

This issue of *Muruk* has a distinctly West Papuan flavour and it seems appropriate to give some of the more significant sightings from some recent bird trips there. Given the lack of recent records we go into some detail with the sightings. The Halmahera section is included because of the strong Australasian connection. The two trip reports give an indication of what can be seen in these remote and inaccessible sites, but basic breeding and status data are lacking for many species and further records would be welcome. Observations of the virtually unknown Bruijn's Brush-turkey and Snow Mountain Robin are particularly noteworthy in the two travelogues from Charles Davies.

The Papua Bird Club have led, organised and advised many birding tours to West Papua. An example trip report visiting the most popular birding sites is given below. For more details of their tours, the birds of west Papua and the conservation awareness work undertaken by the club, see [www.papuabirdclub.com](http://www.papuabirdclub.com)

### **West Papua (and Halmahera) 3<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

Leaders: Guy Dutson and Kris Tindige for Sickiebill Safaris

This was perhaps only the second tour operated to West Papua (the Indonesian half of New Guinea, previously known as Irian Jaya) since civil unrest in the late 1990s. We focussed on the West Papuan endemics, notably the birds of paradise, of which we saw all seven species endemic to Indonesia and another three species rarely seen outside Indonesia. We benefited from the recent construction of roads into the Arfaks and Lake Habbema and encountered no real problems except that the poor trails evidenced a lack of visitors and the mountains have not become any less steep...

Since it was taken over by Indonesia in 1963, West Papua has seen a low-level insurgency between the native Papuans and the Indonesian government and security forces. Birders have often been unable to obtain travel permits to visit the province, especially the high mountains of Lake Habbema. We found a solution: to enter overland from PNG, and then to rely on the organisational abilities of the Papua Bird Club.

#### **Tuesday April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

After an early morning walk around the hotel, finding **Blue-winged Kookaburras**, **Grey-headed Munias** and **Fawn-breasted Bowerbird**, our first morning was spent flying from Moresby to Vanimo. We loaded a set of camping gear onto the back of our vehicle then drove to the Indonesian border. Fortunately, the border crossing formalities were straightforward and we were soon whisked away to Jayapura; the increasing numbers of minibuses, motorbikes and cigarettes suggesting that we had left PNG behind and we were truly in Indonesia – this impression was confirmed by the abundance of **Tree Sparrows**.

#### **Wednesday April 4<sup>th</sup>**

In the morning we birded the margins of Lake Sentani, the huge lake set in rolling hills behind Jayapura. We found a pair of **New Guinea (Helmeted) Friarbirds** nesting over the boathouse, and a **Black Bittern** flew past. From the boat, we found another bittern, and the highlight of a scatter of forest birds was a fantastic white-phase **Variable Goshawk** atop a coconut palm. After lunch, we flew to the large raised coral island of

Biak where we met Kris and were bundled into a minibus to look for our first Biak or Geelvink Bay endemics. Kris soon stopped the bus and we were admiring a pair of **Long-tailed Starlings**, their super-long tail feathers billowing in the wind. Next stop was a successful search for **Biak White-eyes** and then onto a forest fragment that Kris had scouted for the **Biak Paradise-Kingfisher**. Kingfishers called around us but it took an hour of effort before we succeeded in obtaining scope views of this iridescent beauty. Biak Scops-Owl remained typically silent and invisible but good views of a **Biak Sugar Glider** was a good compensation.

#### Thursday April 5th

A dawn start gave us great views of several more paradise-kingfishers, before we explored a forest track, soon finding **Biak Black Flycatchers** and **Yellow-bibbed** and **Claret-breasted Fruit-Doves**. A tall canopy tree held several birds, including more **Long-tailed Starlings**, the fluorescent local subspecies of **Golden Monarch** and reasonable views of a **Geelvink Pygmy-Parrot**. A pair of **Emperor Fairy-Wrens** were seen well in the undergrowth but two **Biak Megapodes** that were flushed were only seen as anonymous shapes.

In the afternoon, we headed west and birded a ridge-top road through extensive but degraded forest. We added **Spice Imperial-Pigeons** and **Biak Red Lorries** to our list but a **Biak Coucal** remained hidden. A **Peregrine** and a **Large-tailed Nightjar** entertained us whilst we sat and enjoyed the sunset from a roadside vantage point.

#### Friday April 6th

After an early-morning flight to Manokwari, we were met by Kris's wife, Shita, and two land-cruisers loaded with supplies for the Arfak Mountains. We were blessed that the road into the Arfaks had been completed and was still navigable, enabling us to reach our base village in two hours instead of the traditional two days hard trek. Kris spotted two **Long-tailed Buzzards** on the drive, and we were soon finding two local endemics, **Vogelkop Scrub-Wrens** and **Vogelkop (or Western Smoky) Honeyeaters**, in the forest above the village. After settling into the guest-house and lunching, we set off with Zeth our local guide for our first true taste of New Guinea forest birding. As would become typical, the paths were wet and very steep, birding was slow, the birds were elusive, but included a real blocker – a **Long-tailed Paradigalla** perched high above the canopy. Other great birds included a pair of **Josephine's Lorikeets**, good views of **Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrots** and, amongst the small birds, a **Mountain Mouse-Warbler** showed well, and the mixed flocks included **Dimorphic**, **Black** and **Friendly Fantails** and a **Black-breasted Boatbill**.

#### Saturday April 7th

We trekked up to a forested ridge where Zeth and other villagers had constructed small hides beside the display-arenas of **Western Parotias** and the bowers of **Vogelkop Bowerbirds**. On the walk up, we marvelled at several Vogelkop bowers, which are perhaps the most impressive bird construction in the world. Each male clears a lawn and lays it with moss, then constructs a small house of orchid stems around a maypole, and decorates the lawn with piles of coloured objects, including flowers, fruits and beetle

elytrae. Each male had a slightly different fashion and one was addicted to plastic trash – we wondered how far it had flown with a bottle in its bill. Three male **Western Parotias** called from the treetops but did not come down to the display arena. Birding around these hides in the misty rain, a **Black-mantled Goshawk** gave magnificent views when it landed in front of us, and a female **Black Sicklebill** also perched up at close range. We walked on to the highest clearing, where Zeth hunted around in the undergrowth and found us a superb **Mountain Owlet-nightjar** to admire at point-blank range, one of the many trip highlights. On the return walk, two **Rufescent Imperial-Pigeons** were the highlight of a very steep walk back to the guest house.

#### Sunday April 8th

We had good views of a **Modest Tiger-Parrot** on the walk up to the hides, and arrived in time for point-blank views of several female Western Parotias at their display arena, one even perching on the hide. A **Buff-tailed Sicklebill** called close to us and we enjoyed several close flight views of this rare species but couldn't manage to find it perched. We walked on up to the mossy forest and had lunch between a couple of calling **Ashy Robins**. Our walk down was enlivened by **Black-throated** and **Garnet Robins** and, after settling into the small hut in the upper clearing, a **Papuan Boobook** perched just a few metres away.

#### Monday April 9th

Some walked up the steep, muddy track in search of **Arfak Astrapias**, whilst others returned for more, and better, views of the **Vogelkop Bowerbirds** and **Western Parotias**. Up high, two astrapias were found feeding in the mossy forest, along with two **Smoky Robins** and a **Papuan Logrunner**. After lunch, we descended to the guest house and went out on a successful search for the locally endemic **Green-backed Robins**, and some had views of a **Black Pitohui**. Meanwhile, bets were on: was Ron's 6000<sup>th</sup> bird the exotic **Vogelkop Melidectes** or a **Grey-green Scrub-Wren**?

#### Tuesday April 10th

On our final morning in the Arfaks, the rain was too heavy for the **Magnificent Bird of Paradise** to perform, but a **White-eared Bronze-Cuckoo** provided some recompense. Our vehicles were waiting to drive us back to the airport and onto our flight to Sorong. In Sorong, we elected to take a chance with the sea and board our boat immediately for the island of Batanta. The crossing proved to be calm, if a little too wet to sit outside, and a couple of flocks of **Red-necked Phalaropes** were flushed off the floating seaweed. Arriving at Batanta in the late afternoon, we watched **Pinon Imperial-Pigeons** and **Blyth's Hornbills** whilst Kris checked us in with the village.

#### Wednesday April 11th

**Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise** is perhaps the star bird of the trip and to be sure of seeing it, we left at 4 the next morning for a pre-dawn hike to its display arena. The walk was steeper and slower than we anticipated, so we had to keep walking past the **Marbled Frogmouths** that called before dawn and the **Hook-billed Kingfishers** serenading the sunrise. At the top of a long steep climb, a Wilson's was calling but we weren't quite sure whether it would show itself after our noisy approach along a precarious hillside and our

guides cutting palm leaves for us to hide behind. We need not have worried – an absolutely amazing adult male Wilson's regularly came down to the ground just in front of us over the next two hours with three males jumping around and flaring their breast-shields. What a bird!!

Walking slowly down the path, we soon heard a bird of paradise and had close views of **Red Bird of Paradise**, the other west Papuan endemic, and also a flock of **Rusty Pitohuis**. A **Red-bellied Pitta** refused to show itself but a **Hook-billed Kingfisher** inadvertently called and was soon entered into the digiscope hall of fame. After good views of the local subspecies of **Yellow-bellied Gerygone** which looked very much like a distinct species, the midday heat killed most bird activity and Guy returned uphill to await the Wilson's afternoon activity. The male did return to show off his resplendent colours, and a **Pheasant Pigeon** walked right past the hide. **Great-billed Herons** and a number of other coastal species were seen on an afternoon boat cruise.

#### Thursday April 12th

Our next morning was spent on Salawati, searching lowland forest along the coast for **Western Crowned Pigeons**. The forests here clearly had many fruity pickings: hornbills and pigeons were noisy overhead, **Red-billed Brush-Turkeys** wailed and **Northern Cassowary** footprints followed our path. Soon after starting our walk at the second site, we heard a pair of crowned pigeons flush up out of sight over a river. We found **Large Fig-Parrots** overhead whilst Kris built a bridge, then as we crossed the river, a crocodile splashed down from the bank. Undaunted, we searched for the pigeons and Kris had soon found a **Western Crowned Pigeon** perched and posed for photos. In the remaining hours before it became too hot, we found a number of passerines including **Rusty Mouse-Warbler** and **Spot-winged Monarchs**. Having successfully seen our target birds, we opted for an early return to Sorong and cruised back up the passage between Batanta and Salawati, grateful that these islands still retain so much forest. Then a distant spout signalled a whale and we enjoyed wonderfully close views of a huge **Bryde's Whale** blowing and diving next to the boat. This chance encounter gave us just a short time on Senapang island, where **Varied Honeyeater** and **Beach Kingfisher** were new birds, and we were soon back to our favourite plate of king prawns in Sorong.

#### Friday April 13th

The primary objective of our day in Sorong was to find **Black Lory** but the day dawned very misty and over-flying lorries were difficult to see. A **Red-bellied Pitta** teased us but then amazed us when it appeared in full view, whilst **Greater Black Coucals** disappeared into a thicket never to be seen. After lunch, we visited a transmigration area where the rice paddies held a number of wader species and a **Lesser Black Coucal**. Moving on to a logging road inland, **Glossy-mantled Manucodes** and **Streak-headed Munias** showed well, **Black Lories** finally flew over, and then three perched to give us good scope views of this smart parrot.

#### Saturday April 14th

After an early check-in at Sorong airport, we explored the airstrip for an hour, finding a scatter of mangrove and coastal species, including much better views of **Lesser Black**

**Coucal.** From Sorong we flew to Ternate, via Manado, and enjoyed a great lunch in Ternate before crossing to Halmahera, checking into the guest house. We were soon seeing our first Halmahera birds – birding the main road through the hills behind Sidangoli. **White Cockatoos** were obvious, **Long-billed Crows** were impressive, **Grey-headed Fruit-Doves** were distant and our attempts to find some night-birds scored only one distant calling **Moluccan Scops-Owl**.

#### Sunday April 15th

Our first full day on Halmahera started pre-dawn on the side-road to Kali Batu Putih. Scops-Owls again remained hidden as a dawn chorus of exotic songs confused us all. Our first new birds were a pair of **Giant Coucals**, and just up the road, some of us saw the **Ivory-bellied Pittas** that were flying around and calling. A small roadside pond swarmed with the most amazing golden frogs as we continued along the road to some clearings with **Moluccan (Slaty) Flycatchers**, distant **Dusky-brown Oriole** and **White-streaked Friarbird** and a pair of **Blue-and-white Kingfishers**. A pair of **Paradise Crows** gave very good scope views, then we met up with Kris and Anu who guided us further along the road, past a great pair of **Chattering Lories**, to a small plantation where we found **Halmahera Cuckoo-shrike**, **White-naped Monarch**, **Dull Whistler** and a surprise **Arctic Warbler**. The midday heat killed off bird activity and we returned to the guesthouse for lunch. Our afternoon excursion was limited by persistent rain and a **Blue-capped Fruit-Dove** only perched up briefly. Another night-birding session after dinner was successful, with good views of a pair of **Moluccan Scops-Owls**.

#### Monday April 16th

The next day, we walked to Anu's clearing and formed a long wobbly chain to cross the river. A **Cinnamon-bellied Imperial-Pigeon** was the best find on the walk to the Standardwing lek, before we climbed the steep hill where the standardwings were still calling, and settled down to watch. At least two **male Wallace's Standardwings** performed wonderfully, mesmerising us with their display. A **Dusky Scrubfowl** created a short diversion before the sun rose and the standardwings slipped away. Whilst trying to find the **Nicobar Pigeon** and **Dusky Scrubfowl** that flushed up just along the trail, Anu heard a **Sombre Kingfisher** and a **Scarlet-breasted Fruit-Dove**, and somehow we found the kingfisher high in the forest canopy – a great bird undeserving of its name. The fruit-dove took longer to find but was a splendid bird when it appeared, and gave prolonged scope views. That afternoon, we drove to a vantage point at Gunung Potong to look for pigeons and parrots, and had good views of perched **Spectacled Imperial-Pigeon** and a spectacular monstrous **Great-billed Parrot**. **Violet-necked** and **Chattering Lories** flew past and we had repeated views of **Grey-throated Goshawk**, a proposed split from Variable Goshawk.

#### Tuesday April 17th

Our last morning and night-birding attempt was suddenly in luck when a **Moluccan Owlet-nightjar** called just before dawn and great views were enjoyed. **White-streaked Friarbirds** finally gave themselves up in Anu's clearing and we enjoyed our last views of many Halmaheran endemics – thank you Anu for all your help and knowledge! In the late morning, we took a boat back to Ternate and the flight to Manado,

### Wednesday April 18th

The next day we flew back to Jayapura, where we had time to bird the remnant forest patches along the Lake Sentani road and were rewarded by a splendid, if distant, displaying male **Lesser Bird of Paradise**.

### Thursday April 19th

After an early start and drive, we met Jamil, our local guide at Nimbokrang, and spent most of the morning on a narrow plank-trail resembling the best boardwalks on British bird reserves. No such luck; we were soon watching the village boys pushing rainforest planks on skateboards along the plank-trail. A **Greater Black Coucal** and a **Variable Dwarf Kingfisher** showed themselves well along the trail, and a **Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** excavated a nest. The Nimbokrang heat and humidity started to kick-in as we tried to find some shade to shelter until lunch and our motorcycle-lifts home. That afternoon we jumped back onto the bikes and visited some heavily logged swamp forest the other side of town, where we found two **Oriental Cuckoos** and had great views of a **Papuan Nightjar** hawking around us at dusk.

### Friday April 20th

The next morning we rode to the Jalan Korea logging road where it passes some particularly wet swamp forest. The road birds included scope views of **Streak-headed Honeyeater** but we had to face up to the swampy interior for Nimbokrang's special birds. Not far in, a **Blue-black Kingfisher** called and whizzed past us; perhaps the same bird performed marvellously on our walk back. Deeper in the forest, Jamil was having some success whistling to a **Pale-billed Sicklebill**, and we eventually had good, albeit brief, views of this unusual bird of paradise. Beaten by the humidity and mosquitoes, we were happy to rest by the road until the day cooled and we explored another road in low hills. The highlight was a **Dwarf Koel** flying past.

### Saturday April 21st

On our next day at Nimbokrang, Jamil took us into drier swamp forest behind his garden, but we soon gave up any idea of dry feet. The dense forest thwarted efforts to see many of the birds heard calling but we were very lucky to have great views of a **White-faced Catbird**. A **Jobi Manucode** showed briefly, a **Blue Jewel-babbler** twice flew past, and we had great views of a **Sooty Thicket-Fantail** whilst waiting for the jewel-babbler. Other birds in the area included **King Birds of Paradise** and **Ochre-collared Monarchs** before activity died down and we returned for our midday rest. In the afternoon we visited some forest edge and paddies, finding another **Jobi Manucode**, **Grey-headed Goshawk** and **White-shouldered Fairy-Wrens**, plus some good fly-over views of **Brown Lorries**.

### Sunday April 22nd

On our last morning at Nimbokrang, we returned to the first day's boardwalk but there was less activity. **Meyer's Friarbirds** and **Zoe Imperial-Pigeons** seen from the road were the best birds.

### Monday April 23rd

An early-morning flight saw us flying up to Wamena across miles of hill forest, lowland swamp forest and montane forest. Much of New Guinea remains an untouched wilderness, and long may it remain so. Paradoxically, it is very difficult to find easy access into forest anywhere in West Papua, and most birding sites are along roads with considerable habitat degradation from industrial logging then village logging and hunting. Wamena is the capital of the West Papuan Highlands, situated in the heavily populated Baliem valley. We were soon driving through fields, grassland and marshes and stopped to watch **Black-breasted Munias** and **Papuan Harriers**. By the time we reached our target forest fragment, the morning bird activity had subsided but we found **Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike** and **Blue-faced Parrot-Finch** amongst commoner species. Back in Wamena, Kris had completed all our arrangements to drive up to Lake Habbema and, after a gourmet lunch of Habbema crayfish, we were negotiating the steep road. Halfway up we stopped for good views of a fantastic male **Splendid Astrapia** but time was against us and we arrived at the lake after dark to pitch our tents and adjust to the climate and altitude.

### Tuesday April 24th

Next morning, we set off in search of one of New Guinea's most-wanted birds: **MacGregor's Bird-of-Paradise**, now reclassified as a honeyeater (MacGregor's Honeyeater of Paradise?) but still a stunning bird. We checked the forest patches close to the lake where MacGregor's have been seen previously but it seems that the road has opened up the area to more visitors and this species, supposedly unwary, has been hunted to rarity. **Orange-cheeked Honeyeaters** were abundant and several **Short-bearded Melidectes** were found in the subalpine bushes. At least two **Salvadori's Teals** were found on the lake and a pair of **Snow Mountain Quail** were flushed and seen by the clients. Some caught a glimpse of a MacGregor's and we spent the next hour or two watching the forest edge, eventually finding another Macgregor's and also several **Splendid Astrapias**. Both were wonderful birds – big, beautiful and in wonderful mountain scenery. The return walk was more notable for its orchids and other alpine flowers, and the afternoon was spent birding from the road near the tree line. A flock of **New Guinea Thornbills** were found, several **Alpine Pipits** were found along the road, a **Black-mantled Goshawk** was seen and also an **Archbold's Bowerbird** down the Ibele Track.

### Wednesday April 25th

On our final morning, we descended to the upper montane forest and walked slowly down the road. A couple of tiger-parrots hid before they could be identified, but a **Painted Tiger-Parrot** was scoped later. **Mountain Firetails**, **Black Sitellas** and **Mountain Robins** gave good views, as did **White-winged Robins** and **Hooded Cuckoo-shrikes**. More **Splendid Astrapias** provided some eventual photo-opportunities and we returned to our Wamena hotel in the early evening.

### Thursday April 26th

Starting our journey home, we took the early morning flight down to Jayapura, back over those endless forests, to our familiar hotel. We checked out a couple of potential birding

sites close to Jayapura, where the first overgrown hilltop held very little but the forest fragments along another transmigration road supported more birds. Many species were heard calling but few perched out for us. A fig-parrot disappeared straight into its nest-hole but **Rufous-bellied Kookaburra**, **Lesser Black Coucal** and **Grey Crow** all offered themselves to the camera.

#### Friday April 27th

On our final day, we stopped at several locations on the drive to the border, seeing another **Jobi Manucode**, fleeting views of **New Guinea Bronzewing** but exceptional views of **Magnificent Riflebirds**. The border formalities were straightforward and we returned to the English-speaking world, or at least to pidgin English. A two-hour stop-over at Madang was made far more comfortable thanks to the use of the executive lounge but a last-minute dash for **Grand Munias** at the end of the airstrip turned into a run for the plane.

It had been a very successful tour - we had seen all of our major target birds and encountered no logistical problems. **Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise** and **Wallace's Standardwing** were mind-blowing birds, **MacGregor's Honeyeater-of-Paradise** was a fitting star of its Alpine environment, **Blue-black Kingfisher** and **Pale-billed Sicklebill** made the Nimbokrang swamps seem worth suffering the climate, **Vogelkop Bowerbird**, **Western Parotia** and **Buff-tailed Sicklebill** were a tribute to fantastic local guides, and **Wallace's Standardwing**, **Great-billed Parrot** and **Ivory-breasted Pitta** tempted us to return to visit more of the Moluccas. Many thanks are due to the late Kris Tindige and his wife Shita for their splendid organization and efforts.

**Bold type** denotes a New Guinea endemic species.

**Underlined** species are endemic to West Papua (including the islands)

\* denotes a near endemic

(H) indicates species which were heard but not seen

Names follow the existing current PNG or Australian usage, and the imposed names from Sibley *et al.* and Clements are given with some reluctance where major confusion exists.

#### **WEST PAPUA**

Birds seen in West Papua

[[**Northern Cassowary** *Casuarius unappendiculatus*

Tracks were seen commonly on Salawati.]]

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Two along the Batanta coast and one at Sorong airport. One perched beside Lake Habbema may be an altitude record for this species!

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

Two from the boat crossing from Batanta to Sorong.

Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana*

Two seen along the coast of Batanta.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

At least one on the Batanta coast and at the Aimas rice-paddies but others may have been overlooked.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

One on the Batanta coast and one at the Sorong airport.

Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra*

Six on the boat crossing from Sorong to Batanta were mostly perched on floating seaweed far out to sea, and one on the return journey.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

At least 40 at the Aimas rice-paddies. Outside West Papua, about were seen 100 at Manado and up to 30 at Port Moresby and Wewak airports.

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

One flying past at the Sorong airport. First noted for New Guinea by Kris in 2001 (published in *Kukila* volume 12).

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*

An immature in flight then an adult perched beside Lake Sentani and probably this species seen after dark at Nimbokrang.

Spotted Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna guttata*

At least 20 along the Batanta coast and Guy saw about 10 coming to the rice paddies at Nimbokrang after dark.

Radjah Shelduck *Tadorna radjah*

Guy saw two off the coast of Batanta.

**Salvadori's Teal** *Anas waigiensis*

At least two birds seen amongst the Coots on Lake Habbema. This is one of the few known localities that's not on a river – birds are easy to see here but at a distance.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

One seen on Lake Habbema

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One at Lake Sentani and one or two most days around Batanta.

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*

Three seen on Biak included good views of perched birds, then a total of six seen at Nimbokrang.

**Long-tailed Buzzard** *Henicopernis longicauda*

Two soaring over the Arfaks on the drive up, then one behind Sorong, and very good views of one circling over the forest below Lake Habbema.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

At least 60 in a thermal at Madang airport was a high count for New Guinea.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*

One over Lake Sentani and one at Port Moresby were the only records.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*

Seen most days in the lowlands, with a maximum of four on the boat crossing to Batanta.

**Papuan Harrier** *Circus (spilonotus) spilothorax*

Two seen in the Baliem valley and two at Lake Habbema. Most recent reviews now treat this as a separate species from Eastern Marsh Harrier.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

One or two seen daily around Batanta, and one along the road beyond Lake Sentani.

\* Variable (Grey) Goshawk *Accipiter (novaehollandiae) hiogaster*

Singles and pairs seen at many lowland sites, notably a wonderful white bird perched by Lake Sentani, and a pair posing for photographs behind Sorong. The birds from Wallacea through New Guinea to the Solomons have been split from the Grey Goshawk of Australia.

**Grey-headed Goshawk** *Accipiter poliocephalus*

One perched instantly then flew past us at dusk at Nimbokrang. Interestingly, this was in exactly the same place and habitat as Variable Goshawk.

**Black-mantled Goshawk** *Accipiter melanochlamys*

Fantastic views of one perched very close to us in the Arfaks, then another near Lake Habbema.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One of the small dark resident subspecies flew past at dusk on Biak.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*

Two perched below the resort in the Baliem valley and two soaring over the forest below Lake Habbema: one displaying high overhead, and another much lower over us.

Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

One near Lake Habbema. The Snow Mountain subspecies *baru* is the only resident population outside Australia.

**Biak Scrubfowl** *Megapodius geelvinkianus*

Two singles flushed on Biak were hardly visible through the dense undergrowth, and another two heard. This species, split in the megapode monograph and most subsequent texts, is currently listed as globally Vulnerable.

\*Dusky Scrubfowl *Megapodius decollatus*

One seen briefly on Senapang Island, but seen much better on Halmahera.

**Red-billed Brush-turkey** *Talegalla cvieri* (H)

Two heard on Salawati and one behind Sorong

**Brown-collared Brush-turkey** *Talegalla jobiensis* (H)

Singles heard on several dates at Nimbokrang and Lake Sentani. This genus is always nearly impossible to see!

**Snow Mountain Quail** *Anurophasis monorhonyx*

Two by Lake Habbema flushed off with noisy wing-beats – close enough for Guy to hear but not see! This monotypic genus is endemic to the highest Snow Mountain peaks.

Buff-banded Rail *Rallus philippensis*

Two seen in the Aimas rice paddies, then great views of two on the road near the Baliem valley resort, and at least two heard at dusk in the Nimbokrang paddies.

Rufous-tailed Bush-hen *Amaurornis moluccanus* (H)

A pair calling on Batanta.

White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea* (H)

Several calling in the Nimbokrang paddies.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*

Four were seen at the PAU.

Purple Swamphen (Purple Gallinule) *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Two at the Aimas paddies and two heard in the Nimbokrang paddies. The black backed race *melanotus* is sometimes split as a separate species.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

At least 32 counted on Lake Habbema.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Small numbers seen on several airstrips in both West Papua and especially in PNG, and two at the Aimas paddies.

Lesser (Mongolian) Sand-Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Two smart birds in breeding plumage on mud near the Sorong airstrip.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One feeding on floating seaweed off Batanta.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

Five at the Aimas paddies were mostly in summer plumage.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris*

One at the Aimas paddies was the rarest wader seen, fortunately perched close to a Wood Sandpiper for a good size comparison.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*

Two at the Aimas paddies.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

About 20 at the Aimas paddies were by far the commonest wader at the site.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*

Four seen rather distantly at the Aimas paddies.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Three also seen rather distantly at the Aimas paddies.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Up to three seen at Wewak, Aimas, Batanta and Sorong airstrip, and heard calling over Wamena.

Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

About five seen on the crossing to Batanta and three on the return.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

About 100 seen on the crossing to Batanta and 20 on the return.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*

About 30 seen on both crossings to and from Batanta.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*

About five seen on the crossing to Batanta and one on the return.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Two of uncertain origin seen in flight at Jayapura (and two at Port Moresby). This species has not really established itself in New Guinea yet.

Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove (Brown Cuckoo-Dove) *Macropygia amboinensis*

Up to four seen on many days in the lowlands, especially at Nimbokrang. This is a split from the Brown Cuckoo-Dove of Australia.

\*Great Cuckoo-Dove *Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*:

Two fly-bys seen by some of the group: at Biak and the forest fragments past Lake Sentani.

**Emerald Ground-Dove** *Chalcophaps indica* (H)

Four heard on Biak.

\*Stephan's Ground-Dove *Chalcophaps stephani* (H)

Singles heard at Nimbokrang.

**New Guinea Bronzewing** *Henicophaps albifrons*

Two flying across the road near the PNG border must have been this species, but were only seen very briefly.

\*Bronze Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba beccarii*

O was seen in the Arfaks

**Pheasant Pigeon** *Otidiphaps nobilis*

One walked whilst sat in the Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise hide. Perhaps the same individual as filmed on "Attenborough in Paradise"?!.

**Western Crowned Pigeon** *Goura cristata*

At least three flushed up on Salawati – fortunately, Kris found one perched for fantastic scope views. Let's hope that the trickle of birdwatchers persuades the hunters to leave these magnificent birds alone...

**Wompoo Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus magnificus*

Two singles seen at Nimbokrang and one or two heard many days in the lowlands. A beautiful bird perhaps matched only by the similar Scarlet-breasted Fruit-Dove of Halmahera!

**Coroneted Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus coronulatus*

Two singles scoped in treetops at Nimbokrang gave good views of this scarce species.

**Beautiful Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus pulchellus*

One in swamp forest at Nimbokrang.

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

Good views of six on Biak. A small-island species ranging from east Indonesia to the Solomon Islands but not on mainland New Guinea.

**White-bibbed (breasted) Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus rivoli*

Heard commonly in the Arfaks but most of the four birds seen were only seen briefly or through dense vegetation.

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

Six of this beautiful species were seen on Biak. Another small-island species which is widespread on the islands east of New Guinea with an isolated subspecies on Biak.

**Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus iozonus*

Up to 10 seen on many days in the lowlands. This is typically the common fruit-dove of degraded lowland forests.

**Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula chalconota*

Two seen in the Arfaks. This species is rarely seen but probably not uncommon away from villages and hunters.

**Purple-tailed Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula rufigaster* (H)

Frustratingly, this species was heard at Nimbokrang and in forest beyond Lake Sentani, but not seen.

**Pinon Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula pinon*

Fairly common on Batanta, Salawati and Nimbokrang and beyond Lake Sentani, with up to 10 seen most days.

**Zoe Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula zoeae*

Only seen at Nimbokrang, where about six were seen in flight and one scoped beside the road, and others heard calling here and beyond Lake Sentani.

**Spice Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula myristicivora*

Three seen in flight over Biak. This subspecies lacks a knob and Kris believes that it is more closely related to the Elegant Imperial-Pigeon, which occurs on small islands off south-west Papua. (Maybe it should be split as a separate species.) Three seen along the Batanta coast and about 10 seen on Senapang island were of the nominate subspecies which is restricted to the West Papuan islands and eastern Moluccas.

\*Papuan Mountain Pigeon *Gymnophaps albertisii*

Surprisingly rare with only two seen – one in the Arfaks and one flying over Nimbokrang.

\*Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*

This magnificent king of swamp forests was fairly common on Batanta and Salawati, where eight were seen, and another two at Nimbokrang.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*

Also fairly common on Batanta and Salawati, where up to 15 were seen from the boat, and one or two on several dates at Nimbokrang and Lake Sentani.

**Black Lory** *Chalcopsitta atra*

Three pairs flying over Sorong were seen well enough to identify to this genus but we then had good scope views of three, showing red on their faces. A West Papuan endemic, basically restricted to the Vogelkop and West Papuan islands.

**Brown Lory** *Chalcopsitta duivenbodei*

About 10 seen flying over Nimbokrang, some close enough to see the yellow on their faces. A localised species endemic to the north coast of New Guinea.

**Dusky Lory** *Pseudeos fuscata*

Small flocks flew over Nimbokrang each morning and evening, with a maximum of about 50 seen, but these were all flying at a typically high altitude.

**Biak Red Lory** *Eos cyanogenia*

Two pairs were seen flying past. This scarcity fits its status as globally threatened, based on the rate of forest loss on Biak, exacerbated by trapping for the pet trade.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Small numbers at most lowland sites, maximum 20 in a day at Nimbokrang.

**Western Black-capped Lory** *Lorius lory*

A pair in flight on Biak, three behind Sorong and a total of six at Nimbokrang. As typical with many lorries, these were seen in flight only.

**Red-flanked Lorikeet** *Charmosyna placentis*

A total of 13 seen in small flocks in flight over Nimbokrang and Sorong.

**Josephine's Lorikeet** *Charmosyna josefinae*

Two and then four birds in flowering trees in the Arfaks. Always a scarce species, we were lucky to see them perched.

**Papuan Lorikeet** *Charmosyna papou*

Two pairs seen in flight in the Arfaks, and two pairs below Lake Habbema. Always a favourite with perhaps the longest streamers of any parrot.

**Plum-faced (Whiskered) Lorikeet** *Oreopsittacus arfaki*

At least two birds in both of the flowering trees with the Josephine's Lorikeets, and at least five in flight below Lake Habema.

**Yellow-billed Lorikeet** *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*

A total of about 20 seen one day in the Arfaks included good views of a pair in the upper clearing, and great scope views of about 20 below Lake Habbema.

**Orange-billed Lorikeet** *Neopsittacus pullicauda*

A total of about 15 in the subalpine scrub around Lake Habbema.

**Geelvink Pygmy-Parrot** *Micropsitta geelvinkiana*

One seen well on Biak, foraging in the crown of a big tree. This is by far the rarest of the world's pygmy-parrots, which range as far east as the Solomons.

**Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot** *Micropsitta pusio*

A total of five seen at Nimbokrang, including excellent view of two at close range on the walkway trail.

**\*Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot** *Micropsitta bruijnii*

Good views of three in the Arfaks.

**Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** *Cyclopsitta diophthalma*

Good views of up to five a day at Nimbokrang, including a female excavating a nest-hole. Unfortunately, not all fig-parrots were seen well enough to exclude the possibility of the regionally-endemic Salvadori's Fig-Parrot, notably the parrot beyond Lake Sentani which dived into a hole and never reappeared.

**Large Fig-Parrot** *Psittaculirostris desmarestii*

Two foraging in a big fig tree above us on Salawati were of a subspecies not illustrated in the field guide.

**Brehm's Tiger-Parrot** *Psittacella brehmii*

We all saw one at Lake Habbema, in addition, two in the Arfaks and one below Lake Habbema.

**Painted Tiger-Parrot** *Psittacella brehmii*

Good but rather distant scope views of one below Lake Habbema, and several 'possibles' seen in flight around Lake Habbema. This is generally the highest-altitude tiger-parrot.

**Modest Tiger-Parrot** *P. modesta*

Great views of one in the Arfaks on the trail below the bowers.

**\*Red-cheeked Parrot** *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*

Common in most lowland sites, max 10 on several days at Nimbokrang.

**\*Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus*

Up to five seen on most days in all lowland sites. Beautiful scope views on Batanta of this species.

**\*Moluccan King-Parrot** *Alisterus amboinensis*

One on Batanta perched above the path.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*

Two seen on two days in rice paddies at Nimbokrang. An uncommon migrant to PNG, this species could be expected to be more common in north-west Papua.

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*

Four seen on Biak and another four at Nimbokrang.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*

One seen in the Arfaks and two below Lake Habbema. Several heard calling both days around Lake Habbema.

**Rufous-throated Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx ruficollis*

Good but brief views of one in upper montane forest below Lake Habbema.

**White-eared Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx meyeri*

One seen well close to the guest house in the Arfaks. This is the mid-altitude bronze-cuckoo in New Guinea.

**White-crowned Koel** *Caliecthrus leucolophus* (H)

One calling at Nimbokrang. An elusive hill species.

**Dwarf Koel** *Microdynamis parva*

Two singles heard at Nimbokrang both flew overhead, showing the face pattern of this secretive species.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*

Two flew low over us at Nimbokrang and some of us also saw one at Port Moresby and three near Lake Sentani. These are probably all migrants from Australia.

**Greater Black Coucal** *Centropus menbeki*

A pair proved very elusive on the road behind Sorong but another pair at Nimbokrang showed themselves much better. Another single seen later at Nimbokrang and many birds heard calling here and at Lake Sentani.

**Lesser Black Coucal** *Centropus bernsteini*

One found in the paddies at Aimas then a total of five near the Sorong airport and three other singles seen – a good total for this often-elusive species.

**Biak Coucal** *Centropus chalybeus* (H)

A pair heard calling on Biak but not seen. This species is uncommon and, like all forest coucals, rather difficult to see.

**Papuan Boobook** (Jungle Hawk-Owl) *Ninox theomacha*

Fantastic but only momentary views of one in the Arfaks which landed just next to us, and another heard calling the next night.

\*Papuan Frogmouth *Podargus papuensis*

Two heard on Biak and one at Nimbokrang. Probably more common than these records suggest as the terrain and weather gave little opportunity for night-birding.

\*Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus* (H)

Two heard calling on the walk up to the Wilson's Bird of Paradise – unfortunately, we were too pushed for time to stop and search for them.

**Feline Owlet-nightjar** *Aegotheles insignis* (H)

Singles heard twice in the Arfaks. Alas, none could be found in their usual roosting area.

**Mountain Owlet-nightjar** *Aegotheles albertisii*

Amazing daytime views of one roosting in the Arfaks. Zeth's knowledge of where to find this species gave us one of the great trip highlights.

**Papuan Nightjar** *Eurostopodus papuensis*

One hawking around us at Nimbokrang gave us good views of this rarely seen species, clearing showing a white throat and plain wings and tail.

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*

Three seen hawking at dusk on Biak, one seen briefly on Batanta, one on the nest at Nimbokrang and others heard at Nimbokrang and at Lake Sentani.

**Mountain Swiftlet** *Collocalia hirundinacea*

Large swiftlets in the mountains presumed to be this species were seen in the Arfaks, maximum 10, and Lake Habbema, maximum 20.

Uniform Swiftlet *Collocalia vanikorensis*

Widespread in the lowlands with large counts of 100 on Batanta and behind Sorong.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Common on Biak, small numbers at Nimbokrang, and common at Lake Habbema, especially in the montane forest where 50 were seen on our walk down.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

Guy saw four on Batanta.

**Papuan Spinetail** *Mearnsia novaeguineae*

Up to 10 daily at Nimbokrang, where many were flying low over the roads, and one at the PNG border.

Variable (Dwarf) Kingfisher *Ceyx lepidus*

Fantastic views of two perched close to the path at Nimbokrang. Usually this species is only heard – others were heard on Salawati, Nimbokrang and the PNG border.

\*Common Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanysiptera galatea* (H)

About five heard on Batanta and three on Salawati

**Biak Paradise-Kingfisher** *Tanysiptera riedelii*

A highlight of Biak was the great views of this endemic species which perched out in the open after we had worked hard to track them down in the forest. A total of nine seen and about 17 heard. Sometimes considered a subspecies of Common Paradise-Kingfisher, this taxon has distinctive body plumage as well as tail shape and colour.

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

One called during the day on Batanta and was seen perched, otherwise several calling at dawn on Batanta, one heard behind Sorong and two at Nimbokrang.

**Rufous-bellied Kookaburra** *Dacelo gaudichaud*

This impressive forest kingfisher was heard regularly in lowland forest, and one seen on Salawati, three seen at Nimbokrang and two seen beyond Lake Sentani.

**Blue-black Kingfisher** *Halcyon nigrocyanea*

This Nimbokrang speciality was only recorded when we left the roads and waded through the swamp forest. On the first trail, the first bird calling was seen by most of us, the next two birds remained hidden, but the final bird perched up very close for everyone to appreciate this stunning bird. Another heard on the other trail.

Beach Kingfisher *Halcyon saurophaga*

Quintessential views of one perched over the beach on Senapang Island.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*

This Australian migrant was fairly common in open habitats at Nimbokrang, where five were seen one morning in the paddies and another four singles seen, and one at Port Moresby.

\*Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon torotoro* (H)

Three heard at Nimbokrang.

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*

Small numbers were seen at Nimbokrang, up to 10 at Lake Sentani and 15 at both Batanta and Port Moresby.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

Common at Nimbokrang, where up to six were seen in open habitats, and four beyond Lake Sentani, and singles on Biak and Batanta. Most were probably Australian migrants.

\* Blyth's Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus*

The regular sightings of pairs and small groups of this magnificent species in most lowland forest sites were a highlight, maximum 15 on Salawati.

Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* (H)

Elusive but fairly common on Biak, where about seven were heard, and another heard on Salawati.

Red-bellied Pitta *Pitta erythrogaster*

Three heard calling on Batanta, where also flushed one from the trail, and a calling bird behind Sorong obligingly jumped up.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seven around the Sentani airport on our first day soon dropped to one mid-way through the tour, then none. Two singles also seen near Sorong.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

Small numbers, usually pairs, were widespread, especially around airports and hotels.

Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*

Singles of this uncommon Australian migrant were seen at Wewak and Nimbokrang.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla (flava) tschutschensis*

Four at the Aimas rice paddies and one heard over Sorong.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Six singles seen in the Arfaks and around Sorong. These two wagtails are the Palearctic passerine migrants most commonly encountered in New Guinea but perhaps forest warblers and pipits are overlooked.

**Alpine Pipit** *Anthus gutturalis*

Common along the road at Lake Habbema, where a total of 15 were seen, usually flushing up to land further down the road or in a small tree. This must be the easiest place to see this high-altitude endemic, as the Tari Gap road in PNG is not high enough.

**Hooded Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina longicauda*

Four of these impressive birds followed us for a while through the forest below Lake Habema.

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina papuensis*

One to three seen on five dates at Batanta, Sorong, Nimbokrang and Lake Sentani.

**Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina boyeri*

Four of this usually common lowland species were seen at Nimbokrang.

**Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina caeruleogrisea*

Good views of one at the Baliem Valley resort.

**Grey-headed Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina schisticeps*

Three seen behind Sorong and two at Nimbokrang. Another usually common cuckoo-shrike which seemed rather scarce this time.

**Cicadabird** *Coracina tenuirostris*

The only record was three of the Biak subspecies. Cicadabirds are absent from most forest in New Guinea, where they are presumably out-competed by the other cuckoo-shrikes.

**Black-browed Triller** *Lalage atrifrons*

Five on Biak (a separate subspecies), two behind Sorong and a total of six around Nimbokrang.

**Sooty-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus aurigaster* (I)

Three seen on Biak. An introduction from western Indonesia, probably Java, reflecting the strong trading links with Biak but not the New Guinea mainland.

**Pied Chat (Pied Stonechat)** *Saxicola caprata*

Common in the lower montane grasslands, with five seen in the Baliem Valley and about 10 seen on the drive up to Lake Habema, plus one near Lake Sentani.

**Island Thrush** *Turdus poliocephalus*

Abundant at high altitude at Lake Habbema, especially in the burned grasslands but also in clearings and roadsides through the forest. About 40 seen when we wandered around searching for MacGregor's, where it was the commonest bird.

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

One in display flight over Madang airport.

**Island Leaf-Warbler** *Phylloscopus poliocephala*

Two in the Arfaks, at relatively low attitude near the guest house and one heard near the Baliem valley resort.

**Papuan Grassbird** *Megalurus (timoriensis) papuensis*

About ten seen in the grasslands around Lake Habema. The calls of the highland birds are distinct from Australian birds and it is split in the latest Howard and Moore Checklist.

**Sooty Thicket-Fantail** *Rhipidura threnothorax*

Two heard behind Sorong were typical super-skulkers – coming within a few metres but remaining hidden – then one inside the forest at Nimbokrang did allow brief flight-views, which was totally eclipsed by good views by one foraging naively in front of us as we strained to see a Blue Jewel-Babbler.

**White-bellied Thicket-Fantail** *Rhipidura leucothorax*

Singles heard frequently but only two were seen – at Nimbokrang and behind Lake Sentani.

**Dimorphic Fantail** *Rhipidura brachyrhyncha*

Fairly common in the Arfaks where 12 were seen, and three in the forests below Lake Habbema.

**Rufous-backed Fantail** *Rhipidura rufidorsa*

One seen well at Nimbokrang. A surprisingly unobtrusive species.

**Black Fantail** *Rhipidura atra*

Another fairly common species in the Arfaks, where a total of 14 were seen.

**Friendly Fantail** *Rhipidura albolimbata*

The commonest montane fantail, with up to eight seen daily in the Arfaks and below Lake Habbema.

**Northern Fantail** *Rhipidura rufiventris*

Fairly common in lowland forests, including two on Biak, three on Batanta, five on Salawati and up to five per day at Nimbokrang.

**Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*

Common in open lowland habitats, including six and a nest on Biak, up to five elsewhere, and up to 10 at each of the PNG airports.

**Black Monarch** *Monarcha axillaris*

Two on the last full day in the Arfaks were behaviourally distinct from the commoner Black Fantails.

**Hooded Monarch** *Monarcha manadensis*

One seen in the first mixed flock encountered at Nimbokrang – an elusive lowland species.

**Spot-winged Monarch** *Monarcha guttulus*

Great views of a loose group of about five on Salawati, and one at Nimbokrang.

**Golden Monarch** *Monarcha chrysomela*

This spectacular species proved to be fairly common at Nimbokrang, where 10 were seen. A male of the Biak subspecies was distinctly orange – a feature shared by other island subspecies.

**Frilled Monarch** *Arses telescopthalmus*

One on Batanta and three on Salawati.

**Ochre-collared Monarch** *Arses insularis*

Four singles seen at Nimbokrang – a recent split from Frilled Monarch.

**Biak Black Flycatcher** *Myiagra atra*

Six seen on Biak made it one of the commoner endemics. This genus has speciated widely in the islands around New Guinea but not on New Guinea itself.

**Shining Flycatcher** *Myiagra alecto*

Two seen and a few heard around Lake Sentani, and about six seen at Nimbokrang, including excellent views of some confiding individuals.

**Yellow-breasted Boatbill** *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*

One seen well close to the crowned pigeon on Salawati, and one heard at Nimbokrang.

**Black-breasted Boatbill** *Machaerirhynchus nigripectus*

Five seen in the Arfaks and just one below Lake Habbema. A wonderfully patterned bird.

**Canary Flycatcher** *Microeca papuana*

Two singles seen in the Arfaks were the only records of the unobtrusive *Microeca* flycatchers.

**Garnet Robin** *Eugerygone rubra*

One in the Arfaks and two below Lake Habbema. This tiny bird is unique in shimmering its wings in a similar fashion to *Myiagra* flycatchers shimmering their tails.

**Mountain Robin** *Petroica placens*

At least ten seen below Lake Habbema was a great total for this rarely-recorded high altitude species.

**Lesser Ground-Robin** *Amalocichla incerta*

Several were heard in the Arfaks and two were glimpsed. The least shy out of New Guinea's suite of shy ground birds.

**Ashy Robin** *Heteromyias (Poecilodryas) albispecularis*

One seen and others heard in the Arfaks were of the Vogelkop subspecies *albispecularis*. This is often lumped with the Grey-headed Robin of Australia, but the calls, songs, habits and habitat are quite different.

**Black-sided Robin** *Poecilodryas hypoleuca*

Great views of one on Salawati, another seen on Batanta and two at Nimbokrang. This species is easier to see than most robins as it perches in the open.

**Black-throated Robin** *Poecilodryas albonotata*

Two seen in the Arfaks and two below Lake Habbema. A large robin with an easily-overlooked very thin whistle.

**White-winged Robin** *Peneothello sigillatus*

Five below Lake Habbema, showing the white shoulder patch of this western subspecies.

**Smoky Robin** *Peneothello cryptoleucus*

One heard and Guy saw two at high altitudes in the Arfaks. This Vogelkop endemic is remarkably similar in plumage to the Blue-grey Robin.

**Blue-grey Robin** *Peneothello cyanus*

Fairly common and confiding in the Arfaks, where about six were seen. Only one was heard below Lake Habbema which was at its upper altitudinal range.

**Green-backed Robin** *Pachycephalopsis hattamensis*

Four were seen in undergrowth close to the Arfaks guest house. Another Vogelkop endemic, named after Zeth's tribe, the Hattam people .

**Mottled Whistler** *Rhagologus leucostigma*

Two seen briefly in the Arfaks.

**Regent Whistler** *Pachycephala schlegelii*

Fairly common in the Arfaks, where up to six were seen in a day.

**Vogelkop Whistler** *Pachycephala meyeri*

This indistinct species was seen alongside the very similar female Sclater's and Regent Whistlers in the Arfaks, where at least four were seen.

**Lorentz's Whistler** *Pachycephala lorentzi*

Four around the tree-line at Lake Habema were much brighter in plumage than females of other species. Endemic to the high mountains of West Papua.

**Sclater's Whistler** *Pachycephala soror*

The common montane whistler, with up to five seen daily in the Arfaks, and four on the walk down from Lake Habbema.

**Golden Whistler** *Pachycephala pectoralis*

Two at the Baliem Valley resort. This species is widespread on small islands from Indonesia to Fiji but has just this one subspecies on New Guinea, restricted to the montane valleys of West Papua.

**\*Grey Whistler (Grey-headed)** *Pachycephala (simplex) griseiceps*

Two singles seen on Salawati and at Nimbokrang. New Guinea birds are often called Grey-headed Whistler, which Clements splits from the *simplex* taxon, which he calls Grey Whistler even though it's brown.

**Rufous-naped Whistler** *Pachycephala (Aleadryas) rufinucha*

Good views of at least three in the Arfaks, exhibiting their unusual plumage, harsh call and furtive habits which all support their classification in a separate genus.

**Little Shrike-thrush** *Colluricincla megarhyncha*

Singles seen on Batanta, Salawati and Nimbokrang.

**Variable Pitohui** *Pitohui kirhocephalus* (H)

The pitohuis heard by the PNG border but refusing to show themselves were this species.

**Hooded Pitohui** *Pitohui dichrous*

One dived across the trail at Nimbokrang.

**Rusty Pitohui** *Pitohui ferrugineus*

The common pitohui of the trip, with flocks of about five of the white-billed subspecies seen on Batanta, and of the dark-billed subspecies on Salawati and Nimbokrang.

**Black Pitohui** *Pitohui nigrescens*

A male seen briefly in the Arfaks. This pitohui prefers the understorey and is always difficult to see...

**Papuan Log-runner** *Orthonyx novaeguineae*

Guy saw one high in the Arfaks. Recently split from Australian Log-runner on the basis of biochemistry and morphology, but the songs, calls and habits are also distinct. This is the nominate race.

**Spotted Jewel-babbler** *Ptilorrhoa leucosticta*

Two heard in the Arfaks where we had wonderful views of one which crossed the path several times.

**Blue Jewel-babbler** *Ptilorrhoa caerulescens*

Just one was heard calling at Nimbokrang where the forest was too flooded for this species, where it entertained us for hours before eventually giving us some passable flight views.

**Emperor Fairywren** *Malurus cyanocephalus*

A group of three of this electric-blue forest wren were seen on Biak, one behind Sorong and two at Nimbokrang. This is one of very few species of small New Guinea birds which have colonised Biak without speciating.

**White-shouldered Fairywren** *Malurus alboscapulatus*

Six of this grassland species were seen at Nimbokrang and four at the lower forest edge below Lake Habbema.

**Rusty Mouse-warbler** *Crateroscelis murina*

We were lucky to have good views of a singing bird on Salawati. Just one other was heard, behind Sorong.

**Mountain Mouse-warbler** *Crateroscelis robusta*

Regularly heard in the Arfaks and below Lake Habbema, with a bird showing itself on the first day in the Arfaks and two seen near Lake Habbema.

**Perplexing Scrubwren** *Sericornis virgatus*

Groups of two and three were seen close to the guest house in the Arfaks. A difficult species to identify, especially as it exhibits great geographical variation.

**Large Scrubwren** *Sericornis nouhuysi*

A flock of six seen high in the Arfaks.

**Buff-faced Scrubwren** *Sericornis perspicillatus*

Two of this distinctive species were seen at the Baliem Valley resort.

**Vogelkop Scrubwren** *Sericornis rufescens*

This Vogelkop endemic was one of the commoner small birds, with two to ten seen daily. Clearly a close relative of the Buff-faced Scrubwren, but foraging higher into the forest sub-canopy.

**Papuan Scrubwren** *Sericornis papuensis*

Three flocks of scrub-wrens below Lake Habbema appeared to be this species.

**Grey-green Scrubwren** *Sericornis arfakianus*

Two singles were seen in scrub close to the Arfaks guest house.

**New Guinea Thornbill** *Acanthiza murina*

A flock of at least eight in small bushes close to Lake Habbema and a couple in the forest a few miles down the road. These close views allowed us to see the distinctive tail-pattern and pale irides.

**Grey Gerygone** *Gerygone cinerea*

Two seen in the Arfaks.

**Large-billed Gerygone** *Gerygone magnirostris*

Three seen close to water at Nimbokrang and three in mangroves at Sorong airport.

**Brown-breasted (Tree-fern) Gerygone** *Gerygone ruficollis*

Several heard in the Arfaks but only one seen on the last morning, and three seen at high altitude around Lake Habbema.

\*Fairy Gerygone *Gerygone palpebrosa*

Three seen the first day at Nimbokrang and two there on a later date.

\*Green-backed Gerygone *Gerygone chloronotus*

Commonly heard in lowland forest but just one seen, at Nimbokrang.

**Yellow-bellied Gerygone** *Gerygone chrysogaster*

Two on Batanta and three on Salawati gave great views of the distinctive subspecies *notata* (which could be a separate species...). Four of the nominate subspecies seen at Nimbokrang.

**Black Sittella** *Daphoenositta miranda*

A total of about 20 seen in four flocks in the upper montane forest below Lake Habbema was an exceptional count of this usually uncommon and always beautiful and acrobatic species.

**Papuan Treecreeper** *Cormobates placens*

Six seen in the Arfaks, where they appear to be commoner than in the central mountain ranges.

**Black Sunbird** *Nectarinia aspasia*

One of the most widespread birds of lowland forest, usually in forest edge, with a daily maximum of 10 on Biak.

**Yellow-bellied Sunbird** *Nectarinia jugularis*

Similar status to the Black Sunbird but commoner in open habitats, maximum 15 around Lake Sentani.

**Yellow-bellied Longbill** *Toxorhamphus novaeguineae*

Singles seen on Salawati and at Nimbokrang. The Salawati bird gave atypically prolonged views of this usually shy and hyperactive species.

**Dwarf Longbill** (Honeyeater) *Oedistoma iliolophus*

Two seen at Nimbokrang by Guy, giving typically momentary views.

**Black Berrypecker** *Melanocharis nigra*

One female seen on Salawati and one male at Nimbokrang.

**Mid-mountain Berrypecker** *Melanocharis longicauda*

Three in the Arfaks were unobtrusive and only seen briefly.

**Fan-tailed Berrypecker** *Melanocharis versteri*

One in the Arfaks and three around Lake Habbema, where better views were obtained in the undergrowth of a forest clearing.

**Tit Berrypecker** *Oreocharis arfaki*

Small flocks of 8-10 seen twice in the Arfaks. Several widespread New Guinea species are named after the Arfaks, where presumably the first expeditions were mounted into these coastal mountains.

**Crested Berrypecker** *Paramythia montium*

A total of about 20 seen at Lake Habbema – a gorgeous species.

**Olive-crowned Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum pectorale*

One or two seen most days in the Arfaks and Salawati. This Vogelkop and West Papuan islands taxon is often lumped with other New Guinea flowerpeckers as Papuan Flowerpecker *D. pectorale*.

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

Eight on Biak and one to three most days at Nimbokrang.

**Western Mountain White-eye** (Dark-capped White-eye) *Zosterops fuscicapillus*

Fairly common in the Arfaks where flocks of 5-10 were seen on most days, and flocks of five were seen at the Baliem valley resort and below Lake Habbema.

**Biak White-eye** *Zosterops mysorensis*

Six seen on the first afternoon on Biak and about 10 the next day. A white-eye-less species, similar in plumage to some Wallacean and Solomons species.

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

A very familiar call and common sighting in the lowlands. Starting with a pair at a nest beside Lake Sentani, up to 10 were seen daily here, on Batanta and Salawati and at Nimbokrang. Now lumped back with Helmeted by Clements.

**Meyer's Friarbird** *Philemon meyeri*

Two in a treetop at Nimbokrang. An unobtrusive canopy species which is often overlooked.

**Short-bearded Melidectes** *Melidectes nouhuysi*

This Snow Mountains endemic was fairly common around the tree-line at Lake Habbema, where nine were seen.

**Cinnamon-browed Melidectes** *Melidectes ochromelas*

Three seen high in the Arfaks.

**Vogelkop Melidectes** *Melidectes leucostephes*

Two seen in the forest in the Arfaks, then 10 seen in a loose flock flying over a ravine, and several heard. A rather unobtrusive species, often remaining hidden in the canopy.

**Belford's Melidectes** *Melidectes belfordi*

Characteristically common and pugnacious in the forests below Lake Habbema, where about 30 were seen.

**Western Smoky Honeyeater** *Melipotes gymnops*

A common Vogelkop endemic, where two to six were seen daily in the Arfaks. Very similar to the next species and the new species just discovered in the Foya Mountains.

**Common Smoky Honeyeater** *Melipotes fumigatus*

One at the Baliem Valley resort, two pretending to be MacGregor's and five in the forests below Lake Habbema.

**Rufous-sided Honeyeater** *Ptiloprora erythropleura*

Another common Vogelkop endemic, where one to six were seen daily in the Arfaks.

**Grey-streaked (Black-backed) Honeyeater** *Ptiloprora perstriata*

Quite common at Lake Habbema, where eight were seen around the tree-line and another eight in the forests below.

**Long-billed Honeyeater** *Melilestes megarhynchus*

Six seen and several heard at Nimbokrang; the first birds perching up for good roadside views.

**Streak-headed Honeyeater** *Pycnopygius stictocephalus*

Scope views of one at Nimbokrang.

\*Tawny-breasted Honeyeater *Xanthotis flaviventer*

Rather elusive at Nimbokrang, where four were seen but others heard.

**Spotted Honeyeater** *Xanthotis polygramma*

Good views of one on Salawati where it inhabits lowland forest unlike most of New Guinea where it is a mid-montane species.

Varied Honeyeater *Lichenostomus versicolor*

Five on Senapang Island were typically loud and obtrusive.

**Black-throated Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus subfrenatus* (H)

Heard in the forest below Lake Habbema.

**Orange-cheeked Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus chrysogenys*

A spectacular Snow Mountain endemic – large, confident and with a bright yellow-orange cheek patch. Many were foraging on the ground with Island Thrushes around the tree-line at Lake Habbema, where a total of 40 were seen.

**Scrub White-eared Honeyeater** *Meliphaga albonotata*

Two seen in mangrove scrub near Sorong airport.

**Mountain Meliphaga** *Meliphaga orientalis* (H)

Two heard around Zeth's house in the Arfaks.

**Mimic Meliphaga** *Meliphaga analoga*

All of the lowland Meliphagas looked like this species, despite some trip reports claiming that the Nimbokrang birds are Yellow-gaped. Singles seen on Batanta, Salawati and Lake Sentani, and up to four daily at Nimbokrang.

**Red-collared Myzomela** *Myzomela rosenbergii*

Ten with lorikeets in each of two big flowering trees in the Arfaks, two at the Baliem Valley resort, and four below Lake Habbema. An amazingly brightly-coloured species, albeit rather common.

**Macgregor's Honeyeater (of Paradise)** *Macgregoria pulchra*

Lake Habbema is the only site where one can drive to see this very localised and highly sought-after species. However they are hunted here and apparently have become rarer and shyer; after seeing one in flight, it took some hours to finally pin another one down. A quite remarkable species, surely deserving of the name 'Honeyeater of Paradise'.

**Brown Oriole** *Oriolus szalayi*

Singles seen at Lake Sentani and Nimbokrang. Another friarbird-mimic, apparently deriving some peace from looking like an aggressive friarbird.

(Papuan) Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus (bracteatus) carbonarius*

Regularly seen in small numbers in lowland forest, including Biak. Sometimes split from the Australian drongos which have distinct calls.

**Lowland Peltops** *Peltops blainvillii*

Two singles seen at Nimbokrang – always a great bird!

White-breasted Wood-swallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*

Seven around Port Moresby airport, one on Batanta and 17 on Senapang Island.

**Great Wood-swallow** *Artamus maximus*

Three on the drive up to Lake Habbema.

**Hooded Butcherbird** *Cracticus cassicus*

Fairly common in the lowlands, with up to five seen on Biak, Batanta, Nimbokrang, Lake Sentani and near the PNG border.

Black Butcherbird *Cracticus quoyi*

Singles of this species with a hugely impressive bill were seen on Salawati, Nimbokrang, Lake Sentani and near the PNG border.

**Arfak Astrapia** *Astrapia nigra*

This proved to be the most difficult of the Vogelkop endemics as it was restricted to the highest altitudes. None seen on our afternoon walk up to these altitudes but two there the next morning.

**Splendid Astrapia** *Astrapia splendidissima*

A male seen well on the drive up to Lake Habbema was the first of a total of seven birds seen. This really is one a most splendid species with a fantastic shimmering green mask and breast-plate. It just creeps into PNG but is rarely seen outside West Papua.

**Western Parotia** *Parotia sefilata*

Several birds seen around the display grounds in the Arfaks – three female-plumaged birds were seen at very close range on the display ground (and one perched on the hide!), whilst three or four males were more elusive, keeping to the tree-tops.

**Long-tailed Paradigalla** *Paradigalla carunculata*

The third bird of paradise endemic to the Vogelkop was seen on the first afternoon, when one perched up in an open treetop, but not again.

**Magnificent Riflebird** *Ptiloris magnificus*

Fantastic views of two birds close to the PNG border, where a few others were heard, and also one heard beyond Lake Sentani. These had the call of the western birds, sometimes split from those in eastern PNG.

**Superb Bird of Paradise** *Lophorina superba*

A female at the Baliem Valley resort was not seen well enough to be sure that it wasn't a Carola's Parotia, but this is by far the most likely species.

**Black Sicklebill** *Epimachus fastuosus*

Very close views of a female in the Arfaks, and another two females (and heard a distant male) at higher altitudes the next day.

**Buff-tailed Sicklebill** *Drepanornis albertisi*

A calling male seen in flight several times but, frustratingly, always perching out of sight in thickets, was a surprise bonus in the Arfaks. Another was heard.

**Pale-billed Sicklebill** *Drepanornis bruijnii*

One seen in the swamp forest at Nimbokrang thanks to Jamil's persistent whistling. At least two others heard here in the swamp forest but not from the roads. This poorly-known species is endemic to the central north coast plain (almost endemic to West Papua), and the only lowland sicklebill.

**Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise** *Seleucidis melanoleuca*

One heard and a female seen in the swamp forest at Nimbokrang.

**Wilson's Bird of Paradise** *Cicinnurus respublica*

Probably the bird of the trip and one of the best birds in the world. Amazing views of three males and a female just a few metres away at a display ground on Batanta, and two more that afternoon.

**King Bird of Paradise** *Cicinnurus regius*

Two heard on Salawati and three female-plumaged birds seen at Nimbokrang.

**Lesser Bird of Paradise** *Paradisaea minor*

A fully-plumed male displaying to at least seven females and young males close to the road at Lake Sentani was a great find. Up to four seen at Nimbokrang, a couple more seen around Lake Sentani, and one heard on Salawati.

**Red Bird of Paradise** *Paradisaea rubra*

Good views of an immature male on our walk back down the trail on Batanta, where a few others were heard. This West Papuan island endemic has become more difficult to see as the lowland forests are being logged.

**Glossy-mantled Manucode** *Manucodia atra*

The commonest bird of paradise on the trip, with pairs seen on Salawati, Lake Sentani and Nimbokrang.

**Jobi Manucode** *Manucodia jobiensis*

This poorly-known species seemed to be more distinctive and more common than expected, with singles seen three times at Nimbokrang and one near the PNG border.

INCERTAE SEDIS Uncertain affinities

**Lesser Melampitta** *Melampitta lugubris* (H)

Just one heard below Lake Habbema where the forest was too dense to stand a chance of seeing this skulking species.

**White-eared Catbird** *Ailuroedus buccoides*

One heard at close range but refusing to show itself behind Sorong would have been a typical tally for this species until a pair showed themselves remarkably well at Nimbokrang.

**Archbold's Bowerbird** *Archboldia papuensis*

One seen briefly on a trail below Lake Habbema.

**Vogelkop Bowerbird** *Amblyornis inornatus*

This species' bower is of the wonders of the avian world. We saw many bowers decorated with fruits, flowers, beetle elytrae and even plastic junk. Six birds were seen, including one at the parotia's display ground, whose dour plumage compensate for their extravagant bowers.

\*Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris*

One seen near Lake Sentani and one near the airport at Port Moresby.

**Grey Crow** *Corvus tristis*

Fairly common in lowland forests, mostly at Nimbokrang where flocks of up to eight were seen. Several could have been the localised Brown-headed Crow but none was seen well enough.

Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*

Three or four seen daily on Batanta and Salawati but otherwise only two seen at Lake Sentani, five at Port Moresby and one at Madang.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*

After ten around Port Moresby airport, none was seen until five seen well and flocks of either Singing or Metallic Starlings seen in flight near Sorong.

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*

Locally common in large flocks on Biak, Sorong and Nimbokrang.

**Long-tailed Starling** *Aplonis magna*

Sixteen were seen on Biak, where we had good views of this Geelvink Bay endemic alongside Metallic Starlings.

**Yellow-faced Myna** *Mino dumontii*

Our old friend was fairly common in small numbers at Nimbokrang and Lake Sentani.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (I)

This was a good avian indicator that we had crossed the political line into Indonesia. Fairly common in all the towns, with up to 20 in the outskirts of Jayapura.

**Mountain Firetail** *Oreostruthus fuliginosus*

Good views of three in the forest below Lake Habbema.

**Streak-headed Mannikin** *Lonchura tristissima*

Up to 40 seen at Nimbokrang, 20 behind Sorong and five around Lake Sentani.

This is the common mannikin of forest edge and clearings.

**Black-breasted Mannikin** *Lonchura teerinki*

About 30 in the Baliem valley; endemic to the mid-montane valleys of the Central ranges of West Papua.

**Western Alpine Mannikin** *Lonchura montana*

Five juveniles close to Lake Habbema were identified as this species by their altitude, but their plumage was plain and indistinguishable from other manikins.

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax*

Four behind the Lake Sentani hotel, and 20 at the Madang airport.

Blue-faced Parrot-Finch *Erythrura trichroa*

Good views of this elusive species at the Baliem Valley resort. Other parrot-finches were heard but not seen below Lake Habbema.

The following report from **West Papua** is courtesy of Mark van Beirs, from the Birdquest tour of July 7-August 4 2007.

Great-billed Heron *Ardea sumatrana*

One along the Salawati shoreline

Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis*

A couple of observations of this mainly crepuscular species along the Jalan Korea near Sentani.

Papuan Harrier *Circus spilothorax*

Three observations over L. Sentani and the Lake Habbema grasslands.

Black-mantled Goshawk *Accipiter melanochlamys*

One was seen in the L. Habbema area and a confusing immature bird showed in the Long-tailed Paradigalla grove in the Arfak Mountains.

Grey-headed Goshawk *Accipiter poliocephalus*

A wet bird, trying to dry out after rain, in the foothills of the Arfak Mountains.

Gurney's Eagle *Aquila gurneyi*:

Fair views of this impressive raptor on Batanta.

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*

Single birds were noted on Batanta and in the lower foothills of the Arfak Mountains. Beehler indicates that there are no known observations from the Vogelkop area.....

Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*

A single observation of the resident endemic subspecies *baru* in the Lake Habbema area.

Oriental Hobby *Falco severus*

One was catching dragonflies over our hotel in Sentani and another bird showed near our base on Batanta.

White-headed Shelduck (Radjah Shelduck) *Tadorna radjah*

A few observations of this handsome duck along the Salawati coast.

Salvadori's Teal *Anas waigiensis*

Repeated perfect scope studies of at least ten of these localized ducks on Lake Habbema.

Snow Mountain Quail *Anurophasis monorthonyx*

Excellent views of males and females of this intriguing gamebird on our wanderings through the grasslands near Lake Habbema. No fewer than ten birds were seen, both in flight and on the deck.

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

One was flushed from a grassy patch on the shore of Lake Sentani.

New Guinea Flightless Rail *Megacrex inepta*

One in swamp forest at Nimbokrang.

Eurasian Coot (Common C) *Fulica atra*

Up to ten were seen on Lake Habbema.

New Guinea Woodcock *Scolopax rosenbergii*

Brief views of a roding bird performing its territorial rounds at dusk and again just

before dawn along a forest edge near Lake Habbema.

Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia nigrirostris*

Regular observations in the Arfak Mountains, where we also saw a nest with one egg.

Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus solomonensis*

Seen in the forests of Biak.

Claret-breasted Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus viridis*

Regular observations of this magnificent creature on the island of Biak.

Spice Imperial Pigeon *Ducula myristicivora*

We found this island dweller regularly on Biak. Note that the birds on Biak (race *geelvinkiana*) do not show the characteristic enlarged black cere.

Rufescent Imperial Pigeon *Ducula chalconota* (H)

We heard several in the higher reaches of the Arfak Mountains.

Black Lory *Chalcopsitta atra*

Several flocks in flight on Salawati. These birds belonged to the totally black, western nominate race.

Biak Red Lory *Eos cyanogenia*

This smart species is still common on Biak, and is almost always seen in flight.

Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*

Regular observations on Salawati and Batanta and a single sighting in the Nimbokrang area

Salvadori's Fig-Parrot *Psittaculirostris salvadorii*

Several were heard feeding in the canopy of a forest giant at Nimbokrang

Painted Tiger-Parrot *Psittacella picta*

Several excellent encounters at Lake Habbema.

Modest Tiger-Parrot *Psittacella modesta*  
Two birds at our last camp of the Habbema trek.

Great-billed Parrot *Tanygnathus megalorhynchus*  
Three showed nicely in flight over a small island near Batanta.

Papuan Hanging Parrot *Loriculus aurantiifrons*: A male of this rather uncommon creature at Nimbokrang.

Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*  
Good views of eight of these impressive, prehistoric-looking birds at Sentani.

Biak Coucal *Centropus chalybeus* (H)  
We only heard this retiring Biak endemic.

Biak Scops-Owl *Otus beccarii*:  
We heard it in a nice patch of forest on Biak, but only managed a glimpse.

Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus ocellatus* (H)  
One was heard near our camp in the lowland forest at Nimbokrang.

Papuan Frogmouth *Podargus papuensis* (H)  
Regularly heard on Biak.

Feline Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles insignis*  
Our man on the spot in the Arfak Mountains showed us this jewel on its day roost in a dense patch of secondary growth.

Mountain Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles albertisi*  
Fantastic day time views, in a dense patch of secondary growth in the Arfak Mountains.

Papuan Nightjar *Eurostopodus papuensis*  
One flew over the road just after dusk near our camp at Nimbokrang.

Papuan Spine-tailed Swift (Papuan Needletail) *Mearnsia novaeguineae*  
Regular sightings of this distinctive swift at Nimbokrang and also seen on Batanta.

Biak Paradise Kingfisher *Tanysiptera riedelii*  
Perfect scope views of several in the forest on Biak. Most only had short tails, but we saw one or two with distinctive elongated tail feathers.

Blue-black Kingfisher (Black-sided Kingfisher) *Halcyon nigrocyanea*  
Glimpses only of this localized species in swamp forest at Nimbokrang.

Beach Kingfisher *Halcyon saurophaga*  
Good views of two on the shore of a small island off Sorong and excellent views of one along the Salawati coast.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*  
Two were hawking for insects over the Sentani grasslands.

Alpine Pipit *Anthus gutturalis*  
A fairly regular bird of the alpine grasslands surrounding Lake Habbema.

Sooty-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus aurigaster*  
Several parties of this introduced species showed well on Biak.

Pied Chat (Pied Bushchat) *Saxicola caprata*  
This well-known and very widespread species was only encountered in grassland habitat near Sentani.

Papuan Grassbird (Papuan Grass Warbler) *Megalurus macrurus*  
Several in the grasslands near Lake Habbema.

- Emperor Fairy-wren *Malurus cyanocephalus*  
A pair showed quite well in the lowland rainforest at Nimbokrang.
- White-shouldered Fairy-wren *Malurus alboscapulatus*  
Several encounters in secondary growth in the Arfak Mountains.
- Orange-crowned Fairy-wren *Clytomyias insignis*  
Fair views of a swift-moving party in the Arfak Mountains.
- Vogelkop Scrub-wren *Sericornis rufescens*  
The most common Scrub-wren in the Arfak Mountains. Small parties were regularly encountered.
- Grey-green Scrub-wren *Sericornis arfakianus*  
Four encounters with this unobtrusive little bird in the Mokwam area of the Arfak Mountains.
- Biak Gerygone *Gerygone hypoxantha*  
Two birds performed beautifully in a patch of secondary forest on Biak.
- Spot-winged Monarch *Monarcha guttula*  
One or two showed well, but briefly, in a mixed flock on Salawati.
- Ochre (Rufous)-collared Monarch *Arses insularis*  
Several observations in the lowland forest at Nimbokrang.
- Biak Black Flycatcher *Myiagra atra*  
Several encounters in forest patches on Biak.
- Mountain Robin *Petroica bivittata*  
Just one in mountain forest near Lake Habbema.
- Smoky Robin *Peneothello cryptoleucus*  
A couple of observations in the higher reaches of the Arfak Mountains
- Green-backed Robin *Pachycephalopsis hattamensis*  
Splendid views, eventually, of this lovely species in highland forest in the Arfak Mountains.
- Common Golden Whistler (Golden Whistler) *Pachycephala pectoralis* (H)  
Several were heard in the Baliem Valley,
- Rusty Pitohui *Pitohui ferrugineus*  
Good views of a party of these large and very vocal birds in foothill forest on Batanta. The race here has a distinctive pale bill.
- Papuan Sittella *Daphoenositta papuensis*  
Great views of a small party in a mountain forest glade in the Arfaks.
- Black Sittella *Daphoenositta miranda*  
Many excellent observations at close range on the Lake Habbema trek.
- Olive-crowned Flowerpecker *Dicaeum pectorale*  
Regular observations. This is the form on the Vogelkop, Batanta and Salawati. It should not have any red on the rump or the crown, but some birds show at least traces of red.
- Biak White-eye *Zosterops mysorensis*  
This uncommon Biak endemic showed really well on our visit
- Dusky Myzomela (Dusky Honeyeater) *Myzomela obscura*  
A single bird was seen on Biak. *This is a bird with a strange distribution in the New Guinea area as it only occurs along the southern coast of PNG, in the Popondetta area of the north coasts, on the Aru Is. and on Biak. This endemic*

*race rubrobrunnea is a good candidate for a split and was originally described as a species (Ed.)*

Mimic Meliphaga *Meliphaga analoga*

Quite common in the Nimbokrang area, on Batanta and in the lower Arfak Mountains. *The Meliphaga honeyeaters are surely the most difficult New Guinea species complex to identify. They share many features and vocalisations and there seem to be few if any reliable criteria for identification in certain taxa, with the taxonomy still not fully resolved (Ed.)*

Yellow-gaped Meliphaga *Meliphaga flavirictus*

Fantastic studies of this uncommon species in the lower reaches of the Arfaks.

Orange-cheeked Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysogenys*

A very obvious inhabitant of treeline scrub in the Snow Mountains.

Rufous-sided Honeyeater *Ptiloprora erythropleura*

Commonly encountered in the mountain forests of the Arfaks.

Sooty Melidectes *Melidectes fuscus*

Several showed very well near the treeline in the Snow Mountains.

Short-bearded Melidectes *Melidectes nouhuysi*

A regular and attractive bird of the treeline scrub in the Snow Mountains.

Cinnamon-browed Melidectes *Melidectes ochromelas*

Several were heard and one or two briefly seen in the higher reaches of the Arfak Mountains.

Vogelkop Melidectes *Melidectes leucostephes*

Quite common by voice, but usually not easy to see well.

Hooded Mannikin *Lonchura spectabilis*

Two birds showed briefly in grassland habitat near Sentani.

Black-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura teerinki*

Good views of several in a patch of cultivation in the Baliem Valley.

Western Alpine Mannikin *Lonchura montana*

Eight birds showed beautifully in the grasslands surrounding Lake Habbema.

This species is virtually confined to West Papua, but just creeps into Papua New Guinea at Mount Capella in the Star Mountains.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Everywhere in towns and villages. On our 1995 visit we could only find it at the airport on Biak.

Archbold's Bowerbird *Archboldia papuensis*

We heard its grating call emanating from undergrowth in the higher reaches of the Snow Mountains

Black-faced (Flame) Bowerbird *Sericulus (aureus) ardens*

A striking male was found on a distant hill slope in the lower Arfak Mountains

Macgregor's Bird of Paradise *Macgregoria pulchra*

Views of this most bizarre bird on several occasions at the treeline near Lake Habbema. It is much rarer there now than it used to be, mainly because of it being hunted for its delicious taste. Recent research has shown that this species seemingly belongs with the Honeyeaters.

Crinkle-collared Manucode *Manucodia chalybata*

Bad views of this species in the mist in the foothills of the Arfak Mountains.

Jobi Manucode *Manucodia jobiensis*

Good looks at a single bird in the lowland rainforest at Nimbokrang.

Trumpet Manucode *Manucodia keraudrenii*

Glimpses only of one in the gardens below Mokwam in the Arfak Mountains.

Long-tailed Paradigalla *Paradigalla carunculata*

Two nice observations in the middle reaches of the Arfak Mountains.

Buff-tailed Sickbill *Epimachus albertisi*

A calling male in the mid montane forest of the Arfak Mountains.

Pale-billed Sickbill *Epimachus bruijnii*

A perched up male in the soft late afternoon light at Nimbokrang.

Arfak Astrapia *Astrapia nigra*

Excellent views of an adult and an immature male clambering about in a forest giant in the higher reaches of the Arfak Mountains.

Splendid Astrapia *Astrapia splendidissima*

Regular observations of both males and females of this very attractive species in the montane forests of the Snow Mountains.

Wilson's Bird of Paradise *Cicinnurus respublica*

A male of this most wonderful and extraordinary Bird of Paradise on his display court in the hills of Batanta Island.

Red Bird of Paradise *Paradisaea rubra*

A great showing of displaying males of this localized species in a forest giant on Batanta.

Brown-headed Crow *Corvus fuscicapillus* (H)

The distinctive vocalizations were heard in the distance at Nimbokrang.

## **Waigeo Island, March-April 2007**

*By Charles Davies*

Waigeo is a large island in the Raja Empat group off the west coast of West Papua. It is accessible by an expensive five-hour boat trip from Sorong, a bit further than Batanta and Salawati, which are more popular birdwatching destinations. Waigeo has large areas of pristine forest, an endemic bird (Bruijn's Brush-Turkey) and large mammal (Waigeo Cuscus), as well as large populations of other specialties like Red and Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise, Brown-necked Crow, Western Crowned-Pigeon and Pheasant Pigeon.

I made a three-week trip to Mount Danai together with Iwein Mauro, a Belgian birdwatcher, and Zeth Wonggor, a guide from the Arfak Mountains. Before the trip, Iwein was the only birdwatcher to have seen Bruijn's Brush-Turkey in the field. In fact, the inhabitants of Waigeo (at least the part we visited) do not seem to be familiar with this species, which mostly inhabits the hills in the interior of the island, whereas the human population seems to be restricted to the coast and, based on our experiences, rarely ventures more than a few kilometres inland.

Mount Danai is not the highest hill on Waigeo nor the most accessible. Rather, it is the area with the greatest extent of land above 650m, and would be expected to hold the largest population of Bruijn's Brush-Turkey. The slopes of Mount Salal, the highest mountain on the island further to the north, were extensively burned a few years ago, and

lower elevations are covered by impenetrable scrub. Mount Nok, while close to the coast, is a limestone hill surrounded by cliffs. It is quite a job to climb, and its summit holds only a few pairs of brush-turkeys. While we had some trouble finding Mount Danai, in the end we did get to its upper slopes, and the whole of our route passed through pristine forest.

**Getting there.** Waigeo is a five-hour boat ride from Sorong, costing about 2 million Rupiah each way (subject to negotiation). Unless the boat stays on the island the whole time you are there, you will need to arrange a pick-up date, and hope that the boat indeed turns up!

Sorong is the second largest town on West Papua. I flew Silk Air round-trip from Singapore to Manado (on northern Sulawesi), then took a direct flight from Manado to Sorong on a large but elderly Merpati airline. The Merpati flight is direct only in this direction – I made the Sorong-Manado return leg on Wings Air (“Life is Cheap”). Sorong has a supermarket, a few banks and several hotels.

**Facilities on Waigeo.** None. You will need to ship in all your food and equipment. At present, there are no roads into the interior of the island – all the settlements are coastal fishing villages. Once on the island, I don’t think you could even count on a local offering to put you up, or being able to rent a boat for the return leg, so it is important to make good arrangements in Sorong.

**Weather.** We made the visit during the rainy season for a chance to see a male brush-turkey in breeding plumage. It rained heavily almost every day. A tarpaulin is better than a tent. Zeth was very adept at making wooden beds and tables at our campsites to keep us off the ground. After arriving late at our 450m campsite in the rain, we had the bright idea of putting a tarpaulin on the ground to keep everything dry. The unintended consequence was that all the water ran down to the lowest point, which was our rice sack. From that point on, we had to cut down to two meals a day, and it was lucky all the porters had left several days before that, so we didn’t have the extra mouths to feed! Our other mistake was carrying all the food in cardboard boxes, which broke open in the rain on the very first day. I’d recommend those waterproof rucksacks that are a bit like diving bags with arm straps – I used them on a subsequent trip and they worked very well. If you hike up a river and/or the conditions are wet, it is best to use Wellingtons rather than hiking boots, which will not dry out.

**Permission and porters:** On arrival at Waigeo, we stopped at the village of Sion (see map) to obtain permission and hire some porters. We requested four porters but were provided with a rag-tag band of seven, mostly teenagers. They didn’t know the way up Mount Danai and clearly didn’t feel comfortable in the forest, claiming to have had encounters with “Orang Gee” (forest people – whether they are ghosts or flesh-and-blood depends on who you ask – could this be the modern-day home of *Homo floresis*?!) One of our porters left after the first day, a few more after the second day, and the remaining three porters all left on the third day, after we had set up the 120m campsite and scouted to 450m. This meant a ton of extra work for Zeth – our only remaining machete-owner, and the only one of us competent to cut trails at a reasonable speed, set up camps,

construct hides (by the bird-of-paradise leks and brush-turkey mound), and make fires in the sodden conditions. We had to spend a lot of extra days cutting trails, and had to make two trips to carry all our equipment and food between campsites.

**Hazards.** The people in Sion said that the Orobiai river canyon is prone to flash floods. Much of the terrain is rugged karst (limestone). It is best to avoid karst areas if you can, since they have steep slopes, cliffs, and sinkholes, and normally lack drinking water (since limestone is soluble and the streams tend to run underground). We encountered several large trees that had come down recently in the wet and windy weather during our trip.

Of the animals, one to watch out for is the New Guinea Small-eyed Snake, sometimes called the “white snake”, although both pale and dark morphs occur on Waigeo. It has a very strange, wormlike head with tiny eyes, is common in the forest and its bite can be fatal. It responds aggressively to light, so be careful with your torches at night. Monitor lizards are common on the island, so make sure to hang everything up safely if you leave your camp unattended.

**Jepman island.** This small island, off the coast of Salawati, used to host the airport for Sorong, and the dilapidated runway takes up much of the interior of the island. It is an hour’s boat ride from Sorong (with boat taxis from town), and only 4 hours from Waigeo. We stopped in Jepman for a night on the way to Waigeo, and spent a few hours birdwatching – Peregrine Falcon and Blue Rock-Thrush were our most interesting sightings.

Birds on Jepman island: Lesser Frigatebird (3), Osprey (1), Peregrine Falcon (1), Pacific Golden-plover (30), Lesser Sand-plover (25), Red-necked Stint (5), Common Sandpiper (1), Pacific Swallow (10), Blue Rock-thrush (ssp *philippensis*, 1, perched on the airport hanger), Willie-wagtail (1), Varied Honeyeater (5), White-breasted Woodswallow (5), Singing Starling (10)

**Crossing to Waigeo:** Seawatching was pretty good on this four-hour trip (each way). The highlight was an pod of about 200 dolphins that approached the boat a few kilometres off the coast on the way to Waigeo, and performed for us with the island’s mountains as a backdrop.

Birds on boat trips to and from Waigeo: Lesser Frigatebird (1), Brown Booby (5), Red-necked Phalarope (15), Great Crested Tern (5), Bridled Tern (about 70), Pomarine Skua (1), Black Noddy (50+ mostly in one group on the return trip)

**Waigeo coast and Orobiai river.** Waigeo island is almost split into two halves, which are connected by a narrow isthmus on the northern side of the island. A narrow sea channel (with treacherous currents, according to our boatman) leads to a central lagoon, which we did not visit. We arranged our porters at the village of Sion, on the western side of the entrance channel. The mouth of the Orobiai river is on the opposite (eastern) side of the channel, a short way to the north of the village.

The first few kilometres of the river pass through a shady canyon between two ranges of limestone hills. You can walk quite fast along the wide gravel banks, but some deep sections of the river have to be waded across. On the return trip, we saw a Western Crowned-Pigeon walking around on the gravel.

After passing through the canyon, the river forks. There is a small garden with papayas and cassava on the south bank of the stream, and we camped at this spot in each direction. From here, one branch of the river travels north, skirting the eastern edge of a range of limestone hills, and another branch travels east-north-east. On the way up, we hiked several kilometres up the eastern branch and made a camp on a ridgetop above the river at about 120m altitude. On the way back, Zeth and Iwein scouted a more direct route down to the northern branch of the Orobiai (see map).

Above the fork, the river becomes rocky and more difficult to navigate, with rapids and some small waterfalls.

The forest around the 120m campsite looked undisturbed but was quite strange, with numerous small trees growing densely together. Maybe there had been a fire in this area 20 or 30 years ago? Western Crowned-Pigeon (seen at the start of our second food run up to 450m) was again the highlight in this area – we didn't see many birds overall.

Itinerary:

- 17 March – Boat to Waigeo, met village chief and hired porters in Sion, hiked up Orobiai canyon in rainstorm, camped at fork in river.
- 18 March – Hiked about 4km up eastern branch of river and set up camp at 120m.
- 19 March – Scouting to another campsite further up the ridge at 450m.
- 20 March – Porters left in the morning. Iwein, Zeth and I carried half our gear up to 450m and established a new campsite (in the rain again).
- 21 March – Returned to 120m to collect remaining half of our food and equipment.
- 8 April – Hiked from 450m campsite back down to the camp at the fork in the rivers, via the northern branch of the river.
- 9 April – Morning hike back down to the coast, met our boat and travelled back to Sorong.

(Total of about a day's bird-watching along the river, and a day at 120m)

Along the Orobiai river up to the riverside camp at 120m: Little Egret, Radjah Shelduck, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Common Sandpiper, Great Cuckoo-dove, Slender-billed Cuckoo-dove, Western Crowned-Pigeon (2), Pinon Imperial-Pigeon, Palm Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Black-capped Lory, Eclectus Parrot, Glossy Swiftlet, Uniform Swiftlet, Yellow-billed Kingfisher (heard), Dollarbird, Blyth's Hornbill, Azure Kingfisher, Willie-wagtail, Helmeted Friarbird, Spangled Drongo, Red Bird-of-paradise (heard), Hooded Butcherbird, Black Butcherbird (heard), Brown-necked Crow (common)

**450m campsite:** This was a few kilometres almost due north of the 120m campsite. For the most part, the ridgetop ascended gradually, with a couple of very steep ascents, and other flat sections of strange, boggy forest with lots of moss and pitcher plants. Above about 400m, the forest became much taller with higher bird numbers.

- 19 March – Scouted from 120m to this campsite
- 20 March – Carried up half of food and supplies.
- 21 March – Returned to 120m campsite and carried up remainder of food and supplies.
- 22 March – Bird-watching around 450m campsite.
- 23-24 March – Scouting from 450m to new campsite at 570m altitude.
- 25 March – Carried half of supplies and established camp at 570m
- 28 March – Returned from 570m campsite .
- 6 April – Returned from Mount Danai to 450m campsite (first rain-free day of the trip!)
- 7 April – Birdwatching around 450m campsite
- 8 April – Hike back down to Orobiai river

(Total of about 3 days birdwatching around the 450m campsite)

Birds and mammals around 450m campsite – Brahminy Kite, Long-tailed Honey-Buzzard, Variable Goshawk, Great Cuckoo-Dove, Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove, Western Crowned-Pigeon (heard), Pheasant Pigeon (heard), Beautiful Fruit-Dove, Wompoo Fruit-Dove (heard), Purple-tailed and Pinon Imperial-Pigeons, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Black-capped Lory, Eclectus Parrot, Moluccan King-Parrot, White-crowned Koel (heard), Dwarf Koel (heard), Greater Sooty-Owl (heard), Jungle Hawk-Owl (heard), Rufous Owl (heard), Marbled Frogmouth (heard), Glossy Swiftlet, Hook-billed Kingfisher, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (heard), Yellow-billed Kingfisher (heard), Common Paradise-Kingfisher (about 350m on the way back down), Blyth's Hornbill, Northern Fantail, Frilled Monarch, Golden Monarch, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Olive Flyrobin, Black-sided Robin, Gray-headed Whistler, Rufous Shrike-thrush, Rusty Pitohui, Variable Pitohui, Rusty Mouse-warbler, Pale-billed Scrubwren, Fairy Gerygone, Yellow-bellied Longbill (one nesting), Mimic Honeyeater, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater, Helmeted Friarbird, Brown Oriole (heard), Spangled Drongo, Hooded Butcherbird, Wilson's Bird-of-paradise (4), Red Bird-of-paradise (about 25 displaying males, and only 2 females), Brown-necked Crow, Yellow-faced Myna, Waigeo Cuscus (3)

**570m campsite** – This campsite was only a few kilometres east-north-east from the 450m campsite, but getting there was tortuous because it involved traversing an area of karst, followed by a point where the ridgetop dropped sharply about 50m in between the source of two rivers running off in opposite directions. Scouting to this campsite took two-and-a-half days, mostly in heavy rain, for only a slight gain in altitude. Getting from the 570m campsite to the highest campsite we made on the slopes of Mount Danai (750m), also took several days, with one whole day lost to heavy rain.

The forest at the 570m campsite was again tightly packed with smaller trees, and the bird composition was quite different – and less rich – than that at our 450m campsite. One of the Waigeo upper-elevation birds – Beccari's Scrubwren – came in at 570m.

Itinerary:

- 25 March: carried half of the supplies to 570m campsite, and set up the camp in some cold rain.
- 26 March: Lost the whole day to heavy rain.

- 27 March: I birdwatched around the campsite; Zeth and Iwein scouted uphill to 800m, finding some brush-turkey mounds that had been raided by pigs.
- 28 March: Collected remainder of food and equipment from 450m campsite.
- 29 March: Improved trail uphill.
- 30 March: Hiked up to highest campsite, at about 750m, on the slopes of Mount Danai. (Total of about 1.5 days birdwatching)

Birds around 570m campsite – Slender-billed Cuckoo-dove (heard), Pheasant Pigeon (heard), Western Crowned-Pigeon (heard), Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon, Pinon Imperial-Pigeon (heard), Palm Cockatoo, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Moluccan King-Parrot (lots), Jungle Hawk-Owl (heard), Marbled Frogmouth, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Hook-billed Kingfisher (heard), Yellow-billed Kingfisher (heard), Blyth's Hornbill, Sooty Thicket-Fantail (heard), Northern Fantail, Frilled Monarch, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Black-sided Robin, Gray-headed Whistler, Rufous Shrike-Thrush, Rusty Pitohui, Variable Pitohui, Rusty Mouse-Warbler, Fairy Gerygone, Beccari's Scrubwren, Pale-billed Scrubwren, Puff-backed Honeyeater (common), Spotted Honeyeater (common), Helmeted Friarbird (heard), Brown Oriole (heard), Spangled Drongo, Hooded Butcherbird (heard), Wilson's Bird-of-paradise (3 females – males heard only), Red Bird-of-paradise (2 males), Glossy-mantled Manucode (2), Brown-headed Crow (heard), Yellow-faced Myna, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker (none had any red), Long-billed Honeyeater

**750m campsite** – This was a few kilometres further north-east from the 570m campsite. The 570m campsite turned out to be on an isolated ridge, and we had to descend steeply about 100m to a small stream, walk upstream for about a kilometre, then climb very steeply to another ridgetop at about 700m. Descending just a short way the other side of this ridgetop, we came to a river that was, surprisingly, much larger than the small stream from which we had climbed up all that way. Perhaps an upper stretch of the Orobiai? From this river, we climbed steeply up to another ridgetop and made our final campsite at about 750m, again in heavy rain, in some very tall forest. The muddiest site of all, which is saying something.

From our campsite, the ridge ascended gradually to at least 860m, perhaps all the way to the summit of Mount Danai?

Itinerary:

- 30 March: Hiked up to 750m campsite.
- 31 March: Cut a trail further up the ridge, to 850m.
- 1-2 April: Scouting for mounds and monitoring areas of brush-turkey activity. Active mound found on the 2<sup>nd</sup> at 860m, just a hundred metres from where we stopped on the 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 3-5 April: Monitoring brush-turkey mounds and Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise leks.

Birds and mammals around 750m campsite: Bruijn's Brush-Turkey (2), Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove (heard), Great Cuckoo-Dove (1), Cinnamon Ground-Dove (1 at brush-turkey mound), Pheasant Pigeon (4 seen, many heard), Wompoo Fruit-Dove (heard),

Superb Fruit-Dove, Purple-tailed Imperial-Pigeon (heard), Pinon Imperial-Pigeon (heard), Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (heard), Black-capped Lory (nesting), Moluccan King-Parrot, Jungle Hawk-Owl (heard), Marbled Frogmouth (roosting), Wallace's Owllet-Nightjar (1 seen and 2 heard), Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra (heard), Hook-billed Kingfisher (heard), Blyth's Hornbill, Red-bellied Pitta (on brush-turkey mound), Sooty Thicket-Fantail (heard), Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Olive Flyrobin, Rufous Shrike-Thrush, Variable Pitohui, Rusty Mouse-Warbler (heard), Pale-billed Scrubwren, Beccari's Scrubwren, Black Berrypecker (about 720m on the way out), Yellow-bellied Longbill, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker, Long-billed Honeyeater Black Myzomela, Mountain Meliphaga, Helmeted Friarbird (heard), Spangled Drongo, Hooded Butcherbird (heard), Black Butcherbird (heard), Wilson's Bird-of-paradise (3 males and 1 female seen), Red Bird-of-paradise (1 male seen), Brown-headed Crow (heard), Bandicoot and possum spp. (seen at night)

### **Notes on some interesting species:**

**Bruijn's Brush-Turkey.** After taking much longer than expected to get to the right elevation, we were eventually successful in finding a breeding male brush-turkey, which surprised us with spectacular, inflated wattles forming a red "hood" and contrasting with brown facial skin.

We found evidence of this species only around the 750m campsite. Most of the mounds had been predated by wild pigs – Zeth said this was also a problem for Wattled Brush-Turkey in the Arfaks. In 3 days searching, Zeth found 1 active mound, 3 inactive mounds, 1 abandoned mound, and 5 areas where it looked like brush-turkeys had started to build new mounds. Brush-turkeys have managed to coexist with pigs for several thousand years, but the pigs did seem to be having a serious effect here.

We had three mornings to monitor the active brush-turkey mound once we located it. On the first day (3 April), the male arrived about 6:20am and left at about 9:40am and displayed on its mound.

The mound was built a bit like a mini-volcano, with a raised perimeter and a crater in the centre. The brush-turkey's routine involved running or walking around the edge of the mound (about 75%), and scratching out various small holes (perhaps places where females could deposit eggs?), then filling the holes up and making new holes (about 25%). Once, the male lay down and spread its wings wide over one of these holes. About 10-15 times the male displayed, standing on the edge of the mound, craning its neck up, beating its wings heavily (normally 9 times), then opening its mouth and giving a sigh – aah! I wonder if the sigh has replaced louder vocalizations that would attract pigs? Towards the end of its appearance, the male ran up the slope a few times and performed the display routine away from the mound.

On 4 April, the male showed up very briefly (6:40-6:50am) but it didn't display. Perhaps it had been spooked by my flash photos the day before. Then a female came for a bit longer, from 7:40 to 8:30am. It dug an incubation hole in one side of the interior of the mound, then closed it up and dug another hole. On 5 April, the male brush-turkey didn't show up at all, and the female was heard briefly and glimpsed around 8am.

**Western Crowned-Pigeon** – Only two seen (one on lower stretch of Orobiai river and one at 120m campsite), but regularly heard up to about 700m. They make a soft, deep booming call and flush with a distinctive double-clapping noise.

**Pheasant Pigeon** – Heard down to about 400m altitude, but quite common at higher elevations. Frequently seen on Wilson's BOP leks.

**Greater Sooty-Owl** – A bird heard during several nights in the tall forest around the 450m campsite is a new record for Waigeo.

**Rufous Owl** – The subspecies on Waigeo is small and rarely seen. We heard a pair near the 450m campsite on the way down.

**Marbled Frogmouth** – Present at all of the three upper-elevation campsites, and seen at two of them, this species must be common on the island.

**Wallace's Owlet-Nightjar** – Iwein discovered and recorded this species during a previous visit to Mount Salal. His publication is pending. It seems to be restricted to the hill forest on Waigeo.

**Beccari's Scrubwren** – One of the commonest birds at higher elevations. Iwein discovered this on Waigeo during a previous visit to Mount Salal, and his publication is pending.

**Brown-necked Crow** – The common crow in the interior of Waigeo, seen and heard at all elevations, and especially common at lower and mid-elevations.

**Red Bird-of-Paradise** – Recorded at all elevations, especially common at the 450m campsite. About 30 males and only 2 females in total. The males were starting to come into breeding plumage (but still lacked the yellow flank plumes), and were gathering in leks near the 450m campsite. But the females didn't seem to be visiting the leks yet – both of ours were seen in mixed flocks with Rusty Pitohui.

**Wilson's Bird-of-Paradise** – The lowest individual heard about 150m, more common at mid and high-elevations, with one lek found above 800m altitude. A total of 4 males and 6 females seen during the trip. The males had cleared their leks but no females were visiting, so the males tended to call from the trees above the leks and didn't spend much time on the ground.

**Waigeo Cuscus** – Three individuals seen during the daytime within a kilometre of the 450m campsite, including one in the karst area.

*(Received May 2008)*

Waigeo logistics were organised by Iwein Mauro who offers birding tours with Zeth as advertised on [www.bird-watching-papua-adventure-travel.com](http://www.bird-watching-papua-adventure-travel.com)

## Mount Trikora, Snow Mountains, West Papua, Indonesia 2-17 July 2007

*By Charles Davies*

The central mountains of New Guinea are up there among the world's highest – at just over 4,750m, Mount Trikora (or Mt. Pirgin to those who still know the local name) is the second highest peak in New Guinea after Puncak Jaya (5040m). Of the two highest peaks in New Guinea, Mount Trikora is by far the easier to visit, since it is only a few days hike from Wamena, the major town in the mountains of West Papua, and only a day or two from Lake Habbema, a tourist destination that is (at least in theory) accessible by road from town.

Puncak Jaya lies some way to the west, and visiting it would require a charter flight and/or a much longer hike. One advantage of visiting this more remote peak, however, would be the chance to see some of the remaining glaciers on New Guinea, fast melting but still extant, unlike the glacier on Trikora but disappeared sometime in the mid-1900s.

**Flights.** I flew to Jayapura from Jakarta on Garuda. Despite the concerns about Garuda's safety standards, this was by far the most confidence-inspiring flight I've ever made to West Papua, with an aircraft that was both quite large and reasonably modern. There were two stops, in Ujung Pandang (Makassar) and Biak.

I was able to board a Trigana Airlines flight from Jayapura to Wamena, without having pre-booked, just an hour after arriving in Jayapura. This situation could always change, and if you don't want to risk it, one of the more expensive hotels in Jayapura or Wamena should be able to book the flight for you.

Flying is the only way to get to Wamena. I was told that a road from Jayapura to Wamena was mostly constructed, but some bridges could not be completed and the whole project has been put on hold. Judging by the excellent forest you fly over to get to Wamena, such a road would be well worth checking out if it is ever built, before it gets settled.

The Trigana flight was only an hour on an ageing propeller plane. There are several flights daily between Jayapura and Wamena. In both directions, there were delays of a few hours, and one day the flights were cancelled because of technical problems. I imagine that delays and cancellations would be more frequent in the rainy season.

**Money.** There are a couple of banks on the main street of Wamena. They will exchange US dollars and probably most other major currencies. But if – like me – you don't bring enough cash, you may have some problems. Both banks have ATMs, but only one would accept my card, and had a 2.500.000 daily limit. If you are going on a long trip, or are staying at an expensive hotel like the Baliem Valley Resort, it is much safer to calculate exactly what you will be spending, and make sure to bring enough cash along with you.

**Safety and permits.** Check with your country's Foreign Ministry (e.g., [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)) for safety information on travelling to West Papua, including Wamena. Members of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) kidnapped a group of Western and Indonesian biologists in a remote area of the West Papuan mountains in 1996.

While you still need a surat jalan to visit Wamena, I was able to fly there before obtaining it. You may need an additional permits to visit Lake Habbema and/or the Mount Trikora summit. These permits may not always be forthcoming! You may be able to find out the current situation before you arrive by contacting a local hotel (like the Baliem Valley Lodge) or guide (like Jonas).

**Hotels.** I stayed two nights at the Baliem Valley Lodge (<http://www.baliem-valley-resort.de>), in the hills north-east of Wamena. It is only a few kilometres from town, but the voyage takes about two hours because the road is so terrible. It cost 950.000 Rupiah per night, with extra charges for dinner, laundry etc. There are also some less expensive hotels in Wamena itself.

**Transport.** A taxi from the airport to the Baliem Valley Lodge will cost about 300.000 Rupiah (subject to bargaining). A taxi from the hotel to the town costs more, about 500.000 Rupiah, although the hotel normally allowed me to hitch a ride on taxis that other guests had ordered. Once, I tried to save money and rent a motorcycle from the town to the resort for about 100.000 Rupiah, but it couldn't make it all the way and had to walk the last section.

**Communications.** There is mobile phone signal in Wamena, and most of the time at the Baliem Valley Resort. Wamena also has an Internet café, and the Internet was working both times I went there. I tried to phone abroad once on a landline from a Wartel (Indonesian telecommunications centre) but I couldn't get a connection. I lost the mobile signal after hiking a few kilometres into the mountains from Wamena and didn't recover it at any point before returning to town.

**Logistics for the hike.** I made the trip with Jonas Wenda, who handles the logistics for commercial bird tours that visit Lake Habbema, as well as occasional hiking trips to the summits of Mount Trikora. Jonas hired four porters for the two-week trip – his nephew Netius, Perus (a friend from his home town), Thomas (a solidly built security guard from the Baliem Valley Resort) and Kipenus, who we met on the way to Taila village. The prices are expensive by Papuan standards – Jonas charged 350.000 Rupiah per day and each porter 80.000 Rupiah per day. I also paid a flat fee of 3.000.000 that covered food and village fees for the two weeks. But it was well worth it – the arrangements were superb. Everyone was great company, the porters all worked very hard and there was plenty of food. You can contact Jonas directly at [jonaswenda@hotmail.com](mailto:jonaswenda@hotmail.com) or mobile phone 0852-44220825.

**Conditions and equipment.** If you hire four porters per person (like me), you will only need to carry what you need for the day. The hiking is not too difficult – up to 10km per day at birding pace. The trails can be quite steep. Much of the trail through forest area consists of the top of fallen trees – a bit like a boardwalk. Wonderful if you have good balance and are walking barefoot, but very slippery in hiking boots.

It is cold above the treeline. I slept in my clothes in my sleeping bag, but was still too cold to sleep well, and had ice on my tent in the mornings. I also had a warm winter coat, but it often wasn't warm enough.

My visit was during the dry season, but we still had heavy rain several days and nights in the forest. I imagine heavy rain above the treeline could get pretty unpleasant, but we were lucky to avoid this (mostly).

Altitude sickness is a risk here. Even taking several days to hike up, I did have a bit of a headache the first day above the treeline.

**Baliem Valley Resort.** I stayed here at the beginning and end of the hike. It is a comfortable resort that you could take your family to, with spectacular views down over the Baliem Valley as well as the summit of Trikora (if there isn't too much mist). There is a small patch of forest you can walk uphill to behind the resort, but the resort is mostly surrounded by scrub.

Birds: Gray Goshawk, Pied Bushchat, Black Fantail, Golden Whistler, Capped White-eye, Red-collared Myzomela, Marbled Honeyeater, Ornate Melidectes, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Superb Bird-of-paradise (heard only)

#### **Ibele valley villages (4-5 July 2007, 1800-2450m)**

Early on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>, we travelled to the town of Beneme, where the road west from Wamene hits the Ibele River (see map). After dropping off two American tourists at the airport, I paid 500.000 Rupiah for the extra distance. Beneme is the start of the "traditional" route up through the Ibele valley, described in "Where to Watch birds in Australasia". After posing for photos by the road with about half the villages' population, we started hiking up through fields and woodlands of spindly trees, pausing for lunch next to a traditional covered bridge where we met Kipenus, from Taila village, and decided to hire him as our fourth porter.

After the bridge, the trail climbed steeply for a bit, then followed the contours, passing through a series of villages perched on the steep hillside: Pilia (referred to in some reports as Ibele), Millipaga, then Tailarek, where we stopped on the night of the 4<sup>th</sup>. The villages are surrounded by vertical fields of sweet potatoes, and I wonder how they stop the rain washing away all the soil.

On the evening we arrived at Tailarek, we ran into a local hunter who had just caught a male Splendid Astrapia at a drinking pond staked out by the locals. He had wrapped up the astrapia in banana leaves like the puppy in Epaminondis (see, e.g., [www.rickwalton.com/folktale/bryant18.htm](http://www.rickwalton.com/folktale/bryant18.htm)) and was planning to sell it in the Wamena market. I decided to buy it (100.000 Rp) and took possession the following morning, intending to release it in the nearest patch of forest, but after a brief display of bravado, it went limp and died. Many of the bird traps we found in the forest consisted of tripwires and arrows rigged up to perches by small pools, either on the ground or in dead trees, where birds come to drink – I'm a bit surprised this approach works in such a wet area.

Climbing further up the valley to Taila the following day, the trail passes through some patches of forest. Everyone we met was very friendly – quite a crowd gathered a couple of times when I was looking at my field guide, and people we passed gave us

sweet potatoes, passion fruit, oranges and bananas (Jonas had brought along some chocolate bars and sweets to hand out). The following night, we stayed in the highest group of huts on the slope above Taila, right on the edge of the forest. In the afternoon, a group from the village took us quite some way into the forest to a bowerbird bower (not sure what kind), but we only could spend 20 minutes there and didn't see it.

Open country birds from Beneme to Taila: Variable Goshawk (1 photographed at Taila at 2450m), Brown Falcon (ditto), Glossy Swiftlet, Pacific Swallow, Island Leaf-Warbler, Pied Bushchat, White-shouldered Fairywren, Brown-breasted Gerygone, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Red-collared Myzomela, Ornate Melidectes (7), Superb Bird-of-paradise (3, including 2 males), Black-breasted Munia (several groups totalling about 40 birds, up to the forest edge at 2450m)

Birds in forest patches, mostly between Tailarek and Taila: Plum-faced Lorikeet, Mountain Kingfisher (carrying a pink salamander by the fish ponds in Millipaga), Friendly Fantail, Little Shrike-Thrush Black-breasted Boatbill, Blue-gray Robin, Ashy Robin, Mountain Mouse-warbler (heard), Buff-faced Scrubwren (2), Fan-tailed Berrypecker (1 male), Tit Berrypecker, Rufous-sided Honeyeater, Smoky Honeyeater

### **Ibele valley cloudforest (Yabogema) (6-7 July 2007)**

Jonas and I got up early on the 6<sup>th</sup> and walked slowly up to Yabogema (I made the altitude there about 2700m), then the following day we walked up above the forest zone. From Taila, the trail ascends steeply into the cloudforest, then descends to the confluence of two rivers (which join to form a tributary of the Ibele). From there, you walk uphill all the way to Yabogema, and above that towards the pass between the Ibele Valley and Lake Habbema. Above about 2900m, the forest becomes very stunted and mossy. It rained heavy the whole night at Yabogema – Jonas and the porters made a toasty fire and sang rounds well into the night.

Birds in the cloudforest zone below about 2900m: Chestnut Forest-Rail (a pair seen above Yabogema and several heard), White-breasted Fruit-Dove, Papuan Lorikeet, Plum-faced Lorikeet, Yellow-billed Lorikeet, Modest Tiger-Parrot, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Glossy Swiftlet, Mountain Kingfisher (heard), Hooded Cuckoo-Shrike, Friendly Fantail, Blue-gray Robin, Canary Flycatcher, Orange-crowned Fairywren (one group of 4), hen-plumaged whistler sp., Buff-faced Scrubwren, Papuan Scrubwren, Crested Berrypecker, Red-collared Myzomela, Black-backed Honeyeater, Belford's Melidectes, Smoky Honeyeater, Torrent-lark (2), Splendid Astrapia (1 male and 5 females), King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise (1 male in small bare trees at Yabogema, and 1 female), Brown Sicklebill (1 male calling at dawn in tall trees around Yabogema, and 1 female further downhill)

Birds and mammals in the moss forest zone above about 2900m: Plum-faced Lorikeet, Orange-billed Lorikeet, Friendly Fantail, White-winged Robin (1), Large Scrubwren (2), Papuan Scrubwren, Black-backed Honeyeater, Belford's Melidectes, Smoky Honeyeater, Splendid Astrapia (2 females), Speckled Dasyure (2)

**Trikora/Lake Habbema area** (7-13 July 2007). Above the moss forest, the trail ascends through a narrow zone of heath scrub – it looks a bit like what you find along the coast in southern Australia – then into open country above the treeline, with spectacular views of the forest downhill. Descending the other side of the pass, it is only a few hundred metres before you cross the dirt road between Wamena and Lake Habbema. To continue walking towards Trihora, you cross the road and continue due south. To go to Lake Habbema you have to detour and follow the road about 5 kilometres to the west.

There didn't seem to be any vehicle traffic on the road and I understand it is closed to tourists at the moment. The main people using it were travellers from the Duga tribe, hiking to and from Wamena. Jonas said it was a very long hike to reach the Duga villages – you have to cross the Trihora massif and continue about 30km the other side along some very difficult jungle trails. But the Duga area is well populated once you reach it – perhaps more heavily populated than the Baliem Valley itself. We bought some packages of pandanus seeds – like long, chewy nuts with a strong flavour of palm – from some of the Duga people we met, but rejected the Greater BOP skins that we were offered.

Above the treeline the valleys are broad and flat, covered with boggy grassland dotted with treeferns. The slopes are covered by rather open woodland of *Libocedrus/Papuacedrus* cypresses, with a mossy and grassy understorey. In many areas, all the cypresses are dead – Jonas said a fire had ravaged the area during a serious drought in 1999.

The pines and tree ferns phase out at about 3500m, above which is it grassland and alpine scrub, with only red-and-grey bare rock, lichen and scree above about 3800m, looking much like the top of a mountain in Scotland or Wales. Reaching the summit of Trihora requires mountain climbing – I only got to about 4250m, and even this involved one very steep climb that I wouldn't have attempted without a lot of encouragement from Jonas and Thomas!

Standing anywhere in this area, you can see the bare rock zone of the highest mountains stretching quite some way west from Trihora (perhaps all the way to Puncak Jaya?). It all looks like suitable habit for the Snow Mountain Robin – probably no one has been able to survey the areas in-between these two peaks.

The land birds are quite similar everywhere at high altitudes around Lake Habbema and Trihora. You get a decent selection of waterbirds on the lake itself. Macgregor's Bird-of-Paradise (now classified as a honeyeater) is associated with the cypress woodland and is fairly common. The normal clue to their presence is the sound of their loud wingbeats, much like those of a hornbill. We even saw a few Macgregor's BOP well down into the cloudforest zone in the Ue valley (see next section). Although I missed it, Archbold's Bowerbird has been seen in the Habbema area and adjacent mossy forest. Jonas always sees them together with groups of Macgregor's Bird-of-paradise. He does another trek to an isolated mountain called Mount Ellit (also 3 days through scrub and villages each way from Wamena), where he sees the bowerbirds more regularly.

Jonas has seen Snow Mountain Robin regularly on mountain-climbing tours to the highest ridgetop of Trihora. I found a pair in the bare rock zone at about 4250m, but getting there involved that one very steep climb – maybe Jonas can set up a rope for

people to hold on to! We did find one robin below this cliff on the way back down, at about 4050m, but I suppose your chances are better the further you ascend.

Snow Mountain Quail are regular in the flat grasslands. We flushed a couple on the way back down from the Trikora Summit area that left behind a frightened chick.

Our itinerary was as follows: 7 July – Arrived at pass between Ibele Valley and Lake Habbema. 8 July – Hike along road to Lake Habbema. 9 July – Back the way we had come, then tacking south across a range of scrubby hills (to 3450m, with Sooty Melidectes at the pass), followed by a spectacular, steep descent to a wide, prehistoric-looking valley blanketed with tree ferns. After crossing the valley, a couple of kilometres wide, we set up camp in the cypress woodland the southern side. 10 July – Climbed up towards the Trikora summit, camping in a small cave (together with a group of about 30 Duga hikers and a pig that turned up right at dusk). Some nice raspberry bushes around the cave! 11 July – Up to the Trikora summit area, then back to the cave for another night (alone this time). 12 July – After waiting out some rain, walked back down to the camp in the cypress woodland. 13 July – Hiked east about 7km to the edge of the moss forest in the upper reaches of the Ue Valley, which leads down to Wamena.

We took our time with all the hikes – I mostly walked with Jonas at birding pace. You could get from Lake Habbema to the upper slopes of Trikora in a day if you walked fast.

Again, we were lucky with the weather above the treeline, it was clear and sunny everyday apart from the second morning after we woke up in the cave, although the clear weather meant it got very cold at night.

Birds above the treeline (grassland/woodland) around Trikora and Lake Habbema: Eastern Marsh-Harrier (1), Snow Mountain Quail (7), Dusky Woodcock (heard at the pass between Ibele and Lake Habbema), Plum-faced Lorikeet, Orange-billed Lorikeet (5), Glossy Swiftlet, Alpine Pipit (~80), Island Thrush, Tawny Grassbird, Friendly Fantail (to 3600m), Snow Mountain Robin (3), White-winged Robin (4), Alpine Robin (1), Lorentz's Whistler (5), Papuan Scrubwren, Papuan Thornbill (~10), Brown-breasted Gerygone, Crested Berrypecker (~35), Red-collared Myzomela, Black-throated Honeyeater (3, all in alpine scrub at 3400-3600m), Orange-cheeked Honeyeater (~200), Black-backed Honeyeater (~10), Short-bearded Melidectes (~20), Sooty Melidectes (1), Belford's Melidectes, Smoky Honeyeater (to 3500m), Splendid Astrapia (1 female at Lake Habbema), Macgregor's Bird-of-paradise (~8), Mountain Firetail (4), Snow Mountain Munia (~150)

Waterbirds on Lake Habbema: Little Grebe, Little Pied Cormorant, Salvadori's Teal (3), Pacific Black Duck, Eurasian Coot

**Ue River Valley** (13-17 July 2007). We decided to hike back down to Wamena via the Ue River Valley, which leads east then north to Wamena. This route enters the forest, again through a heath-scrub zone, about 10km east of Trikora, then travels down through the forest for at least another 10km to the village of Palililo, which consists of an area of huts and sweet potato fields surrounded by forest on all sides. The final trek out from Palililo village involves a 2km climb up through forest (with the river in a steep canyon

below you), then a descent through villages on the hillside above the Ue River, if anything an even more impressive torrent than the Ibele, and with forest on the opposite bank most of the way back to Wamena.

We stopped for three days in the moss forest zone at 3000m, but had heavy rain the whole time. Hiked from here down to Palililo in a single day through fabulous forest with tons of birds of paradise, such as 20 *astropias* (including 6 males). Worth about a week, I think. Not so Palililo village itself – most of the birds the villagers claimed were present failed to materialize, and it was difficult to sleep because of the fleas.

Birds in the Ue valley moss forest, above 2,900m: Chestnut Forest-Rail (1, with several heard), Dusky Woodcock (one flying over every dawn and dusk), Plum-faced Lorikeet, Greater Sooty-Owl (heard), Orange-billed Lorikeet, Glossy Swiftlet, Mountain Kingfisher (heard), Island Thrush, Friendly Fantail, Dimorphic Fantail (1), Black-breasted Boatbill, Alpine Robin (~10), White-winged Robin, Canary Flycatcher, Rufous-naped Whistler (heard), Lorentz's Whistler (9), Orange-crowned Fairywren (1 group), Mountain Mouse-Warbler, Papuan Scrubwren, Papuan Thornbill (~10), Brown-breasted Gerygone, Black Sitella (1 group), Tit Berrypecker, Crested Berrypecker, Red-collared Myzomela, Black-backed Honeyeater, Belford's Melidectes, Smoky Honeyeater, Mountain Peltops (2), Crested Bird-of-Paradise (1 female + 1 juvenile at about 3050m), Macgregor's Bird-of-Paradise (2 by the camp at 3000m), Splendid *Astrapia* (4, including 2 males), Lesser Melampitta (1 proving it can fly – or at least flutter – plus a few heard), Mountain Firetail (1)

Birds in the forest below 2,900m (1 day): Great Cuckoo-Dove, White-breasted Fruit-Dove, Papuan Lorikeet, Plum-faced Lorikeet, Yellow-billed Lorikeet, Modest Tiger-Parrot, Friendly Fantail (~30), Dimorphic Fantail (~10), Black-breasted Boatbill (~8), Canary Flycatcher, Black-throated Robin (1), Blue-grey Robin, Ashy Robin (heard), Rufous-naped Whistler (1 plus several heard), Golden Whistler (1 male), Lorentz's Whistler (3), Mountain Mouse-Warbler, Buff-faced Scrubwren, Papuan Scrubwren (~30), Black Sitella (~10 in 1 group), Red-collared Myzomela, Belford's Melidectes, Smoky Honeyeater, Great Woodswallow (4 at Palililo), MacGregor's Bird-of-Paradise (4, down to 2800m), Splendid *Astrapia* (20, including 6 males), King-of-Saxony Bird-of-Paradise (1 female), Brown Sicklebill (1 male)

(Received May 2008)

### **Notes on Imitator Sparrowhawk *Accipiter imitator* and Pied Goshawk *Accipiter albogularis* on Bougainville**

**By Don Hadden**

There is much to learn about these two little-known goshawks. Debus (1995) concluded his comments with the observation that there is a 'clear need' to understand the plumage, vocalisations, ecology, biology and field identification of these two species. Here I endeavour to add a little to our knowledge of these species and I also comment on the *Accipiter albogularis/imitator* debate based on a series of more recent observations of

these two species on Isabel (Webb 1992, 1997); (Debus 1995); (LeCroy *et al* 2001); (Kratte *et al* 2001) and Bougainville (Hadden pers. obs.)

#### Habitat:

Although only three *A. imitator* have been positively identified on Bougainville, it appears that *A. albogularis* and *A. imitator* are found in different habitats. Schodde (1977) took his specimen 'within the substage of tall old secondary rain forest' at an altitude of c.300m in southern Bougainville. Our two birds were netted at c.800m and c.1000m inside undisturbed forest in the Crown Prince Range of central Bougainville. *A. imitator* therefore appears to be a bird of the forest interior.

On the other hand *A. albogularis* on Bougainville is a bird of open country, scrubby second growth, airports, playing fields, forest edges, garden edges and even within townships and villages. Schodde (1977) also reported 'fringes and lower stages of forest remnants, open secondary growth and garden areas ... in trees on the edges of clearings and gardens.' Other observers on Bougainville describe similar locations.

Virtue (1947) observed 'a male perched on overhead telephone lines beside a road ... the eye orange coloured.' Bluff and Skyrme (1994) mention a bird out in the open on the Jaba River delta. Brian Finch (unpublished field notes) 'Three birds seen, one in Arawa, one on the Buin road and one at Aropa swamp.' Elsewhere (Blaber 1990) describes it as a bird of 'shorelines ... open areas' e.g. 'on the ground at Munda airfield in July.'

I had some 19 sightings of the species over 8 years in Arawa, and they basically conform to the habitat preferences as described above. Two entries shed some light on hunting and food preferences:

12 June: One young bird, almost in adult plumage, on mown grass beside a shop in Arawa town. It half walked/ran here and there across the lawn until it disturbed a large grasshopper. As the grasshopper flew up into the air the *A. albogularis* with remarkable agility leapt sideways and caught the grasshopper in flight with its talons. It flew to a small low bush about two metres from the concrete block wall of the shop. It was just starting to eat its prey when another *A. albogularis* flew past. The perched bird followed it and they flew out of my sight across town towards the market.

22 August: One flew under Munau's house in Section 11 in Arawa and captured a recently hatched chicken. Mrs Munau was not amused.

I have had many villagers tell me of chicks captured by a black and white 'hawk.' See also Sibley (1951) for similar behaviour on New Georgia. From the above it can be seen that the habitat of *A. albogularis* is across a wide range of open country areas particularly along the coastal lowlands and at times might even be regarded as a suburban bird. The only author I can find who suggests *A. albogularis* is a forest bird is Diamond (1975) who states '*A. albogularis* occurs more commonly at higher elevations (up to at least 1800m) and in the forest and feeds mainly on birds ...'

*A. imitator* is the bird of the forest interior and clearly forages close to the ground on occasions at least, enabling us to mist net two which would not have been possible if it was a canopy bird. This agrees with LeCroy *et al* (2001) 'Both our specimens of *A. imitator* were collected low in the forest.' Wattel (1973) also speculates that *A. imitator* is a bird of forest interiors 'from the very short wings it may be guessed it is a bird of dense forests.' At this stage of our knowledge of this species on Bougainville, Wattel's guess is

accurate.

On Choiseul and Isabel, the species is only known from a handful of specimens, mostly recently by LeCroy *et al* (2001). G. Dutson (in litt. 2008) saw an *A. imitator* perched low in dense secondary forest at Garana, Isabel. *A. imitator* occurs at much lower population densities and appears to be less conspicuous than *A. albogularis* - even when accounting for its denser forest habitat. Dutson has no records of *A. imitator* soaring, whereas *A. albogularis* are often recorded soaring (including over extensive tracts of closed forest).

### **Field Identification**

In LeCroy *et al* (2001) attention is drawn to the difficulty of distinguishing the pied morphs of *A. imitator* from *A. albogularis* in the field. 'Our collection of both a melanistic and a pied specimen of *A. imitator* has convinced us that the presence of *A. albogularis* on Isabel can be confirmed with certainty only by specimens' and 'we call attention to the difficulties of sight identification.' I am puzzled by these statements as I believe field identification is not a significant problem. The main points are summarized below:

Readily distinguished by iris colour. The two *A. imitator* we netted had very dark eyes, which would appear black in the field, but in good light in the hand are dark brown. On the other hand, *A. albogularis* have golden/yellow/orange/reddish iris colour. This feature alone makes field identification simple. I can find no reports of any of the morphs of *A. albogularis* having black/dark brown eyes. The iris colour of *A. albogularis* is variable but not to the extent that it could ever be confused with the dark iris of *A. imitator*. In fact the dark brown iris of *A. imitator* has been reported from the very first collections (Rothschild and Hartert 1905) although in that paper their Choiseul specimen (No A. 1105) went unrecognised as a separate species despite its having a black throat and breast and dark brown iris. Any apparent difficulty would apply only to fully pied birds.

A pied bird that has a black throat or upper breast is always *A. imitator* as there are no known black-throated morphs of *A. albogularis* (though if there were, one would only need to check iris colour). Other distinguishing features are the jet black plumage of *A. imitator* as opposed to the slaty black and dark grey plumages of *A. albogularis*, but in uncertain light these features may not be easily distinguished.

The two *A. imitator* we netted had the orange-yellow of the cere extending onto the lower mandible. This seemingly does not occur on *A. albogularis*. This feature should be easily discerned on a perched bird especially if a spotting scope is used, though the iris colour would be more obvious.

Another feature of *A. albogularis* and not of *A. imitator* is the rufous collar on the hind neck. In Ferguson-Lees (2001) under the Imitator Sparrowhawk entry and the subheading Confusion Species, he states 'Greatest risk of confusion would be between adults of white-chested morph of *imitator* and collarless morph of Pied Goshawk.' Precisely. Any *A. albogularis/imitator* seen with a collar is undoubtedly *albogularis*. LeCroy *et al* (2001) state 'our collection of both a melanistic and a pied specimen of *A. imitator* has convinced us that the presence on Isabel of *A. albogularis* can be confirmed with certainty only with specimens.'

It is puzzling therefore to find Webb, a co-author of (LeCroy *et al* 2001) stating in

an earlier paper (Webb 1992) '*A. albogularis* has a rufous dorsal collar and white underparts. I often saw it soaring above valleys between Bara and Kologaru villages.' Clearly Webb observed *A. albogularis* on Isabel during his two years there from September 1986-1988 because he writes of the rufous dorsal collar. G. Dutson (in litt. 2008) has also seen *A. albogularis* on Isabel, identified by their distinctive size, grey upperparts and rufous collar.

There seems to be confusion about the adult male pied *Accipiter imitator*. Doughty (1999) states under *Accipiter imitator* 'Sexes alike except in size, female larger ...' LeCroy *et al* (2001) 'In pied adults of *A. imitator* of both sexes ...' However I cannot find any reference in any paper to a pied male specimen. I believe the pied adult male plumage was unknown at the time Doughty and Le Croy were writing. However, the specimen we collected on Bougainville was a male bird (Le Croy pers. comm). This bird had an undescribed plumage variation. The white underparts were washed throughout, from lower breast to undertail coverts with an ashy, earthy colour. The second bird was similarly coloured. Both birds were pied morphs with dark throats and upper breasts. The first bird was netted in dense forest at c 1000m in the Crown Prince Range of central Bougainville on 20 May 2000.

Description: Bill black. Large broad yellow-orange cere, this colour extending onto the lower mandible. Upperparts black. Throat and chin black. Breast grey, some feathers with darker edges. Lower breast, abdomen and undertail coverts as above. Undertail light brown, no barring. Underwing largely white. Under the primaries light grey with grey barring but at the tips of the primaries it is plain grey with no barring. Legs orange, claws black. Iris black but in good light is seen to be a very dark brown. Wing 186mm, bill 16.9mm, tarsus 55mm and tail 151mm. Overall length 300mm.

A second *A. imitator* was netted on 10 June 2001 at c. 800m in the Crown Prince Range, central Bougainville. Bill black, cere orange the colour extending onto the lower mandible. Upperparts and throat black. Breast black but not as jet black as the throat. Rest of underparts basally white but washed throughout with an ashy, earthy, dirty colour right through including the undertail coverts. Patches on thigh dark grey. Underwing similar to the first bird. Legs and feet orange. Claws black. Iris very dark brown. Hooded eyelid. Wing 203.2mm, bill 18.1mm, tarsus 63.2mm, tail 169.7mm. Total length despite the long tail 300mm.

This *A. imitator* was caught by hand. When my field assistant John Turuora checked this net, he found as he approached quietly that the *A. imitator* was standing on the ground eating a Stephan's Dove *Chalcophaps stephani* that had walked into the net. John ran towards the *A. imitator* which flew but then hit the net. At that point he was able to capture it. On examining the Stephan's Dove it was found to be intact except for the back of the skull which had been opened up and all the brains had been eaten. This was photographed.

Unfortunately this expedition ended with some difficulty. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army personnel who still control a large area of central Bougainville came to the village and took all my mist nets, my cameras, tape recorder etc. Although we knew we were in a restricted area it was at the invitation of the village chief. Until things settle down politically the area where these birds were discovered will remain off limits to all visiting ornithologists.

One other *Accipiter* has been netted. John Turuora collected a black morph *A. albogularis* at 1500m in the Crown Prince Range. Apart from its size its golden yellow iris confirmed its identity as *A. albogularis*. All black above and below. The breast had some feathers edged dark grey. In the centre of the abdomen there were just two or three rufous feathers. Underwing coverts grey, some feathers darker tipped while the primaries had narrow, dark grey barring although each 'bar' only covered half of each feather. Bill black, cere lemon, hood of skin over eye and eyering also lemon. Legs greyish-mustard. Feet mustard. Iris yellow or golden. Wing 232mm, bill 19.4mm, tarsus 63mm, tail 179.7mm. Total length 370mm.

This specimen *A. albogularis* differs from the black morph *A. imitator* described in LeCroy *et al* (2001) as follows: It was considerably larger. Measurements of *A. imitator* from Isabel were: Wing 195mm, tail 159mm and tarsus 57mm. The measurements of the Bougainville specimen were: Wing 232mm, tail 179.7mm and tarsus 63mm. The Bougainville bird had a yellow iris not chestnut brown. It was black not glossy black. The cere was lemon not yellowish-orange. The legs and feet were greyish mustard not pale orange. It is clear then that even the black morphs of *A. imitator* and *A. albogularis* are easily distinguished in the field by iris colour. In my field notes I have several references to the yellow iris of the black morph *A. albogularis* seen elsewhere on Bougainville. The larger size may not always be apparent as size is notoriously difficult to estimate in the field.

The *A. imitator* seen in the field on Isabel by G. Dutson was a pied morph with white underparts with a rufous streaky wash on the breast. *A. albogularis* never show rufous-washed underparts.

Calls: A rufous-naped individual was recorded at Kieta on the evening of 16 September 2001. It gave sets of seven calls at about two and a half notes per second. Another adult gave a continuous series of 'kek kek kek' calls, 38 in total at two per second. These standard accipitrine calls seem to be consistent across the range. A juvenile in May 2001 was calling regularly with short pauses and was perhaps begging or advertising its presence to the adults. Twenty-two bursts of calling, ranged from nine to thirty-one notes each time and were given at five notes a second, about twice as rapid as an adult.

#### Nesting

The only nesting activity I observed was that noted above. In the centre of Arawa township are several gigantic fig trees *Ficus* sp. A pair of *A. albogularis*, one dark morph and one pied morph built a nest in a relatively slender leafy branch at almost the highest point in the tree. At this great height 'c. 40m' the branch it was built in was lying almost parallel with the ground but others near it were more vertical. On 29 April while I watched for half an hour the dark morph bird was seen bringing small and medium sized sticks to the nest. These sticks were collected from other *Ficus* sp trees nearby. It spent a few moments each time apparently working the sticks into the nest but leaves prevented a clear view. On 3 May the pied *A. albogularis* was seen soaring and circling above the nest tree at 1230 hours. On 4 May the black morph bird was calling persistently from the nest. The nest was now substantially larger and a sitting bird could no longer be seen. It wasn't until it flew off the nest that I saw it was the dark morph bird that had been calling. As it was the one spending time on the nest it was presumably the female. It flew to an adjacent tree and continued calling. Throughout May there was little activity at the

nest and I presumed the adults were incubating. On 3 June the nest was gone. Webb (1997) also reports that they build bulky nests and that the black morph was the female.

The BirdLife Species factsheet for *A. imitator* classes the species as Vulnerable. I suspect that it will be found to be reasonably common in the forest interior throughout Bougainville because we netted two despite very few net hours. Also Schodde took one about 100 kilometres south of our area. Very little work has been done on the high altitude birds of Bougainville and to obtain three *A. imitator* would seem to suggest it will be found fairly readily by future ornithologists.

BirdLife Factsheet summary:

**Justification** This little-known species is classified here as Vulnerable on the basis of very small island subpopulations which are inferred to be declining through forest loss. However, it has been seen so infrequently that any population estimates are largely conjecture, and it may qualify for Endangered (or even Critically Endangered) status.

**Range & population** *Accipiter imitator* is endemic to Bougainville, **Papua New Guinea**, and Choiseul and Santa Isabel, **Solomon Islands**. It is rare but may be overlooked because of its unobtrusive forest habits and it perhaps lacks a distinctive call. It is known from just one specimen from Bougainville and a handful from both Choiseul and Isabel. During many weeks of fieldwork on all three islands in the 1980s and 1990s, it was seen only once on Bougainville and a series of records from Tirotonga village on Isabel. One specimen was taken here, but some of the other field records and local reports, including those of all-black individuals, have been queried. This species's similarity to the polymorphic sympatric *A. albogularis* has led to a number of uncertain records, including birds on the distant island of Makira. Population numbers and trends are difficult to assess from so few recent records, but the species is clearly very rare and appears to have declined, on Choiseul at least.

**Threats** As a lowland species, it is likely to be threatened by forest loss and degradation. There is extensive logging in the lowlands and hills of Choiseul and some on Isabel. Logging may become a problem on Bougainville when the island opens up to development. It possibly suffers from competition with *A. albogularis*, especially in degraded forest.

**Recommended citation** BirdLife International (2007) Species factsheet: *Accipiter imitator*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org>

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(Received Jan 2008)

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## Newly Published

*A Checklist of the Birds of New Guinea and Associated Islands* (2008) by Phil Gregory Sicklebill Publications # 2. Kuranda.

*A Checklist of the Birds of Australia and Its Island Territories* (2008) by Phil Gregory Sicklebill Publications, # 1 Kuranda.

Available from the editor at Au\$ 12.00 inc. p & p. Both give an overview of the avifauna and are based around current taxonomic thinking, using morphology, calls and songs, range and behaviour as points to consider, as well as genetic evidence. Both avifaunas have been somewhat neglected, with long out-of-date checklists and a tendency to overlump species. The checklists are intended as a discussion point and to draw attention to neglected taxa. Distant island endemics and vagrants are shown as separate appendices, so it is easy to see the species occurring on the mainland and nearby islands, and to see the broad range of each species.

*Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds* (2008) by Les Christidis and Walter E. Boles. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.

This is a long-awaited and thorough review of the whole Australian avifauna including the distant islands, by two eminent scientists. Heavily biased towards genetic evidence, with some controversial declarations, and naturally raises many unresolved issues, but an essential reference, A full review will appear in the next issue of *Muruk*.

*The Birds of Zambia* (2008) by R. J. Dowsett, the late D. Aspinwall and F. Dowsett-Lemaire. Tauraco Press, Liège.

This is another long-awaited review, this time of the Zambian avifauna. Excellent atlas data from many observers over two decades, but a disappointingly conservative, somewhat dated taxonomy detracts a bit from its value.

*Shorebirds of Australia* by A. Geering, L. Andrew and S. Harding (2007) CSIRO Publishing Collingwood. A useful compendium for all the species of shorebird regularly occurring in Australia, with generally good colour photos, and particularly valuable distribution maps done with dot points for outlying records. There are succinct and useful chapters on various aspects of ecology, migration and conservation, wader plumages and topography, and some eye-opening estimates of numbers: Red-capped Plovers are estimated as totalling 95000, Inland Dotterel just 14,000, Red-kneed Dotterel some 25000-1,000,000 and Black-fronted Dotterel at what seems an amazingly low 15,500. Australian Painted Snipe is estimated at 1500 whilst Broad-billed Sandpiper comes in at 10,000, a very significant percentage of the world population.

*Raptors of the World. A Field Guide* by I. J. Ferguson-Lees and D. A. Christie (2005) Helm. This is the sawn-off and fully revised shorter field guide-style version of the weighty *Raptors of the World* volume of 2001, with 25 newly split species, some 65 new raptor images and a pleasingly modern taxonomic viewpoint. Very good colour plates, abbreviated text, small, broad-brush but up-dated maps, a common-sense approach to the vexed question of English names and an invaluable checklist including all subspecies.