

NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORDS - LIHIR ISLAND

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During a ten day stay on Lihir and nearby islands in the New Ireland Province, PNG from 30 January 1991 to 8 February 1991 I recorded 37 species of birds. Three of these have not been recorded from these islands before (see Coates 1985).

Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi*. On 8 February 1991 while examining old burial sites near the Kennicott Niugini Joint Venture goldmine at Luise Harbour on the east coast, we (Biries, Margaret Mackay and I) saw a large dark eagle glide over us about 50 m above. It glided over us on thermals for about three minutes until it vanished behind a knoll. I identified it as a Gurney's Eagle by its all-over brown colour but for a pale patch under each wing where the secondaries join the primaries. I ruled out the juvenile of the White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* which usually has much more light colour under the wing and on the rump and underside of the tail. To confirm my identification I asked Biries about the eagles there and he said that the name of this bird, the Gurney's Eagle was *Managolai* and that the White-bellied Sea Eagle was called *Molam*. Biries knew that the Sea-Eagle caught fish but the Gurney's Eagle did not.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacuta*. Although this record is a long way from the rest of its known distribution in PNG this is not an unusual record for such a wide ranging species. I saw it on two occasions - 30 January 1991 over Lipuko Village on the east coast and on 3 February 1991 over the open grounds of the Roman Catholic mission at Paile on the south coast. It is a regular migrant from Australia and New Zealand through PNG to southeast Asia.

Four Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* were seen together perched on a power line and swooping around the grounds of the Paile mission. I observed them for at least five minutes while waiting for transport from the mission - 3 February 1991.

Coates, B.J. (1985). **The Birds of Papua New Guinea. Volume I.** Dove Publications.

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BARNES'S LONG-TAILED BIRD OF PARADISE

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The female Splendid *Astrapia* Bird of Paradise featured in the extension of range for that species by Tolhurst (1990) is most likely a typical example of young Barnes's Long-tailed Bird of Paradise *Astrapia mayeri* x *Astrapia stephaniae*, probably a three to four year old male.

A less likely possibility for the individual described is that of an immature female Ribbontail Bird of Paradise *A. mayeri*. The occurrence of white tail feathers in *A. mayeri* is not confined to males. In his second volume Brian Coates features a Cliff and Dawn Frith photograph of an adult, white and black tailed, female plumaged, *A. mayeri* at the nest with a gaping nestling (Coates 1990). The one complete central tail feather of that bird is all white from the base to within 50 to 100 mm of the tip, which is black. The intact section of the broken other tail feather is also all white. The width of both feathers appear to be the same as that of an adult male - about 22 mm. The "brown towards the end" of the tail, in Len T. Tolhurst's description of the individual he observed indicates a young hybrid male rather than a female *A. mayeri*.

The description given by Tolhurst of the tail feathers, namely "the white on the base of the tail covered the full width of the tail feathers" alone, precludes the possibility of the bird in question being a female *A. splendidissima*. In this species the white bases of the tail feathers are edged with brown or black, as is depicted in Gilliard (1969) and Cooper & Forshaw (1977) as well as by Medland (in Iredale 1950).

In 'Barnes's Long-tail' the extent of white in the central tail feathers is greater in some individuals than others (Shaw Mayer, pers. comm.). The pattern of white and black, and the width of the central tail feathers are also variable. The adult male described by Iredale and featured by Medland had a different pattern of white/black and a much wider, shorter tail (12 at base to 40 mm and 750 mm long) to the one which Shaw Mayer had at the Hallstrom Sanctuary, Nondugl and which is pictured in Peckover (1992) (tail about 22 mm wide throughout and 1080 mm long). These variations in obvious hybrids and the additional black in the tail feathers of some adult male 'pure' *A. mayeri* may indicate intergrading with *A. stephaniae* (that is, the occurrence of viable cross-breeding to second, third and subsequent generations) in at least some populations where the two species overlap. However, the two species are reported to "live side by side, one above the other, on Mt. Giluwe without appreciable hybridisation" (Gilliard 1969).

For many years the occasional hybrid birds of paradise which were collected in the wild were thought to be new species. The last to be described as such as *Astrapia barnesi*, Barnes's Long-tailed Bird of Paradise (Iredale 1948). In his later book on birds of paradise