



WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY (Section 2 – PNG to Japan)

23rd April – 7th May 2015

SYSTEMATIC LIST

By Chris Collins

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

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

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

1-10 = actual number seen

11-100 = A

101-1,000 = B

1,001-10,000 = C

10,001-100,000 = D

Non-native introductions are shown in brackets.

BIRDS

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*

Five birds were seen on Chuuk on 27 April.

Short-tailed Albatross *Phoebastria albatrus*

A total of nine birds, in various plumages (from juvenile to adult), were seen on 5 May during chumming off Torishima Island and then later in the day as the *Spirit of Enderby* continued northwards. The only other sighting was a lone bird the previous day, south-east of Torishima.

Black-footed Albatross *Phoebastria nigripes*

The first sightings of this species were on 3 May (east of the Bonin Islands) where a low A was logged. The species was then seen on a daily basis for the remaining three days of the expedition with the highest count (A) being as the ship sailed north from Torishima on 5 May.

Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*

Two birds were seen north of the Steffen Strait, New Ireland on 24 April, with another noted the following day.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*

A lone bird seen a day south of the Bonin Islands (2 May) was by far the most northerly record from the *Spirit of Enderby*.

Bonin Petrel *Pterodroma hypoleuca*

The most northerly of the *Pterodromas* which are regularly seen on the full voyage from New Zealand, with the first sightings being a day south of the Bonin Islands (2 May: low B). Similar numbers were recorded in the vicinity of these islands the following day, with slightly lower numbers on the sea days between the Bonin Islands and Torishima and north from there (4-5 May).

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulweria*

Although there were less sightings of this widespread tropical species than on some previous voyages, nevertheless, a reasonable number were seen with the final record being several individuals a day south of the Bonin Islands (2 May).

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

This species was seen on the majority of days between New Britain and Yokohama with the highest count being off Miyake-jima where D (10,000+) was logged on 6 May. The numbers recorded between New Ireland and the Bonin Islands were, however, significantly lower than this with only single figure counts (or no sightings) on most dates.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*

The only sightings of this species were single individuals on 3 and 4 May (Bonin Islands and cruising to Torishima). It is worth noting that this species has a somewhat bizarre distribution in the West Pacific in March-May, as birds are often seen close to both New Zealand and Japan, but not between these countries, and this pattern occurred once again in 2015.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*

This was amongst the most frequently encountered species on the voyage with almost daily sightings between New Britain and Japan. The highest counts were off the Bonin Islands where B was logged on 3 May, with slightly lower numbers on both the previous and subsequent days.

Whilst south of the Equator, dark phase birds predominated, during the latter stages of the expedition, all the birds were pale morphs.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*

Only two individuals were recorded with single individuals sighted on the sea day between the Bonin Islands and Torishima (4 May) and a couple of days later, close to Miyake-jima.

Bryan's Shearwater *Puffinus bryani*

The sighting of one of these extremely poorly known birds to the east of Chichi-jima in the Bonin Island was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the expedition and almost certainly the first confirmed sighting of this species on a commercial bird tour.

It was only described in 2011 based on a specimen taken fifty years earlier at Midway Island in the Hawaiian archipelago. The breeding grounds in the Bonin Islands were only discovered in February 2015 when Japanese researchers found ten pairs on Higashi-jima, a small island to the east of Chichi-jima.

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

This species seemingly breeds on Chuuk and a low A was logged close to the archipelago’s outer reef system on 26 April. A single individual, presumably from the Northern Marianas population, was then seen on 1 May as the ship passed these islands.

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

Bannerman’s Shearwater *Puffinus bannermani*

The identification criteria for this poorly known species remain somewhat confused, especially as Atoll (“Tropical”) Shearwaters also seemingly occurs in the waters between the North Marianas and Bonin Islands, however, birds which were considered to be this species were seen on 2 May (low A) as the *Spirit of Enderby* cruised between these island groups.

Wilson’s Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

Four birds were seen feeding with a small flock of Matsudaira’s Storm-petrels off the Bonin Islands (3 May).

Leach’s Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

This species was only recorded in the late stages of the expedition with four birds seen whilst cruising north from Torishima (5 May). The only other sighting was a lone bird the previous day.

Tristram’s Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami*

The first sightings of this species were offshore from the Bonin Islands (3 May) where a low B was logged. On the two subsequent days, there were single figure counts, although good numbers of distant and, therefore, unidentified storm-petrels were also spotted.

Matsudaira’s Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*

This species was seen on six consecutive dates with the first sightings being three days south of the Bonin Islands (30 April: 2 birds). For the following five days either A or B was logged, with highest numbers being off the Bonin Island and the sea day south of there.

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*

There were three sightings of this widespread tropical seabird with these being on 29 April (day 2 north of Chuuk), 1 May (day 4 north of Chuuk) and 3 May (off the Bonin Islands).

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

This species is invariably more regularly recorded on this expedition than Red-tailed Tropicbird with sightings on seven dates between New Ireland and the Bonin Islands and a total of eighteen individuals recorded.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*

A lone bird on 30 April as the *Spirit of Enderby* passed the Northern Mariana Islands archipelago was the only record.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

This species was seen near Kokopo (23 April) and then on the two subsequent days with a total of nine birds being recorded.

In addition, a number of other frigatebirds were seen but not identified to species.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

This species was first recorded on 29 April (day 2 north of Chuuk) when a lone bird was spotted. The highest count was as the *Spirit of Enderby* passed the uninhabited islands at the northern end of the North Mariana archipelago (1 May) with a low A logged.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Although this species was recorded on nine days, there were only two occasions when the count was higher than single figures with these being off New Ireland (24 April) and the Bonin Islands (3 May) when a low A was logged.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

This species was encountered on nine dates with the highest numbers being close to Tench Island (north of New Ireland) on 24 April where this species breeds in large numbers and a low B was logged. On most other occasions when this species was recorded, it was only seen in small numbers, although a number of individuals roosted onboard and then used the *Spirit of Enderby* as a floating platform for hunting flying fish.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*

At least five birds were observed during the shore excursions on Chuuk (27 April).

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*

A single bird was seen on Chuuk (27 April).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

A lone bird was found on the small marsh on Chuuk (27 April) and like the previous species, this was presumably a lost vagrant.

Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra*

Seen on both days on Chuuk (26-27 April) with a total of four birds recorded.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

At least two birds passed the ship as we cruised away from Torishima Island (5 May) with one of these resting onboard for a while before continuing its migration northwards. The only other records came from Chuuk where five were seen on 27 April.

Rufous Night-Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*

This species is resident on Chuuk with three seen from the ship on the afternoon of 26 April and six logged the following day.

Eastern Osprey *Pandion cristatus*

The only record on the expedition was a lone bird seen as the *Spirit of Enderby* transited through Steffen Strait, New Ireland on 24 April.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus migrans*

Several individuals were seen in Tokyo Bay (7 May).

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

This species is a reasonably recent, seemingly natural, colonist of Chuuk and at least six birds were seen on the small marsh (27 April).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

A low A was logged on Chuuk (27 April) with a lone migrating bird then seen flying north passed the ship a few days later.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

A reasonably regular species on Chuuk with A logged (27 April).

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*

A small number were seen in Tokyo Bay (7 May).

Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*

Another gull which was only seen at the very end of the expedition with all records being within Tokyo Bay as the *Spirit of Enderby* approached the wharf at Yokohama (7 May).

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

This species was seen on six dates between New Ireland and the Bonin Islands (24 April-3 May) with A logged on each of these occasions.

Black Noddy *Anous minutes*

This species was only encountered on four of the first five days of the voyage with the highest numbers being near Tench Island (north of New Ireland) where a low D (ie 10,000+) was logged.

White Tern *Gygis alba*

There were daily sightings of this species from Chuuk (26 April) until a day south of the Bonin Islands (2 May) with A logged on five occasions.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscata*

Generally this widespread species is one of the most frequently encountered seabirds on the voyage and in 2015, this was once again the case with almost daily sightings between New Ireland (24 April) and Torishima (4 May). The largest counts (low B) were recorded as the ship passed the uninhabited islands north of Saipan and Guam (30 April-1 May).

Aleutian Tern *Onychoprion aleuticus*

The first confirmed sightings of this species on this itinerary were two birds seen not far from Miyake-jima (6 May).

Grey-backed Tern *Onychoprion lunatus*

This species seems to have a somewhat patchy range along the route followed by the *Spirit of Enderby* between New Zealand and Japan and whilst birds are sometimes seen in the Solomon Islands and off Bougainville, they are only occasionally recorded further north. In 2015, however, five birds were seen as the ship passed the uninhabited islands in the Northern Marianas archipelago (30 April).

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*

Reasonable numbers of this tropical seabird were recorded to the north of New Ireland (24 April: A) with the only other sightings being two near Kokopo the previous day and one a day to the north.

Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana*

Reasonable numbers were found in the waters around Chuuk with A logged on both 26 and 27 April.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

This species was only recorded in Tokyo Bay, where it was common (7 May), and around New Ireland (24 April: low A).

Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergi*

This species was only seen around New Britain and New Ireland (23-24 April) with a total of seven individuals logged.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

A percentage of the Ross Sea population of South Polar Skuas migrate into the northern hemisphere each northern summer with a handful recorded in 2015 including one a day to the south of the Bonin Islands (2 May).

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

The number seen from the *Spirit of Enderby*, whilst transiting from New Ireland to Japan, varies markedly from year to year (with later departures typically seeing a lot fewer birds) and this was the case in 2015 with only five individuals seen between New Ireland and the Bonin Islands.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Only three individuals were seen with the first off New Ireland (24 April) and the final record near Torishima (5 May).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

The most frequently recorded skua in terms of both the number of birds sighted and dates with at least 13 individuals seen across six days. The highest count was near Torishima where six were recorded on 5 May.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

At least two birds were seen in Tokyo Bay on 7 May.

Japanese Murrelet *Synthliboramphus wumizusume*

Japanese Murrelet is the last of the 'big birds' on the itinerary and about 35 individuals were seen as we cruised northwards passing their breeding islets near Miyake-jima on 6 May.

Caroline Islands Ground-dove *Gallicolumba kubaryi*

This species is endemic to the Caroline Islands and was seen in good numbers on Weno on 18 April with at least eight recorded. It had been feared that the typhoon that hit the archipelago in early April 2015 might have affected this species but our sightings suggest that it was not too badly impacted despite the winds apparently reaching over 100mph.

Crimson-crowned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus porphyraceus*

Reasonably numerous on Chuuk, with a low A logged (27 April).

Coconut ("Rainbow") Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Four birds were seen whilst traversing the Steffen Strait, New Ireland (24 April).

Caroline Islands Swiftlet *Aerodramus inquietus*

This extremely common swiftlet is endemic to the Caroline Islands and was seen on Chuuk on both 26 and 27 April with a low B logged on the second day.

Micronesian Myzomela *Myzomela rubratra*

This species is common on Chuuk and A was logged on 27 April with two also spotted from the ship whilst we awaited clearance the previous afternoon.

Oceanic Flycatcher *Myiagra oceanica*

This Micronesian endemic is relatively common on Chuuk and like all the other species does not appear to have been too badly affected by the typhoon despite the widespread damage to the tree cover on the island. During our shore excursion on 27 April a low A was logged.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Several individuals of this reasonably widespread species were seen in Tokyo Bay (7 May).

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Three birds were seen migrating north on 6 May as the ship passed Miyake-jima.

Caroline Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus syrinx*

This species is endemic to the Caroline Islands and was seen in reasonable numbers on Weno, Chuuk on 27 April with two birds also seen from the ship the previous day.

Caroline Islands White-eye *Zosterops semperi*

This Micronesian endemic is reasonably numerous on Chuuk and a low A was logged on 27 April.

Micronesian Starling *Aplonis opaca*

A common bird on Chuuk with a high A recorded on 27 April and three also seen from the ship the previous day.

[**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*]

This species was recorded in small numbers on Chuuk (27 April) where it is believed to be a recent, and presumably ship-assisted, arrival.

Blue-faced Parrotfinch *Erythrura trichroa*

Chuuk is probably amongst the easiest places to see this often tricky species with four observed on 27 April.

CETACEANS

Sperm Whale *Physter macrocephalus*

Five Sperm Whales were seen on 2 May (day south of the Bonin Islands), with the same number then recorded a couple of days later as the ship sailed towards Torishima.

Bryde's/Omura's Whale *Balaenoptera edeni/acutorostrata*

Two animals seen near the Bonin Islands were initially thought to be Omura's Whales, however, subsequent research since the end of the expedition suggests they may have been Bryde's Whales.

Orca *Orcinus orca*

A widely spread pod (low A) was seen offshore from Chichi-jima, Bonin Islands on 3 May.

Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*

Two separate pods were seen on 6 May as the *Spirit of Enderby* cruised towards Miyake-jima.

Cuvier's Beaked Whale *Ziphius cavirostris*

Four of these distinctive whales were seen on the sea day between the Bonin Islands and Torishima (4 May).

Blainville's Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon densirostris*

A lone animal was seen and photographed not long after the ship left Kokopo on 23 April.

Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*

This comparatively recent split from the more widespread Bottlenose Dolphin was seen on two occasions with six within the lagoon on Chuuk (26 April) and a somewhat larger pod not far from Torishima on 5 May.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*

A decent sized pod (A) was seen off the Bonin Islands on 3 May.

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris*

This widespread species was seen near Kokopo (23 April) and a day south of the Bonin Islands (2 May) with A logged on both dates.

Chuuk Flying-fox *Pteropus insularis*

Seen on both days during our visit to Chuuk (26-27 April) with a total of nine animals being recorded.

© Chris Collins/Wildwings
May 2015