

THE KOOKABURRAS

Continued from the October Edition

#3 THE RUFOUS-BELLIED KOOKABURRA



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN GOULD
FROM "WIKIPEDIA COMMONS"

The Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (*Dacelo gaudichaud*) is a species of Kingfisher widely distributed through the lowland forests of New Guinea. It is also been seen, but not officially recorded, on Queensland's Torres Strait island of Saibai. Although Saibai is part of Queensland it is just off the coast of Papua New Guinea, so it would be within easy flying distance for the species.

The scientific name commemorates the French botanist Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupré 1789-1854.

It is an unusual Kookaburra in that it occupies dense lower canopy rainforest, not the open country preferred by the other members of the *Dacelo* genus. It also varies by not living in family groups, but in pairs. It is a dimorphic species, the sexes being easily distinguished, as the male has a blue tail and the hen a rufous-brown tail.

The Rufous-bellied feeds on various small vertebrates and insects, and nests in holes excavated in arboreal termite nests.

Vocalisation has been described as:

"a loud barking, chopping, 'tchk, tchok, tchk', and a rattling 'tok-tok-tok', sometimes uttered by two or more birds as a duet. Also varied shrieks and rasping sounds."

(Having observed this bird in Variata National Park when resident in Port Moresby, I can vouch for the fact that it is extremely attractive. Ed.)

Reference:

1. *Wikipedia*
2. *Birdpedia -Australia*

Series to be continued.



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