



The undoubted star of this fantastic tour is the unique KAGU (János Oláh).

NEW CALEDONIA, FIJI VANUATU & SAMOA

4 / 7 – 20 / 23 AUGUST 2016

LEADER: JÁNOS OLÁH

This itinerary targets a selection of special birds in a hidden corner of the world! It is a superb tour to the South Pacific where, with the help of island-hopping, we encounter a new avifauna from time to time so the excitement never ends – until the very end of the tour anyway! For a split second I was wondering which stunning species to put on the front of the report but very quickly realised it can only be the unique Kagu no matter how many other goodies we saw on this birding tour. This is such a charismatic and amazing bird and the undoubted highlight for most birders on this tour! Nevertheless there is a fine selection of pigeons, doves, whistlers, shrikebills, honeyeaters and parrotfinches on this action-packed tour. Of course island hopping on this large scale (we visited nine different islands on this tour) can cause problems as well, and this year we were unlucky with our flights. While the start of the tour was ultimately not hampered by a cancelled flight, the last destination was affected for most of us. This fantastic region has many interesting birds with comfortable lodging, glorious scenery and a peculiar mix of Melanesian and Polynesian culture. We managed to see most of our targets, doing particularly well on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji where we cleaned up on all gettable specialties and only two special birds were missed on Samoa – which is a great result for a leaderless party! The total trip list was 141 recorded species with only one 'heard only'. This list

included no fewer than 86 Birdquest diamond (◊) species and a total of 24 globally threatened birds including a critically endangered species with a population of only 150-300 individuals in the World: the Crow Honeyeater of New Caledonia! Notable highlights were Vanuatu Megapode, Tahiti Petrel, White-bellied Goshawk, Kagu, Tanna-, Many-coloured-, Orange-, Golden, Whistling Fruit Doves, Cloven-feathered Dove, Goliath Imperial Pigeon, Vanuatu and Flat-billed Kingfishers, the trio of Shining Parrots, Ouvéa and Horned Parakeets, Crow Honeyeater, Mao, Silktail, three species of Shrikebills, Azure-crested Flycatcher, New Caledonian Thicketbird, five species of white-eyes and Pink-billed Parrotfinch just to name but a few!



Fiji has amazing corall reefs and we could witness them on our various flight around this amazing archipelago (János Oláh).

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. Our short visits to the Loyalty Islands yielded Tahiti Petrels, the unique Ouvéa Parakeet and the rarely-seen Large Lifou White-eye. On the mainland of New Caledonia the unique Kagu stole the show but we managed to clean up on all the gettable endemics including the skulking New Caledonia Thicketbird and the rare Crow Honeyeater. Next Fiji's Kadavu island gave us Whistling Fruit Dove, Crimson Shining Parrot, the scarce Black-throated Shrikebill while Viti Levu island gave us lovely Golden Fruit Dove, the very vocal Giant Honeyeater and the rare Pink-billed Parrotfinch. On Taveuni, the Garden Isle, the unbelievable Orange Fruit Dove impressed us most next to the avian wonder of the magnificent Silktail. The highlights of the Upolu island in Samoa included Flat-billed Kingfisher, Mao and Red-headed Parrotfinch.

Our pre-tour extension started on the island of Efate, which is the international gateway to Vanuatu's 115 islands. Some of us arrived in time while the main flight from Australia was cancelled so most of the group arrived well after midnight with the Air Vanuatu flight from Sydney. It was a great relief to see everybody at the airport next morning just before the flight to the island of Espiritu Santo or Santo as it is known locally. After arrival and a quick lunch we wasted no time and drove to the village near the Loru Protected area on the northeast coast of the island. It was just a short drive on the paved road (built recently by the Americans) to the village where we were to meet with a local guide. The village head and the guides were not around so we made arrangements for early next morning and then started birding on the access road of the reserve, which proved to be excellent. We soon located the endemic Vanuatu White-Eye and the many fruiting trees around attracted Pacific Imperial Pigeons as well as the smart Red-bellied Fruit Dove - which is restricted to Vanuatu, Temotu and New Caledonia – and best of all the endemic Tanna Fruit Dove of which we saw several males and females and even found an incubating female on nest! A well forested area gave us several skittish MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Doves, Streaked Fantails and finally a pair of the fantastic Vanuatu or

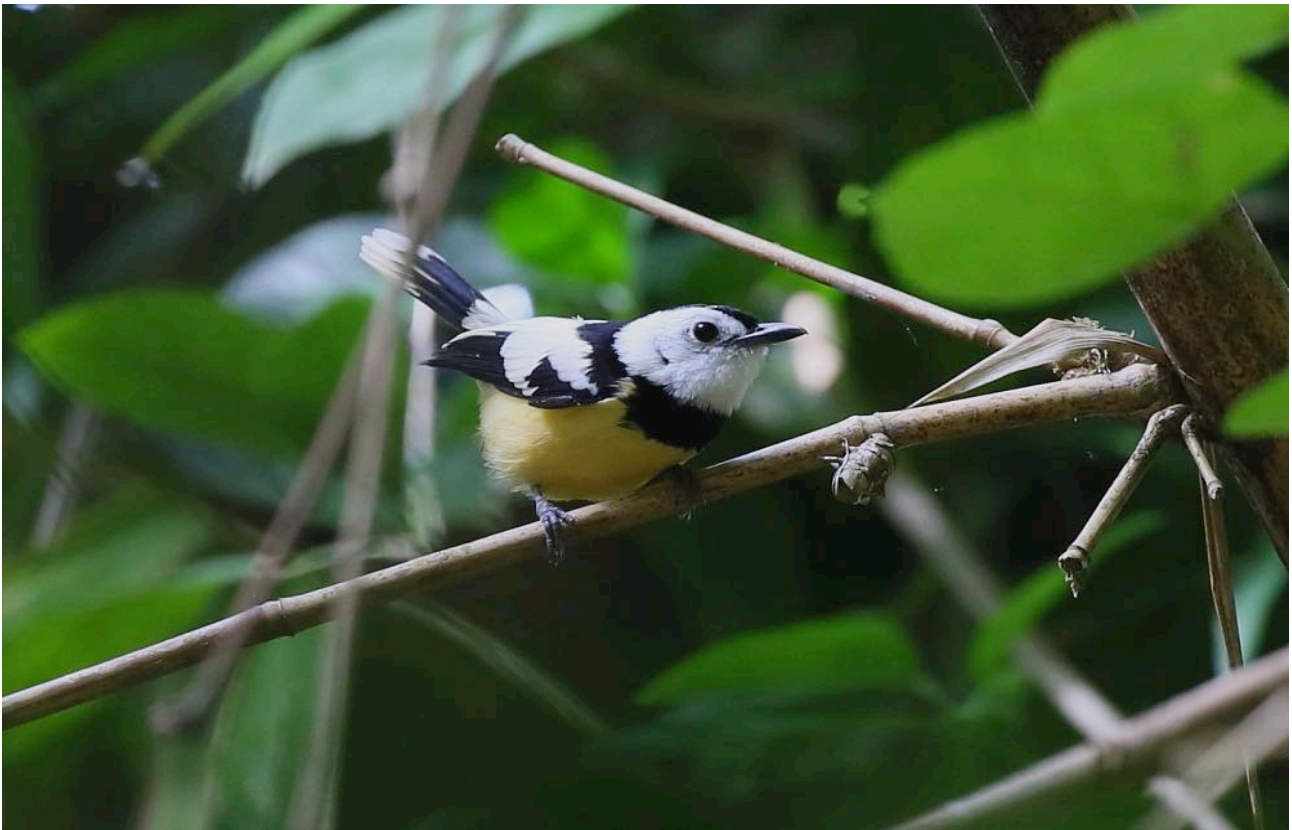
Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher! Other goodies this afternoon included Melanesian Flycatcher, Swamp Harrier, Buff-banded Rail, Metallic Pigeon, many Pacific Emerald Doves, Coconut Lorikeet, Glossy and Uniform Swiftlets, Pacific Kingfisher (distinctive *santoensis* race), Cardinal Myzomela, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike (with its piercing yellow eyes), Melanesian Whistler (*intacta* race) and a brief view of the fantastic Buff-bellied Monarch for some.



On our first afternoon on Vanuatu we saw the superb endemic Vanuatu Kingfisher (top left) and Tanna Fruit Dove (top right) as well as Melanesian Whistler (bottom left) and Red-bellied Fruit Dove (János Oláh).

We were back early next morning at the Loru Reserve, which protects a splendid stretch of lowland rainforest and our local guide was waiting for us this time. We entered the forest in search of the shy Vanuatu Megapode which we did hear several times distantly but the usual spots did not produce any sightings. However, we had amazing looks of the adorable Buff-bellied Monarch which in another endemic and placed in its own genus *Neolalage*. We had more sightings of the canopy dwelling Vanuatu (or Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher at eye-level and also visited a huge colony of Vanuatu Flying Foxes. Despite much effort the megapode was not seen until lunch. After a splendid lunch with some entertaining Mud Crabs to eat we drove to the accessible foothills of the island. Most of the high altitude endemics are out of reach for birders who not prepared for several days of hiking and camping but getting up to about 500 meter we had a slight chance of the Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon. The forest was in good shape but strangely enough it was silent and activity was low. After some exploration however we heard our first Vanuatu (or Baker's) Imperial Pigeons and some of us got lucky instantly seeing it on a large tree. For most of us however took several hours of bushwacking to get some glimpses of this noticeably shy (hunted) species in the thick canopy.

Next morning we were back to Loru but this time we arrived even earlier and took some young and very energetic local guides from the village. The weather was also on our side as it was an overcast morning with slower but longer activity. As soon as we entered the forest we heard the Vanuatu Megapode again but our first tactics were not working regardless how close we got to calling birds. It was time to try something else so a discussion with the locals was followed with a new plan and this time it was working! We positioned ourselves perfectly to see one of them as it was flushed up a tree. We all got excellent looks at these chicken-like creatures perched up on a horizontal branch. The red face, yellow legs and dark plumage could be studied in detail. Needless to say we were all very happy to get this vulnerable endemic!



The amazing looking Buff-bellied Monarch (top), ferry ride to lunch (János Oláh) and the shy Vanuatu Megapode (John Reilly).

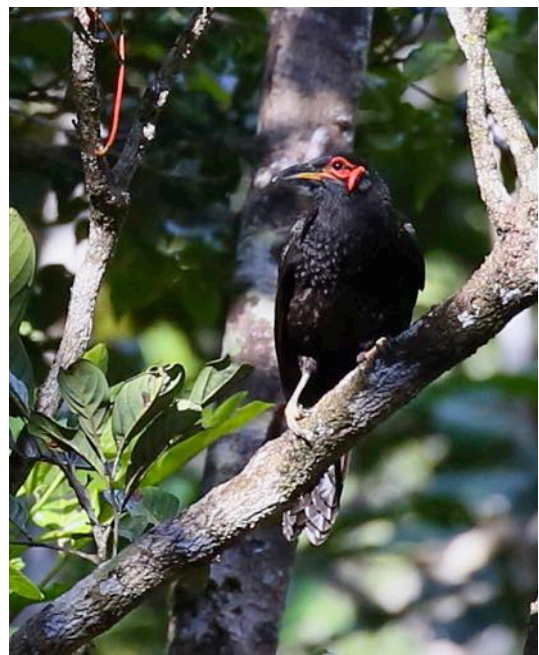
After breakfast we flew to Efate, where we enjoyed a relaxed picnic lunch at Devil's head with Lesser Frigatebird, Red-footed and Brown Boobies, local race of the endemic Vanuatu White-Eye and Grey-eared Honeyeaters. Here, our Vanuatu pre trip ended as we took the onward flight to New Caledonia. We picked up the minibus and drove into the substantial and modern city of Nouméa for the night.

Our day trip to the offshore island of Ouvéa, one of the Loyalty Islands was the next day's programme! After a short flight we drove in our minibus to the north of this strangely-shaped island, where the restricted range Ouvéa Parakeet survives. Unfortunately our pre-arranged local guide had to leave the island a few days before our arrival so it took a while to find his wife who was just as good in the field with great skill to mimic the call of the parakeets! She took us into the forest, where we heard several parakeets though it took a while to track one down. Eventually however we all got superb looks of this very special bird as it was feeding over the forest track. It used to be lumped with the mainland Horned Parakeet, but looks quite different. We got our main target for the day so a nice seaside lunch was followed by a bit of seawatching of the eastern headland. It was very birdy with hundreds of Black and Brown Noddies flying around and we also had several Brown Boobies, Tahiti Petrels and a Bridled Terns. We also had three more Ouvéa Parakeets in this area and other birds on the island included Brown Goshawk, Pacific Emerald Dove, Red-bellied Fruit Dove, Sacred Kingfisher of the *macmillani* race, Cardinal Myzomela, Grey-eared Honeyeater, Fan-tailed Gerygone, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike of the *lifuensis* race, Melanesian Whistler of the *littayei* race, Melanesian Flycatcher of the *viridinitensis* race and Striated Starlings!



Flying into Ouvéa, Loyalty Islands (left) and the endemic Ouvéa Parakeet which has a World population of 2000 birds (János Oláh).

Our next day was K-day so all very excited we left very early for the famous Parc de la Rivière Bleue. Arriving at dawn we did some birding around the park's entrance, where in the forest and surrounding scrub we picked up our first specialities like a very obliging New Caledonian Parakeet, several nice Barred Honeyeaters and New Caledonian Friarbirds. As soon as the gate opened we were inside this famous park with the help of our local guide Joel. We arrived in good time at the best stretch of humid forest and soon heard a distant Crow Honeyeater. We got no response so we continued to search for Kagu. We walked the Kagu trail but apart from New Caledonian Whistler nothing else show. Back on the main track we started walking and soon managed to locate a fine Crow Honeyeater which behaved uncharacteristically well, low down in the mid canopy allowing superb looks for all! This most endangered bird of the tour with a World population of 150-300 individuals was a much appreciated lifer for everyone.



The critically endangered Crow Honeyeater on New Caledonia (János Oláh).

Next we walked the trail around the Grand Kauri tree and here we found our first Kagus in the forest. What a stunning bird and how nice it was to see it in the forest! Later several more Kagus showed extremely well and in the course of the day we got mega looks at eight different birds, often at extremely close range. Getting eye-ball to eye-ball views of this endangered species was a great experience. About 1,500 of these flightless birds are estimated to survive and their main threats are feral dogs and cats. The birdy forest track yielded other goodies too such as the secretive White-bellied Goshawk, the huge Goliath Imperial Pigeon, the modestly-feathered New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, the colorful New Caledonian Myzomela, the very curious Yellow-bellied Flyrobins and Southern Shrikebill. It was a great day birding and we left this fantastic park very satisfied!



Adult Kagu (top), male New Caledonian Whistler (bottom left) and New Caledonian Parakeet in Parc Rivière Bleue (János Oláh).



Yellow-bellied Flyrobin (top), Goliath Imperial Pigeon (bottom left) and New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, Parc Rivière Bleue (János Oláh).

Our next day was another short visit to another small island. We flew to the offshore island of Lifou, one of the Loyalty Islands, which produced several very localized birds. After the early morning flight in a small plane we landed on this woodland covered island. We quickly got our rental vehicle again and started to explore the island. The first endemic was seen at the airport waiting area as a party of Small Lifou White-

eyes were feeding on some low bushes with the local and very distinct *melanops* race of Silvereyes! We explored several forest trails and soon located handsome Red-bellied Fruit Doves, Metallic Pigeons, Cardinal Myzomelas and *lifuensis* South Melanesian Cuckooshrikes. The other island endemic however took us a while to locate but eventually we all got excellent looks of this unobtrusive and rather shy forest denizen: the Large Lifou White-eye. It was yet another successful morning and we were ready to fly back to Grand Terre. As soon as we were back to Nouméa we took some picnic lunch and drove to a nearby wader spot hoping to get some proper tide level. Our short lunch spot gave us our only Eastern Osprey of the tour as well as Bar-tailed Godwits and Whimbrels. In the late afternoon we drove to the Farino area further north on the island.



Small Lifou White-eye (left) and the shy Large Lifou White-eye (right) on Lifou Island (János Oláh).

Our next day was planned to cover the various habitats around Farino and to locate the remaining endemics on New Caledonia. We left our hotel in darkness as usual and our picnic breakfast spot was very productive with an exquisite Cloven-feathered Dove, a Long-tailed Triller and some New Caledonian Crows. Some people also managed to see Horned Parakeets. For most of the morning we wandered along the 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. Our best bird was the seldom seen New Caledonian Thicketbird which really did perform well and everybody got first class looks! It was a special moment indeed.



New Caledonian Thicketbird (Janos Oláh).



New Caledonian Thicketbird (János Oláh).

With most of our targets seen well we decided to walk a forest track where we have encountered more White-bellied or New Caledonian Goshawks. We had repeated smashing looks at least three different perched birds, definitely one of the more handsome looking members of the genus *Accipiter*. Along this pleasant walk we had more looks of New Caledonian Friarbirds, Barred Honeyeaters and New Caledonian Myzomela males. Some of us also got to see a singing Red-throated Parrotfinch. After a fine lunch we concentrated to get more looks at parrotfinches for everybody as well as good views of Horned Parakeet. It

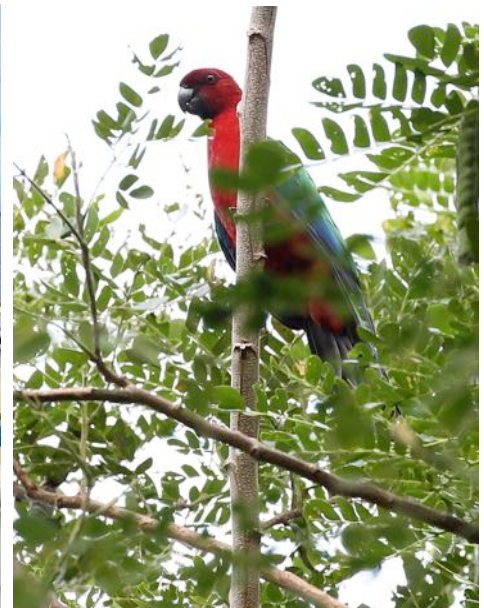
was a successful afternoon as we got to see about eight Red-throated Parrotfinches as they were feeding on the roadside and taking a quick bath in a nearby pool. We also had walk-away scope views of several Horned Parakeets and many Green-backed White-eyes. Other birds included Buff-banded Rail, Welcome Swallow, Australasian Swamphen, introduced Wild Turkey, Spotted Dove, Rufous Whistler, Striated Starlings and Common Waxbill. On the way back to our hotel we had two more Goliath Imperial Pigeons and an Eastern Barn Owl at dusk.



White-bellied or New Caledonian Goshawk (top), Red-throated Parrotfinch (left) and New Caledonian Crow, Farino (János Oláh).

It was a great finale to this magical island and all left for us next morning was to drive to the airport. We had a brief stop along the way to see a few more waterbirds on some pools near La Foa. We added Australasian Grebe, Grey Teal and Pacific Black Duck to our island and trip list. So New Caledonia definitely had delivered the goods and a happy group flew to Fiji, where we landed at Nadi for an overnight stay. This is the hub of the Fiji Archipelago and is situated on the western side of the island of Viti Levu.

A short onward flight took us to Kadavu next morning. This isolated island was our first birding on Fiji. From the plane we gazed at the splendid coastal scenery and upon arrival we were greeted by the friendly staff of the Papageno Resort. 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 new energetic manager and after a late lunch we wandered around the splendid gardens.



The Birdquest group on the way to Papageno Resort (left) and the endemic Crimson Shining Parrot on Kadavu (János Oláh).

In the next day and a half we thoroughly explored the fantastic garden and also took some forest trails. We have repeated great views of all the Kadavu endemics and also have seen many other Fiji endemics. In the garden we found a great spot where fruiting trees and bushes attracted most of the fruiteater birds and it allowed us to get prolonged excellent looks of Whistling Fruit Dove, Many-coloured Fruit Dove, Barking Imperial Pigeon, Polynesian Starling, Polynesian Triller and Layard's White-eye. The Kadavu Fantail with its black throat and high pitched song, the magnificent Crimson Shining Parrot and both Slaty Monarch and Vanikoro Flycatchers were seen on the forest edge. The red flowering Schefflera bushes or octopus trees were attracting many Kadavu Honeyeaters with its bright yellow cheek patch, Collared Lories and Sulphur-breasted Myzomelas. The pecking order was of course decided by the size so poor myzomelas had to be very quick and very persistent to be able to get to the flowers! The forest trail leading to a waterfall was also very productive and we got excellent looks of the scarce Black-throated Shrikebill and the *becki* race of the Pacific Robin! We also spotted several Whistling (or Velvet) Doves and heard the unmistakable unique, almost whistler-like song, sounding very unusual for a member of the pigeon family! Other notable birds included the local 'white-throated' form of Fiji Whistler, Fiji Shrikebill and Fiji Bush Warbler. The lodge was also amazing and very friendly so the entire experience was truly memorable!



Collared Lory (left) and the endemic Kadavu Honeyeater feeding on Schefflera bush at the Papageno Resort (János Oláh).



Black-throated Shrikebill (top) and the endemic Whistling or Velvet Fruit Dove at the Papageno Resort (János Oláh).

After a last morning at the Papageno Resort we made our way to the airport by boat and took a short flight to Suva on the eastern side of Viti Levu. A quick lunch at the airport was followed by picking up our minibus and a short drive to our hotel along the beach. We still had a little time left for birding and we decided to visit

Suva point and check out waders. Just as we got there we picked up Fiji Woodswallow, a singing Kikau or Western Wattled Honeyeater and Fiji Parrotfinch in the nearby scrubland and also had a fine adult Fiji Goshawk perched on a roadside post allowing extra good looks. It was high tide and a bit early for the wader season but we still managed to find our main target in the form of about a dozen Wandering Tattlers roosting on a dead tree not far from the shore. It was a nice relaxed afternoon with some wonderful views!



Fiji Parrotfinch male at Suva Point (János Oláh).

The following morning we drove to the interior of the island. Most of the day found us along a wide track through well preserved hill forest and this produced an excellent variety of Fijian specialities. Our first unscheduled stop produced brief views of the Giant Honeyeater, a pair of Pacific Robins, a singing Fiji Bush Warbler of the *badiceps* race as well as Masked Shining Parrots and Azure-crested Flycatcher for some. After this quick but birdy stop we drove to our final location where the rare Pink-billed Parrotfinch had been reported recently. By the time we got there the clouds were moving in and visibility reduced. We took an uphill sidepath from the track where first two running local kids and then two running cattle appeared from the mist and we could barely jump away from the 'Pamplona Bull running'. After this unexpected excitement we concentrated on the singing birds and it did not take long to get great looks of a calling male Golden Dove! What a stunner it was! Fiji is famous for its trio of special fruit doves which used to be placed in their own *Chrysoenas* genus (will be soon again) and we have no doubts why they are so special after seeing the first two! We continued along the path and we got distant but proper looks of the Giant Honeyeater and more Golden Doves were seen but we have not had a sniff of the rare parrotfinch. On the way back to our bus we saw a fine Azure-crested Flycatcher but as soon as we got back it started raining. We returned to our hotel for a lunch seeing another Masked Shining Parrot along the road. In the afternoon we were back to the very same spot and although the rain more or less stopped the activity was very poor. A singing Island Thrush refused to show and Golden Dove was heard only. A few Kikaus were hoping about and a male Black-throated Shrikebill was seen again. Activity was slightly picking up and we finally had excellent looks of Giant Honeyeater. It was very late afternoon when a small bird party was starting to show and Bob soon shouted 'I have got a parrotfinch'. We got lucky and indeed it was the rare Pink-billed Parrotfinch, which was rather skittish and unobtrusive, feeding at mid level in the mossy forest and acting like a nuthatch. A few nervous minutes were passing as it disappeared a few times but luckily we always managed to relocate it. Finally we all got to see it well and then realized we have just added another bird to the Birdquest life list! What a fantastic finish of a great day it was and a lifer for the leader as well! This was followed by some celebration wine back in the hotel!



Giant Honeyeater (top), the rare Pink-billed Parrotfinch (left) and the amazing Golden Dove on Viti Levu (János Oláh).

We needed a very early start to take us along a pretty rough track to the mountainous heart of Viti Levu by daybreak. It was an adventure to get to the site, especially the last section of very steep gravelly track. 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 were happy to stretch our legs and get a quick field breakfast. Our local guide meanwhile explained how badly this area has been hit by the first ever category 5 hurricane back in February and no doubt we could see this in the state of the forest. We were ready to go and look for this mega skulker! We soon heard the characteristic repetitive strophes of our target so we got in position and waited, and waited but nothing happened. We tried this a few more times and the bird was just like a ghost – usually walking in very thick undergrowth – we could not get a glimpse. We tried other territories and some of us had fleeting glimpses but by this time we knew why this bird was 'lost for a long time'. We decided to try a different area and drove to another site where we managed to locate three more territories but over the course of another few hours only one of us had a proper view. So all in all after a lot of work we have not had much success of this mega skulker in its wet, rocky habitat. We have not spent much time to look at anything else then the undergrowth but a fine Black-throated Shrikebill, Pacific Robins, Metallic Pigeons, Fiji Parrotfinches and several Island Thrushes of the race *layardi* were seen. In the afternoon it started to rain heavily so we decided to quit and drove back to our base in Suva.

We had a leisure mid morning flight the following day which was very welcome after the 0400 start the previous day. We were about to fly to our final destination on Fiji, to the fantastic Taveuni or sometimes called the 'garden island'. However we first had to fly back to Nadi so it was late afternoon by the time we arrived to this island. We drove to our base which is a nice lodge with a superb ocean view and spent a little time with seawatching though apart from Red-footed and Brown Boobies there were very few out there. Sadly this island was also very badly hit by the big hurricane and one of the usual site where all birders go was absolutely devastated with no big trees left at all. Luckily we had a local guide who knows another spot for the much sought-after Orange Dove – so our expectations were still high for the next day. The weather forecast was rather grim for the next two days but it did not destroy our spirit!

Soon after dawn next day we were up on a forested hillside where lots of big fruiting trees were prominent and even the overnight rain has stopped by dawn. So it was all looking very good indeed. We quickly moved to a side gully where the enigmatic Silktail has a territory. Fiji Whistlers were singing all around us, lots of Barking Imperial Pigeons were about and we also heard a Tongan Ground Dove from the undergrowth as well as distant Maroon Shining Parrots. A fine male Azure-crested Flycatcher showed up and this local race is also a good candidate for a future split. Just as we were watching this beauty suddenly a Silktail flew across the path and not much later we were all looking at this unique and strange little bird in its full glory! In the next hour we saw at least three different individuals as they were singing, chasing each other and foraging on mossy limbs.

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.

After this magical bird we concentrated on the fruiting trees and saw fine male Many-coloured Fruit Doves, Maroon Shining Parrots, Polynesian Starlings and Polynesian Trillers. Finally on the way back to our cars we heard the clicking song of the male Orange Dove and with a bit of coaxing we got excellent looks of this amazing bird, the last of the 'big three' Fiji doves! What a stunning bird it was and we could study it for a long time. We also managed to see the recently split Fiji Wattled Honeyeater, which is only possible on Taveuni on this tour. In the afternoon we visited the cool, dripping forest of the Des Veoux Peak. In this paradise of epiphytes, bamboo, orchids and moss-covered trees we found another Silktail. We also had a displaying male Azure-crested Flycatcher with its crest fully erected, some shy Island Thrushes of the race *tempesti*, Fiji Parrotfinches and we also tracked down our main target, the recently split Yellow-billed Honeyeater (split form Giant Honeyeater) showing its distinctive yellow bill and legs. They really look and sound different and Birdquest has suggested a long time ago how different they are and we always made sure to see it well in case of a future split! This was another excellent day with stunning birds!



The group in front of a large 'hurricane victim' tree at Taveuni's Des Veoux Peak (János Oláh).



Silktail (top left), male Orange Dove (top right), Azure-crested Flycatcher (bottom left) and Yellow-billed Honeyeater (János Oláh).

We had another morning on this superb island so we decided to return and look for the specialties again. Back in the same area as the previous morning things were rather different. We only had fleeting looks at a Silktail but while waiting at the fruiting trees most people saw a fly-by Tongan Ground Dove. Not the best of views but this secretive species is very difficult to observe in this lush undergrowth. We had more views of Orange Doves and we could study the female, the green and orange checkered immature and a fine male again. This time the male was singing continuously and it was amazing to see it in the telescope. This was a fitting final of Taveuni! After lunch we drove to the airport and were ready to go. This is where things started to go wrong as the flight was cancelled. Rather frustrated we returned to our welcoming lodge and had another wonderful dinner by the ocean.

Next morning we did manage to get out of Taveuni and fly back to Nadi. However we missed our international flight last night and the plane was almost full for this day. To cut a long story short only half the group managed to fly to Samoa this evening. Even worse that there were no flight next day and the 72 seater was full again for the day after tomorrow. So this fantastic tour finished rather sadly as we were separated and not to be rejoined.

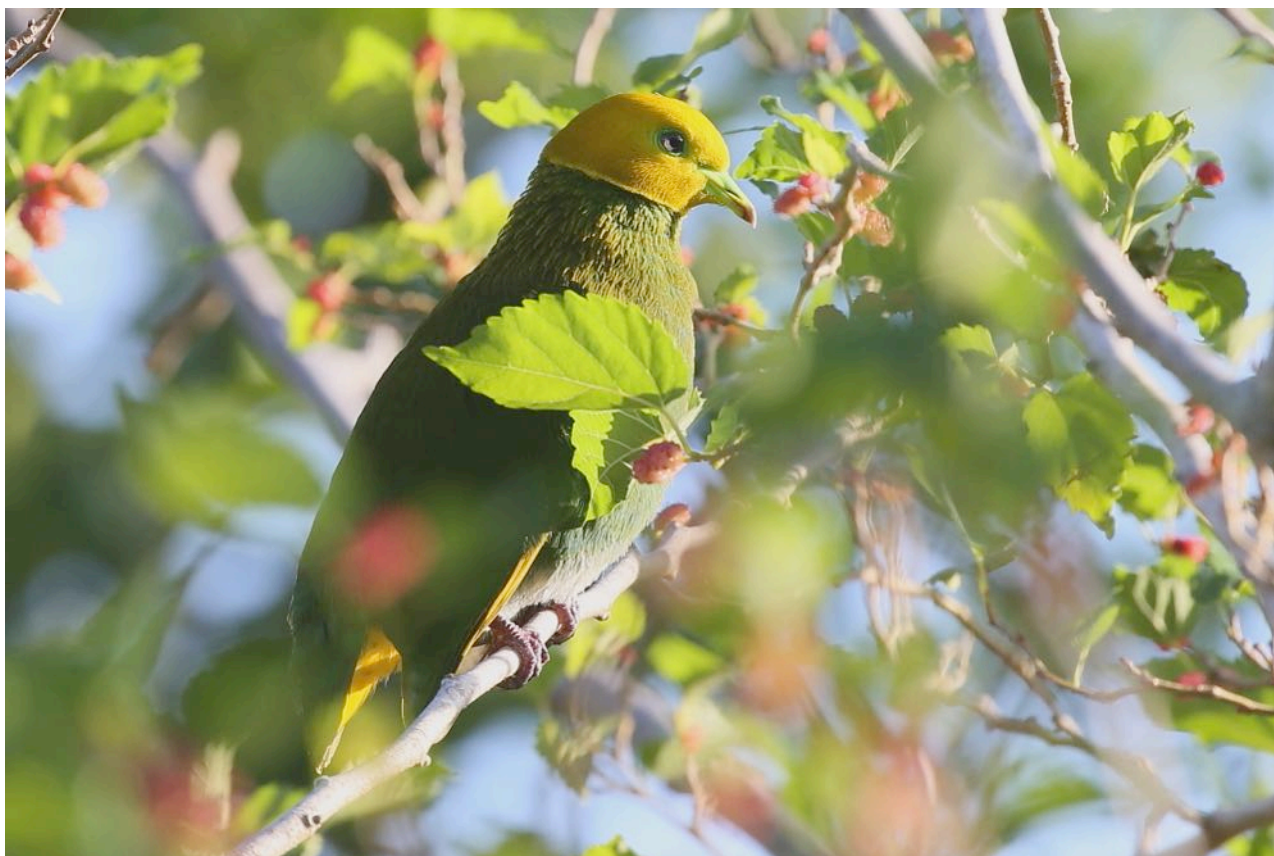
For those who made it to Samoa the birding was great! The Samoa Archipelago consists of two larger islands (Upolu and Savai'i) next to eight islets and its origin is volcanic. Samoa was previously located east of the international date line but in 2011, the country moved the International Date Line to 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. The first day was spent along the Cross Island Road at various locations and a good number of Samoa endemics were seen. The charming Flat-billed Kingfisher looks like a small Sacred and likewise sat out in the open. The large, black Samoan Starling was regularly seen but Polynesian Starling was irritatingly common at times. Samoan Whistlers betrayed their presence by their loud song and look distinctive enough with their yellow throats and fronts. Highlights of the first day were superb perched views of the Blue-crowned Lorikeets and a pair of noisy Maos. It was an amazing bird and the last member of the distinctive genus *Gymnomyza* (endemic to the southwest Pacific) had fallen, after the Crow, Giant and Yellow-billed Honeyeaters. Graceful White-tailed Tropicbirds and Brown Noddies drifted continually overhead and ethereal White Terns graced the skies. Several other birds were noted as well such as the colourful Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove, Cardinal Myzomela, Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater and a few Red-headed Parrotfinches. The next day more new birds were found like the delightful Samoan Fantail and also better looks of the Red-headed Parrotfinches were obtained. The famous Robert Louis Stevenson loop, to the place where the famous author of "Treasure Island" and "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" lies buried, was rather quiet and birdless in the heat of the day. Stevenson spent the final five years of his life on the island of Upolu. Samoa did deliver a good selection of its specialities!

It was an amazing tour with a very keen and relaxed group of Birdquesters! We have had many great birds and memories to remember on this superb tour to the South Pacific!



The amazing Mao (top left) and the large Samoan Starling (top right) on Samoa (John Reilly) and a fantastic Origma or Rock Warbler near Sydney for those who didn't make it to Samoa (János Oláh).



Male Whistling Dove on Kadavu. This is one of three special – used to be 'Chrysoenas' genus - doves of Fiji (János Oláh).

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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>

CR = Critically Endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* One was seen near La Foa in New Caledonia. Race *leucosternos*.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* A few near La Foa in New Caledonia.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* A few near La Foa in New Caledonia.

Vanuatu Megapode ◊ (New Hebrides S) *Megapodius layardi* Finally we got excellent looks on Santo. **VU**

Wild Turkey *Meleagris gallopavo* Just a female and two chicks were seen in New Caledonia. Introduced.

Red Junglefowl (Feral Chicken) *Gallus gallus* We only saw them on Vanuatu. Introduced.

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

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* (LO) One was seen off Ouvéa, New Caledonia.

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

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* (NL) One was seen on the edge of mangroves on Kadavu. Race *solomonensis*.

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

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

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* One was seen on Taveuni (Fiji).

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Singletons were seen on Vanuatu and New Caledonia while it was common on Fiji.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* A few were seen on Vanuatu and more on Fiji especially Taveuni.

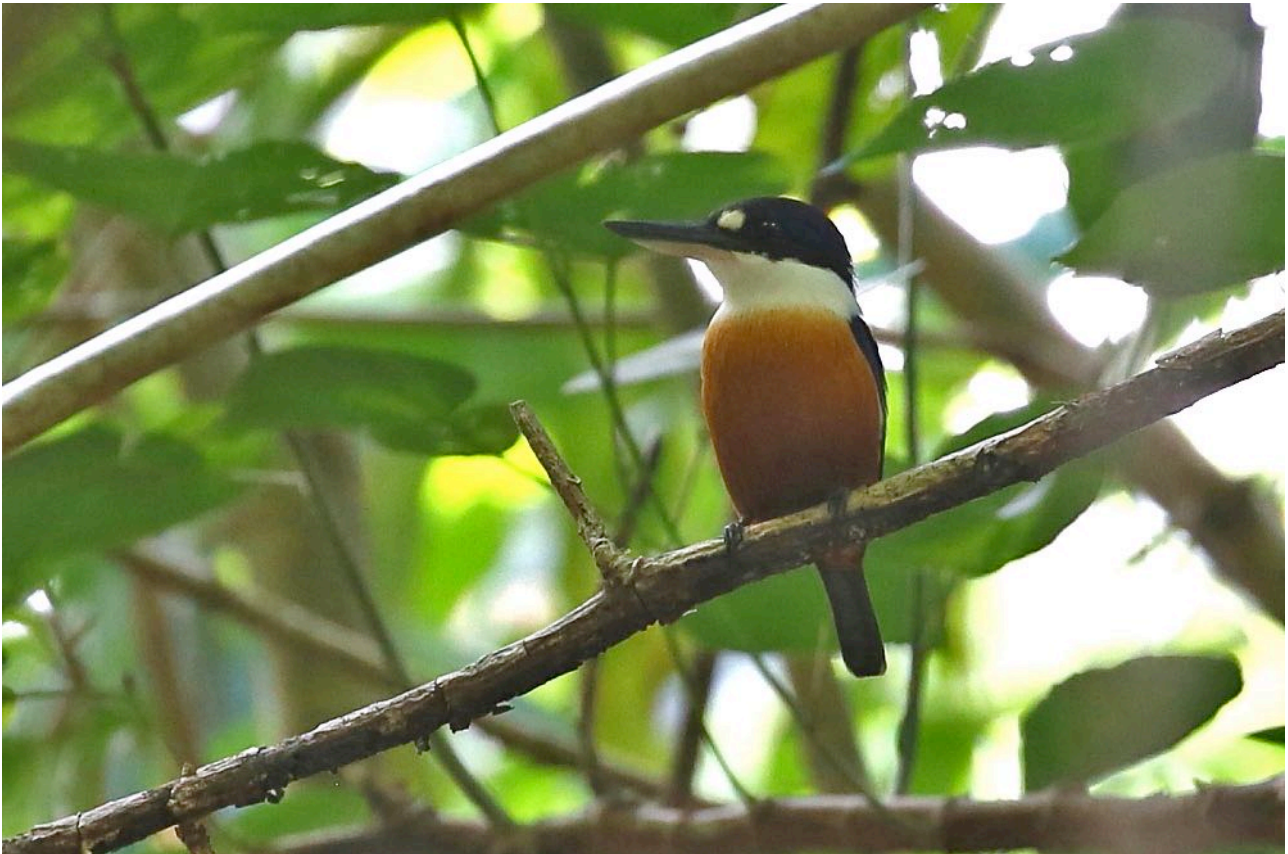
Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Regular sightings off Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji.
Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Two were seen in New Caledonia.
Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One was seen near Nouméa in New Caledonia.
Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* A brief sighting on Ouvéa by some and another at New Caledonia mainland.
White-bellied Goshawk ♦ (New Caledonian G) *Accipiter haplochrous* Several superb looks on New Caledonia. **NT**
Fiji Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter rufitorques* A total of 10 were seen on the three visited islands in Fiji.



Adult Fiji Goshawk at Suva Point (János Oláh).

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia and a few noted on Fiji.
Whistling Kite *Haliastur spheurnus* A handful of sightings on New Caledonia.
Kagu ♦ *Rhynchotus jubatus* We had fantastic encounters with this attractive and unique species. Bird of the trip! **EN**
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.
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Singletons were seen on Fiji.
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Just seven of the *baueri* race in New Caledonia near Nouméa. **NT**
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Two of the *variegatus* race in New Caledonia near Nouméa.
Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* We saw 14 birds roosting near Suva Point on Fiji.
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* A few were seen on Ouvéa, a few distant birds on Fiji and common on Samoa.
Black Noddy *Anous minutus* About 300 were seen off Ouvéa (New Caledonia).
White Tern (Common W T) *Gygis alba* (NL) Fairly common and so very appealing on Samoa.
Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* About 70 were seen close to Nouméa.
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 distant birds on Taveuni (Fiji).
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* Regularly seen.
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* Several great encounters on Vanuatu.
Pacific Emerald Dove (P Green-winged P) *Chalcophaps longirostris* Good looks on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
Tongan Ground Dove (Friendly G D, Shy G D) *Alopecoenas stairi* Flight views for most of us on Taveuni. **VU**
Tanna Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus tannensis* Excellent looks of this one on Vanuatu.
Many-coloured Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus perousii* Great views on Kadavu and Taveuni (Fiji) and Samoa. **See note.**
Crimson-crowned Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus porphyraeus* (NL) Regular observations on Samoa. **VU**
Red-bellied Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus greyi* Regular on Vanuatu and on New Caledonia's islets.
Orange Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus victor* Both sexes were seen very well on Taveuni (Fiji). Amazing bird!

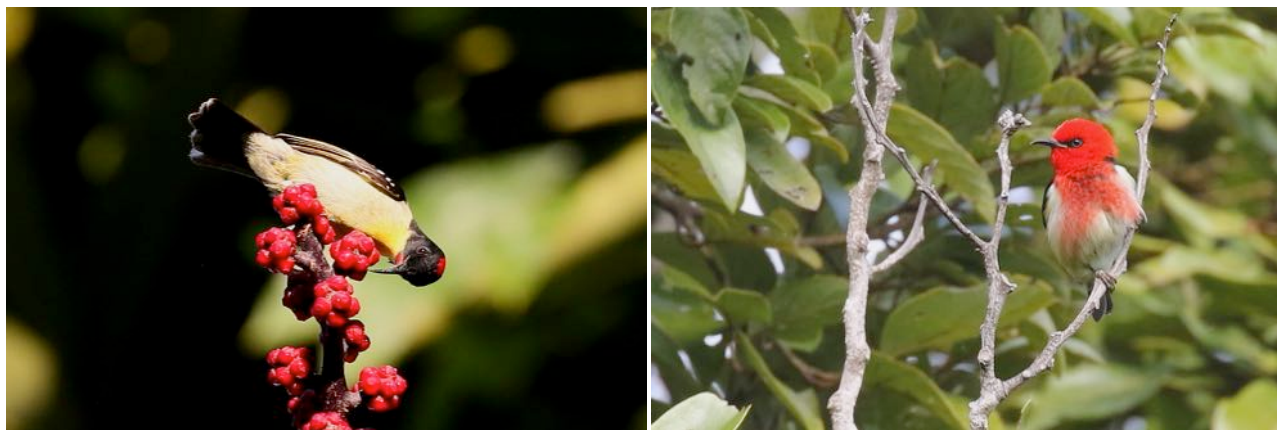
Golden Fruit Dove ◇ *Ptilinopus luteovirens* We had good views on Viti Levu (Fiji).
Whistling Fruit Dove ◇ (Velvet F D) *Ptilinopus layardi* Amazing sightings on Kadavu this year! **NT**
Cloven-feathered Dove ◇ *Drepanoptila holosericea* A single bird was seen well on New Caledonia. **NT**
Pacific Imperial Pigeon ◇ *Ducula pacifica* Common on Vanuatu and Samoa.
Barking Imperial Pigeon ◇ (Peale's I P) *Ducula latrans* Common on the Fijian islands.
Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon ◇ (Baker's I P) *Ducula bakeri* We managed some brief views in the Santo foothills. **VU**
Goliath Imperial Pigeon ◇ (New Caledonian I P) *Ducula goliath* Excellent looks on New Caledonia. **NT**
Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* A few encounters on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis* (H) We heard the unique song in the highlands of Viti Levu.
Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto delicatula* One was seen well at dusk near Farino on New Caledonia.
Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius* Seen on New Caledonia and especially common on Fiji.
Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* It was common on Vanuatu.
Vanuatu Kingfisher ◇ (Chestnut-bellied K) *Todiramphus farquhari* This lovely endemic showed well on Santo. **NT**



Endemic Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher (top) on Vanuatu while *juliae* /*santoensis* race (bottom left) and *vitiensis* race of Pacific Kingfisher on Vanuatu and Fiji (János Oláh).

Pacific Kingfisher *Todiramphus sacer* Many sightings on Vanuatu (*juliae*) and on Fiji (*vitiensis*). **See note.**
Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Regular on New Caledonia. **See note.**

Flat-billed Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus recurvirostris* (NL) Commonly encountered on Samoa.
 Crimson Shining Parrot ♦ *Prosopaea splendens* Cracking views of several at our cosy resort on Kadavu (Fiji). **VU**
 Masked Shining Parrot ♦ *Prosopaea personata* Several were seen on Viti Levu (Fiji). **NT**
 Maroon Shining Parrot ♦ (Red S P) *Prosopaea tabuensis* Regular encounters of the *taviunensis* race on Taveuni (Fiji).
 Horned Parakeet ♦ *Eunymphicus cornutus* Several excellent scope studies in New Caledonia's reserves. **VU**
 Ouvea Parakeet ♦ (Uvea P) *Eunymphicus uvaeensis* Great views of several foraging birds on Ouvéa. **EN See note.**
 New Caledonian Parakeet ♦ *Cyanoramphus saisseti* Excellent looks on New Caledonia. **NT**
 Blue-crowned Lorikeet ♦ *Vini australis* (NL) Good views on Samoa.
 Collared Lory ♦ *Phigys solitarius* Many splendid observations sightings on Fiji. Best views on Kadavu!
 Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* The *massena* race on Vanuatu and *deplanchi* race on New Caledonia.
 New Caledonian Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela caledonica* Regular in flowering bushes on New Caledonia.
 Cardinal Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela cardinalis* Seen well on Vanuatu, New Caledonia's islets and on Samoa. **See note.**
 Sulphur-breasted Myzomela ♦ (Orange-breasted M) *Myzomela jugularis* Great looks at this fantastic Fiji endemic.
 Grey-eared Honeyeater ♦ (Dark-brown H) *Lichmera incana* Common in New Caledonia and Vanuatu. **See note.**
 Kadavu Honeyeater ♦ (Kandavu H) *Xanthotis provocator* Common and vocal on Kadavu.
 New Caledonian Friarbird ♦ *Philemon diemenensis* Regular in New Caledonia's reserves.
 Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater ♦ *Foulehaio carunculatus* (NL) Common on Samoa. **See note.**
 Fiji Wattled Honeyeater ♦ *Foulehaio taviunensis* A few were seen on Taveuni (Fiji). **See note.**
 Kikau (Western W H) ♦ *Foulehaio procerior* Regularly seen on Viti Levu. **See note.**
 Yellow-billed Honeyeater ♦ *Gymnomyza viridis* Just a few were seen on Taveuni. **See note.**
 Giant Honeyeater ♦ (Giant Forest H) *Gymnomyza viridis* Seen several times on Viti Levu. Amazing loud song!
 Mao ♦ *Gymnomyza samoensis* (NL) This vocal species was seen in the Upolu highlands. **EN**
 Crow Honeyeater ♦ *Gymnomyza aubryana* Great looks of this rarity at Parc de La Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. **CR**
 Barred Honeyeater ♦ *Glycifohia undulata* Small numbers of this smart bird were noted on New Caledonia.



Sulphur-breasted Myzomela (top left) on Kadavu, New Caledonian Myzomela (top right) and Barred Honeyeater in Grandes Fougères NP in New Caledonia (János Oláh).

Fan-tailed Gerygone ◇ *Gerygone flavolateralis* Regular sightings on New Caledonia. We only heard it on Vanuatu.
 White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Regular on Vanuatu and New Caledonia.
 Fiji Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus mentalis* Common on Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji).
 Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* This introduced species was seen on Taveuni (Fiji).
 South Melanesian Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina caledonica* Regular sightings on Vanuatu and New Caledonia. **See note.**
 New Caledonian Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina analis* One was seen at Parc de La Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. **NT**
 Polynesian Triller ◇ *Lalage maculosa* Common on Fiji and Samoa. **See note.**



Polynesian Triller on Kadavu (Fiji) feasting on mulberry (János Oláh).

Long-tailed Triller ◇ *Lalage leucopyga* Just a few were seen on New Caledonia.
 Melanesian Wistler ◇ *Pachycephala chlorura* Common on Vanuatu, also seen on Ouvéa (New Caledonia). **See note.**
 New Caledonian Wistler ◇ *Pachycephala caledonica* It was common at Parc de La Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia.
 Fiji Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala vitiensis* Small numbers were recorded on Viti Levu and Taveuni (Fiji). **See note.**
 White-throated Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala kandavesis* Several nice observations on Kadavu (Fiji). **See note.**
 Samoan Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala flavifrons* (NL) A few were seen on Samoa.
 Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris* Just a few of the *xanthetreae* race on New Caledonia.
 Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa* The *brenchleyi* race on Santo (Vanuatu) and *bulgeri* race on New Caledonia.
 Streaked Fantail ◇ *Rhipidura verreauxi* Regular on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. **See note.**
 Kadavu Fantail ◇ (Kandavu F) *Rhipidura personata* Regular and common in the forest on Kadavu. **NT**
 Samoan Fantail ◇ *Rhipidura nebulosa* (NL) Regular encounters on Samoa.
 Silktail ◇ *Lamprolia victoriae* Amazing bird and we got several excellent looks! **See note. NT**
 Slaty Monarch ◇ *Mayrornis lessoni* Many good looks on Fiji. Behaves and looks like a New World gnatcatcher.
 Buff-bellied Monarch ◇ *Neolalage banksiana* This top endemic showed very well on Santo (Vanuatu).
 Southern Shrikebill ◇ *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides* Good views on Vanuatu and on New Caledonia. **See note.**
 Fiji Shrikebill ◇ (Lesser S) *Clytorhynchus vitiensis* Several excellent looks at this unobtrusive species.
 Black-throated Shrikebill ◇ *Clytorhynchus nigrogularis* Good views on Kadavu and Viti Levu (Fiji). **NT**
 Melanesian Flycatcher ◇ (N C Flycatcher) *Myiagra caledonica* Common on Vanuatu and New Caledonia. **See note.**
 Vanikoro Flycatcher ◇ *Myiagra vanikorensis* Commonly seen on all three Fijian islands. *Kandavensis* on Kadavu.
 Azure-crested Flycatcher ◇ *Myiagra azureocapilla* This beauty showed well on Viti Levu (*whitneyi*) and Taveuni.
 New Caledonian Crow ◇ *Corvus moneduloides* Small numbers showed on New Caledonia.
 Yellow-bellied Flyrobin ◇ (Y-b Robin) *Microeca flaviventris* Excellent looks on New Caledonia.
 Pacific Robin ◇ *Petroica pusilla* We had *becki* race on Kadavu and *kleinschmidti* on Viti Levu (Fiji).
 Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* This introduced species was seen on New Caledonia and Fiji.
 Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* We saw it on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and on Fiji.
 Fiji Bush Warbler ◇ *Horornis ruficapilla* Excellent looks at this secretive species on all three Fijian islands. **See note.**

New Caledonian Thicketbird ♦ (N C Grassbird) *Megalurus mariei* We all had good looks of this tricky endemic.
Long-legged Thicketbird ♦ (L-l Warbler) *Megalurulus rufus* Only seen by some and heard by all on Viti Levu. **EN**
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). **See note.**
Small Lifou White-Eye ♦ *Zosterops minutus* Common in the Lifou forests and gardens.
Green-backed White-Eye ♦ *Zosterops xanthochroa* It was common on New Caledonia.



Green-backed White-Eye was commonly seen on New Caledonia (János Oláh).

Silveryeye *Zosterops lateralis* Regular sightings on Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji. **See note.**
Large Lifou White-Eye ♦ *Zosterops inornatus* We managed excellent looks of a pair 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.**
Samoan Starling ♦ *Aplonis atrifusca* A very common endemic on Samoa.
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 variable species on Viti Levu (*layardi*) and Taveuni (*tempesti*) Fiji.
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Regular on New Caledonia.
Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* This introduced species was seen on New Caledonia.
Red-throated Parrotfinch ♦ *Erythrura psittacea* Great looks at this attractive endemic on New Caledonia.
Red-headed Parrotfinch ♦ (Samoan P) *Erythrura cyaneovirens* (NL) Several nice sightings on Samoa.
Fiji Parrotfinch ♦ *Erythrura pealii* Delightfully common on Viti Levu and just a few on Taveuni.
Pink-billed Parrotfinch ♦ *Erythrura kleinschmidti* Great views of this rarity on Viti Levu. BIRDQUEST LIFER! **VU**
Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla* Small numbers of this introduced species were seen on Santo (Vanuatu).

MAMMALS

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus* It was seen on Vanuatu and on Viti Levu (Fiji). A sad introduction.

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

Samoa Flying Fox *Pteropus samoensis* Regularly seen on Samoa.

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



Vanuatu Flying Foxes on Santo (János Oláh).

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird List (v6.3).

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*

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

Many-coloured Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus perousii*

The nominate form on Samoa and the race *mariae* on Fiji.

Pacific Kingfisher *Todiramphus sacer*

We saw the following subspecies: *santoensis* (Santo, Vanuatu), *juliae* (Efate, Vanuatu), *eximius* (Kadavu, Fiji) and *vitiensis* (Taveuni and Viti Levu, Fiji).

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*

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

Ouvea Parakeet (Uvea P) *Eunymphicus uvaensis*

Used to be lumped with Horned (Ornate) Parakeet of mainland New Caledonia.

Cardinal Myzomela

We saw the following subspecies: *tenuis* (Santo, Vanuatu), *lifuensis* (Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia) *nigriventris* (Samoa).

Grey-eared Honeyeater *Lichmera incana*

We saw the *griseiventris* race on Efate (Vanuatu) and the nominate form was common on New Caledonia.

Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater *Foulehaio carunculatus*

Following the split of Fiji Wattled Honeyeater (*F. taviunensis*) the form on Samoa became Polynesian Wattled Honeyeater (*F. carunculatus*).

Fiji Wattled Honeyeater *Foulehaio taviunensis*

Fiji Wattled Honeyeater is split from [Polynesian] Wattled Honeyeater (*F. carunculatus*). It is also called Northern Wattled Honeyeater.

Kikau *Foulehaio procerior*

Kikau is split from [Polynesian] Wattled Honeyeater (*F. carunculatus*). It is also called Western Wattled Honeyeater.

Yellow-billed Honeyeater *Gymnomyza viridis*

It was split from Giant Forest Honeyeater (*Gymnomyza brunneirostris*) as it differs in behaviour, vocalisation and genetics. We had good looks on Taveuni.

Giant Honeyeater *Gymnomyza brunneirostris*

Following the split of Yellow-billed Honeyeater the english name is under revision. Seen several times on Viti Levu. Amazing loud song!

South Melanesian Cuckooshrike *Coracina caledonica*

We saw the *thilenii* race on Santo (Vanuatu), *lifuensis* (Lifou, Loyty Islands, New Caledonia) and the nominate race on mainland New Caledonia.



The lifuensis race of South Melanesian Cuckooshrike on the Loyalty Islands of New Caledonia (János Oláh).

Polynesian Triller *Lalage maculosa*

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

Melanesian Whistler *Pachycephala chlorura*

Species name of Melanesian Whistler becomes *Pachycephala chlorura* with split of *P. caledonica* as New Caledonian Whistler. We saw the *intacta* race on Santo (Vanuatu) and the *littayei* race on the Loyalty Islands (New Caledonia).

Fiji Whistler *Pachycephala vitiensis*

We saw the following subspecies: *graeffii* (Viti Levu, Fiji) and *torquata* (Taveuni, Fiji).

White-throated Whistler *Pachycephala kandavesis*

Currently this distinctive white throated form on Kadavu is lumped with Fiji Whistler *P. vitiensis* but as being the only one with a white throat on the island complex and vocally different this is a very likely candidate for being a separate species. In fact probably all races within Fiji should be split!



The kandavensis race of Fiji Whistler is a very likely future split (János Oláh).

Streaked Fantail *Rhipidura verreauxi*

We saw the following races: *spilodera* (Santo, Vanuatu), nominate (New Caledonia), *layardii* (Viti Levu, Fiji) and *rufilateralis* (Taveuni, Fiji).

Silktail *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. We had the nominate race on Taveuni.

Southern Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloide*

We managed to see the *griseus* race on Santo (Vanuatu) which had distinctly more white on its tail and the nominate form on New Caledonia.

Melanesian Flycatcher *Myiagra caledonica*

We saw the following races: *marinae* (Santo, Vanuatu), *viridinitens* (Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia) and the nominate form on mainland New Caledonia.

Fiji Bush Warbler *Horornis ruficapilla*

We saw the following races: *badiceps* (Viti Levu, Fiji), *funnebris* (Taveuni, Fiji) and the nominate form on Kadavu (Fiji).

Vanuatu White-Eye *Zosterops flavifrons*

We saw the *brevicauda* race on Santo (Vanuatu) and the *efatensis* race on Efate (Vanuatu).

Silveryeye *Zosterops lateralis*

A highly variable species. We saw the following races: *tropicus* (Santo, Vanuatu), *vatensis* (Efate, Vanuatu), *nigrescens* (Ouvéa, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia), *melanops* (Lifou, Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia), *griseonota* (mainland New Caledonia) and *flaviceps* (Fiji).

Polynesian Starling *Aplonis tabuensis*

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

APPENDIX: overall results of the 'Bird of the tour' contest

Species		Points	Nominations
1st	Kagu	66	7
2nd	Vanuatu Megapode	44	7
3rd	Silktail	24	5
4th	Orange Dove	18	4
5th	Pink-billed Parrotfinch	16	3



The lovely Horned Parakeet is a delightful endemic bird of New Caledonia (János Oláh).