around. One cuckoo-shrike hovered briefly in order to pick a caterpillar off a leaf. Both species battered their prey and ran it through their mandibles. Both averaged about a minute in handling time before consumption.

There seems to be a rough inverse correlation between the mass of the bird and handling time for similar sized prey.

The number of species present in the tree during the same time period varied from day to day. On 31 May, only three species were present, and during the same time on 30 May, seven or eight species were there. On 28 May, close track was not kept, but no more than four species were present in that time period. There was heavy rainfall for one hour prior to the 30 May observation period. This may have stimulated insect activity, or the birds may have been catching up on their feeding before retiring for the night.

Some incidental observations were made. Chestnut-breast Cuckoos and a Brown Oriole were seen taking caterpillars from other *Trema orientalis* on the W.E.I. grounds. A Rainbow Lory was seen drinking liquid from an upturned flower of a nearby African Tulip-Tree (*Spathodea campanulata*) after the rain on 30 May. Finally, as unequivocal proof that pure research pays off, I saw an unexpected lifer while making these observations - a Blue-faced Parrot-Finch *Erythrura trichroa*.

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BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *CALIDRIS BAIRDII* AT KANOSIA LAGOON - FIRST RECORD FOR THE NEW GUINEA REGION

BRIAN W. FINCH

LOCATION AND HABITAT

Four members of the Papua New Guinea Bird Society (myself, Roger Hicks, and Joan & Michael Oliver) were investigating Kanosia Lagoon, Central Province, on 24 November 1985, to see what migrant species were being attracted by the drying out process that was leaving extensive area of oozy mud with scattered drier islands and shallow pools.

Whilst the area had been too wet for the main passage of waders, and sadly most had passed over without stopping on the southward passage, the increasing suitability of habitat was attracting the later migrants, and there were over a hundred palaearctic waders present.

Species present consisted of approximately a hundred Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata*, one Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, five Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, one Eastern Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica fulva*, and ten Japanese Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*. A pair of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* turned out to be of the resident race *dubius*.

The observers had spilt up and were each checking out different parts of the lagoon. Whilst returning from the farther north-eastern portion, I saw a wader feeding in the company of a party of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and one Marsh Sandpiper. The bird was obviously different and was thought to be a Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, although the species had not previously been recorded in the New Guinea region before. Two observers studied the wader for over twenty minutes taking detailed notes, and sketching the bird in the field.

Whilst the other two members of the PNGBS were making their way down the hill to the lagoon and heading towards the birds, the small flock startled, and flew further down the lagoon some 50 m away, and from this assemblage single birds and pairs peeled off and headed past us back down the lagoon towards the area in which the unusual sandpiper was first discovered. In spite of a thorough search by all four observers the bird could not be relocated amongst the thirty or more birds feeding in the shallow pools and on the dry mud with tangles of dead vegetation.

We later found the Baird's Sandpiper at the edge of a small pool. After a short time it, together with a dozen Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, flew up and after circling the far end of the lagoon, all flew out of sight.

DESCRIPTION

The bird stood up to a centimetre shorter than the accompanying Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, the body bulk was slighter but the entire length was comparable, because of the very long wings which extended well beyond, and totally obscured the tail.

Head: Wholly brownish-grey (the field notes read as cold greeny-grey), slightly browner on the crown with no obvious supercilium, this being reduced to a pale line just above, and slightly beyond, the eye. There was no darkening around the ear coverts as in most *Calidris* waders.

Throat/breast: Although the chin was not observed while the bird fed, the throat appeared cold grey, and this continued on to the lower throat where there was narrow but obscure streaking although the background colour was uniform with head. This streaking broke off quite noticeably just in front of the bend of the wing, where the white of the underparts extended upwards.

Flanks: Along the sides of the breast and flanks was a line of irregularly shaped indistinct orange-brownish spots.

Underparts: The remainder of the underparts were white without any marking or suffusions.

Upperparts: From the nape extending on to lower back, there was a series of furrowed dark and pale stripes which shaded into the cold Dunlin-grey of the lower back. The wing-coverts and inner secondaries were grey with indications of darker centres and conspicuous buffy white edges to the feathers. The flight feathers were blackish and contrasted with the rest of the wings. The primaries were very long and extended well beyond the tail, and each wing tip crossed over totally obscuring the all grey tail.

Flight: In flight with the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, this bird differed little except in being smaller; it shared the obscure indistinct whitish wing bar of the sharp-tails, and showed an all blackish rump.

Bill: The bill was shorter than a Sharp-tailed Sandpipers', and was straight with only a slightly perceptible droop at the tip when seen from some angles, but not nearly as pronounced a droop as in Sharp-tailed Sandpipers' bills. Unlike that species the bill was completely blackish, and did not show the olive cast to the basal third of the lower mandible. The width was even along the length, tapering at the tip.

Legs: Blackish although usually obscured by water as the bird fed with the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers in shallow muddy water. Although the two species were feeding in the same depth of water, the Baird's Sandpiper was up to its belly in water whilst the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were still keeping their underparts dry, testifying to the *C. bairdii* having much shorter legs.

General Appearance: The bird was like a large stint in proportions, but more attenuated and with a head that appeared too small for the body. The neck was short compared to other medium sized *Calidris* and the bird had a very sleek profile with the long tapering back and wings protruding beyond the tail.

Feeding: Whilst feeding in the shallow water, the bird's habits were distinct enough to enable it to be picked out from the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers even if obscured bodily by that species. The jabbing motion was more like that exhibited by the Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (a useful means of picking out that species from Sharp-tailed Sandpipers when plumage differences cannot be discerned). The head was held with the bill pointing vertically downwards, and inserted into the water with a series of rapid jabs, retracted, although the tip may still have remained in water, and the bird moved forward a little. Then the procedure was repeated. By contrast the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers' feeding actions were far less deliberate and more casual, the bill inserted into the water at an angle, not vertically, and with slower series of shallow jabs. The legs were slightly bent, whereas the Baird's Sandpiper seemed to keep its legs straight, although admittedly obscured by water.

DISCUSSION

All four observers had had previous experience with Baird's Sandpiper in the field, either in Canada or in the United Kingdom.

Like many vagrant birds, this individual exhibited variance from what is considered 'the norm' in its choice of feeding habitats. Instead of feeding on the dry mud it chose

to feed in water with the Sharp-tailed Sandpipers. It is quite likely that dry mud baking in an equatorial sun becomes quite sterile. Other Baird's Sandpipers that have turned up in Australia have also been found in wetter habitats than would be considered usual in the Nearctic where the bird is mainly a passage migrant through the central prairies rather than along the coasts.

The presence of obscure spotting along the flanks is suggestive of a adult bird coming out of breeding plumage, whilst the overall grey appearance with narrow but distinctive buffy white edges to coverts is more suggestive of a first winter bird.

The breeding range of this species extends from the Nearctic into western Siberia, and it is only to be expected that a few birds would wander southwards to the Australiasian region. This record would constitute the first record for the New Guinea region, whilst Australian has had four and New Zealand one record.

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ACCIPITER NOVAEHOLLANDIAE ATTACKS *CACOMANTIS CASTANEIVENTRIS*

D. McWHIRTER

On 4 June 1983, at about 15:00 hours, while sitting in the lounge of the Wau Ecological Institute hostel, I heard a rush of wings outside, behind me. A hawk had hit another bird in flight, and the impact had carried them about 10 m further into a small hollow near a coffee bush. The hawk crouched with spread wings and tail over the struggling, crying bird. The hawk's head was up and its mouth open. When the victim cried and struggled harder, the hawk pressed closer, bent its head down, and may have bitten the bird. At this point, the hawk could be identified as an adult, coloured phase Grey Goshawk, *Accipiter novaehollandiae*.

When I went outside to try and determine the identity of the other bird, the hawk flew off, but, judging from the scolding by other birds, circled around behind some trees, and stayed in the vicinity. The victim was an adult *Cacomantis castaneiventris*. It did not fly and seemed to be in shock. It had a slight wound in the throat area, the left eye was punctured, and the adjacent orbital bone looked damaged, perhaps from a bite. After setting the cuckoo down a metre from where it had previously lain, I went into the hostel to see if the hawk would return.

About fifteen minutes later, it flew in and landed in the base of the nearest coffee bush. It seemed to inspect the area visually, staying within the cover of the bush. However,