

## A SECOND LOWLAND POPULATION OF THE WHITE-FACED ROBIN *TREGELLASIA LEUCOPS*

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I report here sightings of a previously undiscovered lowland population of the White-faced Robin *Tregellasia leucops*. These sightings were made at an altitude of 145 m at a location known as Langia, between the Aiema and Ariama Rivers, some 25 km from the nearest point on the Strickland River and approximately 75 km east of the island village of Miwa, off the southern shores of Lake Murray, in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea

I was present daily at Langia between 23 September and 2 October 1990, although I could observe birds only opportunistically. I was surveying the perimeter of an elongated piece of land some 10 ha in area, but saw *T. leucops* in only one fairly restricted locality along that perimeter. Sightings of *T. leucops* were made on two separate days, 27 and 28 September, on each occasion of a single individual, but these were not sufficiently far apart to be certain that different individuals were involved. The size of the newly discovered population remains unknown.

The forest at Langia varies considerably as a function of the drainage, which is reflected in the regional topographical relief pattern, i.e., a series of flat ridges and broad dips, the local relief approximating 60 or 70 m vertical elevation. *T. leucops* was sighted only in forest that was dry underfoot, with relatively sparse undergrowth and many smaller trees and large, mature rainforest trees scattered throughout. The ground was gently sloping and the forest was relatively easy to move through. The general area of the sightings was near and at the top of one of the aforementioned broad, flat ridges.

The first individual seen was perched upright on a slender limb, the second was perched sideways against a tree trunk. Both were within three metres of the ground. The forehead appeared all white, the crown black, face and lores were white with the black of the crown extending round behind the eye and below its level in a black semi-circle. The gap between the black and the eye was reasonably large. The breast and the abdomen were bright yellow. Chin and throat colouration were not noted. The back and wings were dark brown and the upper tail almost black. The legs were yellow and the beak (upper and lower mandible) appeared white.

It is interesting, perhaps significant, that *Rhipidura hyperythra*, which is also basically a hill forest species but with lowland populations in the upper and lower Trans-Fly (Coates 1990), was seen and heard on several occasions around the perimeter and is evidently common at Langia. The only previously known (and apparently relict) lowland population of *T. leucops* was found Oriomo, over 200 km to the southwest, and for which the altitude was given as "near sea level" (Mayr and Rand 1937). Of the various authorities Coates

(1990) cites the widest altitude range for *T. leucops* viz. "from about 300 up to 2200 m, mainly 600 to 1650 m, and locally in the lowlands in the southern Trans-Fly region."

It is quite possible from the description that the Langia birds constitute a previously unknown sub-species, but only specimens will confirm this.

- Coates, B.J. 1990. **The Birds of Papua New Guinea. Volume II. Passerines.** Dove Publications.  
 Mayr, E. & A.L. Rand. 1937. Results of the Archbold Expeditions. 14. Birds of the 1933-1934  
 Papuan Expedition. **Bulletin of the American Museum Natural History** 73: 1-248.

### APPENDIX SPECIES RECORDED AT LANGIA

Southern Cassowary	<i>Casuarus casuarus</i>
Seen (once) and heard, plus many droppings.	
Common Scrub-Fowl	<i>Megapodius freycinet</i>
Many mounds seen and birds heard.	
Superb Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>
One male seen in the lower mid-canopy.	
Wompoo Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus magnificus</i>
Heard only.	
Zoe Imperial pigeon	<i>Ducula zoeae</i>
Heard only.	
Southern Crowned Pigeon	<i>Goura sheepmakeri</i>
Heard only.	
Rainbow Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
Seen and heard. In one particularly good view of a small flock of these birds in the low stage, the colouration of the head appeared very dark, almost black.	
Western Black-capped Lory	<i>Lorius lory</i>
Seen and heard. By colouration, definitely the race <i>L.l. rubiensis</i> .	
Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>
Seen and heard, but not common.	
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>
Seen and heard.	
Red-checked Parrot	<i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>
Seen and heard.	
Hook-billed Kingfisher	<i>Melidora macrohina</i>
Heard many times but not seen.	
Yellow-billed Kingfisher	<i>Syma torotoro</i>
Heard only.	
Rainbow Bee-eater	<i>Merops ornatus</i>
Seen and heard at the clearing.	
Blue-breasted Pitta	<i>Pitta erythrogaster</i>
Heard only.	
Hooded Pitta	<i>Pitta sordida</i>
In contrast to <i>P. erythrogaster</i> , which was heard on many occasions, <i>P. sordida</i> , although heard several times, was heard on the one day only, on 25 September.	
Rusty Mouse-Warbler	<i>Crateroscelis murina</i>
Heard only.	

Yellow-bellied Gerygone Seen and heard.	<i>Gerygone chrysogaster</i>
Sooty Thicket-Fantail Heard several times and one bird seen indistinctly.	<i>Rhipidura threnothorax</i>
Chestnut-bellied Fantail Good views were obtained of this basically hill forest species, which is common at Langia.	<i>Rhipidura hyperythra</i>
Spangled Drongo Seen and heard, but not common. The single bird seen was blue glossed, indicating the resident race	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>
Friilled Monarch Amongst other sightings, on 26 September a pair was seen building a nest about 15-20 m up. The nest was suspended from the lower crown of a large tree by two tendrils, one of either side of the cup. Both male and female brought material for the nest. When the observation finished the female had been sitting in the nest for some minutes.	<i>Arses telescopthalmus</i>
White-faced Robin The presence of this distinctive hill forest/lower montane species was completely unexpected. It was, however, seen on two occasions only, and in a restricted area.	<i>Tregellasis leucops</i>
Helmeted Friarbird Seen and heard, occasionally heard duetting.	<i>Philemon buceroides</i>
Tawny-breasted Honeyeater Seen and heard.	<i>Meliphaga flaviventer</i>
Puff-backed Honeyeater Seen and heard. The identification was based mainly on the relatively stout beak and the large yellow auricular, appearing rounded at the distal end.	<i>Meliphaga aruensis</i>
Mimic Honeyeater 16 or 17 cm, a shrill "tup"; yellow auricular; brown wings and back; apparently unmarked, grey underside; relatively long bill. This bird was bathing in a pool of water formed by a small hollow in a horizontal log at the forest edge.	<i>Meliphaga analoga</i>
Papuan Flowerpecker Seen and heard.	<i>Dicaeum pectorale</i>
Black Berrypecker Heard only.	<i>Melanocharis nigra</i>
Brown Oriole Heard only, but common.	<i>Oriolus szalayi</i>
Hooded Butcherbird Seen and heard.	<i>Cracticus cassicus</i>
Magnificent Riflebird Heard only, but common, the powerful, whistled calls of <i>P. m. magnificus</i> .	<i>Ptiloris magnificus</i>
Raggiana Bird of Paradise Seen and heard. Appeared to be pure <i>P. raggiana</i> .	<i>Paradisaea raggiana</i>
Grey Crow Seen and heard.	<i>Corvus tristis</i>

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## BIRDS OF SONOMA

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A few years ago I wrote for the Newsletter an account of the birds sighted during a short stay at Kambubu High School, on the Gazelle Peninsula some two hours' drive from Rabaul. Recently my wife and I were able to spend about eleven weeks at Sonoma College, also situated near Rabaul, and this is an account of the birds we saw there. Many of the birds sighted there had already been seen at Kambubu. We were fortunate to be able to spend three days at Kambubu while we were at Sonoma.

Sonoma is situated on a plateau about 50 km from Rabaul. It is in plantation country, with groves of coconuts and cacao trees all around, interspersed with groves of natural or second growth bushland. Both the plantations and the bushland are inhabited by many species of birds. Following is a list of those that we saw.

### Frigatebirds

*Fregata* spp.

A few of these were seen during our visit to Kambubu. I am not sure whether they were of the greater or lesser kind.

### Brahminy Kite

*Haliastur indus*

Some were occasionally seen, and on one occasion four or five were seen at once.

### Common Scrub-Fowl

*Megapodius freycinet*

While travelling through forest land we saw a black bird disappearing into the bush at the side of the road. The local people who were with us told us that this was a scrubfowl. On another occasion they told us that a bird which we could hear calling from a nearby valley was also a scrubfowl.

### Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove

*Ptilinopus aurantiifrontis*

One was sighted on one occasion, but they were often heard calling from nearby bushland.

### Emerald Ground-Dove

*Chalcophaps indica*

These were sighted on several occasions. We saw one on our visit to Kambubu, and on this occasion the bird flew in a large circle round us, beneath the level of the lower branches of the cacao grove where we were at the time. This was the best view we had ever had of a ground-dove, since they usually fly off in a straight line and quickly disappear. Perhaps there was a nest nearby. I noticed in Peckover & Filewood (1976) that this bird is on the mainland, and Stephan's Ground-Dove is the one found in the Bismarck Archipelago. That may have been what we saw.