

AN UNIDENTIFIED PYGMY PARROT (*MICROPSITTA*)

ANNE MURRAY

On 20 September 1987 John Ebbelinghaus and I observed an unusual Pygmy-Parrot at Mount Binnie, Western Province, in dripping moss forest, at 2140 m. The bird was seen at a distance of only 3 m, in fine weather with only a very light mist. It sat on a branch above our heads, and gave us excellent views for about 15 minutes. It appeared to be agitated and called constantly, giving a sweet, twittery "ssiss ssiss.....". We thought it might be close to a nest, and found a hole in a mossy stump about 3 m from the ground. However, the parrot did not enter it, and eventually flew to another tree. I returned to the area on 25 September, but found no sign of the bird.

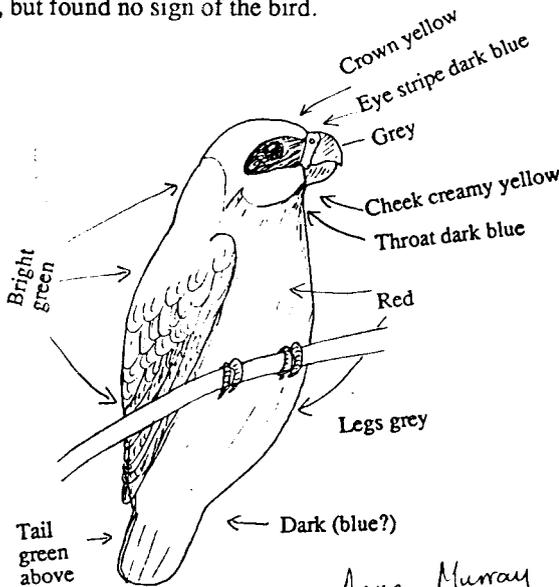
The figure shows a sketch of the bird, and the following description is taken from the field notes:

Size: 9 to 10 cm, typical *Micropsitta* shape. Crown vivid yellow with prominent dark blue eye-stripe. Cheek creamy yellow; throat dark blue. Chest and underparts extensively bright red, with undertail coverts appearing darker, possibly blue; tail short, green above; back, wings, and nape bright green.

This description does not seem to apply to any known *Micropsitta* species. The only *Micropsitta* recorded locally is the Red-breasted *M. bruijnii*, recorded at 650 m near Tabubil (Murray 1988) and at the Ok Tedi Mine at 1800 m (Coates & Lindgren 1978). Gilliard & LeCroy (1961) record it from the Victor Emanuel Mountains to the north.

The main differences between this bird and *M. bruijnii* are the yellow crown and the blue eye-stripe, the remainder of the body colouring being similar. Perhaps this bird was only an unusual colour form of *M. bruijnii*, but this observation is published to encourage other visitors to the area to look out for pygmy-parrots, since it is possible that there is an undescribed high altitude subspecies or species.

- Coates, B.J. & E. Lindgren. 1978. 6. Ok Tedi Environmental Task Force, Ok Tedi Development Co. and the Office of the Environment and Conservation, P.N.G.
 Gilliard, E.T. & M. LeCroy. 1961. Birds of the Victor Emanuel and Hindenburg Mountains, New Guinea. *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 123.
 Murray, A. 1988. A study of the birds of the Tabubil Region, Western Province, Papua New Guinea. *Muruk* 3:87-112.



CRIPPLERS OF KIUNGA

DION HOBSCROFT

Following in the footsteps of Brian Finch & Hugh Buck, Hans Beste, Tony Palliser and myself arrived in Kiunga on 10 September 1987. Having spent the previous fortnight scouting the Tari Gap, it was time to "tackle the lowlands" and once accommodated, courtesy of Mr Arva Siage, we set about the task in earnest the following day.

Hans and I hitched out to the local sawmill, c. 9 km towards Tabubil. Walking along the road and logging tracks produced an excellent diversity of lowland species. I was able to record 80 species in a morning at this site. Small numbers of Palm Cockatoos and Blyth's Hornbills flew lazily over the canopy, while Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrots were common, if typically difficult to obtain convincing views. Male Greater Bird of Paradise were delightful though generally hard to find. More conspicuous, Flame Bowerbirds, the males truly psychedelic, averaged three per morning at the sawmill - the females were abundant. Despite wishful thinking I was unable to produce male Flame Bowerbird, Golden Monarch, Golden Myna and Golden Cuckoo-Shrike in one tree! Further visits to this locality produced White-spotted Mannikin, Dwarf Koel, White-crowned Koel and Yellow-eyed Starling.

Tony on his initial trek into the forest interior behind the airstrip saw Broad-billed Fairy-Wren, so in we went, balancing precariously across logs over flooded channels while the mosquitos and leeches dined handsomely. Despite the many voices of the forest it was an excellent destination for a non-birding day (as optical connections were few and far between). The genuine highlight of the four mornings I gave to fairy-wren chasing was an excellent view of a Little Paradise-Kingfisher, which happily we all viewed. The diagnostic all navy blue outer rectrices were obvious. Two sightings of Mottled Pitohui, on both occasions associated with mixed foraging flocks, were an additional bonus. Tony also glimpsed a Golden-backed Whistler and an additional specimen of the highly elusive Fairy-Wren.

For a change of scenery we moved up to Tabubil. Vulturine Parrots, I'm happy to say, are still quite common in the adjacent forest. A Lesser Black Coucal was flushed from the roadside while Silver-eared Honeyeater was a most unexpected new bird. A morning at the Ok Tedi mine saw the three of us clambering up a track a mountain goat would have had difficulty negotiating. Nevertheless between looking at our feet we sighted Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrots, an adult Black-mantled Goshawk, and female Garnet Robin, unfortunately without her illustrious partner. Tony persevered and was rewarded with Sooty Whistler and Short-tailed Paradigalla. Hans and I turned back to look for Josephine's Lorikeet and dipped but we did pick up a pair of Torrent Flycatchers by the bridge at the security post. A Grey-tailed Tattler on the Tabubil playing field was a bit incongruous.

On our return to Kiunga I bade farewell to Hans and Tony as they moved on to Telefomin and Vanimo. Despite concerted negotiations and arrangements, which fell