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- ALAN TENNYSON, *Threatened Species Unit, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10420, Wellington*
- RAY PIERCE, *Northland Conservancy, Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 842, Whangarei, New Zealand*

Received 18 March, accepted 8 July 1995



Red-vented Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus cafer*) in New Caledonia

On 22 September 1993 BJB saw a Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) on an overhead wire on Route de l'Anse Vata, in a residential area of Nouméa, New Caledonia. The presence of these birds in New Caledonia is not noted in the recent literature (e.g. Hannécart & Létocart 1980, 1983), so BJB mentioned the sighting to GRH of Nouméa. Enquiries by GRH revealed that SS had seen a Red-vented Bulbul in the Faubourg Blanchot area of Nouméa in 1983, and ascertained that an unknown number were released in Nouméa just before 1983. They had been illegally imported and apparently released by their owner to avoid prosecution.

A newspaper article (*Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 2 October 1987) reported small colonies of bulbuls in Nouméa at Nouville, the cathedral, and around Ouen Toro. There are unconfirmed reports of the birds at Païta and Bourail on the west coast northwest of Nouméa. One day in early December 1994, SS counted a total of 27 bulbuls at several sites in Nouméa. Some birds may have been counted more than once but clearly the birds are establishing. A nest has been recorded at the ORSTOM site at Anse Vata Bay. SS saw a parent feeding two fledglings in the Val Plaisance area in 1993, and a juvenile near the Place des Cocotiers in October 1994.

SS has seen the bulbuls pecking at lychee fruits and mangoes. A large increase in the number of bulbuls could cause substantial damage to fruit and flowers, especially those of agricultural crops. Red-vented Bulbuls might

compete with the common endemic Green-backed Silvereye (*Zosterops xanthochroa*) which frequents gardens to feed on fruit (Hannécart & Létocart 1980).

Red-vented Bulbuls were introduced from India to Fiji in about 1903 (Watling 1978). Elsewhere in the Pacific they are established on the Tongan islands of Tongatapu and Niuafu'ou (Dhondt 1976, Rinke 1986), in Western Samoa (Gill *et al.* 1993) and in American Samoa, Hawaii and Tahiti (Pratt *et al.* 1987). In Australia, the species established in Melbourne about 1917 but has not been seen with certainty since 1942 (Blakers *et al.* 1984). Red-vented Bulbuls established in Auckland in the 1950s but were exterminated (Turbott 1990). It remains to be seen if they now increase in New Caledonia.

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- B.J. GILL, *Auckland Institute & Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland, New Zealand*
- G.R. HUNT, *B.P. KO147, Koutio, New Caledonia*
- S. SIRGOUANT, *B.P. 4338, Nouméa, New Caledonia*

Received 24 Jan 1995, accepted 6 July 1995