



*The gorgeous Tuamotu Sandpiper won the bird-of-the-trip through it's amazing character rather than good looks! (Pete Morris)*

## **PITCAIRN, HENDERSON & THE TUAMOTUS**

**3 – 17 OCTOBER 2017**

**LEADERS:** PETE MORRIS and MARK BEAMAN

After a three year absence, Birdquest returned to Polynesia this year with a bang! We modified our approach a little to give us an even more comprehensive coverage of the region, and this necessitated splitting the tour into two: this tour and the complementary French Polynesia and the Cook Islands which ran straight afterwards. It has to be said, the two combined produced an unrivalled selection of Polynesian species, with every single target endemic being seen well!

As the tour title suggests, this tour focused on the Pitcairn group (Pitcairn, Henderson and Oeno Islands), and the Acteon and Gambier Islands in French Polynesia's Tuamotus. These are some of the most remote islands



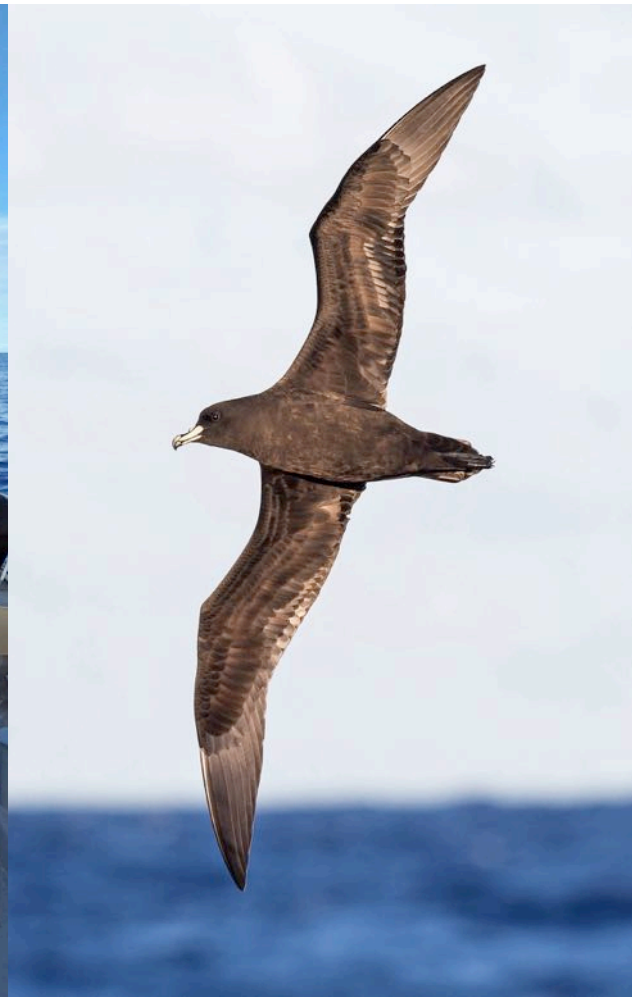
*The wonderful Henderson Crake gave many fabulous views (Pete Morris)*

on our planet, that have been visited by relatively few birders, and I am sure that we all felt extremely privileged each time we set foot on another island. Thanks to the skill and determination of Matt, Nigel and their skilled crew, we were able to make landings on all the islands on our cruise itinerary, despite some choppy seas and off-putting swells! It must be said that this was not a tour for those that are after a long bird list. Our tally was a mere 50 species, but as is often the case, it wasn't the quantity of species we were after. No fewer than seventeen of the species are of conservation concern (with one critically endangered and five endangered species). With top land birds such as Tuamotu Sandpiper, Henderson Crake, Stephen's Lorikeet and Polynesian Ground Dove, seabirds such as Polynesian Storm Petrel and Henderson, Phoenix and Juan Fernandez Petrels, numerous Bristle-thighed Curlews and plenty of Humpback Whales to keep us company, we were not disappointed.

Having met up in Tahiti, we flew to the start point of the tour, Totegegie Airport in the far distant Gambier Islands, the south-easternmost of the French Polynesian archipelago. From here, we took the quirky ferry across the lagoon to Rikitea on Mangareva. As soon as we disembarked the ferry, we were met by several smiling faces, that were soon to become our new friends. Matt and his crew (Elliot, Dan, Matt and Charlie) as well as the boss Nigel, soon made us feel at home on the R.V. Braveheart, and after a brief tour of our home for the next two weeks, we settled in to our cabins.

We were keen to get going, and once the paperwork had been completed, we set sail just before five, in order to position ourselves off the small island of Motu Teiku in the south of the lagoon. This we managed just in time to see numerous Tropical Shearwaters and c15 stocky Christmas Shearwaters coming back to their nesting grounds in the evening. With our first decent birds under the belt, we settled down to our first of many excellent meals prepared by Charlie, and adjusted to our new life on the ocean!

For the next 36 hours we chugged in an east-southeasterly direction – our destination Pitcairn Island. We were heading into a reasonable wind and lumpy seas, and the first night was a baptism of fire for some, or perhaps it helped us get our sea legs quicker! The following morning it was still choppy, but not unreasonably so, and most of us settled in to our first day of seabirding, largely from the back deck. Anyone that has been watching Sir David



*On deck on the Braveheart (Pete Morris), from where we saw many great seabirds including (clockwise from top right) Black Petrel (Pete Morris), Cook's Petrel (Björn Andersson) and Soft-plumaged Petrel (Björn Andersson)*

Attenborough's latest excellent series, 'Blue Planet 2', will have heard Sir David refer to the Pacific Ocean as a desert, and this was our first of many chances to experience it first hand. It was also a chance for the vastness of the Pacific to sink in as we worked out we were approximately 5000km from New Zealand and 5000km from Chile! In fact the Pacific Ocean covers an incredible 161.8 million square kilometres. Now that is a lot of ocean for those seabirds to feed in and to hide in! That said, some sharp eyes picked up a good number of species, and some even sharper cameras facilitated the identity of a few more. Murphy's Petrels and Black Petrels were our most constant companions, the latter joined by a handful of White-chinned Petrels. Both Herald and the similar Kermadec Petrel gave great views, a Soft-plumaged Petrel showed well but briefly, and a couple of Cook's Petrels were seen tantalizingly in the field but identified thanks to the amazing resolution of modern cameras. Aside from that, we also noted the odd Red-tailed Tropicbird, Common White Terns and a few boobies.

By sunrise the next morning, we were approaching Pitcairn Island, and by the time we had finished breakfast, we had arrived off the island, found a sheltered spot, and were ready to go ashore just as a Bristle-thighed



*Approaching Pitcairn Island at sunrise and the trusty R.V. Braveheart (Pete Morris)*



Curlew flew across calling, and Grey Noddies came to the boat to greet us. The islanders came out in their sturdy longboat to take us ashore, and what a fun and interesting bunch they were, somewhat dominated by the larger than life 'Pirate Paul'. The human history of Pitcairn is interesting to say the least. In 1790 nine of the mutineers from the Bounty, along with the native Tahitian men and women who were with them (six men, eleven women and a baby girl), settled on Pitcairn Island and set fire to the Bounty. The wreck is still visible

underwater in Bounty Bay, and most islanders descend from these original settlers. More recently, Pitcairn achieved notoriety at the beginning of this century through some unsavoury goings on, and it was suggested that we avoided this particular topic whilst on the island, which we did!



*Pirate Paul, one of the charismatic Pitcairn Islanders, a fine Grey Noddy and a 'sparrow' - Pitcairn Reed Warbler (Pete Morris)*



By eight we'd loaded the mail and other cargo on to the longboat and jumped aboard ourselves for the short transfer to the wharf at Pitcairn, one of the remotest inhabited islands in the world. After a warm welcome from the islanders, we headed up hill towards Adamstown, soon finding the local 'sparrow' – Pitcairn Reed Warbler, the only landbird on the island. They proved to be common, most being leucistic to some extent, but endearing nevertheless. Having made it to Adamstown we explored the market and little museum, and most then embarked on a quad bike tour of the island, admiring the spectacular scenery, and learning a little about the island life. One could not help wondering at the long-term future of this far flung outpost of humanity, now with only 40 or so, mostly ageing inhabitants. During our explorations, we noted a few seabirds including Great Frigatebirds, smart Red-tailed Tropicbirds, a few Red-footed and Brown Boobies, Brown, Black and Grey Noddies and Common White Terns. After an extremely interesting morning exploring the island, we reconvened for a very enjoyable lunch, followed by an informative talk about the birds of the Pitcairn group, where we learnt in detail about the sadly failed attempt to rid Henderson Island of Polynesian Rats. It had been a very pleasant visit, but it was already time to say our farewells to the islanders, board the longboat, and return to the Braveheart. We rounded off the day with a scenic circumnavigation of the island.



*A pair of typically leucistic Pitcairn Reed Warblers (Pete Morris)*

After a calm night, we set sail and headed a little further east-southeast to a seamount, where we spent a long time chumming and looking for seabirds. A tantalisingly distant Polynesian Storm Petrel and our first Henderson Petrels raised the excitement levels, and upon arriving at the reef, we were delighted to see our first couple of Humpback Whales. Through the day, we accumulated a few more seabirds including a few White-faced Storm Petrels, good numbers of Murphy's and Henderson Petrels and some showy Kermadec Petrels, but we were getting the idea that attracting seabirds in from the desert is far from straightforward!



*Cracking Pterodromas (clockwise from top left) Herald Petrel (Pete Morris), Kermadec Petrel (Pete Morris), and two Henderson Petrels (Björn Andersson) and (Pete Morris)*





*A gorgeous Stephen's Lorikeet feeding on palm flowers on Henderson Island (Pete Morris)*

By dawn the next day, we had arrived off Henderson Island, a relatively large island which is actually a raised or uplifted coral atoll. After breakfast we went ashore in the ship's Naiad – a jet-propelled inflatable with reinforced aluminium hull ideal for landings over coral reefs. Landing at North Beach proved to be relatively straightforward, and once all ashore we set off together to explore the island. Fortunately, all of the interesting birds can be found by exploring the palm groves, pandanus and woodland at the base of the makatea (raised coral centre), and we focused on the accessible areas alongside the rather long North Beach. We had already been greeted by friendly Henderson Reed Warblers, and a couple of Bristle-thighed Curlews on the beach,



*Henderson Reed Warblers also typically showed some leucistic feathering and seemed less common than Pitcairn Reed Warblers (Pete Morris)*





*Several beautiful Henderson Fruit Doves were seen very well (Pete Morris)*

and before too long our first colourful Stephen's Lorikeet put in an appearance in one of the flowering coconut palms. Henderson Fruit Dove was the next to put in an appearance, and the final piece of the jigsaw was put in to place when a couple of confiding Henderson Crakes were found rooting around in the leaf litter! Success! We then had the rest of the day simply to enjoy the place. Wandering around quietly, more furtive Henderson Crakes were discovered, with one bird even found on a nest. Pairs were watched together, while others dug deep holes in the leaf litter as they searched for food. More spectacular Stephen's Lorikeets gave great views, the odd confiding Henderson Fruit Dove obliged, and a good number of breeding Masked Boobies entertained. Towards the afternoon, good numbers of Henderson Petrels started arriving over the beach, joining the numerous Murphy's Petrels, and a few Kermadec and Herald Petrels joined the party. Numerous Red-tailed Tropicbirds engaged in their bizarre aerial display and several Grey Noddies floated over the beach. We even



*The lovely Henderson Crake soon became a favourite (Pete Morris)*

had tantalizing glimpses of what was most likely our first Phoenix Petrel. A lovely pink hue engulfed the horizon as we headed back to the Braveheart, and this was enhanced by some breaching Humpbacks. Watching these whales against a backdrop of the setting sun could hardly have been a better ending to a perfect day. Other than the excessive plastic pollution, and the all-too-numerous Polynesian Rats, it really had been a day in paradise!



*The sight and sound of Bristle-thighed Curlews was a regular feature of the tour (Pete Morris)*



*Juan Fernandez Petrel (Pete Morris) and a Long-tailed Skua (Björn Andersson)*

We returned to the island early the next morning for a few more hours on shore simply to soak it in and enjoy it. All four of the endemic land birds were of course seen again, as were numerous Bristle-thighed Curlews, Wandering Tattlers and breeding seabirds. By late morning, we set sail, and again attempted some chumming. White-faced Storm Petrels were again seen, and our first much-wanted Juan Fernandez Petrels put in an appearance. Other than that, small numbers of the usual *Pterodromas* were seen, and we came across an unexpected Long-tailed Jaeger (Skua).

When we awoke the next morning, we found ourselves holding station off the tiny atoll of Oeno, a stunning island of white sandy beaches surrounded by a coral reef and covered in palms and scrub. After an early breakfast we headed ashore nice and early, and after a straightforward beach landing, we set about exploring this wonderful island. Oeno is home to a huge number of breeding seabirds, many of which are remarkably



*Idyllic tropical island scenery on Oeno Island (Pete Morris)*



*Murphy's Petrels were abundant on Oeno Island (Pete Morris)*





*Christmas Shearwaters were present in small numbers on Oeno Island, and showed very well indeed (Pete Morris)*



tame, and we had a brilliant time walking all the way round the island (only a few kms) and strolling about amongst the bushes in the interior. Cameras clicked away madly, and it was often difficult to know which way to look! Much the most abundant species was Murphy's Petrel, and these were everywhere, and one had to be careful not to stand on fluffy, fat, brown chicks! There were also lots of delightful pink-hued Red-tailed Trop-



*Masked Booby and Red-tailed Tropicbird always entertained (Pete Morris)*





*Some of our encounters with Bristle-thighed Curlews were spectacular! (Pete Morris)*

icbirds and Masked Boobies nesting on the ground amongst the bushes, and Great Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies, Brown Noddies and Common White Terns nesting in the trees. Several Christmas Shearwaters were discovered in the scrub above the beach, and these were one of the highlights, as we also watched them flying around in a courtship display. Kermadec Petrels and Herald Petrels were seen circling over the island, and we managed to find both species on the deck. Aside from the seabirds, there were also plenty of tame Bristle-thighed Curlews, and a few Wandering Tattlers and Eastern Reef Egrets. As the afternoon wore on, more and more petrels came ashore, and numerous Herald Petrels chased each other around high above the island in an exaggerated courtship flight whilst cackling manically. Careful scrutiny of these petrels resulted in the discovery of several Phoenix Petrels, and we spent a while getting to grips with this interesting and endangered species.



*We spent a fine afternoon on Oeno watching Phoenix Petrels (above) and Herald Petrels (Pete Morris)*







*We also found both Herald Petrel (above) and Kermadec Petrel on the deck on Oeno Island (Pete Morris)*



A return visit to Oeno the following morning once again allowed us to soak up the splendour of this magical island. We also put in a short vigil for Spotless Crake which proved fruitful, with all of those that wanted getting excellent views. The swell was still running high, and the journey back to the Braveheart in the Naiad was a bit



*The rides on and off Oeno Island were at time exhilarating! This Spotless Crake showed well to those that wanted (Pete Morris)*



hairy, with some big breakers rolling in. Sadly, we copped one, and with one camera already on the blink, we gained a second casualty, and the camera merry-go-round began in earnest!

That afternoon we set sail once more, this time bound for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia. Other than a couple of Phoenix Petrels, and a few Herald Petrels, little of interest was seen. The whole of the following day was at sea too, though we did spend a fair amount of time chumming around the Minerva Reef. Here, we were



*Many Red-footed Boobies delighted us (Pete Morris)*

often accompanied by impressive Humpback Whales, but as usual, the seabirds excited but frustrated us. A White-bellied Storm Petrel was identified at some distance (presumably a *titan*), the odd Juan Fernandez Petrel flashed by, and our first Tahiti Petrel was identified. Just as interest was waning, the big one finally put in an appearance, and it really could not have been better! We were able to watch and follow a superb Polynesian Storm Petrel for more than half an hour, watching in awe as it propelled itself over the waves in arcs, springing off one foot, occasionally stopping to pick up tiny squids or jellyfish. It really was the stuff that dreams are made of for the seabird officianados amongst our ranks! Heading on we found more Juan Fernandez Petrels, but little else.



*A composite image of the brilliant Polynesian Storm Petrel that we spent nearly an hour watching! (Pete Morris)*

Next morning it was pleasant to find ourselves approaching the low profile of Tenararo Atoll. Being one of the very few atolls which supports a population of the fabled Tuamotu Sandpiper, excitement began to mount, but the landing looked far from straightforward, and even our more agile client, 'Gibbon', declared that it was too dangerous, even for him!! Fortunately, Nigel had other ideas, and some skilful Naiad driving saw us literally jet over the treacherous coral reef, making the landing pretty safe and easy with a bit of care. All ashore, we began to explore, though by now, the Tuamotu Sandpipers had already found us! Indeed, the stories about the Tuamotu Sandpiper had not been exaggerated, and these stunning little birds entertained us for hours. They were so charismatic and so confiding. They would literally run up to your feet, and with a bit of encouragement, some would even sit on you – on your foot or hand, even shoulder and head! It's hard to explain how a dowdy little brown bird can be so good – I guess one has to sample it to realize! They were everywhere, even in the heart of the pandanus-dominated forest and up in the trees. They were quite literally impossible to avoid, as wherever one stopped for more than a few moments, two or three would fly in to investigate!! Atoll Fruit Doves were also confiding, though it took us a little longer to find our first critically endangered Polynesian Ground



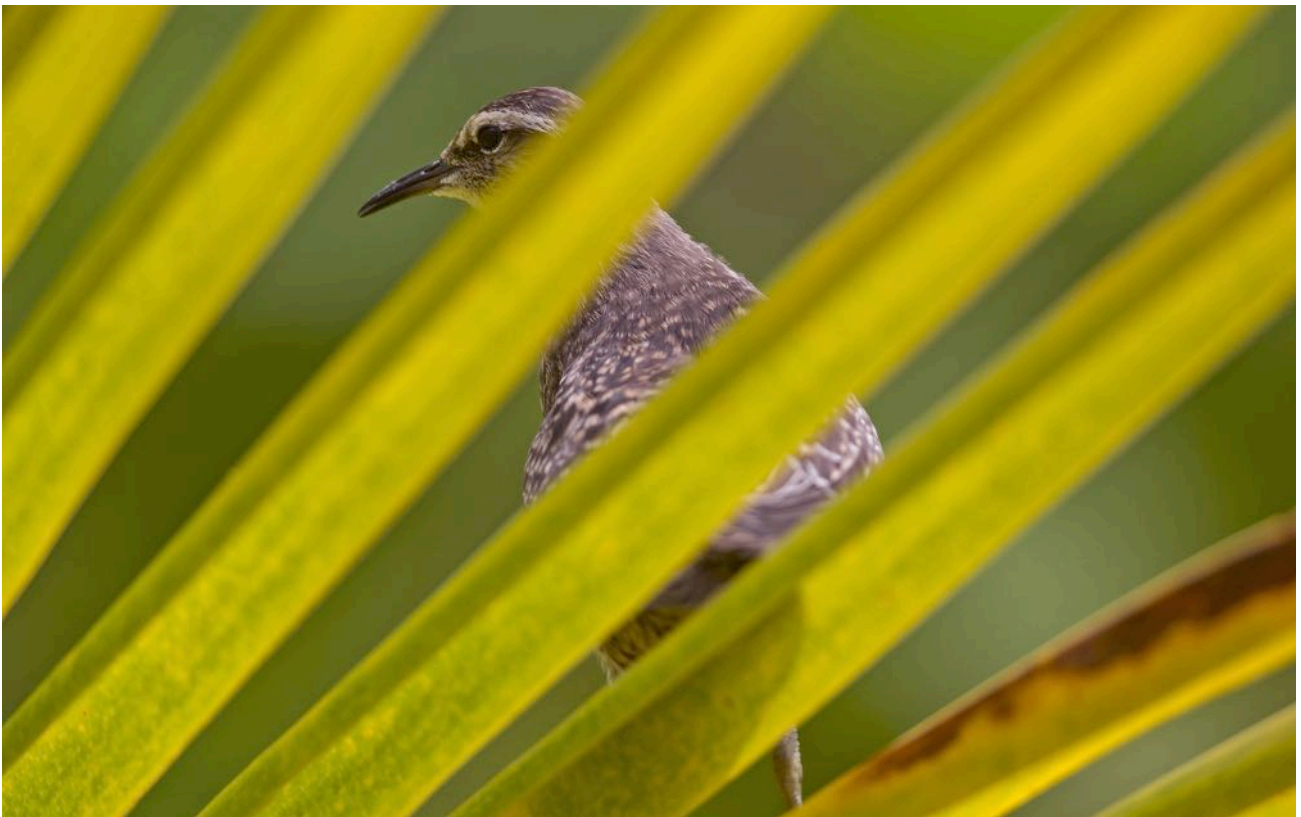
*Tuamotu Sandpipers really were amazingly friendly as this one on my hand demonstrates (Björn Andersson)*

Dove, as these were much less common and preferred the interior of the island. However, with a concerted effort we found several, and when we did, they proved to be almost as tame as the sandpiper and the fruit dove. The whole experience of seeing these extremely rare birds being so ridiculously friendly was both exhilarating and worrying. They are so defenceless, and it is we humans and our rats, cats and dogs that have brought them to the verge of extinction.

While these three species occupied most of our attention, there were also lots of breeding seabirds on the island, mostly Great Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies and Common White Terns, with smaller numbers of



*Mark eyes up a friendly Tuamotu Sandpiper (Pete Morris), whilst another plays hide-and-peek with Björn (Björn Andersson)*



Red-tailed Tropicbirds and Masked Boobies. Several Murphy's Petrels were seen flying about over the island, and other birds included several Pacific Reef Herons and plenty more Bristle-thighed Curlews... "toowip".

Many of us went ashore on Tenararo for a few hours early the next morning, once again to soak in the splendours of this brilliant island and its unique wildlife. It was then time to head on once more, this time south



*A couple of different male critically endangered Polynesian Ground Doves on Tenararo - the final stronghold (Pete Morris)*





*A young male Polynesian Ground Dove and one of several smart Atoll Fruit Doves (Pete Morris)*





*More views of our favourite Tuamotu Sandpipers... (Pete Morris)*





towards the equally remote Morane Atoll. The wind had whipped up a bit, and the swell increased, and by the time we hit the open oceans it was quite lumpy. Fairly swiftly the back deck emptied, and the cabins became occupied with people riding out the 6m waves from the horizontal comfort of a bunk! Dinner was surprisingly well attended – I think most had acquired their sea legs by now!

The following morning we arrived at Morane Atoll in the south of the Actaeon Group, ready for another landing. This one proved a little tricky but not too bad – we were well practiced by now! We spent an enjoyable day wandering around this large atoll, admiring dozens and dozens more Tuamotu Sandpipers. Plenty of the usual seabirds (tropicbirds, boobies, noddies and Sooty and Common White Terns) and Bristle-thighed Curlews were present, but despite some of us traipsing through the dense pandanus, no ground doves were found. A Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo was a bonus for the boss, and I at least learnt that crashing through pandanus in shorts is something one should only do once – I was picking spikes out weeks later!



*Another fine Bristle-thighed Curlew... (Pete Morris)*



*A view from Morane Atoll looking out at the Braveheart with sandpipers looking on! (Pete Morris)*

We began the following morning landing some spectacular Wahu which were skilfully filleted for more delicious meals!! Leaving Morane, the seas were still heavy, and the winds brisk, meaning that seabirding was tough. Birds would soon disappear into troughs or be obscured by the mountain behind the boat! Consequently little



*...and another Tuamotu Sandpiper!! (Pete Morris)*

of real interest was seen, and it was a relief to get in the shelter of the vast Mangareva Lagoon. An attempted chum was largely uneventful, though we did see Wedge-tailed Shearwater and White-tailed Tropicbird while looking, and we then made our way to Kamaka Island, a privately-owned island with a single inhabitant, the amiable owner Johnny Reasin. Sadly, Johnny has been quite unwell, but he still invited us to hold our final barbeque lunch at his humble abode, and this we did with great pleasure, whilst allowing Matt and the crew to catch up with their great friend. It was a very pretty little island and we had time to explore and admire the views, but sadly it was just about devoid of birds except for the odd Pacific Reef Heron, Wandering Tattler and Common White Tern. From Kamaka, we checked some nearby motus late in the afternoon for seabirds, but little was going on, though we did get a chance to study the interesting form of Blue Noddy that lives in the Gambier Islands. We then made our way back to Riketea where we moored up soon after dark.

Our final dinner on the Braveheart that evening was an extremely jolly affair. Hammers, spanners, even a blow torch were laid out to help dismantle the delicious coconut crabs and a great dinner was washed down with



*Beauty and the beast!! Lovely Common White Terns and hulking Great Frigatebirds were frequently overhead (Pete Morris)*





*The crab bonanza on the final evening. I've never witnessed anything like it! (Björn Andersson)*

plenty of fine New Zealand wine! The fancy dress came out, and some of us stayed up rather later than was perhaps sensible, leading to numerous cases of the unpleasant BDF (Back Deck Fever) the following morning, though this was small beer compared to poor Elliot's fate...

And so the first of our two tours around the remote Polynesian Islands drew to a close. We disembarked after breakfast and gradually retraced our steps back to the airport, where the tour ended, and onward to Tahiti. Some managed a visit to the impressive church in Riketea (and added Rock Dove to the list!!), others simply relaxed on the wharf. As we waved the Braveheart off (she was heading off to meet most of us in Nuku Hiva in the distant Marquesas in a few days time) we could reflect back on what was possibly one of the most amazing adventures many of us had ever been on! The memories of the remote islands, endless vast ocean, beautiful and endangered birds and Humpback Whales will live with us for ever, and for that amazing experience we owe much to Matt and his special crew. And of course the sturdy little Braveheart, which had soon become our second home, a home that many of us couldn't wait to be reunited with...



*Oops, I did it again! Another Tuamotu Sandpiper. Sorry! (Pete Morris)*



*Stunning Stephen's Lorikeets were firm favourites on Henderson Island (Pete Morris)*

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR**

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).

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

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

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

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>

**(EW)** = Extinct in the wild, **(CR)** = Critically Endangered, **(EN)** = Endangered, **(VU)** = Vulnerable, **(NT)** = Near Threatened, **(DD)** = Data Deficient.

For polytypic species, the subspecies seen on the tour, where known, is placed in parentheses at the end of the species comment. Generally, species listed with trinomials are not currently split by the IOC.

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **2017. IOC World Bird List (v 7.3)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra ([www.igoterra.com](http://www.igoterra.com)) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.

**Red Junglefowl (introduced) *Gallus gallus*** A few on Pitcairn.

**Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*** (NL) One for some the evening we left Oeno Island.

**White-faced Storm Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*** Small numbers, with great views between Henderson and Oeno.



*White-faced Storm Petrels showed well, and we were pleased with multiple Juan Fernandez Petrels and saw a few White-chinned Petrels (Pete Morris)*



**White-bellied Storm Petrel** ◇ *Fregetta grallaria* One seen distantly at the Minerva Reef, confirmed from photos [titan].

**Polynesian Storm Petrel** ◇ *Nesofregetta fuliginosa* (EN) Brilliant views of one for 40 mins at the Minerva Reef. Stunner!

**Murphy's Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma ultima* (NT) First seen on the way to Pitcairn, then common, with many 100s on Oeno.

**Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis* A single early on the passage to Pitcairn.

**Juan Fernandez Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma externa* (VU) First seen on the way to Oeno. Several seen well, a few close to the boat.

**Kermadec Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma neglecta* Several at sea, first on the way to Pitcairn. Also several seen well on Oeno [juana].

**Herald Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma heraldica* Several at sea, first on the way to Pitcairn. Also many seen very well on Oeno.

**Henderson Petrel** ◇ (H Island P) *Pterodroma atrata* (EN) Many seen well on and around Henderson Island, with c200 in a day!

**Phoenix Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma alba* (EN) A probable on Henderson, excellent views of c5 over Oeno, and two more at sea.

**Cook's Petrel** ◇ *Pterodroma cookii* (VU) Two seen poorly and tentatively identified from photos on the journey to Pitcairn.

**Tahiti Petrel** ◇ *Pseudobulweria rostrata* (NT) Just a couple seen, the first on the Minerva Reef [nominate].

**White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* A few seen, the first on the way to Pitcairn Island.

**Black Petrel** ◇ (Parkinson's P) *Procellaria parkinsoni* (VU) Several seen well, the first on the way to Pitcairn Island.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna pacifica* Just one when chumming off the northwest side of Mangareva Lagoon.

**Christmas Shearwater** ◇ (C Island S) *Puffinus nativitatis* First off Motu Teiku at dusk, then seen brilliantly on Oeno Island.



A Christmas Shearwater over Oeno Island (Pete Morris)

**Tropical Shearwater** ◇ *Puffinus bailloni* First seen (c50) flying around Motu Teiku at dusk. A few others at sea [dichrous].

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* Many seen; very common on Henderson and Oeno Islands [melanorhynchos].

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* A few seen around Mangareva Lagoon [dorotheae].

**Pacific Reef Heron (P R Egret)** *Egretta sacra* A dark morph on Oeno Island, others on Tenararo and Morane [nominate].

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* Common and widespread, first seen on Pitcairn Island [ridgway].



*Masked Boobies on Henderson Island, the one above receiving unwanted attention from a Great Frigatebird (Pete Morris)*





**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* Just a few seen, the first on Tenararo [nominatē].

**Masked Booby** ♦ *Sula dactylatra* First seen on the way to Pitcairn, but then common on several islands [*personata*].

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* Common and widespread. Mainly darker birds but some smart light birds too [*rubripes*].

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* A couple seen at Pitcairn Island and a few around Mangareva [*plotus*].

**Spotless Crake** ♦ *Porzana tabuensis* Great views of one at the small swamp on Oeno Island.

**Henderson Crake** ♦ (H Island C) *Porzana atra* (VU) Brilliant views of 8+ on Henderson Island. Superb and very confiding.



*Henderson Crake and Bristle-thighed Curlew (Pete Morris)*



**Bristle-thighed Curlew** ♦ *Numenius tahitiensis* (VU) One over Pitcairn, then plenty on Henderson, Oeno, Tenararo and Morane.  
**Tuamotu Sandpiper** ♦ *Prosobonia parvirostris* (EN) Very common on Tenararo and Morane. Many wonderful encounters!  
**Wandering Tattler** *Tringa incana* Present on most islands in small numbers.  
**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* (NL) One for one lucky observer on Oeno Island.  
**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* Common and widespread. First seen well on Pitcairn Island [*pileatus*].  
**Black Noddy** ♦ *Anous minutus* Much the scarcer of the two noddies. First seen at Mangareva [*nominata*].



*Brown Noddies and Red-tailed Tropicbirds were present on most islands we visited (Pete Morris)*



**Blue Noddy** ♦ *Anous ceruleus* See note.

**Grey Noddy** ♦ (G Ternlet) *Procelsterna albivitta* Many seen well at Pitcairn, Henderson and Oeno Islands. [*skottsbergii*].

**White Tern** ♦ (C Fairy T) *Gygis alba* Two forms apparently: *candida* in French Polynesia; *leucopes* in the Pitcairn group.

**Greater Crested Tern** (Crested T, Swift T) *Thalasseus bergii* Seen at a few spots, first at Mangareva [*cristatus*].

**Spectacled Tern** ♦ (Grey-backed T) *Onychoprion lunatus* (NL) Three for one lucky observer on Morane Atoll.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* Just small numbers seen, the first at 40 mile reef [*oahuensis*].

**Long-tailed Jaeger** (L-t Skua) *Stercorarius longicaudus* One seen between Henderson and Oeno [*pallascens*].

**Rock Dove** (introduced) *Columba livia* A few fine examples of 'Beaman's Pigeon' in Mangareva.

**Polynesian Ground Dove** ♦ *Alopecoenas erythropterus* (CR) Brilliant views of several on Tenararo - stunners [nominated].

**Atoll Fruit Dove** ♦ *Ptilinopus coralensis* (NT) Common on Tenararo where c10 seen daily.

**Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo** ♦ (L-t Koel) *Urodynamis taitensis* (LO) One for Mark on Morane Atoll.

**Stephen's Lorikeet** ♦ *Vini stepheni* (VU) Brilliant views of several on Henderson, where up to c12 were seen each day.

**Henderson Reed Warbler** ♦ *Acrocephalus taiti* (VU) Brilliant views of 6+ on Henderson. Most were partly leucistic.

**Pitcairn Reed Warbler** ♦ *Acrocephalus vaughani* (EN) Very common on Pitcairn. Most were partly leucistic.



Another view of the lovely Polynesian Ground Dove (Pete Morris)



*A Humpback Whale at sunset on Henderson Island (Pete Morris)*

#### **MAMMALS**

**Polynesian Rat** *Rattus exulans* Especially common on Henderson Island... sadly!

**Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae* Many great looks – in excess of 30 logged during the tour!



*The scourge of Henderson Island - the Polynesian Rat (Pete Morris)*



Henderson Island (Pete Morris)

#### NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. (Gill, F and Donsker, D Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird Names v7.3. Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

#### **Blue Noddy** *Anous ceruleus*

Blue/Grey Noddies seen around Mangareva at the beginning of the tour, and again around the islands at the end of the trip, are categorised as the subspecies *murphyi* by the IOC and included in Blue Noddy. They appear variable and somewhat intermediate between Blue Noddies further northwest and Grey Noddies further southeast, though are darker, dove grey generally than birds from further south.



A Grey Noddy on the beach on Henderson Island (Pete Morris)



*For those with the inclination, there was some great underwater life! Clockwise from top left: Ornate Butterfly Fish; Saddled Butterfly Fish; Six-barred Wrasse and an imposing Grey Reef Shark (Björn Andersson)*





*Even from the shore there were great creatures to be seen (Pete Morris)*





*Sadly, plastic litter is a great problem on Henderson Island, as, despite the sign, are rats! (Pete Morris)*







**APPENDIX 1**

**TOP 6 BIRDS OF THE TOUR**

- 1<sup>st</sup> TUAMOTU SANDPIPER**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> HENDERSON CRAKE**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> POLYNESIAN STORM PETREL**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Stephen's Lorikeet**
- 5<sup>th</sup> Polynesian Ground Dove**
- 6<sup>th</sup> Murphy's Petrel**





*Masked Booby (Pete Morris)*