

BRIEF UIT INDIË ¹⁾

"To my bird-friends, New York:

Dear Friends!

"Would you like to go birding here? OK, take a bicycle and come along. A bicycle is here the best means of transportation and like everywhere the early morning is the best time for birding.



Then the temperature is very pleasant too. We leave at half past five or quarter to six. My one-room house is in the garden city of Batavia. Batavia, a halfmillion city, is rather large and has the most unusual shape being nearly ten times as long as broad. Wherever you live, you are always relatively near to the fields. The city offers great variety of "Habitat" for human beings — and birds. The roads in the neighbourhood are excellent for bicycles,

except after a shower, which comes nearly every afternoon. But then we will be home again. In the tops of the trees, as silhouets against the clear sky, small thrushlike birds are singing in chorus. These are golden-vented bulbuls (*Pycnonotus aurigaster*). They sing more or less like robins, and live everywhere near human dwellings. An other "city bird" is the graybacked shrike (*Lanius shach*) very much like the California shrike, but with a nice orange colored breast and very tame indeed. On a lawn in front of one of the larger houses, six or eight starlings are walking, pecking industriously in the grass. The rose-colored starlings (*Sturnogaster contra*) are perhaps one of the most popular cage birds, kept by the native population. Keeping of cage birds is an ancient tradition and no bird-protecting law has the power to deprive the people of their hobby. However the starlings are plentiful and tame notwithstanding many are caught and sold. The other, may be still more popular cage bird is a little dove (*Geopelia striata*). Nearly every native home has its "perquutut" in a dome shaped cage sometimes attached to a long pole to give the little favorite a maximum of fresh air. A small woodpecker is making a terrific machinegun-noise in top of an antenna (*Dryobates analis*).



1) Overgenomen uit: „DEZE MOOIE WERELD", opstellen en tekeningen van Jan Joost ter Pelkwijk, met voorafgaand woord van Prof. Dr N. Tinbergen, uitgeverij Ploegsma, Amsterdam, 1948. Prijs in Ned. f 4.75. De uitgeverij beschikt nog over exemplaren. (Red.)

"We are in the fields just after dawn. The air is clear and bluish green in color. Far away you see clearly the outline of two big volcanoes. In front, flooded rice fields. Early in the morning those fields remind to ancient church windows.

All shades of colours from the rising sun are reflected in the separate parts of water, bordered by irregular narrow strips of black dikes, forming an interesting pattern over the scenery. In the water with its regular dots of bright green riceplants, hundreds of herons are fishing. During the flooded period the fields yield an additional crop of fish, but certainly not every little fish planted out

will be found back afterwards! There are many different herons on Java and they are all rather common too.

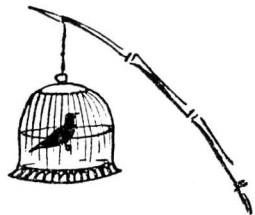
On a single trip you may see the great blue and purple herons, three egrets, night herons, bittern, and two little "pond herons" (*Ardeola*). It is a marvelous view to

see a big heronry in a huge Ficus-tree on the middle of the market place in a native village. Of course you may expect some rails in the rice fields. One of the most beautiful birds I know, is the native coot (*Porphyrio albus*). Between the yellowish green of the rice you suddenly see a coot with a bright red bill and deep blue and purple all over.

"Between the fields you see many little "woods." Please don't suppose this were tropical jungles! They are but villages with gardens of all kinds of fruit trees. The thing that fascinates me is that these trees look all the time as if it were spring.

"They don't have the dull green colors of our trees in summer, but look like oaks in early June. Some trees, or branches of trees however look very winter-like indeed. A flight of noisy paroquets (*Psittacula alexandri*) has stripped all the leaves. Many singing golden orioles make me think of my own garden in Holland. It was surprising to find a pale colored edition of the ordinary European coaltit (*Parus major*) here. They look like mounts

that have been preserved for half a century or so in a show, not far from the window. Two other interesting birds are the fantailed flycatcher (*Rhipidura albicollis*) and the magpy-colored Straits



robin (*Copsychus saularis*), which however is certainly not named after your robin, but after the British one.

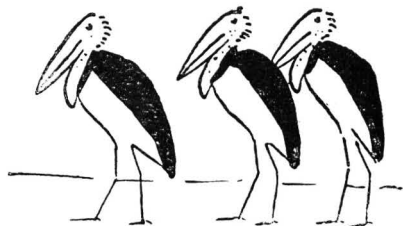
"Real jungle may only be found here on the slope of the volcanoes. Don't forget that Java is one of the most densely populated spots of the world. Over fifty million people live together in an area of the size of Florida. If you realize that, it is surprising how much is left for a naturalist here. It seems unbelievable that tigers, rhinoceroses, wild bulls and crocodiles can live in such an anthill of human beings. But they do, thanks to the rather well arranged nature protection and (if nothing unforeseen happens) they will be safe for an indefinite period of time. Along the coast however there is a strip of very much jungle-like woods; partly flooded woods with trees on stilt-roots, partly a kind of secondary or tertiary jungle, that has a definite value as a



producer of fire wood. We might just as well go to the mountain slopes to see wild orchids and rhinoceros birds, but we can do so a next time. In the coast-woods we are sure to see lots of my favorites: the monkeys and birding is generally easier there. We have got to wade through brooks and swampy thickets. You may feel at home while hearing the rattle of the American kingfisher. However, the noise is produced by *Rhamphalcyon capensis*, the stork-billed kingfisher, who has about the size of the American and the brilliant colors of the European kingfisher. There are many kingfishers here and you see them near every little brook or stream. Some are bigger others are smaller, but all have the most brilliant colors and colorpatterns. An other bright bird that we will see without doubt is the bee-eater, (not beef-eater, though that is a brightly colored animal too). They are considered to be migrants here though they stay all the year round. But nobody has ever seen them breeding and they will have to reproduce somewhere. "There are lots of migrants here: in winter from Asia and in summer from Australia. The barn swallows are leaving just now for China. All the time you hear hte monotonous call of cuckoos. One of them has the disagreeable name of "brainfever" because of the sound (and the effect) of its call (*Caccmantis merulinus*). An other cuckoo, crow-pheasant (*Centropus sinensis*) is big and heavy and if he calls, it is, if a drum is beaten. It will not last long before we see the first monkeys. Sometimes you notice



them far, far away because of their screaming noises. Often, especially at the middle of the day you observe them suddenly overhead, sitting quietly and making faces at you. They are rather tame and will certainly stay, if you keep quiet. There are two kinds that are by far the most common: a gray one with a very human expression and a slender black one (*Macacus cynomolgus* and *Semnopithecus maurus*). A remarkable creature that is quite common here is the "dragon", a little lizard that sails through the wood like a glider-plane on the skin, expanded between the ribs. There are many species of them and most have a very nice color. Between the



roots of the trees all kinds of little noises are heard, produced by armies of crabs. At the edge of a brook or in the top of a palm tree a group of birds, more or less sparrow-like, is flying about in a very busy manner. It is a colony of weaverbirds. There are three kinds of them here, all with different types of nests, the most remarkable being *Procecla hypoxanta*, a rather common zoobird I believe. The bright Java sparrow, the munias and field sparrow are the most common finches. They feed in huge numbers on the ripe rice fields.



"Between the sea and the land often fish ponds have been laid out. They are more or less like the famous salt pans near Salinas (Monterey), only they are filled with brackish water instead of brine. All kinds of shore birds are to be found there: golden plovers

(*Charadrius apricarius*), curlews (*Numenius phaeopus*), snipes (*Capella stenura*) and sandpipers (*Eriola ruficollis*, for instance) make you think of Long Island. In a sandy pool, however, a group of very official Adjutant-birds remind you to the fact that you are birding in the far east. Because of my job, I spend most of my time on or near the Java sea. Now you might think that I will have a fine opportunity for watching birds.

It is a great shame that real sea birds are scarce here. Joe Hickey will be disappointed indeed for we don't have any gulls here to give them colored bands. He will have to spend all his time at peregrine falcons, that are only slightly different from the American ones. There are many more "hawks" here. Exceedingly common everywhere along the coast is a chestnut-colored Brahminy kite.



Far from rare is a sea-eagle (*Haliaetus leucogaster*), that makes me think of your quarters and half dollars. They come down in

the fish-markets to steal fish! But as a whole, the sea is rather desolate. Except for a few terns and one or two frigate birds or boobies, very little distracts my attention from the fishes. I wish that all of you, or at least one of you, will come here in the next future to go with me on a real bird-trip. I hope it will give you as much joy, as birding around New York has given to me.

Sincerely yours,
PELK."

26 April 1941

UIT DE AFDELINGEN

DJAKARTA

Verslag excursie naar de Proeftuin Pasar Minggu op 29 Maart j.l. Het is goed om naast de natuur ook eens aan een cultuur aandacht te schenken en het gewas door 's mensen ingrijpen te zien dienstbaar gemaakt aan zijn behoeften. In het centrum van de vruchtencultuur in de Ommelanden staat reeds meer dan 30 jaar de Proeftuin Ragunan te Pasar Minggu om het tuinbouwkundig onderzoek uit te dragen en in toepassing te brengen. Uit een eenvoudige demonstratie en een korte omwandeling over de kwekerij Tandjung Barat kunnen we reeds leren, hoe het cultuurgewas zich leent tot de beproefde kunstgrepen van de mens en hoe zijn lot bepaald wordt van zaad tot onderstam, van oog tot ent, van oculatie tot stump. Maar ook de vruchtbaarheid van de bodem, waarin het gewas zal moeten groeien en voortbrengen, is een voorname cultuurzorg op deze rode, arme gronden. Is het niet vreemd, dat juist op deze gronden één der rijkste vruchtengebieden van Java wordt aangetroffen, onder de rook van de grote stad, het gretige afzetgebied? Maar eerder dan aan de bodemvruchtbaarheid dient deze ongerijmde productiviteit toegeschreven te worden aan klimatologische en hydrologische factoren. Bij de zorg voor de cultuurgrond treedt het groenbestersvraagstuk naar voren en uiteraard is ook dit hier aangevat blijkens de manshoge proefvakken *Crotalaria* spp., *Cassia Leschenaultiana*, *Acacia villosa*, enz. en de grondbedekkende, grootbladige Japanse kudzu (*Pueraria Thunbergiana*). In de collecties stelt de papaja-aanplant ons voor een hybriden-puzzle. Op het gloednieuwe laboratorium worden we haast feestelijk onthaald en krijgen we tot onze grote verrassing een uiteenzetting te beluisteren van de grote plannen, die hier spoedig zullen worden uitgevoerd. Niet alleen de vruchtenconservering (waarvan de resultaten ons de tong vermochten te strelen), maar nog vele andere richtingen in de voedingstechniek vormen een onderdeel van deze grootse opzet.

In verband met het gevorderde uur wordt de verdere rondgang beperkt tot een bezoek aan de collecties te Ragunan, waarvan de exoten-tuin onze plantenliefhebbers het meeste boeit. De gehele tropengordel en vele subtropische gebieden der wereld zijn hier in een gemengde boomgaard vertegenwoordigd, allemaal exoten met een nader te toetsen introductiedoel, vele als vet- en olieleverancier (paranoot, *Bertholletia*, Australische noot, *Macadamia*), andere weer als eetbare-vrucht (Natal orange, *Strychnos spinosa*, lokwat *Eriobotrya*) of als onderstam voor onze vruchtbomen (*Aphanomixis* voor d u k u, *Sideroxylon* voor s a w o).

Beladen met fruit, maar niet minder met rijke indrukken en met een gevoel van sympathie voor het werk en de staf van de Proeftuin, keren we in het inmiddels late middaguur huiswaarts.