



# Western Pacific Odyssey 2018

## Itinerary

### **Day 1: Tauranga**

Subject to demand we may be able to organise a visit to the Miranda Shorebird Centre for Wrybill, New Zealand Dotterel and other NZ specialities on the way from Auckland. Embark late afternoon in Tauranga, NZ and sail.

### **Day 2: Hauraki Gulf**

We plan to arrive in the Hauraki Gulf early morning and start the day near the Mokohinau Islands looking for Grey Ternlets. Other birds that we should encounter include Buller's Shearwaters, Australian Gannets, and possibly Little Blue Penguins. Later in morning, we will go to an area where previously we have had considerable success with finding the critically endangered New Zealand Storm-petrel and we will possibly chum or use fish oil to attract these birds. Other birds that we might see in the vicinity include White-faced Storm-petrel, Grey-faced Petrel, Little Shearwater and Black Petrel. This evening as we cruise up the east coast of North Island, we will undoubtedly be accompanied by some albatrosses with the possibilities including Campbell, Shy, Buller's and Wandering.

### **Days 3 to 4: At Sea**

We are at sea heading north to Norfolk Island. We will take the opportunity to offer some presentations on seabird identification as well as briefings on what we can expect to see once ashore on Norfolk Island. Species that have been encountered on this leg previously include Grey-faced, Black-winged, Kermadec and White-necked Petrels. Both Wedge-tailed and Short-tailed Shearwaters have also been recorded as have White-bellied and White-faced Storm-Petrels, White Terns and Red-tailed Tropicbirds.

### **Day 5: Norfolk Island**

Norfolk Island was a former Penal Colony and the island has been significantly modified but there are still some areas of forest and that is where we plan to spend our time ashore. The four species we are keenest to locate are the endemic Norfolk Island Parakeet, Slender-billed White-eye, Norfolk Robin and Norfolk Gerygone. Sadly the White-bellied White-eye appears to have followed several other endemics and is now considered to be extinct, although we should find some other regional specialities such as Pacific Emerald Dove and Grey Fantail.

By mid-afternoon, we will farewell Norfolk and begin cruising north. The birding will continue from the ship and we will be on the lookout for White-bellied Storm-petrel, Providence Petrel and Little Shearwater – all species we have seen previously in these waters.

**Day 6: At Sea**

It should be good 'birding' today especially for petrels which could include Tahiti, Collared, White-necked, Providence and Kermadec Petrels. If conditions are suitable a fish oil slick could bring in other species, especially storm-petrels.

**Day 7: New Caledonia**

Today we plan to visit the Parc de la Rivière Bleue National Park which is located some 60km from Noumea. We plan a day here searching for the endemics including the unique Kagu and highly range-restricted Crow Honeyeater. Other birds could include Horned and New Caledonian Parakeets, Yellow-bellied Robin, New Caledonian Imperial-pigeon, Southern Melanesian and New Caledonian Cuckoo-shrikes, New Caledonian Goshawk, and Red-throated Parrotfinch.

**Day 8: New Caledonia**

Shortly after dawn, we plan to be in waters where we have previously seen the 'New Caledonian Storm-Petrel'. This bird was first sighted and photographed on the WPO expedition in 2008 and has been seen a number of times since then. Although it seems to be closely related to New Zealand Storm-Petrel, there are a number of important differences and it is now generally considered that this is a long lost storm-petrel which was collected in Samoa almost 200 years ago and has not been seen since !!

We plan to lay fish oil slicks in an attempt to attract this interesting bird and these chumming sessions will undoubtedly bring in other species which could include Tahiti, Providence, Gould's and Collared Petrels as well as Short-tailed and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters.

By late morning we will be heading north along the coast of New Caledonia towards the Solomon Islands.

**Days 9 to 10: At Sea**

The sea birding is generally not as intense as further south but still equally enjoyable and rewarding. The one bird we really want to find is the Polynesian Storm-Petrel and we have previously had good success with this species off the New Caledonian coastline. Band-rumped Storm-Petrel has also been photographed several times on this leg, a species which previously was not considered to be present in the South West Pacific. Other possibilities including Kermadec, Herald, Collared and Tahiti Petrels as well as Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Red-footed Boobies, White-tailed Tropicbirds and both Great and Lesser Frigatebirds.

**Day 11: Rennell Island**

Rennell is a lone 'Polynesian Outlier' within the Solomon Island group (which are all Melanesian) and is the largest raised coral atoll in the world (86km long and 15km wide). Originally the island was covered in dense forest, but sadly large tracts have now been milled but fortunately the area where we plan to land still has sufficient tree cover that we have an excellent chance of finding the island's seven endemics, Rennell Parrot, Rennell Shrikebill, Rennell Gerygone (split in Jan 2017 in the new HBW Birdlife checklist), Bare-eyed White-eye, Rennell White-eye, Rennell Fantail and Rennell Starling,. Other species we may find include Pacific Imperial Pigeon, Silver-capped Fruit-Dove (near endemic), Melanesian Flycatcher, Cardinal Myzomela, Finsch's Pygmy Parrot and Island Thrush. There will also be the chance to enjoy a snorkel.

**Day 12: Anuta Island in the Makira Group**

Makira Island is located in the eastern Solomons. It is the most easterly of the main islands in the archipelago. Anuta is a small inshore island on the western side. We anchor close to Anuta and local villagers will escort us along a disused forestry road that winds up and inland where there is still some decent forest. Here we can expect to see an exciting range of new species including many which are either endemic to Makira or otherwise only occur on a few other islands. These could include Sooty Myzomela, San Cristobal Melidectes, San Cristobal Starling, Makira Flycatcher, Makira Cicadabird, White-collared Monarch, Mottled Flowerpecker, White-headed Fruit-Dove and Chestnut-bellied Imperial-pigeon. Other species could include Red-knobbed and Island Imperial-pigeons, Pied Goshawk, Pacific Baza and Solomon Islands Sea-Eagle.

Before departing we will enjoy the hospitality of the people in Anuta village, where the people are extremely welcoming.

### **Day 13: Mount Austin, Honiara, Guadalcanal**

We will anchor off Honiara and plan to depart the ship before dawn to rendezvous with a fleet of 4WD vehicles to take us to nearby Mt Austin. This is only a short distance from Honiara and the area has great birding potential with a fantastic list of endemics and other localised specialities. The species we could find include Ultramarine Kingfisher, Yellow-eyed, White-bellied and Solomons Cuckoo-shrikes, Brown-winged and Singing Starlings, Yellow-faced Myna, Chestnut-bellied and Black-and-white Monarchs, Steel-blue Flycatcher, Midget Flowerpecker and Black-faced Myzomela. There should also be a number of parrots and pigeons including Cardinal and Yellow-bibbed Lories, Singing and Eclectus Parrots, Finsch's Pygmy Parrot, Ducorps' Cockatoo, Mackinlay's Cuckoo Dove, Red-knobbed Imperial-Pigeon and Claret-breasted and Superb Fruit-Doves.

### **Day 14: Santa Isabel, Barora Fa Island, Poru Channel**

Today we will enjoy a full day exploring Santa Isabel and its surrounding islands which is often considered one of the most picturesque places in the Solomon Islands. We will leave the ship in the early morning by zodiac to explore the inlets and reef systems of the spectacular Poru Channel. We plan to land on Vakao Island where there will be a chance to explore the island's verdant rainforest and our main targets will be the highly localised Yellow-throated White-eye and Red-capped Myzomela. The area is also good for Ultramarine Kingfisher and Blyth's Hornbill should we have not yet seen these two species. After lunch back aboard the ship, we will head out again to choose a spot to while away the afternoon. You can go snorkeling and relax on the white sandy beach or join another trip into the forest where we will look for Melanesian Megapode, Black-and-white Monarch and other specialities.

### **Day 15: Kolombangara Island**

Kolombangara is a dormant 1,800m high volcano and we plan to land at the settlement of Ringi Cove and then head into the hills for a visit to the Imbu Rano Conservation Area. This reserve was set aside by the elders of the island who decided that logging of indigenous forests should cease above 400m. Below this, a sustainable forestry of exotic timbers has been established growing mainly teak and eucalyptus. The lodge at the reserve provides an uninterrupted view up towards the enormous forested crater of the Kolombangara volcano. Birdlife should be plentiful and we hope to see the spectacular Solomon Islands Sea Eagle, Cardinal, Duchess and Meek's Lorikeets, Pale Mountain Pigeon, White-capped Monarch, Crimson-rumped Myzomela, Ducorps' Cockatoo and Metallic and Singing Starling.

We may also have an opportunity to look for the elusive and highly localised Roviana Rail as we leave the reserve.

In the late afternoon, there may be time for a refreshing dip in the sea before the departure of the *Spirit of Enderby*.

On past voyages we have encountered a range of cetaceans as we sail towards the New Britain Trench and birders will want to keep a lookout for Heinroth's Shearwater which also occurs this area.

### **Day 16: At Sea off Bougainville**

We are at sea today and our target bird is Heinroth's Shearwater. Our course takes us up the west coast of Bougainville before crossing a deep water canyon known as the New Britain Trench. This area has proved very productive for cetaceans on previous voyages and the species we have seen include Sperm Whale, False Killer Whale, Fraser's Dolphin and both Dwarf and Pygmy Sperm Whales.

### **Day 17: Off the coast of New Ireland**

Our main target bird today is the recently rediscovered Beck's Petrel and we plan to begin chumming at day-break in an area where we have found this species on previous occasions. We have previously found Heinroth's Shearwater here too, so we will also be on the lookout for this poorly known and highly localised species. This is another area with an impressive list of cetaceans and those we have seen previously include False Killr Whale, Melon-headed Whale and Dwarf and Pygmy Sperm Whales.

### **Days 18 to 19: At Sea**

The wildlife watching on these days is generally fairly quiet so this is an excellent opportunity to relax after a busy time in the Solomons and off Bougainville and New Ireland. Nevertheless, there

are a number of species to look for and possibilities include Bulwer's Petrel, Tropical and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, White-tailed Tropicbird, White and Sooty Terns and both Great and Lesser Frigatebirds.

### **Days 20 to 21: Caroline Islands**

We will enter the protected (and historic) waters of the Chuuk (Truk) Lagoon in the late afternoon of day 20 and if there is time after immigration and clearance, you are welcome to go ashore and enjoy some late afternoon birding or a quiet stroll through town.

The following morning, we will (weather permitting) offer a couple of options. On Weno Island, where the ship will be berthed, you can walk around and there is a good chance of seeing species such as Caroline Islands White-eye, Micronesian Myzomela, Micronesian Starling, Oceanic Flycatcher, Caroline Reed Warbler, Caroline Ground-Dove, Caroline Islands Swiftlet and Purple-capped Fruit-Dove. The other option will be to take a long zodiac ride to Tol South Island where after a rather demanding climb (especially in the heat and humidity of these islands) there is a reasonable chance of seeing two other localised endemics, Faichuuk (or Great Truk) White-eye and Chuuk Monarch.

By late afternoon, we will depart Chuuk hoping to find Tropical Shearwater as we leave the outer reef.

### **Days 22 to 25: At Sea**

The first couple of days can be somewhat quiet but as we continue north, we will be on the lookout for a new range of seabirds with the possibilities including Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels, Bonin and Bulwer's Petrels and Wedge-tailed, Christmas and Bannerman's Shearwaters.

As we approach the Bonin Islands, we will keep a particular look out for the newly described Bryan's Shearwater. This area is also good for cetaceans especially Humpback Whales which are known to occur here in reasonable numbers.

### **Day 26: Chichi-jima, Bonin Islands**

We will clear Customs and Immigration into Japan at the largest of the Bonin Islands, Chichi-jima, after which there should be time to explore the settlement and surrounding area. Birds that can be found here include Blue Rock Thrush, Japanese White-eye, Brown-eared Bulbul and Japanese Bush Warbler.

### **Day 27: Haha-jima and Higashi Shima, Bonin Islands**

We plan to land early in the morning on the rarely visited island of Haha-jima which is only place in the world where the stunning Bonin Honeyeater can be found. After spending the morning ashore, we will return to the *Spirit of Enderby* for lunch and then sail north again to spend the late afternoon and evening off the east coast of Chichi Jima which is the only known breeding site for the recently described and extremely rare Bryan's Shearwater.

### **Day 28: At Sea**

Relax at sea as we sail north from the Bonin Islands. We will be on the lookout for seabirds with the possibilities including Tristram's Storm-petrel, Bonin Petrel and Bannerman's Shearwater.

### **Day 29: Torishima Island**

Landings are not permitted at Torishima Island, but we plan to cruise as close to shore as the Captain will permit in the hope of seeing the spectacular Short-tailed Albatross which breeds on the island. We plan to begin chumming early in the morning and will continue for as long as it takes to bring the birds around. Other species that could be attracted include both Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses, Streaked Shearwater and both Tristram's and Matsudaira's Storm-Petrels.

### **Day 30: Miyake-jima Island**

We plan to land this morning on the Island of Miyake- Jima and visit the Tsubota Nature Centre where walks through the forest provide an opportunity to see species including the endemic Izu Thrush, Ijima's Leaf-warbler and Owston's Tit. We also hope to find Japanese Wood Pigeon and Japanese Pygmy Woodpecker. We will end our birding on the expedition by sailing close to some islets where it is possible to see Japanese Murrelet.

### **Day 31: Yokohama, Japan**

Once breakfast and arrival formalities have been completed in Yokohama, we will disembark the *Spirit of Enderby*.

NB: As applies to all expedition cruises, the exact itinerary will be subject to weather and local conditions. All landings are subject to government permissions.

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