



SOUTH WEST PACIFIC ODYSSEY

1st–17th April 2017

SYSTEMATIC LIST

The taxonomy and English names used in this checklist generally follows the recommendations of the *International Ornithologists' Union's World Bird List* with revisions made where an alternative name/taxonomy is considered more appropriate.

This systematic list was **compiled by Chris Collins** (based on the figures agreed at the nightly logs) and includes all species recorded between departing Tauranga, New Zealand and arriving at Kokopo, New Britain.

Accurately counting seabirds at sea is extremely difficult (eg as one can never be sure which birds are following or revisiting the ship), so the system outlined below was adopted, with this also used for the more numerous land birds:

1-10 = actual number seen

11-100 = A

101-1,000 = B

1,001-10,000 = C

10,001-100,000 = D

Non-native introductions are shown in brackets.

BIRDS

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

Six birds were logged on the zodiac cruise on 14 April whilst cruising the channels around Vakao and Barora Fa Islands, Santa Isabel archipelago.

Melanesian Scrubfowl *Megapodius eremita*

This species was heard on four of the five days spent in the Solomon Islands but was not seen.

White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche steadi*

A lone bird was logged on 3 April whilst travelling north from the Three Kings Islands.

Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki*

One of the major specialities of the voyage, with a low A of this extremely poorly known (and seemingly highly localised) species being recorded off New Ireland on 17 April.

Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*

This species was seen on nine dates between 4-17 April (day south of Norfolk Island – New Ireland) with A logged on four dates and single figure counts on five other days.

Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma gouldi*

This species was seen on a daily basis between the Hauraki Gulf and New Caledonia (2-6 April) with the highest counts being a high A on both 3 and 4 April (between the Three Kings Islands and Norfolk Island).

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*

This species is not recorded annually on this expedition, however, two individuals were seen with sightings on both 4 and 5 April (waters off Norfolk Island and the sea day to the south).

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*

Seen on five dates between the Three Kings Islands and the sea day south of Santa Ana, with the highest count being near the Three Kings where a low A was logged.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*

Seen on a daily basis between the Hauraki Gulf (2 April) and the sea day south of New Caledonia (6 April). There were single figure counts on four dates with A logged on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (4 April).

Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*

This species has generally finished breeding with most birds having left their New Zealand breeding grounds by the time the SWPO starts, although a lone bird was seen shortly after the ship had left the wharf at Tauranga (1 April) with a low A then logged on the following two days.

Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*

Seen on six dates between the Three Kings Islands (3 April) and northern New Caledonia (9 April). The highest count was off southern New Caledonia (8 April) when B was logged.

Black-winged Petrel *Pterodroma nigripennis*

Encountered on all sea days from the Three Kings Islands (3 April) until southern New Caledonia (8 April) with A logged on the first three dates.

Magnificent Petrel *Pterodroma (brevipes) magnificens*

Two individuals of this recently described (sub)species were seen on 9 April off the northern end of New Caledonia.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur*

A very low A was logged in the Hauraki Gulf on 2 April.

Bulweria Petrel sp *Bulweria sp*

Three Bulweria petrels were seen offshore from New Ireland on 17 April. Whilst one of these appeared to be a Bulwer's Petrel, at least one of the other birds may not have been this species and follow up work on its identification is continuing.

Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*

The first sightings were not long after the ship left Tauranga (1 April) when a very low A was recorded. There were then daily records for the subsequent four days with the highest count being on the sea day near the Three Kings where A was logged.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

Eight birds were seen off New Ireland (17 April) with a lone individual the previous day offshore from Bougainville.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

This species seems to have become significantly less common on recent SWPO voyages with two birds in the Hauraki Gulf (3 April) and lone individuals the following day and on the day south of Santa Ana (10 April) being the only sightings.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

This was amongst the most frequently encountered species on the voyage with sightings on 13 dates. The first record was offshore from the Three Kings (3 April) and birds were then seen on an almost daily basis for the rest of the expedition. On the majority of dates, A or B was logged, although over 1,000 individuals (ie a low C) were logged in the afternoon after leaving Noumea (8 April).

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*

Only seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 2 April where a low B was recorded and the following day when A was logged.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*

This species was seen on ten dates between a day south of Norfolk Island (4 April) and Cap St George, New Ireland (17 April). For the first six days when this species was recorded (4-10 April excluding 7 April when ashore on New Caledonia), B or C was logged with smaller numbers seen subsequently.

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavioides*

A low A was logged as the ship headed north from Tauranga in the afternoon of 1 April with two birds seen the following day in the Hauraki Gulf.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*

Only recorded on three dates with the first sightings on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (4 April) when three birds were seen. The following morning a low A was logged as we cruised northwards from the island with the final sighting being a lone bird the next day.

The birds were presumably of the race *assimilis* which breeds on Norfolk Island. It is interesting to note, however, that according to Margaret Christian who wrote the field guide to the birds of the island, there are summer and winter breeding populations which vary so markedly in size that they require different size leg rings !!

Atoll ("Tropical") Shearwater *Puffinus (bailloni) dichrous*

Somewhat unexpectedly, the only sighting was a lone bird a day south of Santa Ana (10 April). Although the Audubon's/Little/Tropical Shearwater complex has recently been split by several authorities, it seems clear that the situation has not been fully resolved, as there are plumage differences between some of the different populations, winter and summer breeders on the same island etc. The name 'Atoll shearwater' has, therefore, been used to describe the birds recorded on this voyage, ie to

differentiate them from those in the Indian Ocean, however, even this is undoubtedly a simplification of the situation.

Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi*

A total of three individuals were seen with a lone bird off Bougainville on 16 April and two off New Ireland the following day.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

This species was observed on eight dates during the voyage. All counts were in single figures with the majority of the birds seen (eighteen of the twenty five individuals logged) being recorded between 2-4 April, ie to the south of Norfolk Island.

A number of the birds were seen flying strongly in a northerly direction and were presumably migrants heading for the Northern Hemisphere.

New Zealand Storm-petrel *Fregetta maorianus*

Oiling in the outer Hauraki Gulf for this species (2 April) proved highly successful with at least fifteen birds visiting our slick.

There were then sightings throughout the rest of the day as the ship cruised north, with a total of 43 individuals being recorded. This is by far the highest number recorded on any SWPO voyage and suggests the population is continuing to increase following the clearance of introduced pests from many of the Hauraki Gulf islands.

The following day a lone individual was also seen in the vicinity of the Three Kings.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*

The only sightings were two birds as the ship cruised north from the Hauraki Gulf (2 April).

"Solomon Band-rumped Storm-petrel" *Oceanodroma sp.*

Five birds which closely resemble Band-rumped Storm-petrel were seen off the northern end of New Caledonia (9 April) with another found the following day.

This is at least the fifth time that similar looking birds have been recorded in this general area on SWPO expeditions (ie off the northern New Caledonian coastline or in the Solomon Sea). Given Band-rumped Storm-petrel is only known to breed in three parts of the Northern Pacific and according to Onley and Scofield (*Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World*) is unknown in the south-west Pacific, it seems highly likely that there is an unknown breeding population somewhere in the general area of New Caledonia or the southern Solomon Islands.

As Band-rumped Storm-petrel has now been split into several species in the Atlantic, if the same happens to the birds in the Pacific, it seems not inconceivable that the birds being seen on the SWPO are an undescribed taxon.....

Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

Good numbers were seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 2 April with A being logged. The previous evening similar numbers were recorded offshore from Tauranga.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

The first sighting was a day south of Norfolk Island (4 April: 1), with birds then seen on seven of the subsequent eleven days, although all counts were in low single figures with the highest number being around Norfolk Island (5 April) where five birds were logged.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

This species was seen on seven dates. The vast majority of these were found during the second half of the expedition with a total of fourteen birds being recorded.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*

Although many of the more distant frigatebirds seen during the voyage were not identified to species, there were confirmed sightings of Great Frigatebird on four dates with the first sighting (2 birds) being offshore from Norfolk Island on 5 April.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

This species was seen on four dates between 11-17 April with A logged on two occasions.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

This species was recorded on eight dates during the voyage with the largest numbers (A) recorded close to Norfolk Island (5 April).

It is worth noting that the birds which breed on Norfolk Island (and on the Kermadec and Lord Howe Islands) are 'Tasman Boobies' which may eventually be treated as a full species given there are structural and plumage differences from other populations. These birds also have dark eyes unlike those seen later in the voyage which had yellow eyes.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

This species was encountered on eight dates between northern New Caledonia and New Ireland (9-17 April) with A logged on two occasions and all other counts being in single figures.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

Seen on eight dates between 4-17 April (sea day south of Norfolk Island-New Ireland) with the highest count being off New Ireland where A was recorded.

Normally this species is first encountered off New Caledonia on SWPO expeditions so seeing it more than 500 nautical miles south of there was a major surprise. These sightings do, however, continue a pattern of recent southerly records including the first New Zealand mainland record which was found shortly before SWPO 2017.

Australian Gannet *Morus serrator*

This species was recorded on each of the first three days of the trip with the highest count being in the Hauraki Gulf on 2 April with several hundred individuals seen on the Maori Rocks where they breed.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*

The only records were shortly after the *Spirit of Enderby* left the wharf at Tauranga (1 April) as there is a small colony of this species (low A) at the entrance to the harbour.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Three birds were observed on the trip to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (7 April).

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

A lone bird was seen on the excursion to Riviere Bleue on 7 April.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta*

Three birds were seen during the excursion at Barora Fa (14 April) with a single individual logged the following day at Kolombangara.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*

A lone individual was seen on the trip to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (7 April).

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*

Seen on five dates/islands between New Caledonia and Kolombangara with a total of ten individuals being logged.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata*

The only sightings were three birds at Barora Fa Island (14 April).

Rufous Night-Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*

This species was only recorded at Barora Fa Island (14 April) with a single individual being seen.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus*

This species was seen in small numbers on three dates with the first being two birds shortly after leaving the wharf at Noumea (8 April). Three birds were then subsequently recorded in the Solomon Islands.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*

This species was only seen on New Caledonia with five individuals recorded on the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue (7 April).

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur Indus*

This species was seen on a daily basis in the Solomons, although all counts were in single figures with the highest numbers being on Ugi (12 April) where seven birds were logged.

Sanford's (Solomon Islands) Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus sanfordi*

This impressive Solomon Islands endemic was seen on days in the Solomons with a total of ten individuals being recorded.

Variable Goshawk *Accipiter hiogaster*

Lone birds were seen at Barora Fa (14 April) and the following day ashore on Kolombangara.

Pied Goshawk *Accipiter albogularis*

This species is endemic to the Solomon Islands with the only record being a lone bird on 11 April (Santa Ana/Star Harbour).

New Caledonia Goshawk *Accipiter haplochrous*

This tricky species was seen during the excursion on New Caledonia to Riviere Bleue (7 April) with a single individual noted.

Woodford's Rail *Nesoclopeus woodfordi*

This extremely elusive species was heard but not seen on the excursion to Mount Koghi, Guadalcanal (13 April).

Roviana Rail *Gallirallus roviganae*

A lone individual was spotted on the drive back to the ship after visiting the highlands on Kolombangara (15 April).

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Four birds were noted whilst travelling between Noumea and Riviere Bleue on 7 April.

Kagu *Rhynchetos jubatus*

This species is always one of the major landbird highlights of the expedition with at least a dozen birds seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 7 April.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

A low A was recorded on Kolombangara (15 April) with the only other sightings being two individuals on 11 April (Santa Ana/Star Harbour).

Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus*

A lone bird seen on Santa Ana (11 April) was the first time this species had been recorded on any SWPO/WPO expedition.

South Island Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus finschi*

A high A was logged on the mudflats at Tauranga (1 April).

Variable Oystercatcher *Haematopus unicolor*

This species was only seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga (1 April) with several dozen individuals observed on the wharf and nearby mudflats.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incarna*

Two birds were noted during the expedition with a flyby on 6 April (at sea between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia) and another on 11 April (Santa Ana/Star Harbour).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

This widespread species was recorded on three days. There were two sightings in the Solomons with the higher total being a low A logged on Barora Fa (14 April).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

A small flock was seen offshore from New Ireland on 17 April.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

This species was reasonably numerous (A and low B) around the harbours of Tauranga (1 April) and Noumea, New Caledonia (7-8 April) with the only other sightings being around the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf (2 April) where similar numbers were recorded.

It is worth noting that until recently the birds in New Zealand were regarded as an endemic species, Red-billed Gull, but both the Birdlife International Illustrated Checklist and the *International Ornithologists' Union's World Bird List* now lumps these birds with the more widespread Silver Gull.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicus*

The only records were around Tauranga (1 April) with a low A logged.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

This species was first seen on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (4 April) when two individuals were logged. It was then recorded on nine subsequent dates with the highest count being B which was recorded off New Ireland (17 April).

Black Noddy *Anous minutes*

This species was encountered on a regular basis between Norfolk Island (5 April) and New Ireland (17 April) with C logged on two occasions, although most day counts were in single figures.

Grey Ternlet *Procelsterna albivitta*

This species is regular at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf and also breeds around Norfolk Island. A low A was logged at the Maori Rocks (2 April) with a total of six birds then seen off Norfolk Island (5 April) and the sea day to the south of there.

White Tern *Gygis alba*

This species breeds on Norfolk Island and A was logged offshore from the island on 5 April. There were single figure counts on six other dates between the Three Kings (3 April) and New Ireland (17 April).

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscata*

This widespread species was first encountered on the sea day between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia (6 April). It was seen on four subsequent occasions with the highest count being a low C (ie in excess of 1,000 birds) off New Ireland on 17 April.

Grey-backed Tern *Sterna lunata*

This species rarely approaches ships although birds were seen on four dates between the sea day south of Santa Ana (10 April) and New Ireland (17 April). The highest count was on the last of these dates when a very low A was recorded.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*

This tropical seabird was encountered on an almost daily basis between 10-17 April with the highest count being a high A (ie approaching 100 individuals) off New Ireland on 17 April.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Two birds off New Ireland on 17 April were the only record on the expedition.

Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis*

Three individuals were seen shortly after the ship left the wharf at Noumea on 8 April.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

A lone bird was recorded near Tauranga on 1 April.

White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata*

Only seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga on 1 April where a low A was logged.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

This species was only recorded during the latter stages of the expedition with almost daily sightings between Santa Ana (11 April) and Kolombangara (15 April).

Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergi*

This species was seen close to the majority of islands between New Caledonia and New Ireland (with sightings on eight dates) although almost all day totals were in single figures.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

There were four sightings during the expedition with the first record being a day south of Norfolk Island (4 April).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Like the previous species, this skua was only recorded on a few occasions with four individuals logged.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

Two birds were recorded off the Three Kings (3 April) with three the following day.

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis*

Five individuals were seen on the excursion to Mount Koghi (8 April).

[Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*]

This Asian introduction was seen on New Caledonia, with A recorded on both 7 and 8 April.

Mackinlay's Cuckoo-dove *Macropygia mackinlayi*

This species is reasonably widespread in the Solomon Islands and was seen on Santa Ana, Ugi, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. The highest count was on the last of these islands, where a low A was logged (15 April).

Stephan's Dove *Chalcophaps stephani*

Three on Ugi (12 April) were the only sightings on the expedition.

Bronze Ground-Dove *Gallicolumba beccarii*

The only record of this tricky species was a single bird at Star Harbour, Makira (11 April).

Silver-capped Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus richardsii*

This species is endemic to Rennell, Santa Ana, Ugi and a few other islets and two were seen on Santa Ana on 11 April with a very low A logged the following day on Ugi.

Superb Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus superbus*

Two were found on the excursion on Kolombangara on 15 April.

Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus solomonensis*

Six birds were seen on 11 April (Santa Ana/Star Harbour) with one the following day at Ugi.

Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus viridis*

Another range-restricted fruit-dove which was seen on Guadalcanal (13 April: 3), Barora Fa (14 April: 1) and Kolombangara (15 April: 4).

White-headed Fruit-Dove *Ptilinopus eugeniae*

Endemic to Makira, Santa Ana, Ugi and a few other islets, this species was seen very well during our landing on Ugi (12 April) where two individuals were logged.

Cloven-feathered Dove *Drepanoptila holosericea*

This fancy New Caledonian endemic is not seen on all SWPO visits to Riviere Bleue, however, a lone bird was found during our excursion to the park (7 April).

Red-knobbed Imperial-pigeon *Ducula rubricera*

This impressive looking pigeon was seen on all the islands visited in the Solomons with the highest count being a low A at both Santa Ana/Star Harbour (11 April) and Barora Fa (15 April).

Island Imperial-pigeon *Ducula pistrinaria*

This nomadic species was seen in small numbers on all days in the Solomon Islands with the exception of Guadalcanal.

Chestnut-bellied Imperial-pigeon *Ducula brenchleyi*

A somewhat range-restricted Solomons endemic which was seen on both 11 and 12 April with the highest count being on the latter date (Ugi Island) when a low A was recorded.

New Caledonian Imperial-pigeon *Ducula goliath*

A lone bird was recorded at Riviere Bleue on 7 April, with two more logged the following day at Mount Koghi.

Pale Mountain Pigeon *Gymnophaps solomonensis*

Three of these distinctive pigeons were seen on Kolombangara on 15 April.

Ducorps' Cockatoo *Cacatua ducorpsii*

This species was first seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 13 April with two birds being recorded. On both subsequent days (ie Barora Fa and Kolombangara), it was also seen with a low A logged at Barora Fa.

Cardinal Lory *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*

This brilliantly coloured parrot was seen on Ugi, Guadalcanal, Barora Fa and Kolombangara although there was only one occasion (Barora Fa: 14 April) when more than a single figure count was logged.

Coconut ("Rainbow") Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

This species was first recorded in Noumea, New Caledonia (7 April: low B), and was also seen on a couple of islands in the Solomons although only four birds were noted.

Yellow-bibbed Lory *Lorius chlorocercus*

A Solomon Islands endemic which was recorded on each of the first three days in the Solomons although a total of only six birds were noted.

Meek's Lorikeet *Charmosyna meeki*

Three birds were found on the excursion on Kolombangara (15 April).

Duchess Lorikeet *Charmosyna margarethae*

A low A was logged at both Barora Fa and Kolobangara (14 and 15 April).

Finsch's Pygmy-parrot *Micropsitta finschii*

Although this species is reasonably numerous in the Solomons, its tiny size can make it difficult to spot with the only sighting on the expedition being four birds at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal (13 April).

Horned Parakeet *Eunymphicus cornutus*

Good numbers of this New Caledonian endemic were seen in 2017 with four birds at Riviere Bleue (7 April) and six the following morning at Mount Koghi.

New Caledonian Parakeet *Cyanoramphus saissetti*

Another species which is not seen on every visit to New Caledonia but three birds were found during the visit to Riviere Bleue (12 April) with a further three individuals logged the following day at Mount Koghi.

It is worth noting that in the recently published Birdlife Illustrated Checklist, this species has been lumped with Red-crowned Parakeet (of New Zealand), although this proposal has not been accepted by other 'authorities'.

Singing Parrot *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*

Seen on both Guadalcanal and Kolombangara (13 and 15 April) with a total of three birds recorded.

Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus*

Another beautiful bird which was recorded on three days whilst travelling through the Solomon Islands with a total of sixteen individuals noted.

Pacific Koel *Eudynamys orientalis*

Heard but not seen on Barora Fa (14 April).

Buff-headed Coucal *Centropus milo*

This raucous Coucal, which is endemic to the Solomon Islands, makes an almost mammalian-like call and was found at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (13 April) with a presumed pair seen well during the morning excursion.

A couple of days later, it was heard but not seen on Kolombangara.

Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta*

Seen on both days ashore in New Caledonia (7-8 April) and then on five islands visited in the Solomons with A logged on each occasion.

White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus spodiopygius*

Only recorded in very low numbers in New Caledonia (7 April) with two individuals seen in Noumea.

Uniform Swiftlet *Aerodramus vanikorensis*

Seen on four days whilst cruising through the Solomons, although on most occasions there were only single figure counts.

Moustached Treeswift *Hemiprocne mystacea*

This impressive bird was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (13 April: 3), Bararo Fa (14 April: 6) and Kolombangara (15 April: 1).

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

A single individual of the race *salomonensis* were seen on Barora Fa on 14 April. These birds differ markedly from the birds in Europe having blue ear-coverts and richer purple-blue upperparts and surely warrant further taxonomic study.

Ultramarine Kingfisher *Todirhamphus leucopygius*

A lone individual of this much desired Solomon Islands endemic was seen extremely well at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 13 April, with a pair then found the following day in the mangroves on Barora Fa.

Pacific Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sacer*

Following the recent splitting of 'Collared Kingfisher' into multiple species, four Pacific Kingfishers were seen on the day at Santa Ana/Star Harbour (11 April) with eight the following day at Ugi Island.

Beach Kingfisher *Todirhamphus saurophaga*

This species was first recorded on Ugi (12 April: 1) with four birds then seen a couple of days later during the zodiac cruise around the channels between the ship and Barora Fa Island.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sanctus*

The only sightings were during the excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (7 April) when two birds were recorded.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

Noted on four days during our landings in the Solomon Islands with the highest count being on Ugi where a low A was logged (12 April).

Blyth's Hornbill *Aceros plicatus*

Seen on a daily basis on the last three days of landings in the Solomon Islands with the highest count being a low A at Barora Fa on 14 April.

New Caledonia Myzomela *Myzomela caledonica*

The first of six species of Myzomela recorded on the voyage with a low A logged at Riviere Bleue on 7 April and two birds the following day at Mount Koghi.

Cardinal Myzomela *Myzomela cardinalis*

This species was reasonably numerous on Ugi Island with a low A logged (12 April). The previous day three birds were seen at Santa Ana/Star Harbour.

Red-capped Myzomela *Myzomela lafargei*

Restricted to a few islands in the Northern Solomon Islands, this species was seen on the landing at Barora Fa with four individuals being recorded (14 April).

Crimson-rumped (Yellow-vented) Myzomela *Myzomela eichhorni*

A relatively scarce and range-restricted Solomon Island endemic, with a low A logged on Kolombangara (15 April).

Black-headed Myzomela *Myzomela melanocephala*

Endemic to some of the islands in the Central Solomons, six individuals were seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 13 April.

Sooty Myzomela *Myzomela tristrami*

Seen in modest numbers at Santa Ana/Star Harbour and Ugi (11-12 April).

Dark-brown (“Grey-eared) Honeyeater *Lichmera incana*

This species is more readily found in scrubby and urban habitats than in the forest at Riviere Bleue with five seen there (7 April) and a low A logged the following day at Mount Koghi.

Barred Honeyeater *Phylidonyris undulata*

Like the previous species, this endemic is usually more numerous at Mount Koghi than Riviere Bleue with a total of fourteen individuals logged across the two days.

Crow Honeyeater *Gymnomyza aubryana*

This is generally the trickiest endemic at Riviere Bleue and is only found on about 50% of our visits to New Caledonia and then not necessarily seen by everyone in the group. An extremely obliging individual was, however, located on this year’s excursion and was seen by all the keen birders.

New Caledonian Friarbird *Philemon diemenensis*

This endemic was well seen on the excursion to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (7 April: 5) with another two found the following day at Mount Koghi.

San Cristobal Melidectes (‘Makira Honeyeater’) *Meliarchus sclateri*

This impressive honeyeater, which is endemic to Makira, was seen during our shore excursion at Star Harbour with at least six individuals recorded.

Fan-tailed Gerygone *Gerygone flavolateralis*

Approximately eight individuals were seen on New Caledonia during the excursion to Riviere Bleue (7 April) with six more found the following day at Mount Koghi.

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*

This species is generally only encountered in ‘open country’ habitats on New Caledonia with five birds being seen during the trip to Riviere Bleue on 7 April and another two the following day at Mount Koghi.

Southern Melanesian Cuckooshrike *Coracina caledonica*

At least three birds were seen on New Caledonia with two at Riviere Bleue on 7 April and one the following day at Mount Koghi.

It is worth noting that until relatively recently the birds on New Caledonia were lumped with those in the Solomon Islands, however, these have now been split into two separate species by most 'authorities'.

Yellow-eyed Cuckooshrike *Coracina lineata*

This cuckooshrike was seen on Guadalcanal and Kolombangara (13 and 15 April) with a total of ten individuals logged.

White-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina papuensis*

As with the above species, this cuckooshrike was only seen in the Solomons with a lone bird logged at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (13 April), six the following day on Barora Fa and a singleton on Kolombangara (15 April).

New Caledonian Cuckooshrike *Coracina analis*

This New Caledonian endemic is generally only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue and 2017 was no exception with two individuals recorded on 7 April.

Makira Cicadabird *Coracina solomonis*

Four individuals of this Makira endemic were seen during our afternoon shore excursion at Star Harbour (11 April).

Solomon Islands Cuckooshrike *Coracina holopolia*

This species is usually the least frequently encountered cuckooshrike (in the Solomons) on SWPO expeditions and 2017 was no exception with a lone bird on Kolombangara being the only sighting.

Long-tailed Triller *Lalage leucopyga*

Three individuals were seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 7 April, with a single individual the following day at Mount Koghi. The highest count, however, was in the Solomons where a low A was logged on Ugi (12 April).

Oriole Whistler *Pachycephala orioloides*

Although this species was heard on four dates during our time in the Solomon Islands, none were seen.

New Caledonian ("Melanesian") Whistler *Pachycephala caledonica*

This species is generally found in more forested habitats than the next species (ie Rufous Whistler) and at least four birds were recorded at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 7 April with a further individual the following day at Mount Koghi.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*

Two birds were seen during the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (7 April) with a further five noted the following day at Mount Koghi.

Willie-wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*

Seen on four dates during our time in the Solomons although on most occasions, the day count was in low single figures.

White-winged Fantail *Rhipidura cockerelli*

This fantail seems to be less numerous than some other species in the same family but three individuals were found during our time in the Solomon Islands with a lone bird at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (13 April) and two the following day on Barora Fa.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

A total of nine individuals of this reasonably widespread fantail were recorded on New Caledonia (7-8 April).

Streaked Fantail *Rhipidura spilodera*

This localised fantail (which is only found on New Caledonia and Vanuatu) was found at Riviere Bleue (7 April: 4) and Mount Koghi (8 April: 4).

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*

Four individuals were found on Santa Ana (where there is an endemic subspecies) with three, much blacker, birds the following day (12 April) on Ugi.

The differences between these 'subspecies' were striking and further taxonomic work on the subspecies/species boundaries in this fantail is surely needed given how much variety there is in their plumage.

Southern Shrikebill *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides*

This species seems to have become somewhat trickier to find at Riviere Bleue in recent years but two birds were seen there on 7 April with another the following day at Mount Koghi.

Chestnut-bellied Monarch *Monarcha castaneiventris*

This Solomon Islands endemic was seen on Santa Ana, Makira (Star Harbour), Ugi and Guadalcanal with a total of fourteen individuals being logged.

The birds on Santa Ana and Ugi were completely dark and quite different to those seen elsewhere (where they have chestnut bellies) and the recently published second volume of the Illustrated Checklist produced by Birdlife International and Lynx Editions now splits these birds as a different species, Ugi Monarch *Monarcha ugiensis*. The same publication also treats the birds on Makira as a different species, Makira Monarch *Monarcha megarhynchus*, and if this approach is adopted, three different species were seen on the expedition.

White-capped Monarch *Monarcha richardsii*

This monarch is only found in the New Georgia group of islands (within the Solomons) and four individuals were seen on 15 April during our shore excursion on Kolombangara.

Kolombangara Monarch *Monarcha browni*

Another localised endemic with a lone individual recorded on Kolombangara (15 April).

Solomons Monarch *Symposiachrus barbatus*

This slightly more widespread Solomon endemic was heard but not seen on the excursion on Barora Fa (14 April).

Steel-blue Flycatcher *Myiagra ferrocyanea*

Another Solomon Islands endemic which was seen on Guadalcanal (13 April: 3) and Kolombangara (15 April: 4).

Makira Flycatcher *Myiagra cervinicauda*

Despite its name, this species also occurs on Santa An and Ugi and four individuals were seen on Ugi on 17 April.

Melanesian (“New Caledonian”) Flycatcher *Myiagra caledonica*

This species was seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (7 April: 5) and heard the following day at Mount Koghi.

New Caledonian Crow *Corvus moneduloides*

This species was not seen at Riviere Bleue (where it can be tricky to find) but the following day, at least a dozen birds were seen at Mount Koghi (8 April).

This species is regarded as one of the most intelligent bird species in the world and individuals are regularly recorded using sticks as tools to help procure food.

White-billed (“Guadalcanal”) Crow *Corvus woodfordi*

This corvid can be extremely elusive at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal although two birds were well seen there (13 April), however, the following day, a low A was recorded at Barora Fa.

Yellow-bellied Robin *Eopsaltria flaviventris*

A low A of this New Caledonian endemic was logged at Riviere Bleue (7 April).

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*

The only sighting on the expedition was a lone bird on 5 April not far from Norfolk Island.

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*

Seen on all the islands visited in the Solomons with the exception of Ugi with A logged on each day it was recorded.

[Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*]

This Asian introduction was seen around Noumea, New Caledonia on 7 April.

Solomon Islands White-eye *Zosterops rendovae*

This slightly confusingly named white-eye is only found in the New Georgia group of islands (including Kolombangara) within the Solomons archipelago. During our shore six birds were logged there on 15 April.

Yellow-throated White-eye *Zosterops metcalfei*

This range-restricted white-eye was seen on Barora Fa on 14 April with a low A logged.

Green-backed White-eye *Zosterops xanthochrous*

This New Caledonian endemic is reasonably common and a low A was recorded on both excursions on the island (7-8 April).

Silver-eye *Zosterops lateralis*

Four birds on 7 April (excursion to Riviere Bleue) were the only record on the expedition.

Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica*

Seen on all islands we visited in the Solomons with the exception of Guadalcanal with A logged on each occasion.

Singing Starling *Aplonis cantoroides*

Another starling which was recorded on most days in the Solomon Islands (again not seen on Guadalcanal) with a low A found on most days.

Brown-winged Starling *Aplonis grandis*

This Solomon Islands endemic species is reasonably reliable at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal with a low A logged on 13 April. Three birds were then seen a couple of days later on Kolombangara.

Despite its name, the diagnostic pale brown primaries can, on occasions, be moderately difficult to see when birds are perched.

San Cristobal Starling *Aplonis dichroa*

At least six individuals of this localised endemic were seen at Star Harbour on Makira on 11 April.

Striated Starling *Aplonis striata*

Reasonable numbers of this New Caledonian endemic were found at Mount Koghi with a low A logged (8 April).

Long-tailed Myna *Mino kreffti*

This Myna (which has recently been split into two species – Long-tailed and Yellow-faced with the latter now regarded as a Papua New Guinea endemic) was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (13 April: 8), Barora Fa (14 April: 2) and Kolombangara (15 April: 5).

[**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis*]

This Asian introduction was reasonably numerous on New Caledonia (7-8 April) and in Honiara, Guadalcanal (13 April) with A recorded on all three dates.

Midget Flowerpecker *Dicaeum aeneum*

This Solomon Islands endemic is not uncommon at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal and on Barora Fa but its small size can make getting good views somewhat challenging. Nevertheless, we had some decent looks on both landings with a total of fourteen individuals being logged.

Mottled Flowerpecker *Dicaeum tristrami*

This Makira endemic was well seen during our afternoon shore excursion at Star Harbour with four individuals recorded (11 April).

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*

Seen in small numbers on Ugi (12 April: low A), Guadalcanal (13 April: 2) and Kolombangara (15 April: 4).

[**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*]

A common introduction which was seen on both days ashore in New Caledonia (7-8 April).

[**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild*]

Another introduction on New Caledonia with a small flock seen adjacent to the wharf on both 7 and 8 April.

Red-throated Parrotfinch *Erythrura psittacea*

As usual, this New Caledonian endemic was only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue with six birds recorded on 7 April and four birds the following day at Mount Koghi.

CETACEANS

Sperm Whale *Physter macrocephalus*

Sperm Whales were seen on two dates with eight animals on 9 April (off northern end of New Caledonia) and a low A logged in the late afternoon as the ship sailed towards Bougainville from Kolombangara (15 April).

Short-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

A pod was seen logging at the surface on 17 April offshore from Cap St George.

Longman's Beaked Whale *Indopacetus pacificus*

Five animals seen off Bougainville (16 April) were considered to be this infrequently seen species.

Blainville's Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon densirostris*

Three small groups, each of which was thought to contain three individuals, were seen during the expedition. The first of these was on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (4 April) with more found the following day. The final encounter was off New Ireland (17 April).

Dwarf Sperm Whale *Kogia sima*

Five were seen off Bougainville on 16 April.

Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

Seven animals were seen offshore from Norfolk Island (5 April).

Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*

Two individuals were logged on 3 April not far from the Three Kings.

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris*

This species is usually the most frequently encountered dolphin on this expedition, however, on this occasion it was only definitely seen on the afternoon of 15 April following the morning landing on Kolombangara.

Striped Dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba*

A low A was logged on 3 April as the ship cruised northwards from the vicinity of the Three Kings.

Fraser's Dolphin *Lagenodelphis hosei*

This species is not encountered every year but a small pod was seen off New Ireland (17 April).

Dusky Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*

A reasonable sized pod (A logged) was seen not long after the ship left Tauranga (1 April).

OTHER NOTEWORTHY WILDLIFE SEEN AT SEA

Tawny Nurse Shark *Nebrius ferrugineus*

There were multiple individuals around the ship on 17 April as we spent several hours drifting in an amazing tideline off Cap St George, New Ireland.

Mako Shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*

A lone shark seen during the sea day between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia (6 April) was considered to probably be this species.

Ocean Sunfish *Mola mola*

Lone individuals were seen on each of the first three days of the expedition (1-3 April).

Flying Squid sp *Ommastrephes sp*

Several of these bizarre creatures were seen on 3 April (off Three Kings) with a low A logged. The following day two more were noted.

Manta Ray sp *Manta sp*

Two unidentified Manta Rays were noted off New Ireland (17 April).

Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*

At least six of these attractively patterned turtles were found in the tideline off New Ireland with some seen resting on some of the floating debris (17 April).

www.wildwings.co.uk