



**WEST PAPUA: ARFAK AND WAIGEO BIRDING
EXPEDITION**

3 - 14 AUGUST 2019



© Andy Walker/Birding Ecotours 2017

Wilson's Bird-of-paradise is one of our targets on this trip.

Overview

New Guinea is a geographic, rather than political term that refers to the main island in the region. The western half of the island of New Guinea comprises the Indonesian provinces of West Papua (Papua Barat) and Papua, collectively once called West Irian or Irian Jaya; the eastern half of the main island of New Guinea comprises the country of Papua New Guinea. We will be based in West Papua for this birding adventure.

Aside from the large landmass of New Guinea, the New Guinea region includes numerous small islands on the continental shelf or verges thereof (some part of Indonesia and others part of Papua New Guinea), and we will visit one of these areas: Waigeo, part of the Raja Ampat Archipelago in West Papua (also known as the Northwestern Islands).

Approximately 680 bird species have been recorded from West Papua, from slightly more than 700 for the whole New Guinea region. Some 550 species are considered breeding residents, with 279 New Guinea endemics (found in Indonesia and/or Papua New Guinea) and at least an additional 42 endemics found only in West Papua. There are also over 115 Palearctic and Australian migrant species and a range of seabirds to be found spending some of their time in West Papua.

This Arfak and Waigeo tour will begin in the town of Manokwari, situated on the north-eastern tip of West Papua's Bird's Head, (or Vogelkop) Peninsula. From here we will travel to the nearby Arfak Mountains, where we will search for a fabulous series of birds, renowned in birders' circles as the "Vogelkop Endemics", such as **Vogelkop Bowerbird**, **Western Parotia**, **Arfak Astrapia**, **Long-tailed Paradigalla**, **Black Sicklebill**, **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise**, and **Spotted Jewel-babbler**.

The second and final leg of our tour takes us to Sorong, on the opposite side of the Bird's Head Peninsula, and then to one of the Raja Ampat Islands, Waigeo. Here we will search for endemic **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise**, **Red Bird-of-paradise**, and **Western Crowned Pigeon**. **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise** is often considered one of the 'best-looking' birds on the planet, and so we'll look forward to making our own judgments on this.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually only slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, weather, roads, birding sites, the discretion of the local guides, or other factors.

Itinerary (12 days/11 nights)

Day 1: Arrival in Manokwari

Arrival at Rendani Airport in Manokwari, where you will be met and taken to our nearby hotel for the remainder of the day at leisure.

Overnight: Manokwari

Day 2: Birding near Manokwari, travel to and birding in the Arfak Mountains

We will get the tour under way with some great birds near Manokwari, such as **Pacific Baza**, **Claret-breasted Fruit Dove**, **White-bibbed Fruit Dove**, **Pinon's Imperial Pigeon**, **Collared Imperial Pigeon**, **Zoe's Imperial Pigeon**, **Papuan Mountain Pigeon**, **Eclectus Parrot**, **Black-capped Lory**,

and **Hooded Butcherbird**. We may even find our first bird-of-paradise of the trip, the beautiful **Lesser Bird-of-paradise**. Around mid-morning we will leave the city and travel into the Arfak Mountains, our base for the next four days. The afternoon will be spent birding the forest near our accommodation, where we may see the likes of **Masked Bowerbird**, **Arfak Honeyeater**, **Black-throated Robin**, **Green-backed Robin**, and possibly **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise**.

Overnight: Arfak Mountains

Days 3–6: Birding in the Arfak Mountains

Arguably one of the premier birding regions in West Papua, the Arfak Mountains support nine endemic bird species (and a further eleven species with restricted ranges), of which the most famous must be **Vogelkop Bowerbird** – the world’s greatest avian architect. Males of this amazing species build a roofed house-like maypole (tented) bower construction at the base of a tree sapling, inside and in front of which they place colorful berries, flowers, and insect parts to attract females, a true sight to behold for the female, and us!

We will also look for the exciting **Western Parotia**, the males of which perform a bizarre side-step dance on the floor of their display courts, while their flank plumes are spread to form a circular skirt, with their six, wiry, antenna-like nape feathers directed forward. Two other endemic birds-of-paradise are commonly seen here at higher altitudes (almost 2,000m) – the little-known **Arfak Astrapia** and **Long-tailed Paradigalla** (rediscovered in 1989), as well as the more widespread **Black Sicklebill** with its 80cm long tail. Lower down, the **Magnificent Bird-of-paradise** may be seen on his court, displaying, in sequence his iridescent, carmine back, dark green breast shield, and sulphur-yellow cape before jerkily dancing up and down a vertical sapling, while quivering his cocked, sickle-shaped central tail feathers. Up to seven species of robins may be seen on the mountain trails, among many other families, as well as **Spotted Jewel-babbler**, and, if we are lucky, **Feline** or **Mountain Owlet-nightjar**.

Other wonderful birds, most of them endemic or range-restricted, which we hope to find in the Arfak Mountains include **Superb Bird-of-paradise** (the Arfak sub-species likely to be split soon), **Papuan Mountain Pigeon**, **Red-collared Myzomela**, **Rufous-sided Honeyeater**, **Vogelkop Melidectes**, **Arfak Honeyeater**, **Northern Variable Pitohui**, **Vogelkop Scrubwren**, **Papuan Parrotfinch**, **Papuan Boobook**, **Wattled Brushturkey**, **White-striped Forest Rail**, **Trumpet Manucode**, **Papuan Black Myzomela**, **Vogelkop Whistler**, **Papuan Eagle**, **Papuan Lorikeet**, **Papuan Treecreeper**, **Papuan Logrunner**, **Papuan Sittella**, and **Smoky Robin**, among, as always, so many others.

After our final day birding in the Arfak Mountains we will descend back down to Manokwari.

Overnight: Arfak Mountains (three nights), Manokwari (one night)

Day 7: Transfer to Sorong

Today we will take a flight from Manokwari to Sorong on the far north-western edge of the Vogelkop Peninsula. Depending on the exact time of the flight there might be some time for further birding around Manokwari. After our arrival in Sorong we will visit some of the local mangroves, where we will look for **Barred Rail**, **Collared Imperial Pigeon**, **Orange-fronted Fruit Dove**, **Blue-black Kingfisher**, **Little Kingfisher**, **Moustached Treeswift**, and **Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot**.

Overnight: Sorong

Day 8: Sorong to Waigeo

An early start today will see us birding in some forest near Sorong. There are many incredible birds possible, some of these may include **Palm Cockatoo**, **Magnificent Riflebird**, **King Bird-of-Paradise**, **Red-breasted Paradise Kingfisher**, **Yellow-billed Kingfisher**, **Blue-black Kingfisher**, **Red-billed Brushturkey**, **Black Lory**, and **Long-tailed Honey Buzzard**.

After lunch we will transfer by ferry from Sorong to Waigeo Island across the Indonesian Dampier Strait (sometimes also known as Augusta's Strait). During the two-to-three-hour ferry ride we will look out for pelagic species like **Pomarine Skua**, **Lesser Frigatebird**, **Bulwer's Petrel**, **Streaked** and **Wedge-tailed Shearwaters**, and **Matsudaira's Storm Petrel**. On arrival on Waigeo Island we will check into our beachside guest house.

Overnight: Waigeo Island

Days 9–10: Birding on and around Waigeo Island

Waigeo, where we will be based for the next three days, is the largest island in the Raja Ampat Archipelago, comprising over 1,500 small islands, cays, and shoals, located off the northwest tip of the Bird's Head Peninsula. These islands are the home of three endemics, comprising the exquisite **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise** with its bright cerulean-blue, bare crown, crisscrossed with fine black lines (considered by many as the best-looking bird on the planet), the crimson-plumed **Red Bird-of-paradise**, and the recently re-discovered **Waigeo Brushturkey** (unfortunately this stunning brushturkey is a very tough bird, which may not easily be found on this tour – if you'd like to try for this very difficult species please talk to us about a possible expedition extension to look specifically for it). Other birding highlights on these islands include **Western Crowned Pigeon** (one of the trio of New Guinea crowned pigeons - the world's largest pigeons), **Pheasant Pigeon**, **Palm Cockatoo**, and **Great-billed Parrot**.

During our time on Waigeo we also hope to encounter, among a multitude of others, **Hook-billed Kingfisher**, **Common Paradise Kingfisher**, **Papuan Pitta**, **Hooded Pitta**, **Blyth's Hornbill**, **New Guinea Friarbird**, **Southern Variable** and **Raja Ampat Pitohuis**, **Hooded** and **Black Butcherbirds**, **Marbled** and **Papuan Frogmouths**, **Papuan Boobook**, **Dusky Megapode**, **Pygmy** and **Gurney's Eagles**, **Red-necked Crake**, **New Guinea Bronzewing**, **Moustached Treeswift**, **Moluccan King Parrot**, **Brown-headed Crow**, and **Glossy-mantled Manucode**.

One afternoon while here we will take a boat into Kabui Bay to look for **Spice Imperial Pigeon**, **Beach Kingfisher**, **Violet-necked Lory**, **Great-billed Heron**, **Raja Shelduck**, **Island Monarch**, **Common Paradise Kingfisher**, **White-bibbed Fruit Dove**, **Moluccan Starling**, and ending with sunset watching the huge **Great-billed Parrots** coming in to roost.

Overnight: Waigeo Island (two nights)

Day 11: Birding on Waigeo and travel to Sorong

We will have a final morning on Waigeo, where we will search for more of the species mentioned above, maybe again enjoying the otherworldly **Wilson's Bird-of-paradise**. We will then take the afternoon ferry back to Sorong, where we will enjoy a farewell dinner, a good rest, and the difficult task of deciding on a 'bird of the trip'.

Overnight: Sorong

Day 12: Departure

Time at leisure and departure from Sorong.

Duration:	12 days
Limit:	4 - 8
Date:	3 - 14 August 2019
Start:	Manokwari
End:	Sorong

Price: US\$6,499 per person sharing, based on 4-8 participants

Single Supplement: US\$522

Price Includes:

Lodging

Meals

Expert bird guide during the entire trip

Private transportation during the tour (except for the flight from Manokwari to Sorong, estimated at \$200)

Transfers to and from the airport

Price Excludes:

All flights (see above for the cost of the internal flight; we will book for you to ensure everyone is on the same flight)

Personal and medical insurance

Tips

Items of a personal nature, such as extra drinks, snacks, alcoholic beverages, laundry, souvenirs, etc.

Physical Toughness:

Reasonable physical fitness and good agility are required to bird the relatively steep slopes here.