

SICKLEBILL SAFARIS PNG HIGHLIGHTS

June 2 – 19 2016

Led by Phil Gregory

Participants: Sean Dooley, Jonathan Franzen, John Wray

This was an unusual trip, in that it consisted of well known, (even famous) writers doing a private highlights tour of this wonderful country. We were blessed with atypically good weather, losing no time at all to rain, which is most unusual. Air Niugini excelled themselves in leaving on time and getting luggage out with amazing alacrity, plus there was a brand new terminal at Kagamuga Airport in Mt Hagen, which was a huge improvement on the disgusting old facility there. Even the rebranded PNG Air (formerly Airlines PNG) were pretty good in getting us out of Kiunga with only a slight delay, and the TNT charters all worked very nicely.

The tour was designed to have the more basic lodgings first, and everyone dealt with Kwatu Lodge with aplomb, with even the chiggers behaving themselves there. Sadly we came undone with them at Lake Murray, but fortunately no-one was laid up and even the itching did not seem to affect the group badly. Lake Murray Ec Lodge, Rondon Ridge and Ambua were great destinations with some terrific birds too, and our hotel in Port Moresby is a very pleasant haven as always.

Jon and I visited the PAU on the afternoon we arrived, with Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Papuan Frogmouth, Grey-headed Mannikin and Fawn-breasted Bowerbird as nice additions; next day we went up to Varirata, sans John (aka Jack for this tour) Wray who had overslept and missed his flight from Brisbane, jet-lag can do that to you, but luckily we were able to get him rescheduled for next day without too much drama. We did well at the park with showy male Raggiana BoP's, several sightings of the elusive Growling Riflebird, the old faithful Barred Owllet-nightjar back in his longtail roost hole, Brown-headed Paradise-Kingfisher and almost a sighting of Pheasant Pigeon, plus Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Hooded Pitohui and Rusty Pitohui. We returned to Port Moresby mid-afternoon to meet up with Sean and Jack, and worked in a twitch for Silver-eared Honeyeater at the former PNG Arts site and also Yellow-tinted Honeyeater at the spectacular Waigani Houses of Parliament during a minor cultural diversion.

Next day saw us over to Kiunga, and an excellent late afternoon trip up to Km 17 for the Greater Bird of Paradise lek, which had 3 fine showy males displaying, plus a lovely bonus of a terrific male King Bird of Paradise en route. I was delighted to hear that the excellent local guide Kwiwon had come back from 5 years away at the gas fields, and we were able to get him and Edward as our guides upriver. The two nights at Kwatu went well, despite the fried spam and truly horrid corned beef (square meat), and the birds were terrific-Southern Crowned Pigeons, Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise, Long-billed Cuckoo, Dwarf Koel, an utterly gobsmacking sighting of Starry Owllet-nightjar (which was everyone's bird of the trip). Wallace's Owllet-nightjar, New Guinea Vulturine Parrot, a stunning view of Large Fig-Parrot, Common Paradise Kingfisher, Flame Bowerbird, White-bellied Pitohui, Hooded Monarch and a strong supporting cast.

Kumul Lodge gave us some fine sightings, with up to 4 (each differently plumaged!) **Ribbon-tailed Astrapia** coming at various times to the feeder, including a striking adult male; there were also several female-plumaged **Brown Sicklebills**, some lovely **Brehm's Tiger-Parrots**, remarkably few **Belford's Melidectes** and nearby **Rufous-naped Bellbird** and **Blue-**

capped ifrit along with **Crested Berrypecker**, whilst a **Sooty Owl** was quite vocal and showed briefly on both mornings, and a **Mountain Owlet-nightjar** was heard.

Our outing for the **Blue Bird of Paradise** was successful (despite Wilson!), and the trip to the lek at Kama paid off with us just catching the very last male **Lesser Bird of Paradise** before he departed, along with an entertaining trek there and back. **Torrent Flyrobin**, **Marbled Honeyeater** and a very brief **Mag BoP** showed at the Sepik headwaters too.

Lake Murray came next, with an enjoyable charter flight and a short boat trip to the attractive ecolodge. Birding the lowland forests with the enthusiastic local crew of Mea and Dennis et al was rewarding, with **Southern Crowned Pigeon**, an unexpected **White-crowned Cuckoo**, **Coroneted** and **Dwarf Fruit Dove**, **Blue Jewel-babbler**, **Papuan Babbler**, a very odd **Southern Variable Pitohui** taxon, **Wallace's Fairywren**, **Crinkle-collared** and **Trumpet Manucode**, but we dipped utterly on the hoped for **Campbell's Fairywren**. **Black Mannikin** and **White-spotted Mannikin** were seen on the Kaim River trip, as well as a nest of **Black Bittern** with 2 large fluffy nestlings.

We then flew back to the much more luxurious Rondon Ridge near Mt Hagen, with lovely big rooms, but the 40 steps to climb up to the dining area keeping us fit! Thankfully they now have a good system of trails in the forest here and we found it a rewarding place, albeit still hard to see things well. One afternoon was very quiet before a heavy rainstorm, but it was good thereafter and we spent a rewarding morning in the forest next day, with the afternoon as always much quieter. Star birds here included **King of Saxony BoP**, **Superb BoP**, **Princess Stephanie's Astrapia**, a male **Brown Sicklebill**, a brief look at **Black Sicklebill** for some, **MacGregor's Bowerbird** (with several bowers), **Black Pitohui**, **Sclater's Whistler**, **Elfin** and **Red-collared Myzomela**, **Ashy Thornbill**, **New Guinea White-eye** and **Mottled Berryhunter (Whistler)** seen by Sean.

Excitements of a cultural nature were nothing too untoward- the guide situation at Kumul is still unresolved with, heaven help us, Wilson as the only available option; the lek at Kama necessitated an unexpected walk up hill as the road was too slippery, and the landowners then got into an altercation which was quite dramatic, if largely show. Tari as ever was full of surprises, with first of all a tree down across the highway, pulled over by a container truck that morning and now the subject of a K4000 compensation claim. This delayed us by an hour or so but we had a great spectacle of the PNG Pawa boys chainsawing and hacking the branches whilst the adjacent primary schoolkids cheered each time the trunk slipped off the cables and almost pitched the guy to the ground! There is also a serious tribal fight going on, with 5 dead on each side at this point and some burned out huts right by the highway, so there was a heavy police presence and a palpable air of tension, with no roadside markets at Tigibi for the first time I can remember. However, none of it affected us and we were able to make our outings much as desired. I was also very pleased to see much less logging in evidence, and far less traffic on the highway now the oil and gas start-up is over.

We even had one of those classic Ambua days when we lucked into all sorts of great birds, just like the old times- **Papuan Harrier**, **Mountain Kingfisher**, **Papuan Logrunner**, **Chestnut Forest Rail**, **Lesser Melampitta**, **Lesser Ground Robin**, **Garnet Robin**, a male **Archbold's Bowerbird** and **Orange-crowned Fairywren** in the morning, then **Loria's Satinbird** and **Torrentlark** that afternoon, capped off with 2 **Papuan Boobook** that evening for a really memorable day. Even departure day gave us a fantastic male **Black Sicklebill** sat up and calling; despite the distance the bird was still utterly incredible.

Thanks to Sue and Rowan at *Sicklebill Safaris* for good logistics, to Leonard at Port Moresby, Samuel, Kwiwon, Edward plus Edmund at Kiunga, the unique and bizarre Wilson as well as Max at Kumul, Mea and Dennis and the crew at Lake Murray Ecolodge, Joseph Tano at Rondon, and Thomas and Paulus at Ambua. My particular thanks to the group for good company and the chance to do the trip and get some great sightings, various recordings and a few nice photos. The Land of the Unexpected treated us well, with good weather throughout with no time

lost to rain and with no flight misdemeanours for once, and coming at the very start of the birding season certainly worked in our favour. Tenk yu tru.

Itinerary

Jun 2 Port Moresby arrival for Jon and Phil, then PAU trip.
Jun 3 Varirata NP for Jon and Phil, then meet Jack and Sean in POM and visit Waigani Houses of Parliament.
Jun 4 POM-Kiunga then Km17 pm. Overnight Kiunga GH.
Jun 5 Fly River and Elevala, then Kwatu Lodge.
Jun 6 Kwatu area and Watame Lodge, overnight Kwatu Lodge
Jun 7 Kwatu to Gusiore, then Fly River to Kiunga. Overnight Kiunga GH.
Jun 8 Kiunga to Mt Hagen on PNG Air, then Kumul Lodge 2600 m. Orchid garden pm.
Jun 9 Kumul Lodge /Tomba/ Kama lek/Orchid garden area. Overnight Kumul Lodge
Jun 10 Transfer to Mt Hagen, then TNT charter to Lake Murray Ecolodge
Jun 11 Lake Murray Ecolodge/Fria am, pm Kaim River.
Jun 12 Lake Murray Lodge Fria area, pm forest opposite lodge and walk towards airstrip.
Jun 13 Forest opposite Lake Murray Ecolodge, then transfer at 1130 to TNT charter to Mt Hagen then Rondon Ridge.
Jun 14 Rondon Ridge track to 2300 m.
Jun 15 Rondon to Mt Hagen then TNT charter to Tari and Ambua Lodge. Tari Gap pm.
Jun 16 Ambua and Tari valley- Paulus's place early on, 7-kona 0830-0930, new Gap trail 1000-1200, then Waterfall Trail pm, thankfully more or less in dry weather for once..
Jun 17 Fly to Port Moresby on Air Niugini at 1045 after a quick foray for Black Sicklebill. Overnight in POM.
Jun 18 Depart for Cairns or Brisbane/Melbourne.

BIRD LIST

* Heard only I Introduced **Bold type** denotes endemic to New Guinea
XC posted on Xenocanto IBC posted on Internet Bird Collection
The family sequence follows the chronological order of the Tree of Life (2015) project

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

SPOTTED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna guttata*)

Four probables over the Fly River by the oxbow, then 2 at Fria on Lake Murray were a nice find, with 5 flying over next day. A very good trip bird.

RADJAH SHELDUCK (*Tadorna radjah*)

Two at the PAU were unexpected, this is not common here.

GREEN PYGMY GOOSE (*Nettapus pulchellus*)

Small numbers from Lake Murray.

PACIFIC BLACK DUCK (*Anas superciliosa*)

Just 2 at the PAU this trip.

Megapodiidae (Megapodes)

YELLOW-LEGGED (BLACK-BILLED) BRUSHTURKEY (*Talegalla fuscirostris*)

Heard at Varirata, Kwatu and Lake Murray, honking away like a goose, and huge active nest mounds still at VNP and also at Lake Murray. Then one seen briefly at Varirata beside a new small mound on our final morning, always so hard to see and quite unlike the Australian Brush-turkeys.

ORANGE-FOOTED SCRUBFOWL (*Megapodius reinwardt*)

A couple of very large nest mounds at Lake Murray, and one bird was seen briefly by some of us.

Phasianidae (Gamebirds)

BROWN QUAIL (*Coturnix ypsilophora*)

One flushed up in the fields at the PAU, the only sighting of the trip.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

AUSTRALASIAN GREBE (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)

An adult at the PAU was the only sighting.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

FERAL PIGEON (*Columba livia*) I

Birds at Mt Hagen may or may not be feral.....

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

A couple at Varirata, then seen at Km 17, Kwatu, Kama and Rondon. Now split as Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove and an eastern NG and Bismarcks endemic.

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

This small rusty brown *Macropygia* was seen quite well at Rondon.

GREAT CUCKOO-DOVE (*Reinwardtoena reinwardtii*)

An immature flashed by at the Tomba Blue BoP site, and then we had another at a fruiting tree by Rondon, the long tail and rich chestnut back showing well, and the forehead turning whitish.

PEACEFUL DOVE (*Geopelia striata*)

Seen at the PAU and then at Ela Beach.

BAR-SHOULDERED DOVE (*Geopelia humeralis*)

3 at Lake Murray, this is a bird of the Trans-Fly savannas and around the Port Moresby area.

PHEASANT PIGEON (*Otidiphaps nobilis*)

Vocal at Varirata on the first visit and I got a glimpse of it, and we heard it again on the final day.

SOUTHERN CROWNED PIGEON (*Goura scheepmakeri*)

Wonderful views of this terrific species at Kwatu, always a trip highlight.

WOMPOO FRUIT DOVE (*Megalopreia magnificus*)

One at Kwatu where it was also calling, and another at Lake Murray, it is now moved out of *Ptilinopus* and gets its own genus.

PINK-SPOTTED FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus perlatus*)

A few at Varirata, Km 17 and Kwatu, then one at Lake Murray.

ORNATE FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus ornatus gestroi*)

One seen perched at Km 17 was a surprise as they are uncommon here, it's a hill forest species, and an elusive one too. Then one at Varirata on the final morning.

ORANGE-FRONTED FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus aurantiifrons*)

Jon and I had 2 at the PAU, then there was one at Km 17 where it is unexpected, and 3 at the fruiting tree in the forest at Lake Murray, this is one of the less common fruit-doves and quite easily missed.

SUPERB FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus superbus*)

A male at Km 17, a couple at the fruiting tree in the forest at Lake Murray, and a juv. sat up along the Gare's Lookout Trail on the last morning.

CORONATED FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus coronatus*)

Two at Lake Murray were a pleasant surprise, and we had one at Varirata on the last morning where it is very uncommon.

BEAUTIFUL FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus pulchellus*)

A perched one scoped at Km 17, then seen at Kwatu and small numbers at Lake Murray.

MOUNTAIN (WHITE-BIBBED) FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus (rivoli) bellus*)

A male seen up at Ambua, tucked away in the foliage, and heard at Rondon. Now split by the IOC from the White-bibbed Fruit Dove (*P. rivoli*) of the Bismarcks and Solomons.

ORANGE-BELLIED FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus iozonus*)

Seen perched in treetops at Km 17 and Kwatu, with a few at Lake Murray and one at Varirata later.

DWARF FRUIT DOVE (*Ptilinopus nainus*)

A male at Km 17, one at Kwatu flying over, and up to 3 at a fruiting tree in the forest at Lake Murray, and one at Varirata on the last morning, an unusually good trip for what can be an elusive species.

PURPLE-TAILED IMPERIAL PIGEON *Ducula rufigaster*

Jon saw one at Varirata on the first day, then a fine view of two at Kwatu and 2+ at Varirata on the last day. Uncommon and easily missed.

PINON'S IMPERIAL PIGEON *Ducula pinon*

Just 3-day records, with 5 long the Elevala, 2 at Kwatu and 4 flying over at Lake Murray Ecolodge.

COLLARED IMPERIAL PIGEON *Ducula mullerii*

Just 2 seen on the upriver journey at Kiunga, and a couple the next afternoon, unusually scarce, and where do they go? Then 2 at Lake Murray, this species roosts in treetops along large rivers and is very tied to riparian forest.

ZOE'S IMPERIAL PIGEON *Ducula zoeae*

Seen well at the lowland sites and at Varirata, but as ever only small numbers.

TORRESIAN IMPERIAL PIGEON (*Ducula spilorrhoea*)

Two at the PAU and 6 at Waigani next day, then a flock of 5 over at Lake Murray.

PAPUAN MOUNTAIN PIGEON (*Gymnophaps albertisii*)

A flyby at Max's orchid garden, then a small flock below Ambua and one sat by the road later.

Centropodidae (Coucals)

GREATER BLACK COUCAL (*Centropus menbeki*) *

Heard from Kwatu and Lake Murray, also at Varirata, but as ever shy and very elusive. I posted a sound recording from Lake Murray to IBC and XC as they have no or little material of this species.

PHEASANT COUCAL (*Centropus phasianinus*)

One seen briefly whilst en route from Varirata, then some good sightings from Lake Murray.

LESSER BLACK COUCAL (*Centropus bernsteini*) *

Heard at Kwatu and Km 17 but stayed out of sight.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

BRUSH CUCKOO (*Cacomantis variolosus*)

Five sightings of singles from upriver at Kiunga and at Lake Murray.

FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis excitus*)

One heard then seen at the new trail across the Tari Gap, this montane form is a potential split.

CHESTNUT-BREASTED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis castaneiventris*) *

Heard but unresponsive at Varirata.

WHITE-CROWNED CUCKOO (KOEL) (*Caliecthrus leucolophus*)

Our boatman Dennis got us onto one at Lake Murray, where we had a good view of the white crown. I was surprised to find it here; we were lucky as they are very tough to see.

DWARF KOEL (*Microdynamis parva*)

One at Kwatu showed well, then we had another at Varirata on the last day. Another species where the (presumed) host is unknown.

LONG-BILLED CUCKOO (*Rhamphomantis megarhynchus*)

Kwiwon got us onto one at Kwatu that landed beside something else we were looking at, a fortunate pick-up of what is quite a rare bird, the host species still unknown too. Then we heard it again at Lake Murray on Jun 12.

RUFOUS-THROATED BRONZE-CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx ruficollis*)

Sean and Jon saw one at Kumul, and it was heard there and at Ambua. The host species is still unknown.

LITTLE BRONZE-CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx minutillus*)

Heard up at Kwatu where Sean saw one, then I called in one male at Lake Murray for good views.

PACIFIC KOEL (*Eudynamys scolopaceus*)

Heard at the lowland sites, and seen at Kwatu and Lake Murray.

CHANNEL-BILLED CUCKOO (*Scythrops novaehollandiae*)

Two flew over calling as we were at the White-bellied Pitohui site, but a very occluded view, and Jon saw one by the PAU as we came back to POM on the last day, I was surprised at how sparse they were this trip.

Podargidae (Frogmouths)

MARBLED FROGMOUTH (*Podargus ocellatus*)

Vocal up at Kwatu and Watame, and some saw one flick over on that first night at Kwatu.

PAPUAN FROGMOUTH (*Podargus papuensis*)

Two fine birds sat in a tree in at the PAU were a nice addition to the tour; I hope Jack got them on his foray there?

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars)

LARGE-TAILED NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus macrurus*)

Heard at Lake Murray Ecological, and we flushed one on the last day from ferns beside the Gare's Lookout Track.

Aegothelidae (Owlet-Nightjars)

STARRY OWLET-NIGHTJAR (*Aegotheles tatei*)

The first attempt at Kwatu was a no-show, not even heard, but next night at Watame in for once very good clear conditions with almost no moon we got lucky at long last. Now I had heard this species 4 or 5 times before but never got to see it, so this was major grudge match. The Wallace's Owlet-nightjar was eventually seen nicely, then Edmund told me he had just heard the Starry on another trail, to which we duly hastened.

I got a very quick fairly close response, but the bird seemed to move further away and my hopes were plummeting. Then Kwiwon told us he had it and shone the light on the extraordinary shape sat on a branch right above the trail. We were viewing from behind so it looked very weird and all angles, but we were able to shift and see it from head on, totally amazing! It's a big owlet-nightjar, slender and long tailed too and very rusty looking, with a bizarre head shape with big ear tufts and odd dull yellow eyes. Kwiwon only saw it because he saw a leaf flutter down and looked up to see the Starry sat there! I could hardly believe I'd finally got to see it after all these years, and it was the #1 bird of the trip for all of us. Photos posted on IBC.

WALLACE'S OWLET-NIGHTJAR (*Aegotheles wallacei*)

A good show at Watame, where my persistent playback elicited some harsh calls I had not heard previously, then the quiet musical calls from a perched bird high in a tree beside the track. Photo on IBC, this is one seldom seen species.

MOUNTAIN OWLET-NIGHTJAR (*Aegotheles albertisi*) *

Heard at Kumul Lodge but despite playback I failed utterly to get it to show, this is one hard bird here.

BARRED OWLET-NIGHTJAR (*Aegotheles bennetti*)

My to my surprise my old faithful was back this year in the roost hole with the stick poking out of it, and we got another for Sean and Jack on our final morning.

Hemiprocnidae (Tree-swifts)

MOUSTACHED TREE-SWIFT (*Hemiprocne mystacea*)

Just 2 birds along the Elevala River, unusually few this time around.

Apodidae (Swifts)

GLOSSY SWIFTLET (*Collocalia esculenta*)

Quite common at all localities we visited except Kiunga and Lake Murray.

UNIFORM SWIFTLET (*Collocalia vanikorensis*)

Seen around Kiunga and a couple at Lake Murray.

MOUNTAIN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus hirundinaceus*)

Just a few were seen at Kumul and Ambua.

PAPUAN SPINE-TAILED SWIFT (*Mearnsia novaeguineae*)

A couple of sightings over the river at Ketu Creek and the Elevala.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CHESTNUT FOREST RAIL (*Rallina rubra*)

It pays to be the first tour in, I got one to respond at 7-kona and a delightful male scampered in and came right past us, just like the old days before they got taped out! One of the birds of the trip for sure.

RED-NECKED CRAKE (*Rallina tricolor*) *

Heard daily up at Kwatu, at one time very close to the lodge, recording posted on XC.

AUSTRALASIAN (PURPLE) SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio (porphyrio) melanotus*)

5 seen at the PAU, and now at long last split, a mere 17 years after the initial proposal.

DUSKY MOORHEN (*Gallinula tenebrosa*)

Ten at the PAU.

Jacanidae (Jacanas)

COMB-CRESTED JACANA (*Irediparra gallinacea*)

Great views of 8 at the PAU, a superb little bird, but oddly none at Lake Murray.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

MASKED LAPWING (*Vanellus miles miles*)

A good count of 13 were seen at the PAU, but nowhere else.

Laridae (Gulls & terns)

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*)

Three-day records of 8, 5 and 2 from Lake Murray.

Sulidae (Gannets & boobies)

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*)

A couple off Ela Beach.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants)

LITTLE PIED CORMORANT (*Microcarbo melanoleucos*)

4 at the PAU.

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

Two at the PAU, and one over the road there on the last day as we came back to town.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

AUSTRALIAN WHITE IBIS (*Threskiornis molucca*)

Four at the PAU, an uncommon winter migrant.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

EASTERN CATTLE EGRET (Asian) (*Bubulcus (ibis) coromandus*)

About 20 near the PAU. Split by the IOC from Western Cattle Egret, the breeding dress is very distinct.

NANKEEN (RUFOUS) NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

A smart adult at the PAU was the only sighting.

GREAT EGRET (AUSTRALASIAN) (*Ardea alba modesta*)

Just one at the PAU, and a handful from Lake Murray and the Fly River.

INTERMEDIATE EGRET (*Egretta intermedia*)

Three at the PAU, and 3 at Lake Murray.

BLACK BITTERN (*Dupetor flavicollis*)

One at Ketu Creek, then 2 plus a nest with 2 big white fluffy juveniles at Kaim River, and a single near Fria.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

PACIFIC BAZA (*Aviceda subcristata*)

One flew by at Varirata.

BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans affinis*)

Quite common around Mt Hagen and Kumul and singles near Port Moresby. Note this taxon is oddly enough NOT a part of Black-eared Kite.

WHISTLING KITE (*Haliastur sphenurus*)

A single was over the Fly River, then small numbers up to 8 seen at Lake Murray.

BRAHMINY KITE (*Haliastur indus*)

Singles at Varirata and two birds were very obvious flying around each day below Ambua.

WHITE-BELLIED SEA EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)

A couple of adults up the Fly and Elevala Rivers, then small numbers at Lake Murray.

PAPUAN HARRIER (*Circus (spilonotus) spilothorax*)

One female/imm. by the airstrip at Mt Hagen as we were taking off to go to Ambua, then a fine pied male at the Tari Gap, a good pick up of a scarce species which is often split as Papuan Harrier.

VARIABLE GOSHAWK (*Accipiter hiogaster leucosomus*)

One was perched below Kumul, right by the road.

GREY-HEADED GOSHAWK (*Accipiter poliocephalus*)

One by the picnic site at Varirata on Jun 19 was I think my first record from here.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

SOOTY OWL (GREATER) (*Tyto tenebricosa arfaki*)

Calling at 0500 at Kumul Lodge on both mornings, and both days we got a flyby look at it, it came every close on the first morning but was unbelievably hard to find! We were lucky to get it, as we could not go down into the Tari Valley for the usual roost sites.

Strigidae (Owls)

PAPUAN BOOBOOK (*Ninox theomacha*)

A fantastic look at 2 at Ambua, after failing on the previous night, they showed very well and it was unusual to see two birds together.

BARKING OWL (*Ninox connivens*)

A pair were calling well at Lake Murray Ec lodge and Sean saw one fly over as I was playing back early one morning.

PAPUAN HAWK OWL (*Uroglaux dimorpha*) *

Sean and Kwiwon heard this early one morning at Kwatu, but we were all fast asleep!

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

BLYTH'S HORNBILL (*Aceros plicatus*)

Two at Varirata on both trips were unusual there, then up to 12 per day above Kiunga and a single at Lake Murray.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

RAINBOW BEE-EATER (*Merops ornatus*)

Seen at Varirata and above Kiunga, with a few from Lake Murray.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

ORIENTAL DOLLARBIRD (*Eurystomus orientalis*)

One along the Varirata approach road, common upriver from Kiunga, and one at Lake Murray.

Halcyonidae (Tree Kingfishers)

COMMON PARADISE-KINGFISHER (*Tanysiptera galatea*)

A lovely view of one along Ketu Creek, and a couple seen at Lake Murray.

BUFF-BREASTED PARADISE-KINGFISHER (*Tanysiptera galatea*)

One in the forest at Lake Murray was a nice find, probably an Australian wintering bird.

BROWN-HEADED PARADISE-KINGFISHER (*Tanysiptera danae*)

Leonard got us a fine bird on day one at Varirata, and again on the last day for Sean and Jack's benefit. It's endemic to SE PNG and this is the only place I have ever seen them. I like to get them without using tape; they sit quietly and can often be picked up by the bright red breast.

HOOK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Melidora macrorrhina*)

Heard at Kwatu, and one glimpsed flying through and calling along the Elevala at the White-bellied Pitohui site, being mobbed by other birds.

BLUE-WINGED KOOKABURRA (*Dacelo leachii*)

Jon and I saw one at Varirata, and there was a flyby at Waigani Houses of Parliament, but again none at Lake Murray.

RUFOUS-BELLIED KOOKABURRA (*Dacelo gaudichaud*)

A very nice view of 2 at Varirata, and again upriver from Kiunga, but oddly enough none at Lake Murray

SACRED KINGFISHER (*Todiramphus sanctus*)

An Australian migrant here, seen at the PAU, Kiunga, Lake Murray and Ambua Lodge.

FOREST KINGFISHER (*Todiramphus macleayii*)

One at the PAU, and one along the Varirata approach road, then a few seen at Lake Murray.

YELLOW-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Syma torotoro*)

Great views of one at Lake Murray, they were quite vocal at Varirata too but stayed out of sight.

MOUNTAIN KINGFISHER (*Syma megarhyncha*)

One seen well and calling at Paulus's land below Ambua, where two birds were vocalizing; this is another very tricky species to actually see.

Alcedinidae (River Kingfishers)

AZURE KINGFISHER (*Ceyx azureus*)

One at Varirata on both visits, Kelly spotted the first right by the picnic site along the approach road.

PAPUAN DWARF KINGFISHER (*Ceyx solitarius*) *

Heard close by along the trail at Varirata and at Lake Murray, but another very hard bird to get to see.

Falconidae (Falcons)

AUSTRALIAN HOBBY (*Falco longipennis*)

A single flew by late afternoon as we neared the Ecolodge at Lake Murray on Jun 10.

Cacatuidae (Cockatoos)

SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua galerita triton*)

One seen from Varirata lookout, a few above Kiunga, and a single from Lake Murray.

PALM COCKATOO (*Probosciger aterrima*)

Some good views from along the rivers above Kiunga on 3 days, but always just 2 or 3 per day this trip

Psitttrichasidae (NG Vulturine and black parrots)

NEW GUINEA VULTURINE PARROT (*Psitttrichas fulgidus*)

This was one of the big trip wants, and we were lucky to find 4 calling birds at Watame Lodge, keeping warily back but showing quite well and with some nice flight views, that flap-flap-glide flight style is very distinctive.

Psittaculidae (Australasian Parrots)

DUSKY LORY (*Pseudeos fuscatus*) *

Heard flying over at Lake Murray, but sadly not seen anywhere else.

COCONUT (RAINBOW) LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)

New Guinea birds are often now split as Coconut Lorikeet; the plumage is pretty distinct from the Australian birds. We saw them along the approach road to Varirata.

YELLOW-STREAKED LORY (*Chalcopsitta sintillata*)

Several flyovers of small flocks from the Kiunga area, and one right overhead at Lake Murray.

BLACK-CAPPED LORY (*Lorius lory*)

These were noisy and we got some good looks at Varirata and Km 17 as well as on the Fly R.

RED-FLANKED LORIKEET (*Charmosyna placentis*)

10 zipped by along the Varirata approach on the first day there, and another small flock shot through on the last day, but really a BVD (better view desired).

STELLA'S (PAPUAN) LORIKEET (*Charmosyna stellae*)

There was a frustrating flyby at Kumul, but much better views up at Tari Gap; it really is one of the most beautiful of all the parrots. Now split from the Papuan Lorikeet of the Vogelkop too.

PLUM-FACED LORIKEET (*Oreopsittacus arfaki*)

This tiny lorikeet with the husky voice was seen well above Rondon Ridge.

RED-BREASTED PYGMY-PARROT (*Micropsitta bruijnii*)

The group had a calling flyover Ambua where it is the only *Micropsitta*, but no-one ticked it, these guys have standards.

YELLOW-CAPPED PYGMY-PARROT (*Micropsitta keiensis*)

A stonking scope view of a male at Watame Lodge, great to be able to admire what are more usually dots flying over.

YELLOW-BILLED LORIKEET (*Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*)

A few at Ambua where we got to see them well.

ORANGE-BILLED LORIKEET (*Neopsittacus pullicauda*)

2 at Kumul Lodge were a nice find and showed very well.

BREHM'S TIGER PARROT (*Psittacella brehmii*)

Good looks at Kumul with up to 5 birds including a fine male, the group greatly enjoyed their chunky antics, and one was at Tari Gap.

Some feathers from a recently deceased Tiger-Parrot over Tari Gap may belong to Painted Tiger-Parrot I suspect.

RED-CHEEKED PARROT (*Geoffroyus geoffroyi*)

Some good views both at rest and in flight from Varirata and Kiunga, but very few at Lake

Murray.

BLUE-COLLARED PARROT (*Geoffroyus simplex*)

I heard some late one afternoon at Ambua, then next day Jun 17 a flock of 9 burst out of the trees above the lodge and flew over us, giving the lovely chiming call- believe me guys this was a good close view, usually they are calling up in the cloud base and you only see the shape!

ECLECTUS PARROT (*Eclectus roratus*)

Four males and a female in a flock flying over along the Varirata approach road, then daily upriver at Kiunga and Lake Murray.

PAPUAN KING PARROT (*Alisterus chloropterus*) *

Only heard briefly below Ambua.

ORANGE-BREASTED FIG-PARROT (*Cyclopsitta gulelmitertii*)

Good views of the usual small flocks of 4-6 upriver from Kiunga, and heard at Lake Murray.

DOUBLE-EYED FIG-PARROT (*Cyclopsitta diophthalma coccineifrons*)

This was surprise with 2 birds at the Yellow-breasted Bowerbird site at 1700 m below Rondon, the highest altitude I have ever seen them. We also saw 2 fly over at Gusiore, the red face very obvious.

LARGE FIG-PARROT (*Psittaculirostris desmarestii godmani*)

A fantastic scope view of one at Kwatu, my best view in years, seeing the yellow whiskers, orange crown and blue breast band. HBW/BirdLife split this into 3 species this one being Yellow-naped Fig-Parrot *P. godmani*.

Pittidae (Pittas)

PAPUAN (RED-BELLIED) PITTA (*Erythropitta erythrogaster*)

Heard at Watame Lodge, and along the Elevala where Phil got a brief look at it, with glimpses maybe for some others? Now split as Papuan Pitta as a part of the break-up of the complex into 10 + species.

HOODED PITTA (*Pitta sordida*)*

Heard but unresponsive upriver at Kiunga.

Ptilonorhynchidae (Bowerbirds)

OCHRE-BREASTED (WHITE-EARED) CATBIRD (*Ailuroedus (buccoides) stonii*) *

Heard at Varirata on the last morning but always a really hard bird to see, and now split into 3 species.

ARCHBOLD'S BOWERBIRD (*Archboldia papuensis*)

Absent from Kumul this trip, but we heard it in the forest on the new trail over the Tari Gap, and were lucky enough to get onto a terrific yellow-crested adult male high in an Antarctic beech there, on Jun 16 during that great morning we had.

MACGREGOR'S BOWERBIRD (*Amblyornis macgregoriae*)

A fine bower in the *Castanopsis* forest above Rondon, and we saw a female at a fruiting tree later, a very tricky bird to get a view of indeed. Another site here had two bowers very close together on the ridge top.

FLAME BOWERBIRD (*Sericulus aureus*)

The group got a brief look at a calling male in the forest at Kwatu, and we saw a female and subadult male at Gusiore next day, unfortunately dipping an adult male seen by Edward. This was really a BVD with such a great species.

FAWN-BREASTED BOWERBIRD (*Chlamydera cerviniventris*)

Several at the PAU with a work-in-progress bower too, and then 2 up along the Varirata approach.

Maluridae (Fairwrens)

WALLACE'S FAIRYWREN (*Sipodotus wallacei*)

Heard at Watame, then 3 heard then seen foraging in mid-stratum at Lake Murray, and giving us

a brief burst of hope for Campbell's Fairywren until we saw them properly, the only time I have ever been disappointed to see this uncommon species!

EMPEROR FAIRYWREN (*Malurus cyanocephalus*)

A tremendous male showed beautifully for us along Ketu Creek, boy was he fired up!

WHITE-SHOULDERED FAIRYWREN (*Malurus alboscapulatus lorentzi*)

Both males and females were seen very well in the gardens at Rondon, females here are black above and have white on the face and white throats, whereas other taxa have male-type plumage or are brown and white, all very bizarre. Lake Murray birds have the brown and white females.

ORANGE-CROWNED FAIRYWREN (*Clytomias insignis*)

Calling and eventually all except me saw them quite well on the new trail over the Tari Gap, they are always tough to see as they skulk so much and move quite fast.

Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters)

RED-COLLARED MYZOMELA (*Myzomela rosenbergii*)

Seen up at Rondon and Ambua, the male is an eye-catching thing for sure

ELFIN (MOUNTAIN) MYZOMELA (*Myzomela adolphinae*)

One beautiful diminutive male was foraging among flowers in a flowerbed at Rondon for some, and we saw one very well at Kama lek.

RUBY-THROATED MYZOMELA (*Myzomela eques*)

A fine view of one in a flowering tree along the Lookout Trail, always elusive and good to find this species.

PAPUAN BLACK MYZOMELA (*Myzomela nigrita*)

One at the flowering tree along the Gare's Lookout Trail, and a sharp "tip" call I taped and posted to XC Mysteries is almost certainly this species.

GREEN-BACKED HONEYEATER (*Glycichaera fallax*)

One was seen briefly in the forest at Lake Murray, unobtrusive and very local in NG.

TAWNY-BREASTED HONEYEATER (*Xanthotis flaviventer*)

Seen well at Kiunga, Lake Murray and Varirata.

SPOTTED HONEYEATER (*Xanthotis polygramma*)

Sean and Jon saw one in the forest at Lake Murray, usually a hill forest species but with an outlier population in the Trans-Fly lowlands.

OBSCURE HONEYEATER (*Caligavis obscura*)

One of this rare species was seen nicely at Watame Lodge. It is the lowland replacement of Black-throated Honeyeater of the highlands, with a lovely fluty call.

BLACK-THROATED HONEYEATER (*Caligavis subfrenatus*)

They were quite vocal at Rondon and were seen nicely up at Tari Gap.

SILVER-EARED HONEYEATER (*Lichmera alboauriculatus*)

An afternoon twitch to the old PNG Arts site came good, with nice looks at a couple of this oddly local species.

YELLOW-TINTED HONEYEATER (*Ptilotula flavescens*)

Jon and I saw them at the PAU, and then got them for the newly arrived lads at Waigani next day.

ELEGANT (GRACEFUL) MELIPHAGA (*Meliphaga (gracilis) cinereifrons*)

Ah, now the Meliphagas at Varirata with the big pale ear spots are actually not Graceful but this recently split taxon Elegant Honeyeater *M. cinereifrons*. It's one of the few readily identified taxa in the genus.

[GRACEFUL MELIPHAGA] (*Meliphaga gracilis*) *

The Meliphaga calling "chip" in the forests and grounds at Lake Murray are almost certainly this species, but we never got a good enough view to confirm.

MIMIC MELIPHAGA (*Meliphaga analoga*)

What looked to be this species was at Lake Murray and Kwatu, and came in to the flowering tree along the Lookout Trail, it has a quite small ear spot and is fairly large and long billed.

PUFF-BACKED MELIPHAGA (*Meliphaga aruensis*)

One at Watame Lodge was right by a Mimic Meliphaga; you could see the shorter thicker bill and darker face, good to have them as a comparison as they are a major challenge otherwise.

MOTTLED HONEYEATER (*Meliphaga mimikae*)

One of this scarce species was also at the flowers along the Gare's Lookout Trail, the dark chest is a good field character but Jack was the only one to see it.

WHITE-THROATED HONEYEATER (*Melithreptus albogularis*)

Two seen along the Varirata approach on both visits.

STREAK-HEADED HONEYEATER (*Pycnopygius stictocephalus*)

Brief views at Varirata, and then well seen at Km17 and Lake Murray. This is one of the friarbird mimics, along with Brown Oriole.

MARbled HONEYEATER (*Pycnopygius cinereus*)

One at the Sepik headwaters was a good find of an uncommon bird.

MEYER'S FRIARBIRD (*Philemon meyeri*) *

Heard calling in the forest at Lake Murray each day, but proved elusive.

NEW GUINEA (HELMETED) FRIARBIRD (*Philemon (bucerooides) novaeguineae*)

Widespread in the lowlands and hills, and quite distinct from Helmeted in calls and morphology. It used to be split by Clements but was then oddly demoted, but happily the IOC have split it again and now have it as a NG endemic (though note the new Pratt and Beehler guide lumps it.)

GREY-STREAKED (BLACK-BACKED) HONEYEATER (*Ptiloprora perstriata*)

The Grey-streaked Honeyeater was seen very well at Kumul and Tari Gap.

BELFORD'S MELIDECTES (*Melidectes belfordi*)

Bel Mels are liked by clients, being big, noisy and obvious, we saw them very well at all 3 highland sites.

YELLOW-BROWED MELIDECTES (*Melidectes rufocrissalis*)

Quite common at Ambua, just as noisy as its cousin, and also seen near the Blue BoP site.

ORNATE MELIDECTES (*Melidectes ornatus*)

A couple in the valley by Kama.

LONG-BILLED HONEYEATER (*Melilestes megarhynchus*)

One showed briefly by Kwatu Lodge, but probably UTV's (untickable views) for most folks.

SMOKY HONEYEATER (*Melipotes fumigatus*)

The extraordinary blushing honeyeater was seen well at Kumul, Rondon and Ambua.

RUFIOUS-BANDED HONEYEATER (*Conopophila albogularis*)

Only heard at the PAU, but common enough at Lake Murray.

BROWN-BACKED HONEYEATER (*Ramsayornis modestus*)

Seen on two dates at Lake Murray, where it looks to be uncommon.

Acanthizidae (Thornbills and Allies)

GOLDENFACE (*Pachycare flavogrisea*)

Several of these odd little arboreal birds were calling along the Gare's Lookout Trail, but we had had a very difficult time getting on them and Phil was the only one who got a view!

RUSTY MOUSE WARBLER (*Crateroscelis murina*) *

Heard at Varirata and seen very well at Lake Murray, where they have a dark face and whitish chin with reddish underparts. An unfamiliar sibilant call heard nearby just might have been the Campbell's Fairywren, but we were never able to connect.

MOUNTAIN MOUSE-WARBLER (*Crateroscelis robusta*)

Heard at all 3 sites and we saw them briefly them in the moss forest at Kumul and Ambua. One at Rondon looked to be entirely buff below but the others showed white throats, the taxonomy here is unresolved but 3 species seem plausible.

LARGE SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis nouhuysi*)

Seen nicely at Kumul and Rondon.

BUFF-FACED SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis perspicillatus*)

Seen at Ambua, the wide buff eye surround is very obvious.

PALE-BILLED SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis spilodera*) *

Seen along the Lookout Trail by Jon and I, this is the one with the “nee naw” call reminiscent of an ambulance!

PAPUAN SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis papuensis*)

Good looks at Tari Gap, where they sing late afternoon, and seen by some at Kumul too.

TROPICAL SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis beccarii randi*)

A great look at one in the forest at Lake Murray, with yellowish belly, white eye crescents and a well-defined narrow white > shape wing-bar. This was a New Guinea tick for me, *randi* being a lowland form mostly from the Trans-Fly, and with the recent pitta, kingfisher, catbird and cuckoo-dove splits brings me just over 700 for PNG.

GREEN-BACKED GERYGONE (*Gerygone chloronotus*)

Heard at Varirata and one seen briefly at Lake Murray, but it proved to be a nemesis for Jon despite much upward peering and quite good responses at Lake Murray, albeit in dense foliage

FAIRY GERYGONE (*Gerygone palpebrosa*)

Seen well at Varirata with a fine black-throated male for Jack but not Jon or I.

YELLOW-BELLIED GERYGONE (*Gerygone chrysogaster*)

Four along the Lookout Trail, always members of the bird flocks here, and common at Lake Murray.

BROWN-BREASTED GERYGONE (*Gerygone ruficollis*)

Seen nicely at Ambua and Rondon; the delightful smoky descending song is the best thing about it.

NEW GUINEA THORNBILL (*Acanthiza murina*)

Jon saw one at Rondon, but I failed utterly in finding where they were, it is a good species to get, being an elusive and scarce high-altitude bird.

ASHY (GREY) THORNBILL (*Acanthiza cinerea*)

A good look at one at Rondon, grey above and whitish below, and Sean saw one earlier in the flock I did not get onto. I am still surprised with this reassignment as a thornbill, why do they sing so much like Brown-breasted Greygone?

Pomatostomidae (Australasian babblers)

PAPUAN BABBLER (*Garritornis isidorei*)

One elusive individual at Kwatu, and one of the pendulous nests seen there, then better looks at a small flock at Lake Murray.

Orthonychidae (Logrunners)

PAPUAN LOGRUNNER (*Orthonyx novaeguineae*)

This very elusive species was singing really well in the forest at 7-kona at the Tari Gap, and we saw a pair walk past on the forest floor; it's amazing how their calls and behaviour are so totally unlike their tame Australian congener.

Cnemophilidae (Satinbirds)

LORIA'S SATINBIRD (*Cnemophilus loriae*)

A good view of a male at Ambua along the Waterfall Trail, now reallocated out of bops and into this fairly new endemic family.

Melanocharitidae (Berrypeckers and Longbills)

BLACK BERRYPECKER (*Melanocharis nigra*)

A male was seen briefly at Varirata, this one of the NG endemic families.

MID-MOUNTAIN BERRYPECKER (*Melanocharis longicauda*)

A female with a juvenile was at Rondon near Bob's house, feeding on berries, one of 4 species of berrypecker seen that day.

STREAKED BERRYPECKER (*Melanocharis striativentris*)

One in fruiting trees by Rondon on Jun 12, this is a species I very rarely see but Rondon is a good place for it, the shorter tail, dumpy appearance and pale buff surround to the eye were obvious.

FAN-TAILED BERRYPECKER (*Melanocharis versteri*)

Nice views at Kumul and above Ambua.

SPOTTED BERRYPECKER (*Rhamphocharis crassirostris*)

Sean and Jon saw one above Rondon, which Jack and I dipped on, then Sean saw another at Ambua Lodge on the last morning, gone by the time we got there. It's quite a scarce species, and may belong in a distinct family.

YELLOW-BELLIED LONGBILL (*Toxoramphus novaeguineae*)

Vocal around Kwatu and I think we all got a look at one.

SPECTACLED (DWARF) LONGBILL (*Oedistoma pygmaeum*) *

Heard along the Gare's Lookout Trail and also the Lookout Trail, but no views.

PYGMY LONGBILL (*Toxoramphus pygmaeum*)

Clicking away in the forest at Lake Murray, and Jon was lucky enough to get a look at one, New Guinea's smallest bird too.

Paramythiidae (Tit Berrypecker, Crested Berrypecker)

CRESTED BERRYPECKER (*Paramythia montium*)

Good views at Kumul, a lovely bird. It's a member of an endemic family, along with Tit Berrypecker, which was oddly missing in action this trip.

Cinclosomatidae (Jewel-babblers and quail-thrush)

PAINTED QUAIL-THRUSH (*Cinclosoma ajax*)

Heard at Varirata on the first trip, then I managed to lure a pair close enough for the group to get brief looks at them on the last day, always a very hard species to see.

CHESTNUT-BACKED JEWEL-BABBLER (*Ptilorrhoa castaneothorax*) *

Heard at Varirata on the last day, and I think some may have seen one flit by, doubtless a UTV but this is always one of the mega-skulkers!

BLUE JEWEL-BABBLER (*Ptilorrhoa caerulescens*)

Heard at Kwatu, and then seen fairly well at Lake Murray where they seemed quite common by voice in the forest, and Jack saw them again next day. This bird is always one of the mega-skulkers, but generally a little easier than its congeners.

Machaerirhynchidae (Boatbills)

YELLOW-BREASTED BOATBILL (*Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*) *

Seen along the Lookout Track at Varirata and at Lake Murray.

BLACK-BREASTED BOATBILL (*Machaerirhynchus nigripectus*)

Great views of this striking species at Tari Gap.

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus leucorhynchus*)

A few around Port Moresby and Kiunga.

GREAT WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus maximus*)

Great looks at Ambua, huddling in endearing fashion.

Cracticidae (Bellmagpies and Allies)

BLACK-BACKED BUTCHERBIRD (*Cracticus mentalis*)

Fine views at the PAU; it's otherwise a Cape York special.

HOODED BUTCHERBIRD (*Cracticus cassicus*)

A good singer, and seen well at Varirata.

BLACK BUTCHERBIRD (*Cracticus quoyi*)

Seen well at Ambua, these highland New Guinea races are a likely split.

LOWLAND PELTOPS (*Peltops blainvillii*)

A couple of sightings up along Ketu Creek, always a neat trip bird.

MOUNTAIN PELTOPS (*Peltops montanus*)

Two fine birds were back in the car park area at Ambua this year; I posted a cut of the call to the IBC.

Campephagidae (*Cuckooshrikes*)

STOUT-BILLED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina caeruleogrisea*)

A fine pair of this huge species, one of the largest of the family, up along the Gare's Lookout Trail, the male had a huge bill and great long tail and looked absolutely amazing at close range in the forest

BARRED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina lineata axillaris*)

Two at Varirata, with very different calls to the Queensland birds, only the females are barred here and I suspect this is a distinct species.

BOYER'S CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina boyeri*)

Good views from Varirata and Km 17.

WHITE-BELLIED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina papuensis*)

One along the Varirata approach, and small numbers from Lake Murray.

BLACK-FACED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)

Up to 6 at Lake Murray in small flocks at a couple of sites.

HOODED CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina longicauda*)

Seen very well and heard on the Waterfall Trail and the car park at Ambua, a large and striking species.

GREY-HEADED CICADABIRD (*Edolisoma tenuirostris*)

A pair at Watame Lodge were unexpected as this is usually more of a hill forest bird.

BLACK CICADABIRD (*Edolisoma melas*)

Jon and I had a pair at Varirata, and Sean saw a female at Lake Murray.

COMMON CICADABIRD (*Edolisoma tenuirostris*)

Heard at Varirata, then singing well at Lake Murray with both sexes seen. One song is a dry raspy series a bit like some Australian calls, but another series sounds remarkably like the song of Black-shouldered Cicadabird, a hill forest and lower montane species. I presume the same birds made them and are some variant of Cicadabird call, I heard this at both Gusiore and Lake Murray. The taxonomy here is vexed, these birds are I suspect resident here and not migrants, and I have never heard the whistled call like we get in the rainforests of far north Queensland in PNG.

GOLDEN CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Campochaera sloetii*)

Seen several times around Kiunga and upriver, where they are quite vocal.

VARIED TRILLER (*Lalage leucomela*)*

Heard at Varirata and seen upriver from Kiunga.

Rhagologidae (*Mottled Whistler*)

MOTTLED BERRYHUNTER (WHISTLER) (*Rhagologus leucostigma*)

Joseph and Sean saw one in the *Castanopsis* and bamboo forests by Rondon, which is a good site for it, but Sean is not ticking it! Always a bit of an oddity, it is now given family rank as part of an ancient Tertiary radiation revealed by genetic work. Not heard to call this trip.

Oreoicidae *Australasian Bellbirds*

RUFOUS-NAPED BELLBIRD (WHISTLER) (*Aleadryas rufinucha*)

This odd bird that is actually not a whistler at all showed very well at both Kumul and Ambua. It is now placed with the Crested Bellbird of Australia in the new family of Oreoicidae.

PIPING BELLBIRD (*Ornorectes cristatus*) *

Heard singing the long repetitive song along the Gare's Lookout Trail, but as ever not visible, this is one really hard bird to see and I haven't seen one for some years.

Eulacestomidae (Ploughbill)

WATTLED PLOUGHBILL (*Eulacestoma nigripectus*) *

Heard above Rondon by the KoS site, but sadly unresponsive. Another that was always a bit of an oddity, it is now given family rank as part of an ancient Tertiary radiation revealed by genetic work.

Pachycephalidae (Whistlers and Allies)

BLACK PITOUI (*Melanorectes nigrescens*)

A pair at Rondon, which is a good site for them, most us saw the big-billed rusty female and some saw the black male.

BROWN-BACKED WHISTLER (*Pachycephala modesta*)

A good look above Rondon at this rather odd PNG endemic, then again at Ambua. I still have no recording of this rather quiet species.

GREY WHISTLER (*Pachycephala simplex*)

Several seen nicely at Varirata (*peninsulae*), also at Lake Murray (presumably *perneglecta*) where they were very vocal and seemed much yellower below than the Varirata birds.

SCLATER'S WHISTLER (*Pachycephala soror*)

We got very nice looks, at both Rondon and Ambua.

REGENT WHISTLER (*Pachycephala schlegelii*)

A couple of good looks at the striking male at Rondon, and of both sexes above the Bailey Bridge at Ambua.

BLACK-HEADED WHISTLER (*Pachycephala monacha*)

Seen nicely in the valley by Kama lek.

WHITE-BELLIED WHISTLER (*Pachycephala leucogastra*)

A fine male with a female along the Varirata approach took a while to get, but this is a good site for this very local species.

LITTLE (RUFIOUS) SHRIKE-THRUSH (*Colluricincla megarhyncha*)

Seen at Varirata, Lake Murray, Ambua and Rondon, this Not-so-Little Shrike-thrush group of 28 taxa is reputedly about to become an 8+ way split, just what the world needs!

GREY SHRIKE-THRUSH (*Colluricincla harmonica*)

Heard at Varirata approach but stayed out of sight, and heard and seen briefly at Kaim River on Lake Murray.

WHITE-BELLIED PITOUI (SHRIKE-THRUSH) (*Pseudorectes incertus*)

This upper Fly endemic was quite vocal by Kwatu, and the group caught up with them as we were coming back down the Elevala, when I got a fairly responsive group to come by.

RUSTY PITOUI (SHRIKE-THRUSH) (*Pseudorectes ferrugineus*)

Jon and I got a brief look at Varirata, and again at Lake Murray, it is one of those things that you hear more than see, but the pale eye is a good field mark.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE (*Lanius schach stresemanni*)

Seen well in the Wahgi Valley, a singularly beautiful shrike. This highland PNG endemic race is a possible split.

Oriolidae (Orioles)

BROWN ORIOLE (*Oriolus szalayi*)

Seen at the PAU and Varirata, this is one of the friarbird mimics.

AUSTRALASIAN FIGBIRD (*Sphecotheres vieilloti salvadorii*)

8 at the PAU, a distinctive endemic taxon, the male has a greyish chest and yellow belly.

HOODED PITOHI (*Pitohui dichrous*)

3 seen at Varirata, this orange and black species is now placed with orioles and is one of the few poisonous birds.

SOUTHERN VARIABLE PITOHI (*Pitohui uropygialis*)

Heard at Km 17 where Jack saw one, this is the race *brunneiceps*; however birds at Lake Murray have distinct blackish-brown heads and chests and dark wings, and are very richly coloured orange elsewhere, resembling Hooded Pitohui. I am not sure what taxon this is, it is like the birds from SE PNG or the Vogelkop, and it has rather distinct vocals too- see the XC website. This one badly needs some research.

Monarchidae (Monarchs)

FANTAIL (BLACK) MONARCH (*Symposiachrus axillaris*) *

Heard at Ambua where Jon got me onto it, I had not seen one for several years!

SPOT-WINGED MONARCH (*Symposiachrus guttula*)

One seen well along the Lookout Trail in the mixed flock there, also at Kwatu and Lake Murray.

HOODED MONARCH (*Symposiachrus manadensis*)

Heard at our first stop along Ketu Creek in the rain, then seen well at a site along the Elevala later, this is a decidedly scarce bird.

BLACK-FACED MONARCH (*Monarcha melanopsis*)

One seen well along the Lookout Trail.

BLACK-WINGED MONARCH (*Monarcha frater*)

Jack got us onto one along the Gare's Lookout Trail a fine silvery grey and rusty bird with black face and black wings; it's an uncommon bird of the hill forest.

GOLDEN MONARCH (*Carterornis chrysomela*)

A couple seen around Kwatu, and again at Lake Murray.

FRILLED MONARCH (*Arses telescopthalmus*)

Great views of a pair along the Lookout Trail.

TORRENTLARK (*Grallina bruijnii*)

One along the Waterfall stream at Ambua, shy as ever but giving tickable views for Sean and the chaps. The raspy call cuts through the loud white noise of the torrents, an amazing adaptation.

LEADEN FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra rubecula*)

Singles seen along the Varirata approach road on both trips.

SHINING FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra alecto*)

Some nice views along Ketu Creek, of both males and females.

PAPERBARK FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra (inquieta) nana*)

One at the Kiam River at Lake Murray may be a significant northward range extension. Oddly the new Pratt and Beehler lumps it with Restless Flycatcher.

Ifritidae (Ifrit)

BLUE-CAPPED IFRIT (*Ifrita kowaldi*)

This is also a poisonous bird a bit like pitohuis, certainly an important species to see on a New Guinea trip and we did nicely for them at Kumul where 2 birds were seen well by the Lodge. It was a favorite and we did unusually well for this oddity, which creeps along branches and picks over lichens, also seeing it at Rondon and beyond Tari Gap. For many years no one knew what family it belonged to, it has been placed in various groups such as rail-babblers or Incertae Sedis, but is now given family rank as part of an ancient Tertiary radiation. I am not surprised.

Dicruridae (Drongos)

PAPUAN SPANGLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus (bracteatus) carbonarius*) *

Common at Varirata and Kiunga with distinctive calls; I split this from the Spangled Drongo in my forthcoming Field Guide.

SPANGLED DRONGO (*Dicrurus bracteatus*)

These Australian migrants were quite common at Lake Murray and readily picked by their different calls.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

DRONGO FANTAIL (PYGMY DRONGO) (*Chaetorhynchus papuensis*)

One along the Gare's Lookout Trail was a good find, now currently placed in Fantails but soon about to become a new family along with the Silktail of Fiji, the Lamprolidae.

WILLIE-WAGTAIL (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)

Very widespread, we even had them at Ambua at 2200m and Max's garden at 2500m.

NORTHERN FANTAIL (*Rhipidura rufiventris*)

A few seen in the forest at Lake Murray.

FRIENDLY FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albolimbata*)

Good looks at all 3 sites, where it lives up to its name.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura hyperythra*)

Six in the feeding flocks along the Lookout Trail at Varirata.

RUFIOUS FANTAIL (*Rhipidura rufifrons*)

These were quite common by voice in the forest at Lake Murray, being wintering birds from Australia, and we saw a few each day.

RUFIOUS-BACKED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura rufidorsa*) *

Heard briefly up at Watame Lodge forest, but a long way off, and we did not find it at Lake Murray, which was quite surprising.

BLACK FANTAIL (*Rhipidura atra*)

A pair at Rondon and Ambua, the sexes are strikingly different, the female being deep rufous, not black like the male.

DIMORPHIC FANTAIL (*Rhipidura brachyrhyncha*)

Seen very well at Rondon.

SOOTY THICKET-FANTAIL (*Rhipidura threnothorax*) *

Heard from Varirata and at Kiunga, but as ever elusive and no-one got a proper look at one that was close at Watame.

WHITE-BELLIED THICKET-FANTAIL (*Rhipidura leucothorax*)

Heard up river at Kiunga, then seen nicely along the Kaim River at Lake Murray.

Corvidae (Crows)

GREY CROW (*Corvus tristis*)

5 flying over the Varirata approach one afternoon.

TORRESIAN CROW (*Corvus orru*)

A pair had a nest at the PAU.

Melampittidae (Melampittas)

LESSER MELAMPITTA (*Melampitta lugubris*) *

Heard at Kumul, where two birds on a trail late one afternoon were probably an adult and an immature of this species, then much more conclusively at Tari Gap where one showed nicely. Genetic studies indicate it is of family rank, part of an ancient Tertiary radiation.

Paradisaeidae (Birds-of-Paradise)

GLOSSY-MANTLED MANUCODE (*Manucodia ater*)

Heard at Varirata, then common along the rivers at Kiunga, some in the butterfly-like display flight and up to 15 in a day here. Quite vocal at Lake Murray too.

CRINKLE-COLLARED MANUCODE (*Manucodia chalybatus*)

One was seen along the approach Road at Varirata, with another at Lake Murray (which was also calling), and then a very fine scope look at Varirata on the last morning with very obvious head bumps erected.

TRUMPET MANUCODE (*Phonygammus keraudeni*)

One seen well at Km 17, and heard upriver from Kiunga and at Lake Murray, from where I posted a sound cut to the IBC and XC. This is the lowland taxon *jamesii*, and this species is due for splitting up into several species.

RIBBON-TAILED ASTRAPIA (*Astrapia mayeri*)

Great looks at a resplendent but still quite short tailed adult male at Kumul. We saw 5 or 6 individuals here and each was in a different plumage! Another magnificent adult male flew across at 7-kona with the spectacular long white tail rippling, and there was a subadult in the forest next day. This is one of the all-time great birds and a particular favourite of mine.

PRINCESS STEPHANIE'S ASTRAPIA (*Astrapia stephaniae*)

Good looks at female plumaged birds at Rondon, and a full plumage but slightly ragged tailed male there too.

LAWES'S PAROTIA (*Parotia lawesii*) *

None at the fruit tree at Ambua yet as the fruit is not ripe, so only heard at Paulus's garden this trip

KING-OF-SAXONY BIRD OF PARADISE (*Pteridophora alberti*)

A fine male was at 2300 m above Rondon and he showed very nicely, with another shorter plumed bird also there. Then heard above Ambua where the traditional song posts have been destroyed or abandoned.

SUPERB BIRD OF PARADISE (*Lophorina superba feminina*)

Nice female-plumaged birds at Rondon, with a good male on the very quiet afternoon too, and another as were driving down. Then another male sat up in big dead tree below Ambua, with Sean remarking that he looked like he was trying to get out of a sweater that was too tight for him as he wriggled about, whilst Jack thought he looked like he was wearing a 1970's disco suit!

GROWLING (MAGNIFICENT) RIFLEBIRD (*Ptiloris (magnificus) intercedens*)

A male Growling Riflebird was seen sat up calling along the Lookout Trail on June 3, and we were able to stalk in close enough to see him, whilst later a female plumage bird shot through with a feeding flock. Jon then saw another male with Leonard later, so we did well for what can be a very hard bird. We heard them again on the final morning here too, the voice is so distinct this is clearly a good species, if the identical looking Chirruping and Chiming Wedgebills get split then so should this!

BROWN SICKLEBILL (*Epimachus meyeri*)

Several female-plumaged birds at Kumul were feeding on fruits and showing the pale blue eye nicely. The beautiful adult male who had been here for some years was hit by a catapult by a Western Highlander in 2014 and has now disappeared, the Great War on Nature continues. However, a fine male was happily at a fruiting tree at Rondon, along with a female too.

BLACK SICKLEBILL (*Epimachus fastosus*)

Joseph saw a female above Rondon when we were distracted trying for Lesser Melampitta, but Jon saw it later and I had a flight view. Then a far distant but nonetheless wonderful male scoped atop a song post below Ambua on the morning we were leaving, good that this elusive bird is still around.

MAGNIFICENT BIRD OF PARADISE (*Diphyllodes magnificus*)

Heard by the Sepik Headwaters and a female plumage bird was seen briefly, then later heard calling along the Gare's Lookout trail, but notably unresponsive.

KING BIRD OF PARADISE (*Cicinnurus regius*)

A fantastic male was seen en route to the lek at Km 17, sat high in vine tangle for wonderful scope views. Heard upriver, and a female plumage bird was seen at Lake Murray, with Jack getting another male as well.

TWELVE-WIRED BIRD OF PARADISE (*Seleucidis melanoleucus*)

A fine calling male was sat atop his song post near Kwatu early one morning, with a female plumage bird seen from the lodge the day before.

GREATER BIRD OF PARADISE (*Paradisaea apoda*)

Great looks and sounds from 3 displaying pure bred males at Km 17 late one afternoon, with a couple of hybrid Raggiana x Greater as well (known as Lupton's Bird of Paradise.)

RAGGIANA BIRD OF PARADISE (*Paradisaea raggiana*)

The main lek at Varirata had 3 lovely plumed males on June 3, and we saw female plumaged birds and a subadult male later in the park. Then quite a few along the Fly River and heard (presumably this species?) at Lake Murray.

LESSER BIRD OF PARADISE (*Paradisaea minor*)

The lek at Kama was back in business for visitors and we were assured that the road was now good, so setting off we then found it was too slick to get up a steep bend about 2 km from the site! This necessitated a walk uphill, accompanied by many local schoolkids, and with some urgency as it was getting steadily later. We got there by 0910, just in time to see the last of the males sat up in a big tree for lovely views before he shot off down the valley. The usual fairly dramatic landowner dispute then broke, out so we left them to it, but it was great to see this BoP so nicely and I hope access will still be feasible in future.

BLUE BIRD OF PARADISE (*Paradisornis rudolphi*)

A fine male at Tomba early one morning, though adept at hiding behind foliage. Then heard below Ambua later. This is a quite rare and restricted range species that is endemic to a narrow and heavily settled height band in PNG.

Petroicidae (Australasian Robins)

BLACK-SIDED ROBIN (*Poecilodryas hypoleuca*)

Heard at Kwatu and Watame, and one was very briefly spotlighted on our foray there, though most of us saw nothing on it!

BLACK-THROATED ROBIN (*Poecilodryas albonotata*)

Jon saw the one calling at the trail across the Tari Gap.

WHITE-WINGED ROBIN (*Peneothello sigillata*)

Seen very well at Kumul, and at 7-kona where a pair had a nest low in a sapling.

BLUE-GRAY ROBIN (*Peneothello cyanus*)

Seen briefly at Rondon, then a bird along the Waterfall Trail at Ambua. They have become shyer here in recent years but this one showed nicely.

WHITE-FACED ROBIN (*Tregellasia leucops*)

Nice looks at two along the Lookout Trail on June 3, and then the Treehouse Trail and Gare's Lookout on the last day.

TORRENT FLYROBIN (*Monachella muelleriana*)

Great views of 2 by the Sepik headwaters.

PAPUAN (CANARY) FLYROBIN (FLYCATCHER) (*Microeca papuana*)

Seen twice above Ambua.

YELLOW-LEGGED FLYROBIN (FLYCATCHER) (*Microeca griseiceps*)

Jon found us one in the forest at Lake Murray, a good find of an uncommon bird.

LEMON-BELLIED FLYROBIN (*Microeca flavigaster*)

Two along the Varirata approach road.

GARNET ROBIN (*Eugerygone rubra*)

One male was calling and showed quite well eventually across Tari Gap; it's an odd arboreal robin that is more like a gerygone.

PAPUAN SCRUB ROBIN (*Drymodes beccarii*) *

Heard quite close at Varirata but in a very dense spot each time, so no views were possible.

LESSER GROUND ROBIN (*Amalocichla incerta*) *

Another mega-skulker, which we saw briefly across the Tari Gap after protracted effort!

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

PACIFIC SWALLOW (*Hirundo tahitica*)

A few at Port Moresby and Mt. Hagen, also at Tari.

TREE MARTIN (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

A few at Lake Murray airstrip, these are winter migrants from Australia.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

ISLAND LEAF-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus poliocephalus*)

Seen very well singing at Rondon, and then Ambua.

Zosteropidae (White-eyes)

BLACK-FRONTED WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops atrifrons*)

Vocal at Varirata but hard to get them to show, we eventually saw 2 along the Gare's Lookout Trail.

CAPPED WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops fuscicapilla*)

A group of 5 down below Ambua.

NEW GUINEA (PAPUAN) WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops novaeguineae*)

Seen below Rondon, with white eye-rings, yellow throat and undertail and greyish-white underparts, but what are they? Pratt and Beehler show this species as nowhere near here, yet they are obviously not Black-fronted White-eyes. The whole taxonomy of these two species is a bit of a mess; I suspect New Guinea White-eye is more a state of mind than a reality, and that several different cryptic species are involved.

Acrocephalidae (reed warblers)

AUSTRALASIAN REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus australis*)

One seen along the Kaim River at Lake Murray, where they were singing noisily.

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

PAPUAN GRASSBIRD (*Megalurus macrurus*)

Now split as Papuan Grassbird, much larger than Tawny, with montane habitat and different song. It was seen well at Kama and at two sites near the Tari Gap.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas)

GOLDEN-HEADED CISTICOLA (*Cisticola exilis*)

Quite common at Lake Murray, sorry Jack did not get a decent view of it!

Sturnidae (Starlings)

METALLIC STARLING (*Aplonis metallica*)

10 seen at the PAU.

YELLOW-EYED STARLING (*Aplonis mystacea*)

One of this rare species was seen perched up on a tree from Kwatu Lodge, we got good scope views.

SINGING STARLING (*Aplonis cantoroides*)

A pair were seen at the PAU and 2 at Tari.

YELLOW-FACED MYNA (*Mino dumontii*)

A very obliging couple at the PAU, and widespread upriver from Kiunga; Jon fell in love with

their weird interrogative “*aww?*” voice.

GOLDEN MYNA (*Mino anais*)

A couple of nice looking birds along the Elevala river, then at Gusiore.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

ISLAND THRUSH (*Turdus poliocephalus*)

Seen nicely at Kumul, very reminiscent of Eurasian Blackbird, whilst the juv. reminds me of Varied Thrush!

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

PIED BUSHCHAT (*Saxicola caprata wahgiensis*)

Seen below Kumul, at Rondon and the Ambua area, a wide-ranging species in NG, this is one of the highland races.

Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

RED-CAPPED FLOWERPECKER (*Dicaeum geelvinkianum*)

We saw this tiny bird very well at Rondon and Ambua.

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds)

BLACK SUNBIRD (*Leptocoma sericea*)

Singles around Kiunga on several days, and quite common at Lake Murray.

OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD (*Nectarinia jugularis*)

Seen at Lake Murray, Kiunga and Sogeri.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) I

A few around Mt Hagen, it has colonized since 1992 and is one of just a couple of introduced species in PNG.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) I

A few in Port Moresby and at the PAU this is a colonist since 2003 and now exploding throughout all the urban areas in New Guinea, where we saw them at Kiunga, Lake Murray airstrip and at the Ecologe too.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

MOUNTAIN FIRETAIL (*Oreostruthus fuliginosus*)

Sean and Jon saw one briefly at Kumul; it's a striking and quite scarce finch of the montane zones.

CRIMSON FINCH (*Neochmia phaeton evangelinae*)

A few around Lake Murray, this being the white-bellied taxon and in NG a Trans-Fly special

BLUE-FACED PARROTFINCH (*Erythrura trichroa*)*

Heard at Rondon and Ambua, presumably this species and not Papuan Parrotfinch.

WHITE-SPOTTED MANNIKIN (*Lonchura leucosticta*)

5 at Gusiore village, then some small numbers at Kaim River, Lake Murray.

GREY-HEADED MANNIKIN (*Lonchura caniceps*)

A small flock at the PAU, then some at Sogeri on the last day, this species is endemic to SE PNG.

HOODED MANNIKIN (MUNIA) (*Lonchura spectabilis*)

Nice views at Rondon and above Ambua. Adults have a striking black head, and birds at Rondon had some with buffy underparts and some whitish-buff, maybe two subspecies intergrading here?

CHESTNUT-BREASTED MANNIKIN (*Lonchura castaneothorax*)

An adult at Sogeri on the last day was a good trip tick.

BLACK MANNIKIN (*Lonchura stygia*)

One adult looked to be carrying nest material at the Kaim River, and Sean and Jon saw 20 at the

airstrip as were leaving. This is a very local Trans-Fly endemic.

Favourite birds were a varied assortment, but Starry Owlet-nightjar was the # 1 sighting for us all, followed by King of Saxony BoP, Chestnut Forest Rail, Emperor Fairywren, Brehm's Tiger Parrot, White-winged Robin and of course Southern Crowned Pigeon.

MAMMALS

Pteropodidae (Fruit bats)

Greater Flying-fox (*Pteropus neohibernicus*)

A couple of small camps along the Elevala River, with c.50-60 individuals in each.

Muridae (Rats & mice)

Black-tailed Giant Rat (*Uromys anak*)

One came to the feeder at Kumul each night, a large black possum sized beast with a black bare pale tipped tail

REPTILES

New Guinea Freshwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus novaeguineae*)

Two quite large ones seen along the Elevala, maybe 2 m long.

Emerald Tree Monitor (*Varanus prasinus*)

One of this striking species was at Lake Murray, it was quite a bright green colour and with a long thin tail and maybe 70+ cm long.

A small tree snake was seen swimming in the Elevala River.

A large >10 cm greyish scorpion was in its death throes in the forest at Lake Murray, being devoured by ants and an altogether gruesome sight.

A fine Hercules moth (*Coscinocera hercules*) was seen at Rondon, one of the largest moths in the world.

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