

Marchant, S. & Higgins, P. J. 1990. *Handbook of the Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume I: Ratites to Ducks*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

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### **Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) New to Papua New Guinea**

By Guy Dutson

A male, probably first-winter, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* was seen on small pond near Tokua airport, Rabaul, New Britain on 14 January 1998.

These ponds appear to be the result of mining gravel from the beach at the end of the airstrip and are were seen from the air. I visited them briefly on 11 January and for several hours on 14 January with Kester Wilson. Only the one duck was seen but many species of heron, rail and wader were recorded. The duck was watched on the water and on land through binoculars at a range of 15-30 m. The brown-black plumage contrasting with white flanks and a yellow iris enabled instant identification. It was aged as first-winter by the glossy dark brown plumage, dirty brown mottling on the rear of the white flanks and the absence of a nape tuft. Other pied congeners were eliminated by close examination of head-shape and bill-pattern. The rather smooth head-shaped was assessed as identical to that of Tufted Duck which both observers were all too familiar with. The bill was blue, slightly paler on the lower mandible and terminally, a very pale narrow subterminal band and a small black tip.

This Palaearctic species winters across northern south-east Asia to Japan. The closest records of vagrants are from Sulawesi (White & Bruce 1986) and Micronesia and Hawaii (Pratt *et al.* 1987). As with the Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* (which has two New Guinea records), it is as yet unrecorded from Australia.

#### **References**

- Pratt, H. D., Bruner, P. L. and Barrett, D. G. (1987) *The birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press.
- White, C. H. M. & Bruce, M. D. 1986. *The birds of Wallacea*. BOU checklist no.7. London: British Ornithologists Union.

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