology, Resources, Writing – review & editing. **David J. Gower:** Resources, Writing – review & editing. **Simon T. Maddock:** Conceptualisation, Resources, Writing – review & editing. **Ronald A. Nussbaum:** Resources. **Oommen V. Oommen:** Resources. **Ana Serra Silva:** Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. **Julia J. Day:** Conceptualisation, Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Resources. **Mark Wilkinson:** Conceptualisation, Supervision, Writing – review & editing, Resources, Funding acquisition.

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Data availability

All demultiplexed illumina read data generated for this study has been deposited at the NCBI Sequence Read Archive (SRA) with the BioProject number PRJNA1034088. Raw illumina read data and matrices used in this study are deposited at the UCL Research Data Repository under the project DOI: 10.5522/04/24459628.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Figure legends

Figure 1. Majority-rule consensus of the maximum likelihood tree inferred with IQ-TREE. Full UFBoot and SH-aLRT branch support is labelled with '100*' (lower support not shown), sCF values are in italics (values less than 33.3 not shown). Inset map of the Seychelles granitic islands that are occupied by multiple caecilian species. Coloured sample IDs represent the island where the sample was collected. Approximate maximum length and vertebrae numbers given in italics.

Figure 2. Splits network of IQ-TREE bootstrap trees. Scale bar indicates substitutions per site. Sample IDs are coloured to indicate the island where the sample was collected (see inset map of the Seychelles).

Figure 3. The optimal network inferred in the PhyloNetworks analysis. Blue edges indicated inferred hybridisation events. Numbers adjacent to blue lines are γ inheritance values representing the proportion of the genome inherited from the ancestor.

Tables

Table 1. Table of sample information including the proportion of unsampled SNPs present in the final alignment. BMNH = Natural History Museum; UK = University of Kerala = UMMZ = University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. sf = sequencing failed.

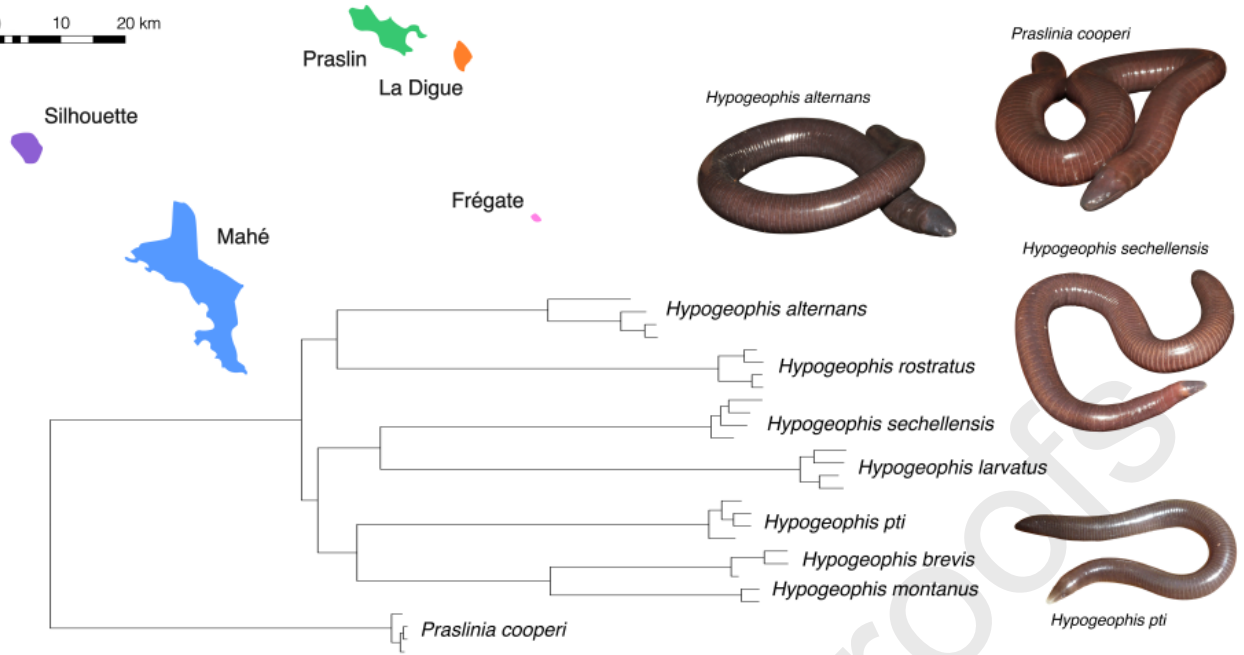
| Sample ID | Species | Locality | Raw forward read no. | Missing data % | Voucher prefix | Voucher code | NCBI SRA no. |
|-----------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| RAN 31756 | <i>Hypogeophis rostratus</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 4,054,922 | 17.1 | UMMZ | 200500 | SRR26876954 |
| RAN 31329 | <i>Hypogeophis rostratus</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 8,597,062 | 13.3 | UMMZ | 193026 | SRR26876955 |
| SM 326 | <i>Hypogeophis rostratus</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 6,171,580 | 14.8 | BMNH | 2005.1814 | SRR26876953 |
| SM 376 | <i>Hypogeophis rostratus</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 924,721 | 32.0 | BMNH | 2005.1810 | SRR26876952 |
| SM 296 | <i>Hypogeophis alternans</i> | Praslin Seychelles | 2,104,230 | 15.6 | BMNH | 2005.1700 | SRR26876974 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------|------|------|-----------|-------------|
| SM 318 | <i>Hypogeophis alternans</i> | La Digue, Seychelles | 9,486,954 | 9.2 | BMNH | 2005.1676 | SRR26876962 |
| SM 397 | <i>Hypogeophis alternans</i> | Silhouette, Seychelles | 7,530,203 | 10.7 | BMNH | 2005.1709 | SRR26876951 |
| SM 303 | <i>Hypogeophis alternans</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 3,792,203 | 17.0 | BMNH | 2005.1701 | SRR26876973 |
| SM 238 | <i>Hypogeophis larvatus</i> | Silhouette, Seychelles | 4,589,528 | 17.5 | BMNH | 2005.1732 | SRR26876942 |
| SM 473 | <i>Hypogeophis larvatus</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 16,625,293 | 14.5 | BMNH | 2005.1730 | SRR26876939 |
| SM 351 | <i>Hypogeophis larvatus</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 3,328,155 | 22.0 | BMNH | 2005.1717 | SRR26876940 |
| SM 316 | <i>Hypogeophis larvatus</i> | La Digue, Seychelles | 3,164,344 | 20.9 | BMNH | 2005.1715 | SRR26876941 |
| SM 379 | <i>Hypogeophis sechellensis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 3,757,841 | 16.0 | BMNH | 2005.1752 | SRR26876967 |
| SM 278 | <i>Hypogeophis sechellensis</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 7,355 | sf | BMNH | 2005.1755 | SRR26876969 |
| SM 249 | <i>Hypogeophis sechellensis</i> | Silhouette, Seychelles | 2,071,655 | 22.7 | BMNH | 2005.1758 | SRR26876970 |
| SM 338 | <i>Hypogeophis sechellensis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 6,663,689 | 12.5 | BMNH | 2005.1749 | SRR26876968 |
| SM 495 | <i>Hypogeophis sechellensis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 7,608,685 | 11.9 | BMNH | 2005.1691 | SRR26876966 |

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|--------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------|------|------|-----------|-------------|
| SM 472 | <i>Praslinia cooperi</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 10,709,450 | 35.9 | BMNH | 2005.1842 | SRR26876943 |
| SM 470 | <i>Praslinia cooperi</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 8,261,022 | 36.9 | BMNH | 2005.1840 | SRR26876944 |
| SM 237 | <i>Praslinia cooperi</i> | Silhouette, Seychelles | 5,417,870 | 42.2 | BMNH | 2005.1843 | SRR26876946 |
| SM 469 | <i>Praslinia cooperi</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 9,353,962 | 36.0 | BMNH | 2005.1839 | SRR26876945 |
| SM 354 | <i>Hypogeophis brevis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 7,134,082 | 17.6 | BMNH | 2005.1784 | SRR26876965 |
| SM 355 | <i>Hypogeophis brevis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 11,583,956 | 15.8 | BMNH | 2005.1785 | SRR26876964 |
| SM 356 | <i>Hypogeophis brevis</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 38,959 | 90.3 | BMNH | 2005.1786 | SRR26876963 |
| SM 284 | <i>Hypogeophis montanus</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 6,067,507 | 18.2 | BMNH | 2005.1820 | SRR26876961 |
| SM 285 | <i>Hypogeophis montanus</i> | Mahé, Seychelles | 7,090,710 | 17.1 | BMNH | 2005.1821 | SRR26876960 |
| SM 490 | <i>Hypogeophis pti</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 3,376,578 | 20.1 | BMNH | 2005.1838 | SRR26876956 |
| SM 295 | <i>Hypogeophis pti</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 3,070,575 | 20.2 | BMNH | 2005.1827 | SRR26876958 |
| SM 302 | <i>Hypogeophis pti</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 4,239,994 | 17.3 | BMNH | 2005.1831 | SRR26876957 |
| SM 282 | <i>Hypogeophis pti</i> | Praslin, Seychelles | 5,380,432 | 14.2 | BMNH | 2005.1826 | SRR26876959 |

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|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------|------|--------------------|-----------------|
| MW 01293 | <i>Gegeneophis ramaswami</i> | Shonlode, India | 1,463,154 | 87.2 | KU | MW 01292 | SRR2687693 8 |
| MW 01522 | <i>Gegeneophis ramaswami</i> | Vanchuvan, India | 1,404,878 | 87.4 | KU | MW 01521 | SRR2687693 7 |
| MW 01565 | <i>Gegeneophis ramaswami</i> | Pathanapura m, India | 2,404,680 | 85.0 | KU | MW 01561 | SRR2687697 2 |
| MW 02170 | <i>Gegeneophis ramaswami</i> | Maraimalai, India | 66,440 | 97.5 | KU | MW 02169 | SRR2687697 1 |
| MW 08365 | <i>Idiocranium russeli</i> | Tinta, Cameroon | 2,557,735 | 94.4 | BMNH | 2008.688 (8364) | SRR2687695 0 |
| MW 08481 | <i>Idiocranium russeli</i> | Tinta, Cameroon | 986,191 | 96.0 | BMNH | 2008.688 (8480) | SRR2687694 9 |
| MW 08508 | <i>Idiocranium russeli</i> | Makamune, Cameroon | 3,556,272 | 93.5 | BMNH | 2008.688 (8350) | SRR2687694 8 |
| MW 08608 | <i>Idiocranium russeli</i> | Makamune, Cameroon | 5,499,169 | 93.1 | BMNH | 2008.688 (8607) | SRR2687694 7 |

0 10 20 km



Figure_2

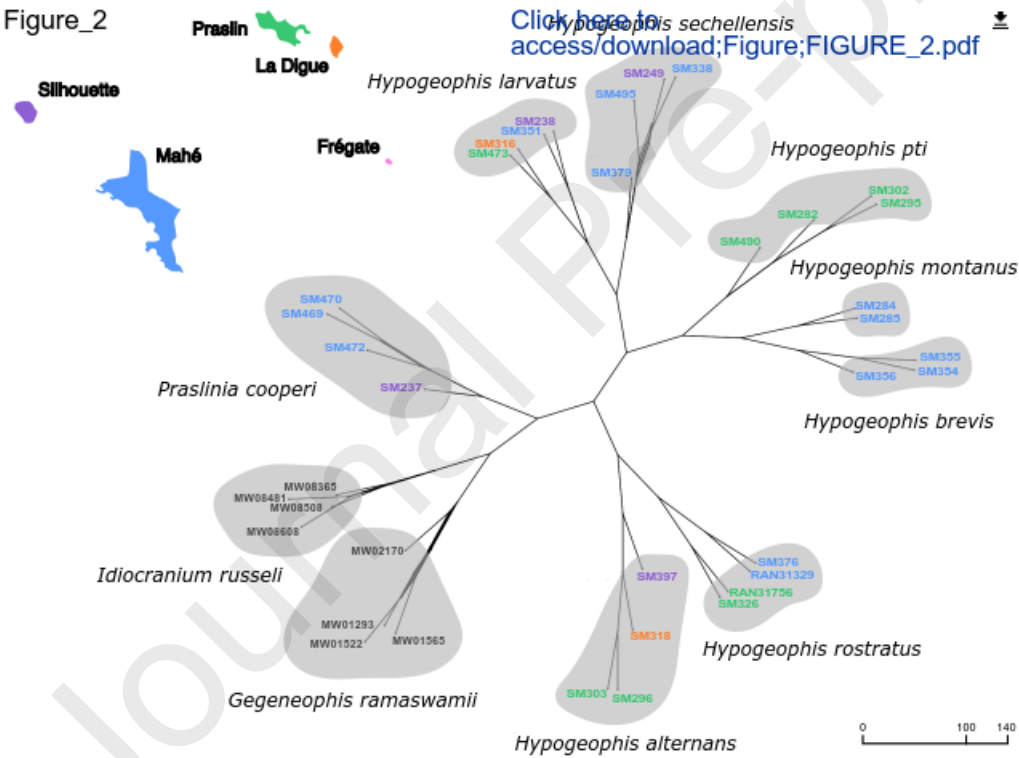
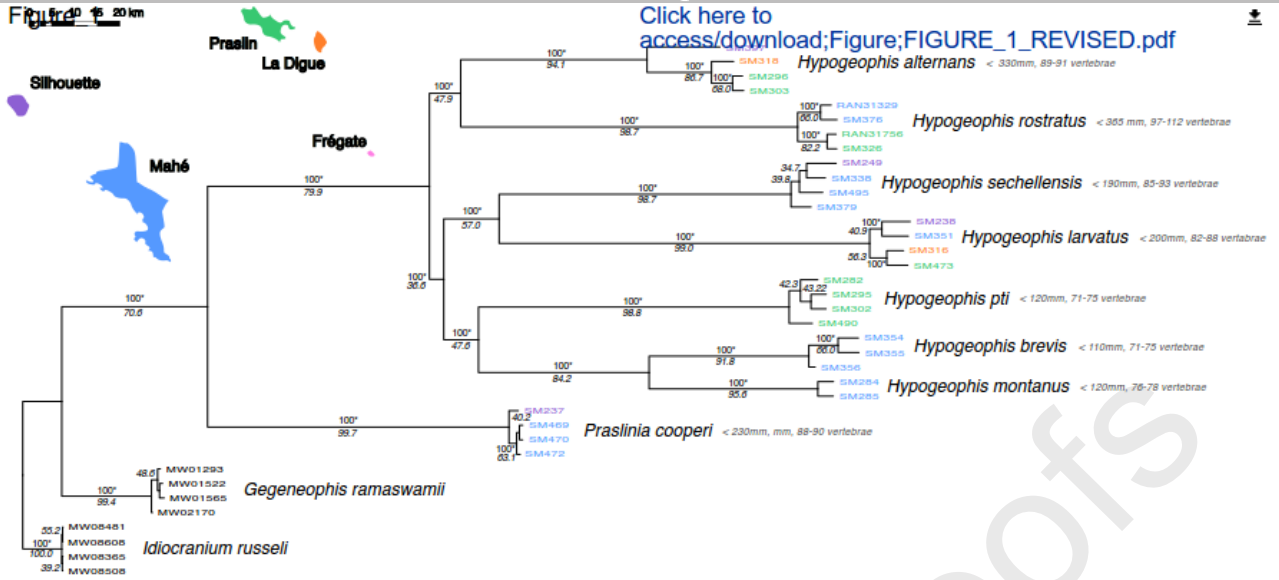


Figure 3



Figure_3

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