

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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(Received October 1995)

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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(Received August 1995)

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

calling at dusk the day before ("Owl he cry cry cry at 6 o'clock"). He did too, an extraordinary grunting, coughing series of 4 notes, quite unlike anything I'd heard before. We heard at least 4 birds in this area, one calling really close and two seemingly answering each other, but all obstinately staying out of view. I decided to try out at Rossun village at 8.30 where one was calling the night before, but timed my arrival to miss it by five minutes, hear three others more distantly and encounter a heavy storm. None too encouraged, we scrounged a rather temperamental spotlight and drove back along the road to Lorengau, picking out 3 of the Admiralty Cuscus (*Spilocuscus kraemeri*), an attractive endemic but not the one I was after. We had no sightings, so turned back to drop the lads off, spot-lighting on the way which was a good move as we picked out a Manus Boobook high on a dead branch near the big water-tank about a kilometre out of Lorengau along the Rossun road. We got quite reasonable views via the spot-light, thus finding all the endemics bar the Fantail within a 3 km. distance of Lorengau. I left a description of the Masked Owl with Luke and Aaron, with a request to look for it, so the next birder through could do worse than follow that one up too, it must be there somewhere!

Manus Trip list highlights July 6-9 1995

* denotes a Bismarck or Admiralty endemic. A species underlined is endemic to Manus or the Admiralty Islands.

- Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) 1 by the waterfall track 9.7.
- Oriental Hobby (*Falco severus*) 1 on Tong Island 7.7.
- Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*) 1 at the waterfall on 8.7. and 1 in Lorengau on 9.7.
- * Pied Cuckoo-Dove (*Reinwardtoena browni*) 2 together and then a single flying over forest along the waterfall track on 9.7. Rather smaller than Great Cuckoo-Dove (*Reinwardtoena reinwardtoeni*) but similar shape, with black upperparts, whitish chin, throat and chest, under-tail coverts appearing chestnut. Legs and feet pinkish.
- Grey Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula pistrinaria*) 4 on Tong Island 7.7. 2 along Rossun-Lorengau road 7.7. 4 10 km beyond Rossun 8.7.
- Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus viridis*) 1 male 10 km beyond Rossun 8.7.
- Superb Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus superbus*) 1 male 10 km beyond Rossun 8.7.
- Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove (*P. solomonensis*) 6 males and 5+ females Tong Island 7.7.
- Stephan's Ground-Dove (*Chalcophaps stephani*) 2 on 8.7. and 1 on 9.7.
- Brown Cuckoo-Dove (*Macropygia amboinensis*) Fairly common on Manus
- (Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove) *M. mackinlayi* 2 probables on Tong 7.7.
- River Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) 1 black billed bird along waterfall stream 8.7.
- Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*) 2 on Tong Island on 7.7.
- Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*) 1 near waterfall 8.7. Not listed for the Admiralty Islands in Coates (1985).
- Eastern Black-capped Lory (*Lorius hypoinochrous*) 2 near Rossun 6.7. Not listed from Manus by Coates (1985).
- * Meek's Pigmy-Parrot (*Micropsitta meeki*) 1 near Lorengau 6.7., 1+ beyond Rossun 8.7. and 3+ near the waterfall same day; 6+ near the waterfall on 9.7. Aaron showed me what may well have been a nest hole of this *Micropsitta* about 4m up in a tree-ant mud cluster. The call is louder and more sibilant than *M. bruijnii* of the mainland, and more often given as a single isolated note rather than a series.
- Brush Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*) Juv. being fed by Yellow-bellied Sunbird (*Nectarinia jugularis*) on 6.7.
- White-rumped Swiftlet (*Collocalia podiopygia*) Quite common.
- Glossy Swiftlet (*Collocalia esculenta*) Nearly all birds had a white rump patch.

- * Manus Boobook (*Ninox meeki*) 7+ heard and 1 seen 8.7. Rossun road.
- * Superb Pitta (*Pitta superba*) 1 seen and 2 heard beyond waterfall 7.7. 1 heard waterfall turn-off from Rossun road 9.7.
- * Admiralty Pied Monarch (*Monarcha infelix*) 1 on 9.7. only.
- * Manus Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura semirubra*) 12+ on Tong Island on 7.7.
- * Manus Friarbird (*Philemon albitorques*) common on Manus, up to 30 in total a day.
- * Bismarck Black Myzomela (*Myzomela pammelaina*) 50 on Tong Island on 7.7. None seen on Manus.
- * Black-headed White-eye (*Zosterops hypoxantha*) 5 on 6.7. 3 on 7.7. 2 on 8.7.

References

Eastwood C. 1995. Manus : A Trip Report. **Muruk** Vol 7 (2) pp. 53-55.
 Hicks R. 1992. Whitehead's Swiftlet *Collocalia whiteheadi* on Manus ? **Muruk** Vol. 5 (2) p. 64.

MOULT IN BIRDS OF PARADISE

by William S. Peckover

In his "Notes on the Display Behaviour of a Fully-plumed male Blue Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea rudolphi*," Muruk Vol. 7 (2):72. Richard Whiteside refers to "A female plumaged Blue Bird of Paradise with an uneven tail was seen advertising and heard chattering on 24 December 1993. It was assumed that this was a mature male in eclipse plumage, as a plumed male was observed advertising from this territory several times earlier in 1993 and again in 1994".

From Richard's excellent detailed descriptions of the location, calls, plumage condition and time of the year, the bird in question was undoubtedly an adult male at an early stage of its annual moult. Birds of Paradise do not have an "eclipse" plumage- see below. Also, on the basis of these descriptions I disagree with the Editor's comment that it may have been an immature male or a visiting female.

Male dimorphic birds of paradise are known to moult annually, according to Shaw Mayer (Personal communication) for most species this usually commences in December and they acquire their complete dress of new plumage by early May. With the Lesser Bird of Paradise (*Paradisaea minor*), the flank display plumes are dropped first (personal observation); this is likely to be the same with other species, including the *P. rudolphi* described by Richard.

With regard to Richard's comment that "If females were present, then the male would draw them with him from one display site to the next, and he would display for short spells at each site" needs an explanation of how he determined the birds drawn with the male were females, not immature males or a mixture of both.

The comment "That perhaps the 'intense phase' of the display lasts longer if a female shows enough interest" seems logical and may well be correct in many instances, however, the presence of a female in the vicinity of the displaying male is not obligatory for that phase to continue for up to fifteen minutes (numerous personal observations from mid-1964).

Eclipse Plumage

Eclipse plumage is very well defined in the latest revision of Alfred Newton's 1896 classic work "A dictionary of Birds" (Campbell and Lack 1985) which reads: