

BEYOND SULAWESI

7 NOVEMBER – 2 DECEMBER 2011

TOUR REPORT

LEADERS: MARK VAN BEIRS and CRAIG ROBSON

This was the first ever organized bird tour to these little-known specks of land situated between mainland Sulawesi and the Moluccas, just to the west of Weber's zoogeographical Line. We visited the little known island groups of Talaud, Banggai, Sula, the Togians and Sangihe and came away with excellent views of the majority of the extant endemics. The logistics went unexpectedly smooth and although we had to work quite hard at times to get to the habitat of some of the specialities, we got rewarded with some exceptional observations of some of the least known and rarest species on the planet. The bird of the trip was the modestly-clad Sangihe Shrike-Thrush, not only because we will long remember the long hike on steep, slippery trails to get to its beautiful, montane forest habitat, but mainly because of the terrific views we had of this extremely rare species. Other mega highlights included the cute Sangihe Scops Owl, the remarkable Togian Boobook, the seriously weird Banggai Crow, the smart Bare-eyed Myna, the terrific Helmeted Myna and the unpretentious Sula Scrubfowl. We recorded 205 species on our travels. Mammals were not very obvious but both the Peleng and Sangihe Tarsiers conquered our hearts with their enormous eyes. Other interesting animals included Peleng Cuscus, Sulawesi Crested Macaque and Short-finned Pilot Whale.

The group convened at our hotel outside Manado, the capital of the weird-shaped island of Sulawesi. In the afternoon we explored the beautiful gardens and started the list with beauties like Barred Rail, Black-billed Koel, Black-fronted White-eye and Chestnut and Scaly-breasted Munias. Manado was going to be our hub for our month long exploration of five little known and rarely visited island groups in this part of Wallacea.

The tour started in earnest before dawn on a track leading to the forested top of a volcano near Manado, in eastern Minahasa province. We heard and soon saw a delightful Sulawesi Scops Owl and a few minutes later we were fortunate enough to hear the distinctive trill of the secretive, endemic Scaly Kingfisher. After a bit of strategic playback we all obtained cracking scope views of this rarely seen forest denizen. An excellent start of the tour! After this most satisfying experience we walked along the track in drizzly conditions and found a nice selection of goodies including Japanese Sparrowhawk (an immature), Peregrine Falcon, a very obliging pair of Isabelline Waterhens, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Superb Fruit-Dove, Yellow-billed Malkoha, Sulawesi and Glossy Swiftlets, Collared Kingfisher, Sulawesi Pygmy Woodpecker, Hair-crested Drongo, Slender-billed Crow, Sulawesi Blue and Citrine Flycatchers and Grey-sided and Yellow-sided Flowerpeckers. In mid morning we returned to our hotel, where in the gardens we noted Cinnamon Bittern, Spotted Kestrel, Buff-banded Rail, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Sulawesi Myzomela and Black-faced Munia.

Later we drove to Manado airport and caught a flight to Karakelong, the main island of the isolated Talaud archipelago. We watched several Pacific Golden Plovers, a lost Sand Martin (the first for Wallacea!) and a few Asian Glossy Starlings while waiting for our luggage. We then transferred to the town of Beo, the capital of Talaud and in late afternoon stood overlooking a marsh where a pair of Rufous-tailed Bush-hens and a Grey-streaked Flycatcher obliged.

Our morning walk took us towards a protected forest area in the centre of Karakelong island. We explored gardens, plantations, open scrubby growth and some nice stretches of untouched forest along a meandering river and soon managed to add two main targets to our tally. The attractive Red-and-blue Lory was first seen in flight and later obliged very nicely, perched in a flowering tree. This endemic of the Talaud and Sangihe archipelagos was easier to identify than Talaud Kingfisher. It took a while to convince ourselves that this Collared Kingfisher look alike was really the endemic species we were aiming to get to grips with. This forest based bird showed a subtly differently-shaped bill, emitted a characteristic call and when we later saw a real Collared Kingfisher along the coast we were totally convinced and understood why the scientific epithet is '*enigma*'. Several migrant Grey-faced Buzzards showed well, an Oriental Cuckoo was gobbling up caterpillars and a beautiful Rufous Paradise Flycatcher performed very well. Other interesting species on our walk included Common Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Emerald Dove, Black-naped Fruit-Dove, Yellow-eyed Imperial Pigeon, Golden-mantled Racquet-tail, Blue-naped Parrot, Common Kingfisher, Sulawesi Cicadabird, Arctic Warbler, Brown Shrike, Black Sunbird and Everett's White-eye. At the start of our afternoon outing we found five Marsh Sandpipers in a rice paddy and the walk through clove and nutmeg plantations to a stretch of well preserved forest interspersed with open areas gave us Grey and Pied Imperial Pigeons, Common Dollarbird and, after dusk, a fine Northern Boobook.

The two remaining endemics on Karakelong were two recently described members of the rail and crake family: Talaud Rail and Talaud Bush-hen. We spent most of the following day trying to chase these down, but to no avail. We heard the Bush-hen a couple of times and tried to attract this shy species within viewing range, but response was rather weak and only a few of us saw the vegetation move. In between our 'railquest' endeavours we noted Pink-necked Green Pigeon, Blue-backed and Great-billed Parrots, Common Koel and a dazzling Ruddy Kingfisher. We had a lovely time studying the antics of a pair of Talaud Kingfishers with their two fledged young. Our nocturnal foray was a bit disappointing as we only heard Northern Boobook.

We spent another morning trying for the rails on Talaud, and although we again heard the Talaud Bush-hen, it kept its distance and wasn't really interested. We did see Philippine Scrubfowl, a male Sulawesi Cicadabird and a Gray's Grasshopper Warbler and then it was time for our flight to Manado, where a Purple Heron showed at the airport. We transferred to a well appointed hotel where in the gardens and along the mangrove-lined coast we observed Lesser and Greater Sand Plover, Eurasian Whimbrel, a couple of much appreciated Great Knot, Peaceful Dove, several Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeons, White-rumped Cuckoo-Shrike, Sulawesi Triller, White-breasted Wood-Swallow and Flyeater.

It took two flights and a ferry ride to reach the remote island of Peleng, the largest island of the Banggai archipelago. From the boat good numbers of Short-finned Pilot Whales and Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphins were seen and on our evening hike up to our base in the hills of Peleng we heard (and some saw) a Banggai Scops Owl. A couple of hours later, we settled into our surprisingly comfortable accommodation in a small village.

Soon after dawn we were walking through partly logged forest in the highlands of Peleng and it didn't take very long to hear the distinctive creaking calls of the weird Banggai Crow. This very strange corvid showed off its unique fluttery flight and then perched up in an isolated tree in a glade, where its heavy bill could be admired. Observing this recently rediscovered species was one of the highlights of the tour. We spent a fair amount of time at viewpoints along forest edges, where Chinese

Goshawk, Japanese Sparrowhawk, Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle, Sulawesi Black Pigeon, Ornate Lorikeet, the endemic Sula Hanging Parrot, Moluccan Drongo Cuckoo, Black-naped Oriole and Ivory-backed Wood-Swallow showed. In the forest we found a Moluccan King Parrot, heard a Sula Pitta and followed a mixed species flock which held Northern Golden Bulbul, Arctic and Island Leaf Warblers, Pale-blue Monarch, Rusty-bellied Fantail and Common Golden Whistler. After a tasty picnic on one of the higher hills, we checked a few more clearings before the rain started. On the return walk we noted two more endemics: Slaty Cuckoo-Shrike and Helmeted Myna and flushed a Night Heron (Malayan or Japanese?). An after dinner owling session in the nearby forest produced a cute Banggai Scops Owl in all its glory.

At daybreak we were waiting in a dense patch of secondary forest for Peleng Tarsiers to appear. These adorable prosimians with very evocative, enormous eyes showed very well, but at the same time the heavens opened and it rained heavily for several hours. Later we explored the nearby forest and obtained nice looks at Jerdon's Baza, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Golden-mantled Racquet-tail, Sula Hanging Parrot, White-throated Needletail, Grey-rumped Tree-Swift, Slaty Cuckoo-Shrike, Common Cicadabird and several, rather shy Banggai Crows. A Sula Pitta performed very well and several highly appealing Helmeted Mynas performed at length in the scope.

On our last morning in the forest surrounding our guesthouse we concentrated on finding the Banggai Fruit-Dove, a recent split from the Sulawesi endemic Maroon-chinned Fruit-Dove. As soon as we entered a nice stretch we heard the distinctive song. It took a while of searching and hanging about, but eventually we managed to admire this large fruit-dove in the scope. Some participants had a bit of fun with a well-behaved Sula Pitta and other interesting species here included Banded Honey Buzzard and Sulawesi Serpent Eagle. We then packed up and walked down the hill along a very slippery, treacherous path till the coastal road. In the afternoon we drove eastward to the town of Salakan, the capital of the Banggai archipelago, where a fair hotel with hot showers and an excellent dinner waited.

The rather trashed lowland forest near Salakan was amazingly birdy. At dawn along a forest edge we heard a Sula Scrubfowl and not much later obtained good views of a young bird sitting on a branch at eye level. A smart Red-and-black Thrush responded well to our imitations and sat out long enough for everyone to appreciate its beauty. A real gem! Several sparkling Helmeted Mynas showed very well and a fruiting fig tree held a nice assortment of pigeons including Black-naped Fruit-Dove and Green and Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeons. An adult Sulawesi Serpent Eagle was scoped on its perch; a female Common Cicadabird performed beautifully and a Drab Whistler gave a great show. On our return walk our local guide found a lovely Peleng Tarsier and an adorable Peleng Cuscus at their day roosts. Our afternoon session at a clearing produced a couple of White-throated Pigeons and Blue-backed Parrot and just before dusk we heard the characteristic calls of an Elegant Pitta.

The following morning was spent in the same patch of lowland rainforest, where it took a fair amount of time getting to grips with the reticent Henna-tailed Jungle Flycatcher. This unobtrusive denizen of dense undergrowth eventually gave good views. A pair of Vinous-breasted Sparrowhawks with a youngster showed well and in midmorning we explored an area of mangrove along the coast where Little Pied Cormorant, Little Heron, Sunda Teal, Moluccan Starling and Brown-throated Sunbird were added to the list. In the afternoon we kept watch at a forest clearing, where we observed Pacific Golden Plover, Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon, lots of Black-naped Fruit-Doves and a Sulawesi Triller. We marvelled at several very charming Helmeted Mynas and at dusk heard a Sulawesi Masked Owl.

Early next morning we boarded our medium sized wooden boat, which took us from Peleng along the north coast of Taliabu to the coastal village of Jorjoga. The trip lasted for most of the day and although it was usually fairly quiet at sea, we encountered several pockets of activity with a nice selection of marine birds. The boat turned out to be an excellent platform to seawatch from and allowed good views of Bulwer's Petrel, Brown Booby, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Sooty Shearwater,

White-tailed Tropicbird, Common, Aleutian and Bridled Terns, Brown Noddy and lots of Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphins.

Upon arrival we drove till a broken bridge and walked the final two kilometres to our base, a large wooden house at the edge of a village. The wide track through coco palm plantations and taro gardens gave us Sula Hanging Parrot (here with a yellow-orange back), Rusty-breasted Cuckoo (adult and juvenile) and Northern Golden Bulbul. A short after dinner outing soon produced excellent views of a Sula Scops Owl.

On our first full day on Taliabu, the main island of the Sula archipelago, we explored some remaining patches of lowland rainforest interspersed with bamboo copses and marshy areas. All the lowlands of this island had been totally logged c25 years ago, leaving only tall emergent trees amongst secondary growth, taro gardens and plantations of African oil palms. It was quite birdy early on and it became piping hot by nine o'clock. Best of all were the excellent views we had of both male and female Sula Cicadabird, while in the afternoon we managed to scope a rather distant pair of smart and much wanted endemic Bare-eyed Mynas. Other exciting species included Osprey, Lesser Fish Eagle, Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle (adult and immature), White-bellied Imperial Pigeon, Yellow-and-green Lorikeet and a Slaty Cuckoo-Shrike on its nest.

Next morning, just after dawn we started our walk up into the highlands of Taliabu. First we had to wade through a river and then followed a fairly straightforward walk along an old partly overgrown logging track to an altitude of c800m, where our crew made a splendid camp consisting of four tarpaulin tents. Not much of note was seen on the hike up, except numerous elegant Grey-rumped Tree-Swifts. In late morning we arrived at our base, where we had to wait for three hours while heavy showers were tormenting our camp. In the afternoon we investigated the surrounding area. Tall trees emerged from within montane scrub and here we found lots of Slaty Cuckoo-Shrikes, Sula Cicadabird, Island Verditer and Little Pied Flycatchers and lots of Sulawesi Myzomelas, but best of all was the stylish White-bellied Imperial Pigeon sitting in the open canopy of a forest giant surrounded by ten gorgeous Helmeted Mynas. A splendid experience. After a satisfying dinner, we turned in early. Sleeping under a tarpaulin on a bed of ferns under starry skies was quite an event. An hour before dawn some of us heard the distinctive screech of a Taliabu Masked Owl from our bed.

Soon after dawn we walked up through better and better looking montane forest till the end of the old logging track at c1150m altitude. Beautiful pitcher plants in large and small sizes adorned the trail. Soon after leaving the camp a powerful Meyer's Goshawk flapped over and higher up we heard the high piercing notes of an as yet undescribed Bush Warbler. We put in quite a bit of effort in trying to see it, but to no avail. The only new bird was an all grey subspecies of Island Thrush that was feeding in a fruiting tree. We also obtained nice views of White-bellied Imperial Pigeon, Mountain Tailorbird, Rusty-bellied Fantail, Common Golden Whistler and another distinctive form of Island Leaf Warbler. We returned to camp for lunch, packed up and walked down under threatening skies. Alluring Helmeted Mynas escorted us on our way down. At the river crossing we all refreshed ourselves and we spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning up and getting ready for a very early departure the next day. Upon our return walk from dinner at the house of our local guide we heard the characteristic calls of Red-legged Crakes flying about. A prolonged nightbirding session didn't produce much. We heard Northern Boobook and several Sula Scops Owls, but not a sniff was had of the hoped for Taliabu Masked Owl.

The 12 hour boat trip to the town of Luwuk on mainland Sulawesi took us across the southern portions of the Moluccan Sea. We were usually quite close inshore, but we also crossed a stretch of more open and deeper water. During the enjoyable cruise we had good looks at Streaked Shearwater, Lesser Frigatebird, Brown Booby, lots of Red-necked Phalaropes, a Long-tailed Skua and for some lucky souls a Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel. The hot showers and the delicious ice cream in Luwuk were very much appreciated.

Next morning we drove to Bunta, a small harbour on the north coast of the short, eastwards projecting arm of Sulawesi. From here two speedboats took us to the distant Togian islands across the smooth, birdless waters of the Gulf of Tomini. Upon arrival at the main island of Batudaka, we settled into our lovely accommodation on the beach. In mid afternoon we explored a nearby area of mixed forest and plantations, where it did not take very long to find a pair of endemic Togian White-eyes. We enjoyed great scope views of this recently described species. It was quite birdy here as we also noted Yellow-breasted Racquet-tail, Large Sulawesi Hanging Parrot (a distinctive race with a yellow back) and several very well behaved Sulawesi Babbler interacting on the track.

Our first full day on the Togians started at the coast where we picked up Javan Pond Heron, Little Heron, Yellow Bittern (at a small fresh water marsh) and Pacific Golden Plover. We walked inland, first through plantations and gardens and eventually reached a nice stretch of native hill forest. Oriental Hobby, Sulawesi Black Pigeon, Ruddy Kingfisher, a colourful Knobbed Hornbill, a delightful pair of Ashy Woodpeckers, Blue-breasted Pitta, Northern Golden Bulbul (a very bright race) and Grosbeak Starling were some of the highlights of the morning. A relaxed afternoon near the village did not produce a lot, but after dinner we revisited the forested hill, where after a slog along a steep, muddy trail we obtained excellent scope views of the recently described Togian Boobook (or Hawk Owl). What a splendid voice! We also heard a Sulawesi Masked Owl, which remained hidden inside the canopy of a forest giant.

As we had seen the specialities of the Togian islands and as we had heard about the spectacular coral reefs, we decided to have a go at snorkelling at a nearby islet where we had easy access to a healthy reef from the beach of a nice dive resort. We certainly were not disappointed and most of us had a fabulous time observing an astounding variety of bizarrely-shaped corals and colourful reef fish. A Blue Rock Thrush had chosen this idyllic spot to spend the winter. In the afternoon we returned to the White-eye area. At the coast a Great-billed Kingfisher was scoped and at a clearing we obtained great views of both Yellow-breasted and Golden-mantled Racquet-tails allowing for excellent comparison. A pair of Togian White-eyes performed very nicely. In the evening some of us returned to the Boobook site and again had fantastic looks at a couple of vociferous Togian Boobooks.

A travel day ensued as the following morning we left the Togian islands and raced in a speed boat across the glass smooth waters of the Tomini Gulf to mainland Sulawesi. Only a few Bridled Terns enlivened the journey. An uneventful drive to Luwuk was followed by flights to Makassar and Manado.

A short morning visit to the rich lowland forests of the famous Tangkoko reserve produced great sightings of Red-backed Thrushes, a couple of roosting Ochre-bellied Boobooks at minimal distance, Purple-winged Roller and a troop of impressive Sulawesi Crested Macaques. At midday we boarded the jetfoil that took us to the outlying island of Sangihe. We made a short stop at the volcanic island of Siau, where we pondered about the continuing existence of the endemic Scops Owl. By early evening we were checked in into our snug guesthouse in the main town of Tahuna.

An early start saw us hiking up Gunung Sahendaruman, one of the main volcanoes, along a slippery trail through a mosaic of forest patches and plantations. Flowering trees attracted the beautiful endemic Elegant Sunbird together with the distinctive races of both Yellow-sided and Grey-sided Flowerpeckers. Once we reached the first ridge we descended into one of the few remaining valleys covered in indigenous forest. It was very quiet here, but after a bout of waiting and searching we finally connected with our target, the legendary Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher. Not as gaudy as expected, this extremely rare bird behaved very unobtrusively in the middle canopy and gave fair views to all of us. It had been feared extinct till it was rediscovered only 13 years ago. The total population must be tiny as only a few km² of forest are left on Sangihe. In the epiphyte-laden trees Rosenberg's and Sulawesi Dwarf Squirrels played hide and seek. We then made our way cautiously

back along the treacherous trail and in late afternoon did a bout of roadside birding near the capital Tahuna. A flock of eight Chinese Goshawks circled over and we heard a Hooded Pitta nearby. At dusk we saw a couple of attractive, endearing Sangihe Tarsiers and had cracking views of a charming Sangihe Scops Owl at close range.

The varied habitat near Tahuna consists of patches of forest next to plantations of coco palm, clove and nutmeg. In the early morning we heard and soon observed a cracking Hooded Pitta, that even allowed scope views! We walked along the quiet road, did a lot of scanning and eventually a Sangihe Hanging Parrot flew past and was then found perched high up on a palm frond. Yellow-eyed Imperial Pigeon, lots of Pied Imperial Pigeons and a male Common Koel sat up and we had a good look at the Hair-crested Drongos here, as most showed red eyes and a deeply forked tail, but at least one sported white eyes and a typical tail. What is the situation with these drongos here? In the afternoon, in between showers we explored a bit more of the northern part of the island; We saw several appealing Sangihe Tarsiers and heard a Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher.

On the last real birding day of the tour, we started early and hiked up a volcano in the southern part of Sangihe to try for the remaining endemics. The trail was steep and slimy and we regularly had to crawl on hands and knees. By eight o'clock we were already at the right altitude for the fabled Sangihe Shrike-Thrush and not much later we were surrounded by five individuals behaving rather like babblers and looking and sounding very much like a Great Reed Warbler. A truly great bird! This unobtrusive critter has only recently been described as a separate species and the total population is minute, possibly fewer than 100 birds! We climbed up till the ridge of the volcano, covered in beautiful montane forest with tree ferns, lots of large Pandanus (screw palm), rattan, big trees overflowing with all kinds of epiphytes and beautiful Medinilla bushes. We had more views of the Shrike-Thrush and enjoyed great looks at the distinctive local race of Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher. Not a sniff was had of the extremely rare Sangihe White-eye, the last remaining endemic of the island of Sangihe. We also had very nice looks at a close Sangihe Hanging Parrot. In the middle of the day we began our walk down, a stumbling and sliding, but extremely happy group! We had done it! No wonder the Sangihe Shrike-Thrush was voted Bird of the Trip.

Many thanks to Filip Verbelen and Craig for all their help and my humble excuses to Roger Clift.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Subspecies names are given where known and/or appropriate, either in a comment or in parentheses.

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/index.html>

PROCELLARIIDAE

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*: Several excellent observations during the boat trips between Peleng and Taliabu, and also brief looks at a few from the fast ferry between Sangihe and Manado. The bird is named after Reverend James Bulwer (1794-1879), Scottish naturalist and collector and chaplain at Madeira in 1828.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*: Some very nice close up views on the sea trips. These are migrants or wintering birds from their breeding grounds in the greater Japan area.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: A number of dark shearwaters were recorded between Peleng and Taliabu. Those that were seen well, including one that Roger photographed, were thought to be this species. Coates & Bishop don't mention it for Wallacea, but it has recently been recorded in the Banda Sea.

HYDROBATIDAE

Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae* (NL): A single bird was seen by some on the sea crossing between Taliabu and Peleng. The white shaft-streaks on the base of the primaries showed well.

PHAETONTIDAE

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaeton lepturus*: Brief looks at a distant bird at sea between Peleng and Taliabu (nominate).

FREGATIDAE

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*: Regular observations (*minor*). Frigatebirds have the lowest wing-loading (low weight in contrast to large wing area) of all birds, enabling them to be amongst the most nimble of fliers.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*: Regular observations (nominate). Most of the frigatebirds seen were too distant to identify.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*: A couple of sightings near Salakan on Peleng (nominate).

SULIDAE

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: Regular observations of this distinctive seabird on our sea trips (*plotus*).

ARDEIDAE

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: We saw this widespread species at Manado airport, on Peleng and on the Togian Islands (*manilensis*).

- Eastern Great Egret *Egretta modestus*: A couple of sightings on Talaud and a single bird on Sangihe.
- Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*: A single bird was seen in the Manado area during one of our stopovers there.
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: We saw this well known species on Talaud, Taliabu, the Togian Islands, Sangihe and the Sulawesi mainland. Although mostly dark-footed *nigripes*, yellow-footed *garzetta* was also noted.
- Pacific Reef Egret *Egretta sacra*: Just a handful of sightings on Taliabu, Siau and Sangihe (nominate). Both pale and dark morphs were seen.
- Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: Frequent sightings of this widespread species on Talaud, Sangihe and mainland Sulawesi.
- Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa*: Several observations of smart breeding-plumaged birds on Peleng and on the Togians (nominate).
- Little Heron (Striated/Little Green Heron) *Butorides striatus*: We saw this familiar species on Peleng and on the Togians (*javanicus*).
- Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* (NL): A single bird showed well in flight at a marshy area on the island of Batudaka, Togian Islands. The bird is not mentioned in 'The Birds of the Togian Islands' by Indrawan et al (Forktail 22 (7-22)).
- Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*: Good looks at two in the Manado area on our first birding day of the tour.

PANDIONIDAE

- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: A single bird was seen on Taliabu (*cristatus*).

ACCIPITRIDAE

- Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*: Good looks at this infrequently seen species in the highlands of Peleng. The race involved is *celebensis*. Surgeon-Major Thomas Jerdon (1811-1872) was a Scottish field ornithologist and collector in India.
- Barred Honey Buzzard (Sulawesi Honey Buzzard) *Pernis celebensis*: We obtained good views of a couple in the highlands of Peleng (nominate).
- Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*: Regular sightings on all the visited islands (*intermedius*).
- White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: We saw this impressive bird of prey on Talaud, Taliabu and Sangihe.
- Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis*: Distant views of two in the lowlands of Taliabu from our Bare-eyed Myna viewpoint (nominate). It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.
- Sulawesi Serpent Eagle *Spilornis rufipectus*: Regularly observed and more often heard. We noted it on Peleng and Taliabu (*sulaensis*) and on the Togians (nominate).
- Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis*: Small numbers of this northern migrant were seen on Peleng and on Sangihe. The scientific epithet is derived from the city of Solo on Java.
- Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*: A single bird showed near Manado and a couple were seen on Peleng. This is another northern migrant.
- Vinous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rhodogaster*: Magic views of two adults and a recently fledged young bird in the lowlands of Peleng (*sulaensis*).
- Meyer's Goshawk *Accipiter meyeri*: A powerful adult showed well to some in the highlands of Taliabu. There are only a few records of this species from the Sula Islands.
- Grey-faced Buzzard *Butastur indicus*: Regular encounters with this northern migrant on Talaud and on Sangihe. Many great looks at this smart raptor. The call is very like the well-known vocalisation of Great Kiskadee of Latin America.
- Rufous-bellied Eagle *Hieraetus kienerii*: Two encounters on Peleng and a single on Taliabu (*formosus*).

Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus lanceolatus*: We observed this impressive raptor on Peleng, Taliabu and on the Togian Islands.

FALCONIDAE

Spotted Kestrel (Moluccan Kestrel) *Falco moluccensis*: This dainty raptor was seen on Peleng, on Taliabu, on the Togians and on Sangihe (*microbalia*).

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*: A single bird was seen perched high on a dead tree on the island of Batudaka on the Togians. The species is not mentioned in 'The Birds of the Togian Islands' by Indrawan *et al.* (Forktail 22: 7-22).

Peregrine (Peregrine Falcon) *Falco peregrinus*: One of the small and dark race *ernesti* was found perched on a pylon not too far from Manado.

ANATIDAE

Sunda Teal *Anas gibberifrons*: A couple were seen on Peleng.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*: A single bird favoured a patch of mangrove on Peleng.

MEGAPODIIDAE

Philippine Scrubfowl (Tabon Scrubfowl) *Megapodius cumingii* (H): We heard the distinctive calls on Talaud (*sanghirensis*) and on the Togians (*gilbertii*).

Sula Scrubfowl (Sula Megapode) *Megapodius bernsteinii*: Brief looks at an adult in flight and magical views of an immature bird perched up in a bush in the lowlands of Peleng. We also heard it in the Peleng highlands, and on Taliabu. This species is endemic to the Banggai and Sula Islands. It is considered as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Heinrich Bernstein (1828-1865) was a German physician, zoologist, collector and explorer who organized nine successful expeditions in eastern Indonesia. There was a strong, but gentlemanly rivalry between him and Alfred Russel Wallace.

RALLIDAE

Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis*: Two showed well near Manado (nominate) and a single bird was seen crossing a track on Peleng (Banggai Islands). The species has not been described from the latter island.

Barred Rail *Gallirallus torquatus*: Regular observations on Sulawesi (*celebensis*). We heard it on Peleng (*sulcirostris*).

Red-legged Crake *Rallina fasciata* (H): The distinctive flight calls were regularly heard at night around our accommodation in the lowlands of Taliabu. Coates & Bishop do not mention this species from the Sula islands.

Rufous-tailed Bush-hen *Amaurornis moluccanus*: We saw and heard this mega skulker on Talaud (nominate).

Isabelline Bush-hen *Amaurornis isabellinus*: Excellent views of two of these Sulawesi endemics at the edge of some rough fields near Manado.

Talaud Bush-hen *Amaurornis magnirostris* (H): We heard its distinctive vocalisations several times in dense vegetation along the forest edge on Talaud. Unfortunately, our considerable efforts to get a glimpse of this sly and sneaky skulker failed this time. It is a Talaud endemic, and was only described in 1998. BirdLife International consider it to be Vulnerable.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: We saw or heard this widespread species on Talaud (nominate), and on Peleng, Taliabu and the Togians (*leucomelanus*).

CHARADRIIDAE

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: Several observations of this northern migrant on Talaud, Peleng, the Togians and Sangihe.

Lesser Sand-Plover (Mongolian Plover) *Charadrius mongolus*: Several observations of this widespread migrant. The one or two birds that were seen on Batudaka (Togians) appear to be the first to be recorded from this island group.

Greater Sand-Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*: A few sightings. One seen on Batudaka (Togians) appears to be the first to be recorded from this island group.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: Regular sightings of this familiar species.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: Five birds showed well in a paddyfield on Talaud.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Odd birds were encountered along our route.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*: Regular observations. A minimum of eight birds that were observed on Batudaka (Togians) appear to be the first to be recorded from this island group.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*: Two showed very well at the Santika Hotel near Manado. It is considered as Vulnerable by BirdLife International.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* (NL): CG saw one along the coast near Beo, Talaud.

Red-necked Phalarope (Northern Phalarope) *Phalaropus lobatus*: Fair numbers were recorded during our boat trip between Peleng and Taliabu, with at least 150 estimated during the return journey.

STERCORARIIDAE

Long-tailed Skua (Long-tailed Jaeger) *Stercorarius longicaudus*: Nice looks at a couple during our boat trips between Peleng and Taliabu.

STERNIDAE

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Regular sightings of this well known species. Most of the birds seen were second year birds. A group of eight birds seen off the west coast of Pulau Togian (Togian Islands) appear to be the first of the species to be recorded from the archipelago.

Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica*: About 20 were identified at sea between off the north-east tip of Peleng. Most of them were, characteristically, sitting on flotsam.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*: Regular observations at sea. Two were seen at sea as we left Batudaka (Togians), and appear to be the first to be recorded from this island group.

Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*: Small numbers were noted at sea.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*: At least 30 were estimated during the crossing from Peleng to Taliabu, with just a couple during the return journey.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*: Relatively few sightings.

White-throated Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*: Several observations on Peleng and on Taliabu, usually of flying birds (*halmaheira*).

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Regular observations on Sulawesi, Talaud and the Togians (*tigrina*).

Brown Cuckoo-Dove (Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove) *Macropygia amboinensis*: We noted this well known species on all the visited island groups. On Talaud and Sangihe we saw the endemic race *sanghirensis*, on the Togians the endemic *atrata*, on Peleng and on mainland Sulawesi *albicapilla* and on Taliabu the endemic race *sedecima*.

Sulawesi Black Pigeon (White-faced Cuckoo-Dove) *Turacoena manadensis*: Excellent scope views of perched birds on several occasions. We were also able to witness the lovely display flight. We noted this smart pigeon on mainland Sulawesi, Peleng, Taliabu and the Togians. The vocalizations of the birds on the Banggai and Sula Islands are highly

distinctive, and these populations are in the process of being split-off as a separate species.

Emerald Dove (Green-winged Pigeon) *Chalcophaps indica*: This unobtrusive species was seen on all the visited islands (nominate).

Peaceful Dove (Zebra Dove) *Geopelia striata*: Several were seen on mainland Sulawesi.

Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans*: Nice scope views of this attractive species on Talaud, on mainland Sulawesi and on Sangihe.

Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon *Treron griseicauda*: This lovely species was seen on Peleng, Taliabu and on the Togians (nominate).

Banggai Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus subularis*: This recently described taxon – a split in the Maroon-chinned Fruit-Dove complex - showed beautifully, after a bit of effort, in the highlands of Peleng. The voice is quite different from its mainland counterpart. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Sula Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus mangoliensis*: This attractive species – also a split in the Maroon-chinned Fruit-Dove complex – showed very well in the lowlands of Taliabu. It is also considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*: We only saw this cracker on mainland Sulawesi and on Peleng (*temminckii*).

Black-naped Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus melanospila*: This adorable, tiny species was observed on Talaud and Sangihe (the endemic race *xanthorrhoea*), on Peleng and Taliabu (*chrysorrhoea*) and on the Togians (nominate).

White-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula forsteni*: Smashing views of this well-voiced pigeon in the highlands of Taliabu. We obtained scope views of perched birds, but most memorable was the bird surrounded by ten Helmeted Mynas in the canopy of a forest giant. Fabulous!

Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea*: This widespread species showed well on Peleng and Taliabu (endemic race *sulana*) and on the Togians (*paulina*).

Yellow-eyed Imperial Pigeon (Blue-tailed/Elegant Imperial Pigeon) *Ducula concinna*: Brief views of one on Talaud were followed by nice scope views of several on Sangihe. This smart bird favours small islands.

Grey Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pickeringii*: Several nice encounters with this localized species on the island of Karakelong in the Talaud archipelago. It is considered as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Charles Pickering (1805-1878) was a US zoologist, librarian and curator at the city's [Academy of Natural Sciences](#) and naturalist on the United States Exploring Expedition (an exploring and surveying expedition of the Pacific Ocean and surrounding lands conducted by the United States from 1838 to 1842).

Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor*: This attractive species was noted on mainland Sulawesi, Talaud, Siau and Sangihe.

Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeon (White Imperial Pigeon) *Ducula luctuosa*: Perfect scope views in the mangroves of the Santika hotel near Manado, commonly recorded on Peleng and Taliabu, and a small number on Batudaka (Togians).

PSITTACIDAE

Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio*: Excellent views of perched and flying birds on the island of Karakelong in the Talaud archipelago (*talautensis*). This delightful species is endemic to the Sangihe and Talaud island groups, and is considered as Endangered by BirdLife International.

Ornate Lorikeet *Trichoglossus ornatus*: Regular encounters on Peleng and on the Togians. It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub region.

- Yellow-and-green Lorikeet *Trichoglossus flavoviridis*: Frequent observations of the Sula endemic nominate race on Taliabu.
- Yellow-breasted Racquet-tail *Prioniturus flavicans*: Perfect scope views of this subtly attractive species, with its rather comical calls, on the Togian Islands. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.
- Golden-mantled Racquet-tail *Prioniturus platurus*: We encountered it on Talaud (the small endemic race *talautensis*), Taliabu (the grey mantled Sula endemic race *sinerubris*) and on Peleng and the Togians (nominate).
- Blue-naped Parrot *Tanygnathus lucionensis*: Regular observations of the endemic race *talautensis* on Karakelong (Talaud). This is a mainly Philippine species, that also occurs on some islands off northern Borneo and on Talaud. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.
- Blue-backed Parrot *Tanygnathus sumatranus*: We noted this widespread species on Talaud, Peleng, Taliabu and the Togians (nominate).
- Great-billed Parrot *Tanygnathus megalorhynchos*: A brief encounter with the nominate race on Karakelong (Talaud).
- Moluccan King Parrot *Alisterus amboinensis*: Nice looks at this beautiful species in the higher reaches of Peleng (the Banggai Islands endemic race *versicolor*).
- Large Sulawesi Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus stigmatus*: This cutie showed well on mainland Sulawesi and on the Togian Islands. It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region.
- Sangihe Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus catamene*: After all too brief looks at a distant perched bird, we had eye-ball to eye-ball views of several in the highlands of Sangihe. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.
- Sula Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus sclateri*: Both forms of this well-groomed endemic were seen at length and in depth: the Banggai island race *ruber* on Peleng and the Sula race *sclateri* on Taliabu. Both are surprisingly common.

CUCULIDAE

- Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus*: Three of these northern migrants allowed close scrutiny on Talaud.
- Rusty-breasted Cuckoo (Indonesian Cuckoo) *Cacomantis sepulcralis*: Often heard and regularly seen. We had very good views of a young bird near our accommodation on Taliabu. On mainland Sulawesi, the Togians and Peleng we recorded the race *virescens* and on Taliabu the race *aeruginosus*.
- Moluccan Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus musschenbroeki*: Excellent scope views of a responsive bird in the highlands of Peleng.
- Black-billed Koel *Eudynamis melanorhyncha*: We saw and heard this Sulawesi sub-region endemic on mainland Sulawesi, Peleng and Taliabu.
- Common Koel (Asian Koel) *Eudynamis scolopacea*: Good looks at several on Talaud and on Sangihe (*mindanensis*). More often heard obviously.
- Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae* (H): We heard the frightening guttural, nasal screams just after dawn in the lowland forest on Peleng. This prehistoric-looking species is a migrant from Australia, but also breeds locally in Wallacea. It parasitizes crows.
- Yellow-billed Malkoha (Fiery-billed Malkoha) *Phaenicophaeus calyrorhynchus*: Good looks at this smart Sulawesi sub-region endemic near Manado.
- Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*: Regular encounters (*javanensis*).
- Bay Coucal *Centropus celebensis*: This Sulawesi sub-region endemic was observed on mainland Sulawesi and heard on the Togian Islands (nominate).

TYTONIDAE

Sulawesi Masked Owl *Tyto rosenbergii* (H): We heard this Sulawesi sub-region endemic in lowland rainforest on Peleng (*pelingensis*) and on Batudaka in the Togian Islands (n nominate?). The latter was calling consistently from a forest giant but would not budge.

Taliabu Masked Owl *Tyto nigrobrunnea* (H): We searched quite hard for this enigmatic species, but only heard it, at night, from our tarpaulin camp in the higher reaches of Taliabu. It is endemic to the island of Taliabu (Sula islands) and is considered as Endangered by BirdLife International.

STRIGIDAE

Sulawesi Scops Owl *Otus manadensis*: Good views of this cutie on our first morning near Manado. A Sulawesi endemic.

Sangihe Scops Owl *Otus collari*: Cracking scope views at dusk of this Sangihe endemic. We will always remember how it turned its head consistently sideways in a very endearing manner. A fabulous encounter. The number two in the bird of the trip game. Heidi's favourite.

Sula Scops Owl *Otus sulaensis*: Repeated good looks at this Sula endemic in the lowlands of Taliabu. More often heard, and frequently encountered calling whilst in flight.

Banggai Scops Owl *Otus mendeni*: Magnificent looks at this Banggai endemic in the middle reaches of west Peleng. A very distinctive voice.

Northern Boobook *Ninox japonica*: Good views of this northern migrant during our nocturnal forays on Karakelong (Talaud), and Taliabu. It was surprising to hear birds vocalizing on the wintering grounds.

Ochre-bellied Boobook *Ninox ochracea*: A heart warming close encounter with two birds at their day roost in the Tangkoko reserve near Manado. This lovely species is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region, and is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Togian Boobook (Togian Hawk Owl) *Ninox burhani*: It took a bit of effort to get this recently described Togian endemic on our list, but eventually we had fantastic scope views on two consecutive nights. Another great voice! It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International. The number three in the bird of the trip game, and Angie's favourite.

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Great Eared Nightjar *Eurostopodus macrotis*: Many, very nice observations of this impressive species. We noted it at dawn or dusk on Peleng and Taliabu (*macropterus*).

APODIDAE

Uniform Swiftlet *Collocalia vanikorensis*: We only noted this species in the lowlands of Taliabu, where it was recorded for the first time only recently.

Sulawesi Swiftlet *Collocalia [infuscata] sororum*: Regular encounters, all along our route with the exception of Taliabu. It is endemic to Sulawesi and the Sula islands. Strangely enough this species is not mentioned in 'The Birds of the Togian Islands' by Indrawan *et al.* (Forktail 22: 7-22).

Glossy Swiftlet (White-bellied Swiftlet) *Collocalia esculenta*: Frequent sightings all along our itinerary, with the exception of Talaud. We saw the race *manadensis* on mainland Sulawesi and Sangihe and the nominate race elsewhere.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*: A single migrant showed well at a forest clearing in the higher reaches of Peleng.

HEMIPROCNIDAE

Grey-rumped Tree-Swift *Hemiprocne longipennis*: Many excellent encounters with this very elegant species on Peleng, Taliabu and the Togian Islands (*wallacii*).

ALCEDINIDAE

Green-backed Kingfisher *Actenoides monachus* (NL): CG saw one at Tangkoko on our short visit there (nominate). It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region and considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Scaly Kingfisher (Scaly-breasted Kingfisher) *Actenoides princeps*: A splendid observation of one of these rarely-observed Sulawesi endemics on our first morning of the tour on the flanks of Gunung Mahawu (nominate). The scope views of this secretive species were very much appreciated. One of the highlights of the tour.

Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher (Lilac K) *Cittura cyanotis*: Excellent views of this jewel in the higher reaches of Sangihe. The race involved is the highly distinctive *sanghirensis*, which is in the process of being split-off as a distinct species. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Great-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon melanorhyncha*: Good looks at this monster along the coast of Batudaka, in the Togians (nominate).

Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*: Regular encounters with this smart species. We saw the race *rufa* on Talaud, Sangihe and the Togians, the endemic race *pelingensis* on Peleng and heard the endemic race *sulana* on Taliabu.

Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris*: A frequently encountered species on all the visited islands, with the exception of Sangihe (nominate). On Talaud we only saw this familiar bird along the coast.

Talaud Kingfisher *Halcyon enigma*: It took a while to get to grips with this Collared Kingfisher look-alike, but the different voice and habits gave it away. We obtained perfect scope views of this Talaud endemic. The scientific epithet speaks for itself, as does the alternative name of Obscure Kingfisher. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*: A single encounter with this Australian migrant on Taliabu.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: A few encounters with this colourful species on Talaud, Peleng and the Togians. The race involved is the very distinctive resident form *hispidoides*, which will surely be given full species status in future.

CORACIIDAE

Purple-winged Roller *Coracias temminckii*: A single observation at Tangkoko, during our short visit there.

Common Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*: We observed two birds on Talaud (subspecies?).

BUCEROTIDAE

Knobbed Hornbill *Rhyticeros cassidix*: Nice looks at this stunner on Batudaka (Togian Islands). This snazzy species is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region.

PICIDAE

Sulawesi Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos temminckii*: Good views of a male in a patch of forest on the flanks of Gunung Mahawu on our first morning of the tour.

Ashy Woodpecker *Mulleripicus fulvus*: Splendid looks at both males and females in the forests of Batudaka, Togian Islands (*fulvus*).

PITTIDAE

Blue-breasted Pitta (Red-bellied Pitta) *Pitta erythrogaster*: We heard it on Talaud (*inspeculata*), heard it on mainland Sulawesi and obtained very nice views of a singing bird on the Togian Islands (*celebensis*).

Sula Pitta *Pitta dohertyi*: Very nice looks at a foraging bird in the middle reaches of west Peleng. Some authorities would prefer to lump this taxon into Blue-breasted Pitta. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*: Perfect, walk-away scope views of a calling bird on Sangihe. The race involved is the endemic *sanghirana*, with its distinctive white bar on the primaries.

Elegant Pitta *Pitta elegans* (H): We heard the characteristic call at dusk in lowland forest on Peleng and maybe also on Talaud. There appear to be no previous records from the Banggai Islands.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: A few observations of this well known species on the Sulawesi mainland and on Talaud.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*: Easily the most regularly observed hirundine (*javanica*). We saw it on all the visited island groups.

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*: A single bird was seen foraging with Barn Swallows over the grasslands of Karakelong airport on Talaud. There seem to be no documented records of this familiar species from Wallacea.

MOTACILLIDAE

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*: We saw four of these dainty birds in rice paddies near Manado on the first day of the tour. Heard on Talaud.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Small numbers were encountered all along our route.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Slaty Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina schistacea*: Regular sightings of this modestly-clad species on Peleng and Taliabu. It is endemic to the Banggai and the Sula islands. We were shown an active nest near our accommodation on Taliabu.

White-rumped Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina leucopygia*: Regular encounters on mainland Sulawesi and on the Togian Islands. It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region.

Common Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*: We saw this species on a regular basis on Peleng. The race involved is the endemic *pelingensis*, in which the female shows unbarred, rufous underparts.

Sula Cicadabird (Sula Cuckoo-Shrike) *Coracina sula*: Common in the lowland forests of Taliabu. It is endemic to the Sula islands.

Sulawesi Cicadabird *Coracina morio*: Excellent looks at a male and a female of the race *talautensis* on Karakelong (Talaud Islands).

Sulawesi Triller *Lalage leucopygialis*: Good views of this pied species on the Sulawesi mainland, on Peleng and on Taliabu. It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region.

PYCNONOTIDAE

Sooty-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus aurigaster*: Small numbers of this introduced species in the Manado area.

Northern Golden Bulbul *Thapsinillas longirostris*: This vociferous species was seen on Peleng (*harterti*), on Taliabu (n nominate) and on the Togian Islands (the very bright race *aureus*). All of the forms involved have distinctive vocalizations and morphometrics, and there will be a major splitting-up of the species in the near future.

DICRURIDAE

Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*: Drongos in the Sulawesi sub-region are a rather delicate issue, as taxonomic reality is far from clear. On mainland Sulawesi and Peleng we noted the distinctive *leucops* race, with its white eyes. On Taliabu we saw the race *pectoralis* with reddish eyes and longer neck hackles. On the Togians we saw birds both with reddish-brown and with white eyes (though the former may have been juveniles), and on Sangihe all of the birds had dark reddish eyes, except for one or two with white eyes. The tail of the Sangihe birds was deeply forked and looked totally unlike the tail of a 'normal' Hair-crested Drongo. To be continued...

ORIOLIDAE

Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis*: Frequent observations of this handsome fellow. We saw the race *melanisticus* on Talaud, the race *frontalis* on Peleng and Taliabu, the race *celebensis* on the Togians and mainland Sulawesi, and the race *sanghirensis* on Sangihe.

CORVIDAE

Slender-billed Crow *Corvus enca*: Regular observations of this widespread species. We noted the race *celebensis* on Sulawesi. We also saw this easy to identify corvid on Peleng (Banggai Islands) and on Sangihe. Coates and Bishop don't mention this species for the Banggai Islands, or for Sangihe. Strangely enough, we did not see it on Talaud or on the Togians. On Peleng this species only occurs in open lowland habitat, in contrast to Banggai Crow.

Banggai Crow *Corvus unicolor*: Excellent observations of this highland forest-dwelling species in the middle reaches of west Peleng. This is a very distinctive bird with a really bizarre flight and characteristic vocalisations (creaking whistles). Its nearest relative is probably the Piping Crow, which behaves in very much the same way in Sulawesi's highland forests. This species was previously known from two specimens taken on an unspecified island in the Banggai archipelago. A sighting of the species in western Peleng in 1991 remained unconfirmed until searches of the island in 2004, 2006 and 2007 confirmed the continued survival of the species, but only in the montane forest of western Peleng and in small numbers at lower levels in the central isthmus of the island. The total population of the species has been estimated at close to 500 individuals, including 50-200 birds in the western Peleng highlands. It is considered as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Note that the species probably does not occur on the island of Banggai. Came in at number four in the bird of the trip game, and CG's favourite.

TIMALIIDAE

Sulawesi Babbler *Trichastoma celebense*: Fair views of this modestly-clad species on the Sulawesi mainland (*celebense*), and then some great looks at the endemic *togianense* race on Batudaka, Togian Islands, including two birds displaying to one another.

TURDIDAE

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus*: Excellent scope views of this widespread species in the upper reaches of Taliabu (Sula Islands). It was only recently discovered here and it has not yet been subspecifically described. No fewer than 50 races of this very variable bird exist, and we can rest assured that it will be split into many distinctive species in due course.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: One was seen along the coast at Black Marlin Dive Resort, Pulau Kadidiri (Kadidi), Togian Islands. This seems to be the first record from the archipelago.

Red-backed Thrush *Zoothera erythronota*: Cracking views of several in the forests of Tangkoko. A really exquisite species! It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Red-and-black Thrush *Zoothera mendeni*: This Sula endemic showed brilliantly in the lowland forest of Peleng. A much appreciated species. All members of the genus *Zoothera* have a very special appeal. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

ACANTHIZIDAE

Flyeater (Golden-bellied Flyeater, Golden-bellied Gerygone) *Gerygone sulphurea*: Seen and heard on the Sulawesi mainland and on Peleng (*flaveola*).

SYLVIIDAE

Bush-warbler sp *Bradypterus* sp. (H): We located a single singing bird in montane forest on Taliabu, but it refused to cooperate. This form has only recently been discovered and has yet to be formerly described. It remains unclear at present whether it represents a new race of Chestnut-backed Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus castaneus* or a distinct species, though the latter appears to be most likely.

Gray's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella fasciolata*: This northern migrant was regularly heard and seen on Talaud, Peleng and Taliabu.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*: Good views of several near Manado on our first morning of the tour. The endemic subspecies concerned is *celebensis*, which probably belongs in Australian Reed Warbler *A. australis*.

Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus*: Regularly heard and seen in the highlands of Taliabu. This distinctive form has not been subspecifically assigned yet. DNA studies have shown that it is not remotely related to tailorbirds, and it is currently called *Phyllergates cucullatus*.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*: A few sightings of this northern migrant on Talaud and on Peleng.

Island Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus poliocephalus*: Good looks at several in the highland forests of Peleng (Banggai Islands), and common in the Taliabu highlands (Sula Islands). These are both recently discovered and undescribed forms that are expected to be split-off as distinct species: Banggai Leaf-Warbler and Sula Leaf-Warbler.

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis* (NL): One was seen by CG in a clearing in the hills of Peleng (*rustica*).

MUSCICAPIDAE

Henna-tailed Jungle-Flycatcher *Rhinomyias colonus*: It took some persistence, but eventually everyone had views, some excellent and prolonged, of this skulking and unobtrusive species in the lowland forest of Peleng (*pelingsensis*). We also heard the distinctive song on Taliabu (nominate). It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*: A single bird was found by our man on the spot, Wesley, on the higher slopes of the Gunung Sahendaruman Caldera on Sangihe. There only appears to be one previous Wallacean record of this Siberian migrant; a bird collected in NE Sulawesi in 1931.

Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseicticta*: Regular observations of this northern migrant on Talaud, Peleng, Taliabu and Sangihe.

Island Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias panayensis*: We had very nice looks at several birds in the higher reaches of Taliabu. The race is still undescribed.

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*: Several excellent observations of this widespread Asian species in the higher reaches of Taliabu. The race is also undescribed.

Sulawesi Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis omissus*: Good looks at a male on the slopes of Gunung Mahawu on mainland Sulawesi. On Batudaka (Togian Islands), we had great views of a couple and

heard the very distinct song of this undescribed form, which is rightfully being put forward as a distinct species.

MONARCHIDAE

Pale Blue Monarch *Hypothymis puella*: This endemic of the Sulawesi sub-region was repeatedly encountered in the forests of Peleng and Taliabu (*blasii*) and on the Togians and mainland Sulawesi (nominate).

Caerulean Paradise-Flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi*: This enigmatic Sangihe endemic was for over a century only known by the type specimen and was presumed extinct when searches in 1985 and 1986 failed to locate it. The survival of the species was confirmed in October 1998, followed in due course by the discovery of a population of at least 19 birds at five localities around the base of the Gunung Sahendaruman Caldera. The total population is thought to lie between 19 and 135 birds. We obtained good views of three birds on our hike to one of the remote valleys where this Critically Endangered species survives. The total area of remaining suitable forest for it is only c.8 km²!! It is not in fact a paradise-flycatcher, being more closely related to the monarchs.

Rufous Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone cinnamomea*: Perfect views of several of these charming birds in the forests of Karakelong (Talaud). It is mainly a Philippine species.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens*: Great looks at several on Talaud were followed by vocal encounters on Peleng and more observations on Taliabu. This is a small island species with a wide distribution in Wallacea, the New Guinea region and northern Melanesia.

RHIPIDURIDAE

Rusty-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura teysmanni*: Repeated good views of this lovely species in the highland forests of Peleng (subspecies as yet undescribed) and Taliabu (*sulaensis*). It is endemic to the Sulawesi sub-region.

PETROICIDAE

Citrine Flycatcher (Citrine Canary Flycatcher) *Culicicapa helianthea*: Several observations on the Sulawesi mainland, on Peleng and on Taliabu (nominate). The Philippines and the Sulawesi sub-region comprise its area of distribution.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

Common Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*: Regular encounters in the forests of Peleng (*pelengensis*) and Taliabu (*clio*). The form involved is sometimes split off as a separate species: Black-chinned Whistler *P. mentalis*. No fewer than 64 races have been described!

Drab Whistler *Pachycephala griseonota*: Several very nice observations in the lowland forests of Peleng; an as yet undescribed form.

Sangihe Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla sanghirensis*: The Bird of the Trip! In the highlands of Sangihe, on the rim of the Gunung Sahendaruman Caldera, we obtained superb close-range views of two small flocks of this enigmatic Sangihe endemic. We had to work hard to get to grips with this rarity, as its habitat can only be reached after a fairly long hike along steep and slippery trails. It was only known from two historical specimens collected in 1878 until its rediscovery in 1985. It only occurs on the forested Gunung Sahendaruman Caldera, where the total population is likely to be extremely low (possibly under 100 birds) given the tiny area of remaining habitat. In 2009, reports suggested that numbers of this species were in serious decline owing to forest loss. BirdLife International considers it as Critically Endangered. The favourite species for Yvon, Billy and Craig.

ARTAMIDAE

White-breasted Wood-Swallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*: Regular sightings of this widespread species (*albiventer*).

Ivory-backed Wood-Swallow *Artamus monachus*: A few encounters with this Sulawesi sub-region endemic on Peleng and Taliabu.

LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: Three of these northern migrants were seen on Karakelong (Talaud Islands).

STURNIDAE

Moluccan Starling (Island Starling) *Aplonis mysolensis*: Small numbers were noted on Peleng and Taliabu (*sulaensis*).

Asian Glossy Starling (Philippine Starling) *Aplonis panayensis*: Commonly encountered on Talaud and Sangihe (the distinctive race *sanghirensis* with an obvious frontal crest) and on the Togian Islands (n nominate).

Helmeted Myna *Basilornis galeatus*: This magnificent species was seen on a regular basis on the islands of Peleng and Taliabu. Many splendid observations, often at close range, of this Banggai and Sula endemic. One of the best looking birds of the tour. Roger's favourite bird of the trip. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Bare-eyed Myna *Streptocitta albertinae*: It took a while, but eventually we found two of these smart Sula endemics in an area of trashed lowland forest on Taliabu. This much wanted species leads an inconspicuous life in the subcanopy of tall trees, and is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

Grosbeak Starling (Finch-billed Myna) *Scissirostrum dubium*: We saw small numbers of this gregarious Sulawesi sub-region endemic on Batudaka (Togian Islands).

MELIPHAGIDAE

Sulawesi Myzomela *Myzomela chloroptera*: Singles were seen on the mainland of Sulawesi (n nominate) and on Peleng, and we found it in good numbers in the highlands of Taliabu, where it is represented by an as yet undescribed form.

NECTARINIIDAE

Brown-throated Sunbird *Anthreptes malacensis*: A few birds were seen on the Sulawesi mainland and on the Togians (*celebensis*), and on the island of Peleng (*extremus*).

Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia*: Many sightings of this well-groomed species. We saw the race *talautensis* on Talaud, *sangirensis* on Sangihe, *grayi* on the Sulawesi mainland, *porphyrolaema* on the Togians and *auriceps* on Peleng and Taliabu.

Olive-backed Sunbird (Yellow-bellied Sunbird) *Nectarinia jugularis*: This widespread and well-known species was seen on Talaud, on Sangihe, on the Sulawesi mainland and on the Togians (*plateni*) and also on Peleng and Taliabu (*robustirostris*).

Elegant Sunbird *Aethopyga duyvenbodei*: Great looks at this stunning Sangihe endemic in the hills of Sangihe. A truly lovely and unique species. The bird is named after Maarten Dirk Van Renesse van Duyvenbode, a Dutch merchant and planter in the Moluccas at the end of the 19th century. It is considered as Endangered by BirdLife International.

Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*: A single observation in the Manado area (*flavostriata*).

DICAEIDAE

Yellow-sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum aureolimbatum*: This Sulawesi sub-region endemic was observed on mainland Sulawesi and on the Togians (nominate) and on Sangihe (the distinctive race *laterale*).

Crimson-crowned Flowerpecker *Dicaeum nehrkorni*: A couple of these Sulawesi endemics were seen on the flanks of Gunung Mahawu.

Grey-sided Flowerpecker *Dicaeum celebicum*: This endearing Sulawesi sub-region endemic was observed in small numbers on the Sulawesi mainland (*celebicum*), on Talaud (*talautensis*), on Peleng and Taliabu (*sulaense*) and on Sangihe (*sanghirense*).

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Everett's White-eye *Zosterops everetti*: Just a few observations of the race *babelo* on Karakelong (Talaud Islands).

Mountain White-eye *Zosterops montanus*: We saw this widespread species on the Sulawesi mainland (nominate) and on Taliabu, where the subspecies had yet to be described.

Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops atrifrons*: Regular observations on mainland Sulawesi and Peleng (nominate), and on Taliabu (*sulaensis*). The latter form will be split as a separate species, but it is not clear yet whether Banggai birds will be included in the new species. They may constitute yet another species!

Togian White-eye *Zosterops somadikartai*: A couple of excellent observations of this recently described (2008) unobtrusive species. It is considered as Near-Threatened by BirdLife International.

PASSERIDAE

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Common all along our route.

ESTRILDIDAE

Black-faced Munia (Moluccan Munia) *Lonchura molucca*: We observed this Indonesian endemic on the Sulawesi mainland, on Peleng and on Taliabu.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: We only saw this widespread species in the Manado area (*particeps*).

Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*: We found this widespread species on the Sulawesi mainland (*brunniceps*).

MAMMALS

Small Sulawesi Cuscus *Strigocuscus celebensis*: A splendid sighting in the highlands of Sangihe.

Peleng Cuscus *Strigocuscus pelengensis*: This cutie showed very well in a dense palm in the lowland forest on Peleng.

Sulawesi Dwarf Squirrel *Prosciurillus murinus*: A few of these tiny squirrels were seen in the forests of Sangihe. From where they have only recently been described.

Rosenberg's Dwarf Squirrel *Prosciurillus rosenbergii*: This medium-sized species was commonly encountered in the forests of Sangihe.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*: A handful of sightings of this well-known commensal.

Peleng Tarsier *Tarsius pelengensis*: Fantastic views at close range in the highlands of Peleng. Tarsiers are tiny primates with enormous eyes; each eyeball is approximately 16 mm in diameter and is as large as their entire brain. This is why they are listed in the Guinness Book of Records as having the largest eyes on any mammal relative to body size.

Sangihe Tarsier *Tarsius sangirensis*: This distinctly long tailed species showed at length at several locations on Sangihe.

Sulawesi Crested Macaque *Macaca nigra*: Nice close up views of a troupe at Tangkoko.
Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*: Small numbers were seen in the Moluccan Sea, and around Peleng.
Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*: Frequent observations, often in large pods. Some of our sightings may relate to Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*, but the two species are often difficult to separate.
Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*: A pod of c.60 animals performed quite well off Peleng.

REPTILES

Tockay Gecko *Gekko gekko* (H): Heard a number of times on Peleng at least.
Common House Gecko (Spiny-tailed G) *Hemidactylus frenatus*: Certainly this species at our accommodation on Talaud.
Sulawesi Gliding-lizard *Draco spilonotus*: A courting couple at Tangkoko, of this N Sulawesi endemic.

BUTTERFLIES (compiled by Craig)

'Talaud Birdwing' *Troides dohertyi*: A birdwing with whitish instead of yellow windows on Talaud.
Common Mormon *Papilio polytes polycritus*: Peleng.
'Sulawesi' Wanderer *Pareronia tritaea hermocinia*: Peleng.
Orange Albatross *Appias nero*: Talaud.
Erichson's Tree-nymph *Idea leuconoe esanga*: Talaud, and ? Sangihe.
Black-trimmed Tree-nymph *Idea blanchardi*: Mainland Sulawesi, Peleng, and the Togians.
'Sulawesi Commander' *Moduza lycone*: Peleng.
Great Eggfly ? *Hypolimnias cf bolina*: Talaud.
Chocolate Argus *Junonia hedonia ida*: Talaud.
'Sulawesi Faun' *Faunis manado*: Along the forest trails on Peleng we saw we saw *intermedius*, on Taliabu *sulanus*, and on Sangihe *syllus*.
'Sulawesi Yeoman' *Algia satyrina satyrina*: Peleng.

BIRDS OF THE TRIP

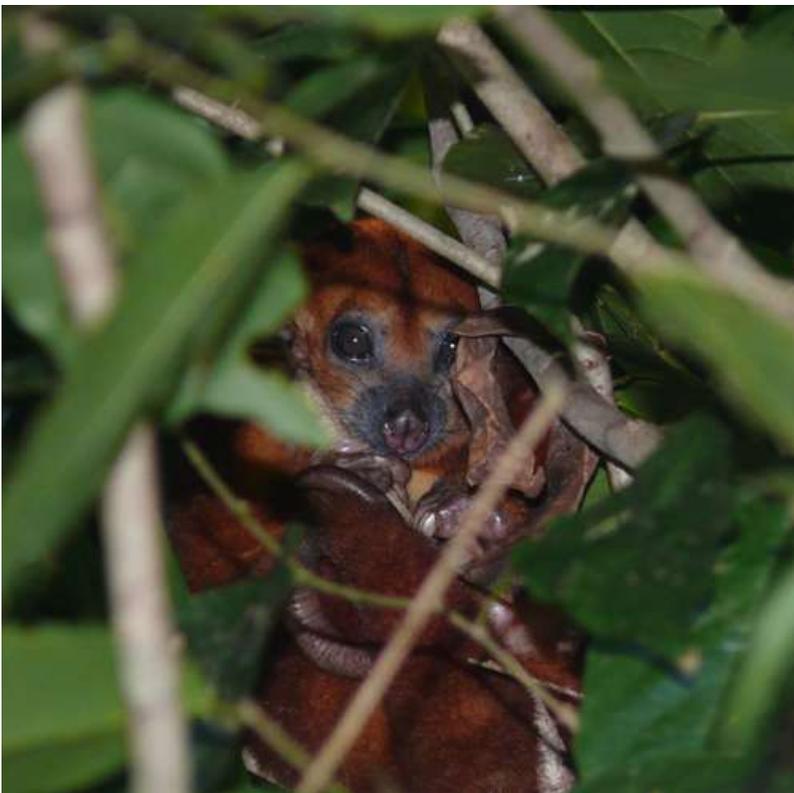
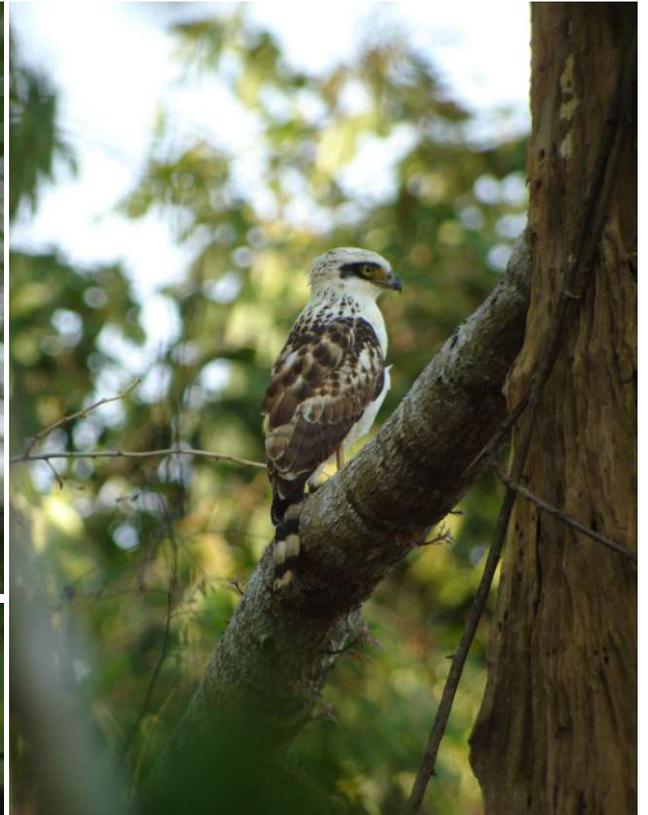
- 1 Sangihe Shrike-Thrush
- 2 Sangihe Scops Owl
- 3 Togian Boobook
- 4 Banggai Crow
- 5 Bare-eyed Myna
- 6 Matsudaira's Storm-petrel
- 7 Helmeted Myna
- 8 Sula Scrubfowl

'BEYOND SULAWESI' TOUR PHOTOS

taken by Angie Pattison (AP), Craig Robson (CR), Yvon Princen (YP) & Mark Van Beirs (MVB)



A volcano in Minahassa (Sulawesi) (YP); Talaud Kingfisher (CR); Oriental Cuckoo (AP); Great Knot (CR); Sula Scrubfowl (MVB)



Sula Hanging Parrot (AP); Sulawesi Serpent Eagle (AP); Peleng Cuscus (MVB); Banggai Scops Owl (AP); Blue-backed Parrot (AP)



Waiting for the boat in Luwuk (YP); our boat on the way to Taliabu (CR); Slaty Cuckoo-Shrike on the nest (AP); our tarpaulin camp in the highlands of Taliabu (MVB); the montane forest of Taliabu (MVB)



Pitcher plant (MVB); sunset near Luwuk (YP);
Large Sulawesi Hanging Parrot (AP); Northern
Golden Bulbul (AP); our transport on the
Togian Islands (MVB)



Ruddy Kingfisher (AP); Togian Boobook (AP);
Ochre-bellied Boobook (MVB); Sangihe Scops
Owl (AP)



Our group in the Caerulean Paradise- Flycatcher gully on Sangihe (CR); the crater rim high on Sangihe (MVB); the habitat of Sangihe Shrike-Thrush on Gunung Sahendaruman (CR)