



# WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY (Section 1 – NZ to PNG)

6 – 23th April 2015

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

By Chris Collins

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*

A low A was logged on the zodiac cruise on 19 April whilst cruising the channels around Vakao and Barora Fa Islands, Santa Isabel archipelago.

### **Melanesian Scrubfowl** *Megapodius eremita*

Three birds were seen during the shore excursion on Vakao and Barora Fa Islands, Santa Isabel archipelago (19 April).

### [**California Quail** *Callipepla californica*]

A reasonably common introduction on Norfolk Island where a low A was logged on 10 April.

**[Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*]**

This introduced species is well established on Norfolk Island with A logged (10 April).

It is worth noting that although the Australians regard these birds as 'tickable' as Red Junglefowls, many birds seem to be closer to feral chickens.....

**Gibson's Albatross *Diomedea gibsoni***

A number of birds showing characteristics of this form/species were seen in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) with others seen the following day.

**Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida***

Two were seen whilst cruising north from the Three Kings Islands on 8 April with the characteristic honey-coloured eyes of this form/species being seen.

**White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche steadi***

A total of five birds were logged in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) and the following day (north from the Three Kings Islands), with the birds considered to be this form/species of 'Shy' albatross.

**Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki***

One of the major specialities of the voyage, with about twenty individuals of this extremely poorly known species being seen off New Ireland on 22 April. The first of these was on a chum slick not far from Cap St George in the early morning, with others seen whilst cruising later in the day.

**Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata***

This species was seen on a daily basis from 9-16 April inclusive (day south of Norfolk Island – day south of Rennell Island) with A logged on four dates and single figure counts on the other days.

The only other sighting was off Bougainville (21 April) where a lone bird was recorded.

**Grey-faced Petrel *Pterodroma gouldi***

This species was seen on a daily basis between leaving Tauranga and Norfolk Island (6-10 April) with the highest count being A on 8 April (northwards from the Three Kings Islands).

**Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri***

This species is not recorded annually on this expedition, however, a lone individual was seen on 13 April, not far from the reef entrance offshore from Noumea.

**Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta***

Seen on six dates with a total of nine birds being recorded. All the sightings were between 8-15 April (Three Kings – day 2 to Rennell Island).

**White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis***

First recorded offshore from the Three Kings Islands (8 April) and then on a daily basis for the subsequent three days. The highest count was on the first date when A was logged.

**Vanuatu Petrel *Pterodroma occulta***

Although confirming the identity of this species away from the breeding grounds is always going to be a major challenge, two birds which showed characteristics of this species were seen and photographed on 11 and 13 April (a day south of Noumea and off the New Caledonian coastline).

**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 very A was logged in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) with eight the following day as the ship cruised north from the Three Kings Islands. The final sighting was a lone bird on 10 April near Norfolk Island.

**Gould's Petrel** *Pterodroma leucoptera*

Seen on an almost daily basis between 8-14 April (Three Kings – day 1 to Rennell) with the highest counts being around the southern end of New Caledonia (13 April) when B was logged.

**Collared Petrel** *Pterodroma brevipes*

Two intermediate morph birds were seen and photographed with the first of these being at a seamount in Australian territorial waters just under 200 nautical miles north of Norfolk Island. This species is considered to be only a vagrant by the Australian Records Committee, although it has been recorded near this seamount on a number of SWPO expeditions.

It is possible that other pale morph birds went undetected as separating pale morph Collared Petrels from Gould's Petrels is never easy in the field.

**Magnificent Petrel** *Pterodroma (brevipes) magnificens*

Two birds which were considered to be this form/species were photographed on 11 April at the Australian seamount north of Norfolk Island.

**Black-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma nigripennis*

Encountered on a more or less daily basis from the Three Kings Islands (8 April) until a day north of Noumea, New Caledonia (14 April) with A logged on the first three days and single figure counts on all other occasions.

**Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur*

A was logged in the Hauraki Gulf on 7 April with similar numbers also seen the following day.

**Black Petrel** *Procellaria parkinsoni*

A low A was recorded in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) with five birds then noted the following day and a singleton on 9 April.

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*

This species is sometimes recorded off Bougainville and New Ireland and on SWPO 2015 we logged a low A at both locations.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*

This species was recorded on the first three days of the expedition with the highest count being in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) where a low A was recorded.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus*

This was amongst the most frequently encountered species on the voyage with sightings on 12 dates. The first records were whilst cruising north from the Three Kings Islands (8 April) and birds were then seen on a daily basis until reaching Rennell. On the majority of dates, B was logged, although A or a single figure count was recorded on five occasions.

**Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri*

Only seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 7 April where a low B was recorded and the following day when a low A was logged.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris*

This species was seen on a daily basis between Norfolk Island (10 April) until the sea day south of Rennell (16 April) with the largest number being a day north of Norfolk Island when many large flocks of migrating birds were recorded. It was difficult to accurately estimate the numbers passing the ship but the general consensus was that between 15-20,000 birds were seen during the day.

**Fluttering Shearwater** *Puffinus gavia*

A low B was logged in the Hauraki Gulf (7 April) with similar numbers the following day off the Three Kings Islands.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis*

Only recorded on two dates with three birds in the Hauraki Gulf on 7 April and nine offshore from Norfolk Island (10 April).

The birds seen around Norfolk Island 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 !!

Further south, the birds were presumably of the subspecies *haurakiensis* which, as its name suggests, breeds in the Hauraki Gulf.

**Atoll (“Tropical”) Shearwater** *Puffinus (bailloni) dichrous*

Somewhat unexpectedly, the only sightings were four birds seen near Noumea, New Caledonia on 13 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 seen 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*

One of the star seabirds of the SWPO with a total of nine individuals being logged. Four birds were seen as the *Spirit of Enderby* cruised away from Kolombangara (20 April) with a further five individuals found the following day offshore from Bougainville Island.

**Wilson’s Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*

This species was observed on five dates during the first eleven days of the voyage. All counts were in single figures with a total of 21 individuals being recorded.

**White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina*

The only sightings was a lone bird on the chum slick off the Three Kings Islands on 8 April.

**New Zealand Storm-petrel** *Fregetta maorianus*

Oiling in the outer Hauraki Gulf for this species proved highly successful with about fifteen birds logged for the day. The following day a single bird was recorded whilst cruising north from the Three Kings Islands.

**Polynesian Storm-petrel** *Nesofregetta fuliginosa*

Four individuals of this poorly known and seemingly endangered bird were found on 15 April (day 2 to Rennell). Whilst it is entirely speculative, this area is not far from some rarely visited atolls off the northern end of New Caledonia and it seems possible that this species breeds there as it has been recorded in the same general area on an almost annual occasion on recent SWPOs.

**“Coral Sea or Solomon Band-rumped Storm-petrel”** *Oceanodroma castro*

Two birds which resemble Band-rumped Storm-petrel were seen and photographed a day south of Rennell Island. It is interesting to note that this is at least the third time that similar looking birds have been recorded in this general area on SWPO expeditions (ie off the northern New Caledonian coastline or a little further north). 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*

Modest numbers were seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 7 April with a low A logged with four the previous evening offshore from Tauranga.

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda*

The first sighting was whilst cruising north from the Three Kings Islands (8 April: 1), with birds then seen on the subsequent two days with good numbers being recorded around Norfolk Island on 10 April where A was logged.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*

This species is more widespread along the route of the SWPO than Red-tailed Tropicbird with sightings on four dates and a total of nine 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 (6 birds) being off Norfolk Island on 10 April.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*

This species was seen on eight dates between 10-23 April with the first sighting being a lone bird around Norfolk Island where the species is rare. Subsequently, Lesser Frigatebirds were recorded on an almost daily basis between a day north of Noumea and reaching New Britain, although all counts were in single figures.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*

This species was recorded on three dates during the voyage with the largest numbers (B) recorded close to Norfolk Island (10 April).

It is worth noting that the birds which breed on Norfolk Island 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 the three individuals seen on 15 April (2 days north of Noumea) which had yellow eyes.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*

This species was encountered on six dates between Norfolk Island and New Ireland (10-22 April). Although most day counts were in low single figures, A was logged off New Ireland (22 April).

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*

Seen on seven dates between 12-22 April (New Caledonia-New Ireland) although on most dates only a single figure count was recorded.

**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 7 April when B was logged with several hundred individuals breeding on the Maori Rocks.

**Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax varius*

The only record on the voyage was shortly after the *Spirit of Enderby* left the wharf at Tauranga (6 April) where there is a small colony of this species and a low A was recorded.

**Little Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Two birds were observed on the trip to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (13 April).

**White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae*

Recorded on Norfolk Island (10 April: 5) and on New Caledonia (13 April: 1).

**Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra*

Seen on three dates with one bird on Rennell (17 April), six on Santa Isabel (19 April) and two at Kokopo (23 April).

**Rufous Night-Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus*

This species was only recorded at Santa Isabel with a lone bird seen in the late afternoon of 19 April as the birding group returned to the ship after visiting Barora Fa Island.

**Australian Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca*

This species is reasonably common on Rennell with a low A logged on 17 April.

**Eastern Osprey** *Pandion cristatus*

This species was seen in small numbers on two of the islands visited in the Solomons, namely Rennell (17 April) and Kolombangara (20 April). The only other records were a lone bird seen at least fifteen miles off the coast of Bougainville on 21 April and three between Noumea and the New Caledonia outer reef (13 April).

**Pacific Baza** *Aviceda subcristata*

Somewhat surprisingly, the only sighting of the expedition was a lone bird at Mount Austin on 18 April.

**Whistling Kite** *Haliastur sphenurus*

This species was only seen on New Caledonia with six recorded on the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue (13 April).

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur Indus*

This species was seen on three of the four landings in the Solomons (none on Rennell) with the highest numbers being on Kolombangara where a low A was logged.

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

This impressive Solomon Islands endemic was seen on three islands with up to three individuals at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal (18 April) including an extremely obliging perched bird. On both of the following two days, two individuals were seen.

**Swamp Harrier** *Circus approximans*

A lone bird at Riviere Bleue was the only sighting on the expedition (13 April).

**Brown Goshawk** *Accipiter fasciatus*

There were several sightings of this species on Rennell on 17 April although most of these probably related to just a couple of individuals.

**Pied Goshawk** *Accipiter albogularis*

This species is endemic to the Solomon Islands and at least one individual was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April).

**Australian Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides*

Two individuals were seen on Norfolk Island (10 April).

**Roviana Rail** *Gallirallus rovianae*

A lone individuals of this highly localised Solomon Islands endemic was seen by some of the group on Kolombangara (20 April).

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*

A low A was logged on 10 April whilst ashore on Norfolk Island.

**Kagu** *Rhynchetos jubatus*

This species is always one of the major landbird highlights of the expedition with at least fifteen birds seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 13 April.

**Double-banded Plover** *Charadrius bicinctus*

Nineteen individuals were seen close to the landing site on Norfolk Island (10 April).

**Variable Oystercatcher** *Haematopus unicolor*

Another species which was only seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga (6 April) with several dozen individuals roosting on the wharf.

**Wandering Tattler** *Heterosceles incanus*

A single individual was identified near the landing site Norfolk Island on 10 April, with the only other sightings being four birds on Vakao Island, Santa Isabel (19 April).

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

A single bird was noted on Vakao Island, Santa Isabel (19 April).

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

Three individuals of this widespread shorebird were seen on Norfolk Island (10 April).

**Red-billed Gull** *Chroicocephalus scopulinus*

This New Zealand endemic was only seen in Tauranga (6 April) and the following day around the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf with A logged on both dates.

It is worth noting that the recently published Birdlife International Illustrated Checklist lumps this species with the more widespread Silver Gull and the same approach has just been adopted (May 2015) by the *International Ornithologists' Union's World Bird List*.

**Silver Gull** *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

This species was reasonably numerous (A) around the harbour in Noumea, New Caledonia on both 12 and 13 April.

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicus*

The only records were around Tauranga (6 April) with A logged.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*

This species was first seen on the second sea day north of Noumea (15 April) when four individuals were noted. It was then only recorded on two subsequent dates with the highest numbers being off Kolombangara (20 April) where B was logged.

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutes*

This species was encountered on an almost daily basis between Norfolk Island (10 April) and Kokopo, New Britain (23 April) with B logged on three occasions.

**Grey Ternlet** *Procelsterna albivitta*

This species is regular at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf and also breeds around Norfolk Island. It was seen on a daily basis between these two locations (7—10 April) with A logged at the Maori Rocks and lower counts for the following three days.

**White Tern** *Gygis alba*

This species breeds in good numbers on Norfolk Island and a low B was logged there (10 April) with single figures counts on the previous and subsequent days. The only other sighting was a lone bird noted whilst cruising up the western coastline of New Caledonia on 14 April.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata*

This widespread species was seen on seven dates between a day north of Norfolk Island (11 April) and arriving in Kokopo (23 April).

**Grey-backed Tern** *Sterna lunata*

This species rarely seems to approach ships although birds were seen on two dates with a low A logged offshore from both Bougainville and New Ireland (21-22 April).

**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*

This tropical seabird was only encountered north of New Caledonia with the first sightings being three birds on 15 April (second sea day north of Noumea). There were then sightings on five subsequent dates with the highest count being off New Ireland where A was logged.

**Fairy Tern** *Sternula nereis*

Reasonable numbers were found close to the outer reef as the ship departed New Caledonia on 13 April.

**Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*

The only sighting was a lone bird off Bougainville on 21 April.

**White-fronted Tern** *Sterna striata*

Only seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga on 6 April where A was logged.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

This species was only recorded during the latter stages of the expedition with the highest numbers (a low B) being recorded whilst cruising away from Kolombangara (20 April).

**Great Crested Tern** *Sterna bergi*

This species was seen close to the majority of islands between New Caledonia and New Britain (with sightings on five dates) with the highest counts being offshore from New Caledonia and Kolombangara where a low A was logged (13 and 20 April). On all other days when this species was recorded, counts were in single figures.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

A lone bird seen flying around the wharf at Noumea on 12 April.

**South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki*

A pale morph bird (which was presumably migrating north from the Ross Sea) spent several minutes flying around the ship on the morning of 14 April as the *Spirit of Enderby* cruised along the western coast of New Caledonia.

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Only two birds were noted with one on 11 April (sea day north of Norfolk Island) and another on 21 April, off the coast of Bougainville.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

The only record was a single individual off New Ireland (22 April).

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

This species was seen on three dates (8, 10 and 21 April) but the only occasion when more than one individual was logged was the last of these dates (off Bougainville) when eight birds were noted.

[**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis*]

This Asian introduction was seen on New Caledonia, with A recorded on both 12 and 13 April.

**Mackinlay's Cuckoo-dove** *Macropygia mackinlayi*

This species is reasonably widespread in the Solomon Islands and was seen on Rennell, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara. The highest count was on the last of these islands, where a low A was logged (20 April).

**Pacific Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps longirostris*

The only sightings of the voyage were three individuals at the Botanical Gardens on Norfolk Island on 10 April.

**Stephan's Dove** *Chalcophaps stephani*

A single bird was seen on the shore excursion to Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April).

**Superb Fruit-dove** *Ptilinopus superbus*

Two individuals were seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (15 April).

**Silver-capped Fruit-dove** *Ptilinopus richardsii*

This species is endemic to Rennell and a few nearby islets, however, it is fairly common with A logged on 17 April.



**Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus viridis*

Another range-restricted fruit-dove which was seen on Guadalcanal (18 April: A) and Kolombangara (20 April: 4).

**Pacific Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula pacifica*

This species was only seen on Rennell (17 April) with two individuals recorded.

**Red-knobbed Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula rubricera*

This impressive looking pigeon was seen on Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel and Kolombangara (18-20 April) with the highest count being on Kolombangara where A was logged.

**Island Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula pistrinaria*

This nomadic species was seen on Santa Isabel and Kolombangara (19 and 20 April) with A logged on the latter date.

**New Caledonian Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula goliath*

A lone bird was recorded at Riviere Bleue on 13 April.

**Pale Mountain Pigeon** *Gymnophaps solomonensis*

Good numbers of this distinctive pigeon were seen at Ringgi on Kolombangara on 20 April with A logged.

**Ducorps' Cockatoo** *Cacatua ducorpsii*

This species was first seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 18 April with eight birds being recorded. On both of the following days (ie Santa Isabel and Kolombangara), it was also seen with A logged on both these landings.

**Cardinal Lory** *Chalcopsitta cardinalis*

This brilliantly coloured parrot was seen on Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel and Kolombangara with A or B logged on all three islands.

**Coconut ("Rainbow") Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus*

This species was first recorded in downtown Noumea, New Caledonia (12 April: 8), and was also seen on Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel and Kolombangara (18-20 April) with A logged on each of these Solomon islands.

**Yellow-bibbed Lory** *Lorius chlorocercus*

A Solomon Islands endemic which was seen on Rennell and Guadalcanal with a total of eight birds being recorded.

**Meek's Lorikeet** *Charmosyna meeki*

One of the highlights at Ringgi, Kolombangara (20 April) was a flowering tree where at least 3 of these diminutive parrots were seen feeding allowing many of the group to get 'scope views' of this difficult bird. A single bird was also recorded at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April) although this was a more typical sighting with the bird only seen in flight by a small percentage of the group.

**Duchess Lorikeet** *Charmosyna margarethae*

The only records of this handsome parrot were in the same flowering tree at Ringgi on Kolombangara where six birds were seen feeding.

**Finsch's Pygmy-parrot** *Micropsitta finschii*

Although this species is reasonably numerous in the Solomons, its tiny size can make it difficult to spot, however, it was seen on both Rennell and Guadalcanal (2+ birds on both landings) with one bird in particular giving some great views on Rennell as it moved along an open branch very much in the manner of a small woodpecker.

**Horned Parakeet** *Eunymphicus cornutus*

This New Caledonian endemic showed reasonably well at Riviere Bleue (where it can be tricky) with at least five birds recorded on 13 April.

**New Caledonian Parakeet** *Cyanoramphus saissetti*

Another species which is not seen on every visit to Riviere Bleue but most of the group had excellent looks during the visit to this fantastic National Park (13 April) with three birds being logged. It is worth noting that in the recently published Birdlife Illustrated Checklist, this species has been 'lumped' with the Red-crowned Parakeet (of New Zealand) and the Norfolk Island Parakeet, although this proposal has not been accepted by other 'authorities'.

**Norfolk Island Parakeet** *Cyanoramphus cookii*

At least nine individuals were seen during the shore excursion on Norfolk Island (10 April).

[**Crimson Rosella** *Platycercus elegans*]

This introduced species is common on Norfolk Island and A was logged there on 10 April.

**Singing Parrot** *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*

Seen on both Rennell and Guadalcanal (17-18 April) with A logged on both islands.

In the Birdlife Illustrated Checklist, the birds on Rennell have been split as 'Rennell Parrot' although, at the time of writing, this proposal has not been accepted by other authorities such as the IOC.

**Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus*

Another beautiful bird which was recorded on Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel and Kolombangara (18-20 April) although only lone birds were noted on each of these landings.

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus*

Two individuals were seen on the short shore excursion at Kokopo, New Britain on 23 April.

**Shining Bronze-cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

At least three birds were seen on Rennell (17 April) with two more spotted at Kokopo, New Britain (23 April).

**Pacific Koel** *Eudynamys orientalis*

This species was heard but not seen on both Santa Isabel and Kolombangara (19-20 April).

**Buff-headed Coucal** *Centropus milo*

This raucous Coucal, which is endemic to the Solomon Islands, makes an almost mammalian-like call and was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April) with five logged during the morning excursion. A couple of days later, it was heard but not seen on Kolombangara.

**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta*

This species was seen in reasonable numbers on the two days ashore on New Caledonia (12-13 April) and then on three of the four islands visited in the Solomons with A or B logged on each occasion.

**White-rumped Swiftlet** *Aerodramus spodiopygius*

Only recorded in very low numbers in New Caledonia (12-13 April).

**Uniform Swiftlet** *Aerodramus vanikorensis*

Seen on all the islands visited in the Solomons, with A logged each day.

**Moustached Treeswift** *Hemiprocne mystacea*

This impressive bird was seen on Rennell (17 April: 4), Santa Isabel (19 April: 1) and Kolombangara (20 April: 3).

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*

Two birds of the race *salomonensis* were seen on Santa Isabel on 19 April with a single individual also recorded the following day on Kolombangara. 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 pair of this tricky and always much desired Solomon Islands endemic were seen extremely well at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 18 April.

**Collared Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus chloris*

Four birds were logged on Rennell on 17 April, with a further two individuals a couple of days later on Santa Isabel.

**Beach Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus saurophaga*

At least eight birds were seen whilst zodiac cruising the channels between the ship and Vakao Island during the Santa Isabel excursion on 19 April.

**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus sanctus*

Reasonable numbers were recorded during the landing on Norfolk Island on 10 April.

**Blyth's Hornbill** *Aceros plicatus*

A low A of this spectacular bird were seen during the 'expedition day' around north-western Santa Isabel (19 April) with single figure counts on the previous and subsequent days (ie on Guadalcanal and Kolombangara).

**New Caledonia Myzomela** *Myzomela caledonica*

The first of five species of Myzomela recorded on the voyage with four birds logged at Riviere Bleue on 13 April.

**Cardinal Myzomela** *Myzomela cardinalis*

This species was only seen on Rennell where it is common (17 April: A).

**Red-capped Myzomela** *Myzomela lafargei*

Restricted to a few islands in the Northern Solomon Islands, this species was well seen on the expedition day visit to the Santa Isabel archipelago with at least six individuals being recorded (19 April).

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

A relatively scarce and range-restricted Solomon Island endemic, with eight birds seen on Kolombangara on 20 April.

**Black-headed Myzomela** *Myzomela melanocephala*

Endemic to some of the islands in the Central Solomons, about six individuals were seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 18 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 and a low A was recorded around Noumea (12 April), with two further sightings on the return trip from Riviere Bleue the following day.

**Barred Honeyeater** *Phylidonyris undulata*

This endemic is usually not uncommon in suitable habitat on New Caledonia, although on this visit a total of only three individuals were seen at Riviere Bleue on 13 April.

**Crow Honeyeater** *Gymnomyza aubryana*

This species is amongst the trickiest of the New Caledonian endemics to find at Riviere Bleue and the only sightings were a couple of very brief flight views on 13 April.

**New Britain Friarbird** *Philemon cocerelli*

Two individuals were seen during the brief excursion at Kokopo on 23 April.

**New Caledonian Friarbird** *Philemon diemenensis*

This endemic was well seen on the excursion to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (13 April: 5).

**Norfolk Island Gerygone** *Gerygone modesta*

This Norfolk Island endemic is reasonably numerous and a low A was logged on 10 April.

**Fan-tailed Gerygone** *Gerygone flavolateralis*

Approximately six individuals were seen on New Caledonia during the excursion to Riviere Bleue on 13 April.

**Rennell (Fan-tailed) Gerygone** *Gerygone (flavolateralis) citrina*

A reasonably numerous bird on Rennell with A logged during the shore excursion on 17 April.

Although this bird is generally lumped with the Gerygones on New Caledonia (and not treated as a Rennell endemic), visually it is quite different, eg pale eyes and a mainly yellow breast compared with the birds on New Caledonia which have dark eyes and less yellow on the underparts. Playback experiments on both New Caledonia and Rennell also suggest that the birds do not recognise the songs of the birds from the other island, providing further evidence that the two forms should indeed be split.

**White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus*

This species is generally only encountered in more 'open country' habitats on New Caledonia with four birds being seen during the trip to Riviere Bleue on 5 April.

**Southern Melanesian Cuckooshrike** *Coracina caledonica*

Three birds were seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 13 April.

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 species by most 'authorities'.

**Northern Melanesian Cuckooshrike** *Coracina welchmani*

Four individuals were seen on Kolombangara (20 April).

**Yellow-eyed Cuckooshrike** *Coracina lineata*

This cuckooshrike was the most frequently encountered during our shore excursions in the Solomon Islands and was seen on Rennell, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara (17, 18 and 20 April) with the highest count being at Mount Austin where a low A was logged.

**White-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina papuensis*

As with the above species, this cuckooshrike was only seen in the Solomons with three birds logged at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April) and one the following day on the expedition day at Santa Isabel.

**New Caledonian Cuckooshrike** *Coracina analis*

This New Caledonian endemic is generally only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue and 2015 was no exception with only a single individual recorded on 13 April.

**Cicadabird** *Coracina tenuirostris*

Only seen on Guadalcanal (18 April) where five individuals were seen at Mount Austin.

**Solomon Islands Cuckooshrike** *Coracina holopolia*

This is generally the least frequently encountered cuckooshrike in the Solomons but a fine adult male was seen during the excursion to Mount Austin on 18 April.

**Long-tailed Triller** *Lalage leucopyga*

Two individuals were seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 13 April.

**Norfolk Island Whistler** *Pachycephala (pectoralis) xanthoprocta*

Seven of these birds were seen on Norfolk Island on 10 April.

Although currently included within the Golden Whistler complex, the unique (and extremely drab) plumage of this endemic form certainly warrants further study and it is surely only a matter of time before it is given specific status.

**Oriole Whistler** *Pachycephala orioloides*

A lone bird was seen on Kolombangara with others heard both there and the previous day at Santa Isabel (19-20 April).

**New Caledonian (“Melanesian”) Whistler** *Pachycephala caledonica*

This localised species is generally found in more forested areas than the next species (ie Rufous Whistler) and at least six birds were recorded at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 13 April.

**Rufous Whistler** *Pachycephala rufiventris*

The only record was during the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia where a lone individual was seen (13 April).

**Willie-wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*

Seen on Guadalcanal (18 April: 2), Santa Isabel (19 April: 4) and Kolombangara (20 April: 2).

**White-winged Fantail** *Rhipidura cockerelli*

Two individuals were seen on Kolombangara on 20 April.

**Rennell Fantail** *Rhipidura rennelliana*

This species is endemic to Rennell and four individuals were recorded during the shore excursion on 17 April.

**Grey Fantail** *Rhipidura fuliginosa*

This reasonably widespread fantail was recorded on both Norfolk Island (10 April: low A) and New Caledonia.

**Streaked Fantail** *Rhipidura spilodera*

This localised fantail (which is only found on New Caledonia and Vanuatu) was found at Riviere Bleue (13 April:5).

**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons*

This species was only recorded on Kolombangara where a lone individual was seen on 20 April.

**Southern Shrikebill** *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides*

Four individuals of this regional endemic (which is also only found on New Caledonia and Vanuatu) were seen at Riviere Bleue National Park on 13 April.

**Rennell Shrikebill** *Clytorhynchus hamlini*

This Rennell endemic is reasonably common and was seen very well during our shore excursion on 17 April.

**Chestnut-bellied Monarch** *Monarcha castaneiventris*

A Solomon Islands endemic which was seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (18 April: 2) and the following day during the ‘expedition day’ visit to the Santa Isabel archipelago where a further individual was recorded.

**White-capped Monarch** *Monarcha richardsii*

This monarch is only found in the New Georgia group of islands (within the Solomons) and six individuals were seen on 20 April during our shore excursion on Kolombangara.

**Steel-blue Flycatcher** *Myiagra ferrocyanea*

This Solomon Islands endemic was seen on Guadalcanal (18 April: 5) and Kolombangara (20 April: 1).

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

This species was seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (13 April: 6).

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

This corvid can be extremely elusive, however, three birds were seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 18 April and the following day, at least six were recorded during the ‘expedition day’ landing off north-west Santa Isabel.

**Bismarck Crow** *Corvus insularis*

Good numbers of this regional endemic were seen around Kokopo on 23 April (A logged).

**Pacific Robin** *Petroica multicolor*

This handsome species was seen in decent numbers during the excursion on Norfolk Island with a low A logged (10 April).

**Yellow-bellied Robin** *Eopsaltria flaviventris*

Three individuals of this New Caledonian endemic were seen at Riviere Bleue National Park (13 April).

**Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxena*

This species is reasonably common on Norfolk Island (10 April) with A logged. The only other sightings were at Tauranga where four birds were seen as the ship departed (6 April).

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica*

Seen on Guadalcanal, Santa Isabel and Kolombangara with A logged on each island.

**[Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer*]

This Asian introduction is reasonably common around Noumea, New Caledonia with a low A recorded on 12 April.

**[Blackbird** *Turdus merula*]

A reasonably successful introduced species on Norfolk Island where two birds were recorded on 10 April.

**Island Thrush** *Turdus poliocephalus*

The only island on the SWPO itinerary where this highly variable species can be found is Rennell with the birds resembling 'mini Blackbirds'. During our shore excursion (17 April), two birds were seen.

**[Song Thrush** *Turdus philmelos*]

Like Blackbird, this species was introduced to Norfolk Island and a lone individual was logged on 10 April.

**Bare-eyed White-eye** *Woodfordia superciliosa*

This species is the commonest of the single island endemics on Rennell and good numbers (A) were seen during the shore excursion on 17 April.

Although this species is currently treated as a white-eye, further taxonomic work is surely required as structurally it seems so different from 'normal white-eyes'.

**Yellow-throated White-eye** *Zosterops metcalfei*

Six of these range-restricted white-eyes were seen on Santa Isabel on 19 April.

**Rennell White-eye** *Zosterops rennellianus*

Despite its name, this Rennell endemic does not have a white eye-ring (it is dark!!) and somewhat uncharacteristically for a white-eye, it also has a bright orange bill. Nevertheless, it was well seen during the landing with at least six birds recorded (17 April).

**Solomon Islands White-eye** *Zosterops rendovae*

This slightly confusingly named white-eye is only found on the New Georgia group of islands (including Kolombangara) within the Solomons archipelago. During our shore excursion reasonable numbers were logged with a low A on 20 April.

**Green-backed White-eye** *Zosterops xanthochrous*

This New Caledonian endemic is reasonably common and eight were recorded around Noumea on 12 April with slightly lower numbers than seen the following day during the visit to Riviere Bleue.

**Slender-billed White-eye** *Zosterops tenuirostris*

This Norfolk Island endemic was well seen with A logged during our shore excursion on 10 April.

**Silver-eye** *Zosterops lateralis*

This species is common on both Norfolk Island and New Caledonia and was recorded on all days whilst ashore on both of these islands.

**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallica*

Seen on Santa Isabel (19 April: low A) and Kolombangara (20 April: B), with others recorded during the birding excursion at Kokopo on 23 April (A).

**Singing Starling** *Aplonis cantoroides*

This species was recorded on Guadalcanal (18 April: A) and Santa Isabel (19 April: A).

**Rennell Starling** *Aplonis insularis*

This Rennell endemic seems to be somewhat nomadic as the numbers seen vary from year to year. On this visit, it was present in comparatively low numbers with only two individuals recorded during the shore excursion on 17 April.

**Brown-winged Starling** *Aplonis grandis*

This Solomon Islands endemic species is reasonably reliable at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal with A logged on 18 April. Despite its name, the diagnostic pale brown primaries can, on occasions, be moderately difficult to see when birds are perched.

**Striated Starling** *Aplonis striata*

This New Caledonian endemic is not particularly common at Riviere Bleue and only two individuals were recorded there on 13 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 (18 April: 7), the following day on Santa Isabel (6 birds) and on Kolombangara (8 birds).

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

This Asian introduction was reasonably numerous on New Caledonia (12-13 April) and in Honiara, Guadalcanal (18 April) with A recorded on all three dates.

[**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*]

This introduced species is common on Norfolk Island with A logged during the shore excursion (10 April).

**Midget Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum aeneum*

This Solomon Islands endemic is not uncommon at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal and a low A was recorded on 18 April, with similar numbers the following day at Santa Isabel. Given its tiny size, it can often be challenging to get good views but we had some great views of perched birds at Mount Austin.

**Olive-backed Sunbird** *Cinnyris jugularis*

Only seen on Guadalcanal (18 April: low A) and Kolombangara (20 April: 4).

[**European Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*]

Another introduction on Norfolk Island with two individuals noted on 10 April.

[**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*]

Two birds were seen on Norfolk Island (10 April).

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

Another common introduction which was seen on Norfolk Island (10 April) and both days ashore in New Caledonia (12-13 April) with A recorded on all dates.

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

This widespread introduction was seen in Noumea on 12 April.

**Red-throated Parrotfinch** *Erythrura psittacea*

As usual, this New Caledonian endemic was only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue with a lone bird recorded on 13 April.



## CETACEANS

### **Sperm Whale** *Physeter macrocephalus*

Sperm Whales were seen on two dates with two animals on 9 April (a day south of Norfolk Island) and two more sighted a couple of days later, a day north of Norfolk Island.

Somewhat surprisingly, none were seen off Bougainville, where this species is usually regular, although the abnormally high seawater temperatures may have been the reason for this.

### **Orca** *Orcinus orca*

Three animals were seen whilst cruising northwards from the Three Kings Islands (8 April).

### **Short-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

A small pod was seen a day north of Norfolk Island (11 April).

### **Cuvier's Beaked Whale** *Ziphius cavirostris*

The waters off New Caledonia seem to be a reasonably regular area to encounter this widespread species and two were recorded on 12 April with the same number then seen a couple of days later as we cruised up the west coast of the island.

### **Beaked Whale sp**

As well as the sightings described above, beaked whales were also seen on a further three days but none of these were identified to species, although it is thought at least some of them were probably Blainville's Beaked Whales.

### **Rough-toothed Dolphin** *Steno bredanensis*

A modest sized pod of these distinctive dolphins were seen whilst cruising away from Kolombangara on 20 April.

### **Short-beaked Common Dolphin** *Delphinus delphis*

A pod (A) was seen in the outer Hauraki Gulf on 7 April.

### **Spinner Dolphin** *Stenella longirostris*

This species is generally the most frequently encountered dolphin on this expedition and pods were seen on a daily basis between Kolombangara and New Britain (20-23 April).

© Chris Collins/WildWings  
May 2015

[www.wildwings.co.uk](http://www.wildwings.co.uk)