Asia’s youngest country–Timor-Leste–became autonomous in 2002 after 24 years of post-colonial era civil war between Indonesia and the Portuguese speaking Timorese. The country holds a fascinating history, colonised by Portugal in the 16th century before leaving in 1975, only for Indonesia to invade the following year, and remain until 1999, a period which was marked by much violence and brutality. During the Second World War, the Japanese also briefly occupied the capital, Dili, and the mountainous region to the south. The Portuguese left a rich culture and language, a stark contrast from their Indonesian neighbours on the western end of Timor. Now that the conflict is over and locals are getting on with their lives in this poor, but oil-rich country, it is again safe to visit. From a birding perspective, after 8 tours to west Timor as part of our well-trodden Lesser Sundas tour, generally seeing all but 2-3 of the islands endemic or near-endemic species we wanted to eke out those remaining endemics during our 5 days on the island. One of which – Timor Coucal – is endemic to Timor Leste, while another – Timor Green Pigeon – has possibly gone unrecorded in the west since before the turn of the century due to intense hunting pressures. Our final target, Iris Lorikeet we generally have a 50-50 chance of in the west but here in Timor Leste, where hunting pressure is less and capture for the bird-trade is almost non-existent, it is still a locally common species.

Merpati, the ‘Get the feeling’ airline, is Indonesia’s most notoriously unpredictable airlines delivered us an hour ahead of schedule, a surprise and a relief after Lion Air had forced us into a gruelling 12-hour marathon drive in order to make our connection, by cancelling our Makassar to Bali flight! Once we settled down in the
small city of Dili we immediately headed eastwards along the well-paved road, winding in and out of eucalyptus dominated hillsides looking down on a dramatic panorama of crystal clear blue sea, a continuous bed of coral lying just before the coastal surface and pristine sun-kissed beaches for 4 hours until we reached the town of Baucau and spent the night in the charming Puasado de Baucau, run by a Portuguese family. The delicious steak, egg and chips in a rich gravy a stark contrast to Indonesian Timor! We were on the road again pre-dawn, though getting up wasn't as easy as usual given the events of the preceding night. We reached our intended destination shortly after sunrise and after much searching eventually our main target of the morning, Timor Coucal, running across the road just in front of us, a lucky break considering their lack of vocal activity. This coucal was only described in 1984 but for some illogical reason was lumped with the Australasian Pheasant Coucal – the most noticeable difference? Well, the entire head and body of this bird is white!

The lack of coucal activity was quite a contrast to the number of Timor Orioles and Friarbirds singing from literally every scrubby patch, mixed with numerous Long-tailed Shrikes, ‘Timor’ Northern Fantails, Lesser Coucal, Rose-crowned Fruit Doves and Timor Figbirds. Later in the morning James had another coucal, attempting to feed quietly underneath the thick scrub but its big, clumsy feet were as noisy as most birders are in the dry leaf-litter!

A short stop in the heat of the day at a beautiful roadside pond revealed plenty of breeding and feeding activity – several pairs of Australian Grebes were busy feeding their well-grown young, Dusky Moorhen lurked in the shadows while Green Pygmy Geese (a tarts tick for James!) lounged out on the floating logs with several Pied Cormorants and a single Australian Darter. On the fringes several White-browed Crakes were active, as were Eastern Yellow Wagtails, Wood Sandpiper and a Long-toed Stint, while a Black Bittern flew back-and-forth and White-winged Black Terns gracefully hawked over the pond. We did though decide against trampling along the wet margins as a local pointed to the water, and simply said, in our common language, Indonesian ‘kamu jatu, buaya makan!’, simply meaning ‘you fall, crocodile eat’!

We then drove down one of the worst ‘paved’ roads I have ever attempted to drive down on a tour, weaving down 8 kilometres through the splendid tropical dry forests inside the huge, and wonderfully named Nino Konis Santana National Park – Timor Leste’s first national park, and named after the famous freedom fighter, and leader of the Fretilin militia in the 1990’s. Our accommodation, though simple was spotlessly clean, and right on the edge of yet another palm-fringed white beach, overlooking a glistening blue sea and the tropical island paradise of Jaco. If this was anywhere else it would be pouring with red-skinned holidays makers, and probably a very good road too!

**Timor Green Pigeon and Timor Coucal, Nino Konis Santana National Park**

We were right at the easternmost point of the island for one simple reason, to see Timor’s most difficult endemic, the endangered Timor Green Pigeon. Once common, even in the west, the numbers have been decimated by unsustainable hunting of this ‘dumb’ bird. Despite over 11 visits to west Timor, has even eluded James, so we were keen to head straight out, especially as Hans also needed Timor Stubtail having missed it on a previous trip to Timor (not with Birdtour Asia we must stress!). Incredibly the stubtail was the very first bird we lay our eyes on as we jumped out of the vehicle – a pair was found calling and feeding underneath the roadside scrub.

We had an afternoon, full day and a single morning to find the elusive Treron and despite looking very hard, we were struggling, although this was not a surprise as frugivores were noticeably thin on the ground, as were fruiting trees. During our time we were struck by the sheer number of certain birds, as we continually compared with our exploits in the west – 30-40 Timor Orioles a day were being seen without much effort, and even more figbirds, ‘Timor’ Drongo numbered 20+ daily – a species we get 1-2 per trip usually, a pair of Olive-shouldered Parrots perched up once, and the occasional Rainbow Lorikeet did similar. Most pleasingly, on our final morning, we found 6 distantly perched Yellow-crested Cockatoos, this park probably holding the
largest remaining population of this critically endangered bird. We found most of the usual endemics too, including a pair of furtive Black-banded Flycatchers, the odd Timor Black Pigeon (which were noticeably less shy), and Timor Bushchats seemingly every 50 metres along the road.

At dusk, while waiting, successfully, for ‘Timor’ Nightjar – an undescribed taxon currently subsumed under Large-tailed Nightjar despite its distinct vocalisations, something early collectors were obviously not aware of! We also found out just how common Timor Coucal was, with several individuals booming as the light went. We were finally treated to excellent views by concealing ourselves deep in the bush and perplexed one individual as it flew in, landing on a very close (too close) branch just above our heads attempting to scare off the intruder in its territory. A pair of Timor Boobook was also found hunting on our second dusk foray, with one bird catching a gecko and gently passing it over to its mate while they excitedly called just besides us.

Our final morning and we had three potential fruiting trees to check – the first two drew a total blank, not even a Rose-crowned Fruit Dove or figbird to show for our early morning efforts so with the sun rising quickly we drove up to the third tree for the second morning in succession, having also drawn a blank here the previous day. As expected, figbirds buzzed around this tree again but little else except for a single Rose-crowned Fruit Dove offering a glimmer of hope. A pair of Timor Coucals crept up behind us, calling from the top of a big bare tree for outstanding, prolonged views before they lifted their rather ungainly, massive frame and long, floppy tail and flapped across the road leaving us happy enough despite the lack of pigeons. With a last throw of the dice before we headed off back to Dili, James bushwhacked around the other side of the fruiting tree, returning rather cut-up in the deep thorny scrub to which Hans responded, rather hurriedly, ‘green pigeon’! A quick look in the scope confirmed Hans’s unlikely words and there it was – a single Timor Green Pigeon sitting deep in the tree, not feeding and generally not doing a lot other than looking rather miserable with half its right wing dangling down, presumably showing why it is now such a rare bird, due to hunting. Once this, our final Timor endemic, disappeared after 30 minutes we headed off all the way to Dili, feeling very content with the overriding feeling of success that only a last-gasp mega can bring!

Timor Black Pigeon and Olive-shouldered Parrot, Nino Konis Santana National Park

With a final morning remaining for the fourth, and final target – Iris Lorikeet – we only had to head an hour up into the hills from Dili, where the eucalyptus-dominated hillsides were heaving with the raucous shrills and screeches of Olive-headed Lorikeets from dawn as hundreds were moving from their various roost sites to flowerings eucalyptus trees, several of which were right by the busy roadside. A couple of short walks brought about several new species to the trip list – abundant Yellow-eared Honeyeaters, Mountain White-eye, singing Tawny Grassbirds and a single Blood-breasted Flowerpecker. After an hour here we moved on to the coffee-dominated hillsides, and it was here within 5 minutes, that the tell-tale harsher screech of our wanted lorikeet was heard. Several Iris Lorikeets were at eye-level and giving brilliant scope views just 30 metres away as they fed on some juicy figs before eventually wheeling down and away, revealing at least 30 in that one tree! We were even back in time for breakfast and safely onto our flight back to Bali, and ending our first, but certainly not our last Timor Leste tour.

James did stay on an additional night, scouting areas for potential future tours here, in the afternoon finding Timor Sparrows close to Dili, followed by an outstanding morning birding, just an hour from Dili that resulting in not only more Iris Lorikeets but also at least 4 Timor Imperial Pigeons (including a nesting pair), Buff-banded Bushbirds, Spot-breasted Dark-eyes, more stubtails, Black-chested Myzomela and most pleasing of the lot, loads of small groups of Olive-shouldered Parrots that must have numbered over 50 along just 2 kilometres of road, and add to that a couple more cockatoos and it just proves what an outstanding future destination Timor Leste is...
Iris Lorikeet and Olive-headed Lorikeet, above Dili (top)
Timor Boobook, Nino Konis Santana National Park (middle)
Timor Oriole and Timor Blue Flycatcher, Nino Konis Santana National Park (bottom)
# Systematic List

**PODICIPEFORMES: Podicipedidae**  
Australiasian Grebe  
*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

**PELECANIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae**  
Little Black Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*  
Little Pied Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*

**PELECANIFORMES: Fregatidae**  
Great Frigatebird  
*Fregata minor*

**CICONIIFORMES: Ardeidae**  
Eastern Great Egret  
*Ardea [alba] modesta*  
Intermediate Egret  
*Egretta intermedia*  
Black Bittern  
*Dupetor flavicollis*  
White-faced Heron  
*Egretta novaehollandiae*  
Little Egret  
*Egretta garzetta*  
Pacific Reef Heron  
*Egretta sacra sacra*  
Eastern Cattle Egret  
*Bubulcus coromandus*

**ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae**  
Wandering Whistling Duck  
*Dendrocygna arcuata*  
Green Pygmy Goose  
*Nettapus pulchellus*

**FALCONIFORMES: Accipitridae**  
Oriental Honey Buzzard  
*Pernis ptilorhynchus orientalis*  
Black Kite  
*Milvus migrans affinis*  
Brahminy Kite  
*Haliastur indus intermedius*  
White-bellied Sea Eagle  
*Haliaeetus leucogaster*  
Short-toed Eagle  
*Circaetus gallicus*  
Bonelli's Eagle  
*Aquila fasciata renshi*

**GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae**  
Red Junglefowl  
*Gallus gallus*  
(G. I. introduced)

**GRUIFORMES: Rallidae**  
White-browed Crake  
*Porzana cinerea cinerea*  
Dusky Moorhen  
*Gallinula tenebrosa*

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Recurvirostridae**  
White-headed Stilt  
*Himantopus leucocephalus*
**CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae**
Red-capped Plover Charadrius ruficollis

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae**
Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus variegatus
Common Greenshank Tringa nebularia variegata
Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis
Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola
Red-necked Stint Ereunetes ruficollis
Long-toed Stint Ereunetes subminuta
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper Ereunetes acuminata

**CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae**
Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybrida
White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus
Great Crested Tern Thalasseus bergii

**COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae**
Spotted Dove Streptopelia chinensis tigrina
Timor Black Pigeon Turacoena modesta
Pacific Emerald Dove Chalcophaps longirostris timorensis
Barred Dove Geopelia maugel
Timor Green Pigeon Treron psittaceus
Rose-crowned Fruit Dove Ptilinopus regina
Pink-headed Imperial Pigeon Ducula roacea

**PSITTACIFORMES: Cacatuidae**
Yellow-crested Cockatoo Cacatua sulphurea parvula

**PSITTACIFORMES: Psittacidae**
Marigold Lorikeet Trichoglossus capistratus capistratus
Olive-headed Lorikeet Trichoglossus euteles
Iris Lorikeet Psitteuteles iris iris
Olive-shouldered Parrot Aprosmictus jonquillaceus

**CUCULIFORMES: Cuculidae**
Sunda Cuckoo Cuculus lepidus
Gould's Bronze Cuckoo Chrysococcyx Russatus
Australian Koel Eudynamys cyanocephalus everetti
Lesser Coucal Centropus bengalensis javanensis
Timor Coucal Centropus mui

**STRIGIFORMES: Strigidae**
Timor Boobook Ninox [novaeseelandiae] fuscus

**CAPRIMULGIFORMES: Caprimulgidae**
'Timor' Nightjar Caprimulgus [macrurus] sp nov
Savanna Nightjar Caprimulgus affinis

**APODIFORMES: Apodidae**
Timor Swiftlet Collocalia [esculenta] neglecta
Edible-nest Swiftlet Aerodramus fuciphagus
White-throated Needletail Hirundapus caudacutus
Pacific Swift Apus pacificus

**CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae**
Collared Kingfisher Halcyon chloris chloris
Cinnamon-banded Kingfisher Halcyon australasia australasia

**CORACIIFORMES: Meropidae**
Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus

**CORACIIFORMES: Coraciidae**
Dollarbird Eurystomus orientalis pacificus
PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae
Pacific Swallow  Hirundo tahitica javanica
Barn Swallow  Hirundorustica

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae
Paddyfield Pipit  Anthus rufulus

PASSERIFORMES: Charadriiformes
Pacific Golden Plover  Pluvialis dominica

PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae

PASSERIFORMES: Sylviidae
Timor Stubtail  Urosphena subulata subulata
Aberrant Bush Warbler  Horornis flavolivacea everetti
Timor Leaf Warbler  Phylloscopus presbytes presbytes
Tawny Grassbird  Megalurus timorinsis

PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae
Little Pied Flycatcher  Ficedula westermanni
Black-banded Flycatcher  Ficedula timorensis
Timor Blue Flycatcher  Cyornis hyacinthinus hyacinthinus
Pied Bushchat  Saxicola caprata pyrrhonota
Timor Bushchat  Saxicola gutturalis gutturalis

PASSERIFORMES: Rhipiduridae
'Timor' Northern Fantail  Rhipidura [rufiventris] rufiventris
Arafura Fantail  Rhipidura dryas semicollaris

PASSERIFORMES: Monarchidae
Spectacled Monarch  Monarcha trivirgatus trivirgatus
Broad-billed Flycatcher  Myiagra ruficollis ruficollis

PASSERIFORMES: Pachycephalidae
Fawn-breasted Whistler  Pachycephala orpheus

PASSERIFORMES: Acanthizidae
Plain Gerygone  Gerygone inornata

PASSERIFORMES: Nectariniidae
Flame-breasted Sunbird  Cinnyris solaris

PASSERIFORMES: Dicaeidae
Modest Flowerpecker  Dicaeum modestus tinctum
Red-chested Flowerpecker  Dicaeum maugei maugei
Blood-breasted Flowerpecker  Dicaeum sanguinolentum hanieli

PASSERIFORMES: Zosteropidae
Mountain White-eye  Zosterops montanus montanus
Ashy-bellied White-eye  Zosterops citrinella citrinella

PASSERIFORMES: Meliphagidae
Yellow-eared Honeyeater  Lichmera flavicans
Black-chested Myzomela  Myzomela vulnerata
Streak-breasted Honeyeater  Meliphaga reticulata
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<tr>
<th><strong>Passeriformes: Oriolidae</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Timor Oriole</td>
<td>Oriolus melanotis melanotis</td>
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<td>Timor Figbird</td>
<td>Sphecotheres viridis</td>
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<th><strong>Passeriformes: Laniidae</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Long-tailed Shrike</td>
<td>Lanius schach bentet</td>
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<th><strong>Passeriformes: Artamidae</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Black-faced Woodswallow</td>
<td>Artamus cinereus perspicillatus</td>
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<th><strong>Passeriformes: Passeridae</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasian Tree Sparrow</td>
<td>Passer montanus malaccensis</td>
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<th><strong>Passeriformes: Estrildidae</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Scaly-breasted Munia</td>
<td>Lonchura punctulata nisoria</td>
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<th><strong>Mammals</strong></th>
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<td>Black Flying Fox</td>
<td>Pteropus alecto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-tailed Macaque</td>
<td>Macaca fascicularis</td>
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