

Editorial

There has been a 7-year gap between the last issue of the Papua New Guinea Birdwatching Society's journal *Muruk* in 2000 (Vol. 8: 2) and this issue, which completes that volume. It serves a valuable purpose documenting significant records of New Guinea birds, and publishing notes and papers relevant to New Guinea ornithology. Thanks are due to Conservation International's Melanesia Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation) for coming up with funds for the printing of the journal, with particular thanks to Roger James.

The idea is to clear a large backlog of records, and publish articles relating to New Guinea ornithology, with the help of an editorial team:

Editor - Phil Gregory

Editorial consultants: K. David Bishop, Ian Burrows, Brian Coates, Guy Dutson, Chris Eastwood.

We would like feedback about the direction the journal should take; it has been a useful reference resource over the years and is cited in many publications. Current thinking is to publish two issues per annum, with thoughts about expanding coverage to include other nearby areas such as Halmahera and the Solomon Islands, which have a large New Guinea component to the avifauna.

The Pacific region as a whole is poorly served and there may be scope to include other parts of Melanesia and Polynesia.

We now complete the old pre-2000 subscriptions with this issue, which is sent free to former subscribers, and invite new subscriptions.

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Significant Sightings from Tour Reports

Compiled and edited by Phil Gregory

More and more companies are offering tours to PNG, mostly doing the same circuit but still coming up with interesting records or little known or rare species, breeding data or distributional information. We encourage companies to let us have their reports so we can extract this information, which is otherwise lost. We use editorial discretion over very unusual records and qualify these where appropriate. Ideally very rare or poorly known species should have documentation and/or photos to substantiate them, and such sightings are flagged in the reports. We hope this causes no offence but we reserve the right to sometimes temper enthusiasm, and would be happy to be proven wrong. Editorial comments are italicized. Major rarities will be submitted to the PNG Rarities committee where details are available.

Thanks to the following bird tour companies for access to their reports: Field Guides Inc., Rockjumper, Sicklebill Safaris UK, Sicklebill Safaris Australia and Birdquest Ltd. We summarize the major records from each report with the approximate date of the tour. There is a large backlog of reports and it will take several issues to work through it.

Keki Lodge is a landowner lodge in the Adelbert Mt. foothills; Warili is another landowner lodge near Ambua Lodge in Southern Highlands Province. Satop village is on the Huon Peninsula en route to the Kabwum Pass

Species listing

Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi*

July 2006 - One of this seldom-seen species was seen off Kimbe Bay 13 July. *Since first reported by Hadoram Shirihai back in 2003, this species has been regularly seen here.*

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

May 1998 - One over the forest at Kiunga was a surprise, whilst 2 at Hisiu were more conventional in their location.

Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana*

Aug 1999 - 3 of this rare bird along the Elevala, including an immature. *Still a good site for the species, but increased disturbance will surely drive this very shy species away.*

Pied Heron *Egretta picata*

May 1998 - 319 birds at Moitaka SP.

Forest Bittern *Zonerodius heliosylus*

May 1998 - One perched on a snag by the Elevala River in the late afternoon.

August 2003 - One along the Varirata Lookout Trail.

The first Varirata record for many years, good to know it is still around.

Black Honey Buzzard (New Britain Buzzard) *Henicopernis infuscatus*

May 1998 - An immaculate pair soaring over forest near Kimbe.

Doria's Hawk *Megatriorchis doriae*

September/October 2005 - An adult bird was seen carrying prey over Dablin Creek. The bird perched briefly before flying off calling. *This rare and seldom seen species was very visible at this site in 2005 and probably nested there.*

July 2006 - Carrying prey over Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil 7 July. *A rare bird, but Dablin is a great site for it.*

New Guinea Harpy Eagle *Harpyopsis novaeguineae*

May 1998 - Amazing views of a calling bird near the Bailey Bridge at Ambua, which was duly photographed, videoed and taped. This has been a good area for the species for many years. Another calling bird up at Varirata later.

Little Eagle *Aquila (Hieraaetus) morphnoides*

May 1998 - Three birds at Kiunga gave quite outstanding views, presumably a family party; seen well at Vanapa too.

Aug 1999 - Singles near Tari and at Mt. Hagen Kagamuga airport were unexpected.

March 2004 - One soaring over the ridge by Mendi airstrip.

September/October 2005 - A single bird was seen near Kumul Lodge.

New Guinea birds of the taxon weiskei are apparently genetically very distinct and would seem conceivably to represent a distinct species. They seem to be widespread but low density from lowlands and hills up to the lower mountains in PNG.

Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurney*

September/October 2005 - 2 adults and an immature soared over the Pipeline road, Kikori about two kilometres south of Kopi camp. Another adult bird was seen cruising low over the forest along the Dringas road near Kiunga. *A widespread but rather rare and low-density species, always good to find.*

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*

March 2004 - A single on Dobu, D'Entrecasteaux Is.

Black-mantled Goshawk *Accipiter melanochlamys*

March 2004 - Seen daily above Satop, and then one at Ambua, normally a scarce species.

Meyer's Goshawk *Accipiter meyerianus*

March 2004 - A single seen nicely above Ambua, with another lower down the valley. A rare species.

October 2005 - A single adult bird was seen perched at K108 along the Tabubil road and singletons were also seen near Tari Gap and Ambua Lodge.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrhocephalus*

March 2004 - Singles on Fergusson, D'Entrecasteaux Is.

New Britain Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brachyurus*

July 2005 - One at Pokili Wildlife Management Area 4 August.

July 2006 - One flew to a perch and remained there in the fading light en route to Walindi. Any of New Britain's endemic raptors is a prize during a brief visit.

They also need good views and details of neck colouration and eye colour, these island raptors are very poorly known and easily confused, with almost all sightings referring to Variable Goshawk, which can look very strange in these islands. We really need supporting details or photos for such claims. All 3 of the endemic accipiters seem to be rare, or at very least to be seldom seen in the places visited by birders. There are just a couple of recent sightings of Slaty-mantled Goshawk around the Kimbe area, just a single recent record of New Britain Grey-headed Goshawk, and virtually no sightings for the New Britain Sparrowhawk. Immature plumages for all the accipiters here are very poorly known and readily confused; photographs of any accipiters in the Bismarcks would be welcome.

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*

May 1998 - Great views of this diminutive hobby, eating a swiftlet near Hoskins, with another at the Lavege hot springs later.

Aug 1999 - A single of this diminutive and very uncommon hobby, in a coconut plantation on Kowhae Island off Lorengau.

March 2004 - One bird along the Waterfall Trail, where we initially found them in July 2001, at the upper end of their altitudinal range at 2000m. Two seen at Keki as well, always a sparse species.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*

May 1998 - Well seen at Kiunga, perched on the cranes at the wharf.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

July 2006 - An immature was eating a chicken (?) high in a tree along the highway east of Kimbe, New Britain, on 11 July. *Rarely reported in the Bismarcks, probably the resident taxon ernesti.*

Spotted Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna guttata*

May 1998 - Seen in flight along the Fly River early one morning.

Aug 1999 - A flock of 21 at Alexishafen ponds.

March 2004 - An adult and 2 juveniles at the now very overgrown Alexishafen ponds.

Plumed Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna eytoni*

July 2005 - Six birds among the many Wandering Whistling-Ducks at Pacific Adventist University 17 July. *This Australian duck is a rare vagrant in New Guinea and they turned up here earlier this month. There a just a couple of previous PNG records.*

Red-backed Buttonquail *Turnix maculosa*

May 1998 - "Look out for Buttonquail here at Aroa": One flushes seconds later!

Blue (Blue-breasted or King) Quail *Coturnix chinensis*

Aug 1999 - Two flushed from long grass by a damp meadow on the road to Kulu River, looking very small and dark. The first recent record for the Bismarcks.

They were then found regularly at this site up to 2003, when it was over-planted with oil palm.

April 2003 - One at Kavieng Airstrip, New Ireland.

Pink-legged Rail *Rallus insignis*

May 1998 - Taped in for a marvellous view along the Lavege track, the first tour ever to find this little known endemic species.

Oct 2000 - Heard up at Wild Dog Mine, altitude c. 1000m, near Rabaul.

Buff-banded Rail *Rallus philippensis*

September/October 2005 - A pair with 2 small chicks and another adult were seen on the new rice fields in the Laloki River valley.

Chestnut Forest-Rail *Rallina rubra*

September/October 2005 - A pair was seen at the watercress bed at Kumul Lodge giving excellent close views. A male was seen in the orchid garden at the Lodge and next day a pair with a small chick were seen nearby. *Good to have breeding data for this species.*

It was formerly straightforward up at Ambua, but from 2003 on has become much more difficult, maybe taped out. Interestingly Forbes' Forest-Rail has become much easier to find there and seems to have supplanted this species at some former sites.

Bare-eyed Rail *Gymnocrex plumbeiventris*

July 2006 - A bird calling at dusk from across the Elevala River from Ekame Lodge was identified by Samuel as this species.

A widespread but rarely reported species, a tape of the call would be nice.

Dusky (Rufous) Woodcock *Scolopax saturata*

July 2005 - On 28 July, at least one bird in the swampy forest bordering the driveway to Kumul Lodge was, on two occasions, herded toward us. *The classic site in the classic year.*

July 2006 - Seen by only a lucky few at Kumul Lodge. *You should have been here in 2004 when they were easily seen here. Rarely reported as so cryptic, but Kumul Lodge is the place. This is now split from the taxon found in Sumatra.*

Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*

July 2005 - Tari Airport 3 August.

They winter more in the lowlands, this is a good record here.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

March 2004 - An adult of the local race *dubius* at the Hot Springs on Fergusson was most unexpected, though there is a record of the species from Goodenough in October, of uncertain race. Also up to four at Nadzab Airport at Lae, probably displaced by flooding from the Markham River. *The subspecies in New Guinea dubius has a very different call compared to Palearctic birds and could well be a split.*

April 2007 - One on a shingle bank on the Warangoi River near Rabaul, subspecies uncertain.

Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*

July 2006 - One flying high over Garu Forest on 12 July was a surprise sighting.

Whiskered Tern *Sterna hybridus*

May 1998 - A single on the Fly River above Kiunga was a surprise.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

March 2004 - A few migrants at sea off Fergusson, max. 30.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*

March 2004 - Two at sea off Fergusson.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

March 2004 - Three off Fergusson March 9th and five next day.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

March 2004 - Quite common off Fergusson, with up to 40.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*

July 2005 - It was a great surprise to see what was in the hand of a local man strolling down Boystown Road near Kiunga 20 July - a live adult Sooty Tern! Kiunga is near the exact centre of New Guinea, thus this pelagic species could hardly have been farther from the ocean on this very large island. The man had found the moribund tern lying on the road.

There are two Tabubil records also, but this is not the cyclone season!

Black (White-capped) Noddy *Anous minutus*

March 2004 - 150 on March 8th at sea off East Cape, and 70 there on March 11th.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

March 2004 - One off Normanby on March 9th and two on March 11th.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

March 2004 - A single at sea off East Cape on March 8th, with a skua sp. there on March 11th.

Cinnamon Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba rufigula*

March 2004 - This mega-skulker was heard up at Keki.

Thick-billed Ground-Pigeon *Trugon terrestris*

July 2002 - a nesting bird along the Dringas Road, with a single white egg laid on the ground between two buttresses of a rainforest tree, exactly as described in Rand & Gilliard. *Very few records of breeding are known, and species is rarely seen, more often heard and easily overlooked.*

July 2006 - Heard along the Elevala River 2 July and one seen flushing in that area the next day.

Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus viridis*

March 2004 - Two seen nicely on Dobu Island were a pleasing find of an elusive species. This is the endemic race *vicinus*.

White-throated Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*

March 2004 - This very scarce bird was seen very nicely in flight twice along the approach road to Varirata, on March 21 and 22.

Pied Cuckoo-Dove *Reinwardtoena browni*

Aug 1999 - Splendid views of this spectacular and vocal endemic near Limbin, a real hard one to find.

Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica*

Aug 1999 - Flight views of two adults on Kimbe Island, a great bird.

Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula chalconota*

Sept 2000 - Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon a nesting pair at Ilaru near Boana on Sept 28, built in a densely foliated sapling. *Maybe the first ever known nest of this species?*

March 2004 - Lovely views of three of this very local hill forest species in a fruiting tree near the pass above Satop.

September/October 2005 - 2 were seen along Max's trail along the Wabag road below Kumul Lodge. Both birds fed in a fruiting tree.

July 2006 - A pair inside the forest at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Finsch's Imperial Pigeon *Ducula finschii*

May 1998 - Great views of a single that we taped in along the Lavege track, the rarest of the Bismarck endemic *Ducula*.

July 2005 - At least four at Pokili Wildlife Management Area 4 August were quite cooperative, giving away their presence by calling.

July 2006 - One flyby inside Pokili Wildlife Area on New Britain.

A low density Bismarck endemic, best located by the deep growling klaxon-like call.

Black Imperial Pigeon (Bismarck Imperial) *Ducula melanochroa*:

May 1998 - A single perched high in a tree along the Lavege track.

Aug 1999 - Good views of 6 in the hills at Mt. Nakru, New Britain and 12 near Limbin, a scarce and elusive species.

July 2005 - Two single birds flew over us at Pokili Wildlife Management Area, New Britain, 4 August.

Scarce in the lowlands but comes down occasionally.

Island (Grey) Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria*

July 2005 - At least eight flying and perched at Pokili 4 August; 30+ around Restorf Island on 6 August.

July 2006 - About 60 over both Timor and Restorf islands during our Bismarck Sea boat trip 13 July.

Common on the small islands around Kimbe.

Song Parrot (Singing Parrot) *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*

May 1998 - Seen well near Kimbe, scarce in the lowlands.

White-naped Lory *Lorius albinucha*

Aug 1999 - Two along the Limbin Road, the distinctive red underparts and lack of a white cere visible even in flight. *This site was only discovered in June of this year when John Hornbuckle's group followed our initial recce here and found this species, a big range extension up from the far south of the island.*

Little Red (Fairy) Lorikeet *Charmosyna pulchella*

March 2004 - Seven just above Satop, a scarce and highly nomadic species.

Red-chinned Lorikeet *Charmosyna rubrigularis*

Aug 1999 - 90 near Limbin, seen very well and always a tough bird to find. This is now a regular site for it.

Goldie's Lorikeet *Psitteuteles goldiei*

July 2006 - Pairs and flocks flying over high, both near Ambua Lodge and at Kumul Lodge, with 40 estimated at the latter on 1 July.

Brown Lory *Chalcopsitta duivenbodei*

Sept 2000 - Scarce in PNG, we saw two flocks totalling 8 birds along the Bewani Road near Vanimo.

Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta bruijnii*

March 2004 - Two seen on Dobu Is, and another briefly on the walk down from Keki.

Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta keiensis*

September/October 2005 - 2 gave good perched views at Dablin creek, Tabubil. *First found at this site earlier this year, unexpected away from the lowlands and sympatric with M. bruijnii.*

Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta bruijnii*

July 2006 - Small flocks flew over us all day at Dablin Creek Road 7 July, but toward the end of that day an incredible flock of 150 birds descended on the trees around us and swarmed all over the bark like tiny nuthatches – only colourful, thumb-sized parrots! We enjoyed scope views of many birds flaking bark and chewing lichens. The literature generally states that this species goes in small flocks of up to 20 birds. However, *Handbook of the Birds of the World* notes that, in November 1992, 650 were counted flying north-east at Ok Tedi. *That was a remarkable year for them in this area and flocks of hundreds were seen on several occasions.*

Painted Tiger-Parrot *Psittacella picta*

July 2005 - A female at Kumul Lodge 28 July. Near Tari Gap a pair on 30 July and a male on 2 August. The field guide colour plate has the labels for male and female transposed for this species.

July 2006 - One female seen at Ambua Lodge 26 June. *This is a remarkably low altitude for the species if it was actually at the Lodge, they are usually about 600 m higher up at the Gap.*

Edwards' Fig-Parrot *Psittaculirostris edwardsii*

Sept 2000 - about 20 along the Bewani Road near Vanimo. Karawari Lodge on the Sepik is another reliable spot for this North slope special, also seen near Madang about 20 km out on the Lae Road.

Papuan Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus aurantiifrons*

Aug 1999 - Seen very well near Baiyer River, a very nice find in a new locality.

Green-fronted (Bismarck) Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus tener*

July 2006 - A flock of four flying past Mora Mora, New Britain on 11 July.

Vulturine Parrot *Psittrichas fulgidus*

May 1998 - A single along the Ok Ma road at Tabubil after brief flight views near Kiunga.

March 2004 - A flock of ten up at the pass above Satop at 1900m gave fantastic views in the late afternoon sunshine on March 12th, and we saw a single male near Satop on March 14th. *Listed as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Skins of this species fetch hundreds of kina in the highlands, where they are valued as decoration in traditional dress.*

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*

March 2004 - One at Wasu, Huon, and another up along the approach road to Varirata on March 22nd.

September/October 2005 - Single birds along the Pipeline road, Kikori, along the Boystown road near Kiunga, along the Elevala River, and twice at Dablin creek, Tabubil 8.10.05.

Long-billed Cuckoo *Rhamphomantis megarhynchus*

This rare and little known species is seen regularly at Km 17 near Kiunga, usually singly. Immature birds have been seen as well as adult males.

Vocalizations noted May-Sept. Also seen along the Boystown Road at Km 14 Jun 2000. There are still very few localities for it in PNG.

Gould's or Little Bronze-Cuckoo (Malay Bronze) *Chrysococcyx (malayanus) minutillus /russatus*

March 2004 - Heard on Dobu and Fergusson, and also at Wasu. The resident race here is *poecilurus*, similar to *russatus*

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

May 1998 - Seen near Kimbe.

July 2005 - Seen near the Kulu River Road 5 August.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

March 2004 - Seen on Fergusson Island.

July 2005 - A group of more than 30 along the Fly River 21 July. Two were there on our return 23 July. A high-elevation vagrant at Kumul Lodge 28 July, which flushed from its roost beside our room before dawn. *A high altitude record and very unusual.*

Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus*

March 2004 - Singles on Normanby.

Pied (White-necked) Coucal *Centropus ateralbus*

Aug 2005 - About ten individuals in three small groups were seen and heard at Pokili. Most were the usual morph with a broad white neck area, but one was an all-brownish immature and another had its entire head, neck, breast, and upper belly white.

Quite common around Kimbe still, but skulking.

Papuan Boobook *Ninox theomacha*

March 2004 - Heard at Esa'ala on Normanby, then at Warili and finally at Keki.

Manus Boobook *Ninox meeki*

Aug 1999 - Manus, near Lorengau; calling just after dawn on August 28, and then it responded again about 0620. Then located sat on a branch in mid-stratum, where it gave brilliant daylight views of this little known endemic.

Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus*

July 2006 - One day-roosting on vines climbing a large snag along the Elevala River near Ekame Lodge on 2 July. Three birds were spotlighted nicely during the evening boat ride, during which we enjoyed various of their calls. *Ekame is a very good locality for this species. Which owlet-nightjars occur here however?*

Papuan Nightjar *Eurostopodus papuensis*

September/October 2005 - A single bird was seen shortly after dark along the Gre-Dringas road near Kiunga, giving excellent views in the spotlight. *A poorly known and little recorded lowland species, the calls are still not known.*

Archbold's (Mountain) Nightjar *Eurostopodus archboldi*

September/October 2005 - A single bird shortly after 1900hrs on two occasions at Kumul Lodge and another was seen on a ledge in the lower quarry near the Bailey Bridge below Tari Gap. This bird seemed to be incubating eggs or protecting young. *Only a single breeding record is documented, from near the Bailey Bridge at Ambua. Vocal data would also be nice, still barely known.*

July 2006 - One watched each night at dusk sallying upwards from the roofs at Kumul Lodge.

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*

September/October 2005 - A single bird accidentally flushed from its "nest", which contained two eggs, along the Gare's Lookout trail in Varirata National Park. Another was accidentally flushed off a single egg along the Circuit track 3 weeks later. 3 were seen near Dablin creek, Tabubil and a single seen near Warili Lodge, where calling birds were heard each night.

Mountain Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles albertisi*

July 2006 - One bird heard and seen repeatedly over two nights at close range at Kumul Lodge. This bird always wears a “pained” look on its face! *Kumul is the place to see this species.*

Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles wallacii*

July 2005 - While attempting to land in the partially flooded forest along the Elevala River to try for Hook-billed Kingfisher on 23 July, our boat flushed this bird from its roost snag protruding above the water. It briefly perched against another tree, where some of us saw it well. *The editor asked for details and Stephen Bailey was kind enough to provide the following documentation for a very seldom reported and poorly known species in a group that is taxonomically challenged, remarkably variable and tricky to identify:*

“We saw this bird on 23 July 2005 during a stop along the Elevala River on the way back from Ekame Lodge, much farther down the Elevala River toward its confluence with the Fly River. The spot was an area of partially flooded forest where we stopped for Hook-billed Kingfisher. The owlet-nightjar flushed from a hole in a snag protruding from the water. The snag was perhaps 15cm in diameter and maybe 3m tall above the water surface, with a large open hole at the top. It flew away from us and perched briefly on the side of a medium-sized live tree trunk on the adjacent shore, looked back over its shoulder at us while some of us watched it, then flew on into the forest out of sight.

I identified the bird as a Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar: a “normal-sized” owlet-nightjar (i.e. not a large one like a Feline). The long-tailed, shortish-winged, round-headed shape plus the bird's upright perching made the identification as an owlet-nightjar obvious. It was all dull grey, speckled all over with white. There was no barring or striping pattern apparent on any of the parts visible to me, but I never saw the front of the bird's body. There were no colours such as rufous or brown or buff; the whole bird that I could see from behind and somewhat the side plus the face as it looked back at us was all dull grey with white speckles, not bars or visible vermiculations. Probably there were in fact extremely fine and indistinct grey vermiculations, but if so these were so subtle that we could not notice them and only the white speckles were apparent. I felt that these colours and the white-speckled pattern confirmed Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar and eliminated other species including their juvenile plumages. When the bird looked back at us, the face looked dull grey and did not show the obvious facial stripes and buffy cheeks typical of Australian Owlet-Nightjar. The fine barring and vermiculations that characterize the Barred Owlet-Nightjar and the juvenile plumages of at least some species were not apparent and instead the bird's dorsal plumage was dominated by small white speckles. The lack of any rufous or brown tones, together with the modest size and the elevation near sea level should eliminate Feline (Large), Starry (Spangled) (*which is actually known from*

the lowlands at Nomad R. and near Kiunga), Mountain, and Archbold's owl-nightjars.

Looking at the illustrations in "Nightjars" by Nigel Cleere (illustrated by Dave Nurney) and "Handbook of the Birds of the World" Volume 5 (illustration by Tim Worfolk), I must say that our bird did NOT look like ANY of Dave Nurney's paintings of owl-nightjars but DID look very much like Tim Worfolk's illustration of Wallace's Owllet-Nightjar except that any subtle grey-on-grey vermiculations were so fine that we could not notice them and my impression was of slightly more white speckles than Worfolk illustrated."

Barred Owllet-Nightjar *Aegotheles bennettii*

July 2006 - One individual peering from its roost tree cavity off the Boundary Track at Varirata National Park 24 June. A different individual later. *This was early June and it became a stake out for most tours during the year. They seem to be quite common in suitable snags in the park as one of the rangers has now supplemented his income nicely by locating them!*

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

March 2004 - Three of this Asian migrant at Varirata on March 22nd were unexpected.

Mountain Kingfisher *Halcyon megarhyncha*

March 2004 - A bird just above Satop of the endemic Huon race *sellamontis*, which is supposed to have an all yellow bill, except this one had some dark on the upper mandible. Structurally it was clearly the large montane species and not the diminutive lowland bird. Also heard at Warili and Ambua.

Buff-breasted (White-tailed) Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanysiptera sylvia*

March 2004 - An adult and an immature along the Varirata Lookout trail, probably of the local race as it seems early for migrants.

April 2007 – An adult and immature in the same area, clearly of the local race.

Little Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanysiptera hydrocharis*

Jan 1998 - One at Ekame Lodge, still an almost unknown New Guinea species at this time.

Aug 1999 - Excellent views of this then great rarity above Kiunga. We finally learned the distinct call and the rest followed.

Now seen regularly at several spots in the monsoon forest above Kiunga, sympatric with two other Tanysiptera species but with quite distinct vocalizations. Tends to keep lower down in the forest than Common Paradise-Kingfisher.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*

March 2004 - Four very distant birds at Nadzab. The easiest PNG site for this very local species.

Blyth's Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus*

March 2004 - Ten on Fergusson, three at Wasu and a couple of pairs around Keki.

Red-bellied Pitta *Pitta erythrogaster*

March 2004 - Three heard calling on Fergusson around Sabutuia.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

March 2004 - Two at Nadzab March 16.

Australasian Pipit *Anthus australis exiguus*

March 2004 - The distinctive NG highlands form *exiguus* at Mendi Airstrip included a strange very dark plumaged presumed melanistic bird on 11th. This bird had blackish-brown upperparts with dark streaks, greyish-white outer tail feathers and dark centres to dusky undertail coverts. Belly buffish-white, chest boldly streaked dark much as nearby normal phase Australian Pipits. Supercilium was much narrower and less obvious than with these nearby birds. Long pink legs, size of Australian Pipit, no call heard. Curious almost vertical, very upright stance, and belly could appear dusky at times.

I think this taxon is yet another split waiting to be recognised, it is a montane form with distinct calls.

Alpine Pipit *Anthus alpinus*

July 2005 - One at about 2100m just below the Bailey Bridge, Ambua, was very unexpected, flushing from the road and perching in a tree beside the road.

July 2006 – One flushed after walking through the grasslands in the Tari Gap, a single bird that allowed for relatively prolonged but distant views. *Rare here, they sometimes stray down from the nearby mountains, but the usual species is Australian Pipit of the race exiguus, itself probably a split.*

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

October 2005 - An interesting passage migration of birds moving up the Tari valley was observed from Warili Lodge with up to 15 seen passing over each evening 15-17 October.

Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina lineata*

March 2004 - Seen nicely near Satop and at Keki sightings being of the very distinct NG race (*axillaris*), in which the males have little or no barring.

Island Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus poliocephala*

March 2004 - Seen above Satop where birds had very striking head patterns and did not look like the subspecies found at Ambua. It is supposedly the same.

Tawny Grassbird *Megalurus timoriensis*

March 2004 - This lowland species was heard at Wasu and seems to extend up into the hills some way. Curiously HBW Vol.11 treats this as the subspecies *harterti* of Papuan Grassbird, but the song was clearly of the *timoriensis* type. This taxon *timoriensis* in mainland PNG is supposedly only a Trans-Fly taxon, but this must be wrong.

Papuan Grassbird *Megalurus (timoriensis) papuensis*

March 2004 - This was common above Ambua and what was presumed to be this species was above Satop too. *The calls and the highland habitat are distinct from Australian birds and it is split in the 2003 Howard and Moore Checklist.*

Rufous-faced Thicket-warbler *Megalurulus rubiginosus*

Aug 1999 - A sudden loud response to my tape brought one in for brief but close views in forest at Mt Nakru, New Britain.

Fairy Gerygone *Gerygone palpebrosa*

Aug 1999 - Two on Pig (Bird) Is off Madang were unexpected.

March 2004 - Heard on Fergusson and seen up at Keki where two males showed well.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus carbonarius*

March 2004 - Great views on Fergusson and Dobu and heard at Varirata. *PNG birds of the race carbonarius have different calls to those in Australia and Coates (2001) suggests it is specifically distinct.*

Wallace's Fairy-wren *Sipodotus wallacii*

May 1998 - 2 at Dablin Creek. *Regular sites for this elusive mid-canopy fairywren now include Varirata, Dablin and Ekame.*

Black Monarch *Monarcha axillaris*

March 2004 - This bizarre mimic of the male Black Fantail was seen well above Satop. Claims of Black Fantail at Varirata probably refer to this species.

Black-winged Monarch *Monarcha frater*

March 2004 - Two singles were seen up by Keki Lodge, foraging high in the canopy.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens*

Aug 1999 - Lovely views on Pig (Bird) Island off Madang of this small island specialist, about as close as it comes to the mainland.

Ochre-collared Monarch *Arses insularis*

March 2004 - One at Keki. *Both this species and Frill-necked Monarch (A. lorealis) of Cape York are recent splits from Frilled, the females being very distinct in the latter species.*

Hooded Monarch *Monarcha manadensis*

May 1998 - A single in swamp forest above Kiunga, a very local and tricky bird to find.

July 2005 - One near the mouth of the Elevala River 23 July.

September/October 2005 - 2 were seen near Ekame Lodge. *Rather rare on the southern watershed but this is a known site.*

Yellow-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*

July 2005 - One was building a nest very high in the canopy at Varirata National Park 18 July.

Lesser Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra hebetior*

July 2006 - A male was seen in one of the trans-Kulu River clearings on New Britain. *Still hanging on amidst the oil palm deserts; claims of this species on Restorf Island need substantiation as Shining Flycatcher is common there.*

Olive Flycatcher *Myiagra flavovirescens*

March 2004 - One at Keki.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*

May 1998 - A single male in the mangroves at Hisiu.

Aug 1999 - A female along the Lavege track, New Britain, rather early.

March 2004 - A female plumaged bird on Dobu showed characters of this species rather than Leaden, and there was a probable male on Fergusson.

September/October 2005 - A male and two females were seen along the Pipeline road, Kikori. *A scarce migrant, seldom recorded and then mostly on the North slope or the Bismarcks. Identification of females may be problematic.*

Mottled Whistler *Rhagologus leucostigma*

March 2004 - A pair seen nicely in the rain below Kabwum Pass, Huon.

July 2006 - A female on the Dablin Creek Road.

It is an occasional visitor here

Grey Whistler *Pachycephala (simplex) griseiceps*

March 2004 - Seen at Keki, NG birds are often called Grey-headed Whistler. Also heard on Fergusson

Rusty Whistler *Pachycephala hyperythra*

July 2006 - One was seen at Brown River. This is the south-eastern race that is much more dull-coloured than those in central New Guinea. *This would be a new species for the area if correct, more usually a hill forest bird.*

Golden-backed Whistler *Pachycephala aurea*

Aug 1999 - Good views at Km 120, two adults showing well after initially being difficult. *The old helipad area was covered in road gravel in 2005 and the site no longer holds the species, which is curiously rare and local in PNG. This was the traditional site to see this species.*

Common Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*

Aug 1999 - A female in the forest along the Lavege track, and a male on Manus.

Mangrove Golden Whistler *Pachycephala melanura*

Aug 1999 - Good views of the odd sounding birds on Pig (Bird) Island off Madang.

Wattled Ploughbill *Eulacestoma nigropectus*

July 2005 - A juvenile ploughbill was by the Bailey Bridge at Ambua 1 August. The reddish back and rump bewildered us. *Nice to have a breeding record.*

White-bellied Pitohui *Pitohui incertus*

May 1998 - Seen nicely despite being shy along the Fly River above Kiunga, with several parties in evidence. *A rare and little known species that is fairly common in a few spots along the Elevala and Fly Rivers above Kiunga.*

Variable Pitohui *Pitohui kirhocephalus*

Apr 2004 - Brief views of several brownish-headed birds in the Keki area, and also one near Satop, Huon. Immatures lack the dark head.

New Guinea White-eye *Zosterops novaeguineae*

May 1998 - Birds in the Tari Valley are presumed to be this species, having no black forehead, a yellow chin and throat, pale yellowish underparts with greyish white flanks, yellow under tail coverts. *Rather a strange plumage, it would be interesting to know which race is involved.*

Papuan Sittella *Daphoenositta papuensis*

March 2004 - This newly split taxon was seen above Satop (a male), and some ten birds were seen at Ambua.

July 2006 - A flock of seven flew over us above Ambua Lodge. Two cooperative flocks in the Kumul Lodge region 30 June, totaling thirty birds.

Green-backed Honeyeater *Glycichaera fallax*

Aug 1999 - Seen at Dablin Creek, most unexpectedly again on Pig (Bird) Island off Madang, and at Varirata, a tricky one.

March 2004 - One seen at Keki, always an uncommon and elusive bird.

Red-throated Myzomela *Myzomela eques*

March 2004 - One was seen below Keki on March 19th.

Ashy Myzomela *Myzomela cineracea*

Aug 1999 - Quite common in the Hoskins-Lavege area, a distinctive island allospecies of *M. eques*.

Papuan Black Myzomela *Myzomela nigrita*

March 2004 - Seen on Dobu and Fergusson. *This distinctive taxon forbesi has a small red cap and must be a potential split.*

Mountain Red-headed Myzomela *Myzomela adolphinae*

March 2004 - Varirata, a tiny male atop a huge gum, regularly seen here, and one above Satop, Huon.

Red-collared Myzomela *Myzomela rosenbergii*

March 2004 - Common on the Huon above Satop.

Red Myzomela *Myzomela cruentata*

May 1998 - A rather tatty looking male at Dablin Creek.

Aug 1999 - Quite common in the Lelet hills of New Ireland. Probably best treated as an allospecies (Red-tinted Myzomela) of the mainland Red Myzomela.

March 2004 - Three males of this scarce species seen in a flowering tree by Keki Lodge.

Scarlet-bibbed (Sclater's) Myzomela *Myzomela sclateri*

August 2005 - 6+ on Restorf Island off New Britain were flying around actively.

July 2006 - More than twenty were seen on the three small islands in Kimbe Bay 13 July.

April 2007 - 6 on Restorf, 4 on Big Malo Malo and a few on Kimbe Is. Flying about very actively and sometimes heading briefly offshore.

Bismarck Black Myzomela *Myzomela pammelaena*

Aug 1999 - Five in coconut plantations on Kowhae Island off Manus.

July 2006 - two on Timor Island, well out in Kimbe Bay, Bismarck Sea, on 13 July. *This species generally inhabits only the more remote small islands offshore the main Bismarck Islands and only recently was it found to inhabit Timor Island. Not known on Restorf Island, which is quite close to the Willaumez Peninsula of New Britain, and may be competitively excluded by Black Sunbirds as the two species do not usually seem to co-exist.*

New Ireland (Olive-yellow) Myzomela *Myzomela pulchella*

Aug 1999 - A single along the Limbin Road, a rather rare NI endemic, which is pretty reliable along this road in small numbers

Black-bellied (New Britain Red-headed) Myzomela *Myzomela erythromelas*

July 2006 - Up to twelve individuals seen each day on mainland New Britain. *Numbers seem to fluctuate and it can be extremely elusive, there must be local movements after blossoms.*

Forest White-eared Honeyeater *Meliphaga montana*

March 2004 - Glimpsed in the Keki area

Graceful Honeyeater *Meliphaga (gracilis) cinereifrons*

March 2004 - This potential split with the large yellow ear patch, which does not give the “plik” call of Far North Queensland birds, was seen at Varirata.

Mountain Meliphaga *Meliphaga orientalis*

March 2004 – This small montane Meliphaga was seen above Satop.

Obscure Honeyeater *Lichenostomus obscurus*

May 1998 - A few heard at Kiunga and seen well at Tabubil. *A rather rare and local species but usually found around Kiunga.*

Black-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus subfrenatus*

March 2004 - Good views on the Huon where it was very vocal, up to six seen in a day. Heard at Ambua where numbers vary greatly from year to year.

Varied Honeyeater *Lichenostomus versicolor*

March 2004 - Seen at Alotau and Wasu.

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavescens*

March 2004 - Seen at the Pacific Adventist University. *The race here (germana) has a curious guttural “trrrr call, very similar to Fuscous Honeyeater in Far North Queensland.*

Tawny-breasted Honeyeater *Xanthotis flaviventer*

March 2004 - The birds are much duller on the north slope of the island, where we saw them at Keki Lodge. Also heard on Fergusson.

Spotted Honeyeater *Xanthotis polygramma*

March 2004 - One was seen in a flowering tree near Keki Lodge.

Plain Honeyeater *Pycnopygius ixoides*

March 2004 - Three of this rather uncommon species were seen well at Keki Lodge

Marbled Honeyeater *Pycnopygius cinereus*

March 2004 - This scarce high altitude species was seen above Satop, and again at Warili.

Yellowish-streaked (Olive-streaked) Honeyeater *Ptiloprora meekiana*

July 2005 - Heard near Ambua Lodge 31 July, this species was seen over the Ambua Lodge entrance road the next day. *A rather rare bird, at the usual site.*

September/October 2005 - 2 of these elusive honeyeaters in a flock on Papuan Sittellas *Neositta papuensis* near the Ambua Lodge entrance. *The waterfall trail is the best site for it.*

Meyer's Friarbird *Philemon meyeri*

March 2004 - One of these small dull friarbirds near Keki Lodge. *A high altitude for this species.*

New Guinea (Helmeted) Friarbird *Philemon (novaeguineae) buceroides*

March 2004 - Common in the lowlands and hills with the north coast birds quite different to the southern ones. It was seen on all three of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands- Fergusson, Normanby and Dobu.

Rufous-backed Honeyeater *Ptiloprora guisei*

March 2004 - Unexpectedly common on the Huon.

Silver-eared Honeyeater *Lichmera alboauricularis* :

September/October 2005 - 2 seen in trees outside PNG Arts souvenir shop in Port Moresby 19 October. *A very unusual site.*

Cinnamon-browed Melidectes *Melidectes ochromelas*

March 2004 - This was the common melidectes on the Huon, but was quite elusive, our day maximum being eight.

Ornate Melidectes *Melidectes ornatus*

March 2004 - Nice views near Satop, where we saw five in a day.

Huon Melidectes *Melidectes foersteri*

March 2004 - Brief views in wet and misty conditions of a *Melidectes* with blue facial skin below the Kabwum Pass, which looked good for this Huon endemic species, at the lower level of its altitudinal limit here, and far outnumbered by the Cinnamon-browed.

Spangled Honeyeater *Melipotes ater*

March 2004 - This large and quite spectacular Huon endemic was fairly common above Satop, with up to six in a day.

Brown-backed Honeyeater *Ramsayornis modestus*

March 2004 - One was seen on Fergusson.

Black Sunbird *Nectarinia aspasia*

March 2004 - Seen on Fergusson and Dobu.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis*

March 2004 - Seen on all three D'Entrecasteaux islands of Fergusson, Normanby and Dobu, and at Wasu on the Huon.

Red-capped Flowerpecker (Papuan Flowerpecker) *Dicaeum (pectorale) geelvinkianum*

March 2004 - The endemic race *violaceum* was seen on Normanby and Dobu.

Papuan Whipbird *Androphobus viridis*

July 2005 - An apparent juvenile in the edge of the high forest near Tari Gap on 2 August was perhaps the rarest bird of our trip. At first it struck us as a large, dark berrypecker of the genus *Melanocharis*. Then we realized that it was the little-known Papuan Whipbird!

July 2006 - We were very fortunate to obtain scope views of a female of this very rarely encountered species while scanning along the forested edge below the Tari Gap.

This species is one of the least known New Guinea birds and is frequently confused with Fan-tailed Berrypecker, which needs to be eliminated from consideration when female plumaged birds are claimed (as is usually the case). There are no breeding records so the possible significance of this claim is high. My thanks to Stephen Bailey for supplying his notes:

It was on the edge of high-elevation forest along the road ("Southern Highlands Highway") quite far up from Ambua Lodge toward Tari Gap. We saw it mid-day under cloudy conditions.

"Fairly close views in shade a bit above eye level; looked like a large dark

Melanocharis berrypecker and it confused us until I remembered Papuan Whipbird; probably a juvenile, as it showed a light gape mark [orange *vide* Adam]; larger than Fan-tailed Berrypecker, but slender with fairly long tail and slender bill; looked dusky greenish above and dark grey below; no eye ring; no spots or streaks except gape mark.”

My literature at home could add essentially nothing to this identification, especially with respect to juvenile plumage. I still believe the species identification to be correct but it is only a presumption that it was in juvenile plumage, based on the light orange gape mark. Obviously, with the bird showing so few field marks, much of the identification rests on the bird's size and shape being appropriate for Papuan Whipbird and not any berrypecker. While size is notoriously treacherous, I must point out that we had been seeing Fan-tailed Berrypecker, Lemon-breasted (Mid-mountain) Berrypecker, and Spotted Berrypecker (male and female) and thus were freshly familiar with their appearances. Also, I have about eight months field experience in New Guinea, so I feel that I have a reasonable handle on most New Guinea birds, especially when I have been seeing them in the past few days, as was the case for the berrypeckers when we saw the Papuan Whipbird. My notes state that there were “no spots or streaks except gape mark.” Notably absent were the tail spots or light patches expected in both Fan-tailed Berrypecker and Lemon-breasted (Mid-mountain) Berrypecker. Also, I specifically looked for streaks or an eye ring, but my notes state clearly that none of these were present. This should eliminate Streaked Berrypecker. As you note, it would be great if more of these Tari Gap / Ambua sightings of Papuan Whipbird involved the more-distinctive adult male, but I can only report what we actually saw. That was a very dull bird indeed, with the light orange gape mark the only indication of what plumage the bird was in. As you know, with the exception of species possessing a gape mark in adult birds, in passerines such a gape mark normally indicates a fledgling.

The record will be circulated to the PNG rarities committee. Essentially I think a review of all claims of Papuan Whipbird at Ambua is required, with adult males in particular being of great interest, and some vocal data would be invaluable. The risk of confusion with female plumaged berrypeckers is very high and its status in PNG is equivocal pending photos, sound recordings or trapping.

Mid-mountain Berrypecker *Melanocharis longicauda*

July 2006 - A female was studied on forest edge at Tari Gap, a surprisingly high elevation for this “mid-mountain” species. *Tricky, keep an eye on the berrypeckers as it may be that Mid-mountain occasionally comes this high here.*

Obscure Berrypecker *Melanocharis arfakiana*

March 2004 - One seen in the canopy at Keki Lodge again, still a virtually unknown bird.

July 2006 - The Tabubil area again produced this enigmatic species, which was almost unknown until discovered to be regular at this site. Pairs were seen at both Ok Ma and Dablin Creek Road. The latter were strongly streaked below, which may be a juvenile plumage. Otherwise they seemed identical to the previous day's pair and they did not show the eye ring or gape mark of the Streaked Berrypecker. *Discovered here in 1992, with presumed juveniles seen in 1993 and regular here thereafter, actually quite common in at least 3 sites around Tabubil. This is either Obscure Berrypecker or a just possibly (but unlikely!) a very similar and undescribed species (which ought then to be the Even More Obscure Berrypecker!).*

Streaked Berrypecker *Melanocharis striativentris*

July 2006 - One across the road from the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Black Berrypecker *Melanocharis nigra*

March 2004 - Good views in the forest understorey up at Keki.

Fan-tailed Berrypecker *Melanocharis versteri*

March 2004 - Males were seen well on the Huon above Satop and at Ambua.

Mid-mountain Berrypecker *Melanocharis longicauda*

March 2004 - Two were seen above Satop, the yellow pectoral tufts being a good field character.

Spotted Berrypecker *Rhamphocaris crassirostris*

July 2006 - A pair in a mixed flock at the King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise site below Kumul Lodge.

Slaty-chinned Longbill *Toxorhamphus poliopterus*

March 2004 - One was seen on the Huon above Satop.

Dwarf Longbill (Honeyeater) *Oedistoma iliolophus*

March 2004 - This was an unexpected find on Fergusson, and gave a good view for some of us. Also heard at Keki.

Pygmy Longbill (Honeyeater) *Oedistoma pygmaeum*

March 2004 - This tiny and easily missed species was seen en route to the Hot Springs on Fergusson.

Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops atrifrons*

March 2004 - Heard at Varirata, this is the common lowland and hill forest white-eye. Four of the race *minor* were seen near Keki.

New Guinea White-eye *Zosterops novaeguineae*

March 2004 - Fairly common on the Huon above Satop, the song is distinct from Black-fronted White-eye even though the plumage is similar. This is a curiously local species in PNG

Blue-faced Parrot-Finch *Erythrura trichroa*

March 2004 - Two were seen on the Huon and two at Ambua.

July 2005 - One was seen well by some along the Waterfall Trail at Ambua Lodge 29 July, and two juveniles were observed for long periods along the Ambua Lodge entrance road.

Papuan Parrot-Finch *Erythrura papuana*

March 2004 - One group saw one in the usual area below Warili. Cryptic and poorly known.

September/October 2005 - Up to 4, probably a family party of a pair and an immature and another adult, were seen daily near the entrance to Ambua Lodge. The birds were behaviourally different from the highly mobile and wary Blue-faced Parrot-Finches *E. trichroa*, being slow, stolid feeders, gradually working their way through the trees paying scant attention to the observers. Also the bill was noticeably stout, about 30% deeper than that of a Blue-faced Parrot-Finch. *The area around the Lodge and just below is a good site for them*

Hooded Mannikin *Lonchura spectabilis*

March 2004 - Seen nicely at Ambua, with rich buff underparts. Back in the early 90's they were white beneath here and changed in the intervening period! Also one seen at Mendi.

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax*

March 2004 - Fifty on Normanby.

White-spotted Mannikin *Lonchura leucosticta*:

May 1998 - 5 birds in a grassy patch by the Kiunga airstrip.

May 2005 - About 40 birds along Kiunga Airstrip was the most I have ever seen here.

They are regular at this site, albeit sometimes elusive. Also known from the Dringas Road and in reeds along the Fly River not far north of the town in some seasons.

Hunstein's Mannikin *Lonchura hunsteini*

The regular site for this New Ireland endemic is the airstrip at Kavieng, and it does seem to be restricted to the very northern part of the island.

What is the form apparently introduced and common in the Caroline Is. on Pohnpei? This seems such an unlikely species to be introduced, and some authors list it as a separate subspecies!

New Hanover Mannikin *L. (hunsteini) nigerrima*

June 2002 - About 30 birds around Taskol on New Hanover, much darker headed than the nominate race.

June 2007 - About 30 seen near Taskol, including many immatures.

Clements splits this species and the immatures do seem a bit different, but the call is very similar to Hunstein's Mannikin.

Forbes' Mannikin *Lonchura forbesi*

Aug 1999 - 11 near Namatanai were a good find of this sparse low density New Ireland endemic. Immatures of other species are readily confused with this endemic, and I wonder about reports from Kavieng airstrip?

Oct 2000 - 5 near Dalom.

June 2007- 5 near Limbin.

Black Mannikin *Lonchura stygia*

May 2005 - At least 2 birds (and maybe 5) were in the long grass beside Kiunga Airstrip, a big range extension from the Trans-Fly of a very restricted range and poorly known species.

Buff-bellied Mannikin (Bismarck Mannikin) *Lonchura melaena*

May 1998 - Great views of a few at Hoskins airstrip.

May 1998 - A small flock near an oil palm plantation north of Dalom (Phil Gregory), a new species for New Ireland. They resemble the taxon *bukaensis* which was described from Buka airstrip in 1995, but requires evaluation as the characters given by Restall (1995) for the nominate are incorrect, as this taxon does have a black head. They do seem richly coloured beneath and have bright reddish tails. The Buka birds have not been seen since the early 1990's.

Oct 2000 - Five near Dalom, New Ireland.

July 2005 - Various-sized flocks totalled at least 75 birds along the Kulu River Road, New Britain, 5 August.

June 2007 – 30 south of Kavieng near Km 100, including many immatures. *They seem to have become more common in recent years around Hoskins and Kimbe. The first occurrence on New Ireland is noteworthy and it seems likely to have been overlooked previously.*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

March 2004 - The sparrow only properly colonized PNG (in Port Moresby) since 1992, so the first record for the Highlands at Mendi airstrip was significant. Here we saw six birds including a female and an immature male. Our pilot first noted them here on Jan 23 2004.

There was a female at Nadzab, Lae in 1998.

Yellow-eyed Starling *Aplonis mystacea*:

May 1998 - A couple along the Fly River and a starling seminar at Rumgenai one afternoon, with all flocks of Yellow eyed flying to our left and all the Metallics to the right, a little known field character!

July 2006 - Twice on the Fly River we saw that the bird leading a flock of passing starlings was an adult Yellow-eyed Starling. Both species occur together in flocks. Later the same day five juvenile Yellow-eyed Starlings were in a fruiting tree beside the Elevala River. An adult at Dablin Creek Road, Tabubil, on 7 July. The odd bristly nasal/frontal tuft plus the unusual head shape and hackles were nicely displayed. *A new species for Dablin!*

July 2006 - A nesting colony of over one hundred birds along a forested trail near the Elevala River.

Quite a rare bird and numbers seem to vary along the Fly and Elevala.

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*

March 2004 - Seen on Dobu and Fergusson only.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*

March 2004 - A pair on Normanby, also seen at Alotau.

Atoll Starling *Aplonis feadensis*

June 2007 – 18 birds on Tench Island included several juveniles with greyish rather than yellow coloured irides.

Hooded Butcherbird *Cracticus cassicus*

March 2004 - Good views on Dobu and Fergusson.

Paradise Drongo *Dicrurus megarhynchus*

Aug 1999 - 4 of this large spectacular and noisy endemic drongo at Utu near Kavieng, including one the local lads had trapped.

White-eared Catbird *Ailuroedus buccoides*

March 2004 - Heard at Keki on two dates, always very difficult to see.

Spotted Catbird *Ailuroedus melanotis*

Aug 1999 - Heard quite often but it is incredibly shy and skulking in New Guinea, very distinct behaviour from Australian birds and also with very distinct plumage. One was calling in the same area as the White-eared Catbird along the Ok Ma.

Macgregor's Bowerbird *Amblyornis macgregoriae*

March 2004 - One of the Huon taxon *germanus* that makes a distinct bower, up on the south side of the Kabwum Pass crest. We also saw a bower of the usual form at Ambua, and one below Warili. *This is a potential split, (c/f. Coates and Peckover 2001).*

September/October 2005 - A male was seen along the Benari road below Warili Lodge and an active bower was seen along Steven's trail near the Lodge. The maypole bower was also decorated with maize kernels around the rim of the "moat" which seems to be a previously unrecorded item of ornamentation of this species' bower.

Fire-maned Bowerbird *Sericulus alberti*

March 2004 - Fantastic views of this restricted range rarity at Keki again, still seen by only a select few westerners. A male came and perched right out atop a tall tree below the lodge for some ten minutes one morning, and a pair came and fed briefly in the tall fig by the lodge one morning. We saw three birds on March 18th and a male on the 19th.

Yellow-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera lauterbachii*

Aug 1999 - Excellent views near Baiyer River, maximum 12 in one day. *This is a species that is not usually on the trip circuit.*

Archbold's Bowerbird *Archboldia papuensis*

June 2005 - A noisy trio passed by Kumul Lodge on 29 June.

Still regular above Ambua Lodge but adult males are seldom seen.

Curl-crested Manucode *Manucodia comrii*

March 2004 - We heard the strange bubbling call behind Esa'ala and saw two of this strange bird. On Fergusson, loose flocks were moving through the canopy at one point. Several birds on Dobu Island, it seems quite common and widespread on these islands where tall trees remain. Curiously we did not hear or see the local form of Trumpet Manucode at all. The local name is "mailulu" and may reflect the lovely wavering call?

Pale-billed Sicklebill *Epimachus bryijni*

Sept 2000 - Two singing males along the Bewani Road out of Vanimo, with a fantastic wild musical call. This is the best-known site for the species, being

relatively accessible but much degraded by logging and clearance. Rarely seen by tour groups.

Wahnes' Parotia *Parotia wahnesi*

March 2004 - This rather rare Huon / Adelbert endemic gave very nice views just above Satop, more or less where seen in 1994. We saw at least two males and four female plumaged birds, whilst the first sighting a km or so above Satop on March 13th sounds like a young male.

There seem to be no recent records from the Adelbert Mts.

Ribbon-tailed Astrapia *Astrapia mayeri*

July 2005 - Up to ten were at Kumul Lodge 26-29 July, and the continual visits of females and immature males to the feeder was a Kumul Lodge highlight. One adult male was seen there. Up to eight per day 30 July - 2 August were in the high forests toward Tari Gap. Of special interest was the adult male hybrid Ribbon-tailed X Princess Stephanie's Astrapia at Kumul Lodge 27 July. It showed full colours including the copper breast band, had only a small pom-pom on the forehead, and its one long tail feather was spatulate, folded into a deep keel trough, and all white except for a black tip.

Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise *Cicinnurus magnificus*

March 2004 - Two female plumaged birds seen at Keki but not at all tape responsive despite males calling at several sites by the Lodge.

Greater Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea apoda*

July 2005 - The unanimous highlight-of-the-trip was watching the courtship displays, side-by-side, of both Greater and Raggiana birds-of-paradise in the Attenborough Tree at Km 17 north of Kiunga. As long as we wanted to watch, we stared as these avian dandies posed, danced, and quivered their long yellow and red (respectively) plumes in a competition both within species and between species. Indeed, these two birds-of-paradise do hybridize in this area and we saw at least one likely hybrid. Although the male Raggiana Birds-of-paradise occupied the central sites in the lek tree, usually the most advantageous for mating success, the Greater Birds-of-paradise males had most of the action, as most of the visiting females were Greater. The courtship was hot and heavy, and several copulations resulted. On our first visit (19 July), we concentrated on scoping a different display tree, in which there were only Greater displaying and copulating. Thirty or more were in the area. On our return in the morning of 24 July, there were comparable numbers and we concentrated on the Attenborough Tree from a closer vantage point, watching the Raggianas displaying in the midst of the Greater. Elsewhere around Kiunga we saw up to seven Greater per day and we saw at least four females along the Elevala River 21-23 July.

Lesser Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea minor*

Aug 1999 - Males and the distinctive females at a lek at Baiyer River.

March 2004 - Male and female plumaged birds near Keki, but they were quite shy and wary.

July 2006 - While exploring a remote forest patch in the Mount Hagen area we found a new site for the previously unrecorded Lesser Bird-of-Paradise! We found five individuals including three females, one immature male, and one stunning adult male.

July 2006 - A couple of female plumaged birds near Karawari Lodge on the Karawari R. West Sepik, were unusual there and may have moved down due to the dry conditions this year.

Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana*

July 2005 - At least 25 individuals were seen, at Varirata and others heard, both scattered and visiting the lek off the Varirata Lookout road. On the latter day, we sat quietly under the display trees and waited until the wary males returned to court. Impressive! Even better, at Km 17, in the combined lek described above, three adult males displayed in the central positions of the Attenborough lek tree. However, perhaps only one Raggiana female appeared to be courted during our extended visit 24 July, in contrast to the conspicuous action enjoyed by the Greater.

Goldie's Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea decora*

March 2004 - This restricted range endemic performed brilliantly at a lowland site near Sabutuia Village on Fergusson, saving us several hours flog up into the hills at 600m. The first sighting was brief views of a female plumaged bird that was calling, then we got onto two males doing some odd kind of static display, and which sat for ages at close range, just fantastic. We are the first bird tour to see the species which has only been seen by a very few birders anyway. The local name is "siae" and the species is endemic to Normanby and Fergusson, usually up in the hills.

Emperor Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea guilielmi*

Aug 1999 - The well-known site at Boana has been degraded by tree clearing, and is being invaded by Raggianas which are now common there. We saw just a couple of Emperor's, including a fine male.

March 2004 - Two immatures were seen in low fruiting trees just above Satop, allowing quite nice scope views. I had not expected it to be this high up. They were loosely associated with the Huon *Astrapia* and the Wahnes *Parotias* too.

Blue Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea rudolphi*

September/October 2005 - A fine male along the Benari road below Warili Lodge.

OBITUARY NOTICE Shortly after the July - August 2005 tour finished, news was received that the male Blue Bird of Paradise at the Tapuka quarry had been injured by an opportunist 'hunter' with a slingshot. The intention was to sell the bird to whoever wanted it for K70 (£14, \$25) but it was retrieved by a local landowner and duly died. The 'hunter' got nothing and the Tapuka area is far less attractive to visiting birders now. Perhaps another male will fill the void, but that is doubtful.

Bismarck (Torresian) Crow *Corvus (orru) insularis*

The birds in New Britain are very different from mainland birds, both in jizz and voice, so there are good grounds for splitting them off as the Island or Bismarck Crow *Corvus insularis*. They are at least as distinct as the various corvid species in Australia, and probably not closely related to Bougainville Crow (*C. woodfordi*), though this was suggested by Brian Finch (Muruk 1988).

The above sightings were extracted from the following tour reports, all followed the standard PNG itinerary based around Port Moresby/ Kiunga/ Ambua except where noted:

Birdquest May 1998: Phil Gregory, New Britain extension.

Sicklebill Safaris (Australia) Aug 1999; Phil Gregory.:

Baiyer River and Kumul Lodge. New Britain, New Ireland and Manus.

Sunbird 2000: Phil Gregory. Vanimo, Wau, Madang, Kiunga, New Britain.

Field Guides Islands of PNG 2002, 2003 and 2007: Phil Gregory. New Britain, Buka, Bougainville, New Ireland, New Hanover, Djaul, Tench Island, Manus.

Sicklebill Safaris (Australia) March 7-26 2004; Phil Gregory. D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago: Fergusson, Dobu and Normanby Is; Huon Peninsula near Satop; Ambua/Tari; Keki, Adelbert Mts.

Sicklebill Safaris (UK) 25 September to 21 October 2005; Ian Burrows. Kikori area, Kumul Lodge.

Rockjumper July-Aug 2005 Adam Riley & Stephen Bailey. Kumul Lodge.

Rockjumper 23 June-14 July 2006. David Shackelford & Stephen Bailey. Kumul Lodge and New Britain extension.

Rockjumper 10 - 31 July 2006; David Shackelford & Stephen Bailey. Kumul Lodge and New Britain extension.

Buka and Bougainville August 30 - September 4 2001

By Phil Gregory

Chris Eastwood and I made a trip to these islands, long off the route for birders due to the civil war, which has put them off-limits since 1989. Andy Anderson made a brief Buka trip in 1999, and was surprisingly here just the week before us, but no other birders have visited the islands for many years. Don Hadden was the