



*Field Guides Tour Report*  
**New Caledonia, Fiji & Vanuatu 2015**

Aug 31, 2015 to Sep 18, 2015  
Phil Gregory

*This tour returns to our schedule in 2018.*



*As always, the enigmatic Kagu (sole representative of the ancient bird family Rhynochetidae) was a highlight, with a total of nine seen well. Photo by guide Phil Gregory.*

The 2015 Field Guides South Pacific tour began with another fine trip to New Caledonia, with good weather throughout and only one 2-hour flight delay to contend with. The park at Rivière Bleue was excellent, and we had Jean-Marc (the chief ranger) with us -- complete with his huge speaker system, as I had promised. We more or less cleaned up on our first day, getting New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, New Caledonian Myzomela, Barred Honeyeater, Lesser Shrikebill and both endemic parakeets, as well as a great look at the rare (and Critically Endangered) Crow Honeyeater after a few fruitless attempts; it's always great to nail that one!

The Kagu, monotypic representative of the ancient family Rhynochetidae, was as terrific as ever, with three birds on the first day and lovely sightings of six 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 -- one of the world's great doves, seen really well at both Riv. Bleue and Farino -- and the huge New Caledonian (or Goliath) Imperial-Pigeon, which is also seriously impressive, and was again remarkably scarce this trip. New Caledonian Crow showed very well, much to Janina's delight, whilst White-bellied (Blue or New Caledonia) Goshawk was great, perched at Farino as we had our picnic. Both the main island parakeets (New Caledonian and Horned) showed well, and the Ouvéa (Horned) Parakeet gave moderate views this time, with a nest hole nearby.

Lifou is a nice stay, with abundant Small Lifou White-eyes and everyone getting brief looks at the elusive Large Lifou White-eye, with its odd, thrush-like call. Red-bellied Fruit-Dove was obliging, and a male Cardinal Myzomela was a nice piece of eye candy. We nailed all the endemics here, even hearing the New Caledonian Grassbird for the first time in some years. It was a fun stay in New Caledonia with a nice hotel, and the fascinating and unique combination of bustling metro-France and laid-back Kanak culture.

Vanuatu is a relatively new destination for us (this being just the fourth Field Guides tour here), but we had a very good time, and enjoyed the relaxed lifestyle and the lovely people. The flight schedules left us with a 6-hour layover in Port Vila, so I hired a van at the airport, and we made an exploration of the town, which is recovering remarkably well after the devastation of Cyclone Pam in March earlier this year. We had a look at the craft market, ate lunch at Jill's American cafe, and did some birding up in the hills beyond the waterfall, where Vanuatu White-eye was our first endemic. A trip to the port area gave us the very vocal endemic Vanuatu Whistler and what was only my second Vanuatu Peregrine flying over.

Turtle Bay was very nice this year; it has had some renovation done, has great staff and is being well-run, so we had a pleasant stay there. We had a couple of fine outings to the nearby Loru Conservation Area, with our very nice local guide Steve, and friendly locals David and Jackson (who stayed with us in the afternoon and enjoyed the spectacle of birders in action, as it were). The elusive Chestnut-bellied (Vanuatu) Kingfisher was seen well, as was the striking Buff-bellied Monarch, but Vanuatu Scrubfowl was tough and only some of us saw a bird flush up in the forest. Tanna Fruit-Dove and Pacific Imperial-Pigeon came really good here too, as I noticed some fruiting trees in the morning that proved very productive in the afternoon.

On next to Fiji, starting on Viti Levu with excellent Masked Shining-Parrot and Duetting Giant-Honeyeater right at Colo-i-Suva Ecological. A walk at Colo-i-Suva Forest Park the next day got us Fiji Shrikebill, Fiji Whistler, Slaty Monarch and Blue-crested Flycatcher, whilst we put in some effort and finally got a fine male Golden Dove calling. The local form of Fan-tailed Cuckoo was also calling and flew by -- a split in waiting, I'm sure. The Suva waterfront gave us Wandering Tattler and Whimbrel, as well as Bar-tailed Godwit, and we found Polynesian Starling and more Golden Doves out along the Namosi Road.

Delightful Taveuni was next, where the Garden Island Resort was very nice, and folks enjoyed their very pleasant rooms with a noisy and very long-established colony of flying-foxes nearby. A visit to the nearby 180-degree meridian (with its shiny new sign) was fun, with a Red (Maroon) Shining-Parrot for good measure. Naturally, our morning up Des Voeux Peak was as cloudy and showery as ever, but a new and much easier trail in the dense forest habitat eventually got the great prize of Silktail really well for everyone. This is expected to become a new family (along with New Guinea's Pygmy Drongo), so was even more significant than usual on this trip. The afternoon at Nabogiono Farm produced the unbelievable sunburst Orange Dove and the striking and oddly-patterned Many-colored Fruit-Dove, as well as Polynesian Starling and Red (Maroon) Shining-Parrot. The boat trip back in the late afternoon was very calm this year, but we got nice looks at a fishing flock of Red-footed Boobies, Bridled and Sooty terns, and -- best of all -- 5 Tahiti Petrels, with two of them seen at quite close range.

Kadavu is a neat addition to this tour and the small Polynesian style Matana Beach Resort was very laid-back and pleasant. The tsunami advisory we got that afternoon after the huge Chilean earthquake added a certain spice too, but happily proved to be a nonevent here. Kadavu Honeyeater was obliging, whilst Red Shining-Parrot plus the elusive endemic *kandavensis* Fiji (White-throated) Whistler also showed well. Velvet (Whistling) Dove was not evident at Matana this year, so I arranged an early departure next day and basically hired a van for 3 hours to go bird along the forest patches near Vunisea. Whistling Dove was calling very close by but we failed to get a view, and 4+ others stayed stubbornly out of range, but we did see Kadavu Fantail and Slaty Monarch plus more White-throated Whistlers and Crimson Shining Parrots.

This was a fun trip with a friendly group, run at a relaxed pace, with some great birds that (in most instances) showed very well. The tour provides a terrific intro to South Pacific birding and the much slower pace of life here. My thanks to Joanna, Lois and Jim for extracurricular help in a couple of circumstances, and to Karen in the Field Guides office for doing a fine job of grappling with frequent and unusually complex flight schedules. Also thanks to Kenneth and Steve on Santo, Vido on Viti Levu, Boro and Bobby on Taveuni, and Matthew on Kadavu for their help with the birding. And finally, thanks to all of you for joining me!

Vinaka vakalevu, or thank you very much in Fijian! -- Phil

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## 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

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## BIRDS

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

**PACIFIC BLACK DUCK** (*Anas superciliosa*) – Seven at Riviere Sallee, some saw one at Riviere Bleue and one flew over at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre.

**GRAY TEAL** (*Anas gracilis*) – 30 at the Riveiere Sallee park.

### Megapodiidae (Megapodes)

**VANUATU SCRUBFOWL** (*Megapodius layardi*) – One flushed up in Loru and 3 of us saw it, and Joanna saw another later; it was heard there and at Mathanas too but is always hard to find and see. [E]

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

**RED JUNGLEFOWL** (*Gallus gallus*) – Heard at Loru and Mathanas, a long-established introduction here. [I\*]

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – A few scattered small flocks around Tontouta, may be spreading south as we saw one flock south of the airport this year. [I]

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**AUSTRALASIAN GREBE** (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) – One at the small ponds at La Foa again. A recent colonist here.

### Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

**TAHITI PETREL** (*Pseudobulweria rostrata*) – The late afternoon boat trip in Somosomo Strait worked well as we saw 5 of this much-wanted species, despite flat calm conditions too. They were flying and gliding like shearwaters, not arcing like the usual *Pterodroma* flight action.

**WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus pacificus*) – Jim and Wayne saw this distantly off Ouvéa.

### Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)

**GREAT FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata minor*) – One came right over us on Kadavu, and Jim saw one at Garden Island.

### Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets)

**BROWN BOOBY** (*Sula leucogaster*) – A few off Taveuni and one on a buoy off Kadavu.

**RED-FOOTED BOOBY** (*Sula sula*) – Nice looks from the boat trip, with both the brown and white and black and white morphs.

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) – One at Riveiere Sallee was unexpected, another recent colonist in New Caledonia.

**GREAT CORMORANT (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae*) – One at Lac du Yate in Riviere Bleue was unexpected and was a NC tick for Phil; it is another recent colonist and still quite rare.

**LITTLE PIED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*) – Small numbers at Riv. Bleue and Riv. Sallee.

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

**WHITE-FACED HERON** (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) – One over near Tontouta and near Noumea earlier, 2 at Suva and one on Kadavu.  
**PACIFIC REEF-HERON** (*Egretta sacra albolineata*) – Singles near Noumea and a dark phase on Ouvea. A single white one at Turtle Bay.  
**STRIATED HERON** (*Butorides striata*) – Wayne saw one near Noumea and some saw it near Suva.  
**RUFIOUS NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax caledonicus caledonicus*) – Three adults at Riv. Sallee.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Pandion haliaetus cristatus*) – One eating a fish on the roof structure of the Tjibaou centre, and one at Riv. Sallee; this taxon is split by the IOC.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**SWAMP HARRIER** (*Circus approximans*) – Several en route to Farino. Jim saw it on Santo too. Then a single on Kadavu and some folks saw one on Viti Levu too.

**BROWN GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter fasciatus vigilax*) – Jim saw one in Noumea and there were 2 briefly on Lifou.

**NEW CALEDONIA GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter haplochrous*) – A great view of a small male at Farino, spotted by Joanna and understandably initially thought to be a woodswallow. It is a lovely deep blue-grey colour, quite unique and the local name of Blue Goshawk suits it well. [E]

**FIJI GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter rufitorques*) – Good views at Colo i Suva, then on Taveuni where one was sat on a nest in a large tree en route to the Dateline sign. Then finally one on Kadavu, soaring and perching along the ridge by Matana Dive. [E]

**WHISTLING KITE** (*Haliastur spheurnus*) – Up to 5 daily at Riv. Bleue.

*Rhynchotidae (Kagu)*

**KAGU** (*Rhynchotus jubatus*) – Three on the first day, seen very nicely and coming in to investigate a guide scratching in the soil, then 6 next day with two lovely birds at the Grand Kaori. One of these we walked into and it hissed in alarming manner at Joanna, quite off-putting and probably quite an effective defence. As usual one of the birds of the trip, it really is a fantastic creature. There are now over 600 birds in the park thanks to strict feral animal control. [E]

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**BUFF-BANDED RAIL** (*Gallirallus philippensis swindellsii*) – One at Riv. Sallee and glimpsed on Lifou. Seen each day on Santo, scuttling across the roads.

**PURPLE SWAMPHEN (AUSTRALASIAN)** (*Porphyrio porphyrio samoensis*) – A few en route to Farino and some at Riv. Sallee, now at long last split as Australasian Swamphehen in the latest updates.

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis fulva*) – Ten on Ouvea included some in partial breeding dress, and a couple of Lifou. Then 5 at Taveuni and 5 on Kadavu, the migration is well under way.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**WANDERING TATTLER** (*Tringa incana*) – About 20 along Laucala Bay near Suva.

**WHIMBREL (SIBERIAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus variegatus*) – Jim saw 2 at Turtle Bay, and I heard it one morning. Then one at Laucala Bay on Fiji.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*) – Just one at Laucala Bay.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – A single at Laucala Bay, much disturbed by people on the sand this time, as it was a weekend.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

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

**BROWN NODDY** (*Anous stolidus*) – One off Taveuni.

**SOOTY TERN** (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – A single sat on driftwood off Taveuni was a nice find and sat long enough to be seen well. Surprisingly this was a lifer for Lois.

**BRIDLED TERN** (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – Good views of about 20 off Taveuni, and surprisingly this too was a lifer for Lois.

**BLACK-NAPE TERN** (*Sterna sumatrana*) – Garden Island came good again and Jim found us 3 there, of which I got to see one. It has been a good site for years.

**GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii cristatus*) – Small numbers on Taveuni and Viti Levu, and heard off Kadavu!

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – A few in Noumea and also seen in Port Vila and Suva. [I]

**METALLIC PIGEON** (*Columba vitiensis hypoleucos*) – Great looks at Farino and also seen well on Lifou. A couple of singles on Santo too.

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Quite common on New Caledonia, and a handful of singles on Fiji. [I]

**MACKINLAY'S CUCKOO-DOVE** (*Macropygia mackinlayi mackinlayi*) – Heard on two occasions, and one in the scope near Loru, it was atypically scarce this trip for some reason.

**EMERALD DOVE (PACIFIC)** (*Chalcophaps indica sandwichensis*) – Seen well on Lifou and quite common on Santo, often seen flushing off the roads.

**ZEBRA DOVE** (*Geopelia striata*) – A couple by the pond at La Foa. [I]

**TANNA FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus tannensis*) – Good looks on 10/9 at the fruiting trees near Loru Village, where we saw at least 4 birds and got scope views of a couple. Then a couple of flybys at Mathanas on 11/9 at 300 m. None on Efate this year as the trees there are still damaged from the ravages of cyclone Pam.

**MANY-COLORED FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus perousii mariae*) – Seen very nicely at Bobby's Farm, and also in flight at Kadavu.

**RED-BELLIED FRUIT-DOVE** (*Ptilinopus greyi*) – A great view of this lovely bird on Lifou, and also seen on Ouvea. We had had one right by Drehu Village this year too. Also seen nicely at the fruiting trees at Loru, and flying by at Mathanas.

**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. Also a female was feeding a juv. there, and then we saw a pair along the road up des Voeux Peak next day. Expect it to be moved back into the original 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, the male is a curious

glistering yellow colour with broad dark green shaft streaks. 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*) – Frustrating this year, there were none at Matana, so I hired a van for the next morning and we found 5 or 6 of them calling in the forest, with one really close. However, it was completely invisible, we simply could not get onto it in the tangle, and none of them were playback responsive this year, all very irritating and a tad unlucky. 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. [E]

**CLOVEN-FEATHERED DOVE** (*Drepanoptila holosericea*) – Jean-Marc got us a beauty in Riv. Bleue where it is actually quite hard to see well, and we saw 2 more at Farino. The constipated lowing call is very distinctive. [E]

**PACIFIC IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula pacifica*) – Nice looks at Loru where we saw about a dozen and got good scope views.

**PEALE'S IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula latrans*) – Small numbers on Fiji, and heard daily, Barking Pigeon is a very good name for it. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula goliath*) – Great looks at one at the Grand Kaori on both days, but these were the only ones we saw of this huge pigeon, aptly named Goliath Imperial Pigeon. [E]

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**FAN-TAILED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis pyrrhophanus*) – Phil heard this once on Ouvea but we were hurrying to the airport, unnecessarily as it turned out! [E]

**FAN-TAILED CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis flabelliformis simus*) – Calling at Colo i Suva and seen flying across the road there, this is another cryptic species in the group, vocally very distinct from all the rest. It even has a black morph which I have never seen yet.

**SHINING BRONZE-CUCKOO (NEW CALEDONIAN)** (*Chrysococcyx lucidus layardi*) – A nice look at Farina and also by the departure lounge at Ouvea where one was calling persistently.

#### Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

**BARN OWL (AUSTRALIAN)** (*Tyto alba delicatula*) – We flushed one as Narcisse was taking us into the forest on Lifou, and most of us got a look, we quite often see them in daylight on Lifou. Split by most authorities too.

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

**GLOSSY SWIFTLET** (*Collocalia esculenta albidior*) – Common on New Caledonia, Efate and Santo, this race has a striking white rump.

**WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus spodiopygius leucopygius*) – Some nice close looks this year at Riv. Bleue and Riv. Sallee, the dingy underparts and brownish upperparts help to distinguish it from the quite similar Glossy Swiftlet. Also common on Fiji.

**UNIFORM SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus vanikorensis*) – Good looks at Klehm's Hill near Port Vila and then as we left Turtle Bay.

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED KINGFISHER** (*Todiramphus farquhari*) – This one of the Vanuatu stars, and we eventually got a good look at one at Loru after chasing up several calling birds without seeing them. It's a very beautiful small kingfisher too. Phil saw one next day 11/9 at Mathanas where one flew across the track, and we heard another 4 calling. [E]

**COLLARED KINGFISHER (VANUATU)** (*Todiramphus chloris santoensis*) – Vocal on Santo but not very showy this year, now split as Pacific Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sacer*) too.

**COLLARED KINGFISHER (VANUATU)** (*Todiramphus chloris juliae*) – One seen on Efate, also a part of the newly split Pacific Kingfisher.

**SACRED KINGFISHER (NEW CALEDONIAN)** (*Todiramphus sanctus canacorum*) – Just a couple on Grande Terre only, it seems scarce.

**SACRED KINGFISHER (LOYALTY IS.)** (*Todiramphus sanctus macmillani*) – Common on both Lifou and Ouvea, far more so than the main island birds.

**SACRED KINGFISHER (FIJI)** (*Todiramphus sanctus vitiensis*) – Great looks at Colo I Suva and on Taveuni, and now a part of Pacific Kingfisher.

**SACRED KINGFISHER (FIJI)** (*Todiramphus sanctus eximius*) – Seen well on Kadavu and rather distinctive, this one is very white below with a rusty supercilium and bluish upperparts. I suspect more splits will be in order in this complex, this is now one of the Pacific Kingfisher group.

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**PEREGRINE FALCON (INDO-PACIFIC)** (*Falco peregrinus nesiotes*) – One bird over the wooded ridge by the wharf at Port Vila was a nice find by Jim, and was only my second Vanuatu record.

#### Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

**CRIMSON SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia splendens*) – Seen flying on Kadavu on both days but not obliging with a scope look. This one really is a vivid crimson colour. [E]

**RED SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia tabuensis taviunensis*) – Great looks on Taveuni, the maroon and teal green combination is very striking. Oh yes, it ain't red either, it's maroon, hence the IOC name Maroon Shining Parrot [E]

**MASKED SHINING-PARROT** (*Prosopeia personata*) – Great looks at the Ecolodge, 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*) – Nice looks at Riv Bleue by the entrance gate again, then a brilliant view at Farino where I at last got a good photo, now on the IBC. A very distinctive bird. [E]

**HORNED PARAKEET (OUVEA)** (*Eunymphicus cornutus uvaensis*) – BG took us to his forest patch where there was a nest in hole in a big tree, and we heard and saw the birds several times, though not for prolonged views as in previous years. I reckon I heard at least 3 pairs here and saw about 4, whilst BG tells me the population is now estimated at about 2000 birds, and seems quite well protected too by the local communities. This distinctive dark taxon is split by the IOC. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN PARAKEET** (*Cyanoramphus saisseti*) – Seen briefly at the entrance gate to Riviere Bleue, then a scope view of one as we came out of the forest patches there. Quite a rare bird, always much harder to find than Horned Parakeet. [E]

**COLLARED LORY** (*Phigys solitarius*) – Wayne's favourite long lunch at Raintree actually gave us great looks at this striking bird feeding in a Schefflera there, a very odd little parrot in a monotypic genus. Also seen on Taveuni and Kadavu too. [E]

**RAINBOW LORIKEET (COCONUT)** (*Trichoglossus haematodus massena*) – A few flybys around Noumea. Split by the IOC as Coconut Lorikeet.

**RAINBOW LORIKEET (COCONUT)** (*Trichoglossus haematodus deplanchii*) – Noisy and showy on Santo, this race has a rather plain red chest.

#### Meliphagidae (Honeyeaters)

**NEW CALEDONIAN MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela caledonica*) – Seen nicely at Riv Bleue. [E]

**CARDINAL MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela cardinalis lifuensis*) – Very nice looks at several males on Lifou eventually. I suspect this complex will be broken up into several species as the various island taxa are very different. Also heard on Santo.

**ORANGE-BREASTED MYZOMELA** (*Myzomela jugularis*) – Nice looks at Coli i Suva and on Taveuni, a striking bird but badly named as the breast is yellow not orange. Sound recording now on xenocanto. [E]

**BARRED HONEYEATER** (*Gliciphila undulata*) – Great looks at Riv Bleue, but as ever quite sparse. [E]

**DARK-BROWN HONEYEATER** (*Lichmera incana incana*) – Abundant on New Cal and the Loyalties, one was singing outside Le Lagon at 0400 each day, near a street light. Dutson calls it Grey-eared Honeyeater which is a better name.

**DARK-BROWN HONEYEATER** (*Lichmera incana griseoviridis*) – This was vocal and quite common around Port Vila, and has a very different set of calls to those on New Caledonia as well as a few that sound similar. Odd that we never see it on Santo, but many Vanuatu birds have very local distributions.

**NORTHERN WATTLED-HONEYEATER** (*Foulehaio taviuensis*) – Seen well on Taveuni, quite a dark bird with distinct vocals, good to see them split out and amazingly Clements having good appropriate names for them! I am going to suggest the IOC adopt the same. [E]

**WESTERN WATTLED-HONEYEATER** (*Foulehaio procerior*) – Seen well at Coli i Suva, and a good name too, the local name of Kikau is used by the IOC but is not terribly informative. [E]

**CHATTERING GIANT-HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza viridis*) – I got my best ever views of Taveuni thanks to Lois missing the first sighting, then also missing the second close one before we found one feeding low down in some gingers. This showed beautifully AND Lois got to see it too, it can be hard to see well. Now at long last split too, but with an inappropriate name..... [E]

**DUETTING GIANT-HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza brunneirostris*) – This is uncommon and can be hard, but we got one 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 now split from the Taveuni bird. Badly named though..... [E]

**CROW HONEYEATER** (*Gymnomyza aubryana*) – This is one of the NC megas, and we got lucky when after quite a lot of effort one snuck in and hung about for good views, and moderate photos and video, A Critically Endangered species, the rarest bird of the trip, one I have only ever seen at Riv Bleue and with maybe <200 in existence. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN FRIARBIRD** (*Philemon diemenensis*) – Great looks at Riv. Bleue and Farino, quite a good looking friarbird with that odd silvery wing covert pattern [E]

**KADAVU HONEYEATER** (*Xanthotis provocator*) – Quite common around Matana and quite noisy, the yellow facial skin is quite striking. They call well after dark and before dawn too. [E]

#### *Acanthizidae (Thornbills and Allies)*

**FAN-TAILED GERYGONE** (*Gerygone flavolateralis flavolateralis*) – Seen well at Riv Bleue and Riv. Sallee, and also on the Loyalties.

#### *Artamidae (Woodswallows)*

**FIJI WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus mentalis*) – Weirdly we saw just singles at Nadi Airport and near Suva, it is usually common on Taveuni but the new power lines there seem to have moved them away, for the first time ever I saw none here. [E]

**WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus leucorhynchus*) – A few around Noumea and on Efate.

#### *Cracticidae (Bellmagpies and Allies)*

**AUSTRALASIAN MAGPIE** (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) – Singles on Taveuni where it still has a small population. [I]

#### *Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)*

**BLACK-FACED CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Coracina novaehollandiae*) – Joanna and Jim saw this vagrant in Noumea the day they arrived.

**SOUTH MELANESIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Coracina caledonica thilenii*) – About 3 at Loru and one at Mathanas, I still failed to get a recording of the distinctive piercing call.

**SOUTH MELANESIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Coracina caledonica caledonica*) – Very nice looks at Farino where they were vocal and sat for photos.

**POLYNESIAN TRILLER** (*Lalage maculosa*) – Common on Viti Levu and Taveuni, and quite vocal.

**LONG-TAILED TRILLER** (*Lalage leucopygia montrosieri*) – A few at Riv. Bleue, but the best were by the airport on Ouvea. It was also seen briefly on Santo.

**NEW CALEDONIAN CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Analisma analis*) – As usual only seen in Riv. Bleue where it is uncommon, but gives itself away by the odd piercing shrill call. [E]

#### *Pachycephalidae (Whistlers and Allies)*

**VANUATU WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala chlorura intacta*) – Very vocal in the forest areas on both Efate and Santo but surprisingly hard to see, we did eventually see both sexes quite well. One of the splits out from what was Golden Whistler, and it does not respond to squeaking like that species does.

**FIJI WHISTLER (WHITE-THROATED)** (*Pachycephala vitiensis kandavensis*) – Endemic to the southern Fiji islands but looks very like a classic but rather pale yellow Golden Whistler. We saw a fine male by Matana, and the group got one proudly found by guide Matthew near Vunisea, where I finally got tape of it. I expect this to be split again in due course, it is very distinct and also very small, it weighs half of some of the other taxa. [E]

**FIJI WHISTLER (FIJI)** (*Pachycephala vitiensis torquata*) – Elusive, but we finally got a striking male with black upperparts and black collar with bright deep yellow underparts on the last morning on Des Voeux Peak. [E]

**FIJI WHISTLER (FIJI)** (*Pachycephala vitiensis graeffii*) – Many of this yellow throated taxon have little or no breast band, and are almost black above. We saw one male at Colo i Suva. Another taxon that does not respond well to pishing.

**NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala caledonica*) – Nice looks in Riv. Bleue. [E]

**NEW CALEDONIAN WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala caledonica littayei*) – We saw this distinctive bird on Ouvea, bright yellow below with a white throat and broad black chest band, plus large size and long heavy bill. It is I have to note obviously incorrectly placed in New Cal Whistler, it is better with Vanuatu (Melanesian) Whistler and could even be a species in its own right. I got the IOC to amend their placement and I trust Clements will eventually catch up.

**RUFIOUS WHISTLER** (*Pachycephala rufiventris xanthetraea*) – Also seen well at Ruv. Bleu and then at Farino, and I got a photo of a male at the Tjibaou Centre.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

**SILKTAIL** (*Lamprolia victoriae*) – The new (and much easier trail) through the dense forest habitat on Des Voeux Peak eventually got us the great prize of Silktail really well. This and the Pygmy Drongo of New Guinea are expected to be put into their own small, new bird family soon.

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

**STREAKED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura verreauxi 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 verreauxi rufilatalis*) – Seen well on Taveuni where it does show quite rusty flanks and sounds a bit different to the other taxa.

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

**KADAVU FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura personata*) – We got one at the last gasp along the road from Vunisea on the last morning, it seems to be low density. [E]

**GRAY FANTAIL (MELANESIAN)** (*Rhipidura albiscapa bulgeri*) – Common at Riv. Bleue this trip, also at Farino. One part of the song here is quite reminiscent of Mangrove Fantail oddly enough.

**GRAY FANTAIL (MELANESIAN)** (*Rhipidura albiscapa brenchleyi*) – A few at Loru.

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**SLATY MONARCH** (*Mayrornis lessona*) – This small slaty-grey species with the rather 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. They like to forage in dead leaf tangles a bit like a shrikebill. Also seen at Mathanas on 11/9. [E]

**SOUTHERN SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides pachycephaloides*) – We had fine views of a couple of this uncommon bird at Riv. Bleue, the weird quavering call is a good sign of its presence. One was digging into a rotten stick and prised out a grub with that heavy chisel bill.

**SOUTHERN SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides grisescens*) – A nice look at one at Loru, and I managed to get some tape too this time, we don't always see this race.

**FIJI SHRIKEBILL** (*Clytorhynchus vitiensis*) – Seen well at Colo i Suva and then on Taveuni, and heard on Kadavu. [E]

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica caledonica*) – A couple of males seen at Riv. Bleue.

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica viridinitens*) – A female on Lifou.

**MELANESIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra caledonica marinae*) – A few at Loru.

**VANIKORO FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra vanikorensis*) – A striking species that is almost a Fiji endemic, named for a remote 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 that we don't hear on Viti Levu or Taveuni.

**BLUE-CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiagra azureocapilla*) – Seen well eventually at Colo i Suva, and some saw it on Taveuni, a striking and quite uncommon species. [E]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**NEW CALEDONIAN CROW** (*Corvus moneduloides*) – This showed nicely at Farino several times, the oddly angled lower mandible is very distinctive, as is the disyllabic barking call. Also heard at Mont Koghis. [E]

Petroicidae (Australasian Robins)

**PACIFIC ROBIN** (*Petroica multicolor taveunensis*) – Heard on the first day on Taveuni, then a fine male came in to my playback in the rain at 3000ft on the second day. Formerly considered a part of Scarlet Robin, and probably best treated as multiple endemic island species.

**YELLOW-BELLIED ROBIN** (*Eopsaltria flaviventris*) – This strange little bird is actually not a typical robin at all, despite the appearances, but a flyrobin from the Australasian robin family. This was a big discovery about 5 years ago from genetic work, but as ever for the Old World the Clements list lags behind. In the IOC World Checklist, it is placed in the genus *Petroica* and called Yellow-bellied Flyrobin. We saw it very nicely at Riv. Bleue. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**WELCOME SWALLOW** (*Hirundo neoxena*) – I think Jim and Wayne saw this on Lifou.

**PACIFIC SWALLOW** (*Hirundo tahitica*) – Small numbers on Vanuatu and Fiji.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Just a handful around Noumea, has this got less common here? Still common on Viti Levu though. [I]

Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Horornis ruficapilla ruficapilla*) – Heard along the Vunisea road and I think some folks got a glimpse of this taxon which is endemic to Kadavu. [\*]

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Horornis ruficapilla badiceps*) – Vocal and seen unusually well at Colo-i-Suva.

**FIJI BUSH-WARBLER** (*Horornis ruficapilla funebris*) – A reversion to type, it was not calling much in the damp conditions and proved impossible to see this year on Taveuni. [\*]

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

**NEW CALEDONIAN GRASSBIRD** (*Megalurulus mariei*) – I have gone 10 years since a sighting, but was pleased to get one to respond some 3 times at Farino to a session of the recorded call. All too typically it did not come in to show itself, but I know where it lives again now..... [E\*]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

**LARGE LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops inornatus*) – This proved tough as is sometimes the case, but a bird did come in without calling to my playback and we all got some sort of a view of it. It did eventually reply but again as ever was hard to get onto. By far the rarest of the 3 *Zosterops* species here. [E]

**GREEN-BACKED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops xanthochroa*) – Very common this trip, we saw up to 30 per day in all the wooded sites on Grande Terre.

[E]

**SMALL LIFOU WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops minutus*) – Also very common, we saw dozens on our day on Lifou, a nice brightly coloured diminutive species. [E]

**LAYARD'S WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops explorator*) – Small numbers of this green-backed species on Fiji, on all 3 islands. [E]

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis griseonota*) – Very uncommon on Grande Terre, we saw just a couple of singles.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis nigrescens*) – Seen a couple of times on Ouvea and it is another fairly distinctive taxon, it is kind of buffy white below with much less black on the face than on Lifou.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis melanops*) – Seen quite well on Lifou but nowhere near as common as the Small Lifou White-eye. Potentially a split I suspect given the amazingly rapid speciation rates in this genus.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis vatensis*) – Seen on Efate near the wharf.

**SILVER-EYE** (*Zosterops lateralis flaviceps*) – Just a single at Colo i Suva this year, which completed our set of Silvereye taxa for the trip. It is about time someone did a close look at what they really all are.

**YELLOW-FRONTED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops flavifrons efatensis*) – Common on both Efate (race *efatensis*) and Santo (race *brevicauda*), and very vocal. The various races of this species seem to have large genetic divergences and more than one species may be involved.... [E]

#### Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**ISLAND THRUSH (VANUATU)** (*Turdus poliocephalus vanikorensis*) – This was a surprise sighting on Sept 11 at Mathanas, where I heard one call and it shot across the road in front of Jim and I. My first record here and yet another potential split, this complex is long overdue for a big re-evaluation.

**ISLAND THRUSH (LAYARD'S)** (*Turdus poliocephalus layardi*) – Seen flying across the road at Colo i Suva and Namosi, this is one hard bird to see well.

**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, I expect multiple species to be recognized.

#### Sturnidae (Starlings)

**STRIATED STARLING** (*Aplonis striata*) – None at Riv. Bleue, but seen well at Farino and also on the Loyalty Islands, the sexual dimorphism is quite marked in this species. The race on the Loyalties is *atrontensis*. [E]

**POLYNESIAN STARLING** (*Aplonis tabuensis*) – An uncommon and strangely plumaged bird quite unlike other *Aplonis*, one was seen along Namosi Road, then we had pairs at Des Voeux Peak and Bobby's Farm, then a couple seen well on Kadavu. I finally managed to record it as well and will post it on xenocanto and the IBC.

**JUNGLE MYNA** (*Acridotheres fuscus*) – Common on Viti Levu and Taveuni. [I]

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common in urban areas throughout. [I]

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Still quite common in urban areas throughout. [I]

#### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – This seems to be getting commoner and we saw flocks of up to 30 on Grande Terre. [I]

**RED AVADAVAT** (*Amandava amandava*) – Joanna spotted a small flock at Nadi Airport, the only ones we saw. [I]

**RED-THROATED PARROTFINCH** (*Erythrura psittacea*) – Jim finally laid the curse of the parrotfinch to rest, with great views of this attractive bird on the track up at Farino, always a good site for it.

**FIJI PARROTFINCH** (*Erythrura pealii*) – Good looks at 3 on Des Voeux Peak on our last morning there, and Jim and Joanna saw them at the hotel in Nadi too. [E]

**CHESTNUT MUNIA** (*Lonchura atricapilla*) – Small flocks at Loru and en route to Mathanas, we saw about 30 birds in 3 small flocks on Sept 10. A curious introduction here, I'd love to know their provenance. It is quite common on Santo, but more often called Black-headed Mannikin, and split from Chestnut Mannikin which is *Lonchura malacca*.... [I]

**CHESTNUT-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura castaneothorax*) – A flock of 5 at Riv. Sallee, this seems to be getting steadily less common, perhaps in competition with the waxbill here? [I]

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## MAMMALS

**ORNATE FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus ornatus*) – Just one seen flying over on Ouvea.

**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. Also seen nicely at Colo-i-Suva.

**SAMOAN FLYING-FOX** (*Pteropus samoensis*) – I think the flying foxes at Loru are this species, the trouble is most look very similar!. We also saw one at Namosi Road on Viti Levu.

**SMALL INDIAN MONGOOSE** (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) – Phil saw one near Nausori, a noxious introduced pest. [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Birds of the trip were the wonderful Kagu, those fantastic Silktail, Orange Dove, Collared Lory and Vanuatu Kingfisher. Phil was especially pleased with the views of Chattering (Yellow-billed Giant) Honeyeater on Taveuni, and Tahiti Petrel is always an exciting addition to the tour.

### Herps

Banded Green Iguana *Brachylophus bulabula* - a beautiful green female came to bid goodbye to us 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. The village chief here is an expert at finding them, he did it again this year!

How I wish New Caledonia and Vanuatu had butterfly guide books, 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.

From Vanuatu I identified the Swamp Tiger *Danaus affinis*, the 8-spot Butterfly *Hypolimnys octocula*, Lemon Migrant *Catopsila pomona* and what I think is Canopus Swallowtail *Papilio fuscus*, though the Vanuatu stamp series labels it *Papilio godeffroyi* which does not show in the lists of Vanuatu butterflies I have found, it may be a synonym.

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 *Catopsila pomona*

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 *Xoys sesara* Colo-i-Suva and Kadavu

Blue Moon *Hypolimnys bolina* Viti Levu and Taveuni

Meadow Argus *Junonia villida*

Many of the trip photos are now posted on the Internet Bird Collection (IBC), a free access site via Lynx Edicions (publishers of the classic Handbook of Birds of World). It is a superb collection of videos, photos and sound cuts and I usually post pictures and sound cuts from the tours here, as well as on the Field Guides gallery for that particular tour. Look under my name to see what is there.

I also recommend the xenocanto website which has cuts of almost all the world's bird species, I contribute cuts from most tours.

Folks were also asking about the IOC World Checklist of Birds, a free access downloadable Excel file that gets updated every 4 months, version 5.3 has just been published. Go to [worldbirdnames.org](http://worldbirdnames.org) or google IOC and ignore the Olympics stuff!

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**Totals for the tour: 161 bird taxa and 4 mammal taxa**