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# Sulawesi & Halmahera, Indonesia

**6<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

**Leader: Rob Hutchinson**

**Max Group Size: 6**

The four-legged island of Sulawesi lies to the east of the famous Wallace's Line, an imaginary boundary between distinct faunal regions. It is the largest and geographically most complex Wallacean island and during our journey we will see for ourselves the amazing avifauna which is so different from the islands of the Greater Sundas to the west, including up to 70 species found nowhere else on earth. We shall cover all habitats, from coastal mangroves to forest-cloaked mountains, in search of such mouth-watering specialties as Diabolical Nightjar, Purple-bearded Bee-eater, Great Shortwing and the magnificent Maleo.

We also visit Halmahera, the largest of the fabled 'Spice Islands' with a noticeable Australasian shift in the avifauna. Halmahera holds an equally exciting set of endemics with the highlight perhaps the unique Wallace's Standardwing, one of the most spectacular and bizarre birds-of-paradise. We will be able to watch this extraordinary species at one of its lek sites.

## **Day 1:**

After a morning arrival in Manado, situated on the northern Minahassa peninsula, we shall transfer to the nearby Tangkoko-Dua Saudara National Park. As we approach the park we may encounter our first endemics; Purple-winged Roller, Sulawesi Crested Myna and White-rumped Cuckooshrike.

In the evening we shall walk around the surrounding grasslands hoping to add to our endemic tally, and as dusk approaches we shall visit a nearby roost tree for one of the smallest primates in the world; the Spectral Tarsier. This incredible looking species with its endearing large eyes was the inspiration for Steven Spielberg's "ET" and we will watch in amazement as they spring from branch to branch. Night at Tangkoko.

## **Days 2-3:**

The wonderful park of Tangkoko with its forest rising from coastal to submontane, supports a large range of the region's endemic birds. The highly sought-after endemic quartet of kingfishers; Lilac-cheeked, Green-backed, Sulawesi Dwarf and Scaly are all possible. The first two are the most likely to be seen. On one day we will take a boat trip into the mangroves to search for a fifth endemic kingfisher, the huge Black-billed.

The park boasts the highest density of the brilliant Knobbed Hornbill on Sulawesi and the uncommon Dwarf Hornbill also occurs, sometimes following troops of black Sulawesi Crested Macaque, which patrol the forest like miniature Gorillas! A variety of other endemics are possible; Ornate Lorikeet, Silver-tipped Imperial Pigeon, Sulawesi Black Pigeon, Yellow-billed Malkoha and Ashy Woodpecker to name just a few.

Walking up through the forest, close attention to the forest understory could produce skulkers such as the gorgeous Red-backed Thrush, Red-bellied and Hooded Pittas and Stephan's Dove.

Night-time forays should prove rewarding, with the surrounding grasslands and secondary forest home to three nocturnal endemics; Sulawesi Scops Owl, Sulawesi Masked Owls and Sulawesi Nightjar. Good numbers of hawking Great Eared-Nightjar also occur. Nights at Tangkoko.

#### **Day 4:**

We will spend a final morning at Tangkoko, making a special effort for any species missed thus far. As the temperatures rise we will drive south-west to the town of Kotamobagu, our base for exploration for the next four nights. Night in Kotamobagu.

#### **Days 5-7:**

We will explore the nearby Dumoga-Bone National Park, visiting a lowland forest area on the eastern side of this extensive park. Despite large-scale deforestation around the perimeter of the park the birds continue to hang-on and the list of possibilities is huge. Sulawesi endemics abound, and we will be looking for Bay Coucal, Black-billed Koel and Sulawesi Black Pigeon feeding in the understorey. Frugivores in the sub-canopy will hopefully include Yellow-breasted Raquet-tail, Maroon-chinned Fruit Dove, Sulawesi Triller, Pied Cuckooshrike and both Large and Small Sulawesi Hanging-parrots. Once again, a host of ground-dwellers are possible; Red-bellied Pitta, the secretive Sulawesi Ground-dove and even the rarely seen Blue-faced Rail occur here. We will also keep an eye to the sky, as all four of the Sulawesi endemic Accipiters are here; Small, Vinous-breasted and Spot-tailed Sparrowhawk along with the rare Sulawesi Goshawk. Sulawesi Serpent Eagle, Sulawesi Hawk Eagle and Barred Honey Buzzard complete the set of endemic raptors present and Spotted Harriers also occur in the area. Once again night birding can be productive and we have a chance of encountering Sulawesi Scops Owl, Sulawesi Masked Owl and both Speckled and Ochre-bellied Boobooks.

One morning we will visit the nesting grounds of the unique Maleo, a large pied megapode that is Sulawesi's most famed and enigmatic species. Maleos use geothermal heat in the volcanic soil in their communal breeding grounds to incubate their eggs, and the young are able to fly as soon as they dig their way out of the ground after hatching! Unfortunately Maleo eggs suffer from high predation, predominately by humans, but it is hoped that on-going conservation work should help protect the birds at this site.

To the north of Kotamobagu lies another national park, Gunung Ambang. This park will give us access to submontane forests that are equally rich in bird life. Though forest clearance is a severe threat to the park, some excellent tracts remain, holding some of Sulawesi's least known and rarest species. They include the recently described Cinnabar Boobook, only known from here and a handful of other sites. We shall make an effort to find this species and another local speciality, the surprisingly attractive Matinan Flycatcher, known only from the hill forests of the Minahassa Peninsula. Other species include the rarely observed and skulking Sombre Pigeon, Scaly Kingfisher and Red-backed Thrush.

#### **Day 8:**

Today will predominately be a travelling day. We head off early morning to Manado Airport to connect with our flight to Ternate, one of the fabled 'Spice Islands' which is our hopping off point for Halmahera. After a short boat ride across the open water we arrive at Sidangoli, a tranquil fishing village located on the west coast of Halmahera. Frigatebirds may well be flocking overhead, the majority being Lesser though there is the possibility of Great Frigatebird among them. Beach Kingfisher is another possibility, although later in our stay we will search more thoroughly for this noisy but sometimes elusive species. Night at Sidangoli.

#### **Days 9-13:**

Spending five nights on Halmahera will give us the opportunity to search for some of the most prized species on earth, including Wallace's Standardwing and Ivory-breasted Pitta. We should see both, and will hope to observe the Standardwing at a lek site – a truly magical experience as the birds greet the rising sun by jumping up and parachute down accompanied by an amazing cacophony of noise whenever a female approaches. Birding in the tropical forests of Halmahera is an exhilarating experience and a whole host of island and Moluccan endemics can be expected. Parrots are a common feature of the landscape, with White Cockatoos still reasonably common, although numbers of Chattering and Violet-necked Lory are declining due to trapping of these beautiful species for the cagebird trade. Other frugivores make use of the often abundant fruiting trees in the area with several species of fruit dove possible, including the elusive Scarlet-breasted. Paradise Crow (a generally uniform, corvid-like bird-of-paradise), Halmahera Oriole and the aptly-named Goliath Coucal are also likely. Raptors are again much in evidence, with Grey-throated and Moluccan Goshawks, Rufous-necked Sparrowhawk and Gurney's Eagle all possible. Night birding is a must here as we hope to spot-light the bizarre looking Moluccan Owlet Nightjar along with Moluccan Scops Owl and Halmahera Boobook.

One evening we shall take a journey along the coast to visit the communal breeding grounds of the Moluccan Scrubfowl. By sitting quietly, we can hope to encounter one or more of these birds as they come down from the forests to lay their single egg on the beach. A short boat ride along the nearby mangroves will be required to search for the noisy but often inconspicuous Beach Kingfisher. Nights on Halmahera.

#### **Day 14:**

We will bid farewell to this marvellous island as we take the short boat ride back to Ternate for our flight back to Manado and connect with our onward flight to Makassar, the hub of Southern Sulawesi, for an overnight stop. Allowing ourselves enough time in the afternoon, we make the short journey to the remaining forest

patches at Karaenta to search for yet another localised endemic, Black-ringed White-eye. The forest is also home to several other endemics including diminutive Yellow-sided and Grey-sided Flowerpeckers and Black Sunbirds. Night in Makassar.

### **Days 15-19:**

Following a short flight north to Palu in central Sulawesi, we head to one of Indonesia's greatest national parks, Lore Lindu, for a four-night stay. We shall base ourselves in the lowlands making frequent forays to the higher reaches of the park for some of the really special endemics of Sulawesi.

It is difficult to know where to start to describe the incredible diversity of species that inhabit the national park; it is home to nearly all of Sulawesi's remarkable endemics. The higher reaches of the park are accessible along a famed old logging road, the Anaso Trail, and home to 4 of the most wanted endemics; Diabolical (Satanic) Nightjar, Geomalia, Great Shortwing and one of the world's most spectacular bee-eaters; Purple-bearded Bee-eater. The bee-eater breeds in roadside banks and often perches conspicuously, giving great views. Once again, pigeons are much in evidence, with White-bellied and Grey-headed Imperial regularly seen, as are Superb and Red-eared Fruit Doves. Feeding flocks often comprise several more endemics; Yellow-vented and Sulphur-bellied Whistlers, Cerulean and Pygmy Cuckooshrikes, Rusty-bellied Fantail, Sulawesi Myzomela and both Lesser and Greater Sulawesi Honeyeaters.

Birding at a slightly lower altitude will produce a shift in bird life. Here we can find the taxonomically perplexing Malia, flocks of which sometimes contain the rare Sulawesi Thrush, an equally perplexing species that behaves more like a babbler than a thrush! The forest understorey is home to the rarely seen Maroon-backed Whistler, Sulawesi Ground Dove and even such mega-rarities as Blue-faced Rail and Sulawesi Woodcock, although the last two are seen by only the most fortunate observers.

On day 19 we shall drive back to Palu for an overnight stay.

Nights in Lore Lindu National Park.

### **Day 20:**

This morning we fly from Palu to Makassar to connect with our international flights.

Please note this itinerary is open to change at any time due to continuing changes in internal flight schedules.

**Total tour cost: £ 2795**

**Single room supplement: £ 180**

**Deposit: £ 300**

These prices are available in US dollars, please contact us for details.

### **The cost includes:**

All accommodation, all main meals, overland transport, internal flights, permits, entrance fees, guide fees & translator

### **The cost excludes:**

International flights, departure taxes, tourist visa, insurance, drinks & other items of a personal nature

For further information please contact us via [e-mail](#) or telephone **+44 1332 516254**