

# Papua - March 2008 - Raja Ampat, Arfak & Biak

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## Introduction

We visited Papua in March 2008 for a spectacular and highly enjoyable total of 12 days of birding. Our plan wasn't to try and cram loads of sites into this short time, but rather to take a good look at a couple (Raja Ampat Islands & Arfak Mountains) and then cram in one extra! (Biak Island). This gave us an itinerary that went something like this:

Sun 16 <sup>th</sup>	Early morning flight Jakarta to Sorong, transfer directly to Batanta;
Mon 17 <sup>th</sup>	Full day on Batanta;
Tue 18 <sup>th</sup>	Morning in Salawati, evening in Batanta;
Wed 19 <sup>th</sup>	Morning on Salawati then transfer back to Sorong, evening birding near Sorong;
Thu 20 <sup>th</sup>	Fly to Manokwari, transfer directly to Arfak Mountains;
Fri 21 <sup>st</sup>	Arfak Mountains;
Sat 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Arfak Mountains;
Sun 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Arfak Mountains;
Mon 24 <sup>th</sup>	Arfak Mountains;
Tue 25 <sup>th</sup>	Morning in Arfak, birdwatch back to Manokwari; evening flight to Jayapura;
Wed 26 <sup>th</sup>	Early morning flight to Biak; rest of day birding in Biak;
Thu 27 <sup>th</sup>	Full day birding in Biak;
Fri 28 <sup>th</sup>	Early morning flight back to Jakarta.

In total we recorded 180 species of birds, with highlights including: 10 species of bird-of-paradise (which included Wilson's, displaying Magnificent, and the amazing Black Sicklebill), Vogelkop Bowerbird, Western Crowned Pigeon, 16 species of parrot (including two species of pygmy-parrot and the awesome Black Cockatoo), Spotted Jewel Babbler, three owls, two owlet-nightjars, one frogmouth, five things with the word 'Biak' in front of the name, and the second Black-headed Gull ever for Papua!

## Logistics

We organised this trip independently, but with some great help from Shita and Untu at Papua Bird Club (contact details at end). They made the arrangements for the Batanta/Salawati visit, and then gave us really useful help and advice for both Arfak and Biak. In this trip report we have tried to be deliberately detailed on logistic arrangements, for anyone considering arranging such a trip themselves.

Papua is expensive by Indonesian standards, but the birds are worth it! In total, Jakarta-back-to-Jakarta, the trip cost us about US \$2,000 each. Many of the costs incurred are fixed (e.g. car/boat hire, guides etc) so the more people on your trip, the more ways you can split them (up to the point when you start needing two of things). Others, like flights etc, you'll need to pay each. Please feel free to contact me if you need more detailed information on costs.

We booked our flights Jakarta-Sorong (Merpati, Rp 1,800,000) and Biak-Jakarta (Garuda, Rp 2,169,100) through *Vayatour* in Bogor (Tel: +62-251-356861; Fax +62-251-356865; [www.vayatour.com](http://www.vayatour.com)). Shita then helped us out by booking the flights Sorong-Manokwari (Merpati, Rp 685,000), Manokwari-Jayapura (Batavia, Rp 919,000), and Jayapura-Biak (Merpati, Rp 800,000) through *Papua Wisata Tour & Travel* in Manokwari (Tel: +62-986-211095, Fax: +62-986-213698) and we transferred the money to Shita to pay for them before we left home.

### ***Raja Ampat***

We decided to let Shita & Untu of Papua Bird Club take care of all the logistic arrangements for Raja Ampat (Sorong-Batanta-Salawati-Sorong), including boat charter, food, negotiating accommodation, guides and porters etc. They did an excellent job of this and everything went without a hitch. They quoted us an all in cost which seemed pretty reasonable, given the high costs associated in particular with boat charter.

While it would be possible to do this bit entirely independently, unless you have lots of time, speak good Indonesian, and are very patient, I wouldn't recommend it. It might also end up costing you almost as much. If you wanted to try, you would need to buy all the food you need and then negotiate boat hire in Sorong, or try and find a place on an irregular public boat to the village of Wailebed on Batanta. Once at Wailebed you'd need to present yourself to the village head (Kepala Desa) and arrange accommodation and local guides etc. If you'd travelled on a public boat you'd need to then arrange a small fishing boat to take you over to Salawati and find the local guide (Nelman) in the village of Kalias, and from there get the boat to take you to the various site options on Salawati. Once you'd had your fill you'd then need to try and get back to Sorong. If you were relying on a public boat rather than a charter, this may require a long wait! In short, my advice, use Papua Bird Club.

The accommodation on Batanta is nice but basic. If you have come with Papua Bird Club they will take care of the cooking arrangements etc. You'll need a tent, or a mosquito net and sleeping mat and sleep on the main hut floor (as we did). Washing yourself or your clothes is in the nearby stream, and a pit toilet has been dug nearby.



*The guest house in Wailebed on Batanta.*



*The boat we chartered.*

### ***Arfak Mountains***

For Arfak you need to get yourself to the village of Sioubri and find Pak Zeth, the best bird guide I have ever met in Indonesia. To get there Shita had put us in touch with a local driver, Pak Udin, who knows the route and needs of visiting birders well. Using his car we stocked up on all the supplies we needed for our five day stay, plus sufficient food for the team of people we needed to recruit (read on!), including about 10kg of rice, and in our case, bundles of Durian. The car hire cost is a flat rate, but more if you plan to stop regularly along the way for birds as we did. The drive will take about two hours direct and passes through nice forest for much of the way. We opted to drive directly up, but took around six hours to come back down as we stopped at various altitudes along the road to sample the birds. Make sure to arrange a pick up time clearly with Pak Udin before he departs.

Once you arrive in Sioubri you should try and find Zeth. This should be easy if he is around. In our case Shita had passed on a message earlier that we were coming, so we were more-or-less expected. There is a short walk up to the guest house (100m) and we paid a small tip to each of the various porters that carried

our bags and food up. We then arranged, through Zeth, to hire him, a couple of porters, a cook and an assistant cook. These positions were then variously filled by members of Zeth's extended family. As is common practice in Indonesia we did not discuss payments at all at this time, but it is taken as given that you will offer a fair price on satisfaction. On the final morning we settled our bills by offering Zeth, the porters and the cooks a daily price. We also gave money for our five nights in the guest house, and for our two nights in the garden house, plus a donation to the village and to the land owner, and paid for the fire wood and fresh vegetables we consumed. We provided the money in various envelopes to Zeth, who then distributed it.



*The village of Sioubri*



*Reception committee*

The accommodation is again nice but basic. The most comfortable is at the 'base camp' Guest House (Rumah Turis) here you get to sleep on boards and cooking is done (by your team!) in a adjacent covered area. A clean pit toilet has been built behind the hut and you can wash yourself or clothes in the ice cold water of the nearby stream. In Arfak there is also the option to sleep higher up the mountain, about one hours walk up, in the 'Garden House' (Rumah Kebun). This is a great spot for birding and for accessing higher points on the mountain. You only need to take the stuff you need for your stay and you can arrange for food cooked below at the base camp to be carried up. The only downside to the garden house is that there is no access to water, so you can't wash. The temperature is cold at night at both sites so you'll need a sleeping bag, but don't really need a mosquito net.



*The base camp Guest House*



*The Garden House*

## ***Biak***

Biak is pretty straightforward in comparison to Raja Ampat and Arfak. You can fly direct from Manokwari to Biak (by Merpati for around Rp 685,000) but the flight is not daily, prone to cancellation and delay, and cannot be booked properly more than a day in advance. Instead we played safe and got ourselves an evening scheduled flight to Jayapura, stayed overnight in Sentani near the airport, and then an early morning scheduled flight to Biak. This arrangement probably got us to Biak more quickly than the irregular flight (as we would have had to stay overnight in Manokwari the night before in order to ensure our place), but cost us more. As you approach Jayapura from Manokwari you will probably fly over Nimbokrang and Jalan Korea as we did. The option to break the trip in Jayapura and birdwatch this site is obvious, but we didn't.

Shita has put us in touch with a local driver in Jayapura Pak Rustan (+62-852-444-93000) and he met us at the airport and picked us up early the following morning to take us back. As before we didn't discuss a price in advance and he asked only to be paid what we thought appropriate. We gave him money on the generous side of the going rate and he seemed happy. We stayed at the vast but empty *Hotel Sentani Indah*, about 10 mins from the airport (Tel: +62-967-591900; Fax: +62-967-592828; [www.sentanihot.com](http://www.sentanihot.com); Rp 481,464/night).

In Biak we took an airport taxi to the Arumbai Hotel in town (Tel: +62-981-21835; Fax: +62-981-22501; [www.arumbaihotel.com](http://www.arumbaihotel.com); Rp 350,000/night) and then called another local driver that Shita had put us in touch with (Pak Simon, +62-852-4462-6675) he drives a public minibus as a day job, but will also do charters if you give him some advance warning (we called him from Manokwari before we went to Arfak). He also has the distinct advantage that he has ferried around groups in the past for Papua Bird Club and so knows some sites. He is the only public mini-van driver I have met in Indonesia that you can ask to take you to a site for Biak Scops Owl and who says 'OK'! As usual, we didn't discuss prices in advance but offered him a good price at the end for our two day charter and he seemed happy. We stocked up on biscuits etc in local shops and when we stopped for lunch or dinner we paid for the driver too, as is custom.

On our final morning we got the hotel car to take us back to the airport (free but for a tip) and caught our scheduled flights back to Jakarta. I then went home a happy man to Bogor and Gus caught his flight back to the UK that evening. For me the trip was 12 days, for Gus he left and returned to the UK inside of 14 days.

## ***General***

All-in-all the trip went logistically without a hitch, which is pretty amazing for Indonesia. I am fortunate in speaking pretty fluent Indonesian, and this no doubt made things easier for us to travel independently as we did. With the exception of Shita and Untu I don't think we actually came across anyone else who spoke any English (for many people in Papua Indonesian is a distant second language). Everyone we came in contact with was incredibly friendly and helpful, as usual for Indonesia, but the biggest thanks go to Shita and Untu from Papua Bird Club. Their help, not just with Raja Ampat, but with making arrangements for Arfak and Biak made the trip easy. I cannot recommend them enough (see contact details at end).

## **Birds and birding sites**

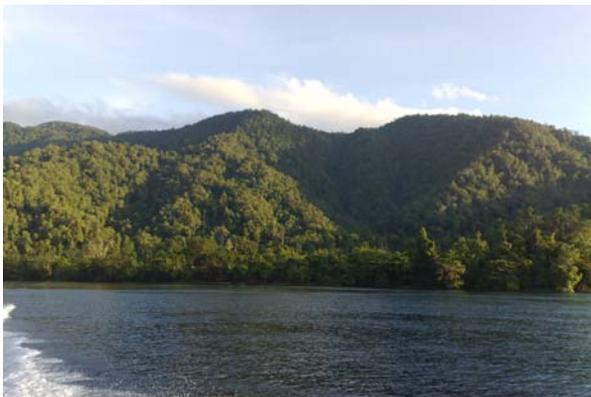
### **Raja Ampat**

Here our primary target was undoubtedly Wilson's Bird of Paradise, followed closely by Western Crowned Pigeon, King and Red BoP, plus Northern Cassowary as an outside bet. The sites for Wilson's BoP are all up a steep hill behind the guest house on Batanta. On our first morning we first tried a site mid-way up the hill, but despite hearing a calling bird nearby it wouldn't come down. We moved on up the hill after about an hour to try elsewhere. With mounting tension we tried another site that had a calling bird and within only a few minutes we got brief glimpses of the truly amazing bird doing some display motions on a branch close to the ground. We went on to get some great views and after we had our fill made the gruelling trek back down. That evening we got views of a single Red Bird-of-paradise from the main clearing.

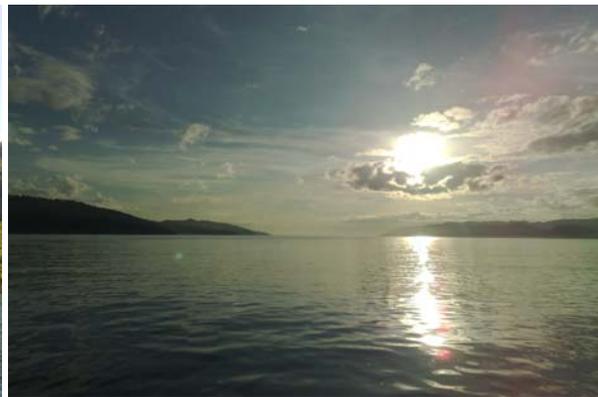
Next morning we headed over to Salawati. We tried a site a bit more distant from the usual sites, only accessible as the winds were from the north-east so the waves were not too big. We were hoping for Western Crowned Pigeon and Cassowary. We flushed two pigeons after about an hour but only got brief views as they flew into cover. Later we found a single bird perched in a tree and were able to properly enjoy the amazing sight. After that the doors seemed to open. We had distant views of two birds walking on the beach and as we went to leave had excellent views of three birds feeding in low beach-side vegetation. More than we expected! As for cassowary, we found plenty of very fresh tracks but had no sighting. All the time we were looking we had Nelman, the local guide, telling us stories of cassowaries attacking people, kicking large rocks around, killing his dogs etc to the point that we felt we were looking for velociraptors rather than birds and started to have our own doubts as to whether we even wanted to find one! We had brief views of a King Bird-of-paradise here, and nice views of the rarely seen Black Lory.

On our last morning we got up early and managed to finally get a decent view of the Papuan Frogmouth we had been hearing call each night of our stay, then we loaded our stuff and headed across to Salawati again to the more customary King BoP site east of the village of Kalam and had great views of a bird calling low in its display tree. Later that day we worked our way east along the coast of Salawati stopping at any interesting sites we fancied the look of. We tried an area with a large lake just behind the shore and were pretty amazed to see another two Western Crowned Pigeons in a tree as we parked the boat. Finally we headed back to Sorong via the small island of Senapang where we managed to see Beach Kingfisher from the boat, but were unable to land because of the big waves breaking all around (the same weather that allowed us to land at the south-western site, prevented us landing at this north-eastern site!). In the evening we birdwatched in secondary forest near Sorong, but the place was fairly bird free.

The forest around Batanta and Salawati are all in great condition. Batanta was steep and muddy in places. Salawati was flat and very muddy! It rained intermittently throughout, often heavily, but we were not plagued by the rain as others have been. We found plenty of leaches on Salawati in the swamps forests that are home to the pigeons and cassowary, but had no trouble with chiggers (we stayed away from long grass and pretty much covered our legs, socks and shoes in strong DEET repellent).



*The Wilson's BoP hill on Batanta*



*Looking east, Batanta on left, Salawati on right.*



Google Earth map showing the main sites visited on Batanta & Salawati

### Birds recorded in Raja Ampat

1	<b>Northern Cassowary</b> <i>Casuarius unappendiculatus</i>	Not seen, unfortunately, but definitely present on Salawati. We found tracks that were only hours old...
2	<b>Little Grebe</b> <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	A single bird on the lake on Salawati.
3	<b>Little Pied Cormorant</b> <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>	A single bird perched near a river mouth on Salawati.
4	<b>Lesser Frigatebird</b> <i>Fregata ariel</i>	A few birds seen at sea, distant birds also presumed in most cases to be this species.
5	<b>Great Egret</b> <i>Ardea alba</i>	A single bird seen near the lake area on Salawati.
6	<b>Intermediate Egret</b> <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	A couple of birds seen near the lake area on Salawati.
7	<b>Pacific (Eastern) Reef-Heron</b> <i>Egretta sacra</i>	Dark-phase birds seen on several occasions along the beach or on floating logs in the straits.
8	<b>Great Blue Heron</b> <i>Ardea sumatrana</i>	A single bird seen near the lakes site on Salawati.
9	<b>Spotted Whistling-Duck</b> <i>Dendrocygna guttata</i>	A small group seen on the lakes on Salawati.
10	<b>Osprey</b> <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Seen daily in the straits between Salawati and Batanta.
11	<b>Pacific Baza</b> <i>Aviceda subcristata</i>	Seen perched and flying on several occasions on Salawati.

12	<b>Brahminy Kite</b> <i>Haliastur indus</i>	Seen occasionally, usually near the coast.
13	<b>White-bellied Sea-Eagle</b> <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	Seen occasionally near, or over, the sea.
14	<b>Variable Goshawk</b> <i>Accipiter hiogaster</i>	A pair perched on trees from the main clearing on Batanta.
15	<b>Grey-faced Buzzard</b> <i>Butastur indicus</i>	A single bird soaring overhead near Sorong.
16	<b>Gurney's Eagle</b> <i>Aquila gurneyi</i>	A single bird seen soaring high above secondary forest near Sorong.
17	<b>Dusky (Common) Scrubfowl</b> <i>Megapodius freycinet</i>	A single seen briefly from the lowest Wilson's BoP hide on Batanta.
18	<b>Red-necked Crane</b> <i>Rallina tricolor</i>	Caught in a spotlight beam one night in the forest behind the Guest House on Batanta.
19	<b>Common Sandpiper</b> <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Seen occasionally along beaches.
20	<b>Lesser Crested Tern</b> <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	A few seen at sea (probably more present, but distant).
21	<b>Black-naped Tern</b> <i>Sterna sumatrana</i>	A few seen at sea (probably more present, but distant).
22	<b>Bridled Tern</b> <i>Sterna anaethetus</i>	A few seen at sea (probably more present, but distant).
23	<b>Stephan's Dove</b> <i>Chalcophaps stephani</i>	Seen a couple of times in forest, usually in flight.
24	<b>Western Crowned-Pigeon</b> <i>Goura cristata</i>	Seen on five occasions on Salawati. Four times at the site labelled 'W. Crowned Pigeon Site' on the map, including a pair flushed into trees; a single bird perched high in a tree, a pair seen distantly feeding on the beach and a group of three seen well feeding on the beach. Also seen one time at the site labelled 'Lakes', with a pair perched in a tree just behind the beach.
25	<b>Pinon Imperial-Pigeon</b> <i>Ducula pinon</i>	Occasionally seen and heard.
26	<b>Palm Cockatoo</b> <i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>	Seen on several occasions near the Guest House on Batanta. Amazing birds!
27	<b>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</b> <i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Seen and heard regularly.
28	<b>Black Lory</b> <i>Chalcopsitta atra</i>	A group of five or six birds seen feeding with the mixed parrot flocks at the 'W. Crowned Pigeon site' on Salawati. Nice looking parrots.
29	<b>Rainbow Lorikeet</b> <i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>	Commonly seen and heard.
30	<b>Black-capped Lory</b> <i>Lorius lory</i>	At least two birds present in the mixed flocks of parrots at the 'W. Crowned Pigeon site' on Salawati.
31	<b>Red-cheeked Parrot</b> <i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>	Seen a couple of times in flight from the main clearing on Batanta.
32	<b>Eclectus Parrot</b> <i>Eclectus roratus</i>	Very common around the main clearing on Batanta, and seen regularly elsewhere.
33	<b>Papuan Frogmouth</b> <i>Podargus papuensis</i>	Heard every night around the guest house on Batanta, but we only managed to get a proper view early on our final morning as one was spotlighted as it returned to its day-time roost.
34	<b>Glossy Swiftlet</b> <i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	Common.

35	<b>Uniform Swiftlet</b> <i>Aerodramus vanikorensis</i>	Common.
36	<b>White-throated Needletail</b> <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>	Occasionally small groups seen overhead.
37	<b>Moustached Tree-swift</b> <i>Hemiprogne mystacea</i>	A pair seen from the main clearing on Batanta.
38	<b>Variable (dwarf) Kingfisher</b> <i>Ceyx lepidus</i>	A bird perched briefly about 1m away from us in forest near the main King BoP sites on Salawati.
39	<b>Rufous-bellied Kookaburra</b> <i>Dacelo gaudichaud</i>	Seen and heard around the Guest House and main clearing on Batanta.
40	<b>Beach Kingfisher</b> <i>Todiramphus saurophagus</i>	A single bird seen from the boat on Senapang Island (behind big breaking waves!).
41	<b>Yellow-billed Kingfisher</b> <i>Syma torotoro</i>	A pair perched and calling around the clearing near to the main King BoP sites on Salawati.
42	<b>Common Paradise-Kingfisher</b> <i>Tanyptera galatea</i>	Seen on a couple of occasions in the forest, including from the lowest Wilson's BoP hide on Batanta, and in the forest near the main King BoP sites on Salawati.
43	<b>Dollarbird</b> <i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	Seen once or twice near clearings.
44	<b>Blyth's Hornbill</b> <i>Aceros plicatus</i>	Seen and heard regularly in all forest areas.
45	<b>Hooded Pitta</b> <i>Pitta sordida</i>	Seen twice in forest near the King BoP sites on Salawati. Heard more commonly elsewhere.
46	<b>Red-bellied Pitta</b> <i>Pitta erythrogaster</i>	An adult seen high on the ridge on Batanta, a juvenile seen on the trail just behind the Guest House, also on Batanta.
47	<b>Barn Swallow</b> <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Several overhead.
48	<b>Grey Wagtail</b> <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Seen occasionally in open areas.
49	<b>White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike</b> <i>Coracina papuensis</i>	A pair seen from the main clearing on Batanta.
50	<b>Black-browed Triller</b> <i>Lalage atrovirens</i>	Seen several times in forest and forest edge, both on Batanta and Salawati.
51	<b>Grey-streaked Flycatcher</b> <i>Muscicapa griseisticta</i>	Seen daily in the main clearing on Batanta.
52	<b>Northern Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>	Seen occasionally in forest and forest edge. Often with mixed flocks.
53	<b>Willie Wagtail</b> <i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>	A pair always present around the Guest House on Batanta.
54	<b>Black Thicket-Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura maculipectus</i>	Seen well near the main King BoP sites on Salawati, see briefly in forest on Batanta also.
55	<b>Frilled Monarch</b> <i>Arses telescophthalmus</i>	Seen on two occasions in the small forest patches between the Guest House and the main clearing on Batanta.
56	<b>Shining Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiagra alecto</i>	Seen on one occasion in the small forest patches between the Guest House and the main clearing on Batanta.
57	<b>Golden Whistler</b> <i>Patchycephala pectoralis</i>	Seen once and heard in the forests of Batanta.
58	<b>Variable Pitohui</b> <i>Pitohui kirhocephalus</i>	A single bird of the ' <i>buff-hooded</i> ' race seen in the small forest patches between the Guest House and main clearing on Batanta.
59	<b>Black Sunbird</b> <i>Leptocoma sericea</i>	Seen around the coconut groves at the lake site on Salawati.

60	<b>Olive-backed Sunbird</b> <i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	Seen around the coconut groves at the lake site on Salawati.
61	<b>Olive-crowned Flowerpecker</b> <i>Dicaeum pectorale</i>	Seen occasionally around the main clearing on Batanta (aka Papuan Flowerpecker).
62	<b>Puff-backed Honeyeater</b> <i>Meliphaga aruensis</i>	Seen on 2-3 occasions in forest high on the ridge on Batanta.
63	<b>Mimic Honeyeater</b> <i>Meliphaga analoga</i>	Occasionally seen in forest and forest edge (Salawati & Batanta).
64	<b>Helmeted Friarbird</b> <i>Philemon bueroides</i>	Seen a couple of times near the Guest House on Batanta.
65	<b>Hooded Butcherbird</b> <i>Cracticus cassicus</i>	Commonly seen and heard.
66	<b>Glossy-mantled Manucode</b> <i>Manucodia ater</i>	A single bird seen in the Red BoP display tree adjacent to the main clearing on Batanta, and then another, somewhat bizarrely, spotlighted at night in forest just behind the Guest House, also on Batanta.
67	<b>Wilson's Bird-of-paradise</b> <i>Cicinnurus respublica</i>	Heard regularly in the forest and seen well at display grounds high on the ridge. Initially we waited for a while at the lowest display ground, but despite the calling bird being very close it did not descend or reveal itself. At the alternative sites higher up the birds were much more forthcoming!
68	<b>King Bird-of-Paradise</b> <i>Cicinnurus regius</i>	A bird was seen briefly, high in a tree, at the 'W. Crowned Pigeon site' on Salawati, with several more birds calling in the vicinity. Later seen well at the more regular display sites further north on Salawati; here we got to enjoy nice views of a male calling away in its tree.
69	<b>Red Bird-of-Paradise</b> <i>Paradisaea rubra</i>	A single male seen on one evening (out of the three we were looking) in the 'regular' display tree adjacent to the main clearing on Batanta.
70	<b>Grey Crow</b> <i>Corvus tristis</i>	Seen occasionally around the main clearing on Batanta.
71	<b>Torresian Crow</b> <i>Corvus orru</i>	Seen regularly around the main clearing on Batanta.
72	<b>Yellow-faced Myna</b> <i>Mino dumontii</i>	A pair present around the clearing near to the main King BoP site on Salawati.

## Arfak

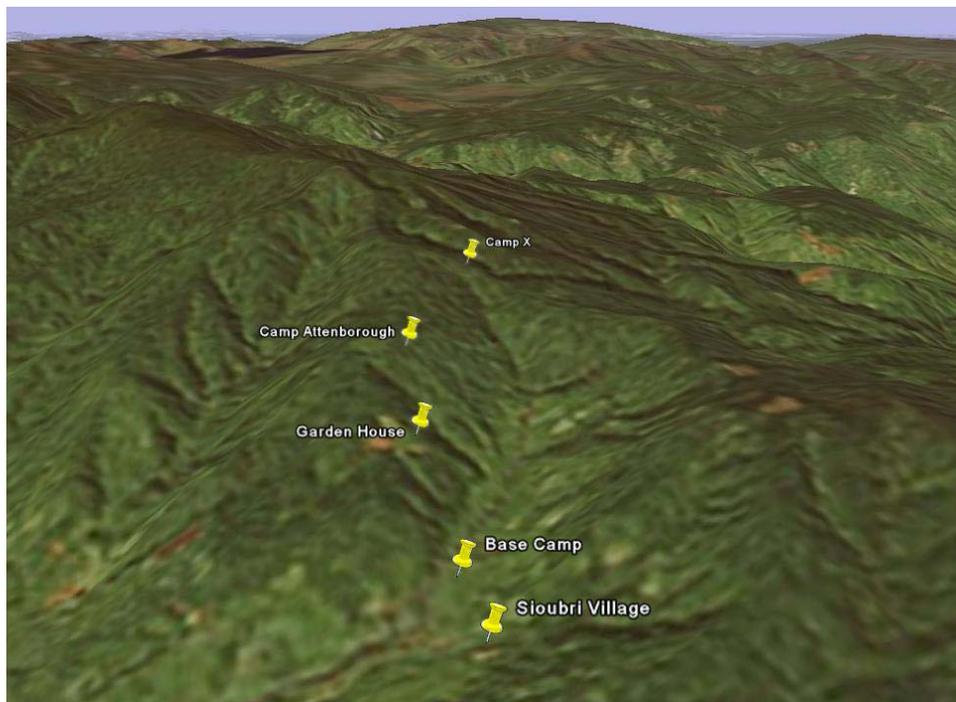
The Arfak Mountains, around the region of Mokwan and Sioubri villages, includes hill, sub-montane and montane forest, with birding opportunities stretching from virtually sea level (near to Manokwari) to 2,500m. The bulk of the best birding, trails, hides and known sites are around and above the village of Sioubri at altitudes of 1,400 m to 1,800 m. Here habitat includes sub-montane forest, forest edge, secondary forest areas and clearings. At higher altitudes (above 2,000 m) the forest changes to become distinctively montane in character with smaller trees, great numbers of epiphytes (bromeliads, orchids and mosses) and includes the all important Pandanas palms (that are home to Black Sicklebills!). Zeth is a true expert on this area and over the years has identified display grounds for many of the birds of paradise. At the most reliable he has constructed viewing hides that give fantastic views of the action.



*Montane forest at around 2,000 m.*



*The Arfak Mountains, viewed from around 1,000 m.*



*The birding sites around Sioubri in the Arfak Mountains.*

During our five-night stay we concentrated our first two days on the forests around the village, our second two days on the high altitude forests, and our final day birding along the main access road down to around 600 m asl. Our targets, quite naturally, included as many birds-of-paradise as possible, plus anything and everything else! The timing of our visit, at the end of March, was a bit early for active displaying for many species, so we didn't expect to see too much of that, but we did want to see them all nevertheless!

On our first morning we tried the Western Parotia display grounds about 40 mins steep climb above the base camp. We didn't have to wait long before a beautiful male descended to just above the display ground and gave fantastic views. No females arrived that morning, so it didn't have the incentive to perform, but it looked great anyway! Nearby there are several Vogelkop Bowerbird bowers so we also got to enjoy these amazing constructions. At one site, still being actively built, the male bowerbird was extremely confiding as it tried to steal articles of our equipment to incorporate into the bower!

After getting our fill of these we moved away and followed a wide loop past the garden house, and back down to base camp. Zeth showed us a beautiful roosting Feline Owlet Nightjar near the garden house. The trick seems almost magical so we started talking to Zeth about it. It seems he only ever knows the approximate location of the birds (within say 400m<sup>2</sup> area), as every day they actually come to rest on a different branch or tree. Zeth's tactic is just to creep into the approximate area and find the birds afresh each time! Knowing this made the feat seem all the more amazing. As if by confirmation of his amazing eyesight, a couple of hours later while we were birding Zeth spotted another roosting Feline Owlet-nightjar only about 3 m from the trail, with no previous idea that one was there. The second bird was a rufous-phase as opposed to the grey-phase of the first bird and so made for a nice comparison.

Shortly after this Zeth once again impressed us (this theme would continue on a daily basis!) by getting us onto a nest building Long-tailed Paradigala. The nest site was new to Zeth as well and when we asked how he had got on the non-calling bird way before we did, he said that he heard something flying and recognised the sound of the wing-beats! Suffice to say, we had great views of this very smart bird.

A bit later we tried in vain to get a view of a calling pair of Lesser Melanpitta, but they may as well have been underground for the difficulty of seeing them. Gus got a fleeting glimpse as one ran from under one log to under another, but that was all.

Finally, towards the end of the day, we got nice views of a pair of Spotted Jewel Babbler, having heard and briefly seen a few throughout the day. All the time we were walking we also kept hitting flocks of smaller birds, including many of sought after Vogelkop and montane specialities.

On day two we opted to try for Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise first, at a site just below the village. As this was Easter weekend Zeth dropped us at the hide early and then headed off to church with plans to find us later wherever we ended up. At the hide, we didn't have to wait long before a male turned up, and then shortly after it a female. With the right ingredients in place we sat back and were treated to the male's incredible dancing transformation as the feather on its nape were raised over its head and the bright green bib rigidly extended. Spectacular stuff. All smiles, we left the hide after only about 30 minutes having witnessed this amazing sight. We then wandered our way slowly back to the base camp on our own, finding plenty of new birds around the forest edge clearings and agricultural gardens of the village, including a 'Zeth moment' by Gus who wandered off into the forest to relieve himself and promptly found a black monarch nest!

After lunch we reassembled at base camp and made our move up to the Garden House. More new birds on the way, including a roosting Mountain Owlet-nightjar found by Zeth (of course) using the same cold-searching-in-an-approximately-known-area tactic. That evening we just stayed around the camp and got a few more birds on the list. At night we heard Sooty Owl calling nearby but frustratingly we couldn't get a decent view of the tree it was in (despite trying..), or a recording, as it was calling too infrequently on the brightly moonlit night.

The next morning was Easter Sunday proper, so Zeth and team all descended to church again and me and Gus were left on our own for the morning. We first tried the Parotia hides again and this time bizarrely we had a female visit the display ground, but no male to be seen! We abandoned this after a while and decided to head up the mountain on our own. The trail was generally easy to follow, but we needed to retrace our

steps a few times to stay on (what we hoped) was the right track. After a few hours, and lots of birds, we passed another Vogelkop Bowerbird bower and came across an old camp at 2,000 m. Guessing this was the old camp used by David Attenborough that Zeth had told us about we figured we were on course. Beyond this point the forest changes distinctly in character to become proper montane forest and the birds changed too. Now we were getting tons of parrots in the many fruiting trees, and a different set of small birds. After a while we stumbled across a female Black Sicklebill feeding in a fruiting Pandanus palm just above the trail, then briefly and distantly saw a male. Well pleased with this we pushed on and after a while found ourselves on a ridge at 2,200 m, with another old camp, we named 'Camp X' for want of a better name. We stopped here to recover, to see more birds and to eat the last of our biscuits. By this time we were still on our own, it was three in the afternoon and we had taken six hours to get this far from the garden house, itself an hour above the base camp, and we weren't even sure where we were. As we were starting to contemplate finding our own way back down, as if by magic Zeth appeared puffing and panting and carrying a big bucket full of lunch! Well pleased, we asked him how long it had taken him to get here, and he told us it had taken him just under one hour from leaving the church in the village far below to here! He then went on to accurately describe all of our activities that morning saying he had noticed we had taken the wrong path a couple of times, and that we had stopped for a while in a couple of places etc etc! With Zeth back we asked him to show us the Black Sicklebill display tree (not being used this early in the season). As we got close we heard a male calling nearby and we pursued it. Before long we had excellent views of an adult male hopping around in trees and preening. At around 1m long from bill-to-tail this is one amazing bird, and seeing it so well was one of the highlights of the trip for me. By now it was starting to get dark and we headed back down, taking only an hour of concentrated walking/stumbling/falling to get back to the garden house.

That evening the Sooty Owl started up again in the same area and we managed to get a recording, but still couldn't see the bird. After a while we sat back in the clearing for a rest, and played the tape a couple of times. After about 20 mins I turned my head and was amazed to see the owl swooping down straight at me from nowhere. It passed within only a couple of metres of my head and flew on into trees out of sight calling again! We also had Papuan Boobook calling nearby, but couldn't get on them and couldn't coax them out into the open. Also both species of owl nightjar were calling nearby but we didn't try to see them.

The next morning we headed up again, this time with Zeth and crew, and with Arfak Astrapia our main target. Not an easy bird this one as they don't call, apart from the male making an irregular clucking noise. We heard this at one point and Zeth leapt into full search mode, quickly getting us onto a female high in a tree. A short mad chase later and we had great views of this bird feeding in a low fruit tree. We never saw any sight of the male, but we were happy nevertheless. Shortly after we heard a loud call that Gus and I had heard but not recognised from the day before, but Zeth immediately identified as New Guinea Harpy Eagle. After creeping up on the call, we found it high in a tree and got great scope views of the perched bird. An absolute monster and an amazing and quite rare sight to see one this well.

After plenty of other good birds we headed back down. While searching for the roost location of the Sooty owl by day, we came across a female Superb Bird-of-Paradise. This was the only decent view we got of this species, despite hearing male birds calling all the time down below. After lunch we headed back down and made one last go to see the Spotted Catbirds we had been hearing calling throughout, but despite hearing around five different birds, and having a tape call, we couldn't get one to approach or break cover. Same was true of more Superb BoPs. We did manage good views of Green-backed Robin though, and were happy with that.

On our last morning we said our good-by's early and headed down the road with Pak Udin for some birding on our way back to Manokwari. We first stopped at a site just below the village at which Zeth told us Flame Bowerbird and Buff-tailed Sicklebill were regularly seen. We didn't see either, or even hear the Sicklebill (which usually calls if it is present), but we did get plenty of other nice stuff including Dwarf and Mottled Whistler which we hadn't seen up to that point.

We then moved lower again, hoping to try for a Lesser Bird-of-paradise display tree, but when we got there we found the road building crew were working right at the spot, so didn't hold much hope for seeing them. We birdwatched around here for a couple of hours and despite the mid-day heat we managed quite a few new birds for the trip, and got great views of a female Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot.

Back in Manokwari we met up with Shita and Untu for lunch at the beach, before getting our flight to Jayapura. While eating lunch Gus (who is based in the UK) said casually ‘there is a gull over there’ both me and Shita immediately said ‘you mean a tern?’ but Gus was insistent and grabbing my bins for a look it was indeed a Black-headed Gull, which flew casually a little distance away and then came to rest floating on the sea (in very un-tern like fashion!). With only one previous West Papuan record, and not many more for the whole of Indonesia, this was probably the rarest bird we saw on the whole trip!!

All told, Arfak was great. The weather was beautiful; not too hot, not too cold, with only very brief rain showers. The habitat is great, the birds are great, the people are great, and Zeth is truly amazing.

### Birds recorded in Arfak

1	<b>Little Egret</b> <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	A group of six or seven birds roosting in the forest canopy seen from low on the road to Sioubri (at around 600m).
2	<b>Long-tailed Honey-Buzzard</b> <i>Henicopernis longicauda</i>	Several seen, including a presumed family group of three birds just below the village of Sioubri.
3	<b>Black-mantled Goshawk</b> <i>Accipiter melanochlamys</i>	One bird seen soaring low over the road just below Sioubri (at around 1,500 m).
4	<b>Grey-headed Goshawk</b> <i>Accipiter poliocephalus</i>	A single bird seen hunting low along the road at around 600m.
5	<b>New Guinea Eagle</b> <i>Harpyopsis novaeguineae</i>	An amazing bird seen perched in a tree between Camp Attenborough and Camp X. First found by the calls, and eventually viewed in the scope.
6	<b>Black-headed Gull</b> <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	A single winter-plumaged adult bird seen just offshore from Manokwari, flying and resting on the water. Probably the second record for Indonesian Papua!
7	<b>Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove</b> <i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>	Seen on several occasions in forest at a wide range of altitudes.
8	<b>Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove</b> <i>Macropygia nigrirostris</i>	A bird seen in a dry river bed above the base camp (at around 1,600m).
9	<b>White-breasted Fruit-Dove</b> <i>Ptilinopus rivoli</i>	Seen and heard quite commonly at higher elevations (above 1,500m).
10	<b>Papuan Mountain-Pigeon</b> <i>Gymnophaps albertisii</i>	Seen and heard on a few occasions at high altitude (above 2,000m).
11	<b>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</b> <i>Cacatua galerita</i>	A pair seen once near the Parotia hides, and again low on the access road (at around 600m).
12	<b>Fairy Lorikeet</b> <i>Charmosyna pulchella</i>	Seen well on two occasions; once near Camp Attenborough, and once from the trail between there and Camp X. (aka ‘Little Red Lorikeet’).
13	<b>Josephine's Lorikeet</b> <i>Charmosyna josefinae</i>	Small groups seen on several occasions feeding on fruiting trees with other parrot species (most commonly with Papua Lorikeet).
14	<b>Papuan Lorikeet</b> <i>Charmosyna papou</i>	Commonly seen and heard at higher altitudes (above 2,000m). Probably the commonest parrot seen present at this altitude.
15	<b>Yellow-billed Lorikeet</b> <i>Neopsittacus musschenbroekii</i>	Seen and heard on a few occasions at the highest elevations (above 2,200m).
16	<b>Red-breasted Pygmy-Parrot</b> <i>Micropsitta bruijnii</i>	A male seen briefly high on the summit trail (at around 2,100m); a female seen very well low on the access road at only around 600m.
17	<b>Modest Tiger-Parrot</b> <i>Psittacella modesta</i>	Single birds and/pr pairs seen on around four occasions above the Garden House.
18	<b>Brush Cuckoo</b> <i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>	Heard calling low on the access road.
19	<b>Rufous-throated Bronze-cuckoo</b> <i>Chrysococcyx ruficollis</i>	A pair seen just outside the base camp guest house on one day.
20	<b>Greater Sooty-Owl</b> <i>Tyto tenebricosa</i>	Heard every night from the Garden House. Seen briefly in flight as it flew low over the Garden House clearing.

21	<b>Papuan Boobook</b> <i>Ninox theomacha</i>	One or two birds heard nightly from both the garden house and the base camp guest house, but never close enough to tape or attract (or see!).
22	<b>Feline Owlet-Nightjar</b> <i>Aegotheles insignis</i>	Seen twice near the Garden House. A grey-phase bird once at a known roost site of Zeth's and a rufous-phase bird at a newly found site. Birds heard calling occasionally around both the Garden House and base camp Guest House.
23	<b>Mountain Owlet-Nightjar</b> <i>Aegotheles albertisi</i>	Seen once at a known roost site of Zeth's. Heard calling occasionally around the Garden House.
24	<b>Papuan Frogmouth</b> <i>Podargus papuensis</i>	Heard nightly near the main Guest House. Seen briefly in flight once.
25	<b>Glossy Swiftlet</b> <i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	Commonly seen.
26	<b>Mountain Swiftlet</b> <i>Aerodramus hirundinaceus</i>	Seen on several occasions in small parties from village of Sioubri upwards.
27	<b>Blyth's Hornbill</b> <i>Aceros plicatus</i>	Seen and heard on a number of occasions, particularly at lower elevations.
28	<b>Grey Wagtail</b> <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Seen frequently along the access road.
29	<b>New Guinea Cuckoo-shrike</b> <i>Coracina melas</i>	At least two birds present in a loose mixed flock on the access road at around 600m. (aka 'Black Cuckoo-shrike').
30	<b>Island Leaf-Warbler</b> <i>Phylloscopus poliocephalus</i>	Commonly seen in mixed flocks from Sioubri village upwards.
31	<b>Friendly Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura albolimbata</i>	As the name suggests, the first species to arrive if you ever started making squeaking noises!
32	<b>Black Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura atra</i>	Seen on a number of occasions and at a wide range of altitudes. Often with mixed flocks.
33	<b>Dimorphic Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura brachyrhyncha</i>	Seen several times in forest above and around the base camp.
34	<b>Black Monarch</b> <i>Monarcha axillaris</i>	Seen 2-3 times, including the discovery of an active nest just below the village of Sioubri.
35	<b>Golden Monarch</b> <i>Monarcha chrysomela</i>	Several birds seen low on the access road (600m).
36	<b>Frilled Monarch</b> <i>Arses telescopthalmus</i>	A pair seen low on the access road (at around 600m).
37	<b>Black-breasted Boatbill</b> <i>Machaerirhynchus nigriceps</i>	Seen on several occasions and at a wide range of altitudes.
38	<b>Lesser Ground-Robin</b> <i>Amalocichla incerta</i>	Frequently heard, and seen well on several occasions at a range of altitudes.
39	<b>Canary Flycatcher</b> <i>Microeca papuana</i>	Seen on a few occasions in the high forests between Camp Attenborough and Camp X.
40	<b>Garnet Robin</b> <i>Eugeryone rubra</i>	A small party seen once just above the Garden House.
41	<b>Black-throated Robin</b> <i>Poecilodryas albonotata</i>	Seen twice, once high up near Camp X, and once just next to the Garden House.
42	<b>Smoky Robin</b> <i>Peneothello cryptoleuca</i>	Seen and heard on several occasions at the highest altitudes (above 2,000m).
43	<b>Blue-grey Robin</b> <i>Peneothello cyanus</i>	Frequently seen and heard at lower altitudes (around the base camp).
44	<b>Gray-headed (Ashy) Robin</b> <i>Heteromyias a. albispectula</i>	Seen once just above Camp X, at around 2,300m.
45	<b>Green-backed Robin</b> <i>Pachycephalopsis hattamensis</i>	Seen on the first and last day, in newly cleared forest just above the base camp guest house.

46	<b>Mottled Whistler</b> <i>Rhagologus leucostigma</i>	A single bird seen from the road about 30 mins below Sioubri village.
47	<b>Dwarf Whistler</b> <i>Pachycaire flavogriseum</i>	Two birds seen together on one occasion, from the access road about 30 mins below Sioubri village.
48	<b>Rufous-naped Whistler</b> <i>Aleadryas rufinucha</i>	Seen and heard on several occasions between base camp and the garden house.
49	<b>Vogelkop Whistler</b> <i>Pachycephala meyeri</i>	Probably the commonest whistler around the base camp and as far as the garden house.
50	<b>Sclater's Whistler</b> <i>Pachycephala soror</i>	Frequently seen in forests between base camp and the garden house, seemed to get replaced by Regent Whistler at higher altitudes.
51	<b>Regent Whistler</b> <i>Pachycephala schlegelii</i>	Seen regularly in the high forests between Camp Attenborough and Camp X.
52	<b>Variable Pitohui</b> <i>Pitohui kirhocephalus</i>	A nice looking bird of the bright 'grey-hooded' race seen low on the access road, at around 600m.
53	<b>Hooded Pitohui</b> <i>Pitohui dichrous</i>	Seen once in forest below the village of Sioubri.
54	<b>Black Pitohui</b> <i>Pitohui nigrescens</i>	Seen and heard on a couple of occasions just above the garden house.
55	<b>Spotted Jewel-Babbler</b> <i>Ptilorrhoa leucosticta</i>	Heard frequently and seen briefly on several occasions. A pair seen well on only one occasion just above the base camp guest house.
56	<b>White-shouldered Fairywren</b> <i>Malurus alboscapulatus</i>	A pair found in secondary vegetation within crop fields around the village of Sioubri.
57	<b>Mountain Mouse-Warbler</b> <i>Crateroscelis robusta</i>	Heard a few times, seen well once, just above the base camp guest house, running around on the ground in thick vegetation like a mouse!
58	<b>Perplexing Scrubwren</b> <i>Sericornis virgatus</i>	A large featureless scrubwren, seen running along branches near the base camp guest house at around 1,500m was presumed to be this species, largely identified by altitude!
59	<b>Large Scrubwren</b> <i>Sericornis nouhuysi</i>	Large featureless scrubwrens seen 2-3 times at high altitudes between Camp Attenborough and Camp X (i.e. above 2,000m) were presumed to be this species, again largely identified by altitude!.
60	<b>Vogelkop Scrubwren</b> <i>Sericornis rufescens</i>	The most commonly encountered scrub wren at all altitudes.
61	<b>Mountain Gerygone</b> <i>Gerygone cinerea</i>	Seen at least twice. Once in low forest above base camp, and once from the road below Sioubri. May have been more common but overlooked. (aka 'Grey Gerygone').
62	<b>Brown-breasted Gerygone</b> <i>Gerygone ruficollis</i>	The most commonly encountered gerygone. Present from below the village of Sioubri to at least the garden house.
63	<b>Varied Sittella</b> <i>Neositta chrysoptera</i>	Seen in small parties on several occasions at a range of altitudes above Sioubri.
64	<b>Papuan Treecreeper</b> <i>Cormobates placens</i>	Seen on several occasions at higher altitudes (garden house, and above).
65	<b>Black Sunbird</b> <i>Leptocoma sericea</i>	Seen from the access road at lower altitudes (below 1,000m).
66	<b>Olive-backed Sunbird</b> <i>Cinmyris jugularis</i>	Seen from the access road at lower altitudes (below 1,000m).
67	<b>Fan-tailed Berrypecker</b> <i>Melanocharis versteri</i>	Seen on several occasions in high forests around Camp X and Camp Attenborough.
68	<b>Tit Berrypecker</b> <i>Oreocharis arfaki</i>	Seen once at high altitude near Camp X.
69	<b>Spotted Berrypecker</b> <i>Melanocharis crassirostris</i>	A pair seen on only one occasion, in low forest just above the base camp guest house.

70	<b>Dwarf Honeyeater</b> <i>Toxorhamphus iliolophus</i>	A single bird seen once at forest edge just below the village of Sioubri.
71	<b>Olive-crowned Flowerpecker</b> <i>Dicaeum pectorale</i>	Seen in farmland and forest edge around and below the village of Sioubri (aka 'Papuan Flowerpecker').
72	<b>Capped White-eye</b> <i>Zosterops fuscicapilla</i>	Commonly seen above Sioubri (aka 'Western Mountain White-eye')
73	<b>Mountain Myzomela</b> <i>Myzomela adolphinae</i>	Seen only once in forest near the garden house (aka 'Mountain Red-headed Myzomela').
74	<b>Red-collared Myzomela</b> <i>Myzomela rosenbergii</i>	Seen several times in high forest areas.
75	<b>Forest Honeyeater</b> <i>Meliphaga montana</i>	Seen once, low on the access road at around 600m (aka 'Forest White-eared Meliphaga').
76	<b>Mountain Meliphaga</b> <i>Meliphaga orientalis</i>	Seen on a couple of occasions, including around forest edge near village of Sioubri.
77	<b>Tawny-breasted Honeyeater</b> <i>Xanthotis flaviventer</i>	Several birds seen from the road around 30 mins below Sioubri village.
78	<b>Rufous-sided Honeyeater</b> <i>Ptiloprora erythropleura</i>	Seen commonly and at a range of altitudes above Sioubri.
79	<b>Cinnamon-browed Melidectes</b> <i>Melidectes ochromelas</i>	The commonest 'large' melidectes at higher altitudes (above the garden house).
80	<b>Vogelkop Melidectes</b> <i>Melidectes leucostephes</i>	The commonest 'large' melidectes at lower altitudes (between base camp and garden house).
81	<b>Arfak Honeyeater</b> <i>Melipotus gymnops</i>	Common throughout (aka 'Western Smoky Honeyeater').
82	<b>Mountain Peltops</b> <i>Peltops montanus</i>	No sign of these for the first four days, then suddenly they seemed to be everywhere around the garden house on the last day!
83	<b>Long-tailed Paradigalla</b> <i>Paradigalla carunculata</i>	Great views of a bird nest building not far from the garden house. A very smart looking bird.
84	<b>Arfak Astrapia</b> <i>Astrapia nigra</i>	A female seen very well feeding on fruit at high latitude (near Camp X). Contact calls of males heard nearby, but never seen.
85	<b>Western Parotia</b> <i>Parotia sefilata</i>	Males seen near the known display grounds between base camp and the garden house. Females seen on a number of other occasions including around the garden house and from the access road below Sioubri.
86	<b>Superb Bird-of-Paradise</b> <i>Lophorina superba</i>	Commonly heard in forests between base camp and the garden house. A female seen from the garden house was our only decent view of this frustrating species!
87	<b>Black Sicklebill</b> <i>Epimachus fastuosus</i>	First a female was seen feeding on fruit above the trail between Camp Attenborough and Camp X, then a male seen distantly nearby, and finally great views of an adult male above Camp X. One of the trip highlights. Calls of the males could be heard often above 2,000m.
88	<b>Magnificent Bird-of-Paradise</b> <i>Cicinnurus magnificus</i>	A pair was present at the display ground below Sioubri, providing us with amazing views of the full display. Also one of the trip highlights.
89	<b>Lesser Melampitta</b> <i>Melampitta lugubris</i>	A pair heard and one briefly seen near the garden house.
90	<b>Spotted Catbird</b> <i>Ailuroedus melanotis</i>	Heard calling and taped on many occasions around the base camp Guest House, but frustratingly never actually seen!
91	<b>Vogelkop Bowerbird</b> <i>Amblyornis inornata</i>	Several amazing bowers seen, and the birds themselves seen and heard on a number of occasions. Tried to steal our stuff from within the nearby Western Parotia hides!
92	<b>Streak-headed Munia</b> <i>Lonchura tristissima</i>	A single bird seen in crops around the village of Sioubri.

## Biak

Our plan in Biak was to see as many birds as possible with the word 'Biak' or 'Geelvink' in front of the name in the short time we had! We knew some would be hard, like Biak Monarch, for which the situation is unclear and many people fail to see it, and others would be fairly random, like Biak Coucal, for which we would either get lucky or not. But we hoped many of the others would be relatively easy.

Biak has been pretty comprehensively logged in the past, and much of the forest is secondary or highly degraded. In our short visit we only had time to visit such areas, as they are close to Biak town, but given more time we would definitely have headed north with camping equipment (possibly hired motorbikes) to see whether there is extensive pristine habitats to be found elsewhere. If you were serious about seeing Biak Monarch, or wanted to see Victoria Crowned Pigeon, I think this would be the only real chance. Despite staying only around degraded forest areas, the birding was still excellent, and we were quickly notching up endemics.

We birdwatched at two main sites. One a short 3-4 km road through degraded forest not far from Biak Town ('Site 1' on the map) and another a long road winding its way through forest of varying quality ('Site 2' on the map). The birds at both were generally similar but with some differences, such as the abundance of Biak White-eye at 'Site 1' and their complete absence from 'Site 2'!



*The two sites we visited in SE Biak. Both are roads cutting through degraded forest.*

We were plagued by frequent and often heavy rain showers during our stay on Biak, but we pushed on regardless and still saw plenty of birds despite getting soaked on many occasions. The weather at least kept the birds active late into the day. Things like Long-tailed Starling were easy, and we also had no trouble seeing plenty of Biak (Black-winged) Lory (at Site 2), including several nice scope views of perched birds. Biak (Black) flycatcher was also found quite easily and seen several times. The very smart looking Biak Paradise Kingfisher seemed to be everywhere on our first evening, but bizarrely we didn't see them at all on our second day.

We had great views of a pair of Geelvink Pygmy Parrot feeding in low bushes at Site 2, many small flocks of Biak White-eye (at Site 1), and a single Biak Gerygone (also Site 1). The gerygone threw us a bit at first as we hadn't really done our homework properly and so weren't expecting the yellow underside of Biak Gerygone, so were initially a bit stumped by the yellow underside of the gerygone we found! (we'd been expecting something looking like a more typical Large-billed Gerygone...). We heard the coucal calling in a large clearing near the road at 'Site 2' on our first evening, but it didn't want to break cover and we didn't get to see it. Later the same evening we tried for Biak Scops Owl along the road (at Site 2), but didn't hear anything. Papuan Frogmouth was calling everywhere but we didn't make a concerted effort to see one. In fact the best thing we saw this evening were trees full of fire-flies!

On the second (and our last) evening we tried for the scops owl again, this time at a site that Shita and Untu had seen them, and which Pak Simon could remember, further along the road at 'Site 2'. As it got dark we heard them call and using a tape copy of a Moluccan Scops Owl call we soon had one interested. Before long we had coaxed it into a small tree just above our heads on a small side trail off the main road. We were then all smiles as we got great views of the bird in the spotlight, making a nice ending to an amazing trip.

### Birds recorded on Biak

1	<b>Pacific Baza</b> <i>Aviceda subcristata</i>	A couple of soggy looking birds perched in the rain at Site 2.
2	<b>Variable Goshawk</b> <i>Accipiter hiogaster</i>	One seen perched near the road at Site 2.
3	<b>Rufous-tailed Bush-hen</b> <i>Amaurornis moluccana</i>	A single bird seen briefly in long grass at a clearing at Site 2
4	<b>Pacific Golden-Plover</b> <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	A single bird, and maybe more, at the airport.
5	<b>Common Sandpiper</b> <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	A bird flushed from low scrub and grass near the road to Site 2.
6	<b>Rock Pigeon</b> <i>Columba livia</i>	Seen once near habitation.
7	<b>Slender-billed Cuckoo-Dove</b> <i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>	Pairs of birds seen on a couple of occasions at Site 2.
8	<b>Great Cuckoo-Dove</b> <i>Reinwardtoena reinwardtii</i>	A single bird seen flying low across the road at Site 2.
9	<b>Stephan's Dove</b> <i>Chalcophaps stephani</i>	A bird flew across the road at Site 2.
10	<b>Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove</b> <i>Ptilinopus solomonensis</i>	This nice looking pigeon seen a couple of times perched high in trees at Site 2.
11	<b>Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove</b> <i>Ptilinopus viridis</i>	The commonest pigeon seen and heard at Site 2.
12	<b>Spice Imperial-Pigeon</b> <i>Ducula myristicivora</i>	Seen on 2-3 occasions, perched and in flight at Site 2.
13	<b>Sulphur-crested Cockatoo</b> <i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Occasionally seen perched and in flight at both Site 1 and Site 2.
14	<b>Biak (black-winged) Lory</b> <i>Eos cyanogenia</i>	Small groups seen perched and in flight on several occasions at Site 2.
15	<b>Rainbow Lorikeet</b> <i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>	Seen occasionally at both sites.
16	<b>Red-fronted Lorikeet</b> <i>Charmosyna rubronotata</i>	A small group seen feeding in the top of a tree at Site 2.
17	<b>Geelvink Pygmy-Parrot</b> <i>Micropsitta geelvinkiana</i>	A male seen briefly from the road and then later a pair seen very well (including scope views) just off the road at Site 2.

18	<b>Red-cheeked Parrot</b> <i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>	A single bird seen feeding in a tree at Site 2.
19	<b>Eclectus Parrot</b> <i>Eclectus roratus</i>	Seen occasionally in flight at both Site 1 and Site 2.
20	<b>Oriental Cuckoo</b> <i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	A single bird seen perched in a low tree at Site 1.
21	<b>Brush Cuckoo</b> <i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>	Heard on several occasions.
22	<b>Biak Coucal</b> <i>Centropus chalybeus</i>	Unfortunately not seen, but heard calling in the evening not far from the road at Site 2.
23	<b>Biak Scops-Owl</b> <i>Otus beccarii</i>	Excellent close views of a bird spotlighted in low forest near Site 2. Initially attracted to taped calls of Moluccan Scops Owl. At least two birds were present and calling in this area.
24	<b>Papuan Frogmouth</b> <i>Podargus papuensis</i>	Heard on several occasions calling from roadside forest at Site 2, including at the Scops Owl site. We never made a concerted effort to actually see one.
25	<b>Large-tailed Nightjar</b> <i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	Heard calling at dusk on both evenings at site 2. Not actually seen.
26	<b>Glossy Swiftlet</b> <i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	Common.
27	<b>Uniform Swiftlet</b> <i>Aerodramus vanikorensis</i>	Commonly seen at all sites on Biak.
28	<b>Biak Paradise-Kingfisher</b> <i>Tanysiptera riedelii</i>	5-6 birds seen in rapid succession on our first evening at Site 2, including adults and young birds, then bizarrely not seen again!
29	<b>Rainbow Bee-eater</b> <i>Merops ornatus</i>	A couple of birds seen perched and feeding in an open area along the road at Site 1.
30	<b>Dollarbird</b> <i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	A bird seen perched at Site 2.
31	<b>Grey Wagtail</b> <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Seen once at the airport.
32	<b>Cicadabird</b> <i>Coracina tenuirostris</i>	An adult bird seen briefly at Site 1, and a young bird moulting into an adult seen at close range at Site 2.
33	<b>Black-browed Triller</b> <i>Lalage atrovirens</i>	Seen commonly along roadside forest at both Site 1 and Site 2.
34	<b>Willie-wagtail</b> <i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>	Commonly seen at many locations on Biak.
35	<b>Northern Fantail</b> <i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>	Seen occasionally in forest and forest edge. Often with mixed flocks.
36	<b>Golden Monarch</b> <i>Monarcha chrysomela</i>	Seen on several occasions at both Site 1 and Site 2. Males striking with orangey-red flame-coloured breasts.
37	<b>Biak (Black) Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiagra atra</i>	Male and female birds seen on several occasions in roadside forest. Most commonly at Site 2, but also one occasion at Site 1.
38	<b>Shining Flycatcher</b> <i>Myiagra alecto</i>	Male and female birds seen on several occasions in roadside forest at Site 2.
39	<b>Emperor Fairywren</b> <i>Malurus cyanocephalus</i>	A single male seen in grassy scrub at Site 2.
40	<b>Biak Gerygone</b> <i>Gerygone hypoxantha</i>	A single bird seen at Site 1, seemingly loosely associating with a Biak White-eye flock. This bird threw us a bit when we saw it as we hadn't expected the yellow colouration of the underside!
41	<b>Black Sunbird</b> <i>Leptocoma sericea</i>	Commonly seen.

42	<b>Olive-backed Sunbird</b> <i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	Commonly seen.
43	<b>Red-capped Flowerpecker</b> <i>Dicaeum geelvinkianum</i>	Commonly seen in roadside forest and scrub (aka Papuan Flowerpecker).
44	<b>Biak White-eye</b> <i>Zosterops mysorensis</i>	Small parties seen regularly in roadside forest and scrub at Site 1. Strangely, not seen at Site 2 despite far more time spent there.
45	<b>Dusky Myzomela</b> <i>Myzomela obscura</i>	Seen on a couple of occasions at Site 2.
46	<b>Spangled Drongo</b> <i>Dicrurus bracteatus</i>	Common in roadside forest.
47	<b>Hooded Butcherbird</b> <i>Cracticus cassicus</i>	Commonly seen and heard in open forest.
48	<b>Metallic Starling</b> <i>Aplonis metallica</i>	Seen regularly in all open forest habitats.
49	<b>Long-tailed Starling</b> <i>Aplonis magna</i>	Commonly seen in all forest habitats.
50	<b>Eurasian Tree Sparrow</b> <i>Passer montanus</i>	Seen around town.

### Thanks

The biggest thanks go to Shita and Untu of Papua Bird Club. The Raja Ampat leg of the trip organised by them went like clockwork, and the help and advice they gave us for the Arfak and Biak legs made things easy for us. I would recommend them unreservedly to anyone planning a trip to this part of Indonesia.

Also a big thanks to Zeth (and family), for being such an amazing guide. At the time we were there he was trying to train another young guy from the village to assist him, but the poor guys task is daunting!!

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A Google Earth file (.kmz file) showing all locations mentioned is available on request.



*Nick, all smiles because he's just seen a displaying Magnificent BoP!*



*Gus & Zeth, all smiles, because they've got a New Guinea Harpy Eagle in the scope!*