

PAPUAN HAWK-OWL *UROGLAUX DIMORPHA* IN THE LAE- BULOLO AREA

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Although Pratt (in Beehler *et al.*, 1986) states that *Uroglaux dimorpha* is distributed throughout the lowlands of New Guinea, Coates (1985) records it only from the southern side of the island. This note details its occurrence in the northern side of the cordillera.

On the 15 March 1981, a road kill was picked up on the Lae-Bulolo road between Gabensis and Wampit, Morobe Province. A study skin was made (PNGFC 00086) and housed at the PNG Forestry College before being sent to the Papua New Guinea National Museum at the end of 1987. The bird was identified as *U. dimorpha* by Roy Mackay (then at Baiyer River Sanctuary). He commented on its known distribution (southern side of the cordillera). The bird was an adult female; wing 224 mm; tail 148 mm; weight 236 g and ovaries undeveloped. The stomach contained 3 scarab beetles (Scarabidae) each approximately 26 mm long and 1 grasshopper (Orthoptera).

On the 15 January 1987 Forestry Department personnel in Bulolo purchased a juvenile owl from local children who claimed to have obtained the bird in the surrounding forest. It was a young *U. dimorpha* with the head still in downy white plumage. The wings were barred grey-brown. The bird was kept indoors and fed by hand, initially on raw beef and chicken. The diet was changed within a fortnight, to live grasshoppers and geckos which were also offered by hand to the bird. Beef and chicken were refused. By 3 March it had started foraging for itself. Over the 1987 Easter Ornithlon, a number of PNG Bird Society members viewed and photographed the bird. The bird was released on 5 July 1987, but remained in the vicinity of the house for several weeks before finally disappearing. It weighed over 300 g (largest Pesola scale available) and had a wing length of 221 mm. Other measurements were unobtainable because of handling difficulties.

In approximately October 1988, lecturing staff at the PNG University of Technology purchased a bird from children on a street in Lae. It was an immature *U. dimorpha*. They did not ask the birds provenance but it can probably be assumed to be Morobe, possibly even the Lae area. At the time the bird still retained downy white plumage on its head and underparts. The bird was still in captivity in December 1989 but disappeared over the Christmas holidays before measurements could be made.

U. dimorpha undoubtedly occurs in the region; however, it appears to be elusive in the field. It would also seem, from these initial observations, that the bird breeds from mid-year to the latter months of the year given the occurrence of juveniles in October and January.

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

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

OBSERVATIONS FROM MANUS PROVINCE

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From 25 June to 16 July 1991, I had the opportunity of spending three weeks in Manus Province. While this was a working assignment and bird watching was done in spare time, I was able to find enough time to make the visit very much worth while as far as my hobby is concerned.

Two weeks were spent in the Lorengau area, and most of my bird-watching was restricted to the town area, and to a few of the offshore islands. I did travel a few km up the Trans-Island Highway, if that is what it can be called, to the village of Rossun, where I spent one night. I had hoped to get out very early in the morning to see what I could in the surrounding forest areas, but during the night it began to rain very heavily, and did not stop until about noon resulting in a very short list for Rossun. The small offshore islands of Mandrin, Pityilu, and Hawei to the north of Lorengau are well worth a visit. The rewards on the islands for me were the sighting of Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens*, Bismarck Black Myzomela *Myzomela erythromelas* and Grey Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pacifica*. These species can be seen elsewhere in Manus, and I was to see them again in some of the southern islands of the Province.

On Hawei I also saw the rare pied form of the Eastern Reef-Egret *Egretta sacra*. It was standing on a wreck of a World War II ship aground on the reef at the eastern end of the island. It stood next to a dark phase individual, and was covered with irregular patches of white and grey, with perhaps the latter colour being more dominant. No plumes were seen on the bird, so it was not in breeding plumage.

My last full week in Manus Province was most rewarding in more ways than one. I travelled by outboard motor-boat to visit the southern islands of Lou, Pam and Balaun. We left Lorengau on 7 July and travelled along the north coast of Manus Island going east till we entered the narrow Lonui Passage which separates Manus Island from Los Negros Island. Just before we travelled under the bridge that connects the two islands there is a small lagoon on the Los Negros side where several scores of World War II landing craft were run ashore and left to rust. It serves as a reminder of the bitter fighting that took place in this area of the Pacific during those days.

After going under the highway bridge, we worked our way through Bird Island Bay and through the gap in the reef and into the ocean, and then almost due south for Rei Village on the Island of Lou, 20 miles or 35 km away. We ran into heavy rain just before we reached the village but our essential luggage was well protected.