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PHILIPPINES

A Tropical Birding custom tour

4th - 26th March 2007

Leaders: Sam Woods & Nicky Icarangal
Local guides: Carlito Gayramara (Kitanglad), Zardo Goring (PICOP)

The spectacular 'resident'
PALAWAN PEACOCK-PHEASANT St. Paul's
- the only true pheasant on the Philippines, but as it looks like this it is more than enough!

The sensational **STEERE'S (AZURE-BREASTED) PITTA**
- a dazzling Philippine endemic, one of 3 pitta species seen very well on the tour.

Report and all photos by Sam Woods/Tropical Birding

INTRODUCTION

Any bird tour to the Philippines inevitably focuses on endemics, as these islands are packed with many spectacular birds found nowhere else. This tour was no exception where, from our total species list of over 330 species, we recorded just under 130 endemics, including some of the Philippines', (and indeed southeast Asia's), top birds. Among these were at least seven species of endemic flowerpecker (depending on taxonomy), all six endemic species of kingfisher, six species of endemic sunbird, five species of endemic hornbill, five species of endemic tailorbird, at least four species of endemic owl, four species of endemic bulbul, two species of endemic leafbird and a stunning endemic pitta and equally spectacular broadbill. Some of the highlights included ***Luzon Bleeding-Heart***, ***Rufous Hornbill*** and ***Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove*** on Luzon; a brace of stunning pittas at PICOP in Mindanao with both ***Steere's & Red-bellied Pittas*** seen extremely well, along with great looks at a **Mindanao Wattled Broadbill** there also; in addition to breathtaking views of the national bird of the Philippines - the mighty ***Monkey-eating (Great Philippine) Eagle,*** at a new nest site in a remote area of Mindanao ; and Palawan, as ever, weighed in with all the possible endemics recorded there including ***Palawan Flycatcher***, ***Palawan Hornbill*** and the exquisite male ***Palawan Peacock-pheasant*** that performed extraordinarily well at the Underground River National Park. Several ***Hooded Pittas*** on Palawan completed the trio of pittas we were seeking on the tour, all of which performed in an exemplary fashion for us. As well as being an endemic hotspot, the Philippines is also a nightbirders paradise. This sprawling archipelago has a diverse set of nightbirds, many being endemic to the islands. A few early starts and finishes were required to get a shot at these, although with such birds as ***Luzon, Mindanao & Palawan Scops-Owls***, ***Chocolate Boobook***, ***Philippine Hawk-Owls*** and ***Philippine Frogmouth*** to show for it at the end of the tour, the lack of sleep seemed more than a little justified!

The tour took the form of three distinct stages, concentrating on the three most accessible, endemic rich islands in the sprawling Philippine archipelago, that encompasses more than 7,000 islands in total. We began first on the 'main' island of Luzon, the largest of all the islands and where the bustling capital Manila is located; then Mindanao, the second largest and most southerly of the main islands, that is especially noteworthy for birders as the last stronghold of the Philippine National Bird, the magnificent Philippine Eagle; and finally the thin tropical island strip of Palawan, that sits between the Sulu Sea to the east and the South China Sea to the west, that divides this paradise island from the huge island of Borneo further west. Biogeographically Palawan is very interesting, sharing more in common with the typically southeast Asian avifauna of Borneo to the west than the other Philippine islands to the east. However, in spite of this there are almost 20 endemics on this lush forested island, that is bordered all around with pristine white sandy beaches that make it an idyllic holiday treat for birders and backpackers alike. We ensured we spent time in both montane areas and lowland areas on both Luzon and Mindanao to target the endemics particular to those elevations, before finishing on the idyllic beach-covered island of Palawan, for some of the Philippines' easiest and most satisfying birding, where we 'cleaned up' on all the available endemics.

DAILY LOG

Part 1: LUZON

5th March: CANDABA MARSH (LUZON) Marshes and wetland.
The tour began much as it continued, with a traditional early start to take advantage of the higher bird activity in the cooler early mornings. Shortly after dawn we arrived at Candaba Marsh, where the distinctive triangular, volcanic cone of Mount Arayat made for an impressive backdrop to our first birding excursion. As soon as we jumped out of the car we immediately logged our first of the endemics that would be the focus of the tour - as several large rafts of ***Philippine Ducks*** were found loafing around the watery margins of the marsh. The other of the marsh's main targets took a little more digging to find, although several trip exclusive ***Island Collared Doves*** were found with a little leg work. As expected this recently protected marsh was packed with waterbirds, from ***Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, White-browed Crakes*** and ***Barred Rails*** to ***Eastern Marsh Harriers*** and ***Blue-tailed Bee-eaters***, while the marsh was positively loaded with ***Yellow Bitterns*** that seemed to be perched on every available reed stem. After loading up on these and other waterbirds, including ***Long-toed Stint, Pacific Golden Plover*** and ***Oriental Pratincole***, we headed north towards the mountainous Cordillera, that would be our base for the following few days. With little birding time after arrival we satisfied ourselves with views of ***Striated Swallows*** and an impressive ***Great-eared Nightjar*** over our Banaue hotel at the close of the day.

6th March: MOUNT POLIS (LUZON) Montane Forest
Having recently found a cooperative pair of the scarce ***Luzon Scops-Owl*** on Mount Polis, I was keen to try for them the first chance we had. So our tour on Polis began with our bleary-eyed group making the chilly pre-dawn walk up this short trail under cover of darkness, with the promise of this rarely seen nightbird. Sure enough, as the first glimmers of sunlight penetrated the gloom, a single scops-owl responded and then appeared suddenly in a close gnarled mossy tree, glaring back at the spotlight with the angry yellow irides that separate this small scops owl from its much larger congener, Philippine Scops-Owl. It was a good night bird to kick off the tour with, although unfortunately did not linger for long, leaving some of us longing for more. The remainder of the morning was spent targeting the high montane birds of Luzon that would only be possible at this site on the tour, as this was to be our only high mountain site on the island of Luzon. Soon after dawn we were surrounded by calling ***Philippine (Luzon) Bush-Warblers*** as we would be throughout our time on Polis as this is a very commonly heard sound in Luzon's high mountains, and we managed to get some several close views during the morning. However the ***Long-tailed (-Ground) Bush-Warblers*** were far less cooperative taunting from every roadside bush it seemed, and it would make us wait until late in our tour on Mindanao before finally putting us out of our misery. On the road a short time after dawn we found a few ***Island Thrushes*** feeding actively in the post dawn mist, while several ***Scaly (White's) Thrushes*** were also found during the morning, the former being one of our high mountain target birds. Although we would have further chances later in the tour for it, we were well pleased to catch up with one of Luzon's more bizarre looking endemics - the fantastic ***Scale-feathered Malkoha*** so early on. Overhead, among the more common ***Glossy Swiftlets***, we found some of the larger endemic ***Philippine Swiftlets***, another high montane target at Polis that would also be possible in the high mountains on Mindanao later in our tour. Other non-endemic mountain species that were fairly common on Polis included ***Mountain Tailorbird***, and most flocks held a ***Mountain White-eye*** or two, ***Mountain Leaf-Warblers*** and some of these also contained the inconspicuous Luzon montane endemic, ***Green-backed Whistler***. Perhaps the most highly sought bird of the morning however was a fine ***Luzon Water-Redstart*** found feeding in their traditional spot on a rushing mountain stream in the small mountain village of Bay-yu on the far side of the pass at Polis. A localized montane endemic that is increasingly under threat from rising levels of water pollution. Aside from the birds we also passed by some of the best examples of the spectacular and famous mud-walled rice terraces in the area, some of which date back 2,000 years when the most feared headhunters of the cordillera at the time, the Ifugao, built them. These have aided in Banaue being long considered the number one tourist destination in the Philippines.

The spectacular, World Heritage listed, mud-walled terraced wet rice paddies near Banaue. Understandably, the number one tourist attraction in the Philippines.

There are a number of examples of these amazing terraced paddies in the area around Banaue, this one was near the Luzon Water-Redstart site at Bay-yu. Some of these
were first built by the Ifugao people almost 2,000 years ago.

7th March: MOUNT POLIS (LUZON) Montane Forest
For our second day in the Cordillera mountains of northern Luzon, we again searched through roadside flocks of ***Elegant Tits*** and others for any hidden endemics, some of the flocks containing ***Chestnut-faced Babblers***, an endemic species to Luzon's high mountains, in addition to the very handsome and more widespread endemic, ***Metallic-winged Sunbird*** (the first of six endemic sunbirds recorded on the tour). A few of the flocks also contained lone ***Blue-headed Fantails***, to kickstart our list of endemic Fantails for the trip. In addition to the flock birds we picked up another thrush - ***Brown-headed Thrush*** - that chose to feed on the open road shortly after dawn, much as the ***Island Thrushes*** had done the day before and were also found doing again a little further down from the Brown-headed. By searching some dead snags around the edge of the cabbage fields near the pass we came across another cool montane endemic that Polis gave us our best shot at, with superb prolonged views of ***Mountain (Gray-capped) Shrike***. However, patience was required for the days star bird as we scanned the treetops for any large doves perched up in the morning sun, before Nicky had us running towards him as the shout went up only for the bird to elude us all by slipping back into the foliage. Finally though Mark pulled out a fantastic ***Flame-breasted Fruit-dove*** perched up high above the canopy on a protruding branch so that we could all lap it up with the aid of a scope. Aside from that much of the birds were similar to the day before, although a stop by some terraced paddies on the way down Polis produced good scope views of one of the most elusive of all the Philippine endemics - a pair of ***Plain Bush-Hens*** that was a massive relief to 'get out the way' so early in the tour, as this bird can often take some serious leg work to see.

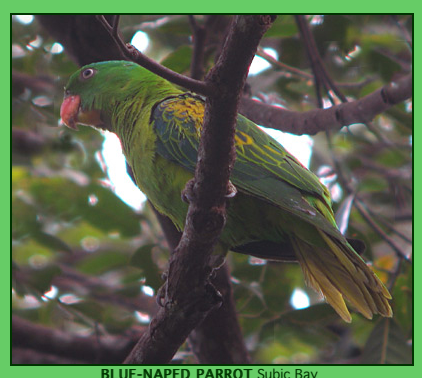
CHESTNUT-FACED BABBLER Mount Polis
- a Luzon montane endemic

MOUNTAIN SHRIKE Mount Polis
- an endemic of the high mountains.

8th March: Subic Bay (LUZON) Lowland Forest

Having begun the tour in the high Cordillera Mountains of northern Luzon we headed south, heading for the distinctly more humid lowland forests around the naval magazine at Subic Bay, on the Bataan Peninsula. However before reaching Subic we made a designated stop for another Luzon specialty - ***Indigo-banded Kingfisher***, a pair of which were found perched out in the open on some riverside rocks along a rushing mountain stream, just as we hoped. While a small group of endemic ***Pygmy Swiftlets*** that circled above were the first encountered on the tour. Formerly a bustling US naval base, this area has long since lost many of the naval personnel formerly residing there, leaving behind a near-deserted, stretch of superb, endemic-rich lowland forest. Arriving in the late afternoon from Polis we did not expect to find much, but quickly stumbled upon some of the key endemics of the area, that included a handsome pair of ***Sooty Woodpeckers***, that showed for us on all of our 3 visits to Subic, in addition to several sightings of the other of the pair of endemic woodpeckers in the Philippines with Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker in the same general area. Best of all though was getting superb, 'on the deck' views of a ***Green Racquet-tail*** (complete with a fine pair of racquets), a key Subic species that is confined to these rare patches of lowland forest on Luzon. A brief walk down a deserted road there saw us enjoying great views of a colony of the exquisitely marked ***Blue-throated Bee-eaters*** and some of the other more widespread endemic species that would feature heavily on the tour, like our first individual from the Philippines's sole endemic family - the Philippine Creepers - with a pair of ***Stripe-headed (-sided) Rhabdornises***, ***Coletos***, ***Guiaberos***; and our first of several sightings of the formidable ***Philippine Hawk-Eagle***. We also got great perched views of ***Colasisi or Philippine Hanging-parrot***, playfully hanging upside down while feeding on a scarlet treetop blossom. Although no one was complaining about some of the supporting cast of non-endemic species, like the showy pair of ***Whiskered Treeswifts***, that were using the low roadside wires to hawk insects at the close of the day.

STRIPE-HEADED (-SIDED) RHABDORNIS
- the commonest species from the Philippines's sole endemic family, the Philippine Creepers or Rhabdornises.



BLUE-NAPED PARROT Subic Bay
- a near-endemic that also ranges onto some small outlying islands off Borneo, and also to the small northern Indonesian island of Talaud.

9th March: Subic Bay (LUZON) Lowland Forest

Dawn found us on the US naval base at Subic, searching for more of Luzon's specialist lowland species. Endemics came thick and fast with ***White-eared (Brown) Doves***, and a superb ***Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove***, surely one of the most attractive of all the doves in the Philippines and indeed of all the endemics, with its sulphury washed breast and striking blood red face patch. Searching the dead snags around the parking lot pulled in several examples of the Philippines's smallest raptor, with 2 or 3 tiny ***Philippine Falconets*** found hawking insects from their high vantage points. Other notable raptors included a fine adult ***Rufous-bellied Eagle*** that passed low overhead and good prolonged of an adult ***Philippine Hawk-Eagle*** perched right beside the van, and the first of many migrant ***Chinese Goshawks (Sparrowhawks)*** recorded on the tour. On the passerine front we soon found one of our main targets - ***Blackish Cuckoo-shrike***, a vocal lowland endemic confined to the island of Luzon, that is not especially common at Subic, although easy to find largely due to the fact they hang about in very noisy parties that helpfully draw attention to themselves with their bold, far-carrying calls. One of the other lowland targets, ***Rufous Coucal***, proved typically shy though passing by only briefly on this occasion. ***White-browed Shamas*** were heard giving their melodic, fluty calls all around, although seeing one of them proved a little more challenging: the first few point blank refused to cooperate, before finally one came straight in and perched within a few feet from us. A beautiful songster and endemic, that was much appreciated by all. Some of the more strange looking endemics in the Philippines are the two Malkohas that are confined to Luzon, we had already had a taste of one of these, with the seriously bizarre ***Scale-feathered Malkoha*** seen at Polis early on the tour. The second of these two Luzon specialties - ***Red-crested Malkoha,*** was recorded first here at Subic and later at Makiling. Malkohas are always a popular family in southeast Asia, although this one with its distinctive red crest that begins just above the eyes, giving the impression of some seriously overgrown bright scarlet eyelashes, is hard to top. ***Blue-naped Parrots*** were also in evidence, a near-endemic that also just reaches the islands of Sulawesi and Borneo, although the Philippines remains the best chance at catching up with this handsome parrot. Other notable additions included ***Balicassiao***, the Philippines's sole endemic drongo, a ***Philippine Tailorbird*** found skulking in a dense thicket of bamboo (that was to be the first of five different species of endemic tailorbird on the tour), and a fine male ***Black-and-White Triller***. One of the families that is always a big draw card in Asia is the hornbills and indeed the Philippines has its own set of interesting and unique hornbills. Subic brought us our first of five different endemic species recorded on the tour, with first some ***Luzon (Tarictic) Hornbills*** around the car park, and later the undisputed 'showstopper' of the morning was the large honking group of ***Rufous Hornbills***, that provided our only tour sighting of this impressive hornbill, that for me is the very best of all the Asian hornbills.

PINK-BELLIED IMPERIAL-PIGEON
- the Philippines is loaded with colorful doves and pigeons (see photo of the stunning Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove below for further proof). This one (like the next) is listed for many islands, although due to rapid recent declines in their respective populations, are both very hard to come by on Luzon and still both best looked for (like this one), at PICOP on Mindanao.

SPOTTED IMPERIAL-PIGEON
This is one of the tougher endemics, a totally unexpected find on the tour at Makiling, where it is very rare.

10th March: Subic Bay am only and **Mount Makiling** (LUZON) Mid-altitude forest, PM.

Our final session on the naval magazine at Subic produced few new species, as by then we were not looking for many more. Although we did run into the hoped-for ***White-fronted Tit***, typically seen singing from a dead snag up in the canopy. While along the trail a pair of noisy ***Philippine Fairy-Bluebirds*** were also new, as were a pair of the near endemic ***Philippine Cuckoo-dove*** that flashed past the van. It was then off south to the chilled out Makiling university campus, near to the town of Los Banos that has numerous resorts for visiting Filipinos, wanting to explore the many natural hot springs in the area. We saved the forested mountain of Makiling for the next few days, as our afternoon arrival was perfectly timed to search for buttonquails that emerge from the long grass at this time of day to feed on an open track right on the campus. The bird we were after was the Luzon endemic Spotted Buttonquail, and while we initially found only a few of the non-endemic ***Barred Buttonquail***, we eventually picked up the bolder markings of the distinctly larger ***Spotted Buttonquail,*** and in the end enjoyed repeated views of both species, scuttling on and off the track to feed in the waning sunlight. Our first welcome encounter with ***Philippine Coucal*** also occurred on campus, after they had earlier frustrated us around Subic.

PHILIPPINE CUCKOO-DOVE

YELLOW-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE
One of the most beautiful of the many colorful endemic pigeons and doves in the Philippines and also thankfully widespread. We picked them up at a number of sites including Makiling on Luzon, and also at both PICOP and Kitanglad on Mindanao.

11th March: Mount Makiling (LUZON) Mid-altitude forest.

Dawn saw us once again on the hunt for endemic nightbirds. Right at the base of the mountain we were soon hearing a number of our targets - ***Philippine Scops-Owl*** (that frustrated throughout the tour), and a number of ***Philippine Hawk-Owls*** that frustrated us for a while before finally, Shirley saw a bird fly up onto an open limb, where we could all get an eyeful of our second endemic owl of the trip. Star bird of the morning was however a bold ***Spotted Imperial-Pigeon*** found perched right above the bumpy mountain road, a tough endemic anywhere in the Philippnes and one that is very rarely encountered on Makiling. Other new birds, some special to Makiling, for the tour included a pair of ***Gray-backed Tailorbirds*** found calling in a roadside vine tangle; several ***Yellow-bellied Whistlers***; several noisy parties of ***Ashy Minivets*** moving through the treetops, ***Philippine Serpent-Eagles*** were found calling overhead making for an interesting comparison both in plumage and call with the Crested Serpent-eagles recorded on Palawan later on the tour. Bulbuls are not a group that often gets the adrenaline flowing, although the endemic ***Yellow-wattled Bulbul*** has a subtle beauty lacking in most of this generally uneventful family, several of which were added to our trip list on Makiling. Other birds seen included more ***Philippine Pygmy-Woodpeckers***, that were a regularly recorded endemic on the tour, and a lone male ***Black-naped Monarch***. There are a whole host of endemic nectarivores on the Philippines and Makiling provided four new ones on our morning walk alone, with a male ***Flaming Sunbird*** (another Luzon endemic), a male ***Lovely Sunbird, Red-striped Flowerpecker*** (that was to be our first of seven endemic flowerpeckers) and a single ***Striped (Thick-billed) Flowerpecker***. In the afternoon we left the forest behind birding some open trees on the campus for another Luzon lowland specialty, the aptly named ***Lowland White-eye*** that was found soon after feeding in some large open trees.

12th March: Mount Makiling (LUZON) Mid-altitude forest.

Another early start was necessary, as ***Spotted Wood-Kingfishers*** had haunted us all tour until that point, being heard almost daily with nothing more than brief flight views to show for it. So for our final push for this bird we got on site early, as these almost crepuscular kingfishers have the frustrating habit of calling almost exclusively at dawn and dusk, often being largely silent outside these times when they become much less responsive and a lot harder to pick up. Having been singularly unresponsive up until then for us, one bird performed in exemplary fashion flying straight into playback on several occasions, giving us all great views just as it became light enough to be able to really appreciate the stunning plumage of this fantastic 'fisher. This was to be the first of six different species of endemic Kingfisher recorded on the tour. Other birds included some great views of upto three separate ***Black-chinned Fruit-doves***, a near-endemic that's range just reaches some small outlying islands off Taiwan. However, the star dove for the day was found when bird activity had dropped off dramatically in the late morning and therefore was far from expected at the time. Mark and I flushed a dove off the bumpy mountain road, that fortuitously landed in full view for Mark who exclaimed, incredulously it was a ***Luzon Bleeding-heart*** Although this shy denizen of the forest floor initially slipped back into the undergrowth before others could get a look, it quickly responded unusually well to playback, giving two further showings as it strolled into view. On one of these occasions the bird alighted on top of a close rock in full view for Don to exclaim 'there it is - perfect!' - it is not often one can claim perfect views of this shy, ground-dwelling Luzon endemic. Other notable birds included a pair of ***Philippine Hawk-cuckoos*** that came in and checked us out a number of times, another sighting of the crazy-looking Luzon endemic ***Red-crested Malkoha***, further views of ***Stripe-headed (-sided) Rhabdornis,*** a pair of the endemic *haematribon* race of ***Greater Flamebacks*** and another ***Flaming Sunbird*** for those who had missed it the day before. It was then back to Manila for a little earlier finish than we had come to expect, although with the earliest start of the tour looming the next day (necessary for our early flight to Mindanao), one that was much needed.

Part 2: MINDANAO

13th March: Bislig Airfield (MINDANAO) Grasslands and marshy pools.

An extremely early start was necessary due to the unfriendly scheduling of the domestic flights to Davao on Mindanao, the largest city in the Philippines and indeed in terms of geographical area, one of the largest in the world. From there we boarded our vans and headed to the small city of Bislig in the eastern province of Surigao Del Sur, that would be our base for exploring the lowland forest patches of the PICOP concession over the coming days. Although we skirted some of PICOPs forests on the way, the long traveling time meant we arrived by the time the heat of the day had laid most of the birds to rest although an 'emergency' stop had to be made for a squadron of low-flying needletails, that proved to be a group of 15 or so ***Purple Needeletails*** that had somehow eluded us on Luzon, so particularly pleasing to get them then. We also bumped into our first ***Barred Honey Buzzard*** of the tour, that we had been expecting to see over the coming days around PICOP. After our afternoon arrival we spent the latter part of the day birding the grasses and marshland that border Bislig airfield, that despite apparently being an active airfield clearly must have very little traffic judging by the number of locals exercising and fishing around the edges of the it! A quick kick about the grassy margins produced the hoped for ***Blue-breasted Quail***, along with a few ***Paddyfield (Oriental) Pipits***. While a few ***Wandering Whistling-Ducks*** and ***Philippine Ducks*** flying around the airfield betrayed the presence of some hidden pools in the area, while ***Oriental Reed-Warblers*** sang from beside the reed fringed runway. From our vantage point on top of our jeepney that would be our vehicle over the coming days, we scanned the marshes as dusk approached for our main quarry that appeared well before the sun began dropping over the horizon, when the first of three ***Australian Grass-Owls*** appeared quartering the marshes; although waiting until after dark was required for our other night quarry - when a pair of 'chonking' ***Philippine Nightjars*** were watched flying around the runway a short time after dark.

14th March: PICOP (MINDANAO) Lowland forest.

PICOP is potentially one of the most depressing places to bird in the Philippines, as the lowland forests here are part of a large logging concession. So the birding is within an area that is largely theoretically doomed to the chainsaw anyway, and to add to that hundreds, (if not thousands) of illegal settlers are also working there way to deforesting the area further. Thus every new trip to PICOP can be full of surprises due to to the rapidly changing nature of the habitat there. For this reason we were grateful for the services of the local guide Zardo Goring, whose up to-the-minute information helped us concentrate our efforts on the best available forest patches. Despite all this gloom, for sure I would say any Philippine bird tour would be foolish to miss this place as it is the key site for many endemics and specifically for some very cool Mindanao lowland specialties, many of which are not possible elsewhere, and are often contenders for birds of the trip on any tour. This tour was no exception and we had three really good days birding in the area, and despite some heavy rain on two of these days, we left little behind due to some extraordinary luck and Zardo's intimate knowledge of the site. For our first day we concentrated on one of the most well-known birding sites at PICOP - road 1/4, that has changed markedly since my first visit there only a few years previously. However despite appearances, the forest fragments there still hold some of Mindanao's most highly sought after birds. Before light we tried for some of the key nightbirds in the area, and although we were initially frustrated by a nearby calling boobook, eventually Zardo picked the bird up as it flew in and positioned his beam right on a ***Chocolate Boobook***, a near-endemic recently split from the the widespread Brown Hawk-Owl . Soon after it got light we started seeing some of the Mindanao lowland specialties that were our prime targets at PICOP. The soft, but distinctive whistles of ***Little Slaty Flycatcher*** were soon heard from the roadside and after this hyperactive pair initially frantically circled us eventually the male gave up the ghost and sat out on an open perch, allowing us all to soak up the subtle plumage features. In the open trees along the road there, we found a number of ***Philippine Orioles*** singing from the open treetops, a few ***Rufous-fronted Tailorbirds*** (a recent split from Philippine Tailorbird) feeding in some high vine tangles, while in the undergrowth another pair of key Mindanao tailorbirds - ***White-browed Tailorbird*** were found with a little strategic use of playback. Coucals are another bird group that few get excited about when pouring through the field guide before coming to the Philippines, although ***Black-faced Coucal***, with its distinctive sulphury yellow head, dusty blue tail and bold black face mask must be a contender for the world's finest coucal being completely different from any others out there. The artificial open nature of the forest along this road (due to the recent deforestation) can be advantageous for picking out some birds that otherwise would be tricky - like a canopy dwelling pair of ***Naked-faced Spiderhunters***, a few ***Philippine Drongo-cuckoos*** perched out on some open dead snags, several ***Yellowish Bulbuls***; and several calling ***Winchell's (Rufous-lored) Kingfishers*** were easily found in the canopies of this artificially open forest there; while the pair of inconspicuous Philippine Leafbirds chose a heavily-leaved canopy to hide in, where their green plumage matched exactly the color of the surrounding leaves making the birds incredibly hard to find, even when fully framed amongst the leaves in the scope! Overhead the distinctive silhouette of a pair of ***Philippine Needletails*** with their characteristic 'butter-knife' wings were picked out easily as they flew low over us, that even allowed us to catch a glimpse of their clean white armpits. This was probably our most bird-packed day of the tour with many new endemics coming thick and fast, including a pair of ***Philippine Trogons*** over breakfast, a stunning ***Silvery Kingfisher*** (a highly localized endemic) hanging out on its usual small, dirty roadside pool, and several noisy gangs of ***Mindanao (Tarictic) Hornbills***. Rain dogged us every time we talked about trying for the regular ***Red-bellied Pitta***, meaning we had to call off the attempt on several occasions and retreat to our jeepney, while the rain (very slowly) passed. Eventually with time getting on and the rain giving us another short respite we ventured out to a small clearing amongst the bamboo understorey where we hoped we could coax the bird into. On playing the tape we initially heard nothing, then a brief, seemingly distant call back before, suddenly, the bird flew in and brazenly perched out in front of us just where we could all conveniently soak it up for the next few minutes. A perfect end to what had been a breathtaking taste of some of the very best birding in the Philippines.

The first of a dazzling brace of pittas at the PICOP concession - this beautiful emerald and scarlet **RED-BELLIED PITTA** was soaked through following a recent bout of
very heavy rain.

One of only two endemic pittas in the Philippines (and the only one that we had a realistic chance of on the tour) - the breathtaking **STEERE'S (AZURE-BREASTED) PITTA**, PICOP.

15th March: PICOP (MINDANAO) Lowland forest.

For our second full day in PICOP, we concentrated our efforts on a different road - road 4/2, that in complete contrast to road 1/4 has some good continuous unbroken stretches of forest along it (largely by default, as the limestone substrate does not lend itself to farming after clearing, so that the settlers have, for now at least, left this bird-rich forest alone). We spent the best part of the day birding this deserted forest-fringed road, in between the bouts of heavy, unseasonal rain. Things were a little slow initially as the rain was heaviest in the morning, although things picked up later as they rain moved off and we logged some of PICOP's very best birds in our day there. Soon after arriving and with the rain coming down heavily at the time, we focused our efforts on the road itself, and soon after found our main target - the stunning ***Steere's (Azure-breasted) Pitta*** feeding right out in the middle of the road. The bird continued to feed on the road, as we followed, over the following 5-10 minutes allowing us all to great looks at one of PICOP's sexiest birds. Two days in PICOP and two pittas down - for a site with such a depressing backdrop to the birding, PICOP can still however produce the goods and some of the best Philippine birding is undoubtedly still within this concession. Many of the birds we were hoping for on that day were flock species, and although we never really got the one big flock we had been hoping for we managed to find some small flocks along the way and pick up these key endemics in these bird parties, like ***Rusty-crowned Babbler, Pygmy Babbler*** and several superb bright orange ***Rufous Paradise-Flycatchers***. The main flock species we were keen to get however was the pair of endemic Monarchs - the distinctive metallic series of notes soon had us homing in on a pair of ***Short-crested Monarchs***, that circled us several times allowing everyone a look or two, although the divine ***Celestial Monarch***, clearly the sexiest of this pair proved a little more challenging as it appeared they may have reached the end of their calling season. However in one of the last flocks of the morning, as we neared the van again we heard its distinctive call, although it was a good 10 minutes or so before Mark managed to not only find, but scope up a spanking male complete with the flashy celestial headdress that gives the bird its name. Before we had hot on the celestial however, and just after having bagged the pair of Short-crested Monarchs we heard the first calls of a ***Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher***, a scarce Kingfisher that was originally thought to be endemic to mid-high elevation forests on Mindanao, although has recently also been found in the lowland forests of PICOP. We had tried several known territories for this bird throughout the morning and even got a response at one, that was then thwarted by a bout of extremely heavy rain, before this bird called right by the short-crested Monarchs and I finally began to think our luck was in. The bird then proceeded to circle unseen for the next 15 minutes, before finally Doris calmly announced she had the bird, seemingly mocking us by being perched at extremely close range. Just one of a trio of sexy kingfishers we had come across at PICOP. The kingfisher haul was not over however, as on the route back on passing by a recently known area for ***Philippine Dwarf-Kingfisher***, this rarely recorded bird flashed by us calling all the while, to bring our tally of endemic kingfishers at PICOP to an impressive four species. Both Monarchs and both Pittas in the first two days, and all the possible kingfishers, what were we going to look for over the next day?! - there was nothing left to do but focus our efforts on PICOP's last sexy resident - the unbelievable (and more than a little tricky) ***Mindanao Wattled Broadbill***. Unlike the other sexy species we had already seen, the broadbills are basically silent and generally spend very long periods being inactive in the understorey. This makes them really, really difficult to find unless they come by in a passing flock.

16th March: PICOP (MINDANAO) Lowland forest.

For our last full day we again moved our efforts on another fragment of forest, this time along road 4. The main purpose for our visiting this area was to try and pick up some hornbills as we were missing one species that is special to these lowland Mindanao forests. Once again the unseasonal weather dealt us a low blow and we hung out around some fruiting trees in an attempt to pick up the hornbill that can sometimes be found in this area in the early mornings. However with the heaviest prolonged burst of rain coming at this time, the weather seemed to have ruined our chances at picking up this key species. With nothing doing and finally the rain easing we headed off for some of the other species we were missing, and then typically as we had just turned the corner, leaving Nicky behind to answer a call of nature we heard his frantic shouting from where we had just been standing. We all raced back, rapidly negotiating our way around a deep muddy puddle in the process to find Nicky trained on a group of 20 ***Writhed Hornbills*** (a record count for the site according to Zardo), that had chosen to fly into the very trees we had been looking at just as we had turned the corner and were just out of sight! Still we were not complaining as we could then soak them up in full detail as they hung about in the treetops to dry off their rain-soaked wings. That brought our tally of endemic hornbills for the trip to four, all the possible species we could have seen until then, just the one on Palawan to go. We then headed back out of the open areas to focus on the forest understorey where we belatedly picked up ***Streaked (Striated) Ground-Babbler*** hopping about amongst the large limestone mossy boulders, that give the forest an almost Tolkeinesque feeling in this area. Aside from that this was our slowest;west days at PICOP, partly due to the fact that we had picked up many of the species we were looking for remarkably quickly in the first few days and also because the rain dogged us more on this day than any other. Our attempts at the Broadbill and ***Blue-crowned Racquet-tail*** both fell flat, meaning we were sure to be returning here for our final few hours at PICOP the following day. However, we did pick up ***Blue Fantail***, ***Bicolored Flowerpecker***, another ***Short-crested Monarch***, ***Steere's Pitta*** and ***Rufous-lored Kingfisher*** although best of all was a pair of ***Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeons***, one of which eventually showed extremely well, flying in and perching on an open limb right over the road.

17th March: PICOP (MINDANAO) Lowland forest.

In our last few hours at PICOP before we headed to the mountains of central Mindanao, we once again returned to road 4 in our last efforts to pick up the rarely encountered Broadbill and for another shot at the racquet-tail. Before we reached there however we made a stop before light and for ***Philippine Frogmouth*** and Philippine Hawk-Owl. The frogmouth proved elusive again, although we all got good looks at ***Mindanao (Philippine) Hawk-Owl*** (still unbelievably officially considered a subspecies of Philippine Hawk-Owl, although very different in both plumage and voice and therefore a surefire species in its own right). Before we headed to our best site for the broadbill, Zardo recommended checking out an area where the racquet-tails have nested in the not too distant past. On getting onto the trail we soon heard the distinctive high-pitched calls of the ***Blue-crowned Racquet-tail*** and looked up to see one of these impressive endemics fly in and conveniently land on an open snag above the clearing we were standing in, where we could admire the needle-fine racquets in full detail. With new birds running out fast there was nothing left to do but head into the forest to an area where the broadbill has been found nesting in recent years. In spite of this site being a good one, and where I had seen one shortly before the tour, many a tour misses them here due to their shy reclusive nature. On top of that the area of forest, while not far off the road has no real trail in and is set on the top of a spiny limestone outcrop, meaning the short walk in is not the most comfortable. Forewarned everyone was keen to try anyway and we soon reached the area where the birds nest hoping for a flock to be in the area, that would be our best chance of picking up this unobtrusive endemic. Unfortunately aside from a lone Blue Fantail there seemed little evidence of a bird party in the area and we started to settle ourselves so we could wait for a passing flock, when a muffled cry went up from Zardo behind. No one seemed to be sure what he said but we legged it anyway and on reaching him found he was watching a superb female ***(Mindanao) Wattled Broadbill***, perched inconspicuously in the understorey that remained there for around 5 minutes so we could all get fantastic looks at this truly unique member of a family (complete with its striking blue wattled eye ring) that does not have a single bad looking bird within it. Job done we headed off to Davao for some welcome rest before we trekked up into the mountains in the Central Mindanao province of Bukidnon, to search for one of the rarest and certainly most celebrated of all the endemics - the Philippine national bird - ***Monkey-eating or Great Philippine Eagle***.

The stunning, ever reliable **SILVERY KINGFISHER**, that typically put on a good show beside its regular haunt, a murky roadside pond at PICOP. Just one of 6 incredible species of endemic Kingfisher seen on the tour, and one of 4 different species on Mindanao alone.

Not the greatest of shots, but what a superb Mindanao endemic, **Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher**. We recorded it at both the recently discovered site for the species, PICOP, and
also at the more traditional site of Kitanglad.

18th March: Bukidnon Philippine Eagle Nest site & Mount Kitanglad (MINDANAO) Montane forest.

With the ***Philippine Eagles*** not breeding this year at Kitanglad, and the birds proving difficult for other tour groups before our tour, I decided with Nicky that if we had the opportunity to visit another nest site we should jump at the chance at seeing this impressive formidable raptor at close quarters. Nicky used his contacts to get us privileged access to a new nest site, that the Eagle Foundation had recently set up watch on, not too far from our intended destination of Kitanglad. As we headed up the trail to the new site alarmingly two adult birds passed briefly overhead, not giving anyone a decent look through the closed canopy above us. Sure enough when we reached the nest the adults were nowhere to be found and the chick was hunched low down in the nest, with only the odd feather in view! With this dismal showing the first group ascended the purpose built tower to have a better look at the nest. A long while went by and just as the first group were going to leave with only marginally better views of the chick obtained the loud distinctive whistles of a close adult were heard close by and then two birds cruised by at eye level, allowing those on the right position at the time to get a real eyeful of this immense eagle at close range. For those who missed it better was to come as the eaglet in the nest then stood up fully revealing its massively oversized bill, and one of the adults was found perched up a short distance away from our lofty position in the canopy. Having experienced Harpy Eagles several times before, that are equally impressive in their huge bulk, and perhaps more so in terms of their formidable claws that are close to the size of a bears, the Harpy simply cannot match the huge bill that gives the impression that the Philippine Eagle is a much larger, more formidable raptor. Instantly Richard and Mark were talking of the bird of the trip, in spite of that fact we had seen several pitta species, a bagful of colorful endemic kingfishers, and a host of multicolored Fruit-doves and pigeons! Unfortunately after the first group descended the tower Don and Doris had a fruitless search for the adults while up there. Although they had enjoyed impressive views of them in flight from their position on the ground, the absence of in your face views of the adults left them wanting and I am sure they are extremely grateful to Nicky who arranged a second trip to the nest a few days later free of charge, when they were then treated to unbeatable, prolonged views of these impressive birds at close range from their position in the canopy. On the ground around the nest a passing flock had us homing in on some of the Mindanao endemics we had come to the mountains for including most notably a stunning ***McGregor's Cuckoo-shrike***, in addition to the more expected fare of ***Cinnamon Ibons, Black-and-cinnamon Fantails*** and ***Mountain White-eyes***. With the morning distraction and changed plan for the eagle we headed out to Kitanglad a little later than expected, leaving little time for birding after our late afternoon arrival at Del Monte Lodge (sometimes referred to as Eagle Camp), although with our unforgettable experiences with the eagles in the morning there were few complaints. After dark we made our first foray for the many nightbirds in the area, and although proving a little more difficult than planned the ***Philippine Frogmouth*** eventually performed in exemplary fashion perching right over our heads, making up for missing it at PICOP the day before.

The funky-looking **APO MYNA**, a bizarre endemic confined to just a few high mountains in northern and central Mindanao. With the strange 'punk' hairstyle and very long tail certainly a very unique
myna species.

19th March: Mount Kitanglad (MINDANAO) Montane forest.
Shortly after dawn we began the trek up the mountain towards the 'eagle watchpoint', around which many birds can be found, aside from the obvious, biggish raptor. When birding Kitanglad it is necessary to cover a number of elevations on the mountain, as some of the specialist species can only be found at either low or high altitudes on Kitanglad. So as we made our way up the mountain, along the gently rising track we passed through some cleared areas where cabbage fields, often packed with Eastern Yellow Wagtails, border the montane forest that harbors many of the most special species. On these lower sections we visited a number of bright red blooming trees that held some of the endemic nectarivores we were after - notably ***Flame-crowned Flowerpecker*** (a scarce bird that seems to be rarely encountered these days at our other possible site on the tour - Mount Polis); several ***Pygmy Flowerpeckers*** and the Mindanao endemics ***Gray-hooded Sunbird*** and ***Olive-capped Flowerpecker***; in addition to a few of the more widespread ***Fire-breasted (Buff-bellied) Flowerpecker***. As we made our way up the mountain we picked up our last possible Rhabdornis of the trip - with the high elevation ***Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis*** found perched on an open dead snag where it remained obligingly for five whole minutes. Our first (of many) ***Eye-browed Thrushes*** flew out from the open trees on the way up, giving their distinctly Redwing like calls as they flew out. The Philippines has a whole host of endemic tailorbirds with three species possible on Mindanao alone. Two of these are found in the lowland forests and were seen already at PICOP, although the third one, ***Rufous-headed Tailorbird***, (a split from Mountain Tailorbird), is as suggested from its close congener's name, a high elevation species. They seemed to be calling from every available thicket of secondary scrub as we moved our way up the mountain, and a pair soon gave us good, close views, to complete the trio of possible endemic tailorbirds we were looking for on Mindanao. In one of the larger clearings we saw a distant adult ***Philippine Eagle*** circling higher up the mountain that made us ever more grateful for the incredible views we'd had the day before. It was necessary to trek up to some higher sections for a few species, notably for a mob of fantastic ***Apo Mynas***, that are unlike any other myna in southeast Asia what with their weird Mohican hairstyles, formed by their unique crest of fine black filaments, and bold yellow patch of bare facial skin around the eye. Also up higher was a single ***White-cheeked Bullfinch***, a brilliant ***Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher*** (a big relief for Mark who had been unsighted for the bird at PICOP, a few days before); and a superb male ***APO Sunbird*** was found singing from an open perch deep within the forest at our highest point on the mountain. The latter always requires a bit of a hike to reach the elevations necessary for the species, so once this bird had been safely seen we turned around and headed back to the more navigable sections of the trail lower down, where all the other remaining species we were after could be found. Other species picked up included a few of the strangely named ***Mindanao or Black-masked White-eye*** in some feeding flocks quite far up the mountain. This species completely lacks the distinctive white eye-ring typical of the other white-eyes, that leads many to believe the species would be far better named simply Mindanao Ibon. Other notable birds included our first ***Short-tailed Starlings***, ***Oriental Honey Buzzards*** and ***Black-shouldered Kite*** of the tour, a number of ***Island (Mountain Verditer) Flycatchers***, and a few endemic ***Sulphur-billed Nuthatches*** in some of the feeding parties lower down on Kitanglad (an endemic 'form' of Velvet-fronted Nuthatch that has now been given full species status); and a brief sighting of the large Mindanao form of ***White-browed Shortwing***.

20th March: Mount Kitanglad (MINDANAO) Montane forest.
For our last full day on the mountain we were to concentrate our efforts along the same mountain track, although focusing specifically on areas where we may pick up the few missing species we were now after. While settling in for breakfast before we started up the mountain again, (and a little untimely as some of us were at the time answering an urgent call of nature!), a ***Mindanao Scops-Owl*** began calling within spitting distance of the camp. With full light approaching fast I sent out the alert and the local guide Carlito and I headed into the bamboo stand, where within seconds it seemed Carlito had this tiny scops owl lined up in the beam for everyone present. The few people there got great views before I turned and realized some of the party were still missing so I dashed back up, picking up the missing persons and returned just in time as Carlito picked it up again on a different perch before it quickly fell silent with the onset of daylight. Things after that initial early morning thrill were a little slower than we'd hoped, with ***Mindanao Racquet-tails*** only heard once we were hidden from a clear view under the forest canopy, and try as we might we just simply could not coax in a ***Long-tailed Ground-Warbler***, that was rapidly becoming a nemesis bird for us on the tour, as we'd heard it's distinctive song almost constantly at Polis at the start of the tour and were still waiting for even a glimpse of this notoriously shy skulker. However, we did see a fine juvenile ***Rufous-bellied Eagle***, several ***Philippine Cuckoo-doves***, more ***Colasisis***, ***Coletos, Black-and-cinnamon Fantails***, ***APO Mynas***, ***Gray-hooded Sunbirds*** and ***Brown Tit-Babblers***, although the migrant ***Mugimaki and Snowy-browed Flycatchers*** were both new additions.

21st March: Mount Kitanglad (MINDANAO) Montane forest.
For our final few hours on the mountain before we made our way out of Mindanao and back to Manila for our final leg of the tour, the group decided to split. Still smarting from the tales of close perched views of adult eagles, Don and Doris returned with Nicky to the eagle nest site nearby, while Richard, Mark and I made a final foray up the mountain for some of the species we were lacking. Two such species made a mockery of our previous efforts further afield on the mountain by appearing almost right in the camp. First up a ***Pechora Pipit*** was found feeding right on the trail, inches from the camp, and then just beyond that an almost rodent-like figure crossed the trail behind - it could only have been our nemesis bird! Some tactical pishing from Carlito worked unbelievably well as he persuaded the extremely shy ***Long-tailed Ground-Warbler*** to perch out for us really well, within a stone's throw of Del Monte Lodge. This was just one of those times when a final few hours on site paid off really well, and despite some heavy rain that had us sheltering for some time higher up the mountain, I let everyone know that a little rain was a good omen for the racquet-tails, that seem to revel in this weather and are much more frequently seen flying about during a bout of prolonged drizzle. After one of these bouts of heavy rain Richard and Mark spotted a large powerful pigeon flying in, that landed close by giving us fantastic prolonged views of a ***Metallic Pigeon***, a species that is hard-to-come by on Kitanglad where they exist only at very low densities. As the heavy rain faded to drizzle we kept our ears open for the racquet-tails high-pitched calls, and after several teasing periods of hearing some of these distant parrots, we finally picked up a group of three calling ***Mindanao Racquet-tails*** as they sailed overhead. With another wave of rain coming in we headed back down the mountain, packed up our things, loaded the horses and made our way back to Damitan where we picked up our vans again for the drive to Cagayan de Oro. From there we met up once again met up with Don, Doris and Nicky, who were full of tales of dramatic close up views of 'on-the-deck' ***Philippine Eagles*** that had remained perched by the nest throughout the long bouts of heavy rain. We then boarded our so-called Cebu Pacific 'fun flight' (complete with the on board game that is typical of these domestic flights), and returned to Manila for a last night in the bustling Philippine capital before our final, Palawan leg of the tour.

Part 3: PALAWAN

22nd March: Puerto Princesa to Underground River National Park, Sabang (PALAWAN) Lowland, coastal limestone forest and mangroves.
Another early start was required to take the only daily flights to the Palawan capital of Puerto Princesa. We had originally planned a stop for ***Chinese Egrets*** and shorebirds at Garceliano Beach near the capital, although when we arrived there were horrified to find an extremely high tide rendering the whole area birdless - we quickly changed the plan, ate an early lunch and then boarded our vans to make the journey to Sabang that would be our base for exploring the endemic-rich coastal, limestone forests of St. Pauls (recently renamed Underground River National Park). Palawan often turns out to be most people's favorite Philippine island, due to a combination of easy endemics, some of the largest most in tact tracts of rainforest and frankly, because much of it is an idyllic paradise island of beaches, mangroves and lush bird-rich rainforests. Between Puerto Princesa and our resort in Sabang we passed by some deserted scenic beaches with superb vistas over the South China Sea, and along the way we encountered some fabulous stretches of forest and tree-lined limestone outcrops that are good spots for some of Palawan's coolest endemic birds. A few weeks before I had checked out some areas in preparation for the main tour, when an unplanned stop for some emergency car repairs, alongside a scenic tree-lined river, had caused me to stumble onto some superb flowering trees that had proved a real boon for nectarivores. And so it was we made our first stop there along the way in the hope that some of the trees would still be in bloom. Thankfully they were and it did not take long to find our main target, with a stocky male ***Copper-throated Sunbird*** and Palawan's own endemic nectar specialist, with the aptly named ***Palawan Flowerpecker,*** in addition to a whole bunch of other nectar feeders including ***Pygmy Flowerpecker***, ***Little Spiderhunter***, several stunning scarlet-breasted *trochilus* race ***Purple-throated Sunbirds***, and a few ***Olive-backed Sunbirds***. Our next, 'emergency' stop was made alongside a stretch of Palawan's idyllic western coastline for another low-flying squadron of needletails, this time a group of ***Brown-backed Needletails***, to add to the Purple and Philippine Needletails already recorded on Mindanao earlier on the tour. All along the way we ran into small vocal groups of the endemic *pusillus* 'race' of ***Slender-billed Crow***, heard giving their instantly recognizable, high-pitched and distinctly un-crow like calls, a subspecies that many believe should be given full species status, and so is frequently referred to simply as ***'Palawan Crow'***. We then rose up onto a scenic forested ridegtop, where the hoped-for ***Ashy-headed Babbler*** that had been present there only a few weeks previous failed to show, although we did begin seeing our first Palawan endemics with several ***Yellow-throated Leafbirds***, high flying flocks of ***Palawan Swiftlets*** (a recent split from Island or Uniform Swiftlet), a ***White-vented Shama*** was observed giving its fluty song from a low roadside perch; and best of all a gorgeous ***Blue Paradise-Flycatcher*** popped up on the opposite side of the road to the showy Shama. A short walk further down the road and we picked up another of the Palawan specialties, when we found a pair of lemon-yellow and black ***Palawan Tits*** singing in a bare roadside tree. Only a few hours within Palawan and we were getting a real taste of some of its very best birds. Aside from this haul of endemics, we also heard our third target pitta species of the trip, when a ***Hooded Pitta*** called closeby, that Don at least got fantastic views of. The others were not left smarting for long over this though, as I had another territory lined up a little further down the road, that paid off handsomely, when on playing the tape only briefly, the bird came crashing in and perched up within a few feet of our stunned, beaming faces. One of the main reasons for taking time on the way into Sabang was to stop for Palawan's endemic nightbirds along the way, so we needed to ride out some time waiting for dusk. Some of this time was spent scanning some huge tree-lined limestone outcrops that jut out above the surrounding coastal forests, giving a truly magnificent backdrop to birding this quiet coastal road. A short time later I picked up the gleaming ivory casques of a small party of ***Palawan Hornbills*** that we had been hoping for and can sometimes be found roosting in this area. We then got ourselves in position for the nightshow, although with light not yet fading a pair of calling ***Ashy-headed Babblers*** (that had failed me earlier in the afternoon) were fair game and typically gave excellent views when responding to a little gentle playback. As we waited along the deserted road for the onset of dusk, the first bats appeared and soon after we were treated to the sight of an ***Oriental Hobby*** hunting the bats low over the road, catching three bats in under 30 minutes, not a bad way to while out the time until the time for owling! Soon after dark our first night bird appeared with a pair of calling roadside ***Large-tailed Nightjars***. The frogmouths we were after were also soon calling, although the first of these gave us the run-around until we found a nice cleared area where we found a much more cooperative individual that just sat there growling back at us from its low perch. This funky bird with its ridiculous oversized whiskers continues to confound birders as to exactly what it is, currently listed as Javan Frogmouth, this island form gives a call that is not known in other populations of the widespread Javan that may itself warrant splitting into several different species. To add to the confusion some have also considered this 'Palawan' Frogmouth as a unique form of Sunda Frogmouth, while others of which the majority of opinion seems to be weighing behind consider the frogmouths on Palawan to be another as yet undescribed species, being referred to widely as simply ***Palawan Frogmouth***. Whilst soaking up the frogmouth our final night quarry, ***Palawan Scops-Owl*** uttered its own quiet, almost inaudible growl. The call of this bird is completely deceptive as you can be standing right in front of one, and the call can be difficult to hear even then, so the toughest thing is not to risk flushing the bird as you can walk right into it. Which is basically what happened initially when I went towards the source of the quiet growling and failed to notice the bird, perched vertically on a low vine until I was right on top of it, so that when everyone else came in for a look the bird flew with only me getting one unforgettable view. Thankfully after an initial, panicked period of silence the bird began calling once more and we managed to find it a short distance from its original perch, where the eyes glowed bright red back at us while we lapped up this impressive endemic scops owl. 3 target nightbirds, all 3 seen so we headed to our resort for celebratory beers and to plan tomorrow's 'assault' on one of the most stunning birds in the Philippines - as we would be seeking the breathtaking ***Palawan Peacock-Pheasant***.

YELLOW-THROATED LEAFBIRD near Sabang
- One of nearly 20 endemics confined to the island of Palawan. This one, like many others, is easy to find and was picked up a number of times in just a few days there.

JAVAN ('PALAWAN') FROGMOUTH near Sabang
- Confusion still reigns over the identity of the Palawan Frogmouths: some say they should be lumped within Sunda, some call them Javan, although many others believe they deserve full
endemic species status.

23rd March: Underground River (St. Paul's) National Park, Sabang (PALAWAN) Lowland, coastal limestone forest and mangroves.
The sparsely populated sandy white beaches of Sabang on the western coast of Palawan provide a peaceful, idyllic setting and base for exploring the bird-rich coastal forests of St. Pauls National Park, that holds all but three of Palawan's 19 or so endemic species. For the most sought-after among these we would have to take a short ride in one of the many 'bancas', a typical Filipino boat that is characterized by the large 'stabilizers' on each side. A short wade out from Sabang saw us boarding the banca and heading straight to the park's star attraction - the 8km long Subterranean (or Underground) River for which the park has recently been renamed. However, although most tourists alight there to take the tranquil boat ride along this geological wonder we were tracking a very different attraction, Palawan's (and perhaps the Philippines's as a whole) undisputed top bird - the gorgeous ***Palawan Peacock-Pheasant.*** This normally shy inhabitant of the limestone 'kast' forests, such as those at St. Paul's, has been unusually easy to pick up in recent years as a tame male bird has taken up residence around a park ranger station deep within the heart of the park, that is conveniently only a stone's throw from the beach when arriving by boat. This superb male bird hangs out near the station, often in company with ***Tabon Scrubfowls***, feeding on food scraps that are left out by the resident rangers who now know this stunning bird very well indeed, due to the droves of birders who have visited over the past 6 years or so. The forest here lines the beach itself, so that literally within inches of entering the forest we caught site of this truly magnificent pheasant feeding right out in the open where the iridescent blue jeweled plumage, with violet-blue 'eyes' or ocelli on its dazzlingly adorned tail, striking black-and-white crested head and 'velvety' black breast could be appreciated to the full. This is one of the undisputed avian gems of Asia, and a bird that can easily be used to persuade any doubting birder of the wonders of birding southeast Asia. With this main target nailed with absolute, and ridiculous ease we checked out some other areas around the Underground River picking up ***Tabon Scrubfowls***, ***Citrine Canary-Flycatcher*** and another Palawan specialty - ***Sulphur-bellied Bulbul***, in addition to both ***Greater and Common Flamebacks*** (the former of the fantastic endemic, red-headed *erythrocephalus* race) in the same tree with our first ***Asian Drongo-Cuckoo***. As we turned around to head back to the banca we realized the peacock had followed us all the way down the trail. So we headed off before this amazing pheasant completely let itself down! We then headed down a trail into the forest proper on the hunt for another striking Palawan endemic - ***Falcated Ground-Babbler***. We did pick up this awesome endemic, although it frustrated us by showing only in brief snatches meaning a surefire return to the spot for tomorrow when we hoped it may perform in more typical fashion, and one of us at least picked up Palawan's only endemic parrot - ***Blue-headed Racquet-tail*** whilst there. On the return journey we found our sixth and final endemic sunbird of the tour, with a fine male ***Handsome (Shelley's) Sunbird*** and later, a pair of ***Malaysian Plovers*** precariously nesting on a nearby coastal sand bar. A fantastic morning's birding with all the available endemics picked up at St. Paul's and on the way in the day before, leaving us wondering what the hell to do in the afternoon! However, as Don had missed many of these birds through a bout of heavy flu, he recovered to head out with us in the afternoon where we quickly set about redressing the balance with some of the endemics he'd missed. Amazingly in the short birding time we had that afternoon and evening before we retired for Shirley's birthday celebrations back at the resort, we managed to re-find ***Palawan Hornbill, Ashy-headed Babbler, Palawan Blue Flycatcher, Javan (Palawan) Frogmouth, Large-tailed Nightjar, Palawan Scops-Owl*** and the ***Oriental Hobby*** that, once again, swooped in on the hunt for bats shortly before nightfall.

The exquisite male **PALAWAN PEACOCK-PHEASANT**
St. Pauls - the only 'true' pheasant in the Philippines.

This showy male **PALAWAN PEACOCK-PHEASANT** provides one of those rare problems for a bird photographer - how to get photos of a bird that is often too close! Digiscoping was generally useless (although I did manage to get the shot on the left through a scope), so I shot this one hand held with the use of a flash as the bird was only a few feet away at the time. Although the natural light shot through the scope reveals the full, phenomenal colors of the bird best. If this is a prority bird for you then this is clearly the time to go for it, as this rediculous individual has made this species shamelessly easy to see!

24th March: Underground River (St. Paul's) National Park, Sabang and Garceliano Beach, Puerto Princesa (PALAWAN) Tidal mudflats and mangroves.
Don had also missed the peacock show the day before through illness and what with there still being a few birds in the same area for the rest of us we boarded our banca once more and waded the short distance ashore, to enter the kast forest that is the peacock's well-documented stomping ground. In addition to the 'almost guaranteed' ***Palawan Peacock-pheasant*** we all had superb views of a perched ***Oriental Dwarf (Rufous-backed) Kingfisher***, that had only given brief views for most the day before as it typically zipped by at lightning speed, and a pair of ***Stork-billed Kingfishers*** were also in the same area. With little else showing we returned to the boat and made the short ride to another bay where we paddled to shore again and entered the forest in search of Palawan's coolest endemic babbler once more. On reaching the spot where it had performed so poorly the day before, the bird was immediately heard calling. This time however, only the shortest burst of playback brought the ***Falcated Ground-Babbler*** screaming into view, that then perched up magnificently in an open gully in the forest that even allowed a few of us to get full on views of this cracking endemic babbler in the Swarovski scope. Other notable birds included our only tour sighting of ***Mangrove Whistler,*** as well as ***Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous-tailed Tailorbird***, ***Common Flameback*** and a couple of young ***Red-bellied Pittas*** that bounced off the trail in front of us. After a final lunch at the Last Frontier where we were able to watch a ***Palawan Hornbill*** leaping around in some trees right by the dining area, we departed for Puerto Princesa, stopping en-route to pick up another pack of low-flying ***Brown-backed Needletails***, our first, much belated view of a ***Plaintive Cuckoo***, a small active party of well-named ***Fiery Minivets*** (that included a vivid orange-red male in their group) and a ***Sulphur-bellied Bulbul*** for Don who had missed it during his bout of flu. We then returned to the mudflats near Puerto Princesa hoping for a more favorable tide on this occasion. Unfortunately the tides were extremely high at this time, leaving little exposed mud. However, we did come across a band of roosting egrets which after some scrutiny was found to hold at least two of the endangered ***Chinese Egrets*** that we were seeking there. Shorebirds were thin on the ground due to the unfortunate state of the tide but we did find a few ***Gray-tailed Tattlers*** roosting in the mangroves. We then retired to Princesa, taking in a superb seafood restaurant perched on the edge of the mangroves, that even has Prince Andrew on its long list of past celebrity diners and after tucking into the locally produced food, we were able soon understood why.

25th March: Iwahig Penal Colony and Rasa Island (PALAWAN) Lowland rainforest and coastal scrub and woodland on Rasa.
The Balsahan Trail, bizarrely set for a birding area within a safe correctional institution, is a key site on Palawan for a couple of endemics that are never recorded at St. Paul's - notably Melodious Babbler and historically (although very rarely in recent years), also Palawan Flycatcher. One of the logistical problems we had not expected there was unseasonally heavy rains the day before our arrival, leading to the swelling of the river that runs alongside the trail and a rising of the formerly little brooks that we needed to cross to reach the best areas for these key endemics. Thankfully Arding, our driver and Iwahig employee, was on hand to aid us all across what is usually little bother to cross in little more than walking boots. We all eventually made it and to my relief we soon heard the ***Melodious Babblers*** calling on cue, and were soon getting to grips with a group of three-four birds perched up in a subcanopy vine tangle. With these falling conveniently early we were getting into the privileged position of what do we look for next? Well the flycatcher of course! My hopes really were not high for this site (we had a stop planned for our final birding of the tour, which has been a much more reliable stakeout in recent years), as nobody had reported seeing at all in the current season (with many tours having visited the area). Indeed Nicky our resident, experienced Filipino bird guide had recently revealed he had never encountered them on the Balsahan at all. What the hell we thought, we had the time so we should try and ease the pressure on tomorrow's final birding stop. So we headed in to the thick stands of bamboo that they generally favor (and which makes them often challenging to see), and received little response to a bit of strategic playback. Unsurprised we turned to leave and immediately a ***Palawan Flycatcher*** piped up and gave a brief snatch of song close by. I waited for a time to hear it again and identify the source of the sound, but the bird had fallen stubbornly silent, so I tried a quick burst of playback whereupon, this shy retiring flycatcher zipped straight in (flashing the bright reddish tail past us as it did so leaving us in no doubt as to what it was), and perched right out in front of us singing away within 10 feet of the whole group who were all fixed firmly on this bonus find. We had served our time in Iwahig and so then headed for our final main destination of the tour - the sleepy, peaceful coastal town of Nara, our base for exploring nearby Rasa Island. After a lunch and rest in Nara from the severe afternoon heat, we boarded another banca and set sail for Rasa, a 30 minute ride away. From the boat we picked up our final new birds of the tour - first our last Imperial Pigeon of the tour, the striking ***Pied Imperial Pigeon***, here on Rasa in its element as it is a small island specialist, and then a little later the first of the roosting ***Philippine Cockatoos*** came sailing in from the mainland. Using a scope while on board a Filipino banca is not easy to say the least, but in between the drifting motion of the boat we all managed scope views of these ivory birds, all of us keen to get a good look at their burnt red vents that makes this species unique from all other cockatoos. These critically endangered 'parrots' are now extremely localized, having suffered a dramatic decline in recent years due to a lethal combination of habitat destruction and intensive hunting for the cage bird trade. Thus they are now very difficult to find anywhere away from Rasa, (having formerly been a regular sighting at St. Paul's there are no very recent records at all despite much good habitat remaining in that national park). So it was well worth the journey to watch playful gangs of these extremely rare cockatoos landing on the edge of island, before they headed deeper inland to roost. We then returned to Nara for our final late farewell dinner, before our departure the next day.

26th March: Nara to Puerto Princesa and departure back to Manila.
Essentially a departure day, we made the journey back to Puerto Princesa to fly to Manila and connect with international flights back. Although we made a stop along the way for a last few looks at some of Palawan's endemic birds, including another view of the scarce ***Palawan Flycatcher*** at a site we would more normally expect to run across it, ***Handsome (Shelley's) Sunbird***, ***Yellow-throated Leafbird*** and a ***Sulphur-bellied Bulbul*** or two. It was then off for our good-byes with talk of the next trip (because us birders are always looking to the next trip and the next haul of new birds at the soonest opportunity) - Argentina next perhaps for Don and Doris, and only a few weeks later Mark, Shirley and Richard would be in Andean cloudforests of southern Ecuador pursuing such treats as Jocotoco Antpitta and others.

As an inaugural tour to the Philippines we were more than happy with our species haul, a good number of endemics (just under 130 recorded), including two representatives from the lone endemic bird family - ***the Philippine Creepers***. Aside from that we had a good run on the most highly sought after species in the Philippines with good looks at many of these, like all 3 realistic pitta species including the spectacular endemic ***Steere's (Azure-breasted) Pitta***, a bagful of very cool endemic kingfishers including ***Winchell's (Rufous-lored), Indigo-banded, Philippine Dwarf, Silvery Kingfisher*** and ***Spotted & Blue-capped Wood-Kingfishers***, the just plain awesome ***(Mindanao) Wattled Broadbill;*** the incredible, few-feet-away views of the breathtaking resident male ***Palawan Peacock-Pheasant*** at St. Paul's; and a bunch of cool doves that included the elusive ***Luzon Bleeding-heart***, the very scarce ***Spotted Imperial & Pink-bellied Imperial-Pigeons*** and fancy ***Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove*** all on Luzon; and a number of good sightings of the more widespread but way more attractive ***Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove***. However, the undoubted highlight of the tour has to have been our unbeatable, close up encounters with the 'haribon' or ***Philippine Eagle***, with cracking views of the 4 month-old chick along with the monstrous adults also in attendance. Only the south American Harpy Eagle comes close to this awesome raptor, although the critically endangered and endemic tag that comes attached to this species gives the Philippine Eagle an undoubted edge that saw it universally voted for as one of the top trip highlights. Both for the group and guides alike this was a great encounter that had it all - good views of the chick in the nest, the adult birds perched and also in flight when the incredibly distinctive silhouette with the bulging primaries was superb to see as it flew low over us. Rarely in birding do you get the full on views that you crave, as the natural world is a 'cruel mistress' as some would say, but this time we had it all and then some. The pressure is now on for next years tour!

BIRD LIST

Taxonomy and nomenclature for this list follow Clements, J. (5th ed. Updated 2004) *Birds of the World. A Checklist.* Pica Press.

Birds in UPPER CASE/CAPITAL LETTERS are PHILIPPINE ENDEMICS.

129 endemics were recorded on the tour, with 124 of these seen. There were also a number of near-endemics (like Rufous Paradise-Flycatcher and Coleto, that many generally treat as endemics as they have such tiny ranges outside of the Philippines); and a number of species that are not yet split by Clements, although are widely believed to be surefire 'species-in-waiting', such as the Mindanao form of Philippine Hawk-Owl, the Palawan form of Slender-billed Crow, and the 'confusing' frogmouth on Palawan.

Those that are endemic to the main island groups visited of Luzon, Mindanao or Palawan, (i.e. If found on only the main island of Luzon and any small outlying islands they are marked as Luzon endemics), have been marked as island endemics. (E.g. Rufous Coucal is found on the main island of Luzon, and also occurs on two smaller islands off there - Catanduanes and Polillo and so is marked as a 'LUZON ENDEMIC').

Those marked with (H) were only HEARD on the tour.

Those that are marked with (GO) were only seen by the GUIDE ONLY.

Abbreviations of L, M and P are used to denote Luzon, Mindanao and Palawan respectively.

I have written selective notes against particular species of note (including all the endemics).

GREBES: Podicipedidae
Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis

HERONS, EGRETS and BITTERNS: Ardeidae
Gray Heron Ardea cinerea
Purple Heron Ardea purpurea
Great Egret Ardea alba
Intermediate Egret Egretta intermedia
Little Egret Egretta garzetta
Chinese Egret Egretta eulophotes
Pacific Reef-Heron Egretta sacra
Javan Pond-Heron Ardeola speciosa
Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis
Striated (Little) Heron Butorides striata
Rufous Night-Heron Nycticorax caledonicus
Yellow Bittern Ixobrychus sinensis
A very common bird at Candaba Marsh (L), and also recorded at Bislig Airfield (M).
Cinnamon Bittern Ixobrychus cinnamomeus
Only recorded the once, a lone bird in a rice paddy at Banaue (L).

DUCKS, GEESE and SWANS: Anatidae
Wandering Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna arcuata
Only recorded flying around the airfield at Bislig (M).
Eurasian Wigeon Anas penelope
PHILIPPINE DUCK Anas luzonica
Recorded at Candaba Marsh (L) where very common, and a pair were also seen skulking in a marsh beside the runway at Bislig Airfield (M).
Northern Pintail Anas acuta
Garganey Anas querquedula
Northern Shoveler Anas clypeata

OSPREY: Pandionidae
Osprey Pandion haliaetus

HAWKS, EAGLES and KITES: Accipitridae
Barred Honey-buzzard Pernis celebensis
Recorded three times at PICOP (M).
Oriental Honey-buzzard Pernis ptilorhynchus
Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus
Brahminy Kite Haliastur indus
White-bellied Sea-Eagle Haliaeetus leucogaster
One was seen cruising over the bay at Subic (L).
Crested Serpent-Eagle Spilornis cheela
PHILIPPINE SERPENT-EAGLE Spilornis holospilus
First recorded at Mt. Polis (L) and also seen once at Subic Bay (L), several times at Makiling (L) and PICOP (M), and once at Kitanglad (M).
NB. Kennedy et al. treated this as a race of **Crested Serpent-Eagle, *S. cheela***.
Eastern Marsh-Harrier Circus spilonotus
Chinese (Sparrowhawk) Goshawk Accipiter soloensis
Japanese Sparrowhawk Accipiter gularis
Besra Accipiter virgatus
Eurasian (Common) Buzzard Buteo buteo
One pair were seen at Mt.Polis (L).
GREAT PHILIPPINE EAGLE Pithecophaga jefferyi
BIRD OF THE TRIP. *A fantastic hulking pair of these magnificent eagles were seen both in low flight, and perched close by a newly advertised nest site in Bukidnon (M), while the 4 month old chick was watched in the nest itself. We were able to watch from a privileged position in a purpose-built, treetop, observation tower. A single adult bird was also seen gliding distantly over a clearing at the more traditional site of Kitanglad (M). Truly one of the world's most impressive raptors.*
Rufous-bellied Eagle Aquila kienerii
Changeable Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus cirrhatus
PHILIPPINE HAWK-EAGLE Spizaetus philippensis
Only recorded at Subic Bay (L), a key site for this endemic raptor, and where they were seen at least once on all three days in the area.

FALCONS: Falconidae
PHILIPPINE FALCONET Microhierax erythrogenys
This tiny falcon was seen on two of our three days at Subic Bay (L), typically hawking insects from high dead snags; and also recorded on one day at PICOP (M), traditionally another good site for the species.
Oriental Hobby Falco severus
Despite a bag load of Palawan endemics seen on our first day we saw this bird, the views of this agile falcon hunting bats within feet of our faces (near Sabang on Palawan), was a very impressive site and overshadowed much else we saw that day. The bird was watched as it swooped low beside us (within inches of our legs) as it dived low to catch bats emerging just before dark. On our first day's sighting we watched as the bird caught three bats in 30 minutes. The bird was also seen once the next day when in only one swoop the bird picked up yet another hapless bat. Another bird was seen seemingly hunting swiftlets around some cliff faces near the Underground River at St. Pauls (P).
Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus
One flew by Del Monte Lodge at Kitanglad (M).

MEGAPODES: Megapodiidae
Tabon Scrubfowl Megapodius cumingii
Several were seen scuffling around in the sand at the Underground River ranger station (P) on both of our visits there.

PHEASANTS and PARTRIDGES: Phasianidae
Blue-breasted Quail Coturnix chinensis
Red Junglefowl Gallus gallus
PALAWAN PEACOCK-PHEASANT Polyplectron napoleonis PALAWAN ENDEMIC
One of the undoubted **CONTENDERS FOR BIRD OF THE TRIP**, *although just pipped to the post largely due to the incredible and unusually good views of the* **Philippine Eagles**. *Otherwise this 'resident' male at the Underground River ranger station is undoubtedly one of the worlds top birds, exquisitely marked, just an awesome bird that is every bit as breathtaking (even when you have already seen numerous photos of this now infamous bird, and therefore seemingly understand well what is to come,*

you can never be fully prepared for this incredible pheasant). A simply cracking bird that is a must for any visiting birder.

BUTTONQUAIL: Turnicidae
SPOTTED BUTTONQUAIL Turnix ocellata LUZON ENDEMIC
A late afternoon vigil, along a grassy track on the campus at Makiling (L), paid off with a number of views of this large, stocky endemic buttonquail, with 6 or more seen in our short time there.
Barred Buttonquail Turnix suscitator
At least 4 were seen along the same track as the **Spotted Buttonquails** *at Makiling (L).*

RAILS, GALLINULES and COOTS: Rallidae
Buff-banded Rail Gallirallus philippensis
Barred Rail Gallirallus torquatus
PLAIN BUSH-HEN Amaurornis olivaceus
This is species is every guides worst nightmare - an easy to hear endemic that is extremely shy and generally hangs about in thick impenetrable grassy verges and bushy thickets. Thankfully for us on this tour the bird proved all too easy to see as we found two separate pairs feeding right out in the open, in the late afternoon, in some rice paddies near Mount Polis. They were also more typically heard only at Makiling(L), Subic (L), PICOP and Kitanglad (both M).
White-breasted Waterhen Amaurornis phoenicurus
White-browed Crake Porzana cinerea
Watercock Gallicrex cinerea
Purple (Gallinule) Swamphen Porphyrio porphyrio
Common Moorhen Gallinula chloropus

JACANAS: Jacanidae
Pheasant-tailed Jacana Hydrophasianus chirurgus

AVOCETS and STILTS: Recurvirostridae
Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus
White-headed Stilt Himantopus leucocephalus

PRATINCOLES: Glareolidae
Oriental Pratincole Glareola maldivarum

PLOVERS and LAPWINGS: Charadriidae
Pacific Golden-Plover Pluvialis fulva
Black-bellied (Gray) Plover Pluvialis squatarola
Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius
Snowy (Kentish) Plover Charadrius alexandrinus
Malaysian Plover Charadrius peronii
A pair of these localized plovers were found nesting on a small sand bar near Sabang on Palawan.

SANDPIPERS: Scolopacidae
[Pintail Snipe Gallinago stenura]
[Swinhoe's Snipe Gallinago megala]
Several unidentified snipe were seen at Candaba Marsh (L) on the first day of the tour that were either Swinhoe's or Pintails, these species are nearly inseparable in the field.
Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago
Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus
Common Redshank Tringa totanus
Common Greenshank Tringa nebularia
Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola
Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus
Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos
Gray-tailed Tattler Heterosceles brevipes
Ruddy Turnstone Arenaria interpres
Long-toed Stint Calidris subminuta

GULLS: Laridae
Black-headed Gull Larus ridibundus

TERNS: Sternidae
Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybridus

PIGEONS and DOVES: Columbidae
Metallic Pigeon Columba vitiensis
This large impressive pigeon, was seen in our final hour of birding at Kitanglad (M), when a lone bird flew in and perched close to us after we emerged from our shelter after a heavy downpour. This species is very rare at Kitanglad, and was certainly a bonus find there where it exists on the mountain only at very low densities.
Island Collared-Dove Streptopelia bitorquata
Three were seen, including a calling bird, at Candaba Marsh (L), the only realistic site for this bird on the tour.
Spotted Dove Streptopelia chinensis
Philippine Cuckoo-Dove Macropygia tenuirostris
(Common) Emerald Dove Chalcophaps indica
Zebra Dove Geopelia striata
LUZON BLEEDING-HEART Gallicolumba luzonica LUZON ENDEMIC
Another **CONTENDER FOR BIRD OF THE TRIP**, *a lone bird flew up from the road late in the morning at Makiling whereupon it then showed on three separate occasions, including one where Don had the bird perched out in full view on the top of a close rock where he was treated to great views of the gleaming white breast and 'bloody' breast patch that characterises these distinctive Filipino pigeons.*
MINDANAO BLEEDING-HEART Gallicolumba criniger (H)
This extremely rarely seen bird was amazingly heard in two different places in one day at PICOP (M), although on both occasions the birds were not close and did not respond at all to playback. This bird has not been seen at PICOP in recent years to my knowledge, and indeed Zardo the local guide who accompanies every bird group there, has only ever seen the bird once in all his years birding there, so I guess our chances of seeing the bird were always close to zero!
WHITE-EARED (BROWN-) DOVE Phapitreron leucotis
Recorded first on one of the lower stretches of forest along the road at Mount Polis and then several times also at Subic (L) and PICOP (M), once also at Makiling (L).
AMETHYST (BROWN-) DOVE Phapitreron amethystina (H)
Pompadour Green-Pigeon Treron pompadora
Thick-billed (Green-) Pigeon Treron curvirostra
YELLOW-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE Ptilinopus occipitalis
The Philippines has an abundance of cool pigeons and doves, and this one is right up there as one of the best of them, with its blood-red face patch and yellow-washed breast. Thankfully it is one of the easier of the doves to come by and we encountered them first at Subic on several occasions(L); then we had amazing, prolonged views of a bird perched out drying itself after a heavy downpour along road 1/4 at PICOP, (with another later sighting there also); and finally we saw two at Mt. Kitanglad (M).
FLAME-BREASTED FRUIT-DOVE Ptilinopus marchei LUZON ENDEMIC
This is probably the one dove that in terms of flashy coloring gives the **Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove** *a good run for its money. This one is also confined to the high montane forests of Luzon, and is also rare and local there, giving it more than a little added rarity value. Patience was required to get it however, as we drew a blank on our first day there, and we never heard any calling in our two full days up there. Although thankfully Mark picked one up at Mt. Polis (L) on our second day, at a very timely moment, after Nicky had just enjoyed brief views of another individual that had showed for him only before slinking away. The bird Mark found was much more cooperative though posing in the scope for everyone, while it was perched up high in some open, bare branches.*
Black-chinned Fruit-Dove Ptilinopus leclancheri
PINK-BELLIED IMPERIAL-PIGEON Ducula poliocephala
Heard on two days at PICOP, when on the second day one of a calling pair flew into playback on three separate occasions. On the final time the bird flew in and landed right above us over the road in dead tree, giving us all cracking views of this really handsome pigeon. This as with the next species seems to be undergoing a real and rapid decline in recent years, so it was pleasing to get both these species of impressive Imperials on the tour.
SPOTTED IMPERIAL-PIGEON Ducula carola
Thinking our best chance (that was not high even there), for this species was at PICOP, we threw out the rule book and found one at Makiling (L) instead, where they are almost unheard of in recent years. A female bird was found low down on the mountain, perched low down in a tree right above us on the road. If it had not been for the fantastic **Luzon Bleeding-heart** *at the same site, this would have been the obvious trip highlight for the Makiling area.*
Green Imperial-Pigeon Ducula aenea
Pied Imperial Pigeon Ducula bicolor
A true island specialist, a few were seen from the boat as we circumvented Rasa Island (P) to get to roosting site for **Philippine Cockatoos**.

COCKATOOS: Cacatuidae
PHILIPPINE COCKATOO Cacatua haematuropygia
Several small groups were watched playfully flying around with each other and calling at each other, from our position on a banca, just offshore from Rasa Island (P) on the last night of the tour. This was our final Philippine endemic of the tour. These formerly widespread endemics are now very rare birds, having suffered a dramatic and sudden decline in recent years and are currently listed by BirdLife International as critically endangered.

PARROTS: Psittacidae
GUAIABERO Bolbopsittacus lunulatus
First seen very well at Subic Bay (L) where they were seen a number of times. Also seen several times at both Makiling (L) and PICOP (M).
MINDANAO RACQUET-TAIL Prioniturus waterstradti MINDANAO ENDEMIC
This high montane parrot made us wait until the last, when after a very heavy downpour on our last morning at Kitanglad (M), a small group of three calling racquet-tails passed by.
BLUE-HEADED RACQUET-TAIL Prioniturus platenae PALAWAN ENDEMIC
This proved to be the most tricky of the Racquet-tails for us on the tour, and was our one big dissappointment on Palawan, as only Richard managed to glimpse a calling bird overhead. They were only heard on two occasions in the St. Pauls area.
GREEN RACQUET-TAIL Prioniturus luconensis LUZON ENDEMIC
Subic Bay (L) is the key site for this rapidly declining and now highly local lowland species. They remain fairly common there though, and we managed to get good perched views of them in our first, very brief foray in the area, when the fine racquets on this, our first racquet-tail of the tour, were seen very well by all.
BLUE-CROWNED RACQUET-TAIL Prioniturus discurus
Although not confined to Mindanao, this species is now very tricky to come by throughout much of its former range and PICOP on Mindanao remains the best place currently for this species, where we saw two separate calling birds perched well in our final few hours there (although they were largely overshadowed by the rather pleasing view of a **Mindanao Wattled Broadbill** *a short time later).*
Blue-naped Parrot Tanygnathus lucionensis
PHILIPPINE HANGING-PARROT (COLASISI) Loriculus philippensis
Recorded at a number of sites, this widespread endemic was especially visible at Kitanglad (M) and Subic Bay (L).

CUCKOOS: Cuculidae
Large Hawk-Cuckoo Cuculus sparverioides
PHILIPPINE HAWK-CUCKOO Cuculus pectoralis
Heard at Kitanglad (M) regularly, although only seen at Mount Makiling (L) on one morning where they were heard on all visits.
Some authors (e.g. Kennedy et al in the field guide), treat the Philippine race as merely a form of Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo).
Plaintive Cuckoo Cacomantis merulinus
Brush (Rusty-breasted) Cuckoo Cacomantis variolosus
Violet Cuckoo Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus
Asian Drongo-Cuckoo Surniculus lugubris
PHILIPPINE DRONGO-CUCKOO Surniculus velutinus
Seen on two of four full days at PICOP (M) and heard daily there. The unnatural, open nature of the forest there (due to the rampant deforestation in the area), makes this a good site to see them.
Some treat this as merely a form of **Asian Drongo-cuckoo**, *S. lugubris.*
Asian (Common) Koel Eudynamys scolopacea
RED-CRESTED MALKOHA Phaenicophaeus superciliosus LUZON ENDEMIC
First seen at Subic Bay (L), this incredible endemic malkoha with the huge red 'eyelashes' that looks more like something out of the muppet show, was also seen at Mount Makiling (L).
SCALE-FEATHERED MALKOHA Phaenicophaeus cumingi LUZON ENDEMIC
Another crazy-looking Luzon malkoha, we saw a single bird on two days on Mount Polis (L). Strangely only heard at Makiling (L).
RUFOUS COUCAL Centropus unirufus LUZON ENDEMIC
Always tricky to see, we saw them twice at Subic Bay (L).
BLACK-FACED COUCAL Centropus melanops
For me one of the most underated and poorly illustrated endemics in the Philippines. A superb Coucal that stands out from an otherwise dull family. Three were seen on one day at PICOP (M), where they were heard on most days.
Greater Coucal Centropus sinensis
PHILIPPINE COUCAL Centropus viridis
A widespread and common endemic. We recorded them Makiling (L), PICOP (M) and Kitanglad (M).
Lesser Coucal Centropus bengalensis

BARN OWLS: Tytonidae
Australasian Grass-Owl Tyto longimembris
3 birds were seen at the traditionally reliable site of Bislig Airfield (M).

OWLS: Strigidae
PALAWAN SCOPS-OWL Otus fuliginosus PALAWAN ENDEMIC
A very good site on the way in to Sabang (P) proved reliable again, where a single bird was seen well on two consecutive nights in exactly the same area. Both times the bird was heard giving its quiet, distinctive croaking growl that to me, due the quiet broken nature of the call, always gives the impression of a bird that it is on the verge of losing its voice. Both times we soon found it sitting there, glaring back at us with its angry, glowing red eyes. A truly cracking endemic owl.
PHILIPPINE SCOPS-OWL Otus megalotis (H)
Frustratingly only heard at both Subic (L) and Makiling (L), despite a lot of effort being made to see them.
MINDANAO SCOPS-OWL Otus mirus MINDANAO ENDEMIC
This tiny, very 'cute' scops-owl was found calling high up in a stand of thick bamboo close to Del Monte Lodge, Kitanglad (M).
LUZON SCOPS-OWL Otus longicornis LUZON ENDEMIC
A short time before the tour I had bumped into a pair of these scarcely seen, small scops-owls along a trail off Mount Polis (L), and thankfully one responded well to playback on the tour coming straight in and staring back at us with its angry yellow irides.
Mantanani Scops-Owl Otus mantananensis (H)
MINDANAO EAGLE-OWL (GIANT SCOPS-OWL) Mimizuku gurneyi (H) MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Typically only heard nightly at Kitanglad.
Chocolate Boobook Ninox randi NEAR-ENDEMIC
This recently split species was seen in an area of open roadside trees at PICOP (M), traditionally a good site for the species.
NB. This was recently split from **Brown Hawk-Owl, *N. scutulata***.
PHILIPPINE HAWK-OWL Ninox philippensis
Two very different forms of this owl were encountered on the tour - first **Philippensis** *on Mount Makiling on Luzon and later one of the* **spilocephala** *'species' was found at PICOP (M).*
NB. The distinct plumage and vocalizations of several forms within the Phil. Hawk-Owl group, including the distinctive Mindanao form, spilocephala, have led many to call for the splitting of some of these forms into full species.

FROGMOUTHS: Podargidae
PHILIPPINE FROGMOUTH Batrachostomus septimus
One of our first birds at Kitanglad (following a belated arrival there after our morning diversion to the new Philippine Eagle nest site), was this long-whiskered nightbird, that was found calling right above our heads close to Del Monte Lodge (M). They were also heard, but unseen, at PICOP (M).
Javan ('Palawan') Frogmouth Batrachostomus javensis PALAWAN ENDEMIC?
This fantastic frogmouth was found on two consecutive nights close to Sabang (P). Confusion reigns over what the frogmouths on Palawan are - some lumping them within **Sunda Frogmouth, *B. cornutus*,** *others (e.g. Kennedy et al.) with* **Javan Frogmouth, C. javensis**, *although the distinct vocalizations of the birds in the Palawan group have led some authors to propose giving them full species status.*

NIGHTJARS: Caprimulgidae
Great Eared-Nightjar Eurostopodus macrotis
Our first nightbird of the tour was this giant, harrier-sized nightjar, that was found with surprising ease hawking right over our hotel in Banaue (L). They were seen there also on all subsequent nights; and also recorded at PICOP (M) and also at Kitanglad (M) where they were also heard nightly.
Large-tailed Nightjar Caprimulgus macrurus
Only occurs on Palawan, where seen on two consecutive nights close to Sabang.
PHILIPPINE NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus manillensis
Commonly heard at both PICOP and Kitanglad (both M), and a pair was seen well by the near disused runway at Bislig Airfield (M).
NB. Clements treats this as distinct from **Sulawesi Nightjar, *C. celebensis***, *although others have previously lumped them together (e.g. Kennedy et al.).*

SWIFTS: Apodidae
Glossy Swiftlet Collocalia esculenta
PYGMY SWIFTLET Collocalia troglodytes
This, the most widespread of the endemic swiftlets, was seen at a number of sites - including near Banaue (L), PICOP (M), between Puerto Princesa and Sabang (P).
PHILIPPINE SWIFTLET Aerodramus mearnsi
This endemic is a high altitude swiftlet, seemingly replacing **Uniform (Island) Swiftlet**, ***A. vanikorensis*** *higher up. Recorded on both days at Mount Polis (L), and also once at Mt. Kitanglad (M).*
PALAWAN SWIFTLET Aerodramus palawanensis PALAWAN ENDEMIC
A very common bird on Palawan seen on most days there.
NB. Although given full species status by Clements, some authors (e.g. Kennedy et al in the field guide, treat palawensis as a race of the more widespread **Island Swiftlet, *C. vanikorensis*.**
Uniform (Island) Swiftlet Aerodramus vanikorensis
PHILIPPINE NEEDLETAIL Mearnsia picina
This spectacular aerial endemic was seen really well at PICOP on our first day, when a low flying squadron was found along road 1/4, when the characteristic butter-knife wings and white flash on the 'armpits' could be seen to full effect. Also seen on one other day at PICOP (M).
Brown-backed Needletail Hirundapus giganteus
Purple Needletail Hirundapus celebensis
A large group (15+) of these powerful swifts was found as we passed through the PICOP concession on our way to Bislig (M). This species also extends to the Indonesian island of Sulawesi.
Asian Palm-Swift Cypsiurus balasiensis

CRESTED TREESWIFTS: Hemiprocnidae
Whiskered Treeswift Hemiprocne comata
A widespread southeast Asian species, but always good to see as it is a real looker. First seen hawking from roadside wires at Subic (L) and later also seen a number of times at Kitanglad (M), including a trio of treeswifts perched by the lodge over breakfast.

TROGONS: Trogonidae
PHILIPPINE TROGON Harpactes ardens
Although heard at Makiling (L), only seen at PICOP (M), where recorded on three of four full days.

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae
Common Kingfisher Alcedo atthis
INDIGO-BANDED KINGFISHER Alcedo cyanopecta
Our only shot at this was on Luzon, where we were expecting to pick it up at Makiling, a traditionally good site for it. There is also another reasonably site fairly close to Banaue where we tried and got great looks at a pair there perched on rocks by the fast-flowing mountain river. A really impressive Kingfisher that is again (like many other stunning Philippine species), not adequately illustrated in the field guide.
SILVERY KINGFISHER Alcedo argentata
This small fantastic fisher is actually rare and local in the Philippines, although as there is a reliably staked out pair at a muddy roadside pond at PICOP, one that is typically expected on any Philippine tour. Within minutes of our arrival the characteristic high-pitched whistles drew us straight to this superb endemic, perched low over the water, where it's vivid scarlet feet glowed from underneath the shadow of the overhanging pondside trees.
PHILIPPINE (DWARF-) KINGFISHER Ceyx melanurus
A very rarely recorded endemic, as it is a highly active Kingfisher that rarely alights, like its more widespread SE Asian counterpart, the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher. This bird was no exception to the rule, as it flashed by us, as we headed back to the vehicle for a late lunch after the notable distractions of **Steere's Pittas, Celestial & Short-crested Monarchs, Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher** *and others during a classic morning of birding at PICOP (M).*
Rufous-backed (Oriental Dwarf-) Kingfisher Ceyx rufidorsa
Unlike its rarer congener above, this species performed brilliantly for us at St. Paul's (P), being seen perched well on two separate days.
Stork-billed Kingfisher Pelargopsis capensis
A pair were seen on both days at St. Paul's (P).
White-throated Kingfisher Halcyon smyrnensis
RUFOUS-LORED (WINCHELL'S) KINGFISHER Todirhamphus winchelli
This cracking endemic Kingfisher can be fairly easy at PICOP, due to a combination of its helpful habit of calling loudly from the top of large prominent bare trees, and also perhaps due to the artificially open nature of the forest there due to recent clearing of many surrounding trees. Either way we were not complaining at the great views of this superb Kingfisher on our first day at PICOP (M), with another recorded on one other day also.
(White-) Collared Kingfisher Todirhamphus chloris
SPOTTED (WOOD-) KINGFISHER Actenoides lindsayi
This awesome endemic Kingfisher is actually fairly common at a few sights on Luzon (notably Subic and Makiling), only becoming apparent in the loud pre-dawn chorus when many individuals can be heard calling all around. The thing that can make this species tricky is they like to call in the twilight periods mainly just before full light in the morning or just after it is a little darker in the evenings when picking them up then becomes a real challenge. So it proved for us on our first attempts at them at Subic and later Makiling. However finally one gave it up for us at the last possible opportunity we had at Makiling (L), and came in and perched well for us several times, in good post dawn light, that was of much relief to me at the time!
BLUE-CAPPED (WOOD-) KINGFISHER Actenoides hombroni MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Like its congener above not often heard calling as they are largely quiet in the post-dawn hours you often find yourself in their range. We tried four separate territories at PICOP for this very cool kingfisher, even hearing a very responsive bird at one of these before a sudden deluge of rain caused the bird to fall stubbornly silent and we had to move on. Finally in the last known territory at PICOP (M) a bird came in several times and eventually perched very close to us, where Doris picked it out well amongst the foliage. Another vocal bird was seen well at Kitanglad (M), where Mark was particularly grateful being the only unfortunately sighted person to have missed the previous showing at PICOP.

BEE-EATERS: Meropidae
Blue-throated Bee-eater Merops viridis
Blue-tailed Bee-eater Merops philippinus

ROLLERS: Coraciidae
Dollarbird Eurystomus orientalis

HORNBILLS: Bucerotidae
PALAWAN HORNBILL Anthracoceros marchei PALAWAN ENDEMIC
One of the scarcer endemics on Palawan, that can be a little tricky to come by. However not for us on this tour as we found a small group perched by the roadside near Sabang on two consecutive nights, and then unbelievably, shortly before leaving our resort, the Last Frontier, for the ride back we saw a much closer bird perched in trees close to the restaurant. This was our final of five possible endemic hornbills seen on our tour
RUFOUS HORNBILL Buceros hydrocorax
This was always going to be the trickiest of the endemic hornbills, although as it is the largest, flashiest and downright impressive of the species one I really wanted to get for the group. Therefore on hearing their loud distinctive honking calls at Subic (L), we hurtled straight after them and soon cam across a group of at least 6 of these bright rusty hornbills with their massive scarlet casques, perched in some close trees. A superb site as I consider this to be the very best of all the Asian hornbills.
LUZON (TARICTIC) HORNBILL Penelopides manillae LUZON ENDEMIC
A fairly easy (although no less impressive) endemic, we came across them around the car park and other areas at Subic (L) and later also at Makiling (L).
MINDANAO (TARICTIC) HORNBILL Penelopides affinis MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Like the Luzon 'version' also fairly easy to see, with Kitanglad and PICOP both being good sites for this handsome bird, where they were recorded on most days.
WRITHED HORNBILL Aceros leucocephalus MINDANAO ENDEMIC
When I first visited PICOP a few years back this bird seemed relatively easy to find, although some of the areas where they were formerly 'easy' have since undergone massive illegal logging and now the bird is a little more tricky. There are a couple of known spots, although as the heaviest of the unseasonally heavy downpours we experienced was on our morning in this area for them, our chances were not looking good. We spent a good few hours waiting through the bouts of heavy rain within the thick, low-lying mist around an area where (if in fruit), the birds can often be found in the early mornings. As the rain had chosen to be at its worst at the best time for the birds, we simply had to call it a day after a time and headed off for some other forest species, whereupon Nicky (who had fortunately lingered behind), let out a loud unintelligible cry - what the heck we ran for it anyway in the hope that it was our main quarry. Sure enough, just as we'd turned the corner out of site of the main 'hornbill trees' a record-breaking flock of 20 Writhed Hornbill flew in behind us! Fortunately they hung about for some time and soon after the visibility improved rapidly and we all managed great views of this very handsome hornbill. This was the largest flock that either Nicky or Zardo had ever experienced in their many years visiting PICOP.

BARBETS: Capitonidae
Coppersmith Barbet Megalaima haemacephala

WOODPECKERS: Picidae
PHILIPPINE PYGMY-WOODPECKER Dendrocopos maculatus
One of the more common forest endemics - we recorded them at Subic (L), Makiling (L), and Kitanglad (M).
White-bellied Woodpecker Dryocopus javensis
Common Flameback Dinopium javanense
Greater Flameback Chrysocolaptes lucidus
SOOTY WOODPECKER Mulleripicus funebris
Although we did not have many sites for this species on the tour, Subic was enough as we recorded pairs of them on all three of our visits to the area.

BROADBILLS: Eurylaimidae
(MINDANAO) WATTLED BROADBILL Eurylaimus steerii MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Although strangely not picked out by any of the group as a tour highlight, this tricky bird for me was one of the most pleasing to get. Easily missed as they are largely silent, very inconspicuous residents of the forest understorey, we got fantastic views of a female bird (with an all white breast) at a known nesting area for them at PICOP (M). As they were not nesting at the time we were not full of confidence and were hoping to find a mixed flock in the area (as this is the time when they can be at their most visible and audible, when the loud distinctive wing flapping noises can draw attention to this otherwise unobtrusive species). However, flocks were not much in evidence during our time at PICOP, and we had to rely on Zardo's knowledge of the most regular haunts for the birds and his keen eyesight which picked out a fantastic female perched nicely in the open that gave us all very satisfying close views in our final few hours on site. As this had been one of the the first birds that Don and Doris requested on the tour (that had bought audible, nervous sighs from me!), it was especially great to pick up this new family for them on the tour. What a broadbill to kick off the family - a rarish endemic that is significantly different from all others in a family that is overloaded with fantastic birds, due to the strange fascinating blue wattles surrounding the eye set in the large head of this cracking endemic bird. On a personal level this would have been the ***BIRD OF THE TRIP,*** *if it had not been for the phenomenal views of the eagles on Mindanao.*

PITTAS: Pittidae
Hooded Pitta Pitta sordida
Seen several times on the way into Sabang (P), on both occasions the birds gave superb close up views - first for Don only and later at another site for everyone else. A very satisfying start to our time on the island paradise of Palawan. As always the birds were very vocal, drawing attention to themselves helpfully while calling.
AZURE-BREASTED (STEERE'S) PITTA Pitta steerii
Pittas are quite simply the best family of birds in Asia and quite possibly the world as they are ground dwelling, skulking species that can never be expected. On top of that they are also the most stunning looking of all the families so that whilst peering into the forest gloom to find them there is nothing like coming across the vivid colors of these fantastic Asian jewels, glowing from within the shadows of the leaf litter that they make their home. Having said all of that, this is not quite how we came across this most stunning of the Philippine pittas. Whilst walking a quite deserted forest road at PICOP (M), we kept one eye on the road as this dazzling species can sometimes be found feeding on the road especially during such wet conditions that greeted us on our morning in the area. Sure enough only a short way along the road we found a superb example of the species feeding brazenly in the middle of the road. We followed this azure bejeweled bird for sometime as it hopped on and off the road, searching for grubs and other insects on the damp leafy dirt road. It was virtually the first bird of the morning so despite the rain a great way to kick off the mornings birding. Again a bird that I would have expected to be a strong contender for bird of the trip, that did not even get a mention from any of the group, which perhaps indicated what a great tour we'd had with all the many options for top trip birds available?
WHISKERED (KOCH'S) PITTA Pitta kochi (H) LUZON ENDEMIC
This cracking Luzon montane specialty is only really likely at a remote site near Tuguegarao in northern Luzon. So although we (as expected) heard them several times at Mt. Polis (L), the birds were never close and we never really had a realistic shot at seeing them. Anyone considering this a top target species should visit the remote region around Tuguegarao, although should note that the hiking required to see the bird is quite taxing and the conditions demanding, as it is in a remote area with few available facilities.
Red-bellied Pitta Pitta erythrogaster
Although not an endemic, a cracking bird, that was a top target for many. We first picked it up at PICOP (M), perhaps the most reliable site in the Philippines at the time we were there (as they were not calling at this time either on Palawan or at Makiling, a generally good site for them on Luzon). Although our first few tries were thwarted due to sudden heavy rains, we bided our time (went and watched a Silvery Kingfisher to pass the time in the rain), and then returned late in the afternoon to our intended spot. Although the rains continued on and off we finally had nothing left to lose but try in a brief respite from the heaviest bouts, and made the short journey into some undergrowth where Zardo had recently come across it. With only a minimal area for the bird to come in and be visible within my hopes were not high and after silence greeted the short burst of playback used my hopes were no higher. However we waited patiently and a few minutes later a quiet call of a Red-bellied Pitta was heard emanating somewhere in front of us from within a dense stand of bamboo. It was difficult to say how far away the bird was as the call was quite soft. As I was contemplating this, a vivid flash of red caught our eyes as the pitta flew into the small gap available within the bamboo in front of us and perched in the most unlikely of positions where it was amazingly completely visible to all of us. Although this bird does not have the 'endemic tag' that gives additional appeal to the Steere's Pitta seen later on the tour, this is one very cool bird, especially when you can see the red belly simply glowing from within the gloomy shadows of the thick bamboo stand. Even though the bird was wet through from the recent rains, the dampness simply could not diminish the brightness of the shocking red breast after which it is justifiably named. Although not especially looked for later on the tour we picked up another three sightings at St. Paul's (P) where one one day a juvenile lazily hopped off the trail and stood in full view just off the trail, and the next day there two other less showy youngsters bounced off the trail in front of us.
LARKS: Alaudidae
Australasian (Singing) Bushlark Mirafra javanica

SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae
Barn Swallow Hirundo rustica
Pacific Swallow Hirundo tahitica
Striated Swallow Cecropis striolata
Fairly common around the town of Banaue (L), and also seen on campus at Makiling (L).
NB. A fairly recent split from **Red-rumped Swallow**, ***H. daurica.***

WAGTAILS and PIPITS: Motacillidae
Eastern Yellow Wagtail Motacilla tschutschensis
Gray Wagtail Motacilla cinerea
Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit Anthus rufulus
Olive-backed (-Tree) Pipit Anthus hodgsoni
Pechora Pipit Anthus gustavi

CUCKOO-SHRIKES: Campephagidae
Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike Coracina striata
BLACKISH CUCKOO-SHRIKE Coracina coerulescens
This was a key species at Subic (L) that performed well there, their loud far-carrying calls drawing welcome attention to them on several occasions there where they were found on all our visits to the former US base.
BLACK-BIBBED CUCKOO-SHRIKE Coracina mindanensis (H)
Unfortunately only heard at PICOP, at the most incovenient of times, just as we were getting our first views of the attractive endemic tailorbird - **Black-headed Tailorbird**. *Once we had got the tailorbird the cuckoo-shrikes had sadly moved on.*
McGREGOR'S CUCKOO-SHRIKE Coracina mcgregori MINDANAO ENDEMIC
The undisputed beauty of the endemic cuckoo-shrikes, this fantastic Mindanao montane endemic, was first found within a mixed feeding flock at the new eagle nest site in Bukidnon, although also later recorded several times at the more traditional site of Mt. Kitanglad (M). A cracking cuckoo-shrike that is always great to come across in an otherwise dull flock of high mountain species in central Mindanao, that is seemingly undervalued in trip reports, and again poorly illustrated in the field guide. Invariably a lone bird is usually found within the company of the much more common **Mountain White-eyes, Cinnamon Ibons** *and sometimes also with* **Black-masked (Mindanao) White-eyes** *and* **Mountain Leaf-Warblers** *in the same exciting, high mountain flock. Well worth a look.*
BLACK-AND-WHITE TRILLER Lalage melanoleuca
First seen at Subic Bay (L), and later also seen on Mindanao at PICOP.
Pied Triller Lalage nigra
Ashy Minivet Pericrocotus divaricatus
Fiery Minivet Pericrocotus igneus
Igneus *is sometimes treated as only a race of* **Small Minivet,** ***P. cinnamomeus.***
Scarlet Minivet Pericrocotus flammeus

BULBULS: Pycnonotidae
Black-headed Bulbul Pycnonotus atriceps
YELLOW-WATTLED BULBUL Pycnonotus urostictus
Seen first on Luzon on Mount Makiling and then later at PICOP (M), where they were a commonly heard voice. A bulbul of subtle beauty that is not done justice by the dowdy illustration in the field guide.
Yellow-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus goiavier
Olive-winged Bulbul Pycnonotus plumosus
Gray-cheeked Bulbul Alophoixus bres
SULPHUR-BELLIED BULBUL Ixos palawanensis PALAWAN ENDEMIC
This chunky, pale-eyed bulbul was caught up with on three occasions on Palawan - once near the Underground River ranger station, then later along the road to Puerto Princesa and then lastly on the final day of the tour on the rode back from Nara to Puerto Princesa.
PHILIPPINE BULBUL Ixos philippinus
The most common and widespread of the endemic bulbuls, commonly encountered throughout the tour on both Luzon and Mindanao. Not present on Palawan.
YELLOWISH BULBUL Ixos everetti
This butch, beastly bulbul occurs in the eastern Visayas and also on Mindanao, therefore our only real shot at this lowland endemic was PICOP, where they are fairly easy to find. They were seen on three of our four full days there and heard daily. Indeed this species was one of the first birds we saw in our time at PICOP (M).

LEAFBIRDS: Chloropseidae
PHILIPPINE LEAFBIRD Chloropsis flavipennis
As with the **Yellowish Bulbul** *we only really had the opportunity for this bird at PICOP (M), where they are easy to hear (they were heard every day there) but not always easy to see as they hide in amongst the bright green leaves that mask their rich green plumage well. And so it proved on the tour when we had one lined up in the scope, that sat there motionless and therefore almost invisible in the scope for a while before everyone could pick it out from its surroundings!*
YELLOW-THROATED LEAFBIRD Chloropsis palawanensis PALAWAN ENDEMIC
This is one of the easier of Palawan's endemics, and was picked up quickly en-route to Sabang during our first foray on Palawan. Also recorded on two other days there. A vocal and conspicuous endemic.

IORAS: Aegithinidae
Common Iora Aegithina tiphia

THRUSHES: Turdidae
Blue Rock-Thrush Monticola solitarius
1 was found perched on our hotel roof in Banaue (L).
Scaly Thrush Zoothera dauma
Island Thrush Turdus poliocephalus
A high altitude turdus, *that was found on both of our days on Mt. Polis (L), feeding on the open road shortly after dawn.*
Eyebrowed Thrush Turdus obscurus
Flocks of these were encountered frequently in the open areas, as we ascended Mt. Kitanglad (M), on each of our days there.
Brown-headed Thrush Turdus chrysolaus
Two were recorded on one day on Mt. Polis (L).
White-browed Shortwing Brachypteryx montana

CISTICOLAS: Cisticolidae
Zitting Cisticola Cisticola juncidis

WARBLERS: Sylviidae
PHILIPPINE (LUZON) BUSH-WARBLER Cettia seebohmi LUZON ENDEMIC
A very vocal, common bird at Mt. Polis (L), where several were seen with a little tactical use of playback to draw them out of the dense, roadside foliage.
Russet (Benguet) Bush-Warbler Bradypterus seebohmi (H)
Easily heard on some of the lower sections of Mt. Polis (L) although always calling a fair way off the road with little access to their calling areas. Unfortunately one of the main areas where this species was more easily picked up (that was never especially easy), has been destroyed in recent years.
NB. Some split this form as the endemic **Benguet Bush-Warbler** *(e.g. Kennedy et al in the field guide).*
LONG-TAILED (-GROUND) BUSH-WARBLER Bradypterus caudatus
One of the most low down and dastardly of all the endemics, despite being common by voice in the mountains of both Luzon and Mindanao. Their 'mocking' song taunted us daily on Polis (L), where we did not get a sniff of one despite trying in some good areas for the bird. This pattern continued to the last at the only other site for this montane species, Mt. Kitanglad (M), when on our final morning as we were leaving camp a bird, in typically rodent-like fashion crossed the trail in front of us. Having gone through hell to get this merest of glimpses of this famously shy bird we satisfied ourselves with these views, only for the local guide Carlito to coax a bird right out in the open a short time later making a complete mockery of our earlier failed efforts - thanks Carlito!
Oriental Reed-Warbler Acrocephalus orientalis
Mountain Tailorbird Orthotomus cuculatus
RUFOUS-HEADED TAILORBIRD Orthotomus heterolaemus MINDANAO ENDEMIC
This handsome, all rufous-headed tailorbird is quite common at Mt. Kitanglad (M), and they were heard daily calling from every available thicket as we climbed the mountain, with several sightings in our time there.
NB. This endemic form is sometimes treated as only a race of **Mountain Tailorbird,** ***O. cuculatus.***
PHILIPPINE TAILORBIRD Orthotomus castaneiceps
The least co-operative of the five endemic tailorbirds for us, just one very elusive bird seen briefly in a thick vine tangle at Subic (L).
RUFOUS-FRONTED TAILORBIRD Orthotomous frontalis
Several were seen whilst at PICOP (M), including a pair watched feeding and calling in a canopy vine tangle.
NB. The races frontalis and mearnsi that form the 'species' **Rufous-fronted Tailorbird** *are sometimes lumped within* **Philippine Tailorbird** *(e.g. in the Kennedy et al field guide).*
GRAY-BACKED TAILORBIRD Orthotomus derbianus LUZON ENDEMIC
Commonly heard at Makiling, this Luzon specialty was seen in our first morning when a pair were found singing within a thick vine tangle where they showed well for us all, including allowing scope views of them as they sang back at us.
NB. There is also a historical, though questionable, record from Palawan. However it is most commonly considered to be confined

to Luzon.
Rufous-tailed Tailorbird Orthotomus sericeus
WHITE-BROWED (BLACK-HEADED) TAILORBIRD Orthotomus nigriceps MINDANAO ENDEMIC
This, the most handsome of all the endemic tailorbirds, was seen well at PICOP (M), when a pair were coaxed in close from out of the low undergrowth they typically inhabit. A really cracking little tailorbird, that is a common sound at PICOP.
Mountain (Leaf-) Warbler Phylloscopus trivirgatus
PHILIPPINE LEAF-WARBLER Phylloscopus olivaceus (GO)
Unfortunately we were not blessed with many flocks at PICOP, M, (these are becoming scarcer as more areas are cleared), with only a few fast moving ones in our time there. Two of which contained these warblers that did not hang around for anyone else to get on them frustratingly.
Tawny Grassbird Megalurus timoriensis
Striated Grassbird Megalurus palustris

FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae
Gray-spotted (Streaked) Flycatcher Muscicapa griseisticta
Mugimaki Flycatcher Ficedula mugimaki
Snowy-browed Flycatcher Ficedula hyperythra
LITTLE SLATY FLYCATCHER Ficedula basilanica
This diminutive endemic, with its distinctive fluty whistles, was one of the first sounds we heard in our first walk along road 1/4 at PICOP (M). After circling us for a while allowing only the briefest of views, the male of the pair finally settled in one spot where we could all get fixed on him at close quarters.
PALAWAN FLYCATCHER Ficedula platenae PALAWAN ENDEMIC
Undoubtedly traditionally the toughest of the 19 or so endemics special to Palawan, and the one I was most concerned about. Traditionally the last site of the tour was to be our 'only' shot at the bird, although historically the bird has also been known from Iwahig though there had been few recent sightings there with none reported all of the current season there to my knowledge. As we were doing so well with all the other endemics we decided to try some of the dense bamboo stands along the Balsahan anyway and after a time heard the quiet melodic song of this subtly handsome flycatcher. A quick burst of playback later the bird swooped in and landed within about 10 feet of us all sitting there and sang back angrily at us from an open branch. Once again as with many of the species in the Philippines, it revealed itself to be much more impressive than the dull picture in the field guide. Just for good measure we also picked up another one at the traditional 'zig-zag' site as we made our way back to Puerto Princesa for departure at the end of the tour, where we would more ordinarily have expected to be looking for this rich red-tailed bird.
Little Pied Flycatcher Ficedula westermanni
Island (Mountain-Verditer) Flycatcher Eumyias panayensis
PALAWAN BLUE-FLYCATCHER Cyornis lemprieri PALAWAN ENDEMIC
This attractive blue-and-red endemic cyornis *flycatcher was found several times on Palawan - once along a trail at St. Pauls and later near the 'Lion's Cave' close to Sabang.*
Citrine Canary-flycatcher Culicicapa helianthea
Oriental Magpie-Robin Copsychus saularis
WHITE-BROWED SHAMA Copsychus luzoniensis
Heard frequently at both Subic and Makiling (both L), and seen really well at the former where an angry bird responded well to playback by screaming in and perching on a low open branch for us all to admire at close range.
WHITE-VENTED SHAMA Copsychus niger PALAWAN ENDEMIC
Another fairly easy Palawan endemic that was one of our first of the endemic haul we had on this idyllic, beach-fringed island. Seen first on the way to Sabang (conveniently just across the road from a **Blue Paradise-Flycatcher***) and later seen several times in St. Pauls, where they were a common forest sound.*
LUZON (WATER-) REDSTART Rhyacornis bicolor
An extremely localized species, that is reported to be suffering a significant population decline due to recent increased water pollution in the rivers that are its favored haunt. Thankfully this local species has a very reliable stakeout near to Polis (L), where with a quick jaunt downslope towards the rushing mountain stream, soon had us picking up this sprightly bird flycatching off some riverside rocks.
Pied Bushchat Saxicola caprata

FANTAILS: Rhipuridae
BLUE FANTAIL Rhipidura superciliaris
Principally a flocking species, they were surprisingly thin on the ground during our time at PICOP (M), the only site for the bird on the tour. After several brief views we all enjoyed superb close ups of a bird in our final hours there, shortly before we were distracted by Zardo's tantalizing shouts of 'broadbill!' that soon had us dropping the fantail like the proverbial hot rock!
BLUE-HEADED FANTAIL Rhipidura cyaniceps
Like the **Blue Fantail** *above a little scarcer in our time at Polis (L) than expected, only a few being seen with the drought of decent feeding flocks we experienced in our time there.*
BLACK-AND-CINNAMON FANTAIL Rhipidura nigrocinnamomea MINDANAO ENDEMIC
The most striking and also pleasingly the most common of all the endemic fantails, they were first picked up at the Bukidnon Philippine Eagle nest site (one within a flock with **McGregor's Cuckoo-shrike**, *the 'ever present'* **Mountain White-eyes** *and a lone* **Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis***), and also later recorded regularly in mixed species feeding flocks at Kitanglad (M). A high mountain endemic, that along with the* **McGregor's Cuckoo-shrikes** *are the undoubted 'lookers' of the high montane feeding flocks on Mindanao.*
Pied Fantail Rhipidura javanica

MONARCH-FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae
SHORT-CRESTED MONARCH Hypothymis helenae
A pair of these handsome monarchs were almost forgotten in a 'bumper', action-packed morning at PICOP (M), that included sightings of the more flashy of the endemic monarchs - with a breathtaking male **Celestial Monarch** *perched up in the scope, a* **Steere's Pitta** *hopping along the road in front of us, an agitated* **Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher** *that sat there calling angrily back at us, in addition to a few bright orange* **Rufous Paradise-Flycatchers** *thrown in for good measure! Another was seen briefly in mixed feeding flock on one other day.*
Black-naped Monarch Hypothymis azurea
CELESTIAL MONARCH Hypothymis coelestis
Clearly the more appealing of the pair of endemic monarchs, this mindblowing bird seemed to have slipped by, as we heard none at all throughout our morning in the best areas for the species at PICOP (M) and Zardo had furthered these fears by remarking that he had missed them only the week before when again he heard none calling. However as we neared the car, much later than planned due to a few very nice distractions on the way (e.g. Philippine Dwarf-Kingfisher), I heard the distinctive ringing whistling of a monarch that heralded the arrival of a feeding flock in the area. The bird frustratingly called only in short sporadic bursts making it hard to track down among the more obvious **Scarlet Minivets** *in the same flock, before finally Mark not only found a stunning male monarch but teed it up perfectly in the scope - thanks again Mark! A great close to a truly spectacular mornings birding at PICOP that included* **Steere's Pitta**, **Blue-capped Wood-Kingfisher,** *several* **Rufous Paradise-Flycatchers** *and* **Short-crested Monarchs** *among others.*
BLUE PARADISE-FLYCATCHER Terpsiphone cyanescens PALAWAN ENDEMIC
This beautiful powerfully-built, powder blue flycatcher was found with relative ease at our first main stop along the way to Sabang in our first foray on Palawan, flying in and perching in full, fantastic view right by the road, with **White-vented Shama, Yellow-throated Leafbird, Palawan Tit** *and* **Hooded Pitta** *all seen in the same general area. Aside from the obvious, dashing, Pheasant, the best looker on Palawan, for me.*
Rufous Paradise-Flycatcher Terpsiphone cinnamomea NEAR-ENDEMIC
Again, do not look to the field guide to prepare you for this superb near-endemic species. A brilliant orange color (NOT rufous), with a flashy blue 'wattle' around the eye, a real looker that is much under-appreciated amongst the other, obviously more 'marketable' endemics.
NB. The range of this near-endemic extends just beyond the Philippines reaching just into Indonesia, where it is only known from the tiny island of Talaud, north of Sulawesi.

WHISTLERS: Pachycephalidae
Mangrove Whistler Pachycephala grisola
GREEN-BACKED WHISTLER Pachycephala albiventris
Probably the least impressive of all the endemics, a non-descript, subtle species that is a montane specialist. Several were picked up unobtrusively making their way through the foliage in mixed feeding flocks up on Mount Polis (L).
YELLOW-BELLIED WHISTLER Pachycephala philippinensis
Recorded several times on both Mount Makiling (L) and Kitanglad (M).

BABBLERS: Timaliidae
ASHY-HEADED BABBLER Malacocincla cinereiceps PALAWAN ENDEMIC
Another of the more cooperative of Palawan's 'easy' endemics. If you can manage to hear one they always seem to respond brilliantly to playback coming in exceedingly close when they do so. And so it was on this tour, when they came right in and passed by within feet of us on two separate days near to the Lions Cave, Sabang.
PALAWAN (MELODIOUS) BABBLER Malacopteron palawanense PALAWAN ENDEMIC
One of the few Palawan 'endems' that does NOT occur at St. Pauls, so we made a special visit to the Balsahan Trail at Iwahig to track this tree-babbler down. We had not banked on some unseasonally, very heavy rains the day before causing the streams we were to be crossing to swell significantly. This made reaching the area for these endemic babblers a little trickier than planned. Although our driver and Iwahig employee, Arding, was helpfully on hand to guide us all across and ensured we all made it unscathed to the best areas for the babblers which were calling soon after our arrival and were soon found calling away in an open subcanopy vine tangle.
STRIATED WREN-BABBLER (STREAKED GROUND-BABBLER) Ptilocichla mindanensis
A pair were seen really well in our time at PICOP, hopping around amongst the large 'Tolkeinesque' limestone boulders that are strewn amongst some of the best areas of forest there.
FALCATED WREN (-GROUND) BABBLER Ptilocichla falcata PALAWAN ENDEMIC
The very best of all the endemic babblers, this cracking bird was seen on two mornings at St. Pauls at a known site for the bird. On the first day the bird proved highly uncooperative, and although most of us got views the bird never remained in view for long. In complete contrast, on our second morning in the same area, what was presumably the very same bird, sat up in the open calling loudly back to us in full fantastic view, even allowing some of us to a get a really full-on 'eye-damaging' view in the scope, before we left the bird with its loud, raucous calls echoing behind us as we went.
PYGMY BABBLER Stachyris plateni
Only two sightings at PICOP (M).
RUSTY-CROWNED BABBLER Stachyris capitalis MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Only one sighting at PICOP (M).
CHESTNUT-FACED BABBLER Stachyris whiteheadi LUZON ENDEMIC
Seen a number of times in mixed feeding flocks along the road at Mt. Polis (L).
Striped Tit-Babbler Macronous gularis
BROWN TIT-BABBLER Macronous striaticeps
Seen on two days at PICOP, and also on both days at Kitanglad (both M).

THORNBILLS and ALLIES: Acanthizidae
Golden-bellied Gerygone (Flyeater) Gerygone sulphurea

TITS: Paridae
ELEGANT TIT Pardaliparus elegans
A fairly common flock species at Mt. Polis (L), Mt. Kitanglad (M) and also recorded Makiling (L) and Subic Bay (L).
PALAWAN TIT Pardaliparus amabilis PALAWAN ENDEMIC
Although heard a few times only seen twice on Palawan, both times near the ridgetop on the road into Sabang.
WHITE-FRONTED TIT Sittiparus semilarvatus
Just one sighting at Subic Bay (L).

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae
SULPHUR-BILLED NUTHATCH Sitta oenochlamys
Seen daily in mixed feeding flocks at Kitanglad (M).
NB. Some authors (e.g. Kennedy et al), lump this species within the more wide-ranging **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch,** ***S. frontalis*** *group.*

PHILIPPINE CREEPERS: Rhabdornithidae
STRIPE-SIDED (HEADED) RHABDORNIS Rhabdornis mysticalis
A fairly common and striking endemic, seen daily at Subic and Makiling (both L) and a number of times at PICOP (M).
STRIPE-BREASTED RHABDORNIS Rhabdornis inornatus
First picked up at the new Bukidnon eagle nest site and then later seen several times on the lower sections of Mt. Kitanglad (M).

SUNBIRDS and SPIDERHUNTERS: Nectariniidae
Plain-throated Sunbird Anthreptes malacensis
Copper-throated Sunbird Leptocoma calcostetha
One male was found at a good spot for it en-route to Sabang from St. Pauls (P).
Purple-throated Sunbird Leptocoma sperata
Olive-backed Sunbird Cinnyris jugularis
GRAY-HOODED SUNBIRD Aethopyga primigenius MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Fairly commonly encountered at low elevations on Kitanglad (M).
MOUNT APO SUNBIRD Aethopyga boltoni MINDANAO ENDEMIC
A true high-mountain endemic, that even once on Kitanglad (M) requires some extra climbing in order to reach the optimum elevation for the bird. Richard and Mark were well up for this and so we soon found ourselves ascending the narrow slippery track up from the eagle watchpoint. It was not long after we reached the lower altitudes at which it occurs that we heard its distinctive song emanating from a dense canopy that hid the bird frustratingly well from us. Try as we might, we just could not lure the bird out from its well thought out hiding place and despite finding a perfectly suitable open perch that would seem perfect for the bird, it steadfastly remained hidden. Until we walked a little further along when the bird sailed in and landed on the open perch that had looked so good to us earlier and then sat there singing right back at us for full-on scope views of this high mountain species.
FLAMING SUNBIRD Aethopyga flagrans
Two sightings at Mount Makiling in our two days there.
METALLIC-WINGED SUNBIRD Aethopyga pulcherrima
Fairly commonly picked up in mixed flocks along the road on Mount Polis (L) at the start of the tour. Our first of the endemic nectarivores and perhaps the best looking of them all? Also picked up at PICOP (M) on one day.
LOVELY SUNBIRD Aethopyga bella
One sighting on Mount Makiling (L), and recorded on most days at PICOP (M).
HANDSOME (SHELLEY'S) SUNBIRD Aethopyga shelleyi PALAWAN ENDEMIC
Recorded on most days on Palawan, a really delightful Palawan endemic.
Little Spiderhunter Arachnothera longirostra
NAKED-FACED SPIDERHUNTER Arachnothera clarae
A pair and two singles were recorded on three days at PICOP (M).

FLOWERPECKERS: Dicaeidae
OLIVE-BACKED FLOWERPECKER Prionochilus olivaceus
Strangely only recorded on one day at PICOP (M) only on the tour, when two or three were encountered.
PALAWAN FLOWERPECKER Prionochilus plateni PALAWAN ENDEMIC
A few were seen on most days on Palawan, being our first species of our endemic haul on this paradise island.
Thick-billed (Striped) Flowerpecker Dicaeum agile
*NB. Clements lumps all 3 races in the Philippines (*affine, striatissimum *and* aeruginosum*) with the more widespread* **Thick-billed Flowerpecker** *that is found throughout much of SE Asia. Others (e.g.Kennedy et al.) split off these races as the endemic* **Striped Flowerpecker, *D. aeruginosum***.
OLIVE-CAPPED FLOWERPECKER Dicaeum nigrilore MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Recorded on both of our full days on Mt. Kitanglad (M), on the lower sections of the mountain.
FLAME-CROWNED FLOWERPECKER Dicaeum anthonyi
This difficult nectar-feeder was encountered twice on Mindanao - once low down on Kitanglad (M) where a single bird was found feeding in a blooming tree with a mixed feeding flock; and later also recorded from the tree observation tower overlooking the **Philippine Eagle** *nest in Bukidnon.*
BICOLORED FLOWERECKER Dicaeum bicolor
Single sightings on two days at PICOP (M) were the only records on the tour.
RED-STRIPED FLOWERPECKER Dicaeum australe
A common species at PICOP (M), and also recorded a few times at Makiling (L).
Orange-bellied Flowerpecker Dicaeum trigonostigma
PYGMY FLOWERPECKER Dicaeum pygmaeum
Several sightings low down on Mt. Kitanglad (M) and also recorded once between Puerto Princesa and Sabang on Palawan.
Fire-breasted (Buff-bellied) Flowerpecker Dicaeum ignipectus

WHITE-EYES: Zosteropidae
LOWLAND WHITE-EYE Zosterops meyeni LUZON ENDEMIC
A small party were seen on the campus grounds at Makiling (L).
NB. Some authors lump this form with **Japanese White-eye, *Z. japonica.***
Everett's White-eye Zosterops everetti
Mountain White-eye Zosterops montanus
MINDANAO (BLACK-MASKED) WHITE-EYE Lophozosterops goodfellowi MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Two small groups were found within mixed feeding flocks quite high up on Mt. Kitanglad (M).
CINNAMON WHITE-EYE (IBON) Hypocryptadius cinnamomeus MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Not as common as they are normally expected to be although recorded at the new Bukidnon Eagles nest site and also on two days at Kitanglad (M). Invariably within mixed flocks with Mountain White-eyes and others.

ORIOLES: Oriolidae
Dark-throated Oriole Oriolus xanthonotus
PHILIPPINE ORIOLE Oriolus steerii
Commonly heard at PICOP (M), and seen a number of times along the more open sections of road there.
Black-naped Oriole Oriolus chinensis

FAIRY-BLUEBIRDS: Irenidae
Asian Fairy-bluebird Irena puella
PHILIPPINE FAIRY-BLUEBIRD Irena cyanogaster
Seen once at Subic Bay (L) and also at PICOP (M).

SHRIKES: Laniidae
Brown Shrike Lanius cristatus
Long-tailed Shrike Lanius schach
GRAY-CAPPED (MOUNTAIN) SHRIKE Lanius validirostris
Seen really well at Polis (L), hunting from dead snags beside an open cabbage field, this high montane species is also possible on Kitanglad but is far more easily found as we did on the higher sections on Mount Polis.

DRONGOS: Dicruridae
Ashy Drongo Dicrurus leucophaeus
BALICASSIAO Dicrurus balicassius
Recorded a number of times at both Subic Bay and Mount Makiling on Luzon.
Spangled Drongo Dicrurus bracteatus

WOODSWALLOWS: Artamidae
White-breasted Woodswallow Artamus leucorynchus

CROWS: Corvidae
Slender-billed Crow Corvus enca
A very common and noisy species on Palawan.
NB. The distinct vocalizations of the pusillus birds on Palawan have led many to call for the splitting off of this form as **Palawan Crow**.
Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos

STARLINGS : Sturnidae
Asian Glossy Starling Aplonis panayensis
Short-tailed (Glossy) Starling Aplonis minor
Fairly regularly encountered at Kitanglad, where they replace the low elevation Asian Glossy.
APO MYNA Basilornis miranda MINDANAO ENDEMIC
Maybe not the best-looking endemic, but certainly wins the prize for the quirkiest of these, with its strange punk hairdo and long tail, a really distinct myna that looks like no other in Asia. They were seen on two days at Kitanglad, where they are confined to the higher elevations on the mountain where they are often noisy, comical and conspicuous residents of the high mountains.
Coleto Sarcops calvus NEAR-ENDEMIC
NB. The range of this near-endemic just reaches into Malaysia, as the bird is also known from the tiny Bangi island off Borneo.
Common Hill Myna Gracula religiosa
Crested Myna Acridotheres cristatellus

WAXBILLS and ALLIES: Estrildidae
RED-EARED PARROTFINCH Erythrura coloria MINDANAO ENDEMIC
This is a really skulking bird that is actually not uncommon on Mount Kitanglad (M) but hard to see as, soon after their quiet seeping notes are heard, they invariably slink away into the dense secondary woodland borders they seem to favor. Indeed we heard them on several occasions at Kitanglad without success, although on our final afternoons birding there a calling bird made its way out into some open scrub where we all got incredible views of this cool mountain finch. The small group contained one juvenile type bird and at least two adults so probably constituted a family party.
Nutmeg Mannikin (Scaly-breasted Munia) Lonchura punctulata
White-bellied Munia Lonchura leucogastra
Chestnut Munia Lonchura atricapilla

FINCHES, SISKINS, CROSSBILLS: Fringillidae
WHITE-CHEEKED BULLFINCH Pyrrhula leucogenis
One of the tour disappointments was their failure to perform at Kitanglad (M), despite hearing a number of them on one jaunt up the mountain we only managed a flight view on that day, and none the following day when none were heard at all. They may have moved higher up the mountain at this time?

SPARROWS: Passeridae
Eurasian Tree Sparrow Passer montanus