

FIELD NOTES ON MEYER'S AND CHESTNUT-SIDED GOSHAWKS

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There are few mainland records of Meyer's Goshawk *Accipiter meyerianus*, and the field guide (Beehler *et al.* 1986) implies that it occurs at higher altitudes than the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk *Accipiter buergersi*. This would seem somewhat incongruous, since Meyer's also occurs on many islands from the Moluccas to the Solomons. Here I wish to record a sighting of what I believe was a black morph Meyer's Goshawk almost at sea level near Port Moresby, and to raise for critical field investigation the possibility that the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk does not have a black morph as is commonly supposed.

On 8 January 1984 I observed a black *Accipiter* sp. near Keagolo, about 10 km inland from Aroma (c. 100 km south-east of Port Moresby). In mid-afternoon in good light, with the sun behind me, I watched the bird glide swiftly from a patch of disturbed rainforest in a gully, across open ground to disappear into gallery forest fringing a river. It flew about 3 m from the ground at a distance of about 50 m, and was in view for perhaps 10 seconds. Even without binoculars I could see that it was entirely jet-black (not dark grey as in the slate-grey morph of the Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*), without obvious barring under the wings and tail nor a visibly pale iris. It was also quite large, about the size of a large female southern Australian Brown Goshawk *Accipiter f. fasciatus* c. 50 cm length), and showed a similar silhouette, wing carriage and style of flight (rather straight and level, slightly 'fingered' wings and a long, rounded tail). It was unlike the silhouette of the Australian Grey Goshawk which has very rounded wings with pronounced camber, drooped wings when gliding and shorter, squarer tail; features apparently shared by the New Guinean forms of *A. novaehollandiae*, cf. photographs in Coates (1985). Flight silhouettes may be useful for separating such difficult species, particularly when photographs can be taken and consulted later, since the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk has a 'six-fingered' wing whereas the other *Accipiter* species have a 'five-fingered' wing (Corben 1982).

Brown & Amadon (1968), first suggested that an alleged black morph in *Accipiter buergersi* might be a case of mistaken identity - a black specimen was perhaps assumed to be *A. buergersi* because *A. meyerianus* was not known to occur in mainland Papua New Guinea at the time. The question has been discussed further (Debus 1985; Czechura 1985), but it has not been satisfactorily resolved. Wattel (1973), had the opportunity to comment on this conundrum, but did not do so.

The field characters and plumages of the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk warrant further investigation for another reason. While it is apparent that this species is closely related to the Australian Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radianus* (Corben 1982; Czechura 1985), the Red Goshawk seems unlike an *Accipiter* in some respects and there is some debate about its generic position. Is the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk really an *Accipiter*? It would be good if

PNG ornithologists could resolve these questions before a second edition of the field guide is produced.

- Beehler, B. M., T.K. Pratt & D.A. Zimmerman (1986). *Birds of New Guinea*. Princeton University Press.
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- Coates, B.J. (1985). *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*. Vol. 1. Dove Publications.
- Corben, . (1982). On Some Field Characters of the Red Goshawk. *Sunbird* 12: 17-18.
- Czechura, (1985). *Australasian Raptor Association News* 6: 70-71.
- Debus, S. (1985). *Australasian Raptor Association News* 6: 31-32.
- Wattel, (1973). Geographical differentiation in the Genus *Accipiter*. *Nuttall Orn. Club*.

NESTING NOTES FROM PACIFIC ADVENTIST COLLEGE

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The campus of Pacific Adventist College, fourteen miles from the centre of Port Moresby on the Sogeri Road, is particularly attractive for the bird life found on its ponds. The following notes result from observations of the nesting habits of some of these campus birds.

BLACK-BACKED BUTCHERBIRD *Cracticus mentalis*

We were fortunate to observe the nest of a Butcherbird located approximately 6 m above the ground in a tree that was close to our lounge room window. The following observations were made in 1983-4:

Early in December 1983, an immature Black-backed Butcherbird was seen in the back yard, following two adults around and squawking for food. As we had been absent for a few weeks before that, we did not see the early stages.

Near Christmas we noticed that two birds were nesting and we presumed they were the same pair.

9 Jan 1984, a chick was seen in the nest.

14 Jan two chicks were seen.

22 Jan the chicks were seen hopping round the nesting tree, and two days later they were in another tree.

1 Feb they were seen flying to the ground beside the parents.

Oct 1984 we noticed that two more young had been raised in the tree behind the house next door, possibly by the same pair.

Discussion:

It seems possible that Butcherbirds can raise two broods in one season. Incubation seems to take almost three weeks. In a short time, about two weeks, the young can leave the nest and a little later they are flying around. For a while after leaving they follow the parents around, squawking to be fed.