

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:

“ECLIPSE: a post-nuptial plumage stage occurring in some species. It is characterized by being of much shorter duration than the winter ( or non-breeding) plumage in most species that show marked seasonal change, as well as by being dull in comparison with a conspicuous breeding dress. Notably, the males of many of the Anatidae are in full breeding plumage for the greater part of the year but have a dull plumage during the latter part of the summer (while a simultaneous moult of the remiges may render them temporarily flightless)”.

#### References

Campbell Bruce and Elizabeth Lack, editors. 1985. **A Dictionary of Birds**. The British Ornithologists Union, T & A. D. Poyser, Calton, England.  
Whiteside, Richard. 1995. Notes on the display and behaviour of a fully plumed male Blue Bird of Paradise, *Paradisaea rudolphi*. **Muruk**, Vol. 7 (2): 71-73.  
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#### AN UNDESCRIBED PLUMAGE MORPH OF THE GREY-HEADED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter poliocephalus*)

by Phil Gregory

Whilst birding along the Ok Ma road near Tabubil, Western Province on 28th July 1992 with a tour group from Field Guides Incorporated, we had two separate sightings of what appears to be an undescribed plumage form of the Grey-headed Goshawk. Both individuals were perched in trees by the roadside, and allowed good views, one at km 7 and the other near km 5. They were medium size accipiters with entirely blackish-slate plumage and the characteristic orangey red cere and legs of this species. The second bird had some dark bars on the outer tail feathers and some dark barring on the underwing flight feathers. Melanistic morph Variable Goshawk (*A. novaehollandiae*), which is the common medium sized accipiter here, would show a yellow cere and legs, as would the larger Meyer's Goshawk *A. meyerianus*.

I have had no subsequent sightings of this morph, and no records of any other melanistic phase accipiter locally either. Clearly the form is rare, whilst normal plumage Grey-headed Goshawks remain uncommon residents in the area. Reference is made in del Hoyo et al (1994) to reports of a possible melanistic morph in this species, probably referring to these sightings which are now duly documented.

#### References

Coates, Brian. (1985). **The Birds of Papua New Guinea**: Volume 1. Dove Publications, Alderley.  
Gregory, Phil. (1995) The Birds of the Ok Tedi area. **Muruk** Vol. 7:1  
del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. eds. (1994). **Handbook of the Birds of the World**. Vol. 2. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona

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(Received Sept. 1995)

#### LITTLE BITTERNS (*Ixobrychus minutus*) IN THE MIDDLE FLY WETLANDS

by Roger Jaensch

Background The Australasian subspecies *dubius* of the Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* primarily occurs in Australia and New Guinea (Marchant & Higgins 1990). Its known breeding strongholds are in south-western and south-eastern Australia, while in tropical Australia breeding is known from only one site, in the north-west (Jaensch 1988). It is probably migratory: most birds apparently leave southern Australia in autumn-winter and there is some evidence of movement across Torres Strait (Marchant & Higgins 1990), but the principal wintering grounds have not been identified.

Little Bitterns occur regularly near Port Moresby (Moitaka) from November to April and are possibly resident there but are seldom seen at other times of the year (Coates 1985). There is one published record from Western Province, one bird, ready to lay, collected in September in 1936 at Lake Daviumbu via Rand (Coates 1985, Archbold and Rand 1940). The similar Yellow Bittern (*I. sinensis*) occurs regularly in the northern watershed of New Guinea and in the islands to the east (Coates 1985).

Recent sightings: On 12th June 1994 I heard 4 Little Bitterns, presumably adult males, calling at 0700 h and several again at 0900 h in flooded vegetation at the channel of Lake Pangua, Middle Fly region, Western Province. A pair were flushed, one bird being a black-backed male, the other (with brown back and dark grey primaries) probably an adult female. Habitat was clumps of reed *Phragmites karka* and pit-pit *Saccharum robustum* with surrounding floating mats of the wetland grasses *Leersia* sp. and *Echinochloa* sp. The wetland was fully inundated.

During December 2-4 1994, single Little Bitterns were seen by Phil Gregory and myself at three locations in the Middle Fly wetlands, though none were heard calling. A single brown phase female or immature bird was glimpsed when flushed from tall lotus *Nelumbo nucifera* in Lake Daviumbu on December 2 (RJ). A brown phase bird was seen flying along the bank of the Fly River opposite Obo station at 0630 h on 3 December (PG); it disappeared in swampy tall reed and pit-pit behind the bank. An immature, streaked below and with grey-brown primaries and mottled back, was flushed from floating grass (? *Leersia* sp.) in remnant water in a tie-channel joined to lake Ambuve around mid-day on 4 December. In December 1994 most of the floodplain was dry and extensively burnt, or holding remnant shallow water, whereas lakes and ox-bows were still deeply flooded.

The Middle Fly lake, ox-bow and floodplain sites surveyed in December 1994 were revisited by Phil Gregory, Paulus Kulmoi and myself in April 1995. An adult male Little Bittern was flushed from pit-pit and reed fringing a tie-channel (joining the Fly River channel) of Lake Ambuve in the morning of 25 April and was seen by all observers. An adult female was seen briefly (PG, RJ) as it rose from a field of dense tall wild rice *Oryza* sp. on nearby floodplain later that morning. The wetlands were fully inundated in April 1995.

Conclusions: All birds seen in 1994-95 were identified as Little Bitterns on the basis of either black backs or (if brown-backed) grey-brown primaries that did not contrast strongly with upperwing coverts. Yellow Bittern does not show a black back in any phase and all phases display black primaries that contrast markedly with pale upperwing coverts (RJ pers. obs. in field and from museum skins).