

Indonesia

**Lesser Sundas, Sulawesi, Sangihe, Talaud,
Halmahera, & Moluccas**



**Independent Budget Birding
June 8 – September 4, 2017**

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www.budgetbirders.com

Overview:

From June-August 2017, Melissa and I traveled independently throughout the Lesser Sundas, Sulawesi, Sangihe, Talaud and the Moluccas in Indonesia. In total we visited twenty-three separate islands. Since there are already many good reports that cover the majority of this region, I have decided to just give brief overviews of each spot we visited mostly focusing on updated locations for target birds and some updated cost information. For additional information on the region check out the reports from others (listed below) especially the reports from Gareth Knass which are still mostly current and very detailed. For information on exact species lists for each location visited, search in eBird. Overall the trip went very well and we thoroughly enjoyed our extended visit to Indonesia. To date, Indonesia has become both mine and Melissa's favorite country and we both highly recommend a visit. Almost everyone we met was extremely friendly and not once did we feel unsafe while traveling around the country. Ease of independent travel, cost of travel, and quality of birds makes Indonesia an amazing birding destination and should be at the top of the list for everyone. I'll be the first to admit that this report isn't nearly as thorough as I would like it to be. Unfortunately due to time constraints (birding and work wise), I'm not going to have time to work on this report much more and instead of postponing its publication until it is "complete" figured it would be more beneficial to publish now as there is still a lot of good information to gain from the report. For more information about the trip, check out blog posts on all the islands in the [Indonesia section of our blog](#)

Itinerary:

June 8-10: Sumba
June 11-14: Timor
June 15-16: Rote
June 17-19: Alor
June 21-22: Lombok
June 23: Bali
June 24-25: East Java
June 26: Bali
June 28-July 4: Flores & Komodo
July 6-10: Halmahera
July 11-13: Morotai
July 15-19: Obi
July 21-24: Talaud
July 25-26: Sangihe
July 27- August 5: Sulawesi
August 6-9: Singapore (needed to leave country to get new visa)
August 10-13: Tanimbar
August 14-18: Kai Kecil & Kai Besar
August 20-23: Buru
August 24: Haruku
August 25: Boano
August 26-September 3: Seram
September 4: Ambon

Weather:

Weather is very important in birding Indonesia and should play a large factor in deciding where and when to visit. During the height of the rainy season, it can be very difficult to bird the Moluccas especially when attempting to visit some of the more remote areas of Obi, Buru, and Seram. For this reason, we started our trip in the Lesser Sundas and tried to postpone our time in the Moluccas as far as possible. We did not have many problems with weather during our trip with the only major rain issues occurring during our time on Obi.

Logistics:

Logistics become a very important part to birding in Indonesia due to the amount of island hopping involved. Most islands can easily be visited by plane, but there are exceptions. The first step to planning a trip to Indonesia is to familiarize yourself with the plane and ferry schedules for the islands you plan on visiting. Sometimes it is very easy to get from one island to another, but other times it is necessary to fly back to a “hub” city.

Familiarizing yourself with all of the schedule flights between islands will make planning a lot easier. Kupang in Timor and Ambon City on Ambon are both very important hubs when planning a trip to the Lesser Sundas and Moluccas. When booking tickets I highly recommend using nusatrip.com. Early on I booked a number of flights through Kiwi.com, but on average, kiwi is much more overpriced than [nusatrip](http://nusatrip.com). Also, it is often VERY inexpensive to change dates for scheduled flights. This is especially true for low cost carriers such as Lion Air and Wings Air. Being able to cheaply change flight dates, we were able to adjust our schedule on more than one occasion. Most changes were \$3-\$10 USD per ticket with the most expensive change I made being on a Garuda Airlines flight that was \$45 per ticket.

For ferries, especially to the more remote islands, it is very necessary to make sure you familiarize yourself with the days/times that they depart. For the most part, I would recommend flying over using a ferry when possible. Often there isn't too much of a price difference and you save a ton of time by flying. For example, we flew to Talaud instead of taking the ferry. This only cost us about \$50 extra per person, but saved us almost two days of birding time. Well worth it. When we did use ferries, we always got a private room. This way we could store our gear in the room while we bought food/ate near the port. All private rooms had electric outlets as well which wasn't always the case in the general area. If you're not concerned about getting a private room, I wouldn't worry about the ferry being “full”. There's always room for one more on an Indonesian ferry.

Acknowledgments:

There are plenty of people that made this trip possible/easier due to their generosity in giving info, advice, and help. In particular I want to give thanks to a few people that really helped us along the way. Thanks to Michael Kearns for joining us for about 3 weeks during the trip (Sulawesi, Sangihe, & Talaud). Thanks to Julien Mazenauer for bringing Melissa a new pair of binoculars after hers were lost/stolen on Obi (read about that on the [blog](#)) and for sharing info while birding Sulawesi at the same time. Thanks to Marc Thibault (Obi & Morotai) and John Mittermeier (Obi) for their detailed info and advice on visiting Obi and Morotai. Thanks to Rob Hutchinson for his info about searching for Madanga on Buru. Thanks to Mark O'Hara and Berenika Mioduszewska for the help and hospitality on Tanimbar. Thanks to Gareth Knass for his outstanding trip reports and giving me a bunch of info that gave me the desire to go look for Seram Thrush. And of course, thanks to all the extremely welcoming locals for their help along the way whether that was allowing us to stay at your house, giving us a ride to the next town, or helping us as porters. Thanks!

Resources:

www.ebird.org: all checklists from the trip can be searched for on eBird

www.xeno-canto.org: Recordings for the trip were downloaded from here, my recordings will eventually be added

www.cloudbirders.com: Access to dozens of trip reports. Below are a few I took with me.

Books/Reports:

I used a number of trip reports during our travels. These are the most useful.

[Lesser Sundas, 2016](#): Gareth Knass

[Sulawesi, Halmahera, Sangihe, Talaud, 2014](#): Gareth Knass

[Moluccas, 2015](#): Gareth Knass

[Lesser Sundas & Moluccas, 2009](#): George Wagner

[Sulawesi and Halmahera, 2014](#): Rob Gordijn

[Lesser Sundas, 2015](#): Herve Jacob

GPS Tracks, Waypoints, & Maps.me

For those who don't own a GPS, buy one. The Garmin Etrex 30 is extremely easy to use and I feel is essential to any independently traveling birder. Using a GPS and a set of coordinates helps to eliminate the guess work in directions and really makes it easier for others to find the same location. In this report I try to use GPS coordinates as much as possible and once again, encourage others to do the same.

If you don't want to buy a GPS, a great alternative (and to be honest, a better alternative for general waypoint marking) is the app Maps.Me. This free app allows you to download offline maps for anywhere in the world. You can easily upload a kmz file that will import all the waypoints and tracks from this trip into the map which is great for use in the field. You can also mark your own sightings in the app and then upload the kmz after your trip for others to use.

KMZ file of all waypoints and GPX tracks in this report are at the follow link:

<https://www.amazon.com/cloudrive/share/u0VI08W363kKUUpG66Q5W8kSehnsGXQCmGXjYphWcXn>

If you do buy a Garmin GPS, you can download free maps from the following site:

OSM Map: http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/OSM_Map_On_Garmin/Download: Download maps from around the world for Garmin

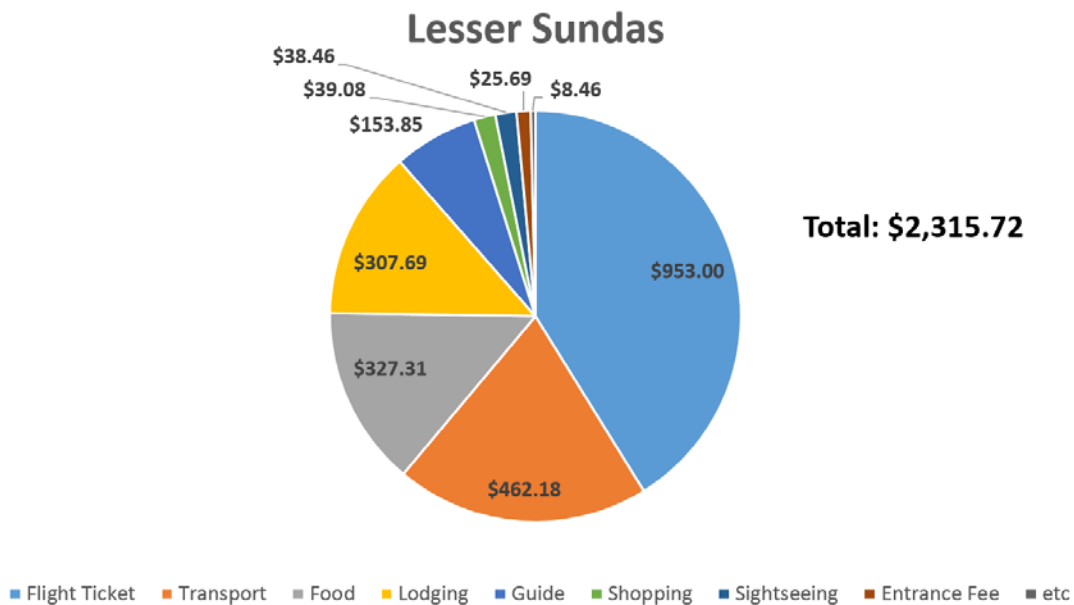
Google Translate

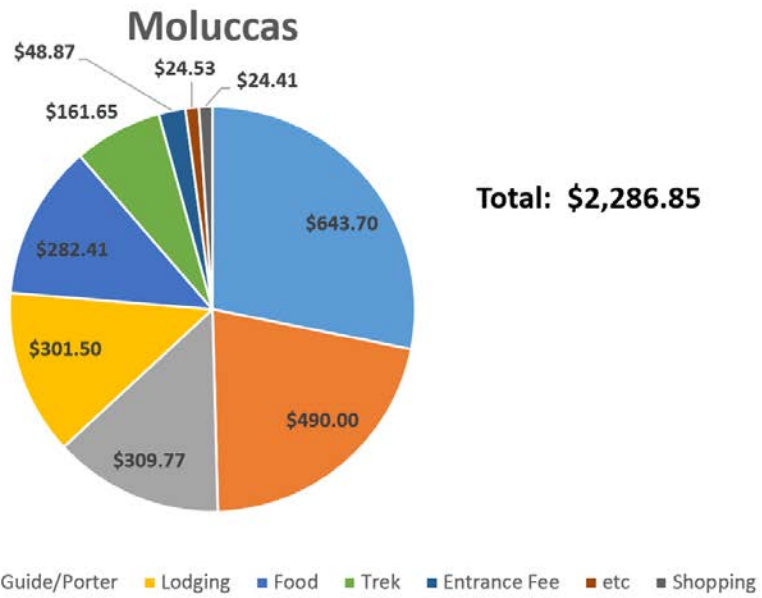
Another extremely useful app is google translate. You can download Indonesian and then use it offline. This is extremely helpful when trying to communicate with porters, drivers, and other people that you meet.

Budget:

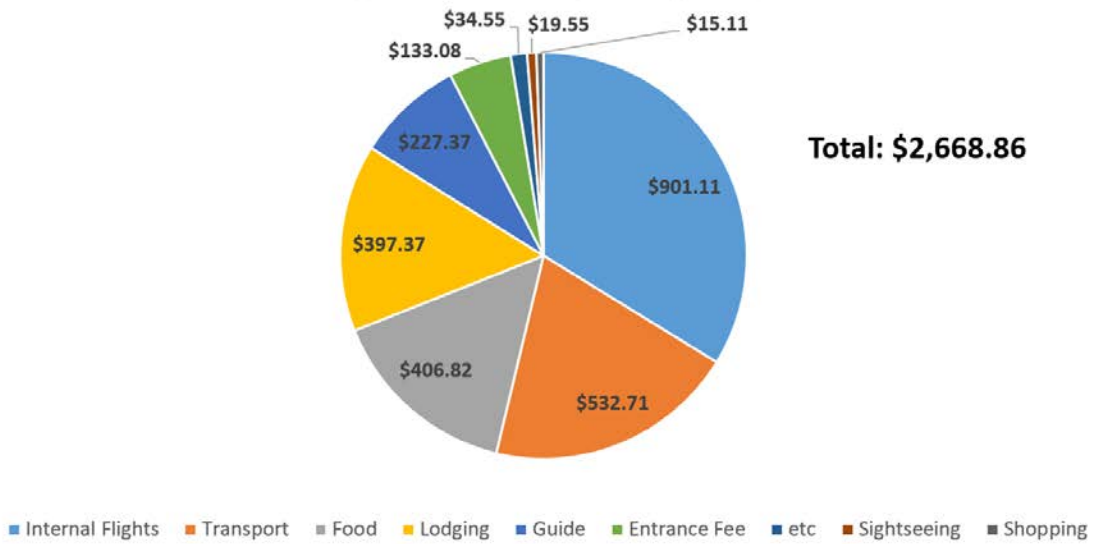
Overview

We kept track of costs over the duration of the entire trip. Below is a break down based on the costs we spent in different regions. Costs are for two people, with a few shared costs split amongst three during the time Michael joined us in Sulawesi. The Lesser Sundas section is a bit inflated as it also includes a last minute decision to visit Lombok/East Bali which resulted in additional airfare of over \$500.





Sulawesi, Halmahera, Sangihe, Talaud



Sumba

Yumbu: We arrived at the airport at 1120, but it took a while to get our bags and haggle a good transportation cost and by the time we left it was already 1230. We arrived at Yumbu Bridge (-9.651082, 120.39251) around 1300. We crossed the bridge and started to walk up the hillside south of the road. It was very windy and few birds were around. Luckily it only took about five minutes to flush our first Sumba Buttonquail (-9.651901, 120.394332). Over the next 45 minutes we flushed four more in the grass south of the road. Other than a few Australian Bushlarks, no other birds were seen (way too windy).

Km51 (-9.72491, 119.94124): We birded here for an evening (1600-1900) and a morning (0500-1130). The first evening we hung around the first clearing, but didn't see too much exciting except a Pale-shouldered Cicadabird and Black-naped Fruit-dove. As evening fell we had a Mees's Nightjar at the first part of the clearing (-9.731633, 119.939501) and a Little Sumba Boobook near the pond in the first forest patch (-9.730744, 119.939609). The following morning we walked in at dawn and started the morning just past the second forest patch at the very large clearing. Early we had two Red-naped Fruit-doves perched up in the open, a flock of 25 Sumba Green-Pigeons also perched up nicely, lots of Green Imperial Pigeons, and Wallacean Cuckooshrike. We also flushed an Orange-footed Scrubfowl in the middle of the field. We then worked our way back toward the first forest patch finding Chestnut-backed Thrush (both forest patches), Sumba Flycatcher (both forest patches), Sumba Warbling-Flycatcher, Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher (second forest patch), Shining Bronze-cuckoo, and Brown Goshawk. By about 0800 we had seen all of our main targets except Sumba Brown Flycatcher. The book says they are mostly found down low, but a few reports alluded to them being seen in the canopy around the first clearing. After three hours of searching we finally found a single bird high in the canopy at the end of the second forest patch (-9.737367, 119.93881).

Km 68-72: We only visited here a single afternoon and didn't have much. We hitched a ride to -9.651996, 119.829728 and walked back through the forest. Our targets were Sumba Hornbill, Marigold Lorikeet, and Sumba Myzomela. We didn't find any of them and didn't see many birds at all. About thirty minutes into our walk a ranger showed up and said we had to pay for bird watching and photography. Since it was already afternoon and we didn't want to pay for the full day, we said we'd just walk back along the road to Lewa. So we did. When we reached ~km 65 we waited around for dark. A few Elegant Pittas were calling and after dark we had a pair of Sumba Boobooks at -9.668057, 119.853238. We continued walking back towards Lewa and at the other edge of the forest patch had a pair of Little Sumba Boobooks. About one km further we had a Barn Owl fly across the road. We then hitched back.

Km 88: We left at 0400 as we didn't know if we'd have any trouble finding the trail to the view point. It only took 40 minutes to get there and the trail is very obvious just at the km88 marker (-9.664059, 119.721537). The trail heads downhill, crosses two very small streams, and then enters a large field where it continues through the field for about 700 meters until a good viewpoint at -9.664407, 119.728117. At first light (0620) we heard and I quickly saw a pair of Orange-crested Cockatoos flying by low through the trees. Between 0630-0700 we saw six Sumba Hornbills, but didn't see any after that. While waiting around, a few Marigold Lorikeets, Great-billed Parrots, and Red-cheeked Parrots flew by. By 0745 we hadn't even heard the cockatoos again so we decided to walk around and find another viewpoint close by. We walked over to -9.662712, 119.727236 and had a nice male Sumba Myzomela singing in a tree. I had left my recording gear back at the lookout and while walking back to our initial viewpoint for it, heard a cockatoo and amazingly it was perched very close -- only about 75 meters away from the lookout! I called for Melissa and we both were able to watch a pair from 0800-0810 before they flew off again.

Timor

Logistics: The Kupang airport is outside of the city so you're pretty much at the mercy of the airport taxis. We were quoted 270,000 rupiah to Camplong, but refused to pay more than 200,000 which was finally agreed upon. Alternatively, take a taxi to -10.148219, 123.65047, near Hotel Brenton and from here you can get a bus or bemo to Camplong for 10,000 each

Accommodation: When staying in Kupang, we stayed at Hotel Miliana. It is 175,000 for a fan room and 250,000 for AC, but this can easily be bartered down to 150,000 and 225,000 respectively. The hotel can arrange taxis for the morning for the ferry (70,000) and airport (80,000), but you could get these rides slightly cheaper by arranging them yourself.

Camplong:

Accommodation: We stayed at the Catholic convent (-10.038336, 123.926688). They charged 75,000 per person per night.

Food: This town is terrible for food and being Sunday when we were there, nothing was open. There are only two small restaurants in town, one is terrible and the other alright, but your best bet would be to coordinate with someone to just cook for you.

Logistics: Easy to walk to the birding site as it is just up the road from the Catholic Convent

Birding: We spent a single afternoon here (1100-1830). It was windy, but still fairly birdy the entire time. We started along the main track and then walked the trail system near the hamlet a few times. Slaty Cuckoo-dove was surprisingly common with four seen and a few more heard (Rose-crowned Fruit-dove sounds very similar and was also present). Black-banded Flycatcher was seen along the bamboo on the main track at -10.039237, 123.934758 as well as Timor Stubtail and Tricolored Parrotfinch (just at dusk, coming in to roost in the bamboo?). Along the trail system we had multiple Buff-banded Thicketbirds, Fawn-breasted Whistler, Timor Fantail, Timor Warbling-Flycatcher, Timor Bushchat, Yellow-eared and Streak-breasted Honeyeaters, Black-breasted Myzomela, Timor Heleia, Plain Gerygone, Timor Oriole, and Red-chested Flowerpecker. After dark we had at least six Timor Boobooks calling along the main track with one seen along the section between the Y and the hamlet.

Bipolo:

Logistics: The main road from Kupang to Soe is heavily traveled and it's easy to hitch at any time of the day. We left the Catholic Convent at 0430 and hitched a ride to the turnoff for Bipolo. From here it was a bit trickier to hitch a ride (since it was only about 0500), but we managed to finally hitch on the backs of two motorbikes to Bipolo. From Bipolo we just walked to all the birding locations. After birding the rice paddies, we paid an ojek 20,000 to give us both a ride from the shrimp ponds back out to the main road to save some time and avoid walking the whole way back to the road in the sun. Getting back to the Catholic Convent we were easily able to hitch a ride.

Birding: We spent a single morning here. We started in the dry river bed (0610-0730). We walked in along the dirt road, through the plantation, and then along the dry river bed. Although there were a lot of Timor Fantails, Barred Doves, and Rainbow Bee-eaters, it was very dead otherwise. We heard a Pink-headed Imperial Pigeon in the beginning, but didn't hear one again. Since it was so quiet we gave up and while walking back had a single Pink-headed Imperial-Pigeon fly by in good light. We then made the long walk down to the rice paddie area. The first open part was very dry and the rice had been harvested. It was also very windy and there were very few birds. Just before the shrimp/fish ponds, there were a few fields that still had rice in them and here we had a very large flock of munias that held Scaly-breasted, Pale-headed, and Tricolored. A small group of Black-faced Munias was also seen. We continued along the dirt road into the pond area and finally found a small group of Timor Sparrows at -10.031706, 123.799937. We then hitched a ride back to the main road and spent from 1000-1130 along the main road forest patch. It was very windy and quiet with nothing exciting seen.

Soe:

Logistics: This city is a good launching point to bird OleNasi as well as arrange transport up to Fatumnasi. We reached Soe from the Camplong area via a bus for 20,000 each. The road is very windy and slow, so plan on at least an hour (possibly 1 ½

hours) to travel from Camplong to Soe. It is also very easy to get back to Kupang from Soe. We took a car for 40,000 each directly to our hotel (Hotel Miliana) in Kupang. The drive took about 2 ½ hours.

Accommodation: There are plenty of options in town. I would recommend trying to stay close to the main road for travel convenience. We first checked out Hotel Chaya mentioned in the Knass report, but it was terrible looking and very sketchy so we decided not to stay there. We stayed at Hotel Dena (225,000). It was very nice, but far from the main road so I wouldn't necessarily recommend it.

OleNasi:

Logistics: It is very easy to hitch a ride from Soe to the trailhead since it's on the main road to Kupang. It also is very easy to hitch back after dark.

Birding: From Soe, I birded here for a late afternoon, (1600-1830). Although it was late when I got there, it was still very birdy. My main goal was to find Dusky Cuckoo-Dove. After some trolling, I finally had a bird fly in to playback between the first and second clearings at -9.882909, 124.208293. Also from this spot I had Black-backed Fruit-dove. At dusk I had two Timor Nightjars calling from the first clearing. One bird briefly came in to the edge of clearing where I was able to see it. After that both birds stopped calling and were never heard nor seen again. Timor Boobook was heard calling, but also wouldn't come in. It started to get very windy which didn't help out. I was easily able to hitch a ride back to Soe after dark.

Fatumnasi:

Logistics: If you have time, getting here shouldn't be too expensive, but since we were trying to get there early morning, we ended up paying a bit more. We originally showed up at the turn off the main highway (-9.861725, 124.272298) at 0500 hoping to hitch a ride, but no vehicles were heading that way. Eventually at 0600, we paid 125,000 for a car to take us to Kapan. When we arrived in Kapan around 0700 the weather was terrible (fog and rain) and no one was around. After twenty minutes we found a truck to take us to Fatumnasi for 250,000. We were quoted 100,000 each for ojek as well. On the way down, we hitched a ride from Fatumnasi to Kapan in the back of a crowded truck for 10,000 each at 1530. This time when we arrived in Kapan it was super busy and people were everywhere. We hitched another ride down to Soe in another truck which charged 15,000 per person. Total time from Fatumnasi back to Soe was about 2 hours.

Accommodation: There's only one homestay in Fatumnasi (-9.649975, 124.221859). There are two VERY rustic huts with dirt floors. We were charged 100,000 per person for room and full board. The guy who runs the place was out of town, but his wife and family were still around. The lady was nice, but very clueless, and a huge pain to deal with. We coordinated breakfast for 0445 and ojek for 0500 to take us to the start of the Mt Mutis trail, but at 0445 she was still sleeping! And we ended up finally getting one ojek at around 0545. (This was after spending over an hour the night before trying to coordinate those two simple tasks. We even had a Javanese college student explaining to her in Indonesian what we wanted. It would have been easier to just find the ojek on our own.) Although I don't recommend staying here, there's no other option. Hopefully when her husband is around, things run a little bit smoother.

Fatumnasi Forest:

Logistics: The dirt road starts at the southern edge of town about 1 km from the homestay at -9.65669, 124.223709. From here you can walk the dirt road or take a small trail at -9.65895, 124.221525 which eventually connects back with the main dirt road.

Birding: During our entire journey up to Fatumnasi, the weather was terrible (foggy/rainy/windy). Just as we arrived at 0900, the weather cleared and it became very nice out. We headed down the road to the dirt road at the southern edge of town. From here we took the small trail that starts at -9.65895, 124.221525 and followed it down to the two stream crossings and to a large clearing (-9.662883, 124.215089). The weather the rest of the day rotated between sunny and very foggy. We had a small group of Mount Mutis Parrotfinches just past the stream crossing at -9.661744, 124.216371. At the edge of the clearing we had a Timor Drongo. We walked back to the homestay for lunch and then once again birded the same area in the afternoon. For the afternoon we stayed on the main dirt road. We didn't see too much more (mostly foggy), but towards evening we had a small group of Olive-headed Lorikeets fly in and provide good views. This was our first sighting as no Eucalyptus was blooming. Luckily

on our walk out I heard Iris Lorikeet near the large bend. Melissa located the pair perched, but they quickly flew off, we were only able to see them in flight as they flew right by us.

Mt Mutis:

Logistics: The trailhead is about 6km from the homestay. We originally tried to coordinate ojek for 0500 for 50,000 each, but only got one and not until 0545. Working with the people at the homestay can be difficult as they speak no English, no Indonesian, and don't seem to understand charades. Anyway, Melissa rode the ojek to the trailhead while I started hiking quickly. I made it over halfway before the ojek came back for me, I only paid him 20,000 for my short ride. Overall the walk to the trailhead isn't bad and I would recommend just leaving early and walking the 6km verses trying to arrange ojek. The trail starts by a small pond at -9.610256, 124.22383. The trail is an old road and is easy walking to a clearing. To return, we simply walked back to the homestay.

Birding: Due to the logistical issues, we arrived at the trail head around 0630 and hiked fairly quickly to the clearing, arriving around 0700. We spent two hours scanning for imperial-pigeons, but didn't find any. We slowly started walking back down the trail and shortly after starting back, flushed a very close Timor Imperial-Pigeon which provided decent views as it flew past us. A single Sunda Bush Warbler was also seen in the area and Jonquil Parrot was heard, but not seen. On the walk out Pygmy Cupwing was common in the areas where there were a lot of boulders. We also had a few Timor Drongos and Timor Friarbirds. We had a few small flocks of Olive-headed Lorikeets fly by, but overall this species was notably absent on our trip (probably due to the lack of flowering trees). The walk back down was fairly unproductive. We arrived back at the homestay around 1500 and luckily were able to hitch a ride to Kapan by 1540. Although Green Figbird is usually reported in this area, we were unable to find any (our only dip for Timor which we hoped to pick up on Rote, along with seeing Jonquils Parrot).

Rote

Logistics: Getting to Rote can be accomplished by both ferry (fast and slow) and plane. Currently there's a slow ferry that departs Kupang at 0700 (although it is always late and probably won't depart until 0900 or 1000) and there's fast ferries from 0830 (except Tues/Wed) & 1100/1400 depending on the day. Ticket prices are 130,000 standard or 160,000 VIP. We did VIP both ways (AC), but the standard for this short trip really wouldn't be too bad. There's also a single flight each afternoon. Be aware that if there are high winds, the fast ferry won't be running. We originally planned to do Rote before Timor, but the fast ferry wasn't running so we switched and did Timor first. (I recommend being flexible so as to not waste days waiting for the ferry.) The trip takes 2 hours once the ferry gets underway. Once you arrive in Ba'a there will be plenty of vehicles looking for business. We originally had contacted the driver used by Knass, but once he picked us up, it became apparent that he wanted 800,000 per day (1,600,000 rupiah total!) instead of the 800,000 that Knass paid for 24 hours. So we told him we'd find someone else. We paid 400,000 to get to Bolatena. The trip should take just over 2 hours. (Our trip took 3 ½ hours because our driver went the long way through Hundi Hopo/Londalusi. He said the other road was "damaged," but actually this longer route was more damaged and slower than the other way which we took on the way back). So make sure your driver takes the route that stays closest to the water (through Matasio). For the return trip, Rens got us two ojek to go from Bolatena to Pantai Baru for 100,000 each. This took just over an hour. From the main road for the turn off to Pantai Baru, we were easily able to hitch a ride back to town (25,000 per person and another hour.) To save money, your best bet would be to hitch a ride to Pantai Baru from Ba'a and then find a motorbike to drive to Bolatena. This is also faster as the ojek can maneuver better on the potholed road compared to a car.

Accommodation: As with everyone else, we stayed at Rens Maku's house. He was happy to see us (unannounced) and showing up without prior coordination shouldn't be an issue. He gave us one of his beds, which had a mosquito net, but also had some type of bed bug. Usually we set up our light weight tent (essentially just a mosquito net) in dirty/sketchy rooms, but didn't here and I regretted it as the bugs bit me all night. I'd recommend setting up a tent on the bed or just camping out front. Rens also doesn't have running water or much electricity so plan accordingly. We ended up paying 350,000 in total for two people for 1 night, 3 meals, and guiding afternoon and next morning.

Food: Food was only white rice with eggs. Very subpar, so make sure you bring snacks!

Birding: Since our transport went the long way, we didn't arrive to Rens until after 1530. We quickly dropped our bags and headed off for some afternoon birding in the forest patch near Rens house. It was a pretty quiet evening, but we did luck into a pair of Jonquil's Parrots that flew in and landed nearby. At dusk we headed down the dirt road to a clearing at -10.587291, 123.265239. From here, we easily taped in a single Rote Boobook. The next morning there was some confusion as to where we were going birding. Long story, but we ended up hitching a ride on ojek to the forest near the lake referenced in Knass. This cost 20,000 each. In this patch of forest we found Rote Leaf-Warbler, Rote Fantail, Rote Myzomela (single bird feeding on white flowers in canopy), and a pair of Red-backed Buttonquail. The lake held Australian Darter, Wandering Whistling-Duck, and Little Grebe. By 0800 we hitched a ride back to Rens and headed off in the forest patch near his house. Our only target left was Timor Figbird, and luckily we quickly found a pair. Also in the area we had a single Slaty Cuckoo-Dove and more Rote Fantails and Leaf-warblers. Not sure it is worth trying to bird the forest near the lake unless you do it the first afternoon on the ride in. Birding the forest patches near Rens house is probably good enough for all the targets.

Also, if you plan to visit Ren Maku in Rote please contact me as I would like to provide him with a copy of the photograph I took of the Rote Boobook while we were there.

Alor

Logistics: There are a few flights heading to Alor every day. Our flight left at 0940 and arrived an hour later. At the airport we took a taxi to Apui for 450,000. The drive only takes about 1 hour, 15 minutes and the road is in good condition (only a few potholes). For the ride back down we took ojek for only 50,000 each.

Accommodation: We arrived at the homestay that Knass stayed at and they quickly welcomed us in. The family was very friendly and the kids were very excited to have visitors. They gave us a room in their house (we set up our tent on the bed). In the end we ended up giving them 500,000 for two nights (two people) and a total of 6 meals each. The family's oldest son, Eddie, speaks decent English and could probably be contacted before arrival to give the family notice that you will be coming. His number is 081239942421 and Facebook "Ninzhu Eddy". He should also be very helpful in coordinating ojek from the airport up to Apui for a very reasonable cost. Unfortunately, we found out a week after our trip to Alor that the father of the homestay passed away. Although it will probably still be possible to stay here, be cognoscente that you shouldn't ask to speak with him directly.

Food: The first few meals we ate here were brutal, just white rice and plain ramen. Eventually we asked for hot sauce "pedas" which made the food a bit better. The last three meals we had though were very good with fresh bread, fish, and actually flavored noodles. Not sure if there was a miscommunication in what we wanted to eat or what, but you probably just need to be upfront with what you want. Also, there isn't much available in Apui, so if you buy a few things at the market in town before heading up you can probably ensure you'll eat better.

Birding: The main birding location is the Telecom Trail. The entrance to the trail is located just down the road (100 meters) from the homestay. Turn onto the concrete road and at the end the trail starts. The trail is just over 3 km long and climbs from about 800m up to 1200m. It is also possible to get ojek to the top of the road and just walk down. The first afternoon, we used the latter option as we weren't sure how steep the trail was and we didn't have a ton of time after sorting out sleeping arrangement and not trying to rudely rush off right away. We were charged 50,000 per ojek for the ride to the top (way over priced). We arrived around 1500 and birded down the trail. Along the upper section we heard numerous Timor Bush Warblers and taped in one. We also taped in a Flores Green-Pigeon at -8.29352, 124.733811 (a few more heard). Eucalyptus Cuckoo-Dove and Black-backed Fruit-Dove are common along the trail and we saw multiples and heard many (also taped in). At dusk along the lower portions of the trail multiple Elegant Pittas were heard calling and a single bird taped in. At dusk we walked across town to the "two bridges area" at -8.267301, 124.724264. Here we easily taped in a pair of Alor Boobooks (seen the next night as well). The next morning we left at 0530 and hiked up the trail and walking up really isn't bad. We started the morning from an overlook at -8.283903, 124.732269 and quickly spotted a Flores Hawk-Eagle on the other side of the valley. A quick play of the tape and the birds (there was actually a pair) flew in to investigate giving amazing views. The pair was in the area all day long and seen multiple times along the Telecom trail. At one point Melissa also saw a fledged juvenile circling with the adults so they have successfully nested in the area. The rest of the morning Melissa and I staked out different areas for the myzomela. I finally had brief views of a single male Alor Myzomela at -8.293941, 124.734088 around 1015. We also saw a male at the same location at 1610 in the afternoon, this time getting scope views of it. Both times we staked out the area for about 2

hours before seeing the bird. Way harder than expected! We only heard Alor Cuckooshrike once along the Telecom Trail. The next morning we once again left at 0515 and hiked up the trail. We spent the first part of the morning scoping for the cuckooshrike from the higher portions of the trail, but then decided to walk up to the Telecom Tower and continue further up the road. There's a good view of the next valley from -8.299222, 124.736461 along the road. From here I finally saw two Alor Cuckooshrikes. Other birds seen along the Telecom Trail during our two days of birding included Sunda Bush Warbler, Lesser Shortwing, Flores Spangled Drongo, Black-fronted Flowerpecker, Brown Goshawk, and Sunda Woodpecker.

Lombok

Logistics: We took a flight from Depansar to Mataram, but there are also ferries that run continuously from Padangbai (Bali) to Lembar (Lombok). The flight is only about 30 minutes while the ferry takes 4-5 hours (46,000 per person). The airport is located quite a ways south of Mataram, so it will be necessary to take transportation north to Senggigi. At the airport you can take a DAMRI bus to Senggigi for 35,000 per person. There is a ticket counter located inside the airport just outside of the baggage claim area. The drive takes about 1 ½ hours. For the return, we needed to stop in Mataram to buy some things, so we took a Bemo from Mataram to Lembar (15,000 per person). For the ferry back, we were approached by a bus driver heading to East Java, who offered us tickets (including ferry ticket) to Gilimanuk for 250,000 each. We negotiated and ended up paying 150,000 per person (including ferry ticket) for a nice A/C bus to take us to Gilimanuk. Traveling from Senggigi to Gilimanuk is a long haul. Our ferry left Lembar at 1630 and we finally arrived in Gilimanuk at 0300.

Accommodation: There are plenty of accommodation options available in Senggigi as it is a major tourist destination. Since we were visiting Kerandangan Natural Park, we located a homestay along the access road called Family Garden Homestay. It was cheap and very close to the park so we planned to stay there. We arrived around 2100 and realized that although google maps and maps.me has the homestay along that road, it actually is located closer to Senggigi. The only other options along the access road to Kerandangan Natural Park are very expensive, so I would just recommend staying in Senggigi and taking a taxi to the park (roughly 20,000). The other option (and the one we chose) was to camp at Kerandangan Natural Park. When we arrived at the park at 2100, no one was around, but we noticed a sign that said camping 5,000. We couldn't find the actual campground so we just set our tent up in a nice flat area.

Birding: We arrived at Kerandangan Natural Park at 2100 and right away heard a Rijani Scop-Owl calling. Although the bird was close, it stopped calling as soon as we played the tape. It took until midnight for us to finally get a good look at an owl. The birds never responded to the tape, but were quite vocal all night long. I stayed awake until 0300 and was able to see a few. Most sightings were along the first 500 meters of the main paved trail. The next morning, we birded along the main paved trail looking for Lombok Drongo. Unfortunately we could not locate any. The area wasn't very birdy with only a few decent birds including Rufous-chested Flycatcher, Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher, and Orange-footed Scrubfowl. We finally found the local ranger at 1000 when we were about to leave. He knows the birds well and took us to a place along a side trail where the drongo nested in Oct 2016. Unfortunately it wasn't around. Entrance fee for the park is 100,000 per person.

Bali

Bali Barat National Park/Menjangan Resort

Logistics: This national park is located in western Bali near the ferry town of Gilimanuk. Getting here should be straight forward via bus from Depansar. Since we were arriving from Lombok, we took a bus directly from Lembar (Lombok).

Accommodation: There are a wide variety of accommodation options in the area. We stayed at Lestari Hotel along the main road, which is basic, but clean. It was only 100,000 for a fan room.

Guide: Since this was a last minute add-on and due to the nature of birding this area where having guides in the national park are mandatory, we decided to use a local bird guide named Kuat Wahyude (Yudi), kt.yudi@yahoo.co.id. He charged 2,000,000 for the entire day (0600-1730), which included all entrance fees, snacks, and vehicle. Although pricey, this really isn't a bad option as Black-winged Starling can be very tricky. (Some may even argue that Yudi's price is a steal.) In hindsight, hiring a guide only for the first few hours of the morning is probably more than adequate as all the other spots are outside the national park. Another guide that might be worth contacting (maybe cheaper) is Made Surya, madesuryawestbali@gmail.com. We stopped at his house during the day as he has a few good birds in the area (see below for details).

Birding: Menjangan Resort area: We started the morning in the national park near the Menjangan Resort. We parked the car and walked the dirt roads to the observation tower. At around 0630 a pair of Black-winged Starlings flew over at -8.139726, 114.55528 and then we saw an additional two from the observation tower. Be familiar with their call/song as you often hear them before seeing them. Walking around the area we also came across a pair of Javan Banded Pittas. Although we had a pair of Java Sparrows fly over, this time of year they can be very tricky in the national park as they have finished breeding and have dispersed to the rice paddies. We also had a pair of Bali Mynas in the same area.

Creek Trail: Located at -8.154844, 114.52701 there is a small trail system that runs along a creek and eventually loops back to the main road. This was a fantastic spot for Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher. We briefly visited the site at around 1000 and saw two kingfishers and then on a longer hike in the evening we saw 3 and heard 2 more dwarf-kingfishers. We also found a single Fulvous-breasted Jungle-Flycatcher along the trail at -8.156945, 114.52917 in the evening. Black-thighed Falconet can also be seen in the area often perching on exposed snags.

Campground: Located along the main highway, the national park campground is also one of the release areas for the Bali Myna. There were about 10 young birds in a cage and another 8 (mostly unringed) Bali Mynas flying around the camp ground. With some patience you should have no problem seeing the Bali Myna from the main highway if you don't want to pay to enter the park/pay for a guide. Another option would just be to walk in and ask about getting entrance. During that process you'd probably see the myna well and could either choose to pay and stay or leave at that point. I'm not entirely certain whether you're actually able to camp there any more or not (I asked our guide three times and each time received a different answer). We also saw Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Java Myna, and Gray-cheeked Pigeon here.

"Made Surya" Homestay: I'm not sure of the name of the homestay (-8.237404, 114.51713), but we briefly stopped at Made Surya's house as he currently has a pair of Sunda Scops-Owls roosting in a tree at the corner of his house. There's also a very reliable pair of Javan Banded Pittas beside his house. We also saw Javan Cuckooshrike, Javan Flameback, and a fly-by Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher behind his house. There's also a palm area just down the road from his house that is usually a good location for Yellow-throated Hanging-Parrot (has nested at the location), but we did not see any.

Kingfisher Bridge: There's a bridge at -8.256364, 114.54105 that we saw Javan Kingfisher and Blue-eared Kingfisher from

Bedegul

Logistics: We visited Bedegul from Gilimanuk. Since it was still Ramadan, transportation was very limited. Although we originally planned to take a bus, the only bus at the station in Gilimanuk sat there for two hours waiting for more people and refused to leave. We eventually gave up and instead hired a taxi for 500,000 to drive us there. It took 3 hours along the north route (a bus would take the southern route and take around 5 hours). Leaving Bedegul should not be too difficult, but since it was still the holiday, traffic was terrible and public transportation was nonexistent. It took us 3 hours to get a public bus (only three passed by with the first two being full). It then took over 3 hours just to reach the Ubung Bus Terminal just north of Denpasar (50,000 each). It then took another 2 hours to take a private bemo from Ubung to our hotel near the airport (80,000 total). The trip from Bedegul to Denpasar should normal only take 2- 2 ½ hours if it isn't a holiday.

Accommodation: There are a few homestays along the access road to the botanical gardens. We stayed at Mekar Sari Homestay and paid 200,000 for the night (including breakfast).

Birding: The botanical garden doesn't open until 0800, but I arrived just before sunrise at 0545 and the guard had no problem letting me in early to look for birds. The best area for the Sunda Thrush is supposed to be the Tropical Forest Trail and the gullies that run along it. I spent the entire morning sneaking around the various gullies in the area, but I did not see the thrush.

East Java

Logistics: The ferry from Gilimanuk to East Java runs continuously and takes about 45 minutes (6,500 per person). From here you should be able to take a Bemo to Banyuwangi for 10,000 per person. On the way back to the ferry, we paid 50,000 for a taxi from Banyuwangi since it was still a holiday and no Bemos were available.

Accommodation: We stayed at Hotel Berlin Barlat for 100,000 per night, fan room.

Mount Ijen:

Logistics: The cheapest way to visit Mount Ijen would be to rent your own motorbike, but since we don't do that, we had to look into other options. For our first day, we also wanted to visit the "Blue Fire" so we ended up settling for a tour. The company we went with only charged 250,000 per person which includes the 100,000 nation park entrance fee. We were originally planning on doing the Blue Fire hike independently, but when you factor in transport, entrance, finding gas mask, ect, 250,000 is actually a very reasonable price. Although we went on a tour, we actually left our group at the start as they were slow and we hike much faster than most people. Since there are literally hundreds of people doing the hike, you don't actually need a guide. The second day we hired a car to drive us up in the morning for 500,000. We way overpaid, but it was Ramadan, one of the biggest holidays of the year so no one wanted to drive us up and a large "holiday premium" was needed to be paid. On both days we hitched back down to Banyuwangi.

Accommodation: Although we stayed in Banyuwangi, I'd also recommend staying in Licin. There are plenty of homestays in Licin and getting up to Ijen from there should be a lot cheaper. We didn't stay there because we didn't arrive until late at night, but in hindsight, this would have been a much better option.

Birding: We spent 1 ½ days birding Mount Ijen. On the first day we arrived at 0200 and did the hike for the "Blue Fire". After seeing the flames, Melissa continued to the sunrise point while I very quickly hiked back down the crater trail so that I could be in a good area for Horsfield's Thrush at dawn. Just as it was getting light (before sunrise) I had good looks at a single Horsfield's Thrush along the lower part of the crater trail at -8.072162, 114.22562. From here I started walking down the road where I had multiple Javan Bush Warblers in the open grassy area. Just past here and for the next 1 km down the road, Gray-breasted Partridge was very vocal just after dawn. Although over a dozen birds were heard, all were far off the trail and I never did see one. Melissa saw a single White-bellied Fantail along the crater trail as she was walking back down after sunrise to meet back up with me. We spent the rest of the morning birding down to the 3rd shelter, hitched a ride back to the top, and then walked back down to the 4th shelter. The upper elevation forest is good for Dark-backed Imperial-Pigeon and Pink-headed Fruit-Dove, but we only heard both despite lots of looking and taping. We did see a single Ruddy Cuckoo-dove that responded well to playback. In the afternoon we finally found a pair of White-bellied Fantails at -8.085865, 114.2363 in a mixed flock. Most mixed flocks contained large numbers of Sunda Warbler, Mountain Warbler, and Indigo Flycatchers. Other birds we had included Javan Scimitar-babbler, White-flanked Sunbird, Javan Helaia, Sunda Minivet, Sunda Bulbul, Orange-spotted Bulbul, Crescent-chested Babbler, "eastern" White-breasted Babbler (-8.099028, 114.24131), and Sunda Cuckooshrike. Although we had a single Changeable Hawk-eagle, we never saw any Javan Hawk-eagles. The second day we once again started at the top and spent the entire morning focusing on seeing Pink-headed Fruit-dove and Gray-breasted Partridge. Unfortunately we didn't see either (but heard many). While walking down the main road, there's a dirt road on your right just before the 4th shelter. It is possible to walk this dirt road which connects again along the main road just above the 3rd shelter. This is a good way to get off the main road (and away from traffic). We had a pair of White-bellied Fantails along this road. We also had a single Wreathed Hornbill fly over at the 3rd shelter. We hitched back down around 1400.

Flores

Ruteng

Logistics: There are two main points of entry for Flores; Labuan Bajo and Ruteng. We chose to fly into Ruteng as there is a 0600 flight from Kupang on Timor. From the airport it is a very short distance to nearby hotels. Costs to get into town shouldn't be more than 10,000 per person (although of course they will try to charge you 10x that)

Accommodations: There are plenty of hotel options in Ruteng. We stayed at the Rima Hotel. The owner speaks good English and rooms are decent. 160,000 for two people in economy (shared bathroom) or 225,000 for standard.

Poco Ranaka

Logistics: Located about 7km east of Ruteng, Poco Ranaka provides good access to forest via an old telecom road. After arriving in Ruteng at 0700, we made our way to a hotel and then hitched a ride to the entrance to the road (free, but Bemo shouldn't be more than 10,000 per person). Coming back after dark it was also easy to hitch another ride (20,000 in total). If you arrive before light you probably won't have to pay an entrance fee, but since we didn't get there until 0830, we were charged 100,000 for two people.

Birding: After dropping our bags at Rima Hotel, we headed directly to Poco Ranaka with plans to spend the entire day along the road. Along the lower sections of the road we had Thick-billed Heleia, Crested Heleia, White-rumped Kingfisher (common everywhere), and Melissa had a Flores Green-Pigeon. I was able to call in a Flores Jungle-Flycatcher at -08.62012, 120.51955, 1483m which was the only one of the trip. Also just downhill from that spot I had my only Tawny-breasted Parrotfinch of the trip. From here we continued walking uphill and although it was fairly slow, we managed to find Flores Shortwing (-8.637628, 120.52637) and Pale-shouldered Cicadabird. We turned around at 2050m and slowly worked our way back down to 1850m for dusk. Just after dark we had two Flores Scops-Owls start calling, but neither responded well to tape. We heard another bird walking down the road and at -8.625291, 120.52255 we found a very responsive pair of Flores Scops-Owls and after some searching finally managed very good views of one of them.

Pagal Road

Logistics: Located 26km north of Ruteng (and about 50 minute drive), the road north of Pagal is a known location for a few good birds including Flores Hawk-eagle, Flores Green-Pigeon, and Wallace's Hanging Parrot. We arranged a Bemo through the hotel for a 0500 pickup for 150,000. The guy was 20 minutes late. Returning we hitched a ride (20,000). This road is fairly busy, but there are at least a few good wide spots that allow you to hang out and scan well off the road.

Birding: We arrived shortly after 0600 and started near the beginning of good forest at -8.482325, 120.49558. We spent the first 45 minutes of the day from this location and had two Flores Green-Pigeons (perched), multiple Black-backed Fruit-doves, White-rumped Kingfisher, Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher (pair), and multiple Wallace's Hanging Parrots fly by. After this we slowly started walking downhill. There was a responsive pair of Elegant Pittas at -8.480491, 120.49398 and we also taped in Thick-billed Heleia near here. We only walked about one kilometer down the road before turning around and walking back to our starting point. Along the way back we had one more Wallace's Hanging Parrot fly over. Back at the original spot we once again had a few (probably the same) Wallace's Hanging Parrots fly by. We left around 1000 and didn't spend much time looking for the hawk-eagle since we saw it on Alor.

Golo Lusang

Logistics: Located about 8km south of Ruteng, the road after the pass provides good access to forest. We visited this location twice, both times hitching a ride up from Ruteng (10,000 total in Bemo, 10,000 each on motorbikes). From here we walked down the road until eventually hitching rides back to town (10,000 total both times). This road is narrow and heavily traveled (especially motorbikes). It's pretty annoying to bird.

Birding: Both times we visited this location we had issues with fog. The first time we arrived around noon (after visiting Pagal road in the morning) and the other side of the pass was completely fogged in (despite it being clear and sunny in Ruteng). We spent about 45 minutes walking down the road, but the fog was thick so we gave up and decided to head to Kisol instead. The second time we arrived around 1000 (arriving from Kisol) and just as we arrived the fog once again started to roll in. Luckily this time it wasn't as bad and visibility ranged from around 50 meters to over 300 meters. We spent four hours slowly walking down the road with only one target in mind, Leaf Lorikeet. We finally managed to hear and then see a few from a small lookout at -8.670145, 120.46081. Eye-browed Heleia, Pygmy Cupwing, Red-cheeked Parrot, Black-backed Fruit-dove, and Bare-throated Whistler were also seen along the road. Keep in mind that this area has potential to get fogged in often, so plan accordingly (i.e. go early if you can).

Kisol

Logistics: Located 66km east of Ruteng, the village of Kisol provides a good base camp to explore the nearby forests of Poco Ndeki. The bus terminal for east bound buses is located in Carep, just east of Ruteng (5,000 per person Bemo). When we arrived at around 1400, we were told there weren't any more buses for the day. There was a single private hire car hanging around and after negotiation, we ended up paying 250,000 for a ride to Kisol which took just over two hours. Returning to Ruteng was easy as we simply hitched a ride from the main road outside of the seminary for 50,000 each.

Accommodation: The only place to stay is the Catholic Seminary. We ended up paying 400,000 in total for one room for two nights and five meals (dinner, b/l/d, breakfast).

Birding: The forest, locally known as Poco Ndeki, is a 3.3km walk from the seminary. The road slowly goes uphill before reaching a clearing and then starts to descend back down to another village. We only birded from the start of the forest up to the overlook at -8.842508, 120.662695. The first morning I arrived at the start of the forest at dawn where a few Flores Crows were roosting and easily came in to playback (-8.833607, 120.66268). These birds returned to this area at dusk as well. The only Chestnut-capped Thrush that we saw was at the beginning of a small side trail at -8.834092, 120.66144. Along the main road we saw numerous Black-naped Fruit-doves, Little Cuckoo-dove, and three Dark-backed Imperial-Pigeons (twice responding to playback). We spent a little time scanning from the overlook, but didn't see the hawk-eagle. A lot of time was dedicated to owling at this site. The first evening we tried the forest patch behind the soccer field, but didn't hear a thing. We gave up at 2000 and went back to the seminary for dinner. At about 2100 we could hear two Moluccan Scops-owls calling from our room, but decided to go to bed. I awoke at 0230 and headed back out for owling. I easily taped in the pair of Moluccan Scops-owls that were calling outside of our room along the dirt access road that borders the seminary. I also heard a distant Wallace's Scops-owl from this location. I then moved to the soccer field and spent about 60 minutes there. A single Wallace's Scops-owl distantly called a few times from the opposite side of the road behind the houses, but it was impossible to access the area due to barking dogs and having to sneak around people's houses in the middle of the night. Instead I headed down the road towards the forest and decided to head up the steep hill along a fence at -8.818598, 120.66788. I climbed to the top of the hill (-8.818053, 120.6672) and from here taped in two Wallace's Scops-owl for good views. This was at 0445. That evening I took Melissa to the same spot and we spent one hour after dark playing tape and listening, but the birds never even called. The Moluccans near the seminary were also quiet. We awoke at 0230 and tried for the Moluccans, but again they were quiet. We then moved to the Wallace's Scops-owl spot on the hill and from 0330-0430 didn't hear anything except a distant Moluccan Scops-owl. Around 0430 the Wallace's Scops-owl pair became vocal and were quickly taped in. One bird has a damaged left eye. They stayed about 15 minutes before flying off. From here we walked back down the hill to the road and headed towards the forest in hopes of finding a Moluccan for Melissa to see. Instead another Wallace's was calling at -8.827099, 120.66527 and quickly was taped in just before light at 0520. Owling at this location is tricky. Birds seem to be very quiet at dusk. Wallace Scops-owl in general is difficult as they don't appear to call very often. For the bird near the seminary and the one opposite the soccer field, they would only call one series every ten to fifteen minutes.

Labuan Bajo

Logistics: This tourist town located on the west coast of Flores is the launching point for trips to Komodo as well as a good point to enter and exit the island. There are shuttle buses (110,000 each) that depart Ruteng a few times a day, but when we tried to buy a ticket for the 1700 bus about two hours beforehand, it was already full. Instead we took a bemo (10,000 each) to Mena, the bus terminal on the edge of town for western bound buses. Once again we were told there were no more buses for the day (it was around 1530). Luckily I got a few locals involved in the search and soon a passing car headed towards Labuan Bajo offered us a ride. We ended up paying them 150,000 for two people. The trip took about 4 ½ hours (including a quick stop for dinner).

Accommodation: There are plenty of options in Labuan Bajo, but being the end of the holiday, most places were fully booked. Luckily Blessing Hotel mentioned in Knass, had open rooms and was a good price and clean. We paid 200,000 for the standard room, but economy for 150,000 (shared bathroom) is also available.

Halmahera

Logistics: Although birding takes place on the large island of Halmahera, it is first necessary to fly into the gateway city of Ternate, located west just offshore of Halmahera. From the airport you'll need to take a taxi to the speed boat pier in Kota Bura (0.780852, 127.38838) or the ferry terminal further south. We were originally quoted 150,000 by a taxi driver from the airport which quickly dropped to 100,000, but no one would budge (that is still way overpriced). We decided to walk about 1 km out the airport access road to the edge of town and quickly found a Bemo that took us the rest of the way to the speed boat pier for 40,000 (still overpriced). We arrived at the pier around 0830 and waited for our speed boat to get enough people. By 0930 we left and headed towards the town of Sofifi. The crossing took 50 minutes on a flat ocean and the cost was 105,000 per person. Most people either take a speed boat to Sofifi or Sidangoli. Although there are some birding spots near Sidangoli, Sofifi is the transport hub and getting a ride to Foli should be easier from there. Plus there's no reason to actually waste time birding near Sidangoli as all targets can be found between Foli, Subaim/Buli Road, and Bingara.

Foli

Logistics: Once we arrived in Sofifi, we were quickly greeted by a number of taxi drivers looking for business. From other trip reports it seemed most people pay upwards of 1,000,000 for the drive to Foli. This seemed overpriced to me, but I still figured I'd have to pay a significant amount. We were quite surprised when the first driver quoted us 400,000 for the entire drive! I don't have his name, but his number is 082296746688, might be worth contacting him, although he speaks no English. The drive took just under 4 hours including a quick stop for lunch.

Accommodation/Food: Everyone visiting the Foli area stays at Pak Jeffery's house (1.251168, 128.16318) located just before entering the town of Foli. Although basic, the family is used to catering to birders. Jeffery's mother speaks the most English out of the group. We were charged 100,000 per person per night as well as 100,000 per person per day for food. The food cost was a bit of a surprise as we only ate breakfast and dinner each day, never venturing back for lunch. So it might be best to discuss this beforehand. We were also originally charged an entrance fee of 150,000 per person, but in the end I only paid 50,000 per person as that is what other trip reports have stated.

Birding: The old logging road heading inland from Foli is the main birding spot at this location. The road starts at the edge of town and heads uphill for about 1.5km before flattening out/slightly increasing in elevation. Most of the birding is done between km 2-5, but the road continues on for a long way if you have your own transport. We spent a total of 2.5 days in the area. The first afternoon after arriving, we hiked in and located the start of the lek track near km 2.7 (1.257178, 128.18204). This track splits with left heading to an old quarry and straight heading to a wooden shelter (1.259609, 128.18259). Across the trail from the wooden shelter, another trail on the right starts and after about 350m there is a wooden platform (1.262677, 128.18305) where the Standardwing lek is. The second day we departed at 0400 in order to do some owling as well as get to the lek by dawn. After watching the lek for an hour with at least 2 females and 6 males displaying, we walked out the main logging road to around km 6. We walked back to the shelter near the lek trail and remained there most of the afternoon due to

rain. The next day we started at 0500 and birded from km 1 to km 5 and back, once again spent the afternoon waiting out rain at the shelter. Both days we also ventured down the quarry trail. Below are some remarks for each area.

Km 1-2: The first part of the road is fairly open/degraded, but at dawn and dusk in this area Common Paradise Kingfisher was quite vocal with multiple birds heard/seen (1.25293, 128.17334). The grassy areas along this section are also good for Rufous-vented Bushhen (multiple heard, one seen). Large-tailed Nightjars can be also been seen at dawn/dusk. During one evening we also had a single Varied Goshawk in this area.

Km 2-3: Along this section we had multiple Moluccan Scops-Owls as well as our only Moluccan Owlet-Nightjars (1.25353, 128.18108). The owlet-nightjars were not heard the first evening/morning and it wasn't until the second evening that we found a vocal and responsive pair. Halmahera Boobook was heard in this area, but we didn't try to see it here (having already seen it well the night prior).

Lek Trail (Km 2.7): The track starts at 1.257178, 128.18204 and heads to a wooden shelter (1.259609, 128.18259). From here you take a right which leads to a wooden platform (1.262677, 128.18305). Right at the beginning of the trail there were always several Red-flanked Lorikeets and a few Violet-necked Lorikeets in the mornings. Along the first part of the trail we had Moluccan Monarch, Dusky Myzomela, and White-bellied Cuckooshrike. At the shelter itself we had our only Halmahera Cuckooshrike. The trail from the shelter heads into the woods and goes downhill to the lek. This section is slippery and muddy so use caution. Along the steep section there were some fruiting trees where both Spectacled and Cinnamon-bellied Imperial Pigeons were seen. The area always had a few Long-billed Crows as well. Ivory-breasted Pitta was heard along here and of course a number of Wallace's Standardwings were seen displaying at dawn on one morning. Back at the shelter the main track continues for a little bit, but quickly becomes overgrown. Just before the overgrown area in a small clearing is where we had our only Sombre Kingfishers (1.260334, 128.18148).

Quarry Trail: This trail starts at the very beginning of the Lek Track. Instead of continuing straight to the shelter, take a left and follow the trail a few hundred meters until a large opening with decent views of the surrounding area. This was a good area for Halmahera Paradise Crow, White Cockatoo, Spotted Kestrel, Blue-and-white Kingfisher, and Goliath Coucal. Along the first part of this trail you can scan the far ridgeline which is where our only two Purple Dollarbirds were seen hawking insects over the forest. We also saw Pygmy Eagle scanning from here.

Km 3-5: This section of road heads through open forest as well as multiple large clearings which are good for scanning. Along this section in the evening we heard multiple Ivory-breasted Pittas and were able to easily tape one in. Halmahera Boobook was common by voice and three were taped in at 1.25922, 128.18715. Grey-headed Fruit-Dove is very common and we had small numbers of Blue-capped and Superb Fruit-doves as well as a single Scarlet-breasted Fruit-dove that was taped in at 1.259426, 128.18988. Shining Monarch was heard a few times with a very responsive individual at 1.267043, 128.20015. We spent a lot of time the first morning trolling for White-naped Monarch and finally found a responsive male near km 5 at 1.266469, 128.19806. A few White-streaked Friarbirds, Dusky Myzomelas, Halmahera Flowerpeckers, and Common Cicadabirds were also seen along this section. The only Chattering Lories we had in Foli were heard and briefly seen the second day near the White-naped Monarch spot. A few White Cockatoos were hanging around each morning around km 3.5. The only Common Paradise-Kingfisher heard along this section was near km3 at 1.258569, 128.18577. Noticeably absent (despite lots of looking) was Moluccan Cuckooshrike.

Subaim/Buli Road

Logistics: This road connects the town of Subaim in the north to the town of Buli in the south with a mountain pass at 535m. This allows you to access higher elevation than the Foli area and gives you an opportunity to see a few species that are either uncommon in Foli (Great Cuckoo-dove) or completely absent (Moluccan King-parrot and Halmahera Leaf-warbler). Since we wanted to end the day in Bingara, we contacted the taxi driver who had dropped us off in Foli and offered him 800,000 to pick us up in Foli at 0400, drive to the Subaim/Buli pass, spend a few hours birding, and then drop us off in Bingara at 1400 (total of 10 hours). Although he agreed, later that night he canceled, but told us his friend would drive for us instead. Although this plan worked out well, it probably could be organized a bit cheaper as there was no hesitation when I said that price. From Foli to the pass it took 1 hour. Leaving the pass, it took about 2 ½ hours to make it to Bingara including a stop in Subaim for an early lunch.

Birding: We arrived at the pass (1.015308, 128.30411) just before dawn and started walking downhill towards Buli. Just downhill from the pass, you have a very good view of the hillside for scanning. In the early morning a few pairs of Chattering

Lories flew by with one pair landing close for nice scope views. This species is scarce at Foli, but seems to still be fairly common here. The edges along the road had been cleared for construction, so we quickly decided to walk back up to the pass and instead bird down hill towards the Subaim side. Just downhill from the pass where the road crosses a small bridge we had fantastic views of a calling Moluccan Goshawk (1.015362, 128.30178), a flyover group of Moluccan King-Parrots, and were able to tape in a Great Cuckoo-Dove. Although we dipped the leaf-warbler, our friend had it in this area about a month after us. Continuing downhill there is a large clearing area on your right and just at the edge of the forest we were able to call in a North Moluccan Pitta (1.016608, 128.30037). Continuing further downhill we had a single pair of Moluccan Cuckooshrikes at 1.017901, 128.29859 (the only ones we had on Halmahera). Although it was a successful morning, we never found Halmahera Leaf-warbler even though it was our main target and a lot of effort was spent looking for it. We also didn't see Moluccan Cuckoo which is a possibility here. We left just after 1030 and headed towards Bingara. Unfortunately this area is probably a bit too low for Gilolo Fantail which seems to only be reliable near Weda.

Bingara

Logistics: Located along the main road from Sofifi to Foli, this location is convenient for either a stop going to or coming back from Foli. The main reason for visiting is a chance of seeing Invisible Rail, but there are a good number of other interesting birds to be seen as well. After arriving in town, we asked for Pak Roji, and soon someone had called him and he met us at the store along the main highway. From here the taxi took us down a dirt road, but for the last kilometer we needed to take ojek to make it the whole way to Roji's House at.

Accommodation/Food/Guiding: Roji is used to catering to birders and was fine with our unannounced arrival. We were charged 100,000 per person per day for lodging as well as 100,000 per person per day for food. The food charge was a bit nonsense as the first day we only had dinner. There is also a fee of 150,000 per person per day since this area is considered part of the national park. Roji accompanied us the first afternoon, as well as the next morning until 1200 (I birded the afternoon by myself, as I prefer it and was finally able to convince Roji I could handle being alone). Roji tried to charge us 300,000 per day for guiding, but I ended up giving 150,000 per day since he only went with us two half days (and other than showing us the trails, didn't really need him). Roji is very familiar with the birds though and can be very helpful if you're looking for specific targets. My only concern is that twice he said he heard the rail, but both times he was wrong. He eventually realized his mistake both times, but for someone not experienced, you might count it as a heard only if you trust him (the first time it was a bush-hen and the second time some contact calls of Goliath Coucal!)

Birding: When we arrived around 1400, the water levels of the river behind Roji's house were extremely high due to rain up in the mountains. Therefore access to most areas were underwater. We briefly birded a patch of forest on the other side of the garden seeing Black-chinned Whistler (absent at the other locations I visited), Sombre Kingfisher, and Ivory-breasted Pitta. By evening the water had already dropped about 1 meter, so we were able to walk a little along the river. No rails were heard. The next morning the water had gone down another .5 meter and it was finally easy to walk along the river. We spent the first part of the morning walking up along the river playing tape for the rail, but got no response. The other target here is Moluccan Dwarf-Kingfisher and luckily we had great views of a bird bathing just after dawn at 0.732659, 127.8024. By mid-morning we crossed the river and walked the trail that eventually leads to a standardwing lek although we did not walk all the way to the lek. This trail crosses a small muddy stream (0.72925, 127.80598) which is as far as we made it. We spent two hours sitting here and playing tape intermittently, but got no response from the rail. We were very fortunate though to have a Bare-eyed Rail walk out and stand in the middle of the trail for about 5 seconds offering great views. We headed back to Roji's house around 1000 and then took ojek to a nearby area for Beach Kingfisher. What I originally thought would be a quick 10 km trip to tick the kingfisher turned into a huge ordeal, as you had to drive along a muddy trail through coconut plantations and then walk through a mangrove area that was completely flooded (and the bridges broken). It took a while to get through to the beach without getting too wet, but when we did, we quickly found a pair of Beach Kingfishers in a small mangrove island just off the coast. In the afternoon I returned to the small creek area (0.72925, 127.80598) in hopes of at least seeing the Bare-eyed Rail. I wasn't there more than 5 minutes before I heard two Invisible Rails calling to the left. One bird about 100 meters in called for about 5 minutes while another responded a bit closer for about 1 minute. This was around 1600. I decided to head in after them and after bushwhacking through the swamp for about 50 meters, I stopped and started playback in hopes of getting a response. I ended up sitting there for two hours and never heard the rail again. The only highlight was good looks at a Halmahera Spectacled Monarch. At dusk I returned to the main trail and waited for owls. A Dusky Scrubfowl flew up into a roost and provided great views. After dark, a very responsive Moluccan Scops-Owl was seen in the same area and Barking Owl was heard.

Although I had a very focused effort at Bingara, the area can be good for other species as well. There is a standardwing lek about two hours walk away and further in there is a good area for Purple Dollarbird. Roji can guide you to these areas if interested. As for the rail, I don't know what to make of the situation. I was surprised that after 1 ½ days of searching I only heard the rail once. I'm also not sure what the best time of year to look would be. In past years they have been vocal/seen in July, so it isn't necessarily a bad time to visit. I tried to ask Roji when is the best time, but never really got a good answer. He did say they breed Sept-Nov timeframe. For those visiting, putting in effort for the Bare-eyed Rail would also probably be worthwhile.

Morotai

Logistics: Currently there's a few ways that you could go about getting to Morotai. (1) Take a flight from Ternate (TTE) to Morotai (OTI), (2) take an overnight ferry from Ternate to Daruba, or (3) take a speed boat (or ferry) from Tolebo, Halmahera to Daruba. Since we were already on Halmahera, the fastest and cheapest option for us was to use a speed boat from Tolebo to make the crossing to Daruba. Conveniently, there's a shared car that leaves daily from Bingara to Tolebo very early (0300-0400) to make the 4 hour drive to Tolebo. Pak Roji was able to coordinate this ride for us and drop us off at the main road the morning we needed to leave. Although the car said it would pick us up at 0300, it actually didn't arrive until almost 0430. Roji stayed with us during this time to make sure it showed up. Once arriving in Tolebo, you can either go to the ferry terminal or the speed boat dock (1.724836, 128.01325). I highly recommend the speedboat over the ferry as it is way faster and not much more expensive. We arrived around 0900 and only had to wait about an hour before our boat was filled and we were on our way to Morotai. Cost was 105,000 per person and took two hours. Once we arrived in Daruba, we took a taxi to Desa Mira (Mira Village) for 200,000. This drive took about 45 minutes. When leaving, we once again took a taxi from Desa Mira to Daruba (200,000) and stayed in town for the night. The next day we flew out of the airport on the daily flight that leaves at 1300 for Ternate (45 minute flight).

Accommodation: In the main town of Daruba there are a few options. The nicest hotel is Hotel Ria (~400,000 per night), but we stayed at Pacific Hotel (275,000 /AC). The room was basic, but had AC. Also apparently there is no WIFI on the entire island (but 3G data was decent in town). In Desa Mira, we arrived at the Kapala Desa's (village head) house and was greeted by his daughter who speaks basic English. Both of her parents were gone, but she had no problem welcoming us in and telling us to wait for her parents to arrive home. In the end we ended up spending one night at their house camping in the front yard (they gave us a room, but it was very hot and more comfortable to sleep outside), and stored some gear at their place during our two days up in the mountains. We also ate dinner at their house the first night we arrived. When we went to leave, they didn't want money, but we ended up giving them 300,000 in total for their hospitality.

Guiding: We took two guides with us during our two day trek into the mountains. Marc Thibault gave me the names of Andamen and Jabert who had accompanied him into the field. The Kapala Desa's daughter was easily able to track them down for us. They have now lead four groups of birders into the mountains and are very familiar with the needs of birders. They asked 200,000 each for the two day trip, but in the end we gave them both 300,000. Andamen carried one of our packs (camping gear & food), while Jabert carried their bag and cooking gear. Both know the trail system well and were great at setting up camp, cooking, etc. They do not speak English.

Birding:

Around Desa Mira:

The first day we arrived around 1300 and since the Kepala Desa wasn't going to return until evening, we told his daughter that we would go for a walk and return in the evening. We left our bags at their house and walked the one km north to the start of the dirt road inland (2.166155, 128.59171). From here we walked a few kms reaching about 250m in elevation. This first section of road passes through disturbed forest as well as a few forested gullies. We encountered our first Dusky Friarbird (2.170035, 128.58427) and heard Morotai White-eye from the same spot. Near dusk we taped in a pair of "Morotai" Paradise-Kingfishers in a forested gully at (2.170416, 128.5785).

Mountain above Desa Mira:

Although we did this hike in two days, I would highly recommend at least three days. Although rain made things a bit slow for us, this is still a long hike, and if you're not in very good shape, completing it in two days and getting all the birds would be very tricky. We got very lucky finding the leaf-warbler the first evening. Had that not happened, it would have been very difficult to complete this hike in two days. Below are some details on the hike and birds found:

After some evening coordination, the plan was set to depart at 0400 the next morning to start the hike into the mountains. At first the guides were a bit hesitant to leave so early, but after insisting, they agreed to the early start. They arrived on time, but we ended up not starting until about 0430. It rained for the first few hours of the hike which made things fairly miserable and slow going. The hike starts one km outside of town at 2.166155, 128.59171 and it is 13.7 km to the first camp (2.188405, 128.52247) area at 480m. There is another camp area about 1.7 km further uphill at 580m (2.19852, 128.51452) as well. Although this hike might seem somewhat mundane (500m elevation gain over 14km is nothing), you first climb to about 300m before going back down to 40m, cross a large river (wet crossing) and then climb back up with a few more little downhill sections. So overall elevation gain is probably closer to 900-1000m. Also, due to the continuous rain, crossing the river took a good bit of time. On the way in the river level was waist deep and on the way back it was mid-thigh. There were also two other small "wet" crossings, but these can probably be avoided if it hasn't rained too much. We left at 0430 and arrived at camp at 1200, exhausted. We took an hour break part way through the morning to wait out some of the heaviest rain, but other than that, we hiked fairly quickly. Once we arrived at camp, we ate lunch and then headed back out around 1330 to climb up higher. The climb up to the second camp is slow going and took over an hour. From here we made our way a bit higher to a clearing at 2.201455, 128.51293, 605m. It was at this clearing that we finally found a very responsive North Moluccan Leaf-Warbler. After seeing this bird, we made our way back down to camp for the evening. Ideally it would be best to camp at the second camp site, if you have more time. During the hike we did little birding due to the rain and desire to get above 500m as soon as possible. "Morotai" Paradise-Kingfisher was common by voice near dawn and is probably present throughout the hike. Dusky Friarbird and Morotai Drongo are both common, but we only heard one "Morotai" Pitta during the entire trip at 2.188007, 128.53805. Luckily this bird was easily taped in for good views. I imagine this species isn't too difficult to find and believe the weather was the main reason we heard so few. The only Morotai White-eyes at higher elevations were a small flock of five birds seen at 2.197806, 128.51542 on the walk back from Camp 2 to Camp 1. After dark, both Barking Owl and Moluccan Scops-Owl were heard/seen around camp. The Barking Owls were easily taped in, but the scops-owl remained elusive. Luckily the next morning, I was able to tape in the Moluccan Scops-Owl just below camp.

The next morning we broke camp at dawn and fairly quickly started on the descent down the mountain. For the first two hours we walked slowly birding along the way through intermittent rain showers. Dusky Friarbird, Morotai Drongo, Chattering Lory were all common, but we never heard another pitta and despite trolling for the white-eye almost the entire hike down we never got another response until literally the last km of the hike. Once we were almost back to the village, we took a difficult dirt road which apparently is a short cut to town (although it isn't much quicker). Along this section we finally had a group of Morotai White-eyes respond to tape and come in for very good views at 2.158909, 128.57814. Unfortunately my recording gear had already been packed away because of the rain and my camera wasn't working (also due to the rain). So although we got fantastic looks at them, we couldn't get any good documentation! We arrived back in Mira just after 1300, gathered our bags, and fairly quickly departed for Daruba to get a hotel.

Overall we were very pleased with our quick visit to Morotai and highly recommend a visit. The people in Mira were very nice and the Kepala Desa and his family were very accommodating. If you're just looking for the endemics, completing the time intensive hike up to 600m isn't necessary. The friarbird, drongo, paradise-kingfisher, and white-eye can all be found within an hour walk of town. Doing just a day hike up into better forest (but staying on the close side of the river crossing) should be enough to get you the pitta as well. The only birds necessary to get at higher elevations is the leaf-warbler and possibly the endemic subspecies of Chattering Lory (although this could be found closer to town as long as the trappers haven't gotten to all of them).

Obi

Logistics: Currently ferries leave every day (except Sunday) from Ternate to the island of Obi. Schedules fluctuate often, but our ferry was slated to depart at 2000 (left at 2215) and arrived on Obi at 1400 the next day. General ticket price is 170,000 per person and it is an additional 200,000 per person for a private room (two people per room, so 400,000 if you are alone and want a private room, AC/fan are the same price). The general area looks like it would be a bit of a rough ride so we opted for a private room, which is nice because you can lock the door and there's an outlet to charge things. For the return trip, the ferry left Obi at 1000 and arrived at 0600 in Ternate the next morning. The ferry also makes two port calls. On the initial journey we arrived on Bacan just before light at 0545 and departed again at 0830, and then a quick stop on Bisa just before Obi for about 30 minutes. On the return journey we made the quick stop on Bisa and then arrived on Bacan at 1530 and departed at 2100. We arrived a bit ahead of schedule in Ternate at 0530.

Accommodation: Once you arrive in Jikotamo, there are a few options when it comes to accommodation. The first is the homestay of Pak Sabar. The Sabar family is used to catering to birders and everyone is extremely friendly and helpful (although they do not speak much English). Their house is located very close to the port. Take a right out of the port, the first left, and their house is located directly in front of you at the end of the road (-1.343442, 127.65485). We also stayed at a wooden building near the river that is used to house workers of the local water company (-1.384568, 127.64268). These people were very friendly and it was enjoyable staying with them. There is also a hotel located in Jikotamo at -1.342077, 127.6524. We ended up staying one night at Pak Sabar's house, two nights at the "water works camp", and two nights at the hotel in town. The hotel charges 200,000. The Sabar family didn't ask for money, but we gave them 300,000 for staying one night, eating dinner, and storing bags for two nights. We spent two nights and ate four meals at the "water works camp" (possibly some of the best meals of the trip), and gave them 400,000 which they didn't even want to take. The fact that Indonesians will continuously go out of their way for complete strangers speaks volumes about their character.

Birding: Most of our birding effort was centered around the river confluence area of the Cabang and Sumbali River as well as the logging road that goes beyond the river. Birding Obi was very frustrating as getting to higher elevation from the north seems to be very tricky (despite a few bird tour reports alluding to easier access). Using both Mittermeier's and Thibaut's articles we explored the area around Sembiki as well as an old logging road. Getting around these areas was difficult as the river level was very volatile due to daily afternoon/evening rain. All afternoons the river would be 1-1.5 meters higher than it would be in the morning. This made crossing the river very difficult/dangerous and greatly impeded our mobility. Also, the first sections of the logging road are insanely muddy involving mud up to your knees and at one point almost up to my waist! Below are some details on specific areas.

Cabang River Area:

From Laiwui Village head south at the mosque (-1.340584, 127.643041). It is ~4 km to the river (-1.376101, 127.65047). At the river you can either cross and head south along the logging road to the river confluence (-1.396682, 127.647417, about another 2.5 km), or take a trail along the north bank of the river which leads to the "water works camp" (-1.384568, 127.64268).

Birding: The road before the first river crossing (-1.376101, 127.65047) and the river confluence (-1.396682, 127.647417) was birded on one morning and one afternoon. Most of the common Obi endemics were seen along this road including Obi Paradise Crow, Obi Golden Bulbul, Obi Whistler, Obi Spectacled Monarch, North Moluccan Pitta (-1.393154, 127.65041), and Rufous-necked Sparrowhawk (near the river confluence shortly after dawn). At the confluence, if you cross the river and head upstream another 75 meters, you come to an area where the Moluccan Woodcock can be seen displaying (-1.397896, 127.64808). We also saw the Moluccan Woodcock fly over at dusk on one evening from the water works camp (-1.384568, 127.64268) and apparently they display a bit further along the dirt road past the camp, according to the locals we were staying with. Also along the dirt road past the camp we had a very responsive Moluccan Scops-owl (-1.387496, 127.64115).

Logging Road:

Past the river confluence, a wide logging road leads to a wooden building used by the loggers. From here the road turns right and heads uphill. This section is very muddy and difficult to navigate. Once you climb up the first section, the new road continues straight, but there is an old road to the left (follow GPS track). This road continues to climb up to 560m, but unfortunately, on my second attempt along this road, a landslide had caused part of the road to cave away at 400m and it was impossible to get around this hole in the road (trust me, I tried for 40 minutes to figure out a way around). I am not sure that the road will be repaired at all since it looked abandoned, so I'm not sure how useful this area will be in the future.

Birding: We explored this area on two mornings. The first morning we were trying to figure out how far up the road we could get. We started along the logging road around 0600 and by 1000 I had made it up to 560m. It didn't stay long as Melissa had waited further down the road and I anticipated coming back later on. Around 350m I saw numerous Pale Cicadabirds along with White-bellied Cuckooshrike and Obi Cicadabird. I also found three Bacan Myzomelas at -1.424456, 127.63974 in a large flowering acacia tree along with Black Sunbirds and Dusky Myzomela. Neither the leaf-warbler nor the white-eye was seen despite lots of searching. On my second attempt along this road I left at 0400 so that I could make it to the higher elevations by dawn. Unfortunately the road was impassable at 400m so I couldn't make it any higher. From this point I slowly started birding my way back down. Highlights included another male Bacan Myzomela at -1.416818, 127.63779, Obi Paradise-Kingfisher & Island Flycatcher at -1.416277, 127.63783, and Carunculated Fruit-Dove & Cinnamon-bellied Imperial-Pigeon at a fruiting tree at -1.408816, 127.63663.

Sembiki Road

This area is located a few kilometers east of Jikotamo. From town we took motorbikes to -1.373247, 127.67821 and then explored both the side road to the left and the main road. The side road leads up to 400m, but the habitat is severely degraded. The main road continued for a bit before a washed out bridge. We continued past for another few kilometers, but the birding wasn't that great.

Birding: We spent a single morning here which was an unsuccessful attempt to reach higher elevation. The side road that starts at -1.373247, 127.67821 goes to 400m, but the habitat is lack luster. There were numerous Scaled Lorikeets along this road and we found a single Bacan Myzomela at -1.383456, 127.68735, but not much else. On the walk back out to the main road we came across a small flock of Carunculated Fruit-Doves at -1.365778, 127.67372 which afforded great views. At dusk Moluccan Woodcock displays at -1.358765, 127.66976 near the creek (not the open area about a hundred meters further along the road).

Talau

Logistics: Although there are multiple ferries to Talau, Wings Airlines also offers flights to the island. Since a plane ticket is roughly the same cost as a private room on the ferry, I'd highly recommend flying instead of taking the ferry. We departed Manado around 1100 and arrived about an hour later on Talau. From here we took a taxi (35,000 per person, 105,000 total) to the town of Beo about 50 minutes to the north.

Accommodation: There seemed to only be one place to stay in Beo, Meysan Hotel. Although we were able to get two rooms (one A/C, one broken A/C), it appears that they aren't accepting many guests at the moment. The whole area is under construction and it appears that the new store adjacent to the hotel is getting an addition that I assume will eventually become the new accommodation. I don't want this to deter people from visiting, but just be prepared that you might have some issues showing up and trying to get a room. We were charged 200,000 per room per night.

Guide: There's a local bird guide in Beo named Michael, 085240002341, although we tried to contact him a few weeks in advance by e-mail, we never got a response. I texted him the evening prior to our arrival and quickly got a response that he would meet us in Beo. After settling into the hotel, Michael took us south of Beo to a trail that starts at 4.194756, 126.77397. He birded with us that evening and then met us at 0400 the following morning, but when we arrived at the same birding location and started off down the trail, we realized that Michael didn't follow us. We figured he'd eventually join us, but oddly

he never did. Kind of strange, but we never ended up birding with him again. I felt a bit bad as we never ended up paying him for the first afternoon so we texted him to meet us the last day, but once again he didn't show up.

Birding: We ended up spending our time at two different locations, both detailed below.

Dirt road south of Beo: Located about a 15 minute tuk-tuk ride (20,000) south of Beo, this dirt road starts at 4.194756, 126.77397. We spent an afternoon/evening, a full day, and a morning at this location. The first afternoon we birded with Michael who took us to a spot at 4.189346, 126.78113 and said it was good for the rail and bush-hen. It rained the entire afternoon and while we were sitting in the woods waiting for rails, Michael allegedly saw both a bush-hen and a rail from the main trail! The next morning we arrived before light and spent the entire day at the location where Michael had seen the rail the day prior (4.189346, 126.78113). From this spot we briefly saw the rail at 0550, but the look was very poor/quick. We didn't see it again all day and didn't even hear the bush-hen. We did however have a lot of other good birds from this spot. Red-and-blue Lory was fairly common with numerous groups flying over throughout the day and a few birds seen very well perched. Multiple Talaud Pittas were heard calling and one taped in. Two Talaud Kingfishers were present in the area. We also had the local forms of Black Sunbird, Grey-sided Flowerpecker, Sulawesi Cuckoo-Dove, Sulawesi Cicadabird, and Black-naped Oriole. Green, Elegant, and Gray Imperial-Pigeons were also all present. The last morning we spent here, we saw nothing of note except great looks at a Tabon Scrubfowl which appeared along the main trail shortly after dawn.

Dirt road east of Beo: The second spot we visited was just east of Beo. We originally found this spot when a local birder in town (but not Michael, apparently there's more than one!) saw us on the side of the road and asked what we were doing. I told him we were looking for the bush-hen and he recommended this road. The dirt road starts at 4.220169, 126.79784 about 1 km outside of town. From here the road heads uphill and into decent forest (much better than the first location). As we headed along this road we had Island Monarch along with numerous Red-and-Blue Lorries. After 3 km we came to a muddy creek area where I got good, but brief looks of a Talaud Rail crossing the road. (4.213372, 126.81727). We snuck down into the area, but were unable to relocate it despite spending the next three hours staked out in the area. A nice consolation prize was a Talaud Bush-hen that responded strongly to my playback by running down a small trail directly at me (4.213551, 126.81727). Both Talaud Pitta and Talaud Kingfisher were also present at this location. The next morning we tried this spot again for two hours before having to leave for the airport. Unfortunately we didn't have any sign of the rail or the bush-hen. Surprisingly during our entire time on the island we only heard the bush-hen call briefly once. Not sure if it was the wrong time of year or what, but they were very quiet. Luckily both Michael and I both got good looks at the one that came running in to my playback. We were also surprised by the number of Red-and-blue Lorries. Most reports seem to mention a few flybys, but we had numerous groups on all days. On the last morning walking out of the forest Melissa and I had great views of a flock of over 40 Red-and-Blue Lorries feeding in a flowering tree.

Sangihe

Logistics: From Manado there are daily ferries (except Sundays) that leave for Sangihe. You can buy your ticket at the entrance of the harbor (1.494691, 124.83988). There are a few companies, so if the first one says there isn't a ferry for the day, just check with the next ticket office. The ferry leaves at 1900 and arrives in Sangihe very early the next morning (around 0400). As usual we opted for a private room which cost 300,000 per person. The general admission ticket is only 150,000. From the harbor in Tahuna we were quickly able to get a truck to take us to Rainbow Loseman for 200,000. Our driver knew the homestay, but if not, just say you want to go to Tomako. Leaving the homestay was straight forward as we had Wesley's brother call to find us a ride. We were charged 150,000 for the return trip to Tahuna (only 2 people) which is likely overpriced. Once again the ferry departed at 1900 and arrived in Manado the next morning around 0330.

Accommodation: Everyone stays at Rainbow Loseman. Their prices are the cheapest we've encountered anywhere in Indonesia. 80,000 for a double room and 25,000 per meal.

Guiding: Although access to the mountain is fairly straightforward (see gps points and track) I still highly recommend using Wesley (the homestay's brother) as he's extremely knowledgeable about the island's birdlife and will know the latest locations for the whistler and bulbul. He current charges 300,000 per person per day which is a bit steep, but still worthwhile. Especially at the time of our visit there were no public recordings of the bulbul available so using Wesley just to get access to his very good recording of the bulbul was well worth it. I was able to get a few recordings of the bulbul, but still not as good as Wesley's

recording. The easiest way to contact Wesley is through Facebook, Wesley Pangimangen. Although be aware that he doesn't have service near his house and it might take a few days for him to reply.

Birding: Birding is done along a steep trail that leads up to the top of Gunung Sahendaruman. From the homestay you must first travel a few kilometers up a small road until the start of the trail at 3.500309, 125.53678. For us, Wesley used his ojek to shuttle all of us to the start of the trail. The section of the trail up to the Garden House is fairly tame. It's a bit slippery in parts and involves a few stream crossings (we were able to avoid getting wet by jumping between rocks, but if the water is a bit higher they might be wet crossings), but overall it isn't a bad trail. It took about 50 minutes to climb the 2 km up to the Garden House (510m, 3.510548, 125.54094). From here there's a small side trail that goes down into a nearby valley for the Cerulean Paradise-Flycatcher. This trail is very steep and can also be quite slippery. Although it's only about .7 km down into the valley for the flycatcher, this section is much more difficult than getting to the Garden House. Once you reach the stream at the bottom, there's a trail that runs up along the stream through the flycatcher's habitat. We encountered a very vocal pair at 3.514895, 125.54193. After climbing back up to the Garden House, we continued on the trail that leads up to the ridge. This section of trail is very steep and muddy. It took us about 1 ½ hours to reach the top of the ridge (860m, 3.517446, 125.54796), but this could be done a bit quicker if you weren't birding along the way. We arrived at the top of the ridge around noon and after a quick lunch heard our first Sangihe Whistler call near 3.517325, 125.54843. We didn't see the bird and it quickly moved off. We spent about 1 ½ hours along the top of the ridge and finally saw another whistler that came in silently at 3.51885, 125.54736. The bird mostly sat quietly in the mid/upper canopy and preened. During the afternoon hike down we encountered the whistler a few more times (3.517119, 125.54762). Each time though it was moving around silently, only giving a few call notes periodically. We spent the second part of the afternoon between 800-700m looking for Sangihe Golden Bulbul that we heard very distantly in the valley on the hike up that morning (730m). We were unable to relocate the bulbul and made our way back down the mountain at dusk. We arrived back at the homestay shortly after dark and easily called in a Sangihe Scops-Owl behind the homestay. The next morning we departed at 0430 to start the hike up to the ridge. We arrived to the Garden House just as it was getting light and there were two Sangihe Pittas calling on both sides of the trail just before the Garden House. This is the same area we had Sangihe Lilac Kingfisher and Hooded Pitta the day before as well. From the Garden House it is only about 30 more minutes of climbing to reach 700m. The worst part of the trail is from the Garden House up to 700m. From that point, the trail flattens a good bit as you head up the ridge towards the summit (there's one last steep section just before the end). This section (700-800m) allows for fairly easy birding and is the area where the Sangihe Golden Bulbul seems to be encountered the most. We arrived at 700m around 0600 and quickly heard a few bulbuls singing in the valley below. For the next two hours we heard the bulbuls a few times, but always distantly and in the valley. At around 0800 we moved to a spot where Wesley said he's seen the bulbul twice (Aug 2016 & Sept 2015) at around 0900 in the morning. As we were waiting I got a bit bored and started searching up and down the trail from this point. At around 0845 I had a pair of Sangihe Golden Bulbuls silently respond to the tape and fly in above my head (3.516702, 125.5472). I called for the others and we were able to get fantastic views of the pair before heading back down the mountain. An absolute mega. Sangihe Hanging Parrot is common by voice, but a bit tricky to see. The clearing at the Garden House is a good spot to watch for them. We saw a few birds feeding in some orange flowers along the flycatcher trail as well as a few from the clearing. I also saw one from the homestay before we left which is also apparently a good area for them. Elegant Sunbird was encountered numerous times throughout the hike. Sangihe Lilac Kingfisher was seen just below the Garden House as well as behind the homestay.

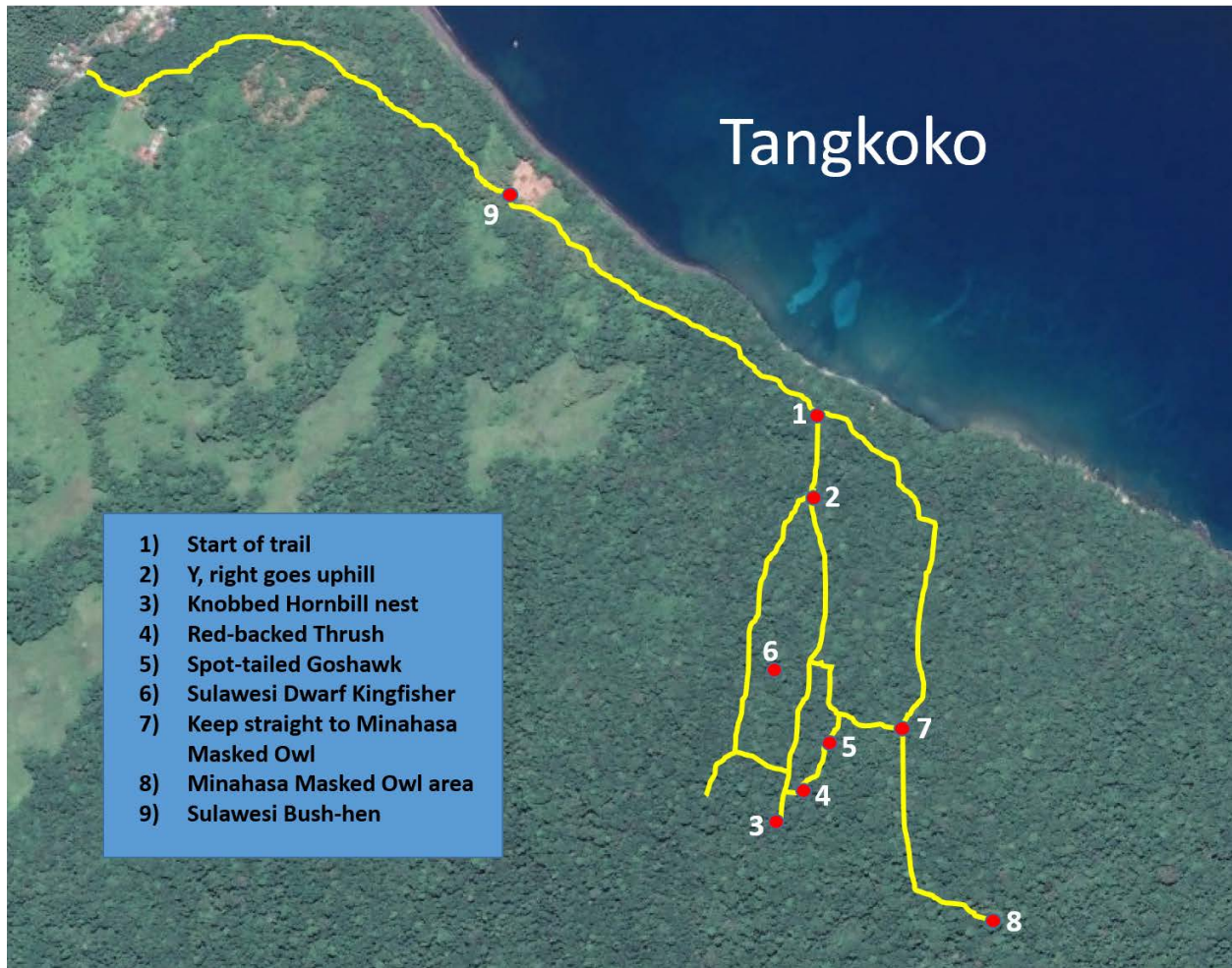
Sulawesi

Tangkoko:

Logistics: We arrived via ferry from Sangihe to the Manado Harbor at 0330. Here there were many taxis waiting and we quickly organized a ride to Tangkoko (make sure you say Batu Puti, as the Tangkoko terminal is much closer). Of course we were originally quoted 500k, but after laughing at that guy and moving on to others we finally settled on a price of 200k (for three people). The drive should take about 1.5 – 2 hours depending on traffic, but being 0400 and having accidentally hired the fastest taxi driver in Manado, we quickly made it to the km 10 overlook within an hour.

Accommodation: There are plenty of options for homestays in Tangkoko. Just outside the entrance road, the three closest are Mama Roos, Tarsius Homestay, and Ranger Homestay. We originally made reservations at Mama Roos, but ended up staying at Tarsius Homestay instead. I HIGHLY recommend NOT staying at Mama Roos. We arrived at Mama Roos midday (after spending the morning at km 10) and got our rooms and told them we would go birding and be back around 2100 for dinner. When we arrived back at 2100 they said they couldn't feed us (although they were eating) and also the owner introduced us to our guide for the next day. We had originally been told we'd have a bird guide, but were instead given a novice bird guide (who admitted he was a novice) as the other guy was now busy (although we had made reservations weeks in advance). On top of that, this novice guide said he wanted 500k per person not including entrance fee(!!!) and when I told the owner that he was trying to rip us off, he replied that he has no control over the guides and it wasn't his problem. He also said coordinating guides is too much work and he doesn't want to bother! I walked down to Tarsius and even though it was 2130, they agreed to cook us dinner. Since they were being so nice and had availability we left Mama Roos (who still demanded we pay for that night, which we didn't) and stayed at Tarsius. The people there were extremely helpful. The owner who is a ranger in the park helped get us a guide at the last minute and later on helped arrange reasonable transport to Tomohon, plus arrange a place for us to stay there. He was not available to guide us, but he seemed to know various locations of the birds so using him in the future might not be a bad idea. Price at Mama Roos is 100,000k per person for a single or 150,000k for a double (does not include lunch or dinner). Prices at Tarsius is 150,000k per person, but includes full room and board. For a singleton, Tarsius is the way to go price wise. For us as a couple, 300k for room and board was a bit pricey, but being that they were so helpful, we didn't mind spending a bit extra. Not sure of the prices at Ranger, but they should be about the same. When we returned to Tangkoko at the end of the trip, we easily negotiated to pay only 150,000 for the night for the two of us (since we arrived late and weren't eating) and then the typical 300k for full room/board the next day. Tarsius also has wifi which the others do not have.

Guiding: Probably the most beneficial discovery of the trip is that you do not need a guide for Tangkoko, despite every trip report saying you do. The first day we used a guide. We paid 400k per person which included the entrance fee. The guide wasn't a bird guide, but knew the places for most of the stakeouts. He helped spot birds and found a few cool things (Bear Cuscus), but for the most part just showed us the trails. I'd highly recommend using a guide for the first day as there are a ton of trails and it's easy to get confused. But if you have a GPS, after the first day you should have no problem navigating around without a guide. The second and third days we birded the park without a guide and although a few times we were asked where our guide was, it was clear that we didn't need one. Entrance fee is 100,000 per person except on Sundays which is 150,000k. On the way back out of the park each day, we'd be stopped at the front gate to pay our entrance fee (since they were never open when we went in before light). Once again no one would mention or care that we didn't have a guide. This is a huge money saver if you're able to find birds on your own. Samuel (the guide referenced in past reports) has started his own guiding business and is now fairly pricey. He knows the forest and birds very well, but don't expect to use him unless you book well in advance (he leads tours all over Sulawesi now) and expect to pay a lot. Also, he won't guide you if you stay at Mama Roos. Apparently we aren't the only ones who have issues with the ownership of Mama Roos! If you're looking for a local guide though, I'd highly recommend Samuel. A friend of mine was using him at the same time we were birding the area and they did very well. When we met Samuel he was very friendly and helped out answering a few questions and gave us a recording of dwarf-kingfisher since the only recording on XC was very subpar (that's changed now, as my recordings should be very helpful).



Tangkoko (Inside the National Park)

Birding: Unlike most trip reports that say “oh well, you have to use a guide anyways at Tangkoko so I’m going to be as vague as possible” I’ll try to give some helpful tips on exploring Tangkoko on your own and tracking down the target birds. Of course I’d still recommend using a guide the first day, but after that, it really becomes an unnecessary expense. There are a ton of trails so on your first day make sure you leave your GPS on so that you have a good understanding of the trail system. Luckily the forest is fairly open so at times it’s easier to just bush whack until your next GPS point. As stated before I’d highly recommend having a GPS if you’re going to explore this area by yourself.

Once you enter the park, there’s a gravel/dirt road that runs parallel to the ocean for 2.2km to a research station (the road continues further but we never explored past here). Along this access road there’s a trail that starts around km2 at 1.563102, 125.172708. This is the main trail that enters the forest. Along this trail you’ll come to a Y (1.562105, 125.172709). From here you can go right and head along a gully for quite a ways or go left and climb up, eventually reaching a series of gullies and an area where a pair of Knobbed Hornbills were nesting. For most tourist groups, the circuit appeared to be go see the tarsier, find some macaques, and then stop by the hornbill nest. Below I’ll cover specifics on a few areas with reference to the map.

Gully trail: This trail starts at 1.562105, 125.172709 and leads along a bottom of a gully which eventually becomes narrower and ends at a steep rock area (the trail actually continues a bit past the steep area if you want to explore further). This was the first trail that our guide took us along and said it was good for the dwarf-kingfisher and Red-backed Thrush. Although we spent a good bit of time along this trail, we never found it very productive and only saw a single thrush along it. There is a very cooperative and photogenic tarsier along this trail that roosts in a big fig tree. There are a few side gullies on your left that you’ll be able to take to reach the trails up by the hornbill area.

Hornbill Area: The area near the hornbill nest and the series of gullies just before it were very productive during our visit. The actual nest is in a large tree at 1.555073, 125.17138. The male comes in a few times throughout the day to feed the female with the first feeding being at 0550 and 0557 on the two days we were there. There's also a Vinous-breasted Sparrowhawk nesting in the area and it is quite vocal and easy to find early morning in the area. From the hornbill nest back towards the main access road, there is a network of trails that cross over a number of gullies. This area is very good for both the thrush and dwarf-kingfisher. We had a ton of difficulty finding the kingfisher and it took nearly two full days of dedication before seeing one. Our friend saw the dwarf-kingfisher about 30m before the hornbill nest, but we finally saw it a bit further down in a gully at 1.557501, 125.17167. Unlike some of the other dwarf-kingfishers I've seen that patrol their area flying up and down gullies calling regularly, this bird was quite sedentary and spent most of its time in a small area and only vocalized after I imitated its call. We saw a few Red-backed Thrushes in the area, with the most confiding bird being at 1.555829, 125.17234. Pied Cuckooshrike and Sulawesi Hornbill were heard from the hornbill nest and other good birds seen in the area included Spot-tailed Goshawk (responded well to tape at 1.55668, 125.172614), White-faced Cuckoo-Dove (once again, taped in), and both Green-backed and Lilac Kingfishers.

Entrance Road: The dirt road from the entrance of the park to the research station was usually quite birdy. Early morning Ruddy Kingfisher can be seen along the stream at the very beginning of the road (before the entrance gate) and both Green-backed and Lilac Kingfishers are quite vocal and easy to track down along this road. The only open area (1.567374, 125.166516) along the road is a known stakeout for Sulawesi Nightjar and Sulawesi Bushhen. We heard the nightjars every time we walked past here at night, but were unable to tape one in at this location. For the bush hen, we had two responsive birds at 1430 one afternoon. At the beginning of the open area we took the track out to the ocean and then walked about 50 meters along the edge of the clearing to 1.567939 125.16715. At this point we sat down and easily taped in two bush hens for fantastic views. Although we never dedicated too much birding time along the entrance road (except when traveling in and out) we still saw a number of good birds along it. The first morning we had Purple-winged Roller and Ornate Lorikeet just before the open area and we flushed multiple Tabon Scrubfowl and Barred Rails along the road on different occasions. We also saw Red-backed Thrush near the ocean at 1.565302 125.16988.

Owls: A quick note on owls within the park. At the time of our visit, the only known owl roosts were of Ochre-bellied Boobooks. We spent an insane amount of time owling here as we (unsurprisingly) struggled to see Minahasa Masked Owl. Over a course of 5 days we spent well over 25 hours in the woods at night specifically looking for the masked owl. Ochre-bellied Boobook was fairly common by voice, but we were unable to tape any in along the entrance road. They were seen though on two occasions, once at the forest patch outside the park (1.55761, 125.15154) and once on the trail back from the "Minahasa Spot." Sulawesi Scops-Owl is obnoxiously common with dozens of individuals heard and at least five seen without ever playing the tape for them. Sulawesi Masked Owl was never heard here although I never specifically tried for them. Now to talk about Minahasa Masked Owl. The first bird we located was in the forest patch outside of the park. This bird was heard on a few occasions from the trail on two nights and also heard from the main road in the open plantations near 1.563521, 125.15244. During our second night at the park, my friend Julien (with Samuel as a guide) had nice looks at a Minahasa within the park at a location about an hour walk away. After Julien saw the bird at dusk he sent me the coordinates and we headed directly to the spot. For the next few nights we essentially staked out this area, and dubbed it the "Minahasa Spot", and although the bird would call every so often (sometimes not calling for 2-3 hours) we never could find it. During transition to and from this location I found two other Minahasas, but once again the birds would only call intermittently and always were quite distant. On our last attempt at the "Minahasa Spot" we planned to spend all night (our second all-nighter at the spot) and on this last attempt I happened upon a Minahasa Masked Owl tangled in a bush! The bird freed itself, but seemed to be dazed or injured. It flew to a nearby trunk where we were able to watch it from two meters away. It then flew again and landed low in a bush. At this time I approached it to check for injuries. From what I could tell the bird was not injured and possibly was just dazed from getting tangled. It eventually worked its way up higher in the trees, but still looked a bit weak. Hopefully it survived the night. I originally thought about catching it and taking it to a rehabilitator, but in Indonesia I feel it would have just ended up as someone's pet. An absolutely amazing experience especially given the hours of hard work we put in looking for this rare owl.

Directions to "Minahasa Spot": Take the access road just past the research station and at 1.562448, 125.17409 take the trail on the right that heads uphill. The trail is currently marked with orange tape (this is also apparently the trail that climbs up the mountain). At 1.557755, 125.17459 there's a Y, make sure you keep right (which drops down into a little gully and back up the other side). Continue on this trail keeping straight at the intersection at 1.556836, 125.17421 (right will take you to the hornbill area). Continue following the trail (and orange tape) to about 1.553948, 125.174227 which at this time you'll have to go off trail and bush whack through fairly open forest to 1.553234, 125.17573. This is the spot we spent the majority of our

time at while looking for the owl. We finally actually saw the owl at 1.552855, 125.17621. Don't try to find this area if you don't have a GPS. You'll get lost.

Forest Outside Park

Logistics: From the park entrance (and area with homestays) walk back out the main road past Tangkoko Hill Resort to a dirt road on your left at 1.565295, 125.153665. The dirt track leads past a few houses with a few side trails. Eventually we took a trail that leads down to a small creek (1.55993, 125.15205). We crossed the creek and followed an overgrown trail a short distance (50m) to a wider trail at (1.559469, 125.15218). From here you can turn left and follow the trail through decent forest.

Birding: We only spent one afternoon here, but in the open plantation area we found a few White-rumped Cuckooshrikes (1.563476, 125.15382). Once you get into the good forest, we had a very responsive Sulawesi Pitta at 1.55636, 125.15255. A few days later my friend had two from the same location at dawn. Sulawesi Pitta is currently quite difficult at Tangkoko so hopefully this remains a reliable spot. To get to the area, cross the creek referenced above and when you get to the trail (1.559469, 125.15218) take a left. Eventually you'll come to a Y (1.557676, 125.15298), keep right and follow a trail to 1.55636, 125.15255.

Mangroves

Logistics: From Bati Putih it is easy to coordinate a boat with a local to visit the mangroves (1.621267, 125.142923). We paid 400,000 in total for the boat (not per person like some people have said!) for about 3 hours. The biggest concern is tide levels. Low tide for us was at 1430, so we left at 1500 to head towards the mangroves. It's a 35 minute boat ride and when we arrived at the river mouth it was still too shallow to enter. We got out and walked the first section while the boatman pushed the boat through about a foot of water. Luckily the main river channel is a bit deeper and we were able to board the boat and continue down into the mangroves. Just be cognizant that you might have to adjust your schedule a bit based on tides and to bring sandals if you have to walk.

Birding: Although it was the middle of the afternoon, finding the Great-billed Kingfisher was quite easy. We had a single bird at 1.622611, 125.14063 and two more at 1.618802, 125.13816. They respond well to Stork-billed Kingfisher recordings, but typically stay silent themselves. We also had Common, Collared, and Sacred Kingfisher. We didn't have any White-rumped Cuckooshrikes, but also didn't try any playback for them since we had seen them earlier in the afternoon in the plantations. Black-naped Terns were seen on the ride in and out.

Mahawu

Logistics: Tomohon is used as a base for exploring Mahawu. We arrived via a private car from Tangkoko coordinated through our hostel (400,000) and spent the night at Volcano Resort (200,000 per room). The owner of the resort gladly agreed to drive us to the birding location at 0400 even though we didn't arrive to his hotel until 2330! Leaving Tomohon it is easy to catch a bus or bemo back to Manado. We originally wasted a lot of time trying to hire a car to go from Tomohon to Kotamabangu. Save yourself the hassle and just get a ride to Manado and then coordinate from there. It will be less time consuming and cheaper. The actual birding location is located about 15 minutes outside of Tomohon. The entrance road to the parking lot for the Volcano is at 1.338023, 124.86867. A couple hundred meters before the parking lot there is a trail at 1.348253, 124.87067 on your right. Take this trail and at a Y keep right (1.349809, 124.8716), and at the next Y also keep right (1.349847, 124.87209), the trail then follows along a creek which you can cross just before the spot where we had the kingfisher (1.348923, 124.87319). From the main road to the kingfisher spot it is only about 450m. Leaving we walked back down to the main road and easily hitched a ride back to town.

Birding: We arrived well before first light as we didn't have details on where the trail entrance was (only the actual kingfisher GPS coordinates). Luckily, we chose the right trail and miraculously made it to the spot well before light. Just as it started getting light (well before sunrise), I played the tape and a female Scaly Kingfisher quickly flew in and started calling. We eventually found the bird, but it quickly flew off and never called again all morning. We spent about two hours trying to relocate it, but were unsuccessful. Other interesting birds including Sulawesi Blue Flycatcher, Sulawesi Myzomela, and Rusty-breasted Cuckoo. *Note*: Although there are numerous records of Rufous-throated Flycatcher from Mahawu, this location is well above the typical elevation range and per conversation with a few area experts, no records from this area have been

confirmed. Female Sulawesi Blue Flycatchers can look superficially similar to Rufous-throated Flycatcher. Use caution when making the ID and if you do actually see a Rufous-throated Flycatcher at Mahawu, get some pictures.

Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park

Overview: This national park, located south west of Kotamabagu has a few popular birding locations. We first visited Tambun to see Maleo and then spent 1 ½ days at Torout and the neighboring roadside birding location known as Tapakaulintang

Logistics: From Tomhon, it is best to take a shared taxi back to Manado. From Manado shared taxis leave for Kotamabagu from a company called “Paris 88” located at 1.46735, 124.83007. Last taxi of the day departs around 1600. Cost is 80,000 per person. Since we arrived in Kota around 1900, it was a bit difficult to find a Bemo heading to Tambun, but eventually we were able to get a ride for 200,000 (way overpriced, but we needed to get there since Max didn’t know we were coming). We finally arrived at Max’s house at Tambun (0.588729, 124.11894) just before 2100. Luckily Max had open rooms for us to stay, but if not, camping should be possible. It would be best to try and reach Max prior to arrival as sometimes there are multiple groups visiting. For us, the next morning there was a private group plus a Bird Tour Asia group that were going to be visiting. Luckily the private group was one of our friends so we were able to join them, but otherwise we might not have been able to access the Maleo area. Leaving here we hitched a ride out to the main road and then took ojek for 50,000 each to Torout.

Accommodation/Entrance: It was 150,000 to stay at Max’s house. 160,000 per person to enter the National Park, 100,000 per person for Maleo guiding, and 50,000 per person for breakfast once we were done birding.

Birding: We spent a single morning here looking for Maleo. It was quite crowded as between our group and the Bird Tour Asia group, there were about 10 birders plus a bunch of extra guides. At this time of year the Maleo aren’t laying eggs, but we were able to find one fairly easily perched up in a tree. We also had Maroon-chinned Fruit-Dove, Black-billed Koel, Sulawesi Hanging-Parrot, Sulawesi Serpent Eagle, and Short-crested Myna.

Tourout/Tapakaulintang:

Logistics: From Tambun it took a little over an hour to reach Tourout. There is a large National Park complex (admin buildings and dorm rooms) which you are able to stay in. The cost was 200,000 per room (way over priced) and entrance to the National Park was 150,000. You also had to take a guide for 100,000. During our first afternoon here, we visited the nearby area of Tapakaulintang. We used the national park vehicle for the afternoon for 300,000. When leaving, we took a Bemo back to Kota for 50,000 each.

Birding:

Torout: We spent a single morning birding this area, but it was fairly underwhelming. Sulawesi Masked Owl was heard at night around the accommodation, but not seen. Speckled Boobook was seen roosting in the abandoned building at 0.562234, 123.90278 as well as at night along the trail in the park. To enter the forest you need to cross a river on a small barge. Along the trail system we had good looks at Pied Cuckooshrike, but nothing else too interesting.

Tapakaulintang: We spent a single afternoon in this area. We initially got out of the vehicle at 0.461107, 123.96471 and spent some time walking along the road. We found numerous raptors in the area including Sulawesi Hawk-Eagle and Black Eagle as well as our main target, Ivory-backed Woodswallow at a large overlook at 0.454841, 123.96963. A flock of Short-crested Mynas were also seen in the same area.

Gunung Ambang

Logistics: From Kotamabagu we took a Bemo to Sinsingon for 15,000 per person. We when arrived at Julius’s house (GPS) we found out that we wasn’t around, but his wife was happy to let us stay at their house. Since Julius wasn’t around we birded the area on our own for the afternoon as well as the next day, which was fine by us. From Julius’s house walk outside of the village and take the track on your left at 0799398, 124.400223. Follow this track which eventually heads up to 0.786189, 124.402701 where a trail starts up to the forest. The forest starts at 0.780702, 124.40089. There’s a Y in the trail at 0.77791, 124.39707. I think most people take a right at the Y, but we went left and had no problem finding all of our targets. From Julius’s house to

the start of the forest is about a 45 minute walk. We had some issues leaving Sinsingon since we tried to leave in the evening around 1900. Eventually we found a ride back to Kotamabagu, but it cost us 200,000.

Accommodation: We stayed at Julius's house (0.803117, 124.40452). We paid 150,000 per room plus 50,000 per person for dinner.

Birding: We spent an afternoon and a full day birding the trail at Gunung Ambang. Shortly after the forest starts at 0.780702, 124.40089 is a reliable location for Purple-bearded Bee-eater. Another Purple-bearded Bee-eater was seen at 0.76967, 124.39541. Red-eared Fruit-Dove was taped in before the Y. At the Y (0.77791, 124.39707) we went left and found a Scaly-breasted Kingfisher at dusk at 0.77401, 124.39679. The next morning we heard the Scaly-breasted Kingfisher at the same spot as well as our first Matinan Flycatcher. We also had another pair of Matinan Flycatchers further up the trail at 0.77137, 124.39610. The biggest highlight of the morning was hearing a Sombre Pigeon from 0.76967, 124.39541. The bird was fairly far off so we headed towards it and set up in a good location at 0.768977, 124.39624. After a few minutes of playback Michael spotted the pigeon which had flown in and landed about 30 meters away. We got great perched views of this very tricky bird before it flew off. A small flock of Malia was seen at 0.77137, 124.39610. After dark we heard a few Cinnabar Boobooks in vicinity of the Y and eventually had good looks at one. While walking back down through the open fields after dark, we taped in a few Sulawesi Masked Owls around 0.790608, 124.40108.

Tanimbar

Logistics: The easiest way to visit Tanimbar is by plane from Ambon. Both Lion Airways and Garuda Indonesia currently have flights to the island. The airport is located about 15 km north of the island's main town of Saumlaki. We were originally quoted 200,000 for a taxi ride to town, but finally settled on 70,000 in total.

Accommodations: There are plenty of hotel options now available in Saumlaki. The cheapest are around 200,000 per night with the fanciest being about 700,000 per night. The biggest issue with staying in town is that the main birding spots are about 45 minutes away to the north. This makes coordinating reliable transportation both time consuming and expensive. Luckily, after arriving our first afternoon, I was out exploring the Kebun 45 area when I ran into a local who told me about a research couple who had set up a research station nearby. The field station, Goffin Lab Tanimbar, is currently being used to study Tanimbar (Goffin) Cockatoo, but with an extra spare room already available, the goal is to turn the building into a homestay and be the initial catalyst for eco-tourism in the area. The two researchers, Dr Mark O'Hara and Dr. Berenika Mioduszewska have already began to mentor the local family, Emus and Vera, into how to make their homestay efficient and birder friendly. The family had no issues getting up early (0300) to cook us packed lunches for the day and are very knowledgeable of the surrounding forest. Emus or local guide Max can show you the trails and are also trying to learn stakeout locations for specific species. Cost is 100,000 per night for one person, or 150,000 per night for two people. We also paid 25,000 per person per meal (very good food). Emus or Max can also guide you on the trails for 100,000 per day. The homestay is also very conveniently located close to the birding trails. The "old logging road" is 2 km south of the homestay and "scrubfowl trail" is 2 km north of the homestay. There's also a trail from the homestay leading into the forest, but we didn't explore this trail. Because this area is considered tribal lands, the family requests that a small ceremony (adat) is completed upon your arrival so that you'll be protected while exploring the forest. This ceremony should only take 5-10 minutes and will be coordinated after your arrival. The establishment of this homestay now makes birding Tanimbar both straightforward and very cheap. We had all of the endemic species and subspecies within walking distance of the homestay and never had to worry about coordinating transportation. You can now visit Tanimbar and not even have to deal with visiting Saumlaki, although I would recommend bringing any additional supplies (snacks, etc.) with you as going into town from the homestay takes about 45 minutes each way. Currently Mark and Berenika will be at the station until October 2017, but have plans to continue research and conservation for years to come in the area pending further funding. Mark can be contacted at mark.ohara@vetmeduni.ac.at or +6281288524285. Both Emus and Vera speak basic English and can be contacted at verasamangun@yahoo.com, 082197545612, or on Facebook at moes_tanimbar_maslel or veramoessamangun

Edit: As of writing this report in Dec 2017, a few more birding groups have visited Goffin Lab and stayed with Emus and his family. Everyone who has stayed with them has had a positive experience and Emus has found a few reliable spots for Tanimbar Scrubfowl. As stated above, I'd highly recommend staying at Goffin Lab during a visit to Tanimbar.

Birding:

We spent 4 ½ days birding Tanimbar and concentrated our efforts on a few trails located within walking distance of Goffin Lab Tanimbar. Overall the birding was great and by 0600 on our second full day we had seen all of our targets except Pied Bronze Cuckoo and Tanimbar Crow. These two species proved to be exceedingly difficult to find. We finally ended up seeing a single Pied Bronze Cuckoo just past the homestay and eventually saw a pair of Tanimbar Crows near dusk at an overlook near -7.814604, 131.365361. I'm not sure why the cuckoo was so elusive since most people see them in numbers and the crow remains a difficult target (although it is sometimes seen from the homestay). Below are details on each location.

Kebun 45: This well-known location (-7.83401, 131.35046) is about 4 km south of the homestay. On the south side of the bridge, there is a trail that heads east along the stream. I spent one afternoon in this area with the highlights being Slaty-backed Thrush, a single Fawn-breasted Thrush, and a pair of Tanimbar Flycatchers.

Police Trail: Just north of the police station (about 3.5 km south of the homestay), there is a trail heading west that starts at -7.829459, 131.35313. We briefly explored the first 100 meters of this trail twice in the middle of the day. Both times we easily had Slaty-backed Thrush and Tanimbar Flycatcher at -7.829359, 131.35242.

Old Logging Trail: We spent an entire day (0400-1700) along this trail. From the main road here the dirt road heads west eventually reaching a series of kebuns (plantations). By this time the road has turned into a trail, but once you cross the kebuns, the trail once again turns into a wide dirt road (somewhat muddy on our visit) and continues for a few more kilometers through good forest before once again becoming a trail and continuing further inland (in total we walked about 10 kilometers inland before turning around). I recommend downloading my GPS track to make sure you can get from the main road to the good forest as navigating across the kebuns can be a bit confusing (especially if you go in the dark). Before light along the first part of the trail we had a very responsive pair of Tanimbar Boobooks at -7.813645, 131.35644. While crossing the kebuns, there were a few large fruiting trees at -7.804656, 131.35015. At dawn one tree was loaded with over 100 fruit-doves, Tanimbar Starlings, and a single Metallic (Purple-hooded) Starling. In the late afternoon we had great views of a pair of Blue-streaked Lorries and a pair of Kai Cicadabirds in the same area. Spending the day along the trail produced a majority of the other targets including Tanimbar Bush-Warbler, Black-bibbed and White-naped Monarchs, Yellow-throated Whistler, Fawn-breasted Thrush (-7.786257, 131.3320), Tanimbar Drongo (only one at -7.782645, 131.32235), and Wallacean Cuckooshrike. Although we played scrubfowl tape all day long, not a single bird was heard or seen along this trail.

Scrubfowl Trail: Based on a single eBird point from Craig Robinson, there appeared to be a trail north of the homestay that had good potential for scrubfowl. After a quick scouting trip the evening prior, it appeared that there was indeed a trail that potentially could lead towards Craig's eBird point. The trail entrance is at -7.802877, 131.38303 and heads northwest across a field before entering good forest. The first 50 meters of the trail is quite overgrown, but after that it is in good shape and turns into a road once you enter the forest. We arrived before light and after making our way into the forest waited for light to try for the scrubfowl. After walking a few hundred meters we finally had a scrubfowl respond to the tape at -7.792997, 131.37737. We quickly sat down on the edge of the trail and played the tape again. Surprisingly the Tanimbar Scrubfowl flew in and landed in a tree above us! Unfortunately it also quickly flew off again. With another bird calling we played the tape again and a second bird walked out onto the trail only about 10 meters way. Once again, it was a bit too close and quickly saw us and flushed. We could hear two more scrubfowl from this location and a fifth bird a bit further down the trail. Later in the morning two locals showed us an active nesting mound about a ten minute walk from our GPS point. The mound was actively being hunted (about 10 snares set up around it). We explained to the locals how bad it was to trap scrubfowl (called *Maleo* in Indonesian and *Co-fat* in Tanimbar) and removed all the traps. We also told Emus about the mound and the hope is that he will help to protect it and set up a blind so that future birders can come and enjoy it. Ask Emus or Mark to show you the location. I won't provide exact GPS. Unfortunately during the evening and the next morning no scrubfowl were heard or seen in the area, so it might take more than one chance to connect with this bird. Although the main trail probably continues for quite a ways through good forest, we headed back out to the main road since our only remaining targets (bronze cuckoo and crow) would be easier to find in open area. I'd highly recommend spending a full day along this trail though if you have the time.

Main Road Kebun 45 to Scrubfowl Trail: The main from from Kebun 45 to Scrubfowl Trail covers about 7 km of open habitat, plantations, and a few overlooks. We invested a ridiculous amount of time along this road since the crow and cuckoo proved to be so difficult. Although birding the road is good, it's much more enjoyable to be in the forest. In the afternoons we

recorded a number of raptors including Bonelli's Eagle, Pacific Baza, Brahmy Kite, Varied Goshawk, and Spotted Kestrel. Tanimbar Cockatoos and Eclectus Parrots were regularly seen while scanning from various overlooks and smaller numbers of Blue-streaked Lorries and Great-billed Parrots were also seen. Tricolored Parrotfinch was only seen once at GPS-7.816231, 131.36362, but small numbers of Scaly-breasted Munia and Five-colored Munias were seen on a number of occasions. Both Elegant and Pink-headed Imperial-Pigeon are very common. For some reason Pied Bronze Cuckoo remained very elusive (maybe the time of year?). It took almost 1 ½ days to finally see a single bird and I never did hear one. Tanimbar Crow expectedly was also very difficult. Mark and Berenika occasionally see the crow right around the homestay, but it can be found anywhere along the road. After two days of walking up and down the road (over 40 km of walking!) we finally saw a pair chasing a Channel-billed Cuckoo near dusk at an overlook just south of -7.814084, 131.36588. Also on our first morning (0330) we had fantastic views of a Tanimbar Masked Owl along the road at -7.814084, 131.36588.

Kai Kecil

Overview: Although most birders have concentrated on the small remnant patches of forest near Ohoililir, the new highway to the airport provides better access to forest patches and is easier to reach from the main town of Tual.

Ohoililir Forest:

Logistics: From the airport we took a taxi for 100,000 (originally quoted 200,000). This is a quick flat drive and only takes about 30 minutes. The forest patches are located just north of the Coaster Cottages and are easiest to reach from a new road that ends at -5.644306, 132.63847. From here there is a small series of trails that lead into the forest to the north. The most annoying part of staying out here is coordinating a ride back to Tual or the airport. There isn't much traffic so you don't have much room to negotiate. Luckily we were able to get to town for 150,000, but that is still way overpriced.

Accommodation: Most people stay at Coaster Cottages, but it was full upon our arrival. A bit further to the south there are a few more accommodation options and we stayed at Evelyn Cottage (-5.664076, 132.6362 for 250,000 for the night. From here we just walked along the very beautiful beach north for about 2 km to reach Coaster Cottages and onward to the forest patch.

Birding: We only spent one morning here and it was absolutely dead. I wouldn't even recommend wasting time coming out to Ohoililir except that the beach is one of the most beautiful I've ever seen and Island Whistler seems to be more common here than near the airport (we had none there). It was very dead all morning and we hardly saw a bird before 0800. Eventually we did have a few birds around -5.641194, 132.63756 including Kai White-eye, White-tailed Monarch, Afura Fantail, and Island Whistler. We left by 1000 since the birding was so bad.

Airport Road:

Logistics: From Tual we took ojek for 20,000 each and got off around -5.747643, 132.724691. We explored a few trails on each side of the highway. Heading back to Tual we hitched a ride for free.

Accommodation: There are a few accommodation options in Tual, but most are all over priced. We stayed at Syafira Hotel since it was near the ferry for 400,000 per night. It had A/C and subpar wifi, but everything in Tual is overpriced.

Birding: We first explored a few trails west of the highway that lead through patches of good forest as well as the edges of a few Kebuns (gardens/farms) and then crossed the road and explored another trail to the east. Birding was much better here and we saw most of the target birds including Kai Coucal, White-tailed Monarch, Kai White-eye, Kai Fantail, Stephans Dove, Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot, and Paupan Pitta (east of highway at -6.74022, 132.73049). Grey-headed Whistler was common here, but Island Whistler was absent. The only birds of interest that we didn't see here were Kai Cicadabird and Wallacean Cuckooshrike.

Kai Besar

Logistics: The ferry leaves from -5.647583, 132.74284 at 0900 and at 1400 and costs 50,000 for a regular ticket or 60,000 for VIP (A/C, bigger seats). The ride takes 1-1 ½ hours and arrives on Kai Besar at the village of Elat. From Elat we took a bemo in the direction of Fako for 35,000 each. Our goal was to sleep in Fako, look for the boobook, and visit the mission the next morning. Unfortunately Fako isn't in the mountains as suggested by google maps/maps.me and after passing the mission we went back down to sea level and the small village of Fako. We didn't want to stay here, so we paid 50,000 each (way overpaid but there was no options) to get ojek rides back up to the mission (-5.627036, 133.04226). We walked in to the mission and camped under a large structure at the mission. Leaving the mission we planned to hitch a ride down, but that proved to be somewhat difficult as there wasn't much traffic. Eventually we did get ojek back down to Elat, but be prepared to give yourself some time to hitch a ride. Another option (and way more recommended) would be to stay either in Elat or in the small village (-5.630768, 133.01012) just past the turn off for the mountain road to the mission (-5.633369, 133.008839). Best advice would be to contact Adolof who is a tourist guide on Kai Kecil, but is originally from Kai Besar and still has a house there that his brother and sister live at. This is what I did the second time I visited since the first attempt at the boobook failed. Adolof charged me 300,000 to sleep at his house on Kai Besar including guiding/transport for the boobook. To be honest, you'd be hard pressed to spend less (just in transport), so it's well worth contacting him.

Accommodation: See above, contact Adolof (082399098714) to sleep at his house. 100,000 per night.

Birding:

Bukit Indah Mission

The main birding site on Kai Besar is the Bukit Indah Mission. Located about 40 mins by ojek from Elat, the mission provides easy access to elevation needed to find the leaf-warbler. The turnoff for the mission is at -5.627036, 133.04226 and after walking a few hundred meters you arrive at an abandoned building, shelter, and two statues. The trail for the leaf-warbler starts behind and to the right of the large Jesus statue (-5.623861, 133.04511). The trail heads up in elevation, but not as steeply as I expected it to. Luckily I didn't have to go far and had a responsive pair of leaf-warblers at 360m (-5.622577, 133.04674). The Greater Kai White-eye was easily seen around the clearing where the structure is as well as along the entire road back down to the ocean. Stephan's Dove was heard just past where I had the leaf-warblers and the local ssp of Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove was common in the area. On the walk back down along the road, a single Kai Cicadabird was seen at -5.625023, 133.03259.

Kai Boobook: The first night we spent on Kai Besar we camped at Bukit Indah Mission. It was very rainy and windy from dusk until 0100. At 0100 I started looking for the boobook and from 0100-0400 I walked along the access road as well as down the main road, but only heard one brief response at -5.626129, 133.02905. Rain started again at 0400 and didn't stop until dawn. After getting the leaf-warbler, we headed back to Elat and took the 0900 ferry onward to Tual. Since I dipped the boobook I decided to get back on the 1400 ferry with local guide Adolof. Eventually it became apparent that he had never actually seen the boobook, but had heard it a bunch of times, which was fine with me. We went to his house and waited for dark. From there we headed up the mountain road towards the mission (the same road I had looked for the boobook by myself the night prior, but lower down). The first place we checked was just after a bridge, but we got no response. From there we just started working our way up the road trying various spots. Eventually I heard a distant boobook at -5.63184, 133.02212 and luckily there was a trail heading inward into the plantation. After walking in a few hundred meters, we eventually had very good looks at the Kai Boobook at 05.630642, 133.02143. Adolof was quite happy to see his lifer Kai Boobook (maybe I should have charged the guiding fee?).

Buru

Logistics: To get to Buru you need to take the overnight ferry (there's apparently a day ferry too) from Galala on the island of Ambon. The ferry leaves nightly (except Sundays I think) at 2000 and arrives in Namlea just before 0500. From Namlea a shared bemo to Wamana will cost 50,000 each. The drive takes about 2- 2 ½ hours. Be advised that when we arrived they tried to charge us 50,000 each also for each bag we had. We ended up giving an additional 50,000, but this was never discussed prior to departure and could have been avoided by tying the bags on the roof. Leaving Buru the ferry once again departs at 2000. From Wamana back to Namlea it is possible to get a bemo as late as 1600, but after that, you'll have to coordinate your own transport. Melissa took a bemo back for 50,000 (didn't try to charge her extra for baggage) and I took an ojek later in the afternoon for 200,000.

Accommodation: Most reports talk about staying at the Buru Resort in Wamana. It's 500,000 a night. Not sure why anyone would ever stay there. Right at the entrance to the logging road is Penginapan Kwal Aseh. Rooms are 200,000 and 250,000 per night. There's also a few stores and a restaurant next to Kwal Aseh while the resort has nothing near it.

Transport: Most birders will visit the Wamlana Logging Road via chartered 4wd. This costs 1.8 million and can be arranged with the stores near the entrance (as well as Kwal Aseh).

Dana Ranua:

Transport: Since we decided to do things different and go to Dana Rauna, we took a shared 4wd for 150,000 each. Every day except Fridays, there is a shared 4wd that will depart from near the entrance road between 0730-1000 (depending on when it fills up). We arrived on the ferry at 0500, made it to Wamlana shortly after 0700, and started up the road in the back of the truck around 0930. It should take about four hours to reach Dana Rauna, but because of a landslide (and other issues with the road) at the time of our visit, the truck stopped roughly 8 kilometers before Dana Rauna. We had no clue this was going to happen and had taken all of our gear/luggage with us instead of leaving unnecessary things at Kwal Aseh. We got out of the vehicle and were told it was a "three hour walk" to Wagrahiolo (the village next to the lake). I was also told that there would be ojek in town to help with the gear. I took the largest bag and "quickly" made my way to the village. It only took 1 hour, 45 minutes, but I was exhausted when I arrived. Unfortunately both ojekes were broken so I grabbed two porters and walked back (this time taking 1 ½ hours without gear) to get Melissa and the rest of the bags. The final hike back took us 2 hours and we paid each porter 200,000 for the trip. Leaving we once again paid porters 200,000 to help carry our bags to the pickup point. You need to be back at the pickup point by 0930 to make sure you don't miss the return trip (the 4wd will arrive between 0930 and 1300). For us, the 4wd arrived at 1000, but earlier than when we arrived at 1300 a few days before.

***Edit*:** As of Nov 2017, the road was fixed and you could take the 4wd the whole way to the village. This will definitely save some time and money, but ask about the road conditions before leaving because I wouldn't be surprised if there's more landslide issues in the future.

Accommodation: In Wagrahiolo we stayed at one of the Kepala Dusan's houses (the village has a Kepala Desa and two Kepala Dusans), at -3.38848, 126.54798. We only spent two nights at the actual house, spending the rest of the time camping. We weren't charged for our stay and didn't end up giving anything extra since the Kepala Dusan's son was the one who carried our bags in and out and was getting paid a premium to do so.

Guiding: Luckily there was a social worker staying in the village who spoke perfect English which made our lives a lot easier. We arranged for two guides (Ronnie and Arcain) to take us up into the mountains. We agreed to pay 200,000 per person per day. The guides showed us the trail up the mountain, made camp, and cooked meals.

Food: Make sure you buy food before arriving as you can't purchase anything in town. Also, it's best to buy things in Ambon instead of Buru as variety will be much better. For example, you can't buy canned tuna in Buru. We brought 3 kg rice, 24 ramen noodle packets, 4 large packets of coffee, 1 kg of sugar (Indonesians love their coffee very sweet), 8 cans of tuna and one large tarp for our 3 day, 2 night trip (for four people in total). I highly recommend bringing a tarp! There's a careful balance between having enough food and things weighing too much, but I'd recommend more food than less. We had some rice, coffee, and sugar left over that the guides happily took off our hands.

Adat: The very simplistic definition of an adat is an Indonesian ceremony. Sometimes these are necessary before entering the forest and in this case it was. Luckily we were able to get the adat completed the night we arrived so that it didn't interfere with our plans. In total we paid 500,000 for the adat (originally they wanted 700,000). Kind of a ridiculous cost, but I guess that's the price you pay for keeping the evil spirits at bay.

The Trek: We left at 0630 (first light) and started up a very steep trail that was in good condition. We took our time birding along the way and quickly heard numerous Buru Pittas as well as a single Buru Dwarf-Kingfisher (-3.378969, 126.54931). After two kilometers we had reached a campsite area at 1345m. Originally our guides thought we would camp there, but we explained we still needed to go much higher. The trail continued higher and soon reached a ridge around 1450m. We followed the trail along the ridge, but as it reached the next mountain top, the trail started to degrade quickly. We continued along for a little longer, but the trail didn't go higher, instead following the side of the mountain. We reached another campsite at 1450m (-3.361348, 126.53558) and decided this would be a good place to sleep. From here the trail continues along the side of the mountain and is difficult to follow. The guides insisted that it would go higher, but to me it didn't look like it would any time soon. Luckily we got the Madanga very quickly (more on that below) and spent late afternoon around camp as it rained. The next morning instead of following the trail, I just headed directly uphill from camp. There are numerous side trails and I was easily able to get up to 1560m and probably could have continued up to the top around 1650m. Unfortunately, this area tops out around 1650 but continues on a ridge that eventually goes above 1700m. I'm not sure of the feasibility of going along that ridge. The main trail past the campsite continued along the side of the mountain and was not in good shape. Our guides insisted it eventually went higher, but I'm not sure if that's true. Although I'd recommend this trek, it is a bit unfortunate that getting above 1450m becomes difficult. Looking at topographical maps, it looks like there could be some better options a bit further west of Wagrahiolo. This was our original plan, but with the road issues mentioned above, just making it to Wagrahiolo was enough for us. After birding around camp in the morning, we made our way back down to the first camp we passed at 1345m. We spent the night there and then the next morning slowly birded down arriving back in the village around 1030.

Birding: There are two main areas discussed below; The Trek and the access road.

The Trek: The trail starts at around 800m and quickly gains in elevation. Cinnamon-chested Flycatcher was seen well in a gully around 1000m at -3.381535, 126.54927. Buru Dwarf Kingfisher was heard calling both on the way up and way down at (-3.378969, 126.54931). On the way down we spent two hours sitting in the area hoping to see it, but never did. Buru Pitta, Buru Thrush, and Buru Grasshopper Warbler were all commonly heard throughout. A few specific locations for each are Buru Pitta (-3.367994, 126.54441), Buru Thrush (-3.373772, 126.54863 & -3.371267, 126.54672), and Buru Grasshopper Warbler (-3.375405, 126.54918 & -3.367632, 126.54409). Black-lored Parrot was heard distantly around the campsite at 1345m and Moluccan Scops-Owl was very common. No owling was done around the 1450m as it rained all night. After arriving at camp at 1450m the first afternoon, we slowly started birding our way along the trail past camp. In the first flock we encountered, we found a single Madanga. (-3.36-174, 126.53591). We watched the bird for over five minutes as it crawled nuthatch-like over mossy branches. Unfortunately we never heard it call, so no recordings! The weather was light rain and fog which might be the reason as to why it was at the lower limits of its elevational range (or maybe it's more common at that attitude than originally thought?) Other birds in the flock included Tawny-backed Fantail, Buru White-eye, Buru Leaf-Warbler, Buru Drongo, and Yellow-throated Whistler. The next morning I hiked up to 1560m and found a single Buru Honeyeater (-3.36-165, 126.53435). Once again it was very foggy and very little bird activity. Although we encountered the same flock as we had the prior afternoon, we were unable to relocate the Madanga. By late morning we left camp and walked back down to the other camp at 1345m which we had named "Campsite Tiga Blas," (with *tiga blas* meaning thirteen in Indonesian.) We didn't see much along the way, but managed good looks at Buru Pitta. That night we searched long and hard for Buru Boobook without success (it would have been nice to have a recording). The next morning we worked our way back to the village focusing on Buru Dwarf-Kingfisher and Cinnamon-chested Flycatcher. Only hearing the former, but connecting well with the later.

Access Road: We also spent a good bit of time along the logging road that connects Dana Ranua back to the coast. Although the trek is good for forest birds like pittas and thrushes, it was terrible for raptors, pigeons, and lots of other canopy birds since it was often hard to see into the tops of the trees. Therefore birding the road is essential to picking up the rest of the endemics. We spent one morning birding the road on the way back out to meet the 4wd to head back to Wamlana. Before light we had fantastic views of Buru Masked Owl just outside of town at -3.385162, 126.55-9. Moluccan Scops-Owl was very common, but once again no sign of the boobook. We also had a very close Black-lored Parrot at the Masked Owl spot that I saw fly over. After light we were able to find all of the remaining endemics including both pigeons, two groups of Buru Cuckooshikes, and multiple Buru Monarchs.

Bara:

Logistics: From Wamlana it now only takes 1 hour to reach Bara. My original plan was to spend one night in Bara, but since I picked up the green-pigeon very quickly, I only spent about 30 minutes in the area! From Wamlana I took an ojek to Bara for 70,000. I made my way to the Kapala Desa's house and arranged to spend the night. I then took an ojek back out to the main road to start looking for the green-pigeon. Just as we reached the main road I noticed a pigeon sitting in a nearby tree. Amazingly it was a juvenile Buru Green-Pigeon. Since Melissa had already headed back to Namlea, I decided it would be best to head directly back as well and try to catch the evening ferry. Luckily I arrived in Namlea around 1930 and we were able to get on the ferry before it departed at 2000.

Ambon

Overview: Ambon is the transportation hub for most of the Moluccas. Although we didn't spend too much time on the island, there is still one endemic, Ambon White-eye. Along with the white-eye, the small island of Haruku is easily reached from Ambon and is probably the most convenient place to see Moluccan Scrubfowl.

Accommodation: There are dozens of hotels in the main city of Ambon. We preferred to stay at Hotel Pacific (-3.690826, 128.186805) which was 370,000 a night, but very nice. It also wasn't too far from the Malaku City Mall (MCM) which is a good place to stock up on food before heading to Buru or Seram. For some odd reason you can't buy tarps at the mall, but you can from the small stores across the street from the mall. This is helpful as if you plan on doing treks on Buru or Seram, you'll want to bring tarps.

Birding:

Tulehu Road: A small road heading inland from the town of Tulehu is a very reliable spot for Ambon White-eye. I visited this spot on a single morning where I hired an ojek from Ambon to drive me to site, bird for an hour, and drive back (200,000). Upon arrival I heard the white-eye even before getting off the motorbike! The turnoff for the road is at -3.58708, 128.327882. I saw multiple white-eyes early in the morning around -3.585246, 128.3043.

Haruku: From Tulehu you can hire a boat to Haruku. We paid 300,000 to hire a boat for 6 hours. We departed in the evening around 1600 and arrived in the small village of Kailolo about 40 minutes later. Although we tracked down Mr Badi, mentioned in Knass's report, this proved to be a bit difficult. I think it would be easier to just ask anyone hanging around the port to be your "guide" and get permission to access the scrubfowl area. There are a few open areas at the edge of a cemetery just north of the port and south of the village. There is a hide at -3.538643, 128.41463 along the edge of the one clearing that provides great views of the scrubfowl. While waiting for it to get dark, we took a walk around the area and saw a few Forsten's Scrubfowl. Just as it was getting dusk, 10 Moluccan Scrubfowl came in to the clearing where the hide was. We ended up paying our three "guides" 120,000 in total before returning to the harbor and taking our boat back to Tulehu.

Seram

Overview: Most birders visiting Seram will spend the majority of their time birding the Trans Seram highway and basing their stay in the coastal village of Sawai. Although this is a good strategy that will result in most of the endemics, we decided to take a slightly different approach and visit the upper slopes of Mount Binaiya to search for Seram Masked Owl and Seram Thrush. This plan worked very well and we were able to see both of our targets. Below is information on organizing and completing the hike to Mount Binaiya as well as birding the morning typical sites.

Logistics: From Ambon you can take a ferry to either Waipirit or Amahai. Since we first went to Boana for the Boana Monarch, we took the ferry to Waipirit and then eventually took a taxi to Amahai before taking another taxi to Sawai. Upon leaving, we took the afternoon ferry from Amahai back to Ambon.

From Amahai, you can use Dijual as a taxi to get to Sarawi. His number is 081354998788. He speaks basic English and only charged 600,000 for the ride there plus a few hours of birding along the way. We used him on the way back too, with a 0500 pickup (birding the highway for a few hours) and then getting back for the Amahai ferry to Seram. He arrived by 0520 so pretty reliable by Indonesian standards! He understands what birders want to do (walk the road with him following behind).

Accommodation: Most birders visiting Sawai decide to stay in one of the two water front guesthouses that charge 350,000 per person per day for full room and board. This is a bit expensive, especially when you'll probably be out birding all day and missing most of the meals. A much cheaper option is to stay in the small village of Masihulan located just before Sawai. Almost every house in this small village is a "homestay". We chose to stay at the pink house on the right at the top of the hill (-2.965676, 129.20161) and were charged 100,000 per night. Although they didn't have food to cook for us, we bought food in the main village of Sawai and they gladly cooked us meals. Staying in Masihulan has an additional benefit as it is within walking distance of birding the lower areas of the Sawai road so you do not have to worry about coordinating early morning transportation. Also, the porters we used for the Mt Binaiya hike live in this village.

Birding:

Lower Sawai Road: The road from Masihulan out to the main intersection with the Trans Seram Highway (-2.985824, 129.207941) is good for a number of lowland species including Salmon-crested Cockatoo, Long-crested Myna, Violet Crow, Indigo Kingfisher, and Seram Boobook. Although we spent little time in this area, we did have a Seram Boobook respond very well to tape at -2.973379, 129.20515 shortly before dawn.

Trans Seram Highway: The area around the "first" pass is by far the most commonly birded area on Seram. The pass is located at 1340m at -3.024279, 129.182607. We spent two mornings birding this area. The first time we coordinated ojek rides from Sawai for 50,000 each to the top of the pass and then walked down the highway in the direction of Sawai before eventually hitching a ride back to the village. The second time we birded the highway in the early morning before departing around 0900 to head back to Amahai to catch the afternoon ferry. Since we visited this location after our hike to Mt Binaiya, we had very few targets remaining. Highlights included Rufous-necked Sparrowhawk near the pass at -3.023086, 129.18228 and our only Bicolored Heleia of the trip at -3.014789, 129.18323. The highway was also much better for canopy birds such as Seram Myzomela, Drab Myzomela, and pigeons compared to the Binaiya Hike. We also had a single Buru Bush Warbler along the highway near the second pass at -3.040306, 129.14686.

Palau Loesaolat: We visited this small island to find Olive Honeyeater. Although most people pay around 800,000 for a boat trip to the island we found a local fisherman to take us for only 200,000. Although his boat was a bit smaller and slower than the ones used by the two resorts, we still were able to safely make it to Palau Loesaolat after about an hour boat ride, although you could only fit a total of 3 people in it. When we first arrived, the honeyeaters were nowhere to be found, but eventually I heard one calling and then out of nowhere, we had 5-6 birds become very vocal and active. We checked the nearby sandbar for Chinese Crested Tern, but I think it was a bit too early in the season for the wintering bird to possibly be around. The boat man lives at -2.958232, 129.1809. He and his wife were extremely friendly and before we went out on our trip, we coordinated for his wife to cook us a meal upon our return. When we arrived back from seeing the honeyeaters we had a fantastic fresh fish dinner. I highly recommend going this route.

Mount Binaiya Trek:

Overview: Birding the trail to the summit of Mount Binaiya provides access to some of the best forest in Indonesia. The upper slopes of the mountain are home to many high elevation species that are either very difficult or near impossible to see along the Trans Seram Highway. Although this area is extremely interesting to visit, the access hike is quite strenuous and should only be completed if you're in very good shape. From the starting point in Huaulu to the final campsite for the thrush is just over 24km. We completed our trek in six days, but I would highly recommend 7 or even 8 days so that you'll have some additional time to explore. The hike starts in the village of Huaulu which is about a 45 min car ride from Masihulan. From here you follow a trail/river to Roho and then another very muddy trail to Kanikeh. From Kanikeh you finally start on the ascent up the side of Mt Binaiya. From Huaulu to the campsite at 1340m it takes about 1 ½ days of walking with little birding.

Contact Info: To coordinate a visit, it is best to try and contact Soni (082198363542) in the village of Masihulan. Soni has visited Mt Binaiya over 15 times and is very familiar with the area. Unfortunately, Soni was injured when we visited, but he was able to find two other porters to guide us.

Porters/Gear/Food: Although we only took two porters, I would recommend taking three. We originally thought we'd be able to buy more food in the last village of Kenikeh, but that isn't possible. Therefore we were very short on food for the entire duration of the trek. By taking a third porter you could definitely bring a lot more food. Also, make sure to bring tarps for both you and your porters. It is possible to buy tarps in Sawai, but to be safe I'd buy them in Ambon and bring them with you. Although boiling water for drinking is an option, we decided to bring a water filtration system. The porters will be able to provide cooking gear. We paid each porter 1.2 million rupiah for the trek as well as 50,000 for staying in Roho the first night and 50,000 in Kanikeh as an "access fee".

Below is a detailed report of our trek as well as some birding highlights. Be advised, it is only possible to do this trip during the dry season. Later in the year once it begins to rain a lot, the rivers will be too high to safely cross. A few friends wanted to do the hike in November, but were told that it wasn't possible due to high water levels.

Day 1: Aug 27th: Start at 1530 at Huaulu (elevation 117m, -2.990186, 129.35241) and end at Roho (elevation 85m, -3.019755, 129.3913) at 1800. The hike starts out by going up steeply to roughly 300m elevation before dropping back down to the large river system at around 100m. From here you have to navigate along the river (and a few side trails) until finally reaching Roho. This section of the trek is nice and flat (except the first part!) but you'll definitely get wet and muddy. I'd highly recommend just bringing water shoes and walking through the river for almost the entire time. At times there are opportunities to take side trails along the river, but they are very muddy (shin high at times). At other times it's impossible to avoid walking or crossing the river so you'll get wet anyways. Rubber boots would work well, but at times the water is higher than the boots. The last river crossing before Roho had quite a swift current and if the water would have been higher, I don't think it would have been safe to cross. Total distance is 7.1km

Day 2: Aug 28th: Depart Roho at 0600. The next section of trail is in fairly good shape with a few muddy sections, but overall quite enjoyable. It passes through degraded forest as it slowly gains in elevation (roughly 100m every 3 km) until you reach 400m and then drops down to a shelter called Camp Wasamata (-3.078898, 129.43412) at 350m. This section is just over 8 km long and this shelter would make a good first stopping point if you left earlier the day prior (we stayed in Roho instead since we didn't start until 1530). We arrived at the shelter at 0930 and took a 30 minute break. Although we didn't bird this section on the way in, we did see a few good birds on the way out. A Seram Boobook was flushed at -3.071609, 129.42629 and Long-crested Myna was seen at -3.063462, 129.41825. Red-breasted Pygmy Parrot was also seen a times along this section of trail.

From the shelter you cross another river and then start climbing in elevation to around 500-600m and then the trail continues with a number of up and down sections staying in the 500-600m range. This section has a lot of very muddy areas and for the most part is the least enjoyable part of the hike. We eventually arrived in Kanikeh (elevation 613m, -3.108815, 129.47991) at 1430 and took a 30 minute break. This section is roughly 6 km.

From Kanikeh the trail starts to climb again with a few more river crossings, we eventually made it to a camp site (elevation 977m, -3.138563, 129.48213) about two hours later just after 1700. We did not bird this section on the way in, but on the way out saw a few interesting birds including Wallacean Cuckooshrike and Cinnamon-chested Flycatcher at -3.12625, 129.47925.

Day 3: Aug 29: We spent the morning looking for birds near the campsite, but the noise from the river made it hard to find anything. Only highlight was a fly-over Purple-naped Lory at the campsite. We left around 0800 and started to hike up to the next camp site. You cross a river and the trail becomes VERY steep. This section of the trail is only around 2.5 km but you climb

from 977m up to camp Waensela (elevation 1344m, -3.144599, 129.47345). This section took just over 2 hours and we arrived at camp Waensela around 1030. After setting up camp I explored the area above camp, first taking a "side trail" that the porter thought was the correct trail! We followed it for about 2 hours before it topped out and I knew it wasn't right. Luckily that was ok, as we were just looking for birds and still had some nice sightings along the trail (including the only Seram Pitta of the trip at -3.144421, 129.47009). We then went back to camp and took the correct trail (that starts by crossing the little stream) and continued uphill for the evening. Just at dusk I found a Seram Thrush around 1440m (-3.146868, 129.47268) and was able to get amazing views of it.

Day 4: Aug 30: Left camp at 0300 and started uphill looking for Seram Masked Owl. We heard a single bird around 14020m (-3.146346, 129.47267) and briefly saw it, but didn't get any pictures or recordings! At dawn I showed Melissa the Seram Thrush as she had taken the afternoon off the day prior. We were able to get fantastic views as well as the first photographs of it in the wild and first sound recordings. From here we continued up the steep trail to around 2000m spending the day looking for the local ssp of Island Thrush. Unfortunately we didn't find the Island Thrush, but had plenty of other good birds including multiple Blue-eared Lorries, Seram Grasshopper-Warbler, Grey-hooded White-eyes, and heard a few more Seram Thrushes (-3.159368, 129.48154). In the evening we walked back down to camp.

Day 5: Aug 31st: Left camp at 0700 and started back down. Arrived at Kanikeh around 1130 and ate lunch just below town. Arrived at camp Wasamata at 1600 and spent the night there.

Day 6: Sept 1: Left camp at 0700 and slowly worked our way back to Roho arriving around 1130. Then from Roho we made it back to Hualulu by 1330. From Hualulu it was a bit hard to find transportation, but we finally found someone in town to give us an overcharged ride (100,000) out to the main road. From there we hitched our way back to Masihulan.



Map Showing route from Hualulu to top of Mount Binaya