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Philippines Custom Tour – Luzon, Mindoro & Mindanao

23rd February – 3rd March 2006

Leader: Rob Hutchinson



Philippine Boobooks – Mt Makiling, Luzon (Rob Hutchinson/Birdtour Asia)

This short custom tour visiting Luzon, Mindoro and Mindanao was an extension to participant Keith Riding's business trip and aimed to find some of the more difficult species missed on a previous month-long birding trip to the archipelago.

On our first day we arrived at Mount Makiling, Luzon mid afternoon and after checking into our Lodge close to the forest edge headed immediately for some casual birding in the nearby Botanical Gardens. Here we were soon enjoying our first endemics; Red-keeled Flowerpeckers were much in evidence and we picked out a single Striped among them, Lemon-throated Leaf Warbler, Stripe-headed Rhabdornis, Balicassio, Guaiabero, Colasisi, Coletto and Red-crested Malkoha all performed. Back at our Lodge, Philippine Falconets entertained in a nearby dead tree, and then as dusk fell we were treated to a chorus of Spotted Wood-Kingfishers and *philippensis* Philippine Boobooks and although both remained elusive at this time, later in the evening a pair of Boobooks gave fantastic views as they growled down from overhead branches.

An early start the next morning saw us in prime position along the summit track at dawn where once again Wood-Kingfishers and Boobooks were vocal and one of the later again obliged with good close views. Moving on slowly as dawn broke we soon picked up a movement ahead in the form of a Red-bellied Pitta feeding in full view on the track. Things were to get even better however when subtle movements close to the Pitta drew our attention and in the half-light we picked out an Ashy Thrush sat quietly in the leaf litter. The bird soon began to feed and we were treated to a 10 minute telescope view as the Thrush and Pitta fed side-by-side on the track in quickly improving light. With one of the Philippines most shy and elusive endemics, and our primary target at the site, under our belts the remainder of the morning was spent at various spots along the trail picking up some of our other targets including Luzon Hornbill, Handsome Sunbird, Pygmy Flowerpecker and Philippine Drongo Cuckoo, while other endemics seen included more Red-crested Malkohas, Philippine Coucal, Island Swiftlet, Black & White Triller, White-browed Shama, Blue-headed Fantail, Elegant Tit and a small group of Yellowish White-eyes.

The afternoon was spent in relaxed fashion close to our Lodge but produce good birds; Naked-faced Spiderhunter, Philippine Pygmy Woodpecker, noisy groups of Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes, single Striped and Pygmy Flowerpeckers, the only Lowland White-eyes of the trip and several Purple Needletails giving superb high-speed Fly-bys.

As dusk approached it was time again for the Spotted Wood-Kingfishers to become active and this time we were more fortunate with a fine male giving splendid views on the forest edge. In the evening one of several pairs of calling Philippine Boobooks again gave great views close to our Lodge.

A final morning on the mountain produced further views of several birds from the previous day including Pygmy Flowerpecker but new birds seen included Flaming Sunbirds glowing in the tree-tops, Philippine Hawk-Cuckoo and great views of a male Philippine Trogon posing nearby. In the late afternoon we returned to Manila in preparation for our trip to the island of Mindoro.



Mindoro Boobook – Sablayan Penal Colony, Mindoro (Rob Hutchinson/Birdtour Asia)

Early the following morning we took a flight to San Jose and Mindoro's west coast and after buying supplies for our stay and accompanied by Oriental Pratincoles hawking the roadside fields, we were soon on our way northwards to Sablayan Penal Colony where some good lowland forest still remains close to Siburan Sub Prison.

The participants' previous tour had not previously visited Mindoro so having been made very welcome by the prison authorities and allocated 2 inmates as guides we were keen to begin our exploration. This proved worthwhile and the endemics soon started to appear with our first foray producing good views of the endemic Scarlet-collared Flowerpecker, inquisitive Mindoro Hornbills and the distinctive *mindorensis* Philippine Coucal – a likely future split.

After a short rest a late afternoon wander along the forest edge produced further views of 'Mindoro' Coucals and Mindoro Hornbills together with noisy Blue-naped Parrots and a surprise Eastern Marsh Harrier – a widespread Asian species on our list of 'target-birds'.

As dusk fell we positioned ourselves on the forest edge and were soon enjoying excellent views of a pair of Mindoro Boobooks screeching above our heads. Later in the evening another pair of Boobooks showed in a different spot but more surprising was a calling Chocolate Boobook which came in to our recordings – this recently split species extends only marginally beyond the Philippines to the Indonesian Island of Talaud and appears to be seen only rarely away from Mindanao.

The following morning we were greeted by a hawking Great Eared-Nightjar over the accommodation before we were on our way into the forest again. Trekking into the forest again produced views of 'Mindoro' Coucals and Mindoro Hornbill while new species included fine views of Pink-bellied Imperial Pigeon, Blue-crowned Racquet-tail, White-eared Brown-Dove, singing Mangrove Blue Flycatchers and the distinctive *axillaries* race of Pompadour Green-Pigeon – another potential split. It was not until we reached good, untouched forest however that we began to hear the distinctive calls of the endemic Black-hooded Coucal and eventually managed good brief views of this elusive species. It was while searching for the coucals that we heard the distinctive vocalizations of the Mindoro Boobook and we were soon enjoying fantastic views of a pair of these brilliant Owls in broad daylight!

With all possible endemics seen bar the rare and elusive Mindoro Bleeding-heart we were very happy with our success here as we departed once again for San Jose stopping en-route at Lake Labuao where Purple Heron, Common Moorhen and White-browed Crake were all added to our trip-list.

After a relaxing evening at a beach resort close to San Jose we took an early morning flight back to Manila and connected with our onward flight to Davao City on Mindanao. Not wishing to waste any time we headed straight for Baracatan on the slopes of Mount Taloma in the Apo range. Here our late afternoon birding produced some interesting birds with good numbers of wintering Eye-browed Thrushes, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, Tawny Grassbird, Short-tailed Starling, Philippine Falconet and excellent views of a perched immature Rufous-bellied Eagle.



Philippine Eagle – Mt Kabul, Mindanao (Rob Hutchinson/Birdtour Asia)

The following morning we departed early for our long awaited visit to Mount Kabul, near Barangay Salaysay, a known breeding site for the Philippine national bird – the Philippine (Monkey-eating) Eagle. Despite much effort Keith had been unfortunate enough to miss the Eagle during his previous visit so this was arguably the most-wanted species on this trip...

Thanks to the skill of our motorbike drivers we were delivered safely to our designated spot after an exciting (?), white-knuckle ride along rough tracks into the mountains, which produced the only Plain Bush-hen of the tour crossing the trail. Here although we didn't find any evidence of breeding this year we enjoyed fantastic views of a pair of Philippine Eagles soaring majestically over the adjacent valley, undoubtedly one of the most memorably sightings of the whole tour.

Several Philippine Serpent Eagles shared the thermals and a single Philippine Falconet hunted from favored perches close to our lookout. Nearby secondary growth surprised with a singing Cryptic Flycatcher giving good but all-to-brief views. During the day we also saw Rufous-headed Tailorbird, Tawny Grassbird, Brown Tit-Babbler, Mountain White-eye and Philippine Pygmy Flowerpecker.

The following day was again spent on the forested slopes at Baracatan and while the difficult Whiskered Flowerpecker couldn't be found we were delighted to find a pair of our other target bird - the rare Mindanao Lorikeet, a species very rarely seen on the usual Mindanao birding circuit. Other endemics flowed during the day; Yellow-breasted Fruit-Dove, Black & Cinnamon Fantail, Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis, Brown Tit-Babbler, Yellow-bellied Whistler, Naked-faced Spiderhunter, Mountain White-eye, Fire-breasted, Buzzing, Bicoloured & Olive-capped Flowerpeckers, Short-tailed Starling, Philippine Leaf Warbler and Cinnamon Ibon. Both Philippine and Purple Needletails gave great views among a large congregation of Philippine Swiftlets in the afternoon before a torrential rainstorm bought a premature end to the days birding.

Our final morning was spent in slightly lower elevation forest close to the Philippine Eagle Breeding Centre at Malagos. This produced some interesting birds; Black-headed Tailorbird, Grey-hooded Tailorbird, Black-faced Coucal and Yellow-wattled Bulbul were new for the trip but the highlights were excellent views of tape-responsive Streaked Ground-Babbler and Rufous-ored Kingfisher. Finally great views of a stunning Silvery Kingfisher on a small pond nearby provided a fitting finale to a very enjoyable and successful tour.

This tour was focused on a short-list of key species missed during a previous visit and we were very successful recording among others – Ashy Thrush, Mindanao Lorikeet and Philippine Eagle, among the Philippines most threatened and difficult to see endemics, while our trip to Mindoro recorded all of our expected target species. During the tour we recorded a total of 144 species including 66 endemics, 3 near endemics (Coletto and Chocolate Boobook) and a further 16 heard only.

Systematic Bird List

1	Purple Heron	<i>(Ardea purpurea)</i>	
2	Intermediate Egret	<i>(Egretta intermedia)</i>	
3	Little Egret	<i>(Egretta garzetta)</i>	
4	Cattle Egret	<i>(Bubulcus ibis)</i>	
5	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>(Elanus caeruleus)</i>	
6	Philippine Serpent-eagle	<i>(Spilornis holospilus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
7	Eastern Marsh Harrier	<i>(Circus spilonotus)</i>	
8	Crested Goshawk	<i>(Accipiter trivirgatus)</i>	
9	Great Philippine Eagle	<i>(Pithecophaga jefferyi)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
10	Rufous-bellied Eagle	<i>(Aquila kienerii)</i>	
11	Philippine Falconet	<i>(Microhierax erythrogenys)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
12	Peregrine Falcon	<i>(Falco peregrinus)</i>	
13	Plain Bush-hen	<i>(Amaurornis olivacea)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
14	White-browed Crake	<i>(Porzana cinerea)</i>	
15	Common Moorhen	<i>(Gallinula chloropus)</i>	
16	Black-winged Stilt	<i>(Himantopus himantopus)</i>	
17	Oriental Pratincole	<i>(Glaucopis maldivarum)</i>	
18	Little Plover	<i>(Charadrius dubius)</i>	
19	Wood Sandpiper	<i>(Tringa glareola)</i>	
20	Feral Pigeon	<i>(Columba livia 'feral')</i>	
21	Red Collared-dove	<i>(Streptopelia tranquebarica)</i>	
22	Spotted Dove	<i>(Streptopelia chinensis)</i>	
23	Emerald Dove	<i>(Chalcophaps indica)</i>	
24	Zebra Dove	<i>(Geopelia striata)</i>	
25	White-eared Dove	<i>(Phapitreron leucotis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
26	Pink-necked Pigeon	<i>(Treron vernans)</i>	
27	Philippine Green-pigeon	<i>(Treron axillaris)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
28	Yellow-breasted Fruit-dove	<i>(Ptilinopus occipitalis)</i>	
29	Pink-bellied Imperial-pigeon	<i>(Ducula poliocephala)</i>	

30	Green Imperial-pigeon	<i>(Ducula aenea)</i>	
31	Mindanao Lorikeet	<i>(Trichoglossus johnstoniae)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
32	Guaiabero	<i>(Bolbopsittacus lunulatus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
33	Blue-crowned Racquet-tail	<i>(Prioniturus discurus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
34	Blue-naped Parrot	<i>(Tanygnathus lucionensis)</i>	- Philippine Near Endemic
35	Philippine Hanging-parrot	<i>(Loriculus philippensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
36	Phillipine Hawk-cuckoo	<i>(Cuculus pectoralis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
37	Philippine Drongo-cuckoo	<i>(Surniculus velutinus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
38	Asian Koel	<i>(Eudynamys scolopacea)</i>	
39	Red-crested Malkoha	<i>(Phaenicophaeus superciliosus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
40	Black-hooded Coucal	<i>(Centropus steerii)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
41	Philippine Coucal	<i>(Centropus viridis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
42	Chocolate Boobook	<i>(Ninox randi)</i>	- Philippine Near Endemic
43	Philippine Hawk-owl	<i>(Ninox philippensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
44	Mindoro Hawk-owl	<i>(Ninox philippensis spilonota)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
45	Great Eared-nightjar	<i>(Eurostopodus macrotis)</i>	
46	Savannah Nightjar	<i>(Caprimulgus affinis)</i>	
47	Glossy Swiftlet	<i>(Collocalia esculenta)</i>	
48	Grey-rumped Swiftlet	<i>(Collocalia marginata)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
49	Philippine Swiftlet	<i>(Aerodramus mearnsi)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
50	Island Swiftlet	<i>(Aerodramus vanikorensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
51	Philippine Needletail	<i>(Mearnsia picina)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
52	Purple Needletail	<i>(Hirundapus celebensis)</i>	
53	Whiskered Treeswift	<i>(Hemiprocne comata)</i>	
54	Philippine Trogon	<i>(Harpactes ardens)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
55	Silvery Kingfisher	<i>(Alcedo argentata)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
56	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>(Halcyon smyrnensis)</i>	
57	Rufous-lored Kingfisher	<i>(Todirhamphus winchelli)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
58	Collared Kingfisher	<i>(Todirhamphus chloris)</i>	
59	Spotted Kingfisher	<i>(Actenoides lindsayi)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
60	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>(Merops philippinus)</i>	
61	Luzon Hornbill	<i>(Penelopides manillae)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
62	Mindoro Hornbill	<i>(Penelopides mindorensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
63	Mindanao Hornbill	<i>(Penelopides affinis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
64	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>(Megalaima haemacephala)</i>	
65	Philippine Woodpecker	<i>(Dendrocopos maculatus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
66	White-bellied Woodpecker	<i>(Dryocopus javensis)</i>	
67	Red-bellied Pitta	<i>(Pitta erythrogaster)</i>	
68	Barn Swallow	<i>(Hirundo rustica)</i>	
69	Pacific Swallow	<i>(Hirundo tahitica)</i>	
70	Yellow Wagtail	<i>(Motacilla flava)</i>	
71	Grey Wagtail	<i>(Motacilla cinerea)</i>	
72	Oriental Pipit	<i>(Anthus rufulus)</i>	
73	Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	<i>(Coracina striata)</i>	
74	Black-bibbed Cuckoo-shrike	<i>(Coracina mindanensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
75	Black-and-white Triller	<i>(Lalage melanoleuca)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
76	Pied Triller	<i>(Lalage nigra)</i>	
77	Ashy Minivet	<i>(Pericrocotus divaricatus)</i>	
78	Yellow-wattled Bulbul	<i>(Pycnonotus urostictus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
79	Yellow-vented Bulbul	<i>(Pycnonotus goiavier)</i>	
80	Philippine Bulbul	<i>(Ixos philippinus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
81	Blue Rock-thrush	<i>(Monticola solitarius)</i>	
82	Ashy Thrush	<i>(Zoothera cinerea)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
83	Eyebrowed Thrush	<i>(Turdus obscurus)</i>	

84	Zitting Cisticola	<i>(Cisticola juncidis)</i>	
85	Rufous-headed Tailorbird	<i>(Orthotomus heterolaemus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
86	Grey-backed Tailorbird	<i>(Orthotomus derbianus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
87	Lemon-throated Leaf-warbler	<i>(Phylloscopus cebuensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
88	Mountain Warbler	<i>(Phylloscopus trivirgatus)</i>	
89	Philippine Leaf-warbler	<i>(Phylloscopus olivaceus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
90	Tawny Grassbird	<i>(Megalurus timoriensis)</i>	
91	Striated Grassbird	<i>(Megalurus palustris)</i>	
92	Grey-spotted Flycatcher	<i>(Muscicapa griseisticta)</i>	
93	Cryptic Flycatcher	<i>(Ficedula crypta)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
94	Little Pied Flycatcher	<i>(Ficedula westermanni)</i>	
95	Island Flycatcher	<i>(Eumyias panayensis)</i>	
96	Mangrove Blue-flycatcher	<i>(Cyornis rufigastra)</i>	
97	White-browed Shama	<i>(Copsychus luzoniensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
98	Pied Bushchat	<i>(Saxicola caprata)</i>	
99	Blue-headed Fantail	<i>(Rhipidura cyaniceps)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
100	Black & cinnamon Fantail	<i>(Rhipidura nigrocinnamomea)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
101	Black-naped Monarch	<i>(Hypothymis azurea)</i>	
102	Yellow-bellied Whistler	<i>(Pachycephala philippinensis)-</i>	- Philippine Endemic
103	Striated Wren-babbler	<i>(Ptilocichla mindanensis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
104	Brown Tit-babbler	<i>(Macronous striaticeps)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
105	Elegant Tit	<i>(Pardaliparus elegans)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
106	Sulphur-billed Nuthatch	<i>(Sitta oenochlamys)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
107	Stripe-sided Rhabdornis	<i>(Rhabdornis mystacalis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
108	Stripe-breasted Rhabdornis	<i>(Rhabdornis inornatus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
109	Plain-throated Sunbird	<i>(Anthreptes malacensis)</i>	
110	Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>(Cinnyris jugularis)</i>	
111	Grey-hooded Sunbird	<i>(Aethopyga primigenius)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
112	Flaming Sunbird	<i>(Aethopyga flagrans)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
113	Handsome Sunbird	<i>(Aethopyga bella)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
114	Naked-faced Spiderhunter	<i>(Arachnothera clarae)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
115	Olive-backed Flowerpecker	<i>(Prionochilus olivaceus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
116	Striped Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum agile aeruginosum)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
117	Olive-capped Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum nigrilore)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
118	Bicoloured Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum bicolor)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
119	Red-striped Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum australe)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
120	Scarlet-collared Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum retrocinctum)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
121	Orange-bellied Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum trigonostigma)</i>	
122	Buzzing Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum hypoleucum)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
123	Pygmy Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum pygmaeum)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
124	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>(Dicaeum ignipectus)</i>	
125	Lowland White-eye	<i>(Zosterops meyeri)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
126	Yellowish White-eye	<i>(Zosterops nigrorum)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
127	Mountain White-eye	<i>(Zosterops montanus)</i>	
128	Black-masked White-eye	<i>(Lophozosterops goodfellowi)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
129	Cinnamon Ibon	<i>(Hypocryptadius cinnamomeus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
130	Black-naped Oriole	<i>(Oriolus chinensis)</i>	
131	Brown Shrike	<i>(Lanius cristatus)</i>	
132	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>(Lanius schach)</i>	
133	Balicassiao	<i>(Dicrurus balicassius)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
134	Spangled Drongo	<i>(Dicrurus bracteatus)</i>	
135	White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>(Artamus leucorhynchus)</i>	
136	Palawan Crow	<i>(Corvus pusillus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic
137	Large-billed Crow	<i>(Corvus macrorhynchos)</i>	

138	Asian Glossy Starling	<i>(Aplonis panayensis)</i>	
139	Short-tailed Starling	<i>(Aplonis minor)</i>	
140	Coletto	<i>(Sarcops calvus)</i>	- Philippine Near Endemic
141	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>(Passer montanus)</i>	
142	Nutmeg Mannikin	<i>(Lonchura punctulata)</i>	
143	White-bellied Munia	<i>(Lonchura leucogastra)</i>	
144	Chestnut Munia	<i>(Lonchura atricapilla)</i>	

Heard Only

1	Barred Rail	<i>(Gallirallus torquatus)</i>	
2	Metallic Pigeon	<i>(Columba vitiensis)</i>	
3	Philippine Cuckoo-dove	<i>(Macropygia tenuirostris)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
4	Amethyst Dove	<i>(Phapitreron amethystina)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
5	Black-chinned Fruit-dove	<i>(Ptilinopus leclancheri)</i>	
6	Plaintive Cuckoo	<i>(Cacomantis merulinus)</i>	
7	Violet Cuckoo	<i>(Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus)</i>	
8	Scale-feathered Malkoha	<i>(Phaenicophaeus cumingi)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
9	Black-faced Coucal	<i>(Centropus melanops)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
10	Philippine Scops-owl	<i>(Otus megalotis)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
11	Greater Flameback	<i>(Chrysocolaptes lucidus)</i>	
12	Hooded Pitta	<i>(Pitta sordida)</i>	
13	White-browed Shortwing	<i>(Brachypteryx montana)</i>	
14	Long-tailed Bush-warbler	<i>(Bradypterus caudatus)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
15	Black-headed Tailorbird	<i>(Orthotomus nigriceps)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,
16	Philippine Fairy-bluebird	<i>(Irena cyanogaster)</i>	- Philippine Endemic,

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