

NOTES ON BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE DURING JULY 1993

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1. Spotted Nightjar (*Eurostopodus argus*): A single bird was observed 17th July at about 8:30pm one kilometre downstream from Obo. It flew along the bank of the Fly River, about 20m from boat for a few minutes, providing an excellent view. The wing spot was large, well-defined and clearly visible. There was no white on the tail, nor any visible on the throat. This bird was the correct size for spotted, rather than the larger white-throated nightjar. We are quite familiar with Spotted Nightjars in Australia and are confident of our identification, even though this species has otherwise been reported only from the Aru Islands in the New Guinea archipelago (Beehler et al., 1986).

2. Collared-Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula muellerii*): This species was very common around d'Albertis junction. We found a nest after a bird was seen to fly from low vegetation very close to our boat. It was situated in vines between the crowns of two pandans about 1.5m above the water in a flooded oxbow. The nest was a sparse platform of dried twigs 25cm in diameter and contained a single white egg.

3. Broad-billed Flycatcher (*Myiagra ruficollis*): Two birds were caught by hand at night in flooded oxbows immediately north of d'Albertis junction on 12th and 13th July. They were both perched on vines about 2m above the water. The bill was very broad and the outer-most tail feathers were paler than the rest of the tail. These oxbows were surrounded by dense lowland rainforest. This species has previously been reported only from mangrove forest in PNG (Coates 1990), but also occurs in tropical monsoon forests and adjacent woodlands in Australia (Simpson & Day 1984).

4. Grey-crowned Mannikin (*Lonchura nevermanni*): A flock of 40-50 birds were observed at Lake Daviumbo on 15th July. They were among tall grass on the flooded lake and were seen clearly from a distance of 30m.

5. Splendid Astrapia (*Astrapia splendissima*): Two birds were observed at close quarters from a helicopter 8-10 kms south of Tabubil in the Ok Tedi valley on 18th July. This locality is at an altitude of 6-700m, very much lower than the 1800m lower limit given by Beehler et al. (1986). This species has been seen previously 6 km from our locality in the Hindenberg Range (P. Gregory - pers. comm.). The long, dark tail with starkly contrasting white on the anterior portion was clearly seen from above. The birds were roughly crow-sized, and in general shape resembled a bird of paradise. Against the green canopy they appeared quite dark, almost black.

References cited:

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A NEW ALTITUDE RECORD AND RANGE EXTENSION FOR THE THREE-TOED SWIFTLET *Collocalia papuensis*

Peter Rowland

The Three-toed Swiftlet *Collocalia papuensis* was until 1967 considered to be a subspecies of Whitehead's Swiftlet *C. whiteheadi* (Coates 1985). This New Guinea endemic is a large predominantly grey-brown swiftlet, approximately 140mm long with a wingspan of 119-137mm. It is known to occur only from the Idenburg River, along the northern slopes of the Snow Mountains, and Jayapura, Irian Jaya. There are unconfirmed sight records from the northern watershed as far as Lae. Given the difficulty of swiftlet identification, the identity of large swiftlets seen at Manam Island (Berggy 1978) and near Alotau (Gregory pers obs) is uncertain.

The Three-toed Swiftlet is usually observed high in the air, often in large flocks of twenty to thirty birds (Coates 1985), though it is occasionally seen feeding low over marshes and swamps. Little else is known of the species and its nesting habits are as yet undescribed. Until recently the altitudinal range of the Three-toed Swiftlet was considered to extend from sea-level to 1800 metres. However, on April 1st 1993 a single Three-toed Swiftlet was captured by Dr. Tim Flannery (Australian Museum, Sydney) and Mr Lester Seri (Department of Environment and Conservation, Papua New Guinea) while they were trapping bats in a mist net erected outside Luplupwintem Cave, Western Province, on the southern slopes of the Hindenburg Range. The swiftlet was removed from the net at first light (0615 hours), shortly after bats were returning to the cave.

Luplupwintem Cave lies at 2400m above sea-level, within an area of mossy montane and *Dacrycarpus* forest. This represents an altitudinal increase of 600m in the known height range of the species, and is the first specimen record for PNG. Dr. Flannery (pers comm) suggests that the swiftlet may be nocturnal or crepuscular, as it was not trapped the previous evening at 2100 hrs when the net was checked (*but roosting in the cave seems equally plausible*). *Luplupwintem cave is well-known locally as the site for the rare relict species Bulmer's Fruit Bat Aroteles bulmerae. It lies just north of the central Hindenburg Wall--ed*.

The specimen is now registered in the collection of the Australian Museum as 0.64733.

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