

First Nest and Egg of the Seram Mountain-Pigeon *Gymnophaps stalkerii* of Maluku

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Ringkasan. Ekspedisi ke Gunung Binaya (Seram, Maluku) pada bulan September 2006 menemukan sarang Merpatigunung Seram *Gymnophaps stalkerii*. Spesies merpati ini pada umumnya dianggap sejenis dengan Merpatigunung Mada *Gymnophaps mada*, tetapi berdasarkan perbedaan warna bulu sebaiknya jenis ini diperlakukan sebagai spesies tersendiri. Dalam catatan ini diberikan deskripsi pertama tentang sarang tersebut, yang berisi satu telur putih dan sangat menyerupai sarang dari spesies-spesies yang lain dalam marganya.

Until recently, the Seram Mountain-Pigeon – which is endemic to montane forests of the island bearing the same name – was considered a subspecies of the Long-tailed Mountain-Pigeon *Gymnophaps mada* together with the nominate Buru taxon *G. m. mada* (Baptista *et al.* 1997; Gibbs *et al.* 2001; Sukmantoro *et al.* 2007). Rheindt & Hutchinson (2007) proposed species status for the subspecies from Seram on account of pronounced plumage differences exceeding those of good species in closely related pigeon genera, and we here follow that taxonomic treatment. Nothing is known about the reproductive biology of either the Seram Mountain-Pigeon *G. stalkerii* or the Buru Mountain-Pigeon *G. mada* (Baptista *et al.* 1997; Gibbs *et al.* 2001).

During an expedition to Mount Binaya, central Seram, Maluku, our porters alerted us to the presence of a nest of a Seram Mountain-Pigeon on 13 September 2006. The location was within primary montane forest at an elevation of 2,300 m asl along the trail that leads to the summit of Mount Binaya. An adult individual was flushed from the nest on repeated occasions.

The nest was loosely lined with small twigs and moss, and placed within the crevice of a dead moss-covered horizontal branch at *c.* 2.5 m above the ground (Plate 1) and contained one white egg (Plate 2). The nest was discovered in the morning, but by the time we photographed it in the late afternoon, it had apparently been deserted, as the egg was cold. Disturbance by our expedition party, with people repeatedly passing the nest location, probably led to its abandonment.

Descriptions of nests and eggs are available for the remaining two species in the genus: the Papuan Mountain-Pigeon *G. albertisii* of New Guinea and the Pale Mountain-Pigeon *G. solomonensis* of the Solomon Islands. The Papuan Mountain-Pigeon has been observed to construct a platform of intertwined twigs

which it places 3.5-5.0 m above the ground in a small tree or high up in a forking branch or in the epiphytes of a tall tree (Majnep & Bulmer 1977). However another observed nest type constitutes a depression in short dry grass without added material on a grassy ledge near the top of a 5 m high rock face above the tree line (Smith 1976). A nest of this species somewhat intermediate between these two nest types was found on Mount Arfak in 1997; it had been built on a flat surface halfway in a 2 m tall *Vaccinium* (Bas van Balen, *in litt.*).

The nest of the Pale Mountain-Pigeon is a simple depression in moss or debris with a scant lining of dried grass or twigs placed about 3-7 m above the ground on horizontal moss-covered branches or in vine-entangled trunks of stunted trees (Gibbs *et al.* 2001; Hadden 2004). Therefore, the nest of the Seram Mountain-Pigeon closely resembles those of the Papuan and Pale Mountain-Pigeons. Both of these species lay single white eggs (Smith 1976; Majnep & Bulmer 1977; Hadden 2004), as we observed in the Seram Mountain-Pigeon. Our breeding record in mid-September contradicts Baptista *et al.* (1997), who suggest that "...as with other montane species in Seram, the breeding season is probably largely over by mid-August".

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Plate 1. Nest location on horizontal branch.



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Plate 2. Single white egg placed in nest.