

SOME FEEDING RECORDS FOR BIRDS OF PARADISE

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1. MAGNIFICENT RIFLEBIRD *Ptiloris magnificentus*
a) Varirata National Park, Central Province, 800 m, Feb 1987. Observers: HCFH & M.J.G. Hopkins.

On Gare's Lookout trail, a male and female were observed for several minutes feeding on the fruits of *Eurya tigang* Schumann & Laut. (Theaceae). This is a small to medium sized tree, common at Varirata in disturbed and second growth vegetation, and indicative of poor soils. The fruits are sessile, borne singly or in clusters in leaf axils or on bare twigs, and they have an involucre of bracts around the base. They are spherical, 3-5 mm in diameter, red to blue-black, fleshy when ripe, and contain numerous small seeds.

- b) Varirata National Park, Central Province, 750 m, 4 October 1987. Observers HCFH & M.J.G. Hopkins.

A female was seen taking fruits of a palm, possibly *Hydriastele beccariana* Burret, in dense forest near the stream along the boundary trail. The palm was about 7 m high, and bore a bunch of red fleshy fruits just below the crown. Each was c. 5 x 7 mm, with a thin layer of flesh surrounding a single, comparatively large, fibrous seed.

2. KING BIRD OF PARADISE *Cicinnurus regius*
McAdam National Park, Morobe Province, 850 m, 20 April 1987. Observers HCFH, M.J.G. Hopkins & N. Wahlberg.

Several males, probably 4 or 5, and 1 or 2 females were observed feeding for about 30 minutes flying in and out of the canopy of a fruiting *Dysoxylum* tree (Meliaceae). The birds were not actually seen to take fruits because of the dense foliage, and fruit eating is therefore only assumed because of the more or less continuous rain of discarded fruit capsules that were falling to the ground. When not in this particular tree, some of the males were displaying in a nearby crown, or flying into the crown of another *Dysoxylum*, some 20 m away which was also in fruit.

A female Raggiana Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana* flew into the crown of the first *Dysoxylum*, but feeding could not be confirmed.

The fruits of this tree were orange-red capsules, c. 15-22 x 11-17 mm, which split open to reveal three or four red seeds.

Bechler (1983) recorded a *Dysoxylum* species, and other trees of the Meliaceae, as food plants for several birds of paradise.

3. LAWES' PAROTIA *Parotia lawesii*
BLUE BIRD OF PARADISE *Paradisaea rudolphi*
SUPERB BIRD OF PARADISE *Lophorina superba*
Road from Wau towards Biaru, c. 20 km south of Wau Morobe Province, 1800 m, 19 April 1987. Observers: HCFH & other members of PNGBS.

A mixed flock of birds of paradise were seen feeding in the crown of a 15 m high tree of *Trema orientalis* (L.) Bl. (Ulmaceae), close to the road side. The principal birds in the flock were about 20 female Lawes' Parotias, but one male Lawes' Parotia, a female Blue Bird of Paradise, and both sexes of Superb Bird of Paradise were also identified. Not all the birds were continuously present, most of the female Lawes' Parotias remained in this tree, while the other birds flew between this tree and a neighbouring *Trema*. Common Smoky Honeyeater *Melipotes fumigatus* was also present in the canopy.

Trema orientalis is a medium sized tree of second growth and disturbed forest. Here it was common along the forest margin by the roadside. It has an open crown and rather distinctively arranged foliage. The fruit is a small, ovate to spherical drupe, 3-5 x 2-4 mm, and black when ripe. The fruits are borne in clusters on short, branched peduncles.

4. STEPHANIE'S ASTRAPIA *Astrapia stephaniae*
Road from Wau towards Biaru, c. 20 km south of Wau Morobe Province, 1800 m, 19 April 1987. Observers HCFH & members of PNGBS.

About one km further along the road a male Stephanie's Astrapia was seen feeding on the mature fruit of another *Trema orientalis* tree, again close to the road. After feeding it continued to perch in the small crown for about 30 minutes.

McWhirter (1986) records numerous species foraging in *Trema orientalis* at the Wau Ecology Institute, but many of the birds he observed were insectivorous, and did not feed on the fruit.

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McWhirter, D. 1986. Some observations of birds foraging in *Trema orientalis*.

Muruk 1(3): 15-16.

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FOOD PLANTS OF FEMALE FAN-TAILED BERRYPECKERS

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During a brief stay at Ambua Lodge, Tari (Southern Highlands Province) in November 1987 female Fan-tailed Berrypeckers *Melanocharis versteri* were observed feeding on the fruits of three different plants. No male Fan-tailed Berrypeckers were seen feeding. Samples of each plant were collected, and subsequently identified by Lawong Balun. They were *Planchonella* sp. (Sapotaceae), *Rubus cf. ferdinandi-muelleri* Focke (Rosaceae) and *Pipturus argenteus* Willd. (Urticaceae). The fruit of each plant was ingested whole by the birds, the largest fruit being that of *R. ferdinandi-muelleri* which measured c. 7 mm x 5 mm.

Voucher specimens at UPNG are: *Planchonella*, Hicks & Hicks #8; *Rubus*, #9; *Pipturus*, #10.

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