

CORRESPONDENCE

SYMPATRY IN BOWERBIRDS OF GENUS *AMBLYORNIS*

Sir.—While I agree with Frith (Emu 70: 196–197) that *Amblyornis subalaris* and *A. macgregoriae* may prove to be sympatric in certain localities, I think that a word of caution is advisable regarding altitudinal records provided by early field-workers. I believe that these records should be accepted only after they have been confirmed by modern field-studies in the areas in question.

For example, we have in The American Museum of Natural History specimens of both species with the following localities and altitudes noted on the labels: Eafa District (below Mt Alex and Mt Bellamy in the Owen Stanley Mts), 300–1,000 m and 1,500–1,800 m, A. S. Anthony collector; Avera, Aroa River, no altitude, A. S. Meek collector; Mt Cameron, 1,950–2,100 m, A. S. Anthony collector.

All of these records are for late nineteenth and early twentieth century specimens, as are those cited by Frith except for F. Shaw Mayer's specimen. But Shaw Mayer did not collect both species at Boneno. Collecting altitudes are probably very inexact for the early specimens, particularly for plume birds, which were likely to be brought long distances by the natives because of their high value. In fact, Meek (1913, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land*, London), in the popular account of his travels, states that he usually bought all birds-of-paradise (and presumably

plumed bowerbirds) brought in by local people. They, in turn, must have been well aware of this policy and would have spared no effort to obtain the birds. Gilliard's (1969, *Birds of Paradise and Bower Birds*, London) altitudes cited by Frith are based on records from recent expeditions, in which altitudes were carefully established for precise collecting sites.

One further point in Frith's article requires comment. He says, 'The more elaborate bower of *A. subalaris* may result from [selection for a species-specific bower-design used as an isolating mechanism] rather than from its slight loss of display plumage as suggested by Gilliard (1956).' Careful re-reading of Gilliard's text on the 'transferral effect' (1969, *op. cit.*; 1956, *Auk* 73: 450–451) shows that he considered the bowers to be species-specific isolating mechanisms but that, once the bower was recognized as such and became a psychological stimulus to the female, its structure might be further elaborated through sexual selection, whereas sexual selection for elaborate plumage would be lessened. It would be at this point that natural selection might act to reduce the extent of conspicuous plumage. The possession of a bower serving as a sexual releaser would be the *precondition* for the loss of display plumage.

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RECORDS OF WADERS IN NEW GUINEA

Sir,—In 1966 (Emu 66: 32) I commented on the sighting of a Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* at Port Moresby, presumed to be the first record for New Guinea. However, it had been recorded before at Merauke, West Irian, by Hoogerwerf (1964, *Bull. Br. Orn. Club* 84: 120–124) who collected specimens now at Leiden. He also recorded for the first time in New Guinea the Red-kneed Dotterel *Charadrius cinctus*, Knot *Calidris canutus*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* and Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, all represented by specimens, and a sight-record of the Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*. In his valuable paper Hoogerwerf gives data on

other species of waders in New Guinea.

Regarding the Masked Plover *Vanellus miles* Hoogerwerf (*in litt.*) says: 'A very common species near Merauke and for surroundings and also breeds there. I found the eggs on Frederik Hendrik Island not so far from Merauke.' Until recently, *V. miles* was thought to be merely a wintering migrant from Australia. Meanwhile, local observers near Port Moresby continue to record waders, and it is becoming apparent that the area round Port Moresby is not a major wintering ground and that large flocks of waders usually appear only as transients.

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