

## EDITORIAL

This issue contains a short item on records made during brief visit to one of the smaller mountains of Kalimantan. In nine days, two students extended the known range of four montane species, thus confirming a statement made in our last issue that the mountains of Kalimantan remain a wide open field for study.

This example is taken to illustrate an important factor of Indonesian ornithology, that wide areas have never had scientific study, except perhaps for some historical collecting expeditions. Development and the spread of a burgeoning population is inevitably resulting in the increasingly rapid clearance of, or damage to, our fragile rain forests, usually those that have never seen the gleam of a pair of binoculars. Thailand has recently gained unhappy renown with the loss of nearly all its lowland forests, and wide areas of the Philippines are in a similar predicament. At least in most of our outer islands, we have not yet reached this extreme condition, but the danger point for many species must be approaching very rapidly, especially in Wallacea. Some have already reached extinction. See for example the paper by Whitten, Bishop, Nash & Clayton on Sulawesi in *Conservation Biology* 1(1):42-48 (May 1987).

As Diamond has shown in his paper entitled "Extant unless proven extinct? Or, extinct unless proven extant?" in the same issue of *Conservation Biology*, the publication of Red Data books may be guilty of engendering a degree of complacency, and he concludes with the statement that for much of the world, species must be presumed extinct or endangered unless shown to be extant and secure.

This editorial is not intended as another depressing homily on Doomsday, rather it should be interpreted as an invitation to bird-watchers to include Indonesia in their itineraries. To many travellers, Indonesia may seem rather remote and daunting (excepting, of course, Bali), but today the Government is actively following a policy to develop and extend its tourist industry. Visitors will generally find a warm welcome, and visa restrictions have been lifted for most *bona fide* tourists.

However, while the National Parks of Java and Sumatra have reasonable access and a guarantee of good bird-watching, these areas are relatively secure, at least in theory. Indeed, international tourism can play a very positive role in contributing to this security, as has been shown in Africa and elsewhere.

But, for the younger or more enterprising ornithologists, there is an urgent need to visit those forests that have not been scheduled for conservation, and to submit their records for documentation or publication. There is an increasing awareness in Indonesia of the urgency for the conservation of ecologically important areas, but the planners still lack the data base on biological distribution on which to make their recommendations.

*KUKILA* will play its part by publishing this data, where appropriate, and by drawing attention to present status. The recent BOU checklist for Wallacea and its imminent counterpart for Sumatra, together with the field guides already published or in preparation, should provide the necessary stimulus to develop Indonesian ornithology while there is still time. As the two students found on Gunung Nyiut, enterprise can be well rewarded.

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