

## **New Birds and other interesting sightings from Melanesia.**

by Michael Tarburton

This paper records fourteen new species over nine islands in Papua New Guinea, 362 new species on new islands in the Solomons, and 16 new records for Vanuatu. The main observations in New Caledonia were the locating of two tern species in winter when they were thought previously to have deserted the island group.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many smaller islands have rarely or never been visited by bird collectors or bird observers so they are a special feature of this paper. These smaller islands contain small bush birds, mostly tramp species that have broad diets and can cope where others cannot. But there are surprises as well. Willie-wagtails and nightjars on tiny islands are just two of them. Museum collectors visiting the South Pacific have largely neglected seabirds and migratory waders so observations of these birds also make a special feature of this paper.

Tench Island and the islands in the Solomons Manning Strait are eroding away with many coastal trees being washed away by the encroaching ocean and so I hope that recording the birds on some of these islands is not a farewell to them, but rather an incentive for others to learn something about them while there is time.

### **METHODS**

Six years were spent collating as many published records for Melanesia as possible. (These may be found at [WWW.birdsofmelanesia.net](http://WWW.birdsofmelanesia.net)). Observations from the field trips

described in this paper have been assessed in the light of these data. Observations on and offshore of New Ireland, New Hanover, Ungalik, Emira, Mussau, and Tench were made between 26 June and 7 July 2000 and were made with Colin Richardson. These islands are shown in Figure 1. Daru Island, Balimo, Kotale and Kotale-Cowa Bush Camp areas of the Gulf of New Guinea were searched for birds between 5-12 August 2005.

The third area of study was in the Solomon Islands. Two week-long trips to the area around Honiara were made in July 2001 and August 2002. These were followed by a field trip that made landings on 40 small islands in the Western Solomon Islands. These small islands are east of Gizo and between Choiseul and Santa Isabel and are shown on Figures 2, 3, and 4.

The fourth area of study was New Caledonia and Vanuatu in June 2007. A single field trip of ten days by boat was made to the islands of Grande Terre, Santo, Pentecost, Efate, Aneityum and Inyeug. The most interesting observations were made offshore.

## RESULTS

### **New Species for Islands in Papua New Guinea**

*Emira (Emirau) Island* – Baune is at 01 40 45S 149 58 50E.

**Melanesian Scrubfowl** *Megapodius eremita* Two heard Emira Island 28 June and four seen on Tench Island 1 July. Nine Tench Island 2 July. One heard at swiftlet cave near Dalom (New Ireland, 03 14.22s 151 57.22e). (*Previously known from Tench and documented in several trip reports-Ed.*)

**Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta* One dark morph bird observed 25km east of Emira Island 30 June. It was observed at close range in good light conditions enabling definite positive identification. The pale “wrist windows” were clearly seen while there were no white areas on the face, leading wing edge or throat. There is only one previous record in PNG waters (Coates 1985).

**Tahiti Petrel** *Pseudobulweria rostrata* One 30km south of Emira 27 June. Coates (1985) records one near New Hanover as the only previous sighting in this area although it is known to occur regularly off Port Moresby.

**Matsudaira’s Storm-Petrel.** *Hydrobates matsudairae* One 20 km east of Emira Island 30 June. The bird was seen at close range enabling a definite, positive identification. It was a large, all dark storm-petrel with a distinctly forked tail (one-third of tail length) which eliminated the dark form of the smaller Leach’s Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. This is the first record of this species in PNG waters although its presence has been suspected for some time (PNGBS Newsletter. 181: 26 (1981). We decided that the largish size (it came quite close several times) and the quite noticeably pale bases of the outer primaries on the dorsal surface made this individual Matsudaira’s Storm Petrel rather than Swinhoe’s Storm Petrel. We thought it was in fresh plumage not worn. (Shirihai (2008) also recorded Matsudaira’s Storm-Petrel in 2007 on his Beck’s Petrel trip off New Ireland-Ed.)

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna carneipes* One 4km south-east of Emira Island 27 June and another 24km West of Tench Island 30 June. Previously recorded close to New Ireland (Coates 1985).

**Heinroth’s Shearwater** *Puffinus heinrothi* One eight km south of Emira Island 27 June. The bird was seen well enough

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to enable a positive identification to be confirmed by reference to the literature (del Hoyo *et al* 1992, & Harrison 1983.). Coates (1985) reports several probable/possible sightings near New Hanover and New Ireland and it has recently been shown to occur in Kimbe Bay, West New Britain (Bourne 2000, Shirihai 2008) with one record off Nissau Island (Dutson 2001).

**Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* Seven seen Emira 28 June. Coates (1985) recorded this species from New Ireland (Coates 1985).

**White Tern** *Gygis alba* Ten on or near the three old pylons from the US wharf ruins at Baune. Four on Liubotuo Island, a few hundred metres off southern Emira 28 June. Four 20 km, and two 30 km, East of Emira 30 June. This species breeds on Tench Island (This paper) where it has previously been recorded (Coates 1985).

**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Six seen Emira Island 28 June. The nearest previous record to this sighting is a lone record on New Britain (Coates 1985).

**Atoll Starling** *Aplonis feadensis* Six birds either in hollows or on the ruined wharf on the south coast at Baune. Four were also on Liubotuo Island south-west of Emira. This bird has been recorded on Tench Island (Mayr & Diamond 2001) but not Emira Island or Mussau Island.

Tench Island - Circular island diameter of 0.6km at 01 39 10S 150 40 13E.

**Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma heraldica* A single bird 25km south of Tench Island 2 July. Observed at 15m, it was all dark brown (dark morph) with a distinct M-pattern on upper wings. Not recorded in PNG by Coates (1985). This bird was a dark brown with the even darker M pattern on the dorsal surface

with no pale patches or feather shafts on the dorsal surface, or paleness around the face. The underwing pale patch was too dark for a Kermadec. (*This is the first for New Guinea, a long expected addition, but needs to be carefully distinguished from Kermadec Petrel-Ed.*)

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardenna carneipes* One 24km west of Tench Island 30 June. Presumed to be a regular visitor to this area (Coates 1985) though only one record given (off New Ireland).

**Eastern Osprey** *Pandion cristatus* One 1 July Tench Island. There is no previous record on Tench Island though one of the distribution dots in Coates (1985) may indicate a previous sighting on or near Tench.

#### *New Guinea*

[**Hill Myna** (*Gracula religiosa*)] On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2005 I had very good views of a single bird that was uniformly black and a little larger and more stocky than the Yellow-faced and Golden Mynas that I know well. It had a very short tail, not in moult or partial moult, with bright orange legs and a small white window in the wing. The bill was fairly short and slightly down-curved. The bird perched sideways on the trunk of a fruiting palm for a while then flew up to feed on the fruit. It emitted a soft "cheep" whistle while flying away.

The juvenile Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa*) is the only bird in the region that resembles what I saw. It is patchily distributed into Indonesia, being found on Sumbawa, Flores, Pantar, Lombok, Alor, the greater Sundas and Palawan (Coates & Bishop 1997). Could part of its patchy distribution include New Guinea or could it be an escapee from the Asian logging camps 20km distant at the time? The local people do not keep caged birds.

The site was lightly-logged lowland rainforest near Kotale Village's most distant bush camp called Cowa, Gulf Province. about 35m asl and at 07 49 20S 142 52 00E. King et al. (1991) define the Hill Myna's habitat as forest and secondary growth.

The immature Hill Myna fits the size, stockiness, solid non-glossy black body colour, orange legs, white wing window, of the bird that I saw and the audible regular whistle it gave while flying. The species is unrecorded on New Guinea. (*Circulation of this sighting to various referees produced a unanimous opinion that this is most likely an escaped cagebird, particularly given the proximity of a logging camp- Editor*)

Other Interesting Sightings in PNG

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas* One 32 km south-east of Emira 27 June.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* One bird on Tench Island 1 July, being the least likely time of year to find this species breeding, hence the breeding population may be greater than this sighting indicates. Tropicbirds normally only come near land to breed (Tarburton 1980)

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* Two 15km east of New Hanover 27 June, six 35.5km west of Tench Island 30 June. 600 on Tench Island 1 July with eggs or small young. Seven 25-30km south of Tench Island 2 July. Five 50-55km south of Tench Island 2 July and two 10 km north of Kavieng 2 July.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* One 6km south of Soi (New Hanover) and one 32 km north of Ungalik Island (New Hanover) 27 June. Five on Tench Island 30 June and three there on 1 June. Two 30 km south of Tench Island 2 July. It is likely to breed on Tench Island but this has not been recorded.

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* Two over Emira Island 28 June. Forty 5-40 km west of Tench Island 30 June. There were 70 on Tench Island 30 June and 30 on 2 July.

**Oriental Hobby** *Falco severus* One Kavieng 26. June and one Mussau Island 29 June. This is a widespread but uncommon species in PNG.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata* One adult on Tench Island 2 July. Five widely spaced immature birds 30 km south of Tench Island. Their stomach was blotchy black and white, unlike the single sharp line between stomach and vent shown in most field guides and the single immature Sooty Tern in the PNG Museum.

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana* Two, Baune Lagoon. Two Liubotuo Island, south-west Emira Island 28 June..

**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* Two Liubotuo Island, south-west of Emira. Five 23km west of Tench Island and two Tench Island 30 June.

**Grey-backed Tern** *Onychoprion lunata* One six km west of Soi (New Hanover) 27 June. This bird had a very pale back. It fitted well the two I saw just four months earlier (27. 2. 2000) near the Taiwanese Fishing boat wreck 10.6km from Irupara SE of Port Moresby. They have a shorter eye-brow also, though not as short as Sooty Tern. The clincher to me was their call it was different to Bridled, whose yap-yap and bark-like variation I know well. (*Previous records claimed from PNG are very few and lack proper documentation-Ed.*)

**White Tern** *Gygis alba* 25 and 10 on Tench Island 1 & 2 July. Several on eggs, and one with a week old hatchling.

**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Two Taskul (New Hanover) 27 June. Two Mussau Island 29 June and four Limbin Road (New Ireland) 4 July.

**Atoll Starling** *Aplonis feadensis* Ten 30 June, 8, 1 July, and 4, 2 July, Tench Island.

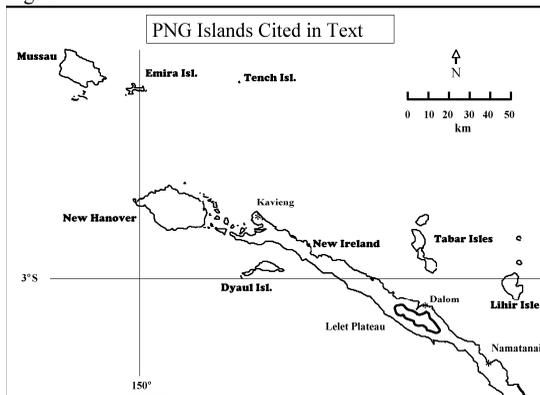
**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallicus* 160 leaving a coconut tree roost Kavieng 27 June. Four Taskul (New Hanover). 250 Emira Island 28 June, 300 Mussau Island 29 June. Fifty Kavieng to Dalom 3 July.

**Singing Starling** *Aplonis cantoroides* Five Kavieng 27 June, four Mussau Island 29 June. Eight and 15 Kavieng 2 & 3 July. Thirty Kavieng to Dalom and 45 Limbin Road 3 & 4 July. Four Kono (New Ireland) 5 July.

#### *For Future Clarification*

A *Microeca*-like bird was seen on Limbin Road (New Ireland) 4 July. It had a grey head, pale lemon chest and belly, dark olive-green wings and back, with a pale area around the eye cf. Gregory & Hornbuckle (2002).

Fig. 1



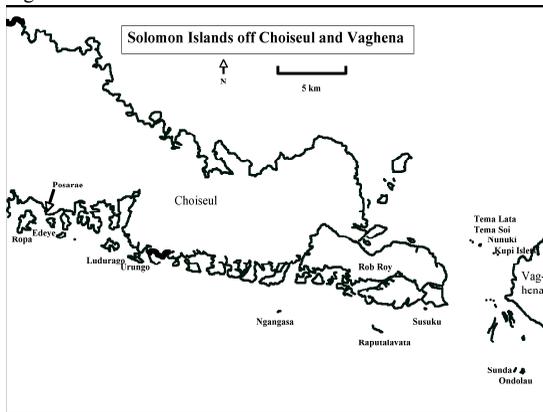
## Solomon Islands New Island Records

### Choiseul

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*

1 circling with Uniform Swiftlets around the peak of Mt Kalove inland of Posarae on 22 & 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2005. For half an hour we were on that peak viewing at close range. This is the first published record of this species for the Solomon Islands though it has been anticipated for some time (Doughty et al 1999). Subsequently I have learned of an unpublished record. Chris Eastwood and Phil Gregory saw a single bird at the Munda Airport on New Georgia 28 December 1996, during cyclonic conditions.

Fig.2



Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One flew over Ludurago  
Dec 2005.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* 2, 1, & 1, obs ten – 22 km offshore Dec 2005.

**Edeye** (800m long, S side of Choiseul, 2km SE of Posarae at 07 22 11S 157 13 58E-Google Earth. Visited 16 December 2005)

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* 1 offshore.

**Ghire** (South of Vaghena, visited 21 December 2005)  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 16 flew to this island from Wagina.

#### **Gizo**

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*. One on beach 13 Dec 2005.

**Haycock** (South-East of Vaghena island, main island at 07 28.81S, 157 52.21E, visited 21 December 2005)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Male over island.

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* Two grey-form birds.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus* Two present.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One present.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One seen, two more heard, eggs seen in mounds.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* two present.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* one present.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* One identified.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Three seen and its distinctive call heard.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* One seen and call heard.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* present.

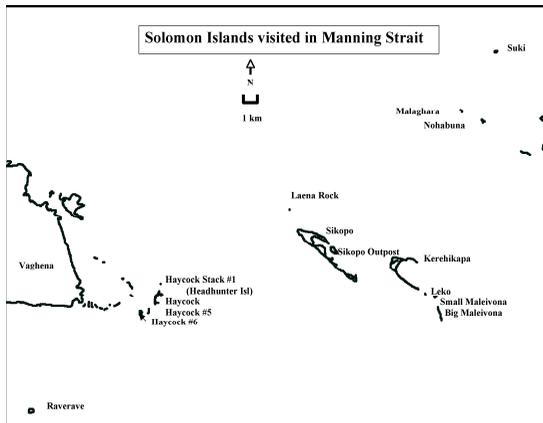
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* 91 perched on stakes at

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seaweed farm.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Two roosting on beach.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 45 flew by close to west coast.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One seen, one heard, and remains of freshly eaten bird found.  
Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two present.  
Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* One present.  
Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One present.  
Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One present.  
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Two seen.  
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* Two present.  
Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* Two present.  
Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea* One seen one heard.  
Yellow-breasted Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Five seen plus another heard.  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* One observed.

**Haycock Stack #1.** (Northernmost of four in-line stacks north of Haycock, 07 27.96S, 157 52.46E. Labelled Headhunter Island on Google Earth. Visited 21 December 2005).  
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One present.  
Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* 1 with nest.  
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* 3 present.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Three roosting.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Three flew away.  
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Three flying around cliff.



Phil & Sue Gregory Saturday,  
5:36 PM

Fig. 3

**Haycock Stack #2.** (Second furthestmost of four stacks in line north of Hancock, visited 21 December 2005)  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Two roosting.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Five birds present.

**Haycock Island #5.** (SW of Haycock at 07 28.88S, 157 52.15E, visited 21 December 2005)  
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* One present.  
Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* One seen.  
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* One seen.  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One heard.  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* One seen.

**Haycock Island #6.** (SW of Haycock at 07 28.92S, 157 51.89E. Visited 21 December 2005)

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Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* One white form present.  
Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* Freshly dug burrows located close to rotting tree roots.  
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 1 observed.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Nine feeding 60-100 metres offshore.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Four feeding 40m offshore.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 16 seen plus one heard.  
White-throated Nightjar *Eurostopodus mystacalis* One flushed from the beach high tide line twice before it headed into the centre of the island.  
Dollar Bird *Eurystomus orientalis* 1 seen.  
Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One heard close by.  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Five seen plus one heard and begging fledgling.

**Kerehikapo** (Largest of Arnavon Group at 07 27 51S, 158 01 39E, visited 15-20 December 2005)

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* one seen on two days.

Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* One observed on two days.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* one seen 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* Two seen several days.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* One to four seen on four days.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* One to five seen on four days.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Up to Five seen on three days.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Eight to 55 seen on four days.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* One on coral flats 17th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* One on coral flats 17th.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Three to seven on Coral flats on four days.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* One seen 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One seen on beach or drowned tree on four days.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Three to Seven observed over four days.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Two to nine observed over three days.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Three to nine observed over four days.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* 15 close to camp buildings 15th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* One to eight seen on three days.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Three observed 16th and 10 on 18<sup>th</sup>.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Six on coral sand flats 18th.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 17 fishing three km West of island 19th.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* 130 1 km offshore and 140 inshore 16th.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One to five seen on four days.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Two to five seen over three days.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Three seen 20.

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Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One seen on 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* Five observed 19<sup>th</sup>.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* One on 16<sup>th</sup> and two on 19<sup>th</sup>.

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons* One to two seen on four days.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One to seven seen on five days.

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea* Male observed 16<sup>th</sup>.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One to Four seen on six days.

Scarlet-naped Myzomela *Myzomela lafargei* One seen 16, 17 and 19<sup>th</sup>.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* one bird 700m out coming in from Isabel, 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Kulambangra** (Visited 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December 2005)

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Two observed eight kilometres to NW.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 34 on Kukundu airstrip.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Three on Kukundu Airstrip.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Locally common right along the south and west coasts.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* One to three seen, 1 km, 3 km, 12 km and 18 km offshore.

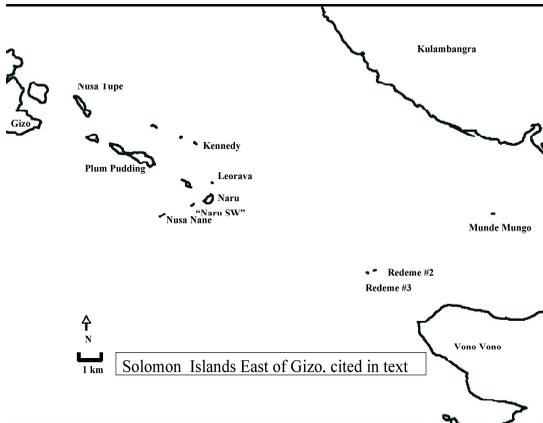


Fig. 4

**Kupi Islets** (two very small islets 1 km NW Wagina at 07 24.00S, 157 42.04E, visited 16 December 2005)

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* Two grey and one white form present.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Three feeding close to shore.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* 20 roosting.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 80 present.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Four present.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One observed.

**Laena Rock** (North of Sikopo, Arnavon Group at 07 25.25S, 157 57.29E. Visited 21 December 2005)

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* One 3 km to South.

**Leko** (35m long island off Southern tip of Kerehikapo, Arnavon Group at 07 28.39S 158 02.41E, visited 18 December 2005)  
Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One observed.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Three roosting on the island.

**Leorava** (Islet 600m North of Naru at 8 07 53s 156 55 07- Google Earth). Visited 13 December 2005)  
Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One seen.  
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* One present.  
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* One seen.  
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Seven present.  
Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* One present.  
Sanderling *Calidris alba* One roosting.  
Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Two roosting.

**Ludurago** (South of Choiseul, 10-15 km East of Posarae, visited 20 December 2005)  
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One over island.  
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Four flew from island to Choiseul.  
Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One present.

**Malaghara** (Island of rocky peaks and coral sand at 07 21.41S, 158 03.84E, visited 19 December 2005)  
Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One observed.  
Melanesian Megapode *Megapodius eremita* One nest with freshly dug tunnels located.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 150 feeding 4 km to SW.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* At least 50 birds present and many nesting. Two nests inspected contained one  
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egg each.

Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* At least two on nests and one with a dark brown nestling.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One observed.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Two present.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One observed.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One observed.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Three observed, one of which flew to Noapuna 1.8 km distant at 71°.

**Big Maleivona** (Arnavon Islands, at 07 28.85S, 158 02.88E, visited 18 December 2005)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* Two seen.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Two roosting.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* one on beach.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One on beach.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Two roosting.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* 50 roosting, 1 carrying metal band.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* 35 roosting on beach.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Five feeding close inshore.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 12 roosting, nine fishing.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* 30 fishing close to shore, 100 passing the island and possibly 300 too far offshore to identify which noddy species.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Three on island.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Three on island, two of which flew 1-2 km towards Isabel then returned.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One resident.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* Four observed.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* A pair seen.

**Small Maleivona** (Arnavon Islands, at 07 28.49S, 158 02.27E.  
Visited 16 & 18 December 2005)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One present.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Two present.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One flew onto  
beach then back into bush.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* 50 feeding inshore.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Ten feeding inshore.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Two seen.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Two present.

**Munde Mungota** (NW entrance to channel between  
Novovono and Kohinggo, 08 08.71s 157 02.17e . Visited 14  
December 2005)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* 30 offshore.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Five offshore.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* 15 offshore.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One present.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* One seen.

White-capped Monarch *Monarcha richardsi* One observed.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One present.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Two seen.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* two present.

**Naru** (West side of New Georgia Group, 630m long at 8 08  
20S 156 55 04E-Google Earth. Visited 14 December 2005)

Melanesian Scrub Fowl *Megapodius eremita* Four seen.

Red Jungle Fowl *Gallus gallus* Several heard.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Heard calling.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One seen.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One heard.

**Naru South-west** (300m SW of Naru, New Georgia Group, 08 08.58S 156 54.66E. Visited 13 December 2005).

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* Two present.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* One roosting.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Three present.

**Ngangasa** (Off South coast of Choiseul at 07 27.52S 157 28.34E. Visited 20 December 2005.)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Three over island.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristata* Two at roost.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* Two seen and one more heard.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One seen another heard.

Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* One present.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Two present.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* One seen.

**Nohabuna** (Manning Strait, 14.1km @ 35° from Sikopo at 07 21.86S 158 04.71E. Visited 19 December 2005.)

Solomon Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus sanfordi* One present.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Four feeding 100m offshore.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* One feeding 100m offshore.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Two feeding three km to South.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 200+ building nests, six & three flew to Isabel.

Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* 50+ nesting – eggs seen.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two flew from Pizuana off Isabel.

Eastern Koel *Eudynamys orientalis* One calling incessantly for two hours from thicket.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Two observed.  
Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Two seen.  
Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One observed and  
three more heard,  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two observed.

**Nunuki** (North of Vaghena at 07 23.61S 157 40.90E. Visited  
16 December 2005).

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* Tracks of one on beach.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Five at rest.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Two at rest on beach.  
Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Three at rest on beach.  
Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One observed.  
Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One observed.  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Four seen.

**Nusa Nane** (700m SW of Naru W side of New Georgia Group  
at 08 07 89S 156 54 29E. Visited 13 December 2005)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* Four at roost.  
Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One seen, 50  
burrows counted.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* One offshore.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Two roosting in  
*Casuarina*.  
Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Moderately  
common.  
Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* Two on beach.  
Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One seen.  
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* Two  
observed.  
Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* One present.  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Ten seen.

**Nusa Tupe** (1.2km E of Gizo at 08 05.55S 156 51.50E.  
Visited on 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 25 December 2005.)  
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 2-5 seen on airstrip.  
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 1-2 on airstrip.  
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Two present on  
14<sup>th</sup> December.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Two-15 offshore.  
Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Three offshore 13 December.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* One to three offshore.  
Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Six on posts to South of island  
14 December.  
Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two flew in  
from Plum Pudding Island.  
Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Two foraging  
overhead 13 December.  
Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One on beach 25  
December.  
Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* 1-4 present.  
White-capped Monarch *Monarcha richardsi* one seen 15  
December.  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* 1-2 observed.

**Ondolau** (South of Vaghena, Manning Strait at 07 31.26s 157  
43.63e. visited 21 December 2005).

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One overhead.  
Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One heard,  
Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One passing 1 km offshore.  
Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* One feeding close inshore.  
Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Six observed.  
Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Three present.  
Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Five seen plus one with begging young heard.

**Plum Pudding** (East of Gizo, Sanbis Resort island at 09 07 11S 156 53 09E. Passed on 14 December 2005.)

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Two offshore.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard calling.

**Raputalavata** (South of Rob Roy Island at 07 28.93s 157 34.77e. Visited 20 December 2005.)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Two overhead.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One resting on driftwood.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* One roosting.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Four seen and another five heard.

Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* One heard.

Eastern Koel *Eudynamys orientalis* One heard.

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus* Two observed.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One heard.

**Raverave** (South of Vaghena Island at 07 32.55s 157 47.44e. Visited 21 December 2005.)

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Two present.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One heard.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One present.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Five fishing one to four km offshore.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Nine feeding 60-100m offshore.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Four feeding 40m offshore.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 17 observed.

White-throated Nightjar *Eurostopodus mystacalis* One flushed twice from high tide line.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* One seen.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One heard.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Five seen plus fledging begging and its parent heard.

**Redeme #2** (1 km W of Redeme Island, 140 x 20m in size at 08 10.19s 156 59.02e. Visited 14 December 2005.)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Many moulted feathers below evening roost.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* 200 including 1 immature roosting on isolated mangroves.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Four roosting on isolated mangroves.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Five on island.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Pair present.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* One seen.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Two seen.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two adults and one immature present.

**Redeme #3** (110m SW of Redeme #2, 10m long at 08 10.26s 156 59.09e. Visited 14. December 2005.)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One resting.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Six roosting.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Two seen.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Pair present.

**Rob Roy** (E end of Choiseul, North coast visited 16<sup>th</sup> and South coast visited 20 December 2005.)

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* One grey seen each day.

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Variable Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae* One on South coast.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Three on North coast.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Two on each coast.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Four on South coast.

Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon *Ducula rubricera* Three on North and one on South coast.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One on each coast.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Six on South coast.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two on south coast.

Song Parrot *Geoffroyus heteroclitus* One on South coast.

Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* Two on north coast.

Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus* Three on South coast.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Two on South coast.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Four observed near South coast.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Two in mangroves on North coast.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* One on South coast.

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus* Female on North coast, Pair & Female on South coast.

Melanesian Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina caledonica* Two on south coast.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One on South coast.

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea* Male on South coast.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One on South coast.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* One on north coast, two on South.

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica* Six on South coast.  
Yellow-faced Myna *Mino dumontii* One on North coast.

**Ropa** (1 km SW of Posarae on South of Choiseul at 07 21 55S  
157 12 23E. Visited 15 & 21 December 2005).

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* One seen.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One observed.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One 1 km offshore, 11 on  
poles.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 17 observed.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* 8 seen.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* One seen.

Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* Two seen.

Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus* One flew from island to  
Choiseul.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* 60 arrived in  
circling flight 10 December.

Moustached Tree-swift *Hemiprocne mystacea* Two seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Four pairs + 1  
along entire coast.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* Two seen.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* Two seen.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* 12 seen or heard.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* A flock of nine seen.

Brown-winged Starling *Aplonis grandis* One seen (a pair was  
nesting at Posarae).

**Salakana** (South of Rob Roy Island, visited 20 December  
2005.)

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One seen.

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus* Male seen.

**Sikopo** (In Arnavon Group, Manning Strait at 07 27.65s 157 59.55e. Visited 19 December 2005.)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One seen.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* Three near south end.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One feeding eight km to East.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 40 feeding 8-10 km East of island.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* 30 feeding four km East of island.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Six seen and five heard.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* One very dark bird seen.

White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* Two seen.

Island Monarch. *Monarcha cinerascens* Two heard.

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea* Female seen.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Three heard.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two adults with yellowish-red eyes and seven immatures seen.

**Sikopo Outpost** (150m East of Sikopo at 07 27.36s 157 59.42e. Visited 19 December 2005.)

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One heard in thicket.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Two seen.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Two seen.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One heard.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* Two heard.

**Suki** (4.86 km from Noapuna at 281° or at 07 19.28s 158 05.15e. Visited 19 December 2005.)

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* Four seen.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One seen and one active nest beside rotting tree noted.

Beach Stone-curlew *Esacus magnirostris* One seen.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Four on flotsam, 500m to SW.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* One on flotsam one km to SW.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Singles feeding 50 m and 500m to SW.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* 20+ birds and one nest on the island.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* One seen.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One seen.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* One seen.

Island Monarch *Monarcha cinerascens* One seen.

**Sunda** (0.75 km W of Ondolau, South of Vaghena at 07 31.02s 157 43.17e. Visited 21 December 2005.)

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Three Males one female seen.

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* One grey bird present.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus* One seen.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita* One heard.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* 15 seen.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Two seen.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Two feeding close to shore.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* One seen.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* One seen.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* One seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Two seen.

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**Susuku** (SE of Rob Roy at 07 27.40s 157 37.48e. Visited 20 December 2005.)

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* One seen.

Island Imperial Pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria* Two seen.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* Two seen.

Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Nectarinia jugularis* One seen.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two seen.

**Tema Lata** (N of Vaghena at 07 23.14s 157 40.37e. Visited 16 December 2005).

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Two fishing offshore.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Two seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* Two heard.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One seen.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Four seen.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* adult brooding two young on 2m pole 7m into sea.

**Tema Soi** (N of Vaghena at 07 23.38s 157 40.59e. Visited 16 December 2005).

Ducorp's Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsi* One seen.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis* Two seen.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* One heard.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga* One seen.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Two seen.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two seen.

**Urungo** (S coast of Choiseul at 07 24.40s 157 19.80e. Visited 16 December 2005.)

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* One ashore, as we passed.

**Vaghena** (Off E end of Choiseul at 07 26 17 S 157 46 06E.  
Visited coast only 16 December 2005).  
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One seen .  
Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Three feeding 1 km offshore 13  
in tree roost.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* One feeding 1 km  
offshore 29 roosting in tree.  
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* 16 feeding 1 km offshore.  
Black Noddy *Anous minutus* 19 feeding 1 km offshore.

**Viughoba** (S coast of Choiseul, visited 16 December 2005).  
Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Two flew from  
Viughoba to Choiseul.

**Vona Vona** (New Georgia Group at 08 12.35s 157 04.88e.  
visited 14 December 2005).  
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Three seen.  
Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* One seen and heard.  
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One seen.  
Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* Four seen.  
Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* One seen.

#### **Solomon Islands Interesting Sightings**

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos*  
On Guadalcanal according to Mayr (1945), recorded by Pacey  
1974-1979 near Honiara (*pers. comm.*) but not mentioned for  
this island by Doughty et al. (1999). I confirm this species is  
still there by seeing it in or near the Lunga River particularly  
near Betikama Adventist College. Five seen 28 July 2001, Five  
seen at the swamp behind Betikama 31 July 2001, where four  
went to roost that evening. One was observed 11<sup>th</sup> August, five  
on 15<sup>th</sup> August, two on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta* Terry Pacey (1999 *pers comm.*) observed these birds move into the rice fields and start breeding 1974-79. Yet again Doughty (1999) does not record them for Guadalcanal. I saw one at Betikama Swamp, 29.7.2001, when the kink in neck and large vertically broad bill were obvious. Two on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2001 and one 15<sup>th</sup> August 2002, also at Betikama.

Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* Betikama Swamp, Guadalcanal, 31.7.2001.

White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea* Heard calling 29<sup>th</sup> July 2001 and 15 August 2002, at the Betikama Swamp.

Chestnut-bellied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula brenchleyi*  
Endangered - Recent records said to be only from Makira (Doughty et al 1999). One seen 5<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> August 2002 at Betikama. The pale grey head, darker back and rich chestnut (even merging into a purplish) stomach.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 40 on Henderson airstrip 16<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One on rocky shore behind Shell garage Kukum, one on Lunga River shingle beds, Betikama, both 15.8.2002.

Whiskered Tree Swift *Hemiprocne mystacea* Nestling on nest high in Casuarina, with five adults in the area, Gizo 15 December 2005.

San Cristobal Thrush *Zoothera margaretae* A little known endemic. The wings and several other feathers from two freshly eaten carcasses on top of ridge adjacent to Betikama swamp & remnant patch of rainforest. Photographed. Pacific Baza (*Aviceda subcristata*) perched near patch 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>, from where it scanned patch for more than an hour and is possibly the predator of the two birds found.

Brown-winged Starling *Aplonis grandis* At Mt Austen just north of Honiara a pair were carrying nest material 29.7.2001. Call was a trumpeted “oo” or “ah” or “wah” followed by a squeaky “it”

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* Adults building one nest while others feeding young in foreshore buildings Gizo 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

### **New Information for New Caledonia**

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

Sixty resting on Ugo Isle (22 26.42' S 166 55.42 E) and 11 flying towards that island 25 June 2007. This sighting is of interest because Bretagnolle & Benoit (1997) said after studying seabirds breeding on 74 islets in this lagoon between 1993 and 1999 “All tern species desert the Southern New Caledonian Lagoon in Winter”. That almost all of their 229 trips to these islets were in Summer – when the seabirds were breeding (Benoit & Bretagnolle 2002) may make this observation less surprising.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*

11 adults 70-90 km W to NW of Pott Island 20 June 2007. Fourteen in ones and twos 40-50 km to South, flying north 20 June 2007. Later that day 22 in groups of 1-3 flying towards Surprise Island but 40-90 km east of it. Still later 20 adults and one all brown juvenile 100-170 km to east and flying westwards towards Surprise Island.

These sightings answer the problem of where this species spends the winter in New Caledonia. “It is not actually known where the birds disperse to in winter but, obviously, the Bridled Tern totally leaves New Caledonian waters in winter” (Bretagnolle & Benoit 1997). Although it might be argued that the birds I saw south of Grande Passage were still

migrating out of New Caledonian waters those seen later in the day flying to the south-west and south counters that possibility and makes it likely they were all flying towards Surprise Island in the D'Entrecasteaux Reefs. Only one winter visit has been recorded to any of the four islets on the D'Entrecasteaux Reefs (Kusser 1986 unpubl. in Robinet et al. 1997.) so it is not surprising that these birds were found here in winter. Robinet et al (1997) recorded 10 on Surprise Islet in December 1996 but they were not recorded on another 12 trips to this group of islets.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

3 Ad 4 Imm 70-85 km NW of Pott Isl 20 Jun 2007.

27 adults 40 km to south of Surprise Island, D'Entrecasteaux Reefs, but flying north towards the island 20 June 2007. Later in the day 15 adults with 3 juveniles 90 – 170 km to the east of, but again flying towards Surprise Island. Eighty Masked Boobies were found breeding on Surprise December 1996 and 183 breeding a little further away on Huon Island in December 1993 (Robinet et al 1997). The interesting thing is that I saw so many of this species and no Red-footed Boobies yet 4278 of the latter were found breeding on Surprise in December 1996 (Robinet et al 1997).

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

18 adults and one immature, 40-50 km south of Surprise Island but flying towards it 20 June 2007. Robinet et al (1997) found 704 breeding on Surprise Island in December 1996.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

One female 40 km south of Surprise Island, and one juvenile 130 km north-east of Surprise Island 20 June 2007. Robinet et al (1997) found 79 birds breeding on Surprise Islet December 1996.

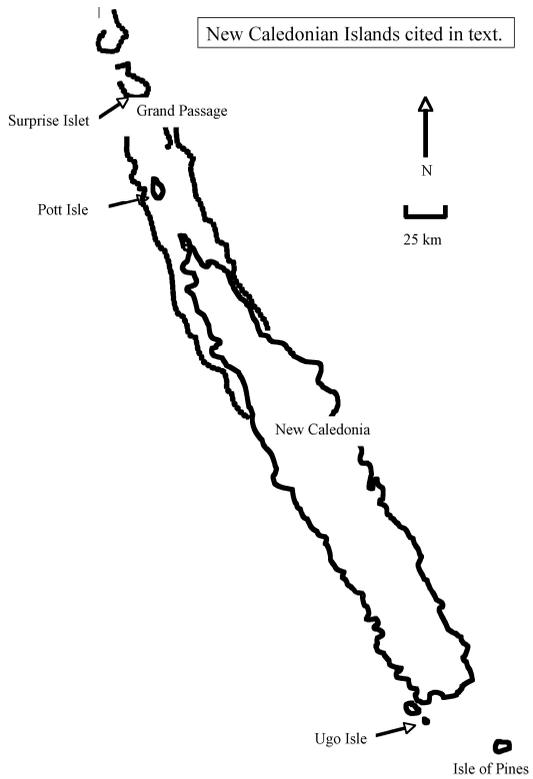


Fig. 5  
**New Birds for Islands in Vanuatu**

**Aneityum** (Visited June 2007).

Silveryeye *Zosterops lateralis* Four seen with eight Yellow-fronted White-eyes near South tip.

**Aore** (Visited June 2007).

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* One seen.

Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia mackinlayi* Locally common.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* Very common in forest and forest edges.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Very common.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Very common.

Collared Kingfisher *Todirhamphus chloris* Moderately common.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Moderately common.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa* Moderately common.

Streaked Fantail *Rhipidura verreauxi* One in forest behind Aore Adventist Academy.

Melanesian Flycatcher *Myiagra caledonica* Common in forest and around settlements.

Yellow-fronted White-eye *Zosterops flavifrons*. Very common.

Cardinal Myzomela *Myzomela cardinalis* Common in forest and gardens.

**Inyeug (Mystery)** One km off S coast Aneityum, visited June 2007).

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Two onshore.

Melanesian Flycatcher *Myiagra caledonica* Male and three females observed.

Cardinal Myzomela *Myzomela cardinalis* Juveniles with adults, had light fawn bellies possibly leading to confusion with *Myzomela caledonica* on islands such as Iles des Pins.

### **Conclusion**

Both the seabirds and landbirds of this region are little known and so it is not surprising that I have been able to add thirteen new species to the records for islands in Papua New Guinea, one for islands in Indonesia, 362 for islands in the Solomon Islands, and 16 for Vanuatu. The new records for New Caledonia relate mainly to their location in winter - a time period when little work has been done in the outer islands of that locality. There is a need for someone to name the still unnamed *Microeca* type flycatchers (flyrobins) from Mussau and New Ireland.

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Author's address: <sup>1</sup>School of Science & Technology: Pacific Adventist University, PMB Boroko, [Tarburton,m@optusnet.com.au](mailto:Tarburton,m@optusnet.com.au)

## **Birding around the summit of Mt. Hagen in Papua New Guinea**

by Michiel van den Bergh

### **Introduction**

From July 29 to 1 August 2008 I spent 4 days birding on and near the summit of Mt. Hagen (3861 metres), Enga Province, Papua New Guinea. My goal was to see some high altitude birds, with a remote change of discovering an unknown population of Mannikin species (*Lonchura*) or Greater Ground-Robin (*Amalocichla sclateriana*).

Unfortunately, I did not record any Mannikins or Ground-Robins. However, I did see some interesting localized high-altitude species, including Long-bearded Melidectes (*Melidectes princeps*) and Mountain Robin (*Petroica bivittata*), that were well worth the visit. Besides, the forest and scenery were stunning, and the birding was great, with many ‘difficult’ species seen with relatively ease and at close range. With this short note I provide some information on the birds and birding possibilities of this ornithological poorly known mountain.

#### **Logistics and accommodation**

My trip was arranged through the Kumul Lodge (<http://www.kumullodge.com.pg/>), who gave me permission to visit the privately (by a clan) owned mountain and supplied me with a guide. As there is no accommodation on the mountain you have to sleep on a grass-lined floor of a rock overhang; the so-called cave. Food, drinks, cooking gear, mattresses, sleeping bag etc. all have to be brought up the mountain by yourself and/or the guide.

The cave is situated at 3650 metres above sea level, right at the tree line and can be reached from the Kumul Lodge via a fairly rough trail. It takes about 6 hours or more to reach the cave. There was no trail up to the summit, and to reach the summit I had to make a (fairly) rough and sometimes steep hike for several hours.

#### **Birding**

I tried to do some line transects counts to obtain a rough estimate of the abundance of some bird species. These line transects included the following three;

- Line transect (1) Transect downhill from the cave (cave excess trail) through montane forest; elevation 3650 - 3450m; length 1.5km.
- Line transect (2) Transect on both sides of the cave along the tree line; elevation 3650m; length 150m.
- Line transect (3) Transect uphill from the cave through alpine grassland and a isolated forest patch; elevation 3650-3750m; length 500m.

All three line transect were surveyed three to four times, back and forth, including at least once in the early morning and once in the (late) afternoon. Besides birding these line transect, I spent one day birding the summit and surrounding valleys and peaks (4); an area existing of extensive alpine grasslands and isolated forest patches.

### **Highlights**

Multiple sightings of both Long-bearded Melidectes (*Melidectes princeps*) and the uncommon Mountain Robin (*Petroica bivittata*) represented the highlights of the trip; being both very localized high altitude species and difficult to see anywhere in New Guinea (to which they are endemic). Other recorded New Guinea high altitude endemics which are often difficult to see elsewhere in the country or maybe even anywhere in New Guinea, included Painted Tiger Parrot (*Psittacella picta*), New Guinea Thornbill (*Acanthiza murina*), Alpine Pipit (*Anthus gutturalis*) and Sooty Melidectes (*Melidectes fuscus*); all of them were moderately easy to very easy to see. The fact that most birds were very approachable (due to the lack of hunting?) made the birding even more rewarding. See the bird list for an overview of all recorded birds.

### **Bird list**

Bird species that were recorded along the line transects (1, 2 & 3) and/or on the summit and surrounding valleys (4) are listed below (only birds identified up to species level are listed). Furthermore, the number of days on which a species was recorded are given, after which, between brackets, the location is given where the species is recorded, concluding with the maximum of birds recorded on one day or other additional information.

1. **Papuan Mountain Pigeon** (*Gymnophaps albertisii*) seen on 2 days (1), up to 2 birds
2. **Papuan Lorikeet** (*Charmosyna papou*) seen on 3 days (1), up to 2 birds (2 dark morphs)
3. **Plum-faced Lorikeet** (*Oreopsittacus arfaki*) seen/heard on 4 days (1); up to 15 birds
4. **Painted Tiger Parrot** (*Psittacella picta*) seen on 3 days (1 & 2), up to 2 birds
5. **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) seen on 1 day (2), 1 bird
6. **Glossy Swiftlet** (*Collocalia esculenta*) seen on 4 days (1,2,3 & 4), up to 4 birds
7. **Mountain Swiftlet** (*Collocalia hirundinaceus*) seen on 1 day (4), common in area 4
8. **Island Thrush** (*Turdus poliocephalus*) seen on 1 day (4), 4 birds
9. **Papuan Grassbird** (*Megalurus macrurus*) seen on 2 days (3 & 4), common, up to 22 birds
10. **New Guinea Thornbill** (*Acanthiza murina*) seen on 4 days (1&2), many groups of 2-10 birds
11. **Mountain Mouse Warbler** (*Crateroscelis robusta*) seen/heard on 3 days (1&3), up to 3 birds

12. **Papuan Scrubwren** (*Sericornis perspicillatus*) seen on 2 days (1), up to 4 birds
13. **Large Scrubwren** (*Sericornis nouhuysi*) seen on 1 day (1), 3 birds
14. **Friendly Fantail** (*Rhipidura albolimbata*) seen on 4 days (1 & 2), up to 6 birds
15. **Dimorphic Fantail** (*Rhipidura brachyrhyncha*) seen on 3 days (1), up to 2 birds
16. **Mountain Robin** (*Petroica bivittata*) seen on 2 days (1), up to 2 birds
17. **White-winged Robin** (*Peneothello sigillatus*) seen on 4 days (1,2,3), 2 to 6 birds a day
18. **Canary Flycatcher** (*Microeca flavigaster*) seen on 1 day (1), 1 bird
19. **Garnet Robin** (*Eugerygone rubra*) seen on 1 day (1), 1 female bird
20. **Alpine Pipit** (*Anthus gutturalis*) seen on 2 days (3,4), 20+ birds in (4), incl. 6 males singing
21. **Regent Whistler** (*Pachycephala schlegelii*) seen on 2 days (1), up to 3 birds
22. **Brown-backed Whistler** (*Pachycephala monacha*) seen on 1 day (1), 1 bird
23. **Crested Berrypecker** (*Paramythia montium*) seen on 3 days (1), up to 8+ birds
24. **Grey-streaked Honeyeater** (*Ptiloprora perstriata*) seen on 3 days (1,2), up to 9 birds
25. **Black-throated Honeyeater** (*Lichenostomus subfrenatus*) seen on 1 day (1), 3 birds
26. **Belford's Melidectes** (*Melidectes belfordi*) seen on 4 days (1,2,4), up to 8 birds
27. **Long-bearded Melidectes** (*Melidectes princeps*) seen on 4 days (1,2,3), up to 3 birds

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| <p>28. <b>Sooty Melidectes</b> (<i>Melidectes fuscus</i>) seen on 3 days (1,2,4), up to 1 bird</p> <p>29. <b>Common Smokey Honeyeater</b> (<i>Melidectes fumigatus</i>) seen on 3 days (1), up to 2 birds</p> <p>30. <b>Crested Bird of Paradise</b> (<i>Cnemophilus loriae</i>) seen on 1 day (1), 5 birds</p> <p>31. <b>Ribbon-tailed Astrapia</b> (<i>Astrapia mayeri</i>) seen on 3 days (1), up to 3 birds</p> <p>32. <b>Brown Sicklebill</b> (<i>Epimachus fastuosus</i>) heard on 1 day from (1), 1 bird calling below (1)</p> |
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Author's address: michielvdbergh@hotmail.com, The Netherlands

### **Eurasian Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*) in PNG**

by Phil Gregory

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) is known from West Papua with records from Biak, and now seemingly newly but well-established in urban centres such as Sorong and Jayapura as well as some villages, but there have been no published Papua New Guinea records to date.

In April 2007 I was in Walindi on New Britain, and following a tip-off from a local about some sparrows in Kimbe town, I went to check the sparrows in the industrial area. I found some half dozen Eurasian Tree Sparrows flitting about by a paint warehouse, and carrying nest material. I returned in June 2007 and again saw the birds at this site, where they seem well-established.

In April 2009 I visited Ela Beach in Port Moresby and during a cursory glance at some sparrows on a fence by the container port we were amazed to see 4 Eurasian Tree Sparrows. The chestnut cap, white cheeks and black ear covert spot was diagnostic, the birds must hitch rides on the container ships, and being a common Asian urban bird it is not surprising that they have eventually found their way to PNG. As far as I am aware this is the first mainland PNG sighting, but I wonder how long they have been here?

Introduced species in New Guinea are remarkably few, with the two *Passer* species and some doubtfully established urban populations of Feral Pigeons (*Columba livia*). However racing or domestic pigeons are common as pets in PNG and I am not convinced that any of the sparse urban pigeons of Port Moresby, Madang or Mt. Hagen are genuinely established. Birds at Lorengau on Manus may however be really feral. The only other introduced species was Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) on Bougainville, where they seem to have now died out.

Author's address: sicklebill@optusnet.com.au

### **Trip Report Sightings of note (April and June 2007)**

*Courtesy of Sicklebill Safaris (Australia) and Field Guides Inc.*

#### **Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita***

Flight views at Garu on New Britain and we saw some of the holes dug in the heated soil there, then an amazing experience at the colony on the slopes of Tarvurur volcano at Rabaul April 2007. The local lads dig out something like a thousand eggs per day and maybe something approaching half a million p.a., going as much as 2m deep into the soft volcanic ash, with a real risk of a cave-in and getting suffocated! Astonishing how the birds continue to survive with this level of predation. Eggs sell for over K1 each so this is a very important local asset. Also seen on remote isolated Tench Island off New Ireland, a real tribute to the dispersive powers of the species.

#### **White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus***

None seen on Tench but or two seen briefly off-shore June 2007. This is its only New Guinea breeding station.

#### **Red-footed Booby *Sula sula***

Great views on Tench Island June 2007, perched in trees and fishing offshore.

#### **Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster***

One adult on Tench June 2007, sat in an tree, and some saw one in Kimbe Bay.

#### **Plumed Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna eytoni***

There were 8 of this rare vagrant to PNG by the main lake at the PAU, Port Moresby in gathering darkness pre-storm on April 13 2007. This was only about the fourth record, maybe the dry weather in Australia has pushed them northwards? One bird was still present June 9 2007.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus (ibis) coromanda*

One at Hoskins in June 2007 was unusual.

**Nankeen Night Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus*

One at Walindi, and two singles in Arawa Jun 2007.

**Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis*

One adult was standing out in an open grass field en route to Garu June 2007, no doubt wondering why it's habitat was now largely over-planted with the dreaded oil palm.

**Doria's Hawk** *Megatriorchis doriae*

One of this rarity just below the Fly-Elevala River confluence on April 17 2007, flying across the river. They are curiously short-winged with a long barred tail, very odd looking.

**Sanford's Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus sanfordi*

The group were fortunate to get one from Kuri Lodge on Buka Jun 2007, and one over their truck near Kokopau on Bougainville. It is a scarce species, quite hard to get.

**Woodford's Rail** *Nesoclopeus woodfordi*

A pleasant surprise was two birds in the road near Nick's village on Buka Jun 2007, my first record from this island. Also seen around Arawa but the birds in the town have become much harder to find and are I suspect under hunting pressure. We saw 4 or 5 in the road on a couple of days June 2007.

**Beach Thick-knee** *Esacus magnirostris*

An unexpected record was one calling in flight off Restorf Island, heading towards Walindi on April 5 2007.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

An adult of uncertain race on river gravel by Warangoi bridge, April 4 2007, and one at Km 120 near Tabubil. The subspecies in New Guinea *dubius* has a very different call compared to Western Palearctic birds and could well be a split.

**Swinhoe's Snipe** *Gallinago megala*

7 at Kokopo airstrip April 3 2007 and 35+ in a pasture field on the way to Garu on April 6 2007, great flight views of this pot-bellied species with the monosyllabic dry call.

**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes*

One unexpectedly on river gravels some way inland at Warangoi April 4 2007, and one at Walindi. Inland records are unusual.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

120+ at sea in small flocks north of Restorf Island on April 5 2007, some coming into breeding dress and clearly migrating through. There are wintering records to March, and an October record of 4000-5000 on Lake Dakataua on Willaumez peninsula nearby (Bishop 1983).

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus*

Common and nesting on Tench, and a few en route to New Hanover.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*

Nesting on Tench, and a single off Walindi, also one in Rabaul Harbour on the Beehive volcanic plug.

**White Tern** *Gygis alba*

This lovely delicate species was nesting on Tench, with a tiny pepper-and-salt chick sat on a bare diagonal branch in the village. This is its sole New Guinean nesting site.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

Birds at Lorengau on Manus may well be the real feral pigeon, which may not really be established in mainland PNG, (there was excitement in Kavieng where two had just showed up!)

**Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove** *Ptilinopus solomonensis*

A pleasant bonus on Tench, where we showed the village lads a picture and they took us to a fruiting tree nearby, where one of this tiny small island dove showed well. Also heard on Tong.

**Claret-breasted Fruit Dove** *Ptilinopus viridis*

A male sat up near Arawa on Bougainville June 2007.

**Knob-billed Fruit Dove** *Ptilinopus insolitus*

Fairly common around Garu, and a few on New Ireland.

**Pacific Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula pacifica*

This is an elusive species, mainly known from small remote islands such as Tench, where we had great looks at several fine adults with large bill knobs in Jun 2007.

**Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula rubricera*

Fine views on New Britain and New Ireland, with the very distinct *rufigula* subspecies on Bougainville. One on New Hanover June 2007 was by a nest (we later discovered from the photos!) and a village girl there had a small juvenile.

**Finsch's Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula finschii*

Heard on New Britain, then one sat up near Limbin on New Ireland June 2007, with a fly-by again later on that day.

**Island Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula pistrinaria*

Common on the islets in Kimbe Bay, and again on Manus.

**Black Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula melanochroa*

Just a few on the Limbin Road, New Ireland June 2007, they were perhaps scarcer than normal but we did get one sat up for great looks, and few nice flyovers of small flocks.

**Yellow-tinted Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula (spilorrhoea) subflavescens*

This distinctive form is split by some authorities and is a Bismarck endemic. We saw a few nicely around Garu and Kerevat.

**Papuan Mountain Pigeon** *Gymnophaps albertisii*

A flock of 14 on two days on the Limbin Road, New Ireland June 2007, it is high altitude species here, unlike on mainland New Guinea.

**Red-chinned Lorikeet** *Charmosyna rubrigularis*

This was common along the Limbin Road in June 2007, with over 100 one day, attracted to the flowering trees there.

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

A strange call at Taskul on New Hanover saw this species come bulleting out for a flight glimpse for a few!

**Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus (saturatus) horsfieldi*

This Asian migrant was seen at Kiunga airstrip and km April 18 2007, and also near Dablin Creek April 20 2007. Silent birds are not identifiable to taxon, so the recent split here is problematic for us. It is assumed most are *horsfieldi*, but it is possible that the Himalayan Cuckoo *C. saturatus* also occurs.

**Long-billed Cuckoo** *Rhamphomantis megarhynchus*

This rare and little known bird was seen along Ketu Creek, and then an adult at Km 17; the host is still unknown and it seems to be an ancestral form to the other small cuckoos

**Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

A female with a green cap along the Kulu R road near Kimbe April 5 2007. Several fine views on Bougainville June 2007, the species is a migrant from Australia, and one bird at Kisas village on Buka was clearly of this race.

**Manus Boobook** *Ninox meeki*

Great looks at this rather gingery colored species with the heavily streaked front near Lorengau Jun 2007. It was the fourth and final boobook for the trip.

**New Ireland (Bismarck) Boobook** *Ninox variegata*

The third boobook of the trip, coming in right away for a great look along the Limbin Road, the wings drooped down on either side of the branch as it grunted away. This should really be called the New Ireland Boobook, as it does not occur on New Britain, as was at one time thought (and is still being published!)

**Solomon's Boobook** *Ninox jacquinoti*

This one was sat up in hole in a huge tree near Morgan near Arawa and peering out on a strange heavily overcast afternoon where it got dark really early. We had terrific scope views of the bird. This is a potential split (Bougainville Boobook) as the two other insular races in the Solomons look very different and may have significant vocal differences too.

**New Britain Boobook** *Ninox odiosa*

A pair calling well out at the site along the Kulu River road April 4 2007, which was literally being destroyed as we waited. Still hanging on nearby in June 2007.

**Papuan Hawk-Owl** *Uroglaux dimorpha*

An amazing view of one at Ekame Lodge April 15 2007, I played some tape and it came in silently to perch at eye level and give us a wonderful view. It's the first time I've seen it here but I found them calling in previous years. Still a very little known species with the call only known since 2002.

**Mayr's Swiftlet** ? *Aerodramus orientalis leletensis*

There is a large and dark swiftlet on New Ireland, which is almost blackish above and more like Mountain Swiftlet (*C. hirundinaceus*) than Uniform (*C. vanikorensis*). It has quite dark underparts with the same colour chin and throat, and seems larger than Uniform and much darker, less brownish. It does not however show a pale greyish rump like the one specimen of Mayr's Swiftlet that was taken here. It seems unlikely that a second undescribed species would be here, but until more are collected or netted we simply don't know. We saw a few near Limbin in June 2007.

**Shovel-billed Kingfisher** *Clytoceyx rex*

A female came in silently at dusk along the Ok Ma Road April 20 2007. One of the great New Guinea prizes.

**White-mantled Kingfisher** *Halcyon albonotatus*

Two near Warangoi near Rabaul April 2007, and then one at Garu, always a hard species to find as it is not very vocal.

**Collared Kingfisher** *Halcyon chloris*

The taxonomy of this species group is a mess- 49 races, two being supposedly sympatric on New Ireland, New Britain birds having rich rusty underparts and distinct calls, birds on New Ireland looking like a big Forest Kingfisher etc. Splitting is way overdue, but for the record we saw: *tristrami* on New Britain, *nusae* on New Ireland and *alberti* on Bougainville. The birds on New Britain are fairly small, rusty below and live in forest. How can this be the same species as Collared Kingfisher?

**Black-headed Paradise Kingfisher** *T. (sylvia) nigriceps*

This is an island allospecies of Buff-breasted (*T. sylvia*), and we got super looks at Garu as well as a flyby and hearing it at Warangoi April 4 2007.

**Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** *T. sylvia*

An adult and juvenile along the Varirata Lookout trail April 22 2007, definitely not early migrants from Australia but birds of the local race *sylvia*.

**Ashy Myzomela** *M. cinereifrons*

Just two at Kilu Ridge April 2007, curiously scarce this time.

**Sclater's (Red-bibbed) Myzomela** *M. sclateri*

20+ of this small island Bismarck endemic April 6 2007, feeding very actively on Restorf, Big Malo Malo and Kimbe Islands.

**Mountain Honeyeater (Meliphaga)** *M. orientalis*

This small montane Meliphaga was seen at Dablin April 2007.

**Yellow-gaped Honeyeater (Meliphaga)** *M. flavirictus*

I think we saw this a couple of times around Ekame in the forest in April 2007. It has a “chup” call (like most!), a yellow

gape line and greyish legs. It is seldom recorded and may be quite rare, but identification problems cloud the issue; I have very few sightings to date but I suspect it is regular here.

**Mimic & Puff-backed Honeyeater (Meliphaga)** *M. mimikae* / *M. aruensis*

Meliphagas seen along the river above Kiunga probably belong to one or both of these species, but brief views make field i.d. problematic, and calls are seemingly no help. They are one of the most difficult of all bird genera, far worse than greenbuls or cisticolas, with taxonomy still unresolved and vocalizations largely unknown.

**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus flavescens*

Seen at the PAU April and June 2007, the race here (*germana*) has a curious call similar to Fuscous Honeyeater (*L. fuscus*) i.d. in Far North Queensland. Some genetic work here could be instructive, especially as the Fuscous has a much closer range than the Yellow-tinted.

**Manus Cuckooshrike** *Coracina (papuensis) ingens*

This was split as Manus Cuckooshrike in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. It is quite a bit larger than White-bellied (*C. papuensis*), has a big bill and seems much greyer on the chest. I had never paid it any mind before this trip, but we sought it out on the last morning on Manus with a fine look at a single at Rossun Jun 2007, though sadly no calls were heard.

**Cicadabird** *Coracina tenuirostris*

More splits pending, these island taxa have very distinct vocalizations and are clearly allospecies. The rusty and unbarred female on Bougainville is noteworthy. We saw what are currently races as follows: *heinrothi* on New Britain, *saturator* on Bougainville, *remota* on New Ireland.

**Solomon Is. Cuckooshrike** *Coracina holopolia*

Two males near Arawa Jun 2007, which came in nicely to tape.

**Papuan Sittella** *Daphoenositta (chrysoptera) papuensis*

This newly-split taxon was seen very well at Ambua with 8 birds on April 12 2007, and 2 the next day.

**Bismarck Fantail** *Rhipidura dahl*

Great looks at one of this scarce endemic in forest near Limbin.

**Manus Fantail** *Rhipidura semirubra*

Our trip to Tong June 2007 twitched this very nicely, with lovely views near where we landed. It is now restricted to a few tiny islands having seemingly died out on Manus proper, and the total population must be very small.

**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons*

The Rufous Fantail in forest near Arawa is actually the taxon *commoda*, placed with this species and not Arafura Fantail despite the white tail tips. More work is need to establish the relations of these island forms.

**Black-faced Monarch** *Monarcha melanopsis*

One at Varirata April 22 2007 would be a winter visitor from Australia.

**Island Monarch** *Monarcha cinerascens*

Two on Big Malo Malo April 6 2007 were a useful trip bird; it is another small island specialist.

**Solomon's Pied Monarch** *Monarcha barbatus*

One near Morgan Jun 2007, finally it came good and really showed off, just as I was giving it up. It's a striking pied monarch with big white shoulder patch, again a very sparse and low density species.

**Atoll Starling** *Aplonis feadensis*

A real special bird of tiny, remote islands, we had them very well on Tench with at least 18 birds. Adults have a piercing yellow eye and immatures have a greyish one.

**Brown-winged Starling** *Aplonis grandis*

Just a few of this localised Solomon's endemic on Buka and Bougainville.

**Bismarck Flycatcher** *Microeca* sp. nov.

This undescribed species sat up and posed for us near Limbin, Jun 2007, and we got the first ever photos of this brown and white *Microeca* type which has to date been seen just a handful of times- with 4 of the sightings here, and just two on New Britain.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

A major surprise in April 2007 and again in June 2007 was seeing Eurasian Tree Sparrows at Kimbe. This was the first record for Papua New Guinea, and it was clearly a new arrival, though now subsequently noted in Port Moresby, and a potential colonist. Birds looked to be nesting in April as they were carrying dried grass under the eaves of the warehouse.

**White-spotted Mannikin** *Lonchura leucosticta*

A scarce and restricted range western endemic that later Clements up-dates lump with Streak-headed Mannikin (*L. tristissima*), though the IOC separate it We saw 4+ at the airstrip, 6+ at km 14 on Boystown Road Kiunga April 2007.

**Forbes's Mannikin** *Lonchura forbesi*

A very scarce endemic on New Ireland, with immatures of other mannikins having a superficial resemblance to it and sometimes misidentified e.g. Kavieng records require confirmation. We found some small groups on the Lelet Plateau and got some good views, the bright chestnut back and black undertail with black head really show well.

**Hunstein's Mannikin** *Lonchura hunsteini*

Kavieng airstrip is the best place for this very localised northern New Ireland endemic, and we had good views in June 2007. There is apparently an introduced population in the Caroline Is., which some list as a distinct subspecies *minor*, supposedly only there since the 1920's- there is clearly something amiss here, and what an odd species to introduce, it is seemingly not known as a cagebird these days. It would be good to get confirmation of both the identification and the puzzling taxonomic status of these birds, especially given the reports of such a recent introduction.

The New Hanover taxon *Lonchura (hunsteini) nigerrima* is one that Clements for some reason best known to himself has split as New Hanover Munia; this needs to be substantiated as the call is very like Hunstein's, and the bird is basically much like that species but with an entirely black head. They are quite common around Taskul on New Hanover.

**Buff-bellied Mannikin** *Lonchura melaena*

Now quite common around Numundo and at Hoskins airstrip, much more so than ten years ago when they were quite hard to find. 20 near Numundo near Kimbe April 4 2007, and small numbers on the next two days. Immature has black breast patches and adults have black heads, contra Restall (1996). Also c. 20 south of Kavieng, with really vivid reddish tails and strongly red-buff underparts. First found on New Ireland in 1999, and maybe either a new subspecies or the mysterious taxon *bukaensis*, described from Buka where it is no longer found at the type locality, the airstrip there.

References

Bishop, K. D. (1983). Some notes on Non-Passerine birds of West New Britain. *Emu* 83: 235-241.

Restall, R. (1996) *Munias and Mannikins*. Pica Press, Sussex.

## Book Review

*Owls of the World* by Claus König and Friedhelm Weick  
Second Edition, 2009, Helm, London.

The book follows the well-established pattern for such family monographs, with a useful checklist at the start, then an introduction followed by succinct introductory chapters on morphology and anatomy, topography, food, hunting, behaviour, breeding, vocalizations, systematics and taxonomy, how to study owls, conservation and molecular phylogeny and systematics of the Strigiformes. Then follows 72 attractive, albeit pale, colour plates, many extensively revised from the original edition, before the systematic section, which includes useful range maps. The species accounts vary in length from about half a page for poorly known species to several pages for well-studied ones.

This is a substantial revision of the original from 2002, now recognizing at least 250 species, using the Biological Species Concept (BSC) according to the authors. They state that specific status can be substantiated by DNA evidence and field studies, with nucleotide substitution in DNA-sequencing variable at subspecific level from zero to 1%. Greater differences suggest species status, a moot point as varying numerical values have been apportioned to such distinctions, some authors adopting far greater or lesser figures to denote species status. Our own recently demoted Lesser Sooty Owl (*Tyto (tenebricosa) multipunctata*) is a case in point, but in this book it is still accorded species status, despite Christidis and Boles (2008) making a case for lumping despite quite significant DNA differences. It all depends where you choose to draw the line, and genetics is not after all going to give us the absolute magical numerical threshold for species status that it once seemed to promise, it comes down to a matter of interpretation still.

For the Australasian region there are many significant changes, with lots of surprises in store. The long over-lumped Barn Owl complex is now broken up, a major innovation here being something called the Boang Barn Owl (*Tyto crassirostris*) from the tiny island of Boang in the Tanna group, off New Ireland. This was collected on the Whitney South Seas Expedition in 1935 and is I suspect unknown in life. The authors split it on the grounds of isolated distribution and great differences in the size of the beak and

talons, but acknowledge that almost everything remains to be learned about this taxon. This is intriguing, indeed bold, and perhaps a tad inconsistent as there are quite a few other isolated taxa which do not get elevated. I respect the courage to break out of the stultifying taxonomic straightjacket, but still find myself wishing for more information, and wonder if a less bold initial move might have been prudent.

They likewise split the three taxa of Boobook in Australia, plus the Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) in New Zealand which both vocally and on plumage grounds is very distinct, though some geneticists still insist on lumping them all. The Red Boobook (*Ninox lurida*) of the northern rainforests sure sounds like Southern Boobook (*N. boobook*), whilst the Tasmanian (*N. leucopsis*) does sound a bit different and seems to have genetics that could be argued either way. I was dismayed to discover the use of the misleading and confusing Americanism “Hawk Owl” for the boobooks of the Melanesian islands, when perfectly good well-established names already exist i.e. boobook. I was also dismayed to find the Bismarck Boobook (*N. variegata*) still shown as being found on New Britain, when it is a New Ireland endemic and could be called New Ireland Boobook!

Space precludes further analysis, but there are many quite radical splits in store, and it is stimulating to read through and imagine the furore which is sure to follow. The scientific names of the local Australian Barn Owl is here given as *Tyto delicatula*, contra Christidis and Boles who label it as Pacific Barn Owl *T. javanica*, and the taxonomists will have a field day over the correct affinity-suffice to say it looks as if C & B win out!

I can recommend the book for anyone interested in this amazing family. The long-term specific composition will be likely be a matter of conflicting debate and interpretation for many years yet, and the book is a stimulating and controversial reworking of the systematics.

Phil Gregory, *Muruk* editor