

seeds of *Echinochloa* sp. at Lake Daviumbu and a small flock of 6 at Lake Ambuve similarly.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to OTML for their sponsorship of the waterbird survey in Dec. 94 and April 95, and to the villagers and guides of the areas surveyed for permission to visit their land. Also to Roger Jaensch for constructive comments on this note.

References

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE FLY RIVER GRASSBIRD (*Megalurus albolimbatus*)

by Phil Gregory and Roger Jaensch

The Fly River Grassbird is a little known restricted range species endemic to the Papua New Guinea Trans-Fly region where it was previously known from the Bensbach area and the middle Fly including Lake Daviumbu (Coates 1990). Few ornithologists have had the chance to observe it due to the remote range and the inaccessible nature of its habitat.

During the course of the waterbird survey of the middle Fly sponsored by OTML for the Asian Wetland Bureau, Roger Jaensch and I found the species at some 3 sites. Being decidedly cryptic and similar to Tawny Grassbird (*M. timoriensis*) identification is not easy, but we found the following characters helpful:

Unstreaked bright tawny-orange crown, with a white supercilium and whitish underparts. The bird appears somewhat smaller and cleaner than a Tawny Grassbird, with an orangey rump, and the tail rather gently rounded and not long and raggedy like a Tawny Grassbird. The tertials were black prominently edged white, a very good field character.

Caution! The female of the local race of White-shouldered Fairy-wren (*Mahurus alboscapulatus*) inhabits similar habitat and has a whitish supercilium and white underparts. This has initially fooled several very skilled ornithologists.....

A frequently heard call was a monotonous, quiet rising whistled "zeeee", which appeared to be characteristic. PG has heard this call from birds at Wando near Bensbach and we also heard it at Lake Ambuve.

The habitat was *Echinochloa* and *Leersia* sp. at Deep Creek lagoon, Lake Pangua, in the midst of a flooded plain, accessible only by boat at this time of year. Besides these two sites, we heard the Fly River Grassbird calling from floating *Echinochloa* grass beds near the entrance to Lake Daviumbu. The habitat at Bensbach seems to be much more tied to patches of sedge *Cyperus* sp. which is largely absent at these middle Fly localities.

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MYSTERIES, AND ADDITIONS TO THE BIRDS OF AMBUE AND TARI DISTRICTS, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE

By Joseph Tano

(Joseph is the naturalist at Ambue Lodge, he knows the birds of the area very well and is particularly helpful with calls. Birding visitors should arrange to contact him prior to arrival as he is quite busy. Editor)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

One landed in a *Nothofagus* tree at the Tari Gap, not previously recorded.

[Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*]

Reported by Joseph as nest building (a mud cup) near the Dauli Teacher's College about a metre away from a hydro intake. The species is a northern winter migrant to Papua New Guinea in greatly increased numbers in recent years, but there has never been any suggestion of nesting and I quote the report above just in case (Editor).

Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris*

Not found in the area, but recorded in the Tari valley about a km. from the airport on 25 /1/ 95. Joseph also reports a mysterious species as follows: First recorded on 16 August 1992, a species Joseph has never seen before. A daily visitor to the trees and bamboo in front of the big waterfall, keeping company with a male Sclater's Whistler (*Pachycephala soror*). A robin-shaped bird usually keeping in cover but at times comes and perches right in the open. Wholly black with red breast, and white in the tail; flicks its tail when perched and spends much time on the *Homolanthus* tree branch and clinging to the side of the tree. The site is continually misty and cloudy.

Any visitors with the time to check out this report could be in for a surprise! Please let us know what it is, Joseph reckons it is most like the Snow Mountain Robin (*Petroica archboldi*).....

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NESTING OBSERVATION OF GREY CROW (*Corvus tristis*) AT VARIRATA NATIONAL PARK NOVEMBER 1994

By William F. Glynn

Site Location

Varirata National Park is located thirty five kilometres east of Port Moresby at the south west corner of the Sogeri plateau. It is bounded on the south and west by escarpments. Elevation at Varirata lookout, which is above the western escarpment, is 833 metres.

Location of Nest

The nest was located approximately thirty metres below and sixty metres west of the lookout in rain forest in a pinkish-orange smooth barked deciduous tree estimated to be twenty five metres high. At the time the tree did not have any leaves. The nest was constructed about twenty metres above the ground close to the end of a horizontal branch. The nest which appeared to be above the canopy was sheltered from the south east trade winds, which occur from June to December, by the escarpment.