



The elusive Giant Scops Owl was seen exceedingly well during the tour. (Yann Muzika)

ULTIMATE PHILIPPINES

26 JANUARY – 15/21/28 FEBRUARY 2014

LEADER: DANI LOPEZ-VELASCO

Due to the increasing popularity of our Philippines tours, surely because of our high success rate with the endemics, this year Birdquest operated 2 “Ultimate Philippines” tours, the first one led by Simon Harrap and the second one, starting just 1 week later, led by me, both finishing with excellent results. This second tour comprised of the main tour and two post-tour extensions, resulting in a five-week endemics bonanza. The first three weeks focused on the better-known islands of Luzon, Palawan and Mindanao, and here we saw some of those mind-blowing, world’s must-see birds, including Philippine Eagle, Palawan Peacock-Pheasant

and Azure-breasted Pitta, amongst many other endemics. The first extension took us to the central Visayas where exciting endemics such as Flame-templed Babbler or the recently described Cebu Hawk-Owl were seen well, and we finished with a trip to Mindoro and remote Northern Luzon where several other endemics performed, best of all definitely being the fantastic Whiskered Pitta, although megas like Luzon Bleeding-heart or Grand Rhabdornis came close. Our success rate with the endemic targets – the ones you come here for- was overall very good, and highlights included no less than 14 species of owl recorded, including mega views of Giant Scops Owl, 12 species of beautiful kingfishers, including Hombron's (Blue-capped Wood) and Spotted Wood, the 6 possible endemic racket-tails and the four possible species of pitta – always trip favourites! The once almost impossible Philippine Eagle-Owl showed brilliantly near Manila, odd looking Philippine and Palawan Frogmouths gave the best possible views, impressive Rufous and Writhed Hornbills (amongst 8 species of endemic hornbills) delighted us, and both Scale-feathered and Rough-crested (Red-c) Malkohas proved easy to see. Three Ashy Ground Thrushes were seen hopping on the road, skulking Falcated and Striated Wren-Babblers were lured out into the open for prolonged views and the amazing Celestial Monarch, getting very rare these days, was seen nicely together with Short-crested Monarch. 13 species of flowerpeckers, including the scarce Flame-crowned, were seen, as well as no less than 15 species of sunbirds, including Apo Sunbird, together with the 3 world's rhabdornis (formerly placed in their own family and now considered to be "just" starlings), including the seldom seen Grand Rhabdornis. Deforestation is at its worst in the Philippines, and seeing the forest disappear in front of your eyes is always a sad sight. In no time and unless urgent conservation work takes place, some of these exciting endemics will no longer exist, so it's a bit of a privilege every time you get to see these endangered birds.



Whiskered Pitta, possibly the world's ultimate pitta, required some extra effort, but in the end we got mind-blowing views during the Remote Northern Luzon extension. (Yann Muzika).

Our 'Ultimate Philippines' adventure began at Manila's airport and we were soon heading off towards Subic Bay. We just had enough time to make a productive stop at Candaba Marsh. In the late afternoon light we enjoyed great views of our two main targets, Philippine Duck and Philippine Swampphen, and we also picked up Wandering Whistling Duck, Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Barred and Buff-banded Rails, White-browed Crake, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Philippine Pied Fantail (a recent split from Pied) and lots of Red Turtle Doves, while a flock of White-shouldered Starlings was a welcome bonus. We then

headed towards Subic, having dinner en route before reaching our hotel.

Several nightbird species occur in the Subic area, so our first owling session took place early next morning. At first, things were quiet but as dawn broke we got good views of Luzon Hawk-Owl and Great-eared Nightjar. The rest of the day was spent birding the various spots at Subic, and it proved to be very successful, although unfortunately due to some military action our White-fronted Tit stake out was off limits. A single Philippine Serpent Eagle was seen soaring overhead, the endemic Plain Bush-Hen showed briefly for some, while Green Imperial Pigeon and endemic Philippine Hanging Parrot (Colasisi) and Guaibero were far more conspicuous. The scarce Green Racket-tail was seen very well both perched and in flight, while noisy Blue-naped Parrots were pleasantly common. Delightful Whiskered Treeswifts, Luzon Hornbills and showy Bar-bellied and Blackish Cuckooshrikes were all logged. 4 species of woodpecker (Philippine Pygmy, White-bellied, Northern Sooty and Luzon Flameback – the last a split from Greater Flameback) also performed, Rufous-crowned Bee-eaters were conspicuous on the wires (a split from Blue-throated), while Brown-breasted Kingfishers (a split from White-throated) were commonly seen along the road. Other notable additions included Elegant Tit, the ubiquitous Philippine Bulbul, Lowland White-eye, Coletto, the shy White-browed Shama singing its beautiful song, and spectacular Rough-crested and Scale-feathered Malkohas. In the afternoon we went back to the forest, where it was predictably quiet, but we caught up with the endemic Rufous Coucal. Another owling session in the late evening gave us fantastic views of both Chocolate Boobook and Philippine Scops Owl.



Philippine Scops Owl and Chocolate Boobook showed superbly at Subic. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Before leaving Subic the next day we had time for some early morning birding. There was little activity due to the wind, and unfortunately access to the best area for White-fronted Tit was forbidden, which was really annoying, having to search, in vain, for it somewhere else, but nevertheless we added a few species to our list including Purple Needletail and a perched male Japanese Sparrowhawk. It was then time to sit back for the long drive north to Banaue. In the late afternoon, we stopped at the river at Lagawe, where our main target, the endemic Indigo-banded Kingfisher, was soon found, while Pygmy Swiftlets flew around us. Eventually, we made it to our hotel at Banaue for a well-deserved dinner.

We set off very early next morning, looking for the endemic Luzon Scops Owl in the montane forest above town, but we didn't hear a single call at our stakeout. After dawn, bird activity started to pick up, and we spent some time looking for and at mixed flocks, which contained a number of new species for us, including Green-backed Whistler, Mountain Tailorbird, Negros Leaf Warbler (a split from Mountain Leaf), Blue-headed Fantail, and Mountain White-eye. Tireless Sulphur-billed Nuthatches were seen creeping up tree trunks, striking Little Pied Flycatchers flittered around, Luzon Sunbird (split from Metallic-winged) busily fed on

roadside flowers, and small flocks of Chestnut-faced Babblers flew from tree to tree. A couple of Eastern Buzzards soared overhead, while a few groups of Montane (Luzon) Racket-tails shot past. Several endemic Mountain Shrikes – a species that can be tricky to see at times – perched out in the open, and we enjoyed good views of a couple of White's and Island Thrushes, as well as several Olive-backed Pipits. A roadside stake-out for Luzon Water Redstart didn't deliver the hoped-for bird, and afterwards we ate at Bay-yo, overlooking the famous rice-terraces and spending some time scanning the river until we eventually found the prized redstart. Heading back towards the hotel, we noticed a big bird perched on top of a tree right next to the road, and as we drove past it, realized it was a stunning Flame-breasted Fruit Dove. We stopped some distance past the bird in order not to flush it, as this is a very shy species due to hunting pressure, but as we got out of the car and set the scopes on the spot, a very thick mist suddenly built up, not allowing even to see the tree, and once it finally dispersed, the bird was gone... We spent some time waiting in the area, to no avail. We then finished off the day in the hotel gardens, where numbers of nesting House Swifts kept us entertained.



Luzon Sunbird and Luzon Scops Owls were seen well at Mt Polis, where we admired the Banaue rice terraces. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)



We

only

had a few target birds for our second day at Mount Polis, and started off with another attempt at Luzon Scops Owl. Unfortunately, we failed, and again did not even hear the bird. Simon's group also missed it over several attempts a week earlier, so it was clear that for some reason the owls weren't vocal. Once dawn broke it was again misty at the summit, and there were few birds around, although a pair of Flame-crowned Flowerpeckers, a pretty scarce endemic, showed very well – thanks Rob for alerting us! We spent a fair amount of time looking at several spots favoured by the fruit dove, but we drew a blank. Some more racket-tails were seen in flight, and we came across more mixed flocks, containing pretty much the same species as yesterday. Luzon Bush Warblers called from the undergrowth and eventually showed well, while secretive Benguet Bush Warblers weren't as cooperative though, with one crawling in thick vegetation down to our feet but giving only brief views. In the afternoon, we visited a spot for Trilling Tailorbird, which wasn't very responsive and was only seen briefly, and the same area also produced Yellowish White-eye. Before dinner, we made one final attempt at the elusive scops owl, and within no time we heard a bird calling. It took some time but eventually we were rewarded with great views of this scarce endemic. Mission accomplished!



We couldn't have asked for better views (or photos) of the scarce Flame-crowned Flowerpecker. (Yann Muzika)

We left Banaue early the next day for the long drive back to Manila, with very few birds seen on the journey. Our target for the day was the rare and impressive Philippine Eagle-Owl, which until recently was pretty much a dream-only for any visiting birder. However, Angono, famous for its petroglyphs, is home in recent years to a pair of Philippine Eagle-Owls, and that's where we were heading. We were not to be disappointed as we had stunning views of an adult near its nest. One of the birds of the trip! After this, we arrived in good time to enjoy our luxury hotel.



The impressive Philippine Eagle-Owl was seen near Manila twice during the tour. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Our flight to Palawan was early in the morning and as soon as we arrived at Puerto Princesa we headed to the beach. Despite some rain we succeeded in getting good views of the endangered Chinese Egret. A few waders were also present, including Grey-tailed Tattlers, Greater Sand Plovers, Red-necked Stints and Pacific Golden Plovers, while the mangroves held several Philippine Pied Fantails. We then headed to Sabang, but we experienced heavy rain on the journey and thus couldn't do any proper birding on the way. Once we settled in our hotel, we waited for a few hours before rain and wind ceased – a typhoon was passing through the island- and spent the last couple of hours of the afternoon birding along the road. Apart from widespread species such as Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Thick-billed Green Pigeon or Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, we did very well with endemics, seeing a small group of the critically endangered Red-vented (Philippine) Cockatoo, several distinctive Palawan Hornbills, brightly colored Fiery Minivets, some Palawan Drongos and Palawan Crows uttering their strange calls. A pair of Palawan Tits showed down to a few metres, the usually secretive and stunning Falcated Wren-Babbler gave the best possible views, several delightful Palawan Flowerpeckers obliged, as did some drab Ashy-fronted and Palawan Bulbuls. In the evening, we enjoyed fantastic views of Palawan Scops Owl, as well as a roosting Hooded Pitta. We got very close to a calling Palawan Frogmouth but unfortunately it flew off before we could get our eyes on the bird. All in all, a highly productive first afternoon on the island, in spite of the weather.

Before dawn we were in the field again, looking for the frogmouth, and this time we got lucky, enjoying excellent views of this bizarre looking bird. A pair of Spotted Wood Owls kept calling very close to us, but we were focused on the endemic frogmouth and once we had had enough of it the owls had gone quiet, although a Large-tailed Nightjar was seen. Afterwards we took a boat to St Paul's National Park, although the weather didn't look too promising and there was a bit of a swell on the way. As we were getting out of the boat we saw a pair of Philippine Megapodes (Tabon Scrubfowls) stalking through the undergrowth, but it then started to rain really heavily, and the usually easy Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, one of those must-see birds in the world, eluded us for some time. We were beginning to seriously worry about missing it, but finally the bird was tracked down and we had great views of this mind-blowing species. This habituated individual is getting old and as soon as it dies, the species will return to its former highly sought-after and extremely elusive status. The same area also gave us endemic White-vented Shama, Lovely Sunbird and a pair of very

showy Hooded Pittas. After a break we hit the forest again, seeing a few noteworthy species, including Dark-throated Oriole, Sulphur-bellied Bulbul, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, endemic Spot-throated Flameback (split from Common Flameback), Yellow-throated Leafbird, Pale Spiderhunter (split from Little), and in the late afternoon we got good views of 8 Red-vented Cockatoos from the viewpoint.



Three Palawan endemics: from left to right Palawan Tit, Palawan Scops Owl and Falcated Wren-Babbler. (Yann Muzika, DLV and YM)

There were a couple of specialities in the Sabang area we still needed, and within minutes of arriving at a certain spot next morning we got good views of both Ashy-headed Babbler and Palawan Blue Flycatcher. A calling Red-bellied Pitta was well spotted by Gina and gave terrific views. We then went for a check at the nearby beach for Malaysian Plover, but, like Simon's group, drew a blank; perhaps this threatened bird has abandoned the site due to the ever-increasing numbers of tourists. After an excellent lunch (including lobster for a certain person ☺) it was time to leave Sabang and St Paul's, surely one of the loveliest places in the Philippines. In the afternoon, we drove to Honda Bay and took a boat out to one of the small islands in search of Mantanani Scops Owl. Once in the little island, we checked a nearby beach where we were fortunate to locate a nice Malaysian Plover, while in the mudflats we found a flock of shorebirds containing Kentish, Mongolian and Greater Sand Plovers. Then, Nicky miraculously found a pair of owls roosting in the mangroves. The views were decent although they were a bit obscured by branches, so we decided to stay until dusk. As it got dark, we got brilliant views of a calling scops owl right out in the open, which posed for pictures for some time. We then took the boat back to the mainland and drove on to Puerto Princesa for the night.



We spent most of the next day birding around the Iwahig Penal Colony. In the early morning we worked the Balsahan Trail, where we had good views of the endemic Palawan Flycatcher. As usual, Melodious Babblers didn't make things easy, but after getting glimpses of the first bird heard, we finally found a more cooperative pair, which gave very good views. One of the highlights of the morning was definitely the brilliant Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher that, for a change, was seen perched in the open just a few metres from us. Overhead, the only Brown-backed Needletails of the trip were seen, and the endemic Blue Paradise Flycatcher also obliged. In the afternoon, we checked out some roadside mangroves, where a pair of Copper-throated Sunbirds eventually showed themselves, and then the paddies, where large numbers of waders included Common, Pin-tailed/ Swinhoe's Snipes (not really possible to tell apart except when good pictures showing outer tail feathers are taken), Long-toed and Red-necked Stints and Marsh Sandpipers, as well as a single Ruff. To finish off the day, we had a flock of endemic Blue-headed Racket-tails on the way to the hotel.



The shy White-vented Shama. (Yann Muzika)

We had done really well, endemic-wise, in Palawan, but as the views of the racket-tail had been brief we decided to give a quick try in the morning, sadly to no avail. A Ruddy Kingfisher was a welcome bonus though, and afterwards we took a flight to Cebu and on to Davao on Mindanao. We arrived mid afternoon and then drove eastwards to our base for the next few days, the Paper Country Inn at Bislig.

Our first day in what remains of the PICOP logging concession was very successful. Our usual early start and bumpy jeepney ride into the former concession was in the dark, in time to track down a calling Chocolate Boobook. Giant Scops Owl and Mindano Hawk-Owls were heard but unfortunately didn't come close enough to be found with the torch. After some coffee we started birding, with one of the first birds seen being a stunning pair of Azure-breasted (Steere's) Pitta. What a cracker! Further on the trail we came across a mixed flock containing our only Black-bibbed Cicadabird (B-b Cuckooshrike) and Philippine Leafbirds of the trip, plus other goodies such as endemic Short-crested Monarch, Mindanao Blue Fantail and Yellowish Bulbul, as well as Yellow-bellied Whistlers and a female Violet Cuckoo. A vocal Striated Wren-Babbler (Streaked Ground Babbler) gave very good views in the undergrowth, and we also managed to pull out of the thick

cover a Black-headed Tailorbird, while Rufous-fronted Tailorbird was easier to locate. Philippine Orioles were in evidence in the canopy, and a pair of Philippine Trogons posed nicely in the scope. A calling Winchell's (Rufous-ored) Kingfisher was first heard and after some time eventually found sitting motionless on a branch and gave excellent views. Noisy Brown Tit-Babblers eventually showed well, and hornbills – both Mindanao and the impressive Writhed, were also logged. Overhead, Steere's Honey Buzzard and Philippine Serpent Eagles soared. A cute Philippine Falconet was found sitting on a dead tree and 2 Blue-crowned Racket-tails were seen briefly, one sitting on a branch very close to the trail. After our picnic we worked the road back to Bislig, stopping to admire the faithful but always brilliant Southern Silvery Kingfisher on its pool. In the afternoon we paid a visit to the airfield, where we saw several new species, including King Quail, Javan Pond Heron, a pair of Great Frigatebirds flying overhead, Clamorous Reed Warbler, a skulking Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler and a pair of Golden-headed Cisticolas. As dusk fell, we waited for the regular Australasian Grass Owl to make an appearance, but only Philippine Nightjars showed up.



Two PICOP specialties, the superb Azure-breasted Pitta and the cracking Southern Silvery Kingfisher. (Yann Muzika)

Next morning, we headed out early again to try for some owls. This time we got lucky with Mindanao Hawk-Owl, of which a pair put on a great show for us. The whole morning was spent on a trail through forested hills (the best bit of habitat remaining PICOP). We had rain on and off during our whole stay, which didn't make birding easy, at all, for us. After a bit of effort, we managed to locate a calling Hombron's (Blue-capped Wood) Kingfisher, a cracking endemic, and nearby a pair of day roosting Philippine Nightjars was found. Probably due to the rain, very few flocks were located, but fortunately one of them contained one of the most wanted of all PICOP specialties, the mind-blowing Celestial Monarch - a species that's getting rarer and rarer each year-, and a pair of these gems showed nicely and low down. Apart from species seen the previous day, we added Rufous Paradise Flycatcher, Mindanao Pygmy Babbler, Philippine Leaf Warbler, Rufous-tailed Jungle Flycatcher, Buzzing Flowerpercker, Metallic-winged Sunbird and Naked-faced Spiderhunter - building a nest-, while several Philippine Spine-tailed Swifts (P Needletails) flew over the forest. After our picnic it started to rain pretty heavily, so we decided to call it a day and headed back to our hotel.



Hombron's Kingfisher and Black-faced Coucal were eventually seen at PICOP. (Yann Muzika)

On our last day at PICOP we started before dawn looking for Giant Scops Owl, but only managed to hear it distantly. Then we set off on a search for Mindanao Wattled Broadbill, another species that's getting very difficult lately and which had eluded us the previous day, at a couple of favoured places, but we drew a blank. We succeeded though in finding the endemic and always impressive Rufous Hornbill, while Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove, Philippine Magpie-Robin and Black-faced Coucal were also welcome additions. On our last attempt we managed to find a good sized flock which held a number of species, including a Wattled Broadbill that called a few times, but the area was covered with pretty thick vegetation and despite all of our efforts, we couldn't connect with the bird, although several Short-crested Monarchs gave my best views ever of this handsome endemic. It was then time to take the final bumpy jeepney ride back to the hotel to pack, have an early lunch and then drive to a place near Davao for the night.



The exquisite Short-crested Monarch. (Yann Muzika)



We had extremely good views of the skulking Striated Wren-Babbler. (Yann Muzika)

Next day was hopefully going to be a very special day for all of us. If there's one bird that fully represents the Philippines then it surely has to be the spectacular Philippine or Monkey-eating Eagle, one of the most impressive and endangered raptors in the world. The usual place to see it, Mt Kitanglad, our base for the next 3 days, had apparently been a bit unreliable recently, with one group missing it altogether and the other BQ group only getting distant views. For that reason, and knowing that missing this iconic bird would be catastrophic, as soon as we found out, just a few days earlier, about an active and relatively accessible nest near Davao, we decided to do everything in our hands to try to visit it. After a lot of hassle, we managed to get the permits, and after some time driving and a 30 minute walk, we were standing just a couple hundred metres from a nest with a young – c.2.5 months old - Philippine Eagle on it. We enjoyed great scope views of the chick, but we were all eagerly awaiting to see the real thing- a full adult! Soon fog covered the whole valley, but once it cleared out we realized that one of the adults had come, unnoticed, to the nest. WOW! What a bird! It was a great and memorable moment indeed, and we felt very privileged, especially knowing that only less than 200 pairs of this critically endangered raptor are left in the world. Over the next couple of hours – whenever the mist lifted up- we enjoyed terrific views of this mega bird, although some branches in front of the adult made photography somewhat difficult. After lunch, satisfied with our views and given that the fog was getting worst, we happily returned back to our accommodation.



Our visit to a Philippine Eagle nest was one of the tour's highlights. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Next morning, we drove to Bukidnon Province and the jumping off point for Mount Kitanglad. Eventually we arrived at the trailhead where the ponies were waiting to carry our baggage up to the camp. The track is no longer passable for vehicles, so we were back to the traditional sweaty walk up to the Eagle Camp. Prior to our visit there had been torrential rains in the area, which meant that crossing the river was no easy task, but eventually we all made it. After settling in, we set out just before dusk to look for Bukidnon Woodcock – a species discovered by a Birdquest group lead by Simon Harrap and the late Tim Fisher in 1993 - and were treated to some very close flypasts by two birds. After this we had with great views of one of the most bizarre-looking birds in the planet -Philippine Frogmouth –‘Old Growler’ as this long-term resident is known.

We woke up early on our first full day in the mountain, in order to look, unsuccessfully, for Giant Scops Owl, on what would be a major battle over the following days. After breakfast we walked up to the Eagle Viewpoint with our man-in-the-spot, Carlito, and his son Danny, picking up a few species on the way, including Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Cinnamon Ibon, Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, Negros Leaf Warbler, Tawny Grassbird and Short-tailed Starling. Given that we had already seen the Eagle the day before, we spent very little time at the viewpoint, highlighted by three Oriental Honey Buzzards and some Mindanao Racket-tails. We then proceeded to the higher parts of the mountain, and as we got higher we encountered several flocks and started to pick up some of the specialities. Special mention goes to the perched Philippine Eagle that gave very nice and prolonged scope views. Apart from that, we found a flock of endemic McGregor's Cuckooshrikes, a single Rufous-headed Tailorbird and several Mindanao (Black-masked) White-eyes, while White-cheeked (Philippine) Bullfinches were heard and only seen briefly. Apo Mynas were showier, and we enjoyed superb views of these punk starlings. Apo Sunbird, one of the stars of the mountain, was unusually difficult this year (the same elusiveness was noted by Simon's group a couple of weeks before our visit) giving, at first, only frustratingly brief views high up in the canopy. After a couple of hours, those who decided to walk even higher up were rewarded with good, albeit brief, views of this endemic before it started to rain. Before dinner, we enjoyed again a good show of pair of displaying woodcocks but, as usual, Giant Scops Owl remained very elusive and was only heard a couple of times.



The prehistoric-looking Philippine Frogmouth is usually easy to see at Kitangland. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Early next morning, we tried at another place for the owl, and, again, a bird called several times but unfortunately didn't come close enough to be seen. The battle with the bird wasn't over yet though and we wouldn't admit defeat! After breakfast we tried at a favoured place for the endemic Red-eared Parrotfinch, and some of us got brief views of a pair. We spent the whole day up in the mountain, seeing most of the birds recorded the previous day, but also adding a few new species to our list. While having a snack at the viewpoint I noticed some movement with the back of my eye and was pleased to find an adult Philippine Eagle perched pretty close to us. While admiring this beast, we realized that another adult was perched just a few metres below. After half an hour of full-frame scope views they both took off and soared directly overhead, giving gripping view. We couldn't have asked for better encounters with the ultimate Philippines bird! Also in the air was a pair of Pinsker's Hawk-Eagles, as well as a few Philippine Swiftlets. Other notable species included Mugimaki Flycatcher, Olive-capped Flowerpecker and Grey-hooded Sunbird. On the walk back, Yann had a Plain Bush-Hen crossing the trail. After a well deserved dinner, we set off on our quest to see the elusive Giant Scops Owl, and this time, thanks to Nicky's persistence, we finally got excellent views of this most wanted owl.



A pair of Apo Mynas and a displaying Bukidnon Woodcock at Mt. Kitangland. (Yann Muzika and Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Leaving the Eagle Camp early in the morning, we walked down to the road and civilisation, picking up our vans for the drive to the new airport at Cagayan de Oro. The flight to Manila was on time, and we were soon heading towards Mount Makiling. After a quick check-in we visited the well known 'buttonquail track', where at least 5 Barred Buttonquails were seen dust-bathing in the track, although our main target, the endemic Spotted Buttonquail, didn't show up. One for the next day...



The colourful Philippine Trogon. (Yann Muzika)

The next day was spent at Mount Makiling, where the birding in the upper parts of the mountain was pretty good. On the drive up, we were fortunate enough to see no less than 3 endemic and usually highly elusive Ashy Thrushes feeding unobtrusively on the road, in front of the vehicle, allowing excellent views. Afterwards, several Spotted Wood Kingfishers were heard as soon as we step out of the car, and within minutes we had excellent views of a male that sat in full view. Later on the day we would see a further 2 individuals – this is surely the easiest place in the Philippines to see this cracker! Grey-backed Tailorbirds were pretty easy this year, and we had good looks at two birds. Both Rough-crested and Scale-feathered Malkohas – two of the best looking of all Philippine endemics- were pretty showy in the morning, and our first and only Amethyst Brown Dove of the trip flew straight to the tape and sat on a branch for ages. Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo, on the other hand, was, as usual, a bit more elusive, flying back and forth around us but never sitting for long. Three Brown-headed Thrushes were seen feeding on some fallen fruit, while Flaming Sunbird busily fed on flowering trees above the trail. Further on the trail, we heard the characteristic call of one of the most sought after, and shier, birds in the country: Luzon Bleeding-heart, and after walking down a pretty steep gully, we sat down quietly, started playing the tape and waited. And waited. After around half an hour without moving an inch or making any sound – thanks to the entire group for some very good behaviour! the bird stopped calling, and suddenly there it was. However, as soon as it popped out behind a trunk, just a couple of metres from us, the bird flushed from the ground and was gone... Pretty frustrating after all the effort, but this is birding, and after so much hunting these bleeding-hearts are extremely wary. On the walk back, we had a brief sighting of a sneaky Pechora Pipit walking on the forest floor. After lunch and a siesta, we visited the botanical gardens, where a flowering tree attracted our target Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, as well as plenty of sunbirds and flowerpeckers. Nearby, we had good views of an Ashy-breasted Flycatcher, a rarely seen endemic. We then paid another visit to the buttonquail track, and this time we got lucky, as a pair of Spotted Buttonquails crossed the trail twice and were seen by everybody.



The shy Ashy Ground Thrush was pretty showy this year! This is not one of the “habituated” birds of La Mesa Ecopark, but a truly wild one from Mt Makiling. (Yann Muzika)

On the last morning of the main tour, we visited Makiling again, mostly looking for yesterday's bleeding-heart, but this time the bird was silent. Bird species were similar to the previous day, and after a few hours working the forest it was then time to head to the airport, for the end of what had been a great and highly successful main tour to the Philippines. After saying goodbye to those leaving, we checked in for the flight to Dumagete and the Visayas Extension, arriving in good time at our seaside hotel in Negros.

One of the most special Negros endemics is the endangered Negros Striped Babbler, and a trek up one of the few forested mountains left in the island is required in order to see it. The excursion turned out to be a great success, as we had excellent views of several of these babblers. As we walked down we had a large flock of hirundines feeding over the slope, and we managed to find two Asian House Martins mixed in – a rarity in the Philippines-. On the drive back to town we stopped at a forested gully where our target, the very localized Visayan Shama (split from White-browed) was soon located giving its lovely song. After dinner we set off in search of the endemic Negros Scops Owl. At the first two spots the owls were silent but at the third time a bird finally responded. At first it only gave brief views but after some persistence, we enjoyed brilliant views of the bird, which is surely one of the most attractive scops owls in the world.

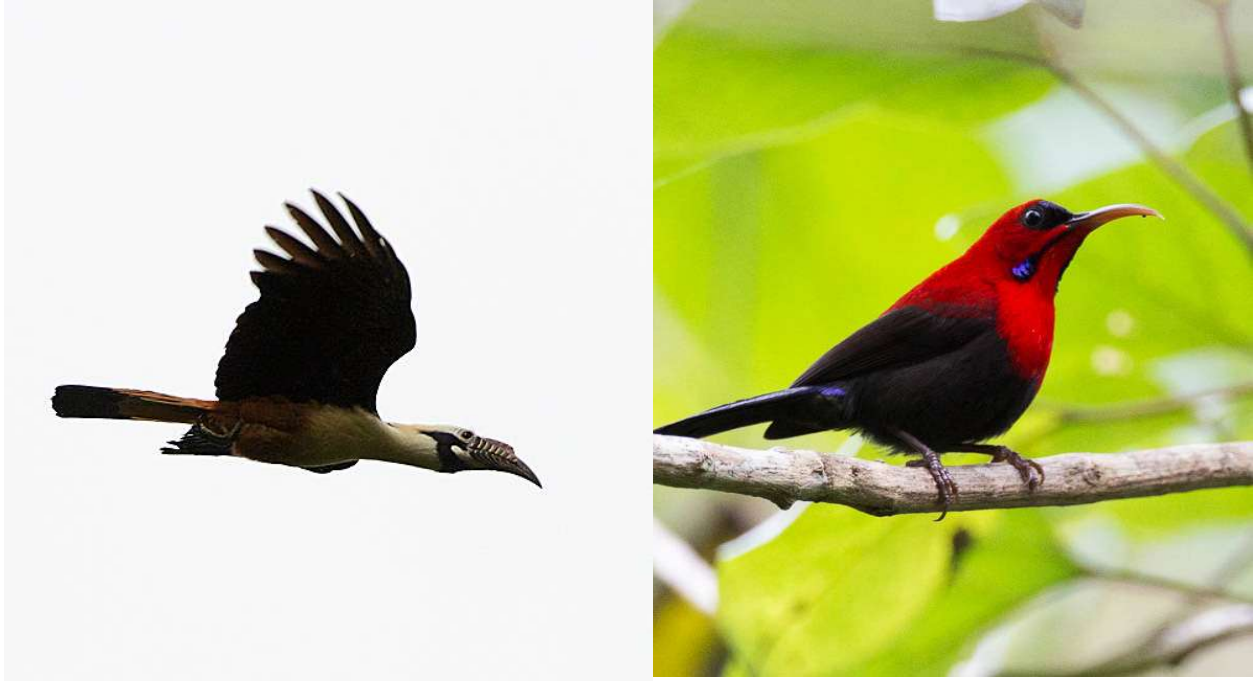


Two Negros endemics: Negros Striped Babbler and the cute Negros Scops Owl. (Yann Muzika and Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Next morning, we paid a visit to the Twin Lakes to search for a few more endemics. On arrival we found a colourful male Maroon-naped Sunbird (a split from Flaming) as well as a male of the aptly named Magnificent Sunbird (a split from Crimson) feeding on some flowers. A visit to the lake itself produced several endangered Visayan Hornbills, as well as 2 Pink-spotted Imperial Pigeons and some distinctive Visayan Drongos (the white bellied form of Balicassiao). A mixed flock held Visayan Bulbuls and Visayan Fantails (both vocally very distinct from Philippine Bulbul and Blue-headed Fantails respectively) as well as White-vented Whistlers, Elegant Tits and Sulphur-billed Nuthatches. Next on the agenda was the endemic White-winged Cuckooshrike, of which a bird sat nicely on top of a tree for scope views, while nearby a very responsive Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo gave better views than the one in Makiling. After lunch we rounded off the visit with Philippine Tailorbird (now distinct from Trilling on Luzon). On the drive back to town, we stopped to look for the gorgeous Flame-templed Babbler, but there was little activity at the place and no babblers were heard.

We had done very well during our 2 days on Negros, but still had a couple of special birds to look for before leaving to Bohol. We started early the next day at a forested gully where we searched in vain for Flame-templed Babblers. They had been seen the previous week by Simon's group, but after a lot of work and time spent there, it was clear that the birds were either not around or simply not responding, although a pair of delightful Black-belted (Visayan) Flowerpeckers, were a good consolation prize. So with two hours left in the island, we decided to give a desperate last minute try at a new place and hope for the best - it was certainly

the right decision as once we arrived we soon heard the distinctive song of the babbler and after a bit of searching we eventually had good views of a pair of these cracking birds. Persistence pays off! Then, it was time to return to our hotel, pick up our luggage and head to Bohol. The fast ferry took us to Tagbilaran in just two hours, but the seas were pretty much birdless apart from a few terns.



The endangered Visayan Hornbill and the cracking Magnificent Sunbird were seen at Negros. (Dani Lopez-Velasco and Yann Muzika)

We had an early start next day and headed towards Rajah Sikatuna National Park, where our owling session wasn't very productive, as our target Everett's Scops Owl was heard very close but couldn't be located. After some coffee we enjoyed nice views of a lovely Northern Silvery Kingfisher at small pond by the Headquarters. We spent some time at the clearing, seeing some Samar Hornbills as well as a pair of Buff-spotted Flamebacks. Later on we hit the trails, but the forest was very, very quiet. There was very little bird song, and almost no activity, with only one small flock encountered during the whole morning, despite all of our efforts. After some work, however, we managed to get decent views of the skulking Yellow-breasted Tailorbird, while several Philippine Fairy-bluebirds gave good views. A single Visayan Blue Fantail was noted in the flock, and a pair of Bicoloured Flowerpeckers was also new for us. Before lunch we went to a nearby secondary habitat area where both Handsome and Bohol Sunbirds (split from Metallic-winged) were found feeding on coconut flowers. We had lunch in the butterfly gardens, where the main highlight was a day roosting Everett's Scops Owl. A Grey-faced Buzzard was also seen soaring overhead, while a pair of Philippine Magpie-Robins was in evidence too. In the afternoon we worked the trails again, but they were still very quiet, and we sat very little of note, apart from a roosting Colugo and a single Black-faced Coucal.



Visayan endemics Visayan Shama and Northern Silvery Kingfisher were logged during the first extension. (Yann Muzika)

We went back to the National Park early next morning, mostly looking for Visayan (Wattled) Broadbill and Black-crowned Babbler. Sadly, we didn't encounter any decent-sized flock in 6 hours of walking in the forest, which meant no broadbills, and pretty much no birds, were seen, although on the other hand we managed to find a small group of babblers. Simon's group experienced the same lack of flocks, and birds, a few days before us, and one wonders about the reason for this lack of bird activity in the park. We then left to pack and returned to the ferry terminal. Our ferry to Cebu left on time and after docking we were on our way to Tabunan, a relict area of forest high in the hills above the Cebu City. We arrived in good time and walked out to the forest, lead by a local guy, where our main target, the recently described Cebu Hawk-Owl, hopefully awaited us. And as dusk fell, we stroke gold, enjoying walk away views of a pair of these owls.



The recently described Cebu Hawk-Owl. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

We paid a brief visit to Tabunan again the next morning. Our first Black Shama- a scarce Cebu endemic- proved pretty elusive, but a bit further on the trail we found another individual, which ended up showing well for the whole group. This is the place where the almost extinct (or is it already extinct?) Cebu Flowerpecker used to occur, but apparently there haven't been any sightings in the last couple of years, so not seeing it didn't really feel like a miss (although one always hopes for the best when coming here!) Not much else was seen, so we drove back to the city. The flight to Manila went smoothly, and in the afternoon those who hadn't joined the main tour went to see the pair of Philippine Eagle-Owls at Angono. We arrived just in time, as we got stuck for ages in a major traffic jam, but in the end the drive was well worth it, as we enjoyed fantastic views of the one of the adults.

The second extension started next day, and after a lay in morning, we headed for Mindoro. As soon as we arrived we went straight to the main birding spot in the island: Sablayan Penal Colony. We had an afternoon and a morning to explore the remnant forest, seeking out most of the desired species. With some time left before the owling session, we already scored a few targets, including Mindoro Racket-tail, Mindoro Hornbill, Black-and-white Triller and Mindoro Bulbul. Once it got dark, our target, Mindoro Hawk-Owl, uttering some of the most bizarre vocalizations of any owl species, performed, giving great views. In the same we also saw a single Chocolate Boobook and several Savanna Nightjars.



Mindoro Hawk-Owl was one of the Mindoro endemics seen during the second extension. (Yann Muzika)

There were a couple of available endemics left for us in the forest, and we spent the whole morning looking, successfully, for them. First came the gorgeous endemic Scarlet-collared Flowerpecker, which showed nicely, although briefly. The always elusive Black-hooded (or Steere's) Coucal was heard several times, and in the end we managed to see one bird calling from some thick tangles. The very distinctive, all-black, form of Philippine Coucal was also scoped in the forest. Mindoro Racket-tail also gave better views than on the previous afternoon, while a pair of Philippine Collared Doves was a nice addition, as they are getting quite rare these days. We had seen pretty much all realistic endemics we had hoped for in the island, so satisfied with our sightings we went to San José, where we spent the night.

Next day, we took a flight back to Manila and on to Tuguegerao, before embarking on our trek to Sawa camp, deep into the Sierra Madre Mountains. The walk was pretty long but everyone did very well. We eventually waded across a river just before dusk and made our way up to the camp, arriving after dark. Luckily, everything was in place when we arrived, with plenty of beer and cold drinks already on the table!



Home, sweet home. Our base camp at Sawa, deep in the Sierra Madre Mountains. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

We had two and a half days to explore the forest, and our visit proved to be highly successful. The main reason for coming to this remote area is the gorgeous Whiskered Pitta, a large, rare and colourful pitta endemic to the island of Luzon. This species is never easy, but the chances of seeing one here are pretty good, so our hopes were high. However, for some reason (perhaps because of the lack of rain in the last month?), the species was strangely silent and elusive this year. During the entire first morning we didn't even hear one. In the afternoon we finally heard a distant individual, but although we did our best, the bird wasn't very responsive and couldn't be lured into view. Next morning we had a chance sighting, but it was only seen very briefly by one of us, not to be found again. And, again, no birds were heard or seen in the afternoon. Things were looking pretty awful, and I didn't want to even think of the walk back without having seen the bird after all the effort... However, in the late afternoon, while we were trying at some gullies above the camp, Yann decided to go on his own to the other trail, and succeeded in finding a very cooperative pitta.

That meant we had only a couple of hours in the last morning to give a last, desperate, try. We were all pretty excited at breakfast, and within minutes of arriving at the spot, we heard a pitta, but it was down the gully. We walked down, using the machetes, for some time, until we found a proper spot. We then started playing the tape, and the bird went silent. We were beginning to seriously worry, until I caught some movement with the back of my eye, and found the bird not in front of us, but directly behind. A big, red, blob sitting on top a log. I quietly told everyone, and finally we all had gripping views of this mega bird! What a relief!! Over the two and a half days spent looking for the pitta we found pretty much all other Sawa specialities, including the seldom seen Grand Rhabdornis, as well as a Luzon Bleeding-heart that was seen by everybody. The extremely skulking and recently described Sierra Madre Ground Warbler (Rusty-faced

Babbler, formerly part of the Rabor's Wren-Babbler complex) eventually gave decent views, while two Cream-breasted Fruit Doves feeding on a fruiting tree also showed well. Other good birds here included White-lored Oriole, a pair of Blue-breasted Flycatchers around our camp, Lemon-throated Leaf Warblers, colourful Golden-crowned Babblers, smart Luzon Striped Babblers and a pair of Sierra Madre Crows. After seeing the pitta, it was time to slowly begin the walk back to civilization, but there was still another surprise awaiting for us. A couple of Furtive Flycatchers showed nicely, but the highlight by far was the stunning adult Philippine Eagle, chased away by several Rufous Hornbills, that perched in a tree in front of us while having lunch. How does it feel seeing THE eagle at three different places, and it being pretty much the last bird seen in the tour..? Unbelievable! Roughly four hours later we made it to the road, and headed for the hotel. A pleasant dinner and a few beers followed and we could then relax and begin to think back of everything we had seen during the previous 5 epic weeks.



The rare Grand Rhabdornis and the localized Golden-crowned Babbler were amongst the endemics seen at Sawa. (Dani Lopez-Velasco and Yann Muzika)

All that remained was our flight back to Manila before we split up and headed for our separate flights home. It had been an extremely successful trip from a birding perspective, with many great birds, and unusually dry weather, according to Philippine standards. It is surprising that, even though the habitat continues to get more and more degraded each year, we still manage to see as many if not more birds than in the past. Quoting Pete, with a vast experience in the Philippines, on last year's report, I can only fully agree with his words: "The habitat destruction is becoming such a problem that the number of species we'll be able to find in the future will start to diminish. So, the sad message is, if you've not yet been, go as soon as you can, as many of the birds will not be around too much longer, at least not in areas where we can get to them".



Happy faces after seeing Whiskered Pitta in the Sierra Madre Mountains. A Philippine Eagle was actually perched in a tree just on the edge of this clearing! (Dani Lopez-Velasco)



The stunning Spotted Wood Kingfisher performed at Makiling. (Yann Muzika)



Arguably the two best birds of the Philippines: Philippine Eagle (Yann Muzika) and Palawan Peacock-Pheasant (Dani Lopez-Velasco)



SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

CR = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

Philippine Megapode ◊ (**Tabon Scrubfowl**) *Megapodius cumingii* Good views of two in St Paul's NP (nominate).

King Quail ◊ *Excalfactoria chinensis* A bird flushed twice at Bislig Airstrip (*lineata*).

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* (H) Heard several times at Sawa.

Palawan Peacock-Pheasant ◊ *Polyplectron napoleonis* (**VU**) Great views of the habituated male in St Paul's NP.

Wandering Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna arcuata* Seen at Candaba and Bislig (nominate)

Philippine Duck ◊ *Anas luzonica* (**VU**) Good numbers at Candaba and a few at Bislig.



Philippine Duck (Yann Muzika)

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* 10 birds at Candaba.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Several at Candaba.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* A few at Candaba Swamp.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Several at Candaba Swamp.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Only seen at Candaba Swamp (*philippensis*).

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* A few at Candaba, Iwahig and Bislig.

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* Seen at Candaba, Banaue and Bislig airfield.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Good numbers seen at Candaba Swamp (nominate).

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* Several seen (*atricapilla*-group).
Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa* Scattered sightings, including one in breeding plumage.
Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Common and widespread.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* First seen at Candaba Swamp (*jouyi*).
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* First seen and largest numbers at Candaba Swamp (*manilensis*).
Eastern Great Egret *Ardea [alba] modesta* Widespread. Not yet split by IOC who include it in Great Egret.
Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* Widespread (nominate).
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Common and widespread (*nigripes*).
Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Two at St Paul's, Palawan (nominate).
Chinese Egret ◇ *Egretta eulophotes* (VU) 10 at White Beach, Puerto Princesa and 3 at Cowrie I.
Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* A pair in flight over Bislig sairfield.
Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Two at Lake Balinsasayao, Negros (nominate).
Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Seen on the drive back from Kitangland (*hypoleucus*).
Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Seen at Kitanglad and Sierra Madre Mts (*philippensis*).
Steere's Honey Buzzard ◇ (Philippine H B) *Pernis steerei* 4 in flight at PICOP (nominate).
White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaetus leucogaster* Seen at Cowrie I. Palawan.
Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* Two seen very well near Sabang (*palawanensis*).
Philippine Serpent Eagle ◇ *Spilornis holospilus* Singles and pairs seen throughout the tour.
Philippine Eagle ◇ *Pithecophaga jefferyi* (CR) Mega views in the nest near Davao, and also at Kitangland and Sawa.
Philippine Hawk-Eagle ◇ *Nisaetus philippensis* (H) (VU) Heard at Mt Polis.
Pinsker's Hawk-Eagle ◇ *Nisaetus pinskeri* (VU) A pair displaying at Mt Kitanglad.
Changeable Hawk-eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* Seen very well on Palawan (*limnaeetus*).
Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle *Lophotriorchis kienerii* Singles at Kitanglad and Sierra Madre (*formosus*).
Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* Scattered sightings.
Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis* One seen well at Subic.
Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis* A single male seen perched at Subic (*gularis*).
Besra *Accipiter virgatus* A male seen at Bay-yo.
Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus* A single at Candaba.
Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucus* A pair put on a great show on the way to Banaue.
Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Widespread (*intermedius*).
Grey-faced Buzzard ◇ *Butastur indicus* A single seen well at Bohol.
Eastern Buzzard *Buteo japonicus* Two pairs seen at Mt Polis.
Barred Rail ◇ *Gallirallus torquatus* Seen well at Candaba Bislig airfield (nominate).
Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis* Several seen very well at Candaba (nominate).
Plain Bush-Hen ◇ *Amaurornis olivacea* Seen briefly by some of us at Subic, Kitangland and Mindoro.
White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Widespread (nominate).
White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea* Seen well at Candaba, Bislig and Iwahig.
Philippine Swampphen ◇ *Porphyrio [porphyrio] pulverulentus* Seen at Candaba and Bislig. A good potential split.
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* A few at Candaba Swamp and Bislig (*orientalis*).
Spotted Buttonquail ◇ *Turnix ocellatus* Scope views of two birds at Mt Makiling (nominate).
Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator* Great views of at least 5 birds at Mt Makiling (*fasciatus*).
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Common in the paddies at Iwahig.
Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Several at White Beach, Puerto Princesa and Iwahig.
Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* Two seen at Cowrie I, Palawan.
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* First seen in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan (*curonicus*).
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Around 10 on Cowrie Island and lots at Iwahig (*nihonensis*).
Malaysian Plover ◇ *Charadrius peronii* (NT) Not seen at Sabang, and a single bird was a nice bonus at Cowrie.
Mongolian Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Around 50 on Cowrie Island (*mongolus/stegmanni*).
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* A few at White Beach and on Cowrie Island (nominate).
Bukidnon Woodcock ◇ *Scolopax bukidnonensis* A pair seen brilliantly on three dates at Mt Kitanglad.
Pin-tailed/Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago stenura/megala* Several at Iwahig. Outer tail feathers not seen.
Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Good numbers in the paddies at Iwahig (nominate).
Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Seen at White Beach and Cowrie I. (*variegatus*).
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Good numbers seen in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* First seen in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* First seen at Candaba Swamp, and lots on Palawan.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* About 15 seen well at White Beach and 5 at Cowrie I.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* A few at scattered sites during the tour.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* 5 seen well at Cowrie I.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Seen at White Beach and Cowrie I.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Seen in Palawan and at Iwahig.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Around 25 in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* A single male at Iwahig, Palawan, was a surprise. Perhaps last winter's returning bird?

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* A few off Negros.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* A few seen in Cebu Harbour.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Several seen off Negros (*longipennis*)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Lots at Candaba, on the journey to Banaue and off Negros.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* A single first winter bird seen well at Cebu harbour.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* 'feral' Introduced birds seen throughout the tour.

Metallic Pigeon *Columba vitiensis* A bird, most likely a escape, was seen at Negros.

Philippine Collared Dove ♦ *Streptopelia dussumieri* Two seen well at Sablayan, Mindoro.

Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* Plenty at Candaba Swamp (*humilis*).

Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* Scattered in small numbers.

Philippine Cuckoo-dove ♦ *Macropygia* Scattered sightings (nominate).

Common Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* Seen a couple of times (nominate).

Zebra Dove *Geopelia striata* Fairly common and widespread, even around Manila.

Luzon Bleeding-heart ♦ *Gallicolumba luzonica* (NT) Poor views at Makiling and better views at Sawa (*griseolateralis*)

White-eared Brown Dove ♦ *Phapitreron leucotis* Nominate (Luzon), *nigrorum* on Negros and *brevirostris* (Mindanao).

Amethyst Brown Dove ♦ *Phapitreron amethystinus* Seen well on Mt Makiling.



Amethyst (left) and White-eared (right) Brown Doves. (Yann Muzika and Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Pink-necked Green Pigeon *Treron vernans* Two birds near Iwahig.

Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra* Four roosting birds near Sabang (*erimacrus*).

Philippine Green Pigeon ♦ *Treron axillaris* Two forms; nominate (Subic on Luzon) and *canescens* (Mindanao).

Flame-breasted Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus marchei* (LO) (V) 1 seen perched in a tree very close to the road at Mt Polis.

Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus occipitalis* Scattered sightings of this stunning dove.

Cream-breasted Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus merrilli* (NT) Good views of 2 in the Sierra Madre Mts (*faustinoi*).

Black-chinned Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus leclancheri* Two seen very well at a fruiting tree in Palawal (*gironieri*).



Black-chinned Fruit Dove on Palawan. (Yann Muzika)

Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeon ♦ *Ducula poliocephala* (NT) Seen well on Negros and Mindoro.

Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea* Common at Subic (nominate) and on Palawan; also at PICOP and Mindoro.

Red-vented Cockatoo (Philippine C) *Cacatua haematuropygia* (CR) Good views of several birds near Sabang.

Philippine Hanging Parrot (Colasisi) ♦ *Loriculus philippensis* See note.

Montane Racket-Tail ♦ (Luzon R-T) *Prioniturus montanus* (NT) Several seen at Mt Polis.

Mindanao Racket-Tail ♦ *Prioniturus waterstradti* Several fly-bys at Mt Kitanglad (*malindangensis*).

Blue-headed Racket-Tail ♦ *Prioniturus platenae* (VU) Seen on Palawan.

Green Racket-Tail ♦ *Prioniturus luconensis* (VU) Great views at Subic Bay.

Blue-crowned Racket-Tail ♦ *Prioniturus discurus* *Whiteheadi* seen on Negros and nominate seen at PICOP.

Mindoro Racket-Tail ♦ *Prioniturus mindorensis* Great views of several on Mindoro. A recent split

Blue-naped Parrot ♦ *Tanygnathus lucionensis* Common at Subic Bay (nominate); *salvadorii* on Palawan.

Guaiabero ♦ *Bolbopsittacus lunulatus* Two forms seen; nominate (Luzon) and *mindanensis* on Mindanao.

Rufous Coucal ♦ *Centropus unirufus* (NT) Good views at Subic Bay and Sawa.

Black-faced Coucal ♦ *Centropus melanops* Seen at PICOP and Rajah Sikatuna NP, Bohol.

Black-hooded (Steere's) Coucal ♦ *Centropus steerii* (CR) Great views on Mindoro.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (H) Heard only on Palawan.

Philippine Coucal ♦ *Centropus* See Note.

Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis* Seen on Mindoro.

Chestnut-breasted Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus curvirostris* Seen near Sabang and on Iwahig (*harringtoni*).

Rough-crested Malkoha (Red-c M) ♦ *Dasylophus superciliosus* Seen at Subic Bay and Mt Makiling (nominate).

Scale-feathered Malkoha ♦ *Dasylophus cumingi* Seen at Subic, Mt Polis, Mt Makiling and Sawa.

Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopaceus* Heard on Palawan and seen on Mindoro (*mindanensis*).

Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus* A female *amethystinus* seen at PICOP.

Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus* Seen on Mindanao (nominate).

Rusty-breasted Cuckoo *Cacomantis sepulcralis* Seen well on Bohol (nominate).

Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo ♦ *Surniculus velutinus* The nominate form was seen well at PICOP.

Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris* Seen well on Palawan (*brachyurus*).

Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo ♦ *Hierococcyx pectoralis* (E) Seen at Makiling and Bohol.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus* Three at the foot of Mt Kitanglad.

Giant Scops Owl ♦ *Otus gurneyi* (VU) After many attempts, one seen very well at Kitanglad.

Palawan Scops Owl ♦ *Otus fuliginosus* (NT) One seen well near to Sabang.

Philippine Scops Owl ♦ *Otus megalotis* Seen well at Subic Bay.

Everett's Scops Owl ♦ *Otus everetti* Seen well at Bohol butterfly gardens. Recently split.

Negros Scops Owl ♦ *Otus nigrorum* (E) Excellent prolonged views on Negros. Another recent split.

Luzon Scops Owl ♦ *Otus longicornis* (NT) It took some time, but eventually 1 showed very well at Polis. Thanks Rob!

Mantanani Scops Owl ♦ *Otus mantananensis* (NT) Excellent views of a pair on Cowrie Island (nominate).



Mantanani Scops Owl showed nicely on Cowrie I. (Yann Muzika)

Philippine Eagle-Owl ♦ *Bubo philippensis* (VU) Brilliant views of one adult at Angono near Manila (nominate).

Spotted Wood Owl ♦ *Strix seloputo* (H) Heard only near to Sabang (*wiepkeni*).

Chocolate Boobook ♦ *Ninox randi* Great views at Subic Bay, PICOP and Sablayan.

Luzon Hawk-Owl ♦ *Ninox philippensis* Seen well at Subic Bay.

Mindanao Hawk-Owl ♦ *Ninox spilocephala* Good views of two at dawn in PICOP.

Cebu Hawk-Owl ♦ *Ninox rumseyi* (E) Brilliant views at dusk at Tabunan, Cebu.

Mindoro Hawk-Owl ♦ *Ninox mindorensis* Great views of a pair at Siburan, Sablayan Penal Colony.

Philippine Frogmouth ♦ *Batrachostomus septimus* Brilliant views at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).

Palawan Frogmouth ♦ *Batrachostomus chaseni* Great views near Sabang.



The bizarre-looking Palawan Frogmouth. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Great Eared Nightjar *Lyncornis macrotis* Seen at Subic, PICOP, Kitangland, Mindoro and Sawa (nominate).
Philippine Nightjar ◇ *Caprimulgus manillensis* Seen at PICOP and Mt Kitanglad and heard on Bohol.
Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* Seen near Sabang (*johnsoni*).
Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis* Several seen at dusk at Sablayan Penal Colony, Mindoro (*griseatus*).
Whiskered Treeswift *Hemiprocne comata* Seen well at Subic Bay and Mt Kitanglad (*major*).
Glossy Swiftlet *Collocalia esculenta* Common.
Grey-rumped Swiftlet ◇ *Collocalia [esculenta] marginata* Lots at Subic. Not universally split.
Pygmy Swiftlet ◇ *Collocalia troglodytes* First seen at the Lagawe, with lots at PICOP and seen on Negros and Cebu.
Philippine Swiftlet ◇ *Aerodramus mearnsi* Birds assumed to be this species at Mt Kitanglad.
Uniform Swiftlet ◇ *Aerodramus vanikorensis* Widespread (*amelis*).
Palawan Swiftlet ◇ *Aerodramus [vanikorensis] palawanensis* Seen at Palawan. Not universally split.
Philippine Spine-tailed Swift (P Needle-tail) ◇ *Mearnsia picina* (NT) Good views of two in PICOP.
Purple Needle-tail ◇ *Hirundapus celebensis* Seen at Subic and PICOP and plenty at Mindoro.
Brown-backed Needle-tail *Hirundapus giganteus* Seen at Iwahig (nominate).
House Swift *Apus nipalensis* Seen at the Banaue Hotel (nominate).
Philippine Trogon ◇ *Harpactes ardens herberti* See Note.
Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* Scattered sightings (nominate).
Spotted Wood Kingfisher ◇ *Actenoides lindsayi* Seen very well at Mt Makiling (nominate).
Hombroon's Kingfisher (Blue-capped K) ◇ *Actenoides hombroni* (VU) Great views at PICOP; heard at Mt Kitangland.
Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis* Seen well at Sabang (*gouldi*).
Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda* Seen at Iwahig (*linae*).
Brown-breasted Kingfisher ◇ *Halcyon gularis* Several seen, the first at Subic Bay. Not yet split by the IOC.
Winchell's Kingfisher ◇ (Rufous-lored K) *Todiramphus winchelli* Good looks at two birds at PICOP (*mindanensis*).



Winchell's Kingfisher at PICOP. (Daniel Lopez-Velasco)

Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris* Widespread. First seen at Subic Bay (*collaris*).
Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Scattered sightings. First seen at Candaba (*bengalensis*).
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca* See very well at Iwahig. See note.
Indigo-banded Kingfisher ◇ *Ceyx cyanopectus* Two on the river at Lagawe (nominate).
Northern Silvery Kingfisher ◇ *Ceyx flumenicolus* (VU) Excellent views on Bohol. Not yet split by the IOC.
Southern Silvery Kingfisher ◇ *Ceyx argentatus* (VU) Great views on a small pond at PICOP.
Blue-tailed Bee-eater ◇ *Merops philippinus* First seen at Candaba Swamp, with a few others recorded (nominate).
Rufous-crowned Bee-eater ◇ *Merops americanus* Seen at Subic Bay, Negros and Mindoro. Not yet split by the IOC.



Rufous-crowned Bee-eater is still considered a subspecies of Blue-throated Bee-eater by some. (Brian Lloyd)

Palawan Hornbill ♦ *Anthracoceros marchei* (VU) Several showed well on Palawan.

Rufous Hornbill ♦ *Buceros hydrocorax* Good views at PICOP (*mindanensis*) and Sawa (*nominate*).

Visayan Hornbill ♦ *Penelopides panini* (E) Great views of several on Negros (*nominate*).

Luzon Hornbill ♦ *Penelopides manillae* A few at Subic Bay and Sawa (*nominate*).

Mindanao Hornbill ♦ *Penelopides affinis* Quite common at PICOP.

Mindoro Hornbill ♦ *Penelopides mindorensis* (E) Great views of several on Mindoro.

Samar Hornbill ♦ *Penelopides samarensis* (E) Good scope views at Rajah Sikatuna NP on Bohol.

Wreathed Hornbill ♦ *Aceros leucocephalus* (NT) Seen well in PICOP, including a flock of 15.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* Scattered sightings, *nominate* at Luzon, *mindanensis* at Mindanao.

Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker ♦ *Dendrocopos maculatus* *Validirostris* on Luzon and *fulvifasciatus* on Mindanao.

White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis* *Confusus* at Luzon and *mindorensis* on Mindoro.

Spot-throated Flameback ♦ *Dinopium everetti* Good views on Palawan. A recent split.

Buff-spotted Flameback ♦ *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* Seen at Rajah Sikatuna NP (*rufopunctatus*).

Luzon Flameback ♦ *Chrysocolaptes haematribon* Seen well at Subic Bay.

Northern Sooty Woodpecker ♦ *Mulleripicus funebris* Great views at Subic.



A confiding Northern Sooty Woodpecker at Subic. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Philippine Falconet ♦ *Microhierax erythrogenys* Two forms: nominate on Luzon and *meridionalis* on Mindanao.
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Immatures seen at Iwahig and Makiling.
Whiskered Pitta ♦ *Erythropitta kochi* (VU) Mega views in the Sierra Madre Mountains. Thanks Yann!
Red-bellied Pitta ♦ *Erythropitta erythrogaster* Seen very well on Palawan (nominate).
Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* Great views on Palawan (*palawanensis*) and heard at PICOP (nominate).



This roosting Hooded Pitta was spotlighted on Palawan while looking for nightbirds. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Azure-breasted (Steere's) Pitta ♦ *Pitta steerii* (VU) Good views of 2 in PICOP (nominate).
Golden-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone sulphurea* Seen at Banaue (*simplex*).
White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Widespread (nominate).
Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* A single on Palawan (*aequanimis*).
Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina striata* See Note.
Blackish Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina coerulescens* Several seen well at Subic and Sawa (nominate).
Black-bibbed Cicadabird ♦ *Coracina mindanensis* (VU) Great views of three at PICOP (*mindanensis*).
White-winged Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina ostenta* (E) Great views at Lake Balinsasayao on Negros.
McGregor's Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina mcgregori* A few seen well at Mt Kitanglad.
Pied Triller *Lalage nigra* Seen at various locations (*chilensis*).
Black-and-white Triller ♦ *Lalage melanoleuca* Nominate seen in the Sierra Madre Mountains, *minor* heard at PICOP.
Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricatus* Seen well at Subic and again at Makiling.
Fiery Minivet ♦ *Pericrocotus igneus* (NT) A few near Sabang (nominate).
Philippine Minivet ♦ *Pericrocotus leytenis* (LO) Only seen briefly at Makiling.
Green-backed Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala albiventris* Several at Mt Polis (nominate).
White-vented Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala homeyeri* (E) On Negros, *winchelli* seen well.
Yellow-bellied Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala philippinensis* See Note.
Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* Widespread wintering visitor (*lucionensis*).
Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* Fairly common (*nasutus*).
Mountain Shrike ♦ *Lanius validirostris* Very good views at Mt Polis (nominate).



The endemic Mountain Shrike was easy to find at Mt Polis this year. (Yann Muzika)

- Dark-throated Oriole** *Oriolus xanthonotus* (NL) One seen near Sabang (*persuasus*).
- Philippine Oriole** ◇ *Oriolus steerii* Seen well in PICOP (*samarensis*).
- White-lored Oriole** ◇ *Oriolus albiloris* Good views in the Sierra Madre Mountains.
- Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis* Fairly common and widespread (nominate).
- Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* A few seen on Palawan (nominate).
- Balicassiao** ◇ *Dicrurus balicassius* Several at Subic, Mt Makiling and Sawa (*abraensis*) and nominate on Mindoro.
- Visayan Drongo** ◇ *Dicrurus [balicassius] mirabilis* (E) Seen on Negros. Not split by IOC.
- Palawan Drongo** ◇ *Dicrurus [hottentottus] palawanensis* A few on Palawan. Not split by the IOC.
- Mindanao Drongo** ◇ *Dicrurus [hottentottus] striatus* Nominate on Mindanao, *samarensis* on Bohol. Not split by IOC.
- Mindanao Blue Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura superciliaris* Several in mixed flocks at PICOP (*apo*).
- Visayan Blue Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura samarensis* Scarce this year. 2 seen in mixed flocks at Rajah Sikatuna NP, Bohol.
- Blue-headed Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura cyaniceps* Great views at Mt Polis (nominate).
- Visayan Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura albiventris* (E) Several in mixed flocks on Negros.
- Philippine Pied Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura nigritorquis* Several seen. First seen at Candaba. A recent split.
- Black-and-cinnamon Fantail** ◇ *Rhipidura nigrocinnamomea* Fairly common in flocks at Mt Kitanglad, (*hutchinsoni*).
- Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea* Fairly common and widespread (nominate).
- Short-crested Monarch** ◇ *Hypothymis helenae* (NT) Several at PICOP (*agusanae*).
- Celestial Monarch** ◇ *Hypothymis coelestis* (VU) Two of these stunning flycatchers at PICOP.
- Blue Paradise Flycatcher** ◇ *Terpsiphone cyanescens* (NT) Seen well on Palawan.
- Rufous Paradise Flycatcher** ◇ *Terpsiphone cinnamomea* Seen well at PICOP (nominate).
- Palawan Crow** ◇ *Corvus pusillus* Pretty common on Palawan. Not split by the IOC.
- Sierra Madre Crow** ◇ *Corvus sierramadrensis* One seen at Sawa.
- Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos philippinus* Common and widespread (*philippinus*).
- Citrine Canary-flycatcher** ◇ *Culicicapa helianthea* Seen at Polis and Sawa.
- Elegant Tit** ◇ *Periparus elegans* Seen at Mt Polis, Mt Kitanglad, Mt Makiling and on Negros. See Note.
- Palawan Tit** ◇ *Periparus amabilis* (NT) Great views near Sabang.
- Black-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus atriceps* A few seen in Palawan (nominate).
- Yellow-wattled Bulbul** ◇ *Pycnonotus urostictus* Nominate seen at Makiling and *philippensis* seen at PICOP.
- Yellow-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus goiavier* Common. See Note.
- Ashy-fronted Bulbul** ◇ *Pycnonotus* Small numbers on Palawan. A recent split.
- Palawan Bulbul** ◇ *Alophoixus frater* A few on Palawan. Another recent split.

Sulphur-bellied Bulbul ◇ *Iole palawanensis* Fairly common on Palawan.

Philippine Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes philippinus* Nominate common on Luzon, *saturation* on Mindanao and Bohol.

Visayan Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes guimarasensis* (E) Fairly common on Negros. Another recent split.

Yellowish Bulbul ◇ *Hypsipetes everetti* Small numbers at PICOP (nominate).

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus* Two seen well and photographed on Negros. A rarity in the Philippines.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* First seen at Candaba Swamp, and common throughout (*gutturalis*).

Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Widespread.

Striated Swallow *Cecropis striolata* Widespread (nominate).

Mountain Tailorbird *Phyllergates cuculatus* Seen at Mt Polis (*philippinus*).

Rufous-headed Tailorbird ◇ *Phyllergates heterolaemus* Singles seen at Mt Kitanglad.

Philippine Bush Warbler ◇ *Horornis seebohmi* Seen well at Mt Polis.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Singles recorded at various locations. See Note.

Philippine Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus olivaceus* Seen in PICOP and Bohol.

Lemon-throated Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus cebuensis* (E) Seen well at Sawa (*luzonensis*).

Negros Leaf Warbler ◇ *Phylloscopus nigrorum* See Note.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Seen at Bislig Airfield (*harterti*).

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* Only seen at Candaba Swamp

Long-tailed Bush Warbler ◇ *Locustella caudata* See Note.

Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler ◇ *Locustella ochotensis* Seen at Bislig airfield.

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris* Common in open areas. First seen at Candaba (*forbesi*).

Tawny Grassbird *Megalurus timoriensis* Seen at Kitangland (*crex*).

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* Seen at Candaba (*tinnabulans*).

Golden-headed Cisticola ◇ *Cisticola exilis* Seen and heard at Bislig Airfield (*semirufus*).

Philippine Tailorbird ◇ *Orthotomus castaneiceps* (E) Seen well on Negros (*rabori*).



Philippine Tailorbird at Negros. (Yann Muzika)

Rufous-fronted Tailorbird ◇ *Orthotomus frontalis* Seen well at PICOP and on Bohol (nominate).

Grey-backed Tailorbird ◇ *Orthotomus derbianus* Seen well at Mt Makiling.

Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus* Several on Palawan (nominate).

Black-headed Tailorbird ◇ *Orthotomus nigriceps* Commonly heard in PICOP and a couple seen well.

Yellow-breasted Tailorbird ◇ *Orthotomus samarensis* (NT) One seen well on Bohol.

Pin-striped Tit-Babbler ◇ *Macronus gularis* A few seen well on Palawan (*woodi*).

Brown Tit-Babbler ◇ *Macronus striaticeps* Seen at PICOP (*mindanensis*).

Striated Wren-Babbler ◇ (Streaked Ground-B) *Ptilocichla mindanensis* Nominate seen well at PICOP.

Falcated Wren-Babbler ◇ (F Ground-B) *Ptilocichla falcata* (VU) Excellent views of a pair near Sabang.

Ashy-headed Babbler ◇ *Malacocincla cinereiceps* Eventually seen well in roadside forest near Sabang.

Melodious Babbler ◇ *Malacopteron palawanense* Seen well at Balsahan.

Sierra Madre Ground Warbler ◇ (Rabor's W-B) *Robsonius thompsoni* (VU) Seen at Sawa. Mega skulker! See Note.

Chestnut-faced Babbler ♦ *Zosterornis whiteheadi* Common at Mt Polis (nominate).



Chestnut-faced Babbler at Mt Polis. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Luzon Striped Babbler ♦ *Zosterornis striatus* (NT) Great views of a few in the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Negros Striped Babbler ♦ *Zosterornis nigrorum* (EN) Great views of several birds in montane forest above Mantiquil.

Flame-templed Babbler ♦ *Dasycrotapha speciosa* (E) (EN) After a lot of effort, two seen well on Negros. A stunner!

Mindanao Pygmy Babbler ♦ *Dasycrotapha plateni* A few at PICOP.

Golden-crowned Babbler ♦ *Sterrhoptilus dennistouni* (NT) Several seen well in mixed in the Sierra Madre Mts.

Black-crowned Babbler ♦ *Sterrhoptilus nigrocapitatus* Seen on our second morning at Bohol.

Rusty-crowned Babbler ♦ *Sterrhoptilus capitalis* Good views in mixed flocks at PICOP (*euroaustralis*).

Mindanao White-eye ♦ (Black-masked W-eye) *Lophozosterops goodfellowi* A few at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).

Lowland White-eye ♦ *Zosterops meyeri* Seen at Subic.

Everett's White-eye ♦ *Zosterops everetti* A few at PICOP (*basilanicus*)

Yellowish White-eye ♦ *Zosterops nigrorum* Seen at Iwahig and on Negros.

Mountain White-eye ♦ *Zosterops montanus* Seen on Mt Polis and Mt Kitanglad. See Note.

Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella* Several on Palawan (*tweetdali*).

Philippine Fairy-bluebird ♦ *Irena cyanogastra* Good views on Bohol and Sawa. See Note.



Philippine Fairy-bluebird. (Yann Muzika)

Sulphur-billed Nuthatch ♦ *Sitta oenochlamys* Two forms seen; *isarog* on Luzon and *apo* on Mindanao.



The beautiful Sulphur-billed Nuthatch. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* A single seen on Palawan.

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis* Common, first seen on Palawan (nominate).

Short-tailed Starling ♦ *Aplonis minor* A few at Mt Kitanglad (*todayensis*).

Apo Myna ♦ *Basilornis mirandus* (NT) A few seen well at Mt Kitanglad.

Coleto ♦ *Sarcops calvus* Two forms. The nominate on Luzon, *melanonotus* on Mindanao and Negros.



Coleto taking off. (Yann Muzika)

Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* A few seen on Palawan (*palawanensis*).

Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus* A couple seen at Subic Bay. Introduced.

White-shouldered Starling ♦ *Sturnia sinensis* Two seen well at Candaba Swamp.

Stripe-headed Rhabdornis ♦ *Rhabdornis mystacalis* Birds of the nominate ssp at Mt Makiling.



Two good endemics seen in the Sierra Madre Mountains: Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, (left) and Furtive Flycatcher (right). (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis ♦ *Rhabdornis inornatus* A few seen very well at Mt Kitanglad (*alaris*)

Grand Rhabdornis ♦ *Rhabdornis grandis* One seen very well at Sawa. A very rare species nowadays.

Ashy Thrush ♦ *Geokichla cinerea* (VU) Three birds showed superbly at Makiling.

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea* A couple seen at Mt Polis and Sawa (nominate).

Island Thrush ♦ *Turdus poliocephalus* Several seen at Mt Polis.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* Common at Mt Polis and Mt Kitanglad.

Brown-headed Thrush ♦ *Turdus chrysolaus* Three seen at Mt Makiling.

White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* One seen at Mt Kitanglad (*mindanensis*).

Philippine Magpie-Robin ♦ *Copsychus mindanensis* Three in PICOP, and also seen at Bohol.

White-browed Shama ♦ *Copsychus luzoniensis* Great views at Subic (nominate).

Visayan Shama ♦ *Copsychus superciliaris* (E) Stunning views on Negros.

White-vented Shama ♦ *Copsychus niger* Great views on Palawan.

Black Shama ♦ *Copsychus cebuensis* (E) One seen well at Tabunan, Cebu, although rather shy.

Luzon Water Redstart ♦ *Rhyacornis bicolor* (VU) Distant views of a pair at Mt Polis.

Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata* Two forms: nominate on Luzon; *anderseni* on Mindanao.

Asian Rock Thrush (Red-bellied R T) *Monticola philippensis* A male at the Lagawe. Not split by IOC.

Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta* A widespread wintering species.

Rufous-tailed Jungle Flycatcher ♦ *Rhinomyias ruficauda* Good views of 1 in a flock in PICOP.

Ashy-breasted Flycatcher ♦ *Muscicapa randi* (VU) One at Mt Makiling.

Mugimaki Flycatcher ♦ *Ficedula mugimaki* Several seen well on Mt Kitanglad.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula hyperythra* One at Kitangland.

Palawan Flycatcher ♦ *Ficedula platenae* (VU) Good views of one along the Balsahan Trail.

Furtive Flycatcher ♦ *Ficedula disposita* (NT) Two seen well in the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni* Two forms; *abori* on Luzon and nominate on Mindanao.

Turquoise Flycatcher ♦ (Mtn Verditer) *Eumyias panayensis nigrimentalis* on Luzon on and *nigriloris* on Mindanao.

Palawan Blue Flycatcher ♦ *Cyornis lemprieri* (NT) One male seen well on Palawan.

Blue-breasted Blue Flycatcher ♦ *Cyornis herioti* Excellent views in the Sierra Madre Mountains (nominate).

Mangrove Blue Flycatcher ♦ *Cyornis rufigastra* (E) Seen well near Banaue (*philippinensis*).

Philippine Leafbird ♦ *Chloropsis flavipennis* (VU) Good views at PICOP.

Yellow-throated Leafbird ♦ *Chloropsis palawanensis* Several seen well on Palawan.

Olive-backed Flowerpecker ♦ *Prionochilus olivaceus* It took time, but eventually seen well at Sawa.

Palawan Flowerpecker ♦ *Prionochilus plateni* Seen well on Palawan (nominate).

Striped Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum aeruginosum* Singles seen well at PICOP and Makiling (*striatissimum*).

Olive-capped Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum nigrilore* Seen at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).

Flame-crowned Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum anthonyi* Great views of a couple at Mt Polis (nominate)
Bicolored Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum bicolor* Seen well on Bohol and Sawa (nominate).
Red-keeled Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum australe* Many seen, but particularly common in PICOP.
Black-belted Flowerpecker ♦ (Visayan F) *Dicaeum haematostictum* (VU) Good views on Negros.
Scarlet-collared Flowerpecker ♦ (Mindoro F) *Dicaeum retrocinctum* (VU) Great views of several on Mindoro.
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum trigonostigma* *Cinereigulare* on Mindanao and Bohol; *dorsale* on Negros.
Buzzing Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum hypoleucum* Seen well at PICOP (*pontifex*) and Makiling (*obscurum*).
Pygmy Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum pygmaeum* Scattered sightings.
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus* Two forms seen: *luzoniense* at Mt Polis, and *apo* at Mt Kitanglad.
Brown-throated Sunbird (Plain-t S) *Anthreptes malacensis* A total of 4 on Palawan (*paraguae*).
Grey-throated Sunbird ♦ *Anthreptes griseigularis* Excellent views near Bay-yo.
Purple-throated Sunbird *Leptocoma sperata* Seen well on Palawan, Bohol, PICOP and Makiling.
Copper-throated Sunbird ♦ *Leptocoma calcostetha* A pair in the mangroves at Iwahig.
Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis* Common in open country. See Note.
Grey-hooded Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga primigenia* (NT) A few at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).
Apo Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga boltoni* (NT) Not easy this year. Three seen at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).
Flaming Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga flagrans* A pair at Mt Makiling and a single at Sawa (nominate).
Maroon-naped Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga daphoenonota* (E) Great views on Negros.



The localized Maroon-naped Sunbird, a recent split from Flaming Sunbird. (Brian Lloyd)

Metallic-winged Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga pulcherrima* Small numbers recorded at PICOP.
Luzon Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga jefferyi* Common at Mt Polis. A recent split from Metallic-winged.
Bohol Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga decorosa* (E) A pair seen well on Bohol. Another recent split.
Lovely Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga shelleyi* A few seen on Palawan.
Handsome Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga bella* A pair at PICOP (nominate) with *minuta* on Makiling.
Magnificent Sunbird ♦ *Aethopyga magnifica* (E) Great views on Negros. A recent split from Crimson Sunbird.
Orange-tufted Spiderhunter ♦ *Arachnothera flammifera* Two seen at PICOP (nominate).
Pale Spiderhunter ♦ *Arachnothera dilutor* Great views near to Sabang.
Naked-faced Spiderhunter ♦ *Arachnothera clarae* ♦ A pair nest-building at PICOP (nominate).
Cinnamon Ibon ♦ *Hypocryptadius cinnamomeus* Many seen well at Mt Kitanglad.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Common and widespread (*malaccensis*).
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Recent coloniser. Seen near Puerto Princesa.
Red-eared Parrotfinch ♦ *Erythrura coloria* (LO) (NT) A pair seen briefly at Mt Kitanglad.
Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* Seen on Palawan (*cabanisi*).
White-bellied Munia *Lonchura leucogastra* 2 forms: *palawana* at Iwahig and *manueli* on Mindanao.
Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla* First seen at Candaba, with one lots at Bislig airfield (*jagori*).
Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis* First seen at Candaba; 1,000+ on the first visit to Bislig.
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Scattered in small numbers.
Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus* Recorded at various locations (*lugubris*).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Several seen well at Mt Polis.



Olive-backed Pipit. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* One seen at Makiling.

White-cheeked Bullfinch ♦ *Pyrrhula leucogenis* Good views at Mt Kitanglad (*steerei*).

MAMMALS

Northern Palawan Tree Squirrel *Sundasciurus juvencus* Seen on Palawan.

Oriental Small-clawed Otter *Amblonyx cinereus* Two showed well on Palawan.

Golden-capped Acerodon (Golden-crowned Flying Fox) *Acerodon jubatus* Great looks at Subic Bay.

Large Flying-Fox *Pteropus vampyrus* Great looks in the colony at Subic Bay with the above.

Philippine Flying Lemur (Colugo) *Cynocephalus volans* Two seen well on Bohol.

Long-tailed Macaque (Crab-eating M) *Macaca fascicularis* Seen at several sites.

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Philippine Hanging Parrot (Colasisi) *Loriculus philippensis*

Four forms were seen during the tour. The nominate form was found on Luzon, *apicalis* on Mindanao, *chrysonotus* on Cebu and *mindorensis* on Mindoro.

Philippine Coucal *Centropus viridis*

Nominate birds were seen at several sites, but on Mindoro, the interesting and all glossy black race *mindorensis* was seen well at Siburan, Sablayan Penal Colony.

Philippine Trogon *Harpactes ardens*

Three subspecies were noted. The nominate, *ardens*, showed well at PICOP. In Rajah Sikatuna National Park, Bohol we had great views of the subspecies *linae*, while in the Sierra Madre Mountains we saw the form *herberti*.

Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca*

The rufous-backed forms (like those seen on Palawan) are sometimes split off as a separate species, Rufous-backed Kingfisher *C. rufidorsa*. However, the IOC do not recognise *rufidorsa* as a subspecies even. They list the form in the Philippines as *motleyi*.

Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina striata*

No fewer than 5 subspecies noted! Nominate on Luzon, *difficilis* on Palawan, *kochii* on Mindanao, *panayensis* on Negros and the rather plain and different-looking *boholensis* on Bohol.

Yellow-bellied Whistler *Pachycephala philippinensis*

We saw three forms. On Mindanao, *apoensis* was fairly common in mixed flocks at PICOP and Mt Kitanglad. On Bohol, *boholensis* was seen at Rajah Sikatuna National Park, and in the Sierra Madre Mountains a couple of the nominate form were seen.

Elegant Tit *Periparus elegans*

No fewer than 4 subspecies noted. First site for each form as follows: Subic Bay (*gilliardi*), Mt Polis (*montigenus*), Mt Kitanglad (*mindanensis*) and Negros (*albescens*).

Yellow-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus goiavier*

Nominate (Luzon and Negros), *suluensis* (Mindanao), *samarensis* (Cebu and Bohol).

Negros Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus nigrorum*

We saw three forms of this recently split species. On Luzon, we saw *benguetensis* at Mt Polis, on Mindanao we saw *flavostriatus* at Mt Kitanglad and on Negros we saw the nominate form above Mantaquil.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

With the recent splitting of Japanese Leaf Warbler *P. Xanthodryas* and Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *P. examinandus*, the possibility (or even probability) that some or all of our records refer to these cannot be discounted.

Long-tailed Bush Warbler *Locustella caudata*

Two forms were recorded. The nominate was common by voice at Mt Polis where a single bird was seen very well, whilst the form *unicolor* was heard and glimpsed at Mt Kitanglad. The two forms are vocally and morphologically different and could well be regarded as good species.

Sierra Madre Ground Warbler (Rusty-faced Babbler, Rabor's Wren-Babbler) *Robsonius thompsoni*

Rabor's Wren-Babbler has now been split off into 3 species: Cordillera Ground Warbler *Robsonius rabori*, Sierra Madre Ground Warbler *R. thompsoni* and Bicol Ground Warbler *R. sorsogonensis*. The one that is possible on this tour is the recently described Sierra Madre Ground Warbler *R. thompsoni*. For more information on this interesting subject, see the paper by Hosner *et al* (The Condor, 115 (3): 630-639).

Mountain White-eye *Zosterops montanus*

Three forms seen - *whiteheadi* was common on Mt Polis, *vulcani* was common at Mt Kitanglad and *pectoralis* was seen on Negros.

Philippine Fairy-Bluebird *Irena cyanogastra*

Three forms seen. The first was a brief sighting of the form *hoogstraali* at PICOP. The form *ellae* showed well at Rajah Sikatuna National Park, Bohol, and the nominate form was fairly common in the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*

We saw three forms during the tour. On Luzon, we saw the nominate form at Subic Bay and *obscurior* in the Sierra Madre Mountains. On Palawan, we saw the form *aurora* which is distinctive as it shows an orange breast.