



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Papua New Guinea II

### *Trip Report*

*22<sup>nd</sup> July – 8 August 2008*



Group Photo near Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea

**Tour Leaders:** Frank Lambert and David Hoddinott

### Tour Summary

We began our Papua New Guinea explorations with a visit to the manicured grounds of the Pacific Adventist University just outside Port Moresby. Here we had a chance to observe no less than six Papuan

Frogmouths frozen in their deceptively disguised daytime positions, and to examine carefully the alley-shaped bower of the localised Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, created with thousands of carefully woven sticks and decorated with green fruits and leaves in hopes of attracting a mate. Bowerbirds were fairly common, as were a number of species of waterbird including Comb-crested Jacana walking on lily pads with their elongated toes. Other highlights included fantastic views of a single Spotted Whistling Duck perched on the bough of a large tree, Rufous Night Heron, Black-backed Butcherbird, White-shouldered Fairywren and two species of attractive munia.

Days two and three found us in the Varirata National Park, where we were impressed by the rocky eucalypt scenery and dense lowland rainforest so close to the capital. As dawn approached on the first day we saw Large-tailed Nightjar and heard Hook-billed Kingfisher and Barred Owllet-Nightjar. At first light the forest came alive with song, whilst pairs of noisy, colourful Black-capped Lory dashed past and small flocks of Rainbow Lory regularly passed overhead. Although the sounds percolated through the forest interior, it took considerable persistence and patience to obtain views of the interior forest species such as the stunning Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher and camouflaged but noisy Red-cheeked Parrot. Later in the day we had memorable views of a Barred Owllet-nightjar peering out at us from its daytime roost, and a few participants saw a distantly soaring Gurney's Eagle followed immediately by brief views of the huge New Guinea Harpy Eagle, which glided low over the road in front of some of the group.

On our second day we glimpsed the secretive, crepuscular Hook-billed Kingfisher, before spending an hour watching the ritualized displays of about five Raggiana Birds-of-Paradise, one of the highlights of this part of New Guinea. This remarkable display, surely one of the most impressive performances of any bird, was evidently too much for one member of our group, who passed out in the forest. Leaving the Raggiana's we continued our exploration of this excellent national park, and were rewarded with views of three roosting Marbled Frogmouths and, despite intermittent heavy rain, found a good selection of commoner birds. Apart from the many birds, participants marvelled at the wonderful Papilio swallowtail butterflies and the superb Alexander's Birdwing which flashed their electric-coloured wings as we patiently attempted to tape in birds like Rusty Mouse-warbler, Pheasant Pigeon, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler and Northern Scrub-Robin, all of which taunted us and tried our patience! Other great birds included a close encounter with Black-billed Scrubfowl by some, the localized Growling Riflebird, Pale-billed Scrub-wren, Frilled, Black, Black-faced and Spot-winged Monarch, Fairy Gerygone, Rufous and Grey Whistler, Boyer's Cuckoo-Shrike, White-throated, Streak-headed and Tawny-breasted Honeyeater, and Black Berrypecker. 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 – these are loaded with homobatrachotoxin, a chemical also found in poison dart frogs in Central America.

We bid a temporary goodbye to the humidity and heat of the lowlands and set off to the Central Highlands of the Tari Valley. Spread below us during the flight we were privileged to glimpse one of the largest remaining 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 small town of Tari. On our way up the recently improved road to Ambua, which was previously horribly 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. And even more amazing were the small group of Wigmen with their traditional brightly painted faces, amazing head-dresses of bird-of-paradise plumes and the feathers of parrots and other birds and adornments of shells as well as cuscus fur and other products of the natural world.



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, and with the view. Nestled at the edge of montane forest dominated by large old trees heavily adorned with dense epiphytes, the view of the surrounding valley was simply breathtaking. Indeed, Ambua Lodge has been ranked as one of the finest eco-lodges in the entire world. During our brief stay, even the hotel gardens were brimming with birds, and one fruiting tree adjacent to our cabins attracted no less than seven species of birds-of-paradise, including Black Sicklebill, Short-tailed Paradigala and the strange male Lawes Parotia. But for most of us, the undoubted highlight was the marvellous views we had of a gorgeous male Princess Stephanie's Astrapia displaying its spectacular tail plumes from prominent perches in the tree.



The Huli Wigmen we encountered near Ambua Lodge (photo Frank Lambert)

Ascending into the highlands above the lodge we quickly located one of the most spectacular birds on earth, the outrageous King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise, with its beautifully intricate head plumes which it brandished in earnest while uttering its strange display songs. Birding some of the narrow forest trails, we soon heard the beautiful song of the secretive Lesser Ground Robin, and saw it crossing the trail a few times, had glimpses of the scarce Ashy Robin and Chestnut Forest-Rail, Black and Dimorphic Fantail and Mottled Whistler. The phenomenal Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, the male of which supports white tail feathers over three times the length of its own body - proportionally the longest tail of any bird in the world, were found to be not uncommon, and at least five Brown Sicklebills put on a wonderful display in the tops of the tallest trees. In the Tari Valley we scoped a brilliant Superb Bird-of-Paradise vocally displaying on a forested crest with a sudden rigid flexing of its wings, and further down the valley, in the agricultural area, we were fortunate to get prolonged scope views of the localized Greater Sooty Owl near a roost cavity. We were pleasantly surprised to see a superb male Papuan King Parrot sitting in the open at the edge of one of the taro fields.



Amazingly our flight from Tari to Mount Hagen was more or less on time and we were finally on our way to our next mountain lodge, nestled in the mountain forests of the Central Ranges of Mount Hagen over 9,000 feet (2,850m) above sea level. From the wooden balcony overlooking the garden, we had spectacular views of many species, such as the remarkable Brown Sicklebill, the male of which is surely one of the most beautiful of the Birds-of-Paradise, Smoky Honeyeater, Island Thrush, White-winged Robin, Belford's Melidectes, and the brightly colored Brehm's Tiger-Parrot.

Our first morning at Kumul saw us driving in the dark to a site where Blue Birds-of-Paradise are regularly found. Not long after dawn a pair of this remarkable species was observed at close range in a fruiting tree, and later the male, with its wonderful plumage and adornments, posed for us several times at the top of various exposed perches. Whilst waiting for these beautiful birds, we were excited to see a pair of Madarasz's Tiger-parrots at very close range, a rare species that is easily overlooked due to its unobtrusive behaviour and camouflaged plumage.

The following day our group split up to undertake two activities. For one group, the tall, unspoilt forests on the slopes of Mt Hagen were wonderful to admire on the long walk up Mt Hagen. We reached an elevation over 3500m, not that far from the summit, after an exhilarating 7 hour walk that started at 3am. On the way, we saw some great birds, including the range-restricted Long-bearded Melidectes, the miniature Mountain Robin, small groups of Black Sittellas and Papuan Thornbills and close encounters with the colourful Crested Berrypecker and a calling Lesser Malampitta. Meanwhile the other group was chasing up species such as Wattled Ploughbill nearer the lodge. Between us we managed to find some exciting species within a short journey of our lodge, including the localized Marbled Honeyeater, and the strange-sounding Lesser Melampitta, whilst some of us glimpsed the very shy Spotted Jewel-Babbler. Around the lodge we were fortunate to find a cuscus as well as a confiding Speckled Dasyure, and with persistence we tracked down a phenomenally brilliant orange male Crested Bird-of-paradise as well as a fully-plumaged male Ribbon-tailed Astrapia. We finished our highland birding adventures with a morning marvelling at the elaborate breeding displays of Lesser Bird-of-paradise, and the appropriately named Ornate Melidectes.

It wasn't until the mid-1800s that European traders and missionaries began to settle New Guinea, and the highland region, thought to be inhospitable, wasn't explored until the 1930s. Here in remote mountain valleys intrepid explorers in search of gold discovered huge numbers of people living in isolated fertile mountain valleys with cultures and traditions that had remained unchanged for centuries. Hence it was with great anticipation that, on our last day, most of the group went to a cultural event near Mount Hagen. We visited a traditional village to see a local "sing sing" and spent an incredible afternoon with the locals of Mount Hagen in their traditional dress, famous for the elaborate and colourful head-dress adorned with the feathers of birds-of-paradise, parrots, birds of prey and other birds. In an intimate setting, we watched the men and women, all spectacularly adorned, performing dances that had been passed down from generation to generation, in a festival of dynamic colour and rhythmic beating drums. We were also enthralled by the other-worldly movements of the ghostly Mud Men wearing gruesome (and very heavy!) white clay helmets and brandishing their long ghastly nails of bamboo! The few die-hard birders, who did not go to the sing sing, meanwhile had a memorable close encounter with the highly sought-after but skulking Forbes Forest-Rail.

Flying west towards the West Papua (Irian Jaya) border of Indonesia to the mining town of Tabubil, we set out in high anticipation for what was soon to come. On our first afternoon, we visited an area of rapids on a medium sized forested river, where careful scanning and patience eventually allowed us to find three white-water specialists: the beautiful Torrent Flycatcher, boldly patterned Torrent-lark, and the often elusive



Salvadori's Teal, the last seemingly swimming effortlessly through the surging white water. Two males were watched chasing each other round in a spectacular display that lasted several minutes.

The foothills of the Star Mountains around Tabubil harbour a number of spectacular and localized species, and we spent considerable time searching for fruiting trees at just below 1,000m altitude in search of some of these on our second day. The wind chime song of Blue-collared Parrots could be heard overhead, often in the mist, whilst in the nearby trees we had great views of species such as the boldly patterned Mountain Peltops and bright Golden Cuckoo-Shrike, Spotted Honeyeater, Rusty Mouse-warbler, Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot, and an impressive flock of tiny Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrots, moving acrobatically on the branches and trunk of some large trees as they searched for lichen patches to feed upon. White-rumped Robin proved elusive for most of us, but we all had many views of Magnificent Bird of Paradise, including one male, and a single Carola's Parotia.

Next we travelled to the mining road near the Ok Tedi River where we arrived pre-dawn in search of a truly remarkable species, the Shovel-billed Kingfisher. They were calling close-by, but finding one was hard and frustrating work until Betsy finally spotted one in full view, much to everyone's relief. The loud gibbon-like calls of Magnificent Riflebird pierced the air regularly throughout the morning, and a male briefly perched on an exposed tree stump high in the forest as we birded the area. The forest interior was riddled with limestone sinkholes in places, making interior forest birding difficult, but from the road we saw plenty of good species, including a skulking Sooty Thicket-Fantail, the spectacularly large Whiskered Treeswift and the little-known Obscure Berrypecker.

We next visited one of the most famous sites in Papua New Guinea, a location near Kiunga 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 set up our scopes and gazed skyward to behold a flurry of rhythmic displays, intricate wing mantling and vibrant plume posturing. We all felt privileged to have witnessed one of the finest birding experiences on earth, and some of us even saw Greater Bird-of-Paradise mating near the lek! A few of us also managed to obtain excellent views of the endangered Vulturine (Pesquet's) Parrot as two flew just overhead.

The following day we spent the morning staking out a section of remnant forest close to Kiunga where we were fortunate to observe no less than three gorgeous radiant orange male Flame Bowerbirds, surely one of the brightest plumaged species on the planet. There was persistent bird activity all day in this particular area of forest, and we were fortunate to observe several species of fruit-dove and imperial pigeon, Obscure and Plain Honeyeaters, Golden Monarch and much more.

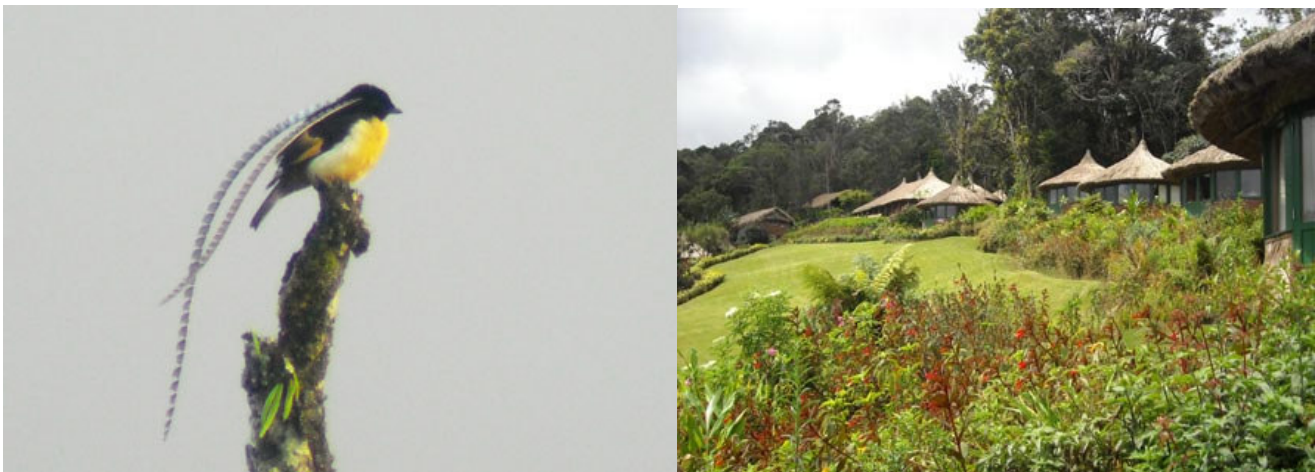
On our penultimate day in the Kiunga area we departed at dawn from the bank of the expansive Fly River, where we began our journey into the remote lowland rainforest interior along the Elevala River. We were soon overwhelmed by the sheer number of large birds, including Eclectus parrots and lorries, pigeons and doves, and hornbills, all giving testimony to the excellent condition and large expanse of the surrounding forest. Large flocks of Collared Imperial Pigeons competed with flocks of Blyth's hornbills for our attention. Passing by small forest villages and locals transporting materials by dugout canoes, we first stopped to search for paradise kingfishers and King Bird-of-Paradise. As we made landing, we could already hear the King Bird-of-Paradise, and before long we were having spectacular views of a male as it hopped about in vines below the canopy, a mere 15-20m away. This is surely one of the most beautiful of



the birds-of-paradise, with its gaudy red and white plumage and green-spatulas at the end of long modified tail feathers. Later we slowed to hear the sharp cries of the extraordinary Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise, seen well in flight and then located displaying at the top of a conspicuously exposed Pandanus palm the following morning. During our journey we also had excellent views of the rare New Guinea Crocodile.

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 – here we were at about 50m altitude but still nearly 1,000 km (by river) from the sea! Exploring this truly wild place was enthralling and we vigilantly persisted along the muddy forest trails finding rarely encountered gems such as the stunning Common Paradise-Kingfisher and Golden Monarch, though the enigmatic Hook-billed Kingfisher severely tested our patience and managed to elude us. One of the highlights of the tour materialized while we quietly floating down the river at sunset; close to dusk we finally spotted a colossal Southern Crowned Pigeon perched not far from the river bank, and later another two. These magnificent birds are extraordinary, with a greyish-blue plumage combined with deep maroon and an extravagant permanently raised fine crest of feathers extending as an arc above its head; by far the most outrageous of all the world's pigeons and doves. The highlight for some of us, however, was the spectacular views of Spangled Owlet-nightjar, which we found not far from the lodge. Our sighting was the first at the lodge of this newly described species, and we were elated to have such unexpectedly amazing views of a bird that has eluded so many others! A great way to end what had been a superb trip to this extraordinary island.

We saw a remarkable 278 bird species during our tour (and heard another 30 or so), a very respectable total for any mainland PNG tour. Amongst this tally were 21 birds-of-paradise (excluding the two satinbirds that were formerly considered to be birds of paradise) that included many full-plumaged males, 18 species of pigeon and dove, 23 species of parrots, and 12 species of kingfisher. From poisonous birds and giant butterflies to ornamented tribesmen and displaying birds-of-paradise, Papua New Guinea is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating and memorable birding destinations on earth!



King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise and Ambua Lodge

## Annotated Checklists of Birds

### Key to endemic/near endemic abbreviations

NG – endemic to New Guinea



PNG – endemic to Papua New Guinea

NE – near endemic to New Guinea

### Megapodes Megapodiidae

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

One seen briefly in Varirata by some of the group. Heard regularly in lowland areas and nest mounds were also seen near Ekame Lodge.

### Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

**Wandering Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata*

About 50 at Pacific Adventist University.

**Spotted Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna eytoni*

One seen perched in a large tree at Pacific Adventist University.

**Salvadori's Teal (NG)** *Salvadorina waigiensis*

We scoped two swimming amongst the rocks on a larger river near Tabubil. This is a highly-desired bird on any New Guinea tour.

**Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa*

About 25 at Pacific Adventist University.

### Grebes Podicipedidae

**Australasian Grebe** *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

Two were seen at Pacific Adventist University.

### Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

**Australian (White) Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca*

Four at PAU.

**Straw-necked Ibis** *Threskiornis spinicollis*

Three at Port Moresby airport were the only ones seen.

### Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae

**Rufous (Nankeen) Night-Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus*

Five were seen at the Pacific Adventist University.

**Striated (Little Green/Green-backed) Heron** *Butorides striatus*

Only seen along the Elevala River, where two were observed each day.

*Note: A polytypic and cosmopolitan superspecies with over 30 recognized forms. Clements recognised 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.*

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*

Only seen in the Port Moresby region: at and near PAU, and Port Moresby airport.

*Note: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret E. coromanda.*

**Great-billed Heron** *Ardea sumatrana*

We had several flight views on the Elevala River of this huge heron.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba*

Widespread in small numbers in the lowlands.

*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*

We saw about 25 of this beautiful heron at PAU.

**Intermediate Egret***Egretta intermedia*

Widespread but uncommon, with sightings on three dates.

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 IOC.

**Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae****Little Black Cormorant***Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

Common in the Port Moresby area, with about 40 at the Pacific Adventist University (PAU). Singles on the Elevala River.

**Little Pied Cormorant***Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Two at PAU, and several seen in the Kiunga area.

**Anhinga & Darters Anhingidae****Darter***Anhinga melanogaster*

One at PAU. Note: Race *A. m. novaehollandiae* is usually split as Australasian Darter, occurring from Australia, New Guinea and Wallacea.

**Falcons and Kestrels Falconidae****Australian Hobby***Falco cenchroides*

One seen in the Tari valley.

**Brown Falcon***Falco berigora*

One at Mt Hagen airport

**Hawks, Eagles & Kites Accipitridae****Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

One at PAU was catching large fish in front of the group. Another seen near Port Moresby.

**Pacific Baza (Crested Hawk)***Aviceda subcristata*

Seen almost daily in the Tabubil / Kiunga / Elevala River area, with a maximum of eight a day.

**Long-tailed Honey-buzzard (E)***Henicopernis longicauda*

Two seen near Kiunga was the only observation of the trip.

**Australian Kite***Elanus axillaries*

One on the way from Mt. Hagen to Kumul Lodge.

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

Up to 40 birds were seen daily in the Mt. Hagen area and one or two per day in the Port Moresby region.

**Whistling Kite***Haliastur sphenurus*

Several in the Port Moresby area.

**Brahminy Kite***Haliastur indus*

Seen regularly throughout the tour, with maximum of three daily in the Moresby area and up to five a day in the Kumul area.

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle***Haliaeetus leucogaster*

Superb views of this huge fish-eating eagle on the Fly River.

**Variable Goshawk***Accipiter hiogaster*

Widespread, with one or two seen on six days.

**Brown Goshawk***Accipiter fasciatus*

Two seen in the Tari Valley.

**Grey-headed Goshawk***Accipiter poliocephalus*

Seen on two occasions, one on Dablin Creek Road and two between Tabubil and Kiunga.

**New Guinea Eagle NG***Harpyopsis novaeguineae*

Brief views of this powerful raptor at Varirata as it glided across the road, but sadly only a couple of people got onto the bird before it disappeared.

**Gurneys Eagle***Aquila gurneyi*

One seen soaring from the road at Varirata.

**Little Eagle***Hieraaetus morphonoides*

One seen soaring near Ambua.

**Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae****Forbes Forest Crake***Rallina forbesi*

Several of the group had great views of this elusive bird near Kumul Lodge, and it was heard there on two other dates.

**Chestnut Forest Crake***Rallina forbesi*

About half the group had views of this beautiful crake near Ambua. Heard on two dates near Kumul Lodge.

**Red-necked Crake***Rallina tricolor*

One heard in riverside forest on our way from Tabubil to Kiunga, but sadly not seen.

**Buff-banded Rail***Gallirallus philippensis*

One observed at Ambua Lodge.

**Purple Swamphen***Porphyrio porphyrio*

At least 60 were recorded at Pacific Adventist University.

*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*

About ten were at Pacific Adventist University.

**Buttonquails Turnicidae****Red-backed Buttonquail***Turnix maculosa*

Repeating our success from the tour immediately preceding, we observed one of these secretive little birds at Kiunga Airport and were treated to good views.

**Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae****Masked Lapwing***Vanellus miles*

Eight seen at PAU.

**Little-ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

Two observed around some shallow pools between Tabubil and Kiunga.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Only one seen, on the Fly River.

**Jacanas Jacanidae****Comb-crested Jacana***Irediparra gallinacea*

Only two were found at the Pacific Adventist University.



---

**Coursers and Pratincoles Glareolidae**

**Australian Pratincole***Stiltia isabella*

One near was seen at Kiunga.

**Pigeons & Doves Columbidae**

**Slender-billed [Brown] Cuckoo-Dove***Macropygia amboinensis*

This species was widespread and common in small numbers from the lowlands up to mid-level mountains, with up to four per day.

**Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove***Macropygia nigrirostris*

Up to 10 per day in the Kumul area.

**Great Cuckoo-Dove (NE)***Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*

Two near Ambua Lodge; including one scoped near the lodge, and another at Varirata.

**Stephan's Dove***Chalcophaps stephani*

Two seen along the Elevala River.

**Peaceful Dove***Geopelia placida*

Ten at PAU.

**Bar-shouldered Dove***Geopelia humeralis*

We found this highly localized bird (in New Guinea) at Pacific Adventist University.

**Southern Crowned-Pigeon (NG)***Goura scheepmakeri*

Always one of the main target birds along the Elevala River, this amazing bird did not let us down. We had fantastic prolonged views of four on our first day and three on the second day along this river.

**Pheasant Pigeon (NG)***Otidiphaps nobilis*

Heard only, at Varirata.

**Wompoo (Magnificent) Fruit-Dove***Ptilinopus magnificus*

Heard on five dates in the lowlands, but not seen.

**Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove (NG)***Ptilinopus perlatus*

The commonest fruit-dove on this tour, seen on seven dates in the lowlands, with up to 10 in a day.

**Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove (NG)***Ptilinopus aurantiifrons*

One seen along the Fly River.

**Superb Fruit-Dove***Ptilinopus superbus*

Heard in the Elevala River area and one seen by some of the group.

**Beautiful Fruit-Dove (NG)***Ptilinopus pulchellus*

One along Boys Town Road, Kiunga.

**Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove (NG)***Ptilinopus iozonus*

Good numbers seen in the Kiunga area, with up to a high of 40 per day.

**Dwarf Fruit-Dove (NG)***Ptilinopus nanus*

Seen on two dates in the Kiunga area, with three on one day and four on the other.

**Pinon Imperial-Pigeon NG***Ducula pinon*

Seen on three dates in the Kiunga – Elevala River region, with up to ten per day.

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

Abundant along the Elevala and Fly rivers, with up to 150 estimated daily.

**Zoe Imperial-Pigeon (NG)***Ducula zoeae*

Fifteen seen in total, in Varirata, along the Elevala River and around Kiunga.

**Torresian Imperial-Pigeon (NE)***Ducula spilorrhoea*

Two seen at PAU.

**Papuan Mountain-Pigeon (NE)***Gymnophaps albertisii*

Widespread and often seen in flocks of up to 20, not only in the mountains but also in lowland areas. Maximum count of about 20 on the Ok Ma road near Tabubil.

### **Cockatoos & Parrots Psittacidae**

- Pesquet's Parrot** *Psittrichas fulgidus*  
Two seen flying low over the forest at Km 17 near Kiunga.
- Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot (NE)** *Micropsitta keiensis*  
About 15 of these tiny birds seen in flight along Boys Town Road, Kiunga.
- Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot (NE)** *Micropsitta bruijnii*  
Great views on the Dablin Creek Road, where at least 50 were feeding in the taller trees.
- Palm Cockatoo (NE)** *Probosciger aterrimus*  
Seen daily in the Tabubil and Kiunga/Ekame Lodge areas, with up to three of this magnificent species seen per day.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita*  
Observed on five days and heard on others, with up to two per day, in the lowlands and hills.
- Yellow-streaked (Greater Streaked) Lory (NG)** *Chalcopsitta sintillata*  
Up to 10 daily in the Kiunga area, with smaller numbers along the Elevala River.
- Dusky Lory (NG)** *Pseudeos fuscata*  
Seen only in the Tabubil area, with up to 20 a day.
- Rainbow Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus*  
Common and widespread in the lowlands and hills.
- Goldie's Lorikeet (NG)** *Psitteuteles goldiei*  
Only seen below Kumul Lodge, where two were seen.
- Western Black-capped Lory (NG)** *Lorius lory*  
This gorgeous bird was common through the lowlands and hills in small numbers. Eight in a day was the maximum count.
- Red-flanked Lorikeet (NE)** *Charmosyna placensis*  
About 20 seen in the Kiunga area.
- Fairy (Little Red) Lorikeet (NG)** *Charmosyna pulchella*  
About ten seen well along the Ok Ma road, Tabubil.
- Papuan Lorikeet (NG)** *Charmosyna papou*  
Small numbers in the mountains, with up to eight daily around Ambua Lodge and a few near Kumul. This must rate as one of the world's most beautiful parrots!
- Plum-faced (Whiskered) Lorikeet (NG)** *Oreopsittacus arfaki*  
About ten per day around Ambua Lodge.
- Yellow-billed Lorikeet (NG)** *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*  
Small numbers below Kumul Lodge and in the Ambua Lodge area.
- Orange-billed Lorikeet (NG)** *Neopsittacus pullicauda*  
Several birds at both Kumul Lodge and the Ambua Lodge area.
- Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot (NG)** *Clycopsitta guliemitertii*  
We had 10 at Dablin Creek Road and small numbers along the Elevala River.
- Brehm's Tiger-Parrot (NG)** *Psittacella brehmii*  
Up to three seen 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.
- Madarasz's Tiger-Parrot (NG)** *Psittacella madaraszii*  
A pair was studied near Ambua Lodge.



---

<b>Red-cheeked Parrot (NE)</b>	<i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>
Common but easily over-looked. Seen at PAU, Varirata, and in the Kiunga – Elevela River area.	
<b>Blue-collared Parrot (NG)</b>	<i>Geoffroyus simplex</i>
At least 10 were seen in flight overhead at Dablin Creek Road.	
<b>Eclectus Parrot (NE)</b>	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>
Seen regularly in small numbers on the mainland, though no more than ten per day.	
<b>Papuan King-Parrot (NG)</b>	<i>Alisterus chloropterus</i>
Seen on three dates, with maximum of three in a day at Varirata.	

### Cuckoos and Coucals Cuculidae

<b>Greater Black Coucal (NG)</b>	<i>Centropus menbeki</i>
We heard several calling along the Elevela River, especially before dawn around Ekame Lodge, and saw a couple briefly.	
<b>Pheasant Coucal</b>	<i>Centropus phasianinus</i>
One seen at PAU; and two in the Varirata area.	
<b>Brush Cuckoo</b>	<i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>
A common bird that was seen occasionally and frequently heard.	
<b>Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo (NE)</b>	<i>Cacomantis castaneiventris</i>
We found a singing bird at Dablin Creek Road.	
<b>Fan-tailed Cuckoo</b>	<i>Cacomantis flabelliformis</i>
Heard on several dates but seen only once, near Ambua.	
<b>White-eared Bronze-Cuckoo (NG)</b>	<i>Chrysococcyx meyeri</i>
Seen on both visits to Varirata, and twice in the Tabubil area.	
<b>Rufous-throated Bronze-Cuckoo (NG)</b>	<i>Chrysococcyx ruficollis</i>
One seen above Ambua and another near Kumul Lodge.	
<b>Little Bronze-Cuckoo</b>	<i>Chrysococcyx minutillus</i>
One near Ekame Lodge.	
<b>White-crowned Koel (NG)</b>	<i>Caliechthrus leucolophus</i>
Heard only, near Kiunga.	
<b>Asian [Common] Koel</b>	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>
Observed twice in the Kiunga-Tabubil area. As this is the breeding form in New Guinea, it is the only one expected to call there; the male looks just like the male Australian Koel, which is usually silent in New Guinea. Also recorded on the pre-tour extension to New Britain.	
<b>Channel-billed Cuckoo</b>	<i>Scythrops novaehollandiae</i>
Twenty observed along the Elevela and Fly rivers. Also recorded in small numbers on the pre-tour extension to New Britain.	

### Barn Owls Tytonidae

<b>Greater Sooty-Owl (NE)</b>	<i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>
We all had spectacular daylight views of this stunning species in the Tari valley.	

### Typical Owls Strigidae

<b>Papuan Boobook (NG)</b>	<i>Ninox theomacha</i>
Two seen by some of the group around Ambua Lodge.	



---

### Frogmouths Podargidae

**Marbled Frogmouth (NE)** *Podargus ocellatus*

Three of these gigantic night birds seen at a daytime roost in Varirata

**Papuan Frogmouth (NE)** *Podargus papuensis*

Essentially the first birds of this tour were a magnificent pair roosting together in a tree in the residential portion of Pacific Adventist University. We scoped these astounding birds in intimate detail. Another four seen around the PAU grounds, and one more in the Tari valley.

### Nightjars & Allies Caprimulgidae

**Large-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus macrurus*

Seen on two dates pre-dawn at Varirata, with at least three birds involved.

**White-throated Nightjar** *Eurostopodus mystacalis*

One seen briefly prior to dawn on the Boys Town Road, Kiunga.

### Owlet-Nightjars Aegothelidae

**Spangled (Starry) Owlet-Nightjar (NG)** *Aegotheles tatei*

One seen extremely well near Ekame Lodge using tape playback made by FL on the previous RBT tour. According to our guides, no birding groups have previously managed to see this newly-recognised species.

**Barred Owlet-Nightjar (NG)** *Aegotheles bennettii*

One scoped at its daytime roost hole in Varirata National.

**Mountain Owlet-Nightjar (NG)** *Aegotheles albertisi*

Heard nightly around Kumul Lodge but not seen.

### Treeswifts Hemiprocnidae

**Moustached Treeswift (NE)** *Hemiprocne mystacea*

Seen regularly in the lowlands near Kiunga and Tabubil, with up to ten in a day, and one near Ambua.

### Swifts Apodidae

**Glossy Swiftlet** *Aerodramus esculenta*

Up to 50 birds estimated daily in the hills and mountains.

**Mountain Swiftlet (NG)** *Aerodramus hirundinaceus*

Up to 50 daily in the Kumul Lodge and Tari Gap – Ambua Lodge areas, and in higher areas near Tabubil.

**Uniform Swiftlet** *Aerodramus vanikorensis*

Very common in the lowlands and hills, where seen virtually every day.

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

Small numbers foraging above the Fly and Elevala Rivers, with up to 10 per day.

### Rollers Coraciidae

**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis*

Seen regularly in the lowlands with up to 40 per day near Kiunga.

### Kingfishers Alcedinidae

**Azure Kingfisher** *Alcedo azurea*

One at Varirata in a small forest stream and another along a backwater of the Elevala River.



**Little Kingfisher***Alcedo pusilla*

Lillian found us one along the Elevala River, a species missed by some tours.

**Variable (Dwarf) Kingfisher***Ceyx lepidus*

One seen in Varirata and another near Tabubil.

**Blue-winged Kookaburra***Dacelo leachii*

Up to five birds were seen at PAU and up to two a day at Varirata. One of the largest kingfishers, with a truly massive bill!

**Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (NG)***Dacelo gaudichaud*

Seen and heard in the lowlands and hills on five dates, with up to three in a day.

**Shovel-billed Kookaburra (NG)***Clytoceyx rex*

Three or four birds were calling in the dawn twilight at Ok Ma, Tabubil, but we had some tense moments until Betsy spotted one of these magnificent birds sitting in the open. This is a near-mythical species; the first known nest of this species was only discovered in this same area just a few years ago!

**Forest Kingfisher***Todirhamphus macleayi*

The only birds seen were two near Varirata.

**Collared Kingfisher***Todirhamphus chloris*

One near Tabubil.

**Sacred Kingfisher***Todirhamphus sanctus*

This common wintering bird from Australia was widespread and frequently seen in the lowlands.

**Hook-billed Kingfisher (NG)***Melidora macrorrhina*

We heard this crepuscular species calling many times but only had a very brief view at Varirata.

**Yellow-billed Kingfisher (NE)***Syma torotoro*

One seen well at Varirata National Park on two dates.

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

Heard several times near Ambua Lodge but sadly never seen.

**Little Paradise-Kingfisher (NG)***Tanysiptera hydrocharis*

Heard along the Elevala River but never seen.

**Common Paradise-Kingfisher (NE)***Tanysiptera galatea*

One seen well along the Elevala River – a stunning and memorable species.

**Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher (PNG)***Tanysiptera danae*

With only a small amount of work we saw one well at Varirata National Park.

**Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher (NE)***Tanysiptera sylvia*

One seen briefly in Varirata.

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

Seen on six dates, with up to 15 in a day. This is a migrant from Australia.

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

This species is always most common along the Elevala and Fly rivers, where we saw it daily in numbers up to 50. The only hornbills we saw elsewhere were a few at Ok Ma.

**Pittas Pittidae****Hooded Pitta***Pitta sordida*

We heard this species regularly along the Elevala River and in the Kiunga area, and most of us saw one or



two well.

**Blue-breasted Pitta***Pitta erythrogaster*

Heard only, near Ekame Lodge.

**Bowerbirds Ptilonorhynchidae****Macgregor's Bowerbird (NG)***Amblyornis macgregoriae*

A female seen briefly by some of the group near Kumul Lodge.

**Flame Bowerbird (NG)***Sericulus aureus*

We had great views of at least three males of this extraordinary golden bird as they flew across the road above the forest along Boys Town Road.

**Yellow-breasted Bowerbird (NG)***Chlamydera lauterbachii*

Near Munganda village below Kumul Lodge we glimpsed at least two distant birds before finally getting closer views of a more confiding individual.

**Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (NE)***Chlamydera cerviniventris*

We saw at least four birds at Pacific Adventist University and another six around the Holiday Inn in Port Moresby, and were able to study an active bower.

**Australasian Wrens Maluridae****Wallace's Fairywren (NG)***Sipodotus wallacii*

At least three in the subcanopy at Km 17 near Kiunga.

**White-shouldered Fairywren (NG)***Malurus alboscapulatus*

Fairly widespread and seen at several sites below Kumul Lodge, at Varirata, and in the Kiunga lowlands.

**Emperor Fairywren (NG)***Malurus cyanocephalus*

Heard only, at Km 17.

**Orange-crowned Fairywren (NG)***Clytomyias insignis*

Small groups encountered twice near Kumul Lodge, though only a couple of the birds were seen.

**Honeyeaters Meliphagidae****Spotted Honeyeater (NG)***Xanthotis polygramma*

One on Dablin Creek Road. A strikingly marked honeyeater.

**Tawny-breasted Honeyeater (NE)***Xanthotis flaviventer*

One at Varirata and about ten on the Ok Ma Road.

**Black-throated Honeyeater (NG)***Lichenostomus subfrenatus*

One near Ambua was the only definite sighting.

**Obscure Honeyeater (NG)***Lichenostomus obscurus*

Up to five a day in the Kiunga area.

**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater (NE)***Lichenostomus flavescens*

Several at the Gateway Hotel, Port Moresby.

**Mountain Meliphaga (NG)***Meliphaga orientalis*

Seen in the Tabubil area and below Kumul Lodge, with up to five a day.

**Scrub (Scrub White-eared) Honeyeater (NG)***Meliphaga albonotata*

Several around Tabubil town and along the Dablin Creek Road.

**Mimic Honeyeater (Meliphaga) (NG)***Meliphaga analoga*

Several on each visit to Varirata. And two on the Dablin Creek Road.

**Graceful Honeyeater (Meliphaga) (NE)***Meliphaga gracilis*

Three seen along the Boys Town Road.



<b>White-throated Honeyeater</b>	<i>Melithreptus albobularis</i>
Up to three a day in savanna along the Varirata National Park entrance road.	
<b>Plain Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Pycnopygius ixoides</i>
One on the Boys Town Road, Kiunga	
<b>Marbled Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Pycnopygius cinereus</i>
One seen below Kumul Lodge.	
<b>Streak-headed Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Pycnopygius stictocephalus</i>
Seen only in Varirata National Park and near Kiunga.	
<b>Meyer's Friarbird (NG)</b>	<i>Philemon meyeri</i>
Heard only, along Boys Town Road	
<b>Helmeted [New Guinea] Friarbird</b>	<i>Philemon buceroides</i>
Common in the New Guinea lowlands and recorded almost daily in numbers up to seven in the Kiunga area and in smaller numbers around Port Moresby-Varirata.	
<b>Common Smoky Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Melipotes fumigatus</i>
Common in the high mountains, with up to 40 and 30 daily at Kumul and Ambua lodges, respectively. 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.	
<b>Long-bearded Melidectes (NG)</b>	<i>Melidectes princeps</i>
At least two seen on Mt Hagen.	
<b>Belford's Melidectes (NG)</b>	<i>Melidectes belfordi</i>
Most common high and heard constantly. Up to 25 daily in the Kumul Lodge and Ambua areas.	
<b>Yellow-browed Melidectes (NG)</b>	<i>Melidectes rufocrissalis</i>
Mostly below the elevation zone dominated by Belford's Melidectes. Some showed signs of introgressive hybridization from Belford's, as is common in this region. Daily numbers up to 10 from somewhat above Ambua Lodge down into Tari Valley.	
<b>Ornate Melidectes (NG)</b>	<i>Melidectes torquatus</i>
Only seen below Kumul Lodge and near Mt Hagen airport.	
<b>Rufous-backed Honeyeater (PNG)</b>	<i>Ptiloprora guisei</i>
Seen daily around Ambua Lodge.	
<b>Black-backed (Grey-streaked) Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Ptiloprora perstriata</i>
Daily numbers of up to ten around Kumul Lodge and six in the Ambua area.	
<b>Long-billed Honeyeater (NG)</b>	<i>Melilestes megarhynchus</i>
One on Dablin Creek Road was the only sighting.	
<b>Rufous-banded Honeyeater (NE)</b>	<i>Conopophila albobularis</i>
Several birds around the Gateway Hotel and at Pacific Adventist University.	
<b>Mountain Red-headed Myzomela (NG)</b>	<i>Myzomela adolphinae</i>
A female at Tari airport.	
<b>Red-collared Myzomela (NG)</b>	<i>Myzomela rosenbergii</i>
Seen on four dates in the highlands of Ambua and Kumul, with up to two a day.	
<b>Green-backed Honeyeater</b>	<i>Timeliopsis fallax</i>
Three in total, in the Kiunga and Tabubil areas.	

### **Thornbills & Allies Acanthizidae**

<b>Rusty Mouse-Warbler (NG)</b>	<i>Crateroscelis murina</i>
Three birds seen at Varirata and one on the Dablin Creek Road.	
<b>Mountain Mouse-Warbler (NG)</b>	<i>Crateroscelis robusta</i>



Up to two seen daily near both Kumul and Ambua lodges, and on Mt Hagen.

**Large Scrubwren (NG)** *Sericornis nouhuysi*

Four at Ambua and up to two per day at Kumul Lodge.

**Buff-faced Scrubwren (NG)** *Sericornis perspicillatus*

Up to at least three at Ambua and Kumul lodges.

**Papuan Scrubwren (NG)** *Sericornis papuensis*

Up to ten daily at Kumul Lodge but only a few at Ambua Lodge.

**Pale-billed Scrubwren (NG)** *Sericornis spilodera*

Seen on both visits at Varirata.

**Green-backed Gerygone NE** *Gerygone chloronotus*

Its distinctive song was heard frequently in the lowlands and hills from Varirata and the Kiunga region to Tabubil, and several were seen in both areas.

**Large-billed Gerygone** *Gerygone magnirostris*

One seen well along the Elevela River.

**Yellow-bellied Gerygone (NG)** *Gerygone chrysogaster*

A total of three seen along the Elevela River.

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

Heard almost daily and often seen in the mountains near both Kumul and Ambua lodges, with up to twenty seen. Its song is one of the beautiful and characteristic sounds of the montane forest.

**Fairy Gerygone** *Gerygone palpebrosa*

Small numbers in Varirata.

### Australasian Babblers Pomatosromidae

**Papuan (Rufous) Babbler (NG)** *Pomatostomus isidorei*

At least 12 seen well at Km 17 near Kiunga.

### Satinbirds Cnemophilidae

**Velvet Satinbird (Loria's Bird-of-paradise) NG** *Cnemophilus loriae*

Up to three daily in the Ambua area and two at Kumul.

**Antenna Satinbird (Crested Bird-of-paradise) NG** *Cnemophilus macgregorii*

An adult male and a female were seen below Kumul Lodge and a female and immature male were also seen in the garden. Another male in the canopy of a tall tree on Mt Hagen.

### Berrypeckers Melanocharitidae

**Obscure Berrypecker (NG)** *Melanocharis arfakiana*

We saw one on the Ok Ma road, Tabubil and heard it on Dablin Creek Road This enigmatic species was almost unknown until discovered to be regular around Tabubil.

**Black Berrypecker (NG)** *Melanocharis nigra*

Two observed at Varirata National Park.

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

Several observed in the highlands near Kumul and Ambua Lodge.

**Fan-tailed Berrypecker (NG)** *Melanocharis versteri*

Two seen above Ambua Lodge.

**Streaked Berrypecker (NG)** *Melanocharis striativentris*

One seen below Kumul Lodge

**Yellow-bellied Longbill (NG)** *Toxorhamphus novaeguineae*



One seen well at Km 17 near Kiunga, and another near Ekame Lodge.

**Slaty-chinned Longbill (NG)** *Toxorhamphus poliopterus*

One observed below Kumul Lodge

**Dwarf Honeyeater (NG)** *Toxorhamphus iliolophus*

One was seen at Varirata National Park and others near Tabubil on Dablin Creek Road.

### Painted Berrypeckers Paramythiidae

**Tit Berrypecker (NG)** *Oreocharis arfaki*

About 15 seen near Ambua Lodge and another few near Kumul Lodge.

**Crested Berrypecker (NG)** *Paramythia montium*

Small numbers seen daily around Kumul Lodge, and a group of at least ten on Mt Hagen. Also two seen above Ambua.

### Whipbirds and Jewel-babblers Eupetidae

**Papuan Whipbird (NG)** *Androphobus viridis*

One seen near Kumul Lodge by David.

**Spotted Jewel-babbler (NG)** *Ptilorrhoa leucosticta*

Some of us saw this species near Kumul Lodge, where also heard on several occasions.

**Blue Jewel-babbler (NG)** *Ptilorrhoa caerulescens*

Some of the group managed to see this beautiful but elusive species at Km 17 near Kiunga. It was also heard around Ekame Lodge.

**Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler (NG)** *Ptilorrhoa castanonota*

Heard in Varirata and near Tabubil but never seen.

### Quail-thrushes Cinclosomatidae

**Painted Quail-thrush (NG)** *Cinclosoma ajax*

Heard only, in Varirata.

### Boatbills Machaerirhynchidae

**Yellow-breasted Boatbill (NG)** *Machaerirhynchus flaviventris*

Two seen in Varirata National Park.

**Black-breasted Boatbill (NG)** *Machaerirhynchus nigripectus*

A total of five observed in the highlands around Kumul and Ambua Lodges.

### Butcherbirds & Allies Cracticidae

**Black-backed Butcherbird (NE)** *Cracticus mentalis*

Three at Pacific Adventist University.

**Hooded Butcherbird (NG)** *Cracticus cassicus*

Conspicuous, by both sight and sound, at Varirata, around Kiunga, and along the Elevala river with maximum of three on a day.

**Black Butcherbird** *Cracticus quoyi*

Two near Tabubil and another two below Ambua Lodge.

**Mountain Peltops (NG)** *Peltops montanus*

Four on the Dablin Creek road and three near Ambua Lodge.



### Woodswallows Artamidae

**Great Woodswallow (NG)**

*Artamus maximus*

Up to 15 per day around Ambua Lodge and a few elsewhere in the highlands.

**White-breasted Woodswallow**

*Artamus leucorhynchus*

Up to five seen daily in the Port Moresby area and lowlands, where recorded on four dates

### Cuckoo-shrikes Campephagidae

**Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**

*Coracina novaehollandiae*

This Australian migrant was most common at Varirata where at least ten were seen. Others were seen in the Kiunga and Tabubil area.

**Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Coracina caeruleogrisea*

Among New Guinea's cuckoo-shrikes, this large bird is particularly impressive. We saw one near Ambua and four in the Tabubil area.

**Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike**

*Coracina lineata*

Two seen at Varirata.

**Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Coracina boyeri*

Seen on two occasions in the Tabubil area.

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**

*Coracina papuensis*

Widespread in the lowlands where up to four were seen per day.

**Black Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Coracina melas*

A single bird seen in Varirata.

**Grey-headed (Black-tipped) Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Coracina schisticeps*

Up to five daily in the Tabubil and Kiunga areas.

**Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Coracina montana*

Ten seen on one day near Ambua and one on two dates near Kumul Lodge.

**Golden Cuckoo-shrike (NG)**

*Campochaera sloetii*

This is always a popular bird and we saw two or three several times on the Dablin Creek Road and near Kiunga.

**Varied Triller**

*Lalage leucomela*

Seen on five dates with a maximum of at least four in Varirata.

### Sittellas Neosittidae

**Black Sittella (NG)**

*Neositta miranda*

A flock of at least four on Mt Hagen and six from the road below Kumul Lodge.

### Shriketits Falcunculidae

**Wattled Ploughbill (NG)**

*Eulacestoma nigropectus*

Seen briefly on two occasions near Kumul Lodge.

### Whistlers Pachycephalidae

**Dwarf Whistler (NG)**

*Pachycare flavogriseum*

One seen briefly in Varirata by a couple of people.

**Rufous-naped Whistler (NG)**

*Aleadryas rufinucha*

This distinctive whistler was seen nearly every day in the highlands around Kumul and Ambua lodges, with a maximum of four seen.



---

<b>Mottled Whistler (NG)</b> Two seen near Ambua Lodge.	<i>Rhagologus leucostigma</i>
<b>Rusty Whistler (NG)</b> Two seen on each visit to Varirata.	<i>Pachycephala hyperythra</i>
<b>Brown-backed Whistler (PNG)</b> We encountered this whistler three times in the highlands, with up to two daily.	<i>Pachycephala modesta</i>
<b>Grey-headed [Grey] Whistler (NE)</b> Seen on five dates.	<i>Pachycephala griseiceps</i>
<b>Sclater's Whistler (NG)</b> A single bird seen near Ambua.	<i>Pachycephala soror</i>
<b>Regent Whistler (NG)</b> Up to three daily at Kumul Lodge and six on Mt Hagen, but fewer near Ambua Lodge. One of the most colourful of all whistlers.	<i>Pachycephala schlegelii</i>
<b>Black-headed Whistler (NG)</b> Two in the Tari Valley and a single bird below Kumul Lodge	<i>Pachycephala monacha</i>

### Shrikes Laniidae

<b>Long-tailed Shrike</b> Up to four seen almost daily near Kumul Lodge.	<i>Lanius schach</i>
---	----------------------

### Figbirds and Orioles Oriolidae

<b>Brown Oriole (NG)</b> Small numbers at Varirata and around Kiunga.	<i>Oriolus szalayi</i>
<b>Green Figbird</b> Several at Pacific Adventist University.	<i>Sphecotheres viridis</i>

### Shrikethrushes & Pitohuis Colluricinclidae

<b>Rufous (Little) Shrike-Thrush</b> A few in Varirata and around Tabubil and one below Kumul Lodge	<i>Colluricincla megarhyncha</i>
<b>Grey Shrike-Thrush</b> One in Varirata was our only sighting.	<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>
<b>Hooded Pitohui (NG)</b> Up to six birds seen at Varirata National Park. This aposematically-coloured bird is the traditional “poison-bird” as it was the first bird species discovered to possess poisonous compounds in its tissues.	<i>Pitohui dichrous</i>
<b>Rusty Pitohui (NG)</b> One bird seen at Km 17 outside Kiunga.	<i>Pitohui ferrugineus</i>
<b>White-bellied Pitohui (NG)</b> Five along the Elevala River were seen by almost everyone after much effort.	<i>Pitohui incertus</i>
<b>Crested Pitohui (NG)</b> We heard its remarkably long pulsing song at Varirata.	<i>Pitohui cristatus</i>
<b>Variable Pitohui (NG)</b> Heard on two visits to km 17 near Kiunga, but not seen.	<i>Pitohui kirhocephalus</i>

### Drongos Dicruridae

<b>Spangled Drongo</b> We had up to ten on most days in the lowlands and lower hills.	<i>Dicrurus bracteatus</i>
--	----------------------------



### Fantails Rhipiduridae

- Northern Fantail** *Rhipidura rufiventris*  
Only seen in the Tabubil area, with a maximum of six in a day.
- Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*  
Very widespread, being seen every day throughout the trip; with up to 30 per day in the Port Moresby region. Also recorded on the pre-tour extension to New Britain.
- Friendly Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura albolimbata*  
Relatively common in the highlands, with up to ten per day around Kumul and Ambua lodges.
- Chestnut-bellied Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura hyperythra*  
Three were seen at Varirata National Park.
- Sooty Thicket-Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura threnothorax*  
One seen in the Tabubil area and another in Varirata.
- White-bellied Thicket-Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura leucothorax*  
Two seen, one near Tabubil and the other between Tabubil and Kiunga.
- Black Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura atra*  
Seen on four dates in the highlands, with two per day.
- Dimorphic Fantail (NG)** *Rhipidura brachyrhyncha*  
A total of four birds seen near Ambua and singles in the Kumul Lodge.

### Monarchs Monarchidae

- Black Monarch (Fantail Monarch) (NG)** *Monarcha axillaris*  
This species was observed in Varirata, near Tabubil and near Kumul Lodge.
- Black-faced Monarch** *Monarcha melanopsis*  
Three seen over two visits to Varirata.
- Black-winged Monarch** *Monarcha frater*  
One seen near Ekame Lodge.
- Spot-winged Monarch (NG)** *Monarcha guttulus*  
Singles seen twice in Varirata.
- Golden Monarch (NG)** *Monarcha chrysomela*  
One along Boys Town road and another three along the Elevala River.
- Frilled Monarch (NG)** *Arses telescopthalmus*  
Seen on four dates in the lowlands.  
*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.*
- Torrentlark (NG)** *Grallina bruijni*  
We all had great views of a pair of this charismatic cascade specialist above the Ok Menga Hydro Plant.
- Leaden Flycatcher** *Myiagra rubecula*  
Two seen in Varirata.
- Shining Flycatcher** *Myiagra alecto*  
Common along the Elevala River where at least four per day were seen.

### Crows and Jays Corvidae

- Grey (Bare-eyed) Crow (NG)** *Corvus tristis*  
About ten seen in Varirata and six along the Elevala River. Heard regularly in the lowlands.
- Torresian Crow** *Corvus orru*



The typical 'mainland' form we saw in the Port Moresby – Varirata region, and near Kiunga.

### Family Uncertain

#### **Lesser Melampitta (NG)**

*Melampitta lugubris*

Several of us saw this species well near Kumul Lodge, and one gave fantastic views on Mt Hagen. Also heard in the Ambua area.

#### **Greater Melampitta (NG)**

*Melampitta gigantea*

Heard only as it gave us the run-around on several occasions on the Ok Ma road.

#### **Blue-capped Ifrita (NG)**

*Ifrita kowaldi*

Seen well on two dates near Ambua. 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.

### Birds-of-Paradise Paradisaeidae

#### **Glossy-mantled Manucode (NG)**

*Manucodia atra*

We saw only one bird that were definitely this species, on the Elevala River. It was heard near Kiunga.

#### **Crinkle-collared Manucode (NG)**

*Manucodia chalybata*

Singles seen at Varirata and in the Tabubil area.

#### **Trumpet Manucode (NE)**

*Manucodia keraudrenii*

Two seen on exposed perches along the Boys Town Road.

#### **Short-tailed Paradigalla (NG)**

*Paradigalla brevicauda*

Up to two seen daily in a fruiting tree at Ambua Lodge.

#### **Ribbon-tailed Astrapia (PNG)**

*Astrapia mayeri*

Up to four per day at Ambua Lodge and two per day at Kumul which included occasional visitors to the feeder. 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*

Five of these magnificent birds were seen around Ambua Lodge.

#### **Carola's Parotia (PNG)**

*Parotia carolae*

One female along Dablin Creek Road was our only sighting.

#### **Lawes' Parotia (PNG)**

*Parotia lawesii*

Up to four daily at Ambua Lodge included adult males.

#### **King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise (NG)**

*Pteridophora alberti*

We watched several our males calling from exposed perches atop large trees above Ambua and also saw a number of females in this area as well as below Kumul Lodge. These observations included the males' characteristic 'radio static' song and incredible 'semaphore' displays with their two unreal head plumes!

#### **Growling Riflebird (NG)**

*Ptiloris intercedens*

We saw a female at Varirata.

#### **Magnificent Riflebird (NE)**

*Ptiloris magnificus*

After much effort we finally had brief views of both sexes of this species along the Ok Ma road. It was also heard along the Boys Town Road and at Km 17 near Kiunga.

#### **Superb Bird-of-paradise (NG)**

*Lophorina superba*

First seen at Ambua, with up to four in a day, and then later on the Dablin Creek Road, and below Kumul Lodge.

#### **Brown Sicklebill (NG)**

*Epimachus meyeri*

This species was an entertaining visitor to the Kumul Lodge feeders (up to five daily, including a fully



adorned male), and we heard adult males regularly in the Kumul area. We also saw several per day above Ambua Lodge, both males and females. The adult male's 'machine-gun burst' calls always impress.

**Black Sicklebill (NG)***Epimachus fastuosus*

A female seen feeding in a fruiting tree within the Ambua Lodge garden was seen by some of the group.

**Magnificent Bird-of-paradise (NG)***Cicinnurus magnificus*

At least six seen along the Dablin Creek Road, including a nice male. Another on Ok Ma Road.

**King Bird-of-paradise (NG)***Cicinnurus regius*

The adult male faithfully attended the canopy tangle of a display tree by the Elevala River. Although often difficult to see, his repeated movements within a small and predictable area gave us many striking views of his gleaming red-orange and white plumage with unique green tail rackets. We even saw his green-tipped pectoral fans! This is the smallest bird-of-paradise but also one of the brightest and most unique.

**Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise (NG)***Seleucidis melanoleuca*

Typically active in the early morning, and occasionally late afternoon, this species treated us to a good show along the Elevala River where at one point we watched various males competing for the top of calling posts. We saw at least six birds.

**Greater Bird-of-paradise (NG)***Paradisaea apoda*

We saw up to four a day in the Kiunga area, and witnessed the amazing display of this species at Km 17 with full plumaged males alongside similarly splendidly adorned Raggiana Bird-of-paradise males. Without a doubt, this must be one of the most memorable spectacles of the tour.

**Lesser Bird-of-paradise (NG)***Paradisaea minor*

At least four birds were seen in and around the display tree at Munganda village included three adult males.

**Raggiana Bird-of-paradise (PNG)***Paradisaea raggiana*

This is the national bird of Papua New Guinea, endemic to PNG. Waiting under the lek trees in Varirata National Park, we watched as several prime males displayed briefly, dancing and shivering their rich reddish flank plumes every time a female appeared. We also saw several most days in the Kiunga area and on the Elevala River, and watched males performing alongside Greater Bird-of-paradise at Km 17.

**Blue Bird-of-paradise (PNG)***Paradisaea rudolphi*

We scoped an adult male and a female as they fed in a fruiting tree early in the morning down the valley below Kumul Lodge. At Ambua Lodge we saw a single female. Even the female of this species is strikingly coloured and patterned. This PNG endemic is one of the most desired of all birds-of-paradise.

**Australasian Robins Petroicidae****White-faced Robin (NE)***Tragellasia leucops*

One seen at Varirata.

**Mountain Robin (NE)***Petroica bivittata*

One seen at 3,500m near the treeline on Mt Hagen.

**Black-sided Robin (NG)***Poecilodryas hypoleuca*

One seen along the Elevala River.

**Black-throated Robin (NG)***Poecilodryas albonotata*

Two seen above Ambua and another near Kumul Lodge.

**White-winged Robin (NG)***Peneothello sigillatus*

Up to eight seen daily around Kumul Lodge.

**White-rumped Robin (NG)***Peneothello bimaculatus*

One seen on the Dablin Creek Road and others heard at Ok Ma.

**Blue-grey Robin (NG)***Peneothello cyanus*

Singles below Kumul Lodge and four at Ambua Lodge.



---

<b>Grey-headed [Ashy] Robin (NE)</b> Seen briefly near Kumul.	<i>Heteromyias albispecularis</i>
<b>Torrent Flyrobin (NG)</b> At least five seen around the Ok Menga Hydroelectric Plant near Tabubil and a few on the main river below Kumul.	<i>Monachella muelleriana</i>
<b>Lemon-bellied Flyrobin (NE)</b> Up to two each visit to Varirata.	<i>Microeca flavigaster</i>
<b>Olive Flyrobin (NE)</b> Two seen at Varirata	<i>Microeca flavovirescens</i>
<b>Canary Flyrobin (NG)</b> Seen on five dates in the highlands, with a maximum of three.	<i>Microeca papuana</i>
<b>Garnet Robin (NG)</b> Excellent views of a male above Ambua Lodge.	<i>Eugerygone rubra</i>
<b>Lesser Ground-Robin (NG)</b> One seen above Ambua. Also heard below Kumul Lodge.	<i>Amalocichla incerta</i>
<b>Northern Scrub-Robin</b> One seen by some at Varirata as it silently skirted the group.	<i>Drymodes superciliaris</i>

### Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

<b>Pacific Swallow</b>	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
This is the common swallow of the region and it is very widespread; we had modest numbers (up to 30 daily) throughout the lowlands and in the montane valleys.	

### Old World Warblers Sylviidae

<b>Island Leaf-Warbler (NE)</b>	<i>Phylloscopus poliocephalus</i>
Small numbers heard in the highlands, with a maximum of three seen below Kumul Lodge.	
<b>Tawny Grassbird</b>	<i>Megalurus timoriensis</i>
Seen daily in the mountains around Ambua and seen once there.	
<b>Papuan Thornbill</b>	<i>Acanthiza murina</i>
Small groups observed on the slopes of Mt Hagen by those who climbed the mountain.	

### White-eyes Zosteropidae

<b>Black-fronted White-eye (NG)</b>	<i>Zosterops minor</i>
Two at Varirata and four on two dates near Kumul were the only ones seen.	
<b>Capped (Western Mountain) White-eye (NG)</b>	<i>Zosterops fuscicapillus</i>
One seen in the Tari Valley.	
<b>New Guinea White-eye (NG)</b>	<i>Zosterops novaeguineae</i>
Common in the Mt Hagen area where up to 30 seen per day.	

### Starlings Sturnidae

<b>Metallic Starling (NE)</b>	<i>Aplonis metallica</i>
We found this colonial starling to be common along the Elevala River – Kiunga. On days when we passed multiple nesting colonies we estimated numbers up to more than a hundred along the Fly and Elevala rivers.	
<b>Yellow-eyed Starling (NG)</b>	<i>Aplonis mystacea</i>
We saw about ten along Boys Town Road and another along the Elevala River.	



**Singing Starling (NE)***Aplonis cantoroides*

We saw about twenty in Port Moresby and others near Mt Hagen.

**Yellow-faced Myna (NG)***Mino dumontii*

Seen almost daily in the lowlands, with up to 10 per day in the Tabubil – Elevela River – Kiunga region and slightly smaller numbers in the Varirata – Port Moresby region.

**Golden Myna (NG)***Mino anais*

Seen on two dates in the Kiunga/Elevela River area, with up to three birds.

**Thrushes & Allies Turdidae****Island Thrush***Turdus poliocephalus*

Up to five daily at Kumul Lodge and six at Tari Gap.

**Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae****Pied Bushchat***Saxicola caprata*

Local in the lowlands and widespread in the mountains, with up to six daily.

**Flowerpeckers Dicaeidae****Red-capped [Papuan] Flowerpecker (NG)***Dicaeum geelvinkianum*

Widespread in small numbers throughout the lowlands, hills, and mountains, with up to four seen per day.

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

**Sunbirds & Spiderhunters Nectariniidae****Black Sunbird***Leptocoma sericea*

About ten seen daily in the Kiunga region.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae****House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

Up to thirty were seen and heard at and near the Port Moresby Airport and around Port Moresby.

**Tree Sparrow***Passer montanus*

A few at the Port Moresby Airport on most visits.

**Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae****Mountain Firetail (NG)***Oreostruthus fuliginosus*

Four seen at Kumul Lodge.

**Blue-faced Parrotfinch***Erythrura trichroa*

The only observation was of one near Ambua Lodge.

**Hooded Munia (NG)***Lonchura spectabilis*

Seen in the highlands on five days, with a maximum of about 20 per day.

**Grey-headed Munia (PNG)***Lonchura caniceps*

Sixty at PAU and about six near Varirata.

**Chestnut-breasted Munia***Lonchura castaneothorax*

About ten at PAU.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae****Australasian Pipit***Anthus novaeseelandiae*

---

We saw two at Mt. Hagen Airport.

### Annotated Checklist of Mammals

<b>Speckled Dasyure (NG)</b> One observed daily in the garden of Kumul Lodge.	<i>Neophascogale lorentzii</i>
<b>Possum sp.? (NG)</b> One seen near Kumul Lodge– it was possibly a Mountain Cuscus.	
<b>Black-tailed Giant Rat (NG)</b> Observed on the fruit feeder at the Kumul Lodge.	<i>Uromys anak</i>
<b>Big-eared Flying-fox (NG)</b> Many seen over the Elevala River.	<i>Pteropus macrotis</i>
<b>Great Flying-fox (NE)</b> Several observed in the Varirata area	<i>Pteropus neohibernicus</i>

**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](mailto:info@rockjumper.co.za)**  
**Alternative Email: [rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com](mailto:rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com)**  
**Website: [www.rockjumper.co.za](http://www.rockjumper.co.za)**

