

# The conservation status of the forest birds of Siquijor, Philippines

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Siquijor is a small island in the central or Visayan region of the Philippines. During a student expedition (the Cambridge Philippines Rainforest Project 1991) in 1991, three days were spent surveying the remnant forests there. The major ornithological interest of the island is its population of the threatened Streak-breasted Bulbul *Ixos siquijorensis*, and there are also several endemic bird subspecies.

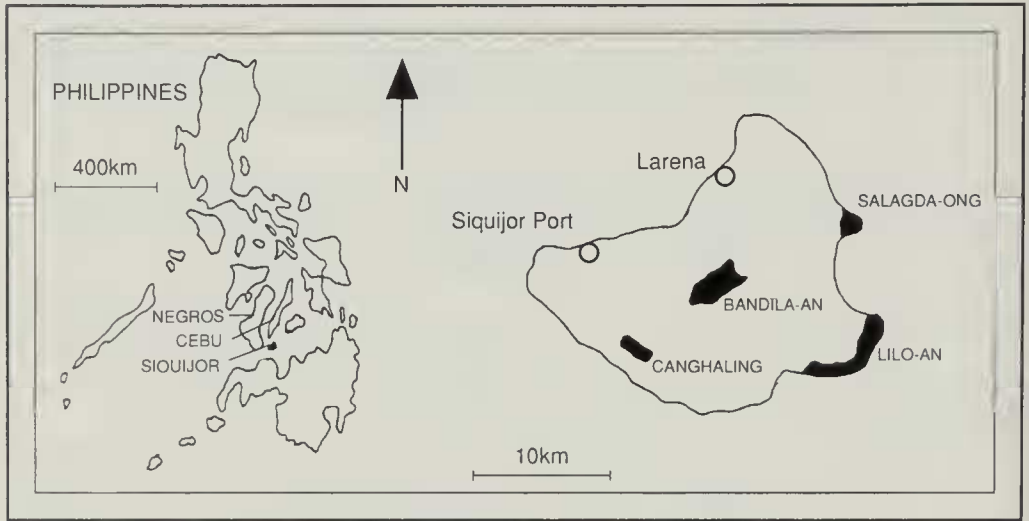
## FOREST STATUS ON SIQUIJOR

Siquijor is a hilly, coralline island, covering 344 km<sup>2</sup> and reaching 628 m altitude. Only four significant patches of forest remain (Figure 1), which cover a total of 781 ha, and are all in reserves controlled by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Three of these patches were visited by the expedition in the company of forest reserve staff and Perla Magsalay, a native Siquijorian and National Coordinator of Asian Wetland Bureau - Philippines, between 27 and 30 August 1991.

The last detailed report on Siquijor was by Rand and Rabor (1960), who presented a species list and a physical description of the island. They described only two patches of forest, both of the lowland evergreen dipterocarp-molave type, at Lilo-an (then 400 ha), and Bandila-an (then 500 ha). They observed logging and encroachment at both sites.

These two sites are now much smaller (Figure 1), and we noted signs of continuing degradation, which should be halted as soon as possible. Lilo-an is under particular pressure - the understorey has been replaced by maize over about 90% of the area, so the site is more like parkland than forest. This has happened in the last five years, since the visit of J. Hornskov and S. Jensen in 1987 (P. Magsalay pers. obs.). Forest species lost include Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma* and Yellow-bellied Whistler *Pachycephala philippinensis*, while the Streak-breasted Bulbul *Ixos siquijorensis* now occurs in comparatively low numbers (Figures 2 and 3). Bandila-an has the best remaining forest and retains a typical forest avifauna, but a few larger species are apparently extinct even there e.g. Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, which was noted to be on the verge of extinction by Rand and Rabor (1960).

The two small forest patches not mentioned by Rand and Rabor are also currently under pressure from logging and encroachment (pers. obs.). Apart from a few parts of the Bandila-an site, no primary forest remains on Siquijor.

**Figure 1** Remaining forest on Siquijor

## NEW RECORDS FOR SIQUIJOR

Siquijor has an impoverished avifauna of around 90 breeding species (including the new records below), due to its small size, recent origins and, perhaps, recent deforestation (Rand and Rabor 1960). There are no records of, amongst others, tits, drongos, woodpeckers, hornbills or barbets.

We noted seven 'new' species for the island (not listed by Dickinson *et al.* 1991), of which six are probably resident breeders: Spotted Dove (common), Uniform Swiftlet *Collocalia vanikorensis* (Lilo-an and Bandila-an), White-bellied Swiftlet *C. esculenta* (Bandila-an), Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis* (one or two at Lilo-an), Golden-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone sulphurea* (three heard in coastal scrub at Larena), Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (five migrants seen at Lilo-an), and Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (ubiquitous in towns and farmland, including a roost of 100 in the town of Maria).

In addition, a frigatebird *Fregata* was seen at Lilo-an. Both Great *F. minor* and Lesser Frigatebirds *F. aquila* are known from the Philippines, but neither has been recorded from Siquijor. Also one Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* and three Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* were seen from a ferry between Negros and Siquijor on 27 August. The Siquijor list now stands at 121 species.

## ENDEMIC SUBSPECIES

A special effort was made to locate species of conservation interest. We saw four of the five endemic subspecies in reasonable numbers in the remaining forest (Figure 3). These were Streak-breasted Bulbul *Ixos siquijorensis*

*siquijorensis*, Yellow-bellied Whistler *Pachycephala philippinensis siquijorensis*, Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma besti* and Everett's White-eye *Zosterops everetti siquijorensis*. Only the bulbul was present at Lilo-an, but all were present at Canghaling and Bandila-an. They occur at high densities in the habitat which remains, so are not under immediate danger of extinction. However, this could change very quickly if any more forest is cleared - it seems that the whistler, flowerpecker and white-eye are already extinct at Lilo-an. They will require careful monitoring.

There are no recent records of the Philippine Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus philippensis siquijorensis* (Parkes and Dickinson 1991), although they had been reported to Perla Magsalay from the vicinity of Bandila-an. These could have referred to escaped cage-birds of other subspecies, as is apparently the case on Cebu (Rabor 1959), where the endemic subspecies *L. p. chrysonotus* is also considered extinct.

## THREATENED AND NEAR-THREATENED SPECIES

Nine threatened or near-threatened species (Collar and Andrew 1988) are known from Siquijor. Of these, Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* (threatened) is known from two specimens, Spotted Imperial Pigeon *Ducula carola* (near-threatened) from one specimen, Malaysian Plover *Charadrius peronii* (near-threatened) from one specimen, and Japanese Night-Heron *Gorsachius goisagi* (threatened) from four specimens. All are probably migrants or occasional visitors. The other five probably once bred on the island.

The Rufous-lored Kingfisher *Todirhamphus winchelli* (near-threatened) is a scarce lowland forest species endemic to the southern Philippines. Two juveniles were seen at Lilo-an, where the habitat has been severely degraded. The population on Siquijor must now be tiny.

The Philippine Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia* (threatened) formerly bred commonly throughout the Philippines. In the last 15 years, populations have crashed, due mainly to trapping for the cage-bird trade. Extinction seems imminent (F. Lambert verbally 1992). Only Palawan, Mindanao and Luzon still support more than scattered pairs and, even there, all accessible nests are raided annually. It is apparently extinct on Negros (Brooks *et al.* in prep.) and Cebu (P. Magsalay pers. obs.), and extremely rare on Mindoro (Dutson *et al.* in press). One pair remains on Siquijor, at Lilo-an. This pair is well-known locally and the nest has been robbed in each of the last five years, making their future on the island very bleak.

The Philippine Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus philippensis* and the Malayan Night-Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus* (both near-threatened) have not been found on Siquijor since 1891 (Rand and Rabor 1960) and are likely to be extinct.

The Streak-breasted Bulbul *Ixos siquijorensis* (threatened) is known from four islands. It formerly occurred on the mountain-tops of Cebu (*I. s. monticola*), where it is apparently extinct, following total deforestation of the island, although the widespread Philippine Bulbul *I. philippinus* was still abundant in scrub there (Rabor 1959). It is found on the small islands of Romblon and Tablas (*I. s. cinereiceps*, Dickinson *et al.* 1991), where very little forest remains (Swedish Space Corporation 1988). R. J. Timmins visited both islands in 1992 and found that the bulbul was numerous in the very limited habitat remaining. The subspecies *I. s. cinereiceps* appears very different in the field and may warrant treatment as a separate species from *I. s. siquijorensis* (R. J. Timmins verbally 1992). On Siquijor, as on Romblon and Tablas, *I. philippinus* is absent, and *I. s. siquijorensis* occurs at all altitudes. We found it common in the three forest patches visited and in dense second growth. It may or may not require forest for breeding, but the remaining forest habitat is probably sufficient for several thousand individuals (given a density of maybe 1-3 pairs per hectare). Scrub is plentiful in the hillier parts of the island, but the comparatively low encounter rate at Lilo-an suggests that dense forest is the preferred habitat. The bird merits its threatened status, and should be considered Rare if it can breed in second growth, and Vulnerable if not.

The Blue-naped Parrot *Tanygnathus lucionensis* was also formerly known from Siquijor. We did not see it, but it was seen at Lilo-an in 1987 (P. Magsalay pers. obs.) and forest guards reported 'green parrots' there in 1991. The species, although not listed in Collar and Andrew (1988), is under severe pressure. It is apparently extinct on Negros (Brooks *et al.* in prep.) and Cebu, virtually so on Mindoro (Dutson *et al.* in press), and heavily collected throughout its range for the pet trade (R. Wirth *in litt.* 1991), so may warrant inclusion in the next Red Data book.

## CONCLUSION

Very little forest remains on Siquijor, and it may be under threat. Four of the five endemic subspecies are not under immediate threat, but the fifth may be extinct. Three globally threatened species still breed, but only one can be considered secure. These rare forest birds are currently vulnerable to destruction of the last fragments of their habitat - several species are now extinct at Lilo-an, where the habitat has been degraded, and some species have been wholly lost from the island. Improved protection is urgently required, particularly the prevention of further logging, of clearance for cultivation inside the official reserves, and of trapping.

We wish to thank our field companions, Derio Asane, Rob Timmins and Jing-Jing Toledo and the DENR on Siquijor for their invaluable help.

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## APPENDIX

## AN UPDATED LIST OF SIQUIJOR'S BIRDS

	1888	1907	1991			
	-1891	-1954	Lilo-an	Canghaling	Bandila-an	Other
BLUE-BREASTED QUAIL <i>Coturnix chinensis</i>	-	C	-	-	-	-
RED JUNGLEFOWL <i>Gallus gallus</i>	S	CR	-	-	-	-
WANDERING WHISTLING-DUCK <i>Dendrocygna arcuata</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
E PHILIPPINE DUCK <i>Anas luzonica</i>	S? (unconfirmed in Dickinson <i>et al.</i> (1991))					
DOLLARBIRD <i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	SB	R	I	4	-	-
COMMON KINGFISHER <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
VARIABLE KINGFISHER <i>Ceyx lepidus</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
RUDDY KINGFISHER <i>Halcyon coromanda</i>	Mc	R	-	-	-	-
WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER <i>H. smyrnensis</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
E+ RUFOUS-LORED KINGFISHER <i>Todirhamphus winchelli</i>	B	-	2	-	-	-
COLLARED KINGFISHER <i>T. chloris</i>	B	CR	26	3	2	+
BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER <i>Merops philippinus</i>	SB	CR	-	-	-	-
CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO <i>Clamator coromandus</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
HODGSON'S HAWK-CUCKOO <i>Cuculus fugax</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
ORIENTAL CUCKOO <i>C. saturatus</i>	B	R	-	?	(one sp. seen 28 Aug.)	-
RUSTY-BREASTED CUCKOO <i>Cacomantis sepulcralis</i> <sup>1</sup>	-	R	-	-	-	-
ASIAN KOEL <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
E PHILIPPINE COUCAL <i>Centropus viridis</i>	B	CR	7	12	19	-
LESSER COUCAL <i>C. bengalensis</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
E* PHILIPPINE COCKATOO <i>Cacatua haematuropygia</i>	B	CR	I	-	-	-
BLUE-NAPED PARROT <i>Tanygnathus lucionensis</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
E PHILIPPINE HANGING-PARROT <i>Loriculus philippensis</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
WHITE-BELLIED SWIFTLET <i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	-	-	40	2	7	+
E PYGMY SWIFTLET <i>C. troglodytes</i>	B	CR	-	-	12	-
UNIFORM SWIFTLET <i>C. vanikorensis</i>	-	-	40	-	1	-
ASIAN PALM-SWIFT <i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
BROWN HAWK-OWL <i>Ninox scutulata</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
E PHILIPPINE HAWK-OWL <i>N. philippensis</i>	SB	CR	-	-	2	-
METALLIC PIGEON <i>Columba vitiensis</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
SPOTTED DOVE <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	-	-	64	-	-	+
ISLAND COLLARED-DOVE <i>S. bitorquata</i>	SB	CR	-	-	-	-
PHILIPPINE CUCKOO-DOVE <i>Macropygia tenuirostris</i> <sup>3</sup>	-	R	-	1	-	-
EMERALD DOVE <i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	B	CR	4	8	5	-
ZEBRA DOVE <i>Geopelia striata</i>	-	Ra	71	6	2	-
* NICOBAR PIGEON <i>Caloenas nicobarica</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
E WHITE-EARED BROWN-DOVE <i>Phapitreron leucotis</i>	B	CR	4	4	13	-
PINK-NECKED GREEN-PIGEON <i>Treron vernans</i>	SB	CR	26	-	-	-
POMPADOUR GREEN-PIGEON <i>T. pompadora</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
BLACK-CHINNED FRUIT-DOVE <i>Ptilinopus leclancheri</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
E+ SPOTTED IMPERIAL PIGEON <i>Ducula carola</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
GREEN IMPERIAL PIGEON <i>D. aenea</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
PIED IMPERIAL PIGEON <i>D. bicolor</i>	SB	CR	-	-	-	-
SLATY-LEGGED CRAKE <i>Rallina eurizonoides</i>	S	-	-	-	-	-
BARRED RAIL <i>Gallirallus torquatus</i>	B	C	-	-	-	-
SLATY-BREASTED RAIL <i>G. striatus</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
PLAIN BUSH-HEN <i>Amaurornis olivaceus</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
WHITE-BROWED CRAKE <i>Porzana cinerea</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-

	1888	1907	1991			
	-1891	-1954	Lilo-an	Canghaling	Bandila-an	Other
SWINHOE'S SNIPE <i>Gallinago megala</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
WHIMBREL <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
COMMON REDSHANK <i>Tringa totanus</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
WOOD SANDPIPER <i>T. glareola</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
COMMON SANDPIPER <i>T. hypoleucos</i>	-	C	-	-	-	-
GREY-TAILED TATTLER <i>T. brevipes</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
RUDDY TURNSTONE <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
RED-NECKED PHALAROPE <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1
GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
GREY PLOVER <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER <i>P. fulva</i> <sup>4</sup>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
KENTISH PLOVER <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	S	-	-	-	-	-
MALAYSIAN PLOVER <i>C. peronii</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
MONGOLIAN PLOVER <i>C. mongolus</i>						
GREATER SAND PLOVER <i>C. leschenaultii</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
GREAT CRESTED-TERN <i>Sterna bergii</i>	B	C	-	-	-	-
BRIDLED TERN <i>S. anaethetus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	3
SOOTY TERN <i>S. fuscata</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
WHISKERED TERN <i>Chlidonia hybridus</i>	B (omitted from Dickinson <i>et al.</i> 1991)					
BRAHMINY KITE <i>Haliastur indus</i>	S	CR	-	-	-	-
WHITE-BELLIED FISH-EAGLE <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
BESRA <i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
GREY-FACED BUZZARD <i>Butastur indicus</i>	SB	-	-	-	-	-
E+ PHILIPPINE HAWK-EAGLE <i>Spizaetus philippensis</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
ORIENTAL HOBBY <i>Falco severus</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
PEREGRINE FALCON <i>F. peregrinus</i>	-	CR	-	-	-	-
LITTLE EGRET <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
PACIFIC REEF-EGRET <i>E. sacra</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
CATTLE EGRET <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	-	CR	-	-	-	-
STRIATED HERON <i>Butorides striatus</i>	B	R	-	-	-	-
RUFOUS NIGHT-HERON <i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>	SB	C	-	-	-	-
* JAPANESE NIGHT-HERON <i>Gorsachius gosisagi</i>	-	R	-	-	-	-
+ MALAYAN NIGHT-HERON <i>G. melanolophus</i>	B	-	-	-	-	-
HOODED PITTA <i>Pitta sordida</i>	SB	CR	5	5	4	-
RED-BELLIED PITTA <i>P. erythrogaster</i>	B	R	-	-	-	-
GOLDEN-BELLIED GERYGONE <i>Gerygone sulphurea</i>	-	-	-	-	-	3
BROWN SHRIKE <i>Lanius cristatus</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
LONG-TAILED SHRIKE <i>L. schach</i>	SB	CR	-	-	-	+
E YELLOW-BELLIED WHISTLER <i>Pachycephala philippinensis</i>	SB	CR	-	10	12	-
LARGE-BILLED CROW <i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	SB	CR	2	-	-	+
WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW <i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>	SB	CR	37	3	5	-
BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE <i>Oriolus chinensis</i>	SB	CR	129	18	5	-
PIED TRILLER <i>Lalage nigra</i>	B	CR	63	-	-	-
PIED FANTAIL <i>Rhipidura javanica</i>	B	CR	35	3	3	-
BLACK-NAPED MONARCH <i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	B	CR	-	14	22	-
BLUE ROCK-THRUSH <i>Monticola solitarius</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
GREY-STREAKED FLYCATCHER <i>Muscicapa griseisticta</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
MANGROVE BLUE-FLYCATCHER <i>Cyornis rufigaster</i>	B	CR	-	3	10	-
ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN <i>Copsychus saularis</i>	B	CR	24	3	-	+
PIED BUSHCHAT <i>Saxicola caprata</i>	B	CR	9	-	-	+
ASIAN GLOSSY STARLING <i>Aplonis panayensis</i>	SB	CR	540	140	140	+
E COLETO <i>Sarcops calvus</i>	S	CR	4	-	34	-
BARN SWALLOW <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	B	R	6	-	-	-
PACIFIC SWALLOW <i>H. tahitica</i>	B	CR	200+	-	-	+

	1888	1907	1991			
	-1891	-1954	Lilo-an	Canghaling	Bandila-an	Other
STRIATED SWALLOW <i>H. striolata</i> <sup>5</sup>	-	D	-	-	-	-
E* STREAK-BREADED BULBUL <i>Ixos squijorensis</i>	SB	CR	87	101	242	10
GOLDEN-HEADED CISTICOLA <i>Cisticola exilis</i>	B	CR	-	4	-	-
EVERETT'S WHITE-EYE <i>Zosterops everetti</i>	B	CR	-	8	54	-
ARCTIC WARBLER <i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	-	Cr	-	-	-	-
TAWNY GRASSBIRD <i>Megalurus timoriensis</i>	B	-	-	3	-	-
ORANGE-BELLIED FLOWERPECKER <i>Dicaeum trigonostigma</i>	SB	CR	-	1	23	-
E PYGMY FLOWERPECKER <i>D. pygmaeum</i>	B	CR	-	-	-	-
PURPLE-THROATED SUNBIRD <i>Nectarinia sperata</i>	B	CR	-	1	13	-
OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD <i>N. jugularis</i>	SB	CR	26	8	16	+
EURASIAN TREE SPARROW <i>Passer montanus</i>	-	-	20	-	-	+
YELLOW WAGTAIL <i>Motacilla flava</i>	-	-	5	-	-	-
GREY WAGTAIL <i>M. cinerea</i>	-	CR	-	-	-	-
PADDYFIELD PIPIT <i>Anthus rufilus</i> <sup>6</sup>	SB	CR	-	-	-	-
PECHORA PIPIT <i>A. gustavi</i>	-	CR	-	-	-	-
WHITE-BELLIED MUNIA <i>Lonchura leucogastra</i>	-	R	-	-	2	-
BLACK-HEADED MUNIA <i>Lonchura malacca</i>	B	R	16	-	2	+

E = species endemic to the Philippines

\* = included as 'threatened' in Collar and Andrew (1988)

+ = included as 'near-threatened' in Collar and Andrew (1988)

Numbers in the columns for Lilo-an, Canghaling and Bandila-an refer to bird-day totals. A total of 27 observer-hours were spent surveying Lilo-an, 18 observer-hours at Balinga-an and 9 observer-hours at Canghaling.

B = collected by D. C. Worcester and F. S. Bourns in 1891 (mainly from Bourns and Worcester, 1894)

C = collected by A. Celestino in 1907-1908 (McGregor 1908)

D = Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

Mc = McGregor (1909-1910)

R = collected or observed by D. S. Rabor, 1949-1954 (Rand and Rabor 1960)

Ra = Rabor *et al.* (1970)

S = collected by J. B. Steere in 1888 (Steere 1890).

<sup>1</sup> = considered conspecific with *C. variolosus* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

<sup>2</sup> = considered conspecific with *T. capensis* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

<sup>3</sup> = considered conspecific with *M. phasianella* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

<sup>4</sup> = considered conspecific with *P. dominica* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

<sup>5</sup> = considered conspecific with *H. daurica* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)

<sup>6</sup> = considered conspecific with *A. novaeseelandiae* by Dickinson *et al.* (1991)