

## SOME BIRDS NOTED IN NEW GUINEA

By HOWARD JARMAN

During the period from May, 1945, to May, 1946, the writer was stationed in various parts of New Guinea, and notes were made on the birds seen, although the following list presents a very incomplete picture of the bird life in the areas visited.

Difficult terrain, poor light, uncertain weather, and the preoccupations of duty all combined to limit the number of species seen, while the lack of any reference book, other than my battered "Leach," was a further handicap. However, Mr. George Mack, now Director of the Queensland Museum, Brisbane, was most helpful, and his correspondence in connection with my numerous enquiries was much appreciated.

All stations were on the coast, chiefly in Northern New Guinea, and I was unable to visit the inland areas and higher altitudes.

**PORT MORESBY.**—Several days during May, 1945, were spent here, while awaiting air transport. The country in the immediate vicinity is undulating grasslands and hills, with no thick timber.

**LAE.**—June and July, 1945, were spent at Lae, at the head of the Huon Gulf, and to the east of the Markham River. During my stay it rained almost every day, the area being characterised by luxuriant tropical vegetation. The edges of the remnants of jungle supported large populations of many species of birds, the names of most of which I shall never know. The numerous Lorikeets and Fruit Pigeons proved especially difficult, as they kept to the tops of the great trees in most places.

**AITAPE.**—I spent August and September, 1945, and May, 1946, about the coastal strip at Aitape. Little time could be devoted to birds, but a number of species seen are referred to in the list which follows.

**WEWAK AREA.**—The period October, 1945, to April, 1946, was spent along the coastal strip in northern New Guinea between Wewak and the mouth of the Haiwan River, a distance of about 25 miles. A one-man patrol took the writer to Koil Island, in the Schouten Islands, to the east of Wewak for a month, while a similar period

was spent on Walis and Tarawain Islands, about 40 miles north-west of Wewak. The mountains of the mainland could be discerned from all three islands.

In the following list the precise locality where each species was noted is given, and some extracts from my field notes. The scientific names adopted are those of Mayr (1941), and it will be noted in a few instances that these differ slightly from those used in the 1926 R.A.O.U. Checklist for species which occur in Australia also. However, for the sake of uniformity, it has been considered advisable to employ names used by Mayr. The subspecific names are applied in a geographical sense only, being based on the useful distributional data given by Mayr; field characters observed do not always permit subspecific identification.

The vernacular names are those of the R.A.O.U. Checklist, Mayr, Ogilvie-Grant, Gould, etc., but in the case of purely New Guinea species some of these are artificial or little known or used.

*Casuarus* sp., Cassowary.—Observed in the Wewak area.

*Podiceps ruficollis tricolor*, Little Grebe.—Three pairs of small, red-necked grebes frequented a small freshwater lake on Walis Island. A nest contained one egg on January 25, 1946. The egg was white, with a few irregular spots.

*Fregata* sp., Frigate bird.—Seen at Lae, Aitape, and Wewak Area.

*Egretta* sp., Egret.—A small bird of this genus was seen at Aitape.

*Demigretta sacra sacra*, Reef Heron.—An example of this species is believed to have been seen at Aitape. The grey phase was also seen at Koil and Walis Islands.

*Milvus migrans affinis*, Black (Fork-tailed) Kite.—Seen at Port Moresby, Lae and Aitape.

*Haliastur indus girrenera*, Red-backed Sea Eagle.—Seen at Aitape and Wewak.

*Haliastur sphenurus*, Whistling Eagle.—Seen at Moresby and Aitape.

*Haliaeetus leucogaster*, White-bellied Sea Eagle.—Seen at Wewak, Koil and Walis Islands.

*Megapodius freycinet* subsp., Scrub Fowl.—At Wewak, Koil and Walis Islands.

*Sterna* spp., Terns.—Birds of this genus were seen but not identified at Port Moresby, Aitape and Wewak.

*Ducula spilorrhhoa*, Torres Strait Pigeon.—Seen at Wewak.

*Geopelia striata papua*, Peaceful Dove.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Trichoglossus haematodus micropteryx*, Coconut Lory.—Port Moresby.

*Lorius lory* subsp., Black-capped Lory.—At Lae and Aitape. This noisy and brilliant Lory was often seen, usually in small parties. Crown—bluish; head, upper back, throat, chest and beak—crimson; wing—green; band across nape, abdomen under tail and back—indigo blue; light green bar under wing. Tail short and pointed.

*Cacatua galerita triton*, White Cockatoo.—Seen at Lae and Aitape.

*Lorius roratus pectoralis*, Eclectus (Red-sided) Parrot.—At Wewak.

*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*, Red-cheeked Parrot.—Seen at Lae and Aitape, frequently. Beak, face, cheeks to behind eye—scarlet; crown—lavender; under wing—? light blue; dorsal and ventral surfaces—green. Tail short and square. Dull birds in the flocks (? females or young) were green, with the face dull plum colour and the crown grey.

*Centropus* sp., Pheasant Coucal.—A dark-coloured bird was seen in the Kunai grass flats at Nadzab.

*Hemiprocne mystacea*, Whiskered Tree Swift.—This large Swift, comparable in size with the Spine-tailed Swift (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) was frequently seen to perch on the twigs of tall dead trees. The tail is very long and pointed. Side of rump, line above and below eye—white. Upper and under parts greyish, with the abdomen more pallid.

*Sauromarptis gaudichaud*, Gaudichaud's Kingfisher.—This large Kingfisher frequented the edges of the jungle. Its weird "laugh" or cries were even more discordant than those of the Blue-winged Kookaburra. Frontal spot, broad collar and throat—white; crown—black; chest and abdomen—chestnut; light blue 'blaze' on wing and rump.

*Dacelo leachii intermedia*, Blue-winged Kookaburra.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Halcyon* ? *macleayi*, Forest Kingfisher.—May have been seen at Aitape.

*Halcyon sancta sancta*, Sacred Kingfisher.—Seen at Port Moresby and Aitape.

*Merops ornatus*, Australian Bee-eater.—Port Moresby, Lae and Aitape.

*Eurystomus orientalis* subsp., Dollar Bird.—At Aitape.

*Rhyticeros plicatus jungei*, Papuan Hornbill.—At Lae and Aitape. Usually seen in pairs, the heavy "woosh, woosh" of their wings and the nasal calls attracting attention.

*Hirundo tahitica frontalis*, Welcome (or Pacific) Swallow.—Seen at Port Moresby, Lae, Aitape, Wewak, Koil Island, Walis Island.

*Petrochelidon nigricans nigricans*, Tree Martin.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Lalage sueurii* ? *tricolor*, White-winged Triller.—I thought I saw this bird at Port Moresby.

*Edolisoma* sp., "Cuckoo-shrike."—Size and shape of *Lalage sueurii tricolor* (Triller). Male jet black, except for white rump and wing patch. Female uniform fulvous. Seen amongst low bushes on the grasslands at Port Moresby.

*Coracina novae-hollandiae* subsp., Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Malurus alboscapulatus*, Pied Wren Warbler.—This black and white relative of the familiar "Blue Wrens" of Australia was often seen in Kunai grass. The male is black with white "shoulders."

In the same areas at Lae and Aitape, another *Malurus* was seen, although never in company with the male birds described above. Unlike the Australian members of the genus, the females of the Pied Wren Warbler are black, and it is believed that the birds mentioned above were females or young males of this species. All upper parts with the exception of a white eyebrow and shoulder were black; under parts white.

*Todopsis cyanocephala*, Blue-headed Wren Warbler.—A very shy, small bird which frequented the dense thickets was probably this species. Crown and upper back—royal blue; remainder of body velvety black or very dark blue. Seen at Aitape and Wewak.

*Cisticola exilis diminuta*, Golden-headed Fantail Warbler.—Seen at Port Moresby, Aitape and Wewak.

*Gerygone olivacea cinerascens*, White-throated Warbler.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Peltops blainvillii*, Broad-billed Flycatcher.—This somewhat sedentary Flycatcher was noted several times at Lae. Rump, vent and under the tail—crimson; upper back—white; lower back—? indigo; bill, face and breast—dark greenish-blue.

*Rhipidura leucophrys melaleuca*, Willie Wagtail.—Seen at Port Moresby, Aitape and Wewak.

*Rhipidura ? rufiventris*, White-throated Flycatcher.—Possibly seen at Lae and Wewak.

*Monarcha alecto chalybeocephalus*, Shining Flycatcher.—Seen at Wewak and Walis Island.

*Colluricincla ? harmonica* subsp., Grey Shrike-thrush.—Possibly seen at Port Moresby.

*Artamus leucorhynchus leucopygialis*, White-breasted Wood Swallow.—Port Moresby, Aitape and Wewak.

*Aplonis* sp.—A Shining Starling was seen at Lae, Aitape and Wewak, but its identity was not established.

*Mino dumontii violaceus*, Orange-faced Grackle or Papuan Myna.—Small parties of this large and noisy Starling were often observed in the branches of trees in more open situations at Lae and Wewak. Strikingly coloured they have short square tails; they also have a variety of croaking calls. Head, face, beak and lower abdomen—orange; nape, back, chest, throat, lores and line below eye—black; rump and round patch in wing—white.

*Cracticus cassicus cassicus*, Pied Butcher Bird.—This small black and white Butcher-bird was frequently seen at Lae, also at Aitape and Wewak. It is an excellent songster, rivalling the Australian Pied Butcher-bird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*).

*Cracticus mentalis*, Black-backed Butcher-bird.—Seen at Port Moresby.

*Cracticus quoyi*, Black Butcher-bird.—Seen at Aitape.

*Dicrurus bracteatus carbonarius*, Spangled Drongo.—Seen at Lae.

*Paradisea apoda*, Great Bird of Paradise.—A number of birds of this species was seen, usually singly and feeding on berries. Once their harsh, loud calls were known, their whereabouts in the tree-tops could be easily located and a patient watch was usually

rewarded by a glimpse of a bird amidst the dense foliage. Seen at Lae, Aitape and Wewak.

*Cinnyris sericea*, Black-breasted or Purple Sun-bird.—While the Yellow-breasted Sun-bird (see below), a familiar friend from North Queensland, was a common and confident bird in the gardens around Lae, the Purple Sun-bird, which favoured the same habitat, seemed to be rare and more timid. This latter species is usually to be seen in pairs. They are tiny birds with long curved bills and short tails. The male is a "gem," being completely black with iridescent metallic green patches on the crown, throat and centre wing, while the upper base of the tail is bluish. The female has the bill black also, the head being grey, throat greyish-white, back light green, and underparts pale yellow. Both species of Sun-birds were very partial to the flowers of the "male" Paw Paw. The Purple Sun-bird was also seen at Aitape, and at Koil and Walis Islands.

*Cinnyris jugularis* subsp., Yellow-breasted Sun-bird.—I saw this species at Port Moresby, Aitape, Lae, Wewak and at Koil and Walis Islands.

*Myzomela* sp.—A small unidentified Honey-eater of this genus was seen at Lae.

*Dicrurus bracteatus carbonarius*, Spangled Drongo.—Seen at Lae.

*Corvus* sp.—A bird which may have been *Corvus orru* was seen at Lae, Aitape, Koil Island and Walis Island.

*Meliphaga* spp.—Honeyeaters of this genus were noted at Port Moresby, Aitape and Wewak.

*Philemon novaeguinae*, Friar Bird.—Seen at Lae and Aitape.

*Lonchura* sp.—A sombre Finch was seen occasionally at Aitape. Tail, ventral surfaces and head—blackish or very dark brown. Wings—brown with faint speckling. Rump—pale buff. Bill—dark horn.

*Lonchura caniceps caniceps*.—This Finch was seen at Port Moresby.

*Lonchura castaneothorax sharpii*, Chestnut-breasted Finch.—This New Guinea form of the Australian species was seen at Lae and Aitape.

#### REFERENCE.

Mayr, E. 1941. List of New Guinea Birds.