



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Indonesia

West Papuan Island Cruise

12 – 24 November 2016 (13 Days)

Buru Extension

25 – 30 November 2016 (6 Days)

Trip Report



The Seahorse by K. David Bishop

Tour Leaders **K. David Bishop (KDB) and Glen Valentine**
Trip Report **Compiled by Tour Leader: K. David Bishop**

Tour Highlights

Displaying Wilson's and Red Birds-of-Paradise, Blue-black Kingfisher, Kofiau Paradise Kingfisher and Kofiau Monarch. Displaying Obi (Moluccan) Woodcock, Carunculated Fruit Dove, Blue-eared and Purple-naped Lories, Salmon-crested Cockatoo, Black-lored Parrot AND Madanga!!!!

Tour Summary

Rockjumper's inaugural exploration of the Raja Ampats and eastern Wallacea, Indonesia was arguably the finest tour I have ever had the privilege of leading in forty wonderful years of tour leading. Highlights are just that, but they do not capture the whole. Our truly, truly wonderful group were at the core of the enormous happiness, success and pleasure this trip engendered. However, it didn't do any harm to have a ship and crew that were quite simply near perfect. Thank you Captain, Ibu Cici, Daniel and Tony. We were also supported on the ground by many helpful individuals, too many to name here; however, Ibu Shita, Pak Bennie and Pak Poli were instrumental in ensuring the efficiency and success of everything on land. They were superb and I cannot thank them enough. I would also like to thank Pak Ceasar and Pak Fino for their special help on Buru. I would also like to pay a very special tribute to my co-leader, Glen, for being so absolutely delightful to work with. Easily the best co-leader I have ever enjoyed working alongside. His knowledge of not only what things looked like but also their calls was quite remarkable, especially given that he had never been to eastern Indonesia before.

It is impossible to convey fully in words the excitement of setting off into these islands only to be greeted by a magnificent sunset and the thrill of what the morrow promised. The group met up for lunch in a lovely hotel in Sorong before heading into the hills and some surprisingly bird-rich forests. What a perfect way to break the 'ice' and quickly learn everyone's names and 'needs'.

After barely a couple of minutes had passed, we had a litany of attractive New Guinea species in the 'scope', including Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves, Black-browed Triller and Rufous-bellied Kookaburra. Benie spotted a huge Papuan Frogmouth, permitting us to enjoy all the details of this interesting nocturnal bird during the daytime; as well as obtaining some nice images. A couple of roguish-looking hunters, replete with high-powered air-rifles, were initially disconcerting but David's ability to speak Bahasa Indonesia soon had them onside and pointing birds out to us rather than killing them. Further down the track, a tree full of Pinon's Imperial Pigeons provided fine and prolonged scope views, along with a couple of Zoe's Imperial Pigeons. Neither species is trivial, as both - but especially the Pinon's - tends to be hunted out near to human habitation. It was time to wrap things up all too soon, but not before David's clear voice got most onto the much desired and rather local Black Lory as four of them flew close by.



**Buru Cuckooshrike
by K. David Bishop**





**The group looking over the Tamrau lowlands
by K. David Bishop**

And so began a series of early starts which were to typify this tour. Thanks to some pre-trip exploration, we headed off the next morning in a phalanx of four-wheel-drive vehicles into the vast and magnificent primary forests that happily still cloak the lowlands surrounding the Tamrau Mountains. Enjoying a second breakfast from our perch atop a slight rise, we watched as the morning mist slowly retreated, revealing some marvellous birds. Blyth's Hornbills were common - always a good sign - as were Eclectus Parrots and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. Large Fig-Parrots were astonishingly common. Further down into the valley, an Albizzia tree, presumably replete with lerps hosted a mixed

flock of Grey-headed and Golden Cuckooshrikes, New Guinea Friarbirds, Green-backed Honeyeater, the rather scarce but attractive Spotted Honeyeater - one of six possible Meliphagas, the Mimic Honeyeater, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater and Pygmy Longbills (no longer regarded as honeyeaters). As the day warmed up, we did battle with a Dwarf Koel - of which the female gave us a flyby. Resounding 'honking' from the forest interior had us dreaming of actually seeing Red-billed Brush-Turkey but, typically, it was not to be. However, we had only just walked away with defeat ringing in our ears before the distinctive but oh so rarely heard tones of a Blue-black Kingfisher were heard nearby. Crossing a shallow stream and entering a magical world of towering primary forest, we did fight it out with this most elusive bird. Thanks to some superb spotting by Dougald, some of us managed to get onto a perched bird. From thereon, it was a major battle and only flybys were enjoyed. Nevertheless, this was quite a coup, as David had only ever seen this species once before in forty years of working in New Guinea. The day had heated up and it was time to retrace our steps. We returned to Sorong and went straight to the ship where introductions were made and safety instructions given and before we knew it, we were enjoying lunch, having 'set sail' for Waigeo. Streaked Shearwaters, a lone and distant Bulwer's Petrel and a couple of Pomarine Skuas – an uncommon migrant hereabout, accompanied us to our anchor spot, surrounded by a most lovely sunset. Thankfully, it was high tide, so landing in the dark the next morning was a breeze and Shita and Benie and their crew were there to meet us.

Having already been assigned our respective groups, we bundled into the four-wheel-drives and headed up into the limestone hills. Much to our consternation, we quickly learnt that our driver had no idea how to drive such a vehicle and having slid backwards rather rapidly as we tried to climb a steep hill *whoops!* KDB immediately took over chauffeur duties and rapidly reassured everyone on board. Dropping off the groups quietly in the dark, each with a leader and local guide, we made the easy, *yes easy*, walk of a few hundred metres into the forest interior to the location of our blind. Still



**Male Wallace's Birdwing Butterfly
by K. David Bishop**



pitch-black, we quickly adjusted the viewing holes to our needs and settled back to wait.



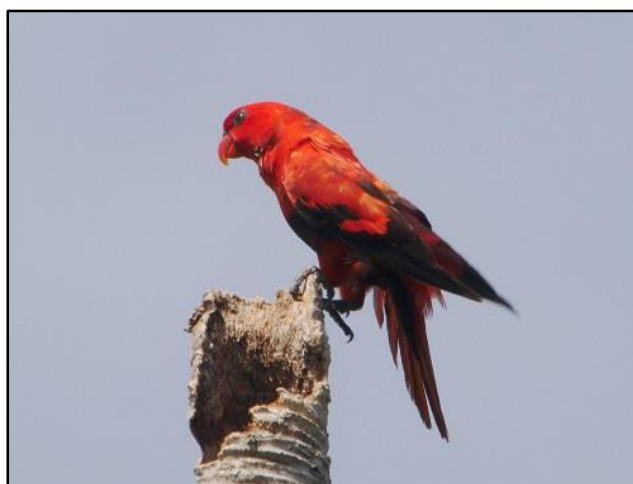
Male Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise by K. David Bishop

Sitting there in the dark, listening to the dawn-chorus and after a seemingly short while, we heard the most thrilling sound of all, the unmistakable call of a male Wilson's Bird of Paradise. Suddenly, there in the gloaming, was THE most wondrous of creatures. For some of us, it was the bird we had most wanted to see for all of our lives. Sir David Attenborough has it so right. Immediately, he began to clean his court of fallen leaves (and some that been cunningly laid there by Benie) only to stop now and then to loudly proclaim his territory. *Fabulous!* As the light slowly filtered through, and with his court in a pristine state, this creature, that almost

defies description, began to go through his full repertoire of displays and postures. The arrival of a female sent him into a real frenzy and as he called, he opened his gape wide to reveal a lime-yellow interior. We could have watched him forever. At the same time, it was particularly exciting to hear as many as six Common Paradise-Kingfishers trilling all around us. *Quite simply fabulous!* Reluctantly, we returned to the road where, eventually, we all congregated to wax lyrical about our early morning experience. Everyone had achieved the same degree of success. The day was warming quickly and after quick looks at a couple of birds such as Golden Monarchs, we were only too glad to learn that Doris had seen an unidentified bird on the nest over her Wilson's display court. David went ahead to set the scope up in the blind, whilst Glen and most of the others watched a female Beautiful Fruit-Dove attend her eggs located on the flimsiest of twig-nests. The nest over the arena was occupied by a very smart looking Spot-winged Monarch, which everyone duly took turns to enjoy, before returning to the dove and also some fine views of the endemic Raja Ampat Pitohui.

Lunch time and it was back to the boats and a welcome shower and chance to digest the reality of what we had seen; the joy of having a single base out of which to work cannot be overstated. The service and care, not to mention the good food, on the ship was outstanding and added immeasurably to everyone's enjoyment of the trip. Happily, this was to be repeated the day after for the duration.

As we ate, the anchor was raised and we cruised into fascinating Kaboe Bay. After a necessary break, we headed out in the very comfortable and ideally appointed tenders for a tour of the soaring karst limestone cliffs. Too hot for many birds to be really active, we did enjoy fine views of our first and very smart-looking Beach Kingfisher in addition to large numbers of Spice Imperial Pigeon. *Wow!* As sunset approached, we



Violet-necked Lory by David and Judy Smith



stationed ourselves with the light behind us and watched agog as several hundred Great-billed Parrots flew in dribs and drabs to noisily roost at a traditional site. Returning to the ship surrounded by such majestic landscapes, garnished by THE most amazing sunset, left this writer bereft of adjectives.



Pair of Red Bird-of-Paradise by K. David Bishop

Having returned to our anchorage of the previous night, we, again, quietly made our way in the wee hours of the morning back into Waigeo's forest. With the help of a team of local landowners, we climbed a very sweaty hill, also in the dark, and settled down to wait for dawn. Listening to bird after bird calling in the dark was tantalising, especially when we heard, quite nearby, the little-known Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar. However, we had bigger fish to fry and as the first hint of light tipped the forest canopy, our first Red Bird of Paradise appeared. Thereafter, it was quite simply an astonishing performance of male birds cavorting and competing with one another for the attention of a female. The prolonged views we

enjoyed, especially through the scopes, were simply breathtaking. For those taking images, it was the chance of a lifetime. Eventually, the males ran out of energy and so we made our way back to the road and spent the remainder of the morning enjoying Waigeo's forests and its inhabitants. As was to be the case throughout this tour, beautiful butterflies accompanied us throughout, including several pairs of Common Birdwings.

Birds of note included Great Cuckoo-dove, closeby we heard an infrequently encountered New Guinea Bronzewing, Pink-spotted and Dwarf fruit-doves, graceful Pied Imperial Pigeons, Moustached Treeswift, numerous and thunderous Blyth's Hornbills, a solitary Palm Cockatoo, Ruby-throated and Dusky Myzomelas at a flowering tree and after much searching, four very peculiar Brown-headed Crows. *What a morning.* Returning to the comfort of our ship and a very welcome shower, we cruised over to Pulau Kris. Here, at what is regarded as the finest of the Raja Ampat diver resorts, we were, thanks to the generosity of David's friend, Max - the owner of the resort - permitted to snorkel his superlative reef and bird the resort grounds. Albeit a little quieter than anticipated bird-wise, we still ended up with fine views of the often very elusive Dusky Scrubfowl and Glossy-mantled Manucode. Our thanks to Max and the hospitable staff of the resort.



Limestone Karst at Waigeo by K. David Bishop





Varied Honeyeater by David and Judy Smith

With a bit of a storm brewing, we found a good, safe anchorage for the night, only changing position to be nearer to our supertramp island in the early hours of the morning. David and Glen set off to scout the landing at an island David knew from his previous surveys of the Raja Ampats. As luck would have it, whilst the ‘cats were away’, a flock of circa 3,000 shorebirds migrated by. *So frustrating.* As we cruised to our tiny speck of an island, good numbers of seabirds were out fishing, including some fine views of delicate Black-naped Terns, a few Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, some strange, strikingly black-and-white shearwaters - perhaps Tropical Shearwaters - and, with a group of Greater Crested Terns, at least two possible

Aleutian Terns (we are still working on the images for a definitive ID). Landing in two tenders on a sublimely beautiful sandy beach, we explored this tiny classic supertramp island, which was densely covered in coconuts, pandanus and mangrove-like plant communities.

This was our only chance for several very localised species and we saw the lot! Superb Violet-necked Lories were nesting and provided great scope views, similarly good looks were enjoyed of Olive Honeyeater - which looks very different here from that illustrated in the book and may be a new taxon, Varied Honeyeaters - which were typically vociferous and abundant, the lovely Arafura Fantail, our first Moluccan Starlings, Torresian Crows, and best of all, a pair of Island Whistlers attending young. The latter has an incredibly circumscribed range on a small scatter of tiny islands and is very rarely, if ever, seen by birders.

Eventually tearing ourselves away from this idyllic place, we returned to our ship and cruised southwards towards the island of Kofiau. Passing hundreds of wintering Red-necked Phalaropes as we approached our destination, we arrived just at dusk and in time for an ineffable sunset.

After a relatively leisurely breakfast, we boated over to the welcoming arms of Kofiau and the villagers whom David had last birded with in 2012. Having checked things out earlier the previous



Sunset by K. David Bishop



evening, David and Glen had organised things in advance and thus a group of able and willing men were standing by to escort us into the forest.



Kofiau Paradise-Kingfisher by Roy Giles

It is so refreshing to literally stand at the edge of a village in Indonesia and watch groups of large birds, such as Eclectus Parrots, disport themselves seemingly without a care in the world. Multiple and prolonged scope views of these strikingly dimorphic birds provided an uplifting start to our birding on Kofiau. In short order, we enjoyed scope views of Metallic Starlings, a pair of White-bellied Cuckooshrikes, two Sacred Kingfishers and a Grey-streaked Flycatcher - the first of its kind for Kofiau (see Diamond, Mauro and Bishop 2015). A gentle walk through the gardens of Tapiok (Cassava) accompanied by Spectacled

Imperial Pigeons (aka Moluccan I.P.), Glossy Swiftlets and a lumbering Great-billed Parrot soon brought us to the beginnings of the forest. No sooner had we entered the shade afforded by the 100ft tall trees than one of our two most sought after beasts, the endemic Kofiau Paradise-Kingfisher, announced his territory. Seemingly in the blink of an eye, we were in raptures as this truly exquisite jewel permitted everyone to drink their fill. *Hmmm*

A brief squall freshened the morning air as we continued on into the forest interior, passing carefully cut planks of wood destined for the island's first school. We ignored the calls of fruit-doves and Large-billed Gerygones before finally tracking down the second and final Kofiau endemic, the Kofiau Monarch - the specific name of which honours Queen Julianae of the Netherlands. Our quarry proved a little less than confiding and with the heat and humidity assailing us, it took three different birds to ensure everyone enjoyed satisfactory views of this species, which is still only known from the single type specimen. We were only the second ever bird group to see the Kofiau Paradise-Kingfisher and the Kofiau Monarch! *Fabulous, just fabulous!*

Bearing in mind that we had a long sea-voyage to Obi and ideally wanted to be there by dawn, we turned tail and headed back to the beach. After sipping freshly eviscerated coconuts with the villagers, we made our thanks and waved goodbye and headed out of the lagoon towards the little-known Boo Islands. Our time to relax and snooze was rudely disturbed by a huge pod of Pilot Whales basking some distance off to the south. As it turns out, these were NOT Melon-headed Whales as surmised at the time, however, the bull Pilot Whale does look very similar. A skilful tack took us to within a few metres of these wonderful marine mammals, permitting an excellent opportunity to photograph this distinctive species. With flat seas and the sun beaming down on the ocean,



Carunculated Fruit-Dove by Roy Giles



activity thereafter seemingly seized and the opportunity was taken to enjoy a delicious, relaxed lunch and to bone up on the birds of Obi.



Orchid by K. David Bishop

And so to Obi, little-known and until very recently, never birded and only explored by a handful of museum collectors prior to World War II. This was one of the last remaining gaps in David's knowledge of the islands of Wallace so there was a special edge to our anticipation of what we might see. Clambering inelegantly onto the dock, we soon found our guide, Pak La Goda. Drivers and vehicles and were efficiently whisked off to the forest. Parking near a lovely, shallow river, we began with fine views of the very handsome North Moluccan endemic, Rufous-bellied Triller. Birding was slow and clearly, we were not in very salubrious habitat.

Notwithstanding, there should have been many more birds and the paucity of parrots and their kin sadly attested to the heavy handedness of the hunting and trapping in these parts.

Nevertheless, we persisted. Crossing the river was quite 'entertaining', although Nigel figured things out well enough! For the next few hours, we slowly but surely garnered a nice collection of species, many of them new to the many, including fine views of displaying Pacific Bazas, both Pygmy and Gurney's eagles in quick succession, a good look at a hunting female Variable Goshawk, Brown - now named Sultan's (by some) – Cuckoo-doves were numerous, Spectacled Imperial Pigeons, lovely Moustached Treeswifts, just two Blyth's Hornbills, fine views of a Common Kingfisher fishing in our river, brief views of Red-flanked Lorikeets zooming by, six Violet-necked Lories, amazing scope views of a North Moluccan Pitta, several White-bellied Cuckooshrikes, several drongos - referred to as Obi Spangled Drongo in the new field guide, Northern Fantail, for most, nice looks at a pair of Moluccan Monarchs, our first handsome Moluccan Flycatchers, the weird-sounding Paradise-Crow (yes, it is a bird of paradise) was quite common and we even found a pair nesting, brief views of two Northern Golden Bulbuls, a migrant Arctic Warbler, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler was heard, Metallic Starlings were common, more good views of the migrant Grey-streaked Flycatcher and just a handful of Halmahera Flowerpeckers; whereas both Black and Olive-backed Sunbirds were quite common. As we made our way back to the ship, under a burgeoning sun, a group of Eastern Yellow Wagtails entertained us as they foraged among the rank grasses of the coconut plantation.

Hot and very steamy aptly describes the afternoon, but it was garnished with some very fine birds. First up, a gorgeous pair of Blue-and-white Kingfishers gave the photographers a great opportunity, a Cinnamon-breasted or Obi Whistler put on a good show together with Spectacled Imperial Pigeons and a very handsome



Blue-and-white Kingfisher by K. David Bishop



endemic Rothschild's Cuscus. However, we only had one thing in mind, the almost mythical Moluccan or Obi Woodcock.



Turquoise Flycatcher by K. David Bishop

Since the beginning of time, this beast has been known from just a handful of specimens and no field sightings. Then some wild and woolly students decided that Obi was worthy of some serious ornithological attention and suddenly we were in contention to actually see the myth. Nevertheless, it had been made quite clear to me that our chances were very slim as the birds “do not display from November to January”. Fortunately, birds often ignore such ‘dictates’ and right on time we heard and then saw one and then two of these incredible creatures flying around us, uttering their peculiar chatter as they hurried across the early

night sky. Silhouetted initially and then as we got their range lit in the light of our powerful torches, it was an almost unimaginable treat. *Incredible*. I never thought to see this bird in my lifetime. *WOW!!!!* Everything else for a while seemed superfluous. I was stunned for several days. *Amazing*.

Our final morning on Obi found us on the road or rather, logging track we should have been on from the beginning. And it was clear that this place was much more birdy than the other site. A flowering tree was alive with 40+ Red-flanked Lorikeets which gave us some great scope views, along with Wallacean Cicadabird. Out of the blue, a movement well ahead of us drew my attention and there, much to our collective relief, was not one, not two but a whole mess of Carunculated Fruit-Doves. Much of the next while was spent watching this very poorly-known Obi endemic. *Fabulous stuff*. A pair of richly clad Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeons and a superb Scarlet-breasted Fruit-Dove, neatly found by Glen, added to the lustre of yet another exclamatory session of birding. Hustling back to the ship, we set sail due south for the huge island of Seram and an afternoon of relaxed and, sadly, rather unproductive seawatching.

Waking up the next morning, we found ourselves in arguably THE loveliest bay on the planet. Towering limestone crags covered in lush forest loomed above us and dropped vertically into the sea, whilst a picture-postcard village welcomed us with drivers and vehicles for our exploration of the interior. Finally drawing to halt at a pass at circa 680m, we then spent the morning slowly birding down through a mosaic of hill forest and secondary woodland.

Albeit rather on the quiet side at first, things slowly picked up, such that by the end of the morning we had accumulated a fine selection of beautiful species, including Pacific Baza, our first Black Eagle, a displaying Gurney's Eagle, several Brahminy Kites, exceptional and prolonged scope views of very obliging and sumptuous Claret-breasted Fruit-Doves, good numbers of Seram Mountain Pigeons flew over,



Seram White-eye by K. David Bishop



our first Seram Swiftlets, a gem of a female Lazuli Kingfisher, more Blyth's Hornbills, a pair of the handsome Spotted Kestrels, good numbers of Red-cheeked and Eclectus Parrots, Red Lories and Coconut Lorikeets, a couple of the endemic Grey-collared Orioles, Seram White-eyes, many Moluccan Starlings, more Grey-streaked Flycatchers and Ashy Flowerpeckers were notably common. Undoubtedly though, the two gems of the morning were the flock of ten Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrots - which we all enjoyed at length through the scope, and as many as 20 of the peculiar Long-crested Mynas. Roy very sharply spotted a roadside immature Black Bittern for us in the lead vehicle. *It was quite a morning.* Whilst everyone headed back for lunch, David went on a mission of exploration and found the high pass he had been looking for at 1300m.



Sawai Bay, Seram by K. David Bishop

Koel, vulgar Channel-billed Cuckoos, our first Seram Friarbirds – which were noisy but surprisingly difficult to see and Violet Crow - which are notably small forest dwelling members of the family suggesting that splitting them as Pygmy Crows might be more appropriate.

Departing much earlier than the previous day, we drove up to the second highest pass at circa 1200m, amidst some very fine looking upland forest. As was the case throughout our time on Seram, birding was slow, very slow, and just plain hard work. However, at these 'high' elevations, it was a noticeably more comfortable climate, which was some compensation. Notwithstanding, the morning got off to a good start with fine scope views of a lone Metallic Pigeon and a small flock of very vocal Island Leaf Warblers.

Gradually working our way upwards, a songful and responsive pair of lovely Streak-breasted Fantails put on a great show. *What a neat endemic.* A little further on, in an area of rather stunted woodland characterised by numerous pitcher-plants *Nepenthes* sp, we finally encountered a mixed flock which gave us the very distinctively sounding Moluccan Brush Cuckoo, the uncommon Seram Honeyeater and an attractive pair of Turquoise Flycatchers, plus loads of Seram White-eyes and a Mountain Tailorbird with a barely fledged young. A single female White-bibbed Fruit-Dove was one of only two we saw all tour. Despite a concerted effort, birding continued to be slow; Moluccan King Parrots eluded almost everyone, as did the peculiar Rufescent Dark-eye. A flowering tree,



Idyllic Islands by K. David Bishop



a little high to be really comfortable to work, eventually yielded good looks at the very handsome male Wakolo Myzomela, along with the appropriately named Drab Myzomela. As we made our back downhill toward our ship, KDB spotted a male Superb Fruit Dove depart a nest located deep in the



Chinese Crested Tern by K. David Bishop

forest but just back from the road. It was one of those fortunate moments when we were all lucky enough to see this beautiful bird carry-in fine twigs to pass over to his female sitting on the partially built nest. During the afternoon, we returned to mid-level elevations only to discover that the incredible din of millions of Cicadas drowned out any hope of hearing birds, and likely seeing them too. We persisted and were rewarded with good looks at Seram Imperial Pigeons, several Blyth's Hornbills along with a similar list of parrots and their kin as seen the previous afternoon.

Overnight, our ship shifted station to nearby Sawai Bay, where the next morning we ascended a steep and wonderfully forested road. With the intention of reaching the highest pass on the entire cross-island road, we were stopped in our tracks at circa 1100m by a broken down truck. *Darn it!* Nevertheless, as it happened, it turned out to be a wonderful piece of serendipity. Walking back down through Manusela National Park, we almost immediately found a pair of extremely rarely seen Blue-eared Lorikeets - here far below their 'normal' elevational range and not a species we really had any hope of seeing. Here we also enjoyed great scope views of several Seram Mountain Pigeons and at last caught up with the spectacular Moluccan King Parrot. Continuing further down the road, we were struck by how uncannily quiet it was, although we did find one of our only two Seram Golden Bulbuls. Nevertheless, our ex-poacher turned ranger-guide led us unerringly to a pair of the incredibly rare and endemic Purple-naped Lories. Watching such rare birds at length as they attended camouflaging huge red blossoms was, for me, a dream-come-true. Eventually, we dragged ourselves away and headed further downhill, but the quiet birding returned and there were seemingly no birds! Completely out of the blue a very, very lucky few flushed a Seram Thrush from the side of the road, sadly never to be seen again.

The bird-quiet continued, and as we had already begun to detect the previous day, it was likely to continue, especially with the incredible din of the cicadas now screaming at full force. With the benefit of our experience on Buru and elsewhere, we can now look back and conclude that many, if not most, of the birds on Seram were breeding, actually attending nests and thus exceptionally quiet and inconspicuous. It certainly didn't make the leaders' task very easy.



Salmon-crested Cockatoo by K. David Bishop





Black-tipped Monarch by K. David Bishop

confiding, permitting us to approach sufficiently close so that we could all see the diagnostic black-tipped bill. *An incredible piece of good fortune!* Apparently, this one bird has migrated from its breeding site off the south coast of China for the last few years along with a flock of Greater Crested Terns (which also nest at the same site) to spend the Palearctic winter off the coast of northern Seram. *Truly amazing!!!!* Not surprisingly, we all returned to the ship bubbling with excitement. For virtually the only time on the entire trip, it poured with rain during the afternoon, severely curtailing our birding. However, we returned to ‘Parrot Valley’ where we reacquainted ourselves with great scope views of several species that had been new for us only the day before.

With so many more species still to find on Seram (and a few major problems to overcome on Boano), we decided to forgo visiting Boano for one more Monarch and instead departed very early and drove up to the highest pass on Seram, located at 1300m. Misty, damp, cool and seemingly rather birdless, we kept on plugging away, looking for mixed flocks. Eventually, we did manage to drag out several views of Drab Whistlers, along with the ever-present Streakbreasted Fantail. Tony found us a Sacred Kingfisher at 1200m! *What the heck was it doing up there?* A male Pale Cicadabird gave okay views as it fed in the canopy with a mixed flock, but sadly, Rufescent and Grey-hooded Dark-eyes only gave a couple of very quick views to a very lucky few. We had given Seram a very thorough workout and despite essentially missing a couple of endemics, we did remarkably well considering how quiet and inactive the birds were. It is all too easy to quickly forget just how much we had seen and the magnitude of what we had seen. For me, best of all was to see conservation successfully in action. As we cruised along Seram’s north coast, to see the wonderful extent of its forests was similarly uplifting. Long may those forests persist.

An afternoon of cruising produced several large pods of dolphins, which, unfortunately, were too far off to specifically identify. Another fine sunset was enjoyed as we cruised, through the night, to the island of Ambon. Unfortunately, it was time to extend our heartfelt thanks to the ship and its wonderful crew and to say goodbye to those not continuing on the Buru extension.

We woke relatively late, and I’m sure that was appreciated by everyone as it certainly helped recharge the batteries for the days to come.

Needing a change of pace, we returned to the ship and made ready to head out in the two tenders to a little, sandy cay. Skirting reefs and bowing under the burning sun, we quickly found our destination (thank heavens for Google Earth) and a flock of resting Greater Crested Terns. And there, in their midst, was one of the world’s rarest birds, a Chinese Crested Tern. Looking distinctly whiter (paler?) and seemingly larger, it did stand out to the discerning eye. Attempting to hone in on the critical black-tipped bill with the scope from a bobbing boat was a very quick way to make one seasick. Fortunately, the bird was exceptionally



Buru Thrush by K. David Bishop



Phalaropes continued to accompany us right into Ambon harbour, where we dropped anchor conveniently near to the airport. Catching up on e-mails, saying our goodbyes, a transfer to the airport for some and then for the remainder, it was off to the back-end of Ambon for its sole endemic, the attractive Ambon White-eye. Possibly the quickest tick of the whole trip, we all had a good look at this well-defined species before ambling through the burgeoning city of Ambon and back to our ship. Dinner and then, under the professional and efficient aura of my wonderful friend - Pak Poli, we all transferred to the huge passenger ferry which would be our accommodation for the night as we trundled across to Buru.



Buru White-eye by K. David Bishop

Here we also enjoyed good looks at a pair of very handsome Collared Kingfishers, numerous Red-cheeked Parrots, excellent views of four Pale Cicadabirds, a nesting pair of Northern Fantails, another pair of Moluccan Flycatchers, a couple of Golden-headed Cisticolas and Flame-breasted Flowerpeckers. A brief foray uphill produced a flock of Buru Racket-tails in flight, but very nice all the same. Back to our resort and the much-appreciated air-conditioned and very spacious and most comfortable rooms. Chomping at the bit to get out again, we were soon heading back uphill to as high as 800m and what looked to be some very nice forest. Typical of the afternoons, it was rather quiet, although a pair of Moluccan Scops-Owls put on a great show that evening. Nevertheless, the road and its associated forest looked very good for the days ahead. In fact, we were to become very familiar with this old logging track over the next three days as we concentrated our efforts at high elevations, where virtually all of our remaining desired birds supposedly lived.

For the next three days, we typically departed between at 04:00 and 04:30, as we made our way for two hours up to as high as 1438m, where we could see, in the distance, the lovely Danau (Lake) Rana, hidden in the folds of still pristine forested hills. On the first and third day, we returned to our resort after the birding gave up the ghost for a break and lunch. There was then the option, for those who wished, of relaxing at the resort or doing some late afternoon/early evening birding on the nearby slopes.



Buru Golden Bulbul by K. David Bishop





Immature Black Eagle by K. David Bishop

Unlike Seram, the upland forests of Buru were quite active bird-wise with something always singing or calling. Mixed flocks predominated, and typically included the distinctive Buru population of Wakolo Myzomela, the rather uninspiring looking Buru Honeyeater, Black-faced Friarbird – separating this species from its mimic, the Black-eared Oriole, is much more difficult than the new field guide suggests, Pale Cicadabird was notably common and easy to observe and similarly, the Drab Whistler; conversely, the so-called Yellow-throated Whistler (Buru birds have white throats so the new field guide's name of Moluccan Whistler is

much more apt) was only finally seen on the second to last afternoon in the mountains, when a pair was finally detected in a mixed flock at 1400m, Tawny-backed Fantail was only found to be relatively easy to see at our highest elevation of 1650m when we were searching for the Madanga, Buru Golden Bulbul, Mountain Tailorbird, Arctic and Island Leaf-warblers, the distinctive grey-bellied form of Mountain White-eye, along with the very common Buru White-eye and Flame-breasted Flowerpeckers.

Some species required a lot more work but we finally dug out at least a couple of Streak-breasted Jungle Flycatchers, a most uninspiring little bird. Undoubtedly THE highlight of the first morning was the incredible views of the virtually unknown Buru Thrush. Little did we know at that stage that we had been lucky enough to happen on the territory of a pair attending young at the nest. At least one pair of impressive Black Eagles regularly patrolled the ridgeline and when a young bird flushed from its huge nest, we better understood the reason why: they were still feeding a very demanding youngster. Although we had seen them in flight, everyone wanted to see the Racket-tailed Parrots; and perched they finally did, showing rich sulphur yellow undertail coverts, which are not shown in the new field guide. For those that went out for the late afternoon session of the 26th, they were treated to the most amazing good fortune in watching, at length, the little known Lesser Masked Owl. *Now that is quite something.*

On our second day in the Buru uplands, for those that wished, we remained all day in the field - the idea being to search for the near-mythical Black-browed Parrot during the late afternoon. Well, the strategy worked perfectly, and from a superb overlook that commanded a view for miles out over fine looking forest, we heard the distinctive calls of this little-known parrot. Calls were intermittent but after about an hour so, Glen suddenly shouted that he had got it! *Fabulous.* The only problem was that only one client was able to see it before it disappeared from view. It was all so very quick and so very frustrating and I know for sure that I for one, will have to go back!



Buru Green Pigeon by David and Judy Smith





Madanga by David and Judy Smith

Scrambling through the most awful tangle of lawyer vines, with various yells of ‘got it’ and ‘come here’, we all finally enjoyed the most unimaginably wonderful views of a species known from just four specimens and only seen previously by less than ten people. *Fantastic!!!* It was a pretty happy bunch of birders that returned to the resort for a very late lunch. Again, options were offered and this time it was those that rested who made the smart choice as the late afternoon was perhaps, not surprisingly, a non-event.

Just for a change, we headed out westwards well before dawn along the coast towards the small township of Bara and some very nice sections of tall moist forest. Three Forsten’s Scrubfowl flushed across the road, with one remaining perched up in a bush for long enough for at least some of the folks in the rear vehicles to get onto it. Black-eared Oriole showed exceptionally, however, our primary target was the worrisomely rare Buru Green Pigeon. In fact, Glen and I had only commented that we thought it was a million to one chance when Dougald piped up that he had the pigeon perched out. *Amazing*. It was just one of those trips. For the next 15 minutes or so, we ‘oohed’ and ‘aahed’ over the fine scope views of this strangely rare endemic. But we weren’t done yet. Claret-breasted Fruit-Doves and Pied Imperial Pigeons gave great scope views and hordes of Red Lories gave us their best views yet. But the real last hurrah was a gorgeous South Moluccan Pitta, which Glen managed to get everyone on to.

And so, it was time to pack up and move out. Returning the way we had come to Namlea, the capital town of Buru, we stopped at a small forested lake where a handful of waterbirds added to the lustre of our list: Little Pied and Little Black cormorants, Australasian Darter, 26 Tricoloured and one Australasian Grebes, Purple Heron, several Little Egrets and a couple of migrant Common Kingfishers. Dinner included Magnum ice-creams, which seemed a perfect way to conclude this most

On our final day in the Buru uplands, nearly the entire group elected to make the climb from the high pass to a ridge of unknown elevation. It was steep, very steep in parts, and most certainly not a trivial hike. But what a bunch of troopers the group was, nary a whine nor complaint. As the trail finally levelled out, the density of razor-sharp lawyer vine increased and we were finally in what we believed to be the habitat of the mythical, legendary Madanga. A brief glimpse of a possible bird raised our hopes and our adrenalin. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. But everyone was up for it and yet again, it was Glen who found the flock and found the bird.



Our intrepid group by K. David Bishop



memorable of tours. Accessing our rooms on the ferry was a little less fraught than in Ambon and before we knew it, we were back in the hustle bustle of a small city. Thanks to Pak Poli's forethought, we all had our own rooms immediately available so we could catch up on some more sleep, shower and complete any last minute packing. By early afternoon, everyone had scattered to the four corners and it was just down to Glen and I to toast your health, safe travels and to thank each and every one of you for contributing to what we both regard as the best tour we have ever led.

ANNOTATED BIRD LIST (253 seen & heard)

H = Species which were heard only.

☐ = Taxonomic notes

BIA = The new field guide to the Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago.

ANATIDAE

Spotted Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna guttata

Two on Obi at dusk.

Raja Shelduck

Tadorna radjah

Two on a small island in the Raja Ampats.

MEGAPODIIDAE

Red-billed Brush-Turkey (H)

Talegalla cuvieri

Several heard, including one very close by in the Tamrau lowlands.

Dusky Scrubfowl

Megapodius freycinet

A total of five seen on Pulau Kri, including one seen especially well by the entire group. Many thanks to Max for permitting us to visit his magnificent dive resort.

☐ BIA treat populations of *Megapodius* on Seram and Buru as

Forsten's Scrubfowl – At least ten heard in degraded forest, ca 500m, on Buru and three birds flushed from the roadside near Bara including one that sat up long enough for some participants to enjoy good views of this rather dull coloured scrubfowl.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Streaked Shearwater

Calonectris leucomelas

Ten of these northern migrants seen well as we cruised from Sorong towards Waigeo and ca. 30 as we cruised from the Raja Ampats to Kofiau.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater

Ardenna pacifica

A large group of ca. 60 flying west along the north coast of Batanta and one between Kofiau and Obi.

Shearwater sp – Six very black and white shearwaters were seen at a considerable distance with a fishing flock in the Raja Ampats.

Bulwer's Petrel

Bulweria bulwerii

Just one seen all too briefly as we cruised from Sorong towards Waigeo.



PODICIPEDIDAE**Tricolored Grebe***Tachybaptus tricolor*

Twenty-six counted, mostly in breeding plumage, on a small lake near Namlea, Buru.

Australasian Grebe*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

One in breeding plumage, on a small lake near Namlea, Buru.

ARDEIDAE**Black Bittern***Dupetor flavicollis*

One immature well spotted by Roy in rank, roadside grasses at low elevations on Seram.

Striated Heron*Butorides striata*

One adult seen nicely in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo. One seen by some on Buru.

Eastern Cattle Egret*Bubulcus coromandus*

One adult seen nicely in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo; ca 50 among domesticated Banteng cattle on Obi and ten at the same site the following morning.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

One on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

One during our brief afternoon's birding on Ambon; six on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

Pacific Reef Egret*Egretta sacra*

Two dark morphs in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo; a total of four in the Raja Ampats during our last morning there; four seen from our lovely Buru resort and two on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

FREGATIDAE**Lesser Frigatebird***Fregata ariel*

Widespread and often very common with large numbers seen daily in the Raja Ampats and as many as ca. 1,000 off Kofiau. Surprisingly this was the only species of Frigatebird we recorded on this trip.

SULIDAE**Brown Booby***Sula leucogaster*

Circa 30 as we cruised from the Raja Ampats to Kofiau; ca. 20 between Kofau and Obi and ca. 20 between Obi and Seram.

PHALACROCORACIDAE**Little Pied Cormorant***Microcarbo melanoleucos*

Two at dusk in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo and six on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

Little Black Cormorant*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

A gathering of 14 counted drying out on a large dead tree on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

ANHINGIDAE**Australasian Darter***Anhinga novaehollandiae*

Three on a small forest-lined lake near Namlea, Buru.

☐ BIA refer to this taxon as Australian Darter.



PANDIONIDAE**Eastern Osprey***Pandion (haliaetus) cristatus*

One in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo; one attending a nest in a dead tree above our host village on Kofiau; two over degraded coastal forest near Bara, Buru.

☐ BIA lump the Osprey as one species *P. haliaetus*

ACCIPITRIDAE**Pacific Baza***Aviceda subcristata*

Two displaying over degraded lowland forest on Obi and a third bird observed that afternoon in hill forest. Ones and twos observed in hill forest on Seram.

Black Eagle*Ictinaetus malaiensis*

Singles seen daily cruising over Seram's forests. Notably common and conspicuous in the upland forests of Buru where a pair were regularly observed hunting along a steep ridge. It was this same pair that were the parents of an immature bird we saw fly off from a huge nest, located in the top of a large moss cushion half-way up a tall tree on the side of a steep ridge at ca. 1250m. Some of the close views of this species hunting below us and at eye-level were spectacular.

Pygmy Eagle*Hieraaetus weiskei*

Two over the forest on Waigeo; these are only the second and third records of this species for the island. One soaring over degraded forest on Obi. One over upland forest on Seram and one flushed from just below the track within upland forest on Buru.

Gurney's Eagle*Aquila gurneyi*

Fine views of an individual in display flight over Seram.

Chinese Sparrowhawk*Accipiter soloensis*

A possible individual of this Palearctic migrant seen in flight over Seram.

☐ BIA place this taxon in *Tachyspiza*

Variable Goshawk*Accipiter hiogaster*

One female seen nicely in flight in the Tamrau lowlands. We also observed a female hunting at the edge of degraded riverine forest on Obi.

☐ BIA place this taxon in *Tachyspiza* and refer to it as Varied Goshawk.

Grey-headed Goshawk*Accipiter poliocephalus*

One of these handsome birds dashed across the road within the Tamrau lowlands.

Rufous-necked Sparrowhawk*Accipiter erythrauchen*

One seen very briefly on Obi.

☐ BIA place this taxon in *Tachyspiza*

Brahminy Kite*Haliastur indus*

Widespread and seen daily in 1s and 2s until we reached Seram. Thereafter, just singles on one day on Seram and on two days on Buru.

White-bellied Sea Eagle*Haliaeetus leucogaster*

One fishing far out to sea as we cruised from Obi to Seram. ☐ BIA place this taxon in *Ichthyophaga* and changed the widely accepted English name to White-bellied Fish Eagle.

RALLIDAE**Pale-vented Bush-hen (H)***Amaurornis moluccana*

Heard at the roadside on Seram.



SCOLOPACIDAE**Pacific Golden Plover***Pluvialis fulva*

An impressive but distant flock of circa 3,000+ migrating shorebirds, most likely belong to this species, seen in flight shortly after dawn (06.15), moving east along the north coast of Batanta.

Moluccan Woodcock*Scolopax rochussenii*

Extraordinary! We enjoyed multiple views of this very little known species on Obi. Watching this virtual myth, which has only very recently been rediscovered, display around us at dusk, was an undoubted highlight of the entire cruise. Having been advised and read that this species did not display during November and December we were especially grateful for ‘Orni’s’ munificence.

Common Sandpiper*Actitis hypoleucos*

One on Waigeo and one on Obi.

Red-necked Phalarope*Phalaropus lobatus*

Clearly a large part of the area we traversed forms a major wintering ground for this Palearctic breeder. We recorded ca. 300 in the Raja Ampats; ca. 30 between Kofiau and Obi; ca. 40 between Obi and Seram; ca. 40 along the north coast of Seram (west of Sawai) and ca 50 as we rounded the south side of Ambon.

STERNIDAE**Gull-billed Tern***Gelochelidon nilotica*

Revealed in images of the flock of terns we observed at length whilst studying the Chinese Crested Tern. Info. courtesy David and Judy Smith.

Greater Crested Tern*Thalasseus bergii*

Widespread and generally common including some 50 roosting on a small sandy cay off the north coast of Seram wherein we found the Chinese Crested Tern.

Chinese Crested Tern*Thalasseus bernsteini*

Known from just a single old specimen collected near Halmahera (year 1861), this severely endangered species has recently sighted off Seram during four Palearctic winters. We duly investigated and there to our delight, standing out among the covey of Crested Terns was our quarry. A fine conclusion to yet another superlative morning’s birding. Our thanks to Craig Robson for so generously sharing this exciting find in a previous year’s trip report.

Little Tern*Sternula albifrons*

One as we cruised from Sorong towards Waigeo.

Black-naped Tern*Sterna sumatrana*

Two as we cruised from Sorong towards Waigeo and ca. 50 fishing in the Raja Ampats. A very pretty tern.

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

Ca. 50 as we cruised from Sorong towards Waigeo.

Aleutian Tern*Sterna aleutica*

Two birds in non-breeding plumage together with Greater Crested Terns fishing in the Raja Ampats may have belonged to this taxon.

STERCORARIDAE**Pomarine Jaeger***Stercorarius pomarinus*

Three of these bold-chested birds were seen well as we crossed from Sorong to the island of Waigeo. An uncommon winter migrant in these waters.



COLUMBIDAE**Rock Dove***Columba livia*

Just two on Obi.

Spotted Dove*Streptopelia chinensis*

One on two morning's on Seram and small numbers on Buru in scrubby coastal areas with a total of 14 counted as we returned to Namlea. **Introduced.**

Brown Cuckoo-Dove*Macropygia phasianella*

□ BIA split this taxon into seven or eight species. We observed Sultan's Cuckoo-Dove *M. doreya* on Waigeo and Obi; we observed Amboina Cuckoo-Dove *M. amboinensis* commonly on Seram and Buru. This classification is based upon a published, peer-reviewed paper. NOTE: Pratt & Beehler's (2015) new field guide to birds of New Guinea treats brown cuckoo-doves throughout New Guinea as belonging to *M. amboinensis*, whilst restricting *phasianella* to Australia.

Great Cuckoo-Dove*Reinwardtoena reinwardti*

Four singletons were seen nicely in flight in the Tamrau lowlands; singles seen on two days on Waigeo.

Common Emerald Dove*Chalcophaps indica*

□ BIA split Asian Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* from Pacific Emerald Dove *C. longirostris* (also split in Pratt & Beehler's (2015) new field guide to birds of New Guinea). Fine views of a lovely male as he fed at the roadside at dawn in the Seram lowlands.

Stephan's Emerald Dove*Chalcophaps stephani*

Flybys of single birds in the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

New Guinea Bronzewing (H)*Henicophaps albifrons*

Heard nicely on Waigeo.

Buru Green Pigeon*Treron aromaticus*

What a way to conclude a brilliant, brilliant tour! Thanks to some equally brilliant spotting by Dougald we all enjoyed prolonged 'scope views of this seemingly very rare endemic in degraded coastal forest near Bara, Buru.

NOTE: Formerly lumped under the wide-ranging Pomadour Pigeon *Treron pompadora*.

Scarlet-breasted Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus bernsteinii*

Fine views of this gorgeous bird in the forested hills of Obi.

Wompoo Fruit-Dove (H)*Ptilinopus magnificus*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus perlatus*

Superb 'scope views of four in the forested hills above Sorong and one on Waigeo.

Superb Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus superbus*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo; a pair were seen nicely on Kofiau. Subsequently we witnessed an amazing incident in which we observed the gorgeous male carrying sticks to the sitting female who was building a nest in tall, moist forest on Seram. Rather cute listening to her give occasional single notes to encourage his efforts.

Beautiful Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus pulchellus*

One in the forested hills above Sorong; an amazingly confiding female on her nest 2m up in the limestone forest near one of the Wilson's BOP display sites on Waigeo.

White-bibbed Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus rivoli*

□ Pratt & Beehler (2015) in the new New Guinea field guide split *rivoli* into three species: Moluccan Fruit-Dove *P. prasinorrhous* – We saw one female at ca. 1200m on Seram and heard it



regularly in the hills of Buru where a female was flushed from her nest containing a single squab;
 Mountain Fruit-Dove *P. bellus* – Known throughout the mountains of mainland New Guinea;
 White-bibbed Fruit-Dove *P. rivoli* – Confined to the Geelvink Bay islands and small islands off SE New Guinea.

Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus viridis*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands, on Waigeo and Kofiau. Superb 'scope views of at least three calling males on Seram (600m asl); heard occasionally on Buru where just one seen. Truly a very handsome dove.

Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus iozonus*

As many as ten seen superbly in the forested hills above Sorong; heard regularly on Waigeo.

Carunculated Fruit-Dove*Ptilinopus granulifrons*

After not seeing hide nor hair of this highly sought after species on our first day on Obi it was with enormous relief and immense pleasure on our final morning on Obi, that we found a fruiting tree with at least ten very confiding birds. Despite that we were unable to obtain a sound recording of the species the call was noted as being very similar to Orange-bellied F-D.

Dwarf Fruit-Dove*tilinopus nainus*

Two seen well in the 'scope on Waigeo.

Spectacled Imperial Pigeon*Ducula perspicillata*

□ BIA split this taxa into two species but instead refer to Spectacled I.

P. as Moluccan Imperial Pigeon – We observed six on Kofiau and four superbly one afternoon on Obi and another four there the following day.

Seram Imperial Pigeon*Ducula negelcti*

Seen and heard moderately commonly and daily on Seram.

Spice Imperial Pigeon*Ducula myristicivora*

□ Pratt & Beehler (2015) in the new New Guinea field guide split *myristicivora* into two species: Spice Imperial Pigeon *D. myristicivora* – We saw and heard this distinctive taxon commonly on Waigeo and several other islands in the Raja Ampats; Geelvink Imperial Pigeon *D. geelvinkiana* – Confined to Biak, Mios Num and Numfor.

Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon*Ducula rufigaster*

One seen in flight through the forested hills above Sorong; heard in the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeon*Ducula basilica*

Two birds provided fine 'scope views on Obi, where also heard.

Pinon's Imperial Pigeon*Ducula pinon*

Notably common with a total of 12 counted and several individuals studied at length in the 'scope in the forested hills above Sorong. Smaller numbers observed in the Tamrau lowlands and common on Waigeo.

Zoe's Imperial Pigeon*Ducula zoeae*

Fine 'scope views of two along with several Pinon's in the forested hills above Sorong. Two seen on Waigeo where heard regularly.

Pied Imperial Pigeon*Ducula bicolor*

Common during both days on Waigeo (10 & 8); common during three days on Seram (6, 10 & 12); smaller numbers seen on two days on Buru (6 & 2).

Buru Mountain Pigeon*Gymnophaps mada*

Fine 'scope views of as many as ten on two days in the upland forests of western Buru.

Seram Mountain Pigeon*Gymnophaps stalker*

Common daily in the upland forests of Seram including a total of 20 on the first day.



CUCULIDAE**Ivory-billed Coucal (H)***Centropus menbeki*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands.

NOTE: More widely known as Great Black Coucal.

Goliath Coucal (H)*Centropus goliath*

Heard once just prior to dawn on Obi.

Lesser Coucal*Centropus bengalensis*

One seen well in secondary growth on Seram (600masl) and two in the lowlands of Seram.

Dwarf Koel*Microdynamis parva*

One female seen in flight and a pair heard giving their distinctive duet in the Tamrau lowlands.

Pacific Koel*Eudynamis orientalis*

One female seen superbly in the Seram lowlands and singles heard there on two days. Two koels were heard on Obi and appear to represent the first of its kind for this island, however, specific identification remains pending subject to specific identification.

Channel-billed Cuckoo*Scythrops novaehollandiae*

One heard and seen in flight over Kofiau and two seen and heard in the Seram lowlands. Both sightings are from locations where this species is supposedly a winter visitor from Australia.

However, the fact that it was recorded in mid-November (when this species should be in Australia) and was calling loudly suggests that it may actually be breeding in these islands.

Little Bronze Cuckoo (H)*Chrysococcyx minutillus*

Both songs heard in the forested hills above Sorong.

Brush Cuckoo (H)*Cacomantis variolosus*

Heard widely but never seen from the forested hills above Sorong; the Tamrau lowlands; Waigeo; Kofiau, Obi and Seram.

Moluccan Cuckoo*Cacomantis aeruginosus*

Fine 'scope views of this very elusive species in the uplands (1200m asl) of Seram. The impressively distinctive song of this poorly known species was heard widely throughout the uplands of Seram. Less commonly heard on Buru where one was seen in flight at 1400m asl.

TYTONIDAE**Moluccan Masked Owl***Tyto sororcula*

Fabulous views in degraded hill forest on Buru.

□ BIA now lumps this taxon with Australasian Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae*.

STRIGIDAE**Moluccan Scops Owl***Otus magicus*

One heard and seen briefly on Obi. Two pairs counter-singing in the hill forests of Buru produced several fine studies of this widespread species. Several others heard and one spotlighted on our second night on Buru.

Hantu Boobook*Ninox squamiphila*

□ BIA split this taxon into two species: Seram Boobook *Ninox squamiphila* – We heard and saw this species briefly at dawn on Seram; Buru Boobook *N. hantu* – Nary a peep out of the bird despite concerted efforts on four nights.

Papuan Boobook (H)*Ninox theomacha*

Heard on both mornings on Waigeo.



PODARGIDAE**Marbled Frogmouth (*H*)***Podargus ocellatus*

Heard early one morning on Waigeo.

Papuan Frogmouth*Podargus papuensis*

Thanks to some great spotting by Benny we all enjoyed fine 'scope views of this giant species during the daytime in the forested hills above Sorong.

AEGOTHELIDAE**Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar (*H*)***Aegotheles wallacii*

The distinctive call of this species was heard as we sat in the dark in the forests of Waigeo, waiting for the Red Birds of Paradise to perform.

CAPRIMULGIDAE**Large-tailed Nightjar***Caprimulgus macrurus*

Heard one evening on Obi and two seen the following morning before dawn along the road into the forest. One seen on Seram and on Buru.

HEMIPROCINIDAE**Moustached Tree Swift***Hemiprocne mystacea*

Small numbers (2 & 4) seen on two mornings on Waigeo; moderately common on Obi (4 & 10); less so on Seram (2-4 daily) and uncommon on Buru where just two were seen one morning.

APODIDAE**Glossy Swiftlet***Collocalia esculenta*

Widespread and seen daily; the commonest swiftlet throughout the tour. Smaller than the other two species and often seen flying much nearer the ground and close to forest surfaces.

Seram Swiftlet*Aerodramus ceramensis*

Very common, especially in the uplands of both Seram and Buru.

Uniform Swiftlet*Aerodramus vanikorensis*

Six over the forested hills above Sorong; six over Kofiau; common over Obi (30 & 15), Ambon (30) and Buru (30)

ALCEDINIDAE**Hook-billed Kingfisher***Melidora macrorrhina*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

Common Paradise-Kingfisher*Tanysiptera galatea*

Impressively common in the Waigeo forests especially at the Wilson's BOP display grounds where a total of six were present at one hide. Several seen, mostly in flight.

Kofiau Paradise-Kingfisher*Tanysiptera ellioti*

Undoubtedly this was one of THE highlights of the entire trip! We were only the second group of birders to see this spectacular species in the wild and boy did we see it well! To our utter delight it was notably common and we must have heard and seen at least six pairs during our morning on the island. One pair put on an exceptional display permitting everyone, including our astonished guides, to enjoy long, lingering 'scope views of this fabulous bird!

Rufous-bellied Kookaburra*Dacelo gaudichaud*

One in the forested hills above Sorong and two in the Tamrau lowlands.



Blue-black Kingfisher *Todiramphus nigrocyanus*

Absolutely incredible! This very little known species which KDB had only seen once in 40 years of birding in New Guinea gave some of the group memorable views as a pair perched (briefly), called and flew excitedly around us in the Tamrau lowlands.

Blue-and-white Kingfisher *Halcyon diops*

Fine views of a pair on Obi and a lovely pair in case someone missed it the following morning.

Lazuli Kingfisher *Todiramphus lazuli*

Fantastic views of the gorgeous female during our first morning of birding on Seram.

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris*

Moderately common in the upland forests of Buru – something of a surprise. However, almost abundant in the degraded drier coastal forests towards Namlea.

Beach Kingfisher *Todiramphus saurophagus*

First seen along the shores of the magical Kaboe Bay, Waigeo and thence on Pulau Kris and finally four on our super-tramp island in the Raja Ampats.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sanctus*

Two of this Australian migrant on Kofiau and much to our surprise one in upland forest, ca. 1200m on Seram. Thanks Tony.

Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Syma torotoro*

One seen in the forested hills above Sorong and two in the Tamrau lowlands. Heard on Waigeo.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Two of these Palearctic migrants on Obi, fishing along a lovely river and two along the shores of a small lake near Namlea, Buru.

Moluccan Dwarf Kingfisher (H) *Ceyx Lepidus*

Amazingly just one individual heard on our first morning on Seram.

Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx solitarius*

Heard regularly on Waigeo and in the Tamrau lowlands.

BUCEROTIDAE**Blyth's Hornbill** *Rhyticeros plicatus*

One in the forested hills above Sorong; ca. 12 in the Tamrau lowlands; notably common in the forests of Waigeo, with 15 on the first day and 30 on the second. Just two on Obi where hunting clearly is a problem. Notably common on Seram where we saw 2-8 every field session.

FALCONIDAE**Spotted Kestrel** *Falco moluccensis*

Fine views of a pair of this Indonesian endemic at 680m on Seram. Notably common in the uplands of Buru where we encountered as many as three pairs, often sitting at the side of the road or in exposed dead trees.

□ BIA refer to this species as Indonesian Kestrel.

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*

What a handsome bird. We enjoyed fine prolonged views of this scarce falcon at high elevations (ca. 1400m) on Buru.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One very dark individual seen over Kaboe Bay, Waigeo.



CACATUIDAE**Palm Cockatoo***Probosciger aterrimus*

Singles of these huge and very glamorous birds (and among my all-time favourites!) were observed in flight over the forested foothills above Sorong and during our second morning on Waigeo.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo*Cacatua galerita*

Just one over the forested foothills above Sorong but as many as 15 in the Tamrau lowlands. Common in the forests of Waigeo where ten and six recorded on respective mornings.

Salmon-crested Cockatoo*Cacatua moluccensis*

Magnificent views of a pair of these endangered endemics attending their nest hole near Sawai, Seram. Thereafter just one seen briefly high over Manusela National Park, Seram.

PSITTACIDAE**Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot***Micropsitta keiensis*

Two seen in flight over the forested foothills above Sorong but as many as 20 in the Tamrau lowlands.

Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot*Micropsitta bruijnii*

Thanks to some fine spotting by Glen, we were all treated to exceptional and prolonged 'scope views of ten of these mites foraging high in a 180 ft tree on Seram (ca 600m), including a pair copulating! What gems.

Moluccan King-Parrot*Alisterus amboinensis*

One scooted over our heads in the Tamrau lowlands and another behaved similarly on Waigeo. We finally got to proper grips with this very handsome species on Seram where we saw pairs and singles daily. It may have been slightly more common in the uplands of Buru where we saw several pairs on one day at least.

Buru Racket-tail*Prioniturus mada*

Moderately common although not as common as I had expected. We observed 2-6 daily but it took a concerted effort to 'scope a perched pair where we could see the tiny rackets (much smaller than other *Prioniturus* spp) in the uplands of Buru.

Eclectus Parrot*Eclectus roratus*

This spectacular, large, colourful parrot was common on throughout its range except on Obi where it was heard only. On Buru we recorded none, which is almost certainly a direct reflection of the depredations of the despicable bird trade. No argument, this species exhibits some of the most extreme sexual dimorphism in the bird world.

Red-cheeked Parrot*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*

Widespread and common on almost every island visited. This species happily does not appear to be a major target of the bird-trade.

Great-billed Parrot*Tanygnathus megalorhynchos*

What a truly fabulous creature. Thanks to Shita and Benie we enjoyed a wonderful experience watching a total of 300+ arriving in dribs and drabs to roost against a most wonderful sunset. Fine flight views of six on Kofiau; just one on Obi and 15 and 10 during respective afternoons birding in the lowlands of Seram – what a difference halfway decent protection has! Just one in the lowlands of western Buru.

Black-lored Parrot*Tanygnathus grammacus*

Well the strategy worked and we finally found the bird. We all heard it clearly BUT sadly only one very fortunate client was able to cotton on to Glen's directions as it scooted past a patrolling Black Eagle.



For years this species was known from just a handful of specimens and no field observations save those of Toxopeus in Siebers' (1930) account. There was and continues to be a great deal of speculation about this near-mythical Buru endemic, including many who thought it was only active at night. Despite the disappointment for most of not seeing this species, surely the wonder of even hearing such an evocative and incredibly rare bird was a special moment. Hearing it initially in the distance and then slightly closer at extended intervals made the search very exciting. Oh we were so close!

Red-flanked Lorikeet*Charmosyna placentis*

Three seen briefly in flight over the forested hills above Sorong; two pairs seen on Kofiau; and common on Obi where saw 12 on our first morning and as many as 40+ on the second including some fine 'scope views.

Chattering Lory (H)*Lorius garrulus*

Heard just once on Obi. This species is endemic to the North Moluccas and classified as 'Vulnerable' by Birdlife. Sadly as with so many parrots and lorries in Indonesia and the Philippines this species is clearly declining as a result of habitat destruction and human exploitation (the despicable bird-trade). Birdlife currently estimates its total population between 46,000 and 295,000 of which it is estimated that trappers may catch as many as 10% per year. Parrots and their kin appear, from our observations, to be especially hard hit on Obi.

Purple-naped Lory*Lorius domicella*

A long sought after species for this author. For years the Purple-naped Lory has been on the brink of extinction as a direct result of the bird trade. Happily, however, the efforts of various individuals including several whom we met on this trip have turned the situation around. Slowly but surely this lovely endemic is coming back to life and as a result, we were able to enjoy fine 'scope views of a pair of these birds as they fed and chattered at a flowering tree on Seram.

Black-capped Lory*Lorius lorry*

This closely related species albeit with a much wider distribution is now being brutally hammered by the cage-bird industry. We were thus fortunate to enjoy fine views of this striking species in the forested hills above Sorong; in the Tamrau lowlands and in the forests of Waigeo.

Black Lory*Chalcopsitta atra*

Four of these indelible birds flew by us in the forested hills above Sorong.

Violet-necked Lory*Eos squamata*

Fabulous views of at least one, possibly two pairs of these lovely birds nesting in the tops of dead coconut palms on our supertramp island in the Raja Ampats. As many as 20 on Kofiau and six on Obi. Interestingly this species sounds almost identical to Rainbow Lorikeet.

□ BIA - In my opinion the little darlings have made an awful hash of this one J BIA split this taxon into two species: Violet-necked Lory *Eos ricincta* which is confined to Halmahera and the bird we saw is now Scaled Lory *E. squamata*. Glen and I studied at length several individuals at several locations and can only surmise, based on these observations, that there is a great deal of individual variation and that BIA have been duped by this.

Red Lory*Eos bornea*

Small numbers (2-6) seen every field session on Seram but happily much more common on Buru especially in the tall secondary forest of the lowlands.

Blue-eared Lory*Eos semilarvata*

A major coup seeing such a little-known species somewhat below its known altitudinal range. A pair of these birds a little early in the day for some folks was perched long enough for most of us to see some of the colours and pattern at circa 1100m in Manusela National Park, Seram.



Coconut Lorikeet*Trichoglossus haematodus*

Formerly known as Rainbow Lorikeet, a widespread and familiar to Australian residents and New Guinea denizens. This taxon has now been split up into many species, the veracity of which only time will tell. We saw modest numbers in flight in the Tamrau lowlands; as many as 12 on Waigeo; notably common on Seram where we saw 10 – 20 every morning field session and smaller numbers during the afternoons; slightly less common on Buru but nevertheless fairly common especially in the lowlands of the west.

Large Fig-Parrot*Psittaculirostris desmarestii*

Surprisingly common in the Tamrau lowlands where we garnered as many as eight of these handsome New Guinea endemics.

Double-eyed Fig-Parrot*Cyclopsitta deiophthalma*

Two foraging high overhead in the forested hills above Sorong and two in the Tamrau lowlands.

PITTIDAE**South Moluccan Pitta***Erythropitta rubrinucha*

Thanks to some remarkable and very persistent work by Glen everyone enjoyed fine views of this lovely bird on our final morning on Buru ... whatever it actually is!

NOTE: Quite frankly this is where the current spate of seemingly kneejerk splitting is becoming ludicrous and in doing so it is creating a very confusing mess for everyone.

□ IOC the international checklist which is favoured by RBT splits the once single species of Blue-breasted (sometimes called Red-bellied) Pitta *Pitta erythrogaster* into a whole suite of barely distinguishable taxa – to my ear the vocalisations are essentially identical; Clements (Cornell and e-bird) go even further and split this taxon into 12 species! Yikes. BIA, however, having split everything else under the sun take a much more conservative route and retain the entire assemblage under *Erythropitta erythrogaster* which they rename Sahul Pitta (NOTE: Sulawesi, the Moluccas and the Philippines are NOT part of the Sahul shelf so I have no idea why they renamed this well established taxon thus). Enjoy.

North Moluccan Pitta*Erythropitta rufiventris*

Thanks to some very smart spotting by Jim we all enjoyed prolonged 'scope views of this lovely bird in the degraded forests of Obi.

Papuan Pitta (H)*Erythropitta macklotii*

Heard in the forested hills above Sorong and in the Tamrau lowlands.

Hooded Pitta (H)*Pitta sordida*

Two birds were calling vociferously back and forth either side of our path and boy they came close but unfortunately not close enough in the forested hills above Sorong.

Ivory-breasted Pitta (H)*Pitta maxima*

Heard at one location that was sadly inaccessible on Obi.

MELIPHAGIDAE**Drab Myzomela***Myzomela blasii*

A most appropriate epithet; we saw singles on two mornings on Seram.

Ruby-throated Myzomela*Myzomela eques*

Good 'scope views of the striking male at a flowering tree on Waigeo.

Dusky Myzomela*Myzomela obscura*

One at the same flowering tree as the Ruby-throated Myzomela on Waigeo. A second bird was subsequently seen on Obi.



Wakolo Myzomela*Myzomela wakoloensis*

□ BIA split this taxon into two or three species (and the IOC checklist splits what in my book was a single species into 6-7 species!): *Seram Myzomela Myzomela elizabethae* – We saw four of these lovely birds on the morning of the 21st Nov. in the uplands of Seram; *Buru Myzomela M. wakoloensis* – Moderately common in the uplands of Buru where we saw as many as six on two days.

Green-backed Honeyeater*Gylicichaera fallax*

One of these understated birds was foraging actively with a mixed flock in an Albizzia tree within the Tamrau lowlands.

Olive Honeyeater*Lichmera argenteauris*

We enjoyed fine views of three of these little-known birds on our supertramp island in the Raja Ampats. Based on observations, sound recordings and photographs obtained by KDB on an earlier expedition these birds may belong to an undescribed taxon.

Buru Honeyeater*Lichmera deningeri*

Ok views of this rather underwhelming endemic on two mornings in the uplands of Buru.

Seram Honeyeater*Lichmera monticola*

Rather nice looks at this relatively well marked and poorly known Seram upland endemic as it foraged persistently at a tall shrub covered in handsome Pitcher Plants *Nepenthes sp.*

Spotted Honeyeater*Xanthotis polygramma*

A really quite extraordinary experience with this species; we enjoyed fine views of one foraging actively with a mixed flock in an Albizzia tree within the Tamrau lowlands. On Waigeo we encountered two on the first morning and three on the second. This is usually an uncommon and infrequently encountered hill-forest species and thus seemingly well below its known lower elevational limits.

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater*Xanthotis flaviventer*

Six in the forested hills above Sorong and two in the Tamrau lowlands.

Seram Friarbird*Philemon subcorniculatus*

Surprisingly tough to see on Seram, we heard it commonly daily but only managed a few good looks at this endemic.

Black-faced Friarbird*Philemon mouluccensis*

Common on Buru where we saw as many as ten on one day.

New Guinea Friarbird*Philemon novaeguineae*

Heard in the forested hills above Sorong; common in the Tamrau lowlands; throughout the forests of Waigeo and Kofiau.

Long-billed Honeyeater*Melilestes megarhynchus*

Two seen all too briefly in the Tamrau lowlands.

Varied Honeyeater*Gavicalis versicolor*

Abundant and very vocal on our supertramp island in the Raja Ampats.

Mimic Honeyeater (Meliphaga)*Meliphaga analoga*

Small numbers seen well enough to specifically identify in the forested hills above Sorong; the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

Puff-backed Honeyeater (Meliphaga)*Meliphaga aruensis*

Two seen well enough to specifically identify on Waigeo.

ACANTHIZIDAE**Rusty Mouse-Warbler***Crateroscelis murina*

Heard commonly on Waigeo a group of three was glimpsed.



Pale-billed Scrubwren *Sericornis spilodera*

Just one seen on Waigeo.

Large-billed Gerygone (H) *Gerygone magnirostris*

Heard on Kofiau.

Green-backed Gerygone (H) *Gerygone chloronota*

Heard in the forested hills above Sorong; the Tamrau lowlands and on Waigeo.

POMATOSTOMIDAE

Papuan Babbler (H) *Garritornis isidorei*

Heard close by in the forested hills above Sorong.

MELANOCHARITIDAE

Black Berrypecker (H) *Melanocharis nigra*

Heard on Waigeo.

Pygmy Longbill *Oedistoma pygmaeum*

These tiny birds were feeding actively with the mixed flock in the Albizzia in the Tamrau lowlands.

Four seen on our first morning on Waigeo.

ARTAMIDAE

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*

Four in Kaboe Bay, Waigeo.

Lowland Peltops *Peltops blainvillii*

Superb 'scope views of one on Waigeo and one in the Tamrau lowlands.

Black Butcherbird (H) *Melloria quoyi*

The lovely voice of this elusive species characterized dawn in the Tamrau lowlands.

Hooded Butcherbird *Cracticus cassicus*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands and small numbers seen daily on Waigeo.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Buru Cuckooshrike *Coracina fortis*

Several good looks at this uncommon endemic in the foothills and uplands of Buru.

Boyer's Cuckooshrike *Coracina boyeri*

Three in the Tamrau lowlands; classically showing off their rufous armpits.

White-bellied Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina papuensis*

One pair on Kofiau; fairly common on two mornings on Obi (8 & 4).

Common Cicadabird *Coracina tenuirostris*

One seen well in the 'scope on our last morning on Obi.

□ BIA split this taxon into several species (it is not exactly clear from their text exactly how many). In essence I agree with what they have done, however, this taxon group is so complicated and confused that a field guide such as this is not really the place to review such taxonomic matters. BIA refer to the bird we saw on Obi as Wallacean Cicadabird *Lalage amboinensis*.

Pale Cicadabird *Coracina ceramensis*

A fine male seen nicely in the uplands of Seram and then daily in modest numbers (2-6) on Buru. Often associated with mixed feeding flocks.

Grey-headed Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina schisticeps*

Three in the forested hills above Sorong and as many as ten in the Tamrau lowlands, including several seen well in the 'scope with the mixed flock feeding in the Albizzia.



Black Cicadabird (*H*)*Coracina melas*

Heard just once in the Tamrau lowlands.

Golden Cuckooshrike*Campochaera sloetii*

Fine views of two of these lovely canopy inhabitants in the forested hills above Sorong and as many as four in the Tamrau lowlands

Rufous-bellied Triller*Lalage aurea*

This handsome North Moluccan endemic was delightfully common on Obi with 6, 3 and 8 seen on our three field sessions.

Black-browed Triller*Lalage atrovirens*

Fine views of a pair in the forested hills above Sorong and three in the Tamrau lowlands

PACHYCEPHALIDAE**Island Whistler***Pachycephala phainota*

We enjoyed superlative and prolonged views of a pair of these very poorly known small-island species feeding a single young in the Raja Ampats.

Grey Whistler (*H*)*Pachycephala simplex*

Heard commonly on Waigeo.

Yellow-throated Whistler*Pachycephala macrorhyncha*

The English epithet is something of a misnomer as the males we saw all had white throats!

Astonishingly difficult to find on Seram where just a couple of brief bouts of half-hearted song was all we could produce. On Buru we did, at last, find a pair with a mixed flock on our second last afternoon in the uplands.

□ BIA split the once Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* replete with innumerable subspecies into three species in the region they refer to. They perhaps wisely refer to the birds we saw as Moluccan Whistler.

Drab Whistler*Pachycephala griseonota*

□ BIA split this taxon into two species and suggest further partitioning may be appropriate. We struggled but eventually saw the male a few times with mixed flocks in the uplands of Seram. Conversely on Buru we found this species quite vocal and common, by far the commonest of the island's whistlers. The male exhibits a very distinct plumage and albeit currently treated as a distinct subspecies *examinata* is by all the criteria we are seeing surely worthy of specific recognition.

Cinnamon-breasted Whistler*Pachycephala johnei*

We enjoyed good views of this distinctive species on our afternoon on Obi and again the following morning.

□ BIA refer to this species by the English name Obi Whistler.

ORIOLIDAE**Raja Ampat Pitohui***Pitohui cerviniventris*

The old assemblage of 'Pitohui' including the 'Poisonbird' has now been divided up amongst two or three families. Variable Pitohui *P. kirrhocephalus* has been broken into three species (see Pratt & Beehler 2015 and Beehler & Pratt 2016). We found this Raja Ampat endemic common on Waigeo where we recorded 12 and 10 on our two mornings there.

Southern Variable Pitohui (*H*)*Pitohui uropygialis*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands.



Grey-collared Oriole*Oriolus forsteni*

Good looks were enjoyed of the few birds we were able to see in the uplands of Seram.

Black-eared Oriole*Oriolus bouroensis*

Notably uncommon in the uplands of Buru where separating this visual mimic from its model the Buru Friarbird was quite troublesome. However, on our last morning in the western lowlands we found it quite common and enjoyed multiple fine views of this species. The illustration in BIA is a little too warmly coloured.

DICRURIDAE**Spangled Drongo***Dicrurus bracteatus*

And folks this is where the fun really begins

□ BIA appears to have completely dispensed with the English epithet Hair-crested Drongo, which I thought was a useful name to separate it from the Spangled ensemble. BIA refers to all members of this group as ‘Spangled’. Fair enough. However, they then split these drongos into approximately 20 species. Pick your island, add the name of the island before Spangled Drongo and there you have it. Without going off at too long a tangent BIA splits the taxa we saw as follows: Obi Spangled Drongo *D.*

guillemardi – Moderately common in degraded woodland and forest (6, 2, 6); Seram

Spangled Drongo *D. amboinensis* – Five seen on our first morning in rather degraded forest at ca. 600m and only heard once thereafter; Buru Spangled Drongo *D. buruensis* – One or two seen most days in the uplands of Buru. I must admit this latter taxon’s vocalisations were very distinctive which together with its rather long tail suggest it is ‘different’.

Quite where this leaves us with the New Guinea birds is anyone’s guess and this is one of the many problems of ‘doing’ regional taxonomies and ignoring all the other related taxa in the surrounding regions. For the time being we can only state that we saw ‘Spangled Drongo’ fairly commonly throughout the Birds Head, Waigeo, Raja Ampat and Kofiau area.

RHIPIDURIDAE**Willie Wagtail***Rhipidura leucophrys*

If you want upset the entire Australian population just start messing with their iconic backyard bird, the Willie Wagtail. ‘Willie Fantail’ indeed! That one will never fly and in my opinion actually demeans the authors by its sheer foolishness. We heard and saw this rather cheerful species, often in pairs from Waigeo in the Raja Ampats, to Kofiau, Obi, Seram (very uncommon) and at the last gasp on Buru.

Northern Fantail*Rhipidura rufiventris*

□ BIA split this taxon into seven species within the region they refer to but with no indication what to do about taxa in New Guinea, the Bismarcks and Australia. GRRRR! : Obi Fantail *R. obiensis* – We found this taxon quite common in degraded woodland on our first morning but rather scarce thereafter; Seram Fantail *R. cinerea* – Heard but never seen on Seram; Buru Fantail *R. buruensis* – Notably common and easy to observed throughout Buru. Presumably the birds on Buru were at a very different stage of their breeding cycle from those on Seram.

Black Thicket Fantail*Rhipidura maculipectus*

One heard and seen within the tall Tamrou lowland forests when we were looking for the scrubfowl.

Chestnut-bellied Fantail (H)*Rhipidura hyperythra*

Heard one morning on Waigeo.



Streak-breasted Fantail*Rhipidura dedemi*

This lovely endemic was remarkably songful and responsive, certainly by comparison to virtually all the other passerines on Seram. What a lovely cheeky Charlie.

Tawny-backed Fantail*Rhipidura superflua*

Not quite as easy to see as the Seram endemic but everyone did eventually enjoy fine views of this rather muted species. Interestingly the Madanga appeared to stay very close to it, perhaps benefitting from the fantail's broadly fanned tail flushing insects for its consumption.

Arafura Fantail*Rhipidura dryas*

This lovely supertramp put on quite a show for us on our small island in the Raja Ampats. What a gem.

MONARCHIDAE**Spot-winged Monarch***Symposiachrus guttula*

Thanks to some great spotting by Doris we all enjoyed fine views of this smart looking monarch as it attended its nest located over the display arena of Wilson's Bird of Paradise on Waigeo.

Moluccan Monarch*Symposiachrus bimaculatus*

□ IOC split this taxon from Spectacled Monarch *S. trivirgatus* - we saw a pair of Moluccan Monarchs in degraded forest on Obi. Conversely BIA split Spectacled Monarch thus: *S. trivirgatus* – throughout the Moluccas and Nusa Tenggara **BUT** call it Wallacean Monarch. BIA separates New Guinea and Australian populations as 'Sahul Spectacled Monarch' *S. melanopterus*. They do not split *bimaculatus*.

Moluccan Flycatcher*Myiagra galeata*

We enjoyed fine views of pairs of this handsome species on two mornings on Obi and a male on just one morning on Seram.

□ BIA refer to this taxon as Moluccan Monarch.

Black-tipped Monarch*Symposiachrus loricatus*

Fine views of this superb Buru endemic on our first morning in the field on this rarely birded island. Another pair seen that afternoon and then at least two pairs were seen in coastal forest on our last morning.

Kofiau Monarch*Monarcha julianae*

As with the other Kofiau endemic this too was common but more so in taller less disturbed forest. We saw one incredibly confiding pair and heard 3-4 other pairs. Again we are only the second group of birders to see this species in the wild! David and Jared rediscovered this species during their 1986 expedition. Thus fewer than 30 birders have ever seen this species all on trips led by yours truly.

White-naped Monarch*Carterornis pileatus*

□ BIA splits this taxon into two species: White-naped Monarch *C. pileatus* – Halmahera and Buru, the latter where we enjoyed excellent views of this striking species as it foraged with a mixed flock in the uplands. Tanimbar Monarch *C. castus* – Tanimbar Islands.

Golden Monarch*Carterornis chrysomela*

One pair with a mixed flock on Waigeo.

Friiled Monarch*Arses telescopthalmus*

As many as four in the forested hills above Sorong and pairs and single males seen daily on Waigeo.

Shining Monarch*Myiagra alecto*

Seen well in small numbers on Waigeo, Pulau Kris, Kofiau and Obi. Heard on Buru.



CORVIDAE**Violet Crow***Corvus violcaeus*

This very distinctive crow was seen well during our first afternoon birding in the lowlands of Seram. The vocalisations, small size and forest dwelling habit of this taxon underscore the veracity of treating it as a full species, however, the English name Violet might be better replaced by Pygmy.

Brown-headed Crow*Corvus fuscicapillus*

A distinctive species of great character and with a great call. We finally tracked at least four of these very localised birds down at the eleventh hour on Waigeo.

Grey Crow (Bare-eyed Crow)*Corvus tristis*

This peculiar and distinctive crow was common in the Tamrau lowlands.

Torresian Crow*Corvus orru*

Seen in small numbers throughout the Raja Ampat islands and just once on Obi.

PARADISAEIDAE**Paradise Crow***Lycocorax pyrrhopterus*

□ BIA splits this taxon into two species: Obi Paradise-Crow *L. obiensis* - This rather strange and clearly aberrant Bird of Paradise was seen and heard fairly commonly on Obi where a pair was observed attending a nest in tall secondary forest. Endemic to the North Moluccas. *L. pyrrhopterus* – Halmahera and nearby islands.

Glossy-mantled Manucode*Manucodia ater*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands and seen commonly on Pulau Kri.

Magnificent Riflebird (H)*Ptiloris magnificus*

Heard quite close by in the Tamrau lowlands.

Wilson's Bird of Paradise*Cicinnurus respublica*

Undoubtedly for many, this was THE highlight of the entire cruise. From four specially constructed hides we were all treated to extended and most wonderful experiences with this most extraordinary of all birds. From the half-light of pre-dawn when we first heard the male to seeing it alight upon its court; clear the court of overnight debris and then go into his full display routine was surely, certainly for me, one of the greatest avian spectacles I have ever had the privilege to witness. Not for us the brutal climb up in the dark for three hours into the hills of Batanta. Instead here on the island of Waigeo we drove 20 minutes into the forest and tiptoed along an easy trail for a few hundred metres before sitting comfortably at a well-built blind. Amazing.

King Bird of Paradise (H)*Cicinnurus regius*

Heard in the Tamrau lowlands.

Lesser Bird of Paradise (H)*Paradisaea minor*

Heard in the hills above Sorong and in the Tamrau lowlands.

Red Bird of Paradise*Paradisaea rubra*

Just when we didn't think things could get any more spectacle we snuck into the display grounds of this magnificent birds on Waigeo. Waiting in the dark hearing the birds of the forest slowly wake around us before we were completely taken over by the truly, truly spectacular displays and courtship of this stunning birds (see the image on the first page which was taken at this site on this morning).

PETROICIDAE**Black-sided Robin (H)***Poecilordryas hypoleuca*

Typically heard commonly throughout the lowland forests of the Birds Head and Waigeo.



PYCNONOTIDAE**Seram Golden Bulbul***Thapsinillas affinis*

Notably uncommon; we saw just two singles in two days.

Northern Golden Bulbul*Thapsinillas longirostris*

Uncommon on Obi where we saw just one or two birds during our two mornings on the island.

Buru Golden Bulbul*Thapsinillas mysticalis*

Moderately common, with 2-10 seen daily in the uplands of Buru.

HIRUNDINIDAE**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

A few (<6) these Palearctic migrants were seen as we drove through the outskirts of Sorong and six on the coast of Obi.

Pacific Swallow*Hirundo tahitica*

The common resident hirundine, seen on most islands except Kofiau and Obi.

CETTIDAE**Mountain Tailorbird***Phyllergates cuculatus*

For some time now, this taxon has not been regarded as a ‘Tailorbird’ and thus placed in a different family. Sensibly most lists have retained its familiar name, after all it is only a label. We observed an adult and a very confusing-looking young one in the uplands of Seram. On Buru we saw 2-4 daily, invariably foraging with mixed flocks.

PHYLLOSCOPODIDAE**Arctic Warbler***Phylloscopus borealis*

Singles seen during every field session on Obi and then 1-2 daily, often with mixed flocks in the uplands of Buru.

Island Leaf Warbler*Phylloscopus maforensis*

□ Beehler & Pratt (2016) observe that the specific name for New Guinea populations should be *maforensis* not *poliocephalus*. BIA split Island Leaf Warbler into four species in Wallacea and suggest that there are a further possible species in New Guinea and Melanesia.

They also place all the taxa in *Seicercus* instead of *Phylloscopus*: Seram Leaf Warbler *S. ceramensis* – Very common in the uplands of Seram; Buru Leaf Warbler *S. everetti* – Moderately common and seen daily in the uplands of Buru.

LOCUSTELLIDAE**Chestnut-backed Bush Warbler (H)***Locustella castanea*

□ BIA split this taxon into three species: Buru Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella disturbans* Heard on two days at high elevations on Buru where only glimpsed; *L. musculus* Seram Grasshopper Warbler and *L. castanea* Sulawesi Grasshopper Warbler. NOTE: BIA also change the group name from Bush Warbler to Grasshopper Warbler.

Gray’s Grasshopper Warbler*Locustella fasciolata*

Heard on Waigeo and heard regularly and glimpsed on Buru. This is a common but very difficult to observe Palearctic migrant in eastern Wallacea and New Guinea.



CISTICOLIDAE**Golden-headed Cisticola***Cisticola exilis*

One or two seen well in the coastal grasslands of Buru.

ZOSTEROPIDAE**Rufescent Darkeye***Tephrozosterops stalker*

Sadly this distinctive endemic eluded all but the leaders and one fortunate client in the uplands of Seram.

☐ BIA place this taxon in *Heleia* and give it the English name Rufescent Heleia.

Grey-hooded White-eye*Lophozosterops pinnaiae*

Singles seen by a lucky few on two mornings in the uplands of Seram.

☐ BIA place this taxon in *Heleia* and give it the English name Binaia Heleia. The name Binaia refers to Seram's highest mountain, which is located within Manusela National park.

Mountain White-eye*Zosterops montanus*

Small numbers seen in the uplands of Seram and notably common in the uplands of Buru.

Seram White-eye*Zosterops stalker*

Moderately common in the uplands of Seram.

Buru White-eye*Zosterops buruensis*

Common to abundant in the uplands of Buru.

Ambon White-eye*Zosterops kuehni*

Two of these endemics seen nicely foraging in an Albizzia sp tree on Ambon.

STURNIDAE**Metallic Starling***Aplonis metallica*

Circa 30 in the Tamrau lowlands; very common on Kofiau and Obi and ten seen on Ambon.

Singing Starling*Aplonis canteroides*

Common (20) on Waigeo and Pulau Kris.

Moluccan Starling*Aplonis mysolensis*

Six seen, several of which were nesting in dead palm trees on our supertramp island in the Raja Ampats; ten during our first morning on Obi; common on Seram including a small group which were nesting behind the bark of a dead tree in the lowlands. Similarly common on Buru where also observed nesting but in the uplands.

Yellow-faced Myna*Mino dumonti*

Four in the forested hills above Sorong; two in the Tamrau lowlands; small numbers (2-4) daily on Waigeo.

Long-crested Myna*Basilornis corythaix*

Surprisingly only seen on one day but then we enjoyed fine 'scope views of as many 20 in groups of 5-6 in tall secondary forest at circa 600m on Seram. A fabulous and distinctive endemic.

TURDIDAE**Buru Thrush***Geokichla dumasi*

Yet another incredible highlight. We all enjoyed stunning views of this very little known and purportedly super elusive endemic in the uplands of Buru. Discovery of its nest with at least one young suggests why we were so fortunate.



Seram Thrush*Geokichla joiceyi*

Seen briefly in flight by a very lucky few on the lower slopes of Manusela National Park. This may be the first time this species has ever been recorded on a birding tour.

MUSCICAPIDAE**Grey-streaked Flycatcher***Muscicapa grisesticta*

Widespread and moderately common (1-4) daily. The record of three from Kofiau is the first of this Palearctic migrant from that island. This species' wintering grounds are almost exclusively Sulawesi, Maluku and western New Guinea.

Turquoise Flycatcher*Eumyias panayensis*

Pairs seen in the Seram uplands on two days. □ BIA give this species the English name Turquoise Warbling Flycatcher. It was previously known as Island Flycatcher.

Streak-breasted Jungle-Flycatcher*Eumyias additus*

□ BIA give this species the English name Buru Warbling-flycatcher. We observed this peculiar little flycatcher on two occasions; once in degraded hill forest ca. 400m and again, on two occasions, at ca. 1200m.

DICEIDAE**Flame-breasted Flowerpecker***Dicaeum erythrothorax*

□ BIA refer to this taxon as Buru Flowerpecker. We saw this species regularly in modest numbers (2-8) daily in the uplands of Buru.

Halmahera Flowerpecker*Dicaeum schistaceiceps*

Small numbers (1-2) were seen each field session on Obi.

Ashy Flowerpecker*Dicaeum vulneratum*

□ BIA refer to this taxon as Seram Flowerpecker. Notably common throughout Seram.

Olive-crowned Flowerpecker*Dicaeum pectoral*

Four in the forested hills above Sorong; just one female on Waigeo and one other seen on Kofiau.

NECTARINIIDAE**Black Sunbird***Leptocoma (Nectarinia) sericea*

Widespread and common and seen at all localities.

Olive-backed Sunbird*Cinnyris (Nectarinia) jugularis*

□ BIA split this taxon into several species: Sahul Sunbird *C. clementiae* - Widespread and common and seen at all localities. We observed the distinctive black-bellied *clementiae* population on Ambon and Buru; *C. ornatus* Ornate Sunbird – Nusa Tenggara, and Greater Sundas.

PASSERIDAE**Eurasian Tree Sparrow***Passer montanus*

A widespread and ubiquitous commensal of man we recorded this species at almost every landing.

ESTRILDIDAE**Black-faced Munia***Lonchura molucca*

This Indonesian endemic was common (ca. 30) in rank grassland on Obi. Similarly common on Buru.



MOTACILLIDAE**Eastern Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla tschutschensis*

Common on Obi (20, 6, 6) in rank grassland. Just four seen in coastal Buru.

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

Common and widespread in ones and occasionally twos along roads through forest on Obi, Seram, Ambon and Buru.

INCERTAE CEDIS**Madanga***Madanga ruficollis*

Undoubtedly one of THE most astonishing highlights of a very remarkable tour. Known from just four specimens collected prior to World War II this peculiar species was until 9 days previously unknown in life.

Recently regarded as an aberrant Pipit but still placed in the genus *Anthus*. Having now seen this species I now regard such placement as erroneous. We really do need to learn to regard DNA data as only part of the picture and one equally subject to error as any other piece of genetic evidence. Hence I have placed this taxon as *Incertae Cedis*.

I must at this point pay special tribute to our remarkable group who without a single complaint plodded up the not inconsiderable climb (and back down again), albeit through some lovely forest, to finally find this Holy Grail. Thanks to Glen's sharp eyes we all, with a fair of bit persistence and Lawyer Vine notwithstanding, enjoyed stunning and prolonged views of this species. It was a fascinating species to observe as it foraged along, both above and below, large, epiphyte-covered lateral canopy branches much like a typical nuthatch. Although larger than most nuthatches I was struck by the similarities combined with the peculiar strong peach colour of its throat sharply demarcated from soft grey underparts and olive-green upperparts. The legs were clearly red. Pipit it is not.

MAMMALS

The mammals of eastern Indonesia are extremely poorly known and what literature there is very poor and/or taxonomically confused and/or dated. I'm most grateful to Dr. Kristofer Helgen for help with identification of some of the taxa listed here.

Spinner Dolphin*Stenella longirostris*

Relatively common with pods of as many as 100+ being seen. Twelve between Sorong and Waigeo; circa 50 between the raja Ampats and Kofiau; circa 100 between Kofiau and Obi. On several occasions we enjoyed superb views of dolphins as they rode our bow-wave.

Dolphin sp

Circa 300 and a second group of circa 150 as we cruised west off the north coast of Seram.

Short-finned Pilot Whale*Globicephala macrorhynchus*

Circa 100 of these beasts were seen loafing on the surface and up very close just west of Kofiau. The big broad-headed critters were big adult males.

Baleen Whale sp

One seen spy-hopping very late in the afternoon near the very southern tip of Halmahera.



Sei Whale*Balaenoptera physalus*

One seen close by but all too briefly such that we only saw a glimpse of the enormous body and the dorsal fin. Seen within a km or two of the above.

Spectacled Flying Fox*Pteropus conspicillatus*

Large numbers at dusk over Waigeo.

Moluccan Flying Fox*Pteropus chrysoproctus*

Commonly encountered large flying fox on Obi, Seram and Buru.

Moluccan Bar-backed Bat*Dobsonia moluccensis*

Two or three just after dusk on Obi and again on Buru.

Big-eared Roundleaf Bat*Hipposideros macrobullatus*

One photographed in a culvert in the uplands of Seram.

cf Raffray's Sheath-tail-bat*Emballonura raffrayana*

Huge numbers of small bats, at dusk, pouring out of a limestone cave high on a vertical cliff-face above the village of Salemada (near Sawai), Seram.

Rothschild's Cuscus*Phalanger rothschildi*

Great looks at both colour morphs of this very little known endemic on Obi.

Three-striped Dasyurid*Myoictis melas*

One at KDB's Wilson's BOP display site on Waigeo.

Common Palm Civet*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*

One seen trundling across the track at dusk at circa 800m as we descended from the Buru uplands.

Malay Civet*Viverra zibethica*

One seen in the middle of the track at circa 900m asl as we descended from the Buru uplands.

Introduced.

REPTILES

Salvadori's Monitor Lizard*Varanus salvadori*

Common on Pulau Kris. This is the world's longest species of lizard.

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