

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.

The Nest

The nest was constructed from thin sticks supported by two or three thin outer members of the branch beyond the last main fork in the branch. The nest was a platform estimated to be 750 mm by 600 mm by 150 mm deep. The distance to the nest from the observation point was too far to allow a detailed examination of the nest.

Young Grey Crows

When first observed on the 26th and 27th of November 1994 there were four nearly fully fledged young on the nest being fed at short regular intervals by what appeared to be only two adults. Observation times were around 4 pm on the 26th and 10 am on the 27th.

At the next observation of the young on the 3rd of December, they were flexing their wings preparing to leave the nest. This time they were being fed infrequently. Observation time was between 9.30 am and 10.30 am.

The site was visited again on the 18th of December and the nest was found to be vacated. Grey crows could be heard about one kilometre away to the south.

It was noted in May 1995 that the top ten metres of the tree was in full thick foliage and the location of the nest could not be observed from the lookout.

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BAT HAWK (*Macheiramphus alcinus*) SIGHTING FROM KOBAKMA, IRIAN JAYA, INDONESIA ON 8TH DECEMBER 1990.

By William F. Glynn.

This is to record the sighting of a Bat Hawk (*Macheiramphus alcinus*) at Kobakma in the Wamena Government District, Irian Jaya, Indonesia on the 8th of December 1990. Kobakma, (elevation 975m) is twenty minutes by a Cessna 185 or a two day walk, north of Wamena (elevation 1525m), the government administration centre for the Baliem Valley region. There were no roads to Kobakma in 1990. The immediate area around (three to four kilometres) Kobakma has cleared areas with regrowth rain forest, beyond this is rain forest. Kobakma is situated on a flat ridge top.

The Bat Hawk was sighted at 8 am about four kilometres east of the air strip (in the centre of Kobakma) above the main walking track to Pasvalley and Wamena. The Bat Hawk was flying in a westerly direction about 100m above the ground. It appeared to be flying direct to a definite location. The sky was clear at the time of sighting. (Editor's note: Will Glynn knows the species from Papua New Guinea and is certain of his identification, though no field notes were made at the time. It is not known from Irian Jaya, but occurs in Java and Borneo and its occurrence in this province of Indonesia is not altogether unexpected.)

Other species sighted between the 4th and 9th of December included: Brown Quail, Grey Gos-hawk (white phase), Collared Sparrow hawk, Crested Hawk, Little Eagle (pale phase and dark phase), Buff-banded Rail, White-browed Crane (Heard), Bush-Hen (Heard), Victoria Crowned Pigeon (fleeting glimpse), Pheasant Pigeon, Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Wompoo Fruit Dove,

Orange-bellied Fruit Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, Bronze Cuckoo sp., Brush Cuckoo, Pheasant Coucal, Yellow Billed Kingfisher, Dollar Bird, Blyth's Horn bill, Great Wood-Swallow, Mountain Swiftlet, Boyer's Cuckoo Shrike, Brown Oriole, Helmeted Friarbird, Meyer's Friarbird, Black-browed Triller, White-shouldered Fairy Wren, Northern Fantail, Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Mountain Peltops (sitting on nest), Black-sided Robin, Grey Wagtail, Grey Shrike-thrush, Dwarf Whistler, Black-headed Whistler, Hooded Pitohui, Black Berrypecker, Black-fronted White-eye, Papuan Flowerpecker, Long-billed Honeyeater, Dwarf Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Myna, Yellow-breasted Bower-bird, Lesser Bird of Paradise, Grey Crow, Singing Starling.

The Mountain Peltops was nesting about six metres above the main walking track to Pasvalley. It's mate kept watch close by. The Grey Wagtail was at an elevation of 880m on the bank of a very fast flowing river.

Reference: B. M. Beehler (1985). **Birds of New Guinea.**
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SPECULATION : ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNA OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by Phil Gregory

I have a checklist of New Guinea birds published by Bill Principe (1991), which details 708 species definitely known to have occurred on the mainland of New Guinea as a whole including the nearby islands, and lists a further 58 as either undocumented, with uncertain taxonomic status or which the author expects to occur. This latter category is unusual in being included in a lighter type face in the main body of the list rather being in an appendix, which can make for confusion. Some of the predictions I find surprising, and with this in mind have decided to speculate on a list of my own.

Basically almost anything which has occurred as a vagrant to Australia is a fair bet, and a few Australian dispersives are possible. Seabirds form the largest body of potential candidates, and given the limited pelagic observations from New Guinea seas so far we can expect a lot of additions in due course. Long distance migrants form the next major category.

Bill's predicted list is given below, and is followed by my own. Other scryers of the crystal ball are welcome to join in ! The Papua New Guinea list is currently 665 from the mainland and nearby islands, with an additional 94 from the Bismarck Archipelago, Admiralty Islands and North Solomons (based on Chris Eastwood's latest pocket check list, PNGBS 1994). The grand total is thus 759 species.

Bill Principe's Predictions * Denotes species now reported from PNG.

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| Cape Petrel | <i>Daption capense</i> |
| Hawaiian Petrel | <i>Pterodroma phaeopygia</i> |
| White-necked Petrel | <i>Pterodroma exsul</i> |
| Phoenix Petrel | <i>P. alba</i> |
| Mottled Petrel | <i>P. inexpectata</i> |