

Endemic birds and New Britain

The country of Papua New Guinea comprises the eastern half the island of New Guinea and a number of smaller islands and archipelagos in the seas around it. Papua New Guinea has more languages (700+) than anywhere else in the world but today the language of education and government is English while Tok Pisin, a mixture of English, German and local languages, is commonly spoken except in the most isolated areas. New Guinea's avifauna is one of the most exciting in the world. The island of New Guinea has more endemics than any other country (400+) and is home to some of the world's most exotic and sought after birds, the family *Paradisaeidae*. There are some 43 members of this family, 36 of which can be found in Papua New Guinea with the rest being in the Indonesian province of West Papua and on the island of Halmahera. New Britain is situated in the Bismarck Archipelago and offers a further sixteen endemic birds.

Days 1-3: Fly to Singapore where we have a connection to Port Moresby. In the afternoon a visit is planned to the PAU Ponds which offer an excellent introduction to the birds of PNG. The area holds Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Black-backed Butcherbird and Spotted Whistling Duck. Three nights in Port Moresby.

Days 4-5: Full day at Varirata National Park. The park is located on the Sogeri Plateau above Port Moresby. This is a great birding spot with several endemics present including Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise, Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher and Eastern Riflebird. Other species we may see include Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Red-cheeked Parrot, Barred Owllet-Nightjar, Chestnut-backed Jewel Babbler and Painted Quail Thrush. In addition to these wonderful birds up to seven species of dove and five kingfishers are possible. On Day 5 we revisit Varirata searching for Dwarf Cassowary and Forest Bittern and localised PNG endemics – Pheasant Pigeon, Black Myzomela, Black Fantail and Slaty-chinned Longbill.

Days 6-7: Early morning flight to the river port of Kiunga. On arrival we stop at various birding sites along the way. Pesquet's Parrots can often be seen flying over the forest. Kiunga is located in the midst of a huge area of lowland rainforest. This is a

Dates

Sunday June 24th - Wednesday
July 11th 2018

Leaders: Ben Blewitt and Mark Finn

Group size: to a maximum of 8

Birds: 300-350

great birding destination. Kiunga has grown up as a river port on the banks of the mighty Fly River. From Kiunga the copper ore from Tabubil is exported and into Kiunga come all the necessities of life brought by barge from Port Moresby via the Fly. An initial exploration of the humid, lowland forest may produce sightings of Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, Pink-spotted, Ornate, Beautiful, Orange-bellied and Dwarf Fruit Doves, Black-capped Lory, New Guinea Babbler, Golden Monarch, Grey-headed and Golden Cuckoo-shrikes. On the morning of Day 7 we visit a Flame Bowerbird display site and spend the day birding around Kiunga. Species we may encounter today include Palm Cockatoo, Greater Bird-of-Paradise, Trumpet Manicode and Obscure Honeyeater.

Day 8: Today we travel by boat up the Fly and Elevala Rivers to Kwatu landowner lodge where we enter an area of pristine rainforest. Along the river we look for Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Orange-



Reggiana Bird of Paradise Photo: *Sicklebill Safaris*

breasted Fig-Parrot, Moustached Treeswift, Southern Crowned Pigeon, Twelve-wired Bird-of-Paradise, New Guinea Bronzewing and Collared Imperial Pigeon. On arrival at the lodge, we search the gardens for Spotted-winged, Golden and Frilled Monarchs, Yellow-bellied Longbill and Yellow-bellied Gerygone. After lunch, a check of the riverine habitats may reveal Twelve-wired and King Bird-of-Paradise, Common Paradise Kingfisher and mixed flocks of forest birds. After dinner a search for night birds may comprise the almost unknown Wallace's and Starry Owlet-Nightjars and Marbled Frogmouth.

Day 9: This morning we walk along the trails with chances of Blue-jewel Babbler, Red-bellied Pitta, Cinnamon Ground-Dove and in fruiting trees Boyer's Cuckoo-shrikes and flocks of Orange-bellied Fig-Parrots. Mixed flocks are worth checking for

Wallace's Fairy-Wrens, Rufous-backed Fantail, Hooded Monarch, Black Sunbird and, with luck, Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeon and Thick-billed Ground Pigeon.

Day 10: Morning birding around the lodge followed by the boat journey back to Kiunga. Our main objective is to watch New Guinea Flightless Rails from a specially constructed hide. On the return boat trip we may find similar birds to Day 8 with the addition of Greater Black Coucal, Golden Myna and Grey Crows. Night in Kiunga.

Day 11: Today, we fly to Mt Hagen where we spend the next three nights at Kumul Lodge. This is a photographer's dream where birds of paradise are among the visitors to feeders. Regularly seen species include Brown Sicklebill, Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, Archbold's Bowerbird, Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Crested Berrypicker and

Smoky Honeyeater. In the lodge grounds we should see White-winged Robin, Rufous-naped Whistler and Mountain Firefinch. Papuan Lorikeets visit flowering trees and the local race of Island Thrush often appears on the lawns. On the garden perimeter we may find Friendly Fantail, Large Scrubwren and Regent Whistler whilst Mountain Swiftlets feed overhead.

Days 12-13: Full day birding the Kumul area with good chances of Superb and, perhaps, Lesser Bird-of-Paradise. In the forest canopy, we search for New Guinea White-eye, Black-breasted Boatbill, Slater's Whistler, Buff-faced Scrubwren, Fan-tailed Berrypicker and Island Leaf-Warbler, whilst grass areas attract Papuan Grassbird, Hooded Mannikin and Brown-breasted Gerygone. A walk along the Pigetes Trail, which traverses a densely forested ridge, may have Orange-crowned Fairy-Wren and displaying King of Saxony Bird-of-Paradise. We also have a chance of locating Blue-faced Parrotfinch, a grass-loving species, and flocks of Yellow-billed Parakeet. We also check a site for the rare Blue Bird of Paradise and another trail for the spectacular King of Saxony Bird-of-Paradise if we have missed it the previous afternoon.

Day 14: Early morning flight back to Port Moresby and on to Hoskins, a small town situated on the north coast of New Britain. On arrival we transfer to Walindi Dive Resort which is set among forest habitats and adjacent to the sea.

Day 15: Garu is our destination today a prime area for lowland forest birds. Bismarck lowland endemics include Blyth's Hornbill, Pacific Baza and Eclectus Parrot. Other species include Red-knobbed, Island, Yellowish-streaked and the rare Finsch's, and perhaps Bismarck Imperial Pigeons, Red-knobbed Fruit Dove, Stephan's Ground-Dove, and Pied Cuckoo-Dove. Kingfishers present include the elusive White-mantled, Black-headed Paradise and Melanesian. We should also find Volcano Scrubfowl at their nesting mounds. Other species we hope to encounter comprise Violaceous and White-

necked Coucals, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, Song Parrot and Bismarck Hanging Parrot, Black-bellied and Ashy Myzomelas, Bismarck Flowerpecker, Black-tailed Monarch, Bismarck Whistler and Long-tailed Myna. We have a chance of Variable Goshawk, Black Honey Buzzard or rarer species – Slaty-backed Goshawk and New Britain Sparrowhawk.

Day 16: Boat trip out to Restorf Island in beautiful Kimbe Bay. Specialties that occur here include Nicobar Pigeon, MacKinlay's Cuckoo Dove, Beach Kingfisher, Slater's Myzomela, Island Monarch, and Mangrove Golden Whistler. Return to the mainland for lunch followed by an afternoon visit to Numundo for Buff-bellied Mannikin.

Day 17: Morning birding locally with our destination to be decided on what has been seen already. In the afternoon return to Port Moresby for an overnight stay.

Day 18: Fly to Singapore with arrival early on the next day

Prices

Ground Price: £8,275
Single room: £875
Deposit: £1,000
*Air Fare: £1,715

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, boat trips, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature, airport departure tax and fuel surcharges. A visa to enter Papua New Guinea.

Good accommodation throughout with en-suite facilities. Kwatu is a very basic lodge with pit toilets and bush showers.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*