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**Excavating MacGregor:
reconnecting a nineteenth century
collection from Papua New Guinea**

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The more beautiful and gorgeous birds of British New Guinea

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This chapter describes the ways that collections were made in British New Guinea during Sir William MacGregor’s tenure (1888–1898) through a focus on the people employed in field collecting for bird specimens. It makes explicit the involvement of local peoples and other specialist collectors living in the region at the time. The creation of the collections was thus through two knowledge systems: that of western science and those of British New Guinean peoples. The influence of locals and other people is evident in the shape of the collection and the kinds of birds acquired. I argue that the curation of the bird specimens at Queensland Museum divorced specimens from the human contexts which contributed to reinforcing the hierarchical colonial structure. Despite this, examination of the collection’s composition shows the focus on ‘beautiful and gorgeous’ species which emphasises the knowledge of British New Guinea’s people and reveals the larger and more complex sphere of social relations that were a feature of MacGregor’s tenure.

□ natural history, collecting, New Guinea, colonialism, MacGregor, ornithology, contact history

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EXPEDITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

‘the most interesting country in the world for the ornithologist’ (MacGregor 1897a:23).

Nestled in storage drawers in precise taxonomic order, most of the 860 birds noted in the *Annual Reports of British New Guinea* (ARBNG) by Queensland Museum curator Charles Walter de Vis at the end of the nineteenth century have been carefully curated and preserved. The birds were collected under the guidance of Sir William MacGregor¹, Administrator and then Lieutenant Governor of British New Guinea (BNG) between 1888 and 1898. They formed the predominant natural history collection coordinated by MacGregor as part of his wider goal of learning more about the colony’s physical geography and settlements in order to pacify the region’s people and bring imperial ideas of productivity into their lives. A much larger formal collection of ethnographic items, referred to as the ‘Official collection’, was acquired to document past lifeways during this period of fast-changing social and cultural norms for British New Guinea peoples (Quinnell 2000; Torrence et. al., Chapter 1 this volume; Davies, Chapter 2 this volume).

Unlike the ethnographic material, the birds were not acquired as part of a salvage exercise (Quinnell 2000). Instead, birds were valued through morphological comparison with international populations and acquired in ways that emphasised their role as examples of living fauna. Although it was evident that living birds and those hunted for their skin and feathers had symbolic, ceremonial, and personal importance in a variety of ways for British New Guinea’s peoples, bird specimens were abstracted from their human relationships in the ARBNG reports and through de Vis’ curation and scientific descriptions. Known internationally during his lifetime as an explorer as well as an administrator and medical officer, one of the hallmarks of MacGregor’s term in British New Guinea was the extent of his work away from the capital, Port Moresby (see Quinnell, Appendix 1 this volume). These birds are a valuable resource for understanding how MacGregor co-opted his

small colonial resources for numerous expeditions to acquire knowledge together with cultural and natural items destined for museum collections.

To find the social relations that made collection possible, the *Annual Reports of British New Guinea* are critical as a record of the bird collection itself and the social relations that contributed to it. Including details of financial, administrative, and geographic data, these official reports are rich sources for understanding the annual work of MacGregor and his officers in the five districts of British New Guinea (Figure 1). These accounts are unflinchingly the views of European-origin colonists. However, in their attempts to encompass all matters encountered over the course of the year, officers and MacGregor included valuable observations about the local populations and foreigners living in the region.² There was a recognition in the ARBNG of the importance of engaging local leaders during exploration into new regions and, subsequently, they were generally identified by name and paid in western trade goods for their involvement.³ Countering the risks involved in travelling far from homelands while accompanying expeditions, British New Guinea leaders evidently found benefits such as reconnaissance of places or opportunities for local diplomatic activities. In other histories of local involvement in colonial expeditions, a range of terms have been developed to describe these people, such as ‘go-betweens’, ‘intermediaries’ and ‘brokers’ (Shellam et al. 2016:4–5). To include the local point of view, I will use the modern word ‘wantok’ to refer to local peoples both in its literal meaning of people who share a language as well as in a more general meaning of people who share a common understanding. In referencing the broader groups of foreigners involved in expeditions, I maintain the colonial terms of the ARBNG.

The emphasis in the ARBNG on local leaders as collaborators in achieving colonial goals such as collecting was also part of the process of pacification of British New Guinea populations and reinforced colonial hierarchies of the administration. These hierarchies are evident from the identification in

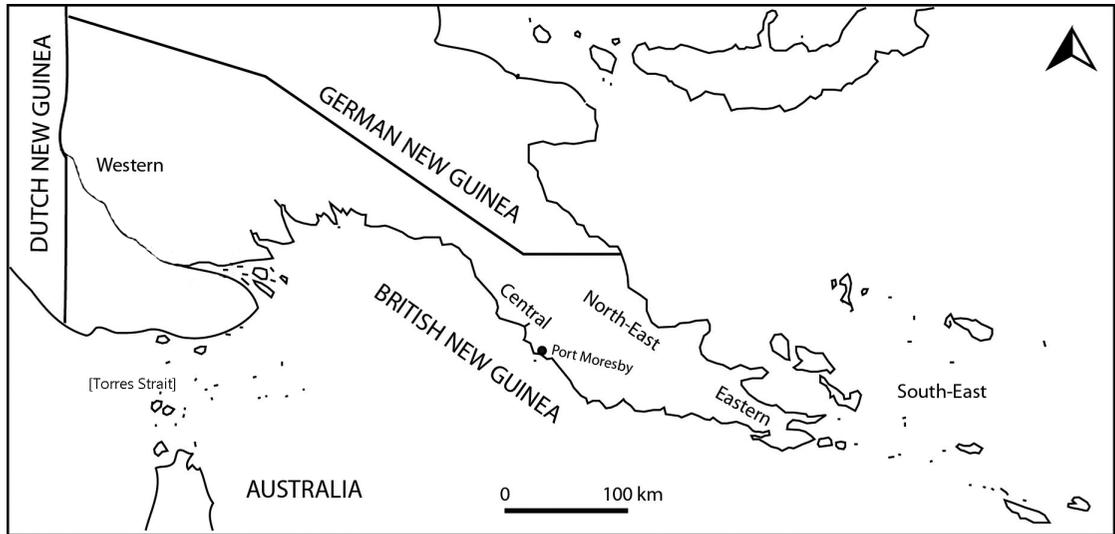


FIG. 1. Map of British New Guinea showing administrative Divisions during MacGregor's tenure. Drawn by Pamela Swadling.

the ARBNG of those responsible for collecting. British New Guinea officers and collecting agents of European descent are consistently named; independent agents of Asian and Pacific Island descent are haphazardly named or referred to as 'Polynesians' or 'Malays'; while British New Guinea peoples working as guides and carriers are seldom named unless they held leadership roles in their community. The terms 'officer', 'collecting agent', 'independent agent' and 'wantok' are used in this paper to refer to these respective roles.

From the viewpoint of international science, the extent of British New Guinea's biodiversity was poorly understood when MacGregor arrived.⁴ Even so, in one of his first reports MacGregor doubted that there was much more to glean about 'the more beautiful and gorgeous birds of British New Guinea' (MacGregor 1890a:26). However, over ten years that involved a combination of casual, sporadic and focussed collecting expeditions, a great deal of knowledge was added to the scientific understanding of avian populations and ranges of species. Yet, there are also curious omissions, such as the sulphur crested cockatoo, which may show a disinterest in a species common in Australia and possibly an avoidance of certain species by the

British New Guinea people who were involved in colonial collecting episodes.⁵

From the beginning of his administration, MacGregor also collected birds for his own enjoyment and for family members (see BOX 3.1). A number of these specimens were eventually gifted to his alma mater, the University of Aberdeen (Torrence & Philp, Chapter 14 this volume). The species collected for these personal purposes overlap with the formal bird collections sent to Queensland Museum (QM) but are not the focus here.

The first part of this chapter describes how MacGregor and his fellow officers coordinated the expeditions that led to the collections, with close attention to the involvement of the various people involved (see BOX 3.2). In recognising the direct and indirect involvement of British New Guinea peoples in the making of the collections, I argue that their influence on the shape of the collections paralleled MacGregor's own emphasis on 'gorgeous and beautiful' birds (see BOX 3.1). Independent agents who were occasionally employed to collect probably worked between the two spheres of value through local marriages and private collecting arrangements. The second part of the chapter examines the European systems that effectively removed any

traces of the involvement of wantok in the making of the collection, and, consequently, from indigenous knowledge systems relevant to ornithology. Following the discussion of museum processes, a short examination is made of the QM data about this bird collection. In concluding, I argue it is plain from the ARBNG, QM collection data, and the bird specimens themselves that there was a parallel in the interests of MacGregor and local people towards what MacGregor called ‘the more beautiful and gorgeous birds’, which includes species with high values in British New Guinea,⁶ and for museums internationally. As with the ethnographic collections (see Torrence et al., Chapter 1 this volume), the work of ‘excavating’ the Official bird collections for signs of social relations aspires to make these collections more accessible to the present-day descendent communities and families of the men who collected these birds for the future.

The MacGregor Collection of birds at QM is an underused resource for understanding the passage of colonisation experienced by local peoples between 1888 and 1898, and for recognising the mechanisms of science that obscured the contributions of wantok and others to the collections. Prior to MacGregor’s work, the birds of New Guinea acquired between the beginnings of religious mission settlement (1874) and the establishment of the Protectorate (1885) were predominantly in the holdings of European institutions and the Australian Museum (Philp 2021). It was MacGregor’s plan to keep all the descriptions and information together as part of the ARBNG (MacGregor 1890a:27). With the Official collection housed at the Queensland Museum, it became the responsibility of the curator, Walter de Vis, to work on matters of ornithological classification and description.

Enormous numbers of new species were defined between 1874–1885, largely based on the work of British, Australian and Italian collector-explorers working with Pacific, Asian and New Guinean people (Philp 2021; Mullins et al. 2012).⁷ The collections of the initial years of the Possession, from 1888 to 1891, were in regions well covered by previous collectors: i.e. the Owen Stanley Ranges; Milne Bay; and in the Fly River region. In this context it is not surprising

that MacGregor expected that there would be few new discoveries for science; but he was proved wrong, because 80 new species were published by de Vis from the collections, several of which were both beautiful and gorgeous (Table 1). In his summary of New Guinean ornithological work, Ernst Mayr (1941:v) pointed out that the 1890s accounted for a quarter of all publications about New Guinea birds prior to 1940.

THE COLLECTING MEN

The organisation of men to collect birds for scientific and personal interest followed a pattern of exploration and colonisation set by MacGregor from his arrival in September 1888 until the end of his tenure in 1898. Before considering how birds were collected, a broad view of the various people involved is needed, along with an understanding of the colonial relationships involved. From the first, MacGregor seemingly determined that colonial work would involve men, but not women. This was in spite of earlier accounts about the region which emphasised how local women’s presence signalled peaceful endeavour and that, from a broad wantok perspective, women were able to endure greater loads than men (Cuthbertson 1887; d’Alberty 1880). It must be concluded that European cultural norms apparently did not permit MacGregor to sanction the employment of women.⁸

In the early years of the colony, men of Asian, European and Pacific Island heritage were hired as temporary staff of the Administration as shooters, collectors, cooks, boat hands (e.g. MacGregor 1890a:14), and, in the cases of George Belford and Reginald Guise, could ascend to the ranks of expedition leader. These men were independent agents who collected for British New Guinea as well as for personal benefit, and it is notable that many were married to Motu women. MacGregor’s officers, involved in pacification and exploration in the late 1890s, invariably report crossing paths with them in remote locations. Alois Anthony and Jimmy Malay were highly successful in adding to international collections through their own expeditions. The

most active collecting agents were Reginald Guise, William Armit, Amadeo Giulianetti, George Belford, A.S. Anthony, Peter Lifu and Jimmy Malay. What is not evident by name alone is that while Guise, Armit and Giulianetti were all born in Europe, Belford, Anthony, Lifu, and Malay were from the Asian-Pacific region. All were married to Motu women, with the exception of Giulianetti and Armit (see BOX 3.2).

The police force, initially formed in 1890 with Solomon and Fijian islanders, was also vital to expeditions. It slowly became the Armed Native Constabulary (ANC) with officers and constables on annual contracts drawn predominantly from

British New Guinea's indigenous populations. By 1898 around 100 men were annually employed in this way. From the beginning the force was dominated by men from the Western Division coast, particularly Kiwai (Dutton 1985:64,66). English, Motu and pidgin forms of both languages were the lingua franca for broad communication (see Dutton 1985 for further detail). In 1894 MacGregor reported that 'thirty or forty men leave the force each year' returning to their own villages (MacGregor 1894:xxviii). The multilingual members of the ANC, who communicated through English, Motu and their own languages, were of utmost importance in maintaining peaceful relations during collecting

TABLE. 1. From field collection to specimen publication: A chronological summary of bird collections from British New Guinea.

ARBNG* Reference	ARBNG Number of bird species	ARBNG Number of specimens	Relevant Transfer	Number of specimens recorded in MacGregor Register	Associated publication
Pre-MacGregor	Specimen labels record date 17-18 Dec 1887	Fly River localities; one Mt Belford (O20226)	T33 (1890)	22	
July 1889–June 1890 (1890)	82	161	T32 (1889)	1	de Vis 1890a republished in de Vis 1891
Sep 1888–June 1889 (1890)	54	unrecorded	T28 (1889) T35 (1890)	3 23	de Vis 1890b
July 1890–June 1891 (1892)	64	78	None		de Vis 1892
July 1891–June 1892 (1893)	None	None	None		
July 1892–1893 (1894)	0	0	T46 (1892) T47 (1892)	1 5	
July 1893–June 1894 (1894)	81	208	T51 (1894)	179	de Vis 1894
July 1894–June 1895 (1896)	0	0	T52 (1894)	29	
July 1895–June 1896 (1897)	175	471	None		de Vis 1897a; republished in de Vis 1897b
July 1896–June 1897 (1898)	0	0	T53 (1897) T58 (1896)	3 57	de Vis 1898
July 1897–June 1898 (1898)	0	0	T65 (1897) T68 (1897)	3 165	
July 1898–June 1899 (1900)	0	0	T74 (1899)	87	
None	None	None	Research specimens	170	
None	None	None	Specimens removed from exhibition	126	
TOTALS**	455	918	296 no T# 578 with T#	874	For a full list of de Vis' publications, see Ingram 1990

*Annual Report for British New Guinea

**Total of 908 specimens listed in the MacGregor Register (Queensland Museum 1915-2001) compared to 1296 in the Queensland Museum Vernon database.

expeditions which often doubled as reconnaissance of unknown territory. For example, concerning an expedition to the northern slopes of the Main Range, Guise wrote: 'Sergeant Banari [from Modeva, Eastern Division (Dutton 1985:195)] acted as chief interpreter ... the tact he showed in his intercourse with the natives established a most friendly feeling' (Guise 1894: 87).

Those from wantok communities in the Armed Native Constabulary (ANC) and wantok carriers worked on expeditions to haul the required tents, supplies, trade goods and collection gear to the collecting grounds and to carry back the birds along with other natural and cultural specimens. Police also took part in shooting and collecting but were not accorded the same recognition for their efforts as independent agents. No birds are named for them, unlike Belford and Anthony, although this may also reflect who was literate and had the ability to contribute to scientific collecting through labelling. With carriers brought in from coastal locations, the advantages of collecting birds for their own purposes appears to have been accepted. Where relief carriers joined during the expedition, it is probable that their local knowledge of habitats was exploited in an informal manner, such as using gestures when no common language was available. Given their perceived lower status in the hierarchy of officers and police, as expressed in the ARBNG, it is not surprising that the carriers' roles are seldom mentioned. In contrast, local leaders who chose to accompany expeditions were acknowledged by their work supplying local names for birds in ARBNG language lists, for their contributions to collections, and for their knowledge of physical pathways within the landscape best suited to the expedition. As noted by anthropologists Nigel Oram and Michael Goddard, all people of colour were treated as inferiors to Europeans (Oram, 1976:38, quoted in Goddard 2020:63). The hierarchies of authority maintained by British New Guinea officers were part of this subjugation.

The terms used in the ARBNG for the people employed in acquiring the birds emphasise the social hierarchies in play. The term 'collector' and

'collecting agent' appears to have been reserved for those who managed collecting expeditions and had ornithological knowledge, including skinning and labelling. 'Officers' were men with permanent positions in the Administration. 'Assistant collector' was a person junior to the collector but with similar skills. 'Shooting boys' is a term reserved for both local men and independent agents of Pacific and Asian origins who knew how to use firearms. While nets and traps together with the bow and arrow were highly effective in capturing birds,⁹ it is notable that mention is only made of shooting birds with European weapons. It is apparent today from the lack of staining on bird feathers and in their general appearance, that there was a shared understanding that when shooting birds, great care was needed to ensure the feathers were not damaged.

British New Guinea officers and independent agents alike used the bonds between wantoks to glean knowledge and to co-ordinate workers for expeditions. The ARBNG contains many snippets documenting local peoples' general dependence on birds for food and some recognition of the symbolic importance and social values of specific species (BOX 3.3). An example of wantok values can be seen in the opportunity taken by men from the Mekeo district to accompany patrols to 'Port Moresby, and east of that ... as they then do a profitable trade with bird plumes and feather dresses in exchange for shell ornaments, & c.' (Kowald 1894a:58). Varieties of ways that birds were used in local societies are noted throughout the reports, such as the use of feathers to announce peaceful intent (MacGregor 1897a:14), birds that were totems for people (MacGregor 1897b:xxviii), and the theft of feathers defined as a criminal act (Blayney 1897:84). Such observations were made about singular cases, but taken together, they emphasise the different kinds of classificatory and value-making processes in play in the highly diverse societies of the region.¹⁰

Indigenous knowledge about birds was not considered to be part of the scientific data relevant for documenting avian diversity. The ARBNG, however, reveal the officers' work in accumulating knowledge about British New Guinea peoples

and their accounts include overlapping forms of information, such as word lists and the evaluation of Indigenous property rights. These show how birds and their habitats were conceived as property (e.g. English 1894:71; 1895; Hely 1897:69). In their questionnaires directed at locals in the Western Division, British New Guinea officers describe the intricate weaving of obligation and freedoms. For some groups the forests and their products were clan and individual property, although others could seek permission to hunt the coastal hinterlands (e.g. Hely 1898; 1897). That MacGregor and his officers recognised these protocols cannot be assumed, but it is possible. It is likely that the independent agents had some understanding of local peoples' protocols through their personal relationships.

Given the value of feathers and bird skins to local communities, it should not be surprising that collecting agents married to wantok appear to have selected carriers from their wantok communities, presumably as a means to direct wealth back into their communities. These marriages were almost entirely to Motu-speaking women of the south-east coast. This was probably a factor of independent choice combined with the potential political and economic value that foreigners could access. Peter Lifu, Jimmy Malay, Alois Anthony and Reginald Guise, who married into wantok families, had advantages of access to multilingual assistants, a capacity to speak two or three languages along with English, and relative freedom due in part to their long-term residency as well as through their employment as intermediaries. The emerging hierarchies of the colony ensured their wives' families and progeny had greater access to education, political authority and economic security into the next century (Dutton 1985).

Income to extended family groups was assured by Guise. For instance, in the 1894 Maneao expedition men were recruited as carriers from communities local to Guise's property in the Rigo district and it was from these men that Guise selected shooters to go out hunting. Alois Anthony, collecting for Rothschild, employed men from near his Port Moresby base (Gors 1896, TM/1/18/16). The Government's general conclusion about coastal Central Division men,

however, was that they were ill-suited to the work (MacGregor 1897a:40; MacGregor 1898b:29). By this was meant they complained of the conditions – in terms of weather and rations – to the point that they grouped together to enforce a halt. It is worth considering whether the absence of women was an issue, given their cultural role in peacemaking and hauling heavy loads. Regardless, an alternative conclusion is that these men simply had a greater power to control their work because they had other sources of income through the increasing number of plantations and the potential to gain cash or trade through the provision of food to outsiders in the populated south-eastern coastal surrounds of Port Moresby.

COLLECTING BIRDS

The two kinds of collecting documented in the ANBNG, sporadic or chance collection and collecting expeditions for which acquiring birds was part of the focus, varied little in terms of field conditions and practices. Both employed some British New Guinea people and were based in temporary and semi-permanent (occasionally fortified) camp sites for the scientific work of collecting including skinning and labelling. Some of the original maps made from expedition work are included in this chapter to demonstrate the complex terrain of the regions explored.¹¹

To understand the varying roles of individuals involved in collecting, I will focus on two examples of sporadic collecting and three cases of expedition collecting. From the beginning of his term, MacGregor personally paid collectors to acquire birds for his own purposes (see BOX 3.1 and Figure 10). He introduced a system whereby collections could be divided up in the field for personal use: 'Of each sort of bird I took the first specimen, the person shooting took the second; I the third, and so on' (MacGregor 1890b:48). This has important ramifications for assessing historic bird populations, as it implies that only half of all birds shot were acquired for the Official collection. An emphasis on ownership given to the 'person

shooting', meant that police and other foreigners with gun licenses could gain income and/or status from bird collecting in addition to their employment in colonial business.¹² A case in point is Alois Anthony, one of the foreigners recruited by MacGregor for expedition work in 1889–1890 (see BOX 3.2). From the mid-1890s he repeatedly requested inclusion in expedition teams to new areas to benefit his independent work as a private collector for Sir Walter Rothschild (cf. Gors 1896).

SPORADIC COLLECTION

[on the Angabanga expedition] I was able to shoot four of the large red parrots, which were afterwards stuffed (Kowald 1894b:113).

In 1889 on the first expedition into uncharted territory beyond the Port Moresby hinterlands, MacGregor left Port Moresby with his staff and boat crew (cf. Davies, Chapter 2 this volume). Once the Vanapa river route inland was proved viable by MacGregor, surveyor John Cameron was sent back to Port Moresby to lead in carriers and supplies for the expedition. The expedition group of 52 included four Europeans¹³, six 'Polynesians' and 27 wantok including 15 men from the coastal Motu settlement of Kapa Kapa. Some of these men had previously travelled into the highlands on the Walter Cuthbertson expedition (Cuthbertson 1886; 1887). The 'chiefs' Kebokanamo¹⁴ and Vale ni Koro (MacGregor 1890a:40) are named along with the Pacific Islanders George Belford, Caesar Lifu, Joe Fiji, Peter Lifu and Jack Tanna (MacGregor 1890b:39).

At their first camp site MacGregor notes that members of the party went to look for 'game' to supplement the camp food (MacGregor 1890b:38). Expeditions occasionally ran perilously short of food and at times birds intended for the collection were consumed, as happened on this expedition when Joe Fiji and Caesar Lifu ate two birds intended for the collections (MacGregor 1890b:46). Nearing the summit of the Owen Stanley Range at Mount Belford, MacGregor noted both the diversity of bird life and the likelihood it was 'a favourite

hunting ground' (MacGregor 1890b:40). At this point, establishing a practice that he followed on subsequent expeditions, MacGregor split the party, with some guarding stores and some bringing additional stores to the advance party. With numerous local hunting lodges and camps noted, they were eventually contacted by nearby villagers. Sixty-one specimens were acquired, with eight novelties including two bowerbirds named in honour of Sir William and Lady MacGregor: respectively *Cnemophilus macgregorii*¹⁵ (de Vis, 1890)¹⁶ and *Amblyornis macgregoriae* (de Vis 1890). This pattern of logistical movement, collection, and the creation of new contacts with regional wantok was fairly consistent over the ten years that MacGregor spent in British New Guinea.

The established wantok hunting grounds between the headwaters of the Vanapa and Angabanga rivers shown in Figure 2 provisioned hinterland and coastal peoples of the Central Division with bird skins and feathers of innumerable species. As Hirsch (1987) and Mimika (personal communication, 2021) have indicated in their anthropological work in the region, *Amblyornis macgregoriae* have long been a critical species for people living in the Fuyuge area. For example, the bird's vertical bowers are employed symbolically and physically in initiation ceremonies and relationships between humans and the birds are acknowledged in dances commemorating the passing of leaders. Feathers from harpy eagles, *Raggiana* birds of paradise and red parrot feathers were used for specific ceremonial headdresses and the calls of certain honeyeaters and wattle birds were associated with the voices of chiefs (Hirsch 1987:4). For Motu also, these and other bird species were highly valued and the feathers were layered together in spectacular headdresses worn during dances commemorating the safe homecoming of Motu-Hiri traders (Lilje & Philp, 2021).

Another event of sporadic collection occurred during the expedition to survey lands surrounding Mount Suckling under the command of Mathew Moreton in July–August 1891. This had a similar logistical model to MacGregor's expeditions but

without the presence of the ANC. Accompanying Moreton were the surveyor and geologist Andrew Gibb Maitland and Reginald Guise, who had previously been operating as MacGregor's personal collector. Coordinated through a leader named Abrahama, were 41 carriers from Taupata (Taupota) at Goodenough Bay led by Guise from Collingwood Bay. Further carriers were brought on at their first camp, along with Yaumobi village's leaders Bogegi and Kaupori. Although Moreton reported that Guise and his 'boys' had collected 40 birds, only 17 can be identified today, 12 of which were taken off exhibition between 1946–1957. It seems that many were destroyed at QM or exchanged away. For example, only three of the seven male *Myzomela rosenbergii* Schlegel, 1871 documented by de Vis (1892) from a list that Guise supplied (Moreton in MacGregor 1893:14) exist today. This collection is

unusual in that the birds arrived at QM and were reported prior to the publication of the expedition in 1893 (Moreton in MacGregor 1893:11–14).

MOUNT MANEAO, 1894

The leadership of wantok during expeditions is evident in the Maneao expedition headed by Reginald Guise (Figure 3), with William Armit as sub-collector. Under the protection of Sergeant Banari (from Modewa on the north side of Awalama Bay, Eastern Division) (Dutton 1985:249 n.21) and two constables, the expedition departed from Collingwood Bay on 26 February 1894, initially supported through the hinterlands by MacGregor and his personal police force who were predominantly from Kiwai in the Western Division. Fifty-two carriers and shooters were



FIG. 2. Vanapa River to Mt Scratchley (detail from MacGregor 1899). Image courtesy Chau Chak Wing Museum.

recruited, including Rebuna, a leader from Koboro, mentioned specifically in the despatch because of his knowledge of local languages. Thirty-two of the carriers came from townships near Guise's property, including his personal servant Lin from Irupara. A dozen were from Taupota, possibly men previously acquainted with Guise from 1891. Carriers and fresh foods were obtained from Kwagila, Uamatu and Itoi villages near the fourth camp inland. When Guise unintentionally offended Bisirabu, the chief of Uamatu, he employed the chief of Itoi to restore diplomatic relations.¹⁷ The most influential wantok group involved in the expedition were Kwagila, from near the fourth camp, who, along with one of their leaders named Soro-Soro, were recruited as carriers and interpreters to travel further inland. On the path homeward Soro-Soro and Sergeant Banari were able to hold off a potential attack, eventually celebrating their comradeship at a feast in Soro-Soro's village. A secondary purpose of the

expedition, to find the origin of greenstone used in axes, was finally fulfilled by Soro-Soro who identified Banaroa as the source village at the close of the expedition (Guise 1894:86). The Kwagila language terms appended to the report includes a variety of bird names presumably acquired by Guise from Soro-Soro with Banari's help and/or by showing the collections. These names were not appended to the lists of specimens.

Much of Guise's report is concerned with descriptions of the logistics of the expedition's movements, details of geography, relaying information relating to cross-cultural communications and short diplomatic visits, such as with the food-trading Opo villagers (Guise 1894: 82). In the high altitudes birds were collected in great numbers, but only after Guise had worked out how to deal with the Motu men from Kaile (who had begun to bully others), through a system for the shooters:

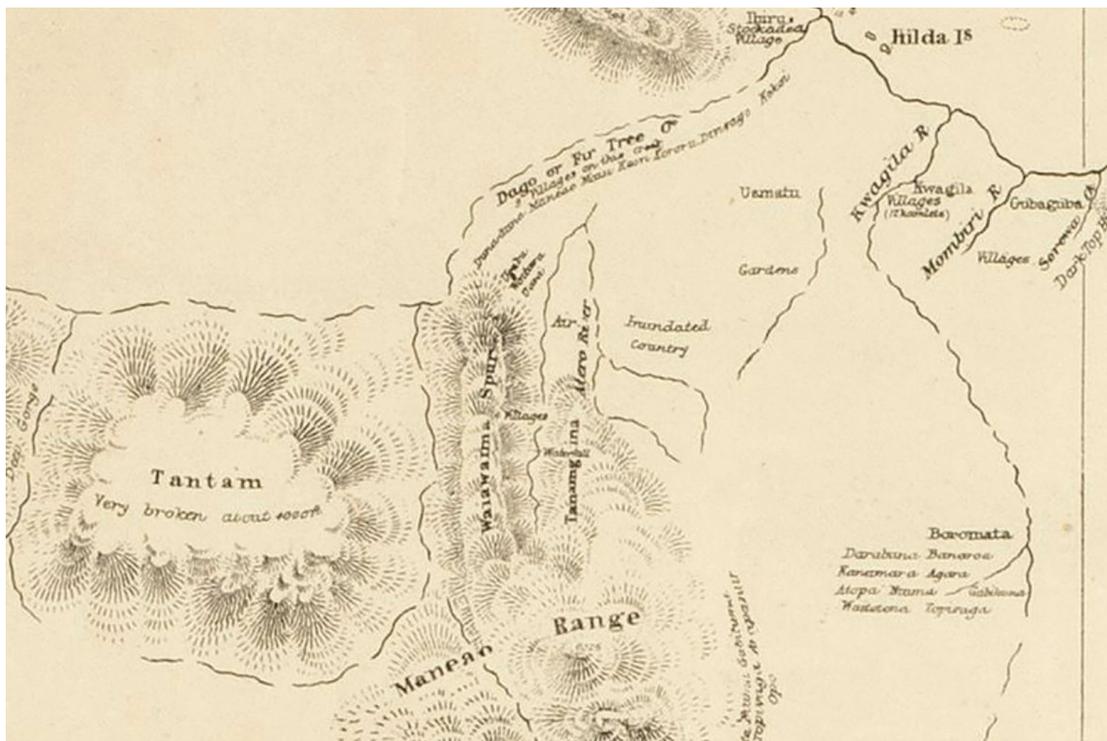


FIG. 3. Mt Maneao, Mt Simpson (detail from MacGregor 1899). Image courtesy Chau Chak Wing Museum.

The following morning the shooting boys were sent out early, but returned almost immediately, saying it was too cold in the scrub. A row ensued with the result that they recognised the error of their ways. Ekiari [Kaile ANC] and Lohiabada (a Kaile boy, an especially good quiet lad) returned some hours later with some new birds, among them an olive-green bower bird. I rewarded each of them with some tobacco. My Irupara boy, Lin, was also rewarded for a very fine male specimen of the *Astrarchia Stefaniae* [*Astrapia stephanie*]. As the boys' enthusiasm in the matter of birds seemed to require stimulating, I promised to reward them in the following scale: new species, five sticks of tobacco; male Paradiseidae, 20 sticks of tobacco; male bower birds, twenty sticks of tobacco; female bower birds, five sticks of tobacco (Guise, 1894:85).

As Armit, Guise, and many of the carriers were sick for long periods of time during the expedition and busy with logistical matters and skinning (Guise 1894:87), it is evident that the vast majority of the 210 birds were acquired by the shooters with little supervision. Guise's scale of rewards for collecting also ensured more beautiful and gorgeous birds came into the collection.

MAMBARE TO VANAPA, 1896

Although 1896 was one of the most physically and mentally exhausting years for MacGregor, a combination of sporadic and detailed field collecting yielded a large collection, thanks to the employment of the experienced field collector Amadeo Giulianetti. MacGregor himself made the first Government crossing of the island from the west to the east coast, deploying Giulianetti to manage the cutting of tracks, diplomatic contacts



FIG. 4: Map: Wharton Range and Mt Scratchley (detail from MacGregor 1899) with details from Giulianetti's expedition. Image courtesy Chau Chak Wing Museum, additional detail added by J. Philp 2022.

and provide assistance to gold prospectors. During the expedition Giulianetti was able to devote time to acquiring ethnographic items, mineral and botanical specimens, as well as birds. The expedition was based in the Main Range over a two-year period (1896–97). Bird specimens were principally acquired from three locations: Boirave on the Orangerie Bay coast (July 1896); Mount Scratchley (September–October 1896) at 12 200 feet; and Neneba (November 1896) at 4 000 feet.

Considering the results of the overland expedition, one imagines a purposeful collecting trip. But during the crossing MacGregor was tasked with coordinating the Government’s police and officers in their battle against local peoples of the lower Mambare. On approaching the southern flank of the Owen Stanley Range, MacGregor left Giulianetti at Neneba, but on reaching the coast heard news of the worsening crisis on the Mambare and so returned there. The sporadic bird collections follow this route, with MacGregor also finding time to collect the Gosisi and Tobiri language name ‘atava’ for the new species that was later named *Macgregoria pulchra* (de Vis 1897; MacGregor 1898a:15). At times Giulianetti and MacGregor note the movements of Jimmy Malay travelling with A.S. Anthony and in concert with Belford prospecting across the Range (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c:19, 37–38).

Giulianetti writes of collecting at high altitudes on Mount Scratchley in September, October and part of November of 1896, remarking that he would return to the interior in search of new Birds of Paradise. During the expedition he collected 220 birds in all, despite sickness and lack of food while he remained at Neneba with only a single ‘native’ (de Vis 1897b, 372n.). Which ‘native’ Giulianetti refers to is ambiguous. He was assigned three or four constables, possibly also had with him his servant-assistant Lario¹⁸ and to greatest advantage Goiye, the leader of the Neneba people, who had done much to assist travellers with food and to stabilise peace with incoming miners and the Administration (MacGregor 1898a:11; Hasselberg, n.d.).

VANAPA TO WHARTON STATION, 1897

This final example of expedition collecting illustrates aspects of MacGregor’s character including his capacity to co-ordinate multiple operations from remote locations. The use of individual ANC and independent officers to carry messages from coast to highlands, as Kowald did on the first Vanapa expedition, is not usually mentioned in the accounts.

In 1897 Giulianetti was directed to collect and cut tracks between the Vanapa headwaters and Wharton Station. Although a separate expedition, birds collected from January to July 1897 formed part of the collections sent to QM along with the bird specimens collected in 1896. In 1897 Giulianetti was directed to collect and carry out peace-keeping work to assist miners and Government work east and west of the Owen Stanley Range. This he did in two stages, initially cutting tracks around the Vanapa headwaters and building 13 camp depots with a relatively small team of 16 carriers, before returning to Port Moresby to bring together a larger expedition group for a continuation of this work on the western slopes. It is notable that Mau, a Doura¹⁹ leader from the lower Vanapa River area, assisted in the initial work, working in concert with the leader Done of Kone to secure further carriers (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c:32). In his report Giulianetti notes the movements of the 40–50 miners working in the district, including George Belford at Suku who then assisted with a Suku language list and with carrying messages inland requesting further carriers. By campsite 10, between Amaseba and Sikube, Giulianetti again met Belford, now travelling with Jimmy Malay and A.S. Anthony (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c:33). Giulianetti writes of the cautiousness of Suku and Sikube wantoks in their dealings with each other and with Europeans, noting Sikube’s reluctance to have their words written down. On paying off carriers, Giulianetti observed Suku passing on some of their payment to visiting Sikube carriers, which he assumed were peace-making offerings, but could also have been related to customary

gifts between neighbouring people or hunting rights (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c:34).

June 1897 found Giulianetti returning to grounds well covered by previous expeditions but, travelling in a cold and damp season, few specimens were acquired at Mt Scratchley, Mt Wharton and around the villages of Neneba and Maiama. The party he led for building camps and cutting tracks included ten constables (Musgrave in MacGregor 1898c:36), along with fifty carriers from the Fly River (Western Division) and Mekeo (Central Division), four collecting 'boys' and Lario. Now, as Government Agent for the Interior, Giulianetti employed the knowledge gained from Goiye of Neneba in 1896 about the wider area and its peoples to direct his path and seek out fresh carriers. Despite Giulianetti having built 13 camps, some large and well-stocked with provisions, which MacGregor used when he went inland with 110 men, MacGregor was displeased with Giulianetti's work and much of his Report is occupied with lengthy descriptions and depositions about the failure to protect the miners and cut a track over the Owen Stanley Range (MacGregor 1898c:19).

From his stockaded camps Giulianetti set up separate areas for skinning, drying and sorting specimens (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c:37). The equipment to do all of this, including casks of spirit for bottling specimens, meant another heavy and awkward burden to be physically manoeuvred over difficult terrain. Shanahan²⁰ noted it took most of November just to shift Giulianetti's gear from Neneba to Tamata station for transport to Port Moresby.

MacGregor's reliance on local leaders to assist in diplomacy between tribes was crucial throughout the 1896 and 1897 expeditions when confederacies of wantoks on both sides of the Owen Stanley Ranges were waging attacks on villages and foreign parties to halt the progress of Government men and miners into their territories. Giulianetti and other Government officers, prospecting parties, and armed police such as Corporal Sefa (from the Western Division) were greatly supported

by other village leaders in personally assisting their passage and through the provision of large groups of carriers. Interestingly, Jimmy Malay and George Belford also worked to ease the pathway of miners and assist Government when requested. The 1896–97 expeditions were part of the work to halt the progress of those fighting back against colonisation. These would not have been successful without the willingness of men such as Goiye of Neneba village, Vasili of Iritumuni village and Mau of Doura village to assist the Government. The chief of Suku village, for example, provided food, assisted with carriers, assisted in bird collecting and personally took part in the revenge attack on Goromani village (Torrence & Davies, Chapter 8 this volume; MacGregor 1898c:21). Frequently providing provisions and hospitality, Neneba villagers became known as reliable allies and presumably gained a greater control of European goods than others in the region in consequence.

MacGregor's last years in his post were during this unsettled period, with groups working for and against the colonial intrusion into their lands. Food stocks, water and bird species were appropriated and traded in large numbers by government officers, independent agents and miners moving across the island via the established routes of the Vanapa river draining to the south coast and the Mambare river to the north coast. It is in this volatile political context that the birds were collected with the support of coastal and inland wantok. The three expeditions funded to collect specimens from 24 sites in the high altitudes of the Main Range account for most of the birds collected (88%). The 1894 expedition (Guise and Armit) acquired 246 birds in the Mount Maneao region with two identified altitudes of 1524 metres and 1722 metres, accounting for 50 per cent of the collection, and another 68 specimens (37%) were collected at 'Mount Maneao'. The 1896 expedition (Giulianetti) accounts for 197 specimens from three locations of the southern region of the Owen Stanley Range. Giulianetti's 1897 expedition collected 233 bird specimens predominantly from the general location of Wharton Range (see Figures 3 and 5).

'I AM GRATEFUL TO THE PAPUAN CARRIERS'

In concluding his report of the 1896 island crossing, MacGregor's last words were to thank the dozens of carriers employed: 'I am grateful to the Papuan carriers' (MacGregor 1898a:14). Their work on this and all other expeditions extended far beyond simply carrying to include hunting for specimens and critical diplomatic engagement. Specimens collected through both sporadic and focussed expeditions show a marked preference for beautiful and gorgeous birds from a European viewpoint, but also of species used widely in the cultural and economic life of British New Guinea peoples (Box 3.3). In his employment of wantok for the Government expeditions, MacGregor also ensured that the expeditions were equipped with knowledgeable hunters. Such men would have had an acquaintance with the behaviour and habitats of numerous useful bird species. This included understanding the marks and food scraps of birds and recognition of both familiar and unfamiliar calls, as well as an awareness of differing plumage throughout the seasons.²¹ Of

the birds collected in greater numbers, the plumage of beautiful and gorgeous birds such as the birds of paradise, parrots, kingfishers, hawks and bowerbirds favoured by MacGregor were also employed by local groups in elaborate headdresses, as elements on clubs, drums and shields and were referred to symbolically in poetry, song and as messages of peace and warfare.

As well as the knowledge of the principal hunters, there were also ornithological reasons for some of the recurrences of particular species. Focussed expeditions provided greater specimen numbers as well as a higher degree of duplication with male, female, juvenile specimen examples required for classificatory purposes and duplicate specimens for exchanges (Philp 2021; Ville et al. 2020). Giulianetti's collections tend to include four to six specimens of the same species, frequently from different localities, while for the Guise-Armit expedition four specimens of a species were usually acquired from the same place and time. Some multiples reflect bird behaviour, such as flocking and perching habits and gatherings of male birds of paradise near breeding season. Other

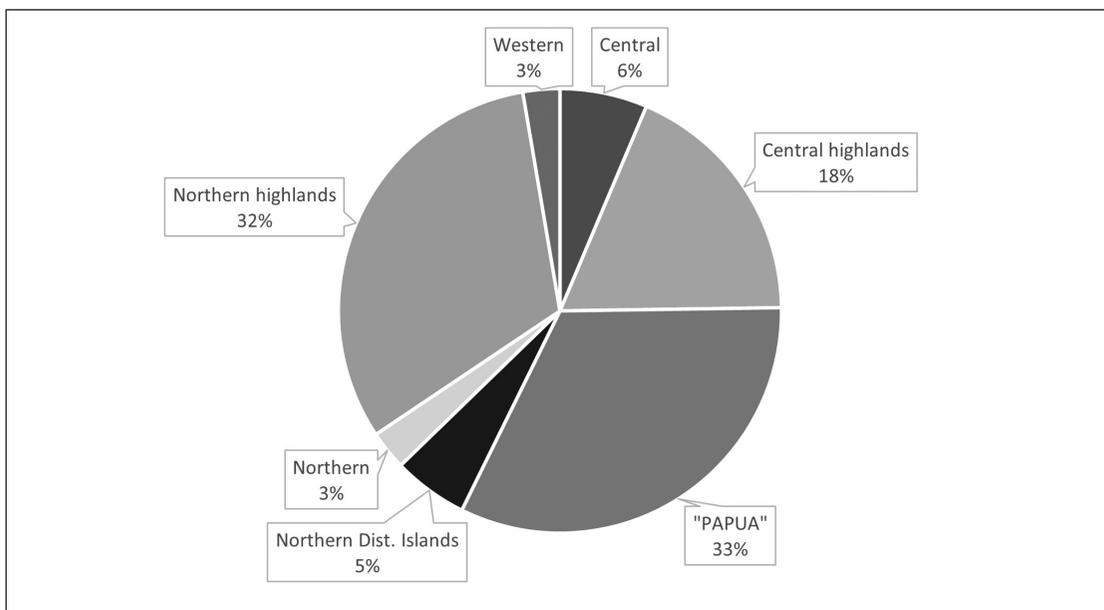


FIG. 5 Percentages of birds collected in different regions of British New Guinea. Data acquired from the QM Vernon database.

multiples, such as the ten specimens of the ground dwelling solitary bird *Oreostruthus fuliginosus* (de Vis 1897) that Giulianetti acquired in July 1897, were acquired at four different locations.

Overall, the collecting expeditions illustrate some common patterns in MacGregor's coordination of peace-keeping and exploration. Based on the expedition summaries provided here, it should be apparent that MacGregor himself had the appropriate skills for working in remote locations, such as demonstrating leadership through direct action. His ability to build relationships of trust with wantok and with local leaders through the ANC and by going out to meet them in their own territories was effective. His was not an expedition style suited to focussed collecting. As can be seen in the relative numbers of birds acquired through each expedition, experienced collectors such as Guise and Giulianetti had a greater ability to clearly direct wantok to acquire specimens that they then worked over to ensure their longevity within a museum context. While I have suggested that there was a parallel between the bird species acquired for local and government purposes, which emphasised birds with beautiful plumage, it is only through an examination of the Queensland Museum collection that this proposal can be substantiated.

THE BIRDS IN QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

I now change the focus from collection of birds in British New Guinea to the work undertaken by Walter de Vis at the Queensland Museum to secure the scientific value of the bird collections. Birds acquired for wantok purposes, such as material for headdresses and other decorations, were prepared and dried as skins and partial skins with all bones removed internally as well as from the wings and feet before smoking to dry out the skin (Swadling 2019). Across the region there was a general emphasis on preservation methods that allowed plumage to be animated through dance and other movements (Box 3.3). Specimens with these kinds of preparation were not collected for ornithological purposes at this period (Philp 2021).

Instead, for the Official collection, established scientific collecting methods, including field labelling and skinning, were adopted to transform the birds into the rigid static form needed for scientific assessment.

Once unpacked at the Queensland Museum, the effort that de Vis devoted to preparing and registering the hundreds of birds from the multiple expeditions was extraordinary. He attempted to maintain order for the thousands of incoming specimens and objects through established procedures at QM where incoming specimens were receipted and recorded through the museum's *Donor Register*. This allocated numbers to incoming and outgoing lots (cf. Davies, Chapter 2 this volume). 'T' (standing for Transfer) prefix numbers were appended to labels to connect birds to the relevant TRANSFER, and from this to collecting events in British New Guinea. Possibly because specimens from some expeditions arrived at different times, as was the case for Giulianetti's 1897 expedition, 22 per cent of specimens were not tracked in this way. There are numerous inconsistencies in the data which cannot be resolved here but need to be noted. For example, while de Vis reported on 860 birds, currently the Vernon database records over one thousand specimens associated with MacGregor's work, echoing problems with the ethnographic collections (cf. Davies, Chapter 2 this volume).

De Vis, like others of his era, displayed taxidermied type specimens in the public galleries to promote the Museum's work. This was the case for many of the 1889-1891 specimens, including the holotype of *Gerygone insperata* de Vis 1892, QMO19777. Another displayed type specimen, *Cnemophilus macgregorii* (de Vis 1890) QMO19429, was amongst the first group of animals to be received at QM and named in honour of MacGregor, with the typically scant details of its collection: '... it was shot by one of the party at some distance from their camp; no other was seen' (de Vis 1890:62). By the twentieth century such specimens were reserved for research rather than altered through taxidermy for display (Sharpe 1906:79-86).²²

By the late 1890s de Vis was coping with overflowing Australian collections, so in addition to displaying them in the exhibition areas, parts of the MacGregor collection were stored in a shed. The burden was made more complex with the move to a new museum building which opened by 1901. It had extensive exhibition space devoted to the Official ethnographic collection and a smaller area on the second floor for fauna including birds ('The Brisbane Museum' *The Queenslander* 2 March 1901, p.424). All this coincided with de Vis' slow move to retirement in 1905 (Mack 1956:116). The various moves written into the collection registers document the changes in the numbering systems, the parallel movements of the specimens to the new site and the 1948 additions following work to update exhibition areas (Mack 1956:118).

FROM BIRD TO SPECIMEN

Expeditions across British New Guinea supplied QM with 'dry' and 'wet' specimens. Dry specimens were prepared in the field by skinning and removing the meat and viscera through the beak and through an insertion in the belly and/or beneath the wing. The wet process of placing dead birds in a vat of alcoholic spirit (hereafter spirit specimens) was simpler. Although certain colouration changes occurred from this treatment, it did mean that full examination of all parts, along with drying and stuffing could be done in a laboratory-style setting. De Vis had requests from MacGregor to send spirit specimens to Richard Bowdler Sharpe at the Natural History Museum (NHM), London, to settle problems of classification (MacGregor 1896a), such as the genus *Paramythia* that de Vis created for the new species *Paramythia montium* de Vis 1892 (de Vis 1892:96).²³

Both sporadic and focussed collecting employed these transformative processes to create specimens from dead birds, but the time allotted for the task and the expertise available varied. This is evident in the ARBNG and in the labels attached to specimens, where literary and technical expertise was needed (cf. Davies et al., Chapter

5 this volume). This form of science-making had a direct relationship to the specimen's long-term use and the organisation of the collection itself. The hand-made labels predominantly employed for sporadic collecting (e.g. Figure 2) indicate the lack of time, ornithological knowledge, and the ad hoc nature of the collecting party, which is often also evident in the quality of the skin. Labels were not always tied to specimens. For example, the independent agent George Belford sent collections with a simple list (Queensland Museum 1890, 3037/1890). Guise attached numbered tags to birds and supplied de Vis with corresponding numbered lists sent with fieldnotes (de Vis 1894:99). Judging from the extant QM specimens, any labels – even fragmentary pieces of string and parts of labels – were carefully preserved by de Vis as part of the bird's fabric. The size of Guise's collection from the 1894 expedition and the lack of field labels led to the production of printed labels with space provided to note the individual details for each specimen. Giulianetti, possibly because of his Italian ornithological training, used formal printed and cut field labels with spaces allotted for noting place of collection, date, altitude, stomach contents and colouration of eyes, beak and legs. Along with these details occasionally a wantok name of the animal was added, the only recognition of local systems for understanding the fauna.

To the field labels lodged with each specimen, De Vis added 'T' numbers and other details, but he also recorded his own form of labelling with a long, recycled, piece of rectangular card for his notes. On the reverse was written in pencil an alphabetical reference, usually between 'a' and 'e', to link individual specimens of the same species to their Transfer number and to any fieldnotes, and to record duplicates within each consignment. Additional pencil annotation noted the species reference in one of the 27 volumes of the *Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum* (Gould et al. 1874–1890) (e.g. QMO14529). After 1920, MAC prefix numbers were added, and later still, O-prefix numbers were attached to each bird. Also occasionally attached at the Queensland

Museum were rectangular double bordered card with double borders on which 'Queensland Museum' was printed. These generally only note the Transfer and MAC number (e.g. QMO20410 which has 'T.33 Mac7059' written in black ink) and might have been a tracking label system used prior to the curatorial work or was used for specimens sent out on loan or to mark potential exchanges.

As was common, the primary sorting and cataloguing tool for the birds at QM was through storage, with species sorted into taxonomic family groups lodged together (see Figure 6), and scant details noted in an index card system sorted by species. These practices emphasise the principal work of the time: i.e. defining and determining species and relationships between species based on morphological difference. With de Vis' death in 1915, naturalist Rowland Illidge was hired for the purpose of re-registering the whole MacGregor collection (QM Correspondence, 1915:18/00272). When the register of the '*MacGregor*' Collection of New Guinea Ethnology (*MacGregor Register*) (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) was established to bring together all the objects and specimens collected through MacGregor, the drawers in which the birds had been grouped became the organising principle. For example, all kingfishers connected to MacGregor's work, no matter when or where they were collected, were sequentially given MAC numbers. This practice continued into the 1950s when the birds that had been on exhibition were brought into the store. These were also given MAC numbers, although it is likely that the group included multiple species from different collectors, places and times. Subsequently, QM curators found further specimens stored in spirits or made into taxidermic displays, including one cuckoo shrike (QMO20731) found in the collections by curator Ingram in 1983. Later dried and stuffed, the specimen today appears mangled. There is also a loss of text on the cloth tags bound to the feet from the prolonged submersion in spirit.

It is possible that information about duplicate birds exchanged during de Vis' curatorship was not transferred across to other data systems, as

only one exchange is noted in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001),²⁴ and there is a discrepancy of over 400 birds between the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) and counts derived from the current Vernon database. Duplicates in natural history had the definitive meaning of specimens of the same species acquired from the same place at the same time (Witteveen 2016:169–170).²⁵ Although in 1893 MacGregor had Sir Thomas McIllwraith's backing in keeping all the duplicates at QM (MacGregor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1/11/1893), he had divided duplicates between collectors in the field (see above). For de Vis exchanges out from the Museum were vital (cf. Torrence & Davies, Chapter 13 this volume). In describing new species, there were personal and institutional advantages to be gained through exchange relationships with other centres of ornithology (Ville et al. 2020). In 1897 de Vis wrote to Sharpe at the British Museum anticipating a change that never came:

Until lately Sir W.M. who rightly insists on his principal collection being kept intact as the property of British New Guinea has declined to permit a distribution of even the duplicates, [however] When I come to the birds I shall very soon be able to let you have your quota of skins and it will be as liberal as I alone can make it (de Vis 1897c).

Along with specific details related to the collection of specimens, additional textual details were standard data assets of the nineteenth century. Three systems linking the physical specimens to label information were developed to manage the bird collections in the twentieth century: an index card system (pre-1919), the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) (beginning in 1919), and the Vernon database in current use. The index cards recorded taxonomic classification and noted duplicates through alphabetical references. *The MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001) initially recorded the birds based on their storage, but after 1947 was used to record specimens brought into new storage

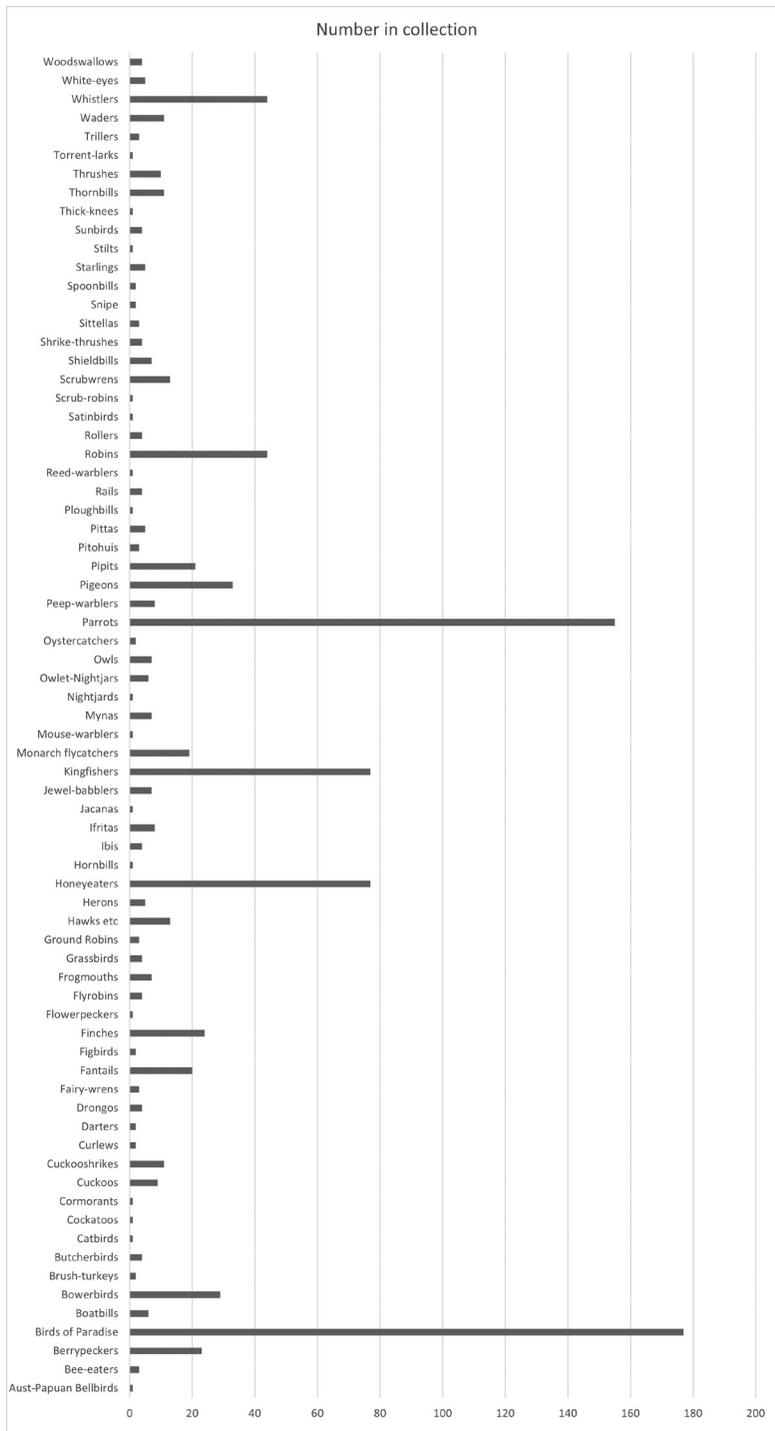


FIG. 6 Bird species as listed in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915-2001).

from exhibition and elsewhere (see:163–188 in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001)). O-prefix numbers, used for the greater QM ornithology collections, were appended to specimens in the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001). The final source, the Vernon database, includes specimens and information found after 1958, as well as data from index cards, the *MacGregor Register* (Queensland Museum 1915–2001), and the various numbers given to the specimen and the publication notes. Read together these data systems reveal some persistent gaps in collecting information. For example, 34 per cent of the collection was only recorded with the general locality ‘Papua’ (see Figure 5). These specimens are most likely from sporadic collection and from Giulianetti’s 1897–98 expedition and were unreported by de Vis.²⁷

REFLECTIONS ON THE QUEENSLAND MUSEUM BIRD DATA

In 1892, after receiving the third lot of birds, de Vis wrote in his ARBNG report:

Let me then beg of you to cause one or two trained collectors to be stationed in some part of the highlands near the seat of Government, that we may have rendered to us a full account of everything the changing seasons may bring to them. (de Vis 1892: 93)

It was not until Giulianetti was appointed that a museum-trained collector-taxidermist worked on the Official bird collection. His collections incorporate specimens that de Vis had hoped for: birds collected at different seasons and habitats as well as juveniles along with adult specimens. Yet the groups collected by Giulianetti also demonstrate a continued emphasis on the beautiful and the gorgeous. For example, male birds which generally have more colourful plumage dominate the collection (Table 2).

The century-long work to register and detail the British New Guinea ornithological collections shows that only 753 specimens were given MAC

TABLE 2. Sex and material form of bird specimens in the QM based on data from the QM Vernon database.

Form	Number	Percentage
Female	342	26
Male	598	46
*Unknown	361	28
Ex ethanol	60	5
Ex taxidermy	95	7
Skin specimens	1141	88

* Male and female birds of paradise are indistinguishable until they reach adulthood and some other bird species do not have distinctive markings that indicate their sex. The large amount of ‘unknown’ sex recorded for the birds also reflects the lack of time devoted to behavioural observation in the field.

numbers from the 1920s, a hundred less specimens than were described by de Vis in the ARBNG. It is likely that some were gifted and exchanged with collectors, other museums, and friends and family. Some may have been destroyed if their condition was compromised. MacGregor’s Personal collection, currently held at the University of Aberdeen, includes over one hundred birds, many with labels appended with ‘Sir WM’ indicating these were put aside for him, perhaps stored at QM after being shot by his personal collectors²⁸ (see BOX 3.1). When and with whom MacGregor organised to withdraw one hundred birds of paradise and other specimens from the Official collection could not be ascertained from existing correspondence.

Together the bird specimens collected during MacGregor’s tenure currently represent one of the key collections of avian fauna from the British New Guinea region. The species represented in the collection (Figure 6) demonstrate MacGregor’s growing awareness that, contrary to his first impressions, with focussed collecting there was much to gain from British New Guinea and that many new discoveries of beautiful and gorgeous birds could be obtained for science (MacGregor 1890a:26).

ENDURING LEGACIES

The extent of terrestrial and marine biodiversity in British New Guinea was evidently poorly understood when MacGregor arrived. Through chance and focussed collecting, a great deal of knowledge was added to the scientific understanding of avian populations and ranges of species published through de Vis' reports and papers. These birds were transformed into specimens through the methods of setting dried bird skins and through directly linking data acquired from them at their time of death, such as stomach contents, on labels attached to the birds in storage. Others worked on by taxidermists at QM were made into small statues of their life-forms for exhibition, including the singular specimens from which new species were named, such as the *Cnemophilis MacGregori*, collected in 1889, which had already travelled to England for the purposes of making an authoritative illustration ('New Guinea Birds' *The Telegraph* 17 October 1894, p.7). In these ways the birds acquired for the Official collection were incorporated into international ornithological knowledge. It is plain from the data that can be gleaned from the various registration systems that 'the more beautiful and gorgeous birds' made up the bulk of the collection and that birds common to Australia, such as cockatoos and ibis, were not acquired systematically.²⁹ The overlapping values of these specimens for scientific and social purposes are evident in the number of birds of paradise and parrots that dominate the collection, yet equally desirable species such as the hornbill and cassowaries are underrepresented.

As the ranges of cassowaries, sulphur crested cockatoos and hornbills were only becoming known scientifically through exploration, it is odd that they were ignored despite their value to science. One suggestion for their absence could be their physically large size, making them awkward and difficult to work on in the crude field conditions. Both cassowaries and hornbills also require patience and time to collect in their forested habitats and, as Giulianetti's expeditions make clear,

even focussed expeditions were limited in the time that could be devoted to collecting. Their absence in the collections could equally be a factor of local relationships to the birds as all three are widely associated with warfare and esoteric practices relating to homicide. Could the omission of these groups be due to cultural prohibitions?

Some of the behaviours of the birds would allow for their collection in greater numbers – such as the flocking of ducks. I have argued here that the overwhelming balance of the collection towards colourful birds indicates a confluence of interest and expertise of both colonial officers and of the guides, carriers, shooters and ANC in locating and hunting them. Supporting this assertion is the historical association to long-standing social and spiritual relationships emphasised through the symbolic use of feathers by local groups that would have been observed by the officers and agents of British New Guinea. Tracing the various expeditions and collectors, it is also evident that while local wantoks were intimately involved in collections made in their regions, Motu clans of the south-east coast also had some influence in the collections through intermarriages with collecting agents.

Examining the bird collections from the viewpoint of the social relations that contributed to them has involved working from the ARBNG which underscores the parallel work of colonisation. Regardless of whether an expedition was undertaken for bird-collecting or geographical purposes, it is evident that everyone involved had to commit to the work of pacification and surveillance of local populations. In all expeditions the vast majority of time spent was logistical, including the arduous task of moving gear and collections, organising food, carriers, and camping sites, and writing and receiving messages and reports to be sent via foot messenger. Although hundreds of men were involved in the collection of birds, less than ten received formal acknowledgement, none of them wantoks. Yet their roles in guiding expeditions, smoothing out diplomatic issues and linguistic work cannot be ignored.

MacGregor consistently doubted de Vis' ability to curate the bird collections and at the same time was concerned that they remained the property of British New Guinea. Writing to the British Museum Ornithologist Sharpe, MacGregor (1896a), intimated that to be of greatest advantage to the ornithological community, the whole QM bird collection should ultimately be lodged with the Natural History Museum in London. Unlike the ethnographic collection, which he conceived would one day be returned to the people of British New Guinea, the idea that British New Guinea peoples had intimately contributed to the collection, or that they would one day themselves be ornithologists, was presumably unimaginable. Papua New Guinian and foreign ornithologists continue today to work with wantok to ensure local permissions and travel through remote areas to locate birds in the dense and difficult terrain. Then, as now, the endemic birds of paradise are one of the principal targets of their observational work.

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ENDNOTES

1. For a discussion about the spelling of MacGregor's name in ornithology, see Frith (2020: 214-216). The spelling 'MacGregor' is used here.
2. Of less concern to collectors at the time, and consequently for this paper, are attributes relating to bird behaviour.
3. In their reports British New Guinea officers insinuate that the primary motivation for leaders joining expeditions was monetary tinged with recognition of colonial purpose. Writing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 Sept 1886, James Chalmers asserted 'The gospel of the New Guineans is red beads, tobacco, tomahawks, and hoop iron' (in Oram c.1998: 4).
4. For current estimates of the number of bird species across the island of New Guinea, see Pratt and Beehler (2015).
5. White cockatoo feather rosettes, for example, were frequently worn by men as emblems of success in warfare (e.g. Figure 22a in Torrence, Chapter 5 this volume).
6. For examples of the different ways that bird species are recognised and valued in New Guinea, see Sillitoe (2002) and Chau (2017).
7. It is complex to identify an exact number due to changes in politico-geographic boundaries and continuing taxonomic work. Five volumes of Gould's *Birds of New Guinea* (which included regions subsumed into Dutch and German New Guinea) list all species known by 1888 (Gould et al. 1875-1888). For a list of birds described by de Vis, including those subsequently reidentified, see Ingram 1990: 20-22.
8. Women were, however, occasionally hired by MacGregor's officers such as Ballantine (1898:17).
9. See Stillitoe (2002), Hitchcock (2004) and Philp, (Chapter 12 this volume) for further elaboration. In reviewing this chapter, Bruce Beehler also noted that currently birds are collected for museums with bow and arrow.
10. See Strathern (1988) for a generalised view of Melanesian socio-cultural intent and Stillitoe (2003) for an anthropologically conceived taxonomy of birds in one Papua New Guinea Highland community.
11. See Pratt and Beehler (2015:22-24) for a brief account of bird species in relation to specific climatic and geographical conditions.
12. See Ville et al. (2020) for an elaboration on this point.
13. One of these was the collector Adolf Goodwin, whose collections are now in the British Museum.
14. Spelt Gobokonomoa in Cuthbertson's narrative (1887:23).
15. Through genetic research, this bird is now recognised as a satinbird (Cracraft, J. & Feinstein, J. 2000).
16. The binomial system of classification includes the genus, the specific name and the author and date when the name was first published. Should the binomial name change, the author and date appear in brackets. This system has been followed in this paper.
17. Uamatu villagers may have worked further to control the situation through esoteric means by purchasing Guise's fingernail clippings in exchange for a large taro (Guise 1894:81).
18. Lario may be the 'Malay' shooter injured by an arrow on MacGregor's first Fly River expedition (MacGregor 1890c:55). He had land at Cape Rodney (Blayney 1898:89) and possibly became a corporal in the ANC, if he is the person referred to by Ballantine as Lario Ismedina from Manila (Ballantine 1900:77).
19. Burns-Philp had a store at Doura, (MacGregor 1898a:19).
20. Shanahan took over from Green at Tamata Station.
21. See Stillitoe's (2003) examination of Wola people's hunting practices for birds and other animals in the Bismarck Mountain Range for an example of this kind of knowledge.
22. By modelling the specimens into living postures through taxidermy and exhibiting in galleries, curators came to realise they were destroying vital data (see Sharpe 1906:85).
23. De Vis was proven correct. Currently, the genus *Paramythia* only relates to this one distinctive species.
24. MAC6678, *Paramythia montium* De Vis was exchanged with Harvard in 1921.
25. From the beginning of the British Museum with the donation of Sir Hans Sloanes' collection together with the Royal and other collections came the potential to move duplicate 'Books, Medals, Coins, or other Curiosities' out of the Museum through exchange, disposal or sale with the agreement of five Trustees (Witteveen 2016).
26. Enormous work has been devoted to working out the origins of the MacGregor ornithology collection by QM curators, who have connected most of the MacGregor collection to specific collecting events. From the 1960s specimens removed from exhibition and spirit specimens were determined to belong to the Official collection but little detail of when or where the specimens had been obtained was retained. This paper has not sought to untangle the discrepancies in the number of birds collected which could be related to unrecorded exchanges, MacGregor's use of specimens in his Personal collection, and his system of divvying up birds in the field.
27. Research into species range, dates and the few details retained on the label could reduce this number.
28. Seven specimens in QM currently have similar labels. Presumably, they were either not wanted or overlooked.
29. Only one specimen was collected despite sightings in other districts, therefore limiting an understanding of their range.

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MACGREGOR'S PERSONAL BIRD COLLECTION

Jude PHILP

MacGregor bequeathed his personal bird collection to the University of Aberdeen on his death 'subject to the condition that my said wife shall be entitled to retain therefrom as her own property any special articles she may desire to have ... and also under the condition that the ornithological collections

should be properly mounted and preserved by the authorities of said University' (MacGregor 1920). Although in this will he stated that the birds were to be mounted, all but a solitary kingfisher have remained research specimens. Curiously, MacGregor did not acquire specimens of all the species named

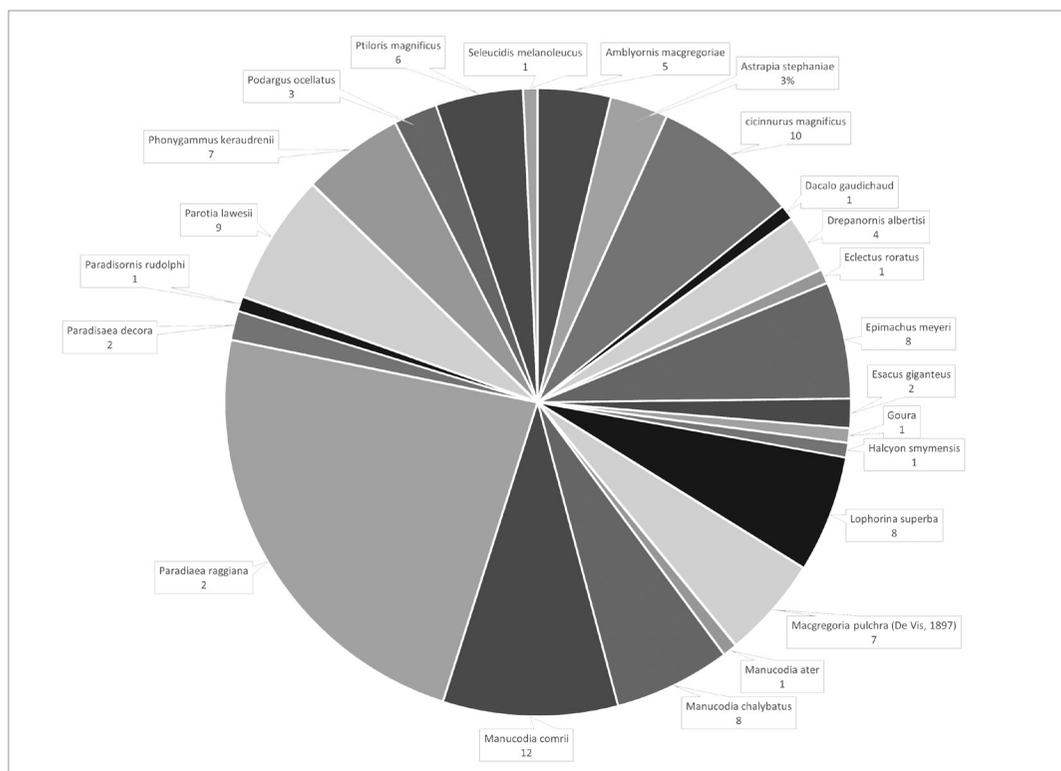


FIG. 7. Numbers of species in MacGregor's Personal Collection now held in the University of Aberdeen.

in his honour. Instead, the birds he chose are the most spectacular, gorgeous and beautiful, including 100 birds of paradise representing ten species (Figure 7). Many have the kind of label de Vis used in the Queensland Museum made of recycled card with 'Sir WM' marked on them, possibly indicating that MacGregor nominated specimens for his personal collection. Most of these are in multiples of seven and eight suggesting that MacGregor envisaged displays that would capture the *lek* displays of male birds at mating season.

Whether it was MacGregor himself who selected the specimens, or one of the Queensland Museum staff

operating under instructions, the collection comprises a potted history of MacGregor's work in British New Guinea. It contains birds from Sudest and Normanby Islands from his first expedition in 1888 and others from his geographical successes reaching the heights of the Owen Stanley Range and crossing the island.

It is strange that 31 *Paradisaea raggiana* Sclater 1873, were included as the species was well represented in European collections of his time. Today this species portrayed on the national flag of Papua New Guinea represents all Papua New Guineans. The most glorious of the Aberdeen specimens is labelled 'Lady MacGregor' in MacGregor's hand (Figure 8).



FIG. 8. One of the 31 *Paradisaea raggiana* at the University of Aberdeen (ABDUZ24542) is labelled 'Lady MacGregor' in MacGregor's distinctive handwriting (see Davies et al., Chapter 5, this volume).

PROMINENT BIRD COLLECTORS EMPLOYED BY THE BRITISH NEW GUINEA ADMINISTRATION

Jude PHILP

A biography is presented of the men who were prominent in collecting birds for the Official Collection and for MacGregor and who also collected birds for other institutions and collectors.

Alois S. Anthony first travelled with MacGregor in 1891 when he was cook for the Mt Yule expedition. Originating from Malta, he is referred to by Rothschild as a 'man of colour'. Marrying Laira Heni from Hanuabada village in British New Guinea, he had a daughter and land at Hisiu (Dutton 1985:152). He worked on plantations for Walter Gors of Burns-Philp and protectorate officer David Ballantine. He also worked with Jimmy Malay as a prospector (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c: 35). Although MacGregor denied his request to accompany Government expeditions in 1896 and 1897, he also conjectured that Anthony could be a good 'cheap' sub-collector for Giulianetti (Giulianetti in MacGregor 1898c: 35). His literacy, and ability to lead collecting expeditions, label and prepare birds led to being employed by Sir Walter Rothschild, mainly collecting in the Owen Stanley Ranges. Known examples of his work survive in NHM London, and ANHM New York.

William Armit arrived in New Guinea in 1883 as part of the Argus inland expedition with Robert Hunter and George Belford (Armit 1883). He then worked in North Queensland as a writer and naturalist before returning to British New Guinea as MacGregor's personal secretary in 1893 and occupying posts in Samarai and the Northern Division until his death in 1901. Despite his background in collecting and publishing on ornithology, he was second to Guise on the 1894 Moneao expedition, when he was in charge of geography, geology and botany. He worked on skinning and preparing the bird skins throughout the expedition, and probably collected sporadically for the colony.

George Belford was the only independent agent recorded in the Register of the 'MacGregor' Collection as a collector (Queensland Museum 1915–2001). He was Australian press news when he shot a *Lophorina superba* (Pennant 1781) paradise bird during the Argus sponsored expedition of 1883 (Armit 1883). He worked with a number of bird collectors including Carl Huntsein, Henry Forbes and Caesar Lifu (Douglas 1888:29) and contributed birds to Queensland Museum in 1887 (O19327). In 1884 he was married in a Motu language wedding service to Maleva (who at the time was working as a servant to the missionary Fanny Lawes) by Ruatoka, the London Missionary Society (LMS) teacher based in Port Moresby ('No. III Port Moresby first impressions' *Adelaide Observer* 19 January, p.42.). Of Samoan-English background, he was, like Anthony, literate. He was appointed to lead the Geographical Society-sponsored mission to the summit of the Owen Stanley Ranges peaks in 1889 and, subsequently, *Melirrhophetes belfordi*, (de Vis 1890) QMO19801 was named in his honour (Figure 9). He collected during the Fly River expedition of 1889–90 (T33, O20826, O17203, O20767, O19316). MacGregor mentions meeting up with him again in Mambere 1897 when he was working with a group of prospectors led by Jimmy Malay (MacGregor 1898c: 20).

Amadeo Giulianetti arrived in New Guinea in 1889 with Lomberto Loria as a taxidermist (Dimpflmeier 2019: 6). He was trained by Tomamaso Salvatore in Italy and in the field by Lamberto Loria. Consequently, he was one of the most technically proficient of the bird collectors. By 1896, when Giulianetti begins work as a Government Agent in the interior, Loria was increasingly working on ethnography and no doubt influenced the style of Giulianetti's work in recording cultural life at Neneba. Giulianetti's meticulous groundwork in setting up well-stocked camps with discrete areas for skinning and drying specimens was not appreciated by MacGregor who complained

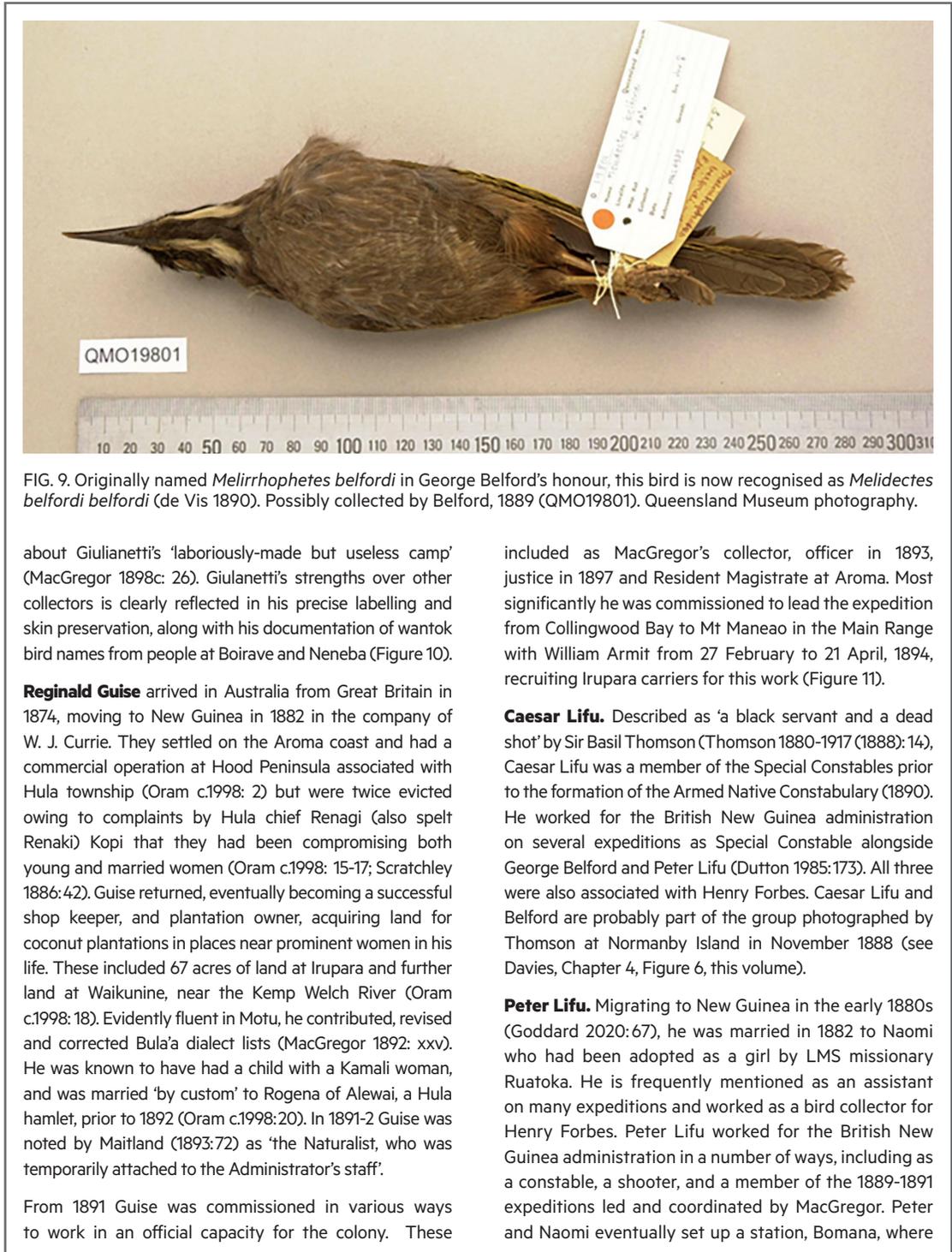


FIG. 9. Originally named *Melirrhophetes belfordi* in George Belford's honour, this bird is now recognised as *Melidectes belfordi belfordi* (de Vis 1890). Possibly collected by Belford, 1889 (QMO19801). Queensland Museum photography.

about Giulianetti's 'laboriously-made but useless camp' (MacGregor 1898c: 26). Giulianetti's strengths over other collectors is clearly reflected in his precise labelling and skin preservation, along with his documentation of wantok bird names from people at Boirave and Neneba (Figure 10).

Reginald Guise arrived in Australia from Great Britain in 1874, moving to New Guinea in 1882 in the company of W. J. Currie. They settled on the Aroma coast and had a commercial operation at Hood Peninsula associated with Hula township (Oram c.1998: 2) but were twice evicted owing to complaints by Hula chief Renagi (also spelt Renaki) Kopi that they had been compromising both young and married women (Oram c.1998: 15-17; Scratchley 1886:42). Guise returned, eventually becoming a successful shop keeper, and plantation owner, acquiring land for coconut plantations in places near prominent women in his life. These included 67 acres of land at Irupara and further land at Waikunine, near the Kemp Welch River (Oram c.1998: 18). Evidently fluent in Motu, he contributed, revised and corrected Bula'a dialect lists (MacGregor 1892: xxv). He was known to have had a child with a Kamali woman, and was married 'by custom' to Rogena of Alewai, a Hula hamlet, prior to 1892 (Oram c.1998:20). In 1891-2 Guise was noted by Maitland (1893:72) as 'the Naturalist, who was temporarily attached to the Administrator's staff'.

From 1891 Guise was commissioned in various ways to work in an official capacity for the colony. These

included as MacGregor's collector, officer in 1893, justice in 1897 and Resident Magistrate at Aroma. Most significantly he was commissioned to lead the expedition from Collingwood Bay to Mt Maneao in the Main Range with William Armit from 27 February to 21 April, 1894, recruiting Irupara carriers for this work (Figure 11).

Caesar Lifu. Described as 'a black servant and a dead shot' by Sir Basil Thomson (Thomson 1880-1917 (1888):14), Caesar Lifu was a member of the Special Constables prior to the formation of the Armed Native Constabulary (1890). He worked for the British New Guinea administration on several expeditions as Special Constable alongside George Belford and Peter Lifu (Dutton 1985:173). All three were also associated with Henry Forbes. Caesar Lifu and Belford are probably part of the group photographed by Thomson at Normanby Island in November 1888 (see Davies, Chapter 4, Figure 6, this volume).

Peter Lifu. Migrating to New Guinea in the early 1880s (Goddard 2020:67), he was married in 1882 to Naomi who had been adopted as a girl by LMS missionary Ruatoka. He is frequently mentioned as an assistant on many expeditions and worked as a bird collector for Henry Forbes. Peter Lifu worked for the British New Guinea administration in a number of ways, including as a constable, a shooter, and a member of the 1889-1891 expeditions led and coordinated by MacGregor. Peter and Naomi eventually set up a station, Bomana, where

they continued to assist the Government in expeditions (e.g. Herle & Philp 2020: 217, 222). Peter also continued to acquire birds (e.g. Ballantine 1898:16).

William MacGregor had received training in the natural and philosophical sciences in his medical degree (Anderson 2020:163-4). His private collections are filled with commercially valued, beautifully plumed birds, but only two of the three birds named in his honour are represented, signalling perhaps that it was beauty rather than vanity that shaped this collection (Box 1). MacGregor recognised that collecting provided useful scientific information on bird distribution as well as new species (MacGregor 1897a). He also brought in legislation that showed he recognised the effect of commercial collecting on the survival of species (MacGregor 1896b: vii). QM labels do bear his handwriting but as there is no further indication that he skinned or stuffed specimens, it is probable that he relied on personal and government staff as his personal collectors (Figure 12). In 1891 during a diplomatic mission to peoples displaced by ‘Tugeri’ (Marind Amin), MacGregor noted in his personal journal that at Kerepunu on the 28 May the party included ‘the collectors Guise and Antonis’ along with Government

Officers, later noting occasions of Guise, Anthony and ‘the boys’ going out shooting. At Tamputa 14 June 1891, he wrote that ‘Winter [chief judicial officer] went out and shot 16 pigeons and a Reggiana in full plume. Anthony, Guise and his boys went out but got little or nothing’ (MacGregor 1890-1892).

Jimmy Malay. No direct evidence links this man, also known as Solien, to the Official collections. Burns Philp Company manager Walter Gors wrote that he ‘... collected a large number of birds toward Mt Victoria ... Jimmy Malay, a one-armed Malay who has been collecting on a small scale for years, but who during the last 12 months or so has been shooting on one-half shares for the Hon. D. Ballantine [British New Guinea Treasurer]. ... He is a man of great energy and by far the best collector in the country, but has no knowledge of writing and therefore cannot describe birds’ (Gors to Hartert 14/11/1896). MacGregor wrote of him in unusually familiar and praiseworthy terms as the ‘indefatigable Jimmy Malay’ (MacGregor 1898c:20). He married two Motu sisters from Tatana Island, near where the London Missionary Society first built their station in 1874. From his wives’ descent group he received land on the north shore of the harbour (Goddard 2020:66).



FIG. 10. *Oreostruthus fuliginosus* (de Vis 1897). A syntype collected by Giulianetti at Mt Scratchley, 1896 (QMO18965). Queensland Museum photography.



FIG. 11. *Heteromyias albispectaris armiti* (Salvadori, 1876). Holotype of this subspecies collected by Guise during the Maneao expedition (QMO19765). Queensland Museum photography.



FIG. 12. *Zosterops griseotinctus pallidipes* (de Vis 1890) collected by MacGregor on his first tour of the Possession in 1888 (QMO19737). Queensland Museum photography.

BIRDS, FEATHERS, FAMILY AND CEREMONY

Jude PHILP

In our customs the feather is also a valuable thing (Peter Joseph 2019: 65–67).

Few complete feathered headdresses were collected for the Official collection by MacGregor and his officers between 1888 and 1898, but there are many partial headdresses and feathered strings in which feather quills are finely entwined in lines with rope or barkcloth. It is from feathered strings like that in Figure 13 that larger headdresses such as ER9721 (MAC1560) in Figure 14 are composed. The form of this headdress, with the arched cane support for the wooden stick of the upright structure, suggests it was used in the vertical position as it appears in the photo. It could also have been intended as part of a greater construction, with additional components fanning to the left and right with this piece used as the central feathered mass.

Three different methods of showing off feathers have been used in this headdress, with feathers coming from two different bird species: a bird of paradise (*Paradisaea raggiana*) and a lorikeet (*Charmosynopsis* species). Examining it by moving up from the base, two dense strings of overlapping lorikeet chest-feathers have been wrapped around the central stick. As the feathers of the lower string are distinctly lighter than those on the upper string (which also has flashes of green downy feathers), the upper strand may have been drawn from the more brightly plumed male with the lower string from a female. The colour differences may equally be due to taking feathers from birds at different moult stages. Leaving a section of the stick exposed, the composer has then used barkcloth to bundle together the top-most element of *Paradisaea raggiana* feathers (Figure 15). On the outside of this barkcloth bundle is a sparse strand through which the quills of lorikeet tail feathers are twisted in place. Only two lines of these



FIG. 13. Feathered string composed of *Paradisaea apoda* (Linnaeus 1758) feathers bound into a string with two distinctive, white-tipped, blue tail feathers from the kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea* (Grey 1859): unknown provenance ER9708 (MAC1568). Queensland Museum Photography, Peter Waddington.



FIG. 14. Feathered headdress: unknown provenance ER9721 (MAC1560). Scale bar: 10 cm. Queensland Museum Photography, Peter Waddington.

feathers were used, with the tips leading to the base of the *Paradisaea* tail feathers. The dome of the red tail feathers atop this headdress signals a high-status object (Iova 2018:57-60), something worn by a person revered within their community for their knowledge and abilities.

The *Paradisaea raggiana* feathers have been positioned to capture the bird's movement in their lek mating displays where, with wings extended, the tail plumes become fuller as the bird twists and jerks its body with dramatic effect to attract a potential mate watching from boughs below (Beehler & Anderton 2008:26-27). The upright full tail plumage, with an additional bunched string of tail feathers in the centre recalls and describes this behaviour. In creating this object, the maker or makers have ensured all the feather work is aligned in the same direction, almost as if the body of the wearer is 'the bird' and the headdress is 'the tail' (Lilje & Philp 2021:192).

The headdress was part of the first consignment (Transfer 46) of objects sent from British New Guinea, which arrived at the QM on 25 October 1892, just over three years into MacGregor's term as Governor (1888-1898) (Davies, Chapter 2 this volume). This headdress did not arrive with a label identifying where it was collected, but most likely comes from the Central Division highlands or North-East Division (Figure 1) where barkcloth is commonly used as a substrate for feather work.

Feathered objects like these were generally transitory. Elements could come apart and become part of other compositions of feathers intricately interwoven to achieve the desired meanings and effect. In writing on songs by Foi people of Hegeso village in the Southern Highlands, James Wiener (2015:xi) wrote that while people were happy to talk about and relay myths at any time, songs 'could only be recorded as they were performed'. The same could be said for feathered headdresses which are frequently a composition made up from many family members' feathered objects creatively worked into a singular performance work for a specific reason. Once the purpose for the creation was over, the feather strings, tail clumps, dried birds and other elements would be returned to their owners and packed away with care (Figure 16). In this way the Official collection feathered strings and parts of headdresses were most likely the individual property of specific individuals and thus suited for trade.

These feathered objects and the feather container are also reminders of what was not collected and the kinds of things that normally accompanied and were part of peoples' experiences of feathered works. These included fragrant smelling leaves and flowers and sounds directly related to the headdresses, such as songs, drumbeats, the noises of dance movements and swishing of skirts in unison as well as other kinds of sounds from the landscape or the voices of family, the squealing of pigs and the calls of distant birds. Isolated

and made singular through museum registration practice, the Official collection's feather wealth can be likened to a performance about to happen, a time when the feathers will be brought together to remember a period of history. In thinking beyond the idea that these objects were predominantly normal parts of trade across the island, it is intriguing to wonder if some of the feathered objects offered in trade to MacGregor were also suitable recognitions of his growing status in the colony.



FIG. 15. Detail of central portion of headdress in FIG. 14: ER9721 (MAC1560). Queensland Museum Photography. Peter Waddington.



FIG. 16. Coconut spathe sheath containing cassowary feathers: Unknown provenance ER15937 (MAC1631). Scale bar: 10 cm. Queensland Museum Photography. Peter Waddington.