

## WELCOME SWALLOW *HIRUNDO NEOXANA* AT MOITAKA SETTLING PONDS

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A single Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxana* was seen at Moitaka settling ponds (National Capital District) at 07:15 on 30 March 1988. The most notable feature was its elongated outer tail feathers, which made it appear more slender than the Pacific Swallows *H. tahitica* available for comparison. Its plumage was very similar to the Pacific Swallows': dark blue-black above, greyish below with a rich rufous throat and upper breast. The long tail-streamers and rich colour of the throat indicated this bird was an adult, as immatures have short tails and duller plumage (Pizzey 1980). A swallow with tail-streamers, that had been glimpsed but not identified, at the settling ponds on 24 March 1988, is now assumed to have been this Welcome Swallow. The other two possible options are Barn Swallow *H. rustica* and Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica*, both northern winter visitors to PNG (Beehler *et al.* 1986). It was not considered to be either of these species because it lacked the dark breast band and white underparts of Barn Swallow, and did not have the pale or rufous rump and collar of Red-rumped Swallow. We are familiar with all three species.

The Welcome Swallow is endemic to Australia, although some authorities consider it conspecific with the Pacific Swallow (Howard & Moore 1984). It is a partial migrant; some southern breeders desert their nesting areas in the austral winter and move north. It has colonised New Zealand (Pizzey 1980). The first record in PNG was of a single bird associating with Barn Swallows and Tree Martins *H. nigricans* at Aroa Lagoon, Central Province, in November 1980 (Finch 1980). The second record was of two birds, an adult and an immature at Hisiu Lagoon, Central Province, in October 1984 (Finch 1984). Hence, this is only the third record for PNG and the entire New Guinea region.

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

Finch, B.W. 1980. Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxana* at Aroa Lagoon, Central Province. A new species for the New Guinea region. PNGBS Newsletter 173-74: 4-5.

Finch, B.W. 1984. Welcome Swallows *Hirundo neoxana* at Hisiu Lagoon. Second record for the New Guinea Region. PNGBS Newsletter 212: 4-5.

Howard, R. & A. Moore. 1984. *A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Papermac.

Pizzey, G. 1980. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Collins.

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## BARRED OWLET-NIGHTJAR *AEGOTHELES CRISTATUS* AT THE KING BIRD TREE

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On 1 October 1988, Chris Eastwood and I were visiting the King Bird Tree area, situated 6 km north-west of the Brown River Bridge, on the Hiritano Highway.

We had gone c. 200 m into the forest when I flushed an owlet-nightjar that had apparently been roosting in a hollow tree trunk. It flew to a bare branch c. 10 m above the forest floor where it stayed for about half an hour. During this time the bird was carefully studied from various angles and these notes were taken: mouse brown above with distinct whitish collar; grey breast and belly, with fine black barring, which got thicker towards the throat; barring on tail; size, c. 20 cm.

After consulting Beehler *et al.* (1986), Barred Owlet-nightjar best fitted the description. Owlet-nightjars are extremely hard to see in Papua New Guinea.

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

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## INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS AT VARIRATA NATIONAL PARK, JUNE-JULY 1989

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We spent two months at Varirata National Park in order to begin a study of the Raggiana Bird of Paradise. During this period, we recorded 120 species, and made observations of several species rarely or not previously known in the park. These are reported in the following annotated list. We follow the nomenclature of Beehler & Finch (1985).

Australasian Grebe

*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

A pair attempted to nest on the lowest pond in June. This nest was destroyed and the birds constructed a new nest in mid-July.

Little Pied Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Observed in early June flying over the open picnic area.