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**The biology of the Moluccan megapode *Eulipoa wallacei*
(Aves, Galliformes, Megapodiidae) on Haruku and other
Moluccan Islands; part 2: final report**

FOREWORD

By a stroke of good fortune the present publication by dr C.J. Heij and his co-workers on the Moluccan Scrubfowl or Wallace's Megapode, *Megapodius (Eulipoa) wallacei*, is in a way complementary to two recent works on Megapodes by Dutch ornithologists: R.W.R.J. Dekker's thesis on 'Conservation and biology of Megapodes' (University of Amsterdam, 1990) and the monograph 'The Megapodes' (1995) by D.N. Jones, R.W.R.J. Dekker & C.S. Roselaar. Dr Heij is advisor to the Faculty of Biology of Pattimura University at Amboina, Moluccas, Indonesia, since 1988.

The writers of this foreword are both emeritus-professor of zoology at the Free University of Amsterdam and were at various levels involved in Heij's doctoral thesis, on the House Sparrow in and around Rotterdam, a study on the life-history of a bird species known all over the world. In contrast, we are now presenting a foreword to a study on the Moluccan Scrubfowl or Wallace's Megapode, one of the rarest and least known bird species of the world. One of us, L. Vlijm, visited Kees Heij in the Moluccas in 1994 and joined him on his study grounds in the small and remote island of Haruku, of the much larger island of Seram. He participated in the thrill of observing egg-laying scrubfowl on a tropical sandy beach at night. Vlijm was impressed by Heij's enthusiasm and perseverance and his diplomatic and courteous joviality towards the local inhabitants who trusted him and continue to give him useful information on egg-collecting, which apparently has been practiced for generations.

This final report mixes old, often hardly verifiable data with new observations obtained in 1994-1995 and 1996. We sincerely hope that this publication contributes to a better understanding of the egg-laying phase in the life-history of this rare Megapode. At the same time we trust that the results lead to a sustaining management of the only few known egg-laying sites of this bird in the Moluccan Islands in accordance with time-honoured customs (adat), and to the conservation of nesting grounds elsewhere in this magnificent group of tropical islands.

Although Heij discovered where the Moluccan Scrubfowl lives when away from the laying grounds, still nothing is known of their mating system and courtship. Also the whereabouts of the highly precocial chicks after fledging is a mystery that needs study. We further recommend that crucial habitat sites as well as those egg-laying beaches which are threatened or over-exploited, should be placed under legal protection against disturbance by local inhabitants and inquisitive ornithological tourists. Let these birds, at least in some places, live their lives undisturbed for years to come.

August 1997,

L. Vlijm, Amsterdam

K.H. Voous, Huizen, N.H.

