

Birding in Mangrove forest of Sorong and Waigeo island of Raja Ampat with 9 American Birdwatchers

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Introduction

Sorong and Raja Ampat are two regencies in the newly formed Province of South West Papua. These are a great birding destination for visitors who are interested in watching parrots, doves, kingfishers, and birds of paradise. From 16-21 April 2023, I had the opportunity to guide 9 birdwatchers from the United States. They were Janet Bair (the group leader), Paul, Sherryl, Peter, Linda, Barbara, Richard, Jeffrey and Eden. I was accompanied by Ali Muntaha from Jakarta.

Darwin Sumang from Vacation Indonesia Tours (VIT Tours) was the field organizer of this tour. He contacted me to guide them both in mangrove forest of Sorong and Waigeo island of Raja Ampat.



Mangrove Park of Sorong

On April 16, 2023, we woke up early in the morning and left our hotels for the mangrove forest of Sorong city at 06:00. The weather was very good, the blue sky was clear with bright sunlight. I immediately prepared my 10×50 binoculars that were mounted on a tripod. We saw Willie Wagtail sitting on a tree. The bird had white underparts, eyebrows with black wing and body. It was easy to recognize it. As we entered the forest area, I saw Olive-backed Sunbird flying fast above us and landed on top of a mangrove tree on the left of us. Two Brown-backed Honeyeater could also be seen flying through the branches of trees. They were very common in the area.

We walked deeper into the forest and saw more birds. White-bellied Cuckooshrike sat near a group of Singing Starlings. All of the participants brought their own binoculars, they enjoyed the birding activity that morning.



We had our tea break for around 30 minutes in a shelter of the park. It was a big structure that could accommodate up to 100 people. Our drivers and local guides helped prepare hot water, biscuits, and boxes of breakfast food that were brought from Swissbel hotel.

After that we continued birding to see more birds including Orange-fronted Fruit Dove, Common Sandpiper, and Glossy Swiftlets. We also saw Brahminy Kite and Scaly-breasted Munia.

We continued our tour of that morning to a traditional market that was located near the hotel. We could see various kinds of products that people sell and buy there including fruits, vegetables, clothes, kitchen tools and electronic goods. All of the tour participants were happy with the tour.



Waigeo island of Raja Ampat

In the morning of 17 April 2023, we left Sorong city for Waigeo island by fast passenger ferry. It took around two hours to reach the island. After that we continued our trip by speed boat to a beach resort near Saporkren village. We put our bags into our rooms and then started our birding activity inside the resort area. I installed my 10×50 binoculars again and aimed it at three Papuan Frogmouth that were sitting on the branches of catappa tree in front of the restaurant of the resort. We saw Palm Cockatoo, Eastern Osprey, Pied Imperial Pigeon, and Willie Wagtail. At around sunset time, we watched birds of the jetty. We saw Beach Kingfisher and Helmetted Friarbird. Sea birds such as Lesser-crested Tern, and Torresian Crow could also be seen flying in the air.



The next morning (18 April 2023), we woke up early in the morning at 05:00. We made preparation, had breakfast and did a long hiking trip to the lek of Red Birds of Paradise. We saw the bird of around 2 hours.

We also saw Yellow-billed Kingfisher that was sitting on a lower branch of a tree near us. When we walked down the slope, we could hear the sounds of Blyth's Hornbill and Hooded Butcherbird as well as Black Butcherbird around us. Hooded Butcherbird was sitting on top of a tree. He was making beautiful calls to attract his female partner. I installed my binoculars and tripod at the bird and asked all the participants to watch it. There was Nothorn Fantail sitting under the canopy of shrub plants on the right of us. When we reached the main road, we could see more birds including Eclectus Parrot, Pinon Imperial Pigeon and Spangled Drongo.



On 19 April 2023, we took an early morning trip by car to watch Wilson's Bird of Paradise. We also saw Rufous-bellied Kookaburra, White-breasted Woodswallow, Moustached Treeswift, Brahminy Kite and a lot of other birds along the way back to our resort.

In the afternoon, we visited Urai island by speedboat. There, we saw Singing Starling, Spice Imperial Pigeon, Oriental Dollarbird, White-breasted Woodswallow. On the way back we enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the tropical forest of Greater Urai island and southern part of Waigeo. White-bellied Sea Eagle, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, and Beach Kingfisher were some of the many birds that we saw in early evening before we arrived again at the resort.





On 20 April, we did an early morning birding trip by cars to airport area. Near a cliff, we saw various species of birds including Yellow-faced Myna, Olive-backed Sunbird, Claret-breasted Fruit Dove and Helmeted Friarbird. On the hills in the north-east of the airport, we saw Rainbow Bee-eater, Channel-billed Cuckoo, and Pinon Imperial Pigeon, Slender-billed Cuckoo Dove and Shining Flycatcher. When we were about to leave, we saw a monitor lizard crossing the road. We still did late afternoon birding walk that day along the road behind the resort. It was a great site to watch Glossy-mantled Manucode, Red-cheeked Parrot, Yellow-faced Myna, Eclectus Parrot, Lesser Frigatebird, Palm Cockatoo, Brown Oriole, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Blyth's Hornbill, and Great-billed Parrot.

We did a night walk too where we saw Waigeo-spotted Cuscus, crab and fruit bats.

After taking our breakfast on 21 April 2021, we returned to Sorong city by ferry. Sorong and Raja Ampat regencies are great destination for visitors who are interested in exploring the biodiversity of flora and fauna of tropical rainforest and coral reef.

