



## Western Pacific Odyssey

15 March – 14 April 2019

### Introduction

This was the first WPO for four years to make the full voyage from New Zealand to Japan. Although we experienced some highly abnormal weather and sea temperatures, the expedition was a huge success with many rare and poorly known birds and cetaceans being seen.

Whilst the headline sighting and surely the most unexpected find of the entire trip was the mystery petrel south of the Solomons, there were plenty of other “almost mythical” seabirds including Fiji Petrel, Vanuatu Petrel, Beck’s Petrel, ‘New Caledonian Storm-petrel’, ‘Solomons Band-rumped Storm-petrel’ and Bryan’s Shearwater. With a supporting cast of Short-tailed Albatross, Tristram’s Storm-petrel, Matsudaira’s Storm-petrel, New Zealand Storm-petrel, Collared Petrel, Magnificent Petrel, Christmas Shearwater, Heinroth’s Shearwater and Japanese Murrelet, the seabird list was exceptional and the cetaceans were not far behind with 23 species being recorded.

Once again, there were some extremely noteworthy records with the highlights being good views of a pod of Deraniyagala’s Beaked Whales, as well as a mother and calf Omura’s Whale. As with the seabirds, the list of ‘other species’ was equally impressive and this included Longman’s Beaked Whale, Blainville’s Beaked Whale, Pygmy Killer Whale and both Pygmy and Dwarf Sperm Whales.

The expedition was, however, not just about seabirds and cetaceans and during the course of the voyage, landings were made on nine islands. These started with a successful visit to Norfolk Island (where all the extant endemics were seen) followed by some great birding on New Caledonia. Here our major target was the Kagu and this was seen exceptionally well thanks to the assistance of the Senior Ranger at the Riviere Bleue Reserve. We also saw five Crow Honeyeaters as well as New Caledonian Goshawk, Horned and New Caledonian Parakeets, New Caledonian Cuckoo-shrike, New Caledonian Crow and Red-throated Parrotfinch.

The next day, many of the group were at Mount Koghi prior to dawn where some were fortunate to see the highly elusive New Caledonian Grassbird, with South Melanesian Cuckoo-

shrike, Metallic Pigeon and Striated Starling amongst the other specialities which we encountered.

After three days at sea, we arrived in the Solomon Islands where we enjoyed five consecutive days of landings visiting Santa Ana, Makira, Guadalcanal, Tetepare and Kolombangara. Here the weather was kind to us (after an extremely damp end to our birding at Riviere Bleue) and a great range of Solomon endemics and other localised species were found including Sanford's Sea-eagle, Ultramarine Kingfisher, Solomons Cockatoo, Duchess Lorikeet, Cockerell's Fantail, Kolombangara Monarch, Makira Flycatcher and Midget Flowerpecker.

The final landings of the expedition were in Chuuk, Micronesia where some of the group made the long zodiac ride to Tol South, whilst others remained on the main island of Weno.

For those who made the tough climb to the higher elevations of Tol South, the reward was some great views of the highly localised Chuuk Monarch and Teardrop White-eye, whilst everyone else remained on Weno where we found all the other specialities including White-fronted Ground-dove, Purple-capped Fruit-dove and Micronesian Myzomela.

With the grand finale of our expedition being the close approach to Torishima (where we saw several hundred Short-tailed Albatross in two of their colonies), it was a highly memorable voyage and hopefully these notes and the attached systematic list will bring back many happy memories to those who joined me.

Chris Collins  
*WildWings*  
April 2019



## WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY

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### SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

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

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.

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## BIRDS

### **Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa*

Four birds were found on Norfolk Island (19 March) with the same number logged on 4 April on Chuuk.

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

This species was seen on both Santa Ana (25 March: 1) and Tetepare (28 March: 5) and also heard on Kolombangara (29 March).

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

A low A of this successful introduction on Norfolk Island was logged on 19 March.

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

This introduced species is well established on Norfolk Island with A logged (19 March).

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.....

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

This species was observed on five dates during the voyage with daily sightings of one or two birds on each day between New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands (22-25 March). The only other sightings were on 16 March in the outer Hauraki Gulf where four birds were seen.

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

Four birds in and around the Hauraki Gulf (16 March), with two seen the following day near the Three Kings.

**New Zealand Storm-petrel *Fregetta maoriana***

Oiling in the outer Hauraki Gulf for this species (16 March) proved highly successful with at least a dozen birds visiting our slick.

There were then sightings throughout the rest of the day as the ship cruised north, with a total of 30+ individuals being recorded. This continues the trend of recent voyages and suggests the population is continuing to increase following the clearance of introduced pests from many of the Hauraki Gulf islands.

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

**New Caledonian Storm-petrel *Fregetta sp.***

Three individuals were found on the afternoon of 22 March whilst cruising north along the west coast of New Caledonia from Noumea.

This intriguing bird was first seen on WPO 2008 and has been observed on a number of the subsequent expeditions. Although it superficially resembles New Zealand Storm-petrel, the structure of the bird and the strength of the dark streaking on the breast is quite different and it is now believed that this is the long lost Lined Storm-petrel from Samoa.

**Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis***

This is always the trickiest of the three North Pacific albatross species on the WPO but a lone bird showed well on 11 April as the ship headed away from the Bonin Islands.

**Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes***

The commonest North Pacific albatross species with daily sightings between Chichi-jima and the evening before the ship arrived in Yokohama (10-13 April). The highest count was on 12 April when the ship was off Torishima and low hundreds were logged including good numbers which could be seen ashore on the island.

**Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus***

It was the first time since 2009 that the *Spirit of Enderby* was able to get close to Torishima (12 April) and the experience was spectacular with 20+ birds around the ship and distant views of two of the colonies on the island where several hundred individuals were present.

Birds were also seen on the previous two days with a very low A (ie 10+ individuals) also logged on 13 April.

**Gibson's Albatross** *Diomedea (antipodensis) gibsoni*

Three birds were seen on 17 March not far from the Three Kings Islands.

**Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea sanfordi*

A rare bird on the WPO itinerary with a lone bird on 17 March.

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

Reasonable numbers were logged on 17 March whilst travelling north from the Three Kings Islands with a very low A being recorded.

**Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche bulleri*

The only sighting was a single bird on 17 March.

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

A total of five birds which closely resemble Band-rumped Storm-petrel were seen between 20 March (day south of New Caledonia and 24 March (day before Santa Ana).

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

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

**Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

A total of six birds of this widespread storm-petrel were seen between 6-11 April (second sea day north of Chuuk to offshore from Chich-jima).

**Tristram's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma tristrami*

Spectacular numbers of this reasonably localised species were seen a few hours sailing north of Chichijima (11 April) with C being logged. The majority of the birds were in several large flocks we found sitting on the sea with a couple of these thought to contain 2,000+ individuals.

The only other confirmed sightings were on the previous and subsequent sea days (ie 10 and 12 April) when a total of five individuals were recorded.

**Matsudaira's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma matsudairae*

This North Pacific species was recorded on an almost daily basis from the second sea day north of Chuuk (6 April) until the evening before the ship arrived in Yokohama. As many of the birds were seen following the ship, it was difficult to accurate estimate numbers but A was logged on three dates (6, 8 and 9 April) with only low single figure counts on the other days when it was recorded.

**Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur*

Three individuals were found in the Hauraki Gulf on 16 March with higher numbers (a high A) the following day near the Three Kings.

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

This species was seen on both 17 and 18 March (Three Kings and sea day to the north of there) with a low A being recorded on both dates.

It is worth noting that many fewer birds were seen in 2019 than on other recent WPO expeditions and this was possibly due to the abnormally high water temperatures.

**Providence Petrel** *Pterodroma solandri*

This species is not recorded annually on the WPO, however, exceptionally high numbers were found with a low A (approximately thirty individuals) recorded on 20 March on the sea day between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. A total of six birds were then noted off northern New Caledonia (23 March) and the following sea day.

The final sighting was more than two weeks later (12 April) when a lone bird was seen north of Torishima.

**Vanuatu Petrel** *Pterodroma occulta*

Single birds showing the key characteristics of this tricky species were seen on both 23 and 24 March. Given the location of both sightings (ie north of New Caledonia), the ship was also significantly closer to Vanua Lava (the only island where this species is known to breed) than any islands where White-necked Petrel occurs.

**Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta*

Seen on three dates between the Three Kings Islands and the sea day south of New Caledonia, with the highest count being near the Three Kings (17 March) where five birds were logged.

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

Seen on a daily basis between the Three Kings Islands (17 March) and a little to the north of Norfolk Island (19 March) with a low A logged on the first two dates and two individuals on the final day.

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

Encountered on all sea days from the Hauraki Gulf (16 March) until southern New Caledonia (20 March) with two individuals also seen on 23 March off northern New Caledonia. The highest count was around Norfolk Island (19 March) where this species breeds with B logged.

**Bonin Petrel** *Pterodroma hypoleuca*

The only *Pterodroma* which is regularly encountered during the latter stages of the WPO with daily sightings from the third sea day north of Chuuk (7 April) until the evening before Yokohama (13 April). The highest count was on 9 April (sea day south of Chichi-jima) when B was recorded.

**Gould's ("White-winged") Petrel** *Pterodroma leucoptera*

Seen on five dates between the Three Kings Islands (17 March) and northern New Caledonia (23 March). The highest count was off southern New Caledonia where B was logged.

**Collared Petrel** *Pterodroma brevipes*

Single birds were seen on all full sea days between the Three Kings Islands (17 March) and northern New Caledonia (23 March). As is typical for this species, the birds varied in appearance with most being somewhat dusky below with more dark on the underwing than on a Gould's Petrel.

Whilst this species is occasionally seen on the WPO, there were significantly more sightings than usual which was presumably linked to the much higher water temperatures we experienced in 2019 during the early stages of the expedition.

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

Six individuals of what were considered to be this relatively recently described (sub)species (ie rather than 'normal' Collared Petrels) were seen between the Three Kings Islands (17 March) and southern New Caledonia (22 March).

**Cook's Petrel** *Pterodroma cookii*

This species has generally finished breeding by the time the WPO starts. A low A was, however, logged in and around the Hauraki Gulf on 16 March, with two birds found the following day near the Three Kings.

**Pycroft's Petrel** *Pterodroma pycrofti*

Three birds were seen as we headed north from the Hauraki Gulf on 16 March.

**Unknown Petrel sp.**

At least three very similar looking birds were seen, photographed and filmed on the sea day south of Santa Ana (24 March) with sightings in both the morning and afternoon.

Although the birds were in moult, their plumage, structure and flight was quite unlike anything which any of the experienced seabirders on the expedition had seen elsewhere. Indeed, a couple of observers admitted in the moments after the first bird was spotted that they were unsure if they were looking at a petrel or a skua !!

The birds had a relatively uniform dark brown plumage with a substantial bill and distinctive white markings in both the upper and underwing and were structurally different from species such as Kermadec Petrel.

This petrel is considered to be the same as a mysterious bird seen in the remote eastern Solomon Islands on a Heritage Expeditions trip in 2014.

**Tahiti Petrel** *Pseudobulweria rostrata*

This species was seen on all sea days between 18-23 March (day south of Norfolk Island – northern New Caledonia) with A logged on two dates and single figure counts on three other days.

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

One of the major specialities of the voyage, with at least eight of this extremely poorly known (and seemingly highly localised) species being recorded off New Ireland on 31 March.

Somewhat incredibly a *Pseudobulweria* was photographed not far from Miyake-jima (13 April) which was either a Beck's or Tahiti Petrel. Neither species has seemingly been previously recorded in this part of the Pacific and the structure of the bird appeared closer to Beck's than Tahiti Petrel, but irrespective of which species was involved, this was an extremely unexpected sighting.

**Fiji Petrel** *Pseudobulweria macgillivrayi*

Undoubtedly one of the biggest surprises of any WPO expedition was when one of these critically endangered and very poorly known seabirds passed across the bows somewhat to the north of the Three Kings Islands on 17 March.

This is a major range extension for this species and the first record in New Zealand waters and its presence so far from the species known range off Gau Island was presumably linked to the abnormally high water temperatures.

**Black Petrel** *Procellaria parkinsoni*

Seen on a daily basis from the Hauraki Gulf (16 March) to the sea day south of Norfolk Island (18 March) with A logged on the first couple of days and three individuals on the last date when this species was encountered.

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*

This species was first recorded south of Santa Ana (25 March) when six birds were logged. It was then seen in very small numbers (between 1-3 individuals) on four further dates in the Solomons and off Bougainville. With the exception of a lone bird offshore from Chuuk on 3 April, there was then a gap in records until the sea day south of Chichi-jima (9 April) with daily sightings until the end of the expedition. The highest count was on the last full day of the trip (13 April) when a very low C was recorded (ie at least one thousand birds) with approximately one hundred birds showing well around the ship during our final chumming session.

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

This was the most frequently encountered species on the voyage with sightings on almost every day of the expedition from 17 March (Three Kings Islands) onwards.

The highest count was on the sea day when the ship headed north from Haha-jima (11 April) when C was logged. On the majority of other dates, A (12 days) or B (8 days) was recorded.

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

Only seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 16 March where a high B was recorded (ie approaching one thousand individuals) and the following day when slightly smaller numbers were found.

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

Seen daily on the last four full days of the expedition (10-13 March) although it was only on 10 April (3 birds) when more than a lone individual was spotted.

Generally this species is seen in high numbers prior to arriving in New Caledonia with large flocks migrating north, however, this year we did not encounter these.

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

A low A was logged in the outer Hauraki Gulf on 16 March with a lone bird then found the following day not far from the Three Kings Islands.

There were then no more records until the second half of the expedition with a single individual off Bougainville (30 March), two on the sea day north of Chuuk (5 April) and then daily sightings between 8-12 April, although only one or two birds were found on each day.

**Christmas Shearwater** *Puffinus nativitatis*

One on the early morning of 8 April (offshore from the North Mariana Islands and two days south of Chichi-jima) was the only sighting of the expedition.



Although this species is reasonably numerous in some parts of the Pacific, it seems to be moderately localised and is only occasionally found on WPO expeditions and all sightings have been in the general area where the 2019 bird was found.

#### **Bryan's Shearwater** *Puffinus bryani*

This recently described and critically endangered shearwater is currently only known to nest on the small island of Hagashi-jima off the eastern coast of Chichi-jima, although it is presumed to have a somewhat larger breeding range than this.

It was one of our major targets in the Bonin Islands and a lone bird was seen reasonably well by many of the group on the evening of 10 April with a total of four individuals being logged. The white face and Little Shearwater like flight of this bird contrasted markedly with the Bannerman's Shearwaters which were also present.

#### **Fluttering Shearwater** *Puffinus gavioides*

A low B was logged as the ship headed north from Tauranga in the afternoon of 15 March with a low A seen the following day in the Hauraki Gulf. As the ship sailed north from the Three Kings Islands (17 March), the two birds seen there were the last sightings of the expedition.

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

This species is generally reasonably regular immediately offshore from Chuuk and this proved to be the case in 2019 with a very low A logged as the ship approached the archipelago on 3 April. When we left the following afternoon, five birds were sighted, with the same number the next day.

The only other records were south of Santa Ana where four were seen on 25 March.

Although the Audubon's/Little/Tropical Shearwater complex has recently been split by several authorities, it seems clear that the situation has not been fully resolved, as there are plumage differences between some of the different populations, winter and summer breeders on the same island etc. The name 'Atoll shearwater' has, therefore, been used to describe the birds recorded on this voyage, ie to differentiate them from those in the Indian Ocean, however, even this is undoubtedly a simplification of the situation.

#### **Bannerman's Shearwater** *Puffinus bannermani*

Good numbers were recorded off the eastern side of Chichi-jima on the evening of 10 April (with A logged) when we were looking for Bryan's Shearwater.

Further south (8-9 April), however, the specific identity of some of the shearwaters is more complex as two, or possibly three, different forms/species were seen. Whilst some of these birds were undoubtedly Bannerman's Shearwaters, there were others which were certainly different.

Without further work (which would probably involve catching birds at sea) it will be difficult to resolve this conundrum but it seems likely that we were encountering a mixture of birds which breed in the North Marianas, others which nest on the Japanese islands to the north, plus in all probability birds which have flown in from elsewhere.

#### **Heinroth's Shearwater** *Puffinus heinrothi*

A total of sixteen individuals were seen, with nine not far from Kolombangara during the late afternoon of 29 March, six the following day off Bougainville and one offshore from south-east New Ireland (31 March).

It is interesting to note that all the birds seen on 29 March were flying in the general direction of Kolombangara, where this species is presumed to breed, however, the nesting colonies remain to be discovered.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis*

Only recorded on two dates with the first sighting on the sea day near the Three Kings (17 March) and two further birds a couple of days later near Norfolk Island.

The birds on 19 March 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, that there are summer and winter breeding populations which vary so markedly in size that they require different size leg rings !!

**Common Diving-petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

A total of seven birds were seen between Tauranga (15 March) and the Three Kings Islands (17 March).

**Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii*

First recorded on the sea day south of Chuuk (2 April) when a lone individual was spotted. Six birds were then found three days later (5 April), with two the following day. The final records on the expedition were as the ship cruised north from Haha-jima (11 April) when three birds were logged.

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

The first sightings were a day south of Norfolk Island (18 March: 2), with a very low A recorded the following day offshore from the island. Although four individuals were spotted on 20 March, it was more than two weeks before the next sightings with three birds on 7 April (three sea days south of Chichi-jima) and the same number two days later.

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

This species was seen on fourteen dates. The majority of these were found during the second half of the expedition (eighteen birds between 30 March-9 April) although there were also sightings on six dates in the first half of the trip. These included one bird which was seen south of Norfolk Island which is exceptionally far south for this species on a WPO expedition.

**Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

Three birds were seen on both days at Chuuk (3-4 April).

**Nankeen ("Rufous") Night-Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus*

Another species which was only recorded on Chuuk with a total of eight individuals logged (3-4 April).

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata*

The only sightings of this widespread species were seven individuals between Santa Ana and Kolombangara in the Solomon Islands.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus*

This species was recorded on three dates with the highest count being a very low A which was logged from the ship as we cruised close inshore to Torishima Island (12 April). The following day, two were seen offshore from Miyake-jima with the only other sighting on the expedition being four birds at the airfield on Chuuk (4 April).

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Two birds at Torishima (12 April) were the only records of this widespread species.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba*

Another heron which was seen distantly from the ship as we cruised offshore from Torishima (12 April) with five the following day off Miyake-jima.

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

A lone individual was observed flying in from the east as the ship cruised north from the Three King Islands (17 March) with the only other sightings being on Norfolk Island where three were recorded on 19 March.

**Pacific Reef Heron ("Eastern Reef-egret")** *Egretta sacra*

Seen on three islands in the Solomons (Santa Ana, Makira and Tetepare) with a total of seven birds noted. Three birds were then found on Chuuk with the final sighting being a lone bird on Miyake-jima (13 April).

**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 eight dates between 23 March-5 April including daily sightings in the Solomon Islands.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*

This species was seen on seven dates between 23-31 March. It was only off Tetepare (12 April) when the day count was more than low single figures, as there was a roost nearby with most of the birds seemingly being Lesser Frigatebirds.

**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 16 March with several hundred individuals seen on the Maori Rocks where they breed.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*

Recorded on nine dates during the voyage with the largest numbers (A) being close to Norfolk Island (5 April).

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

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

Seen on fourteen dates between 20 March-9 April (sea day south of New Caledonia-sea day south of Chichi-jima) with the highest count being off northern New Caledonia where a high A was recorded.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*

This species was encountered on a more or less daily basis between northern New Caledonia (23 March) and the last day before Yokohama (13 April) with only four dates during that period (28 March and 2-4 April) when it was not seen.

Although most day counts were in single figures, there were four occasions when A was logged.

**Little Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

Three birds were observed shortly after the ship left the wharf at Tauranga on 15 March, with five then recorded on the trip to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (21 March). The final sightings were at Santa Ana on 25 March.

**Pelagic Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

Two were seen offshore from Miyake-jima (13 April).

**Australian Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax varius*

The only records were shortly after the *Spirit of Enderby* left the wharf at Tauranga (15 March) as there is a small colony of this species (low A) at the entrance to the harbour.

**Japanese Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax capillatus*

Seen offshore from Miyake-jima where a very low A was logged on 13 April.

**Eastern Osprey** *Pandion cristatus*

This species was seen in small numbers on three dates with the first being five birds shortly after leaving the wharf at Noumea (22 March). A total of seven birds were then subsequently recorded in the Solomon Islands, with the final sightings being two birds at Miyake-jima on 13 April.

**Pacific Baza** *Aviceda subcristata*

Two individuals were seen on Makira (26 March).

**Variable Goshawk** *Accipiter hiogaster*

Two birds seen on Tetepare (28 March) were the only sightings on the expedition.

**Brown Goshawk** *Accipiter fasciatus*

One was found during the morning excursion to Mount Koghi, New Caledonia on 22 March.

**Pied Goshawk** *Accipiter albogularis*

This species is endemic to the Solomon Islands and was seen on Makira (26 March: 1) and the following day at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March: 2).

It is worth noting that one of the individuals at Mount Austin was a black morph bird and this was the first record of this colour phase on a WPO expedition.

**New Caledonia ("White-bellied") Goshawk** *Accipiter haplochrous*

This tricky endemic was seen during the excursion to Riviere Bleue (21 March) with a single individual noted. The following day, there were multiple sightings with as many as four different birds being seen at Munt Koghi.

**Whistling Kite** *Haliastur sphenurus*

This species was only seen on New Caledonia with five individuals recorded on the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue (21 March).

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus*

This species was found on a daily basis in the Solomons, although all counts were in very low single figures with the highest numbers being on Tetepare (28 March) where three birds were logged.

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

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

**Grey-faced Buzzard** *Butastur indicus*

A lone bird was seen on Chichi-jima (10 April) whilst the clearance procedures for the ship and passengers to enter Japan were completed.

**Eastern Buzzard** *Buteo japonicas*

Three birds were seen from the ship at Chichi-jima (10 April).

**Kagu** *Rhynochetos jubatus*

This species is always one of the major landbird highlights of the expedition with at least eleven birds at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 21 March.

**Woodford's Rail** *Nesoclopeus woodfordi*

This extremely elusive species was heard but not seen on the excursion to Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March).

**Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis*

A single bird was spotted on the excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 21 March.

**Roviana Rail** *Gallirallus rovianae*

Three individuals were seen very briefly at Imbu Rano Lodge, Kolombangara on 29 March. Although this species has occasionally been found in the lowlands on Kolombangara on previous WPOs, this was the first time it had been encountered in the forests at Imbu Rano.

**Pale-vented Bush-hen** *Amauronis moluccana*

A lone bird was found on Santa Ana on 25 March.

**Australasian Swamphen** *Porphyrio melanotus*

A single individual on Norfolk Island (19 March) and about half a dozen on Tetepare (28 March) were the only records on the expedition.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

A total of six birds were seen during the two days ashore on Chuuk (3-4 April).

**Beach Thick-knee** *Esacus magnirostris*

Two birds on Tetepare (28 March) were the first records for any WPO expedition.

**Variable Oystercatcher** *Haematopus unicolor*

This species was only seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga (15 March) with a dozen or so individuals observed on the wharf.

**Masked Lapwing** *Vanellus miles*

Another species which was only seen as the ship left Tauranga (15 March) with a single bird noted.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*

A low A was recorded on Norfolk Island (19 March) with similar numbers on Chuuk (3-4 April). Four birds were then seen from the ship at Chichi-jima (10 April) with a singleton off Miyake-jima (13 April).

**Lesser Sandplover** *Charadrius mongolus*

A lone bird on Santa Ana (25 March) was only the second time this species had been recorded on any WPO expedition with the previous sighting being on the same island.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*

The only sighting was a single individual at Chuuk on 4 April.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

A low A of this widespread shorebird was logged on Norfolk Island (19 March) with a total of sixteen individuals also recorded on Chuuk (3-4 April).

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*

Birds were seen offshore from Bougainville (30 March: 2) and New Ireland (31 March: high A).

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

A single bird was found on Chuuk (4 April).

**Wandering Tattler** *Tringa incana*

Two birds were seen adjacent to our landing site on Norfolk Island (19 March). There were then sightings on two islands in the Solomons with three individuals on Santa Ana (25 March) and two on Tetepare (28 March). The final record was on Chuuk (4 April) where a single bird was seen.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*

This species was first observed near Norfolk Island (19 March) when six individuals were logged. It was then found on sixteen subsequent dates with the highest count being B which was recorded at Chuuk (4 April).

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus*

Like the previous species, Black Noddies were first encountered at Norfolk Island (19 March) where B was recorded. Birds were then seen on eight dates between New Caledonia and two days south of Chichi-jima.

**Grey Ternlet** *Anous albivitta*

This species is regular at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf and also breeds around Norfolk Island. A was logged at the Maori Rocks (16 March) with daily sightings from there until Norfolk Island.

**White Tern** *Gygis alba*

Records of this species divided into two distinct blocks with more or less daily sightings between 17-23 March (with a low B logged off Norfolk Island on 19 March) and then records on each day between 3-9 April.

**Silver Gull** *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

This species was reasonably numerous (A and C) around the harbour at Tauranga (16 March) and also at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf the following day. Small numbers were also found around Noumea, New Caledonia (21-22 March).

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

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicus*

The only records were around Tauranga (15 March) with a low A logged.

**Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus*

Three birds were seen offshore from Miyake-jima (13 April).

**Great Crested Tern** *Sterna bergi*

This species was seen on a more or less daily basis from New Caledonia (21 March) until the ship left the Solomon Islands (29 March) although on most days the count was only one or two birds. Six individuals were also seen at Chuuk (3-4 April).

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

Three birds off Kolombangara on 29 March were the only record on the expedition.

**Grey-backed ("Spectacled") Tern** *Sterna lunata*

This species rarely approaches ships and it is invariably a tricky species on the WPO. Three birds were, however, seen after the ship left Makira (26 March) with the same number found four days later off Bougainville. The final sighting was the following day (31 March) off New Ireland where a lone bird was noted.

**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*

This tropical seabird was encountered on nine dates between Guadalcanal (26 March) and a couple of days south of Chichi-jima (8 April). There were only two occasions when the day count was more than single figures with the highest count being A off New Ireland (31 March).

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata*

This widespread species was first identified on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (18 March) when four birds were seen. There was then a gap in records until the ship was off the northern end of New Caledonia with regular sightings (14 dates) from then until a couple of days before the end of the expedition.

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

The only sightings were as the ship sailed from Tauranga on 15 March where a low A was logged with a singleton the following day in the Hauraki Gulf.

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana*

A reasonably reliable species around Chuuk with a low A on both days we were in the archipelago (3-4 April).

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Recorded offshore from Kolombangara (29 March: 4) and Bougainville (30 March: 1).

**Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*

There were seven days during the expedition when this species was noted with a total of ten individuals being logged. Almost without exception, the birds had 'tail spoons' and were heading in a northerly direction, presumably migrating towards their Arctic breeding grounds.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Like the previous species, this skua was only recorded in small numbers with eleven individuals logged across eight widely spaced dates.

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

The commonest skua species of the voyage with records on thirteen dates. On most occasions, the day count was in low single figures but a low A was recorded on both 17 and 18 March (ie the two sea days south of Norfolk Island).

**Long-billed Murrelet** *Brachyramphus perdix*

A new species for the WPO list with two separate sightings on the afternoon of 13 April as the ship sailed north from Miyake-jima.

**Japanese Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*

The last major seabird target of the expedition and seen very well close to the rock stacks to the west of Miyake-jima (13 April) with at least sixty birds being recorded.

**Metallic Pigeon** *Columba vitiensis*

Two individuals were seen on the excursion to Mount Koghi (22 March).

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

This Asian introduction was seen on New Caledonia, with single figure counts on both 21 and 22 March.

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

This species is reasonably widespread in the Solomon Islands and was seen on Makira, Guadalcanal, Tetepare and Kolombangara. The highest count was on the last of these islands, where a very low A was logged (29 March).

**Pacific Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps longirostris*

Seen on both Norfolk Island (19 March) and at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (21 March) with six birds recorded at both sites.

**White-fronted ("Caroline") Ground-dove** *Alopecoenas kubaryi*

Seen on both days whilst on Chuuk with five birds logged on 3 April and six individuals the following day.

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

A lone bird was found at Imbu Rano Lodge on Kolombangara on 29 March.



**Purple-capped Fruit-dove** *Ptilinopus ponapensis*

Reasonably numerous on Chuuk with a low A logged on 4 April and six individuals the previous afternoon.

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

This species is endemic to Rennell, Santa Ana and a few other nearby islets and nine were seen on Santa Ana (25 March).

**Yellow-bibbed Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus solomonensis*

A single bird was found on 26 March on Makira.

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

Another range-restricted fruit-dove which was seen on Guadalcanal (27 March: 4), Tetepare (28 March: 2) and Kolombangara (29 March: 6).

**White-headed Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus eugeniae*

Endemic to Makira, Santa Ana and a few other islets, this species was seen very well during our landing on Santa Ana (25 March) where two individuals were logged. The following day, six more were found on Makira.

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

This impressive looking pigeon was seen on all the islands visited in the Solomons with the highest count being A on Makira on 26 March.

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

This nomadic species was seen in small to moderate numbers (ie single figures to A) on all days in the Solomon Islands with the exception of Guadalcanal.

**Chestnut-bellied Imperial-pigeon** *Ducula brenchleyi*

A somewhat range-restricted Solomons endemic which was recorded on both 25 and 26 March with the highest count being on the latter date (Makira Island) when a low A was logged.

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

Compared with some previous WPO visits to New Caledonia, this species was seen in very good numbers with five individuals at Riviere Bleue on 21 March and four more logged the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Pale Mountain Pigeon** *Gymnophaps solomonensis*

Reasonable numbers (low A) of these appropriately named pigeons were seen from the viewpoint at Imbu Rano Lodge on Kolombangara (29 March).

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

This raucous Coucal, which is endemic to the Solomon Islands, makes an almost mammalian-like call and was found at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March) with two seen well during our morning excursion. The following day, three were logged on Tetepare, with the final sightings being two on Kolombangara (29 March).

**Pacific Koel** *Eudynamis orientalis*

Heard but not seen on Guadalcanal and Makira (26-27 March) with at least three individuals then found on Tetepare (28 March).

**Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus*

A lone bird on Tetepare (28 March) was the sole sighting of the expedition.

**Moustached Treeswift** *Hemiprocne mystacea*

This impressive bird was seen on Tetepare (28 March: A) and Kolombangara (29 March: 2).

**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta*

Seen on all five islands visited in the Solomons with A logged on most occasions.

**Satin Swiftlet** *Collocalia uropygialis*

Seen in good numbers at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (high A) on 21 March with a couple of birds recorded the following day at Mount Koghi.

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

Only recorded in very low numbers on New Caledonia (21 March) with six individuals found in Noumea.

**Uniform Swiftlet** *Aerodramus vanikorensis*

Seen on Santa Ana (25 March) and Guadalcanal (27 March) with A logged on both islands.

**Island ("Caroline") Swiftlet** *Aerodramus inquietus*

Common on Chuuk with A logged on both 3 and 4 April.

The recent change in the name of this species from Caroline Swiftlet to Island Swiftlet seems particularly bizarre given this is hardly the only swiftlet to occur on an island.....

**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis*

Noted on four days during our landings in the Solomon Islands with the highest count being on Makira where eight individuals were logged (26 March).

**Ultramarine Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus leucopygius*

A presumed pair of this much desired Solomon Islands endemic was seen well at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 27 March.

**Melanesian Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus tristrami*

Two individuals were found on Tetepare (28 March).

**Pacific Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus sacer*

Another 'new species' following the recent splitting of Collared Kingfisher into multiple species, with two individuals at Santa Ana (25 March) and another bird the following day on Makira.

**Beach Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus saurophagus*

This species was first recorded on Makira (26 March: 1) with four birds then seen a couple of days later at Tetepare.

**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus sanctus*

The most frequently encountered kingfisher of the expedition with sightings on Norfolk Island, New Caledonia and on three islands in the Solomons. The only occasion when more than two birds were seen was on Norfolk Island, where a very low A was logged.

**Guadalcanal Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ceyx nigromaxilla*

Two birds were seen briefly at Mount Austin (27 March).

**Makira Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ceyx gentianus*

A lone bird was found on Santa Ana (25 March).

**Blyth's Hornbill** *Rhyticeros plicatus*

Seen on a daily basis on the last three days of landings in the Solomon Islands with the highest count being a low A at Mount Austin on 27 March.

**Australian Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides*

Two individuals were seen during the shore excursion on Norfolk Island (19 March).

**Oriental Hobby** *Falco severus*

A presumed pair were found near the summit of Mount Austin on 27 March.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

This widespread falcon is only occasional on the WPO but a lone bird was seen on Kolombangara on 29 March.

**Solomons ("Ducorps") Cockatoo** *Cacatua ducorpsii*

This species was first found at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 27 March with four birds being recorded. On both subsequent days (ie Tetepare and Kolombangara), it was also seen with A logged at Tetepare.

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

Although this species is reasonably numerous in the Solomons, its tiny size can make it difficult to spot. It was recorded on four islands with the highest number being seen on Kolombangara where a very low A was logged on 29 March.

**Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus*

This colourful parrot was recorded on three days whilst travelling through the Solomon Islands with a total of seven individuals noted.

**Song ("Singing") Parrot** *Geoffroyus heteroclitus*

Seen on Guadalcanal, Tetepare and Kolombangara (27-29 March) with a total of eight birds recorded. Also known as the Singing Parrot, it is difficult to understand how this species got either of these names, given its calls are generally as raucous and untuneful as most other parrots.

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

This introduced species is common on Norfolk Island and a low A was logged there on 19 March.

**Horned Parakeet** *Eunymphicus cornutus*

Six individuals of this New Caledonian endemic were seen at Riviere Bleue (21 March).

**New Caledonian Parakeet** *Cyanoramphus saissetti*

Another species which is not seen on every WPO visit to New Caledonia but a very low A was logged at Riviere Bleue (21 March).

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

**Norfolk Island Parakeet** *Cyanoramphus cookii*

The number of parakeets found on Norfolk Island varies markedly from year to year due to the availability of their favoured food but conditions had seemingly been favourable with a very low A logged during the shore excursion on 19 March.

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

This small parrot can be tricky to find on Kolombangara but we were fortunate to find a fruiting tree during our visit and had some great views with a very low A logged (29 March).

**Duchess Lorikeet** *Charmosyna margarethae*

One of the best looking parrots of the trip and as with the above species, we had some nice looks in the fruiting tree at Imbu Rano Lodge on Kolombangara (29 March).

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

A Solomon Islands endemic which was seen in modest numbers (a very low A) at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal (27 March).

**Cardinal Lory** *Pseudeos cardinalis*

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

**Coconut Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus*

This species was first recorded on New Caledonia (21 March: low B), and was also seen on three islands in the Solomons.

Previously lumped with the Rainbow Lorikeet of Australia, the birds on New Caledonia and in the Solomons are now widely regarded to be a different species.

**New Caledonia Myzomela** *Myzomela caledonica*

The first of six species of Myzomela recorded on the voyage with a low A logged at Riviere Bleue on 21 March and six birds the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Cardinal Myzomela** *Myzomela cardinalis*

Four birds were seen on Makira (26 March).

**Micronesian Myzomela** *Myzomela rubratra*

A common species on Chuuk with A logged on both days we were ashore (3-4 April).

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

A relatively scarce and range-restricted Solomon Islands endemic, with a very low A logged on Tetepare (28 March) and six individuals the following day on Kolombangara.

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

Endemic to some of the islands in the Central Solomons, four individuals were seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal on 27 March.

**Sooty Myzomela** *Myzomela tristrami*

Seen in reasonable numbers at Santa Ana (25 March: A) with four birds the following day on Makira.

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

This species is more readily found in scrubby and urban habitats than in the forest at Riviere Bleue or Mount Koghi but two individuals were found on both days we were ashore on New Caledonia (21-22 March).

**New Caledonian Friarbird** *Philemon diemenensis*

This endemic was well seen on the excursion to Riviere Bleue on New Caledonia (21 March: very low A) with another individual the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Makira Honeyeater (“San Cristobal Melidectes”) *Meliarchus sclateri***

This impressive honeyeater, which is endemic to Makira and a few offshore islets, was found in reasonable numbers during our landing near Anuta village (26 March: A) with one individual noted the previous day on Santa Ana.

**Crow Honeyeater** *Gymnomyza aubryana*

This is generally the trickiest endemic at Riviere Bleue and is only found on about 50% or so of our visits to New Caledonia and then not necessarily seen by everyone in the group. On this year’s visit (21 March), however, we were fortunate to find five different individuals including a pair that showed exceptionally well to those who were fortunate to be present.

This species is currently classified as critically endangered by Birdlife International.

**Barred Honeyeater** *Glycifohia undulata*

Seen in reasonable numbers at Riviere Bleue (21 March: low A) with five birds the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Norfolk Island Gerygone** *Gerygone modesta*

This Norfolk Island endemic is reasonably numerous and a low A was logged on 19 March.

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

Good numbers were seen on New Caledonia during the excursion to Riviere Bleue (21 March: A) with four more found the following day at Mount Koghi.

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

This species is generally only encountered in ‘open country’ habitats on New Caledonia with five birds being seen during the trip to Riviere Bleue on 21 March and a lone individual the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Southern Melanesian Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina caledonica*

Another species which can be tricky on New Caledonia but we were fortunate to find at least eleven individuals on our two excursions with four at Riviere Bleue on 21 March and seven the following day at Mount Koghi.

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

**Northern Melanesian Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina welchmani*

Lone individuals were found on Guadalcanal (27 March) and two days later on Kolombangara (29 March).

**Barred ("Yellow-eyed") Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina lineata*

This cuckoo-shrike was seen in low numbers on Makira, Guadalcanal, Tetepare and Kolombangara (26-29 March).

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina papuensis*

Two birds were logged at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March), with a low A the following day on Tetepare and two on Kolombangara (29 March).

**New Caledonian Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina analis*

This New Caledonian endemic is generally only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue, however, 2019 was somewhat exceptional with six individuals being recorded on 21 March.

**Grey-capped Cicadabird** *Coracina remota*

Three birds were found on Tetepare (28 March).

**Makira Cicadabird** *Coracina salomonis*

Six individuals of this Makira endemic were seen during our morning shore excursion on 26 March.

**Solomon Islands Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina holopolia*

On WPO expeditions, this species is usually the least frequently encountered of the cuckoo-shrikes which occur in the Solomons and 2019 was no exception with two birds at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March) being the only sightings.

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

Two individuals were seen at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 21 March, with a similar number the following day at Mount Koghi. The highest count, however, was in the Solomons where seven birds were logged on Makira (26 March), with one the previous day at Santa Ana.

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

Eight of these birds were seen on Norfolk Island on 19 March.

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*

Reasonable numbers of this vocal songster were seen on Santa Ana (25 March) with a very low A being recorded. Two individuals were also seen on both Makira and Kolombangara (26 and 29 March).

**New Caledonian Whistler** *Pachycephala caledonica*

This species is generally found in more forested habitats than the next species (ie Rufous Whistler) and a very low A was recorded at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 21 March.

**Rufous Whistler** *Pachycephala rufiventris*

Two birds were seen during the shore excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (21 March) with a further three noted the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus*

Two birds were seen on Makira (26 March).

This form is endemic to Makira and it has been suggested (eg Dutson: *Birds of Melanesia*) that it could be regarded as an endemic species given it has plumage, structural, call and habit differences from other Spangled Drongos.

**Willie-wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys*

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

**Cockerell's ("White-winged") Fantail** *Rhipidura cockerelli*

This fantail seems to be less numerous than some other species in the same family but a total of six individuals were found during our time in the Solomon Islands with a lone bird at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March), two the following day on Tetepare and three on Kolombangara.

**Grey Fantail** *Rhipidura albiscapa*

A total of eight individuals of this reasonably widespread fantail were recorded on New Caledonia (21-22 March) with a low A also logged on Norfolk Island (19 March).

**Streaked Fantail** *Rhipidura verreauxi*

This localised fantail was found at Riviere Bleue (21 March) with a very low A being logged.

In the Birdlife Illustrated Checklist, the populations on New Caledonia and Vanuatu have been split into two species and if this approach is followed, then the birds seen at Riviere Bleue become another New Caledonian endemic.

**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons*

Reasonable numbers of this brightly coloured fantail were seen on Santa Ana (where there is an endemic subspecies) with three birds the following day (26 March) on Makira. The final sighting was a lone bird on Kolombangara.

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

**Southern Shrikebill** *Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides*

This species seems to have become somewhat trickier to find at Riviere Bleue in recent years but three birds were seen there on 21 March with at least one heard but not seen the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Chuuk Monarch** *Metabolus rugensis*

A few of the group made the long zodiac ride to Tol South, Chuuk (4 April) where after an arduous climb they found two of these spectacular but very localised monarchs.

**Solomons ("Black and white") Monarch** *Symposiachrus barbatus*

This Solomons endemic was heard but not seen on the excursion on Guadalcanal (27 March).

**Kolombangara Monarch** *Symposiachrus browni*

Despite its name, this species is found on a few islands other than Kolombangara and it was seen on Tetepare (28 March: 2) and Kolombangara (29 March: 5).

Some of the birds on Kolombangara showed exceptionally well and the views and number of individuals seen were unquestionably the best of any WPO expedition.

**White-collared Monarch** *Monarcha vidua*

Good numbers of this localised Solomon endemic were found on Santa Ana (25 March) with seven individuals logged, with two more the following day on Makira.

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

This Solomon Islands endemic was seen on Santa Ana, Makira and Guadalcanal.

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

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

This monarch is only found in the New Georgia group of islands (within the Solomons) and was seen during our shore excursions on Tetepare (28 March: A) and Kolombangara (29 March: 6).

**Oceanic Flycatcher** *Myiagra oceanica*

Reasonable numbers were seen on Weno, Chuuk on 4 April with a low A logged. At least three individuals were also found the previous evening.

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

Another Solomon Islands endemic which was seen on Guadalcanal (27 March: 4), Tetepare (28 March: 6) and Kolombangara (29 March: 4).

**Makira ("Ochre-headed") Flycatcher** *Myiagra cervinicauda*

Despite its name, this species also occurs on Santa An and Ugi and a lone individual was seen on Santa Ana on 25 March with six the following day on Makira.

**Melanesian ("New Caledonian") Flycatcher** *Myiagra caledonica*

This species was seen in reasonable numbers at Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia on 21 March with a low A recorded.



**New Caledonian Crow** *Corvus moneduloides*

This species was seen at Riviere Bleue (where it can be tricky to find) with four individuals noted and the following day, at least a dozen birds were found at Mount Koghi (22 March).

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

**White-billed ("Guadalcanal") Crow** *Corvus woodfordi*

This corvid can be extremely elusive at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal and was heard but not seen on 27 March.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Two birds were seen from the ship whilst offshore from Miyake-jima (13 April).

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

Six individuals of this New Caledonian endemic were logged at Riviere Bleue (21 March).

**Norfolk Robin** *Petroica multicolor*

This handsome species was seen in decent numbers during the excursion on Norfolk Island with a low A logged (19 March).

The taxonomy of this bird has changed twice in recent years, as it was originally considered a subspecies of Scarlet Robin. Subsequently, it was included within Pacific Robin, however, the birds on Norfolk Island have now been given specific status and it is thus a single island endemic.

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

This Asian introduction was seen around Noumea, New Caledonia on both 21 and 22 March.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Lone migrants were seen flying around the ship on both 12 and 13 April.

**Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica*

Seen on all the islands visited in the Solomons with the highest count being a low A on Santa Ana (25 March).

**Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxena*

The only sightings on the expedition were a few birds around the wharf at Tauranga as the ship sailed away (15 March) with a low A then recorded four days later on Norfolk Island.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*

A lost migrant spent several minutes flying round the ship, briefly landing for a few moments, as we headed north from Torishima (12 April).

**Carolinian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus syrinx*

Seen in reasonable numbers on both days at Chuuk with eight individuals on 3 April and a low A the following day.

**Shade Warbler** *Horornis parens*

A first for the WPO with one seen briefly on Makira (26 March).

**New Caledonian Grassbird** *Megalurulus mariei*

Although this endemic is regarded as 'locally common' it is notoriously difficult to see well, however, some of the group had brief views at Mount Koghi (22 March).

**Teardrop ("Great Truk") White-eye** *Rukia ruki*

A very low A of this highly localised endemic (which is only found on Tol South and a few other islands) were seen by those who made the long zodiac journey to Tol South and then climbed to sufficient altitude to find this unique looking white-eye.

**Citrine White-eye** *Zosterops semperi*

This species is only found on Palau and in the Caroline Islands and a low A was logged on 4 April with two individuals also noted the previous afternoon.

**Solomon Islands White-eye** *Zosterops kulambangrae*

This slightly confusingly named white-eye is only found in the New Georgia group of islands (including Kolombangara) within the Solomons archipelago. During our shore excursion on Kolombangara, six birds were logged (29 March).

**Dark-eyed White-eye** *Zosterops tetiparius*

Good numbers of this very local endemic were seen during our landing on Tetepare (28 March) with A logged.

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

This New Caledonian endemic is reasonably common and a low A was recorded on both excursions on the island (21-22 March).

**Silvereye** *Zosterops lateralis*

Found in reasonable numbers on Norfolk Island (19 March: A) and on the excursion to Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia (21 March: low A) with two also logged at Mount Koghi (22 March).

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

This Norfolk Island endemic was well seen with a low A logged on 19 March.

**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallica*

Seen on all islands we visited in the Solomons with the exception of Guadalcanal, with A logged on Santa Ana and Tetepare and single figure counts on Makira and Kolombangara.

**Singing Starling** *Aplonis cantoroides*

Another starling which was recorded on most days in the Solomon Islands (not seen on Santa Ana) with a low A found on Guadalcanal and Tetepare and low single figure counts on Makira and Kolombangara.

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

This Solomon Islands endemic was found at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal, Tetepare and Kolombangara with a total of fourteen birds being logged.

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

**Striated Starling** *Aplonis striata*

Reasonable numbers of this New Caledonian endemic were found at Riviere Bleue (21 March: low A) with four birds the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Micronesian Starling** *Aplonis opaca*

Seen on both days (3-4 April) on Chuuk with A recorded on both dates.

**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 (27 March: 6), Tetepare (28 March: 6) and Kolombangara (29 March: 8).

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

This Asian introduction was reasonably numerous on New Caledonia (21-22 March) and in Honiara, Guadalcanal (27 March) with A recorded on all three dates. A couple of birds were also seen as the ship sailed from Tauranga on 15 March.

[**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*]

This introduced species is common on Norfolk Island with A logged during the shore excursion (19 March) with a couple of birds also seen as the ship left Tauranga on 15 March.

**Japanese Thrush** *Turdus cardis*

A migrant bird was seen flying around the ship not far from Torishima (11 April).

[**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*]

A reasonably successful introduced species on Norfolk Island where six birds were recorded on 19 March.

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

Like Blackbird, this species was introduced to Norfolk Island and three individual were logged (19 March).

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Mouticola solitarius*

A lone bird was seen from the ship during the clearance procedures at Chichi-jima (10 April).

**Midget Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum aeneum*

This Solomon Islands endemic is not uncommon at Mount Austin on Guadalcanal but its small size can make getting good views somewhat challenging. Nevertheless, we had some decent looks with a low A being logged.

**Mottled Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum tristrami*

This localised Solomons endemic was first seen during our afternoon shore excursion at Santa Ana (25 March: 2) with A then logged the following day on Makira.

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

Seen at Mount Austin, Guadalcanal (27 March: 2) and on Tetepare (28 March: A).

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

A common introduction which was seen on Norfolk Island (19 March: A) and on New Caledonia (21 March: A).

**Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trichroa***

Three birds on Weno, Chuuk (4 April).

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

As usual, this New Caledonian endemic was only seen in small numbers at Riviere Bleue with three birds recorded on 21 March and two more the following day at Mount Koghi.

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax***

A lone bird was seen during the excursion to Mount Koghi (22 March).

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

Two birds were seen on Norfolk Island (19 March).

## CETACEANS

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

Six Sperm Whales were seen on the sea day south of Norfolk Island (18 March).

### **Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae*

Good numbers were seen off the coast of Chichi-jima (10 April) with A logged. Eight whales were then noted the following day (Haha-jima and passing the eastern coast of Chichi-jima) with the final sightings being three individuals which were seen as the ship sailed north from Miyake-jima (13 April).

### **Omura's Whale** *Balaenoptera omurai*

A female with a young calf was found a couple of days south of Chichi-jima (8 April) allowing us some fantastic views of this poorly known baleen whale.

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

Pods were seen on six widely spaced dates during the expedition with the first being not far from the Three Kings Islands (17 March) and the last off Chichi-jima (10 April).

### **Long-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala melas*

A good sized pod was seen in the Hauraki Gulf (16 March) with A logged.

### **Pygmy Killer Whale** *Feresa attenuata*

A small pod (very low A) was spotted west of Guadalcanal on 27 March.

### **Melon-headed Whale** *Peponocephala electra*

A couple of dozen animals were seen off the coast of New Ireland (31 March).

### **False Killer Whale** *Pseudorca crassidens*

Another species which was only seen off New Ireland (31 March) with about six individuals noted.

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

This species is usually only encountered occasionally on the WPO but exceptional numbers were seen in 2019 with sightings on six dates including records on consecutive dates from 17-19 March.

### **Longman's Beaked Whale** *Indopacetus pacificus*

Three animals seen off Makira (26 March) were considered to be this infrequently seen species.

### **Blainville's Beaked Whale** *Mesoplodon densirostris*

Usually this is the most regularly encountered beaked whale on the WPO but there was only one confirmed sighting in 2019, with four animals seen close to the ship a couple of days south of Chichi-jima (8 April).

### **Deraniyagala's Beaked Whale** *Mesoplodon hotaula*

Six of these extremely poorly known beaked whales were seen and photographed a day to the south of Santa Ana (24 March).

There are very few at sea sightings of this species which was first described in the early 1960s by Dr Deraniyagala based on a specimen which washed up on Sri Lanka. Subsequently this was considered to

be a Ginkgo-toothed Beaked Whale but within the last five years or so, it has been realised that the original proposal was correct and Deraniyagala's Beaked Whale is now an accepted, albeit almost unknown, species.

**Pygmy Sperm Whale** *Kogia breviceps*

Two individuals were recorded to the west of Guadalcanal on the afternoon of 27 March, with two more off New Ireland (31 March).

**Dwarf Sperm Whale** *Kogia sima*

Two were seen off Kolombangara on 29 March.

**Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus*

A low A was logged in the Hauraki Gulf (16 March) with slightly smaller numbers three days later offshore from Norfolk Island (19 March).

**Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops aduncus*

Seen off Chichi-jima on 10 April with A logged.

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

Another cetacean which was only seen off New Ireland with at least five individuals found (31 March).

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

At least eight individuals were logged not long after the ship left Tauranga (15 March).

**Spinner Dolphin** *Stenella longirostris*

This is usually amongst the most frequently encountered dolphin species on the WPO, however, in 2019 it was only seen on four occasions with sightings off Santa Ana (25 March), Makira (26 March), Kolombangara (29 March) and New Ireland (31 March).

**Striped Dolphin** *Stenella coeruleoalba*

A very low A was logged on 17 March as the ship cruised northwards from the vicinity of the Three Kings.

**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin** *Stenella attenuate*

Exceptionally numerous on WPO 2019 with sightings on seven dates between Guadalcanal (27 March) and Torishima (12 April). The highest count was off New Ireland where a very low B was logged (ie in excess of one hundred animals) with A on all other dates.

**Fraser's Dolphin** *Lagenodelphis hosei*

This species is not encountered every year but pods were seen south of Santa Ana (25 March) and offshore from Kolombangara (29 March).

**Pacific White-sided Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*

Another new cetacean for the WPO with at least one animal seen in a mixed pod of dolphins not far from Torishima (12 April).

## **OTHER NOTEWORTHY WILDLIFE**

### **Ornate Flying Fox** *Pteropus ornatus*

At least four individuals were seen on both excursions on New Caledonia (21-22 April).

### **Chuuk ("Ruck") Flying Fox** *Pteropus insularis*

Not uncommon on Chuuk with a very low A logged on both days (3-4 April).

### **Green Turtle** *Chelonia mydas*

Seen in good numbers in the waters around Tetepare (28 March) with three more (including a pair mating) on 10 April at our anchorage at Chichi-jima.