

Bird Watching Tour in West Papua Province of Indonesia

Trip Report by Charles Roring

for Vacation Indonesia Tours

Introduction

I guided a Russian birdwatcher on a 2-week birdwatching, wildlife watching, snorkeling and sightseeing tour in bird's head seascape region of West Papua in the Republic of Indonesia. His name was Dmitry Ivanov. We explored the forest of Waigeo, Sorong's mangrove, Klasow valley and Arfak mountains to watch various species of tropical birds including birds of paradise, cockatoos and parrots, kingfishers, pigeons and fruit doves. We also saw wallaby, and birdwing butterflies. We enjoyed snorkeling over beautiful coral reef and saw coconut crab in Raja Ampat as well as colorful flowers in Arfak mountains. Here is the detailed story of our trip.





Sorong, Saporkren, Klasow Valley, Manokwari and Arfak Mountains were places that we visited during our two weeks trip.

Day 1 (27 August 2022) I met my client Dmitry Ivanov at DEO airport of Sorong city. He flew from Seoul of South Korea. After taking a few hours rest in a hotel in Sorong and enjoying lunch, we began our birdwatching activity in mangrove forest around 45 minutes ride to the suburb of the city. There, we saw Pacific Swallow, Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Sahul Sunbird (formerly called Olive-backed Sunbird). Suddenly rain started to fall. We walked back to the car and had some tea and biscuits while waiting for it to stop. After the rain we still did birdwatching again and saw Oriental Dollarbird, Rainbow Bee-eater, Great-billed Heron, Willie Wagtail, Sacred Kingfisher, Yellow-faced Myna, Helmetted Friarbird. It was already dark when we returned to the city. We had dinner at Padang Restaurant.

Arriving in Waisai harbor, we continued our trip by speedboat to a beach resort in Saporkren area. We still had time to enjoy birding that day. We saw Papuan Frogmouth, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Willie Wagtail, Lesser Frigatebird, Tern, Helmetted Friarbird, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Sacred Kingfisher, and Glossy Manucode (which is a Bird of Paradise). Back to the resort, we had a nice view of Palm Cockatoo sitting on the branch of a Catappa tree over the white sandy beach. It was eating catappa fruits.

Day 3 (29 August 2022)

We woke up early at 04:00 and had some tea and bread. After that we left the resort by boat to a beach in Kabui bay where we continued our trip by hiking steep slopes to the site of Wilson's Bird of Paradise. We arrived around one and a half hour later. We watched the paradise bird until eight o'clock. When we returned we saw Dusky Scrubfowl, Brahminy Kite, Eclectus Parrot, Pacific Swallow, Willie Wagtail, White-bellied Sea Eagle at the beach. We had a stop at Saporkren village and enjoyed some interactions with villagers. Dmitry tried chewing betel nut. In the resort, we took pictures of Papuan Frogmouth.



Wilson's Bird of Paradise



Coconut Crab in Raja Ampat

In the afternoon, by speedboat we went to Raflow resort to enjoy birding. There, we saw Red Bird of Paradise, White-breasted Woodswallow, Variable Goshawk, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove, Rainbow Lorikeet, Palm Cockatoo, Mimic Meliphaga, Hooded Butcherbird, Dwarf Fruit Dove, Yellow-faced Myna, Eastern Osprey, Helmetted Friarbird, Eclectus Parrot, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Pink-spotted Fruit Dove, Red-cheeked Parrot.

Day 4 (30 August 2022)

We woke up in the morning again and had a short hiking to the lek of Red Bird of Paradise. In the same site, we watched Helmetted Friarbird, Spangled Drongo, Hooded Butcherbird. After watching paradike bird we still enjoyed birding in the area and saw Grey-headed Goshawk, Spangled Drongo, Rusty Mouse Warbler. We walked down the slope and did birding walk along the road where we watched Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, Glossy-mantled Manucode, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove, Brown headed Crow, Coconut Lorikeet, Eclectus Parrot, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Yellow-faced Myna, Blyth's Hornbill, Glossy-mantled Manucode, Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Torresian Crow. In the afternoon at 15:00, we left for Friwen to enjoy snorkeling and seeing coconut crab on a small island not far from it.



Red Bird of Paradise

Day 5 (31 August 2022)

Birding in the morning along the road, we were able to watch: Black Butcherbird, Hooded Butcherbird, Mimic Meliphaga, Red Bird of Paradise, Eclectus Parrot, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Red-cheeked Parrot, Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Variable Goshawk, Lowland Peltop, Pacific Reef Heron, Brown-headed Crow, Torresian Crow, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove, Oriental Dollarbird, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker.

A Chinese photographer, Phang, joined us. Because I forgot to bring my binoculars from the beach resort, he was glad to lend me his binoculars. We enjoyed watching and photographing birds during that morning. Phang returned to the guesthouse earlier whereas I and Dimitry continued walking to the area of Raflow resort where he photographed Eastern Reef Egret near the resort.



Palm Cockatoo

We left Raja Ampat at 14:00 and arrived in Sorong at around 16:00. I went to supermarket to buy more food materials and then continued our trip to Klasow valley by 4WD car. We arrived at around 19:00. The rain started to fall. We continued walking along a wooden bridge for a few hours. We saw frogs, lizards, grasshoppers, crickets, moths, and bandicoots. Arriving in the village at 22:00, we had dinner and took a rest. I was very tired but could not sleep well.



King Bird of Paradise

Day 6 (1 Sept. 2022)

We woke up at 05:00 and then started to make preparation. We watched Western-crowned Pigeon, King Bird of Paradise, Frilled Monarch, Blue Jewel Babbler, Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Rainbow Lorikeet, Papuan Lorikeet, Sacred Kingfisher, Yellow-faced Myna. There were calls of Yellow-billed Kingfisher. Unfortunately, we could not see it. At around 12:00 we returned to the village and had lunch. After that we took a rest. At 16:00, we did a birding walk along the bridge where we saw Hooded Pitta, Brown Oriole, Black Lory, and some other beautiful birds of Sorong's lowland forest. Blyth's hornbill flew over the forest several times. There were hibiscus flowers in the village. I took some pictures of them.



Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise



Lesser Birds of Paradise

Day 7 (2 Sept. 2022)

We woke up at 04:00 and then made a preparation. After having some tea and biscuits, we walked to the lek of Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise. It was a long walk. Walking up a steep slope, we saw wallaby. I aimed my flashlight at the marsupial animal. With the light, Dmitry could take pictures of the wallaby. The male Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise was already on top of his display tree when we arrived. We watched him performing the "pole dance" for around thirty minutes before continuing our trip to watch the Lesser Birds of Paradise. We stayed there until 09:00. In addition to Twelve-wired Bird of Paradise and the Lesser Birds of Paradise, we were able to watch Glossy-mantled Manucode, Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, Blyth's Hornbill, Shining Flycatcher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo.

At around 10:00, we slowly returned to the village and took our lunch. After that we took a rest until around 14:00. In late afternoon, we walked along the boardwalk to watch birds including Yellow-faced Myna, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Papuan Babbler. I played the sound of Hooded Butcherbird. Several minutes later he showed up.

We saw some interesting birds including Golden Myna, Orange-bellied Fruit Dove, Red-cheeked Parrot, and Oriental Dollarbird. We waited for the cassowary to visit the village but we did not see it. In late afternoon, we walked back to main road. It was drizzling. Reaching the main road, we saw that the parking lot was still empty. So we continued birding along the road. Wompoo Fruit Dove flew fast crossing the road over the canopy of the forest. There was an Orange-bellied Fruit Dove perching on the top branch of a tree. When our car arrived, we ended our birding in Klasow valley and returned to Sorong where stayed one night at Swissbel hotel.

Arfak Mountains

Day 8 (3 Sept. 2022)

We flew to Manokwari in the morning of 3 Sept 2022. However, we did not go directly to Arfak range. We had to go to a supermarket to buy food materials for our 6 days stay in the mountains. After that, we went to traditional market in Wosi to buy more fruits, vegetables and eggs.

The duration of the car trip from Manokwari city to Arfak mountains was approximately 2 hours. Unloading our bags and food supplies from the 4WD car, we brought them to Lorikeet guesthouse. We did not take a rest. There was still time to watch Vogelkop Bowerbird. Because the nearest blind was only around 5 minutes walk, we immediately went to it. Dmitry was able to see the Vogelkop Bowerbird and took some pictures of the bird. Back to the guesthouse, we were able to see some nice birds including Green-backed Robin and White-shouldered Fairywren. There was a tall tree in the middle of the flower garden of the guesthouse. There, Great Cuckoo Dove liked to eat its fruits.



Magnificent Bird of Paradise

Day 9 (4 Sept. 2022)

We woke up at 04:30 and made preparation as well as had some tea and biscuit. At 05:00 we started hiking up the steep slope of Mount Soyti. It took around twenty minutes to reach the birdwatching hut of Western Parotia. Inside it, Dmitry sat to wait for the paradise bird to come. Because villager had put a red pandanus fruit near the dancing ground of Western Parotia, other birds came to eat the grain of the fruit too. There was a female Western Parotia. And there were also female black sicklebill.

After watching the parotia, we did general birding along the road. We saw Capped-white Eye, Ornate Melidectes, Sclater's Whistler, Mountain Fruit Dove, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker, Olive Flycatcher, Western Smoky Honeyeater. During nightwalk, we saw tree frog, mouse, and stick insect. We heard wing beats of flyingfox but we could not locate the tree where he fed on.



Mountain Owlet Nightjar

Day 10 (5 Sept 2022)

At 04:00 we woke up to make preparation and to have a quick breakfast. We had some bread, rambutan fruits, and tea. Dmitry, accompanied by two villagers went to the site of Magnificent Bird of Paradise. It took around one hour twenty minutes of walking to reach it. He returned at around 10:30 with smiling face. Dmitry was able to make pictures and a short video of the paradise bird. Back to the guesthouse, we photographed Mountain Owlet Nightjar in the front flower garden of the guesthouse.

In the afternoon, he returned to the site of Western parotia again. He wanted to watch the adult Western Parotia performing his courtship dance. However, only the female Black Sicklebill, juvenile Western Parotia that were seen at that site. On a separate

site, I saw Spotted Jewel Babbler at the entrance door of the birdwatching hut. We did late afternoon birding walk and saw Grey Green Scrubwren, Green-backed Robin.



Black-eared Catbird

Day 11 (6 Sept 2022)

As usual during the birding tour, we woke up early in the morning. Our destination this time was Maibri village and our target bird to see was the Crescent-caped Lophorina or Vogelkop Superb Bird of Paradise. The weather that morning was sunny. As a result, we were able to see the paradise bird. At the same site, we also saw Black-eared Catbird, Magnificent Bird of Paradise (male and female), Crinkle-collared Manucode and a female Western Parotia. We heard the sounds of Plum-faced Lorikeets on the canopy of the forest. However, we could not see them. In the afternoon, Dmitry tried to watch the adult male Western Parotia but it did not come to its dancing site.



Vogelkop Superb Bird of Paradise

Day 12 (7 Sept 2022)

I organized a trip for Dmitry to watch Arfak Astrapia in the forest of Syioubri village near a place that was called German Camp. at 02:00 early morning time, by a 4WD car, we went to the village where Dmitry started his guiding trip to the top guided by Elyakim. They arrived at around 03:00 and waited for the sunrise. He was able to watch both the Arfak Astrapia and the Black Sicklebill.

In the afternoon, Elyakim offered him an alternative site for him to watch adult Western Parotia performing his courtship dance performance. Because a bird hide had not been prepared, Elyakim told us that he would build it first. We could go there to watch the bird at 04:00. We went there by 4WD car. It was quite far from Lorikeet Guesthouse. The birding site was located at steep slope in the forest that was inside the territory of Pigout village. We waited for Elyakim to come out of the forest. He showed up at 17:00 and said that the bird had already performed the dance. He had built the hide and offered Dimitry to come and watch it the next day. We agreed to come again the next day at 13:00. Some Sulphur-crested Cockatoo landed on the trees

at the edge of a cliff above us. Dmitry took some nice pictures of them using his Nikon Coolpix P1000 camera.

Day 13 (8 Sept. 2022)

At 05:00, we went by 4wd car to Maibri village to watch Masked Bowerbird. Serinus, a local villager, who owned the land, guided us to the birdwatching hut. When we arrived at the hut and entered it, we saw that the bower of the Masked Bowerbird has been demolished. We still sat down in the blind to wait for the bird to complete his demolition works. Unfortunately, he did not come. We returned to our guesthouse and took a rest at 09:00. There were some birds that were seen playing in the flower garden of the guesthouse. Some that I saw were Black Fantail, Blue Grey Robin, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker, Great Cuckoo Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo Dove, Mountain Fruit Dove, Western Smoky Honeyeater, Cinnamon Melidectes, Vogelkop Melidectes, White-shouldered Fairywren, Glossy Swiftlet, Blue Grey Robin, and etc.

In the afternoon, we did a trip to territory of Pigout village to watch the Western Parotia whose blind had just been prepared by Elyakim. It was a happy moment for Dmitry because he was able to see and made video of the male Western Parotia performing his courtship dance. He also showed me pictures of a snake which they saw on the way to watch Western Parotia.

At 17:00 we returned to Manokwari city. He stayed at Mansinam Beach Hotel. I stayed at home. At night, we had Papeda, a kind of porridge made of Sago starch, and yellow fish soup. I left for home at 23:00.

Day 14 (9 Sept 2022)

We had a morning flight to Sorong city. After taking a rest and having lunch, we went to mangrove forest recreational park by car. Birding in this mangrove forest, we were able to watch Brown-backed Honeyeater, and White-bellied Cuckooshrike. Suddenly rain started to fall in the area. We sat in a shelter to wait for it to stop. Fortunately, the rain lasted for only around twenty minutes. We continued birding again while walking along the boardwalk of the mangrove park. We saw Metallic Starling, Rainbow Bee-eater, Olive-crowned Flowerpecker, Olive-backed Sunbird and Nankeen Nightheron. There were several observation towers in the park. They allowed us to see the magnificent few of the mangrove forest. Unfortunately, there were a lot of plastic wastes which were thrown to the forest floor by the visitors. We also saw Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Pacific Swallow. I played the sounds of Blue Black Kingfisher. He came out but not perched on the visible branch of the mangrove trees. He flew

over a water of the canal in front of us and into the forest on its other side. He did it several times.

Dmitry told me that he wanted to watch Emperor Fairywren. I played its sounds many times both in the Mangrove park and in the protected forest of Sorong but the bird was reluctant to come out of its hiding places. It was drizzling at that time. At around 18:40, we returned to Sorong city. We still had delicious grilled fish at Tembok area as our dinner before returning to Swissbel hotel.



I and Dmitry at Swissbel Hotel

Day 15 (10 Sept. 2022)

At 8:30, I arranged Dmitry's transfer to DEO airport where he would fly to Jakarta at 10:45. We said goodbye to each other before he entered the check-in.

I also left Sorong for Manokwari in the afternoon at 12:45. It was the end of our birding tour.