

## Birds of the northern atolls of the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea

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**Abstract** The North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea consists of two main islands, Bougainville and Buka as well as several atolls to the north and east. The avifauna on five atolls, Nissan, Nuguria, Tulun, Takuu and Nukumanu, was recorded during visits in 2001. A bird list for each atoll group was compiled, incorporating previously published observations, and the local language names of birds recorded.

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### INTRODUCTION

North of Buka Island, in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea lie several small atolls including Nissan (4°30'S 154°12'E), Nuguria, also known as Fead (3°20'S 154°40'E), Tulun, also known as Carterets or Kilinailau (4°46'S 155°02'E), Takuu, also known as Tauu or Mortlocks (4°45'S 157°E), and Nukumanu, also known as Tasmans (4°34'S 159°24'E).

Ornithological visits to these atolls have been rare during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Nissan has had visits from three professional collectors and several birdwatchers (see below). Nuguria and Tulun were visited by the *Noona Dan* expedition in 1962 and Howell in 1982. Takuu has been visited only by the *Noona Dan* expedition. Nukumanu was visited by a German boat in 1910 (Sarfert & Damm 1929) and by the *Noona Dan* expedition in 1962 (Woolf 1966).

These atolls are remote and difficult to access. While Nissan is accessible by plane, the only contact the other four atoll groups currently have with the outside world is via the MV *Sankamap*, a coastal trading vessel, operated by the North Solomons Provincial Government. Presently, the ship visits approximately every two months and usually does a round trip - Buka to Nuguria to Tulun to Takuu to Nukumanu and return - staying anchored offshore (except Nuguria where there is a wharf) just long enough to load and unload goods and passengers before moving on.

I was able to visit these atolls by taking advantage of preparations for the 2002 Papua New Guinea elections. The Electoral Commission needed to visit all the atolls and enrol all the adults. In addition, the national examinations for

Grade 6 students had to be taken by Nukumanu students. Over two days an examiner supervised the exams and then the ship was able to return. A third purpose of the voyage was to provide food aid for the Tulun people. Possibly because of rising sea levels, the gardens of the Tulun atolls are now too saline to grow vegetables. The atolls' District Manager based in Buka is actively searching for a place to relocate the entire Tulun population on the Bougainville mainland. This unusual set of circumstances gave me enough time to visit each atoll and to discuss the birds inhabiting the atoll group as a whole.

### Preparing the atolls' bird lists

It is better not to hand a field guide over and say, 'show me the birds you have here.' It is better to first go birdwatching with knowledgeable locals and to write down their local language names for each species seen. Finally, you sit down with the men and read out all the local names you have just recorded. Then you ask 'do you have any other local bird names I have missed.' This technique would probably not work in a village on mainland Papua New Guinea because the number of possible species is too great. A curious situation arose when I was obtaining the name for the common sandpiper on Nukumanu. A man told me it was the Matakakoni bird. This caused all the men listening to fall about laughing. A small boy nearby was told to clear off. I questioned the name but they assured me it was correct so I wrote it down. Later when I was on the MV *Sankamap* I was chatting to a young woman and discussing what I was trying to do. In the course of conversation I mentioned the Matakakoni bird. She immediately said I should cross that name out but would not explain why. Eventually I found a man from Nukumanu and told him the story.

At last I discovered that Matakakoni means the bird that walks a little and then copulates - a reference to its habit of tail-bobbing as it forages.

### Nomenclature

Throughout the checklists below, nomenclature follows Mayr & Diamond (2001)

## BIRDS OF THE NISSAN ATOLL GROUP

### Previous ornithological studies

During 1924, Eichhorn collected birds on Nissan (Hartert 1926a). The Whitney South Sea Expedition visited during 1929 when Mayr & Hamlin collected 183 specimens of 24 species (Hamlin unpub. journal). Most species are mentioned in a whole series of *American Museum Novitates* (Mayr 1931, 1932a, 1932b, 1936; 1955, 1957; Bogert 1937; Mayr & Amadon 1941; Amadon 1942, 1943; Stickney 1943). During 1944, Logan J. Bennett collected 43 specimens (Ripley 1947). Lang, resident on Buka from 1965-67, also visited Nissan (J. Diamond pers. comm.). Cooke of Rabaul probably visited in 1971 (Cooke 1971). During 1981 Laurie and Alison Howell, Elliot Harding, Tony Skyrme and Gillian Eller visited twice (Howell 1981). The following year Howell, Harding and Skyrme revisited along with Peter and Philippa Craven and Kelson Lang (Harding 1982). Brian Finch visited briefly on 30 January 1985 (Finch 1985). Guy Dutson visited on 18 January 1998, but again not all birds seen were reported (Dutson 1997, 2001). Dr Steven Nachman<sup>1</sup>, an anthropologist living on Nissan from November 1969 to May 1972, made careful notes of the birds present in particular recording their local names. Bird names attributed to Nachman in the Nissan checklist are from his doctoral thesis (see footnote). I too endeavoured to record the Nehan names for each of the birds I saw, as did Howell (1981) and Harding (1982).

<sup>1</sup> Although Dr Nachman had no interest in birds, he wanted to record the language of the Nissan people he was studying for his doctorate. It was easy enough to get words for "table" or "chair" but when the local people pointed out a bird and said its name he was stymied because he didn't know its English name. Therefore he asked the Nissan Islanders to catch all the different species. These he photographed and sent the images to L.W.C. Filewood, a scientist and ornithologist working in PNG at the time, for identification. Some seabirds Nachman identified himself from a book (Nachman pers. comm.). The list of bird names, along with names for other plants and animals gathered by Nachman, were accumulated by John Glennon, a missionary on Nissan and it was from him that I obtained the names reported in this paper. I understand Nachman's list was included in his doctoral thesis *In honor of the dead in defiance of the living*, published by University Microfilms.

### Bird list

\* species seen by me during my visit of 24-28 September 2001. Local names given in [brackets] and attributed to source thus; Nachman (N); Hadden (H: Hadden 1981); Howell & Harding (Ho: Howell 1982; Harding 1982).

#### *Australian pelican (Pelecanus conspicillatus)*

Reported to Filewood by Carson as 'residing on the large lagoon' (Filewood 1969).

#### *Wedge-tailed shearwater (Puffinus pacificus)*

Pale and dark morphs seen by Dutson while sailing from Buka, 18 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.).

#### *Streaked shearwater (Calonectris leucomelas)*

Ten off Nissan on 18 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.).

#### *Heinroth's shearwater (Puffinus heinrothi)*

One seen between Nissan and Buka with a mixed species flock (Dutson pers. comm.).

#### *White-tailed tropicbird (Phaethon lepturus)*

One between Nissan and Rabaul, 19 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.).

#### *Red-tailed tropicbird (Phaethon rubricauda)* [Siroup - N]

Only recorded by Nachman (pers. comm.).

#### *Lesser frigatebird (Fregata ariel)* [Daul - H]

Seen by Harding (1982) and Finch (1985).

#### *Red-footed booby (Sula sula)* [Tagau - N]

Recorded by Nachman.

#### *Brown booby (Sula leucogaster)*

Seen by Harding (1982). Dutson (pers. comm.) saw five on 18, and three on 19 January 1998.

#### *Pacific reef egret (Egretta sacra sacra)* [Kompul = dark morph - H & N; Koerat = white morph - N, H]

Both morphs common. First collected by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947).

#### *\*Rufous night-heron (Nycticorax caledonicus mandibularis)* [Kong - N, H]

Four adults shot by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a). Nachman records this species in his dictionary. Seen by Lang (Diamond pers. comm.). I saw and photographed an immature on the airstrip at dawn.

#### *\*Osprey (Pandion haliaetus melvillensis)* [Huhuan - N, H, Ho. Also Manulab - H]

A common species, seen by recent visiting bird watchers, but not mentioned by Hartert (1926a), Ripley (1947) or Mayr (1945), possibly because they

had no need to collect it. Seen by Lang (Diamond pers. comm.).

\**Brahminy kite (Haliastur indus)* [Longlongkuk – N, H, Ho]

Common. Likely to be seen anywhere.

\**White-bellied sea-eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster)* [Pasukadau – H. Also Manulab – N. Juvenile: Katkatakubul – H. Variant Tatatekubul - N]

I saw a white-bellied sea-eagle above the airstrip. This species was first collected by Bennett (1944). Nachman (pers. comm.) records it. Also seen by Harding (1982). Cooke (1971), Howell (1981) and Finch (1985) also claim to have seen Sanford's eagle *Haliaeetus sanfordi* on Nissan but none explained how they distinguished between juvenile white-bellied sea-eagle and Sanford's eagle. It seems more likely these observers saw juvenile white-bellied sea-eagle.

*Oriental hobby (Falco severus)* [Hoh – N. cf Skua]

Only Nachman records oriental hobby, identified from a bird brought to him. In the North Solomons it is a breeding resident (Schodde 1977; Mayr & Diamond 2001) but perhaps it is a winter migrant as the Nissan oriental hobby is clearly not a breeding resident.

*Peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus)*

One bird seen and photographed by Dutson, 18 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.).

\**Dusky scrubfowl (Megapodius freycinet eremita)* [Kaio – N, H, Ho. Juvenile: Kupkupi – N]

I heard this species wherever I went. First collected by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a). Three collected by the Whitney Expedition.). A common species seen or heard by all visiting birdwatchers.

\**Pacific golden plover (Pluvialis fulva)* [Tuituitulia - H. Also Kokouarang - N]

I saw up to 40 on the airstrip. It is a common summer migrant seen by most visiting birdwatchers. Some overwinter e.g., Howell(1981) and Harding(1982) saw them in June.

\**Whimbrel (Numenius phaeopus)* [Kihibok - N]

There were usually two or three whimbrels on the airstrip. I also saw single birds on various reefs at low tide. Some overwinter e.g., seen in June 1981 (Howell(1982).

\**Grey-tailed tattler (Tringa brevipes)*

I only saw the occasional bird around the shoreline or on the reef. Tattler specimens were taken by Eichhorn and Bennett, but at that stage *T. incana*

and *T. brevipes* were considered conspecific. Overwinters, seen in June 1981 (Howell 1982). Also recorded by Finch (1985).

*Wandering tattler (Tringa incana)*

This species is mentioned by Nachman (pers. comm.), but he does not distinguish it from *T. brevipes*.

\**Common sandpiper (Tringa hypoleucos)* [Tulia - N. Also Domdomtulia - H]

I saw this species in small numbers on both the airstrip and the reefs. It has been seen by most visiting birdwatchers.

\**Turnstone (Arenaria interpres)* [Tuliang tobib - N]

I saw only two on the inner side of Nissan. Overwinters. Seen in June 1981 (Howell 1982).

\**Sharp-tailed sandpiper (Calidris acuminata)*

Along with Leigh Joyce and Richard Walle, I observed three on the airstrip, through a telescope. This is a new species for Nissan.

*Common tern (Sterna hirundo)* [Kara – N, H. This was a generic name for all terns].

Two were shot by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947). It was not seen again until Howell saw them in the lagoon (Howell 1982).

*Black-naped tern (Sterna sumatrana)*

Two males were shot by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947) and large flocks were reported by Howell (1981,1982). It has not been seen by subsequent observers.

*Roseate tern (Sterna dougalli)*

In Hamlin (undated), one specimen of *Sterna dougalli bangsi* is listed for Nissan.

*Greater crested tern (Sterna bergii)*

Reported by Howell (1981), Harding (1982) and Finch (1985). Three observed by Dutson (pers. comm.) on 18 January 1998.

*Sooty tern (Sterna fuscata)*

Five were seen off Nissan by Dutson on 18 January and 70 on 19 January 1998 (Dutson 2001).

*Bridled tern (Sterna anaethetus)*

This species was noted by Nachman (pers. comm.) but he does not distinguish it from *S. fuscata*.

*Black noddy (Anous minutus)* [Boborenglaur – N, H]

Ten were seen 18 January 1998 by Dutson (2001).

*Brown noddy (Anous stolidus)* [Boborenglaur – N, H]

Commonly seen in June by Howell (1981) and Harding(1982) but infrequently seen on other visits.

*Arctic skua* (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) [Hoh – H. A generic name for all skuas]  
Three seen 19 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.)

*Long-tailed skua* (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)  
One seen 19 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.)

*Pomarine skua* (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)  
One off Nissan 19 January 1998 (Dutson pers. comm.)

\**Yellow-bibbed fruit-dove* (*Ptilinopus solomonensis neumanni*) [Bun – N, H, Ho]

The common fruit-dove on Nissan. Eight 1-egg nests were seen by Eichhorn in August 1924 (Hartert 1926a). Nine collected by the Whitney Expedition. Harding (1982) saw a 1-egg nest in April 1982.

*Claret-breasted fruit-dove* (*Ptilinopus viridis*)  
Recorded by Howell (1981) but not by other observers. Howell (1981) and Harding (1982) also recorded the presence of superb fruit-dove, several pairs nesting in 1981 but just one bird in 1982. However they note their bright yellow abdomen, and it seems likely these birds were misidentified yellow-bibbed fruit-doves. An egg measuring 32 x 21.6mm was taken from a superb fruit-doves' nest on Choiseul 11 January 1904 (Rothschild & Hartert 1905) and Australian data gives 30 x 20mm (Morecombe 2000). It seems more likely to be a yellow-bibbed fruit-dove egg. Accordingly, in consultation with Diamond, it has been decided to withdraw this species from the Nissan list. Nevertheless there is the possibility that odd birds could occur. McAllan (pers. comm.) advises that fruit-doves (*Ptilinopus*) e.g. superb fruit-doves and red-crowned fruit-doves (*Ptilinopus regina*) do stray southwards with wrong-way migration in eastern Australia, occasionally even reaching Tasmania. It would be helpful if future observers could clarify the fruit-dove position on Nissan.

\**Island imperial-pigeon* (*Ducula pistrinaria pistrinaria*) [Baluh – N, H]

A common species seen everywhere by most visiting birdwatchers. Many nests seen in August 1924 by Eichhorn (Hartert 1926a). Howell and Harding found it breeding prolifically in June on Hon Island, the nests ranging in height from 3.5m to 17m. On Bougainville the peak of the nesting season is December and January. Five specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

\**Pacific imperial-pigeon* (*Ducula pacifica pacifica*) [Baluhkanang – H]

Two birds coming to feed at a "cherry" tree in Kulis village, observed through a telescope. They were

known to people in that village as the pigeon with an axe-head on its beak. I asked about this species in other villages on Nissan but it was not known. This is a new species for Nissan but appears to be localised and in small numbers. Interestingly Nachman (pers. comm.) records a local name 'kurou' for a species of pigeon then considered to be extinct on Nissan. The name 'kurou' is probably derived from its calls and is probably the Pacific imperial-pigeon as it has a growling call.

*Nicobar pigeon* (*Caloenas nicobarica nicobarica*) [Mumum - N. Juvenile: Koitung - N]

Several collected by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a). Three were collected by the Whitney Expedition and Bennett took two specimens in 1944 (Ripley 1947). Nachman (pers. comm.) also saw this species, noting that its feathers are used in singsings. Not seen by any other observers.

\**Mackinlay's cuckoo-dove* (*Macropygia mackinlayi arossi*) [Kuu – N, H]

Commonly seen and heard by all observers. Eight collected by the Whitney Expedition.

*Bronze ground-dove* (*Gallinula beccarii masculina*) [Boro atoi - N. Also Bor - H. Bor is a generic term for ground-doves]

First collected by Eichhorn in August 1924 (Hartert 1926a) when seven nests were located, each with one egg. Howell (1982) saw a nest in June, containing one chick. Eleven specimens were taken by the Whitney Expedition. Also observed by Cooke (1971), Dutson (pers. comm.) and Nachman (pers. comm.) but not by me.

*Stephan's dove* (*Chalcophaps stephani mortoni*) [Borong tang leke – N, H]

Seen by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a) but not by Bennett. Also photographed by Nachman (pers. comm.) and one seen by Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982 but not by subsequent observers.

*Cardinal lory* (*Chalcopsitta cardinalis*) [Sipih – N, H, Ho]

Eichhorn (Hartert 1926a) and Bennett (Ripley 1947) collected specimens. Not seen by Cooke (1971). Known to Nachman (pers. comm.). Howell and Harding were surprised at how few they saw during visits in 1981 and 1982. Three seen by Finch in 1985. Dutson (pers. comm.) saw just one when he visited in 1998. In 2001 I did not see any despite travelling the entire length of the island and watching carefully for them. I showed pictures to some villagers. They knew the bird but had not seen it for a few years. This species may have died out on Nissan.

\**Rainbow lorikeet* (*Trichoglossus haematodus massena*) [Seng – H, Ho]

A very common species seen by all observers. Sixteen specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

\**Red-flanked lorikeet* (*Charmosyna placentas pallidior*) [Mus – N, H, Ho]

Two males were collected by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a) but Bennett (Ripley 1947) does not mention them as being present in 1944. It was known to Nachman (pers. comm.) and the odd bird was seen by Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982. I found them almost always in the coconut plantations but they were not common.

\**Long-tailed cuckoo* (*Eudynamis taitensis*) [Selekbit – N. Also Selselekbit – H]

Three females were collected by Eichhorn in 1924 (Hartert 1926a). The Whitney Expedition took one male on 10 August 1929 (Bogert 1937). None was seen by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947). It was known to Nachman (pers. comm.) but not seen by other visiting birdwatchers. I saw one fly across a track. Its size, colouring and distinctive long tail excluded any other species known to occur on Nissan. A winter migrant from New Zealand.

*Shining bronze-cuckoo* (*Chrysococcyx lucidus lucidus*)

One male (*C. l. lucidus*) was collected by Eichhorn 4 September 1924 (Hartert 1926a). Seen by Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982 on each of their visits. One specimen taken by the Whitney Expedition. A winter migrant from New Zealand.

*Barn owl* (*Tyto alba crassirostris*) [Hauu – N, H. Also Bangsosogot - Ho]

Eichhorn shot one adult male on 11 September 1924 (Hartert 1926a). The Whitney Expedition took a male and female. Not taken by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947). It was known to Nachman (pers. comm.) but not seen by other visiting birdwatchers. Howell (1981) and Harding (1982) discussed this species with local villagers (as I did also) and it seems that it is present in small numbers.

\**Glossy swiftlet* (*Collocalia esculenta spilogaster*) [Dedelam – N, H]

A very common species seen by all observers. Harding (1982) saw active nests in 1982. Six specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

\**Uniform swiftlet* (*Aerodramus vanikorensis lugubris*)

It was first added to the Nissan list by Lang (Diamond pers. comm.). Howell also saw it in 1981 when it was seen only at the southern end of Sinot Island. It was also seen by Finch in 1985 and Dutson in 1998. I saw small numbers but it is far less common than the glossy swiftlet.

*Little kingfisher* (*Alcedo pusilla*)

Nachman (pers. comm.) lists this species in his dictionary. Almost certainly not present on Nissan.

\**Common kingfisher* (*Alcedo atthis salomonensis*)

It was first recorded by Lang (Diamond pers. comm.). Also seen by Howell in 1981 but was not seen by Harding in 1982. Not seen by other observers. I saw a pair under the overhanging trees on the lagoon side of Nissan. On another occasion I saw one perched on a rock also under trees overhanging the lagoon.

\**Beach kingfisher* (*Halycon saurophaga saurophaga*) [Kekio – N, H]

Common and noisy, seen by all observers except Cooke (1971). Two specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

\**Sacred kingfisher* (*Halycon sancta sancta*) [Kibuh - N]

One specimen collected by the Whitney Expedition. This migratory species from Australia was found to be very common by Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982 with up to 20 birds visible at any one time at the airport. During my visit there were numerous sacred kingfishers around the High School and the airport.

\**Collared kingfisher* (*Halcyon chloris bennetti*) [Kibuh - N]

Recorded on all visits by Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982 who found them common. Collected by Bennett in 1944 (Ripley 1947). Dutson found them to be common. Seven specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition. They were no longer common during my visit. I found only one. At Tartumpos Village, Balil, Harry Hon my guide pointed out a kingfisher sitting in deep shade high up under the canopy. It was markedly different from collared kingfishers on Bougainville. Its pure white underparts and large prominent circular white loreal spots were reminiscent of forest kingfisher (*Todiramphus macleayi*).

*Rainbow bee-eater* (*Merops ornatus*) [Golgolie - N]

Recorded by Cooke (1971) and Nachman (pers. comm.), however it has not been seen by recent observers. This Australian species winters in New Guinea and the Bismarcks including most outer islands. Two specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

\**Pacific swallow* (*Hirundo tahitica subfusca*)

Howell (1981) and Harding (1982) saw it only once on their three visits. I saw one hawking the airstrip. I was told of a swallow-like bird, which was

probably this species, nesting inside a high-roofed church. Familiar to Nachman (pers. comm.). One specimen taken by the Whitney Expedition.

*Tree martin (Hirundo nigricans nigricans)*

Three seen by Harding 14 September 1982 at the airstrip. No other observers have seen this migratory species, but it is likely to visit from time to time.

*\*Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (Coracina novaehollandiae melanops)* [Buluhungreton - H].

A male was taken by the Whitney expedition 9 August 1929 (Mayr 1955). Also seen in August 1981 by Howell (1982) who mistakenly believed his observation was a first for Nissan. I saw this species each day. They regularly foraged on the grass alongside the waders on the airstrip.

*\*Mangrove golden whistler (Pachycephala melanura dahlia)* [Iouioul - N. Welwelung pekon - H. This latter name was also obtained by Nachman (pers. comm.) but it was described to him as a beach bird, tiny and brown with a black throat. He was unable to ascribe a species name].

Twelve specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition. This species has been seen or heard by all visiting birdwatchers except Cooke (1971).

*\*Island monarch (Monarcha cinerascens impediens)* [Kiskismerek - N, H. Tanmarek - Ho]

Seen by all observers. Howell in 1981 and Harding in 1982 found two active nests each with one chick. Twenty-eight specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

*Yellow-bellied sunbird (Nectarinia jugularis)* [Remit - H]

Seen by Howell in 1981 near the airstrip. Ann Palframan, a teacher at Nissan High School identified this species as present upon being shown its picture by me. Not seen by other visitors.

*\*Louisiade white-eye (Zosterops griseotinctus eichhorni)* [Kisikis - N & H & Ho]

An abundant species seen by all observers. Thirty-four specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

*\*Atoll starling (Aplonis feadensis)* [Dorom - N & H & Ho]

Seen by all observers. Cooke (1971) notes a yellow eye-ring but must have meant yellow iris. A pair Howell found nesting in June 1981 had a chick in a hole in the rotten end of a pandanus branch. Sixteen specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition.

*\*Metallic starling (Aplonis metallica nitida)* [Kirikiring - H. Toluk - N, H. Tuluke - Ho]

A common species seen by all observers except Bennett (Ripley 1947). I saw nesting colonies, as did Howell (1981) and Harding (1982) who counted over 100 nests in one day. Nine specimens taken by the Whitney Expedition

*Singing starling (Aplonis cantoroides)*

Nachman (pers. comm.) lists this species. No other observers have seen singing starlings but Hamlin, on 9 August 1929, noted 'three species of *Aplonis* collected today' (Hamlin undated: 87). However, his list (p. 237) mentions only two species, the metallic starling and atoll starling.

### BIRDS OF NUGURIA ATOLL GROUP

We approached the Nuguria atolls at dawn 3 November 2001 (remaining on the atoll all day) passing close to a sand cay known as Sable Island and then headed for Busuria atoll, the site of the main village. The larger atoll known as Sauma or Hauma has largely been abandoned except for gardening. The Nuguria atolls are inhabited by Polynesians who speak a language similar to New Zealand Maori.

The first collection of birds from Nuguria was by Rev. George Brown. Ramsay (1882) describes an atoll starling taken by Brown. The only other bird observations on Nuguria were made by the Whitney Expedition, the *Noona Dan* expedition in 1962 (Woolf 1966), Coates (pers. comm.) for c.15 minutes at the airstrip 16 January 1973, Howell in 1982 and my visit for one day in 2001. Howell (1982) describes a 47 hr sea voyage on the MV *Awin* when he left Buka and visited Takuu, Nuguria and Nissan and returned to Buka.

Birds marked with \* were seen by me. The other species were established from discussions with local residents. The names of the birds often have 'te' at the front, which means 'the'. It seems that 'te' is an integral part of the name.

*Little grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis)* [Patotevai]

David Taravaru told me about a small, duck-like bird that lives on a lake on Paopao atoll; is apparently shy and only seen if approached quietly. If it hears them coming it will dive, swim underwater and hide in lakeside vegetation. They have never seen this bird on land. I showed David a picture of the little grebe and he agreed it looked something like that species. The thought of a lake on an atoll is as surprising as the presence of a grebe on it. Future birdwatchers should endeavour to check this species. Patotevai means the duck that dives.

*White-tailed tropicbird* [Tavake]

This species has bred on Nuguria (G. Carson in Coates 1985).

*Australian pelican*

Local villagers told me that many years ago, perhaps in the 1970s, pelicans appeared on the lagoon for a short while.

*\*Red-footed booby* [Knapu]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982). Probably several tens of pairs nesting on Namotu islet.

*\*Brown booby* [Knaputekerekere]

Several pairs nest on Nuguria. The local name means the booby that lays its eggs on the ground. Coates (1985) states, 'Boobies, apparently brown booby and possible also the masked booby *Sula dactylatra* were reported by G. Carson (in a letter to E. Lindgren) to nest on the Nuguria Islands ...' There have been no other reports of masked booby.

*\* Lesser frigatebird* [Kataha]

The *Noona Dan* expedition (Diamond pers. comm.) collected one specimen. Seen by Howell (1982). Probably several tens of pairs nesting on Namotu islet. There was also a tame juvenile being kept in the village.

*\* Great frigatebird* (*Fregata minor*) [Kataha]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982). Several pairs nesting on Namotu islet.

*Pacific reef egret* [Black morph - Matuku; White morph - Teheri]*Striated heron* (*Butorides striatus*) [Parakohu]

My informant was looking through the photos in my book *Birds of the North Solomons* (Hadden 1981) when he came upon the picture of the striated heron settling onto its nest. Immediately he saw it he pointed it out and said that this species occurred on Nuguria. This needs confirmation; there is a possibility he may have confused it with juvenile rufous night-heron].

*Rufous night-heron* [Mahimahi]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.).

*Dusky scrubfowl* [Marau]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

*\*Pacific golden plover* [Tetuvu]

B. J. Coates (pers. comm.) saw several on the airstrip on 16 January 1973. Also seen by Howell (1982).

*\*Whimbrel* [Koroa]*\*Common sandpiper* [Murikakoni or Murikonikoni].*\*Grey-tailed tattler* [Teturia]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982).

*\*Turnstone* [Koriri]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982).

*Sharp-tailed sandpiper*

Several small waders, probably this species, were seen on the airstrip 26 January 1973 (Coates pers. comm.).

*\*Greater crested tern* [Tetana]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982).

*\*Black-naped tern* [Tropiti]*\*White tern* (*Gygis alba*) [Teakiaki]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell (1982). It appeared to be nesting on Namotu islet, but I didn't search for eggs. Less than 50 birds present.

*\*Black noddy* [Terakia]

Nesting on Namotu islet. Hundreds of birds present. Also seen by Howell (1982).

*\*Brown noddy* [Tenono]

I saw very few brown noddies, but hundreds of black noddies. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected four specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Coates on 26 January 1973. Appeared to be nesting on Namotu islet during my visit.

*Nicobar pigeon* [Treia]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

*\*Rainbow lorikeet* [Teheena]

Seen by Coates on 26 January 1973.

*Red-flanked lorikeet* [Trotuma]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

*Long-tailed cuckoo* [Terope]

It is possible that 'terope' may refer to the oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus saturatus*) which I have seen and photographed farther east on Nukumanu.]

*Shining bronze-cuckoo*

One was seen by Howell April 24 1982.

*Uniform swiftlet*

Seen during the Whitney Expedition visit.

\**Beach kingfisher* [Tehiko]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected six specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). One seen by Coates 26 January 1973 (Coates pers. comm.).

*Sacred kingfisher*

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.). Seen by Howell 24 April 1982 (Howell 1982).

\**Island monarch* [Tehikihikita]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected six specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

\**Atoll starling* [Tehuia]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected four specimens. Seen by Howell 24 April 1982 (Howell 1982).

**BIRDS OF TULUN**

I was present on Tulun for a  $\frac{1}{2}$  day on 2 November and another  $\frac{1}{2}$  day on 9 November. Birds denoted \* were seen by me.

*White-tailed tropicbird* [Lul]

My informant said it was a breeding resident.

\**Frigatebird* (*Fregata* sp) [Kokoyei]

I was told this species nests on Tulun. I only saw one in the distance, a male, but was unable to see if it was a lesser or a great frigatebird.

*Pacific reef egret* [Koei]

Both dark and white morphs present.

*Dusky scrubfowl* [Kio]

\**Pacific golden plover* [Kivi: a generic name for all waders]

Only single birds seen.

\**Whimbrel* [Kokoku]

Also seen by Howell (Howell 1982).

\**Common sandpiper* [Honhon]

\**Grey-tailed tattler* [Kivi]

Identified by its call. A few scattered birds were seen. Also seen by Howell (Howell 1982).

\**Turnstone* [Kivi]

Small flocks of about 12 birds. Seen by Howell (Howell 1982).

*Greater crested tern* [Salana]

\**Black-naped tern* [Nai]

\**White tern* [Knakna]

Nests on some atolls. I did not see any eggs on branches but locals told me they nested here. Less than 50 birds present.

*Little tern* (*Sterna albifrons*) [Kira]

A small tern known as Kira was possibly this species.

\**Black noddy* [Mali]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.). Hundreds of birds present.

\**Brown noddy* [Tsagwa]

Seen only infrequently.

*Shining bronze-cuckoo* [Huanvi]

*Long-tailed cuckoo* [Kirk]

*Sacred kingfisher* [Sustai]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

*Beach kingfisher* [Kikio]

\**Island monarch* [Siksikteuu]

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected six specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

\* *Atoll starling* [Teru]

On a couple of occasions I saw distant starlings in coconut palms, which I assume were atoll starlings. *Noona Dan* expedition collected four specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

*Metallic starling*

The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.).

**BIRDS OF TAKUU**

I was present on Takuu all day on 4 November and for a day on 8 November. Birds denoted \* were seen by me.

A note on the language variability on Takuu: Elderly residents retain the consonant /f/ in their speech, but most of the population has now changed to /h/. The consonants /l/ and /r/ are interchangeable in many words, including bird names (Moyle pers. comm.).

*Shearwater* (*Puffinus* sp.) [Ritai]

These types of birds are known to men who venture into the open ocean outside the reef.

*White-tailed tropicbird* [Tavake].

*Red-tailed tropicbird* [Tavaketoto]  
Only a rare visitor to Takuu.

\**Great frigatebird* [Kataha or Tekatahu]  
On each of the atolls I visited I could not find any local person who could distinguish between the great and lesser frigatebirds. I carefully looked at every frigatebird I saw on the Takuu atolls and every one was a great. Several dozen great frigatebirds were nesting on the sanctuary atoll. Chicks are sometimes caught and reared as pets by both children and adults.

\**Red-footed booby* [Kenapu]  
This species was nesting on the sanctuary atoll. Several dozen birds present. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.).

\**Brown booby* [Kapana]  
I saw one inactive brown booby nest on the ground under the trees on the sanctuary atoll. A juvenile was being kept as a pet. Less than 20 birds seen.

\**Pacific reef egret* [Heriuri - dark morph; Herimakini - white morph]  
People refer to both dark morph and white morph birds as Heri. It was on Takuu that I saw my only mottled (intermediate-phase) reef egret.

*Dusky scrubfowl* [Marau]

\**Pacific golden plover* [Kivi]

\**Mongolian plover* (*Charadrius mongolus*) [Kivi]  
Two birds associating with a small mixed group of waders on the coral reef at low tide, were carefully examined through the telescope.

\*Whimbrel [Taroa]

*Common sandpiper* [Tirikakoni or Tautau]

\**Wandering tattler* [Kivi]  
This was the only atoll where I heard the distinctive call of the wandering tattler.

\**Grey-tailed tattler* [Kivi]  
This species was also identified by call. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.). Most of the tattlers I was able to positively identify by voice were grey-tailed. I am surprised at this as the rocky coral reef platforms would appear to be a more suitable habitat for

wandering tattlers. This seems to be the case on Bougainville where the grey-tailed is found on mudflats and the wandering on offshore, rocky islets. However, these atolls are at the western end of the range of wandering tattler, and each species may occupy a wider range of habitats when the other is absent.

\**Turnstone* [Konokapu or Kivi].

\**Greater crested tern* [Tara]  
Small numbers seen.

\**Black-naped tern* [Laupiti or Raupiti]  
Small numbers seen.

\**White tern* [Kinakina]  
Nesting on the sanctuary atoll. Probably less than 50 birds present.

\**Black noddy* [Lakia]  
Large numbers, perhaps as many as 500 pairs were nesting on the sanctuary atoll. Most of the nests I saw had eggs, but a few had chicks. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected one specimen (Diamond pers. comm.).

\**Brown noddy* [Nnoo]  
Probably less than 100 birds were present. My informants told me they nest on the atoll.

*Sooty/Bridled tern* [Taramoana]  
Not usually seen close to Takuu, hence their name 'ocean tern'.

*Pacific imperial-pigeon*  
We looked at Pacific imperial-pigeons in the field guide and my informants said they appear occasionally but are not resident.

*Swiftlet sp.* [Karakaratevori]  
While looking through the field guide my informants stopped at the swiftlet page and said these birds come during a period of sustained westerly winds, which is apparently the meaning of the name.

*Oriental cuckoo* [Kareva]  
This species was identified by my informants when looking through the field guide. They said it is only present for part of the year. I pointed out shining bronze-cuckoo and long-tailed cuckoo but they kept coming back to oriental cuckoo as the migratory bird they know as Kareva (see Nukumanu list).

*Sacred kingfisher*  
Two specimens were collected by the *Noona Dan*

expedition (Diamond pers. comm.). My informants pointed out the collared kingfisher (*Halcyon chloris*) and said it nests at Takuu. However, collared and sacred kingfishers are so similar that their observation could have been either. Their belief it nested would make one lean toward collared. On the other hand, sacred kingfishers have nested at the Solomons. I suspect only sacred kingfishers are present on Takuu. Future observers should endeavour to clarify this matter.

*Island monarch* [Sikisikitau]

\**Atoll starling* [Huia]

This species was aggressively targeting the eggs of the black noddies. Any noddy that left its nest was likely to find its egg eaten by the atoll starlings. Atoll starlings even hopped right up to incubating noddies which would respond with harsh calls and beak thrusts. I was able to record interactions between these two species on audiotape.

**BIRDS OF NUKUMANU**

I arrived at Nukumanu atolls group about midday 6 November 2001 and departed during the afternoon of 8 November. I visited Huahatu ('the island of many stones') atoll, Nukumanu's wildlife sanctuary, and meet with older men to discuss the birds of Nukumanu. All the people live on Amotu atoll while the largest atoll, Nukumanu, is now used just for gardens.

Just 38 km south of Nukumanu is the Ontong Java atoll group, politically part of the Solomon Islands. Bayliss-Smith (1972, 1974) studied the birds of these atolls for 11 months from June 1970 to May 1971. Other bird observers have been Sarfert (1910), the Whitney Expedition and Bradley in 1953 (Bradley 1957). Although significantly larger than Nukumanu many of the species on the two atoll groups are similar. In the Nukumanu checklist that follows I have indicated those species also known from Ontong Java (OJ). Some former Ontong Java residents were travelling on the ship with me and they wanted to tell me about their birds too, as they knew I was gathering information on all the other atolls. The comments that follow largely come from Bayliss-Smith but some is information I gleaned from these men. Birds marked \* were seen by me.

*Shearwater* (*Puffinus* sp.) (OJ) [Litai and Tiritai]

My Nukumanu informants were aware of these birds and only encountered them when they were in the open ocean outside the lagoon. Bayliss-Smith (1972) identified wedge-tailed shearwaters as the species the OJ fishermen saw.

*White-tailed tropicbird* (OJ) [Tavake]

This bird does not nest on the wildlife sanctuary

atoll but nests on Nukumanu, the garden atoll where there are more suitable cavities for their nests. Bayliss-Smith (1972) found on OJ that white-tailed tropicbirds were present in significant numbers only when nesting.

*Red-tailed tropicbird* [Tavaketoto]

My informants indicated this species is only a rare visitor.

\**Great frigatebird* (OJ) [Kataha]

Bayliss-Smith (1972) found this species more common than the lesser frigatebird.

\**Lesser frigatebird* (OJ) [Kataha]

Katahauamea is the male and Katahapure the female. Both frigatebird species were nesting on Huahatu atoll. Dozens of birds present.

\**Red-footed booby* (OJ) [Kanapu]

Dozens of birds were nesting in trees on Huahatu atoll. This species was much more numerous than the brown booby. Bayliss-Smith (1972) found this also to be the case on Ontong Java.

\**Brown booby* (OJ) [[Hakatoko]

I saw a few old nests seen on the ground. Less than 50 birds present.

\**Pacific reef egret* (OJ) [Teheripala - dark morph; Teherimakini - white morph]

*Dusky scrubfowl* (OJ) [Marau]

Sarfert collected 1 specimen in 1910 (Sarfert and Damm 1929). On Ontong Java noted by Bayliss-Smith (1972) and by the Whitney Expedition.

*Purple swamphen* (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) (OJ)

In Mayr (1945) the purple swamphen was listed for Ontong Java. It was not present in 1972 as Bayliss-Smith did not see it during 11 months' residence.

\**Pacific golden plover* (OJ) [Tekivi]

\**Mongolian plover* (OJ) [Tekivi]

"Tekivi" is commonly used for all migratory waders. One person told me "Tekapo" is used for a very small migratory wader, perhaps a sandpiper or stint. During Bayliss-Smith's 11 months on Ontong Java he encountered 12 species of migratory wader. He saw the eight listed above, as well as large sand-plover (*Charadrius leschenaulti*), bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) and red-necked stint (*Calidris ruficollis*).

\**Whimbrel* (OJ) [Taroa]

\**Common sandpiper* (OJ) [Tiritavoi]

\**Grey-tailed tattler* (OJ) [Tekapo]

\**Turnstone* (OJ) [Teikaika or Kanakapo]  
On Ontong Java noted by the Whitney Expedition (Stickney 1943).

\**Greater crested tern* (OJ) [Tarahora]  
Small numbers present.

\**Black-naped tern* (OJ) [Lopiti]  
The *Noona Dan* expedition collected 3 specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Small numbers present.

\**Sooty/Bridled tern* (OJ) [Taraauri]  
I saw just one probable sooty tern in the distance. Bayliss-Smith (1972) observed sooty terns in December and January only.

\**Brown noddy* (OJ) [Tenoo]  
I saw several nests. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). Both noddies nest on Huahatu atoll, the black noddy in large numbers with just a few brown noddies. In just one tree I counted approximately 50 black noddy nests although I was unable to ascertain whether all were active. The brown noddies did not form colonies but individual nests were scattered throughout the atoll.

\**White tern* (OJ) [Kinakina]  
The *Noona Dan* Expedition collected three specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). I photographed them nesting on the sanctuary atoll. Probably less than 50 birds.

\**Black noddy* (OJ) [Lakia]

\**Pacific imperial-pigeon* (OJ) [Terupe]  
A Pacific imperial-pigeon was being kept as a free-flying pet. I was told it nests at the base of coconut palm fronds. The *Noona Dan* expedition collected two specimens (Diamond pers. comm.). On Ontong Java seen by all visitors.

\**Pomarine skua* (*jaeger*)  
One dark morph seen from the MV *Sankamap* at 4°38'S and 158°58'E

*Nicobar pigeon* (OJ)  
Sarfert took a specimen in 1910 (Sarfert and Damm 1929). Bayliss-Smith noted them on Ontong Java. I asked about this species but nobody recognised it. Probably no longer present.

\**Oriental cuckoo* [Manukareva]  
One of this species was being kept as a pet. Its wings had been clipped.

*Long-tailed cuckoo* (OJ)

My informants agreed this species reaches Nukumanu. It was also given the name Manukareva. On Ontong Java, Bayliss-Smith (1972) found them in small numbers, three arriving on 27 January and the last sighting on 28 August.

*Kingfisher* (*Halcyon* sp.) [Titiriuna, Hohona]

My informants told me of a kingfisher species on Nukumanu. From the field guide it was clear the kingfisher was either sacred or collared but not beach kingfisher. As Bayliss-Smith (1972) observed collared kingfishers on Ontong Java, it is probably this species. However, my informants seemed to indicate in some years it is not seen. This may mean the sacred kingfisher occasionally reaches Nukumanu or that the collared is in such small numbers they overlook it for periods of time. A further complication is that I was given two names for this kingfisher. Firstly Titiriuna, which seems to refer to its habit of sometimes flicking its tail. Then I was told Hohona which refers to its habit of taking hermit crabs and shaking them out of their shells. So do two names mean two different species? The most likely answer I suspect is two names for collared kingfisher which is definitely a breeding resident on Ontong Java.

\**Island monarch* (OJ) [Hihitau]

On Ontong Java seen by Bayliss-Smith (1972) and the Whitney Expedition (Diamond pers. comm.).

*Swiftlet*

A swiftlet-like bird appears when there have been strong winds from the west. It is known as Manutelaki. This species was identified by my informants as they looked through the field guide. Bayliss-Smith notes "a small swallow seen at Pelau on 15 April after two days of very strong north-west to south-westerly winds. This bird may have been a vagrant of *Hirundo tahitica* or *Hirundo nigricans*."

*Atoll starling*

I carefully checked for the presence of atoll starling but they do not appear to live on Nukumanu. At first when discussing the birds I showed them the atoll starling picture and was immediately given a local name for it. Someone else told me "it does not live here; we just know its name". However, it is surprising if it is not on Nukumanu as it is on both Takuu and Ontong Java, either side of Nukumanu. On Ontong Java in July 1972 Bayliss-Smith found a flock of cardinal lorries (*Chalcopsitta cardinalis*). They had arrived after a period of south-westerly gales at the beginning of 1972.

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