

# Australia & Papua New Guinea

## A Study-trip on Birds of Paradise and Bowerbirds

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**Introduction:** For those working with wild birds, the connection to nature is inescapable. For me, the relationship between the birds I work with and their habitats in often distant, exotic and wild places has always been a source of imagination and daydreaming. In order to better understand the birds we keep, I think it is important to understand where they come from

The fascination with exotic places and wild birds is something I share with my employer, however he is less inclined to travel to difficult places and in his own words "walk through wet forest for hours just to see a glimpse of a bird". That is how I found myself in the position to live-out his as well as my own ambitions to go to New Guinea and look for the King of Saxony Bird of Paradise in the wild. He did elaborate though, that if I would return alive, he would consider doing the same travel himself!

Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation (AWWP) is a private institution owned by HE Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammad bin Ali Al-Thani and it is located in the small state of Qatar, on the Arabian Peninsula. AWWP has a large state-of-the-art breeding center for selected bird and mammal species and is focusing on conservation breeding. The center is also involved with in-situ conservation projects worldwide. There has been ongoing breeding success with birds of paradise since 2002 and bowerbirds since 2003. More recently the AWWP has focused on blue macaws from Brazil, but that is another story.

The Papua New Guinea (PNG) trip was set for August 2003. The purpose was first of all to see if it would be possible to travel comfortably and safely to the New Guinean highlands and observe both the blue and the King of Saxony Bird of Paradise in the wild. Secondly it was my aim to investigate the needs of in-situ

conservation projects involving birds of paradise and bowerbirds and finally to learn as much as possible about the places where these birds live in the wild.

To do things right it was important to get the best advice and guidance for the trip. This was achieved in abundance when Clifford Frith, the author of the acclaimed book "The Birds of Paradise" from Oxford University Press, agreed to go to New Guinea with me. Cliff has been observing, photographing and banding birds of paradise and bowerbirds in the Southern Highlands of PNG together with his wife Dawn for decades. I could not have wished for a better guide to this magical world. Cliff and Dawn work as freelance scientific authors and photographers and occasionally guide birding tours. They have both since become very good friends and have visited Al Wabra to observe and study the birds of paradise and bowerbirds kept at the breeding center

### **Cairns and Atherton Tablelands, Australia:**

The trip started in Australia where I arrived at Cairns Airport in tropical Queensland. It was mid-afternoon and I immediately rented a car and headed north. After almost 24 hours of flight-travel and out of the deserts of Qatar for the first time in several months I was awestruck by classic Australian bush land on one side of the road and a beautiful beach on the other, it certainly did not make it easier to keep the head straight and stay in the right... I mean left side of the road.

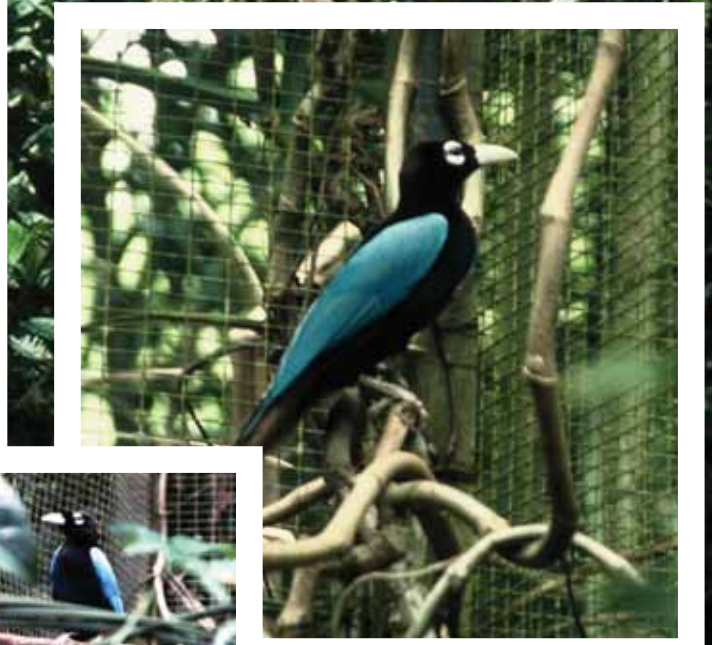
By late afternoon I had arrived at the Port Douglas Rainforest Habitat, which was straightforward to find, and I was welcomed by about a hundred Rainbow Lorikeets sweeping over the parking lot. This Zoological facility boasts a large walk-through aviary and mainly keeps birds but also some marsupials and reptiles. Since I



arrived relatively late in the day I had to rush through but still I was able to observe **Green Catbird**, **Satin Bowerbird**, **Regent Bowerbird** and **Great Bowerbird** in the walk-through aviary. The aviary complex incorporates a number of different simulated habitats including a nice wetlands area where I also found a nesting pair of **Black-necked Storks**, a species that has the reputation of being nearly impossible to breed in captivity. This was certainly news for the large chick in the nest at Port Douglas, carefree and begging for food from its busy parents. A Thai zoo actually claimed the world's first breeding for this species in 2004, about a year after I saw the chick in Port Douglas, something that this particular pair of laid back "Aussie" storks never challenged but just continued to breed at their own pace.

I had little opportunity to talk with the staff there, but one of the most popular things with the visitors to the Port Douglas Rainforest Habitat is the "breakfast with the birds" that takes place every day. A small restaurant within the walk-through aviary is equally popular with visitors as with the regular aviary inhabitants. By the time I arrived the restaurant had closed and was only occupied by a lone **Australian Darter** waiting at the best table, probably hoping to be first in line for the next morning's servings.

I spent the night at a private bed and breakfast back in Cairns, which I had found on the Internet. I was warmly received by the family running the guesthouse and was invited to join dinner. Well recuperated, I drove towards Kuranda the next morning to see two bird-parks the "Kuranda-Birdworld" and the "Kuranda Aviary", before I would finally make my way into the Atherton Table Lands to meet Cliff and Dawn Frith at their home. Driving up the hills behind Cairns on the way to Kuranda, the road took me through wonderful mature Rainforest, a few large **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** flew overhead and signposts brought attention to the "risk" of **cassowaries** crossing the road. Arriving in Kuranda I discovered a small town buzzing with life and there were literally people everywhere, which were mostly tourists. In between the multitude of shops, performers and many other entertainment offers, I found the two bird parks. Admittedly, I was disappointed with both. They both had a walk-through aviary, the information in Kuranda-Birdworld was poor and the aviary populated with an odd mix of birds both native and exotics. At the Kuranda Aviary the information was significantly better, but the birds, mostly Australian species, did not seem in the best of conditions. Both aviaries were relatively poorly maintained at the time I was visiting and the latter actually for sale. More encouraging were the visits to a very nice butterfly farm and the office of a volunteer program that rehabilitates fruit bats called "Batreach". The most exciting thing in







Kuranda was a nature trail through the forest to the Barron River. I spend some time birdwatching and enjoying the sights and sounds. On the Barron River, a little group of 3 **Cotton Pygmy Geese** caught my attention for quite a while. As I returned to the town, in the afternoon, I discovered that it had turned into a ghost town; all the tourists had simply disappeared back down to the coast leaving the place deserted. I was late as well, having a long drive ahead of me.

Reaching deeper into the Table-lands and into the darkness, suddenly the road became alive with tens of thousands of **Marine Toads** literally covering the road. The Marine Toad was deliberately introduced to Australia from South America as a biological pest control. What nobody had foreseen is that these toads will eat just about anything that is smaller than them self and that they are incredibly competitive and invasive, causing a multitude of problems for native fauna. I have never knowingly killed any animals with my car, apart from the odd moth or bumblebee; this night however certainly ruined my statistics. Due to the sheer density of toads on the road, it was impossible to move in any direction without making squishing noises. I choose to consider this part of the trip as my contribution in saving native Australian wildlife from the Marine Toad menace.

It was late in the evening before I arrived, having underestimated the long distances in Australia. After driving through open areas of farmland, the arrival to another rainforest was very exciting, in particular as it was now completely dark and the forest appeared in front of me as a noisy wall. The front gate of the Frith's property is a few miles away from the actual house and the way there takes you through a narrow road that has been cut into the rainforest, with the canopy closing overhead almost like a tunnel. The Friths have a little but beautiful and well maintained garden right in the middle of the rainforest, a large portion of the surrounding forest



including a waterfall belongs on paper to the Friths but in reality it belongs to the wild birds that in turn allow the Friths to study them.

I enjoyed the hospitality of the Friths for almost two days and had the amazing experience of seeing the **Victoria's Riflebird** including a male displaying at close range. I also observed the **Golden Bowerbird** and the **Satin Bowerbird** at their bowers. Birdwatching was very rewarding and interesting with many interesting species, many of which are attracted to feeders in their garden including the **Tooth-billed Bowerbird** and the **Spotted Catbird** as well as a large flock of **King Parrots** that come every morning. The Friths own an amazing piece of land and it was a real privilege to stay there for a few days.

We made a small trip to nearby Malanda hoping to find **Tree Kangaroos**; however, they remained elusive and left us only with a pain in the neck from looking up into the trees. Instead we got a good observation of a **platypus**. Just before sunset, we visited an old volcano crater, initially this was just an open grassy plain to me, but suddenly the call of a single **Sarus Crane** initiated the spectacle of several hundred **Sarus** and **Brolga Cranes** arriving one after the other to roost on this one location. The following day we set off for New Guinea via the airport in Cairns.

### Lae, Papua New Guinea:

Before going on this study trip, I had some communications with a zoological facility in PNG, the Lae Rainforest Habitat. It was created by the same people who made the Port Douglas Rainforest Habitat back in Australia. In the meantime the Lae facility had been taken over by a local university who was running it partly as a tourist attraction and partly as an awareness initiative for local





people. I knew that they had a large population of birds of paradise and was hoping to exchange experiences on husbandry and breeding. Therefore, the first destination in PNG was Lae.

We landed in Lae via Port Moresby just before lunchtime. The airport is small with relatively low security; it pays off to have a good look at your baggage, as they get unloaded from the small airplane, as the place is known for swallowing suitcases. The 40-minute drive into Lae is mainly passing through sugarcane fields and small settlements on an uncomfortable tarmac road full of massive potholes. Lae is one of the larger cities in PNG and the many very underprivileged suburbs stretch far from the centre. In Lae we stayed at the Huon Hotel that is located next to the Botanical Garden, which is basically a lush green public park with many mature trees and good bird watching. We were advised not to go there too late or certainly not after dark, as it can be dangerous. Meeting a park warden there, he suggested that we should come back and meet him there at 6 PM and he would show us the best places for birding. That would have been just before sunset, and as he said, "you should not forget to bring your cameras". The purpose of his friendliness became obvious. Based on my experience, such offers often leave you deprived of your valuables, so we accepted his offer and said we would come, but never actually considered going. During the short time we spent in the park we saw a group of **Yellow-faced Mynahs** a species that I had kept as a child, they were foraging in a fruit bearing tree together with some **Dusky Lorries**.

Getting transport to the Rainforest Habitat proved rather difficult and the few taxis we saw were not in the best of conditions. After lunch I managed to convince the hotel to arrange transfer for us to the University grounds with one of their vehicles. Upon arrival at the



Rainforest Habitat, we were received by Margaret, who is supervising the keepers. She took us around the facilities both in the public part as well as the off-exhibit areas. The Rainforest Habitat in Lae boasts a very impressive collection of native birds, reptiles and mammals. All their permanent enclosures, both on and off exhibit are well maintained and the staff is motivated and interested in what they are doing. The main exhibit is, like in Port Douglas, a large walk-through aviary that has a large number of different birds and also a group of Fresh-water Crocodiles. An elevated boardwalk through the aviary gives a very naturalistic view of plants and animals. In this aviary, a pair of **Raggiana Bird of Paradise** produced an offspring a few years earlier. Unfortunately, the male fell victim to one of the crocodiles and lost its head.

The Lae Rainforest Habitat keeps a large number of birds of paradise but has never had any other breeding successes and it seems to me that all they lack is a little bit of know-how. Almost all their birds of paradise are kept in pairs or in groups. The experience at AWWP in Qatar and in other facilities that successfully breeds birds of paradise shows that these birds must be maintained individually for breeding and only let together for mating, unless of course they are in a very large enclosure. The reason for this is that the males are not participating in any parental duties and, as the birds of paradise are keen nest predators by nature, the male will not make exception for his own offspring, being it eggs or chicks. Actually the facilities at Lae are more than suitable for breeding, having separation cages and connecting doors. I learned that the Wildlife Conservation Society of New York had something to do with the construction of the breeding facilities. The problem is only knowledge about how to operate them in the right way. Most of the keepers seem eager to learn and I think we all benefited from the talks we had about





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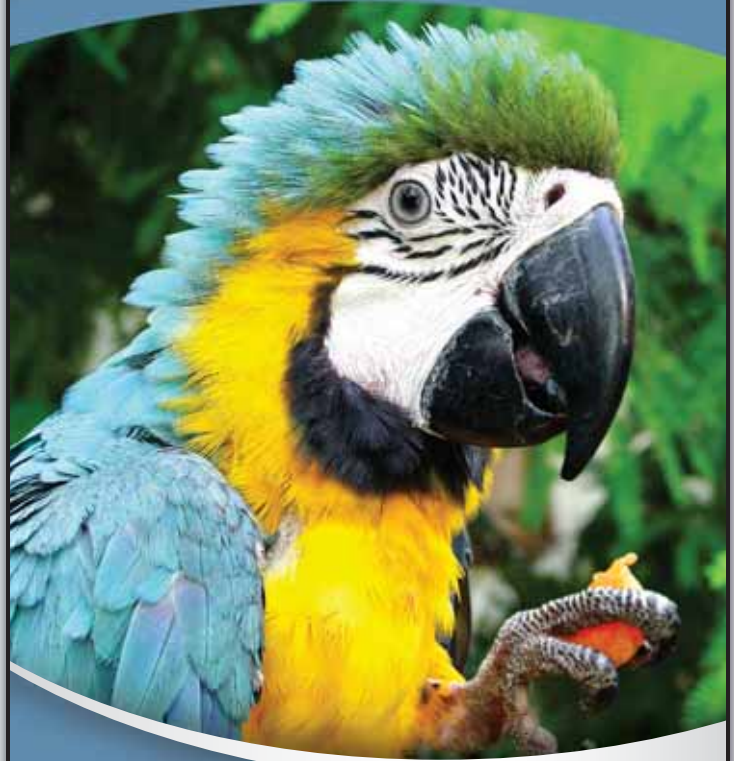
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our mutual experiences with these fantastic birds.

A large number of birds are kept but some of the more interesting include **Pesquet's** and **Eclectus Parrots**, **Palm** and **Blue-eyed Cockatoos** as well as a number of different raptors, the highlight of which is a pair of the rare **New Guinea Harpy Eagles**. Here are also a large number of **Cassowaries** with three species represented.

Furthermore, they kept a number of **Tree Kangaroos**, some of the caging for these was not quite optimal but under improvement and finally there was a huge **Saltwater Crocodile** said to be at least 20 feet long and rumored to have eaten at least one tourist... As the crocodile was partly in hiding during our stay I could not confirm the first claim, and the second claim... This I was certainly not going to test personally!

At the time of our visit the management of the Rainforest Habitat was in a transition period. The previous manager, Peter Clark, who is well known for his involvement in Tree Kangaroo conservation, had left earlier. The University that owns the grounds and runs the facilities had not found a replacement or possibly didn't have the necessary funding. So, currently responsible for the daily administration was a volunteer from England - David Whittaker. He actually came to New Guinea as a volunteer on another environmental project in the region and suddenly found him self working at the Lae Rainforest Habitat as well, and was doing a good job in keeping things together.

On behalf of Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation, I could offer a cooperation agreement in exchanging know-how and for AWWP to physically support the good work they are doing in creating awareness and appreciation for nature. After returning to Qatar, a shipment of books was sent to Lae as the first step, however since then the long distance communication has proven complicated and a real exchange program has yet to be established.

Funding is the main problem at the Rainforest Habitat and the facility does not attract as many visitors as could be hoped. The main source of income is in fact their guesthouse by the renting out of rooms to tourists and visitors. The accommodation there is excellent and great value for money, however, a bit isolated from downtown Lae, causing visitors to sometimes choose other places. I can warmly recommend staying there if ever visiting Lae. Most cages and facilities have been built with the help of local sponsors who in turn get a small plate on the house or cage for their advertisement.

The last highlight in Lae was that we were fortunate enough to observe a wild **Fawn-breasted Bowerbird** in the grasslands behind the Rainforest Habitat and, although at some distance, we could see that the bird was eating some small red berries.



### Southern Highlands:

We left Lae on a very small aircraft early in the morning but had to make an emergency landing at the next landing strip in Madang, as the radio did not work properly. At the airstrip in Madang, temperatures were excruciating and the humidity high enough to cause condensed water to form on all surfaces. We had the opportunity to wait in a small airport hangar that had a toilet and a fan while the repairs were done. Eager to have a peak at the landscape around, I ventured outside, only to be frightened by the sight of our pilot furiously kicking our airplane. Purposely ignoring what I've just seen I went back inside and awaited the completion of the "repairs" trustfully with the other four passengers.

After repairs, we continued to Gorokka, then on to Mt. Hagen and finally landed at the Tari airport in the Southern Highlands. The views I had of the forest, rivers, hills, mountains and villages below were both very exciting and at the same time some areas of deforestations and fires brought the reality back in to the equation. The Tari airport is a fenced dirt track and a small shed. There we were picked up by the lodge in an old bus and taken for the two hour trip up the mountainside. In the city of Tari there was Friday market and several thousand people was filling the streets making driving almost impossible. Many of these people were wearing traditional clothing and "makeup", making it a colorful spectacle.

After arriving well at the Ambua lodge we had lunch and proceeded to investigate the area just around the lodge. This area is very well known by Cliff who often stayed there, sponsored by the owner, during his lengthy studies of birds of paradise in the area.

The Ambua lodge itself consists of a main building made in traditional New Guinean style where all meals are served and, around it, approximately 30 round huts with large windows a bathroom and one bed in a single room, are placed in a nice garden environment. The huts are simple but comfortable and the view from them is breathtaking. It is not uncommon for one to even be





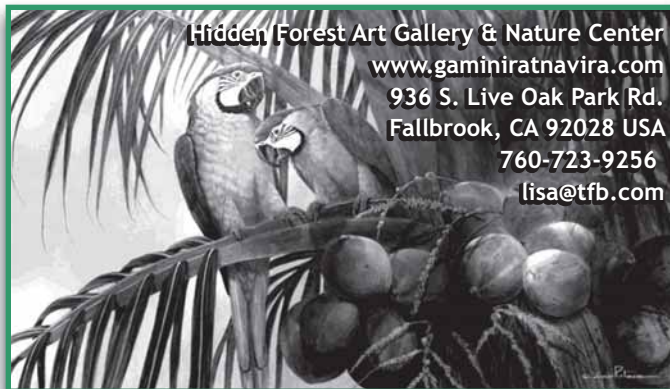
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able to see the occasional birds of paradise directly from the garden, making it a very nice place to be. The meals are on fixed times, the daily menu is predetermined by the lodge and partly consists of local dishes as well as international cuisine - basically no restaurant or room service. A limited selection of soft drinks, wine and water is available at the bar. The lodge owns four mini busses that are used for daytrips and for transfer to the airport. Recently, a private airstrip has been build close to the lodge and there is a landing place for helicopters on the grounds. Some of the employees are specialized bird spotters and some have fine-tuned skills for identifying birds such as Joseph who was our guide on most of our trips up the mountainside or in the valley below.

The scenery just behind the lodge is rainforest and part of the famous BBC documentary "Attenborough in Paradise" was filmed right there as well as in the forested mountain ranges nearby. On the lodge grounds there is a well-marked track leading into the forest down past some very impressive waterfalls and over traditional rattan hanging bridges also featured by David Attenborough.

The whole area is very wet and rain can be expected daily. The altitude is around 7550 feet so the climate is almost temperate with rather chilly nights. To secure comfort despite the cold, the lodge has electric blankets in their huts, which are very nice when returning from birdwatching soaked to the skin from cold rainwater. However, they also make it very tempting to stay in bed when its time to get up before sunrise.

The forest in the region is only used for commercial purposes to a limited degree but there is significant pressure from locals collecting timber and firewood. Massive forest fires have



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scarred large patches of forest and they have often been deliberately started by humans wanting to clear areas for crops. Planting crops is most likely the main problem as the altitude in the Tari valley offers good conditions to grow crops such as yams, potatoes and more recently tomatoes, making it a favored area for human settlements. The same particular altitude is also where the preferred habitat of the **Blue Bird of Paradise** is found, making the competition with humans for space unavoidable.

On the first afternoon I saw a female-plumed **Lawes Parotia**, **Stephanie's Astropia**, **Lorias**, **Superb Bird of Paradise** and even a **Macgregor's Bowerbird**. Naturally, I was ecstatic, all of those birds of paradise right on the grounds of the lodge. And, in addition to that, there were many other species of birds including **Papuan Parrotfinches**, **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, **Cuckoo Shrikes**, **Berry-peckers**, **Whistlers** and **Honeyeaters** as well as numerous exciting insects and amphibians.

The following morning we went up the mountain on the main road towards the Tari Gap, at almost 3000 meters. About halfway there we made a stop and Cliff pulled out the scope and turned it towards the tips of some trees a little further down the slope. There it was, a beautiful adult male **King of Saxony Bird of Paradise** making advertisement calls and doing parts of his display. This bird of paradise is spectacular; it is a smallish bird about the size of a small mynah, it is bi-colored, black above and yellowish-buff below. On each side of its head protrudes a single amazing feather, clear blue on the outside and brown on the inside. The feather barbs are strongly modified and like soft plastic to the touch. Most amazingly, this feather attached just above and behind the eye extends several times the birds' body length. The distance to the bird was less than 80 yards and it was easy to see through the telescope. Less than hundred yards further away, we saw another adult male and not very far from there a female sitting in the sun. The **King of Saxony Bird of Paradise** is found only in a specific belt of altitude where their favorite food plant, the Timonius, occurs. The morning hours are often spent in display trees, sunning and displaying and at about 9:00 they will disappear into the forest to find food. It is interesting that many of the birds of paradise seem to be strongly tied to a specific elevation in this mountainous island. As you move up the mountainside you have to watch for different species within a short distance of each other. Further up we saw an adult male **Ribbon-tailed Astropia**. It is as if the birds of paradise species are competing to be the most spectacular. The **Astrapias** are bulky birds of paradise with a short bill and a long modified tail. The plumage is iridescent metallic green and blue. The **Stephanie's Astropia** that occurs at lower altitudes has a wide purple tail that widens towards the end. The **Ribbon-tailed** has a



long white tail that looks like a silk ribbon as the name suggests, and, is proportionally to body size the longest tail of any wild bird. It extends more than three feet.

In this morning we also found a bower of the **Macgregor's Bowerbird** and saw a pair of this species deep in the forest. The bower is a maypole type with orchid stems stacked around a small seedling 2 – 3 feet high, a mould formed in the moss around the pole and small treasures such as beetle casings and berries can be found on the edge. This was truly one of the most memorable mornings of my life in this mystical forest covered in thick moss on the floor and with epiphytes and ferns everywhere. I have spent quite some time in forests around the world but never have I seen an abundance of fruits like in this one.

Before returning to the lodge for lunch we followed a young **Brown Sicklebill** male feeding on fruits for a while, the sicklebills are also large long-tailed birds of paradise, in addition they have a long curved bill and the colors are dark with a metallic sheen. Their calls are impressive and compare best to the rapid fire of a machinegun both in volume and intensity. That same afternoon, we stayed at a lower altitude where we saw a male **Lorias Bird of Paradise** calling. This species belongs to the Wide-gaped Birds of Paradise, and there is some discussion as to whether or not these should be considered true birds of paradise or perhaps rather be placed in a family of their own called **Satinbirds**. It is a small blackish bird with metallic sheen on the forehead. We also had excellent views of two adult male **Stephanie's Astrapias** that were searching for insects on the moss-covered tree-trunks just around sunset. Other birds that day included: **Papuan Lorikeets**, **Brehm's Tiger-parrots**, **Crested Berry-peckers** and much more.

On the second day it was raining badly in the morning and we saw only a few birds going up the mountain, but had fair views of four **Ribbon-tailed Astrapias** feeding together in a Schefflera Tree. Seeing these birds in the



rain with the water pearly off their extremely long, snow-white tails is just fantastic. Walking back to the lodge we saw some endearing small **White-shouldered Fairy-wrens** and a beautiful male **Regent Whistler**. In the long grass along the roadside was a single **Mountain Firetail-finch**. Closer to the lodge in the trees above a bamboo growth was a single **Short-tailed Paradigalla**. This is an unusual bird of paradise that is mainly black with a yellow wattle on the forehead. Within the bamboo the **Papuan Parrot-finches** were keeping busy. That afternoon, Cliff decided it was time to go a little further down towards the valley. Here the forest is very fragmented and the number of houses and gardens gradually becomes denser. At this lower altitude species such as the **Superb Bird of Paradise** and **Lawes Parotia** are much more common, although the hunting pressure is higher. Most people will try to kill a bird of paradise on sight as the feathers represent a significant value as well as for food. We had nice views of males advertising their display areas for females by calling loudly. We also saw a male and a sub-adult male **Black Sicklebill** at some distance before we suddenly heard the calls of the **Blue Bird of Paradise**. After searching the canopies with our binoculars we finally saw not one but two female plumed **Blue Birds of Paradise**. This species is possibly the most threatened of all the birds of paradise, as they seem to be bound to life in an elevation where the conflict with humans is unavoidable.

On the third morning, we went with the bus to the area of the **King of Saxony Bird of Paradise** to try to get some photographs and were quite successful. After this we left the bus and the driver to go deep into the forest on foot in order to find the bower of the rare **Archbolds Bowerbird**. After a long struggle through the forest we found the site and even got a view of the attending male; a mainly black bird with a small yellow tuft-like crest. The bower, however, is an amazing structure made from fern leaves, moss, orchid stems and abundance of ornaments from snail shells to beetle wing-covers and the absolute treasure, four of the head feathers from the **King of Saxony Bird of Paradise**. The area used by the bird is as big as an average living room; the material on the forest floor is an expensive and rare carpet made of things that are not easy to find nearby and on the branches jewels in the form of beetle casings and berries are carefully placed. The male uses this showpiece real estate exclusively to impress the ladies and I could imagine this particular playboy with some success. We left the bower undisturbed but still hearing the annoyed skulking calls of the "master-architect" behind us. The bower was placed atop a step ridge in thick moss-covered forest. In that area we also heard the static-like calls of the **King of Saxony Bird of Paradise** and the advertisement calls of the adult male **Brown Sicklebill**.

As the bus did not pick us up for lunch, we agreed that we had no option but to walk down the slopes back to the lodge. On the way we passed an area with several smaller fruiting trees and in one tree there was at least eight **King of Saxony Birds of Paradise**, including two males that were chasing the female plumed birds around. It appears that the birds might have been foraging on white flower buds. A **Short-tailed Paradigalla** flew overhead and we saw a few more **Astrapias**. From inside the foliage the excited bussing call of the **Lesser Melampitta** could be heard. Halfway back, we were met by our shaken driver, Jack, who was on foot and shortly after we were picked up by a heavily armed police escort that returned us to the lodge. It appeared that our bus had been attacked and had crashed in the attempt to escape. Luckily, the robbers' homemade weapons miss-fired and no one was hurt. As the police feared that armed rascals might remain in the area, they stayed with us, limiting the possibilities for further birdwatching that day.

On one of the mornings, as we were preparing to get out in the forest, I was "talking" to some small kids. Actually, it was more of an exchange of facial expressions and hand signals though. They were all chewing on something that I could not really identify; it looked like candy or rubber. I tried the best I could to signal my question by pointing to my own mouth and promptly the message came through; two of the kids offered me their treats and each of them pulled a live Tree Frog out of their mouth and handed it to me. The frogs themselves seemed relieved to be out in the open again and after a minute or so looked fine, only to be stuffed back in the mouth of the giggling kids (I must have looked pretty surprised!).

The final day we spent in the company of two Canadian tourists and our shared three-man strong police guard armed with automatic weapons. The weather was fine and we had a good day after we got the escort quieted down a bit. We had great views of an adult male **Ribbon-tailed Astrapia**, **King of Saxony Birds of Paradise** and amazing sight of the flaming red **Crested Bird of Paradise**, as well as one of the **Wide-gaped Birds of Paradise** as it crossed the road followed by two female-plumed birds close to the pass called Tari Gap. Another **Archbolds Bowerbird** several young **Ribbon-tailed Astrapias** and two young **Brown Sicklebills** were seen feeding in fruiting Schefflera Trees. The afternoon was spent on the lodge grounds and offered good opportunity to follow a flock of more than a hundred **Hooded Manikins** and a group of **Papuan Parrot-finches** feeding in bamboo and a Southern Beach Tree on buds. During the night, an **Atlas Moth** had been caught inside my hut. I took it outside in the hope to get some good photographs but I had hardly left the



hut before a **Greater Wood-swallow** swept down and snatched the huge moth right out of my hand.

The last morning in Tari we left the lodge early for the airport but had time to stop on the way to have a look for **Blue Birds of Paradise** once again. After searching for some time, we found a fully plumed male feeding on a Schefflera Tree. It was far away but nevertheless we saw him. Closer to the airport, practically on the edge of a rural area, we stopped at a teachers college that has a garden where we saw a single adult male **Raggiana Bird of Paradise** in full plumage along with two males that were molting. This was a nice conclusion to the stay in the Southern Highlands and, in fact, Papua New Guinea. After a short stay-over in Port Moresby, we were on the way back to Cairns in Australia. About 24 hours of flight travel later, I found myself back in the Middle-eastern dessert I had started off from, but now, a lot richer in impressions and experiences.

Table 1: The following is a list of the birds of paradise and bowerbirds kept at the Lae Rainforest Habitat in 2003 according to their stocklist kindly provided by Mr. David Whittaker:

4.3.4	<b>Blue Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Paradisaea rudolphi</i>
1.1.0	<b>Emperor Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Paradisaea guilielmi</i>
5.2.2	<b>1.1.1 Raggiana Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Paradisaea reggiana</i>
2.1.0	<b>King Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Cicinnurus regius</i>
1.2.0	<b>Magnificent Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Cicinnurus magnificus</i>
1.0.0	<b>Magnificent Riflebird</b>	<i>Ptiloris magnificus</i>
4.1.0	<b>Lawes Parotia</b>	<i>Parotia lawesii</i>
5.4.0	<b>Superb Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Ptilohrina superba</i>
3.1.2	<b>Stephanie's Astrapia</b>	<i>Astrapia stephaniae</i>
2.1.4	<b>Brown Sicklebill</b>	<i>Epimachus meyeri</i>
0.2.0	<b>Lorias Bird of Paradise</b>	<i>Cnemophilus lorae</i>
1.1.w1	<b>Trumpet Manucode</b>	<i>Manucodia keraudrenii</i>
0.0.1	<b>Crinkle-collared Manucode</b>	<i>Manucodia chalybata</i>
1.1.0	<b>Black-eared Catbird</b>	<i>Aliuroedus melanotis</i>

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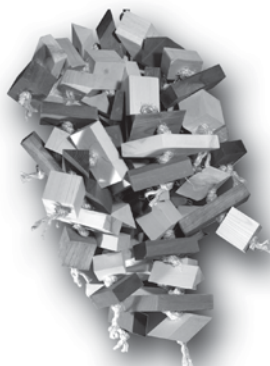


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