

BROWN-BACKED HONEYEATER *RAMSAYORNIS* *MODESTUS* NEAR MADANG

JOAN OLIVER¹ AND HELEN FORTUNE HOPKINS²

According to Beehler *et al.* (1986), the Brown-backed Honeyeater *Ramsayornis modestus* is patchily distributed in the southern watershed of New Guinea and "absent in the north between Mamberamo R. (NW) and Raba Raba (near SE tip)". However, it is also to be found near the town of Madang, on the northern coast, almost 800 km from Raba Raba and c. 1100 km from the mouth of the Mamberamo River.

The following observations are all from the mangroves alongside the road leading to the Jais Aben Resort (5° 08' S 145° 48' E) from the main road, c. 12 km north of Madang.

4th - 7th April 1988. Two in mangroves near Riwo village where road divides (JO).

29th June 1988. One was caught shortly after dawn in a mist net set to catch bats, by a narrow band of mangroves c. 1 km from Jais Aben Resort (HFH).

10th July 1988. One perched on power/telephone lines, then flew into mangroves, c. 1 km from Jais Aben Resort (R. Hicks pers. comm.).

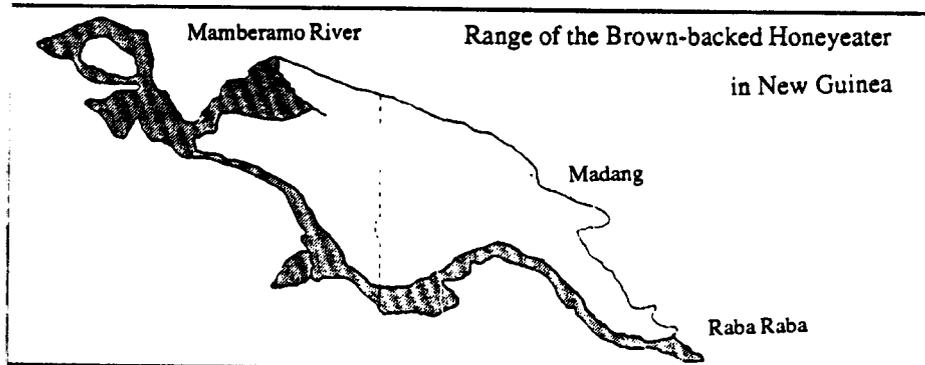
26th March 1989. One in mangroves c. 1 km from Jais Aben Resort (HFH).

Madang lies roughly equidistant from the previous known distribution limits of the Brown-backed Honeyeater, so they may well occur all along the north coast of New Guinea where there is suitable habitat.

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

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RECENT OBSERVATIONS JULY - SEPTEMBER 1988

COMPILED BY CHRISTOPHER EASTWOOD

All observations refer to the Port Moresby area unless the site name is followed by an abbreviated province name.

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Abbreviations: ad = adult; Cen = Central Province; EHP = Eastern Highlands Province; Gul = Gulf Province; I = Island; imm = immature; L = Lake; Mor = Morobe Province; NP = National Park; Oro = Northern Province; PAC = Pacific Adventist College; R = River; Rd = Road; SHP = Southern Highlands Province; SP = settling ponds; UPNG = University of PNG campus; Wes = Western Province; WNB = West New Britain Province.

Dwarf Cassowary

2 Jul, 1 sub-ad (NW); 9 Jul, 1 sub-ad (CE); 23 Jul, 1 ad (IB). All Gare's Lookout trail, Varirata NP.

Southern Cassowary

17 Jul, 1 male with chick, 1 female & 1 sub-ad, Turama R, Gul (IB).

Streaked Shearwater

4 Aug, 1, Kankas (RGS).

Great Frigatebird

24 Jul, at least 4 males seen flying over Lea Lea with *F. ariel* (RH); 26 Jul, 1 second stage imm female, over forest at c. 50 m, c. 7 km NE of Kiunga, Wes (FGI); 30 Jul, 1 in same plumage, but a different individual, as showing more white on belly at about 1000 m, nr Tabubil, Wes (FGI). The appearance of this and the Kiunga bird was coincident with a widespread pattern of showers and occasionally heavier rains brought in by consistent SE winds originating over the ocean south of PNG (FGI); 11 Sep, 1 female, Motupore I (IB); 25 Sep, 1, Kupiano, Cen (RGS).

Lesser Frigatebird

24 Jul, a flock of 85, mostly this species, flying SE over Lea Lea (RH); 24 Jul, 18, Motupore I (IB).

Brown Booby

7 Jul, 1 ad, off Matirogo Point, Port Moresby (RH).

Australian Pelican

24 Jul, 8, L Iaraguma (RH, NW).

Great-billed Heron

8 Sep, 1, Moitaka SP (RGS).

Cattle Egret

14 Jul, 2, Moitaka SP (RH); 7 Aug, c. 30, Kanosia (RH, IB).

White-faced Heron

16 Jul, 2, Kikori, Gul (IB).

Eastern Reef-Egret

2 Jul, 2, PAC (LT).

Casuaris bennetti

23 Jul, 1 ad (IB). All Gare's Lookout trail, Varirata NP.

Casuaris casuaris

17 Jul, 1 male with chick, 1 female & 1 sub-ad, Turama R, Gul (IB).

Calonectris leucomelas

4 Aug, 1, Kankas (RGS).

Fregata minor

24 Jul, at least 4 males seen flying over Lea Lea with *F. ariel* (RH); 26 Jul, 1 second stage imm female, over forest at c. 50 m, c. 7 km NE of Kiunga, Wes (FGI); 30 Jul, 1 in same plumage, but a different individual, as showing more white on belly at about 1000 m, nr Tabubil, Wes (FGI). The appearance of this and the Kiunga bird was coincident with a widespread pattern of showers and occasionally heavier rains brought in by consistent SE winds originating over the ocean south of PNG (FGI); 11 Sep, 1 female, Motupore I (IB); 25 Sep, 1, Kupiano, Cen (RGS).

Fregata ariel

24 Jul, a flock of 85, mostly this species, flying SE over Lea Lea (RH); 24 Jul, 18, Motupore I (IB).

Sula leucogaster

7 Jul, 1 ad, off Matirogo Point, Port Moresby (RH).

Pelecanus conspicillatus

24 Jul, 8, L Iaraguma (RH, NW).

Ardea sumatrana

8 Sep, 1, Moitaka SP (RGS).

Egretta ibis

14 Jul, 2, Moitaka SP (RH); 7 Aug, c. 30, Kanosia (RH, IB).

Egretta novaehollandiae

16 Jul, 2, Kikori, Gul (IB).

Egretta sacra

2 Jul, 2, PAC (LT).