

EDITORIAL

On my first visit to Indonesia in 1970, it felt as if I was almost the only ornithologist in the country. Any ornithological literature was a luxury, far above a useful field guide. Anywhere east of Wallace's Line was a blank on the map. Today, by contrast, there is a wealth of literature, and with the promised publication of a Wallace handbook, there will very soon be a modern field guide for every region of the country. While problems of identification will always be a challenge, today's ornithologists will be enabled to concentrate more on determining distribution and status.

It is now nearly ten years since *Kukila* reappeared, with the issue of Volume 2 No. 1 in May 1986, and it is an appropriate time to look back over the achievements of this decade. *Kukila* has, we hope, taken its place among the World's regional ornithological media, during a period that has seen more progress made in ornithological studies in Indonesia than during the previous several decades together. We believe that *Kukila* has played a significant role in promoting this development and in putting Indonesia on the ornithological map. It was directly responsible for the production of the first definitive checklist of the birds of Indonesia, broken down into seven filioal regions. The results of many of the studies have been published in *Kukila*, and others have been reviewed in its pages. Several more are currently in preparation.

A general index for Volumes 2-7 inclusive accompanies this issue. This shows that a substantial data base has now been built up covering the birds of Indonesia, but the compilation also highlights the gaps. The avifauna of Java and Bali is perhaps the most critical, and while deforestation *sensu stricto* may have more or less stabilized in these islands, habitat degradation continues steadily, as will be seen later. During the past two or three decades, active deforestation has been most rampant in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi. It might be considered that these islands have been relatively well studied, but the two papers on Sumatra in the current issue are alone indicative of the gaps in coverage. It is almost frightening that one of the largest waterbird colonies in the Republic was discovered only last year, despite being in the well-developed and much surveyed province of Lampung (see Holmes & Rusila, this issue); both the first author and others have surveyed this region during the 1970s and 1980s without making the discovery.

The most remote, difficult, and expensive region for me visitor, and perhaps the most exciting, is Irian Jaya. We tend to place priorities here somewhat lower, but we should not be lulled into a sense of complacency by the many miles of pristine wilderness below the aircraft windows. Once development takes off in Irian Jaya, it will be very rapid, and it is imperative that we establish our priorities now. Survey data will be a pre-requisite for the recommendation of conservation areas, as a major component of development planning, before the heavy equipment starts rolling.

During this decade, Indonesia also gained notoriety as a world leader in numbers of threatened species, in *Birds to Watch* and now, after a much more thorough analysis, in *Birds to Watch 2*. This was an inevitable consequence of our rich diversity and lack of survey data, but a useful function was served in focusing attention on the dangers. We have tended to be somewhat more sanguine about the *current* situation, and indeed some of the single-island endemics considered possibly

severely at risk are now known to have reasonably healthy populations, e.g. the White-tipped Monarch *Monarches everetti* (see Dutson, this issue) and, we believe, the Black-chinned Monarch *M. boanensis* on Boano island off Seram.

However, many of these species are protected partially by the remoteness of their terrain. Experience from some other countries such as the Philippines shows that we must never be complacent about the future scenario. Whereas through the centuries, forest clearance has mainly been the result of the slow but relentless onslaughts of expanding rural populations, modern technology and an increasing thirst for short-term profits have the means to convert entire remote islands (whether physical islands or 'islands' of endemism) to sterile monocrops almost overnight

At least legislation is now in force in Indonesia for mandatory detailed environmental studies (*AMDAL*) prior to such development taking place, but in practice the capabilities are not yet well developed and the pressures for development are great. A starting point might be a requirement for *AMDAL* teams to consult with the Indonesian Ornithological Society or PHPA-BirdUfe Indonesia as a routine measure. This is where the role of Endemic Bird Areas and its even more important sequel, Important Bird Areas, would really come into its own.

The example of the Lampung wterbird colonies mentioned above serves to illustrate the vital urgency of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) project. Possibly the biggest contribution that visiting ornithologists can make would be to this project. Natura By the 'tourists' wish to visit the sites where they are ensured of seeing the most endemics with the greatest of ease. However, we appeal to those who have the means and the enterprise, and a smattering of the language, to get off the tourist trail and seek out new IBAs. The urgency of this cannot be too strongly stressed. Remaining habitats are going first. An appropriate medium for this purpose would be the *Kukila* Database/Atlas project, which is announced in the inside cover of each issue.

Several EBAs have now been discovered and surveyed, and many very poorly known species have recently been rediscovered or restudied. We could name, for example Wallace's Standardwing *Semioptera wallacei* on Halmahera, Wallace's Hanging-parrot *Loriculus flosculus* and Flores Monarch *Momrha sacerdotwn* on Flores, the Javan Scopsowl *Otus angelinae* (and, as very recently reported, the Flores Scopsowl *O. alfredi*), and the discovery of the home range of the Golden-fronted Bowerbird *Amblyornis flavijrons* in the Foja Mountains of Irian Jaya. Many others await rediscovery, such as, in Kalimantan, the Bornean Peacock-pheasant *Polyplectron schleiermeicheri*, or in Sumatra, Hoogerwerf's Pheasant *Lophura hoogerwerfi* or the Sunda Ground-cuckoo *Carpococcyx radiceus* (a major mystery species in both Borneo and Sumatra). But the ultimate demise may be difficult to avoid for our critical and endangered species such as the Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Storm's Stork *Cicoma stormi*, White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, Javan Hawk-eagle *Spizaetus barteisi* and White-winged Duck *Cairifia scutulata*, or others that are perhaps not yet acknowledged as being critical (in Indonesia), such as Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* and Bronze-winged Jacana *Meiopidius indica*. Although we must assume that a substantial spate of extinctions of lowland species has occurred in Java and Bali over the centuries, only two species are believed to have become extinct in recent

decades: the Javan Lapwing *Holoplopterus macropterva* and the Caerulean Paradise-flycatcher *Eutrchomyios rowleyi*. A final search on Sangihe Island for the latter species is scheduled this year. Apart from such striking examples, how is the overall health of the country's avifauna?

On the one hand, there is the massive bird trade, and rightly PHPA-BirdLife International Indonesia has made this one of its priority issues (a review of BirdLife's goals in Indonesia is presented following this editorial). The devastation of the parrot family that has been allowed to occur is deplorable, but there are many other *facets* of the trade that should not be permitted to continue. For some species, it may be already too late. The plight of the Yellow-crested Cockatoo *Coccyzoides sulphureus* is now well known, and while BirdLife reports that birds still exist (even the taxon on the Masalembu Islands), the species is beyond easy recovery. Will the lovely Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio* of the Sangihe-Talaud islands follow the same path? - it is probably already extinct on Sangihe and Siau, so the operators have now turned their attention to Talaud. Left alone, they will not cease until their profits have been made on the very last individual. Perhaps less well known is the fact that the Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus* has been virtually exterminated as a wild bird in Indonesia. My own last records were during 1978 in Sumatra and 1985 in Kalimantan, doubtless there are still pockets where this bird's song can yet be heard, but the avarice of the bird trade will soon dig *these* out. As yet, status of "conservation area" carries little guarantee of protection. Birds such as the White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*, Orange-headed Thrush *Zosterops citrina* and Banded Pitta *Pitta guajana* are always at risk. No bird is safe from this particularly unpleasant industry, which continues unabated. Ironic is the wholesale introduction of the Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora* by the trade, not just into Indonesian islands but SB Asia generally, to be succeeded by an equally wholesale decimation of the same feral populations, until its current virtual extinction. Unless new ethics are instilled quickly, one dreads to visualize the plight of the Irianese and Moluccan avifauna once development really takes off there.

There is an unpleasant two-way passage. While endemics and song birds come in from the outer Islands, the popular cage birds of Java are carried back out. Although the Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* presumably arrived under its own initiative (but with man-assisted passages) in the Wallacean region and more recently Biak, a sighting earlier (his year of three Sooty-headed Bulbuls *Pycnonotus aurigaster* near Biak airport was even less welcome. The risks that would be incurred from the introduction, through accident or ignorance, of monkeys on Irian Jaya, for example, would be unthinkable.

There may be other new arrivals, none of them welcome. A House Crow *Corvus splendens* has already reportedly 'disembarked' at Krakatao, and it can be only a matter of time before a population becomes established at Tanjung Priok (Jakarta's port) and other ports. This might not be so dismaying if it is accompanied by a concomitant increase in Koels *Eudynamis scolopacea*, but there may no longer be a resident gene stock around by that time to resupply the new niche.

A second cause of concern is assumed to be farm chemicals, although there is little conclusive evidence. This must be the reason for the demise of the Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* in Java, perhaps associated with the use of chemicals in brackish water fishponds that now replace the mangroves around much of the coast. The bird is still abundant on the opposite shores of Kalimantan where there are few ponds. The editor has also noted a decline in other open-country raptors in the Jakarta hinterland over the past two decades, such as the Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* and Spotted Kestrel *Falco moluccensis*, and probably the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* has followed the same path. Other population retractions are more enigmatic. Has anyone else noted an apparent decline in the Asian Glossy Starling *Aploms panayensis*, at least in western Indonesia, or is this a subjective opinion? Trapping is unlikely to be a reason, so what complex reaction to environmental factors might be at play? How often is the Black Drongo *Dicrurus assimilis* now seen around Jakarta's hinterland?

In Europe, it has been estimated (see *Birds to Watch 2*, p.22) that 25% of species have experienced a decline of more than 20% in over one-third of their populations in the past 20 years. In Europe, however, there is an army of amateur ornithologists that collect the field data. Here in Indonesia, at the present state of development of the hobby, we can only make subjective guesses, but these tend to be frightening. The rate of forest clearance in the Outer Islands of Indonesia is matched in Java and Bah by the sheer rate of urbanization and industrialization. It was not so many years ago that I would see storks from my office window in central Jakarta. We should now be monitoring the breeding populations of waterbirds at Pulau Rambut and Pulau Dua in order to determine the impact of the steadily continuing reduction in their mainland feeding grounds. Jakarta's hinterland is unrecognizable compared to my first run up the road to Bogor over twenty years ago. At that time, one might still see Pied Hombills *Anthracoceros albirostris* in Bogor, and it was not too many years previously that my co-editor used to see the skies over Bogor blackened by Oriental Pratincoles *Glareola mald-varum* on migration. To the present staff of BirdLife Indonesia in their Bogor office, such treats are difficult to visualize.

At the same time, we should not focus only on our resident fauna. We must assume that loss of habitat in China and elsewhere on mainland Asia is at least as rapid as it is here, while the iniquities of the bird trade are emphasized by the enormous volumes of Chinese birds in the bird market. Your little "one-cage family", somewhere in the nether regions of Java is just as likely to have a Black-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax chinensis* in a bird cage as it is to have a local bulbul. Subjectively we believe that the decline in population of many northern migrants is phenomenal, such as the pratincole mentioned above, but firm data are completely lacking. The annual census of wetland birds throughout Asia is just a start in rectifying this omission.

We are far from understanding the causes for population declines. All too readily we blame the humble catapult and air rifle, but in fact the use of air guns is now illegal, and firearms are extremely scarce. It is surely environmental degradation that is the culprit, whether this be loss of habitat, increased pressure from an inexorably growing human population, or the irrational use of farm chemicals, in the latter context, commendable progress is being made by the Government in the field of Integrated Pest Management, especially in the ricefields of Java, although perhaps the

positive invertebrates yet to be felt by the open country avifauna. But whatever the reasons, the habitats of Indonesia are infinitely more fragile than those of Europe. While an English woodland bird, the Blackbird *Turdus merula*, can adapt to a multi-storey carpark in central Bristol (personal observation), there are few woodland Black-naped Orioles *Oriolus chinensis* and Magpie-robins *Copsychus saularis* singing in downtown Jakarta, and few forest-dwelling White-rumped Shamas *Copsychus malabaricus* in the open rural areas. In only a few years, will we be commenting that the stunning forest avifauna of Halmahera and Irian Jaya is tragically unable to adapt to the new open environments of the agricultural settlement and monocrop tree plantations that will be established there? Can we visualize some ugly future scenario where the common open-country birds throughout Indonesia will be Sooty-headed Bulbuls and Tree Sparrows? The chance of the Lampung waterbird colonies being formally recognized as a conservation area is now high, but it must also be acknowledged that they lie in intractable deep-water swamps that are too expensive to reclaim. The hydrologists' recommendations that their most useful function is as a flood storage sunip have been accepted. Would the provincial authorities have been so ready to approve conservation if the land had other potential? In any case, reserve status is no guarantee of protection against the impacts of massive-scale developments on all the surrounding uplands.

The rate of change in Indonesia, as elsewhere SE Asia, is now so rapid, that we urgently need to set in place systems of monitoring. It is also imperative that we identify the Important Bird Areas as soon as possible, in order to be in a position to advise Government, and the consultants engaged in environmental analyses of development projects. It is, however, difficult to envisage where the manpower will come from, and voluntary assistance has a major role to play. Is it just a dream that one day Indonesia will have a Non-governmental Organization, similar to the British Trust for Ornithology perhaps, devoted to coordinating the activities of a band of dedicated volunteers collecting field data?

In the meantime, the trip reports of visiting ornithologists obviously concentrate on the rare species and the endemics that are the primary objective of making the visit. While it will be many years before Indonesia can ever embark on the load of surveys that are commonplace in developed countries, such as the Common Bird Census, Atlas schemes, Nest Record schemes and so on, we can make a start by asking visitors to also focus their attention on the common species. How many of you failed to notice that you failed to see the Glossy Starling and the Java Sparrow? A trip report that also includes a negative listing would serve a useful purpose. By this means we might be able to build up some form of monitoring of the health of populations.

The future scenarios are inevitably pessimistic. One of the worst might envisage a huge expanse of open country and monocrop plantations "from Sabang to Merauke", to borrow an Indonesian phrase, that contain just a handful of 'trash species', many of them non-indigenous. Hopefully there would be a number of well established reserves, recognized and managed by Government and devoted to ecotourism (with queues of visiting birdwatchers ticking off the endemics?). Is this picture too pessimistic? Wide areas of SE Asia already present a similar scene, including significant areas of Java and Bali. Hopefully the reserves will be adequate to preserve the bulk of

our endemics, or at least the smaller species. If we have the political will, there is still time to prevent the worst excesses of the future, but time is short.

The Indonesian Ornithological Society, and its bulletin *Kukila*, may have played a major role in putting Indonesia on the ornithological map, and in attracting the interest that led to an upsurge of activities, during a period which saw the establishment of institutions such as Asian Wetland Bureau and BirdLife International Indonesia Programme. From what has been said above, it is clear that this is only a beginning. The following guest feature outlines some of the approaches being taken to tackle the urgent problems

Proposed changes to *KUKILA*

A composite index of the first ten years of *Kukila*, volumes 2-7, accompanies this issue. Readers are reminded that Volume 1 was a non-scientific bulletin, partly in the Indonesian language, published in the mid-1970s, that was inaugurated by the tiny body of far-sighted individuals who had first formed the ICBP Indonesian National Section. In the future, it is proposed to produce *Kukila* once yearly, as a single issue volume of approximately double the thickness of the current issues. It is intended to improve the standard of production, with the inclusion of photographs. Thus volume 8 will be equated with *Kukila* 1995.

D.A.H.

GUEST FEATURE

THE PHPA/BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL-INDONESIA PROGRAMME: GOALS AND APPROACHES.

by

Paul Jepson, Programme Coordinator

The PHPA/BirdLife-Indonesia Programme (IP) is a collaborative conservation programme between the Ministry of Forestry, Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (PHPA) and BirdLife International, formalised in an Agreement approved by the Secretariat Kabinet, Republic of Indonesia. This paper provides a brief digest of the goals, structure, approaches and activities of the programme.