

EDITORIAL

Unfortunately it has taken a very long time indeed to get this issue of Muruk completed, printed and distributed, and we thank all our readership for their patience, and we apologise to the authors for the delays.

To alleviate one of the major problems in production, the Society has purchased a computer which is dedicated to the production of Muruk. Thus the editor will no longer need to scrape time after hours on shared or borrowed computers. The purchase was made partly from Society funds and also with substantial donations from Fryde Furniture Limited and from Synergou Computer Systems Limited. We hope to further speed up the production of camera-ready material by purchasing a dedicated laser-printer in the near future.

This issue was largely prepared by Roger Hicks before he and Jenny Hicks went finish from P.N.G. after five years as stalwarts, and in many ways the driving forces behind the PNGBS. Their enthusiasm, organisation, and ornithological skills are greatly missed by the Society. While we wish Roger, Jenny, Andrew and Matthew the very best for their futures in Britain or elsewhere, we deeply feel the gap they leave in the Society's ranks.

Issue 5.3 should appear within two months of this issue, and material for issues in volume six are already largely ready for composition. That will clear the backlog of unpublished material, so please continue to support Muruk by sending in your contributions and observations.

EDITORS of the issue: Roger Hicks and Mike Hopkins.

COVER: Head study of Southern Cassowary by Jonas Hiaso

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ACQUISITION OF ADULT MALE PLUMAGE IN SOME BIRDS OF PARADISE AT BAIYER RIVER SANCTUARY

AKIA ARUAH AND ANDREW YAGA

No records have been published to date of the ages at which dimorphic birds of paradise acquire their adult plumages or the duration of the transition period. Estimates given in Cooper & Forshaw (1977) include the following for the genera *Epimachus*, *Paradisaea*, *Cicinnurus*, and *Diphyllodes*:

Epimachus meyeri "Acquisition of adult plumage by young males takes at least four years."

Paradisaea minor, *P. decora* & *P. guilielmi* "males acquire adult plumage slowly."

Paradisaea rudolphi "males acquire adult plumage slowly, over at least three and possibly five or more years."

Paradisaea apoda "males acquire adult plumage slowly, possibly over four or five years."

Paradisaea raggiana "males acquire adult plumage slowly, possibly over five or six years."

Paradisaea rubra "males acquire adult plumage slowly, possibly over six years."

Cicinnurus regius "Young males acquire adult plumage slowly.....until full adult plumage is attained in the fourth year."

Diphyllodes magnificus "acquisition of adult plumage by males is slow."

No information is given about sources on which the foregoing estimates were based. However, for *Diphyllodes republica* it is stated - "from specimens available it appears that young males acquire adult plumage gradually."

RECORDS OF ACQUISITION OF ADULT PLUMAGES AT BAIYER RIVER SANCTUARY

Brown Sicklebill

Epimachus meyeri

On 13 September 1978 the Sanctuary received a young wild-caught Brown Sicklebill (band 6-031) from Wabag, Enga Province. Its sex was recorded at the time as 'female'. Nearly four years later, on 29 July 1982 the typical male calls of this species, a low gobbling followed by a sharp machine-gun-like rattle, were first made by this bird. A year later, on 1 August 1983, the commencement of its plumage change was first seen. A close examination on 25 August that year revealed black wing covert, upper leg, under chin and nape feathers; all other plumage being brown. A further examination in November, 1983 showed - wings: iridescent dark purplish black; head & chin: black; forehead: iridescent light blue; back: spangled iridescent blue; underwing body feathers: soft lavender; side breast plumes: blue-black; flank plumes: fawn; tail: two long brown inner feathers above shorter black feathers; iris: pale blue.