

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

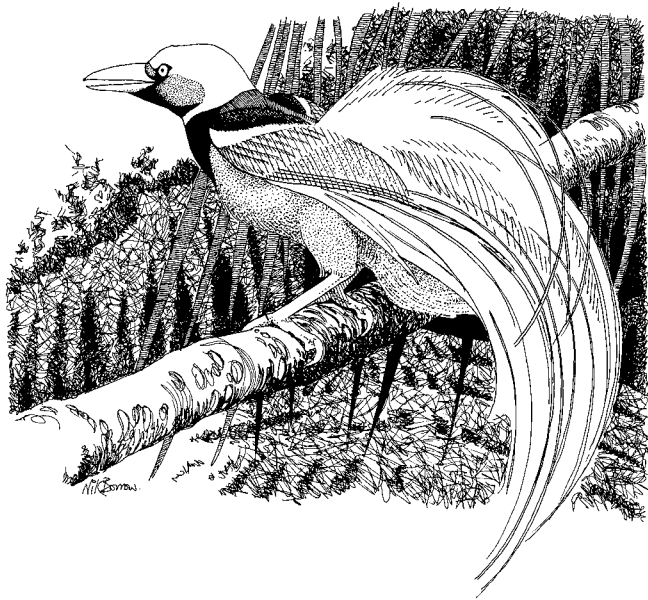
Tuesday 7th June – Thursday 23rd June 2011 (17 days)

New Britain Extension to Monday 27th June (4 days)

Leader: Nik Borrow

Group Size Limit: 8

Tour Category: Easy to Moderate (and one optional fairly Demanding walk)



Raggiana Bird of Paradise (Nik Borrow)

From high in an ancient, gnarled and epiphyte-bedecked tree a strange, static electric crackling reveals the presence of a displaying King of Saxony Bird of Paradise sitting on a snag and waving its extraordinary head-plumes like some strange antennae. A cacophony of yelping reaches a crescendo in the foothill forest and an arching, flaming mass of shivering yellow and orange-pink resolves itself into a Raggiana Bird of Paradise. A pinprick of blood red against an emerald canopy is a King Bird of Paradise. A glint of iridescent viridian, illuminated by a shaft of sunlight that pierces the lead-grey, rumbling heavens, is followed by a rippling wave of white tail streamers as a Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia* takes to the air.

There is no need to say that we are on the island of New Guinea, for these extraordinary birds are amongst the most famous in the world. Indeed, their

wondrous variations in form and colouration, that defy simple description, are so 'out-of-this-world' that when the first skins (which lacked feet) reached Europe they were thought to be faked constructs, or even heavenly species that had somehow fallen to earth!

New Guinea is the second largest island in the world and to this day remains one of the wildest, most sparsely settled regions on earth. Over 700 species of birds are found here, the world's richest island avifauna, and nearly half of these are found nowhere else! Whilst the extraordinary birds of paradise are the finest jewels in New Guinea's ornithological crown, there is so much else to attract the birdwatcher – huge but secretive cassowaries, strange mound-builders, a gorgeous array of doves, pigeons, parrots and kingfishers (all of which reach their greatest

diversity here), sinister-looking frogmouths, skulking jewel-babblers, exquisite fairy-wrens, brightly coloured flycatchers, confusing honeyeaters and fascinating bowerbirds to mention just some of the highlights.

This classic tour explores the eastern half of the island, Papua New Guinea (or 'PNG'), where we shall travel from modern towns to regions almost untouched by the twentieth century (or even the last millennia) and still inhabited by stone-age tribes whose warriors dress in bark belts, loincloths and headdresses decorated with bird of paradise plumes.

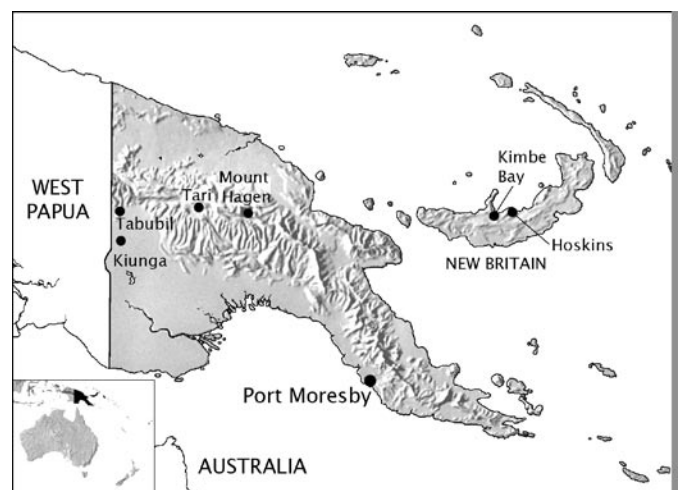
While much of New Guinea is still primitive and undeveloped, conditions for visitors in Papua New Guinea often amaze first timers: standards of accommodation often being good or excellent, and vehicles modern and comfortable. The only downside is that it is a surprisingly expensive place.

We shall start our travels at Port Moresby on the southeast coast. This excellent area possesses one of the richest avifaunas in Papua New Guinea due to its unusual diversity of habitats ranging from dry, Australian-like eucalypt savanna and grassland to lowland rainforest and hill forest. Here we will look for flamboyant Raggiana Birds of Paradise and Eastern Riflebirds, as well as many other exciting birds.

Next we will travel far to the west, to the frontier town of Kiunga on the great Fly River of southwestern Papua New Guinea. In this remote area many large species that have been extirpated by hunting elsewhere can still be seen, as well as some exciting western specialities. Star attractions include the huge Southern Crowned Pigeon, Flame Bowerbird and the gorgeous Greater, Twelve-wired and King Birds of Paradise. After this we will climb into the foothills of the Star Mountains and bird the surroundings of Tabubil, where handsome Carola's Parotias will attract our attention.

From the southwestern lowlands and foothills we will fly up to Mount Hagen in the central highlands, seeming to travel back in time as we do so, in search of our first montane species, including such great birds as New Guinea Woodcock, Mountain Owlet-Nightjar, Lesser Bird of Paradise and Crested Bird of Paradise (or Crested Satin-Bird).

For our grand finale we will continue to Tari in the southern highlands. Here we will explore the magnificent cloud forests of Mount Kerewa and the fringes of the Tari Valley, home of the famous Huli tribe or 'wigmen', in search of the area's remarkable selection of birds of paradise and many other montane specialities. Highlights here will include the superbly





Southern Crowned Pigeon
(Nik Borrow)

elegant Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia*, the strange King of Saxony Bird of Paradise and the striking Blue Bird of Paradise.

During the optional extension there will be the opportunity to visit the large island of New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago, a centre of avian endemism in its own right which will provide us with a superb selection of little-known species including such spectacular birds as Blue-eyed Cockatoo and Black-headed Paradise Kingfisher.

Birdquest has operated tours to Papua New Guinea since 1986.

Itinerary

Day 1 The tour begins this morning at Port Moresby, where we will stay for two nights. Later we will begin our exploration of the surrounding area.

Day 2 The eucalypt savanna of the Port Moresby region is an ecological 'island' with strong affinities to northern Australia, and beyond lies the tropical rainforest that covers so much of New Guinea, rising steadily from the lowlands up into the Astrolabe range. The attractive eucalypt savanna and 'kunai' grasslands, together with plantations and gardens, hold a broad range of species including Black, Whistling and Brahminy Kites, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Hobby, Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Rainbow Lorikeet, Greater Streaked Lory, the smart Western Black-capped Lory, Pheasant Coucal, the impressive and vociferous Blue-winged Kookaburra, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Australasian Bushlark (split from Singing), Pacific Swallow, Tree Martin, White-bellied and Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrikes, Pied Bushchat, Golden-headed Cisticola, the entertaining Willie Wagtail, Leaden and Lemon-bellied Flycatchers, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Graceful Meliphaga, New Guinea Friarbird, Yellow-tinted, White-throated, Rufous-banded and Dusky Honeyeaters, Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Grey-headed and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Singing Starling, Green Figbird, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black-backed Butcherbird and Torresian Crow. We will hope to find the huge, reptilian-looking Papuan Frogmouth at its daytime roost and with a little luck we will encounter White-throated Gerygone or White-bellied Whistler. Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds are quite common in the area and if we find one of their remarkably complex bowers we may be rewarded by hearing the bird's strange repertoire of hisses, gurgles, pops and burps. Small ponds on the edge of the city hold such species as Australasian Grebe, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets,

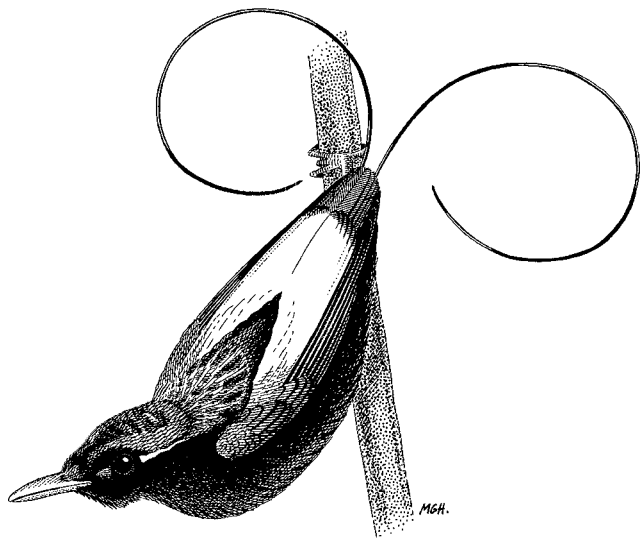
Eastern Cattle Egret (split from Western), the attractive Pied Heron, White-faced Heron, Rufous Night-Heron, the rare and crepuscular Spotted Whistling Duck, Wandering Whistling Duck, Pacific Black Duck, White-browed Crake, Dusky Moorhen, Australasian Swamphen (split from Purple), the pretty Comb-crested Jacana, White-headed Stilt and Masked Lapwing. If we are fortunate we will also see White-headed Shelduck or the pretty Green Pygmy-Goose.

We will spend much of our time exploring Varirata National Park, which is situated in the foothills above the city. The park is dominated by dry eucalypt forest and moister evergreen hill forest, and a good system of trails allows easy access to this magnificent area. The exotic Raggiana Bird of Paradise, one of the 'classic' birds of paradise, is quite common here and we may be lucky enough to find them displaying. Eastern Riflebirds (split from Magnificent) are very vocal but quite shy and can sometimes be seen flying between 'song' perches. The raucous calls of Black-billed Brush-Turkeys can be heard throughout the day, but we will need a lot of luck if we are to see this shy denizen of the area, perhaps near one of its large nest mounds. Other skulking ground dwellers include Painted Quail-Thrush, Chestnut-backed Jewel-Babbler, Northern Scrub-Robin and Crested Pitohui (a bird with a magical song), although we will need persistence if we are to see even two of these shy birds. In the mid-storey we may well come across the unobtrusive Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher. Indeed, kingfishers are well represented at Varirata, with Yellow-billed, Forest, Azure and Variable Dwarf all quite possible. Other species we may well encounter here include Little Eagle, Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove, Wompoo and Superb Fruit Doves, Red-cheeked

Parrot, Large-tailed Nightjar, Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-Shrike, Wallace's Fairy-Wren, Pale-billed Scrub-Wren, Yellow-bellied, Green-backed and Fairy Gerygones, Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Black-winged Monarch, the splendid Frilled Monarch, Little Shrike-Thrush, the poisonous Hooded Pitohui, the shy Rusty Pitohui, Black Berrypecker (a member of the Melanocharitidae, one of only two bird families endemic to New Guinea), Black Sunbird, Black-fronted White-eye, Mountain Red-headed and Papuan Black Myzomelas, Mimic and Spot-breasted Meliphagas, Yellow-faced Myna, Brown Oriole, Hooded Butcherbird and Spangled Drongo. If we are really lucky we will encounter one or two of the more elusive birds of the area, such the retiring Pheasant Pigeon, the exquisite Barred Owllet-Nightjar, White-faced Robin, Dwarf Whistler or Mountain Drongo.

Day 3 This morning we will fly to Kiunga for a four nights stay. Kiunga is situated in the far west of Papua New Guinea, on the mighty Fly River close to the border with West Papua (formerly Irian Jaya). As our plane carries us across the southern lowlands we will begin to appreciate the immensity of the forest that even today covers more than 95% of New Guinea. Once the settled areas around Port Moresby are left behind hardly anything breaks the pattern of the forest, other than the meandering rivers. Kiunga itself is a small and rather rough-and-ready frontier town at the start of the road to the Ok Tedi copper mine in the foothills of the Star Mountains. Following our arrival we will begin our exploration of this exciting area.

Days 4-6 The sparsely populated lowlands of southwestern Papua New Guinea around Kiunga are one of the least disturbed areas in the country and



Magnificent Bird of Paradise (Michael Hodgson)

possess a fine array of birds including some which are difficult or impossible to see elsewhere in the country. Here we will search at dawn for fabulous Twelve-wired Birds of Paradise as they call from the tops of dead trees in the riverside swamps, whilst as we walk amongst the huge rainforest trees we will look out for Greater Birds of Paradise displaying in the canopy and the burst of intense red that signals the presence of a male King Bird of Paradise, surely one of the prettiest little birds on our planet. The loud clacking cry of the Rufous-bellied Kookaburra is a characteristic sound of these forests and we should enjoy good views of this huge kingfisher as it searches for the large cicadas that form the bulk of its diet. Early in the morning Pinon, Zoe and Collared Imperial Pigeons and Pink-spotted and Orange-bellied Fruit Doves catch the first warm rays of the sun from the treetops. Handsome Crested Hawks (or Pacific Bazas) patrol along the river and the rather floppy flight of the Long-tailed Buzzard will soon become a familiar sight. Cuckoo-shrikes are well represented here and we can expect to see Stout-billed, Boyer's, Grey-headed

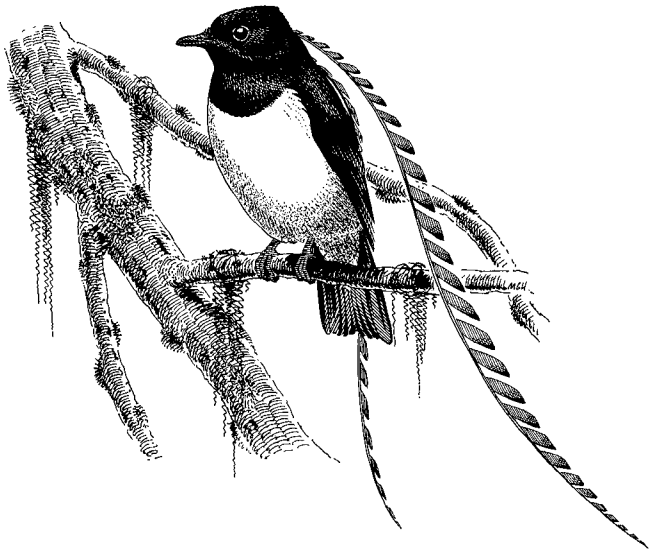
and the dazzling Golden, and possibly Black as well. The stunning Flame Bowerbird is one of the most sought-after specialities here and we stand a very good chance of encountering this magical bird. Southern Cassowaries are still quite common in the Kiunga district, but even light hunting pressure has made them elusive and we shall be very fortunate if we see more than a few footprints. To observe the huge Southern Crowned Pigeon, one of the largest and most mysterious pigeons in the world and another mega-speciality of Kiunga district, we will take a boat for a whole day up the Fly and Elevela rivers in order to reach undisturbed areas where they are still quite numerous. It may take us some time to locate one, but we have a good chance of success and the sight of this incredible bird is one that will last a lifetime. The day we spend on the Fly and Elevela Rivers will be a great treat for other reasons as well, as we should see large numbers of birds, notably pigeons and parrots, perching in the trees alongside the banks. As we travel around the Kiunga area we will be watching out for huge Palm Cockatoos and Blyth's Hornbills flapping

slowly over the canopy, or the striking red and black plumage of the Vulturine Parrot. All three species have largely vanished from heavily settled areas of Papua New Guinea but all are still to be found in this superb region. Amongst the many other species we may well find in the vicinity of Kiunga are Australian Darter, Great-billed and Striated Herons, the imposing White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Variable and Grey-headed Goshawks, Australian Kestrel, Red-backed Button-Quail, Emerald and Stephan's Ground-Doves, New Guinea Bronzewing, Ornate, Beautiful and Dwarf Fruit Doves, Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot, Orange-breasted, Double-eyed and Large Fig Parrots, Eclectus Parrot, Brush and Chestnut-breasted Cuckoos, the little-known Long-billed Cuckoo, Malay Bronze-Cuckoo, the prehistoric-looking Channel-billed Cuckoo, Dwarf, White-crowned and Australian Koels, Greater Black and Lesser Black Coucals, White-throated Nightjar (a migrant from Australia), the graceful Moustached Treeswift, Uniform Swiftlet, Papuan Spine-tailed Swift, the crepuscular and hard-to-see Hook-billed Kingfisher, Common Paradise Kingfisher, the little-known Little Paradise Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Hooded Pitta, the gorgeous Blue-breasted Pitta, Black-shouldered Cicadabird, Varied Triller, the elusive but beautiful Blue Jewel-Babbler, the strange Rufous Babbler, the electric Emperor Fairy-Wren, Rusty Mouse-Warbler, Large-billed Gerygone, White-bellied Thicket-Fantail, Rufous-backed and Northern Fantails, Spot-winged, Black-faced, Hooded and Golden Monarchs, Shining Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Black-sided Robin, Grey Whistler, Variable Pitohui, the very localized White-bellied Pitohui, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Red-throated

Myzomela, Yellow-bellied Longbill, Long-billed, Dwarf, Pygmy, Streak-headed, Tawny-breasted and Plain Honeyeaters, Puff-backed Meliphaga, Meyer's Friarbird, Metallic and Yellow-eyed Starlings, Golden Myna, the wonderful Lowland Peltops, Glossy-mantled, Crinkle-collared and Trumpet Manucodes, Magnificent Riflebird and Grey Crow. We should also see one or two of the more uncommon species of the area, which include Grey-headed Goshawk, Rufous-tailed Bush-hen, Papuan Hanging Parrot, Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher and Spotted Catbird.

Day 7 After some final birding at Kiunga we will travel though untouched lowland and foothill forest to Tabubil at the base of the Star Mountains for a two nights stay. In spite of the new road this region is still pristine wilderness and we will enjoy the seemingly endless vistas of forested lowlands and hills. We will pause at the Ok Tedi river to search for the interesting resident form of the Little Ringed Plover and for foothill species such as Scrub White-eared Meliphaga.

Day 8 The Ok Tedi mine above Tabubil is one of the largest copper mines in the world and the road network that has been created as a result of the mine's development allows us to explore the southern foothills of the remote Star Mountains. Many of the birds found here are of widespread distribution in the hill forests of New Guinea but others are much more localized. One of the star species here is the dazzling and rather illusory-looking Carola's Parotia, and although adult males can be hard to find, we should at least see females or young males in a fruiting tree. Two of New Guinea's rarest and least-known birds, Greater Melampitta (now sometimes considered to be a terrestrial bird of paradise) and Obscure



King of Saxony Bird-of-Paradise (Michael Hodgson)

Berrypecker, occur in this area and we shall be making a special effort to find both these enigmatic species. We will also search one of the many rivers rushing down from the surrounding mountains for Salvadori's Teal, Torrent Flycatcher and Torrent-Lark. Before dawn and after dusk, Shovel-billed Kingfishers call from the forests around Tabubil, but we would be extremely fortunate if we were to encounter this ultra-elusive bird. Amongst the other species we may encounter are Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove, Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Dusky Lory, Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot, Blue-collared Parrot, White-eared Bronze Cuckoo, Sooty Thicket-Fantail, White-rumped Robin, Green-backed, Obscure and Spotted Honeyeaters, Mountain Meliphaga, Great Woodswallow, Mountain Peltops and Magnificent Bird of Paradise.

Day 9 This morning we will return to Kiunga and take a flight to Mount Hagen, the capital of the Papua New Guinea highlands. Our flight takes us over unbroken foothill forest, mountain ridges and eventually the rich cultivated valleys of the New Guinea highlands. Upon

arrival, and after climbing out of the fertile valley around the town, we will continue to Kumul Lodge in Enga province for a three nights stay. We may arrive in time for some initial exploration.

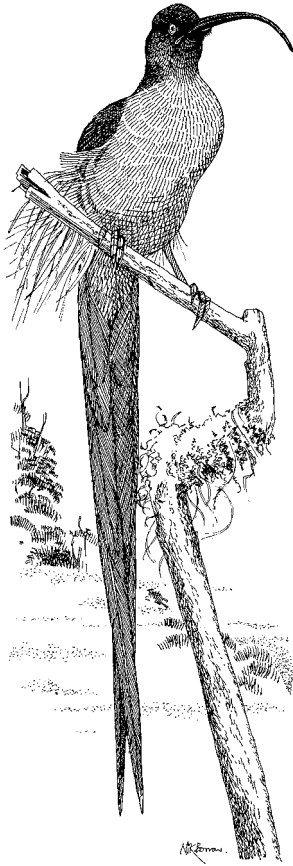
Days 10-11 Kumul Lodge is situated on a high ridge covered in pristine montane forest and the bungalows, which each have their own veranda with a view out over the surrounding valleys, are surrounded by 67 acres (27 hectares) of private grounds. A feeding station has been set up outside the dining room and, because of the no-hunting policy adopted by this community-run project, the birds have become incredibly tame. A 'sit and wait' policy can be productive here. Belford's Melidectes and Grey-streaked Honeyeaters are numerous, and these are joined by Brown Sicklebills, Ribbon-tailed *Astrapias* and sometimes Brehm's Tiger-Parrots. At Kumul these wonderful birds, that are so shy elsewhere, can be watched from only a few metres away and so the photographic opportunities are superb. Island Thrushes hop around the lawns, Red-collared Myzomelas feed from the flowers and Friendly

Fantails, White-winged and Black-throated Robins, and Rufous-naped Whistlers are all common garden birds. Species that are difficult to find at Ambua but much easier here include Crested Bird of Paradise (there is often a male that frequents the lodge), Rufescent Imperial Pigeon, Orange-crowned Fairy-Wren and New Guinea White-eye. However, it is the nightbirds that frequent the lodge that are a prime reason for our visit. As the day draws to a close we have a good chance of encountering the pair of Dusky (or Rufous) Woodcocks that shuffle out from their daytime hiding places to feed around the camp. Mountain Nightjars sometimes perch on the lodge buildings and there is usually a very tame pair of Mountain Owllet-Nightjars in residence. These special birds do 'go missing' from time to time, however, so they should not be thought of as guaranteed. We will also walk to a patch of remnant forest in order to visit a Lesser Bird of Paradise display area, where the birds can usually be seen performing in the early morning. Yellow-breasted Bowerbird can generally be found nearby. As well as its particular specialities, Kumul Lodge and the surrounding country hold many of the species mentioned for Tari.

Day 12 After some early morning birding at Kumul Lodge we will drive through the Central Highlands to Tari for a four nights stay at famous Ambua Lodge. We may arrive in time for some initial exploration of this unforgettable area.

Days 13-15 Until the 1930s, the highlands of New Guinea were thought to be uninhabited, and so the discovery by some intrepid European gold miners of a large human population numbering over a million people living in stone-age conditions in total isolation from the rest of the world was one of the great discoveries of

the century. Even today areas such as Tari are little touched by the outside world, despite the construction of a road from Mount Hagen. The Tari Valley itself is populated by the Huli tribe, best known for their famous 'wigmen' cult, and much is cultivated, but the fringes of the valley and the surrounding mountains are still covered in virgin forest which stretches away in all directions. During our stay we shall be based at Ambua Lodge, a superbly-situated complex of luxurious chalets completed in traditional highlands-style, overlooking the valley and surrounded on three sides by montane forest. Soon after our pioneering visit in August 1986, Tari moved to the forefront of ornithology in Papua New Guinea as the place offering the most exciting highland birding in the country. The principal habitat is the magnificent, moss-encrusted forest dominated by oaks and southern beeches that extends from Ambua Lodge at about 6900ft (2100m) to the Tari Gap at about 9200ft (2800m). Here the forest gives way to grasslands, punctuated by dome-like peaks covered in scrub and frequently wreathed in cloud. Below the lodge the unbroken forest gives way to a mosaic of grassland, cultivation and patches of woodland. The star attraction of Tari is its unequalled variety of birds of paradise. Around the lodge we should encounter Loria's Bird of Paradise and the odd-looking Short-tailed Paradigalla (we found the first-ever nest of this little-known bird back in 1986 in a pandanus outside one of the chalets!), whilst on the slopes of Mount Kerewa higher up we will look for the elusive Crested Bird of Paradise and the graceful Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia*. (Some taxonomists believe that Loria's and Crested Birds of Paradise in fact belong in a separate family, *Cnemophilidae*, and that these species should be called Loria's and



Brown Sicklebill (Nik Borrow)

Crested Cnemophilus, or Loria's and Crested Satin-Bird respectively.) Here also we should see King of Saxony Birds of Paradise with their fantastically long head-plumes that look like strange antennae, huge Brown Sicklebills giving their deafening rattles that sound just like a machine-gun and beautiful Stephanie's Astrapias. Lower down, at the edge of the Tari Valley, we will search fruiting trees for Lawes's Parotia, Superb Bird of Paradise and the stunning Blue Birds of Paradise. Just after dawn the spectacular Black Sicklebill may show off its remarkable display along the forest edge. Amongst the many other birds we may find as we search the mossy forest, the deep gorge below the lodge with its epiphyte-encrusted trees and

rocks, the grasslands and the mixed habitats of the valley floor are Papuan Harrier, Black-mantled and Meyer's Goshawks, Brown Falcon, Oriental Hobby, Brown Quail, Buff-banded Rail, Great Cuckoo-Dove, White-breasted Fruit Dove, Goldie's, Papuan, Plum-faced, Yellow-billed and Orange-billed Lorikeets, Brehm's Tiger-Parrot, Papuan King-Parrot, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo, Greater Sooty Owl (usually at a daytime roost), Mountain and Glossy Swiftlets, Mountain Kingfisher, Australasian Pipit, Hooded and Black-bellied Cuckoo-Shrikes, Long-tailed Shrike, Island Thrush, the retiring New Guinea Logrunner, the ghost-like Lesser Melampitta, the gorgeous Blue-capped Ifrita, Tawny Grassbird, Island Leaf-Warbler, White-shouldered Fairy-Wren, Mountain Mouse-Warbler, Large, Buff-faced and Papuan Scrub-Wrens, Grey and Brown-breasted Gerygones, Dimorphic, Black and Friendly Fantails, Black Monarch, Black-breasted Boatbill, the cute Canary Flycatcher, Garnet, Black-throated, White-winged and Blue-grey Robins, Sclater's, Regent, Brown-backed, Black-headed and Rufous-naped Whistlers, Black Pitohui, the strange Wattled Ploughbill, Papuan Treecreeper, Varied and Black Sittellas, Mid-mountain, Fan-tailed, Tit and Crested Berrypeckers, Western Mountain White-eye, Red-collared Myzomela, Black-throated, Marbled, Grey-streaked, Rufous-backed and Common Smoky Honeyeaters, Sooty, Belford's, Yellow-browed and Ornate Melidectes, Blue-faced Parrotfinch, Hooded Mannikin, Mountain Firetail and the rare and shy Archbold's and Macgregor's Bowerbirds. The magnificent New Guinea Harpy Eagle can be found in this area, although this very secretive bird is often easier to hear than to see. If we are fortunate we will come across two or three of the more difficult

to find species of the area, such as Chestnut and Forbes's Forest-Rails, Painted, Modest and Madarasz's Tiger-Parrots, Spotted Jewel-Babbler, Ashy and Lesser Ground Robins, Olive Straightbill, Yellowish Streaked Honeyeater or Papuan Parrotfinch. At night we will go out in search of Papuan Boobook, Mountain Nightjar and other nightbirds. If we have particularly good luck we will find a Feline Owlet-Nightjar. If it is possible to arrange, those that are interested can, during a quiet period, take some time off from birding to see the Huli 'wigmen' prepare themselves for a traditional 'singsing', elaborately painting themselves in a manner that transforms man into art before donning their magnificent wigs decorated with birds of paradise and parrot plumes. As we watch their exuberant, rhythmic dancing we will be conscious that only three generations ago this was a stone-age, warrior society completely unaware of our existence.

Day 16 After some final birding at Tari we will take a flight to Port Moresby for an overnight stay.

Day 17 We will have a final chance to visit Varirata National Park this morning before the tour ends at Port Moresby in the early afternoon.

New Britain Post-Tour Extension Itinerary

Day 17 We will catch an afternoon flight from Port Moresby to the small town of Hoskins on the island of New Britain for a four nights stay at nearby Kimbe Bay.

Days 18-20 New Britain, the largest island of the Bismarck Archipelago, has the richest avifauna of any island in the Southwest Pacific (excluding mainland New Guinea of course). Many of the species that we will see are either endemic

to New Britain itself or to the Bismarck archipelago as a whole (and sometimes the Solomon Islands also). We shall explore the patches of rainforest that are still to be found amongst the vast oil-palm plantations. The huge trees harbour many spectacular pigeons and parrots, and several species may be seen feeding in the same fruiting trees. Imperial pigeons are very well represented; Yellowish-tinted (split from Torresian) restrict themselves to the coastline, whilst the numerous Red-knobbed is more catholic, occurring throughout the forest, and Grey (or Island) is most common on offshore islands. Two foothill species range down to the adjacent lowland forest; Bismarck is a canopy frequenting species that requires careful searching out and the rarest, Finsch's, keeps inside the canopy and is difficult to locate except by its distinctive call. The fruit doves are represented by Knob-billed, closely related to the Orange-bellied of the mainland, whilst White-breasted is mainly a montane species on the mainland but is found at sea-level here. Pied Cuckoo-Dove is a fairly scarce forest interior inhabitant and the diminutive terrestrial White-bibbed Ground-Dove also occur amidst the gloom but is often very difficult to find. Noisy Blue-eyed Cockatoos are one of the most conspicuous parrots and Eastern Black-capped Lories are also numerous. Strikingly large Great Flying Foxes can be seen flapping and gliding lazily overhead. Other species we may well encounter include Melanesian Scrubfowl, the tiny Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot, Singing Parrot, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Violaceous and Pied Coucals, New Britain Boobook, White-rumped Swiftlet, Black-headed Paradise Kingfisher (split from Buff-breasted), Collared and Common Kingfishers, Common

Cicadabird, Australian Reed-Warbler, Black-tailed Monarch, Dull Flycatcher, Common Golden Whistler, Red-banded Flowerpecker, Ashy and Black-bellied Myzomelas, New Britain Friarbird, Buff-bellied Mannikin, Long-tailed Myna (split from Yellow-faced) and Island Crow (split from Torresian). With a bit of luck we will find two or three of the more uncommon birds of the area, which include Black Honey Buzzard, Bronze Ground-Dove, New Britain Bronzewing, Bismarck Hanging Parrot, New Britain (or White-

mantled) Kingfisher and Bismarck Woodswallow. We will also travel by boat out to one of the small offshore islands to look for the spectacular Nicobar Pigeon, Beach Kingfisher, Mangrove Golden Whistler and two small-island 'tramp' species, Island Monarch and the lovely Sclater's Myzomela. White-bellied Sea-Eagles loaf around the islands and we should also find Great and Lesser Frigatebirds, Eastern Reef-Egret, Osprey, Pacific Golden Plover, Eurasian Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, and Greater Crested and

Black-naped Terns. Weather permitting, we will explore further out to sea in search of the little-known Heinroth's Shearwater and other pelagic seabirds.

Day 21 This morning we will take a flight to Port Moresby where the extension ends.

Accommodation & Road

Transport: The hotels/lodges are of good or medium standard throughout. Road transport is by small coach or minibus. Roads are rather poor and few and far between, but then we do not have to travel long distances on them.

Walking: The walking effort is mostly easy to moderate, but the walk to the Lesser Paradise display area involves crossing a log bridge and climbing a steep hillside.

Climate: Generally warm or hot, dry and sunny at lower altitudes, but cool in upland areas. Overcast weather is quite regular and there is very likely to be some rain, perhaps heavy and prolonged at times. It will be rather humid in the lowlands.

Bird Photography: Opportunities are worthwhile.