

## ENDEMICIS OF THE BISMARCKS AND BOUGAINVILLE

*June 8, 2007 to June 30, 2007*

Guided by  
Phil Gregory

This Endemics of the PNG Islands is not your usual sort of bird trip. While we target the endemics and special birds we also have lots of interactions with the local communities. They earn money from our coming and show a strong interest in what we are doing, and they clearly enjoy having us as guests in these remote and lovely islands.

This year's Bismarcks and Bougainville trip was a memorable one, beginning with a fine morning at a college grounds near Port Moresby where we had 3 species of Whistling-Duck including a vagrant Plumed (6th PNG record) and very obliging roosting Papuan Frogmouth. Then it was over to New Britain and the world-class dive resort of Walindi, which makes a great base for local area birding. A developing problem is the spread of oil palm, which has led to many of the nearby bird sites being degraded and the need to use bumpy tracks to access other sites. Still, we did nicely and soon had Red-knobbed and Yellowish Imperial Pigeons, Knob-billed Fruit-Dove, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, a great look at New Britain Boobook with its bizarre long-lasting call sequence, Black-headed Paradise-Kingfisher, and the scarce Black-bellied Myzomela.

The Kimbe Bay trip gave us several of the small-island specials such as Island Imperial-Pigeon, wonderful looks at Nicobar Pigeon and Sclater's (Red-bibbed) Myzomela, but calm conditions meant almost no seabirds. Eurasian Tree Sparrow is a new addition to the PNG list and we duly twitched it on the way out.

Rabaul was entertaining, with a truly memorable visit to a Volcano Scrubfowl colony on the slopes of Tarvurur volcano, which is still erupting ash and steam and generates mini-earthquakes from time to time. The lads there harvest maybe 1000 eggs per day but risk their lives by tunnelling deep into the volcanic ash, with a real risk of being buried, but they were cheerful and welcoming and clearly enjoyed having their strange visitors. Eggs sell for K1 each, so this is a major asset to the local community and has been harvested for generations. The wreckage of a crashed Betty bomber was another sight here, as were Yamamoto's bunker and the tunnels the Japanese had dug to hide their barges from Allied bombing.

Buka and Bougainville, now an Autonomous Province pending a referendum on independence at some stage, were diverting. We had a very successful afternoon at a village, seeing Red-naped Myzomela, Steel-blue Flycatcher, Pied Goshawk and, amazingly enough, Woodford's Rail in the road on the way back. The Tourism Dept. had laid on a sing-sing partly for our benefit and they made us very welcome; they are keen to re-establish tourism in the ravaged province.

The trip down to Arawa involved 18 creek crossings, with all the bridges and culverts destroyed in previous troubles, but the road was pretty good and is going to be sealed soon courtesy of Japanese aid. Notable birds for us were more Woodford's Rails, Duchess Lorikeet, Solomon's Cockatoo, Ultramarine Kingfisher, Solomon's Pied and an elusive Bougainville Monarch, a fantastic daytime roosting Solomon's Boobook that sat out in a big tree cavity, and Solomon's Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. Our plans to try again for Fearful Owl and Bougainville Crow at a promising site were thwarted when our access was denied by those controlling the mountain areas. Our group fortuitously got a

Sanford's (Solomon's) Sea-Eagle from Kuri Lodge as we prepared to fly out.

New Ireland is my favourite island of the trip, and we did really well here seeing most of the endemics very nicely -- a huge drongo that looks like an astrapia, New Ireland Myzomela, New Ireland Boobook, Hunstein's, Forbes's and New Hanover mannikins (munias), plus another record of Buff-bellied Mannikin. The supporting cast included Pied Cuckoo-Dove, Finsch's and Black imperial-pigeons, White-bibbed Fruit-Dove, and one as yet undescribed and one unidentified species in the recently discovered *Microeca* flycatcher and an unidentified *Collocalia* swiftlet that is likely to be Mayr's.

The boat trip to the remote atoll of Tench was a great day, with the locals making us most welcome and eagerly showing us Pacific Imperial-Pigeon, nesting Nicobars, Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove, Island Monarch, and Atoll Starling. It is also a significant seabird site with nesting Great Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies, White Terns, and both Brown and Black noddies.

Our finale on Manus was complicated by the Superb Pitta now only being reachable after a rough 3 km walk, which took much time and effort and led to most of us getting brief looks at the birds, clearly a very rare and Endangered species. The Manus Boobook was a star though, the fourth endemic boobook of the trip and seen really well. Admiralty Pied Monarch, Meek's Pygmy-Parrot, and Manus Friarbird also showed nicely, the latter vocal but hard to see well. A quick dash over in wonderful calm seas to tiny Tong Island got us the rare Manus Fantail, and our final morning saw some of us foray out for a quick trip to see the newly split Manus Cuckoo-shrike.

My thanks to the group for making it a fun and enjoyable trip, and to Ellen for darning my tattered bilum and Ron for sharing his camera battery charger with several of us. I hope Heidi got her beautiful K6000 (US\$1900) Malagan carving home in one piece too. Particular thanks to Owen at Niugini holidays, Peggy at FG HQ for overseeing it all, Sue Gregory for intervening when needed in my absences, Patrick at Walindi, Zhon Bosco, Philip and Sandra at Arawa, Noah at Kavieng, Peter for the boat trips there, and Aaron and the lovely staff at the Lorengau Hotel on Manus. Lukim yu behain.

PG Kadavu July 07

*List total: 152 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa*

*If marked to left of list, \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic,  
N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant*

*pgi07*

### **Phaethontidae**

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*)

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

### **Sulidae**

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*)

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

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*)

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

### **Phalacrocoracidae**

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

*Two at one of the 18 creek crossings on Bougainville.*

### **Fregatidae**

GREAT FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata minor*)

*Common on Tench with at least 160 birds soaring at one time, and 6 in Kimbe Bay.*

LESSER FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata ariel*)

*A single in Kimbe Bay, and Ellen saw one on Tench.*

### **Ardeidae**

PACIFIC REEF-HERON (*Egretta sacra*)

*A few around Walindi and at Buka and Lorengau.*

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

*One at Hoskins was unusual.*

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striata*)

*Ron thought he saw one on Manus as we headed to the airport on the last day.*

RUFIOUS (NANKEEN) NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

*One at Walindi, and two singles in Arawa, one of which gave great looks.*

BLACK BITTERN (*Dupetor flavicollis*)

*One fine adult was standing out in an open grass field en route to Garu, no doubt wondering why it's habitat was now largely overplanted with the dreaded oil palm.*

### **Anatidae**

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK (*Anas superciliosa*)

*One near Garu, and a couple flew off the road on Bougainville.*

### **Pandionidae**

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

*One was seen fishing from Kuri Lodge on Buka, also seen on Bougainville at Tunuru, and one was in Kimbe Bay.*

### **Accipitridae**

PACIFIC BAZA (*Aviceda subcristata*)

*Quite common on New Britain and Bougainville.*

BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*)

*Common on New Britain.*

WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

*A fine adult on Restorf Is. in Kimbe Bay.*

**E** SOLOMON (SANFORD'S) SEA-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus sanfordi*)

*The group were fortunate to get one from Kuri Lodge on Buka when I was checking us into the flight, and Jim and Ellen had one over their truck near Kokopau on Bv. It is a scarce species and always a relief when we get one.*

VARIABLE GOSHAWK (*Accipiter hiogaster*)

*Common on New Britain, and quite different to mainland PNG birds.*

**E** PIED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter albogularis*)

*A nice flight view of one on Buka at Nick's village, then a melanistic one over Arawa.*

### **Falconidae**

ORIENTAL HOBBY (*Falco severus*)

*One perched up in a huge dead tree en route to Garu, with another calling but remaining out of sight. Always a very scarce species.*

**Megapodiidae**

MELANESIAN SCRUBFOWL (*Megapodius eremita*)

*Flight views at Garu and we also some of the holes they dig in the heated soil there, then an amazing experience at the colony on the slopes of Tarvuvur volcano. Here the local lads dig out something like a thousand eggs per day and maybe something approaching half a million per annum, going as much as 2m deep into the soft volcanic ash, with a real risk of a cave in a getting suffocated! They were eager to show us around and it was an extraordinary experience, astonishing how the birds continue to survive. Eggs sell for over K1 each so this is a very important local asset. We had good views of the adults too. Also seen on remote isolated Tench, a real tribute to the dispersive powers of the species.*

**Rallidae**

**E** WOODFORD'S RAIL (*Nesoclopeus woodfordi*)

*A pleasant surprise was two birds in the road near Nick's village on Buka, my first record from here. Also seen around Arawa but the birds in the town have become much harder and are I suspect under hunting pressure. We saw 4 or 5 in the road on a couple of days, one of our major targets and a rare and little known flightless rail.*

BUFF-BANDED RAIL (*Gallirallus philippensis*)

*Two flushed on New Britain when we were trying for Blue-breasted Quail.*

\* PLAIN BUSH-HEN (*Amaurornis olivaceus*)

*Heard on Bougainville at Arawa, and in the hills on New Ireland.*

\* WHITE-BROWED CRAKE (*Porzana cinerea*)

*Heard in waterside vegetation en route to Garu, and also near Arawa.*

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)

*One near Limbin at about 900m on New Ireland was unexpected, flushing from damp fields.*

**Charadriidae**

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*)

*A small flock at Tunuru on Bougainville, and a couple at Momote on Manus.*

**Scolopacidae**

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*)

*Some folks saw 16 at Walindi, and there were a couple at Momote on Manus.*

**Sternidae**

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Sterna bergii*)

*A few off Walindi and on Tong Island.*

BLACK-NAPED TERN (*Sterna sumatrana*)

*One over en route to New Hanover, but only a brief flight sighting.*

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

*One off Walindi. This is the race longipennis of SE Asia.*

BRIDLED TERN (*Sterna anaethetus*)

*Tom saw one en route to Tench.*

BLACK NODDY (*Anous minutus*)

*Common on Tench where they were nesting, and also a few en route to New Hanover.*

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus*)

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

WHITE TERN (*Gygis alba*)

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

**Columbidae**

**I** ROCK (FERAL) PIGEON (*Columba livia*)

*Birds at Lorengau may well be the real feral pigeon, which is very scarce in PNG overall, (and there was excitement in Kavieng where two had just showed up.)*

SLENDER-BILLED CUCKOO-DOVE (*Macropygia amboinensis*)

*Common on the Bismarcks, the sexual dimorphism is quite striking.*

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO-DOVE (*Macropygia nigrirostris*)

*Common on New Britain where we had good views of this rich rusty cuckoo-dove, much smaller and redder than the Slender-billed and with a finely barred tail.*

MACKINLAY'S CUCKOO-DOVE (*Macropygia mackinlayi*)

*Nice views near Arawa, and again on Tong Island, this is mainly a small island endemic.*

PIED CUCKOO-DOVE (*Reinwardtoena browni*)

*Head on New Britain at Kerevat, and marvellous views on New Ireland where Heidi found us a perched bird after I had taped one in for lovely flight views. A really striking species.*

STEPHAN'S DOVE (*Chalcophaps stephani*)

*We did well for them this trip, with superb looks on New Britain with both males and females in the track.*

NICOBAR PIGEON (*Caloenas nicobarica*)

*One of the birds of the trip, we had great looks at 3 adults inland of a beach on Restorf island, then over 20 on Tench where they were nesting in the coconut palms. A great bird.*

SUPERB FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus superbus*)

*Heard in the Bismarcks, and a male on Manus on the very last morning.*

WHITE-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus rivoli*)

*It was proving hard to see, but a male flew through and was then scoped for wonderful views near Limbin. The breast crescent is pure white here, quite unlike mainland birds.*

**E** YELLOW-BIBBED FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus solomonensis*)

*This was pleasant bonus on Tench, where I showed the village lads a picture and they took us to a fruiting tree nearby, where one of this diminutive small island dove showed very well. Also heard on Tong.*

CLARET-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus viridis*)

*Great views of a male sat up on Bougainville.*

**E** KNOB-BILLED (RED-KNOBBED) FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus insolitus*)

*Fairly common on New Britain with some wonderful looks around Garu, and a few on New Ireland.*

PACIFIC IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula pacifica*)

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

**E** RED-KNOBBED IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula rubricera*)

*Fine views on New Britain and New Ireland of this striking bird, with the very distinct rufigula subspecies on Bougainville. One on New Hanover was by a nest we later discovered from the photos, and a village girl there had a small juvenile.*

**E** FINSCH'S IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula finschii*)

*Heard on New Britain, then a great sighting of one sat up on New Ireland, with a fly-by again later on that day. Always a scarce and elusive sub-canopy bird, one of my favourites with that great growling call.*

ISLAND (GRAY) IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula pistrinaria*)

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

**E** BISMARCK (BLACK) IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula melanochroa*)

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

TORRESIAN (YELLOW-TINTED) IMP.-PIGEON (*Ducula spilorrhoa subflavescens*)

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

PAPUAN MOUNTAIN-PIGEON (*Gymnophaps albertisii*)

*A flock of 14 on two days on New Ireland only, it is high altitude species here, unlike on mainland New Guinea.*

### **Cacatuidae**

**E** DUCORPS' (SOLOMON'S) COCKATOO (*Cacatua ducorpsii*)

*Quite common on Bougainville and very corella-like, a Solomon's endemic.*

- E** BLUE-EYED COCKATOO (*Cacatua ophthalmica*)  
*Still quite common around Garu, we got some fine views.*

### **Psittacidae**

- E** CARDINAL LORY (*Chalcopsitta cardinalis*)  
*Common on Buka and Bougainville, basically a Solomon's endemic.*
- RAINBOW LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)  
*Seen on each of the big islands.*
- PURPLE-BELLIED (EA. BLACK-CAPPED) LORY (*Lorius hypoinochrous*)  
*They were quite common on New Britain and have a great call, whilst we had a few sightings in the lowlands of New Ireland.*
- RED-CHINNED LORIKEET (*Charmosyna rubrigularis*)  
*This was common along the Limbin Road, with over 100 one day, attracted to the flowering trees there.*
- RED-FLANKED LORIKEET (*Charmosyna placentis*)  
*Small numbers on the Bismarcks and Bougainville, and some good scope views of both sexes in the coconut flowers.*
- E** DUCHESS LORIKEET (*Charmosyna margarethae*)  
*This scarce Solomon's endemic gave great looks at a flowering tree in Arawa town, with few at Tunuru later.*
- BUFF-FACED PYGMY-PARROT (*Micropsitta pusio*)  
*Great looks at them foraging like nuthatches at Garu, they eat the lichen on the branches and the genus are the world's smallest parrots*
- E** MEEK'S PYGMY-PARROT (*Micropsitta meeki*)  
*We did well on Manus with a fine one along the pitta-trail, then scope views on the last morning of the this endemic, which can be hard to see well.*
- E** SINGING (SONG) PARROT (*Geoffroyus heteroclitus*)  
*We left it late, after a brief glimpse at Kerevat, then had some great looks up in the hills near Limbin.*
- ECLECTUS PARROT (*Eclectus roratus*)  
*Very common on New Britain, much scarcer on Bougainville and New Ireland, a superb bird with an astonishing sexual dimorphism.*
- E** GREEN-FRONTED (BISMARCK) HANGING-PARROT (*Loriculus tener*)  
*A strange call on New Hanover had me peering up into a big tree, and this species came bulleting out for a flight glimpse for a few! Always a hard bird to get.*

### **Cuculidae**

- BRUSH CUCKOO (*Cacomantis variolosus*)  
*Quite common on all the big islands, with the Bougainville birds having a very distinctive call.*
- SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*)  
*Several fine views on Bougainville, the species is a migrant from Australia and one bird at Kisas village on Buka was clearly of this race.*
- \* ASIAN KOEL (*Eudynamys scolopacea*)  
*Heard on the Bismarcks and Bougainville.*
- E\*** VIOLACEOUS COUCAL (*Centropus violaceus*)  
*Aargh. Well, we heard them really well on New Britain but sadly with none close enough to lure into view, in fact they often seem to take exception to tape and disappear! They are always elusive and need a bit of luck to see well. Only heard once on New Ireland where they are much scarcer.*
- E** PIED (WHITE-NECKED) COUCAL (*Centropus ateralbus*)  
*Good views of this endemic on both New Britain and New Ireland.*

### **Strigidae**

- E** MANUS HAWK-OWL (MANUS BOOBOOK) (Ninox meeki)  
*Ron found us one perched up in a very hard to see spot in a bamboo thicket at dusk after the pitta trek #1, but views were somewhat limited. We stopped on the way back into town and heard another immediately, then Aaron found one sat on a palm frond and we had great looks at this rather gingery colored species with the heavily streaked front. It was the fourth and final boobook for the trip. Hawk-Owl is already used to for two quite different owl genera and we have a well-established and appropriate local name in boobook.*
- E** BISMARCK HAWK-OWL (BISMARCK BOOBOOK) (Ninox variegata)  
*The third boobook of the trip, coming in right away for a great look, the wings drooped down on either side of the branch as it grunted away. This should really be called the New Ireland Boobook, as it does not occur on New Britain as was at one time thought.*
- E** NEW BRITAIN HAWK-OWL (N.B. BOOBOOK) (Ninox odiosa)  
*The first boobook of the trip, still hanging on at a site I found in April, where they are regrettably busy hacking it all down. It responded at once with a pair flying in, and we had a nice scope view of the male sat up high and calling constantly.*
- E** SOLOMON HAWK-OWL (SOLOMON BOOBOOK) (Ninox jacquinoti)  
*Bosco spotted this one from the pick-up, sat up in hole in a huge tree near Morgan and peering out on a strange heavily overcast afternoon where it got dark really early. We had terrific scope views of the bird. This is a potential split (Bougainville Boobook) as the two other insular races in the Solomons look very different and may have significant vocal differences too. One of the birds of the trip for sure.*

### **Apodidae**

#### GLOSSY SWIFTLET (Collocalia esculenta)

*Common on New Britain and New Ireland, with Bougainville birds having a white rump. They were nesting in the Japanese barge tunnels near Rabaul.*

#### WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET (Aerodramus spodiopygius)

*Sparse on New Britain and common on New Ireland and Manus.*

#### MAYR'S SWIFTLET (Aerodramus orientalis leletensis)

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

#### UNIFORM SWIFTLET (Aerodramus vanikorensis)

*Common on New Britain, sparse on Bougainville and a few on New Ireland, very brownish above. None on Manus this time but we spent little time in the open.*

### **Hemiprocnidae**

#### MOUSTACHED TREESWIFT (Hemiproctus mystacea)

*This striking species was seen on all the big islands, this race being somewhat smaller than mainland birds.*

### **Alcedinidae**

#### COMMON KINGFISHER (Alcedo atthis)

*Nice views at Walindi and on a couple of the creeks on Bougainville.*

**\*** VARIABLE (DWARF) KINGFISHER (Ceyx lepidus)

*Heard on Manus, one zipping right by but staying out of sight!*

**E** NEW BRITAIN (WHITE-MANTLED) KINGFISHER (Todarhamphus albonotatus)

*This very uncommon bird showed very well at Kerevat and was even taped calling, a good pick-up as it always a bit tricky to find.*

**E** ULTRAMARINE KINGFISHER (Todarhamphus leucopygius)

*Fantastic views of a male near Arawa, which was I think found by Ellen. Also heard at Tunuru.*

#### COLLARED KINGFISHER (Todarhamphus chloris)

*Oh boy, this taxonomy is a mess- 49 races, two being supposedly sympatric on New Ireland, New Britain birds having very well coloured rusty underparts and distinct calls, birds on New Ireland looking like a big Forest Kingfisher etc. Splitting is way overdue, but for the record we saw: tristrami on New Britain, nusae on New Ireland and alberti on Bougainville*

BEACH KINGFISHER (*Todirhamphus saurophaga*)

*This great bird showed very nicely on Restorf Island, then one was sat on roadside wires on Momote on Manus as we headed to the airport. It was also heard at Dalom and the little island of Balum off New Hanover where we had lunch. A bird on Tong had a white head with a sizeable dark eyestripe.*

SACRED KINGFISHER (*Todirhamphus sanctus*)

*A few of this Australian migrant on New Britain and Bougainville.*

E BUFF-BRSTD. (BLACK-HD.) PAR.-KINGFISHER (*Tanysiptera sylvia nigriceps*)

*This fine bird showed very well at Garu, on a track I found in April, and was heard at a couple of other sites including Kerevat. It is clearly an insular allospecies of Buff-breasted P-K, with a black cap and slightly different call.*

**Meropidae**

RAINBOW BEE-EATER (*Merops ornatus*)

*Seen on all the major islands, a winter migrant from Australia.*

**Coraciidae**

DOLLARBIRD (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

*Just one on Manus, where it is a rare winter migrant from Australia.*

**Bucerotidae**

BLYTH'S HORNBILL (*Aceros plicatus*)

*Small numbers on all the major islands except Manus. The wings make a loud and distinctive whooshing in flight.*

**Pittidae**

b SUPERB PITTA (*Pitta superba*)

*This rare and spectacular pitta has got hard these days, all the former sites along the main road have seemingly gone, so now it's a 3km march through rough muddy tracks to access a site. Some of us got brief looks that first afternoon as they called around us, and the repeat next morning was essentially a replay, they were very hard to see in the dense growth. We heard at least 3 birds here, and I felt somewhat guilty about harassing such a rare and endangered species for so long trying to see it.....*

\* RED-BELLIED PITTA (*Pitta erythrogaster*)

*A site on New Ireland had 3 birds calling and we almost saw one till a local guy came down the track at exactly the wrong moment and it flushed from close at hand. Damn!*

**Hirundinidae**

PACIFIC SWALLOW (*Hirundo tahitica*)

*Small numbers on New Britain, Buka and Bougainville, but none seen on New Ireland or Manus.*

**Campephagidae**

YELLOW-EYED (BARRED) CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina lineata*)

*A female on Buka and 4 birds on B'ville.*

E WHITE-BELLIED CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina papuensis*)

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

CICADABIRD (*Coracina tenuirostris*)

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

E SOLOMON ISL. (BLACK-BEL.) CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina holopolia*)

*Great views of two males near Arawa, which came in nicely to the tape.*

VARIED TRILLER (*Lalage leucomela*)

*Common on all the big islands but none seen on Manus.*

**Cisticolidae**

GOLDEN-HEADED CISTICOLA (*Cisticola exilis*)

*Nice looks at Kokopo, then some very odd sounding birds near Limbin on New Ireland which had a call quite like the harsh note of Tawny Grassbird.*

### **Sylviidae**

AUSTRALASIAN REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus australis*)

*This interesting taxon was seen and heard at Kokopo, then again at Arawa. There are suggestions that it may actually be a split from Australasian Reed Warbler, which was itself split from Clamorous Reed.*

ISLAND LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus poliocephalus*)

*A couple seen at altitude near Limbin.*

\* TAWNY GRASSBIRD (*Megalurus timoriensis*)

*Heard calling from rank grass near Walindi at Numundo.*

### **Rhipiduridae**

NORTHERN FANTAIL (*Rhipidura rufiventris*)

*Just a few seen in New Ireland near Limbin.*

WILLIE-WAGTAIL (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

*This was seen or heard on almost every day of the trip.*

E BISMARCK FANTAIL (*Rhipidura dahli*)

*Great looks at one of this scarce endemic in forest near Limbin, and some nice tape made.*

E MANUS FANTAIL (*Rhipidura semirubra*)

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

RUFIOUS FANTAIL (*Rhipidura rufifrons*)

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

### **Monarchidae**

ISLAND MONARCH (*Monarcha cinerascens*)

*Lovely looks on Tong, and also seen on our lunch island off New Hanover and on Tong, a classic small island species.*

E BOUGAINVILLE MONARCH (*Monarcha erythrostrictus*)

*Well, everyone got to hear it and a few saw the one that came in to take a look at us. My previous site is degraded and we were a tad unlucky here.*

E MANUS (ADMIRALTY PIED) MONARCH (*Monarcha infelix*)

*Great looks at the pitta site, with a juvenile with a tiny white wing patch and pinkish chest patch for good measure. This species has a strikingly white undertail with a narrow dark tip, and like all the pied monarch radiation is quite scarce.*

E BLACK-TAILED (BISMARCK PIED) MONARCH (*Monarcha verticalis verticalis*)

*One was seen briefly at Kerevat, then two showed quite well with a mixed flock near Limbin, though I still need a good tape of the bird. It is always a shy low-density species and quite hard to find.*

E BLACK-AND-WHITE (SOLOMON'S PIED) MONARCH (*Monarcha barbatus*)

*We worked really hard for this in the dense tangle near Morgan, and finally it came good and came in and really showed off, just as I was giving it up. It's a striking pied monarch with big white shoulder patch, again a very sparse and low density species.*

GOLDEN MONARCH (*Monarcha chrysomela*)

*Common and very visible on New Ireland, much more orange-headed than the mainland birds.*

E STEEL-BLUE (SOLOMON'S SATIN) FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra ferrocyanea*)

*Good looks at Kisas village on Buka, it really is like a very bluish Satin Flycatcher.*

SHINING FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra alecto*)

*A few on New Britain, also singles on New Ireland and Manus.*

E DULL (LESSER SHINING) FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra hebetior*)

*One came in briefly near the New Britain Boobook site, then got driven off by Shining Flycatcher. We heard it at a couple of other New Britain sites as well.*

### **Petroicidae**

BISMARCK FLYCATCHER (NEW SPECIES) (*Microeca* sp. nov.)

*Woooo! This undescribed species sat up and posed for us near Limbin, and we got the first ever photos of this brown and white Microeca type which has to date been seen just 6 times- 4 here (3 by Phil along this road!) and twice on New Britain. See my note in Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club. We had TWO basically undescribed species on this trip, both on New Ireland!*

### **Pachycephalidae**

GOLDEN WHISTLER (*Pachycephala pectoralis*)

*Heard up at Kerevat and on New Ireland (race *citreogaster*), where they would not respond to tape of Australian birds. Seen nicely on Manus, subspecies *goodsoni*. 64 races are currently included in this species complex.*

BLACK-TAILED (MANGROVE GOLDEN) WHISTLER (*Pachycephala melanura*)

*Heard on Restorf, then a pair seen very nicely on Balum, our lunch island off New Hanover.*

### **Nectarinidae**

BLACK SUNBIRD (*Leptocoma sericea*)

*Common on the Bismarcks.*

OLIVE-BACKED (YELLOW-BELLIED) SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris jugularis*)

*Quite common on the Bismarcks, Bougainville and Manus,*

### **Dicaeidae**

**E** RED-BANDED (BISMARCK) FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum eximium*)

*It took a while, but everyone (including Tom eventually) got nice looks at this attractive little flowerpecker with the red spot on the grey chest band of the male.*

**E** MIDGET FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum aeneum*)

*We got good looks at a few of this tiny bird on Buka and Bougainville.*

### **Zosteropidae**

**E** BLACK-HEADED WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops hypoxanthus*)

*Three at Kerevat were a good find as it is scarce in the hills of New Britain, then it was quite common near Limbin and we saw a few on Manus.*

**E** YELLOW-THROATED WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops metcalfei*)

*Common and quite vocal on Buka and Bougainville, probably the commonest passerine endemic there.*

### **Meliphagidae**

**E** ASHY MYZOMELA (*Myzomela cineracea*)

*We had good looks at this quite large drab endemic around Garu and at Kerevat.*

RED MYZOMELA (*Myzomela cruentata*)

*They were common going up to the Lelet Plateau in the flowering trees, somewhat duller coloured than the mainland New Guinea birds and perhaps an allospecies, the Red-tinted Myzomela.*

**E** NEW IRELAND (OLIVE-YELLOW) MYZOMELA (*Myzomela pulchella*)

*This is an uncommon and elusive New Ireland endemic bird, but we did well for them on the Lelet Plateau with some nice looks.*

**E** SCARLET-BIBBED (SCLATER'S) MYZOMELA (*Myzomela sclateri*)

*Endemic to small islands off the Bismarcks, we had very good views on both Restorf and Big Malo Malo, where they were terrifically active around the blossoming shrubs.*

**E** EBONY (BISMARCK BLACK) MYZOMELA (*Myzomela pammelaena*)

*Another small island endemic, we saw them on Tench, where one was nest building. There was a single on New Hanover which was unexpected as this is large island, and then on nearby Balum and finally on Tong.*

**E** SCARLET-NAPED MYZOMELA (*Myzomela lafargei*)

*This was a piece of luck on Buka, where one sat up for scope views, it is an elusive species and readily missed.*

**E** BLACK-BELL. (N.B. RED-HEADED) MYZOMELA (*Myzomela erythromelas*)

*Another rather elusive species, we had fantastic looks at a black and red male near Garu, the only one we saw. I dipped on this one in April.....*

- E** WHITE-NAPED (MANUS) FRIARBIRD (*Philemon albitorques*)  
*Common and noisy on Manus, but can be tough to see well and it was really only by the boat launch on Momote that we got good looks. If only that wretched New Ireland Friarbird could have performed as well...*
- E** NEW BRITAIN FRIARBIRD (*Philemon cockerelli*)  
*We saw a few around Garu and Kerevat, and heard one at the hill view point above Rabaul. They call monotonously long before dawn at Walindi, on Phil's first visit he spent ages tracking this nocturnal caller down and was not impressed when he eventually found the culprit!*

### **Dicruridae**

- E** RIBBON-TAILED (PARADISE) DRONGO (*Dicrurus megarhynchus*)  
*Showy and noisy, an *astrapia*-like drongo endemic to New Ireland where it is localised in good forest.*
- \* SPANGLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus bracteatus*)  
*Heard on New Britain.*

### **Artamidae**

- E** BISMARCK (WHITE-BACKED) WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus insignis*)  
*We did well for great views of them, with 4 birds along the Kulu River road, hanging on as their habitat vanishes, then a few on the Lelet Plateau.*

### **Corvidae**

- TORRESIAN (BISMARCK) CROW (*Corvus orru insularis*)  
*An obvious split, more distinctive than some of the Australian corvid species- short wings, distinctive flight, very different vocals, distinct habits. It is strange it has not yet been split, I must find time to write it up!*

### **Sturnidae**

- METALLIC STARLING (*Aplonis metallica*)  
*Common throughout with some big colonies of hanging nests seen on New Hanover and Big Malo Malo.*
- SINGING STARLING (*Aplonis cantoroides*)  
*Also common throughout but in much smaller numbers than the Metallic.*
- ATOLL STARLING (*Aplonis feadensis*)  
*A real special bird of tiny, remote islands, we had them very well on Tench with at least 18 birds. Adults have a piercing yellow eye and immatures have a greyish one.*
- E** BROWN-WINGED STARLING (*Aplonis grandis*)  
*Just a few of this localised Solomon's endemic on Buka and Bougainville.*
- E** LONG-TAILED MYNA (*Mino kreffti*)  
*The short-tailed Long-tailed Myna in quite common on the Bismarcks, Buka and Bougainville. Another name is needed as this one is inappropriate, Coates suggests Island Myna.*

### **Passeridae**

- I** EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*)  
*A major surprise for Phil in April was seeing Eurasian Tree Sparrows at Kimbe, their only Papua New Guinea site, where it is a new arrival. They are known from Biak in West Papua but these are the first for PNG and we twitched them on the way to the airport.*

### **Estrildidae**

- BLUE-FACED PARROTFINCH (*Erythrura trichroa*)  
*Heidi and Ellen saw one near Limbin which I regrettably missed, it would have been a new New Ireland bird for me.*
- HOODED MUNIA (*Lonchura spectabilis*)  
*Nice looks in long grass at Kokopo.*
- E** MOTTLED MUNIA (HUNSTEIN'S MANNIKIN) (*Lonchura hunsteini*)  
*Kavieng airstrip is the place to see this very localised endemic to northern New Ireland, and we had good views on two occasions. There is seemingly an introduced population in the Carolines, which some list as a distinct subspecies, yet it is supposedly only there since the 1930's- something wrong here, and what a weird species to introduce, it is not known as a cagebird these days. One little orni puzzle it would be good to solve.....*

- E NEW IRELAND MUNIA (FORBES' MANNIKIN) (*Lonchura forbesi*)  
*This is a very scarce endemic on New Ireland, with immatures of other mannikins having a superficial resemblance to it and sometimes misidentified e.g. I doubt Kavieng records of it. We found some small groups on the Lelet Plateau and got some good views, the bright chestnut back and black undertail with black head really show well.*
- E NEW HANOVER MUNIA (*Lonchura nigerrima*)  
*This is one that Clements for some reason best known to himself has split; I remain to be convinced as the call is very like Hunstein's and the bird is basically that species but with a black head. Whatever, they are quite common on New Hanover and we saw them well.*
- E BISMARCK MUNIA (BUFF-BELLIED MANNIKIN) (*Lonchura melaena*)  
*These are now quite common around Numundo and also at Hoskins airstrip, much more so than some years back when they were quite hard to find. They are also on New Ireland and we found about 20 south of Kavieng, with really vivid reddish tails and strongly red-buff underparts. I first found them on New Ireland in 1999, and suspect this is either a new subspecies or the same as the mysterious taxon *bukaensis* that was described from Buka but which has not been seen for some years. It is no longer known at the airstrip there, which was the type locality.*

### **MAMMALS**

- E ADMIRALTY CUSCUS (*Spilocuscus kraemeri*)  
*One poor little captive at Lorengau Hotel was being exported to Japan by a volunteer from there! I suspect it would end up as dinner in Port Moresby.....*
- E ADMIRALTY FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus admiralitatum*)  
*This may be the diminutive flying-fox taxon on Tench.*
- E SOLOMONS FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus rayneri*)  
*Small numbers around Arawa are presumably this species.*
- GREATER FLYING FOX (*Pteropus neohibernicus*)  
*Still quite common on the Bismarcks despite being good to eat.*
- COMMON DOLPHIN (*Delphinus delphis*)  
*Fifteen off Kimbe Island were a treat, and 6 on the way back from the Tench looked to be the same species.*

### ***Additional Comments***

Our first afternoon on Port Moresby saw us do the sightseeing thing and visit the spectacular Houses of Parliament, Koki stilt village and Ela Beach, adding Great Frigatebird, Yellow-tinted and Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Singing Starling and House Sparrow to the list.

Next morning due to an afternoon connection to Hoskins we visited the grounds of the PAU and were rewarded with some excellent birding: Australasian Grebe, Nankeen Night Heron, 3 Pied Heron, Little Egret, Great Egret, Intermediate Egret, Cattle Egret, Pac Black Duck, 80 Wandering Whistling-Duck, a single Plumed Whistling-Duck (6th record for PNG), some 6 great Spotted Whistling-Ducks (for the Whistle-Duck trifecta), 1 pr. Green Pygmy-Goose, Purple Swampphen, White-browed Crake heard (and seen by Heidi), Comb-crested Jacana, Masked Lapwing, Whistling Kite, Brahminy Kite, Black Kite (POM), Variable Goshawk, a super pair of Papuan Frogmouth, Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Doves, Common Kingfisher, Sacred Kingfisher, Rainbow Lorikeet, Brush Cuckoo heard, Pheasant Coucal, White-breasted Wood-swallow, Rainbow Bee-eater, Dollarbird 1 imm., Pacific Swallow, Blue-winged Kookaburra for some, Black-f Cuckoo-shrike, White-b Cuckoo-shrike, Golden-headed Cisticola, White-throated Gerygone 1 seen and 2 heard, (Phil's first record from here), Willie-Wagtail, Green Figbird, Brown Oriole, Helmeted Friarbird, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Hooded (by rice fields en route) and Black-backed Butcherbirds, Singing Starling, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Grey-headed Mannikin.

One other natural object of interest was a big waterspout as we came away from New Ireland towards Tench, thankfully not heading our way!  
PG Viti Levu July 07.

*pgi07*