

Editorial

From the editors

What used to take Derek Holmes less than 12 months to collate, publish and distribute has taken the five of us nearly three years to prepare. The legacy of the previous eleven volumes of *Kukila* is perhaps no finer tribute to Derek's remarkable contribution to Indonesian ornithology over so many years. Volume 11 of *Kukila* was published November 2000. After a long delay, here at last is Volume 12!

In his last editorial Derek commented on the seemingly inexorable loss of lowland dipterocarp forests in Sumatra and Kalimantan. The Sundaic lowland forest was Derek's passion. We share his passion and find the loss of these wonderfully rich biotas truly heartbreaking. When data were being gathered for the first of organization's 'Birds to Watch' volume, few Sundaic lowland forest birds were candidates for inclusion because at that time there seemed, on the face of it, an inexhaustible supply of these 'vast lowland forests'. Two decades later we are faced with the potential, indeed highly likely, mass extinction of innumerable species as the last of the Sundaic lowland forest disappears. The reserve systems of Indonesia have come under increasing threat from illegal loggers, poachers and other forms of encroachment as they offer flimsy protection to a mere fragment of what once was. Conservationists have to be optimists but clearly we got things very, very wrong twenty years ago. Our optimism was misplaced and we need to learn from this.

As anyone who was there at the gestation of *Kukila* will know, this journal has grown increasingly in size, quality of content and stature. In fact, a glance at the reference section of any important work involving Asian bird life (such as the *Asian Red Data Book*) will give an appreciation of the value of this publication documenting, as it does, the most diverse and exciting avifauna on earth. The charter of *Kukila* is to encourage birders to publish their observations and records from the vast and relatively under-studied Indonesian Archipelago. In essence *Kukila* assists in documenting the habitat, distribution and abundance of birds - the raw data which underpin conservation status evaluation and decisions. Thus we are especially conscious of our responsibility to ensure the accuracy of what is published herein. Editors have an obligation to both subscribers and contributors so whilst we apologize for delays, uncertainties and conflicting press releases that have surrounded *Kukila* since Derek's death, we do hope that our efforts to ensure care and accuracy have not been in vain.

Besides, not all of these problems were of our own making. The highly 'inconvenient' loss of Derek meant we had to find an organization that recognized the value of *Kukila* and was in a position to handle the logistics of publication and distribution. We have been extremely fortunate to find a partner in Pusat Informasi Lingkungan Indonesia [PILI], an Indonesian non-government organization established to facilitate information exchange amongst the many conservation organizations and agencies working in Indonesia. Readers of *Kukila* who subscribe to the informative Indonesian Nature Conservation newsLetter (INCL)* will already know of the organization. PILI has taken over the production and distribution of *Kukila*, a process that has already commenced with the distribution of back numbers to universities, libraries and wildlife organizations within Indonesia.

We would like to introduce Muchamad Muchtar (kukila@pili.or.id) as the initial contact for all matters relating to Kukila. The continued publication of Kukila in Indonesia has always been seen as important. The rapid increase in the numbers of local birdwatchers and birdwatching clubs has provided a level of local expertise unavailable two decades ago when Kukila started in its present form. Kukila has in the past been fortunate in having abstracts prepared in Bahasa Indonesia by Professor Somadikarta and we hope to resume this practice. Our thanks go to the Gibbon Foundation; a charitable organization dedicated to animal conservation with focus on Indonesia. Their generosity has made this all possible.

We have also been fortunate in obtaining the services of Susan Myers, who generously donated her time and expertise to make Kukila Volume 12 come to life. This has proven to be a huge undertaking and thanks are due for her efforts. Susan has offered to continue this work for future volumes of Kukila and we look forward to a more punctual publication schedule.

Indeed, Volume 13 should follow shortly. Derek completed a detailed overview of the Important Bird Areas in Sumatra and Kalimantan just before his untimely death. This was to be Derek's *magnum opus* and as our final tribute to this gentle friend we will publish in the near future a special issue of Kukila almost entirely based on Derek's document.

These are rapidly changing times in so many ways and we would like to think that Kukila will be there to document them. Despite the doom and gloom hanging over Indonesia, more than ever we encourage birders to visit these islands and document their observations.

Paul Andrew, Bas van Balen, K. David Bishop, Susan Myers, Richard Noske

* Those who do not yet receive this excellent weekly electronic compendium of conservation relevant information may wish to subscribe by visiting the website at www.pili.or.id