

## EDITORIAL

Regretfully there will be the last issue in 1988. It was further delayed by a breakdown of the computer. Next year we will make every effort to get out a full four issues, and to produce them at approximately three month intervals.

This is a theme-issue, with three contributions dealing with the Kiunga and Tabubil areas of Western Province. The main paper is Anne Murray's, and is the result of several years bird-watching in the area of the giant Ok Tedi gold and copper mine.

The cover picture on this issue is the last of the Kauage illustrations. The originals of several of these are still on sale. Contact Mike Hopkins for details.

Editors: Mike Hopkins, with assistance from Helen Fortune Hopkins, Jenny Hicks, Roger Hicks, Joan Oliver, Ian Burrows, and Peter Storer.

MURUK is published by the Papua New Guinea Bird Society, and is available as part of Society membership.

Current membership rates are:

Local (within PNG)	
Individual	10 kina
Family	16 kina
Junior	7 kina
Nearby membership (Australia, New Zealand and Solomon Islands)	
Surface mail	12 kina
Air mail	15 kina
Distant membership (all other countries)	
Surface mail	15 kina
Air mail	20 kina

Cheques or drafts should be sent to: The Treasurer, PNGBS, PO Box 1598, Boroko, PNG.

If it is not possible to pay in kina, Pounds Sterling, Australian Dollars, or US Dollars are acceptable, but please add the equivalent of 2 kina to allow for bank charges.

A STUDY OF THE BIRDS OF THE TABUBIL REGION,  
WESTERN PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

ANNE MURRAY

## SUMMARY

An annotated list of the 269 bird species of the Tabubil and Ok Tedi areas, with observations from July 1985 to October 1987. Comparison with the 1978 survey of the Ok Tedi region made by Coates and Lindgren indicates some changes in the avifauna due to the development of the town of Tabubil and surroundings. Thirty-one species had not previously been recorded in the area and many of these were found to be resident or regular migrants to the town; eg. Lesser Black Coucal, Crested Hawk, Australian Kestrel. These and other species were colonising the newly created grassland and open garden habitats. Many highland species, formerly present on Mt Fubilan, site of the Ok Tedi mine, and recorded by Coates and Lindgren in 1978, were not observed in the present survey. This may in part be due to the fact that the majority of field work was done in the areas below 1000 m as access to the mine and surrounding mountains is extremely limited. Several lowland birds, notably Magnificent Bird of Paradise, male *Paradisaea*, and Golden Cuckoo-Shrike are now scarce around Tabubil. Migration dates for a number of species are presented for the first time for this region and several new breeding records are given.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a complete species list of birds for the Tabubil area of Western Province up to October 1987. It is hoped that it will be of aid to visitors and subsequent ornithological studies as well as serving as a follow-up to Coates and Lindgren's 1978 paper, which studied the area prior to the development of the Ok Tedi mine.

It is based on irregular, though frequent, personal observations. I lived in Tabubil for two and a half years and compiled extensive monthly notes. Most observations were made in the town of Tabubil and the valleys to the west and south (Fig. 1). This covered an altitude range 300 - 1400 m. Access to the mountains above 1400 m was limited to approximately six trips to Mt Fubilan and Mt Binnie and one to Lake Wangbin. The two latter sites involved long bush hikes, preventing more frequent field studies.

Tabubil is a mining town developed mostly in the last decade to service the Ok Tedi gold mine, one of Papua New Guinea's major mining schemes. The Ok Tedi [Ok = small river] is one of the tributaries of the Upper Fly River which drains the south-eastern slopes of the Star Mountains and the south-western slopes of the Hindenburg Range, a series of massive limestone escarpments. Tabubil itself is situated on a plateau in the Ok Tedi valley at an altitude of 600 m. The area surveyed covered an approximate radius of 15 km around Tabubil with by far the greatest number of observations being made on the plateau and in the river valleys.