

Common Vertebrate Animals of Tetepare Island (English and local language names)



Prepared by
John Read and Katherine Moseby
Consultant biologists to WWF Solomon Islands
May 2001

Introduction

Tetepare Island is one of the largest uninhabited islands in the South Pacific, and the terrestrial and adjacent marine ecosystems are largely intact due to their isolation from human habitation. A group of descendants from the customary landowners of Tetepare have established the Friends of Tetepare to oversee resource management and conservation on the island. In conjunction with WWF, the Friends of Tetepare aim to promote sensitive low-level ecotourism as the dominant land use on Tetepare which will achieve the joint aims of conservation and income generation for the stakeholders. A proposed biological research station will provide key local information for a visitor information centre and will also enable an informed resource management plan to be established for the island.

This pilot study of the amphibians and reptiles (with notes on the mammals and birds) of Tetepare Island was commissioned by the Friends of Tetepare in order to commence compiling an inventory of vertebrate species and suggestions for future biological research on the island. The Tetepare language has almost totally vanished, hence the names of species recorded were sourced from the three closest languages to Tetepare, being Lokuru, Roviana, and Marovo. Recording of these local names should assist guides, researchers and ecotourists in knowledge sharing.

Methods

The eastern section of Tetepare was visited by WWF volunteers, John Read and Katherine Moseby and three guides from Nusahope: Keto Hebale, John Tume and Edwin Lau from October 28 to November 3 1999. The western half of the island was visited by JR and KM with four guides from Lokuru: Mary Bea, Tume, Suwhero, Eli and a WWF fieldworker Barasi Wale from April 24 to May 1 2001.

Camps were made at three locations in 1999; on the Raru River (08° 42.347' S, 157° 32.329' E), on the central south coast (08° 45.661' S, 157° 33.093' E), and at the mouth of the Kupa River on the eastern coast of the island (08° 46.730' S, 157° 39.112' E) and at three other locations in 2001: at Querusu beach (57L0334465, UTM 9032875) on the weather coast, at the mouth of the Erava River (08° 42. 42.1' S, 157° 28 53.5' E and at Number 1 on the western tip of the island (08° 42 19.2' S, 157° 26 56.5' E (Figure 1). Reptiles and amphibians were searched for opportunistically by day and night in the vicinity of each of the campsites. Additional searching was conducted during a walk to the summit of Mt Raru and at a garden site at the mouth of the Raru River. Several small reptile and amphibian species were collected and preserved in 10% formalin and transferred to 70% alcohol for verification by relevant experts and lodging in the South Australian museum. Incidental records of birds and mammals observed or heard were also recorded.

The Roviana names of all reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals were obtained from the three Roviana guides when the different animals were observed. Subsequently, Marovo names were sourced from Romulus Paoni of Lagoon Lodge and the publication of Hviding (1995). Lokuru names were sourced from Henry Gumi and Levan Eroni from Rendova by describing the animals and showing pictures in McCoy (1980) and Beehler *et al.* (1986). Additional Lokuru names were sourced from Mary Bea and Suwhero during the 2001 survey. All names were spelt out by the informants.

Results

A total of twenty three reptiles and five frog species were recorded during this survey (Table 1). The scientific names of several of the species recorded here await confirmation from taxonomic specialists and hence this inventory should be regarded as unconfirmed at this stage. Discussions with Chief John Lau from the Baki tribe of Roviana Lagoon, who is a third generation Tetepare descendent indicate that several other reptiles including the file snake *Acrochordus granulatus* (Noki kolo), two types of sea snake *Laticauda* (Nuquru pere - large; Sia kale - small) and the sago palm gecko *Gecko vittatus* (Kumulaho) and Green Turtle, *Chelonia mydas* also inhabit Tetepare Island. It is therefore likely that at least 33 species of reptiles and frogs are found on Tetepare.

In addition, 61 bird species (Table 3) and 7 mammal species (Table 2) were recorded from Tetepare Island although we acknowledge that many bat species and several bird species were undoubtedly overlooked during our brief surveys.

Table 1. Abundance of reptiles and amphibians recorded from each of 6 campsites on Tetepare Island. * indicates recorded >1km from campsite

	Lokuru	Roviana	Marovo	Camp 1	Camp 2	Camp 3	Querus u	Erava	Garden	#1
Crocodiles										
<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>	Seoto	Basioto	Vua		1*		1			1
Goannas										
<i>Varanus indicus</i>	Sosi	Regu	Erebachi	5+	5+	5+	2	2		3
Skinks										
<i>Corucia zebrata</i>	Iqi bukasi	Bukulu	Bukulu		1			1	*	
<i>Emoia atrocostata</i>	Fei edo Qore		Kaburu kude			5	4	1		1
<i>E. caeruleocauda</i>	Qore			1*					2?	
<i>E. cyanura</i>	Qore									1
<i>E. cyanogaster</i>	Vava kiaka	Kokoziolo	Kokojiolo		2					1
<i>E. pseudocyanura?</i>	Qore	Kokoziolo	Kokojiolo	20+	20+	20+	13	6	10	50+
<i>E. nigra</i>	Kudu makau	Gulogulou	Vulouvulou	1		2				1
<i>Lamprolepis smaragdina</i>	Barairi bukasi	Kive	Kokobutongobuma		1			1		
<i>Prasinohaema virens</i>	Barairi bukasi	Kive			4				1	
<i>Sphenomorphus bignelli</i>		Kokoziolo	Lakuhu	10+				1		
<i>S. concinnatus</i>		Kilikoso	Kokogilo	5	2			1		
<i>S. cranei?</i>		Kilikoso	Kokogilo	1						2
Geckos										
<i>Nactus pelagicus</i>	Varu razi	Gulogulou		7	2	5	2	1		5
<i>Gehyra oceana</i>	Zaru mata	Geko	Kumalacha		2		1	2		
<i>Lepidodactylus ?</i>			Tumajeluku		1	1				
Snakes										
<i>Boiga irregularis</i>								1		
<i>Candoia carinata</i>	Kofutu	Noki putarane	Noki oreke	1				1		
<i>Dendrelaphis calligaster</i>	Viroqi, Visoroqi	Noki tapuru	Noki charava	1*						
<i>Salomonelaps par</i>	Vasirai	Noki varipiqei	Noki picha	2	2	1	2			1
Turtles										
<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	Oihare	Tomatolu	Kautolu		2*		1(n)			
<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	Foforo	Kaka podoko?	Vonupede		1					1
<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Safi	Kohale igan	Volu ihana							
Frogs										
<i>Rana?</i>		Bakarao	Bangasasa	1	5+	1+	5	1		
<i>Platymantis solomonis</i>	Kuni	Kuni	Kuni kuni	10+	10+	10+	100+	30		2
Yellow tree frog		Roa		1				1		
<i>Litoria?</i>										
Webbed tree frog										3
<i>Ceratobatrachus</i>			Kuchumango	2			15	5		1

Table 2. Names of mammals recorded during brief survey of Tetepare Island

English	Lokuru	Roviana	Marovo
Large Flying fox	Rano suri	Veke taluaba	Samuru
'Hissing' Flying Fox	Erueru suri	Veke sui	Vahu
'Kissing' Flying fox		Veke lagiso	Lagiso
Solomons Bare-backed Fruitbat*			
Small Melanesian Bent-winged bat*			
Small bat (day & night)	Rika	Peperekoho	Tataemoa
Cuscus	Odo	Manue	Binahere
Small Rat (<i>Rattus</i> sp)	Siro	Gilgale	Vika
Pig			Moa

* captured and identified using "Mammals of the South West Pacific and Moluccan Islands"- T. Flannery

Table 2. Birds recorded from Tetepare Island. (b) indicates breeding recorded.

English	Lokuru	Roviana	Marovo	1999	Querusu	Erava	Gardens	#1- #4
Little Pied Cormorant	Muscuwe manozo							2
Megapode	Ngio	Eo	Io	*(b)	1			2
Nankeen Night Heron	Qore	Kuarape	Chou chigo	*(b)	1			2
Striated Heron (grey)		Sokodele	Chokodele	*		2	1	2
Eastern Reef Egret	Sou	Soa	Chou	*	4			
Pacific Black Duck	Engo	Nara	Aranga	*		1	3	5
Crested Hawk	Tito	Pito	Pito	*	1	2		2
Brahminy Kite	Neqa	Nae	Ke	*	1	3		2
Solomon Sea-Eagle	Atao	Atata	Kakakaputo (Kakaka)	*	1	2		1
Osprey	Nuru	Manuvu	Chogachoga ingana	*	1			1
Variable Goshawk	Mano oowa							1
Purple Swamphen	Bisa	Balikuhi	Bichere	*		1		1
Pacific Golden Plover	Hirahira foti			*	3			
Mongolian Plover				*	3			
Grey-tailed Tattler	Hirahira foti	Suviu	Pivivi	*	5			6
Whimbrel	Giu	Bokala zuzu	Chochori minate	*	1			1
Beach Stone-curlew	Giu	Bilikiki	Bilikiki	*	2			2
Red-necked Stint				*				
Common Sandpiper	Kivi	Pivivi	Chegochego mati	*				
Bridled Tern			Chelekae	*				
Black-naped Tern	Serekae	Helekae	Chelekae	*				
Crested Tern	Farao	Vagolo	Vagolo	*				
Black Noddy	Ofofongo	Dekere	Dekere	*				
Nicobar Pigeon	Bakupa	Bakupa	Bakupa	*	5 (3i)	4		
Ground Dove	Buti	Buti	Buti	*		2		4
Crested Cuckoo-dove					1*			
Claret-breasted Fruit Dove	Kuvo	Kukuva	Kukuva	*	3+	2		1
Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon	Muqi ngausu	Baruku soloso	Kurukuru isu binga	*	1+	10		
Island Imperial Pigeon	Fei ngausu	Baruka masa	Kurukuru	*	10+	100+	30	10
Cardinal Lory	Siriki	Siri	Chiri	*	6	50		20
Rainbow Lorikeet	Visuru	Vilisuru	Chiri chaligere	*	5	100+	10	50
Ecclectus Parrot	Kara	Kara	Kara (f), Karamahi	*	1	1		
Solomon Cockatoo	Keka	Kakia	Kaka	*	12	5	5	4
Australian Koel	Sengi				1			1
Buff-headed Coucal	Moza	Sehoho (f), Ao (m)	Chehohu (f), Ao (m)	*	5+	3		3
Glossy Swiftlet	Rika			*	100	10	20	100
Uniform Swiftlet	Rika							10
Common Kingfisher	Siqe	Siqe	Chige	*	2	3	1	2
Variable Kingfisher (red bill)	Siqe	Siqe	Chige (Pipi)			1		
Collared Kingfisher	Siqe	Siqe	Siqe	*		1	2	2
Beach Kingfisher	Kiokio	Kikio	Kiokio	*	2		1	6
Dollarbird	Kinio		Kekere kocho	*		1		1
Blyth's Hornbill	Omehe	Omehe	Omehe	*	2	2		1
White-throated Nightjar	Isafiha/ Fehryi	Totoa	Totoa	*(b)			*	
Moustached Tree Swift	Sidoroi	Pilisiu	Chiku reta	*			1	1
Pacific Swallow		Hikikoro Busa	Keja	*	2	2		
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	Vizako	Pisale	Pisale	*		2		
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	Hote Ula	Pisale	Pisale	*			1	
Melanesian Cuckoo-shrike	Mbisi							1
Yellow-vented Myzomela						1		1
Golden Whistler								1
Willie Wagtail	Fitikole	Pitikole	Pitikole	*(b)	4	4	2	4(b)
White-capped Monarch	Vingo/ Viara	Zie	Vivoho	*(b)		4(b)		4
Kulambangra Monarch	Viara				2	3		4
Steel-blue Flycatcher	Vie				1			4
Tetepare White-eye	Siokoli		Chikubusa	*	6	10		20
Yellow-bellied Sunbird	Vihu	Hilihiliboe	Viu	*	2	4(b)	2	10
Yellow-faced Myna	Kinio	Kinio	Kolioro	*	5	4		1
Singing Starling	Neo				20	4		
Metallic Starling	Neo	Hiuheze	Ea (Chichiu)	*		4		
Lesser Frigatebird	Amaqi	Belama	Belama	*	1			1

Discussion

Our surveys confirm that Tetepare Island remains a largely untouched wilderness island, with considerable conservation value on regional, national and international scales. Of particular note are the large stands of lowland and coastal forest, habitats that have been extensively exploited for plantations, gardens and logging elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. The dense populations of frogs we encountered may be a good indication of the unpolluted nature of the rivers and streams on the island. The island was devoid of Cane Toads, which are common at Munda and Gizo and have recently been introduced to the Rendova village of Lokuru, adjacent to Tetepare. If introduced to the island they could have a serious impact upon the reptiles and amphibians. Although we found no direct evidence of cats, our guides informed us that feral cats were occasionally found on the island. The control of these pests should assist in the conservation of many vertebrates, particularly ground-nesting bird species.

The Prehensile-tailed Skink is reportedly the largest skink in the world and is endemic to the Solomon Islands. The Prehensile-tailed Skink is also interesting in that it lives in trees, is totally herbivorous, largely nocturnal and the centre of several custom stories. Tetepare Island may become an important refuge for this species, which is threatened by lowland forest logging and conversion to agriculture and also harvesting for the export pet trade.

The Leatherback Turtle is a rare gigantic turtle that nests on several beaches in the Solomon Islands, including some black sand beaches on the weather coast of Tetepare. Two sets of Leatherback tracks and two nests were observed during these surveys. Both nests had been scavenged by goannas which were both abundant and protected by tambu on Tetepare.

We recorded a **White-throated nightjar** breeding in the Kupa area on the eastern tip of Tetepare in 1999. Tume and Mary Bea gave an additional unambiguous description of this bird nesting in the Kiefe region of Tetepare in about 1995, as well as a more recent record at their garden site on the northern shore.

A **Variable kingfisher** with bright red bill, short tail, buff breast and purple-blue back was observed sitting silently in a forest near the Erava River. This kingfisher does not appear in Doughty *et al.* (2000), although one guide, Suwehro, has also seen this red-billed kingfisher on Rendova.

The **Tetepare White-eye** was easily distinguished from all other white-eyes in the field guides by the combination of: absence of a white eye-ring; bill black; mask from bill to eye black; distinct green bib; grey-white belly; yellow under tail and thighs; yellow legs. This species was abundant in coastal and riverside forest throughout the island and were observed eating insects gleaned from the Tuisi tree, a secondary colonising species, and small white berries. The Tetepare White-eye is a tambu bird, protected by the kastom laws of the island

A **Crested Cuckoo-dove** was observed at close quarters flying near the coast. Our guides had only ever seen this species on Tetepare on one occasion previously and considered that it was "not from the island"

The **Solomon Sea Eagle**, listed as a vulnerable bird species by BirdLife International (2000), was widespread throughout the island and one individual was observed taking a Bare-backed Fruit-bat which had been disturbed from its diurnal roost. Near threatened species recorded from Tetepare were **Beach Thick-knee**, **Crested Cuckoo-dove**, **Nicobar Pigeon** and **Kolombangara Monarch**. Several immature Nicobar Pigeons, with black tails, were observed. The Kolombangara Monarchs on Tetepare had considerably larger and squarer white cheek-patches than those illustrated in Doughty *et al.* (2000).

We were unable to confirm the identity of the reasonably common ground dove which was well known to guides as Buti. This species differed from the illustration of Stephan's Ground dove in that it was a more maroon colour, and lacked the white forehead. Although our fleeting observations of these birds were unable to confirm their observations, the guides insisted that Buti had a red bill with at least some individuals having a small knob at the base of the bill. They were commonly seen and sometimes trapped under Ngali nut trees when the nuts were falling.

Extensive rocky tidal flats on both the western and south-eastern extremities of Tetepare may prove to be valuable staging grounds for migratory waders at certain times of the year. Whimbrels, Mongolian Plovers, Pacific Golden Plovers, Red-necked Stints, Grey-tailed Tattlers and Common Sandpipers were recorded in these habitats during these brief surveys.

References

- Beehler, B.M., Pratt, T.K. and Zimmerman, D.A. (1986). **Birds of New Guinea**. Princeton University Press
- BirdLife International (2000). **Threatened birds of the world**. Barcelona and Cambridge, U.K.: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.
- Doughty, C., Day, N. and Plant, A. (1999). **Birds of The Solomons, Vanuatu & New Caledonia**. Christopher Helm Publishers, London.
- Flannery, T. (1995) **Mammals of the South West Pacific and Moluccan Islands**. Australian Museum/Reed Books.
- Hviding, E. (1995). **Of reef and rainforest: A dictionary of environment and resources in Marovo Lagoon**. University of Bergen, Norway.
- McCoy, M. (1980). **Reptiles of the Solomon Islands**. Wau Ecology Institute, Papua New Guinea.