

UNCHARTED PAPUA NEW GUINEA EXPEDITION REPORT 2023

8 September - 5 October 2023

by Mark Beaman

It is hard to know where to start with summarizing this remarkable Birdquest expedition to some of the most remote parts of Papua New Guinea that took place in September and the first few days of October 2023, including Bougainville Island, the Louisiade Islands, the Kokoda Trail and the highlands of New Britain. It was a tough expedition, but it would have been even tougher if we had not had a true band of heroes who were able and willing to do what it would take! I cannot commend them or thank them highly enough. A conventional bird tour of a month is hard going, but add in the extreme physical demands of this expedition and combine it with the logistical delays and frustrations that are now part of life in Papua New Guinea and you have an expedition that few could come through. Never mind what happened to us in the highlands of Bougainville (anyone contemplating a visit to Bougainville should take careful note!).

This extraordinary expedition turned up, depending on the taxonomy followed, no fewer than 24 to 26 Birdquest 'Lifers', an amazing total that we will never again be able to even approach, let alone exceed. (There are just no other journeys left on Earth that could add more than around 10 Birdquest 'Lifers'.)

The expedition was notable for being:

1. The first birding group to get into the key area in the southern highlands on Bougainville
2. The first professionally organized birding group to explore the Louisiade Islands
3. The first professionally organized birding group to visit the eastern Kokoda Trail
4. The first birding trip ever to reach the highlands of New Britain (in the remote Nakanai Range)

Others will surely come after us, but our intrepid Birdquest group were the pioneers!

We started off the expedition in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, and hoped soon to be on our way to the island of Bougainville. Long-wracked by a very violent civil war and avoided by visitors, we had been assured by the local tour agency that those problems were over, but little did we know. In any event, hours of flight delay followed so by the time we finally arrived at the satellite island of Buka, it was getting dark. We crossed the strait to Bougainville itself, much to the amazement of the local islanders (they clearly do not see many 'white folk' in these parts), and then spent hours bumping along the main coast road until we reached our guesthouse at Arawa.

We were up bright and early next morning, ready to set out for an area in the southern highlands where 'the local villagers have discovered the Moustached Kingfisher', a species not seen on Bougainville (at least not by any ornithologist) for decades. Needless to say, we were all excited at the prospect of getting into the southern highlands, the part of Bougainville that is key if you want to look for all the highland endemics. Eventually, our local crew, arranged by the sole tourism agency that exists on Bougainville, were ready and we headed off in our SUVs.

After some hours we reached the highest point we could get to by road and, after a short song and dance 'welcome' by some older local villagers (it turned out later that they were clearly in a minority as regards the merits or otherwise of welcoming whites into their forests!) we started the trek to our camp, situated at about 1,250m (around 4,100ft). Well we knew it would be hard, but the steep, narrow, slippery muddy trail was very tough going indeed and so we had to take our time over it. Indeed, it took us the rest of the day to get up to the camp.

Spirits were high, however, as we had our first encounters with a series of Bougainville highland endemics along the way, plus some Solomons endemics of wider distribution. (Note: Although Bougainville is administratively part of Papua New Guinea, that is through a quirk of history. In terms of geography and fauna and flora, Bougainville is part of the Solomons.) Along the climb up we came across such highland endemics as Bougainville Honeyeater, Bougainville Whistler, Bougainville Bush Warbler and Bougainville White-eye. Other great birds were a Sanford's (or Solomons) Sea Eagle soaring over the mountains (their name belies their habit of spending much of their time inland), our first Meek's Lorikeets, Red-capped Myzomelas and Bougainville Monarchs, plenty of noisy Solomons Cockatoos and the only Crested Cuckoo-Dove of our stay on the island. (We also had a first view of an interesting-looking swiftlet, but it soon cleared off. This individual, and others seen later, could have been of the little-known Bougainville form of the range-restricted Mayr's Swiftlet but we never had really good looks.)

Our camp was the usual primitive New Guinea 'under a big tarpaulin' affair but unfortunately positioned on a slope, something that did not work too well when, inevitably, it started to rain. Nonetheless, by the early hours, it was dry and we rose in the dark to try and locate a Moustached Kingfisher if it called before dawn. There was no sign of the kingfisher unfortunately and our guide confessed he had not actually seen one himself but had been assured by villagers that they were around, but rare. Some had even claimed to have eaten them, apparently!

As the light grew we had some good views of three West Solomon Owls and after it was properly light we added another Bougainville highlands endemic in the form of the endearing Bougainville Fantail. We headed back to camp in good spirits, not knowing this was to be our final birding in the southern highlands!

Soon afterwards a village woman appeared behind us on the trail and started loudly questioning as to why we were in 'her forest'. We did not think too seriously about this and after getting to camp started our simple breakfast. And then the roof fell in on our peaceful world...

From out of nowhere a large mob of machete-wielding village men appeared and started screaming at our camp crew and ourselves. They were using the local tongue, so we could not understand their words, but it was obvious from their violent, threatening behaviour that they meant us ill. They were egged on by a large group of village women. Soon those huge machetes were in action as the men, screaming and hollering, proceeded to demolish our camp, jostle our crew (injuring one when a tree they cut down fell on them) and make it plain we were all to leave

immediately! There was no arguing with a violent mob, and by now the few English speakers were shouting 'you are our enemies', 'you come to destroy our forests', 'go back to your own country' and the like. So we packed up and left, moving as fast as we could down the dire mountain trail with the large mob close on our heels. The screaming and hollering and violent chopping with machetes never stopped and no rests were allowed. I did hang back to try and delay them, but soft reasoning that we were there to watch birds and not destroy their forests fell on deaf ears. They were totally convinced that all white people are miners or mine-prospectors and they were having none of them in their mountains...

It was with some relief that we reached the road and a phone signal so that we could call for transport. Unfortunately, things were about to get even more scary! One of the men following us to the road collapsed and lay motionless. Clearly, his companions thought he was dead as they accused us of using 'witchcraft' to bring about his demise! The situation was getting really ugly, with the threatening crowd closing in on us, when firstly he recovered consciousness and secondly our vehicles arrived, yes just like the cavalry of old! We were certainly not sorry to retreat from the southern highlands and all of us agreed that the area is dangerous and unpredictable, so anyone contemplating birding there should think again.

With our southern highlands sortie truncated, we spent the rest of the time on Bougainville exploring at lower levels.

Unfortunately, only one of Bougainville's endemics occurs in the lowlands, Bougainville Crow. There were, however, lots of Solomons-endemic or near-endemic birds to find including the stunning Cardinal Lory, Song Parrot, Pale Mountain Pigeon, Woodford's Rail (of the Bougainville form *tertia*), Pied Goshawk, the superb Ultramarine Kingfisher, Melanesian Kingfisher, North Melanesian and Solomons Cuckooshrikes, Oriole Whistler, Solomons Monarch, Steel-blue Flycatcher, Yellow-throated White-eye and Midget Flowerpecker. Other new birds of note included a young (very sweet!) Melanesian Megapode, Yellow-bibbed and Claret-breasted Fruit Doves, Red-knobbed and Island Imperial Pigeons, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Pacific Reef Heron, Pacific Baza, the noisy Papuan Eclectus and the striking Long-tailed Myna.

The long and violent war in Bougainville was driven by the highland peoples' hatred of the Australian-owned copper and gold mine (which destroyed a vast swathe of Bougainville). We had the chance to see the ruins of the mine before leaving the island. Everything had been torched during the war, including the factories, the power plant and the workers' village. But when one saw the polluted moonscape that the mine had made, converting lush, pristine forests to a gigantic, hellish pit of cinders, cut by runnels of sulphurous and copper-stained water, one could understand why the highland people, who mostly had no say in its arrival on the island nor received any benefit, could have gone to war over the issue. Up to 20,000 died in what people from the rest of Papua New Guinea call the civil war but which the people of Bougainville call 'the independence war', so we were shocked to learn from islanders that the politicians in Port Moresby and Buka are now talking about resuming mining on the island!

We were all looking forward to a complete change of scene as we explored the Louisiade Islands that lie to the east of Papua New Guinea's long and tapering southeastern peninsula, and we only had to contend with hours of flight delays from Air Niugini to get to our jumping off point at Alotau (via Port Moresby). We had planned to sail in the afternoon from Alotau on our liveaboard dive boat but a problem with one of the generators delayed us overnight (but did allow us to find the

localized Silver-eared Honeyeater) and, problem solved by 'other means', we set sail in the morning for those beautiful tropical islands.

Our first landing was at a real 'desert island' in the middle of nowhere! A little paradise with sandy beaches, coconut palm trees, native woodland and not much else. We were welcomed by the few inhabitants and shown around the island, and in just a few hours we enjoyed great views of such Louisiade endemics and near endemics as Islet (or Colonist) Kingfisher, White-chinned Myzomela, Louisiade Whistler, Louisiade Monarch and lots of Louisiade White-eyes. Other birds of note included some very tame Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Pacific Emerald Dove, White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Beach Stone-curlew, Roseate and Black-naped Terns, Variable Goshawk, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Beach and Sacred Kingfishers, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rufous Fantail and Island Monarch.

After this island paradise idyll, we headed further east, passing a succession of small islands that were home to Brown and Black Noddies, Greater and Lesser Frigatebirds and Brown Boobies. Further offshore we had our only Pomarine Jaeger and the first of many Wedge-tailed Shearwater encounters.

The much larger island of Tagula is a 'high island' but was surprisingly badly affected by deforestation, given the good state of islands further west. Here a friendly local helped us to find a trail that led into the interior uplands. The endemic Tagula Manucode was soon located, as was a Grey-headed Goshawk, but we had to trek well up into the hills to reach the endemic Tagula Honeyeater and Tagula Shrikethrush, both of which proved quite common. The endemic Tagula White-eye was another matter and we had to make do with some heard from down the hard-to-access slopes on one of the ridgetops. Tagula also gave us our first encounter with the endemic Louisiade Flowerpecker.

Other birds on Tagula included Torresian and Pinon Imperial Pigeons, Oriental Dollarbird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot, Red-cheeked Parrot, the colourful and noisy Purple-bellied Lory, Coconut Lorikeet, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Papuan Black Myzomela, Large-billed Gerygone, Northern Fantail, Leaden Flycatcher, Black Sunbird

From Tagula we headed towards the most easterly island in the Louisiades, Rossel Island. Unfortunately, the weather was unseasonably windy and we were unable to get to the exposed harbours on the (windward) south coast of the island where the endemic Louisiade Pitta is known to occur. Such is the unpredictability of island-hopping by boat. Instead, we had to land in the northwest of the island instead. Here, with the help of some friendly local youths, we enjoyed stunning views of the endemic Rossel Paradise Kingfisher and we also observed the endemic Rossel Cicadabird, treated as a full species by some. However, although there seemed some nice 'pitta forest' in the area, attempts to get one to respond drew a blank.

Our time was running out and the strong 'south-easter' showed no sign of lessening, so I elected to head back to the outer islands around Tagula to try again for the Tagula Butcherbird. Mind you, if only we had had second sight, and known we would fester in Alotau for 36 hours waiting for our delayed flight, a different solution might have been possible, but we will never know if that wind abated. Anyway, we set foot the next day on one of the out-islands and within about 15 minutes we were watching Tagula Butcherbirds, and then more, and later more again on another island! One pulled back after all.

Afterwards, we headed back for Alotau, although we need not have been in any hurry. This time, to be fair, it was not Air Niugini not having enough planes or crews but simply bad weather. A huge

depression was settled over eastern New Guinea and when we went to check in for Port Moresby in the morning we were told there would be a delay. The rain and low cloud lasted all day and when, in late afternoon, we could see on the flight tracker app that two planes were arriving from Moresby over Alotau, our hopes flickered, but a look outside showed us that a landing attempt in the low murk was likely suicidal and it was no surprise to see both planes turn back towards Moresby. Gulp!

The bad weather continued for much of the next day and watching nest-building Great-billed Mannikins and a migrant Siberian Sand Plover on the runway was little compensation. Eventually, at long last, our plane could land and we flew back to Moresby, but inevitably the 36-hour delay had cost us our connection to the Kokoda Trail and would shorten our birding time in the Isurava area by half.

Mercifully our short flight to Popondetta ran on time the next morning and soon we were heading for famous Kokoda Town, the start of the infamous track which the Australian forces defended so heroically against the invading Japanese in the Second World War. From Kokoda, after the ritual photos of the memorial arch at the trailhead, we set out for Isurava, the place where we would be staying on the track. We had to get a move on as having lost a full day, we had more limited time to hike up to Isurava, but we did manage to see a number of birds along the way. This was meant to be a drier time of year, but before we reached Isurava the heavens opened and from then on it rained for virtually the rest of our Kokoda visit! We were glad to be able to resnet a large open building in the village rather than be 'under canvas'.

A local guide took us before dawn up the mountain behind the village to a display ground of the Eastern Parotia, but the day was so gloomy and wet that he soon agreed that the male parotia was not likely to dance in such conditions! Nonetheless, we saw our first parotias on the slippery descent and these would be the first of several encounters with this special bird. Indeed we became the first ever organized birding group to see this very localized endemic.

During our time at Isurava, we visited the impressive Isurava shrine to the dead on both sides and saw a surprising variety of birds, given we suffered from continuous rain and misty conditions that made birdwatching very difficult let alone bird photography. Most were widespread New Guinea species but notable were Black-capped Catbird and Lesser Lophorina.

From Popondetta, we flew back to Moresby (after overcoming another regular flying in PNG issue: 'Sorry but we don't have enough seats for all of you...', but then the flight delay issue kicked in yet again. Hours of waiting and then our flight to Hoskins in New Britain was cancelled. 'Come back tomorrow morning' we were told. So off to a Moresby hotel was the only option.

Back at the airport in the morning only to find the first flight is cancelled and then the next flight, which we found seats on thanks only to very polite cajoling, is delayed until, hallelujah! We eventually take off and arrive in Hoskins only 24 hours behind schedule! But there is still enough daylight to hurry to a Golden Masked Owl site and get gripping views of this wonderful and only relatively recently rediscovered endemic! Now we are all feeling a lot better.

Our big adventure on New Britain was about to begin! No birders of any kind had ever reached deep into the highlands of New Britain and indeed the only living outsiders ever to have explored the mountains are a small of researchers. Our local outfitter, Cheyne, had agreed to organize an expedition using a helicopter for our group and another group that was to follow us. Something completely different. [Footnote: Cheyne told me before the end of our time in the Nakanai that he

would never ever organize more than the two trips there, it was just too tough, and by then we could all totally understand his feelings. But thank you mate for being brave enough to do it at all...]

After some hours of driving, we reached a remote village at the foot of the Nakanai and were greeted by traditional song and dance (mercifully these villagers really were welcoming). We even managed to find some good Bismarck endemics including a superb Black Honey Buzzard, Black Imperial Pigeon and Bismarck Hanging Parrot.

Now we just had to wait for 'the chopper' and eventually it hove into view and landed to pick up Cheyne and some of our porters and other staff. Off they went, and after the chopper returned it was my turn and part of the group's. Ever since I survived a crash-landing in a helicopter, I have always been wary of them, but it was exhilarating to be 'whooshed' up the pristine forested ridges of the Nakanai in just minutes, instead of having three days of uphill hiking! Soon we were landing on what appeared to be a very small pile of logs arranged on a recently cleared knife-edge ridge. Well, I won't repeat the exact words of our bush pilot, but they were to the effect that he had landed in a lot of places but this was the worst ever. As he was Australian you can embroider his words more colourfully and not be far wrong! And blow me, the landing site was in the wrong place, way below the summit ridge! Something had gone wrong!

Once we were all safely on the ridge, I spoke with Cheyne but we never really got a clear answer from the locals as to why the landing place was a day's hike below the summit ridge of the Nakanai. All we could do was plan to camp the first night at this lower level and then he and I agreed to split the cost of getting the chopper back the next morning to transport us to the summit! At least we would only have to do the trek down to the village (and that was to prove tough indeed).

We found a number of interesting birds while waiting for our lift to the upper levels, including Red-chinned Lorikeet, Ashy and Red Myzomelas, New Britain Friarbird, Bismarck Whistler, Bismarck Fantail (endemic to the highlands of New Britain and New Ireland), Black-tailed Monarch, Velvet Flycatcher, Rusty Thicketbird (a New Britain highlands endemic), Island Leaf Warbler and Bismarck White-eye.

Our 'chopper' returned as planned we were all whisked up to the summit of the Nakanai, saving a tough uphill hike, but our long-suffering pilot said unspeakable things about that final 'landing site' on a 45-degree slope covered in cut bushes and trees...!

Birding up on the summit ridge was carried out in beautiful surroundings (the forest here is still very tall and full of mosses, lichens and tree ferns) but was pretty hard work bird-wise. We eventually came across a number of individuals of our prime target, the endemic Gilliard's (or New Britain) Honeyeater, but we had not a sniff of the endemic New Britain Thrush either here or at lower levels, in spite of lots of careful searching. Rusty Thicketbirds occurred right up to the summit ridge and, after realising that, my hunch is that the endemic New Britain Thicketbird is restricted to the isolated Whiteman Range (the only place it is so far known from) and does not replace Rusty at higher altitudes elsewhere on the island.

From the summit we returned to our lower, more comfortable camp, although both were of the 'sleep under a big tarpaulin' variety, but at least with some stick platforms that passed as beds! Food was plentiful but pretty basic as one would expect in such remote circumstances. After another day of not being rewarded by a New Britain Thrush and in spite of Charles seeing the

endemic New Britain Goshawk, another highland endemic, the general consensus was that we should return to Walindi and enjoy a peaceful last day on New Britain birding the lowlands. And so it was agreed.

But first, we had to get down the mountain, and that was quite something. I have done a lot of mountain trekking but that descent to the village was tough and made even harder by torrential rain (yes the same old story). Between us, we must have experienced dozens of slips during the day. Some places had deep drop-offs beside the trail, just adding to the uncertainty of negotiating a narrow and steep downhill trail in a downpour, not to mention the numerous sliced bamboo shoots that had been cut by the machetes of our guides. Even at the bottom we had to negotiate a slippery boulder field before finally getting onto a flat path to the village. By the time we reached Walindi Plantation Resort, we truly deserved those lovely rooms and hot showers!

Our last full day was certainly an antidote to the mountain hardships as we were driven around the flatlands and enjoyed such Bismarck endemics as White-necked and Violaceous Coucals, the shy Finsch's and showy Yellowish Imperial Pigeons, New Britain Boobook (much better views that we had up in the Nakanai), the stunning Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, Bismarck Crow and Hooded and Buff-bellied Mannikins. We rounded off the day with a lovely pair of Knob-billed Fruit Doves at the resort, Additional species of interest that last day included Moustached Treeswift, Stephan's Emerald Dove, Swinhoe's Snipe, Black Bittern, Blyth's Hornbill, Shining Flycatcher, Australian Reed Warbler and Papuan Grassbird.

It had been a true adventure in many ways, and a harsh one at times, but we saw an amazing set of rarely-seen endemic birds and saw remote places few have ever seen. I can say without hesitation that Uncharted Papua New Guinea 2023 was the toughest Birdquest ever! By some way. Oh yes, and I almost forgot this, they ran out of seats on our return flight to Moresby and the usual begging took us right down to the wire before we all got on, in spite of having international flight connections. Such is the wonder of Papua New Guinea, Uncharted or Otherwise!

BIRDS OF THE EXPEDITION (MAIN SECTION)

1st Tagula Butcherbird

2nd Rossel Paradise Kingfisher

3rd= Bougainville Monarch

3rd= White-chinned Myzomela

5th Tagula Manucode

BIRDS OF THE EXPEDITION (NEW BRITAIN SECTION)

1st Golden Masked Owl

2nd Gilliard's (or New Britain) Honeyeater

3rd Black Honey Buzzard

4th Violaceous Coucal

5th= Bismarck Fantail

5th= Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Bird 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).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follows Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P. (Eds). **2023. IOC World Bird List (v13.2)** (this was the current version when the checklist for the tour report was created).

BIRDS

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Bougainville and New Britain

Melanesian Megapode ◊ *Megapodius eremita* A juvenile on Bougainville and an adult on New Britain. Endemic from the Admiralty Islands through the Bismarcks to the Solomons.

Orange-footed Scrubfowl *Megapodius reinwardt* Louisiade Islands.

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea* New Britain.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Recorded at all main locations.

White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius* Bougainville and New Britain.

?Mayr's Swiftlet ◊ *Aerodramus orientalis* Some large swiftlets, sometimes among Uniform Swiftlets, in the Bougainville highlands seemed different from the Uniforms but we never really got to the bottom of them. This poorly known species is known only from the highlands of New Ireland, Bougainville and Guadalcanal. Form *leletensis* occurs on New Ireland, nominate on Guadalcanal. The form on Bougainville is undescribed.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Recorded at all main locations.

White-necked Coucal ◊ (Pied Coucal) *Centropus ateralbus* A total of four on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Ivory-billed Coucal ◊ (Greater Black Coucal) *Centropus menbeki* Heard on the Kokoda Trail.

Violaceous Coucal ♦ *Centropus violaceus* Two on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

White-crowned Cuckoo ♦ *Cacomantis leucolophus* Kokoda Trail.

Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo ♦ *Cacomantis castaneiventris* Kokoda Trail.

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* Bougainville, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Two in the Louisiade Islands were migrants of the New Zealand breeding form (the nominate race).

Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia amboinensis* Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove ♦ *Macropygia nigrirostris* Kokoda Trail.

MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove ♦ *Macropygia mackinlayi* Three on Bougainville. Endemic to the Solomons, Bismarcks and Vanuatu.

Crested Cuckoo-Dove ♦ *Reinwardtoena crassirostris* One in the highlands of Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Pacific Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris* Louisiade Islands.

Stephan's Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps stephani* Bougainville and New Britain.

Bronze Ground Dove ♦ (Eastern Bronze Ground Dove) *Pampusana [beccarii] johannae* Heard-only on New Britain. The eastern group is endemic from the Admiralty Islands through the Bismarcks to the Solomons.

Ornate Fruit Dove ♦ (Eastern Ornate Fruit Dove) *Ptilinopus [ornatus] gestroi* Kokoda Trail.

Orange-fronted Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus aurantiifrons* Alotau.

Superb Fruit Dove (Eastern Superb Fruit Dove) *Ptilinopus [superbus] superbus* Bougainville.

White-bibbed Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus rivoli* Two in the Louisiade Islands and one on New Britain.

Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus solomonensis* A few on Bougainville. Endemic to islands from Geelvink Bay to the Bismarcks and Solomons.

Claret-breasted Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus viridis* Bougainville.

Orange-bellied Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus iozonus* Alotau.

Knob-billed Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus insolitus* A pair on New Britain. Endemic to the Bismarcks and St Mathias Islands.

Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon ♦ *Ducula rubricera* Just one on Bougainville but fairly common on New Britain. Bismarcks and Solomons endemic.

Finsch's Imperial Pigeon ♦ *Ducula finschii* One seen and a couple heard on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Rufescent Imperial Pigeon ◊ (Shining Imperial Pigeon) *Ducula chalconota* Kokoda Trail.

Island Imperial Pigeon ◊ *Ducula pistrinaria* Common on Bougainville and in the Louisiade Islands but scarce on New Britain. Endemic to islands from the Admiralty Islands eastwards to the Solomons.

Pinon's Imperial Pigeon ◊ *Ducula pinon* Fairly common in the Louisiade Islands.

Black Imperial Pigeon ◊ (Bismarck Imperial Pigeon) *Ducula melanochroa* Just one on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Torresian Imperial Pigeon ◊ *Ducula spilorrhoea* Alotau and in the Louisiade Islands.

Yellowish Imperial Pigeon ◊ *Ducula subflavescens* 12 on New Britain. Bismarcks and Admiralty Islands endemic.

Pale Mountain Pigeon ◊ *Gymnophaps solomonensis* A total of four on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Woodford's Rail ◊ (Bougainville Rail) *Hypotaenidia [woodfordi] tertia* A total of four on Bougainville. Solomons endemic (*tertia* is restricted to Bougainville and Buka, however).

Australasian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Bougainville.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* Louisiade Islands.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* One on Tagula in the Louisiade Islands may originally have been a vagrant but it had clearly been a human pet before escaping or being released!

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Bougainville (including Buka), the Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover) *Pluvialis squatarola* Louisiade Islands.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands, Alotau and New Britain.

Siberian Sand Plover (Mongolian Sand Plover) *Charadrius mongolus* Alotau.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Bougainville (including Buka) and the Louisiade Islands.

Swinhoe's Snipe ◊ *Gallinago megala* Alotau and New Britain.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Bougainville and New Britain.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Bougainville.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Bougainville, Alotau and New Britain.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Not uncommon in the Louisiade Islands.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Louisiade Islands.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* Louisiade Islands.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* A total of three in the Louisiade Islands.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Louisiade Islands.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* Louisiade Islands.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Louisiade Islands.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* New Britain.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* Louisiade Islands.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* Louisiade Islands.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* Louisiade Islands.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Bougainville and Louisiade Islands.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Louisiade Islands.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Bougainville and New Britain.

Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* New Britain.

Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* Bougainville.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Bougainville, Alotau and Kokoda Trail.

Great Egret (Eastern Great Egret) *Ardea [alba] modesta* Bougainville and New Britain.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Bougainville and Louisiade Islands.

Osprey (Eastern Osprey) *Pandion [haliaetus] cristatus* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata* Bougainville.

Long-tailed Honey Buzzard ♦ *Henicopernis longicauda* One on the Kokoda Trail.

Black Honey Buzzard ♦ *Henicopernis infuscatus* Great views of one on New Britain.

Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands, Alotau and New Britain.

Pied Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter albogularis* A total of three on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Grey-headed Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter poliocephalus* Louisiade Islands and Kokoda Trail.

New Britain Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter princeps* Charles was the only one to see this rare New Britain highland endemic while we were in the Nakanai Range. Lucky man!

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Alotau and nearby islands, plus the Kokoda Trail.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* Alotau.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Bougainville, Alotau, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Ichthyophaga leucogaster* Louisiade Islands.

Sanford's Sea Eagle ♦ *Ichthyophaga sanfordi* An adult soaring over the mountains as we trekked to our camp in the highlands of Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Golden Masked Owl ♦ *Tyto aurantia* A superb individual on New Britain. We could not have hoped for better views! And in daylight too. Endemic.

Papuan Boobook ♦ *Ninox theomacha* Heard-only on the Kokoda Trail. A pity about all that rain...

New Britain Boobook ♦ *Ninox odiosa* Multiple sightings on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and Watom.

West Solomons Owl ♦ *Athene jacquinoti* A total of four seen and others heard on Bougainville. West Solomons endemic.

Fearful Owl ♦ *Asio solomonensis* Heard-only on Bougainville where a swamp prevented us getting closer. West Solomons endemic.

Blyth's Hornbill (Papuan Hornbill) *Rhyticeros plicatus* Bougainville, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* Louisiade Islands.

Rossel Paradise Kingfisher ♦ *Tanysiptera [galatea] rosseliana* Wonderful views of two different birds on Rossel in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher ♦ *Tanysiptera nigriceps* Fine views of one on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and satellites.

Ultramarine Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus leucopygius* A total of five on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Islet Kingfisher ♦ (Colonist Kingfisher) *Todiramphus colonus* Locally common in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic to the Louisiade Islands and some nearby small islands.

Melanesian Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus tristrami* Common on Bougainville and some on New Britain. Endemic to the St Mathias Islands, the Bismarcks and the Solomons.

Beach Kingfisher *Todiramphus saurophagus* Louisiade Islands.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Louisiade Islands, Alotau and New Britain.

Mountain Kingfisher ♦ *Syma megarhyncha* Kokoda Trail.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* New Britain.

New Britain Dwarf Kingfisher ♦ *Ceyx sacerdotis* Heard-only on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and satellites.

North Solomons Dwarf Kingfisher ♦ *Ceyx meeki* Heard-only in the Bougainville highlands. Our imminent attempt to see this bird was foiled by the arrival of the mob! West (or North) Solomons endemic.

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* Alotau and Louisiade Islands.

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus* Bougainville.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora* Kokoda Trail.

Solomons Cockatoo ♦ *Cacatua ducorpsii* Very common on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Alotau, Louisiade Islands and Kokoda Trail.

Blue-eyed Cockatoo ♦ *Cacatua ophthalmica* A total of five on New Britain. Endemic.

Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot ♦ *Micropsitta pusio* Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot ♦ *Micropsitta bruijnii* Bougainville, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Papuan Eclectus ♦ *Eclectus polychloros* Recorded in all main locations.

Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* Louisiade Islands.

Song Parrot ♦ *Geoffroyus heteroclitus* A few on Bougainville and New Britain. Bismarcks and Solomons endemic.

Red-flanked Lorikeet *Hypocharmosyna placentis* Bougainville and New Britain.

Meek's Lorikeet ♦ *Vini meeki* Common in the Bougainville highlands. Solomons endemic.

Red-chinned Lorikeet ♦ *Vini rubrigularis* Very common on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Purple-bellied Lory ♦ *Lorius hypoinochrous* Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Cardinal Lory ♦ *Pseudeos cardinalis* Very common on Bougainville. Endemic to the Solomons and some small islands east of New Ireland.

Coconut Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Recorded in all main locations.

Double-eyed Fig Parrot ♦ *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* Louisiade Islands.

Bismarck Hanging Parrot ♦ *Loriculus tener* Two on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Bismarck Pitta ♦ *Erythropitta novaehibernicae* Heard several times in New Britain (mostly down inaccessible slopes in the Nakanai Range). Bismarcks endemic.

Black-capped Catbird ♦ *Ailuroedus melanocephalus* One on the Kokoda Trail was apparently the first ever seen by an organized birding tour.

Fawn-breasted Bowerbird ♦ *Chlamydera cerviniventris* Alotau.

Papuan Treecreeper ♦ *Cormobates placens* One put in a brief appearance on the Kokoda Trail.

Bougainville Honeyeater ♦ *Stresemannia bougainvillei* Two in the highlands of Bougainville. Endemic.

Gilliard's Honeyeater ♦ (**New Britain Honeyeater**) *Vosea whitemanensis* A total of four in the Nakanai Range. We were the first-ever birders to see this New Britain highland endemic, only observed before by just a few researchers and collectors!

White-chinned Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela albigula* Common in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Ashy Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela cineracea* Small numbers on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and Umboi.

Red Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela cruentata* A few on New Britain.

Papuan Black Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela nigrita* Just a male in the Louisiade Islands.

Red-capped Myzomela ♦ (**Scarlet-naped M**) *Myzomela lafargei* Fairly common on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Black-bellied Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela erythromelas* A pair on New Britain. Endemic.

Meyer's Friarbird ♦ *Philemon meyeri* Alotau.

New Guinea Friarbird ♦ *Philemon novaeguineae* Alotau and Kokoda Trail.

New Britain Friarbird ♦ *Philemon cockerelli* Common on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and satellites.

Spotted Honeyeater ♦ *Xanthotis polygrammus* Kokoda Trail.

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater ♦ *Xanthotis flaviventer* Kokoda Trail.

Silver-eared Honeyeater ♦ *Lichmera alboauricularis* Alotau.

Mountain Honeyeater ♦ *Microptilotis orientalis* Kokoda Trail.

Tagula Honeyeater ♦ *Microptilotis vicina* Fairly common on Tagula in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Ornate Melidectes ♦ *Melidectes torquatus* Kokoda Trail.

Goldenface ♦ *Pachycare flavogriseum* Kokoda Trail.

Rusty Mouse-warbler ♦ *Origma murina* Kokoda Trail.

Bicolored Scrubwren ♦ *Aethomyias nigrorufus* One on the Kokoda Trail. Found roosting on our night walk but only the lead members of the group could see it.

Buff-faced Scrubwren ♦ *Aethomyias perspicillatus* Kokoda Trail.

Large Scrubwren ♦ *Sericornis nouhuysi* Kokoda Trail.

Brown-breasted Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone ruficollis* Kokoda Trail.

Large-billed Gerygone ◇ *Gerygone magnirostris* Louisiade Islands.

Mid-mountain Berrypecker ◇ *Melanocharis longicauda* Kokoda Trail.

Spotted Berrypecker ◇ *Rhamphocharis piperata* Kokoda Trail.

Tit Berrypecker ◇ *Oreocharis arfaki* Kokoda Trail.

Yellow-breasted Boatbill ◇ *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* Kokoda Trail.

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Alotau and Kokoda Trail.

Great Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus maximus* Kokoda Trail.

Mountain Peltops ◇ *Peltops montanus* Kokoda Trail.

Tagula Butcherbird ◇ *Cracticus louisiadensis* Surprisingly difficult on Tagula itself in the Louisiade Islands but fairly common on the out-islands. Endemic.

Stout-billed Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina caeruleogrisea* Kokoda Trail.

Barred Cuckooshrike *Coracina lineata* Bougainville.

Black-faced Cuckooshrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* An Austral migrant in the Louisiade Islands.

North Melanesian Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina welchmani* One on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

White-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina papuensis* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Black-bellied Cuckooshrike ◇ *Edolisoma montanum* Kokoda Trail.

Solomons Cuckooshrike ◇ *Edolisoma holopolium* A few on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Common Cicadabird *Edolisoma tenuirostre* Bougainville and New Britain.

Common Cicadabird (Rossel Cicadabird) *Edolisoma [tenuirostre] rostratum* Two on Rossel in the Louisiade Islands. This endemic form is treated as a full species by HBW, Birdlife and Gregory in *Birds of New Guinea*.

Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela* Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Papuan Sittella ◇ *Daphoenositta papuensis* One appeared for a short time on the Kokoda Trail.

Grey Whistler ◇ (G-headed W) *Pachycephala [simplex] griseiceps* One on Tagula of the endemic form *sudestensis*. Also Kokoda Trail.

Slater's Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala soror* Kokoda Trail.

Bismarck Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala citreogaster* Common on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain, Mussau and Manus.

Oriole Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala orioloides* Fairly common on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Louisiade Whistler ◊ *Pachycephala collaris* We recorded both forms, nominate *collaris* and *rosseliana* (restricted to Rossel), in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Bougainville Whistler ◊ (**B Hooded W**) *Pachycephala richardsi* A total of four in the highlands of Bougainville. Endemic.

Variable Shrikethrush ◊ *Colluricincla fortis* Kokoda Trail.

Tagula Shrikethrush ◊ *Colluricincla discolor* Fairly common on Tagula in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic to Tagula and Junet.

Grey Shrikethrush *Colluricincla harmonica* Alotau.

Hooded Pitohui ◊ *Pitohui dichrous* Kokoda Trail.

Spangled Drongo ◊ (**Papuan S D**) *Dicrurus [bracteatus] carbonarius* Louisiade Islands and Kokoda Trail.

Spangled Drongo ◊ (**Bismarck S D**) *Dicrurus [bracteatus] laemostictus* Fairly common on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and satellites.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Recorded at all main locations.

Northern Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura rufiventris* Louisiade Islands, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Bougainville Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura drownei* A total of three in the highlands of Bougainville. Endemic.

Bismarck Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura dahli* Fairly common in the Nakanai Range. Bismarcks endemic.

Rufous Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura rufifrons* Bougainville and Louisiade Islands.

Spot-winged Monarch ◊ *Symposiachrus guttula* Louisiade Islands.

Louisiade Monarch ◊ *Symposiachrus melanopterus* Fairly common in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Black-tailed Monarch ◊ *Symposiachrus verticalis* Fairly common on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Solomons Monarch ◊ (**S Pied M**) *Symposiachrus barbatus* Two singles on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* Two singles in the Louisiade Islands.

Black-winged Monarch *Monarcha frater* Kokoda Trail.

Bougainville Monarch ◊ *Monarcha erythrostictus* Common on Bougainville. Endemic to Bougainville and satellites.

Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula* Louisiade Islands.

Steel-blue Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra ferrocyanea* Fairly common on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra alecto* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Velvet Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra eichhorni* Two singles in the Nakanai Range on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Bougainville Crow ♦ *Corvus meeki* Fairly common on Bougainville. Endemic to Bougainville and its satellites.

Grey Crow ♦ *Corvus tristis* Kokoda Trail.

Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Alotau and the Louisiade Islands.

Bismarck Crow ♦ *Corvus insularis* Common on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Tagula Manucode ♦ *Manucodia alter* A total of four on Tagula in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Trumpet Manucode ♦ *Phonygammus keraudrenii* Kokoda Trail.

Eastern Parotia ♦ *Parotia helena* A total of 14 seen on the Kokoda Trail where we were the first organized birding tour ever to see this poorly-known species!

Lesser Lophorina ♦ *Lophorina minor* Two different female/immature birds seen by some on the Kokoda Trail.

Growling Riflebird ♦ *Ptiloris intercedens* Small numbers on the Kokoda Trail.

Magnificent Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Diphyllodes magnificus* One on the Kokoda Trail.

Raggiana Bird-of-paradise ♦ *Paradisaea raggiana* Kokoda Trail.

Yellow-legged Flyrobin ♦ *Kempiella griseiceps* Kokoda Trail.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Bougainville, Alotau, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Bougainville Bush Warbler ♦ *Horornis haddeni* Not uncommon but shy in the highlands of Bougainville. Endemic.

Island Leaf Warbler ♦ *Phylloscopus poliocephalus* Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Australian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus australis* Bougainville and New Britain.

Rusty Thicketbird ♦ *Cincloramphus rubiginosus* This was a not uncommon but shy denizen of the Nakanai Range forests, giving people short looks as they scampered along logs, hopped in trails or otherwise went about their business. New Britain endemic.

Papuan Grassbird ♦ *Cincloramphus macrurus* New Britain.

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis* New Britain.

Black-fronted White-eye ♦ *Zosterops chrysolaeus* Kokoda Trail.

Tagula White-eye ♦ *Zosterops meeki* Two or more heard on the high forested ridge on Tagula in the Louisiade Islands was the best we could do. Endemic.

Bismarck White-eye ♦ (**Black-headed W**) *Zosterops hypoxanthus* Fairly common in the Nakanai Range. Bismarcks and Manus endemic.

Bougainville White-eye ♦ *Zosterops hamlini* Fairly common in the highlands of Bougainville. Endemic.

Yellow-throated White-eye ♦ *Zosterops metcalfei* Common on Bougainville. West Solomons endemic.

Papuan White-eye ♦ (**New Guinea W**) *Zosterops novaeguineae* Kokoda Trail.

Louisiade White-eye ♦ *Zosterops griseotinctus* Common in the Louisiade Islands (where we saw forms *griseotinctus* and, on Rossel, *pallidipes*). Endemic to the Louisiade Islands and various other small islands in the Bismarcks and off eastern mainland New Guinea.

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica* Bougainville, Louisiade Islands, Kokoda Trail and New Britain.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Bougainville, Alotau and Louisiade Islands.

Brown-winged Starling ♦ *Aplonis grandis* Fairly common on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.

Yellow-faced Myna ♦ *Mino dumontii* Alotau.

Long-tailed Myna ♦ *Mino kreffti* Bougainville and New Britain. Solomons and Bismarcks endemic.

Red-capped Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum geelvinkianum* Kokoda Trail.

Louisiade Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum nitidum* Fairly common in the Louisiade Islands. Endemic.

Red-banded Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum eximium* Just the one on New Britain. Bismarcks endemic.

Midget Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum aeneum* Fairly common on Bougainville (nominate). Solomons endemic.

Black Sunbird *Leptocoma aspasia* Louisiade Islands and New Britain.

Sahul Sunbird *Cinnyris frenatus* Bougainville and New Britain (*flavigastra*), plus Alotau (nominate).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (introduced) *Passer montanus* Bougainville, Alotau and New Britain.

Great-billed Mannikin ♦ (**Grand M**) *Lonchura grandis* A pair nest building at Alotau airport!

Hooded Mannikin ♦ *Lonchura spectabilis* A few on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and satellites.

Buff-bellied Mannikin ♦ *Lonchura melaena* Small numbers on New Britain. Endemic to New Britain and Buka, West Solomons.

MAMMALS

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris* Louisiade Islands.

New Britain Naked-backed Fruit Bat *Dobsonia praedatrix* Some on New Britain. Endemic.

Solomons Naked-backed Fruit Bat *Dobsonia inrermis* A few on Bougainville. Solomons endemic.