

WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY

17 APRIL – 20 MAY 2011

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: PETE MORRIS

Wow! We crossed the whole Pacific and barely saw a wave! And what a diverse tour. From the weird New Zealand endemics, right through the tropics and on up to Japan where more familiar Palearctic species awaited. In total we recorded 300 species. Not a huge list, but considering we were mostly at sea or on islands with pretty impoverished avifaunas, it's not bad, and they came from an amazing 66 different families of birds!! Of these, no fewer than 44 were tubenoses (eight albatrosses, 26 petrels and shearwaters, nine storm-petrels and a diving-petrel!). Amongst these were some of the rarest and least known birds in the world including the recently re-discovered New Zealand Storm-Petrel, the poorly known Beck's Petrel and Heinroth's Shearwater, and the ultra-rare Short-tailed Albatross which ended up as our bird-of-the-trip. But there were landbirds too! The bizarre Kagu was our second favourite and Caroline Islands Ground-Dove our fourth favourite bird. Indeed we were treated to an excellent selection of endemics on Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, the Solomons and Micronesia with other highlights including Solomon Cockatoo, Solomon Sea-Eagle, numerous colourful fruit-doves and pigeons and bizarre island specialist such as the attractive Rennell Shrikebill. Also of interest is the number of species recorded that are of conservation concern! No fewer than 47, with three being listed as critically endangered, a further ten endangered, 18 vulnerable, 15 near-threatened and one data deficient.

Most of us began the trip with a pre-tour extension to the mainland of New Zealand, and we based ourselves up at Snell's Beach, north of Auckland. This started pretty well with good views of New Zealand Grebe and New Zealand Scaup and, after checking in to our friendly pub, we visited a nearby sand spit where New Zealand Dotterel and Variable Oystercatchers obliged. We also added Tui before dusk but then came the bad news! The wind was picking up, and our pelagic was looking in jeopardy.

Well the following day dawned fair but apparently things were not looking good. A revisit to the dotterels provided more good views but then the confirmation came and hearts sank. The wind had picked up and it was quite unpleasant outside so we decided to head for the relatively sheltered

Tawharanui Regional Park, and this proved a good move as we saw a nice selection of New Zealand endemics including the rare Brown Teal, Bellbirds, Whitehead and even a couple of New Zealand Robins. We turned in early though, for we had plans! We left Snell's Beach early and hammered south down the motorway, and soon after dawn, the scopes were trained on a much-wanted Australasian Bittern. And then another and another until we had located no fewer than five and enjoyed great scope views of birds out in the open! We then visited Miranda where an impressively large flock of Wrybills entertained, with other goodies including breeding-plumaged Asian Red Knots, a Red-necked Stint, an unexpected Marsh Sandpiper, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and White-fronted Tern. We then headed for the port of Tauranga to meet our home for the next four and a half weeks, the *Spirit of Enderby*. We settled in and just at dusk, we headed out of the harbour.

We awoke the following morning in the outer Hauraki Gulf. A moderate southwest wind and following sea, with the protection of the New Zealand mainland made for a comfortable first day which proved to be an excellent day's birding. Starting out around the Mokinhou Islands we scanned the large feeding flocks of Red-billed Gulls finding a few Grey Noddies which were not always easy to pick out. Australasian Gannets were plentiful and other seabirds included excellent Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Parkinson's (Black) and Grey-faced Petrels and a few Common Diving-Petrels. As we headed north, we stopped to chum, hoping desperately that the disappointment of the pelagic could be forgotten. A few Wilson's Storm-Petrels and a late White-faced Storm-Petrel appeared but we also hit the jackpot with excellent views of numerous New Zealand Storm-Petrels which allowed some great views in the end. The rarest bird however was a surprise Great Shearwater that allowed superb views. There are very few previous records of this species from New Zealand, though we were aware that there had been a recent influx in Australian waters so something was going on! A few Little Shearwaters, Cook's Petrels and Fairy Prions were also observed and we also came across a large pod of Short-beaked Common Dolphins and an impressive pod of (assumed) Long-finned Pilot Whales. Albatrosses were also in evidence with Campbell, White-capped, Salvin's, Pacific (Buller's) and Gibson's all being seen, many of them attracted to an afternoon chumming session.

The next couple of days were spent at sea, heading towards distant Norfolk Island. Many keen sets of eyes scoured the oceans and attempts were made to keep all informed via the ship's tannoy and a complicated system of handheld radios! This largely worked, and over the days people gradually found their favourite places to hang out, realizing that being on deck was the only way not to miss the birds! A few albatrosses lingered for the first part of the passage and as we headed north, gadfly petrels became evident and gradually we enjoyed better and better views of smart Gould's and Black-winged Petrels. Other highlights during the voyage included our first White-necked Petrels, White-bellied Storm-Petrel (one or two of which gave good views), better views of White-faced Storm-Petrel, more Grey Noddies that were thankfully easier to see, and some superb Red-tailed Tropicbirds. As we neared Norfolk Island our first stunning White Terns and (dark-morph) Wedge-tailed Shearwaters appeared, a couple of light-morph Kermadec Petrels flashed by and Tasman (Masked) Boobies entertained around the boat.

We awoke off the Australian outpost of Norfolk Island under fairly grey skies and indeed our visit to the island was pretty damp with constant light rain. Monkey-puzzle-like Norfolk Pines characterized the horizon, and Wandering Tattlers greeted us on the beach. We made our way past a great selection of introduced dross (chickens and domestic geese a.k.a. Red Junglefowl and Greylag!!) and found our way to the botanical gardens, led by our friendly hosts. The boardwalks of the garden were not an easy place to lose 50 avid birders, but in the end we managed good views of most of the specialities including Slender-billed White-eye, Norfolk Island Gerygone and Norfolk Island Whistler, and also notable were Pacific Robin, Emerald Dove, Grey Fantail and Silvereye. After a break for tea and cakes we changed plan and moved to Palm Glen where most of the specialities seemed easier to

find and, after some diligent searching, we found the sadly declining Norfolk Island Parakeet which most people got good views. The seabird colony at Rocky Point turned out to be a bit of a damp squib though we did manage good views of nesting Black Noddies, White Terns and Red-tailed Tropicbirds. It was soon time to board the zodiacs and head back to sea. Although the wind had picked up, and the skies were grey, we were treated to a real seabird bonanza as dozens of White Terns and Grey Noddies were joined by hundreds of Brown and Black Noddies, dozens of Little Shearwaters and White-faced Storm-Petrels, good numbers of Black-winged Petrels and even one or two Providence (or Solander's) Petrels.

The next two days were spent at sea, heading for New Caledonia, and although the winds were at times a little blustery, it was never really uncomfortable, and there was plenty to keep us amused as superb pelagic seabirds were always out there! Seven species of gadfly petrels, including our first Tahiti Petrels, both dark-morph and light-morph Collared Petrels, and more White-necked and Kermadec Petrels was surely enough to fire-up the enthusiasm of any seabird connoisseur! Delightful Red-footed Boobies, in a variety of plumages, entertained as they chased flying-fish, and a couple of chumming sessions allowed for great views of some of the seabirds, including some obliging Tahiti Petrels, and we even had a Wedge-tailed Shearwater land on deck!! As we neared New Caledonia, we made an extensive effort to attract storm-petrels to oil slicks that we'd created, and this came up trumps when a "New Caledonia" Storm-Petrel joined the Wilson's. Sadly it never came really close, but we could clearly see that it strongly resembled a New Zealand Storm-Petrel but was perhaps a little larger. For now, its exact identity will have to remain a mystery! Here Gould's Petrels were also present in numbers. Once the activity had died down, we moved on and joined our pilot who guided us through the treacherous reef to Noumea. On the way in we passed huge groups of migrating Short-tailed Shearwaters. As we approached land, we noted distant Fairy Terns, several Black-naped and Greater Crested Terns, and, as we got to the harbour, the local race of Silver Gull. We were allowed off the ship just before dusk, adding a few Dark-brown Honeyeaters and good numbers of Coconut Lorikeets in Noumea.

We had the following morning to explore the fabulous Rivière Bleue Park and it took very little to find the main target, the incomparable Kagu which, despite the anarchic invasion by 50 rabid birders, paraded in front of us. In fact the first Kagu was seen before we'd even got out of the bus and then three of these amazing creatures stalked through the leaf litter seemingly oblivious to the paparazzi and deafening playback! The rest of the morning was not dissimilar to a morning on the Isles of Scilly in October as radios beeped and hissed and manic birders charged from one new bird to the next. Despite these challenges, we did see a number of great birds. At the forest edge we notched up species such as New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, New Caledonia Whistler, New Caledonian Friarbird, Melanesian Flycatcher and the scarce Striated Starling amongst others. As we entered the forest, confiding Yellow-bellied Robins and Streaked Fantails obliged and a couple of impressive New Caledonian (or Goliath) Imperial-Pigeons posed in the scope. Elusive Southern Shrikebills were teased into view, stunning Horned Parakeets and perched White-bellied Goshawks were much appreciated, and other goodies included New Caledonian Myzomela, Barred Honeyeater, New Caledonia Crow (though sadly no tool use!) and Fan-tailed Gerygone. It was soon time to leave, though not before we had a frantic search for the elusive Red-throated Parrotfinch by the entrance. Some of us were lucky enough to see a male of this smart species, but it soon slipped away. As compensation, in the same area we did find obliging Melanesian Cuckooshrikes, Long-tailed Trillers and New Caledonian Parakeets. Before we knew it, we were off again, and as we passed back through the reef, we were joined again by Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Gould's Petrels.

The next three days were spent sailing towards Rennell. The numbers and diversity of seabirds dropped off a little, but plenty of effort produced some interesting sightings. More stunning Collared Petrels were a highlight as were some totally unexpected Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, but best of all was the Polynesian Storm-Petrel which put in a fine pre-breakfast performance. Masked, Red-footed and Brown Boobies periodically entertained around the ship, Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds

put in typically dashing appearances, both Lesser and Great Frigatebird were noted and Sooty Terns joined the fray. Of course many of the previously mentioned species were also seen and we also added some good views of Sperm Whales.

Eventually we arrived at Rennell and enjoyed an excellent if somewhat sweaty and chaotic visit to this largely unspoilt Solomon outpost. We were greeted on shore by a stunning Rennell Shrikebill, and the rest of the endemics fell pretty easily. Bare-eyed White-eyes were common, Rennell Starlings perched on dead snags and as we reached the forest Rennell White-eye and Rennell Fantail obliged. We also saw an excellent back-up cast which included the stunning Silver-capped Fruit-Dove, Pacific Imperial-Pigeon, Brown Goshawk, tiny Finsch's Pygmy-Parrots, Singing Parrot, the handsome Moustached Treeswift, distinctive Rennell (Fan-tailed) Gerygones, colourful Cardinal Myzomelas and retiring Island Thrushes (looking like small Blackbirds here!). We also spent some time admiring the fabulous local race of Collared Kingfisher which was very different from the migrant Sacred Kingfishers also present. Having bade farewell to our kind hosts, we re-boarded the *Spirit of Enderby* and set sail for Makira, admiring the rainbows and boobies as we went.

The following morning, another early start saw us ashore on the little-visited island of Makira, for another sweaty assault on the Solomon endemics. Island Imperial-Pigeons greeted us and having been greeted by our hosts, we made our way up a logging road. New birds came thick and fast as the scopes were trained on Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeons, White-headed Fruit-Doves, San Cristobal Starling, Mottled Flowerpeckers and Sooty Myzomelas. A little further, Chestnut-bellied Monarchs were found in the undergrowth and a loud and melodious song led us to a superb Oriole Whistler (split from Golden Whistler). Dollarbirds perched out in the open, Eclectus Parrots squawked loudly and colourful Yellow-bibbed Lories flashed by, and further on we found the rare Chestnut-bellied Imperial-Pigeon and a flyover Metallic Pigeon. A pair of Makira (or Ochre-headed) Flycatchers were teased into view and a lucky few got on to a White-collared Monarch and a male Yellow-bellied Fruit-Dove. San Cristobal Melidectes played hard to get but eventually obliged, and a good haul of raptors included numerous Brahminy Kites, a couple of fine Pied Goshawks and even a distant Solomon Sea-Eagle. We then made our way across to Anuta Village where we were greeted by clay-painted boys with spears staging a mock attack on us. Just imagine turning up by accident when there were still cannibals there! We then enjoyed a lovely hour or two with our generous hosts who presented us with garlands of flowers and coconuts which most drunk (but some devoured!!) and they then treated us to a song and dance performance by beautifully decorated schoolchildren. A quick cricket match revealed some local talent, but the birding couldn't be suppressed for too long as a fine Beach Kingfisher was spotted from shore and we took the opportunity to zodiac cruise past it on the way back to the ship. As we sailed towards Guadalcanal, a close pod of Short-finned Pilot Whales were popular and Bridled Terns and our first couple of Grey-backed Terns added to the ever-growing list of seabirds.

The following morning we left the ship horrendously early, but sadly our plans to attempt to do some owling were thwarted by poor transport logistics which left most of the group stranded. Undeterred, we began our diurnal attempt on the birds of Mount Austin and soon amassed an excellent variety of endemics and specialities. We were greeted by squadrons of stunning Blyth's Hornbills whooshing overhead and soon had brilliant Ducorps's (or Solomon) Cockatoos lined up in the scope. Colourful Yellow-bibbed and Cardinal Lories sat up to be admired, Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove posed in the scope and a russet-coloured female Cicadabird showed well. Claret-breasted Fruit-Doves, Brown-winged Starlings and Long-tailed Mynas perched on dead snags, Buff-headed Coucals gave their amazing calls from dense thickets and attractive Midget Flowerpeckers were unusually obliging. Further down the hill we found the gorgeous Ultramarine Kingfisher, the unusual Guadalcanal (or White-billed) Crow, smart Solomon Islands Cuckoo-Shrikes, the distinctive local race of Brush Cuckoo (surely a good split on voice) and Pacific Baza, though sadly some folk had already turned back to head up the steep hill due to unfortunate and inaccurate instructions from the powers that be! A few were fortunate enough to catch up with Black-headed Myzomela and Yellow-bibbed Fruit-

Dove too, and many of us also got to get some better looks at a circling Solomon Sea-Eagle, somewhat closer than those seen the previous day on Makira. We then headed back to the ship, ticking off Pacific Swallows and Singing Starlings at the harbour, and then set sail for distant Kolombangara. Late that afternoon we came across some interesting feeding flocks that included our first Tropical Shearwater among Wedge-tailed and Short-tailed Shearwaters though sadly, most of us were already at the compulsory evening briefing in the bar.

After the intense shearwater action yesterday evening we awoke early with optimism – but after an hour not a single bird had been seen! Indeed little was seen before we arrived at Kolombangara and then suddenly our first Heinroth's Shearwater passed the ship, causing major panic! After lunch we went ashore to Kolombangara Island, visiting the hospitable village of Kukundu. Unfortunately, unlike some of the previous WPOs which visited the island in the morning, our visit was in the heat of the day, and as a result, birding was slow-going and hard work, and this was compounded by the unfortunate route that was handed to us which largely involved walking through fields! We did see a few good birds including Duchess Lorikeet and a few huge Buff-headed Coucals, and when we did eventually reach forest we found Yellow-vented Myzomela and Solomon Islands White-eye. Once we got to the forest where the others had gone, the stunning White-capped Monarch also showed up and we also had our best views of the impressive Solomon Sea-Eagle, even watching one hunting fruit-bats at dusk, but sadly we had no luck with the elusive Roviana Rail.

The next five days were at sea, as we steadily made our way up towards Micronesia. Sun-bathing became a popular activity as the birding slowed, and at times, more was on view than was desirable! Many of us took the opportunity to take cover under the sunshade on the top deck which was a real godsend! The first couple of days still had some good birding on offer. Our first day out produced a few Grey-backed Terns, a close Dwarf Sperm Whale and reasonable numbers of Heinroth's Shearwaters, the best of which were in a feeding flock which we sadly passed by in order to stop for a swim and a chumming session which did not produce a single bird as we looked forlornly into the sun. We did however pick up our first Beck's Petrel that afternoon and went on to see several more far better at our chumming session the following morning. This rarely seen species is a real chameleon. In real life it is distinctive – small with a characteristic flight, and we even saw them feeding side-by-side with their larger relatives, Tahiti Petrels. None of this translates into still photos though, and everything distinctive about them disappears as the two species look almost identical on the back of the camera! A hotly debated 2cy Long-tailed Skua joined the chumming session too.

Gradually the birds dried up. Cetaceans and flying-fish added interest with species such as Melon-headed Whale, Spinner Dolphins and more Sperm Whales being of note. Boobies came and went, a few tropicbirds investigated us and a few other species appeared including our first Bulwer's Petrels and our first light morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and we did stop for a swim and a toast as we crossed the equator. Eventually we neared Chuuk, and numbers of seabirds began to increase. We began to encounter some large and impressive feeding flocks with good numbers of noddies and, as we neared the atoll, we picked up small numbers of Tropical (Atoll) Shearwaters. We were then piloted into the harbour at Weno and began scoping up anything that moved, including a mystery gull, from the deck.

The following day we split into two. The more able and adventurous headed for Tol South for a successful attempt to see the endangered Truk Monarch and Truk White-eye. The rest of us stayed on Weno and visited the Japanese Gun where the other endemics (also seen on Tol South) were all available. These included Caroline Islands Swiftlet, Caroline Islands White-eye, and Caroline Islands Reed Warblers as well as Oceanic Flycatchers, stunning Micronesian Myzomelas and handsome Purple-capped Fruit-Doves. After much searching we also found the superb Caroline Islands Ground-Dove which posed in the scope. All the while, White Terns, noddies, and graceful White-tailed Tropicbirds passed overhead and other species seen included Yellow Bittern, unexpected Common Moorhens and Pacific Reef-Egrets. As we set sail from the island, one little mystery was cleared up.

The gull once again flew into view and revealed itself to be a 1st summer Laughing Gull (rather than a Black-tailed Gull as some folk had thought). I wonder if it will ever see another Laughing Gull!? More Tropical Shearwaters as we left the atoll were much appreciated.

It was then a long five days at sea (through the oceanic desert) before we neared land again, and for much of the time, things were extremely quiet. A few boobies and tropicbirds from time to time and the odd petrel and shearwater, but not a great deal to write home about, and it was a good time to catch up on a bit of R&R or to read or edit photos! Great sunsets (though no green flashes) and ice creams and beers on deck added to the feeling that we were on holiday! It was nearly three days into the voyage when we picked up our first Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel, and then, as we got gradually closer to the Bonin Islands things picked up. Numbers of Brown, Masked and Red-footed Boobies once again increased and the latter included a dark-tailed individual perhaps of the eastern Pacific subspecies *websteri*. Numbers of Bulwer's Petrels and Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels increased, light-morph Wedge-tailed Shearwaters became positively common and we began seeing distinctive Bannerman's Shearwaters. We celebrated St (Christopher) Peter's day on the day that we crossed the Tropic of Cancer, enjoying some fine Bonin Petrels and an amusing photo-caption contest!

Once close to the Bonins, birds became abundant, with Tristram's Storm-Petrels now joining the Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels, more Bonin Petrels and Bannerman's Shearwaters being the highlights. The announced morning's chumming was unfortunately postponed until the afternoon when it began to rain. Although some smart Black-footed Albatrosses came in, we had by then lost most of the birds, and during the late afternoon dark morph Pomarine and Arctic Skuas were the only notable sightings.

The following day was Short-tailed Albatross day, but sadly, due to Japanese customs regulations, we were not allowed to approach the breeding island of Torishima any closer than 12 nautical miles. This essentially made the task of finding the albatross pretty tricky, probably coupled with the fact that we were quite late in the season. Much of the day was spent slowly cruising as near to the island as we could, whilst dripping oil and chumming. This pulled in good numbers of Matsudaira's and Tristram's Storm-Petrels for great views along with a single Leach's Storm-Petrel, some very entertaining Black-footed Albatrosses, and, after many hours of effort and with much relief, a single immature/sub-adult Short-tailed Albatross which gave simply incredible views off the back of the ship. Perhaps not the Short-tailed Albatross bonanza we had dreamt of, but stellar (pun intended!) views none the less!

We overnighted close to Torishima, drifting gradually, and soon after first light, in the mist and drizzle, headed on again. A Whiskered Tern was a surprise, but given the conditions and distance we were from the island, the lack of albatrosses wasn't. More of the classic north Pacific seabirds were seen and gradually the numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters fell away as the now abundant Streaked Shearwater took over. That evening we had a fun auction for charity with our very own Hugh putting in a fine kilted performance!

Our final full day at sea began off the coast of Miyake-jima. As predicted, Japanese Murrelets were in short supply (two or three presumed fly-by dots seen by a few people were the best we could manage) as no doubt they had by now headed out to sea with their young, and other than good numbers of Streaked Shearwaters, little else was on offer. With no landing on Miyake-jima possible due to customs regulations we continued north but soon stopped dead in the water for several hours while clearing up some 'Japanese entry formalities'. After lunch we continued on our way and soon began to see good numbers of smart Red-necked Phalaropes and many Japanese Murrelets, including several family parties, some of which showed very well indeed. A Laysan Albatross (our only one of the voyage) and a pod of Baird's Beaked Whales were also seen before we made our way into Tokyo Bay (seeing some very distant Ancient Murrelets) for our final dinner.

The voyage was over. It had been an interesting and rewarding trip through one of the most remote

and inaccessible parts of our planet that had given us enough of a taste to leave us wanting to see more of the Pacific and its avifauna! All that was on offer for now though was an afternoon around Narita, and having utilized the superb public transport system to get us from Yokohama to Narita, we set off for one last swansong! Soon we were seeing all sorts of new species for the trip. Brown-eared Bulbuls and White-cheeked Starlings flitted around, and as we stopped for lunch, a couple of Japanese Wagtails were much appreciated. The nearby reedbeds soon yielded the hoped-for Marsh Grassbirds (Japanese Swamp Warblers) and Ochre-rumped (Japanese Reed) Buntings as well as a number of other interesting species which included the endemic Japanese Green Pheasant. Back nearer the hotel we explored some scrub where Bull-headed Shrike, Japanese Bush-Warbler and Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker were all much appreciated before making our way back to the hotel for a final meal together, rounding off a memorable trip.

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).

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

ANATIDAE

Greylag Goose (introduced) *Anser anser*: Very obviously feral individuals were seen around Snell's Beach on mainland New Zealand and on Norfolk Island where they looked at home alongside the chickens!

Canada Goose (introduced) *Branta canadensis*: A couple of distant individuals were seen at Whangamarino Wetlands in New Zealand.

Black Swan (introduced) *Cygnus atratus*: At least ten were seen at Whangamarino Wetlands in New Zealand.

Paradise Shelduck *Tadorna variegata*: A New Zealand endemic that seems to be doing well. We saw good numbers throughout, with many in roadside fields.

Mallard (introduced) *Anas platyrhynchos*: Only seen in New Zealand and, in a very domestic form, on Norfolk Island!

Eastern Spot-billed Duck (Chinese S-b D) *Anas zonorhyncha*: Seen on arrival in the dock at Yokohama with more later that day at Omigawa.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*: Good numbers were seen in New Zealand and we also saw three more on Chuuk.

Australian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos*: Small numbers were seen well on our visit to Miranda.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*: Fairly common at the Whangamarino Wetlands and at Miranda. This species is declining in New Zealand.

Brown Teal *Anas chlorotis*: We enjoyed great views of about half a dozen of these subtle and confiding ducks at Tawharanui Regional Park near to Snell's Beach. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. It has a very small range and only three significant remaining subpopulations. Until recently its overall range, area of occupancy, area and quality of habitat, number of locations and subpopulations, and number of individuals were undergoing a very rapid decline; however intensive management has halted the decline and populations are now increasing, with several new populations being established. Despite this recent change in fortunes, it remains classified as Endangered until these trends are consolidated. Its population is estimated at 910 mature individuals and is increasing.

New Zealand Scaup *Aythya novaeseelandiae*: A brief detour on our way up to Snell's Beach led to good views of about eight of these New Zealand endemics.

ODONTOPHORIDAE

California Quail (introduced) *Callipepla californica*: About a dozen were seen in total on Norfolk Island. One of the 'better' introductions there.

PHASIANIDAE

Red Junglefowl (introduced) *Gallus gallus*: What can one say? Chickens were all over the place on Norfolk Island and bore little resemblance to real wild Red Junglefowls!

Ring-necked Pheasant (Common P) (introduced) *Phasianus colchicus*: A single introduced individual was seen near to Snell's Beach.

Japanese Green Pheasant (Green P) *Phasianus versicolor*: A female showed well at Omigawa on our last afternoon and a couple of others were heard there.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*: A single at Rivière Bleu on New Caledonia was a surprise and was actually a first sighting on the WPO.

New Zealand Grebe *Poliocephalus rufopectus*: A brief detour on our way up to Snell's Beach led to good views of about four of these New Zealand endemics. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. This species is considered Vulnerable because it has a very small fragmented population (estimated at between 1,700 and 1,800 mature individuals) which may be declining overall.

DIOMEDEIDAE

Pacific Albatross *Thalassarche [bulleri] platei*: A total of four or five were seen in the Hauraki Gulf, with some spectacular close views. They were identified as Pacific, rather than nominate Buller's on likelihood (they breed close by) and by the rather dark grey hoods (which should be paler in Buller's). BirdLife International treat Pacific and Buller's Albatrosses as conspecific and treat the combined form as Near Threatened because, although it is restricted to a tiny area when breeding, the population (estimated at 64,000 mature individuals) is stable and the islands on which it breeds are moderately widely spread so it is unlikely to become highly threatened in a short time owing to human activities or stochastic events.

White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche [cauta] steadi*: A total of six or seven were seen in the Hauraki Gulf, again with some spectacular close views. Not really identifiable at sea from nominate Shy Albatross, they are assumed to be this form on range. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. It is categorised as Near Threatened because, given its longevity and slow productivity, and a high rate of mortality recorded in longline and trawl fisheries, it may be declining at a moderately rapid rate. The population trend of this species is poorly known and its population size is estimated at between 100,000 and 499,000 mature individuals.

Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini*: A single showed relatively briefly in the Hauraki Gulf. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It may have undergone a rapid decline, but different census methods make a comparison of the available data potentially misleading. However, breeding is largely restricted to one tiny island group, where it is susceptible to stochastic events. The current population is estimated at 62,000 mature individuals.

Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche [melanophris] impavida*: We enjoyed great views of a dozen or more of these pale-eyed stunners in the Hauraki Gulf. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It is classified as Vulnerable because breeding is restricted to a single location, where it is susceptible to potential human impacts and stochastic events. Although numbers decreased steeply between the 1970s and 1980s owing to interactions with fisheries, the population (currently estimated at 49,000 mature individuals) is now thought to be increasing, although there has not been a census since 1996.

Gibson's Albatross *Diomedea [exulans] gibsoni*: Great views of several individuals in the Hauraki Gulf and as we sailed north for the next day or two. Assumed adults showed characters of this form, younger birds were noted as this form though in reality cannot be identified to form at sea. BirdLife lump this form in Antipodean Albatross *D. antipodensis* and classify

the combined form as Vulnerable. The combined species is classified as Vulnerable because it is largely confined to three small islands when breeding and is therefore highly susceptible to stochastic effects and human impacts. Recent data (2005-2008) from the Auckland Islands indicate declines in adult survival, productivity and recruitment, which, if confirmed by further monitoring, could result in a reclassification of Endangered or Critically Endangered.

Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*: Just a single was seen on our last day at sea as we sailed towards Tokyo Bay. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. It has been down-listed as recent figures suggest the breeding population has rebounded from declines in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is perhaps because apparent changes in the breeding populations reflected large scale environmental conditions that affected the number of birds that returned to the colonies to nest rather than actual declines in the population. Given the difficulty of predicting long-term trends for such a long-lived species, and the number of documented threats and the uncertainty over their future effects, as a precautionary measure, the species has been projected to undergo a moderately rapid population decline over three generations (84 years), and as such qualifies as Near Threatened. The current population is estimated at 1,180,000 mature individuals.

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*: We noted a total of c65 over four days, the first of which were east of the Bonins. Many were attracted to chum, especially when we were looking for Short-tailed Albatrosses and gave spectacular views. Surprisingly, this species is classified as being at greater risk than Short-tailed Albatross and is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. This is on the basis of a projected future rapid population decline over the next three generations (56 years), taking account of estimated rates of incidental mortality in longline fisheries in the north Pacific Ocean. However, an ongoing review of the species' population status may lead to a review of its categorisation. The current population is estimated at 120,000 mature individuals and decreasing.

Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*: It took a while, but after seven hours of cruising around off Torishima, chumming, we eventually pulled in a sub-adult which gave spectacular views but was our only one! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Although conservation efforts have resulted in a steady population increase, it still has a very small breeding range, limited to Torishima and Minami-kajima (Senkaku Islands), rendering it susceptible to stochastic events and human impacts. The current population estimate is 2,200 – 2,500 mature individuals.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma gouldi*: This chunky petrel was common and conspicuous to beyond Norfolk Island with many showing extremely well at chumming sessions. This form is often lumped in Great-winged Petrel *P. macroptera*.

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*: Relatively few were seen this year and we noted a total of just six between us. Most were in the Norfolk Island sea area though at least one was seen by some off Torishima. Most seen were intermediate morph birds.

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*: A single typically grey-hued bird was seen north of Norfolk Island. A tricky bird to see on this voyage. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it has a very small range, being confined to one very small island and one tiny islet, and it is therefore susceptible to stochastic events and human impacts. Its population is estimated at 100,000 mature individuals and is thought to be increasing.

- Tahiti Petrel *Pterodroma rostrata*: Good numbers were seen on a number of dates with the highest count of c100 on the day that we left New Caledonia. Many close views were granted and the species was often attracted to chum, though was usually a little boat wary. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because, although it breeds on a relatively large number of islands, it still has a moderately 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 *Pterodroma becki*: Without doubt, one of the key seabirds of the voyage. A single was seen rather distantly off northwest Bougainville followed by great views of at least four over the chum slick the following morning when we were lucky enough to see them alongside Tahiti Petrels. When together, the two are straightforward to tell apart with the much smaller size and faster more buoyant flight of this species being very obvious. Identifying photos of the two is an altogether more difficult prospect, and at times, they look virtually identical in still images!! This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. It was only recently rediscovered, with confirmed records of at least 30 and 160 birds from expeditions in 2007 and 2008. It may have declined severely from predation by introduced cats and rats on its breeding grounds (which are unknown but thought likely to include New Ireland). However, the paucity of records is most likely because there have been relatively few searches at sea, plus petrels that are nocturnal at the nesting grounds are notoriously difficult to detect, and there are numerous possible breeding sites on isolated atolls and islands that require surveying. A very small number of mature individuals are currently known (estimated at between 50 and 250 individuals), all within a single subpopulation which is suspected to have declined, and it is consequently classified as Critically Endangered. It may however qualify for down-listing in the future if further surveys reveal it to be more numerous than is currently known.
- White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*: Another species that was scarcer than on previous WPOs, we noted a total of just six on three dates, though we did enjoy some excellent views. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a very small range, on two or three very small islands, and it is therefore susceptible to stochastic events and human impacts. Its current population is estimated at 100,000 mature individuals and is currently increasing.
- Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*: First seen a day south of the Bonin Islands, we enjoyed great views of good numbers over three or four days. A chunky and boldly-marked *Pterodroma*, and the most northerly of the group.
- Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*: Encountered on a daily basis from a day north of the Hauraki Gulf until just south of New Caledonia, with up to 20 noted in a day, including many passing close to the vessel.
- Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*: Three were noted in the Hauraki Gulf. All sightings were relatively brief and categorically eliminating the similar Pycroft's Petrel is not straightforward on such views. Photos of one individual seem to most likely be Cook's. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because although there have been rapid declines in the past, the improving status of the population and habitat, in particular following the successful eradication of the last introduced predators (Pacific Rat) on Little Barrier Island (where by far the largest numbers breed), has led to an increase in fledging success from 5% to 70%. This key step in turning the fortunes of the species followed the earlier eradication of cats from Little Barrier Island in 1980, and Weka from Codfish Island in the early 1980s. Although tiny numbers still occur on Great Barrier Island it may have been effectively extinct as a reproductively viable population for several decades. The current population is estimated at 1,258,000 mature individuals and is decreasing.

- Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*: Good numbers were seen from a day north of the Hauraki Gulf until just south of Rennell, with up to 50 or more being noted in a day. Another very smart species. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small breeding range and a small number of breeding locations, and may be declining overall owing to predation by introduced mammals. Although the Australian breeding population is currently increasing through conservation action, the New Caledonian population is undoubtedly in decline. The overall population size is estimated at between 3,000 and 21,000 mature individuals.
- Collared Petrel *Pterodroma brevipes*: We noted at least a dozen between Norfolk Island and north of Noumea, including some stunning intermediate and dark morph birds. Identifying paler birds from the very similar Gould's Petrel is a real challenge and one that we didn't quite get to the bottom of despite much effort! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It has been up-listed to Vulnerable because improved knowledge indicates that, within its small population, the largest sub-population numbers fewer than 1,000 individuals, with the overall population suspected (estimated at not more than 10,000) to be in decline owing to the effects of introduced species.
- Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*: We saw 50 or so in the Hauraki Gulf, many of which showed very well, and a single the following day.
- Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulweria*: The first was noted south of Rennell, and we went on to record the species on a further eight dates with up to 20 being recorded on several of these. An interesting species, sometimes appearing bigger than it is. On a couple of occasions we saw pairs that appeared to be in some kind of courtship flight.
- Parkinson's Petrel (P Black P, Black P) *Procellaria parkinsoni*: We saw 30 or so of these chunky petrels in the Hauraki Gulf, many of which showed very well, and at least three the following day. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Vulnerable because it breeds on just two very small islands where introduced predators are a potential threat. The population is assumed to be stable (estimated at 5,000 mature individuals), but if a decline is detected, the species should be uplisted to Endangered.
- Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*: First seen off the Bonins, we went on to see huge numbers as we approached Japan where they soon became the dominant seabird with up 1,000s being seen on our last day at sea.
- Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*: We saw 40 or so in the Hauraki Gulf (where care was required to separate them from Parkinson's Petrel) and at least three the following day, and at the end of the voyage, we saw small numbers in the Japanese sea area.
- Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*: A single in the Hauraki Gulf was an excellent find. It showed extremely well in a flock of Buller's Shearwaters off the Poor Knights Islands. It's a great rarity in New Zealand waters, with just a handful of previous records.
- Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*: One of the most frequently encountered species on the voyage, with sightings on 25 dates. First seen south of Norfolk Island, all of the southern birds were dark morph. Once we got north of the equator, pale birds took over, and although variable (some dusker than others) all of those around the Bonins for example were pale morph. Although currently considered monotypic, one has to wonder if the dark and the light morphs are not actually different taxa.
- Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*: At least 150 showed well in the Hauraki Gulf. A smart and large shearwater though somewhat eclipsed by the previous species. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Vulnerable because the population is restricted to a very small area when breeding, and remains at risk from the accidental introduction of predators and other catastrophes. If it succeeds in expanding its range, it

may be down-listed to Near Threatened. Its current population is estimated at 2,500,000 mature individuals and is thought to be increasing.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*: A single was identified in the Hauraki Gulf and another the following day. Others may well have been overlooked during the voyage as they are extremely difficult to tell from the next species. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. It is classified as Near Threatened because although it has a very large global population (estimated at 20,000,000 mature individuals) it is thought to have undergone a moderately rapid decline owing to the impact of fisheries, the harvesting of its young and possibly climate change.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*: Common and seen virtually daily. Great numbers were heading north from their breeding grounds with a trickle of migrants even noted in the 'dead zone'. The highest count was off of New Caledonia where we saw thousands!

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*: Good numbers were visible offshore from Omaha Spit, near Snell's Beach, and we went on to see 20 or more from the Spirit of Enderby in the Hauraki Gulf.

Southern Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*: Our first few were in the Hauraki Gulf, with a few more as we approached Norfolk Island. The biggest numbers and best views were however as we and then left Norfolk Island when at least 150 were logged. Apparently 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! There really is a lot to be learnt about seabirds!!

Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*: A single was seen during a poorly-timed lecture as we sailed towards Kolombangara from Honiara. We then saw a few on the way into and out of Chuuk, some of which showed well, especially on the way out, and we saw another individual off the Northern Marianas. 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. Currently, the birds on Chuuk and off the Northern Marianas (and throughout the Central Pacific) are all classified as *dichrous* but further work may discover sufficient differences between populations to merit the recognition of more forms/species!

Bannerman's Shearwater *Puffinus bannermani*: Great views of small numbers on two dates south of and near to the Bonins. The birds seen showed classic features of this form and correspond very well to photographs published in the Japanese literature. Sadly, more recent field guides have failed to portray this rare and interesting form accurately. This form is not generally split from Tropical Shearwater, but it probably does merit specific status and if treated as such would more than likely be classified as Endangered by BirdLife International.

Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi*: Another WPO speciality, our first was a single noted off Kolombangara, and we went on to see another ten or so the following day as we sailed off Western Bougainville. Although we did get some reasonable views, most were rather distant, and it was a great pity and disappointment that we were unable to slow down to look at the small number that were on the sea in a feeding flock. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International on the basis of an estimated very small population (250 – 999 mature individuals) and breeding range. However there is very little data on this species and on threat processes operating at breeding colonies.

HYDROBATIDAE

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*: Many were seen heading north. We recorded this long distance migrant on twelve dates, usually with just small numbers but with a maximum of around 20 in a day.

- New Zealand Storm-Petrel *Oceanites maorianus*: Having had our Hauraki Gulf trip cancelled, tension was high as we hit the zone in the outer Hauraki Gulf, but we needn't have worried as we saw at least eight that were attracted to the slick, with some pretty decent views of some of them! We also saw a single storm-petrel off New Caledonia, the identity of which remains unresolved. Similar birds have been seen on each of the last three WPOs. The views this year were not good enough to make too many judgements, but it appears to be similar to New Zealand Storm-Petrel, but may be slightly larger and with less white on the underwing. It is possible that this may actually represent an as yet undescribed species, the New Caledonia Storm-Petrel?! which may be this species. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Previously assumed to have been Extinct following the lack of records since three specimens were collected in the 1800s, this species was spectacularly rediscovered in 2003, with multiple annual records subsequently. Although there is very little information on which to base an assessment, the species has been classified as Critically Endangered as a precaution on the basis of an extremely small population (estimated at fewer than 50) which could be susceptible to the impacts of introduced predators. Further observations and information may well lead to a revision of the criteria triggered, and possibly the category to which it is assigned.
- White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*: A couple were seen in the Hauraki Gulf and we went on to log a further twenty or so. Most were on the way to Norfolk Island, with the furthest north bird recorded two days north of New Caledonia.
- White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria*: Three were seen south of Norfolk Island, a couple of which showed pretty well. A scarce species here. This species may comprise of more than one species (now there's a surprise!) so keep an eye on where you've seen it!
- Polynesian Storm-Petrel *Nesofregetta fuliginosa*: A total of four were noted one of which in particular showed well off northern New Caledonia. A spectacular storm-petrel and another of the much-wanted seabirds on this voyage! This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. It was recently up-listed to Endangered, a threat category which may have been warranted for some time, as the species has a very small (estimated at 1,000 to 1,600 mature individuals) and fragmented population which is continuing to decline. It is clear that invasive species are the primary reason for this decline, and although eradication at some locations has been conducted and further eradication programmes are planned for the future, this species remains highly threatened.
- Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*: There were a few claims of this one, but in the end we achieved some acceptable views of one or two in the chum slicks off the Bonins and Torishima.
- Band-rumped Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*: One of the more interesting sightings was that of several *Oceanodroma* storm-petrels south of Rennell. In the field we identified them as this 'species' and photos confirm that they do seem to fit. They were not previously known to occur in this part of the Pacific, so it is pure speculation as to whether they are wintering Japanese birds or an as yet unknown population (or species!!). Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is sure to be split into several species as seabird studies and hence taxonomy move on.
- Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*: This species was seen on six dates, the first sighting being three days south of the Bonins. Good numbers were seen with up to 100+ in a day, with some excellent views. At any distance, extremely difficult to identify from the following species, though straightforward at close range! It is only known to breed on the Iwo Islands, southern Japan. It may also breed on the Ogasawara Islands, but this requires confirmation. The species is treated as Data Deficient by BirdLife International.

Tristram's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami*: Our first sightings were as we approached the Bonins, and good numbers off there and Torishima to the chum slicks. At times we were treated to side-by-side views of this species and Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel which was highly educational. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because it is thought to have a small breeding range. A higher level of threat classification might be justified if the range size is confirmed and found to be declining.

PELECANOIDIDAE

Common Diving-Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*: Good numbers of these auk-like birds were seen in the Hauraki Gulf where we noted at least 100.

PHAETHONTIDAE

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*: Our first was a day or so north of Norfolk Island and we went on to see small numbers on a further thirteen dates. Some showed brilliantly around the ship and we also enjoyed watching the breeding birds on Chuuk. The form here, *dorotheae*, has a rather dull yellow-green bill. More than one species may be involved.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*: The first were seen a day north of the Hauraki Gulf and the last of the 25 or so that we logged were near to the Bonins. We also enjoyed watching the breeding birds on Norfolk Island where we saw a nearly fledged bird at close range on the cliff top.

FREGATIDAE

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*: Small numbers were seen on seven dates as we made our way through the tropics.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*: Our first was on the way north to Rennell and small numbers were seen as we worked our way up through the Solomons. Many of the frigatebirds seen kept at a frustrating distance and were not identifiable.

SULIDAE

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*: Good numbers of dark-eyed 'Tasman' Boobies were seen around Norfolk Island. The subspecies here, *fullagari*, may merit specific status. Further north, the pale-eyed *personata* showed well as far north as the Northern Marianas. They frequently entertained us by accompanying us through the quieter tropics when there was nothing else to look at!

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*: First encountered near to Norfolk Island, we went on to see them on 15 subsequent dates, right up to Japan. The pale eyes and blue bill base on the males was attractive.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*: This lovely species was recorded on 14 dates from south of New Caledonia to the Bonins in Japan. All ages and colour morphs were seen, and friendly individuals often accompanied us and hunted flying fish that were disturbed in front of the boat. The subspecies present here is generally *rubripes*, though one well-watched and photographed sub-adult light morph bird (which actually roosted on the ship!) showed a dark, grey tail base similar to the form *websteri* of the Eastern Pacific. However, I am not sure that we can be certain that this was not a retained sign of immaturity?

Australian Gannet *Morus serrator*: We noted a few from Omaha Spit and even Miranda, and then good numbers of up to 200 in the Hauraki Gulf and the last one was seen the following morning as we headed for Norfolk Island.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*: Small numbers were seen at Miranda.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: A few at Miranda at the beginning of the tour and a few more at Omigawa at the end! I wonder if they're really the same species?!

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*: A few were noted at Omaha Spit and then c50 at Miranda.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*: First seen around Snell's Beach with others at Miranda and a few at Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia.

ARDEIDAE

Australasian Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus*: After the disappointment of the cancelled pelagic, we got some compensation in the form of at least five smart Australasian Bitterns wandering about in the open at the Whangamarino Wetlands. A great bird to see so well, and a rare one to boot! This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. This species is listed as Endangered because it has a very small and rapidly declining population (estimated at 1,000-2,500 mature individuals) owing to loss and degradation of its wetland habitats. Urgent action is a priority to halt declines in Australia.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: A total of three were seen in the wetlands on Chuuk including a distant individual in the scope.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Only seen in the Tokyo area at the end of the tour where they were reasonably common.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta*: A single was seen at Omigawa on our last afternoon.

Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Mesophyx intermedia*: At least ten summer-plumaged birds, complete with dark bills, were seen on the last afternoon at Omigawa.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*: Common on the mainland of New Zealand, where we saw plenty and then also seen on Norfolk Island and New Caledonia.

Pacific Reef-Heron (Pacific/Eastern Reef-Egret) *Egretta sacra*: A single on Makira was followed by a couple on Kolombangara and several birds around the salubrious Truk Stop Hotel on Chuuk.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*: A single was seen on Makira – the only one of the voyage.

Rufous Night-Heron (Nankeen N-H) *Nycticorax caledonicus*: Several were seen from the harbour at Chuuk while we were waiting for clearance from immigration, and a few more were seen the following morning.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Australian Ibis (A White I) *Threskiornis molucca*: c50 were noted on Rennell where many were seen well. The form here, *pygmaeus* is restricted to Rennell and Bellona Islands.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*: Around 15 of these attractive spoonbills were seen well at Miranda.

PANDIONIDAE

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus*: We saw a total of about ten, the first of which was as we were approaching Noumea, New Caledonia, with several more in the Solomons. The tendency these days is to split up Osprey into two or more allospecies.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*: We enjoyed good views of this localized species on Makira and again the following day at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal.

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

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*: One or two were noted in the flooded trees at Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur Indus*: Several were seen on the Solomons. This species seems to be in global decline.

Solomon Sea-Eagle (S Islands S-E) *Haliaeetus sanfordi*: This impressive Solomon Islands endemic was seen on three islands with two distant birds on Makira and a lone individual the following day at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal. The final sighting of at least two birds during the shore excursion on Kolombangara was by far and away the best, with one even hunting fruit bats at dusk! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. This species is classified as Vulnerable on the basis of a small estimated population (250 – 999 mature individuals) which is suspected to be declining. It is judged to have distinct subpopulations, some totalling more than 250 birds. If subpopulations are found to be smaller or, conversely, that movement of birds between them means that all birds are in a single population, the species would warrant up-listing to Endangered.

Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*: A single was seen near to Narita during our excursion at the end of the tour.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*: Very common during the pre-tour extension on the mainland of North Island, New Zealand.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*: At least four were noted on Rennell, a couple of which showed well.

Pied Goshawk *Accipiter albogularis*: An adult was seen very well on Makira, and an immature was seen by some of us on Mount Austin the following day.

New Caledonia Goshawk (White-bellied G) *Accipiter haplochrous*: Seemed particularly conspicuous during our visit, with several birds showing very well indeed. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because it is confined to one small island on which habitat degradation may be causing a moderate decline. Its population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 mature individuals.

FALCONIDAE

Australian Kestrel (Nankeen K) *Falco cenchroides*: A few were seen during our rather wet excursion on Norfolk Island.

RALLIDAE

Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus*: Common on New Zealand during the pre-tour excursion. We went on to see others on Norfolk Island, New Caledonia and the Solomons.

Common Moorhen (C Gallinule) *Gallinula chloropus*: We were surprised to see an adult with chicks, was on Chuuk. I assume the birds are from the localized subspecies *guami*.

RHYNOCHETIDAE

Kagu *Rhynchetos jubatus*: This species was one of the major land bird highlights of the trip. We enjoyed great looks at eight birds at Rivière Bleue, New Caledonia on the 26 April where they were at times ridiculously tame! The first was even seen as we were driving in! This charismatic species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International on the basis of its very small, severely fragmented population (estimated at 250 – 999 mature individuals), with a very small extent of occurrence, which is suffering an overall decline. However, there is cause for hope, as recent research shows it still to be widespread, and populations in some areas are increasing as a result of conservation effort.

CHARADRIIDAE

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*: This species was relatively common during our pre-tour extension on North Island, New Zealand.

Red-breasted Dotterel (New Zealand D) *Charadrius obscurus*: During our pre-tour extension, we were delighted to get some fantastic views of this scarce species at Omaha Spit, near to

Snell's Beach, and at Miranda. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. It has a very small, severely fragmented population (estimated at 2,000 mature individuals) and a small overall range. Extirpation of the southern subspecies has been averted owing to extensive predator control, and numbers are now gradually increasing. However, the status of the northern subspecies is uncertain and populations in some areas have undergone substantial declines. The species is therefore listed as Endangered. Further clarification of the status of the northern subspecies may lead to down-listing in the future.

Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus*: Good numbers were seen at Miranda, though they were in non-breeding plumage.

Wrybill *Anarhynchus frontalis*: Huge numbers of this bizarre species were seen roosting on the spit at Miranda. Indeed we may have seen almost as many as half of the world population!! It is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International because it has a small population (estimated at 4,000-5,000), in a single subpopulation, which is undergoing a continuing decline owing to habitat degradation and the impacts of introduced predators.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

South Island Oystercatcher (S I Pied O) *Haematopus finschi*: Good numbers seen during our time in New Zealand, especially at Miranda.

Variable Oystercatcher *Haematopus unicolor*: Several seen well at Miranda, including an albino individual.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Pied Stilt (White-headed S) *Himantopus leucocephalus*: Especially common and obvious at Miranda where one or two seemed to show the odd Black Stilt gene!

SCOLOPACIDAE

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*: The only one seen by our group I believe was one at sea migrating north (approximately 50 miles south of Chuuk) with a Wandering Tattler on the 8th of May.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana*: Three were seen on Norfolk Island, a single bird was photographed migrating with a Grey-tailed Tattler (see above) and another was noted on Chuuk.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (H): A single heard near to Narita on our post-tour extension.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: A single at Miranda on the pre-tour extension was a bit of a surprise.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: A single flying over Norfolk Island got a few excited and many more were seen around Narita at the end of the trip.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*: Good numbers were still present at Miranda at the beginning of the trip.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*: Great to see some of these smart waders in summer plumage mingling with the Wrybills at Miranda.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*: A single was found amongst the roosting waders at Miranda and showed quite nicely.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Small numbers were seen on Norfolk Island and on Chuuk with further birds seen at sea in Japanese waters and a few in the paddyfields at Narita.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: A single was seen near to Narita at the end of our trip.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*: A number of small flocks were seen between Miyakejima and Tokyo Bay, most of which were in summer plumage and some of which showed well.

Red Phalarope (Grey P) *Phalaropus fulicarius*: The only sighting of the voyage was of a single bird in summer plumage east of the Bonin Islands.

LARIDAE

Black-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus bulleri*: At least three were seen well at Miranda during the pre-tour extension. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because Surveys indicate that this species may have undergone a very rapid decline over three generations (32 years). The current population estimate is of 96,000 mature individuals but declining.

Red-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus scopulinus*: Common around Miranda, then a huge flock were seen around the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*: Several of the rather distinctive *forsteri* subspecies were seen around Noumea. Will this be known as New Caledonia Gull one day?

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*: Probably the biggest surprise of WPO 2011 was finding a 1st summer Laughing Gull flying around the wharf at Chuuk on 8 May (when it was initially identified as a Black-tailed Gull by some). The bird was then seen the following afternoon as the 'Spirit of Enderby' sailed away from the archipelago. It is interesting to note that it is 9,000kms from Chuuk to the west coast of the USA and even further to where this species is normally found.

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*: Just a few were seen in the vicinity of Tokyo as we ended our sea voyage.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*: Common during the pre-tour extension on the mainland of New Zealand.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*: This species was first seen around Norfolk Island and last recorded off the Bonin Islands. Sightings were spread across fifteen dates, with the highest numbers (100+) were logged around Chuuk and off the Bonin Islands.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus*: This Noddy was encountered on sixteen days between a day south of Norfolk Island and two days south of the Bonin Islands. The highest counts were around Norfolk Island and Chuuk, where several hundred were seen.

Grey Noddy (G Ternlet) *Procelsterna albivitta*: This species breeds in the Hauraki Gulf (where we first encountered them near to the Maori Rocks) and on islets just offshore from Norfolk Island and was seen on a daily basis between these two locations with up to 40 noted in a day.

Common White Tern *Gygis alba*: Sightings of this species were divided into two discrete blocks with birds seen on a daily basis from the sea day south of Norfolk Island until arriving at New Caledonia and then again from a day north of New Ireland to a day south of the Bonin Islands. The only record outside these periods was a lone bird a day south of Rennell. The highest counts were at Norfolk Island and Chuuk where this species breeds, with 200 or more noted in a day there.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*: Apparently less conspicuous than usual with sightings on just thirteen dates and with only three dates when more than one hundred individuals were noted. Most sightings were between New Ireland and the Bonin Islands when this species was recorded daily except the day of the shore excursions on Chuuk. Nevertheless, there were plenty of good views.

Grey-backed Tern *Onychoprion lunatus*: We noted the species on four dates with the highest count being off Bougainville when around six were noted. The light plays all sorts of tricks with this species. A tricky species to see well as it seems to avoid ships, but we did get some good views of birds on coconuts and as they took off.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*: This species was only encountered between Makira and Bougainville where up to 50 were noted in a day.

- Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis*: Small numbers were seen just inside the reef entrance shortly before arriving at Noumea though the views were generally distant and poor. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It has been up-listed to Vulnerable owing to recent declines over much of its breeding range. Predation by introduced species, disturbance and inappropriate water level management are thought to have contributed most to this decline. However, data is patchy, and a clarification of trends in its strongholds may lead to its status being revised. Its current population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 mature individuals.
- Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: Some good views of this surprisingly monotypic species during our pre-tour extension in New Zealand.
- Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: A single bird was seen flying around the ship in the fog and drizzle shortly after dawn when the ship was approximately 25 nautical miles north of Torishima. Somewhat surprisingly, this was the first record for the WPO.
- White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata*: Several showed nicely at Miranda during the pre-tour extension.
- Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*: This smart species was first noted as the ship approached Noumea, and was also seen in the waters around Rennell and during the two days the ship was at Chuuk.
- Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Some smart breeding-plumaged individuals of the attractive *longipennis* subspecies were seen as the ship cruised between Miyake-jima and Tokyo Bay.
- Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*: We noted a good number of sightings between New Caledonia and Chuuk, with some entertaining individuals fishing around the ship. We also saw two smart breeding-plumaged birds off Japan. It would appear that all records refer to the subspecies *cristatus*.

STERCORARIIDAE

- Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus*: Few sightings with just two birds east of the Bonin Islands and three individuals between Miyake-jima and Tokyo Bay. These did include both light and dark phase adults complete with spoons.
- Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*: Many skuas (jaegers) went unidentified, but a few of this species were logged including a smart dark-phase adult which got up off the sea right by the boat.
- Long-tailed Jaeger (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus*: This species caused more debate than most, especially given the unfamiliar plumage the young birds were in. Our first was a hotly debated but well-photographed first summer off New Ireland and we went on to see a handful more, including a few fine adults.

ALCIDAE

- Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*: Two birds were seen distantly in Tokyo Bay, but were only really identifiable from the photos taken of them!
- Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*: As I explained, Japanese Murrelet is an early breeder and most adults had left their colony by the time of our visit. However, as the ship continued towards Tokyo Bay, there were multiple sightings of 25+ individuals including several adults with two chicks, a couple of which stayed on the surface as the ship passed within 20m of them! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It has a small population (currently estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 mature individuals) which is thought to be declining rapidly as a result of disturbance at breeding sites, predation and mortality from drift-net fisheries.

COLUMBIDAE

- Rock Pigeon (introduced) (R Dove, Feral P) *Columba livia*: Introduced birds were seen at various places.
- Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*: A single bird was seen in flight on Makira.
- Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T D) *Streptopelia orientalis*: A single was seen well at Narita.
- Spotted Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia chinensis*: This introduced species was seen in New Zealand and on New Caledonia.
- Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia mackinlayi*: This species proved pretty elusive with some of the group catching up on one on Rennell and then good scope views of one for most on Mount Austin Guadalcanal.
- Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: A few were seen in the Botanical Gardens on Norfolk Island. The form here, which may have been introduced, is *chrysochlora*. Some authorities (including the IOC) split off this form as Pacific Dove (which occurs from Northern Australia to New Caledonia etc).
- Stephan's Dove *Chalcophaps stephani* (NL): One or two were glimpsed in the Solomons including one seen by Richard on Makira.
- Caroline Islands Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba kubaryi*: The adventurers had views of one on Toll South while those of us that stayed on Weno enjoyed some fine scope views up near the Japanese Gun. This fine species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Vulnerable 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.
- Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*: A single female on Mount Austin (for some of us) was our only one.
- Crimson-crowned Fruit-Dove (Purple-capped F-D) *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*: Many great views on Weno where the name Purple-crowned is surely more appropriate! Those visiting Toll South also saw a few.
- Silver-capped Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus richardsii*: This smart species is endemic to Rennell and a few nearby islets, where it is fairly common. We got great scope views of several.
- Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus viridis*: Another smart and range-restricted fruit-dove which was seen well in small numbers on both Guadalcanal and Kolombangara.
- Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus solomonensis*: A smart but elusive fruit-dove which was seen by some of the group on Makira and by Daniel B at least on Mt Austin.
- White-headed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus eugeniae*: A smart Makira endemic. We managed good scope views of three on our walk up the hill. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Although relatively common within its small range, this species has a moderately small population, and the forest throughout its range is being or will be logged. Consequently it is thought to be undergoing a moderately rapid population reduction and is therefore considered Near Threatened.
- Cloven-feathered Dove *Drepanoptila holosericea* (HNL): Heard by one or two at Rivière Bleue. Distinguishing the dove from the cacophony of playback was difficult by the time I got there!!! This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Although it has been found to be commoner than was once thought, there are potential changes in gun cartridge quotas which may lead to increased hunting pressure and a moderately rapid population reduction in the next three generations (20 years). The population is currently estimated at 140,000 mature individuals.
- Pacific Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pacifica*: This chunky pigeon was only seen on Rennell where at least six, including a 'knobless' immature, were seen well.

- Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula rubricera*: This impressive looking pigeon was seen in small numbers on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. This species has been up-listed to Near Threatened because recent analysis of rates of deforestation on New Britain (driven by oil palm plantations) suggest that it is likely to be undergoing a moderately rapid population reduction. The current population is estimated to be between 10,000 and 19,999 mature individuals.
- Island Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria*: At least ten were seen well on Makira, including a couple seen perched just after the 'cricket match'!
- Chestnut-bellied Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula brenchleyi*: Great scope views of a couple on Makira, with a couple of others seen in flight. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. This wide-ranging species is rarely encountered but is assumed to have a small population (estimated at between 1,000 and 2,499 mature individuals) that is declining through forest loss. Its confiding behaviour, flocking habits, specialised food requirements and nomadic nature make it susceptible to hunting. Information from at least one site, Hauta, suggests that the population may be declining rapidly. These factors together qualify it as Vulnerable.
- New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula goliath*: We were fortunate to get great scope views of a couple of these 'goliaths' during our visit to Rivière Bleue. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Although probably secure at present, this species qualifies as Near Threatened because it is projected to undergo a moderately rapid population reduction owing to increasing hunting pressure. The population is currently estimated at 100,000 mature individuals.
- New Zealand Pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*: A bonus bird when we visited Tawharanui Regional Park when our pelagic trip was cancelled. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Introduced predators, hunting and habitat degradation are all taking their toll on this pigeon which is undergoing a moderately rapid population reduction as a result.

CACATUIDAE

- Ducorps's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsii*: This species was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal and the following day on Kolombangara. Though it gave some people the run-around, most of us got some very good scope views at the top of Mount Austin.

PSITTACIDAE

- Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*: This brilliantly coloured parrot was seen at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal and on Kolombangara with some birds scoped up perched.
- Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*: Common in downtown Noumea (subspecies *deplanckii*) and seen a few times in the Solomons (subspecies *massena*). Note the English name used here. The IOC split off the *moluccanus* group, referring to that species as Rainbow Lorikeet and renaming this one Coconut Lorikeet.
- Yellow-bibbed Lory *Lorius chlorocercus*: Another stunning parrot that was first seen on Makira with further great views at both Mount Austin on Guadalcanal and on Kolombangara.
- Duchess Lorikeet *Charmosyna margarethae*: The only records of this handsome parrot were on Kolombangara where we only managed flight views of this distinctive little screecher. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. This beautiful species has a moderately small range in which it is locally quite common, however it may decline moderately rapidly in the future if trade levels are allowed to increase.
- Finsch's Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta finschii*: This tiny species was relatively common and easy to see on Rennell, with a few more noted on Makira and heard on Mount Austin. Often seen climbing up or down thin vertical trunks!

- Horned Parakeet *Eunymphicus cornutus*: A real cracker that we were delighted to see in the scope at Rivière Bleu on New Caledonia. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Formerly considered Endangered, This species has been down-listed as recent surveys indicate that there are over 2,500 mature individuals. Nevertheless, the total population remains small, and it is restricted to a single subpopulation which is suspected to have declined owing to habitat degradation.
- New Caledonian Parakeet *Cyanoramphus saisseti*: We enjoyed excellent views of at least five as we were leaving Rivière Bleu. A typical Red-crowned Parakeet type. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It has been up-listed to Vulnerable because it has a single small population (estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 mature individuals), which is suspected to be declining owing to predation by invasive species; its stronghold is in an area under threat from nickel mining and it may undergo a rapid decline in the near future.
- Norfolk Island Parakeet *Cyanoramphus cookii*: This species does not seem to be doing well, and with the inclement weather and perhaps sub-optimum strategy, we struggled, but eventually got reasonably good views of a pair and saw another in flight. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it has an extremely small population (estimated at 200-300 mature individuals), although it has recently been increasing as a result of concerted management efforts (though the local folk told us that more recently the population was in decline again!).
- Crimson Rosella (introduced) *Platycercus elegans*: Introduced to Norfolk Island where it was relatively common.
- Eastern Rosella (introduced) *Platycercus eximius*: At least five of these introduced birds were seen at Tawharanui Regional Park on North Island New Zealand.
- Singing Parrot *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*: Seen in small numbers (single figure counts) on Rennell, Makira and Guadalcanal with birds also heard on Kolombangara. Fortunately we managed to get some decent views in the scope.
- Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*: Another stunningly beautiful bird which was recorded on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. A majority of those seen were males though we did eventually see a female.

CUCULIDAE

- Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*: A single was seen and heard on Mount Austin on Guadalcanal. The distinctive song of the subspecies concerned, *addendus*, surely suggests that this form warrants specific status?
- Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*: A single bird was seen by most of us at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, was the only one of the trip.
- Australian Koel *Eudynamys cyanocephalus* (H): Heard on Makira and while it was still dark on Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, while we were waiting for the bus fiasco to be sorted!
- Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*: One of the more unexpected records of the trip was the Channel-billed Cuckoo which flew passed the ship as we cruised up the west coast of Bougainville. The bird was seemingly coming from the west so was presumably a migrant which, for some reason, was moving from New Britain to Bougainville. When I first found it, it was flying towards us from a distance. All I knew was that it was not a seabird, but it was quite a surprise when it turned and revealed its identity!!
- Buff-headed Coucal *Centropus milo*: We all heard this one at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal, and some were lucky enough to see them there. We then managed some good views of this huge species on Kolombangara. What a noise it makes!!

APODIDAE

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*: Seen regularly in New Caledonia and in the Solomons. Various subspecies were seen.

White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius*: As usual, the small swiftlets were at times confusing. Having studied what available literature there is, I believe that we did indeed see this species over Noumea and again on Kolombangara. Oh for more time and decent literature. The problem largely stems from the variability of the previous species not being well described!

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis*: Recorded on all the islands visited in the Solomon, with the highest count being on Makira.

Caroline Islands Swiftlet *Aerodramus inquietus*: This extremely common Swiftlet is endemic to the Caroline Islands and was seen very well on Chuuk, first being visible from the harbour when we arrived.

HEMIPROCNIIDAE

Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea*: This impressive bird was seen very well on Rennell and again on Kolombangara.

ALCEDINIDAE

Ultramarine Kingfisher *Todirhamphus leucopygius*: After plenty of hunting around, we finally tracked down a pair of this handsome kingfisher on Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, allowing most of us some great looks. Apologies to those that were misinformed by Chris and hence headed up the hill early as requested. What more can I say...

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris*: We were treated to great views of at least four of the distinctive *amoenus* subspecies on Rennell. A really smart looking form and perhaps deserving of specific status.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophagus*: A single of this large and handsome kingfisher showed well on Makira.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sanctus*: Several seen in New Zealand at the start of the tour, and also seen on Norfolk Island and Rennell (where they were easy to separate from the resident Collared Kingfishers) and in small numbers elsewhere in the Solomons.

MEROPIDAE

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*: A flock of six or so were seen flying east towards the Fenni Islands off northeast New Ireland.

CORACIIDAE

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*: Only seen in the Solomons where small numbers were noted on Makira and at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal.

BUCEROTIDAE

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus*: We enjoyed some fantastic views of these amazing birds at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal. The perched views were great but the overhead flight views were even better!

PICIDAE

Pygmy Woodpecker (Japanese P W) *Dendrocopos kizuki*: A nice bonus near our hotel at Narita on the very last evening of the trip.

MELIPHAGIDAE

- Tui *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*: We saw a few of these giant and unusual looking honeyeaters in New Zealand at the beginning of the tour.
- New Caledonia Myzomela *Myzomela caledonica*: Uncommon at Rivière Bleue, but with persistence we managed to see a few smart males well.
- Micronesian Myzomela *Myzomela rubrata*: Common on Chuuk with many smart males showing very well indeed.
- Cardinal Myzomela *Myzomela cardinalis*: This species was only seen on Rennell where it was common with many smart males sitting out to be scrutinized.
- Yellow-vented Myzomela *Myzomela eichhorni*: A relatively scarce and range-restricted Solomon Island endemic, which we saw well, but not without effort, on Kolombangara.
- Black-headed Myzomela *Myzomela melanocephala*: Endemic to some of the islands in the Central Solomons, this one proved pretty tricky, with some of the group seeing one at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, and then those on my bus seeing another there just as we were leaving!
- Sooty Myzomela *Myzomela tristrami*: Restricted to Makira and a few nearby islands, this species was reasonably numerous during our morning birding there.
- New Zealand Bellbird *Anthornis melanura*: Very common at Tawharanui Regional Park, our venue when our pelagic trip was cancelled.
- Dark-brown Honeyeater *Lichmera incana*: First recorded just by the port in Noumea, New Caledonia, with two or three more logged the following day.
- Barred Honeyeater *Phylidonyris undulatus*: Three or four of these large and distinctive honeyeaters were seen well at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia.
- New Caledonian Friarbird *Philemon diemenensis*: One was scoped at the forest edge at Rivière Bleue in New Caledonia, and another was seen by some of the group there.
- San Cristobal Melidectes *Melidectes sclateri*: This bizarre-looking honeyeater is restricted to Makira where, after a bit of playback, we achieved some great views.

ACANTHIZIDAE

- Norfolk Island Gerygone *Gerygone modesta*: This endemic was reasonably common with c10, many of which showed well, during our morning on the island. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. It is restricted to a very small area on one island and although it does not currently appear to be threatened, it remains susceptible to catastrophe. The population is estimated at 3,000 mature individuals.
- Grey Gerygone *Gerygone igata*: A few seen during the pre-tour extension on the mainland of New Zealand including some good views at Tawharanui Regional Park.
- Fan-tailed Gerygone *Gerygone flavolateralis*: Seen in reasonable numbers on New Caledonia during the excursion to Rivière Bleue, with several showing well.
- Rennell Gerygone *Gerygone citrina*: A reasonably numerous bird on Rennell with c10 logged during our visit. Although this bird is generally lumped in Fan-tailed Gerygone (above) visually it is quite different, eg pale eyes and a mainly yellow breast compared with the birds on New Caledonia which have dark eyes and less yellow on the underparts. Playback experiments on both New Caledonia and Rennell also suggest that the birds do not recognize the songs of the birds from the other island, providing further evidence that the two forms should indeed be split.

ARTAMIDAE

- White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*: This species is generally encountered in the more 'open country' habitats on New Caledonia where we noted a couple of birds.

CRACTICIDAE

Australasian Magpie (introduced) *Gymnorhina tibicen*: This introduction was relatively common in the North Island farmland on the pre-tour extension.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina caledonica*: At least four birds were seen at Rivière Bleue, New Caledonia, with some cracking scope views of one or two of them.

Barred Cuckoo-Shrike (Yellow-eyed C-S) *Coracina lineata*: This cuckoo-shrike was the most frequently encountered during our shore excursions in the Solomon Islands and was seen on all the islands which were visited with a maximum of 12+ noted on Rennell.

White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina papuensis*: Only noted in the Solomons where small numbers were noted at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal and on Kolombangara the following day where notably we watched a bird on the nest just at the landing site.

New Caledonian Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina analis*: Around six of this New Caledonian endemic were seen at Rivière Bleue, several of which showed well. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because it has a moderately small population which is believed to be declining owing to habitat loss and fragmentation and which is suspected to approach the threshold for classification as Vulnerable. The population is estimated at between 10,000 and 19,999 mature individuals.

Common Cicadabird (Slender-billed C) *Coracina tenuirostris*: Only seen on Guadalcanal where two distinctive females of the race *erythropygia* were seen at Mount Austin. I would not be at all surprised if the species limits in this widespread and variable species were revised.

Solomon Islands Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina holopolia*: A couple of distinctive males were seen well on Mount Austin, Guadalcanal. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. It is a naturally scarce species which may not tolerate degraded forest. It has a moderately small population and as logging operations increase within its range it is likely to suffer a moderately rapid population reduction.

Long-tailed Triller *Lalage leucopyga*: A couple of the subspecies *montrosieri* were seen well near to the entrance to Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia, with several of the form *affinis* showing well on Makira.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

Whitehead *Mohoua albicilla*: A small and mobile flock were seen at Tawharanui Regional Park. Somewhat surprisingly, this species (along with Yellowhead and Brown Creeper) has recently been placed in the Whistler family.

Oriole Whistler *Pachycephala orioloides*: After some effort, we achieved some great views of a male of the distinctive *christophori* subspecies on Makira. Both the song and plumage were distinctive. I have followed the IOC checklist in splitting this form as part of Oriole Whistler, though a more complete review of the Golden Whistler complex may well lead to further splits!

Norfolk Island Whistler *Pachycephala xanthoprocta*: Several of this rather drab whistler (the males have a female-like plumage) were seen well on Norfolk Island. Although not universally split at the moment, my suspicion is that this form will be widely accepted as a good species in the future.

New Caledonian Whistler *Pachycephala caledonica*: Several showed nicely at Rivière Bleue, New Caledonia. This endemic is generally found in more forested areas than the next species.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*: We noted a single male near the entrance at Rivière Bleue. The subspecies here is the endemic *xanthetraea*.

LANIIDAE

Bull-headed Shrike *Lanius bucephalus*: A single bird showed nicely in the scope close to our Narita Hotel at the end of our brief post tour extension.

RHIPIDURIDAE

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*: Good numbers on Makira and smaller numbers on Kolombangara. The subspecies here is *melaleuca*.

Rennell Fantail *Rhipidura rennelliana*: This smart little endemic showed well in small numbers during our morning on Rennell.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa*: This species was seen in reasonable numbers on Norfolk Island (*pelzelni*) and on the shore excursion to Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia (*bulgeri*).

New Zealand Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*: A few were noted on the mainland of New Zealand on our pre-tour extension. They were particularly conspicuous in the mixed flocks at Tawharanui Regional Park.

Streaked Fantail *Rhipidura spilodera*: This species showed very well at Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia. This species also occurs in Fiji and Vanuatu and is represented on New Caledonia by the nominate subspecies.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*: This species was only found on Makira where we saw several of the endemic subspecies *russata*.

MONARCHIDAE

Southern Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides*: Three of the nominate subspecies were seen well at Rivière Bleue National Park on New Caledonia.

Rennell Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus hamlini*: A common endemic on Rennell in the Southern Solomons, and without doubt the most impressive of the endemics there. We saw several very well during our morning there.

Truk Monarch (Chuuk M) *Metabolus rugensis*: Those who visited Tol South had some great looks at this highly range-restricted and endangered species with two males, one female and a juvenile seen. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it has a very small population (estimated at between 1,000 and 2,499 mature individuals), which appears to be rapidly declining owing to loss of habitat within its small range. If this loss of habitat becomes chronic and causes the population to become severely fragmented then it may be up-listed to Critically Endangered.

Chestnut-bellied Monarch *Monarcha castaneiventris*: A large and smart flycatcher that we first saw on Makira (a couple of the *megarhynchus* subspecies) and another was seen on Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (nominate subspecies).

White-capped Monarch *Monarcha richardsii*: After a bit of a sweat (quite literally), most of us managed some good views of this smart monarch on Kolombangara.

White-collared Monarch *Monarcha viduus*: A few lucky souls in the 'advance' party got on to one of these on Makira.

Oceanic Flycatcher *Myiagra oceanica*: This Micronesian endemic is relatively common on Chuuk with several being seen well on Weno and Tol South.

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea*: This Solomon Islands endemic was seen very well on Guadalcanal and heard on Kolombangara.

Ochre-headed Flycatcher (Makira F) *Myiagra cervinicauda*: A pair were seen well during our morning on Makira. This species is endemic to Makira and is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International because it has a moderately small population which is likely to be declining owing to deforestation. If there was evidence that its population is smaller than assessed, or that it is less tolerant of logged forest than believed, combined with an increase in the area being logged, it may qualify for up-listing to Vulnerable.

Melanesian Flycatcher (New Caledonian F) *Myiagra caledonica*: Several were seen at Rivière Bleue, New Caledonia where the subspecies is the nominate, and we also saw a singing male of the and we also saw a singing male of the *occidentalis* subspecies on Rennell. The calls of the birds on the two islands are different and there are also some plumage differences, so this is another instance where further taxonomic work may yield an armchair tick!

CORVIDAE

New Caledonia Crow *Corvus moneduloides*: We were fortunate to see three of these at Rivière Bleue on New Caledonia. This species is famous for using tools when feeding.

Guadalcanal Crow (White-billed C) *Corvus woodfordi*: Just as we were heading back up the hill at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, the distinctive calls of this scarce species were heard and we were lucky to pull one in for fine looks.

Oriental Crow *Corvus orientalis*: Several were seen around Narita. This form is more often lumped in Carrion Crow.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis*: Several were seen around Narita.

PETROICIDAE

Pacific Robin *Petroica multicolor*: Several of the nominate subspecies were seen on Norfolk Island, including a couple of smart though elusive males.

New Zealand Robin *Petroica australis*: A couple at Tawharanui Regional Park were a bonus. I think the species has recently been re-introduced here.

Yellow-bellied Robin *Eopsaltria flaviventris*: This smart and confiding New Caledonian endemic was seen very well at Rivière Bleue National Park.

ALAUDIDAE

Japanese Skylark *Alauda japonica*: A few were seen well near to Narita at the end of our tour.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: This introduced species was a common sight and sound of the New Zealand landscape. Much more so than it is here.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: A few were seen migrating past the ship during the last few days at sea and several were seen around Tokyo/Narita.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*: This species was common on the mainland of New Zealand and reasonably common on Norfolk Island. Some birds were also seen migrating north on the two previous sea days with approximately 20 individuals noted.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*: This species, which is rather similar to the previous species, was seen on Makira, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. The subspecies here is *subfusca*.

PARIDAE

Japanese Tit *Parus minor*: A few were seen near to our hotel in Narita.

CETTIIDAE

Japanese Bush Warbler *Cettia diphone*: The 'Japanese Nightingale' was heard singing near to the hotel in Narita and was teased into view.

PYCNONOTIDAE

Red-vented Bulbul (introduced) *Pycnonotus cafer*: This introduced species was seen in Noumea.

Brown-eared Bulbul *Hypsipetes amaurotis*: Several were seen in the Tokyo/Narita area.

ACROCEPHALIDAE

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*: A few were seen well during our excursion to the marshes at Narita.

Caroline Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus syrinx*: We enjoyed great views of plenty at Weno and Toll South and even found a few nests.

MEGALURIDAE

Marsh Grassbird (Japanese Swamp Warbler, J Marsh W) *Megalurus pryori*: We enjoyed some excellent views of this scarce species song-flighting at the marshes near to Narita. This species has a moderately small population, which is divided into a number of isolated sub-populations, and is likely to be declining as a result of wetland destruction in its breeding and wintering grounds, however recent surveys suggest that the population at Poyang Lake, China, could exceed 5,000 pairs (giving a global population exceeding 10,000 individuals), and the species has consequently been downlisted to Near Threatened.

CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis*: Common in the marshes near to Narita where we had excellent opportunities to study the plumage, song and display of the local form, *brunniceps*. I find it hard to believe they are the same species as we see in Western Europe!

TURDIDAE

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Introduced to New Zealand where common as it was on Norfolk Island.

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus*:

Song Thrush (introduced) *Turdus philomelos*: Introduced to New Zealand and Norfolk Island where we saw just a few.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Japanese White-eye *Zosterops japonicus* (H): Heard near to Narita on our final day.

Caroline Islands White-eye *Zosterops semperi*: This distinctive endemic was reasonably common on Weno and Toll South.

Rennell White-eye *Zosterops rennellianus*: This distinctive endemic was seen very well on Rennell. Despite its name, this Rennell endemic does not have a white eye-ring (it is dark !!) and somewhat uncharacteristically for a white-eye, it also has a bright orange bill.

Solomon Islands White-eye *Zosterops rendovae*: Not a common species, we managed to see a handful during our disappointing visit to Kolombangara. This slightly confusingly named white-eye is only found on the New Georgia group of islands (including Kolombangara) within the Solomon archipelago.

Green-backed White-eye *Zosterops xanthochrous*: This New Caledonian endemic was reasonably common during our visit to Rivière Bleue .

Slender-billed White-eye *Zosterops tenuirostris*: This Norfolk Island endemic was well with at least ten noted during our visit. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International because it is restricted to a very small and declining range on a single island, and has a very small population (estimated at 2,000 mature individuals), which is likewise believed to be declining.

Silver-eye *Zosterops lateralis*: Common on the pre-tour extension in New Zealand and on Norfolk Island. In both locations, it is represented by the nominate subspecies.

Truk White-eye (Faichuuk W-e, Great Truk W-e) *Rukia ruki*: After a long zodiac ride and a tough climb, at least eight birds were seen on Tol South by those that made the journey. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. It qualifies as Critically Endangered because it has a minute (estimated at 530 mature individuals) and fragmented occupied range, which is likely to be declining owing to continuing habitat loss. A large typhoon could plausibly lead to its extinction.

Bare-eyed White-eye *Woodfordia superciliosa*: This distinctive and strange-looking species was probably the commonest of the single-island endemics on Rennell with at least 50 noted during our visit.

STURNIDAE

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*: We noted a single immature on Mount Austin and at least six on Kolombangara.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*: This relatively unimpressive starling was seen near to the docks at Guadalcanal and again on Kolombangara.

Rennell Starling *Aplonis insularis*: Not especially common but we did see around a dozen on Rennell, a few of which sat up for decent scope views.

Brown-winged Starling *Aplonis grandis*: This Solomon Islands endemic species is reasonably reliable at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal where we noted small numbers. Despite its name, the diagnostic pale brown primaries can, on occasions, be moderately difficult to see when birds are perched.

San Cristobal Starling *Aplonis dichroa*: We saw a few of these Makira endemics, including some good scope views. Another rather drab *Aplonis*

Striated Starling *Aplonis striata*: This starling, which is endemic to New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, was seen well at Rivière Bleue where it is quite uncommon. We were lucky to see them perched up in the scope.

Micronesian Starling *Aplonis opaca*: A common bird on Chuuk where we were able to see many well.

Long-tailed Myna *Mino kreffti*: We enjoyed some great views of these at both Mount Austin, Guadalcanal and the following day on Kolombangara. This myna was formerly known as Yellow-faced Myna but following the split, the latter is now regarded as a Papua New Guinea endemic.

Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis*: This Asian introduction was reasonably numerous on New Zealand, New Caledonia and Guadalcanal.

European Starling (introduced) *Sturnus vulgaris*: Common on New Zealand and Norfolk Island. More vermin!

White-cheeked Starling (Grey S) *Sturnus cineraceus*: Several were seen around Tokyo/Narita.

DICAEIDAE

Midget Flowerpecker *Dicaeum aeneum*: This diddy Solomon Islands endemic was relatively common on Mount Austin on Guadalcanal with several seen very well.

Mottled Flowerpecker *Dicaeum tristrami*: Several were seen well during our excursion to Makira, with others seen zipping over.

NECTARINIIDAE

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*: A few of the subspecies *flavigastra* were seen on Kolombangara (with some people also noting them on Mount Austin the previous day).

MOTACILLIDAE

Black-backed Wagtail *Motacilla lugens*: A few noted near to Narita.

Japanese Wagtail *Motacilla grandis*: A couple performed on cue when we stopped for lunch on the way to the marshes at Narita. Always good to see.

EMBERIZIDAE

Yellowhammer (introduced) *Emberiza citrinella*: A single flyover was noted at Miranda.

Meadow Bunting (Siberian M B) *Emberiza cioides*: Great looks at a couple near to Narita. A smart species.

Ochre-rumped Bunting (Japanese Reed B) *Emberiza yessoensis*: One of the highlights of our visit to the marshes near Narita was seeing several of these smart buntings in the scope.

FRINGILLIDAE

Common Chaffinch (introduced) *Fringilla coelebs*: More introduced dross...

Oriental Greenfinch (Grey-capped G) *Carduelis sinica*: A few were noted in the Narita area.

European Goldfinch (introduced) *Carduelis carduelis*: Another common introduction in New Zealand.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus*: Another common introduction which was seen on both Norfolk Island and New Caledonia.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: This species was seen around the pier on Chuuk where it is believed to be a recent, and presumably ship-assisted, arrival, and then seen again around Tokyo and Narita where it is a natural species and performs the role that House Sparrow performs here.

ESTRILDIDAE

Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trichroa*: This species was seen on both Weno and Tol South Islands, Chuuk with some cracking views for many of us. The subspecies involved is *clara*.

Red-throated Parrotfinch *Erythrura psittacea*: We had a bit of a last minute rush to try and see this smart New Caledonian endemic but in the end just a few of us managed to see a smart but elusive male.

- Rennell Flying Fox *Pteropus rennelli*: The flying-foxes on Rennell were assumed to be this species. Reference material is limited.
- [Solomons Flying Fox *Pteropus tonganus*]: Those seen on Kolombangara may have been this species.
- Pacific Flying Fox *Pteropus tonganus*: Likely to have been the species seen on Chuuk, though this is by no means certain!
- Northern Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*: A single animal on the sea day between Torishima and Miyake-jima was the only sighting of the expedition.
- Great Sperm Whale *Physeter catodon*: Approximately 35 animals were logged across six widely spread dates, many of which gave good views as they logged at the surface and occasionally fluked.
- Dwarf Sperm Whale *Kogia sima*: This species was seen on three occasions during the voyage with the first sighting being two individuals off New Caledonia. A single animal was then seen off Bougainville, with a further two recorded off New Ireland the following day.
- [Beaked Whale sp. *Mesoplodon* sp.]: A small pod of beaked whales were seen and photographed close to Torishima. It is most likely they were either Hubb's, Ginkgo-toothed or Stejneger's Beaked Whales, all of which are poorly known.
- Baird's Beaked Whale *Berardius bairdii*: At least three of these large beaked whales were seen between Miyake-jima and Tokyo Bay though the views were a little distant.
- Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*: A large pod were seen in the outer Hauraki Gulf.
- Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*: There were confirmed sightings of this widespread species on only three occasions, with five animals bow-riding north of Norfolk Island, two days later, two individuals were recorded as the ship approached Noumea, with the only other confirmed sightings being five near Makira.
- Pantropical Spotted Dolphin *Stenella attenuate*: A pod of several dozen animals was seen close to Torishima. Other unidentified beaked dolphins may have related to this species.
- Striped Dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba* (NL): Three were seen by some of the group on the way up to Japan.
- Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris*: This acrobatic dolphin was the most frequently encountered dolphin with pods seen daily between Guadalcanal and New Ireland.
- Long-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala melas*: It is nigh on impossible to separate the two species of pilot whale at sea, however, research has indicated that the most commonly encountered species in the Hauraki Gulf is the Long-finned and a pod of animals seen there was, therefore, presumed to be this species. Approximately twenty animals were also seen the following day, however, given New Zealand is in the overlap zone between the two species, it is better that these are left unidentified.
- Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*: A good-sized pod, probably number about 100 animals, were found in the afternoon as we were leaving Makira, with a smaller number seen a few days later off Bougainville.
- Melon-headed Whale *Peoponophala electra*: A pod, which probably comprised at least a couple of hundred animals, was seen and photographed off New Ireland.
- Pygmy Killer Whale *Feresa attenuata*: The only sightings of this small and rarely encountered species were off New Ireland where three animals were seen and identified from photographs.

Top Birds of the Tour (all photos taken on the tour by Pete Morris)



1st **SHORT-TAILED ALBATROSS**

2nd **Kagu**





- 3rd **New Zealand Storm-Petrel**
- 4th Caroline Islands Ground-Dove
- 5th Beck's Petrel
- 6th Polynesian Storm-Petrel (sorry, no photo)



And the best of the rest...



Leaving New Zealand, and especially when exploring the outer reaches of the Hauraki Gulf, we saw a good numbers of albatrosses including (clockwise from centre left) Pacific (Buller's) Albatross; Campbell Island Albatross; White-capped Albatross and Gibson's Albatross. We also saw our only Fairy Prions of the trip in these waters.



Seabirds were the focus of this tour with some real crackers being seen. *Top two rows, clockwise from top left:* Tahiti Petrel; Black-winged Petrel; Gould's Petrel; Collared Petrel; Bonin Petrel; Kermadec Petrel and White-necked Petrel. In the warmer waters, tropicbirds were often entertaining with White-tailed Tropicbird (*right*), and Red-tailed Tropicbirds (*below*) being regularly seen.





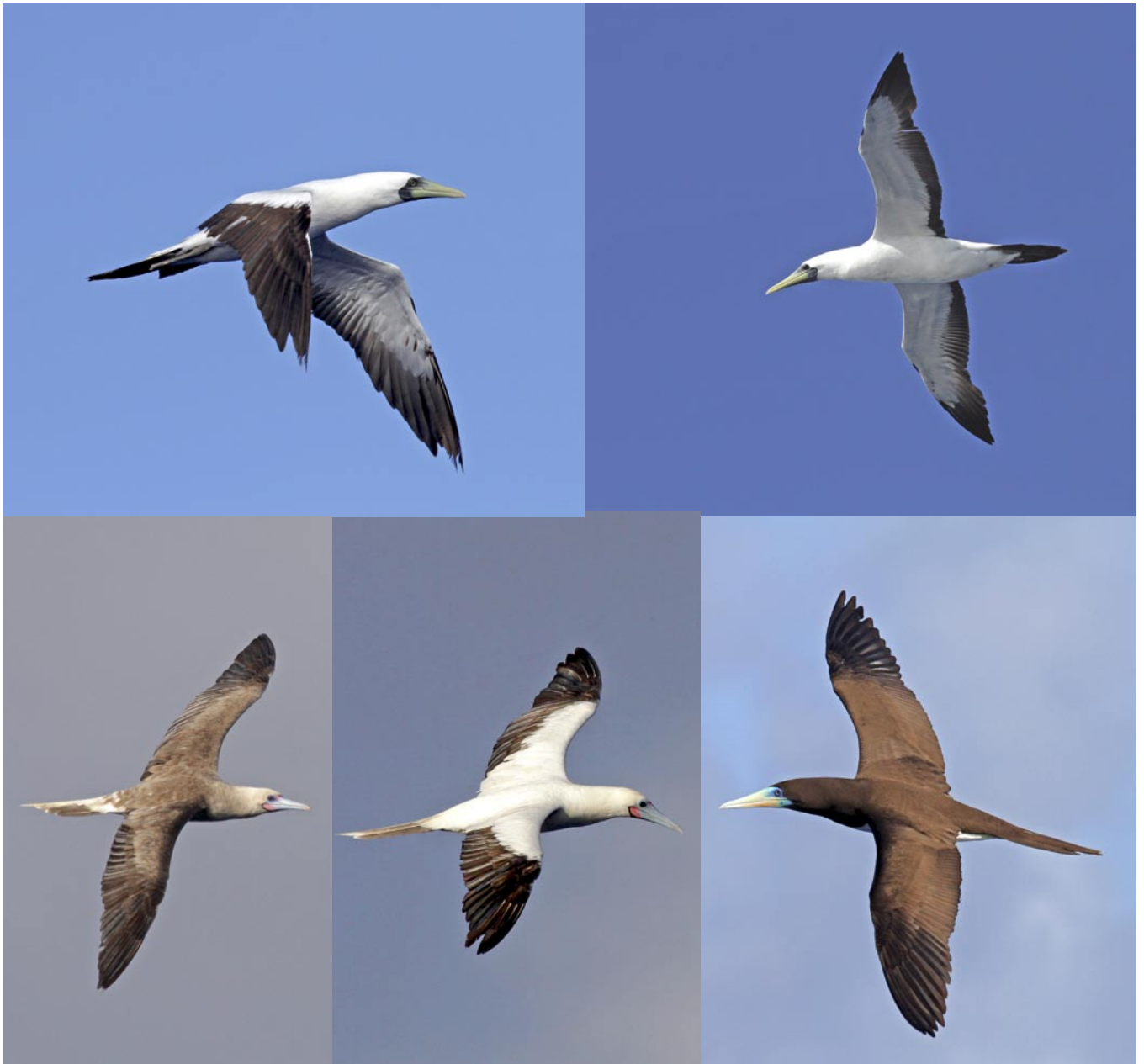
Shearwaters were a regular feature of the journey. *In rows, from top left:* A vagrant Great Shearwater; Buller's and Great Shearwater; Flesh-footed Shearwater; Wedge-tailed Shearwater (dark morph); Wedge-tailed Shearwater (light morph); Little Shearwater; Short-tailed Shearwater; Streaked Shearwater; Tropical (Atoll) Shearwater and Bannerman's Shearwater





Tiny storm-petrels were also a feature of the cruise. *Top row, left to right:* Band-rumped Storm-Petrel; White-faced Storm-Petrel; White-bellied Storm-Petrel and the as yet unknown storm-petrel off New Caledonia which may be a new species or may be New Zealand Storm-Petrel. *Centre row:* various images of Tristram's Storm Petrel. *Bottom row:* Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels with a Leach's Petrel at the right end.





In the tropics, boobies often accompanied us and entertained when little else was on offer! *In rows, from top left:* Masked Booby; Tasman (Masked) Booby; dark morph Red-footed Booby; light morph Red-footed Booby possibly of the form *websteri* and Red-footed Boobies including one that's just caught a flying-fish!





In rows, from top left, a few other seabirds included: Grey Noddy; White Tern; Sooty Tern; 1st year Grey-backed Terns; Black-footed Albatross and our only Laysan Albatross of the cruise.





Above: Japanese Murrelets were seen well as we neared the end of the sea journey and Bulwer's Petrel, a species with us in most tropical waters. Below, clockwise: Interesting birds on our pre-tour extension in New Zealand included: Brown Teal; Australasian Bittern; Variable Oystercatcher and New Zealand Dotterel.





Above, Bellbird and New Zealand Robin were two of the landbirds that we managed to see on the mainland. Below, This large flock of waders largely comprises of a significant proportion of the world population of Wrybills!





In rows, from top left, some of the goodies we saw on New Caledonia included the spectacular Horned Parakeet; Melanesian Cuckooshrike; the huge New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon; the endemic Yellow-bellied Robin and the spectacular White-bellied Goshawk. Left: the idyllic island of Rennell was our first port of call in the Solomon Islands.

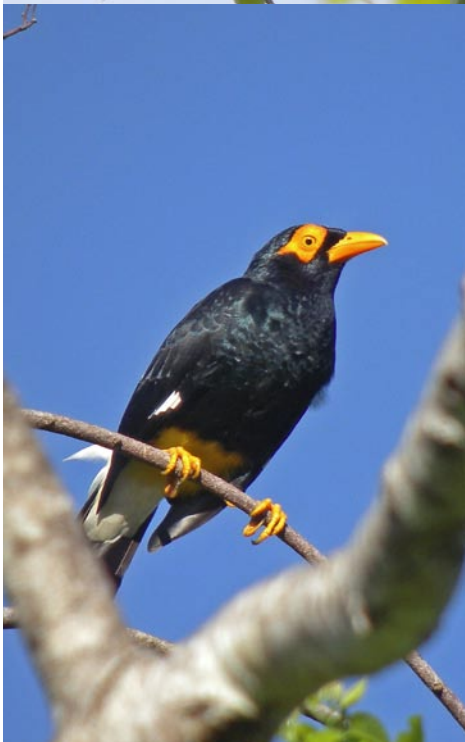


In rows, from top left, other goodies on Rennell included: the striking endemic Rennell Shrikebill; Rennell Fantail; the attractive Silver-capped Fruit-Dove; Pacific Imperial Pigeon; Moustached Treeswift and the amazing local race of Collared Kingfisher which surely merits specific status?





In rows, from top left, other events in the Solomons included: a traditional greeting on Makira; our great leader Christopher Peter trying to blend in with the local folk; the rare Chestnut-bellied Imperial-Pigeon and Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon (all on Makira) and Long-tailed Myna; Pacific Baza and the elusive Ultramarine Kingfisher all on Mount Austin, Guadalcanal.





In rows, from top left, our last port of call in the Solomons was Kolombangara where we found the attractive White-capped Monarch and the impressive Solomon Sea-Eagle. On Chuuk, highlights included Caroline Islands Reed-Warbler; Micronesian Myzomela; Caroline Islands White-eye; the attractive Blue-faced Parrotfinch and Red-capped (or Purple-capped - clearly a more apt name!) Fruit-Dove.





In rows, from top left, other attractions at sea included frequent swims, with Gemma and Saint Christopher Peter (is he really walking on water?) demonstrate different methods of entering the water. Other wildlife included Dwarf Sperm Whale; some spectacular flying-fish and something some of us had never heard of, flying squids! Below, Sunsets were often spectacular!





To end with, a couple more glorious sea-scapes, and the moon, which so often looked big and bright!

