

## A SURVEY OF THE BIRDS OF "NIAS ISLAND, SUMATRA

by

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### **Summary**

Details are given of a 17-day visit to Nias, off the west coast of mainland Sumatra. The author travelled around the island searching, in vain, for primary forest and assessing the bird communities of secondary forest and other habitats. Of twelve species recorded for the first time on the island, three (*Treron capellei*, *Nectarinia jugularis* and *Passer montanus*) are usually regarded as residents. It is postulated that the pigeons were possibly wandering birds from too; mainland, that the sunbirds have been overlooked in the past, and that the sparrows are recent colonists.

The continuing status of some 36 previously-recorded resident species, 23 usually associated with forest, that were not seen in 1990 is discussed. Of 25 endemic subspecies, 8 were not seen in 1990 and the survival of 3 of these is considered very doubtful.

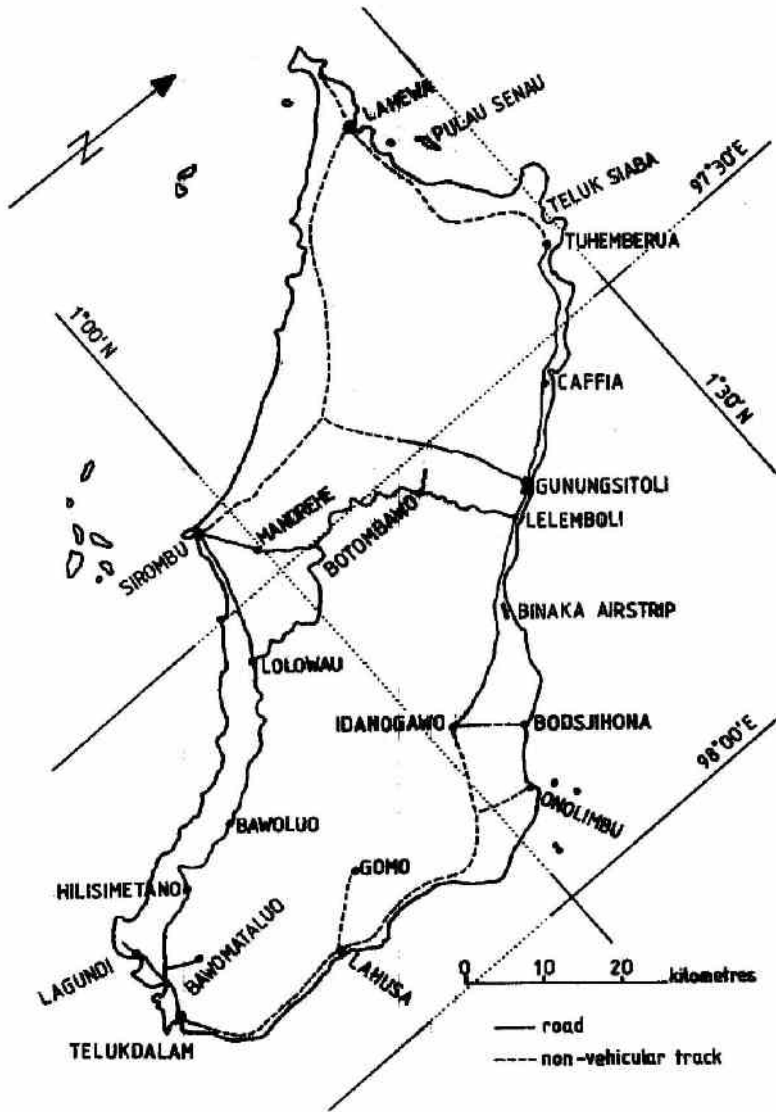
### **Introduction**

Nias is the largest of the chain of islands off the west coast of mainland Sumatra, lying parallel to and some 110 km from that coast. The island is about 125 km long and 40 km wide, with few significant irregularities to the coastline (see Figure 1). There are four groups of small offshore islands. Much of the island is hilly, with a maximum elevation of 885 m and a further ten or more separate summits of over 500 m.

In May 1990 I spent 17 days on the island. It was thought that no primary forest remained on the island and one of the main purposes of my visit was to determine the extent to which forest birds have been able to adapt to and survive in secondary habitats. Also I aimed to compile a comprehensive inventory of the birds by visiting as many habitats as possible.

### **Ornithological history**

The earliest collection of birds on Nias was made by Baron H.C.B. von Rosenberg in 1854. There were no further visits until Dr E. Modigliani made a collection for Count Salvador! during April to August 1886 (Satvadori 1887). J.Claine made a collection in 1891, W.Thomas, a missionary, collected during 1891-93, J.Z. Kannegieter collected during November 1895 to February 1896 (Buttikofer 1896), and H Raap collected during July to December 1897 (Hartert 1898, Blasmr 1901). During his long series of



collecting expeditions around Sumatra and its adjacent islands. Dr. W L Abbott visited Nias from autumn 1902 to spring 1903 and again in spring 1905 (Oberholser 1912, Ripley 1944). Subsequently there have been three collecting visits, by B. Lawrence briefly in July 1937 (Ripley 1944), by S.D-Ripley and F. Ulmer for twelve days in June 1939 (de Schauensee & Ripley 1941) and by F.B.Gill for one day in November 1963 (Gill 1969). There was no further ornithological study on Nias until my visit in May 1990.

### **Itinerary**

The majority of the few hundred annual tourists to Nias head for the southern part of the island, either for the famous surfing conditions at Lagundi or to visit the fascinating village of Bawomataluo to see the huge traditional wooden houses and to watch the stone-jumping ceremonies. Other parts of the island receive extremely few or no tourists at all.

There is a very limited system of vehicular roads along which extremely delapidated small buses provide a slow and irregular service. Access to most parts of the island is extremely difficult, with rough tracks negotiable at best by motorbike and more often by foot only, with the frequent rains often making the tracks almost impassable. Additionally there are numerous river crossings to negotiate.

After my arrival in the capital town, Gunungsitoli, on 2 May 1990, I took the five-hour boat journey next day around to Lahewa where I stayed for four nights. This small town at the northwest corner of Nias has no road link with the rest of the island. I returned by boat to Gunungsitoli on 7 May and then travelled by bus to the hamlet village of Botombawo, where I stayed two nights before continuing by bus over the centre of the island and south to Telukdalam. After exploring areas around Telukdalam and Lagundi, I travelled by motorbike along the coast to Lahusa and inland almost to Gomo, staying there for one night before returning by the same route to Telukdalam and on next day by bus back to Gunungsitoli. My last excursion took me south by bus to Idanogawo and from there by motorbike and on foot to the small coastal village of Bodsjihona: here I incurred an injury which compelled me to return next day to Gunungsitoli and to leave Nias two days later.

### **Habitats**

Nias is a heavily populated island with a consequent mosaic of man-made habitats. Although I was only able to sample small areas of habitat during my visit, my travels about the island enabled me to overview large expanses of the distant hills and valleys. Many of these areas are completely denuded and those that are not comprise a patchwork of agricultural clearings and secondary woodland. Northern and all coastal areas are dominated by coconut palms, dominated in the hinterland by rubber and in the south by coconut palms and bananas. The few tiny fragments of natural forest are restricted to

extremely steep, inaccessible crags and ridges. However, I saw no areas of forest large enough to support a genuine forest community of birds. Along the north coast, east of Lahewa, some areas of swamp forest remain, although the area that I reached had been selectively logged and had surrounding ditches. Scrubby mangroves remain at Lahewa, in and around Telukdalam and more extensively between Bodsjihona and Qnolimbu, and probably at two or three other sites along the northeast coast and possibly elsewhere.

The secondary woodland around Botombawo is extensively underplanted with rubber trees, and it is very likely that a similar situation occurs throughout the inland hills. Many of the steep-sided gullies support strips of dense understorey, but all workable slopes seem to be given over to rubber, cloves and bananas.

#### Systematic list of birds

The following list cites all my observations in May 1990, together with details of the early records of these species. All species on the Nias list that were not recorded in 1990 are listed in the Appendix. It should be noted that in the early references, it is often not clear how many specimens of each species were collected and, indeed, whether all species collected are mentioned in the accounts. Collection sites are given where known for some of the less common species, though several place-names are ambiguous and several cannot be located at all on currently available maps of Nias.

Grid co-ordinates of known cited localities are:

Teluk Siaba	1°30'N. 97°24'E.	Onolimbu	1°02'N. 97°52'E.
Pulau Senau	1°27'N. 97°14'E.	Gomo	0°50'N. 97°9'E.
Lahewa	1°24'N. 97°10'E.	Lahusa	0°45'N. 97°2'E.
Caffia	1°22'N. 97°32'E.	Hilisimetano	0°40'N. 97°03'E.
Gunungsitoli	1°17'N. 97°36'E.	Bawomataluo	0°37'N. 97°46'E.
Leiemboli	1°15'N. 97°32'E.	Lagundi	0°35'N. 97°43'E.
Botombawo	1°11'N. 97°32'E.	Tehikdalam	0°34'N. 97°48'E.
Bodsjihona	1°05'N. 97°49'E.	Idanogawo	1°01'N. 97°46'E.

Uncertain cited localities are:

Ombolata (at least six villages with this name)	Lahagoe (probably the central hills)
Mojeia River (two rivers with this name)	Bawolovalani
Hili Madjajan (probably inland north Nias)	Lafau
Hili Madjeio (probably the same as Hili Madjajan)	Tadora

All records that give only date and month (May) refer to records in May 1990.

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*. A captive immature found in Telukdalam on 10 May had maximum chord wing length of 580mm; by next day its raptors had disposed of it, possibly so for rood. The first record for Nias.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*. Collected by Rosenberg: in 1990, 3-4 seen around Lahewa, 3-7 May, two near Telukdalam on 11 May and two at Bodsphona on 16 May.

**Great Egret** *Casmeradius albus*. Two at Bodsjihona on 15-16 May 1990, tike first record for:Nias.

**Reef Egret** *Egretta sacra*. Collected by Modigliani and Kannegieter: in 1990 at least 2 seen along coast between Lagundi and Lahusa during 11-13 May and 3 at Bodsjihona on 15 May.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striatus*. Collected by Rosenberg and Kannegieter: in 1990 one or two seen at Lahewa during 3-7 May.

**Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*. Collected at Gunungsitoli by Modignani in April and by Abbott in March: in 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 3 May.

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modignani and Kannegieter. During May 1990, seen occasionally at Lahewa, Gunungsitoli, Bodsphona, Telukdalam, Lagundi and Lahusa; probably thinly distributed in coastal areas around whole island.

**White-bellied Sea-eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster*. Observed or collected by Abbott but reference! to this species by other collectors not traced. During May 1990, two - three adults and a juvenile: were seen around Gunungsitoli and one or two adults were seen at Telukdalam

**Crested Serpent-eagle** *Spilornis cheela*. Collected by Thomas, Kannegieter and Ripley. During May 1990, occasional angles seen at all localities visited.

**Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine and Kannegieter. In 1990 one seen at Botombawo on 9 May and a juvenile seen between Lahusa and Gomo on 12 May.

**Wandering Whistling-duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata*. Flock of 16 seen at Telukdalam on 10-11 May, the first record for Nias. These birds were observed on three occasions, at rest and in flight, in scrubby mangrove pools on the edge of the town: dark brown crown reaching to eye level and dark brown hindneck; whitish throat; face, neck and breast buff becoming rich rufous on belly and flanks, with faint dark scaling on breast; short black and buff flank plumes; buffy uppertail coverts; dull chestnut forewing, rest of wing blackish-brown.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Abbott. In 1990, several seen at Lahewa during 3-7 May, but none elsewhere.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*. Collected by Rosenberg, Kannegieter and Raap: in 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 7 May.

**Lesser Sand-plover** *Charadrius mongolus*. ca. 12 seen at Bodsjihona on 15th May 1990, the first record for Nias.

**Greater Sand-plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Raap: in 1990 five seen at Bodsjihona on 15th May.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. Collected by Raap: in 1990 three seen at Lahewa on 4 May and six seen at Bodsjihona on 15-16 May.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus*. Collected by Raap: in 1990 two seen at Bodsjihona on 15 May.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*. 10 seen at Bodsjihona on 15 May 1990, the first record for Nias and the first May record for Sumatra.

**Rufous-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis*. Collected by Raap: in 1990 one at Bodsjihona on 15 May.

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons*. Three perched on flotsam northwest of Gunungsitoli on 3 May 1990 and two seen at Bodsjihona on 15 May 1990: the first records for Nias.

**Large Green Pigeon** *Treron capellei*. At least three seen in valley between Lahusa and Gomo on 13 May and 12 in fruiting tree near Bodsjihona on 16 May 1990: the first records for Nias. The first group was seen to fly into some trees on a densely-vegetated crag, with a single bird, perhaps one of the same group, seen nearby not long after. The second group was watched at close range for some time as they fed clumsily in a single large tree (thought to be a fig *Ficus* sp.) by the track. Very large, rather pale green pigeons, with thick pale greyish-green bill and striking yellow legs and feet, and conspicuous yellow wing-bar; males with diffuse orange breast band and chestnut undertail coverts, females with fainter breast band and buff undertail coverts; very dark tail wedge-shaped, with broad pale grey terminal band.

**Thick-billed Green Pigeon** *Treron curvirostra*. Collected by Abbott and Ripley: in 1990 a party I of five or six seen at Bodsjihona on 16 May was the only sighting.

**Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon** *Treron fulvicoilis*. Collected by Modignani, Clame and Abbott in 1990 one seen near Guningsitoli on 3 May.

**Pink-necked Green Pigeon** *Treron vemans*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modignani, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley. In May 1990 found to be very common in coastal areas around Lahewa, Tehikdalam, Lahuea and Bodsjihona, although none seen at Guningsitoli.

**Green Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula aenea*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley three seen at Bodsjihona on 16 May 1990, but none elsewhere.

**Mountain Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula badia*. Collected by Rosenberg: in 1990 four seen near Lahewa on 5 May, with two in the same place on 6 May. Seen in overhead flight at reasonably close range on both occasions, these huge pigeons were distinguished from *D. aenea* by the prominent pale buff undertail coverts and broad pale grey terminal tail band.

**Pied Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula bicolor*. Collected by Rosenberg and at Lelemboli by Modigliani in 1990 up to six seen daily at Lahewa during 3-7 May.

**Ruddy Cuckoo-dove** *Macropygia emiliana*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter: in 1990 several seen or heard near Lahewa on 6 May, several heard between Uhua and Gomo on 12 May and several heard near Bodsjihona on 16 May.

**Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica*. Collected by Modigliani and Ripley: in 1990 one seen between Telukdalam and Lahusa on 13 May.

**Red-breasted Parakeet** *Psittacula alexandri*. Collected by Rosenberg, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley. In 1990 the only sighting was of five in mangroves at Bodsjihona on 15 May, though the species was quite numerous as a cage-bird.

**Blue-crowned Hanging-parrot** *Loriculus galgulus*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Abbott. Found to be widespread in small numbers in May 1990.

**Plaintive Cuckoo** *Cacomantis merulinus*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley. Widespread and common in May 1990.

**Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani and Kannegieter. Seen or heard in all locations visited during May 1990, and clearly widespread.

**Edible-nest Swiftlet** *Aerodramus fuciphagus*. Collected by Ripley: no other records in early collections. During May 1990 detailed observations of large gatherings of dark bellied swiftlets at Gunungsitoli and at Lahewa suggested two species were involved, presumed to be *A. fuciphagus* and the next species, while at Botombawo and in the Telukdalam area all sightings were considered to relate to this species.

**Black-nest Swiftlet** *Aerodramus maximus*. Listed for Nias by Ripley (1944), no other records in early collections. Large numbers, thought to be this species, observed at Lahewa and Gimungsitoli during May 1990 (see above).

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine and Ripley: in 1990 one near Telukdalam on 11 May was the only sighting.

**Grey-rumped Tree-swift** *Hemiprocne longipemis*. Collected by Raap and Abbott, During May 1990 several were seen at Gunungsitoli, around Lahewa, near Telukdalam and at Bodsjihona, so clearly the species is widespread.

**Orange-breasted Trogon** *Harpactes oreskios*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley. One seen east of Lahewa on 6 May 1990.

**Blue-eared Kingfisher** *Alcedo meninting*. Collected at Gunungsitoli by Kannegieter and. at Lafau by Abbott: in 1990 at least two seen at Telukdalam on 13 May.

**Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ceyx erithacus*. Collected at Gunungsitoli and Lelemboli by Modigliani in April, July and August and found by Ripley to be not uncommon in 1939: in 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 4 May and one seen between Lahusa and Gomo on 13 May.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher** *Pelargopsis capensis*. Collected at Bawolovalani by Modigliani in May 1886: in 1990 two east of Lahewa on 6th, one at Lahewa on 7th and one near Lagundi on 11 May.

**Collared Kingfisher** *Halcyon chloris*. Collected by Rosenberg and Kannegieter: in May 1990 found to be numerous around Lahewa, though none seen at any other localities.

**Asian Pied Hornbill** *Anthracoceros albirostris*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 6-7 May, but none seen elsewhere.

**Blue-eared Barbet** *Megalaima australis*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Abbott and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be common and widespread.



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**Rufous Piculet** *Sasta abnonnis*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990 of seen at Lahewa on 4 May.

**Banded Woodpecker** *Pscus miniaceus*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley in 1990 one seen near Telukdatim on 11 May, at Gunungsitoli on 14 May and one near Bodsjihona on 16 May.

**Buff-rumped Woodpecker** *Meiglyptes tristis*. Collected by Modigliani, Abbotti and Ripley: a; 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 5 May and two there on 6 May.

**Buff-necked Woodpecker** *Meiglyptes tukki*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Raaf and Kipley: in 1990 one seen at Gunungsitoli on 14 May.

**White-bellied Woodpecker** *Dryocopus javensis*. Collected by Claine, by Kannegieter ani Abbott: in 1990, three seen near Lahewa on 6 May.

**Grey-capped Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos canicapillus*. Collected by Rosenberg and Abbott: iK 1990 four seen at Lahewa on 7 May and four between Lahusa and Gomo on 13 May.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*. Listed by Ripley (1944) and Van Marle & Voous (1988) as a regular migrant, though not included in any of the early collectors' lists. None seen during May 1990, which is outside the expected season.

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Abbott, and breeding noted by Ripley. In May 1990 found to be widespread and common.

**Pied Triller** *Lalage nigra*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Abbott: in 1990 a pair seen in Gunungsitoli on 2-3 May and another near Gunungsitoli on 18 May, but none seen elsewhere.

**Black-beaded Bulbul** *Pycnonotus atriceps*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kaimepeter and Ripley. In May 1990 found to be common in all areas visited except Lahewa, in the northwest, where none was seen during 3-7 May despite apparently suitable habitat

**Olive-winged Bulbul** *Pycnonotus plumosus*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley. In May 1990 found to be widespread and very common, certainly the most numerous bulbul. Dependant fledged young seen at Botombawo on 9 May.

**Cream-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus simplex*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley. In 1990 two seen in Gunungsitoli on 3 May and several at Botombawo on 8-9 May, but none seen elsewhere.

**Red-eyed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus brunneus*. No records until collected by Ripley. In 1990 *ca.* 20 seen at Gunungsitoli on 3 May, several at Botombawo on 9 May and *ca.* 20 near Bodsjihona on 16 May, but none seen around Lahewa, in the northwest, and none seen at the south end of the island.

**Spectacled Bulbul** *Pycnonotus erythrophthalmus*. Collected at the Modjeia River by Abbott in March 1905, but no other early records traced: in 1990 *ca.* 10 seen at Lahewa on 4 May, two east of Lahewa on 6 May, several at Botombawo on 8-9 May and two between Lahusa and Gomo on 13 May.

**Common Iora** *Aegithina tiphia*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley. In May 1990 found to be quite common around Lahewa and Botombawo and along valley between Lahusa and Gomo.

**Asian Fairy Bluebird** *Irena puella*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990 three seen between Lahusa and Gomo on 13 May but none seen elsewhere.

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*. One seen at Lahewa on 4 May 1990, the first record for Nias. Observed at ranges down to 20 m for about 30 minutes; uniform rufous-brown upperparts, slightly richer on tail; whitish forehead and clear white supercillium above bold blackish mask *Scorn*, bill through eye to sides of nape; buff underparts with very faint dark barring on lower flanks; no white in wings or tail.

**Oriental Magpie-robin** *Copsychus saularis*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be common in all coastal areas but not seen in the hills around Botombawo.

**White-rumped Shama** *Copsychus malabaricus*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be widespread and common. A pair was feeding a fledgling at Botombawo on 8 May.

**Common Stone-chat** *Saxicola torquata*. One seen at Lahewa on 5 May 1990, the first record for Nias and only the second record for Sumatra and Indonesia (Dymond 1993).

**Oriental Reed-warbler** *Acrocephalus orientalis*. One seen at Lahewa on 5 May 1990, the first record for Nias. Large warbler with olive-brown upperparts, bold whitish supercilium and dark line from bin through eye tapering to rear of ear-covert; underparts whitish with faint breast streaks and buffy wash on breast and especially flanks; primary projection nearly equal to length of exposed tertials; taint pale tips to outer two pairs of tail feathers at least; longish, strong bill.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*. Collected by Raap, but not listed in other early collections: in May 1990 found to be fairly common in rice paddies, grassy and swampy areas at Lahewa, Tehikdalam and Bodsjihona, but not seen elsewhere.

**Yellow-bellied Prinia** *Prinia flaviventris*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be common in coastal areas but absent from the hilly area around Botomhawa.

**Ashy Tailorbird** *Orthotomus ruficeps*. Collected by Modigliani, by Kannegieter, Abbott, Ripley and Gill: in May 1990 found to be widespread and common with fledged young seen at Lahewa on 4 May.

**Grey-headed Flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Abbott: in 1990 one seen in secondary woodland near Guirangsitoli on 3 May and two in rubber plantation at Botombawo on 8 May, but no others.

**Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be fairly common in all localities visited, including dense mangrove on Pulau Senau, of Lahewa. A pair was feeding fledged young at Botombawo on 9 May.

**Asian Paradise-flycatcher** *Tersiphone paradisi*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990 one female seen at Lahewa on 6 May, but no others.

**Mangrove Whistler** *Pachycephala grisola*. Collected by Modigliani and Ripley: in 1990, singing male seen in rubber plantation at Gunungsitoli on 3 May, several seen or heard around Lahewa during 4-7 May and several heard at Bodsjihona on 15 May.

**Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker** *Prionochilus maculatus*. Collected by Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in 1990 several seen at Botombawo on S-9 May, but none at any coastal sites visited.

**Orange-bellied Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum trigonostigma*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be very common in all localities,

**Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum cruentatum*. Collected by Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990, two seen near Lahewa on 6 May and a pair near Lahusa on 13 May.

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**Brown-throated Sunbird** *Anthreptes malacensis*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be widespread and common in all localities.

**Ruby-cheeked Sunbird** *Anthreptes singalensis*. Collected by Modigliani, Kannegieter and Ripley: in 1990 a pair with a juvenile seen at Botombawo on 8 May, but none seen at any coastal localities.

**Purple-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia sperata*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in 1990 several seen at Gunungsitoli on 2 May, two at Lahewa on 4 May and one at Bodsjihona on 16 May.

**Copper-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia calcostetha*. Collected at Lagundi by Raap in December 1897, but not included in other early collections: in May 1990 found to be very common in mangroves near Lahewa, including on Pulau Senau, with several seen in mangroves at Telukdalam and along nearby coast, including a female at a nest, and several in swampy scrub at Bodsjihona.

**Olive-backed Sunbird** *Nectarinia jugularis*. In 1990 several seen at Gunungsitoli on 3 May and a pair north of the town on 18 May, a male at Lahewa on 3 May and *ca.* 8 there on 4 May, and several east of Lahewa on 6 May: the first records for Nias. Males identified by olive upperparts, blue-black throat and breast, bright yellow belly and broad white tips to tail feathers, especially the outer pair; females identified by association, and by deep yellow underparts including throat and white in tail as in males.

**Crimson Sunbird** *Aethopyga siparaja*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley: in May 1990 found to be widespread and fairly common.

**Little Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera longirostra*. Collected by Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott and Ripley: in 1990 several seen in Gunungsitoli on 3 May, *ca.* 6 at Botombawo on 9 May, two near Lahusa on 13 May and one at Bodsjihona on 16 May; but none seen in Lahewa area.

**Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata*. Collected by Modigliani and Claine: in 1990 found to be fairly widespread with several at Gunungsitoli on 3 and 14 May, *ca.* 10 near Lahewa on 6 May, two near Lahusa on 13 May and several at Bodsjihona on 16 May.

**White-headed Munia** *Lonchura maja*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Abbott, Ripley and Gill. In May 1990 found to be widespread and very common, with flocks of up to 50 seen at Lahewa and Telukdalam and smaller numbers at many other localities. Nest-building observed at Gunungsitoli on 3 May and fledged young at Lahewa on 4 May.

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*. co. 15 seen daily at Lahewa during 3-7 May 1990, die first | record for Nias and for any of the West Sumatran islands.

**Asian Glossy Starling** *Aplonis panayensis*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine and I Kannegieter: in May 1990 up to 10 seen daily in Lahewa area, a few each day around Telukdalam I and Lagundi, along coast to Lahnsa and inland to Gomo, and at Bodsjihona.

**Hill Myna** *Gracula religiosa*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley. Perhaps surprisingly, none was seen in May 1990: nest-boxes were seen along the valley between Lahusa and Gomo, but no signs of occupation. According to residents the Nias subspecies is famous for its qualities as a talking bird and is much sought, selling untrained for Rp 100,000 (about £ 30).

**Greater Racquet-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus*. Collected by Rosenberg, Kannegieter and Abbott: in 1990 one seen at Lahewa on 5 May, ca. 8 near Lahewa on 6 May, including recently fledged young, and several near Bodsjihona on 15-16 May.

**Slender-billed Crow** *Corvus enca*. Collected by Rosenberg, Modigliani and Kannegieter: in 1990 a few seen duly in the vicinity of Lahewa, including dependant young, but none seen elsewhere.

## Discussion

My 17-day visit to Nias was much too brief to establish with certainty the presence or absence of all known resident bird species. However, it gave me a sufficient insight to be able to postulate on possible losses as a result of deforestation.

The systematic list details 162 species as having occurred on Nias, but only 107 can be classified as possible or confirmed residents. Of these 71 were observed during May 1990, including three new records for the island: Large Green Pigeon, Olive-backed Sunbird and Tree Sparrow. The occurrence of Large Green Pigeon in two locations some 30 km apart in southern Nias is puzzling. In the west Sumatra islands it has previously only been recorded from Siberut in August 1982 and Telo in August 1985 (Holmes 1994), so perhaps all these sightings are of birds wandering from mainland Sumatra. Olive-backed Sunbirds were observed around Gunungsitoli and Lahewa: previously recorded only from Enggano and the Mentawai group, the species is most likely to have been overlooked on Nias in the past, rather than to have recently colonized the island. Tree Sparrows, however, were observed only at Lahewa. It is almost certainly a recent colonist from mainland Sumatra, although possibly ship-assisted. The species' range in southeast Asia and Oceania has been expanding for many years (Summers-Smith, pers. comm.).

Of the 36 possible or previously confirmed resident species not located during May 1990, 13 are found in coastal, urban, open country or agricultural habitats and 23 are associated wholly or largely with forest habitats. Of these 23 species, those most likely to have become extinct on Nias are Black Eagle (collected just once, in 1854), Blyth's Hawk-eagle (collected just once, in 1886) and Wallace's Hawk-eagle (an endemic subspecies, *S. n. stresemanni*, collected twice, in 1897 and 1905); all of these eagles are thought to require a substantial area of undisturbed forest

The status of the other 20 'Forest' species is a matter of conjecture. Hill Myna certainly still breeds, though under severe pressure from trappers and remaining secondary forest habitats could probably sustain Rufous Woodpecker (endemic subspecies *C. b. celaenephis*). Crimson-winged Yellownap (endemic subspecies *P. p. soligae*). Greater Green Leafbird (endemic subspecies *C. s. parvirostris*) and Scaly-crowned Babbler (endemic subspecies *M. c. niasense*). The elusive Red-legged Crake may survive in areas of remnant swamp forest in the north of the island, though the single specimen collected in August 1897 may only have been a migrant. Other very doubtful survivors are Jambu Fruit-dove (collected just once, in 1897), Nicobar Pigeon (collected in 1854 only). Ruddy Kingfisher (collected in 1854 only). Black-winged Hemipus (collected in 1854 only), Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (endemic subspecies *C. s. kannegieteri*, collected in 1896 only) and Fiery Minivet (collected in 1895 only). The Green Broadbill was collected in three different years at three well-separated localities, but as primary forest no longer exists in those areas the species' survival must be very doubtful. Of the three listed owls, Buffy Fish-owl (endemic sub-species *K. k. minor*) is perhaps most able to adapt to man-affected riverine habitats and could survive in remnant mangroves also, and Oriental Bay Owl may be able to hang on in secondary forest where densely-vegetated gullies remain, but the strictly forest-inhabiting Brown Wood-owl (endemic subspecies *S. I. niasensis*) must be a very doubtful survivor. Both Malaysian Eared Nightjar (collected in 1897 and 1903) and Whiskered Tree-swift (collected as recently as 1963) could still survive in the larger areas of secondary woodland. There appears to be plenty of suitable secondary habitat for Yellow-eared Spiderhunter (collected in 1897 and 1905). The occurrence of Plain Sunbird, based on a single specimen collected in 1886, is considered doubtful.

Of the 13 other possible or confirmed resident species not recorded during May 1990, much the most likely to have become extinct is Straw-headed Bulbul (collected just once, in 1854). The Great-billed Heron (collected in 1854 and 1897) could still be present in inaccessible mangrove areas, and both Malaysian Plover and Beach Thick-knee may still occur in the remote coastal habitats or on offshore islets. The Intermediate Egret, Purple Swampphen and Savanna Nightjar are included in the list on the basis of single specimens collected in 1854: both the egret and the swampphen could have been wanderers from elsewhere although some lush swamp habitat remains to the east of Lahewa in the north of the island, while the nightjar could still be present but undetected due to its nocturnal habits. There is plenty of suitable open-country and fragmented woodland habitat for Blue-throated Bee-eater to still be present and, indeed, it would be surprising if White-crowned Forktail did not continue to thrive in the hilly hinterland where streams and vegetated gullies abound. Despite no records in 1990

Black-naped Oriole must surely persist on Nias, but Baya Weaver (collected in 1886, 1891 and 1897) has probably disappeared, its population in Sumatra having declined (Marle & Voous 1988).

Some 17 subspecies endemic to Nias were recorded in 1990, as follows:

Crested Serpent Eagle <i>S. c. asturinus</i>	Blue-eared Barbel <i>M.a. Gigantorhina</i>
Crested Goshawk <i>A. t. niasensis</i>	Rufous Piculet <i>S.a. Magnirostris</i>
Thick-billed Green Pigeon <i>T. c. pega</i>	Buff-necked Woodpecker <i>M. t. infuscatus</i>
Cinnamon-headed Green Pigeon <i>T.f. melopogenys</i>	Oriental Magpie-robin <i>C.s. nesiarchus</i>
Cuckoo-dove <i>M. e. modigliani</i>	Ruddy Yellow-bellied Prinia <i>P.f. halistona</i>
Red-breasted Parakeet <i>P. a. prionica</i>	Asian Paradise-flycatcher <i>T. p. insularis</i>
White-bellied Swiflet <i>C. e. vanderbilti</i>	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker <i>D.c. niasense</i>
Orange-breasted Trogon <i>H. o. nias</i>	Little Spiderhunter <i>A. l. niasensis</i>
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher <i>C.e. Captus</i>	

As detailed earlier, the continued survival of eight subspecies endemic to Nias remains unproven, at least one being almost definitely extinct and two being doubtfully extant. They are:

Wallace's Hawk-eagle <i>S. n. Stresemanni</i>	Crimson-winged Yellownape <i>P. p. soligae</i>
Buffy Fish-owl <i>K. k. minor</i>	Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike <i>C.s. kannegieteri</i>
Brown Wood-owl <i>S. l. niasense</i>	Greater Green Leafbird <i>C.s. parvirostris</i>
Rufous Woodpecker <i>C b. celaemphis</i>	Scaly-crowned Babbler <i>M. c. - masense</i>

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#### **Appendix. Species on the Nias list that were not recorded in 1990 (with collectors listed)**

- Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. (Rosenberg. There have been no Sumatran records since the 1920s.
- Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana*. (Rosenberg and at Lagundi by Raap).
- Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*. (Rosenberg).
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. (Rosenberg).
- Chinese Pond-heron *Ardeola hacchus*. (Rosenberg).
- Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*. (Rosenberg).
- Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*. (Rosenberg).
- Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis*. (Kannegieter in November).
- Japanese Goshawk *Accipiter gularis*. (Kannegieter in November).
- Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*. (Rosenberg).
- Btyth's Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus alboniger*. (Gunungsitoli, Modigliani, May).
- Wallace's Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus nanus*. (Raap, and at the Mojeia River by Abbott in March 1905).
- Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. (Hili Madjeio, Kannegieter, November).
- Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. (Abbott, March 1903).
- Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica*. (Rosenberg).
- Red-legged Crake *Rallina fasciata*. (Hili Madjajan, Raap, August).
- Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*. (Rosenberg).
- Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. (Rosenberg).
- Malaysian Plover *Charadrius peronii*. (Listed by Ripley (1944) as collected on Nias in February, but the year and collector are unclear - Ripley's sole visit was in June 1939).
- Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. (Raap).
- Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. (Raap).
- Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. (Raap).
- Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucas*. (Rosenberg, Modigliani and Kannegieter).



- Ruddy Turnstone *Arenana interpres*. (Raap).  
Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*. (Rosenberg and Kannegieter).  
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. (Raap).  
Beach Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris*. (Tetukdalam, Raap).  
Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*. (Rosenberg).  
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*. (Lagundi, Raap, in December).  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*. (Collected or observed by Rosenberg and collected by Abbott).  
Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*. (Collected or observed by Rosenberg).  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*. (Collected or observed by Rosenberg).  
Jambu Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus jambu*. (Hili Madjajan, Raap).  
Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica*. (Lagundi, by Rosenberg where noted as common).  
Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*. (Kamiegieter, winter 1895-96).  
Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*. (Lahague, by Kannegieter in February 1896).  
Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*. (Kannegieter and Abbott).  
Asian Koel *Emdynamis scolopacea*. (near Gunungsito, Modigliani, August 1886).  
Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius*. (Gunungsitoli by Kannegieter, and at Huisimetano by Ripley).  
Buffy Fish-owl *Ketupa ketupa*. (Gunungsitoli and Lelemboli by Modigliani, and at Gunungsitoli and Lahague by Kannegieter).  
Brown Wood-owl *Strix leptogrammica*. (Gunungsitoli and Lelemboli by Modigliani, Gunungsitoli by Kannegieter, and two birds by Lawrence in July 1937).  
Malaysian Bared Nightjar *Eurostopodus temminckii*. (Raap, Abbott).  
Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis*. (Rosenberg).  
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. (Kannegieter, January).  
Whiskered Tree-swift *Hemiprocne comata*. (Kannegieter, Ripley and Gill).  
Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*. (Listed by Buttikofer (1896) as collected by Rosenberg).  
Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*. (Kannegieter).  
Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis*. (Rosenberg, Kannegieter).  
Common Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*. (Rosenberg, Kannegieter and Abbott).  
Rufous Woodpecker *Ceolus brachyurus*. (Hili Madjeio by Kannegieter, and at Lafau by Abbott).  
Crimson-winged Yellownape *Picus puniceus*. (Rosenberg, Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter, Raap and Ryley).  
Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis*. (Lelemboli by Modigliani, and at Hilli Madjeio and Lahague by Kannegieter).  
Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*. (Hili Madjeio, Kannegieter, November).  
Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis*. (Teluk Siaba, by Abbott, March 1903).  
Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*. (Hili Madjeio, by Kannegieter in November).  
Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. Listed by Ripley (1944) as collected on Nias, though not included in any of the early collectors' lists.  
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cirerea*. (Kannegieter).  
Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (Rosenberg, Modigliani and Kannegieter).

- Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina striata*. (Lahague, by Kannegieter).
- Fiery Minivet *Pericrocotus igneus*. (Hili Madjeio, by Kannegieter).
- Black-winged Hemipus *Hemipus hirundinaceus*. (Rosenberg).
- Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*. (Rosenberg).
- Greater Green Leafbird *Chloropsis sonnerati*. (Modigliani, Claine, Kannegieter and Ripley).
- Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*. (Rosenberg, and by Kannegieter in January 1896).
- White-crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti*. (Ombolata and Leiemboli by Modigliani, and at Hili Madjeio by Kannegieter).
- Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*. (Two collected at Hili Madjeio by Kannegieter in December).
- Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron cinereum*. (Modigliani, Claine, Abbott and Ripley).
- Arctic Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*. (Hili Madjeio, Kannegieter in December).
- Plain Sunbird *Anthreptes simplex*. (One apparently collected at Leiemboli by Modigliani on 29 July 1886; there are no other records for Nias, nor for any of the west Sumatran islands, so perhaps verification of the specimen should be sought).
- Yellow-eared Spiderhunter *Arachnothera chrysogenys*. (Raap, Abbott). Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*. (Modigliani, Claine and Raap). Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*. (Rosenberg, Kannegieter).
- Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchus*. (Van Marle & Voous (1988) list Nias as a site for this species, referring to Buttikofer 1896:188. Later in the same paper, in his "Complete List of the Birds of Nias as far as they are known to date", Buttikofer only includes *C. tenuirostris* = *enca*. The text for the two species, pp. 185-189, implies considerable taxonomic confusion over specimens from other locations, and as there are no records for other west Sumatran islands, the inclusion of *C. macrorhynchus* for Nias seems tenuous).