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MURUK



VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 OCTOBER 1996

JOURNAL OF THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA BIRD SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

We are pleased to publish in this issue, the first one for Volume 8, a miscellany of material:

A paper about the Middle Fly waterbird survey, some valuable nesting records from the Lakekamu basin including first documented nests of Sooty Thicket-Fantail and Yellow-eyed Starling, travelogues from Irian Jaya, the Middle Sepik and the Bismarck Archipelago, and a variety of notes and observations on Papua New Guinea species.

We welcome this variety and are grateful to our sponsors, Ok Tedi Mining for their continued support in 1996. We hope to continue with three issues per year, but are dependent on contributions for the publishing schedule, which is of necessity flexible. Due to a lack of material we are only able to publish a single issue this year, but hope to continue Volume 8 as items are submitted.

Contributors of sightings have been very few in recent years, and we urge both residents and visitors to submit their records. We particularly welcome copies of tour group reports, as many interesting sightings lie hidden in these inaccessible databases and it is a courtesy to the host country to make copies available to the PNGBS. Feedback about notes and papers is welcomed, if you know more or indeed better please write and tell us, we will be happy to publish, a major aim being to stimulate study and increase the knowledge of New Guinea birds.

Editor: Phil Gregory.

Please continue to send submissions (preferably on disk in the specified format) to:

Editor, *Muruk*, PO Box 69, Tabubil 332, Western Province, PNG.

Phone (675) 5489310 or fax (675) 5489641 (note changed numbers!)

All contributions will be acknowledged.

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Cover: *Southern Cassowary head study by Jones Hiaso*

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THE MIDDLE FLY WATERBIRD SURVEY 1994-95

By P. Gregory, S. A. Helse, R. P. Jaensch, W. R. Kay, P. Kulmoi, G. B. Pearson and A. W. Storey

Ok Tedi Mining Limited commissioned waterbird surveys of the grassed floodplain of the Middle Fly River during both wet and dry seasons, as a part of its program to document the biology of the Fly River ecosystem and to expand the range of organisms monitored. These surveys were made at the end of the dry season (2-7 December 1994) when birds were concentrated at ox-bows and lakes, and near the end of the wet season (25-30 April 1995) when most of the floodplain was inundated.

The area surveyed comprises the Fly River floodplain due west of Lake Murray, from Adopted River Mile 350 in the north to ARM 150 in the south (ARM is the distance in river miles from the estuary mouth). Major water bodies therein include Bosset Lagoon, Lake Daviumbu, Lake Pangua and Lake Ambuve plus a variety of ox-bow lakes. Larger settlements exist at Suki, Obo Station and Bosset, as well as smaller villages at many other sites. The Fly / Strickland River confluence is located just south of Obo.

Two teams of three observers counted from boats and on foot in the accessible areas for the first 3 days of each survey, followed by two days of aerial transects conducted by SAH and GBP. Ground counts gave detailed species lists and were able to distinguish species that would be missed or be unidentified from a helicopter. The survey area was divided into 786 transects 200m wide, located perpendicular to the river channel. Every 23rd transect (36 in total at 4-6 km intervals) was surveyed at a height of 25 m in December and 15 m in April, at a speed of about 90 km/h. Transects were flown at a lower height in April as species were less easy to flush. Each observer counted all waterbirds in a 100m strip along either side of the helicopter, with length of transects varying from 24-46 km.

The overall area divided into transects was 5,957 km², encompassing the Papua New Guinean portion of the middle Fly floodplain, but omitting a small area that is in Irian Jaya territory. 58 species of waterbird were recorded in total and estimated totals are given at the end of the table. The most abundant species were egrets, particularly Great White and Intermediate Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Australian White Ibis, and Magpie Geese. Based on the relative proportions related to ground level counts, it can be estimated that in December 1994 there were 130,000 Intermediate Egrets, 90,000 Great White Egrets and 1500 Little Egrets, with just a single Cattle Egret being recorded. Waterbird numbers in December were estimated at 58,7249 (+62,741), such a number making these wetlands of international significance.

A great reduction was evident in the wet season, with an estimated population of 54,914 (+9,790) individuals of just 36 species (57 in December). The most abundant were Magpie Geese, egrets, Darters and Comb-crested Jacanas. Based on ground count proportions numbers of egrets worked out to about 16,000 Great White and 2,000 Intermediate Egrets. Significant numbers of northern migrants were present in December, with Garganey being quite frequent (176 recorded) as well as Palearctic waders. Glossy Ibis, Radjah Shelduck and Pied Heron showed a major departure amounting to almost total absence by April, whilst Intermediate Egret, Green Pigmy-goose, Nankeen Night Herons and Wandering Whistle-Duck were recorded much less often in April, at

approximately 1-4% of the December abundance. A third group, consisting of Great White Egret, Jacanas, Darters and Magpie Geese and Spotted Whistle-Ducks occurred in April at 17-52% of the December numbers.

During April, Magpie Geese were nesting in areas of thick grass, and this habitat is likely to hold hundreds of pairs. Blocked valley lakes were the richest habitat in terms of number and variety of waterbird species, with *Melaleuca* and sago swamps recording few species. Jacanas and Spotted Whistle-Ducks were also nesting in April.

Interesting sightings included good numbers (45+) of Yellow Wagtails (*Motacilla flava*) along burned grassland around lake edges in December, previously thought to be a scarce migrant in Papua New Guinea. A single Oriental (Great Reed) Warbler was found by PG, PK and RPJ on 4th December 94, singing in the tie-channel of Owa Creek leading to Lake Ambuve in December 1994, the harsh "Karra karra kik kik gurk gurk gurk" song being quite different to that of Clamorous Reed Warbler, and the bird being large and stout with well defined breast streaks. This is one of the few Papua New Guinea records, but the species may well be greatly under-recorded.

The sightings of Restless Flycatcher (*Myiagra inquieta*) extended the known range significantly northward, being previously known in New Guinea only from the Merauke and Bensbach River areas. A nest was found in December 94 on a wooden roof support of an abandoned bush hut at Lake Ambuve, being a simple cup of grass stems and fibres containing one whitish egg with brown and grey spottings. This is the first proof of breeding in Papua New Guinea. The bird was also seen at Obo station, and along *Melaleuca* forest edge at Lake Pangua.

Swamp Harrier was recorded only once by PG, PK and RPJ in April 95, the Eastern Marsh Harrier being much more frequent and identification concerns leading to caution, the two species being readily confused. Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) were also recorded in April 1995 as well, though unfortunately not close enough to distinguish from a possible vagrant Black-shouldered Kite (*E. notatus*).

SAH and GBP recorded New Guinea Flightless Rail from their sector, and also what would be the first Papua New Guinea records of Little Grassbird, otherwise only known in New Guinea from a subalpine population from the Wissel lakes in Irian Jaya. They recorded 2 at Bosset Lagoon in December 1994 and a single bird in April 1995 on a backwater of the Kai River. Migrants from Australia are possible and it would be instructive to check all the *Megalurinus* species here as 3 species may conceivably be present. PG and RPJ found new sites for Fly River Grassbird at Lake Ambuve and Deep Creek lagoon at Lake Pangua, as well as from the original PNG site at Lake Daviumbu (Gregory and Jaensch, 1995). Little Bitterns were recorded in small numbers on both counts (Jaensch, 1995) and suggest a resident population.

Wetland bird numbers are clearly very significant here, with counting accuracy believed to be 89-95%. Some movement may occur between the Bensbach plains and this area, with White Ibis and Radjah Shelduck likely to move to Bensbach during the wet season (Stronoch, 1981). The Middle Fly seems to be particularly significant in a dry season with low water levels, as was the case in 1994. Dispersal from the Middle Fly between December and April is probably due to movements to the Bensbach River area, and to northern Australia, though limited data from the two areas make comparisons difficult.

Conditions in Australia would be very likely to affect the numbers of birds moving to the Trans-Fly, and the significant decrease in the numbers of Glossy Ibis, Radjah Shelduck, White Ibis and Pied Herons suggest that the December counts consisted mostly of migrants from Australia, and the same is likely to apply to Nankeen Night Herons, Intermediate Egrets, Green Pigmy-geese and Wandering Whistle-Ducks. There are no known breeding colonies of Intermediate Egret in Papua New Guinea, while the other species have local resident populations as well as likely Australian migrants. Much more field work is needed to determine the details of New Guinea breeding seasons. The Middle Fly is likely to be an important dry season refuge for Australian waterbirds, with complex patterns of movement, and it is clear that the area is an internationally significant wetland for fish-eating waterbirds.

Table 1. Estimates of the abundance of each species of waterbird/wetland species on the floodplain of the middle Fly River, based on aerial transects, aerial counts and ground counts are shown below. Actual numbers are shown where possible, with the aerial transect counts given with estimates of error in parentheses.

<u>Waterbird / Wetland Species</u>	<u>December 1994</u>	<u>April 1995</u>
Magpie Goose <i>Anseranas semipalmata</i>	47,976 (+- 15,774)	18,670 (+- 4,770)
Spotted Whistle-Duck <i>Dendrocygna guttata</i>	23,218 (+-11,244)	3,666 (+-1,029)
Wandering Whistle-Duck <i>D. arcuata</i>	23,218 (+-12,044)	44
Radjah Shelduck <i>Iadorna radjah</i>	1,358 (+- 527)	-
Pacific Black Duck <i>Anas superciliosa</i>	12,809 (+-3,215)	6
Grey Teal <i>A. gibberifrons</i>	38	-
Garganey <i>A. querquedula</i>	176	-
White-eyed Duck <i>Aythya australis</i>	14	-
Green Pigmy-geese <i>Nettion pulchellus</i>	28,152 (+-8,642)	84
Duck spp	10,953	-
Australian Dabchick <i>Tachybaptus novaeollandiae</i>	16	-
Darter <i>Anhinga novaeollandiae</i>	26,070 (+-4,773)	4,684 (+-1147)
Little Pied Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>	9,278(+2,000)	724 (+-273)
Little Black Cormorant <i>P. sulcirostris</i>	12,628 (+- 2,518)	2,532 (+-1,336)
Cormorant spp	543	-
Australian Pelican <i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	3,213 (+-1,697)	8
White-faced Heron <i>Ardea novaeollandiae</i>	13	-
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	19	-
Great White Egret <i>E. alba</i>	1,025	482
Intermediate Egret <i>E. intermedia</i>	1,531	63
Pied Heron <i>E. picata</i>	22,358 (+-7,490)	19
Cattle Egret <i>Ardeola ibis</i>	1	-
Egret spp	231,052 (+-44,718)	17,923 (+-5,743)
Striated Heron <i>Ardeola striata</i>	26	1
Great-billed Heron <i>Ardea sumatrana</i>	4	8
Nankeen Night Heron <i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>	9,437 (+-3,798)	9
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2	2
Black Bittern <i>Impetor flavicollis</i>	10	15
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis talmellus</i>	60,332 (+-28,589)	1
Australian White Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	50,420 (+-15,054)	4
Royal Spoonbill <i>P. nuda regia</i>	8	-

<u>Waterbird / Wetland Species</u>	<u>December 94</u>	<u>April 95</u>
Black-necked Stork <i>Xenorhynchus asiaticus</i>	24	13
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	-	3
White-bellied Sea-Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	23	49
Swamp Harrier <i>Circus approximans</i>	5	1
Eastern Marsh Harrier <i>C. spilonotus</i>	11	9
Harrier <i>Circus</i> sp.	-	2
White-browed Crake <i>Porzana cinerea</i>	28	44
Unidentified crake or rail	430	68
New Guinea Flightless rail <i>Megacrex inepta</i>	2	1
Purple Swampphen <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	1	2
Swinhoe's Snipe <i>Gallinago megala</i>	12	-
Little Whimbrel <i>Numenius minutus</i>	2	-
Whimbrel <i>N. phaeopus</i>	-	1
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	70	-
Common Greenshank <i>T. nebularia</i>	37	-
Wood Sandpiper <i>T. glareola</i>	40	-
Common Sandpiper <i>T. hypoleucos</i>	54	8
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>Calidris acuminata</i>	249	-
Comb-crested Jacana <i>Irediparra gallinacea</i>	6,404 (+2,572)	3,394 (+735)
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus (h.) leucocephalus</i>	656 (+656)	-
Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	7	-
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1	-
Lesser Sand-Plover <i>C. mongolus</i>	2	-
Greater Sand-Plover <i>C. leschenaultii</i>	3	-
Masked Lapwing <i>Vanellus miles</i>	3,259 (+542)	588 (+374)
Wader spp	950	45
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>	7	-
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	1422	105
White-winged Black Tern <i>C. leucopterus</i>	2	4
Clamorous Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	16	36
Oriental Reed Warbler <i>A. (arundinaceus) orientalis</i>	1	-
Little Grassbird <i>Megalurys grammacus</i>	2	1
Fly River Grassbird <i>M. albolimbatus</i>	4+	11
Tawny Grassbird <i>M. timorensis</i>	10	10
Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	11	19
Golden-headed Cisticola <i>C. exilis</i>	5	5
Total	587,219 (+62,741)	54,915 (+9,790)

Appendix 1Landbird counts Lake Daviumbu and Lake Pangua 2-12-94

Bar-shouldered Dove (*Ceopelia humeralis*) 2, Pied Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula bicolor*) 2, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot (*Cyclopsitta diophthalma*) 2, Brush Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*) hrd, Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianus*) hrd, Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens*) hrd at Obo, Large-tailed Nightjar (*Caprimulgus macrurus*) 2 at Obo, Fork-tailed Swift (*Apus pacificus*) 30.

Blue-winged Kookaburra (*Dacelo leachii*) 1, Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*) 1, Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) 2, an interesting record of this Palearctic species, Yellow Wagtail 10 at Lake Pangua, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Tawny Grassbird 6+, Fly River Grassbird 2 at Lake Pangua, Golden-headed Cisticola, Zitting Cisticola, Yellow-bellied Gerygone (*G. chrysogaster*) nesting at Lake Ambuve, Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*), Shining Flycatcher (*Myiagra alecto*) 1f, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater (*Xanthotis flaviventer*) hrd, Rufous-banded Honeyeater (*Conopophila albogularis*), Grey-crowned Mannikin (*Lonchura nevermanni*) 30 at Lake Pangua and 4 at Lake Daviumbu, Crimson Finch (*Neochmia phaeton*) 10 at Lake Pangua and 4 at Lake Daviumbu.

Appendix 2Landbird counts 24-27. 4. 1995

1 Fly River, Obo- Ambuve entrance channel 24.4.95, late p.m. from deck of *Western Venturer* Crested Hawk (*Aviceda suberistata*) 2, Long-tailed Buzzard (*Hemcopernis longicauda*) 1, Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*) 2, Whistling Kite (*H. sphemurus*) quite common, Blyth's Hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) 2, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) 2, Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) 2, Pacific Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica*), Tree Martin (*H. nigricans*), Dollarbird 1, Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*) few, Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*M. philippinus*) 1, Bar-shouldered Dove 3, Pied Imperial Pigeon 30, Black-collared Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula muelleri*) 5, Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) 2, Metallic Starling (*Aplous metallicus*) several thousand (3,000+) at roost in patch of riparian forest, Pheasant Coucal 4, Torresian Crow (*Corvus orru*) 1, Grey Crow (*C. tristis*) 3, Spotted Cuscus (*Spilogiscus maculatus*) 1 in a bare riverside tree in broad daylight!

2. Ambuve System tie-channel (River to Oxbow) 25.4.95, early a.m. and late p.m. Adopted River Mile (ARM)192.5

Sacred Kingfisher (*Haleyon sancta*) 1, Australian Koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*) 1 dark capped female of the *subcyaniocephala* form, Malay Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chrysoccyx rufus*) 1, Zoe Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula zoeae*) 1 with Pied overhead, Black-collared Imperial Pigeon 1, Pied Imperial Pigeon 4+, Rainbow Bee-eater, Grey Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*) Willie Wagtail White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina papuensis*) 2, Papuan Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum pectorale*) 3, Yellow-bellied Sunbird (*Nectarinia jugularis*) several, Brown-backed Honeyeater (*Ramsayornis modestus*) common, Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula*) 1f, Shining Flycatcher 1m, White-bellied Thicket-Fantail (*Rhipidura leucothorax*) hrd, Crimson Finch several, White-spotted Mannikin (*Lonchura leucosticta*) 5.

3. Floodplains around eastern side of Ambuve and Owa Lakes 25.4.95

Black-winged Kite 1 distant, Eastern Marsh Harrier 1f type with tail barred on upper surface, some white on the head and white bases to primaries on underwing, with rather cinnamon coloured underparts, Red-winged Parrot (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*) 5, Pheasant Coucal, Blue-tailed Bee-eater common, Tree Martin, White-shouldered Fairy-wren (*Mahurus alboscapulatus*) several, f of the brown and white form, Brown-backed Honeyeater in reed patches, Rufous-banded Honeyeater 1, Golden-headed Cisticola several calling, Zitting Cisticola fairly common, Tawny Grassbird several, Fly River Grassbird hrd and confirmed by same call and birds seen at Lake Pangua next day, Crimson Finch c.10, Grey-crowned Mannikin common esp. where *Phragmites* was near grasses, with a flock of 50 in the bamboo in the village, Black Mannikin (*Lonchura striata*) c.50, max. 6 in a flock.

4. Forest (Dry land and Swamp) fringing west side of Lake Ambuve and L. Owa

Lowland forest with *Melaleuca*, palms and *Terminalia* at wet edges.
 White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), Brahminy Kite, Brush Cuckoo hrd., Red-winged Parrot feeding in *Phragmites* beds 1 Red-cheeked Parrot (*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*) 4, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot 2, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Rainbow Bee-eater, Blue-winged Kookaburra Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (*Dacelo gaudichaud*) 1 in bamboo in village, Yellow-billed Kingfisher (*Halcyon torotoro*) hrd. Pheasant Coucal, Bar-shouldered Dove, Willie Wagtail, Grey Shrike-thrush several, Brown-backed Honeyeater common, Streak-headed Honeyeater (*Pycnopopygus stictocephalus*) 1, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (*Chlamydera cerviniventris*) 1, Black-backed Butcherbird (*Cracticus mentalis*), Torresian Crow 2, Grey Crow 1, Glossy-mantled Manucode (*Manucodia atra*) 6, frequently calling the plaintive, rising bell-like "zheve" note

26/4/95 Forest edge near Komavai Village, Pangua Lakes (ARM 225)

By boat along edges, punting much of the way
 Whistling Kite, Pied Imperial Pigeon several, Rainbow Bee-eater, Blue-tailed Bee-eater common, Dollarbird 1, White-breasted Wood-swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) 1, Red-cheeked Parrot 1, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo 1, Black-backed Butcherbird, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Grey Shrike-thrush, Papuan Flowerpecker 1, Restless Flycatcher 1, Glossy-mantled Manucode 2

Lake Pangua Floodplain By boat, middle of day

Swamp Harrier 1, Pacific Swallow, Tree Martin, Small cuckoo sp. 1, Forest Kingfisher 2, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, White-shouldered Fairy-wren, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike 2, Grey Shrike-thrush Golden-headed Cisticola
 Fly River Grassbird 2, a new site and only the fourth known 1 Unstreaked bright tawny-orange crown, white supercilium, whitish underparts Orange rump, tail not long and raggedy and rather gently rounded. Tertiaries black edged white. Smaller than Tawny Grassbird. Monotonous quiet rising whistle "zeeee" call, also heard at Lake Ambuve yesterday. Habitat *Echinochloa* and *Leersia* sp. at Deep Creek lagoon, in midst of flooded plain, accessible only by boat at this time of year Grey-crowned Mannikin very few, less than 10 despite lots of seeding *Echinochloa*
 Crimson Finch 10

27.4.95 Lake Daviumbu Floodplain By boat from morning to mid-day, hot (ARM 223)

Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Golden-headed Cisticola, Crimson Finch, White-spotted Mannikin 10 feeding on *Echinochloa*, with a quite different call to the musical "tink tink" of Grey-crowned Mannikin, being a thin plaintive "seee". Fly River Grassbird heard near entrance to lake in *Echinochloa* beds

Daviumbu Forest Edge, mid to late morning

Black-billed Brush-turkey (*Talegalla fuscirostris*) hrd. Yellow-billed Kingfisher 1 hrd Blue-winged Kookaburra, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot (*Cyclopsitta gulielmiterti*) 4, Red-cheeked Parrot 2, Grey-Shrike-thrush, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Shining Flycatcher 1m, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater 1, Puff-backed Meliphaga (*Meliphaga aruensis*) 2 medium size, large pale yellow ear patch and yellow gape line, in tall forest margin. Black Sunbird (*Nectarinia aspasia*) 1m

Obo Station :

Brush Cuckoo hrd. White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike 2 White-breasted Wood-swallow Restless Flycatcher 1 in mangoes by houses

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(Received March 96)

NESTING RECORDS FROM THE LAKEKAMU BASIN

By Roger Safford and Fred Atwood

As is the case in many tropical rain forest areas, knowledge of the seasonality and nesting habits of New Guinea birds is limited. On seasonality, the main contribution is that of Bell (1982), who analyzed 460 breeding records gathered between 1965 and 1978 in lowland rain forest at Brown River, Central Province. Coates (1985, 1960) later summarized all knowledge of nesting habits of Papua New Guinea birds. This highlighted many species whose nesting habits or eggs remain undescribed and also showed how complex is the seasonality. This must partly be because timing and intensity of wet and dry seasons varies so much, both geographically and between years.

During the course of fieldwork in lowland rain forest in the Lakekamu Basin, Gulf Province, between October 1994 and March 1995, 31 active or colonies of 18 species were found. The basin and its birds are described by Beehler et al. (1993, 1995). Nest finding was not the aim of any study: all nests were found incidentally, and time did not allow the monitoring of their outcomes. Collecting unbiased data on nesting success in sufficient quantity for useful analysis is extremely time-consuming. The information we have for these 31 nests is given here. We hope that further studies will be carried out on the subject, in conjunction with year-round studies on food abundance and climate.

Nesting attempts are grouped by species. For each nest, the following information is given:

1. Dates between which the nest was checked
2. Suspected egg-laying month (estimated from typical incubation or fledging periods from the literature), indicated with a question mark where eggs are not known to have been laid (e.g. nest found under construction and not monitored thereafter) or timing is uncertain.
3. Clutch or brood size and egg colour, if seen (C/1 = clutch of one egg)
4. Height of nest and height of plant supporting it ("15/25m" means nest was 15m up a 25m tree)
5. Outcome, if known
6. Whether photographed

This is followed by a description of the situation and construction of the nest and behaviour of the parents.

Thick-billed Ground Pigeon *Trigon terrestris*

24 Feb.-2 Mar. Egg Feb. C/1, white. On ground. Failed. Photographed.
On ground at base of trunk of large tree, between two large buttresses. Platform of rootlets or small twigs, with a few leaves. When startled, bird erupted from nest (as when flushed while feeding), landing away. When nest approached in view, bird walked off nest stealthily, again stopping to watch observer ca 10m away.

Wompoo Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus magnificus*

1. 8-21 Dec. Egg Dec (Nov.?) C/1, white. 2.5/8m. Fate unknown.
Tiny platform in spindly shrub. Flushed when approached to ca 10m.
2. 15 Dec. Egg Dec (Nov.?) C/1, white. 4/2M. Fate unknown.
At fork on horizontal branch away from trunk, made of twigs and tendrils including spiny vines.
3. 28 Dec. Egg Dec. C/1, white. No further data.
4. 28 Dec. Egg Dec. C/1, white. No further data.
5. 18 Mar. Egg Feb./Mar. ? Contents unseen. 5/6m. Fate unknown.
On thin horizontal branch of slim sapling, tiny platform with many vine tendrils.

Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*

10-16 Mar. Egg Mar. C/1, white. 2/25m. Fate unknown.
Supported in three-way fork, similar to *P. pulchellus* nests, but ?thicker base. Female building 10 Mar, male incubating by day 16 Mar.

Beautiful Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus pulchellus*

1. 4-13 Dec. Egg Nov./Dec. C/1, white. 0.5/0.5m. Failed. Photographed.
Tiny platform on crown of low shrub, large leaves radiating out like tree-fern. Approachable to 1m. After failure, bird still sitting on empty, intact nest.
2. 15 Dec. Egg Dec (Nov.?) C/1, white. 1/1m. Fate unknown.
On flexible, bending palm leaf midrib: very precarious. Approachable to 1m.
3. 21 Feb.-12 Mar. Egg Feb. C/1, white. 0.7/1m. Failed.
On horizontal branch of shrub/minature tree (not sapling). Incubation in progress 21 Feb.-10 Mar. (at least 18 days). 11 Mar: adult flushed and warm, pipped egg on ground below nest, replaced in nest but disappeared the next day.
4. 24-25 Feb. Egg Feb. ? Contents not seen. 2.4/4m. Fate unknown.
On horizontal branch of sapling. Bird sitting.
5. 28 Feb. Egg Feb. ? Contents not seen. 4/2M. Fate unknown.
On top of curving Pandanus leaf, where leaf is horizontal (cf. nest 2).
6. 10 Mar. Egg Feb./Mar. Contents not seen. 0.6/0.6m. Fate unknown.
Similar situation to nest 1. Bird sitting.

Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*

4 Dec. No eggs? 20:20m. Abandoned?
Female excavating/improving cavity in top of tall, broken-off trunk. No subsequent sightings.

Rufous Babbler *Pomatostomus isidorei*

3 March, Eggs March ? 4/2m. Fate unknown.
Nest in typical situation (hanging from spiny palm vine), being built by 2 birds, bringing strips of material from on or near ground close by every minute or so. (This is not proof of breeding since nests are used for roosting (Coates 1990), it is unknown whether birds build nests for roosting, or merely roost in old ones).

Yellow-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone chrysogaster*

17-21 Oct. Eggs Oct ? 6/12m. Failed?
Retort-like nest, hanging by wide, loosely-woven belt from downward-pointing branch. Tail and entrance tube described by Coates (1990). Two birds attending, one (both?) building. All material seemed dead: various brown, not green fibres, also silk from under leaves in herb layer. Nest area demolished by treefall in November, but pair (one banded) still present.

Sooty Thicket Fantail *Rhipidura threnothorax*

5. Jan. Eggs Jan? 0.4/1m. Fate unknown. Photographed.
Being built in tangled but not dense undergrowth in meander bend of small stream. Tightly bound with cobwebs around 3 stems forking from single horizontal branch. Tiny cup so far, being built upwards from the fork, like a monarch. Tail 25 cm long, single stem hanging 10 cm below this. Material fine yellowish, straw-like strips.

Golden Monarch *Monarcha chrysomela*

13. Dec. Eggs Dec ? 5.5.5m. Fate unknown.

In top of stand of saplings in (tree-fall?) gap, partly exposed to sun. Base of nest in fork in large-leaved tree. Typical monarch nest, rim being built up from base. Much white "fluff" in base; male collecting moss, sitting on nest to incorporate it round rim.

Fripled Monarch *Arses telescopthalmus*

8 Dec. Eggs Nov./Dec. 8/15+M. Fate unknown.

In leaf bundle at end of long, down-pointing, vertical branch or liana, far from any other perch: superbly inaccessible. Male sitting.

Torrent Flycatcher *Monachella muelleriana*

13 Mar. Eggs Feb. 2 chicks. 3/-M. Fate unknown.

Exposed to sun, on a narrow shelf formed by base of roots of large fallen tree on gravel bar in middle of river. A wide, shallow cup; exterior mainly live green moss with white moss scattered over outside apparently lined with coarse black and grey rootlets. Proportions and sitting of nest like wood-pewee *Contopus* sp. Young near fledging age, noticeable different sizes.

Rusty Pitohui *Pitohui ferrugineus*

20-31 Oct. Eggs Oct. C/1, pinkish with purple-brown blotches. 2/3m. Failed. Photographed.

Large, deep cup in sapling. Dark materials: small creeper tendrils (corkscrew-like), black fibres, a few short twigs and leaves, no soft lining. Sitting bird extremely shy, flushing on sight of observer, even at 30m range. No distraction behaviour or mobbing. On 31 October, nest empty but intact.

Black Berrypecker *Melanocharis nigra*

1. 11-16 Mar. Eggs Feb./Mar. C/2. 2.5/3m. Fate unknown. Photographed.

Small, deep, smooth, tightly-woven cup attached at base to slender, horizontal, forking twigs. Materials: brown plant fibres, bark strips, cobwebs and pale lichen decoration. Female on eggs 11 Mar, on chicks 16 Mar. flushed at a few cm range. brooded with bill pointed up at 45.

2. 10 Mar. Eggs? Feb./Mar. C/2. 4/5m. Fate unknown. Photographed.

Very similar to nest 1, on leafy part of narrow branch, 10 cm from trunk.

Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia*

25-27 Feb. Eggs? Mar. 3/30m. Fate unknown.

On underside of pinna of epiphytic fern on outside of "green wall" of vegetation at riverbank.

Nest nearly complete, female collecting cobwebs, male only peering her.

Unidentified *Meliphaga* sp. (Probably *M. Aruensis analoga*)

1. 19 Oct. Eggs Sept./Oct. 10/15m. Fate unknown.

Hanging from fork in mid branches of slim tree. Appeared bag-like, as if slightly constricted round the rim. Pale brown strips, whole nest very smooth externally. Like "papier mache". Adult feeding nestlings.

2. 2 Mar. Eggs Feb. 6/12m. Fate unknown.

Slung by rim between small branches. Smooth, deep cup, all covered externally with dead leaves, mosaic-like. Adult feeding nestlings.

Yellow-eyed Starling *Aplonis mystacea*

20 Feb.-26 Mar. Eggs Jan & Feb. 20-30/30m. Fate unknown.

Active colony in single, live 30m tree in primary forest. Total ca 150 nests, many active every visit. Nests messy globes, often clustered, suspended, or attached to others. Begging chicks (2-3) at entrances of some nests.

Brown Oriole *Oriolus szalayi*

4 Nov. Eggs Oct. 15/25m. Fate unknown.

In lowest outer branches of tall tree. Mossy cup hanging from rim, messy, with leaves loosely attached to outside. Adult visiting frequently to feed young. In same tree as nest 1 of Spangled Drongo (under construction).

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentotus*

1. 4 Nov. Eggs? Nov. 18/25m. Fate unknown.

In same tree as Brown Oriole nest, drongo's higher, about 5 m away. Being built in a fork. Neatly woven, translucent cup of brown fibres.

2. 7 Dec. ?/40m. No further data.

3. 8 Dec. No data (identical to nest 1).

Discussion

Two of the nests found- those of Sooty Thicket-Fantail and Yellow-eyed Starling - were previously undescribed. For several other species, such as Beautiful Fruit Dove (the abundant small fruit dove at this site) and Golden Monarch, very few nests have been recorded. The lack of knowledge of the nest of the Sooty Thicket-Fantail is surprising, considering the species' abundance (Coates 1990). The nest found was not well-concealed. The main difficulty in finding it was in following and observing the adult for long enough to track it down, once it had been seen carrying material. The nest and site seem typical of the genus. Our departure from the site prevented further observations on this nest, the eggs, as well as the completed nest, remain undescribed.

Yellow-eyed Starling is a virtually unknown species, being until recently thought to be confined in Papua New Guinea to lowland rainforest in the upper Fly River drainage. It was first identified in the Lakekamu Basin in 1992 (Beehler & Bino 1995) and is now known to be locally (or seasonally) common in the area (Safford 1996), occurring alongside the widespread Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*. This colony, apparently containing only Yellow-eyed Starlings, seems similar to Metallic Starling colonies described by Coates (1990). Further details are given by Safford (1996).

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A TRIP TO IRIAN JAYA

by Chris Eastwood

In August 1995, I joined up with Margaret Cameron, Liz Kerr, Mike Carter and Michael Martin for a comprehensive tour of Irian Jaya which had been put together by Margaret. Margaret had done most of the planning and flights herself, but also used ground agents at all locations. In all we spent 26 days or so birding in the country, covering the following areas (more detailed information can be found in David Gibbs' trip report on Irian Jaya).

We first flew to Wamena from Jayapura and then drove from Wamena to Lake Habbema where we camped for three nights. The drive took about 4 to 5 hours, with few stops on the way. At Lake Habbema we birded mainly along the road but occasionally followed a track from our camp site into the forest. On our last day, we walked for about 5 hours down the road to meet our vehicles and then drove the rest of the way down making various birding stops. From Wamena we flew back to Jayapura and then drove to Nimbokrang, skirting Lake Sentani on the way where we camped for another 3 nights in a deserted logging camp. We birded primarily in the surrounding forest with the help of a local guide, called Jamil. It was dry during this whole period, possibly too dry as far as Nimbokrang was concerned.

Returning to Jayapura and, after a few problems with cancelled flights, we flew to Biak for two nights, having an afternoon and one full day to bird. From Biak we flew to Manokwari where we stayed two nights. We had intended to visit Warkapi but due to logistical problems (taxis not turning up etc) we ran out of time so instead birded along the road to Prafi. We then set off on a seven day trek in the Arfaks, setting off from Warmare and taking in Inat Beab, Cirauberi, Gunung Ngribou and Bini Bei. It had again been very dry, causing us some problems because of lack of water, but the last two days more than made up for this and we got extremely wet. Birding conditions were therefore not always ideal! Further, the gardens and scrub around Bini Bei had become overgrown (ironically, because the area is now a conservation area and the local people had had to stop their gardening) making the site much less attractive for birders.

After the trek and a day to recuperate in Manokwari, we flew to Sorong where it had been, and remained during our entire stay, unseasonably wet! We had intended to spend one morning

visiting the logging area referred to in David Gibb's book, but a bridge had been washed away so we had to make do with the main road and the relatively degraded forest along side it. From Sorong, we got a boat to Batanta where we stayed for four nights near the village of Wai Lebed. In between the rain, we birded around our camp and also had one morning on Salawati. From Batanta we returned to Sorong and then to PNG / Australia.

For those who know PNG, but not Irian Jaya, Irian Jaya's major attraction is the lack of any security problem making birding so much easier. However, in contrast the bureaucracy can be somewhat worse and catching flights or cashing traveller's cheques became very tedious. It was also necessary to register with the police in each district, though this was only a minor inconvenience. The standard of facilities provided by the various hotels was generally below the level found in PNG (although of course they were infinitely cheaper).

A list of all birds seen during our trip is given below, with comments being made on the more unusual sightings.

- Northern Cassowary *Casuarus unappendiculatus*
Batanta (Liz and I stumbled across a large juvenile by the side of a track; it froze in full view of us and seemed unsure what to do before eventually skulking off into the undergrowth where it crouched down on the ground and froze). Salawati (h)
- Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*
Batanta
- Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*
Batanta
- Eastern Reef-heron *Egretta sacra*
Biak
- Crested Hawk *Aviceda suberistata*
Sentani, Biak; Batanta
- Long-tailed Buzzard *Hemicopernis longicauda*
Nimbokrang; Arfaks
- Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
Sentani; Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari
- Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*
Sorong; Batanta
- Black-mantled Goshawk *Accipiter melanochlamys*
Arfaks (an adult hunting in the forest on Gunung Ngribou, it flew from tree to tree, never more than 10 metres, where it perched for a minute or so before flying on to the next tree. A little later we saw presumably the same bird, flying back in the opposite direction, but again flying from tree to tree)
- Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi*
Batanta
- Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*
Nimbokrang
- Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*
Wamena
- Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*
Biak
- Radjah Shelduck *Tadorna radjah*
Batanta

Salvadori's Teal *Salvadorina waigiensis*
 Lake Habbema (one bird on one of the small alpine lakes - we did not go to Lake Habbema itself)

Brown-collared Brush-turkey *Talegalla jobiensis*
 Nimbokrang (h)
 Other unidentified *Talegalla* species heard in the Arfaks (both at low and higher altitudes) and at Manokwari and Salawati (the latter at least were probably *T. cuvieri*)

Snow Mountain-quail *Anurophaps monorthonyx*
 Lake Habbema (two birds flushed from the side of the road through the grassland)

Bare-eyed Rail *Eulabeornis plumbeiventris*
 Nimbokrang (one bird seen)

White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*
 Sentani (h)

Bush-hen *Amaurornis olivaceus*
 Nimbokrang (h)

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica atra*
 Sentani

Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea*
 Sentani

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
 Sorong

Mongolian Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
 Sorong airport

Large Sand-Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*
 Sorong

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
 Sorong airport

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
 Biak, Batanta, Sorong

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*
 Biak, Sorong

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Biak, Salawati, Sorong

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
 Sorong airport

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
 Sorong airport

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*
 Sorong airport

Whiskered Tern *Chlidomas hybridus*
 Sorong

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidomas leucopterus*
 Sorong

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*
 Sorong

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*
 Batanta

Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*
 Sorong

Brown Cuckoo-dove *Macropygia amboinensis*
 Nimbokrang, Biak, Arfaks

Black-billed Cuckoo-dove *Macropygia nigrirostris*
 Sentani, Manokwari

Great Cuckoo-dove *Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*
 Lake Habbema, Biak, Arfaks, Batanta

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*
 Sorong

Western Crowned-pigeon *Goura cristata*
 Salawati (one bird seen after a bit of a chase; three or four others flushed)

Wompoo Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus magnificus*
 Nimbokrang, Batanta

Pink-spotted Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus perlatus*
 Manokwari, Batanta

Orange-fronted Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus aurantiifrons*
 Sorong

Superb Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus superbus*
 Manokwari, Arfaks

White-breasted Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus rivoli*
 Lake Habbema, Arfaks

Yellow-bibbed Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus solomonensis*
 Biak

Claret-breasted Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus viridis*
 Biak, Manokwari (the birds on Biak had an extensive claret breast, whereas the birds near Manokwari had only a small dark patch)

Orange-bellied Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus tozonus*
 Nimbokrang, Sorong

Dwarf Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus nana*
 Manokwari

Spice Imperial Pigeon *Ducula myristicivora*
 Biak (we presume our birds had to be this species, they had a faint pinkish wash to the lower belly and no knob on the bill but they had yellow eyes)

Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon *Ducula rufigaster*
 Batanta (surprisingly common)

Pinon Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pinon*
 Nimbokrang, Manokwari, Sorong, Batanta

Black-collared Imperial Pigeon *Ducula muellerii*
 Nimbokrang, Sorong

Zoe Imperial Pigeon *Ducula zoeae*
 Nimbokrang

Papuan Mountain Pigeon *Gymnophaps albertsi*
 Lake Habbema, Manokwari, Arfaks

Black Lory *Chalcopsitta atra*
 Sorong (flying across main road in early morning; appeared to be area of degraded forest)

Brown Lory *Chalcopsitta duivenbodei*
 Nimbokrang

Biak Red Lory *Eos cyanogema*
 Biak

Dusky Lory *Pseudeos fuscata*
 Sorong
 Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Arfaks; Sorong; Batanta
 Eastern Black-capped Lory *Lorius lory*
 Nimbokrang; Arfaks; Batanta
 Pygmy Lorikeet *Chamosyna wilhelminae*
 Arfaks (small flock feeding with Little Red and Josephine's Lorikeets)
 Little Red Lorikeet *Chamosyna pulchella*
 Arfaks
 Josephine's Lorikeet *Chamosyna josefinae*
 Arfaks
 Papuan Lorikeet *Chamosyna papou*
 Lake Habbema; Arfaks
 Plum-faced Lorikeet *Oreopsittacus arfaki*
 Lake Habbema
 Yellow-billed Lorikeet *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*
 Lake Habbema; Manokwari; Arfaks
 Orange-billed Lorikeet *Neopsittacus pullicauda*
 Lake Habbema
 Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*
 Nimbokrang; Manokwari; Arfaks; Batanta; Salawati (h)
 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Arfaks; Sorong; Batanta; Salawati
 Geelvink Pygmy-Parrot *Micrositta geelvinkiana*
 Biak (only one pair seen well, feeding along branch of a tree)
 Double-eyed Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma*
 Manokwari
 Salvadori's Fig-Parrot *Psittaculirostris salvadorii*
 Nimbokrang (we were taken to a nesting site about an hour's drive away from our camp, where there were at least 3 pairs)
 Painted Tiger-Parrot *Psittacella picta*
 Lake Habbema
 Modest Tiger-Parrot *Psittacella modesta*
 Arfaks
 Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*
 Sentani; Nimbokrang (subspecies with red rump); Biak; Manokwari; Arfaks; Sorong
 Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari; Arfaks; Sorong; Batanta
 Moluccan King Parrot *Alisterus amboinensis*
 Manokwari; Arfaks
 Vulturine Parrot *Psittichas fulgidus*
 Nimbokrang; Arfaks
 Papuan Hanging Parrot *Loriculus aurantiifrons*
 Nimbokrang
 Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Batanta (h)
 Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis pyrrhophanus*
 Lake Habbema; Manokwari

Rufous-throated Bronze-cuckoo *Chrysococcyx ruficollis*
 Lake Habbema
 White-eared Bronze-cuckoo *Chrysococcyx meyeri*
 Arfaks
 Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*
 Biak; Sorong; Salawati (h)
 Membek's Coucal *Centropus menbeki*
 Nimbokrang (h)
 Lesser Black Coucal *Centropus bernsteini*
 Nimbokrang
 Biak Coucal *Centropus chalybeus*
 Biak (only one bird seen although often heard)
 Uniform Swiftlet *Collocalia vanikorensis*
 Nimbokrang; Manokwari; Sorong; Batanta
 Mountain Swiftlet *Collocalia hirundinacea*
 Lake Habbema; Arfaks
 Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*
 Lake Habbema; Nimbokrang; Biak; Arfaks
 Papuan Spine-tailed Swift *Mearnsia novaeguineae*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Sorong
 Rufous-bellied Kookaburra *Dacelo gaudichaud*
 Nimbokrang; Arfaks (h); Batanta
 Hook-billed Kingfisher *Mehdora macrorrhina*
 Nimbokrang (h); Batanta (h)
 [Blue-black Kingfisher *Halcyon nigrocyanea*
 Apparently resident at Nimbokrang when the forest floor is flooded, our guide, Jamil, knew it well]
 Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon torotoro*
 Nimbokrang (h)
 Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*
 Sentani; Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari; Batanta; Sorong
 Common Paradise-kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea*
 Batanta (h); Salawati (h)
 Biak Paradise-kingfisher *Tanysiptera riedelii*
 Biak (surprisingly common and easy to see)
 Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*
 Sentani
 Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Sorong
 Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*
 Sentani; Nimbokrang; Biak; Sorong
 Blyth's Hornbill *Rhynceros plicatus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari; Arfaks; Sorong; Batanta; Salawati
 Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*
 Biak (h); Sorong (h); Batanta (h); Salawati (h)
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
 Manokwari (a few birds among pacific swallows flying around the hotel)
 Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
 Sentani; Manokwari

Alpine Pipit	<i>Anthus gutturalis</i>
Lake Habbema	
Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina caeruleo-grisea</i>
Arfaks	
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina lineata</i>
Arfaks	
Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina boyeri</i>
Manokwari	
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina papuensis</i>
Nimbokrang, Batanta	
Hooded Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina longicauda</i>
Lake Habbema	
Grey-headed Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina schisticeps</i>
Nimbokrang	
Black Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina melaena</i>
Batanta	
Golden Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Campochaera sloetii</i>
Nimbokrang, Manokwari, Sorong	
Black-browed Triller	<i>Lalage atrovirens</i>
Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari; Arfaks; Sorong	
Pied Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Baliem Valley	
Island Thrush	<i>Turdus poliocephalus</i>
Lake Habbema	
Island Leaf-warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trivirgatus</i>
Lake Habbema, Arfaks	
Emperor Fairy-wren	<i>Malurus cyanocephalus</i>
Sorong	
White-shouldered Fairy-wren	<i>Malurus alboscapulatus</i>
Baliem Valley; Nimbokrang	
Rusty Mouse-warbler	<i>Crateroscelis murina</i>
Nimbokrang (h), Arfaks	
Mountain Mouse-warbler	<i>Crateroscelis robusta</i>
Arfaks	
Pale-billed Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis spilodera</i>
Batanta	
Buff-faced Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis perspicillatus</i>
Lake Habbema	
Vogelkop Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis rufescens</i>
Arfaks	
Papuan Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis papuensis</i>
Lake Habbema	
New Guinea Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza murina</i>
Lake Habbema (one party of 6+ birds)	
Fairy Gerygone	<i>Gerygone palpebrosa</i>
Arfaks	
Grey Gerygone	<i>Gerygone cinerea</i>
Arfaks	

Brown-breasted Gerygone	<i>Gerygone ruficollis</i>
Lake Habbema	
Black Thicket-fantail	<i>Rhipidura maculipectus</i>
Sentani	
White-bellied Thicket-fantail	<i>Rhipidura leucothorax</i>
Nimbokrang	
Rufous-backed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura rufidorsa</i>
Arfaks	
Dimorphic Fantail	<i>Rhipidura brachyrhyncha</i>
Lake Habbema; Arfaks	
Black Fantail	<i>Rhipidura atra</i>
Arfaks	
Chestnut-bellied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura hyperythra</i>
Arfaks	
Friendly Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albolimbata</i>
Lake Habbema; Arfaks	
Northern Fantail	<i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>
Nimbokrang, Biak, Manokwari, Arfaks, Batanta	
Willie-wagtail	<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>
Sentani, Biak, Sorong, Batanta	
Island Monarch	<i>Monarcha cmerascens</i>
Batanta (just one bird seen)	
Black-winged Monarch	<i>Monarcha frater</i>
Arfaks	
Spot-winged Monarch	<i>Monarcha guttula</i>
Batanta	
Golden Monarch	<i>Monarcha chrysomela</i>
Nimbokrang, Biak, Manokwari, Batanta	
Friiled Monarch	<i>Arses telescopthalmus</i>
Nimbokrang (ochre-collared race or species <i>insularis</i>), Manokwari (nesting), Arfaks, Batanta	
Shining Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra alecto</i>
Nimbokrang, Biak, Sorong	
Biak Black Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra atra</i>
Biak (a few birds seen)	
Olive Flycatcher	<i>Microeca flavovirescens</i>
Arfaks	
Canary Flycatcher	<i>Microeca papuana</i>
Arfaks	
Lowland Peltops	<i>Peltops blamwillii</i>
Nimbokrang, Manokwari	
Mountain Peltops	<i>Peltops montanus</i>
Arfaks (on altitude)	
White-faced Robin	<i>Tregellasia leucops</i>
Arfaks	
Garnet Robin	<i>Eugerygone rubra</i>
Arfaks	
Mountain Robin	<i>Petroica bivittata</i>
Lake Habbema (nesting)	
Ashy Robin	<i>Poecilodryas albispecularis</i> : Arfaks

Black-chinned Robin *Poecilodryas brachyura*
 Arfaks (only one bird - in the foothills)

Black-throated Robin *Poecilodryas albonotata*
 Arfaks.

White-winged Robin *Peneothello sigillatus*
 Lake Habbema

Smoky Robin *Peneothello cryptoleucus*
 Arfaks (only one or two birds seen)

Yellow-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*
 Arfaks

Black-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus nigripectus*
 Lake Habbema

Dwarf Whistler *Pachycare flavogrisea*
 Arfaks

Vogelkop Whistler *Pachycephala meyeri*
 Arfaks

Sclater's Whistler *Pachycephala soror*
 Arfaks

Grey Whistler *Pachycephala simplex*
 Arfaks

Lorentz's Whistler *Pachycephala lorentzi*
 Lake Habbema

Regent Whistler *Pachycephala schlegelii*
 Arfaks

Little Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla megarrhyncha*
 Biak; Batanta

Variable Pitohui *Pitohui kirhocephalus*
 Nimbokrang; Manokwari (the very distinctive and attractive western race)

Hooded Pitohui *Pitohui dichrous*
 Arfaks

Rusty Pitohui *Pitohui ferrugineus*
 Batanta (yellow-billed subspecies)

Black Pitohui *Pitohui nigrescens*
 Arfaks (one bird seen on Gunung Ngribou)

Papuan Tree-creeper *Climacteris placens*
 Arfaks (quite common)

Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*
 Lake Habbema

Black Sittella *Daphoenositta miranda*
 Lake Habbema

Black Berrypecker *Melanocharis nigra*
 Arfaks

Fan-tailed Berrypecker *Melanocharis versteri*
 Arfaks

Papuan Flowerpecker *Dicaeum pectorale*
 Lake Habbema; Nimbokrang, Biak; Arfaks, Sorong

Tit Berrypecker *Oreocharis arfaki*
 Lake Habbema

Crested Berrypecker *Paramythia montium*
 Lake Habbema

Black Sunbird *Nectarinia sericea*
 Sentani; Nimbokrang, Biak, Manokwari, Batanta

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*
 Nimbokrang, Biak, Manokwari, Sorong, Batanta

Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops minor*
 Manokwari, Arfaks.

Biak White-eye *Zosterops mysorensis*
 Biak (one small flock only)

Western Mountain White-eye *Zosterops fuscicapilla*
 Arfaks

Yellow-bellied Longbill *Toxorhamphus novaeguineae*
 Sentani.

Dwarf Honeyeater *Oedistoma iholophus*
 Arfaks

Red Myzomela *Myzomela cruentata*
 Arfaks

Papuan Black Myzomela *Myzomela nigrita*
 Arfaks

Red-collared Myzomela *Myzomela rosenbergii*
 Lake Habbema, Arfaks

Mountain Meliphaga *Meliphaga orientalis*
 Arfaks

Yellow-gaped Meliphaga *Meliphaga flavirictus*
 Arfaks

Black-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus subfrenata*
 Lake Habbema

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater *Xanthotis flaviventer*
 Manokwari

Orange-cheeked Honeyeater *Oreornis chrysogenys*
 Lake Habbema (common, often seen foraging on the ground)

Marbled Honeyeater *Pycnopygius cinereus*
 Arfaks

Meyer's Friarbird *Philemon meyeri*
 Nimbokrang

Helmeted Friarbird *Philemon buceroides*
 Nimbokrang, Manokwari, Sorong, Batanta

Rufous-sided Honeyeater *Ptiloprora erythropleura*
 Arfaks (quite common higher up)

Grey-streaked Honeyeater *Ptiloprora perstriata*
 Lake Habbema

Sooty Melidectes *Melidectes fuscus*
 Lake Habbema (several birds seen)

Short-bearded Melidectes *Melidectes nonhuysi*
 Lake Habbema (common)

Vogelkop Melidectes *Melidectes leucostephes*
 Arfaks (only one bird seen!)

Belford's Melidectes *Melidectes belfordi*
 Lake Habbema
 Ornate Melidectes *Melidectes torquatus*
 Arfaks
 Western Smoky Honeyeater *Melipotes gymnops*
 Arfaks
 Common Smoky Honeyeater *Melipotes fumigatus*
 Lake Habbema
 Brown-backed Honeyeater *Ramsayornis modestus*
 Sorong
 Streak-headed Mannikin *Lonchura tristissima*
 Nimbokrang
 Black-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura teerinki*
 Baliem Valley (a large flock on the edge of a garden)
 Western Alpine Mannikin *Lonchura montana*
 Lake Habbema (seen in small numbers)
 Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*
 Nimbokrang; Sorong
 Long-tailed Starling *Aplonis magna*
 Biak (common)
 Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Sorong
 Golden Myna *Mino anais*
 Sorong
 Yellow-faced Myna *Mimo dumontii*
 Nimbokrang; Manokwari; Batanta
 Brown Oriole *Oriolus szalayi*
 Nimbokrang (h); Manokwari
 Mountain Drongo *Chaetorhynchus papuensis*
 Arfaks
 Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*
 Nimbokrang; Biak; Manokwari; Batanta
 White-breasted Wood-swallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*
 Arfaks; Sorong
 Great Wood-swallow *Artamus maximus*
 Lake Habbema; Arfaks
 Hooded Butcherbird *Cracticus cassicus*
 Biak; Manokwari; Batanta
 Black Butcherbird *Cracticus quoyi*
 Sentani; Nimbokrang; Sorong
 White-eared Catbird *Ailuroedus buccoides*
 Nimbokrang (h)
 Spotted Catbird *Ailuroedus melanotis*
 Arfaks (one bird with Western Parotias - in feeding flock)
 Vogelkop Bowerbird *Amblyornis inornatus*
 Arfaks (one or two birds and several bowers)
 Flame Bowerbird *Sericulus aureus*
 Arfaks (at least two males seen during the trek, of the black faced form or species)

Macgregor's Bird-of-paradise *Macgregoria pulchra*
 Lake Habbema (one bird seen with difficulty although one of our guides watched one feeding in a tree near our camp for almost an hour!!)
 Glossy-mantled Manucode *Manucodia ater*
 Nimbokrang; Batanta
 [Long-tailed Paradigalla *Paradigalla carunculata*
 Arfaks (heard by one of our guides)]
 Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificentus*
 Manokwari (h); Arfaks
 Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise *Seleucidis melanoleuca*
 Nimbokrang
 Pale-billed Sicklebill *Drepanornis bruijnii*
 Nimbokrang (one bird seen with difficulty)
 Black Sicklebill *Epimachus fastuosus*
 Arfaks (surprisingly common on our first day on Gunung Ngribou; immatures seen displaying in the late afternoon)
 Arfak Astrapia *Astrapia nigra*
 Arfaks (fairly common)
 Splendid Astrapia *Astrapia splendidissima*
 Lake Habbema (only single females seen)
 Superb Bird-of-paradise *Lophorina superba*
 Baliem Valley
 Western Parotia *Parotia sefilata*
 Arfaks (fairly numerous, eventually, particularly at fruiting trees)
 King Bird-of-paradise *Cicinnurus regius*
 Nimbokrang (h); Salawati (h)
 Magnificent Bird-of-paradise *Cicinnurus magnificus*
 Arfaks (fairly vocal but only seen by one of the group)
 Wilson's Bird-of-paradise *Diphylodes respublica*
 Batanta (somewhat disappointingly, only female plumage bird seen briefly at display site)
 Lesser Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea minor*
 Nimbokrang; Manokwari; Arfaks
 Red Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea rubra*
 Batanta (common and vocal, at one display tree males were seen to break off small leafy twigs with their bills, presumably to clear a display area)
 Brown-headed Crow *Corvus fuscicapillus*
 Nimbokrang (single birds seen flying over, although we had excellent views of a perched bird near the Edward's Fig-Parrot site)
 Grey Crow *Corvus tristis*
 Nimbokrang (h); Manokwari (h); Arfaks; Sorong
 Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*
 Sentani; Biak; Sorong; Batanta

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BIRDING THE MIDDLE SEPIK

By Phil Gregory

The chance to take the cruise along the middle Sepik River arose at short notice, and since little has been published about the birds of the area it may be worth listing the species I observed during the visit. I can recommend the cruise from the comfort and cultural interest angles, with birds a nice bonus. Bookings and enquiries via Melanesian Tourist Services P. O. Box 707, Madang or fax (675) 8523543 / 8523325.

“Melanesian Discoverer” Middle Sepik Itinerary
28th September- 2 nd October 1996

September 28 th: Timbunke-Mindinbit
September 29th Blackwater Lakes: Sangriman / Kabriman / Kaningara
September 30 th: Kaminabit / Kanganaman / Palembangi
October 1 st : Chambri Lakes area: Wombun / Aibom / Tambanum
October 2 nd: Timbunke

Composite bird-list

Australian Dabchick (*Podiceps novaehollandiae*)
5 Blackwater Lakes, 1 Sepik R. The broad white wing stripe indicated this species and not *P. ruficollis*.
Little Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)
Common
Little Pied Cormorant (*P. melanoleucos*)
Less common than *P. sulcirostris*
Darter (*Anhinga novaehollandiae*)
Sparse. Max. 7 on 28 9
Black Bittern (*Numenius flavicollis*)
1 near Wombun 1.10.
Pied Heron (*Egretta picata*)
Common (max. 40 on 28.9)
Intermediate Egret (*E. intermedia*)
Common
Great White Egret (*E. alba*)
Common, but not as common as Intermediate Egret
Little Egret (*E. garzetta*)
Sparse, only around Chambri Lakes in 2 or 3 bird groups
Rufous Night Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)
Fairly common, flushing from riverside vegetation
White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)
Singles on most days, but surprisingly uncommon
Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)
Quite common
Whistling Kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*)
Common, outnumbering *M. migrans*

Brahminy Kite (*H. indus*)

One or two daily.

Variable Goshawk (*Accipiter novaehollandiae*)

1 grey-brown phase 29.9.

Papuan Harrier (*Circus spilonotus*)

6 on 29.9. at the Blackwater Lakes, 5 at Chambri Lakes on 1.10.

Two full adult males seen, and an almost entirely melanistic bird but having a white rump at the Chambri Lakes. Immatures have pale patches on the nape, and white or whitish rumps with pale brown scaly mottled upperwing coverts contrasting with the rest of the wing. Some variation in plumages which is presumably age related, the white rump being progressively lost.

Wandering Whistle Duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*)150 Blackwater Lakes, small numbers elsewhere. No *D. guttata* seen at all.Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)

Fairly common

White Pigmy-Goose (*Nettion coromandelianus*)

5 males (2, 2 and a single) at Blackwater Lakes in the Kaningara Village area, a very localized species in New Guinea. Not associated with lily pads either, the first two males being in the main channel, others being in ox-bows.

Bush-hen (*Amaurornis olivaceus*)

Heard at Palembangi on 30.9.

Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*)

Small numbers around Chambri Lakes area.

Purple Swamp-hen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)

Common, often flushed from kunai grass beds by the river.

Comb-crested Jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*)

Small numbers.

Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*)

Pairs in many areas.

Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

2 on 28.9. 1 on 29.9.

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus (h) leucocephalus*)

2 singles on 1.10.

Whiskered Tern (*Chlidomas hybridus*)

Common, flocks of up to 40, many in breeding dress.

Great Cuckoo-Dove (*Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*)

1 at Tambanum on 1.10.

Zoe Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula zoeae*)

1 on 28.9.

Pied Imperial-Pigeon (*D. bicolor*)

Fairly common, usually seen in two's.

Collared Imperial-Pigeon (*D. muelleri*)

3 on 28.9. 2 on 30.9.

Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove (*Ptilinopus aurantiifrons*)

1 on 29.9. and 1 on 1.10.

Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove (*P. tozomus*)

Small numbers most days.

Dusky Lory (*Pseudeos fuscata*)

2 on 29.9. were the only sighting.

Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*)

1 at Kaningarra on 29.9 and 1 at Wombun 1.10.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*)

Small numbers, usually in two's

Red-cheeked Parrot (*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*)

Small numbers, often in pairs.

Eclectus Parrot (*Eclectus roratus*).

Surprisingly uncommon. 2 on 29.9. and 1 on 30.9.

Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot (*Cyclopsitta gulielmiterti*)

2 on 30.9. at Kanganaman. Call a silvery incisive note, quite unlike the flight call of Tabubil birds.

Common Koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*)

1 male on 28.9.

Channel-billed Cuckoo (*Scythrops novaehollandiae*).

Quite common, with 10 on 28.9; 6 on 29.9; 8 on 30.9. 4 on 1.10. Calling also.

Lesser Black Coucal (*Centropus bernsteini*)

6 on 28.9. Small numbers daily, easily seen from the boat perched atop vegetation, especially after rain.

Papuan Spinetail (*Mearnsia novaeguineae*)

Singles on 28 and 29.9. 20+ on 30.9 and 1.10.

Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (*Dacelo gaudichaud*)

Quite common and noisy.

Sacred Kingfisher (*Halcyon sancta*)

Singles on most days.

Kingfisher sp. (*Halcyon Ceyx* sp.)

1 small one glimpsed near Wombun 1.10

Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

Small numbers, up to 10 daily. No bee-eaters was surprising

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina papuensis*)

Common

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*C. novaehollandiae*)

4 on 28.9.

Large-billed Gerygone (*Gerygone magnirostris*)

2 at Kabriman 29.9.

Black Thicket-Fantail (*Rhipidura maculipectus*)

Heard

Willie Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

Common throughout

Shining Flycatcher (*Myiagra alecto*)

Heard

Little Shrike-thrush (*Colluricincla megarrhyncha*)

Heard

Grey Shrike-thrush (*C. harmonica*)

1 near Wombun on 1.10

Papuan Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum pectorale*)

Heard

Black Sunbird (*Nectarinia aspasia*)

Few

Silver-eared Honeyeater (*Lichmera alboauricularis*)

Seen at Mindinbit and Kaminabit, and heard at most places

Helmeted Friarbird (*Philemon buceroides*)

Quite common, silvery nape and very small bill knob.

Grand Mannikin (*Lonchura grandis*)

Common, max. 20 in a flock. 3 nests in a bare tree at Palembang.

Singing Starling (*Aplonis cantoroides*)

Sparse

Metallic Starling (*A. metallica*)

5, only seen on 30.9.

Yellow-faced Myna (*Mino dumontii*)

Small numbers.

White-breasted Wood-swallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*)

Few. Singles only.

Lowland Peltops (*Peltops blainvillii*)

Singles on 28.9 and 30.9. Curious single syllabled clicking song quite unlike that of *P. montana*.

* Yellow-breasted Bowerbird (*Chlamydera lauterbachii*)

4 around the Chambri Lakes tie-channel on 1.10.

Manucode sp. (*Manucodia chalybata jobiensis*)

1 flyover on 30.9

Yellow-breasted Bowerbird (*Chlamydera lauterbachii*)

I saw one flying past the ship, an obvious *Chlamydera* bowerbird but not much else to say, then had brief flight views of 3 flying over the tie-channel to Wombun later that day in scrubby grassland with small trees. The bright orangey-yellowish underparts readily identified them, but I would have liked the chance to have telescope views.

The only paradisaeid was a flyover manucode, and bird diversity was generally low as compared to the Fly River, though my birding trips were somewhat limited and most things were incidental to the cultural aspects of the tour. Remarkably few parrots really, and no great numbers of waterbirds, though Intermediate and Great White Egrets were common, the former outnumbering the latter at least 3:1. Little Egret was very sparse indeed. The trip list of 66 is probably about average for the middle Sepik on this style of journey.

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A LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus minutus*) AT CHAMBRI LAKE, MIDDLE SEPIK WETLANDS

By Roger Jaensch

During a June 1996 visit to the Middle and Upper Sepik wetlands to develop a project on crocodile conservation, I recorded all waterbirds encountered. On 3rd June in the early afternoon I observed an adult female Little Bittern while our boat negotiated a narrow channel connecting the Sepik River near Suapmeri to the northern end of Chambri Lake. The sighting was in an area with patches of tall aquatic grass (to 1.5m above water level) and short grass mat, about 300m north of the open waters of the Lake (site of observation: 4(10.9'S, 143(10.2'E). The tall grass included pit-pit (*Saccharum robustum*) and a similar looking but more slender grass with small drooping tassels as seed-heads, the grass mat included *Leersia* sp. (? *hexandra*), *Echinochloa* sp. (? *praestens*) and *Salvinia molesta*. The River was at peak height and floodplain wetlands including the site of the observation were fully inundated.

The Little Bittern rose from grass mat ahead of our approach and flew low toward and past us, giving good though brief views, especially of the wings and back. It settled in a patch of tall grass, from which we were unable to flush it until we brought the boat alongside, when a fleeting view was obtained as it escaped. The bird was identified on the basis of its brown back, grey-brown primaries and secondaries and generally unstreaked appearance. It was not an adult male Little Bittern because it lacked a black back. It was not a Yellow Bittern (*I. sinensis*) because it did not have black primaries and secondaries, which are a feature of all plumage phases of *sinensis*. In addition, there was little contrast in the appearance of the warmly coloured upperparts, which is typical of adult female *minutus*, whereas adult female *sinensis* show a strong contrast (almost a pied effect) between black primaries and very pale upperwing coverts. The bird was not an immature of either species because it was not boldly streaked. No other *minutus* or *sinensis* were seen during the visit.

Little Bitterns are known to occur in the southern drainages of New Guinea, especially in the middle Fly River wetlands which may be both a non-breeding area for Australian migrants and a breeding area for resident populations (Jaensch 1995). Occurrence of Little Bitterns in the northern drainages including the Sepik wetlands has not been previously documented, though the Yellow Bittern has been recorded, at least as a non-breeding migrant, from northern New Guinea (Beehler et al 1988). Both species are capable of long distance migration (Hancock and Elliot 1978) and it is therefore conceivable that *minutus* would sometimes reach northern New Guinea from Australia, most likely during the austral winter and that *sinensis* would also sometimes reach southern New Guinea, most likely during the austral summer. It is also possible that - assuming there are no residents of either species - *minutus* and *sinensis* occur in the northern wetlands of New Guinea at different times. The Sepik and Fly wetlands would support vast areas of habitat suitable for these species. Due to the difficulties of identification and of access to suitable (overgrown) habitat, bitterns of both *Ixobrychus* species may have escaped notice in the past.

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KAVIENG, DJAUL ISLAND & MUSSAU ISLAND, NEW IRELAND - A TRIP REPORT

By Chris Eastwood

I made a short trip to Kavieng and Mussau in early September 1996 to look for a few of the New Ireland endemics. I had previously birded in the Kavieng area so this part of the trip was aimed at trying to find a good birding area with reasonable forest. I was able to find an area of primary forest that had been recently logged and which consequently gave relatively easy access and which showed plenty of promise, though due to various circumstances, I did not bird there during

prime time (i.e. early morning). There are undoubtedly better area areas but you would have to be prepared to travel further from Kavieng.

To get to this site you leave Kavieng and drive down the main road (towards Namatanai) for 22 kilometres (measured from the cross-roads leading to the air port) where you take a dirt road to the left. The junction is just after the first bridge you come to; the dirt road follows the river inland and, at the start, has an area of mangroves on both sides of the road. Follow this road for approximately 8 kilometres, through areas of regrowth and gardens, and then take a road to the right (this road comes in at 45 (and you don't see the junction until you are practically on it). Follow this road for a further 5 kilometres or so before taking a logging track leading off to the left. There is a fairly good patch of forest on either side of the start of this road, but just under a kilometre from the start there is a small logging mill and an extensive cleared area so its probably best to drive beyond this. The whole drive takes just under an hour; a 4 WD vehicle is necessary because the logging tracks can be a little slippery if it has been raining.

I made one half hour trip to Utu, approximately 5 kilometres from Kavieng on the main Namatanai road. The turning is no more than a dirt track off to the right (on the left hand side of the road is the start of a fairly large school). The track, after 500 metres or so, comes to an old quarry where you can park. The area between the quarry and the main road can be quite good.

While at Kavieng I also visited Djaul island, by hiring a boat at the village of Kaut. Again take the main road to Namatanai and turn left after 22 kilometres (the same road as described above) but instead of turning off to the right for the L keep on the main road for another 5 kilometres or so, before taking a small track off the left which leads down to the village (ask for more precise directions when you are in the general area - regrettably my notes have been lost). I was charged K45 for the return trip plus an extra K20 for the petrol (which I had to buy myself in Kavieng using a container borrowed from the village). You will also have to be prepared to be patient; we agreed for the trip to take place on Saturday morning but on arriving at the village, discovered that the boat had not yet returned from a fishing trip so we had to return the following morning (hence I was not able to bird the logging tracks). The boat trip took about an hour and landed at the village of Sumuna, after making our introductions to the village elders we explored the areas of regrowth around the villages for about one hour before returning to the mainland. It is, apparently, also possible to get over to Djaul (for the grand cost of K2) by catching one of the boats that ferry people and goods between the New Ireland coast and the southern end of Djaul. These boats all operate from an area near Kaut but do not run at weekends and may not necessarily go when you want to.

After three nights in Kavieng, I flew to Mussau via Airlink for a two night stay. The flight takes just over an hour, stopping at Emirau (an old US war base) on the way. The airport for Mussau is actually on Eloaua, one of Mussau's small offshore islands, and there is a half hour boat trip across to the "mainland". The Airlink agent at Eloaua will organise the boat for you (and will send it to collect you for your return) though he does not speak much English; the one way trip cost me K10. There is no accommodation on the island so I had arranged to stay with Pastor Maisi who can be contacted through the SDA mission in Kavieng. He is always prepared to put people up; he does not charge but I gave him K20 per day for looking after me. I only had one full day on the island and so limited my birding to the areas of regrowth along the main road and around the pastor's house. There is plenty of primary forest close by; There are (unfortunately!) loggers on the island so ironically some of the logging roads may be the best areas to visit if they can be reached.

While on the island the pastor regaled me with tales about Tench Island (where birds are plentiful, particularly Nicobar Pigeons). Boats can be hired to take you from Mussau but it is a 7 or 8 hour trip. However, it is only about 3 hours (or so I was told) from Emirau and would probably be well worth doing. (Airlink stops at Emirau on the way to Mussau but not on the way back). Pastor Maisi is actually from Emirau (as were most people I met on Mussau !!) so he would be able to help arrange such a trip.

I list below those birds I saw during my trip and note that I saw Djaul Pied Monarch within about two minutes of starting birding (though we didn't come across them again) and that I saw both Mussau endemics within about 30 minutes of walking along the main road on my first morning (and at about midday when it was very hot and sunny!). Sightings refer to the logging area near Kavieng, unless otherwise stated.

Species underlined are endemic to New Guinea or Solomon Islands

Eastern Reef Egret - *Egretta sancta*

One on Mussau (dark phase)

Black Bittern - *Dupetor flavicollis*

One bird in mangroves by junction with main road

Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus*

Two birds in logging area; one on Mussau

Brahminy Kite - *Haliastur indus*

Occasional birds; one on Mussau

White-bellied Sea Eagle - *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

One on Mussau

Variable Goshawk - *Accipiter novaehollandiae*

One on Mussau

Melanesian Scrubfowl - *Megapodius eremita*

One flushed on road to Kaut

Pacific Golden Plover - *Pluvialis fulva*

Kavieng airport

Superb Fruit-Dove - *Ptilinopus superbus*

One bird seen

Red-knobbed Fruit-Dove - *Ptilinopus insolitus*

Fairly common; also on Djaul & Mussau

Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove - *Ptilinopus solomonensis*

Common on Mussau (refer Coates for illustration - different subspecies illustrated by Beehler?)

White-breasted Fruit-Dove - *Ptilinopus rivoli*

Fairly common

Grey Imperial Pigeon - *Ducula pistrinaria*

Fairly common on Mussau (a much greyer bird than Beehler's illustration would imply)

Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon - *Ducula rubricera*

Fairly common

Brown Cuckoo-Dove - *Macropygia amboinensis*

Common

Spot-breasted Cuckoo-Dove - *Macropygia mackinlayi*

Common on Mussau (look quite red)

Pied Cuckoo-Dove - *Reinwardtoena browni*

At least one bird seen each day (in flight)

Stephan's Ground-dove - *Chalcophaps stephani*

Quite common in logging area and on Mussau

Rainbow Lorikeet - *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Common (none seen or heard on Mussau)

Eastern Black-capped Lory - *Lorius hypoinochrous*

Fairly common; also on Djaul

Red-flanked Lorikeet - *Charmosyna placensis*

Abundant around Kavieng; common on Djaul

Eclectus Parrot - *Eclectus roratus*

Fairly common

Song Parrot - *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*

Fairly common

White-necked Coucal - *Centropus ateralbus*

One or two birds seen

Glossy Swiftlet - *Collocalia esculenta*

Common

Uniform Swiftlet - *Collocalia vanikorensis*

Common in logging area and on Mussau

White-rumped Swiftlet - *Collocalia spodiopygia*

A few seen in logging area; common on Mussau

Moustached Tree-swift - *Hemiprocne mystacea*

One pair

Sacred Kingfisher - *Halcyon sancta*

Two birds on Mussau

Collared Kingfisher - *Halcyon chloris*

Common on Mussau (subspecies with white crown and broad black line through eye and around back of head)

Rainbow Bee-eater - *Merops ornatus*

Common

Dollarbird - *Eurystomus orientalis*

Single birds

Blyth's Hornbill - *Aceros plicatus*

A single bird and one pair seen

Blue-breasted Pitta - *Pitta erythrogaster*

One heard at Utu

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike - *Coracina papuensis*

One bird seen

Cicadabird - *Coracina tenuirostris*

One or two birds seen - the Bismarck race (female being brown with grey cap)

Varied Triller - *Lalage leucomela*

Fairly common

Bismarck Rufous Fantail - *Rhipidura dahli*

One pair seen

Mussau Rufous Fantail - *Rhipidura matthiae*

Fairly common on Mussau - seen in regrowth along the main road

Northern Fantail - *Rhipidura rufiventris*

Fairly common; also on Djaul

Willie Wagtail - *Rhipidura leucophrys*

A pair on Eloaua

Paradise Drongo - *Dicurus megarhynchus*

Three or four birds at Utu

Island Monarch - *Monarcha cinerascens*

A few birds seen on Mussau & Eloaua

Bismarck Pied Monarch - *Monarcha verticalis*

Occasional birds seen

Djaul Pied Monarch - *Monarcha ateralba*

A group of three birds seen in a small feeding flock in swamp forest by the village of Sumuna, a fourth bird (presumed to be a juvenile based on Coates description) was seen later - it had whitish lower breast and belly with a pale orange head and upper breast, also prominent pale eyebrow

Mussau Pied Monarch - *Monarcha menckei*

Fairly common on Mussau; seen in the regrowth along the main road. One bird was feeding a fully fledged juvenile (with a blackish back and nape). Adult birds continually half-flicked their wings (reminiscent of Garnet Robin)

Golden Monarch - *Monarcha chrysomela*

Fairly common; also seen on Djaul

Shining Flycatcher - *Myiagra alecto*

Fairly common in logging area; a female on Djaul Island

Lesser Shining Flycatcher - *Myiagra hebetior*

One female on Djaul Island (seen moments before the female shining)

Golden Whistler - *Pachycephala soror*

Presumably this species - seen on Djaul and Mussau as well as in the logging area

Red Myzomela - *Myzomela cruentata*

Fairly common; also on Djaul

Bismarck Black Myzomela - *Myzomela pammelaena*

Common on Mussau

Black Sunbird - *Nectarinia aspasia*

Fairly common

Yellow-bellied Sunbird - *Nectarinia jugularis*

Fairly common

Bismarck Flowerpecker - *Dicaeum eximium*

Common

Hunstein's Mannikin - *Lonchura hunsteini*

Common - Kavieng airport & approach roads to logging area

Blue-faced Parrot-finch - *Erythrura trichroa*

Common on Mussau - seen along the road edge (particularly in the evening) and in the school gardens acting much like mannikins *Lonchura* sp. but feeding on the ground

Metallic Starling - *Aplonis metallica*

Common; also on Mussau. All birds seen had long elongated central tail feathers so presumably this species

Yellow-faced Myna - *Mino dumontii*

Only a few birds seen (but very vocal!)

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(Received September 1996)

NESTING OBSERVATION OF DOUBLE-EYED FIG-PARROT (CYCLOPSITTA DIOPHTHALMA) AT KIKORI

By Yasuhisa Tanaka

A nest of Double-eyed Fig-Parrot was observed at Kikori on 21 November 1995. The observation area was about 30 km north of Kikori town, Gulf Province, where a dirt pipeline road cuts through forest. The nest site was about 2 km west of the Kikori River along this oil pipeline road. The nest itself was in a hollow of about 10 cm diameter located about 25 m above the ground on a vertical branch of a 30 m tall dead emergent tree. I had clear views of both the male and female visiting the nest, the female with a head pattern like that of the 9 a female bird on plate 21 of Beehler's "Birds of New Guinea" (presumably *C. d. diophtalma*). This female was looking into the hollow whilst a male bird was sitting on branch nearby. Calls of juvenile birds "ju ju ju ju ju ju" were heard when the female bird looked into the hollow, suggesting that the female was feeding them. The male gave a "chii chii" call but did not come to the nest at this time.

About an hour later, a female Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot (*C. guillemittii*) with the face pattern of the 10a female bird on plate 21 in Beehler (presumably *C. g. suavissima*) was sitting on top of the tall dead tree some 500m west of the Double-eyed Fig-Parrot nest site. This suggests that the two species co-exist in this area, though Beehler (1986) states that the species replace each other locally, and Coates (1985) gives that they are largely complementary, being rare or absent where the other occurs.

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FLOWER-PIERCING BY (PRESUMED) HONEYEATERS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

By George E. Clapp

On 14 December 1994, at an altitude of 1940 m ASL and at a location only a few hundred metres distant from the Girebo Watersource in the Hides area of the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, I noticed a single individual Rufous-backed Honeyeater (*Ptiloprora gusei*) at the flowers of a striking epiphytic plant about 15 m up in a medium size broadleaf tree in lightly mossed forest. It caught my attention that the bird appeared to be probing the bases of the flowers one by one. On a hunch I had the epiphyte retrieved from the tree and discovered an obvious instance of pierced flowers, and the use of those pierced flowers by the honeyeater in question.

The plant was an epiphyte with a single floral umbel hanging down, which consisted of nine white flowers. Each of the nine flowers (which were in excess of 5 cm from the base of the corolla to where it started to flare out) had been pierced near the base. On each bloom there was longitudinal slit about 7.5 mm (measured) with negligible variation in the length of the slits. These slits were slightly brownish coloured from the bruising of the floral tissue. Subsequently this plant was positively identified by Dr. G. Stocker of the Papua New Guinea Forest Research Institute, from photographs I had taken, as belonging to the genus *Rhododendron* (G. Stocker pers. comm.) Unfortunately an identification to species level could not be achieved from the photographs.

This rhododendron was quite distinctive, and *P. gusei* was certainly feeding from the slits pierced in the flowers, but because the bird was not actually observed piercing the flowers it cannot be stated with certainty that *P. gusei* is a flower piercer.

Moynihan (1979) discusses flower piercing by birds, in particular by the genus *Diglossa* in South America. "Birds of this genus have uniquely shaped bills which are an efficient tool for grasping and piercing the corollas of long tubular flowers from the side. The base... is held by the hook of

the upper mandible while an incision is made by the lower mandible" (Skutch 1954 in Moynihan 1963). Nectar, with or without small insects which may have drowned in it, is then sucked or lapped up by the U-shaped and brushy tongue (Vuilleumier 1969).

"The great advantage of this mechanism is that it enables the *Diglossa* to "tap" long tubular flowers that would not otherwise be manageable or useful to them, and would instead be reserved for birds with longer bills. Most flowers are not seriously damaged by the process. They are only marked by small slits. The openings are persistent, however, a fact which is not without consequences for many species of the local community, perhaps including the plants." (Moynihan 1979).

P. guisei does not have a specially adapted beak, but it does have a decurved bill which could conceivably be used to pierce flowers. Rand and Gilliard (1967) state that the length of the culmen in *P. guisei* is 27 mm. I have no knowledge of the tongue structure or length in *P. guisei* but it seems probable that this species could not reach the nectaries in the flowers of this particular species of *Rhododendron* without access from the side.

I could find no reference in the literature to any previous record of flower piercing by birds in Papua New Guinea. B. Coates (*pers comm*) confirmed that he knew of no previously documented instance of flower piercing by birds in the country.

Conclusions: although it is now clear that flower piercing does occur in Papua New Guinea, at least on *Rhododendron* spp. and that the honeyeater *P. guisei* certainly uses the pierced flowers, little more can be safely assumed from this one observation. This raises a number of questions: Which flowers (if any) other than *Rhododendron* spp. are pierced? How common is flower piercing in Papua New Guinea, and in what environments does it occur? Which species pierce the flowers? Which birds might opportunistically visit already pierced flowers? How often are pierced flowers revisited? These are all questions which spring to mind (*and which would repay observers looking out for the behaviours indicated- Editor*).

Abstract: *This is claimed as the first documented record of the use of a pierced flower by a honeyeater in Papua New Guinea.*

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. G. Stocker, Director of the Papua New Guinea Forest Research Institute, for identifying to generic level the plant involved in this observation. I am also grateful to B. Coates for discussion on flower piercing with reference to Papua New Guinea.

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TWO NEW SPECIES FOR MISIMA ISLAND, MILNE BAY PROVINCE

By Len Tolhurst

During early August 1995 I spent several days on Misima Island in Milne Bay Province, and saw two Rainbow Bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) on the north coast, in hilly country back from the coast near Singana Village. The birds were in bush or secondary growth

According to Coates "Birds of Papua New Guinea" Volume 1 page 438 this species "doesn't seem to have been recorded from eastern satellite islands". The distribution maps therein also show no previous sightings from the Louisiade Archipelago.

Still on Misima Island, at Bwagasia the main town, I heard the distinctive call of the Bush-Hen (*Amaurornis olivaceus*). This bird was calling at dusk in scrub growth near a little used road. I am familiar with the call of the species, as for many weeks a family of them lived near my back yard at Pacific Adventist College near Port Moresby. The nest was located with one bird sitting on eggs. Again reference to Coates Volume 1 indicates that there are no records from Misima Island, thus this may be the first record of the species here.

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AZURE KINGFISHER (*Alcedo azurea*) CHOKING ON AN OUWEN'S GOBY (*Sicyopterus ouweni*)

By A. C. Redmayne

On the afternoon of 16 th October 1995, while walking along the Oh River. A fast flowing boulder stream at the Crater Mountain Biological Research Station- Wara Sera study site (6 43675 S 145 05 5755 E) at 850 m a s l. I observed an Azure Kingfisher (*A. azurea*) in obvious distress. The bird was exhausted and unable to fly. Closer examination showed that it was choking on a fish.

I collected the bird and took it back to the research station, removed the fish and identified it as an Owen's Goby which was 98 mm in length and 13.6 g in weight. The Azure Kingfisher weighed 40.0 g, had a bill length of 45.6 mm and a wing length of 76.0 mm. It showed no signs of moult and no brood patch. After the fish was removed it rapidly recovered and was duly released.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Haia Landowner Committee for permission to work in the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area. These observations were made whilst assisting on a NYZS / The Wildlife Conservation Society sponsored project.

Reference

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(Received January 1996)

NOTES ON THE GREATER MELAMPITTA (*Melampitta gigantea*) IN THE TABUBIL AREA

By Phil Gregory

The Greater Melampitta was discovered in the Tabubil area in October 1992 on Mount Robinson, by Richard Rowland and the author, following up a distinctive loud call that the author had noted since 1991. Since then further work has revealed this seemingly rare and cryptic species is quite widespread from 750m up to about 1,100m, now being known from some 4 sites in the general area. Otherwise it is so far only known from Mount Mura in far south east Papua and Mt. Somoro in the Torricelli Mountains of the north coast of Papua New Guinea (Coates 1990), and at a handful of sites in Irian Jaya. It is however likely to be much under-recorded and is probably to be expected wherever forested limestone karst country occurs in the 650-1400m height band.

In the Tabubil area it occurs along the Ok Ma road at two sites at 750m, and at Dablin Creek at 800m, whilst several territories are known from the original Mount Robinson vicinity around 1100m. The latter site is anomalous in not being obviously limestone karst country like all the other localities in the Tabubil area, being instead on steep slopes in primary hill forest where fallen trees and root tangles may offer similar habitat requirements.

The species is very shy but inquisitive, its presence being revealed by its loud calls. The birds seem to come and check out intruders, so sitting quietly watching the understorey for movement is a good way to see the bird. They tend to come in quite suddenly and circle round, hopping or half flying and running, whilst their black colouration makes them very difficult to pick up amongst the shadows of the forest floor. They occasionally fly down-slope, and are extremely wary, resembling a giant black terrestrial pitohui more than anything else, and certainly looking and sounding nothing like Lesser Melampitta (*M. lugubris*). The unusually heavy black bill has a distinctly hooked tip, and often looks pale in flight.

The Ok Ma birds are closely associated with limestone sink-holes, and seem to be centred on a depression measuring a couple of hundred metres across, with many small sink-holes scattered across it. Interestingly enough this area was cleared not long ago and the birds seem to use the dense regrowth quite readily, as well as coming into the adjoining forest where they follow ridge lines and use fallen logs as perches.

Calling is sporadic, which is one reason why the species may be much under-recorded. Locally October to March seem to be the main months for vocalizations, though this year I have also now heard them in July, August and September. Like so many New Guinea birds the calls are much the best way of locating the species, the chances of finding it if not calling are minimal. Early morning does not seem to be much favoured for calling, they seem to commence from about 0800 onwards, and again from mid to late afternoon depending on weather conditions. The vocalizations fall into 3 main groups:

1. A very quiet almost inaudible "sip", heard only if really close.
2. A loud, ringing somewhat interrogative whistled "m ee", the first syllable rising and the second slightly descending, constantly repeated and audible over 100m away, and very loud if close. This seems to be the common contact call and is used when the bird is curious. This note is sometimes given by several birds, almost as if they are delineating their territories by replying to each other. It is quite diagnostic and not like any other New Guinea bird of my experience.
3. An incisive run together "m-ee" series, constantly repeated and rather harsher than the previous call. Perhaps more of an alarm note?

Tape recordings have been made and lodged with the British Library of Wildlife Sounds in London. Dr. Jared Diamond (*in litt.*) informs me that the tape corresponds well with the calls of the species in Irian Jaya.

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- Author's address: P.O. Box 69, Tabubil 332, Western Province, PNG. (Received October 96)

MORE NEW RECORDS FROM AMBUA, AND A FURTHER SIGHTINGS OF A MYSTERY BIRD

By Joseph Tano

On 3rd March 1996 I again saw a mystery bird that I had first seen on 16th August 1992 (Tano 1995), which closely resembles the Snow Mountain Robin (*Petroica archboldi*). The bird was seen again near the waterfall by a rocky stream bed, whilst I was watching a Mountain Mouse Warbler (*Cateroscelis robusta*). The robin was just above my head and watched for about 20 minutes before flying away downstream, and is an all black bird with a red breast and a little bit of white in the tail. (Editor's note: Joseph is resident naturalist at the Lodge and knows the local birds well. He has reported this robin before and it would be well worth checking out. *P. archboldi* is currently known only from the high boulder slopes in the Snow Mountains of Irian Jaya, and has been seen by very few if any birders in recent times.)

I have also recorded the following species as additions to the birds of the Ambua or Tari area.

Little Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*) Dauli Teacher's College.

Bare-eyed Rail (*Eulabeornis plumbeiventris*) Lodge grounds (Previously known from a bird that flew into the lodge buildings one night...Ed.)

Long-billed Honeyeater (*Melilestes megarhynchus*) near Tari airport.

Black-winged Monarch (*Monarcha melanopsis*) near Tari airport.

Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina boyeri*) Dauli Teacher's College.

A further interesting sighting concerns Mountain Nightjar (*Eurostopodus archboldi*), which was found with a juvenile at a bare ground nest site near the Bailey Bridge at 2200m on 28th October 1995. The adult bird initially flew off, but came back a number of times and eventually perched nearby on a tree branch. The juvenile was white with black spottings. (A nest was also found near here in October 1992, reference Rowland 92...Ed.) On March 16th 1995 I was at the Tari Gap and found 3 Mountain Nightjar sleeping together on a low Pandanus branch about a metre from the ground. One bird flew away, but the other two remained.

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- Author's address: C/o Ambua Lodge, Trans-Niugini Tours, P. O. Box 371, Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea. (Received May 96)

THE NEW GUINEA FLIGHTLESS RAIL (*Megacrex inepta*) IN GULF PROVINCE*By Phil Gregory*

The New Guinea Flightless Rail *Megacrex inepta* is known from the Fly River and Sepik basins in Papua New Guinea, but remains one of the least known New Guinea species, with hardly any Europeans having seen it in recent years. The very name *Megacrex inepta* conjures up visions of a large and clumsy crane blundering through the forest and swamps. Chris Eastwood and I searched for the legendary beast around Kiunga in Western Province in 1993 using a local guide, as the bird is apparently widespread in the swamp forest and comes into places where sago is being prepared. We saw the footprints of a large rail type bird in a hollowed out sago log, but no more. In 1994 a one-legged captive bird appeared in Kiunga and I saw it in August, but sightings of a wild bird were still needed.

Early in 1995 a team from WWF were engaged in a biodiversity survey of an area near Kikori in Gulf Province, and were lucky enough to be told of a place where sago was being made and rails were visiting. A hunters blind had been built for the purpose of spearing anything that came in, rails included, and Ian Burrows amongst others got to see and photograph the rails at point blank range.

Chris and I made a special trip to the area in July 95, going with the local landowner Garry Bissue who is keen to start a visitor's lodge on Veiru creek near Kikori, in an area of rich lowland forest. He had chopped sago palm specially for us, and had built an extraordinary blind from palm fronds, which looked like a bizarre giant green spiky beehive in the forest clearing, and which proved to be totally waterproof. This was just as well as it was the wet season there and we experienced heavy rain daily. Our first visit saw four of us sat in the hide in near total darkness, peering through small holes to the clearing, which remained free of rails despite a four hour vigil.

However the rain had delayed our start that morning, so we returned in mid afternoon. This time it was only an hour before I saw a movement at the rear of the clearing, and picked out two Flightless Rails flicking their wings as they walked along. Chris and I waited anxiously and had several brief views as the birds came slowly closer, eventually coming right by the blind and hopping up onto the sago log, walking down it directly opposite us! An adult and an immature bird came first, with wings spread and held up over the back, flicked with each step they took. Here was one of the great New Guinea mystery birds walking towards us and then feeding in the sago slurry beneath the blind, soon to be joined by another adult and well grown immature bird.

These immatures (originally 3 of them) were small on June 10th according to Garry, but were now nearly full-grown and with plumage much as the adult, just less of a rusty wash on the sides of the chest. The bill was slightly shorter also, being yellow with a black central portion whereas the culmen of the adult birds was dark with a yellow tip and yellow lower mandible. The body shape was strangely tail-less with rather long grey legs, and the birds walked with heads lowered. The large dark eye and dark eye stripe gave an almost night heron-like look to the head. Chris saw an adult give a white grub to an immature, which kept up a high-pitched cheeping like a baby chicken. The adults had a quiet deep toned note, almost braying and sometimes quite drawn out. They fed around the area for about 10 minutes then walked off into the forest.

The species is quite widespread in the area and is best seen at sago sites, where some hunting goes on, birds being killed by arrows and remaining even when one has been slain as long as no noise is made by the hunter. The area also holds Southern Crowned Pigeon (*Goura scheepmekeeri*) and Southern Cassowary (*Casuaris casuaris*), both of which were calling near our blind. A persistent loud crack like a pistol shot was apparently a cassowary running at a tree to knock down fruits! Vulturine Parrot (*Psittichas fulgidus*), Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*), Twelve-wired (*Seleucidis melanoleuca*) and King Birds of Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*) are quite easy to see from the river and the full range of lowland Papua New Guinea species may be found, including New Guinea Harpy-Eagle (*Harpyopsis novaeguineae*).

Garry Bissue has a small lodge made from traditional materials in an attractive clearing on the banks of Veiru Creek, where you can stay for K30 a day full board. Travel is by plane from Port Moresby to Kikori (2 hours), then by boat from Kikori, about 30 minutes ride away. He hopes to have the area made a wildlife management zone with eco-tourism providing a source of income. Loggers are however already at the gates, and it can only be hoped that the WWF sponsored business initiatives based around sustainable resource use succeed in preventing major devastation. Pay him a visit and ask him to prepare a Flightless Rail blind for you!

Acknowledgments:

Thanks to Chris Eastwood and Garry Bissue, splendid companions on the trip.

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