

This issue of *Muruk* has a distinctly West Papuan flavour and it seems appropriate to give some of the more significant sightings from some recent bird trips there. Given the lack of recent records we go into some detail with the sightings. The Halmahera section is included because of the strong Australasian connection. The two trip reports give an indication of what can be seen in these remote and inaccessible sites, but basic breeding and status data are lacking for many species and further records would be welcome. Observations of the virtually unknown Bruijn's Brush-turkey and Snow Mountain Robin are particularly noteworthy in the two travelogues from Charles Davies.

The Papua Bird Club have led, organised and advised many birding tours to West Papua. An example trip report visiting the most popular birding sites is given below. For more details of their tours, the birds of west Papua and the conservation awareness work undertaken by the club, see www.papuaibirdclub.com

West Papua (and Halmahera) 3rd – 28th April 2006

Leaders: Guy Dutson and Kris Tindige for Sicklebill Safaris

This was perhaps only the second tour operated to West Papua (the Indonesian half of New Guinea, previously known as Irian Jaya) since civil unrest in the late 1990s. We focussed on the West Papuan endemics, notably the birds of paradise, of which we saw all seven species endemic to Indonesia and another three species rarely seen outside Indonesia. We benefited from the recent construction of roads into the Arfaks and Lake Habbema and encountered no real problems except that the poor trails evidenced a lack of visitors and the mountains have not become any less steep...

Since it was taken over by Indonesia in 1963, West Papua has seen a low-level insurgency between the native Papuans and the Indonesian government and security forces. Birders have often been unable to obtain travel permits to visit the province, especially the high mountains of Lake Habbema. We found a solution: to enter overland from PNG, and then to rely on the organisational abilities of the Papua Bird Club.

Tuesday April 3rd

After an early morning walk around the hotel, finding **Blue-winged Kookaburras**, **Grey-headed Munias** and **Fawn-breasted Bowerbird**, our first morning was spent flying from Moresby to Vanimo. We loaded a set of camping gear onto the back of our vehicle then drove to the Indonesian border. Fortunately, the border crossing formalities were straightforward and we were soon whisked away to Jayapura; the increasing numbers of minibuses, motorbikes and cigarettes suggesting that we had left PNG behind and we were truly in Indonesia – this impression was confirmed by the abundance of **Tree Sparrows**.

Wednesday April 4th

In the morning we birded the margins of Lake Sentani, the huge lake set in rolling hills behind Jayapura. We found a pair of **New Guinea (Helmeted) Friarbirds** nesting over the boathouse, and a **Black Bittern** flew past. From the boat, we found another bittern, and the highlight of a scatter of forest birds was a fantastic white-phase **Variable Goshawk** atop a coconut palm. After lunch, we flew to the large raised coral island of