

THE BIRDS OF BANDA NEIRA, MOLUCCAS, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on data gathered during a vertebrate survey of Banda Neira Island in September 1992. A total of 28 species of bird were recorded for the island some of which represent new island and/or Archipelago records. The local distribution, abundance and habitat preferences found for each species are described.

INTRODUCTION

Banda Neira is a small volcanic island, situated within the Banda Islands, about 160 km southeast of Ambon in 4°31'S, 129°50'E, Maluku Province, Indonesia. It is about 5 km long and 1.5 km wide and rises in the centre to about 200 m. The island group is dominated by the active volcano Gunung Api, rising to 650 m. (Figure 1).

- Birds of Wallacea* (White and Bruce 1986).
- Five major habitat types were recognised.
1. *Marine*. Includes coastal seas and straits between islands.
 2. *Coasts*. Includes rocky sandy and coral beaches.
 3. *Cultivated areas*. These include nutmeg and clove orchards and vegetable and village gardens.
 4. *Airstrip* and associated rank grassland bordering the airstrip.
 5. *Rainforest patches*. Small patches of closed forest and scrub occur along some creeks and on steep slopes and hilltops.

ANNOTATED SPECIES LIST

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* – Ten on the water and flying east of Hatta Island ca 4°34'S, 130°15'E.
Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor* –

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4.8 and 4.2 g) found on 25 September; nest with 2 hatchlings (weight 0.8 g) and another with 2 feathered chicks (weight 8.4 g) found on 26 September; and nest with 2 fresh eggs found on 29 September.

Pachycephala phaionorus Island Whistler – Moderately common. Mainly forest and scrub, also nutmeg and clove plantations. Breeding: nest with 2 eggs found on 24 and another on 26 September.

Lemon-bellied White-eye *Zosterops chloris* – Common. Mainly in small flocks favouring forest and cultivated areas. Breeding: nests with eggs, hatchlings and feathered chicks found in September.

Scarlet Honeyeater *Myzomela sanguinolenta* – Common. Ones and twos. Mainly forest and cultivated areas. Breeding: nests with hatchlings and heavily incubated eggs found in September.

DISCUSSION

Although the survey was short we were able to cover the entire island and feel that most of the resident species were recorded, namely: Blue-tailed Imperial Pigeon, Collared Kingfisher, Rufous Fantail, Island Whistler, Lemon-bellied White-eye and Scarlet Honeyeater, all of which were found breeding. The Great Frigatebird and Red-footed Booby are both resident in the Banda Sea region. The remainder of the avifauna is made up largely of migrants or occasional visitors e.g. the Grey Plover, Oriental Plover, Common Sandpiper, Little Curlew, Whimbrel and Yellow Wagtail, all of which are nonbreeding winter visitors from the Palaearctic; the Wedge-tailed Shearwater is a migrant from the

Pacific or Indian Ocean; and the Pied Heron a vagrant from Australia.

White and Bruce (1986) list a further 28 species for the Banda Islands not recorded by us on Neira namely:

- Cape Petrel *Daption capense*, Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*, Variable Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*, Orange-footed Scrubfowl *Megapodius reinwardi*, Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea*, Masked Lapwing *Hoploperyx miles*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Rufous-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nitotica*, Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Wallace's Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus wallacii*, Rose-crowned Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus regina*, Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*, Australian Koel *Eudynamis cyanocephala*, Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*, Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans*, Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*, Kai Cicadabird *Coracina dispar*, Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* and Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*. Many of these are migrants from the Palaearctic and Australia and no doubt could occur on Banda Neira from time to time.

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