

New Caledonia (Grande Terre, Lifou, Ouvea and Ile des Pins) and Fiji (Taveuni and Viti Levu) July 2013 trip report

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I (Jarmo) and my wife Inger visited New Caledonia and Fiji on a combined birding and family holiday in July 2013. Our strategy was to try to see the endemics and other new birds in an effective way and spend the rest of the time together with our children. To achieve this we used local guiding services where available.

We have not recently written trip reports for our world birding trips but I thought this time we have some useful information to share: Some pitfalls to avoid, some advice on finding the birds and some contact details. I noticed that recent independent trip reports from NC and Fiji were not in abundance. The best ones we found were Dave Seargeant's detailed report and our countryman Petri Hottola's good updates for different Pacific Islands.

Travel arrangements

Arc en Ciel was recommended in some birding reports as a good organizer for NC birding itineraries. They certainly seem professional and have all the connections but we found their offer up to twice as expensive compared to booking the same services directly and we decided to make our own bookings even though it involved more work. Especially if you can communicate in French, you can save money this way.

Flight tickets, accommodation and car rentals can in most places be booked easily through Internet, Loyalty Islands (e.g. Lifou and Ouvea in birders' context) being the most notable exception. I have attached a link with contact information to services on Loyalty Islands. Also, if you are planning to take the Betico ferry to Ile de Pins, you should consider to book it through a travel agency, to avoid the trouble of going there in person.

Weather

July is supposed to be the "dry" season in both NC and Fiji. However, it can be rainy and it is good to have some reserve dates for the key sites. In heavy rain access to key sites may be limited and anyway it is more difficult to find the birds.

The key site in NC, Parc de la Rivière Bleue, can be closed even in July. In early July, a few days before our visit it had rained 700 mm(!) and the park was flash flooded and was still officially closed during our visit on July 11. The high water marks e.g. at the Grand Kaori tree were at about 2 meters above ground!

When we arrived in Taveuni on July 20, it had rained heavily for the past week and it seemed that it would be difficult to find someone to risk his 4WD on the track to Des Voeux Peak. Also higher elevations on Viti Levu can experience heavy rain in July.

Birding sites

The above mentioned reports have good instructions on how to find various places; I mostly refer to them for site information. Because we were birding with guides in many places I can't give exact locations for their spots.

New Caledonia

We saw all the endemics except the NC Grassbird. It seems that endemic species on Grande Terre, possibly excluding the Grassbird, are available by visiting just two locations: Parc de la Rivière Bleue and Farino (Parc des Grandes Fougères).

Parc Provincial de la Rivière Bleue

As well known, this is THE site for Kagu and Crow Honeyeater and the best place to see some of the other endemics like NC Imperial Pigeon and NC Cuckooshrike. The park is easily found and well signposted from the road to Yaté. We left our car at the visitor center which is well before Pont Perignon and continued from here in park vehicles with Jean Marc Meriot. First we took one vehicle to Pont Perignon, went over the bridge on foot and continued with another vehicle after the bridge. Most of the birds were seen before Pont German, areas before and around the Grand Kaori tree being especially productive. Birding habitat continues also past Pont German. The bridge was damaged but we continued on foot seeing Crow Honeyeater for the second time and our only well seen NC Cuckooshrike.

Mt. Koghis

It seems that this area has undergone some changes after Dave Seargeant's visit. Auberge and Café seemed to be closed, maybe at private use. It seemed that more private residences had been built up; every road behind the auberge had a "private" sign. A sign hanging from the chain in the forest track stated that forest was private and closed. I would recommend skipping this site if you have time to visit the Farino area.

Farino (Parc des Grandes Fougères)

The traditional NC Grassbird site has been turned into a national park, not to protect the Grassbird, but mainly to cater for visiting hikers. Petri Hottola's instructions on how to reach the site still apply well; there are also some signs to the park. We didn't observe the Grassbird and as some other reports noted, some of the habitat has been cleared at the parking place and along the "Grassbird track". There is however still long grass and lantana on the slopes along the Grassbird track that starts on the left hand side of the parking lot. We possibly heard a Grassbird contact call twice at a large long grass / lantana thicket 600 m down the track. It is the lowest place on the track with long grass and lantana. Grassbird track and the road up to the park seem to be a good site for NC Goshawk and Cloven-feathered Dove.

Lifou

We had booked three nights in Drehu Village and planned to have some family holiday after seeing the birds. We had not booked a rental vehicle in advance and that was a mistake. Gasoline supplies on the Island were low and Drehu Village couldn't get a rental vehicle for us because there was not enough gas for the vehicles. So we had to rent bikes. Drehu Village bikes were pretty decent except about 12 out of 18 gears were *not* working.

Cycling meant that we were slower and because we didn't like the idea of cycling in pitch dark we would not arrive to good forest early in the morning and we had to limit our birding to certain areas. We didn't hear any Large Lifou White-eyes in the morning after 10 am, so an early start is recommended.

For the White-eyes, we selected the area G – H in Dave Seargeant's map. We didn't see the forest trails marked on his map, but the main track is pretty narrow and goes through a good forest, which Large Lifou White-eyes seem to like. There was just one car using this partially moss-covered road in the morning. After seeing successfully the Large Lifou White-eye we cycled the remaining couple of kilometers to the W shore to have a break on the beach. With this extension it was about 40 km cycling trip.

It seems that Large Lifou White-eyes can be pretty secretive. We saw just one bird well when it was preening itself. After noticing us it soon disappeared among vines. On another occasion we taped one vocal bird beside the road, but didn't get it come to playback – it and its mate stayed deep in the undergrowth.

The following day we biked to Point Daussy (30 km roundtrip) hoping to see some tubenoses, but had to content us to a smallish whale and a Brown Booby.

Cycling had its good side also: We heard the birds and could make more stops. On the other hand taking photos was not easy because I had my camera in the backpack and usually the birds had moved on by the time I had my camera ready.

Ouvea

We had prepared according to Dave Seargeant's advice and bought a traditional *manou* in Nuomea (piece of colourful cloth and a package of cigarettes); they know the word *manou* in a cloth shop. We had also booked one night accommodation in Roland Ouckewen's traditional bure.

But it seems that Roland is no longer needed as the middle-man when going to see Ouvea Parakeets. Roland doesn't have an e-mail and we had not reached him by phone so we had booked our stay through the local Syndicat d'Initiative d'IAAI and tried to secure a visit to the parakeets. We never got a confirmation on the parakeets and when we arrived at Roland's we began to understand why. Roland had some brochures for different activities on the island and there were 2 persons who advertised themselves as Ouvea Parakeet guides. Guiding rates were 2000 XPF per person. Roland pointed out which one he recommended (Benouit Tangopi) but for some reason Roland was not willing to make a call to him (local call). Instead we had to make the call to Benouit ourselves using our own mobile phone (international roaming call) and agree on parakeet viewing.

Phone numbers for parakeet guides are listed under Contacts. I assume that the *manou* is not necessary, but it certainly makes the guide happier.

Is it possible to see the parakeets without entering private land? The parakeet population is now a few thousand individuals and Benouit told us that some people have started to regard them as pests so it should be possible to see them somewhere. But the parakeets that we saw didn't fly high nor call aloud. They also perched pretty low. Benouit said that his resident parakeets can always be found within 100 meter radius from his house. It also seems that adverse weather conditions can occur any time of the year. I would say if you make the effort to go to Ouvea for a short time it is worth to secure the parakeet by contacting Benouit or someone else who can arrange access to a good place.

Ile des Pins

Ile des Pins does not have any endemics of its own but supports several Grande Terre endemic species. The maps in the Birds of Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia fail to show many of these species; Information in the Birds of Melanesia is more correct. Our observations are from Eastern part of the Island, Oro bay – Upi Bay area, where we had a few days family holiday after the birding part of the trip. We couldn't avoid

keeping our eyes open and saw e.g. Green-backed White-Eye, Long-tailed Triller, Streaked Fantail, Melanesian (NC) Whistler, Fan-tailed Gerygone, Striated Starling and Red-throated Parrotfinch. We also heard the characteristic call of NC Imperial Pigeon.

Fiji

We saw the endemics and specialties on Taveuni and Viti Levu except Long-legged Warbler (didn't go to the right place), Pink-billed Parrotfinch and Shy Ground-Dove.

Bobby's Farm (Nabogiono Farm), Taveuni

Naresh (BOBBY) Shankaran protects a forest area around his house and tropical fruit farm. This is a good place to get amazing views of some endemics, the stars being male Orange Doves that can be seen just around his house. A birdy and also otherwise very interesting afternoon at Bobby's cost 40 FJD per person. It is possible to see also Shy Ground-Dove at Bobby's, but it requires a lot of work and some luck. We wanted to have some family holiday also so didn't have time to try it.

Des Vouex Peak, Taveuni

Birding near the peak is easy once you get there. When we arrived in Taveuni, it had been raining hard for about a week and we had some problems finding a driver with 4WD and willing to go up to the top. The sunny weather the following day dried the roads a bit and we found Samir who was willing to give us a return ride for a compensation of 180 FJD. The road had some muddy spots and in one place there was a need to adjust some stones, but going up was relatively easy in Samir's 4WD. We also picked with us Boro S., who is a local bird guide. Boro knows the calls so he was great help in the beginning.

We started at the top, about 100 meters up from the gate was a particularly good place to observe the Silktails, the same spot as in Petri Hottola's report. We birded down a couple of kilometers to the "Blue line"; the edge of the park where Samir picked us up. It is good to be at the top at sunrise, we were there at about 06.00 and Silktails were most active after the sunrise. Silktail calls are soft and probably not easily picked up later in the day.

Nanuku Levu, 45 km E of Taveuni

We tried to see some pelagic birds in the ocean east of Taveuni and made it in a 7 meter open boat all the way to Nanuku Levu some 45 km east of Matei. Nanuku Levu had 2 Pacific Imperial Pigeons and nesting Brown Noddies. On the way back we found 4 White Terns feeding with Black Noddies, but no tubenoses. We arranged the trip with Taveuni Ocean Sports. The 6 hour trip, including almost 2 hours ashore cost 300 USD. Our skipper was Viti, a man who knows the waters around Taveuni and whose grandfather has lived on Nanuku Levu. Taveuni Ocean Sports have also larger boats, but they are used for daily diving and snorkeling tours.

Namosi Road, Viti Levu

Namosi road starts from Queens Road about 25 km west of Suva. It has some good forest with all the common Viti Levu endemics. Long-legged Warbler has been seen very occasionally and you really need a stroke of good luck to observe it. Vili has observed birds twice (out of about 100 times), but they were not visible even though they were very active close to the road. The waterfall is about 300 meters away – too far for the birds to pop up regularly at the road. The waterfall is audible to the road; it is just before the highest crest on the road. Pink-billed Parrotfinch can be observed, but is rare as everywhere. Black-throated Shrikebills seemed to have several territories along the road. To see a Shy Ground-Dove here, you

would have to get one on the road – a slim chance I would guess. All other birds can be seen also at Raintree Lodge.

Raintree Lodge, Viti Levu

Lodge grounds are apparently a good place to see the easier endemics well. We didn't have much time here in daylight and saw our easier birds at Namosi road.

Jim's forest, Viti Levu

Behind the Raintree Lodge a narrow track runs through the village. At the end of this track lives Jim and his family. I guess you need to ask permission from the owner to enter the forest. Jim has a piece of forest that holds 1-2 pairs Shy Ground Doves. We walked all the forest back and forth, but didn't find any. We got our only and super views of a male Golden Dove though.

[Road to Monosavu Dam]

We didn't visit this place, but it is THE place to see the Long-legged Warbler, there are three territories close to the road at higher elevations. Pink-billed Parrotfinch, Black-throated Shrikebill and other endemics occur at lower altitudes. You need a really good 4WD for this site; Vili said that if we would go there he would hire one instead of using his own (which in my eyes looked perfectly ok).

Daily accounts

11.7. Parc de la Rivière Bleue

We started at 5 AM in Southern Noumea (Anse Vata) and arrived at the park entrance 6.15. During our visit the park was still officially closed due to flash flood a few days earlier, but we could get in because we had agreed on the guiding with Jean Marc Meriot, the man who at the moment knows the birds in the park best. The cost for bird guiding was 2000 XPF per hour (not per person). There were no other visitors; the only other people we saw were construction workers fixing the places after the flood. The aftermath of the flood was still well evident: At Pont Perignon, the water was still almost at level with the bridge deck and the water was brown instead of the usual blue, muddy high water marks were visible in many places, reaching up to almost two meters at the Grand Kaori tree. Park benches had been swept into the bushes, at Pont German the sand covering large stones had been washed away, making the bridge barely passable to large 4WD vehicles and one side of the road after Pont German was completely washed away at one point. There was still some rain during our visit, but fortunately mostly light rain that didn't prevent us from seeing the birds.

We saw our first Horned Parakeets, NC Myzomela and Barred Honeyeaters at the visitor center before meeting Jean Marc.

We birded with Jean Marc for about 7 hours and saw a good selection of birds: A family of five Kagus that Jean Marc shows to visitors performed in an amazing way: In the morning four of them climbed to a fallen trunk and stood there calling wildly; in the afternoon we saw them close-by on the road. We also saw one adult and one 3-month-old juvenile near the Grand Kaori tree. Other birds seen were Horned Parakeets, NC Imperial Pigeons, 2+1 Crow Honeyeaters with surprising ease, the latter close-by in a fruiting tree, NC Friarbirds, Fan-tailed Gerygones, Melanesian (NC) Whistlers, Streaked Fantails, 4 Southern Shrikebills, Melanesian (NC) Flycatchers, Yellow-bellied Robins and Green-backed White-eyes.

After saying goodbye to Jean Marc we birded for an hour and a half around the visitor center and saw NC and Horned Parakeets, a single Dark-brown Honeyeater, NC Myzomela, Fan-tailed Gerygones, Long-tailed

Triller and Red-throated Parrotfinches. All the birds were seen in about a 50 meter radius from the ticket booth.

After the first birding day we were only missing a handful of the endemics!

12.7. Mt. Koghis

We had originally booked 2 days with Jean Marc but after the successful first day we had seen about all species possible at the park. The park manager also needed Jean Marc to show the Kagu to some journalists so we decided to do something else and drove to Mt. Koghis. The morning was very rainy but we added three birds in two hours: Melanesian Cuckooshrike, Striated Starlings and NC Crow.

13.7. Flight to Lifou, family holiday at Drehu Village

After arriving at Drehu Village, we tried to get a rental vehicle for the following day, but didn't get any. Gasoline was low on the island. Gas was sold only for 2000 XPF at a time and there were long queues to the gas stations.

This day we had a family holiday, not much seen besides Dark-brown Honeyeaters that were calling everywhere. In the evening we walked to the village and saw our first local, very dark-headed Silvereyes.

14.7. By bike in search of the landbirds

We started pedaling west a bit before sunrise. On the way we saw some Red-bellied Fruit-Doves and White-throated Pigeons fly over, but they didn't perch. Finally we had good view of one White-throated Pigeon. We also stopped to admire Small Lifou White-eyes. When we finally arrived at spot G on Dave Seargeant's map, it was already past 8 o'clock. Two Eastern Barn Owls flushed from the trees. Red-bellied Fruit-Doves were vocal and we again saw some fly-overs; Cardinal Myzomelas were active and Small Lifou White-eyes were at the edge of the forest. Large Lifou-White-eye was calling in the forest. We continued along the main path towards spot H and we soon heard Large Lifou White-eye very close, but as we stopped the bike, it retreated in the bush and we didn't see it. 50 meters after that we found one Large Lifou White-eye preening on an open branch about 5 metres from us. Before I could get my camera from the backpack it started moving into a vine tangle and soon disappeared behind the leaves. But it was very good views and after all the cycling we felt victorious! It was about nine AM, and all lifers seen! Close to this place there was a vocal Large Lifou White-eye and we set up a small project to get it photographed. I taped the call with my portable Olympus LS-10 and we tried to lure the bird into the open. Another Large Lifou White-eye also came close, but neither into the open; they stayed well hidden.

We decided to continue to the west shore. Shortly before the beach we flushed yet another Eastern Barn Owl. We had a small break on the pristine white sand beach before climbing back to the forest. It was around 11 o'clock and the forest was much quieter; we didn't anymore hear Large Lifou White-eyes.

On the way back we had several stops to watch Small Lifou White-eyes, *melanopsis* Silvereyes and other birds.

15.7. By bike to Point Daussy

We started again a bit before sunrise, this time along the coast road towards Point Daussy. The species that we saw were a bit different: No Doves or Pigeon but a couple of Melanesian Cuckooshrikes and a NC Friarbird. When we arrived at Point Daussy we noticed that access to the shore is a bit limited as mentioned already in Dave Seargeant's report. There was one path but it lead to a place that would have required us to jump on sharp rocks over rifts several meters deep and about one meter wide – at the same time down

or up more than half a meter. We didn't feel comfortable in proceeding with all our gear which included the telescope and a big camera. We continued and after a few hundred meters there was a spot where the sea was visible from the road, vegetation wasn't too dense and the rocks pretty easy to navigate. There was a red mark on a tree at the roadside.

We saw just a smallish whale, a Brown Booby and a Pacific Reef Egret in about one hour and a half and decided to return to the hotel to continue the family holiday. On the way back we found some fresh bird corpses, obviously hit by the cars: One Small Lifou White-eye and seven(!) White-rumped Swiftlets. There was a large flock of Swiftlets around; they all seemed to be White-rumped Swiftlets.

16.7. Flights Lifou – Noumea – Ouvea and Ouvea Parakeet

After we had settled into Roland's bure in Ouvea and called Benouit Tangopi, Roland took us to the place in the nearby village where we entered Benoit's private land. We saw our first Ouvea Parakeet feeding on a pawpaw within seconds of arrival. All in all there were 4 parakeets in Benoit's garden. Giving the *manou* together with 4000 XPF (2000 XPF each) broke the ice. Benouit was a very friendly man and he showed us a parakeet nest in the nearby forest and we made a short walk around his premises seeing e.g. the local subspecies of Melanesian (Golden-type) Whistler. Roland's fee for the transport was 5000 XPF – pretty much I think.

It was raining hard most of the day, but when we were at Benouit's place the weather was a bit better. On the way back we stopped at the famous lagoon of Ouvea but it didn't look very special in the rain and there was litter on the beach.

17.7. Seabird watching at Point Escarpe; flight Ouvea – Noumea

Roland gave us a lift to Point Escarpe after breakfast. It was raining pretty heavily and at Point Escarpe we met an easterly gale. The sea was white – perfect conditions for a tubenose to fly by if we can only keep the optics dry. We selected a place further north compared to Dave Seargeant's report and also maybe 1-1.5 kilometers north of the place that Roland first suggested. At our site the reef seemed to be even narrower and thus the deep water was closer. We could also stand on a higher ground without compromising the view too much. This was important in stormy conditions. The wind was so strong that it was not possible to scan the sea with binoculars. Since we didn't have our "Finnsticks" with us the binoculars were shaking too much. We had one telescope and took turns in scanning the sea. At 20x and additional support from our hands it was pretty stable. The only problem was that it was raining directly at us and the optics needed constant drying. Towards the end of our 3-hour session the rain became a bit weaker but we were pretty drenched when Roland came to pick us up even though we had had our rain gear on.

This was however our best seabird watching during this trip. Soon after starting we saw a Red-footed Booby fly close-by and unidentified dark petrels started to appear far away. There were a few more Red-footed Boobies, a couple of Brown Boobies and a flock of noddies. After the first hour and a half I suddenly got a Tahiti Petrel in the scope flying the same close route as the Red-footed Boobies. It was well visible with binoculars also, but we both managed to get good views in the telescope. Unfortunately all the other petrels (about 10) were seen at a much further distance.

18.-19.7. Farino (Parc des Grandes Fougères)

On our first morning near Farino we saw some White-throated Pigeons and an Emerald Dove when driving up, but no hoped-for Cloven-feathered Doves. We anyway decided to drive straight up to try for the NC Grassbird as early as possible. After parking the car we descended the Grassbird track slowly scanning the

long grass and lantana, playing the call note (all we had) every now and then. 600 meters down the track there is large area of long grass and lantana on both sides of the road. There we heard just once a possible call note, but couldn't locate any bird.

Cloven-feathered Doves were calling a bit lower and after some unsuccessful searching for the Grassbird we decided to locate the Doves instead. This was easier thought than done because the two calling birds were well concealed and we could only make out a dark shape flying inside the foliage. The ridge was steep and it was not possible to get any closer either.

We spent the remaining time in this general area until it started to rain at about 1 PM. No sight of the Doves that soon went silent, nor the Grassbird. Just another possible click-sound. Luckily, one vocal NC Goshawk was hunting in this area (around 600 m) most of the morning: It perched in the open and swooped down to the ground to catch prey. Other birds observed during the morning included Horned Parakeets, NC Myzomela, Barred Honeyeaters, NC Friarbirds, Fan-tailed Gerygones, Melanesian (NC) Whistlers, Gray and Streaked Fantails, NC Crows, lots of Green-backed White-eyes and 2 heard-only NC Imperial Pigeons. At the car park there were several Melanesian Cuckooshrikes, a Long-tailed Triller and some Striated Starlings.

On the second morning we changed our strategy giving priority to the Cloven-feathered Dove. On our way up we made some stops on the road between 1,5 km and 2,5 km after the bridge (see Petri Hottola's instructions). We heard 2 Cloven-feathered Doves and 2 Emerald Doves. The Cloven-feathered were at a spot where a high hedge prevented viewing and despite trying to find a good place, didn't see them. We saw one of the Emerald Doves, though and an obliging NC Goshawk. We also tried some places higher up for the Grassbird, but no luck.

Feeling a bit depressed, we arrived at the car park and started down the Grassbird track. We observed almost the same birds as the day before and in addition a few Metallic Pigeons. When we arrived at the Cloven-feathered Dove territories at 700 m they were still vocal although not as close as the day before. We soon found one male perched high up near the top of the opposite ridge. Good, but a bit distant views from different angles as it changed its perch. A big relief! No sign of the Grassbird though. When we came back to the car park there was a "birdwave" moving through the cut grass area: Silvereyes (our only ones in Grande Terre), White-eyes and Parrotfinches.

20.7. Flights Noumea – Nadi, Fiji; Nadi – Matei, Taveuni

The best birds at Nadi Airport car park were a Collared Kingfisher and 2 Fiji Parrotfinches. It was raining hard when we arrived in Taveuni. It had been raining almost all of the previous week even though July is the driest month on Taveuni.

21.7. Bobby's Farm

The weather was sunny and the morning was reserved for holiday activities. Later in the day the usual SE trade wind changed to a more southerly gale. The wave heads in Somosomo strait were white and it didn't look good at all when we discussed our possibilities to make it out to the ocean to search for true pelagic birds. We decided to postpone the pelagic to our last full day, 24th.

I couldn't help noticing our first Red Shining Parrots and Vanikoro Flycatchers. In the afternoon we went to Bobby's farm to see our first Taveuni endemics. We had a flat tire on the way and while our driver was

changing the tire we birdwatched from the road. The best one was a Fiji Goshawk (or two) seen repeatedly. We had also good views of Red Shining Parrots.

Once at Nabogiono we met Bobby and were soon admiring Orange Doves, Many-coloured Fruit-Doves, Collared Lories, Orange-breasted Myzomelas, Polynesian Trillers, Slaty Monarchs, Vanikoro Flycatchers, Fiji White-eyes and Polynesian Starlings.

Bobby said that Pacific Imperial Pigeons are seasonal at his place and he hadn't seen them for two months. He had seen a Shy Ground-Dove three weeks earlier.

On the way back we observed Fiji Goshawks at several places.

22.7. Des Vouex Peak

We had got Samir to take us up to the Des Vouex Peak. He apologized for being a couple minutes late (5.02) – I think he was pretty well on time! We picked up Boro the bird guide on our way up. We reached the gate near the top at 6 AM. It was still a bit dark, but Blue-crested Flycatcher was already singing.

Boro suggested going onto a forest trail to view the Silktails but we wanted to go up. We walked about 100 metres to a place where the road makes a sharp curve to the left. Silktails were among the first birds we saw. There were about 4 birds in the area. Other birds seen included our first Fiji Bush Warbler, an unidentified Shrikebill, and a male Blue-crested Flycatcher, some Island Thrushes and a single Polynesian Starling.

At 7.30 we felt that activity at the top was getting lower and we had not located all the target species. We decided to walk down before the morning activity died off. Luckily it proved to be just a temporary drop in activity as after a couple of hundred meters down the road we started to find new birds: a Fiji Shrikebill, our first pair of Giant Honeyeaters, Pacific Robins, Polynesian Trillers and a Fiji Parrotfinch, a pair of Fiji Goshawks + more of the other birds except Silktail. Taveuni Giant Honeyeater with its bright yellow beak was a much cooler bird compared to our expectations.

The birds came in easily to the tape and I concentrated on taking photos. We reached the so called blue line at 10.40 and had Samir take us back to the hotel.

23.7. Family holiday

We went snorkeling to Somosomo Strait with Taveuni Ocean Sports. We had a break on the Vanua Levu side of the strait. The best birds were a pair of Fiji Goshawks at Taveuni Ocean Sports office.

24.7. Pelagic trip and Nanuku Levu

The sea in Somosomo Strait was looking calm enough for us to try a pelagic trip with Taveuni Ocean Sports. The boat was their NAKIA I, an about 6-metre open boat with a powerful engine. Our skipper was Viti, who has been a fisherman and knows the waters around Taveuni very well. Our plan was to go as far out as safely possible and try to see some pelagic birds.

Viti had prepared according to our instructions and brought four buckets of chum. They contained well decayed fish and Viti had sealed the plastic buckets with some tape so that it would be possible to release the chum either by making holes in the tape or taking the tape off. In addition we had carefully taken a half

a liter bottle of fish oil all the way from Finland. We were glad that the glass bottle had not broken. Our handicap was that we couldn't have anything floating behind the boat when we were driving fast.

When we proceeded past Matei, the sea didn't look too bad and we continued northeast. It was not possible to use the binoculars because we needed to hang on to the seats, but we scanned the ocean with our naked eyes and slowed down when we saw a bird. We just saw some noddies and some distant boobies.

Viti suggested that we would go to a small island with nesting seabirds. We knew that there wouldn't be anything of big interest to us, but agreed because it was good to have a break somewhere. Soon we could see the island of Nanuku Levu starting to appear at the horizon. It was now open sea in all directions and the swell was higher. The boat proved seaworthy and Viti was steering with great skill. We only hit the waves a couple of times and had to slow down. Closer to the island we encountered a larger flock of feeding birds: Brown Noddies, one intermediate morph Red-footed Booby and a two Lesser Frigatebirds. We chummed for the first time here to see if there would have been something else close-by, but didn't see anything. The chum that Viti had prepared was good stuff, at least judging by the smell.

We went ashore on Nanuku Levu. The tide was low and the reef partially exposed but Viti knew how to navigate into the lagoon. The island looked like a paradise with white sand beaches and lots of coconut palms. Viti told us that his grandfather had lived on the island and planted all the coconut palms. There was a small house that at the moment was leased to a lodge that sometimes takes their customers there for a few days. Now there wasn't anyone. Viti steered the boat to the shore, the soft sand shore dropped pretty sharply so it was possible to let the boat lean against the sand.

We had by this point noticed that there were a lot of Brown Noddies on the island, nesting in the palms. After starting our lunch we noticed a pigeon on a nearby tree and after raising our binoculars we saw that it was a Pacific Imperial Pigeon. We got a new species after all, even if there had been no sight of pelagic birds! We walked around the island and found another Imperial Pigeon and heard the feral junglefowls that had been brought to the island in past. After taking some pictures we started back towards Taveuni.

We used the last chum on the way back but didn't see anything at that point. The swell was bigger and it was a bit unpleasant to just float around in the rolling waves. Viti also said that the waves are getting bigger so we understood that it is time head back.

We were about 25-30 kilometres E of Matei when we saw a feeding flock of dark birds and white birds flashing amongst them. They were a bit south of our course, but we headed towards the flock. They were pretty far away and it was not possible to use binoculars while driving fast. Our first thought was that the white birds were Boobies or Tropicbirds, but when we got a little closer we realized that we were watching four White Terns. Even though we got under the birds, it was not easy to take a picture in the rough sea, but I managed some document shots of White Terns and Black Noddies. White Tern was a totally unexpected new bird to us; this trip was well worth the effort!

25.7. Flight to Nadi and drive to Suva

We had a morning flight to Nadi where we rented a vehicle from Europcar and started to drive towards Suva. The drive is neither especially scenic nor birdy. Undoubtedly the best beaches are behind the high walls of large hotels. In the evening we met Vili at Raintree Lodge and agreed on the program for the coming full day and one morning.

26.7. Namosi Road

We birded Namosi Road with Vili. It was a cold morning and it took some time before the birds started to wake up. Vili had been birding the road just a few days earlier and at that time all the birds had been cooperative – now we saw lots of empty favourite perches for various birds.

The star birds were a few Black-throated Shrikebills – we had repeated views of three different males. Other birds seen were Many-coloured Fruit-Doves, Barking Pigeon, Collared Lorys, Masked Shining Parrots, Orange-breasted Myzomelas, Wattled Honeyeaters and Giant Honeyeaters, Polynesian Trillers, one male Fiji Golden Whistler, Slaty Monarchs, Fiji Shrikebills, Vanikoro Flycatchers, Blue-crested Flycatchers, Pacific Robins, Fiji Bushwarblers, a Polynesian Starling and a few Fiji Parrotfinches. We didn't see any Golden Dove perched, just some females shooting past the vehicle down the slope.

Giant Honeyeaters were constantly calling out their “car alarm” call, which is missing from Taveuni Giant Honeyeaters. Bill and feet were not yellow, but blackish. It is a likely future split.

After a few hours it started to rain. We just sat in the car and waited for the worst weather to pass and then continued birding.

We tried for the Long-legged Warbler at the waterfall even though it is an unlikely spot. Vili said that the 2 times he has observed it at the road, it has been very vocal from the beginning.

Vili heard a Pink-billed Parrotfinch, but it flew over and was not heard again. The call is even more high-pitched than the Fiji Parrotfinch call.

27.7. Behind Raintree Lodge

The following morning we drove a bit north from Raintree Lodge, turned left to a village road and once more left to a narrow road that lead us through the village to the edge of the forest. Vili knew Jim who lived there and after we greeted Jim we went into his forest to search for Shy Ground-Doves. We walked through the forest and back, but didn't encounter or flush any on our way. There were some Golden Doves calling and we managed to position us under a tree where a male was perched. The bird gave excellent views for a short while and it was a great relief after the dip the previous day.

After the forest it seemed that we are not going to find any new native birds so we asked Vili if he knows where to find Java Sparrows and Red Avadavats. Vili drove us to the agriculture school close to the airport and we first scanned the rice paddies finding Red Avadavats but not Java Sparrow. We ventured into the school campus and there we finally found Java Sparrows, two juveniles fed by two adults.

After that it was time to get back to the room, pack and start the drive back to Nadi to catch our flight to Noumea. On the way we stopped before and after Navutulevu village to scan the sea, but didn't see anything else besides one Black-naped Tern. This time police was more actively monitoring the traffic with radars and unprepared as we were, we got a 30 FJD fine (not a ticket) at the first place.

28.7. Ferry to Ile des Pins, family holiday

We took the Betico2 ferry from Noumea to Ile des Pins. It was windy and rainy. Despite some scanning we didn't see much, just one noddy. Our sons were feeling sea-sick. It rained all day, we were pretty wet (and cold).

29.7. – 2.8. Family Holiday

We spent four nights in Oro Bay – Upi Bay area and although we were having family holiday we saw some birds: our only Rufous Night-heron for the trip, Green-backed White-Eyes (common), one Long-tailed Triller, a pair of Streaked Fantails, four Melanesian (NC) Whistlers, some Fan-tailed Gerygones, about 15 Striated Starlings and max count of 12 Red-throated Parrotfinches. We also heard the characteristic call of NC Imperial Pigeon; two birds across the river. White-throated Pigeon seemed pretty common; in addition to seen ones we heard several.

Piscine Naturelle was an extraordinary place for snorkeling: Crystal clear, turquoise and calm water full of colourful fish.

When back in Noumea, we had a couple of hours in the afternoon to pack and also to scan Anse Vata Bay in hope of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. We didn't see any shearwaters, but a flock of about 15 Fairy Terns feeding actively was a nice find as we have seen it previously only in New Zealand.

Contact details

Parc de la Rivière Bleue:

Jean Marc Meriot knows the birds and how to find them, is good company and works hard to show the birds to the visitors. He prefers French, but has a basic knowledge of English. Highly recommended. jean-marc.meriot@province-sud.nc.

Ouvea Parakeet:

Benouit Tangopi, GOSSANAH village between St. Joseph and Point Escarpe. Phone 800549. Benouit has breeding parakeets and also simple bures to sleep in. He knows also other birds like the local subspecies of Melanesian/Golden Whistler. He is very friendly and eager to show visitors around his land.

[Jean Baptiste Dao, TEOUTA village in the very north. Another option for parakeet guiding. Phone 905485. We didn't meet him.]

Taveuni:

Naresh (BOBBY) Shankaran is the owner and conservator of Nabogiono Farms. A great place for seeing birds close-by, famous for guaranteed mind-blowing views of male Orange Doves. Phone (+679) 828 3677 / 828 1246. Cell phone (+679) 923 8612. nabogiono@yahoo.com.au.

Samir has a good 4WD. It was the first time he took birders up to the peak, but he has been there frequently with other tourists. He is willing to take birders also in the future. Cell phone (+679) 955 2964. Other phone (+679) 902 8375. samirm9948@gmail.com.

Bird guide Boro S. has a long experience and knows the calls of the birds, he can guide at the peak and also in other places as we understood. Phone (+679) 9482235. boro.birdguide@yahoo.com.

Viti Levu:

Vilikesa (Vili) Masibalavu is the person who has re-discovered Long-legged Warbler in 2002 after hearing a song he hadn't heard earlier. He is a very competent bird guide and good company for birding. Highly recommended. Phone (+679) 7777040. vmasibalavu@conservation.org.

Links

<http://www.iles-loyaute.com/en/>

Information about Loyalty Islands. Accommodation, transport etc.

http://www.worldtwitch.com/pacific_islands_birding_report_des.htm

Dave Sargeant's trip report and maps.

http://www.bongariliitto.fi/files/6742/New_Caledonia_January_2006_Hottola_P.pdf

Petri Hottola's New Caledonia trip report.

http://www.bongariliitto.fi/files/6745/Fiji_January_2009_Hottola_P.pdf

Petri Hottola's Viti Levu and Kadavu trip report.

<http://www.club300.se/Files/TravelReports/Taveuni.pdf>

Petri Hottola's Taveuni report.

<http://komi.1g.fi/kuvat/Birds/Birding+abroad/2013/>

Some photos from our trip.

Species – comments on selected species and our observations

Pacific Black Duck

NC: 26 at the ponds in La Foa.

Fiji: about 30 in a river near Nausori airport.

Grey Teal

NC: La Foa ponds 13, Noumea Hippodrome 2.

Red Junglefowl (introduced)

Fiji: Feral birds at the deserted Nanuku Levu islet.

Australasian Grebe

NC: 1 adult 2 juveniles at La Foa ponds

Tahiti Petrel

NC: Single bird glided by at Point Escarpe, Ouvea.

Petrel sp.

NC: Singles in the horizon at Point Escarpe, Ouvea.

Great Frigatebird

NC: One adult female at Ouvea.

Lesser Frigatebird

Fiji: Two adult males around Nanuku Levu. Some tens of unidentified Frigatebirds seen around Taveuni main island.

Brown Booby

NC: 1 adult Lifou, 1 adult 1 immature Ouvea.

Red-footed Booby

NC: 5 light morph birds at Point Escarpe, Ouvea.

Fiji: 1 light morph, 1 intermediate near Nanuku Levu.

Little Pied Cormorant

NC: Singles on three days at Grande Terre, always in flight.

White-faced Heron

NC: 1-2 seen in Noumea, La Foa and Ile Des Pins.

Fiji: 1-2 seen on Taveuni and Viti Levu. Additional six in the rice paddies at Agricultural School near Suva.

Pacific Reef-Heron

NC: 2 dark morph birds Lifou, 3 dark morph Ile des Pins.

Fiji: 1 dark morph + 1 light morph Taveuni.

Rufous Night-Heron

NC: One bird at Oro Bay on several dates.

(Eastern) Osprey

NC: Family party of four on several days on Ile des Pins. It seems that they had nested in Oro Bay – Upi Bay area.

Swamp Harrier

NC: Singles seen from the vehicle north of Noumea and Ile des Pins.

Fiji: Singles seen from the vehicle between Nadi and Suva.

Fiji Goshawk

Fiji: It seems that this bird is still very common on Taveuni, we saw it also on days when we were not birding. Max daily count 3 seen + 4 heard. Total on Taveuni about 8-9 seen birds + 4 heard. One on Viti Levu between Nadi and Suva.

Brown Goshawk

NC: One at the swamp near St. Joseph, Ouvea.

New Caledonia Goshawk

NC: One bird in three places in Farino area, on the way up or in the park.

Whistling Kite

NC: About 5 at Parc de la Rivière Bleue, max 16 counted on the way to Farino.

Kagu

NC: Family party of 5 adults + 1 adult with a 3-month-old juvenile at Parc de la Rivière Bleue.

Purple Swamphen

NC: 2 at La Foa ponds.

Silver Gull

NC: Small numbers (max 13 in a flock) in Anse Vata and Ile des Pins. All were adults except one juvenile at Oro Bay, still begging for food 28.7. – 2.8.

Noddy sp.

NC: Unidentified noddies were seen at Point Escarpe and from Betico2 ferry between Noumea and Ile des Pins.

Fiji: Some unidentified noddies on our pelagic.

Brown Noddy

Fiji: Breeding on Nanuku Levu, at least 150 adults present.

Black Noddy

Fiji: We saw around 30 in the same flock as White Terns about 30 km east of Matei, Taveuni.

Common White Tern

Fiji: Four birds in a feeding flock of some tens Black Noddies about 30 km east of Matei, Taveuni.

Fairy Tern

NC: A flock of 15 feeding at Anse Vata Bay August 2.

Black-naped Tern

Fiji: One immature after Navutulevu village between Suva and Nadi.

Great Crested Tern

NC: 1-2 birds recorded at Anse Vata, Lifou, Ouvea and Ile des Pins.

Rock Pigeon (introduced)

NC: 2 in Noumea.

Fiji: 2 at Nadi, 5 on Taveuni.

White-throated (Metallic) Pigeon

NC: 8 seen on Lifou, 3 seen in Farino, 6 seen on Ile des Pins + some heard.

Fiji: One at Bobby's Farm.

Spotted Dove (introduced)

NC: Max daily "count" 15.

Fiji: Max daily "count" about 25.

Emerald Dove

NC: 1 on Lifou, max daily count 11 at roadsides on Ouvea (rainy day, short distances; very common!), 2 Farino, max daily count 5 on Ile des Pins.

Red-bellied Fruit-Dove

NC: 5 seen, a few heard on Lifou. 2 seen well on Ouvea (Rolands Bure + Benoit's garden).

Many-colored Fruit-Dove

Fiji: 3 males 2 females at Bobby's, about 8 seen at Namosi road.

Orange Dove

Fiji: 3 males, 3 females at Bobby's, 3 females at Des Vouex Peak.

Golden Dove

Fiji: Poor flight views of females at Namosi road. We checked lots of empty favourite perches with Vili. One male tracked down on our last morning at Jim's forest. Altogether about 7 calling males heard.

Cloven-feathered Dove

NC: 2 heard calling at Grassbird track (at around 700 metres), and finally one male seen. 2 birds heard calling about 1.6 kilometres after the bridge on the way up.

Pacific Imperial-Pigeon

Fiji: At least 2 birds at Nanuku Levu gave excellent views. It seems that the only place where people see this species on "mainland" Taveuni is Nabogiono Farm. Bobby said that it is seasonal at his place and he hadn't seen any for about 2 months.

Barking Imperial-Pigeon

Fiji: Very common in Taveuni, Namosi road and Raintree Lodge. Around 20 seen at Taveuni and Namosi, many heard.

New Caledonian Imperial-Pigeon

NC: Two seen + heard at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, 1 heard at Mt. Koghis, 2 heard at Farino, 2 heard at Ile des Pins.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Fiji: Two heard calling at Des Vouex Peak, Taveuni, one at Namosi Road and one at Jim's.

Eastern Barn Owl

NC: We flushed 2 + 1 birds on Lifou in the general area where we observed our Large Lifou White-eyes.

Glossy Swiftlet

NC: We paid too little attention to swifts. We also had with us only the Birds of the Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia guide which has a pretty misleading picture of White-rumped, so I guess we missed many in the beginning. Glossy Swiftlets were at least at Park de la Riviere Bleue and some other places on Grande Terre.

White-rumped Swiftlet

NC: White-rumped was numerous on Lifou, max daily count around 75 + additional 7 birds killed by vehicles. Other places also had swiftlets, but we didn't pay too much attention.

Fiji: Very small numbers throughout, max daily count 25 on Namosi Road day.

Collared Kingfisher

Fiji: Max daily count 8 on Taveuni. Max daily count 5 on Viti Levu. Subspecies *vitiensis* on both islands. It seems that this subspecies has 2 colour morphs: All the birds that we saw on Taveuni had orangy supercilium and much orange colour on flanks. Most birds on Viti Levu had pure white underparts and pure white supercilium. One bird on Viti Levu (at the agricultural school) was like the birds in Taveuni.

Sacred Kingfisher

NC: Small numbers in all places visited, largest daily counts 10 on Lifou and 5 in Farino. One bird that I photographed on Ile des Pins showed unusual head pattern: broad white supercilium reaching nape and connecting. Doesn't really look like a Sacred Kingfisher at all! See my photos – any comments welcome.

Collared Lory

Fiji: On Taveuni 3 seen at Bobby's and heard at the Peak. On Viti Levu 2 seen at Namosi Road and heard at Raintree Lodge.

Coconut (Rainbow) Lorikeet

NC: Common in parks of Noumea. One or two at Mt. Koghis, Lifou and Farino. Small numbers (max. daily count 8) at Ile des Pins.

Red Shining-Parrot

Fiji: Max daily count 6 at Taveuni. Present in the forest as well as secondary habitats near villages. One near Raintree Lodge, Viti Levu, where introduced. Vili had not seen one on Viti Levu for a long time before this observation.

Masked Shining-Parrot

Fiji: Namosi Road 8 seen and some heard. Raintree Lodge and environs max 5 in a day.

Horned Parakeet

NC: 5 at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, 4 at Farino.

Ouvea Parakeet

NC: 4 at Benouit's.

New Caledonian Parakeet

NC: 2 at Parc de la Riviere Bleue visitor center.

New Caledonian (Scarlet) Myzomela

NC: Seen only twice, males at Parc de la Riviere Bleue visitor center and Farino.

Cardinal Myzomela

NC: Five seen and at least same amount heard on Lifou. Subspecies is lifuensis, in which the male is breathtakingly beautiful – all black with red hood. Seemed to favour forest edges, but was seen inside good forest also.

Orange-breasted Myzomela

Fiji: We saw only 2 at Bobby's and one at Namosi Road.

Dark-brown Honeyeater

NC: One at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, two at Farino were the only ones on Grande Terre. On Lifou, Ouvéa and Ile des Pins very common – you hear (and see) them constantly in secondary habitats. On Lifou, seemed to be missing from good forest with Large Lifou White-eyes.

Barred Honeyeater

NC: Seen at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, Mt. Koghis and Farino with highest count 15 at Mt. Koghis.

Wattled Honeyeater

Fiji: Judging by calls a common bird in forests. 5 seen at Des Vouex Peak in Taveuni; on Viti Levu 4 at Namosi Road and 2 near Raintree Lodge. Both of these Fiji subspecies have fairly inconspicuous wattles, which are difficult to see when birds are not close-by.

Giant Honeyeater

Fiji: Distinct subspecies on Taveuni and Viti Levu. Viti Levu birds have dark feet and bill and constantly make a loud "car alarm" call. Taveuni birds have bright yellow bill, facial markings and feet and have shorter calls. As noted by many, this a likely split in the future. Taveuni birds were really spectacular and earned our bird of the day title over Silktail.

Crow Honeyeater

NC: We saw two birds not far from the main road somewhere before the Grand Kaori tree. Looking at the photos the other one might be a juvenile. In addition, we saw one bird very close in a fruiting tree after Pont German.

New Caledonian Friarbird

NC: We saw about 5 at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, 2 at Mt. Koghis, just one on Lifou, 2 on both days at Farino. At Ile des Pins, it was abundant with about 15 seen daily, many more heard.

Fan-tailed Gerygone

NC: Fairly common judging by the easily recognized song. Seen birds: Parc de la Riviere Bleue including visitor center about 10, Lifou 1, Farino 5, Ile des Pins 6.

White-breasted Woodswallow

NC: Very small numbers on Grande Terre, a few more on Lifou where max daily count 11.

Fiji Woodswallow

Fiji: Max daily count 15 between Nadi and Suva. Just 2 at Namosi Road.

Australasian Magpie

Fiji: Just a handful on Taveuni.

Polynesian Triller

Fiji: 2 seen at Nabogiono Farms, 4 seen and more heard at Des Vouex Peak. On Viti Levu, 10 seen and more heard at Namosi Road.

Long-tailed Triller

NC: We saw only two at Parc de la Riviere Bleue visitor center, one on Lifou, one at Farino and one at Ile des Pins.

Melanesian Cuckoo-Shrike

NC: Seen at Mt. Koghis (2), Parc des Grandes Fougères car park (5) and Lifou (2).

New Caledonian Cuckooshrike

NC: Two were seen, one well, at Parc de la Rivière Bleue.

Melanesian (including New Caledonian) Whistler

Whistler systematics is complex and will probably be revised in the future. Both NC forms have white throat.

NC:

- Subspecies *caledonica* (New Caledonian Whistler) was observed at Parc de la Rivière Bleue (6 seen), Mt. Koghis (1 seen), Farino (5 seen) area and Ile des Pins (4 seen). Male has more orange tone on breast/belly, collar narrower and hood grey. Female grayer without yellow.
- Subspecies *littayei* (included in Golden Whistler in some systematics) was observed on Lifou (5 seen) and Ouvéa (3-4 seen). This one is yellower (also female has yellowish breast and yellow belly), male has black hood and complete collar.

Fiji (Golden) Whistler

Fiji: Both Fiji subspecies that we saw have yellow throat. They are included in Fiji Whistler or Golden Whistler. [The subspecies on Kadavu has a white throat and is sometimes spit off as White-throated Whistler.]

- Subspecies *torquata* (Taveuni). One male seen close to the peak. This one doesn't have a breast band, it is just all yellow underneath.
- Subspecies *graeffi* (Viti Levu). One male seen at Namosi Road. This one has a complete breast band.

Some more heard only.

Rufous Whistler

NC: Just one seen before Pont Perignon in Parc de la Rivière Bleue.

Silktaill

Fiji: 4 seen at the peak in Taveuni.

Gray Fantail

NC: Seen at Parc de la Rivière Bleue visitor center, Mt. Koghis, Farino and Ile des Pins. Max daily count 5 seen. Generally not in good forest, where replaced by Streaked Fantail.

Streaked Fantail

NC and Fiji birds appeared pretty different.

NC: (subspecies verreauxi) seen at Parc de la Rivière Bleue (5) Parc des Grandes Fougères (2) and Ile des Pins (2). NC birds have broad dark markings in breast feathers creating a scaled appearance.

Fiji: Seen on Taveuni (5+; subspecies rufilateralis) and Namosi Road (5; subspecies layardi). Taveuni birds had only narrow streaks on the breast, while breast sides and flanks were rufous. Viti Levu birds had bolder streaking, but not scaly pattern like NC birds.

Slaty Monarch

Fiji: Four seen and some heard at Nabogiono Farms. Two at Namosi Road.

Fiji Shrikebill

Fiji: 3 seen along Des Vouex Peak road, 2 seen and one heard at Namosi Road..

Black-throated Shrikebill

Fiji: Three males seen and one more heard at Namosi Road. The call is lower in pitch compared to Fiji Shrikebill.

Southern Shrikebill

NC: 4 seen at Parc de la Riviere Bleue, all in good forest.

Melanesian (New Caledonian) Flycatcher

NC: Seen at Parc Riviere Bleue (4), Lifou (2 (+ 5 heard)) and Ouvea (1). Usually in open areas like forest clearings, in Loyalty Ilands in bushy areas. For some reason we didn't observe it at Ile des Pins.

Vanikoro Flycatcher

Fiji: Common, seen in many places and also in secondary habitats like gas stations. But not numerous, max daily count 6.

Blue-crested Flycatcher

Fiji: Des Vouex Peak 3 males one female seen. 2 males seen at Namosi Road. In addition some heard in both places.

New Caledonian Crow

NC: One seen at Mt. Koghis. 10+ seen at Parc des Grandes Fougères, more heard. Some of the individuals were rather confiding, most were quite vary.

Pacific (Scarlet) Robin

Fiji: Four males, two females at Des Vouex Peak, one male, two females at Namosi Road.

Yellow-bellied Robin

NC: About ten seen at Parc de la Riviere Bleue. Some birds close to picnic tables were pretty confiding. 6+ seen at Ile Des Pins.

Pacific Swallow

NC: Very low numbers at Loyalty Islands, Farino and Ile des Pins (max 5 in a day).

Fiji: Usually less than 15 in a day, except about 150 on the drive from Nadi to Suva.

Red-vented Bulbul (introduced)

NC: 2 seen at Mt. Koghis, 2 at La Foa.

Fiji: Common close to habitation; about 30+ seen between Nadi nad Suva..

Fiji Bush-Warbler

Fiji: 2 seen well and 2 heard at Des Vouex Peak. About 12 heard and one glimpsed at Namosi Road. Two heard at Jim's forest.

Large Lifou White-eye

NC: Seemed to favour shaded forest with big trees and moss on the road. All our observations were between map points G and H in Dave Seargeant's map. One seen well and 4 heard.

Green-backed White-eye

NC: Usually in or close to forested areas, except 2 seen in an overgrown garden at Anse Vata, Noumea. Common in most forests, the following numbers are seen birds in a day, in addition always many only heard ones. Parc de la Riviere Bleue 7, Mt. Koghis 20, Farino 40, Ile des Pins 20.

Small Lifou White-eye

NC: Quite common in more open forest and edges of villages on Lifou. 30+ seen and more heard.

Fiji White-eye

Fiji: Fairly common in forests, but very active and didn't often stop for views. The following numbers were seen well: Nabogiono Farms 2, Des Vouex Peak 10, Raintree Lodge 3.

Silver-eye

NC: On Lifou the dark-headed form *melanops* was not rare, 8+ seen. It usually occurred within the villages. Elsewhere we saw only one flock of 8 birds at Parc des Grandes Fougères car park, "normal-looking".

Fiji: Normal-looking Silvereyes seen as follows: Bobby's Farm 5, Des Vouex Peak 1, Namosi Road 10.

Island Thrush

Fiji: About 10 seen + more heard at Des Vouex Peak on Taveuni. Glimpsed also at Namosi Road.

Striated Starling

NC: Max. daily numbers in each place: Mt. Koghis 2, Lifou 1, Ouvea 3, Farino 7, Ile des Pins 15.

Polynesian Starling

Fiji: On Taveuni 3 seen at Bobby's and 3 at Des Vouex Peak. One seen and one heard at Namosi Road.

Jungle Myna (introduced)

Fiji: Common in Fiji, max 80 per day.

Common Myna (introduced)

NC: Common near Noumea, max some tens per day.

Fiji: Common in Fiji, max 40 per day.

House Sparrow (introduced)

NC: Small numbers seen in Noumea, one pair at La Foa.

Red Avadavat (introduced)

Fiji: 1 male, 20 females at the rice paddies close to Agricultural School near Nausori Airport.

Common Waxbill (introduced)

NC: Flocks seen on the outskirts of Noumea and La Foa. Largest concentration was about 150 birds at the Noumea Hippodrome.

Red-throated Parrotfinch

NC: Four at Parc de la Rivière Bleue visitor center, seven at Farino. At Ile des Pins often three, but on the best day 12 birds. Most birds were seen at roadside grassy habitats.

Fiji Parrotfinch

Fiji: Nadi Airport 2-3, Des Vouex Peak 1, Namosi Road about 5, a few behind Raintree Lodge and at the Agricultural School. Birds were seen in both urban habitats and forest.

Java Sparrow (introduced)

Fiji: 2 juveniles fed by 2 adults at Agricultural School near Nausori Airport.

Birds that we didn't see

Shy Ground-Dove

This species usually requires time and patience. Possible places to search for are Bobby's farm and Jim's forest.

New Caledonian Grassbird

We didn't see any recent reports for Farino area on the Internet. I think there is still habitat (long grass and lantana) along the old "Grassbird track".

Long-legged Warbler

THE place to see the Warblers is to go to Monasavu road; there are 3 territories close to the road. More than one day may be needed because of the possibility of adverse weather in high elevations. Long-legged Warbler territories are always strictly close to a waterfall. Vili has also found a nest at Monasavu road. It is a 2.5 -3.5 hour drive from Raintree Lodge, depending on road condition. A heavy duty 4WD is compulsory.

Namosi road has one place where a waterfall is 300 meters from the road. This is usually too far away, but Vili has observed the Warbler twice (out of about 100 times) along this road also, both times at this same spot.

Vili told us that the species is more common than earlier believed and many waterfalls have their pair. Other places are harder to get to.

Blue-faced Parrotfinch

We didn't hear anything like a Blue-faced Parrotfinch when cycling in Lifou. On the other hand we didn't focus on finding habitat for this bird, because we have seen it in Australia.

Pink-billed Parrotfinch

Vili heard this at Namosi Road when we were there. The call is very much higher in pitch compared to Fiji Parrotfinch. It is a nomad and can be seen practically anywhere in the forest. But it is quite rare.