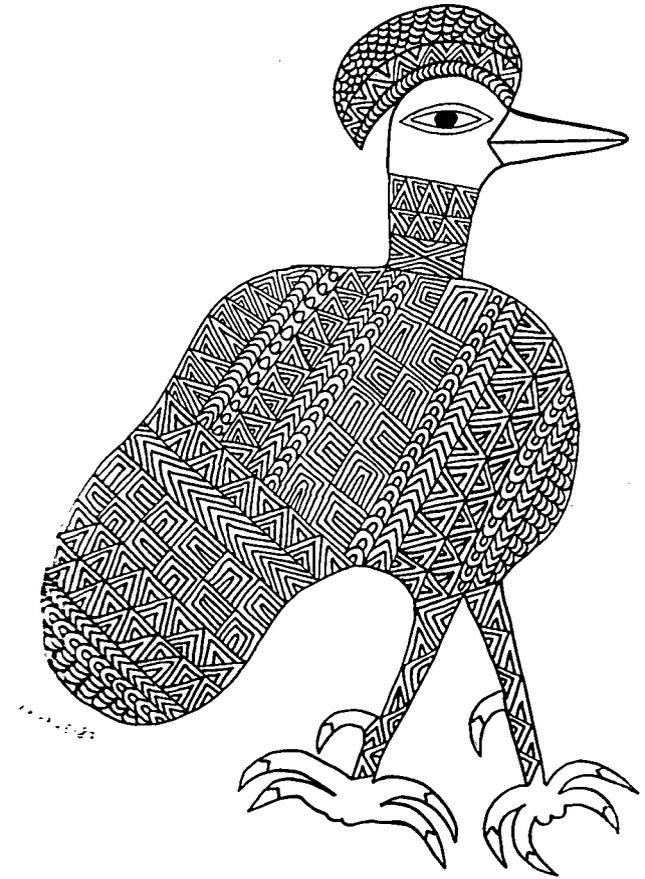


MURUK



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EDITORIAL PAGE

COVER

The cover of this issue, and of those which follow, are representations of cassowaries by the artist Kauage.

Kauage is from Miugu Village in Chimbu Province, PNG. Until 1968 he worked in coffee and rubber plantations, and then he came to Port Moresby he and worked as a cleaner at the Administrative College. He showed his drawings to Georgina Beier, who was then in charge of the Centre for New Guinea Cultures at the University of Papua New Guinea. Soon after this he gave up his job and took up full time drawing and painting, giving his first exhibition at UPNG in 1969. Since then he has exhibited throughout Australia, as well as in Manila, Suva, Brighton, Edinburgh, Ite and Los Angeles. His work has recently been featured in Air Niugini's Paradise magazine, and he is generally recognised as one of Papua New Guinea's foremost artists. His work is frequently on show at the Art School in Port Moresby.

These pictures of Muruks were specially commissioned by the PNGBS. The full-sized originals (51 x 63 cm), in black and white, may be purchased from the Society at the very reasonable price of 40 kina each. Please write to Mike Hopkins if you are interested.

FUTURE COVERS

We would like to use pictures of Cassowaries on our future issues. Readers are invited to submit drawings for consideration. The size is unimportant, but in order to get as clear a reproduction as possible, line drawings in black ink with minimum shading would be best. Please send drawings to the editors.

FUTURE MURUKS

With the eventual publication of two issues of Muruk in 1987 the backlog of articles is now becoming low. If you have something which is intended for Muruk the editors would be very grateful if you could submit it as soon as possible. Suitable material can be sent direct to the editors, or to the Society at PO Box 1598, Boroko, NCD, Papua New Guinea.

Mike Hopkins & Joan Oliver, Editors

BIRDS OF THE LOWER SIBIUM MOUNTAINS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

GEORGE E. CLAPP

SUMMARY

An account is given of a brief visit in April 1984 to the Sibium Mountains, a semi-isolated outlier range in the Oro Province of North-east New Guinea. These mountains were hitherto unexplored ornithologically. Thirty-two species of birds were encountered, including the relatively uncommonly recorded Lesser Melampitta *Melampitta lugubris*, Wallace's Fairy-Wren *Sipodotus wallacii*, Yellow-legged Flycatcher *Microeca griseiceps* and Buff-tailed Sicklebill *Epimachus albertisi*. Brief notes are given on behaviour, calls, altitude, etc. It is concluded that these observations from 1000 to 1300 m indicate a potentially rich avifauna that may be revealed when the Sibium Mountains are explored to their full height of nearly 2200 m.

INTRODUCTION

This report continues the series of accounts by the writer on the avifauna in remote locations in the Oro Province of Papua New Guinea.

Between 9 and 13 April 1984 I camped out in the Sibium Mountains. My camp, Rhonda one, was situated at Latitude 09° 18' 13" S, longitude 148° 25' 40" E grid reference FK 568715 on the 1:100,000 topographical map, edition 1 - AAS Series T683 Sheet 8579 Sibium.

The camp was 12 km in a direct line from the village of Gewoia, but that represented a walk of one and a half days, necessitating an overnight stop, so the site was more isolated than appears at first glance. The nearest airstrip is at Gewoia village which lies at grid reference FKG30823 on the same topographic map. The camp was 42 km in a direct line from the crest of the Owen Stanley mountain range, and was situated at an altitude of exactly 1000 m. The journey from Popondetta to the camp and back was made by helicopter. Gewoia villagers walked from the village, erected the helipad, assisted me in my work and walked back again. All altitudes quoted were measured by altimeter.

THE SIBIUM MOUNTAINS

Situated in the Oro Province, in the northern portion of the south-east of the island of New Guinea, the Sibium Mountains rise to nearly 2200 m.

They appear to have been unexplored ornithologically before this visit (Diamond 1985 and my own researches) and none of the early collectors and naturalists recorded any visits to them. Although not far from the top of the main range, the Sibium Range is semi-isolated, being separated from the central cordillera by lowlands of 1000 m or less. It was therefore fortuitous

that my camp was situated exactly at 1000 m since the birds recorded will indicate what avifauna the forested land between the main range and the Sibium Mts might support. These records may be compared later when the highest parts of the Sibium Range are visited.

My observations should provide an interesting comparison between the avifaunas of other similar outlier ranges on New Guinea which are separated from the main range by a comparatively greater distance.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED

DWARF CASSOWARY *Casuarius bennetti*

Before I arrived at the camp on 9 April the villagers had shot and smoked some cassowaries which by size, description and name were *C. bennetti*. The Gewoia people distinguish in their language between *C. casuarius* which is "Bina" and *C. bennetti* which is "Hinini": they told me that they had shot "Hinini" which they said was common in the mountains. When I examined critical portions of meat (e.g. the legs) they were not big enough to have been *C. casuarius*. There is no doubt therefore that *C. bennetti* is found in the Sibium Range.

NEW GUINEA HARPY-EAGLE *Harpyopsis novaeguineae*

It was gratifying to find this large eagle in the Sibium Mountains, where it is unlikely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. I heard it calling from an area just below the camp at 1000 m for one hour before sunset on 11 April. On 12 April I saw and heard this species not far from the camp at 1200 m. The eagle had a method of apparently searching for game whereby it would perch for several minutes, then fly for 50 or 60 m and perch again then move another 50 or 60 m, and perch again, and so on. The noise of this large bird landing on a perch is an audible thud and the foliage shakes.

PAPUAN MOUNTAIN PIGEON *Gymnophaps albertisii*

My only sighting of mountain pigeons, and indeed the only pigeons on this visit, was a flock travelling high NNE on 11 April.

SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO *Cacatua galerita*

This cockatoo was heard (the call is diagnostic) and/or seen on 9, 10, 11 and 12 April. Sightings were all of a single pair of birds and the species was not abundant. All sightings were of birds seen near the camp at 1000 m or of birds seen from the camp but on the ridges several hundred m above, and all were in the early morning or towards dusk.

PAPUAN KING-PARROT *Alisterus chloropterus*

I had one sighting on 11 April, a female, 8 or 9 m up in the canopy of a lower middle storey tree at 1100 m. The Papuan King-Parrot was eating the medium-small white fruits of the tree and was not particularly shy.

PAPUAN BOOBOOK *Ninox theomacha*

The diagnostic call of the Papuan Boobook was heard from the camp in the early hours of 12 April at 1000 m.

MARbled FROGMOUTH *Podargus ocellatus*

The distinctive call of the Marbled Frogmouth was heard near the camp at 1000 m in the early hours of 12 April.

OWLET-NIGHTJAR SP. *Aegotheles* sp.

An owl-nightjar, unidentified as to species, was heard calling near the camp in the early hours of 12 April.

MOUNTAIN SWIFTLET *Collocalia hirundinacea*

Several swiftlets, which I identified by size, colouration, shape and flight as Mountain Swiftlets, were seen near the camp at 1000 m on 11 April. A typical place frequented by these swiftlets in my experience, the camp was situated on a ridge at an angle to a river valley which sloped steeply away leading towards Gewoia. The river was some hundreds of m below.

MOUNTAIN KINGFISHER *Halcyon megarhyncha*

The distinctive police whistle call, undoubtedly the Mountain Kingfisher at this altitude, was heard near the camp at 1000 m on 11 April.

BLYTH'S HORNBILL *Rhyticeros plicatus*

The unmistakable call of a single individual of this species was heard at 1100 m on 12 April.

BLUE-BREASTED PITTA *Pitta erythrogaster*

The diagnostic call of this pitta was heard just above the camp on 11 April.

BLACK-BELLIED CUCKOO-SHRIKE *Coracina montana*

A small company of Black-bellied Cuckoo-Shrikes, a male, a female and a juvenile, was sighted on 10 April near the camp at 1100 m. They were giving harsh calls and at one stage there was a duet consisting of a "Swee" from one bird accompanied by two harsh disyllabic calls from another bird, this pattern being repeated continually. I base the composition of the group on the following: the fully plumaged male was distinctive and no detail need be added; the female I noted as having less black in the plumage - black on the throat and upper breast with the rest of the underparts grey; the juvenile I noted as having less black on the plumage - from the eye through to the beak.

These cuckoo-shrikes were seen again on 11 April at 1100 m where, judging by their calls, they were common. They were also seen on 13 April near the camp.

LESSER MELAMPITTA

Melampitta lugubris

A pair of these birds was seen on 11 April at 1200 m. The habitat agreed well with the description in Mayr and Rand (1937) of the favoured habitat of this species, being in lower montane forest with plenty of ground cover. As this presumably constitutes a low altitude record I include the field notes on identification, which was quite positive. Apart from the general plump melampitta build and shape of the birds my field notes recorded all black plumage, the distinctly shaped black beak, longish black legs and that the birds had a reddish iris. Size was about the same as a White-eyed Robin *Pachycephalopsis poliosoma*. I also noted that the birds clung sideways to saplings, etc. Despite my waiting, when the birds moved off they did not return and a search of the area failed to find them. This was unfortunately the only sighting of these intriguing birds.

WALLACE'S FAIRY-WREN

Sipodotus wallacii

Several of these birds were seen at the edge of the forest on 12 April near the camp at 1000 m. Good views were obtained and the identification was positive. The birds did not linger in any one spot and moved quickly along the foliage at a height of from 2 m up to the canopy. This was presumably a family party. 1000 m appears to be above the normal range for this species and may constitute an altitude record, but as the hill forest/lower montane forest ecotone was just about at this level and a little higher in places, it is perhaps not surprising. Bell, Coates and Layton (1979) mention no altitude range as such except to quote Rand and Gilliard (1967): "the whole of the New Guinea lowlands up to 800 m", which they imply, and I agree, is too broad a definition of range for this bird.

RUSTY MOUSE-WARBLER

Crateroscelis murina

The species was heard near the camp at 1000 m on 9, 10, 12 and 13 April.

BLACK-WINGED MONARCH

Monarcha frater

One individual of this distinctive species was seen on 12 April at 1030 m.

YELLOW-LEGGED FLYCATCHER

Microeca griseiceps

There was an excellent sighting of this uncommon flycatcher on 12 April at 1030 m. My field notes indicate: olive brown upperparts, grey head, yellowish green underparts with fine streaks on the throat and upper breast, orange-yellow legs, lower beak yellow and upper black, whitish eye ring, a plump bird 12.5-13 cm. I cite these notes because it is important to properly identify these birds which are the middle species in a three species altitudinal sequence. I also noted that the bird flicked its tail occasionally, a habit not previously noted for this species in the literature but which is listed for *M. papuana* (Rand and Gilliard 1967). I also noted that the bird chattered.

My discovery of *Tregellasia leucops* at the same basic altitude and locality as *M. griseiceps* in the Sibium Mountains agrees well with the niche differences outlined for this group of flycatchers by Diamond (1972) and further reinforces the identification.

WHITE-FACED ROBIN

Tregellasia leucops

This robin was sighted on 11 April at 1200 m and on 12 April at 1020 and 1040 m. It is quite distinctive and was apparently reasonably common in the area.

WHITE-EYED ROBIN

Pachycephalopsis poliosoma

The White-eyed Robin was sighted on 11 April at 1200 m and on 12 April at 1020, 1040 and 1100 m, and was a common bird in the area. I have noted that when flying it made a distinct whirring of wings. It was to be seen low in the undergrowth and made a "tuck tuck tuck tuck" call.

It is impossible to distinguish the sub-species without specimens but the white throat patch was fairly extensive and there was a whitish patch on the abdomen. Curiously enough I did not find this species difficult to see (pace Diamond 1972), perhaps reinforcing my impression that it was quite common in the area.

SCLATER'S WHISTLER

Pachycephala soror

Sclater's whistler was seen on 10 April at 1300 m. It was common in the forest canopy where the ridge flattened out.

GREY WHISTLER

Pachycephala simplex

Only one was heard on 10 April (altitude not noted).

HOODED PITOHUI

Pitohui dichrous

Heard on 10 April, this species was positively identified by a sighting on 12 April at 1300 m.

WHITE-EYE SP.

Zosterops sp.

A small flock of *Zosterops* were seen on 10 April. Although I could see that they were certainly white-eyes I could not see them clearly enough to distinguish the species. I suspect them to be *Z. minor*.

RED MYZOMELA

Myzomela cruentata

A pair, a male and a female, was active in a grove of secondary growth trees beyond the helipad at 1000 m on 10 April.

MELIPHAGA SP.

Meliphaga spp.

On 9 April I saw two yellow-eared *Meliphagas*. The yellow auricular spot was medium in size and somewhat cusp shaped, with the horns of the cusp towards the front and a rounded posterior end. They were giving a typical meliphagid "tup" call, and I have noted that it was different in quality from the *M. analoga* call of the lowlands around Popondetta. The birds had grey-yellow undersides and olive upperparts. They were at the forest edge. They did not tally with *M.*

aruensis in other parts of the province, which has a much darker top of the head and is generally darker in colouration.

On 10 April near the camp at 1000 m I saw a white-eared *Meliphaga* that was brown on the upperparts (with no discernible olive), grey underneath and with a white rictal gape streak. As I did not see the birds closely it is possible that the white rictal gape could have been very pale yellow but I certainly did not see any yellow. Nevertheless it is probable that this bird was *Meliphaga montana*.

MOUNTAIN DRONGO *Chaetorhynchus papuensis*

One only was sighted on 11 April at 1100 m.

SPOTTED CATBIRD *Ailuroedus melanotis*

A cat-like call, almost certainly this species and very similar to the Australian bird, was heard just below the 1000 m camp on 12 April.

BUFF-TAILED SICKLEBILL *Epimachus albertisi*

A single individual of this bird of paradise, a female or a male still in female plumage, was sighted on 11 April at 1100 m. It was in the canopy 3 or 4 m up and with its long bill it continually probed the heavy moss cover on the tree trunk to which it clung upright (c.f. Diamond 1985), but I could not distinguish what, if anything, it obtained by this behaviour.

LAWES' PAROTIA *Parotia lawesii*

My only sighting of this striking bird of paradise was a single fully plumaged male high in the canopy of a huge lower montane rainforest tree on 11 April at 1100 m in the same locality that I saw *E. albertisi*. I have noted that judging by the calls the species is not uncommon. I saw no white on the head, the only relatively conspicuous colouration being the bronze-green breast shield (and this was clearly visible). Presumably this was *P. lawesii helenae*, although confirmation would be needed. Its presence is not unexpected at this altitude. The behaviour of the bird was nervous, it was obviously watching me and did not stay long in view.

GREY CROW *Corvus tristis*

Heard only on 10 April from the camp at 1000 m. The call is diagnostic.

MISCELLANEOUS

On several days towards dusk flocks of a dozen medium sized parrots with a soft call flew swiftly through the gathering mist past the camp at right angles to the ridge on which we were camped.

An unidentified megapode mound was seen at 1200 m.

DISCUSSION

It is regrettable that I was unable to visit the highest part of these mountains, but I was on a non-ornithological working trip. However, species encountered were most interesting and indicate that the Sibium Mountains will probably prove to have a rich avifauna. One would expect this as the mountains are situated close to the main range, separated only by the various headwaters of the Musa River and their basin.

These mountains are little touched by man, except for the occasional hunting party. They are steep, subject to landslides (there were several areas of old slide not far from the camp and more on the other side of the mountain) and the crests of the foothills were rugged. Hunting trails were overgrown, and the abundance of game in the area of the camp, which was the site of an earlier camp for several weeks some years previously, showed that the area is rarely visited. Twice I saw tree kangaroos (*Dendrolagus* sp.) and they appeared to be relatively common, which might account for the presence of *Harpyopsis novaeguineae*. I also saw fresh burrows of a spiny anteater but whether *Zaglossus* or *Tachyglossus* I could not say. Wild pigs were common (several were shot while I was there) and so, apparently were cassowaries. These are indications that the area is fairly safe for animals and birds.

The interesting sighting of the Lesser Melampitta presumably constitutes a low altitude record for the species. It is intriguing that Diamond (1983) describes the Greater Melampitta (the Lesser Melampitta's only congener) as "perching with its body at an angle to the ground rather than horizontal". Perhaps there could be a connection between the two species and their perching habits - certainly I saw the Lesser Melampittas perching sideways on the stems of small saplings and plants, in which position, of course, the legs are at an angle to the body.

My observations confirm that in these mountains the duet of *Coracina montana* is the same as that described by Diamond and Terborgh (1968) as is the composition of the small duetting companies.

These records reveal that the small area of the Sibium Mountains explored, between 1000 and 1300 m, has basically a lower montane avifauna. A total of 28 positively identified species, four identified to genus only, an unidentified megapode mound and some non-specific sightings of smaller parrots, were noted.

This was the first visit to these mountains by an ornithologist, and records of the rarely encountered *Melampitta lugubris*, *Sipodotus wallacii*, *Microeca griseiceps* and *Epimachus albertisi*, obtained during only two days observation at lower altitudes, are indicative of a rich lower and middle montane avifauna which will be more fully revealed once the Sibium Mountains are fully explored and to their maximum height of nearly 2000 m.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Mr. B.J. Coates who provided expert criticism and discussion of an earlier draft of this paper. Needless to say any errors which may be

contained herein are mine alone. I am indebted to councillor Amos Bedana of Gewoia village for general organisation of the work programme, and to his relatives who walked in and out of the area, cut the helipad and generally arranged matters at the camp. Thanks are also due to the pilots of Pacific Helicopters for setting us down and picking us up safely and on time in a remote location.

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INTERESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

K.D. BISHOP

The following observations represent new distributional records for Papua New Guinea (cf. Beehler *et al.* 1986) or additional information on the voices of little known species (cf. Coates 1985, Hadden 1981). Most observations were made during the period 6 July to 9 October, 1986 while leading several bird tours in the region. I am grateful to my clients who made these observations possible.

ANNOTATED LIST

CATTLE EGRET *Egretta ibis*

Eleven individuals, none in breeding plumage, feeding among a small herd of cattle near Ilimo farm 22 August, Central Province.

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Single adult with flocks of Little Black Cormorant *P. sulcirostris* on the Bensbach river below Bensbach Lodge. 26 July, Western Province.

GREAT-BILLED HERON *Ardea sumatrana*

Unusually numerous (for this species) along the Bensbach river. More than 18 individuals counted near the Bensbach Lodge. All birds were observed in tall, heavily wooded monsoon riverine forest and at least three individuals were in immature plumage. 27 July, Western Province.

SACRED IBIS *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Two to three thousand seen along the Bensbach river above the Lodge. 27 July. Single adult in the top of a dead tree in heavily cut over sago swamp forest. 24 August, Western Province.

BAT HAWK *Macheiramphus alcinus*

Single adult hawking over selectively logged lowland forest immediately south of the Markham river (near the Markham bridge, Lae). 6 August, Morobe Province. (D. & N. Massie pers. comm.).

BRAHMINY KITE *Haliastur indus*

Single adult over alpine grassland at Tari gap c. 2700 m. 19 August, Southern Highlands.

GREY GOSHAWK *Accipiter novaehollandiae*

An adult female attending a large stick nest c. 12 m up in a 25 m tall tree at the edge of selectively logged lowland swamp forest. 18 July, Kapiura, northern West New Britain.

MEYER'S GOSHAWK *Accipiter meyerianus*

Two 'pied' phase birds soaring high over montane forest above Ambua Lodge, Tari (2000-2700 m). July and August, Southern Highlands.

GURNEY'S EAGLE *Aquila gurneyi*

Single adult soaring over a forested ridge of the Markham river (near the Markham bridge, Lae). 6 August, Morobe Province.

SALVADORI'S TEAL *Anas waiguensis*

One 'pair' on forest-lined river (c. 2100 m) above Margarima, Southern Highlands Province. Note: this species has disconcertingly declined radically in the past ten years from former regular haunts such as the Wahgi and Baiyer valleys. 16 August.

BAILLON'S CRAKE

Porzana pusilla

At least three adults and one immature foraging at dusk in swampy grassland and dense scrub over water. Small lagoon near Iimo farm. 19 August, Central Province.

AUSTRALIAN PRATINCOLE

Stilia isabella

Single adult foraging on Tari airstrip. 17/18 August, Southern Highlands.

LITTLE CURLEW

Numenius minutus

Single adult on Rabaul airstrip with a large (c. 150) mixed flock of shorebirds. 7 October. Third record for New Britain (Bishop in prep.).

LATHAM'S SNIBE

Gallinago hardwickii

At least two birds at Moitaka sewage ponds. Both individuals were scrutinised carefully with a 15-60x telescope and the diagnostic long tertiaries overlapping the tips of the primaries on the folded wing but noticeably shorter than the tail were noted (cf. Hayman, Marchant and Prater 1986). 8 October, National Capital District.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

Limosa limosa

Three individuals on Rabaul airstrip represent only the second New Britain record (Bishop in prep.). 7 October, East New Britain.

PIED CUCKOO-DOVE

Reinwardtoena browni

Normally uncommon and inconspicuous, at least four individuals were observed in or at the edge of primary lowland forest, Pokilli Wildlife Management Area, north-central West New Britain, 4-7 October. One pair was observed briefly giving a bowing display and the presumed male giving a magnificent vocal display. Voice: Slow, mournful, slightly monotonous two note call the first disyllabic and upslurred, the second following a 1/2 second pause is longer and downslurred. The male responded well to tape playback.

WHITE-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE

Ptilinopus rivoli

Single adult carrying nesting material in lowland forest, Pokilli Wildlife Management Area. Previously considered mainly a montane resident and only a visitor to the lowlands on New Britain (Bishop in prep., Diamond pers. comm.). 5 October, West New Britain.

BLACK IMPERIAL PIGEON

Ducula melanochroa

Generally considered a montane resident this species has been observed relatively frequently in the lowlands (Bishop 1983). Further observations of individuals and a group of five in lowland forest, Pokilli Wildlife Management Area, suggests that this may be a regular possibly seasonal phenomena (as in *Gymnophaps albertisii*). West New Britain.

FINSCH'S IMPERIAL PIGEON

Ducula finschii

Generally common and widespread throughout the lowlands forests of West New Britain this species can easily be overlooked unless one is familiar with its distinctive call. Voice: not dissimilar to a steam train entering a tunnel. Loud, guttural three note call; *wok wok woowoo.....*, the first two notes short and identical the third descends and slows into a growl.

DUSKY LORY

Pseudeos fuscata

Groups of 2-8 birds seen flying over and feeding in tall flowering *Schefflera* sp. above 2000 m. Near Ambua Lodge, Tari, Southern Highlands. 17-19 August. This species rarely reaches 1800 m. (Beehler *et al.* 1986).

MADARASZ'S TIGER-PARROT

Psittacella madaraszii

Single adult female observed on two separate occasions during July and August, foraging in the scrubby edge of mid-montane forest c. 1,800 m, Kuhli Mission, Western Highlands. Contrary to the illustration in Beehler *et al.* (1986) this individual had a distinctive chocolate brown patch extending from the nape to the lower hindneck but lacked any indication of scaling. The blue on the forehead was barely visible and then only at very close range and in good light.

RED-BREASTED PYGMY-PARROT

Micropsitta bruijnii

Two males and at least one female feeding in flowering tree, Baiyer River Sanctuary. Second record for the sanctuary, however, this species is regularly observed on the nearby Jimi Ridge and may be a regular migrant. 6 August, Western Highlands.

VULTURINE PARROT

Psittichas fulgidus

At least one adult observed in flight over undisturbed forest on a steep escarpment, immediately south of the Markham river (near the Markham bridge, Lae). 5 August, Morobe Province.

HORSFIELD'S BRONZE-CUCKOO

Chrysococcyx basalis

Two to three individuals feeding on the ground in large open plains bordering the Bensbach river. 26 July, Western Province.

SOOTY OWL

Tyto tenebricosa

Single adult observed on numerous occasions at dawn during July and August entering and once carrying a mouse (*Mus musculus*?) to a presumed nest hole 7 m up in a lightning-damaged tree. Baiyer River Sanctuary, Western Highlands.

RUFIOUS OWL

Ninox rufa

Two adults flushed from c. 4 m up along a trail within riverine hill forest. 9 August, Baiyer River Sanctuary, Western Highlands.

A maximum of three individuals observed just prior to dawn (05:15) perched on posts alongside the road in eucalypt savanna on the approach to Varirata National Park. 24 & 27 August, Central Province. (H. Buck pers. comm.)

Two individuals observed alongside the Tari Gap road, c. 2000 m. One bird appeared to use the side of a high embankment from which to forage. This species gives an exceptionally large, bright, retinal reflection, shows no white in flight and looks brown not black. 25 July and 17 August, Southern Highlands.

A call heard and tape recorded at dawn in a remnant patch of lowland swamp forest c. 16 km north of Arawa resembled the only known description of this species' call. (cf. Cain & Galbraith 1956). North Solomons.

A pair of birds heard and seen duetting, Varirata National Park, Central Province. The call of the male differed radically from the female. Male: one or occasionally two note, explosive whistled "twip" preceded immediately by the female giving a high pitched whistle; the first two notes rather staccato then blending to a high pitched descending whistle. While uttering his call the male was observed strutting in a very upright posture on the forest floor. His breast appeared inflated and the white moustachial stripes contrasted dramatically with the blue breast and face mask.

Observed in small groups (2-6) frequently in association with Yellow-throated White-eyes *Z. metcalfei*. from c. 100 to c. 1000 m (*contra* Hadden 1981). July-October, Panguna/Arawa Bougainville, North Solomons.

Three individuals observed for c. 20 min. foraging in lower canopy of montane forest (c. 2000 m) near Ambua Lodge. Generally dark-streaked yellowish-green appearance, and yellow pectoral tufts were diagnostic. Third record for the Central Highlands (cf. Beehler *et al.* 1986). 14 August, Southern Highlands.

A group of c. 5 birds feeding on *Saccharum* sp. grass seedheads and bathing in a small roadside puddle, approximately 20 km south-east of Hoskins, West New Britain. This represents the first published record of this little known species in the province. In the field appears dark and dumpy with pale buffy lower abdomen and rufous-orange tail coverts.

Seen and heard commonly in the canopy of mid-montane forest, c. 1,800 m Jimi Ridge, Western Highlands. 7-9 August. The call is somewhat similar to some of the harsh notes uttered by the Superb Bird of Paradise *Lophorina superba* (pers. obs., cf. Beehler *et al.* 1986). Its apparently unrecorded call is a series of loud, harsh, grating notes slightly upslurred, *sssh sssh sssh*, usually two notes followed by a brief pause and again two to three notes. As the series continues the notes become slower and stronger but lower pitched than the Superb's. Individual males were observed calling in this manner and both sexes responded to tape playback.

At least one single adult female was observed feeding in near proximity to male and female Lawes' Parotia *Parotia lawesii*. Mid-storey, partially logged mid-montane forest (c. 1800 m). July/August, Kuhli Mission, Western Highlands. Species of the genus *Parotia* supposedly occupy allopatric ranges, however, this and other observations suggest, certainly for these two species, that the situation requires further study.

Single male observed in the mid-storey of dense montane forest c. 2000 m. 17 August, Ambua Lodge, Tari, Southern Highlands. (David & Nancy Massie pers. comm.). There are few records of this elusive species in the central ranges (Beehler *et al.* 1986.).

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MIXED FLOCKS OF BIRDS FEEDING ON FRUITS OF THE SAVANNAH TREE *ANTIDESMA GAISAMBULLA* NEAR GIRUA AIRFIELD, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

GEORGE E. CLAPP

OBSERVATION

On 2 January 1984, in savannah just north of Girua airfield, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, I made separate observations of two mixed companies of birds feeding in the same fruiting tree.

Initially I saw 6 or 7 Red-cheeked Parrots *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*, 4 or 5 Metallic Starlings *Aplonis metallica* and 2 Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves *Ptilinopus iozonus* all in the tree simultaneously, feeding on the fruits. A Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* was also in the tree, but I did not see it feeding on the fruit and it may well have been attracted to insects which had been drawn by the ripe fruit.

On a later occasion the same day I saw a Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris* and 2 Eastern Black-capped Lories *Lorius hypoinchrous* in the same tree, and these also were feeding on the fruit.

I observed no aggression on either occasion, although both observations were of no more than a few minutes and the fruit was superabundant.

The densely-foliaged savannah tree was identified by specimens of branchlets, leaves and fruit as *Antidesma gaisambulla* (Euphorbiaceae). The fruit, born profusely, varied between 3 and 6 mm in diameter, was spherical and dark purple to black in colour. Sweet and sugary to the taste, it left a curious 'waxy' feeling on the interior of the mouth when eaten (local people identified the fruit as edible for humans) and temporarily stained the lips and tongue purple. Neither I, nor others with me who tried it, suffered any ill effects from eating the fruit, which contained a small but distinct pit surrounded by a fleshy pericarp. *A. gaisambulla* appears to be widespread in savannah areas of the Oro Province since, in addition to other specimens scattered around the Girua area, I have also seen it in low hill savannah near the Pongani road between Oro Bay and Banderi village, and a P.N.G. informant from the Tufi area and with us that day, told me it also occurred in the Tufi administrative district.

January is in the middle of the rainy season in the Girua area.

DISCUSSION

A. gaisambulla occurs in *Nauclea-Antidesma* savannah in Eastern Papua (Pajmans 1973). Although knowledge of the use of fruiting trees by birds in the rainforest and secondary forest in P.N.G. is rapidly being expanded (Terborgh and Diamond 1970; Clapp 1979; Lecroy *et al.* 1980; Beehler 1983; Pratt 1986) nothing seems to have been recorded about birds eating the fruit of

savannah trees in P.N.G. and I can find no previous reference in the literature to the consumption by birds of *A. gaisambulla* fruits.

The only in depth study of birds in any savannah area in P.N.G. is that of Bell (1982) who stated that the Port Moresby savannah was obviously an area of ornithological interest but comparatively little attention had been paid to it....ornithological exploration was mainly aimed at rainforest endemics. Little has changed since that statement was made.

Heyligers (1965) lists *Antidesma* spp. trees (although not specifically mentioning *A. gaisambulla*) as occurring in several different savannah vegetation communities in the Port Moresby-Kairuku area. Bell (1980), although listing frugivores, mixed feeders, etc. for the savannah, gave no observations at fruiting savannah trees, and it seems unlikely that he encountered any, particularly as his study area was necessarily restricted. He did, nevertheless, comment on the 'scarcity of edible fruits' as one reason, *inter alia*, for the poverty of the savannah avifauna.

In my observations five bird species from four separate taxonomic families were seen to eat the fruit of *A. gaisambulla*; three of the species involved were medium-large birds. Other specimens of *A. gaisambulla* in the Girua area were not fruiting at the same time, which suggests a possible staggered fruiting season dependent on unknown factors. It is premature to speculate on the importance or otherwise of *A. gaisambulla* in the ecology of New Guinea savannah birds, but birds may well be an important means of seed dispersal for this tree.

Although noting only two separate observations at a single tree this report has been compiled because it highlights the need for further observations of birds at fruiting savannah trees in Papua New Guinea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to officers of the Division of Botany, Office of Forests, LAE, for identification of *A. gaisambulla* from the specimens submitted, and to Mr Nathan Siriga, Provincial Forests Officer, Popondetta, for arranging same.

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AN EXTENSION OF ALTITUDE RANGE FOR TWO MANNIKIN SPECIES

ROGER HICKS

On 3 April 1986 at Myola, Northern Province 09° 09' S, 147° 45' E two Eastern Alpine Mannikins *Lonchura monticola* were observed on the edge of a flock of c. 100 Grey-headed Mannikins *L. caniceps*, feeding on the short grass of the airstrip. Two birds were subsequently seen on the moss-forest/grassland border, again in the company of Grey-headed Mannikins. Myola, at 2080 m, lies well below the normal altitude range for Eastern Alpine Mannikins, given as 2700 m to 3500 m in Beehler *et al.* (1986) and 9000' to 12000' (2750 m to 3400 m) in Rand and Gilliard (1967). In the days preceding the observation there had been very heavy and continuous rainfall. This might have caused the birds to move lower. Grey-headed Mannikins had been recorded on each of the five days prior to this observation. The Eastern Alpine Mannikins were seen by six other observers. In September 1987 Eastern Alpine Mannikins were found to be common in the tree fern forest located 2 km from Myola 500 m higher (M.J.G. Hopkins, pers. comm.).

Grey-headed Mannikins have been recorded at Myola on previous and subsequent visits: April 1985 P. Lambley, June 1986 J. Oliver, April 1987 H.C.F. Hopkins & P. Lambley (pers. comms), and in September 1985 and June and September 1987 (pers. obs). They have usually been observed feeding in the grasslands of the Myola basin or along the moss-forest/grassland edge. Myola is higher than the upper altitude limit for this species given by Beehler *et al.* (1986) as 1900 m, and by Rand & Gilliard (1967) as 5800' (c. 1800 m). The regular recording of this species suggests it is a resident in the area.

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THE LOGRUNNER, *ORTHONYX TEMMINCKII* (ORTHONYCHIDAE), AT TARI GAP, SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

CLIFFORD AND DAWN FRITH

To date the Logrunner *Orthonyx temminckii* has been considered to have a conspicuously discontinuous distribution on the island of New Guinea. The three apparently isolated Papuan populations are each given subspecific status: *O. t. novaeguineae* of the Vogelkop in Irian Jaya, *O. t. dorsalis* of the Snow Mountains in Irian Jaya, and *O. t. victoriana* of the Wharton Range and Herzog Mountains of south-east New Guinea between 1200 and 2800 metres above sea level (Deignan 1964, Rand & Gilliard 1967, Beehler *et al.* 1986). A recent sighting of the species on Mt. Scratchley by Clapp (1986) has extended its altitudinal range to 3450 m. The species was unknown from the Eastern and Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea (Diamond 1972, Beehler *et al.* 1986).

During September and October 1986 the authors carried out a bird mist-netting and banding study at six sites in the moss forest of the Tari Gap area (5°58' S 143°8' E), Southern Highlands Province, at altitudes predominantly between 2600 and 2800 m. The study was conducted on behalf of the Wildlife Conservation International, of the New York Zoological Society. A total of 266 hours was spent with four 12 m and four 9 m mist nets erect during 32 netting days. Thus there was an average of 8.3 hours each netting day with 84 linear metres of mist net.

On 12 September 1986 a female Logrunner was netted, and on 30 September a male was caught 2 km from the capture point of the female. Both birds were in adult plumage without moult (see Table 1).

Table 1. Measurements of two banded *Orthonyx temminckii* mist-netted at Tari Gap, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.

Band No.	Sex	Weight	Wing	Tail	Tarsus	Culmen	Skull+bill
05099314	F	55.1g	85	66	29	-	38.9
05099346	M	61.5g	87	82	34	17.1	39.9

Note: Skull+bill is the maximum length from rear skull to bill tip. Wing is the maximum, flattened chord. Culmen is from bill tip to union with skull. All measurements are in mm.

Tari Gap is approximately midway between the eastern extremity of *O. t. dorsalis* distribution (Oranje Mts.) and the western limit of *O. t. victoriana* (Mt. Missim, Kuper Range) and is at least 400 km from either subspecies population. As wing length measurement in the two subspecies overlap (Mayr & Rand 1937, Rand 1940, Rand 1942) specimens of the Tari Gap population would be required in order to be able to clarify subspecific status.

The Logrunner was discussed by Diamond (1972) as one of nine "drop out" species absent from the Eastern Highlands zoogeographical area but present in areas of western and south-eastern New Guinea on the central cordillera. Further searching for this inconspicuous species to the east and west of Tari Gap is required to establish if, in fact, it has a continuous distribution along the length of the central mountains of New Guinea.

During our eight weeks field work we did not see or hear *Orthonyx* other than the two netted individuals; but CBF did note the conspicuous results of logrunner leaf-litter foraging on the forest floor, identical to that of *O. spaldingii*, and saw the stick foundations of two logrunner nests. Clapp (1986) notes that the New Guinea logrunner populations appear less noisy than Australian birds. The logrunner vocalizations described by Beehler *et al.* (1986) are for Australian birds, suggesting a lack of knowledge of calling New Guinea birds. Thus, the presence of the species in New Guinea may be more readily detected by mist netting. Jared Diamond (pers. comm.) has, however, pointed out that intensive mist netting has been carried out at other locations in the Central Range of Papua New Guinea, east of longitude 146°, including Mt. Karimui, Okapa area, Schrader Range and elsewhere.

We thank the Wildlife Conservation International of the New York Zoological Society for funding this work as part of a larger ornithological project at Tari Gap, and R.E. Bates of Trans Niugini Tours for help and support in various ways. Bruce Beehler and Jared Diamond kindly read and commented on a draft of this note.

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FAWN-BREASTED BOWERBIRD *CHLAMYDERA CERVINIVENTRIS* ON THE LAI RIVER, JIMI VALLEY, WESTERN HIGHLANDS, PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

CLIFFORD B. FRITH

The Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris* is known to occur on New Guinea in coastal areas from the SE tip of the island along the north coast as far west as Jayapura and along the south coast as far west as the Merauke area and also in the Ransiki and Kebor Valley areas of the Vogelkop, Irian Jaya; usually below 500 metres but rarely to 1400 m (Cooper & Forshaw 1977, Beehler *et al.* 1986). It is also found on the north-eastern coastal areas of Cape York Peninsula, Australia.

The 3 to 5 December 1985 were spent at Ruti Cattle Station (5°20', 144°15') on the Lai River in the Jimi Valley, Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea observing birds. Throughout this period the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird was commonly seen and heard about the immediate vicinity of the homestead and throughout adjacent valley floor grassland and abutting rainforest edge along the sides of the valley floor; by myself, Dawn Frith and Roy & Margaret Mackay.

One active and several disused nests of this species were found in isolated small trees and shrubs on the open grassland, and three active bowers were examined. These structures, and the bird activity at them, will be reported fully elsewhere (Frith & Frith, in prep.).

The presence of *C. cerviniventris* on the Lai River represents the first record of the north coast populations inland, or south, of the Schrader and Bismarck Ranges, and is probably the most inland location for it. Ruti Cattle Station is approximately 145 km inland of Bogia, the closest point on the coast. It is likely that the Lai River birds represent an inland extension of populations of the Sepik-Ramu river systems, via the grasslands of the Yuat River Valley.

The Fawn-breasted Bowerbird occurs sympatrically with the Yellow-breasted Bowerbird subspecies *C. lauterbachii lauterbachii* at Aiome in the Ramu River Valley (Gilliard 1969). The Lai River *C. cerviniventris* are located between the presently known distributions of the Baiyer-Wahgi Valley populations of *C. l. uniformis* and the Aiome-Jagei River population of *C. l. lauterbachii*.

I sincerely thank Roy and Margaret Mackay for the opportunity and means to visit the Jimi Valley, Jim and Flossie Gentle for kind hospitality there, and Dawn Frith for assistance.

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THE FAIRY MARTIN *HIRUNDO ARIEL* IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA. THREE NEW SIGHT RECORDS AND A BRIEF REVIEW.

ANNE MURRAY, L.M. MURRAY & ROGER HICKS

Three new sight records of Fairy Martin, *Hirundo ariel*, believed to be only the fourth, fifth and sixth for PNG are presented below followed by a brief review of the Fairy Martin in Papua New Guinea.

On 26 September 1986 at Tabubil airstrip, Western Province, A. and L.M. Murray observed a Fairy Martin with a low-flying group of Uniform Swiftlets *Collocalia vanikorensis*. Clear views were obtained for some 15 minutes of its snow-white rump, dark wings and back, rust-red head and nape and pale underparts. Its tail was dark and square. Its flight was more direct than the swiftlets' and it glided frequently. This species has not previously been recorded from Tabubil. It is possible that the exceptionally dry month prior to this sighting and/or the noticeable southwards migration e.g. of Rainbow Bee-eaters *Merops ornatus* and Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes *Coracina novaehollandiae* were relevant factors.

On 28th October 1986 at 15:00 while driving through Tari, Southern Highlands Province, R. Hicks noticed a small white rumped hirundine hawking low over an area of long grass in the company of several Pacific Swallows *Hirundo tahitica*. A brief glance showed that the rump was clean white and when the bird turned its rufous cap could be seen, so erasing thoughts of a late Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*. The next day two individuals were observed from a distance of not more than 5 m for about half an hour while they were perched on the Tari airfield perimeter fence. The birds could not be re-located on either 30 or 31 October.

The following field notes were made:

The birds were noticeably smaller than the Pacific Swallows with which they were associated, but with a stockier and shorter-winged build similar to that of the Tree Martin, although there were none of this species present for comparison. Plumage details: The rufous cap extended from forehead to nape and just below the level of the eye. The mantle and back were black with some pale streaking where the rufous of the crown met the black of the mantle, giving a zig-zag collar effect. Flight feathers and both upper and lower tail were dark grey. The rump was clean white. Chin, throat and ear coverts were very finely streaked pale brown on white. The ear coverts were also smudged with rufous. The streaking ended at the top of the breast with a narrow white band. Just below this on the upper breast were some faint brown smudges. The rest of the underparts were clean white.

On 8 November 1986 at 12:30, Mike and Helen Hopkins and R. Hicks observed a flock of c. 70 Fairy Martins flying over the river c. 10 km south of Balamuk, Western Province. Shortly after the flock was seen perched on a derelict wire fence which allowed a more accurate estimate of c. 100 birds to

be made. Two Tree Martins were also present in the flock. These birds were much more jumpy than the Tari individuals and would not allow a close approach.

The Fairy Martin is a widespread species in Australia, although only a breeding season (August - April) visitor to the south-east of that country. (Pizzey 1980). It is a vagrant to PNG with only three records prior to the last quarter of 1986. The first of these records was of a single bird at Nomad River, Western Province on 10 May 1967 (Bell 1968). The second was of unspecified numbers at Weam, also Western Province, in mid-1970, (Lindgren 1970) and only c. 20 km north of the Bensbach floodplain sighting this year. The third record followed some 12 years later when a single individual was seen at Kanosia Lagoon, Central Province on 15 August 82. (Finch 1982). All three records are of birds associating with Tree Martins which are common non-breeding season (March-October) visitors to PNG (Beehler et al 1986). It is probable that these records refer to Fairy Martins that had become caught up in the Tree Martins northward migration. All records occurred in the southern winter.

The latest three records differ in that they all occurred in the southern spring, much later in the year than the previous records, at a time when the Fairy Martins should be well into their breeding season. The Tari and Tabubil records are considerably farther north than Fairy Martins have previously been recorded, the individual at Tabubil being only 5° S of the equator. The record from Tari is further unique in that there were no Australian breeding species present. These Fairy Martins were associating with Pacific Swallows, a species which is not known to migrate and has not yet been admitted to the Australian list. This suggests there may have been a large influx of Fairy Martins in the southern autumn of 1986 and it will be interesting to see if any further records come to light following the publication of this note.

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CRESTED HAWKS *AVICEDA SUBCRISTATA* IN TABUBIL

ANNE MURRAY

On 8 February 1987 a pair of Crested Hawks (*Aviceda subcristata*) together with an immature were observed about 5 km south of Tabubil, Western Province. The immature was fully fledged but was being brought food by one of the adults. Both adults were being very territorial and calling noisily. The nest was not seen but it appeared that breeding had taken place in this location. This is probably the first breeding record for this area. Coates and Lindgren in their 1978 survey did not record Crested Hawks in the Ok Tedi region at all, and the only mention in any of the other literature is a record for the Fly River by Diamond and Raga (1977). I have recorded adult Crested Hawks in November and December 1985, and March 1986 at Ok Menga, in an area which had been cleared and was regrowing. My February 1987 record is also from a cleared part of the valley, suggesting that the hawks have moved into these newly-made habitats from further south.

I notice that Beehler *et al.* (1986) do not describe the immature. The one I saw on 8 February 1987 was dark brown on the back, wings and tail and creamy with light barring on the underparts. The head was cream with one or more dark streaks across it. The undertail coverts were pale rust and its legs were yellow. When the adults approached with food the immature bird flapped its wings and the barring on the underside of the wings was visible.

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BLUE ROCK THRUSH ON PAGA HILL, PORT MORESBY. FIRST RECORD FOR THE AUSTRALIAN REGION, EAST OF THE MOLUCCAS.

ROGER HICKS & BRIAN W. FINCH

At 18:00 on 7 January 1986 while watching a party of c. 30 Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* feeding over the eucalypt savanna on the eastern slopes of Paga Hill in Port Moresby, RH noticed a bird fly across an open space and perch on a building under construction below us. He thought it might be a Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* and pointed it out to BWF who confirmed the identification.

The bird was observed without binoculars, for about five minutes in fading light and the following notes were made. It was considerably larger than a Pied Chat *Saxicola caprata*, available for direct comparison, and held itself in a typical thrush-like stance. Upon landing it flicked its tail slowly downwards, a

movement often repeated while perched. Plumage details were difficult to determine in the fading light, but it was thought to be uniform blue-grey with darker primaries, a dark bill and dark legs. It eventually flew into the half completed building and was lost from sight.

We returned to the area at 06:00 the following morning, armed with binoculars. BWF spotted the bird almost immediately and we watched it for nearly an hour in good light. The dull image of the previous evening had changed overnight into an resplendent adult male of the chestnut bellied race *M. s. philippensis*. It was seen daily up to 19 January 1986 and appeared to range widely although it was often found around the houses in the early morning and late afternoon. It was subsequently seen by 13 other observers.

The following description is taken from notes made at the time. The bird was shaped like a thrush, with a moderately long tail, often held pointing downwards and flicked agitatedly. Head to chest and entire upperparts were blue-grey, primaries and central retrices were darker. The wing coverts had small dark centres and whitish crescent shaped tips. The feathers across the back, bordering the wings and across the upper breast similarly had whitish crescent shaped tips. The underparts from chest to vent were a uniform deep chestnut-orange, sharply contrasting with the blue-grey of the chest. The feathering at the base of the legs was blue. The bill was slender and quite long for a thrush and uniform blackish. The legs were also uniformly dark. The iris was large, prominent and dark.

There are ten species of rock thrush *Monticola*, five of which are confined to Africa (Howard & Moore 1984) and are not considered further here. The remaining five species are distributed across Eurasia. One reaches no further east than northern India. Four species can be found in south-east Asia (King *et al.* 1975) and all are, at least partially, migratory. The chestnut-bellied race of the Blue Rock Thrush *M. s. philippensis* winters further south and east than any other species reaching the Philippines and Indonesia. The Blue Rock Thrush is the only one of the these four to have a blue breast and, in non-breeding plumage, to have scaly markings across the mantle and on the breast (King *et al.* 1975; Vincy & Phillips 1983). Both these features were noted on the bird at Paga Hill. This is the first record of this species in Papua New Guinea and Australia (East of the Moluccas).

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FIELD NOTES ON MEYER'S AND CHESTNUT-SIDED GOSHAWKS

STEPHEN DEBUS

There are few mainland records of Meyer's Goshawk *Accipiter meyerianus*, and the field guide (Beehler *et al.* 1986) implies that it occurs at higher altitudes than the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk *Accipiter buergersi*. This would seem somewhat incongruous, since Meyer's also occurs on many islands from the Moluccas to the Solomons. Here I wish to record a sighting of what I believe was a black morph Meyer's Goshawk almost at sea level near Port Moresby, and to raise for critical field investigation the possibility that the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk does not have a black morph as is commonly supposed.

On 8 January 1984 I observed a black *Accipiter* sp. near Keagolo, about 10 km inland from Aroma (c. 100 km south-east of Port Moresby). In mid-afternoon in good light, with the sun behind me, I watched the bird glide swiftly from a patch of disturbed rainforest in a gully, across open ground to disappear into gallery forest fringing a river. It flew about 3 m from the ground at a distance of about 50 m, and was in view for perhaps 10 seconds. Even without binoculars I could see that it was entirely jet-black (not dark grey as in the slate-grey morph of the Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*), without obvious barring under the wings and tail nor a visibly pale iris. It was also quite large, about the size of a large female southern Australian Brown Goshawk *Accipiter f. fasciatus* c. 50 cm length), and showed a similar silhouette, wing carriage and style of flight (rather straight and level, slightly 'fingered' wings and a long, rounded tail). It was unlike the silhouette of the Australian Grey Goshawk which has very rounded wings with pronounced camber, drooped wings when gliding and shorter, squarer tail; features apparently shared by the New Guinean forms of *A. novaehollandiae*, cf. photographs in Coates (1985). Flight silhouettes may be useful for separating such difficult species, particularly when photographs can be taken and consulted later, since the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk has a 'six-fingered' wing whereas the other *Accipiter* species have a 'five-fingered' wing (Corben 1982).

Brown & Amadon (1968), first suggested that an alleged black morph in *Accipiter buergersi* might be a case of mistaken identity - a black specimen was perhaps assumed to be *A. buergersi* because *A. meyerianus* was not known to occur in mainland Papua New Guinea at the time. The question has been discussed further (Debus 1985; Czechura 1985), but it has not been satisfactorily resolved. Wattel (1973), had the opportunity to comment on this conundrum, but did not do so.

The field characters and plumages of the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk warrant further investigation for another reason. While it is apparent that this species is closely related to the Australian Red Goshawk *Erythrotriorchis radianus* (Corben 1982; Czechura 1985), the Red Goshawk seems unlike an *Accipiter* in some respects and there is some debate about its generic position. Is the Chestnut-shouldered Goshawk really an *Accipiter*? It would be good if

PNG ornithologists could resolve these questions before a second edition of the field guide is produced.

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NESTING NOTES FROM PACIFIC ADVENTIST COLLEGE

DON HALLIDAY

The campus of Pacific Adventist College, fourteen miles from the centre of Port Moresby on the Sogeri Road, is particularly attractive for the bird life found on its ponds. The following notes result from observations of the nesting habits of some of these campus birds.

BLACK-BACKED BUTCHERBIRD *Cracticus mentalis*

We were fortunate to observe the nest of a Butcherbird located approximately 6 m above the ground in a tree that was close to our lounge room window. The following observations were made in 1983-4:

Early in December 1983, an immature Black-backed Butcherbird was seen in the back yard, following two adults around and squawking for food. As we had been absent for a few weeks before that, we did not see the early stages.

Near Christmas we noticed that two birds were nesting and we presumed they were the same pair.

9 Jan 1984, a chick was seen in the nest.

14 Jan two chicks were seen.

22 Jan the chicks were seen hopping round the nesting tree, and two days later they were in another tree.

1 Feb they were seen flying to the ground beside the parents.

Oct 1984 we noticed that two more young had been raised in the tree behind the house next door, possibly by the same pair.

Discussion:

It seems possible that Butcherbirds can raise two broods in one season. Incubation seems to take almost three weeks. In a short time, about two weeks, the young can leave the nest and a little later they are flying around. For a while after leaving they follow the parents around, squawking to be fed.

Every year the Jacanas on the campus raise a new brood of young, and there have been times when we have been able to observe as many as a dozen chicks in various stages of growth. Especially interesting is the habit of the parent in sheltering the chicks under its wings, so that it can appear to have as many as ten legs - its own and those of four chicks.

The following notes were recorded in early 1984, mostly at weekly intervals.

Date	NEST 1	NEST 2	NEST 3	NEST 4	NEST 5
4 Feb	sitting				
11 Feb	3 chicks	built			
18 Feb	-	4 chicks			
25 Feb	-	4 chicks			
3 Mar	-	4 chicks	built		
10 Mar	3 chicks	4 chicks	sitting	sitting	
17 Mar	3 chicks	4 chicks	sitting	sitting	
24 Mar	-	-	sitting	2 chicks	sitting
31 Mar			1 chick	2 chicks	sitting
7 Apr				2 chicks	sitting
11 Apr					4 chicks
	NEST 6	NEST 7			
14 Apr	sitting				
21 Apr	failed?	sitting			
28 Apr		sitting			
5 May		2 chicks			

Further notes:

- Feb. 11 Three chicks (nest 1) were seen being carried under the parent's wings.
- Feb. 25 A pair were seen mating.
- Mar. 10 It is possible that the bird that was sitting on nest 3 was the same as that from nest 1.
- Apr. 14 A pair was seen mating.
- Apr. 21 The chicks from nest 5 were seen sheltering under the parent.

May 12 The chicks from nest 5 were seen still sheltering under the parent.

May 19 The chicks from nest 5 were feeding around the pond; the chicks from nest 7 were sheltering under the parent.

Discussion:

From my observations it appears that Jacanas may raise more than one brood in a season and the incubation takes place in the wetter season. Incubation may take up to three weeks, and the chicks after hatching are frequently sheltered by the parent, especially in the cooler part of the day, for at least two weeks after hatching. The second brood may start only a couple of weeks after the hatching of the first, and in this case the chicks in the first brood are left fairly much to themselves. Chicks were seen foraging for themselves from the time they are hatched.

MASKED LAPWING

Vanellus miles

The Lapwings were observed to lay their eggs in the open paddocks, and there was no real nest at all. Clutches of eggs were seen in May 1983 and again in December the same year. The following observations were made in April and May 1984:

12 Apr Eggs were seen in a "nest" in the paddock.

14 Apr There were now four eggs. Parents birds were ready to attack on any approach to the nest. One parent was sitting.

26 Apr Two eggs had hatched out; two days later two of the chicks were seen.

9 May Another egg had hatched.

11 May All the eggs had hatched, and there was now no sign of either eggs or chicks. The chicks were seen the next day.

It was noted that no trace of the hatched eggs was left round the nest.

Discussion:

Four eggs were laid by the lapwings. Incubation time seemed to be variable, but was up to three weeks or more. Once the eggs were hatched the site was cleaned up and the chicks were hidden in the grass.

Other Notes

The White-browed Crake *Porzana cinereus* has been seen with chicks in May and April; this was noted in 1983, 1984 and 1985. There are usually four chicks.

- The Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* relies on other birds to rear its young. In September 1984 a young cuckoo was seen being fed by Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters *Lichenostomus flavescens*.
- The Australian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* was seen with four chicks in April 1984.
- The Buff-banded Rail *Rallus philippensis* was seen with chicks in January 1984 and in February 1985.
- The Wandering Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna arcuata* was seen with a mate and 13 chicks late in April 1984. They were seen again six weeks later.

BIRD WATCHING OBSERVATIONS

L.P. TOLHURST

UNIDENTIFIED MANNIKIN

On 20 September, 1986, at 17:30 hrs I was watching a flock of Grey-headed Mannikin *Lonchura caniceps* on the campus of Pacific Adventist College, near Port Moresby. Together with this species there were a few Chestnut-breasted Mannikins *Lonchura castaneothorax*. At a range of about 40 feet, I saw a mannikin that resembled neither of these two species. The head, throat and chest were all dark: - black or dark grey. The dark colour on the chest was uniform and extended well down, about half way down the front of the body. The cut off line for the dark colour was quite distinct. The belly was white. There was no chestnut colour on the front of the bird at all. At first I thought that it might be a Black-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura teerinki*. However it seems to be unlikely as this species is listed as being a mountain resident, found from at 1000 feet upwards. The College Campus is at only 150 m. The bird did not look like an immature Grey-headed Mannikin which is often seen on Campus. The only other possibility would be an immature Chestnut-breasted Mannikin.

FEEDING HABITS OF BRAHMINY KITES *HALIAETUR INDUS*

During the winter months of 1986 at the Pacific Adventist College, near Port Moresby, I several times observed Brahminy Kites feeding on the larvae and the pupae of a species of moth or butterfly that feeds on *Delonix regia* leaves. To achieve this the birds would circle over the target tree for some time getting lower and lower, then when about twenty feet above the top of the tree, they would dive down and clutch with their talons at the selected larva or pupa and fly off with what they had succeeded in getting. The trees involved were very close to inhabited houses, some within only 10 m.

OBSERVATION OF A MIGRATING SACRED KINGFISHER *HALCYON SANCTA*.

During the weekend of 27-31 March 1986 I visited the village of Domara, a few miles to the south-east of Cape Rodney, Central Province. On the morning of 30 March I joined a group of village people for a fish drive on the main reef, which was some ten miles offshore. Four large canoes set off with about 80 men. We left a little after sunrise. We travelled south for about two miles, by

which time the weather changed, and a large rain-storm began to lash us, with strong winds. All four canoes took shelter to the leeward of a large sand-bar, where we were protected from the wind and waves. Here we waited out the storm. While riding at anchor, I noticed a Sacred Kingfisher flying around the canoes trying to land. After several attempts the bird crashed into my canoe. One of the men close to me picked it up and gave it to me. It was wet through to the skin, and obviously exhausted. For some time it tried to peck at me, but soon settled down. From the time of year I assume that the bird was on migration from Australia, and had been caught in the bad weather when only a few miles from its destination. During the hour that we waited out the storm the kingfisher lay relaxed in my hand.

When the rain and wind ceased to be a problem, we began to move away from our sheltered waters, and then we turned South to head towards the main reef still some five or six miles distant at that point of the coast. As soon as the canoe turned south, the kingfisher began to struggle in my hand and tried to get away from me.

This kingfisher had been flying in a northerly direction, and at the time no sun was visible, due to the very heavy cloud cover. Since the worst of the squall was now between us and the land, we could not see the land either. My conclusion, as I observed the bird's behaviour was that it struggled to get free at the precise moment we turned south, because it sensed that we were taking it in the direction from which it had just come, and away from the land to which it wished to travel. I kept the bird safely on the canoe all day, and took it back to land in the evening. During the night it got away and made its escape, safely.

KITES AND OTHER BIRDS FEEDING ON CATERPILLAR INFESTATIONS IN POINCIANA TREES *DELONIX REGIA* IN POPONDETTA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

G.E. CLAPP

INTRODUCTION

In the garden of house No. 2, Bambusi Street, Popondetta, Oro Province, Papua New Guinea, stands a poinciana tree *Delonix regia*. This tree, as well as several other tree species in the town, is periodically subject to severe attack by small brown/black, hairless caterpillars, presumably the larvae of a moth. If not themselves subject to predation these caterpillars can strip the leaves until the tree is almost bare. Between 1980 and 1982 I noticed that several species of birds, some of them surprisingly large to be taking such small prey, were taking advantage of these caterpillar plagues and were using them opportunistically as superabundant food sources.

OBSERVATIONS

On 21 June 1980 I saw several Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes *Coracina novaehollandiae* and several Metallic Starlings *Aplonis metallica* feeding on caterpillars which were in plague proportions in the *Delonix regia* at house No. 2. These birds were capturing the caterpillars by snatching/gleaning them off the foliage with their beaks.

On 28 February 1982 I saw other birds feeding on the same type of caterpillars infesting the same poinciana tree: one of the Bronze Cuckoos *Chrysococcyx* sp.; a Brush-Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*; a White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*; a Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*; a Brown Oriole *Oriolus szalayii*; and a Mimic Meliphaga *Meliphaga analoga*. I also saw a flock of ten or twelve Torresian Crows *Corvus orru* in the vicinity - an exceptionally large flock for Popondetta where these crows are normally only seen in ones and twos. There is a high probability that these crows were also feeding on the caterpillars. I observed no aggression amongst the six species that were feeding in the one tree.

On 6 March 1982 I saw eight or nine Black Kites *Milvus migrans* and one Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* feeding on identical caterpillars in the same poinciana tree. The feeding method was the same for both species, but different from that of the previously mentioned species: a kite would sweep in, snatch a caterpillar from the tree with its feet whilst on the wing, and then fly away whilst simultaneously lifting its legs to the beak to feed. This prey capture action was repeated continuously.

On 7 March 1982 in Popondetta (although not at house No.2) I made the very unusual sighting of several Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, a Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* and a Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*. These birds were presumably after the caterpillars, as many of the trees in town had similar infestations.

DISCUSSION

Reports of birds at superabundant food sources such as fruiting or flowering trees, insect swarms, etc. are fairly common. However, although abundant, these caterpillars were quite small, no more than 2mm in body diameter and 10 to 20mm in length. The large raptors feeding on these small caterpillars looked faintly ridiculous and the behaviour is noteworthy. Bell (1985) summarises known information on these three kites in Papua New Guinea, including their food and feeding methods but does not mention that any of the three feed on caterpillars. Similarly Coates (1985) makes no mention of the habit. Presumably even the large kites, despite the method of capture, must have realized a net energy gain because of the almost continuous feeding permitted by the superabundance of caterpillars.

The cuckoos, of course, are to be expected, as they are caterpillar feeders par excellence. Some cuckoo-shrikes are also known to feed regularly on caterpillars in New Guinea (Coates, pers. comm.; Lamothe 1979; McWhirter 1986); and the oriole, starlings and fantail flycatcher are not surprising as they too take the occasional caterpillar (Lamothe, 1979; McWhirter 1986; pers.

obs.). The honeyeater *Meliphaga analoga*, however, is rather surprising, and suggests that this species is rather more catholic in its choice of food than originally thought.

Bell (1985) quotes several examples to show that the Black Kite is very adaptable in its habits. The foregoing observations of kites are another example of such adaptability. By taking apparently nutritious, superabundant prey usually deemed abnormally small for the size of the predators, the kites are demonstrating an extreme feeding opportunism. This may enhance the species' ability to survive in semi-urban or otherwise relatively impoverished habitats, where more specialised feeders could not persist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to B.J. Coates for comment on an initial draft of this paper; notwithstanding, any error contained herein is mine alone.

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THE LOCATION AND ALTITUDE OF MT. SCRATCHLEY SUMMIT

BILL PECKOVER

Clapp (1986) mistakenly assumes that the PTC Microwave Repeated Station is at the summit of Mt. Scratchley. He has been misled by the location of the name 'Mt. Scratchley' on the 1:100,000 topographic map and on the 1976, 1:50,000 cadastral map (Clapp, pers. comm.). The name has been lettered on the former between the 3280 m and the 3480 m contours in a position where it appears to nominate the knoll above the 3250 contour line as Mt. Scratchley. This knoll is about five km north-west of the summit, which is itself some 2.5 km north of English Peaks. The repeater station is in fact on another knoll approximately 4 km to the west and 268 m (881 ft) below the actual summit.

In 1965 Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd. was contracted to test the practicality of a microwave radio telecommunications link across the central cordillera to interconnect Port Moresby, Lae, Goroka, Madang and Mount Hagen. Their contract was to undertake extended propagation testing between Mt. Scratchley and Mt. Strong, a distance of 110 km: more than twice the

distance between repeater stations elsewhere in the World. In selecting the testing site the summit of Mt. Scratchley was deliberately avoided, primarily because of doubts that it provided a clear line-of-sight to Mt. Strong, a critical prerequisite. A second reason for selecting the present site was that it provided a suitable construction area for the tower and shelter hut.

The control survey for the Mt Scratchley Repeater Station site (Central Mapping Bureau, Reg. No. 7539) shows the location of the ground level survey marker on the site (located where the helicopters land) as 8° 43' 59" S and 147° 26' 13" E, at an altitude of 3571.792 m. The grid reference for this location on the 1:100,000 topographic map is EL481346; the Repeater Station is shown as a small square 'building' dot on this map at that grid point. A 1:1,000,000 scale sketch map of the repeater station site in its relationship to the peak is included on PTC Drawing PT-1854C. On the 1976 edition of the 1:250,000 Joint Operations Graphic (Air) map the 'spot' summit elevation is given as 12599 + 100 ft (3840 + 30 m).

It is unfortunate that the 1:100,000 and 1:50,000 maps do not clearly indicate that 'Mt Scratchley' and 'English Peaks' are both part of the same massif. The Mt Scratchley massif above 3400 m elevation is about 15 km long and about 5 km wide, reducing to a very irregular strip about 6 km long and averaging about 1 km wide at the 3600 m level.

In a reference to *Orthonyx temminckii* Clapp (1986) says "There is a record of this species at 11,000 ft (3354 m) on Mt Scratchley and Mt Knutsford in 1898 (Rothschild & Hartert, 1903) but it is well known that these old records are notoriously unreliable with regard to altitude.....MacGregor (1898) gave the altitude for the summit of Mt Scratchley as 12860 ft (3921 m). This is not a surprising error given that the methods used to obtain altitude were the boiling point of water and the aneroid barometer.". Given the actual altitude of 12599 feet at the summit, MacGregor's calculated altitude was only 261 ft (81 m) in error not 1311 ft as Clapp suggests.

While the error in the location and altitude of Mt Scratchley is of little ornithological significance, the correction is important because of the inappropriate generalisation about the inaccuracy of old records. I have found another instance where the later interpretations of old records have been at fault (Heron 1975; Lecroy & Peckover 2987; Meise 1931; Mayr & Rand 1937). These wrong interpretations often remain uncorrected and are subsequently quoted without checking or verifying the original source.

I seriously question Clapp's assumptions that "...the drier season brings man, and with him fire", and the need of "...a patrolled high altitude National Park set-up.", in respect of Mt Scratchley.

There is strong evidence that the repeater station knoll and possibly all of the surrounding heathland areas are regenerating fire-devastated moss forest. There is, however, no evidence of recent fire devastation, nor of fires occurring over an extended period of time. Aerial photographs taken during the early 1970s for the 1:100,000 and 1:250,000 modern maps could provide worthwhile time-scale information about fires.

Because growth and decomposition at high altitudes is slow it can be estimated that fire devastation occurred between 40 and 100 years ago. Present growth in the heathland area is mostly shrubs up to a height of 3 m. The main evidence of moss forest regeneration is the presence of a number of conifer saplings, ranging between 1.5 and 2 m in height.

Like most New Guinea high mountain areas, Mt Scratchley is subject to drying winds. Grasses and bushes are usually dry within two hours of an extended rainfall even in the wet season. Although the fire devastation on the mountain could have been man-initiated an equally feasible explanation is multiple lightning strikes during an extended dry spell. The extent of fire damage and the fact that all of the fire-killed trees give the appearance of having died at about the same time gives weight to the theory of lightning having been the ignition agent.

The high areas of Mt Scratchley have little to offer man and consequently are rarely visited. The area is too high to support a human population - the reason for Clapp's observation on the absence of pigs. There are no roads or trails, only tracks which may be used once to twice a year. For these reasons regular 'high-altitude patrols' on this mountain would be a waste of resources. Such patrols could in fact be counter-productive through habitat interference by patrol members. At present this particular area is virtually untouched by man; surely it is best left that way.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank the author of the original paper, George Clapp, for the helpful suggestions he made about the draft of this response.

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