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Fulbright Specialists Provide Advanced Ornithology Training



Photo Caption: Excited PNG participants train their binoculars on the “amazingly diverse” bird life in the Highlands Region. Two Fulbright specialists from the United States — Dr. Andrew Mack from the Indo-Pacific Conservation Alliance and Dr. Brett Benz from the University of Kansas — have conducted advanced ornithology (the study of birds) training in PNG in January and February.

February 13, 2012, Port Moresby — The U.S. Fulbright Specialists Program teamed up with the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and PNG Institute of Biological Research to offer two courses on advanced ornithology — the study of birds — in January and February.

PNG, said Dr. Andrew Mack, one of the specialists from the Indo-Pacific Conservation Alliance, is “an ideal place” to study birds because of the “amazing diversity.” According to Mack, “PNG has roughly the same number of species as the entire continent of Australia or North America.”

As PNG has few trained biologists, the courses were particularly useful. Dr. Mack and his colleague, Dr. Brett Benz from the University of Kansas, worked with a broad section of PNG's scientific community; this included students and staff at UPNG, the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The goal, said Dr. Mack, is to stimulate a generation of national ornithologists.

The students found and identified 105 species from 34 different bird families — a good representation of the diversity in the Highlands region — in Eastern Highlands and Enga provinces.

The Fulbright Specialists Program, said Public Diplomacy Officer Brian Asmus, sponsors experts in the sciences and humanities from the United States to share their expertise with colleagues in other countries. The U.S. Embassy, said Mr. Asmus, will also be sending experts on women's health to the region in the near future.

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