



*A male Blue Bird-of-paradise surveys his territory in the mountains – what a bird! All photos by Joshua Bergmark.*

# BEST OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

15 – 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

**LEADER:** JOSHUA BERGMARK

Visiting Papua New Guinea should be high on the wishlist of all birdwatchers, but a long visit to cover the entire country thoroughly is not such an easy commitment! This short “Best Of” tour once again offered our excited group a fantastic overview of the paradise isle, and we of course focused on the birds-of-paradise as a top priority! Of these, we recorded twenty species, from the huge and impressive Black Sicklebill, a neighboring Greater Lophorina showing off his iridescent breast shield and cape, right down to the tiny ruby-red King Bird-of-paradise in his favourite tree. King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise waved his antennae around in front of us, and male Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia* noisily chased each other around the garden at Kumul Lodge. Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise kept us hanging on until the last minute, but the closely related Magnificent Riflebird and Growling Riflebird did not take much time to find! Then who could forget the marvelous *Paradisaea* genus, the masters of dance. We enjoyed watching Raggiana Bird-of-paradise, Greater Bird-of-paradise, and Lesser Bird-of-paradise at their leks, plus received superb views of a male Blue Bird-of-paradise keeping watch over his hillside territory. Not everything is a bird-of-paradise here though, and the other priority for us was seeing all the endemic families this wonderful island has to offer. Three of these families we managed to see the entire collection of species (all of four longbills, three satinbirds, and two

painted berrypeckers), then also birds like the subdued Black Berrypecker; retiring Mottled Berryhunter; a wonderfully friendly Lesser Melampitta; the poisonous Blue-capped Irit, and a family of Wattled Ploughbill brought us up to seeing all eight target families in just thirteen days! The tour was full of other highlights too, with a male Flame Bowerbird attending his architectural construction in front of us for at least an hour being the definitive bird of the tour, and enormous Slater's Crowned Pigeons lining the riverbank near Kwatu, despite some heavy rain! Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher, Little Paradise Kingfisher, Mountain Kingfisher and the imposing Shovel-billed Kookaburra were perhaps the best representatives of the astounding variety of kingfishers we saw, while Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Goldie's Lorikeet, Pesquet's Parrot, Papuan King Parrot, Large Fig Parrot, Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot were some of our favourite parrots. The tiny Dwarf Fruit-Dove and the much larger Pheasant Pigeon showed well at Varirata, while a very rare Cinnamon Ground Dove on the nest was exciting to see along the Fly River, not to mention the other two dozen pigeon species throughout the tour! Nobody wanted to be out too late for nightbirding, but over several short pre-dinner and pre-breakfast jaunts we still found Papuan Boobook, Archbold's Nightjar, Mountain Owlet-nightjar, Wallace's Owlet-nightjar, Marbled Frogmouth, and a surprise Red-necked Crake! Other favourite species included a confiding Black-billed Brushturkey, Long-billed Cuckoo, Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, beautiful Wallace's Fairywren, Emperor Fairywren, eclectic Palm Cockatoo, Red-collared Myzomela, Red Myzomela, Black-throated Honeyeater, stunning Ornate Melidectes, vibrant Goldenface, Grey Thornbill, Blue Jewel Babbler, cute Black-breasted Boatbill, Painted Quailthrush, Great Woodswallow, Black-backed Butcherbird, Golden Cuckooshrike, friendly Rufous-naped Ballbird, Crested Bellbird, Rufous-baced Fantail, White-bellied Thicket Fantail, Hooded Pitohui, Golden Monarch, Black-winged Monarch, Black Monarch, White-faced Robin, White-winged Robin, the strange Torrent Flyrobin, Canary Flyrobin, Olive Flyrobin, the uncommon Torrent-lark, Yellow-breasted Bowerbird, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Papuan White-eye, rare Yellow-eyed Starling, pretty Mountain Firetail and White-spotted Mannikin. All this and more amongst our total of 320 species (including 16 heard and 4 leader only). Overall very successful – you would be hard pressed to see this many species in PNG on any other short thirteen day tour!



*The male Flame Bowerbird is impossibly vibrant, and positively lights up the undergrowth when he arrives to inspect his bower!*

First on the agenda was Varirata National Park. We arrived early only to find the park full of people celebrating the Independence Day weekend! We hit the trails to try and get as far from the noise as we could, and before too long a very cooperative Dwarf Longbill was well appreciated! As we worked our way along, Chestnut-bellied Fantail were plentiful, and one pair was associating with a few Spot-winged Monarch and Yellow-bellied Gerygone. A nesting Olive Flyrobin scoped up well, and Brown Orioles were inquisitive as always. Growling Riflebird was seen a few times, but only the female offered any real perched views. A male Painted Quailthrush came in well, but for most people the views were brief as he crossed the trail! Otherwise we notched up Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Black Cicadabird, Grey Whistler, Black-faced Monarch, and Spangled Drongo. Just before lunch, we spied the regular Barred Owllet-Nightjar sunning himself at the entrance to his hollow, and we also found the most obliging White-crowned Cuckoo I have ever encountered! Delaying our food a little longer was inevitable when a “Grey-naped” Pheasant Pigeon began calling, but it didn’t take long before he duly appeared in view next to the speaker before spotting us and taking flight back down the hill.



*Barking Owls are not commonly seen on tours to PNG, but this one performed nicely for us at Varirata!*

While taking it easy around the picnic area we were constantly distracted by a fruiting bush which attracted Tawny-breasted Honeyeater, Plain Honeyeater, Elegant Meliphaga, Black Berrypecker, and a number of dapper Black-fronted White-eye. Some larger trees held Boyer’s Cuckooshrike, Barred Cuckooshrike, some poisonous Hooded Pitohui, and a Torresian Crow. Some more time in the forest proved slow going, but a Yellow-breasted Boatbill and brief Rusty Mouse-warbler were welcomed. A smart White-faced Robin was a delight, and we observed the newly split Variable Shrikethrush a few times. Towards dusk we headed to the savanna, where our key target was the restricted White-bellied Whistler. After a quick success with a pair, we spent time enjoying some more birds, with a Barking Owl probably being the most exciting! Coconut Lorikeet, New Guinea Friarbird and White-throated Honeyeater were common, but we only saw one each of Leaden Flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, and Varied Triller. Some Hooded Butcherbirds and Yellow-faced Mynas called from prominent perches, while a lovely Blue-winged Kookaburra and a colourful Forest Kingfisher hung around nearby. Visiting Rainbow Bee-eaters and a Sacred Kingfisher preceded some lovely looks at Glossy-mantled Manucode, and then a Brown Goshawk found by the roadside as we returned to Port Moresby capped off our first successful day.



*Papuan King Parrot is always tough to see perched, but we had excellent views of this male on a few occasions!*

At dawn the boisterous calls of Raggiana Bird-of-paradise were echoing around us, and it didn't take long for us to have our first "Attenborough Moment" as the females arrived, and the males went bonkers! Watching them raise their plumes while bouncing up and down and shuffling along the branch is an experience never to be forgotten! Not long after we tracked down two noisy Rufous-bellied Kookaburras, and a sublime Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher which posed perfectly for us! New birds came slowly at first, with a few brief Piping Bellbirds and a calling Papuan Scrub Robin being all we could manage initially. We had great encounters with a pair of Papuan King Parrots, and then came across some excellent flocks. These contained the beautiful Goldenface, Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot, Frilled Monarch, Yellow-legged Flyrobin, Green-backed Honeyeater, and Fairy Gerygone. We also came across some noisy Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, a tree full of Black-capped Lory, another tree full of Papuan Black Myzomela, and a party of Grey Crow. Last but not least, a male Golden Monarch was topped by a pair of super-responsive Wallace's Fairywren which gave rare eye-level views of their orange backs and pretty blue crowns!

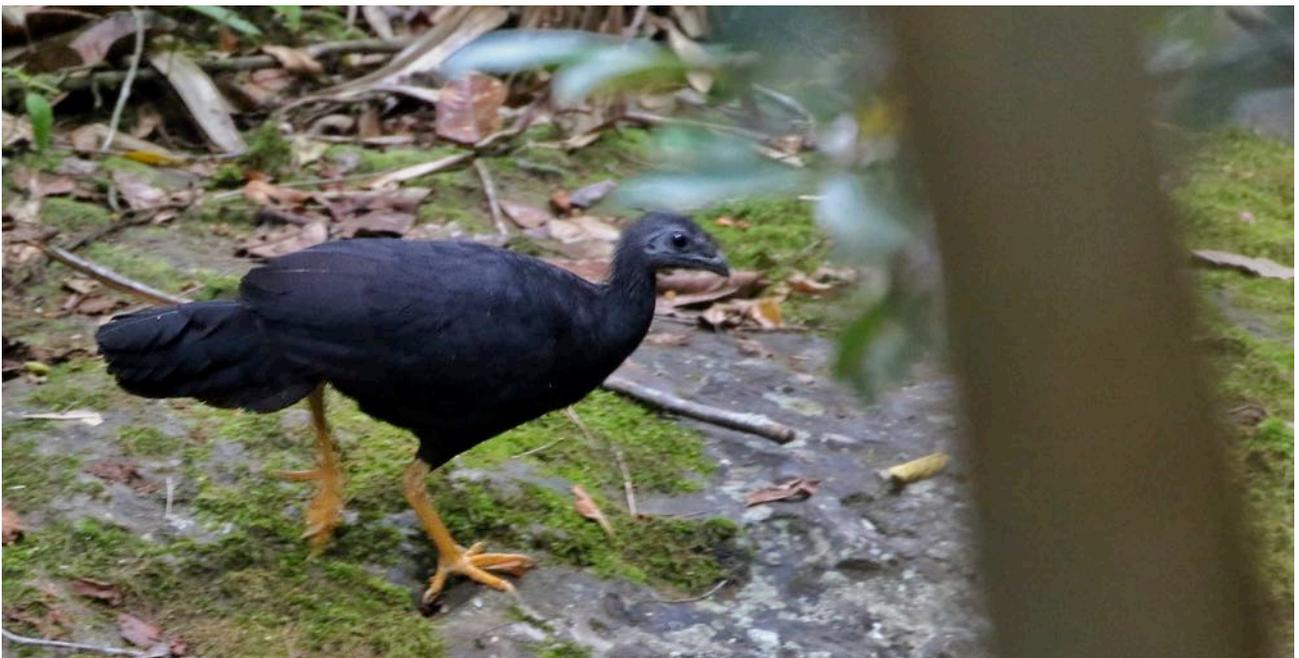


*One of New Guinea's trickier endemics, we had a lovely encounter with a few Wallace's Fairywren at Varirata!*



*No trip to PNG is complete without witnessing the display lek of male Raggiana Bird-of-paradise only an hour behind Port Moresby!*

The hotter part of the day was spent around the picnic area, which just continued giving us bird after bird! Streak-headed Honeyeater came in above us, while a Yellow-billed Kingfisher suddenly appeared on a branch at eye-level without any prompting whatsoever! Long-tailed Honey Buzzard sailed overhead, and a male Red-cheeked Parrot was scoped up. Some short afternoon walks connected us with a stunning Beautiful Fruit-Dove, the tiny Dwarf Fruit-Dove, a brief Drongo Fantail, and a fantastic Crinkle-collared Manucode circling around us. The highlight however was two different Black-billed Brushturkeys, the second of which showed well to the whole group as he slowly walked across the dry riverbed towards us. Back at the picnic area we finished the day with pigeon hour, having excellent encounters with Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove, Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, and a Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon expertly spotted by Alec!



*More often heard than seen, this Black-billed Brushturkey strolled right past us - I prefer the alternate name, Yellow-legged Brushturkey!*

After a lengthy transit the next day we arrived in Tabubil in time for an afternoon birding session. It was a little damp, but the hoped-for Salvadori's Teal showed well immediately after we pulled up at Ok Menga, alongside a Torrent Flyrobin. Further up the hill at Kivitembip Forest some brief flyby Striated Lorikeets were overshadowed by a much lengthier flyover of two Pesquet's Parrot! On dusk we taped for Shovel-billed Kookaburra, and after some battling we all had fantastic looks at one bird in the scope as I illuminated it with the torch. This was a great achievement in no small part because it meant that all five of our 2019 Birdquest New Guinea tours had connected with this highly desirable species!



*PNG is one of the best places in the world to see an astounding variety of kingfishers – this is a Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher.*

We were excited to visit the new road above Ok Menga the next morning, and with clear skies we quickly scoped up an advertising male Greater Lophorina (ex Superb Bird-of-paradise) with his iridescent blue breast shield extended and his cape ruffled. Minutes later, the distinctive elongate shape of a male Black Sicklebill appeared on top of a dead tree, where he proceeded to sit and call for most of the morning - excellent stuff! We continued along the road finding Black Monarch to be plentiful, and a lovely pair of Torrent-lark in a rocky stream. Mountain Kingfisher obliged nicely as we ate breakfast, while Black-breasted Boatbill, Black-bellied Cuckooshrike, and Metallic Pigeon were seen nearby. Island Leaf Warbler flitted about, and one Long-billed Honeyeater foraged up a vine tangle, while a Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo and Dimorphic Fantail posed perfectly. Fast and flighty birds were prolific, but we all had fair views in the end of Slaty-headed Longbill, Dwarf Longbill, and the more difficult Pygmy Longbill! Grey Thornbills on the other hand sat rather nicely in a small shrub for many minutes, male Sclater's Whistlers allowed scope studies, and a party of Grey-green Scrubwren hopped up in view after some hard work. Some uncommon Dusky Lory were seen on two occasions flying overhead, and a superb Black-mantled Goshawk put on a great show for us! Sadly one flyby Short-tailed Paradigalla was only seen by some of us, while New Guinea Bronzewing and Black-eared Catbird were heard only. The real rarity however came in the form of an exquisite male Yellow-breasted Satinbird which perched up on a dead snag, showing off his bizarre blue knob at length! This is an extremely rarely observed bird due to its restricted altitudinal range, and in fact ours marked the first sighting I am aware of by any bird tour to New Guinea for at least *THIRTY YEARS* – an absolutely mega sighting!



*The shy Torrent-lark is a truly charismatic New Guinea endemic, but we rarely manage extended views like this!*

Not long before lunch some angry locals appeared and we were kicked off “their road” promptly - a typical situation in this part of the world, even when you have made sure to get permission in advance! We returned to Kivitembip Forest where a drizzly afternoon still allowed us to find a very responsive Magnificent Riflebird, one showy Rufous-backed Fantail, and a male White-shouldered Fairywren. We spent some time trying to see Magnificent Bird-of-paradise at his display court where a rudimentary hide had been constructed, but although he twice came in briefly, not everybody managed to see it. Some impressive Great Woodswallows were noted as we returned to the hotel.

The day started well with a pre-dawn Papuan Boobook sitting in a low tree, and we were soon arriving at Dablin Creek Road where the conditions were unusually sunny! Two glowing male Magnificent bird-of-paradise were found attending a fruiting tree, but frustratingly they chased off our only Queen Carola’s Parotia of the morning before anybody had time to get on it. We waited and waited at the viewpoint for any calls which might help us locate another parotia, but the sun kept them quiet. Always a double-edged sword, the clear conditions allowed us to pick up some excellent species such as a lone Yellow-eyed Starling, a cracking male Red Myzomela, some beautiful White-eared Bronze Cuckoos, colourful Orange-breasted Fig Parrot, a surprise male Mottled Berryhunter, and a nice Black-winged Monarch with a Slaty-headed Longbill nearby. Otherwise we had views of Scrub Meliphaga, Long-billed Honeyeater, Green-backed Gerygone, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, Brush Cuckoo, and some flyby Capped White-eye.



*We search for male Greater Bird-of-paradise within a few hundred metres of the spot where David Attenborough filmed in the 1990's!*

After a long and bumpy ride back towards Kiunga, with a male Blyth’s Hornbill en. route, we spent our afternoon at the famous KM17, where the main target was Greater Bird-of-paradise. We succeeded in having an intimate encounter with a gorgeous male sitting below the canopy calling to his lekking partners. They did some brief practice dances once or twice on the display tree, but no females were around the liven up the mood! A male King Bird-of-paradise popped in for a visit too at a fruiting tree, with his jewel-like red plumage clearly visible! During our wanderings, we had fair flight views of a Hooded Pitta crossing the trail, nailed some cooperative Southern Variable Pitohui and an Obscure Honeyeater for everyone, plus saw a handful of Trumpet Manucode. After dark, our usual pair of Wallace’s Owlet-nightjar responded well, with one even allowing us to scope him up! As a double bonus, we also tracked down a nice Marbled Frogmouth,

and lucked across a Red-necked Crake trying to get some sleep! Even better still, we also found a Lowland Ringtail sitting motionless in a small tree - a very rare and thinly spread species, and not just a Birdquest mammal lifer, but I believe the first time this possum has ever been photographed in the field (see *the last page of the report*).



*Lucking across this Red-necked Crake roosting at night was certainly a tour highlight!*

Out at Boystown Road in the morning we staked out the usual overlook for a few hours. We had nice looks at Dwarf Koel, Pacific Koel, and a wintering Oriental Cuckoo, however it was probably a male Emperor Fairywren who stole the show. We eventually spied both Double-eyed Fig Parrot and the diminutive Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot perched on nearby branches, but a Palm Cockatoo only flew through once. Our first Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves and Black Sunbirds were in evidence, then on the return to Kiunga a Lesser Black Coucal showed well to everyone on the side of the road. Soon after we were on a boat speeding up the Fly River, from which we turned into the Elevala River and motored towards Kwatu. Along the way we noted a Pacific Baza, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Yellowish-streaked Lory, and a beautifully perched Large Fig Parrot as new for the list. First stop was at an exciting blind looking out over an alleyway constructed of sticks. After a short wait, the stunning male Flame Bowerbird who owned this bachelor pad appeared out of nowhere, stunning us with his impossible colours. He spent a long time in view as he rearranged his structure, constantly chewing up leaves and saliva to make the glue-like paste used to hold everything in place. He was still busy tidying up when we left - how polite! After dropping our gear at the hut we continued birding, finding a huge Ivory-billed Coucal perched low down near the river bank, and then the forest a beautiful Common Paradise Kingfisher was scoped up. We waited for a while at the New Guinea Flightless Rail hide but the birds did not show, and neither did a King Bird-of-paradise at his tree. Instead we were content with a lovely Little Paradise Kingfisher allowing close study of his distinguishing features - often a tough ask for this shy and restricted endemic, but we were very pleased this time! Back out on the river some Pinon's Imperial Pigeon perched in the evening sun, while Shining Flycatchers and Striated Herons lined the banks. Singles of Palm Cockatoo, Great-billed Heron and White-bellied Sea Eagle passed by, and then we struck gold with the stupendous Sclater's Crowned Pigeon right on dusk! We enjoyed his tail wagging and huge feathery crown through the scope before he disappeared back into the forest. It rained all night so spotlighting proved futile.



*Who couldn't fall in love with the impressive Sclater's Crowned Pigeon?!*

The next morning we braved the downpour and went back to where we had been in the evening, managing to relocate a trio of very wet Sclater's Crowned Pigeon - these ones afforded much better views now that there was some light to see the colours! The rain was getting heavier with each passing minute, and quite soon we turned back to the lodge seeking respite from the deluge. While we waited, another crowned pigeon flew in and perched in view for an hour on an open branch across the river, while both Golden Myna and Mimic Meliphaga dropped by and showed well. Eventually it cleared up, and we went back on the boat, having great perched looks at a pair of Blyth's Hornbill, and an Azure Kingfisher. We got off for a walk in the forest, but first found Yellowish-streaked Lory, Red-flanked Lorikeet, and Double-eyed Fig Parrot all drying themselves in a dead tree! Once on the trails a Blue Jewel Babbler was tempted in to cross the track and showed very well indeed when he landed next to the tape, the tiny Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher sat still for a long time in front of us, and a pair of Yellow-bellied Longbill flitted around. The biggest surprise however was a fledgling Cinnamon Ground Dove sitting on his nest - a very rarely observed New Guinea endemic indeed!

Back at base a Long-billed Cuckoo entertained us during lunch, after which it was time to head back to the swamp forest. This time the male King Bird-of-paradise was sitting happily on his display vines, allowing extended study. Otherwise the afternoon was very quiet, although we did at long last scope up a party of Golden Cuckooshrike. During the evening return to Kiunga along the Fly we were able to see many flocks of Collared Imperial Pigeon, but the returning rain hampered further birding efforts for the evening. We were desperate at this stage for one last bird, and returned to the river early the next morning. After cruising upstream for a while in the drizzle, our hopes were rapidly fading. Then, suddenly, the grand finale to our time in the southern lowlands appeared on his pole in full view. The incomparable male Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise sat for as long as we wanted, allowing us to count the wires individually and see the brilliant emerald green line along his lower breast shield. Brilliant stuff, and we made our way back to town with smiles on our faces, seeing a bonus flock of lovely White-spotted Mannikin along the way.



*Golden Mynas are a little more impressive than their relatives on mainland Asia!*

A change of scenery and temperature saw us arriving at the wonderful Kumul Lodge for a scrumptious lunch, which was enjoyed while we watched a myriad of birds enjoying their lunch at the feeding table! Beautiful Brehm's Tiger Parrot and glorious male Ribbon-tailed *Astrapia* mixed with Common Smoky Honeyeaters demonstrated their amazing colour transformations, while bossy Belford's *Melidectes* chased Grey-streaked Honeyeaters around. Nearby, confiding White-winged Robins gave welcome relief from their shy cousins in the lowlands, and likewise some Mountain Firetails allowed very close approach. Friendly Fantails lived up to their name, and a very cooperative pair of "Eastern" Crested Berrypeckers fed unconcernedly in front of us at eye level! We also found Rusty-naped Bellbird, some brief Plum-faced Lorikeets, and a single Papuan Lorikeet before torrential rain drowned any birding for the rest of the afternoon. It stopped just before dinner, so some of us went back out and were successful in having a nice look at Mountain Owlet-nightjar.

Next day we found ourselves listening to the loud ringing call of a Blue Bird-of-paradise as we trudged up the hill in anticipation. It was not long before he appeared, giving us multiple excellent and extended scopes views during the morning of his vibrant blue and black plumage with subtle pink plumes and feathered highlights. As always, we accepted it to be one of the best birds in the world! Nearby plenty of Yellow-browed *Melidectes*, Marbled Honeyeater, and a Mountain *Myzomela* performed well, while Buff-faced Scrubwren and Papuan White-eye foraged in small shrubs. A short stop back towards Kumul found us several noisy Tit Berrypeckers, and then we hit the trails. It was deathly quiet for a long time, but persistence paid off as a golden ten minutes right before lunch netted us our first Papuan Scrubwren, Mountain Mouse-warbler, a foraging party of monotypic Blue-capped Irit, and best of all, a superb male Lesser *Melampitta* who hopped around in full view for thirty seconds!



*We were treated to some stupendous views of "Eastern" Crested Berrypecker at Kumul this tour!!*



*This male Lesser Melampitta was greatly appreciated, being one representative of a New Guinea endemic family (we saw all eight)!*

After lunch some of us birded a little more around the lodge and saw Large Scrubwren, but not much else. Over at Murrumbidgee Pass however the new birds came rapidly. When we arrived at the clearing, “Western” Bronze Ground Dove and “Black-capped” Ashy Robin were feeding on the ground in front of us. They ended up staying all afternoon! A male King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise was calling, quickly allowing us to locate and enjoy his antennae finery waving around his head. A few male Brown Sicklebills were calling, and one impressive individual eventually perched up in full view for us on a dead snag! Both Modest Tiger Parrot and Mottled Berryhunter came by a few times, and then a Goldie’s Lorikeet sat nicely for a while in the scope. A flowering tree held Black-throated Honeyeater, Rufous-sided Honeyeater, and Red-collared Myzomela, while a glorious male Regent Whistler and the somewhat drabber Brown-breasted Gerygone foraged above us. All too soon the rain began, and we beat a hasty retreat to Kumul where we didn’t add anything of note for the remainder of the evening.

We started the following morning with a BoP - Lesser Bird-of-paradise to be exact! The fantastic male was seen serenading his ladies from his hilltop tree looking over the vast Lai River Valley below, and was the first bird we saw at dawn! The surrounding bushes were attracting a few Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove and Mountain Meliphaga, plus we admired some more Ornate Melidectes. A few stops along the road going up the valley allowed us to find a pair of Black-headed Whistler, two surprise Grey Shrikethrush, and a subtly beautiful Yellow-breasted Bowerbird collecting sticks for his construction work. Our first Singing Starling and a few well-perched Papuan Grassbird also appeared before we returned to Kumul. Behind our rooms we scored great views of both Canary Flyrobin and Fan-tailed Berrypecker. While we were having lunch, a lovely Blue-capped Iffrit appeared, foraging nuthatch-like on a mossy trunk above the feeder (much appreciated by those who had missed it earlier). A few seconds later, pandemonium broke out when one of the local guides tapped on the window and pointed at a glowing male Crested Satinbird sitting in the next tree over! Everyone in the dining room scrambled to get binoculars and cameras, and we were all able to enjoy this magnificent bird for almost half an hour in the lodge gardens as he moved between fruiting bushes. Some hard work in the afternoon on the trails gave us two new rewards - some Orange-crowned Fairywren in a tight-knit flock, and a brief male Wattled Ploughbill which disappeared before most could get their binoculars on him. Frustrating, but we would keep trying! At dusk a pair of Archbold’s Nightjar were easily found hawking over the nearby grassland below Kumul, but those who persisted after dinner only added Feline Owlet-nightjar to the heard list.



*One can never tire of seeing male Ribbon-tailed Astrapias visiting the feeding table at Kumul!*



*This male Crested Satinbird won a spot in our Top Five, but the Yellow-breasted Satinbird we saw near Tabubil was a much rarer find!*

Our last full morning in the highlands was spent back at Murrumbidgee Pass, where we were ecstatic to find both Princess Stephanie's *Astrapia* (our 20th bird-of-paradise for the tour!), and then soon after attaining superb views of a Wattled Ploughbill family! We could enjoy the curious red wattles of the male for as long as we wished as he kept returning to feed his begging juvenile. We also had fantastically improved views of the dapper Plum-faced Lorikeet, and a few Loria's Satinbird visiting a fruiting tree, while Alec found a Hooded Cuckooshrike. We had one more go at Lesser Melampitta for Holly, and when the calling bird jumped right into a small clearing we could officially say that all of us had finished seeing the eight endemic bird families of New Guinea! We spent the rest of the day, evening, and night looking for a few missing species, but given the low probability of actually finding any of the three-star birds on our very difficult target list, unsurprisingly we didn't have much luck! Indeed, a testament to just how immensely successful we had been in seeing all the birds we could really hope for around Mount Hagen!

We had an early flight back to Port Moresby, but we still had time to tick up Australian Pipit and Papuan Harrier at the airport. We spent the afternoon at our favourite perpetually-birdy university, where the nice change from the shy and skulking forest birds of New Guinea was welcomed! All of us enjoyed point blank views of Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove, Grey-headed Mannikin, Black-backed Butcherbird and Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, these somewhat restricted species being easier to see at PAU than anywhere else! An impressive Papuan Frogmouth sitting on her nest took a while to locate, but in contrast the ponds held a good selection of easily-observable waterfowl including both Plumed Whistling Duck and Wandering Whistling Duck, Raja Shelduck, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Australasian Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Little Black Cormorant and Little Pied Cormorant. Smart Pied Heron and the lovely Comb-crested Jacana were particular favourites, while fruiting trees were full of Torresian Imperial Pigeon and Australasian Figbird. Some drier woodland allowed us to see a nice active Fawn-breasted Bowerbird bower hidden under a dense bush, with Bar-shouldered Dove, Peaceful Dove, Rufous-banded Honeyeater and Yellow-tinted Honeyeater nearby. Some bonus surprises included one Variable Goshawk, a flock of Pacific Golden Plover, Wood Sandpiper, a well-seen Latham's Snipe which must have been heading south to Australia!



*The pretty endemic Grey-headed Mannikin was breeding during our visit to PAU, and were easily seen as they constructed their nests!*

A short morning at Varirata proved that this phenomenal national park still had more to give! On the way in, a dark Pheasant Coucal sat up calling on a cycad, and then a Pacific Emerald Dove flew across the road. We wanted to revisit the Raggiana lek, but it was quiet due to an overnight deluge wetting their feathers and thus putting a dampener on any displays. As such, we headed back into the forest fairly early, where a pair of Stout-billed Cuckooshrike and one brief Coronated Fruit-Dove were highlights amongst other species we had seen previously. So concluded a very enjoyable and successful short trip to this wonderful island. Each time we visit there is something different on offer, but this quick jaunt really gave us a phenomenal glimpse into the life of birds in paradise! Thank you to my wonderful clients for a fun and easy tour!



*A happy group having just seen all the endemic families of New Guinea!*

### **BIRD OF THE TOUR (AS VOTED FOR BY THE GROUP)**

1. Flame Bowerbird
2. Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher
3. Greater Lophorina (Greater Superb Bird-of-paradise)
4. Crested Satinbird
- = 5. Blue Bird-of-paradise / Brown Sicklebill / Sclater's Crowned Pigeon



Who could ever get tired of the magnificent Blue Bird-of-paradise?!

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRD SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

**Total number of bird species recorded: 320**

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). IOC World Bird Names. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

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

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

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

**Plumed Whistling Duck** ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* Several at PAU.

**Wandering Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata* Good numbers at PAU.

**Raja Shelduck** ◊ (White-headed S) *Radjah radjah* Fairly common at PAU.

**Salvadori's Teal** ◊ *Salvadorina waigiuenis* Pair at Ok Menga.

**Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa* Noted at PAU and on New Britain.

**Grey Teal** *Anas gracilis* A few at PAU mixing with Pacific Black Ducks.

**Black-billed Brushturkey** ◊ (Yellow-legged B) *Talegalla fuscirostris* Tremendous looks at one in Varirata.

**Orange-footed Scrubfowl** *Megapodius reinwardt* Rare in New Guinea due to hunting, we heard one at Tabubil. (H)

**Australian White Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca* Common at PAU.

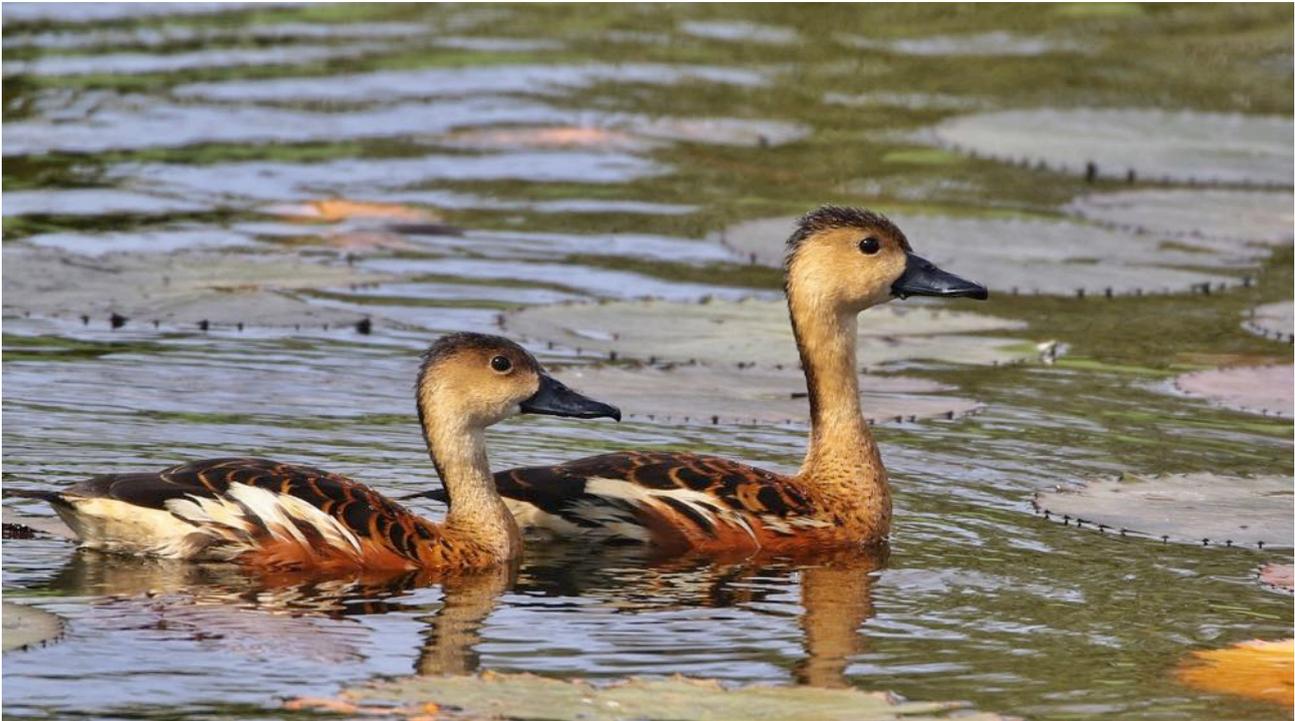
**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* Two along the Fly River.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* Common around PAU.

**Great-billed Heron** *Ardea sumatrana* One along the Fly River.

**Great Egret (Eastern G E)** *Ardea [alba] modesta* Some at PAU.

Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* Some at PAU.  
 Pied Heron ◊ *Egretta picata* A nice flock of these pretty herons at PAU.  
 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* One at PAU.  
 Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* A few at PAU.  
 Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* A few at PAU.



*Wandering Whistling Ducks at PAU are always nice to see.*

Pacific Baza (Crested Hawk) *Aviceda subcristata* Noted on the Fly River.  
 Long-tailed Honey Buzzard ◊ *Henicopernis longicauda* A few nice looks in the lowlands.  
 Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster* Just one near Port Moresby on our last day.  
 Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* One near Varirata on our first day.  
 Papuan Harrier ◊ *Circus spilothorax* One finally appeared at Mount Hagen Airport as we were taking off!  
 Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Abundant around Mount Hagen.  
 Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Regularly noted this beautiful raptor.  
 White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Some on the Fly River.  
 Red-necked Crake ◊ *Rallina tricolor* One found roosting near Kiunga!  
 New Guinea Flightless Rail ◊ *Megacrex inepta* Heard near the hide up the Fly River, but it did not come. (H)  
 Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Several at PAU.  
 Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa* Several at PAU.  
 Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* Common around PAU.  
 Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Small flock near PAU on a field.  
 Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea* Several at PAU.  
 Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* One well-studied bird at the PAU ponds.  
 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* A few along the Fly River.  
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* One scoped on a field near PAU.  
 Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia* Noted in a few towns.  
 Metallic Pigeon (White-throated P) *Columba vitiensis* One flying through above Tabubil.  
 Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove ◊ *Macropygia amboinensis* Regularly encountered throughout the lowlands and hills.  
 Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove ◊ (Black-billed C-D) *Macropygia nigrirostris* Some seen well in the Lai River Valley.  
 Great Cuckoo-Dove ◊ (Long-tailed C-D) *Reinwardtoena reinwardti* A few in the Lai River Valley.  
 Pacific Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris* One flew across in front of the car at Varirata.  
 Stephan's Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps stephani* One flew across in front of us on the Fly River.



The Pied Heron is another typically Australian species we usually see very well at PAU.

- New Guinea Bronzewing** ◊ *Henicophaps albifrons* Heard above Tabubil a few times. (H)
- Peaceful Dove** *Geopelia placida* Common at PAU.
- Bar-shouldered Dove** *Geopelia humeralis* A few seen well at PAU.
- Bronze Ground Dove** ◊ *Alopecoenas beccarii* Nominate form seen well at Murmur Pass.
- Cinnamon Ground Dove** ◊ *Gallicolumba rufigula* One on a nest near Kwatu.
- Pheasant Pigeon** ◊ *Otidiphaps nobilis* Great looks at one on our first day in Varirata.
- Sclater's Crowned Pigeon** ◊ *Goura sclaterii* At least four individuals on a rainy morning up the Fly River!
- Wompoo Fruit Dove** ◊ (Magnificent FD) *Ptilinopus magnificus* Seen in Varirata, and along Boystown Road.
- Pink-spotted Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus perlatus* One of the more common fruit-doves, seen a few times.
- Orange-fronted Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus aurantiifrons* Several at PAU in their usual trees!
- Superb Fruit Dove** *Ptilinopus superbus* Some seen around Tabubil and Kiunga, a few more at Varirata.
- Coroneted Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus coronulatus* One on our last morning at Varirata.
- Beautiful Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus pulchellus* Several seen, one very low down in a tree when up the Fly River.
- White-bibbed Fruit Dove** ◊ (Mountain FD) *Ptilinopus rivoli* Heard above Tabubil. (H)
- Orange-bellied Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus iozonus* Common along the Fly River.
- Dwarf Fruit Dove** ◊ *Ptilinopus nainus* Several at Varirata.
- Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon** ◊ *Ducula rufigaster* Great views of one in the clearing at Varirata.
- Pinon's Imperial Pigeon** ◊ *Ducula pinon* Common in the lowlands of mainland New Guinea.
- Collared Imperial Pigeon** ◊ *Ducula mullerii* Several along the Fly River.
- Zoe's Imperial Pigeon** ◊ *Ducula zoeae* Some nice views at Varirata and elsewhere.
- Torresian Imperial Pigeon** ◊ *Ducula spilorrhoea* Some at PAU.
- Papuan Mountain Pigeon** ◊ *Gymnophaps albertisii* Regularly noted, often in big flocks.
- Ivory-billed Coucal** ◊ (Greater Black C) *Centropus menbeki* One seen well from the boat near Kwatu.
- Black-billed Coucal** ◊ (Lesser Black C) *Centropus bernsteini* Two perched nicely along Boystown Road.
- Pheasant Coucal** *Centropus phasianinus* One dark morph individual on our last morning in Varirata.
- Dwarf Koel** ◊ *Microdynamis parva* Excellent views at Boystown Road and near Kwatu.
- Pacific Koel** *Eudynamis orientalis* Nice views along Boystown Road.
- Channel-billed Cuckoo** *Scythrops novaehollandiae* Several noted on a few occasions near Kiunga.

**Long-billed Cuckoo** ◊ *Chrysococcyx megarhynchus* Great looks at this strange cuckoo on the Fly River.  
**Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo** ◊ *Chrysococcyx ruficollis* One friendly individual above Tabubil.  
**White-eared Bronze Cuckoo** ◊ *Chrysococcyx meyerii* Several nice looks at Dablin Creek near Tabubil.  
**Little Bronze Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx minutillus* One on the Fly River.  
**White-crowned Cuckoo** ◊ (W-c Koel) *Cacomantis leucolophus* One unusually confiding individual at Varirata.  
**Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** ◊ *Cacomantis castaneiventris* One great encounter at Varirata.  
**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** *Cacomantis flabelliformis* One on the wires near Mount Hagen.  
**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* Noted a few times, best seen at Tabubil.  
**Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus optatus* Unusually abundant – we must have hit peak migration. At least five on the Fly.



Only rarely does a White-crowned Cuckoo pose like this!

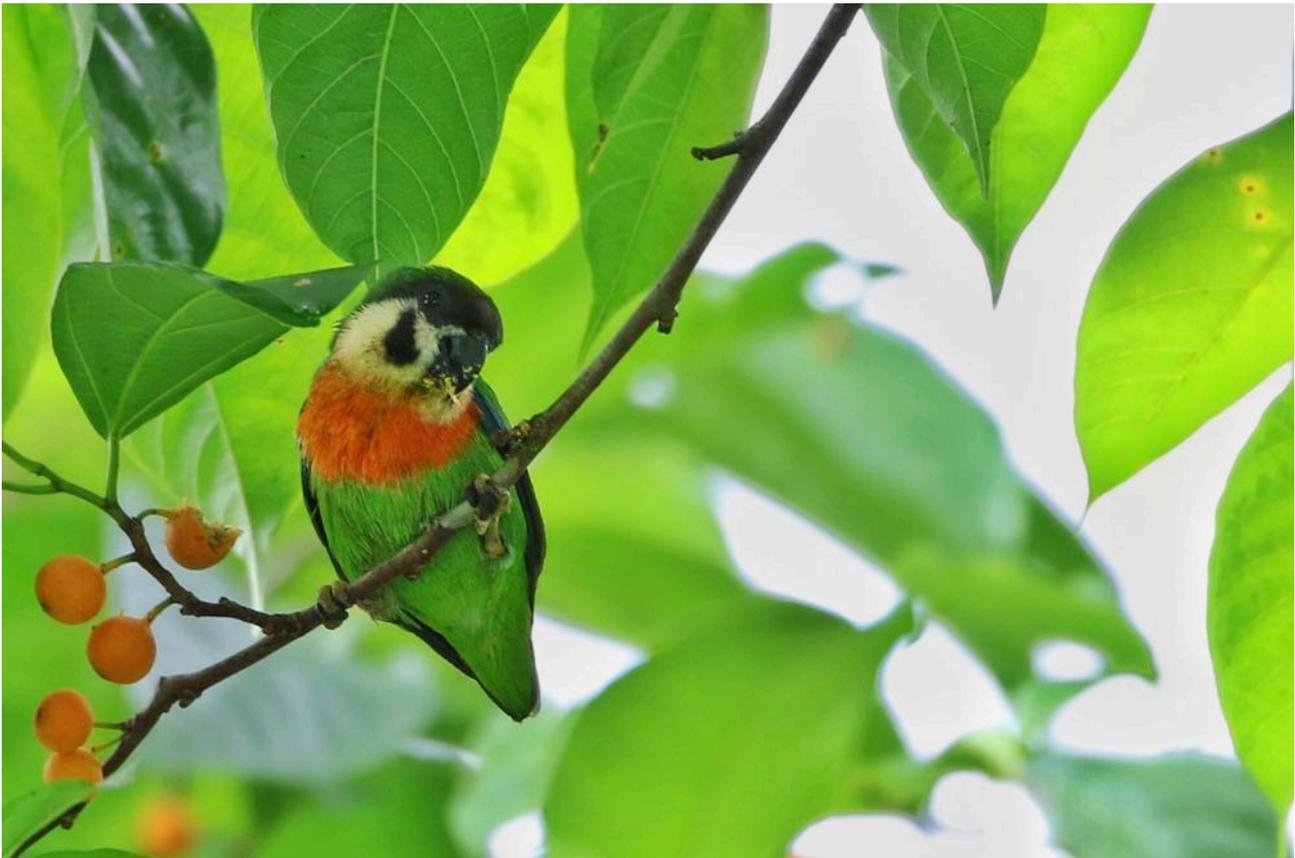
**Barking Owl** *Ninox connivens* One at Varirata on our first day.  
**Papuan Boobook** ◊ (Jungle Hawk Owl, Jungle B) *Ninox theomacha* Great views of one at Tabubil.  
**Marbled Frogmouth** ◊ *Podargus ocellatus* Excellent looks near Kiunga.  
**Papuan Frogmouth** ◊ *Podargus papuensis* One on the nest at PAU.  
**Archbold's Nightjar** ◊ *Eurostopodus archboldi* Two near Kumul Lodge were great to see.  
**Feline Owlet-Nightjar** ◊ *Aegotheles insignis* Heard at Kumul, but it didn't quite show itself. (H)  
**Wallace's Owlet-nightjar** ◊ *Aegotheles wallacii* New for Birdquest last year, we continued our run of great views!  
**Mountain Owlet-Nightjar** ◊ *Aegotheles albertisi* Nice views of one bird at Kumul.  
**Barred Owlet-Nightjar** ◊ *Aegotheles bennettii* Mr Reliable was still in his tree hollow at Varirata, as usual!  
**Moustached Treeswift** *Hemiprocne mystacea* Small numbers at Varirata and along the Fly River.  
**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta* Abundant throughout.  
**Mountain Swiftlet** ◊ *Aerodramus hirundinaceus* Noted around Kumul.  
**Uniform Swiftlet** *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Common throughout the lowlands.  
**Papuan Spine-tailed Swift** ◊ (P Spinetail, P Needletail) *Mearnsia novaeguineae* Common along the Fly River.  
**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* Common along the Fly River.



*The ever-reliable Barred Owlet-nightjar is still faithful to this hole in Varirata!*

- Hook-billed Kingfisher ◊ *Melidora macrorrhina* Heard often, but we never managed to find one. (H)
- Common Paradise Kingfisher ◊ *Tanysiptera galatea* Brief views along the Fly River.
- Little Paradise Kingfisher ◊ (Aru P K) *Tanysiptera hydrocharis* Some nice views along the Fly River.
- Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher ◊ *Tanysiptera danae* Some extended views at Varirata were nice!
- Shovel-billed Kookaburra ◊ (S-b Kingfisher) *Clytoceyx rex* One super responsive bird came in well at Tabubil!
- Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii* Several near Varirata.
- Rufous-bellied Kookaburra ◊ *Dacelo gaudichaud* Regularly heard, a few seen well.
- Forest Kingfisher *Todiramphus macleayii* Some near Varirata.
- Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Regularly noted throughout.
- Yellow-billed Kingfisher ◊ (Lesser Y-b K) *Syma torotoro* One eventually see well at Varirata.
- Mountain Kingfisher ◊ (M Yellow-billed K) *Syma megarhyncha* Great views above Tabubil.
- Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher ◊ *Ceyx solitarius* Great looks at one bird near Kwatu.
- Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azureus* Some at Varirata.
- Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* Noted regularly.
- Blyth's Hornbill ◊ (Papuan H) *Rhyticeros plicatus* Most common along the Fly River, an impressive beast!
- Palm Cockatoo ◊ *Probosciger aterrimus* A few pairs along the Fly River.
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Common and noisy!
- Pesquet's Parrot ◊ (N G Vulturine P) *Psittrichas fulgidus* Two encounters with this weird bird around Tabubil!
- Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot ◊ *Micropsitta keiensis* Some in a low tree at Boystown Road.
- Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot ◊ *Micropsitta pusio* Seen at Varirata mixing with a feeding flock.
- Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot ◊ *Micropsitta bruijnii* Heard over Dablin Creek Road. (H)
- Papuan King Parrot ◊ *Alisterus chloropterus* Several great encounters in Varirata.
- Eclectus Parrot ◊ *Eclectus roratus* Seen a few times throughout.
- Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* Abundant throughout.
- Blue-collared Parrot ◊ *Geoffroyus simplex* Two birds high overhead above Tabubil.
- Brehm's Tiger Parrot ◊ *Psittacella brehmii* A fantastic parrot, seen well at the Kumul feeders.
- Modest Tiger Parrot ◊ *Psittacella modesta* One briefly at Murmur Pass.
- Plum-faced Lorikeet ◊ (Whiskered L) *Oreopsittacus arfaki* A few at Murmur Pass showed well.

**Striated Lorikeet** ◊ *Charmosyna multistriata* Two flocks passed over above Tabubil.  
**Red-flanked Lorikeet** ◊ *Charmosyna placensis* Some perched in a dead tree near Kwatu were nice to see.  
**Papuan Lorikeet** ◊ *Charmosyna papou* Several near Kumul.  
**Yellow-billed Lorikeet** ◊ *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii* Some in the Lai River Valley.  
**Orange-billed Lorikeet** ◊ *Neopsittacus pullicauda* Some at Murrumbidgee Pass seen well.  
**Black-capped Lory** ◊ (Western B-c L) *Lorius lory* Regularly noted.  
**Yellowish-streaked Lory** ◊ (Yellow-s L, Greater S L) *Chalcopsitta scintillata* A few around Kiunga and Kwatu.  
**Dusky Lory** ◊ *Pseudeos fuscata* Several flocks passing over above Tabubil.  
**Goldie's Lorikeet** ◊ *Psitteuteles goldiei* Great scopes studies at Murrumbidgee Pass.  
**Coconut Lorikeet** ◊ (Rainbow L) *Trichoglossus haematodus* Common throughout the lowlands.  
**Large Fig Parrot** ◊ (Yellow-naped F P) *Psittaculirostris desmarestii* Some in a tree near the Fly River.  
**Orange-breasted Fig Parrot** ◊ (Dusky-cheeked F P) *Cyclopsitta gulielmitertii* Common near Tabubil.  
**Double-eyed Fig Parrot** ◊ (Red-faced F P) *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* Some in the lowlands around Kiunga.



*Orange-breasted Fig Parrots are just one of the exciting array of parrots we saw on the tour!*

**Hooded Pitta** ◊ *Pitta sordida* Seen a few times coming in quickly to the tape, and leaving just as quickly!  
**Ochre-breasted Catbird** ◊ *Ailuroedus stonii* Always a tricky one, just heard at Varirata. (H)  
**Black-eared Catbird** ◊ *Ailuroedus melanotis* Heard only near Kiunga. (H)  
**Flame Bowerbird** ◊ *Sericulus ardens* Bird of the tour, this absolute stunner sat in front of us for over an hour!  
**Yellow-breasted Bowerbird** ◊ (Lauterbach's B) *Chlamydera lauterbachii* A few seen near Mount Hagen.  
**Fawn-breasted Bowerbird** ◊ *Chlamydera cerviniventris* Common at PAU.  
**Wallace's Fairywren** ◊ (W Wren) *Sipodotus wallacii* One pair at Varirata.  
**Emperor Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus cyanocephalus* A pair at Boystown Road were beautiful to see.  
**White-shouldered Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus alboscapulatus* One male near Tabubil was seen well.  
**Orange-crowned Fairywren** ◊ *Clytomyias insignis* Small flocks seen around Kumul.  
**Red Myzomela** ◊ *Myzomela cruentata* A few nice males near Tabubil.  
**Papuan Black Myzomela** ◊ (B M) *Myzomela nigrita* Good numbers in the flowering tree at Varirata.  
**Mountain Myzomela** ◊ (Elfin M, M Red-headed M) *Myzomela adolphinae* Common around Kama Village.  
**Red-collared Myzomela** ◊ *Myzomela rosenbergii* Fairly common in the highlands.

**Green-backed Honeyeater** ◊ *Glycichaera fallax* Some in feeding flocks at Varirata.  
**Rufous-backed Honeyeater** ◊ *Ptiloprora guisei* Common at Murrumbidgee near Kumul.  
**Grey-streaked Honeyeater** ◊ (Black-backed H) *Ptiloprora perstriata* Another excellent feeder bird of Kumul.  
**Plain Honeyeater** ◊ *Pycnopygius ixoides* Common in Varirata.  
**Marbled Honeyeater** ◊ *Pycnopygius cinereus* Some seen along the Tonga Trail.  
**Streak-headed Honeyeater** ◊ *Pycnopygius stictocephalus* Encountered well at Varirata.  
**Tawny-breasted Honeyeater** ◊ *Xanthotis flaviventer* Common throughout the lowlands.  
**New Guinea Friarbird** ◊ (Helmeted F) *Philemon novaeguineae* Common in the lowlands.  
**White-throated Honeyeater** ◊ *Melithreptus albogularis* A few on the outskirts of Varirata.  
**Long-billed Honeyeater** ◊ *Melilestes mearnsi* Regularly seen in flight, a few nice perched views.  
**Common Smoky Honeyeater** ◊ *Melipotes fumigatus* Abundant in the highlands.  
**Rufous-banded Honeyeater** ◊ *Conopophila albogularis* Many at PAU.  
**Black-throated Honeyeater** ◊ *Caligavis subfrenata* A few around Kumul and feeding in a tree at Murrumbidgee.  
**Obscure Honeyeater** ◊ *Caligavis obscura* Great looks at km17 near Kiunga.  
**Yellow-browed Melidectes** ◊ *Melidectes rufocrissalis* Most common in the Lai River Valley.  
**Belford's Melidectes** ◊ *Melidectes belfordi* The loudest voice of the highlands, common at Kumul.  
**Ornate Melidectes** ◊ (Cinnamon-breasted M) *Melidectes torquatus* Great views in the Lai River Valley.  
**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** ◊ *Ptilotula flavescens* Some at PAU.  
**Mountain Honeyeater** ◊ (M Meliphaga, Hill Forest H) *Meliphaga orientalis* Nice studies at Kama.  
**Scrub Honeyeater** ◊ (S Meliphaga, S White-eared M) *Meliphaga albonotata* A few on Dablin Creek Road.  
**Mimic Honeyeater** ◊ (M Meliphaga, Mimetic M) *Meliphaga analoga* Both at Varirata and up the Fly River.  
**Elegant Honeyeater** ◊ (E Meliphaga) *Meliphaga cinereifrons* A few seen well at Varirata.



Common Smoky Honeyeaters are a joy to watch on the Kumul feeding table – the bright yellow wattle can flush to bright red in seconds!

**Goldenface** ◊ (Dwarf Whistler) *Pachycare flavogriseum* A few at Varirata, more above Tabubil  
**Rusty Mouse-warbler** ◊ (Lowland M-w) *Origma murina* Heard often, a few seen on various occasions.  
**Mountain Mouse-warbler** ◊ *Origma robusta* Seen a few times at Kumul.  
**Pale-billed Scrubwren** ◊ *Aethomyias spilodera* Some at Varirata were heard. (H)  
**Buff-faced Scrubwren** ◊ *Aethomyias perspicillatus* Some in the Lai Valley were seen well.

Papuan Scrubwren ◊ *Aethomyias papuensis* Common around Kumul.

Grey-green Scrubwren ◊ *Aethomyias arfakianus* A few small groups above Tabubil.

Large Scrubwren ◊ *Sericornis nouhuysi* Common around Kumul.

Brown-breasted Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone ruficollis* Some showing well at Murmur Pass.

Yellow-bellied Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone chrysogaster* Common in Varirata.

Green-backed Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone chloronota* Regularly heard, eventually seen at Tabubil.

Fairy Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone palpebrosa* Seen well in Varirata.

Grey Thornbill (Ashy Gerygone, Mountain G) ◊ *Acanthiza cinerea* Some nice views above Tabubil.

Papuan Babbler ◊ (Rufous B, NG B) ◊ *Garritornis isidorei* Small group near Kiunga was leader only. (LO)

Loria's Satinbird ◊ *Cnemophilus loriae* Regularly seen at Murmur Pass.

Crested Satinbird ◊ *Cnemophilus macgregorii* The sublime male appeared at Kumul for us!

Yellow-breasted Satinbird ◊ *Loboparadisea sericea* Bird of the trip for the leader – a male above Tabubil!

Obscure Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis arfakiana* A few at Dablin Creek Road.

Black Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis nigra* Commonly heard in the lowlands, nice views at Varirata.

Fan-tailed Berrypecker ◊ *Melanocharis versteri* A few at Kumul.

Dwarf Longbill ◊ (Spectacled L) ◊ *Oedistoma iliolophus* Some at Tabubil.

Pygmy Longbill ◊ *Oedistoma pygmaeum* Most encounters above Tabubil were brief!

Yellow-bellied Longbill ◊ (Green-crowned L) ◊ *Toxorhamphus novaeguineae* Best seen along the Fly River.

Slaty-headed Longbill ◊ (S-chinned L, Grey-winged L) ◊ *Toxorhamphus poliopterus* Noted in the highlands twice.

Tit Berrypecker ◊ *Oreocharis arfaki* Some nice views around Kumul.

Crested Berrypecker ◊ *Paramythia montium* One pair gave extended views at Kumul.

Blue Jewel-babbler ◊ *Ptilorrhoa caerulescens* Tempted across the trail in front of us, one showed very well!

Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler ◊ *Ptilorrhoa castanonota* Heard a few times, never responsive. (H)

Painted Quail-thrush ◊ *Cinclosoma ajax* Another difficult skulker which was seen well at Varirata!

Black-breasted Boatbill ◊ *Machaerirhynchus nigripectus* A few in the highlands.

Yellow-breasted Boatbill ◊ *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* Just one or two at Varirata.

White-breasted Woodswallow ◊ *Artamus leucorhynchus* Noted throughout the lowlands.

Great Woodswallow ◊ (New Guinea W) ◊ *Artamus maximus* Some seen well at Tabubil.

Lowland Peltops ◊ *Peltops blainvillii* Both at Kwatu and at Boystown Road.

Mountain Peltops ◊ *Peltops montanus* Common around Tabubil.

Black Butcherbird ◊ *Melloria quoyi* Noted a few times around Tabubil.

Black-backed Butcherbird ◊ *Cracticus mentalis* Several of this restricted species at PAU.

Hooded Butcherbird ◊ *Cracticus cassicus* Common throughout.

Mottled Berryhunter ◊ *Rhagologus leucostigma* Some great views both at Tabubil and at Murmur Pass.

Stout-billed Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina caeruleogrisea* A pair showed well at Varirata on our last day.

Hooded Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina longicauda* One at Murmur Pass on our last morning in the highlands.

Barred Cuckooshrike ◊ (Yellow-eyed C) ◊ *Coracina lineata* Some at Varirata.

Black-faced Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina novaehollandiae* Some near Varirata.

Boyer's Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina boyeri* Common in the lowlands.

White-bellied Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina papuensis* Common around Port Moresby.

Golden Cuckooshrike ◊ *Campochaera sloetii* Took some time, but seen well near Kwatu.

Black-bellied Cuckooshrike ◊ (B-b Cicadabird) ◊ *Edolisoma montanum* Some around Mount Hagen and Tabubil.

Grey-headed Cuckooshrike ◊ (G-h Cicadabird) ◊ *Edolisoma schisticeps* Noted at Dablin Creek.

Black-shouldered Cicadabird ◊ *Edolisoma incertum* Noted at Dablin Creek.

Black Cicadabird ◊ (B Cuckooshrike, New Guinea C) ◊ *Edolisoma melas* One male showed well in Varirata.

Varied Triller ◊ *Lalage leucomela* Noted regularly in the lowlands.

Wattled Ploughbill ◊ *Eulacestoma nigropectus* A superb male showed beautifully at Murmur Pass.

Rufous-naped Bellbird ◊ (R-n Whistler) ◊ *Aleadryas rufinucha* Common and showy at Kumul.

Piping Bellbird ◊ (Crested Pitohui) ◊ *Ornorectes cristatus* Heard often, some brief views at Varirata.

Brown-backed Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala modesta* Seen around Mount Hagen.

Grey Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala simplex* Seen both at Varirata and above Tabubil.

Sclater's Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala soror* A nice male showed well above Tabubil.

Regent Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala schlegelii* Common around Kumul.

Black-headed Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala monacha* Nice views of a pair in the Lai River Valley.



*White-bellied Whistler is a highly restricted endemic, but they can usually be found near Variata!*

- White-bellied Whistler** ◇ *Pachycephala leucogastra* Very showy near Varirata.
- White-bellied Pitohui** ◇ *Pseudorectes incertus* Heard only near Kwatu. **(H)**
- Rusty Pitohui** ◇ *Pseudorectes ferrugineus* Brief views only in Varirata for the leader. **(LO)**
- Arafura Shrikethrush** ◇ *Colluricincla megarhyncha* A few around Kwatu up the Fly River were heard only. **(H)**
- Variable Shrikethrush** ◇ *Colluricincla fortis* Common in Varirata.
- Grey Shrikethrush** *Colluricincla harmonica* Seen near Kama Village.
- Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach* Common by the roadsides in the highlands.
- Australasian Figbird** *Sphecotheres vieilloti* A few at PAU.
- Southern Variable Pitohui** ◇ *Pitohui uropygialis* Seen at Tabubil, and around Kiunga at km17 well.
- Hooded Pitohui** ◇ *Pitohui dichrous* Common in Varirata.
- Brown Oriole** ◇ *Oriolus szalayi* A common voice of the lowlands, seen well a few times.
- Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus* Common in Varirata in particular.
- Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Noted regularly.
- White-bellied Thicket Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura leucothorax* A pair on Dablin Creek Road performed beautifully.
- Black Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura atra* Singles noted multiple times in the mountains.
- Chestnut-bellied Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura hyperythra* Common at Varirata.
- Friendly Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura albolimbata* Most common at Kumul.
- Dimorphic Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura brachyrhyncha* A few encounters in the highlands.
- Rufous-backed Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura rufidorsa* One very showy bird at Tabubil.
- Drongo Fantail** ◇ (Pygmy Drongo, Mountain D) *Chaetorhynchus papuensis* Brief looks at Varirata.
- Black Monarch** ◇ (Fantailed M) *Symposiachrus axillaris* A few above Tabubil.
- Spot-winged Monarch** ◇ *Symposiachrus guttula* Just a few at Varirata.
- Black-faced Monarch** ◇ *Monarcha melanopsis* Seen well at Varirata.
- Black-winged Monarch** ◇ *Monarcha frater* Seen well at Dablin Creek.
- Golden Monarch** ◇ *Carterornis chrysomela* Regularly noted throughout.
- Frilled Monarch** ◇ *Arses telescopthalmus* Regularly noted throughout.
- Leaden Flycatcher** *Myiagra rubecula* One male below Varirata.
- Shining Flycatcher** *Myiagra alecto* A few along the Fly River.

Torrent-lark ◇ *Grallina bruijnii* A pair on the river above Tabubil showed very well.

Grey Crow ◇ (Bare-eyed C) *Corvus tristis* Often encountered in the lowlands.

Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Regular around Port Moresby.

Lesser Melampitta ◇ *Melampitta lugubris* Saw it on our first try at Kumul! A really cooperative male for once.

Blue-capped Ibrit ◇ (B-c Ibrita) *Ibrita kowaldi* Very nice views of this poisonous curiosity around Kumul.

Glossy-mantled Manucode ◇ (Glossy M) *Manucodia ater* Best seen at Varirata in the open woodland.

Crinkle-collared Manucode ◇ *Manucodia chalybatus* Showed well in Varirata along the river trail.

Trumpet Manucode ◇ *Phonygammus keraudrenii* A few views at km17, and at Boystown Road.

Short-tailed Paradigalla ◇ *Paradigalla brevicauda* A frustratingly brief bird flew over the road above Tabubil.

Ribbon-tailed Astrapia ◇ *Astrapia mayeri* Always a favourite, these beautiful birds were common at Kumul.

Princess Stephanie's Astrapia ◇ *Astrapia stephaniae* One female dropped by at Murmur Pass.

Queen Carola's Parotia ◇ *Parotia carolae* Sadly the only one we saw at Dablin Creek was leader only. (LO)

King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Pteridophora alberti* One fancy male showing off at Murmur Pass.

Greater Lophorina ◇ *Lophorina superba* Very good views above Tabubil.

Magnificent Riflebird ◇ *Ptiloris magnificus* A male showed a few times near the road at Tabubil.

Growling Riflebird ◇ (Eastern R) *Ptiloris intercedens* Regular encounters in Varirata.

Black Sicklebill ◇ *Epimachus fastosus* This impressive beast was scoped for as long as we wanted above Tabubil.

Brown Sicklebill ◇ *Epimachus meyeri* Typically impressive, great encounters around Kumul with males and females.

Magnificent Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Diphyllodes magnificus* Males and females seen at Dablin Creek.

King Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Cicinnurus regius* The famous km17 bird was MIA, but we found another on the Fly!

Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Seleucidis melanoleucus* Another weird and wonderful BoP from the Fly River.

Greater Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Paradisaea apoda* Fantastic views for us at km17!

Raggiana Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Paradisaea raggiana* A really great morning with these guys, very active and excited!

Lesser Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Paradisaea minor* The male at Kama Village showed very nicely above us.

Blue Bird-of-paradise ◇ *Paradisaea rudolphi* One of the best birds in the world, we had magnificent views!

Ashy Robin ◇ (Black-capped R) *Heteromyias albispectus* A few seen at Murmur Pass.

Black-sided Robin ◇ (B-bibbed R) *Poecilodryas hypoleuca* Heard only along the Fly River. (H)

White-winged Robin ◇ *Peneothello sigillata* Common in the garden at Kumul.

White-rumped Robin ◇ *Peneothello bimaculata* Heard often around Tabubil. (H)

Slaty Robin ◇ *Peneothello cyanus* One above Tabubil.

White-faced Robin ◇ *Tregellasia leucops* Really great views at Varirata of these retiring robins.

Torrent Flyrobin ◇ (T Flycatcher, River F) *Monachella muelleriana* Plentiful around Tabubil.

Lemon-bellied Flyrobin ◇ (L-b Flycatcher) *Microeca flavigaster* A few on the outskirts of Varirata.

Yellow-legged Flyrobin ◇ (Y-l Flycatcher) *Microeca griseiceps* Some at Varirata were quite confiding.

Olive Flyrobin ◇ (O Flycatcher) *Microeca flavovirescens* One at Varirata was a good find sitting on a nest!

Canary Flyrobin ◇ (Papuan Flycatcher, Montane F) *Microeca papuana* A pair at Kumul.

Garnet Robin ◇ *Eugerygone rubra* One male showed very well above Tabubil.

Papuan Scrub Robin ◇ *Drymodes beccarii* This skulker was heard only at Varirata. (H)

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Common throughout.

Island Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus maforensis* Common in the Lai River Valley, and above Tabubil.

Papuan Grassbird ◇ *Cincloramphus macrurus* Noted in the highlands.

Black-fronted White-eye ◇ *Zosterops minor* Common in Varirata.

Capped White-eye ◇ *Zosterops fuscicapilla* Many at Dablin Creek flying through during the morning.

Papuan White-eye ◇ *Zosterops novaeguineae* A few pairs in the Lai River Valley.

Metallic Starling (Shining S) *Aplonis metallica* Common throughout.

Yellow-eyed Starling ◇ *Aplonis mystacea* One scoped up at Dablin Creek.

Singing Starling ◇ *Aplonis cantoroides* Just a few in the Lai River Valley, and at Mount Hagen Airport.

Yellow-faced Myna ◇ *Mino dumontii* Common throughout the lowlands.

Golden Myna ◇ *Mino anais* Greats looks around Kwatu on the Fly River.

Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus* Common around Kumul, and on the feeder.

Pied Bush Chat (P Chat) *Saxicola caprata* Regular roadside birds in the highlands.

Red-capped Flowerpecker ◇ *Dicaeum geelvinkianum* Common throughout.

Black Sunbird ◇ *Leptocoma aspasia* A few around Kiunga on Boystown Road.

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Noted at Mount Hagen Airport.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow (introduced) *Passer montanus*** Common in most towns.  
**Mountain Firetail** ◊ ***Oreostruthus fuliginosus*** Very nice views around Kumul.  
**White-spotted Mannikin** ◊ ***Lonchura leucosticta*** A grand flock at the Kiunga jetty was great to see!  
**Grey-headed Mannikin** ◊ ***Lonchura caniceps*** One big flock in the grass at PAU.  
**Hooded Mannikin** ◊ ***Lonchura spectabilis*** Quite common in the highlands.  
**Grey Wagtail** ***Motacilla cinerea*** One in a stream above Tabubil.  
**Australian Pipit** ***Anthus australis*** Some on the airstrip at Mount Hagen.

## MAMMALS

**Total number of mammal species recorded: 2**

**Lowland Ringtail** ***Pseudochirulus mayeri*** One near Kiunga – a very rare mammal indeed (see below).  
**Giant Rat sp.** ***Species unknown*** We saw a large orange rat near Kiunga, but I have not been able to identify it yet...



*The first field photo I have seen of a Lowland Ringtail! Two other references exist – a sketch from 1880, and a skin collected in 1906.*