



*A pair of Writhed Hornbills in the island of Mindanao. (Dani Lopez-Velasco).*

## **BEST OF PHILIPPINES**

**31 JANUARY – 20 FEBRUARY 2016**

**LEADER: DANI LOPEZ-VELASCO**

This year's Birdquest "Best of Philippines" tour was yet again another highly successful tour to this avian endemic paradise. During the 3 weeks we visited various spots in the islands of Luzon, Palawan and Mindanao, where we saw some of those mind-blowing, world's must-see birds, including Philippine Eagle, Palawan Peacock-Pheasant or Azure-breasted Pitta, amongst many others. Our success rate with the endemics– the ones you come here for- was overall very good, and highlights included a good assortment of owls, such as the rare Luzon Scops Owl, 12 species of colourful kingfishers, including Hombron's (Blue-capped Wood) and Spotted Wood Kingfishers, and 4 endemic racket-tails. Bizarre-looking Philippine and Palawan Frogmouths gave the best possible views, impressive Rufous and Writhed Hornbills (amongst 5

species of endemic hornbills) delighted us, and both Scale-feathered and Rough-crested (Red-c) Malkohas were seen well. A pair of Ashy Thrushes showed at point blank range, shy Falcated and Striated Wren-Babblers were lured into view and a flock of three stunning Celestial Monarchs, getting rare these days, gave fair views, together with Short-crested Monarch. The very rarely seen and ultra skulking Benguet Bush Warbler showed itself, and no less than 12 species of sunbirds, including the very localized Apo, were observed.



*The cracking Southern Silvery Kingfisher, always a trip favourite. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

Deforestation is a very serious issue in the Philippines. In no time and unless urgent conservation measurements take place, some of these exciting endemics will go extinct, so it's a bit of a privilege every time you get to see these endangered birds.

Our adventure began at Manila airport and we were soon heading off towards Subic Bay. We made a productive stop at Candaba marsh in the late afternoon. Our two main targets here, Philippine Duck and Philippine Swamphen, were soon in the scope. Other ducks seen included Wandering Whistling Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Garganey and Eurasian Teal. There were plenty of herons and egrets around, with a nice colony of Purple Herons, a fly-by Black Bittern, both Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Black-crowned Night Heron and Striated Heron, amongst others. Barred and Buff-banded Rails, White-breasted Waterhen and White-browed Crake all showed nicely out in the open. Whiskered Terns hawked over the rice fields, and large numbers of Red Turtle and Zebra Doves perched in the wires. Other new birds here included Common Kingfisher, delightful Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, several White-breasted Woodswallows, a pair of Pied Trillers, the recently split Philippine Pied Fantail, a fly-over Horsfield's Bush Lark, many Yellow-vented Bulbuls, both Oriental and Clamorous Reed Warblers, some Striated Grassbirds, two brief White-shouldered Starlings, a pair of Pied Bush Chats, lots of Chestnut Munias and a single Paddyfield Pipit. Pleased with our first taste at Philippines birding, we carried on towards Subic Bay, where we stayed for the next two nights.

Several nightbird species occur in the Subic area, so our first owling session took place early next morning. Things were pretty quiet at first, but eventually we had close up views of a Chocolate Boobook sitting on a telephone wire by the road. We then tried for Luzon Hawk-Owl, but unfortunately it didn't come close enough to be seen. On the other hand, several Great-eared Nightjars performed, flying low over our heads. The rest of the day was spent birding the various spots at Subic, and it proved to be a successful morning. A vocal Philippine Serpent Eagle soared overhead, joined briefly by a rare Grey-headed Fish Eagle, while Besra, Brahminy Kite, Philippine Cuckoo-Dove, Philippine Green and Green Imperial Pigeons and endemic Guaiberos were all seen in the area. We also went to a particular spot in search of the uncommon White-lored Oriole, and after a bit of searching we finally found a pair, which gave good views. Not far from there we spent quite some time looking for the rare White-fronted Tit, but there was no sign of it. On the other hand, the scarce Green Racket-tail was seen very well both perched and in flight, and a couple of flocks of endemic Rufous Coucals were seen briefly, while noisy Blue-naped Parrots were pleasantly common. Delightful Whiskered Treeswifts, Luzon Hornbills, Balicassias, Stripe-headed Rhabdornis and active Barbellied and Blackish Cuckooshrikes were all logged as well. Woodpeckers were much in evidence here, with White-bellied, Northern Sooty and Luzon Flameback – the latter a recent split from Greater Flameback - all performing for us. Rufous-crowned Bee-eaters were conspicuous on the wires (a split from Blue-throated), and Brown-breasted Kingfishers (split by some from White-throated) were commonly seen along the road. Other notable additions included a flock of Elegant Tits, the ubiquitous Philippine Bulbul, Coletto, the shy White-browed Shama singing its beautiful song, and spectacular Rough-crested and Scale-feathered Malkohas – both trip favourites!-. Around the hotel grounds we found a confiding Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker and a Coppersmith Barbet, and Mark managed to see a Plain Bush Hen. In the afternoon we visited another patch of forest, but it was predictably quiet, although a pair of Luzon Flamebacks showed nicely, as did a flock of Ashy Minivets and a skulking Trilling Tailorbird. Another owling session in the evening gave us good views of Luzon Hawk-Owl.



*The group watching a pair of Luzon Flamebacks at Subic Bay. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

Before leaving Subic the next day we had time for some early morning birding. We tried again for White-fronted Tit at the usual stake out, but in spite of two hours looking for it, we drew a blank. 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 there was no sign of the usual Indigo-banded Kingfisher, although we saw Pygmy Swiftlet, Blue-headed Fantail and Bicolored Flowerpecker. Eventually, we made it to our hotel at Banaue for a well-deserved dinner.



*The sought after Luzon Water Redstart near Banaue. (Jan Hillman)*

We set off very early next morning, looking for the endemic Luzon Scops Owl in the montane forest above town. We heard a couple of birds pretty close, and after some time we finally had one in the spotlight, but unfortunately it didn't stay for long, and only a couple of us got to see it. We would have to try again... 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, Negros Leaf Warbler (a split from Mountain Leaf Warbler), Blue-headed Fantail, Mountain Tailorbird, Luzon Bush Warbler and Mountain White-eye. Striking Little Pied Flycatchers flittered around, a single male Turquoise Flycatcher was seen singing from a treetop, Luzon Sunbird (split from Metallic-winged) busily fed on roadside flowers, and small flocks of Chestnut-faced Babblers flew from tree to tree. Mountain Shrikes were not very obvious this year, but in the end we managed to get good views of a couple of birds. One of the highlights of the morning was getting brief – but decent-, views of the super skulking and very rarely seen Benguet Bush Warbler. And not far, we also obtained very good views of a singing Long-tailed Bush Warbler. A roadside stake-out for Luzon Water Redstart produced excellent, close-up views of this sought-after endemic. Afterwards we had lunch at Bay-yo, overlooking some rice-terraces, while Crested Honey Buzzards and Eastern Buzzard soared overhead. On the way back we stopped at the famous Banaue rice terraces, where we saw several Buff-banded Rails. In the late afternoon we checked the hotel garden, where we added Bicolored Flowerpecker, Golden-bellied Gerygone, and a flock of Yellowish White-eyes to our list. Before sunset we were back at our Luzon Scops Owl spot, and this time, for a change, the bird proved easy to see, giving smashing views to everyone.



*Luzon Scops Owl. We couldn't have asked for better views. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)*

We only had a few target birds for our second day at Mount Polis, but the weather – with rain and fog- didn't help. We spent a lot of time scanning the few forested slopes left in the mountain for Flame-breasted Fruit Dove, a species that has become rare in recent times due to illegal trapping, but we couldn't find any. A few

mixed flocks—with more or less the same species as the day before- kept us entertained, while a Philippine Serpent Eagle feeding on a snake in the road was a bit of a surprise.



*One of the few forested slopes left in Mt Polis. (DLV)*

We left Banaue very early the next day for the long drive back to Manila. A stop at the Lagawe river gave us the hoped-for Indigo-banded Kingfisher, showing very well in the scope as it sat on some rocks by the river. The rest of the day was spent in the vehicle, and by late afternoon we finally made it to our hotel in the capital.



*Indigo-banded Kingfisher and Negros Leaf Warbler. (Jan Hillman)*

Our flight to Palawan was early in the morning. The group arrived to Puerto Princesa and went straight birding, seeing Nankeen Night Heron amongst other things, while I had some trouble getting in the plane due to overbooking. Thankfully, in the end everything worked fine and I managed to get to Puerto Princesa on

the next flight. Once we were all together, we headed to a nearby beach, where we quickly found our target, the endangered Chinese Egret. The tide was high so there were only a few waders around, including Grey-tailed Tattlers and Pacific Golden Plover, while the mangroves held several Philippine Pied Fantails and some Black-headed Bulbuls. The rest of the day was spent battling against the awful weather while trying to do some birding along the road to Sabang. In spite of the tough conditions, we managed to score a few endemics, including Fiery Minivet, Palawan Drongo, Palawan Crow, Ashy-fronted and Sulphur-bellied Bulbuls, Ashy-headed Babbler, White-vented Shama, Palawan Flowerpecker and Pale Spiderhunter. Other notable species like Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird and Asian Fairy Bluebird were seen. However, our attempt at some nightbirding was completely ruined by the heavy rain. Soaked wet we got back to the hotel, in time for a good dinner.



*A pair of Critically Endangered Red-vented Cockatoos in Palawan. (Jan Hillman)*

Typhoon-like weather continued next day and the usual boat trip to St Paul's National Park was cancelled so instead we had a long hike to get there and even though conditions were difficult, we had some good birds during the walk, with the highlight being a singing Falcated Wren-Babbler, one of the trickiest endemics of the island and the only one seen during our stay. Once we finally arrived to the ranger station we soon set off in search of our main target, the stunning Palawan Peacock-Pheasant, one of those must-see birds in the world. 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. After a bit of searching we eventually found the old faithful male, which performed superbly. The same area also gave us two showy Philippine Megapodes, a very obliging Stork-billed Kingfisher and, on the way back, Palawan Blue Flycatcher, Palawan Bulbul, Pin-striped Tit Babbler, Yellow-throated Leafbird and Dark-throated Oriole. We had lunch at the hotel, and a check at a fruiting tree in the garden revealed a small group of much-wanted Palawan Hornbills. In the afternoon we did some roadside birding, which produced good views of two pairs of critically endangered Red-vented (Philippine) Cockatoos, Plaintive Cuckoo, Spot-throated Flameback, a pair of prehistoric looking Great Slaty Woodpeckers, Common Hill Myna, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo and Chestnut-breasted Malkoha. In the evening, still with pouring rain, we ventured out again to look for Palawan Frogmouth and Palawan Scops Owl. During a short window of decent weather we managed to get gripping views of the frogmouth, perched just a few feet from us. We also found some roosting diurnal birds, highlighted by a cracking Hooded Pitta, but with White-vented Shama, Ashy-headed Babbler and Palawan Bulbul as supporting cast. We heard a distant scops owl, but it started raining heavily again, so we retraced our steps back to our hotel.



*One of the best birds in the world. Palawan Peacock-Pheasant. (DLV)*

At dawn next morning we were back at the scops owl place, but the birds were far more elusive than in any of my previous trips, and in spite of trying very hard, we only heard them distantly, across the river, a few times. The endemic Palawan Tit had so far eluded us, so we spent some time looking for it after breakfast. We soon heard their calls at the second spot where we stopped, and we were soon enjoying good views of this cute endemic. Some roadside birding gave us an all-too-brief Blue-headed Racket-tail, some Crested Serpent Eagles and more Palawan Hornbills. After an excellent lunch it was time to leave Sabang and St Paul's. In the afternoon, we drove towards Puerto Princesa. After checking in at our hotel, we went to the harbour, where we saw a White-bellied Sea Eagle, and took a boat out to a small offshore island in search of Mantanani Scops Owl. As it got dark, the owls started calling, and we were soon treated to excellent views of a calling bird. Pleased with our success, we 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. Melodious Babblers were pretty common but it took a while until everyone had satisfactory views. The endemic Blue Paradise Flycatcher was also seen in the forest, and a pair of eye-level Lovely Sunbirds was also a welcome sight. We also heard a drumming Red-headed Flameback –our remaining endemic woodpecker in the island-, and after a bit of playback, the bird flew in, perched for a couple of seconds and then flew off. The usual stake-out for Palawan Flycatcher didn't seem to have any birds on territory, and oddly we didn't hear a single one during the whole morning. On the way back some of us saw a beautiful Red-bellied Pitta near the trail. A quick stop at some rice paddies gave us good numbers of waders including Common, Pin-tailed and Swinhoe's Snipes (we took pictures showing outer tail feather, confirming the ID of the two), Pacific Golden Plover, Long-toed Stint, Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit as well as flocks of Chestnut, White-bellied and Scaly-breasted Munias. The surprise find here was a Temminck's Stint, one of the first records for the Philippines! A quick visit to some nearby mangroves produced excellent views of a pair of Copper-throated Sunbirds.



*Close-up of the endemic Palawan Frogmouth. (DLV)*

Early next morning we took a flight to Manila and then to Davao on the island of Mindanao. We arrived there mid afternoon and then drove eastwards to our base for the next few days, the Paper Country Inn at Bislig.

During our first day in what remains of the PICOP logging concession we managed to see a good selection of endemics. Our usual early start and bumpy jeepney ride into the former concession was in the dark, in order to do some nightbirding. However, heavy rain (which we suffered every single dawn) spoiled it. After some instant coffee, and with the umbrellas in the hand, we started birding. A visit to a nearby fruiting tree produced one of the best sightings of the trip, when a flock of no less than 60 Writhed Hornbills flew in and started feeding above our heads. Magical! Soon, more hornbills arrived, with the remaining two species, Rufous and Mindanao, all in attendance, together with White-eared Brown Dove, Philippine Green Pigeon and Green Imperial Pigeons. Not far we found a flowering tree that attracted large numbers of sunbirds, and we enjoyed point blank views of Grey-throated, Purple-throated, Olive-backed, Metallic-winged and Handsome Sunbirds as well as Orange-tufted and Naked-faced Spiderhunter. Overhead, we saw a Pinsker's Hawk Eagle, and Philippine Spine-tailed Swifts also shot past. Our first Philippine Falconets were scoped, and Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo, Buff-spotted Flameback, Blue-crowned Racket-tail, the uncommon Black-bibbed Cicadabird and Philippine Minivet were all new birds for us. We also found some mixed flocks, which held such goodies as Yellowish Bulbul, Philippine Leaf Warbler, Mindanao Pygmy Babbler and Philippine Leafbird. After a picnic lunch we went back to Bislig, stopping to admire the faithful and always brilliant Southern Silvery Kingfisher on its pool.

Next morning, we headed out early again to try for some nightbirds. Like the previous day, it rained non-stop, which made owling impossible. Most of the remaining of the day was spent on a trail through forested hills, at the best bit of habitat remaining in PICOP. One of the best birds of the day was surely the Azure-breasted Pitta (Steere's P) seen foraging along the trail, and later carrying food, giving terrific views. After a bit of effort, we also managed to lure into view a Hombron's (Blue-capped Wood) Kingfisher, a cracking endemic. Even better was the small flock of three Celestial Monarchs, a very uncommon species nowadays, that

stayed in the canopy and played hide and seek for a while until we all had satisfactory views. A pair of Philippine Nightjars was found at their daytime roost, and mixed flocks held Rufous Paradise Flycatcher, Short-crested Monarch, Mindanao Blue Fantail, Brown Tit-Babbler, Rusty-crowned Babbler and Yellow-bellied Whistler. We also heard a Philippine Dwarf Kingfisher, and some even managed to glimpse it in flight. After our picnic it started to rain heavily again, so we decided to call it a day and headed back to our hotel, making another quick stop at the Southern Silvery Kingfisher pond for some better views of the bird.



*Azure-breasted Pitta carrying food to the nest. What a cracker! (DLV)*

We got rained out, again, during our pre-dawn owling session. Later we explored another patch of forest, where a vocal Striated Wren-Babbler (Streaked Ground Babbler) gave very good views, and we also managed to pull a Black-headed Tailorbird out of its thick understory home, while Rufous-fronted Tailorbird and Philippine Trogon were easier to see. A pair of Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeons was scoped, Philippine Orioles were in evidence in the canopy and a pair of retiring Black-faced Coucals obliged. A calling Winchell's (Rufous-lored) Kingfisher was first heard and after some time eventually found sitting motionless on a branch and gave good views, while on the same tree we also saw our only Olive-backed Flowerpecker of the trip. Overhead, at least 3 Philippines Honey Buzzards (split from Barred) and a pair of Philippine Serpent Eagles soared, while Blue-crowned Racket-tails were also seen perched, next to a family of Rufous Hornbills. In the afternoon we paid a visit to Bislig airfield, where we saw several interesting species, including Wandering Whistling Duck, Philippine Duck, King Quail, Yellow Bittern, Clamorous Reed Warbler, a showy Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler and a pair of Golden-headed Cisticolas. As dusk fell, we waited for the previously easy (not anymore) Australasian Grass Owl to make an appearance, but none showed up.



*A family of Rufous Hornbills. A rare sight these days. (Jan Hillman)*

On our last morning at PICOP we tried desperately to do some owling, but for the fourth morning in a row, it was pouring rain, and predictably no owls were heard or seen. The weather was bad during the rest of the morning, making birding difficult, but we managed to see a long awaited Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove, found by Lisa. A rare Little Slaty Flycatcher was heard singing and some of us managed to see it briefly, although it didn't cooperate. And then it was time for 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.



*Rufous Paradise Flycatcher and Short-crested Monarch at PICOP. (DLV)*

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. After settling in, we went outside for some initial birding in the mountain, which gave us Black-and-cinnamon Fantail, Sulphur-billed Nuthatch, Mountain White-eye, White-browed Shortwing, a pair of Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers, Grey-hooded Sunbird and Cinnamon Ibon. We set out again 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 - but the birds were strangely silent. After our failed attempt we had great views of one of the most bizarre-looking birds in the planet -Philippine Frogmouth –‘Old Growler’ as this long-term resident is known.



*The group watching a Philippine Oriole at PICOP. (DLV)*

We woke up early on our first full day in the mountain, in order to look for Giant Scops Owl. The birds here are mostly taped-out and can actually be very tricky to see. Not this year though, as within minutes we had one in the spotlight, perched quietly in a branch. Great stuff! 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 and Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo. By 8 o'clock we had reached the viewpoint, where we spent most of the day, hoping for the great Philippine Eagle, the star of the mountain, to show up. However, even though the weather was ok and there were plenty of raptors flying around, including Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle, we didn't have a sniff at the big eagle. Good numbers of Philippine Swiftlets were also seen, and a small flock of Mindanao Racket-tails shot past. Also from the viewpoint we saw several Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, a flock of distant McGregor's Cuckooshrikes, a single Apo Myna and some Short-tailed Starlings, as well as hundreds of Eyebrowed Thrushes. On the walk back we came across a large mixed flock, which held a couple of Mindanao White-eyes and Olive-backed Flowerpeckers, and plenty of

Cinnamon Ibons, and Nicola and Lisa had good views of a Red-eared Parrotfinch on the way down. Before dinner, went again to look for the woodcock, and this time we were treated to very close flight views of one bird. Excellent!



*Giant Scops Owl at Kitangland. One of the best birds of the trip. (DLV)*

Having missed the eagle - possibly the single most wanted bird for any birder coming to the Philippines-, the previous day, pressure was definitely high when we started climbing up the mountain the following morning. We reached the viewpoint in good time, and started scanning. However, after a couple of hours of constant scanning, there was no sign of our target. So, given that we still needed Apo Sunbird, we had to make a decision. After going through all the options, some decided to stay at the viewpoint, while most of the group opted to go up. So we set off, and proceeded to the higher parts of the mountain. Once we reached the right altitude, it didn't take long to find our target, the localized Apo Sunbird. A male and a female were seen feeding very low down, giving my best views ever, and we studied their plumage features in detail. Not far from there we also connected with the endemic White-cheeked Bullfinch. After having a well-deserved picnic lunch, we started the long walk back to the camp. I kept scanning the slopes, but by now we all thought the Eagle was going to be our main miss here... However, persistence usually pays off (and in Birdquest we know "a bit" about persistence...), and I couldn't believe my eyes when I spotted a small white spot, very far away, that turned out to be the Eagle, sitting in a tree. I told the others, who at first couldn't believe it, but there it was! The views were not good, as the bird was very distant, but at least they were good enough to tick it. We called the others, who were still at the viewpoint, and thankfully they managed to get to the spot in record time, and see the bird. Excellent! Pleased with our success, we walked to the camp for a well-deserved dinner and some beer, as well as to some delicious Spanish ham I had brought for the occasion.



*Apo Sunbird and Sulphur-billed Nuthatch. (DLV)*

Early next morning we said goodbye to our wonderful hosts, Carlito and his family, and walked to the village, where our vehicles were waiting for us. We then drove to Cagayan de Oro, and boarded the plane. The flight to Manila was a bit delayed, and once there we were soon heading towards Mount Makiling. We had an early dinner and went to bed.



*One of the most bizarre-looking birds on the planet. Philippine Frogmouth. (DLV)*

The next day was spent at Mount Makiling, where the birding in the upper parts of the mountain was pretty good. First, we did some owling, which was very successful as it resulted in good views of Philippine Scops Owl and Luzon Hawk-Owl. Spotted Wood Kingfishers, one of the stars of the mountain, were pretty quiet during our visit, so it took some time before we eventually saw one. The wait was well worth it though, what a cracker!! Grey-backed Tailorbirds weren't very responsive either, but at the second attempt we obtained good looks at a pair. A fruiting tree held our only Amethyst Brown Doves of the trip, joined by a pair of Black-chinned Fruit Doves. We spent a good two hours trying to see a calling Luzon Bleeding-heart, at the same spot where we had seen it the previous year. However, the bird was singing from behind some dense cover, and in spite of all tricks, including playing the recording of its own call, etc.. the bird didn't move at all during the whole time, and unfortunately never came into view. While looking for it, a mixed flock appeared and we were delighted to find a very confiding Lemon-throated Leaf Warbler, while a singing Philippine Fairy Bluebird was also glimpsed. On the walk back to the vehicle we tracked down a singing Rusty-breasted Cuckoo. After lunch we visited the botanical gardens, where a Flaming Sunbird put a brief appearance, while Pygmy Flowerpecker was more obliging. Later in the afternoon we went to the "buttonquail track". Our target

here, the endemic Spotted Buttonquail, was seen crossing the path three times, allowing for decent scope views. Also in the area some Barred Rails, a Barred Buttonquail and a flying Grey-faced Buzzard were observed.



*Wagler's Pit Viper (Tropidolaemus wagleri, DLV).*

Next morning we visited La Mesa Ecopark, in search of the endemic Ashy Thrush. The place was full of students, but after some time we found a quiet patch of forest, where a pair of these beautiful thrushes performed at length. What a bird! Other good birds in the area included endemic Lowland White-eye and a very confiding male Spotted Wood Kingfisher. All that remained now was our flight back to Manila before we split up and headed for our separate flights home. It had been a very successful trip from a birding perspective, with many great birds. It is surprising that, even though the habitat continues to get more and more degraded each year, we still manage to see as many species as in the past, including a number of previously "ungettable" birds. However, it's also true that the numbers of certain species are clearly decreasing rapidly, and some of them are getting tougher and tougher to find each year. The habitat destruction is becoming such a problem that the number of species we'll be able to find in the future will soon 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.



*Roosting Hooded Pitta, above, and Philippine Serpent Eagle (with a Grey Wagtail in the background), below. (DLV)*





*The retiring White-vented Shama, above, and Elegant Tit, below. (DLV)*





A cracking male Spotted Wood Kingfisher. (DLV)

## 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.

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

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* One at Candaba.

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

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* A few seen at Candaba.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* 15 birds at Candaba.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* Several at Candaba.

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

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



Clockwise, from top left. Philippine Duck, Philippine Megapode, Barred Rail and White-breasted Waterhen. (DLV and Jan Hillman)

**King Quail** ◊ *Excalfactoria chinensis* Seen well at Bislig Airstrip (*lineata*).

**Red Junglefowl** *Gallus gallus* Seen near Subic.

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

**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 Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis* Seen at Candaba.

**Nankeen Night Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus* Seen at Palawan.

**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* Seen at Palawan.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* Common and widespread.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* First seen at Candaba (*jouyi*).

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Seen at Candaba and Bislig (*manilensis*).

**Eastern Great Egret** *Ardea [alba] modesta* Widespread. Not yet split by the IOC, which includes in Great Egret.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* Widespread (nominate).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Common and widespread (*nigripes*).

**Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra* Several seen at Palawan (nominate).

**Chinese Egret** ◊ *Egretta eulophotes* (VU) Good views near to Puerto Princesa.

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* One sighting (nominate).

**Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* A few sightings (*philippensis*).

**Philippine Honey Buzzard** ◊ (Steere's H B) *Pernis steerei* Seen well at PICOP (nominate).  
**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Seen in Kitangland (*hypoleucus*).  
**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus* Widespread (*intermedius*).



*Color-ringed Chinese Egret and Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle. (DLV and JH)*

**White-bellied Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Seen at Palawan.  
**Grey-headed Fish Eagle** *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* One seen at Subic by some of us.  
**Crested Serpent Eagle** *Spilornis cheela* Seen very well in Palawan (*palawanensis*).  
**Philippine Serpent Eagle** ◊ *Spilornis holospilus* Singles and pairs seen throughout the tour.  
**Eastern Marsh Harrier** *Circus spilonotus* One sighting.  
**Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus* Scattered sightings.  
**Besra** *Accipiter virgatus* A male seen at Subic  
**Eastern Buzzard** *Buteo japonicus* Seen at Mt Polis.  
**Grey-faced Buzzard** *Butastur indicus* One seen at Los Baños.  
**Philippine Eagle** ◊ *Pitheophaga jefferyi* (CR) Distant views on the final day at Kitangland.  
**Changeable Hawk-Eagle** *Nisaetus cirrhatus* Seen very well in Palawan (*limnaeetus*).  
**Pinsker's Hawk-Eagle** ◊ *Nisaetus pinskeri* (VU) Seen and photographed at PICOP.  
**Rufous-bellied Hawk-Eagle** *Lophotriorchis kienerii* Seen very well at Kitangland.  
**Barred Rail** ◊ *Gallirallus torquatus* Various sightings (nominate).  
**Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis* Several seen (nominate).  
**Plain Bush-Hen** ◊ *Amaurornis olivacea* A couple of brief sightings.  
**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Widespread (nominate).  
**White-browed Crake** *Porzana cinerea* Seen well.  
**Philippine Swamphen** ◊ *Porphyrio pulverulentus* Seen at Candaba.  
**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* A few at Candaba Swamp and Bislig (*orientalis*).  
**Spotted Buttonquail** ◊ *Turnix ocellatus* Good scope views of two birds at Mt Makiling (nominate).  
**Barred Buttonquail** *Turnix suscitator* One seen briefly at Mt Makiling (*fasciatus*).  
**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Common in the paddies at Iwahig.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Several seen in Palawan.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* First seen in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan (*curonicus*).

**Bukidnon Woodcock** ◇ *Scolopax bukidnonensis* One eventually showed well at dusk in Mt Kitanglad.



Temminck's Stint, one of the first documented records in the Philippines, at Iwahig. Marsh Sandpiper. (DLV)

**Pin-tailed Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* Seen and outer tail feathers photographed.

**Swinhoe's Snipe** *Gallinago megala* Seen and outer tail feathers photographed.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* Good numbers in the paddies at Iwahig (nominate).

**Eurasian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Seen in Palawan (*variegatus*).

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* One seen at Iwahig.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Good numbers seen in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* First seen in Candaba.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* Two seen in a rice paddy in Palawan.

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

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* One seen at Iwahig.

**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes* A few seen well at White Beach.

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

**Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* Around 30 in the paddies at Iwahig, Palawan.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* One seen at Iwahig.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Four birds in Palawan.

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

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

**Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica* Scattered sightings (*humilis*).

**Spotted Dove** *Spilopelia chinensis* Widespread.

**Philippine Cuckoo-Dove** ◇ *Macropygia* Seen several times.

**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) (H) Heard but not seen despite all of our efforts at Makiling.

**White-eared Brown Dove** ◇ *Phapitreron leucotis* Nominate (Luzon) and *brevirostris* (Mindanao).

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

**Pink-necked Green Pigeon** *Treron vernans* Seen at Palawan.

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

**Yellow-breasted Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus occipitalis* Seen at PICOP.

**Black-chinned Fruit Dove** ◇ *Ptilinopus leclancheri* Seen twice.

**Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula poliocephala* (NT) Seen at PICOP.

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

**Rufous Coucal** ◇ *Centropus unirufus* (NT) Good albeit brief views at Subic Bay.

**Black-faced Coucal** ◇ *Centropus melanops* Seen well at PICOP.

**Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis* Seen in Palawan.

**Philippine Coucal** ◇ *Centropus* Seen a few times.

**Chestnut-breasted Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus curvirostris* Seen in Palawan (*harringtoni*).  
**Rough-crested Malkoha (Red-c M)**  $\diamond$  *Dasylophus superciliosus* Seen at Subic Bay and Mt Makiling (nominate).  
**Scale-feathered Malkoha**  $\diamond$  *Dasylophus cumingi* Seen at Subic, Mt Polis and Mt Makiling.  
**Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopaceus* (H) Heard in Palawan.  
**Violet Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus* (H) Heard a couple of times.  
**Plaintive Cuckoo** *Cacomantis merulinus* Scattered sightings.  
**Rusty-breasted Cuckoo** *Cacomantis sepulcralis* Seen well at Kitangland (nominate).  
**Philippine Drongo-Cuckoo**  $\diamond$  *Surniculus velutinus* The nominate form was seen well at PICOP.  
**Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo** *Surniculus lugubris* Seen well in Palawan (*brachyurus*).  
**Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo**  $\diamond$  *Hierococcyx pectoralis* (E) Seen well at Kitangland.



Mantanani Scops owl, left, and Philippine Scops Owl, right. (DLV)

**Giant Scops Owl**  $\diamond$  *Otus gurneyi* (VU) Seen very, very well at Kitangland.  
**Palawan Scops Owl**  $\diamond$  *Otus fuliginosus* (NT) (H) Frustratingly, heard only in terrible weather in Palawan.  
**Philippine Scops Owl**  $\diamond$  *Otus megalotis* Seen well at Makiling  
**Luzon Scops Owl**  $\diamond$  *Otus longicornis* (NT) Seen very well at Polis.  
**Mantanani Scops Owl**  $\diamond$  *Otus mantananensis* (NT) Excellent views on a small offshore islet (nominate).  
**Chocolate Boobook**  $\diamond$  *Ninox randi* Great views at Subic Bay.  
**Luzon Hawk-Owl**  $\diamond$  *Ninox philippensis* Seen well at Subic and Makiling.  
**Philippine Frogmouth**  $\diamond$  *Batrachostomus septimus* Brilliant views at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).  
**Palawan Frogmouth**  $\diamond$  *Batrachostomus chaseni* Great views near Sabang.  
**Great Eared Nightjar** *Lyncornis macrotis* Seen at Subic, PICOP and Kitangland. (nominate).  
**Philippine Nightjar**  $\diamond$  *Caprimulgus manillensis* Seen at Bislig, PICOP and Mt Kitanglad.  
**Whiskered Treeswift** *Hemiprocne comata* Seen well at Subic Bay and Mt Kitanglad (*major*).  
**Glossy Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta* Common.  
**Grey-rumped Swiftlet**  $\diamond$  *Collocalia [esculenta] marginata* Common in Subic. Not universally split.  
**Pygmy Swiftlet**  $\diamond$  *Collocalia troglodytes* First seen at Lagawe, with many at PICOP.  
**Philippine Swiftlet**  $\diamond$  *Aerodramus mearnsi* Birds assumed to be this species at Mt Kitanglad.  
**Ameline Swiftlet**  $\diamond$  *Aerodramus amelis* Widespread, absent from Palawan. Recently split from Uniform Swiftlet.

**Palawan Swiftlet** ◊ *Aerodramus [vanikorensis] palawanensis* Seen at Palawan. Not universally split.  
**Philippine Spine-tailed Swift (P Needle-tail)** ◊ *Mearnsia picina* (NT) Good views at PICOP.  
**Purple Needle-tail** ◊ *Hirundapus celebensis* Seen at Subic and PICOP.  
**Brown-backed Needle-tail** *Hirundapus giganteus* Seen in Palawan.  
**House Swift** *Apus nipalensis* Seen at the Banaue Hotel (nominate).  
**Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* Seen at los Baños.  
**Philippine Trogon** ◊ *Harpactes ardens herberti* Seen well at PICOP.  
**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) Good views for most at PICOP.  
**Stork-billed Kingfisher** *Pelargopsis capensis* Seen at St Pauls (*gouldi*).  
**Ruddy Kingfisher** *Halcyon coromanda* Seen by some at Palawan.  
**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 views at PICOP (*mindanensis*)  
**Collared Kingfisher** *Todiramphus chloris* Widespread. First seen at Subic Bay (*collaris*).  
**Blue-eared Kingfisher** *Alcedo meninting* Seen in Palawan.  
**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* Scattered sightings (*bengalensis*).  
**Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ceyx erithaca* See in Palawan . See note.  
**Philippine Dwarf Kingfisher** ◊ *Ceyx melanurus* Heard and glimpsed at PICOP.



*Brown-breasted Kingfisher, left, and Southern Silvery Kingfisher, right. (DLV)*

**Indigo-banded Kingfisher** ◊ *Ceyx cyanopectus* Two on the river at Lagawe (nominate).  
**Southern Silvery Kingfisher** ◊ *Ceyx (argentatus) argentatus* (VU) Great views on a small pond at PICOP.  
**Blue-tailed Bee-eater** ◊ *Merops philippinus* A couple of sightings (nominate).  
**Rufous-crowned Bee-eater** ◊ *Merops americanus* Scattered sightings.  
**Palawan Hornbill** ◊ *Anthracoceros marcheii* (VU) Several showed very well in Palawan.  
**Rufous Hornbill** ◊ *Buceros hydrocorax* Good views at PICOP (*mindanensis*).  
**Luzon Hornbill** ◊ *Penelopides manillae* A few seen at Subic Bay (nominate).  
**Mindanao Hornbill** ◊ *Penelopides affinis* Quite common at PICOP.  
**Writhed Hornbill** ◊ *Aceros leucocephalus* (NT) An impressive flock of 60+ at PICOP.  
**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* Scattered sightings.  
**Spot-throated Flameback** ◊ *Dinopium everetti* Good views on Palawan. A recent split.  
**Buff-spotted Flameback** ◊ *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* Seen well at PICOP (*montanus*) .  
**Luzon Flameback** ◊ *Chrysocolaptes haematribon* Seen well at Subic Bay.  
**Red-headed Flameback** ◊ *Chrysocolaptes erythrocephalus* One seen at Balsahan.  
**Northern Sooty Woodpecker** ◊ *Mulleripicus funebris* Great views at Subic.  
**Great Slaty Woodpecker** *Mulleripicus pulverulentus* A pair gave great views in Palawan.  
**Philippine Falconet** ◊ *Microhierax erythrogenys* SSp *meridionalis* seen well in Mindanao.  
**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* One sighting.



*Philippine Falconet and Luzon Flameback. (DLV and JH)*

**Red-vented Cockatoo (Philippine C)** *Cacatua haematuropygia* (CR) Good views of 4 birds near Sabang.  
**Philippine Hanging Parrot (Colasisi)** ◊ *Loriculus philippensis* Seen several times.  
**Mindanao Racket-tail** ◊ *Prioniturus waterstradti* Only seen briefly at Mt Kitanglad (*malindangensis*).  
**Blue-headed Racket-tail** ◊ *Prioniturus platenae* (VU) (LO) A leader only bird. Awful weather later on didnt help.  
**Green Racket-tail** ◊ *Prioniturus luconensis* (VU) Great views at Subic Bay.  
**Blue-crowned Racket-tail** ◊ *Prioniturus discurus* Seen very well at PICOP.  
**Blue-naped Parrot** ◊ *Tanygnathus lucionensis* Common at Subic Bay (nominate); *salvadorii* in Palawan.  
**Guaiabero** ◊ *Bolbopsittacus lunulatus* Two forms seen; nominate (Luzon) and *mindanensis* in Mindanao.  
**Red-bellied Pitta** ◊ *Erythropitta erythrogaster* Seen at Balsahan trail in Palawan and PICOP.  
**Hooded Pitta** *Pitta sordida* Seen roosting in Palawan (*palawanensis*).  
**Azure-breasted (Steere's) Pitta** ◊ *Pitta steerii* (VU) Excellent views at PICOP (nominate).  
**Golden-bellied Gerygone** *Gerygone sulphurea* Seen at Banaue and La Mesa (*simplex*).  
**White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus* Widespread (nominate).  
**Common Iora** *Aegithina tiphia* A couple of birds seen in Palawan (*aequanimis*).  
**Bar-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina striata* Seen several times.  
**Blackish Cuckooshrike** ◊ *Coracina coerulescens* Several seen well at Subic (nominate).  
**McGregor's Cuckooshrike** ◊ *Coracina mcgregori* A few seen very well at Mt Kitanglad.

**Pied Triller** *Lalage nigra* Seen at various locations (*chilensis*).  
**Ashy Minivet** *Pericrocotus divaricatus* Seen well at Subic.  
**Fiery Minivet** ◊ *Pericrocotus igneus* (NT) Seen well in Palawan (nominate).  
**Philippine Minivet** ◊ *Pericrocotus leytenis* Seen very well in PICOP.  
**Green-backed Whistler** ◊ *Pachycephala albiventris* Seen at Mt Polis (nominate).  
**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* Good views at Mt Polis (nominate).  
**Dark-throated Oriole** *Oriolus xanthonotus* Seen very well near to Sabang (*persuasus*).



Clockwise, from top left. Dark-throated Oriole, Apo Myna, Mindanao Drongo and Yellowish Bulbul. (DLV and JH)

**Philippine Oriole** ◊ *Oriolus steerii* Seen well at PICOP (*samarensis*).  
**White-lored Oriole** ◊ *Oriolus albiloris* Excellent views at SUBIC.

**Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis* Fairly common and widespread (nominate).

**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* A few seen in Palawan (nominate).

**Balicassiao** ◊ *Dicrurus balicassius* Several at Subic and Mt Makiling.



Palawan Tit, above. Elegant Tit, below. Right, ssp. montigenus, left, ssp. mindanensis.

**Palawan Drongo** ◊ *Dicrurus [hottentottus] palawanensis* A few seen in Palawan. Not yet split by the IOC.

**Mindanao Drongo** ◊ *Dicrurus [hottentottus] striatus* Nominate ssp seen on Mindanao.



Assortment of endemic hornbills. Top left, Palawan Hornbill. Top right, Luzon Hornbill. Below, Mindanao Hornbill. (DLV and JH)

**Mindanao Blue Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura superciliaris* Several seen in mixed flocks at PICOP (apo).

**Blue-headed Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura cyaniceps* Great views at Mt Polis (nominate).

**Philippine Pied Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura nigritorquis* Several seen well. 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).



Clockwise, from top left Grey-throated Sunbird, Brown-throated Sunbird, Copper-throated Sunbird and Buzzy Flowerpecker. (DLV and JH)

**Short-crested Monarch** ◊ *Hypothymis helenae* (NT) Several at PICOP (*agusanae*).

**Celestial Monarch** ◊ *Hypothymis coelestis* (VU) After some effort, a flock of 3 males seen at PICOP. Getting rare.

**Blue Paradise Flycatcher** ◊ *Terpsiphone cyanescens* (NT) Seen in Palawan.

**Rufous Paradise Flycatcher** ◊ *Terpsiphone cinnamomea* Seen well at PICOP (nominate) and Makiling.

**Palawan Crow** ◊ *Corvus (enca) pusillus* Pretty common on Palawan. Not yet split by the IOC.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos philippinus* Common and widespread (*philippinus*).

**Elegant Tit** ◊ *Periparus elegans* Seen at Mt Polis, Mt Kitanglad, Mt Makiling. See Note.

**Palawan Tit** ◊ *Periparus amabilis* (NT) Great views near to Sabang.

**Horsfield's Bush Lark** *Mirafra javanica* One seen near Candaba.

**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.

**Ashy-fronted Bulbul** ◊ *Pycnonotus* Small numbers in Palawan. A recent split.

**Palawan Bulbul** ◊ *Alophoixus frater* A few on Palawan. Another recent split.

**Sulphur-bellied Bulbul** ◊ *Iole palawanensis* Fairly common in Palawan.



Top, Lovely Sunbird. Bottom, Handsome Sunbird. (DLV)

- Philippine Bulbul** ◊ *Hypsipetes philippinus* Nominate common on Luzon, *saturation* in Mindanao.
- Yellowish Bulbul** ◊ *Hypsipetes everetti* Small numbers at PICOP (nominate).
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* First seen at Candaba Swamp, and common throughout (*gutturalis*).
- Pacific Swallow** *Hirundo tahitica* Widespread.
- Striated Swallow** *Cecropis striolata* Seen at Banaue (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 seen (and sound recorded) at various locations. See Note.
- Philippine Leaf Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus olivaceus* Seen at PICOP.
- Negros Leaf Warbler** ◊ *Phylloscopus nigrorum* See Note.
- Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* Seen at Candaba and Bislig Airfield (*harterti*).
- Oriental Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus orientalis* Only seen briefly at Candaba Swamp
- Long-tailed Bush Warbler** ◊ *Locustella caudata* Seen very well at Polis (*caudata*).



Clockwise, from top left. Ashy Thrush, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Black-and-cinnamon Fantail and Mindanao Pygmy Babbler. (DLV and JH)

- Middendorff's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella ochotensis* Seen well at Bislig airfield.
- Benguet Bush Warbler** *Locustella seebohmi* Seen at Mt Polis. A mega skulker!
- Striated Grassbird** *Megalurus palustris* Common in open areas. First seen at Candaba (*forbesi*).
- Tawny Grassbird** *Megalurus timoriensis* Seen at Polis and Kitanglang.
- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* Seen at Candaba (*tinnabulans*).
- Golden-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* Seen and heard at Bislig Airfield (*semirufus*).
- Trilling Tailorbird** *Orthotomus chloronotus* Seen well at Subic.
- Rufous-fronted Tailorbird** *Orthotomus frontalis* Seen well at PICOP (nominate).
- Grey-backed Tailorbird** *Orthotomus derbianus* Seen well at Mt Makiling.
- Rufous-tailed Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sericeus* Several in Palawan (nominate).
- Black-headed Tailorbird** *Orthotomus nigriceps* Seen well at PICOP.
- Pin-striped Tit-Babbler** *Macronus gularis* A few seen well in Palawan (*woodi*).
- Brown Tit-Babbler** *Macronus striaticeps* Seen at PICOP (*mindanensis*).



*Yellow-throated Leafbird from Palawan. (DLV)*

- Striated Wren-Babbler** ◇ (Streaked Ground-B) *Ptilocichla mindanensis* Nominate seen very well at PICOP.
- Falcatid Wren-Babbler** ◇ (F Ground-B) *Ptilocichla falcata* (VU) Good views of a singing bird near to Sabang.
- Ashy-headed Babbler** ◇ *Malacocincla cinereiceps* Seen very well at St Pauls.
- Melodious Babbler** ◇ *Malacopteron palawanense* Seen at Balsahan.
- Chestnut-faced Babbler** ◇ *Zosterornis whiteheadi* Common at Mt Polis (nominate).
- Mindanao Pygmy Babbler** ◇ *Dasycrotapha plateni* Seen well at PICOP.
- Rusty-crowned Babbler** ◇ *Sterrhoptilus capitalis* A couple seen in mixed flocks at PICOP (*euroaustralis*).
- Mindanao White-eye** ◇ (Black-masked W-eye) *Lophozosterops goodfellowi* Seen at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).
- Lowland White-eye** ◇ *Zosterops meyeri* Seen at La Mesa.
- Everett's White-eye** ◇ *Zosterops everetti* A few at PICOP (*basilanicus*)
- Yellowish White-eye** ◇ *Zosterops nigrorum* Seen several times.



*Winchell's Kingfisher, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis (with a Turquoise Flycatcher), Metallic-winged Sunbird from Mindanao and Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, ssp. fulvifasciatus.*

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

**Asian Fairy-bluebird** *Irena puella* Several in Palawan (*tweeddalii*).

**Philippine Fairy-bluebird** ◊ *Irena cyanogastra* Good views at Rajah Sikatuna.

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

**Asian Glossy Starling** *Aplonis panayensis* Common, first seen in 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.



*White-cheeked Bullfinch, Bicolored Flowerpecker and Mountain Tailorbird. (DLV)*

**Coledo** ♦ *Sarcops calvus* Two forms. The nominate on Luzon, *melanonotus* in Mindanao.

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

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

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

**Stripe-headed Rhabdornis** ♦ *Rhabdornis mystacalis* Nominate ssp at SUBIC and *minor* at PICOP.

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

**Ashy Thrush** ◊ *Geokichla cinerea* (VU) Two birds showed superbly at La Mesa.

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



Roosting Palawan Blue Flycatcher. (DLV)

**Brown-headed Thrush** *Turdus chrysolaus* One seen briefly at Mt Polis.

**White-browed Shortwing** *Brachypteryx montana* Seen at Kitanglad.

**Philippine Magpie-Robin** ◊ *Copsychus mindanensis* (NL) Seen at PICOP.

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

**White-vented Shama** ◊ *Copsychus niger* Great views in Palawan.

**Luzon Water Redstart** ◊ *Rhyacornis bicolor* (VU) Seen very well at Mt Polis.

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

**Asian Rock Thrush (Red-bellied R T)** *Monticola (solitarius) philippensis* A few seen. Not split by the IOC.

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

**Rufous-tailed Jungle Flycatcher** ◊ *Rhinomyias ruficauda* Seen at PICOP.

**Mugimaki Flycatcher** *Ficedula mugimaki* Seen at Kitanglad.

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

**Little Slaty Flycatcher** *Ficedula basilanica* One seen briefly at PICOP.

**Turquoise Flycatcher** ◊ (Mtn Verditer) *Eumyias panayensis* Seen at Polis and *ssp nigriloris* seen in Mindanao.

**Palawan Blue Flycatcher** ◊ *Cyornis lemprieri* (NT) Three birds seen well in Palawan.

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

**Yellow-throated Leafbird** ◊ *Chloropsis palawanensis* Several seen well in Palawan.

**Olive-backed Flowerpecker** ◊ *Prionochilus olivaceus* Seen at PICOP.

**Palawan Flowerpecker** ◊ *Prionochilus plateni* Seen well in Palawan (nominate).

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

**Bicolored Flowerpecker** ◊ *Dicaeum bicolor* Seen a few times (nominate).

**Red-keeled Flowerpecker** ◊ *Dicaeum australe* Many seen, but particularly common at PICOP.

**Orange-bellied Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum trigonostigma* *Cinereigulare* in Mindanao.

**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* Seen in Palawan (*paraguae*).  
**Grey-throated Sunbird** *Anthreptes griseigularis* Seen well at PICOP.  
**Purple-throated Sunbird** *Leptocoma sperata* Seen well a few times.  
**Copper-throated Sunbird** ◊ *Leptocoma calcostetha* Two seen in Palawan.  
**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) Great views at Mt Kitanglad (nominate).  
**Flaming Sunbird** ◊ *Aethopyga flagrans* One briefly at Mt Makiling (nominate).  
**Metallic-winged Sunbird** ◊ *Aethopyga pulcherrima* Small numbers recorded at PICOP.  
**Luzon Sunbird** ◊ *Aethopyga jefferyi* Common at Mt Polis. A recent split from Metallic-winged.  
**Lovely Sunbird** ◊ *Aethopyga shelleyi* A few seen in Palawan.  
**Handsome Sunbird** ◊ *Aethopyga bella* Excellent views in PICOP.  
**Orange-tufted Spiderhunter** ◊ *Arachnothera flammifera* Two seen at PICOP (nominate).  
**Pale Spiderhunter** ◊ *Arachnothera dilutior* Great views in Palawan.  
**Naked-faced Spiderhunter** ◊ *Arachnothera clarae* ◊ Seen very well at PICOP (nominate).  
**Cinnamon Ibon** ◊ *Hypocryptadius cinnamomeus* Many seen well at Mt Kitanglad.  
**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* Common and widespread (*malaccensis*).  
**Red-eared Parrotfinch** ◊ *Erythrura coloria* (NT) Brief sightings at Mt Kitanglad.  
**Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata* Seen in Palawan (*cabanisi*).  
**White-bellied Munia** *Lonchura leucogastra* 2 forms: *palawana* at Iwahig and *manueli* in Mindanao.  
**Chestnut Munia** *Lonchura atricapilla* First seen at Candaba, with one lots at Bislig airfield (*jagori*).  
**Eastern Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla tschutschensis* Several sightings.  
**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* Scattered sightings.  
**Paddyfield Pipit** *Anthus rufulus* Several sightings.  
**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Several seen well at Mt Polis.  
**Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* One seen well at Makiling.  
**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Seen at Iwahig rice fields.  
**White-cheeked Bullfinch** ◊ *Pyrrhula leucogenis* Good views at Kitanglad (*steerei*).

## MAMMALS

**Northern Palawan Tree Squirrel** *Sundasciurus juvencus* Seen in 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.  
**Long-tailed Macaque (Crab-eating M)** *Macaca fascicularis* Seen at several sites.

## NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

### **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*

Three subspecies noted- Nominate on Luzon, *difficilis* on Palawan, *kochii* on Mindanao.

### **Elegant Tit** *Periparus elegans*

No fewer than 3 subspecies noted. First site for each form as follows: Subic Bay (*gilliardi*), Mt Polis (*montigenus*), Mt Kitanglad (*mindanensis*).

### **Negros Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus nigrorum*

We saw 2 forms of this recently split species. On Luzon, we saw *benguetensis* at Mt Polis, on Mindanao we saw *flavostriatus* at Mt Kitanglad-

### **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*

With the recent splitting of Japanese Leaf Warbler *P. Xanthodryas* and Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *P. examinandus*, the possibility that some of our records of silent birds refer to these cannot be discounted. However, the two birds sound recorded were definitely Arctic Warblers.

### **Long-tailed Bush Warbler** *Locustella caudata*

Two forms were recorded. The nominate was seen very well at Mt Polis, while the form *unicolor* was heard at Mt Kitanglad. The two forms are vocally and morphologically different and could well be regarded as good species.

### **Mountain White-eye** *Zosterops montanus*

Two forms seen - *whiteheadi* was common on Mt Polis, *vulcani* was common at Mt Kitanglad.-

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

We saw two forms during the tour. On Luzon, we saw the nominate form at Subic Bay. On Palawan, we saw the form *aurora* which is distinctive as it shows an orange breast.