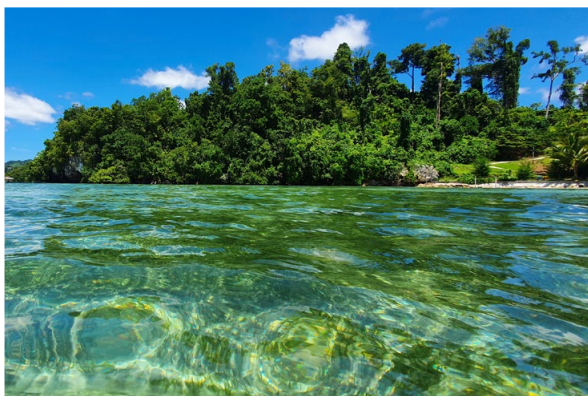
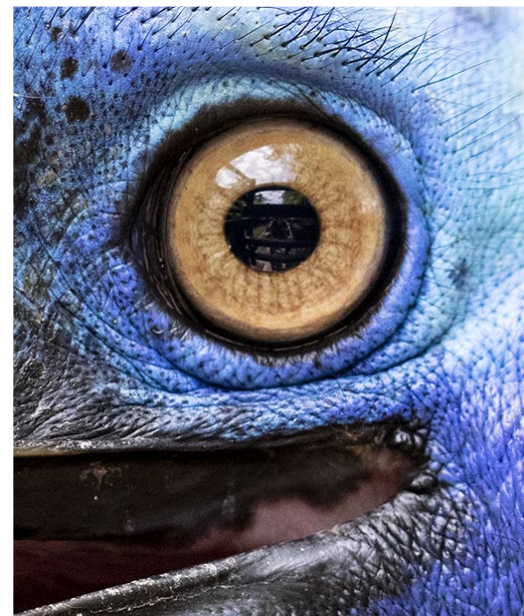


WEST PAPUA

Trip report 2022



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Participants: **Thomas Carlsson, Jan-Åke Engfors, Gunnar Hillerdal, Ronnie Lindqvist, Bengt Petersen** (Sweden); **Anne-Marie & Edwin Schuurman** (Netherlands)

Photo: All images are taken by **Zsombor Károlyi** except Variable Goshawk (white morph) on p. 6 and Red-breasted Paradise Flycatcher on p. 27. These photos are taken by Gunnar Hillerdal

It's easy to have high expectations of Birds-of-paradise, but when you finally see them, they are definitely met! This was the second Birdsafarisweden-tour to West Papua, the first one being in 2019 and the second postponed twice due to Covid. Now after two years, we were finally able to visit this beautiful region. Thanks to great weather (almost no rain) we lost virtually no birding time and had very little issue with mosquitoes, and thanks to Sujan's vast local knowledge and skills the whole trip went like clockwork. Birding here can be quite challenging due to heat and moisture, but nevertheless extremely rewarding with fabulous Pittas, Kingfishers, Pigeons and Birds-of-paradise topping the list. For European birders, many of the exotic birds of the New Guinea region are totally unknown. Myzomela, Parotia, Gerygone, Melidectes, Friarbird, Paradigalla, Riflebird and Pitohui – it can be hard to even picture these things! However, given some time, they can be easily recognized, learned and appreciated. Apart from many beautiful and unquantifiable experiences, we totalled a remarkable 279 species in West Papua, with an additional 49 species in Jakarta pre-tour, thanks to a great group and great flow throughout the whole trip.

Rough itinerary:

1-2 October: Jakarta

3-7 October: Nimbokrang

7-11 October: Arfak Mountains

12-14 October: Malagufuk

15-17 October: Waigeo

Top 10 birds of the tour, as voted by the participants:

1. **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise (65p)**
2. **Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise (51p)**
3. **Victoria Crowned Pigeon (36p)**
4. **King Bird-of-paradise (35p)**
5. **Western Parotia (32p)**
6. **Common Paradise Kingfisher (29p)**
7. **Blue-Black Kingfisher (29p)**
8. **Feline Owlet-nightjar (26p)**
9. **Hooded Pitta (21p)**
10. **Western Crowned Pigeon (19p)**

Day 1 – October 1st (Arrival)

Our little group of 9 arrived in 6 different flights to Jakarta without any hiccups and finally met up at Zest Hotel near the airport in the late, hot afternoon. We were all very eager to get this fabulous tour started! Some of us had never been remotely close to this part of Asia or even south of the Equator before. As we went out for dinner, Sujan informed us on the latest developments in West Papua where he had just finished his last tour a few days prior to this one. Before leaving to Papua though, we would have a full day to spend in Jakarta.

Day 2 – October 2nd (Jakarta)

We would spend our first morning at the Ragunan Zoo, one of the depressingly few green areas in this 11-million-people's sauna known as Jakarta. A heavy thunderstorm in the night still lingered on in the morning as a light drizzle, but we headed out after breakfast anyway. There were a few things we immediately had to get accustomed to. Like the fact that people drive on the left side of the road, that there's rarely any seat belts in the cars, all the noise around everywhere, and people burning trash on the roadside. These are common phenomena in most tropical countries but just like the jetlag, you need some time to get accustomed. The zoo of course has a lot to offer in terms of animals but we weren't so interested in the caged Orangutans and Giraffes but instead walked along the trails and looked up into the trees. Since we wouldn't see any

Bulbuls, Woodpeckers, Barbets or Green-Pigeons east of the Wallace Line we were happy to find both **Yellow-vented** and **Sooty-headed Bulbuls** here, as well as **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker**, **Coppersmith Barbet**, **Pink-necked Green-Pigeon** and even two **Grey-cheeked Green-Pigeons**, beautiful with their spectacled eyes. A **Black-naped Oriole** was calling high up somewhere in the trees, lots of **Scarlet-headed Flowerpeckers** were around, the air was filled with the calls of **Red-breasted Parakeets** and **Cave Swiftlets**, and in a bush, we found two **Brown-throated Sunbirds**. It's hard to tell the origin of some of the birds seen here due to the intense caging going on in Indonesia. For example, we saw both **Zebra Dove** and **Common Myna**, two species expanding in Jakarta as escaped birds are forming new wild populations. Even Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were flying around but mostly near the cages where other Cockatoos were locked in, so we didn't count these. As saddening as the caging business is, it was actually interesting to see two threatened species, Bali Myna and Java Green Peafowl, in the "zoo" part of the zoo. Suddenly the light drizzle turned into rain and we had to take cover together with a school-class out on excursion. Luckily, we were near some canals and apart from the common **Javan Pond-Heron** and **White-breasted Waterhen**, we even saw a **Blue-eared Kingfisher**, a really good bird to get here. The rain stopped and after picking up **Javan Myna**, **Plaintive Cuckoo**, **Malaysian Pied-Fantail**, **Small Minivet** and **Common Iora** (birds we wouldn't observe on the rest of the trip) we eventually headed back to our hotel for some time off and lunch.



Cerulean Kingfisher

In the afternoon we were picked up by the well-known, energetic brother-duo Khaleb Yordan and Boas Emmanuel for a boat trip out into the Muara Angke area in the Jakarta Bay. This was not supposed to be a part of the tour but was rather a spontaneous last-minute arrangement from our part. It's better to do this boat ride in the morning to get a chance to see the Frigatebirds, but the afternoon trip still went beyond our expectations. We spent the first hour looking for the very local mangrove-dwelling **Cerulean Kingfisher**, of which we found several while zigzagging among **Great Egrets**, **Little Egrets**, **Purple Herons**, **Black-crowned Night Herons**, **Oriental Darters** and **Striated Herons**. Among hundreds of **Whiskered Terns**, we saw a single **White-winged Tern**, and a small group of the endangered **Milky Stork** was foraging on the shoreline. The high tide gave the shorebirds a hard time to find food, so most of the waders were grouped on a small reef absolutely full of trash. Our main goal was the very locally found **Javan Plover**, of which we found 3 individuals, but there were also **Wood Sandpipers**, **Lesser Sand Plovers**, **Sunda Teals**, **Pied Stilts**, **Whimbrels**, **Pacific Golden Plovers** and **Red-necked Stints**, all sprinkled around literally tons of rubbish. As the sun was setting, we entered a tight canal where **Bar-winged Prinia** and **Olive-backed Tailorbird** were singing in mangroves on one side, and the other side was a huge illegal fishing village struck with people, boats, more trash and dirty grey water pipes. Still, the birding here was extremely rewarding. **Black-backed Swamphens** were foraging



Ragunan Zoo



Grey Heron



Little Egrets



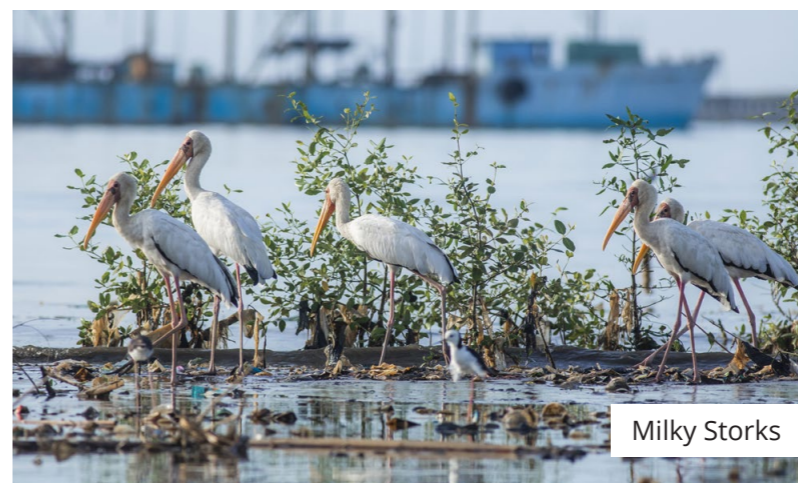
Long-tailed Macaque



Javan Pond Heron



Pink-necked Green Pigeon



Milky Storks



Zebra Dove



in the edge, a flock of **Daurian Starlings** swished by as well as a group of **Javan Munias**, a **Sunda Collared Dove** made a quick appearance, there were **White-breasted Woodswallows** and migrating **Blue-tailed Bee-Eaters** in the air, and after a lot of staring and cruising back and forth, we finally spotted the grand prize, a **Sunda Coucal**. Happy with our first day and 64 species of birds already, we headed back to the hotel for dinner and packing before leaving for the airport. This day was a very nice addition, since Javan avifauna differs a lot from West Papua. In fact, of the 328 species we noted in total, only 15 were in both regions (mostly herons, waders, terns and introduced species). At midnight, we finally departed with the domestic flight towards Jayapura, West Papua.



Sooty-headed Bulbul

Day 3 – October 3rd (Jayapura – Nimbokrang)

We touched ground on Sentani airport soon after 7 in the morning. The sun was way up already and we could feel the heat just looking through the window! We quickly got our bags and had time for a coffee at Café Papua (I recommend the cappuccino) before getting into our three cars that were already waiting for us by the airport. Many people were smoking both indoors and outside, and I noted that the tobacco here has a peculiar smell. The drive to Nimbokrang village would take us about 4 hours with all the stops we made along the way, but there were several birds here that we wouldn't see any more during the trip. Right off the bat, we had a group of **Tree Martins**, a **Pied Bush Chat** and a **Buff-banded**

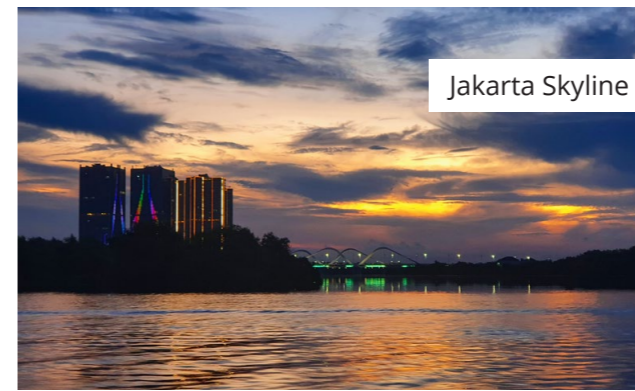


Variable Goshawk (white morph)

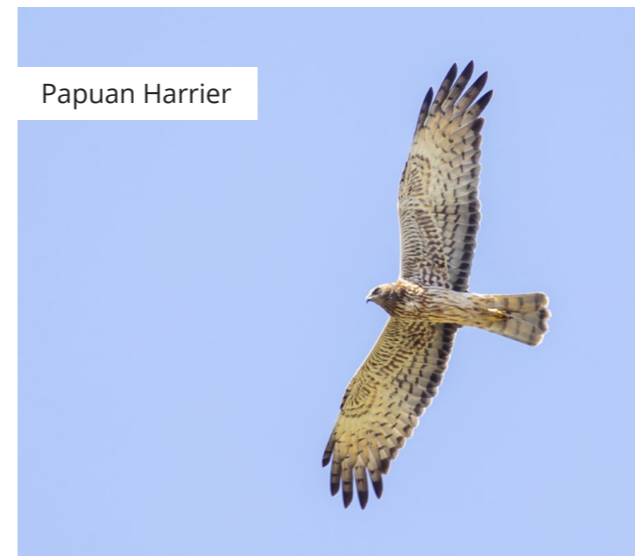
ey Buzzard of the whole trip. We arrived to Nimbokrang just in time for lunch.

Heat can be unbearable in these lowlands, so there is plenty of down time in the middle of the day. Our homestay offers several rooms, shared bathrooms and a common space to eat and summarize the days. We could also get our clothes washed here, which certainly is an appreciated service in Papua. Today we got fish for lunch and had some time to sleep and look at the Northern Cassowary in the backyard that was taken care of as a chick by Jamil, the famous Nimbokrang bird guide. He is not around anymore but we were still well taken care of the team led by his son-in-law Kolik, as well as the supreme tracker Dance (one trip report calls him "a walking GPS in the forest") and William, another local guide. We left the homestay around 3 pm and drove uphill to the Km9-outpost, a beautiful spot to spend the afternoon. On the way, our driver stopped and

Rail in the grasslands outside of Jayapura, as well as the surprise of the day, a female **Papuan Harrier** swooping by, before flying high up in the air to be joined by a male in a neat courtship display. It's springtime in these parts, apparently. Not many birders get to see this raptor, they mostly reside in the high mountains of central New Guinea. There were several **Brahminy Kites** in the air and we even saw three **Rainbow Bee-eaters** (my 1500th lifer!), **Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds** usually in singles and never offering quite good views, as well as the occasional **Great-billed Mannikin**, **New Guinea Friar-bird**, **Willie Wagtail**, **Olive-backed Sunbird** and the probably introduced, strawberry-looking **Crimson Finch**. There were also many colourful butterflies around. All the way to Nimbokrang we were surrounded by beautifully undulating hills and sharp towering mountain tops, and at one stop along the road we saw our first **Moustached Treeswifts**, one of them on its nest, and the only **Long-tailed Hon-**



Jakarta Skyline



Papuan Harrier

called out a bird as a Cockatoo but it turned out to be a white morph **Variable Goshawk**! A rare morph that Sujan had never seen before in his 13 trips to Papua. At the outpost we sat down and enjoyed the afternoon looking down above the canopy of the vast Papuan lowland jungle where many birds flew around before taking an evening roost. We saw our first **Black-browed Trillers**, **Mimic Honeyeaters** and **Black Sunbirds**, and heard a **Dwarf Koel** and a **Rufous-bellied Kookaburra** calling. In the air both **Uniform Swiftlets** and **Glossy Swiftlets** were flying around, their paths occasionally crossed by **Papuan Spine-tailed Swifts**, flying with a straighter and faster pace. Over the treetops loud groups of **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, **Red-cheeked Parrots**, **Coconut Lorikeets** and **Black-capped Lories** were flying back-and-forth throughout the evening. Our first **Zoe's Imperial Pigeon** was heard (reminded me of Ural Owl) and two **Pinon's Imperial Pigeons** were seen flying. Through our eager scanning in the scopes, we were also able to find **Orange-bellied Fruit-Doves**, **Boyer's Cuckooshrikes**, a **Lowland Peltops** and the very first BOP of the trip – a young male **Lesser Bird-of-paradise**! A bit far off but still very cool to see, and a great way to end our first day on West Papua. 49 species observed today.



Rescued Northern Cassowary



Day 4 - October 4th (Nimbokrang)

We had an early breakfast and left the homestay at 4:30. We headed out to Jalan Korea (the old Korea road) west of Nimbokrang and walked into the jungle as the forest was awakening. The crepuscular **Hook-billed Kingfisher** has an easy call to recognize, but the rest of the chorus had to be left unidentified because we needed to be quiet. As it was getting a bit lighter, we were all huddled together and staring up at a bare stick, the remnant of an old tree used as the display of the amazing-looking **Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise**! Soon enough a male appeared and started to call out into the dawn with a very appropriate and loud jungle-call. He even adds a little dance to it with the wings open! We must have spent half an hour here as he came out on his stick, sang and danced for a while and flew back into the forest. Sometimes a female appeared and then he got really excited! They were chasing each other up and down the stick, the male showing off his wires and wagging his rear back and forth. She seemed very interested and looked up and down, even picking on his rear with her beak sometimes. Not many birds are this amusing to watch! A **Golden Monarch** also made a quick appearance, and we heard a **Black Butcherbird** calling loudly. When the BOPs flew off, we were taken by William to see another spot, this time a tree 'owned' by none other than a male **King Bird-of-paradise**, a real jewel among the BOPs. Every male King has their own tree where they show off their dance moves and move up and down the lianas. We eventually spotted the male up in this tree, but he was very inactive this morning, probably there were no females around. We took a little break to drink coffee, finally discuss all that we have experienced, and ID some of the birds calling around us. Among others, Kolik and William called out **Yellow-billed Kingfisher**, **Rusty Pitohui**, **Sooty Thick-et-fantail** and **Wompoo Fruit Dove**. They then started to playback another of our targets here, and soon enough a female **Pale-billed Sicklebill** ap-



Orange-bellied Fruit Dove

peared in front of us for a few moments before disappearing into the jungle again. This BOP is a tricky one because you have to run into it, they don't display on reliable spots. Then Sujana called out a **Spot-winged Monarch** and soon another one appeared. It was getting hotter. We started moving back to the road and walked for a bit, looking at colourful butterflies and dragonflies, picking up calls of **North-ern Fantail**, **Papuan Babbler** and **Streak-headed Honeyeater**. Two **Dusky Lorries** flew loudly above us like bullets, and on a clearing, we noticed a few **Streak-headed Mannikins**. Trying to avoid a sun-stroke we jumped into the cars and moved back towards Nimbokrang, making a stop at the edge of the village to look at a **Red-cheeked Parrot** on her nest. This was also a good spot to look at the ant-colonies on the large branches, since they offer good nesting and feeding opportunities for the **Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot**. Sure enough, Kolik pointed out two birds climbing around just like nuthatches. Neither their behaviour nor their sounds make you think "Parrot", not to mention the tiny size. Another quick stop before lunch was inside the village where Kolik knew about a nesting **Papuan Frogmouth**. It didn't disappoint us. What a morning!



Jalan Korea

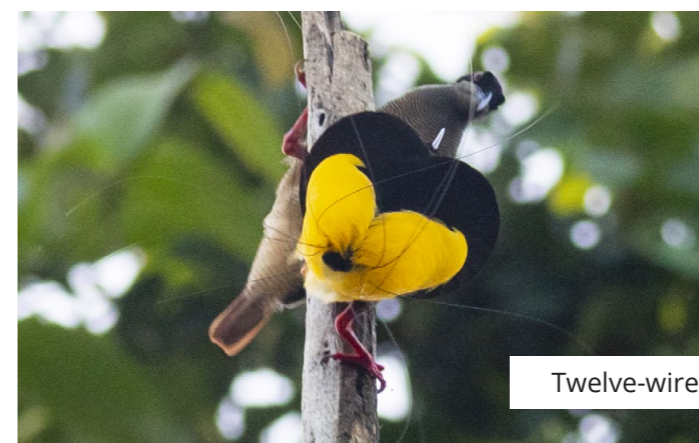


Red-cheeked Parrot

After lunch and a couple of hours of down-time we headed out to Jalan Korea again for a quiet afternoon of birding. Being outside in these lowlands can really feel like birding in a sauna, even the little gusts of wind are like somebody turning a hairdryer towards you. The birds make up for it, though. Apart from the species we had already started to get used to, both **Great Cuckoo Dove**, **Amboyna Cuckoo Dove** and a **Double-eyed Fig Parrot** made an appearance this time, as well as two **Grey Crows** and in the shrub by the bridge we were standing on, a **Large-billed Gerygone** was feeding and calling. The scream of a **Channel-billed Cuckoo** was an experience we had been looking forward to, but we weren't able to get a glimpse of the bird. A fly-by of a female **Lesser Bird-of-paradise** was a nice surprise. We were overlooking a huge and depressing clearing made just a few months ago, and there is a substantial risk of some company planting oil palms in the middle of this birder's paradise in the following years. As the sun was setting, we had some tea and coffee and enjoyed the birds flying in before dark - many **Pi-non's Imperial Pigeons**, some **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, and a **Glossy-mantled Manucode** just to name a few. At sunset we went further back the road to try and find Marbled Frogmouth but we had no luck. However, two **Papuan Nightjars** kept us great company! Back at our homestay we celebrated our first full day on Papua and the great birds of the day with some well-deserved Scotch. 53 species today.



Papuan Frogmouth



Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise





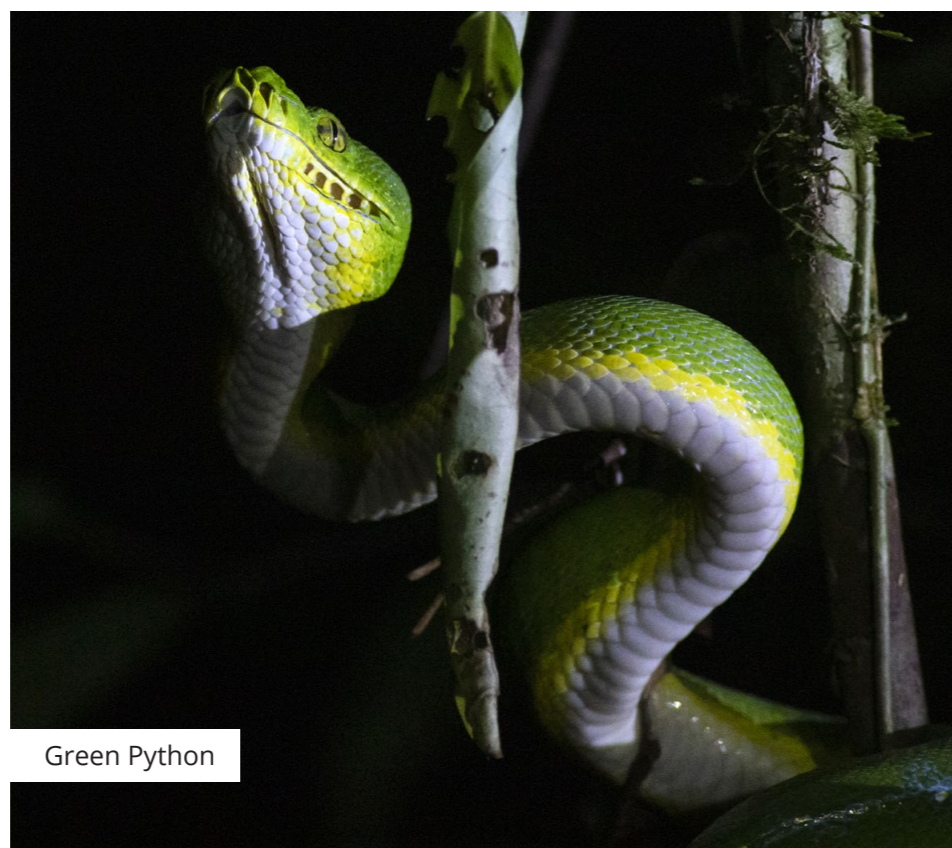
Papuan Nightjar



Coffe-break

Day 5 - October 5th (Nimbokrang)

We woke up very early, had some noodles for breakfast and headed out at 4 o'clock to drive a bit higher up, around 200 metres of altitude. By the Km8-post we started walking along the muddy trail leading up to the hill with a Magnificent Riflebird-hide. Rubber boots and headtorches are essential gear here. It turned out to be a very sweaty 45-minute walk but with great birds on the way! Already before sunset we heard the calls of an **Ivory-billed Coucal** and **Marbled Frogmouth**, and by the trail we spotted a beautiful **Green Python** climbing around in a small tree. As it was getting lighter, we heard **Meyer's Friarbird**, **Plain Honeyeater**, **Common Paradise Kingfisher** and **Eclectus Parrot**, among others. By the hide (basically a wall of palm-leaves with small openings to look through) we were divided into two groups and saw the display stick of the **Magnificent Riflebird** from different angles. A young male was already on the stage, practicing the beautiful penetrating call to attract a female. No other riflebirds turned up though, but he was very energetic and cool to watch! William pointed out more bird calls in the meantime - **Collared Brushturkey**, **Hooded Pitta**, **Rufous-backed Fantail**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Rusty Mouse-warbler**, **Pink-spotted Fruit Dove**, **Hooded Butcherbird** among others. Incoming **Blyth's Hornbills** sounded almost like fighter jets above our heads! After about one hour we reunite-



Green Python

ed the two groups and walked over to a huge tree hosting a group of displaying **Lesser Birds-of-paradise** - no less than 3 males and 8 females! A bit far up, but still very much visible for the group. Three **Papuan King Parrots** swished by and the poisonous **Hooded Pitohui** was calling a bit further on. A **Tan-capped Catbird** sounded like hissing cat and a **Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon** just like a car driving away and changing gears. It was time for some well-deserved coffee and tea, though it was a bit hard to drink in the hot, moist forest, that was clearly different than the kind of jungle we had been to before. Kolik stopped and pointed out a calling **Papuan Pitta** in the background - that's both Pittas heard in the same morning, very nice. As we moved

down from the hill and back towards the cars, we took our time to see some new birds. At one point two **Papuan Dwarf Kingfishers** zig-zag around our heads but barely give us a view. Kolik then very skilfully pointed out a **Yellow-billed Kingfisher** high up in a tree, as well as the calls of **Black Cicadabird**, **White-bellied Thicket Fantail**, **Yellow-bellied Ger-gone** and **Dwarf Fruit Dove**. We also passed by some hanging stuff in the jungle that were said to be nests of **Papuan Babbler**. Fancy! Further on we found a colony of nesting **Metallic Starlings**. Nearly back by the cars we turned into the jungle where the guys were putting up a spontaneous photo hide that we called 'Pitta Hut' - it turned out to be the time to see a **Hooded Pitta** up close! It's was cool to see how skilfully and quickly the hide was set up for 8 people, worms set up and the speaker on. In just a few minutes a beautiful bird turned up and showed for about 10 minutes, offering nice views. It's hard to believe that it's only 9:30. At home some people have barely had their morning coffee, and here we were experiencing some of the best birds in the world up close!



Magnificent Riflebird



Lesser Bird-of-Paradise

The advantage of the Nimbokrang heat is that downtime is necessary in the middle of the day and you never really exhaust yourself in birding. The downtime after lunch also makes it feel like you have two days of birding in one! After lunch we headed out Robin-hunting in the outskirts of Nimbokrang. Kolik and company built a similar hide to the Pitta Hut and soon enough we had a neat **Black-sided Robin** in front of us feeding on the mealworms. Of all the Australasian Robins, this would be the only one that we observed outside of the Arfak Mountains. The late afternoon was spent by the rice fields in the eastern part of Nimbokrang, a nice change after so much forest birding. Two **Sacred Kingfishers** kept watch from a small tree and several **Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds** were hanging around. Two **Pacific Golden Plovers** flew by. **Brahminy Kites**, **Moustached Treeswifts**, **Eclectus Parrots** and a **Dollarbird** were seen in the air too, as well as a big flock of **Singing Starlings**. The highlights here were the **Mannikins**. We found all four species here, that is **Great-billed**, **Streak-headed**, **Chestnut-breasted** and **Hooded Mannikins**! Some also heard a **Brown Quail** here before it got dark and we headed home. We observed 69 species today, sharing the top spot with Day 14.



Eupholus sp



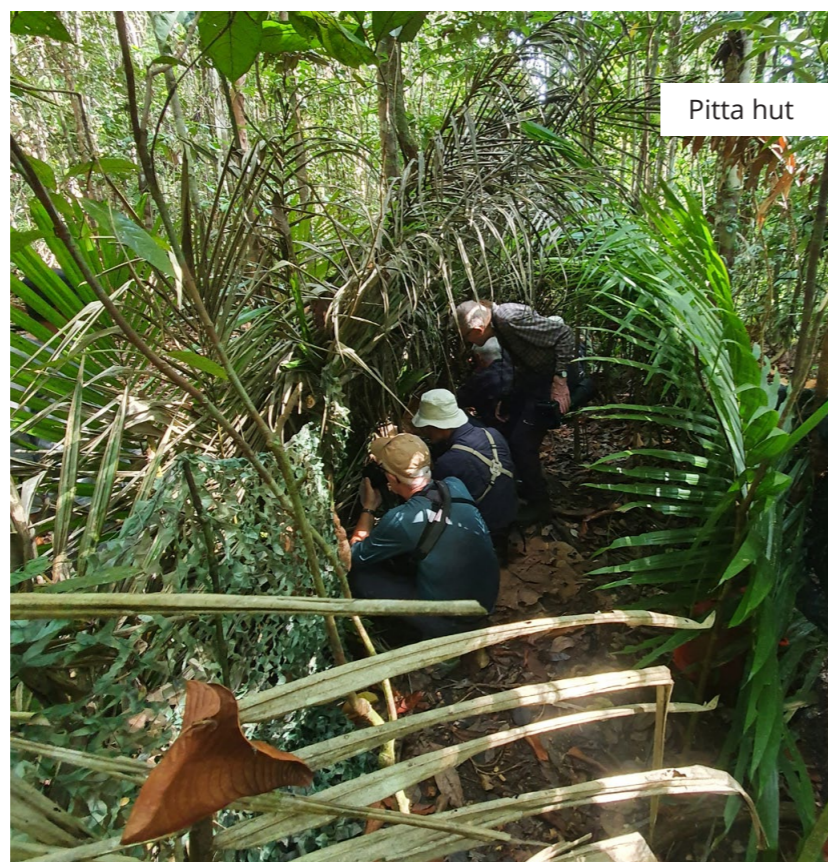
Black-sided Robin



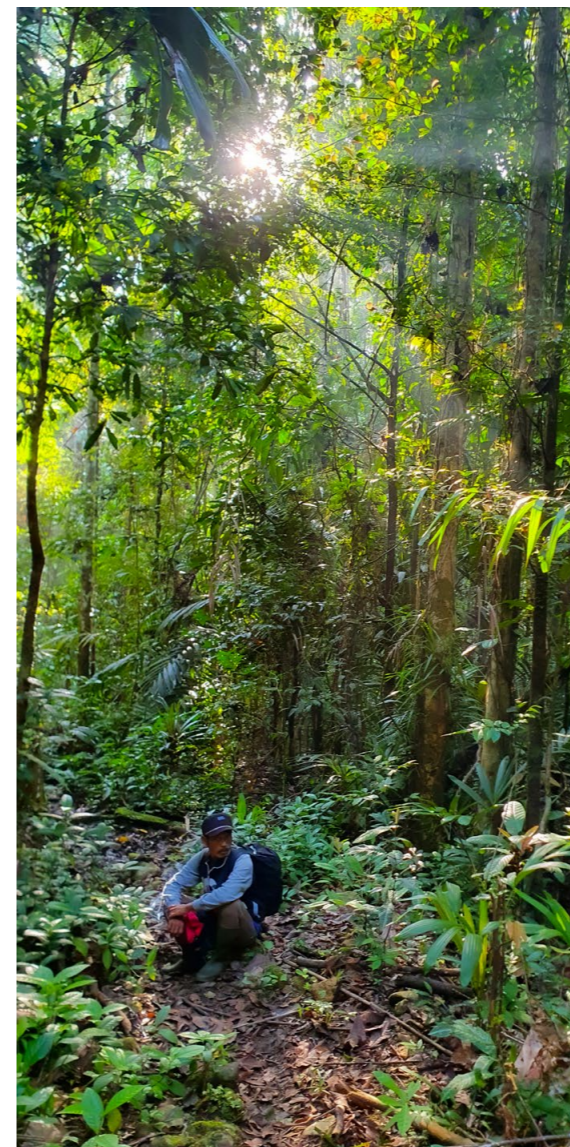
Metallic Starlings



Hooded Pitta



Pitta hut



Pacific Golden-plover

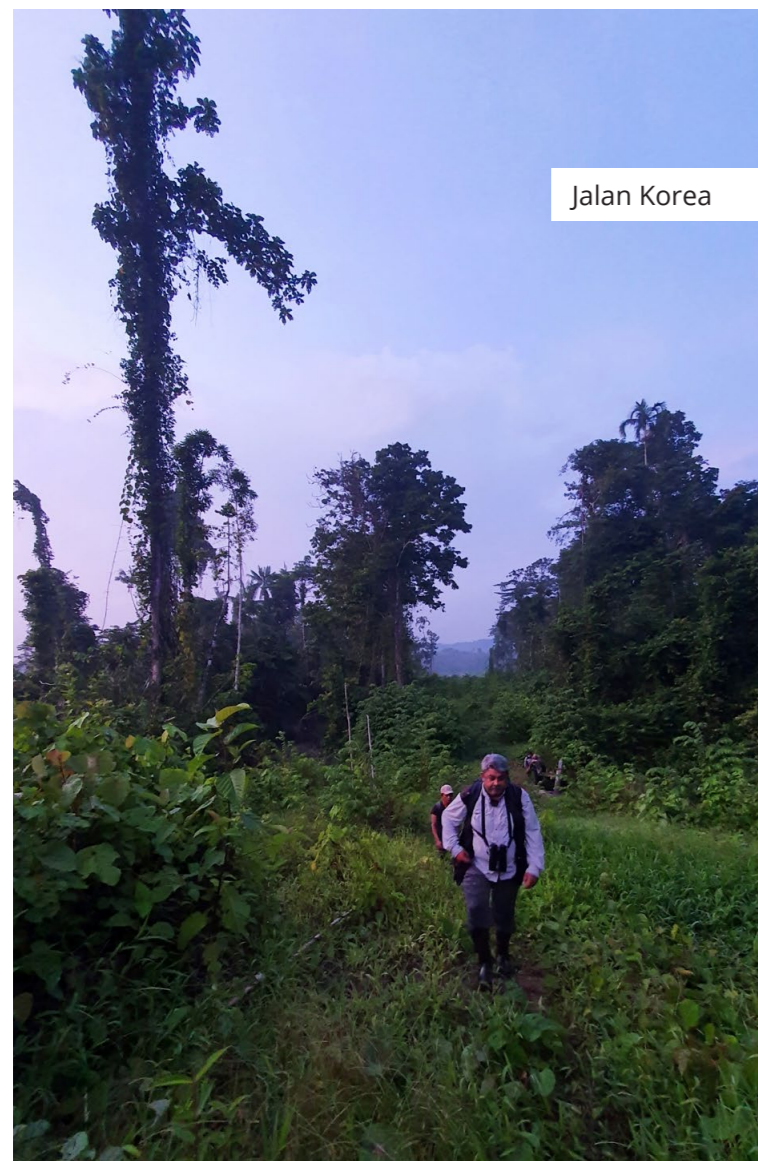


Neurothemis decora

Day 6 – October 6th (Nimbokrang)

According to the original itinerary, this would have been our last day in Nimbokrang. But this is Indonesia, and a few days earlier we learned that our flight has been cancelled and therefore we would have an extra day here. So, we decided to spend this extra morning trying to find Mambruk – aka the Victoria Crowned Pigeon! By 04:30 we were in the cars leaving towards Jalan Korea. We walked across the huge clearing before we entered into the deep swamp forest that Mambruk calls home. A **White-crowned Cuckoo** was calling, as well as **Collared Brushturkey**, several Parrot species including **Brown Lory** flew around us, and Kolik pointed out a tree on the edge of the clearing that was previously used as a display stick of the Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise. A **King Quail** crossed the trail (or was it a rail?). We walked slowly until we reached a river bed that Dance had pointed out as a good spot. A **Spangled Drongo** watched from a dead treetop, a **Blyth's Hornbill** flew by and two **Yellow-faced Mynas**

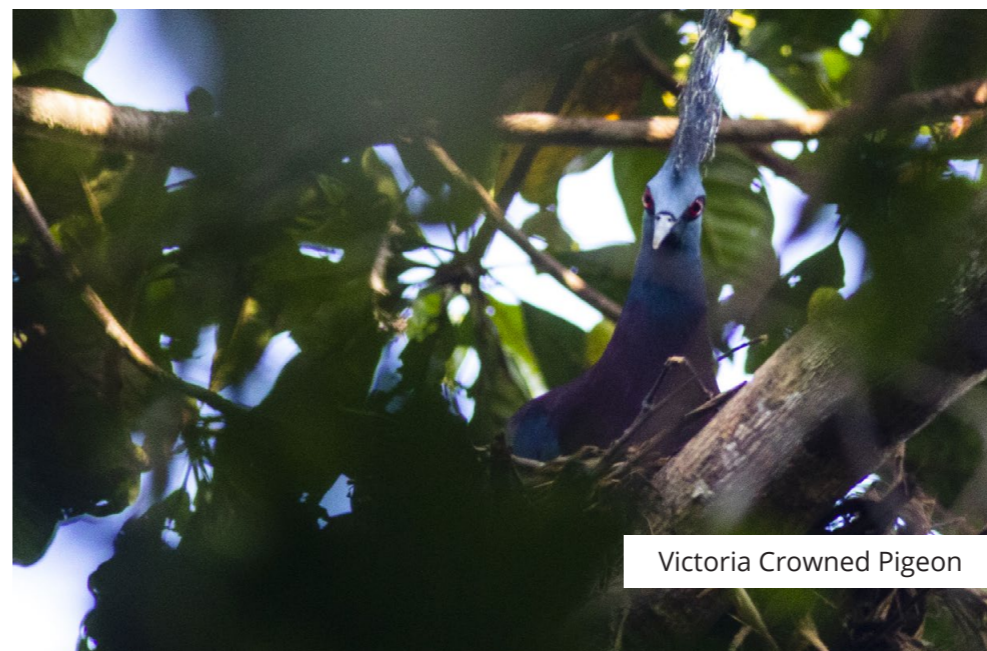
came flying above us. Sujan also called out the faint calls of a **Northern Cassowary** not too far, but only a few others were able to hear it. We continued on and as we entered the deep swamp forest, a group of four **Palm Cockatoos** came landing in a tree. A **Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise** was heard too, and **Channel-billed Cuckoos**. We had been walking for nearly two hours and stopped here for a coffee break. Then suddenly we heard the deep call of the **Victoria Crowned Pigeon** – it's the deepest sound imaginable, barely heard, rather it's felt in the chest! Kolik sprung out into the forest and amazingly came back in 20 minutes with great news – he had found a nest! We followed him and he pointed out the Mambruk-nest with the huge bird sitting on top, looking down on us. We all got great and long views of this dream bird, until unfortunately at one point it suddenly got scared and flew away. We turned back too, almost not believing what we had witnessed. **Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher** was another great bird to watch sitting still, but apart from this, the walk back was mostly uneventful. The sun had gotten very high



Jalan Korea



Palm Cockatoo



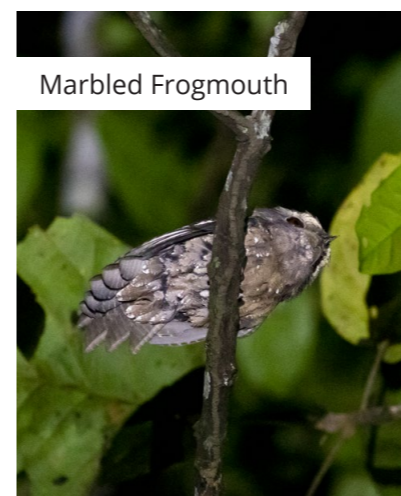
Victoria Crowned Pigeon



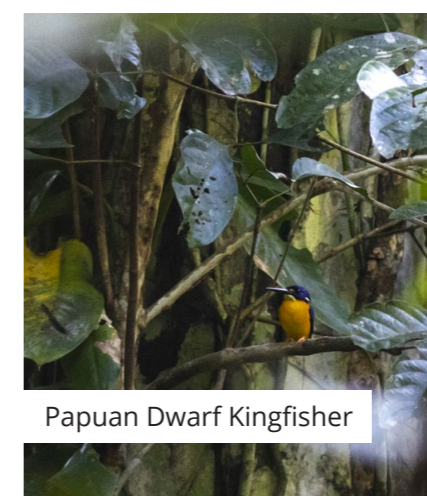
Common Paradise-kingfisher



Zsombor with Kolik and Dancie



Marbled Frogmouth



Papuan Dwarf Kingfisher



Bower of Fawn-breasted Bowerbird

already, making it a very sweaty one hour walk back along the huge clearing to our cars. Near the cars we also noted **Lowland Peltops** and **Papuan Pitta** before going back to Nimbokrang. After lunch we took a break, and at 11:28 we felt the house shaking for a few moments – a small but very obvious (3,9 magnitude) earthquake!

In the afternoon Kolik took us to see something not seen by many – the bower of a Fawn-breasted Bowerbird. It's not a fancy thing, but very clearly a lot of work goes into building it. We headed back to Jalan Korea and spent the afternoon birding along the road, and we had a very nice time even though we had seen most of these birds before. **Lesser Bird-of-paradise, Oriental Dollarbird, Yellow-faced Myna, Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise, Large-billed Gerygone, Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Black Cicadabird** to name a few. New birds for the trip were **Brush Cuckoo, Ochre-collared Monarch, Pygmy Longbill** and **Grey-headed Goshawk**. As the sun was setting, we headed back along the road and listened for the evening choir. A **Shovel-billed Kookaburra** called out, clearly different from the

Rufous-bellied Kookaburra and **Hook-billed Kingfishers** also making themselves heard before the dark set in. We entered the jungle again, surrounded by fireflies, and tried again for **Marbled Frogmouth**. After a few minutes of playback, two birds started calling and one of them appeared right above our heads, offering great views! Great days often end great. 63 species.

Day 7 – October 7th (Nimbokrang – Manokwari – Arfak Mts.)

Transfer day, and the shortest day of the tour bird-wise. Our flight to Manokwari wasn't until 11:30 so we had a calm morning and tried our luck with a **Common Paradise Kingfisher** in the outskirts of Nimbokrang that Kolik knew about. Just like the previous hides, this one was set up quickly and easily, and just like the previous times, the Kingfisher appeared and showed very nicely in front of us. The bird was missing the tip of one of its tail feathers, but otherwise, what a splash of colour! Definitely the highlight of the day. We also heard **Red-necked**

Crake, Streak-headed Honeyeater and a duetting pair of **Dwarf Koels** before heading back to the homestay for packing, writing in the guestbook and taking selfies with the team. Kolik's wife also brought me my Papuan shirt (tailormade, with Birds-of-paradise!) that I had bought/ordered the day before in a nearby shop. A few uneventful hours followed as we left from Nimbokrang to the Sentani airport (it has good Wi-Fi!) and took our flight to Manokwari. Seeing New Guinea from above is a great experience. Not only is it a huge green country with lots of primary forest left standing (apart from some parts scattered with palm oil plantations), but it's also a very topographically interesting country. There are so many hills and mountains everywhere! Anyway, we quickly arrived to Manokwari, a big city with a tiny airport, the capital of the district of West Papua (Jayapura being the capital of the second district, Papua). Here we enjoyed a great lunch and went shopping in a big mall for everything we would need for the next few days. People were taking photos of us and selfies with us, which was all a bit surreal. After shopping we finally headed up towards the Arfak Mountains in our huge 4x4s (with no seatbelts). With

us was Zeth Wonggor, the legendary bird guide of these famous mountains, telling stories about guiding people like Tim Laman and David Attenborough. We reached the village of Siyoubri in the evening. The temperature has dropped significantly but was still enjoyable. Two **Papuan Boobooks** were calling in the night, as we made ourselves home in the guesthouse for the following couple of days. 25 species today.

Day 8 – October 8th (Arfak Mts.)

We were all very excited about today. The morning would be spent in photo hides to get up close and personal to some secretive and special BOPs! We had an early breakfast and some even heard a **Greater Sooty Owl**, others a **Mountain Owl-et-nightjar** in the dark, before we split up into two groups and were taken downhill to our respective hides. Half the group went to the hide of the Magnificent Bird-of-paradise, and others went to a Western Parotia-hide. My group (the latter one) took a short 4x4 ride downhill, followed by a 10-minute uphill

walk through the dark and into our little hide. We waited and watched the **Kuansu**-fruits placed out as bait for Birds-of-paradise. A **Bronze Ground Dove** was constantly singing. As it got lighter, we noticed a young **Western Parotia** feeding on the fruit, and soon enough a stunning female **Black Sicklebill**, and later a pretty moulted **Crescent-caped Lophorina** also turned up on the feeder. Throughout our stay we saw at least two young male Parotias, and two females. After about an hour, an older male appeared too, with an all-black, neat plumage. One of the younger males tried his luck of displaying several times, he seemed especially keen when a female was nearby. It's a very fascinating dance to see, including low bows, elegant head-bops and fancy tip-toing. The beautiful morning was made even better on the way back from the hide, when we passed the remarkable bower of a **Vogelkop Bowerbird**! It's sad to see all the trash they bring back to the bowers, but the way they build them (it takes four months) is truly amazing. We even heard one bird calling nearby, he probably kept his eyes on us.



Black Sicklebill

Mountain
Owlet-nightjar

Back on the main road we met up with the other half of our group. They were lucky too, with the **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise**, having seen two birds although none were displaying. Zeth kept watching the forest and pointed out a few calls to us. **Slaty Robin** and **Green-backed Robin**, **White-shouldered Fairywren**, **Black-breasted Boatbill**, **Arfak Catbird** and **Mountain Honeyeater**, all fantastic montane and foothill species! The real surprise came when we were shown a little path up the forest and got presented a roosting **Mountain Owlet-nightjar**. These

they drove past. A group of about 30 **Papuan Mountain Pigeons** flew high in the clouds, adding another one to our long list of pigeons. A great morning suddenly turned fantastic as Zeth found a gorgeous male **Masked Bowerbird** on the far side of a valley (our 200th species on the trip, Jakarta included), and we all got to enjoy it in the scopes. A female turned up further down the road but showed only briefly. It was time for us to go back to Siyoubri for lunch, but we still found birds like **Grey-green Scrubwren**, **Vogelkop Melidectes**, **Friendly Fantail**, **Vogelkop Whistler**, **Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot**, **Sclater's**

birds seem to have their preferences (sleeping under tree ferns) but still must be skilfully found by the locals every morning if they want to show them to visitors. An amazing bird to see, for sure. We jumped into the trucks and drove downhill for a bit, picking up Sujan on the way, and spent the rest of the morning birding along the road. The air was misty and clouds came rolling around the great Arfak hills full of trees covered in beautiful hanging lichens. **Papuan** and **Yellow-billed Lorikeets** flew about, their loud calls mixed in the air with the soft song of **White-bibbed Fruit Doves**. Up in the trees we saw flocks of **Capped** and **Black-fronted White-eyes**, a few **Brown-breasted Gerygones** and **Island Leaf Warblers**, as **Red Myzomelas** and a single **Goldenface** was calling. Sujan called out a loud but distant **Trumpet Manucode**, the only one on the trip, and Zeth pointed to a calling **Ornate Fruit Dove** just as a **Superb Fruit Dove** came flying above our heads. Local people came up and down in their trucks. Often the cars would have 10-15 people sitting in the back and they were always waving and cheering as



Western Parotia



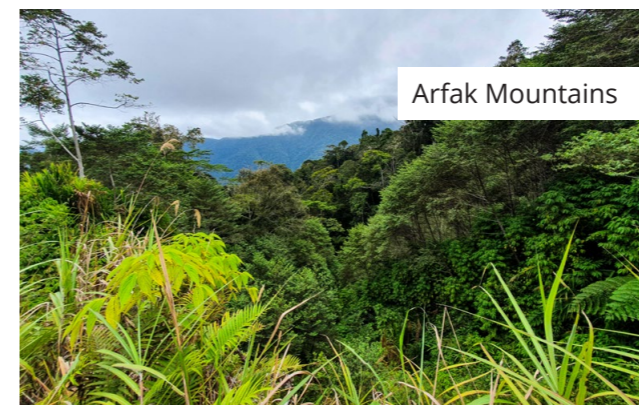
Bower of Vogelkop Bowerbird



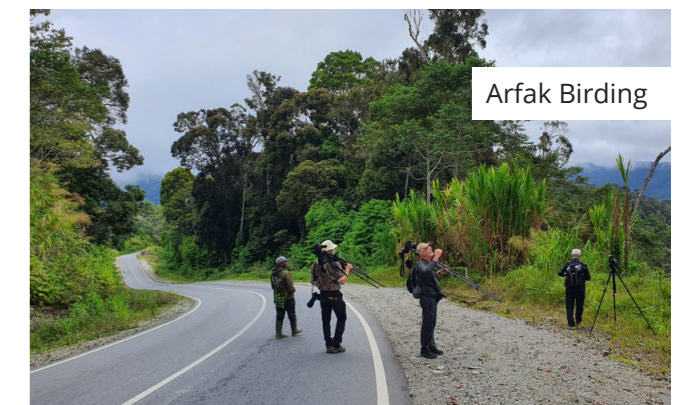
Whistler and **Grey Thornbill** on the way up. Is there a "too much" when it comes to birds?

After lunch we kept birding around Siyoubri, seeing **Olive-crowned Flowerpeckers** and a raptor we couldn't ID properly (possibly Papuan Eagle!), and we also had some accidents including wasps that Zeth tried to smoke out from one of the rooms. Anyway, we spent the afternoon a bit downhill again. There was plenty more to explore, after all. A group of lorikeets turned out to be **Plum-faced Lorikeets**. We also had luck with honeyeaters, as both the gorgeous **Ornate Melidectes** and the local **Vogelkop Melidectes** and **Arfak Honeyeaters** turned up. Sujan pointed out a cool plant in a tree, a **Nepenthes maxima**, which is a carnivorous Pitcher-plant. Birds

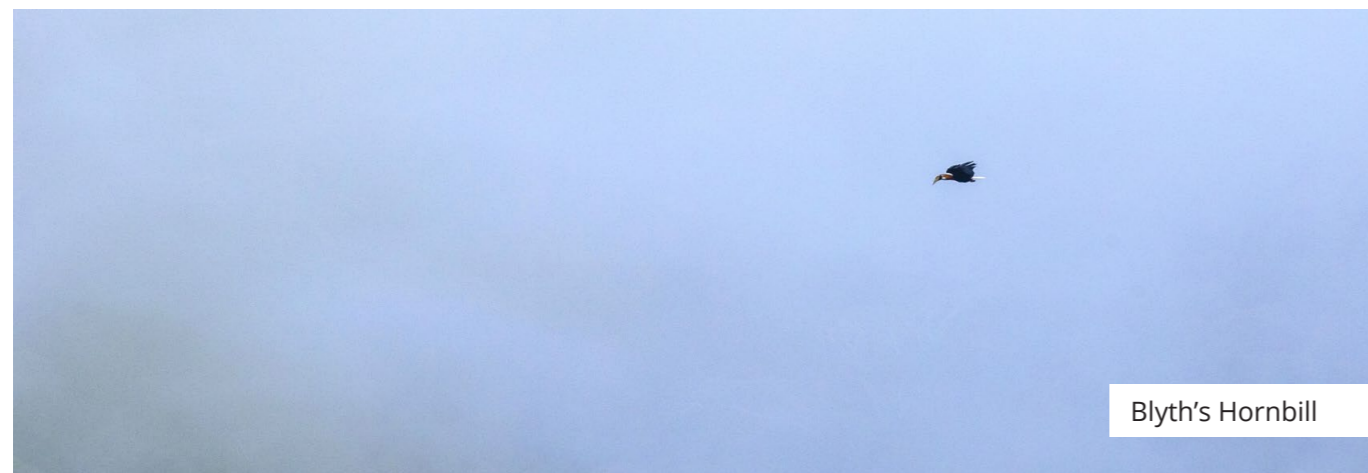
are not as shy here as in the lowlands, but are still quite hard to photograph due to poorer light and the fact that they like being higher up in the trees. However, a **White-eared Bronze Cuckoo** showed very well and for a long time. Robins were nice too but mostly heard – **Ashy Robin**, **Lesser Ground Robin** and **Canary Flyrobin** being new ones for the tour. The clouds started to roll in and the trees became even more obscured, but we still managed to find **Red-collared Myzomela**, **Black Pitohui**, **Moluccan King Parrot**, **Dimorphic Fantail** and **Rufous-naped Bellbird** before we finally gave in and headed back to the guesthouse. Out of the 63 bird species observed today, around 50 were new lifers for most of us!



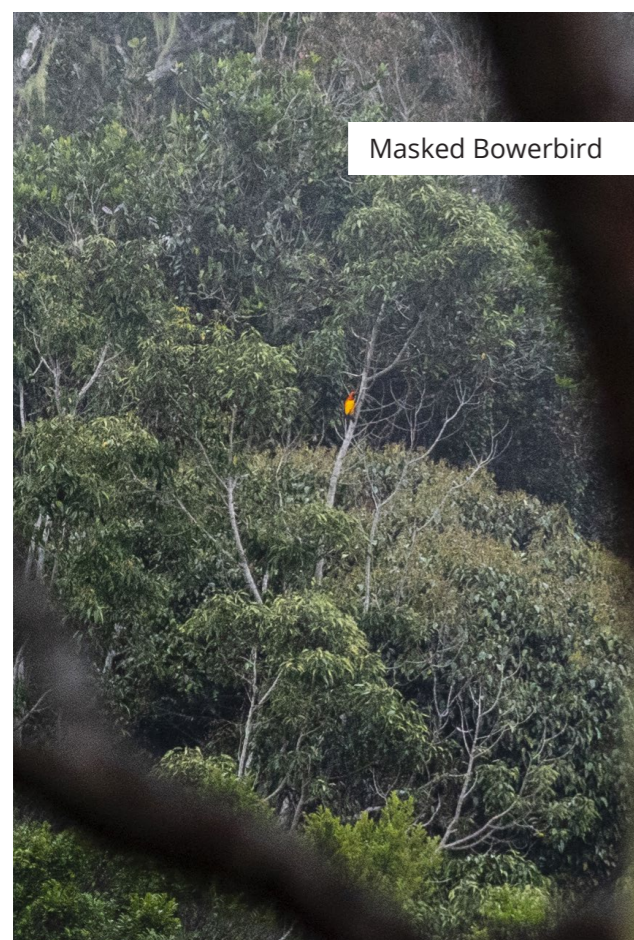
Arfak Mountains



Arfak Birding



Blyth's Hornbill



Masked Bowerbird



Siyoubri



Nepenthes maxima



Feline Owlet-nightjar

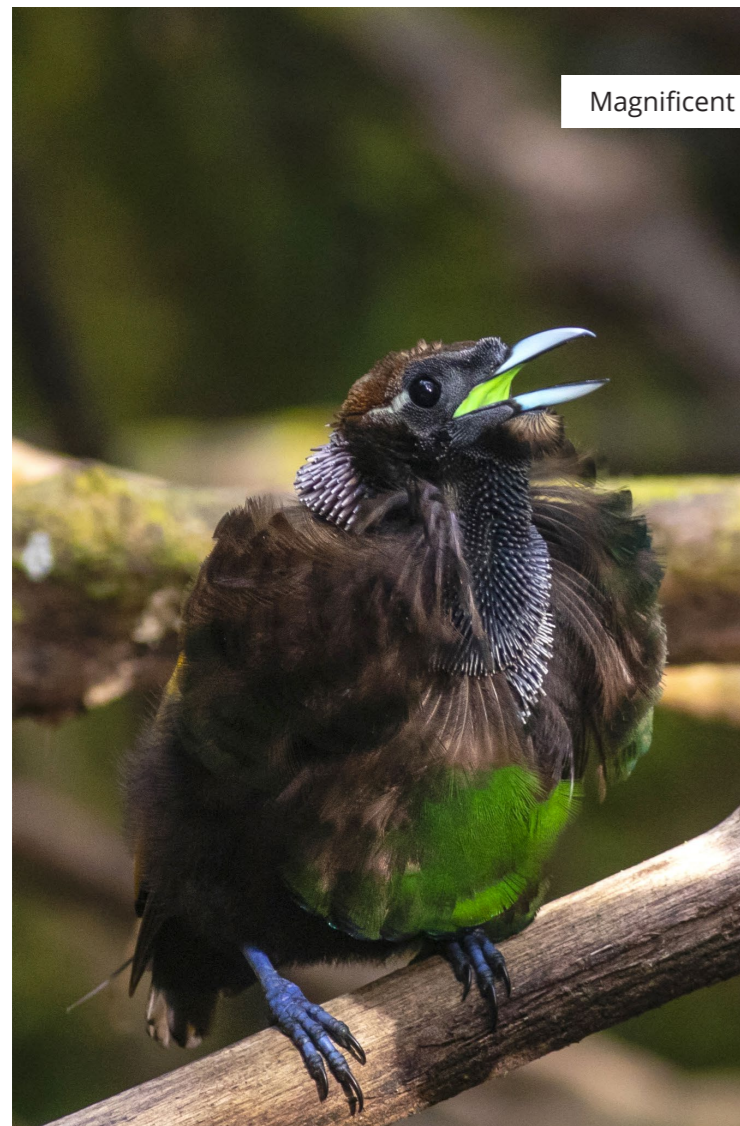


Day 9 – October 9th (Arfak Mts.)

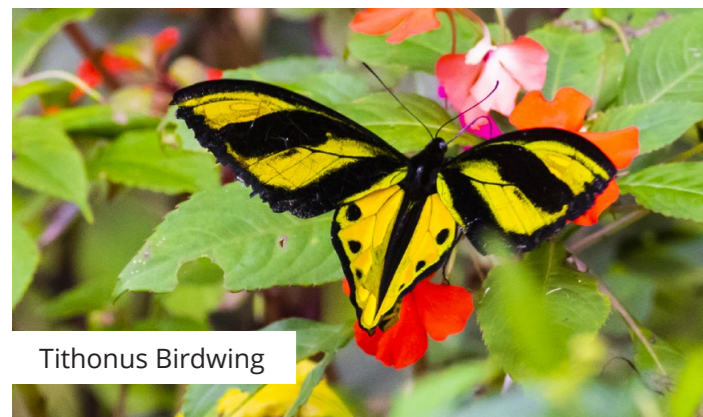
A couple of us woke up early to try calling for Great-er Sooty Owl but had no luck, so we had breakfast, switched groups and got back into the hides again. This time my group was taken to the hide of the Magnificent Bird-of-paradise. For almost an hour we sat quietly with nothing to look at, apart from a few mosquitoes and a curious **Green-backed Robin**. Since there is no feeder, it was quiet for a long time. Then suddenly a male **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise** appeared from nowhere (quite a big bird!), sat on a branch and energetically started calling for a female. He was moulting a lot, especially around the chest, and barely had any stumps of tail feathers yet. After 14 minutes of calling from the same spot, he jumped off just as quickly as he came. After another hour we heard him behind the hide again, but it took three females appearing on the lek for him to come forward. Unfortunately, it all went very fast and they all disappeared in a few seconds, but it was still very nice to see so many of them at once. We packed up and drove back to meet the rest of the group who had been lucky with mostly the same birds as we had seen yesterday in the Parotia-hide. We were then taken down next to the Lorikeet guesthouse and into the forest where a lovely **Feline Owlet-nightjar** had been staked out, this one also sleeping in the branch of a tree fern. Superb bird! A **Hooded Pitohui** came seemingly crashlanding in front of us before disappearing again, and we heard our first **Pacific Koel** calling in the dark forest. We

then headed back to our guesthouse in Siyoubri for some down-time. Since it was a little cloudy (meaning good photo weather for butterflies) a couple of us took a walk, and among others we saw a precious male **Tithonus Birdwing**, one of the largest diurnal butterflies in the world!

The clouds rolled in and it even started raining during the lunch hours. It had taken us nine days to see some real rain, which is a long time for being in West Papua! Luckily it stopped right in time for us before we went for an afternoon birding walk uphill with Zeth. Those of us who wanted, of course. The rain activated the passerines and there was plenty of movement in the trees – groups of **Capped White-eyes**, pairs of **Friendly Fantails**, **Black-breasted Boatbill**, **Fan-tailed Berrypecker** and **Black Monarch**, to name a few. A raptor came in quickly but we managed to ID him from photos as a male **Collared Sparrowhawk**. The usual **White-bibbed Fruit Doves** were singing in the forest and we also heard a **Metallic Pigeon**. **Slater's Whistler**, **Island Leaf Warbler**, **Arfak Honeyeater**, **Rufous-sided Honeyeater** are also notable mentions of the afternoon. The highlight of our walk was a hard-to-get BOP that resides in these Vogelkop hills – a short sighting of the **Long-tailed Paradigalla**. The tail is not particularly long, only compared to its short-tailed cousin in that's only found in the central highlands of New Guinea. It was getting quite rainy again so we turned back to the guesthouse. 43 species observed today, not bad.



Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise



Tithonus Birdwing



Friendly Fantail



White-shouldered Fairywren

Day 10 - October 10th (Arfak Mts.)

Time to get physical! Today we were going to hike uphill to German Camp, a well-known birding spot at around 2000 metres altitude (Siyoubri is around 1500 metres), spending one night in the camp before coming back to the guesthouse. For different reasons only five of us made the hike alongside Zeth, while the others stayed in Siyoubri to take it easy and have more time to spend in the BOP-hides (even try out a new one). We had breakfast at 5:30 and by 6 we were ready. We walked slowly for two hours to reach a resting area, seeing lots of birds along the way including **Pygmy Longbill**, **Fantail Monarch**, several **Arfak Honeyeaters** and **Yellow-billed Lorikeets**, **Vogelkop Scrubwren** and **Rufous-sided Honeyeater**. Heavy clouds were touching the treetops but luckily, we managed to

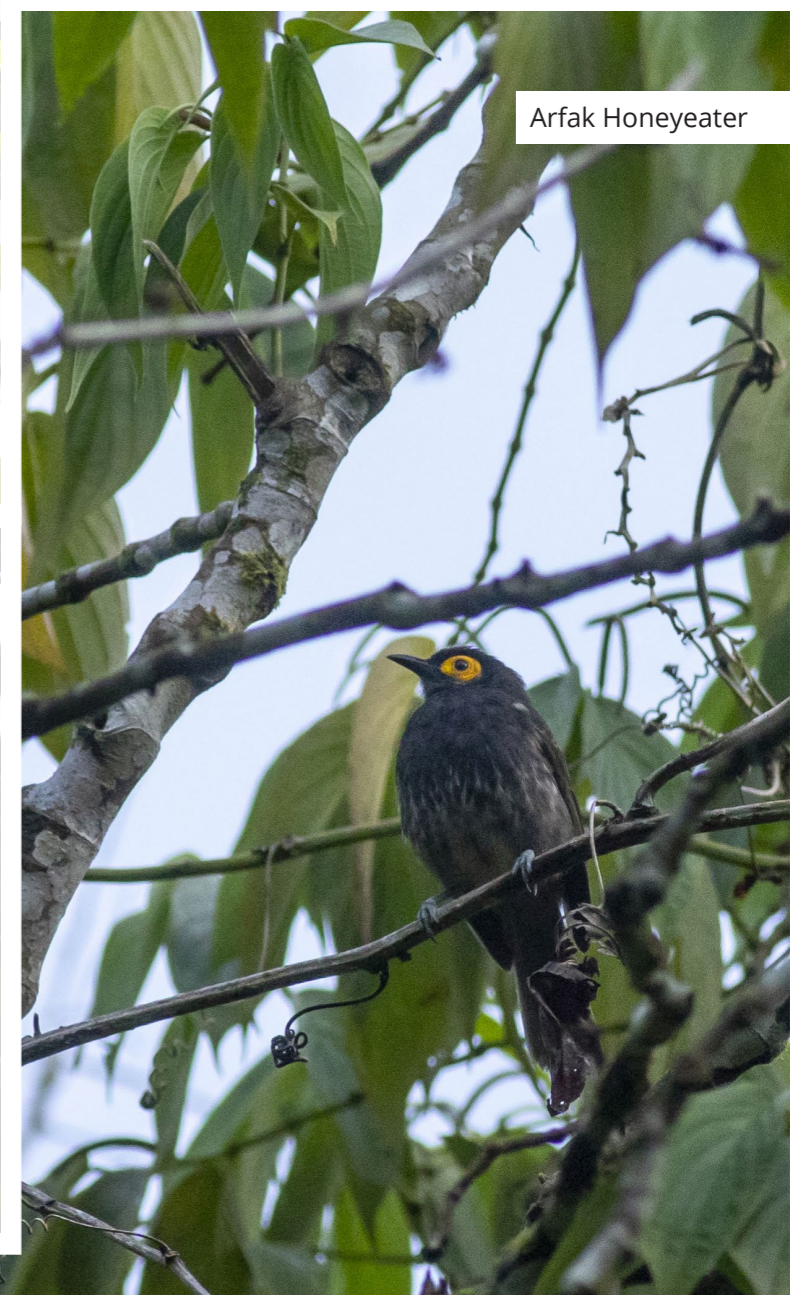
stay dry the whole day. Birds were actively calling in the cloud forest including **Vogelkop Melidectes**, **Sultan's Cuckoo-Dove**, **Fan-tailed Berrypecker** and the monotypic **Mottled Berryhunter**, a very special bird we were all excited about. The resting area was quite good for us too, we stayed here for two hours, waiting around for birds to turn up. Even our friendly porters who carried all the food and equipment (including our sleeping bags and tripods) were with us for a while before they went ahead for the campsite. We were clearly higher up now and the birds were different. Zeth pointed out the calls of **Garnet Robin**, **Lesser Melampitta**, **Rufescent Imperial Pigeon**, **Lesser Ground Robin** and **Papuan Treecreeper**, some real good birds! Patience payed off, and after some time we saw two **Brehm's Tiger Parrots**, and later a pair of **Tit Berrypeckers** moving about in the canopy. Another **Long-tailed Paradigalla** was a nice addition, too.



Yellow-billed Lorikeets



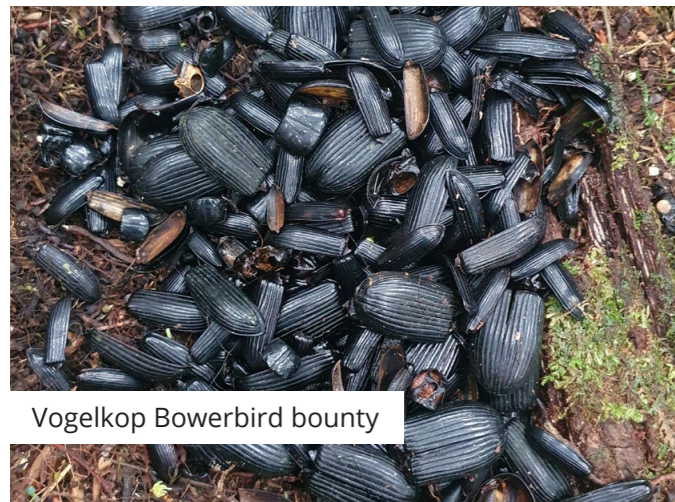
Regent Whistler



Arfak Honeyeater

It took us one more hour to reach German Camp. This was the steepest and sweatiest part of the hike and it was hard on the knees. Right before reaching the camp Zeth took us to another bower of **Vogelkop Bowerbird** (one was even calling nearby, almost like telling us that we were being watched) and this bird seemed to have a lot going for him – berries, plastic bags, soda cans, even a pile of beetle wings laid neatly in front of the display site. At the camp we changed into warm and dry clothes and took an hour's lunch break. We were chatting and enjoying the clouds rolling into the valley from a little lookout, surrounded by the calls of montane species like **Ashy Robin**, **Marbled Honeyeater**, **Regent Whistler** and **Cinnamon-browed Melidectes**. There is really something magical about this cloud forest. On the far side of the valley lies Camp David, where sir Attenborough had stayed in the 90's to make his documentary on Birds-of-paradise. Soon after, we went out for an afternoon walk along a trail surrounded by orchids, green carpets of mosses and enormous trees. The bird activity was surprisingly high, with several **Fan-tailed Berypeckers**, **Papuan Treecreepers**, **Regent Whistlers**, **Black Pitohuis**,

Vogelkop Bowerbirds, **Rufous-naped Bellbirds**, **Rufous-sided Honeyeaters**, **Tit Berypeckers**, **Sclater's** and **Regent Whistlers**, to name a selection. Another **Brehm's Tiger Parrot** flew by and a **Mountain Peltops** called somewhere. A diverse set of Robins live in the dark understorey – **Smoky** and **Black-throated** being the highlights. The bird of the afternoon was a quite large colourful one coming in from nowhere, flying right between us, seemingly crashing 2 metres in front of us and disappearing again into the forest floor in two seconds – a **Spotted Jewel-babbler**! Quite the surprise. Back in the camp we enjoyed the last light from the viewpoint as a male **Black Sicklebill** kept calling deep inside the forest, a good sign for the next morning. Our porters made a quite all right, and most importantly, warm, dinner for us and we set up our sleeping bags in the recently built lodge in the camp. Before sleep we took a walk into the forest for some herping, finding some sort of **Leaf Frog** and a cool-looking **Arfak Cannibal Frog** (*Platyplectrum platyceps*) on the ground. Two or three **Papuan Boobooks** were actively calling too. 59 species today.



Vogelkop Bowerbird bounty



Arfak Cannibal Frog



Canary Flyrobin



Black Sicklebill

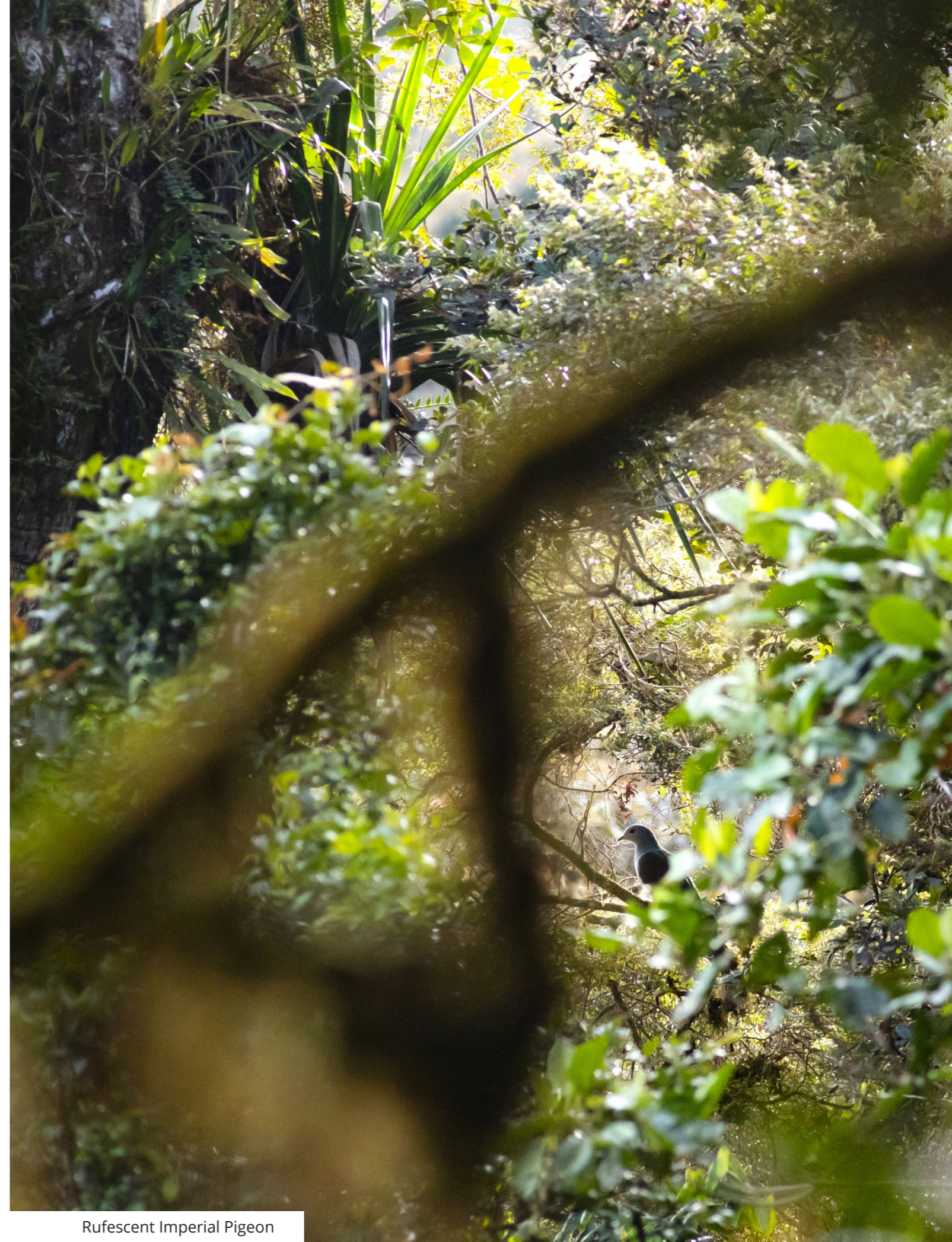
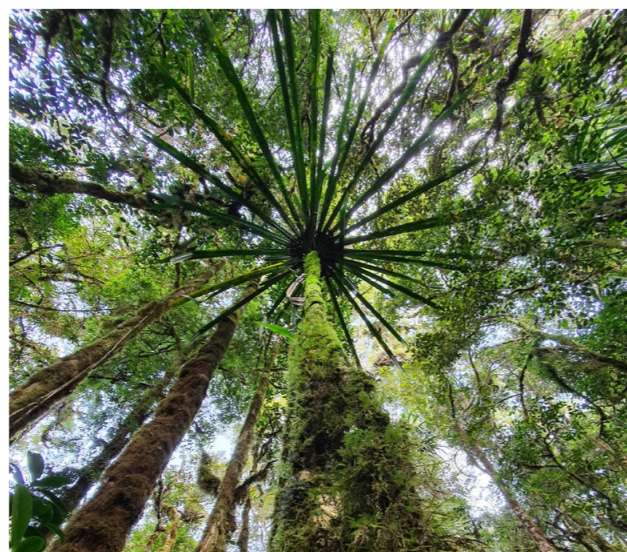


Arfak Crew

Day 11 – October 11th (Arfak Mts. – Manokwari)

It was a cold night and we woke up several times. Zeth and the porters were making a fire and we crawled out of our sleeping bags early to get some hot coffee and get warmed up a bit. It was damp and cloudy but at least it wasn't raining, which was a good sign. Before we had to start walking back to Siyoubri we had no more than three hours on our hands, and some really cool birds on our wishing list. Soon after breakfast (fried rice) we found ourselves walking in the dark uphill towards the camp known as Japanese Camp. **Marbled Honeyeaters** and **Ashy Robins** were already calling in the dark and we heard two **Black Sicklebills** in the distance. Their powerful call is heard quite a long way, and seeing a male displaying was one of our goals this morning. We obviously got closer and closer. We passed three **Papuan Logrunners** calling somewhere in the understorey, also one of our main targets. We were getting very close to one of the Sicklebills, but it was frustratingly difficult to get a view until Zeth finally found a little gap right up to a dead branch where he was sitting still, making a strong call every minute or so. A fantastic BOP to see so well and for a long time! Unfortunately, no females triggered him to do his transformative dance this morning, but just seeing him calling was quite a treat. As he dropped down into the cloud forest with his long tail hanging behind, he gave me the strong impression of a large, dark quetzal. We continued on until spot (Japanese Camp) where Zeth said "this is the *Astrapia* place". We spent a lot of time here waiting for this mysterious BOP, looking high up in the trees. There was plenty of activity. A **Papuan Treecreeper**, two **Vogelkop Bowerbirds** and a **Large Scrubwren** called. We heard singing **Garnet Robin**, **Smoky Robin**,

Black-throated Robin and **Spotted Jewel-babbler**. Zeth pointed out a **Rufescent Imperial Pigeon** sitting wonderfully back-lit far away in a tree, and a **Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove** also showed shortly. But no *Astrapia*, and we were slowly running out of time. Two **Canary Flyrobins** turned up right in front of us and a call was revealed to be a **Black-throated Honeyeater**, another high-altitude speciality. Suddenly Zeth jumped up, as he spotted two **Arfak Astrapias** moving in the canopy looking for fruits. We had to run after him but soon enough we saw the birds too, quickly moving from tree to tree. It all went quite fast but we could still see that it was a female followed by a young male. Very cool, a real high-five moment! Heading back to the camp, we still tried for the **Papuan Logrunner** on the way down. One was calling quite close but we never managed to get a view. **Mountain Peltops**, **Great Cuckoo-Dove** and **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** was calling, too. We were now eager to get some coffee, and after packing everything up, it was time for us to do the long walk down to Siyoubri. We didn't stop too much and made the walk in less than 1,5 hours. Some birds noted on the way down were **Vogelkop Melidectes**, **Lesser Ground Robin**, **Vogelkop Scrubwren**, **Arfak Catbird**, **Crescent-caped Lophorina** and another **Spotted Jewel-babbler**. Soon after we arrived to the homestay and got reunited with the rest of the group, it started raining. After lunch it was time for us to say goodbye to our Arfak friends and head back down to Manokwari in the rain, making it a quite uneventful afternoon. We arrived to the beautiful hotel Aston outside Manokwari by 3 pm. Finally, we could take a warm shower! Most of us turned in clothes for express laundry, too. The hotel was also offering great dinner – none of us had the fried rice this time. 54 species today.



Rufescent Imperial Pigeon

Day 12 - October 12th (Manokwari - Sorong - Malagufuk)

The first half of the day was spent on technical stuff. We had breakfast in the hotel, took a taxi to the airport, took the flight to Sorong (approx. 1 hour) and went shopping in Sorong for the next 2,5 days in Malagufuk. The flight was beautiful, especially seeing the wide untouched landscape of the Tamrau mountain range (west of the Arfaks), just forests and streams and almost nothing else in the way of pure nature. Rain was pouring down in Sorong. We had pizza for lunch in and then drove off (2 hours) eastwards to Malagufuk, a hot and damp jungle full of birds! The ecovillage Malagufuk is basically a large clearing in the jungle, some sort of government project way deep in the forest that even hosts several houses and lodges for visitors. The place feels wild and remote, especially considering the 4 km walk from the nearest road into the jungle. The locals had recently built a beautiful (although questionable) boardwalk to make this walk easier - just be careful when it gets wet (and it does in the rainforest) because it's very slippery. We were greeted by a whole staff of porters and the local guide Absalom. Entering the jungle two **Yellow-bellied Longbills** welcomed us and two **Palm Cockatoos** flew overhead.

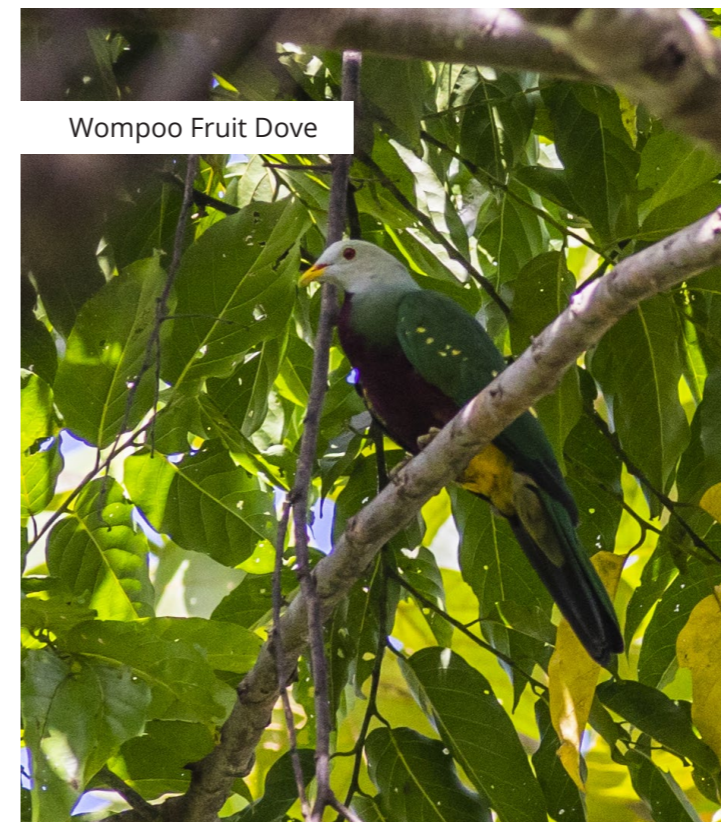
A great start! Several **Magnificent Riflebirds** were calling (one was even briefly seen) and there were plenty of parrots in the air - **Black-capped Lorries**, **Red-cheeked Parrots**, **Coconut Lorikeets**, **Black Lorries** and towards the end also **Large Fig Parrots**. **Brown Orioles** and **Friiled Monarchs** were calling, **Hooded Pittas**, **Pinon's Imperial Pigeons** and **Rusty Mouse Warblers** singing in the forest. We also had a **Lowland Peltops** and later two **Golden Mynas** right above us for some time. The highlight of the lowland forests of Malagufuk must be the Kingfishers though. We observed a staggering 9 species throughout our stay! **Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** is one of the main attractions here and quite reliable (noted daily). But by far the highlight of the day was when Ronnie called "I see it" speaking of a **Blue-black Kingfisher** that we had first heard calling, and then all of us spent 20 minutes of frenetically looking deeply into the forest trying to find it. Everyone got to enjoy this rare and beautiful gem of Kingfisher for a long time in the scopes. After 2,5 hours of walking, we arrived to Malagufuk. We made ourselves comfortable and had dinner, and some of us took a night walk. We didn't see much though, apart from a **Spectacled Flying Fox**, a **White-lipped Leaf Frog** and a huge Longhorn Beetle called **Batocera laena**. The bird list landed on 45 species today.



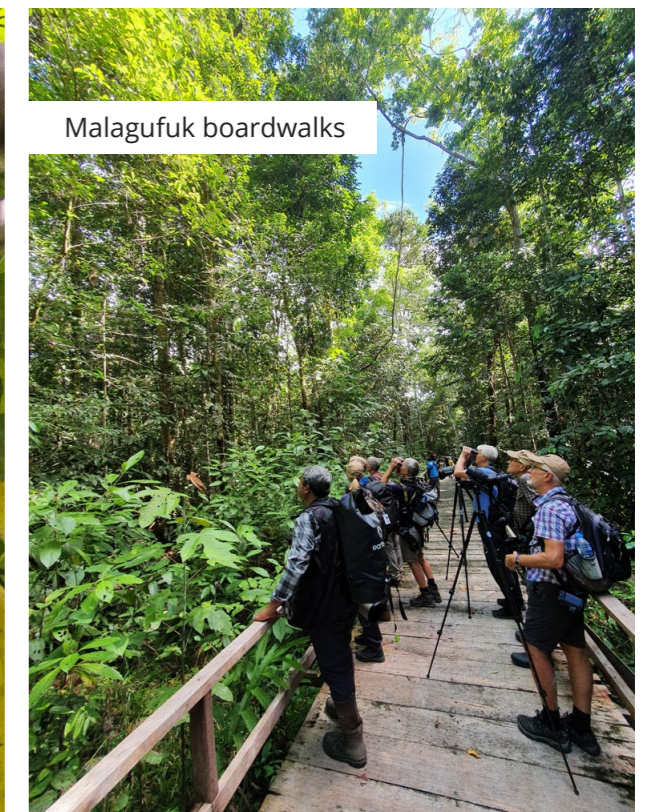
Blyth's Hornbill



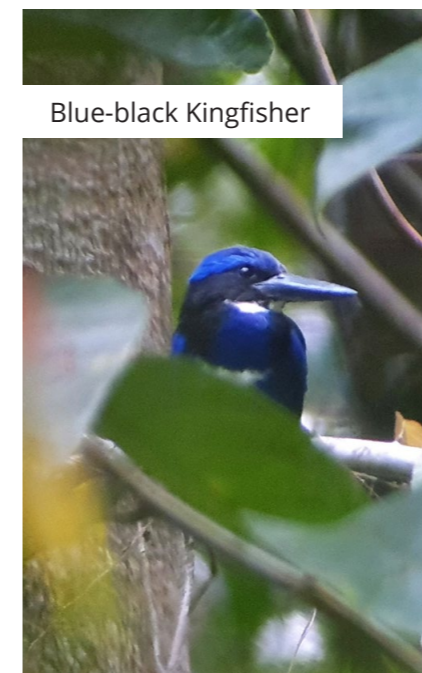
Tamrau mountains



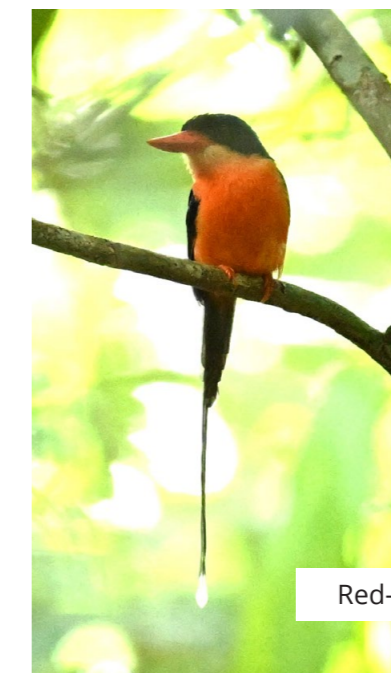
Wompoo Fruit Dove



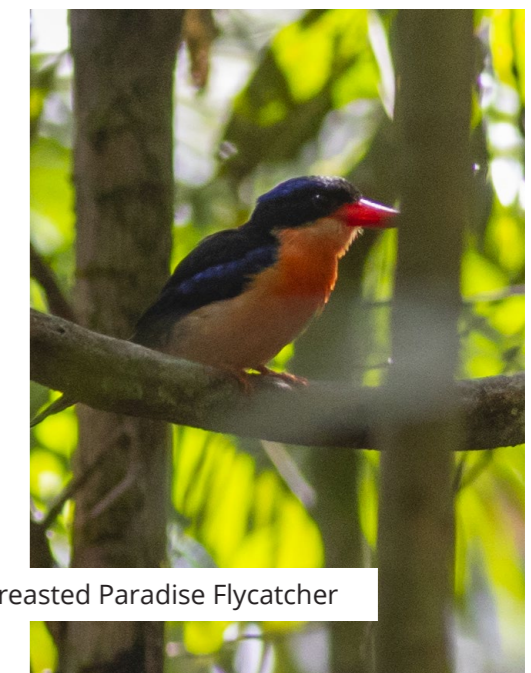
Malagufuk boardwalks



Blue-black Kingfisher



Red-breasted Paradise Flycatcher



White-lipped Leaf Frog



Batocera laena



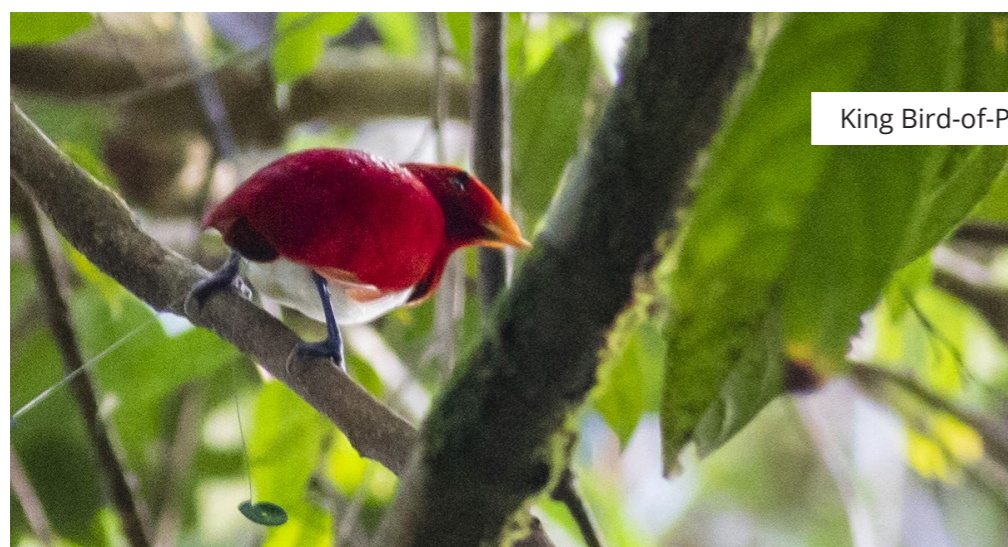
Shining Flycatcher

Day 13 – October 13th (Malagufuk)

We had noodles for breakfast at 5 in the morning as the forest around us slowly started to awake – **Hook-billed Kingfishers**, **New Guinea Friarbirds** and **Blyth's Hornbills** were heard. A sole **Grey-streaked Flycatcher**, an East Asian migrant, was hunting insects from a tall tree. Entering the jungle and the wide trail into the Klasow valley we heard several **Magnificent Riflebirds**, **Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise**, **Hooded Pitta** and a new bird for the trip, **Black Thicket-fantail**. From a ridge and far in the valley we were heard a long, strange whistle – a **Pheasant Pigeon**! A very long and extremely morning walk commenced. Our goal was to reach a certain tree that Absalom and Bastian, another local guide, knew quite well. When we arrived, we all looked up trying to find the little jewel in his tree – a male **King Bird-of-paradise**. We had already seen one in Nimbokrang but not quite well and we were hoping for some action today. Soon enough two females appeared, and then two more males, then they really hit it off. For about 10 minutes they all jumped around in the tree, calling, chasing each other and running up and down the vines, flashing in crimson red, silky white and metallic green. A fan-

tastic show to watch! A very cool, green lizard climbing around in the tree turned out to be an **Emerald Tree Monitor (Varanus prasinus)**, a small arboreal Monitor Lizard. During our walk back through the forest we also heard some really high-quality birds like **Red-billed Brushturkey**, **White-eared Catbird**, **Papuan Babbler**, both **Common** and **Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher**, another **Pheasant Pigeon** and a **Thick-billed Ground Pigeon**.

After a coffee break back in the village, some of us went back into the jungle with Bastian for another two hours. We had a clear goal in mind – the **Western Crowned Pigeon**. Luckily, we heard one already soon after we entered the forest (a very deep sound, just like the Victoria). But after what can only be described as a wild Mambruk chase down the valley, along the stream and up the ridge, and maybe the sweatiest day in my life, Bastian managed to find us the bird far up in a tree! This was truly hard work but we were highly rewarded with a gorgeous bird. "Watching a Mambruk as a **Magnificent Riflebird** calls in the background – it doesn't get more 'Papua' than this!" – Thomas exclaimed. After some time, we headed back to the ecovillage for a late lunch. I even brought back a leech on my leg (my third one this



King Bird-of-Paradise



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

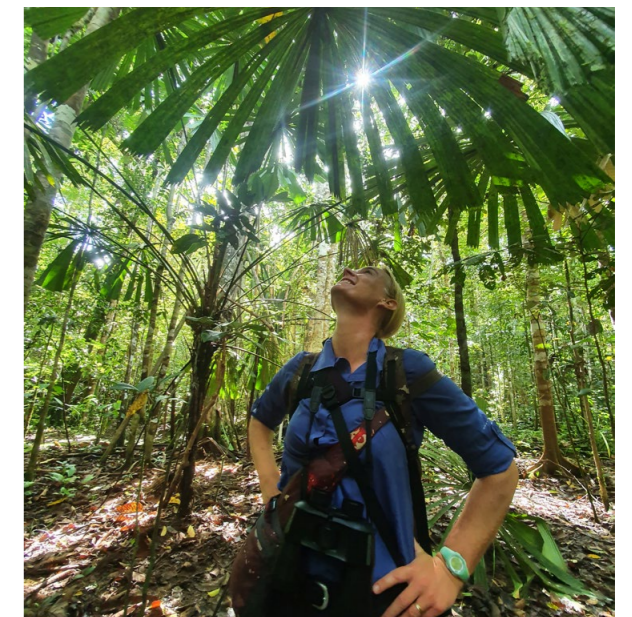


Western Crowned Pigeon



Emerald Tree Monitor

trip). After some down-time and butterfly-watching we took a walk back along the boardwalk for a bit. We entered the forest to try for Wallace's Owlet-nightjar in a tree where it was seen roosting recently, but we had no luck. It was getting cloudy. Since we didn't want to risk any sudden rainfall, we spent most of the afternoon in the village, birding and chatting and just enjoying ourselves. The birds were still quite active, among others we saw a **Glossy-mantled Manucode**, several **Black Lories**, **Boyer's** and **Golden Cuckooshrike**, **Large Fig Parrot**, **Hooded Butcherbird** and **Ruby-throated Myzomela**. When it got dark a **Brown Dorcopsis** (or Brown Forest Wallaby) was seen foraging in the village. We went out for a walk, and when I stepped away to the forest edge to pee, a **Common Echymipera**, a sort of Bandicoot, ran across the field and in front of me. Silly animal. 54 species today.



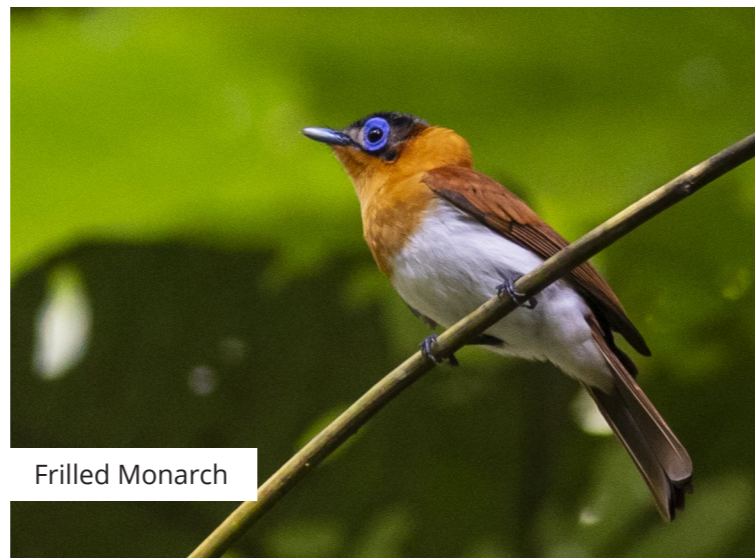


Waigeo sunset

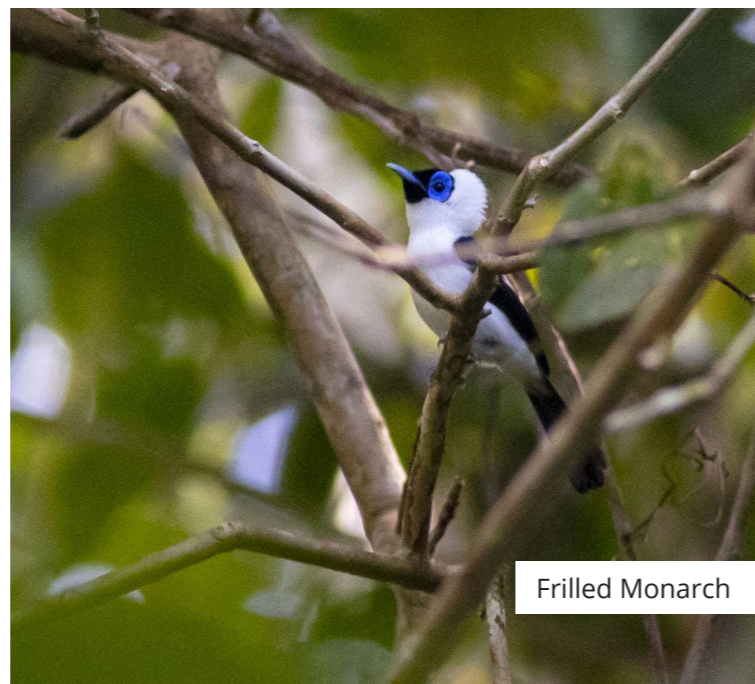
Day 14 – October 14th (Malagufuk – Sorong – Waigeo)

Our last day in Malagufuk. Those who wanted could have a sleep-in, but a few of us took a morning walk with Bastian. One of the highlights this morning was a singing **Blue Jewel-babbler**. We entered the forest hoping for pittas, but personally, I soon had to turn back after falling into the stream. The others went on with Bastian and apart from finding Curasow-droppings, they also had great views of a **Papuan Pitta**! We had breakfast (fried rice) and enjoyed two **Blyth's Hornbills**, a **Glossy-mantled Manucode** and two **Grey Crows** in the tall trees, and a **Variable Goshawk** was flying around the village, perhaps hunting for chickens. It was time for us to pack up and go back to Sorong. The boardwalk birding was not quite as bird-rich as on the way here, but at least six singing **Hooded Pittas** along the way is noteworthy, as well as singing **Green-backed Gerygone** and **Golden Monarch**. And we saw tracks of Northern Cassowary! **Long-billed Honeyeater**, **Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo**, **Frilled Monarch**, **Brown Oriole** and **Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** was also seen, among others. We took a group photo with the team before saying goodbye and driving back to Sorong.

After gearing up in Sorong (=buying more beer and ice cream), we quickly went to the ferry that would take us to the beautiful island of Waigeo in the Raja Ampat archipelago. This would be something completely different! The boat ride took us 2,5 hours to this birder's and diver's paradise. We were sitting in the back of the ferry so we didn't have a great view for optimal seawatching (this was also a different ferry from the ones that usually do this route), but at least 10 **Lesser Frigatebirds**, 2 **Bulwer's Petrels**, 4 **Streaked Shearwaters**, around 30 **Wilson's Storm**



Frilled Monarch



Frilled Monarch

Petrels, apart from **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Black-naped Tern**, **Bridled Tern** and **Brown Booby** was still pretty good! Arriving to the port of Waisai we were amazed by two things. First, how many people actually fit inside this ferry (crazy!) and secondly, the beautiful corals right by the harbor. Once we were picked up by our local drivers, we were quickly taken to our beautiful hotel by the sea. We arrived an hour before sunset, giving us enough time to catch our breath and enjoy the view. And man, was there a view! Our bungalows along the pier were sitting right above beautiful coral reefs, and there were stairs leading straight down into the warm seawater right from the terrace. The rooms were very comfortable with soft beds and AC, and the view overlooking the sunset just amazing. The two **Beach Kingfishers** and **Osprey** sitting calmly by the shore didn't ruin the view either. Notably refreshed after a few hot and humid days, we enjoyed a nice dinner and summarized the day with 69 species. Waigeo is by far the best spot to see two very local and remarkable BOPs – the Red Bird-of-paradise and the Wilson's Bird-of-paradise.

Day 15 – October 15th (Waigeo)

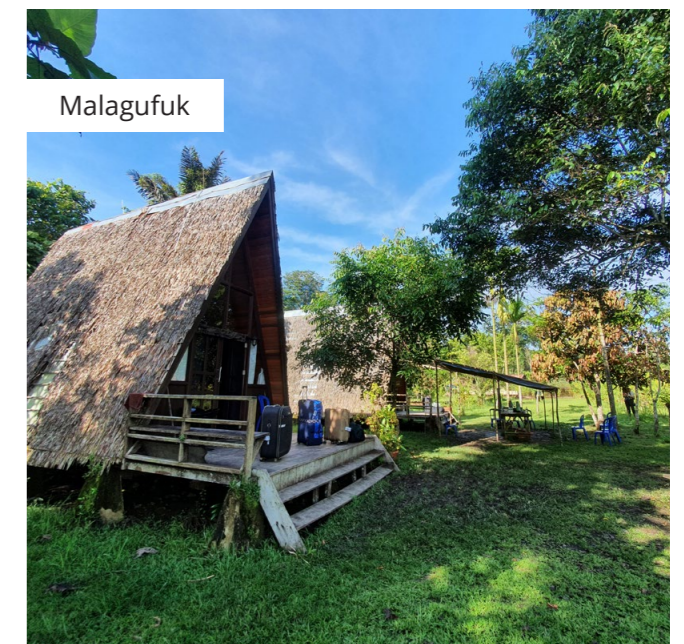
We had a very early breakfast. Today we planned on going to a display site of the Wilson's Bird-of-paradise, but when we arrived to the hide, it turned out some people had already occupied it. Naturally this is not supposed to happen, but our local guide had no good explanation, nor a way of throwing them out. So, we quickly rescheduled and instead of fighting we drove a bit further to a stakeout for **Red Bird-of-paradise**, hoping that the issue would be resolved until the next morning. A **Marbled Frogmouth** was calling in the dark, and a **Dusky Megapode** ran across the road in front of the car. Arriving to our spot, we had to do a 15-minute climb to the top of a hill. We could hear the Red BOP calling in the trees but unfortunately, we only got very short and usually very bad views of the birds. Two males were above us, and at least two others were calling in the distance. This bird is a gorgeous BOP with really long tail wires, blood red silky tail and a metallic green face. We soon descended back to the road and walked along for a bit, hearing the calls of **Papuan Pitta**, **Glossy-mantled Manucode**, several **Common Paradise Kingfishers** and a local speciality, **Waigeo Shrikethrush**. A distinctive call immediately caught our attention, and after a minute we got him in full view – a male **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise**! Crowned "the most beautiful bird in the world" by many birders, and easily the highlight of any day, this splash of colour is a bit larger than expected, with extra-cool tail-wires. Just to add a little to the moment, I noted that this was the 300th species of our trip (Jakarta included), which is a nice milestone. We only got a short view but we were still very happy. We went on, adding **Puff-backed Honeyeater**, **Raja Ampat Pitohui** and **Brown-necked Crow** be-



Red-breasted Paradise Flycatcher



Variable Goshawk



Malagufuk



Red Bird-of-Paradise



Grey-headed Goshawk



Pacific Reef Heron



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper



Eclectus Parrot

fore it started to get too hot and we turned around to our hotel. After lunch we had a couple of hours to rest, keep birding (**White-bellied Sea Eagle, Torresian Crow, Lesser Crested Tern**) or just swim or snorkel among the beautiful corals and colourful fishes. Snorkels were available in the reception, and some even brought their own equipment.

Afternoon birding was also optional (not that anyone is ever pressured into birding) - some chose to stay to relax and snorkel or just plainly enjoy the scenery. The rest of us took the cars out west along the main road for a few hours. A flock of pigeons piqued our interest so we stopped, noting a **Pinon's Imperial Pigeon** surrounded by six **Spice Imperial Pigeons**. A flock of **Pied Imperial Pigeons** also flew past, a really fancy looking bird. There were many **Eclectus Parrots** and **Coconut Lorikeets** flying around. Two **Red Birds-of-paradise** were calling from a

tree, proving to be a surprisingly common bird on Waigeo. **Spangled Drongos** and **Dollarbirds** were on the lookout here and there, and **Glossy Swiftlets** were hunting insects with **Moustached Treeswifts** in the air. We then made a stop by Airport Bay, a spot that often hosts good waders when the tides are right, and it sure didn't disappoint in that regard. **Terek Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler** and most importantly - a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper!** This is a dream **Calidris** to see for many European birders and actually not a very common bird to see on West Papua, either. We took our time to get good views. Back at our hotel we could still add **Grey-headed Goshawk** and **White-breasted Woodswallow** to our long list of birds of the day, totalling 60 species.



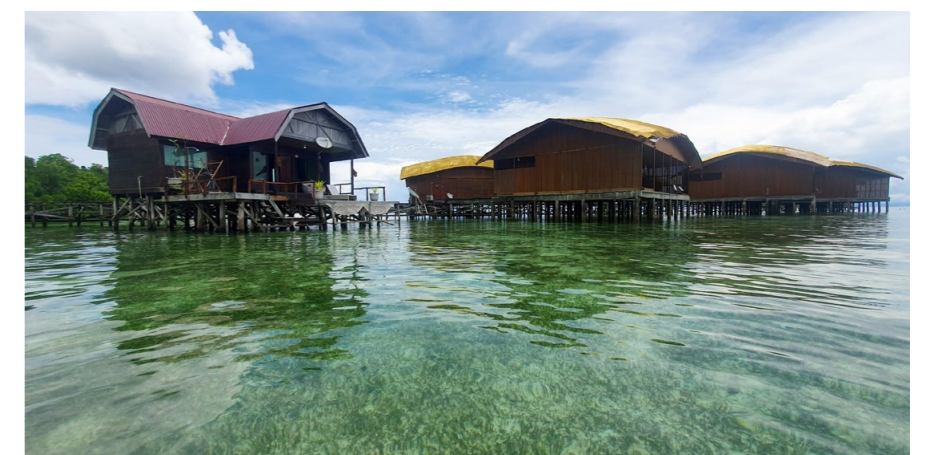
Dollarbird



Spice Imperial Pigeons



Moustached Treeswift

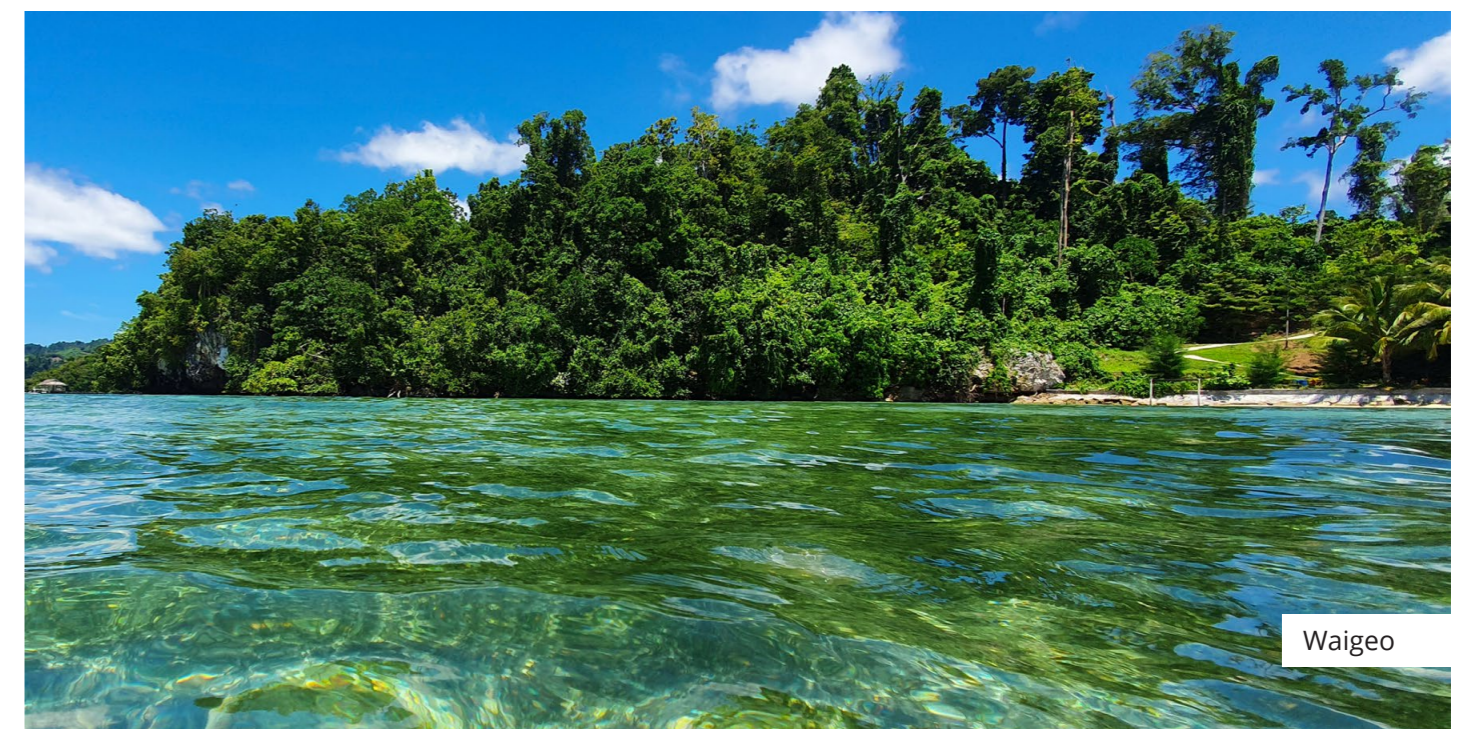
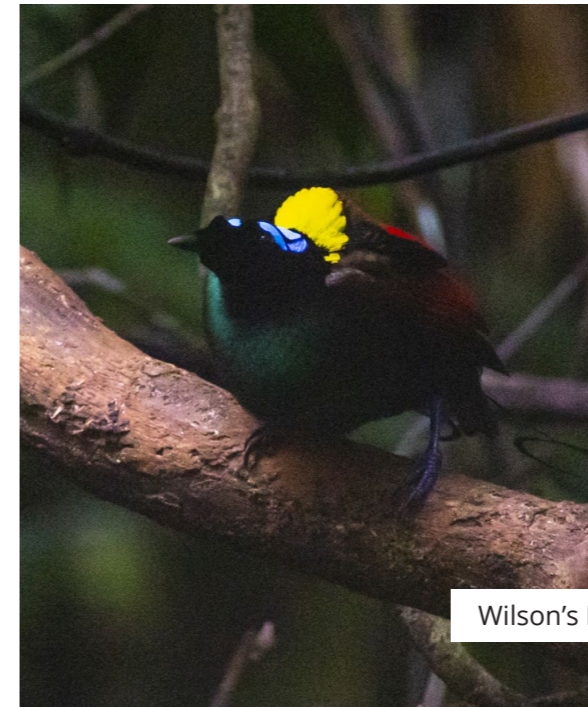


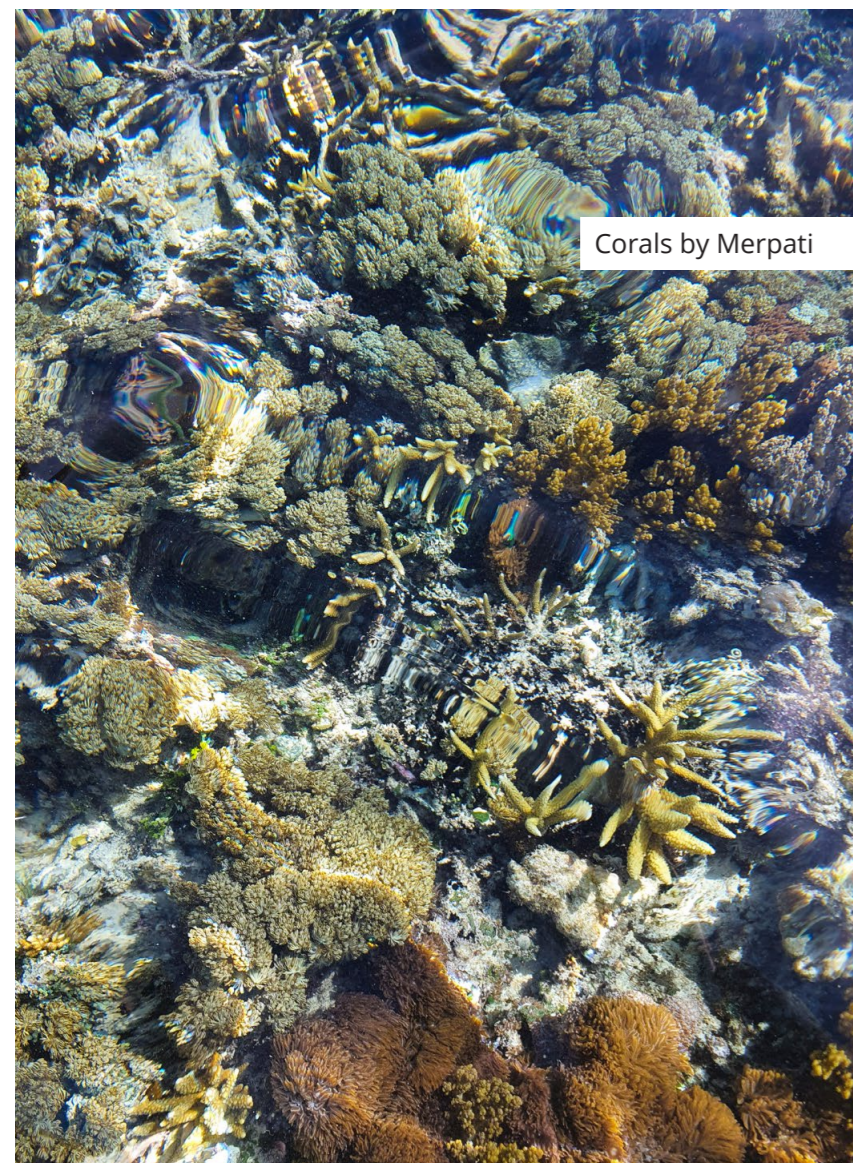
Day 16 – October 16th (Waigeo & Merpati)

Our last full day. Just like the day before, we woke up early to have enough time for the hour-long drive to the hides, and get in before the action starts. At 05:45 we were in place, and soon enough the star of the show, the first **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise** appeared. For the following hour and a half we were thoroughly entertained by this mind-blowing bird, a truly beautiful experience! At least two adult males, one young male and four females were on the lek, not all the time but moving around, calling and jumping around. None of them really did any displaying on the floor, nor running up-and-down the sticks, but there was always at least one bird visible in front of us. As it got lighter the activity was getting more intense, until suddenly all of them disappeared and the show was over. We then spent a long time walking along the forest road, noting birds like **Palm Cockatoo**, **Frilled Monarch**, **Yellow-bellied Longbill**, **Spot-winged Monarch**, **Red Bird-of-paradise**, **Yellow-gaped Honeyeater**, **Brown-headed Crow** and **Claret-breasted Fruit Dove**. We even got brief views of a **Papuan Pitta**. On the drive back two **Dusky Megapodes** crossed the road, but the real surprise came a bit later, when after a curve a freaky **Western Crowned Pigeon** was standing in the middle of the road! We stopped quickly but it walked off, and some could still see it flying off into the valley. Not bad! Back at the hotel, the usual chilling and swimming around the ocean. Easy life.

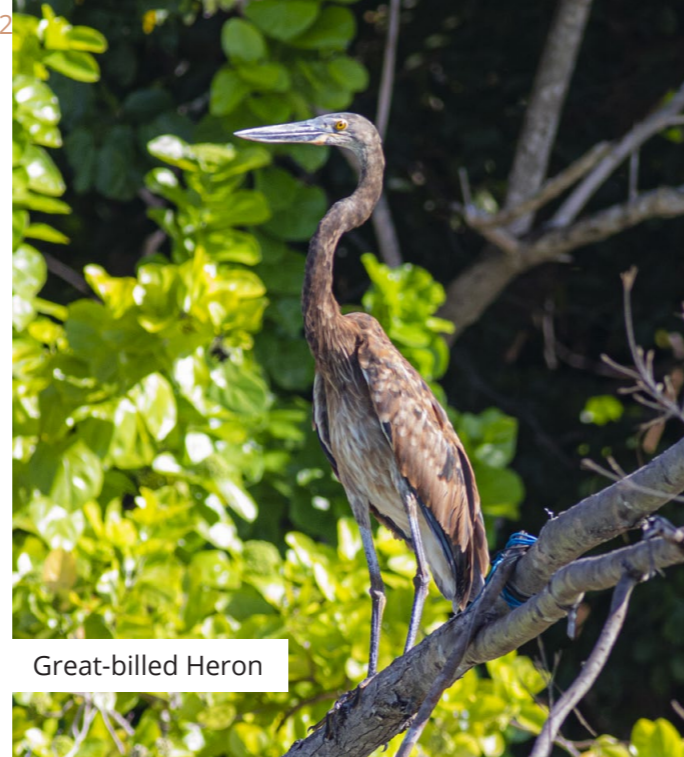
The afternoon plans were slightly delayed (our boat didn't show up for an hour), but soon enough we were on the open ocean swooshing by **Lesser Frigatebirds** and two **White-bellied Sea Eagles**, on our way to the tiny island of Merpati more than 30 kms away. We were quite fast though and arrived in a little over an hour later. Merpati means Pigeon in Indonesian, and it really looks like a fairy-tale tropical island with mesmerising sandy beaches and crystal-clear waters covering healthy coral reefs. A **Great-billed Heron** was keeping a lookout, and two **White-bellied Woodswallows** welcomed us as we touched land. This is one of those places where you would just love to spend a couple of extra days, off-grid and far away from everything. We only had a little over an hour though, so we wandered around looking for birds. Right off the bat a vibrant flock of **Violet-necked Lorries** flew by, and there were several **Moluccan Starlings** in the **Beach Sheoak**-trees, as well as **White-bibbed Fruit Doves** of the **prasinorrhous** subspecies (a little different than the ones we saw in the Arfaks). It was surprisingly hard to track down the passerines but we soon found many of our targets – **Olive Honeyeater**, **Lem-**

on-bellied White-eye, **Island Whistler**, **Arafura Fantail** and **Varied Honeyeater**. Every minute on this little island felt precious. As we left in our little boat the reality hit in, the fact that it was soon time for us to go home and from this very point, we were on our way back. We passed the little island Mios Kon (also called the Bat Island), but didn't see much apart from a few **Pied Imperial Pigeons**. Finally, we arrived to our hotel and celebrated our last full day together (not to mention the beautiful Wilson-lek in the morning) with some leftover Scotch after dinner. Everybody also got to vote, privately of course, on their top birds of the tour. We noted 62 species today.





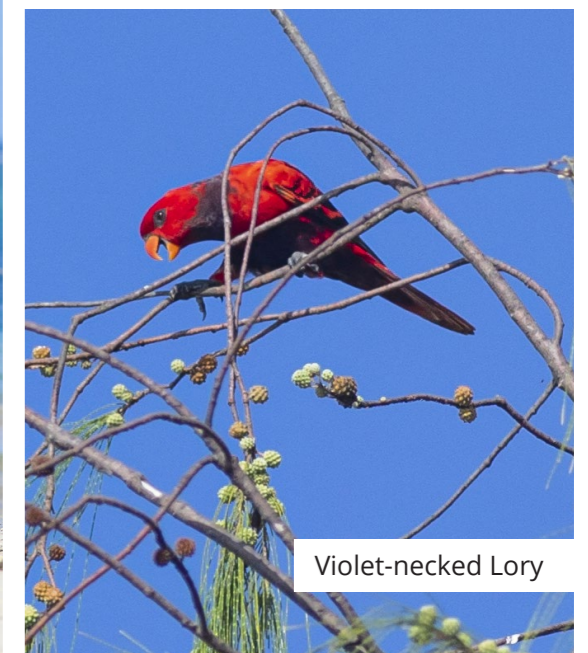
Corals by Merpati



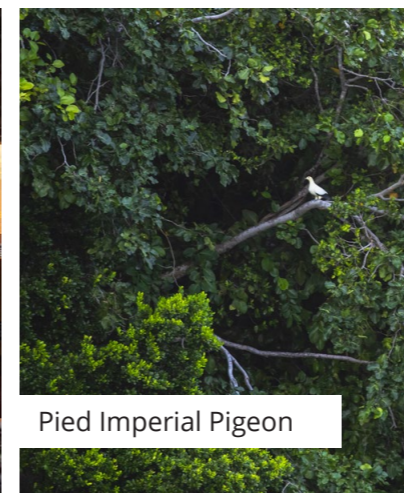
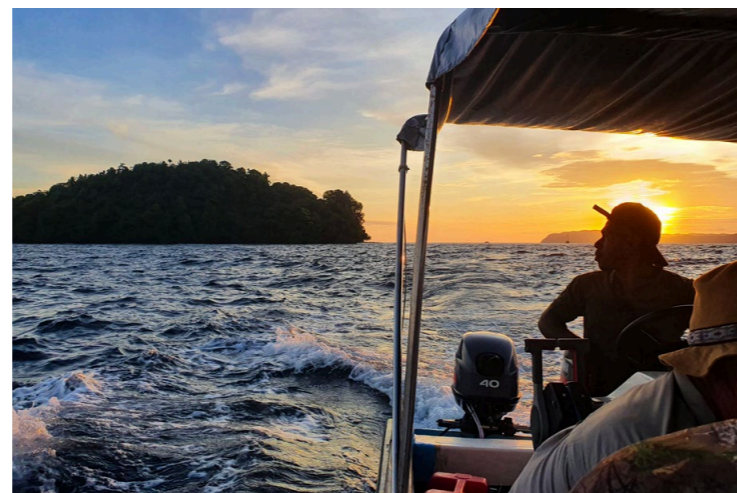
Great-billed Heron



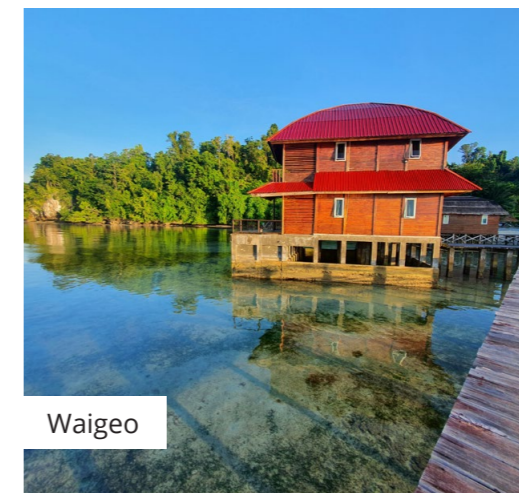
Merpati



Violet-necked Lory



Pied Imperial Pigeon



Waigeo



Flying Fish

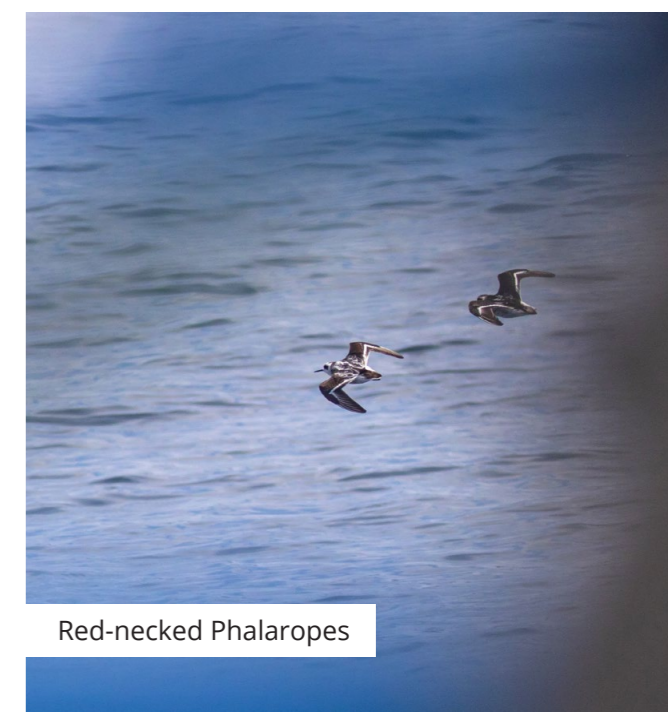
Day 17 – October 17th (Waigeo – Sorong - Jakarta)

We had all the way until 8 o'clock to have breakfast and pack up everything, so that gave us a whole lot longer to sleep than the previous mornings. I still woke up early for some snorkelling, but first I wanted to photograph some fish from the pier. As I was standing there, enjoying the marvellous corals and the morning light, a **Blacktip Reef Shark** swam by, followed by a **Sharksucker** fish. Cool stuff! Before leaving we enjoyed our morning coffee in great company surrounding the hotel – **Eclectus Parrots**, **Pi-non's Imperial Pigeons**, **Channel-billed Cuckoos**, **Pacific Swallows**, **Torresian Crows**, **Willie Wag-tails**, **Osprey**, **Dollarbird**, **White-breasted Woodswallows** and **Beach Kingfisher**. We said goodbye to Bengt who would stay here for an extra day snorkelling, and Thomas, who would stay around here

(adding Biak etc.) for another three weeks. The ferry ride back to Sorong was nice, this time with the good kind of ferries where we were allowed to stand in the front. We didn't see too much, but with **Black-naped Terns**, **Bridled Terns**, **Wilson's Storm Petrels**, one **Pomarine Skua**, six **Brown Boobies**, **Red-necked Phalaropes**, **White-winged Tern**, three **Bottlenose Dolphins** and lots of cool **Flying Fish**, it was still a very good ride. From the harbor we went straight to the airport, leaving for Jakarta. We said goodbye and continued our separate ways after a fabulous West Papua tour.

For most of us, this meant going home. Personally, I stayed another four days to visit the Gunung Gede volcano area, one of the best birding spots on Western Java. This extension almost deserves its own trip report, but to summarize shortly, I added another

61 species on my personal list, most of them Javan endemics – **Javan Cochoa**, **Volcano Swiftlet**, **Javan Banded Pitta**, **Javan Trogon**, **Javan Frogmouth**, **Pink-headed Fruit Dove**, **Sunda Thrush**, **Spotted Crocias**, **Javan Owlet**, **Sunda Scops Owl**, **Javan Scops Owl**, **Fire-tufted Barbet**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Trilling Shrike-babbler**, **Sunda Warbler**, **Lesser Shortwing**, **White-browed Shortwing**, **Blue Nut-hatch**, **Javan Blue Robin**, **White-flanked Sunbird** and a lot more. Ironically though, this is where I had the most use for my rain gear and mosquito repellent through the whole trip. It's also a physically exhausting volcano to ascend. Still, I would highly recommend this extension to anyone visiting the region.



Red-necked Phalaropes



Merpati



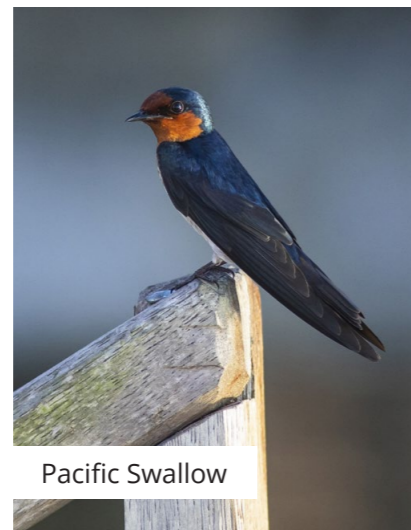
White-breasted Woodswallow



Blacktip Reef Shark



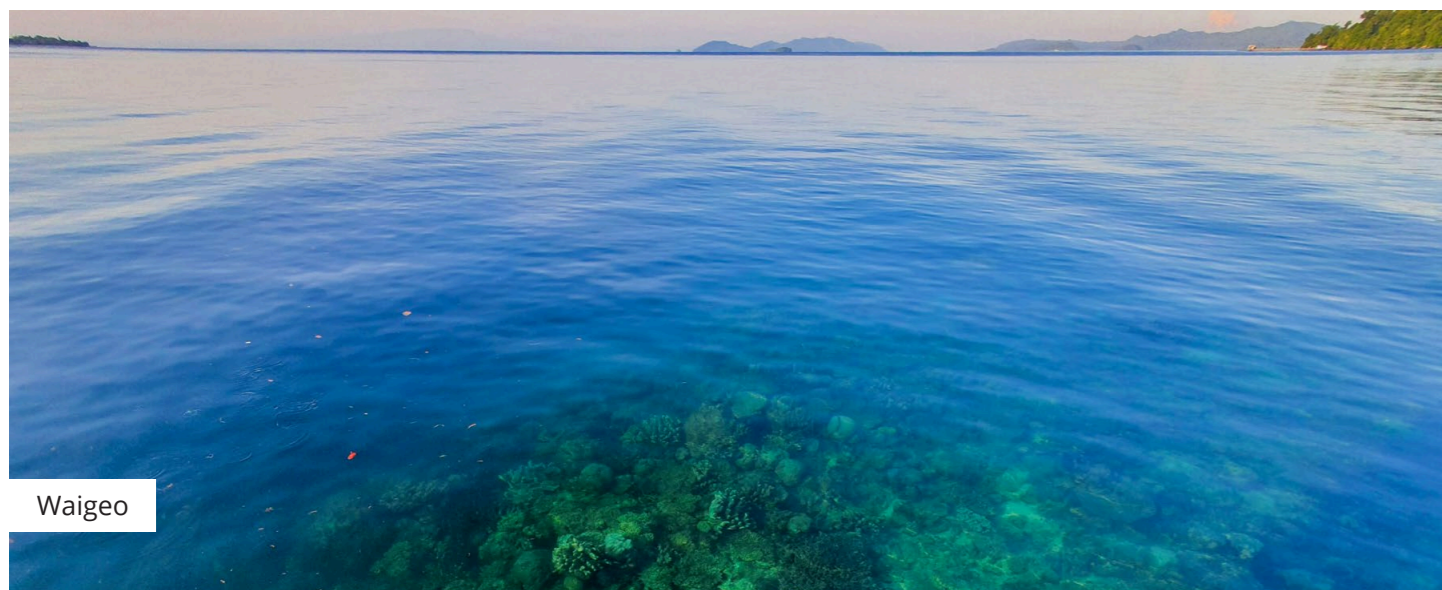
Willie Wagtail



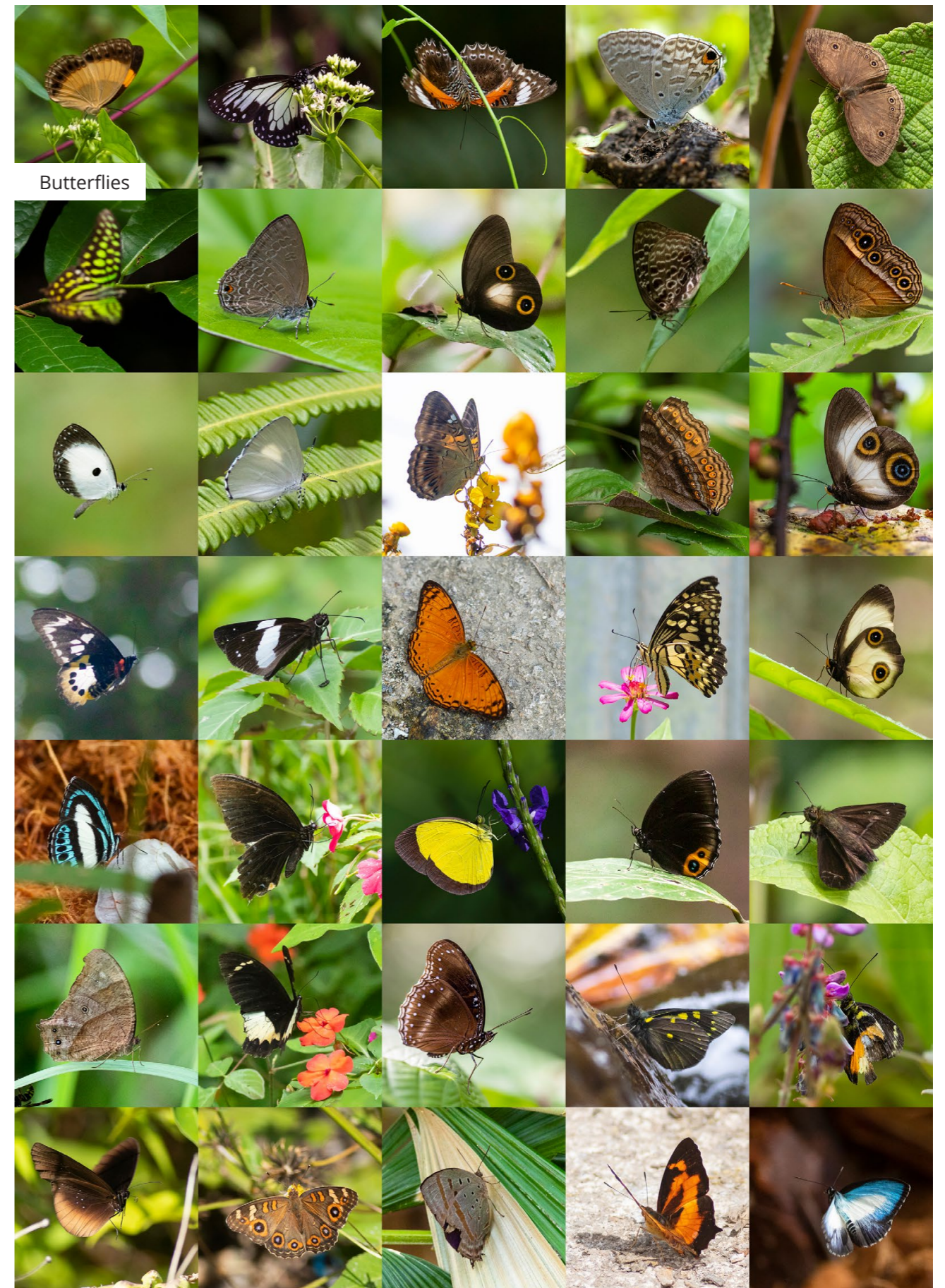
Pacific Swallow



Wilson's Storm Petrel



Waigeo



Butterflies

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