

- Hooded Mannikin *Lonchura spectabilis*
 Small groups of these were seen on a couple of occasions near patches of cassava plants. Evidently it was the nest building season, as one was carrying nesting material.
- Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*
 These were the most common birds of the area, and could often be heard and seen. We saw one large tree where they had a nesting colony.
- Yellow-faced Myna *Mino dumontii*
 Only one pair was seen the whole time we were there. I thought they would have been more common.
- Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*
 Seen fairly often.
- Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*
 These were rather plentiful, and very noisy. Indeed they seemed to make more noise than any group of crows I have seen before, and it was different from the usual crow noises. They were fond of perching on the tops of the taller trees on the campus.

Peckover, W.S. & L.W.C. Filewood. 1976 **Birds of New Guinea and Tropical Australia**. A.H. & A.W. Reed

Address: 172 Harbord Street, Bonnells Bay, New South Wales 2264, Australia

Helmeted Friarbird *Philemon buceroides* feeding on red ants. Len Tolhurst. On 10 October 1990 at the Pacific Adventist College, NCD, I noticed Helmeted Friarbirds feeding on red ants. The red ants had formed several nests by pulling together leaves of a golden shower tree *Cassia fistula*. The friarbirds flew up to the nests and picked off ants while hovering for a second or so in mid-air, then returned to a branch where they perched and swallowed the ants they had observed. Address: Pacific Adventist College, Private Mail Bag, Boroko, N.C.D.

Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianus* attacking birds caught in a mist net. Roger K. Hicks and Robin Restall. On 17 July 1990 we visited the Pacific Adventist College (PAC), National Capital District, in the hope of catching some Mannikins *Lonchura* spp. We set a 20 m, 4 panel mist net at a site where mannikins had been observed feeding on the ground. We then left the net for an hour. On our return we had caught 12 birds (10 Grey-headed Mannikins *L. caniceps* and 2 Chestnut-breasted Mannikins *L. castaneothorax*). Two Pheasant Coucals had been attracted to the net, presumably by the flutterings of the trapped mannikins. One of the coucals was actually in the net but escaped as we approached. It had attacked and killed two juvenile Grey-headed Mannikins by pecking at the head and neck, but had not been able to get the mannikins out of the net. After extracting the birds we again left the net. RR returned after about half an hour. We had caught no more birds, but a Pheasant Coucal was sitting close by the net where it was apparently visible to the mannikins as these were now flying higher than they had earlier and so missed the net. Previously, RH had noted Pheasant Coucals sitting under mist nets set in his garden on Matirogo Point, Port Moresby, but no birds had been found dead in the nets. Address: (Hicks) 7 Newtown, Codicote, Herts, SG4 8UG, U.K.; (Restall) 31 South Bay Road, Hong Kong.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* fishing? Roger K. Hicks. Since January 1990 I have regularly recorded an adult and immature Brahminy Kite on my Town Bird Survey site at Matirogo Point, Port Moresby, National Capital District. Over this time the immature has been slowly obtaining its adult plumage and now only has some flecks of white in the rufous of the upper wing. North of Matirogo Point, a stream flows into a small, unnamed bay and at low tide flows across the exposed mudflats. At 11:05 on 17 September 1990, when the tide was half out, these two Brahminy Kites were seen bathing in the stream. They stood within two feet of each other, in water that was almost belly-deep. After about 5 minutes, the immature flew c.10 m to a rock, on which it perched. The adult remained in the water and began, apparently, to fish. It waded c.30 m through the shallows of the stream, stopping frequently. During the stops it occasionally stabbed at something on or in the water. It made a total of six stabs in seven minutes. Each stab seemed to be successful, although the distance from my vantage point to the bird, c.150 m, was too great for the prey to be discernible. The stabbing action it used for "fishing" was of too short a duration for the

bird to have been drinking. After seven minutes wading the adult Brahminy Kite flew and landed near the immature. The immature took off immediately, circled the bay and was then joined by the adult. Rand & Gilliard (1967, *The Handbook of New Guinea Birds*) recorded one Brahminy Kite that had eaten many small fish, but considered they may have been carrion. Coates (1985, *The Birds of Papua New Guinea. Vol 1.*) reports that Brahminy Kites are expert at snatching fish from just below the surface, but there are no PNG records of Brahminy Kites fishing in the manner described above. *Address: 7 Newtown, Codicote, Herts SG4 8UG, U.K.*

Birds feeding on Hawk Moths. Roger K Hicks. Throughout the period just before the onset of the wet season large numbers of Hawk Moths (and other insects) are attracted to the security lights around my house on Matorogo Point, Port Moresby, National Capital District. During the day these Hawk Moths "roost" in nearby trees, usually under a leaf, or in the shaded nooks on the outside of the house. In the third week of December 1990, when conditions were hot, humid and calm, numerous Hawk Moths of two species were noted around the house. This abundance of prey was exploited by several species of birds. A family of Torresian Crows *Corvus orru*, two adults and two fledged young, visited the roof of the house each morning between 05:30 and 07:30. The young were readily identified by their dark eyes and pinkish gape. I assume all the birds were feeding on insects that had been attracted by the security lights but the prey was only identified on three occasions. Each of these times a young bird was noted holding a Hawk Moth in its bill. The young bird transferred the Hawk Moth from its bill to its feet where it was held against the bird's perch while the Hawk Moth's wings were stripped and discarded before the body was eaten. On one occasion the Hawk Moth escaped while the young Torresian Crow was transferring it from bill to foot. Two Pheasant Coucals *Centropus phasianus*, not usually recorded in the garden, were observed in trees near the house where the Hawk Moths "roosted", but I could not confirm they were feeding on the moths. They were noted on the ground beneath the security lights where they fed on Hawk Moths that had come to grief during the night. Up to four White-breasted Wood-Swallows *Artamus leucorhynchus* snatched moths from trees near the house. The wood-swallows picked the moths, and other insects, from the foliage with their feet as they flew past. Their prey was then manipulated and passed from feet to bill while in flight. Some of the moths taken in this way may have been Hawk Moths, but I cannot be certain and most seemed too small. A dragon *Lophognathus temporalis* was also noted feeding on damaged Hawk Moths on the ground. *Address: 7 Newtown, Codicote, Herts, SG4 8UG, U.K.*

RECENT OBSERVATIONS JULY - SEPTEMBER 1990

COMPILED BY ROGER HICKS

All observations refer to the Port Moresby area unless the site name is followed by an abbreviated province name.

Contributors: Ian Burrows (IB); Field Guides Incorporated tour group (FGI); Mike Hopkins (MH); Roger Hicks (RH); Edel Kraayo (EK); John Silcock (JS); Geoff Smith (GS); Len Tolhurst (LT); Niklas Wahlberg (NW).

Abbreviations: ad = adult; bp = breeding plumage; Cen = Central Province; CGO = Central Government Offices; EHP = Eastern Highlands Province; ESP = East Sepik Province; Fm = Farm; I = Island; imm = immature; juv = juvenile; L = Lake; Mad = Madang Province; Mor = Morobe Province; NP = National Park; NSP = North Solomons Province; Oro = Northern Province; PAC = Pacific Adventist College; R = River; Rd = Road; SHP = Southern Highlands Province; SP = settling ponds; UPNG = University of PNG campus; Wes = Western Province; WHP = Western Highlands Province.

Dwarf Cassowary	<i>Casuarus bennetti</i>
28 Sep, 1 ad and a third-grown young, Varirata Lookout trail, Varirata NP (RH).	
Australasian Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i>
28 Sep, 2 full-grown imm, PAC (RH).	
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
1 Jul, 2 in bp, Alexishafen ponds, Mad (RH).	
Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>
9 Sep, 1 male & 1 female, with Lesser Frigatebirds, flying south over Papa (RH).	
Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>
9 Aug, 3, Loloata I (EK); 9 Sep, c.15, flying south over Papa (RH).	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
16-19 Aug, 1, Bensbach, Wes, (FGI).	
Great-billed Heron	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i>
16-19 Aug, 1-2, Bensbach, Wes (FGI).	
Cattle Egret	<i>Egretta ibis</i>
2 Jul, c.20, Madang airport, Mad (RH); 9 Sep, c.100, with cattle, Fairfax grasslands (RH).	
White-faced Heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>
17 Sep, 1, Rouna No. 3 Power Station, the only record of the year so far (RH).	
Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
28 Sep, 1, Ilimo Fm (RH).	
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
10 Aug, 1, Mount Hagen airfield, WHP (FGI).	
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
31 Jul, 1, Ilimo Fm (NW).	
Spotted Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus spilonotus</i>
11 Aug, 1, Tari Gap, SHP (EK).	