

The Mammals of Kumul Lodge, Enga Province, Papua New Guinea, with Notes on Calaby's Pademelon *Thylogale calabyi*

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ABSTRACT. Over a period of 14 years (2006–2019) 15 visits were made to Kumul Lodge in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea. Forty hours of nocturnal searching spanning 31 observation-nights with occasional daytime-sightings resulted in 11 species of native mammals being recorded in the lodge grounds. Of most importance were sightings of the rare Calaby's Pademelon *Thylogale calabyi*. Observations and photographs of this poorly known and threatened macropod are presented. Three species—the dasyurid *Murexia melanurus* and rodents *Lorentzimys nouhuysi* and *Rattus steini* are reported in Enga Province, for the first time.

Introduction

Observing mammals in the field, in the mountains of Papua New Guinea, is difficult. Many species are hunted intensively by local people for food and pelts. Most mammal species are nocturnal and occur at low density in thick forest where terrain is often steep. Identification guides are limited; confident identification often requires comparative studies using museum specimens (Helgen, 2007). Field-identification of a handful of distinctive species is possible, however, from good sightings or photographs alone. It remains, never-the-less, a challenge to study mammals in the field in this remarkably biodiverse country.

Knowledge of many mammal species in the different regions of Papua New Guinea is still remarkably poor and Enga Province is no exception. Helgen (2007) references 39 species from Enga Province, qualifying this number with the caveat: “many species remain to be detected and ... the local mammal fauna is likely to be twice as diverse as currently recorded”.

In the past few decades a small number of ecotourism lodges have been developed offering visitors accommodation in forested areas where bird-watching and cultural tours have become increasingly popular. One site is Kumul Lodge which

is unique in being both entirely managed by the traditional owners and situated in largely undisturbed montane forest in the central highland cordillera.

Kumul Lodge (5.793°S 143.974°E) is situated close to the western flank of Mount Hagen at 2861 m above sea-level in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea (Fig. 1). It is located in an area of thick montane cloud rainforest with pockets of anthropogenic grassland some of which are very extensive on either side of the Highlands Highway. Kumul Lodge is also unique in that it has a feeder table where fruit is placed to attract various fruit-eating birds such as birds of paradise, honeyeaters, and tiger-parrots. The fruit has also attracted at least three species of mammal directly to, or underneath, the table to feed on scraps (pers. obs.).

Fifteen visits were made by the author to Kumul Lodge between 2006 and 2019 whilst leading natural history tours. Visits occurred in June (2010, 2019), July (2017), August (2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018), September (2012, 2014, 2019) and October (2009). A total of 31 nights were spent at the lodge with a minimum total of 40 hours spent at night searching for mammals with powerful hand-held torches. The objective was to record as many native mammals in the region as possible.

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