Introduction

Just to make things clear from the outset, this was no ordinary Papua New Guinea birding tour. It has to be said that we were exceptionally lucky with some very difficult birds. I am yet to find a trip report that has encountered five species of Owlet-Nightjar on a tour like we did! So maybe we were unique in that regard. However it wasn’t just with the little nocturnal devils that we got lucky. Many people judge the success of a PNG trip by the number of Birds-of-paradise seen, this trip recorded 24, with 22 of those seen, and both Melampittas (one seen, one heard only) also
recorded. However, many other rarities were scored including New Guinea Harpy Eagle, Doria’s Hawk on a nest, Dusky Woodcock perched just after dark, Papuan Whipbird seen, all three Jewel-Babblers seen, Cinnamon and Bronze Ground Dove seen, as well as super views at the uber-cryptic Painted Quail-Thrush and Northern Scrub-Robin, and many more. We also scored those old favourites such as Southern Crowed-Pigeon, Hook-billed Kingfisher and Shovel-billed Kingfisher. We recorded 364 species in 18 days, which is pretty amazing considering we didn’t visit New Britain or any Bismark Archipelago Islands. It’s hard to believe that any trip to this fabled island could go any better, and I struggle to think that we could repeat this haul of rare and scarce species. Oh well, we may as well try!

Daily Log

31st August 2009. Port Moresby

In fairy tale fashion the Air Niugini flight landed on time and everyone managed to clear customs and find their baggage without hassle. Making use of this efficient head start, we quickly checked into our accommodation, greeted Wesley and Susan who had just come back from a relaxing sojourn at Loloata Island, and without further hesitation drove off to the Pacific Adventists University for a first taste of New Guinea birdwatching. En route to PAU we came across Australian Kite, Grey-headed Munia and Golden-backed Cisticola in the grasslands at the end of Moresby’s Airport. We had not yet stepped off the bus when our first mob of lifers was spotted in a fig tree above the vehicle. Brown Oriole, Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird and the local race of Green Figbird with its peculiar greyish head.

The ponds were, as usual, swarming with birds and with the aid of scopes we systematically teased the goodies out of a melange of waterfowl finding Purple (Black) Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Pacific Black Duck, Comb-crested Jacana, Australian Grebe, Pied, Rufous Night and Great White Heron, Cattle and Intermediate Egrets, a massive flock of Wandering Whistling Ducks with 3-4 individuals of the vagrant Plumed Whistling Ducks present amidst. The latter were definitely in great condition, able to fly and stood out like a sore thumb among the Wanderings with their pale crowns and long pale flank plumes, a great record for PNG. A pair of Whistling Kites chased by Masked Lapwings caused the resting flock to take on the wing in alarm, whilst many Black Kites swarmed higher above.

Birding the stately fig trees in the campus gardens we encountered a few more exciting species such as Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Black-backed Butcherbird, Streak-headed Honeyeater, Red-cheeked Parrot, the highly desirable and sexy Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Pied Imperial Pigeons and several Sacred Kingfishers. At the edge of PAU, the experimental agricultural plots were being attended by large flocks of Grey-headed Munias, colorful Rainbow Bee-eaters, several flying Zoe’s Imperial Pigeons, Helmeted Friarbirds, beautiful Brahminy Kite and pestering Torresian Crows.

A short walk to some of the less conspicuous dams in and around the campus produced no less than 6 individuals of the much sought after Spotted Whistling Duck. Australian Ibis and Straw-necked Ibis were here too, and not a few yards away, our first pair of Papuan Frogmouth put our necks to the test. Before leaving the campus we visited an active Fawn-breasted Bowerbird bower, and en route struck it lucky with a perched Forest Kingfisher sighting, a pair of Blue-winged Kookaburras perched nearby calling loudly whilst a Dollarbird was warming up doing its aerial loops as dusk crept upon us. With glee and a full bag of great goodies we trickled back into Moresby for a much-yearned shower, a scrumptious supper and a well deserved rest.
1st September 2009, Port Moresby to Kiunga

Whilst waiting for the airport shuttle to appear, we enjoyed our first views of Yellow-fronted Honeyeaters and polychromatic Rainbow Lorikeets at the hotel’s courtyard. Checking in for our flight was straightforward, and with time in hand we escaped the bustle of the waiting lounge and birded the airport perimeter for 40 minutes, adding Singing Starling, House and Eurasian Tree Sparrow, a lonely Pacific Golden Plover, several Straw-necked Ibis and a few Grey-headed Munias before we boarded the plane.

The flight was, as always, enthralling and inspiring, and our reception committee in Kiunga - an Australian Pratincole - most welcoming. A slight drizzle had settled in, but soon after checking into our accommodation and devouring a needed lunch, we rolled out of Kiunga toward the famous KM 17 along the Kiunga – Tabubil road. The drizzle would not subside, but neither did our drive and luck during this afternoon, and as time ticked by we relentlessly clocked up our first Birds-of-Paradise (BoP’s), namely Glossy and Trumpet Manucodes, as well as the stellar Greater BoP’s. Grey-headed Cuckoo-shrike, Golden-faced Myna, squadrons of (Western) Black-capped Lory, handfuls of the minute Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot and colourful splashes of Orange-breasted Fig Parrots were sighted too from our observation knoll. Across the glade from where we stood, a Variable Goshawk and a stunning Pacific Baza glided past. Lesser Black Coucals were seen emerging from the undergrowth, searching for a high perch to drip dry, and a noisy Australian Koel flew over us.

The walk into the forest was spiced up by a brief encounter with a flock of New Guinea Babblers and on our way out by the cracking whip-lash calls of a Blue Jewel-Babbler that never graced us with even a glimpse. But by then we were well hyped-up and reeking testosterone after having soaked up the best ever display of Greater BoP’s even Samuel (our local guide) recalled. For some reason, this afternoon (possibly fuelled by the on and off drizzle), several males (8+) had gathered at the large display tree. The silence of the forest would break into a glorious collection of wails and hoots as one male after another broke into call, and display, and yet more followed. Several females were drawn to this spectacle, and a few encouraged the males in their bawdy behaviour. After more than 40 minutes standing and taking turns behind the scope, we watched the males ruffle up, sway, quiver, shiver, and approach any female (and occasionally juvie male) within reach. Those lucky to have courted the ladies attention would proceed to get closer, more amorous, and before we knew it, on two different branches we witnessed various full copulation acts and rituals. The rituals included head-peckings, head-sways, peck-slaps and ended with a mounting. It was EVERYTHING that Birds in Paradise evoke, it felt as good as anything witnessed in Attenborough in Paradise except it was better, real and happening above and around us. The problem was….how to top this one…where to from here now?. Truth is, this trip just kept on getting better and better...
As we eagerly waited for dusk to settle in, with the prospect of catching sight of a few nightjars, we enjoyed the mutterings of a distant Papuan Boobook, a Marbled Frogmouth doing its antediluvian mumbles, and Red-necked Crake breaking into hysterical squeaks by the road verge. The drive back was unfortunately marred by more rain, and after some final shopping in Kiunga, and some dinner, we all slumbered to bed with a wicked grin on our faces.

2nd Sept 2009, Kiunga to Ekame

A midnight check of the trip checklist revealed that the Greater BoP memories were in fact real, not a dream! Phew, what a relief! Back to sleep, 4 more hours of sleep till dawn. By 05h30 we had tucked into breakfast and were boarding our boat to proceed down the Fly River, and its tributaries, to a new camp located deep in the jungle, named Kwatu. Bushhens were calling from the grassy verges and Rufous Night-Heron shadows drifted by headed to their day roosts. The cruise was steady and comfortable, and as daylight improved, myriads of pigeon and parrot flocks crossed the river and congregated along the snags dotting the banks.

Cruising up the Fly we enjoyed a bombardment of new and great looking species such as raucous Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, histrionic Eclectus Parrots, Yellow-streaked Lories, Red-checked Red-flanked Parrots and a feeding pair of Large Fig-Parrots. Flocks of Papuan Mountain, Collared and Pinon Imperial Pigeons were spotted throughout the cruise. Singletons and sometimes pairs of Black-billed and Great Cuckoo-doves crossed in front of us, with the occasional Stephan’s Dove darting past too. Snags and fruiting trees were well attended by an array of desirable fruit doves, Pink-spotted, Beautiful and Orange-bellied of which we managed to truly enjoy.

A fleeting glimpse of a Southern Crowned-Pigeon that would not stay perched whetted our appetite, but only for the need of better more prolonged views, though today was not to be our day for this species. Prehistoric looking Blyth’s Hornbill flew over our heads bringing a feel of eerie remoteness to our whereabouts. The first sightings of the odd looking Bare-faced Crow were sounded, several pairs of Boyer’s Cuckoo-shrikes, the first gigantic Moustached Tree-Swift, and endemic Papuan Needletail and gaudy Golden Mynas, kept us well entertained through the morning.

A stop half-way, allowed us to visit a very special display area, this was none other than the tangled realm that a crimson gem, known as King BoP, calls home. Stealthily, we approached the observation arena, and within minutes we were being treated to this magnificent creature. One is initially drawn to the alluring depth of its red, the seemingly silky effect that blurs all contours on its body, but as you scope him carefully your brain gets teased and distracted by the two electric whirls suspended off the tip of its trailing filo-plumes, which vibrate furiously with every turn, move or shake. Then there is a ruffle of feathers in its forehead and a drippy orange bill to contend with. By now you are either sobbing or wrapping yourself to the scope as the next participant is trying to peel you off to have a look. Fortunately, they stayed, and stayed for long enough to allow all of us soaking views. We even had a short and sweet display take place as the drab female ever rocked up, a stirring love dance within the “King”. There was immediate consensus that this would be a tough contender to shove off the best bird of the trip ranking. Whilst waiting for another testosterone spike, a Little Paradise-Kingfisher graced us with its presence, an unexpectedly easy going Gray-headed Whistler turned up too, whilst a pair of male and female Frilled Monarchs became most curious and a Yellow-bellied Gerygone was also taped in. In the depths of the forest, Hooded Pitta and Black-sided Robins were heard calling.
Lunch awaited us on arrival at Kwatu, the new camp on the hill. Whilst still basic, and communal, (long house style), built on cleared ground, with no grass, and thus less, much less, chiggers! This camp is now endowed with two pit latrine blocks, a very basic cold shower, a communal feeding station, and cubicle styled rooms, overlooking great forest. The birdlife around camp, the calming river that flows past, and a Raggiana BoP nest building in the trees next to camp, made it rather pleasant and easy to endure.

In the afternoon we took a very rewarding walk along the many trails surrounding Kwatu. It started with grand views of a Rufous-bellied Kookaburra perched near camp, then followed by a succession of great-looking Monarch sightings, namely, Black-faced, the elegant Spot-winged and later on a female Golden Monarch. A Painted Quail-Thrush calling right next to the trail spiked our hopes, but in true jewel-babbler fashion it slipped away under our noses. En route to a Hook-billed Kingfisher territory we racked up a mixed bag of great goodies such as Rufous Shrike-Thrush, Green-backed, Large-billed and sprightly coloured male Fairy Gerygones, Yellow-bellied Longbill, Shining Flycatcher and were tortured constantly by the elusive Sooty Thicket-Fantail. Finding the Hook-billed was not an easy task, but after a good hours effort its perch was located and the bird scoped for everyone to enjoy. Soon after, a rather skittish Common Paradise-Kingfisher added the last touches of colour to our bird filled day.

A short boat foray in search of Southern Crowned Pigeon failed to meet up with the beast itself, but produced startling views of Azure Kingfisher, and an enjoyable visit to a massive Metallic Starling colony where we teased out the rarer Yellow-eyed Starling, and returning to camp scored a gliding Large-tailed Nightjar.

After supper, under a clouded sky and armed with spotlights and torches, we ventured into the forest surrounding Kwatu. We walked stealthily, ears peeled, listening for a specific call, blocking out the numerous Marbled Frogmouth and Southern Boobook calls that bubbled around us. Every now and then a Black-billed Brush-Turkey would release some tension and break into raucous call, startling everyone. Eventually, the thin calls of a Starry Owlet-Nightjar began to sound, quietly we approached the area, lured it in and painstakingly waited several times for him to perch out in the open, above, near us, anywhere would have been great so long it was in the open. Some saw its shadow darting through the trees, others enjoyed hearing its velvety wing flaps overhead, we all endured the elation of hearing him calling above us, but after a long while of tease and wait, the bird would not come in low enough and we called off our efforts given the sensitivity of this species. Approaching Kwatu, just as we were exiting the forest, a Wallace’s Owlet Nightjar called from the trees above camp, this bird was only seen departing by the lucky few at the fore of the line. Its calls tortured us through the night as it serenaded us from the forest below. Later that night, a slow but loud booming call was heard in the distance, very Bittern-like, possibly Forest Bittern as Jimmy our local guide suggested.

3rd September, Kwatu – Kiunga

Whilst still chewing our breakfast, we boarded our boat and slithered quietly downstream through the rising mist towards a nearby embankment. Breaking through the canopy, against the skyline a white straight snag stood out like a flag pole, but before I was able to point it out to all present, a glowing black-and-yellow Twelve-wired BoP emerged from the bottom of it and proceeded to climb it, perching, preening, scanning and wailed a few calls. A female arrived shortly, and although it did not stay for long, it sparked the male to do some of its spectacular pole dancing tricks. Few birds and displays top this one, and for a few brief seconds I almost forgot we still needed to find ourselves Southern Crowned-Pigeon. As quietly as we got here, and
once everyone had been satiated with great views and were now convinced there are no 12 wires in its tail.... but 10!! we headed upstream on a two hour search after powder-blue “dodos”.

Chugging upstream, scanning every overhanging branch, snag and likely fruiting tree we came across several Palm Cockatoos, several pairs of Pesquet’s Parrots, a nesting Marbled Frogmouth, heard Dwarf Cassowary, flushed off the bank a superb Great-billed Heron, and caught a distant and all too brief glimpse of a Flame Bowerbird flying across the river. Additions to the Pigeon and Fruit-dove tally included Wompoo Pigeon, Ornate, Superb and Dwarf Fruit-doves, the latter showing exceptionally well at the trees around Kwatu.

Dawn slipped through, and the morning became hot, but micro-seconds before we almost called the search off...a shape and a familiar crash was glimpsed and heard at the bank. We offloaded Jimmy on the bank and moved to the opposite side for views of a bird flying off. Silence, quiet, stillness ensued, and then nothing until a big fanged grin popped out of the forest attached to Jimmy who with flailing arms beckoned us to his embankment. Disembarking on slick mud was not easy but everyone was psyched about what they were about to see. Soon enough we sludged our way to the spot, scoped a monster Southern Crowned Pigeon and crumbled in a heap of relief, joy, elation and unmentionable expletives. Little did we know that the day was going to yield another 7 sightings of this of this memorable and magnificent Columbid...each one better than the last.

A great flock gathered whilst we were watching the pigeon and from it we managed to tweak out Variable Pitohui, Hooded Monarch, White-bellied Ticket-Fantail and Rusty Mouse-Warbler. Further downstream an explosion of calls gave away the whereabouts of a large flock of White-bellied Pitohuis which we thoroughly enjoyed until their limelight got stolen by yet another flock of New Guinea Babblers, both of them showing exceptionally well.

With ample time before lunch we indulged in a long walk near the old Ekame Camp. The main target here was Blue Jewel-Babbler, but we were pleasantly distracted by a calling Red-bellied Pitta. The group positioned itself, the guide called out where it would pop up, and after a few bursts of playback, some waiting, hope and attention...those who were still alert watched the bird pop into a gap, look straight at us, and vanish from sight. A long and arduous chase ensued for those who had missed it, and whilst better views were not had, everyone was satisfied, of course no one knew yet that in Varirata we would be literally kicking one off the path. More Crowned-Pigeons added to the excitement and a breeding Superb Fruit Dove was seen twice attending the nest. But most exciting was finding a Wallace’s Fairy Wren feeding at a dried leaf clump well above our heads, a bird everyone loved getting glass on, and most struggled even though it was quasi static. A canopy dweller, this species can be almost mythically tricky to get good views of on a bad day. Eventually a Blue Jewel-Babbler started calling nearby and with the help of some skilled tactics we got him to run around us in circles. This particular individual was not very forgiving, but at least managed to show well enough to a few lucky ones. As it is the norm with these birds, we would carry on trying them again and again, attempting to get every soul in the group a satisfactory look.

Soon after lunch we were packed, ready, and cruising back to Kiunga, thinking, why on earth are we leaving? Everyone could have stayed another night! The cruise back was serene and replete with all the common stuff we had been enjoying over the past days, a Grey-headed Goshawk and a flock of White-spotted Munias were new and welcome additions, and no one tired of watching the many Hooded Butcherbirds and Dollarbirds that adorned the trees along the way.
4th September, Kiunga – Boystown Road – Tabubil.

By 06h00 we were approaching The Knoll, at Boystown road. The birding here is all about patience, endurance and good hearing. Playback is key to draw out the nuggets that move in the depths of this forested roadside. Using Dwarf Koel calls we gathered Mimic Meliphagas as well as Black Sunbirds, but soon enough the distinct cuckoo-like shape of Dwarf Koel tore in and perched out in the open. His better rendition lured in other excitable species such as Long-billed Cuckoo, Brush Cuckoo, White-crowned Koel and Common Koel. An out of reach, far and very vocal Magnificent Riflebird never stopped calling, but getting closer to him was physically impossible. Female Raggiana’s and Greater BoP’s flew over our heads constantly, and Crinkle-collared and Trumpet Manucodes were spotted perched on numerous occasions. But the awaited Flame Bowerbird was not to display its stuff today as it had the previous week.

Large flocks of Papuan Mountain Pigeon tore through the skies in great light, Zoe Imperial-Pigeon were ubiquitous, and a few Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeons were spotted feeding high in a fruiting tree. Mobs of Greater Streaked, Dusky, (Western) Black-capped and Red-flanked Lories kept us on our toes throughout the morning, and a spike of excitement arose when a flock of Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrots squeaking like ‘squeaking’ mice honed into a nearby tree.

A Long-tailed Honey Buzzard and several Brahminy Kites soared inquisitively above us. It was getting hot and maybe time to walk a bit. Attempts to drag out a calling Yellow-billed Kingfisher failed, but whilst trying, some caught sight of a Lowland Peltops. Our next quarry, Emperor Fairy-Wren was far more forgiving, and provided great looks after some trying. However, some of us are still trying to comprehend the depth of that indigo colour. With the heat building on, it made sense to dive into the forest for one more assault on Blue Jewel Babblers, the Yellow-billed Kingfisher was seen darting through, but never stopping again, more New Guinea Babblers inspected us and a pair of Blue Jewel-Babblers had started taking notice of our playback. Minutes later, two jewel babblers were on top of us, around us and one of them even came flying directly towards us, missing our heads only narrowly. The BEST views ever had rolled on for everyone present, with the birds walking on logs, strutting on leaf litter and showing off their glorious colours on clear ground. Nothing less than a ROYAL BLUE treat.

Before reaching Kiunga, we tried the local airstrip for one more lifer, and although the grass had been mowed, burnt and bundled, we flushed two Red-backed Buttonquails at the bottom of the runway. White-breasted Wood Swallows and the usual Aussie Pratincoles where in attendance too. Lunch in the form of a packed lunch was had en route, and after a burst tyre, stopping for a few truck convoys, loads of dust, a few thousand Willy Wagtails, some more Pacific Swallows and oodles of Brahminy Kites we reached km 120, at the banks of the massacred Ok Tedi river. Today the localised race of Little Ringed Plover where not here, nor anywhere nearby. Black Butcherbirds and a few Pesquet’s Parrot’s flying in the distance was all the afternoon produced.

A funny moment ensued when I was busy explaining how the many years of mining and chemical extraction techniques had decimated the waters and life of the Ok Tedi river, and how worthless scanning its banks for Salvadori’s Teals would be, bla, bla, bla. Then all of a sudden Elena called out a Crocodile, which I nearly scorned at first and subsequently and almost choked on when I
too spotted the 2.5 m predator. How bad can fish stocks be in the Ok Tedi? After a long day, we pulled into Tabubil, showered, had supper, and planned the next day’s assault on Dablin Creek.

5 September 2009, Tabubil - Dablin Creek and Ok Menga

Every effort and idea we could come up to try access Ok Ma road was met with disgust and disinterest by the mine authorities in charge of repairing the bridge. The bridge, which washed away earlier on the year, now kept us marooned on the opposite bank, unable to visit the number one Shovel-billed Kingfisher stake out in the country. This was beyond depressing.

Soon after breakfast we headed for the steep slopes of Dablin Creek. It actually is shocking to watch the forest disappear under the axe of subsistence farmers growing vegetables for the town of Tabubil. The mind boggles when you think how each spade full, inches closer to extirpation the life of hundreds of magnificent creatures that so evidently occur in these wooded slopes. Having said this, to the first timer, Dablin Creek remains a superlative birding venue and a full morning here was indeed filled with great birds and excitement. Lesser Black Coucals and Rufous-tailed Bushhens greeted us with their calls on arrival. The steep hill required a slow ascent but our relaxed paced gave us ample chances to tease out every noisy culprit from bushes lining the water pipeline track. With patience and determination, we unravelled Scrub, Plain, Obscure, Green-backed, Yellow-gaped and Spotted Honeyeaters from bushes and flowering canopies, Mountain Meliphagas and Red-throated Myzomelas as well. Black Fantail gave us a good run around, but eventually showed up nicely. Mountain Peltops were present in good numbers, presiding over the snags that tower over cleared lands. Here too we managed to tape in the highly sought after White-eared Bronze Cuckoo and later had Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike and the western race of Dusky Lory which was rather interesting to watch. Brief views of Doria’s Hawk were had flying over the ridge and a New Guinea Little Eagle was enjoyed by everyone on our way back to the car.

At the top of Dablin Creek a receding patch of less degraded forest remains relatively intact. Here we birded some hidden and muddy trails connecting with no less than three different flocks and teasing out great sightings of the delightful Dwarf Whistler (a crowd favourite) the also stunning Sclater’s Whistler, Golden and Black-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, Papuan Myzomela, the delicate and retiring White-rumped Robin, several Black Monarchs, Northern Fantail, Island Leaf Warbler, Mountain Gerygone, and as we were leaving the forest the hulking black mass of a large Meyer’s Goshawk seen flying away below the canopy. Whilst watching and waiting for more sightings of Torrent Larks along the stream that comes down the creek, we heard Greater Melamptitta calling not far from us, but despite our stealthiest effort to bring him out, he would not cross the river, yet again finding ourselves stranded on the wrong bank. As we were about to leave Dablin Creek, a surprise and unexpected sighting of an Oriental Cuckoo capped our morning effort. After lunch, and a short rest at the hotel back in Tabubil, we drove to Ok Menga to try our luck with Salvadori’s Teal. The
afternoon was wet and gloomy, however patience paid off and eventually we nabbed this river specialist duck as a pair was spotted feeding on the rivers’ edge, working the flows and eddies in search of invertebrates. Torrent Flycatchers were seen everywhere in good numbers and a Water Dragon perched on a rock in the middle of the stream was quite a sight. From our observation rock we watched a large flock of “chimney” Blue-collared Parrots fly over, a bird very un-prone to perching by the looks of things. A Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo (photo above) was also observed foraging along a fence line. More Pesquet’s Parrots were spotted, and this time we were able to enjoy them distantly, but in clear scope views.

In an attempt to decide how to best target the next morning’s quarry, Shovel-billed Kingfisher, we stayed till dusk at both ends of the Ok Menga tunnel, hoping to hear a call or two from this most wanted Kookaburra, but sadly no calls were heard. Marbled Frogmouths did start calling, and Papuan Booboks as well, but in trying to playback the latter I pressed by mistake an old recording of Papuan Hawk Owl, low behold a reply hoot of the latter species sounded from the forest above. A few more strophes and before we knew it, in the spotlight we were all staring at a magnanimous Papuan Hawk Owl, its back to us but looking straight at us...totally jammy!! Thank you very much...we will take that as well. Supper and celebratory beers were enjoyed back in Tabubil.

6th September 2009, Tabubil – Ok Menga and Dablin Creek

I shudder to think that it did cross my mind that we should go after Papuan Boobok instead of shooting up to Ok Menga in the rain. It somehow felt more plausible getting the Boobok, than Shovel-billed Kingfisher. But I guess the Boobok was too easy, thank goodness I stuck to the original plan. Minutes later we were parked at the Ok Menga tunnel entrance, soaking in drizzle, waiting for a sign of kingfishers about. Papuan Booboks and Marbled Frogmouths were at it, but the piping calls of our yearned Kookaburra were distinctly missing. My heart deflated as the first cacophonies of Rainbow Lorikeets and Dusky Lory’s sounded the end of dawn. A morning chorus earned prominence relentlessly as time ticked by. Scanning in despair, wondering where else this bird could be, I noticed a fast flying shadow in the mist, rising from the understory to perch on a branch...just like a fat kingfisher would come to perch. A quick glance through my bins confirmed it, all I could blurt was a Shufflewilled Klingwisher!! and before I could get it right I was tearing out of the van all participants into the rain lining them up behind the scope. Fighting poor light, drizzle, misted up lenses and a backlit subject we all saw enough of it to agree that it was indeed Shovel-billed Kingfisher before it dove back into the forest. Its trajectory was a tell tale though, and its silence now made some sense...could it be nesting again? if so this would be her second attempt this year. The good news though, was that we knew where she tried to nest the first time as we had found the nest on our previous tour. We made our way into the forest, set up scopes on the nest hole entrance and waited absolutely quiet and still for the light to improve. As time waned by the shape of the bill, eye, throat and facial pattern became evident, everyone managed to soak the features and appreciate the magnitude and essence of this great find.

Breakfast was delicious, and spirits were sky high. A second day at Dablin Creek was on the cards and as we drove there, a soggy-wet Brown Falcon perched by the road was a nice addition for the list. A gliding Long-tailed Honey Buzzard was stunning to watch as we slowly earned height along the Dablin Creek track. The sights were set on better views of any BoP’s attending the usual fruiting trees. Whilst one scope was trained on the usual fruiting tree, the others scanned furiously a kaleidoscope of leaves and branches in search of motion or fruit. After a short while, a different tree loaded with ripe fruit was located, and predictably the BoP party had gathered here. With patience and much determination, everyone rotated past the scopes and caught up
with more satisfying views of Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise (male and female) and glimpses of Carola’s Parotia.

For some reason, today the skies were very busy with stratospheric flocks of Blue-collared Parrots. A pleasant surprise was locating a Greater Black Coucal perched out in the open at the forest’s edge, whilst searching for White-shouldered Fairy Wrens. Noon was spent birding the track, sneaking up and down different trails and glades in search of bird activity. The weather was wet and horrid, worsening as the day progressed. But with patience and stamina we scored several flocks of Red-breasted Pygmy Parrots, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Rusty Whistlers and Crested Pitohui (heard), better views of Slaty-chinned Longbill, a darting flock of Blue-faced Parrot-finches, Black-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike and a striking western morph of Smoky Honeyeater, the second western morph found here in two days.

The jammy bird of the day was undoubtedly a startling Carola’s Parotia in full and immaculate breeding regalia, perched out in the open, in the barest most perfect snag one could ever hope for, but the best part of it was that it stayed for over 30 minutes. Like kids stuck to a candy shop window, we ogled, ravaged and drooled over the scopes taking in every detail, counting dangly bits, watching every ruffle, movement, glitzy iridescence...E-VER-Y-THING until the rain started and we literally got flushed out of Dablin Creek. Nevertheless, that was undoubtedly the best views ever had, wished for and hoped for a Carola’s Parotia. What a great day this was.


Today we started the day looking for Little Ringed Plover at the gravel pits near Ok Tedi. We only saw the bird flying on arrival, and subsequent searches for it proved futile as we raked the area. Our flight to Hagen was on time, and with a technical stop in Kiunga to pick up some more passengers, cargo, and some more great views of our friendly Australian Pratincole, the flight was painless and, as always, mesmerising as one flies over virgin jungles, expansive moorlands, alpine meadows and forests that cause the mind to wonder what and who lives down below, what and how much remains to be discovered.

A Brown Falcon, loads of Black Kites and an Australasian Pipit greeted us on arrival at Mt Hagen’s runway. After a bit of shopping we set course for Kumul Lodge, high in the misty highlands of the Enga province, at the foothills of Mt Hagen. On the drive up we encountered several flocks of Mountain Swiftlet, Long-tailed Shrike and a stunning adult male Papuan Harrier drifted over a roadside field. We arrived at Kumul Lodge in the late noon, but our meal awaited us, and friendly faces helped us with our suitcases to check into our rooms.
The arrival at Kumul is always a momentous occasion, everyone knows and feels they have just arrived at a special place, but how special it actually is remains a mystery until you are standing in front of the key attraction, the bird feeding platform. Words are never enough to describe this moment, this is the one place where the up-close and personal Bird-of-Paradise experience is outstanding. Our visit was no exception, I still find myself being hard pressed to stay silent as one fights back squeals of enjoyment caused by the undeniably cute Brehm’s Tiger-Parrot, the gaudy Smoky Honeyeaters and handsome Belford’s Melidectes feeding 3-4 m away from the balcony at eye-level. A supporting crowd composed of Island Thrushes, Gray-streaked Honeyeaters, Rufous-naped Whistler and the pied beauty of White-winged Robins worked the bushes and forest edge in a most entertaining manner. Then invariably, the big guns arrive! A collective group gasp, in unison, that would make anyone’s ears pop ensues. In front of us male and female Brown Sicklebill and Ribbon-tailed Astrapias took turns feeding on ripe papaya at the table, cameras went wild, tears welled in someone’s eyes, and most of us tried to make sense of what was being observed. Indeed, even a fruit dump like this is well worth watching when you are in Paradise! Those brave enough to peel themselves from the feeding table took a short stroll through the property in the afternoon, and in doing so were blessed with a few new encounters, of the rather handsome Plum-faced Lorikeet, Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, endearing Friendly Fantail, chunky Mountain Mouse Warbler, Large and Papuan Scrub Wrens. Before dinner, a short foray to a nearby spot along the road yielded our first sighting of Archbold’s (Mountain) Nightjar and an all too brief sighting of a Spotted Cuscus on the tracks leaving the lodge, evidently startled by our vehicle but quickly reacting and jumping into the verge. Heavy drizzle hampered our intentions to knob Mountain Owlet-Nightjar, but plans were laid for an early dawn chase, its calls were heard later in the night. Supper was abundant and delicious, and climbing into a warm bed (electric blankets!) once again...heavenly.

Male Brown Sicklebill, this year “regular” at the Kumul feeding table (J.Leveille)
8th September 2009, Kumul Lodge

A pre-dawn start saw the more determined souls in the group trudge into the forest in the cool hours of a drizzly morning chasing after Mountain Owlet-Nightjar. Response to playback was poor initially at the traditional sights, but eventually a response was elicited and soon enough we were shuffling in the dark, trying to secure good views of this elusive species. Glimpse views were had on one occasion before the bird was spooked away by an unfortunate branch snapping underfoot. Thereafter, the bird became very aware of our presence, hovering over our heads, calling within meters but staying clear from us and the spotlight.

The plan for this morning was to head to the town of Tonga, and try our luck at a Blue BoP in a new display tree. Generally speaking, this morning was nothing like our previous visit a few weeks earlier, when crippling views of this species were had several times over the course of a few hours. However, we did manage to sight briefly a female Blue BoP, heard the male calling throughout the morning, caught several sightings of Superb BoP flaring his chesty epaulettes, but not a whiff of Lawes’ Parotia or any prolonged looks at Blue BoP. The wait felt long and without the Blue “one” about, it felt endless and depressing. However, we did manage to add several species mucking about the shrubs and bushes around us such as Tawny (Papuan) Grassbird calling from rank grasses below, Hooded Munias nest building and feeding in the meadows and a very active group of White-shouldered Fairy-Wrens milling about. From the trees and canopies above us we teased out Brown-breasted Gerygone, Papuan Parrotfinch, Mountain (Red-headed) Myzomela, Marbled Honey-eater, Yellow-browed Melidectes and a single Slaty-chinned Longbill. En route to the lodge for lunch we added Great Wood-swallow and Slender-billed Cuckoo-dove to the morning’s bounty. The lunch interlude at the lodge was had overlooking the feeding table, which as always was being well attended by the usual suspects. Welcome additions however included a Chestnut Forest-Rail strutting under the table, a female Archbold’s Bowerbird, a brief sighting of a Crested Berrypecker by a lucky few, Mid-mountain Berrypecker, and for those who skipped the afternoon walk and slogged it at the feeding table, a rewarding Bronze Ground-Dove put up a starring appearance.

Shortly after lunch, we headed to Max’s Trail, otherwise known as Pigites Trail for the afternoon. Soon after commencing our ascent a pair of Blue-capped Ifritas startled the group with a stellar encounter. Some time was spent chasing after Blue-Gray Robin and Spotted Jewel-Babbler which did not really cooperate. However better luck was had with Lesser Melampitta, whom after a long spell showed to everyone present. Whilst teasing him into view we also enjoyed great views of a very dynamic Mountain Tree Possum feeding and scurrying through the branches above us. Stunning Regent Whistlers were soaked in as they flew in alongside with a pair of Tit Berrypeckers, always a crowd favourite. A Black Monarch was seen briefly in the area and a Dimorphic Fantail was also enjoyed by all. Superb views of Garnet Robin were had, as this energy-filled, minute arboreal robin strutted its stuff fanning its tail, calling its ear piercing song above us. Rufous-backed Honeyeaters were a last and most welcome addition to the afternoon list.

The better bird of the afternoon was well enjoyed through the scope, and it was none other than a displaying King-of-Saxony BoP. Perched atop a well-worn snag, patiently perched through swathes of mist, scanning the hills awaiting the moment when a female emerges to admire his repertoire. From below we ogled this magnificent creature, unfold its crenulated and mesmerising “antennae” giving them a good swirl, whilst bouncing up and down on his legs,
flashing its lime mouthparts and letting “rip” a stridulating insect-like buzz. Once again, simply a bird that needs to be seen to be believed.

King-of-Saxony BoP, defying everything NORMAL about bird looks, behaviour and glamour! (C.Boix)

Lesser Ground Robin was heard on our way out of the forest, but we had run out of time since we were headed to a very specific spot in the forest in search of Dusky Woodcock. The walk to the Woodcock display area was perfectly carried out, by taking turns at the front of the line everyone managed to get a glimpse of this elusive, crepuscular, and amazing bird. But if ground sightings were not enough, we struck it well lucky, when we positioned ourselves in front of a bare branch and waited patiently. As predicted, after having heard several calling individual flying over us, a Dusky Woodcock landed on the pre-empted branch, lights went on! Voila! In the scope, in the bins through camera lenses everyone enjoyed unique and crippling views of this rare bird (H.Cook, right), we returned for supper elated. Mountain Owlet-nightjars were heard in the distance, but none around the lodge, and with a long day planned for the following day, we opted to try for the following morning.

9th September 2009, Kumul – Kama (Lesser BoP)- Kumul
Oops!! We were all ready to roll but there was no staff about to serve breakfast. However, the mettle and resolve of this birding lodge showed immediately and an emergency plan was concocted. Soon enough breakfast was produced and we left with a minor 30 minute delay. The skies were cloudy and menacing with rain, so hopes that the Lesser Bird-of-Paradise would display till a bit later were reasonable. We tore down the tortuous roads towards Kama, rock-and-rolling along slippery and muddy tracks until we eventually reached our destination.

From the car we could hear the cacophony that the BoPs were already rousing, the rain had subsided, dawn was breaking and patches of clear skies were streaking through a leaden sky. The Lesser BoPs put out a remarkable display, showing off well, in the open and being visited several times by females which caused utter pandemonium in the ranks with ruffled feathers, calls and dances to sounding from all lekking males present. With this grand bird in the bag, a beautifully coloured morning, a fresh breeze and a great show...everyone felt content and relaxed. Ornate Melidectes was added, and superb views of several (+20) male Mountain (Red-headed) Myzomelas feeding at a nearby flowering bush were enjoyed by everyone. A Brown-backed Whistler was another welcome addition to the morning. Brush and Rufous-throated Cuckoos were heard through the course of the morning. A quick drive to a nearby marshy area yielded perfect views of the not so abundant Yellow-breasted Bowerbird, and phenomenal views of more male Superb BoPs in full display.

Returning to Kumul we stopped again at Tonga, hoping for better luck with Blue BoP, but once again neither Blue BoP or Lawes Parotia were about, however a chance encounter with an even rarer denizen took place as some of us lucked upon a breeding male McGregor's Bowerbird and enjoyed superb views of Black-throated Honeyeater, and Mountain (Gray) Gerygone. A flock of Red-collared Myzomelas was enjoyed during a stop en route to the lodge whilst calling for Mottled Whistler. The afternoon was spent back at the lodge, waiting out a torrential downpour that lasted the whole afternoon, clearing off for maybe half an hour before letting rip again. A few of us still managed to sneak in some birding during the rainy intermission and scored a crisp Black-breasted Boatbill, several Papuan Lorikeets, fleeting glimpses of Crested Satinbird, several Fan-tailed Berrypeckers, Orange-crowned Fairy-wren, Canary Flycatcher and great looks at a sedate pair of feeding Mountain Firetails under the feeding table.

At dusk, the group set off to a new site, were Mountain Owlet-Nightjars had been heard the previous night. A nice spot to place ourselves and wait for dusk to set in was found, instructions on how to proceed delivered, and THE TORCH handed over to our local guide, and we waited in silence. As the evening set in and the first calls were heard, a long duel ensued between the bird and the iPod. The first approach and fly-over got us all excited, but the pair that was calling and inspecting us appeared to stay out of reach. Every time the pair changed perch, fluffy wing flutters were heard above our heads. At one stage a micro-squeaky sniggering was heard directly in front of us, but despite much imploring to set the spotlight on it, the local guide dismissed it
tacitly it as a frog....unfortunately seconds later we all heard the “frog” fly off...and then the forest went quiet. We had evidently been spotted, caught out and left to play our silly games alone. Our hearts sunk as we heard the bird fly away...not a great way to end a day.

10th September 2009, Kumul to Port Moresby

In a last attempt to nab Mountain Owlet-nightjar, we headed out at 04h00am to the usual spots, a slight breeze, clear skies and a bit of a moon, was not bidding well on our side to either hear or hide from our quarry. No birds where heard calling anywhere, and it only got quieter. A change of strategy was necessary and thus we returned to last night’s spot in utter desperation. Half an hours effort, yielded nothing, we shifted slightly to a spot away from any moonshine...and suddenly, after a few bursts, the squeaking and twittering started above us, without hesitation the spotlight was switched on at the same branch were last night we suspected the “frog” had landed. FINALLY!! There it was perched, sedate, curious, fluffy and staring right back at us a perfect Mountain Owlet-Nightjar at last!!

It was only 05h00 and although dawn was slowly creeping in on us, we were stoked and charged up, ready for more. In a moment of madness or bravado (or some indefinable quality) it was decided to jump in a van and head out a considerable distance to a spot where on the previous tour a Feline Owlet-Nightjar had been heard. Once at the site, the first few strophes caused no reaction, but minutes later a very different growl worthy of inspection emanated from the forest not far from where we stood. We walked into the forest to the area where we thought the call had come from, pretty much blindly, switched off headlamps, allowed our eyes to adjust and played a few of the newly recorded calls. The silence was broken by a second even closer growl. My heart was racing so fast I could hardly think what to do next. Dick was certain he had heard something flutter in, scanning to my right a lump in a branch that I did not recall earlier now stood out. The spotlight was trained on it and for an all too brief moment the startled, glowing eyes of a massively-whiskered Feline Owlet-Nightjar was burnt into our retinas, as it inspected us and realised how close we were to each other, and took off. Elation and rampant euphoria ensued. This was our fourth Owlet-Nightjar of this tour, an amazing feat!
Back at the lodge, three Chestnut Forest-Rails were enjoyed below the table, and in order to have breakfast with peace of mind a roster was set to watch the most likely visitation perches of Crested Satinbird around the lodge, a bird that somehow had eluded being sighted at the feeding table but that frequents the Kumul knoll. Most of us had not yet tucked into our scrambled eggs when a sweaty and huffy member of staff announced that the Crested Satinbird was attacking its reflection at one of the bungalow windows. Instant exodus ensued, and shortly afterwards everyone was drooling at the sight of such a perfect creature. We all shuffled through the gallery and pathways of the lodge following the bird, like kids following a visiting elf, in awe, gob-smacked, measuring our step and advances, grinning and greedily seeking one more eye-filling look at it.
Male Crested Satinbird, teetering on the edges of ornithological illusion (H.Cook)

The remainder of a cold breakfast has rarely tasted as sweet, and soon after we set off for another morning climb up Max’s trail. The climb up to the higher reaches was momentously halted by a wonderful pair of Wattled Ploughbills feeding lazily at eye level, unconcerned by us and showing off beautifully their sexual dimorphic differences and his stunning pink wattles drawing the crowd’s admiration. An accompanying cast of Rufous-backed Honeyeaters, Tit Berryeckers, Mountain (Gray) Gerygone, several female King-of-Saxony BoPs, calling Black Monarchs and an alluring Spotted Jewel-Babbler had us pinned for a good hour to the one spot, where the most remarkable addition to the day’s tally was indeed a male and female Princess Stephanie’s Astrapia. Further on, a Mottled Whistler reacted to playback in instant fashion, allowing all sundry to enjoy cracking views of it. Towards the end of the morning whilst chasing after a Papuan and Buff-faced Scrub Wren flock, we came across several Black-bellied Cuckooshrikes, Black-breasted Boatbill and fleeting views of flying Papuan King Parrots. On our way back and out of the forest, we chanced upon a Lesser Ground Robin, but only a few managed to see it. Nonetheless, every one was rewarded with top notch views of a superb male Loria’s Satinbird, calling and feeding in the canopy. Before leaving the forest, a brief encounter with Mid-mountain Berryecker allowed most to catch up with this species, which showed so poorly this year at the lodge grounds.

After lunch we hesitantly left the sacred grounds of Kumul, a small, simple but massively charming lodge run by beautiful people and frequented by birds, most of the world can only dream of. The flight to Moresby was delayed initially by bad weather, and later by being overweight...thus our afternoon plans to visit PAU again were somewhat thwarted. All in all, a minor bother, considering we did eventually make it to Port Moresby and were now set to take tomorrows flight to Tari, and the famous Tari Highlands. Best of all, great news reached Bill, revealing that his wife’s biopsy was nothing to be concerned about.

11th September 2009, Port Moresby to Ambua Lodge
The flight to Tari was well on time, possibly because today we were flying Lady Carol Kedu, the one and only female parliamentarian in New Guinea. Lady Carol turned out to be a most nice, kind and interested person whom we had the chance to talk at length and discuss many aspects of PNG’s future. She was particularly fascinated by Tropical Birding’s dealings in the tropics and over the next couple of days, became a bit of a fan of our company, our bird sightings and the convivial chats we engaged in after supper at the lofty bar of Ambua. Another great advantage of flying with Lady Carol, was that her arrival prompted the most massive Huli Wigmen gathering I have ever seen at Tari, with dances, instruments, much bouncing and the most unbelievable headgear in the whole region. Truly inspiring and utterly spectacular.

En-route to Ambua we stopped at the Sooty Owl stakeout, being a bit late in the day it took some effort to get a reaction from Mr Owl, but eventually its dusky face peered out of the roosting hole and unfortunately flew off, still offering top notch views to all present. In trying to negotiate with the garden-owner a return to look for Papuan Boobok we became mesmerised in one of those typical mundane house-keeping tales that only would shape up in PNG. The owner of the farm was very apologetic, and suggested that we returned on Saturday instead of Sunday, given that he had to go visit a nearby clan to pay for compensation, as he had recently chased and treed a neighbouring clan member over a drinking dispute, but when he chopped the tree down, the poor treed fella slammed to the ground wrapped in branches and broke his arm. Oh deary me! Sunday then, it would not be. We were still laughing about this story, when a kilometre down the road we drove past a heavily armed platoon escorting a rather large pig back home. We were told that had been the talk of the valley, and that the armed escort had just recovered their pig from a neighbouring clan found guilty of stealing it, thus were now on their way back home after paying a visit to the thieving culprit clan. We dared not ask details!

When we eventually reached Ambua, its welcome cocktails, great vistas, stunning lounge and smiling faces made everyone realise we were in for a royal treat. This modern and stunning lodge seems like a fairytale, and somewhat unreal compared to the truly rural and traditional existence one sees all around you. It is still less than 100 years since these people first met a white man! Indeed, without much delay, after a scrumptious lunch we boarded our bus and headed for the hills for some afternoon roadside and forest birding.

The change of altitude, habitat and region produced the goods and we were soon dabbling in the identifications of Fairy and Yellow-billed Lorikeets, loads of Blue Gray Robins feeding on the roadside (as road works had tilled and exposed a lot of grubs), another pair of Wattled Ploughbill, loads of Blue-capped Ifritas, more Orange-crowned Fairy-wrens, White-breasted Fruit-Dove, Hooded Cuckoo-shrike, plenty of Papuan Lorikeets and a pair of Black-throated Robins. Shortly before reaching the lodge a pair of Orange-billed Lorikeets was added to the list, Plum-faced Lorikeets were enjoyed in good numbers, feeding in fruiting trees
But by far the most coveted and rewarding bird of the afternoon was a Papuan Treecreeper feeding for several minutes in a roadside tree whilst everyone had a superlative chance to admire this rare endemic.

A retiring and impossible Mountain Kingfisher called at dusk from the gulley across the lodges dining hall, and after supper we all enjoyed watching an industrious Papuan Boobok snatch moths at one of the dining halls corner lamps. In lieu of our early wake up call, enveloped in Papuan Frogmouth calls and the fresh drizzle mist that veils Ambua at night, we retired for a well deserved rest.


The group met at the helipad as the sun had yet to rise and mists were busy lifting, peeled ears and active scopes scanned the horizon for black blobs perched atop snags, it was indeed Black Sicklebill time. With luck on our side the first quasi ultra-sonic blips were heard from afar and the scopes soon found not one but three different Black Sicklebills, albeit at a fair distance. The joy of having found this awesome bird was quickly drowned by the calls of a Lawes Parotia nearby, however although we did not catch a glimpse of it, we did find a cripplingly beautiful male Short-tailed Paradigala near the lodge’s main building.

As soon as we had tucked into breakfast we headed for the hills, some in the party wanted to try their luck photographing King-of-Saxony BoP’s and Crested Berrypecker, whilst others were keener on sifting through the many skulking and harder bird species that make a living in the forest floors of PNG. Great views of Modest Tiger-Parrot kick-started the proceedings, swiftly followed by an all too brief and darting Forbes’ Forest Rail that would not be coerced to react to some playback. Minor consolation was achieved with a perched and scoped White-breasted Fruit Dove, but in all due respect, it was an Ashy Robin that placed us back on a good wicket. Leaving the area a Bronze Ground Dove darted across the trail never to be seen again, but before we could feel its void, a pair of great looking Lesser Melampitas were taped in.

A very kind and relaxed Short-tailed Paradigala “eye-ing” us out (C.Boix)
Extremely close views of a King-of-Saxony BoP were enjoyed, and unfortunately for those at the back at the line, only the forerunners managed a glimpse of the New Guinea Logrunner. In need of a morale booster, we deployed towards the heart of an old and well-known Spotted Jewel-Babbler territory. After a few bursts of playback the first reactions were heard and in no time an approaching pair of Spotted Jewel Babblers managed to hone in on us. The show was now officially on, and for as long as we played back their call intermittently, the male circled around us, five feet away, fanning his tail, jerking his head, showing its spots, its stuff, and strutting proudly its beauty.

We had hardly walked a few hundred meters away from this site, when from a mossy tangle of decaying trunks and roots an inconspicuous olive creature, larger than a berrypecker, emerged and headed for the canopy climbing up tangles, and disappearing into the canopy. At first no one clicked, and it took a while to compute that a female Papuan Whipbird had just jay-walked in front of us. Further on, the female and male rejoined and started calling nearby, and for 15 minutes of incessant search we agonised after a single glimpse of the male, but this was not to happen...today. Before we left the forest, another New Guinea Logrunner was sighted by some, but most of the group still needed to connect with this bizarre-looking bird.

Back on the road, our road walkers had managed to score great views of Ashy Robin as well, superb sightings of King-of-Saxony BoP and Ribbon-tailed Astrapias, as well as lucking onto a group of Crested Berrypeckers. Thus with happy souls and hungry tummies we drifted down to the lodge for lunch. The afternoon was languid, hot and not as productive, we did enjoy great opportunities to study many of the birds previously seen, and study at close range stunning species like Plum-faced Lorikeets, Papuan Lorikeets, Regent Whistlers, Crested Berrypeckers and a surprise Crested Satinbird female. We waited unsuccessfully for Grass Owls to emerge from the grassy moorlands at the Gap, but nothing appeared. Despite dusk and a chilly breeze slaughtering our chances to see properly, the excitement of a day that had yielded no less than nine different species of Bird-of-Paradise which kept everyone warm and merrily upbeat.
13th September 2009, Ambua Highlands

We started our explorations birding the Bailey Bridge Trail. Seconds after entering the forest a pair of NG Logrunners called nearby and were subsequently lured them into a beautiful open patch where finally everyone got their definitive view of this species. During the tape in, a passing Buff-tailed Sicklebill was heard too, but by the time we had clenched the Logrunner, the sicklebill was sadly not responsive any more. However, a very cooperative Forbes’ Forest Rail was coerced into view after some effort, and thankfully put on a sterling show for everyone. A distant Papuan Whipbird from the steep valley below, was rather tempting, but the chasm we had to ford to get to it, brewed some common sense. Birding the usual patch across the road, we managed to attend a great show at an old favourite territory, with Lesser Ground Robin hopping across the path fully relaxed. Later in the morning a similar performance by Lesser Melampitta was relished too, as we watched them shrug and hop with every “chip” as it walked along a log.

A long chase for views of Black Pitohui then unravelled, as these were calling high in the canopy and after several fly away views most resolved that would be the better views on offer for the day. However the chase did generate a smattering of other great sightings the better of them all, was a perched Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo which we managed to scope and admire for several minutes until it flew off. Walking back towards the lodge we added a flock of Varied Sitellas, a White-throated Needletail flying amidst a massive flock of Mountain Swiftlets, Black-bellied and Hooded Cuckoo-shrike to the days tally.

Birding after lunch slowed down to a freeze once again, and although we enjoyed supreme and closeby views of Orange-billed and Yellow-billed Lorikeets, Fairy Lorikeets and Plum-faced Lorikeets feeding in a large flock, the only birds worth mentioning this afternoon were another sighting of Spotted Jewel-Babbler, Crested Berrypecker and Yellowish-streaked Honeyeater, a canopy specialist that often gets ignored. Those who opted to visit the McGregor’s Bowerbird bower were pleasantly rewarded by a viewing of the bird itself. They also discovered that the recently vandalised bower was now being reconstructed, apparently an odd behaviour, since this species normally rebuilds elsewhere from scratch. Others, who stayed at the lodge met up with a great looking Papuan Whipbird male.

14th September 2009, Ambua Highlands to Moresby

With our flight departing at noon, the required drive back to Tari and the necessary 2 hour check in lead time to ensure you do not get bumped off this flight, we opted to visit a nearby farm where sightings of Blue BoP sounded like a grand way to end up our birding sojourn in the highlands. The visit was well worth every second, as we managed to scope two male Blue BoP’s and one female, all the while hearing their cool calls around us. A stunning male Short-tailed Paradigala was also enjoyed, Ribbon-tailed Astrapias a-plenty, a distant yet displaying Superb BoP, a female of the elusive Black Sicklebill flying by, and as total treat to end this superb show, two males and three females Lawes’ Parotia were enjoyed as they fed relaxed, displaying all their dangly-bits, flashing their awesome yellow mouthparts and “strobing” us with their iridescent plumage at every turn and change of position. Truly mesmerising. An extra bonus whilst shifting positions on the commanding grasslands overlooking the forest was flushing a pair of Brown Quails, Marbled Honeyeater and a flock of Western Mountain White-eyes.
Loud, flamboyant and mesmerising ...the incomparable Blue BoP (C. Boix)

For once the plane was well on time, the heavens clear and take off from the always busy town of Tari was thankfully uneventful. Mind you, flying at 9000 feet with a plane loaded of Huli Wigmen in full dress attire and feathered wigs bound to Moresby’s Independence Day celebrations was quite a sight. We were relieved that there was to be no clan dispute on-board!

After a brief snack we mingled with the newly arrived third departure Tropical Birding group, and set off towards mangrove and open grassland country. The drive there soon added Bar-shouldered Dove and plenty Peaceful Dove, Blue-winged Kookaburras, Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters, Helmeted Friarbirds, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike and several Australian Bushlarks, Australian Pipits and Golden-headed Cisticola. A flock of Pacific Swallows and Tree Martins had gathered over a burning patch of grassland, but a surprising probable Sand Martin was spotted a number of times diving in and out from the smoke plume and edges of the fire. Walking the grassland and mangrove edges we scored Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, a perched Papuan Marsh Harrier and many Torresian Imperial Pigeons and Crows.

The dried up pans and mangrove shores were being attended by a few shorebirds and we managed to get quite close views of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Masked Lapwings, Sanderling, Red-necked Stint, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whimbrel and Great Crested Tern out at sea. Returning to Moresby, a roadside stop produced Gray Shrike Thrush and an Orange-footed Scrubfowl.

15th September 2009, Varirata NP

Dawn met us at the camp grounds of Varirata NP, waiting for the first signs of activity near a flowering eucalypt. Dove and “parrot” traffic kept us busy most of the early hours with Pink-spotted and Beautiful Fruit Doves moving about, Zoe Imperial Pigeons calling and circling above tree tops, plenty of loud Eclectus Parrots, a pair of Papuan King Parrots, Black-capped Lorys and
Red-cheeked Parrots and Yellow-billed Lorikeets everywhere. Gliding Moustached Tree-Swifts, allowed for great close up encounters and appreciation of their sheer size. Eastern (Growling) Riflebirds were spotted and scoped in distant snags. Several Cuckoo-shrike species were recorded through the morning, most notably Boyer’s, Black and Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike. Yellow-billed Kingfisher was eventually found calling high in the canopy of a nearby tree. As the morning progressed and nectar production climaxed, our flowering Eucalypt drew in desirables such as Hooded Pitohui and Papuan Myzomela.

![Birds of Paradise](image)

**A pair of male Raggianna BoPs set the tempo and chord of Varirata’s dawn chorus (P.Oberer)**

Before it got too hot we immersed ourselves into the forest, we had yet to acclimatise to the light when a darting Black Berrypecker came snapping past us, shortly after our first Chestnut-bellied Fantail and White-faced Robin appeared and suddenly a most wanted Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher was spotted, scoped and thoroughly enjoyed. Walking the Tree House trail we lucked upon a calling Chestnut-backed Jewel-Babbler which after a short while of luring it did provide brief but clear views to some of the lucky few who had spotted its stealthy approach. Unfortunately as it ran out of cover and came upon a wall of eager birders and binoculars it veered wildly and wide around us and back into the depths of Varirata’s forests.

The remainder of the morning was spent walking several circular trails, bumping into countless flocks and flowering Eucalypts from where we were able to harvest a healthy bag of species such as Spotted, Frilled and Hooded Monarchs, Leaden Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Grey-headed Whistler, Pale-billed Scrub-Wren, Green-backed and Yellow-bellied Gerygone, Yellow-bellied Longbill and Dwarf Honeyeater. After lunch at the lookout point we followed a creek in search of Forest Bittern. Instead we encountered our first sighting of a roosting Barred Owlet-Nightjar, an incredible 5 species of these near-mythical nocturnal critters on one tour! Incredible, we had been blessed by the birding gods. We also encountered Red-bellied Pitta, Varied Triller, Yellow-eyed Cuckooshrike and enjoyed grand views of Raggianna’s Birds-of-Paradise. A fair amount of time was spent locating the whereabouts of a calling Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher that did not dignify us with a sighting.
Before leaving the park we visited a Doria’s Hawk nest, and enjoyed great views of a young individual, standing sentry next to the nest’s edge, awaiting patiently the delivery of some food by its parents, which were heard close-by but were never seen attending the nest. We ended the day birding the Eucalypt hills outside Varirata where among others we saw White-bellied Whistler, White-throated Gerygone, Pheasant Coucal and a flying Azure Kingfisher, before we returned to Moresby.

![A unique encounter with one of PNG’s most poorly known raptors, Doria’s Goshawk (C. Boix)](image)

16th September 2009, Varirata NP

Because today was PNG’s National Independence Day, some participants were drawn to attend its festivities. Others, on the contrary, stuck to the program and headed well before dawn towards Varirata NP. As we climbed out of the vehicle in Varirata NP a calling Black-billed Brush Turkey gave itself away, and we watched it cruising through the forest understory below us. Painted Quail Thrush calls got our attention for a few minutes until we realised it was walking away from us. The Raggiana BoPs were in good form displaying eagerly at the arena, and after several very satisfying moments with these birds filling the forest with their awesome wails...we returned to the car. A White-crowned Koel was located calling in a grove of pines near the vehicle.

We proceeded towards the Tree House trail, and soon after entering the forest we picked up the long drawn whistles of a Northern Scrub Robin. By sitting patiently and quietly, imitating its call we soon picked up its shufflings and were able to observe the bird from a fair distance. Interestingly, as the bird hopped and bounded through the leaf litter it must have landed on a cryptic pair of roosting Large-tailed Nightjars that spooked out, and flew off in search of a new roost site to slumber. The Robin was so shocked, neither it or its callings where heard for a while.
Suddenly, the ear piercing call of a Painted Quail-Thrush got us excited again, stealthily and keeping the tempo we walked towards it as we whistled back its call. For 35 minutes we stood motionless near a large tree stump hiding and controlling our moves, scanning and searching the leaf litter for clues. Whilst waiting a small ochre-brown, dove-like, creature torpedoed out of the creek below us and narrowly missed our heads with that flap and whistle characteristic of doves. At this point we were happy we had not shouted and were not surgically removing a dove from one of our eye sockets. Later, the culprit showed in a gentle manner as we picked the bumbling progress of a Cinammon Ground-Dove foraging on the ground close to where we were standing. Not long after the motion of a crisp, slinky and dazzling Painted Quail-Thrush was spotted high on the leaf strewn hill, zig-zagging the hillside, casually feeding and making progress towards us and our whistling. We thoroughly enjoyed each and every detail of this great bird until it found us and turned tail away from us. Amazingly, never in a rush, confident and reliant on how good its feather patterning aids him to melt into the background, simply walked away.

Soon after, a second Northern Scrub-Robin started calling nearby, and whilst approaching it we stumbled into a mysterious flycatcher that to date has defied identification by all experts. Not so, a darting Sooty Thicket-Fantail, a bird we had heard throughout the trip but not managed to set eyes on yet. A short sitting brought in the Scrub-Robin to walk directly in front of us, and for desert an Agile Wallaby pranced by.

A long and productive walk kept us busy for the rest of the morning till lunch. The star attraction was indeed a most welcome New Guinea Harpy Eagle that flushed off its perch, but we managed to watch as it glide into the next valley showing its massive bulk, silent motion, round and powerful wings, pale below and dark above....utterly majestic. As it left, the forest around us turned alive, trees and creepers quivering with bird movement and suddenly we found ourselves immersed in an almighty flock. As we skipped from one species ID to the next, we clocked our
first breeding male Golden Monarch, Black-faced Monarch, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Pale-billed Scrub-Wren, Rusty Mouse-Warbler, Rusty Pitohui, Gray Whistler, Red Myzomela, Yellow-bellied Canary, Fairy Gerygone, Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Frilled, Hooded and Spot-winged Monarchs. As the activity waned, we moved on, but soon came across a Spot-breasted Meliphaga feeding in a flowering tree.

A second flock was met towards the end of the morning, but the only species added to our impressive morning tally was Papuan Drongo and whilst we heard Black-fronted White-eye and Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot, we were unable to locate these in the canopy. Lunch was had with the rest of the group, which after the morning festivities at POM joined us for some afternoon birding. We targeted a few creeks in search of Forest Bittern, seen well a few weeks ago, and subsequently by participants on the third Tropical Birding tour to the island. But hard as we tried, we were unable to catch a glimpse. Nonetheless, we had awesome views of Barred Owlet Nightjar peering at us from the comfort of its roost entrance. The walk was then utterly hijacked by a bold Red-bellied Pitta that hopped and fed around us, completely trusting and unabashed by our presence. Hopes arose by a nearby Painted Quail-Thrush calling, but despite all our good efforts it never came in close enough to be seen. Some managed to get a fleeting glimpse of a Cinnamon Ground-Dove as it took off from the path and dove into the undergrowth lining the path.

Walking out of the forest, we watched a Lesser Black Coucal cross the path and clamber up a nearby tree before disappearing into its canopy. As a fitting ending to bird packed tour we stopped at the Raggianna’s BoP arena, to take in one more final display of these awesome birds. Back in Moresby the group gathered at a nearby Chinese restaurant and relished both a great meal and a dissection of a blessed, trouble free, productive and most successful trip to this wonderful island.

**BIRD LIST**


Species marked *ENDEMIC* are endemics to New Guinea (satellite islands and New Britain are included within the definition of New Guinea used here). Those marked with an (H) were heard only. If a species is often given an alternative name to the one denoted here by Clements, I have indicated the other commonly used name in brackets, for ease of cross-reference with other sources. I have selectively annotated the checklist for species that may be of particular interest.

**CASSOWARIES**: Casuariidae  
Dwarf Cassowary *Casuarius bennetti* (H)

**GREBES**: Podicipedidae  
Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

**CORMORANTS**: Phalacrocoracidae  
Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*  
Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*

**ANHINGAS**: Anhingidae  
Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*
HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTENRS: Ardeidae
Great-billed Heron Ardea sumatrana
Great Egret Ardea alba
Pied Heron Egretta picata
Intermediate Egret Egretta intermedia
Little Egret Egretta garzetta
Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis
Striated Heron Butorides striata
Rufous Night-Heron Nycticorax caledonicus

IBIS AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae
Australian Ibis Threskiornis molucca
Straw-necked Ibis Threskiornis spinicollis

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae
Spotted Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna guttata
Plumed Whistling-duck Dendrocygna eytoni
Wandering Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna arcuata
Salvadori’s Teal Salvadorina waiguensis *ENDEMIC*
Gray Teal Anas gracilis
Pacific Black Duck Anas superciliosa

HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES: Accipitridae
Pacific Baza Aviceda subcristata
Long-tailed Honey-buzzard Henicopernis longicauda *ENDEMIC*
Black–shouldered kite Elanus caeruleus
Black (Fork-tailed) Kite Milvus migrans
Whistling Kite Haliastur sphenurus
Brahminy Kite Haliastur indus
Eastern (Papuan) Marsh-Harrier Circus spilonotus *ENDEMIC?*
NB. This species is currently grouped with the widespread Eastern Marsh Harrier, although many authors split this off as the New Guinea endemic, Papuan Harrier.
Variable Goshawk Accipiter hiogaster
Gray-headed Goshawk Accipiter poliocephalus *ENDEMIC*
Meyer’s Goshawk Accipiter meyerianus
Doria’s Goshawk Megatriorchis doriae *ENDEMIC*
New Guinea (Harpy) Eagle Harpyopsis novaeguineae
Little Eagle Aquila morphnoides There has been some talk of this form in New Guinea being split off as the endemic New Guinea Little Eagle.

FALCONS: Falconidae
Brown Falcon Falco berigora

MEGAPODES: Megapodiidae
Black-billed Brush-turkey Talegalla fuscirostris *ENDEMIC*
Orange-footed Scrubfowl Megapodius reinwardt

QUAIL: Phasianidae
Brown Quail Coturnix ypsilophora

BUTTONQUAILS: Turnicidae
Red-backed Buttonquail Turnix maculosa
RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS: Rallidae
Chestnut Forest Rail *Rallina rubra* *ENDEMIC*
Forbes’s Rail *Rallina forbesi* *ENDEMIC*
Red-necked Crake *Gallirallus philippensis* (H)
Rufous-tailed Bush-hen *Amaurornis moluccana* (H)
Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*
Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*

JACANAS: Jacanidae
Comb-crested Jacana *Irediparra gallinacea*

PRATINCOLES: Glareolidae
Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae
Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* *ENDEMIC*? They possess a pale base to the bill and give a very different call to the nominate race, leading some to treat this as a separate, endemic species.
Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus*
Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

SANDPIPERS: Scolopacidae
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Gray-tailed Tattler *Tringa breviceps*
Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Red-necked Stint *Calidris minuta*
Dusky Woodcock *Scolopax saturata*

TERNS: Sternidae
Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Slender-billed (Brown) Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia amboinensis*
Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia nigrirostris* *ENDEMIC*
Great (Long-tailed) Cuckoo-Dove *Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*
Stephan’s Dove *Chalcophaps stephani*
Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida*
Bar-shouldered Dove *Geopelia humeralis*
Cinnamon Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba rufigula* *ENDEMIC*
Bronze Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba beccarii*
Southern Crowned-Pigeon *Goura scheepmakeri* *ENDEMIC*
Wompoo Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus magnificus*
Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus perlatus* *ENDEMIC*
Ornate Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus ornatus* *ENDEMIC*
Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus aurantifrons*
Superb Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus superbis*
Beautiful Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus pulchellus* *ENDEMIC*
White-breasted (bibbed) Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus rivoli*
Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus iozonii* *ENDEMIC*
Dwarf Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus nanus* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Purple-tailed Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula rufigaster*  
Rufescent Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula chalconota*  
Pinon Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula pinon*  
Collared Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula mullerii*  
Zoe Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula zoeae*  
Torresian Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula spilorrhoa*  
This Australasian species is sometimes lumped in with the Asian Pied Imperial Pigeon, although is currently considered distinct within the Clements list.

Papuan Mountain-Pigeon *Gymnophaps albertisii*.

**COCKATOOS: Cacatuidae**  
Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*  
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*  

**PARROTS: Psittacidae**  
Yellow-streaked (Greater-streaked) Lory *Chalcopsitta sintillata*  
Dusky Lory *Psitacops fuscata*  
Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*  
Goldie's Lorikeet *Psitteuteles goldiei*  
(Western) Black-capped Lory *Lorius lory*  
Red-flanked Lorikeet *Charmosyna placentis*  
Papuan Lorikeet *Charmosyna papou*  
Plum-faced (Whiskered) Lorikeet *Oreopseittacus arfaki*  
Yellow-billed Lorikeet *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*  
Orange-billed Lorikeet *Neopsittacus pullicauda*  
Pesquet's (Vulturine) Parrot *Psittichas fulgidus*  
Yellow-capped Pigmy-Parrot *Micropsitta keiensis*  
Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot *Micropsitta bruijnii*  
Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta guliemiterii*  
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot *Cyclopsitta diophthalma*  
Large Fig-Parrot *Psittaculirostris desmarestii*  
Modest Tiger Parrot *Psitacella modesta*  
Brehm's Tiger-Parrot *Psitacella brehmii*  
Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*  
Blue-collared Parrot *Geoffroyus simplex*  
Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*  
Papuan King-Parrot *Alisterus chloropterus*  

**CUCKOOS: Cuculidae**  
Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus*  
Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis castaneiventris*  
Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis* (H)  
Rufous-throated Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx ruficollis*  
White-earred Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx meyeri*  
Little Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx minutilus* (H)  
Long-billed Cuckoo *Rhamphocantus megarghynchos*  
White-crowned Koel *Caliechthrus leucolophus* (H)  
Dwarf Koel *Microdynamis parva* (H)  
Australian Koel *Eudynamys cyanocephala*  
Channel-billed Cuckoo *Scythrops novaehollandiae*  
Greater Black Coucal *Centropus menbeki*  
Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasinanus*  
Lesser Black Coucal *Centropus bernsteini*
Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*

**BARN-OWLS: Tytonidae**
Greater Sooty-Owl *Tyto tenebricosa*

**OWLS: Strigidae**
Jungle Hawk-Owl (Papuan Boobook) *Ninox theomacha* **ENDEMIC**
Papuan Hawk-Owl *Uroglaux dimorpha* **ENDEMIC**

**OWLET-NIGHTJARS: Aegotheelidae**
Feline Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles insignis* **ENDEMIC**
Mountain Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles albertisi* **ENDEMIC**
Barred Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles bennettii* **ENDEMIC**
Wallace’s Owlet Nightjar *Aegotheles wallaci* **ENDEMIC** (GO)
Starry Owlet Nightjar *Aegotheles tatei* **ENDEMIC** (H)

**FROGMOUTHS: Podargidae**
Marbled Frogmouth *Podargus papuensis*
Papuan Frogmouth *Podargus papuensis*

**NIGHTJARS: Caprimulgidae**
Archbold’s (Mountain) Nightjar *Eurostopodus archboldi* **ENDEMIC**
Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*

**SWIFTS: Apodidae**
Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*
Mountain Swiftlet *Aerodramus hirundinaceus* **ENDEMIC**
Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis*
Papuan (Spine-tailed-) Needletail *Mearnsia novaeguineae* **ENDEMIC**
White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

**TREESWIFTS: Hemiprocnidae**
Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea*

**KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae**
Azure Kingfisher *Alcedo azurea*
Little Kingfisher *Alcedo pusilla* (GO)
Variable (Dwarf) Kingfisher *Ceyx lepidus*
Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii*
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra *Dacelo gaudichaud* **ENDEMIC**
Shovel-billed (Kingfisher) Kookaburra *Clytoceyx rex* **ENDEMIC**
Forest Kingfisher *Todirhamphus macleayii*
Sacred Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sanctus*
Hook-billed Kingfisher *Melidora macrorrhina* **ENDEMIC** (H)
Yellow-billed Kingfisher *Syma torototo*
Mountain Kingfisher *Syma megarhyncha* **ENDEMIC** (H)
Little Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanypitta hydrocharis* **ENDEMIC**
Common Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanypitta galatea*
Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanypitta danae* **ENDEMIC**
Buff-beasted Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanypitta sylvia* (H)

**BEE-EATERS: Meropidae**
Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*
ROLLERS: Coraciidae
Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

HORNBIFFS: Bucerotidae
Blyth’s (Papuan) Hornbill *Aceros plicatus*

PITTAS: Pittidae
Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*
Red-bellied (Blue-breasted) Pitta *Pitta erythrogaster*

LARKS: Alaudidae
Australasian Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*

SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae
Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*
Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: Motacillidae
Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

CUCKOO-SHRIKES: Campephagidae
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*  *ENDEMIC*
Stout-billed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina caeruleogrisea*  *ENDEMIC*
Yellow-eyed (Barred) Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina lineata*
Boyer’s Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina boyeri*  *ENDEMIC*
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis*
Hooded Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina longicauda*  *ENDEMIC*
Papuan (Black-shouldered) Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina incerta*  *ENDEMIC*
Gray-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina schisticeps*  *ENDEMIC*
New Guinea (Black) Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melas*  *ENDEMIC*
Black-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina montana*  *ENDEMIC*
Golden Cuckoo-shrike *Campochaera sloetii*  *ENDEMIC*
Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela*

THRUSHES: Turdidae
Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus*

OLD WORLD WARBLERS: Sylviidae
Island (Mountain) Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus poliocephalus*
Tawny (Papuan) Grassbird *Megalurus timoriensis*  *ENDEMIC?*
*NB. Some authors propose this to be split off as Papuan Grassbird, although I cannot see why personally!*

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae
Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae
Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris*
Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Friendly Fantail *Rhipidura albolimbata*  *ENDEMIC*
Chestnut-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hyperythra*  *ENDEMIC*
Sooty Thicket-Fantail *Rhipidura threnothorax*  *ENDEMIC*
White-bellied Thicket-Fantail *Rhipidura leucothorax*  *ENDEMIC*
Black Fantail *Rhipidura atra*  *ENDEMIC*
Dimorphic Fantail *Rhipidura brachyrhyncha* *ENDEMIC*

**MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae**
- Black Monarch *Monarcha axillaris* *ENDEMIC*
- Black-winged Monarch *Monarcha frater*
- Black-faced Monarch *Monarcha melanopsis*
- Spot-winged Monarch *Monarcha guttulus* *ENDEMIC*
- Hooded Monarch *Monarcha manadensis* *ENDEMIC*
- Golden Monarch *Monarcha chrysomela* *ENDEMIC*
- Frilled Monarch *Arses telecopthalmus* *ENDEMIC*
- Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula* *ENDEMIC*
- Shining Flycatcher *Myiagra alecto*
- Black-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus nigriceps* *ENDEMIC*
- Yellow-breasted Boatbill *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*

**AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS: Petroicidae**
- Lesser Ground-Robin *Amalocichla incerta* *ENDEMIC*
- Torrent Flycatcher *Monachella muelleriana* *ENDEMIC*
- Lemon-bellied Flycatcher *Microeca flavigaster*
- Canary Flycatcher *Microeca papuana* *ENDEMIC*
- Garnet Robin *Eugerygone rubra* *ENDEMIC*
- White-faced Robin *Tregellasia leucops* (H)
- Black-sided Robin *Poecilodryas hypoleuca* *ENDEMIC*
- Black-throated (-bibbed) Robin *Poecilodryas albonotata* *ENDEMIC*
- White-winged Robin *Peneothello sigillatus* *ENDEMIC*
- White-rumped Robin *Peneothello bimaculatus* *ENDEMIC*
- Blue-gray Robin *Peneothello cyanus* *ENDEMIC*
- Gray-headed (Ashy) Robin *Heteromyias albispecularis* *ENDEMIC?*

  *Clements currently has this lumped with the northern Australian Gray-headed Robin, that differs markedly in its song and completely in its habits. The birds in Australia being showy and even tame at times. A far cry from the New Guinea birds that are notoriously skulking. Other authors have split this off as a New Guinea endemic, Ashy Robin.*

- Northern Scrub-Robin *Drymodes superciliaris*

**WHISTLERS: Pachycephalidae**
- Mottled Whistler *Rhagologus leucostigma* *ENDEMIC*
- Dwarf Whistler (Goldenface) *Pachycare flavogrisea* *ENDEMIC*
- Rufous-naped Whistler *Aleadryas rufinucha* *ENDEMIC*
- Rusty Whistler *Pachycephala hyperythra* *ENDEMIC*
- Brown-backed Whistler *Pachycephala modesta* *ENDEMIC*
- Gray-headed Whistler *Pachycephala griseiceps*

  *NB. A recent split from the Gray Whistler, *P. simplex* in Australia.*

- Sclater’s Whistler *Pachycephala soror* *ENDEMIC*
- Regent Whistler *Pachycephala schlegelii* *ENDEMIC*
- Black-headed Whistler *Pachycephala monacha* *ENDEMIC*
- White-bellied Whistler *Pachycephala leucogastra* *ENDEMIC*

  *A scarce, endemic whistler with an interesting taxonomic history. Originally considered a subspecies of Rufous Whistler, *P. rufiventris*, which is also found in Australia, although only fairly recently split off as a species in its own right. There are now some authors who are proposing that it be lumped with another species again, although this time with Black-headed Whistler, *P. monacha.*

- Rufous (Little) Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla megarhyncha*
- Gray Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*
- Hooded Pitohui *Pitohui dichrous* *ENDEMIC*
- White-bellied Pitohui *Pitohui incertus* *ENDEMIC*
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Rusty Pitohui *Pitohui ferrugineus* *ENDEMIC*
Crested Pitohui *Pitohui cristatus* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Variable Pitohui *Pitohui kirrocephalus* *ENDEMIC*
Black Pitohui *Pitohui nigrescens*
Wattled Ploughbill *Eulacestoma nigropectus* *ENDEMIC*

**PSEUDO-BABBLERS: Pomatostomidae**
New Guinea (Rufous) Babbler *Pomatostomus isidorei* *ENDEMIC*

**LOGRUNNERS: Orthonychidae**
Northern (New Guinea) Logrunner *Orthonyx novaeguineae* *ENDEMIC*

**WHIPBIRDS AND QUAIL-THRUSHES: Eupetidae**
Papuan Whipbird *Androphobus viridis* *ENDEMIC*
Painted Quail-thrush *Cinclosa ajax* *ENDEMIC*
Spotted Jewel-babbler *Ptilorrhoa leucosticta* *ENDEMIC*
Blue jewel-babbler *Ptilorrhoa caerulescens* *ENDEMIC*
Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler *Ptilorrhoa castanotata* *ENDEMIC*
Blue-capped Ifrita *Ifrita kowaldi* *ENDEMIC*

**FAIRYWRENS: Maluridae**
Orange-crowned Fairywren *Clytomyias insignis* *ENDEMIC*
Wallace’s Fairywren *Sipodotus wallaci* *ENDEMIC*
White-shouldered Fairywren *Malurus alboscapulatus* *ENDEMIC*
Emperor Fairywren *Malurus cyanocephalus* *ENDEMIC*

**CISTICOLAS: Sylvidae**
Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*

**THORNBILLS AND ALLIES: Acanthizidae**
Rusty (Lowland) Mouse-Warbler *Crateroscelis murina* *ENDEMIC*
Mountain Mouse-Warbler *Crateroscelis robusta* *ENDEMIC*
Large Scrubwren *Sericornis nouhyusi* *ENDEMIC*
Buff-faced Scrubwren *Sericornis perspicillatus* *ENDEMIC*
Papuan Scrubwren *Sericornis papuensis* *ENDEMIC*
Pale-billed Scrubwren *Sericornis spilodera* *ENDEMIC*
Mountain (Gray) Gerygone *Gerygone cinerea* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Green-backed Gerygone *Gerygone chloronotus*
Fairy Gerygone *Gerygone palpebrosa*
Yellow-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone chrysogaster* *ENDEMIC*
Large-billed Gerygone *Gerygone magnirostris*
Brown-breasted Gerygone *Gerygone ruficollis* *ENDEMIC*

**SITELLAS: Neosittidae**
Varied Sitella *Neositta chrysoptera* *ENDEMIC*

**AUSTRALASIAN TREECREEPERS: Climacteridae**
Papuan Treecreeper *Cromobates placens* *ENDEMIC* (H)

**SUNBIRDS: Nectariniidae**
Black Sunbird *Leptocoma sericea*

**BERRYPECKERS AND LONGBILLS: Melanocharitidae**
Obscure Berryecker *Melanocharis arfakiana* *ENDEMIC*
Black Berrypecker *Melanocharis nigra* *ENDEMIC*
Lemon-breasted (Mid-mountain) Berrypecker *Melanocharis longicauda* *ENDEMIC*
Fan-tailed Berrypecker *Melanocharis versteri* *ENDEMIC*
Slaty-chinned Longbill *Toxorhamphus poliopterus* *ENDEMIC*
Yellow-bellied Longbill *Toxorhamphus novaeguineae* *ENDEMIC*
Dwarf (Plumed Longbill) Honeyeater *Toxorhamphus liiolophilus* *ENDEMIC*

**TIT AND CRESTED BERRYPECKERS: Paramythiidae**
Tit Berrypecker *Oreocharis arfaki* *ENDEMIC*
Crested Berrypecker *Paramythia montium* *ENDEMIC*

**FLOWERPECKERS: Dicaeidae**
Red-capped (Papuan) Flowerpecker *Dicaeum geelvinkianum* *ENDEMIC*

**WHITE-EYES: Zosteropidae**
Black-fronted White-eye *Zosterops minor* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Capped (Western Mountain-) White-eye *Zosterops fuscicapillus* *ENDEMIC*
New Guinea White-eye *Zosterops novaeguineae* *ENDEMIC*.

**HONEYEATERS: Meliphagidae**
Long-billed Honeyeater *Melilistes megarynchus* *ENDEMIC*
Green-backed Honeyeater *Glycichaera fallax* (Papuan)
Black Myzomela *Myzomela nigrita* *ENDEMIC*
Red-throated Myzomela *Myzomela eques* *ENDEMIC*
Mountain (Red-headed) Myzomela *Myzomela adolphinae* *ENDEMIC*
Red-collared Myzomela *Myzomela rosenbergii* *ENDEMIC*
Red Myzomela *Myzomela cruentata* *ENDEMIC*
Mountain Meliphaga *Meliphaga orientalis* *ENDEMIC*
Scrub (White-eared) Honeyeater *Meliphaga albonotata* *ENDEMIC*
Mimic (Meliphaga) Honeyeater *Meliphaga analoga* *ENDEMIC*
Graceful Honeyeater *Meliphaga gracilis*
Spot-breasted Meliphaga *Meliphaga mimikae* *ENDEMIC*
Black-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus subfrenatus* *ENDEMIC*
Obscure Honeyeater *Lichenostomus obscurus* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Yellow-tinted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavescens*
Tawny-breasted Honeyeater *Xanthotis flaviventer*
White-throated Honeyeater *Melithreptus albogularis* (H)
Marbled Honeyeater *Pycnopygius cinereum* *ENDEMIC*
Streak-headed Honeyeater *Pycnopygius stictocephalus* *ENDEMIC*
Meyer’s Friarbird *Philemon meyeri* *ENDEMIC*
Helmeted (Papuan) Friarbird *Philemon buceroides*
Yellowish Streaked Honeyeater *Ptiloprora meekiana* *ENDEMIC*
Rufous-backed Honeyeater *Ptiloprora guisei* *ENDEMIC*
Black-backed (Gray-streaked) Honeyeater *Ptiloprora perstriata* *ENDEMIC*
Belford’s Melidectes *Melidectes belfordi* *ENDEMIC*
Yellow-browed Melidectes *Melidectes rufocrissalis* *ENDEMIC*
Ornate Melidectes *Melidectes torquatus* *ENDEMIC*
(Common) Smoky Honeyeater *Melipotes fumigatus* *ENDEMIC*
Rufous-banded Honeyeater *Conopha albobularis*

**ORIOLES: Oriolidae**
Brown Oriole *Oriolus szalayi* *ENDEMIC*
Green Figbird *Sphecotheres viridis*
**SHRIKES: Laniidae**
Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

**DRONGOS: Dicruridae**
Papuan (Mountain) Drongo *Chaetorhynchus papuensis* *ENDEMIC*
Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus*

**MUDNEST BUILDERS: Grallinidae**
Torrent-lark *Grallina bruijni* *ENDEMIC*

**WOODSWALLOWS: Artamidae**
Great Woodswallow *Artamus maximus* *ENDEMIC*
White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorynchus*

**BELLMAGPIES AND ALLIES: Cracticidae**
Mountain Peltops *Peltops montanus* *ENDEMIC*
Lowland Peltops *Peltops blainvillii* *ENDEMIC*
Black-backed Butcherbird *Cracticus mentalis*
Hooded Butcherbird *Cracticus cassicus* *ENDEMIC*
Black Butcherbird *Cracticus quoyi*

**BIRDS-OF-PARADISE: Paradisaeidae**
Loria’s Bird-of-paradise *Cnemophilus loriae* *ENDEMIC*
Crested Bird-of-paradise *Cnemophilus macgregoria* *ENDEMIC*
Glossy-mantled Manucode *Manucodia atra* *ENDEMIC*
Crinkle-collared Manucode *Manucodia chalybata* *ENDEMIC*
Trumpet Manucode *Manucodia keraudrenii*
Short-tailed Paradigalla *Paradigalla brevicauda* *ENDEMIC*
Riboon-tailed Astrapia *Astrapia mayeri* *ENDEMIC*
Princess Stephanie’s Astrapia *Astrapia stephaniae* *ENDEMIC*
Carola’s Parotia *Parotia carolae* *ENDEMIC*
Lawes’s Parotia *Parotia lawesii* *ENDEMIC*
King-of-Saxony Bird-of-paradise *Pteridophora alberti* *ENDEMIC*
Magnificent Riflebird *Ptitoris magnificus* (H)
‘Eastern Riflebird’ *Ptitoris magnificus intercedens* *ENDEMIC*
Superb Bird-of-paradise *Lophorina superba* *ENDEMIC*
Black Sicklebill *Epimachus fastuosus* *ENDEMIC*
Brown Sicklebill *Epimachus meyeri* *ENDEMIC*
Buff-tailed Sicklebill *Epimachus albertisi* *ENDEMIC* (H)
Magnificent Bird-of-paradise *Cicinnurus magnificus* *ENDEMIC*
King Bird-of-paradise *Cicinnurus regius* *ENDEMIC*
Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise *Seleucidis melanoleuca* *ENDEMIC*
Lesser Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea minor* *ENDEMIC*
Greater Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea apoda* *ENDEMIC*
Raggiana Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea raggiana* *ENDEMIC*
Blue Bird-of-paradise *Paradisaea rudolphi* *ENDEMIC*
Lesser Melampitta *Melampitta lugubris* *ENDEMIC*
Greater Melampitta *Melampitta gigantea* *ENDEMIC* (H)

**OWERBIRDS: Ptilonorhynchidae**
Sanford’s Bowerbird *Archboldia sanfordi* *ENDEMIC*
Macgregor’s Bowerbird *Amblyornis macgregoriae* *ENDEMIC*
Flame Bowerbird *Sericulus aureus* *ENDEMIC*
Yellow-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera lauterbachii* *ENDEMIC*
Fawn-breasted Bowerbird *Chlamydera cerviniventris*

**CROWS AND JAYS: Corvidae**
Gray (Bare-eyed) Crow *Corvus tristis* *ENDEMIC*
Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*

**STARLINGS: Sturnidae**
Metallic (Shining) Starling *Aplonis metallica*
Yellow-eyed Staling *Aplonis mystacea* *ENDEMIC*
'Singsing' Starling *Aplonis cantoroides* *ENDEMIC*.
Yellow-faced Myna *Mino dumontii*
Golden Myna *Mino anais* *ENDEMIC*

**OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae**
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

**WAXBILLS AND ALLIES: Estrildidae**
Mountain Firetail *Oreostruthus fuliginosus* *ENDEMIC*
Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trychoa*
Papuan Parrotfinch *Erythrura papuana* *ENDEMIC*
Streak-headed (White-spotted) Munia *Lonchura tristissima* *ENDEMIC*
Hooded Munia *Lonchura spectabilis* *ENDEMIC*
Gray-headed Munia *Lonchura caniceps* *ENDEMIC*

**MAMMALS & REPTILES**
Mountain Cuscus *Phalanger carmelitae*
New Guinea Forest Wallaby *Dorcopsis vanheurni*
Dusky Pademelon *Thylogale brunii*
Greater flying Fox *Pteropus neohibernicus*
New Guinea crocodile *Crocodylus novaeguineae*
New Guinea Water Dragon *Physignathus lesueuri*