

**Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike** (*Coracina lineata*)

Seen on one day.

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** (*Coracina papuensis*)

Fairly common.

**Cicadabird** (*Coracina temirostris*)

The commonest cuckoo-shrike and seen every day.

**Varied Triller** (*Lalage leucomela*)

Common.

**Bismarck Pied Monarch** (*Monarcha verticalis*)

Seen several times on two days in different areas.

**Bismarck Rufous Fantail** (*Rhipidura dahlia*)

Only one bird seen on our first afternoon, although it was occasionally heard calling particularly in the bush behind the camp.

**Northern Fantail** (*Rhipidura rufiventris*)

Fairly common.

**Golden Whistler** (*Pachycephala pectoralis*)

Seen on two days.

**Bismarck Flowerpecker** (*Dicaeum eximium*)

Quite common but more often heard than seen.

**Black Sunbird** (*Nectarinia aspasia*)

Small numbers present.

**Black-headed White-eye** (*Zosterops hypoxantha*)

Fairly common (usually in small parties).

**Ashy Myzomela** (*Myzomela cineracea*)

Small numbers.

**Red Myzomela** (*Myzomela cruentata*)

Present on most days near one particular flowering tree.

**New Britain Red-headed Myzomela** (*Myzomela erythromelas*)

Present on most days near one particular flowering tree.

**New Britain Friarbird** (*Philemon cockerelli*)

Small numbers; one bird was building a nest in a tree by the camp.

**Metallic Starling** (*Aplonis metallica*)

Small numbers.

**Yellow-faced Myna** (*Mino dumontii*)

Small numbers but fairly vocal (the call being quite unlike that of the mainland birds).

**Spangled Drongo** (*Dicrurus hottentottus*)

Small numbers.

**Torresian Crow** (*Corvus orru*)

Small numbers.

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(Received October 1995)

**MEMORABLE MYOLA October 1995**

by Phil Gregory

The party arrived at 0700 on Sunday October 8th, and departed at 1000 on Tuesday October 10th. The PNGBS used to visit this site regularly but have not done so for a few years. Myola village lies on the lower slopes of the Owen Stanley Range at 2080m and consists of about 15 huts, with a basic camp staff of Mark, his wife and a boy; It is beautifully sited in a grass and swampland basin set about by forested hills rising up to 2800m +, just a 25 minute flight from Port Moresby. The next village is about 4 hours walk away. MBA cancelled the charter flight set for Saturday but we got away at first light on Sunday, only to find Myola had been dry all week and we could have got in. I suspect the pilots had a golf game scheduled...

Cloud and rain by mid-afternoon Sunday after a wonderful sunny morning. Rain overnight Sunday and at dawn, but cleared away to a high overcast on Monday with rain again by late pm. Tuesday dawn was clear, but clouding up by the time we left.

Participants: Chris Eastwood, Phil Gregory, Arlene Johnson, Ian Richardson, Yasuhisa Tanaka, Mark Walker, and bush-walkers Richard and Emma. Camp cook Mark from Myola. MBA Islander coming in and a Twin Otter going out.

Sunday was really a recce of the village area and adjacent trails, with next day focusing on the key sites, which for me were mostly the trail to the west. Tuesday again saw me along there, with a detour around the airstrip and gardens before catching the flight.

Birding was splendid, with Monday 9th one of the best birding days I've had in PNG:

Composite List

New Guinea Harpy-Eagle 1 heard 8.10. calling from slopes west of the village.

King Quail 1 pair 9.10. 1 male 10.10.

Forbes' Forest-Rail 3 on 9.10. (1 male, 1 female)

Spotless Crane 1+ late pm on 8.10 and heard on the other two dates.

Lewin Rail 1 on 8.10. Dashed over the track, slightly larger than Spotless, not black, reddish crown and nape. Also flushed by IR on 9.10.

Rufous Woodcock 1 9.10 (PG)

Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove 1 on 8.10. 2 on 9.10. 3 on 10.10. and heard

Great Cuckoo-Dove heard

White-breasted Fruit-Dove 1 male on 8.10 and heard.

Papuan Mountain Pigeon 12 on 8.10 and 2 on 10.10. and heard

Bronze Ground -Dove 1 9.10 CE

Goldie's Lorikeet daily, max. 50 on 10.10. Flight call like a higher pitched version of Dusky Lory. Whiskered Lorikeet CE

Brehm's Tiger-Parrot 1 9.10.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo frequent by camp, max. 4 birds, and also heard in the forest. MW saw a juv.

Papuan Boobook 1 calling briefly on 8.10.

\* Mountain Nightjar 1 flying over by village along forest edge at dusk on both 8 & 9.10. Identified as this species by habitat and altitude. Gave a quiet guttural flight note. Flying in quite heavy rain on 9.10.

Mountain Swiftlet max. 15

Glossy Swiftlet max. 6. Both *Collocalia* species were even flying amongst trees along forest margins.

\* Shovel-billed Kingfisher 1 male on 9.10 (and again on 10.10 MW /YT)  
Pacific Swallow 1 or 2 around village  
Island Thrush daily in small numbers.  
\* Log-runner 1 male on 9.10.  
Lesser Melampitta 1 glimpsed on 10.10., also heard calling. 1 by AJ in bamboo near the camp same day.  
Blue-capped Ifrita 2 on 9.10. CE  
Tawny Grassbird common in boggy grassland & sedge.  
Island Leaf Warbler 1 8.10 2 9.10. 1 10.10.  
Orange -crowned Fairy-wren 3 small groups seen by CE and AJ on 9 & 10.10.  
Bicoloured Mouse-Warbler 1 9.10 by YT. 1 probable also on 9.10.  
Mountain Mouse-Warbler Daily in small numbers.  
Large Scrub-wren common  
Buff-faced Scrub-wren 1 10.10.  
Papuan Scrub-wren 1+ adults on 9.10. with a juv. which had a prominent yellowy supercilium and rather greenish upperparts, superficially resembling Island Leaf Warbler.  
Grey Gerygone A flock of 5 on 9.10.  
Brown-breasted Gerygone 25 on 8.10 and common daily, one of the most abundant small birds at Myola.  
Dimorphic Fantail 3 seen daily.  
Black Fantail 1 pr. at nest daily.  
Friendly Fantail common.  
Black Monarch 2 daily.  
Black -breasted Boatbill 1 by CE.  
Canary Flycatcher 1 by CE.  
Garnet Robin 1 m 8.10 1 f/imm 10.10.  
Ashy Robin 1 pr. and a juv. daily, another by the Forest-rail site and often heard, giving a quiet "yeeb" call reminiscent of the contact call of a Bullfinch.  
Lesser Ground-robin heard daily, 1 or 2 birds.  
Mottled Whistler 1 male on 10.10. by CE/YT  
Regent Whistler 1 male on 8.10.  
Brown-backed Whistler 1 on 9.10.  
Rufous-naped Whistler heard daily and 1 seen 10.10.  
Wattled Ploughbill 1 seen by AJ on 10.10.  
Varied Sittella 9 on 10.10. including a juvenile bird that had a yellowy base to the black bill.  
Fan-tailed Berrypecker up to 6 daily, males and females.  
Tit Berrypecker heard daily  
New Guinea White-eye 1 on 8.10. Lemon yellow chin and throat, no black lores, white breast and belly, yellow under tail coverts. Altitude would indicate this species. No call heard.  
Red-collared Myzomela 4 males and 1 female on 8.10 2 males on 9.10.  
Black-throated Honeyeater 1 on 8.10 and heard daily  
Grey-streaked Honeyeater 1 on 8.10.  
Rufous-backed Honeyeater 1 on 9.10.  
Belford's Melidectes common. Black bill, blue eye patch.  
Common Smoky Honeyeater 1 or 2 daily  
Blue-faced Finch 2 on 8.10 and heard daily. A fine view of one feeding along the edge of a mixed *Lonchura* flock at the forest edge in the village on 8.10. Clearly associating with the flock when near trees as it came back after being flushed several times.  
Grey-headed Mannikin 50 on 8.10 150 on 9.10 40 on 10.10

\* Eastern Alpine Mannikin 6+ on 8.10 9 on 9.10. 7 on 10.10.  
Macgregor's Bowerbird 1 on 10.10. by CE/YT  
Brown Sicklebill 2 f / imm. 9.10.  
Stephanie's Astrapia 2 on 8.10 3 on 9.10 2 on 10.10.  
Superb Bird-of-Paradise heard

#### Notes on particular species

##### **Eastern Alpine Mannikin *Lonchura monticola***

I heard mannikins calling as we got off the plane, and dumped the bags to go and check out a flock of Grey-headed Mannikin (*Lonchura caniceps*), which proved to have 4 Eastern Alpine amongst them. Excellent views on the fence and even on wires in camp, later seen feeding on the short turf in the village with about 50 Grey-headed and a Blue-faced Finch associating, the latter keeping near the forest edge but feeding beside the mannikins on the grass, seen 3 times that afternoon in the same situation over a 2 hour period. Present each day, up to 12 birds.

*L. monticola* is similar in size to *L. caniceps* but has a black face and chin, brown upperparts with a tinge of rusty to the flight feathers, a yellowy-buff rump and upper tail and dark outer tail. Underparts white except for black pectoral band which extended on down the flanks, giving a horseshoe -shaped effect. This flank band was continuous, not broken up like the Beehler illustration. The call was a quite harsh, rather nasal and buzzy "tee tee", different to the plaintive note of *L. caniceps*. The birds were quite approachable, often perched in bushes or on fence posts. Altitude here is 2080m, rather low for this species and saving me a 4 hour slog up to the tree-fern forest where they are usually found.

We watched the very wet track through the bog by the camp near dusk, and had 3 sightings of Spotless Crake. Very small and appearing all blackish with a short bill. Also heard calling from the long grass and sedge, as well as a crake with a sharp "kik kik kik" call which I suspect is Lewin's Rail. I had a very brief view of a small crake with the impression of a reddish top of head and neck, not black in colour and similar in size to Spotless, but just got the bins on it as it ran, almost a tickable view .....

##### **Mountain Nightjar *Eurostopodus archboldi***

A fairly small nightjar with a quiet guttural call flew directly over Chris and I at dusk on the forest edge. Presumed to be this species on altitude, which is above the usual limits for Large-tailed Nightjar, and forest margin habitat. Also seen again in the same place in heavy rain the next night.

During the dusk forest edge vigil, I also had a strong suspicion that I could hear a Woodcock roding, some 10 times I heard an incisive but quiet "tsick" type note which seemed to be coming from up in the air. Once I glimpsed a broad winged bird low over the trees, which may very well have been Rufous Woodcock. Its also the right time of year as Aug-Sept is down as the display period for this species. A strong probable.... later events tending to confirm.

##### **Shovel-billed Kingfisher *Clytoceyx rex***

Chris pointed out the area where 6 years ago he had seen this species here, the only bird person ever to do so ! Later that afternoon I glimpsed a biggish bird fly off through the bamboo, and the

antennae quivered..... Next morning, about an hour after dawn, I was first along the trail and reaching the crest of the track along the hillside again flushed from the ground a biggish bird which landed in a tree not far away. It took me about 5 minutes to pick it up, but shifting position I suddenly got an eyeful of the orangey underparts, white chin and throat and huge bill of a **Shovel-billed Kingfisher**, regarding me with its large dark eye ! I watched it hardly daring to move for about 5 minutes, then saw Arlene climbing over the dead tree back along the track. I beckoned her up and got her on to it, then went back myself to shout for Chris, who also arrived in time to get splendid views of the beast.

Rather like Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (*Dacelo gaudichaud*), but with the weird, broad and deep shovel bill relatively short and entirely pale horn in colour, resembling one of those paper snapper things we used to make as kids. Underparts dull orangey, with the white of the chin and throat often not visible as the bird sat rather hunched up close to the main trunk. Upperparts dull brownish, with a hint of bluish iridescence on the wing coverts and the faintest sheen of same on the dark tail, indicating the bird as a male. A broad orangey buff collar extended right over the nape, and a there was narrow stripe of this colour and the base of the bill. A rusty fairly narrow eyestripe extended from behind the eye. Legs and feet pinkish in colour. The blue rump was not seen, the bird was mostly facing us about 30m away and 10m up the tree, turning round once for a couple of minutes view of the back before it flew off upslope. Dull early morning light.

Interestingly, later that day the big rotten stump in the path here had 3 large woodpecker- like holes gouged out of it, with chips scattered about the ground. Could it be the Shovel-bill ? We also suspected it calling late afternoon. Possible call of *Clytoceyx rex* a far carrying, powerful whistled "wer" series, upslurred at the end of each note, given anywhere between 7 and 17 times and particularly late pm. First heard mid afternoon on 9.10. One calling from near where I found the bird in the morning and about 3 individuals along the stretch of track from the Forest-Rail site to camp (1 km).

A cracking start to the day, one of the great New Guinea mystery birds nailed, seen by just a handful of people in recent years ( Beehler's site at Lakekamu, Chris Doughty at Ambua in 1994, Chris Eastwood's previous record here and Greg J. from the POM botanical gardens in 1992 !)

Mark and Ian had seen the Forbes' Forest-Rail well yesterday, so I spent some time along that section of track, with both Chris and Arlene having it run across but me missing it. We did hear what we think was it calling, a croaking, grunting rail-like series that went on for several minutes but stayed well out of view.

I had one mystery bird, a *Crateroscelis* with Large Sericornis (*S. nouhuysi*) that has a rich red chin and throat but rather brown upperparts as far as I could see; I'm pretty sure it must be *C. nigorufa* at this altitude, and its by far the brightest of the mouse warblers I've seen; the brown colour of the head seems strange though and I did not see it for long, maybe its an imm. ? Yasuhisa had adults of Bicoloured (or Biocoloured as Beehler has it !) Mouse-Warbler by the Shovel-bill site. I'd like a confirmatory view. It seems unlikely *murina* would be this high and sympatric with the two other species.

That afternoon I decided to take a walk down the rough grass beside the airstrip after King Quail, flushing a pair near the end of the strip:

**King Quail** *Coturnix chinensis*

A very small *Coturnix*, female rather greyish tinged and the male with bright yellow feet and rusty

under tail coverts. We flushed a male again next day, this time seeing the large white chin and throat as it flew by me. Rather different to the Blue Quail (*C. adansonii*) of Zambia, lacking the wine red wings and very dark appearance of the male.

A good beginning to the walk. I then went back to the Forest-Rail area, and had a curiously strong hunch to stay by one particular spot where there were fair views under the vegetation. After about 10 minutes a bird stepped into view, and to my amazement proved to be a male **Logrunner** (*Orthonyx temminckii*), a rare NG bird and not previously known from Myola. I had excellent views at 4 m range, seeing the big white throat, greyish pectoral bands at sides of throat / chest, strange raggedy tail with spiky tips to the rectrices and mottled upperparts. The bird was scratching about under bamboo, just like the Australian birds do, and looked very similar if somewhat larger. No call heard.

It vanished and I then heard a quiet note off to my left. I glimpsed a bird by a pandan root, and saw it come behind a tree bole. I waited for it to emerge and had a glimpse of a barred and mottled back, too big for Log-runner which was what I half expected. I then thought, maybe female Forest-Rail ? It stepped in to clear view not 3m away, for one of the biggest shocks of my birding career, of a species I'd long wanted but had scant hope of finding:

**Rufous Woodcock** *Scolopax saturata*

A diminutive woodcock, not nearly as dark and rufous as the Beehler plate. It looked to be shuffling along on its belly, pale feet barely visible, progressing rather like a rail along the forest floor and probing with its long dark slender beak. Large dark eye, upperparts closely barred and chequered black on brown, underparts paler and whitish on the belly with heavy black transverse bars across. Forehead also broadly barred with black. It came within 2m of me, then turned to shuffle along parallel, partly hidden by the vegetation. Watched for about two minutes, at point-blank range and oblivious of me. No rufous noted in the plumage in the dull light of the forest floor.

At this point Ian and Mark appeared and I beckoned them to come up slowly, with them reaching me as the bird went behind a clump of trees, never to be seen again. Consolation however was the reappearance of the Log-runner, again giving cracking views. I was stunned, this was one of the biggest surprises of my birding career as its a species I'd virtually no hope of finding, one of those NG mysteries that seemed likely to stay that way without a dazzling stroke of luck like this.

Good birds continued as Mark picked up a male **Brehm's Tiger-Parrot** feeding in typical quiet, unobtrusive Psittacella fashion in a small tree. Excellent views of a species I saw just briefly but well at Tari Gap a couple of years ago. Brownish head, chin and upper throat, with prominent yellow side of neck semi-collar, chest and underparts pale bright unbarred lemony- green, scarlet undertail coverts. Upperparts a bright lemony-green colour with fine black barrings on mantle, rump and uppertail. Bill grey on upper mandible, paler on lower.

**Forbes' Forest-Rail** *Rallina forbesi*

We were just about to leave at 5.20 pm when two small rails with short slender bills suddenly materialized where the Log-runner had been, running quickly about like clockwork toys. I clapped the bins on one and saw a rufous red head and chest and throat with dark mantle, before it ducked away, whilst a third bird was moving to my left where the woodcock had been. This individual was making a quiet very distinctive frog-like croaking grunt, audible only at close range, but I only glimpsed it walking along.

A terrific couple of days, with some 66 species recorded by the group and everyone seeing at least some of the megabirds of the trip. Our thanks to Mark at Myola for a memorable stay, and to Yasuhisa for organizing it. The PNGBS really should do this more often.

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#### THE NEST OF THE BLACK IMPERIAL PIGEON (*Ducula melanochroa*).

by Michael Hedemark

A *Ducula melanochroa* nest was found on 30 January 1994 in the Hans Meyer Range of New Ireland Province during a rapid biological survey conducted by the Department of Environment and Conservation, Conservation International and Smithsonian Museum. The nest was found at an altitude of 1760 metres at the approximate position of E 152 57.0', S 04 26.2'. The nest was discovered when an adult bird flew from the nest as a member of the expedition walked underneath the limb of the tree. The adult bird flew to a nearby tree where it was identified.

A single white egg was collected and is housed in the Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC (specimen number 48140). The egg was entirely white with measurements 5.3 cm X 3.4 cm. The egg appeared to have been freshly laid as there was no sign of chick development. The nest was located approximately 4 metres off the ground in a broad saddle formed by two large limbs in a robust but stunted moss covered tree. The diameter at breast height (dbh) of the tree was 49 cm. The nest had the shape of a shallow platter, 23 cm in diameter and was made of layered sticks. There were no feathers nor finer nest lining of moss or fine twigs.

The tree was located at the edge of a steep cliff. The forest type in the immediate area (from 1600 m to 2300 m) is high elevation cloud forest. The 10-20 m canopy is dominated by *Metrosideros salomanensis* (Myrtaceae) making up 75% of the trees with diameters of greater than 30 cm. The dominant medium sized tree (10-30 cm dbh) is *Ascarina* (Chloranthaceae) (Robin Foster in press).

The adult bird was not seen at the tree on subsequent visits.

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#### MORE FROM MANUS

by Phil Gregory

I was able to visit Manus from 6 July to 9 July 1995 and present edited highlights of the trip. All the endemics, with the exception so far of the almost unknown Manus Masked Owl (*Tyto (novaehollandiae) manusi*), can be found within 5 km of Lorengau, and excellent guides are available at Rossau Village if you contact Aaron Joseph (c/o PO Box 374 Lorengau) or Luke Genaton (c/o Highway Enterprises phone 409051, PO Box 138 Lorengau). The Harbourside Hotel in Lorengau was very helpful with transport and arranging a boat to Tong Island.

My trip really commenced with 20 a minute stopover at Kavieng, time enough to find my first Bismarck endemic, Hunstein's Mannikin (*Lonchura hunsteini*) on the fence near the terminal building. The call was a metallic, rather plaintive "see" series, with a flat tone, different to other *Lonchura* spp. and not described in any of the standard textbooks.

Arriving on Manus, a quick trip out along the road to Rossun gave the amazingly noisy Manus Friarbird (*Philemon albitorques*) or "chowka", aptly named from the noise it makes and the Black-headed White-eye (*Zosterops hypoxantha*). This species has an unusual piercing sibilant "sip sip" call, and a quiet more typically *Zosterops*-like chatter. Meek's Pigmy-Parrot (*Micropsitta meeki*) was also seen.

Next day saw us off before dawn to Tong Island, a 2 hour sea-trip which proved very rewarding. The Manus Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura semirubra*) was quite common in the scrub beneath coconut palms, with a total of 12 seen during the course of the morning. There was no trace of it where I was on the main Manus Island, and there seem to be no recent records from there. Maybe no-one is looking in the right areas or has it died out? Tong, San Miguel and Sibisa Islands are the only sites with current information about its continued presence, maybe it is a small island species like the Bismarck Black Myzomela (*M. pammelaina*), Island Monarch (*Monarcha cinerascens*) and Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove (*Macropygia mackinlayi*)?

An Oriental Hobby (*Falco severus*) may have been a new species for the Admiralty group, whilst Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus solomonensis*) was quite common, as was the Grey Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula pistrinaria*). I had glimpses of what was probably Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove but not enough to confirm, but Island Monarch was easy and Bismarck Black Myzomela common at coconut flowers. Curiously enough we did not find this species on Manus proper, it really does seem to be a small island specialist here.

The afternoon back on Manus was spent checking sites for Superb Pitta (*Pitta superba*); about 5 pm we went to an area of old gardens beyond the waterfall, owned by Luke's cousin. The boys began imitating the call of the pitta, a quite deep toned mournful "cou cou", the first note slightly higher pitched than the second. The bird began responding quite quickly, and having got a bearing on it we headed into the thickets. By continually imitating it we lured it in close, then suddenly I caught a movement and the Superb Pitta flew through and perched on a bamboo branch not 3m from us: A magnificent large pitta, jet black in colour with a red belly and iridescent pale blue wing coverts. Every time it called it half-squatted down and pumped its wings as if forcing the sound out. Luke reckons they have bronze on the top of the head but I did not see this. Some 3 birds were calling in this area.

Next day we spent some while along the waterfall stream, having brief views of River Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), and much better ones of the splendid Admiralty Pied Monarch (*Monarcha infelix*). This striking species has an almost completely white tail with a narrow dark tip and really reminded me of nothing so much as a Torrent-lark (*Grallina bruijnii*).

A drive out along the road beyond Rossun, primarily to look for possible Whitehead's Swiftlet (*Collocalia whiteheadi*) suspected by Hicks (1992) gave us chance to check out some Cuckoo-doves, which proved to be the Brown *M. amboinensis*, and have excellent views of Claret-breasted fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus viridis*) first listed as being on Manus by Hicks (1992) and where both Chris Eastwood (Eastwood 1995) and I have now found it. The Manus Boobook (*Ninox meeki*) was the next target, and for this we went to an area where a local woman had heard it