

The fabulous Superb Pitta showed brilliantly and was voted Bird of the Trip (Josh Bergmark)

REMOTE PAPUA NEW GUINEA

7 JULY – 3 AUGUST 2018

LEADER: MARK VAN BEIRS and JOSH BERGMARK

Our unique Remote Papua New Guinea itinerary offered once again a rich variety of terrific birding experiences in some of the least visited corners of this amazing country. This year, the logistics went unusually smooth, but copious amounts of rain sabotaged our birding endeavours on several occasions. Off the eastern tip of PNG, we travelled to the island of Fergusson in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands by live aboard boat getting excellent views of displaying Goldie's Birds-of-paradise and of Curl-crested Manucode in the lowland rainforests. We also found the rarely seen Louisiade White-eye and an adorable chick Orange-footed Scrubfowl. We reached the forested highlands of the Huon Peninsula after an exciting charter flight and an awful drive and were rewarded by magnificent looks at gorgeous Wahnes's Parotias, splendid Huon Astrapias, shy Emperor Birds-of-paradise and gaudy Pesquet's Parrots. The much-wanted, but modestly-attired Mottled Berryhunter showed brilliantly in its montane forest habitat. The newly built Keki Lodge in the Adelbert Mountains offered truly cracking views of a smashing male Fire-maned Bowerbird, while Marbled Frogmouth and Obscure Berrypecker added to the fun. The central mountains of New Ireland produced goodies like New Ireland Boobook, the attractive Paradise Drongo and the undescribed Bismarck Flyrobin, while our boat trip on a very nice live aboard took us to the extraordinary seabird island of Tench where we

admired wonderful Nicobar Pigeons, displaying Great Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies, endearing White Terns and the rare Atoll Starling. For the first time ever, we managed to visit the far-flung island of Mussau where we added the cute Mussau Fantail and the fine-looking Mussau Monarch to the ever-growing Birdquest lifelist! The final leg of our month-long voyage took us to the island of Manus where the truly magnificent Superb Pitta gave tremendous looks, resulting in it being voted Bird of the Trip. The excellent views of Manus Boobook and of the cute Manus Fantail on its distant islet were also much appreciated.



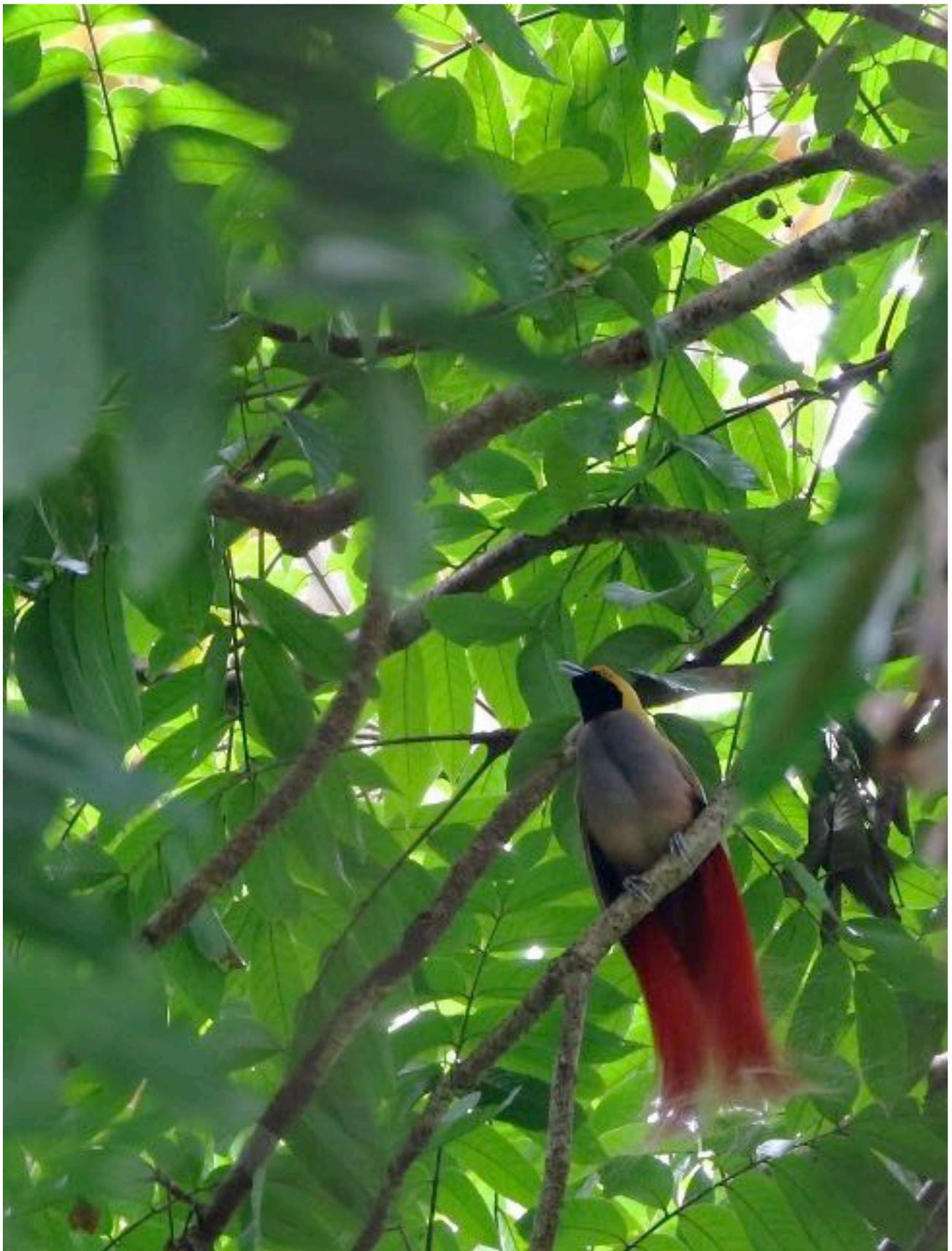
The modest Fawn-breasted Bowerbird showed well at Alotau (Josh Bergmark)

The tour started at the domestic terminal of the Port Moresby airport where our keen, international group gathered. After a frustratingly slow check in and a smooth flight we arrived in the small town of Alotau, situated at the extreme eastern tip of the large island of New Guinea. We checked in at our efficient, well-appointed hotel, arranged some practicalities, enjoyed a savoury lunch and birded for a while in the gardens where a couple of well-behaved Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds, Silver-eared Honeyeater, White-breasted Woodswallow and Grey Shrikethrush showed particularly well. Later we drove to a nearby stretch of mixed gardens and lowland rainforest where goodies included Pink-spotted and Orange-bellied Fruit Doves (scope views), Brush Cuckoo, Forest Kingfisher, impressive Blyth's Hornbills, noisy Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, gaudy Eclectus Parrots, Purple-bellied Lory, Streak-headed Honeyeater, New Guinea Friarbird and a hard to see Green-backed Gerygone. We also noted Variable Goshawk, Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove, an all too brief Channel-billed Cuckoo, Glossy and Uniform Swiftlets, Coconut Lorikeet, vociferous Hooded Butcherbirds, Spangled Drongo, Singing Starling, Yellow-faced Myna, a tiny Red-capped Flowerpecker, Olive-backed Sunbird and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin.... a nice introduction to New Guinea birding.



Island Imperial Pigeons were found on several islets (Josh Bergmark)

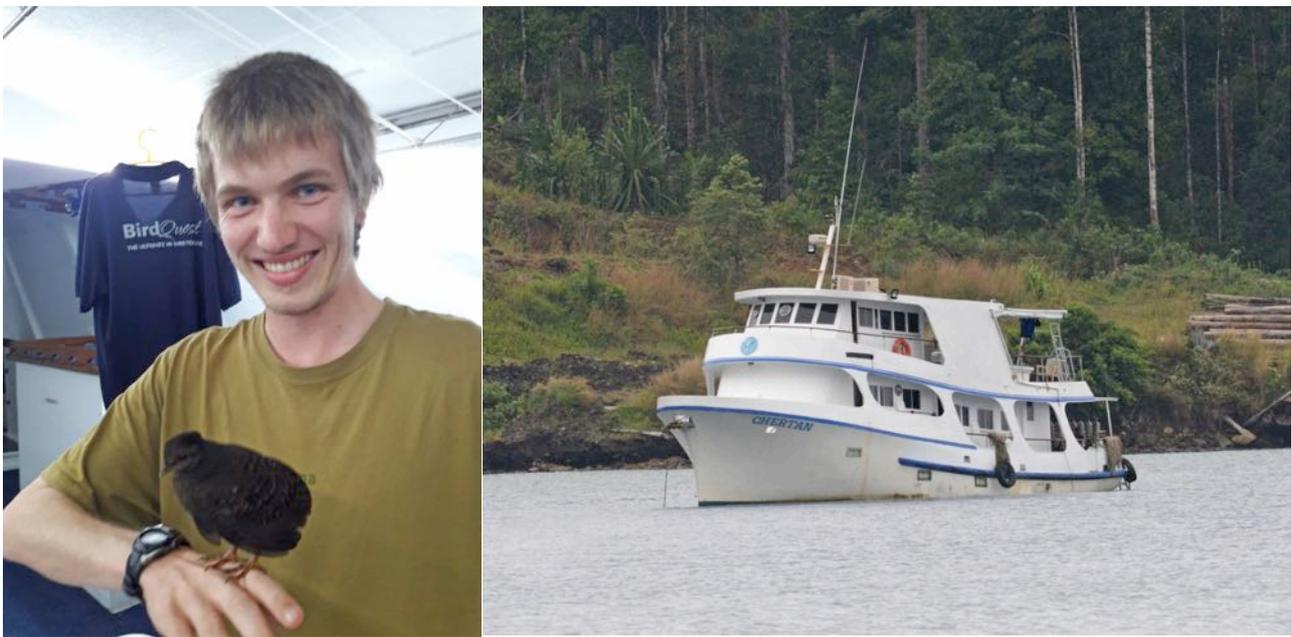
Next morning, not long after dawn we made our way to a nearby small harbour where our live-aboard waited for us. While the boat was made ready, we observed smart Orange-fronted Fruit Doves and attractive Torresian Imperial Pigeons in the surrounding trees. A Brahminy Kite flew overhead, a Sacred Kingfisher showed well and a White-bellied Cuckooshrike flapped over. While getting settled in our cabins, we started sailing to the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, first traversing famous Milne Bay and later across the deep Goshen Strait. Tropical seas are always quiet birdwise and this time was no exception. Two menacing-looking male Great Frigatebirds circled overhead and Brown Booby, Whimbrel, Greater Crested Terns and a Bridled Tern were spotted. A roosting flock of Black Noddies held a single Common (or Brown) Noddy, which made for good comparison. In early afternoon we reached a small island off the coast of Normanby, where we landed on a deserted beach. It took a little bit of a scramble to get to the higher areas as we had to tackle a fairly steep rock face, a stretch of nasty along along grass and some aggressive red ants. A huge White-bellied Sea Eagle patrolled its territory and several Island Imperial Pigeons sat up. Once inside the forest activity picked up as noisy Varied Honeyeaters, a rather shy Mangrove Golden Whistler and a couple of Rufous Fantails were found. Best of all was the localized and rather modestly-clad Louisiade White-eye. We located a small flock travelling through the canopy and although they were always on the move, everyone eventually got decent looks. This small island specialist occurs here at the extreme west of its rather small area of distribution, which is centred on the Louisiade Archipelago. A couple of Collared Kingfishers, probably of the Islet type, only allowed glimpses. A couple of Nicobar Pigeons were flushed by some lucky souls in the forest. In late afternoon, as the rain clouds were gathering, lots of Torresian Imperial Pigeons were coming to roost on the islet together with swirling flocks of Metallic Starlings. The day ended with a scrumptious meal, while the southern cross enlivened the austral sky.



Colaris C Bird of paradise was the prize on Fergusson (seen Bergman)

In the middle of the night we continued sailing to Fergusson Island. Dawn found us amongst small islands where we saw an Eastern Osprey and where a pod of Spotted Dolphins zoomed in to the boat for a terrific bout of bowriding. What a spectacle! In the early morning we landed on a secluded beach where we got in touch with our man on the spot. A really muddy trail led into a nice stretch of lowland rainforest, where we

soon heard the distinctive calls of Goldie's Birds-of-paradise emanate from the canopy. It didn't take too long to point our scopes and cameras on a displaying male hanging upside down high up in the crown of a forest giant. Although it was rather overcast and quite gloomy, the bright yellow, green and red feathers of this restricted range jewel showed well. We spent a fair amount of time admiring several of these rarely observed and much wanted members of the most amazing bird family in existence. Some strange calls led us to the unpretentiously attired Curl-crested Manucode, the other endemic bird-of-paradise of this archipelago. Several of these very vocal birds performed well in the mid canopy. We also noted Channel-billed Cuckoo, Purple-bellied Lory and Tawny-breasted Honeyeater. We enjoyed our picnic lunch in the hamlet of our guide and in the gardens and nearby secondary growth observed a good selection of passerines like Papuan Black Myzomela (of the endemic race *forbesi*), Dwarf (or Spectacled) and Pygmy Longbills, Varied Triller, Grey Whistler, Spangled Drongo, Northern Fantail, Spot-winged, Black-faced and Golden Monarchs and Shining Flycatcher. In the afternoon we returned to the gloomy forest where we obtained glimpses only of a Papuan Pitta, although we sure did our best to lure it into view. Our boat anchored in a secluded bay and while looking at some remarkable moths in the late evening, a chick Orange-footed Scrubfowl flew in and perched under the lights. We caught this adorable little tike and held it overnight in a dark box.



Josh with a chick Orange-footed Scrubfowl; Our live aboard in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands (Mark Van Beirs)

We woke up before dawn after a quiet night on our cozy live aboard. A small flock of Black Noddies was endlessly circling the boat, probably drawn in by the multitudes of small fish that had been attracted by the lights of our vessel. We released the cute chick Orange-footed Scrubfowl on the nearby beach after a photo session and were pleased to see it fly so very well. As we had seen the main birds of Fergusson Island, we thought it worthwhile to try searching for the "new" Oya Tabu White-eye. Although this split from Capped White-eye is not accepted by any of the major world lists, both the 'Beehler/Pratt' and the 'Gregory' New Guinea fieldguides accept it as a distinct species, restricted to the highlands of the islands of Goodenough and Fergusson. We chartered the only vehicle in the nearby hamlet (a Toyota Landcruiser which only ran in second gear) and made our way very slowly up along an old logging track. At an altitude of 400m the car got stuck in the mud and it started to rain quite heavily. As we would have needed to climb another 400m to reach the lowest elevation of the white-eye and as we were running short of time, we decided to retrace our steps, sadly. Interesting birds seen on our exploratory trip included Grey-headed Goshawk, lots of ante-diluvial-looking Channel-billed Cuckoos, Azure Kingfisher, Puff-backed Honeyeater and Little Shrikethrush. A dinghy ride around the bay only produced some Greater Crested Terns and a couple of White-bellied Sea Eagles. Around midday our boat weighed anchor and started to sail back towards distant Alotau. Several pods of dolphins enlivened the otherwise rather birdless journey. Both Spotted and Long-nosed Common Dolphins enjoyed riding the bow wave of our little boat. Heartwarming moments! We sailed through the night and arrived at Alotau in the very early hours of the morning after a fairly smooth passage. Most of the day

was spent travelling as we first flew to Port Moresby and then onwards to Lae, the second largest town in Papua New Guinea. Upon arrival at Lae's Nadzab airport we transferred in an infamous, grille-protected Guard Dog minibus along a truly atrocious road to our hotel in town.

A pre-breakfast stroll in the gardens surrounding the hotel gave us several Orange-bellied Fruit Doves, a couple of Red-cheeked Parrots and a party of Grey Crows. We then returned to the airport, flew in a New Zealand built Pac aircraft over the Saruwaged range and eventually reached our accommodation in a small village at mid altitude on the northern slopes of the Huon Peninsula. We organized our sleeping arrangements in a section of the local girl's school and explored the partly forested surroundings which produced a handful of new birds for the trip. Adorable Mountain Peltopses were sitting up for excellent views and we heard the harsh calls of Emperor Birds-of-paradise emanate from the valley below us. Enticing, but no sightings yet! A well-behaved White-bellied Thicket Fantail allowed unusually good views as it circled us several times in a dense bit of woodland. We also noted Mountain Swiftlet, Barred Cuckooshrike and Common and Black Cicadabirds.



The male Huon Astrapia is a real gem (Josh Bergmark)

Just after dawn, we were already high up in the mist-shrouded montane forests of the Huon Peninsula. As soon as we got out of the vehicles, a couple of Huon Astrapias flew past. We walked inside a particular good forest patch where Scheffleras were fruiting and where a good number of trees were flowering. Several male and female Huon Astrapias showed quite well, although we would have to wait till another day to discern the subtle colours of their plumage. We scanned, waited and patrolled and managed great looks at a terrific selection of goodies. We spent some time trying to get to grips with a secretive Forbes's Forest Rail, but only a few of us managed fair looks at this skulker. A White-eared Bronze Cuckoo was sedately foraging high in the canopy. A magnificent and very colourful Pesquet's Parrot showed brilliantly in flight and we scoped a foraging female Brehm's Tiger Parrot as it was devouring fleshy bits from an epiphyte. A flowering tree held a party of tiny Fairy Lorikeets and a single Papuan Lorikeet. A shy, modestly-attired MacGregor's Bowerbird was playing hide and seek in a dense fruiting tree and a Huon endemic Spangled Honeyeater gave very nice views, as we were lucky enough to see it flash its fleshy facial wattle. Several participants really wanted to add Mottled Berryhunter to their lifelist as this unusual species is now placed in its own family. They were not

disappointed as we got really good looks at a foraging female in a nearby fruiting tree. Several attractively-patterned female Wahnes's Parotias also favoured the area and allowed pretty good views on different occasions. Other interesting species observed included Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove, Ornate Fruit Dove, Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Mountain Swiftlet, Brown Falcon, Red-collared Myzomela, Rufous-backed, Black-throated and Mountain Honeyeaters, Buff-faced Scrubwren, Black-breasted Boatbill, Stout-billed Cuckooshrike, Brown-backed and Regent Whistlers, Black and Friendly Fantails, Black-throated and Slaty Robins, Canary Flyrobin and Island Leaf Warbler. While we were munching our picnic lunch, low clouds drifted in and it started to rain, so we decided to make our way to lower altitudes. We explored a stretch of secondary growth where Emperor Birds-of-paradise were known to occur. Sadly, only one female was briefly seen during our vigil. A couple of Pink-spotted Fruit Doves of the distinctive race *plumbeicollis* were scoped and a cute Double-eyed Fig Parrot was sitting in its nesthole. A female Barred Cuckooshrike was sitting on her nest, but very little else was happening.



A female Brehm's Tiger Parrot munching away (Mark Van Beirs); A lovely Black-throated Robin (Josh Bergmark)

The following morning we were scanning a nice stretch of forest edge high up in the mountains and we soon got rewarded with terrific views of a cracking male Wahnes's Parotia showing off in the treetops above his display court. We could easily discern the six wires, the brassy green pompom, the golden frontal shield and the pale blue eyes of this regional endemic bird-of-paradise! Marvellous moments. Several females were also about as was an immature male. We heard a Mountain Kingfisher call in the distance, and not too much later we obtained excellent scope views of this much wanted bird. The distinctive race in the Huon (*sellamontis*) doesn't sport the black line on top of the upper mandible. Several group members opted to spend some time in the parotia hides and they were lucky enough to get fantastic views at close range of a splendid adult male. We explored several other areas of mountain forest where we scored on great birds like Black-mantled Goshawk (perched and in flight), Great Cuckoo-Dove, Rufescent Imperial Pigeon, a Brown Falcon with a snake in its talons, Papuan Lorikeet, Dusky Lory (a flock high overhead), Marbled Honeyeater, Tit Berrypecker, more Mottled Berryhunters (!) and Black-fronted White-eye. In late afternoon the skies opened, so we returned to base along the now rather well known truly atrocious track.



We obtained excellent views of a male Wahnes's Parotia (tour participant Ilka Rauch)

Just after dawn we stood guard at a known Emperor Bird-of-paradise spot below our accommodation, where after a bit of a wait we obtained fair views of a female and scoped several smart-looking Ornate Fruit Doves. We really wanted to see a male Emperor BoP, so we decided to walk to a patch of woodland where we had witnessed display on previous tours. But, getting to this spot involved a rather tricky river crossing, which everyone managed very well! Soon after we arrived two males were briefly seen winging past, but luckily we soon managed excellent looks at another glorious male in flight. A couple of Meliphagas were foraging in nearby trees and after some dedicated scope study, we concluded these were rarely-seen Forest (White-eared) Honeyeaters. We also added Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Black-capped Lory, Great Woodswallow and several poisonous Hooded Pitohuis to the tally. In mid-morning we returned to the higher stretches of the Huon and birded a couple of nice patches of epiphyte-laden montane forest. We heard Forbes's Forest Rail at both venues, but the birds didn't want to show. We found a couple of Blue-capped Ifrits (or Ifritas) creeping nuthatch-like along branches and observed a couple of Yellow-billed Lorikeets in flight. A Mountain Mouse Warbler played hide and seek in the undergrowth and a shy male Superb Bird-of-paradise made a brief appearance. And then it started raining in earnest, so we decided to call it a day.



The male Emperor Bird-of-paradise showed well in flight (Mark Van Beirs)



The plane that took us across the Huon (Mark Van Beirs); The makeshift bridge on our way to Keki Lodge (tour participant Ilka Rauch)

A travelling day followed. We first drove down to the Wasu airstrip, where we had to wait for quite a while for our charter plane to come in. A splendid flight took us over the thickly forested slopes of the Saruwaged range of the Huon Peninsula to the airport of Lae. Another plane delivered us to the beautiful town of Madang, where we were welcomed by our host Moyang. After a visit to the local supermarket, we drove along the coastal highway towards the Adelbert Mountains. A bridge over a major river had collapsed more than a year ago, causing a fair bit of disruption. We had to walk over a bamboo walkway amidst some rather shady looking characters, but our host had taken care of everything, and soon we were on our way in another vehicle. For the last stretch of the road into the mountains we transferred to a 4x4 truck, which took us to the doorstep of our newly built lodge. After getting organized, we enjoyed a fairly simple dinner, while a Marbled Frogmouth was serenading us nearby.



The fantastic male Fire-maned Bowerbird that enlivened our stay at Keki Lodge (Josh Bergmark)

The birding started right on the doorstep of our terrific, newly-built, roomy accommodation, from where we could scan the forest edge surrounding the famous Keki clearing. The large fig tree wasn't bearing ripe figs yet, but was visited on a regular basis by an assortment of birds. Several other smaller fruiting trees were also attracting birds, so we had a great morning observing the activity. Best of all was the much-desired Fire-maned Bowerbird, of which we first observed a female in the fig tree above us. It showed quite well, and soon after a male was spotted on an open perch in a distant dead tree. It showed well for at least half an hour as it was obviously advertising its presence. A couple of females paid him a visit and we could admire the fabulous black, yellow and red attire of this rarely seen Adelbert endemic. Several male and female Lesser Bird-of-paradise posed now and then and a Forest Honeyeater showed beautifully at close range. A couple of extremely rare Obscure Berrypeckers visited a small tree full of berries and on our brief visit to the forest we observed a rather well-behaved Sooty Thicket Fantail and a skittish Banded Yellow Robin. We heard the braying of a Collared Brushturkey at close range and also added Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, Superb and Beautiful Fruit Doves, Pinon's Imperial Pigeon, Oriental Dollarbird, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Black-capped Lory, a perched Dusky Lory, Red Myzomela, Plain Honeyeater, Black Berrypecker, Boyer's Cuckooshrike and Northern Variable Pitohui to the tally. It rained most of the afternoon, but we still managed to see a few birds from the veranda. Several participants sat in a hide at a display court of Magnificent Bird-of-paradise, but the bird didn't want to show. Sadly, our nightbirding efforts were sabotaged by continuous rain.



Marbled Frogmouth performed extremely well; Our newly-constructed accommodation at Keki (Mark Van Beirs)

Our second full day at Keki was a very wet one. It rained almost constantly, and we, miserably, only managed a few hours of birding in the clearing and in the forest. Extremely frustrating, as there were still several very good birds we wanted to observe. A Tan-capped Catbird (a recent split in the White-eared Catbird complex) played hard to get inside the forest, but showed well in the large fig tree. The male Fire-maned Bowerbird was showing off again on his distant perch and a Brown-headed Jewel-babbler was glimpsed by some within the forest. A Crinkle-collared Manucode was scoped and we enjoyed some very nice display of a male Lesser Bird-of-paradise at the clearing and high in the canopy inside the forest. Impressive Blyth's Hornbills showed very nicely, a perched Pesquet's Parrot allowed excellent scope views, a pair of Black-capped Lories sat up and a brief Chestnut-bellied Fantail was another addition to the list. While we were getting ready for bed, Josh found us a cracking Marbled Frogmouth beautifully perched up only meters away from our rooms. We watched this bizarre bird for as long as we wanted and eventually left it in peace in its undisturbed stretch of forest.

The following day started with rain, so we had a relaxed breakfast and had time to pack. After a while the rain relented and a magnificent male Fire-maned Bowerbird decided to pose for us on a nearby dead snag.

The scope views of this exquisite creature were out of this world, even if the conditions were still rather gloomy. He stayed there for at least fifteen minutes, allowing us to study his sophisticated plumage in detail. What a glorious farewell present! Two Obscure Berrypeckers obliged again in their favourite fruiting tree. In late morning we boarded Moyang's truck and after an uneventful drive under police escort, we reached our very nice hotel in Madang, where we enjoyed the hot showers and the air conditioning to the full.



Elegant Moustached Treeswift (tour participant Olof Persson) and Great Flying Fox showed well in the Madang area (Josh Bergmark)

We aimed to bird a stretch of excellent lowland rainforest not too far from Madang the following morning, but it took a bit longer than expected to reach the area because of awful road conditions. Eventually we walked the steep trails of this protected forest, but found bird activity to be rather poor due to the rainy conditions. We never had a glimpse of the bird we really wanted to observe, the rarely-seen Edward's Fig Parrot. Double-eyed Fig Parrots showed well, as did adorable Moustached Treeswifts and some other widespread, common species. In the afternoon a small catamaran took us to Tabb Island, a small uninhabited, forested patch of land situated several kilometres offshore. Soon after landing we had good looks at a smart male Mangrove Golden Whistler. It took quite a while before everyone managed a tickable view of the New Guinea Scrubfowl that make a living here. We located several active mounds, which looked quite disturbed and found the birds to be extremely shy. We soon found out why as several snares were discovered, proving that the adults were heavily persecuted. The large, tasty eggs were obviously continuously dug up from the mounds. One wonders how long these New Guinea Scrubfowl will survive on this lovely island? We also had good looks at several dainty Coroneted Fruit Doves and at a Pacific Koel.



A Variable Goshawk on its eyrie and a good-looking Torresian Imperial Pigeon in the gardens of our Madang hotel (Mark Van Beirs)

The lush gardens of our Madang hotel provided birding entertainment for a few hours before our flight to Kavieng via Port Moresby. Hundreds of Great Flying Foxes were plying the skies and interacting noisily in the large trees. A fruiting tree attracted good numbers of Orange-bellied Fruit Doves, several smart Torresian Imperial Pigeons and dozens of Singing Starlings. A Forest Kingfisher obliged and we discovered an occupied eyrie of a Variable Goshawk. The brooding female tried to make herself invisible, but the scope views were quite excellent. In late afternoon we arrived at Kavieng, the capital of the island of New Ireland, where we settled into our comfortable hotel, full of expectations for this new venue.



The New Ireland endemic Hunstein's Mannikin gave a sterling performance (Josh Bergmark)

A pre-breakfast outing in the outskirts of Kavieng produced admirable looks at the New Ireland endemic Hunstein's Mannikin together with a perky Golden-headed Cisticola and a subtle Australian Reed Warbler. A pair of Eastern Ospreys had a nest on the radiotower near the hotel and Bismarck Crows were particularly common. After breakfast we packed up and drove in our Toyota Hilux vehicles along the splendidly smooth Boluminsky highway east to the centre of this long, narrow island. We arrived just after noon at our pleasant accommodation on the beach and enjoyed a nice lunch. Several Lesser Frigatebirds and a loafing pod of Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphins enlivened the peaceful scene. Later we explored a nearby stretch of lowland rainforest, where we obtained good looks at Stephan's Emerald Dove, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Purple-bellied Lory, Golden Monarch and Long-tailed Myna, but Yellowish Imperial Pigeon and Red-chinned Lorikeet were only seen in flight. We heard several Bismarck Pittas call from the undergrowth, nonetheless they were totally unresponsive. An after-dinner outing yielded terrific views of a friendly and cooperative endemic New Ireland Boobook.



The New Ireland Boobook allowed in depth studies (Josh Bergmark)

Next morning, we got up very early, as we wanted to reach the birdrich Lelet plateau just after dawn. We positioned ourselves strategically at a viewpoint at c850m altitude overlooking some fine montane forest dotted with many impressive treeferns. We observed splendid Bismarck endemics like the attractive Pied Cuckoo-Dove, Knob-billed Fruit Dove, a male White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Finsch's and Black Imperial Pigeons, White-necked Coucal, White-naped Lory (in flight only), White-backed Woodswallow, Grey-capped Cicadabird, Bismarck Whistler, the gorgeous Paradise Drongo (always a bit shy and keeping its distance), Black-tailed Monarch, the still undescribed Bismarck Flyrobin, swirling flocks of Bismarck White-eyes and Red-banded Flowerpecker. We walked short distances and scanned the treetops and also added more widespread species like Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove, Metallic Pigeon, Shining Bronze Cuckoo, White-rumped Swiftlet, Song Parrot.



Pied Cuckoo-Dove (Mark Van Beirs) and the still undescribed Bismarck Flyrobin were scoped on the Lelet plateau (Josh Bergmark)

and lots of Red Myzomelas to the list. Around midday threatening clouds came in so we retreated to the sunny coast. A Black Bittern and several Melanesian Kingfishers were noted on the return journey. After a short break we went in search of the endemic Forbes's Mannikin, of which we found several dozen obliging well in a patch of seeding grasses



Paradise Drongo is one of the specialties of New Ireland (tour participant Ilka Rauch & Mark Van Beirs)

At first light we were again on the Lelet plateau, trying to get to grips with some of the remaining Bismarck specialties. Best of all was a pair of New Britain Sparrowhawks that showed briefly, but luckily enough we managed to discern sufficient distinguishing features to add this very rarely-seen species to the tally. Several graceful Moustached Treeswifts were catching insects nearby and we obtained nice scope views of feeding Red-flanked Lorikeets. We again had first-rate looks at a variety of already seen pigeons and doves and we also did a bit of exploring, as we really wanted to get to higher reaches. We followed several leads, but none of the rather rough tracks seemed to take us to upper montane forest. During the midday break a flock of c120 Lesser Frigatebirds was circling offshore over a loose aggregation of Black Noddies. A pale morph Red-footed Booby flew past at quite a distance and in the gardens we scoped a Common Kingfisher and some foraging Red-chinned Lorikeets. Later we birded the lowland rainforest near our accommodation. We worked for a while with a Bismarck Pitta, but the bird, frustratingly, remained a voice in the undergrowth. We obtained nice looks at a pair of Pacific Bazas and a swift Finsch's Pygmy Parrot zoomed past.



Two of the more colourful endemics of New Ireland: New Ireland Dwarf Kingfisher and Bismarck Pitta (Josh Bergmark)

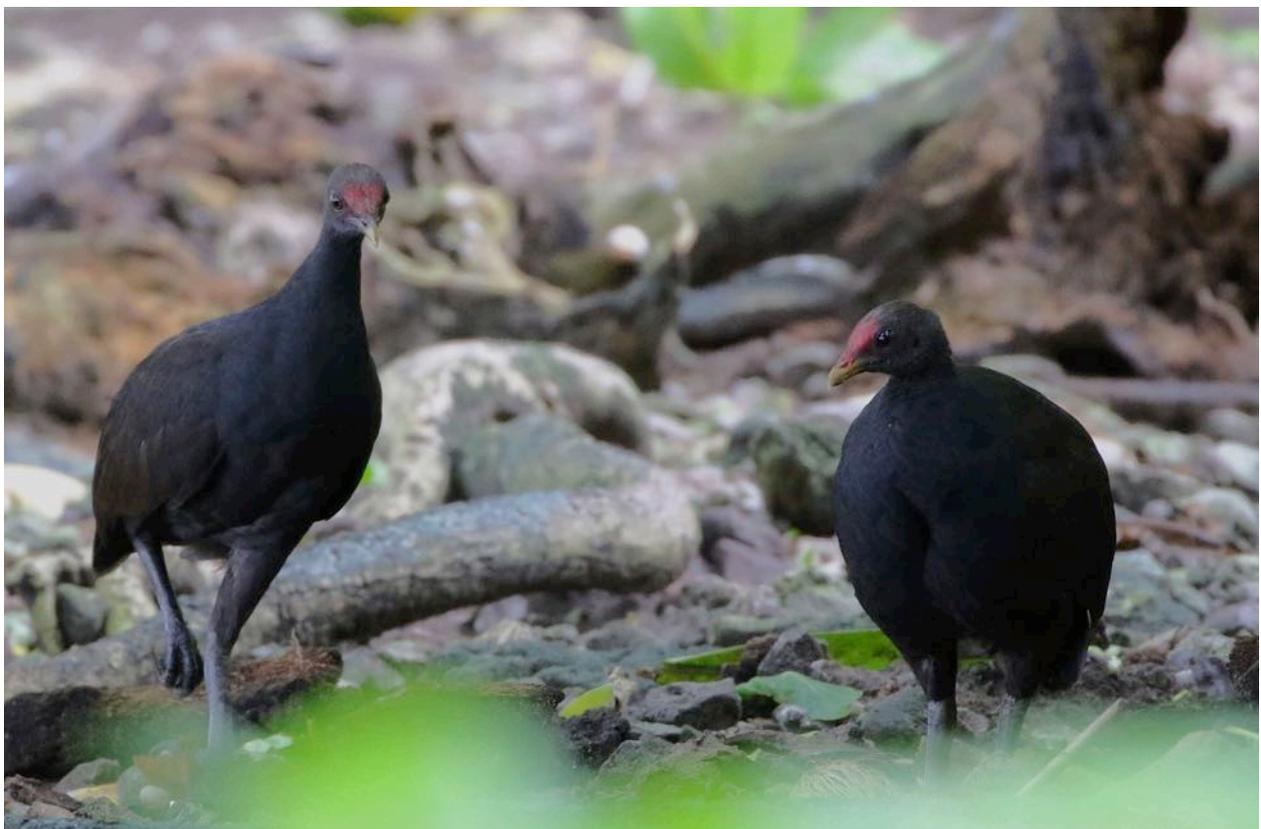
Our final morning in central New Ireland gave us smashing looks at a pair of lovely, cooperative Paradise Drongos in the gardens, at a hulking Beach Kingfisher on the reef and at a tiny, delightful New Ireland Dwarf Kingfisher in the nearby woods. The scope views of the latter made us realize how awful this lovely species

is depicted in both fieldguides! Some of the more enterprising participants went exploring along one of the rivers with Josh and came away with splendid looks at a Bismarck Pitta. In late morning we packed up, enjoyed a tasty lunch and returned along the smooth Boluminsky highway to the New Ireland capital of Kavieng, where our charter boat was waiting for us. We were warmly welcomed by the crew of the "Ultimate One", a beautifully crafted, modern catamaran. We got settled in, relished a very tasty dinner and sailed throughout the night northwards to the tiny seabird island of Tench. The sea was rather choppy, so several group members did not really enjoy the journey.



The rare Atoll Starling is the speciality of Tench (Josh Bergmark); Red-footed Boobies are decidedly common there (Mark Van Beirs)

We arrived at our destination just before dawn and soon landed on this amazing, minute piece of land in the middle of nowhere. The small community greeted us cheerfully and for a good part of the day we wandered through this wonderful seabird colony and got fantastic looks at all its avian inhabitants. The speciality of Tench



Melanesian Megapodes behaved so well on Tench (Josh Bergmark)



A male Great Frigatebird showing off his inflated pouch (Mark Van Beirs)

is the occurrence of the rare and very localized Atoll Starling, which is endemic to only eight islets in Melanesia. We found them to be more common than ever and obtained many great looks. Bizarre, much wanted Nicobar Pigeons were marvellously common and allowed terrific views. Black Noddies were decidedly abundant and nested in almost every tree. Two colour morphs of Red-footed Boobies adorned many of the trees and many dull-brown coloured youngsters sat about. A few Brown Boobies were incubating eggs at the edge of the reef. Dozens of Great Frigatebirds circled over the island and several males were displaying in the treetops showing off their impressive, bright red inflated gular pouches, while emitting their yodeling calls. A pair of imposing Beach Kingfishers gave a terrific show as they posed on the picturesque dead trees on the reef. Chicken-like Melanesian Megapodes were foraging unmolested in the undergrowth, while adorable White Terns were quietly perching in the understory or showing off in display flight above the canopy. Several elegant White-tailed Tropicbirds were patrolling high over the island. Tiny Bismarck Black (or Ebony) Myzomelas were flitting through the trees as were noisy Island Monarchs. A gigantic, very impressive Coconut Crab was found hiding in a hole amongst rocks. In mid-afternoon we said goodbye to this magnificent island with its isolated community and sailed to the island of Mussau, a totally new Birdquest destination.



The attractive Mussau Fantail was a Birdquest lifer (Josh Bergmark),



as was the adorable Mussau Monarch (Josh Bergmark)

Our enchanting boat reached a shallow bay of this rarely-visited island around dawn and the dinghy took us across the reef to the island. We had arranged our visit beforehand as nasty rumours about (very) unfriendly inhabitants had been circling for many years. We were warmly welcomed and guided by several locals to the best patches of forest near the village. It didn't take too long to point our binoculars at the gorgeous Mussau Monarch, a beautiful black and white variant in the Pied Monarch group. We found them to be reasonably common, though quite shy, due to the slingshot carrying village youngsters. The very attractive Mussau Fantail also showed well, eventually, but only an immature bird allowed photographs. This very localized endemic must be the best looking *Rhipidura* I have ever seen. Both these exquisite endemics were much appreciated Birdquest lifers! Inside the forest Josh found us a female of the very little-known Mussau Flycatcher, which is still considered by both major world lists as a form of Velvet Flycatcher. Both field guides of the region however, consider it as a separate species. We were lucky enough to get good looks at the very distinctive female. A couple of retiring Russet-tailed Thrushes were flushed on our wanderings. Cute Yellow-bibbed Fruit Doves were encountered on several occasions and we obtained good views of a few Bismarck Whistlers. Unobtrusive Island Leaf Warblers were found foraging in the canopy and Blue-faced Parrotfinches proved to be fairly common and quite showy! Around midday, we left this remote island and on the return dinghy ride across the shallow bay we encountered three Green Turtles. And soon we were pointing the bow towards the town of Kavieng. Nothing of note was seen on the boat journey.... tropical seas are usually rather birdless.



The Manus Boobook is not always as forthcoming (Josh Bergmark)

We got up in the middle of the night to catch our very early flight to Port Moresby and after a leisurely and filling breakfast flew onwards to the island of Manus, where we were welcomed by our knowledgeable man on the spot. As it was a Saturday (7th Day Adventists...), we were not allowed inside the forest, so we took it easy and recovered from the rather sleepless nights on the choppy seas off New Ireland.

Just after sunrise we were walking a narrow trail through good secondary forest, where our man on the spot had recorded our main quarry recently. But, try as we may, not a single call was heard from the so very much wanted Superb Pitta, which is endemic to the island of Manus. Luckily there were several other specialities about. A wonderful, tiny Meek's Pygmy Parrot was sitting at the entrance of its nesthole in an arboreal territory and could be studied at leisure through the scope. Several Manus Monarchs were flitting through the mid canopy and noisy Manus Cuckooshrikes showed well at the forest edge. The Manus (or

White-naped) Friarbird was by far the most vociferous of the birds on Manus, but as they are rather shy, it took a while before we obtained decent views. We paused for a while in the heat of the day and in late afternoon we had a fantastic encounter with a very obliging Manus Boobook, which, in response to playback, came to sit in the open on top of a treefern. We were able to study this often difficult to see well endemic for ten fabulous minutes. A magnificent ending of our first birding day on Manus.



The exquisite Manus Fantail obliged on Tong island; The island of Manus offers some nice scenery (Mark Van Beirs)

The little island of Tong is situated c35 km from the mainland of Manus. It is one of the few remaining islands surrounding Manus, where the lovely Manus (or Admiralty Rufous) Fantail survives. After a rather exciting journey in a banana boat we arrived at the beautiful central lagoon of Tong in mid-morning and minutes after landing we had already seen this exquisite endemic. Several birds performed very well as we wandered the scrubby woodland and the gardens. We also found the local race of Manus Monarch (*coultsi*) with its much whiter tail. Other interesting birds included MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove, Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove and Melanesian Kingfishers of an undescribed race. As we left the lagoon an immature Common Tern was identified. The return trip went much smoother, so a happy group landed at midday on Manus. In the afternoon we returned to the pitta forest, but intermittent rain didn't help at all. We stayed till dusk and heard the distinctive calls of the Manus Boobook, but nothing else was stirring.

Another day on the slippery trails in the lowland forests of Manus didn't produce any new birds. It had rained overnight, so the conditions were excellent for the pitta, but our main target sadly remained unheard. We observed the regular Manus endemics and while having lunch on the veranda of the hotel a Grey-tailed Tattler showed. A small New Guinea Ground Boa was found on our afternoon outing. We were still missing the most important bird of Manus (and one of the most crucial birds of the tour at that!), so a concerted effort was made to talk to several landowners (local politics ... always something very touchy in PNG...) and, luckily, this resulted in the splendid news that a bird had been heard in a nice patch of hill forest not too far away. While the sun was still below the horizon, we drove to the trail head and walked for several kilometres to the specific area, where after a while of anxious waiting, most of us obtained fair views of a rather shy Superb Pitta. We were fairly satisfied, but the photographic opportunities had not been great. Another territory was known several more kilometres away, so we hiked, covered in sweat in drenched shirts, to that patch and here we all had terrific looks at this very much wanted beautiful endemic pitta. The Superb Pitta is one of the harder to get members of this exquisite family, so we were all extremely happy to have scored. Several nice photos of this cracker were taken as it was hiding high up in the canopy. On the return walk a Manus Dwarf Kingfisher showed all too briefly and we all enjoyed a relaxed afternoon.

Another excellent, though rainy morning in the hilly forest gave us more fabulous, extended views of the smashing Superb Pitta. We were definitely being spoiled by this well-behaved bird. While observing the singing, blue, red and black pitta high in the canopy above us, we heard no fewer than three other birds vocalise nearby. This stretch of forest was definitely pitta heaven! Several glimpses were had of Manus Dwarf Kingfisher in between rain showers and we flushed quite a few Nicobar Pigeons, but little else was

moving in the forest. In the afternoon part of the group went exploring the interior of the island and asking locals about the possible occurrence of the Manus Masked Owl. There have been no observations since 1934, but who knows... Anyway, nothing of interest was learned and on our final dinner the bird of the trip game resulted in a mega score for the wonderful Superb Pitta.



The Superb Pitta that made the trip! (tour participant Ilka Rauch)



The stunning Nicobar Pigeon won a place in our hearts (Josh Bergmark)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & 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.

Collared Brushturkey ◊ (**Brown-collared B**) *Talegalla jobiensis* (H) We heard the loud braying calls at Keki.

Melanesian Megapode ◊ *Megapodius eremita* Great looks at rather tame birds on Tench.

New Guinea Scrubfowl ◊ (**N G Megapode**) *Megapodius decollatus* Several showed on an islet off Madang.

Orange-footed Scrubfowl *Megapodius reinwardt* A very young chick flew on board of our boat off Fergusson!

Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora* (H) One was heard at the base of the Huon mountains.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* A few distant sightings near Tench.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* A couple of these elegant birds were circling overhead on Tench.

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis* Two were flushed on New Ireland.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Regular observations.

Great Egret (PM) *Ardea alba* A single sighting at the Alotau airport.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* A few were noted at different airstrips.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Several observations of dark morph birds.



Immature Great Frigatebird (Mark Van Beirs); Displaying males Great Frigatebirds (Josh Bergmark)

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* Terrific sightings of displaying males and females on Tench. Glorious moments!

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Regular. A flock of 100+ was noted from our seaside lodge in central New Ireland.



Red-footed Booby; Brown Booby (Josh Bergmark)

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* Common and very friendly on Tench, where two morphs occur.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* A handful of birds showed very well on Tench.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* Regular observations. The one bathing at our New Ireland lodge was good fun.

Pacific Baza (Crested Hawk) *Aviceda subcristata* Several nice sightings. A handsome bird of prey!

Long-tailed Honey Buzzard (L-t Buzzard) *Henicopernis longicauda* A single bird was noted at Keki.

Variable Goshawk (Varied G) *Accipiter hiogaster* Regular. We found an occupied eyrie at our Madang hotel.

Black-mantled Goshawk (M) *Accipiter melanochlamys* Two encounters with this highland endemic in the Huon.

Grey-headed Goshawk (G) *Accipiter poliocephalus* A single bird was briefly noted on Fergusson Island.

New Britain Sparrowhawk (N) *Accipiter brachyurus* (V) Two of these were seen on the Lelet plateau (New Ireland).

Papuan Harrier (H) *Circus spilothorax* Singles were noted at the Port Moresby airport.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Regular in open areas on the PNG mainland.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* The most widespread bird of prey of the tour.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Eight observations of this powerful and widespread raptor.

Forbes's Forest Rail (F) *Rallidula forbesi* Fair views for some of this secretive species in the Huon.

Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis* A single bird was seen on New Ireland.

Pale-vented Bush-hen (P) (Rufous-tailed B-h) *Amauornis moluccana* (H) We heard the grunting calls at Kavieng.



Eastern Osprey (Mark van Beirs); White Tern (Josh Bergmark)

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* Several were foraging at the Port Moresby airport.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* A handful of birds were noted on the grassy edges of the Manus airport.

Whimbrel (Eurasian W) *Numenius [phaeopus] variegatus* Small numbers were seen along our route.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Two were spotted at the Manus airport.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Singles were found on New Ireland and Manus.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* (NT) A single bird was identified from the lunch table of our Manus hotel.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Just a few on Tench and a single at sea off Fergusson.



Black Noddies were abundant on Tench (Josh Bergmark)

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Small numbers off Fergusson and very common on Tench.

White Tern (Common W T) *Gygis alba* Small numbers of this delightful species were seen on Tench.

Greater Crested Tern (Crested T) *Thalasseus bergii* Fairly common in the D'Entrecasteaux archipelago.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* A handful of encounters on the boat journeys.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* (NL) One was noted off Normanby.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* A single immature bird was foraging over the Tong lagoon.

Rock Dove (introduced) (R Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis* Two nice observations on the Lelet plateau.

Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove ◇ *Macropygia amboinensis* Regular encounters.

Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove ◇ (Black-billed C-D) *Macropygia nigrirostris* Small numbers were noted in the highlands.

MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove ◇ (Spot-breasted C-D) *Macropygia mackinlayi* Several were seen on Tong island.

Great Cuckoo-Dove ◇ (Long-tailed C-D) *Reinwardtoena reinwardti* Some nice encounters in the Huon.

Pied Cuckoo-Dove ◇ *Reinwardtoena browni* (NT) Scope views of singing birds on the Lelet plateau (New Ireland).

Stephan's Emerald Dove (S Ground Dove) *Chalcophaps stephani* Fairly common on New Ireland and on Manus.

Nicobar Pigeon ◇ *Caloenas nicobarica* (NT) Delightfully common on Tench. Many scope studies.

Wompoo Fruit Dove (Magnificent F D) *Ptilinopus magnificus* Regularly heard and also seen at Keki.

Pink-spotted Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus perlatus* Scope views in the Huon foothills.

Ornate Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus ornatus* Scope views in the Huon highlands. The race *gestroi*.

Orange-fronted Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus aurantiifrons* Great looks at several in the Alotau area and on Fergusson.

Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus* Several observations of this widespread species.

Coroneted Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus coronulatus* Nice looks at several on an islet off Madang.

Beautiful Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus pulchellus* A single bird was spotted in the large fig tree at Keki.

White-bibbed Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus rivoli* We saw this beauty in the Huon and on New Ireland.

Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus solomonensis* Several showed on Mussau and on Tong.

Claret-breasted Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus viridis* Seen all to briefly on Manus, where regularly heard.

Orange-bellied Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus iozonus* Regular observations in the lowlands of mainland PNG.

Knob-billed Fruit Dove ◇ (Red-knobbed F D) *Ptilinopus insolitus* Fairly common on New Ireland.



Pacific Imperial Pigeon; Papuan Mountain Pigeons (Mark Van Beirs)

Pacific Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula pacifica* A handful of nice observations on Tench.

Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula rubricera* (NT) Regular and smart-looking on New Ireland.

Finsch's Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula finschii* (NT) Flight views only in the New Ireland hills.

Rufescent Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula chalconota* Good looks in the mountain forests of the Huon.

Island Imperial Pigeon ◇ (Grey I P) *Ducula pistrinaria* Regular in small numbers.

Pinon's Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula pinon* Regularly seen at Keki Lodge.

Black Imperial Pigeon ◇ (Bismarck I P) *Ducula melanochroa* Fairly common in the New Ireland hills. Smart!

Zoe's Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula zoeae* Scope views of two in the Huon hills.

Torresian Imperial Pigeon *Ducula spilorrhoea* Common in the D'Entrecasteaux islands and in the Huon lowlands.

Yellowish Imperial Pigeon ◇ (Yellow-tinted I P) *Ducula subflavescens* (NT) Just a few in the New Ireland lowlands.

Papuan Mountain Pigeon ◇ *Gymnophaps albertisii* Quite common in the Huon and on New Ireland.

White-necked Coucal ◇ (Pied C) *Centropus ateralbus* Several very nice encounters on New Ireland.

Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus* Two observations in scrubby growth on mainland PNG.

Dwarf Koel ◇ (Black-capped K) *Microdynamis parva* Frustrating looks at one at Keki.

Pacific Koel ◇ *Eudynamis orientalis* A few sightings of this often heard, retiring bird.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae* Common on Fergusson; a few elsewhere.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Two observations in the New Ireland hills.

White-eared Bronze Cuckoo ◊ *Chrysococcyx meyerii* A single observation in the Huon highlands.
White-crowned Cuckoo ◊ (W-c Koel) *Cacomantis leucolophus* (H) We heard it a few times in the Huon.
Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo ◊ *Cacomantis castaneiventris* Regularly heard in the Huon.
Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* Commonly heard and regularly observed.
Papuan Boobook ◊ *Ninox theomacha* (H) We heard it one evening in the distance at Keki.
Manus Boobook ◊ (M Hawk Owl) *Ninox meeki* Fantastic views in the late afternoon at Rossun.
New Ireland Boobook ◊ (Bismarck Hawk Owl) *Ninox variegata* Great looks at a friendly bird near our lodge.
Marbled Frogmouth ◊ *Podargus ocellatus* Terrific eye-ball to eye-ball studies at Keki. Walk away views.
Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea* Regular observations of this superbly elegant bird.
Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Common along our whole route.
Mountain Swiftlet ◊ *Aerodramus hirundinaceus* Small numbers were identified in the Huon highlands.
White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius* Small numbers were seen on New Ireland, Mussau and Manus.
Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Common.
Oriental Dollarbird (Common D) *Eurystomus orientalis* A few at Keki and near Madang.
Common Paradise Kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea* (H) We heard the distinctive call near Alotau and near Madang.
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra ◊ *Dacelo gaudichaud* We saw this widespread lowland species near Madang.
Forest Kingfisher *Todiramphus macleayii* Good looks near Alotau and in Madang.
Torresian Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus sordidus* We saw this Collared Kingfisher split on an islet off Madang.
Islet Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus colonus* Two were noted on an islet off Normanby (D'Entrecasteaux Isl).
Melanesian Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus tristrami* Regular sightings on New Ireland.



Beach Kingfisher (Josh Bergmark)

Beach Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus saurophagus* Cracking views were on Tench! A few elsewhere.
Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Regular observations.
Yellow-billed Kingfisher ◊ *Syma torotoro* (H) We heard one on Fergusson Island.



Mountain Kingfisher (Josh Bergmark)

- Mountain Kingfisher** ◊ *Syma megarhyncha* Superb scope views in the Huon highlands (*sellamontis*).
- Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* A few observations on New Ireland (*hispidoides*).
- Manus Dwarf Kingfisher** ◊ *Ceyx dispar* (NT) Brief looks only.
- New Ireland Dwarf Kingfisher** ◊ *Ceyx mulcatus* Scope views of this cutie near our lodge in central New Ireland.
- Azure Kingfisher** *Ceyx azureus* A couple of brief sightings on mainland PNG.
- Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Regular sightings of this southern migrant.



Blyth's Hornbill (tour participant Olof Persson); Meek's Pygmy Parrot (Mark Van Beirs)

- Blyth's Hornbill** ◊ (Papuan H) *Rhyticeros plicatus* Many great encounters.
- Brown Falcon** *Falco berigora* Good looks at several in the Huon highlands. One was carrying a snake!
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita* Common and vociferous on mainland PNG and on Fergusson.
- Pesquet's Parrot** ◊ (Vulturine P) *Psittrichas fulgidus* (V) Very nice views in the Huon highlands.
- Meek's Pygmy Parrot** ◊ *Micropsitta meeki* Regular on Manus. Scope views of one at its nest in a termitary.
- Finsch's Pygmy Parrot** ◊ (Green P P) *Micropsitta finschii* Brief looks at two on New Ireland.

Papuan King Parrot ◊ *Alisterus chloropterus* Several showed all too briefly in the Huon highlands.



Male Eclectus Parrot (Mark Van Beirs)

Eclectus Parrot ◊ *Eclectus roratus* Quite common and so very attractive.

Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* Regular observations.

Song Parrot ◊ (Singing P) *Geoffroyus heteroclitus* Several excellent encounters on New Ireland.

Brehm's Tiger Parrot ◊ *Psittacella brehmii* A foraging female was scoped in the Huon mountains.

Red-chinned Lorikeet ◊ *Chamosyna rubrigularis* Fairly common on New Ireland. Usually seen in flight.

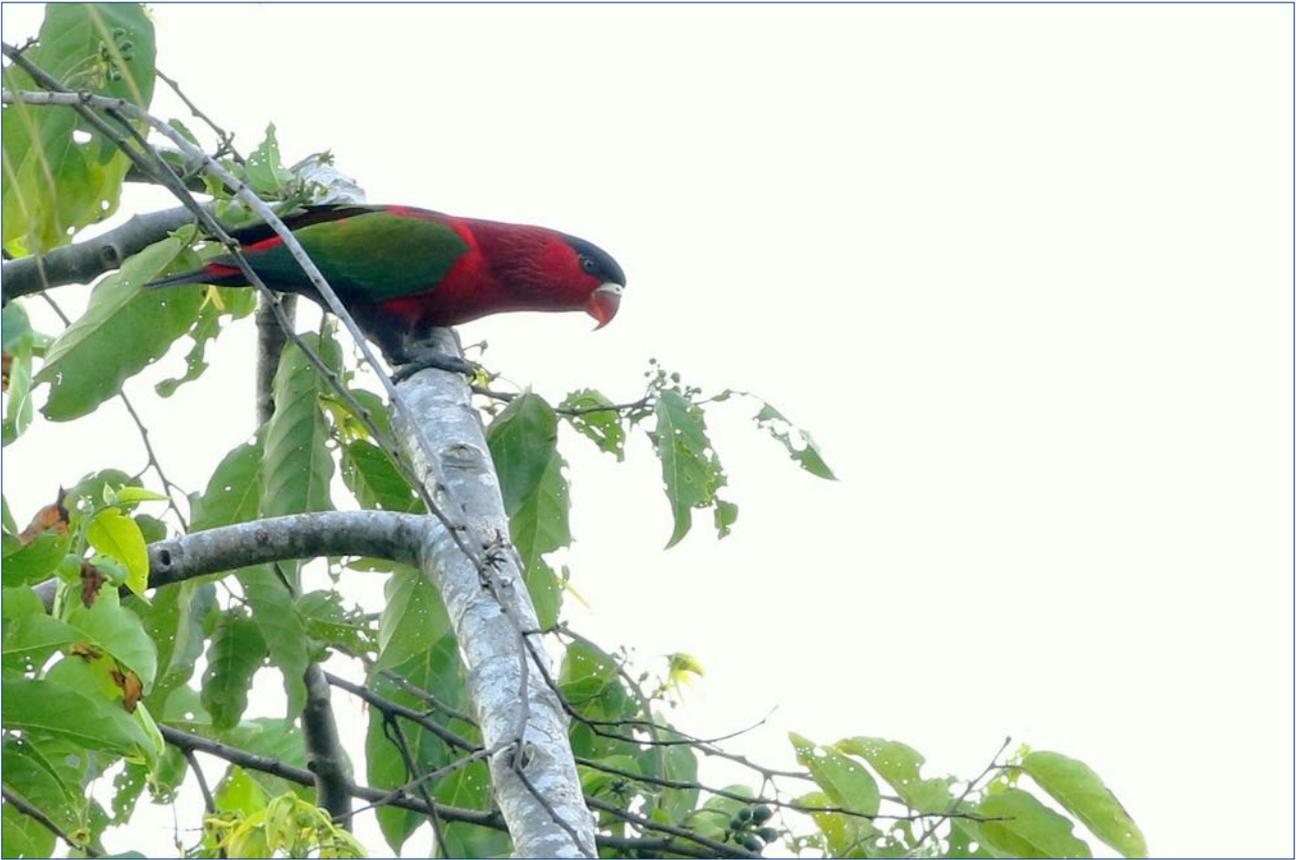
Red-flanked Lorikeet ◊ *Chamosyna placensis* Fairly common on New Ireland.

Fairy Lorikeet ◊ (Little Red Lorikeet) *Chamosyna pulchella* Scope views in the Huon highlands.

Papuan Lorikeet ◊ *Chamosyna papou* Singles showed briefly in the Huon.

Yellow-billed Lorikeet ◊ *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii* A few were seen in flight in the Huon.

Black-capped Lory ◊ (Western B-c L) *Lorius lory* Regular in the Huon lowlands and at Keki Lodge.



Purple-bellied Lory (Josh Bergmark)

Purple-bellied Lory ♦ *Lorius hypoinochrous* Nice observations at Alotau and on New Ireland.



Bismarck Black Myzomela (Josh Bergmark)

White-naped Lory ◊ *Lorius albidinucha* (NT) Pairs were noted in flight on two occasions in the New Ireland hills.

Dusky Lory ◊ *Pseudeos fuscata* Flocks were seen in flight in the Huon and scope views of perched birds at Keki.

Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Regular in the lowlands all along our route.

Double-eyed Fig Parrot ◊ *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* Scope studies in the Huon and others near Madang.

Bismarck Pitta ◊ *Erythropitta novaehibernicae* Good views, eventually, for half the group on New Ireland.

Papuan Pitta ◊ *Erythropitta macklotii* Brief looks at two on Fergusson Island.

Superb Pitta ◊ *Pitta superba* (E) THE BIRD OF THE TRIP! Fantastic observations of this jewel on Manus.

Tan-capped Catbird ◊ *Ailuroedus geislerorum* Nice looks at a foraging bird in the large fig tree at Keki.

Huon Catbird ◊ *Ailuroedus astigmaticus* (H) We heard it a few times in the Huon hills.

MacGregor's Bowerbird ◊ *Amblyornis macgregoriae* Two nice observations for some in the Huon highlands.

Fire-maned Bowerbird ◊ *Sericulus bakeri* (NT) Great views of this brilliant bird at Keki.

Fawn-breasted Bowerbird ◊ *Chlamydera cerviniventris* Easy to see well in Alotau.

White-shouldered Fairywren ◊ *Malurus alboscapulatus* (H) We heard it in the Huon lowlands.

Red Myzomela ◊ (Red-tinted Honeyeater) *Myzomela cruentata* Common in the New Ireland forests.

Papuan Black Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela nigrita* Two males showed well on Fergusson (race *forbesi*).

Bismarck Black Myzomela ◊ (Ebony M) *Myzomela pammelaena* Fairly common on Tench, Mussau and Tong.

Red-collared Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela rosenbergii* Regular and very attractive in the Huon highlands.

Rufous-backed Honeyeater ◊ *Ptiloprora guisei* Small numbers were noted in the montane forests of the Huon.

Plain Honeyeater ◊ *Pycnopygius ixoides* Several birds were regularly visiting fruiting trees at Keki Lodge.

Marbled Honeyeater ◊ *Pycnopygius cinereus* A single bird was seen well in the Huon highlands.

Streak-headed Honeyeater ◊ *Pycnopygius stictocephalus* One was seen in the Alotau area.

Silver-eared Honeyeater ◊ *Lichmera alboauricularis* Good looks in the Alotau gardens.

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater ◊ *Xanthotis flaviventer* Small numbers were noted on Fergusson and in the Huon.

New Guinea Friarbird ◊ *Philemon novaeguineae* Fairly common on the PNG mainland.

Manus Friarbird ◊ (White-naped F) *Philemon albitorques* Quite common and vocal on Manus, but shy.

Long-billed Honeyeater ◊ *Melilestes megarhynchus* Several were seen in the Huon and at Keki.



The Huon endemic Spangled Honeyeater (Josh Bergmark)

Spangled Honeyeater ◊ *Melipotes ater* Super looks at this Huon endemic in the Huon highlands.

Black-throated Honeyeater ◊ *Caligavis subfrenata* Often heard and seen a few times in the Huon forests.

Cinnamon-browed Melidectes ◊ *Melidectes ochromelas* A handful of observations in the Huon.

Varied Honeyeater *Gavicalis versicolor* Good looks in the D'Entrecasteaux and at Madang.

Forest Honeyeater ◊ (F White-eared Meliphaga) *Meliphaga montana* Several birds allowed excellent looks at Keki.

Mountain Honeyeater ◊ (M Meliphaga) *Meliphaga orientalis* We found this species in the Huon and at Keki.

Scrub Honeyeater ◊ (S White-eared Meliphaga) *Meliphaga albonotata* A single bird was identified near Alotau.

Mimic Honeyeater ◊ (M Meliphaga) *Meliphaga analoga* A handful of observations at Keki Lodge.

Puff-backed Honeyeater ◊ (P-b Meliphaga) *Meliphaga aruensis* A couple of nice sightings on Fergusson island.

Rusty Mouse-Warbler ◊ *Crateroscelis murina* (H) Regularly heard in the Huon and at Keki.

Mountain Mouse-Warbler ◊ *Crateroscelis robusta* Two showed briefly in the higher reaches of the Huon.

Buff-faced Scrubwren ◊ *Sericornis perspicillatus* Regular encounters in the montane forest of the Huon.

Brown-breasted Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone ruficollis* (H) Several were heard in the Huon.

Green-backed Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone chloronota* Fair looks at a single bird high in the canopy near Alotau.

Obscure Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis arfakiana* Two birds performed very well in a berry bearing tree at Keki.

Black Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis nigra* Regular encounters at Keki Lodge.

Fan-tailed Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis versteri* Three were seen in the Huon forests.

Dwarf Longbill ◊ *Oedistoma iliolophus* Good looks at a couple in the lowland forest on Fergusson.

Pygmy Longbill ◊ *Oedistoma pygmaeum* Two showed quite well in the lowland rainforest on Fergusson.

Slaty-headed Longbill ◊ (Slaty-chinned L) *Toxorhamphus poliopterus* Two sightings at Keki Lodge.

Tit Berrypecker ◊ *Oreocharis arfaki* Regular and so attractive in the Huon forests.

Brown-headed Jewel-babbler ◊ (Brown-capped J-b) *Ptilorrhoa geislerorum* Brief looks for some at Keki.

Black-breasted Boatbill ◊ *Machaerirhynchus nigripectus* Excellent views in the montane forests of the Huon.

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Common in open areas on mainland PNG.

Great Woodswallow ◊ (New Guinea W) *Artamus maximus* Nice looks at several in the Huon mountains.



White-backed Woodswallows (Josh Bergmark)

White-backed Woodswallow ◊ (Bismarck W) *Artamus insignis* A few encounters in the New Ireland hills.

Mountain Peltops ◊ *Peltops montanus* Perfect studies of this well-behaved species in the Huon and at Keki.

Hooded Butcherbird ◇ *Cracticus cassicus* Regularly seen and often heard.
Mottled Berryhunter ◇ *Rhagologus leucostigma* Excellent looks at this important species in the Huon forests.
Stout-billed Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina caeruleogrisea* A single bird was seen in the Huon hills.
Barred Cuckooshrike (Yellow-eyed C) *Coracina lineata* Regular in the Huon and at Keki.
Boyer's Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina boyeri* Several observations at Keki.
White-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina papuensis* Regular in small numbers along most of our route.



Mountain Peltops (Mark Van Beirs); Manus Cuckooshrike (Josh Bergmark)

Manus Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina ingens* Common and showy on Manus.
Common Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris* A handful of observations of this unobtrusive species.
Grey-capped Cicadabird ◇ *Coracina remota* Several nice sightings on New Ireland.
Black Cicadabird ◇ *Coracina melas* Good looks at a male in the Huon hills.
Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela* We saw this widespread species on Fergusson and on New Ireland.
Rufous-naped Bellbird ◇ *Aleadryas rufinucha* (H) We heard its distinctive voice a few times in the Huon.
Brown-backed Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala modesta* Several fine observations in the Huon forests.



Mangrove Golden Whistler (Josh Bergmark); Paradise Drongo (Mark Van Beirs)

Grey Whistler *Pachycephala simplex* We saw this self-effacing species on Fergusson and at Keki.

Bismarck Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala citreogaster* Regularly recorded on New Ireland, Mussau and on Manus.

Mangrove Golden Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala melanura* Our best views were had on an islet off Madang.

Regent Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala schlegelii* Just a few encounters in the Huon mountain forests.

Little Shrikethrush *Colluricincla megarhyncha* Single sightings during the first half of the tour.

Grey Shrikethrush *Colluricincla harmonica* Good looks at a couple in Alotau.

Australasian Figbird (Green F) *Sphecotheres vieilloti* A single bird was found in the hotel garden at Alotau.

Northern Variable Pitohui ◊ *Pitohui kirhocephalus* A single bird was seen in the large fig tree at Keki.

Hooded Pitohui ◊ *Pitohui dichrous* Several nice encounters in the lower Huon hills.

Brown Oriole ◊ *Oriolus szalayi* Regular sightings of this subtly-hued species.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus* A handful of observations on mainland PNG.

Paradise Drongo ◊ (Ribbon-tailed D) *Dicrurus megarhynchus* (NT) Splendid looks at this endemic on New Ireland.



Willie Wagtail; Northern Fantail (Mark Van Beirs)

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Common all along our itinerary, but does not occur on Manus.

Northern Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura rufiventris* Regularly recorded.

Sooty Thicket Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura threnothorax* Nice looks at a rather friendly bird in the forest at Keki.

White-bellied Thicket Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura leucothorax* Excellent looks at this skulker in the Huon.

Black Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura atra* A few observations of males and females in the Huon forests.

Chestnut-bellied Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura hyperythra* A single bird showed quite well in the forest at Keki.

Friendly Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura albolimbata* Regular in the Huon mountain forests.

Mussau Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura matthiae* (NT) Exquisite studies of this Mussau endemic. A new bird for Birdquest!

Manus Fantail ◊ (Admiralty Rufous F) *Rhipidura semirubra* (V) Fairly common and well-behaved on Tong.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons* Two birds were seen on an islet off Normanby.

Spot-winged Monarch ◊ *Symposiachrus guttula* We observed a couple on Fergusson.

Manus Monarch ◊ (Admiralty Pied M) *Symposiachrus infelix* (NT) Several nice observations on Manus and Tong.

Mussau Monarch ◊ *Symposiachrus menckei* (NT) This beauty was fairly common on Mussau. New for Birdquest!

Black-tailed Monarch ◊ (Bismarck Pied M) *Symposiachrus verticalis* Just two on New Ireland. Extremely shy!

Island Monarch ◊ *Monarcha cinerascens* Regular observations on several islets.

Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis* Not uncommon on Fergusson.

Golden Monarch ◊ *Carterornis chrysomela* We saw this lovely species on Fergusson and on New Ireland.

Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra alecto* Fairly common. More often heard.

Velvet (Mussau) Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra hebetior hebetior* (V) We saw a female of the very distinctive Mussau form.

Velvet Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra hebetior eichhorni* (V) Male and female showed well in central New Ireland.

Grey Crow ◊ (Bare-eyed C) *Corvus tristis* Regular encounters.



Island Monarch; Golden Monarch (Josh Bergmark)

Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Fairly common.

Bismarck Crow ♦ (Island C) *Corvus insularis* Common and obvious on New Ireland.

Lesser Melampitta ♦ *Melampitta lugubris* (H) We heard it in the Huon montane forests, but no response.

Blue-capped Ifrit ♦ (B-c Ifrita) *Ifrita kowaldi* Good looks at two of these unusual birds in the Huon forests.

Crinkle-collared Manucode ♦ *Manucodia chalybatus* Scope views of one at Keki Lodge.

Curl-crested Manucode ♦ *Manucodia comrii* Quite common and very vocal on Fergusson.



Torresian Crow (Mark Van Beirs); male Huon Astrapia (Josh Bergmark)

Huon Astrapia ♦ *Astrapia rothschildi* Several excellent observations of males and females in the Huon.

Wahnes's Parotia ♦ *Parotia wahnesi* (NT) Males and females performed well in the Huon. A real cracker!

Superb Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Lophorina superba* Brief looks at a male in the Huon.

Growling Riflebird ♦ *Ptiloris intercedens* (H) We heard its loud calls in the Huon foothills.

Magnificent Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Diphyllodes magnificus* A male was seen at his display court at Keki.

Raggiana Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Paradisaea raggiana* A female showed briefly near Alotau on our first day out.

Lesser Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Paradisaea minor* Regular and quite showy at Keki Lodge.

Goldie's Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Paradisaea decora* (V) Tremendous looks at displaying males on Fergusson.

Emperor Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Paradisaea guilielmi* (NT) Good looks at males and females in the Huon foothills.

Banded Yellow Robin ♦ (Olive Yellow R) *Poecilodryas placens* (NT) Brief looks at two at Keki. Often heard.

Black-throated Robin ♦ *Poecilodryas albonotata* Perfect scope views in the Huon mountains.



Slaty Robins (Josh Bergmark)

- Slaty Robin** ◊ (Blue-grey R) *Peneothello cyanus* Several encounters in the Huon mountains. A bit secretive...
- Canary Flyrobin** ◊ (C Flycatcher) *Microeca papuana* Several showed well in the Huon mountain forests.
- Bismarck Flyrobin** ◊ *Microeca sp. nov.* Very nice looks at this undescribed taxon on the Lelet Plateau (NI).
- Garnet Robin** ◊ *Eugerygone rubra* (LO) Josh saw a male in the Huon mountains.



Pacific Swallow (Mark Van Beirs); Bismarck White-eye (Josh Bergmark)

- Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica* Common at all visited places.
- Island Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus maforensis* Regularly recorded in the Huon and also on Mussau.
- Australian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus australis* Two were singing away at the Kavieng airport.
- Golden-headed Cisticola (Bright-capped C)** *Cisticola exilis* Several observations of this widespread species.

Black-fronted White-eye ◊ *Zosterops minor* Regular in the montane forests of the Huon.
Bismarck White-eye ◊ (**Black-headed W-e**) *Zosterops hypoxanthus* Good looks on New Ireland and on Manus.
Papuan White-eye ◊ (**New Guinea W-e**) *Zosterops novaeguineae* A few observations in the Huon and at Keki.
Louisiade White-eye ◊ *Zosterops griseotinctus* We saw eight birds well on an islet off Normanby (D'Entrecasteaux).



Singing Starling (Josh Bergmark); Long-tailed Myna (Mark Van Beirs)



Male Black Sunbird (Mark Van Beirs)

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica* Common all along our route.
Singing Starling \diamond *Aplonis cantoroides* Regular in small numbers all over.
Atoll Starling \diamond *Aplonis feadensis* (NT) 15+ showed very well on Tench. Very special and localized!
Yellow-faced Myna \diamond *Mino dumontii* Fairly common in the lowlands of mainland PNG.
Long-tailed Myna \diamond (Melanesian M) *Mino kreffti* Regular sightings on New Ireland.
Russet-tailed Thrush \diamond *Zoothera heinei* Several birds were flushed on our walk on Mussau.
Pied Bush Chat (Pied Chat) *Saxicola caprata* A male was seen at Alotau airport.
Red-capped Flowerpecker \diamond *Dicaeum geelvinkianum* Fairly common in the lowlands of mainland PNG.
Red-banded Flowerpecker \diamond (Bismarck F) *Dicaeum eximium* Fairly common on New Ireland.
Black Sunbird \diamond *Leptocoma aspasia* Small numbers all along our route, but absent on Manus.
Olive-backed Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S) *Cinnyris jugularis* Small numbers all over of this widespread species.
House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* A single bird was seen at Port Moresby airport.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow (introduced) *Passer montanus* Regular in the main towns.
Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trichroa* Good looks at several well-behaved birds on Mussau.
Hooded Mannikin \diamond *Lonchura spectabilis* Several showed well at the Wasu airstrip.



Forbes's Mannikins (Josh Bergmark)

Forbes's Mannikin \diamond (New Ireland M) *Lonchura forbesi* Excellent looks at this endemic in central New Ireland.
Hunstein's Mannikin \diamond (Mottled Munia) *Lonchura hunsteini* Several posed beautifully at the Kavieng airport.
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax* Regular in the Alotau gardens.

MAMMALS

Long-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus capensis* A well-behaved pod escorted us off Normanby.
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuata* Several pods escorted us in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands.
Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* Great looks at six from our beach resort on New Ireland.
Admiralty Flying Fox *Pteropus admiralitatum* Two were identified on Manus.
Great Flying Fox (Bismarck F F) *Pteropus neohibernicus* Common in the Madang area and on New Ireland.



Common Tree Snake (Josh Bergmark)

REPTILES

Common Tree Snake *Dendrelaphis punctulatus* A lovely one showed well on New Ireland
New Guinea Ground Boa *Candoia aspera* One was found on Manus
Pacific Black Skink *Emoia nigra* Common on Tench
Pacific Blue-tailed Skink *Emoia caeruleocauda* Several were seen on New Ireland and on Mussau.
Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas* Several showed well along the Mussau coast.

OTHER

Coconut Crab *Birgus latro* An enormous one was found on Tench. It is the largest land-living arthropod in the world!

BIRD OF THE TRIP

1 Superb Pitta	36 points
2 Goldie's Bird-of-paradise	21 points
3 Fire-maned Bowerbird	17 points
4 Wahnes's Parotia	13 points
5 Nicobar Pigeon	7 points



The island of Tench (Mark Van Beirs)



On the boat to Tong (tour participant Ilka Rauch)



A delightful White Tern (Mark Van Beirs)



Manus sunset (Mark Van Beirs)