



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Papua New Guinea I

23rd June – 14th July 2006



Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader David Shackelford

Top 10 bird list as voted by participants:

1. King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise
2. Southern Crowned Pigeon
3. Feline Owlet-Nightjar
4. Greater Bird-of-paradise
5. Crested Bird-of-paradise
6. Ribbon-tailed Astrapia
7. King Bird-of-paradise
8. Emperor Fairy-Wren
9. Doria's Hawk
10. Hook-billed Kingfisher

Trip Summary

Beams of sunlight filtered through the canopy foliage illuminating a labyrinth of red plumes arched into a veiling bouquet over the back and passionately quivering in extraordinary display. The intense golden feathers on the head were surpassed only by the glitter of emerald shimmering iridescent as the throat inflated to produce the raucous courtship call in bold excitement and exclamation. If ever a bird were to emulate a vision of beauty, the Raggiana Bird-of-paradise that was performing an intricate exhibition only a few meters above our heads would undoubtedly be the embodiment of such inspiration.

Papua New Guinea is rightfully regarded as one of the wildest yet most amazing and inspirational destinations on earth. The world's highest island, New Guinea is still almost completely carpeted by tropical rainforest spreading across imposing jagged mountains and extremely rugged territory. Because of this densely forested and topographically forbidding territory, population groups developed in virtual isolation from each other in remote mountain valleys thereby generating hundreds of unique languages and tribal cultures. In fact, New Guinea hosts one of the world's most diverse and fascinating cultural landscapes with many inhabitants still adhering to traditional tribal customs. Papua New Guinea occupies the eastern half of this, the second largest island in the world, and within this nation is a complex mosaic of diversely vegetated habitats giving rise to arguably the most spectacular birds on earth.

Beginning our explorations on the narrow forested trails of Varirata National Park outside the capital city of Port Moresby, we were impressed by the rocky eucalypt scenery and dense lowland rainforest so close to the city limits. At first light the forest came alive with vivacious song and flocks of noisy crimson Western Black-capped Lories and Eclectus Parrots flying past overhead. Although the sounds percolated through the forest interior, it took persistence and patience to obtain views of the unique Black Berrypecker, Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrots that fed cooperatively nearby, and the stunning Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher. *Papilio* butterflies flashed by with electric blue wings as we patiently attempted to follow the tracks of Dwarf Cassowary and the ethereal calls of a Painted Quail-Thrush taunted us as we enjoyed scope views of the rarely seen Barred Owllet-Nightjar. Here we also encountered our first of several poisonous birds, the Hooded Pitohui, a member of the only bird family known to have poisonous feathers loaded with homobatrachotoxin, a chemical also found in poison dart frogs in Central America.



A visit to the manicured grounds of the Pacific Adventist University allowed us a chance to scope the nocturnal Papuan Frogmouth frozen in an a deceptively disguised daytime position, several charming Rufous Night-Heron, and Comb-crested Jacana walking on lily pads with specially designed elongated toes. Here we also carefully studied the alley-shaped bower of a Fawn-breasted

Bowerbird created with thousands of carefully placed sticks and decorated with particular colored fruits and leaves for decoration in hopes of attracting a mate.

We bid a temporary goodbye to the humidity and heat of the lowlands and set off by small aircraft to the Central Highlands of the Tari Valley. Spread below us during the flight we were privileged to gaze down upon one of the largest expanses of lowland tropical forest on earth surpassed only by the Congo Basin of Ituri and the vast lowlands of Amazonia. Landing on a dirt runway, there were literally hundreds of local people who had come to watch the spectacle of an airplane landing in the village. Men wearing traditional grass coverings, cassowary bones for protection, and bird-of-paradise plumes placed in their hair greeted us and assisted us transporting our luggage to our off-road vehicle. Making our way along a horrifically muddy and potholed road, it was fascinating to see the steep sun-baked mud walls surrounding properties and graves of respected ancestors from generations past, still well maintained.

Arriving at the luxurious Ambua Lodge, we were all impressed by the quality of the round thatched rooms complete with hydroelectric power and electric blankets for warmth. Nestled inside montane forest featuring heavy growth of bryophytes and mosses, the view of the surrounding valley was simply breathtaking. Indeed, Ambua Lodge is often ranked as the finest eco-lodge in all the world. Even from the forest adjoining the lodge itself we were fortunate to find the gorgeous Princess Stephanie's *Astrapia* displaying its spectacular tail plumes from a prominent perch, the unique and boldly marked Mountain Peltops, and the highly sought-after but bizarre Wattled Ploughbill feeding nearby.

Ascending into the steep highlands almost to where the tree line ends near the mountain pass we continued our search for some of the most spectacular birds on earth including the outrageous King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise sporting unbelievable elaborate head plumes that it brandishes in earnest while uttering energetic display songs. Here we crept carefully adjacent the dense forest thick with bamboo finding the secretive Blue-faced Parrot-finch and dazzling Blue Bird-of-paradise and later the Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia* that supports white tail feathers over three times the length of its own body - proportionally the longest tail streamers of any bird in the world! Later we enjoyed looking out over the undulating grasslands of the spectacular Tari mountain pass while smart Papuan Harriers cruised by.

It wasn't until the mid-1800s that European traders and missionaries began to settle in New Guinea, and even then the highland region, thought to be inhospitable, wasn't explored until the 1930s. Here in remote mountain valleys brave explorers in search of gold discovered people living in fertile mountain valleys with cultures surviving unchanged for countless centuries. Even as we walked along muddy paths through one of the villages we could see people wearing traditional dress, tending their gardens and pigs, and building their bush material huts. Here we spent an incredible few hours with the Huli Wigmen, famous for their elaborate and colorful dress demonstrating their great admiration for the birds-of-paradise. In an intimate ceremonial dance we watched the men spectacularly adorned with elaborate wigs of feathers, flowers and cuscus fur performing while looking skyward with decorated faces painted with yellow ochre clay. Branches of leaves were positioned behind each man to form a tail plume and vines with brightly colored berries and forest beads were hung from the arms and ankles in an astonishing festival of dynamic color and rhythmic

beating drums.

In the Tari Valley we scoped a vocalizing Lawe's Parotia that sported a set of impressive head rackets shimmering lively in the morning sunlight. Black Sicklebills displaying conspicuously on a forested crest with a sudden rigid flexing of wings over the head was a pleasure to witness in the wild and we were fortunate to find the localized Greater Sooty Owl that we scoped for an extended period of time near a roost cavity. One late evening we ventured into the depths of the interior forest near a swift river crossing and waited patiently and successfully for a very rarely encountered bird, the near-mythical Feline Owlet-Nightjar sporting intricate auburn and white streaks and elongated facial bristles resembling cat's whiskers.

After a long but worthwhile wait for the plane to land we were finally on our way to our next mountain lodge, nestled in the mountain forests of the Central Ranges over 9,000 feet above sea level. Even from the wooden balcony we marveled at the active fruit feeding tray teeming with ornamental birds such as the complexly patterned Brown Sicklebill that gives a startlingly loud machinegun-like call and the brightly colored Brehm's Tiger-Parrot among many others.

Innumerable varieties of mosses, bromeliads, and orchids presented the feeling of a natural wonderland as the surrounding stunted forest enveloped us during our explorations. Consequently, Papua New Guinea hosts more species of orchids than any other nation in the world! Through a series of waterfalls and steep scenic cliffs we found such birds as the aloof Dusky Woodcock, appropriately named Ornate Melidectes, and with persistence we tracked down a phenomenally bright orange male Crested Bird-of-paradise. Following the fern-laden walkways adjoining the lodge we were fortunate to stumble on an endearing marsupial called a Short-furred Dasyure and with persistence we eventually tracked down the extraordinary Mountain Owlet-Nightjar of which we approached with the use of spotlight to within only a few feet for incredible photographic opportunities.

Flying west towards the Irian Jaya border of Indonesia to a small settlement called Kiunga, we set out in high anticipation for what was soon to come. We were approaching one of the most famous



sites in Papua New Guinea, the location where David Attenborough was ceremoniously hoisted into the treetops for awe-inspiring footage of displaying Greater and Raggiana Bird-of-paradise. Many birds-of-paradise keep traditional display trees that are used generation after generation, and as we drew near to the site we could hear a cacophony of sound echoing through the forest. After carefully approaching we took position beneath the sprawling tree and gazed skyward to behold a flurry of rhythmic displays, intricate wing mantling and vibrant golden plume posturing. One of the finest avian

experiences on earth, it was spellbinding to be besieged by such a marvelous and captivating demonstration of nature's efforts to survive and compete within a species.

Departing before dawn from the bank of the expansive Fly River, we loaded into an open canoe and began our journey into the remote lowland rainforest interior. Passing by small forest villages and locals transporting materials by dugout canoes, we slowed to hear the sharp cries of an extraordinary Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise that we located displaying at the top of a conspicuously exposed Pandanus palm. Eventually we veered onto a smaller tributary and were overwhelmed by the sheer number of brightly colored parrots, pigeons and doves, and hornbills giving testimony to the pristine condition of the surrounding forest. We sat mesmerized as gaudy Palm Cockatoos flashed brilliant red cheek-patches while massive flocks of Collared Imperial Pigeons only just outnumbered spectacular Australian migrants such as the giant Channel-billed Cuckoo.

Our rainforest lodge built of local palms and set on stilts was very basic, but offered spectacular views of the serene Elevala River that winds for miles into increasingly remote territory. The locals were eager to peer through our scopes and flip through the field guides, and in return they caught fish that they cooked over open fire in the evenings after we took showers. Exploring this truly wild place was enthralling and we vigilantly persisted along the muddy forest trails finding rarely encountered gems such as the stunning Little Paradise-Kingfisher and enigmatic Hook-billed Kingfisher, the wary Hooded Pitta, the incomparable King Bird-of-paradise displaying in a tangle of vines above our heads, and with a bit of luck we managed to obtain excellent views of the endangered Vulturine (Pesquet's) Parrot. A highlight of the tour materialized while we quietly floating down the river at sunset. We had already found the rare New Guinea Crocodile when we spotted a colossal Southern Crowned Pigeon perched on a hefty tree branch extending over the water's edge. This creature is completely intrepid blue combined with deep maroon and an extravagant crest of feathers extending over its head; by far the most outrageous of all the world's pigeons and doves.



After returning to the small town of Kiunga we spent a morning staking out a section of remnant forest where we were fortunate to find a gorgeous sunset-radiant male Flame Bowerbird, a species that contends to have the brightest plumage in the world! Loading our gear into our 4x4s we set out northward along a mining road maintained to transport the vast quantities of gold and copper that are extracted from this region. Stopping at a the rapids of a hastily flowing watercourse, we scanned carefully finding white-water specialists including the petite Torrent Flycatcher, boldly patterned Torrent-lark, and the difficult Salvadori's Teal that seemingly swims effortless and graceful through the surging water.

In the foothills of the Star Mountains we spent considerable time searching for fruiting trees in the collage of lower montane vegetation enshrouded in mist giving our surroundings a rather ethereal feel. The wind chime song of Blue-collared Parrots could be heard overhead and with careful

scanning we managed to locate the Magnificent Bird-of-paradise and Carola's Parotia among many other bird species. Perhaps the show was stolen at the end of the day when after watching a massive flock of Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrots feeding nearby we witnessed the very rare Doria's Hawk with nesting material clung tightly in its talons fly by almost directly in front of us!

Next we traveled to the mining road near the Ok Tedi River where we arrived pre-dawn in search of a truly mythical species, the Shovel-billed Kingfisher which we all heard and a few of us were lucky enough to see. The surrounding forest was alive with song and the harsh screams of the Magnificent Riflebird pierced the air continuously throughout the morning as we birded through the forest interior riddled with limestone sinkholes. We also worked hard but only obtained glimpses of the very secretive Greater Melampitta, our final representative of a phenomenal twenty-three species of birds-of-paradise encountered on the mainland!

Our final mainland destination after returning to the capital city of Port Moresby was the open secondary habitat surrounding the slow flowing Brown River where we obtained amazing views of gems such as Yellow-billed and Common Paradise-Kingfishers. We barely avoided the mistake of stepping on a camouflaged Northern Death Adder but it was well worth the hazard as from that site we enjoyed superb views of the brilliant Emperor Fairy-Wren, a tiny blue gem secretively bounding through the undergrowth. This day as well we wrestled with an incredible thirteen-foot Papuan Olive Python that caused quite a stir before boarding our aircraft to the South Pacific islands of the Bismarck Archipelago. This volcanic series of islands is situated along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," and from our diving resort we were we were literally encircled by a chain active volcanoes periodically billowing plumes of ash-laden smoke into the atmosphere.

Venturing into the surrounding rainforest in Pokili Wildlife Management Area was quite an endeavor as we literally had to weave our footsteps around thousands upon thousands of Melanesian



Scrubfowl burrows that had been dug deep into the ground to incubate clutches of eggs in the warm volcanic soil. This otherworldly experience of venturing into the heart of the largest megapode colony on earth is something that has to be experienced to be believed! In the same area we managed outstanding views of the gorgeous Black-headed Paradise-Kingfisher while Blue-eyed Cockatoos and Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeons whizzed past acrobatically in flight over the treetops past Queen Alexandra's Birdwing Butterflies, the largest butterfly in the world with a wingspan over a foot wide! Another afternoon

we were fortunate to find the scarce New Britain Kingfisher and with persistence locate the beautiful Bismarck Woodswallow.

Boarding our sea-bound diving vessel we motored into the Bismarck Sea to explore several small remote tropical islands. As the sun's first rays reflected across the sea, playful Spinner Dolphins and impressive Short-finned Pilot-Whales greeted us with impressive leaps and breaches before we

continued further out to sea finding the scarce Heinroth's Shearwater gliding effortlessly over the breaking surf. Anchoring beside the white sand beaches of Restorf Island we continued our explorations discovering the boldly attractive Beach Kingfisher and the extraordinary shaggy Nicobar Pigeon before we adorned masks and swam through the maze of surrounding spectacular coral reef. In an underwater extravaganza of living coral we swam through the exceptionally clear turquoise water beset with every color imaginable in vivid motion from anemones to urchins, starfish to crabs, and sea lilies to parrotfish.

We tallied 386 bird species during our tour, a very high total for any PNG tour, with all but seven of these species being seen. Most of the 23 birds-of-paradise that we enjoyed included full-plumaged males with nearly half performing spectacular courtship displays! Other prominent bird groups with many stunning species included parrots, honeyeaters, doves, and kingfishers. From poisonous birds and giant butterflies to ornamented tribesmen and displaying birds-of-paradise, Papua New Guinea is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating destinations on earth.

Photo Credits: Huli Wigmen, Raggiana Bird-of-paradise, Crested Berrypecker, Crested Bird-of-paradise, Ambua Lodge All photos by David Shackelford

Annotated Species List:

Codes: NG – endemic to New Guinea, PNG – endemic to Papua New Guinea, NB – endemic to New Britain, BA – endemic to the Bismarck Archipelago, NE – near endemic to New Guinea

BIRDS

Cassowaries *Casuariidae*

(Southern Cassowary NE)

(Casuarius casuarius)

Tracks and scats seen in the Elevala River area. Not counted in the trip total, of course.

Grebes *Podicipedidae*

Australasian Grebe

Tachybaptus novaehollandiae

Up to twelve daily in the Port Moresby area: at PAU, Varirata, and near Brown River.

Shearwaters & Petrels *Procellariidae*

Heinroth's Shearwater NE

Puffinus heinrothi

One of this seldom-seen species was seen by four of us on the Bismarck Sea boat trip 13 July.

Boobies & Gannets *Sulidae*

Brown Booby

Sula leucogaster

Three on the Bismarck Sea boat trip 13 July.

Cormorants *Phalacrocoracidae*

Little Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax sulcirostris

Up to 30 daily in the Port Moresby area at Pacific Adventist University and Brown River. One flew over Mambissanda high in the central mountains below Kumul Lodge on 29 July.

Little Pied Cormorant

Phalacrocorax melanoleucos

Up to ten daily in the Port Moresby area at PAU and Brown River. Two each were also seen at Kiunga and the Kulu River Bridge.

Anhinga & Darters *Anhingidae*

Darter

Anhinga melanogaster

Two on the Elevala River plus singles at Brown River and PAU.

Taxonomic note: Race *A. m. novaehollandiae* is usually split as Australasian Darter, occurring from Australia, New Guinea and Wallacea.

Frigatebirds *Fregatidae*

Lesser Frigatebird

Fregata ariel

Twenty far offshore Walindi on 12 July were apparently this species, as confirmed by the 35 on the Bismarck Sea boat trip there the next day.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns *Ardeidae*

Great Egret

Ardea alba

Up to 25 around Port Moresby and small numbers around Kiunga.

Taxonomic note: The nominate Old World Great Egret may be split from the New World *A. a. egretta* which would become American Egret. This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Pied Heron

Egretta picata

Up to 15 birds per day around Port Moresby: at PAU and the nearby rice paddies.

Intermediate Egret

Egretta intermedia

Up to 40 per day around Port Moresby and small numbers around Kiunga.

Taxonomic note: This group may be split into 3 species, Yellow-billed Egret *E. brachyrhyncha*, Plumed Egret *E. plumifera* (which is what we recorded in PNG) and the nominate Intermediate Egret. This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Single birds at Brown River and PAU.

Pacific Reef-Heron

Egretta sacra

Single dark morph birds on Timor and Restorf islands 13 July.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Up to 300 daily in the Port Moresby area, with many coming to roost at PAU in the evenings.

Taxonomic note: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret *E. coromanda*. This split is as yet not recognised by Clements.

Striated (Little Green/Green-backed) Heron

Butorides striatus

One bird on the Elevala River on 2 July.

Taxonomic note: A polytypic and cosmopolitan superspecies with over 30 recognized forms. Clements recognizes two full species, the North American Green Heron *B. virescens* and the most widespread nominate form which we recorded in PNG. This split is not recognized by Handbook of Birds of the World (del Hoyo et al) who lump these forms under the nominate.

Rufous (Nankeen) Night-Heron

Nycticorax caledonicus

Up to 15 per day at Pacific Adventist University and Brown River; eight were seen on New Britain

11 July, including pre-dawn on the paved highway, where they apparently eat road-killed frogs.

Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*

On New Britain, one flushed by the owling site and one scoped closely from the Kulu River Bridge.

Ibises & Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

Australian (White) Ibis *Threskiornis molucca*

Up to 20 per day in the Port Moresby area: at PAU and Brown River.

Ducks, Geese & Swans *Anatidae*

Spotted Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna guttata*

Eleven were seen in their roost at Pacific Adventist University on both of our visits. Two were seen from the Kulu River Bridge.

Wandering Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna arcuata*

About 300 were at Pacific Adventist University 23 June but only one tenth that number were at the same ponds on 10 July.

Green Pygmy-goose *Nettapus pulchellus*

38 were on the lake near Vanapa trans-Brown River and one was at Pacific Adventist University 10 July. A distinctive and beautiful little duck.

Salvadori's Teal NG *Salvadorina waigiensis*

One at the Ok Menga Hydroelectric Plant near Tabubil 5 July cooperated nicely, giving scope views as it swam in the rushing torrent and preened on the riverbank.

Gray Teal *Anas gracilis*

Two picked out amongst the many Pacific Black Ducks at Pacific Adventist University 10 July.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

Up to 150 at Pacific Adventist University; a pair seen twice on the Fly River; four on New Britain.

Osprey *Pandionidae*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A pair flying over an island off the tip of the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain on our boat trip.

Hawks, Eagles & Kites *Accipitridae*

Pacific Baza (Crested Hawk) *Aviceda subcristata*

Seen almost daily in the Kiunga-Tabubil area, with fifteen along the Elevala River 2 July the maximum; one near Brown River; up to four seen per day on New Britain.

Long-tailed Honey-buzzard E *Henicopernis longicauda*

Singles at Varirata National Park both days; seen most days in the Kiunga-Tabubil region, with up to four per day.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Up to 25 daily in the Mt. Hagen area; singles near Port Moresby 23 June and between Kinuga and Tabubil.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*

Eight were near Brown River on 9 July, with one or two in the Port Moresby region on other days.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*

Common everywhere in the New Guinea and New Britain lowlands, with up to 20-25 near Brown River and daily on New Britain; also three in Tari Valley.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

Three at Mora Mora 11 July and pairs on Timor and Restorf island 13 July. We saw the very large nest on Timor Island.

Eastern Marsh-Harrier *Circus spilonotus*

Singles various days at Tari Gap and Tari Valley plus up to two at Mt. Hagen Airport.

Taxonomic note: Race *C. s. spilothorax* is sometimes considered a full species, Papuan Marsh-Harrier.

Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster*

From one to three seen on most days in the Port Moresby-Varirata and Kiunga-Tabubil regions. Most of these were normal morph adults. Up to eight were seen daily on New Britain.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*

A total of three birds in Tari Valley.

Gray-headed Goshawk NG *Accipiter poliocephalus*

A total of four birds in the area from Kiunga to Ekame Lodge.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrocephalus*

Seven sightings were scattered among Varirata, Tari Valley, Km17, Elevala River, the road to Tabubil, and the Port Moresby region.

New Britain Sparrowhawk NB *Accipiter brachyurus*

One flew to a perch and remained there as we watched it in the fading light during our drive to Walindi on the day we arrived. Any of New Britain's endemic raptors is a prize during a brief visit.

Doria's Goshawk NG *Megatriorchis doriae*

Samuel Kepuknai identified this bird by call as it approached us carrying prey over Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, at the end of the day 7 July. This large, rarely seen raptor was the capping reward to those people that stayed the whole long day. Voted eighth-best bird of the trip, it would have ranked higher had not half the group retired before it was seen.

New Guinea Eagle (New Guinea Harpy Eagle) NG *Harpyopsis novaeguineae*

Samuel and David saw, and a few others glimpsed, this huge forest raptor from Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, on 7 July. Pity that it did not show for all.

Falcons & Caracaras *Falconidae*

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

An immature was eating a chicken (?) high in a tree along the highway east of Kimbe, New Britain, on 11 July. This bird, presumably of the resident subspecies *ernesti*, initially confused us as it showed little of the expected ventral streaking but it was clearly too large and powerful to be a hobby.

Megapodes *Megapodiidae*

Black-billed (Yellow-legged) Brush-turkey NG *Talegalla fuscirostris*

Heard at Varirata and Ekame Lodge on several days. Nest mounds were also seen at Varirata National Park.

Melanesian (Volcano) Scrubfowl NE *Megapodius eremita*

Always a highlight of our visit to New Britain is the vast nesting colony at Pokili Wildlife Management Area. Thousands of birds lay their eggs in the warm soil in this hot springs area that covers many hectares! The entire area is riddled with nest burrows. Just walking through a portion

of the colony, we flushed many adults and had many great views of these strange birds skulking in the trees. David estimated that 150 birds were seen. We visited on an egg harvest day, during which the local residents dig up eggs from the burrows in the portion of the colony that each family owns. It was a fascinating sight to see the diggers in action. Although the birds are protected by law and the egg harvesting is regulated, this harvest still appears to be on a very large scale; the colony is so large that it seems to have been sustainable to date.

Pheasants & Partridges *Phasianidae*

Brown Quail

Coturnix psilophora

One flushed just outside Varirata National Park 24 June and five were seen on the road to Tari Gap 26 June.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots *Rallidae*

Buff-banded Rail

Gallirallus philippensis

One walked onto the lawn of Ambua Lodge and other singles were seen in Tari Valley on two days.

Bare-eyed Rail NE

Gymnocrex plumbeiventris

A bird calling at dusk from across the Elevala River from Ekame Lodge was identified by Samuel as this species.

White-browed Crane

Porzana cinerea

From the Kulu River Bridge, a cooperative pair was spotted by Michelle for her and Curtis' 2,000th bird, after which scope views were enjoyed by all.

Purple Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

Common around Port Moresby, with up to 75 seen daily from Pacific Adventist University to Vanapa, trans-Brown River.

Taxonomic note: This cosmopolitan species is currently in taxonomic review and several forms are expected to be recognised as distinct species. The form we recorded might then become Black-winged Swamphen *P. melanopterus*. Other forms to be recognised may include Indian Swamphen *P. poliocephalus*, Philippine Swamphen *P. pulverulentus* and Eastern Swamphen *P. melanotus*.

Dusky Moorhen

Gallinula tenebrosa

Locally common around Port Moresby, with moderate numbers seen from Pacific Adventist University to Vanapa, trans-Brown River.

Jacanas *Jacaniidae*

Comb-crested Jacana

Irediparra gallinacea

Four or five at Pacific Adventist University on both of our visits there.

Plovers & Lapwings *Charadriidae*

Masked Lapwing

Vanellus miles

Common in the Port Moresby lowlands, with up to twelve daily along roads, fields, and wetlands.

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

One seen at Kilometer 120 near Tabubil; two on the Tabubil airstrip.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

- Dusky (Rufous) Woodcock NE** *Scolopax saturata*
 Seen by only a lucky few at Kumul Lodge, this bird was extra-elusive this year.
- Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
 Five were at Garu Beach and Walindi Resort, both on New Britain, on 12 July.
- Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis*
 One flying high over Garu Forest on 12 July was a surprise sighting.
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Five were at Walindi Resort on 12 July.

Terns Sternidae

- Great Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii*
 About 50 were day-roosting on the reefs off Garu Beach and Walindi Resort on 12 July; fifteen were tallied on our boat trip on the Bismarck Sea the next day.
- Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*
 One was at Walindi Resort on 12 July; four were seen on the Bismarck Sea boat trip the next day. These were young birds overwintering from the Asian population *longipennis*, in which adult birds have a black bill even when breeding.
- Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus*
 One on our boat trip on the Bismarck Sea 13 July was initially riding flotsam and then flushed away.
- Black Noddy** *Anous minutus*
 One hundred unidentified noddies were foraging far offshore Garu Beach on 12 July. On the Bismarck Sea boat trip the next day, 25 of 26 noddies were Black Noddies.
- Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*
 One individual was flying with the largest flock of Black Noddies during our Bismarck Sea boat trip on 13 July.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

- Rock Pigeon (Dove)** *Columba livia*
 Up to ten were around the Port Moresby airport.
- Slender-billed [Brown] Cuckoo-Dove** *Macropygia amboinensis*
 Widespread, with up to ten in a day being seen at Varirata, in the Kiunga-Tabubil region, and on New Britain.
- Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove NG** *Macropygia nigrirostris*
 Up to five per day around Ambua and Kumul lodges, at Tabubil, and near Port Moresby.
- Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove** *Macropygia mackinlayi*
 One bird seen in flight on Timor Island and three seen better on Restorf Island, in Kimbe Bay, on 13 July. This is one of the small-island specialist species.
- Great Cuckoo-Dove NE** *Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*
 Three sightings at Ambua Lodge and four along the Elevala River of this huge-tailed dove.
- Stephan's Dove** *Chalcophaps stephani*
 Two fly-bys at Boystown Road were topped by very good views of five on the road at Pokili.
- New Guinea Bronzewing NG** *Henicophaps albifrons*
 One flushed and scoped perched in the forest along the Elevala River 2 July.

Peaceful Dove NE*Geopelia placida*

Up to fifteen at Pacific Adventist University and a few others near Port Moresby.

Bar-shouldered Dove*Geopelia humeralis*

Up to five at Pacific Adventist University. Very local in New Guinea.

Nicobar Pigeon*Caloenas nicobarica*

Eight of this highly sought-after, unique pigeon gave us many merry chases within the forest on Restorf Island, but eventually all pursuers got good views of this elusive small-island specialist, a real prize.

Thick-billed Ground-Pigeon NG*Trugon terrestris*

Heard along the Elevala River 2 July and one seen flushing in that area the next day.

Southern Crowned-Pigeon NG*Goura scheepmakeri*

One of the trip highlights was the superb views that we enjoyed of this amazing bird! All were along the Elevala River. We had great pairs during daylight boat rides on both 2 & 4 July. In between, we heard another on 3 July and then spotlighted one on its roost during that evening's boat ride. This was voted second-best bird of the trip.

Wompoo (Magnificent) Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus magnificus*

A total of four birds seen at Kilometer 17 and along the Elevala River, plus a few heard there.

Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove NG*Ptilinopus perlatus*

Up to 35 daily in the Kiunga – Elevala River area; otherwise only one at Varirata on 9 July.

Ornate Fruit-Dove NG*Ptilinopus ornatus*

Up to five scoped from Ekame Lodge.

Superb Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus superbus*

Singles heard and seen around Ekame Lodge; up to ten daily around Tabubil.

Beautiful Fruit-Dove NG*Ptilinopus pulchellus*

Singles seen at Varirata and Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.

White-breasted Fruit-Dove NE*Ptilinopus rivoli*

Two seen at Ok Ma, Tabubil, represented the mainland New Guinea form with a purple belly and yellow surrounded by white on its breast.

Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove NE*Ptilinopus solomonensis*

Three seen on Timor Island as we viewed from the boat 13 July. This is another small-island specialist.

Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove NG*Ptilinopus iozonus*

Common in the New Guinea lowlands of Kiunga and Port Moresby, with up to 35 daily near Kiunga and 50 in the Brown River area on 9 July.

Knob-billed Fruit-Dove BA*Ptilinopus insolitus*

We totaled four birds on New Britain 12 July. Although it was initially just seen as a fly-by at Garu Forest, eventually we all rejoiced at great scope views of this species hooting trans-Kulu River.

Dwarf Fruit-Dove NG*Ptilinopus nanus*

Eight birds were along the Elevala and Fly rivers on 2 July.

Red-knobbed (Knob-billed) Imperial-Pigeon NE*Ducula rubricera*

Abundant on New Britain, with maximums of 80 at Mora Mora and Pokili 11 July and 60 at various sites the next day. Clements and others use the name Red-knobbed instead of Knob-billed because six species of imperial-pigeons have a knobbed bill, but only this species has a red knob.

Purple-tailed Imperial-Pigeon NG*Ducula rufigaster*

Pairs seen and/or heard inside the forest along the Elevala River 2 & 3 July.

Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon NG*Ducula chalconota*

A pair inside the forest at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge was initially a fly-by glimpse, was then heard and believed by Max to be a New Guinea Eagle, but then we

flushed the birds and got nice perched views through gaps in the forest.

Finsch's Imperial-Pigeon NG *Ducula finschii*

One flyby inside Poliki Wildlife Area on New Britain.

Island (Gray) Imperial-Pigeon NE *Ducula pistrinaria*

About 60 were swarming all over both Timor and Restorf islands during our Bismarck Sea boat trip 13 July. This species found east of New Guinea is often called Gray Imperial-Pigeon but that name belongs to another, quite similar species found from the southern Philippines to north Borneo and Sulawesi.

Pinon Imperial-Pigeon NG *Ducula pinon*

Up to 25 seen daily in the Kiunga – Elevala River region; two scoped brilliantly at Brown River.

Collared (Black-collared) Imperial-Pigeon NG *Ducula mullerii*

Abundant along the Elevala and Fly rivers, with 200 estimated on our initial trip along both rivers 2 July and much smaller numbers the next two days. As lowland rainforest along rivers is its optimum habitat, boat trips on these rivers are the easy way to see many of this species.

Zoe Imperial-Pigeon NG *Ducula zoeae*

Heard daily in the Kiunga, Elevala River, Tabubil, and Brown River areas, fewer were seen. Seven along the Elevala River and five at Ok Ma, Tabubil, were the high daily counts seen.

Torresian Imperial-Pigeon NE *Ducula spilorrhoea*

Seven of the nominate form flew over PAU 10 July. On New Britain we had the strikingly yellowish-creamy form that may be split in the future as **Yellowish-tinted Imperial-Pigeon** *D. subflavescens*. We had eight at Pokili and two trans-Kulu River.

Papuan Mountain-Pigeon NE *Gymnophaps albertisii*

Typically, flocks flashed overhead on whooshing wings both in lowlands and highlands, but not on New Britain. They were commonest from Kiunga to Tabubil, with the highest total being 150 at Ok Ma.

Cockatoos & Allies *Cacatuidae*

Palm Cockatoo NE *Probosciger aterrimus*

One or two seen and heard daily in the Kiunga – Elevala River region and both days at Ok Ma, except that we tallied seven along the Elevala River on 3 July. This is a mind-blowing bird when first encountered and it never becomes boring.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*

Two at PAU on the first day of the tour; up to 20 daily in the Kiunga – Elevala River area.

Blue-eyed Cockatoo NB *Cacatua ophthalmica*

Pleasingly common on New Britain, with 30 at Mora Mora and Pokili being the maximum count.

Parrots, Macaws & Allies *Psittacidae*

Yellow-streaked (Greater Streaked) Lory NG *Chalcopsitta sintillata*

After two were brilliantly scoped on big flower stalks at Varirata on 24 June, we were content with the more-usual fly-by views for the rest of the trip: except for five on 5 July we had pairs on two days around Kiunga, at Ok Ma, and at PAU.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Common and widespread in the lowlands, with the highest numbers being 100 in the Port Moresby area 24 June and 50 on New Britain 12 July; in the highlands, up to 20 in a day in the Tari and Mt. Hagen regions.

Goldie's Lorikeet NG *Psitteuteles goldiei*

Pairs and flocks flying over high, both near Ambua Lodge and at Kumul Lodge, with 40 estimated at the latter on 1 July.

Purple-bellied (Eastern Black-capped) Lory PNG *Lorius hypoinochrous*

Common on New Britain, with a maximum of 50 on 12 July, when we had many fine views of this beautiful bird nectaring.

(Western) Black-capped Lory NG *Lorius lory*

From two to fifteen birds per day at Varirata, Kiunga, Elevala River, Tabubil, and Brown River.

Red-flanked Lorikeet NE *Charmosyna placentis*

Ten birds each at Boystown Road and Brown River. As usual, more numerous on New Britain but less common at Pokili (only 40) and more common at Garu Forest (200), the reverse of last year.

Fairy (Little Red) Lorikeet NG *Charmosyna pulchella*

Small fly-by flocks at Tabubil, with 13 on 7 July at Dablin Creek Road and ten at Ok Ma the next day.

Papuan Lorikeet NG *Charmosyna papou*

Only a pair at Ambua Lodge but ten per day at Kumul Lodge, where dark morph birds predominate.

One of the world's most beautiful parrots, plus it comes in different colors!

Plum-faced (Whiskered) Lorikeet NG *Oreopsittacus arfaki*

Small fly-over flocks totaling ten near Ambua Lodge 26 June.

Yellow-billed Lorikeet NG *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*

From 15 to 55 birds daily in the Ambua Lodge area.

Orange-billed Lorikeet NG *Neopsittacus pullicauda*

From four to six daily in the Ambua Lodge area; ten at Kumul Lodge.

Pesquet's (Vulturine) Parrot NG *Psitttrichas fulgidus*

Often called Vulturine Parrot but a South American species has that name. Usually difficult to see well, we did well with five birds along the Elevala River on 3 July, a pair at Ok Ma 6 July, and one bird at Dablin Creek Road 7 July.

Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot NE *Micropsitta keiensis*

From two to five birds daily 1-3 July from Kiunga to Ekame Lodge.

Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot NG *Micropsitta pusio*

A pair in the savanna just outside Varirata National Park 24 June treated us to incredible close scope views! Typically, these thumb-sized parrots are only seen flying past. We also had distant scope views of seven in one dead tree at Garu Forest 12 July.

Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot NE *Micropsitta bruijnii*

Small flocks flew over us all day at Dablin Creek Road 7 July, but these sightings were totally eclipsed when toward the end of that day an incredible flock of 150 birds descended on the trees around us and swarmed all over the bark like tiny nuthatches – only colorful, thumb-sized parrots! We enjoyed scope views of many birds flaking bark and chewing lichens. As last year, these delightful birds were a show-stealer and finished tied for tenth-best bird. The literature generally states that this species goes in small flocks of up to 20 birds. However, Handbook of the Birds of the World notes that, in November 1992, 650 were counted flying northeast at Ok Tedi – essentially the same site as our observation!

Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot NG *Clycopsitta guliemitertii*

Up to fifteen birds every day in the Kiunga – Elevala River – Tabubil region; five at Brown River. One of the cutest parrots.

Double-eyed Fig-Parrot NE *Clycopsitta diophthalma*

Seen nearly daily in the Kiunga region, with ten on the Elevala River 3 July being the maximum.

Large Fig-Parrot NG *Psittaculirostris desmarestii*

One fly-over seen and another heard on the Elevala River 3 July.

Painted Tiger-Parrot NG*Psittacella picta*

One female seen at Ambua Lodge 26 June. The field guide color plate has the labels for male and female transposed for this species.

Brehm's Tiger-Parrot NG*Psittacella brehmii*

From two to four daily at Kumul Lodge, most often feeding obligingly on the fruit at the bird feeder. This is the largest and most-common tiger-parrot but it is always charming to watch.

Red-cheeked Parrot NE*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*

Common at Varirata and in the Kiunga – Elevala River area, with up to 30 birds seen daily; smaller numbers at Brown River and PAU.

Blue-collared Parrot NG*Geoffroyus simplex*

What this bird did not provide in views – flocks flying high against and even into the clouds – it granted in its delightful voice – musical “wind chimes” cascading down from the heavens throughout or days at Dablin Creek Road. A remarkable, joyful sound! We estimated up to 40 birds.

Eclectus Parrot NE*Eclectus roratus*

Common and seen daily in numbers up to twenty in the Kiunga – Elevala River – Tabubil region; six at Brown River. However, this bird is much more abundant on New Britain, where we estimated 100 on each of our birding days on land.

Papuan King-Parrot NG*Alisterus chloropterus*

Seven of this spectacular parrot were seen in Tari Valley over two days.

Green-fronted (Bismarck) Hanging-Parrot BA*Loriculus tener*

A flock of four flying past Mora Mora on 11 July were seen by a few people. This species would better be named Green-rumped Hanging-Parrot, as several hanging-parrots have green fronts but all other species except this one have red rumps.

Cuckoos Cuculidae

Brush Cuckoo*Cacomantis variolosus*

The two main songs of this cuckoo were heard on most days in the lowlands and the lower portions of the montane valleys (Tari and below Kumul Lodge). We heard up to eight per day and Steve made sure that we never ignored it. Only seven individuals were actually seen, but these tended to be scope views.

Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo NE*Cacomantis castaneiventris*

One heard singing most days in the Tabubil area, with one seen briefly at Ok Ma on 8 July.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo*Cacomantis flabelliformis*

Heard near Ambua Lodge on 26 & 27 June.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx lucidus*

This migrant from Australia and New Zealand was well scoped trans-Kulu River on 12 July.

White-eared Bronze-Cuckoo NG*Chrysococcyx meyeri*

Three birds seen around Tabubil, with one at Ok Ma and two at Dablin Creek Road. We also saw a rare wanderer to the lowlands at Brown River on 9 July, a female that we scoped at close range.

Little Bronze-Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx minutillus*

Single birds were seen at Varirata 24 June and Brown River 9 July.

Taxonomic note: This species is often split into two species, the northern Malay Bronze-Cuckoo *C. peninsularis* and the nominate and southern Gould's Bronze-Cuckoo. The form we saw this year represented the former grouping.

Long-billed Cuckoo NG*Rhamphomantis megarhynchus*

Twice we scoped an adult male at Kilometer 17 near Kiunga on 1 July.

Dwarf Koel NG*Microdynamis parva*

On both days at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, we were treated to super views by an adult male. The

first time we called it in by sound recording and scoped it; the second time it was in a fruiting tree.

Asian [Common] Koel*Eudynamys scolopacea*

From one to five were seen and heard daily in the Kiunga – Elevela River area; it was also heard both days on New Britain.

Channel-billed Cuckoo*Scythrops novaehollandiae*

We saw four singles of this spectacular giant: three along the Elevela River and one near Brown River that was being pursued by a Torresian Crow; this cuckoo is a brood parasite of crows.

Violaceous Coucal BA*Centropus violaceus*

Five were seen and others heard in our two days on mainland New Britain.

Greater Black Coucal NG*Centropus menbeki*

We regularly heard several calling along the Elevela River, especially in the evening around Ekame Lodge. More satisfying was one seen on the edge of the road at Ok Ma, where we also heard this bird.

Pied (White-necked) Coucal BA*Centropus ateralbus*

About eleven individuals in small groups were seen, and others heard, in our two days on mainland New Britain. Even in this small sample, a variety of plumage patterns was represented.

Pheasant Coucal*Centropus phasianinus*

Up to five seen daily in the Port Moresby - Varirata region.

Lesser Black Coucal NG*Centropus bernsteini*

Singles heard near Kiunga and the Elevela River. One seen by some on the edge of the road at Ok Ma, Tabubil.

Barn Owls *Tytonidae*

Greater Sooty-Owl NE*Tyto tenebricosa*

After trying two other Tari Valley roost trees without success, the villagers reconstructed the fallen bridge to the same tree that produced for us last year and again one bird was flushed from its roost tree cavity for our viewing. As it paused on the lip of the cavity, the view was more prolonged than some. We also heard this owl at night by Ekame Lodge.

Typical Owls *Strigidae*

Jungle Hawk-Owl (Papuan Boobook) NG*Ninox theomacha*

We heard this chocolate-colored owl at Ambua Lodge, Ekame Lodge, and Ok Ma, where before dawn we spotlit one bird on 6 July and both members of the same pair two days later.

New Britain Hawk-Owl NG*Ninox varigata*

We heard this species calling in an isolated forest patch near our accommodation during the New Britain extension.

Owlet-Nightjars *Aegothelidae*

Feline Owlet-Nightjar NG*Aegotheles insignis*

Joseph Tano produced this very special night bird at his favorite site toward the Bailey Bridge above Ambua Lodge on the evening of 27 June. Using his own tape recording, Joseph called in a pair that initially only yielded flight glimpses. However, eventually we spotlit one bird perched on an open branch and watched it to our hearts' content until the leaders decided that it was time to leave the

bird alone. This is the largest and most strikingly patterned of New Guinea owlet-nightjars. It was voted third-best bird of the trip.

Mountain Owlet-Nightjar NG

Aegotheles albertisi

One bird heard and seen repeatedly over two nights at close range at Kumul Lodge. This bird always wears a “pained” look on its face! Always a treat with spectacularly close views, and we already had three species of owlet-nightjars less than a week into the tour!

Barred Owlet-Nightjar NG

Aegotheles bennettii

We observed one individual peering from its roost tree cavity off the Boundary Track at Varirata National Park 24 June. We had prolonged scope views and were able to see the barring extending to mid-way down its chest where it became obscured by the cavity. Later some participants saw a different individual on our final full day of the tour back in Varirata.

Frogmouths *Podargidae*

Marbled Frogmouth NE

Podargus ocellatus

Steve spotted one day-roosting on vines climbing a large snag along the Elevala River near Ekame Lodge on 2 July. Perhaps this was one of the three birds that we spotlighted during the evening boat ride the next day, during which we enjoyed various of their calls. We were particularly taken by the long “idling outboard motor” gobble-(pause)-pop! Call, with the “pop!” being a bill clap.

Papuan Frogmouth NE

Podargus papuensis

A magnificent trio was found roosting together in large shade trees at Pacific Adventist University on both 23 June and 10 July. Both times we scoped all three astounding birds in intimate detail. We also heard this species at Ambua Lodge.

Nightjars & Allies *Caprimulgidae*

Archbold's (Mountain) Nightjar NG

Eurostopodus archboldi

One watched each night at dusk sallying upwards from the roofs at Kumul Lodge. Sometimes we illuminated it for good views.

Large-tailed Nightjar

Caprimulgus macrurus

Two were seen on the road in Varirata National Park at dawn of 24 June.

Swifts *Apodidae*

Glossy Swiftlet

Aerodramus esculenta

Up to 100 birds estimated daily in the hills and mountains from Varirata National Park and Tabubil up to Tari Gap and Kumul Lodge. Most entertaining when it darts between members of our group!

Mountain Swiftlet NG

Aerodramus hirundinaceus

Up to twenty or more daily in the Tari Gap – Ambua Lodge area.

White-rumped Swiftlet

Aerodramus spodiopygius

A swarming flock of 200 at the Kulu River Bridge gave us great views from all angles as many flew right below us as we stood on the bridge.

Uniform Swiftlet

Aerodramus vanikorensis

On the mainland of New Guinea, up to 200 per day were seen in the lowlands and hills, with both estimates of 200 coming on the long boat rides between Kiunga and Ekame Lodge. On New Britain, many of the 300 estimated on 12 July were with the White-rumped Swiftlets at the Kulu River

Bridge, providing wonderful direct comparisons.

Papuan Needle-tail (New Guinea Spine-tailed) NG *Mearnsia novaeguineae*

From five to twenty seen most days in the Kiunga – Elevala River area.

Treeswifts *Hemiprocnidae*

Moustached Treeswift NE

Hemiproctne mystacea

Only nine of this sublime bird delighted us on mainland New Guinea, at Varirata and Elevala River. However, on New Britain, up to fifteen were seen each day. A pair watched extensively in one of the trans-Kulu clearings gave us a marvelous aerial show.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Common Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

Four were seen on New Britain 12 July: singles at Garu Beach and Walindi Resort and two at the Kulu River Bridge.

Azure Kingfisher

Alcedo azurea

One seen on the Elevala River 2 July and another heard at Varirata 9 July.

Variable (Dwarf) Kingfisher

Ceyx lepidus

One of this little gem was seen along the Elevala River. Four birds seen on New Britain represented that island's endemic form that is larger, darker-colored, has a thicker dark red bill, and may be split as a separate species in the future.

Blue-winged Kookaburra

Dacelo leachii

A total of six birds were seen at Varirata and Brown River. One of the largest kingfishers, with a truly massive bill!

Rufous-bellied Kookaburra NG

Dacelo gaudichaud

Frequently heard and infrequently seen in the Kiunga – Elevala River area, with most (six) seen on 2 July; singles also seen at Tabubil and Brown River. A striking bird, even for a kingfisher.

Shovel-billed Kookaburra NG

Clytoceyx rex

We made two pre-dawn forays to Ok Ma near Tabubil, primarily for this species. Surprisingly it was quite vocal calling through the dense foliage, but only David and one or two others managed a view as it quickly disappeared not to be relocated. The next morning we encountered only a few brief and distant calls.

Forest Kingfisher

Todirhamphus macleayi

We saw three birds along the road up to Varirata National Park and heard one at Brown River.

New Britain (White-mantled) Kingfisher NB

Todirhamphus albonotatus

After much search, we scoped a pair perched high on an open branch bordering one of the clearings trans-Kulu River. As these two birds departed the branch and returned, they turned all sides to us.

Collared Kingfisher

Todirhamphus chloris

One was Garu Beach, where it was one of three species of kingfishers.

Beach (White-headed) Kingfisher NE

Todirhamphus saurophaga

One on Timor Island and a pair on Restorf Island gave us good views. This is a specialist of island shores.

Sacred Kingfisher

Todirhamphus sanctus

This common wintering bird from Australia was widespread and frequently seen in the lowlands of both New Guinea and New Britain. Six at PAU was the maximum on the mainland but fifteen were seen on New Britain 12 July.

Hook-billed Kingfisher NG*Melidora macrorrhina*

We heard from one to six individuals calling each day near Kiunga and along the Elevala River, mostly in the usual crepuscular timing. One bird immediately responded to last year's recording and we managed multiple prolonged scope views of this secretive kingfisher! Close inspection of this individual revealed that its bill tips were crossed. It was voted tenth-best bird of the trip (tied).

Yellow-billed Kingfisher NE*Syma torotoro*

A total of three birds seen and many more heard at Varirata and Brown River; also heard at Kilometer 17 near Kiunga.

Mountain Kingfisher (Mountain Yellow-billed) NG*Syma megarhyncha*

One heard in the distance below Ambua Lodge 27 June.

Little Paradise-Kingfisher NG*Tanysiptera hydrocharis*

A pair on the way to the King Bird-of-paradise site on the Elevala River 3 July came to our recording and perched together in the forest but were difficult to see. After half of the group had scope views the silent birds departed and failed to show for the other people.

Common Paradise-Kingfisher NE*Tanysiptera galatea*

Of five birds heard calling along the Elevala River, we called in one for great scope views. We also had scope views of four birds seen near Brown River, including a scaly juvenal. This was an honorable mention in birds-of-the-trip voting.

Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher PNG*Tanysiptera danae*

We scoped one bird nicely in the forest off the Boundary Track in Varirata National Park.

Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher NE*Tanysiptera sylvia*

After some work, we all obtained scope views of at least one of the three birds seen in and near the huge colony of Melanesian Scrubfowl at Pokili, New Britain. We also heard two calling at Garu Forest but did not need to chase them. If the voting for birds-of-the-trip had included the New Britain extension then this species would likely have scored well; this black-headed New Britain form is a standout even among the spectacular paradise-kingfishers!

Taxonomic note: The nigriceps race of the Bismarck Archipelago is likely to be split off as Black-headed Paradise-Kingfisher.

Bee-eaters Meropidae**Rainbow Bee-eater***Merops ornatus*

Up to 50 per day were seen in the Port Moresby - Varirata area; three were scoped in Tari Valley 28 June; five were in the trans-Kulu area of New Britain.

Typical Rollers Coraciidae**Dollarbird***Eurystomus orientalis*

Most abundant along the Fly and Elevala rivers, where up to 40 per day were estimated; lesser numbers seen at Brown River, PAU, and New Britain. The surprising sight was a Dollarbird flying well out over Kimbe Bay, Bismarck Sea, headed in the general direction of the far-offshore Timor Island!

Hornbills Bucerotidae**Blyth's Hornbill NE***Aceros plicatus*

Up to 20 hornbills per day were seen along the Elevala and Fly rivers; we saw a total of ten on mainland New Britain. It is good to see that this vulnerable bird is still common in such places.

Pittas Pittidae

Hooded Pitta

Pitta sordida

We heard from one to four birds daily in the Elevala River – Kiunga area; some of us saw one briefly in the forest along the Elevala River 2 July.

Red-bellied Pitta (Blue-breasted)

Pitta erythrogaster

Two were heard along the Elevala River on 3 July.

Swallows Hirundinidae

Pacific Swallow

Hirundo tahitica

This is the common swallow of the region and it is very widespread; we had small numbers (up to 25) throughout the lowlands and in the montane valleys.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

Yellow Wagtail

Motacilla flava

Samuel and David saw one flush from the road to Tabubil on 5 July. This was a very unseasonal but not completely unprecedented date for this migrant from the Northern Hemisphere.

Australasian Pipit

Anthus novaeseelandiae

We saw five birds in the Tari Gap grasslands 26 June and another five at Mt. Hagen Airport 1 July.

Cuckoo-shrikes Campephagidae

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina novaehollandiae

This Australian migrant was not as common as last year, but nevertheless 40 birds were seen in the Varirata area 24 June. Otherwise, only one was seen at Kiunga and five were at PAU.

Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike NG

Coracina caeruleo-grisea

Among New Guinea's cuckoo-shrikes, of which we saw all twelve species, this large bird is particularly impressive. We saw up to three each day in the Tabubil area.

Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina lineata

On both of our visits to Varirata we heard and saw a nice male-female pair.

Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike NG

Coracina boyeri

We saw two male-female pairs, along the Elevala River and at Ok Ma, Tabubil. Otherwise we just heard one at Varirata.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike

Coracina papuensis

Up to nine were seen in our two visits to Varirata and up to five per day were seen on New Britain.

Hooded Cuckoo-shrike NG

Coracina longicauda

Five were seen at Ambua Lodge on 26 June.

Cicadabird

Coracina tenuirostris

A male-female pair at Varirata 24 June proved to be our only observation. See all of the geographic forms of Cicadabird that you can, as many have a possibility of being split.

Papuan (Black-shouldered) Cuckoo-shrike NG

Coracina incerta

Seen only at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, where we saw a pair on both visits.

Gray-headed (Black-tipped) Cuckoo-shrike NG

Coracina schisticeps

Seen in particularly good numbers this year, being seen daily from Ekame Lodge and Kiunga through Tabubil and with a maximum of fifteen at Ok Ma on 6 July.

New Guinea (Black) Cuckoo-shrike NG *Coracina melas*

One female seen and one heard singing near Varirata 24 June.

Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike NG *Coracina montana*

The very distinctive male-female antiphonal duet was heard near Ambua Lodge 26 & 27 June. One was seen in Tari Valley, five were at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge, and two were at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.

Golden Cuckoo-shrike NG *Campochaera sloetii*

We had up to five per day along the Elevala River and two or three daily around Tabubil. This is always a popular bird.

Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela*

We found this bird almost daily in the lowlands and hills, usually in pairs, and saw a maximum of ten birds on New Britain 12 July.

Thrushes & Allies *Turdidae*

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus*

Up to ten daily at Kumul Lodge.

Cisticolas & Allies *Cisticolidae*

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*

Singles heard at the Kokoda Trail Monument marsh and seen near Brown River.

Old World Warblers *Sylviidae*

Island Leaf-Warbler NE *Phylloscopus poliocephalus*

We saw two at Ambua Lodge and had from ten to twenty on our two passes into Tari Valley.

Tawny Grassbird *Megalurus timoriensis*

Up to twenty in the tall grass along the Tari Gap road (Southern Highlands Highway!) 26 June; up to five seen along the road near Kumul Lodge.

Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

Seen daily until 1 July and not seen since. The sites varied from the Port Moresby airport and Kokoda Trail Monument to the highlands of the Tari and Mt. Hagen regions. Numbers ranged up to ten per day.

Fantails *Rhipiduridae*

Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris*

The reverse of the previous species, this bird was not seen until 5 July but subsequently was seen essentially every day, with numbers up to five. Sites ranged from Tabubil to Brown River, Varirata, and New Britain.

- Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Very widespread, being seen almost daily throughout the trip. Most days had ten or fewer but 40 were estimated on New Britain 12 July, on which day we traveled many roads.
- Friendly Fantail NG** *Rhipidura albolimbata*
Delightfully common in the highlands, with up to fifteen per day around both Kumul and Ambua lodges.
- Chestnut-bellied Fantail NG** *Rhipidura hyperythra*
Singles were seen at Varirata National Park on both our visits.
- Sooty Thicket-Fantail NG** *Rhipidura threnothorax*
Heard in the Tabubil area at both Ok Ma and Dablin Creek Road 6-8 July, with the bird being seen briefly at Ok Ma on the first day.
- Black Thicket-Fantail NG** *Rhipidura maculipectus*
We heard, and some of us saw, one bird at Brown River. The pursuit of better views ended because we were distracted by the Northern Death Adder.
- White-bellied Thicket-Fantail NG** *Rhipidura leucothorax*
Up to six were heard daily in the Elevala River – Kiunga region and one flew across the road in front of the bus on the drive to Tabubil.
- Black Fantail NG** *Rhipidura atra*
Five were seen from Ambua Lodge to Tari Valley 27 June; a female was near Kumul Lodge 29 June, and one to two were at Dablin Creek Road 5 & 7 July.
- Dimorphic Fantail NG** *Rhipidura brachyrhyncha*
Two separate dark morphs (bicolored tail) above Ambua Lodge 26 June were contrasted by one pale morph (pale gray tail) at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site 30 June.
- Rufous-backed Fantail NG** *Rhipidura rufidorsa*
One was along the Elevala River and two were at Ok Ma, Tabubil.

Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae*

- Black Monarch (Fantail Monarch) NG** *Monarcha axillaris*
We saw two at Ambua Lodge on two days plus one at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.
- Island Monarch** *Monarcha cinerascens*
We saw a pair in the forest on Restorf Island on 13 July. As its name implies, this is one of the small-island specialists.
- Black-winged Monarch NE** *Monarcha frater*
One at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 7 July.
- Black-faced Monarch** *Monarcha melanopsis*
Two were at Brown River.
- Spot-winged Monarch NG** *Monarcha guttulus*
Two were seen at Varirata and a total of three were along the Elevala River.
- Hooded Monarch NG** *Monarcha manadensis*
A total of three were along the Elevala River.
- Black-tailed [Bismarck Pied] Monarch NG** *Monarcha verticalis*
A single bird seen briefly but well by some during a forest walk during the New Britain extension.
- Golden Monarch NG** *Monarcha chrysomela*
Single males along the Elevala River 2 & 3 July were the only individuals of this beautiful bird that granted us the privilege of a view.
- Frilled Monarch NG** *Arses telescopthalmus*
Impressive male-female pairs were at Varirata, Dablin Creek Road, and Brown River, plus we had

up to five in a day along the Elevala River 2-3 July.

Taxonomic note: The Australian *A. t. lorealis* has now been raised to full species status as Frill-necked Monarch, making the Frilled Monarch a New Guinea endemic.

Satin Flycatcher

Myiagra cyanoleuca

Three birds at Varirata included two females and a male; another female was scoped from Ekame Lodge early on Independence Day.

Shining Flycatcher

Myiagra alecto

Most common alongside water, this bird gave us daily totals of five or six birds seen along the Elevala River, with others heard, plus three at Brown River and two or three on New Britain including a pair on one of the small islands.

Dull (Lesser Shining) Flycatcher BA

Myiagra hebetior

A male was seen in one of the trans-Kulu River clearings 12 July. Another male was on Restorf Island 13 July.

Black-breasted Boatbill NG

Machaerirhynchus nigriceps

From one to three (usually a male-female pair) were seen nearly every day in the highlands of Ambua Lodge and Kumul Lodge. This is always an eye-pleaser.

Australasian Robins *Petroicidae*

Lesser Ground-Robin NG

Amalocichla incerta

One was heard briefly from the garden opposite Ambua Lodge.

Torrent Flycatcher NG

Monachella muelleriana

Six at the Lai River bridge below Kumul Lodge gave us some scope views. We also scoped four from the Ok Menga Hydroelectric Plant near Tabubil.

Lemon-bellied Flycatcher

Microeca flavigaster

We saw three birds in the savanna along the entrance road to Varirata National Park 24 June.

Canary Flycatcher NG

Microeca papuana

After this cute bird surprisingly eluded us for a few days, our entire group finally enjoyed a pair at Kumul Lodge 30 June.

Garnet Robin NG

Eugerygone rubra

A female was seen by some at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Black-sided Robin NG

Poecilodryas hypoleuca

Up to three were heard along the Elevala River and we called in and saw the bird singing behind Ekame Lodge on 3 July.

Black-throated Robin NG

Poecilodryas albonotata

Two birds were seen on each of three days: 26 June near Ambua Lodge and 29-30 June near Kumul Lodge.

White-winged Robin NG

Peneothello sigillatus

Only one bird was seen briefly near Ambua Lodge, so two or three every day around Kumul Lodge were more satisfying.

White-rumped Robin NG

Peneothello bimaculatus

Single birds were heard at both Ok Ma and Dablin Creek Road 6-8 July, and the latter bird was glimpsed by some, before we called in this shy bird for good skulking views at Ok Ma on 8 July.

Blue-gray Robin NG

Peneothello cyanus

Up to four birds were around Ambua Lodge each day but at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise forest near Kumul Lodge we only heard it.

Northern Scrub-Robin NE

Drymodes superciliaris

This ground skulker frustrated our group, as the pair recorded at Ok Ma and singles heard at Dablin

Creek Road and the Circuit Track of Varirata refused to show themselves in response to playback (although David did see the latter bird as he was walking to rejoin our group).

Whistlers & Allies *Pachycephalidae*

Rufous-naped Whistler NG

Aleadryas rufinucha

This distinctive whistler was seen only about half of the days in the highlands around Ambua and Kumul lodges, with a maximum of five seen near Kumul Lodge 30 June.

Rusty Whistler NG

Pachycephala hyperythra

One was at Brown River. This is the southeastern race that is much more dull-colored than those in central New Guinea.

Brown-backed Whistler PNG

Pachycephala modesta

We encountered this whistler almost daily in the highlands, with a high count of eight birds seen in the Tari area 26 June.

Gray-headed [Gray] Whistler NE

Pachycephala griseiceps

We had two at Ok Ma, Tabubil, 6 July.

Slater's Whistler NG

Pachycephala soror

We saw surprisingly few of this species, with only two singles around Ambua Lodge and one at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.

Black-tailed Whistler

Pachycephala melanura

One female was at Pokili and three were on Restorf Island. Normally a small-island and mangrove specialist, this whistler also occurs inland on the Bismarcks.

Regent Whistler NG

Pachycephala schlegelii

Two birds were seen near Ambua Lodge but up to ten were seen around Kumul Lodge and the nearby King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site.

Black-headed Whistler NG

Pachycephala monacha

Six were seen in Tari Valley; otherwise it was only heard at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.

White-bellied Whistler PNG

Pachycephala leucogastra

We saw one and heard another singing in the savanna along the road outside Varirata 24 June.

Rufous (Little) Shrike-Thrush

Colluricincla megarhyncha

We noted mostly single birds at Varirata, in Tari Valley (three times), near Kiunga, Elevala River (twice), and both areas around Tabubil (five birds).

Gray Shrike-Thrush

Colluricincla harmonica

Two birds were scoped at PAU on 10 July. This bird's melodious scientific name is appropriate.

Hooded Pitohui NG

Pitohui dichrous

From one to three individuals at Varirata National Park and Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil. This aposematically colored bird is the traditional "poison-bird" as it was the first bird species discovered to possess poisonous compounds.

White-bellied Pitohui NG

Pitohui incertus

We encountered two flocks along the Elevala River, once inside the forest and once lured across the river itself by our recording. Typically, they responded vigorously but remained shy.

Rusty Pitohui NG

Pitohui ferrugineus

Singles were seen at Elevala River, Kilometer 17, and Varirata, plus trios were at both Tabubil sites. They were often in or leading rufous-bird mixed flocks.

Crested Pitohui NG

Pitohui cristatus

Before dusk at Ok Ma, Tabubil, we heard two birds performing their remarkable pulsing song that lasts for a few minutes. As usual, playback failed to attract them.

Variable Pitohui NG

Pitohui kirhocephalus

From one to three birds were seen almost daily in the Kiunga – Elevala River region. This is a brown-hooded subspecies.

Black Pitohui NG*Pitohui nigrescens*

A male was seen briefly in the forest at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Wattled Ploughbill NG*Eulacestoma nigropectus*

One female was at Ambua Lodge on the afternoon that we arrived.

Pseudo-babblers *Pomatosromidae***New Guinea (Rufous) Babbler NG***Pomatostomus isidorei*

We heard at least two at Kilometer 17 north of Kiunga on 1 July and saw three in the forest along the Elevala River the next day.

Whipbirds & Quail-thrushes *Cinclosomatidae***Painted Quail-thrush NG***Cinclosoma ajax*

Singles were heard at Varirata and Kilometer 17 near Kiunga.

Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler NG*Ptilorrhoa castanonota*

Heard both at Ok Ma and Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, one bird was also seen flushing at Varirata.

Blue-capped Ifrita NG*Ifrita kowaldi*

Around Ambua Lodge on 26 June three small groups totaled eight birds; on two days at Kumul Lodge we saw a total of three birds. This is another of the “poison-birds” and is believed to be the most poisonous of them all. In any case, it is a unique bird with a distinctive charm.

Fairywrens *Maluridae***Orange-crowned Fairywren NG***Clytomyias insignis*

A pair gave some of us good views in the bamboo by the Ambua Lodge orchid garden. Three more were seen in the forest at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site.

White-shouldered Fairywren NG*Malurus alboscapulatus*

Widespread in both lowland and highland grasses, in groups up to six or more. Encountered at Varirata, Tari Valley, Dablin Creek Road, and Brown River.

Emperor Fairywren NG*Malurus cyanocephalus*

First heard at Kilometer 17 and the Elevala River, then a pair was called in for fast views at Boystown Road, Kiunga, but it was not until we had great studies of a trio inside a forest patch at Brown River that this glowing blue bird vaulted up into the “top-ten” list (number eight).

Thornbills & Allies *Acanthizidae***Rusty Mouse-Warbler NG***Crateroscelis murina*

Heard daily at both Varirata National Park and Tabubil, four skulking individuals were careless enough that some people were able to get brief views.

Mountain Mouse-Warbler NG*Crateroscelis robusta*

Heard near both Ambua and Kumul lodges but only seen in the forest at Kumul (three birds).

Large Scrubwren NG*Sericornis nouhuysi*

Two were seen near Ambua Lodge and up to three daily at Kumul Lodge.

Buff-faced Scrubwren NG *Sericornis perspicillatus*

Up to at least ten seen almost every day around Ambua and Kumul lodges.

Papuan Scrubwren NG *Sericornis papuensis*

Up to at least ten seen most days around Ambua and Kumul lodges.

Mountain (Gray) Gerygone NG *Gerygone cinerea*

Recorded almost daily above Ambua Lodges and around Kumul Lodge, with up to four per day.

Green-backed Gerygone NE *Gerygone chloronotus*

Its distinctive song was heard many times in the lowlands from Varirata to Tabubil. A total of seven birds were seen in the Tabubil area.

Yellow-bellied Gerygone NG *Gerygone chrysogaster*

Singles were seen on both visits to Varirata; a total of nine were seen along the Elevala River.

Brown-breasted (Rufous-breasted) Gerygone NG *Gerygone ruficollis*

We heard and saw this bird every full day in the mountains, with up to five seen and up to eight heard in a day. Its song is one of the beautiful and characteristic sounds of the montane forest.

Sittellas Neosittidae

Black Sittella NG *Neositta miranda*

A flock of seven flew over us above Ambua Lodge. More entertaining were the two cooperative flocks that we found in the Kumul Lodge region 30 June, totaling thirty birds.

Varied Sittella *Neositta chrysoptera*

Twice near Ambua Lodge and once below Kumul Lodge we enjoyed flocks of this species, up to fifteen birds per flock. On both 26 & 30 June we had both species of the sittella family.

Sunbirds & Spiderhunters Nectariniidae

Black Sunbird *Leptocoma sericea*

We saw up to three birds nearly every day in the lowlands and hills from Kiunga, Elevala River, and Tabubil to Port Moresby. It was more numerous on New Britain, with daily tallies of up to 15.

Olive-backed (Yellow-bellied) Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*

Seen much less than the previous species, we saw one at Varirata, a male-female pair at Brown River, and two more in the Kulu River region of New Britain.

Berrypeckers & Longbills Melanocharitidae

Obscure Berrypecker NG *Melanocharis arfakiana*

The Tabubil area again produced this enigmatic species, which was almost unknown until discovered to be regular at this site. Pairs were seen at both Ok Ma and Dablin Creek Road. The latter were strongly streaked below, which may be a juvenal plumage. Otherwise they seemed identical to the previous day's pair and they did not show the eye ring or gape mark of the Streaked Berrypecker. Samuel agreed that they were Obscure Berrypeckers.

Black Berrypecker NG *Melanocharis nigra*

Five birds were seen at Varirata National Park 24 June.

Lemon-breasted (Mid-mountain) Berrypecker NG *Melanocharis longicauda*

A female was studied on forest edge at Tari Gap, a surprisingly high elevation for this "mid-mountain" species. Steve initially challenged the identification, but eventually agree with David and

Joseph.

Fan-tailed Berrypecker NG

Melanocharis versteri

A male-female pair was seen with the above bird at Tari Gap 26 June and up to five per day were seen in the Kumul Lodge region.

Streaked Berrypecker NG

Melanocharis striativentris

David saw one across the road from the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Spotted Berrypecker NG

Melanocharis crassirostris

We saw a male-female pair in a mixed flock at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Yellow-bellied Longbill NG

Toxorhamphus novaeguineae

A total of six birds was seen along the Elevala River.

Slaty-chinned Longbill NG

Toxorhamphus poliopterus

One was at Dablin Creek Road 5 July.

Dwarf Honeyeater NG

Toxorhamphus iliolophus

One or two birds were seen on each visit to Varirata and one was at Dablin Creek Road.

Pygmy Honeyeater NG

Toxorhamphus pygmaeum

Singles of this tiny bird were at Varirata and Dablin Creek Road, and 2-3 were at Ok Ma.

Painted Berrypeckers *Paramythiidae*

Tit Berrypecker NG

Oreocharis arfaki

The first three of this avian gem were at Ambua Lodge 26 June. We also had 2-4 near Kumul Lodge on 29-30 June. On all three days we had both members of the beautiful painted berrypecker family.

Crested Berrypecker NG

Paramythia montium

We had a plethora of superb views of this stunning painted berrypecker! On 26 June we scoped a pair brilliantly above Ambua Lodge. Then on 29-30 June a pair seemed in almost continual attendance around the bird feeder at Kumul Lodge. It is hard to tire of this beautiful bird.

Flowerpeckers *Dicaeidae*

Red-capped [Papuan] Flowerpecker NG

Dicaeum geelvinkianum

Widespread in small numbers throughout the lowlands and hills, with five at Varirata 24 June the maximum. One was at Ambua Lodge 25 June.

Taxonomic note: This species has been split from the former Papuan Flowerpecker *D. pectorale*.

Red-banded (Bismarck) Flowerpecker BA

Dicaeum eximium

Up to twelve were seen per day on New Britain.

White-eyes *Zosteropidae*

Black-fronted White-eye NG

Zosterops minor

Up to fifty were in mixed flocks with Capped White-eyes at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil; two were also at Ok Ma.

Capped (Western Mountain) White-eye NG

Zosterops fuscicapillus

Sixty were in Tari Valley 28 June and 150 flocked with Black-fronted White-eyes at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 7 July.

New Guinea White-eye NG

Zosterops novaeguineae

Twenty-five were at "Necktie" in the valley below Kumul Lodge 29 June.

Honeyeaters *Meliphagidae*

- Long-billed Honeyeater NG** *Melilestes megarhynchus*
Ken identified one on 26 June near Tari Gap, an extremely high elevation. More expected were the one or two seen most days from the Elevala River to Tabubil.
- Green-backed Honeyeater NE** *Glycichaera fallax*
One was seen briefly at Ok Ma, Tabubil, on 6 July.
- Silver-eared Honeyeater NG** *Lichmera indistincta*
One was seen well at Brown River 9 July.
- Red-throated (Ruby-throated) Myzomela NG** *Myzomela eques*
One at the Elevala River 2 July was almost certainly this species.
- Ashy Myzomela BA** *Myzomela cineracea*
Up to twenty per day were seen on New Britain.
- Dusky Myzomela** *Myzomela obscura*
Two were at Brown River 9 July.
- Red Myzomela NE** *Myzomela cruentata*
Single females were seen at Dablin Creek Road and Ok Ma, Tabubil.
- Black Myzomela NG** *Myzomela negrita*
At least twenty were swarming the blossoms of a flowering tree in the forest off the Boundary Track at Varirata National Park on 24 June.
- Scarlet-bibbed (Sclater's) Myzomela BA** *Myzomela sclateri*
More than twenty were seen on the three small islands visited on our Bismarck Sea boat trip 13 July. This small honeyeater is endemic to islands (mostly small ones) offshore the main Bismarck Islands.
- Ebony (Bismarck Black) Myzomela BA** *Myzomela pammelaena*
From the boat we saw two on Timor Island, well out in Kimbe Bay, Bismarck Sea, on 13 July. This species generally inhabits only the more remote small islands offshore the main Bismarck Islands and only recently was it found to inhabit Timor Island. It was no surprise that we did not find it on Restorf Island, which is quite close to the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain.
- Black-bellied (New Britain Red-headed) Myzomela NB** *Myzomela erythromelas*
Up to twelve individuals of this pretty little myzomela were seen each day on mainland New Britain.
- Red-collared Myzomela NG** *Myzomela rosenbergii*
Up to five per day were seen in the Ambua Lodge – Tari region. This is another eye-pleaser.
- Spot-breasted Meliphaga NG** *Meliphaga mimikae*
Two were seen by some along the Circuit Track at Varirata National Park 9 July.
- Mountain Meliphaga NG** *Meliphaga orientalis*
Three were in Tari Valley, four were below Kumul Lodge, and up to ten daily were around Tabubil.
- Scrub (Scrub White-eared) Honeyeater NG** *Meliphaga albonotata*
One was quite high at Kumul Lodge 30 June. In the lowlands and hills, up to four daily were from the Elevala River and Kiunga to Tabubil.
- Puff-backed Honeyeater (Meliphaga) NG** *Meliphaga aruensis*
Single birds were seen at Varirata, Kilometer 17, and Brown River.
- Mimic Honeyeater (Meliphaga) NG** *Meliphaga analoga*
About ten were seen on each visit to Varirata and pairs were seen three times in the Kiunga region.
- Graceful Honeyeater (Meliphaga) NE** *Meliphaga gracilis*
A total of three birds were seen on two days in the Kiunga region.
- Black-throated Honeyeater NG** *Lichenostomus subfrenatus*
We heard about sixteen but saw only four birds in the Tari Gap and Kumul Lodge areas. We also identified one at the unusually low elevation of Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 5 July, but as there

turns out to be substantial variation in throat color of Obscure Honeyeater it is likely that Samuel's identification of that bird as the latter species was correct.

Obscure Honeyeater NG *Lichenostomus obscurus*

We scoped two birds at Kilometer 17 on 5 July and heard another at Ok Ma, Tabubil.

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater NE *Xanthotis flaviventer*

Although we heard up to four daily in the Elevala River – Kiunga area, we had seen only one before arriving at Tabubil, where we saw up to eight daily. We also saw three at Brown River.

Spotted Honeyeater NG *Xanthotis polygramma*

Seen only in the Tabubil area, with three at Ok Ma and two at Dablin Creek Road.

White-throated Honeyeater *Melithreptus albogularis*

Up to ten per day were in savanna along the Varirata National Park entrance road.

Plain Honeyeater NG *Pycnopygius ixoides*

Two individuals were scoped on 4 July: by the fruiting tree by Gusiore village on the Elevala River and at Boystown Road. We also saw one at Brown River.

Marbled Honeyeater NG *Pycnopygius cinereus*

Two were seen in Tari Valley 27 June and another two were at Mambissanda below Kumul Lodge 29 June.

Streak-headed Honeyeater NG *Pycnopygius stictocephalus*

Singles were seen at Boystown Road, Kiunga, and at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil.

Helmeted [New Guinea] Friarbird *Philemon buceroides*

Common in the New Guinea lowlands and recorded almost daily in numbers up to over thirty in the Port Moresby – Varirata area, up to ten in the Kiunga region, and up to five at Tabubil. At a much higher elevation, were saw four at Mambissanda below Kumul Lodge 29 June.

New Britain Friarbird NB *Philemon cockerelli*

Up to twenty per day on mainland New Britain.

Rufous-backed Honeyeater PNG *Ptiloprora guisei*

Up to five daily around Ambua Lodge and five at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge. More common at lower elevations than the following species.

Black-backed (Gray-streaked) Honeyeater NG *Ptiloprora perstriata*

Most common high. Daily numbers of up to fifteen in the Tari Gap area and around Kumul Lodge.

Sooty Melidectes NG *Melidectes fuscus*

One visiting orange flowers at Kumul Lodge 30 June returned for nice catch-up views by others.

Belford's Melidectes NG *Melidectes belfordi*

Most common high. Fifteen in the Tari Gap area and daily numbers of up to thirty around Kumul Lodge.

Yellow-browed Melidectes NG *Melidectes rufocrissalis*

Mostly below the elevation zone dominated by Belford's. Some showed signs of introgressive hybridization from Belford's, as is common in this region. Daily numbers of ten to twenty from somewhat above Ambua Lodge down into Tari Valley.

Ornate Melidectes NG *Melidectes torquatus*

A total of five of this strikingly marked bird were seen at three locations: two each at Mambissanda below Kumul Lodge and at Dablin Creek Road, plus one at Mt. Hagen Airport.

(Common) Smoky Honeyeater NG *Melipotes fumigatus*

Common in the high mountains, with up to 25 daily both at Ambua Lodge and Kumul Lodge, but strangely absent from Dablin Creek Road where it was common last year. The Kumul Lodge bird feeder provided many opportunities for close views of their faces blushing from yellow to red and back again, often in odd blotchy patterns.

Brown-backed Honeyeater NE *Ramsayornis modestus*

Two were in savanna on the Varirata entrance road 24 June.

Rufous-banded Honeyeater NE *Conopophila albogularis*

Up to fifteen birds were at Pacific Adventist University.

Old World Orioles *Oriolidae*

Brown Oriole NG *Oriolus szalayi*

We noted up to four seen and/or heard daily in the Port Moresby and Tabubil regions.

Green Figbird *Sphecotheres viridis*

We saw fifty and ten on our two visits to Pacific Adventist University. Most of the larger number flew over in one flock as we arrived on 23 June.

Shrikes *Laniidae*

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

We saw one at Tari Gap and ten along the roads near Kumul Lodge.

Drongos *Dicruridae*

Papuan (Mountain) Drongo NG *Chaetorhynchus papuensis*

Single birds were seen in the forest at Varirata 24 June and at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 7 July.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus*

We saw and heard about four or five on most days in the lowlands of both New Guinea and New Britain but on Independence Day we tallied twenty along the Elevala and Fly rivers and at Boystown Road.

Mudnest Builders *Callaeidae*

Torrent-lark NG *Grallina bruijni*

One male that we scoped upriver from the Ok Menga Hydroelectric Plant near Tabubil 5 July unfortunately did not stay long in view.

Woodswallows *Artamidae*

Great Woodswallow NG *Artamus maximus*

Up to twenty daily from Ambua Lodge into Tari Valley; one around Kumul Lodge; nine at the Ok Menga Hydroelectric Plant; three at Tabubil itself. Always entertaining.

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*

Up to twenty each day in the Port Moresby area.

Bismarck (White-backed) Woodswallow BA *Artamus insignis*

After we did not find this special bird at Patrick's usual clearing near Ismin in the trans-Kulu River area, a local man directed us to another clearing where we scoped a brilliant pair. Considered the most beautiful of all the woodswallows, this bird is rendered all the more striking by its narrow white eyering.

Bellmagpies & Allies Cracticidae

Mountain Peltops NG
Peltops montanus

Two to three daily were at Ambua Lodge and up to five were at Dablin Creek Road.

Lowland Peltops NG
Peltops blainvillii

Single birds were seen on the Elevala Rive and at Kilometer 17.

Black-backed Butcherbird NE
Cracticus mentalis

Up to seven per day in the Port Moresby – Pacific Adventist University – Varirata savanna.

Hooded Butcherbird NG
Cracticus cassicus

Conspicuous at Varirata, around Kiunga, along the Elevala river, and along the Kiunga-Tabubil road; the maximum was ten along the Elevala River 2 July.

Black Butcherbird
Cracticus quoyi

One perched atop a cabin at Ambua Lodge; up to three per day were seen in Tari Valley; up to three were heard most days in the Kiunga – Elevala River – Tabubil region, though only two of those were seen.

Birds-of-Paradise Paradisaeidae

Loria's Bird-of-paradise NG
Cnemophilus loriae

On 26 June we scoped two males calling from open perches along the road above Ambua Lodge and saw a female at the Lodge itself.

Crested Bird-of-paradise NG
Cnemophilus macgregorii

At Kumul Lodge 29 June and at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site near there the next day we saw females, with the former bird showing her sagittal crown groove. Back at Kumul Lodge late on 30 June a stunning adult male really performed for us! As we scoped him, he spent many minutes foraging in foliage and along mossy limbs and tree trunks. Again the crown groove (where the male's crest lies hidden) was visible, but just seeing the glowing shaded red-orange upperparts contrasted against the pure black face and underparts scored a "knockout" as this bird was voted fifth-best of the trip!

Glossy-mantled Manucode NG
Manucodia atra

We identified singles twice on the Elevala River and once at Brown River. The many unidentified flying manucodes undoubtedly included this species.

Crinkle-collared Manucode NG
Manucodia chalybata

Two were seen at the fruiting tree by Gusiore village on the Elevala River and two more were at Dablin Creek Road. Unidentified manucodes were usually either this or the previous species.

Trumpet Manucode NE
Manucodia keraudrenii

Single Trumpet Manucodes were scoped while puffing-calling at Kilometer 17 (both visits) and at Boystown Road.

Short-tailed Paradigalla NG
Paradigalla brevicauda

Our wait in the garden across from Ambua Lodge 26 June was rewarded by scope views of one bird moving through fruiting trees and toward the nest tree.

Ribbon-tailed Astrapia PNG
Astrapia mayeri

Six were along the road to Tari Gap 26 June. We had up to ten individuals of this species per day at Kumul Lodge. Although the many females and subadult males visiting the bird feeder at Kumul Lodge were most welcome, it was largely on the strength of nearby full-tailed adult males that this species was voted sixth-best bird of the trip. The adult males have the longest tail in proportion to body size of any bird in the world! This PNG endemic has a very limited range and was the last

recognized species of bird-of-paradise to be discovered (in 1938).

Princess Stephanie's Astrapia PNG *Astrapia stephaniae*

After we scoped a very distant adult male from Ambua Lodge 25 June, we had eight birds along the road above the Lodge the next day. These included scope views of very impressive adult males. Slightly lower than Kumul Lodge, the nearby King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site had two females or immature on 30 June.

Carola's Parotia NG *Parotia carolae*

Six at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 7 July, included scope views of females but both the morning and late afternoon adult males only lingered long enough for some people to see them.

Lawes' Parotia PNG *Parotia lawesii*

Early morning scoping from the road below Ambua Lodge 27 June produced two adult males and two females. That same day we heard, and some saw, an adult male in Tari Valley.

King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise NG *Pteridophora alberti*

This unique and spectacular bird was voted "best bird of the trip" by a wide margin! A male performed a great "semaphore" display as we scoped him from the road between Ambua Lodge and Tari Gap on 26 June, and two females were there as well. The forest known as the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site below Kumul Lodge did not disappoint, as we had six birds there including multiple displaying males. This is a particularly good place at which to see the males pumping up and down on vines. This indescribable bird must be seen to be believed!

Magnificent Riflebird NE *Ptiloris magnificentus*

At least two males were heard and one was glimpsed by some at Varirata National Park. This is the gruff-voiced form split by many as **Eastern Riflebird**. We heard males of the clear-voiced nominate form three times in the Kiunga area but it was at Ok Ma, Tabubil, where we finally saw this shy species on 6 July. Two females and an adult male were seen in and/or departing a fruiting tree and the male perched once on a dead branch right in the open. Another male called nearby.

Taxonomic note: The eastern race *P. [m.] intercedens* is sometimes split as Eastern Riflebird.

Superb Bird-of-paradise NG *Lophorina superba*

Two females were scoped from Ambua Lodge but it was when we dropped down into the Tari Valley that we saw nine birds over two days, including scope views of adult males nicely showing their bizarre plumage, with iridescent blue breast shield, amazing nuchal cape, and facial tufts, as they preened or advertised with their harsh calls. We also twice saw a female at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, 7 July.

Black Sicklebill NG *Epimachus fastuosus*

Early morning scoping from the road below Ambua Lodge 27 June revealed two adult males and a female. Although they were distant, we could see one male displaying by raising his pectoral fans and holding himself horizontal on one side. This is the largest of all birds-of-paradise, reaching a length of 44 inches (1.1m)!

Brown Sicklebill NG *Epimachus meyeri*

Inhabiting forests of higher elevation than Black Sicklebill, there were seven, including two adult males, along the road to Tari Gap 26 June. We scoped some of them. This was a most entertaining feeder bird at Kumul Lodge, with daily totals of up to ten females and subadult males. At the nearby King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise site, an adult male's "jackhammer burst" calls led us to see him inside the forest.

Magnificent Bird-of-paradise NG *Cicinnurus magnificentus*

We saw up to three females at Dablin Creek Road and two females at Ok Ma, Tabubil.

King Bird-of-paradise NG *Cicinnurus regius*

We encountered this smallest of birds-of-paradise only along the Elevala River. We heard at least

three birds and some people saw a female. The real star, of course, was the adult male faithfully residing in the canopy of his display tree. Our scope views of this gleaming red-orange gem with green tail rackets propelled him to seventh place in the “best bird” voting.

Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise NG

Seleucidis melanoleuca

The very strange adult male Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise kept his early morning appointment as he repeatedly perched on his display snags to show all his glory beside the Fly River 2 July. While we watched the male from our boat we also saw a female in an adjacent tree.

Greater Bird-of-paradise NG

Paradisaea apoda

The spectacular courtship displays by numerous gorgeous adult males at Kilometer 17, in both the tree near the gate and the “Attenborough Tree,” earned fourth place in the “best bird” voting. Scoping the former was particularly rewarding, and we witnessed several full dance sequences leading to copulations. It was nice to be able to visit twice to experience this amazing natural phenomenon. We estimated up to 35 birds to be present. Elsewhere in the Kiunga area we saw a few additional females; up to three female per day were also seen in the Tabubil area.

Raggiana Bird-of-paradise PNG

Paradisaea raggiana

We first encountered the national bird of Papua New Guinea on 24 June in Varirata National Park, when at least 20 individuals were seen, and others heard, both scattered and visiting the lek off the Varirata Lookout road. There we sat quietly under the display trees and waited until the three wary adult males returned to court whenever one of the many female visited. The male to the left got all four of the visible copulations. We also saw one adult male performing his courtship dances among the Greater Birds-of-paradise in the Attenborough lek tree at Kilometer 17. These males earned honorable mention in the “best birds of the trip” voting. We saw and heard small numbers along the Elevala River and around Kiunga, plus we heard one in Tari Valley.

Blue Bird-of-paradise PNG

Paradisaea rudolphi

We saw one female very well from the Ambua Lodge parking lot 26 June. This is one bird-of-paradise in which even the female is quite striking. The next day we scoped an adult male from Tomate, on the road below Ambua Lodge. Despite the long distance, the scope views were fairly good. This PNG endemic is one of the most desired of all birds-of-paradise.

Lesser Melampitta NG

Melampitta lugubris

Surprisingly, a male was calling perhaps ten feet up inside dense foliage right alongside the road from Ambua Lodge to Tari Gap on 26 June. Normally, this species is on or closer to the ground. David got virtually everyone onto the bird as it gave its snappy kaluk! The current edition of the Clements checklist classifies the melampittas as aberrant birds-of-paradise.

Greater Melampitta NG

Melampitta gigantea

A loudly calling bird at Ok Ma, Tabubil, 6 July reacted to playback but would not show itself to the group; unfortunately, only David saw it reasonably well. As it was on top of a vertical bluff of limestone, we could not chase it.

Bowerbirds *Ptilonorhynchidae*

Archbold's Bowerbird NG

Archboldia papuensis

The Manleys watched a loud trio pass by Kumul Lodge on 29 June.

Flame Bowerbird NG

Sericulus aureus

A female flew across the Elevala River 3 July, but all our other sightings were the next day. Our vigil at the fruiting tree at Gusiore village on the Elevala River brought an adult male that unfortunately only Curtis saw. That afternoon our patience at Boystown Road was rewarded by four

fly-by females, one of which stopped on a perch within clear sight and even allowed a brief scope view.

Yellow-breasted Bowerbird NG

Chlamydera lauterbachi

Our trip down to Mambissanda in the valley below Kumul Lodge succeeded in locating two of this very local bowerbird.

Fawn-breasted Bowerbird NE

Chlamydera cerviniventris

Although we also saw this bird near Varirata and even at the Gateway Hotel, most were seen at Pacific Adventist University, where we saw up to eight on 10 July. But the real highlight that morning was that we finally had time to inspect a very nice bower and take lots of photos of this amazingly constructed courtship building. In some ways, the bowerbirds are even more outstanding than the birds-of-paradise!

Crows, Jays & Magpies *Corvidae*

Gray (Bare-eyed) Crow NG

Corvus tristis

Up to six per day were seen, mostly in small yelping flocks, along the Elevala River and up to Tabubil. We also had one at Varirata.

Torresian Crow

Corvus orru

The typical form we saw only in the Port Moresby – Varirata region, up to 30 per day. The “**Island Crow**,” which sounds much more like an American Crow, was common on New Britain, with up to sixty per day 10-13 July.

Taxonomic note: The *insularis* race of the Bismarck Archipelago is likely to be split off as Island Crow.

Starlings *Sturnidae*

Metallic Starling NE

Aplonis metallica

We found this colonial starling to be common in the Elevala River – Kiunga region, at Brown River, and on New Britain. One day when we passed multiple nesting colonies we estimated numbers such as over 300 along the Fly and Elevala rivers 2 July and 400 at Pokili Wildlife Management Area 11 July.

Yellow-eyed Starling NG

Aplonis mystacea

Vigilance earned us several observations of this very local species, mostly on 2 July. Twice on the Fly River we saw that the bird leading a flock of passing starlings was an adult Yellow-eyed Starling. In both cases we did not have the opportunity to identify any other birds in the flock, so we do not know if they were all Yellow-eyed or if it was a mixed flock with Metallic Starlings. Both types of flocks are known. Later the same day we scoped five juvenal Yellow-eyed Starlings in a fruiting tree beside the Elevala River. Finally, we had brilliant scope views of an adult at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, on 7 July. The odd bristly nasal/frontal tuft plus the unusual head shape and hackles were nicely displayed.

Singing Starling NE

Aplonis cantoroides

Familiar to us from PAU and the Gateway Hotel, this patchy species also turned up at Mt. Hagen Airport (four) and in the Hoskins area of New Britain (75).

Yellow-faced Myna NG

Mino dumontii

Seen essentially daily in the New Guinea lowlands, with maximum numbers up to 30 in the Elevala River – Kiunga region.

Long-tailed Myna NE

Mino kreffti

Up to fifteen per day were seen on New Britain. Perhaps this bird has the shortest tail of any bird

species named long-tailed!

Taxonomic note: This species occurring in New Britain and the Solomon Islands has been split off from Yellow-faced Myna *M. dumontii*.

Golden Myna NG

Mino anais

Up to four per day on the Elevala River, including those scoped at Ekame Lodge. Quite colorful and not so comical as the above two species.

Old World Sparrows *Passeridae*

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Up to ten were seen and heard at and near the Port Moresby Airport. On 28 June we heard at least two in Mt. Hagen, which may represent a range extension for this non-native species.

Waxbills & Allies *Estrildidae*

Mountain Firetail NG

Oreostruthus fuliginosus

This finch was again particularly cooperative at Kumul Lodge, where we had seven in a day and we particularly admired a male-female pair that we saw repeatedly at the lower parking lot.

Blue-faced Parrotfinch

Erythrura trichroa

In usual secretive flocks, but persistence earned us some rather good views on most occasions. Up to four were seen in the Ambua Lodge area; twenty were at “Necktie” below Kumul Lodge; fifteen were at Dablin Creek Road.

Streak-headed Munia NG

Lonchura tristissima

One of the typical form was seen near Vanapa, trans-Brown River. At Kiunga Airport we saw eleven birds of the sometimes-split “**White-spotted Munia**,” but unfortunately only as fly-bys.

Taxonomic note: White-spotted Munia *L. [t.] leucosticta* is sometimes split as a separate species.

Hooded Munia NG

Lonchura spectabilis

Up to 50 in Tari Valley, in several flocks.

Gray-headed Munia PNG

Lonchura caniceps

From two to five seen at the Gateway Hotel, Kokoda Trail Monument, near Vanapa trans-Brown River, and PAU.

Chestnut-breasted Munia

Lonchura castaneothorax

Three were near Vanapa trans-Brown River.

Bismarck Munia (Buff-bellied Mannikin) BA

Lonchura melaena

Up to twenty per day on mainland New Britain were mostly seen in flight but a few gave excellent studies while perched on fence wires.

MAMMALS

Short-furred Dasyure NG

Murexia longicaudata

About half of us saw this small marsupial at Kumul Lodge in the afternoon of 30 June as it ran along the canopy of the walkway to the cabins, then down a pole and away from us. It entered our checklist as “Antechinus?” pending library research back in California. Back home, Steve spent nearly two days identifying this mammal based on his notes and concluded that it was a Short-furred Dasyure. Although we had identified the same species acting the same way at Kumul Lodge last year, Steve did not recognize this year’s individual as the same due to its small size and all-orange pelage. Those characters were probably because it was a juvenile individual.

Black-tailed Giant Rat NG*Uromys anak*

We watched two of these giant rats eating leftover fruit on the bird feeder at Kumul Lodge after dark on 30 June. They fled from bright lights. This is the only giant rat of New Guinea's high elevations that lacks substantial areas of white on its tail.

Great Bare-backed Fruit-Bat NE*Dobsonia magna*

We saw one on the evening boat ride of spotlighting on the Elevala River 3 July.

Big-eared Flying-fox NG*Pteropus macrotis*

At least 100 Big-eared Flying-foxes flushing from a roost tree along the Elevala River 2 July represented a spectacular and characteristic sight of that part of the world. We also saw a few others over the next two days, including three on the evening boat ride.

Great Flying-fox NE*Pteropus neohibernicus*

Of the numerous flying-foxes seen on New Britain, Steve identified at least 30 at Mora Mora and Pokili as Great Flying-fox.

Variable Flying-fox*Pteropus hypomelanus*

Two Variable Flying-foxes were hanging in a roost tree with Great Flying-foxes at Mora Mora on New Britain. Steve identified them based on their smaller size and more-furred back. Some of the unidentified flying-foxes on New Britain were likely also this widespread species.

Spinner Dolphin*Stenella longirostris*

We had at least ten but probably more than twenty come to our boat in Kimbe Bay not far east of the tip of the Willaumez Peninsula 13 July. The close views allowed us to see the long, slender rostrum (*longirostris*) with its small dark tip, among other characters. They did not spin for us, however, which is in accordance with Steve's three months of research observations offshore from Madang, where they seldom performed their spin-jumps. Wonder why?

Short-finned Pilot Whale*Globicephala macrorhynchus*

Almost in the same place as the Spinner Dolphins we had a dispersed pod of at least eight but more likely about fifteen Short-finned Pilot Whales. Many good close views showed us the huge round melon, the long-based dorsal fin, and other characters. Most of the individuals were small, with only a few animals that seemed large enough even for adult females, and perhaps an adult male or two.

REPTILES

New Guinea Crocodile NG*Crocodylus novaeguineae*

We saw this endemic freshwater crocodile on the Elevala River, where Steve pointed out three resting on logs during our boat ride to Ekame Lodge 2 July. This is a small crocodile, as the maximum length recorded is 3m (ten feet). Our first crocodile was nearly that big, but our favorite one was the two-meter-long individual that allowed us to approach so close that we had amazing views!

Tropical House Gecko*Hemidactylus frenatus*

We saw this ubiquitous tropical commensal of man in many of our lodgings but especially at Cloudlands Hotel in Tabubil, where about thirty appeared each night outside our rooms.

Northern Death Adder NE*Acanthophis praelongus*

After recording songs of a Black Thicket-Fantail in a forest patch at Brown River 9 July, Steve looked around him and discovered that he was standing one meter from a 60cm death adder! This is one of the most deadly snakes in the world and Steve had always wanted to see one and survive the experience. It looks very dangerous, having an adder-like shape with thick body, triangular head, and "horns" over its eyes. Plus it has a great name to match! Despite its appearance and its name, it is not an adder but rather an elapid related to cobras, kraits, tiger snakes, and taipans. As a sit-and-

wait predator, it remains coiled and still, relying on its camouflage (and thus making it a particular hazard to be stepped on accidentally!). On approach by an unsuspecting animal, the snake wiggles its slender tail tip like a distressed worm to lure in the prey, then captures the prey animal with a lightning-fast strike that injects one of the world's most potent neurotoxic venoms. When Steve called the group into the forest supposedly to see the Black Thicket-Fantail and then "casually" mentioned the death adder, the sensational news made everyone forget about the fantail. We clustered near the snake and photographed it while Daniel kept it from escaping by using a walking stick. We had to prevent Daniel from killing it, though, as he still had the attitude that all deadly snakes should be killed on sight. Our tolerance for snakes prevailed, and this death adder that had not harmed us was itself allowed to live.

Taxonomic note: The species taxonomy of death adders is not settled. Current Australian works accept four species, of which the Northern Death Adder *Acanthophis praelongus* is also represented in New Guinea. However, the number of death adder species recognized in Australia has ranged from only one to significantly more than four. Moreover, the New Guinea Death Adder *Acanthophis* sp.? may eventually be considered a separate species.

Papuan Olive Python NG

Apodora papuana

As our bus passed through the savanna just outside Varirata National Park late on 9 July we suddenly stopped for this large snake on the edge of the road. David jumped out and grabbed its tail to prevent its escape into the tall grass. Curtis found its head in the grass and gently pinned it with his foot so that David could secure the head. Then we pulled it out and three of us held this python for photos prior to releasing it back into the grass where it wanted to go. Although we were unable to fully straighten the python, it was clearly somewhat longer than the width of the one-lane road, which was about three meters. At nearly four meters (about twelve feet), this was approaching the maximum recorded length for this species. On finding the PNG snake guide at Walindi Resort, we easily confirmed the species identification based on its almost-uniform olive color, lack of conspicuous labial pits (heat sensors), and slender shape (for a python), with its greatest girth being only nearly the thickness of a forearm despite the python's length. It was a fitting close to a day of dramatic (but ultimately safe) snake encounters!

Several other reptile species were observed but could not be identified in the absence of good identification references in the field.

Rockjumper Birding Tours
Worldwide Birding Adventures
PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa
Tel: +27 33 394 0225
Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225
Email: info@rockjumper.co.za
Alternative Email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumper.co.za