



The incomparable Kagu (Mark Van Beirs)

NEW CALEDONIA, FIJI, VANUATU & SAMOA

7 – 30 AUGUST 2014

LEADER: MARK VAN BEIRS

Our New Caledonia, Fiji, Vanuatu and Samoa tour offers the best of South Pacific birding with well-behaved flightless, brilliantly-coloured or mega skulking species, comfortable lodging, smooth travelling, glorious scenery, lush lowland and dripping montane forests, turquoise seas, palm-lined white beaches, impressive shield volcanoes and a peculiar mix of Melanesian and Polynesian culture. On our recent tour we visited ten quite different islands in four diverse countries, took dozens of flights and observed most of the extant endemic birds. The Vanuatu lowlands produced the shy Vanuatu Megapode, Tanna Fruit Dove, the cracking Vanuatu Kingfisher and the adorable Buff-bellied Monarch, and an exploration of the middle altitudes gave us Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon. On the mainland of New Caledonia the unique Kagu stole the show. This relic from the days when flightless birds ruled the world performed incredibly well. Other megas included White-bellied Goshawk, the incredibly attractive Cloven-feathered Dove and the very rare Crow Honeyeater. Our

short visits to the Loyalty Islands yielded Gould's and Tahiti Petrels, the unique Ouvea Parakeet and the rarely-seen Large Lifou White-eye. Fiji's Viti Levu island gave us lovely Golden Fruit Dove, Sulphur-breasted Myzomela, the very vocal Giant Honeyeater, the scarce Black-throated Shrikebill, Azure-crested Flycatcher and the retiring Long-legged Thicketbird. On Taveuni, the Garden Isle, the unbelievable Orange Fruit Dove impressed us most next to the avian wonder of the magnificent Silktail. Bright Maroon Shining Parrots were also much appreciated. Relaxed Kadavu gave us Whistling Fruit Dove and Crimson Shining Parrot while the highlights of our visit to Upolu island in Samoa included Flat-billed Kingfisher, Mao and Red-headed Parrotfinch. The extension to the mountains of Savai'i added Samoan White-eye to the list of a couple of intrepid hikers.



The smart Buff-bellied Monarch and coastal scenery in Vanuatu (Mark Van Beirs)

The island of Efate is the hub of Vanuatu's 115 islands and in the early hours of a warm august day a group of like-minded birders got together to do a bit of exploring on a forested hill near the capital Port Vila and at a nearby golf course. This provided a nice introduction to the avifauna of these little known islands, especially after the very long transoceanic flights. The first Vanuatu endemics showed and included the ubiquitous Vanuatu White-eye and the rather localized Tanna Fruit Dove. The latter allowed scope views and we were able to study its yellow tipped tertials and greater coverts and the silvery spots on its shoulders. The smart Red-bellied Fruit Dove, which is restricted to Vanuatu, Temotu and New Caledonia, performed very well and the interesting *juliae* subspecies of Collared Kingfisher with its distinctive rufous eyebrows got a lot of attention. We got the list going with Swamp Harrier, Coconut Lorikeet, Glossy, White-rumped and Uniform Swiftlets, Grey-eared Honeyeater, White-breasted Woodswallow and Pacific Swallow together with introduced Common Mynas and House Sparrows. In late afternoon we took a flight to the island of Espiritu Santo or Santo as it is locally known as.

The reserve of Loru protects a splendid stretch of lowland rainforest and our local guide took us straight to a mound of a Vanuatu Megapode. Not too much later we flushed one of these chicken-like creatures and obtained splendid looks as it perched up on a horizontal branch, watching us rather nervously. The red face, yellow legs and dark plumage could be studied in detail. It took a while to get good looks at the canopy living Vanuatu (or Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher, but in the end this beauty showed really well. The adorable Buff-bellied Monarch flitted through the mid storey and as it is the only member of its genus, it got more attention than usual. Other goodies here included Melanesian Flycatcher, Swamp Harrier, Buff-banded Rail, Metallic Pigeon, the skittish MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove, Pacific Emerald Dove, Pacific Imperial Pigeon, Coconut Lorikeet, Glossy, White-rumped and Uniform Swiftlets, Collared Kingfisher (of the distinctive race *juliae*), Cardinal Myzomela, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike (with its piercing yellow eyes), Melanesian Whistler, Grey and Streaked Fantails, the ubiquitous Vanuatu White-eye and Silvereye. Both Vanuatu and Pacific

Flying Foxes were plying the skies regularly. In the afternoon we explored some hill forest, but only found Tanna and Red-bellied Fruit Doves.



The juliae race of Collared Kingfisher and Red-bellied Fruit Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

As we had seen all the lowland Vanuatu endemics we drove up again into the foothills the next morning and managed to drive up to 600m altitude. The forest was in good shape, but strangely enough almost no song was heard and very little was stirring in between the regular showers. The only highland endemic that we managed to get was the Vanuatu (or Baker's) Imperial Pigeon. To get to the right altitude of the remaining six or seven Vanuatu endemics one needs to hike up and camp for several days... We had breakfast with Greater Crested Tern and Cardinal Myzomela and flew to Efate, where we enjoyed a relaxed lunch in a seafront restaurant. Here, our Vanuatu pre trip ended as we took the onward flight to New Caledonia. We picked up the minibus and drove into the substantial and modern city of Nouméa, where two more participants were waiting for us.



Barred Honeyeater (Mike Rodegerdts) and the lovely Cloven-feathered Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

Our predawn drive took us to the famous Parc de la Rivière Bleue, which we found sadly closed. We did manage some birding around the park's entrance, where in the forest and surrounding scrub we picked up our first specialities: several New Caledonian Parakeets showed well, New Caledonian Myzomelas and Barred Honeyeaters visited flowering bushes, New Caledonian Friarbirds called from the treetops and a party of Green-backed White-eyes flitted through the canopy. Several delicate Fan-tailed Gerygones (endemic to New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Rennell) played hide and seek in the dense scrub and Metallic Pigeon, Sacred Kingfisher and yellow-eyed South Melanesian Cuckooshrikes posed in the open. We quickly decided to drive north to the Parc des Grandes Fougères (Park of the large ferns) and on the drive noted a nice selection of open country species like Grey Teal, White-faced Heron, Pacific Reef Heron, Little Pied Cormorant, Brown Goshawk, Whistling Kite, Australasian Swamphen, Silver Gull and introduced Wild Turkey, Spotted Dove and Common Waxbill. On our afternoon visit to this lovely park we observed a whole range of goodies. Best of all was the exquisite Cloven-feathered Dove, which showed off its gorgeous finery in the scope. This attractive endemic species is placed in its own genus, so warranted prolonged looks. Several Goliath (or New Caledonian) Imperial Pigeons called from the canopy of a fruiting tree. Playful New Caledonian Crows (famous for their tool-using ability) uttered their nasal barks and several Striated Starlings foraged in a flowering tree. A Rufous Whistler adorned the car park.



A young Kagu and a Metallic Pigeon (Mark Van Beirs)

For most of the next day we wandered along the deserted trails of the picturesque Parc des Grandes Fougères. We had a superb time in the beautiful hill forest where large Kauri trees (genus *Agathis*), huge tree ferns, slender ironwoods (*Casuarina*) and spiky screw palms (*Pandanus*) reign. We had three breathtaking encounters with the fabulous and much desired Kagu. Most of the birds we saw were unringed and the first two were fairly shy adults, that soon disappeared in the forest. A pair with a half-grown chick remained in one place for quite a while, so we stood happily about observing the antics of this very special species, that is so very different that it deserves its own family. Linda especially was extremely satisfied, as she had just scored on her last bird family! We also had smashing looks at a perched endemic White-bellied Goshawk, definitely one of the more handsome looking members of the genus *Accipiter*. A very smart bird of prey! A Cloven-feathered Dove showed well again and a pair of charming Horned Parakeets were located in the canopy. A Southern Shrikebill behaved like a giant fantail, New Caledonian Crows acted quite inquisitively, an adorable Yellow-bellied Flyrobin sat about and several extremely good-looking Red-throated Parrotfinches were feeding on seeding grasses. In late afternoon we concentrated on good looking habitat nearby where the fabled New Caledonian Thicketbird (or Grassbird) was known to occur, but not a sniff was

heard or seen. Buff-banded Rail, Welcome Swallow, Long-tailed Triller and a flock of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins provided a bit of comfort.



White-bellied Goshawk and Southern Shrikebill (Mark Van Beirs)

A middle of the night start got us to the Parc de la Rivière Bleue just after dawn. We arrived in good time in the best stretch of humid forest and found the birds very quiet. We only started to see activity later in the morning. Several Kagus showed extremely well and in the course of the day we got mega looks at six different birds, often at extremely close range. Getting eye-ball to eye-ball views of this endangered species was a truly heart-warming experience. About 1,500 of these flightless birds are estimated to survive and their main threats are feral dogs and cats. The most endangered bird of the tour, the peculiar Crow Honeyeater was another much appreciated lifer for everyone. It behaved uncharacteristically well, low down in the mid canopy. The area surrounding the giant Kauri also yielded the modestly-feathered New Caledonian Cuckooshrike. On our walks we also found White-faced Heron, Whistling Kite, Horned Parakeet, New Caledonian Myzomela, Southern Shrikebill, several very curious Yellow-bellied Flyrobins and more Red-throated Parrotfinches.



Parc de La Rivière Bleue scenery and Streaked Fantail (Mark Van Beirs)

Our day trip to the offshore island of Lifou, one of the Loyalty Islands, produced several very localized birds. A short flight in a small plane took us to this woodland covered island, where short walks along tracks soon gave us handsome Red-bellied Fruit Doves, Cardinal Myzomelas and abundant Small Lifou White-eyes, next to more uncommon Silvereyes. It took a while to locate the unobtrusive and rather shy Large Lifou White-eye, but eventually, most of us got satisfactory looks. We had a couple of encounters with Brown Goshawks and in the afternoon we did a bout of seawatching from one of the headlands. Several Tahiti Petrels swooped past and a few Brown and a handful of white morph Red-footed Boobies together with some Greater Crested Terns were noted.

A full day on the island of Ouvea followed the same pattern. After a short flight we drove in our minibus to the north of this strangely-shaped island, where the restricted range Ouvea Parakeet survives. Our local guide took us into the forest, where we heard and glimpsed our quarry, but we felt quite frustrated. Later, in the surroundings of his farm, we finally obtained splendid looks at this eccentric bird as it was feeding on papayas at close range. It is sometimes treated as a race of Horned Parakeet, but looks quite different and the population only numbers c2,000 birds. A bit of seawatching of the eastern headland produced fair views of a Gould's Petrel (sometimes split as New Caledonian Petrel) and several Tahiti Petrels and Bridled Terns.



The rare Ouvea Parakeet and a lovely Cardinal Myzomela (Mark Van Beirs)

New Caledonia had delivered the goods and a happy group flew to Fiji, where we landed at Nadi, the hub of the Fiji Archipelago, situated on the western side of the island of Viti Levu. A short onward flight took us to town of Suva, on the eastern side of the same island. It took a while to sort out our minibus, but eventually we got going and our local expert took us to a birdy spot at the edge of a nice stretch of hill forest. There had

been a pair of breeding Pink-billed Parrotfinches here, but, sadly, they were not about anymore. We did see several other Fiji endemics like Barking Imperial Pigeon, smart Collared Lories, exquisite Sulphur-breasted Myzomelas, Wattled Honeyeater, a very vocal Giant Honeyeater (here with dark bill and legs), a sneaky male Black-throated Shrikebill, Vanikoro Flycatcher (also occurring on Vanikoro), Fiji Bush Warbler (a great showing), a flock of Fiji White-eyes and several colourful Fiji Parrotfinches. Lots of White-rumped Swiftlets foraged over the woodland and introduced Jungle Mynas were everywhere.

The following morning started with a pair of localized Striated Herons at the beach of our hotel. The rest of the day found us along a wide track through well preserved hill forest and this produced an excellent variety of Fijian specialities. Fiji Goshawks showed off their spectacular display flight on several occasions. The barking calls of Golden Fruit Dove were regularly heard, a female showed quite well, but the views of the male were a bit too brief. Tail twitching Barking Imperial Pigeons were often about and a Polynesian Triller offered prolonged views at its nest. A couple of Slaty Monarchs behaved for all the world like overgrown gnatcatchers. A Fiji Shrikebill appeared and another male Black-throated Shrikebill wanted to be seen. A pair of sweet Pacific Robins followed us along the track and a single Polynesian Starling posed in a treetop.



The adorable Sulphur-breasted Myzomela and a male Vanikoro Flycatcher (Mark Van Beirs)

We needed a very early start to take us along a pretty rough track to the mountainous heart of Viti Levu by daybreak. An Eastern Barn Owl was noted and predawn, while driving, we heard the distinctive yodelling siren calls of several Giant Honeyeaters. The main reason for visiting this out of the way place was trying to add the little known Long-legged Thicketbird to our lifelists. Upon arriving we already heard the characteristic repetitive strophes of our target. In the course of the morning we heard several birds, but only three of us managed to see this mega skulker in its wet, rocky habitat. This very secretive species was not very responsive. A bit frustrating... In between regular downpours we observed Metallic Pigeon and several Island Thrushes of the race *layardi* and on the return drive many Fiji Parrotfinches and introduced Red Avadavats flushed from the track. In the afternoon we explored an area of lowland rainforest closer to Suva, where a male Golden Fruit Dove showed well and several attractive Masked Shining Parrots vied for attention. A gorgeous Azure-crested Flycatcher behaved impeccably and won a place in our hearts. Several Fiji Whistlers and Slaty Monarchs were also appreciated.



Fiji Woodswallow (Mark Van Beirs) and a male Pacific Robin (Mike Rodegerdts)

Soon after dawn we were inside the cool, dripping forest of the Des Veux Peak. In this paradise of epiphytes, bamboo, orchids and moss-covered trees it did not take long before we had our first looks at our main target, the enigmatic Silktail. A while later and a bit further, as the sun was spreading light inside the forest, we had a truly marvellous encounter with a family party. Three of these splendid creatures foraged at close range for extended time in good light. They were foraging on mossy limbs, continuously fanning their silvery white tails and the blue sparkles on head and wings were glowing. The taxonomic status of the unusual Silktail is still being debated: it used to be a monarch (*Monarchidae*), belongs now with the Fantails (*Rhipiduridae*), but is sometimes considered a separate family together with the Pygmy Drongo of New Guinea. But whatever the taxonomists decide, we sure enjoyed our perfect encounter. On the walk down we saw two female Orange Fruit Doves, several Maroon Shining Parrots, two well performing Fiji Shrikebills and some shy Island Thrushes of the race *tempesti*. Giant Honeyeaters showed their distinctive yellow bill and legs, reminding us how different they looked compared to the Viti Levu birds. After lunch we explored the surroundings of the resort where Wandering Tattler, a tame Fiji Goshawk, lovely Maroon Shining Parrots and showy Metallic Pigeons were admired. We studied the local Sacred Kingfishers (race *vitiensis*) and concluded that they could as well have belonged with Collared Kingfisher. The best solution is probably to treat it as a species in its own right. Another excellent day!



A glorious Silktail and the Taveuni race of Giant Honeyeater (Mark Van Beirs)

Our final island in Fiji was isolated Kadavu (or Kandavu). From the plane we gazed at the splendid coastal scenery of Vanua Levu. Upon arrival we found a pair of Masked Lapwing at the airstrip. We transferred to a

boat that took us to our remote lodge on a peaceful northern beach far away from everywhere. We were welcomed by the Austrian manageress and soon wandered around the splendid gardens. Our first endemics were Kadavu Honeyeater with its bright yellow cheek patch, Kadavu Fantail with its black throat and high pitched song and the unique Whistling (or Velvet) Dove. The latter was located by its unique, almost whistler-like song, sounding very unusual for a member of the pigeon family. The scope views of both male and female were terrific. Many-coloured Fruit Doves and Polynesian Starlings sat about and several Collared Lories created a splash of colour while feeding on a flowering Schefflera bush.

The Papageno Ecoresort was obviously named by the owner after the Mozart opera in honour of the parrots that are so obvious here at times. On our wanderings through the extensive gardens and surrounding forest Crimson Shining Parrots allowed fantastic scope views as feeding and displaying birds performed so very well. The four other Kadavu endemics showed beautifully and repeatedly. Kadavu Fantails escorted us in the forest and Kadavu Honeyeaters betrayed their presence by their loud calls. Whistling Doves could often be heard and both sexes could regularly be found in the fruiting trees in the gardens. White-throated Whistlers (a recent split in the Golden Whistler complex) were much less obvious, but their loud song dominated the forest chorus and we observed several males and females. We also had good looks at Fiji Shrikebill, Slaty Monarch and Polynesian Starling and really enjoyed the delightful surroundings, the excellent food and the very comfortable accommodation.



A colourful Collared Lory and a Kadavu Honeyeater (Mark Van Beirs)

On our last morning at the Papageno Ecoresort we again saw the five Kadavu endemics well. An immature Fiji Goshawk created a bit of a stir as it caught a Jungle Myna in front of our chalets. We wandered around, relaxed on the beach and dozed in the sun till mid-morning when we boarded the boats and sailed to Kadavu airport. We flew to Nadi, said goodbye to Jim and Nigel and endured the long wait till the late evening flight to Samoa. We arrived in the middle of the night, got the minibus arranged and drove to our hotel in the hills to the south of the capital Apia. A short night followed and at breakfast we met up with Hans and Margret.



An elegant White Tern (Mike Rodegerdts) and Polynesian Triller (Mark Van Beirs)

The Samoa Archipelago consists of two larger islands (Upolu and Savai'i) next to eight islets and its origin is volcanic. Samoa was previously located east of the international date line but in 2011, the country moved the International Date Line to the east of the country, so that Samoa lies now to the west of the date line. Samoa also changed to left-hand traffic in September 2009. On our introductory visit to the nearby Botanical Gardens we picked up our first Samoan endemics. The charming Flat-billed Kingfisher looks like a small Sacred and likewise sits out in the open. The large, black Samoan Starling is regularly seen and often visits the flowers of the introduced African Tulip Tree. Samoan Whistlers betrayed their presence by their loud song and look distinctive enough with their yellow throats and fronts. The elegant Samoan Fantail was very obliging and quite inquisitive. Graceful White-tailed Tropicbirds and Brown Noddies drifted continually overhead and ethereal White Terns graced the skies. Colourful Crimson-crowned Fruit Doves offered many good looks and we also observed Cardinal Myzomela, Wattled Honeyeater (of the distinctively yellower Samoa race) and pale-eyed Polynesian Starlings. The roadsides were brimming with Buff-banded Rails and in the afternoon we explored the higher reaches along the cross island road where vibrant Blue-crowned Lorikeets offered good flight views. The amazing song of the secretive Mao sounded like fighting cats and soon this skulking, rather rare, Friarbird-like honeyeater surrendered itself. The last member of the distinctive genus *Gymnomyza* (endemic to the southwest Pacific) had fallen, after the Crow and Giant Honeyeaters of New Caledonia and Fiji. More Flat-billed Kingfishers showed and a couple of vivid Red-headed Parrotfinches fed in a large fig tree.



Samoan Starling and Samoan Fantail (Mark Van Beirs)

Next morning, we stood guard at a spot where the fabled Tooth-billed Pigeon had been seen or been claimed a few times over the last 12 months. We had regular observations of Pacific Imperial and of Metallic Pigeons and had good looks at most of the endemics at the edge of a nice stretch of montane forest. The local landowner assured us she regularly heard the Tooth-billed Pigeon, but... Smart Many-coloured Fruit Doves posed regularly in the scope and pairs of Blue-crowned Lorikeets sped past, seemingly always on a mission. Mao gave good looks again, bright Cardinal Myzomelas adorned the flowering bushes and a sneaky Samoan Triller appeared in a fruiting tree offering all too brief looks of its orange bill and barred underparts. Stylish White-tailed Tropicbirds and ghostly White Terns regularly glided overhead. In the afternoon we walked the famous Robert Louis Stevenson loop to the place where the famous author of "Treasure Island" and "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" lies buried. Stevenson spent the final five years of his life on the island of Upolu. Along the slippery trail and at the nice lookout we noted a good selection of the same endemics and a single Samoan Flying Fox.

Our enjoyable walk through the valley of the Vaisagano watershed, close to the capital Apia produced good looks again at most of the endemics, but of the Samoan Flycatcher not a sniff. We had particularly good views of Samoan Whistler and Samoan Fantail. After a scrumptious lunch we explored a part of the O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park, where the legendary Tooth-billed Pigeon had been seen in 2013 after a terrible typhoon that had left all the trees leafless. No Tooth-billed Pigeons were about, but a Samoan Flycatcher showed so very well, at last. Our final lowland endemic fell graciously. Several Samoan Flying Foxes were found sleeping in the enormous trees. On the drive to the northwest of the island several Pacific Golden Plovers were noted.



A Blue Tiger (Mark Van Beirs) and splendid orchids (Mike Rodegerdts)

Most of the group went home this morning and only two of us took the ferry to the neighbouring island of Savai'i. Only a few boobies enlivened the quiet crossing. We checked in at our cosy hotel on the waterfront and in the afternoon drove to a village on the north side of the island to arrange our hike up Mount Silisili for the following day. After successful negotiations we bought provisions for our walk. It was an eye-opener to see that shops were already closing at 5 pm. On the drive we saw an inordinate number of large and fancy almost cathedral-like churches. Savai'i is obviously a very religious island! A traditional architectural feature was the occurrence of a 'fale', an open roofed structure used for chief council meetings, family gatherings, funerals and chief title investitures next to most houses. Between 1905 and 1911 Mount Matavanu, the shield volcano that covers most of the island erupted several times and its lava flows covered more than 100 km² of countryside and are still visible today.

In the middle of the night we left the hotel and a couple of hours later were already hiking up along a logging track through lush hill forest to get to the altitude of the rarely seen Samoan White-eye. We cursed and we sweated for hours, watched Island Thrush, Red-headed Parrotfinch and Samoan Triller till, in mid-morning, we suddenly both heard the distinctive tinkling calls of our quarry. A single judicious note from the mp3 player brought a party of these dainty creatures close in for detailed scrutiny. The population of this localized endemic is estimated at fewer than 2,500 birds. Two exhausted birders returned to base with a big smile on their faces and celebrated at length that evening.

Next morning we relaxed in the hotel surroundings, visited the Tafu Rainforest Reserve and the lovely Afu Aau waterfall and had fantastic looks at a cooperative Samoan Flycatcher. In the afternoon we took the ferry to Upolu. The boat was rather small and the sea was quite choppy... We revisited the O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park to try again for the Tooth-billed Pigeon, but regular showers ruined our efforts. We scanned and waited, but.. Later, while having lunch at Samoa's most famous Golf course, we listened to a speech from the Samoan president surrounded by United Nations officials and observed Wandering Tattler and Pacific Golden Plovers.



A lovely male Samoan Flycatcher (Mark Van Beirs)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

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

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

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/home>

E = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* A few observations of this widespread species.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* Three were seen on a pond in central New Caledonia.

Vanuatu Megapode ◊ (**V Scrubfowl/New Hebrides S**) *Megapodius layardi* (**VU**) Excellent looks on Santo.

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* Good numbers were foraging in fields in New Caledonia.

Red Junglefowl (Feral Chicken) *Gallus gallus* Seen and heard on several islands.

Gould's Petrel ◊ *Pterodroma leucoptera* (**VU**) A single bird was seen while seawatching off Ouvéa. See Note.

Tahiti Petrel ◊ *Pseudobulweria rostrata* (**NT**) Several were noted while seawatching off New Caledonia and Fiji.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* Quite common on Upolu (Samoa).

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* A couple were feeding at the edge of mangroves on Viti Levu (*solomonensis*).

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* Quite common on New Caledonia and on Fiji.

Pacific Reef Heron (P R Egret) *Egretta sacra* Regularly seen on all the islands. Mainly dark morphs.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Just a few were seen on Fiji.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* Regular sightings off New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Regular sightings off New Caledonia and Fiji.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* A few were noted on New Caledonia.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* A couple of observations on New Caledonia. We saw an eyrie on Ouvéa.

White-bellied Goshawk ◊ (**New Caledonian G**) *Accipiter haplochrous* (**NT**) Superb looks at two on New Caledonia.



Fiji Goshawk and a winter-plumaged Pacific Golden Plover (Mark Van Beirs)

Fiji Goshawk ◊ *Accipiter rufitorques* 19 observations on the three visited islands in Fiji. Often very cooperative.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia and a few noted on Fiji.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* A handful of sightings on New Caledonia.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* (NL) A single bird was noted on New Caledonia.

Kagu ◊ *Rhynchotus jubatus* (**EN**) Several fantastic encounters with this attractive species. We also saw a chick.

Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis* Noted on Vanuatu and New Caledonia, but especially common on Samoa.

Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Observed on most islands in small numbers.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* Two were on territory at Kadavu airport (Fiji).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 40 on Lifou and small numbers on Samoa.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (NL) A single bird was seen on Lifou.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* A few observations of this migrant on rocky shores.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Many sightings on both Samoan islands.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Two were identified off Taveuni (Fiji).

White Tern (Common W T) *Gygis alba* Fairly common and so very appealing on both Samoan islands.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* A few observations along the Nouméa waterfront.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Small numbers were seen on most islands.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* A single bird was identified while seawatching off Ouvéa.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Just a few observations on Taveuni (Fiji) and Upolu (Samoa).

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis* Many excellent observations. See Note.

Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* This introduced species was common on New Caledonia and Fiji.

Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia mackinlayi* Splendid encounters on Vanuatu.

Pacific Emerald Dove (P Green-winged Pigeon) *Chalcophaps longirostris* Regular good looks.

Tanna Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus tannensis* This boy performed very well on Vanuatu.

Many-coloured Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus perousii* Many encounters on Fiji and Samoa. See Note.

Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus porphyraceus (VU)* Regular observations on Samoa.

Red-bellied Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus greyi* Regular on Vanuatu and on New Caledonia's islets.



The magnificent male Orange Fruit Dove (Mark Van Beirs)

Orange Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus victor* This fabulous species showed extremely well on Taveuni. A real jewel!

Golden Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus luteovirens* Several nice sightings on Viti Levu, but usually all too brief.

Whistling Fruit Dove ◊ (Velvet F D) *Ptilinopus layardi (NT)* Regular and cooperative on Kadavu. Another gem!

Cloven-feathered Dove ◊ *Drepanoptila holosericea* (NT) This exquisite species showed very well on New Caledonia.

Pacific Imperial Pigeon ◊ *Ducula pacifica* Common on Vanuatu and Samoa.

Barking Imperial Pigeon ◊ (Peale's I P) *Ducula latrans* Common on the Fijian islands. Remember the tail twitching!

Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon ◊ (Baker's I P) *Ducula bakeri* (VU) Two showed well in flight in the Santo foothills.

Goliath Imperial Pigeon ◊ (New Caledonian I P) *Ducula goliath* (NT) Regular in New Caledonia's reserves.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* A few encounters on Santo (Vanuatu).

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis* (H) We heard the unique song in the highlands of Viti Levu.

Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto delicatula* Two were seen on a predawn drive on Viti Levu.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius* Seen on all the visited islands.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Small numbers were noted on Vanuatu.

Vanuatu Kingfisher ◊ (Chestnut-bellied K) *Todiramphus farquhari* (NT) This lovely species showed well on Santo.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris* Many sightings on Vanuatu (*juliae*) and on Fiji. See Note

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Regular on New Caledonia. See Note.

Flat-billed Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus recurvirostris* Delightfully common on Samoa.

Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Common on Vanuatu and regular on New Caledonia.

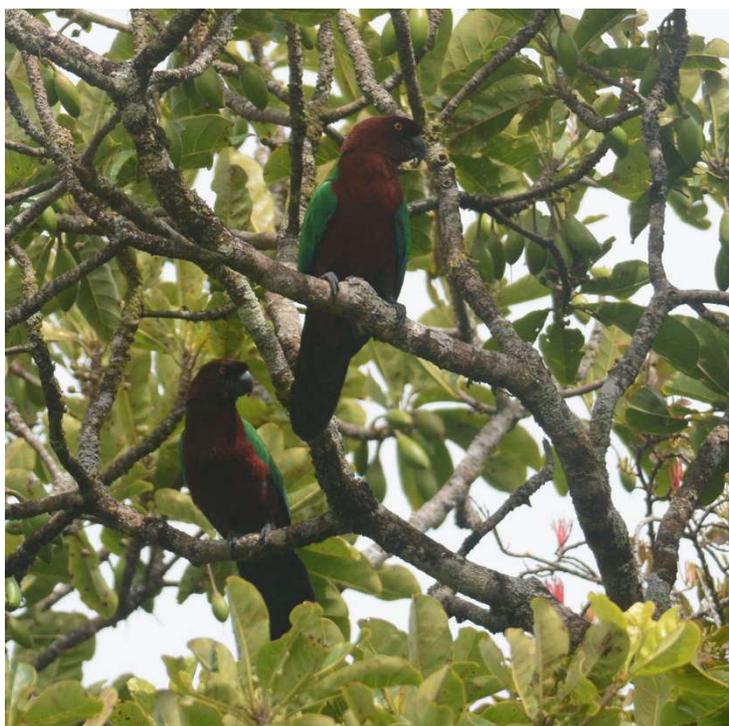
Collared Lory ◊ *Phigys solitarius* Many splendid observations on all three Fijian islands.

Blue-crowned Lorikeet ◊ *Vini australis* Regular encounters on Samoa, but almost always of birds in flight.

Crimson Shining Parrot ◊ *Prosopiea splendens* Cracking views of several at our cosy resort on Kadavu (Fiji).

Masked Shining Parrot ◊ *Prosopiea personata* (NT) Great looks, eventually, of several on Viti Levu (Fiji).

Maroon Shining Parrot ◊ (Red S P) *Prosopiea tabuensis* Regular and attractive on Taveuni (Fiji).



Maroon Shining Parrots and New Caledonian Friarbird (Mark Van Beirs)

Horned Parakeet ◊ *Eunymphicus cornutus* (VU) Several excellent scope studies in New Caledonia's reserves.

Ouvea Parakeet ◊ (Uvea P) *Eunymphicus uvaensis* (EN) Great views of foraging birds on Ouvéa. See Note.

New Caledonian Parakeet ◊ *Cyanoramphus saisseti* (NT) A few showed well in New Caledonia's reserves.

New Caledonian Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela caledonica* Regular in flowering bushes on New Caledonia.

Cardinal Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela cardinalis* Seen well on Vanuatu, on New Caledonia's islets and on Samoa.

Sulphur-breasted Myzomela ◊ (Orange-breasted M) *Myzomela jugularis* Great looks at this glorious Fiji endemic.

Grey-eared Honeyeater ◊ (Dark-brown H) *Lichmera incana* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

Kadavu Honeyeater ◊ (Kandavu H) *Xanthotis provocator* Regular and vocal on Kadavu. A great scientific epithet.

New Caledonian Friarbird ◊ *Philemon diemenensis* Regular in New Caledonia's reserves.

Wattled Honeyeater ◇ *Foulehaio carunculatus* Common on Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji) and on Samoa. See Note.
Giant Honeyeater ◇ (Giant Forest H) *Gymnomyza viridis* Seen on Viti Levu (*brunneirostris*) and on Taveuni (*viridis*).
Mao ◇ *Gymnomyza samoensis* (EN) This very vocal species showed well in the Upolu highlands.



The rare Crow Honeyeater and New Caledonian Whistler (Mark Van Beirs)

Crow Honeyeater ◇ *Gymnomyza aubryana* (CR) Cracking studies of this rarity at Parc de La Rivière Bleue (NC).
Barred Honeyeater ◇ *Glycifohia undulata* Small numbers were noted on New Caledonia.
Fan-tailed Gerygone ◇ *Gerygone flavolateralis* Regular sightings on New Caledonia. We only heard it on Vanuatu.
Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* This introduced species was seen on Taveuni (Fiji).
White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Regular on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
Fiji Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus mentalis* Common on Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji).
South Melanesian Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina caledonica* Regular sightings on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
New Caledonian Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina analis* (NT) Excellent studies at Parc de La Rivière Bleue (NC).
Polynesian Triller ◇ *Lalage maculosa* Common on Fiji and Samoa. See Note.



Grey Fantail and Fiji Shrikebill (Mark Van Beirs)

Samoan Triller ◇ *Lalage sharpei* (NT) A couple of encounters on Upolu and Savai'i (Samoa).
Long-tailed Triller ◇ *Lalage leucopyga* Regular on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
New Caledonian Wistler ◇ (Melanesian W) *Pachycephala caledonica* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
White-throated Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala vitiensis* Several nice observations on Kadavu (Fiji).

Fiji Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala graeffii* Small numbers were recorded on Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji).
Samoan Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala flavifrons* Regular encounters on both Samoan islands.
Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris* Just a few on New Caledonia.
Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa* Common on Vanuatu and on New Caledonia.
Streaked Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura verreauxi* Regular on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji).
Kadavu Fantail ◊ (Kandavu F) *Rhipidura personata* (NT) Regular in the forest on Kadavu. A distinctive song.
Samoan Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura nebulosa* Regular encounters on both Samoan islands.
Silktaill ◊ *Lamprolia victoriae* (NT) THE BIRD OF THE TRIP! Amazing, out of this world views of this jewel. See Note.
Slaty Monarch ◊ *Mayrornis lessoni* Many good looks on Fiji. Behaves and looks like a New World gnatcatcher.
Buff-bellied Monarch ◊ *Neolalage banksiana* This attractive endemic showed very well on Santo (Vanuatu).
Southern Shrikebill ◊ *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides* Heard on Vanuatu and seen on New Caledonia.
Fiji Shrikebill ◊ (Lesser S) *Clytorhynchus vitiensis* Excellent looks at this unobtrusive species.
Black-throated Shrikebill ◊ *Clytorhynchus nigrogularis* (VU) Smashing studies of several on Viti Levu (Fiji).
Melanesian Flycatcher ◊ (N C Flycatcher) *Myiagra caledonica* Commonly seen on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
Vanikoro Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra vanikorensis* Commonly seen on all three Fijian islands.
Samoan Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra albiventris* (NT) Eventually very well seen in the Upolu highlands and on Savai'i.
Azure-crested Flycatcher ◊ (Blue-crested F) *Myiagra azurecapilla* This beauty showed well on Viti Levu.
New Caledonian Crow ◊ *Corvus moneduloides* Small numbers showed at the Parc des Grandes Fougères (NC).



Yellow-bellied Flyrobin (Mark Van Beirs) and Silvereye (Mike Rodegerdts)

Yellow-bellied Flyrobin ◊ (Y-b Robin) *Microeca flaviventris* Many close encounters on New Caledonia. So cute.
Pacific Robin ◊ *Petroica multicolor* We saw it in the highlands of Viti Levu (Fiji) and on Savai'i (Samoa).
Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* This introduced species was common on New Caledonia and on Samoa.
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* We only saw it on Vanuatu and on Fiji.
Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* A single bird was identified at the Parc des Grandes Fougères (NC).
Fiji Bush Warbler ◊ *Horornis ruficapilla* Excellent looks at this secretive species on all three Fijian islands.
Long-legged Thicketbird ◊ (L-l Warbler) *Megalurulus rufus* (EN) Seen by some and heard by all on Viti Levu.
Samoan White-Eye ◊ *Zosterops samoensis* (VU) This one took a bit of effort! Seen very well on Mt Silisili (Savai'i).
Fiji White-Eye ◊ (Layard's W-E) *Zosterops explorator* Common on all three Fijian islands.
Vanuatu White-Eye ◊ (Yellow-fronted W-E) *Zosterops flavifrons* Common on Efate and Santo (Vanuatu)
Small Lifou White-Eye ◊ *Zosterops minutus* Common in the Lifou forests and gardens.
Green-backed White-Eye ◊ *Zosterops xanthochroa* Common on New Caledonia.
Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis* Regular sightings on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji.
Large Lifou White-Eye ◊ *Zosterops inornatus* Good looks, eventually, for most of us in the Lifou forests.
Striated Starling ◊ *Aplonis striata* Small numbers were found in the New Caledonian reserves.
Polynesian Starling ◊ *Aplonis tabuensis* Regular on Fiji and Samoa. See Note.

Samoa Starling *◊ Aplonis atrifusca* A very common endemic of both Samoan islands.

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus* This introduced species was commonly seen on Fiji and on Samoa.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* This introduced species was commonly seen on all the visited islands.

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus* We saw this widespread species on Fiji and on Samoa.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Regular on Vanuatu and on New Caledonia.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Several flocks were seen on New Caledonia.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* Several flocks were encountered on Viti Levu (Fiji).

Red-throated Parrotfinch *◊ Erythrura psittacea* Great looks at this attractive endemic on New Caledonia.

Red-headed Parrotfinch *◊ (Samoa P) Erythrura cyaneovirens* Several nice sightings on Samoa.

Fiji Parrotfinch *◊ Erythrura pealii* Delightfully common on Viti Levu and just a few on Taveuni.

Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla* Small numbers of this introduced species were seen on Vanuatu.

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax* A flock showed well on New Caledonia. Introduced.



Chestnut-breasted Mannikin and the group on New Caledonia (Mark Van Beirs)

MAMMALS

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus* Several were seen on Viti Levu (Fiji). A sad introduction.

Vanuatu Flying Fox *Pteropus anetianus* Several showed well on Santo (Vanuatu).

Samoa Flying Fox *Pteropus samoensis* A single on Viti Levu (Fiji) and regular on Samoa.

Pacific Flying Fox (Tonga F F) *Pteropus tonganus* Seen on Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa.

Rusa (Javan/Timor) Deer *Cervus timorensis* Several were noted at our hotel in central New Caledonia. Introduced.

REPTILES

Pacific Tree Boa *Candoia bibroni* A very large individual was spotted in the highlands of Santo (Vanuatu).

Samoa Brown Skink *Emoia samoensis* A few were seen on Upolu.

Black Skink *Emoia nigra* Common on Upolu and on Savai'i.

Samoa Blue-tailed Skink *Emoia impar* Regular encounters on Upolu and on Savai'i.

BUTTERFLIES

Blue Tiger *Tirumala hamata* Regular on Samoa.

Monarch *Danaus plexippus* Regular on Samoa.



Kadavu scenery and Vanua Levu from the air (Mark Van Beirs)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*

The form on New Caledonia is sometimes split off as a separate species New Caledonian Petrel *Pterodroma caledonica*.

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*

We saw the following subspecies: *leopoldi* (Vanuatu), *hypochoera* (New Caledonia), *vitiensis* (Fiji) and *castaneiceps* (Samoa).

Many-coloured Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus perousii*

We saw the nominate form on Samoa and the race *mariae* on Fiji.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*

The birds on Fiji are sometimes considered to belong with this species and sometimes with Collared Kingfisher. They probably deserve to be considered a separate species. We saw the race *vitiensis* on Viti Levu and the race *eximius* on Kadavu.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*

We saw the race *canacorum* on New Caledonia and *macmillani* on Lifou and Ouvéa.

Ouvea Parakeet (Uvea P) *Eunymphicus uvaeensis*

Clements does not consider it as a separate species (yet).

Wattled Honeyeater *Foulehaio carunculatus*

We saw the nominate race on Samoa, *procerior* on Viti Levu and *taviuensis* on Taveuni.

Polynesian Triller *Lalage maculosa*

We saw the following races: *pumila* (Viti Levu), *mixta* (Taveuni), *soror* (Kadavu) and *maculosa* on Samoa

Silktaill *Lamprolia victoriae*

The taxonomic position of this glorious species is still in flux. It used to be considered part of the Monarch Flycatchers (Monarchidae), has recently been placed with the Fantails (Rhipiduridae) and is probably best placed in a separate family together with the fairly closely related Pygmy Drongo of New Guinea.

Polynesian Starling *Aplonis tabuensis*

We saw the race *vitiensis* on Fiji and the race *brevirostris* on Samoa.