



Field Guides Tour Report

for

## **NEW CALEDONIA, FIJI & VANUATU**

*September 5-23, 2011*

*Guided by Phil Gregory*

*In two parts on the following pages:*

*Part I: New Caledonia*

*Part II: Fiji & Vanuatu*

The revamped tour was a little later this year and it seemed to make some things a bit easier, note how well we did with the rare Crow Honeyeater, and Kagu was as ever a standout. One first-year bird was rewarded with a nice juicy scorpion that our guide found, and this really is a fabulous bird to see, another down on Harlan's family quest, too, as an added bonus to what is a quite unique bird. Cloven-feathered Dove was also truly memorable, and watching one give that strange, constipated hooting call was fantastic and this really is one of the world's best pigeons.

Air Calin did their best to make life hard with a somewhat late flight to Lifou, and I have to say the contrast with the Aussie pilots in Vanuatu was remarkable -- these French guys must still be learning as they landed the ATR 42's so hard and had to brake so fiercely! Still, it all worked out and the day trip for the Ouvea Parakeet worked nicely, whilst the 2 endemic white-eyes on Lifou were got really early for once.

Nice food, an interesting Kanak culture, with a trip to the amazing Renzo Piano-designed Tjibaou Cultural Center also feasible this year, and a relaxed pace make this a fun birding tour with some terrific endemic birds as a bonus.

My thanks to Karen at the Field Guides office for hard work on the complex logistics for this South Pacific tour, to the very helpful Armstrong at Arc en Ciel, Jean-Marc at Riviere Bleue, and to Harlan and Bart for helping me with my bags when I had a back problem. My trip participation looked doubtful at one point as I left to come here, but it all came good. Thanks to everyone for coming and making it all possible, hope to see you again at some point!

--Phil

We have more information about this itinerary and future departures on our web page for [New Caledonia, Fiji & Vanuatu](#).

## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**PACIFIC BLACK DUCK** (*Anas superciliosa*) – Four at La Foa.

**GRAY TEAL** (*Anas gracilis*) – 14 at the ponds at La Foa.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A couple of flocks around Tontouta. [I]

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**AUSTRALASIAN GREBE** (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) – One of this new arrival in NC was at the ponds at La Foa



*The fantastic Kagu, star of the tour! (Photo by guide Phil Gregory)*

where we had them last year.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) – A flock of 10 at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Noumea were a surprise and a NC tick for Phil; it is an occasional irruptive from Australia.

**LITTLE PIED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*) – 15 at Blue River.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**WHITE-FACED HERON** (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) – A few seen around the main island.

**PACIFIC REEF-HERON** (*Egretta sacra albolineata*) – This is the endemic race and we saw just a single this time near the cultural centre, though some folks saw others near the hotel.

**RUFOUS NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax caledonicus caledonicus*) – A couple of sightings with 4 at Riviere Salee the most.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) – One near Noumea. Now split as Eastern Osprey by most.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**WHISTLING KITE** (*Haliastur sphenurus*) – Up to 10 at the lake in Riv. Bleue, and odd birds along the roads north.

**SWAMP HARRIER** (*Circus approximans*) – Four sightings of singles.

**BROWN GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter fasciatus vigilax*) – One by the highway near La Foa and another later the same day.

**NEW CALEDONIA GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter haplochrous*) – A good trip for them, we had one spotted by Bart at the heath edge in Riv. Bleue, then one soaring at Farino and one seen very nicely with another heard calling at Mt Koghi. White-bellied or Blue Goshawk are both better names. [E]



*The coracina form of Melanesian Cuckoo-shrike, photographed by guide Phil Gregory*

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**BUFF-BANDED RAIL** (*Gallirallus philippensis swindellsii*) – Two on Lifou showed well.

**PURPLE SWAMPHEN (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Porphyrio porphyrio samoensis*) – A few on the main island, this Black-backed form is split by some as Pacific Swamphen.

Rhynchotidae (Kagu)

**KAGU** (*Rhynchotus jubatus*) – The star of the show as ever, this year we had great looks at up to 5 in a morning, with one bird raising its crest when it encountered another in the forest. One lurking under the bus was a bit much, though we rewarded it with a nice juicy scorpion! it would be très embarrassing to run one over.... [E]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**GRAY-TAILED TATTLER** (*Tringa brevipes*) – Two at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre. [b]

**WHIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*) – One at Magenta. [b]

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*) – Just a single at Magenta. [b]

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**SILVER GULL** (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae forsteri*) – Small numbers around Noumea.

**BRIDLED TERN** (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – A few distant birds off Ouvea.

**GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii cristatus*) – A few around Noumea and on Ouvea.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**METALLIC PIGEON** (*Columba vitiensis hypoenochroa*) – Scarce this trip, but we got one flyby on Lifou then great looks at 2 at Farino. White-throated Pigeon is the more usual name.

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – A few around in Noumea. [I]

**EMERALD DOVE** (*Chalcophaps indica sandwichensis*) – This is the Pacific Emerald Dove, split from grey-headed Asian

birds by the IOC. We saw them at R. Bleue and then on Lifou and Ouvea.

**ZEBRA DOVE** (*Geopelia striata*) – One at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre. A new colonist in NC. [I]

**RED-BELLIED FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus greyii*) – This beautiful small fruit-dove showed nicely on Ouvea then again on Lifou.

**CLOVEN-FEATHERED DOVE** (*Drepanoptila holosericea*) – One of the birds of the trip, we got a superb adult calling at Farino after only hearing them at Riv. Bleue and Mt Koghis. The fluffy white anklets are just amazing and this really is a tremendous bird. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula goliath*) – This huge *Ducula* gave lovely views at all 3 forest sites on the main island. [E]

#### Psittacidae (Parrots)

**RAINBOW LORIKEET** (*Trichoglossus haematodus deplanchii*) – Part of the Coconut Lorikeet group if you split them, we had some nice looks.

**HORNED PARAKEET** (*Eunymphicus cornutus cornutus*) – This was Phyllis's 5000th bird, and it eventually gave terrific looks at Riv. Bleue after a frustrating morning trying to track them down. [E]

**HORNED PARAKEET** (*Eunymphicus cornutus uvaensis*) – Now split by all except laggardly Clements, this is an Ouvea endemic; we had nice looks at a small vanilla farm near St Joseph where there were at least 8 birds. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN PARAKEET** (*Cyanoramphus saissetti*) – Always scarce and a bird I like to get at Riv. Bleue, we got one on the first visit and had tremendous scope views. Split from Red-fronted Parakeet of NZ. [E]

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**FAN-TAILED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis pyrrophanus*) – I did hear it briefly at Riv. Bleue, then as usual they were vocal on Ouvea (but not Lifou) and we lured a couple by for flight views. I strongly suspect this and the Fiji birds will be split, the vocalizations are very distinct.

**SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (NEW CALEDONIAN)** (*Chrysococcyx lucidus layardi*) – Nice looks at the endemic race on the main island and at the cultural centre where Jeanne caught up with it.

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

**GLOSSY SWIFTLET** (*Collocalia esculenta albidior*) – Common, nicely glossy blue above with a small white rump and white belly.

**WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus spodiopygius leucopygius*) – Much less common, dingy above with a darker belly and small white rump, we had a few on the main island including by the hotel. If you've seen this in Australia note that our one is now a split.

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**SACRED KINGFISHER (NEW CALEDONIAN)** (*Todiramphus sanctus canacorum*) – Very common on New Caledonia

**SACRED KINGFISHER (LOYALTY IS.)** (*Todiramphus sanctus macmillani*) – This is the paler race on the Loyalty Is where it is also very common.

#### Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters)

**NEW CALEDONIAN MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela caledonica*) – Lovely looks at this smart little red and white species on the big island. [E]

**CARDINAL MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela cardinalis lifuensis*) – Quite common on the Loyalties, we had some very good looks on Lifou especially.

**DARK-BROWN HONEYEATER** (*Lichmera incana incana*) – The commonest endemic, even in Noumea.

**BARRED HONEYEATER** (*Phylidonyris undulatus*) – This striking bird was seen well at Riv. Bleue and Mt. Koghis. [E]

**CROW HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza aubryana*) – Lucky or what? This is a Critically Endangered species with just a few hundred remaining, always very hard to find. This year we had 3 birds on the first day at Riv. Bleu then a pair the next day. Apparently the juv. spends some time on the ground, so I don't fancy its long term survival prospects give the number of feral predators. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN FRIARBIRD** (*Philemon diemenensis*) – Nice look on the main island, and also on Lifou. [E]



*Red-throated Parrotfinch at Riviere Bleue, photographed by guide Phil Gregory*

Acanthizidae (Thornbills and Allies)

**FAN-TAILED GERYGONE** (*Gerygone flavolateralis flavolateralis*) – Phyllis was afraid this was going to be #5000 but we managed to stage it otherwise! Nice looks, an attractive little gerygone.

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

**WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) – Just a few on the main island.

Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes)

**MELANESIAN CUCKOO-SHRIKE** (*Coracina caledonica caledonica*) – Nice looks at this large species on 3 days, this yellow-eyed form is now split from the Solomons one. One was seen on Lifou.

**NEW CALEDONIAN CUCKOO-SHRIKE** (*Coracina analis*) – This is fairly straightforward in Riv. Bleue but its the only place we see it. The piercing callnote is a good pointer to its presence. [E]

**LONG-TAILED TRILLER** (*Lalage leucopyga montrosieri*) – Nice looks at several sites on the main island.

Pachycephalidae (Whistlers and Allies)

**GOLDEN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala pectoralis littayei*) – This showed well on Ouvea, it's a part of the Melanesian Whistler complex but oddly the IOC places it with the next species (New Caledonian Whistler) in this group, which can't be right!

**NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala caledonica*) – Nice looks at Riv. Bleue, it's a forest bird and really very different to the main Golden Whistler complex with which it is not usually included, I have to get on to the IOC about this as they merge it in Melanesian Whistler. [E]

**RUFIOUS WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala rufiventris xanthetreae*) – Small numbers in the dry forest on the main island.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

**GRAY FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura albiscapa bulgeri*) – Fairly common in the forests.

**STREAKED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura spilodera verreauxi*) – Widespread in small numbers in the forests.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**SOUTHERN SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides pachycephaloides*) – Great looks at 2 by the Grand Kaori, but they were the only ones we saw.

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica caledonica*) – Nice looks in the forests on the big island.

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica viridinitens*) – Birds on Lifou are this taxon which has a much more obvious eye-ring.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**NEW CALEDONIAN CROW** (*Corvus moneduloides*) – This odd small tool-using forest crow with stubby bill and yapping call was seen with a twig in its bill at Riv. Bleue, then seen and heard again at Mt Koghis and near Farino. [E]

Petroicidae (Australasian Robins)

**YELLOW-BELLIED ROBIN** (*Eopsaltria flaviventris*) – Now removed from robins and placed in Microeca Flycatchers, this gave lovely views in Riv. Bleue and at La Foa. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**PACIFIC SWALLOW** (*Hirundo tahitica*) – Only Gil saw this, they were amazingly scarce this trip.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Common around Noumea. [I]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes)

**LARGE LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops inornatus*) – For the first time ever we saw this uncommon and elusive species before we got the common Small Lifou White-eye! We heard it and had one nailed feeding from blossoms by 0645, with another also showing here and freeing up the day nicely! [E]

**GREEN-BACKED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops xanthochroa*) – Fairly common on the main island. [E]

**SMALL LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops minutus*) – Common on Lifou, very yellow looking above. [E]

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis griseonota*) – Gil saw this on the main island.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis nigrescens*) – This dark-faced taxon was seen well on Ouvea.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis melanops*) – Another distinctive subspecies with a dark face, this is the Lifou form.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**STRIATED STARLING** (*Aplonis striata*) – Small numbers on the main island and a few on Ouvea which have an odd clicking call. [E]

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common on the big island. [I]

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Common around Noumea. [I]

*Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)*

**COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – Small flocks at various sites on the main island, including in Noumea and La Foa.

**RED-THROATED PARROTFINCH** (*Erythrura psittacea*) – We only saw one well, but it was a very obliging bird at Riv. Bleue that even posed for photos. [E]

**CHESTNUT-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura castaneothorax*) – Just 7 at La Foa, much less common than the waxbill. [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Birds of the trip were Kagu (d'accord), Cloven-feathered Dove, Horned Parakeet, and Red-throated Parrotfinch, though Gil professed a liking for Fan-tailed Gerygone too.

Various skinks remain problematic as to their identity.

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**Totals for the tour: 75 bird taxa and 0 mammal taxa**

## Part II: Fiji & Vanuatu

Sep 14, 2011 to Sep 23, 2011

Phil Gregory

This was an enjoyable inaugural Field Guides trip to Vanuatu, with great looks at some of the lowland endemics including Buff-bellied Monarch and Vanuatu (Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher, and some really lovely people who are still not overly used to tourists. Our lodge manager was a circus artiste and gave us a show one night which was unusual to say the least! At no time in my entire life could I have done any of the acrobatics and balancing he did.

Taveuni was very nice, though our lodge folk were surprised to see us having messed up the booking, but they then gave us the lovely premium spa rooms. Due to flight timings we had to cram it all into one day here, but the weather gods smiled with just a little rain at the top of the hill, and we basically had a good morning on the peak where we scored the key birds nicely -- Silktail was excellent after a muddy scramble down, the Taveuni Giant Forest Honeyeater very obliging, and Barking Pigeon was easy, as was Maroon Shining-Parrot and a single Blue-crested Flycatcher. My site for Orange Dove was terrific, we had amazing views of this sunburst orange marvel and also the gorgeous Many-colored Fruit-Dove and Collared Lory, then we caught the boat back from the nearby jetty in calm conditions.

Luckily I picked up a swarm of birds over a tuna shoal and we were soon surrounded by Red-footed and a few Brown boobies, Brown and Black noddies, Black-naped Tern, and best of all Tahiti Petrel, always a great bonus on this foray. Great and Lesser frigatebirds were additional pluses, and it was very nice run back to the lodge after a fabulous day.

Conditions on Viti Levu were less favorable, and we encountered cold weather and heavy rain on our full day, but we got off to a good start with lovely looks at Fiji Parrotfinch, then had Masked Shining-Parrot and a super pair of Golden Doves at Colo-i-Suva, the male glistening yellow with dark streaks. Pacific Robin and Slaty Monarch behaved well, and next day we did get Giant Forest Honeyeater well. Suva waterfront was interesting with the most Wandering Tattlers I've ever seen, something like 150 feeding on the mudflats with a couple of Gray-tailed Tattlers for comparison, plus Bar-tailed Godwits, Eurasian Whimbrel, and Ruddy Turnstones.

Kadavu was a new addition for this tour and our small Polynesian homestay lodge something of a surprise, but the group rose to the occasion and we enjoyed the cultural side especially with our own kava ceremony that evening -- my advice is indulge and sleep well! The only Polynesian Starling of the trip was right by the lodge, and Kadavu Honeyeater was obliging here, whilst Red Shining-Parrot and Kadavu Fantail plus the endemic White-throated Whistler showed nicely on our walk. Whistling (Velvet) Dove was tough, however, and didn't seem to be vocalizing at all; some of us only got fly-bys but time was again very short due to the flight schedules.

It was a fun trip at a relaxed pace and we saw some great birds, it was a lovely intro to South Pacific birding and the much slower pace of life here, with friendly people too. My thanks to Karen at Field Guides for grappling with frequent flight variations, to Kenneth on Santo, Vido on Viti Levu, Boro and Wani on Taveuni, and Sam and Mere on Kadavu for their help with birding and access to sites.

Why not join us on this interesting itinerary in 2012 and get to see the legendary South Pacific for yourselves?

--Phil



*The gorgeous Many-colored Fruit-Dove on Taveuni, photographed by guide Phil Gregory*

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**PACIFIC BLACK DUCK** (*Anas superciliosa*) – About 14 on the river at Nausori.

### Megapodiidae (Megapodes)

**VANUATU SCRUBFOWL** (*Megapodius layardi*) – We heard this at the two forest sites but you just need to be lucky to bump into one, it's elusive and low density. I wonder if one was seen that first morning zipping across the road? **[E\*]**

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**RED JUNGLEFOWL** (*Gallus gallus*) – Nice looks at a couple near Vatthe FR on Vanuatu, where it is an ancient introduction. **[I]**

### Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

**TAHITI PETREL** (*Pterodroma rostrata*) – One of the big bonus birds of the trip, we had very nice looks in calm conditions from our late afternoon boat trip from Nabogiono back to Garden Is. There were at least 5 birds, it is believed to nest in the forested hills of Taveuni but we don't always get to see them.

### Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata minor*) – A couple on the boat trip on Taveuni, and 4 distant birds on Kadavu were probably this species.

**LESSER FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata ariel*) – Good looks at 3 over the boat in Somosomo Strait, Taveuni, with 3 frigatebird sp. as well. New for a couple of folks too.

### Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – A few in Somosomo Strait, I saw about 7.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula sula*) – Some great looks at adults and immatures of this attractive species in Somosomo Strait, hanging about above a tuna shoal. I estimated something like 250 birds, a great sight in the fine afternoon light.

### Ardeidae (Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**WHITE-FACED HERON** (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) – A couple of sightings on Viti Levu and Taveuni, it's a recent colonist from Australia.

**PACIFIC REEF-HERON** (*Egretta sacra*) – Three day records on Taveuni and Viti Levu, all dark phase bar one white bird at Suva.

**STRIATED HERON** (*Butorides striata*) – One was seen on Taveuni, they are scarce here.

### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**SWAMP HARRIER** (*Circus approximans*) – Just one on Vanuatu and 3 records from Fiji, the best on Kadavu. This is a possible split as Pacific Harrier, it occupies a far wider niche here than it does in Australia.

**FIJI GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter rufitorques*) – Common on all the Fijian islands with up to 6 in a day, and very vocal, we got some terrific looks. **[E]**

### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**BUFF-BANDED RAIL** (*Gallirallus philippensis sethsmithi*) – We saw up to 6 each day on Vanuatu, scuttling over the roads and each time raising hopes of scrubfowl!

**PURPLE SWAMPHEN (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Porphyrio porphyrio samoensis*) – Nice looks on Vanuatu, this is a likely split as Pacific Swamphen, the same as the Oz birds.

### Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**MASKED LAPWING** (*Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*) – Three on Kadavu were unexpected, this is a relatively new

colonist from Australia and I have not seen them on this island before.

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A couple at Luganville airport, then singles at Viti Levu and Taveuni.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**GRAY-TAILED TATTLER** (*Tringa brevipes*) – Just 2 amongst the masses of Wandering tattlers at Suva, good to get some direct comparisons and note the more prominent longer supercilium, shorter primaries and greyer appearance.

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – Something like 150 on the mudflats at Suva, easily my largest count ever and in quite a range of plumages, clearly an important staging post for them.

**WHIMBREL (SIBERIAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*) – Now split from Hudsonian Whimbrel, Bart saw one at Turtle Bay and we had 7 at Suva. This race has a small white rump.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT (SIBERIAN)** (*Limosa lapponica baueri*) – Fifty at Suva waterfront.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – Five were at Suva waterfront.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**BROWN NODDY** (*Anous stolidus*) – Nice looks and comparisons with the much smaller, spikier and darker Black Noddy in Somosomo Strait, we saw 50+ here.

**BLACK NODDY** (*Anous minutus*) – At least 250 in Somosomo Strait, nice to have them so close and in such good numbers.

**SOOTY TERN** (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – Just a single in Somosomo Strait.

**BRIDLED TERN** (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – Around 5 in Somosomo Strait.

**BLACK-NAPED TERN** (*Sterna sumatrana*) – Nice looks at about 20 of them in Somosomo Strait, they are very small and white-looking.

**GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii*) – Small numbers in Fiji.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Only seen in Fiji around Nausori. [I]

**METALLIC PIGEON** (*Columba vitiensis vitiensis*) – Two at Loru and then singles by Nausori airport and on Kadavu.

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Just 2 at Nausori. [I]

**MACKINLAY'S CUCKOO-DOVE** (*Macropygia mackinlayi mackinlayi*) – Fly-bys and a brief perched view at Loru on Vanuatu, and often heard there, the disyllabic "cuk-wu" call.

**EMERALD DOVE** (*Chalcophaps indica sandwichensis*) – The Pacific Emerald Dove was seen nicely at Loru, split by most from the Asian taxa now.

**TANNA FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus tannensis*) – Frustrating, Phyllis and Bart had a brief look at one at Loru, and we had calling birds stay out of view at both the sites. [E]

**MANY-COLORED FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus perousii mariae*) – This gorgeous species was nesting at Nabogiono Farm, with the males incubating on some 3 nests and a few females hanging about. Also heard on Kadavu, it's quite an elusive bird and has a unique color scheme.

**RED-BELLIED FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus greyii*) – Some good looks at Loru and Vathe.

**ORANGE DOVE** (*Ptilinopus victor*) – This is a real mega bird, sunburst orange with a green head, and looking as if it has a muffler round its neck. The song is weird quiet "klik", very odd. Once again Nabogiono was a great place to see both sexes. [E]

**GOLDEN DOVE** (*Ptilinopus luteovirens*) – Another unique endemic dove, usually placed in *Chrysoenas* as it's so distinct from *Ptilinopus*, this one has a disyllabic gruff yap yap call. We had lovely looks at glistening yellow males at Colo-i-Suva and on the road to Namosi, with a female also seen nicely. [E]

**VELVET DOVE** (*Ptilinopus layardi*) – I am not sure why long-established Whistling Dove has suddenly been banished in favor of the much less distinct and applicable Velvet Dove! It's another *Chrysoenas*, but sadly only a few of us got brief fly-bys on Kadavu where it is the hardest of the endemics, more time would have been useful. [E]

**PACIFIC IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula pacifica*) – These were quite vocal and we saw at least 8 at Loru.

**PEALE'S IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula latrans*) – The Barking Pigeon is aptly named and quite common on all the 3 Fijian islands we visited, the call is the best feature really! [E]



*Polynesian Starling, photographed by guide Phil Gregory*

Psittacidae (Parrots)

**RAINBOW LORIKEET** (*Trichoglossus haematodus massena*) – A few seen on Vanuatu were of this taxon, if split it is a part of Coconut Lorikeet.

**COLLARED LORY** (*Phigys solitarius*) – Small numbers of this striking bird on Fiji, the vivid apple green nape is remarkable. [E]

**RED SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia tabuensis tabuensis*) – A few seen on Kadavu where it seemed quite vocal but hard to see for long. [E]

**RED SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia tabuensis taviuensis*) – The Taveuni bird is actually maroon not red, so the IOC name it far more appropriately Maroon Shining Parrot, and of course split it. [E]

**MASKED SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia personata*) – Some great looks on Viti Levu at this huge parrot. [E]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**FAN-TAILED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis schistaceigularis*) – This endemic taxon was heard on Espiritu Santo. [E\*]

**SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (NEW CALEDONIAN)** (*Chrysococcyx lucidus layardi*) – Heard on Vanuatu. [\*]

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

**BARN OWL (AUSTRALIAN)** (*Tyto alba delicatula*) – One was calling at Raintree, so Gil and I went to look for it and found it sat in a big tree over the lake. About 2 hours later after dinner everyone else wanted to come see it after I'd pointed out it was split, and amazingly it was still sat there calling away, continuing for another hour thereafter! Split by the Australian Checklist, IOC, Owls of the World etc.

Apodidae (Swifts)

**GLOSSY SWIFTLET** (*Collocalia esculenta uropygialis*) – Fairly common on Vanuatu.

**WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus spodiopygius assimilis*) – Common on Fiji.

**UNIFORM SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus vanikorensis vanikorensis*) – A very few on Vanuatu.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED KINGFISHER** (*Todiramphus farquhari*) – This uncommon Vanuatu endemic was calling well at Loru, and we spent quite a while with a bird that was moving between two calling areas but really good at staying unseen. Then, Phyllis to the rescue, she got a window and bang there he was, a great scope view for everyone of a rather beautiful bird with cinnamon-orange underparts. Vanuatu Kingfisher is a better name as per the IOC. [E]

**COLLARED KINGFISHER** (*Todiramphus chloris santoensis*) – This one is blue above, and white or pale buff below with a cinnamon eyebrow, and lives in forest. Call is also slightly different to other taxa, this whole complex of 49 races badly needs unpicking as it surely contains various species.

**COLLARED KINGFISHER** (*Todiramphus chloris vitiensis*) – Bluish above, white or buffy below, more open country, often placed with Sacred Kingfisher but who knows? It can equally be placed with Collared or split as an allospecies.

**COLLARED KINGFISHER** (*Todiramphus chloris eximius*) – This was the Kadavu bird, which has a rusty eyebrow and lives in forest and forest edges, all previous comments apply!

Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters)

**CARDINAL MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela cardinalis*) – A couple seen on Espiritu Santo.

**ORANGE-BREASTED MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela jugularis*) – Common on Taveuni this trip with some great looks, also a few on Viti Levu and Kadavu. [E]

**DARK-BROWN HONEYEATER** (*Lichmera incana*) – One at Port Vila, not seen on Santo.

**WATTLED HONEYEATER** (*Foulehaio carunculatus*) – Some nice looks on Taveuni and Viti Levu, very vocal at Raintree pre-dawn. [E]

**GIANT HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza viridis viridis*) – This is the orange legged and billed Taveuni bird with the very distinct call, pretty obviously not the same species as the Viti Levu bird. We had some excellent looks on Des Voeux Peak, it can be hard to see well. [E]

**GIANT HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza viridis brunneirostris*) – Dark bill and legs and a call like a car alarm, given every 20 minutes so and quite vocal at Raintree but not till well after dawn. We had some good views on the rainy day along Namosi Road. Must be a split from the Taveuni taxon, though regrettably the IOC calls both Yodeling Honeyeater which is an awful name! [E]

**KADAVU HONEYEATER** (*Xanthotis provocator*) – Uncommon, but we saw it well at Vunisea, the yellow face is quite

striking. [E]

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

**FIJI WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus mentalis*) – We only saw this around Nausori this trip, but had some great views, it's much darker above than White-breasted Woodswallow with a white half collar. [E]

**WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus leucorhynchus tenuis*) – One on Santo.

Cracticidae (Bellmagpies and Allies)

**AUSTRALASIAN MAGPIE** (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) – A few on Taveuni where it an old introduction. [I]

Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes)

**MELANESIAN CUCKOO-SHRIKE** (*Coracina caledonica thilenii*) – Now split from the Solomons bird, with a yellow eye, we saw 2 on Santo.

**POLYNESIAN TRILLER** (*Lalage maculosa*) – Common in Fiji, with a nest along the Namosi Road.

Pachycephalidae (Whistlers and Allies)

**GOLDEN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala pectoralis intacta*) – Great looks on Santo, this whole complex of 61 races is way overdue for splitting up, based on distinct calls and plumage morphology, with the females as well as the males being often very different. A start was made in 1956 by Cain & Galbraith but largely ignored, but now the unpicking has begun and this is placed with Melanesian Whistler by the IOC.

**GOLDEN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala pectoralis kandavensis*) – This one becomes an endemic to the Kadavu group, known as White-throated Whistler. We had some lovely looks at both sexes. [E]

**GOLDEN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala pectoralis torquata*) – Again distinctive, with a yellow throat and black breast band in the males, now placed as an endemic called Fiji Whistler as some seeming intergrades with the next taxon are known. We saw them well on Taveuni. [E]

**GOLDEN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala pectoralis graeffii*) – This one lacks the breast band and we had some good looks on Viti Levu, part of the yellow-throated Fiji Whistler assemblage.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

**GRAY FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura albiscapa brenchleyi*) – Common on Vanuatu.

**STREAKED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura spilodera spilodera*) – This was the Vanuatu bird, which I don't think is the same species as the much more streaky Fiji ones.

**STREAKED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura spilodera layardi*) – We saw a couple on Viti Levu.

**STREAKED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura spilodera rufilateralis*) – This was the one from Taveuni, I anticipate these Fiji birds being split in due course.

**KANDAVU FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura personata*) – Uncommon, but with a great and very loud song, most unlike a fantail. We saw them nicely in a couple of places. [E]

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**SLATY MONARCH** (*Mayrornis lessoni*) – Nice looks at this odd little gnatcatcher-like species on Viti Levu, and common on Kadavu. [E]

**BUFF-BELLIED MONARCH** (*Neolalage banksiana*) – This is a terrific and very striking bird, we saw it well at Loru, one of the best Vanuatu endemics and pretty scarce. [E]

**FIJI SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus vitiensis*) – This was tough this time on Taveuni where we heard it briefly, but we nailed it early one morning at Colo-i-Suva then had some terrific views on Kadavu.

**BLACK-THROATED SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus nigrogularis*) – Frustrating, I think the shrikebill we heard in the rain near Colo-i-Suva was this bird, and Vido agrees, but though it responded it never showed. The calls are quite similar but the scolds sound different. [E\*]

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica marinae*) – Heard at Loru. [\*]

**VANIKORO FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra vanikorensis*) – This is a very nice looking bird, we saw it well on Taveuni and Viti Levu. [E]

**VANIKORO FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra vanikorensis kandavensis*) – Nice looks at Mere's Lodge, this race is duller than the main island birds. [E]

**BLUE-CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra azureocapilla*) – This is perhaps the most striking of the whole *Myiagra* genus, we saw it very well on Taveuni and even got one back for Tom at Colo-i-Suva in the rain. [E]

**SILKTAIL** (*Lamprolia victoriae*) – Always a challenge and eminently missable, we saw 2 very well after a muddy

scramble down into the forest on Des Voeux peak. Congrats to Tom on getting down (and back!), and sorry Jeanne but probably a wise decision not to attempt it. Affinities of this curious bird are still unclear, it may belong with fantails or pygmy drongo. [E]

#### Petroicidae (Australasian Robins)

**PACIFIC ROBIN** (*Petroica multicolor kleinschmidti*) – Nice looks at Colo-i-Suva with a tiny nest seen.

**PACIFIC ROBIN** (*Petroica multicolor taveunensis*) – The one on Taveuni is this race, both Fiji taxa are now split from Scarlet Robin of Australia. This one was wary but showed pretty well.

#### Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**PACIFIC SWALLOW** (*Hirundo tahitica*) – Just a couple at Santo Airport on Vanuatu, but quite widespread on Fiji.

#### Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Cettia ruficapilla ruficapilla*) – Heard on Kadavu. [E]

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Cettia ruficapilla badiceps*) – Heard and seen briefly on Viti Levu. [E]

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Cettia ruficapilla funebris*) – Heard on Taveuni but hard to see this year for some reason. [E]

#### Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Common in Fiji. [I]

#### Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**ISLAND THRUSH** (*Turdus poliocephalus layardi*) – Seen briefly on Viti Levu.

**ISLAND THRUSH** (*Turdus poliocephalus tempesti*) – This showed quite well on Taveuni this year.

#### Zosteropidae (White-eyes)

**LAYARD'S WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops explorer*) – Common in Fiji. [E]

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis*) – A few on Santo and some saw it in Fiji.

**YELLOW-FRONTED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops flavifrons brevicauda*) – Common on Espiritu Santo. [E]

#### Sturnidae (Starlings)

**POLYNESIAN STARLING** (*Aplonis tabuensis*) – Scarce this trip, we finally got it at Mere's Lodge where one was singing right by the building.

**JUNGLE MYNA** (*Acridotheres fuscus*) – Common in Fiji. [I]

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common in Fiji. and on Santo [I]

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Only seen at Port Vila. [I]

#### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**RED AVADAVAT** (*Amandava amandava*) – A few by Nausori Airport. [I]

**FIJI PARROTFINCH** (*Erythrura pealii*) – Terrific looks by Nausori Airport and at Raintree, if only I'd had my camera ready! [E]

**CHESTNUT MUNIA** (*Lonchura atricapilla*) – Common on Santo, now split from Chestnut Munia (*L. malacca*) as Black-headed Munia. [I]

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## MAMMALS

**PACIFIC FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus tonganus*) – A nice colony at Garden Is and a few over Viti Levu.

**SAMOAN FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus samoensis*) – A few on Santo.

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – A couple seen at Raintree, this is a menace to nesting birds in Fiji, a most unfortunate introduction.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Birds of the trip from this section included Tahiti Petrel, Orange Dove and Silktail. Phil picked Vanuatu Kingfisher as it can be so tough to see it and it's a lovely bird.

A Fiji Goshawk on Kadavu was seen eating a large green iguana, which may I fear be the Critically Endangered Kadavu Banded Iguana, *Brachylophus bulabula*, split from Banded Iguana in 2008 after genetic work reveled 3 cryptic species in the islands.

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**Totals for the tour: 105 bird taxa and 3 mammal taxa**