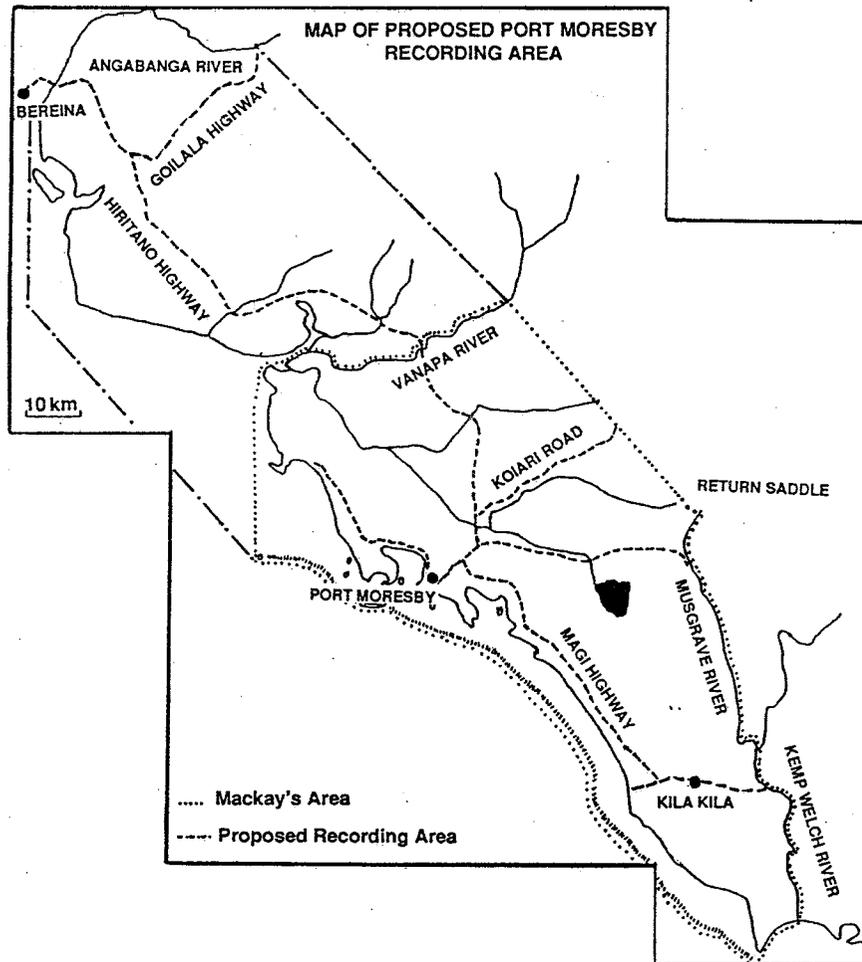


ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DATES IN THE PORT MORESBY AREA OF MIGRANTS FROM THE NORTH

ROGER K. HICKS



In the "Handbook of New Guinea Birds" (Rand & Gilliard 1967) it was noted that "little attention had been paid to the non-breeding birds that visit New Guinea" and that "their relative abundance and times of arrival need to be recorded". Since its founding in 1965, the Papua New Guinea Bird Society (PNGBS) has documented the bird life of PNG through its *Newsletter* and, more recently, through its journal, *Muruk*. These publications contain many references to migrant species. Coates (1985) summarised the observations of non-passerine migrants to PNG, and Mackay (1970) did the same for species in the Port Moresby area. In this paper I aim to summarise the records of holarctic migrants for the Port Moresby area since the founding of the PNGBS and note for each species earliest and latest records, main passage periods, and usual arrival and departure dates. A second paper will deal with migrants to PNG that breed in the southern hemisphere (Hicks in prep.).

The Port Moresby recording area is defined as that which is accessible by road and within a comfortable day's drive of the town centre, i.e. north-west to the Angabanga River, east to Musgrave River and south-east to Kemp Welch River (Hicks 1990). Over 70% of all migrant records in PNGBS publications are from this area.

The PNGBS *Newsletters* (1965 to date) and *Muruk* (1986 to date), have been the major source of records which are referenced here by the *Newsletter* number and page number or *Muruk* volume, issue and page number. Papers quoted from other sources are referenced in full. The data are presented below for each species separately. My personal observations from August 1985 to August 1988 have been included for some species where they help to clarify matters. Extreme dates for areas of PNG beyond Port Moresby are included in brackets. The bar graphs for all species, unless otherwise stated, show number of records per month, not numbers of individuals as this has not always been recorded. Where mentioned, seasons are northern seasons, i.e., November to February is winter, and May to August is summer. Each species' status has been assessed from the number of published records (vagrant = < 6 records, rare = 6 - 20 records, uncommon = 21 - 60 records, common = 61 - 100 records, abundant > 100 records) but qualified by personal observations.

Determining the earliest arrival date of some species is made difficult by the presence of overwintering individuals, i.e., birds remaining in PNG when they should be on their breeding grounds. Generally, birds that overwinter do not acquire breeding plumage, suggesting they may be immatures. Therefore, in species which regularly overwinter, only records of birds showing some trace of breeding plumage have been included for earliest arrival records.