

# SOLOMON ISLANDS TOUR REPORT 2023

8 July - 4 August 2023

by Pete Morris

It had been a few years since our last tour around the Solomon Islands, an itinerary which is well-known to be logistically as well as physically, one of the more difficult in our programme! Well in both regards, this year's tour lived up to its reputation! Fortunately, we had an adventurous group that were prepared to put in the hard yards and put up with some truly awful weather and at times difficult conditions. In the end we came away with an impressive list of endemics and specialities, including a high percentage of the available endemics. Particular highlights included the amazing Solomons Frogmouth, the rare Solomons Nightjar, Guadalcanal, Makira and West Solomons Owls, the impressive Sanford's Sea Eagle, the elusive Black-faced Pitta, Duchess Lorikeet, numerous Solomons Cockatoos, Ultramarine Kingfisher as well as three smart species of dwarf kingfishers, brilliant monarchs including the smart White-capped Monarch, the gorgeous Solomons Robins, the stunning Makira Thrush and a host of white-eyes including the lovely Gizo White-eye (formerly known as Splendid White-eye). In addition, we had fantastic looks at four genera that are endemic to the Solomon Islands: Rigidipenna (Solomons Frogmouth), Nesoclopeus (Woodford's Rail), Meliarchus (Makira Honeyeater) and Woodfordia (Bare-eyed White-eye).

We began the tour in the capital Honiara, on the island of Guadalcanal, and took an early transfer out to Mount Austen on the outskirts of the capital. Here we had an excellent introduction to the birding and the birds of the Solomons... pretty tough going! Early on we were pleased to find Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeons and numerous Claret-breasted Fruit Doves perched up alongside huge Blyth's Hornbills, our first Solomons Cockatoos, impressive Yellow-bibbed Lories, Papuan Eclectus Parrots, Long-tailed Mynas and endemic Brown-winged Starlings. Bird of the morning was probably the delightful Ultramarine Kingfisher, a pair of which performed admirably, and other goodies included our first Chestnut-bellied Imperial Pigeon, the huge Buff-headed Coucal (the first of many) the scarce Black-headed Myzomela, Oriole Whistler, the energetic Steel-blue Flycatcher, and the tiny Midget Flowerpecker.

We returned to town and had lunch at what was soon to become a favourite past-time of the tour... the Chinese buffet. In the afternoon we visited another area of forest just outside of Honiara, at Parangiju. The trail through the forest was lovely, and we soon added more species including the smart Solomons Cuckooshrike, Chestnut-bellied Monarch and the shy Solomons Monarch. We also had a poke around after dark, and although we found another Ultramarine Kingfisher, the hoped-for Guadalcanal Owl only posed briefly in the light, and refused to return.

The following day we were out early again, trying a different area of Mount Austen. Many of the same species appeared again, and we added our first Melanesian Kingfishers as well as a pair of hunting Oriental Hobbies, but the tricky rarities we were after failed to materialize. In the

afternoon we visited Betikama Wetlands near to the airport. It was fairly quiet for wetland species, though we did manage some excellent views of the endemic Guadalcanal (Woodford's) Rail, as well as Australian Swampphen and Buff-banded Rail, and enjoyed numerous Cardinal Lories and Coconut Lorikeets.

Our next port of call was the sleepy island of Rennell, and we touched down on the gravel runway the following morning. This relaxed Polynesian-style paradise island is unfortunately being degraded by logging and mining activities – the sad way the world is going! We had a couple of days to explore the island, fairly easily finding the endemics and specialties which are mostly still common in degraded habitat within walking distance of our accommodation. Rennell White-eye and the intriguing Bare-eyed White-eye were plentiful, and the superb Rennell Shrikebill was certainly a favourite with its lovely rusty orange plumage and stout bluish beak! Rennell Fantails were seen well, busy Rennell Gerygones entertained, and a few Rennell Starlings showed well. The trickiest of the endemics is always the Rennell Whistler, and as usual we had to work hard, but ended up with stunning views of this subtly attractive species. Silver-capped Fruit Dove is not a true endemic, being found on a scattering of nearby small islets, but this is certainly the place to see it, and it was common alongside numerous MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Doves. (Eastern) Bronze Ground Dove was heard, and seen briefly, and other interesting species and Melanesian specialties including a few (Rennell) Island Thrushes, numerous (Rennell) Song Parrots, Pacific Imperial Pigeons, tiny Finsch's Pygmy Parrots, flashy Cardinal Myzomelas, a few smart Pacific Kingfishers, obliging Melanesian Flycatchers and the endemic forms of Brown Goshawk, Shining Bronze Cuckoo and Barred Cuckooshrike. Around the village and airfield we enjoyed watching the small and interesting Rennell form of Australian White Ibis and found a White-faced Heron and a couple of Pacific Golden Plovers.

We left Rennell after a very successful visit, and headed back to Honiara, the home of the Chinese buffet. That afternoon we made a special excursion to see a pair of roosting Guadalcanal Owls, which were a real treat. A little shy and furtive initially, they settled down and allowed wonderful views, making up for our previous disappointments. Later we returned to Betikama for an enjoyable afternoon watching pigeons, parrots and cockatoos, as well as our first (for all of the group), albeit distant, Sanford's Sea Eagle.

The following day we boarded the Auki Express, and from the comfort of the 'business lounge', endured a fast and somewhat choppy crossing to Auki on Malaita. We met our host, dropped our bags, and set off to explore an area of remnant forest in a fleet of 4WDs. With just one afternoon to play with, and with frequent showers, we had our work cut out, but did pretty well considering. Our first bit of luck was on the way there when we found a trio of undescribed (Malaita) Woodford's Rails on the track. Fortunately they were obliging, allowing great views for all. At the next stop we found our first Malaita White-eyes, and higher up we explored a productive logging road. Here we found the distinct white-eyed endemic form of Brown-winged Starling, our first Grey-capped Cicadabirds, the tricoloured endemic form of Solomons Cuckooshrike, a male Oriole Whistler (of the endemic local form) and the attractive and distinctive (White-cheeked) Solomons Monarch. A tip-off from some locals saw us attempt to find Malaita Boobook after dark, but although we heard some interesting sounds and saw some strange shapes in the thermals, it all came to nothing, and we arrived back in Auki quite late for our fish and chips!

The crossing back was even more rough and unpleasant, and we arrived to heavy rain in Honiara! A Chinese buffet and a break were called for! Later, the rain abated a little, and we made our way back to a very muddy Mount Austen. As usual, many of the same birds were on offer, with many

species sitting out drying themselves following the rain. We did also manage to add our first White-billed Crow to our tally. The following day we explored the Parangiju area more extensively. The habitat seemed excellent and we worked hard to find a White-eyed Starling or Guadalcanal Dwarf Kingfisher, but to no avail, despite extensive searching! We did see more good sightings of by now familiar species, and also added more entertaining White-billed Crows, our first Cockerell's Fantail, our first Pied Goshawk and an Oriental Hoppo at close range.

The following morning, we took a delayed flight to Gizo and then on to Munda, from where, after a bit of organization, we took a couple of small boats over to the remote Island of Tetepare. It was a fairly smooth crossing, and we managed to add a few new species including our first Island Imperial Pigeons, Beach Kingfishers, some Black-naped Terns and Pacific Reef Egrets. By the time we arrived on Tetepare it was late afternoon, but we had time to do a little exploring near to the lodge. Here, mixed flocks held the endemic Dark-eyed White-eye (sporting their funny yellow pectoral tufts) and stunning White-capped Monarchs, whilst a nearby fruiting tree was home to the attractive Crimson-rumped Myzomela. At dusk we managed to connect with a showy pair of Melanesian Megapodes, coming for scraps around the accommodation.

We set off early the following morning in pursuit of a very special quarry, the rare Solomons Nightjar. Our excellent hosts had been out the day before to locate the nightjars, and a boat ride (where Nicobar Pigeon was seen briefly by some) and a walk along the shore lead us to a tiny area where at least one pair were known to be. It's an intriguing species, thought to (almost?) exclusively nest just above the high tide line on undisturbed tropical beaches – an extremely rare habitat these days! The species is likely critically endangered, Tetepare being the only place with any recent records. We approached the area very carefully, but there was no sign at first. Then eventually we spotted an eye poking out from around a dead palm leaf, and there was our quarry, albeit rather concealed! It took a bit of effort and maneuvering but eventually we enjoyed some fantastic scope studies of this mega bird, admiring the dark chestnut and golden brown colouration which is quite distinct from the closely related White-throated Nightjar of Australia with which it was formerly lumped. The whole process had taken quite a while, and it was time to head back for breakfast, admiring Moustached Treeswift as we went. After a fine 'brunch', we made our way inland along a trail, and here we were delighted to find the local forms of Kolombangara Monarch and Cockerell's (Black-breasted) Fantail. We then embarked on a boat trip which ultimately proved unsuccessful and costly, though we did see our only Common Sandpiper and Striated Herons of the tour!! Back at base, the Melanesian Megapodes showed well again, this time foraging with some Pacific Black Ducks.

The following morning was a bit wet, and not much was going on. We loaded the boats and headed for Kolombangara, via Munda again. The sea was slightly choppier, and although not rough, it was an unpleasant experience as the speedboats pounded into wave after wave for several hours. It must be said that we were pretty pleased to arrive on dry land once more as we met up with our hosts on Kolombangara. After lunch and a break, we set off to explore the fields and scrubby woodland nearby. Most of us scored with some really good views of the rare Roviana Rail, but unfortunately, they were pretty quick and skittish, leaving us with a little bit of unfinished business!

The following morning we were up early and began our trek inland. The first few hours were good and relatively easy. Another Roviana Rail was found, this time showing well to all, Sanford's Sea Eagles cruised overhead, and Pied Goshawks perched up. We got some great looks at showy Crimson-rumped Myzomelas and in the mixed flocks found several Solomons White-eyes, White-

capped Monarchs, Steel-blue Flycatchers, and a couple of Cockerell's Fantails. A little higher we found a stunning New Georgia Dwarf Kingfisher which showed brilliantly, and a few Duchess Lorikeets flashed by, and it was all going swimmingly well. We then left the logging track and that's when things became a little trickier! The trail had clearly not been used for years and needed to be cleared as we walked, and to add to the fun, the skies had darkened, and the rain had started! We paused for lunch and saw some hyperactive Kolombangara Monarchs, but then the fun really began! Basically we endured a long and tough walk in constant rain, to the camp, seeing very few birds, and crawled into our tents to try and dry off. It then rained nearly the whole night, often torrentially, and was still raining when we awoke. We crawled out of our tents and packed up, but there was really no point trying to walk higher in the torrential rain. We hung around for a while, hoping things would improve, but there was no let up, so we began the long and wet walk down. Small streams on the way up had become raging torrents on the way down, and it wasn't until we were most of the way down that the weather improved. We did manage a few birds, including a Rufous Fantail and an Oriole Whistler, though looking through wet and fogged optics was not easy. We did have one stroke of luck, when our only pair of North Melanesian Cuckooshrikes gave great views, and we also enjoyed studying the very blue local form of Common Kingfisher. We got back down and then had to wait a while before our boats were ready for the crossing to Gizo. This proved to be somewhat unpleasant and eventful, but we made it.

Sadly, we were in a long run of rather fresh southeasterly trade winds, whipping up choppy seas, and as a result, our planned boat trip to Vella Lavella and Ranongga was not able to take place. We spent the time exploring Gizo where the endemic Gizo White-eye was pleasantly common. Its former name of Splendid White-eye would have been more apt, as it really is a smart bird! There were a few other species to keep us amused including more Grey-capped Cicadabirds, more gorgeous White-capped Monarchs, and our only Little Pied Cormorants. Seawatching produced numerous Black Noddies, a few Brown Noddies, and, as luck would have it, a single Heinroth's Shearwater!

We arrived back in Honiara for another Chinese buffet and then flew over to Kirakira on Makira, our base for the next few days. As usual, it was raining on and off, but we made our way to a nearby village, birding the surrounding forest which proved productive. Indeed we managed to notch up a good few new endemics and specialities including the gorgeous Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove, the smart White-headed Fruit Dove, Long-tailed Trillers, Makira Cicadabirds, Sooty Myzomela, our first White-collared Monarch, the interesting Mottled Flowerpecker, Makira Starlings, the local forms of Oriole Whistler and Rufous Fantail, and our only Metallic Pigeon of the trip. We also saw our first Makira Dwarf Kingfisher, though it was pretty skittish.

The following day we began our trek up into the highlands of Makira. We began with a truck ride, followed by our first of many canoe crossings where some seriously fit young men pulled us all backwards and forwards across stony rivers, bare foot, in wooden dug-out canoes! We were all a little nervous at first but soon settled into the routine! A truck ride, a few more river crossings and a bit of a walk later we arrived at our first accommodation at Na'ara. The accommodation was way better than we expected, and on the way, we managed to add the unusual-looking Makira Honeyeater and the endemic Makira Flycatcher as well as more Makira Starlings and other endemics that we had already seen. In the afternoon we explored the forest around the village, and here, with a bit of effort, we managed some fantastic views of the delightful Makira Dwarf Kingfisher and found the scarce Makira Fantail which showed well. We also had our first of many attempts to see the ultra-skulking Makira Thrush, though sadly managed no more than glimpses.

The following day we made our way higher on steep trails. It was tough going, steep and slippery, but we gradually accumulated a good number of Makira's specialities. Lower down, flocks included more smart White-collared Monarchs and the long-billed and vocally unusual (Solomons) Spangled Drongo. Climbing higher we found more Makira Fantails as well as our first Makira Leaf Warblers, Grey-throated White-eyes and Shade Bush Warbler. Some interesting calls led us to some excellent Duchess Lorikeets feeding in the canopy, and while watching them, we located a stunning pair of Solomons Robins which showed fantastically well. We eventually got to our camp and took it easy, though a Crested Cuckoo-Dove caused some brief excitement for a lucky few! That evening we made an effort to find the rare and elusive Makira Owl, eventually coming away with some great views of this seldom seen bird!

The following day we tried higher up above our camp, as well as making more attempts for the Makira Thrush, which only resulted in more glimpses! We found our only Brush Cuckoo of the tour (the local form with its distinctive song), whilst higher up, we got some excellent views of another Shade Bush Warbler, saw the local form of Grey Fantail, and, eventually, found the much-wanted Yellow-legged Pigeon. The heavens then opened once more, though we did manage a fine Crested Cuckoo-Dove on the walk back down.

The following day we made our way back down to Na'ara. It was a long and slippery walk down, but we made it, picking up a few additional views of specialities as we went, including our best views so far of the ultra-elusive Makira Thrush. Back at Na'ara, we made yet more attempts, resulting in a few more brief views for those looking in the right direction! After dinner, we went out for a bit of spotlighting, and this proved to be highly rewarding! Finally we found a Makira Thrush sat still, that everyone could admire at length! We also had brilliant views of a male (Eastern) Bronze Ground Dove! An excellent end to the day! The following day we made our way back down to the relative civilization of Kirakira. Some obliging Pied Goshawks entertained and having retraced our steps back across the rivers and along the trails, we made it back to the hotel for a much-needed shower and time to clean up!! I should mention at this stage, what a fantastic job our team on Makira did. Great hospitality and food, and such a caring approach, helping us hapless westerners sliding down the trails in our state-of-the-art trekking gear, while they walked ahead, barefoot, and prepared the trail for us!

On our last day around Kirakira we visited a couple of spots close to town. In the morning, we birded some roadside forest and the beach, finding Pacific Koel, more Chestnut-bellied Imperial Pigeons, and smart (Makira) Chestnut-bellied Monarchs, whilst at the coast we found Beach Kingfishers and offshore we picked out Bridled Tern and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. In the afternoon we admired more pigeons and doves and various previously seen endemics, but best of all was a pair of Pale-vented Bush-hens which were tempted out of cover and gave some great views.

By the evening, the heavens had once again opened, and the following morning it was lashing down, as another band of rain was clearly moving through the archipelago! There was some confusion as to whether our flight would operate, but fortunately the runway at Kirakira has been upgraded in recent years, and, although a little late, our plane arrived and took us back to Honiara. Sadly though, our onward flight was cancelled, and although this allowed for an extra Chinese buffet, it also caused a lot of concern and uncertainty, and much of the following 24hrs was spent putting plans in to place!

Fortunately we got across to Fera and on to Santa Isabel the following afternoon, and after a fish and chip lunch, we made the steep walk up to Tiratonga. On the walk up we saw our first Yellow-throated White-eyes and some smart Ultramarine Kingfishers, and we arrived at our comfortable base in time for a quick, but ultimately unproductive, walk. After dinner we set off on some rather unpleasant, steep and slippery trails, but our efforts were richly rewarded, with first great looks at the West Solomons Owl, and then, a fantastic Solomons Frogmouth which gave brilliant views. What an amazing call this great bird has, totally unlike any other frogmouth!

The following day we spent the entire time walking the steep and difficult trails. Much of the time was spent trying to see the extremely shy Solomons Pitta with mixed success. We all saw one, some with good views, others more briefly. Other individuals that we tried were even less responsive. It really was tough going! We also encountered a few other goodies, but birds were generally not obliging. White-billed Crows were seen a few times, a Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo was a nice surprise, a North Solomons Dwarf Kingfisher flashed back and forth, alighting occasionally, a (Santa Isabel) Woodford's Rail posed nicely for some, a furtive pair of Red-capped Myzomelas fed in the canopy, and we also saw more Solomons Monarchs. We returned to Tiratonga and were presented with a Solomons Pitta in a cage, with permission to release it. No wonder the poor birds are shy! We attempted to release the beautiful but weak bird, but sadly it was already past the point of no return and destined not to survive.

On our final morning, we tried again to find the pitta, but met with the same difficulties and had no luck. We did see a fine Song Parrot and were treated to brilliant views of roosting West Solomons Owls. After a final lunch we trekked back down, another steep and slippery walk, and, unsurprisingly, the heavens opened once more! Inevitably, it rained from then on, for most of the night, and of course, as we had feared, the airfield was shut! We were stuck, and with international flights to connect to, so 'plan b' was put into operation! A couple of calls and a couple of hours later, the distinctive sound of a helicopter could be heard approaching, and our savior soon landed in front of the market! We loaded up and were whisked away back to Honiara on a brilliantly scenic flight across Santa Isabel, and as a result, got back in good time for our onward flights home.

It had been a challenge! Well a series of challenges to be fair. The weather had been unkind, but fortunately we had a determined group that were prepared to work through the problems and put in the hard yards. Ultimately, we were richly rewarded with a fine selection of endemics and specialities that are never likely to give themselves up easily!

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED**

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g., it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

### **BIRDS**

**Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa* Seen a few times, the first at Betikama, Guadalcanal [*pelewensis*].

**Melanesian Megapode** ◇ *Megapodius eremita* One on the road at night briefly along the Parangiju Road, Guadalcanal. One briefly near to Tigoa on Rennell, then great looks on Tetepare and on Gizo.

**Solomons Nightjar** ◇ *Eurostopodus nigripennis* Brilliant views of one scoped on the ground and another in a tree, plus two tiny chicks, on a tiny island at the west end of Tetepare.

**Solomons Frogmouth** ◇ *Rigidipenna inexpectata* Brilliant views of one spotlighted above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel. Cracking bird and amazing call.

**Moustached Treeswift** *Hemiprocné mystacea* Quite a few seen, the first at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal [*woodfordiana*].

**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta* Three forms noted. Guadalcanal [*becki*], Makira [*makirensis*] and [*desiderata*] first noted on Rennell.

**White-rumped Swiftlet** ◇ *Aerodramus spodiopygius* A few noted, the first seen well at Kukudu, Kolombangara [*reichenowi*].

**Uniform Swiftlet** *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Common, first seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal [*lugubris*].

**Buff-headed Coucal** ◇ *Centropus milo* Nominate form first seen at Mount Austen and at Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Excellent views of the buff-bellied form [*albidiventris*] perched up at Tetepare.

**Pacific Koel** *Eudynamis orientalis* Heard and seen in flight at to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Best views were east of Kirakira, Makira [*alberti*].

**Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo** ◇ *Urodynamis taitensis* Good views of one in the canopy above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel.

**Shining Bronze Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Good views of a few near to Tigoa on Rennell, [*harterti*]. Another briefly on Santa Isabel.

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* Good views of one near to the ridge camp at Bagothane, Makira. Very distinctive song! [*addendus*].

**Metallic Pigeon** *Columba vitiensis* One seen perched well from the clearing along the logging trail heading south from the road between Kirakira and the airport [*halmaheira*].

**Yellow-legged Pigeon** ◇ *Columba pallidiceps* Good views of one at perched along the ridge above Bagothane, Makira.

**Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove** ◇ *Macropygia mackinlayi* First seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal, and particularly common near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Common on Rennell, and many others seen [*arossii*].

**Crested Cuckoo-Dove** ◇ *Reinwardtoena crassirostris* One seen at the camp at Bagohane, Makira, and another seen well, higher up, above the camp, the following day.

**Stephan's Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps stephani* Seen in flight at Mount Austen and near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal and good views on the road near to Tigoa on Rennell. A few others noted [*mortoni*].

**Nicobar Pigeon** *Caloenas nicobarica* Seen in flight by some and heard clattering off at Tetepare [nominate].

**Bronze Ground Dove** ◇ (Eastern B G D) *Pampusana [beccarii] johanna*e Heard near to Tigoa on Rennell where one was also flushed. Excellent spotlight views of a fine male, near to Na'ara Village, Makira and another seen flying off briefly [*solomonensis*].

**Superb Fruit Dove (Eastern S F D)** *Ptilinopus [superbus] superbus* Just a few seen, the first in flight along the logging road at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal.

**Silver-capped Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus richardsii* Many seen well near to Tigoa on Rennell [*cyanopterus*].

**Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus solomonensis* Great views of several on Makira [nominate]. Also heard on Kolombangara [*vulcanorum*].

**Claret-breasted Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus viridis* First seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal, where common. Also seen on Malaita and elsewhere [*lewisii*].

**White-headed Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus eugeniae* A few seen well on Makira.

**Pacific Imperial Pigeon** *Ducula pacifica* Many seen well near to Tigoa on Rennell [nominate].

**Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula rubricera* Common and widespread with plenty seen well, the first at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. Common on Malaita and elsewhere [*rufigula*].

**Island Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula pistrinaria* First seen on the way from Munda to Tetepare and common with many great views on Tetepare [nominate].

**Chestnut-bellied Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula brenchleyi* One seen well at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. Quite common on Makira with many great views, especially near to Kirakira.

**Buff-banded Rail** *Hypotaenidia philippensis* One seen well at Betikama, Guadalcanal. Also seen well near to Kirakira on Makira [*christophori*].

**Roviana Rail** ◇ *Hypotaenidia roviana*e Good views of a pair near to Hambere and then a single in the fields near to Kukudu, Kolombangara, and another seen well along the logging road near to Iriri the following day.

**Woodford's Rail** ◇ (Guadalcanal R) *Hypotaenidia [woodfordi] woodfordi* Excellent views of a pair and then a single, to playback, at Betikama, Guadalcanal. Also seen well at Mount Austen and Parangiju.

**Woodford's Rail** ◇ (Santa Isabel R) *Hypotaenidia [woodfordi] immaculata* One seen well by some of the group above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel. Quite different from the book, with dark



chocolate underparts, contrasting with sharply defined paler neck and head. Bill a dull greenish colour, paler towards the tip.

**Woodford's Rail** ◊ (Malaita R) *Hypotaenidia [woodfordi] sp. nov.* Great views of 3 on the road near to Auki. Much browner than Guadalcanal birds with conspicuous rufous barring in the flight feathers. They flew as well! Still

**Australasian Swamphen** *Porphyrio melanotus* First seen at Betikama, Guadalcanal. Also seen on Malaita and on Gizo [*samoensis*].

**Pale-vented Bush-hen** *Amaurornis moluccana* Great views of a pair and another briefly along the logging trail near Kirakira. Bill all green. Others heard on Makira [*ultima*].

**Beach Stone-curlew** *Esacus magnirostris* Heard only. Heard on Tetepare.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Non leader. Two on the runway at Rennell Airport, Tigoa.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Just one seen on Tetepare.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* A few seen offshore from Gizo [*pileatus*].

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus* A couple seen on the journey to Malaita. Plenty more, especially around Gizo [nominate].

**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* One seen on the journey to Malaita. Quite a few more in the New Georgia group [*cristatus*].

**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* A few seen offshore just east of Kirakira [nominate].

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana* Seen well on the way to Tetepare and off of Gizo [nominate].

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna pacifica* c6 seen passing offshore just east of Kirakira.

**Heinroth's Shearwater** ◊ *Puffinus heinrothi* One seen passing off the south coast of Gizo while seawatching.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* Good numbers seen at sea, the first on the crossing to Tetepare [nominate].

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Several seen, especially around Gizo [nominate].

**Little Pied Cormorant** *Microcarbo melanoleucos* A few seen on the lilly-covered lake on Gizo [nominate].

**Australian White Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca* Common near to Tigoa on Rennell. The form concerned, *pygmaeus*, does seem small!

**Nankeen Night Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus* An immature seen along the river on the walk out from Na'ara, Makira [*mandibularis*].

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* Two or three seen along the river in Tetepare [*solomonensis*].

**Great Egret (Eastern G E) *Ardea [alba] modesta*** Two seen at Betikama, Guadalcanal,

**Intermediate Egret (Plumed E) *Ardea [intermedia] plumifera*** One seen at Betikama, Guadalcanal.

**White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*** One on the runway at Rennell Airport, Tigoa, was a surprise.

**Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*** A few seen, the first on the way to Tetepare [nominate].

**Osprey (Eastern O) *Pandion [haliaetus] cristatus*** Just a few noted, the first on a nest in Honiara.

**Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata*** Several seen very well, the first at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal [gurney].

**Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster*** The form *pulchellus* first seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal, *rubianae* first seen on Tetepare.

**Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*** Several seen near to Tigoa on Rennell [nominate].

**Pied Goshawk** ◇ ***Accipiter albogularis*** Three forms noted. Form *woodfordi* first seen well near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal, *gilvus* seen well on the walk up Kolombangara, and the nominate seen very well on the trek in Makira.

**Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*** Fairly common. First seen at Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal [flavirostris].

**Sanford's Sea Eagle** ◇ ***Icthyophaga sanfordi*** First seen at Betikama on Guadalcanal, with many seen subsequently, and some great views, particularly on Makira.

**West Solomons Owl** ◇ ***Athene jacquinoti*** Good views of one spotlight above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel, and then excellent views of a pair at a roost there. Cracking bird.

**Guadalcanal Owl** ◇ ***Athene granti*** One spotlight briefly by Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal, then excellent views of a roosting pair in Honiara.

**Makira Owl** ◇ ***Athene roseoaxillaris*** Excellent spotlight views of one or two near to the camp at Bagohane, Makira. Great bird!

**Blyth's Hornbill *Rhyticeros plicatus*** Plenty seen well, the first at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. Also seen well on Malaita and elsewhere later in the tour.

**Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*** First seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. Plenty more seen [solomonensis].

**Ultramarine Kingfisher** ◇ ***Todiramphus leucopygius*** Excellent views at Mount Austen, and then several seen very well on Santa Isabel. A cracking kingfisher!

**Melanesian Kingfisher** ◇ ***Todiramphus tristrami*** First seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. Several others seen [alberti].

**Pacific Kingfisher** ◇ ***Todiramphus sacer*** A few seen well in and around Tigoa on Rennell [amoenus] and on Makira [solomonis].

**Beach Kingfisher** *Todiramphus saurophagus* First seen on the way to Tetepare. Plenty more seen with good sightings on Gizo and Makira for example [nominate].

**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* A few seen, the first in Honiara [nominate].

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* Plenty seen well, with the first good views on Tetepare. A distinctly blue subspecies [*salomonensis*].

**North Solomons Dwarf Kingfisher** ◇ *Ceyx meeki* Just one seen above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel. Seen in flight (several times) and perched briefly [nominate].

**New Georgia Dwarf Kingfisher** ◇ *Ceyx collectoris* Brilliant views of one on the walk up Kolombangara. Another seen more briefly and a couple more heard on the island.

**Makira Dwarf Kingfisher** ◇ *Ceyx gentianus* Stunning views of a few on Makira and a few others heard. A little cracker!

**Little Kingfisher** *Ceyx pusillus* Just one seen in flight on Tetepare [*richardsi*].

**Oriental Hobby** *Falco severus* A pair seen hunting from a dead trunk along the logging road at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. A couple of others later in the trip.

**Solomons Cockatoo** ◇ *Cacatua ducorsii* Plenty seen well, the first at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal.

**Finsch's Pygmy Parrot** ◇ *Micropsitta finschii* We encountered four forms. Best views were of the nominate form on Rennell and on Makira. We also recorded *aolae* which we heard on Malaita, *tristrami* which we heard and saw on Kolombangara and *nanina* which we heard above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel.

**Papuan Eclectus** *Eclectus polychloros* Common, first seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal [*solomonensis*].

**Song Parrot** ◇ (Northern S P) *Geoffroyus [heteroclitus] heteroclitus* One seen in flight along the logging road from Okla, ESE of Auki, Malaita. Also seen elsewhere, including good views on Santa Isabel.

**Song Parrot** ◇ (Rennell S P) *Geoffroyus [heteroclitus] hyacinthinus* Common on Rennell with many seen near to Tigoa.

**Duchess Lorikeet** ◇ *Chamosynoides margarethae* Seen in flight on Kolombangara, then excellent views of feeding birds above and below the camp at Bagohane, Makira.

**Meek's Lorikeet** ◇ *Vini meeki* Non-leader. A shape in the rain on Kolombangara!

**Yellow-bibbed Lory** ◇ *Lorius chlorocercus* Fairly common and widespread. First seen well at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal.

**Cardinal Lory** ◇ *Pseudeos cardinalis* Common around Honiara, with great looks at Betikama. Plenty of others seen well elsewhere.

**Coconut Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus* First seen at Mount Austen and Betikama, Guadalcanal. Many more seen later in the tour [*massena*].

**Black-faced Pitta** ◇ *Pitta anerythra* One seen well by some and briefly by others above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel. Another heard there. Generally hard to see, and very shy, despite much effort! Also, a caught captive bird seen in the hand. We attempted to release it, but sadly it was too weak and died overnight [nominate].

**Cardinal Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela cardinalis* Common near to Tigoa on Rennell [*sanfordi*] and quite a few seen in the lowlands on Makira [*pulcherrima*].

**Red-capped Myzomela** ◇ (Scarlet-naped M) *Myzomela lafargei* A pair seen in the canopy above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel.

**Crimson-rumped Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela eichhorni* Seen on Tetepare, then excellent views on both Kolombangara and Gizo [nominate].

**Black-headed Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela melanocephala* Several seen well at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal, and near to Parangiju Lodge.

**Sooty Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela tristrami* Fairly common on Makira, with several seen well.

**Makira Honeyeater** ◇ *Meliarchus sclateri* Several seen well on Makira, the first on the walk into Na'ara.

**Rennell Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone citrina* Plenty seen well near to Tigoa on Rennell.

**Barred Cuckooshrike** *Coracina lineata* Five forms recorded: *pusilla* on Guadalcanal; *gracilis* on Rennell; *ombriosa* throughout the New Georgia group; *makirae* on Makira and *nigrifrons* on Santa Isabel.

**Black-faced Cuckooshrike** *Coracina novaehollandiae* A single adult seen well at the Ravo River crossing on Makira [*melanops*].

**North Melanesian Cuckooshrike** ◇ *Coracina welchmani* Excellent views of a pair low down on the walk down at Kolombangara. Large, long-tailed and dark-eyed [*kulambangrae*].

**White-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina papuensis* First seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal. A few others also seen [*elegans*].

**Makira Cicadabird** ◇ *Edolisoma salomonis* Several seen well on Makira.

**Solomons Cuckooshrike** ◇ *Edolisoma holopolium* The nominate form was first seen near to Parangiju, whilst *tricolor* was seen on Malaita.

**Grey-capped Cicadabird** ◇ *Edolisoma remotum* The form *erythropterygium* was seen well on Malaita whilst *saturatius* was seen on Gizo.

**Long-tailed Triller** ◇ *Lalage leucopyga* Several seen well on Makira [*affinis*].

**Oriole Whistler** ♦ *Pachycephala orioloides* We saw four distinct forms of this variable species. On Guadalcanal we saw the form *cinnamomea*, on Malaita, the form *sanfordi*, on Kolombangara, the form *centralis*, and on Makira the form *christophori*.

**Rennell Whistler** ♦ *Pachycephala feminina* Excellent views of a family of three on Rennell. Others heard – great song, but elusive at times!

**Spangled Drongo** ♦ (Solomons D) *Dicrurus [bracteatus] longirostris* A few seen well on Makira. Long bill and distinct vocalizations were very apparent!

**Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Fairly common and widespread [*melaleuca*].

**Cockerell's Fantail** ♦ (White-winged C F) *Rhipidura [cockerelli] cockerelli* One seen well along the Waterfall Trail, near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal.

**Cockerell's Fantail (Black-breasted C F)** *Rhipidura [cockerelli] albina* Seen extremely well in a mixed flock on Tetepare. Also seen on Kolombangara.

**Grey Fantail** *Rhipidura albiscapa* A couple seen high up above the ridge camp at Bagohane, Makira [*brenchleyi*].

**Makira Fantail** ♦ *Rhipidura tenebrosa* Excellent views of a few on Makira, where first seen near to Na'ara Village.

**Rennell Fantail** ♦ *Rhipidura rennelliana* Many seen near to Tigoa on Rennell, where relatively common and conspicuous.

**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons* Two forms noted: the form *granti* was seen fairly briefly on the walk down Kolombangara, whilst the attractive *russata* was common and conspicuous on Makira.

**Rennell Shrikebill** ♦ *Clytorhynchus hamlini* Brilliant views of several near to Tigoa on Rennell. A real corker!

**Solomons Monarch** ♦ (Black-and-white M) *Symposiachrus [barbatus] barbatus* An adult and a juvenile seen well near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Also seen well above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel

**Solomons Monarch** ♦ (White-cheeked M) *Symposiachrus [barbatus] malaitae* Two adults seen well along the logging road from Okla, ESE of Auki, Malaita. Amazing tail pattern, and very black and white when flitting around!

**Kolombangara Monarch** ♦ *Symposiachrus browni* Two forms noted. The form *meeki* was seen well in a mixed flock at Tetepare, whilst the nominate was seen on the walk up Kolombangara.

**White-collared Monarch** ♦ *Symposiachrus vidua* Fairly common on Makira.

**Chestnut-bellied Monarch** ♦ *Monarcha [castaneiventris] castaneiventris* First seen well near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Also seen along the logging road from Okla, ESE of Auki, Malaita etc

**Chestnut-bellied Monarch (Makira M)** *Monarcha [castaneiventris] megarhynchus* Many seen well on Makira.

**White-capped Monarch** ♦ *Monarcha richardsii* Brilliant views on Tetepare, Kolombangara and Gizo. A real stunner.

**Steel-blue Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra ferrocyanea* Great views of the nominate at Mount Austen and near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. The form *malaitae* was seen well on Malaita whilst *feminina* was seen well on Tetepare and Gizo.

**Makira Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra cervinicauda* A few seen well on Makira, the first on the walk to Na'ara.

**Melanesian Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra caledonica* A few seen well, including orange-throated females, near to Tigoa on Rennell [*occidentalis*].

**White-billed Crow** ♦ *Corvus woodfordi* One seen on Mount Austen then great views of a flock of five near to Parangiju Lodge, Guadalcanal. Also, plenty seen well above Tiratonga on Santa Isabel

**Solomons Robin** ♦ *Petroica polymorpha* Brilliant views of a pair, particularly the cracking male, at Bagohane [nominate].

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica* Relatively common and widespread, first seen in Honiara [*subfusca*].

**Shade Bush Warbler** ♦ *Horornis parens* One seen well below the ridge camp at Bagohane, and another higher on the ridge the following day. A few more heard.

**Makira Leaf Warbler** ♦ *Phylloscopus makirensis* Small numbers seen well, and more heard, in the highlands of Makira, where first seen below the ridge camp at Bagohane.

**Bare-eyed White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops superciliosus* Common near to Tigoa on Rennell. Smart birds!

**Grey-throated White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops rendovae* A few small groups seen in the mountains of Makira.

**Yellow-throated White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops metcalfeii* First seen well just outside Bouala, Santa Isabel. Others seen well up the mountain [nominate].

**Malaita White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops stresemanni* A few seen well on Malaita. Common by voice but generally elusive.

**Gizo White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops luteirostris* Great views of several on Gizo. Cracking bird.

**Solomons White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops kulambangrae* Plenty seen on the trek up on Kolombangara.

**Dark-eyed White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops tetiparius* Common on Tetepare [nominate].

**Rennell White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops rennellianus* Small numbers seen daily around Tigoa on Rennell. Smart!

**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallica* Some decent flocks of mostly juveniles along the logging road from Okla, ESE of Auki, Malaita. many more seen later in the trip [*nitida*].

**Singing Starling** *Aplonis cantoroides* A few seen, the first seen well were at Tigoa on Rennell. Many more seen subsequently.

**Rennell Starling** ♦ *Aplonis insularis* Small numbers seen well near to Tigoa on Rennell.

**Brown-winged Starling** ♦ *Aplonis [grandis] grandis* The form *macrura* was common on Guadalcanal, whilst the nominate, which seemed glossy and dark eyed with less brown in the wings, was seen well on Tetepare.

**Brown-winged Starling** ♦ (Malaita S) *Aplonis [grandis] malaitae* Good scope views of one along the logging road on Malaita. Appeared glossier than *macrura*, and with an obvious white iris. Brown in the wings seemed less conspicuous.

**Makira Starling** ♦ *Aplonis dichroa* Common on Makira with many seen well.

**Long-tailed Myna** ♦ *Mino kreffti* The form *sanfordi* was first seen on Guadalcanal and the nominate form on Tetepare etc.

**Common Myna (introduced)** *Acridotheres tristis* A common introduction in Honiara.

**Makira Thrush** ♦ *Zoothera margaretae* A tricky bird which gave a few brief views after much effort and then fantastic spotlight views of a roosting bird at Na'ara. Stunner!

**Island Thrush** *Turdus poliocephalus* A few seen well near to Tigoa on Rennell [*rennellianus*].

**Midget Flowerpecker** ♦ *Dicaeum [aeneum] aeneum* The form *becki* was fairly common, first seen at Mount Austen, Guadalcanal whilst the nominate was seen on Santa Isabel for example.

**Midget Flowerpecker** ♦ (Malaita F) *Dicaeum [aeneum] malaitae* Several seen well along the logging road from Okla on Malaita.

**Mottled Flowerpecker** ♦ *Dicaeum tristrami* Common on Makira with many seen well.

**Olive-backed Sunbird** *Cinnyris jugularis* A few seen, the first around Honiara. Common in the New Georgia group [*flavigastra*].

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow (introduced)** *Passer montanus* First seen in Honiara.

**House Sparrow (introduced)** *Passer domesticus* Seen near to Honiara Airport.

## MAMMALS

**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin** *Stenella attenuate* I believe that this is most likely the dolphin species that we saw a couple of times.

**Solomon's Flying Fox** *Pteropus rayneri*

**Dark Sheath-tailed Bat** *Mosia nigrescens*

**Brown Rat (introduced)** *Rattus norvegicus* There's a rat in the kitchen...(well bar!).