

CRESTED HAWKS *AVICEDA SUBCRISTATA* IN TABUBIL

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On 8 February 1987 a pair of Crested Hawks (*Aviceda subcristata*) together with an immature were observed about 5 km south of Tabubil, Western Province. The immature was fully fledged but was being brought food by one of the adults. Both adults were being very territorial and calling noisily. The nest was not seen but it appeared that breeding had taken place in this location. This is probably the first breeding record for this area. Coates and Lindgren in their 1978 survey did not record Crested Hawks in the Ok Tedi region at all, and the only mention in any of the other literature is a record for the Fly River by Diamond and Raga (1977). I have recorded adult Crested Hawks in November and December 1985, and March 1986 at Ok Menga, in an area which had been cleared and was regrowing. My February 1987 record is also from a cleared part of the valley, suggesting that the hawks have moved into these newly-made habitats from further south.

I notice that Beehler *et al.* (1986) do not describe the immature. The one I saw on 8 February 1987 was dark brown on the back, wings and tail and creamy with light barring on the underparts. The head was cream with one or more dark streaks across it. The undertail coverts were pale rust and its legs were yellow. When the adults approached with food the immature bird flapped its wings and the barring on the underside of the wings was visible.

- Coates, B.J. & E. Lindgren (1978). *Ok Tedi Birds*. Office of Environment and Conservation, Papua New Guinea.
- Diamond, J.M. & M.N. Raga (1977). The Lowland Avifauna of the Fly River Region. *Wildlife, Papua New Guinea*, No 77-11, 1-7, 1-14.
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BLUE ROCK THRUSH ON PAGA HILL, PORT MORESBY. FIRST RECORD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN REGION, EAST OF THE MOLUCCAS.

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At 18:00 on 7 January 1986 while watching a party of c. 30 Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* feeding over the eucalypt savanna on the eastern slopes of Paga Hill in Port Moresby, RH noticed a bird fly across an open space and perch on a building under construction below us. He thought it might be a Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* and pointed it out to BWF who confirmed the identification.

The bird was observed without binoculars, for about five minutes in fading light and the following notes were made. It was considerably larger than a Pied Chat *Saxicola caprata*, available for direct comparison, and held itself in a typical thrush-like stance. Upon landing it flicked its tail slowly downwards, a

movement often repeated while perched. Plumage details were difficult to determine in the fading light, but it was thought to be uniform blue-grey with darker primaries, a dark bill and dark legs. It eventually flew into the half completed building and was lost from sight.

We returned to the area at 06:00 the following morning, armed with binoculars. BWF spotted the bird almost immediately and we watched it for nearly an hour in good light. The dull image of the previous evening had changed overnight into an resplendent adult male of the chestnut bellied race *M. s. philippensis*. It was seen daily up to 19 January 1986 and appeared to range widely although it was often found around the houses in the early morning and late afternoon. It was subsequently seen by 13 other observers.

The following description is taken from notes made at the time. The bird was shaped like a thrush, with a moderately long tail, often held pointing downwards and flicked agitatedly. Head to chest and entire upperparts were blue-grey, primaries and central retrices were darker. The wing coverts had small dark centres and whitish crescent shaped tips. The feathers across the back, bordering the wings and across the upper breast similarly had whitish crescent shaped tips. The underparts from chest to vent were a uniform deep chestnut-orange, sharply contrasting with the blue-grey of the chest. The feathering at the base of the legs was blue. The bill was slender and quite long for a thrush and uniform blackish. The legs were also uniformly dark. The iris was large, prominent and dark.

There are ten species of rock thrush *Monticola*, five of which are confined to Africa (Howard & Moore 1984) and are not considered further here. The remaining five species are distributed across Eurasia. One reaches no further east than northern India. Four species can be found in south-east Asia (King *et al.* 1975) and all are, at least partially, migratory. The chestnut-bellied race of the Blue Rock Thrush *M. s. philippensis* winters further south and east than any other species reaching the Philippines and Indonesia. The Blue Rock Thrush is the only one of the these four to have a blue breast and, in non-breeding plumage, to have scaly markings across the mantle and on the breast (King *et al.* 1975; Vincy & Phillips 1983). Both these features were noted on the bird at Paga Hill. This is the first record of this species in Papua New Guinea and Australia (East of the Moluccas).

- Howard, R. & A. Moore. (1984). *A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Papermac.
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- Vincy, C. & K. Pjillips. (1983). *New Colour Guide to Hong Kong Birds*. J.R. Lee.