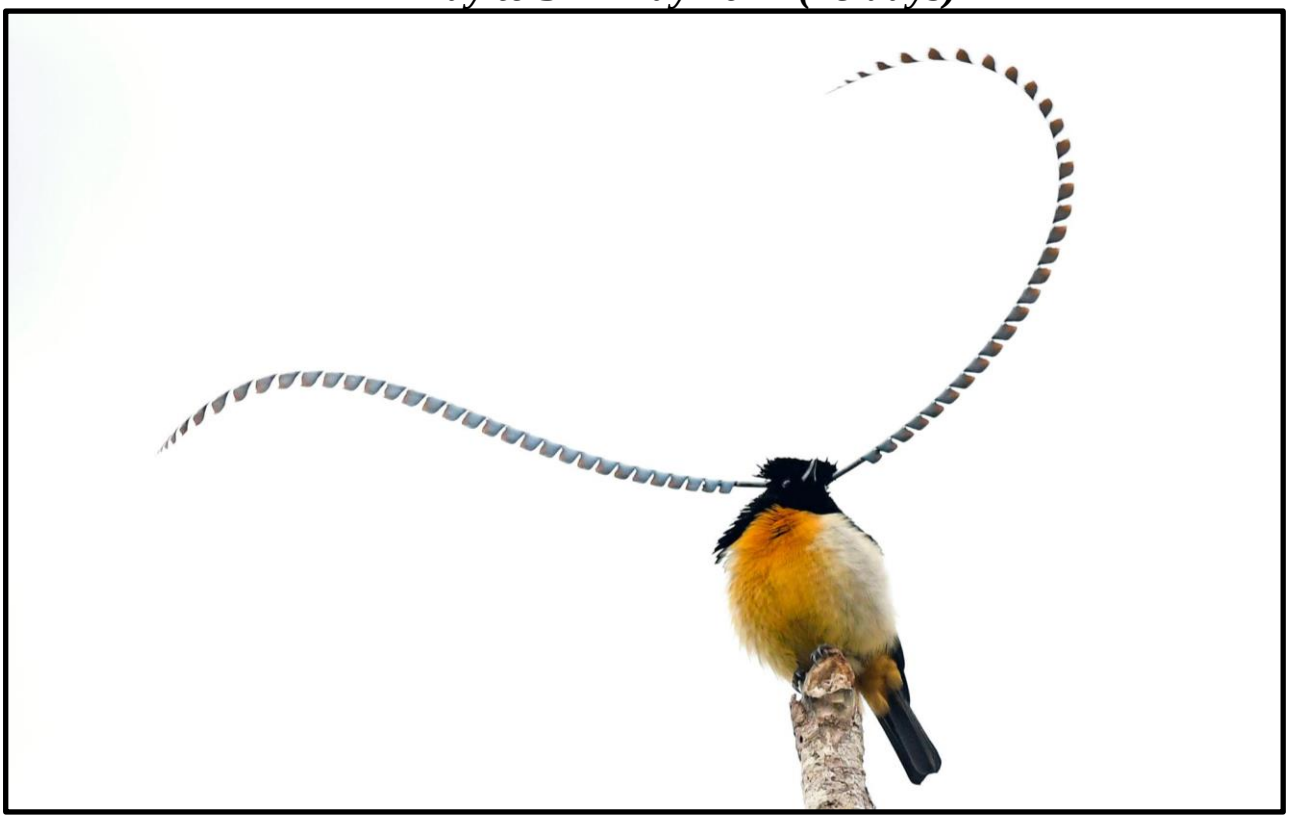
ROCKJUMPER
Worldwide Birding Adventures

# Papua New Guinea

## Birding in Paradise I

***14th May to 31st May 2022 (18 days)***



**King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise by Rich Lindie**

*Of all the world's birding destinations, Papua New Guinea must certainly rank amongst the most fascinating and exotic. The second largest island on Earth, New Guinea was the last inhabited island to be explored by Europeans, and even today many areas have little or no exposure to Western influence. The virtually untouched forests come alive with incredible fruit doves, fig parrots, fairywrens, jewel-babblers, pittas, honeyeaters and berrypeckers, while over twenty species of dazzling birds-of-paradise present sometimes unbelievably iridescent colours and wild tail plumes in one of the most astonishing exhibits of the natural world!*

*Travelling by air, road, and boat we will explore the diverse habitats of the country, from winding lowland rivers and sprawling grasslands, to the richly forested highlands. Native tribes still dress themselves to mimic the island's fabulous birds, adorned with elaborate head plumes made from the feathers of parrots and birds-of-paradise. Our eighteen-day tour covers the highlights of this enchanted and little-travelled country. We can expect a phenomenal variety of remarkable birds in and amongst vast regions of immaculate forests that have been experienced by few people on earth!*

## THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

### THE ITINERARY

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| **Day 1** | **Arrival in Port Moresby, birding at Pacific Adventist University** |
| **Day 2** | **Day trip to Varirata National Park** |
| **Day 3** | **Flight from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen** |
| **Days 4 & 5** | **Rondon Ridge** |
| **Day 6** | **Rondon Ridge to Mt Hagen** |
| **Days 7 & 8** | **Mount Hagen area** |
| **Day 9** | **Flight from Mt Hagen to Kiunga, drive to Tabubil** |
| **Days 10 & 11** | **Tabubil & OK Menga area** |
| **Day 12** | **Tabubil to Kiunga** |
| **Day 13** | **Kiunga area** |
| **Day 14** | **Boat trip from Kiunga down the Elevala River** |
| **Day 15** | **Return to Kiunga** |
| **Day 16** | **Flight from Kiunga to Port Moresby** |
| **Day 17** | **Port Moresby area** |
| **Day 18** | **Final departure** |

## TOUR MAP



## THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

**Day 1: Arrival in Port Moresby and Pacific Adventist University**. Today we meet in Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua New Guinea (PNG). This area was once home to the Motuan seagoing people, famous for their impressively long boats with strange crab-claw shaped sails. PNG occupies the eastern half of the world's second largest island, New Guinea. Once divided between the two colonial powers of Germany to the north and Britain to the south, the entire island was ceded to Australia after the First World War, with PNG gaining independence in 1975.



**Fawn-breasted Bowerbird by Gareth Robbins**

The region of Port Moresby supports the richest avifauna in PNG due to its diversity of habitats. These range from lowland rainforest and eucalypt woodland to rich mangroves, open grasslands and coastal palm beaches. In the afternoon we will visit the Pacific Adventist University, which affords a pleasant introduction to some of the woodland and wetland birds of the island. The expansive grounds of the university contain gardens and patches of habitat suitable for a surprising variety of lowland species that can literally teem with birds.

We will spend the afternoon looking for species that include the huge Blue-winged Kookaburra with its distinctive raucous call, flocks of migrant Black-faced Cuckooshrike that can often number more than 50 at a time, as well as the attractive Rufous-banded and Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters. The loud calls of New Guinea Friarbird are heard throughout the grounds, while conspicuous Black-backed Butcherbirds and the huge, skulking Pheasant Coucal patrol the scrubby edge. One of the key birds here is the subtly attractive Fawn-breasted Bowerbird and we will also look for Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Torresian Crow, the locally uncommon Bar-shouldered Dove, endemic Gray-headed Mannikin and flocks of attractive Australasian Figbird and Yellow-faced Myna. The grounds support many ponds and we can expect to see Comb-crested Jacana, Australasian Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen and good numbers of Pacific Black Duck and Wandering and Plumed Whistling Duck. Other species we may encounter include Green Pygmy Goose, Grey Teal, Raja Shelduck and Nankeen Night Heron. Overhead we will keep an eye out for Whistling and Brahminy Kites, noisy Rainbow Bee-eater, White-breasted Woodswallow and Pacific Swallow. Variable Goshawk hunt throughout the grounds and in the late afternoon we will seek out a



**Raja Shelduck & Wandering Whistling Duck by Glen Valentine**

roost of impressively large Papuan Frogmouths! We will then head back to our comfortable hotel situated on the outskirts of the city.

**Day 2: Day trip to Varirata National Park.** Our day will begin with a very early departure for Varirata National Park, situated in the foothills above the city. En route to the park entrance, we will pass by the head of the notorious Kokoda Trail, where valiant efforts by Australian and local troops halted the Japanese march during the Second World War.



**Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher by Rich Lindie**

The dry eucalypt forests that flank the quiet access road to Varirata provide superb birding and noisy screeches will reveal pairs of stunning Black-capped Lory and flocks of busy Coconut Lorikeet and Red-cheeked Parrot. Here we will find a mix of New Guinea endemics and species shared with Australia. Likely birds may include the attractive White-shouldered Fairywren, Black Sunbird, White-throated Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Varied Triller, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Leaden Flycatcher, Brown Oriole, Spangled Drongo and noisy Hooded Butcherbird, while we will also work hard to try and locate the scarce White-bellied Whistler.

Upon entering the park, we will spend the morning slowly walking the narrow trails that enter the moister evergreen hill forest. These well-marked trails wind through a variety of habitats with some excellent lookouts over Port Moresby and the coastline, providing a full day of new sights and sounds.

The forests here are particularly rich in kingfishers; in fact, New Guinea hosts the world's highest density of these desirable birds with 24 species known to occur! We will search for the PNG endemic Brown-headed Paradise Kingfisher, one of several paradise kingfisher species found on the island and distinguished by their long trailing tails. Further kingfishers to be found today may include Yellow-billed, Azure, Forest, Papuan Dwarf and Sacred, while the most attractive of all the giant kingfishers, Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, is also a distinct possibility.



**Orange-fronted Fruit Dove by Rich Lindie**

Columbids are very well represented here, particularly the stunning collection of Fruit Doves including Wompoo, Pink-spotted, Superb, Beautiful and Orange-bellied. Zoe's Imperial Pigeon, Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove, Metallic Pigeon and the elusive Pheasant Pigeon are other species we will be on the lookout for. The latter is likely to be heard but we would be very fortunate to observe this secretive ground dweller. Other species we might find on the trails include White-faced Robin, Black Cicadabird, Barred Cuckooshrike, Sooty Thicket Fantail and

inquisitive Chestnut-bellied Fantail, Frilled, Black-faced and Spot-winged Monarchs, Green-backed Honeyeater, Rusty Mouse-warbler with its continuous squeaky-gate call, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Grey Whistler, Rusty Pitohui and the poisonous Hooded Pitohui, Pale-billed Scrubwren, Growling Riflebird with its loud, guttural calls, Fairy Gerygone, Black Berrypecker and Dwarf Longbill. The last two mentioned species belong to the Berrypecker family that is endemic to New Guinea. Two other taxonomic oddities that sometimes join the mixed feeding flocks at Varirata are Goldenface and Drongo Fantail and while both are difficult to track down we will certainly try our best as they are both of great interest. We will also attempt to locate Barred Owlet-nightjar, a localised endemic, by checking some potential roost sites.



**Raggiana Bird-of-paradise by Rich Lindie**

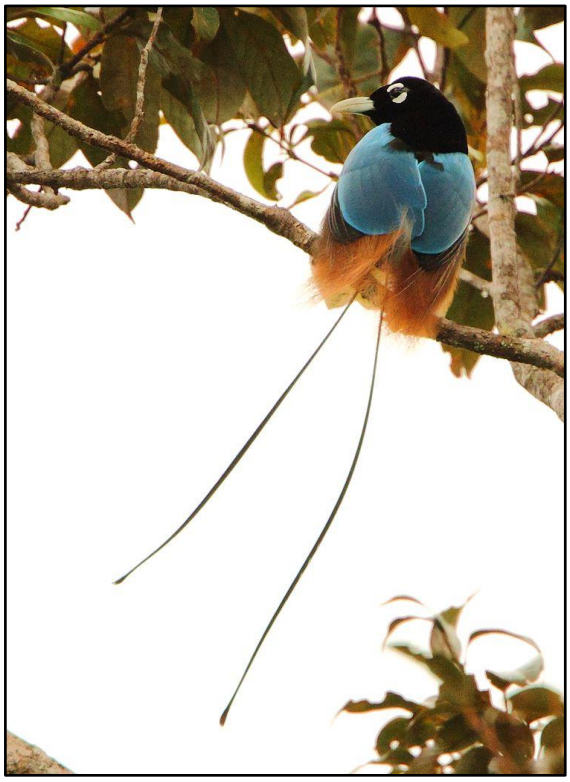
Besides the Pheasant Pigeon, several other secretive terrestrial birds occur in Varirata, all of them a challenge to observe! These include Black-billed Brushturkey, Crested Pitohui, Cinnamon and White-breasted Ground Dove, Painted Quail-thrush, the stunning Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler and Papuan Scrub Robin. Any of these require luck but it would take a huge dose of luck to bump into a Dwarf Cassowary or Forest Bittern, although we have done just that on past tours! However, the absolute highlight of the day will be witnessing the marvellous performance by testosterone-ridden male Raggiana Bird-of-paradise. Adorned with elaborate red and orange flank plumes, they dance in anticipation of a potential mate. We will visit a display site where we may see good numbers of displaying males and receptive females. After this unforgettable experience, we will know for sure that we really are in birders' heaven!



**Plum-faced Lorikeet by Glen Valentine**

**Day 3: Flight from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen.** This morning we fly from Port Moresby to Mount Hagen before transferring to our nearby lodge. Sitting on the outer edge of the Kubor Range, the lodge sits at an altitude of around 2,150 masl. Powered by its own eco-friendly hydro plant, this rather luxurious lodge enjoys stunning views over the Wahgi Valley and Mount Hagen itself. On arrival we may bird the lodge gardens for White-shouldered Fairywren (here of the black and white northern race), Mountain Myzomela, Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove, Mountain

Meliphaga, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Yellow-browed Melidectes before heading out onto the surrounding trails for some initial exploration.

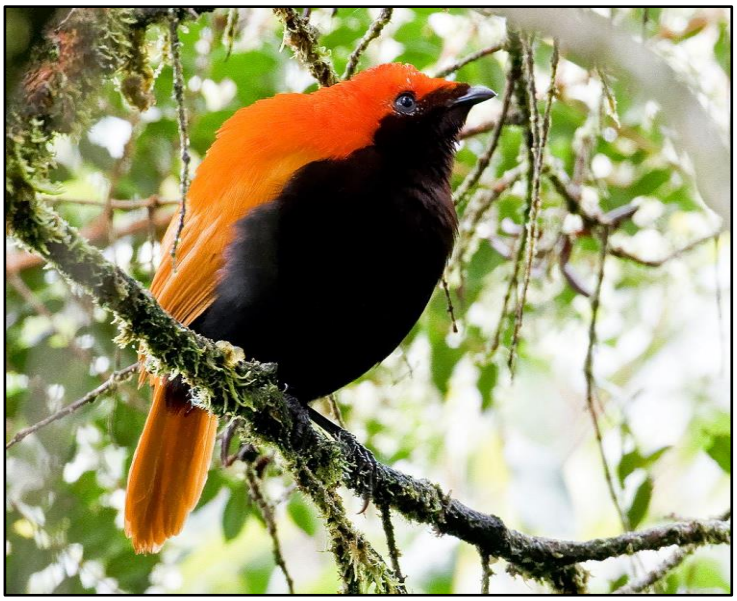


**Blue Bird-of-paradise by Markus Lilje**

**Days 4 & 5: Rondon Ridge.** We have two full days to explore the surrounding forests of Rondon Ridge. A spectacular diversity of Bird-of-paradise occur here, including the elaborately plumed King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise, Superb Bird-of-paradise with its protruding iridescent breast-shields, outrageous Blue Bird-of-paradise, the rare Black and more widespread Brown Sicklebills and impressive Princess Stephanie's Astrapia! With the keen knowledge of local guides, we will attempt to see as many of these jewel-like species as possible, some of which may be performing their ritualistic displays.

Rondon Ridge is a good area to search for some of the more elusive of the 7 endemic bird families of New Guinea. The fabulous Wattled Ploughbill is common here although not easy to see as it moves around in the incredibly lush bamboo growth. The very skulky Mottled Berryhunter is also to be found here, but as always it is much easier to hear than actually see! Poisonous Blue-capped Ifrits are relatively common at the higher parts of the trail. Besides these specialties, we will search some of the forest trails in the area for some other highly sought after species such as the elusive MacGregor's Bowerbird (generally easy to see here!), Goldie's Parakeet, Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot, Black Pitohui, Black-throated Honeyeater, Black-mantled Goshawk, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Sclater's Whistler, Lesser Melampitta, Streaked and Mid-mountain Berrypecker, and Blue-faced Parrotfinch. It is arguably the best site in the country to track down a couple of rare and rather obscure species, namely Yellowish-streaked Honeyeater and Papuan Parrotfinch.

On one of our days here we shall depart the lodge shortly after a hot coffee or tea to take a slow hike up the ridge. Walking through cool forest we are likely to find parties of Buff-faced and Large Scrubwren and perhaps some mixed species flocks, whilst if we hear the piping call of Spotted Jewel-babbler we will certainly do our best to see it! Upon reaching a clearing at the summit, we shall watch and wait for the call of Black Sicklebill, another speciality of Rondon Ridge. With luck we shall see one of the massive males dash into the open before skulking away. We can also expect to find the commoner Brown Sicklebill, the simply incredible King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise and hopefully a few male Princess Stephanie's Astrapia with their amazing tails. We will keep our eyes open for the quiet Rufescent



**Crested Satinbird by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

Imperial Pigeon feeding in the mid-canopy, Yellow-billed, Papuan and the odd Orange-billed Lorikeet, Rufous-backed Honeyeaters, Black-breasted Boatbill and Rufous-naped Bellbird.



**Wattled Ploughbill by Rich Lindie**

We'll head back down the trail to bird a patch of lower altitude forest for the very desirable Blue Bird-of-paradise and the somewhat commoner, but no less attractive Superb Bird-of-paradise. If available, we will head over to look at an active bower of the rare MacGregor's Bowerbird, although we are more likely to encounter this species at a favoured fruiting tree. We may even be able to find a male with their impressive long orange crest! Mixed flocks move through in a frenzy, but with care we may find Loria's Satinbird, Fan-tailed Berrypeckers, Black Monarch, and Island Leaf Warbler.

A number of other species that are likely to be found as we search for the area's specialities include White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Papuan Mountain Pigeon, Ornate Melidectes, Little Shrikethrush, Black and Dimorphic Fantail, Papuan Sitella, Hooded Pitohui, and Black-throated Robin. At the end of the day we will enjoy the spectacular views over the Wahgi Valley and across to the stunning alpine peaks of Mt Hagen and Mt Giluwe. Nocturnal walks could produce a sighting of Papuan Boobook or even the rare Feline Owlet-nightjar.

**Day 6: Rondon Ridge to Mt Hagen.** We have a few more hours to bird our lodge gardens before driving to our next lodge, roughly 2 hours away. En route we shall keep our eyes peeled for birding opportunities, which may see us stopping for Black-headed Whistler, Red-capped Flowerpecker, flocks of Hooded Mannikins or even a perched Brown Falcon.

Our lodge for the next three nights is situated at 2,900m (9,600ft), inside a lush alpine forest patch! Here we will concentrate our efforts on the montane forest patches and secondary forest habitat of this fabulous area.



**King Bird-of-paradise by Glen Valentine**

We are likely to linger at the lodge feeders where the remarkable Ribbon-tailed Astrapias will compete with Brown Sicklebill, Common Smoky and Grey-streaked Honeyeaters, Belford's Melidectes, Brehm's Tiger Parrot, Island Thrush, White-winged Robin and Rufous-naped Bellbird for our attention! A constant flow of hungry birds throng to the feeders, providing incredible photographic opportunities. Many of us will no doubt spend hours birding from here, with a cup of coffee in hand and coal stoves nearby! Birding in paradise indeed!! A number of other elusive

species occasionally attend the feeder and it is hard to predict what will be around, but past visitors have included Archbold's Bowerbird and Crested Satinbird, Bronze Ground Dove, Mountain Mouse Warbler and both Forbe's and Chestnut Forest Rail, although seeing any of these species at the feeder would be a huge bonus. Mammals sometimes visit as well, most commonly a marsupial carnivore called Speckled Dasyure, or perhaps a Raffray's Bandicoot. By night Black-tailed Giant Rat and De Vis' Wooly Rat also sometimes visit.



**Blue-capped Ifrit by Glen Valentine**

**Days 7 & 8: Mount Hagen area.** We have two full days to visit the various altitudinal habitats on offer around Mount Hagen as well as spend time at the incredible fruit feeder, coffee in hand! Although the region of Mount Hagen is rather heavily cultivated, the areas of standing native habitat can produce a wide variety of remarkable endemic species. The area below the lodge offers possibilities of seeing a host of mouth-watering specials such as dazzling Blue, Superb and Magnificent Bird-of-paradise, Lawes's Parotia, Bar-tailed, Amboyna and Great Cuckoo-Doves, attractive Ornate Melidectes, Mid-mountain and rarely-observed Streaked Berrypeckers, Torrent Flyrobin and with luck the striking and rather elusive Torrent-lark. Other birds we will search for include the localised Yellow-breasted Bowerbird, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon, Hooded Mannikin, Papuan White-eye, the beautiful Mountain Myzomela, Island Leaf Warbler, Long-tailed Shrike and best of all, the localised Lesser Bird-of-paradise. (Please note however that accessing the Lesser BOP site largely depends upon local weather and road conditions and is not always possible.)

The heavily mossed trails around our lodge produce some exciting birding and here we will seek out the secretive Rufous-throated Bronze Cuckoo, Friendly and Dimorphic Fantails, stunning Regent Whistler, Orange-crowned Fairywren, Wattled Ploughbill, Garnet Robin, Mountain Mouse-warbler and Large Scrub-wren. The Papuan Lorikeet is one of the world's most beautiful parrots and both the stunning black form and more gaudy red form occur around the lodge.



**Brehm's Tiger Parrot by Markus Lilje**

Flocks of the attractive, monotypic Blue-capped Ifrit feed like nuthatches along branches and are now known to be even more poisonous than the Hooded Pitohui! Crested Berrypeckers sometimes forage around the lodge grounds, while other lodge specialities include Lesser Melampitta, Mountain Firetail, stunning Crested Satinbird, New Guinea Woodcock (a resident in the bogs around the lodge), and Mountain Owlet-nightjar that sometimes perches on tree-ferns outside the cabins at night. Even the rare Feline Owlet-nightjar occurs around the lodge and we will work

hard to try and locate this very difficult species.

In a nearby patch of forest, we will search for slightly lower elevation species that could include White-bibbed Fruit Dove, Mountain Swiftlet, Plum-faced Lorikeet, Red-collared Myzomela, Loria's Satinbird, Black-breasted Boatbill, Black-bellied Cuckooshrike, Ashy Robin, Fan-tailed Berrypecker and Tit Berrypecker. Male Brown Sicklebills utter their incredibly loud machine-gun staccato call from a regular post. However, the star here is the King of Saxony Bird-of-paradise. We hope to encounter a stunning male waving his weird head-plumes around and uttering its strange buzzing calls. This forest patch also offers our best chance at tracking down the elusive Mottled Berryhunter.



**Shovel-billed Kookaburra by Dušan Brinkhuizen**

**Day 9: Flight from Mt Hagen to Kiunga, drive to Tabubil.** Today we leave the highlands behind and cross the country to the humid lowlands. After some final morning birding around our lodge, we head to the airport for our flight to Kiunga. As we fly over this vast region, one can't fail to be impressed by the vastness of this rainforest, indeed one of the largest expanses of lowland tropical forest in the world, smaller only than those found in the Amazon and African Congo Basin! With approximately 80% of the land in its natural state, PNG is one of the world's most pristine countries. This remote area near the border with the Indonesian state of West Papua offers us the chance of seeing some of New Guinea's most sought-after and highly-acclaimed species. Most of the birding will be along unpaved roads, and we are sure to see some spectacular birds in these foothill forests. After landing in Kiunga, we shall drive into the foothills of the Star Mountains, to the mining town of Tabubil. Depending on the time of our arrival, we may have some time to bird the local area late this afternoon.

**Days 10 & 11: Tabubil & OK Menga area.** The forests around Tabubil provide some excellent birding and we have opportunities over two days for observing some rarely seen birds. Target species we will search for include the delightful Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot, which feeds nuthatch-like along mossy trunks, high-flying Blue-collared Parrot, Stout-billed, Black-shouldered, Grey-headed and stunning Golden Cuckooshrikes, Common and Black Cicadabirds, Black-winged Monarch, under-recorded Grey-green Scrub-wren, the highly localized Obscure Berrypecker, Capped White-eye, Mottle-breasted, Puff-backed and Spotted Honeyeaters, as well as Black Butcherbird.



**Salvadori's Teal by Glen Valentine**

Several birds-of-paradise also occur here and we hope to see Magnificent Bird-of-paradise and perhaps hear its unique clapping noise as it snaps its wings like two small stones being banged together. Queen Carola's Parotia with their spatula head wires may appear and we may also encounter Crinkle-collared Manucode.



**Torrent-lark by Markus Lilje**

On one morning we will head to a remnant patch of primary forest where we will search for Pesquet's Parrot and the mega Shovel-billed Kookaburra, which despite being relatively commoner here, is still a very difficult species to see. Other highly sought after species here include Pheasant Pigeon, Chestnut-backed Jewel-babbler, White-rumped Robin, Metallic Pigeon, Striated, Joesphine's and Fairy Lorikeets, Orange-fronted Hanging Parrot, Crested Pitohui, Wallace's Fairywren, Red Myzomela, Spotted and Obscure Honeyeater, Southern Variable Pitohui, Rufous-backed Fantail, Magnificent Riflebird and Olive Flyrobin.

During our time here, we shall also pay a visit (maybe a few) to a nearby hydro-electric plant where we hope to find New Guinea's three torrent specialists: Torrent Flyrobin, Torrent-lark and the erratic Salvadori's Teal. These three fast-flowing river species are particularly attractive but the latter two species are equally difficult to pin down, and perseverance and patience will be required to see these highly desirable species. The general birding around the plant can, however, be quite rewarding and flocks of Dusky and Black-capped Lory are often in attendance, as are Red-flanked and Coconut Lorikeets, Orange-breasted Fig Parrot, gaudy Eclectus Parrot, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater and Mountain Peltops.

We will also spend one late afternoon watching an area where we have a reasonable chance of seeing the rare and much sought-after Pesquet's Parrot flying over the lush forests from their feeding areas to their roost sites. While waiting and watching for the parrots we may pick up other interesting species such as Chestnut-breasted and White-eared Bronze Cuckoos, Black-billed Coucal, White-bellied Thicket-fantail and Scrub Honeyeaters. Although we will be visiting during the dry season, this is one of the wettest spots in the world and rain can well be expected!



**Wallace's Fairywren by David Erterius**

**Day 12: Tabubil to Kiunga.** This morning we will drive to Kiunga, somewhat to the south of Tabubil. This port town is located in extreme western PNG along the border of West Papua, the Indonesian half of New Guinea. Situated on the north bank of the Fly River, Kiunga was built to service the giant Ok Tedi copper and gold mine.

Although Kiunga is situated approximately 1,300 nautical kilometres from the Fly River mouth, the berthing of huge ships bears testament to the size of this impressive river.



**Hook-billed Kingfisher by Rich Lindie**

After our arrival at Kiunga, we will check in at our hotel and enjoy lunch. Thereafter we will bird a nearby area of fabulous, untouched lowland rainforest where we have a chance of encountering several mouth-watering forest specialities. The forest interior is always hard work but with patience and perseverance, we hope to observe some of the shy and secretive forest dwellers. These could include Stephan's Emerald Dove, Thick-billed Ground Pigeon, White-breasted Ground Dove, White-crowned Cuckoo, Dwarf Koel, White-bellied Thicket Fantail, the brightly-coloured Golden Monarch, vociferous Papuan Babbler, the indescribably stunning Blue Jewel-babbler and tricky-to-see Hook-billed Kingfisher with its adapted ground-hunting bill.

One of our main targets here will be the gem-like King Bird-of-paradise. The smallest bird-of-paradise, we will position ourselves at a known tree where this beauty displays from the tangles, with strident calls and raised iridescent green shoulder fans. Its fabulous wired tail ends in a stunning green spiral and the red and white plumage leaps out of the dark green forest once it has been spotted.



**Greater Bird-of-paradise by Markus Lilje**

As one of PNG's most famous birding sites, it is here that David Attenborough was hoisted into the treetops for the marvellous footage of displaying Greater Bird-of-paradise. This remarkable footage is one piece of the highly recommended video *Attenborough in Paradise*, which stars many of the bird-of-paradise species found in Papua New Guinea, performing their elaborate display rituals. Many bird-of-paradise species keep to traditional display trees that are used by generation after generation. Specific trees are generally well supported by a healthy population of the indescribably beautiful Greater Bird-of-paradise. We will have ample opportunity to observe these elegant beauties as they strut their stuff, competing for the attentions of the rather drab females. Rhythmic displays, wing mantling and posturing, loud, raucous and incessant calling and frequent mating are a constant affair. Many participants might consider this as their top experience in PNG!

**Day 13: Kiunga area.** We will concentrate our efforts today searching for some of the magnificent birds found in this lowland area. It is important to get an early



**Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise by Markus Lilje**

start as the morning chorus can hold an impressive array of rarely heard sounds. Among many species we may come across, our key target will be the incredibly beautiful Flame Bowerbird. We will spend time at a lookout near to a colony of these birds, hoping for fly-by or perched views. The radiant orange males really do appear aflame and this must rank as one of the world's most beautiful birds. Other species to be found in the area include the rare Grey-headed Goshawk, shy and elusive New Guinea Bronzewing, Long-tailed Honey Buzzard, Pacific Baza, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, petite Red-flanked Lorikeet, Yellowish-streaked Lory, thumb-sized Yellow-capped Pygmy Parrot, the starkly contrasted Eclectus Parrot (named due to the remarkable difference between the red-and-blue females and green males), Orange-bellied, Beautiful, Dwarf, Pink-spotted and scarce Ornate Fruit Doves and Zoe's, Pinon's and Purple-tailed Imperial Pigeons. There is also the distinctive Long-billed Cuckoo – the male having a strikingly bright red eye-ring, noisy Brush Cuckoo, brilliant Emperor Fairywren, Red-capped Flowerpecker, Long-billed, Obscure, Plain and Streak-headed Honeyeaters, Ruby-throated Myzomela, diminutive Pygmy Longbill and Meyer's Friarbird. Further bird-of-paradise species include the glossy-black Trumpet and Glossy-mantled Manucodes, which often perch prominently atop dead trees to utter their loud retching calls. A nearby area of dry grassland may produce Red-backed Buttonquail and/or Australian Pratincole and, if we are very lucky, flocks of elusive and nomadic White-spotted and Black Mannikin or Crimson Finch.



**Sclater's Crowned Pigeon by Rich Lindie**



**Palm Cockatoo by Glen Valentine**

**Day 14: Boat trip from Kiunga down the Elevala River.** This morning we will depart in the predawn mists swirling over the mighty Fly River on a boat journey into the rich swamp forests and lowlands. The Fly River's source is situated in the higher reaches of the central divide from where it then winds its way south-east, being joined later by the Strickland River. Our destination for the next two days is the Elevala River, one of the tributaries of the Fly.

As dawn breaks, we will be looking along the riverbanks waiting for one of the world's strangest birds to make an appearance – the Twelve-wired Bird-of-paradise! This yellow-and-black creature with a most unusual shape and a dozen bizarre, wire-like feathers bending upwards from its rear-end, performs its ritual maypole shuffle on a dead snag. After witnessing the unique dance of one of the world's most desirable birds, we will continue our journey up the river. Travelling slowly, we will be looking out for the giant Palm Cockatoo, a huge black parrot with a floppy crest, massive hooked bill and bright red cheek-patch that flies noisily overhead. Further species along the river might include the Large Fig Parrot, Shining Flycatcher, Large-billed Gerygone, Lowland Peltops and the scarce Yellow-eyed Starling hidden amongst huge numbers of Metallic Starling. We should also encounter large flocks of Collared Imperial Pigeon, Papuan Spine-tailed Swift, dozens of Oriental Dollarbids and the strange Grey Crow. Parties of noisy Blyth's Hornbill sound like steam trains passing overhead and are delightfully common while migrant flocks of giant Channel-billed Cuckoo from Australia occur in breathtaking numbers at times. However, our key target once we enter the quiet Elevala River is the huge, fan-crested Sclater's Crowned Pigeon. The *Goura* genus that includes Victoria's, Scheepmaker's and Western Crowned Pigeon are the world's largest surviving *columbids*, all four of which are endemic to New Guinea.

A night forest walk will offer us the chance to see some of PNG's most sought-after nocturnal species including Marbled Frogmouth, Papuan Boobook, the inexplicably rare Papuan Hawk-Owl, seldom seen Wallace's and Starry Owlet-nightjars and Greater Sooty Owl. We may also encounter New Guinea Crocodile, which can be prolific along the river edges!



**Golden Monarch by Glen Valentine**

**Day 15: Return to Kiunga.** After an early breakfast, we will head back onto the narrow trails of the surrounding forest for the dawn chorus. Canopy bird parties here can keep us occupied for hours and leave us with warbler-neck! Possible new



**Yellow-billed Kingfisher by Markus Lilje**

species include Wompoo Fruit Dove, Rufous-backed Fantail, Yellow-bellied Gerygone, Hooded and Spot-winged Monarchs, the scalloped blue-crowned Wallace's Fairywren, Little Shrikethrush, Yellow-bellied Longbill, shy and secretive Ochre-breasted Catbird and most localised of all, flocks of noisy White-bellied Pitohui. The forest trails also allow us the very slim possibility of observing the giant Southern Cassowary; though not an uncommon species, it does tend to be incredibly shy. Other regular species that are more likely to be encountered are Ivory-billed Coucal, elegant Moustached Treeswift, up to three species of Paradise Kingfisher (Little, Common and Buff-breasted), secretive Hooded and Papuan Pittas as well as Black-sided Robin.

In the afternoon we will then make our way back towards Kiunga along the Elevala and Fly Rivers. We may be rewarded with sightings of Great-billed Heron and if we are immensely lucky, the secretive Forest Bittern or Red-necked Crake. Any of these species would be a coup! Upon arrival in Kiunga, we will transfer to our now familiar hotel.

**Day 16: Flight from Kiunga to Port Moresby.** This morning we will have a few hours to bird the Kiunga area before catching our onward flight to Port Moresby. We may have a few hours to bird locally in the afternoon.

**Day 17: Port Moresby area.** Today we will either revisit Varirata National Park or the area around Hisui Mangroves and the Brown River, depending on road conditions and whatever species we may still require. The Hisui Mangroves area could provide us with Mangrove Gerygone, Black Thicket Fantail and/or Dusky Lory feeding amongst the fruiting coconut palms. A walk to the beach may yield Beach Thick-knee or Lesser Frigatebird. A nearby lake often holds Green Pygmy Goose and Spotted Whistling Duck, while the few flowering shrubs are excellent locations for both Silver-eared and Brown-backed Honeyeaters.

We will also bird an area near the Brown River that consistently proves productive. Walking along the riverine habitat and dense secondary growth we will search for such beauties as Coroneted and Dwarf Fruit Doves, Yellowish-streaked Lory, the radiant Golden Myna, Dusky Myzomela, Common Paradise Kingfisher, exquisite Emperor Fairywren and, if we are lucky, the rare Streak-headed Mannikin, amongst many others. An area of nearby grassland may yield Great-billed, Grey-headed or Chestnut-breasted Mannikins as well as Papuan Harrier. Stands of Eucalyptus



**Flame Bowerbird by Glen Valentine**

woodland could produce White-throated Gerygone, Bar-shouldered Dove, Grey Shrikethrush, Black-backed Butcherbird, Forest Kingfisher, White-winged Triller and Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot. In the late afternoon, we will return to our hotel in Port Moresby.

**Day 18: Final departure.** After breakfast this morning, we shall transfer to Port Moresby International Airport where the tour will conclude.

**The order of the itinerary will almost certainly be adjusted due to flight time and routing changes. We will attempt to maintain the same itinerary as far as possible.**

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

**Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.**

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 18;
- Bottled drinking water, tea and coffee at meals;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground and water transportation;
- Park entrance fees;
- Tips for lodge staff, porters, drivers, local communities and local guides; and
- Guiding services provided by Rockjumper tour leaders and local guides.

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** flights;
- Visa fees;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**

**b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**

**c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**

**d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

**Tipping:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- This Papua New Guinea tour is designed to be an intensive birding experience and we will attempt to obtain good views of as many bird species as possible. At times we will experience physical difficulty when walking along very muddy and sometimes fairly steep trails (our pace will always be slow) or on a few bumpy drives over poor road conditions.
- In some areas, it can get very hot and humid, especially in the lowlands. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have a lot of early starts to avoid, as far as possible, birding in the heat of the day. Furthermore, the rainforest areas often have high humidity, so it can be potentially uncomfortable. It should also be noted that we spend several nights in the highlands of New Guinea at about 3 000m (9 000ft) above sea level, meaning that cooler evenings and early mornings should be expected.
- This tour **DOES** require a **VERY GOOD** level of fitness and stamina. Participants should also be in good general health. Much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of booking. Furthermore, the trails around the Elevala River, the Rondon Ridge area and in Varirata National Park can be excessively muddy depending on weather conditions. We will be away from modern medical facilities for much of this tour – if you have any medical conditions please advise the Rockjumper Head Office in advance of the tour.
- Accommodation varies greatly in Papua New Guinea, ranging from very good in the primary cities such as Port Moresby to very basic along the Elevala River. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. In the smaller towns, we always opt for the best available accommodation. For the most part, this is good to comfortable, but may still be below the standard of what you have come to expect from the developed world. We will stay either in hotels or guesthouses with the exception of our accommodation along the Elevala River, where the small, elevated bunkhouse has only the most basic facilities (mattress, bedding and mosquito net, plus a forest clearing where washing facilities include cold water and an outhouse.)
- Due to the nature of Papua New Guinea's economy, the cost vs delivery and quality of items and services is highly disproportionate.
- New Guinea is always a challenging place to visit, and it is not unusual for logistics to go awry, so please do expect some hassles along the way - we will do our utmost to make this tour run as smoothly as possible. Delays, sometimes significant, should be expected when taking the several internal flights that are necessary to access these remote locations. Weather or airline problems might cause delays that are out of our control.
- Birding in Papua New Guinea is very challenging. Many species are incredibly shy and difficult to observe along trails. The Lesser Bird-of-paradise lek may be inaccessible due to poor road conditions. Such inconveniences remain an ever-present possibility.
- Although International flights to Port Moresby may have baggage restrictions of up to 30kg, the domestic flights within Papua New Guinea are limited to 16kg per person for checked luggage and 5kg for hand luggage. (Airlines in PNG have however become more tolerant towards travellers carrying heavy / expensive camera and other optical equipment and often waive overweight hand luggage fees.) To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase / duffel bag and one carry-on bag as space in the vehicles is limited.

- Malaria is prevalent in New Guinea, as such we advise you to consult your physician or local travel clinic for further advice on the matter.
- Rubber boots are particularly useful along the many muddy trails and are highly recommended.
- We will spend many hours waiting for birds to appear at various locations where no seating is available. A small, folding stool is highly recommended.

**ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour does not include **ANY** international or domestic airfares. Day 1 of the tour is allocated as an arrival day, and you should have arrived in Port Moresby by midday, as the afternoon will be spent birding at the productive Pacific Adventist University area near to Port Moresby. The main tour will conclude by mid to late morning on day 18 at Port Moresby International Airport.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

**Please note: Due to the unreliable nature of the internal flights in Papua New Guinea, it is highly recommended to take an afternoon or evening departure flight on the final day of the tour or a morning flight the day after.**

**FLIGHTS:**

Port Moresby International Airport (IATA: POM) is the main port of entry for international flights into Papua New Guinea and is serviced most reliably by Air Niugini from Brisbane, Singapore or Cairns. Your local travel agent will be able to book these flights for you. We will book all domestic flights of this tour on your behalf. **IMPORTANT: please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper Head Office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**