

Courtship feeding in Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo

McCulloch (*Emu* 67: 56) briefly mentions an instance of courtship feeding in Horsfield Bronze Cuckoos *Chalcites basalis*. On 15 October 1967 between 1500 and 1630 hrs. I watched two pairs of this species, at Flowerdale, Victoria.

The individuals of one pair were seen first. With high-pitched 'pee-eeee-eep' calls they flew at each other, almost clashing in mid-air, then settled on separate limbs of the same tree, spread their wings and moved them up and down three or four times. One bird then moved directly in front of the other, dropped both wings, and bobbed up and down repeatedly, raising and depressing its tail. After a minute or two both birds moved quickly away searching for food among the branches. This was repeated six times, but, though at times copulation seemed imminent, they separated each time and proceeded to feed, at times leaving the tree to take insects from the air. They did not feed one another and flew away at 1600 hrs. The other pair was noticed 30 m away. These individuals too flew towards one another calling and, having settled, one bird immediately began to display before the other. The display was the same as that of the other pair and was continued for almost 20 minutes. But on five occasions the displaying bird broke off to collect some food (unknown), returned and fed its partner which had stayed in one place. After half-an-hour the birds departed.

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The Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* in Papua and New Guinea

Recently Mackay (1967, *Aust. Bird Watcher* 3: 46-8) recorded nearly 550 Little Black Cormorants at the sewage treatment ponds at Moitaka Livestock Station 15 km from Port Moresby. On 8 January 1964 at 1700 hrs I watched large numbers of this species flying inland at sunset, leaving the same place, and I estimated them as more than 1000. There are not many references to this species in the literature on New Guinea.

Iredale (1956, *Birds of New Guinea*) states only that *P. sulcirostris* is 'apparently breeding in New Guinea in the inland places'. Watson *et al.* (1962, *Emu* 62: 39) mention only six birds at Lawes Swamp, near Mt Lawes, 25 km from Port Moresby, though the 'Agricultural Farm' (presumably Moitaka) was visited on 6 October 1960. Rand & Gilliard (1967, *Handbook of New Guinea Birds*) say that: 'In Australia this is a river species, but in nearly a year spent on the Fly River in south New Guinea, we did not find it. However, the species was fairly common on the lowland lagoons of the Idenburg, and it is abundant in the middle Sepik region perched in trees bordering the lakes.'

Bell (1967, *Emu* 67: 62) records the species as 'reasonably abundant on the lagoons' in the Balimo Sub-district, Papua. Schodde and Hitchcock (1968, *Tech. Pap. Div. Wildl. Res. CSIRO, Aust. No. 13*) recorded only 'single birds and small groups of four to five that were observed on a number of occasions around the margins of the lake (Kutubu).' Schodde (pers. comm.) saw only flocks of less than 10 birds on small lakes and dams in the Port Moresby area between June and September 1962. He did not visit Moitaka ponds.

From the above it certainly appears that *P. sulcirostris* prefers lagoons and lakes rather than rivers in New Guinea and has been thought to be generally uncommon. The founding of the New Guinea Bird Society recently (Mackay 1966, *Aust. Bird Bander* 3: 34) has probably caused a great development of bird watching at Port Moresby and generally. Before this most information came from overseas expeditions which perhaps were concerned with more interesting species. However, Moitaka has been a popular birding area for visitors and local residents for several years and is close to Port Moresby, so it is unlikely that the cormorants there have been missed. They have probably responded to the recent development of the sewage works. The ponds were completed in 1954 and soon became colonized by fish, so that both *Tilapia* spp. and *Gourami* spp. are now established (Mackay *in litt.*). A third alternative would appear to be that *P. sulcirostris* may be to some extent nomadic; the species has not been reported breeding at Moitaka and may not visit the area at that time, but the counts to date are not sufficiently frequent to confirm this (40, 24 Oct. 1966; 550, 7 May; 700, 28 May; 1000, 18 June; 1800, 24 June, all 1967; Mackay pers. comm.).

Moitaka, being near Port Moresby, is a very suitable study area. Local bird-watchers might keep regular counts of the numbers of individuals (and species) frequenting the Treatment Ponds. By noting the direction of the evening flight, roosting and breeding grounds might be discovered. The species has economic interest. Rand & Gilliard (*op. cit.*) mention that the indigenes eat them. Fish-raising in ponds may become important, so that a study of likely predators such as this species would be well worth while, and could be extended to the banding of nestlings at the breeding colony when it is located.

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Grey-backed Storm Petrel in Tasmania

Gould collected four specimens of the Grey-backed Storm Petrel *Garrodia nereis*, from which he described the species, in eastern Bass Strait in May 1839. The specimens are now in the