

WEST NEW BRITAIN

AUGUST 15-23, 2013

LEADER: DION HOBROFT

COMPILED BY: DION HOBROFT

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC.
2525 WALLINGWOOD DRIVE, SUITE 1003
AUSTIN, TX 78746
WWW.VENTBIRD.COM**

WEST NEW BRITAIN

AUGUST 15-23, 2013

Making the most of our afternoon in Port Moresby on a Saturday afternoon, we spent a couple of hours exploring the grounds of the Parliament House—a most spectacular building in its own right. The birding was quite good and we enjoyed excellent views of Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest and Sacred kingfishers, Rainbow Lorikeet, Figbird, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, and Yellow-tinted Honeyeater.

Our travel morning to West New Britain went like clockwork. After checking into the very comfortable Walindi Dive Resort, we were out in the afternoon getting acquainted with the special birds of New Britain. A great afternoon began with point-blank views of exquisite Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrots feeding on lichen. Then we scoped a pair of Violaceous Coucals allopreening; these are striking birds, with orange eyes, pale-green facial skin, and enormous violet bodies. A local man, Joel, located a day-roosting New Britain Boobook for us—a small, largely chocolate-brown and white hawk-owl that is often a very tricky endemic to see well, if at all. After this, dozens of Eclectus Parrots, beautiful Blue-eyed Cockatoos, stunning Purple-bellied Lorries, Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon, Knob-billed Fruit-Dove, Moustached Treeswift, several very tame Variable Goshawks, and a fly-by male Song Parrot made for a great afternoon.



Buff-faced Pygmy-Parrot at Walindi (Dion Hobcroft)

The next morning we explored the Garu Wildlife Management Area which protects primary forest and contains several hot springs. The Melanesian Megapode utilizes the geothermal heat to incubate its eggs buried in the soil—a unique reproductive strategy in the world of birds. Exploring one of these egg-laying areas, a couple of megapodes fluttered up, perched, and allowed good scope views. With persistence we scoped the shy Black-capped Paradise-Kingfisher, played for and observed the shy Velvet Flycatcher, found our first endemic Pied Coucals, and were tantalized by the elusive Black-tailed Monarch. Also new for our trip list were Collared Kingfisher, Rainbow Bee-eater, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Ashy Myzomela, Cicadabird, Spangled Drongo, Northern Fantail, and the endemic Red-banded Flowerpecker. Driving through the oil palm plantations produced an abundance of Stephan's Doves—one of the few forest birds that has adapted well to the vast oil palm plantations. We also enjoyed outstanding views of Black Bittern, Pacific Black Duck, and a juvenile Rufous Night-Heron.

The afternoon session took us to Kulu River, a narrow riparian forest strip. With heavy thunderstorm cloud cover, it was as if the birds had gone to bed early. White-browed Crakes and Rufous-tailed Bush-hen were vociferous in the rainy conditions. A couple of Slender-billed Cuckoo-Doves took gravel from the road and we had a great flock of Buff-bellied (Bismarck) Munias. A pair of Spotted Whistling-Ducks was also of note.

We were on the boat at first light heading to Restoffen Island in Kimbe Bay, hoping to find the much anticipated Nicobar Pigeon. Arriving early paid dividends when we found our first pair of Nicobars feeding on the tide line. They showed well in beautiful light, with their lanceolate neck plumes and green iridescence. On the beach we spotted a brief Melanesian Megapode, a Stephan's Dove, our first of several Sclater's Myzomelas, and numerous Island Imperial-Pigeons. Exploring the island's interior, we had several more excellent views of perched Nicobar Pigeons. We had good success with Mangrove Golden Whistler and, after a lengthy runaround, had some timid Island Monarchs yield themselves to the binoculars. It was the Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove that was the tough nut to crack; we could only sight them in flight, as they hunkered in the densest thickets. With the tide receding we walked along the shoreline and scoped a stunning Beach Kingfisher. Snorkeling activities commenced and folks enjoyed an abundance of colorful fish and corals right next to the boat. With strong winds preventing our attempt for pelagic birding, we cruised along the coast back to the resort. This produced several sightings of Black-naped, Siberian Common, and Great Crested terns; a single female Lesser Frigatebird; a solitary Ruddy Turnstone; a couple of Siberian Whimbrels; a handful of Gray-tailed Tattlers; a couple of Common Sandpipers; both white and dark morph Pacific Reef-Herons; and a Little Egret.

Following a delicious lunch and a siesta we explored the Numundo Cattle Ranch—an area of tall grassland and small pools. First we found a White-browed Crake and several Australian Reed-Warblers. Then we had a major stroke of luck, finding an adult Yellow Bittern that was seen in flight three times—a real rarity in New Guinea. As if all of our Christmases were coming at once, up flew a covey of King Quail, always a difficult bird to see anywhere in the world. Then the leader heard some unusual vocalizations emanating from the back of the paddock. The hunch proved correct when three Papuan Grassbirds were located and photographed. There have been no recent reports of this species in New Britain, so it was an exciting discovery of this endemic subspecies whose vocalizations are mentioned in

The Birds of Melanesia as unknown. A Buff-banded Rail performed well in the scope, and then a flock of nearly 100 Tree Martins turned up. It had been an extraordinary afternoon.



Papuan Grassbird at Numundo (Dion Hobcroft)

On our last full day in West New Britain we elected to visit a new location called Boku in the morning and afternoon. A network of trails gave access to the bird-rich forest interior. The morning was highlighted by a perched Variable Dwarf Kingfisher, great views of perched Pacific Baza and, after a lengthy duel, views of both Black-tailed Monarch and male and female Velvet Flycatcher. The afternoon produced a pair of Bismarck Hanging-Parrots that some folks were lucky enough to see perched briefly,

a sneaky Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, and spectacular Blyth's Hornbills in great numbers, flying and perched all around us.

We squeezed in a couple of hours on our last morning before making the flight back to Port Moresby. Probably the most impressive aspect of birding in West New Britain is the sheer abundance of certain large forest birds. This morning was no exception as we looked through masses of Eclectus Parrots, Blue-eyed Cockatoos, Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeons, Blyth's Hornbills, and Metallic Starlings. The birds generate huge volumes of sound, making it a great wildlife experience. We finished up watching a pair of Ospreys at a nest, and had great views of both Dollarbird and Red-flanked Lorikeet. Then it was on the plane to Port Moresby to commence our mainland highlights tour.

Thanks to Joseph, Terence, Patrick, and Andrew, plus the great staff at Walindi for making our trip to West New Britain so pleasant.



Pacific Baza at Boku (Dion Hobbocroft)

BIRD LIST

Spotted Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna guttata*)

Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*)

Melanesian Scrubfowl (*Megapodius eremita*)

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

Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)

Little Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*)

Black Bittern (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*)

Yellow Bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*)

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

Pacific Reef-Heron (*Egretta sacra*)

Eastern Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis coromandus*)

Rufous Night-Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

Pacific Baza (*Aviceda subcristata*)

Variable Goshawk (*Accipiter hiogaster*)

Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*)

White-bellied Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

Buff-banded Rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*)

Rufous-tailed Bush-hen (*Amaurornis moluccana*) Heard only

White-browed Crake (*Porzana cinerea*)

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Grey-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*)

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

Black-naped Tern (*Sterna sumatrana*)

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

Great Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bergii*)

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

Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove (*Macropygia mackinlayi*)

Stephan's Dove (*Chalcophaps stephani*)

Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) Port Moresby

Nicobar Pigeon (*Caloenas nicobarica*)

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

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

Finsch's Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula finschii*) Heard only

Island Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula pistrinaria*)

Torresian Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula spiliorhoa*) Port Moresby

Yellowish Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula spiliorhoa subflavescens*)

Brush Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*) Heard only

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*)

Australian Koel (*Eudynamys cyanocephalus*) Heard only

Violaceous Coucal (*Centropus violaceus*)

Pied Coucal (*Centropus ateralbus*)

New Britain Boobook (*Ninox odiosa*)

White-rumped Swiftlet (*Aerodramus spodiopygius*)

Uniform Swiftlet (*Aerodramus vanikorensis*)

Moustached Treeswift (*Hemiprocne mystacea*)

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Variable Kingfisher (*Ceyx lepidus*)

Blue-winged Kookaburra (*Dacelo leachii*) Port Moresby

Forest Kingfisher (*Todiramphus macleayi*) Port Moresby

Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*)

Beach Kingfisher (*Todiramphus saurophagus*)

Sacred Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sanctus*)

Black-backed Paradise-Kingfisher (*Tanysiptera sylvia nigriceps*)

Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*)

Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

Blyth's Hornbill (*Aceros plicatus*)

Blue-eyed Cockatoo (*Cacatua ophthalmica*)

Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

Purple-bellied Lory (*Lorius hypoinchrous*)

Red-flanked Lorikeet (*Charmosyna placensis*)

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

Singing (Song) Parrot (*Geoffroyus heteroclitus*)

Eclectus Parrot (*Lorius roratus*)

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

Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (*Chlamydera cerviniventris*) Port Moresby

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus flavescens*) Port Moresby

Rufous-banded Honeyeater (*Conopophila albogularis*) Port Moresby

Ashy Myzomela (*Myzomela cineracea*)

Black-bellied Myzomela (*Myzomela erythromelas*)

Helmeted Friarbird (*Philemon buceroides*) Port Moresby

New Britain Friarbird (*Philemon cockerelli*)

White-breasted Woodswallow (*Artamus leucorhynchus*)

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) Port Moresby

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

Varied Triller (*Lalage leucomela*)

Common Cicadabird (*Edolisoma tenuirostris*)

Mangrove Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala melanura*)

Green Figbird (*Sphecotheres viridis*) Port Moresby

Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus*)

Northern Fantail (*Rhipidura rufiventris*)

Willie-wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

Island Monarch (*Monarcha cinerascens*)

Black-tailed Monarch (*Symposiachrus verticalis*)

Shining Flycatcher (*Myiagra alecto*)

Velvet (Lesser Shining) Flycatcher (*Myiagra hebetior*)

Bismarck Crow (*Corvus orru insularis*)

Pacific Swallow (*Hirundo tahitica*)

Tree Martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

Australian Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus australis*)

Papuan Grassbird (*Megalurus macrurus*)

Golden-headed Cisticola (*Cisticola exilis*)

Metallic Starling (*Aplonis metallica*)

Singing Starling (*Aplonis cantoroides*)

Long-tailed Myna (*Mino krefftii*)

Red-banded (Bismarck) Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum eximium*)

Black Sunbird (*Leptocoma sericea*)

Olive-backed Sunbird (*Cinnyris jugularis*)

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

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

MAMMALS/REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS

Great Flying-fox (*Pteropus neohibernicus*)

Finsch's Monitor (*Varanus finschii*)