

Proceedings of the Third International Megapode Symposium, Nhill, Australia, December 1997

R.W.R.J. Dekker, D.N. Jones & J. Benshemesh (eds)

Dekker, R.W.R.J., D.N. Jones & J. Benshemesh (eds). Proceedings of the Third International Megapode Symposium, Nhill, Australia, December 1997.
Zool. Verh. Leiden 327, 30.vii.1999: 1-174.— ISSN 0024-1652/ISBN 90-73239-71-0.

Key words: Megapodiidae; Galliformes; Aves; biogeography; phylogeny; behaviour; ecology; conservation; bibliography.

René W.R.J. Dekker, National Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 9517, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.

Darryl N. Jones, Australian Environmental Studies, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland 4111, Australia.

Joe Benshemesh, 29 Shiers St, Alphington Vic 3078, Australia.

Contents

Contents	3
Introduction. (Jones, D.N. & R.W.R.J. Dekker)	4
Foreword: The World Pheasant Association. (Howman, K.)	5
The biogeography and extinction of megapodes in Oceania. (Steadman, D.W.)	7
Phylogenetic relationships of the Megapodiidae as indicated by their ischnoceran, in particular goniodid, chewing lice (Insecta: Phthiraptera). (Mey, E.)	23
The acoustic communication of the Polynesian megapode <i>Megapodius pritchardii</i> G.R. Gray. (Göth, A., U. Vogel & E. Curio)	37
Temporal and spatial patterns of laying in the Moluccan megapode <i>Eulipoa wallacei</i> (G.R. Gray). (Baker, G.)	53
Visual recognition of predators by hatchlings of the Australian brush-turkey <i>Alectura lathami</i> J.E. Gray. (Wong, S.)	61
Preliminary results of an ongoing study of the Nicobar megapode <i>Megapodius nicobariensis</i> Blyth. (Sankaran, R. & K. Sivakumar)	75
The biology of the malleefowl <i>Leipoa ocellata</i> Gould in the Little Desert area, Australia. (Reichelt, R.C.)	91
Possible implications of Rabbit Calicivirus Disease for malleefowl <i>Leipoa ocellata</i> Gould in the north-west of Victoria. (Sandell, P.)	95

The National Malleefowl Recovery Plan: a framework for conserving the species across Australia. (Benshemesh, J.) 101

Malleefowl conservation in New South Wales: a review. (Priddel, D. & R. Wheeler)
..... 125

“Its Gnow or Never”: a case study of community action for malleefowl conservation in the wheatbelt area of Western Australia. (Dennings, S.) 143

The megapode action plan 1995 – 1999 halfway down the road. (Dekker, R.W.R.J.) 151

What we don’t know about megapodes. (Jones, D.N.) 159

Bibliography of the Megapodiidae. (Dekker, R.W.R.J.) 169

Introduction

The publication of the Proceedings of the Third International Megapode Symposium, held in December 1997, exactly seven years after the first, provides a clear indication of the continued success and influence of the Megapode Specialist Group. Evidence of growth and development is considerable: the number of participants; the range of countries represented; the scope and scale of the studies reported; and the extent of institutional and business affiliation. In every way, the Third Symposium has exceeded all of our expectations.

Both the first and second symposia were held as specialist meetings under the auspices of the International Ornithological Congresses: the first in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1990, and the second in Vienna, Austria, in 1994. Although both of these meetings were entirely successful, it was clear to all participants that these symposia seriously constrained our attempts to share information and learn from other megapode experts. We needed more time and less structure to get the most from the ever growing band of megapode researchers. We left Vienna well satisfied but also determined that the third symposium would be different, although just how we were not at all sure.

This changed when René Dekker accepted an offer from Tourism Victoria, a government authority in this state in Australia, to visit various potential conference venues around the state. One such place, brought under his attention by Keith Howman of the World Pheasant Association, was the Little Desert Lodge, a remarkable and informal resort situated within the dry mallee country of inland Victoria, near the township of Nhill. Crucially, this site was also renowned for two key features: the presence of malleefowl, one of the most well known species of megapode, and Mr Ray “Whimpey” Reichelt, the owner of the lodge and long-term student of the malleefowl. It seemed to René like an ideal location for a future meeting.

There were, however, plenty of doubts. Would people want to travel so far from the big cities? Would it be logistically possible to get people to, from and around the site? The best timing, December, was also mid-summer in Australia. Would it be too hot, and too risky in terms of that frequent event in Australian summers: “bushfires”. However, we set our concerns aside and started the planning.

When Whimpey Reichelt became aware of our plans, the event began to take definite shape. Whimpey was indefatigable in his effort to find assistants, ways to promote the event far and wide and, especially, to locate a remarkable array of sponsors to off set some of the considerable costs. At this stage the World Pheasant Association, primarily through its Executive Director Mr Keith Howman, became closely involved in both promotion and sponsorship arrangement.

By the time of the symposium, we had obtained invaluable support from four major sponsors (Tourism Victoria, the Ian Potter Foundation, Birds Australia, and British Airways) and a large number of other supports (listed below). We are especially grateful to our major sponsors. Because of their generosity, we were able to bring to the meeting a number of megapode workers who would not have been able to attend.

Still, we remained a little concerned that the remote and rustic location might be something of a deterrent. Instead, holding the event in the authentic outback, within the range of the malleefowl, in excellent conditions and with the opportunity for non-Australians to meet and mix with "fair dinkum Aussies" proved to be a major draw card.

And beyond the quality of the presentations and the enormous amount of information that was exchanged, the symposium was also outstanding on two other levels. First, with a major concern of all attendees being conservation, we were extremely pleased to enable the working group on malleefowl conservation to have some serious and occasionally animated discussion, as part of real progress toward the formulation of a malleefowl conservation plan.

And second, we declared the symposium an outstanding success in terms of friendly and supportive collegiality. We all left Nhill enriched and aware that megapode research has a clear future.

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors who made the Third International Megapode Symposium an unforgettable event; Major Sponsors: Tourism Victoria, The Ian Potter Foundation, Birds Australia and British Airways. Other sponsors and supporters: Luv-a-Duck, Lowan Whole Foods, Little Desert Lodge and Tours, Nhill Free Press, World Pheasant Association, Pheasant and Waterfowl Society of Australia, Mobil, Sherwell Holdings, Best Wines, De Bortolli Wines, Redman Wines, Sepelts Wines, Gollars Wine and Spirit Merchants, V.A.C.C. Insurance and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria.

Darryl Jones & René Dekker
October 1998

Foreword: The World Pheasant Association

Keith Howman, President of the World Pheasant Association, P.O. Box 5, Lower Basildon, Reading, RG8 9PF, United Kingdom.

The World Pheasant Association (WPA) was set up in 1975 by three enthusiastic families of pheasant aviculturalists who had reached the stage of wanting to do more

for the birds than just keep them. From the start we were supported by the great Dr Jean Delacour who agreed to become our first President on the condition that we embraced all the galliforms and not just the pheasants, though it was inevitable that it was the pheasants that would be our first consideration.

However, rather strangely and appropriately for this Proceedings, the first project that the World Pheasant Association ever supported was a megapode study proposed by a young ex-London policeman, David Bishop, who decided he wanted to head off to Papua New Guinea to study these strange birds. And what an auspicious start this was!

The world of conservation is surprisingly political and the WPA decided that it was important that it fitted into existing international structures. In 1982, the WPA was appointed as the Specialist Group for the Galliformes for the International Council for Bird Preservation, now BirdLife International, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

By 1985, WPA organised the First International Cracid Symposium in Mexico which led to the formation by Dr Stuart Strahl of the Cracid Specialist Group. By 1988, he was able to hold the second cracid symposium in Caracas, Venezuela.

In 1986, the Megapode Specialist Group was founded, again entirely independently and consisting initially of scientists interested in exchanging information on megapodes. However, as more field biologists joined the group and the plight of many megapode species began to be revealed, so it was realised that more was needed than just an exchange of data: from the first issue, the Megapode Newsletter also focussed on conservation.

Around 1990, ICBP asked the WPA to consider splitting the galliforms into five specialist groups each with its own chairman. This was agreed to. After short discussions, the already existing Megapode Specialist Group became the official WPA/ BirdLife/SSC Specialist Group, and a very happy and productive relationship this has been.

The role of the Megapode Specialist Group, led by Dr René Dekker and strongly supported by Dr Darryl Jones has changed little, but the enormous amount of work they have put into it has been enhanced, I believe, by the support of the WPA. For example, WPA was able to find funding for the publication of the Proceedings of the First International Megapode Symposium held in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1990. Nothing is worse than to hold a good meeting and not record its input.

In 1991 the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Specialist Group was formed and this is now chaired by Dr John Carroll. In the same year the Pheasant Specialist Group formed with Dr Peter Garson as chairman. Finally, in 1993, the Grouse Specialist Group was formed thus completing the group of five within WPA.

In 1993, WPA organised a Galliform Conservation Assessment Workshop, the outcome of which was the publication (at no cost to the Megapode Specialist Group) of the first ever Action Plan for a bird family. This was followed shortly by action plans for two other WPA/BirdLife/SSC Specialist Groups: the Partridge, Quail and Francolin Action Plan, and the Pheasant Action Plan. All of these action plans were edited by Dr Philip McGowan who worked for WPA during this period.

WPA's role is very much one of helping fund the core costs of its specialist groups, helping fund certain projects where external funding is necessary, publicising the activities of the groups internationally through its newsletter and annual review and assisting without too much interference in the putting together and funding of symposia such as this.