

## EDITORIAL

This issue is the first for 1988, and is again later than planned. Eventually there will be four issues in this year, numbers 2 and 3, being already substantially ready for press.

In this issue we have a mixture of material, partly notes on PNG birds, partly travellers' tales, and partly recent observations, the latter two being inherited from the old-style Newsletter. Thus we now see Muruk as having two main functions, firstly to provide a platform for scientific papers on PNG birds, and secondly to provide useful information for bird-watchers, both resident and visiting. We will continue to publish in this form, though the balance will vary from issue to issue. When possible we will devote whole issues to particular topics. The recent observations section is now somewhat less than recent. Two three-month periods appear here, and there will be a further two in the next issue. This will bring us nearly up to date, and recent observations will become just that. Anyone with records should submit them to the PNGBS.

This issue's cover is again by the PNG artist Kauge. Several of his specially commissioned drawings are still available for sale. We would welcome further cover designs, since we will use a different one on each issue. Drawings should be of a Cassowary (= Muruk in Melanesian Pigeon) or on some related theme. Black and white line drawings with minimum shading reproduce best.

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## GREAT REED WARBLER *ACROCEPHALUS ARUNDINACEUS* AT BENSACH - SECOND RECORD FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

BRIAN W. FINCH

There have been two previous records of Great Reed Warbler in the New Guinea region, one was collected in Irian Jaya in 1962 (LeCroy 1969), its identity being established later, and in December 1979 I saw a bird at Aroa Lagoon, Central Province (Finch 1980).

On 17 November 1985 whilst successfully searching out Fly River Grassbirds *Megalurus albolimbatus* in the sedge beds along the Bensbach River near Wando (Western Province) I and other birdwatchers heard a song coming from a swampy area which was recognised as belonging to the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. The party decided to track the bird down, and it was soon located, not in the sedge bed, but in a thick low bush standing in shallow water, in a grassy clearing.

It was difficult to get a view of the bird as it sang its subsong, (a harsh but not very loud jangle of notes rendered as "...krug-krug skirt-skirt kirrik-kirrik gurk-gurk-gurk...") but eventually it moved to the outer edges, keeping low in the bush where its large bulk was apparent. Compared to the resident Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* it had cold brownish plumage a stout shorter bill, obscure streaking on the throat, and a white eye-stripe. After a while the bird was flushed from the bush, and it flew straight into the sedges growing in the lagoon, and did not emerge again.

An hour later we stopped at the same spot, and could again hear the Great Reed Warbler subsong, this time coming from the opposite side of the river in a dense clump of canegrass. We tried to find this bird and succeeded in drawing out numerous Tawny Grassbirds *Megalurus timoriensis*, several Zitting Cisticolas *Cisticola juncidis*, and a party of White-shouldered Fairy-Wrens *Malurus alboscapulatus*, but the *Acrocephalus* did not show itself.

It is probable that the same individual was involved on both occasions, but it is possible that small numbers of Great Reed Warblers may occur in the dense vegetation along the Bensbach River, and the species may be a regular visitor in small numbers, rather than a vagrant.

- Finch, B.W. 1980. First Papua New Guinean record of the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus orientalis* at Aroa Lagoon, Central Province. PNGBS Newsletter 163-164: 16-20.
- LeCroy, M. 1969. *Acrocephalus arundinaceus orientalis*, first record in New Guinea. Emu 69: 119-120.

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