

Papuan Forest Wallaby *Dorcopsulus macleayi* from Moro, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea

Nick BAKER
nbaker@ecologyasia.com

Observer: Nick Baker.

Photographs by: Nick Baker.

Subject identified by: Jeffrey Saina (WWF-PNG).

Comment: The island of New Guinea is considered to lie outside the geographic area typically referred to as 'Southeast Asia': the western half of the island is part of Indonesia, and the eastern half is part of Papua New Guinea.

Location: 10 km southwest of Moro Airfield, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.

(Lat 06° 26.332'S, Long 143° 11.185'E)

Elevation: 1150 metres

Habitat: Primary, lower montane forest on karst limestone.

Date and time: 30 June 2009, 19:28 hrs

Identity of subject: Papuan Forest Wallaby (or Macleay's *Dorcopsis*, Papuan *Dorcopsis*) *Dorcopsulus macleayi* (Mammalia: Diprotodontia: Macropodidae).

Description of observation: One female observed at night, at the edge of a quiet, unlit, unsealed, oilfield service road. Upon being disturbed it climbed the steep road cutting, paused briefly (Fig. 1) and retreated into the forest (Fig. 2).

Remarks: Wallabies of the genus *Dorcopsulus* are small, with a mean adult weight of around 3 kg. There appear to be few photographs in the wild of *Dorcopsulus macleayi*, which is a nocturnal, forest specialist. It is rarely seen by the casual observer, but native subsistence hunters would be familiar with the species.

Earlier researchers considered *Dorcopsulus macleayi* to be a subspecies of *Dorcopsulus vanheurni*. Flannery (1995) and Groves (2005) treat the two as separate species, the former stating: "*Dorcopsulus macleayi* differs externally from *Dorcopsulus vanheurni* in having approximately two-thirds to three-quarters (rather than one-half) of the tail furred". Less than half the tail in this specimen from Southern Highlands Province (S.H.P.) lacks fur (see Fig. 3.), and it is on this basis that it is identified as *Dorcopsulus macleayi*. The subject also has a dense, dark brown to blackish pelage typical of the species. The extreme tip of the tail of this example is pinkish-white.

The subject was found at an elevation of 1150 metres, which accords with an altitudinal range of 1000 to 1800 metres for the species (Flannery, 1995). Its location, near Moro in S.H.P, is 170 km further west than Mount Karimui, Chimbu Province, which in 1995 was thought to be the westernmost location for the species. Prior to this 2009 find the species had "recently been confirmed from Mount Bosavi" (J. Saina, pers. comm.), the summit of which lies 50 km to the southwest of Moro.

Fig. 4 illustrates the local habitat which comprises limestone mountains, with dense, constantly wet and humid, primary, lower montane forest. The forest floor is complex in character, with numerous overgrown fissures and small sinkholes, and is dominated by dense leaf litter, thick undergrowth and moss-covered fallen branches.

References:

- Flannery, T. F. (1995). *The Mammals of New Guinea*, 2nd edition. Reed Books, Sydney, Australia. 568 pp.
- Groves, C. P. (2005). Order Diprotodontia. In: D. E. Wilson and D. M. Reeder (eds), *Mammal Species of the World*, 43-70. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. 2142 pp.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

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