

Chapter 16

Birds of the Muller Range, Western and Southern Highlands Provinces, Papua New Guinea

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SUMMARY

A rapid biodiversity survey in the Muller Range, central-western Papua New Guinea, surveyed birds at three camps between 500 m and 2,900 m elevation over the period 5-25 September 2009. One hundred and thirty-three species were recorded. A total of 303 individual birds were mist-netted. Interesting distributional records for the Muller Range include Archbold's Robin (*Eurostopodus archboldi*), Green-backed Robin (*Pachycephalopsis hattamensis*), Crested Satinbird, Yellow-breasted Satinbird, and Ribbon-tailed Astrapia (*Astrapia mayeri*). Notable for not being recorded in the Muller Range is the Blue Bird of Paradise, which reaches its western range boundary somewhere between the Muller Range and Tari Valley. This substantial upland area will merit additional ornithological field study in order to search for species such as Papuan Whipbird (*Androphobus viridis*), Greater Ground-Robin (*Amalocichla sclateriana*), and Sooty Whistler (*Pachycephala tenebrosa*).

INTRODUCTION

There are many unanswered questions about avian distribution cross the middle sections of the central ranges of New Guinea. In particular there are unresolved issues about western and eastern species ranges boundaries that appear to coincide with the great geographic discontinuity formed by the gorge of the Strickland River. The objective of this study was to assess the diversity of, and obtain distributional data for, birds from the Muller Range, which lies just on the Strickland River's eastern flank.

METHODS

Birds were mist-netted and observed adventitiously on morning and afternoon transect walks through the habitat at three elevations: Gugusu (515 m), Sawetau (1,300-2,000 m) and Apalu Reke (2,875 m). Descriptions of these sites can be found in Takeuchi (Chapter 9, this volume). An attempt was made to document all species present at each camp environment.

RESULTS

The survey results are summarized in Table 16.1, which lists species recorded by field camp. Details of particular observations and a full analysis of the results are precluded because of the tragic and untimely passing of the author. For those wishing to follow up on this important study, we recommend contacting field co-workers Vincent Kalkman, Ken Aplin or Stephen Richards (see Participants and authors for contact details).