



## IZK cabinet - tracing back paradise birds

workshop at the institute of contemporary art | TU Graz | summer 2012

IZK CABINET was developed within the framework of  
„die Reise der Federn / tracing back paradise birds“ - an artistic project from Gabriele Sturm  
The exhibition was located in a container at the Lendplatz, Graz- 06 July til 30 September 2012  
conducted by Daniela Brasil | assistance Phillip Grein

participants  
Aljaž Iskra | Cordula Weitgruber | Dora Jerbić | Gerald Grassl | Ines Dobošić  
Luka Lipšinić | Luka Murovec | Luís Guimarães | Patricia Wess | Ramona Winkler

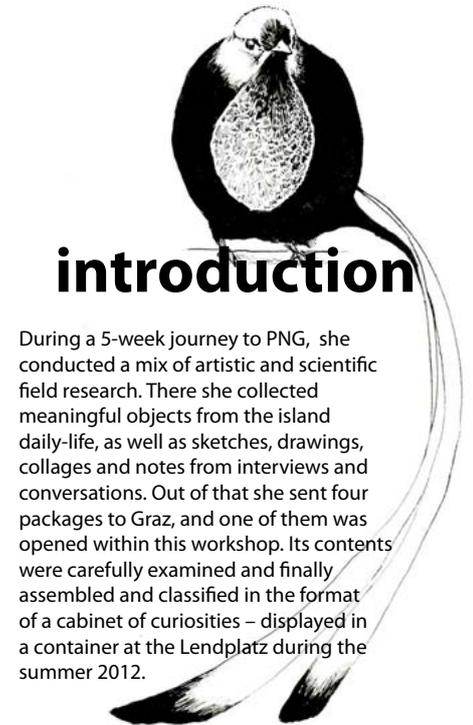
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The Vienna-based artist Gabriele Sturm works with the “transfer process” between different places, cultures and times, specially with the global transportation of goods that since the discovery of the New World has been clearly shaping and affecting our living environments – from the micro politics of our everyday life towards the macro politics of the worldtransnational economies.

In “Tracing back paradise birds”, Sturm researched the importation/ exportation networks of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Tracing back the history of the European high consumption of Birds of Paradise feathers for women’s hat in the beginning of last century (up to 80.000 birds were sent per year between 1905 until 1921 when the English Society of Protection of Exotic Birds banned the use of these feathers on women hats), Gabriele Sturm arrives at the current deforestation problem – which is now rapidly exterminating these endemic birds species’ habitats, as they live in very specific regions and do not migrate.



During a 5-week journey to PNG, she conducted a mix of artistic and scientific field research. There she collected meaningful objects from the island daily-life, as well as sketches, drawings, collages and notes from interviews and conversations. Out of that she sent four packages to Graz, and one of them was opened within this workshop. Its contents were carefully examined and finally assembled and classified in the format of a cabinet of curiosities – displayed in a container at the Lendplatz during the summer 2012.



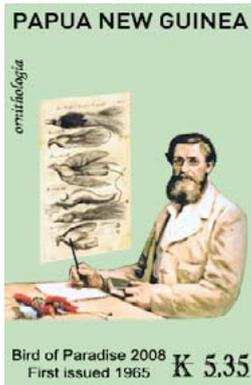
## research-creation

These were the fundaments upon which the idea of a contemporary cabinet of curiosities grew upon. A random collage of these inspirational images are in the chapter „references“, and the links are to be found in the end of this booklet.

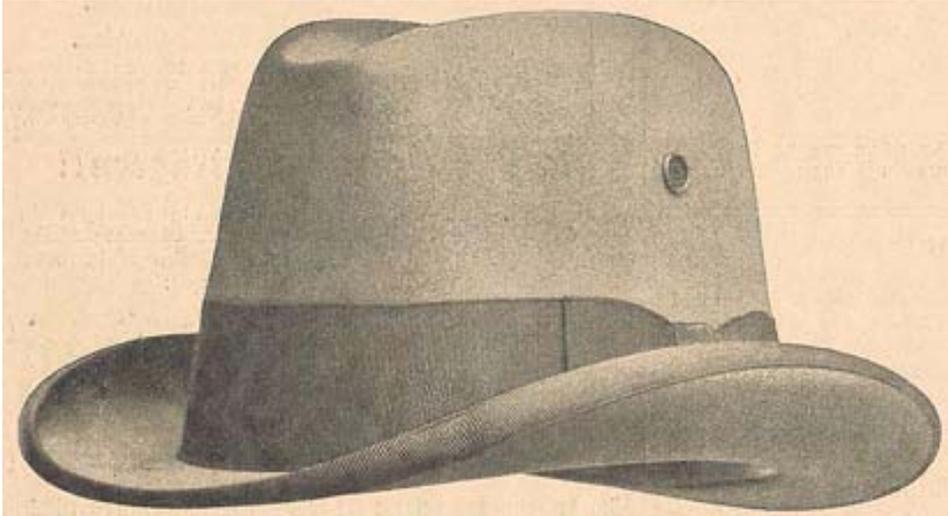
While Sturm was in PNG, theory classes examined the theme of the „exotic“ and „trade“, and how artistic narratives have constructed images and beliefs to be exported to Europe during the colonial times, up to more critical views and interpretations by contemporary artists that deal with the theme of post-colonialism.

In parallel students researched particularly the themes of hat production in Graz, the history of the birds of paradise trades, and the actual political and economical situation of PNG. Critically reinterpreting the facts researched, some students developed new objects and collages which are shown in the following pages.





reinventing the stamps with the birds fate  
Patricia Wess



| Mitte 16. Jhd. erste Kappen und Hutmacher in Graz | 1617 bereits 8 Hutmacher | 1750 Beginn Hutfabrikation Familie Pichler in der Steiermark | Anfang 19. Jhd Blüte der Hutmacher und Modisten in Graz | 1950 an die 20 Hutmacher in Graz | 1919 Hutsalon Pelko eröffnet | 1950 - 1980 Huthauptstadt von Österreich mit ca 30 Hutgeschäften | in den 1980ern Aussterben der Hutmacher und Modisten | 1995 Ausbildungsmöglichkeit für Modisten eingestellt  
**Anton Pichler** | Dezember 1842 Start der Hutproduktion Graz | Fabriksgebäude Karlsruherstraße 26 | durchgängig eigene Produktion - alle Fertigungsschritte | Schladminger - Hut aus Filz mit Feder | 1899 Umstellung von Flißbandarbeit auf maschinelle Fertigung | k.u.k. Hof-Hutfabrik | eingestellt während Erstem Weltkrieg | Tropenhelme im Zweiten Weltkrieg | Geschäftslokal heute Südtiroler Platz 9  
**Josef Pichler & Söhne** | 1857 Sackstraße 31-33 | ab 1889 Herzoglich Sachsen-Meiningensche Kaiserlich Königliche Hof-Hut-Fabrik | Tochter Anna verheiratet mit Peter Rosegger | 1873 25-jähriges Bestehen | bis 1960  
**Josef Kepka & Söhne** | Wickenburggasse 20 | ab 1910 Hütte für Männer, Frauen und Kinder | ab Weltkrieg an die beiden Söhne | 2002 Karin Krahl-Wichmann | 100 Jahre Bestehen im Jahr 2010

chronology about the hat industry in Graz  
 Cordula Weitgruber



prototypes for head adornments  
Ramona Winkler, Gerald Grassl and Luis Guimarães



hat studies with chicken bones and feet  
Cordula Weitgruber



## from austria with love

To get started each participant chose a meaningful personal object of their daily lives to fill up a box: to be received by Gabriele Sturm during her stay in PNG. The aim was to exchange these objects and their embedded personal stories and origins with the local inhabitants.

„from Austria with love“ was the first act of the workshop: before being able to get something new, we gave something we loved away.

Daniela Brasil



necklace & lucky charm



Ines Dobošić



headphones in matches box



Alvaro Gonzales



bike ring

Gerald Grassl



egg opener

Luís Guimarães

wooden 3D puzzle



Aljaž Iskra

organic wood sculpture



Dora Jerbić



soap

Luka Lipšinić



croatian comic / dylan dog

Luka Murovec

drawing



Cordula Weitgruber

scout / friendship ring



Patricia Wess



sunglasses (from Berlin)

Mona Winkler



wooden magical roundabout



12K-TUG

Patricia Brown and Gabriele Strm  
Papua New Guinea

FROM AUSTRIA WITH LOVE

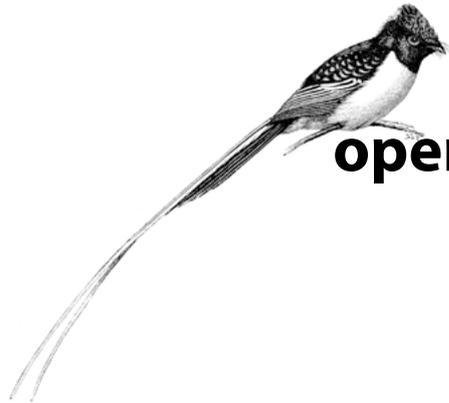
**SVD HOUSE**

to Fr. Józef Maciolek, SVD Superior Delegate  
and Gabriele Strm

**PO. O. BOX 1317**

**BOROKO, NCD**

**Papua New Guinea**



## opening the box from png

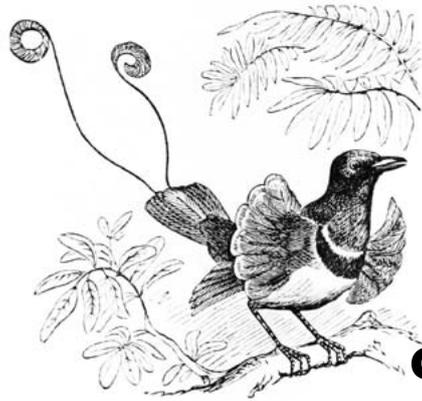
The customs in PNG were quite strict and controlled every object sent. After the boxes arrived in Austria, Gabriele Sturm came to Graz bringing our box along. With the surprise and curiosity of someone who has never received a gift from a far-away place, the students examined the contents carefully.











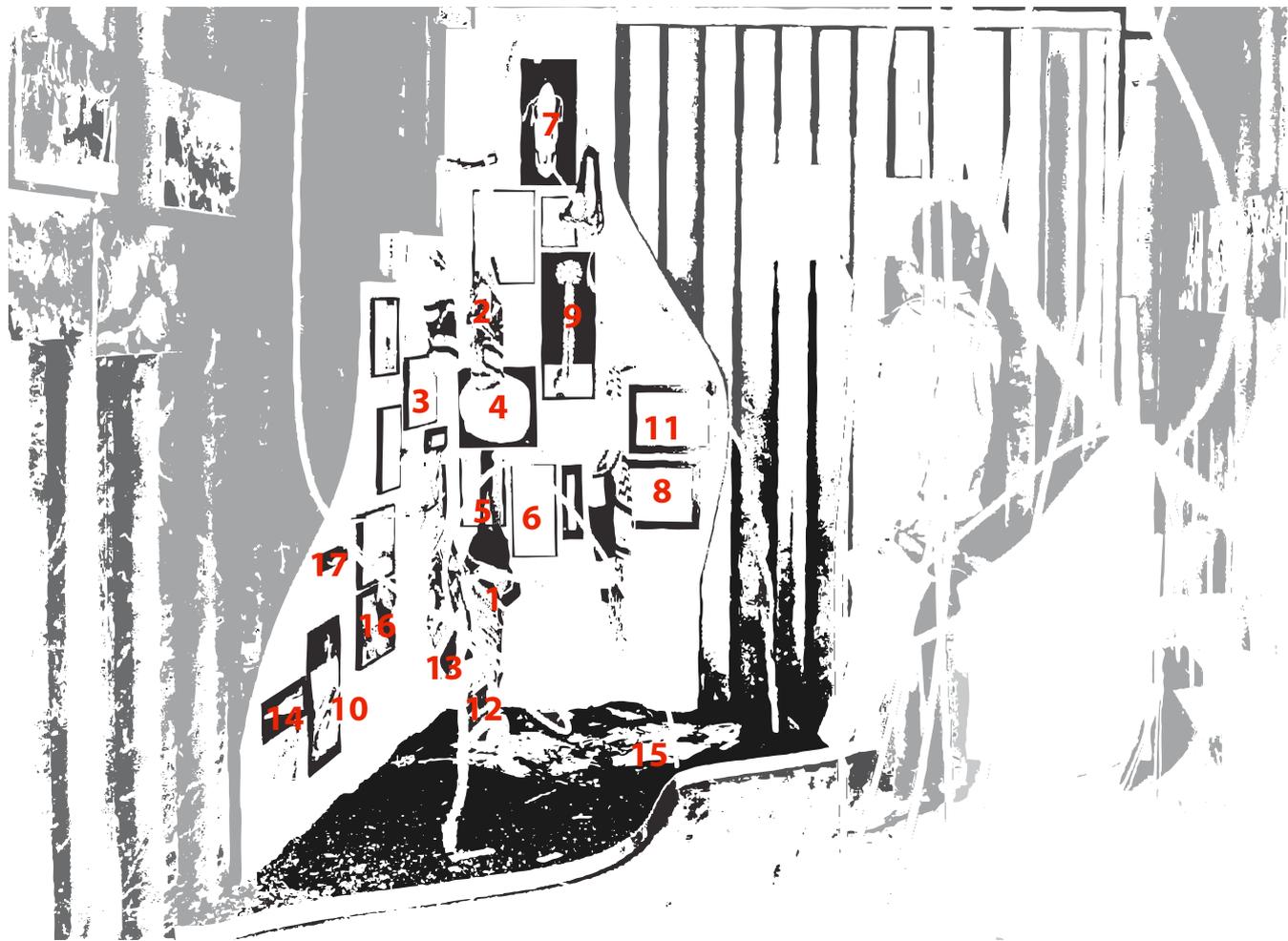
## **cabinet of curiosities**

For the installation at the container, new stories for the received objects were assembled. In the format of a “cabinet of curiosities” the students made a display inspired in the museums of zoology techniques of presenting stuffed birds and their taxonomies, at the same time questioning these forms of „knowledge collection and presentation“.

These descriptions are a game for the reader to find out where the tiny lines between facts and fiction are placed, and to recreate in his/her own perspective of the puzzle Sturm has sent to Graz.







# bilum

1



Handmade plant yarn/ woolen yarn/ recycled plastic yarn, 2005 -12  
Wosera area, East Sepik Province

A Bilum is a traditional string bag in Papua New Guinea. It is made by several processes known as looping, knotless netting and crocheting. Bilums are used for carrying a wide range of items depending on their size. Men use long handled bags so they can be worn over the shoulder, freeing their hands for more important actions. Women prefer the short handled bags, which can be supported by their foreheads, allowing them to carry larger loads, such as babies and/or large amounts of food and goods. Traditionally Bilums are made using handmade woven plant reeds, still widely spread across Papua New Guinea. Nowadays, villagers are using wool-based yarns that allow a greater diversity of colors resulting in highly visible and different patterns and color mix.

Bilums are most common in the Wosera area of East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea. They come in different patterns, of which the each resembles a certain tribe. The Wosera people are the only that maintain the originalities of the Bilums and treasures the complexity of their inherited patterns. More complex and specific patterns are made for carrying during public appearances or displayed during the ceremonial events which include yam festivals, tambuan dances, bride price payment and dead compensation. Today, the concept of Bilums is becoming very marketable also here in Europe.

## ANZ

### australian and new zealand banking group checkbook

illustrated interest deposit sheets, 250pp., 1986

People use different methods of paying throughout the world – bills, coins or checks. All of these mediums are stamped with different symbols and themes. One can get specific, important information about the country just by looking at the currency. On the PNG currency you can find the birds of paradise, on coins as on bills. The paradise birds are an important part of the world trade history and especially in the history of PNG. The paradise bird feathers were transformed into money thanks to the European and American fashion industry of the 1900's.

Today none of us can remember of those trade relations, but they are still deeply rooted in the Papua New Guinea's culture. Australia, the continent that Papua New Guinea belongs to, made sure that these relations are never forgotten by making this checkbook as a reminder. Although the animal trade was made illegal almost 100 years ago (except the one for the scientific purpose), with this checkbook with paradise birds drawn on it, they remain a sort of a 'moneymaker'.



2

## new stamps issue (facsimile)

3



Information folder - special edition, 2008

It is common that nations display their emblems, landmarks, or recognition features, which they are proud of, on their stamps. The contents of the stamps are always displayed in the most possible glorified way. In Papua New Guinea this is their flora and fauna and wildlife, and especially the birds of paradise. But instead of just showing only the bright side of it, these stamps are here to remind of the 'not so glamorous things' like hunting the birds and exporting them to Europe, either for scientific analysis (still legal today) or to make hats for upper-class women.

## cucullo munditia

4

Hygienic cap - to be used in the production fields, 2012

Found its use in various areas of industrial production and gastronomy. The hood encloses the head hair and prevents that precipitate strands fall into the product.



## inter bag label

5

Luggage Label - aerial transport, 2012

A label given by the airline company agent during the check-in, fastened to a piece of luggage, giving information about the owner of the bag/suitcase, as well as the information about the flight (number of flight, departure airport and arrival airport). Thanks to this label, lost luggage can be retrieved and sent back to the owner



## sanitate sudario

6

Sanitary napkin - Women hygiene articles, 2012

A sanitary napkin is an absorbent item worn by a woman while she is menstruating, recovering from vaginal surgery, for lochia (post birth bleeding), abortion, or any other situation where it is necessary to absorb a flow of blood from a woman's vagina.



## carved fertility statue

7

Albizia wood with seashells - indigenous population, about 1950

These ritual artefacts were first found in the 17th century. Back then as well as today these nude male sculptures are an important part of the traditional way of living and its indigenous religion. They represent masculinity, power and fertility.

This very object is a carved plastic cult figure. The rough oval face has seashells representing the eyes. The arms are placed onto the body. The figure's primary and secondary sexual characteristics are highlighted. The round plastic shape is carved with ornaments that recall the abstract, which makes the symbolism even stronger. The figure is covered with a light patina of old, a silver greyish colour of the unprotected wood. The structure of the wood is highly visible through the cracks of the outer surface.



## handdrawings (facsimile)

8

Ball-point pen on paper - local inhabitants, 2012

The Mamose region (East Sepik, Madang, Morobe, West Sepik) inhabitants' drawings show us the most important objects used in everyday life and their purpose in the past as well as today. Most of the drawings show tools and utility objects for everyday use, but also some ritual objects with different meanings.



## women necklaces

9



cut cowrie shell / dried seeds, 2011

Since Papua New Guinea indigenous people wear little or no clothes, jewelry has become very important part of its art and culture. The great significance was given to the necklaces, usually made of different types of shell found on the shore, animal teeth, dried plant seeds, wood or coconut shell.

In the past, small shells were also used as money. This is why necklaces made of shell served not only as a decorative object, but also as a symbol of wealth. The more necklaces one had, the richer he was. The necklaces are also often used as one of the gifts in Papua New Guinean typical custom of gift exchange among the different indigenous communities.

## south pacific beer

10

Beer grate for 6 x 330ml bottles, smashed printed carton, 2006

Found on the streets of Madang, after been thrown away by the driver of a truck loaded with Kapur wood. Their beer („Our Beer“) wanders in the wind, dragged by the traffic of people that cross, trampling and ignoring the story behind this packaging. Its current and popular use is recognized by the way that it is forgotten, used only once and torn in a rush of reaching the bottles of beer, that would in fact reused.



## south pacific export

11

Beer grate for 6 x 330ml bottles, printed carton, 2006

This beer, originally brewed in Papua New Guinea, is sold in supermarkets in the whole Pacific region. Its quality and price makes it one of the internationally 'best-buy' products and therefore Papua New Guinea's pride. Its motto 'brewed locally, loved globally'; shows that the brand is proud for its successful marketing and strategy plan, but also for its sustainable approach to business keeping it environmentally friendly. Since 2002 they support the Paradise Birds Friends Foundation.



## wantok

12



Weekly Newspaper, 17 - 23 Mai 2012

Wantok newspaper is Papua New Guinean local catholic right-oriented newspaper. Written in indigenous language, it is primarily oriented to the local rural reading population. Since the name of the newspaper in Tok Pisin language literally means 'one talk', or 'a person who speaks my language', also colloquially used to name a good friend or a neighbor, it is not a wonder that this newspaper attracts many local readers.

## post courier

13

Daily Newspaper, 08 Mai 2012

Post-Courier newspaper is one of the most popular Papua New Guinean left-oriented newspaper, published in 40 000 copies all over the Pacific. Written in English, it mainly addresses open-minded urban people who are considered to be influential among the people of the indigenous communities.



## crocodile head

14

Hand Carved Wood - Sepik Region, 1968

Crocodiles are the largest animals in PNG and are of great importance in the spiritual lives of the indigenous people. Since ancient times, man and crocodile share the habitat and hunt for the same fish. They've developed a strong spiritual bond that was necessary for this cohabitation. By manhood initiation boys get painful carvings on their backs that resemble crocodile skin. Often houses of the village leaders have wooden crocodile heads as their symbol.



## destroyed rice sack

15

Plastic package for storing rice, nylon strings, 1997

A sack made out of nylon strings, used for storing originally rice and later other goods. Its nylon material makes it an ideal storing and shipping space. Its white, neutral colors hide its content and secure it from the outer elements such as rain, sun, wind, cold... This sack is ripped and made into a sheet. It's filled with burn holes.



## travel drawings (facsimile)

16



Ball-point pen on paper - Gabriele Sturm, 2012

A seed, a garden table, a couple of fire bottles and a picture of village/garden. In a way, these four pictures are related with the sack. These pictures were chosen because of the clues on the sack, such as the burn holes and dirt. The people in the village have used this sack for gardening, as weed defence. The holes make it possible for the seeds to grow because they are the only ones that get sunlight, while the weed is under the sack, and dies from lack of sunlight. The holes are burned simply because there are no scissors to cut them out with.

## bracelett

17

Woven colored threads decorated with cut cowrie shells, 2012

Used daily by the local population as a lucky-charm. In this case stands for a symbol of friendship, as it was exchanged for an old Austrian bike-bell ring sent by the IZK - Cabinet group to Papua New Guinea.



# flying

On the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of June  
Birds of Paradise flew throughout  
Graz...















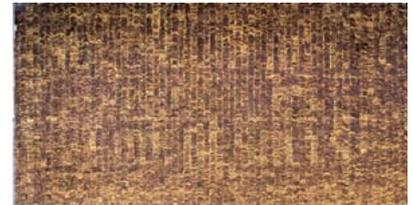




**references**



trade appropriations and explorations



fashion  
feathers and hats

Mantel  
Haltbarkeit

Bedeutung der Feder:  
→ Silberreicher  
→ Paradiesvogel

Tradition der Feder  
am Hut

→ Österreichische  
Tracht  
de Modistin

Geschichte der  
Costume  
whoses have  
feathers on the  
head through  
history.

paradisea apoda

• fasan  
• pfau



paradisea apoda  
mit Feder  
auf dem Hut



**FANCY FEATHERS AND WINGS.**

No. 408. Maroon wing, to black, white, brown, navy, royal, cardinal and green.  
No. 411. Dark pointed wing, some colors.  
No. 422. New shape, soft wing, black only.  
No. 423. Maroon wing, merlot effect, some colors as No. 422.  
No. 424. Cardinal egret, black only.  
No. 502. Fancy egret with various black only.  
No. 503. Small bird with two quills on every, black and fading tail shade.  
No. 504. Cuckoo tail, natural only (black shaded green).  
No. 505. Cuckoo tail, bowing effect, natural only.



## **The Coconut Revolution**

„...a documentary film about the struggle of the indigenous peoples of Bougainville Island against the exploitation of their natural resources The movement is described as the „world’s first successful eco-revolution. It reveals how the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) managed to overcome the marine blockade strategy used by the Papuan army by using coconut oil as fuel for their vehicles.“

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
The\\_Coconut\\_Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Coconut_Revolution). access  
05.05.2012

## **Deforestation in PNG**

<http://news.mongabay.com/2009/0222-png.html>

<http://www.wrm.org.uy/deforestation/Oceania/Papua.html>

<http://www.rain-tree.com/facts.htm>

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/90.pdf>

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/94.pdf>

## **Birds of Paradise**

BBC Natural World - documentation narrated by David Attenborough

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krD\\_qsK85F0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krD_qsK85F0)



participants

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photo/picture credits/graphics  
participants of Cabinet IZK