

SOME NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF LIHIR

IAN BURROWS

Lihir (ca 30° 30' S, 152° 40' E) is the largest of a group of five islands which lie to the North East of New Ireland. This island, about 21,500 ha in area, is formed around five extinct volcanoes and is mountainous, with dome-shaped peaks and razor-backed ridges separated by deep valleys. Most of the interior is covered with secondary and mature rainforest, whereas the coastal fringe supports subsistence gardens, garden regrowth and coconut and cocoa plantations.

The island was visited from 6 to 9 July 1987 primarily to census the population of Common Scrubfowl *Megapodius freycinet* which breed in the geothermally active Luise Caldera. Most observations of other species were made in this area except on 7 July when a boat trip was made round the island.

Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>
Fifteen seen on 7th feeding around a school of dolphin about 800 m offshore.	
Eastern Reef Egret	<i>Egretta sacra</i>
One bird on the beach at low tide on 7th.	
Black Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>
One flushed from a forest thicket on 8th.	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
A pair seen regularly around Luise Harbour are said to breed on the island.	
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
Seen daily with a maximum of six on 7th.	
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	<i>Haliaetus leucogaster</i>
One adult over Luise Caldera on 8th and 9th.	
Common Scrubfowl	<i>Megapodius freycinet</i>
Abundant approximately 2,100 egg-burrows were counted in Luise Caldera.	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
One on the beach at Luise Harbour on 7th.	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
One winter-plumaged bird offshore on 7th.	
Black-naped Tern	<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>
Three offshore on 7th.	
Bridled Tern	<i>Sterna anaethetus</i>
Six feeding around a school of dolphin on 7th.	

Brown Cuckoo-Dove	<i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>
One or two seen daily.	
Stephan's Ground-Dove	<i>Chalcophaps stephani</i>
Single birds seen daily.	
Superb Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>
Two with Red-knobbed Fruit-Doves <i>Ptilinopus insolitus</i> and Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeons <i>Ducula rubricera</i> in a fruiting tree on 7th.	
Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus viridis</i>
One bird flushed off a very flimsy nest containing a single white egg on 7th.	
Red-Knobbed Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus insolitus</i>
Seen daily in singles, pairs or parties of three to five.	
Red-Knobbed Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula rubricera</i>
Very common at fruiting trees, largest party fourteen on 7th.	
Rainbow Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
A party of about ten birds noted on 6th and 7th.	
Red-flanked Lorikeet	<i>Charmosyna placensis</i>
Very common around coconut groves.	
Song Parrot	<i>Geoffroyus heteroclitus</i>
Common throughout the forested area.	
Eclectus Parrot	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>
Very common throughout the forested area.	
Brush Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>
Single birds seen daily.	
Shining Bronze Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx lucidus</i>
Single bird in a cocoa garden on 8th.	
Moustached Tree-Swift	<i>Hemiprocne mystacea</i>
One pair present around the caldera.	
Uniform Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia vanikorensis</i>
Abundant. One cliffside cave contained over 500 birds.	
Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>
Common. One cliffside cave contained about 100 birds.	
Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon sancta</i>
One bird at Luise Harbour on 7th.	
Beach Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon saurophaga</i>
Twenty five counted around the island on 7th.	
Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx lepidus</i>
Three birds in dense forest on 9th.	

- Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
Common around the beaches at low tide and along the larger streams.
- Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*
Two birds present around the caldera.
- Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
One bird in a forest clearing on 9th.
- Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
Four birds around the Catholic Mission on 7th.
- Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela*
Very common throughout the forested areas.
- Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris*
Very common throughout the forested areas.
- Golden Monarch *Monarcha chrysomela*
Common in dense forest.
- Common Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*
Small numbers present in dense forest.
- Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia*
Very common in forest and gardens.
- Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
Common in forest and gardens.
- Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*
A pair present around Luise Harbour.
- Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*
Abundant. The most frequently observed species.

This is undoubtedly an incomplete species list for Lihir, since no rainforest areas outside Luise Caldera were visited. Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* was surprisingly absent and unlikely to have been overlooked due to its conspicuous habits. Cardinal Lory *Eos cardinalis* was also absent. This was surprising in view of its abundance around the coconut fringed airstrip of Masahet Island, which lies some 10 km north of Lihir. No Red-flanked Lorikeets *Charmosyna placentis* were seen during a 30 minute stop-over on Masahet whereas this was the commonest nectar-feeder around the coconut blossoms on Lihir.