



TRANS-FLY

OF WEST PAPUA:

MERAUKE, WAYAU, AND WASUR NP

August 25-30, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The Trans-Fly captured my imagination the first time I looked through a guide to the birds of New Guinea and noticed how many species are restricted to that southern projection of the island, which is more like Australia than the rest of New Guinea. My fascination with this area was fueled by trip reports from Nick Brickle & Rob Tizard (2009) and Nicholas Hughes and Robert East (2013). They painted a picture of a remote and wild place that is very rarely visited by birders or any foreigners for that matter. Thanks to Nick, Rob, Nicholas, and Robert for their trip reports. I hope this report inspires others the way theirs did me, and also blazes the way for more birders not called “Nicholas” or “Robert” to visit the area!

My opportunity to visit the Wasur area came after guiding a Tropical Birding West Papua trip in August 2019. My 30-day Indonesia visa left me with a few extra days after my work was finished. Since I haven’t yet birded in Australia, my main goal was to see a lot of new birds, while experiencing a wild place that is well off the beaten path. I also wanted to evaluate the habitats in this part of New Guinea, to be able to adequately represent them in the guide to the wildlife habitats of the world that I am currently co-authoring.

The area did not disappoint, as this report will show. I'd thoroughly recommend that more birders add it to a West Papua trip. It offers excellent general birding; I doubt that there is anywhere else on the island where you can see so many bird species in a short time. Visiting this area also gives chances to see several Trans-Fly endemic birds, and the possibility of some mega New Guinea birds like Southern Cassowary, Sclater's Crowned-Pigeon, and New Guinea Harpy Eagle.

BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS

In 4.5 days of birding, I recorded 175 species of birds. I doubt there is anywhere in New Guinea away from the Trans-Fly where you can record so many species in such a short time.

BIRDS: Southern Cassowary, New Guinea Harpy Eagle, Spangled Kookaburra, Greater Bird-of-Paradise, Painted Quail-Thrush, Black and Gray-crowned Munias.

MAMMALS: Agile and Dusky Wallabies

ITINERARY

August 25	Arrival in Merauke on Garuda, 10am. Afternoon visit to Ndalir Post, Wasur NP. Night at CoreInn Hotel in Merauke.
August 26	Morning Ndalir, Wasur NP. Afternoon travel to Waam, Sota District, Wasur NP. Camping in the savanna, at the edge of monsoon forest.
August 27	Full day on foot, Waam. Second night at same camp.
August 28	Waam back to Merauke. Quick food shopping, then drive to Wayau. Night in a house in the village.
August 29	Wayau to Maro River mangroves to Merauke. Night in Merauke.
August 30	10:30am Garuda flight from Merauke to Jakarta (via Sentani and Makassar)

LOGISTICS

Flights to and from Merauke were easily booked online with Garuda, and were reasonably priced. This airline offers good service, a solid safety record, and a better on-time record than most Indonesian airlines.

Other aspects of my trip proved slightly trickier to arrange. I first tried to contact Wasur National Park directly, as recommended in the Hughes / East trip report. My e-mails bounced multiple times, so that was a dead end. Searching online, I found a mention of a local guide called Bony Kondahon, in a review of Wasur National Park on trip advisor. I contacted Bony on Facebook, and he responded almost immediately. Contacting him proved an excellent stroke of luck; he was the right man for the job. He proposed an itinerary and explained the costs, though we left things flexible until I arrived in Merauke.

Bony is not a birder or a birding guide, but he is a lover of natural history, and has a lot of experience in helping tourists visit this remote corner of West Papua. His English is not fluent, but more than good enough to communicate, especially with patience on both sides. He is adept at contacting drivers, negotiating with land owners, and charming the local authorities, none of which I would have enjoyed doing on my own, with only a basic Indonesian vocabulary. He is also patient and kind, flexible, hardworking, a good cook, and conscientious about the budget of people he's guiding. Another good thing about Bony is that he understood the need for complete silence and stealth when pursuing incredibly shy Papuan birds. He quickly understood that I was competent to find birds and navigate the forest, and let me walk well in front of him and the local people representing the landowners. Other times I simply walked alone.

Bony has some basic camping gear: tarps, sleeping bags, mosquito nets, unpadded ground mats, and cooking gear. I brought my own small tent and sleeping pad, which made sleeping much more comfortable.

It would be virtually impossible to visit most of the sites in this area without competent local help, provided by a local guide and / or the national park staff. It would certainly be foolish and potentially dangerous to go wandering alone into the countryside in Papua. You are expected to both inform local authorities of your presence and negotiate and pay for access with landowners, both of which would be very tricky on your own.

Bony's contact details are below. He does respond to e-mail and WhatsApp messages, but I found him much more responsive to Facebook messages. Simply search for his full name on Facebook, and you'll find him.

Bony Kondahon

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phone numbers: +62 823 975 71890 (WhatsApp)
+62 813 445 83646

COSTS

The whole mini trip cost me about \$700, without the flights. This is far from cheap by the standards of independent birders, though in my mind reasonable for a single person. The lion's share of the total cost was for car hire and Bony's guiding fee. These costs per person would be greatly reduced by visiting in a group of 2-3 people. I also could have saved money by using motorbikes rather than a car. But travelling this way is tortuous, at least for someone with my frame, and tangibly dangerous, especially since most motorbike drivers don't seem to provide a helmet for their passengers.

Below are the major costs, though this list is not comprehensive. At the time of my visit one USD was equal to about 14,200 Indonesian Rupiah.

Bony Guiding / Cooking Fee	700,000 IDR / day (~\$49). Well worth it.
Landowner Fees	300,000 IDR / site. Paid at Waam and Wayau. A bargain! (~\$21)
Basic / Moderate hotels in Merauke	~400,000 IDR / night. (~\$28) Not a great value.
Good meal at restaurant in Merauke	20,000-40,000 IDR
Food for 3 nights camping	600,000 IDR (~\$42)
Motorbike (including fuel)	300,000 IDR / day (~\$21).
Motorbike porters from Sota to Waam and back	200,000 IDR / bike (~\$14)
Homestay in Wayau	250,000 IDR / night (~\$18)
Car Rental	700,000 IDR / day (~\$49). Quite expensive.
Fuel for rental car	200,000-300,000 IDR / day, depending on places to be visited
Wasur NP entrance fee	150,000 IDR / day (~\$11)

TIMING

The timing of my trip was determined by that of the preceding Tropical Birding trip that I was guiding. Most of this area is only accessible during the dry season, from July to November; virtually all of it floods and becomes impassable during the rainy season. August was good, though even later in the dry season is apparently much better. At that time, there is very little water available, and wildlife like cassowaries, crowned-pigeons, kangaroos, and wallabies are easily seen around the last remaining forest waterholes. Even the likes of Flame Bowerbird can apparently be seen visiting the water. Arrangements can be made with landowners to build temporary hides to enjoy this wildlife spectacle. In the wetlands, such as Wayau, all of the waterbirds are concentrated on the deepest pools. During my trip, conditions were still fairly wet, and birds like cassowaries and crowned-pigeons were spread across the landscape, and difficult to find. Numbers of waterbirds at Wayau were relatively low.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Despite the more open nature of the habitats, photography here is only slightly easier than elsewhere in Papua; in other words, incredibly difficult! Birds are extremely shy and wary. Because of this, I decided to leave my photography gear at a hotel in Merauke, and focus on intense birding. I did bring my recording gear, both as an aid in calling in species like Painted Quail-Thrush, and to try to acquire some recordings of mainly Australian birds whose Papuan representatives are currently missing from xeno-canto. I made a couple hundred recordings, some of which I'll be uploading to xeno-canto.

The one situation here that might offer excellent photographic opportunities, would be a blind adjacent a waterhole during the driest part of the dry season. See the section above on timing for more details on this.

TRAVEL TIMES

Merauke to Ndair	Fairly bad road, though probably passable year-round. 1 hour by motorbike. 1.5 hours by car.
Merauke to Sota	Good new road, which is part of the Trans-Papua highway. 1.25 hours by car

Sota to Waam	Trans-Papuan Highway north for about 10 km, then a tiny track for about 10km into the forest. 1 hour by motorbike
Merauke to Wayau	Fairly good road with some bad spots. There are many roads through the transmigration colonies, and this route would be confusing for a driver who didn't know it. Would be impassable during the rainy season. 2.5-3 hours by car.

SITES



Overall map, showing the main sites visited: Ndalir, Sota / Waam, Maro River Mangroves, and Wayau. All of the GPS points shown are in the table below. *Google Earth.*

Ndalir Post, Wasur NP

This site is described well by Brickle / Tizard from 2009. The area around this national park post and village at the edge of the national park supports a wide variety of habitats: mudflat, mangroves, swamp forest, paperbark savanna, and freshwater wetlands. Although I spent a full afternoon and morning here, I could easily have spent much more time. There is virtually no limit to the birding that you can do here on foot. An independent birder who wanted to see the maximum species at the lowest cost should consider paying the national park entrance fee at the office in Merauke, taking a motorbike here, being dropped off, and spending 1-3 nights either camping or finding a place to sleep in the national park post or a house in the village. You could easily rack up more than 100 bird species in a couple days.

I didn't have as much luck in the mangroves as Brickle / Tizard. The walking was tough, and the forest very dense. I tried birding the mangroves along the road, near the bridge, just before Ndalir, and saw very little in that area.

The adjacent paperbark savanna, just south of the mangroves, was very productive for birding, and delightful to walk through. It was here that I found my first Spangled Kookaburra, a mesmerizingly good-looking bird. Those spangles on the head draw you in and you don't want to look away!

As you go inland, the mangrove swamp along the main watercourse gives way to swamp forest. There is also some thicker monsoon forest. To the north of the river, I could glimpse the Dogamet Swamp, a large freshwater wetland. Although I didn't have the time to walk there, it can be accessed by crossing the bridge, continuing just over one kilometer north along the main road, then walking east on a conspicuous track.

The Ndalir area has excellent coastal mudflats that attract a bounty of waterbirds. I found the first 500m south of the river mouth to be the most productive. High tide is the best time to look for waterbirds, as it brings the birds close enough to see well. Although I only spent a short time here with a scope, I saw the majority of the shorebirds that are known from New Guinea. This would undoubtedly be an excellent place to find some regional rarities, especially during periods of shorebird migration.



Ndalir Ranger Post / Village. *Google Earth.*

Waam, Sota District, Wasur NP

As far as I can tell, I was the first birder to visit this remote site that is near the PNG border in the northeast corner of Wasur. It was recommended by Bony, who has visited many times with general tourists. He suggested it as an alternative to Yanggundur, which has been visited by other birders including Hughes and East. We left the option of visiting Yanggundur open, but once I saw Waam, I was happy to stay for two nights, as it seems to hold the same birds and more. There actually seemed to be more widespread lowland rainforest birds at Waam than reported by Hughes, East, and others at Yanggundur. Waam was a beautiful and wild place, and it was a joy to spend a full day away from the noise and squalor of “civilization”.

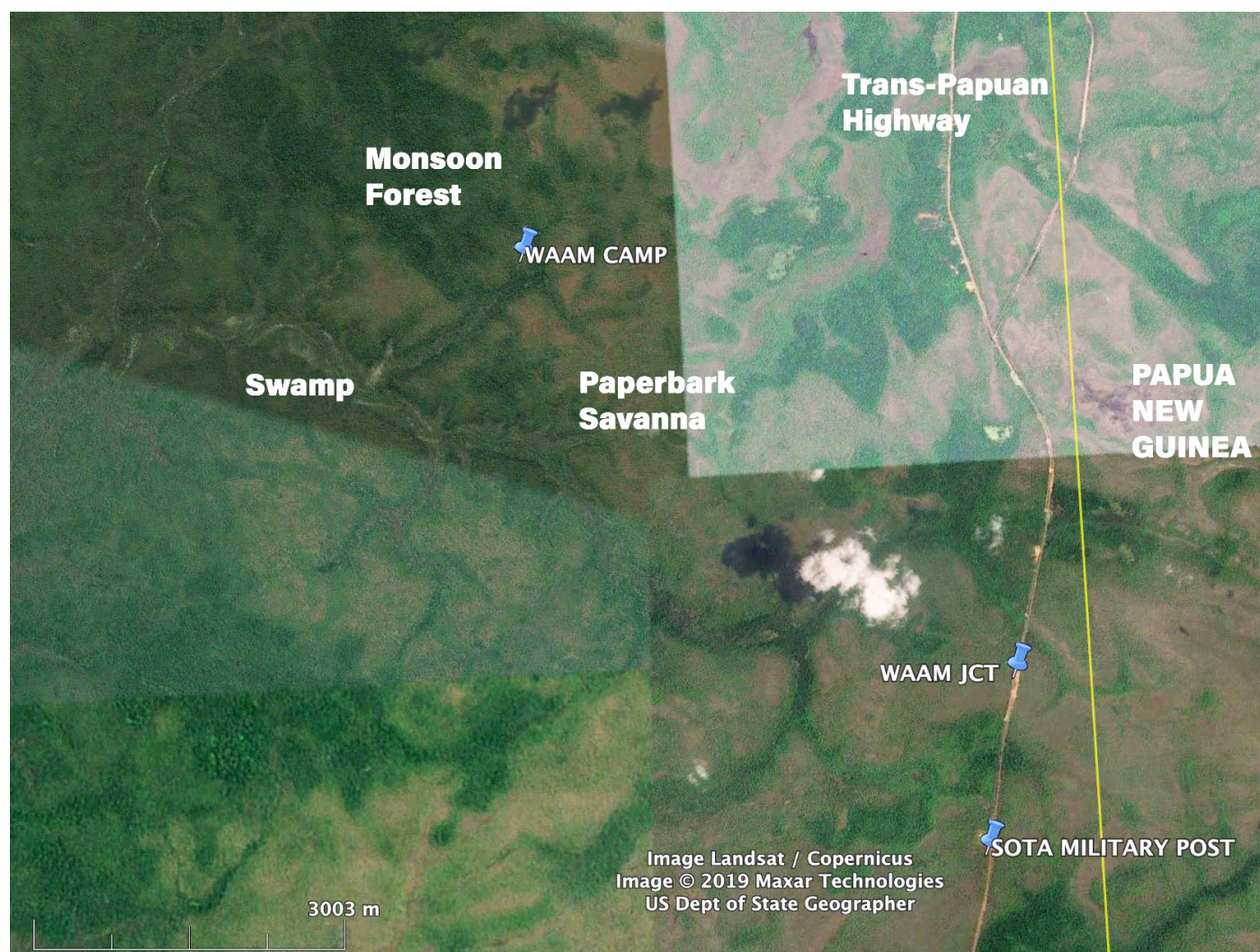
The newly surfaced Trans-Papuan highway makes this a fairly easy site to visit, despite its remoteness. First I paid entrance fees at the Wasur NP office in Merauke. Then, we drove by car

out to Sota, a border outpost, village, and small transmigration colony. We passed through endless paperbark savanna and swamp forest, though it was mid-day and I saw virtually no birds or other wildlife. In Sota we checked in with the local police and immigration authorities. Although this took about an hour, it went smoothly. Then we went to the house of Martin, the Waam landowner. Although he lives in a simple house in this small village, he is the undisputed lord and master of a vast swath of virgin wilderness, which has been passed down to him and his family through the ages. Papuan people may be poor in money, but they are certainly rich in land. Martin arranged two extra motorbikes to bring our baggage to a campsite in the forest. Our final stop before heading into the wilderness was at the military post about 17km north of Sota. We had a chat with these amiable chaps, and finished things up with the obligatory “cell phone photos with a foreigner” session! I can’t blame them; things must be pretty boring at this remote outpost. Not far from the military post, we reached the cryptic junction where a narrow track heads west into Martin’s wild kingdom. It took about 30 minutes of carefully navigating the motorbikes to reach the area that Bony had in mind. We arrived just before sunset, and chose a new campsite in the savanna adjacent a thick patch of monsoon forest. The only source of water here was a rather foul-looking and muddy waterhole about 150m away. This chocolate-colored water proved refreshing enough for washing and fine to drink after boiling. It was thrilling to share a waterhole with cassowaries, whose footprints were conspicuous in the surrounding mud, each scale of their massive feet exquisitely etched into the mud.

I spent a full day and another morning exploring the Waam area on foot. During my full day here, I walked 16km, mostly off-trail, bushwhacking through monsoon forest. It was an exhausting but exhilarating day, one of the best of thousands of days I have spent birding. The first highlight was finding a nest of New Guinea Harpy Eagle, which was completely unexpected and thrilling. The nest was surprisingly small, and appeared to be quite old, and may have been in use for years. Bony will be happy to show this place to future visitors, though be sure to avoid harassing this rare bird. Even if the nest is no longer active in the future, this area seems excellent for Harpy Eagle. I heard at least 2-3 eagles calling from different spots within 3km of camp. The relatively open and flat nature of the habitat here means that you can simply go towards a calling eagle, something that is impossible in most of New Guinea. Soon after finding the eagle, I started trolling for Painted Quail-Thrush, and quickly found a handsome male – a great bird. The rest of the morning was spent on the trail of cassowary. With stealth and lots of walking, I eventually lucked

into a big brown immature bird, which loped away into the forest, displaying incredible grace and power. This was not as satisfying as a full adult bird, but absolutely thrilling nonetheless. Later in the morning, we heard a cassowary booming at close range, its deep voice resonating in my chest, and raising the hairs on the back of my neck. Although this bird escaped unseen, it was still a profound encounter.

The major attraction at Waam for a birder is the monsoon and swamp forest, which holds the best birds, including cassowary, Sclater's Crowned-Pigeon, Painted Quail-Thrush, and New Guinea Harpy Eagle. It also supports a rich sub-set of typical Papuan lowland forest birds. The higher and drier parts of the landscape are covered in beautiful paperbark savanna, which holds quite a different set of birds. These habitats form a complicated and fascinating matrix, which I greatly enjoyed exploring. Although parts of the monsoon forest are hard to walk through, and some of the swamps cannot be crossed, most of this landscape is easily accessible by foot.



Waam, within Sota District, in the northeast corner of Wasur National Park. Google Earth.

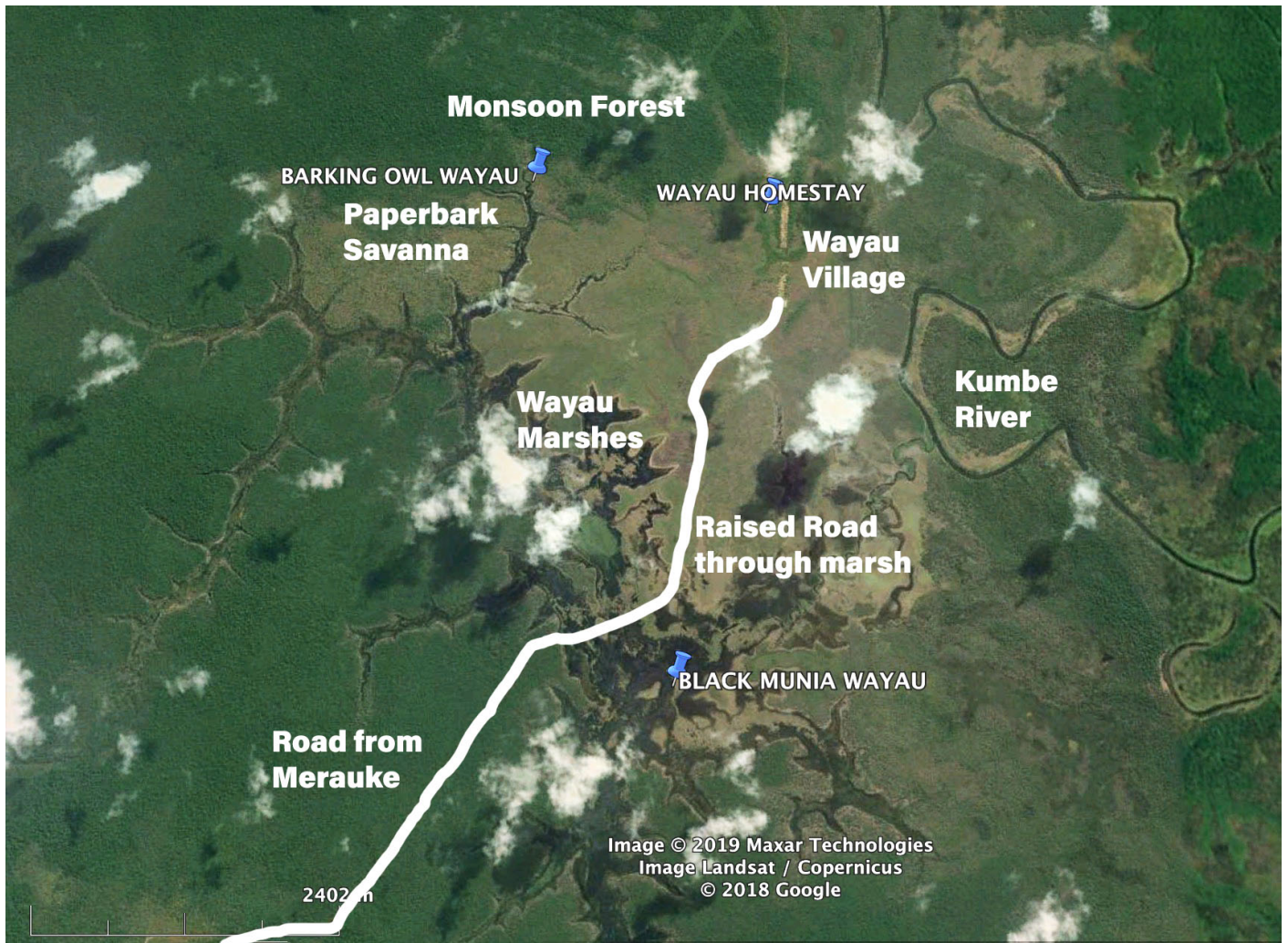
Wayau

This site was recommended by Bony, both as a site for the endemic munias, and as a good place for general wetland and savanna birding. It proved to be yet another delightful place, and I was very happy that I chose to visit.

The drive from Merauke took two and a half hours. Along the way, I watched carefully for munias in the vast rice fields of the local transmigration colonies. Eventually we bumped into a flock of munias; mostly Gray-crowned with a few Crimson Finches and Black Munias mixed in. Farther north, we finally left “little Java” and entered a natural landscape of paperbark savanna and monsoon forest. We crossed one open wetland that I marked with my GPS, and where I spent an hour birding on the way back. It held a good selection of birds including more Black Munias and my only Tawny Grassbirds of the trip. There was no sign of the enigmatic Fly River Grassbird. A few kilometers before Wayau village, you enter a vast floodplain that is covered in marsh and bordered by paperbark savanna and monsoon forest. The village was only accessible by boat until about five years ago, when an elevated road was built. Once in the village, we made the obligatory visit to the local military and police posts, and talked with the landowner’s family about visiting their land for birding. Bony has arranged for his guests to stay in the home of a local widow who has an extra room in her house. It was luxurious after two nights at Waam, with a bed, kitchen, and best of all, a bucket of fairly transparent well water for washing!

In the evening, I walked west from town into a beautiful matrix of savanna and monsoon woodland. In this area, I saw Agile Wallaby twice, remarkable so close to a village. Bony has been asking the villagers to stop hunting, and to focus on ecotourism instead, and it seems to be working! After dark, I easily found Barking Owl and Large-tailed Nightjars were everywhere.

Bony and I, and a local chap from the family of the landowner, spent a full morning walking around Wayau, covering 11km. The open landscape of marsh and savanna was a joy to walk through, and was full of birds. The park-like savannas had the highest densities of honeyeaters that I encountered in the region, with three species of friarbird, and Tawny-breasted, Brown, Rufous-banded, and Brown-backed Honeyeaters all conspicuous. The wetlands had many Wattled Lapwings, Comb-crested Jacanas, Green Pygmy-Geese, and Magpie Geese, though overall bird numbers were fairly low, and marsh birds like grassbirds and reed-warblers strangely absent. The drier short grass along the verges of the swamp would probably be a great place to find Little Curlew, perhaps a bit later in the year.



Wayau. Google Earth.

Maro Mangroves

On my last afternoon, on the way back from Wayau, I was keen to do a bit more mangrove birding. Some exploration on Google Maps showed a promising area of mangroves near the mouth of the Maro River. It turned out to be in excellent shape, with little sign of woodcutting, and easily accessible via several broad tracks. Although my time was very short, I did find Mangrove Gerygone and Red-headed Myzomela. The beach held lots of Whimbrel and sand-plovers. At dusk, hundreds of Torresian Pied Imperial-Pigeons flew over, seemingly headed to a roost site in the mangroves. This site is certainly worthy of additional time and exploration.



Maro Rivermouth Mangroves. *Google Earth.*

GPS

Some key points are listed and described in the table below. I'm happy to send these in GPX or KML format to anyone who requests them via e-mail.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
NATIONAL PARK OFFICE	Headquarters of Wasur NP	-8° 32' 26.0"	140° 26' 23.0"
FIELD to Ndalir	Black Bittern flushed here. Heard Horsfield's Bushlark and Zitting Cisticola	-8° 34' 41.9"	140° 28' 44.2"
DOGAMET JCT	Track heads east from here to Dogamet Swamp	-8° 38' 29.3"	140° 31' 06.2"
SPANGLED KOOK	Spangled Kookaburra in savanna near Ndalir	-8° 39' 09.6"	140° 31' 30.0"

ENTER MANGROVE	Maro Rivermouth mangroves can be accessed at this corner. Walk a short distance south, then west for about 500m, then you meet a major track that runs 800m south to the beach. Red-headed Myzomela is fairly common. There are other tracks in the area that could be explored.	-8° 27' 48.9"	140° 20' 47.0"
MUNIAS MERAUKE	Gray-crowned and Black Munias in a dry rice field, and in the adjacent strips of scrub. These birds probably move around the area a lot depending on where there is food.	-8° 14' 15.3"	140° 22' 35.4"
GRASSBIRD MARSH	Large, open, natural wetland. Tawny Grassbird, Australasian Darter, Magpie Goose, and Black Munia.	-8° 09' 42.8"	140° 24' 06.1"
WAYAU HOMESTAY	House in the village where I slept.	-7° 57' 56.6"	140° 27' 13.1"
BARKING OWL WAYAU	Pair of Barking Owls. Very responsive.	-7° 57' 44.5"	140° 26' 10.2"
AGILE WALL WAYAU	Saw Agile Wallaby twice in this area.	-7° 57' 56.5"	140° 26' 34.8"
BLACK MUNIA WAYAU	Saw Black Munia twice near here, on the entrance road to the village.	-8° 00' 01.1"	140° 26' 41.9"
SOTA POLICE & IMMIGRATION	These two offices are across the street from each other. Need to check in with both before visiting Waam.	-8° 25' 42.6"	141° 00' 42.2"
SOTA MILITARY POST	On the road north of Sota. Also need to check in here before visiting Waam.	-8° 16' 50.6"	141° 00' 35.9"
WAAM JCT	The track to Waam forest starts here, and runs west.	-8° 15' 56.0"	141° 00' 47.9"
WAAM CAMP	I camped here, at the edge of monsoon forest. There are many other potential camping spots.	-8° 13' 36.3"	140° 58' 18.1"

FURTHER EXPLORATION

If you continue down the coastal track past Ndalir, you enter open grasslands, which hold Australian Bustard, and perhaps Brolga and Bush Thick-knee. You could camp in the bush or stay in one of the remote villages further down the coast. There is a mudflat at the village of Tomer that is apparently excellent for coastal waterbirds.

In the center of Wasur is a large lake / swamp called Rawa Biru. It is accessed via a village of the same name, on the northern shore of the lake. The swamps can be explored by motorboat. Bony believes that New Guinea Flightless Rail may be found in these swamps, an intriguing possibility. In any case, there are sure to be many birds. Crossing Rawa Biru and continuing south, you enter more open and grass-dominated savanna, similar to that south of Ndalir along the coastal track. Bony also

tells me that Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise is found in forest near the PNG border, south of Rawa Biru. Those with lots of time could arrange a fascinating trek all the way through the park, ending at the coastal track, and returning to Merauke by motorbike or 4x4.

Bony mentioned another tantalizing possibility, which was visiting a remote village that lies along the Kumbe River, upstream from Wayau, and accessible by motorboat. Though he hasn't yet visited, he is told that cassowaries are remarkably common in that area.

BIRDS MISSED

The table below includes some comments on surprising misses, plus information and / or speculation on where to find some additional desirable targets.

Thick-billed Ground-Pigeon	<i>Trugon terrestris</i>	May be found in the thicker monsoon forest. Probably as good a place as any to look for this enigmatic bird!
Sclater's Crowned-Pigeon	<i>Goura sclaterii</i>	Definitely present. Well known to local people. They say that during the very dry part of the dry season good numbers of "Mambruk" visit the last remaining waterholes, along with a wide variety of other birds and mammals. Usually found in wet forest.
Australian Bustard	<i>Ardeotis australis</i>	Found in the very open, grass-dominated savanna in the southern part of Wasur NP.
White-throated Nightjar	<i>Eurostopodus mystacalis</i>	Must visit during the austral winter. Wayau seems like an ideal place to search for it.
Glossy Swiftlet	<i>Collocalia esculenta</i>	Very surprising miss. I saw no swifts of any species. Strange, as Glossy and Uniform Swiftlet are generally some of the most common and conspicuous birds of the Papuan lowlands.
Dusky Moorhen	<i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>	Strangely absent from Wayau marshes. Must be present, at least for parts of the year.
New Guinea Flightless Rail	<i>Megacrex inepta</i>	When I showed this bird to Bony in the field guide, he described something similar from the swamps of Rawa Biru. Perhaps best searched for by boat.
Brolga	<i>Antigone rubicunda</i>	Apparently found in the very open, grass-dominated savanna in the southern part of Wasur NP.
Bush Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	Perhaps found in the very open, grass-dominated savanna in the southern part of Wasur NP.

Beach Thick-knee	<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	Must be found on some more remote stretches of coastline in Wasur NP.
Oriental Plover	<i>Charadrius veredus</i>	The drier grassy fields that surround the wet portions of the Wayau marshes during the dry season seem like ideal habitat for this species. I suspect that it occurs on passage, perhaps a bit later in the year than I visited.
Little Curlew	<i>Numenius minutus</i>	Likewise must occur at Wayau on passage.
Asian Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>	The mudflats at Ndalir, and further down the coast at Tomer, seem like ideal places to pick up this rare shorebird during migration.
Gray-tailed Tattler	<i>Tringa brevipes</i>	A surprising miss, considering the wide range of shorebirds that I saw at Ndalir. Surely it could have been found with a bit more time birding those mudflats.
Red-backed Buttonquail	<i>Turnix maculosus</i>	Bony sometimes sees it in savanna.
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	I saw surprisingly few tern species at Ndalir. This species must sometimes be common there.
Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	Has been recorded at Ndalir and Wayau, perhaps most commonly in the late part of the dry season.
White-faced Heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>	I expected to see this species, but did not. Perhaps it visits more commonly during the later part of the dry season.
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Bizarrely absent. Generally an uncommon to rare bird in Papua, which is hard to understand considering its abundance throughout most of the rest of the world.
Straw-necked Ibis	<i>Threskiornis spinicollis</i>	I expected to see this at Wayau but didn't. Perhaps it visits later in the dry season.
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Perhaps occurs more commonly in the more open grassland and savanna in southern Wasur.
Gurney's Eagle	<i>Aquila gurneyi</i>	Bony has seen it in Yanggandur.
Wedge-tailed Eagle	<i>Aquila audax</i>	I suspect that it only occurs in the more open grassland and savanna in southern Wasur. Apparently rare.
Doria's Goshawk	<i>Megatriorchis doriae</i>	Seems possible in the thick monsoon forest.
Australian Masked-Owl	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i>	The local people at Waam definitely see a <i>Tyto</i> owl regularly. I assume it's this species.
Rufous Owl	<i>Ninox rufa</i>	The thick monsoon forest at Waam seems like an ideal place for this species.
Southern Boobook	<i>Ninox boobook</i>	Apparently rare in New Guinea. Perhaps only in southern Wasur?

Blyth's Hornbill	<i>Rhyticeros plicatus</i>	I was surprised not to find this widespread lowland forest species in the monsoon and swamp forest of Waam.
Blue-black Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus nigrocyaneus</i>	Perhaps it is found in some of the mangrove swamp of the region.
Little Paradise-Kingfisher	<i>Tanysiptera hydrocharis</i>	A Trans-Fly endemic that doesn't seem to get recorded on the West Papuan side of the Trans-Fly. I tried playing its call occasionally in thicker and wetter patches of forest, but had no luck.
Common Paradise-Kingfisher	<i>Tanysiptera galatea</i>	Strangely absent; I expected to find it in the Waam monsoon forest.
Little Corella	<i>Cacatua sanguinea</i>	Regularly seen in savanna, but not by me!
Red-flanked Lorikeet	<i>Charmosyna placensis</i>	A generally widespread and common lowland forest species that I didn't record.
Noisy Pitta	<i>Pitta versicolor</i>	Known to occur in monsoon forest, as at Yanggandur. The Lynx guide says that it is only vocal in Papua in October. The chance of finding this species would be another reason to visit later in the dry season.
Flame Bowerbird	<i>Sericulus ardens</i>	Has been recorded at Yanggandur, and the local people at Waam say that it occurs there, especially visiting waterholes later in the dry season.
Streak-headed Honeyeater	<i>Pycnopygius stictocephalus</i>	I expected to find this species, but didn't.
Papuan Black Myzomela	<i>Myzomela nigrita</i>	Known from the Trans-Fly, and to be expected in monsoon forest, likely around flowering trees, of which I saw few.
Varied Triller	<i>Lalage leucomela</i>	One of my most surprising misses. Most visiting birders seem to see this widespread southern lowland species.
Black-tailed Whistler	<i>Pachycephala melanura</i>	Most occur in mangroves somewhere in the region. I tried for it both at Ndalir and Maro, without success.
Gray Whistler	<i>Pachycephala simplex</i>	Has been recorded at Yanggandur. I was surprised not to find it at Waam.
Yellow-breasted Boatbill	<i>Machaerirhynchus flaviventer</i>	Widespread lowland forest species. I expected to at least hear it.
Hooded Butcherbird	<i>Cracticus cassicus</i>	I paid careful attention to butcherbirds, and definitely didn't find this species. That left me wondering whether it truly is present in the Trans-Fly, as shown in range maps, or whether it is replaced in the region by Black-backed Butcherbird.
Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise	<i>Paradisaea raggiana</i>	Bony tells me that this species occurs in monsoon forest near the PNG border, on the south side of Rawa Biru lake / swamp.

Black-faced Monarch	<i>Monarcha melanopsis</i>	Another species that I expected to find, but which never materialized. I had virtually no good bird flocks, and this seems to be a flocking species.
Spot-winged Monarch	<i>Symposiachrus guttula</i>	I expected to at least hear it in Waam monsoon forest.
Magpie-lark	<i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i>	The habitat at Wayau seems perfect, and Bony says that he's seen it there before.
Broad-billed Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra ruficollis</i>	Has been seen in mangroves, as at Ndalir.
Pygmy Longbill	<i>Oedistoma pygmaeum</i>	A surprising miss. Must be fairly common in the Waam monsoon forest.
Mangrove Robin	<i>Eopsaltria pulverulenta</i>	Bony says that he sees it both in mangroves and adjacent forest.
Fly River Grassbird	<i>Poodytes albolimbatus</i>	Enigmatic bird. Perhaps found more in the PNG portion of the Trans-Fly than the West Papuan portion. According to the Lynx guide, restricted to the wettest and deepest of wetland habitats.
Pacific Swallow	<i>Hirundo tahitica</i>	My most surprising miss! A ubiquitous town bird throughout every other part of West Papua that I have visited.
Singing Starling	<i>Aplonis cantoroides</i>	Another common town bird, and surprising miss.

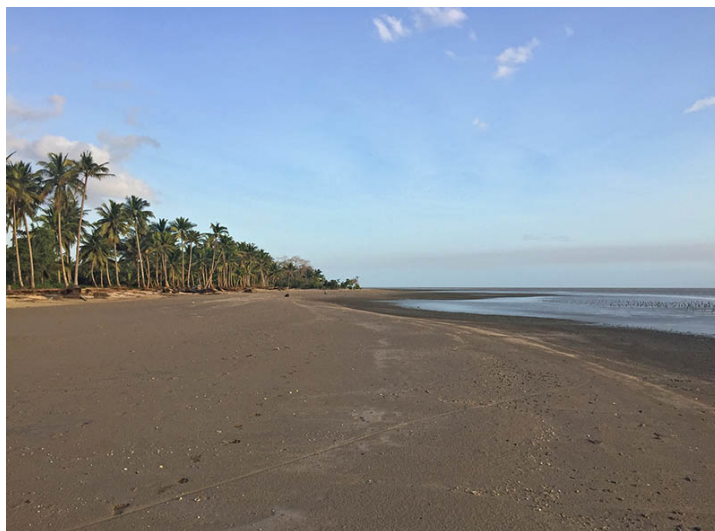
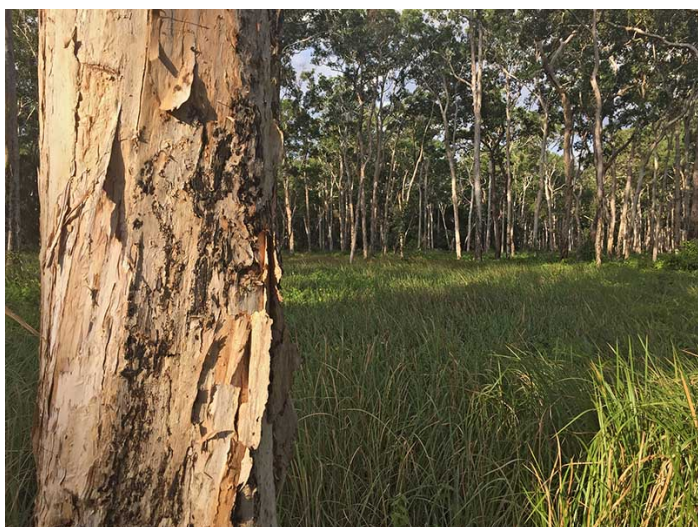
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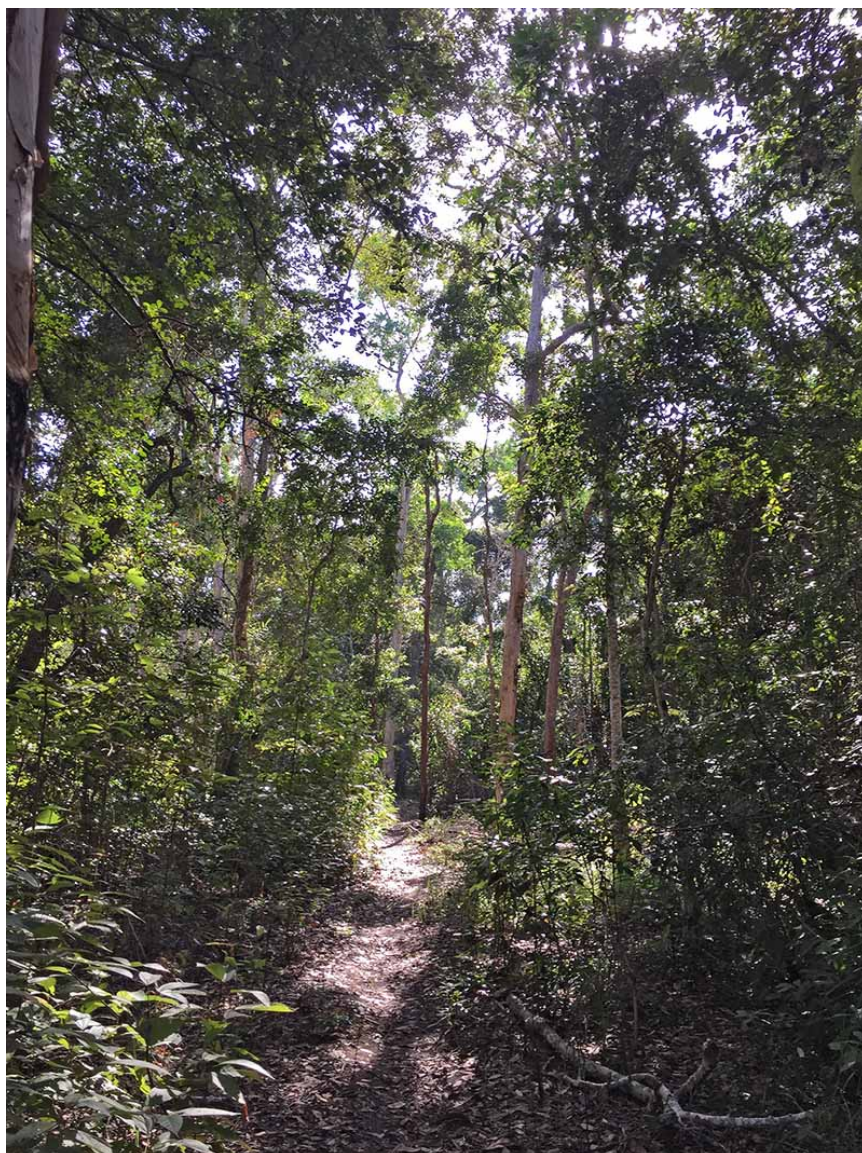
**Left: Merauke as seen from the air, at the mouth of the Maro River.
Right: Monsoon forest at Ndalir. Palms are prominent in the monsoon forest of the Trans-Fly.**



Paperbark swamp forest at Ndalir. This sort of forest replaces mangroves as you go inland along the main watercourse at Ndalir.



Left: beautiful paperbark savanna at Ndalir. Right: the shorebird-rich mudflats at Ndalir.



Paperbark savanna transitioning to thicker, closed-canopy monsoon forest.



This type of open paperbark savanna is the default habitat in much of the Trans-Fly.



The mouth of the small river that emerges at Ndalir ranger post.



At Waam, the transition from open paperbark savanna to thick monsoon forest is quite abrupt.



Left: termite mounds are prominent in the savanna. Right: my camp at Waam.



A massive Cassowary footprint. Perhaps the most dinosaur-like creature left on Earth.



Very fresh Cassowary pekpek, near where I saw one Cassowary and heard another booming.



**A bad digi-scoped photo of a New Guinea Harpy Eagle sitting in a big monsoon forest tree, above its nest.
An unforgettable, adrenaline-pumping encounter.**



Sago palms planted in the swamp were one of few signs of human use of the land at Waam.



Seasonally flooded paperbark swamp forest. In August, only the deepest swamps still held significant water.



There are huge freshwater marshes near the village of Wayau.



Home sweet homestay in Wayau. This outdoor shower (bottom right) was very welcome after a couple nights of camping at Waam!



A narrow finger of marsh that runs down to the main wetland at Wayau. Surrounded by savanna.



A horrible digi-scoped photo of a flock of Magpie Geese at Wayau.



Not only does Wayau have excellent marsh, but there is beautiful open savanna, with a very different character from the taller and lushier savanna that I experienced at Ndalir and Waam.



There is some excellent mangrove forest at the Maro River mouth.

BIRD LIST

Taxonomy and nomenclature follow *The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World v2019* (including updates through August 2019).

CASUARIIFORMES: Casuariidae			
1	Southern Cassowary	<i>Casuarius casuarius</i>	Judging by tracks and scat, seemingly fairly common in monsoon and swamp forest, sometimes going into savanna. But extremely wary and hard-to-see. Saw one immature in Waam monsoon forest, and heard one bird booming.
ANSERIFORMES: Anseranatidae			
2	Magpie Goose	<i>Anseranas semipalmata</i>	Dozens in the marshes at Wayau, and at the "Grassbird" marsh along the way to Wayau.
ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae			
3	Spotted Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna guttata</i>	Two flew by just before nightfall near Wayau village.
4	Wandering Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna arcuata</i>	One flock of ~30 in the marsh at Wayau.
5	Radjah Shelduck	<i>Radjah radjah</i>	One on the river just south of Dogamet Swamp, Ndalir.
6	Green Pygmy-Goose	<i>Nettapus pulchellus</i>	Fairly common on pools in the Wayau marshes.
7	Pacific Black Duck	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>	About 20 scattered across the Wayau marshes
GALLIFORMES: Megapodiidae			
8	Yellow-legged Brushturkey	<i>Talegalla fuscirostris</i>	Fairly common by voice in the monsoon forest northwest of Wayau village.
9	Orange-footed Scrubfowl	<i>Megapodius reinwardt</i>	Heard a couple times in monsoon and swamp forest at Waam.
GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae			
10	Blue-breasted Quail	<i>Synoicus chinensis</i>	Flushed a couple pairs from grassy savanna adjacent the Wayau marshes.
COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae			
11	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Some very dodgy birds in Merauke and villages along the road.
12	Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove	<i>Macropygia amboinensis</i>	Heard several in monsoon forest at Waam. Saw one in monsoon forest along the road to Wayau.

13	Pacific Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps longirostris</i>	Heard once in monsoon forest near camp at Waam.
14	New Guinea Bronzewing	<i>Henicophaps albifrons</i>	Heard once in Waam monsoon forest.
15	Peaceful Dove	<i>Geopelia placida</i>	A couple along the coastal track to Ndalir. Fairly common at Wayau.
16	Bar-shouldered Dove	<i>Geopelia humeralis</i>	Fairly common though shy in savanna habitats, especially at Ndalir.
17	Cinnamon Ground Dove	<i>Gallicolumba rufigula</i>	Heard a couple times in monsoon and swamp forest at Waam.
18	Wompoo Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus magnificus</i>	Heard several times, and found a shoddily-constructed nest containing a fuzzy baby in monsoon forest at Waam.
19	Pink-spotted Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus perlatus</i>	Heard a couple times in monsoon forest at Waam.
20	Orange-fronted Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus aurantiifrons</i>	Seen once in Waam monsoon forest. Common in savanna around Wayau.
21	Superb Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus superbus</i>	Fairly common by voice at Waam, though typically difficult to see.
22	Coroneted Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus coronulatus</i>	Heard a couple times in monsoon forest at Waam.
23	Orange-bellied Fruit-Dove	<i>Ptilinopus iozonus</i>	Fairly common by voice at Waam, in monsoon forest and adjacent savanna.
24	Purple-tailed Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula rufigaster</i>	Seen once and heard fairly frequently at Waam, mainly in monsoon forest.
25	Pinon's Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula pinon</i>	Fairly common though very shy at Waam.
26	Zoe's Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula zoeae</i>	Heard in monsoon forest at Waam. Seen once in savanna adjacent monsoon forest at Wayau.
27	Torresian Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula spilorrhoa</i>	Fairly common in savanna at Waam and Wayau. Hundreds seen flying over at dusk at Maro mangroves.
CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae			
28	Pheasant Coucal	<i>Centropus phasianinus</i>	Seen once in savanna at Ndalir, and a couple times at Waam. Fairly common though shy at Wayau, in savanna adjacent the marsh.
29	Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis castaneiventris</i>	Heard singing at dawn both days at Waam camp.
30	Brush Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis variolosus</i>	Heard several times at Waam.
CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Podargidae			
31	Papuan Frogmouth	<i>Podargus papuensis</i>	Heard one evening calling from monsoon forest adjacent Waam camp.

CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae			
32	Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	Fairly common at Waam and along the road to Ndalir. Even more common around Wayau. I found one incredibly accommodating individual that allowed me to walk up and take cell phone photos of it!
CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Aegotheidae			
33	Barred Owlet-nightjar	<i>Aegotheles bennettii</i>	Woken up at 12:30am one night at Waam by a vocal group of owlet-nightjars. Although I saw and heard them well, their identity was confusing. Vocally, they sounded most similar to Barred, but they looked very white-bellied like Australian Owlet-nightjar, which is apparently unknown from West Papua. The savanna habitat in which I saw them also seems to suggest Australian. I'm hoping to be able to confirm the ID 100% with the voice recordings that I made. If they definitely prove to be Barred Owlet-Nightjar, they'll be the first recordings on xeno-canto once I upload them.
CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Hemiprocnidae			
34	Moustached Treeswift	<i>Hemiprogne mystacea</i>	Saw a few at Waam and Wayau.
CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae			
35	Pied Stilt	<i>Himantopus leucocephalus</i>	A few on the mudflats at Ndalir.
CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae			
36	Masked Lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>	A few flying around the field on the way to Ndalir, and over Waam. Common and conspicuous at Wayau.
37	Lesser Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	~150 on the mudflats at Ndalir.
38	Greater Sand-Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	~300 on the mudflats at Ndalir. A few on the beach at Maro.
CHARADRIIFORMES: Jacanidae			
39	Comb-crested Jacana	<i>Irediparra gallinacea</i>	Fairly common in the marshes at Wayau.

CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae			
40	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Surprisingly, only one at Ndalir. ~20 on the beach at Maro River mouth.
41	Far Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Two flew by at Ndalir mudflats. Impressive huge shorebirds. IUCN status: Endangered.
42	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	~30 at Ndalir mudflats. IUCN status: Near-threatened.
43	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	~8 at Ndalir mudflats.
44	Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>	~50 at Ndalir mudflats. IUCN status: Endangered.
45	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	2 at Ndalir mudflats. One still had remnants of breeding plumage. IUCN status: Near-threatened.
46	Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	~60 at Ndalir mudflats.
47	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>	~150 at Ndalir mudflats. One flock of ~30 flew over Wayau marsh.
48	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	~200 at Ndalir mudflats. IUCN status: Near-threatened.
49	Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	~2000 at Ndalir mudflats. IUCN status: Near-threatened.
50	Swinhoe's Snipe	<i>Gallinago megala</i>	4 seen in the Wayau marsh, from the raised entrance road.
51	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	~120 at Ndalir mudflats.
52	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	~20 at Ndalir mudflats.
53	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Surprisingly, only one at Ndalir mudflats.
54	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	~15 at Ndalir mudflats.
CHARADRIIFORMES: Glareolidae			
55	Australian Pratincole	<i>Stiltia isabella</i>	Two flushed off the airstrip when I landed in Merauke; a fine introduction to this bird-rich area! Another in flight over Wayau marsh.
CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae			
56	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	~50 at Ndalir. Appeared to be of the Australian subspecies.
57	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	~800 at Ndalir. ~200 at Wayau. Mostly in non-breeding plumage, though one beautiful breeding bird seen at Wayau.
SULIFORMES: Anhingidae			
58	Australasian Darter	<i>Anhinga novaehollandiae</i>	One in flight over the "Grassbird" marsh on the way to Wayau.
SULIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae			
59	Little Pied Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>	A few at Ndalir. Dozens at Wayau.

60	Little Black Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>	Fairly common at Wayau marshes.
PELECANIFORMES: Pelecanidae			
61	Australian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	~40 at Ndalir mudflats. One swimming in a deep pool at Wayau.
PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae			
62	Black Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>	One flushed from mashy open field on way to Ndalir. Also a beautiful immature in the swamp behind Ndalir. Another on the way to Wayau. One more at the Wayau marshes.
63	Great-billed Heron	<i>Ardea sumatrana</i>	One in the swamp behind Ndalir. ~12 at Wayau. An excellent tally of a generally uncommon and declining species.
64	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Fairly common at all wetlands.
65	Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>	Most common egret, at all wetlands.
66	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Just a few, at Ndalir and Wayau.
67	Pied Heron	<i>Egretta picata</i>	Fairly common on the way to Ndalir, at Ndalir, and in the swamp at Waam. Abundant and conspicuous at Wayau.
68	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	A few at Ndalir river mouth, and one at Maro mangroves.
69	Rufous Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>	A few in flight along the coastal track to Ndalir, and around Wayau.
PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae			
70	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	A couple in Dogamet Swamp, near Ndalir. Common at Wayau.
71	Australian Ibis	<i>Threskiornis molucca</i>	A couple of flyovers at Waam.
72	Royal Spoonbill	<i>Platalea regia</i>	One flock of five flew over Wayau. Probably becomes more common later in the dry season.
ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae			
73	Pacific Baza	<i>Aviceda subcristata</i>	One in savanna at Ndalir, and one in monsoon forest along the road to Wayau.
74	New Guinea (Harpy) Eagle	<i>Harpyopsis novaeguineae</i>	Found a nest in a massive tree at Waam. Heard 2-3 other individuals. Seems unusually common at Waam, a testament to the wildness of this remote place. IUCN status: Vulnerable.
75	Pygmy Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus weiskei</i>	One in flight over savanna at Ndalir.
76	Papuan Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus spilothorax</i>	One in flight at the Munia spot in the rice fields on the road to Wayau (GPS).

77	Brown Goshawk	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>	One in flight in savanna on the road to Ndalir.
78	Collared Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter cirrocephalus</i>	One near the start of the narrow track leading to Waam.
79	Whistling Kite	<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>	Most common raptor. Seen at Ndalir, Waam, and most commonly at Wayau.
80	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	Regular in small numbers. Seen at Ndalir, Wayau, and Maro mangroves.
81	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	A couple of immature birds in flight over Wayau marshes.
STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae			
82	Barking Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>	A vocal and responsive pair in savanna northwest of Wayau village (GPS).
CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae			
83	Blue-winged Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo leachii</i>	Fairly common by voice at Waam, both in savanna and swamp forest. Most common in the swamp southwest of camp. I also had one pair in very open savanna at Wayau.
84	Spangled Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo tyro</i>	Trans-Fly and Aru Island Endemic. One pair in paperbark savanna at Ndalir (GPS). A couple of pairs at Waam, mainly in swamp forest southwest of camp.
85	Rufous-bellied Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo gaudichaud</i>	Several seen at Ndalir, and fairly common at Waam, including at the swamp forest. Amazing to have three kookaburras in the same spot!
86	Forest Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus macleayii</i>	Most common in swamp forest behind Ndalir. A couple also recorded at Waam and Wayau.
87	Sacred Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>	Many along the road to Ndalir. A couple in savanna at Wayau.
88	Yellow-billed Kingfisher	<i>Syma torotoro</i>	Common by voice in monsoon forest at Ndalir, though typically hard to see. I had one wonderful encounter when a bird landed about 4m away from me. Also provided a wakeup call in the village of Wayau.
CORACIIFORMES: Meropidae			
89	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	Common and conspicuous at Wayau.
90	Rainbow Bee-eater	<i>Merops ornatus</i>	Just a few at Ndalir and Waam, in open habitat.

CORACIIFORMES: Coraciidae			
91	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	Surprisingly, only one seen, along the drive to Sota.
FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae			
92	Australian Hobby	<i>Falco longipennis</i>	Nice perched scope view in savanna adjacent Wayau marsh.
PSITTACIFORMES: Cacatuidae			
93	Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>	Several in swamp forest at Waam, and in savanna at Wayau.
94	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Fairly common at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
PSITTACIFORMES: Psittaculidae			
95	Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot	<i>Micropsitta keiensis</i>	A couple flew over monsoon forest at Wayau.
96	Red-winged Parrot	<i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>	One pair flew over savanna at Waam.
97	Eclectus Parrot	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>	Occasional noisy flyovers at Ndalir and Waam. Strangely, all the birds I saw were males.
98	Red-cheeked Parrot	<i>Geoffroyus geoffroyi</i>	Common by voice at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau. I found a nest in a tree cavity high in a dead snag in savanna at Waam.
99	Orange-breasted Fig-Parrot	<i>Cyclopsitta gulelmitertii</i>	A few in savanna at Waam. Quite common in the swamp paperbark forest southwest of camp at Waam.
100	Yellow-streaked Lory	<i>Chalcopsitta scintillata</i>	One perched up on a dead snag in swamp forest at Waam. A couple other flyovers.
101	Black-capped Lory	<i>Lorius lory</i>	One pair flew over at Ndalir.
102	Coconut Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>	Most common parrot. Frequent flyovers, mainly of small groups of up to 15. Only seen perched a few times, though perched views did allow examination of the black-barred red breast and dull yellowish nape. If Rainbow Lorikeets are indeed present in the Trans-Fly, most of my sightings of <i>Trichoglossus</i> should go down as "Lorikeet sp."

103	Rainbow Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus moluccanus</i>	In savanna at Waam, I observed a pair of lorikeets that were consistent with Rainbow. The red on their breast appeared completely unbarred, and they had a large yellow nape patch. They also struck me as slightly larger than Coconut Lorikeets.
PASSERIFORMES: Pittidae			
104	Papuan Pitta	<i>Erythropitta macklotii</i>	Found an adult with a juvenile in monsoon forest at Waam. Perhaps a slight extension of the known range. Completely silent; never heard one vocalize.
PASSERIFORMES: Ptilonorhynchidae			
105	Black-eared (Spotted) Catbird	<i>Ailuroedus melanotis</i>	Heard several times in monsoon forest at Waam, but never managed to see one, despite trying. Always far away, and seemingly unresponsive to calls.
106	Fawn-breasted Bowerbird	<i>Chlamydera cerviniventris</i>	Handful seen at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau, both in savanna and in monsoon forest. Bony knows of the location of a bower, but we didn't have time to visit it.
PASSERIFORMES: Maluridae			
107	Emperor Fairywren	<i>Malurus cyanocephalus</i>	One group in mangroves at Ndalir. Also heard in monsoon forest at Waam a couple times.
108	White-shouldered Fairywren	<i>Malurus alboscapulatus</i>	A few in savanna at Waam and Wayau. Also seen in the "Grassbird" marsh on the way to Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Meliphagidae			
109	Mimic Honeyeater	<i>Meliphaga analoga</i>	Several seen at Ndalir and Waam. Though to be honest, I didn't pay a huge amount of attention to Meliphagas, and might have missed the Puff-backed Honeyeaters, which were also probably present.
110	Yellow-gaped Honeyeater	<i>Meliphaga flavirictus</i>	Saw one bird in Waam monsoon forest that was a good fit for this species: relatively small and compact, dark, and showing a broad and conspicuous yellow gape. Perhaps an extension of the known range.

111	Graceful Honeyeater	<i>Meliphaga gracilis</i>	Seen in mangroves at Ndalir, and in various habitats at Waam.
112	Brown-backed Honeyeater	<i>Ramsayornis modestus</i>	One of the most common birds in savanna habitat. Remarkably abundant in paperbark swamp forest at Waam.
113	Rufous-banded Honeyeater	<i>Conopophila albogularis</i>	Less common than I expected. Seen a few times in open savanna adjacent the Wayau marshes, and once in the Maro mangroves. Far duller and less attractive than suggested by the illustration in the Lynx guide.
114	Dusky Myzomela	<i>Myzomela obscura</i>	Pretty common by voice, though inconspicuous. Seen in mangroves, savanna, and swamp forest at Ndalir, Waam, and the Maro mangroves.
115	Red-headed Myzomela	<i>Myzomela erythrocephala</i>	One of the most common of a limited set of birds I encountered in the Maro mangroves. Quite a beauty! Better than the book.
116	Brown Honeyeater	<i>Lichmera indistincta</i>	Fairly common in the open paperbark savanna adjacent Wayau marsh.
117	Blue-faced Honeyeater	<i>Entomyzon cyanotis</i>	Seen once at the start of the Waam entrance track, and a couple times in open paperbark savanna at Wayau. Good-looking beast of a honeyeater!
118	White-throated Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus albogularis</i>	Fairly common in savanna at Ndalir. Also a couple sightings in savanna at Waam.
119	Tawny-breasted Honeyeater	<i>Xanthotis flaviventer</i>	One of the most common birds, especially by voice. Seen at all sites, in savanna, swamp forest, and monsoon forest.
120	Spotted Honeyeater	<i>Xanthotis polygrammus</i>	Seen once in monsoon forest at Waam.
121	Little Friarbird	<i>Philemon citreogularis</i>	Uncommon at Ndalir and Waam, but quite common in open savanna at Wayau.
122	Helmeted Friarbird	<i>Philemon buceroides</i>	Seen and heard a few times in savanna at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau. Seen twice feeding in a tree with huge red flowers.
123	Noisy Friarbird	<i>Philemon corniculatus</i>	Fairly common, especially by voice at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau, mainly in savanna. I never figured out the difference in habitat preference among these sympatric friarbirds, if one exists.

PASSERIFORMES: Acanthizidae			
124	Rusty Mouse-Warbler	<i>Crateroscelis murina</i>	Seen in monsoon forest at Waam. First heard, then recorded, and called in to confirm identity. Seemingly an extension of the known range.
125	Tropical Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis beccarii</i>	A couple groups heard in the canopy of monsoon forest at Waam. They stayed very high, and I never managed to see them.
126	Green-backed Gerygone	<i>Gerygone chloronota</i>	Heard a few and saw one in the monsoon forest at Waam.
127	Fairy Gerygone	<i>Gerygone palpebrosa</i>	Heard a couple in monsoon forest at Waam.
128	Yellow-bellied Gerygone	<i>Gerygone chrysogaster</i>	Heard a couple and saw one in monsoon forest at Waam.
129	Large-billed Gerygone	<i>Gerygone magnirostris</i>	Heard a few and saw a couple in monsoon and swamp forest at Waam.
130	Mangrove Gerygone	<i>Gerygone levigaster</i>	Fairly common, at least by voice, in mangroves at Ndalir and at Maro Mangroves.
PASSERIFORMES: Pomatostomidae			
131	Gray-crowned Babbler	<i>Pomatostomus temporalis</i>	Fairly common in savanna habitat at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau. Always in small, vocal groups of ~8 individuals. Great bird with lots of character. Uncannily vocally similar to <i>Turdoides</i> babblers, despite being in a different family.
PASSERIFORMES: Cinclosomatidae			
132	Painted Quail-thrush	<i>Cinclosoma ajax</i>	This was a major target for me. By listening for its vocalizations, recording it, then calling it in, I found it fairly easily in monsoon forest at Waam. Vocally remarkably similar to jewel-babblers. Mega bird, like all members of this small Australasian family!
PASSERIFORMES: Campephagidae			
133	Black-faced Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>	Saw one in savanna at Ndalir. Large numbers in savanna at Wayau; many dozens in loose flocks, flying high, perhaps migrating.
134	White-bellied Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina papuensis</i>	Present in small numbers in savanna at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
135	Common Cicadabird	<i>Edolisoma tenuirostre</i>	Heard in monsoon forest at Waam.

136	Black Cicadabird	<i>Edolisoma melas</i>	Heard several times in monsoon forest at Waam. As with many other lowland forest birds, chasing it down for views was not a high priority after having seen many in previous weeks of birding elsewhere in West Papua.
PASSERIFORMES: Pachycephalidae			
137	Gray Shrikethrush	<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>	Small numbers in savanna at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
138	Little Shrikethrush	<i>Colluricincla megarhyncha</i>	Just a couple sightings; once in mangroves at Ndalir, and a couple in monsoon forest at Waam. Vocally very similar to Gray Shrikethrush, and responded to that species' calls.
PASSERIFORMES: Oriolidae			
139	Olive-backed Oriole	<i>Oriolus sagittatus</i>	Seen once in swamp forest at Waam, and once in savanna at Wayau.
140	Green Oriole	<i>Oriolus flavocinctus</i>	One sighting in beachside scrub at Ndalir.
PASSERIFORMES: Artamidae			
141	White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>	One in flight over swamp forest at Waam.
142	Black-backed Butcherbird	<i>Cracticus mentalis</i>	Common, mainly in savanna habitats, especially by voice. Seen at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
143	Black Butcherbird	<i>Cracticus quoyi</i>	Seen two times, both in mangroves; at Ndalir and Maro mangroves.
144	Australian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>	One group seen at mid-day near Waam camp. Also saw one at the "Grassbird" marsh on the way to Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Rhipiduridae			
145	Northern Fantail	<i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>	Surprisingly uncommon. Only a few seen and heard in monsoon forest at Waam.
146	Black Thicket-Fantail	<i>Rhipidura maculipectus</i>	Seen twice, both in mangroves; at Ndalir and Maro mangroves.
147	Willie-wagtail	<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>	Common in open and often degraded habitats. Most common and conspicuous at Wayau.
148	Rufous Fantail	<i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>	One seen in a little flock of Large-billed Gerygones in swamp forest at Waam.

PASSERIFORMES: Dicruridae			
149	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus bracteatus</i>	Fairly common at all sites, both in savanna and forest. I saw birds that seemed to represent both the resident Papuan taxon and the migrant Australian one. Birds with obviously green gloss, especially on the wings, bolder spangles below, and a less forked tail, seemed like a good match for Australian Spangled Drongos.
PASSERIFORMES: Paradisaeidae			
150	Glossy-mantled Manucode	<i>Manucodia ater</i>	Fairly common though shy and inconspicuous, except by voice, in savanna and forest habitats, at Ndalir and Waam.
151	Greater Bird-of-Paradise	<i>Paradisaea apoda</i>	I encountered several display areas in the monsoon forest at Waam. Also heard calling from swamp forest adjacent Wayau marsh.
PASSERIFORMES: Monarchidae			
152	Friiled Monarch	<i>Arses telescopthalmus</i>	Heard and seen just a couple times in monsoon forest at Waam.
153	Leaden Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra rubecula</i>	Saw one female at Ndalir and one male at Wayau, both in open savanna habitat.
154	Paperbark Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra nana</i>	Searched long and hard for this bird, and finally found a pair in open paperbark savanna adjacent Wayau marsh.
155	Shining Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra alecto</i>	Seen only in mangroves, at Ndalir and Maro.
PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae			
156	Torresian Crow	<i>Corvus orru</i>	Single birds seen a couple times along the roads to Ndalir and Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Petroicidae			
157	Lemon-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Microeca flavigaster</i>	I encountered the occasional singing bird in paperbark savanna at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
158	Papuan Scrub-Robin	<i>Drymodes beccarii</i>	Had fantastic views of a single bird on the forest floor in monsoon forest at Waam. Seemed to be responding to the call of Painted Quail-Thrush. Perhaps a slight extension of the known range.

PASSERIFORMES: Alaudidae			
159	Australasian Bushlark	<i>Mirafra javanica</i>	Heard one singing at the large open field on the way to Ndalir. Fairly common in the grassland adjacent the marsh at Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Cisticolidae			
160	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Heard one singing at the large open field on the way to Ndalir. Fairly common in and around the marsh at Wayau.
161	Golden-headed Cisticola	<i>Cisticola exilis</i>	Just one heard singing from the entrance road at Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Acrocephalidae			
162	Australian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>	Just one singing bird at the munia site in the ricefields on the way to Wayau. Singing from thick scrub growing out of a drainage canal. Strangely absent from the reedbeds at Wayau marsh.
PASSERIFORMES: Locustellidae			
163	Tawny Grassbird	<i>Cincloramphus timoriensis</i>	Several birds actively singing at mid-day, at the "Grassbird" marsh on the road to Wayau (GPS). The tertials were strongly edge in white, but other plumage characteristics and voice clearly pointed to Tawny and not Fly River Grassbird.
PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae			
164	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Just one, at Ndalir.
165	Tree Martin	<i>Petrochelidon nigricans</i>	Small groups in flight at Ndalir and Wayau.
PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae			
166	New Guinea White-eye	<i>Zosterops novaeguineae</i>	One in front of the police station in Sota. Somewhat surprising. Was singing, and sounded remarkably similar to the New Guinea White-eyes in the lower parts of the Arfak Mountains, far away and in a very different habitat.
PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae			
167	Metallic Starling	<i>Aplonis metallica</i>	One small flock flew over the Maro mangroves.
168	Yellow-faced Myna	<i>Mino dumontii</i>	Heard a few calling from monsoon forest near camp at Waam.

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae			
169	Red-capped Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum geelvinkianum</i>	Fairly common at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau, in forest, mangroves, and savanna.
PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae			
170	Black Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma aspasia</i>	Most common sunbird. Found in mangroves, gallery forest, and savanna, at Ndalir, Waam, and Wayau.
171	Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	Only seen along the coast, in scrub and mangroves at Ndalir and Maro.
PASSERIFORMES: Estrildidae			
172	Crimson Finch	<i>Neochmia phaeton</i>	One seen along the road to Ndalir. About 40 seen in a flock, mixed with both Munia species, in a fallow rice field along the way to Wayau. Astounding array of different plumage aspects, most of which aren't illustrated in the New Guinea field guides.
173	Gray-crowned Munia	<i>Lonchura nevermanni</i>	Trans-Fly Endemic. Large flock of about 60, mixed with Crimson Finch and a couple of Black Munias, in rice fields along the way to Wayau (GPS). I made some voice recordings, which will be the first for xeno-canto once I upload them.
174	Black Munia	<i>Lonchura stygia</i>	Trans-Fly Endemic. 3-4 seen in a large flock of Crimson Finches and Gray-crowned Munias, in rice fields along the way to Wayau (GPS). Two also seen in the marsh along the entrance road to Wayau (GPS), and another two at the "Grassbird" marsh on the way to Wayau (GPS). I made some voice recordings, which will be the first for xeno-canto once I upload them. IUCN status: Near-threatened.
PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae			
175	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Common in Merauke and smaller towns. Introduced.

MAMMAL LIST

MACROPODIDAE			
1	Agile Wallaby	<i>Macropus agilis</i>	Seen a couple times in savanna at Waam, and near the village of Wayau. Never sticks around for long in New Guinea!
2	Dusky Wallaby / Pademelon	<i>Thylogale brunii</i>	Locally surprisingly common inside of monsoon forest at Waam. Undoubtedly a major food source for New Guinea Harpy Eagle
MURIDAE			
3	Giant White-tailed Rat	<i>Uromys caudimaculatus</i>	Two individuals seen both nights in a narrow strand of swamp forest near camp at Waam. Rodents can be hard to ID, but the large size, bright white underparts, and half-white naked tail of this species seem distinctive.



Sandy beach at the mouth of the Maro River, just north Merauke.