

## EDITORIAL

It is nice to have *Muruk* back in existence after a rather long time in limbo since **Volume 8 Number 1** back in October 1996. We apologise for the delay. The hiatus was caused by various financial complications related to the PNG drought situation in 1996-97, but we are very pleased that **Ok Tedi Mining Ltd.** has again come to our rescue with further sponsorship.

This issue is largely based on papers and notes from the Bismarcks, Manus and Goodenough Island, and it is a real pleasure to have a contribution from those pioneers of ornithology in PNG, Mary LeCroy and Bill Peckover. Brian Fletcher's paper on Kau Wildlife Reserve near Madang is also of note and fills a gap in a poorly known area. We also announce the formation of a committee to act as custodians of the PNG list, formalising acceptance procedures and maintaining an archive which may be of use to future students of birds in PNG. The interim list of requested species is included in this issue.

Acknowledgments are due to Chris Eastwood for proof reading, and to both him and Sue Gregory for encouragement. Also to K. David Bishop for help with the rarity lists.

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## Birds observed on Goodenough and Wagifa Islands, Milne Bay Province

By Mary LeCroy and William S. Peckover

We spent the period 8-14 August 1988 on Goodenough Island, D'Entrecasteaux Islands, Milne Bay Province, in the vicinity of Galuwala Village, at 620 m, and in *Castanopsis* oak forest at 1030-1075 m. Most of the area around Galuwala is anthropogenic grassland, strewn with large blocks of volcanic rock, presumably from a long-inactive volcano. The track to the forest is through this grassland and is very steep. The forest is relatively clear of undergrowth but shows signs of human disturbance; however, birds seem to be common. There were daily periods of rain during our visit. Each evening, and often during the day, mists swirled down from the summit of the mountain to shroud the forest; not surprisingly, moss extends down to the beginning of the forest at about 1000 m. There is an excellent description of this forest in Mayr and Van Deusen (1956:4). The summit of the mountain on which we camped is several hundred metres higher and is isolated by a wall of solid cliffs.

Flocks of small insectivores were a feature of the forest. The following species were noted in these flocks: *Pachycephala soror*, *Pachycephala simplex*, *Rhipidura rufiventris*, *Oedistoma iliolophus*, *Xanthotis flaviventer*, and *Dicrurus hottentotus*.

There have been a number of reports on the avifauna of Goodenough, summarized most recently by Bell (1970), who gives a total list of the species reported from the island up until that time. Since then, we have found the article by Menzies (1976) to be relevant. Menzies saw a long-tailed black bird that he was unable to identify, keeping alive the reports of such a bird first recorded by Brass (1956:144) on the Fourth Archbold Expedition. We did not encounter this mystery bird, but we observed the following species, two of which are new records for the island.

**Australian Pelican** *Pelecanus conspicillatus*. Two individuals were seen on 9 August, flying over grassland near Galuwala. This is a first record of the species for Goodenough. 1988 was a year in which pelicans were reported from many unusual places, and obviously this sighting was another instance where a build-up in numbers in Australia caused an exodus into the surrounding Pacific areas.

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*. Seen over grassland near Galuwala.

**White-breasted Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus rivoli*. This beautiful fruit-dove was seen in the forest, and appeared particularly fond of the small yellow fruits on a forest tree.

**Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus viridis*. This species also fed on the yellow fruits.

**Eastern Black-capped Lory** *Lorius hypoinochrous*. A noisy inhabitant of the forest above Galuwala. Very common.

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita*. Common in all areas we visited. Fed on the yellow fruits.

**Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus*. Commonly seen from Galuwala, flying over the grassland

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus*. Heard in the vicinity of Galuwala.

**Swiftlet** *Collocalia* sp. Solid grey swiftlets were flying in the company of Glossy Swiftlets over the grasslands above Galuwala, 600 to 1000 m.

**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta*. With the above species.

**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus*. On 8 August, 4 were seen gliding up the valley below Galuwala; and on 9 August, individuals were gliding over the boulder-strewn grassland track leading upward from the village. The species has apparently not been recorded from Goodenough previously.

**Blyth's Hornbill** *Rhyticeros plicatus*. A pair of hornbills was seen over the trail above Galuwala.

**Island Thrush** *Turdus poliocephalus*. A large-headed forest ground bird of the correct size and shape for this species was described as rufous below with black scaling on the breast and head sooty. We believe it was an immature individual of this species.

**Northern Fantail** *Rhipidura rufiventris*. Common and confiding in the forest.

**Sclater's Whistler** *Pachycephala soror*. Seen in the forest.

**Grey Whistler** *Pachycephala simplex*. This plain bird with its distinctive whitish forehead and eye-stripe, and dark line through the eye was regularly seen in the forest.

**Little Shrike-thrush** *Colluricincla megarhynchus*. This species was very common in the forest, heard more often than seen.

**Black Sunbird** *Nectarinia aspasia*. Seen at Galuwala feeding in coconut blossoms.

**Dwarf Honeyeater** *Oedistoma iliolophus*. Frequently netted in the forest. Gleaning for insects, its movements were very rapid as it leaned far over a limb, searching the underside, and hopping up the vertical trunk of a small tree, feeding as it went.

**Red-collared Myzomela** *Myzomela rosenbergii*. This was a very common species of the forest and frequently netted. Five females and immature males were collected and the plumages will be reported elsewhere (LeCroy and Peckover, ms).

**Puff-backed Meliphaga** *Meliphaga aruensis*. This species was netted.

**Tawny-breasted Honeyeater** *Xanthotis flaviventer*. This was a common species of the forest.

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus*. Commonly seen and heard in the forest.

**Hooded Butcherbird** *Cracticus cassicus*. Surprisingly difficult to see, but its loud ringing calls were a feature of the forest. Birds recorded duetting.

**Curl-crested Manucode** *Manucodia comrii*. Much time was spent observing this species, mostly as groups of individuals came throughout the day to feed in the forest tree with small yellow fruits. It was a very common bird, and its bubbling and echoing calls were a dominant feature of the forest sounds. Sometimes the birds were in pairs but usually were in flocks of 6 - 10 individuals, charging and chasing through the trees. This is in contrast to Bell's (1970) observations made in the latter part of October, when most of his records of this species were of pairs. Our observations of birds of this species carrying nesting material on 12 and 13 November 1978 on Normanby Island supports a breeding season later in the year.

Several different calls were noted. The common bubbling call that echoes throughout the forest seems to be a contact call, given as the small flocks move together through the forest, but sometimes with individuals widely separated. It is one of the first calls heard in the morning, just as the sky begins to show light, and it is one of the last calls heard in the evening, becoming fainter and fainter as the light fades.

Males of this species are larger and have more ornately crinkled plumage than females, and once a presumed male gave the bubbling call when directly overhead. His wings were held out from the body but were closed, and his breast swelled, inflating the coiled trachea just before the call began. The bubbling then occurred as the air was released.

A second common call we termed "clacking." This is a peculiar low sound heard only when a small flock was nearby and moving as a group and it may be a flock cohesion call. Several times we heard a long trill, more continuous and less "bubbling" than the common call.

The sitting posture of the species is peculiar. It sits like a chicken with its extravagant tail cocked up and constantly flicked. The body is held horizontal as it perches across the limb.

The birds were not engaged in courtship at the time of our visit, but two observations might be courtship-related. Once when a pair was feeding, the larger, presumed male, followed the other bird up a sloping limb and then perched on a small limb just above. It then leaned over until he was almost touching the other bird and twice gave a low version of the bubbling call, fanning the wings out and down as he did so and shaking them slightly. Then the pair flew away.

Another time when a flock of 6 were moving through the treetops, at least one was giving a low "clack." When it was seen to give this call, it had its wings out like a young bird begging and was vibrating them slightly, but it did not appear to be young.

In addition to the above observations on Goodenough, one of us (ML) has briefly visited Wagifa Island, off the south-eastern tip of Goodenough, 4 times in late January to early March, as a lecturer on AMNH Discovery Tours.

The following species were noted on Wagifa:

**Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii*

**Pied Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula bicolor*

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua triton*

**Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus*

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** *Scythrops novaehollandiae*. A tail feather of this species was worn in the hair of one of the dancers on the coast of Goodenough.

**Pheasant Coucal** *Centropus phasianinus*

**Uniform Swiftlet** *Collocalia vanikorensis*

**Varied Triller** *Lalage leucomela*. Seen on the immediately adjacent coast of Goodenough.

**Flycatcher** *Myiagra* sp. A female of this genus was seen on 8 March 1986. Vibrates tail. (Presumably either Satin *M. cyanoleuca* or Leaden Flycatcher *M. rubecula* -Editor.)

**Black Sunbird** *Nectarinia aspasia*

**Helmeted Friarbird** *Philemon buceroides*

**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallica*. At approximately 6 pm on 1 March 1991, hundreds of Metallic Starlings were seen flying from Goodenough to Wagifa to roost. They flew high across the water and then swooped down almost vertically into the trees. The same phenomenon was seen on Fergusson Island, where large numbers of starlings flew to a small offshore island to roost.

**Curl-crested Manucode** *Manucodia comrii*

**Torresian Crow** *Corvus orru*

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## Birds seen in the Bismarck and Admiralty Islands from 22 Oct - 7 Nov 1996

By Brian S. Fletcher

### Introduction

The Bismarck and Admiralty Islands lie off the north coast of New Guinea and between them have over 50 species of endemic birds. During a 16 day trip there in Oct/Nov. 1996 the principal places I visited were Ulatawa Plantation near Kokopo and Wild Dog Mining Camp in the Gazelle Peninsula on East New Britain; the Kavieng area of New Ireland; and Manus and Tong Islands in the Admiralty Group. I also kept a look out for birds during brief transit stops at Hoskins in New Britain on route to Kokopo, and Lihir Island, off the east coast of New Ireland, on route to Kavieng.

### New Britain

I flew from Madang to Tokua Airport, East New Britain, via Hoskins on the 22 Oct. My trip got off to a good start with a flock of 30 + Buff-bellied Mannikins sitting on the fence surrounding the fuel storage area during the stopover at Hoskins Airport.

After reaching Tokua, I took a PMV into Kokopo and then transferred to another PMV that was going to Gelagela which dropped me off at Ulatawa Plantation, the home of Max Henderson, Director of the Pacific Heritage Foundation. I stayed there for the next 2 days and did some birding within the different habitats present on the plantation, particularly the garden area around the guest house and a small remnant patch of forest to the right near the entrance gate.

On 24 Oct., after getting permission from David Lindley, the Managing Director of Gold Mines of Niugini, who has an office in Kokopo, I hired a local with a utility and drove up to Wild Dog Mining Camp. The camp is situated in the Gazelle Peninsula, approximately 45 km west of Kokopo, at an altitude of 950 metres. En route we had a 45 minutes wait at the locked entrance gate, which is situated at the start of the forested area at an altitude of approximately 300 metres, 8 km before the camp. This gave me the first opportunity to see some of the endemic birds of the area including, Red-knobbed Fruit-dove, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, the only Pied Cuckoo-Dove I saw on the trip, and Blue-eyed Cockatoo.

During my stay at Wild Dog Mining Camp I explored the various trails that ran through the surrounding forest; the most productive being:

- a) The main entrance road back towards Kokopo.
- b) A track that ascended to slightly higher altitude diagonally to the left behind the living quarters.
- c) A track that ran down through good forest to the left from the entrance road, starting at the top of the first ridge back towards Kokopo.

At the time of my visit, conditions for bird watching were excellent as showers were restricted to the early afternoons and evenings and many trees were flowering or fruiting. Two large fruiting fig trees at the eastern edge of the camp grounds attracted a wide range of frugivorous birds and the flowering trees in the surrounding forest