



BIRDING TOUR NEW CALEDONIA: KAGU AND OTHER ENDEMIC SET DEPARTURE TRIP REPORT

03 – 08 SEPTEMBER 2025

By Fraser Bell



*Watching groups of brilliant **Kagus** was an amazing and memorable experience. They were unique, bold and inquisitive, making for some incredible close encounters.*

Overview

This six day birding tour of New Caledonia began in the capital city Nouméa on 3rd of September 2025 and concluded there on 8th September 2025. The tour aimed to see all of the currently recognized and extant endemic bird species found on New Caledonia's largest island, Grand Terre, and localized Melanesian species also found in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. We succeeded in seeing all of our targets, including brilliant close, repeat encounters with **Kagu**, great views of a singing **Crow Honeyeater**, and a vagrant **Eurasian Coot** which was a first for New Caledonia!

As all tour participants had just completed our Fiji and Samoa Pacific birding adventure, our tour of New Caledonia started early, with a morning birding the parks and sea front of Nouméa, which was a great introduction to birding in New Caledonia. Our second day was spent exploring the stunning and unique landscape at the fabulous Parc de la Rivière Bleue (Blue River Provincial Park), where we found most of our endemic targets. The following morning we checked out of our hotel in Nouméa and drove north along the western coastline to explore the prehistoric Parc des Grandes Fougères (Great Ferns Park) in the Farino area, before transferring to our coastal resort for the night near Bourail. We then spent a day birding the grassland, coastal forests and wetlands of the area, before driving back to again stay at our comfortable hotel in Nouméa. For our final full day we returned to the brilliant Parc de la Rivière Bleue, then spent the last morning birding locally in Nouméa.



Cloven-feathered Dove is endemic to New Caledonia and is one of the best looking, and most unusual doves in the world.

We recorded 71 bird species on this birdwatching tour of New Caledonia, including all 19 endemics found on the island of Grand Terre, such as **Kagu**, the stunning **Cloven-feathered Dove**,

massive **New Caledonian Imperial Pigeon**, **Horned Parakeet**, **New Caledonian Cuckooshrike**, famously intelligent **New Caledonian Crow**, skulking **New Caledonian Thicketbird**, and the IUCN/BirdLife International Critically Endangered **Crow Honeyeater**. We also enjoyed seeing many Melanesian specialties such as the gorgeous **Red-bellied Fruit Dove**, **Southern Shrikebill**, **South Melanesian Cuckooshrike**, and **Long-tailed Triller**. Many of these species encounters were over an extended period of time, with great opportunity for watching these localized species and photographing them. We also had a big surprise discovery by finding a first for New Caledonian in the form of a **Eurasian Coot**, a vagrant which had previously been unrecorded in the country. Bird and animal lists for this New Caledonia birding tour follow the report and you can also view the [eBird trip report here](#), where you can see more bird photos.

In addition to the exceptional birding, we enjoyed experiencing New Caledonia's unique and beautiful landscapes, from the Maquis (a specialized type of savanna), diverse Araucaria and fern species, bright red soils and crystal waters of the Blue River Provincial Park, to walking trails through the prehistoric Giant Tree Ferns Park, while watching **Kagu** rummaging in the leaf litter. Throughout the tour we enjoyed high quality accommodation and food which, combined with the birds and landscapes, made for an exceptionally fun birding tour.



*The curious **Yellow-bellied Flyrobin** is a common sight in New Caledonia's rainforest. This individual joined us for our picnic lunch while we were birding in the Blue River Provincial Park.*

Detailed Report

Day 1, 3rd September 2025. Birding Nouméa

With all participants having arrived early for the tour, having just completed our birding adventure across Fiji and Samoa, we made use of our extra time and started birding after our French buffet breakfast. We spent the morning in the southeast of Nouméa, birding the Ouen Toro hill and seeing many species widespread across New Caledonia. Vibrant **Coconut Lorikeets** flicked past overhead, **Gray-eared Honeyeaters** chattered in the scrub forest around us, and flocks of **Silvereyes** and endemic **Green-backed White-eyes** busily jostled at flowering trees. We saw both **Shining Bronze Cuckoo** and a **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, both gave good views and the latter was the only sighting of the species on the tour. Other highlights included large groups of **Satin Swiftlets**, two **Brown Goshawks**, **Rufous Whistler**, **Common Waxbill**, and many opportunities to enjoy the acrobatics of **Grey Fantail**. Walking back along the sea front we added **Silver Gull**, **Greater Crested Tern** and, over lunch, enjoyed watching a pair of **Ospreys** attending their nest right along the promenade, before having the afternoon at leisure. It was a brilliant start to the tour!

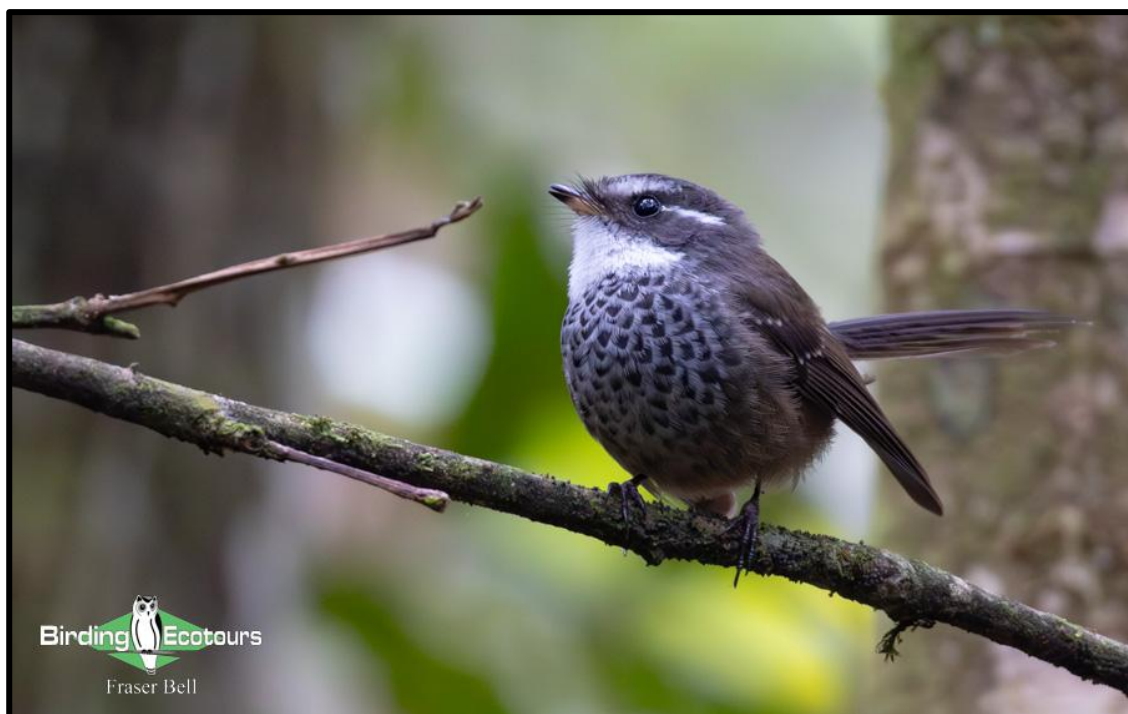


Grey-eared Honeyeater is only found on New Caledonia and Vanuatu.

Day 2, 4th September 2025. Birding the famous Parc de la Rivière Bleue

With an early start we left Nouméa and drove north, pausing at a boulangerie to pick up a breakfast drink and a picnic lunch, then onwards to the brilliant Parc de la Rivière Bleue (Blue River Provincial Park). A chance sighting of an unusual day flying **Pacific Flying Fox** would be the only native mammal we saw on the trip. We spent the whole day in this beautiful and unique park. Birding here was an amazing experience, we felt like we had gone back in time, back to

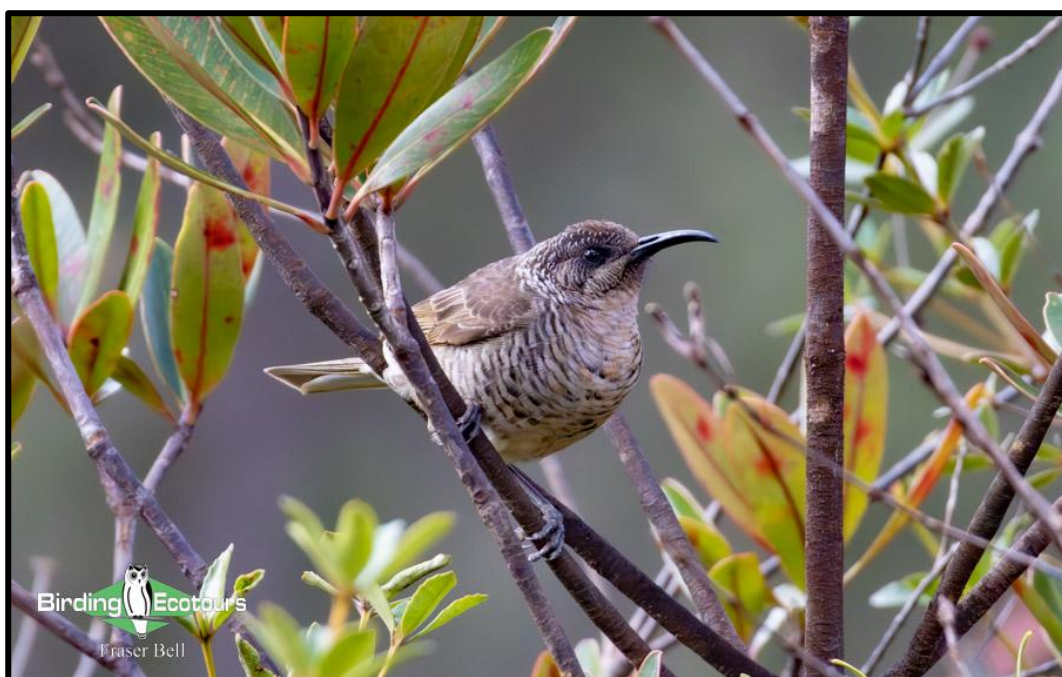
Gondwanan days when ancient forests and wildlife dominated. Much of the park is dominated by maquis savannah, with pockets of rainforest crossed with crystal-clear blue rivers, and set upon bright red soil. This is one of the most interesting locations to birdwatch in the world, and we spent the day in awe at the landscape, plants and, of course, the birds.



New Caledonian Streaked Fantail was a lively bird, often fanning its tail, flitting between logs and branches, and sallying after insects in quick, erratic arcs through the shady forest understory.

In the park we quickly saw flocks of **Satin Swiftlets**, **Metallic Pigeon**, **Barred Honeyeater**, **Grey-eared Honeyeater**, raucous **New Caledonian Friarbird**, and **South Melanesian Cuckooshrike**. On the lakes and rivers we saw **Pacific Black Duck**, **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Little Black Cormorant**, **Great Cormorant**, **White-faced Heron**, and two pairs of **Whistling Kites** nesting in a forest of sunken trees. While starting our quest to see the dinosaur-like **Kagu**, we had great views of a number of endemic and near-endemic songbirds, including **New Caledonian Whistler**, **New Caledonian Streaked Fantail**, **Melanesian Flycatcher**, **Yellow-bellied Flyrobin**, plus a **Southern Shrikebill**. The latter was our only sighting of this unusual monarch flycatcher, but we were able to watch as it crept quietly about in the midstory, investigating leaves and probing between vines looking for prey. Other highlights included the world's largest arboreal pigeon, the massive and aptly named **Goliath Imperial Pigeon**, a pair of **New Caledonian Myzomelas**, the male of which has a striking crimson waist coat, plus the scarce **New Caledonian Cuckooshrike**. We could hear the cuckooshrikes with their piercing, squeaking dog-toy calls, and managed to get some nice views as the pair moved along the roadside trees.

Due to intermittent rain, it was late in the afternoon before we finally saw a trio of the absolutely amazing **Kagu**. This odd flightless rail-like bird is a relic of a bygone era, and they were such a joy to watch. These are bold birds, and they walked right up to and through our group while quietly foraging in the damp leaf litter. It is not every day that one can be face-to-face with one of the most iconic bird species in the world! After some time, the **Kagu** group vanished back into the rainforest and we headed out of the park. Just before leaving we found a group of beautiful **Horned Parakeets** foraging in low trees, and had an all-too-brief flyby **Red-throated Parrotfinch**. Back in Nouméa we enjoyed a feast at one of the seafront restaurants near our comfortable hotel, toasting a long but brilliant day.



Barred Honeyeater is a distinctive New Caledonian endemic.

Day 3, 5th September 2025. Transfer north and birding the Parc des Grandes Fougères

We checked out of our Nouméa hotel early and headed north along Grand Terre's west coastline, adding **Swamp Harrier** and large numbers of **Wild Turkeys** to our lists during the drive. Once in the Farino area, we birded along some quiet roads with brilliant views of **Sacred Kingfisher**, **New Caledonian Friarbird**, **White-breasted Woodswallow**, and more. The highlights, however, were watching a group of **New Caledonian Crows** actively jumping through the canopy and cawing to one another, made even more entertaining by the presence of two young birds loudly demanding food. We also had close views of the hulking **Goliath Imperial Pigeon**, raucous **Horned Parakeet**, and a pair of stunning **Red-throated Parrotfinches**, which quickly flew out of a Casuarina tree just as we lifted our cameras.

On arrival at the Parc des Grandes Fougères (Great Ferns Park) we ate our picnic lunch, entertained by a squabbling trio of **Shining Bronze Cuckoos**, and active groups of **South Melanesian Cuckooshrikes** and **Striated Starlings**, against a gorgeous backdrop across the lush forests below.

This afternoon we walked a trail that wound through the prehistoric forests. **New Caledonian Whistler**, **New Caledonian Streaked Fantail**, and **Melanesian Flycatcher** accompanied us during the walk, and we had repeat views of all of these localized species. Our main target was the fabulous **Cloven-feathered Dove**, which we could hear calling throughout our time at the park. After a bit of time following the song we found a stunningly beautiful male perched in the lower canopy, and we all had great long looks at this star species as it continued calling across the forest. This has to be one of the most interesting and beautiful doves in the world, with such vivid colors and white fluffy trousers, combined with an odd body and head shape (see photo in the tour summary).



*New Caledonia is home to the largest arboreal pigeon in the world, the **Goliath Imperial Pigeon**.*

Being immersed in the forests of Parc des Grandes Fougères was a big tour highlight. Walking amongst this wonderful forest, with the giant tree ferns towering above us (and the other trees!), and watching **Kagus** foraging around us is a memory that will last. The **Kagus** were brilliant to watch as they crept stealthily across the forest floor alongside us. We heard their electronic static-like hisses as they called to one another and even got to see them raising their crests and opening their wings a few times. A pair of **New Caledonian Cuckooshrikes** were a surprise, given that they are much less numerous here than at the Parc de la Rivière Bleue and, after a special effort for them, we saw a lone **New Caledonian Parakeet** - though the views needed to be improved as the individual stayed within the dense canopy.

Roadside birding on the way out of the park yielded our first of many **Buff-banded Rails** and **Australasian Swampheens**, and a brief view of the gorgeous **Pacific Emerald Dove**. The rest of the afternoon was spent transferring to our beachside resort in Deva, near Bourail. Arriving at the

plush resort, we were greeted by hordes of **Wild Turkeys**, **Australasian Swamphens** and nonnative **Javan Deer** (a threatened species in their native range on Java), and enjoyed some well-earned rest and a walk on the beach after another day full of highlights.



*The adult and young **Kagus** that foraged quietly around us in Parc des Grandes Fougères. The young, seen in the foreground with brown on its wing and a band on its leg, has been marked to monitor this Endangered species (IUCN/BirdLife International).*

Day 4, 6th September 2025. Birding near Bourail

After a good rest we awoke to a beautiful sunrise across the resort grounds, then checked out and traveled north to bird roadside thickets and grasslands. Here, we quickly found a couple of pairs of **New Caledonian Thicketbirds**, our major target for the day, these gave brief but good looks as they darted between tussocks and grass stalks. Another specialty here was the **Red-throated Parrotfinch**, we saw a handful of these beautiful tree-dwelling finches but, unfortunately, typically in flight. Continuing birding in the area we finally saw the endemic **White-bellied Goshawk**. Alerted by the call, we followed where it landed and had scope views of this compact hawk, before the mobbing of several species caused it to move on. Traveling out of the area we found another **White-bellied Goshawk**, this one remained perched and we were all able to enjoy excellent views. After a stop to pick up our lunch and a mid-morning drink, we traveled to the coast to target another elusive species. On arrival to the forest gardens in the Poe Beach area, we could hear the characteristic bubbling coos of **Red-bellied Fruit Dove**, a species endemic to New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and southern Solomon Islands. After a short search, we found a stunningly beautiful male calling from the top of a low tree, and everyone had brilliant looks at this star bird. What a great morning!

We had our lunch next to the beach, while listening to the calls of **Red-bellied Fruit Dove** and watching **White-rumped Swiftlets** zooming overhead. During lunch, a **Red-throated Parrotfinch** flew into the tree next to our picnic bench, causing us all to grab our optics and cameras, but again, the bird left all too soon. After lunch we traveled to one of the best wetland sites on Grand Terre. Here we added **Grey Teal**, **Hardhead**, **Australasian Grebe**, and **Dusky Moorhen** to our trip list, and enjoyed close views of nesting **Welcome Swallow**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Little Black Cormorant**, and **Little Pied Cormorant**. While continuing to scan at this picturesque wetland, a distant bird caused a stir, which was re-found much closer and revealed to be the first record of **Eurasian Coot** for New Caledonia! Even though the species is common and widespread across much of the Palearctic, Asia, and Australia, it was a thrill finding this vagrant in New Caledonia.



*This magnificent male **Red-bellied Fruit Dove** was one of the tour highlights.*

Birding the dry forests around the wetlands, we found a busy flock of lovely **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**, an Australian species introduced here, alongside **White-faced Heron**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **White-breasted Woodswallow**, and many others. We drove back to Nouméa in heavy rain, so did not succeed in finding nonnative Zebra Dove, but did chance upon an exotic **Indian Peafowl** on the roadside. We rounded off the day in one of the many excellent restaurants close to our hotel, celebrating yet another great set of birding highlights.

Day 5, 7th September 2025. Return to the amazing Parc de la Rivière Bleue

Although rain threatened the day, we headed off before first light, hopeful to see New Caledonia's rarest species. Fueled by French pastries and coffee, we entered the fantastic Parc de la Rivière Bleue for our second full day at this truly unique park. We had left our hotel earlier in hope of

connecting with the Critically Endangered (IUCN/BirdLife International) **Crow Honeyeater**, a species becoming rarer each year. Our efforts instantly paid off and we watched a female singing from high in an Araucaria tree for over ten minutes. It was amazing to see her red wattles and hear her call ringing out across the forest. Despite this amazing start to the day, the rain then moved in, so we toasted our success with a second breakfast before further exploring the park.



New Caledonian Friarbirds are entertaining to watch and striking in appearance, with silvery blue-grey wings and tail, and throat feathers that look like brushstrokes.

Most important was the **New Caledonian Parakeet**, a sleek parakeet clad in a brilliant green with a stylish red eye stripe. We enjoyed several encounters and listened to their cheerful calls echoing across the unique landscapes. Other species seen well included **Barred Honeyeater**, **New Caledonian Myzomela**, **New Caledonian Cuckooshrike**, **Long-tailed Triller**, and a nice immature **White-bellied Goshawk**. Over our picnic lunch we were able to watch a host of forest species up close, with the stars being the characterful **Yellow-bellied Flyrobin**, which came right up to our benches and grabbed any wayward crumbs! Of course, no visit to the park is complete without quality time spent in the company of the comical and bold **Kagu**. We saw them on three different occasions throughout the day, and each was a joy. We made an additional stop in Nouméa to see nesting **Nankeen Night Heron**, before we enjoyed the final evening meal of the tour.

Day 6, 8th September 2025. Tour conclusion

After the run of early starts, we decided to have a more relaxed morning with breakfast at the hotel followed by some local birding in Nouméa. After enjoying the buffet, we walked along Nouméa's southern sea front. High winds made for slower birding at times, but it was still an enjoyable walk with amazingly close views of **Osprey** in flight and perched near a nest site, and we added

Wandering Tattler and **Lesser Frigatebird**, bringing the tour list to 71 species seen during our six days. It had been an incredible experience exploring such a beautiful location with a fun group of birders. It was no surprise that **Kagu** won bird of the trip without competition, though the beautiful **Cloven-feathered Dove** was a very worthy runner-up. I very much look forward to returning to New Caledonia to show more birders what a truly outstanding destination it is.



New Caledonia Cuckooshrike can be hard to see well, but we managed to see them on three different occasions.

Bird List – Following IOC (Version 15.1 / March 2025)

All species were seen. The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable. (Endemic) = New Caledonia endemic birds.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Pacific Black Duck	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>
Grey Teal	<i>Anas gracilis</i>
Hardhead	<i>Aythya australis</i>
Pheasants & Allies (Phasianidae)	
Wild Turkey (Introduced)	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>
Indian Peafowl (Introduced)	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Swifts (Apodidae)	
Satin Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia uropygialis</i>
White-rumped Swiftlet	<i>Aerodramus spodiopygius</i>
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)	
Shining Bronze Cuckoo	<i>Chalcites lucidus</i>
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis flabelliformis</i>
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove (Introduced)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Metallic Pigeon	<i>Columba vitiensis</i>
Spotted Dove (Introduced)	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Pacific Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps longirostris</i>
Red-bellied Fruit Dove	<i>Ptilinopus greyi</i>
Cloven-feathered Dove (Endemic)	<i>Drepanoptila holosericea</i>
Goliath Imperial Pigeon (Endemic)	<i>Ducula goliath</i>
Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae)	
Buff-banded Rail	<i>Hypotaenidia philippensis</i>
Dusky Moorhen	<i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Australasian Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio melanotus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Grebes (Podicipedidae)	
Australasian Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i>
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Wandering Tattler	<i>Tringa incana</i>
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Silver Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae</i>
Kagu (Rhynchotidae)	
Kagu (Endemic) - EN	<i>Rhynchotos jubatus</i>
Frigatebirds (Fregatidae)	
Lesser Frigatebird	<i>Fregata ariel</i>
Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)	
Little Pied Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>
Little Black Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)	
Nankeen Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>
Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra</i>
White-faced Heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>
Ospreys (Pandionidae)	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Brown Goshawk	<i>Tachyspiza fasciata</i>
White-bellied Goshawk (Endemic)	<i>Tachyspiza haplochroa</i>
Swamp Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>
Whistling Kite	<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>
Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)	
Horned Parakeet (Endemic) - VU	<i>Eunymphicus cornutus</i>
New Caledonian Parakeet (Endemic) - VU	<i>Cyanoramphus saisseti</i>
Coconut Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>
Honeyeaters (Meliphagidae)	
Barred Honeyeater (Endemic)	<i>Glycifohia undulata</i>
New Caledonian Myzomela (Endemic)	<i>Myzomela caledonica</i>
New Caledonian Friarbird (Endemic)	<i>Philemon diemenensis</i>
Grey-eared Honeyeater	<i>Lichmera incana</i>
Crow Honeyeater (Endemic) - CR	<i>Gymnomyza aubryana</i>
Australasian Warblers (Acanthizidae)	
Fan-tailed Gerygone	<i>Gerygone flavolateralis</i>
Woodswallows, Butcherbirds & Allies (Artamidae)	
White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>
Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae)	
South Melanesian Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina caledonica</i>
New Caledonian Cuckooshrike (Endemic)	<i>Edolisoma anale</i>
Long-tailed Triller	<i>Lalage leucopyga</i>
Whistlers & Allies (Pachycephalidae)	
New Caledonian Whistler (Endemic)	<i>Pachycephala caledonica</i>
Rufous Whistler	<i>Pachycephala rufiventris</i>
Fantails (Rhipiduridae)	
Grey Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>
New Caledonian Streaked Fantail (Endemic)	<i>Rhipidura verreauxi</i>
Monarchs (Monarchidae)	
Southern Shrikebill	<i>Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides</i>
Melanesian Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra caledonica</i>
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
New Caledonian Crow (Endemic)	<i>Corvus moneduloides</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Australasian Robins (Petroicidae)	
Yellow-bellied Flyrobin (Endemic)	<i>Cryptomicroeca flaviventris</i>
Bulbuls (Pycnonotidae)	
Red-vented Bulbul (Introduced)	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)	
Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo javanica</i>
Welcome Swallow	<i>Hirundo neoxena</i>
Grassbirds & Allies (Locustellidae)	
New Caledonian Thicketbird (Endemic)	<i>Cincloramphus mariae</i>
White-eyes (Zosteropidae)	
Silvereye	<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>
Green-backed White-eye (Endemic)	<i>Zosterops xanthochroa</i>
Starlings, Rhabdornises (Sturnidae)	
Striated Starling (Endemic)	<i>Aplonis striata</i>
Common Myna (Introduced)	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae)	
House Sparrow (Introduced)	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Waxbills, Munias & Allies (Estrildidae)	
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin (Introduced)	<i>Lonchura castaneothorax</i>
Red-throated Parrotfinch (Endemic)	<i>Erythrura psittacea</i>
Common Waxbill (Introduced)	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Total seen	71
Total heard only	0
Total recorded	71

Mammal List – Following Mammalwatching.com (November 2024)

Common Name	Scientific Name
Flying Foxes (Pteropodidae)	
Pacific Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus tonganus</i>
Deer (Cervidae)	
Javan Deer	<i>Rusa timorensis</i>
Pigs (Suidae)	
Feral Pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
Total seen	3



We saw the localized **Long-tailed Triller** on most days while birding in New Caledonia.