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## Editorial

This is the first online issue of *Kukila*, and its publication marks yet another stage in the somewhat eclectic history of the journal. *Kukila* began its life in 1975 as an essentially avicultural journal, published under the auspices of the Indonesian Ornithological Society (IOS). Although Volume 1 comprised three issues, many years passed before the journal was resurrected in 1985, by which time Volume 1 was out of print. The next three volumes (Vols. 2-5, each comprising two to four issues) were printed as supplements to *Voice of Nature*, a nature conservation magazine published monthly by Yayasan Indonesia Hijau (Green Indonesia Foundation). Under the strong co-editorship of Derek Holmes and Prof Somadikarta, *Kukila* quickly established itself as the first regional ornithological journal in Southeast Asia, with an international reputation as the leading source of up-to-date information on Indonesian birds. The IOS took full control of the journal again in 1992, and Volume 6 saw the inclusion of three assistant editors (Paul Andrew, Bas van Balen and David Bishop), as well as an Advisory Board and two Production editors.

*Kukila* was published annually up to and including 2000 (Vol. 11), the year in which Derek Holmes tragically died. Having lost its senior editor, and a major contributor, the journal went into “limbo” as if mourning the loss of one of Indonesia’s most productive ornithologists and a formidable champion of conservation. *Kukila* was about to enter its next stage of development, involving a major change in appearance and format. Yet it took fully three years to prepare Volume 12 (2003). In 2004 ownership of the journal was officially transferred by Dr Made Sri Prana (Chairman, IOS) to the newly-fledged Indonesian Ornithologists Union (IdOU), but sadly, the next two volumes (13 and 14) were just as slow at fledging (2006 and 2009, respectively) as the previous volume, largely due to the excessive work commitments of the current editors. This irregularity in production undoubtedly reduced confidence in *Kukila* among readers and potential contributors.

Through the last decade, a major problem with publishing *Kukila* has been the costs of publication and distribution. During the editorial reign of Derek Holmes, non-government institutions had borne these costs, chief among them BirdLife International, to which *Kukila* owes a debt of gratitude. Publication of volumes 12 and 13 was made possible through the generous financial support of the Gibbon Foundation and Mr Joost Brouwer. The current editors are also very grateful to the Oriental Bird Club for donating the proceeds of UK sales of *Kukila*, which contributed significantly to the publication of Volume 14.

Given that *Kukila* had become a financial burden on the limited resources of its sponsors and IdOU, it was decided early in 2011 that Volume 15 should be published online, thereby avoiding printing costs. On the positive side, however, we hope that online publication will make the journal much more accessible to ornithologists both within and outside Indonesia. Moreover we are committed to making *Kukila* an annual bulletin again - just as it was in its heyday, with Derek

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at the helm. This may entail a decrease in the number of pages in future issues, but we believe that annual publication will increase confidence in the journal and hopefully the rate of manuscript submission.

*Kukila* is currently written in English, with only summaries (ringkasan) in Bahasa Indonesia. This linguistic restriction has effectively discouraged Indonesian ornithologists and birdwatchers from submitting manuscripts, despite the wealth of university theses written in Bahasa Indonesia that would make useful contributions to *Kukila*. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of articles published to date have come from English-speaking ornithologists and birdwatchers and, despite the explicit policy of the *Kukila* editorial board and IdOU of encouraging Indonesian ornithologists to contribute manuscripts for publication (see my editorial, volume 13), relatively few papers written by Indonesian ornithologists have been received to date. One solution is to make *Kukila* bilingual, and with a growing list of volunteer translators, it is hoped that future issues of *Kukila* will have both English and Indonesian versions.

### **A new era of Indonesian ornithology**

The establishment of the **Indonesian Bird Banding Scheme (IBBS)** in 2009 heralds a new era of ornithology in Indonesia. This is because most of what we know today about the lives of birds, their population demography, migratory routes and social organisation, are due almost solely to banding (or as the British prefer to say, ‘ringing’) studies. Although bird banding had been conducted in Indonesia many times in the past, by both Indonesian and foreign researchers (e.g. Waltert *et al.* 2005; Novarino *et al.* 2006), the bands used on birds were issued by foreign countries (e.g. Japan, Germany). From now on, birds captured for research in Indonesia will be fitted with bands issued by IBBS, having unique codes and numbers. This is good news for Indonesian researchers, who will have greater access to, and control over, data generated by banding studies carried out in their country. At the same time, however, it places the responsibility of assessing banders’ skills and managing banding projects at the feet of IBBS.

Project funds for the establishment of IBBS were secured by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) of the Australian Government’s Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) through the AusAID Public Sector Linkages Program in 2008. The aims of the project were to provide field training for up to 50 bird banding trainees from around Indonesia, and to establish a stock of bands and banding equipment for use in Indonesia, together with a centralised relational database to store all data collected under the auspices of IBBS. Vital to the success of IBBS are the administrative partner organisations - Pusat Penelitian Biologi (Research Centre for Biology), Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Sciences), and IdOU. The co-operative project of setting up the IBBS and the training of Indonesian banders commenced in July 2009 and is due to finish in May 2011.

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Many skills are required to conduct banding projects in an ethical and efficient way. Great care must be taken at all stages of the banding procedure, including the placement of mist-nets in areas that will not subject captured birds to excessive heat from the sun (extremely important in tropical regions, such as Indonesia), the extraction of birds from mist-nets so as to minimise the risk of injuries to the bird, the holding of birds in bags (with adequate ventilation and shade) for minimal periods before banding, and the application of bands of a suitable diameter (sufficiently wide to allow free movement along the tarsus, but narrow enough to prevent slipping over the toes). In many countries, such as Australia, prospective banders are required to undergo several years of training by experienced trainers before they can obtain a banding licence, and only after banding many birds and/or many species can such trainees acquire a permit to conduct independent banding studies without supervision. Animal Ethics Committees, which have been set up right around Australia, provide another filter to ensure that project proposals are scrutinised carefully, and that the proponents put the welfare of the bird above all other considerations in the field. This makes good sense: a bird that is healthy and wearing a good-fitting band when released is more likely to survive and be re-captured than one that suffers injuries before or after the banding process!

In all, five Training of Trainers (ToT) programs have been organised jointly by ABBBS and IBBS (Plate 1), and this issue of *Kukila* contains a report (Noske *et al.*, this issue) on the first of these programs, which took place during July 2009 at Gunung Halimun-Salak National Park, West Java. As well as succeeding in its primary aim of providing initial or additional training for ten Indonesian participants, the field program resulted in the collection of useful data on the annual cycle, moult and longevity of several species found in this part of West Java. These morphometric data will form the basis of further contributions arising from the ToT programs, such as articles on ageing and sexing selected species, in future issues of *Kukila*. Moreover, with this issue we have introduced an exciting new 'banding recovery' section into *Around the Archipelago* to provide information on the longevity and movements of banded birds that have been recaptured or sighted.

In the past bird banding in Indonesia has been utilised primarily to supplement surveys of specific sites, as it is well known that many shy or cryptic ground-dwelling or under-storey rainforest species are under-recorded, or missed entirely, if surveys are based on observations or bird vocalisations alone. Whilst the use of banding (or at least, mist-netting) in surveys is commendable, it must only be seen as a supplementary aid (albeit one that can yield much additional information). Many forest canopy-dwelling species are also easily missed if the observer is not familiar with their calls or behaviour. And this brings me to my critical message in this editorial: the best bird banders are good birdwatchers. It is very easy to misidentify a species in the hand if one does not have prior field experience with most of the species likely to be captured in the area under investigation. Noske *et al.* (in this issue) provides a clear illustration of this

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important point. The risk of misidentification rises further still if the captured individual exhibits a plumage that is not illustrated in any field guides (e.g. juvenile or immature plumage, or certain island races), or the taxonomy of the species in question has changed (e.g. a former subspecies is elevated to specific status, and has a new name). In short, the longer one spends birdwatching and becoming familiar with the field characteristics of local species, the less likely are mistakes to be made.

## References

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- Waltert, M., A. Mardiasuti & M. Mühlenberg. 2005. Effects of deforestation and forest modification on understorey birds in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. *Bird Conservation International* 15: 257-273.

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**Plate 1.** Participants of the IBBS ToT in Gunung Halimun-Salak National Park.