

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: The Islands

'Variarata National Park, a short drive from Pt. Moresby, offered our 'island' group the opportunity to have a taste of mainland PNG our first day in the country. We soon realized the great avian diversity as we saw the first of many endemics in both familiar and new families. Binoculars and scopes worked overtime as Pink-spotted and Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves and colourful parrots including Papuan King had us clamoring for second looks. The kingfisher family of PNG lived up to expectations as we sighted the first of several to come for the trip including Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher and Yellow-billed Kingfisher. The reputation of Hooded Pitohui as a 'poison bird' made it a 'must-see' bird in the park. We were soon to find how well represented the honeyeater family is in PNG as we sighted Black Myzomela and had the first of many struggles with the confusing meliphaga genus. And, a late afternoon visit to a display area of Raggiana Bird of Paradise provided us with the 'real thing' -- displaying male Raggianas in all their glory!

Manus is the largest of the Admiralty Islands and our flight provided views of the beauty of the Bismarck Archipelago. We soon immersed ourselves into island birding and quickly adopted the mindset of quality, not quantity – as all small island birding requires. One of our first island endemics, the 'Chauka' or Manus Friarbird, was to become a regular sighting during our time here, in large part because of its loud vocalizations. The low density of birds here allowed us the opportunity to enjoy many of our sightings including Moustached Tree Swifts and Eclectus Parrots and to have study opportunities to start separating the endemic Mayr's Swiftlets from the more common White-rumped Swiftlets.

We were an eager group the next morning as we set out early to walk the old Rossun (Colonial) Track with Aaron, our local guide who was to lead us to a territory of the bird that had enticed many of us on this island rendezvous, Superb Pitta. A walk in the early dawn hour had us listening to vocalizations of lifers but our focus was on arriving at the designated site as quickly as possible. Upon arrival at the territory, Aaron used his talent for imitating the call of this enigmatic species and we soon heard one responding. Within minutes it seems, a Superb Pitta was calling in the trees above us. Sharp eyes quickly spotted it so that we all were soon enjoying a moment that then stretched into an hour as the pitta cooperated and gave us not only binocular but lingering scope views. A satisfied group leisurely returned to our transport chatting with our local guide and the landowners of this patch of forest about the history of the area during World War II. With the primary target and most difficult species a lasting memory, we spent the rest of our time on Manus enjoying some of the other gems of the island including Beach Kingfisher, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove, Manus (Admiralty Pied) Monarch and Golden Whistler. On our final morning, Aaron once again demonstrated his knowledge of the island's birds by helping us find Meek's Pygmy Parrot. And, then, our luck ran out as we discovered realms of patience that we never knew we had – a delayed flight started a domino effect with our late arrival into Port Moresby and cancellation of the flight to New Britain resulting in a far too short night in Port Moresby and a night less in New Britain.

We may have been less chatty than usual with our 2.45 a.m. departure for the airport for our early flight but we quickly regained energy and enthusiasm with our early morning arrival in Hoskins, New Britain. The diversity of birds on the Kilu Ridge Track the first afternoon sated us while having us wish for more hours of daylight with sightings of our first Blue-eyed Cockatoos, Purple-bellied (Eastern Black-capped) Lories, New Britain Friarbird and Knob-billed Fruit Dove and Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeons. The 'swoosh' of Blyth's Hornbills' wings in flight provided as much enjoyment as sighting these personable birds.

New Britain offered a different type of birding adventure each day including a boat trip to exploring the surrounding waters and off-shore islands. The early morning trip started on an excellent note with a dawn sighting of Beach Stone-Curlew and improved as the morning progressed as we sighted our primary target, Heinroth's Shearwater as well as Lesser Frigatebirds and 8 tern species. Scanning Restorf and Malo Malo islands from the boat provided sightings of Stephan's

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Dove and for a lucky few a brief sighting of a Nicobar Pigeon that unfortunately could not be relocated. The delicious picnic lunch provided by our crew and shared with a Brahminy Kite added to the enjoyment of the day.

Pokili Wildlife Management Area yielded yet more target species and endemics on our final day in New Britain with Melasian Scrub Fowl being common in the area. Stephan's Doves, Bismarck Imperial Pigeon, Green-fronted (Bismarck) Hanging Parrot, Violaceous Coucal, and Red-banded Flowerpeckers added to the sightings of the day while Black-headed Paradise Kingfisher and New Britain Kingfisher once again placed kingfishers in one of the top families of the trip.

The Bismarck Archipelago provided us with sightings of species that few birders have had the opportunity to see as well as a look at island life that is very different to the mainland of PNG. A Superb Pitta calling from his perch high in a tree on the Colonial Track, parrots ranging from large to minute, colourful pigeons and doves, seabirds enjoyed on a calm sea and the hospitality of our hosts at our lodges all provide indelible memories of a trip 'off the beaten track.' Judy Davis

Bird List:

Column 1	= number of days recorded (including heard only birds)
Column 2	= maximum daily number recorded
N	= nesting evident
H	= heard only
(H)	= mostly heard
E	= endemic to Papua New Guinea
NE	= near endemic

Most of the English and Scientific names used in this list follow those used in CLEMENTS CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF THE WORLD 6th Edition with some alternative English names given in parentheses in the list.

Heinroth's Shearwater	NE	1	10		<i>Puffinus heinrothi</i>
Lesser Frigatebird		2	27		<i>Fregata ariel</i>
Little Pied Cormorant		1	1		<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>
Great Egret		2	1		<i>Egretta alba</i>
Intermediate Egret		1	5		<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
Little Egret		1	1		<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Pacific Reef-Heron		4	1		<i>Egretta sacra</i>
Cattle Egret		2	40		<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Black Bittern		1	1		<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>
Osprey		1	2		<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Pacific Baza		2	2		<i>Aviceda subcristata</i>
Black Kite		1	1		<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Whistling Kite		1	2		<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>
Brahminy Kite		7	8	N	<i>Haliastur indicus</i>
White-bellied Sea-Eagle		2	1		<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
Variable Goshawk	2	1	1		<i>Accipiter hiogaster</i>
Collared Sparrowhawk		1	1		<i>Accipiter cirrhocephalus</i>
Oriental Hobby		2	1		<i>Falco severus</i>
Black-billed Brush-Turkey	E	1	1	H	<i>Talegalla fuscirostris</i>
Melanesian Scrubfowl		4	50		<i>Megapodius eremita</i>
Purple Swamphen		1	1		<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Beach Stone-Curlew		1	2		<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>
Masked Lapwing		1	2		<i>Vanellus miles</i>
Pacific Golden Plover		4	40		<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Lesser Sandplover		1	4		<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>

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Whimbrel	4	20		<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Common Sandpiper	5	6		<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	1	6		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Grey-tailed Tattler	1	1		<i>Tringa brevipes</i>
Wandering Tattler	1	1		<i>Tringa incana</i>
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	1		<i>Calidris acuminata</i>
Red-necked Stint	1	1		<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Tern	4	30		<i>Sterna bergii</i>
Common Tern	1	40		<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Black-naped Tern	3	50		<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>
Little Tern	1	2		<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Sooty Tern	1	5		<i>Sterna fuscata</i>
Bridled Tern	1	10		<i>Sterna anaethetus</i>
Brown Noddy	1	4		<i>Anous stolidus</i>
Black Noddy	1	4		<i>Anous minutus</i>
Rock Pigeon I	1	11		<i>Columba livia</i>
Slender-billed (Brown) Cuckoo-Dove	4	5		<i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>
Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove	2	2		<i>Macropygia mackinlayi</i>
Pied Cuckoo-Dove E	1	1	H	<i>Reinwardtoena browni</i>
Stephan's Dove	2	14		<i>Chalcophaps stephani</i>
Peaceful Dove	1	1		<i>Geopelia strata</i>
Nicobar Pigeon	1	1		<i>Caloenas nicobarica</i>
Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove E	1	1		<i>Ptilinopus perlatus</i>
Superb Fruit-Dove	4	1		<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>
Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove	1	2		<i>Ptilinopus viridus</i>
Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove E	1	1		<i>Ptilinopus iozonus</i>
Knob-billed Fruit-Dove	3	3		<i>Ptilinopus insolitus</i>
Finsch's Imperial Pigeon E	1	1		<i>Ducula finschii</i>
Bismarck (Black) Imperial Pigeon E	1	2		<i>Ducula melanochroa</i>
Island (Grey) Imperial Pigeon	4	100		<i>Ducula pistrinaria</i>
Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon	3	20		<i>Ducula subflavescens</i>
Yellow-tinted Imperial Pigeon 3	3	10		<i>Ducula subflavescens</i>
Blue-eyed Cockatoo E	3	12		<i>Cacatua ophthalmica</i>
Purple-bellied (E. Black-capped) Lory E	3	20		<i>Lorius hypoinochrous</i>
Rainbow Lorikeet	6	20		<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
Red-flanked Lorikeet	1	2		<i>Charmosyna placensis</i>
Meek's Pygmy-Parrot E	2	8		<i>Micropsitta meeki</i>
Red-cheeked Parrot	1	4		<i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>
Singing Parrot NE	1	2		<i>Geoffroyus heteroclitus</i>
Eclectus Parrot	6	50		<i>Eclectus roratus</i>
Papuan King Parrot E	1	1		<i>Alisterus chloropterus</i>
Green-fronted (Bismarck) Hanging Parrot	1	2		<i>Loriculus tener</i>
Brush Cuckoo	3	1	(H)	<i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>
Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo	1	1		<i>Cacomantis castaneiventris</i>
White-eared Bronze-Cuckoo E	1	1		<i>Chrysococcyx meyeri</i>
Australian Koel 4	1	1	H	<i>Eudynamys cyanocephala</i>
Common (Asian) Koel 4	1	2	H	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>
Channel-billed Cuckoo	1	10		<i>Scythrops novaehollandiae</i>
Violaceous (Violet) Coucal E	1	3		<i>Centropus violaceus</i>
Pied Coucal	2	2	H	<i>Centropus ateralbus</i>
Pheasant Coucal	1	2		<i>Centropus phasianus</i>
Manus Hawk-Owl (Boobook) E	1	2	H	<i>Ninox meeki</i>
New Britain Hawk-Owl (Boobook) E	1	1	H	<i>Ninox odiosa</i>
Moustached Tree-swift	5	7	N	<i>Hemiprocne mystacea</i>
Glossy Swiftlet	3	4	N	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>

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Uniform Swiftlet	1	10		<i>Collocalia vanikorensis</i>
White-rumped Swiftlet	4	100		<i>Collocalia spodiopygia</i>
Mayr's (Whitehead) Swiftlet E	4	20		<i>Collocalia whiteheadi</i>
Variable (Dwarf) Kingfisher	1	1		<i>Ceyx lepidus</i>
Common (River) Kingfisher	1	1		<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Sacred Kingfisher	3	2		<i>Halcyon sancta</i>
Beach Kingfisher	3	3		<i>Halcyon saurophaga</i>
Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher E	1	4	(H)	<i>Tanysiptera danae</i>
Black-headed Paradise-Kingfisher E 5	2	2		<i>Tanysiptera nigriceps</i>
Forest Kingfisher	1	1		<i>Halcyon macleayi</i>
New Britain (White-mantled) Kingfisher E	1	2	N	<i>Halcyon albonotata</i>
Collared Kingfisher	2	5		<i>Halcyon chloris</i>
Yellow-billed Kingfisher	1	1		<i>Syma torotoro</i>
Rainbow Bee-eater	5	42		<i>Merops ornatus</i>
Dollarbird	3	2		<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
Blyth's (Papuan) Hornbill	3	20		<i>Rhyticeros plicatus</i>
Superb Pitta E	1	2		<i>Pitta superba</i>
Barn Swallow	1	1		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Pacific Swallow	4	10		<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>
Tree Martin	1	3		<i>Hirundo nigricans</i>
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1	70		<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	4	6		<i>Coracina papuensis</i>
Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike	2	2		<i>Coracina lineata</i>
Boyer's Cuckoo-shrike E	1	2		<i>Coracina boyeri</i>
Cicadabird	4	2		<i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>
New Guinea (Black) Cuckoo-shrike E	1	2		<i>Coracina melas (melaena)</i>
Varied Triller	4	2		<i>Lalage leucomela</i>
Painted Quail-Thrush E	1	1	H	<i>Cinclosoma ajax</i>
Chestnut-backed Jewel-Babbler E	1	1	H	<i>Ptilorrhoa castanotus</i>
Australian Reed Warbler	1	1		<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>
Rusty Mouse-Warbler E	1	2	H	<i>Crateroscelis murina</i>
Green-backed Gerygone	1	1		<i>Gerygone chloronotus</i>
Chestnut-bellied Fantail E	1	2		<i>Rhipidura hyperythra</i>
Northern Fantail	4	2		<i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>
Willie Wagtail	4	6		<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>
Island Monarch	2	5		<i>Monarcha cinerascens</i>
Black-tailed (Bismarck Pied) Monarch E	2	2		<i>Monarcha verticalis</i>
Manus (Admiralty Pied) Monarch E	1	7	N	<i>Monarcha infelix</i>
Frilled Monarch	1	4		<i>Monarcha telescopthalmus</i>
Yellow-breasted Boatbill	1	1	H	<i>Machaerirhynchus flaviventer</i>
Shining Flycatcher	4	1		<i>Myiagra alecto</i>
Lemon-bellied Flycatcher	1	1	H	<i>Microeca flavigaster</i>
Golden-faced (Dwarf) Whistler E	1	2		<i>Pachycare flavogrisea</i>
Golden Whistler	2	6		<i>Pachycare pectoralis</i>
Rufous (Little) Shrike-Thrush	1	1		<i>Colluricincla megarhynchus</i>
Grey Shrike-Thrush	1	1	H	<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>
Hooded Pitohui E	1	3		<i>Pitohui dichrous</i>
Rusty Pitohui E	1	1		<i>Pitohui ferrugineus</i>
Red-banded (Bismarck) Flowerpecker E	1	3		<i>Dicaeum eximium</i>
Black Sunbird	2	10		<i>Nectarinia aspasia</i>
Olive-backed Sunbird	3	8		<i>Nectarinia jugularis</i>
Black-fronted White-eye E	1	2		<i>Zosterops atrifrons</i>
Black-headed White-eye	3	3		<i>Zosterops hypoxantha</i>
Dwarf (Grey-bellied) Honeyeater E	1	1		<i>Oedistoma iliolophus</i>
Helmeted (New Guinea) Friarbird	1	6		<i>Philemon buceroides novaeguineae</i>

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New Britain Friarbird	E	3	8		<i>Philemon cockerelli</i>
Manus Friarbird	E	3	8		<i>Philemon albitorques</i>
Ashy Myzomela		3	2		<i>Myzomela cineracea</i>
Black (Papuan Black) Myzomela	E	1	3		<i>Myzomela nigrita</i>
Black-bellied Myzomela	E	2	2		<i>Myzomela erythromelas</i>
Scarlett-bibbed (Sclater's) Myzomela	E	1	6		<i>Myzomela sclateri</i>
Mimic Honeyeater	E	1	4		<i>Meliphaga analoga</i>
Yellow-tinted Honeyeater		1	1		<i>Lichenostomus flavescens</i>
Tawny-breasted Honeyeater		1	1		<i>Xanthotis flaviventer</i>
Rufous-banded Honeyeater		1	2		<i>Conopophila albogularis</i>
Bismarck (Buff-bellied) Munia	NE	1	6		<i>Lonchura melaena</i>
House Sparrow	I	X	2		<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Singing Starling	NE	1	5	N	<i>Aplonis cantoroides</i>
Metallic Starling		7	150	N	<i>Aplonis metallica</i>
Yellow-faced Myna	E	1	2		<i>Mino dumontii</i>
Long-tailed (Melanesian) Myna		3	8		<i>Mino kreffti</i>
Brown Oriole	E	1	1		<i>Oriolus szalayi</i>
Green Figbird		1	8		<i>Sphecotheres viridis</i>
Spangled Drongo		3	6		<i>Dicrurus bracteatus</i>
White-breasted Wood-swallow		2	5		<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>
Hooded Butcherbird	E	1	1		<i>Cracticus cassicus</i>
White-eared Catbird	E	1	1	H	<i>Ailuroedus buccoides</i>
Eastern Riflebird		1	1	H	<i>Ptiloris magnificus</i>
Raggiana Bird of Paradise	E	1	8		<i>Paradisaea raggiana</i>
Torresian Crow		2	20		<i>Corvus orru</i>
Island (Bismarck) Crow	E 6	4	10		<i>Corvus orru insularis</i>

Taxonomic Footnotes:

B Birds of New Guinea by Beehler, Pratt and Zimmerman.1986. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

C The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. Sixth Edition, 2006. Cornell Universtiy Press, New York.

HBW Handbook of Birds of the Work V. 1 – 11 by del Hoyo et.al. Lynx Editions, Spain.

1. Grey Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster*: Beehler lumps this form in Grey Goshawk *A. novaehollandiae* of Australia. Clements, et.al. considers Grey Goshawk a separate species from Variable Goshawk *A. hiogaster* that occurs in New Guinea and other islands of the Pacific region.
2. Yellow-tinted Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula subflavescens*: Clements and other authors lump this form with Torresian Imperial-Pigeon *D. spilorrhoa*. If split, it would be an endemic of the Bismarck Archipelago and Admiralty Islands.
3. Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*: Clements splits Australian Koel *E. cyanocephala* from Asian Koel. Other authors, including HBW and Beehler consider all forms part of the enlarged group, Common Koel *E. scolopacea*. We heard Asian (Common) Koel *E. scolopacea* on the islands and Australian Koel *E. cyanocephala* in Varirata National Park.
4. Black-headed Paradise-Kingfisher *Tanysiptera nigriceps*: C, HBW and other authors continue to lump this endemic island subspecies with Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher *T. sylvia*. If split, it is called Black-headed or Black-capped Paradise-Kingfisher *T. nigriceps*.

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5. Eastern Riflebird *Ptiloris intercedens*: C and B lumps *P. intercedens* with Magnificent Riflebird *P. magnificus*. If split, Eastern Riflebird *P. intercedens* is a New Guinea endemic.
6. Island Crow *Corvus o. insularis*: C considers this Bismarck Archipelago as a subspecies of Torresian Crow *Corvus orru*.