

WHITEHEAD'S SWIFTLET *COLLOCALIA WHITEHEADI* ON MANUS?

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On a visit to Manus, 11 - 14 May 1989, three types of swiftlet *Collocalia* spp. with white rumps were observed, where only two had previously been recorded (Coates 1985). These were identified as follows.

1) The commonest swiftlet was small, with narrow pointed wings and a pointed tail. It had dark brown upperparts except for a neat, small, oblong (broader across the body than along it) white rump. The underparts were paler brown and a bit smudgy on the belly. This was identified as White-rumped Swiftlet *C. spodiopygia*, a species I had previously seen on New Britain and Bougainville. On Manus it was recorded in all habitats visited, from Lorengau at sea-level to rain forest at 200 m. It was the most numerous bird I recorded.

2) The second form was similar in size and shape to the White-rumped Swiftlet and also with a small, neat white rump. This was distinguished by a glossy sheen on the upperparts (not always discernible) and a clean white belly sharply demarcated from a darker breast, which I find is a more reliable field characteristic. This was identified as a white-rumped form of Glossy Swiftlet *C. esculenta*, probably *C. e. stresemanni*. It was much less numerous than White-rumped Swiftlet and seemed to favour valleys with running water through forest or secondary growth.

3) The third form was larger than the preceding two, having a stockier body, broader wings and a square tail. Its upperparts were dark brown with a large, square, smudgy, ill-defined white rump. The belly was smudgy brown on dirty white, becoming more uniform on the breast. It was regularly recorded in small numbers along ridge-tops in the interior of the island and always associated with White-rumped Swiftlets.

In shape and size it closely resembled the Uniform Swiftlet *C. vanikorensis*, which has been recorded on Manus, although I did not see it on this trip. Four very similar swiftlets have been recorded in PNG, although two of these, Mountain Swiftlet *C. hirundinacea* and Three-toed Swiftlet *C. papuensis*, are endemic to mainland New Guinea (Beehler *et al.* 1986, Coates 1985). Both Uniform Swiftlet and Whitehead's Swiftlet *C. whiteheadi* have ranges extending north of Papua New Guinea (Beehler *et al.* 1986) although only Whitehead's Swiftlet has a white-rumped form, the New Ireland subspecies, *C. w. leletensis*. This subspecies is known only from a single specimen from the Lelet plateau, New Ireland (Coates 1985).

I think this third type of swiftlet I observed on Manus may be Whitehead's Swiftlet of the New Ireland subspecies. This would extend the subspecies' range 250 km westwards and would be a new record for Manus. However swiftlets are not the easiest birds to identify

in the field. These observations are presented in the hope that subsequent bird watchers will carefully observe the swiftlets on Manus and either confirm or refute this identification.

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

Coates, B.J. 1985. *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*. Vol 1. Dove Publications.

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BUSH-HENS *AMAURORNIS OLIVACEUS* BREEDING IN THE DRY SEASON.

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Since early 1990 Bush-Hens *Amaurornis olivaceus* have been heard calling in the tall grass on the flat behind the faculty village at Pacific Adventist College, National Capital District. The birds have usually been heard calling at dusk, but also at midnight and into the early hours of the morning. Despite frequent attempts to see the birds when heard calling during daylight hours, I was unable to do so because of thick cover of grass and weeds.

However, on the morning of 16 September 1990 I heard Bush-Hens calling and saw four making their way through and over the grass and weeds. I considered them a family party, two adults and two young. A view of one adult bird revealed its yellow legs, while one bird, presumed to be a juvenile, did not have yellow legs. None of the field guides consulted mentioned this as a feature of juvenile Bush-Hen plumage (Beehler *et al.* 1986, Coates 1990, Macdonald 1973, Pizzey & Doyle 1980, Simpson & Day 1989, Slater *et al.* 1986).

Nesting is reported to occur during the wet season in the Port Moresby area (Coates 1985). However, this pair must have nested during what is normally considered Port Moresby's dry season. Unseasonal rainfall in June and September 1990 probably created conditions like the wet season and prompted this pair to breed.

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

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Macdonald, J.D. 1973. *Birds of Australia*. Reed.

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Simpson, K. & N. Day. 1989. *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Helm.

Slater, P., P. Slater & R. Slater. 1986. *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*. Rigby.

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