

# WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY

27 MARCH – 29 APRIL 2012

## TOUR REPORT

**LEADER:** DEREK SCOTT

From 37°40'S in Tauranga in New Zealand to 35°30N in Yokohama in Japan, this epic voyage of 5,425 nautical miles across the temperate and tropical zones of the Western Pacific gave us a wonderful opportunity to see some of the rarest and least-known sea-birds in the world and visit a succession of remote tropical islands rich in endemic species. We had only one big disappointment – our inability to make a landing on Norfolk Island – and otherwise our voyage was remarkably trouble-free, thanks to the competence of the Heritage Expeditions team and crew on the *Spirit of Enderby* – our home for 30 days. Given that most of our time was spent at sea, our trip total of 307 species was very impressive and included no fewer than 48 species of tubenoses (nine albatrosses, 29 petrels and shearwaters, nine storm-petrels and a diving-petrel). Seabird highlights included the recently re-discovered New Zealand Storm-Petrel, the recently described Magnificent Petrel, the poorly known Beck's Petrel and Heinroth's Shearwater, and the extremely rare Short-tailed Albatross, not to mention Herald Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel, Christmas Island Shearwater and Polynesian Storm-Petrel. The excellent selection of endemics that we found on land included the extraordinary Kagu and Crow Honeyeater in New Caledonia, impressive Solomon Sea-Eagle and recently described Roviana Rail in the Solomons, and ultra-rare Truk White-eye and Truk Monarch in Micronesia. It was worrying, however, that so many of the species we recorded were under threat. No fewer than 54 of the species that we encountered are currently considered by BirdLife International to be of conservation concern, with three being listed as critically endangered, nine as endangered, 23 as vulnerable, 18 as near-threatened and one as data deficient. In almost all cases, the principal threats come from introduced predators (especially rats) and deforestation.

Our tour began gently with a couple of days of birding in North Island, New Zealand. From the airport near Auckland, we headed north to Snells Beach and after settling into our friendly inn, drove a few miles to an area of mud-flats where we soon found the local speciality Red-breasted Dotterel along with an assortment of other waterbirds including Double-banded Plover, Variable Oystercatcher and Pied Stilt. A short drive from here brought us to Tawharanui Regional Park, where, within the space of an hour and a half, we found an excellent assortment of New Zealand endemics including Brown Teal, New Zealand Pigeon, Kaka, Red-crowned Parakeet, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, Whitehead, New Zealand Fantail and New Zealand Robin. Our plan for the next day was to take a pelagic trip out into Hauraki Gulf with local birder Chris Gaskin to look for New-Zealand

Storm-Petrels. Fortunately, the weather was fine and we had a great day out at sea, stopping several times to do some chumming, circling Maori Rocks in the Mokohinau Islands and passing close by famous Little Barrier Island. The New Zealand Storm-Petrels proved to be easy. We saw about a dozen and had some excellent views of several birds at our chumming sessions, along with good numbers of Parkinson's (Black) Petrels, Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Buller's Shearwaters. Other birds of interest included a Little Penguin, half a dozen Cook's Petrels, lots of Fluttering Shearwaters and a few Fairy Prions and Common Diving-Petrels. We passed close by to a breeding colony of Australian Gannets and a roost of Grey Noddies on Maori Rocks, and then had good views of two Bryde's Whales on the way back.

We had an early start the next morning, as we had a long way to go to Tauranga where we were to join our ship, and we had a couple of stops to make on the way. The first was at Whangamarino Wetland Reserve south of Auckland, where we hoped to find Australasian Bittern. Sadly, there were no bitterns on view (possibly because the water level was too high after recent heavy rainfall), so after a quick look at the Canada Geese, Black Swans and Swamp Harriers, we continued on to the shorebird centre at Miranda on the Gulf of Thames. The tide was just beginning to come in and most of the birds were very far off, but we did not have to wait long before the first little flocks of Wrybills began to fly in. Soon we were enjoying great views of hundreds of these unusual little waders, along with dozens of Double-banded Plovers and a small flock of Red Knots. Other birds out on the mud-flats and in the nearby marsh included a dozen Australian Shovelers, 100 Grey Teal, an Eastern Great Egret, two Royal Spoonbills, a couple of thousand South Island Oystercatchers, a flock of 24 Pacific Golden Plovers and 50 Black-billed Gulls. Well pleased, we continued on to Tauranga where we met up with our fellow passengers and boarded the *Spirit of Enderby* in mid-afternoon. The ship sailed at 18:30 and we had time for an hour's sea-watching before dusk, although there was little to be seen other than lots of Pied Cormorants, Kelp Gulls and White-fronted Terns as we were leaving the harbour and a few Parkinson's Petrels and Flesh-footed and Buller's Shearwaters out at sea.

By daylight the next morning, we had reached the Mokohinau Islands in the outer Hauraki Gulf, where we had been in a much smaller boat a couple of days before. We had a quick look at the Australasian Gannet colony and roosting Grey Noddies on Maori Rocks, and then began chumming for storm-petrels. Again this proved successful and within minutes we had attracted the first New Zealand Storm-Petrels, much to the relief of the other passengers on board. Later, as we headed north past the Poor Knights Islands, we found many more New Zealand Storm-Petrels (the day's tally was an impressive 20), along with large numbers of Parkinson's Petrels and Flesh-footed, Buller's and Fluttering Shearwaters. The superb selection of other birds included 10 White-capped Albatrosses, four Campbell Albatrosses, eight 'Wandering Albatrosses' (four Snowy, one Antipodean and three Gibson's), 20 Grey-faced Petrels, 10 Cook's Petrels, a Pycroft's Petrel, 20 Fairy Prions, a Southern Little Shearwater, five Wilson's Storm-Petrels, two White-faced Storm-Petrels, 30 Common Diving-Petrels and a Long-tailed Skua. We also encountered a large school of Short-beaked Common Dolphins, a couple of sun fishes and our first of countless flying-fishes.

When we awoke the following morning, we were approaching the Three Kings Islands at the extreme northern tip of New Zealand. This day produced another feast of tubenoses, including three Pacific Albatrosses, 25 White-capped Albatrosses, six Gibson's Albatrosses, at least 80 Grey-faced Petrels, five Kermadec Petrels, an unexpected Herald Petrel, 15 White-necked Petrels, 35 Black winged Petrels, another dozen Cook's Petrels, four more Southern Little Shearwaters and two more White-faced Storm-Petrels. We saw our last Fairy Prions, Buller's Shearwaters, Fluttering Shearwaters and Australasian Gannets today and our first Red-tailed Tropicbird and Pomarine Skua, along with another Long-tailed Skua. We also saw a total of seven Great Sperm Whales and had some excellent views of a couple as they surfaced close to the ship. The next day, as we continued on north towards Norfolk Island, was dominated by *Pterodroma* petrels, with the day's tally including 100 Grey-faced, eight Kermadec, at least 80 White-necked, 35 Black-winged, two Cook's (the last) and our first Gould's. We also saw our first Tahiti Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Tasman (Masked) Boobies,

Common White Terns and Brown Noddy, and our last 'Wandering Albatross' (an unidentified juvenile) and Parkinson's Petrel.

We had been experiencing a fair amount of swell during our journey north to Norfolk Island – the tail-end of a big storm out to the east of us – and unfortunately the swell was still with us as we approached Norfolk Island and anchored offshore in the early morning. The islanders informed us by radio that the two main landing sites on the east side of the island were out of the question and our only option was to try for a beach landing on the relatively sheltered west coast. A zodiac was launched and a scouting mission was sent to investigate, but the swell was just too big and, much to our disappointment, the landing had to be cancelled. Instead, we had to settle for a zodiac cruise along the west coast. This was not without interest; indeed, we even managed to approach close enough to see several Norfolk Island Gerygones, teased out into the open with playback, but it was extremely frustrating to be so close to the other three endemics with no hope of success. We managed to see a few of the commoner land-birds from the zodiacs, including Red Junglefowl, Australian Kestrel, Sacred Kingfisher and Welcome Swallow, and there were two Little Black Cormorants and several Wandering Tattlers on the rocks, but it was a gloomy day with frequent showers and after two hours in the zodiacs, we were ready to leave. The cruise north from Norfolk that afternoon produced several Red-tailed Tropicbirds and Tasman Boobies, a Grey Noddy and lots of Common White Terns and Brown and Black Noddies.

Our next two days were spent at sea as we continued on north towards New Caledonia. Once again, *Pterodroma* petrels provided much of the interest. Kermadec, White-necked, Black-winged and Gould's were recorded on both days; we saw our last Grey-faced Petrels on the first day, and our only Providence Petrel, another Herald Petrel and the first Collared Petrels on the second. The second day also produced our first of two Magnificent Petrels, a taxon which was described as a subspecies of Collared Petrel as recently as 2010, but possibly represents a new species. Three Tahiti Petrels on the first day out from Norfolk were followed by over 50 on the second and caused great excitement (and confusion) when some observers on the bow of the ship initially proclaimed them to be Beck's Petrels! We spent some time on the second day chumming over a seamount in an area where a mysterious storm-petrel has been seen on the last four WPOS. One (or possibly two) of these mythical 'New Caledonian Storm-Petrels' soon appeared, and we had reasonably good views. Other birds of note during this leg of the journey included 10 more Southern Little Shearwaters, three more White-faced Storm Petrels, our first Red-footed Booby, five Grey Noddies and our first two Sooty Terns on the first day, and eight Wilson's Storm-Petrels, two White-bellied Storm-Petrels and our first White-tailed Tropicbird on the second. The numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters increased rapidly as we approached New Caledonia, and we came across our first little flocks of Short-tailed Shearwaters migrating north.

We had made good speed on our way north from Norfolk, and we found ourselves entering the reef off Noumea in New Caledonia just after mid-day. Three Fairy Terns obligingly flew past the ship as we were approaching the harbour, and we also saw our first Silver Gulls, Black-naped Terns and Great Crested Terns on the way in. As we were waiting by the wharf for clearance by Customs and Immigration, two Dark-brown Honeyeaters appeared around the ship in response to playback, and then, by 3.00 pm, we were stepping ashore. No arrangements had been made for shore excursions and it took us some time to organise a couple of buses, but eventually we set off on a trip to Mount Koghi, some 25 km from the town. By the time we arrived at the forest, we had only an hour of good daylight left, but the birding was excellent and we quickly found our first endemics, New Caledonian Myzomela, Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonian Friarbird, Green-backed White-eye and Striated Starling, along with Metallic Pigeon, Fan-tailed Gerygone, South Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike and Grey Fantail. Well pleased with this introduction to the birds of New Caledonia, we returned to the ship and had an early night, as we had a very early start the next morning.

It was still only 4.30 in the morning when we boarded our bus and left the wharf for our visit to Rivière Bleue Provincial Park, home of the fabulous Kagu. Despite the large size of the group and the need for small shuttle buses to ferry us between a dodgy bridge and the forest, all went well and by 06:55 we had assembled around Yves Letocart ('Mr Kagu') and were entering the forest. A huge loudspeaker was produced, the call of the Kagu was boomed forth and within a few minutes we were enjoying close-up views of five of these superb birds. With the main target in the bag, we could now focus on the many other endemic species in this excellent piece of forest. Highlights included a New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon that posed beautifully only a few feet away, several fancy Horned Parakeets, two little groups of scarce New Caledonian Parakeets, several giant Crow Honeyeaters feeding in the flowering bottle-brush trees with lots of New Caledonian Friarbirds, six New Caledonian Cuckoo-Shrikes, several New Caledonian Whistlers responding well to playback, two New Caledonian Crows and some very confiding Yellow-bellied Robins. Other Melanesian endemics included Long-tailed Triller, Streaked Fantail, Southern Shrikebill and Melanesian Flycatcher, while more widespread species included Little Pied Cormorant, Whistling Kite, Coconut Lorikeet, Glossy Swiftlet, White-breasted Wood-Swallow and Rufous Whistler. We rounded off an excellent morning's birding with a picnic lunch near the Grand Kaori tree, and then, as the rain moved in, made our way back to the park entrance to look for the elusive Red-throated Parrotfinch. This proved even more elusive than usual, perhaps because of the now heavy rain, and so we headed back to Noumea and the ship to begin our next leg of the voyage, north to the Solomon Islands. As we crossed the lagoon that afternoon, we saw our first Lesser Frigatebird and Pacific Reef-Herons, and as we exited the reef that evening, we came across a huge concentration of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and at least 300 Gould's Petrels gathering to come ashore at night.

The next three days were spent at sea en route to Rennell Island in the Solomons. The numbers and diversity of seabirds had now dropped off a little, but long hours spent on deck produced some interesting sightings. The highlights were another Magnificent Petrel and two Polynesian Storm-Petrels on the second day and another Polynesian Storm-Petrel on the third. Wedge-tailed Shearwater was much the commonest tubenose, followed by Tahiti Petrel, but we also saw a few Gould's Petrels and a Collared Petrel on the first day, a Tropical Shearwater, five Wilson's Storm-Petrels and two 'Band-rumped' Storm-Petrels on the second and a Kermadec Petrel on the third. We saw our first Brown Boobies on the first day out and our first Masked Booby on the second, while Red-footed Boobies periodically entertained us as they pursued flying-fish around the ship. Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds put in brief appearances on several occasions and both Lesser and Great Frigatebirds were noted, usually in association with feeding flocks of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies.

Our first landfall in the Solomon Islands was to be on Rennell, the southernmost island in the archipelago. As usual, we had the customary briefing the night before we were to arrive. Unfortunately, there was a minor problem. Because of a land dispute, the airport had been blockaded and the Customs and Immigration officials who had been dispatched to give us clearance for landing had not been able to get to Rennell. Instead, they had flown to the tiny island of Bellona, 50 miles to the west, and were waiting for us there. The new plan was simple: we would anchor off Rennell at 2 o'clock in the morning, pick up the officials in a zodiac, and then continue on to Rennell where we would arrive on schedule. A quick search on Google Earth had revealed that there was indeed a navigable channel through the reef surrounding Bellona and the officials had assured us that they would light a bonfire on the beach so that we could find them in the dark! Much to everyone's amazement, this plan worked beautifully and by 7:00 am we were anchoring off the village of Lavangu on the south side of Rennell with the Customs and Immigration officials comfortably installed in the ship's lecture room. Our half-day ashore on Rennell was little less than perfect. The weather was fine, the island was beautiful, the locals were very friendly, and most importantly the endemics were easy to find. Bare-eyed White-eyes were positively abundant, and we had our first good views of Rennell Shrikebill even before we had left the village. Rennell Gerygone responded well to playback, and Rennell White-eye and Rennell Fantail were easily found once we had entered

the forest. Rennell Starling was not quite so conspicuous, but we managed to find at least seven and had some good scope views. Other birds of note included unobtrusive Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Doves, fancy Silver-capped Fruit-Doves, impressive Pacific Imperial-Pigeons, diminutive Finsch's Pygmy-Parrots, noisy Singing Parrots, boring Uniform Swiftlets, colourful Cardinal Myzomelas and shy and retiring Island Thrushes. We also saw lots of Australian Ibises of the small endemic race *pygmeus*, three Brown Goshawks, several Collared Kingfishers of the distinctive endemic race *amoenus*, a migrant Sacred Kingfisher, a few Barred Cuckoo-Shrikes and a pair of Melanesian Flycatchers. A Rennell Flying Fox added mammalian interest, while a very large monitor lizard came as something of a surprise. Delighted with our first experience of birding in the Solomons, we returned to the *Spirit of Enderby* and set sail in mid-afternoon bound for Makira. As we cruised round the east end Rennell, we passed a small feeding party of Roseate Terns and watched numerous small flocks of Red-footed Boobies returning to their breeding colony on the island.

Shortly after dawn the next morning we anchored off Yanuta village near the west end of Makira, the easternmost large island in the Solomons chain. By 06:40 we were going ashore and, soon after, we were setting off up a logging road into the interior. All the forest in the surrounding area had been selectively logged and much of the habitat was very scrappy, but there were birds about, albeit much less numerous and conspicuous than they had been on Rennell. The birding was tough and many species proved to be much more elusive than we had anticipated, but between us and with some perseverance, we managed to find most of the Solomons and Makira endemics that were likely. These included Pied Goshawk, Yellow-bibbed and White-headed Fruit-Doves, Chestnut-bellied Imperial-Pigeon, Yellow-bibbed Lory, Sooty Myzomela, San Cristobal Melidectes, Makira Cicadabird, Oriole Whistler, Chestnut-bellied Monarch, San Cristobal Starling and Mottled Flowerpecker. A luck few in the advance party came across a Melanesian Scrubfowl and a White-collared Monarch, but the endemic Ochre-headed Flycatcher was only heard. Other additions to our list included Pacific Baza, Brahminy Kite, Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon, Eclectus Parrot, Dollarbird, Rufous Fantail, Pacific Swallow and Metallic and Singing Starlings. For many of us, however, the highlight of the morning was a pair of impressive Solomon Sea-Eagles that soared over the forest and obligingly passed low overhead on several occasions. By mid-day it was time to make our way across to Yanuta village where an elaborate greeting ceremony awaited us. It soon became evident that the islanders were truly pleased to see us and a great time was had by all, as we went through an elaborate process of introductions, sipped from fresh coconuts and watched a colourful display of tribal dancing. After an intriguing departure ceremony in which a number of large ladies jumped up and down in the water, we said our farewells and set sail for Guadalcanal – the next island on our itinerary. As we headed out to sea, we came across our first Bridled Terns and a couple of flocks of Short-tailed Shearwaters.

By 04:30 the next morning, we were boarding the zodiacs again to go ashore at Honiara, the capital of the Solomons, for our morning on Guadalcanal. A fleet of minibuses and 4x4s was on the dock to meet us and we set off on the 45-minute drive to the top of Mount Austen. One of the buses became stuck on the steep muddy road up the hill, but our driver took the necessary bold approach and we arrived safely at the top just before dawn. While we waited for the bus to go back and pick up the stranded passengers, we had a try for Solomon Hawk-Owl, but there was no response to playback and by the time the bus had returned with the rest of the group, it was getting light and time to head off into the forest. It was a steep track down through the forest towards the Lungga River and the group became very spread out, but the birding was excellent and by late morning we had seen most of the likely specialities. These included colourful Claret-breasted Fruit-Doves and Cardinal and Yellow-bibbed Lories, noisy Ducorp's Cockatoos, impressive Blyth's Hornbills and strange Guadalcanal Crows with their huge pinkish bills. Two very responsive pairs of Ultramarine Kingfishers were much appreciated, as were the many little Midget Flowerpeckers, while somewhat less exciting specialities included the dull Back-headed Myzomela and Brown-winged Starling. Long-tailed Mynas posed beautifully on dead snags; Steel-blue Flycatchers played hide-and-seek in the canopy, and some folks were lucky enough to see Stephan's Dove and Buff-headed Coucal. Barred

Cuckoo-Shrikes and White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrikes were fairly common, and we also saw a few Common Cicadabirds, but sadly the Solomon Islands Cuckoo-Shrike eluded us. We were back at the ship shortly after mid-day and set sail almost immediately, as it was a long way to Kolombangara and we wanted to get there as early as possible the next morning. The sea-watching that afternoon turned out to be highly rewarding, producing our first, albeit very distant, Heinroth's Shearwater, our first Grey-backed Tern, and three very interesting cetacean sightings: a pair of Dwarf Sperm Whales, a pod of six Blainville's Beaked Whales and a pod of 10 Pygmy Killer Whales.

Early the next morning, as we were approaching the impressive island of Kolombangara in the New Georgia group, we spotted another three Heinroth's Shearwaters, although again they were very distant. We had made good progress in the night, and by 08:00 we were stepping ashore at the pretty little village of Kukudu. A Solomon Sea-Eagle passed low overhead as we were coming ashore, and there were lots of birds around the village, including a little flock of colourful Duchess Lorikeets feeding in a flowering tree, a pair of Moustached Tree-Swifts over the landing site, and an Island Imperial-Pigeon perched up on a dead snag. After a quick briefing, we set off with our local guides in search of the local speciality, Roviana Rail. It soon became obvious, however, that the rails were not going to reveal themselves to a group of fifty birders, and so we split up into two smaller groups and headed off in different directions. Our group was just about to enter the forest when one of our guides spotted a Roviana Rail in someone's back garden and most of us managed to get decent views before it scuttled off into the long grass. Once in the forest, it did not take us long to track down our first of several fancy White-capped Monarchs, and soon after we came across a loose mixed flock with a pair of Yellow-vented Myzomelas, a pair of Solomon Islands White-eyes and a pair of Steel-blue Flycatchers. A Kolombangara Monarch also put in a brief appearance. After this excellent start, the rest of the morning was rather tame by comparison, adding nothing new to our list, although we did get some good views of Cardinal Lories and Brown-winged Starlings, and saw more Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeons, Ducorp's Cockatoos, Blyth's Hornbills, Metallic and Singing Starlings, and Long-tailed Mynas. We returned to the ship for lunch and were then given two options: a zodiac cruise in the mangroves or a return to the village for another try for Roviana Rail. Those of us who opted for the zodiac cruise had a very productive two-hours in the mangroves, finding an Oriental Hobby, two Shining-bronze Cuckoos, a couple of Buff-headed Coucals, a Common Kingfisher, three Little Kingfishers, a White-winged Fantail and four North Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrikes, while those of us who went ashore also found a White-winged Fantail and had fantastic views of a Roviana Rail in a vegetable patch behind the village school. We stayed on the island until dusk and enjoyed the spectacle of several hundred huge flying foxes flying out from their roost in some large trees in the village.

The next four days were spent at sea, as we steadily made our way north towards Micronesia. For the whole of the first day we were cruising north-west some 15-20 nautical miles off the west coast of Bougainville. The sea was almost calm and it was a good day for spotting cetaceans which included two small groups of False Killer Whales, two Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphins, a large school of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins, an even larger school of Spinner Dolphins and two Risso's Dolphins, as well as a probable Dwarf Sperm Whale, a pod of unidentified beaked whales and an unidentified rorqual whale. The birding was also very rewarding. We finally had close views of two Heinroth's Shearwaters and saw about a dozen Grey-backed Terns along with large numbers of Sooty Terns and a few Bridled. At least 100 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were recorded, including the first pale morph individuals, and a single Beck's Petrel was seen by some of us in the afternoon. Four Arctic Skuas and five Long-tailed Skuas added further interest, as did a Sacred Kingfisher that joined the ship for a while in the afternoon.

When we emerged on deck the next morning, we found ourselves drifting approximately 12 nautical miles off Cape St George at the south-eastern tip of New Ireland. A slick of fish-oil had been laid in the hopes of attracting Beck's Petrels which are thought to breed somewhere in this area. Our first *Pseudobulweria* was a Tahiti Petrel which passed by without showing any interest in our chumming,

but soon afterwards a noticeably smaller and slighter bird arrived at the slick and was confidently identified as a Beck's. We saw another four Beck's Petrels as we were cruising north later that morning and had excellent views of three more at a chumming session in the evening. This was definitely the star attraction of the day, but we also saw about 10 Streaked Shearwaters with a feeding flock of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, an impressive total of 480 frigatebirds (most of which were much too far off for identification), good numbers of Sooty Terns with small numbers of Brown and Black Noddies, a few Brown and Red-footed Boobies, three Pomarine Skuas and one Arctic Skua. Three schools of False Killer Whales totalling at least 120 individuals came over to investigate the ship in mid-afternoon, but the only other cetaceans were some distant dolphins.

The next two days were very quiet by comparison, as we entered the 'dead zone'. There were still a few Wedge-tailed Shearwaters about and we occasionally came across feeding flocks of Sooty Terns with attendant frigatebirds and Long-tailed Skuas, but the only other birds of note included a couple of Bulwer's Petrels and an Eastern Yellow Wagtail that circled the ship several times when we were just south of the equator. A visit by King Neptune and Davie Jones as we crossed the equator in mid-afternoon on 15 April provided a very entertaining break from peering hopefully at an empty sea, but there was no such relief the next day when, between us, we managed to record only 27 birds of nine species in almost 12 hours on deck. Even the cetaceans were few and far between, and all those seen remained unidentified.

The birding began to pick up again as we approached Truk (Chuuk) in the Federated States of Micronesia. Brown Noddies and Common White Terns appeared in good numbers; we saw four more Bulwer's Petrels, and as we neared the outer reef, we came across two Tropical Shearwaters. Shortly after mid-day we entered the lagoon, and by 14:00 hrs we were tied up at the wharf on Weno (Moen) – the administrative capital of Truk. This was somewhat earlier than had been anticipated and no arrangements had been made for any shore excursions. However, there was no stopping us, and at 15:45 we all went ashore, eager to start on the endemics. It seemed to be impossible to hire taxis, and so we set off walking south through the outskirts of town in the hope of reaching some good habitat. It quickly became apparent that this was not necessary as there were birds everywhere. In rapid succession we found our first Micronesian Myzomelas, Micronesian Starlings, Caroline Reed Warblers, Caroline Islands White-eyes and Oceanic Flycatchers in the gardens along the roadside. We had barely gone a hundred metres when someone spotted our first splendid Caroline Islands Ground-Dove perched in a tree over the road, and nearby we saw our first Purple-capped Fruit-Dove in a fruiting tree in someone's back garden. Caroline Islands Swiftlets were flying about everywhere, and some of us glimpsed a little party of Blue-faced Parrotfinches. Within an hour, we had just about cleaned up and we had still not escaped from the suburbs! Well pleased with this comprehensive introduction to the birds of Weno, we returned to the ship to discuss our programme for the morrow.

The rarest of the Truk endemics, Truk White-eye, can only be found in native forest on the summit of four islands in the Tol group in the western part of the lagoon. This is also the best area for the rare Truk Monarch. However, access to the native forest is by no means easy, involving a tough climb up a steep, slippery slope. All but the fittest amongst us were discouraged from attempting the climb and, as a consequence, only fifteen people set off in the zodiacs early the next morning on the long run to Tol South. Their mission was successful, and by 1.00 pm they were back safely, having seen about five Truk White-eyes and a pair of Truk Monarchs. The rest of us had a pleasant morning pottering about on Weno and getting better views of all the birds that we had seen the day before. We began by visiting the forest near the Nefo Caves and Japanese Gun where we saw the first of several Rufous Night-Herons and had great views of Blue-faced Parrotfinches, and then looked down on a large wetland where there were 10 Pacific Black Ducks, several Yellow Bitterns, a juvenile Common Moorhen and an immature Common Tern. Later we visited the municipal rubbish tip, where we found two more Caroline Islands Ground-Doves and a Barn Swallow, and then continued on to the Blue Lagoon Resort, where there were Pacific Golden Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones on the lawn and

yet more Caroline Islands Ground-Doves in the nearby gardens. We were back on board in time for lunch and in mid-afternoon set sail on the last leg of our journey to Japan.

The first two full days north of Truk were very quiet, as we continued on through the 'dead zone'. Apart from the occasional feeding flock of Sooty Terns and Common White Terns, the only birds that we saw were a couple of Bulwer's Petrels, a few Wedge-tailed and Short-tailed Shearwaters, our first four Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels (on the second day), a few White-tailed Tropicbirds and Red-footed Boobies, and a couple of Brown Noddies. However, things began to improve considerably as we reached the Northern Marianas. On our third day out from Truk, as we were passing within sight of Alamagan, Pagan (an impressive active volcano) and Agrihan, we were pleasantly surprised to see a Christmas Island Shearwater (a new species for the WPO), as well as our first few Bonin Petrels, eight Bulwer's Petrels, at least 20 Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels and six Grey-backed Terns. Other birds of note included our first Masked Booby for a long time, three Pomarine Skuas and five Long-tailed Skuas. On the next day, as we were passing the northernmost of the Northern Marianas, we began to see our first large flocks of migrating Short-tailed Shearwaters. Bonin Petrels and Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels were now common; there were more Pomarine and Long-tailed Skuas about, and we saw several Tropical Shearwaters and our first Leach's Storm-Petrel. A flock of 18-20 large waders flew north way off in the distance in the early morning, and a pod of seven Short-finned Pilot Whales passed close by the ship in the late morning.

By 23 April, we had entered Japanese waters and were passing to the east of the Iwo Islands. The Short-tailed Shearwater migration was now in full swing (one of our fellow passengers counted 1,375 during the day) and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters (all of the pale morph) were becoming common. We counted about 100 Bonin Petrels and 50 Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels, and also recorded four Wilson's and two Leach's Storm-Petrels. Two Bannerman's Shearwaters put in a brief appearance, as did a splendid pale morph South Polar Skua. Those with a keen eye on the bow of the ship were rewarded with fleeting glimpses of several little groups of flying squid.

We spent the next day cruising slowly north about 12 nautical miles east of the Bonin Islands, passing Haha-jima in the early morning, Chichi-jima at mid-day and Muka-jima in the evening. The birding was excellent and a long chumming session from the stern of the ship in the afternoon was particularly rewarding. Our day's tally included 20 Black-footed Albatrosses, 100 Bonin Petrels, 1,000 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, 250 Short-tailed Shearwaters, another Bannerman's Shearwater, another Leach's Storm-Petrel, at least 60 Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels, our first few Tristram's Storm-Petrels, 40 Brown Boobies, four Red-footed Boobies, another South Polar Skua, two Long-tailed Skuas and our last Brown Noddies and Sooty Terns. A pod of three Cuvier's Beaked Whales surfaced close to the ship in the morning; a small school of Pantropical Spotted Dolphins passed by in the afternoon, and there were a few more flying squid about.

We awoke the next morning to find the impressive volcanic island of Torishima looming up ahead of us. This is where most of the world population of Short-tailed Albatrosses breeds, and although we could not approach any closer than 12 nautical miles, we had high hopes of seeing one. Fortunately, we did not have to wait long. The first, a young immature bird, appeared in the wake in late morning, and as we continued round the east side of the island, another six, including several adults, were seen passing by, although most were very distant. Finally, at our second chumming session in the afternoon, two adults came in close to investigate and gave us great views. When we were not concentrating on Short-tailed Albatrosses, there were plenty of other birds to look at including about 30 Black-footed Albatrosses, 10 Tristram's Storm-Petrels, several small parties of Red Phalaropes, three South Polar Skuas, three Pomarine Skuas, seven Long-tailed Skuas and even a few passerines: a Barn Swallow flew over the ship in the early morning, a female Siberian Rubythroat circled the ship repeatedly in late morning and a Black-faced Bunting appeared briefly around the ship in late afternoon. There were also a few cetaceans about, including a very pale Cuvier's Beaked Whale and



a pod of three smaller beaked whales that were tentatively identified as the poorly known Ginkgo-toothed Beaked Whale.

We spent that night drifting off Torishima and started chumming again at dawn. It was not long before two Short-tailed Albatrosses appeared, an adult and immature, and these gave us our best views yet. Well satisfied with our close encounters with this impressive albatross, we continued on north towards the Izu Islands. Black-footed Albatrosses were still much in evidence and Streaked Shearwater replaced Wedge-tailed as the common large shearwater. We saw another seven Short-tailed Albatrosses during the day (mostly far off), along with our last three Bonin Petrels, many more Tristram's Storm-Petrels and Red Phalaropes, and forty skuas of four species (one South Polar, six Pomarine, three Arctic and 30 Long-tailed). Eight Risso's Dolphins passed close by the ship in the morning and more beaked whales were sighted, although too far off for identification.

Our last full day at sea began off Miyake-jima in the Izu Islands. Our main target here was Japanese Murrelet, which breeds on several small islets off the east coast of the island. The murrelets were present as predicted and we saw about ten, including some birds on the water close to the ship, but unfortunately we passed the islets bang in the middle of breakfast and those passengers for whom a leisurely breakfast is important missed the murrelets! The sea around the Izu Islands and on the way into Tokyo Bay was teeming with birds, mostly Streaked Shearwaters (of which there were many thousands) and Tristram's Storm-Petrels (hundreds), but there were also surprisingly high numbers of Red Phalaropes (we counted about 150), Pomarine Skuas (at least 40) and Long-tailed Skuas (15). Three Laysan Albatrosses, including one on the water close to the ship, were much appreciated, and we saw another three Short-tailed Albatrosses and about 15 Black-footed. Other birds of note included five Flesh-footed Shearwaters (our first since leaving New Zealand waters), a few Sooty Shearwaters, two Brown Boobies, several Black-tailed Gulls and a dozen Rhinoceros Auklets. As we entered the confines of inner Tokyo Bay, we began to encounter inshore species such as Black-headed, Vega and Slaty-backed Gulls, Common and Little Terns, and a late wintering diver (loon). By the time we were seeing Great Cormorants and Grey Herons flying across the bay, we knew that our great voyage across the western Pacific was over!

We anchored a couple of miles offshore for our final dinner and last night at sea, and early the next morning slipped quietly into the wharf in Yokohama. Immigration clearance went smoothly and after saying our farewells to the Expedition Team and our fellow passengers, we finally went ashore just after 09:00. The transfer by shuttle bus and limousine coach to our hotel at Narita was uneventful, and after checking into our rooms and lunch at the hotel, we picked up our minibus and went off birding. Our destination was the Tone River near Omigawa, an hour's drive away, where we hoped to find the scarce and local Marsh Grassbird (Japanese Swamp Warbler). It did not take us long to find a grassbird in song, and in the end we saw several and had some great views. There were quite a few other birds about and we quickly added another 20 or so species to our trip list. These included a pair of Japanese Green Pheasants, an Eastern Marsh Harrier, a Little Ringed Plover, a Grey-tailed Tattler, several Brown-eared Bulbuls, an Oriental Reed Warbler, a dozen White-cheeked Starlings and a pair of Oriental Greenfinches. We heard a Eurasian Bittern booming in the reed-beds and saw several large flocks of Eurasian Whimbrels flying over, but had no luck with the hoped-for Ochre-rumped (Japanese Reed) Bunting. Back at the hotel that evening, we reflected on our successes over the past five weeks. It had been a highly memorable and rewarding journey through one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the planet and one that had surely left us with a desire to return one day to see more of the Pacific and its interesting avifauna.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

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

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

### MEGAPODIIDAE

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita*: One was seen briefly on the track in the forest on Makira – a lucky find for the advance party.

### ANATIDAE

Canada Goose (introduced) *Branta canadensis*: About 200 at Whangamarino Wetland Reserve in New Zealand.

Black Swan (introduced) *Cygnus atratus*: About 20 at Whangamarino.

Paradise Shelduck *Tadorna variegata*: Great views of about 60 in Tawharanui Regional Park, and several more on the way to Tauranga. This is one of the few New Zealand endemics that seems to be coping well with man and all the introduced predators.

Mallard (introduced) *Anas platyrhynchos*: Common in New Zealand.

Eastern Spot-billed Duck (Chinese Spot-billed Duck) *Anas zonorhyncha*: A pair was seen shortly before we tied up at the wharf in Yokohama, and then we found at least 50 in the wetlands by the Tone River near Omigawa.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*: A dozen in Tawharanui Regional Park; five on the little river at Kukudu on Kolombangara in the Solomons, and about 10 at the wetland below the Japanese gun on Weno in Truk.

Australian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos*: A couple at Whangamarino and about a dozen at Miranda in New Zealand.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Five in the marshes by the Tone River on our final afternoon in Japan.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*: At least 100 in the marsh at Miranda.

Brown Teal *Anas chlorotis*: Great views of about ten of these very confiding ducks in Tawharanui Regional Park. The birds were re-introduced here some years ago and seem to be thriving behind the predator-proof fence. This species, which is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International, is now showing some signs of recovery, thanks to intensive management, although the total population is still thought to number only about 910 mature individuals.

### GAVIIDAE

[Black-throated Diver (Black-throated Loon) *Gavia arctica*/Pacific Diver (Pacific Loon) *Gavia pacifica*: A medium-sized diver seen in flight in Tokyo Bay was either Black-throated or Pacific. Both species winter in Japan, although Pacific is much the commoner, especially along the Pacific coast.]

### PHASIANIDAE

Brown Quail (introduced) *Coturnix ypsilophorus*: Close views of a party of eight near the car park in Tawharanui Regional Park.

Red Junglefowl (introduced) *Gallus gallus*: A couple were seen from the zodiacs as we were cruising along the western shore of Norfolk Island.

Ring-necked Pheasant (Common Pheasant) (introduced) *Phasianus colchicus*: Two birds were seen during our evening stroll in Tawharanui Regional Park.

Japanese Green Pheasant (Green Pheasant) *Phasianus versicolor*: Close views of a male and a female flushed from long grass by the marsh near the Tone River on our final afternoon in Japan.

## SPHENISCIDAE

Little Penguin (Little Blue Penguin) *Eudyptula minor*: One was seen briefly during our pelagic with Chris Gaskin in Hauraki Gulf.

## DIOMEDEIDAE

Pacific Albatross *Thalassarche [bulleri] un-named form*: Three were seen on our second day at sea as we were cruising past the Three Kings Islands, and one of these passed close by the ship. They were assumed to be Pacific, rather than nominate Buller's, on range, as these two 'species' are virtually indistinguishable at sea. BirdLife International treats the two forms as a single species and lists this as Near Threatened because of its very restricted breeding distribution. There are about 18,000 pairs of Pacific Albatrosses breeding in the Chatham Islands and 11,500 pairs of Buller's Albatrosses breeding in the Snares and Solander Islands. The original name *platei* for the northern form is inappropriate, as the type-specimen has subsequently been identified as nominate *bulleri*.

White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche [cauta] steadi*: Great views of about 10 on our first day at sea in the outer Hauraki Gulf and at least 25 the next day, as we were passing the Three Kings Islands. This form is indistinguishable at sea from nominate *cauta* (Shy Albatross), which breeds on islands off Tasmania, and many authorities, including BirdLife International, consider the two forms to be conspecific. The combined species is listed as Near Threatened because of the high mortality caused by long-line and squid fisheries.

Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche [melanophris] impavida*: Good views of four individuals in the outer Hauraki Gulf, including a couple that passed close enough for us to see their honey-coloured eyes. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its tiny breeding range and the high mortality caused by long-line fishing for tuna.

Wandering Albatross (Snowy Albatross) *Diomedea [exulans] exulans*: Identification of the great albatrosses of the Wandering group at sea often poses a challenge, as adults of Gibson's and Antipodean closely resemble immature stages of Wandering (Snowy) Albatross. Four of the eight great albatrosses that we saw in the outer Hauraki Gulf showed characteristics of Wandering and were confidently identified as such by our 'resident' seabird expert Peter Harrison. This form, which has a population estimated at 8,500 pairs or 28,000 mature individuals, is listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. As with most albatrosses, the greatest threat is from accidental catch by long-line trawlers, with some populations decreasing at a frightening rate of 10% per annum.

Antipodean Albatross *Diomedea [exulans] antipodensis*: A single bird in the outer Hauraki Gulf was identified as being of this form. Apart from a few pairs on Campbell Island, the entire population breeds on the Antipodes Islands, where there were between 4,635 and 5,757 pairs during the 1990s. BirdLife International treats Antipodean and Gibson's Albatrosses as conspecific under the name *D. antipodensis*, and lists the species as a whole as Vulnerable.

Gibson's Albatross *Diomedea [exulans] gibsoni*: Good views of three in the outer Hauraki Gulf and six near the Three Kings Islands the next day. A young immature great albatross seen on our third day at sea, not far south of Norfolk Island, puzzled even the experts and remained unidentified.

Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*: Great views of three individuals on our last day at sea as we sailed towards Tokyo Bay. One of them obliged by landing on the sea close to the ship and gave superb views. This species has recently been down-listed to Near Threatened by BirdLife International as recent data suggest that the breeding population has rebounded from declines in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The population is currently estimated at 1,180,000 mature individuals.

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*: Much the commonest of the albatrosses on this cruise and very quick to respond to chumming. We recorded about 100 during our last four days at sea, with the first appearing as we were cruising north past the Bonin Islands. The population is currently estimated at 120,000 mature individuals, but appears to be

declining rapidly because of incidental mortality in long-line fisheries in the northern Pacific. It is therefore classified as Endangered by BirdLife International.

Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*: This is definitely one of the most important birds on the Western Pacific Odyssey and one that gave us some cause for concern, as only a single immature bird had been seen in 2011. However, we need not have worried, as in the end we recorded a total of 22 birds and had some great views of several adults. The first was an immature bird that appeared in our wake as we were heading north towards Torishima. The bird showed well but did not stay long, and the next six birds were mostly very distant, but eventually, during a chumming session 12 nautical miles east of Torishima, two adults passed close by the ship and gave excellent views. Amazingly, a few passengers on board managed to miss them, and so we spent the night 'dead in the water' so that we could do some more chumming off Torishima early the next morning. This proved to be very successful, attracting an adult and an immature which stayed around long enough for everyone to get good views. We then went on to see another seven individuals, mostly adults, as we headed north towards the Izu Islands. We rounded off this excellent run of sightings with three more, including an adult sitting on the water, as we were heading north from Miyake-jima towards Tokyo Bay on our final day at sea. The total population of this very rare albatross once numbered as few as 50 individuals but now, thanks to a major conservation effort, has increased to some 2,200-2,500 mature individuals. It is currently classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International.

#### PROCELLARIIDAE

Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*: Our first was seen south of Norfolk Island, and we then recorded the species commonly until we were approaching Rennell Island in the Solomons, logging about 130 individuals. The birds reacted well to chumming, appearing in good numbers at our oil slicks, but they were a little wary of the ship and often moved off as we approached. Most of the birds we saw were undoubtedly of the form *trouessarti* which breeds in New Caledonia and possibly has a more conspicuous pale panel on the underwing than the nominate form which breeds much further east, in Fiji and Polynesia. We also saw at least three more Tahiti Petrels off the east coast of New Ireland. A *Pseudobulweria* petrel seen near the equator may have been this species or the next. The Tahiti Petrel is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its rather small population (estimated at 20,000 mature individuals) which is declining owing to predation by introduced mammals, and, locally at least, mining.

Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki*: For a while, there was a widely held belief on board that many of the Tahiti Petrels that we were seeing north of Norfolk Island and off New Caledonia were Beck's Petrels, but this misconception never spread to the 'regulars' on the monkey deck and all claims of Beck's Petrel in Australian and New Caledonian waters were subsequently withdrawn. Our first real Beck's Petrel was seen by some of us off the west coast of Bougainville, but the rest of us had to wait until the next day when we were off the east coast of New Ireland. One appeared at our early-morning chumming session off Cape St George, and then we saw four more as we were heading north along the island and three at our chumming session in the evening. Sadly, we were never able to compare Beck's and Tahiti Petrels side by side, and as the smaller size of Beck's was hard to judge in the field, our identification was based entirely on the Beck's Petrel's lighter build and more *Pterodroma* style of flight. Apart from size, the differences between these two 'species' (even in their DNA) are very slight, and one is led to wonder if treatment as two distinct species is really justified. BirdLife International, however, accepts the split and classifies Beck's Petrel as Critically Endangered. It is believed to breed in the highlands of New Ireland and may have declined as a result of predation by introduced cats and rats on its breeding grounds.

Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma gouldi*: This subtly attractive petrel was common and conspicuous from north of Hauraki Gulf to Norfolk Island, but thereafter we only recorded a couple as we

were leaving Norfolk Island. We logged about 200 and had many close views. This form is often lumped in Great-winged Petrel *P. macroptera*.

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*: We logged 13 of these very distinctive petrels and had several great views as we were cruising between the Three Kings Islands and Norfolk Island. We then saw three more just north of Norfolk Island, but the only one thereafter was one north of New Caledonia en route to Rennell Island. All were of the pale or intermediate morphs.

Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*: A light phase bird flew past the ship as we were cruising north from the Three Kings Islands north of New Zealand, and another pale bird passed close in front of the bow mid-way between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. Digital photography helped clinch the identification in both cases. This is a rare bird in these waters, and was a write-in for the Western Pacific Odyssey.

Providence Petrel (Solander's Petrel) *Pterodroma solandri*: Good but regrettably brief views of one that passed close by in front of the ship during our full day at sea between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its very small breeding range on Lord Howe Island and Phillip Island. It formerly bred in huge numbers on Norfolk Island and was named the Bird of Providence by the first settlers, who saw it as a gift from God when they ran out of food and had little else to eat!

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*: One of the fancier of the *Pterodroma* petrels and easiest to identify, if one ignores the somewhat mythical 'Vanuatu Petrel'. We saw our first as we were cruising past the Three Kings Islands off New Zealand and logged about 125 en route to New Caledonia. Our last was a single bird as we were approaching Noumea. We had many great views, although it is doubtful if we would ever have been able to discern the extremely subtle (and doubtfully consistent) differences between this species and *oculta* (Vanuatu Petrel) which breeds in the Vanuatu archipelago. White-necked Petrel is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its very small breeding range on two or three islands. Its population is currently estimated at 100,000 mature individuals and is thought to be increasing.

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*: A common and attractive *Pterodroma* petrel, first encountered at sea east of the Northern Mariana Islands; seen in large numbers off the Iwo Islands and Bonin Islands, and last encountered as we were heading north from Torishima. We logged about 250 and had many close views.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*: Another common and attractive *Pterodroma*, first encountered as we were heading north from Hauraki Gulf and seen in good numbers until just south of New Caledonia. We logged about 110 individuals and had many excellent views.

Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*: Good views of about half a dozen during our pelagic with Chris in Hauraki Gulf and then at least 25 in the outer Hauraki Gulf, off the Three Kings Islands and en route to Norfolk Island during the cruise. Separation from the very similar Pycroft's Petrel is not easy and many of the '*Cookilaria*' petrels that we observed in Hauraki Gulf remained unidentified. Thankfully, there were several extremely skilled photographers on board, and their digital photographs proved extremely helpful in confirming the identity of many individuals. Cook's Petrel is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Although there have been rapid declines in the past, the status of the population has been improving in recent years, thanks to the successful eradication of introduced predators on Little Barrier Island where by far the largest numbers breed. The total population is currently estimated at 1,258,000 mature individuals.

Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*: The distinction between Gould's Petrel and Collared Petrel is obviously far from clear, and we had great fun trying to sort these two out. The first bird that we saw, when we were still south of Norfolk Island, was identified by Peter as a Gould's of the nominate race, which breeds on two islands off eastern Australia. We counted over 90 birds on our day at sea between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia, and

saw at least 500 off the west coast of New Caledonia, but a large proportion of these seemed to show some characteristics of Collared Petrel and a few intermediate and dark phase birds were clearly 'Collared'. The large numbers that we saw gathering in the evening just outside the reef off Noumea must surely have been *caledonica* (a subspecies of Gould's) which breeds in the highlands of New Caledonia, and so must most of the others that we saw within sight of the island. Many authorities still include Collared Petrel within Gould's Petrel, and given our experience around New Caledonia, this would seem to make sense, with the New Caledonian birds being an intermediate population between pure 'Gould's' off eastern Australia and pure 'Collared' further east. BirdLife International, however, continues to treat the two as separate species and classifies Gould's Petrel as Vulnerable because of its small breeding range and possibly declining population. Although the Australian breeding population is currently increasing through conservation action, the New Caledonian population is undoubtedly in decline.

Collared Petrel *Pterodroma brevipes*: At least eight birds observed between Norfolk Island and northern New Caledonia showed complete collars or were of the distinctive intermediate or dark morphs. Many others birds with partial collars may have been pale individuals of this species or dark Gould's Petrels and could not be identified, even from photographs. BirdLife International classifies this species as Vulnerable because of its small population size and likely decline owing to the effects of introduced predators.

Magnificent Petrel *Pterodroma [brevipes] magnificens*: A very dark petrel that passed by during a chumming session between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia and a similar individual seen between New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands were identified as Magnificent Petrels from photographs. This form, which is believed to breed in the Banks Islands in Vanuatu, was described as a subspecies of Collared Petrel as recently as 2010. However, it differs in size and structure from Collared and is likely to be given full specific status in the future.

Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti*: A bird that passed close by the ship as we were heading north from Hauraki Gulf on our first full day at sea was identified from photographs as this species. It is currently classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its very small breeding range, with the majority of the population breeding on one island, and potential threats from introduced predators.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*: We had good views of three during our pelagic with Chris in Hauraki Gulf and saw about 25 during our first two days at sea on the *Spirit of Enderby*.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulweria*: We encountered our first as we were leaving Rennell Island, and went on to record the species in small numbers on a further five dates, with the highest count being eight on our second day east of the Northern Marianas. Two or three individuals gave excellent views as they crossed back and forth under the bow.

Parkinson's Petrel (Black Petrel) *Procellaria parkinsoni*: Superb views of about 20 attracted to our chumming sessions in Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic with Chris, and over 150 during our first two days at sea on the *Spirit of Enderby*, but a single bird the next day was the last. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it breeds on only two small islands where introduced predators are a potential threat. The population is estimated at only about 5,000 mature individuals.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*: We saw our first dozen or so off New Ireland, where this is a non-breeding visitor in the southern summer, but then did not see any more until we came across two near Torishima. Over 100 were recorded the next day as we approached the Izu Islands, where the species breeds, and many thousands were present around Miyake-jima and on the way in to Tokyo Bay on our last day at sea.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*: Superb views of at least 100 attracted to our chumming sessions in Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic with Chris. It was good to have repeated opportunities to compare this species and the superficially very similar Parkinson's Petrel side by side on the water within a few feet of the boat. We also saw about 60 from the *Spirit of Enderby* in the outer Hauraki Gulf on our first day at sea. Then on our last day at

sea, we came across at least five with thousands of Streaked Shearwaters on the way into Tokyo Bay.

Christmas Island Shearwater (Christmas Shearwater) *Puffinus nativitatis*: A rather small all dark shearwater that appeared suddenly around the ship as we were cruising past Pagan Island in the Northern Marianas proved to be a Christmas Island Shearwater – a scarce bird in these waters and a write-in for the Western Pacific Odyssey. The bird stayed around long enough for most of us to see it, and some excellent photographs were obtained.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*: The most frequently encountered species on the voyage, recorded almost daily from just south of Norfolk Island to Torishima, with counts in excess of 100 on several dates. We came across a spectacular concentration of at least 10,000 just outside the reef as we were leaving New Caledonia in the evening, and saw at least 1,000 during our day at sea east of the Bonin Islands. All the birds in the far south were dark morph; we began to encounter a few light morph birds off Bougainville and New Ireland, and north of the equator the light morph became the dominant form. All of those seen off the Northern Marianas and Bonins were light morph.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*: Superb views of about 15 during our pelagic in Hauraki Gulf, and good views of about 165 during our first two days at sea on the *Spirit of Enderby*. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because almost the entire population of 2,500,000 mature individuals breeds on the Poor Knights Islands off North Island, New Zealand, where it remains at risk from the accidental introduction of predators and other catastrophes.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: Three were seen in Hauraki Gulf during our first day at sea in the *Spirit of Enderby*; another was seen the next day and then, after a long gap, four were seen as we were heading north from Miyake-jima into Tokyo Bay. It is likely that others were overlooked, as this species can be very difficult to separate from the next species. The Sooty Shearwater has recently been classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because the population, although still very large, appears to be undergoing a moderately rapid decline owing to the impact of fisheries, the harvesting of its young and possibly climate change.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*: We were a little bit early for the main spring migration, and it was not until we had reached the Northern Marianas that the migration finally caught up with us. We saw a couple of small flocks off New Caledonia and about 30 off Makira, but otherwise only one and twos were recorded in a day until 22 April, when at least 650 passed the ship heading north-northeast at high speed. Over 1,300 were counted the next day, when we were east of the Iwo Islands, followed by at least 250 the next day.

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*: Good views of about 50 during our pelagic with Chris in Hauraki Gulf, and about 25 during our first two days at sea in the *Spirit of Enderby*.

Southern Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*: We had mostly very poor views of six or seven in New Zealand waters during our first three days at sea, and then somewhat better views of about ten birds as we were sailing away from Norfolk Island. Unfortunately, this species and the next appear to be wary of boats and are usually seen flying away at high speed. There are two breeding populations on Norfolk Island – a summer breeding population and a winter breeding population – and the two apparently require different sized leg rings!

Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*: We recorded small 'Tropical' type shearwaters on several occasions: a single bird between New Caledonia and the Solomons; two individuals as we were approaching Truk; two more individuals as we were leaving Truk; and six individuals as we were passing east of the northernmost Northern Marianas. Unfortunately, all were either far off, flying away from us or in poor light, and most were all three! It has been suggested that the small shearwaters in the Pacific should be re-named Atoll Shearwater *P. dichrous* to differentiate them from Tropical Shearwaters in

the Indian Ocean, and further splitting is possible, with the birds on Truk and those in the Northern Marianas being recognised as distinct forms/species.

Bannerman's Shearwater *Puffinus bannermani*: Two small black and white shearwaters seen as we were passing to the east of the Iwo Islands and another bird seen flying through the wake as we were chumming off the Bonin Islands the next day showed the pale sides to the head and neck characteristic of this form. Most authorities continue to treat this form, which breeds in the Bonin Islands, as a subspecies of Tropical Shearwater. Another small black and white shearwater seen briefly by a few of us as we were passing the Bonins showed characteristics of the recently described Bryan's Shearwater *P. bryani* – one of the Little Shearwater complex – but our views were inconclusive.

Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi*: This is another WPO speciality. Our first was an extremely distant bird spotted by Chris Collins as we were heading north-west from Guadalcanal. Three more were seen early the next morning as we were approaching Kolombangara, but again they were very distant and of little consequence. Then at last, as we were sailing along the west side of Bougainville the next day, two individuals gave excellent views as they passed close by the ship, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Another was reported off New Ireland by one of our fellow passengers the next day, but that was the last. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International on the basis of its very small population size (thought to be fewer than 1,000 mature individuals) and restricted breeding range.

#### HYDROBATIDAE

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*: Small numbers were recorded on 11 dates from Hauraki Gulf to the Bonin Islands, with the highest count being eight between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. This species was a regular at our chumming sessions and gave some great views.

White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*: Disappointingly few. We saw two in the outer Hauraki Gulf, two as we were passing the Three Kings Islands, and three soon after leaving Norfolk Island. Fortunately, a couple gave decent views.

White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria*: Fantastic views of a bird that came in to one of our chumming sessions between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. A second individual was seen later the same day. This is a scarce bird in the south-west Pacific.

New Zealand Storm-Petrel *Fregetta maoriana*: The main purpose of our pelagic trip in Hauraki Gulf with Chris Gaskin was not simply to find New Zealand Storm-Petrels but to get good views of them. This we did! Soon after we had started chumming, the first birds appeared and we were treated to some excellent views, as several birds at a time skimmed back and forth around our boat. Our tally for the day was at least a dozen. Two days later, we were chumming in the same area from the *Spirit of Enderby*, and no fewer than 20 New Zealand Storm-Petrels were recorded, but the views were not nearly as good. Previously known from only three specimens collected in the 1800s, this species was spectacularly rediscovered in 2003 and has been seen regularly in Hauraki Gulf since then. Recent DNA studies have revealed that it is a *Fregetta*, not an *Oceanites* as originally supposed, while ongoing studies indicate that the breeding grounds are on nearby islands. The species has been classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International because of its extremely small population size and presumed susceptibility to the impacts of introduced predators. Four days after our encounter with the New Zealand Storm-Petrels and 10° further north we came across one, and possibly two, very similar birds at a chumming session between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. These 'New Caledonian Storm-Petrels' have been seen on each of the last four WPOs, but the views have not been good enough to make any sound judgements. This year we had much better views and Chris Collins was able to obtain some very good photographs. The general consensus was that the bird was larger than New Zealand Storm-Petrel, with broader, more rounded wings, less white on the underwing and longer tarsi, but the differences were slight.



Obviously efforts should be made as soon as possible to net one of these birds and obtain proper measurements and a DNA sample, as it seems likely that it represents a new species.

- Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregetta fuliginosa*: Two individuals showed reasonably well as they passed by the ship on our second full day at sea after leaving New Caledonia, and another bird was seen in the wake the next day, but these were the only ones, despite long hours of diligent searching. This spectacular storm-petrel is very scarce throughout its wide range and is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because of its very small and fragmented population which is continuing to decline.
- Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*: Four individuals were seen between the northern tip of the Northern Marianas and the Bonin Islands.
- Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*: Two *Oceanodroma* storm-petrels seen during our second full day at sea after leaving New Caledonia appeared to be this 'species'. Several similar storm-petrels were seen in the same area during the WPO in 2011. The Band-rumped Storm-Petrel was not previously known to occur in this part of the Pacific, and the origin of these birds is unclear. Are they wintering birds from the breeding colonies in Japan or do they belong to a hitherto unknown breeding population in the south-west Pacific? If the latter, could they belong to a new species within the *castro* complex?
- Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*: We first encountered four of these large storm-petrels with their diagnostic skua-like wing flashes as we were passing to the east of the main Northern Marianas. Typically, they were following in the wake. Over the next four days, we logged about 160 and were seldom without two or three in the wake. We saw out last few around Torishima, and then suddenly Tristram's Storm-Petrel became the common storm-petrel. Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel is known to breed only on the Iwo Islands, although it may also breed in the Bonin Islands. It is treated as Data Deficient by BirdLife International.
- Tristram's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami*: Our first convincing views of this species were to the east of the Bonin Islands, where we recorded at least five amongst the many Matsudaira's. We had excellent views of several at our chumming sessions off Torishima, and good views of another dozen or so as we approached the Izu Islands. The species was positively abundant around Miyake-jima, and we continued to see them well on the way into Tokyo Bay, logging over 200 for the day. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its small breeding range.

#### PELECANOIDIDAE

- Common Diving-Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*: We saw eight during our pelagic in Hauraki Gulf and about 30 from the *Spirit of Enderby* in the outer Hauraki Gulf, but most of our views were of birds whizzing away.

#### PHAETHONTIDAE

- White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*: Our first was seen on our second full day at sea after leaving Norfolk Island. We then went on to see small numbers on a further 13 days, with the last two occurring at sea east of the Northern Marianas. Several showed well around the ship, and we saw a few near their breeding sites in Truk. The form breeding in the tropical Pacific (*dorotheae*) has a rather dull yellow-green bill.
- Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*: We saw our first near Three Kings Islands in New Zealand and logged another 20 or so over the next three days as we passed Norfolk Island, where there is a large breeding population. However, the only others were a couple off New Caledonia, one south of Rennell, two east of the Northern Marianas and one near Torishima.

## FREGATIDAE

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*: We saw our first circling low over the ship just off Norfolk Island, and then recorded small numbers on most days until we reached the equator. Separating this species from the next is not always easy, and as many frigatebirds were very distant, most of the frigatebirds that we recorded were not identified to species.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*: Our first was seen as we were leaving the lagoon in New Caledonia. We then recorded up to ten in a day on many occasions until we had just crossed the equator, but none thereafter. The highest count by far of unidentified frigatebirds was during our day off the east coast of New Ireland, when one of our fellow passengers came up with the impressive total of 480! Most of these were probably Lessers.

## SULIDAE

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*: About 15 of the dark-eyed form *fullagari* (Tasman Booby) were seen in the vicinity of Norfolk Island, often well enough for us to see that they had dark eyes. As Peter Harrison argued strongly, this form, which breeds on Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island and the Kermadec Islands, may merit specific status. Further north, we saw a couple of the pale-eyed form *personata* between New Caledonia and the Solomons and a single individual east of the Northern Marianas.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: We saw our first half dozen off the west coast of New Caledonia, and then saw good numbers in the Solomons, a few off Bougainville and New Ireland, and good numbers again off the Northern Marianas, Bonin Islands and Izu Islands.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*: An attractive little booby, recorded in small numbers on many dates from Norfolk Island to the Bonins. Our highest count was 60 as we sailed away from Rennell in the evening and watched birds returning to their breeding colony on the island. This species occasionally roosted on the ship's mast and frequently entertained us by chasing flying-fishes that were disturbed by the ship. The subspecies in the western Pacific is *rubripes*. We saw several light morph individuals with dusky tails superficially similar to adults of the eastern Pacific form *websteri*, but concluded that these were *rubripes* still retaining some immature plumage.

Australian Gannet *Morus serrator*: Good views of about 200 at and around the breeding colony on the Maori Rocks in Hauraki Gulf, especially during our pelagic with Chris. We also saw six as we were cruising north past the Three Kings Islands, but these were the last.

## PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*: Two at Whangamarino Wetland Reserve in New Zealand were expected; two on Norfolk Island (where this is only a vagrant) were not.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: One at Omaha, four at Whangamarino and one at Miranda in New Zealand, and lots in Tokyo Bay and at the Tone River in Japan.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*: Good views of about 25 at a colony near Snells Beach and about 40 as we were sailing out of Tauranga harbour in New Zealand.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*: Five near Snells Beach in New Zealand and one at the reservoir in Rivière Bleue Provincial Park in New Caledonia.

## ARDEIDAE

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (H): One was heard booming in the marshes by the Tone River near Omigawa.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: Six were seen in Truk, mostly at the wetland below the Japanese gun on Weno. The views here were rather distant!

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Eight flew across Tokyo Bay as we were approaching Yokohama, and about 25 were seen in the marshes by the Tone River on our last afternoon.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta*: A single bird was seen at Miranda in New Zealand, and there were five or so in the wetlands near Omigawa in Japan.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*: We recorded about 20 on the mainland of New Zealand, and also saw one on Norfolk Island and a couple in New Caledonia.

Pacific Reef-Heron (Pacific/Eastern Reef-Egret) *Egretta sacra*: Three were seen as we were leaving Noumea in New Caledonia, and another two were seen on Kolombangara. Others were reported on Rennell and Truk.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*: One was seen by the small river at Kukudu and another was seen during the zodiac cruise in the mangroves on Kolombangara.

Rufous Night-Heron (Nankeen Night-Heron) *Nycticorax caledonicus*: At least five were seen flying about over the suburbs and wetland on Weno in Truk.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Australian Ibis (Australian White Ibis) *Threskiornis molucca*: About 20 were seen on Rennell, where this is almost a garden bird. The form here, *pygmaeus*, is restricted to Rennell and Bellona islands.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*: Two were seen well at Miranda in New Zealand.

#### PANDIONIDAE

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus*: Our first were a couple in the distance over the harbour in Noumea, but we then had great views of a pair on Makira and three on Kolombangara in the Solomons. Whether or not this very thin split becomes widely accepted remains to be seen!

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*: Distant scope views of a single perched bird on Makira. The form here is *gurneyi*, which is endemic to the Solomons.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*: A few were seen in the Tokyo/Narita area. This form is often lumped in Black Kite *M. migrans*, and indeed some juvenile birds are virtually indistinguishable.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*: Two were seen on our afternoon excursion to Mount Koghis and five gave good views during our excursion to Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. These included a pair near their nest at the reservoir.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur Indus*: Good views of three on Makira, two on Guadalcanal and four on Kolombangara in the Solomons. The form here is *flavirostris*, which is endemic to the Solomons.

Solomon Sea-Eagle (Solomon Islands Sea-Eagle) *Haliaeetus sanfordi*: We had two excellent encounters with this impressive eagle – a Solomon Islands endemic. First was a pair over the forest on Makira, one of which put in repeated appearances, occasionally low overhead. Our second encounter was on Kolombangara, where an adult gave great views near the landing site. Another bird was seen later over the forest. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its small population (estimated at fewer than a thousand mature individuals) which is suspected to be declining.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*: A single bird showed well on a couple of occasions over the marshes by the Tone River on our final afternoon in Japan.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*: Over a dozen were seen during our excursions in New Zealand. Our best views were at Whangamarino, where there were at least half a dozen.

Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster*: One was seen by some of the party on Mount Austen on Guadalcanal. The form here, *pulchellus*, is endemic to Guadalcanal.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*: At least three were seen on Rennell, including two perched birds which gave great views in the scope. The form concerned is nominate *fasciatus*, which also breeds in Australia.

Pied Goshawk *Accipiter albogularis*: A distant soaring bird was seen by most of us on Makira (*albogularis*); one was seen by a few of us on Mount Austen, Guadalcanal (*woodfordi*), and Ron had good looks at an immature bird on Kolombangara (*gilvus*).

## FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (NL): One was seen over the marshes near Omigawa on our last afternoon in Japan.

Australian Kestrel (Nankeen Kestrel) *Falco cenchroides*: One was seen from one of the zodiacs as we were cruising along the sheltered west coast of Norfolk Island.

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*: One was seen from the zodiacs in the mangroves on Kolombangara.

## RALLIDAE

Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis*: Great views of three in Tawharanui Regional Park on our first evening in New Zealand.

Roviana Rail *Gallirallus rovianae*: Our first priority on landing on Kolombangara was to try for this large flightless rail but our initial attempts (as a group of 50 birders) proved fruitless. Soon after splitting up into two smaller groups, however, one of our local guides found a bird foraging in a small vegetable garden, and some of us were treated to close, if rather brief, views of it as it sneaked back into the long grass. Those of us who had missed the rail and were desperate to see it opted out of the afternoon's zodiac cruise and returned to the village for a second attempt. Once again our local guide was extremely helpful and in late afternoon took us to an area of vegetable gardens near the school where we had superb views of an adult with two chicks, while another bird showed briefly nearby. This species, which was described as recently as 1991, is classified by BirdLife International as Near Threatened because of its small population which is thought to be declining owing to predation by village dogs.

Pale-vented Bush-hen *Amaurornis moluccana* (H): One was heard calling at dawn from dense vegetation at the summit of Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, but showed little interest in playback.

Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus*: Common in New Zealand and especially so in Tawharanui Regional Park, where we saw about 100. We also saw half a dozen of the form *samoensis* on Kolombangara in the Solomons.

Common Moorhen (Common Gallinule) *Gallinula chloropus*: Distant views of a juvenile in the marsh below the Japanese gun on Weno. This species has been expanding its range in Micronesia in recent years, but the origin of the birds on Truk and their subspecific status remain unknown.

## RHYNOCHETIDAE

Kagu *Rhynochetos jubatus*: This impressive bird was obviously one of the land-bird highlights of the trip. Armed with iPod and ghetto-blaster, Yves Letocart and his colleagues led us into the forest in Rivière Bleue Provincial Park, and within a few minutes we were enjoying extraordinarily close views of a pair on one side of the track and a party of three on the other side. The birds seemed totally unconcerned at our presence, approaching to within a few feet of us, and the only problem was finding a space in the line up of photographers. Later, as we split up into smaller groups, we found at least three more birds and could enjoy them at leisure. This charismatic species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because of its very small and fragmented population (estimated at fewer than a thousand mature individuals), which is suffering an overall decline. Fortunately, the populations in some areas are increasing as a result of conservation efforts, notably predator control, and the species is certainly much easier to find than it was a few decades ago.

## CHARADRIIDAE

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*: Small numbers were recorded on several occasions during our pre-cruise excursions in New Zealand.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*: First encountered in New Zealand, where we had rather distant scope views of a flock of 24 roosting on the mud-flats at Miranda. There was a flock of 10

on the beach at Kukudu on Kolombangara when we arrived, and we had great views of about a dozen on Weno in Truk, including several very tame birds on the lawn at the Blue Lagoon Resort. Finally, a single bird circled the ship a couple of times as we were cruising through the Izu Islands off Japan. Many of the birds were already in their attractive breeding plumage.

Red-breasted Dotterel (New Zealand Dotterel) *Charadrius obscurus*: Good scope views of five on the mud-flats by the causeway out to Omaha near Snells Beach on our first evening in New Zealand. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it has a very small, severely fragmented population (estimated at 2,000 mature individuals) and is undergoing substantial declines in some areas.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: One flew up from the marshes by the Tone River near Omigawa in Japan.

Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*: Good views of half a dozen by the causeway out to Omaha and about 100 at Miranda in New Zealand.

Wrybill *Anarhynchus frontalis*: Although the tide was only just beginning to come in at Miranda, the Wrybills were already beginning to move up to their high-tide roost when we arrived, and by the time we had to leave there were at least 1,000 in front of the hides. The bulk of the population of this bizarre wader, which breeds exclusively in South Island, winters in the Firth of Thames and roosts at Miranda. It is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it has a small population (estimated at 4,000-5,000), which is undergoing a continuing decline owing to habitat degradation and the impacts of introduced predators.

#### HAEMATOPODIDAE

South Island Oystercatcher (South Island Pied Oystercatcher) *Haematopus finschi*: A couple by the causeway out to Omaha near Snells Beach and at least 2,000 on the mud-flats at Miranda.

Variable Oystercatcher *Haematopus unicolor*: Great views of about 15 by the causeway out to Omaha, a couple at Miranda and five in Tauranga harbour. We saw birds in a variety of plumages, from all black individuals to some which closely resembled South Island Oystercatchers.

#### RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Pied Stilt (White-headed Stilt) *Himantopus leucocephalus*: Half a dozen by the causeway out to Omaha and at least 200 on the mudflats at Miranda, where at least one individual seemed to show the odd Black Stilt gene!

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*: A single bird was seen with a Eurasian Whimbrel in the marshes by the Tone River near Omigawa in Japan.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana*: Five were seen along the shore of Norfolk Island; one was heard calling in Noumea harbour, and a couple were seen near the wharf on Weno in Truk.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: Two individuals were seen during the cruise: a bird flying over at Rennell in the Solomons, and a bird flying past the ship near Miyake-jima in the Izu Islands. The spring migration was in full swing when we arrived in Japan and we recorded at least 250 at the Tone River near Omigawa, mostly flying over. The East Asian form of the Whimbrel, *variegatus*, has very little white on the lower back and rump and is thus intermediate between the West Eurasian forms and the dark-backed form *hudsonicus* of the Americas. A flock of about 20 large waders, probably this species or Far Eastern Curlew *N. madagascariensis*, was seen flying north over the sea east of the northernmost of the Northern Marianas on 22 April. The birds were flying purposefully north in single file and clearly knew where they were going. Unfortunately, they were much too far away for any positive identification.

- Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*: Distant views of about 50 on the mud-flats at Miranda.
- Red Knot *Calidris canutus*: There were at least 50 on the mud-flats at Miranda, and some of these flew in reasonably close and mingled with the Wrybills, including a few birds in their smart summer plumage.
- Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Only encountered on Weno in Micronesia, where we saw about 25 including several very smart birds in breeding plumage on the lawn at the Blue Lagoon Resort.
- Red Phalarope (Grey Phalarope) *Phalaropus fulicarius*: Our voyage north through the Izu Islands clearly coincided with the main spring migration of this species, as we encountered numerous small parties on the sea, from the region of Torishima north almost to the wharf in Yokohama harbour. We logged about 200, including a large number of individuals in their brick-red breeding dress, and there must have been many thousands about. The migration of Red-necked Phalaropes *P. lobatus* had presumably not yet started, as this is generally the commonest of the phalaropes in Japanese waters.

#### LARIDAE

- Black-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus bulleri*: Distant scope views of about fifty on the mud-flats and sand-spit at Miranda. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it appears to have undergone a very rapid decline in recent decades. The population is currently estimated at 96,000 mature individuals.
- Red-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus scopulinus*: Common in North Island, New Zealand. We encountered a flock of several hundred at a feeding frenzy off the Maori Rocks in Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic with Chris, and came across the same flock two days later during the cruise.
- Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*: Good views of about 15 of the subspecies *forsteri* in and around the harbour at Noumea in New Caledonia.
- Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*: Common in inner Tokyo Bay and Yokohama harbour. We logged about 150.
- Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*: Good views of five around the ship as we were passing Miyakejima and entering Tokyo Bay, and three more in inner Tokyo Bay the next morning.
- Vega Gull (East Siberian Gull) *Larus vegae*: About 25 were recorded in Tokyo Bay.
- Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*: Distant views of an immature bird and close views of an adult in inner Tokyo Bay.
- Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*: Common during the pre-cruise excursions in New Zealand. Our last were about 30 from the ship as we were sailing out of Tauranga harbour.
- Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*: Our first was a bird seen at sea south of Norfolk Island. Then recorded on many dates almost throughout the cruise, although numbers were generally low except when we were within sight of land. Our highest count was 30 in Truk Lagoon and our last were about 15 at sea east of the Bonin Islands.
- Black Noddy *Anous minutus*: First encountered at Norfolk Island, where we saw about 100, and then seen on many dates until we had left Truk Lagoon, where this species was especially numerous.
- Grey Noddy (Grey Ternlet) *Procelsterna albivitta*: Good views of about 40 roosting on almost sheer rock faces at Maori Rocks in Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic with Chris, and distant views of at least ten at the same site two days later. We also saw two at sea the next day, and had decent views of six around Norfolk Island, where there is a small breeding population.
- Common White Tern *Gygis alba*: We encountered our first few on the day before we arrived at Norfolk Island and then saw good numbers around Norfolk and a few on the way to New Caledonia, but there was then a gap in sightings until we approaching the equator. North of the equator, we saw them daily until we were passing the northernmost of the Northern Marianas, and recorded up to 50 in a day in Truk and 30 in a day off the

Northern Marianas. It was particularly nice to watch pairs displaying at their nest-sites in the tall trees near the Japanese gun on Weno.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*: We saw our first two as we were leaving Norfolk Island and another one the next day, but then it was not until we were well north of New Caledonia that we encountered our first feeding flocks out at sea. Thereafter, we saw Sooty Terns almost daily, often in big numbers, until we were passing the northernmost of the Northern Marianas. Our highest counts were 250 as we crossed the equator and again as we were passing east of the Northern Marianas. Three birds seen east of the Bonin Islands, in Japanese waters, were the last.

Grey-backed Tern (Spectacled Tern) *Onychoprion lunatus*: We found this rather scarce and patchily distributed species on two occasions: firstly off the west coast of Bougainville, where we had good views of about a dozen, including some very scruffy moulting birds and immatures, and secondly east of the Northern Marianas, where we had great views of six adults. Most of the birds off Bougainville were disturbed from their 'roosts' on coconuts or other flotsam.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*: The only ones positively identified were a couple off Makira, half a dozen off Kolombangara and one off Bougainville, but it seems likely that many were overlooked as this is a common breeding species throughout Melanesia.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*: A couple flew past the ship in Tokyo Bay during our last day at sea.

Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis*: Good views of a party of three (two adults and an immature) as we were crossing the lagoon towards Noumea in New Caledonia, and equally good views of possibly the same three birds as we were leaving the lagoon the next day. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of recent declines over much of its breeding range in Australia and New Zealand.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: We saw a couple by the causeway out to Omaha near Snells Beach and a couple on the sand-spit at Miranda during our pre-cruise excursions in New Zealand.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*: Distant views of a party of four feeding in the lagoon at Rennell in the Solomons.

White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata*: Decent views of a dozen during our pelagic from Sandspit with Chris and excellent views of about 30 in Tauranga harbour and as we were sailing away in the *Spirit of Enderby*.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*: Distant views of two or three in the lagoon at Noumea in New Caledonia, and excellent views of 20 or 30 in Truk Lagoon, where this is a common breeding bird.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: An immature bird over the wetland below the Japanese gun on Weno and later around the harbour was unexpected, as this is an uncommon migrant in Micronesia. About a dozen flew past the ship as we were entering Tokyo Bay, and there was one in Yokohama harbour as we approached the wharf. These were birds of the dusky, black-billed eastern form *longipennis*. (A rumour going about the ship that some of the birds seen in Tokyo Bay might have been Aleutian Terns *S. aleutica* was founded more on imagination than eyesight).

Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*: We recorded about 20 off New Caledonia, four off Guadalcanal, one at Kolombangara and a couple in Truk Lagoon. A couple of birds off New Caledonia were obviously using the ship to assist them in their foraging – an interesting piece of behaviour that had also been observed during the WPO in 2011. The form concerned would appear to be *cristatus*.

## STERCORARIIDAE

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius (Catharacta) maccormicki*: We had several great sightings of both pale and intermediate phase individuals of this impressive skua, all in Japanese waters. The first was a bird that flew low over the ship as we were passing east of the Iwo Islands. Another circled the ship as we were passing east of the Bonins, and three were seen near

Torishima, including a very obliging bird that came in to our chumming. Our last was seen the next day, as we were heading north towards the Izu Islands. Two large 'Catharacta' skuas seen east of the Three Kings Islands in New Zealand waters could well have been Brown Skuas *S. antarcticus*, but they were some way off and the possibility of them being dark phase *maccormicki* could not be ruled out.

Pomarine Jaeger (Pomarine Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*: We had several good sightings of this species on the way north, including one off the Three Kings Islands in New Zealand, one between New Caledonia and the Solomons, three off the east coast of New Ireland and five off the Northern Marianas. By the time we reached Japanese waters, the migration was in full swing and we counted a total of 49 between Torishima and Tokyo, including 40 during our last full day at sea. Most of these were adults with full spoons and a few were of the scarce dark phase.

Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*: The identification of small skuas (jaegers) at sea can be very challenging, and many of the birds that we saw went unidentified. Definite Arctics included one in the outer Hauraki Gulf on our first full day at sea, four off the west coast of Bougainville, one off the east coast of New Ireland, one off the Bonin Islands and three north of Torishima. It seems that this is the least common of the three small skuas in the open ocean. Indeed, according to Pratt (1987), the Arctic Skua is "unknown" in the central Pacific.

Long-tailed Jaeger (Long-tailed Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*: This graceful little skua was pleasingly common, especially during the last two weeks of the cruise when it was evident that the spring migration was in full swing. We saw our first individual off the Three Kings Islands in New Zealand and this was followed by one the next day. Five were seen off the west coast of Bougainville and four were seen on the day we crossed the equator. Thereafter we recorded Long-tailed Skuas virtually every day, with numbers increasing to seven on our day near Torishima, no less than thirty on our way to the Izu Islands, and 15 between Miyake-jima and Tokyo Bay. Most of the birds in the south were immatures in confusing plumages, while most of those in the north were adults with full tail-streamers. The sight of two Long-tailed Skuas chasing a South Polar Skua around the ship as we drifted off Torishima was particularly memorable.

#### ALCIDAE

Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*: As predicted, we found about ten birds on the water or in flight near the breeding colony on a group of stacks to the east of Miyake-jima in the Izu Islands. Those of us out on deck had great views, but unfortunately we passed closest to the stacks in the middle of breakfast – a classic case of spectacular bad timing! Those of us who were in the dining room when the announcement came through barely managed to get the tail-end of a couple of birds, and we could find no more on the way in to Tokyo Bay. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it has a small population (currently estimated at between 2,500 and 10,000 mature individuals) which is thought to be declining rapidly as a result of disturbance at the breeding sites, predation and mortality from drift-net fisheries.

Rhinoceros Auklet *Cerorhinca monocerata*: A dozen birds (including one party of eight) were seen on the way in to Tokyo Bay, and one of these gave good views sitting on the water.

#### COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia*: Observed in New Zealand, on Norfolk Island, in New Caledonia and in Japan.

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*: Superb views of four perched birds (*hypochochroa*) on Mount Koghis in New Caledonia and flight views of a single bird (*halmaheira*) on Makira.

Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous Turtle Dove) *Streptopelia orientalis*: Half a dozen were seen on the drive to Omigawa and over the marshes by the Tone River in Japan.



- Spotted Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia chinensis*: Common in the suburbs of Noumea in New Caledonia.
- Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia mackinlayi*: Good views of a total of five in the dense woodland on Rennell Island in the Solomons. Others were seen on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara, but not by us! The form concerned is *arossi*.
- Pacific Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris* (LO): One was flushed from the track by the last shuttle bus from Pont Perignon to the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia.
- Stephan's Dove *Chalcophaps stephani*: A couple were seen in the Solomons: one by Erkii and Hans at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, and one by Tony on Kolombangara. The form concerned is *mortoni*, which is endemic to the Solomons.
- Caroline Islands Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba kubaryi*: This very attractive ground-dove was much easier than anticipated this year. We saw our first (an adult) in a roadside tree only a few hundred yards from the wharf, shortly after going ashore for the first time at Weno, and then found two more that evening and at least six the next day. Our best views were of an adult and a juvenile feeding in a fruiting tree by the roadside in Weno suburbs. These birds obligingly stayed around for hours and were seen by just about everyone. This monotypic species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it has a very small population which appears to be declining on at least one island, probably owing to hunting, predation and expanding cultivation.
- Crimson-crowned Fruit-Dove (Purple-capped Fruit-Dove) *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*: Easily found on Weno and seen extremely well on several occasions. We recorded three on our first evening and about a dozen the next day.
- Silver-capped Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus richardsii*: Common and conspicuous on Rennell Island, and seen extremely well through the scope on several occasions. This very attractive fruit-dove is endemic to Rennell and a few nearby islets.
- Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus viridis*: Another smart fruit-dove with a restricted range which was reasonably common. We saw about a dozen at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and had some great views. The form concerned is *lewisii*.
- Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus solomonensis*: A smart but elusive fruit-dove which was seen by some of the group on Makira. The form here is the nominate *solomonensis*.
- White-headed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus eugeniae*: A very smart fruit-dove endemic to Makira. It took a while to find the bird, but eventually some of us had good views of one and saw a couple more. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because it has a moderately small population, and the forest throughout its range is being or will be logged.
- Cloven-feathered Dove *Drepanoptila holosericea* (H): One was heard calling on Mount Koghis in New Caledonia. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of the threats to its habitat and hunting pressure.
- Pacific Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pacifica*: Good views of three, including a 'knobless' immature, on Rennell Island. A couple more were heard calling in the forest. The form here is the nominate.
- Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula rubricera*: A colourful and impressive pigeon that was fairly common on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. We saw about 20 in all, and had some great views. The form concerned is *rufigula*, which is endemic to the Solomons. This species is listed as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of a recent increase in the rate deforestation on New Britain, where the bulk of the population occurs.
- Island Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria*: One was seen by a few of us at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and the rest of us caught up on Kolombangara, where at least three were seen including a couple of birds in the scope. The form concerned is the nominate *pistrinaria*.
- Chestnut-bellied Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula brenchleyi*: Two of us had good flight views of one bird and brief views of another on Makira, as we were heading back to the ship. This species is

classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it appears to be scarce everywhere and is assumed to be declining as a result of deforestation.

New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula goliath*: Some of us had brief views of a couple from the bus as we were driving up to Mount Koghis on our first evening in New Caledonia, and all of us had superb close-up views of a perched bird in the forest at Rivière Bleue the next day. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of increasing hunting pressure.

New Zealand Pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*: We found this species to be quite common in the native forest in Tawharanui Regional Park and recorded about 20 in our short evening stroll there. We even saw a few from the *Sumo* during our pelagic trip with Chris the next day. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of the threats from introduced predators, hunting and habitat degradation.

#### CACATUIDAE

Ducorps's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsii*: We had good views of about six of this Solomons endemic at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and also saw two or three on Kolombangara the next day.

#### PSITTACIDAE

New Zealand Kaka *Nestor meridionalis*: Very distant views of one flying high over the forest in Tawharanui Regional Park in New Zealand. The Kaka has apparently re-colonised this area under its own steam from nearby predator-free islands. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it has a small population which is thought to be declining rapidly owing to the effects of introduced competitors and predators.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*: We found about six at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, but the views were rather poor. On Kolombangara, however, the species was much more conspicuous and obliging, and we saw at least 20, some of which gave great views.

Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*: First encountered in Noumea and then seen well the next day at Rivière Bleue, where we found several small parties visiting the flowering trees (subspecies *deplanchii*). We also saw a pair in flight on Makira and about 15 on Kolombangara in the Solomons (subspecies *massena*). The IOC has split off the *moluccanus* group, referring to that species as Rainbow Lorikeet and renaming the *haematodus* group as Coconut Lorikeet.

Yellow-bibbed Lory *Lorius chlorocercus*: A very fancy lory. We had good views of four on Makira and about six at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal. A single bird was also recorded at Kukudu on Kolombangara, but this may have been an escaped cage-bird as the species is supposedly confined to the eastern Solomons.

Duchess Lorikeet *Charmosyna margarethae*: Great scope views of a party of ten feeding in flowering trees near the landing site at Kukudu on Kolombangara. Unfortunately, the birds did not hang around long. This very colourful little lorikeet is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its moderately small range and the threats posed by the cage-bird trade.

Finsch's Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta finschii*: This tiny little parrot appeared to be quite common on Rennell, Guadalcanal and Makira, judging by the number of times that we heard its high-pitched call, but it was some time before all of us had seen it well. Our best views were of a pair on Rennell and a couple of birds on Kolombangara, foraging nuthatch-like on tree trunks. The form occurring on Rennell and Makira is the nominate; the form on Kolombangara is *tristrami*.

Horned Parakeet *Eunymphicus cornutus*: A very handsome parrot which we saw well on several occasions at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. One of our best views was of a bird near the entrance gate in the pouring rain, just as we were leaving. This species is currently classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Formerly considered to be Endangered, it has been down-listed as recent surveys indicate that there are over 2,500 mature individuals.

New Caledonian Parakeet *Cyanoramphus saisseti*: Excellent views of a pair and a group of four in the forest at Rivière Bleue. We were lucky to find this New Caledonian endemic so easily, as it can be very elusive. It is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its small population size and the threats from introduced predators and forest clearance for nickel mining.

Red-crowned Parakeet (Red-fronted Parakeet) *Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*: Great views of a very responsive party of six in the forest in Tawharanui Regional Park on our first evening in New Zealand. Like the Kaka, the parakeet has re-colonised this area from the nearby islands.

Eastern Rosella (introduced) *Platycercus eximius*: Four of these introduced birds were seen in Tawharanui Regional Park.

Singing Parrot *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*: Seen in small numbers on Rennell, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. Most of our views were of birds in flight, but a couple of birds showed well before taking off. The form occurring on Rennell is *hyacinthus*; the form on Guadalcanal and Kolombangara is the nominate.

Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*: A large and, in the case of the female, striking parrot that we saw on several occasions flying high over the forest on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. Unfortunately, most of the birds seen were boring males. The form concerned is *solomonensis*.

#### CUCULIDAE

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* (H): A single bird was heard calling at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*: Two were seen during the zodiac cruise in the mangroves on Kolombangara.

Australian Koel *Eudynamis cyanocephalus* (H): Heard calling in the distance at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and also on Kolombangara.

Buff-headed Coucal *Centropus milo*: One was seen by a few of us and two more were heard at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, and then about six were seen on Kolombangara, several of which showed well.

#### APODIDAE

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*: Fairly common in New Caledonia and in the Solomons, where we recorded it on all four of the islands that we visited.

White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius*: As usual, identification of the small swiftlets presented a real challenge, especially in New Caledonia where the local race of Glossy Swiftlet (*albidior*) has a narrow white rump. We finally concluded that a couple of white-rumped swiftlets seen hawking over the river at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia were indeed *spodiopygius*. The situation on Kolombangara was less complicated, as the Glossy Swiftlets here (*becki*) lack the white rump. A heavy shower in the afternoon pushed large numbers of swiftlets down into the village area and here it was relatively easy to pick out about 15 White-rumped Swiftlets amongst the Glossy and Uniform Swiftlets.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis*: The commonest swiftlet on all the islands that we visited in the Solomons, usually seen foraging high over the forest.

Caroline Islands Swiftlet *Aerodramus inquietus*: A common little swiftlet endemic to the Caroline Islands and the only species present on Truk. We recorded about 100 on our first evening on Weno and saw lots more the next day on Weno and Tol South.

#### HEMIPROCNIIDAE

Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea*: We missed this impressive bird on Rennell, although some of our fellow passengers saw a few, and only some of us saw a couple on Guadalcanal, but we all had great views of about six on Kolombangara, including a very obliging pair near the landing site. The form concerned is *woodfordiana*.

## ALCEDINIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: One was seen and another heard during the zodiac cruise in the mangroves on Kolombangara in the Solomons, and we also found a bird in the marshes by the Tone River near Omigawa in Japan.

Little Kingfisher *Ceyx pusillus*: Those of us who took the zodiac cruise in the mangroves on Kolombangara had good views of three of these little gems. The form here is *richardsi*.

Ultramarine Kingfisher *Todirhamphus leucopygius*: This handsome kingfisher was high on our list of targets at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal. It can be a difficult bird to find, but this year we were in luck, finding two very responsive pairs and getting some great views. This species is endemic to the western Solomons.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris*: Great views of four of the subspecies *amoenus* on Rennell, two of the subspecies *solomonis* on Makira and two of the subspecies *alberti* on Kolombangara. The variation within this species is enormous and will doubtless eventually encourage someone to start splitting!

Sacred Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sanctus*: We recorded about 10 during our pre-cruise excursions in New Zealand (subspecies *vagans*), a couple on Norfolk Island, where they are resident (also *vagans*), and single individuals on Rennell and Kolombangara, where they occur only as 'winter' visitors from Australia (nominate *sanctus*). On the day after leaving Kolombangara, as we were sailing up the west side of Bougainville, a Sacred Kingfisher landed on the ship and stayed for about fifteen minutes before continuing on its journey.

## CORACIIDAE

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*: Reasonable scope views of three individuals in the forest on Makira. The form concerned, *solomonensis*, is confined to Feni and the Solomons.

## BUCEROTIDAE

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus*: We had great flight views of two pairs at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and also saw two pairs in flight over the forest on Kolombangara. Birds occurring in the central Solomons are sometimes given subspecific status under the name *harterti*.

## MELIPHAGIDAE

Tui *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*: Great views of about 15 of these bizarre honeyeaters in Tawharanui Regional Park on our first evening in New Zealand, then a few more in Snells Beach and on the drive to Tauranga. We even saw one near the information centre at Mount Maunganui as we were waiting to board the *Spirit of Enderby*.

New Caledonia Myzomela *Myzomela caledonica*: Great views of three on Mount Koghi and about 15 at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia.

Micronesian Myzomela *Myzomela rubratra*: Very common and conspicuous in Truk. We saw our first even before we had gone ashore, and recorded about 30 that evening and at least 50 the next day. The form occurring in Truk is the endemic *major*.

Cardinal Myzomela *Myzomela cardinalis*: Common and conspicuous on Rennell where we recorded about 30 and had many great views. The form occurring on Rennell is the endemic *sanfordi*.

Yellow-vented Myzomela *Myzomela eichhorni*: Altogether a much tougher proposition than the three preceding myzomelas. After some effort we eventually saw at least five in the forest on Kolombangara and had some decent views. This species is endemic to the New Georgia group of islands, the form occurring on Kolombangara being the nominate.

Black-headed Myzomela *Myzomela melanocephala*: This is another uncommon and elusive myzomela, confined to Guadalcanal and two nearby smaller islands. We managed to find four individuals at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, but most of the views were not great!

- Sooty Myzomela *Myzomela tristrami*: This myzomela, restricted to Makira, was relatively easy. We saw our first within moments of stepping ashore and recorded about 10 in all. We had several great views, but the bird is not much to look at!
- New Zealand Bellbird *Anthornis melanura*: Very common in Tawharanui Regional Park, where we had some fantastic views in response to playback, and also seen and heard on Little Barrier Island during our pelagic in Hauraki Gulf.
- Dark-brown Honeyeater *Lichmera incana*: True to his word, Chris managed to lure a couple in as we were waiting to go ashore in Noumea. We saw a few more that evening during our excursion to Mount Koghis, but none the next day at Rivière Bleue. This is very much a bird of scrub and gardens and obviously shuns tall forest.
- Barred Honeyeater *Phylidonyris undulatus*: Great views of three of these distinctive honeyeaters at Mount Koghis on our first evening in New Caledonia, and at least eight at Rivière Bleue the next day. A New Caledonian endemic.
- Crow Honeyeater *Gymnomyza aubryana*: This uncommon honeyeater can be very elusive, but this year we were lucky. There were lots of flowering trees along the track through the forest at Rivière Bleue and the Crow Honeyeaters were taking advantage of them. We saw at least six individuals, some of which showed very well, although they seldom stayed long in the same tree. This species is now listed as Critically Endangered by Birdlife International because the extremely small population is confined to the south of New Caledonia and is probably undergoing a very rapid decline owing to predation by introduced mammals.
- New Caledonian Friarbird *Philemon diemenensis*: We saw a couple at Mount Koghis on our first evening in New Caledonia and then at least 15 in the forest at Rivière Bleue, where they were favouring the same flowering trees as the Crow Honeyeaters. Another New Caledonian endemic.
- San Cristobal Melidectes *Melidectes sclateri*: This Makira endemic proved to be unusually elusive this year and only three of us managed to get reasonable views of one.

#### ACANTHIZIDAE

- Norfolk Island Gerygone *Gerygone modesta*: No-one can claim that the views were great, but we did actually see a total of three of these dull little gerygones from the zodiacs as we were cruising along the sheltered west coast of Norfolk Island. We heard them first and eventually lured the birds into view with playback. This Norfolk Island endemic is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because of its very restricted range and small population size (estimated at 3,000 mature individuals).
- Grey Gerygone *Gerygone igata*: Good views of half a dozen in Tawharanui Regional Park during our first evening in New Zealand.
- Fan-tailed Gerygone *Gerygone flavolateralis*: Good views of a couple on Mount Koghis and about 10 at Rivière Bleue Provincial Park in New Caledonia. We saw the nominate form. Other forms occur in the Loyalty Islands and Vanuatu.
- Rennell Gerygone *Gerygone citrina*: Fairly common and responding well to playback in the forest and scrub on Rennell. We saw at least a dozen during our brief visit. Although this bird is usually lumped in Fan-tailed Gerygone, it differs from the New Caledonian birds in having pale eyes and a more yellow on the underparts. The songs of the two species are also quite different.

#### CALLAEIDAE

- North Island Saddleback *Philesturnus rufusater* (H): One was heard calling in the distance as we were drifting off Little Barrier Island during our pelagic in Hauraki Gulf.

#### ARTAMIDAE

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*: One was seen on the way to Mount Koghis on our first evening in New Caledonia, and we recorded about five more on our excursion to Rivière Bleue the next day. The form here is *melaleucus* which is confined to New Caledonia.

#### CRATICIDAE

Australasian Magpie (introduced) *Gymnorhina tibicen*: A few were observed in farmland during our excursions in North Island, New Zealand.

#### CAMPEPHAGIDAE

South Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina caledonica*: Great views of three on Mount Koghis and half a dozen at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. A large cuckoo-shrike with little to recommend it other than a yellow eye.

North Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina welchmani*: Four were seen during the zodiac cruise in the mangroves on Kolombangara. This form, which is confined to the Solomons, is usually lumped with South Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike, but differs in having a dark eye.

Barred Cuckoo-Shrike (Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-Shrike) *Coracina lineata*: The commonest cuckoo-shrike in the Solomons, recorded in good numbers on all four islands that we visited. We saw *gracilis* on Rennell, *makirae* on Makira, *pusilla* on Guadalcanal and *ombriosa* on Kolombangara, and had good views of them all.

White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina papuensis*: Fairly common and conspicuous on Guadalcanal and Kolombangara and often in mixed species flocks with Barred Cuckoo-Shrike. We recorded about 20 in all. The form here is *elegans*.

New Caledonian Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina analis*: It took us a while to find our first, but we eventually had good views of about six of this New Caledonian endemic in the forest at Rivière Bleue. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its moderately small population which is believed to be declining owing to habitat loss and fragmentation.

Common Cicadabird (Slender-billed Cicadabird) *Coracina tenuirostris*: A male and two females of the race *erythropygia* were seen at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, and a single individual of the form *saturator* was seen on Kolombangara.

Makira Cicadabird *Coracina salamonis*: We all had good views of a plain grey male and Ron was lucky enough to see the grey and rufous female on Makira. This form, which is endemic to Makira, is usually lumped in Common Cicadabird, but the female plumages are strikingly different.

Long-tailed Triller *Lalage leucopyga*: One showed briefly as we were assembling to walk into the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia (subspecies *montrosieri*), and a couple gave slightly better views in the forest on Makira (subspecies *affinis*).

#### PACHYCEPHALIDAE

Whitehead *Mohoua albigilla*: A party of four in dense bush near the car park at Tawharanui Regional Park responded well to 'pishing' but for most of the time kept well hidden. We also heard the species calling from the forest on Little Barrier Island.

Oriole Whistler *Pachycephala orioloides*: We frequently heard their loud songs in the forest on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara, and saw a couple of males of the form *christophori* on Makira and a female of the form *cinnamomea* on Guadalcanal.

New Caledonian Whistler *Pachycephala caledonica*: Good views of about half a dozen responding well to playback in the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*: A single bird was seen by Erkki in the scrub at Rivière Bleue. The subspecies here, *xanthetreae*, is endemic to New Caledonia

## RHIPIDURIDAE

- Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*: We saw our first in Lavangu village on Makira, during the official greeting ceremony, and about ten around Kukudu on Kolombangara. We also heard one at the wharf in Honiara on Guadalcanal. The subspecies here is *melaleuca*.
- White-winged Fantail (Cockerell's Fantail) *Rhipidura cockerelli*: Two individuals of this scarce and elusive fantail were seen on Kolombangara: one with a mixed flock in the forest during our afternoon walk and the other in the mangroves during the zodiac cruise. The form occurring on Kolombangara is *albina*, which is confined to the New Georgia group. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of widespread deforestation throughout its range in Bougainville and the Solomons.
- Rennell Fantail *Rhipidura rennelliana*: We had great views of about half a dozen of these very demonstrative fantails in the forest on Rennell.
- Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa*: Good views of three at Mount Koghis and four at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. The form here is *bulgeri*.
- New Zealand Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*: Good views of about ten in Tawharanui Regional Park on our first evening in New Zealand, and also seen at Whangamarino Wetland Reserve.
- Streaked Fantail *Rhipidura spilodera*: We had good views of about eight in the undergrowth at Rivière Bleue. The form here is *verreauxi*, which is endemic to New Caledonia. Other forms occur in Vanuatu and Fiji. Note that many authors, including BirdLife International, use the name *R. verreauxi* for this species.
- Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*: This colourful fantail was common on Makira and showed well on many occasions. The form here is the endemic subspecies *russata*. We also saw one of the endemic form *rufofronta* at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal.

## MONARCHIDAE

- Southern Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides*: A drab, shy and retiring species that we eventually saw well in response to playback in the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. We recorded at least four. The form here is the nominate; another subspecies occurs in Vanuatu.
- Rennell Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus hamlini*: A colourful shrikebill, and pleasingly common and conspicuous. We saw at least ten during our morning on Rennell and had some terrific views.
- Truk Monarch (Chuuk Monarch) *Metabolus rugensis*: The three of us who made the effort to climb up into the native forest on Tol South in Truk were rewarded with good views of a male and female of this very striking monarch. The Truk Monarch is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because of its very small population (estimated at fewer than 2,500 mature individuals) which appears to be declining rapidly owing to loss of natural habitat within its tiny range.
- Chestnut-bellied Monarch *Monarcha castaneiventris*: This large and smart monarch was reasonably common on Makira, where we recorded about a dozen including one within a few yards of the landing site. The form here is *megarhynchus* which is endemic to Makira. We also recorded five of the nominate form in the forest at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal.
- White-capped Monarch *Monarcha richardsii*: This very smart monarch took a little bit of finding on Kolombangara, but we eventually located about five and had great views of a couple. It is endemic to the New Georgia group.
- White-collared Monarch *Monarcha viduus*: A few of us were lucky enough to see one of these fancy monarchs on Makira.
- Kolombangara Monarch *Monarcha browni*: One was seen well by many of us in a mixed-species flock in the forest on Kolombangara. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of the threat from logging operations throughout its small range. The form occurring on Kolombangara is the nominate.
- Oceanic Flycatcher *Myiagra oceanica*: This Truk endemic was fairly common and easy to find on Weno, where we saw at least 15 and had some great views.

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea*: We saw three of this Solomon Islands endemic at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal (subspecies *ferrocyanea*) and at least five on Kolombangara, where we had good views of a pair at the nest (subspecies *feminina*).

Ochre-headed Flycatcher (Makira Flycatcher) *Myiagra cervinicauda* (H): One was heard calling in the forest on Makira. This Makira endemic is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its moderately small population which is likely to be declining owing to deforestation.

Melanesian Flycatcher (New Caledonian Flycatcher) *Myiagra caledonica*: We had good views of at least five of the nominate form responding well to playback in the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia, and also had good views of a male and a female of the form *occidentalis* on Rennell.

#### CORVIDAE

New Caledonia Crow *Corvus moneduloides*: Most of us were fortunate to see two of these in the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia. This species is famous for using tools when feeding.

Guadalcanal Crow (White-billed Crow) *Corvus woodfordi*: Between us, we recorded five at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal, and most of us had good views. The massive pinkish white bill gives the bird a very strange appearance.

Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*: About half a dozen were recorded during our afternoon excursion to the Tone River in Japan. This form is usually lumped in Carrion Crow *C. corone*.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis*: First seen from the *Spirit of Enderby* as we were approaching Yokohama, and then seen commonly once we were ashore in Japan.

#### PETROICIDAE

New Zealand Robin *Petroica australis*: Superb views of one on the track in Tawharanui Regional Park, where this species has been re-introduced. We also heard one calling on Little Barrier Island.

Yellow-bellied Robin *Eopsaltria flaviventris*: Great views of this very smart and confiding New Caledonian endemic at Rivière Bleue. We found at least eight.

#### ALAUDIDAE

Japanese Skylark *Alauda japonica*: About a dozen by the Tone River near Omigawa in Japan.

Eurasian Skylark (introduced) *Alauda arvensis*: Common in the farmland in New Zealand.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: One at the rubbish tip on Weno in Truk was a little unusual. Several birds appeared briefly around the ship as we were cruising north past Torishima and the Izu Islands, and we saw lots during our afternoon excursion to the Tone River.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*: Common on the mainland of New Zealand. We also saw about a dozen as we were cruising back and forth along the west coast of Norfolk Island in the zodiacs.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*: This dull, short-tailed version of Welcome Swallow was fairly common on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. We recorded 10-12 on all three islands. The subspecies here is *subfusca*.

#### CETTIIDAE

Japanese Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone* (H): One was heard singing from riverine vegetation near Omigawa in Japan.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

Red-vented Bulbul (introduced) *Pycnonotus cafer*: Half a dozen in Noumea, mostly near the wharf.



Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*: Several were seen during our afternoon excursion to the Tone River in Japan.

#### ACROCEPHALIDAE

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*: One was heard in song and seen briefly in the reed-beds by the Tone River in Japan.

Caroline Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus syriacus*: Superb views of numerous individuals on Weno and Tol South in Truk. We found our first within a few minutes of going ashore, and logged at least 25. Here, in the absence of competitors, this reed warbler is able to exploit a wide variety of niches and occurs in all sorts of habitats.

#### MEGALURIDAE

Marsh Grassbird (Japanese Swamp Warbler, Japanese Marsh Warbler) *Megalurus priuri*: This was the main target of our excursion to the marshes by Tone River near Omigawa on our final afternoon in Japan. It was some time before we had good views of one, but as the sun began to set the birds became more active and we ended up seeing about five and hearing half a dozen more. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because of its relatively small population and fragmented distribution and the threats to its habitat through wetland drainage.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis*: Good views of about a dozen in the marshes by the Tone River near Omigawa. The form here is *brunnicaps*.

#### TURDIDAE

Eurasian Blackbird (introduced) *Turdus merula*: Fairly common on the mainland of New Zealand.

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus*: We saw five and had excellent views of a couple in the forest on Rennell. Males of the form *renellianus*, which is endemic to Rennell, look very much like a small Eurasian Blackbird and even sound a bit like one.

Song Thrush (introduced) *Turdus philomelos*: Just a couple during our pre-cruise excursions in New Zealand.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*: A female entertained us for several minutes as it circled the ship repeatedly while we were cruising north from Torishima. The bird was last seen heading off to the north-east.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

Caroline Islands White-eye *Zosterops semperi*: This colourful little white-eye was easily found on Weno and Tol South, and very responsive to playback. We saw at least 30 and had great views at extremely close range. The form occurring on Truk is *owstoni*; other forms occur on Pohnpei and Palau.

Rennell White-eye *Zosterops renellianus*: We recorded about 15 of these distinctive white-eyes with bright orange bills on Rennell and had some great views in response to playback. Unlike most white-eyes, this species lacks a white eye-ring.

Solomon Islands White-eye *Zosterops rendovae*: We had good views of two pairs of this very dull white-eye on Kolombangara, thanks to playback, but it was obviously not very common and seemed to be confined to tall forest. The species is found only on the New Georgia group of islands, and the form occurring on Kolombangara is *kulambangrae*.

Green-backed White-eye *Zosterops xanthochrous*: This New Caledonian endemic was fairly common on Mount Koghi and at Rivière Bleue. We recorded about 25 and had many great views.

Silver-eye *Zosterops lateralis*: Seen well in Tawharanui Regional Park and heard on several more occasions in New Zealand, and also recorded at Noumea in New Caledonia.

Truk White-eye (Faichuuk White-eye, Great Truk White-eye) *Rukia ruki*: Those few of us who were up to the challenge of Tol South were rewarded with good views of a party of five of

these extremely rare white-eyes in the native forest on the slopes of Mount Winipot. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International because of its tiny population (estimated at only 530 mature individuals), minute and fragmented range and continuing loss of habitat.

Bare-eyed White-eye *Woodfordia superciliosa*: This distinctive and very odd-looking white-eye was much the commonest of the endemics on Rennell. We recorded at least 60 and had many great views.

#### STURNIDAE

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*: We had good views of four of these long-tailed starlings on Makira and also saw about 10 on Kolombangara. The form concerned is *nitida*.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*: Fairly common on Makira, where we saw at least 10, and also seen on Guadalcanal and on Kolombangara.

Rennell Starling *Aplonis insularis*: Not a very common bird, at least in the part of Rennell that we visited. We eventually found a total of seven and had some good views in the scope.

Brown-winged Starling *Aplonis grandis*: We recorded four of this Solomon Islands endemic at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and another six or so on Kolombangara. Scope views of perched birds at Mount Austen revealed the diagnostic brown primaries.

San Cristobal Starling *Aplonis dichroa*: This Makira endemic was very elusive this year. Two of us saw a few, but the rest of us missed them. Another rather drab *Aplonis*

Striated Starling *Aplonis striata*: We had good views of about a dozen on Mount Koghis on our first evening in New Caledonia, but then only saw a couple at Rivière Bleue, where it is quite uncommon. This species is endemic to New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands.

Micronesian Starling *Aplonis opaca*: A common bird in Truk. We saw our first before we had even left the ship, and recorded at least 80 on Weno. This species has a wide distribution in Micronesia, but is one of several species that has become extinct on Guam because of predation by introduced Brown Tree Snakes.

Long-tailed Myna *Mino kreffti*: Great views of at least four at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal and six on Kolombangara. This species was formerly lumped in Yellow-faced Myna *M. dumontii*, which occurs in Papua New Guinea. *M. kreffti* is endemic to the Bismarcks and Solomons.

Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis*: Common in New Zealand, New Caledonia and Guadalcanal.

European Starling (introduced) *Sturnus vulgaris*: Common in New Zealand, and also seen from the zodiacs on Norfolk Island.

White-cheeked Starling (Grey Starling) *Sturnus cineraceus*: About a dozen during our afternoon excursion to the Tone River in Japan.

#### DICAEIDAE

Midget Flowerpecker *Dicaeum aeneum*: Fairly common at Mount Austen on Guadalcanal. We recorded about a dozen and had several great views. The form concerned is *becki*, endemic to Guadalcanal.

Mottled Flowerpecker *Dicaeum tristrami*: Judging by the number of birds we heard calling, this is a common species in the forest on Makira. We saw at least six and managed to get a couple of perched birds in the scope. A Makiran endemic.

#### NECTARINIIDAE

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*: One at the wharf at Honiara on Guadalcanal and about a dozen on Kolombangara the next day. The form concerned is *flavigaster*.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] tschutschensis*: A male 'Green-headed Wagtail' (*taivana*) appeared around the ship in the morning of 15 April, when we were just south of the

equator. It circled the ship several times before heading off to the north-east. This form, which breeds in Japan, Sakhalin and Kamchatka, has been recorded at least once in New Ireland, the nearest major land mass to our position at the time.

Black-backed Wagtail *Motacilla lugens*: A couple were seen during our afternoon excursion to the Tone River in Japan.

New Zealand Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*: One flew up from the roadside near Tawharanui Regional Park on our first evening in New Zealand.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

Yellowhammer (introduced) *Emberiza citrinella*: A couple were seen in New Zealand.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*: A male of the Japanese form *personata* circled the ship a couple of times as we were cruising north from Torishima. This form, which has yellow underparts, is sometimes treated as a separate species, Masked Bunting.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

Common Chaffinch (introduced) *Fringilla coelebs*: Seen on a couple of occasions in New Zealand.

European Greenfinch (introduced) *Carduelis chloris*: Half a dozen at Whangamarino in New Zealand.

Oriental Greenfinch (Grey-capped Greenfinch) *Carduelis sinica*: Great views of a pair on the track by the Tone River on our last evening in Japan.

European Goldfinch (introduced) *Carduelis carduelis*: Small numbers seen on several occasions in New Zealand.

#### PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus*: Common in New Zealand and New Caledonia.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Half a dozen individuals were seen in the town on Weno in Truk, and about 20 were recorded during our afternoon excursion in Japan. This species is a recent arrival in Truk, presumably finding its way there on board ship.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trichroa*: Some of us had brief glimpses of a couple on our first evening ashore on Weno in Truk, but we then had several great views of at least 12 the next day, on both Weno and Tol South. The form concerned is *clara*.

Red-throated Parrotfinch *Erythrura psittacea* (LO, H): A little party flew over as we were assembling to enter the forest at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia, but none of us saw them and only the leader heard them!! A last-ditch effort near the park entrance in the pouring rain was unsuccessful.

#### MAMMALS

European Rabbit (introduced) *Oryctolagus cunicillus*: Three during our afternoon excursion to Tawharanui Regional Park in New Zealand.

Rennell Flying Fox *Pteropus rennelli*: Good views of at least one flying over the forest on Rennell.

Solomons Flying Fox *Pteropus rayneri*/Pacific Flying Fox *Pteropus tonganus*: Great views of several hundred at their roost and flying about over the village on Kolombangara. Both species occur here, and in the absence of any useful reference material, we were unable to decide which they were.

Chuuk Flying Fox (Truk Flying Fox) *Pteropus insularis*: Three were seen by the group who visited Tol South.

Bryde's Whale *Balaenoptera edeni*: Good views of two in Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic with Chris. This is the commonest baleen whale in the area. Several other baleen whales seen blowing and glimpsed as we were heading north through the Pacific were too distant for positive identification, although in a couple of cases, Bryde's Whale was thought to be the most likely.

- Great Sperm Whale *Physeter catodon*: A total of seven were seen as we were cruising north from the Three Kings Islands north of New Zealand, and two of these gave excellent views quite close to the ship. We also saw a couple of individuals between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia.
- Dwarf Sperm Whale *Kogia sima*: Good views of two individuals logging at the surface off the coast of Guadalcanal, a possible two days later off Bougainville, and another individual almost on the equator.
- Blainville's Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon densirostris*: Great views of a pod of six surfacing close by the ship off the coast of Guadalcanal. The bizarre jaw structure of the big male was clearly visible. We also saw of pod of eight beaked whales between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia and a pod of five off the west coast of Bougainville that were almost certainly this species.
- Ginkgo-toothed Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon ginkgodens*: Good views of a pod of at least three, including one individual that leaped completely out of the water, near Torishima. The identification of this poorly known species is not easy, as it closely resembles several other species, but the combination of dark beak and smoothly sloping forehead indicated Ginkgo-toothed.
- Cuvier's Beaked Whale *Ziphius cavirostris*: Good views of a pod of three, including a large heavily scarred male east of the Bonin Islands and a lone, very pale individual near Torishima the next day.
- False Killer Whale *Pseudorca crassidens*: Good views of a pod of eight around the ship as we were cruising up the west coast of Bougainville, then fantastic views of two large groups, totalling about 120 individuals, that came over to investigate us as we were passing New Ireland.
- Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*: A large school of some 200 to 300 individuals was seen in the outer Hauraki Gulf.
- Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*: Great views of two that came over to investigate the ship as we were cruising off the west coast of Bougainville, and excellent views of five riding the ship's bow wave soon after we had left Truk Lagoon.
- Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuate*: Our best views were of a school of about 40 playing around the ship as we were cruising up the west coast of Bougainville. We also saw one as we were leaving Norfolk Island and at least five when we were east of the Bonin Islands.
- Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris*: Distant views of a school of at least 10 as we were leaving Rennell Island in the Solomons, and much better views of a school of about 50 loafing at the surface off the west coast of Bougainville. Several sightings of fast-moving and highly acrobatic dolphins way off in the distance probably related to this species.
- Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*: Close views of a pod of seven, including a couple of large males, surfacing almost alongside the ship as we were passing the northernmost of the Northern Marianas. The possibility of these having been Long-finned Pilot Whales can be ruled out as there are no longer any in the northern Pacific.
- Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*: A couple were seen briefly off the west coast of Bougainville, and a school of eight passed close by the ship between Torishima and the Izu Islands.
- Pygmy Killer Whale *Feresa attenuata*: Good views of a school of about eight logging at the surface off the north-west coast of Guadalcanal. As with many of our cetacean sightings, the identification was confirmed from photographs.



**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
**Photos by Ron Huffman, Tony Morris and Derek Scott**



**Brown Teal, Tawharanui, New Zealand (Derek Scott)**



**New Zealand Storm-Petrel (Tony Morris)**



**Wrybills, Miranda, New Zealand (Derek Scott)**



**Gibson's Albatross (Tony Morris)**



**Parkinson's (Black) Petrel (Ron Huffman)**



**Black-winged Petrel (Tony Morris)**



**Flesh-footed Shearwater (Ron Huffman)**



**White-bellied Storm-Petrel (Tony Morris)**



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**Kagu, New Caledonia (Tony Morris)**



**Melanesian Flycatcher, New Caledonia**  
**(Tony Morris)**



**Crow Honeyeater, New Caledonia (Tony Morris)**



**New Caledonian Friarbird, New Caledonia**  
**(Tony Morris)**



**Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonia (Tony Morris)**



**Tahiti Petrel (Tony Morris)**



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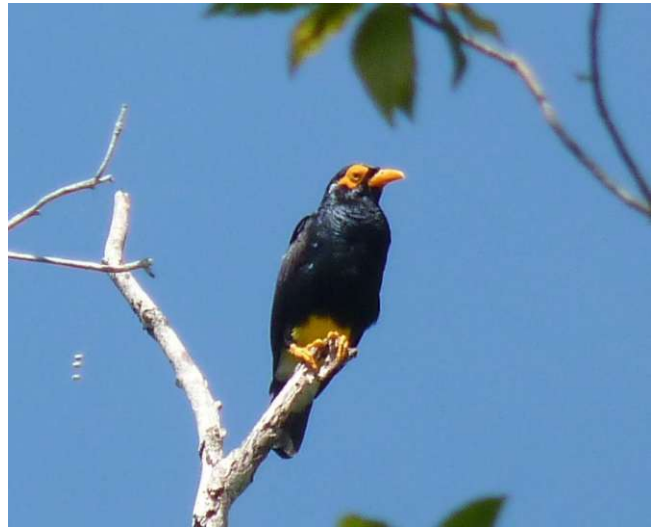
**Rennell Shrikebill, Rennell (Ron Huffman)**



**Ultramarine Kingfishers, Guadalcanal (Derek Scott)**



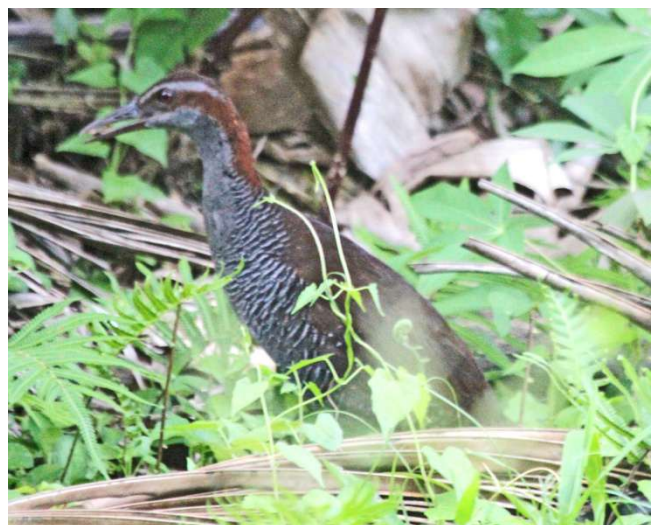
**Solomon Sea-Eagle, Makira (Ron Huffman)**



**Long-tailed Myna, Guadalcanal (Derek Scott)**



**Chestnut-bellied Monarch, Makira  
(Tony Morris)**



**Roviana Rail, Kolombangara (Ron Huffman)**



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**Buff-headed Coucal, Kolombangara (Ron Huffman)**



**Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin (Tony Morris)**



**Flying Fox, Kolombangara (Tony Morris)**



**White Tern, Weno, Truk (Tony Morris)**



**Sacred Kingfisher on board (Tony Morris)**



**Caroline Islands Ground-Dove, Weno (Derek Scott)**



**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
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**Purple-capped Fruit-Dove, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Caroline Reed Warbler, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Micronesian Myzomela, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Caroline Islands White-eye, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Oceanic Flycatcher, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Micronesian Starling, Weno (Tony Morris)**



**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
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**Red-footed Booby on the mast (Derek Scott)**



**Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel (Tony Morris)**



**Masked Booby (Tony Morris)**



**Wedge-tailed Shearwater (Tony Morris)**



**Bonin Petrel (Tony Morris)**



**Black-footed Albatross (Ron Huffman)**

**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
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**Short-tailed Albatross (Ron Huffman)**



**South Polar Skua (Tony Morris)**



**Short-tailed Albatross (Tony Morris)**



**Siberian Rubythroat (Tony Morris)**



**Long-tailed Jaeger (Ron Huffman)**



**Laysan Albatross (Tony Morris)**



**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
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**The *Spirit of Enderby* – tied up alongside in Truk  
(Derek Scott)**



**Chumming from the stern  
(Derek Scott)**



**Up on the monkey deck in the rain  
(Derek Scott)**



**Norfolk Island – the closest we got  
(Derek Scott)**



**Out on the bow on a fine day  
(Derek Scott)**



**Our welcoming committee in New Caledonia  
(Derek Scott)**



**Western Pacific Odyssey : 27 March – 29 April 2012**  
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**Makira – paradise island in the Solomons ...**  
**(Derek Scott)**



**Kissing a dead fish on the equator!**  
**(Derek Scott)**



**... but the shape of things to come**  
**(Derek Scott)**



**One of many great skylines on the open ocean**  
**(Derek Scott)**



**The important departure ceremony on Makira**  
**(Derek Scott)**



**Back to civilization – Yokohama in the early morning**  
**(Derek Scott)**