

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

LORAINÉ LAMOTHE

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

LEONARD P. TOLHURST

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.

Lou Island is volcanic, and much of the island is covered with heavy bush. It was here that I saw the Admiralty Pied Monarch *Monarcha infelix* for the first time.

On Monday July 8th, I paid for the outboard motor fuel, and travelled with a couple of Rei villagers to the San Miguel Islands, commonly known as Tilianu Islands, although this name only refers to the main island of the group in the north. We first went to the southernmost island of the group shown on maps as Anobat Island, but known to the locals by the name Purol Island. This island is a real bird island, there must be thousands there, maybe because the island is not inhabited by man. By far the most common bird on the island is the Grey Imperial Pigeon. I had hoped to find the Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* there in large numbers too, but only got a glimpse of one as it flew away through the thick forest. It was recognized by the large white tail, which was all that I was able to see. Another bird that I was hoping to see, and which virtually met us on the beach was the Beach Kingfisher *Halcyon saurophaga*. This is one bird I had been wanting to see for a long time, and I was also to see it several times later in other places.

Perhaps an even bigger thrill was to get a good look at the rare Manus Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura semirubra* on this little island. I later saw it again on Sivisa Island in the Fedarb Island Group. published reports of this beautiful species indicate that it is so rare on Manus Island that its status there is now considered uncertain. It is known to be on San Miguel and Tong Islands, so now we can add the name of Sivisa Island to its known habitat.

After leaving Anobat Island, we went North-east to Loraine Island, still in the San Miguel group, only to find that there were not many birds there. One sighting on Loraine Island is what I identified as Mangrove Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*. It looked too large and too white to be a Sacred Kingfisher, yet I noticed that Coates (1985) indicated that this species is apparently not known in the Admiralty Islands, though it has been seen on Moru Island near north western Manus, and on Wuvulu Island to the west of Manus. It is common in the eastern Bismarck Archipelago. If this is a sighting of the Collared Kingfisher in the Admiralty Group, it could be a first, but I would like confirmation from others who visit this island, or correction as the case warrants.

While in these Islands it was interesting to see flocks of Grey Imperial Pigeons fly off to Lou Island where they feed, a distance of about 18 km. I also saw a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodes* leave for the island of Rambutyo, a distance of about 20 km away.

Upon returning to Rei Village I gathered my luggage and travelled by boat to the west coast village of Solang, where my night's stay will long be remembered for the approximately 60 red-bug bites I received! From Solang we travelled over land to the east coast village of Paup, which is situated close to an area of thermal activity, with boiling water and boiling mud. It is in this area that I saw the largest complex of nesting area for the Common

Scrubfowl *Megapodius freycinet* that I have seen anywhere. It is a much larger complex than that in the Rabaul area where this species also uses the heat of the ground to incubate its eggs. During a long walk along the beach I was rewarded with a sighting of Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia mackinlayi*. This species was also later seen on Sivisa Island.

On Wednesday July 10 we crossed over to the Pam Islands to the south of Lou Island. On the way a Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, and a Black Noddy *Anous minutus* were seen.

The next day we travelled further south to the volcanic island of Baluan, which is also very fertile. I travelled around the west side of the island till I reached the south coast, then transferred from a utility to the back of a trailer pulled by a tractor, and went straight up over the centre of the island to the north coast. On the summit I visited a small vent in the ground that was sending out steam and sulphur fumes.

On Friday, 12th July I returned to Rei where I spent the weekend. On the way we had a good close look at the island of Tuluman, just off the southern tip of Lou Island. Tuluman came up from the sea floor in a volcanic eruption some years ago. Singing Starlings *Aplonis cantaroides* and Rainbow Lorikeets have established themselves on the island, and shore and ocean birds include Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*, Black-naped Tern *S. sumatrana*, Black Noddy, and Eastern Reef-Egret.

On Sunday morning, July 14 I again hired a boat and visited the Island of Sivisa, in the Fedarb Group. This visit is alluded to a couple of times above in that I again saw the Manus Rufous Fantail here, also another sighting of Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove.

On Sunday afternoon I made the return trip to Lorengau, again not without running into another heavy downpour on the way.

Listed below are bird lists for the various places visited:-

**LORENGAU AREA**

Black Noddy  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Uniform Swiftlet  
White-rumped Swiftlet  
Moustached Tree-Swift  
Dollar Bird  
White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird  
Black-headed White-Eye  
Manus Friarbird  
Singing Starling  
Metallic Starling

**ISLANDS OFF**

**LORENGAU**

**M=Mandrin Island**

**P= Pityilu Island**

**H=Hawei Island**

Eastern Reef-Egret **MH**

Rufous Night-Heron **M**

Brahminy Kite **M**

Common Scrubfowl **P**

Whimbrel **P**

Black-naped Tern **H**

Grey Imperial Pigeon **M**

Rainbow Lorikeet **M**

White-rumped Swiftlet **M**

Island Monarch **M**

Shining Flycatcher **P**

Bismarck Black Myzomela **M**

**ROSSUN VILLAGE**

Grey Goshawk

Eclectus Parrot

Brush Cuckoo

Shining Flycatcher

White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike

Cicadabird

Northern Fantail

**MOMOTE AIRPORT**

Lesser Golden Plover  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Rainbow Bee-eater

**LOU ISLAND**

Black Bittern  
Brahminy Kite  
White-breasted Sea-Eagle (at sea)  
Grey Goshawk  
Common Scrubfowl  
Common Sandpiper  
Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Brush Cuckoo  
White-rumped Swiftlet  
Sacred Kingfisher  
Beach Kingfisher  
Rainbow Bee-eater  
Northern Fantail  
Admiralty Pied Monarch  
Shining Flycatcher  
Metallic Starling  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird

**SAN MIGUEL GROUP**

Eastern Reef-Egret  
Rufous Night-Heron  
Crested Hawk  
Brahminy Kite

Common Scrubfowl  
Nicobar Pigeon  
Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove  
Grey Imperial Pigeon  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Collared Kingfisher ?  
Beach Kingfisher  
Manus Rufous Fantail  
Island Monarch  
Bismarck Black Myzomela  
Singing Starling

**PAM ISLANDS**

Lesser Frigate Bird  
Eastern Reef-Egret  
Common Scrubfowl  
Black Noddy  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
White-rumped Swiftlet  
Beach Kingfisher  
Shining Flycatcher  
Metallic Starling

**BALUAN ISLAND**

Rufous Night-Heron  
Grey Imperial Pigeon  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Brush Cuckoo  
Channel-billed Cuckoo  
White-rumped Swiftlet

Sacred Kingfisher  
Dollarbird  
Shining Flycatcher  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird  
Bismarck Black Myzomela  
Singing Starling

**TULUMAN ISLAND**

Eastern Reef-Egret  
Black-naped Tern  
Sooty Tern  
Black Noddy  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Singing Starling

**SIVISA ISLAND**

Eastern Reef-Egret  
Common Scrubfowl  
Purple Swampphen  
Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove  
Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove  
Grey Imperial Pigeon  
Rainbow Lorikeet  
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo  
White-rumped Swiftlet  
Manus Rufous Fantail  
Island Monarch  
Bismarck Black Myzomela  
Metallic Starling

**DOES THE GREATER GROUND-ROBIN *AMALOCICHLA SCLATERIANA* INHABIT TARI GAP?**

**BRUCE M. BEEHLER**

On 20 November 1991, while birding the roadside forest of Tari Gap (at c. 2400 m) with several others, I heard a very distinctive song that I could not place to species. The song, musical, clear, and mournful, comprised a loose series of upslurred notes in a middle range. A complete series might contain four notes over a ten second period, and thus the series is quite hesitant or tentatively produced. In some instances only a single loud note was given.

The most remarkable aspect of the song was the ringing upslurred quality of the major notes. These are sometimes preceded by a short flat note, producing something like: "hoo..wrrreeeee?" Keys to characterization of this call are: (a) the sad quality; (b) the clear musical tone; (c) the preponderance of upslurred notes; (d) the slow, hesitant pace of note production; (e) the medium pitch of the notes, easily imitated by a human whistling; and (f) the series of notes moves up and down the scale in an odd fashion.

The song closely approaches songs I have heard of the Greater Ground-Robin *Amalocichla sclateriana* from the English Peaks, in the Owen Stanley Range. Might the song I have heard refer to that species? This song is distinct from those described for the Lesser Ground-Robin *A. incerta* and Logrunner *Orthonyx temminckii*.

I recommend that birders and fieldworkers visiting the area listen for this remarkable call, which we heard in the late afternoon. If, indeed, this is a Greater Ground-Robin, it should be looked for at elevations above 2500 m. This bird is exceedingly difficult to observe. It can best be encountered by whistling an imitation of the call or playing a tape, while waiting motionless within the forest near the singing bird. It will approach on or near the ground, but rarely affords clear views, as it remains hidden in the vegetation.

This would constitute a considerable range extension for the species, as it is only known from the Snow Mountains of Irian Jaya and the mountains south and east of Wau, Morobe Province (Owen Stanley and Wharton ranges, and Bulldog Road).

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

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Coates, B.J. 1990. **The Birds of Papua New Guinea. Volume II**. Dove Publications.

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