

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

SOME BIRDS RECORDED FROM TIMOR BY SALOMON MÜLLER IN 1828-29

McKean, Mason and O'Connor (1975) have claimed no less than thirty-six additions to the known avifauna of Timor, partly based on observations, partly on collected material. It is in no way my intention to belittle the interesting results obtained by these authors but only to do justice to the remarkable achievements of one of the travellers of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie; I want to draw attention to the fact that six of these species were previously recorded by Salomon Müller. All these records have been published, often more than once, and of five species the material is still present in our collection.

Salomon Müller and other members of the 'Natuurkundige Commissie van Nederlandsch-Indië' arrived at Koepang in October 1828 and stayed on Timor until November 1829. There is no need here to repeat the story of the many misfortunes that befell the Commission, including the early deaths of the botanist Zippelius, the artist van Raalten and one of their Sundanese helpers (cf. Müller 1842: 132).

The species concerned are the following:

Falco peregrinus Peregrine Falcon

Observed repeatedly in the district of Amassarie, between the villages Baoeng and Soba (Müller 1843: 179); apparently not collected.

Arenaria interpres Ruddy Turnstone

A skull in good condition. Listed by Schlegel (1865: 45, s.n. *Streptilas interpres*) and by van Oort (1907: 91). Because Sumba appears to be the only other of the Lesser Sunda Islands from which this species has been recorded (Mayr 1944: 141), I take the opportunity to mention a mounted specimen from Adonara, a small island east of Flores, collected by Governor-General J. W. van Lansberge in August 1880 (Cat. no. 69).

Limosa lapponica Bar-tailed Godwit

Müller's (1842: 152) first observation of this species was at the mouth of the river Manikie near Koepang on 1 November 1828 (s.n. *Limosa rufa*). Our collection contains two males (Cat. nos 6 and 7), collected in December 1828 and March 1829; they have been listed by Schlegel (1864: 25, s.n. *Limosa uropygialis*) and Rensch (1931: 493).

Tringa nebularia Common Greenshank

Two specimens (Cat. nos. 44 and 45), both females, collected in November 1828 and March 1829; also a skull (Cat. no. 51). See Schlegel (1864: 63, s.n. *Totanus glottis*) and van Oort (1907: 96, s.n. *Glottis littoreus*).

Sterna albifrons Little Tern

Two unsexed specimens, one undated, the other from November 1829 (Cat. nos 9 and 10), and a skull (Cat. no. 21). Recorded by Schlegel (1863: 23, s.n. *Sterna minuta*), van Oort (1907: 104, s.n. *Sterna minuta* and *Sterna sinensis*) and Junge (1948: 317). They are syntypes of *Sterna pusilla* Temminck (1840: 465).

Sterna bergii Crested Tern

A female, November 1828 (Cat. no. 29, previously Cat. no. 23) and a skeleton, January 1829. Recorded by Schlegel (1863: 11) and by van Oort (1907: 103).

In addition, Temminck (1840: 414) referred to specimens of *Tringa stagnatilis* Marsh Sandpiper: 'des îles de la Sonde, de Timor et de la Nouvelle-Guinée'. At present our collection contains three pre-1840 specimens from Java and one from Borneo but none from Timor and New Guinea. Therefore it is no longer possible to substantiate Temminck's record, although he is quite definite about it. In those days large numbers of specimens of birds were exchanged with other institutions and several universities were regularly supplied with material for teaching purposes; Temminck may have had specimens that have become lost in that way.

I take the liberty to discuss two other species listed by McKean *et al.*; one is the Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, about which they state that the nearest previous record is from Sumba. Paynter (1963), however, listed a specimen from Flores obtained by Father Verheijen and I have material from the same source. Verheijen (1964) found the species breeding; an egg obtained by him is in our collection. Besides, A. H. Everett (in Hartert 1898: 455) observed the species on Alor, which is even closer to Timor.

Although it is true that there are no previous records of the Malay Sand-plover *Charadrius peronii* from the main island of Timor, the satellite island of Samao is usually included with Timor in ornithological literature. Müller collected two specimens on Samao, which are syntypes of the species (Schlegel 1865: 34).

In retrospect it is a matter of great regret that comprehensive reports on the zoological results of the Natuurkundige Commissie have never been published. Regarding the Timor collections, new species were described from it until well over fifty years after collecting; for example *Orthnochichla subalata* Sharpe (1884) and others remained undescribed until obtained and described from other sources, for example *Cettia everetti* Hartert 1898.

In reading the contribution of McKean *et al.* it strikes me that their acceptance of species as 'new for Timor' is exclusively based on Mayr's (1944) paper (this was confirmed by Mr McKean *in litt.*). Even Hellmayr's (1914) comprehensive contribution, with its supplement published two years later, is not mentioned. It should have been realized, however, that Mayr and Hellmayr were mainly interested in the resident avifauna, which provided them with the material for important zoogeographical considerations. Widely distributed winter visitors from the northern hemisphere are not of much interest in this connexion and that is why both authors can almost be said to have dismissed them in a footnote (cf. Hellmayr 1914: 105-106; Mayr 1944: 133).

It is worth mentioning that of the species that Mayr (1944: 130) listed as new for Timor at least three had been previously obtained by Müller; they are the Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (♂, February 1829, cf. Mees 1975), the Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (♀, March 1829, cf. Schlegel 1865: 55, s.n. *Pluvialis varius*) and the Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* ('three specimens, cf. Schlegel 1864: 46, s.n. *Tringa minuta*); the last-mentioned species is probably the one described by Müller (1842: 153) as: 'eene kleine *Tringa*, veel gelijkenis hebbende met *T. Temminckii*'.

Peculiar is the case of *Rogibyx tricolor* (Horsfield) = *Vanellus cucullatus* Temminck, of which Temminck (1830) wrote: 'elle habite en g[r]andestroupes la plage de Timor'. The locality Timor was also listed by Seebohm (1887: 188), Sharpe (1896: 148) and Peters (1934: 238) but not mentioned by either Hellmayr or Mayr. A mounted specimen from Timor is still in our collection; it is a syntype of *Vanellus cucullatus* Temminck.

The preceding notes will make clear that anybody who is interested in winter visitors and is prepared to go through the possibly tedious work of sifting earlier literature is likely to be rewarded by the rediscovery of a few overlooked records. Other records may require a reappraisal in the light of the discoveries made by McKean *et al.*: for example, the two mounted specimens of the Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus* in Paris, labelled as originating from Timor (cf. Hellmayr 1916: 110).

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FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE TAKING OF PEBBLES BY BLACK-FACED CORMORANTS

Following an initial observation of a Black-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscescens* picking up and swallowing four pebbles at Wright's Island, Tasmania (van Tets 1968a), the taking of pebbles by adults of the same species was observed many times from 25 October to 5 November 1970 at Dangerous Reef, South Australia.

Pebbles are regularly found in stomach samples and regurgitated pellets of cormorants that have been foraging in seawater but rarely in those that have been foraging in fresh water. The observations at Dangerous Reef permit a more detailed description of how at least one species obtains these pebbles.

STUDY-AREA

Marlow (1968) described Dangerous Reef and illustrated it with photographs. It is a low flat rocky island with a maximum height of less than four metres. Thousands of Black-faced Cormorants use the island for roosting and nesting and the Australian Sea-lion *Neophoca cinerea* uses it for hauling out and breeding.

Because the Sea-lions would push over and destroy conventional hides, dug-outs were made for observing the Cormorants. A dugout consisted of a pit with a short trench leading into it, covered by a flat roof of driftwood strong enough to support the weight of a Sea-lion. The roof was supported by boulders about a third of a