

THE KOOKABURRAS

Continued from the December Edition

#5 THE SHOVEL-BILLED KOOKABURRA



Shovel-billed Kookaburra

Photo: "Wiki"

The Shovel-billed Kookaburra (*Clytoceyx rex*), also known as the Shovel-billed Kingfisher, is a dark brown tree kingfisher with a heavy, short and broad bill that is unique among the kingfishers. It is approximately 33cm (13") long with a dark head with a rufous stripe behind the eye, a white throat, rufous neck-collar and underparts, bright blue rump, brown iris, brownish-black beak with paler mandible (the entire beak often appears brownish due to the birds' habit of digging for earthworms) and pale feet. Both sexes are similar in appearance, except for the colour of the tail. The

male has a bluish tail while female's is rufous. Juveniles have female-like feathering that are scale-patterned.

This species is the sole representative of the genus *Clytoceyx*, and is endemic to New Guinea. The Shovel-billed mainly occurs in hill forests, but has been recorded from sea-level up to an altitude of 2400m (7850'). It seeks its food in mud or on moist earth. The main constituents of the diet are earthworms, snails, beetles, lizards and insects. An inconspicuous bird it is infrequently seen, and is thought to be partially nocturnal.

Widespread but uncommon throughout a large part of New Guinea, the Shovel-billed Kookaburra is evaluated as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Reference: Wikipedia

This concludes the Kookaburra series.

RAISING JAPANESE QUAIL

At the December General Meeting a member asked how to care for and feed orphaned Japanese Quail (*Coturnix japonica*).

A standard ration for either growing or breeding quail is available commercially. If this is not readily procurable a good quality, fresh, commercial turkey or game bird diet is the next best thing, preferably fed as crumbles to minimise feed wastage. For the first 6 weeks quail should be fed a diet containing approximately 25% protein and 1.0% calcium. A good quality commercial starter ration for game birds or turkeys contains about 25%–28% protein. Fresh water is essential, but a drown-proof container must be used.

The other necessity is warmth. This can easily be supplied by using an incandescent light globe suspended in a jam tin. This can be raised or lowered until the chicks are comfortable. If they huddle directly under the light it is too cool; if they keep well out from the light it is too hot. The temperature is right if they gather just outside the hottest part of the heat source.