

SOME RECENT BIRD OBSERVATION FROM HALMAHERA

Frank Lambert and Dennis Young

During July 1987, the authors spent 10 days on Halmahera, observing birds in the vicinity of Domato (0 deg 53'N, 127 deg 28'E). Most observations were made 6-10 km inland, in the area known locally as "Batu Puteh". This is an area of steep-sided hills, for the most part forested, but with widespread small scale selective logging of larger hardwoods in all accessible areas. In most of the lower valleys land had been cleared for agriculture, and these areas were usually bordered by degraded forest or scrub. Observations of birds in this area are documented in instances where information is additional to that given in White & Bruce (1986).

Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica*

One was observed by FL in a dense area of large bamboo at the forest edge on 27 July, c.6 km from the coast. Although usually recorded as a small island species in Wallacea, this species may be a regular visitor to forests on Halmahera, since the local people claimed to see this species occasionally in the forest. Local people know this species as *Megapodius hijau* (*ekor puteh*): literally a green megapode (with a white tail).

Scarlet-breasted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus bernsteinii*

According to White & Bruce, recorded in hill forest, but altitudinal data lacking. In July, observed on two occasions at the forest edge at c.250m.

Blue-capped Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus monacha*

White & Bruce state "probably in lowland forest and woodland, but information is lacking". Observed with congeners at a fruiting tree near the forest edge at c.250m.

White-eyed Imperial Pigeon *Ducula perspicillata*

In Seram common near the coast but scarce inland, to 800m, and to 1400m on Buru (White & Bruce 1986). Since no data is published from Halmahera it seems worth noting that this species was not uncommon in forest, forest-edge or in large trees bordering agriculture up to at least 300m, and 5-6 km inland.

Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Duculata basilica*

White & Bruce give the altitudinal range as above 850m, but on Halmahera the bird was occasionally seen as low as 250m, although it is commoner at higher elevations.

White Cockato *Cacatua alba*

Small groups were seen daily in forested hills from 150 to 450m. This

species is both shot for food and trapped for trade, using decoys. During July 1986, DY saw flocks of up to 15 birds and daily totals of up to 50 birds in this area. However, in 1987 the largest group recorded was 3 individuals, and no more than 10 birds were seen per day, suggesting either a serious population decline or nomadic behaviour.

Violet-necked Lory *Eos squamata*

White & Bruce state that this species inhabits flowering trees and coconuts in the lowlands, but it was most frequently encountered over forest and at the forest edge at 200-300m, 6-8 km inland. Several birds were feeding on unripe orange figs (*Ficus* sp.) on two occasions.

Mollucan Hanging Parrot *Loriculus amabilis*

No information on the habitat of this species is given by White & Bruce. On Halmahera, observed in forested areas and at the edge of agricultural clearings, mostly at c.250m.

Drongo Cuckoo. *Surniculus lugubris*

There is only one specimen of this species from Halmahera. It is therefore worth noting that one was seen at the forest edge at c.250m. The call had a slightly different quality to Malaysian birds, with a series of 6-8 notes, and occasionally as many as 12. Birds on Sulawesi are reported to have a similar call (D. Holmes, pers. comm.).

Giant Coucal. *Centropus goliath*

White & Bruce state that this is probably a common inhabitant of lowland forest undergrowth. In fact it is a common and conspicuous species, frequenting forested areas of all types up to at least 300m, including larger patches of scrub at the edge of agricultural land. This species was frequently seen feeding in the lower forest sub-canopy up to 12m, as well as in the understorey. Usually in small groups of 3-4 birds.

Long-whiskered Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles crnifrons*

White & Bruce presumed that this species occurred in well wooded or forested localities, perhaps mainly in the hills. The bird appeared to be relatively common in forest at c250m, especially near the edge. The call was reminiscent of Javan Frogmouth *Batrachostomus javensis* and, with such a distinctive frogmouth appearance, a better vernacular name would perhaps be Long-whiskered Owlet-Frogmouth.

Beach Kingfisher *Halcyon saurophaga*

There is no recorded information on the habitat of this species in Wallacea (White & Bruce 1986). One seen in mangrove on a small coral island near Domato village.

Azure Roller *Eurystomus azureus*

White & Bruce give no information on the habitat of this species. A single bird identified as this species was seen in a coconut grove near

Domato.

Dollarbird. *Eurystomus orientalis*.

Since there appears to be little information on when this species is present on Halmahera, it seems worth noting that it was common in the coastal lowlands near Domato at the end of July.

Ivory-breasted Pitta. *Pitta maxima*

White & Bruce state that this species presumably occurs in forest, but give no other details. On Halmahera, a relatively common and vocal species in forest from 150m to at least 450m.

The loud call, "wok-wow" (first note short, ending abruptly, second note longer and trailing off) carries over a considerable distance, and is usually repeated at intervals of 3-4 seconds.

Locals reported finding an occupied nest of this species in early July.

Halmahera Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina parvula*

White & Bruce state that this probably occurs in montane forest, but it was observed on several occasions at altitudes between 250 and 500m.

Dusky-brown Oriole. *Oriolus phaeochromus*.

White & Bruce give no information on habitat or altitudinal limits for this species. This Halmahera endemic was not uncommon in forest, including secondary areas, from 250 to at least 400m.

Long-billed Crow. *Corvus vallisus*

White & Bruce give no information on the habitat or altitudinal range of this species. In July it was mostly recorded in forested areas, including secondary forest, but also observed in agricultural areas and *Imperata* grassland, from the coast to at least 400m.

Paradise Crow. *Lycocorax pyrropterus*.

According to White & Bruce, this species inhabits forest from the lowlands to 1600m. On Halmahera, it appeared to be well adapted to secondary forest, and was even observed in scrub bordering agriculture on two occasions. Several birds were seen eating the flesh from the large aril late red fruits of ginger identified as *Alpinia* sp. (M. Newman, pers. comm), probably *A. nutans* (L.) Ross. The call is a single, brief frog-like "ekk", usually repeated at intervals of 6-8 seconds.

Standardwing Bird-of-Paradise. *Semioptera wallacii*.

Although White & Bruce state that this species is montane, it was not uncommon in the well forested hills near Domato at altitudes between 250 and 500m, and males were observed displaying at c.250m, at two sites. The first was discovered in 1984 (K.D. Bishop pers. comm., in press), but unfortunately, the original lekking tree was felled in 1986. Only one male bird used this site to display in July 1987. The other site was some 500m distant, where two males displayed some 15m

above the ground in a low tree.

Island Leaf Warbler. *Phylloscopus poliocephala*

Since White & Bruce give no information on the altitudinal range of this species in Halmahera, it is worthy of note that one or two birds were observed at the forest edge at c.500m. There is only one specimen of this species from this part of Halmahera (D. Bishop, pers. comm.).

White-naped Monarch. *Monarcha pileata*.

White & Bruce state that very little is known of this species although it perhaps occurs in hill forest on Bum, and also near the coast. On Halmahera, observed twice as members of mixed-bird parties, in doped forest at c.250m.

Dusky Honeyeater. *Myzomela obscura*.

Birds identified as this species were seen in forest at c. 450m. Elsewhere this species is apparently an inhabitant of lowland woods and savannas (Beehler et al. 1986).

Acknowledgements.

The authors would like to thank K.Q. Bishop for providing useful comments on an earlier manuscript.

References.

- Beehler, B.M., T.K.Pratt, & D.A. Zimmerman. 1986. *Birds of New Guinea*. Princeton University Press,
- White, C.M.N. & M.D.Bruce, 1986. *The Birds of Wallaces*. British Ornithologists Union, Checklist no.7, London.

Address:

Dr. F.R. Lambert, 15 Bramble Rise, Westdene, Brighton, U.K.

D.Yong, 28 Jalan SS2/43, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.