

On the New Guinea mainland there are currently considered to be four subspecies:

T.p. versteegi (Snow Mountains), *T.p. erebus* (central highland provinces); *T.p. keysseri* (Saruwaged Mountains, Huon Peninsula); and, *T.p. papuensis* (Owen Stanley and Wharton Ranges).

Although geographically isolated, these subspecies are similar in colour and shape, but differ in size. Measurements of wing, tail and tarsus can be used as a basis for identification, however, there are also size differences between male and female of the same subspecies (Table 1).

On 04 and 05 April 1987 three birds were collected by Dr Tim Flannery (Australian Museum, Sydney) and Mr Lester Seri (Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Wildlife, Papua New Guinea), near Dokfuma, Star Mountains (altitude 3200 metres). They subsequently captured a further individual on Finimteri Plateau, Hindenburg Range (altitude 2280 metres) on 02 May 1992. The specimens were incorporated in the Australian Museum bird collection. Measurements were taken and their sexes were determined by internal examination (Table 2).

The measurements indicate that these specimens represent *T.p. versteegi*. Ideally, a greater number of individuals within this region should be measured. The tarsus lengths of the two males are smaller than those of five specimens measured by Mayr & Gilliard (1951). The measurements of the adult female are inconsistent with those published of *versteegi* females. The differences in the measurements of the three adult birds collected by Flannery and Seri raise an element of doubt as to whether these birds are truly *versteegi* or perhaps a new subspecies.

These are the first records of the subspecies *Turdus poliocephalus versteegi* for Papua New Guinea.

Table 1.

Comparative wing, tail and tarsus measurements (mm) of adult Island Thrush subspecies. From Diamond (1989) and Mayr & Gilliard (1951).

		<i>versteegi</i>	<i>erebus</i>	<i>keysseri</i>	<i>papuensis</i>
Wing	male	136.0-144.5	124.5	118-124.0	127.0-135
	female	135.5-136.0	122.5-125	118-120.5	125.5-129
Tail	male	100-108	89	85	97- 105
	female	96-102	85-90	80	91- 94.5
Tarsus	male	39.5-42.0	36.5	36	33.5-38
	female	40.0-40.5	35.0-37.5	38	36.0-37.5

Table 2.

Measurements (mm), sexes and Australian Museum registration numbers of specimens collected by Flannery and Seri.

Locality	Dokfuma	Dokfuma	Dokfuma	Finimteri
Sex & Age	Ad. male	Ad. female	Ad. male	Imm. female
AM Reg.	O.59750	O.59751	O.59752	O.64416
Wing (mm)	139	134	138	129
Tail (mm)	107	107	108	102
Tarsus (mm)	38.7	39.3	39.2	39.2

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THE AVIFAUNA OF THE ALOTAU AREA, MILNE BAY PROVINCE

Antony Fabbro

Location:

Alotau is the provincial capital and gateway to the Milne Bay Province and is located 385 Km E. S. E from Port Moresby. The peaceful town has 6,385 inhabitants and is located on a narrow coastal plain on Milne Bay. The surrounding area has steep rainforest covered mountains, coconut plantations and oil palm estates interspersed with traditional gardens and undisturbed lowland rainforests. A regional highway passes through Alotau and connects East Cape and Sagarai via Gurney Airport. Other local roads link to the north coast and the southern shores of the Bay. Local vessels and dinghies link the villages and island areas. A network of airstrips connects Alotau with the islands and inner mountain areas.

Topography and Vegetation : Major Classifications

Lowland rainforests : e. g. Alluvial plains Alotau region.

Rugged Mid-High Mountain Ranges : e. g. Owen Stanley Mt Dayman (2980m) and Agaun (1015m).

Dry coral limestone coasts and grassland savannahs : e. g. Cape Vogel, Rabaraba District.

Extensive Mangrove systems e. g. Mullins Harbour, Suau Coast.

Extensive Mangrove Systems e.g. Lousiade Archipelago and deep water ocean habitats; Solomon & Coral Sea.

The Province is generally wet and tropical with the moist S.E. trade winds during March to June and a dry season from December to February.

Avifauna :

The area contains mid montane forest, hill forest, and lowland coastal species with some areas of dry savannah country.

Alotau Accommodation;

Alotau Masurina Lodge (high cost) P.O. Box 80 Alotau Tel 611-212

K.B. Mission Accommodation (low cost) Alotau.

Provincial Gov't Hostel (mid cost) P.O. Box 104 Alotau Tel 611-523

Alotau is a good jumping-off point for visiting the Eastern Papuan Islands with their endemic species.

Access to Alotau ;

Daily Flights from Port Moresby via MBA and Air Niugini.

List of species recorded for the Alotau region (urban, and local river systems), coastal Milne Bay (e.g. Dawadawa and Wagawaga), Lowland/Hill Forests (Sagarai) and Milne Bay Oil Palm Estate Mar. 1992- May 1993

Common name	Scientific name
Dwarf cassowary	<i>Casuarius bennetti</i>
Brush Turkey	<i>Talegalla jobiensis</i>
Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>
Australian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Intermediate Egret	<i>E. intermedia</i>
Eastern Reef Egret	<i>E. sacra</i>
Grey-headed Goshawk	<i>Accipiter poliocephalus</i>
Grey Goshawk	<i>A. novaehollandiae</i>
Crested Hawk	<i>Aviceda subcristata</i>
Brown Falcon	<i>Falco berigora</i>
Long-tailed Buzzard	<i>Henicopernis longicauda</i>
Little eagle	<i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i>
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Buff-banded Rail	<i>Rallus philippensis</i>

Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Brown Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Bridled Tern	<i>Sierna anaethetus</i>
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>
Stephan's Ground Dove	<i>Chalcophaps stephani</i>
Emerald Ground Dove	<i>C. indica</i>
Great Cuckoo-dove	<i>Reinwardtoena reinwardtoeni</i>
Brown Cuckoo-dove	<i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>
Orange-fronted Fruit-dove	<i>Ptilinopus aurantiifrons</i>
Orange-bellied Fruit-dove	<i>P. iozonus</i>
Coroneted Fruit-dove	<i>P. coronulatus</i>
Wompoo Fruit-dove	<i>P. magnificus</i>
Pink-spotted Fruit-dove	<i>P. perlatus</i>
Pied Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula bicolor</i>
Rainbow Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
Eastern Black-capped Lory	<i>Lorius hypoinochrous</i>
Black-capped Lory	<i>Lorius lory</i>
Red-flanked Lorikeet	<i>Charmosyna placentis</i>
Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>
Red-cheeked parrot	<i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>
Eclectus Parrot	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>
Papuan King parrot	<i>Alisterus chloropterus</i>
Dwarf Koel	<i>Microdynamis parva</i>
Channel-billed Cuckoo	<i>Scythrops novaehollandiae</i>
Pheasant Coucal	<i>Centropus phasianus</i>
Gould's Bronze-cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx minutillus</i>
Brush Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>
Moustached Tree-swift	<i>Hemiprocne mystacea</i>
Hook-billed Kingfisher	<i>Melidora macrorrhina</i>
Azure Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo azurea</i>
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo gaudichaud</i>
Blue-winged Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo leachii</i>
Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx lepidus</i>
Forest Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon macleayii</i>
Sacred kingfisher	<i>H. sancta</i>
Collared Kingfisher	<i>H. chloris</i>
Yellow-billed Kingfisher	<i>H. torotoro</i>
Beach Kingfisher	<i>H. saurophaga</i>
Rainbow Bee-eater	<i>Merops ornatus</i>
Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
Blyth's Hornbill	<i>Rhyticerosplacatus</i>
Nightjar sp.	<i>Caprimulgidae</i>
Papuan Frogmouth	<i>Podargus papuensis</i>
Uniform Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia vanikorensis</i>

Glossy Swiftlet (*C. esculenta*)
 White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina papuensis*)
 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*C. novaehollandiae*)
 Black-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike (*C. morio*)
 Black Cuckoo-shrike (*C. melaena*)
 Varied Triller (*Lalage leucomela*)
 White-shouldered Fairy-wren (*Malurus alboscapulatus*)
 Tawny Grassbird (*Megalurus timoriensis*)
 Golden-headed Cisticola (*Cisticola exilis*)
 White-bellied Thicket-fantail (*Rhipidura leucothorax*)
 Sooty Thicket-fantail (*R. threnothorax*)
 Northern Fantail (*R. rufiventris*)
 Willy Wagtail (*R. leucophrys*)
 Frilled Monarch (*Arses telescopthalmus*)
 Black-faced Monarch (*Monarcha melanopsis*)
 Golden Monarch (*M. chrysomela*)
 Hooded Monarch (*M. manadensis*)
 Satin Flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*)
 Lowland Peltops (*Peltops blainvillii*)
 Olive Flycatcher (*Microeca flavovirescens*)
 Yellow-breasted Boatbill (*Machaerhirynchus flaviventer*)
 Grey Whistler (*Pachycephala simplex*)
 Little Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla megarhyncha*)
 Grey Shrike-thrush (*C. harmonica*)
 Papuan Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum pectorale*)
 Black-fronted White-eye (*Zosterops atrifrons*)
 Silver-eared Honeyeater (*Lichmera alboauricularis*)
 Yellow-bellied Sunbird (*Nectarinia jugularis*)
 Black Sunbird (*N. aspasia*)
 Dusky Myzomela (*M. obscura*)
 Red-throated Myzomela (*M. eques*)
 Mimic Meliphaga (*Meliphaga analoga*)
 Scrub White-eared Meliphaga (*Malbonotata*)
 Varied Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus versicolor*)
 Tawny-breasted Honeyeater (*Xanthotis flaviventer*)
 Plain Honeyeater (*Pycnopygius ixoides*)
 Streak-headed Honeyeater (*Pycnopygius stictocephalus*)
 Helmeted Friarbird (*Philemon buceroides*)
 Chestnut-breasted Mannikin (*Lonchura castaneothorax*)
 Grand Mannikin (*L. grandis*)
 Metallic Starling (*Aplonis metallica*)
 Singing Starling (*A. cantoroides*)
 Yellow-faced Myna (*Mino dumontii*)
 Brown Oriole (*Oriolus szalayi*)
 Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentotus*)
 White-breasted Wood-swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*)

Hooded Butcherbird (*Cracticus cassicus*)
 Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (*Chlamydera cerviniventris*)
 Yellow-breasted Bowerbird (*C. lauterbachii*)
 Trumpet Manucode (*Manucodia keraudrenii*)
 Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise (*Paradisaea raggiana*)
 King Bird-of-Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*)
 Magnificent Riflebird (*Ptiloris magnificus*)
 Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*)

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS OF *Aplonis* STARLINGS FEEDING ON INSECTS

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Two observations of *Aplonis* starlings feeding on insects reported in a recent issue of *Muruk* (Clapp 1993 ; Burrows 1993) prompted me to report similar observations I have made on the Sepik River. Such behaviour may not be uncommon.

On 3rd February 1989 near Kamindimbit on the middle Sepik, in late morning I noticed *Aplonis* starlings swooping over the river after mayflies that had hatched. Their foraging resembled that of swallows.

On 22nd February 1991, again on the middle Sepik, at 6.40am, hundreds of *Aplonis metallica* were seen foraging low over the surface of the river. There were flocks of perhaps 50 birds that merged and separated in wheeling flight. Some of these flocks seemed to be following the edge of the outflow of a small tributary. At first it seemed that the large flocks were following canoes crossing the river, and I thought that perhaps the canoes were stirring up insects from the water's surface, but later there appeared to be no interaction between the flocks and the canoes. The flocks swirled back and forth across the Sepik and into and out of the tributary for some 20 minutes. There were a few Rainbow Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) and White-breasted Wood-swallows (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) feeding with the starlings, some of which may have been *A. cantoroides*. There were a few starlings in immature plumage. In another 10 minutes all of the feeding birds had gradually disappeared. The disappearance was so gradual that it seems unlikely that the starlings were gathering insects to feed young. I saw no purposeful flight towards and away from the river such as one might expect if there were a nesting tree in the vicinity.

On 20th February 1992 near Korrogo on the middle Sepik, I again saw a wheeling flock of *A. metallica* foraging low over the river at sunrise.

While I was unable to determine the prey items in the latter two cases, it is likely that they were hatching mayflies as well. I did not notice these flocks in the evenings, on other mornings, or on the lower Sepik. These observations were made whilst I was ornithologist on American Museum of Natural History Discovery Tours aboard the *Melanesian Discoverer*. In 1989, 1991 and 1992 we were on the Sepik for 4 1/2