

Report of a birding trip to

# Manus Island

Including a visit to Tong Island

From 30 April to 4 May 2019

**Participants:**

Arjan Brenkman

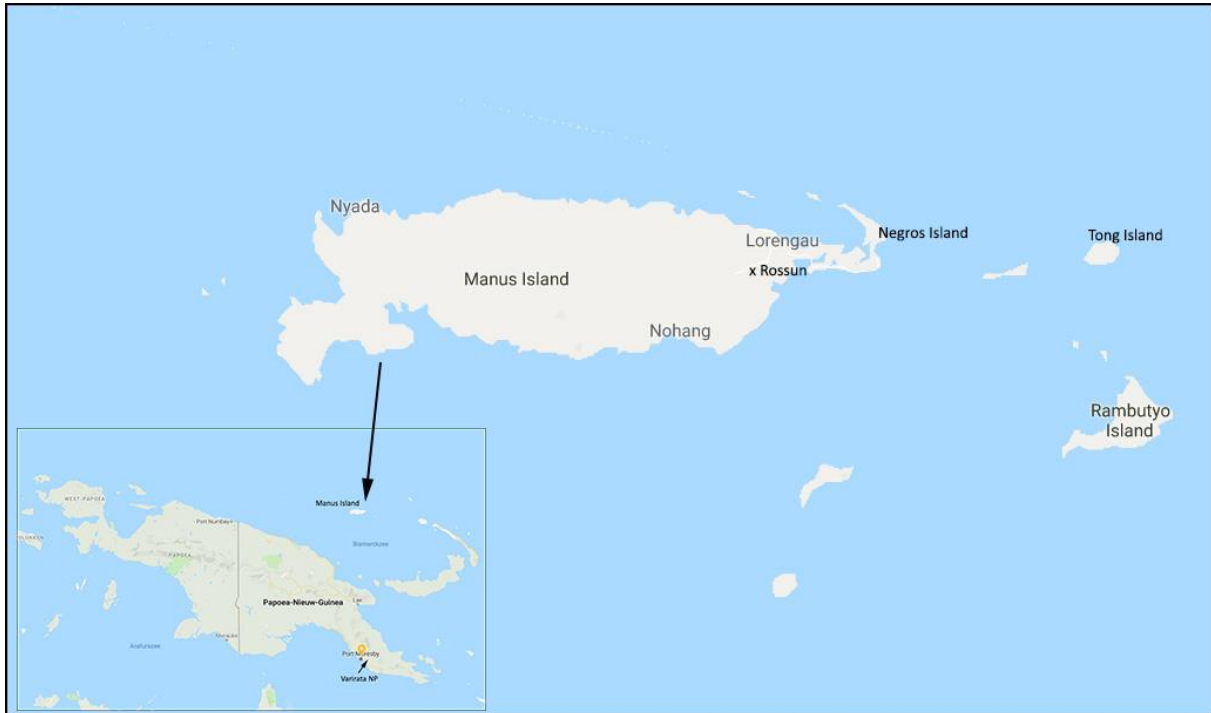
Jan van der Laan



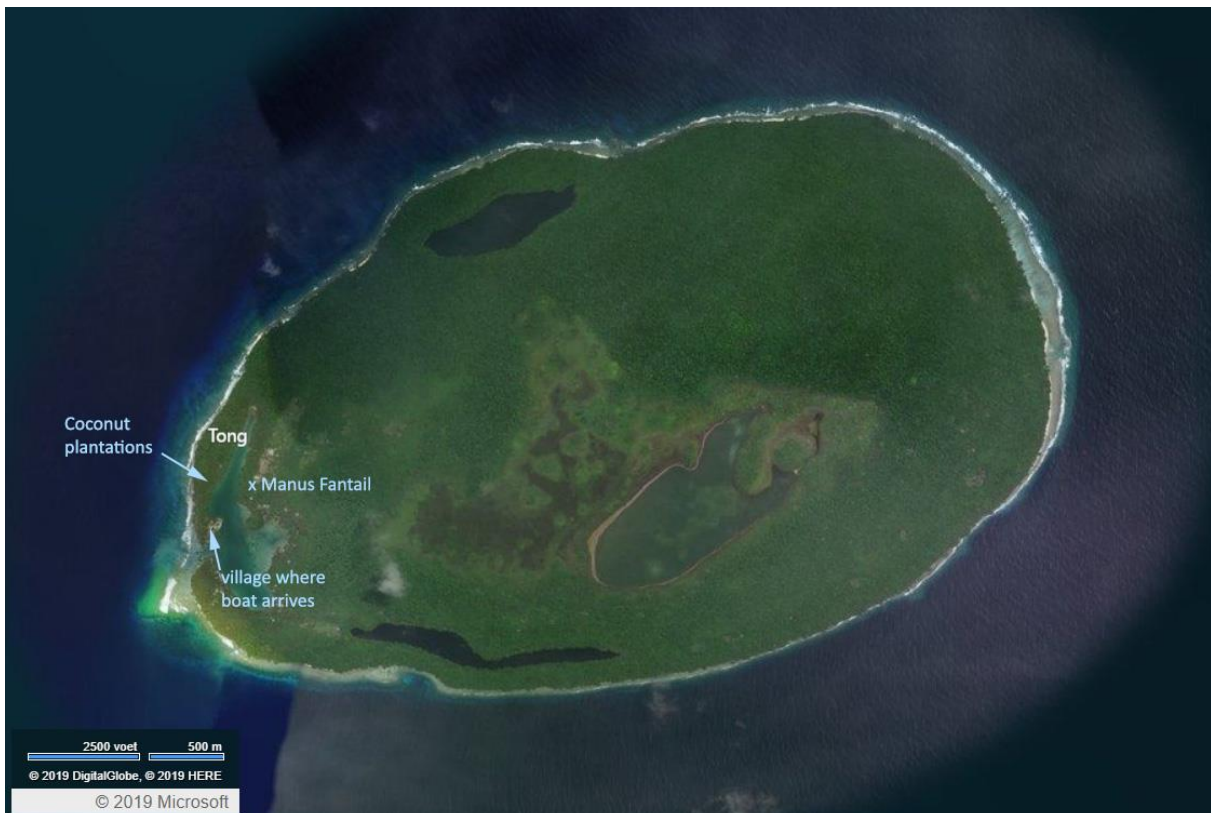
Superb Pitta, 1 May 2019, Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island, Bismarck Archipelago, Papua New Guinea; © Jan van der Laan.



## Maps



Map 1: Manus and Tong Island, Bismarck Archipelago, Papua New Guinea.



Map 2: Tong Island.



## Introduction

Of the 44 Pitta species three species are most difficult regarding long travel and organization: Superb Pitta, Black-faced Pitta and Louisiade Pitta. The latter we believe for now is just a race of Papuan Pitta. We chose to do Superb Pitta on Manus island (Bismarck Archipelago, Papua New Guinea) first as we believed this is the most endangered pitta and birders have failed to see it the past few years e.g. in 2017. However, a Birdquest group in July 2018 and Helen Rijkes and Rob Gordijn who visited Manus in August 2018 both succeed in seeing Superb Pitta. So we felt it was now a good opportunity to look for one of the most beautiful members of the Pitta family.

## Local contacts

In the past this used to be a bit of an issue (see Campbell) but things start to get sorted out as demonstrated by Helen and Rob Gordijn and a similar experience by us. Two contacts are essential. The first is **Mark Jowilz Lowap** ([jowilzm@gmail.com](mailto:jowilzm@gmail.com), +675-72777373). We received contact information about him from Helen and Rob and he always responded promptly to our emails. He lives in Lorengau and aims at getting more tourism to Manus. We contacted Mark beforehand and he arranged the **Harbourside hotel** on Manus Island and also prepared the trip to Tong Island. Note that although there is a website for the hotel, it was impossible to book online and there was no response to email. We paid for the accommodation weeks before our arrival (1600 kina for 4 nights Harbourside including breakfast) and we paid for the boat to Tong in cash (1300 kina) during our stay. There is a fee of about 25% included in the price we paid for Marks efforts. Mark really looked well after us in Manus and arranged pickups and drop-offs at 50 kina per one way to Rossun and back via the Harbourside Hotel. He also joined us to Tong and knows the locals there, which makes it rather easy to go birding with the right local. We paid 100 kina to Jesse, who showed us around on Tong. Most importantly, Mark arranged access to the forest where the Superb Pitta resides and had a very good insight of relationships between landowners. As Aaron Joseph had moved to New Britain recently, Mark did some searching for us and came up with Samuel Maluan in the end. We can recommend his services to any birder, independent or tour group alike. We also advice any birder never to go in the forest without proper permission of the landowners.

The other essential contact is **Samuel Maluan** ([maluansamuel390@gmail.com](mailto:maluansamuel390@gmail.com); +675-73992180). He is a 30-year or so local who lives just past Rossun with wife and two kids. Everyone knows everyone in Rossun and his property can be reached from the main island road at  $-2.070056^{\circ}$ ,  $147.240507^{\circ}$  (Google Earth, decimal degrees). From here he lives about 200m along the trail here to the North. In the buildings at the opposite side of the road lives the rest of his family, together with a Manus Boobook in the remnant forest patch. Anyway, walking up north from the GPS point, immediately to the right is a small wooden building used as a church, behind this is some derelict wooden building and after some 50m through proper rainforest (Boobook here often at night), the trail widens and reaches his house at the rainforest edge. A great rainforest trail starts right behind his house for several km and all the birds are there. In this report we will refer to this area as Samuel's trail. In the end we paid Samuel 400 kina for two days guiding and forest access. A really friendly and knowledgeable guy, who looks after you, knows all the forest creatures and whistles an impressive Superb Pitta song. Birds at both locations came straight in. This forest patch was also used by Aaron Joseph in the past, the continuing issue however was that it didn't belong to his family. With Samuel, you are birding in his ancestor's forest. The easiest way though to contact Samuel is through Mark who will call him beforehand.

## Accommodation

As mentioned before, we chose to use the beachfront Harbourside Hotel which has clean bungalows with airco, shower and a restaurant with complimentary breakfast. Conveniently, Air Niugini has an office right next door and Digicel sells prepaid sim cards with a booth there too.

## Transportation

Due to the presence of the [Manus Regional Processing Centre](#) there is one flight each day with Air Niugini from Port Moresby to Manus, rather than the former three times a week scheme. However, flights sometimes can get cancelled for all kind of reasons. Happily our flights were on time. On the island, the Harbourside Hotel awaits you with a complimentary shuttle bus from Momote airport. Upon arrival at the Harbourside, Mark arrived within 10 minutes after a call by the reception. Our contact Mark made sure that the Harbourside hotel dropped us off,



or picked us up from Rossun at 50 kina per pickup. It is about 8 km from Rossun and it takes 30 minutes one way. Mark also checked our flights out with Air Niugini while we were still birding.

### Health & bugs

We took Malaria prophylaxis (Malarone) throughout but didn't even encounter a mosquito. A few leeches were seen in the forest and a single cockroach regretted entering our room at one point. According to the local guides there are no poisonous snakes on the island but we didn't try one out. We noted a non-poisonous Ground Boa and some tree snake species. Arjan experienced some mild food poisoning, most likely from the pork steak the night before and spent a few hours on the toilet. Otherwise, we didn't experience any health issues. Note that due to the presence of Manus Regional Processing Centre, the hospital is well equipped and funded, according to the local people. Bring sunblock for the trip to Tong.

### Weather

We had chosen to go in spring as it coincided with our holiday break. Then is also the rainy season, so it is wise to take some extra time in your itinerary. Our plan was to spend all our time in Rossun and visit Tong only in case we had seen Superb Pitta. Since we saw Superb Pitta already at the first morning, we went straight to Tong on the next day. This was a good choice as the sea was fine. The next day it was raining heavily and it would be impossible to go to Tong. That day it rained all morning and beginning of the afternoon to about 15:00 (with quite a bit of wind), so we only had a few hours birding left. On the first night it rained throughout the night, but stopped just before dawn.

### Telephone, Wi-Fi

There is no Wi-Fi at the Harbourside hotel, but there was phone signal in Rossun and Lorengau. Upon arrival to Papua there is a Digicel phone shop at Jacksons International airport where you can buy a local SIM for visitors. Because the cash machines were empty then, we didn't go for this option and used SMS/text which worked fine for about 2 kina a message. The local drivers from Harbourside never responded to a text but they did receive it and reacted for pick-up or drop-off requests.

### Money

There appears to be no ATM on Manus, but we didn't check thoroughly, so we brought all cash with us. Kina's and some US dollars as spare. At Harbourside it looks like that they accept credit cards (logo and stuff).

### Safety

We never felt unsafe on Manus as it has a relaxing island vibe. Islanders were generally relaxed and always friendly to us.



Flag of Manus



## Itinerary

- 30 April** After a breakfast we took the shuttle bus to the **Domestic terminal** of **Jackson Airport**. We had already checked-in the day before and happily at the online-only desk (there is one!), they told us it this was very good idea, otherwise we were not admitted on the plane as the flight was overbooked due to a cancellation on the day before. The flight PX894 to Manus departed on time at 8:00 hours and after a short stop at **Madang**, we arrived on time at c 11:00 hours on **Momote Airport** of **Manus Island**. The shuttle bus was quickly found and half an hour later we were in the **Harbourside Hotel** in **Lorengau**, Where we met Mark, who informed us that the usual guide for the Superb Pitta, Aaron Joseph had moved to New Britain, due to all kind of problems with landowners and spending the guiding fee more on liquor and it was not appreciated that the money was not divided amongst the villagers who owned the forest. To find a guide we were first looking for Timothy and his son, but finally we found another guide, Morgan, who was willing to show us the place where the Superb Pitta is often seen. We entered pristine forest and the first birds were Bismarck Whistler, Manus Friarbirds and Island Imperial Pigeons. After climbing two hills we sat in position for the Superb Pitta. Morgan mimicked the sound, but nothing responded. Then Arjan used the sound on his phone and immediately a Pitta responded. We waited for an hour and were entertained only by a Manus Monarch plus juvenile, feeding together with a surprise male Black Sunbird. When it was too dark we decided to return to **Lorengau** and made appointments for the next morning. After dinner at 19:00 we went to bed early at 20:30 hours.
- 1 May** We had breakfast at 5:30 and at 5:50 we were picked up by Job, one of the two drivers of the hotel. They brought us to **Rossun** to the house of Samuel where Morgan was waiting for us. We started to walk to the trail behind Samuel's house, but Samuel appeared too and he and Morgan started a conversation. It turned out that Mark and Samuel had agreed Samuel would be our guide for the simple reason that it was his forest! We went back to the place where we heard the Superb Pitta the day before and after the excellent mimicking of Samuel the bird responded and within 10 minutes we saw a Superb Pitta, but too short to take any pictures. Samuel and Morgan told us there was a better place c 2 km away where the bird would give better views. Samuel used his machete from time to time to make way for us. During the walk we saw nearly all Manus endemics: Meek's Pygmy Parrot, Manus Monarch, Manus Dwarf Kingfisher (heard only) plus Shining Flycatcher, Admiralty Cicadabird, Eclectus Parrot and Bismarck White-eyes. After a walk of less than an hour we reached the place and after mimicking the sound, two Superb Pitta's started to call back and came quickly into view. I was able to take dozens of pictures, but Arjan's battery has ran low. Yet we had wonderful close looks of this very beautiful pitta! The area used to be a rubber plantation and it seems that this is the place where Aaron used to take birders to. After this success we slowly walked back, saw two Nicobar Pigeons, flushed a Stephan's Emerald Dove, heard another Manus Dwarf Kingfisher, had short views of Bismarck Whistler and we tried to see Manus Friarbird (in vain). At the road we were picked by Job and transported back to **Lorengau** to the hotel. There we had lunch with Mark and Samuel and we made arrangements to bird in the afternoon and evening again. Also we made arrangements for the next day for our trip to Tong Island. Around 16:00 hours we went back to **Rossun** again and at first we walked along the main road. We quickly found Brush Cuckoo, Admiralty Cicadabird and Manus Cuckooshrikes. In the garden of Samuel's parents we saw Northern Fantail, Superb Fruit Dove and had very good looks of a Pied Cuckoo-dove and we managed to [record the sound](#) for the first time. Our main quarry was Manus Boobook and one bird started to call at around 17:00 hours in the same garden. We could not get it into view so we tried another spot in **Samuel's garden**. Here we heard another one plus two more along the main road, but none was kind enough to get closer. So finally when it was all dark, Job came with the car and brought us back to **Lorengau**. There we had dinner with a celebration SP beer and around 21:00 hours we went to sleep.
- 2 May** At 5:30 somebody knocked at the door telling breakfast was ready. It turned out the kitchen was in operation for our early risings. Around 8:30 hours a guy called Danny knocked on our door and introduced himself as our guide and boatmen for our trip to Tong Island. In the harbour of **Lorengau** we met Mark and two friends who would join us to too. At 9:00 we started our tour to **Tong Island**. On our way we saw flying fish, three dolphin pods, two frigatebirds, flocks of noddies and two Crested Terns. We arrived c two hours later and were welcomed on the island by the villagers. A



guide named Jesse was appointed to us and Jesse immediately brought us to the place where the fantails are supposed to be. The first birds we saw were Island Monarchs, Bismarck Black Myzomelas, Yellow-bibbed Fruit Doves, MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Doves, a single Beach Kingfisher and Eastern Osprey. We were halfway the bay when we finally connected with Manus Fantails. Also there were the white-tailed form of the Bismarck Monarch and the enigmatic Melanesian Kingfisher. Jesse told us the Melanesian Megapode could be found more in the interior of the island. We left the area after staying here for c two hours. The ride back was rougher and back at Manus we took another route back. At **Los Negros Island** we saw several Black-naped Terns. Finally we were back in **Lorengau** at c 15:00 hours and the rest of the afternoon was spent around the hotel checking the starlings and swiftlets and updating our notebooks. After the regular dinner routine we went to bed at around 21:00 hours.

**3 May** Our plan we to rise early and be present in Rossun and hour before sunrise, but when the alarm went off, we heard it was raining heavily. Yet we gave it a try and went to **Rossun**. No boobooks were calling and we decided to wait and shelter for the rain at Samuel's house. From there we waited till c 11:00 hours, but the rain did not stop. Best birds were Northern Fantail, Manus Monarchs, Manus Friarbird (finally good views), Bismarck White-eye, a Black-naped Tern flying over the house and Manus Cuckooshrike. We decided to go back to have lunch in **Lorengau** and to wait till the rain would stop. Around 15:30 hours it seemed to stop raining and we went back to **Rossun**. With Samuel we start looking for Manus Dwarf Kingfisher in the forest stream behind his house. After half an hour a male Dwarf Kingfisher flew in and perched right in front of us. Due to over-excitement, I made the beginner's fault to point to the bird, so the bird took off but perched only 5 meters further away. Just when I had the focus of my Nikon in place and I was about to take the first ever photograph of a male, the bird flew away. The female showed itself too, but shortly. Very happy though with the result we decided to wait for Manus Boobook in the garden of Samuel's parents. Indeed an owl called, but it did not come closer. We found an Admiralty Spotted Cuscus (a mammal), but then it started raining again. We waited for almost two hours, but no boobook called, so we called Job to collect us. We said goodbye to Samuel and after an hour wait, Richard (instead of Job) came with the car and brought us back to **Lorengau**, where we had dinner and went to sleep. As it was still raining we decided not to rise very early to do one desperate search for the Manus Boobook.

**4 May** We woke at 7:00 hours, had a quick breakfast and checked out. The hotel tried to charge us with an extra 1600 kina, but we explained the hotel room was already payed for. At 7:45 the shuttle bus arrived and brought us to **Momote Airport**. At the airport we found an Oriental Pratincole, a lone Lesser Sandplover, Turnstone and several Pacific Golden Plovers. To our great relief the plane arrived and flight PX893 departed in time at 9:45 hours to **Lae**. We stopped there for 20 minutes and continued to Jackson Airport, **Port Moresby**, where we arrived ahead of schedule at 12:00 hours. The remaining part of our trip will be continued in our [separate Varirata report](#).

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## Suggested Reading

For Manus and Tong we used the *Birds of Melanesia: Bismarcks, Solomons, Vanuatu and New Caledonia* by Guy Dutton (2011). This book is excellent and gave us not any identification issues.

We used the following trip reports:

- [Remote Papua New Guinea 7 July – 3 August 2018](#) by Mark van Beirs and Josh Bergmark.
- [PNG \(Normanby, Manus, New Britain and Tari\)](#) 5-13 August 2018 by Rob Gordijn and Helen Rijkes.
- [Manus Island, 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2017](#) by Oscar Campbell, Aidan Kelly and Steve James.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following persons: Helen Rijkes and Rob Gordijn for their advice and excellent trip report, Mark Jowilz Lowap for all his organisational skills, Samuel Maluansan for guiding and giving us access to his wonderful forest, Morgan for guiding, Job & Richard (our faithful drivers), Danny for assistance on the boat, Jesse plus all the people on Tong Island for access on their island and keeping us company during the search for the Manus Fantail. And last but not least again our [dear Wags](#) for taking care of the Homefront!

## The Species Accounts

Scientific names and family order of the IOC [www.worldbirdnames.org](http://www.worldbirdnames.org), version 14.1 is followed. Endemic species or specialties for the region are in capitals. All photographs are in *chronological* order.

Alkmaar and Culemborg, May 2019

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Superb Pitta taking off, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan



Superb Pitta flapping its wings while calling, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Manus Cuckooshrike, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: female Admiralty Cicadabird; right: the miniscule Goldcrest-sized Meek's Pygmy Parrot, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Island Imperial Pigeon; right: Pied Cuckoo-dove, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.  
Inset shows undertail and undertail coverts of this lesser-known pigeon.





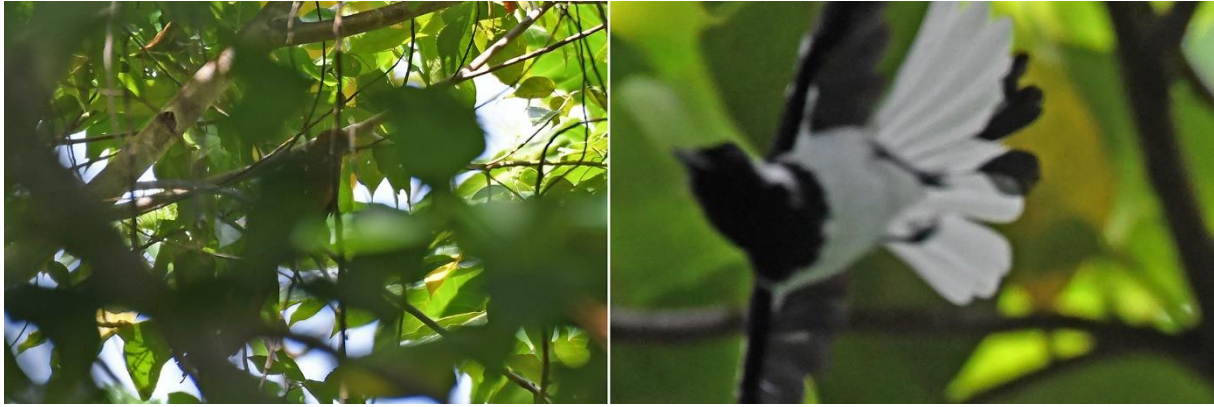
Left: Bismarck Black Myzomela; right: Island Monarch, both on 2 May 2019, Tong Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left and right: Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove, another supertramp species, 2 May 2019, Tong Island; © Jan van der Laan.



The mysterious Melanesian Kingfisher of Tong Island, 2 May 2019; © Arjan Brenkman.



Left: MacKinlay's Cuckoo-dove; right: Manus Monarch showing details of its tail feathers. Apparently one tail feather is missing; 2 May 2019, Tong Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Manus Monarch *ssp coultasi*; note its nearly white tail; 2 May 2019, Tong Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Manus Fantail, our main quarry on Tong Island, 2 May 2019, Tong Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Glossy or Uniform Swiftlet? right: Singing Starling; 2 May 2019, Lorengau, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Metallic Starling; right: Bismarck White-eyes; 3 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Manus Friarbird; right: Manus Monarch (note black t1); 3 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: male Sahul Sunbird; 1 May 2019; left: female Sahul Sunbird, 3 May 2019; Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Bismarck White-eyes; 3 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Our plane for our flight back to Port Moresby showing Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise on its tail; 4 May 2019, Momote Airport, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan;



015. **Island Imperial Pigeon** - *Ducula pistrinaria*

Pleasantly common in Rossun with more than 30 birds seen. Also seen at Tong. In good light this is a beautiful bird with its green back, chestnut undertail coverts and metallic blue tail.

016. **Pacific Golden Plover** - *Pluvialis fulva*

30-04                      6    Momote Airport, Manus Island. Also present there on [4 May](#).

017. **Lesser Sand Plover** - *Charadrius mongolus*

04-05                      1    (summer plumage) [Momote Airport](#), Manus Island.

018. **Whimbrel** - *Numenius phaeopus*

30-04                      2    Momote Airport, Manus Island; also there (same?) on [4 May](#).

019. **Ruddy Turnstone** - *Arenaria interpres*

04-05                      3    [Momote Airport](#), Manus Island.

020. **Common Sandpiper** - *Actitis hypoleucos*

04-05                      2    [Momote Airport](#), Manus Island.

021. **Oriental Pratincole** - *Glareola maldivarum*

04-05                      1    Momote Airport, Manus Island.

According to the [checklist](#) produced by MK Tarburton of the Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, this species had not been recorded before on Manus.

022. **Greater Crested Tern** - *Thalasseus bergii*

02-05                      2    (on a piece of driftwood) between Pak and Tong Island.

023. **Black-naped Tern** - *Sterna sumatrana*

02-05                      c 8    (seen from the boat) between Los Negros and Manus Island

03-05                      1    flying over the forest at Samuel's house during the rain that lasted all day.

024. **Black Noddy** - *Anous minutus*

02-05                      c 50    (two identified positively) [between](#) Pak and Tong Islands.

025. **Lesser Frigatebird** - *Fregata ariel*

02-05                      2    (most probably this species) between Manus and Tong Island.

026. **Pacific Reef Heron** - *Egretta sacra*

30-04                      1    between Momote Airport and Lorengau, Manus Island.

027. **Eastern Osprey** - *Pandion cristatus*

02-05                      2    (pair) [Tong Island](#).

028. **Pacific Baza** - *Aviceda subcristata coultasi*

02-05                      1    Tong Island.

New record for the island? This should be the endemic race *coultasi*, noted by its brown bars on the belly



instead of black bars seen by e.g. birds in Varirata NP, on mainland Papua.

029. **Brahminy Kite** - *Haliastur indus*

Seen daily on Manus Island in the coastal area and on 2 May one bird was seen on [Tong Island](#).

030. **White-bellied Sea Eagle** - *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

02-05                      1    [Tong Island](#).

031. **MANUS BOOBOOK** - *Ninox meeki*

Frustratingly, this boobook remained a heard-only with birds calling from Samuel's garden and that of his parents on 1 May. We heard at least five different birds along the road but none were tape responsive or too far in the forest. The one in the backyard of his parents called from close by but did not respond the two times we tried. The rain on the evening of 3 May didn't help either. In retrospect we should have done what Oscar Campbell had done, walk from Lorengau to Rossun in the very early morning.

032. **Oriental Dollarbird** - *Eurystomus orientalis*

Several along the main road through Rossun and from the shuttle bus to Momote airport.

033. **Melanesian Kingfisher** - *Todiramphus tristrami*

02-05                      1    Tong Island; see notes on page 18.

034. **Beach Kingfisher** - *Todiramphus saurophagus*

02-05                      1    (a normal white-headed individual) Tong Island.

035. **Common Kingfisher** - *Alcedo atthis*

02-05                      1    Lorengau jetty, Manus Island.

A shade darker than the ones we know from Europe. Also the call is somewhat different in pitch.

036. **MANUS DWARF KINGFISHER** - *Ceyx dispar*

01-05                      2    (heard only) Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island; see notes on page 18.

03-05                      2    (male & female) [first stream](#) along Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

037. **MEEK'S PYGMY PARROT** - *Micropsitta meeki*

Common by voice and one seen really well at a distance of less than 2 m along Samuel's trail on 1 May. A bizarre bird with the size of a Goldcrest - *Regulus regulus*! Breeds in termite nests that are built on trees.

038. **Eclectus Parrot** - *Eclectus roratus*

Several males and twice a nice female along Samuel's trail and in his backyard, Rossun, Manus Island.

039. **Coconut Lorikeet** - *Trichoglossus haematodus*

Several views daily in Rossun and often feeding in Samuels garden, Manus Island.

040. **SUPERB PITTA** - *Pitta superba*

30-04                      1    (heard only) [c 300 meter](#) in at Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

01-05                      2    (1 seen!) [c 300 meter](#) in at Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

2    (seen) [rubber plantation](#), Samuel's Trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

Definitely the bird of the trip! Initially, we heard one calling the first late afternoon a few 100 meters along



Samuel's trail. Next morning after heavy rain throughout the night, two were calling spontaneously from the site we heard them the afternoon before. The first was seen well here for a few seconds. After a few more km bushwhacking we reached an overgrown rubber plantation where we encountered the boundary of two territories. It was here where we had prolonged views of two birds and could take pictures of one bird. The birds never perched on the ground and were only seen in the canopy.

041. **BISMARCK BLACK MYZOMELA** - *Myzomela pammelaena*

02-05 c 30 Tong Island. The most common bird here.

042. **MANUS FRIARBIRD** - *Philemon albitorques*

Common on Manus Island by its loud voice but a bit shy. Eventually on 3 May we saw 2-3 birds quite well.

043. **MANUS CUCKOOSHRIKE** - *Coracina ingens*

01-05 2 along the main road in Rossun, Manus Island.

03-05 1 in Samuel's garden, Rossun, Manus Island.

044. **ADMIRALTY CICADABIRD** - *Edolisoma admiralitatis*

Birds were seen along Samuel's trail, his backyard and along the main road through Rossun.

045. **BISMARCK WHISTLER** - *Pachycephala citreogaster*

30-04 c 5 (heard only) along Samuel's trail Rossun, Manus Island.

01-05 c 6 (two adults and a juvenile seen, others heard) along Samuel's trail Rossun, Manus Island. The upper tail of the adult appears all black.

046. **Northern Fantail** - *Rhipidura rufiventris*

01-05 1 garden of Samuel's parents, Rossun, Manus Island.

03-05 2 around Samuel's house, Rossun, Manus Island.

047. **MANUS FANTAIL** - *Rhipidura semirubra*

02-05 3 [Tong Island](#).

At this time of year they don't have young yet, so you have to search a bit for it. Beautiful *rhipidura*.

048. **MANUS MONARCH** - *Symposiachrus infelix*

30-04 2 (adult and juvenile, *ssp infelix*) [Samuel's trail](#), Rossun, Manus Island.

01-05 2 (*ssp infelix*) Samuel's trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

02-05 4 (*ssp coultasi*) [Tong Island](#).

03-05 2 (adult and juvenile, *ssp infelix*) Samuel's garden, Rossun, Manus Island.

Note that the tail difference is not as striking as depicted in Dutson (2011): in *infelix* only t1 (the central one) is black, in *coultasi* only the tips of t1 and t2 are black.

049. **Island Monarch** - *Monarcha cinerascens*

02-05 c 10 [Tong Island](#).

050. **Shining Flycatcher** - *Myiagra alecto*

01-05 1 (female) Samuel's trail, Rossun, Manus Island.

051. **BISMARCK WHITE-EYE** - *Zosterops hypoxanthus*

01-05 c 6 Samuel's trail, Rossun, Manus Island.





03-05                            2    prolonged views of a pair in Samuel's garden, Rossun, Manus Island.

052. **Metallic Starling** - *Aplonis metallica*

Common and conspicuous around Rossun, Manus Island.

053. **Singing Starling** - *Aplonis cantoroides*

Several seen daily around the Harbourside view hotel, Lorengau, Manus Island, breeding in the palm trees in the garden.

054. **Black Sunbird** - *Leptocoma aspasia*

30-04                            1    (male, most probably this species or an undescribed taxon) Samuel's trail, Rossun, Manus Island. See notes below.

055. **Sahul Sunbird** - *Cinnyris frenatus*

Common in secondary forest and scrub in Rossun, Manus Island.





## Notes on some birds of Manus and Tong Island.

### **Superb Pitta** - *Pitta superba*

A true bucket list species. Key to find it is getting access to primary forest. Along Samuel's trail all forest birds, including the Pitta, can be found without too much difficulty and without Coronation Street like issues for getting access. Samuel has at least three pairs within 2 km of his house. Off course, a Pitta is a Pitta, so once they are in the middle of the breeding season things can be much harder.

### **Manus Masked Owl** - *Tyto manusi*

There are only two old records, with one of them collected in a cave. Samuel convincingly however told us about a bird he saw at night in mangroves along the coast. The coast has several patches of limestone like caves as we noticed ourselves e.g. between Los Negros and Manus by boat. Mark ensured us that particularly the Western side of Manus is also full of caves along the coast. Samuel described the light face of the *Tyto* and the distinct dark line around it, by heart, without seeing the field guide. Morgan, the cousin of Aaron, also claimed to have seen it in forest but his description was inaccurate and may refer to Rufous Owl, which possibly occurs on the island or confusion with Manus Boobook. Apparently, local people actively do night fishing along the coast and in or near mangroves, it could be worthwhile to check with them for recent sightings or ask Samuel for the site as there is to our opinion no reason to believe the bird went extinct.

### **Manus Dwarf Kingfisher** - *Ceyx dispar*

Only some Birdquest and Jon Hornbuckle trip reports ever reported seeing one alive and there is a photo of a [female posted by Nobuo Matsumura](#) on the web. Along Samuel's trail however, they breed along the small stream and we were shown another earth bank that is regularly used for nesting. We noted no less than four birds over the course of two days in the forest, at least two territories. In the afternoon of 3 May we saw a male after 30 min of waiting along the stream at arm's length distance, accompanied by a female.

### **Melanesian Kingfisher** - *Todiramphus tristrami matthiae*?

As noted by other birders there is a *Todiramphus* Kingfisher co-occurring with Beach Kingfisher on Tong. Beach Kingfisher occurs at the waterfront, but this kingfisher is found mainly in the forest. Based on distribution it is likely to be Melanesian Kingfisher (IOC split from Collared Kingfisher). Whether it is ssp *matthiae* to which it resembles mostly by its plumage which occurs 300 km of open water to the east, or some endemic subspecies remains to be determined. As pictures show, the bird photographed here is definitely not a Beach Kingfisher as the latter has hardly any primaries projecting beyond the tertials, whereas Melanesian has three to four visible primaries.

### **Black Sunbird** - *Leptocoma aspasia*

There is some debate if this sunbird actually occurs on Manus. The checklist compiled by M.K. Tarburton from the Pacific Adventist University, Port Moresby, mentions a few sightings from 1977, but Birdquest disputes its presence altogether in their recent trip reports. We found a fully black sunbird, presumably a male, feeding loosely together with a Manus Monarch adult and juvenile in primary forest behind Samuel's house, Rossun, in the afternoon of 30 April. Unfortunately we could not photograph it and it remains a question whether this is really a Black Sunbird or maybe an undescribed taxon and visiting birders should pay attention to every sunbird (and to every bird in general).



## Mammals on Manus Island.

**Admiralty Spotted Cuscus** - *Spiloglossus kraemeri*;

03-05 1 (female) seen well in the garden of Samuel's parents, Rossun, Manus Island.



Admiralty Spotted Cuscus, 3 May 2019 Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Victory after seeing Manus Pitta on 1 May 2019. From left to right: Samuel, Jan, Morgan and Arjan; © Arjan Brenkman.



Left: Mark Lowap, the guy who made it all possible on Manus Island, 1 May 2019, Lorengau, Manus;  
Right: Samuel during rain on 3 May, Rossun, Manus; © Arjan Brenkman.



Samuel's new house under construction, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Arjan at the Green Lagoon, Tong Island, 2 May 2019. The gap is the entrance to the Bismarck Sea, right is the main village; © Jan van der Laan



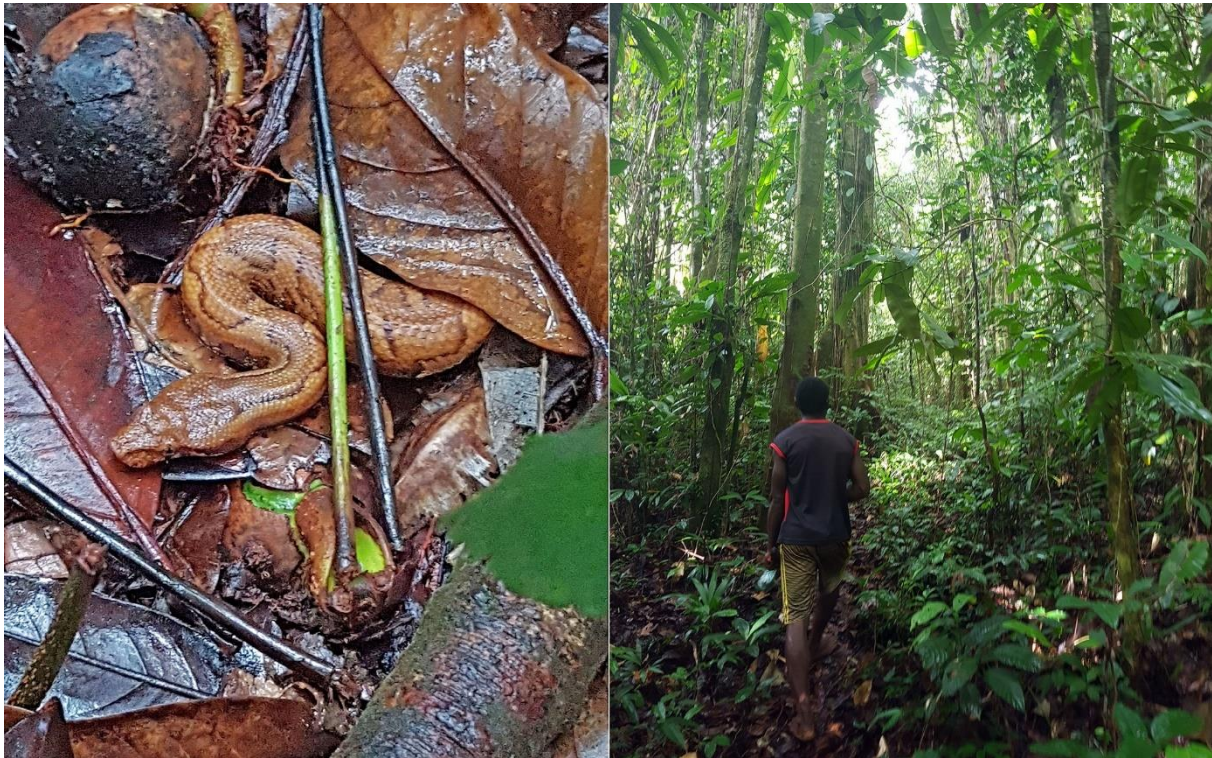
View from Rossun, looking in northern direction, 1 May 2019, Rossun, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



With this type of boat we made it to Tong Island; 2 May, Lorengau, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Dragonfly on Tong Island, suggestions are welcome; 2 May 2019, Lorengau, Manus Island; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Pacific Ground Boa - *Candoia carinata*; right: Samuel in his forest; 1 May 2019, Manus Island; © Arjan Brenkman.