

An Annotated Translation of Georg Stein's, 1933, A Research Trip to the Dutch East Indies

TIM F. FLANNERY¹ , RUDOLF HASLAUER²,
STEPHEN M. JACKSON¹ , AND IAN A. W. MCALLAN³ 

¹ Australian Museum Research Institute, 1 William Street, Sydney NSW 2010, Australia

² Independent researcher, Poernbach, Germany

³ Academic Library Services, Macquarie University NSW 2109, Australia

Introduction

Georg Hermann Wilhelm Stein was born in Zittendorf, Germany on 7 April 1897. He became a secondary school teacher who was self-educated in natural history. In 1930, employed by the Botanical Museum in Berlin, he travelled to the Dutch East Indies from 1931–1932. During the expedition he was accompanied by his wife Clara for whom he later named the bandicoot *Echymipera clara*. The highlight of his expedition was an ascent of the Weyland Range in western New Guinea, where he collected at least two mammal species, *Microperoryctes murinus* and *Macruromys elegans*, that have not been sighted before or since. The diaries of his expedition were lost during the Second World War (National Herbarium, Netherlands, no date), making the published account, translated into English here for the first time, a valuable chronicle (Stein, 1933).

In later life Stein became associated with the Humboldt University Museum, Berlin, where his mammal and New Guinea bird specimens are held. During the 1950s and 60s he published on European mammals, including moles and the field mouse (e.g., Stein, 1958). On his 70th birthday the great ornithologist Erwin Stresemann (who had unique privileges to cross the Berlin Wall) gave an encomium which read in part: ‘Now you too have marched with brisk steps over the threshold of old age—a joyful occasion for the circle of your fellow participants and admirers of the long journey you have travelled as a successful, tireless researcher. I have been appointed spokesperson at your beloved place of work because no-one has accompanied your progress as long as I have. It was not mammals that first brought you into the

net of zoological research, but rather birds.’ (Stresemann, 1967). The late Colin Groves told TF of a meeting he had with Stein at the Museum which suggests that relationships with his colleagues were not always rosy. As Stein conducted Groves towards his own office, passing the office doors of other curators, he pointed and said ‘she is a communist; he was a Nazi during the war’, and so on. When they reached Stein’s office, he pulled out a postage stamp which bore the image of Erich Honecker, East Germany’s Head of State, and spat vehemently on it before sticking it to an envelope, saying ‘It is good that they put Honecker on the stamp. I spit on him.’ Stein passed away on 19 April 1976.

Below is a full translation of Stein (1933) in which our edits to his text are in square brackets throughout to include the current taxonomy and other notes. Taxonomy used follows Mittermeier & Wilson (2015) for mammals and Avibase (2025) for birds, with details of the bird collections by Stein available in Roselaar (2003). This translation includes historic language about race and cultural practices. While we would not use this language ourselves, we have retained it here in order to remain faithful to Stein’s original text.

Part I: New Guinea

My journey was intended as a continuation of Dr Ernst Mayr’s expedition to Dutch New Guinea in 1928. It was to consist of ornithological research on several islands in Geelvink Bay, Waigeu Island, and finally the ascent of the Weyland Mountains, the western foothills of the Snow Mountains. Most of the funds were provided by friends of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, at the

Keywords: New Guinea, Weyland Range, Georg Stein, *Microperoryctes murinus*

ORCID iD: Flannery, 0000-0002-3005-8305; Jackson 0000-0002-7252-0799; McAllan, 0000-0002-3084-1789

Corresponding author: Tim Flannery tim.fridtjof.flannery@gmail.com

Submitted: 9 September 2025 **Accepted:** 10 September 2025 **Published:** 6 March 2026 (in print and online simultaneously)

Publisher: The Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia (a statutory authority of, and principally funded by, the NSW State Government)

Citation: Flannery, Tim F., Rudolf Haslauer, Stephen M. Jackson, and Ian A. W. McAllan. 2026. An annotated translation of Georg Stein's, 1933, a research trip to the Dutch East Indies. In *Contributions to the Mammalogy of New Guinea*, ed. Tim F. Flannery and Kristofer M. Helgen. *Records of the Australian Museum* 78(1): 87–106. <https://doi.org/10.3853/j.2201-4349.78.2026.3008>

Copyright: © 2026 Flannery, Haslauer, Jackson, McAllan. This is an open access article licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited.



intercession of Dr L. C. Sanford. My deepest gratitude goes to Prof. Dr Stresemann, whose trust enabled me to undertake this journey. Prof. Dr Diels, Director of the Botanical Museum in Berlin, granted a subsidy for the travel expenses, so that I was able to take my wife with me. Although I still believe that the high mountains of New Guinea, with their demands on physical fitness and willpower, are ill-suited to a European woman, I have not regretted my decision to take my wife with me, and I know that the success of the expedition is largely due to her boundless enthusiasm and constant helpfulness.

After lengthy preparations in the museums of Berlin and Tring, the journey began in early December 1930. The Zoological Museum in Buitenzorg provided us with two taxidermists, including DARNÄ, who had experience in expeditions. Dr Dammerman, to whom we owe our heartfelt thanks for his constant help and care, also provided us with the necessary government recommendations and thus the moral support without which a major expedition in New Guinea cannot function. We made a brief stop in Makassar on Celebes, and eight weeks after our departure from Berlin, we arrived in Manokwari, the capital of Dutch New Guinea.

The day before, we had called at Waigeu [Waigeo]. Gloomy, shrouded in rain clouds and fog, completely covered in jungle, the picturesque limestone peaks of the large island lay before us. Small outrigger canoes, in which dark brown figures with huge hairpieces sat—the first Papuans—swarmed around the ship. To be honest, I did not feel too comfortable when I thought about the fact that we were supposed to go into this eerie, rain-grey, rocky jungle wilderness. We even had a real cannibal from the hinterland of Sorong, who was awaiting trial, in chains on board! Yet the fellow looked quite well-mannered, wore khaki trousers, chewed fruit and looked at everything with eyes that seemed to understand nothing. The Dutch government does not hang such a poor fellow, who acted out of a dark, probably religiously rooted urge, from a tall tree as a deterrent, but instead he is given the necessary number of years of forced labour, ‘service’, as the natives so nicely call it, learns to speak Malay, gets to know European civilization and, if he survives it all, later becomes a great man in his village.

Manokwari

Manokwari is one of the most beautiful places we have seen, especially if you do not know that malaria and dysentery are rife here. Located in a quiet bay, where hundreds of lights from fishing boats flicker on moonless nights, the town is built on terraces, shaded by coconut palms and large Ficus trees. On the coast, under palm trees, are the Chinese shops, the pasar (market) with its colourful bustle of Chinese, Malays, Arabs, and Papuans, with its abundance of bananas, pineapples, vegetables, fish, eggs, and chickens; behind it, separated by a football pitch for the soldiers, barracks, government buildings, hospital, the little church, higher up the houses of the Malays and a few Europeans, well-kept paths, very bright and friendly. Above it all, however, on the other side of the bay, rise steeply from the sea the almost 3,000 m high massifs of the Arfak Mountains, shining blue in the light of the clear sky in the morning, deep green at midday with immeasurable forests and gorges, fading into thunderstorms and clouds in the evening.

We moved into a nice room at the *Pasanggrahan*, the public

rest house, and as soon as my shotguns were unpacked, I set off into the forest early in the morning, eager for action and thirsty for blood. There was remarkably little bird life in the bushes and individual trees in the area. Green honeyeaters with yellow ear coverts (*Meliphaga analoga*), one of the most common birds in New Guinea, were everywhere; but otherwise I only encountered a pair of black flycatchers (*Rhipidura tricolor* [= *R. leucophrys melaleuca*]) with white superciliary stripes, their long tails fanned coquettishly and moving back and forth like a bird of prey; high in the treetops, several oriole-sized yellow and black starlings (*Mino dumontii*) cawed; a crow, *Corvus coronoides orru* [= *C. orru*], with cobalt blue eyes, flew overhead. In the jungle, the same disappointment! Where were the magnificent birds of paradise that I had seen in the museum cabinets? I could not have known that almost everything had been exterminated in the Manokwari area by the zealous activity of Europeans and colonists. Finally, a small flock of birds the size of jackdaws, with mostly white plumage and black wings, descends upon me in a fruit tree. Their calls, melodious and trumpet-like, pierce the forest. I shoot one down: it is a *Cracticus cassicus*, also extremely common in New Guinea and hated by all museums. I shoot another *Manucodia ater*, a bird of paradise, but one that looks desperately like a blue-black crow, and two pitiful white giant cockatoos (*Cacatua triton* [= *C. galerita triton*]).

Gradually, however, you learn how to move around in the jungle. I discovered the little flycatchers *Todopsis cyanocephalus* [= *Malurus cyanocephalus*], which slip through the dense undergrowth almost like blue tits, their tails raised, and I see the first *Tanysepta hydrocharis*, the light blue kingfisher with the red beak and long central tail feathers, swinging on a thin liana. I watch the little *Aegotheles wallacei* [= *A. wallacii*], which at first glance resemble night swallows, as they flit over the alang-alang of the secondary bush at dusk like large spinners, encountering insects in flight, and even catch some of the rare *Pycnopygius stictocephalus*, large, dark-coloured honey eaters with white stripes on their heads. In the evening, the metallic tjük tjük of the nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* can be heard from the roofs of the houses; I have never heard it make the purring sound that is characteristic of our species. I try to catch owls and in doing so shoot a poor chicken in the darkness that was sleeping in a tree, as is customary for chickens there. Later, when I was out at night with my shotgun, it happened to me several times that a dark figure approached me, pointed to a tree and whispered: *Toean awas, ada ajam!* Sir, be careful, there are chickens sitting up there!

One morning, an incredibly dirty Papuan stands in front of the *Pasanggrahan*, grinning from ear to ear. His name is Josepho. Josepho—apparently, he is from Arfak, but of course already a Christian—offers to hunt birds for me. He proves to be very skilled, stalking and shooting with great accuracy, so I decide to take him with me to Yapen. After three days, he asks me for an advance, describing the great hardship his family is in, and receives a guildler. The next morning, he does not show up; as we pass his hut, Josepho is sitting outside, dressed in brand-new swimming trunks, squinting in the sun and looking at me with great cheerfulness. One of his children is sick in the hut, and he cannot leave. The next day, in response to my energetic representations, he explains briefly and concisely that he no longer feels like it and asks for the rest of his earned money. I never gave him an ‘advance’ again.

The island of Yapen

On 17 February 1931, we steam through Geelvink Bay in glorious weather on the small government steamer Anna to our first working area, the island of Yapen (Japen) or Jobi, as it is always incorrectly named after the small town on the north coast. In the evening, we drop anchor in a quiet bay on the small, wooded rocky island of Miosnom. The steamer has only one *djuraggan*, a Malay captain who is forbidden to sail at night. The next morning, the long island of Yapen comes into view. To my displeasure, it lies there just as gloomy and rain-shrouded as Waigeu. We sail past Anssus, further west, the former centre of bird of paradise hunting. Here there is only hilly country with gentle slopes. We want to go to Seroei, in the eastern part of the island, the seat of the only Dutch government official in Geelvink Bay. A small bay, protected by rocky islets, a hot and humid coastal plain with lots of sago swamps, crisscrossed by muddy watercourses, open only to the coast, otherwise completely enclosed by mountain ranges that run down to the sea—that is Seroei. The natives here were once considered particularly dangerous and treacherous. On the coast today, they naturally wear cotton cloths bought like everywhere else, and are lazy and indolent. We met better people in the mountains who still knew how to use bows and arrows. There they were still quite reserved, dismissive, even gloomy. The Dutch official had even given us a few policemen as a precaution, but this was not necessary. Some smaller tribes are said to still roam the vast interior of Yapen as nomadic hunters. Everyone knew Dutch money, and most spoke Malay.

Yapen's characteristic bird is *Paradisaea minor jobiensis*, the bird of paradise with its magnificent chrome-yellow tail, the main object of the former ornamental feather trade. If the birds ever suffered in their numbers due to hunting, the gaps must have closed surprisingly quickly. I even saw one in Kampong, the native village, flying slowly over the wide paths, so that the yellow plumage swayed up and down, almost like the white fins of a strange ornamental fish. But hunting is generally not that easy. The old magnificent males are usually found in the company of uncoloured animals. A flock calls through the jungle with *quao quam* and *qua qua*. Slowly, feeding here and there, hopping, fluttering, gliding down into the undergrowth, shooting upwards, the company moves through the forest, and suddenly, to one's surprise, something flashes in the green of the treetops for a moment: an old male! It is gone, covered by thick branches. Now it flies on. Like a white and yellow veil, the bird glides along, disappearing into the shadows. It flashes again; he has spread his decorative plumage! The shotgun trembles, your knees fly with excitement as you rush down a slope where you get caught in vines, where you must bend bushes aside and watch out for boulders so they do not start sliding. Once the younger, uncoloured birds, in the midst of which the old male tends to keep, have spotted the hunter, you can follow the birds for a good hour before you get a shot, unless you prefer to give up, because there is a danger of getting into terrain where it is difficult to find your way home in the heat of the hunt. This happened to me once in Waigeu while pursuing *Paradisaea rubra* and caused me some very unpleasant hours.

In the mountains, my highest camp is located at 1,000 meters above sea level, next to a stream that babbles coolly and clearly along its rocky bed, shaded by bamboo, tall ferns,

and climbing plants. *Paradisaea* no longer lives up here, but another bird of paradise does: *Diphyllodes magnifica*, along with a host of small, colourful fruit doves (*Ptilinopus*); the small red nectar-feeders *Myzomela cruentata* are common here, as are small *Gerygone* species (*G. palpebrosa*, *magnirostris*, *chloronota*), which roam the treetops like leaf warblers. The small silky blue flycatcher *Todopsis wallacei* [= *Sipodotus wallacii*] lives low in the bushes. From the dry peaks of the jungle trees, *Hemiprocne mystacea* glides down like a giant glider and floats through the air in an ethereal flight.

One afternoon, a few old men from some remote mountain village carried a large red cuscus (*Phalanger maculatus* [= *Spilocuscus maculatus*]) on a pole, to which they had simply attached its long naked prehensile tail to the wood with raffia. They did not speak a word of Malay, and the only coin they knew and naturally demanded for the animal was a 'ringget', the largest Dutch silver coin worth 4.25 marks. Of course, I refused this outrageous demand, especially since we already had enough work (the table was full of birds and bats) and a red cuscus, tied to a log, was already waiting for its fate. The group of gaunt patriarchs sat sullenly apart, whispering among themselves with toothless mouths and glaring at me. You could tell they were already annoyed at having come here in the first place and now having to put up with being led around by the nose despite their dignified age. Now it was clear that these white men were all a bunch of swindlers! When they were young, strangers were not allowed to come here, so business would have been concluded quickly; but those good old days were gone, here as everywhere else! My people showed them other types of money, and again there was endless discussion. The guilder coin, also quite large, found favour in their eyes. I did not really want to pay more than the usual price, namely half a guilder, but in the end, not least for psychological reasons, I agreed to pay 95 cents, a nice pile of small change. In vain, they did not even glance at me, said a few words to the people in Japanese and loaded the poor couscous back onto the cart. Barely 50 meters from our camp, in the stream bed, so that we could see it, they beat it to death and roasted it on the spot, out of malice or protest.

Numfor

After a seven-week stay, we leave Yapen with a haul of over 600 birds and 300 mammals. On the return journey, we make a short stop at the small island of Numfor, almost always mistakenly referred to as Mafor, where I hastily shoot a few of the large fruit doves (*Ducula geelvinkiana*) for supper. My wife spots one of the charming, finch-sized green dwarf parrots *Micropsitta geelvinkiana* sitting on a tree trunk, we continue to observe the deep blue long-tailed kingfisher *Tanysiptera carolinae*, so that when the Dutch government official visits the island on an inspection tour sometime later, we join him without further ado, especially as this detour costs almost nothing. Numfor lies in Geelvink Bay on a flat base made entirely of coral limestone. There are no elevations, and the limestone, only sparsely covered with humus, is visible everywhere; nevertheless, the vegetation is truly tropical in its lushness. Unfortunately, the bird fauna did not live up to what it had promised during our first brief visit and can be described as extremely poor. More impressive was the number of individuals. Everywhere, large grey-blue

fruit doves (*Ducula geelvinkiana*) sat in small flocks on the jungle trees, interspersed with literally flocks of various *Ptilinopus* species, small green and colourful fruit doves. The endemic starling *Macruropsar magnus* [= *Aplonis magna*] could have been caught in any number, as could the beautiful bright red parrot *Eos cyanogenys* [= *E. cyanogenia*] with blue cheeks and yellow wing mirrors. The blue of the equally endemic *Tanysiptera carolinae* shone everywhere in the primeval forest.

However, I have very bad memories of the Numfor people; they seem to have reached the peak of indolence. It was impossible to find anyone who was willing to hunt for me, let alone anyone who could do so. When I asked children to help me find a bird that had fallen into dense undergrowth, they explained that there were poisonous snakes there and they had no intention of going in. A man came back from the sea with a few fish he had caught. I wanted to buy one from him, but he calmly explained that he would eat them all himself. On this occasion, I had a minor tantrum, summoned the kapala (village chief) and demanded that he get me some fish for tomorrow. This good man, instead of going himself, naturally first ran around the village, perhaps hoping to find someone else who could be burdened with this task. In the end, however, he had to make the effort himself. We had taken an older boy from Manokwari with us as a ‘jack of all trades’, or perhaps more accurately, a ‘jack of none’, simply because he came from Numfor and claimed to know his way around there. This was indeed the case. When he accompanied me on the hunt and was supposed to search for a shot bird, he often claimed that I had missed, or that the bird must have flown away, or that it was impossible to find. Until I realized that this cunning rascal was sitting peacefully in the bush or only going where his dirty but precious brown skin would not be damaged. I then felt compelled to do some ‘retrieval exercises’ using a sturdy stick that I quickly cut down. In any case, saying goodbye to Numfor was not exactly difficult for us.

Waigeu

To get to Waigeu, we took the Dutch K. P. M. steamer from Manokwari, but only travelled as far as Sorong, a small island on the north-western coast of the Berau Peninsula. From there, we wanted to save on the rather high steamer fare and entrusted ourselves to a small, very small government motorboat for the journey through the Dampier Strait. From early morning until dusk, we rocked back and forth between Salawatti, Batanta, and Waigeu. The *djuraggan* naturally had no idea where we were, but to our relief, he finally brought us—the heavy seas had calmed down in the afternoon—if not exactly to our destination, then at least to Saonek, a small island opposite Waigeu, where I first thoroughly savoured the pleasant feeling of having solid ground under my feet again. The engine had already stopped working on the way there, so I instructed the people to fix it before our departure the next morning. When we were about to board, of course, they had not even started. They certainly could not understand why I expressed my displeasure so vividly. Strange people, these Europeans! Does it really matter whether you sail now or work on the engine? Everything will work out in the end!

We chug along the coast of Waigeu. The green hilltops and wide gorges lie there in the sunshine. Today, the sea is one big reflection of light. Two, three, five sea eagles glide slowly far

out to sea, where fish leap out of the water. On the seabed, we see, as if through clear glass, a fairy-tale carpet of colourful corals, blue starfish, green seaweed, and schools of coral fish in incredible colours, swimming calmly through these meadows. Soon we are travelling along steep cliffs, where the trees lean over and reach into the sea with their branches, soon the black flat edge of mudflats stretches out before our eyes, covered with the stilt roots of the *Rhizophoras*. It becomes more mountainous; a rock gate opens; we enter Majalibit Bay. Fjord-like steep walls rise menacingly to the right and left of the narrow road, hung with dense jungle full of towering palm trees. Often, we pass under overhanging rocks covered with ferns and orchids, whose large flowers, purple with dark spots, nod downwards. Full of trepidation, we remain silent until the blue sky shines again.

We are now deep inside Waigeu. We cross the small ‘sea’ to Kampong Warmek, where we will stay. Even from a distance, we can see a large gap in the giant jungle on the coast, which we are heading towards. A rickety jetty shows us the way, and now we know: we have arrived. A prau disappears, seemingly shooting into the jungle. From the shore, muffled honking sounds reach our ears, but nothing approaches. With the help of the Administrative assistant, the Malay administrative official whom the Lieutenant Governor of Sorong has kindly provided us with, we climb ashore. A brown-skinned man in a cotton jacket and trousers comes running up, breathless and appropriately dirty, of course, for who could have expected such distinguished visitors—the Kapala Kampong, the village chief. With his hand on the area where his heart should be, his back bent and his knees crooked, he greets us with complete subservience—although inwardly, of course, he wishes us to all the devils. The village lies as if dead: the entire population has fled into the forest! People here seem to have a very guilty conscience! The Kapala leads us into his hut and brings us roughly assembled bamboo chairs; and there we sit, with the utmost dignity, sweating, because there is a terrible, humid heat in this village surrounded by swamp forest.

We now make it clear to Kapala that I ‘only’ want to shoot birds here and need porters for the trek into the mountains. He is visibly relieved and promises everything. A hut is cleared for us. We are given double portions of quinine, as the place is swarming with mosquitoes, and then we get to work. The village is surrounded by secondary forest with a rich bird life. From afar, you can already hear the humming *hum hum hum hum* of the large fruit doves *Ducula pinon*; the *budhu budhu* of the small green *Ptilinopus pectoralis* [= *P. viridis pectoralis*] with its grey head and red throat patch, and the loud chirping of the *Sauromarptis gaudichaud* [= *Dacelo gaudichaud*], the loudest screamer among the kingfishers, his *kirr kirr kirr kek kek kek*. Add to that the trill of the small ochre-brown kingfisher *Syma torotoro*, the mocking call of the black fork-tailed drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus*, parrot calls, and we have the whole jungle concert. *Oriolus szalayi* may join in, and *Philemon novaeguineae* [= *P. buceroides jobiensis*], the large honey eater; the other rarer species are quite silent. Only at dusk does the plaintive call of *Melidora macrorrhina* [= *M. macrorrhina*], the large kingfisher with a hooked upper beak, ring out. Rarely and sporadically, the calls of small birds can be heard. At the edge of the village, the blue-black crow *Corvus coronoides orru* [= *C. orru*] calls out its *ra ra ra ra roaaa*; from the mangrove forest, a

similar but different sound echoes: *ö ö ö ö, ga gock, ga gock*. There is already a second crow, but it is larger; agile, bird of prey-like, it swings through the treetops and lands on the highest peak. I sneak after it through the mangrove forest. With every step, bubbles gurgle from the black mud, small crabs scurry over the roots of the mangroves, the air is foul and humid, but I get my crow: it is *Macrocorax fuscicapillus* [= *Corvus fuscicapillus*] with a dark coffee-brown head, noticeably larger than *Corvus*.

The Malay official from Waigeu, who is based on the north coast, visits us and asks about my wishes. He has brought his shotgun with him, a venerable muzzle-loader with an enormous barrel, made in Germany. The next morning, we set off together into the mountains to hunt for the *burung merah*, *Paradisaea rubra*, the red bird of paradise, endemic to Waigeu. A native who knows a courtship tree leads us. The path first leads through swampy coastal jungle, then into hilly country. Here, for the first time, I hear the mating call of the *Goura cristata*, the great blue crowned pigeon: it is a deep humming sound like *mm mm mm*, also two syllables like *mmpe*. The bird, which is the size of a black grouse, flies off, its wings clapping loudly together, but only on the first few beats, then it continues its flight silently. Green flycatchers, *Microeca papuana* [= *Devioeca papuana*], attract with a soft arpeggio-like *drü drü drü*; a series of soft whistles of equal pitch bubbles out of the undergrowth, and *Monarcha guttula* [= *Symposiarchus guttula*], a flycatcher with the appearance and behaviour of our reed buntings, including their tail twitching, flies in—a harsh screech, characteristic of all *Monarcha*, then the bird notices us and flees back into the darkness of the ground vegetation.

Our guide points to a huge, dry tree: this is where *Paradisaea* is supposed to be courting. From a ravine above, from the treetops, the calls of the females and young bird resound: *ka ka ka ka, ko ko ko, kwao, kwao, kwe, kwe kwe*, it sounds like many voices. Powder, a wad, shot, another wad is laboriously stuffed into the muzzle-loader, the whole thing is tamped down with the ramrod, and we are ready to go. Sure enough, a male is already flying into the courtship tree. It sits high up, hopping and spreading its wings. The bird moves tremulously, now it looks as if it is swaying, then suddenly it hops onto the next branch. The assistant sneaks around the tree, and already a second male is there, but he still does not shoot. The calls of the females and young birds echo from all around. I am now trembling with excitement. I can hardly hold the shotgun. Why isn't the guy shooting yet? Finally, finally, he takes aim—and lowers his gun again, because the birds are hidden by thick branches. The bang of black powder rolls through the forest; my guide has hit his target, and I hold the first *Paradisaea rubra* in my hand, this magnificent creature with a velvety green throat shield, green feather buttons on the front of its head and long decorative feathers like spun red glass.

All the birds have fallen silent. Pangil, pangil, call, call! whispers the assistant to the native. He closes his nose with his fingers, and *nä nä* echoes nasally through the forest, repeatedly, until the chorus of birds of paradise becomes loud again and the second male jumps and dances in the tree. I am far too excited to shoot and must watch again as the official brings it down.

We have yet to find any trace in the plains of the most beautiful bird of paradise, which otherwise only inhabits

the island of Batanta, the small *Schlegelia respublica* [= *Diphylloides respublica*]. The bird with the bare, bright blue crown is called 'Mankombon' by the natives. It lives only in the mountainous interior, and we collect many specimens there, but I have been unable to learn anything about its life. It is always seen, suspicious and very shy, as a black shadow—with a bright yellow collar—darting through the undergrowth and disappearing.

We visit the Lam Lam Mountains in northern Waigeu, go to Kampong Liunssok, located in a vast sago swamp, then to the mountainous Lupin Valley, always on the lookout for the *Aepyodius bruijni* [= *A. bruijnii*], a large bird that no collector has yet found on Waigeu. Only the native hunters of the bird of paradise dealer BRUIJN from Ternate have shot this strange animal and given Waigeu as its location. It is likely that there has been a mix-up regarding the location where it was found, and that the animal's home is somewhere on the Berau Peninsula.

With a haul of around 600 birds, we leave Waigeu after a seven-week stay and return to Manokwari to prepare for our journey to the central mountains of New Guinea.

Departure for the Weyland Mountains

Travelling in New Guinea is a cumbersome and time-consuming affair. Perhaps Kant had formulated his conception of time differently here, attributing to it not only transcendental but also empirical ideality. So, to get from Manokwari to the southern tip of Geelvink Bay, about 250 km, took us over two weeks. First, we are treated once again to the thoroughly enjoyable journey via Numfor and Yapen. From 6 July onwards, we wait patiently in Seroei, the main town on the island of Yapen, to continue our journey. The resident of Amboina was supposed to come and may have wanted to use the government steamer, so the steamer had to be there.

At midnight on 17 June 1931, it finally began. The small coastal steamer with the affectionate name Yvette was packed with people, including a whole collection of young girls from the Waroppe coast, all wearing huge hair ornaments, which constituted the bulk of their clothing, not to mention a few glass beads and the decorative scars on their backs. They had been supposed to dance for the resident, who ultimately did not show up, receiving a very warm ovation, and now, since unmarried young ladies do not yet go out alone there, they were being transported home with their numerous male entourages, who had attached themselves to the back of the steamer with a few praus. It was a lovely jumble; we sat as if in a packed herring barrel, only with different smells. Where my people were, where the luggage was, only Allah knew. In any case, the anchor finally rattled, and we fell asleep reasonably calm, only to wake up quite abruptly.

Little Yvette writhed as if in severe stomach cramps, breakers crashed overhead, bright flashes of lightning were followed by rumbling thunder, accompanied by the occasional screams of fear from the forty Papuan girls. The prau with its men had already been cut loose; heaven knows how they got home! In the end, we had nothing to complain about except the loss of the non-metal part of our tableware.

In the morning, however, the sea was once again infinitely calm, its surface trembling slightly, sunlit and blue. We sailed down the eastern shore of Geelvink Bay and marvelled

at the immense coastal plain stretching endlessly like a green forest sea, until clouds and mist blocked our view. The central mountain range must have been there, and I will always remember how, in the late afternoon, the walls of clouds suddenly parted, the sun flooded through and we saw mountain ranges of gigantic power and imposing dimensions: the snow-capped mountains of New Guinea! Was it seconds, minutes, or was it a mirage? For already the cloud cover had closed in again. But anyone who has seen these mountains once will never forget them; they will be captivated by them. Wainami (Nabire), at the southern tip of Geelvink Bay, is the seat of the Malay administrative officer who had been entrusted with the 'staging' of our train journey. The kampong is a typical coastal Papuan village, carved out of the jungle and towered over by coconut palms. Swallow-tailed kites (*Artamus*) rest on their giant fronds, two or three at a time; here and there, one of the birds swings itself off, glides into the air without flapping its wings and returns to its old place in a gentle arc. *Cinnyris*, the shimmering nectar feeders, buzz tirelessly in the flowering bushes of the natives' gardens; on the giant wall of the jungle in the background, large cockatoos shine like white feathers. Here and there, one glides into the soft twilight green of the forest. Above it all, however, a colony of black starlings (*Aplonis metallica*) make a racket, nesting in a giant tree that stands in the middle of the village. The branches bend under the weight of the pouch nests in the treetops. The kampong consists of palm-leaf-covered huts on stilts, under which pigs, dogs and chickens seek shade. Many of the men can be seen with shaven heads, all of them wearing purchased cotton rags around their hips; none of them carry bows and arrows anymore; the women, however, are 'decently' covered up to their armpits.

And here, where a dull layer of European civilization already covers everything, come three girls, young, swaying as they walk, Polynesian women, without a doubt. Only a dark blue cloth wraps around their hips, tucked in at the back and floating down to the floor like a long train. Red strings of pearls around their slender necks, their long, shiny hair tied up. As I ask them with a smile where they are from and where they are going—they do not understand, but they know what I mean—one of them steps up to me, completely uninhibited, and points to a distant island in the sea. I see her slender bronze arm and feel that Aphrodite, the goddess born of foam, also rose from the waves here.

Meanwhile, my porters' convoy has assembled, brought in from all the accessible villages, about 75 men who speak no fewer than six languages, almost all of them coastal people, skilled sailors. But there is also a group of Tarungares among them, giant figures with the bodies of athletes. They are only coming along because they are forced to and unwillingly. Their tribesmen still live in the hinterland of Geelvink Bay as nomads without permanent homes, true big game hunters of cassowaries and wild boars. The luggage is loaded onto 12 praus, and for two days we travel along the coast with oars and bast sails to the mouth of the Wanggar, the starting point of our trek into the Weyland Mountains. On the way, we see nothing but jungle, jungle on the coast. Once we glide past a Tarungaresen camp. As the praus pass by, everyone flees into the forest, last of all a Papuan woman, a piglet under her arm, a second one and a little dog at her side. The broad laughter of our boatmen accompanies them.

River trip

In Kampong Wanggar, the praus are once again carefully overhauled, the luggage is tied down securely, considerable quantities of coconuts disappear into the deep holds of the vessels, and each porter has taken two weeks' worth of sago with him. Already, the praus are shooting out of a quiet bay into the stream, the first large jungle river in New Guinea that we encounter.

A wide bed, sandbanks in it, on which dead giant trees have washed up, everywhere pairs of black starlings *Aplonis cantoroides* on them, which now have their nests in the hollows. The whole area we are travelling through is covered with forest. Soon it becomes a lighter, lower river forest with casuarinas and acacias, breadfruit trees with large, glossy leaves, isolated clumps of tall reeds, and areas of alang-alang grass; soon dense rainforest approaches the steep bank, and we marvel at the smooth trunks of the giant trees rising, their tops interwoven with lianas, vines, and epiphytes in lush abundance.

At midday, everyone rests on the pebbles of a dry bank in the riverbed, letting the sun shine on their naked brown bodies, dipping dried sago into coconut water and feeling happy. From the forest on the riverbank, the *quao quao* and *quā quā* of the bird of paradise can be heard, and for the first time, the two-syllable *tjui tjuo* call of the bird of paradise *Ptiloris magnifica* [= *P. magnificus*] rings out, to my ears the most beautiful bird song in New Guinea, filling the entire forest with its rich tone. A flock of small grey weaver birds (*Munia castaneothorax* [= *Lonchura castaneothorax*]) sits on the *alang-alang*, the first representatives of the [bird family] Ploceidae that I have seen, for like so many other species, they have not made it to the islands of Geelvink Bay. Wren-like with their tails raised, completely black with white wing mirrors, a pair of *Malurus alboscapulatus* slip through the *alang-alang*, a flight of large starlings, golden yellow and black, falls into the bush forest (*Melanopyrrhus anais* [= *Mino anais*]), and my taxidermists, who consider their day's work with the contemplative prau trip to be finished, look less than pleased when I reach for my shotgun.

Today we reach the mouth of the Djalau River, which flows calmly and deep green into the Wanggar, covered by the crowns of giant trees. Soon tarpaulins and tents are pitched; from the jungle come the sounds of our boatmen's machetes as they gather poles and bushes for their simple shelters. Towards evening, we head back into the jungle. Rain-damp black foliage dampens our steps, twilight reigns and a solemn silence prevails, saplings entwined with tough vines and lianas, snaking upwards, hinder our progress. And here the delicate rattan palm (*Calamus*) climbs and entwines with its beautiful pinnate leaves ending in terrible barbed whips, whose loveless embrace everyone fears.

The stage of absolute speechlessness on such occasions has long since been overcome, as has swearing. But at that moment, one might think of the Bible and the Book of Job, about the righteous man who also had to suffer so much. We struggled on like this for six days. What remains with me is the memory of the heroic deed of a Papuan. Our prau began to spin in a whirlpool and hurtled sideways towards the steep bank with the unwelcome prospect of being smashed to pieces, and above all—the shotguns were in our vehicle! Everyone hung onto the outriggers and tried to brace themselves against the boulders at the bottom

of the river. Then, in dire straits, on the brink of disaster, one man threw himself onto the bank, braced himself with all his might against the speeding prau and absorbed the force of the impact with his own body. Not a word about it, not a movement in his brown face, we continue. We too remain silent. My altimeter reads 200 m. The Wanggar now shoots between dark rock walls from which water trickles, lush ferns and orchids hang down and large white balsam flowers shine. *Monachella mülleriana* [= *M. muelleriana*], the black, white, and brown water flycatcher, sits on the bubbling boulders in the stream. Here, the praus are pushed under quickly constructed roofs. The river journey is over. From afar, the muffled nasal *nā nā* of the large-footed bird *Talegallus fuscirostris* [= *Talegalla fuscirostris*] can be heard. A flock of thrush-like brown birds hops, climbs and flies through the vines of the treetops: *Pomatorhinus isidori* [= *Garritornis isidorei*]. There on the ground, running like a chicken, a large bird disappears into the bushes and twilight, its long tail folded like a roof. It is the beautiful, iridescent ground dove *Otidiphaps nobilis*. A small bird appears, its long tail spread coquettishly, now flying towards a vine, now fluttering along a broken trunk. But it always stays close to the ground: the flycatcher *Rhipidura maculipectus*. It moves low among the huge *Araceae* leaves that cover a trunk up to the treetops; brown, rat-like, it runs across the ground, wanting to cross the trunk that has fallen across a jungle stream. I just manage to shoot it, and my companion brings me a brown marsupial shrew, black and yellow-red with longitudinal stripes on its back (*Phascogale melas* [= *Myoictis melas*]). As early in the morning as the *krükrü* of the colorful pitta (*Pitta mackloti* [= *Erythropitta macklotii*]) sounds from the forest and flocks of parrots screech across the river, life returns to the camp. Tents and tarpaulins are taken down and packed into the boats, and on we go. What remains are porters' huts, pole frames, and a few smouldering fire pits. We have not yet left the plain, but the force of the current is increasing, and it is no longer possible to move forward with oars alone. The praus are pulled through the current by long rattan ropes that the people cut in the jungle yesterday as a precaution. Some of the crew wade in the water, hanging between the outriggers of the prau, pushing, lifting, and shoving. Only the guide stands in the prau and keeps an eye out for whirlpools, blocks, and logs hidden by the water. When the water is deep, everyone climbs into the prau like lightning, and with tremendous effort, they row across. And in doing so, they must manoeuvre from one bank to the other. The people's performance is admirable. Often enough, the crew of a second or even third prau must be called in to help conquer a rapid. There is a huge log lying diagonally across the riverbed. The rushing tide pushes it up and down, and where it ends, there is only a narrow passage to the other bank, through which the dammed water shoots. More rattan ropes are attached to the prau, a few people climb from the bank onto the swaying log and pull from there, others lie down in the rattan ropes from the other bank, and the rest shout enthusiastically and row like mad, so that the outriggers bend and creak. A few more waves crash over the prau, and we were through! The further we go, the more unpleasant it becomes. A prau has crashed into a boulder and developed a crack that needs to be repaired. Every evening, the outriggers are checked and some of them reattached. On the third night, there is suddenly a commotion: *Bandjir, bandjir*, high water! Quickly pull the praus onto the

steep bank! Everyone rushes, pulls, pushes, and clears paths through the bushes on the bank for the praus awkwardly wide outriggers, which bounce and dance in the waves. Shouting, complete darkness. I run around everywhere like a ridiculous, superfluous figure. I can no longer sleep. Again, and again I watch the water rise. If we cannot continue tomorrow morning, everything will lie still, and in the tranquil calm, the porters will consume at least three times more sago than is calculated for the day. And then? Then I will have to break off my march before reaching the mountains! Through numerous such friendly events—and they are as common in New Guinea as showers are here in April—something like a deep Olympic calm gradually descends on my sorely tried mind, and when, for example, in the evening a fellow with infinite caution places the empty petrol container in front of you, in which 10 L of petrol were still gurgling sweetly in the morning, then you just nod your head and say: It's all right, my friend.

March through the low mountain range

For the last time in a while, everyone eats in peace. In large cauldrons, the sago bubbles over huge fires until it boils down to a thick glue. Then everyone squats together in a circle. The tobacco ball moves from the mouth behind the ear, and from their hair, everyone takes out a split wooden arrow with a carved handle, which I had previously thought served as a purely decorative object, 'high in the ideal realm of the useless'. But now, without a thought for the possibilities, they dip it into the cauldron and carefully wrap thick portions of the sticky sago paste around it.

Then it's time to divide up the loads for the walk. Everyone is now remarkably active. The aim is to remember the lightest loads so that you can disappear with them as quickly as possible in the morning. A guy trudges past you, laden with a tin containing cotton wool and other heavy items—all of which are pure extra weight—groaning, and responds to your sympathetic question with nothing more than a nod of his thick Papuan skull. But the next morning, disaster strikes. The porters are already bustling around the luggage, including the brother with the cotton wool tray. He has already had to cut a pole for today! First, you express your regret once again about yesterday's heavy load. He accepts your appreciation with dignity, whereupon you point in a friendly and inviting manner to the heavy tarpaulin, already rolled up and damp from the rain, the sorrowful piece of the entire luggage. Deep consternation now crosses his features. He jumps up and gasps for air, so offended is he, until the diabolical grins of his comrades all around him—even the Papuan greatly appreciates *schadenfreude*—show him that nothing can be salvaged. To reach the Weyland Mountains, we now had to cross several mountain ranges and traverse the Waissai, a tributary of the Wanggar. Then somewhere along the way we would come to the Menoo, a source river of the Wanggar from the Weyland Mountains. Up to that point, the porters were familiar with the land from bird of paradise hunting, and we were able to follow the narrow hunting trails, even though they were almost completely overgrown. On 28 July, we set off with the entire convoy on our march through the jungle, into the low mountain range, which immediately rose steeply to over 1,000 m. After just half an hour, I encountered the people who had been so efficient on the prau trip, resting individually

and in groups, chewing sago leisurely to dry off. I had to persuade them to continue, encountered new groups leaning peacefully on their loads, and so it went on all day. At least we still got far enough, namely to the ridge of the second mountain range. Three months later, I have grown tired of tackling this route, even though my annoying corpulence did not really weigh me down. The bird life here in the low mountain range is extremely poor, the forest is quite light, huge, consisting almost entirely of damar trees (*Agathis*? [= *Agathis labillardierei*]), with sparse undergrowth. All day long, the calls of *Paradisaea* ring out, large-footed chickens call, small flocks of green parrots, *Geoffroyus*, probably *G. simplex*, fly like pigeons through the treetops, the loud flapping of the wings of the large blue crowned pigeons awakens longing thoughts of a full cooking pot—but only forward, forward! Small birds flee from the noise of the passing porter caravan. Every now and then, a *Rhipidura* flits by, its tail fanned coquettishly and its wings hanging down, curious; again and again, I hear the sweet call of my mouse-like, scurrying little brown friend *Crateroscelis murinus* [= *Origma murina*]: *h c h b a*, it whistles softly and melodiously from the tangle of broken trunks, roots and vines on the ground, and sometimes the motif that expresses the name of one of our greatest, sounds modulated and solemn: Bach.

We must call it a day early this afternoon. The sky looks leaden grey through the gaps in the treetops. There is a rumbling in the distance. And as the first heavy drops fall, at least there is a tarpaulin set up to shelter the luggage. My cook WAIKOLE from Ternate—he is supposed to be a hunter and cook—is of course nowhere to be found. Instead of enthusiastically devoting himself to the meritorious task of making coffee, he dignifiedly instructs a few porters on how best to protect his precious camp bed and accessories from the downpour. The fact that some of our belongings are still standing in the rain does not bother him in the slightest. A guy like that has rarely had more than a few copper coins for tobacco in his entire life. But no sooner has he squeezed the first 10 guilders out of someone than he immediately must have a bed frame, a towel, and a pair of cotton trousers, with wide vertical stripes, of course.

The next day, we descended to 400 m and crossed a jungle plateau crisscrossed by countless streams and swampy strips, the system of which will forever remain a mystery to me. The most likely explanation is that it was always the same stream that we waded through an estimated 30 times, from one bank to the other, leaving it once to walk a short distance through the jungle and then returning to it. The forest is filled with thick fog, birdsong rings out from nearby, but you cannot see the animals because everything is ghostly pale. Now it starts to rain, lightly at first, then turning into a downpour; the forest seems to want to dissolve into water and mud. All the leaves flutter in the torrential rain, the whole forest is in a state of trembling excitement, you run, stumble, sink, curse for a while at first, and finally trudge along, a grotesque image of a mule searching for its way in the fog. We then struggled up a 1,400-metre mountain range. In the evening, the blankets were wet, the damp wood would not burn, and we shivered our way into the night, our teeth chattering.

The next morning was cool and clear. There they lay before us, albeit still in the distance, blue chains, promising, exhilarating: our destination, the Weyland Mountains! And I thought I knew how Moses must have felt when he saw the Promised Land. Below us lay a valley through which

the Waissai River flowed. The descent was quick. Menoo could not be far away now. We made our way through the overgrown river forest to the Waissai, which flowed calmly and was soon crossed. Only my protective escort, two Papuan policemen with sabres in wide leather sheaths at their sides, carbines on their backs and gaiters down to their bare feet, had trouble getting through, as no one wanted to help them; and everyone watched with glee as the two heroes poured water out of their carbine barrels. We continued through extensive river forest. Never again have I seen such gigantic jungle trees as there, and we resignedly watched the large hornbills in the treetops, out of reach of our shotguns. Large stretches of alluvial sand crisscrossed the forest floor, traces of violent floods. If the floods from Menoo and Waissai were to pour in here now, it would be impossible to move forward. From then on, there were an extraordinary number of land leeches, which used every crack in our gaiters and even the lace holes in our boots to get to our precious blood. However, one quickly gets used to these tormentors, especially as they are so gentle and painless in their activities.

Several hours passed before we found a crossing over the raging Menoo. The porters did not participate in the search. Apparently, they were not at all happy about us crossing the river. We could understand that, because this was an area they had never been to before. We had been cutting paths all day long. Finally, my brave taxidermist, Darna, found a crossing. Now everything had to be carried across, two or three at a time, with my wife behind, dragged through the current by strong arms.

Stay at Menoo

A wonderful campsite on the other side, high above the floodwaters and close to the jungle. Several meters below us, the Menoo river rushed by. None of the people wanted to help set up camp today; they sat around listlessly and hardly thought about building huts for themselves for the night. Finally, the truth came out: the sago rations had been used up. Some of the people had been starving for two days! That was why they did not want to cross the Menoo! Why bother with all that work when we were going back to the coast tomorrow anyway! At first, I was completely devastated. So close to our goal—the high mountains could hardly be more than three days away—was our expedition going to collapse here? I no longer had the resources for a new venture; all our efforts and struggles had been in vain! I could not deny the difficulty of our situation. What to do with these starving people here in the mountains of New Guinea, where there is no food except for birds and the rare marsupials, where not a single fruit is edible? At noon, I had already seen some porters chewing the woody, bitter seeds of a small palm tree, but I had no idea how bad the situation was. Finally, I told the people that I was prepared to grant their wish and let them return to the coast, which of course made them very happy, because then all the drudgery through the jungle would be over once and for all. Yes, I even suspect that the porters were so careless with their supplies to be able to return home this cheaply. However, I added to my solemn statement that everyone would have to restock their provisions immediately on the coast; I would wait for them at this beautiful place during that time, and then we would continue the march. The two policemen, who also had no food left, were to lead the entire return transport. There was general resentment about my proposal, but since I was

unyielding and also promised them that I would tell the ‘*toean besaar*’ in Manokwari [meaning the ‘big boss’, the assistant resident, the highest official in North New Guinea] about this matter, which would probably result in many soldiers coming, etc., etc., they finally agreed to my proposal, much to my relief. Only the Herculean Tarungares, who had not deemed it necessary to participate in the negotiations, let me know that they had no intention of making the journey twice, that they would stay with me and hunt enough pigs and cassowaries. I saw no way to get rid of these people in a nice way. In any case, the next morning, most of the baggage train set off, accompanied by the two policemen, who were happy to have escaped this eerie situation.

In the afternoon, I saw the Tarungaresen returning to camp in small groups, looking tired; none of them had bagged anything, as is usually the case in such situations. Down at Wanggar a few days earlier, they had shot and eaten several cassowaries without telling me, even though they knew how much I cared about these animals. In the evening, the people squatted and lay under their leaf roofs, some here by the small fire, others there in the dark. The whole situation seemed eerie. I walked through the huts and, to my horror, counted over 30 people. So, around 20 had returned during the day, too lazy to walk to the coast and trusting in my filled rice trays. No one took any notice of me, no one answered, they all sat there brooding, hunger raging in their guts. All it would take was one person to give the signal and we would be lost. It could only be a matter of hours before that happened! My assistants had crawled into their tent—I stood alone facing this hungry horde.

I conferred with my wife for a long time, finally rummaged sorrowfully for my pistol, the only time I did not dislike having it, and summoned the leaders of the people, who trotted bluntly. I explained to them that I would not voluntarily give up a single grain of rice, but if they decided to return to the coast tomorrow morning, I would sacrifice enough of my supplies to feed them on the way. Sensibly (a weight was lifted from my chest!), they accepted my proposal. Everyone immediately received a measure of rice, and soon we were all sitting around the big fire, smoking my tobacco, happy as if nothing had happened at all. My assistants also crawled out of their tent, last of all, the good cook Waikole, but not without first carefully scanning our expressions.

The next day we were ‘finally alone’, and the rest of our stay at Middle Menoo is one of my fondest memories. The river rushed beneath us in wide channels, giant logs washed up and drifted on the stone banks; between the channels, casuarina and alang-alang bushes stretched out. Cool, crystal-clear water bubbled over boulders. There were almost no mosquitoes. How often did I sit on a boulder in the evening, behind us the mountain ranges we had crossed, cloud-covered, fading into twilight. *Harpyopsis* [= *H. novaeguineae*], the giant hawk of New Guinea, flies to its roosting tree in the river forest on the other bank, hornbills fly overhead with a heavy flapping of wings, a nightjar (*Caprimulgus macrurus*) flutters over the alang-alang, and when the last *Trichoglossus* and cockatoo flocks have fallen silent, the large flying foxes arrive with sluggish wings, the polyphonic calls of the tree frogs and the chirping of the cicadas grow louder, fireflies flit rhythmically around individual trees, making them look like large living Christmas trees, and the ever-mysterious New Guinea night envelops everything in starless darkness.

Early in the morning, off on a merry hunt with Teschin and shotgun! My wife stays alone in the camp and works on bellows that could not be finished the day before. The forest lies in twilight, not a bird’s song to be heard, drops fall from the trees, the crowns are shrouded in grey mist, forming a forest above the forest with their epiphytes. Beneath them hang the powerful arches of lianas, and from the ground, young shoots strive upwards towards the light, entwined by vines. Sometimes the tangled undergrowth is almost impenetrable, and whatever flits by there with a flutter of wings flees in haste. Rarely does the eye see a flower on a bush or trunk; only the dusky green of the leaves, in which light reflections play here and there, fills the forest. Only what has fought its way to the light high up in the crowns is allowed to blossom and bear fruit, and then fallen petals cover the ground, large and rich in colour. Here, too, the loud call of *Ptiloris magnifica* [= *P. magnificus*]; *Cicinnurus regius*, the little king bird of paradise with its glass-red plumage, shoots through the treetops, and close to the ground, where the vegetation is sparse, it calls out with a bell-like melody, *ting ting ting*, and responds with a deeper *tōng tōng tōng*. Sometimes the whole forest resounds with these little bells, and yet it takes a long time before I know who is calling. Close to me on the ground, it flutters along, the size of a robin with a bright yellow underside and green back, flying here to a trunk, there to a sapling, disappearing again, and again: *Poecilodryas placens* [= *Gennaedryas placens*]. In the treetops, a rapid *zit zit zit*: already they are chirping away, the tiny parakeets, only the size of a siskin, *Micropsitta pusio*. With *à c f*, easy to whistle, brown and curious, it flies in, *Pinarolestes megarhynchus* [= *Colluricincla megarhycha*], thrush-sized, always morose because it appears daily in the harvest.

Otherwise, most birds in the jungle are extremely shy. No matter how many calls you hear from afar, when you sneak up on them, everything seems dead and deserted. It is as if everything retreats before the hunter’s footsteps and a yawning emptiness gape where he stands. Due to the unfavourable lighting conditions and the dense vegetation of the jungle, the bird has very poor visibility, never feels safe and flees at every sound. Tree snakes, probably the main enemies of birds in New Guinea, jungle sparrow-hawks and hawks (*Accipiter papuanus* [= *Tachyspiza cirrocephalla papuana*], *Astur melanochlamys* [= *Tachyspiza melanochlamys*]), certainly also arrive silently and in a flash; as a bird, you have to be constantly on your guard. Probably the shyest are the old male birds of paradise in their magnificent plumage. With them, one really cannot help feeling that the animals know how exposed they are in their splendour. The obvious hindrance to their flying ability caused by the arrangement and extent of their decorative feathers must also increase their insecurity. It is good for the hunter to crouch patiently in the dark behind a broken tree trunk, shotgun ready to fire. Soon the dead forest comes to life. *Eutrygon terrestris* [= *Trugon terrestris*], the yellow-brown ground dove, scurries along, its plumage ruffled, unaware. A pair of beautiful red parrots, *Alisterus dorsalis* [= *A. amboinensis dorsalis*], glide along, their flight gentle, their tails long. Attentively, they fly towards the trunks, checking the hollows inside for their suitability as nesting sites, peering down from the swaying arch of a liana, gliding on. Noise and screeching from afar: a flock of brown *Pitohuis*, *Paradisaea*, with young birds still without

decorative plumage, shooting down into the undergrowth, hopping in the treetops, climbing—passing by. And there on the ground, with a long supporting tail, a larger mammal hops like a hare in slow jumps. It is about to disappear into the darkness of the ground vegetation: *Dorcopsis* [= sp. cf. *D. muelleri*], the forest kangaroo! There it lies, already shot, and for a while everything around it is once again dead and extinct. In the afternoon, we go down to the riverbed. This is where *Pachycephala aurea*, the golden-winged whistling bird, lives, with its dactylic metallic call like *hüit zick zick* [Stein evidently misidentified this species, from the description of the bird and its call it was *Carterornis chrysomela*]. Green honeyeaters slip into the bushes, *Meliphaga notata* [= *M. analoga*] with yellow ear tufts, and not infrequently the low mountain species *M. montana* with white ear coverts. Bee-eaters sit in small groups on the casuarina bushes, smoke-black swiftlets [= *Aerodramus*] dart back and forth like swallows, and now and then a brown cinnamon pigeon with a long tail (*Macropygia*) flies up from the ground, disturbed in its search for food and disappearing into the dense jungle.

Every day brings heavy rain; you can hear it pattering in the jungle from afar, and it is most beautiful when it falls on the tarpaulin at night, under which you lie in your warm tent. The climate here is like our mild summer days, albeit much more humid. The unpleasant ‘hot and humid greenhouse air’ mentioned in so many writings is something we only know from the coast, and only where sago swamps and mangrove forests predominate. The tropical rainforest of the plains is also a pleasant place to stay, as the dense canopy of leaves shields you from the scorching sun. Absolute calm is another characteristic of the jungle of New Guinea. Here at Menoo, we experience a strong gust of wind. There is a crash throughout the forest; large, rotten knots covered with plant cushions fall—a heavy rumbling: a dead giant tree collapses, and I rush to find a place where I can see the light of the sky above me.

Visit to the primeval forest

One morning, just after returning from a hunt, I hear shouts coming from the riverbed. Far away, four men are standing there with bows and arrows, waving. I hear shouts coming from the forest too. They are highland Papuans, Jabis, inhabitants of the Weyland Mountains. They must have heard the crack of our shotguns during a hunting expedition and have come closer out of curiosity. Full of joy, I go down to them, because I will need these people. They put down their bows and arrows when I wave to them. We greet each other. Everything is a little strange: one of them raises his hand, threatening me with his index finger, so to speak. I do the same, of course, but also raise my other arm, whereupon he conscientiously raises both hands. However, we quickly tire of this. He taps my arm with his finger, but no matter how I try to do the same, he deliberately dodges me. Aha, he’s not good at this! Now he launches into a lengthy speech in which the word ‘marabo’ appears several times. I repeat it after him; after all, it cannot hurt. He is obviously very pleased with my performance. The strange thing is that these primitive people do not realize at all and do not even gradually understand that we do not understand their language. They talk incessantly and are not deterred by our silence or negative gestures. This remained the case during our long stay with these people.

Any request is always presented with increasing urgency; when it comes to business, they assume that we do not want to discuss these matters; at best, they might think—if they think about it at all, which is highly doubtful—that the white man is a little ‘slow on the uptake’. Perhaps, in the great excitement that they regularly get into, they repeatedly forget that they are not being understood. But they are just as unaware that we are gradually speaking their language with them.

Finally, I politely invite the small group to come closer, pointing to our camp. Another long conversation, completely incomprehensible to me; three come with me, the fourth waits, then goes to the steep bank, swings himself up, and is gone. Funny little people, tripping along beside me, bows and arrows over their shoulders. They look almost black, sooty, which they are, since they prefer to lie by the fire and probably never wash. A string around their hips, holding a small bast-woven pouch, is their only clothing. They wear shells around their necks; one, who has an incredibly skinny mutt under his arm, has a ring of human hair around his forehead. I wonder if it is his own hair? They all have short, tightly curled hair and thick, full beards; they are also much smaller than me: real little men from the forest. Each of them has a small raffia bag hanging from their back. I am secretly amused by these funny little men and proud to be bringing the first savages ‘home’. Our cook WAIKOLE, however, looks at them with considerable concern; the good man has never felt quite at ease in the interior of New Guinea: he was in constant fear that, because of his well-fed appearance, he would be the first to be roasted when the time came.

At first, the three Jabis sat quietly by the fire, but they soon seemed convinced that we were extremely peaceful people. Only an outsider could describe the grimaces we all made to communicate and convince each other of our good intentions. Finally, I began to experiment a little. A mirror was presented: what a sensation! Tears ran down our cheeks. So that’s what we look like! Our own tongues and teeth, teeth, teeth—everything was visible! Lost in their newfound discovery, the three of them fiddled with this incredible thing, each wanting to hold it up to their own face. They reached behind it, stuck their fingers in their mouths, pulled the most ridiculous faces, turned the mirror around and were even more amazed when they could not see anything at all. This seemed to be something extremely valuable! One of them was already busy with a hatchet, enthusiastic, completely absorbed, until he finally put it in his bast bag. I took it out, he calmly put it back in, until I gave him a slap on the paw, whereupon he looked at me very offended. The second one was just about to disappear into our tent, while the third was having a great conversation with the cooking pot. With combined efforts, we got the little people back together; they were very excited, their eyes darting around the whole camp. But now it was time to move on to more important things: a stuffed shrew [= *Myoictis melas*] was presented to them, which they immediately examined with interest and objectivity. They determined that it was stuffed and filled with an unknown white substance, whereupon they immediately demonstrated to me how it ran. They called it by an incomprehensible name, and one of them caressed its belly affectionately. Aha, you eat these cute animals? Now I was suddenly very satisfied. Bird skins and kangaroo skins were brought, my people joined in the pantomime,

and despite the truly Babylonian confusion of tongues, all points were clarified: we wanted to go to the mountains, collect rats and birds there and exchange them for knives that my porters would bring. I wisely kept quiet about the fact that we had enough here. They wanted to pick us up and show us the way. They were given a string with 14 knots, which they themselves had requested, and the gesture for sleeping was made, which they also mimicked themselves, pointing to our camp: so, we had to wait here for another 14 days, and soon they wanted to bring us fruit, which we were completely lacking. And then they were gone, disappearing into the forest. My wife did not sleep that night, as has already been mentioned. I saw her peeking through the cracks in the tent until I fell peacefully asleep.

A few days later, our friends returned, this time four men and a little boy; they brought sweet potatoes, yams and wild sugar cane. One of them knelt before my wife, who was embarrassed enough, as if he wanted to propose to her. But the lad only intended to negotiate a small bag of sweet potatoes with my wife and, incidentally, did not even know that he was dealing with a female being. As soon as he saw a thick bundle of small chalk-white glass beads—a fortune, as I soon learned!—he had already grabbed it and refused to give it back. Instead, he flew into a rage, grabbed his bow and arrows and made a move to run into the forest, which I had to prevent at all costs, as I wanted to be on good terms with the locals. Appeasement—but the beads were gone.

The Jabis had only arrived late in the afternoon; now they calmly declared that they wanted to spend the night in our porters' leaf huts, which none of us liked at all. We could not get rid of them amicably; instead, they turned a deaf ear and asked for the leftovers from our spicy dinner, which we gladly gave them, but they did not get any, as we soon heard. And now they sat suspiciously in the dark with stomach aches and dark thoughts. They did not dare to leave either, as it was completely dark, and just stared at us angrily. My wife sat by the tent flap again all night, my people did not sleep either, the Jabis were also terribly afraid, there was an atmosphere of the blackest mistrust, but I slept very well with a clear conscience and as the only reasonable person. The next morning, with the first rays of sunshine, everything was cheerful again, but we always remained people from whom the Jabis would not take a piece of bread. A warm farewell; the string from which the necessary knots, signifying the days that had already passed, have been removed, is shown once more, and we are alone again.

March into the high mountains

Soon the porters and police arrived, cheerful as if nothing had happened. One of the policemen had been replaced because he was showing signs of an unpleasant illness. The journey was to continue the next day. In the evening, the first cases of groin gland inflammation and foot wounds were reported. They were to remain in the Menoo camp and wait for the porters to return. One had even impaled himself on a thorn when he sat down, a highly remarkable injury for a Papuan who is constantly squatting! The next morning, there are even more sick people in front of the tent with completely uncontrollable ailments: head, stomach, knee and who knows what else, but all of them are truly suffering. Now two of them drag a strong lad along, a third

pushes him from behind with a merciful, gentle face. The sufferer collapses in front of me, and all those standing around look as if they have seen a ghost; there is a solemn, serious atmosphere, as if at the funeral of a prince. I also feel somehow when I look at the scoundrels in turn. The cook looks at WAIKOLE, looks at me, grins, becomes serious again, hurries to roll a cigarette, as if he wanted to increase the pleasure he was about to enjoy. Mild as a candidate for the parish priesthood, I ask the sick man about his ailment. The poor man has something everywhere! Unfortunately, I do not have any castor oil, which would also cause unwanted disturbances later during the march. 'I'll give you a good *obat* [remedy],' I promise soothingly and comfortingly, taking the large tin spoon heaped with Karlovy Vary salt. The poor man laboriously opens his mouth, and his head must be supported. I pour in the whole load and command in a thunderous voice: *Makan sarnaskali!* [Eat everything]. The effect is magnificent. In a flash, he is up, gagging, spitting, leaning forward. When I ask: *Ada lagi orang sakit?* [Are there any more sick people?], no one responds. Soon after, it is time to leave. The seriously ill man carries the famous tarpaulin.

Cries echo from the forest: my Jabis are coming, right on time, as promised. They help carry the load and take the lead through the unfamiliar terrain. New mountain ranges, camp by the stream. The next morning it rains. Nevertheless, we set off; we must continue. The first tree ferns; you can hardly see them because it's pouring with rain and you're dirty, wet and exhausted. At midday, we come across some dilapidated Jabi hunting huts with smoke rising from the fires inside. Some of the people have already huddled together there, while the others stand outside, shivering. They have thrown down their loads and stare blankly into the wilderness. But we must keep going, so I fetch the people from the huts one by one. We also make it to the foot of the first major range of the Weyland Mountains, the Kunupi. This night also passes.

The next morning, sunshine, our clothes are drying despite the coolness on our bodies, we are climbing, always climbing, now along the ridge of the elongated Kunupi. Over there, the next range of mountains is even higher, running parallel to the Kunupi. The scenery becomes magnificent. Our feet tread on elastic moss beds, the trees are covered with moss, they are sparser and lower, with nest ferns and orchids growing on them. Bizarre pandanus trees on stilt roots, with strap-like hanging leaf crowns, rattan, and bamboo form a dense tangle. My wife and I do not say a word. We look at each other and point to the wonder forest. Bird calls, strangely shrill, never heard before, strike our ears. The Jabis notice our excitement, smile, say something. I feel drunk! I've never seen anything like this before. All fatigue is gone, all heaviness forgotten—here is the forest of the great Pan!

We are lying on the slope of Kunupi, which we have left behind us at 2,100 meters, in the middle of the Weyland Mountains. 500 m below us, the Menoo River thunders, having carved its way deep into the mountains. In front of us rise further mountain ranges, massifs. There is the Epo, a huge block to our left, and directly opposite the Sumuri, a long ridge with steep slopes, also completely covered in jungle. Behind it, chains and chains. In the distance, a peak can be seen above it, which is probably over 3,000 m high. Clouds and wisps of rain above everything; down in the Menoo Valley, the fog is steaming. The porters stand

silently beside me, staring like me at the wild landscape. More Jabis arrive. Their huts lie scattered around us and below us. The people stay until nightfall. One of them starts a song, the others join in, and their sonorous, deep voices fill the darkness; the last note lingers, drawn out and fading away. We fall asleep happily. Tomorrow we are to descend into the Menoo Valley, towards that distant peak. When we wake up, it is pouring with rain. All the mountain ranges have disappeared in the mist. We cannot continue today, we are tired enough, and so it is decided to wait here for the rain to stop. And it rains for 60 hours! We have never experienced such persistent rain as here. The porters are no longer fetching wood, which is also wet and green and will not burn. The mood is gloomy everywhere. Water drips through the flimsy huts, which are covered only with fern leaves because there are no suitable leaves of sufficient size up here. The people also lack the necessary blankets. I sit under the tarpaulin and stare out. It looks as if the birds are fleeing to the valleys in this downpour: everything is moving downhill. For the first time, I see the bird of paradise *Astrapia splendissima*, not yet in its decorative plumage; its long light brown tail flutters as it moves downhill. Long-tailed flycatchers, black males and brown females (*Rhipidura atra*), flutter in the bushes. Small groups of green weaver birds with red tails (*Erythrura*) appear. Even in the pouring rain, *Peltops montanus* with black, white, and red plumage sit calmly on dry branches. White-eyes (*Zosterops fuscicapillus* [= *Z. fuscicapilla*]), green with blackish cap and white eye rings, flutter and buzz in the trees; small honey eaters, which I do not yet know, fly through—a rich bird life despite the flood of water. But I want to go higher, to where the rarest high-mountain dwellers of New Guinea live. I shoot a few birds, which my wife skins alone. The taxidermists sit gloomily in the tent, probably thinking of their beloved Buiten-zorg with its warmth and streets full of colourful life. Silently, WAIKOLE places rice and coffee in front of us and trots off to the taxidermists' tent.

During the Flood, it is said to have rained for much longer, forty days and nights, and besides, we are too high up for the water to rise so quickly here—so we console ourselves with cheap gallows humour, but it is high time things improved! On the second day, around 25 of the porters are still strong enough to want to continue, on the third day only 10: the leaders of the individual groups, who do not want to abandon me. We also take on a few Jabis as porters and guides. They offer to take us to their friends on the Sumuri. I must give up on reaching the distant heights we have seen. The Jabis point to the arrow scars on their bodies and refuse to take us there. It would be futile anyway to attempt it with so few people, who are also weakened and worn out. Most of my team is allowed to leave for the coast immediately. They disappear quickly!

My wife must stay in Kunupilager with most of the luggage, a policeman, a younger taxidermist, and the cook. The Jabis themselves have made this a condition. All the items for exchange must also remain here. They fear, and rightly so, that I might otherwise attempt to venture further into the mountains to meet people with whom they are at enmity, and then they would lose all the precious things we have brought for them. Ultimately, we have no choice. The thought of any danger to my wife does not even cross our minds.

On the Sumuri

Finally, we can set off: the small remaining group of porters, the Jabis, all heavily laden, the village chief of Wanggar, DARNA the taxidermist, a policeman—and me bringing up the rear. My wife waves us off, and we descend the slope of Kunupi. The forest has been cut down here, the trunks left lying on the ground, weeds growing over them, and there is no end to the stumbling and falling. Bushes, tall clumps of sugar cane, and everywhere the impeccably clean yam and sweet potato plantations of the natives. In the undergrowth, spectacled birds whisper again, green leaf warblers with light longitudinal stripes on their heads (*Phylloscopus giulianettii* [= *P. poliocephalus giulianettii*]) call softly and familiarly, just like in Germany. A dainty chocolate-black cone-billed bird (*Munia tristissima* [= *Mayrimunia tristissima*]) flies to its nest, behind it fluttering a long yellow bast thread like a grotesquely elongated tail. A small flock of green parrots (*Neopsittacus pullicauda*) whizzes past us down into the valley, and high above us we see the flight pattern of the beautiful long-tailed wasp hawk *Henicopernis longicauda*.

We now continue through dense jungle. The Menoo thunders loudly as it foams between the rocks here. After the heavy downpours of the last few days, it is carrying a particularly large amount of water, and we stare hopelessly at the bubbling and swirling. The Jabis now lead us upstream along the Menoo, a gruelling stretch of the journey, until a rock gate opens through which the stream rushes. Here, a tree trunk lies above the floodwaters, crooked, rammed into crevices on both banks, splashed with foam. Over there, a strange Jabi is crouching, covered in soot, with a curly beard—a real forest gnome. He laughs and waves: it is a Sumurimann who has come to greet us. He wears a wonderful large necklace made entirely of animal teeth around his neck, which he has surely put on in our honour. He prances along the first part of the slippery trunk, then settles down, crawls cautiously further, and is with us. He laughs good-naturedly at me. As I am about to step onto the bridge, he holds me back anxiously, speaks excitedly, makes gestures, tells me to wait. Funnily enough, I am reminded of the fairy tale about the bridge of lies, from which anyone who has told a lie that day will fall. I have a clear conscience in this regard, but that is too little consolation for me, so I decide to take the obstacle in a riding position and, if necessary, lovingly embrace the trunk. But already the Jabis are dragging young trunks over, equipped with rattan slings on both sides. These are tied to the side of the tree trunk so that the foot has more grip and cannot slip off so easily. Sand, brought from somewhere, is scattered, although it is quickly washed away again. Another excited conversation among the natives—my new friend takes me by the hand, a second Jabi takes the other—and slowly I am led first, always stepping sideways, across the raging whirlpool. The Jabis themselves must also carry all the loads and the porters. I am terrified for my shotguns. Only Bazi, the Tarungaresen chief, comes to the end upright, almost contemptuous, alone.

It is time to set up camp for the night. I stand aside and ponder how these poorest savages, who have nothing of their own, know nothing of the moral law within us that we 'good Europeans' have recorded in thousands of writings, from the Bible to all philosophical works, have helped me so fraternally, so genuinely humanely.

The Jabi, who brought me across the river with such concern, just like a father, comes up to me. He takes a freshly caught, beautiful pouched shrew [= member of the family *Dasyuridae*] out of his bag, laughs happily and asks me for a knife. I silently hand him a few miserable glass beads, he asks again, then takes them. Perhaps I will be criticized for this behaviour, but I had to economize with my treasures for the sake of the idea for which I am here, as bitter as it has become for me here.

The next day, we climb steep slopes up to Sumuri. The coastal people, panting under their heavy loads, throw themselves down at every rest stop. Only one thing keeps them going here: the fear of being left alone in this strange landscape, among these unknown people. During a rest stop, new natives rush in from all sides—the Sumuri people! They stare at us excitedly. I sit on my tropical suitcase and smoke. I am surprised at how calm I am. After all, there is nothing I can do to change the situation, and everything will be fine. By evening, we have reached an altitude of 1,800 meters. The Jabis do not want to go any further; they sit around, freezing. They are given a few strips of red cotton cloth—and they are satisfied. The next day, our camp is finally set up on the Sumuri at an altitude of 2,300 meters, with the summit still about 300 meters above us. All the porters go back; two Jabis from Kunupi, whom we persuade to stay, have already disappeared the next morning, taking the blankets we gave them with them. Over there lies Kunupi, and on its slope, far below us, I can see a bright spot in the green of the forest when the weather is clear: my wife's camp.

The gorges of Sumuri are filled with gloomy moss forests, all trunks and branches covered with thick layers of damp green moss. There is almost no undergrowth around our camp, and the trunks stand black in the twilight. The whole forest is filled with a solemn, solemn silence, rarely interrupted by a bird call. Then the soft call of the beautiful light green parrot *Psittacella brehmi* [= *P. brehmii*] with dark cross-banding sounds; a slate-blue *Poecilodryas* [an Australasian robin] flits through with a soft chirp; appearing on roots, then disappearing again into moss caves, just like our wren: *Crateroscelis robusta* [= *Origma robusta*]. High up in the foliage sits a black bird the size of a magpie with a slender beak; now it turns, and a white tail root glows. It hops further along the mossy branches, now swoops down into a black ravine, and in amazement I pick up the first magnificent *Astrapia splendidissima* in its brilliant splendour. Wings rustle above me: two black birds with chicken-like short wings flit through the treetops. A soft whistle, one disappears, the other is gone: *Paradigalla curunculata* [probably = *P. brevicauda* at this locality rather than *P. carunculata*], the bird of paradise with black velvet plumage and light green and blue skin flaps on the front of its head. Yesterday, a thick green bird the size of a blackbird hopped along the branches on long legs, the female of the bird of paradise *Loria loriae* [= *Cnemophilus loriae*, now in the family *Cnemophilidae*]; I also saw the male darting through the treetops as a black shadow. Only when you hold it in your hand do you see how the whole bird shines in soft blue-black iridescent velvet.

Time and again, it is hard to comprehend how the most magnificent birds of paradise live here in this wilderness, where the sun does not shine for days on end, where moss and leaves are dripping with moisture and masses of fog envelop the mountain. Even when your clothes are wet and

cold and clinging to your body, you cannot help feeling that no effort was too great, that it is nothing compared to the elation of seeing with your own eyes the pulsating life of creatures that are otherwise preserved only as dead specimens in museum cabinets.

Early afternoon, grey twilight everywhere. The tree trunks appear shadowy. Back home in Germany, all the birds were already asleep, but here there is still whispering everywhere. Close in front of you, red and black plumage flutters in the grey bush: *Myzomela rosenbergi* [= *M. rosenbergii*], it pays no attention to you. Like leaf warblers, the little brown *Sericornis* [scrubwrens] slip by, all still busily searching for food. On the ground, scurrying like a mouse, is a small brown-black marsupial shrew [= from the family *Dasyuridae*]. It quickly disappears again. But I have already learned something, and so I hiss through my teeth: *ss, ss, ss*. Then it reappears, because it is looking for the insect whose buzzing wings it thought it heard in the hissing sounds.

Higher up towards the summit, it becomes brighter and lighter. The trees, weathered and bizarre, stand scattered. Some have died, and then bare, beard lichen-covered spikes protrude, on which *Artamus maximus*, the high mountain swallow thrush, sometimes sits. Many bushes are in bloom here, with small bells tinged with pink, probably a blueberry plant. Trees are also adorned with flowers, dotted with bells. Inside, the army of parrots is making a racket. The rare little *Oreopsittacus arfaki*, with their red foreheads and blue cheeks streaked with white, gather here in flocks; among them the long-tailed, beautiful green and red *Charmosyna josephinae* [= *C. josefinae*], climbing with claws and beaks. Now everything flies up in alarm, screeching, chirping, plunging down into the valley and then returning, again. But the strangest bird is *Paramythia montium* [= *P. olivacea* at this locality], found at altitudes above 2,000 meters. It does not seem to belong to the starlings, near which it has been placed. With loose blue plumage, a yellow belly, and a blue-white cap, it sits there, its posture and behaviour very much like a waxwing, also a berry eater like the waxwing, not shy, always alone. Several species of honey eaters live here: in the crowns of the thrush-sized *Melidectes belfordi* with long beaks and brush-like tongues, in berry-bearing bushes the similarly sized but plumper, dark-coloured *Melipotes fumigatus*, fluttering and feeding. With golden ear tufts and a lively finch-like flutter, a smaller Meliphagidae (*Xanthotis subfrenata* [= *Caligavis subfrenata*]), probably the only bird here with a melodious song. Hunting here is difficult enough given the steepness of the terrain, and finding the shot bird is even more difficult.

A couple of times, Jabis come up. They bring possums, rats and sugar cane to trade, a business that is conducted with vigor, seriousness and a great deal of time wasted. One of their skinny mutts secretly stays here overnight and takes the opportunity to eat at least 30 finished bird and mammal skins. One Jabi loses his composure at the sight of blue glass beads. He jumps at me, waving his arms around, and I have trouble calming him down. As I see afterwards, he has knocked over a bottle of machine oil that we use to clean the rifles. However, it is not until midday that the full extent of the disaster becomes apparent. My taxidermist cheerfully reaches into the rice container to take out the necessary portion for the meal, but withdraws his hand in shock, it is covered in oil and rice in a lovely mixture. We all stand around mourning the good rice and imagine how the soup

will taste now. One filled tray has already fallen into the abyss during the ascent, so we must be very economical. Every morning, the village chief of Wanggar climbs stark naked (he would only unnecessarily soak his precious blanket) into a gorge to fetch the necessary water, which collects there in a hole he has dug. He reappears completely wet, with drops trickling from his shiny brown body. Nevertheless, he laughs every time, which is saying something at a temperature of 7–10°C.

Jabis from Kunupi bring a note from my wife, who writes that she is not feeling well and has a fever. However, as the message does not sound serious, I decide to stay, especially as I have spotted several species of bird that I am keen to shoot: the giant kingfisher *Clytoceyx rex* [= *Decelo rex*] and the small brown *Ifrita* with a blue crest on its head [= *I. kowaldi*]. Once again, Jabis come from across the river, sent by the cook. It is evening when I receive this message, and we cannot set off in complete darkness. So, I have the bellows we have finished packed up, because I want to take them back to Kunupi myself. I decide that the rest of my people must wait here until I can send Jabis up to carry the luggage. After a bleak night, I set off with my guides in the dark to march back to Kunupi. Shaken by the uncertainty of my wife's fate, I hurry inexorably along in the darkness. Slowly it gets lighter, the strap-like leaves of the pandanus trees flutter in the morning wind, water drips from branches and leaves, wisps of mist fly through the forest, we rush on.

We rest for a moment at the huts of the Sumuri people. The men stand around me in silence, and I just keep calculating how long it will take to reach my wife's camp. As we set off, a little boy pushes his way through the crowd. Without me saying a word, he grabs my heavy rucksack and hoists it onto his small, brown back. '*Ubi, ubi!*' (let's go, let's go), he says, smiling at me and coming along [*Ubi* is Bahasa for sweet potato. Perhaps the boy was indicating that he had food in the backpack]. Is he thinking about the knife I will give him later in return? I do not know. We have not agreed on anything, as is always customary when dealing with Papuans.

Now we are already above the roaring Menoo, and the ascent through secondary forest and native plantations begins. The sun is shining brightly today, and I am struggling to move forward. Where a fallen tree provides shade, I throw myself down. I do not remember how I managed the last 500 meters to the camp. The tarpaulin is already shining through the trees. I call out, but get no answer. The campsite lies there as if dead! Finally, the cook stands in front of me, looking at me in disbelief. I manage to choke out a question about my wife, but get no answer. I rush to the tent, tear it open, and there lies my wife on the floor. She cannot lift her head, but she smiles at me. Now the tension eases, I stagger back, it's as if the earth is spinning around me. We cannot say what was wrong with my wife, probably a mild case of typhoid fever because of the protective vaccination. SAAN, the taxidermist, has also been ill. It was high time I came. The Jabis fetch the luggage from the Sumuri, some of it remains there because it cannot be handled. Gradually, my wife is getting better. I attribute this to the incredible soups I composed with great dedication and few ingredients over a smouldering green wood fire, the smoke bringing tears to my eyes.

Camp on Kunupi

Soon, the joy of work returns. First, I devoted myself to the jabis. I had already discovered their excellent hunting qualities on the Sumuri. One of them climbed almost upright, effortlessly, up a barely sloping trunk, at the top of which a flock of parrots was squawking. He stood there freely, waiting until the frightened birds returned to the vicinity, placed the long red arrow on his bow, shot it, and the arrow disappeared somewhere in the foliage. The man calmly climbed down to climb another tree. I really could not say why he chose that tree. At the top, he shook the branches for a while: the arrow fell to the ground, and the bird was brought to me, not shot through, only stuck, and therefore unharmed. There were special arrows for each type of game, and only one or two of each type were available. The bird arrows, about 1.5 meters long, had many hardwood tips at the top, which were tied together at one end and sunk relatively loosely into the hollow of the tube, while the free tips gaped apart. The rat and marsupial arrows had three strong barbed points, and the wild boar arrows had a broad bamboo blade. They also had another type of arrow, carefully crafted with a long, polished, brown hardwood tip. When I asked about their use, they calmly pointed to the heavy scars that each of the people bore on their bodies, as if it were the most commonplace and self-evident thing in the world. Certainly, the people lead a turbulent life. If members of an enemy tribe are encountered in the shared hunting grounds, they fight each other to the death. In a short time, European influences of some kinds were able to bring about peace here. But what did they bring with them? Only unspeakable misery with diseases and vices that are still unknown. The people live happier lives this way, for we never saw even the slightest quarrel among the men within the tribal community.

Obedience without coercion is a matter of course for the younger ones; they helped each other acquire hatchets by hunting together for the mammals I coveted. I sincerely and wholeheartedly wish that anyone who approaches these people without pure motives will break their neck on the coast.

I would have liked to have had some of the Jabis as hunters. There was great excitement when I appeared with my shotgun. So that's the thing that goes 'puh puh'! On the first day of hunting, I had about 20 men following me. They pointed out every bird somewhere in the transparent green of the treetops with outstretched arms and excited gestures. Finally, I saw it too, and when I took aim, everyone respectfully stepped back, but watched the hopping bird with glee, and then it was time to shoot! It had to be made clear to the people that the shotgun was lethal. In and of itself, it does not take any special skill to shoot down the first unsuspecting bird in the jungle, but my excited entourage made the work a little more difficult today. At least the people got their money's worth, and there was great joy when the bird I hit came crashing down. All 18 birds I had hit were brought back; they also searched very carefully for the two that were missing, which of course amused me greatly. Back at camp, I immediately tried to teach the few who had the courage to do so how to shoot with the Teschin. A hopeless and not entirely safe undertaking! But one of them finally got the hang of it, received five cartridges and soon returned with a valuable bird. The next day, he asked for as many cartridges as he had fingers, but only brought

back two, albeit very good birds. On the third day, one of the policemen caught him roasting the birds he had shot! So that's no good, we'll have to do this work ourselves. The huts of our Kunupile people stood scattered on the mountainside between the plantations, solid log cabins made of tree trunks. I never managed to gain access to them—there were always a few men standing in the dark doorway, whose disapproving expressions left me in no doubt that my presence was not welcome. I estimated the entire population of the mountain to be 200, just as many may have lived on Sumuri. On the few clear nights we had up there, we also saw other little lights glowing in the Menoo valley, far away in the interior of the mountains.

Even though we were up here for over three months, I know little, nothing, about the lives of these people. They were completely free in their dealings with me, showing none of the shameful subservience that Europeans know the natives display towards them. It was a great offence to step over bows and arrows. Every time this happened to me, they paused, but immediately realized that it was an oversight on the part of this strange white man and kindly asked me to retrace my steps, once again stepping over the bows and arrows. When sitting with them, it was considered highly inappropriate to pass an object in front of your neighbour. This had to be done from behind, just like we do. We never saw any ritualistic acts or objects that would suggest such practices.

Our little tent camp lost none of its appeal to people during our entire stay. The first visitors arrived at dawn, always armed with bows and arrows, which the Jabi always carry with them. When it rained, everyone wore a giant bag woven from leaves on their heads, with one side extended to cover their entire backs. In addition, everyone had a raffia bag with what appeared to be the same contents: the lower jaws of giant rats (*Mallomys*, *Hyomys*), whose sharp incisors served as knives, a piece of string, a 'lighter', small change, namely a few white shells and a packet of homemade tobacco. The giant penis gourds made from bottle gourds, often in strangely twisted shapes, which people sometimes wore, seemed highly disconcerting.

People immediately sat down by our fire and held their heads over the acrid smoke. It always amazed me how people could stand the sharp smoke from the green wood; there is no dry wood in these rain-soaked heights of New Guinea. They sat there quietly, warming themselves and doing nothing, which caused the greatest bitterness in WAIKOLE, the cook (who, of course, only worked when we saw him). And then the poor people had to make themselves useful. Chop kindling! he mimed to them with a swinging axe, appropriate movements and a reference to the logs lying around. When, instead of reaching for the axe, they worked on the wood with their white teeth and bit it into beautiful splinters until the necessary pile lay there to make coffee for the toean, he kept saying in disbelief: *Ini orang samaskali bodok!* These people are all crazy!

With the wood chopped up, everyone now had a certain right to the embers, so everyone quickly pushed their sweet potatoes into the fire and had breakfast. They had their own tobacco, even though they were careful to try to get some from me first. They poured their rather crumbly tobacco onto the dry, lanceolate leaf of a pandanus, pinched it lengthwise, and a cigarette about a quarter of a meter long was ready. They now took it between their lips, crosswise of course,

so that the ends stuck out far on both sides, which looked incredibly funny. One end was lit with a glowing splinter, and they puffed away merrily. The neighbour took the opportunity to pinch off a piece from the unlit end, which was accepted without objection at any time; indeed, they were happy to share the remaining portion even further. And now everything in the camp was observed with attention and annotated with marginal comments, which we unfortunately did not understand.

A shaving brush attracted particular attention, which is typical of these people's closeness to nature. It was immediately passed from hand to hand, everyone had to examine these strange hairs, and there was lively discussion about which animal they might belong to. Wild boar? General rejection, the hair was too soft for that, nor was it kangaroo or possum; they ran their hands through the hair again to demonstrate its unusual length. Ubukuma, rat? Energetic shaking of heads. Until I drew a horse for them and showed them its size. Finally, one asked: *Nai tekki?* Is the animal good to eat?

Our haul from Sumuri was thoroughly examined. It was immediately explained to me that *Paramythia* did not exist on Kunupi, nor did the small black dwarf bandicoot [= *Microperoryctes murinus*] [Kunupi, in the Mee dialect, means ,swamp + flower. It's a term in daily use among the Mee speakers of the Paniai Lakes (Ms Ance Bom, *pers. comm.*). We suspect here that Stein's informants are referring to the swampy lands around the Paniai Lakes. The western crested berrypecker (*Paramythia olivacea*) occurs both on the high peaks of the Weyland Range and the Maokop. *Microperoryctes murinus*, however, has never been recorded outside of the Weyland Range].

The names of the other species were given to me, and the calls of the birds were whistled. All in all, the people knew much more about the wildlife of their mountain than I did. The names were melodious and easy to pronounce, and the people articulated just like us. The beautiful high-mountain kingfisher was called *Syma megarhyncha* okkurru, the owl kewara, the bird of paradise *Lophorina* [= *L. superba*] kera after its call, the rat *Anisomys* even puradidl, which always made us burst out laughing, while the people looked at us in amazement because they saw no reason for merriment.

Once I asked them how far it was to that distant height that I could not reach. Twenty days, they indicated with their hands and feet, it would take to get there. The trees up there were barely taller than a man, and that was where *Proechidna* [= *Zaglossus bartoni*] lived, the strange monotreme with its spiny coat, whose hedgehog-like silhouette I had sketched for them. His father had once received it from the people who lived back there, one of them explained. And when I expressed my doubts, he picked up the bird of paradise *Epimachus* that was lying on the table, pointed to its enormous beak, and said: 'The animal you have drawn here has a beak just as long as uawa, the bird of paradise!' There really could not have been a more apt comparison. At first, they were very afraid of the camera and kept asking: Bokkai [dead]? Until they found the courage to investigate the lens, while I enlarged and reduced the aperture. Immediately, one of them said in amazement: kewara [owl]! Finding the correct comparison here with the size of the owl's pupil changing with the change in light intensity shows the Jabis' excellent powers of observation and probably also their considerable intelligence.

This acumen could even embarrass me and was the cause of the only impropriety I ever committed towards them.

To collect plants, I used a certain Jabi, my special friend. For every five trees he climbed, from which he had to throw down everything in bloom, he got a pair of scissors. One morning, as I was climbing up the mountain, I saw one of the rare little *Crateroscelis nigrorufa* [= *Aethomyias nigrorufus*] slipping through the tangle of vegetation on the ground. Instead of my shotgun, I was carrying my plant press. If you try to hunt birds and collect plants at the same time, you end up doing neither, so I had left my firearm in the camp for the day and had to ask Jabi, who of course was carrying a bow and arrow, to shoot the little black bird for me. I must have been a little agitated, because when he held out the bird stuck in the arrowheads to me, he scrutinized my expression and asked me to take the bird out. As soon as he knew that the animal was valuable to me, I had to sacrifice the scissors I had in my pocket, which were supposed to serve a completely different, 'higher' purpose today. With feigned indifference, I asked him to remove the bird from the arrow himself. But he was still not reassured. *Ssadakki*, shall I throw it away? he asked probingly and somewhat maliciously. I made a generous gesture with my hand, as one might do when refusing to hand over a two-penny piece. That seemed to satisfy him, and at last I had the precious piece, and the poor man had to climb for another half hour: which, incidentally, did not bother him at all, as those with compassionate hearts here will understand.

Most of our time was spent hunting birds. We set off early in the morning, the cook WAIKOLE, one of the policemen and I. The Kapala from Wanggar was responsible for providing firewood and water, building snares and beat traps with the second policeman, and supervising the small snap traps. DARNA and my wife, who still had to take care of the plants, had to prepare the birds. SAAN, the smaller taxidermist, was master of mice and marsupials. Let's climb the mountains together! You wake up in the small but cozy Klepper tent and stick your nose through the crack in the tent: black night; heavy raindrops fall on the tarpaulin under which the tent stands. After a while, there is a clattering outside: WAIKOLE, the capable one, is making coffee. He squats in front of the ashes, has lit the trusty stable lantern and is gathering the last embers from the hearth, putting green wood on top, blowing long and hard, coughing, placing the kettle on the three stones and staring bitterly at the chaos of petrol cans, pots, hanging skins, shreds of sackcloth covering the floor, wobbly bamboo seats, and tin suitcases. It is getting dark, so out of the warm tent, out of the thick trousers that are only meant for the tent and for sleeping. With slight goose bumps, you drive into the browned and smoky stuff that has just been taken from the fireplace. It is impossible to always have enough dry suits here, not to mention 'matching' socks and the eternally wet mountain boots. For breakfast, there are a few boiled sweet potatoes; every few days, there is even bread, which my wife makes in a petroleum tin. The flour is a bit lumpy, but 'only a little,' as my wife tries to convince me.

We set off, trudging slowly up the 600 m to the summit. Near the camp, there is thick mud, the topsoil has been removed, and the earth is mushy from being trampled by the feet of many Jabi. Every day, it's the same struggle to climb a rock with tired bones. We pass through secondary forest, former indigenous plantations, now overgrown with giant ferns and climbing plants. Here, *Crateroscelis*

murinus [= *Origma murina*] still calls its sweet verse from the plain. In the treetops, a pair of starling-sized *Edolisoma montanum* hop about, the female mouldy blue, the male with a black underside. *Huiti* *hui*: *hui*: their calls sound, interspersed with magpie-like chatter. *Peltops montanus* makes its circular flights from dry crags with a shrill *zrii zrii*. In the undergrowth, like leaf warblers, rare, the small *Gerygone*, rarest of all *G. rubra* with its bright red back [= *Eugerygone rubra*, actually an Australasian robin]. This is already the upper limit for *Loboparadisea*, the small silk paradise bird, brown on top and light lemon-yellow underneath [= *L. sericea*, a member of the Cnemophilidae]. As pretty as the bird looks, it is just as boring. The birds can be observed feeding in berry-bearing bushes, then flying into the treetops, always silent. Without striking plumage, the bird is also correspondingly familiar. *Pristorhamphus versteri* [= *Melanocharis versteri*], a Dicaeidae, is common, especially the larger, chaffinch-like females [This species is now in the family Melanochartidae]. The males are rarely seen, and if it were not for the blue-black colouring of their backs and the dove-grey of their undersides, they could almost be mistaken for long-tailed tits. Small birds whisper in a fruit tree and fly on in loose formation, calling like tits. This is *Oreocharis arfaki*, a true high-altitude bird. Everyone thinks the males are beautifully coloured great tits, and A. B. Meyer was probably right to describe the bird as *Parus arfaki*. *Küi küi*, loud and black woodpecker-like, it echoes from a ravine: *Parotia carolae*, the six-rayed bird of paradise. It too rarely goes above 1,800 m. *Kera kera*, it sounds high in the treetops; a black shadow whizzes by, and WAIKOLE, who has been dozing until now, perks up. He loves this bird very much; it is *Lophorina*, the little black bird of paradise with a velvety decorative mantle on its back and an emerald green breastplate, from which lanceolate feathers protrude coquettishly on both sides. WAIKOLE has disappeared, and we wait patiently. Once again, I have thoughtlessly sat down on a tree trunk covered in dripping wet moss, and now I am annoyed because I would have liked to keep the seat of my trousers dry for a little while longer. In the undergrowth, *Chaetorhynchus papuensis*, the black highland drongo, sings. Here, one can truly speak of singing, although it is more of a grasshopper-like mocking. A small long-tailed flycatcher flies in, *Rhipidura albolimbata*, one of the most charming birds in New Guinea. It approaches to within a few meters, tilts its head, looks at us innocently and flutters on. WAIKOLE has fired, the dull roar of black powder echoing from the slopes and gorges. He has his *Lophorina* [= *L. superba*], strokes it tenderly, wraps it in paper and slips it into his shirt. We climb higher, walking along a narrow ridge. Deep in the gorge, a stream rushes by.

Uprooted trees have fallen and torn a gap that is now filled with green thickets, mainly creeping bamboo, ferns with chiselled fronds, and small fan palms above. The moss forest begins. This is home to the most magnificent of paradise birds, *Pteridophora alberti*, which has two long cobalt-blue fern-like feathers on its head that extend slightly beyond its tail. The dark grey young males with pearls on their undersides are not uncommon. From mossy branches high up in the treetops, their strange metallic whirring and hissing sounds can be heard, a back-and-forth pull of tones that bears some resemblance to the song of our corn bunting and is just as difficult to get out of your ear. Except for its moving wings, the bird is concealed by the branch stump

on which it sits. I shot the first male in breeding plumage by chance. I mistook the bird, sitting quietly high up in the dark treetops with its yellowish underside, for an *Edolisoma* [= cicadabird]. Immediately afterwards, I saw the second one shoot through the branches, incredibly shy and restless, until it finally sat completely exposed for a moment—and then it darted into a ravine, its head feathers fluttering after it. The third bird remained stuck in a moss tree, and even the skilled climbers, whom I brought up from our camp to the spot on the same day, were unable to rescue the bird. At an altitude of 1,800 meters, the bamboo jungle begins, which extends to the dome-like summit of Kunupi, and here we spread out, where fog lies all day long, where the ancient weathered trees with clumps of moss in their treetops, in which orchids with yellow and salmon-coloured flowers grow, stand only individually. The undergrowth here is a dense thicket of rattan and bamboo, with smaller deciduous trees in between. In places, layers of hollow bamboo rolls lie rotting, collapsing under the hunter's footsteps, interspersed with fallen branches, crushed by the weight of the moss cushions—decay and mould everywhere. Here, the shy bird of paradise *Amblyornis inornatus* [= *A. macgregoriae* at this locality] beckons, whose mating ground, swept clean like a threshing floor, we found close to the ground with a soft call. High above, the honey sucker *Melidectes belfordi* blares out a lively and rhythmic little song, which is sometimes needed here. Completely in a minor key, it sounds soft and melancholic from up close.

That is *Heteromyias armiti*, hopping on the ground, with a thick beak and white wing mirrors against the brown of its back. You can whistle for it as often as you like, and then there are two or three of them, and you wonder where they all came from, because you rarely see the bird otherwise. It now comes within reach, sitting on a branch close in front of you, so that you think you could kill it with a stick.

Another ground-dwelling bird lives here: *Pachycephala tenebrosa atra* [= *Colluricincla tenebrosa atra*], dark black-brown in colour and highly elegant. I only ever shot it by chance. Twice, when everything nearby became agitated because a marsupial shrew was running through the branches. And now one of the most beautiful high-mountain birds! *Kuit kuit*, it echoes brightly and powerfully between the dark roots of a tree stump, and everyone thinks the caller is a rail until they see it, completely black, round as a ball, long-legged, its head feathers bristling as if brushed: *Melampitta lugubris*, which I would love to see up there again in my lifetime. Now it hops onto a broken trunk, a wren-like trill falling like pearls moves its little throat—already it rolls down, hit, and I gaze in delight at the little singer again, and again. A rail also lives up here, where there is no standing water, where everything is immediately absorbed by moss and humus like a sponge: *Rallicula rubra*, reddish-brown, white-spotted, thrush-sized. The bird runs nimbly over the moss cushions, the lying bamboo rolls, through the stilt roots of the pandanus trees. Hardly any species up here is more common than it. The males are particularly lively, chasing each other with a shrill *chwai chwai chwie*, which is difficult to reproduce. It is rare for a bird to fly more than a few meters.

The rare *Eulacestoma nigropectus* also lives here inconspicuously, and I was introduced to it in a rather amusing way. On my way down to the camp, I meet the cook, who excitedly tells me that a very strange bird was shot today and that it has already been brought to the camp. At my insistence that he

tell me what it looks like, he finally deigns to say succinctly that it is '*satoe roepa ajam*, a kind of chicken'. I imagine all sorts of things, and finally find a very inconspicuous little green bird on the dissection table, smaller than a finch, and ponder what about this animal is supposed to be chicken- or rooster-like, until, to my joyful surprise, I discover two flesh-red flaps of skin on the sides of its head: the bird is the rare *Eulacestoma*! WAIKOLE was teased about his '*satoe roepa ajam*' for a long time.

We return to camp every lunchtime completely soaked. I indignantly and horrified reject a bowl of washing water that my wife has brought me, because I am truly wet enough. Besides, there are more urgent tasks to be done: the ongoing business with the Jabis, more groups of whom have arrived in our absence. They sit with the taxidermists and watch them work. Bows and arrows lean peacefully against the trees. I furtively examine the contents of their bags, but otherwise I do not pay any attention to them—for God's sake, no rushing into business! My wife and my people are shown nothing at all; when they ask the Jabis about the results of the hunt and the setting of snares, they receive only a '*bäu*', a no, in reply. I have already exchanged my soaking wet clothes for the second and last set, which is also 'freshly smoked', and we eat. Every day that God allows us to be here, we have the same huge plate full of wonderfully fluffy white rice with a meter-long broth made from plenty of onions, of which we strangely have a lot, and a cube of bacon that is unfortunately getting smaller every day. Sometimes we even have cucumbers, which the Jabis bring us from time to time. My wife has, of course, put together her own special menu, with sweet potato leaves fried in plenty of water and a little coconut oil to accompany the rice. This infernal dish, which our people also enjoy, is praised to me daily with many words of praise, albeit in vain. For dessert, everyone is allowed to chew as much sugar cane as they like.

The Jabis watched our meal reverently. Every now and then, one of them would furtively reach for his bag to check whether the rat was still there. Then the first one approached, and our painstakingly maintained self-control was gone! With a jerk, he pulls out a huge *Mallomys* with thick, long-haired fur and holds it close to my nose. '*Marabo, tekki*,' he shouts at me, 'friend, something really good!' And with that, he runs over to the other tarpaulin, under which the police are housed in a homemade hut. There are several short strings hanging there. Each Jabi has his own specific string and is allowed to tie a knot in it for a large rat. The second knot earns him one of the highly coveted machetes, of which we have brought a nice supply with us.

Our friend has already disappeared into the hut and is rummaging excitedly among the bush knives. They all have cords with different knots. Each of the people has 'reserved' a knife in advance and marked it with their own mark. Finally, Tabi has found 'his' knife. He shows me his mark, points again to the two knots in his string to document the legitimacy of his actions—he did not forget to quickly tie the second knot before fetching his knife—and now, immensely proud and satisfied, puts it in his raffia bag, of course in such a way that the handle is visible, so that everyone can see how wonderfully far he has come. Those who did not hurry are in a bad way. After all, I have had enough of the giant rats and increasingly frequent cuscus, and I must explain to them 'to my regret' that the terms and conditions have changed somewhat. These animals are no longer accepted

as payment for a machete, but are paid for immediately in cash, and only with a smaller knife. Justified indignation, murmuring (I do not know if there is an expression in the Jabi language for our beautiful ‘*uncoulant*’). But they come to terms with the fact. One of them did it very cleverly. He presents a rat and demands his machete, which I politely refuse. Hesitantly, he takes another little mouse out of his pocket, and then another, until I finally must relent. He gets his knife and now brings out *Pseudochirulus caroli*, a rare marsupial that I am urgently looking for. I will have to credit him for this on the next hatchet. Everyone is grinning, but I make a mental note and from now on I will have them empty their pockets thoroughly before we enter the shop. Another has unpacked a whole bunch of ‘cheap stuff’ in front of me, demands his machete and, when I do not respond, declares that he will give me the animals as a gift. He also refuses to reach an agreement and, energetically and visibly offended, pushes the animals towards me. He also gets his machete, because I do not want to be given anything for free, even though I see right through the guy. But now the fun is over: families must go hunting for the rare *Dactylonax*, the striped possums with one enormously elongated finger, and I realize that only now is the purchase of a machete the real pleasure.

Women are the ones who suffer in this whole situation, as they are mainly responsible for hunting the animals, while men prefer to take care of the more difficult business side of things.

To our amazement, one day a Jabi woman appears, chubby-cheeked, frizzy-haired, a little shy, and brings a *Parahydromys*, a large species of rat of which there were only two in existence in all the museums of the world. As usual, she asks for a hatchet. Not too much to ask for such a precious item, one might think. But the woman probably did not know that there was only one specimen in Berlin and a second in the British Museum. Besides, and this was the decisive factor here, about 10 skins were already drying over our fire. So, I put on a regretful face and politely decline. She smiles again, somewhat embarrassed, as women tend to do in such cases, and quickly considers in her Papuan mind what she could ask for the stupid animal. She does not want a machete at all; her husband just asked her to ask for one. My refusal relieves her of all embarrassment, and so she asks for mani-mani, blue glass beads, which are quite nice and which she would surely have liked to have had a necklace made of long ago. The next best thing after the machete would have been a small knife. Glass beads, small coins in our barter trade, come last.

You can get that for a penny. Her husband, who is sitting nearby—why he did not make the deal is a mystery to me—has hardly heard anything about Mani-mani when he jumps up angrily and yells at his wife that it’s just the way he is. To our deepest regret, we cannot understand what he is saying. In any case, the poor woman goes home saddened and deprived of hope. The rough husband—after all, I cannot interfere in marital disputes—quickly asks me for the knife and, also disappears with a clouded brow. After a while, he reappears, very cheerful, with a relieved expression. My evil taxidermist DARNA, who also has a wife in Java, cannot resist asking him somewhat maliciously where he has been. A merciless, cheerful, and beautiful sweeping gesture of the hand is the answer. I look melancholically at my *Parahydromys*.

Women do not often come to our camp, and only to unload crops; we’ve never seen unmarried women or girls. I often heard them giggling in the bushes during my hunting trips,

but then a call would come from somewhere just in time and everything would fall silent.

One exception was the chief’s wife; the Jabis had several, up to three, although our Kapala from the coast never failed to explain that he only had one, and it would be ‘*soeda, sampe*’ if he had enough with just her! The chief’s wife soon arrived, slim, with a narrow face, from which two dark eyes looked at me calmly and confidently. She wears only a string of raffia around her hips and a blue pearl necklace around her neck, but her body is so perfectly harmonious that one does not realize this woman is almost naked. She kneels next to me and hands me some brown mice she has just caught while working in the fields. Smiling, I give her a mirror and glass beads, which slip into her small, skilled hands. Nothing moves in her face. She gets up, exchanges a few words with her husband and leaves. This woman was the mother of a boy, our little friend, the most beautiful boy we have ever seen, whose grace delighted us time and again. Old women are truly ugly and justify the view of the proverbial ugliness of the Papuans.

Once we even receive post brought up by the coastal people. It took almost two months just to transport it from Manokwari to here, so the newspapers do not exactly contain the latest news, but I still spend the whole afternoon reading in the tent with the greatest pleasure. I give the people a letter to take to Manokwari and ask the assistant resident to expect us in Wanggar 14 days later than agreed, and the porters are also to arrive here two weeks later, as we must make up for what was missed due to my wife’s illness. This, of course, requires us to stretch our already meagre supplies. The police and the man from Wanggar will not be able to get any more rice for a few days and will have to make do with sweet potatoes and rat meat. Whereas the Jabis usually get the bodies of the animals they have caught back, which they value greatly, I now buy the whole animals. Only the bodies of the mice are given back to the people. They are wrapped in a leaf, placed in the fire for a while and then eaten very politely; at the very end, the little tail always hangs melancholically from the lips.

Caterpillars seem to be a particular delicacy for the Jabis. They never miss an opportunity to collect a bagful of them, which is then placed in the hot ashes. Unfortunately, we have not got that far yet. We share with our taxidermists the small and oh-so-skinny bodies of the high-mountain birds that must provide our daily evening soup. Lately, our conversations up there have revolved almost exclusively around food. We remember with nostalgia all the good things we have had the opportunity to eat in our lives, and I solemnly promise my wife that once we get back to Berlin, I will eat my way through the entire two-page menu of a restaurant. In the afternoon, we gather in the secondary forest around the camp. A murky stream winds its way through a small, overgrown gorge; this is the habitat of the rare green ground meliphagids *Euthyrhynchus* [= *Timeliopsis*], which, unlike all other species, slip low through the swamp thicket with their stilted tails, like wrens. Mokoppa, the rare small, dark-colored ground dove *Gallucolumba beccarii* [= *Alopecoenas beccarii*], I shoot here, the green ground shrike *Pachycephalopsis hattamensis* hops along the broken trunks, several species of the small *Microeca* flycatchers catch insects, and the soft, very high-pitched call of the golden cuckoo *Chalcites meyeri* [= *C. meyerii*] rings out. The broad-billed flycatchers *Monarcha frater* and *M.*

axillaris [= *Symposiachrus axillaris*] chirp warningly. In the treetops, several species of honey eaters: the small *Ptiloprora gusei* and *erythropleura*, the larger *Ptiloprora cinerea* [= *Pycnopygius cinereus*]; most commonly, the black *Melipotés fumigatus* (Jabi name bogu) with its chrome-yellow bare skin patches on its head. It is easy to be fooled by this bird, which you only recognize once you hold it in your hand. If you have a Jabi as a companion, it will always warn you in good time in such cases: *Bogu bau!*

One day, I finally bag the second specimen of the bird of paradise *Drepanornis albertisii* [= *D. albertisi*]. The gorge is filled with thick fog, rain pattering through the branches. There, in the distance, a series of whistles like *üe üe üe üe üe üe*, clear and descending, almost like a green woodpecker. I imitate it, something flies towards me, lands a few meters in front of me, but completely hidden by a tangle of leaves and vines. A long beak becomes visible, a small head with dark eyes peeks around searchingly, and then the bird flutters to the ground. I also caught all my *Psittacella modesta*, small parrots, as big as a bullfinch and with the same shape, but light green with dark cross bands in the soft plumage of the back, here while stalking, when their soft *hue hue* sounded. *Syma megarhyncha*, the ochre-coloured high mountain kingfisher with the dark head, blue wings and blue tail, gave me particular trouble. Up to 2,000 meters up, you can hear its *drititititit*, which sounds just like the call of its relative, the *Syma torotoro* from the plains. I never managed to see the bird sitting motionless high up in the canopy. Finally, I hear its soft, *oui*-like call, whistle it back, and the first one shoots over and sits on the front of a tree fern.

Soon, the Jabis also know that I am looking for this bird. A little kid sneaks up, waves at me smartly and whispers: *okkuriu!* The little Jabiman is no more than six years old, but he climbs down a ravine in front of me as skilfully and confidently as the adults. He has inherited an old sleeveless calico shirt from one of the porters, which has become unspeakably dirty and reaches down to his ankles. He must keep lifting it up to free it from the vines, complaining loudly about the time he is losing and the effort it takes, but he would never part with it. The *drrrit it it it it* of the bird now sounds very close. Of course, I cannot find it. It must be sitting quite high up, so I send for the big shotgun. A whole crowd of Jabis comes along, and everyone tries to show me the bird. They put the shotgun to my shoulder, point the barrel somewhere and advise me to pull the trigger, shaking their heads at such a degree of clumsiness; until finally one of them summons all his courage, embraces me, presses his cheek against mine—I think I can already feel a tingling sensation in my hair and as I follow his outstretched arm, I finally see the bird. Only its beak and tail protrude above the thick branch on which it is sitting. Just then, the *drritititit* sounds again, the beak straightens until it is almost pointing upwards, and now the bird sinks back down, only its tail twitching back and forth. At the sound of the shotgun, all the Jabis rush into the ravine, and I can return to camp with peace of mind.

Return march to the coast

We eagerly await the arrival of our porters. We have no more goods to trade; the chief already has my wife's swimsuit, and I have also 'pawned' my pocket knife. We still have a small bag full of beautiful colourful wooden beads, but the Jabis contemptuously bite them with their teeth to show me what

poor quality they are.

Finally, WAIKOLE, the cook, falls ill with kidney inflammation and intestinal catarrh. He is in a very bad way; we hear him moaning through the night. He has my wife to thank for coming down alive. At last, the first group of porters arrives; the others have been held up by a flood wave at Menoo, but should also be here soon. No more work is done that evening. We sit in the tent and do not talk much; finally, I dig out my harmonica, which was among the barter goods, and try to coax silly melodies out of the 30-penny instrument, and in the end we even sing.

We were up here for over three months; 1,300 birds, 300 mammals, bundles of plants, the result of our work, must be packed into metal sheets, tied up, and wrapped in tent fabric. Departure. The place lies desolate, scaffolding stares into the air. The rattan-woven bamboo table and a bark hut still stand, fire pits smouldering. We glance indifferently over everything one last time and then follow the porters, who have long since hurried away with their now light loads. At noon, the two Jabis who accompanied us bid us farewell. We are too tired to feel anything.

It must be the orchids' flowering season; they glow on the ground and from broken stems. Soon I am carrying a whole bunch in my arms to put them in the plant press in the evening. It is afternoon, and we are accompanied only by the cook, who is dragging himself along with difficulty, and Kapala from Wanggar, who is also leaning on a stick, so exhausted is he from the long stay in the mountains with its poor food. There is no sign of the porters—they probably want to return to the coast in a day. We stumble forward listlessly, having eaten nothing all day. Finally—it is already dusk—we hear shouting and see a glimmer of light: the camp is already set up. I put aside the orchids that I have not lost along the way and later find them trampled under the dirty feet of the porters. There is no point in getting upset about it. The next day we walk along a narrow ridge. There is movement among the porters: they point through a gap in the trees. Below us stretches the jungle that we still must cross. Fog brews in the wide green valleys, but at the back on the horizon a narrow silver strip glows, with light blue clouds above it: *Thalatta, Thalatta*, the sea, the sea! For dinner today, we have soup made from leaves that the porters brought from the forest. *Sajoer oetan, bagoes toean*, jungle vegetables, excellent, sir! say my taxidermists, but I am content with just tasting it.

We also happily cross the Menoo, where I am somewhat concerned about my collections, and finally arrive at the Prauen camp. From afar, we can already hear the joyful shouts of the porters who arrived before us. One of the men gives us a delicious banana that he brought up from the coast. We eat dry rice, cooked together with the last mouldy peas, straight from the pot. We speed down the river, past the camps we passed on our way here. In a few hours, we arrive safely at the coast; only one prau has been wrecked on the way! Fortunately, it did not contain any of our collections.

We move into a hut in the kampong, have a feast of chicken prepared, receive delicious bananas and drink the sweet and sour water of green coconuts.

The next morning, we stand at Wanggar and see blue chains in the distance through the clearing in the jungle created by the river. They shine just as mysteriously, untouched and compelling as they did before our journey. We cannot believe that we were up there, we can hardly believe

it, and already we are quietly moved by a longing for those mountains that will never leave us.

The steamer that is supposed to pick us up is already overdue. Finally, we learn from the Malay administrative official in Wainami that it was already here three weeks ago, right on time for the originally scheduled date. Due to a particular mishap, my letter did not reach Manokwari, so we have no idea how long we will have to wait. I consider making the trip to Manokwari by prau. But the journey takes at least 14 days and also involves long stretches along the steep coast, where landing is impossible in stormy weather. I do not want to expose my collections to further coincidences, so we must wait. Resigned, we unpack the shotguns again, gather the last of our ammunition and get back to work. I have been dealt the hardest blow: I have run out of tobacco. I generously gave gifts to the prau people for their safe journey home on the Wanggar and now have to watch others smoke. At least I still have the pleasure of shooting a small series of what is probably the most beautiful kingfisher, *Halcyon nigrocyanea* [= *Todiramphus nigrocyaneus*], which lives in the coastal forest. At high tide, you can bathe in the warm brackish water up to your hips. Small green tree snakes hang in the branches—in general, snakes are very rarely seen in New Guinea—large monitor lizards climb the trunks, a rat swims into the undergrowth, the *boeroeng siang*, the bird that heralds the day (*Philemon novaeguineae*) [= *P. buceroides*] calls its quokke quokke, large fruit doves (*Ducula pinon*) rumble away, and suddenly the eye sees a bright blue splash of colour: this is *Halcyon nigrocyanea* [= *Todiramphus nigrocyaneus*], the blue lister. Except for a white throat and belly patch and its black head, the entire bird is deep blue, and even my wife, who has been very spoiled here, at least as far as the colourfulness of birds is concerned, is delighted.

After waiting for 14 days, we spot a plume of smoke on the horizon. We quickly pack up our few belongings and carry all our luggage to the beach, but the steamer disappears again—it has sailed right across Geelvink Bay without a thought for us, probably so that we can enjoy our Robinson Crusoe experience to the full. Two days later, however, boats take us

to Wainami, where we are greeted by the amiable assistant resident, Sprock, who comes to pick us up himself with the ‘Yvette’. We enjoy a wonderful trip through Geelvink Bay, past the Wandammen Mountains, which rise steeply and cloud-covered from the sea, and past the island of Roon. We make a short stop in Manokwari, where the collections are finally packed. In Ternate, Waikole, the cook, who would have liked to accompany us to Timor, bids us farewell. He remains on board until the steamer departs. He has tears in his eyes and shakes our hands repeatedly.

We have been in New Guinea for almost a year; our total haul amounts to 3,000 birds and 600 mammals. If new destinations, Sumba and Timor, did not beckon, it would be very difficult for us to say goodbye to the land of the birds of paradise.

References

- Avibase. 2025. Bird Checklists of the World—Island of New Guinea. [Accessed 21 September 2025].
<https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=NGU>
- Mittermeier, R. A., and D. E. Wilson. 2015. *Handbook of the Mammals of the World. Volume 5. Monotremes and Marsupials*. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.
- National Herbarium, Netherlands. No date. Stein, Georg Hermann Wilhelm. [Accessed on 11 September 2025].
<https://www.nationaalherbarium.nl/FMCollectors/S/SteinGHW.htm>
- Roselaar, C. S. 2003. An inventory of major European bird collections. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Union* 123A: 253–337.
- Stein, G. 1933. Eine Forschungsreise nach Niederländisch-Ostindien. *Journal of Ornithology* 81(2): 253–310.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01955201>
- Stein, G. 1958. The Field Mouse (*Microtus arvalis* Pallas). In *The New Brehm Library*. Wittenberg, Lutherstadt: A. Ziemsen Verlag.
- Stresmann, E. 1967. Georg H. W. Stein zum 70. Geburtstag. *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. Zoologisches Museum und Institut für Spezielle Zoologie (Berlin)* 43(2): 185–187.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/mmnz.19670430202>

