

'EASY' PHILIPPINES

Sunday 6th February – Saturday 19th February 2011 (14 days)
Mountains of Mindanao Post-Tour Extension to Wednesday
23rd February (4 days)

Leader: Simon Harrap

Group Size Limit: 8

Tour Category: Easy for the most part, occasionally Moderate (main tour); Moderate plus (extension)



Stripe-headed Rhabdornis (Nik Borrow)

This is a special easier and slightly shorter version of our standard Philippines tour, visiting a selection of the most endemic-rich areas, and designed for those who want to sample the wonderful avifauna of the Philippines, but who want to do so without too much travelling and with less physical effort and not so many very long days. We can expect to see members of the Philippines' endemic bird family, the Philippine Creepers, as well as a host of other stunning endemic birds (and during the optional extension we even have a very good chance for the impressive Philippine Eagle).

The Philippine archipelago is a cluster of more than 7000 islands extending for nearly 2000 kilometres across the warm tropical waters of the Pacific. Most of the land area of the Philippines is divided amongst the eleven larger islands, with two-thirds accounted for by the two largest, Luzon and Mindanao. In the north, the Batan Islands are little more than 200 kilometres south of Taiwan, while the southernmost islands lie only

50 kilometres off the east coast of Borneo.

Despite their proximity to other parts of Asia, the rugged, mountainous islands of the Philippines have enjoyed a long and complex period of isolation which has resulted in an evolutionary explosion with considerable variation from one island to another. There are almost 4000 species of trees, over 160 species of mammals and over 240 species of reptiles, and all this in a country slightly smaller than the British Isles! The extraordinary degree of endemism in the Philippines is well demonstrated by the country's avifauna: over 580 species have been recorded, of which around 400 are resident and almost 200 are endemic, many of these restricted to just one island (and with many more endemic subspecies, some of which are highly distinctive, the number of birds treated as endemic species is sure to rise). Sadly, the marvellous but vanishing avifauna of the Philippines is amongst the most threatened on our planet: it is no exaggeration to say that some species will, within a short

time, become impossible to find, so delaying a visit to the Philippines is not a good plan.

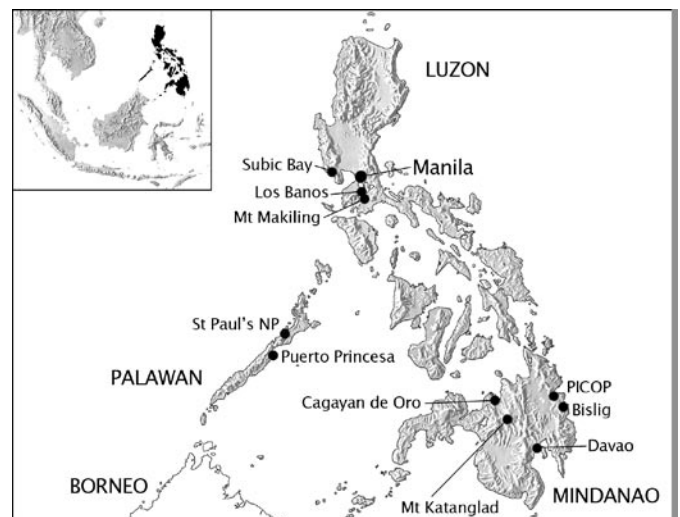
During our journey we will visit three of the major islands, Luzon, Mindanao and Palawan, which between them hold the majority of the archipelago's endemics, and we have a very good chance of seeing over 100 of them (which represents around 80% of the number observed on our longer Philippines tour). Sadly, however, in common with so many parts of the world, the rainforest in the Philippines is severely threatened and most has already disappeared. In consequence many bird species are in imminent danger if the destruction continues and in order to see some of the specialities it will be necessary to visit one or two fairly remote areas.

Travel in the Philippines offers some fascinating insights into the history of the islands. This is perhaps the least 'Oriental' of all the Far Eastern countries: four hundred years of Spanish colonial rule followed by 'fifty years of Hollywood' (as the period of association with the United States is popularly referred to) have inevitably left their mark. The friendly Filipinos are predominantly Catholic and the countryside is adorned with thousands of extravagantly decorated churches. There is little other evidence of Spanish rule,

however; the American influence is strong and one of its more endearing aspects is the fleets of gaily decorated 'jeepneys' (intricately painted copies of American jeeps, some festooned with chrome-plated accessories, plastic streamers, garlands of flowers and enough lights to decorate a Christmas tree). In complete contrast, ethnic minority groups still exist in the most remote areas of the Philippines whose lives have been little changed over hundreds or even thousands of years. With magnificent scenery, friendly people and an incomparable selection of little-known birds, the Philippines have all the ingredients for a truly memorable tour.

After an overnight stay in Manila, we will begin our journey in earnest on the island of Palawan where we will spend much of our time in the spectacular St Paul's National Park. This long island, which links Borneo to the rest of the Philippines, has a markedly Malaysian influence in its avifauna. We have a good chance of seeing most of the Palawan endemics during our visit, including the gorgeous Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, the endangered Philippine Cockatoo, the impressive Palawan Hornbill and Palawan Tit

Returning to Luzon, we will first visit the forests of the former US naval base at Subic Bay in search of Luzon





Palawan Peacock-Pheasant (Craig Robson)

endemics such as Green Racquet-tail and White-lored Oriole. Next we will visit Mount Makiling, a forested mountain to the south of the city where we will see a selection of the Luzon endemics, including the noisy and spectacular Spotted Wood Kingfisher and Stripe-headed Rhabdornis (one of the endemic creepers).

We will then move on to the southern island of Mindanao where we will explore the lowland forests in the Bislig area where some of the most exciting birds in the Philippines, including Steere's Pitta, Silvery, Rufous-lored and Blue-capped Wood Kingfishers, and Short-crested Monarch, can be found amidst the remains of what was once the tallest rainforest in the world.

With magnificent scenery, friendly people and an incomparable selection of little-known birds, the Philippines have all the ingredients for a truly memorable tour.

During the optional extension we will make a visit to the magnificent Kitanglad Mountains. Many exciting montane birds occur here, some of which are found only on Mindanao, including such enigmatic species as McGregor's Cuckooshrike and Mount Apo Myna, and we have an excellent chance of seeing the magnificent but endangered Philippine Eagle and the little-known Bukidnon Woodcock (a species discovered as recently as 1993, and by a Birdquest

group!), as well as many more montane endemics.

Birdquest has operated tours to the Philippines since 1990.

Itinerary

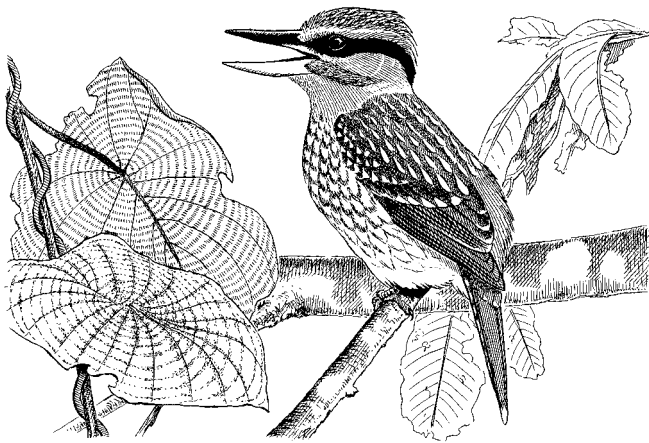
Day 1 The tour begins this afternoon in Manila, where we will stay overnight.

Day 2 This morning we will catch a flight to Puerto Princesa, the capital of Palawan. In contrast to the frenetic bustle of Manila, Palawan has a distinctly calmer and more relaxed atmosphere, as do most of the provinces. Indeed, it almost seems that the island is one large friendly village. Unlike other islands in the Philippines, much of Palawan is still well forested, and, from a biological viewpoint, is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating areas in this diverse archipelago. A narrow island with a chain of mountains extending its full length, Palawan is about 400 kilometres long and effectively connects Borneo with the rest of the Philippines. In consequence it shares many of the faunal and floral characteristics of both areas. This is well reflected in the island's avifauna, for many birds of Malaysian origin can be found here but occur nowhere else in the Philippines. Importantly, Palawan has many Philippine endemics, including up to 20 species (depending on one's views on taxonomy), which occur only on this

one island. We will start our exploration by visiting an area of mudflats and degraded mangroves on the edge of Puerto Princesa, where we will search for Chinese Egret, a globally threatened species that winters in good numbers on Palawan. We may also find Grey and Striated (or Little) Herons, Eastern Cattle, Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Kentish, Greater Sand, Pacific Golden and Grey Plovers, Whimbrel, Common Redshank, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone and Red-necked Stint along the shore, and Common and Collared Kingfishers, Pacific Swallow and Olive-backed and Copper-throated Sunbirds in the mangroves. We will then drive north along the spectacular coast of the island to Sabang, a small settlement on the edge of St Paul's National Park, for a two night stay. En route we should find some common open country species such as Glossy Swiftlets, Spotted Dove, Barn Swallow, Pied Fantail, Brown Shrike, Asian Glossy Starling and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. Along the way we will stop at some patches of forest, and in these we should find our first Palawan endemics, including Palawan Hornbill, Palawan Swiftlet (a 'split' from Island), Yellow-throated Leafbird and Sulphur-bellied Bulbul.

Day 3 St Paul's National Park lies on the west coast of Palawan, to the north of Puerto Princesa. The scenery in the park is spectacular, with forest reaching right down to the coast from towering limestone crags. The attractive beaches are good for swimming but undoubtedly the park's best-known attraction for the general visitor is the famous Underground River. There are many interesting birds to see in and around St Paul's, including most of Palawan's endemics. Perhaps the most spectacular of these is the strikingly beautiful Palawan Peacock-Pheasant. This little known species is not uncommon here, although

it is extremely secretive. In common with the other peacocks pheasants, it has a loud, strident and somewhat discordant call, and we may hear a few individuals, but we would normally have to be very lucky to see one. In recent years, however, a male has become habituated to humans and remarkably tame, and if he survives we should enjoy ultra-close views of this stunning little pheasant. The fascinating Tabon Scrubfowl is also somewhat secretive and likewise attracts attention with its call, a haunted, mournful whistle, but we do have a good chance of seeing this species feeding quietly on the forest floor. We will also hope to find Hooded Pitta, which, although another forest-floor skulker, calls from an elevated position and flashes blue and white as it swoops unerringly through the forest. Rather more terrestrial is the Falcated Ground-Babbler, which can be very tricky to see as it creeps through the undergrowth. When seen well this is a simply stunning bird with the long lanceolate black and white feathering that gives it its name. Also keeping low is the Ashy-headed Babbler, while the rich song of the White-vented Shama is another sound that we will have to track through the undergrowth. Palawan's endemics are not all found on the forest floor, however. Blue-headed Racquet-tails screech from the tree tops, whilst Blue-naped Parrots (almost endemic to the Philippines) favour the flowering trees along the beach, and these often attract Palawan Flowerpeckers too. Lovely Sunbirds give their monotonous 'chip-chap' calls from the tops of the trees (their distinctive, if uninspiring, voice is one of the reasons for the recent split of Lovely from the Handsome Sunbird of the rest of the Philippines) and Palawan Tits move noisily through the canopy, while in the middle storey we will hope to find Palawan Blue Flycatcher and the stunning Blue Paradise-Flycatcher.



Spotted Wood Kingfisher (Craig Robson)

Along the coast we will also search for Malaysian Plover, a species whose preference for quiet sandy beaches has seen it disappear from much of its range due to the expansion of tourism. As our accommodation is close to the forest, there will be good opportunities to look for night birds. At dawn and dusk we will listen for the call of Large-tailed Nightjar, which is very much a slower version of the disyllabic call of Philippine Nightjar, and watch for them sitting on a prominent perch as they call. On one evening we will make an effort to find the true nocturnal endemics. Palawan Frogmouth has a highly distinctive voice and is doubtless best treated as yet another Palawan endemic (split from Javan), and we will hope to find this little frogmouth sitting and calling, its head a mass of wispy feathers. Palawan Scops Owl, also has a very distinct voice, and its low and often very quiet croaks are all too easily passed off as a frog! We are also likely to come across Brown Boobook (or Brown Hawk-Owl). Amongst the many other species we will be hoping to find at St Paul's are Crested Serpent Eagle, Green Imperial-Pigeon, Thick-billed Green-Pigeon, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Greater Coucal, Common (or Asian) Koel, Plaintive Cuckoo, Brown-backed Needletail,

Dollarbird, Common Flameback, the noisy Great Slaty Woodpecker, Fiery Minivet, Palawan Drongo (split from Hair-crested), Ashy Drongo, Dark-throated Oriole, Palawan Crow (with its characteristic 'quacking' calls and flapping flight, a split from Slender-billed), Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, Black-headed, Olive-winged and Grey-cheeked Bulbuls, Common Iora, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird, Mangrove Whistler, Common Hill Myna, Olive-backed and Purple-throated Sunbirds, and Little Spiderhunter (the Palawan form being a potential split).

Day 4 We will spend a second morning in the vicinity of the superb St Paul's National Park looking for any species we have not yet seen. After lunch we will make our way back to Puerto Princessa for an overnight stay, looking out for any new species as we go.

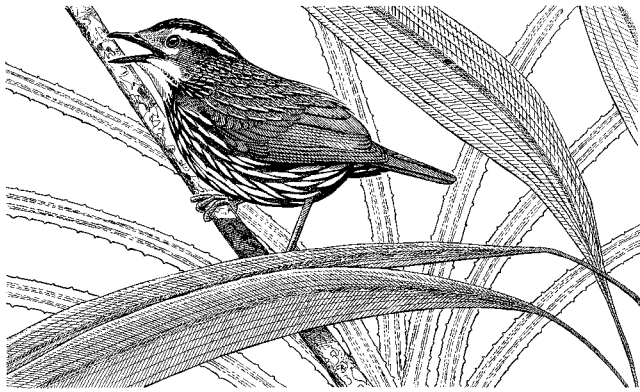
Day 5 This morning we will visit the Balsahan River not far from Puerto Princessa. Here we will be hoping to find the diminutive Palawan Flycatcher, an endemic that is not found at St Paul's National Park, as well as the aptly-named Melodious Babbler, a noisy but elusive species. We will also have another opportunity to find many of the birds listed for

St Paul's. We will also check the paddyfields where we are likely to find White-breasted Waterhen, Common Moorhen, Common Greenshank, Wood, Marsh and Common Sandpipers, Long-toed Stint, White-breasted Wood-Swallow and both Chestnut and White-bellied Munias. Later we will take a flight back to Manila and then drive to Subic Bay for an overnight stay.

Day 6 The American naval base at Subic Bay protected an extensive area of lowland forest but, following the catastrophic eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991, the base was handed back to the Filipinos. The eruption itself decimated large areas of the forest, leaving the larger trees alive but destroying much of the lower canopy and understorey. The area has, however, recovered and now provides an excellent introduction to avifauna of Luzon. As we walk quietly along the tracks through the forest, birds we may see include Philippine Falconet, Philippine Green-Pigeon (split from Pompadour), White-eared Brown-Dove, the attractive Scale-feathered and Red-crested Malkohas, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker, Greater Flameback, Coppersmith Barbet, Philippine Fairy Bluebird, Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Colasisi (or Philippine Hanging Parrot), Balicassiao (with its amazing repertoire of imitations), Coletto (a strange, bald-headed starling), Philippine Bulbul and Philippine Tailorbird. We should also see Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, one of three members of this endemic Philippines family. We will also be hoping in particular to find several species that are difficult or impossible to see elsewhere on the tour. These include Green Racquet-tail, the shy Rufous Coucal, Grey-rumped Swiftlet (split from Glossy), Sooty Woodpecker, Blackish Cuckoo-shrike, White-

lored Oriole and the canopy-loving White-fronted Tit. Later we will drive to Los Banos, adjacent to Mount Makiling, for a two nights stay. We will arrive in time for some initial exploration of the areas of grassland and rice fields at the foot of the mountain. Here we will be looking in particular for Spotted Buttonquail, and we may also find Barred Buttonquail, Barred Rail, Black-winged Stilt, Common and Swinhoe's Snipes, and Lesser Coucal. If we are lucky we will also encounter one of the more uncommon species such as Greater Painted Snipe or Blue-breasted Quail.

Day 7 Mount Makiling is a small forested volcanic mountain about 50 kilometres to the south of Manila that still preserves an extensive area of rainforest. The forest extends from near sea-level to around 1000m and more than 50 Philippine endemics have been found breeding in the area, which is kept as a research reserve for the University of the Philippines at Los Banos. On one morning, we will aim to arrive at the forest a little before dawn, and we may hear and perhaps see Philippine Hawk-Owl and Philippine Scops-Owl. As the light slowly builds there is a chorus of screams and chatters from Spotted Wood Kingfishers, which are extraordinarily common here, and we will scan the tracks through the forest, hoping to see Red-bellied Pitta or even Ashy Ground Thrush (although a great deal of luck is needed to encounter the latter species). During the morning we will have a chance to see a good number of Luzon endemics and other species including Luzon Hornbill, the gorgeous Indigo-banded Kingfisher, the endemic White-browed Shama, Arctic Warbler, Grey-backed Tailorbird (a species restricted to the southern half of Luzon), the superb Blue-headed Fantail, Yellowish and Lowland White-eyes, Lovely and Flaming Sunbirds,



Streaked Ground Babbler (Craig Robson)

and Striped and Pygmy Flowerpeckers. In the more open areas and at the lake close to our hotel we may find Whiskered Tern, Asian Palm Swift, Striated Swallow, Long-tailed Shrike and Grey-throated Sunbird.

Day 8 After some final birding on Mount Makiling we will return to Manila and take a flight to Davao on the southern island of Mindanao for an overnight stay.

Day 9 This morning we will travel by road to Bislig on the eastern coast of Mindanao for a four nights stay. As we get towards Bislig the road passes through more and more forest patches and we will make several stops as we begin our exploration of this fascinating area.

Days 10-12 From our base near Bislig we will explore the extensive area of forest that is universally known as 'PICOP'. This acronym stands for 'Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines' and 'PICOP' was a gigantic logging concession granted to this company nearly fifty years ago. Large areas have indeed been logged, and some have even been replanted with commercial plantations (a rare event in the Philippines), but the company took its obligations seriously and made great efforts to prevent illegal logging and squatters. The result was that some superb

areas of forest remained, complete with one of the best selections of birds found anywhere in the Philippines. The company has, however, now lost the concession and as a result illegal logging has become rampant, while droves of squatters have moved in and the habitat is disappearing at an alarming rate. Nonetheless, and in spite of some losses amongst the pigeons, parrots and hornbills due to hunting pressure, for the moment PICOP still holds a fantastic array of endemics and is the only readily accessible area of lowland forest remaining on Mindanao. Here we will hope to find Mindanao and Writhed Hornbills and the magnificent Rufous Hornbill (whose throaty growls echo across the forest), Philippine Cuckoo-Dove (split from Slender-billed), Common Emerald-Dove, and Black-chinned and Yellow-breasted Fruit-Doves. Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeon and Amethyst Brown-Dove are harder to find, and we will be fortunate indeed if we come across a Spotted Imperial Pigeon (surely one of the Philippines' most threatened birds). Loud squawks and screeching may announce the presence of Blue-crowned Racquet-tails and other canopy species present include the chunky Guaiabero, Violet and Drongo Cuckoos, Philippine Coucal, Whiskered Treeswift, Black-bibbed Cuckoo-shrike, Black-and-white Triller,

Philippine Minivet (split from Scarlet), Philippine Leafbird, Philippine and Black-naped Orioles, Everett's White-eye, and Orange-bellied, Bicoloured, Red-keeled and Buzzing Flowerpeckers.

Overhead a variety of raptors, including Crested Goshawk, Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Steere's Honey-Buzzard (split from Barred), Philippine Serpent-Eagle and hopefully the rather scarce Philippine Hawk-Eagle, may be joined by Purple and Philippine Needletails and Pygmy and Island Swiftlets. The forest undergrowth and mid-storey also demand attention and we will hope to find some mixed-species flocks which hold Philippine Trogon, Mindanao Drongo (split from Spangled), Yellow-wattled and Yellowish Bulbuls, Pygmy and Rusty-crowned Babbblers, Philippine Leaf-Warbler, Black-naped Monarch, Blue Fantail, the stunning Rufous Paradise Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Jungle-Flycatcher, Olive-backed Flowerpecker, the dazzling Metallic-winged Sunbird and Naked-faced Spiderhunter. Black-faced Coucals clamber around the tangles of vines, Rufous-fronted and Black-headed Tailorbirds sing loudly from the thickets (although both can be hard to see) and we will hope to find Streaked Ground-Babbler and Red-bellied Pitta, both elusive denizens of the forest floor. Naturally, we will make particular efforts to locate some of the most sought-after endemics while we are at PICOP. The beautiful Steere's Pitta favours areas where there are outcrops of limestone in the forest, and we will hope to hear its strident calls as these are the best clue to its whereabouts before tracking down this vision of turquoise splendour. The mixed flocks may hold both Short-crested Monarch and, less commonly, the stunning Celestial Monarch; both species are an almost impossible shade of blue. In the vicinity of these mixed

flocks we will look out for the scarce Mindanao Wattled Broadbill, a quiet and unassuming species that looks truly bizarre, but which sadly is becoming steadily scarcer and which now requires a good deal of luck to find. From deeply shaded gullies we may hear the quiet song of the Little Slaty Flycatcher, a bird that was almost unknown until recently, and at dawn we will listen for Rufous-colored Kingfisher and hope to find one sitting high in the canopy shouting its head off. The striking Silvery Kingfisher is found, more typically, around small forest pools, whilst the widespread White-throated Kingfisher sits on the roadside wires. We will aim to arrive at the forest a little before dawn on one or more days. Mindanao Boobook (or Mindanao Hawk-Owl, split from Philippine) and Chocolate Boobook (or Chocolate Hawk-Owl, split from Brown) both occur here and with luck we will hear their distinctive calls and see them in the twilight. Whilst we are at Bislig we will also visit an abandoned airstrip where the surrounding wet grassland holds a number of interesting birds including Wandering Whistling Duck, Philippine Duck, Australasian Grass Owl and Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler (a winter visitor which has a limited distribution in north-east Asia), although the last species is extremely hard to even glimpse in the rank vegetation. We should also see some more widespread species such as Purple Heron, Zebra Dove, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Striated Grassbird, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Bright-capped Cisticola and Large-billed Crow and if we are lucky, Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns.

Day 13 After spending a final morning birding at Bislig we will travel to Cagayan de Oro for an overnight stay.

Day 14 Morning flight to Manila, where the tour ends.



Philippine Eagle (Nik Borrow)

Mountains of Mindanao Post-Tour Extension Itinerary

Day 14 We will leave early and drive north to Bukidnon Province and the Kitanglad Mountains for a three nights stay. Our baggage will be transferred to horses to be carried up to our camp and we will walk up, arriving in time for lunch (horses will also be available for those who wish to ride). The trail passes through areas of fields and cultivation before finally crossing some forested gullies. Indeed, our camp is surrounded by relict patches of forest and trees and a good number of species can be seen here. As dusk falls we will take up position near (or even in) our campsite, hoping to see Bukidnon Woodcock in its roding flight. This new species was discovered by our 1993 group and is now known from a few of the highest mountains in the Philippines, although Mount Kitanglad remains by far the most accessible site. As the light fades further, the

huge ghostly shapes of Great Eared Nightjars float over the valley, giving their ringing whistled calls and Philippine Nightjars begin to call from nearby clearings, and just a few minutes later, we should hear the first growls of the Philippine Frogmouth; we will hope to see all these species during our stay on the mountain. The fascinating Giant Scops-Owl is also present in the woods around our camp, but it usually calls only briefly and irregularly through the night and is extremely hard to see.

Days 15-16 The highest point of the Kitanglad Mountains reaches nearly 3000m. Much of the higher slopes of the range are still clad in rich montane forest dominated by dipterocarp trees, whilst at the highest altitudes there is mossy forest dripping with epiphytes. Numerous species of trees, plants and butterflies are restricted to this range alone, or are shared with the Mount Apo range. The area holds many fascinating

birds, some of which are extremely rare and little known. During our stay we will work the lower slopes and also higher trails reaching around 1800m in order to see all the specialities. Around our camp and in the nearby relict patches of forest we will come across foraging mixed-species flocks, often dominated by superb Black-and-cinnamon Fantails, Mountain White-eyes and Cinnamon Ibons, but often including McGregor's Cuckoo-Shrike, Elegant Tit, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Mountain Leaf-Warbler, Little Pied Flycatcher, Mountain Verditer, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Grey-hooded Sunbird, and Olive-capped and Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers. Less obvious, although common on the mountain, are Rufous-headed Tailorbird and Snowy-browed Flycatcher, and we will also hope to see some of the other species of the understorey such as Brown Tit-Babbler, White-browed Shortwing and the Mindanao form of the Long-tailed Ground-Warbler, which gives its high buzzing song from the densest vegetation and is typically elusive, though with patience we may see one creeping, mouse-like, almost at our feet. We will spend some time in the mossy forests at higher altitudes where we will search for the superb Apo Sunbird, the extraordinary 'bug-eyed' Apo Myna, Black-masked White-eye and White-cheeked Bullfinch. If we are lucky we will find the dazzling Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher, and we also have a slim chance of seeing the very localised Red-eared Parrotfinch or perhaps even Bagobo Babbler (trapping has shown this last species to be relatively common, but it is extraordinarily skulking and seems to possess a 'cloak of invisibility'!). Whilst walking between the patches of forest we will cross areas of cultivation where we will see a variety of open country birds such as Paddyfield Pipit,

Grey and Yellow Wagtails, Pied Bushchat and Tawny Grassbird and, if we are very lucky, we will come across the scarce and elusive Mountain Shrike. Bare trees and other snags attract Short-tailed Glossy Starling, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis and Grey-streaked Flycatcher, and flocks of Eye-browed Thrushes move swiftly between the areas of woodland. Rusty-breasted Cuckoos sometimes call from prominent perches (and we may be kept awake at night by this species as it will sometimes call from dusk through to dawn), but we will have to work harder to find the skulking Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo.

Overhead small numbers of Philippine Swiftlets may appear amongst the commoner Glossy Swiftlets, and shrill shrieks announce the presence of Mindanao Racquet-tails which typically flash past in a blaze of emerald. Indeed, our eyes should be on the skies for a good variety of raptors is possible here, including Grey-faced Buzzard and Brahminy Kite. However, the bird we will all be hoping to see whilst we are at Kitanglad is the Philippine or Monkey-eating Eagle, one of the largest raptors in the world and severely endangered due to the continued destruction of the Philippine rainforests. Current population estimates range from 3000 individuals to as low as 180, and Mount Kitanglad is the most reliable accessible site for finding the species. If we are lucky, a nest will have been located and we may see an adult bringing food such as a flying lemur or a baby monkey. Philippine Eagles only nest every other year however, as the youngster remains dependent for many months after fledging, and the birds on Mount Kitanglad have become irregular in recent years, apparently 'skipping' a season once in a while, perhaps due to food shortages. In the years when



Philippine Frogmouth (Tony Disley)

they are not nesting, we will hope to track down one of the adults or perhaps the dependent youngster (which can be extremely vocal), or

alternatively we will modify the itinerary on Mindanao in order to visit another area where the birds are present at the time of our visit. This

magnificent bird is very much a forest raptor and spends long periods perched, watching over the canopy. From time to time, however, they can be seen soaring up into the sky before gliding off down a forested valley to hunt.

Day 17 After some final birding in the Kitanglad Mountains we will walk down from our camp to the foot of the mountain, from where we will drive to Cagayan de Oro for an overnight stay. En route we will look out for open country species we may not have seen such as Pied Triller.

Day 18 Morning flight to Manila, where the extension ends.

Accommodation & Road

Transport: The hotels are mostly of normal Birdquest standard. At St Paul's we will stay in simple chalets

with private bathrooms. In the Kitanglad Mountains we will be accommodated in tents (for twin or single occupancy) and a large but basic communal shelter. Road transport is by small coach or minibus and roads are mostly reasonable.

Walking: The walking effort during the main tour is easy to moderate. During the optional extension there will be some harder grade walking at Mount Kitanglad.

Climate: Most days in the lowlands will be hot, dry and sunny, but overcast conditions are fairly frequent and some rain can be expected. In upland areas it will be cool to warm and at the highest altitudes it may be distinctly cold. The humidity can be high at times.

Bird Photography: Opportunities are worthwhile.