



Field Guides Tour Report

New Caledonia, Fiji & Vanuatu 2013

Sep 2, 2013 to Sep 20, 2013
Phil Gregory

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).

The Field Guides 2013 South Pacific Tour began with another fine trip to New Caledonia, with good weather throughout and Air Calédonie behaving itself for once and actually leaving slightly early on a couple of flights! The park at Rivière Bleue was having problems with a washed out road and the transport there proved problematic, but it all worked out eventually even if we did do some unexpected hiking initially.

The ancient monotypic family, Kagu, was great, showing really well, with 4+ birds the first day and lovely sightings of 7 on the second day. The gray ghost of the forest was again outright winner for bird of the trip. However, not to be outdone were Cloven-feathered Dove, seen really well at Farino, and which really is one of the world's great doves, and the huge New Caledonian (or Goliath) Imperial-Pigeon, which is also seriously impressive and remarkably scarce this trip. New Caledonian Crow showed very well, as did both the main island parakeets (New Caledonian and Horned), and the Ouvea (Horned) Parakeet was terrific, with a nest hole nearby. White-bellied (Blue or New Caledonia) Goshawk was great perched at Mont Koghis and seen again at Farino later. Luckiest find of the trip here was getting lovely looks at the rare Crow Honeyeater, we simply walked into where one was on the way out on day 2. I heard it call once and we found it about 4 minutes later. We nailed all the endemics except the darn grassbird, the same story as usual, and it was a fun trip with a fascinating and unique combination of bustling metro-France and laidback Kanak culture.

Vanuatu is a relatively new destination for us, this being just the third Field Guides tour here, but we had a very good time and really enjoyed the relaxed lifestyle. The flight schedules left us with a 6-hour layover in Port Vila, so I again hired a van at the airport, and we had an exploration of the town- we saw one of the huge P & O cruise ships in port and had a look at the market, ate lunch at a nice little local cafe, and did some birding up in the hills beyond the waterfall where we found Tanna Fruit Dove and the Vanuatu White-eye as our first endemics, and had my first Vanuatu Peregrine with a pair flying over.

A night time arrival is always fraught and d'accord our rooming arrangements on Santo had to be sorted out, but we then had a couple of fine outings to Loru Conservation Area nearby, with a very nice local guide in Carl (or Cal?). The elusive Vanuatu (Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher was seen well, as was the striking Buff-bellied Monarch, but Vanuatu Scrubfowl was tough and only some of us saw 3 birds flush up off the track in the plantation.

On next to Fiji, starting on Viti Levu with excellent Fiji Parrotfinch at Nausori Airport, then Masked Shining-Parrot and Giant Forest Honeyeater right at Raintree Lodge. A short walk got us Pacific Robin and Blue-crested Flycatcher, plus Fiji Whistler, whilst next day we put in some effort and finally got a fine male Golden Dove calling. Suva waterfront gave us Wandering and a single Gray-tailed Tattler, plus Lesser Frigatebird robbing Crested Terns. A trip out along Namosi Road was hot and then hit a shower but we still got Fiji Shrikebill, and a very brief snatch of calling led me to go do a late lunch then come back late afternoon for a crack at the rare and elusive Black-throated Shrikebill, which amazingly proved very responsive and sat out for scope views of a calling male, the cut now downloaded to Xeno-canto. Excellent.

Delightful Taveuni was next, where Garden Island Resort was very nice, and folks enjoyed the luxurious rooms with a nearby noisy and very long-established colony of flying-foxes. A visit to the nearby 180 degree meridian was fun, it's even got a new sign this year, with Maroon (Red) Shining-Parrot for good measure and the unusual crepuscular Evening Brown Butterfly.

Naturally our morning up Des Voeux Peak was cloudy and humid, but a two-hour vigil cum scramble in the dense forest habitat eventually got Silktail quite nicely for everyone. This is anticipated to become a new family (along with Pygmy Drono from New Guinea!) so is even more significant than usual on this trip.

The afternoon at Nabogiono Farm produced the unbelievable sunburst Orange Dove and striking oddly-patterned Many-coloured Fruit-Dove, also Polynesian Starling and a nest hole with a chick of Maroon Shining-Parrot. The boat trip back in the later afternoon was very calm this year and seabird activity was sparse, but we did get nice looks at a fishing flock of Red-footed and Brown Boobies at very close range.

Kadavu is a neat addition to this tour and the small Polynesian style Matana Beach Resort was very laid back and pleasant. We had the often elusive Whistling (Velvet) Dove as our first Kadavu endemic with one seen from the boat as we came in, along with a Red Shining-Parrot, but it took a while to get a scope view of a calling Whistling Dove later. Kadavu Honeyeater was obliging here, whilst Red Shining-Parrot and Kadavu Fantail, plus the endemic White-throated Whistler, were basically only heard on our walk, though Eva gripped us off by seeing all 3 and most folks got the parrots nicely in flight later!

This was a fun trip with a friendly group, run at a relaxed pace and with some great birds, a terrific intro to South Pacific birding and the much slower pace of life here. My thanks to Karen at Field Guides for grappling with frequent and complex flight variations, to Kenneth and Carl on Santo, Vido on Viti Levu, Boro, Bobby and Wani on Taveuni, and Ben and Ally on Kadavu for their help with birding.

Why not join us for a fun trip in 2014? It's a laid back tour and has some great birds and countries, you can expect 60+ new birds including some very odd and unusual ancient families.

Vinaka vaka levu -thank you very much in Fijian!

[Note: There are several interesting audio clips embedded in this triplist. They are all by Phil though uploaded via Jay's SoundCloud account, thus his name above each clip.]

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*) – A handful on New Caledonia and some near Nausori.

GRAY TEAL (*Anas gracilis*) – 46 including 6 ducklings at La Foa and 13 at Riviere Sallee.

Megapodiidae (Megapodes)

VANUATU SCRUBFOWL (*Megapodius layardi*) – Heard at Loru but some way off, then we flushed 3 from near the track as we went through the plantation on day two, and saw a nest digging deep in the forest. [E]

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Some small flocks in the fields north of Tontouta as usual. [I]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

AUSTRALASIAN GREBE (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) – 2 at La Foa, a recent colonist in New Caledonia.

Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

LESSER FRIGATEBIRD (*Fregata ariel*) – Excellent looks at a female successfully klepto- parasitizing a Crested Tern at Suva, with a male also showing nicely. Also seen from Taveuni and at Kadavu.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

MASKED BOOBY (*Sula dactylatra*) – Ian saw one distantly off Ouvea.

BROWN BOOBY (*Sula leucogaster*) – A couple off Ouvea, an imm. off Suva and then about 10 in Somosomo Strait with the Red-footed Booby flock.

RED-FOOTED BOOBY (*Sula sula*) – Great looks at about 70 adults, subadults and brownly immatures with whitish tails off Taveuni, plunge diving in Somosomo Strait.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) – 3 over Paita on New Caledonia, where it is scarce.

LITTLE PIED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*) – A couple at Riv. Bleue. and one in Noumea.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

WHITE-FACED HERON (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) – A few in New Cal and about 15 at Suva, then a couple on Kadavu on the last day..

PACIFIC REEF-HERON (*Egretta sacra albolineata*) – A couple of sightings from New Caledonia, Ian saw 3 on Lifou as well. Then 4 dark morph at Suva with one white morph also, and a couple of dark morphs on Taveuni and Kadavu. by guide

RUFIOUS NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax caledonicus caledonicus*) – A fine adult at Riv. Sallee.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (AUSTRALASIAN) (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) – Two adults fishing at Riviere Sallee. Split by many these days as Eastern Osprey.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

SWAMP HARRIER (*Circus approximans*) – A couple up near Farino and one over Loru, then 2 close by at Nausori. Also one soaring high over the dive resort on Kadavu on the last day.

BROWN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter fasciatus vigilax*) – A couple of brief sightings from New Cal. with one on Lifou and one near Riv. Bleue.

NEW CALEDONIA GOSHAWK (*Accipiter haplochrous*) – A fantastic blue-grey male sat up at Mont Koghis, then a couple at Farino on the last day. [E]

FIJI GOSHAWK (*Accipiter rufitorques*) – The first was one gruesomely dismembering a still living Wattled Honeyeater that it had just snatched off the nest at Colo-i-Suva. Then some good looks on Taveuni where a female came to a large stick nest up Des Voeux peak, and a few sightings on Kadavu. [E]

WHISTLING KITE (*Haliastur sphenurus*) – A few on Grande Terre.

Rhynochetidae (Kagu)

KAGU (*Rhynochetos jubatus*) – The star of the show, we had great looks at them in Riviere Bleue with a pair with a well- grown juvenile on the first day plus 2 adults elsewhere, and then 7 on the second day. This is a fantastic conservation success story, bringing them back from very low numbers to a few hundreds here now, as long as feral animal control continues the grey ghost of the forest should survive and continue to delight visitors. A wonderful bird, those orange claws just set it off so well! [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

BUFF-BANDED RAIL (*Gallirallus philippensis swindellsii*) – Common on Santo, where a wet start to one morning brought them out of the rank grass and we saw 20 birds that day, so many we christened one track "Rail Road"- ho ho. Also seen on Efate where an adult had a tiny black chick, and just one on Taveuni, they have gone from islands with mongoose in Fiji it seems.

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (AUSTRALASIAN) (*Porphyrio porphyrio samoensis*) – One at Riviere Sallee, about 7 on the way up to Farino, and one glimpsed on Santo in Vanuatu.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

MASKED LAPWING (*Vanellus miles miles*) – Valerie saw one near Noumea, a rare bird here that would have been a New Cal tick for Phil!

PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis fulva*) – A few at Ouvea airport, then about 150 at Suva.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

GRAY-TAILED TATTLER (*Tringa brevipes*) – Two were seen at the Tjibaou cultural centre when the ladies went there, then one was at Suva waterfront.

WANDERING TATTLER (*Tringa incana*) – Nice views at Suva waterfront with about 30 birds, the lack of supercilium and long wing projection are far more use in identifying than nasal grooves and leg scutes!

WHIMBREL (SIBERIAN) (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*) – Just a single at Suva.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa lapponica*) – About 10 at Suva waterfront, presumably race baueri.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – 5 at Suva waterfront.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SILVER GULL (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae forsteri*) – A few in New Caledonia.

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii cristatus*) – About 40 on a sandbar on Ouvea, and half a dozen at Suva. About 10 off Garden Is Resort, and a couple on Kadavu, terns overall were very scarce this trip.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Quite common in Noumea and in the towns in Fiji. [H]

METALLIC PIGEON (*Columba vitiensis hypoenochroa*) – Scarce on New Caledonia this trip, we only saw them on Lifou, and it was heard just once at Loru.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Common around Noumea and on Viti Levu, with a couple at Bobby's farm as well. [H]

MACKINLAY'S CUCKOO-DOVE (*Macropygia mackinlayi mackinlayi*) – Some nice views of this small rusty dove with the "cuk-woo" call at Loru.

EMERALD DOVE (PACIFIC) (*Chalcophaps indica sandwichensis*) – A few on the Loyalties, then quite common at Loru.

FRIENDLY GROUND-DOVE (*Gallicolumba stairi*) – One flew low across the Namosi Road on our afternoon foray, a brief view but the only ground-dove on the islands!

TANNA FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus tannensis*) – We saw two birds from the lookout on Klehm's Hill at Port Vila, in the same place as last year! None seen on Santo, I wonder if it likes the hills better?

MANY-COLORED FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus perousii mariae*) – Great looks at a pair at Bobby's farm, then some nice chasing and bowing display activity in a big fig at Matana Dive Resort.

RED-BELLIED FRUIT-DOVE (*Ptilinopus greyii*) – Lovely looks on Ouvea, right out in the open Chez Benoit, and a couple on Lifou. Also seen briefly in Loru.

ORANGE DOVE (*Ptilinopus victor*) – One of the birds of the trip, we saw about 3 males at Bobby's farm and had amazing views of this sunburst orange creature giving its weird little click call. Expect it to be moved back into the genus *Chrysoenas* shortly too, it is totally unlike the other *Ptilinopus* in structure and call.

GOLDEN DOVE (*Ptilinopus luteovirens*) – Great looks at a male at Colo-i-Suva, and then another along the Namosi Road, a curious glistening yellow colour with broad dark green shaft streaks. Also heard at Raintree, which was unusual, this is one of the star Fiji birds for sure. Expect it to be moved back into the genus *Chrysoenas* shortly too, it is totally unlike the other *Ptilinopus* in structure and call.

VELVET DOVE (*Ptilinopus layardi*) – One seen in flight from the boat as we landed at Matana Dive, then eventually great scope looks at a calling male I taped in along the beach walk there, where we heard a couple of others next day too. Quite why it is called Velvet Dove escapes me, Whistling Dove is very apt! Expect this to be moved back into the genus *Chrysoenas* shortly too, it is totally unlike the other *Ptilinopus* in structure and call.

CLOVEN-FEATHERED DOVE (*Drepanoptila holosericea*) – Once again a major trip highlight, this spectacular dove was great up at Farino, where Valerie found us a female sat right out, then we had 5 birds including several stunning males in a fruiting fig later. A really unique species, quite large, with flat head and fluffy white anklets, plus odd spiky looking feathers [E]

PACIFIC IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula pacifica*) – Great looks at Loru, where it was very vocal. This nominate race has a sizable bill knob.

PEALE'S IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula latrans*) – The Barking Pigeon was seen and heard very nicely at Raintree and Colo-i-Suva. Also seen at Taveuni and heard on Kadavu.

NEW CALEDONIAN IMPERIAL-PIGEON (*Ducula goliath*) – Very scarce this trip, we had a great look at one at the Grand Kaori and heard it at Mont Koghis where we were denied access to the tracks this year. A huge species, the alternate name Goliath Imperial Pigeon suits it well. [E]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis pyrrophanus*) – Once again this taxon was vocal on Ouvea but nowhere else, and we eventually got fantastic looks at one sat quite low down. They are much rustier and less vinous below than Fan-tailed Cuckoo in Australia, and with a very different call, I am sure this is a distinct species.

FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis schistaceigularis*) – What appeared to be a Fan-tailed Cuckoo shot through in woodland at Klehm's Hill, but we saw nothing on it and sadly heard no calls. I am not sure where this taxon is grouped, is it with the Fiji type, the New Caledonia one or something else? Interestingly Carl at Loru does not know this bird from there.

FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis simus*) – Heard at Colo-i-Suva and Namosi Road, but all quite distant. Another cryptic species in the group, vocally very distinct from all the rest. [*]

SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (NEW CALEDONIAN) (*Chrysococcyx lucidus layardi*) – Nice looks on New Caledonia, the ladies saw two at the cultural centre and we saw it at Riv. Bleue. Also heard on the Loyalties and at Loru.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (AUSTRALIAN) (*Tyto alba delicatula*) – One flushed near Drehu Village but it was a glimpse only. Heard at Raintree on both nights and some folks saw it. Phil also saw one at the Novotel in Nadi one night. Split by most authorities these days as Pacific Barn Owl.

Apodidae (Swifts)

GLOSSY SWIFTLET (*Collocalia esculenta albidior*) – Common on New Caledonia and Vanuatu, this race has a large white rump, white belly and blue-washed upperparts.

WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus spodiopygius leucopygius*) – Nice looks at Riv. Sallee and Riv. Bleue, told from Glossy by the matt brown black upperparts, dingy belly and smaller white rump. They looked to be nesting under a culvert in Noumea. Much less common than Glossy Swiftlet.

WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus spodiopygius assimilis*) – Also quite common on Fiji where we saw them nicely, this is the dull rumped race *assimilis*.

UNIFORM SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus vanikorensis*) – Small numbers on Efate and Santo, a uniform brownish swiftlet with paler belly.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED KINGFISHER (*Todiramphus farquhari*) – This species is always a challenge, they seem shy, low-density and often not vocal; we would hear 3 or 4 birds at Loru but it took a while to track down one for great scope views on the second visit. Ian, Valerie and I also saw one earlier but it was quite obscured and hard to pick-up. They have a beautiful cinnamon-orange belly and contrasting white throat. [E]

COLLARED KINGFISHER (VANUATU) (*Todiramphus chloris santoensis*) – Common and noisy on Santo and also seen on Efate, they are very blue and white with a white eyebrow. This complex of 49 races is way overdue for large-scale splitting, I made some nice tape of the vocals in the hope it might be useful at some stage.

SACRED KINGFISHER (NEW CALEDONIAN) (*Todiramphus sanctus canacorum*) – A few seen on the big island.

SACRED KINGFISHER (LOYALTY IS.) (*Todiramphus sanctus macmillani*) – Nice looks on the Loyalties.

SACRED KINGFISHER (FIJI) (*Todiramphus sanctus vitiensis*) – This small blue taxon with rusty supercilium and whitish underparts with buffy flanks is common on Viti Levu and Taveuni, but is more usually assigned to Collared Kingfisher, with the whole group way overdue for massive splitting.

SACRED KINGFISHER (FIJI) (*Todiramphus sanctus eximius*) – Another very striking taxon, which is sexually dimorphic too, the males are white below with rusty supercilium and hind neck band, the females buffy on the flanks and paler rusty on the head. Same comments as previously, I made some tape of them as this one is poorly known

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

PEREGRINE FALCON (EURASIAN) (*Falco peregrinus nesiotus*) – Two birds flew right over at Klehm's Hill on Efate, a very unexpected trip addition and my first Vanuatu sighting.

Psittacidae (Parrots)

RAINBOW LORIKEET (COCONUT) (*Trichoglossus haematodus massena*) – Quite common on New Caledonia, even in Noumea.

RAINBOW LORIKEET (COCONUT) (*Trichoglossus haematodus deplanchii*) – Fairly common on Santo, we got nice looks. One had a rather blackish not blue head and a curiously extended upper mandible, with broad greeny yellow nape collar and faint bluish bars on the chest.

COLLARED LORY (*Phigys solitarius*) – A few on Viti Levu, mostly just flybys. [E]

CRIMSON SHINING-PARROT (*Prosopeia splendens*) – This proved tricky this trip, we had one flying away from the boat as we landed, then each of us except poor Ian got some decent flight views later. [E]

RED SHINING-PARROT (*Prosopeia tabuensis taviuensis*) – Great looks on Taveuni, the maroon and teal green combination is very striking. Bobby showed us a nest hole with a well grown juv. crouched at the bottom some 3' down, I wish I'd remembered to sniff there as the old name was Musk Parrot due to their striking odour! Oh yes, it ain't red either, it's maroon..... [E]

MASKED SHINING-PARROT (*Prosopeia personata*) – Great looks at Raintrees as we arrived, they showed very nicely here, with others at Colo-i-Suva and Namosi Road. It's a huge great parrot that glides with wings in a dihedral. [E]

HORNED PARAKEET (HORNED) (*Eunymphicus cornutus cornutus*) – Seen at the park HQ on both days, with nice views for all on the second day. [E]

HORNED PARAKEET (OUVEA) (*Eunymphicus cornutus uvaeensis*) – Great looks at this Ouvea endemic, which had a nest in a cavity in big old tree. Much darker and greener than the Horned, with small dark horns lacking the red tips. Split by most. [E]

NEW CALEDONIAN PARAKEET (*Cyanoramphus saissetti*) – We managed to see this quite nicely at the Grand Kaori, where it was calling well. They are always elusive and it's one of the key Riviere Bleue birds. [E]

Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters)

NEW CALEDONIAN MYZOMELA (*Myzomela caledonica*) – Great looks at Riviere-Bleue and Farino. [E]

CARDINAL MYZOMELA (*Myzomela cardinalis lifuensis*) – This striking bird showed briefly on Lifou after a female on Ouvea, then much better at Loru and Turtle Bay where Ellen finally caught up with it.

ORANGE-BREASTED MYZOMELA (*Myzomela jugularis*) – Nice looks at Nausori airport in a palm there, then at Colo-i-Suva and on Taveuni and Kadavu. [E]

DARK-BROWN HONEYEATER (*Lichmera incana incana*) – Common on New Caledonia where it was one of the characteristic bird sounds, even in Noumea. Much scarcer in Vanuatu where the taxon *griseoviridis* sounds different, and only seems to be on Efate.

BARRED HONEYEATER (*Phylidonyris undulatus*) – Nice looks at this striking species at Riv Bleue and Mont Koghis. [E]

WATTLED HONEYEATER (*Foulehaio carunculatus*) – Common and noisy on Viti Levu, where a nesting bird was grabbed by a Fiji Goshawk. [E]

GIANT HONEYEATER (*Gymnomyza viridis viridis*) – Quite a decent look at one found by Eva at Des Voeux Peak on Taveuni, the orange bill and legs showed well. I made some recordings of it which will be on xeno-canto, they are quite different to that of the birds on Viti Levu and I am sure this is a split. [E]

GIANT HONEYEATER (*Gymnomyza viridis brunneirostris*) – This is uncommon and can be hard, but we got a pair straight off the bat at Raintree, the call is loud and amazing, sounding like a car alarm! Also seen along the Namosi Road. This taxon has greenish plumage and dark legs and bill,

and is vocally quite distinct from the Taveuni birds, which are I anticipate another species. [E]

CROW HONEYEATER (*Gymnomyza aubryana*) – One of the blue riband birds for the trip and easily missed, it's Critically Endangered and basically only in Riviere Bleue. Luckily we got onto one along the entrance road near the canoe spot on the second visit, and had a very good view of this big black honeyeater with the reddish orange facial skin. Yay! [E]

NEW CALEDONIAN FRIARBIRD (*Philemon diemenensis*) – Fairly common in Riv Bleue and one of the more striking friarbirds. [E]

KANDAVU HONEYEATER (*Xanthotis provocator*) – Quite common around Matana and quite noisy, the yellow facial skin is quite striking. [E]

Acanthizidae (Thornbills and Allies)

FAN-TAILED GERYGONE (*Gerygone flavolateralis flavolateralis*) – Very good looks on both New Caledonia and Vanuatu, we felt Yellow-sided Gerygone would be a better name though!

Artamidae (Woodswallows)

FIJI WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus mentalis*) – Just a few on Fiji this trip, though it was seen on each island. [E]

WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) – A few around on grande terre.

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

SOUTH MELANESIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina caledonica thilenii*) – A couple at Loru.

SOUTH MELANESIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina caledonica caledonica*) – A few on grande terre and Lifou, the yellow eye is very striking.

POLYNESIAN TRILLER (*Lalage maculosa*) – This small short-tailed species has a nasal beeping call and was quite common on Fiji.

LONG-TAILED TRILLER (*Lalage leucopyga montrosieri*) – We saw a few on New Caledonia only, this one has a squeaking call.

NEW CALEDONIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Analisma analis*) – Seen as usual only in Riviere Bleue, where we had very good views- the chestnut undertail coverts are very distinctive as is the loud piercing call. [E]

Pachycephalidae (Whistlers and Allies)

NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER (*Pachycephala caledonica*) – Nice looks on grande terre, I believe this to be a New Caledonia endemic, vocally and morphologically quite different to other taxa currently placed with it. [E]

NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER (NEW CALEDONIAN) (*Pachycephala caledonica littayei*) – Ah yes, well this is one very distinctive "Golden" Whistler, with voice, structure and plumage quite distinct to New Caledonian Whistler. It should be placed with Melanesian Whistler or perhaps even split.

NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER (VANUATU) (*Pachycephala caledonica intacta*) – Another misplaced taxon, should be with Melanesian Whistler as vocals and both male and female plumage are very different to New Caledonian Whistler.

WHITE-THROATED WHISTLER (*Pachycephala vitiensis kandavensis*) – This was irritating as we heard it quite near Kadavu airport, then had one calling quite close by along the beachside walk, but only Eva saw it! It's endemic to the southern Fiji islands too but looks very like a classic Golden Whistler. [E]

FIJI WHISTLER (*Pachycephala graeffii torquata*) – Very vocal on Taveuni and we had a couple of looks at the striking yellow throated males which have black pectoral bands. I am contributing tape of the various Golden Whistler taxa I encounter to xeno-canto in the hope that they can at some point be available to help complete the splitting out of the huge complex, originally some 64 taxa but now starting to be unpicked at last. [E]

FIJI WHISTLER (*Pachycephala graeffii graeffii*) – Seen at Colo-i-Suva, many of this yellow throated taxon have little or no breast band, and are almost black above. Tape sent to xeno-canto also.

RUFOUS WHISTLER (*Pachycephala rufiventris xanthetraea*) – Quite common in the drier habitats on New Caledonia.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

SILKTAIL (*Lamprolia victoriae*) – We got fine looks at an adult after quite a slog through some dense thickets, a great relief as this is about to become a new family. [E]

GRAY FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albiscapa bulgeri*) – This was seen on New Caledonia where it lives in the wet forest.

GRAY FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albiscapa brenchleyi*) – This is the taxon seen on Vanuatu.

STREAKED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura spilodera spilodera*) – This nominate race is the one from Vanuatu where it seemed quite scarce.

STREAKED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura spilodera layardi*) – This is the one on the bigger islands of Fiji, they seem fairly distinct to the New Caledonia birds being much less streaked and with different vocalizations. Needs more study for sure.

STREAKED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura spilodera verreauxi*) – The wet forest dwelling Streaked Fantail taxon from New Caledonia, it seems fairly distinct to the Fiji birds and was quite common.

KANDAVU FANTAIL (*Rhipidura personata*) – Frustrating, my site from last year stiffed out totally on both attempts, and only Eva got a proper view of one on our beachside trek. [E]

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

SLATY MONARCH (*Mayrornis lessoni*) – This small slaty-grey species with the gnatcatcher-like appearance is not uncommon on Fiji, they flick and fan the white-tipped tail and have harsh scolding calls. [E]

BUFF-BELLIED MONARCH (*Neolalage banksiana*) – One of the most striking passerines of the trip, they are uncommon in the damp forest vine thickets at Loru, but we had some excellent views. Pretty vocal too and quite varied, I have posted some on xeno-canto but still don't have the distinctive rising single note they occasionally give. They like to forage in dead leaf tangles a bit like a shrikebill. [E]

SOUTHERN SHRIKEBILL (*Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides pachycephaloides*) – Great looks in Riviere-Bleue where this is a scarce species, usually located by the call as they forage in dead leaf tangles.

FIJI SHRIKEBILL (*Clytorhynchus vitiensis*) – Seen nicely along the Namosi Road and heard on Taveuni. [E]

BLACK-THROATED SHRIKEBILL (BLACK-THROATED) (*Clytorhynchus nigrogularis nigrogularis*) – A rare bird, endemic to Fiji now the Nendo taxon is split, we were very lucky and got a very responsive male sitting out along the Namosi Road, one we often miss.

MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra caledonica caledonica*) – Vocal and seen well on grande terre.

MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra caledonica viridinitens*) – Seen nicely on Lifou and Ouvea.

- MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica marinae*) – Seen well at Loru and there was a fine male in a hibiscus hedge at Turtle Bay.
- VANIKORO FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra vanikorensis*) – A striking species that is almost a Fiji endemic, named for a tiny island in the Solomons where it also occurs. They are quite common on the islands and very vocal, the female has the same chestnut belly and white throat pattern as the Vanuatu Kingfisher!
- VANIKORO FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra vanikorensis kandavensis*) – Common and noisy on Kadavu, and they seem to have one deeper trilling call we don't hear on Viti Levu or Taveuni.
- BLUE-CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra azureocapilla*) – Another very striking monarch, Ellen had great trouble with it at Colo-i-Suva but it came good next day at Namosi Road, and I got some nice tape of the song. [E]
- Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*
- NEW CALEDONIAN CROW** (*Corvus moneduloides*) – This odd corvid with the blunt chisel-tipped bill and nasal "wak wak" call was seen well at Mont Koghis and Farino. Famous as a tool using species, they use twigs to dig out grubs. [E]
- Petroicidae (Australasian Robins)*
- PACIFIC ROBIN** (*Petroica multicolor kleinschmidti*) – Seen very well at Colo-i-Suva where a nice plumaged scarlet and black male showed very well right by the entrance.
- PACIFIC ROBIN** (*Petroica multicolor taveunensis*) – Seen briefly on Taveuni when one flew across the track and began calling.
- YELLOW-BELLIED ROBIN** (*Eopsaltria flaviventris*) – Not a robin at all but a *Microeca* Flyrobin, a fact discovered several years ago but not yet in Clements. Tame and obliging in Riviere-Bleue, and has the habit of haunting the picnic sites to forage for crumbs, very odd for a flyrobin as no others do this! [E]
- Hirundinidae (Swallows)*
- WELCOME SWALLOW** (*Hirundo neoxena*) – The swallows we saw on New Caledonia have pale whitish underparts and tail spots despite their short tails, so they belong with this species. Local races of Pacific Swallow are much darker below, but it gets more complex in PNG!
- PACIFIC SWALLOW** (*Hirundo tahitica*) – Small numbers on Vanuatu and Fiji, we saw them very well on Kadavu and could see the dusky underparts nicely.
- Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)*
- RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Common in the towns on New Caledonia and also frequent on Viti Levu. [H]
- Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)*
- FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Cettia ruficapilla badiceps*) – Vocal and seen by a few at Colo-i-Suva.
- FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Cettia ruficapilla funebris*) – Unusually obliging this year on Taveuni, we had terrific views of 3 individuals on Des Voeux Peak, the reddish forecrown is quite distinctive and the tail was longer than I remembered, this can be a tough one to see well!
- Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)*
- LARGE LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops inornatus*) – Always a challenge, you find them by their musical thrush-like phrase but they don't respond much and you just have to locate them by watching for movement in the tangles of leaves. It's like a big dull silvereye with no eye-ring, a very curious species, we had quite good views on Lifou after a bit of an effort. [E]
- GREEN-BACKED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops xanthochroa*) – Quite common in small groups on the New Caledonia mainland, we had a really big loose flock of about 70 at Farino which was interesting. [E]
- SMALL LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops minutus*) – Fairly common on Lifou, small and very yellow looking. [E]
- LAYARD'S WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops explorator*) – Small numbers of this green-backed species on Fiji. [E]
- SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis griseonota*) – This was seen at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre, and we finally saw another at Farino, they are much scarcer than the endemic white-eye.
- SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis nigrescens*) – This dark-faced form is the one from Ouvea, it is moderately distinctive.
- SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis melanops*) – This is the rather distinctive dark faced taxon on Lifou, I think Silvereye might repay genetic work to see if some splits are involved.
- SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis vatensis*) – Small numbers at Turtle Bay where they seem to like one small tree.
- SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis flaviceps*) – Just a single at Colo-i-Suva, they seem uncommon.
- YELLOW-FRONTED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops flavifrons efatensis*) – Common and vocal on Santo and Efate, they have a distinct deeper call-note than Silvereye, I posted a cut on xeno-canto. IOC follow Dutson and call this Vanuatu White-eye. [E]
- Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*
- ISLAND THRUSH (LAYARD'S)** (*Turdus poliocephalus layardi*) – Heard at Colo-i-Suva in the late afternoon. [*]
- ISLAND THRUSH (TEMPEST)** (*Turdus poliocephalus tempesti*) – Quite common in the forest on Des Voeux peak, but shy and hard to see well. The alarm note is remarkably like that of Eurasian Blackbird! The whole group of 49 taxa badly needs another review.
- Sturnidae (Starlings)*
- STRIATED STARLING** (*Aplonis striata*) – Uncommon on New Caledonia but seen well at Farino, and commoner on Ouvea and Lifou where the race *atritensis* has a different callnote. [E]
- POLYNESIAN STARLING** (*Aplonis tabuensis*) – An uncommon and strangely plumaged bird quite unlike other *Aplonis*, Valerie and Ian glimpsed one along Namosi Road, then we had a single at Bobby's Farm and a couple seen well on Kadavu.
- JUNGLE MYNA** (*Acridotheres fuscus*) – Common on Fiji, Ellen had trouble distinguishing them from Crested Auklet..... [I]
- COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Sadly common in all 3 countries but not seen on Kadavu. [H]
- Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*
- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Fairly common in Noumea, and a few in Port Vila and Suva. [I]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

- COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – Quite common on New Caledonia where they seem to be displacing Chestnut-breasted Mannikin. [H]
RED AVADAVAT (*Amandava amandava*) – Nice looks by Nausori Airport, we saw about 4 in non-breeding dress (and Ian got a photo of the wire where they were). [H]
RED-THROATED PARROTFINCH (*Erythrura psittacea*) – Great looks at Riviere Bleue by the visitor centre, this can be elusive and it was nice to nail it on day one. It was also seen and heard briefly at Farino, another good site for it. [E]
FIJI PARROTFINCH (*Erythrura pealii*) – A very nice look by Nausori airport, and also seen at the Nadi Novotel by some of us. [E]
CHESTNUT MUNIA (*Lonchura atricapilla*) – Quite common on Santo, this is often called Black-headed Mannikin, and split from Chestnut Mannikin which is *Lonchura malacca*, [H]
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MAMMALS

- ORNATE FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus ornatus*) – I think I was the only one who saw this at Mont Koghis? Flying-foxes seem curiously rare on New Caledonia.
PACIFIC FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus tonganus*) – Common on Fiji, and the colony at Taveuni Garden Is Resort has grown, we saw a couple of hundred animals on this island with a big roost at the hotel and on the island opposite. Also seen nicely at Colo-i-Suva.
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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Birds of the trip were the wonderful Kagu, Silktail, Cloven-feathered Dove, Orange Dove, Red Shining-Parrot, Pacific Robin and Buff-bellied Monarch.

It was also a trip for memorable bird vocalizations, remember the barker, yapper, squeaker, beeper, Ambulance bird, Halloween bird and clicker? A list of what they were is given at the very end.....

Banded Green Iguana *Brachylophus bulabula*- a beautiful green female was at Matana Dive Resort, amazingly well-camouflaged and moving slowly like a chameleon. It is a critically endangered species, described quite recently and a mega for herp-twitchers.

Butterflies

How I wish New Caledonia and Vanuatu had butterfly guides, the latter in particular had over a dozen species. We did see the endemic blue swallowtail *Papilio montrouzieri* on New Caledonia and Monarch Butterflies are quite well-established on all the islands.

Fiji now has Butterflies of the South Pacific by B & H Patrick (2012 Otago Uni Press) and I was able to identify the following:

Fiji Swallowtail *Papilio schmeltzi* at Colo-i-Suva

Lemon Migrant *Catopsilia pomona* Kadavu

Common Sulphur *Eurema hecabe* Des Voeux Peak

Common Crow *Euploea lewinii* all 3 Fiji islands

Fiji Crow *Euploea leucostictus* Kadavu

Evening Brown *Melanitis leda* Taveuni

Common Fijian ringlet *Xoia sesara* Colo-i-Suva and Kadavu

Pacific Orange Leafwing Butterfly *Doleschallia tongana* Kadavu

Blue Moon *Hypolimnas bolina* Viti Levu and Taveuni

Meadow Argus *Junonia villida* Taveuni

Fijian Blue *Jamides candrena* Kadavu

Answers to bird vocals- Peale's Imperial Pigeon, Golden Dove, Long-tailed Triller, Polynesian Triller, Giant Forest Honeyeater (Viti Levu), Black-throated Shrikebill and Orange Dove.

Most of these are now posted on xeno-canto.

Totals for the tour: 148 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa