

***Birds of New Guinea: Including Bismarck Archipelago and Bougainville.* Phil Gregory. 2017. Lynx Editions, Barcelona. 464 pages. ISBN-13:978-84-941892-7-2.**

Following hot on the heels of *Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago: Greater Sundas and Wallacea* (Eaton *et al.* 2016) Lynx Editions has now published a field guide covering the area immediately to the east of Wallacea, namely the huge island of New Guinea (only exceeded in size by Greenland) and its numerous satellite islands. Politically the area covered is split between Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the east, and the Indonesian part, comprising Papua and West Papua provinces, to the west. The region is home to some of the most spectacular and sought-after birds on the planet, including of course the great majority of the birds of paradise and bowerbirds. Others include the huge but remarkably elusive cassowaries, numerous unusual and colourful kingfishers, pigeons and parrots, the ubiquitous honeyeaters and a large assemblage of tantalizing interior forest species, such as terrestrial jewel-babblers, various rails and secretive Australasian robins.

Furthermore, many of New Guinea's birds have long been regarded as taxonomic oddities, and recent genetic analysis suggests that no fewer than seven families are endemic to New Guinea. These are the Melanocharitidae (Berrypeckers and Longbills), Paramythiidae (Tit-Berrypeckers and Crested Berrypeckers), Cnemophilidae (Satinbirds), Rhagologidae (Mottled Berrypecker -previously called Mottled Whistler), Ifridae (Blue-capped Ifrit), Eulacestomidae (Wattled Ploughbill) and Melampittidae (Melampittas). With so much on offer, it is not surprising that birding trips to New Guinea are becoming increasingly popular, despite the huge challenges posed in finding many of these alluring but skulking, range-restricted species.

For those who have seen the *Indonesian Archipelago* guide, the appearance and format of these two field guides published by Lynx are very similar, as is the size. Measuring 23 x 16 cm and fairly thick, *Birds of New Guinea* won't fit in your pocket, but it would easily fit in any rucksack or large side bag. This new guide is succinct, leaving out breeding and other biological data to concentrate on the field identification and distribution of the birds of the region, and in providing brief but important taxonomic notes in relevant species accounts. Identification when compared to similar species is also addressed in the text, as is voice, although the latter descriptions are somewhat weak in places. This Lynx guide is, however, not the only recent book on the birds of New Guinea. In 2014, Princeton University Press published the widely-acclaimed new edition of the *Birds of New Guinea* (Pratt and Beehler 2014), a similar-sized guide that includes 780 species (plus many distinctive subspecies). This new Lynx field guide, however, sets itself apart from that of Pratt and Beehler by its inclusion of new splits and in the adoption of different boundaries.

Experienced New Guinea birders have long been aware of the rather inadequate taxonomy that has, until recently, been generally followed in lists of New Guinea birds. Many observers have advocated the splitting of various taxa, and whilst Pratt and Beehler elevated a significant number to species level, publication of the two-volume *Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World* by HBW and BirdLife International (also published by Lynx Editions in 2014-2016), has led to the recognition of even more new species in the New Guinea region. Whilst not all of these splits are recognized by everyone, Phil Gregory has not surprisingly incorporated the splits from the HBW-BirdLife checklist into this new field guide, and has also used the common names from that list. This, incidentally, includes MacGregor's Honeyeater *Macgregoria pulchra*, which is perhaps preferable to the name used by Pratt and Beehler, Giant Wattled Honeyeater.

Splits in the Lynx field guide that were insinuated at but not adopted by Pratt and Beehler include four species of Pheasant-pigeon *Otidiphaps* spp., four species in the genus *Cyclopsitta* derived from splitting Orange-breasted Fig-parrot, and three from Large Fig-parrot (*Psittaculirostris desmarestii*). There is also another tiger-parrot in this book (Snow Mountain Tiger-parrot *Psittacella lorentzi*) and a newly recognized fourth species of Crowned-pigeon (Scheepmaker's Crowned-pigeon *Goura scheepmakeri*) as well a number of newly recognized dwarf kingfishers *Ceyx* spp. A number of splits from various island groups are also newly included as species in this field guide, such as Rossel Paradise-kingfisher *Tanysiptera rosseliana*, Louisiade Whistler *Pachycephala collaris* and Rossel Cicadabird from the Louisiade Archipelago, Djaul Monarch *Symposiachrus ateralbus* and Djaul Flycatcher *Myiagra cervinicolor* from the New Ireland area, Long-billed Myzomela *Myzomela longirostris* of the D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago, and Geelvink Cicadabird *Edolisoma meyerii* from Biak and Numfor. Pitta enthusiasts will happily note that there are now five species from the red-bellied pitta complex (derived from the splitting up of *Erythropitta erythrogaster*) in the region covered by this guide, and that Hooded Pitta is represented by two newly recognised species, Eastern Hooded Pitta *Pitta novaeguineae* and Biak Hooded Pitta *P. rosenbergii*.

Phil Gregory's book includes the birds of the Bismarck Islands (New Britain, New Ireland and Manus being the best known of these) and Bougainville. Although Bougainville is biologically much more closely related to the Solomon Islands, this large island and the Bismarck Archipelago are part of PNG. These islands were not included in the 2014 New Guinea guide by Pratt and Beehler; hence this new Lynx guide, by including these islands and incorporating newly recognized splits, includes significantly more species than Pratt and Beehler (2014), with 943 species in total, of which 456 (a truly staggering 48%) are considered to be endemic to the New Guinea region. The inclusion of the Bismarck Archipelago alone adds 65 endemics, whilst Bougainville supports a further nine. There are also two undescribed species included in this guide, the Foya Imperial-pigeon *Ducula* sp., known from the remote Foya Mountains, and Bismarck Flycatcher *Microeca* sp. which several observers, including myself, have seen in the Bismarck Archipelago. As noted by Phil Gregory, future research and field exploration will likely raise all of these totals. All of the species of the region are depicted by more than 1,780 illustrations on paintings that are on the page opposite the relevant species accounts. Seventy-five vagrant species are included in a separate set of plates at the back of the book.

As mentioned above, the brief but comprehensive species accounts face the illustrated species, but the 867 colour distribution maps are located on the plates themselves, adjacent to or below the species that they illustrate. Maps are coloured to represent status, whilst the letter E on relevant maps is used to indicate the species that are regional endemics. Maps are, however, all based on a single template of the region, which means that it is difficult to appreciate the details for a considerable number of mostly island-endemic species that have highly restricted ranges.

The illustrations, most of which originate from Lynx's *Handbook of the Birds of the World* series, include many that have been revised and others painted especially for this guide. They derive from 25 different artists, meaning that some groups are more accurately illustrated than others, but the great majority of illustrations are very good to excellent. Some plates seem a little "empty", but this is a consequence of having the text facing the plates, since the text for some species is necessarily long.

Since many birders visiting Papua New Guinea will likely visit some of the offshore islands, most notably New Britain, this book will be a welcome addition to the other guides

presently available. Before the publication of this book, one would have had to take Guy Dutson's (2011) somewhat unwieldy *Birds of Melanesia* for birds in the Bismarck Archipelago since the Princeton University Press guide by Pratt and Beehler, whilst a fantastic guide, does not include New Britain or the other islands in the Bismarck Archipelago, including Manus and New Ireland, nor the rarely-visited Bougainville Island.

Whilst this guide will now be indispensable to anyone visiting PNG on a birding trip that includes New Britain or other islands in the Bismarck Archipelago, it is also undoubtedly very useful for anyone interested in birding the region. This is especially true for anyone with a particular interest in regional bird taxonomy, since it clearly shows which taxa are now recognized as good species (although it should be noted that some splits are not universally accepted). Those who have already invested in the Princeton New Guinea guide may decide not to buy this guide, but both books are excellent, and will surely contribute enormously in encouraging birders to visit and explore this truly amazing birding paradise. When I picked up this book, I felt like jumping on the next plane to New Guinea!

## References

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