

REDISCOVERY OF A RESIDENT POPULATION OF EURASIAN COOT *FULICA ATRA* IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

BRIAN W. FINCH¹ AND DAVID GILLIESON²

In the 1960's Harry Bell located a resident population of Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* on Lake Wangbin not very far from what is now the town of Tabubil (Bell 1969). Very shortly afterwards these birds completely disappeared, and he stated that shotguns were responsible. At the time this was the only known resident population of coots in Papua New Guinea.

Other records of non-resident birds in the Port Moresby area at Moitaka Settling ponds and Tanubada Ponds are listed in observations in the PNGBS Newsletter in 1966 and 1967, and also for Hisiu, Kanosia, and Aroa Lagoons (Central Province) in 1978-79.

On 10 June 1985 we were in a helicopter at Ubai Gubi flying over a ridge not far from the lodge (perhaps 3 km in a straight line). In the bottom of a valley was a lake completely bordered by vegetation and well concealed. We went down lower to see what was on this lake, and approached until we were hovering some 40 m from the surface of the water. Through 10 x 40 binoculars it was easy to see that there were at least 30 Coot present, including one on a nest. Two Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* were present (also new sightings for this area), and there were three Pacific Black Ducks *Anas superciliosa*.

The lake, at about 2000 m, is not marked on any map, and appears to have no name. There are other lakes hidden in other valleys including some on Crater Mountain where birds matching the description of coots have been reported by the local people.

Bell, H. 1969. Field notes on the birds of the Ok Tedi Drainage. *Emu*. 69: 193-211.

Addresses: ¹ P.O. Box 59749, Nairobi, Kenya

² not known to us [Eds].

GREY IMPERIAL PIGEON NEAR KARAWARI LODGE, EAST SEPIK PROVINCE

HELEN C. FORTUNE HOPKINS

On 22 June 1987 I saw a single large pigeon flying over the Karawari River, close to Karawari Lodge, about 135 km from the coast and the mouths of the Sepik and Ramu rivers. The bird had a wing pattern similar to that of the Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* with dark outer wing edges (primaries and secondaries) and pale wing linings. The wing linings and underparts were clearly grey, not white, and the feet were bright pink. Of the four grey and green *Duculas* described by Beehler *et al.* (1986), this description fits only the Grey Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria*, and none of the four (Spice, Pacific, Grey, and Elegant Imperial Pigeons) are recorded from inland in the Sepik region. The Grey Imperial Pigeon is known to occur on islands off the coast of the Sepik-Ramu, and on the eastern Papuan Islands, in mangroves and coastal forest, often in flocks (Beehler *et al.* 1986).

Beehler, B.M., T.K. Pratt & D.A. Zimmerman. 1986. *Birds of New Guinea*. Princeton University Press.

Address: Biology Department, U.P.N.G., P.O. Box 320, University, P.N.G.

RECORDS OF BIRDS FEEDING AT FLOWERING OR FRUITING TREES IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

HELEN C. FORTUNE HOPKINS AND MICHAEL J.G. HOPKINS

Many people watching birds will see them feeding in flowering or fruiting trees. Indeed, one of the best ways to see some species, such as parrots and fruit-doves, is to watch a suitable tree and let the birds come to you. A number of workers have made detailed studies of feeding behaviour in New Guinea birds and a selection of the more important references is given in the bibliography. However, the feeding behaviour of many species is completely unreported, and the amateur bird-watcher can make a valuable contribution by recording food plants.

Of course, detailed studies of particular species will be of much greater value than isolated records. However, if bird-watchers can be encouraged to record and report their feeding observations, a body of information will be built up, and patterns should emerge. Not only is this information of interest to ornithologists studying the feeding habits of birds, but it is also of interest to botanists and ecologists studying the pollination or dispersal ecology of particular plants.

For the bird-watcher the difficult part is not in identifying the bird, but in collecting and identifying the plant. While there are about 700 species of bird on the mainland of New Guinea (Beehler *et al.* 1986), it has been estimated that there are about 9000 species of plant in the same area (Good 1960). Vague descriptions of the plant, or small samples of the flowers, fruit, or leaves picked up off the ground are usually inadequate to identify the plant accurately. Good botanical specimens are required. Making such collections is not difficult, but the technique may be unfamiliar to many bird-watchers. To assist bird-watchers in making collections we give some notes here which we hope will encourage them to collect identifiable botanical specimens and to submit feeding records for publication in *Muruk*. A much fuller account may be found in Womersley (1976).

1) Field notes. These are best taken while you have the fresh specimen in your hand. Colours especially are usually lost in the dried specimen. The following notes should be recorded:

a) Locality of collection; province; altitude; date of collection. Latitude and longitude are also useful, especially if the locality is difficult to locate on a map.

b) Collector's name(s) and collection number. It is very important that the specimen you collect can be uniquely identified. "*H.C.F. Hopkins & M.J.G. Hopkins #224*" can refer to only one individual collection. Anyone finding mention of this in the literature can (at least in theory) go to the plant collection (herbarium) where it is stored and verify the identification for themselves. Start a number series in your name, and number your collections sequentially. Be careful never to use the same number for two different collections.

c) Description of the plant. This should include its habit (tree, shrub, liana, epiphyte, herb etc); the height of the plant, and for a tree, its trunk diameter; its frequency in the habitat (dominant, abundant, common, rare etc); colour of the flowers and/or fruits; description of any odour; anything else distinctive about the plant (presence of buttresses, colour of bark etc).

d) The vegetation type in which it was found (e.g. forest, secondary growth, garden, savanna, mangrove etc).