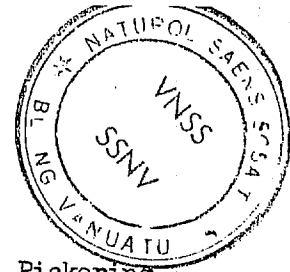


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28

AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF VANUATU

by Richard Pickering

This checklist is first and foremost simply a list of names. The descriptions given are too brief to be of much use to anyone who does not have at least some idea of what a swift (martinet), warbler (fauvette) or honeyeater (méliophage) should look like. Newcomers to bird watching will need a more complete text or an experienced birder to guide them. This list is produced in the hope that it will arouse some interest in our birds and to stimulate observation on such aspects as habitat, distribution, breeding and other habits of the various species. For tickers, it should provide a convenient list to check against.

The Birds.

All the recorded resident and migrant land and freshwater birds are listed. A dove of the genus Gallicolumba supposedly collected on Cook's visit to Tanna in 1774 is generally assumed to be based on an error. No such bird has been recorded there since.

As far as is known, all the waders and plovers encountered in Vanuatu are migrants from the Northern Hemisphere. While some individuals spend the northern summer here, they do not breed. Some of the sea birds are said to breed in Vanuatu, and actual records of this would be of great interest. The list of birds of sea and shore is not supposed to be complete, but includes those species most likely to be encountered. Several other species, particularly of shearwater, petrel and tern, may be expected to occur in Vanuatu waters.

The Names.

It was the intention to give four names for each bird, i.e. 1. the scientific name, 2. the English common name, 3. the French common name and 4. the Bislama name. At present the French and Bislama lists are far from complete, and some of the names included may be wrong or open to dispute. If you can fill any gaps or if you disagree with any of the names given please write or contact me. I shall be very pleased to hear from you. I have tried to justify my choice of scientific and English names in the Appendix.

Distribution.

These are given very broadly. Many birds whose distribution is given as 'Throughout' may be absent from various islands, particularly smaller ones. Diamond and Marshall (1976) list all the islands from which each resident land and freshwater bird has been reported since records began. But the distribution of a number of species has changed or contracted over this period. This applies particularly to Chamosyna palmarum, the cuckoo Collocalia spodiopygia and Gerygone flavolateralis. See also Diamond and Marshall (1977). Hence constant updating of distribution knowledge can help to follow such changes.

Arrangement.

The birds are listed in three sections:

Section A. Resident Land and Freshwater Birds (61 species)

Section B. Migratory Land Birds (1 species)

Section C. Birds of Sea and Shore (16 species)

SECTION A. Resident Land and Freshwater Birds. (61 species)

Podicipedidae

1. Podiceps novaehollandiae Australian Dabchick Grèbe australien
Small chestnut, black and white ducklike bird of freshwater. Gaua, Santo, Malo, Aoba, Efate.

Ardeidae

2. Butorides striatus Little Mangrove Heron Héron des mangroves
Small grey and white heron of mangroves. Banks & Torres, Santo, Malakula.
3. Egretta sacra Reef Heron Aigrette des récifs Naova, Longnek
White and grey phases, reefs and coasts, occasionally inland rivers. All islands.

Anatidae

4. Anas superciliosa Australian Grey Duck Canard à sourcils Wael dakdak
Freshwater, occasionally coastal. A dark coloured duck with green wing-patches and a conspicuous face pattern. Main islands throughout.
5. Anas gibberifrons Grey teal Sarcelle grise
Brownish-grey duck with white, black and green wing patches, no face pattern. Efate.
6. Aythya australis Australian White-eyed Duck Nyroca austral
Chestnut head, duller body, white wing stripe and belly. Main islands throughout.

Accipitridae

7. Circus approximans (or aeruginosus) Swamp Harrier Busard des roseaux
Mala
The common hawk, quartering over open country or forest. Male with white rump. Throughout.
8. Accipiter fasciatus Australian Goshawk Autour australien
Shy, medium-sized, dull grey-brown hawk, secondary growth and forest edges. Anatom only.

Falconidae

9. Falco peregrinus Peregrine Falcon Faucon pèlerin
Swift flight and pointed wings. Rarer than harrier. Throughout.

Megapodiidae

10. Megapodius freycinet Incubator Bird Mégapode de Freycinet
Nanalau, Skrabdak
Dark-coloured, fowl-like bird with red head on floor in bush or forest, coastal scrub. Efate northwards.

Phasianidae

11. Gallus gallus Red Jungle Fowl Coq sauvage
In the bush, smaller than domestic fowl with higher voice. Throughout.

Rallidae

12. Rallus philippensis Banded Rail Râle à bandes Nambilak
Commonest & tamest rail, bush and tall grass, roadsides. Throughout.
13. Porzana tabuensis Sooty Rail Râle charbonneux, Maouette fuligineuse
Rare, difficult to see. Sooty, with red legs. Swamps & marshes. Erromango, Tanna, Anatom.
14. Poliolimnas cinereus White-browed Rail Râle cendre
Rare, difficult to see. Brown and grey with white brow. Swamps. Gaua, Erromango, Tanna.
15. Porphyrio porphyrio Purple Swamphen Poule sultane Red hed, Nabwiro
Large blue-black bird, red bill, face shield and legs. Bush, gardens, riversides. Throughout.

Columbidae

16. Columba vitiensis White-throated Pigeon Pigeon à gorge blanche Nataroa
Large dark pigeon with white throat patch. Trees throughout.
17. Macropygia mackinlayi Rufous-brown Pheasant Dove Colombe à longue queue.
Longtel
Brown with long tail. Forest and open country. Throughout.
18. Chalcophaps indica Emerald Dove Colombe turvert Sotleg
Green wings, rufous body, white spot on wing. Often on the ground.
Common throughout.
19. Gallicolumba sanctaecrucis Santa Cruz Ground Dove Tourterelle de
Santa Cruz
Rare. Forests of Santo only.
20. Ptilinopus greyii Red-bellied Fruit-dove Ptilope à ventre rouge
Smalfala Grin Pijin
Common small green dove with red cap and belly patch. Trees throughout.
21. Ptilinopus tannensis Tanna Fruit-dove Ptilope à ventre jaune
Bigfala Grin Pijin
Endemic. All green, larger than last. Forest & woodland, Vanua Lava to Tanna.
22. Ducula pacifica Pacific Pigeon Carpophage du Pacifique Nawemba
Large grey & green pigeon with knob on bill. Woodland throughout.
23. Ducula bakeri Baker's Pigeon Carpophage de Baker Napir
Endemic. Large brown & grey pigeon. Ureparapara to Ambrym.

Psittacidae

24. Trichoglossus haematodus Rainbow Lory Perruche des cocotiers Nasiviru
The common red, blue and green parrot. Noisy flocks. Throughout.
25. Chamosyna palmarum Green Palm Lorikeet Loriqueet des palmes
Small, entirely green with long tail. Treetops. Present distribution uncertain, Northern Vanuatu

Cuculidae

26. Cacomantis pyrrhophanus Fan-tailed Cuckoo Coucou à évertail
Medium-sized, grey and brown. Nowhere common. Distribution uncertain.
Has been recorded Tanna northwards.
27. Chrysococcyx lucidus Shining Cuckoo Coucou cuivré
Glossy green above, barred below. Same range as Gerygone which it parasitises.
Occasional migrants in other islands.

Tytonidae

28. Tyto alba Barn Owl Effraie commune Hoknaet
The only owl and truly night bird: Large white bird. Throughout.

Apodidae

29. Collocalia vanikorensis Vanikoro swiftlet Salangane de Vanikoro
All brown, high-flying on pointed, fluttering wings. Not Anatom.
30. Collocalia spodiopygia White-rumped swiftlet
Dark with a white rump only. Said to be found only on Malo and West Coast, Santo
31. Collocalia esculenta Glossy swiftlet
Common, low-flying, glossy black with white belly and rump. Throughout.

Alcedinidae

32. Halcyon chloris White-collared kingfisher Alcyon à collier Nasiko
Common kingfisher of all islands, open country to forest.
33. Halcyon farquheri Chestnut-bellied kingfisher Alcyon à ventre roux
Endemic in forests of Malakula, Malo and Santo. Black cap, chestnut below.

Hirundinidae

34. Hirundo tahitica Pacific swallow Hironnelle de Tahiti
Often on small bare branch or wires (swiftlets do not perch). Chestnut
throat and forehead. Throughout.

Campephagidae

35. Coracina caledonica Melanesian Greybird Échenilleur calédonien
Grey, crow-like bird of large trees, often with yellow eyes. Santo, Malo,
Malakula, Erromango.
36. Lalage maculosa Polynesian triller Échenilleur polynésien
Variously barred, black and white. Mainly in forests. Efate northwards.
37. Lalage leucopyga Long-tailed triller Échenilleur pie
Cleanly black and white, white wing patch, some individuals with white eye-
stripe. Open country, throughout.

Muscicapidae - Turdinae

38. Turdus poliocephalus Island thrush Merle des îles
Black with yellow bill and feet, except Erromango and Tanna where birds have
white heads. Forests throughout.

Muscicapidae - Sylviinae

39. Cichlornis whitneyi Thicket warbler Fauvette des buissons
Largish brown warbler of the Santo forests.
40. Gerygone flavolateralis Fantail warbler Fauvette à ventre jaune
Tiny, long-tailed warbler. Forest, secondary growth, gardens. Range
changing, Santo, Malo, Malakula, ?

Muscicapidae - Muscicapinae

41. Petroica multicolor Scarlet robin Rouge-gorge écarlate
Small scarlet, black and white flycatcher. Bush, throughout.

42. Rhipidura spilodera Spotted fantail Rhipidure tacheté
Breast and belly spotted or streaked. Fantail of thick cover, Efate northwards.
43. Rhipidura fuliginosa Collared fantail Rhipidure à collier Nasiksik
Dark collar across light breast. Efate northwards confined to more open habitats, southern islands forest as well.
44. Clytorhynchus pachycephaloides Southern shrikebill Gobe-mouches brun
Rusty brown flycatcher of the forests, Efate northwards.
45. Myiagra caledonica Vanuatu Broadbill Gobe-mouches à large bec
Male: black and white; female: brown and white with orange chest. Throughout.
46. Neolalage banksiana Buff-bellied flycatcher Gobe-mouches à bec ventru
Black and white with orange-buff belly. Small, chunky birds searching through leaves in the bush. Endemic, Vanua Lava to Efate.

Muscicapidae - Pachycephalinae

47. Pachycephala pectoralis Golden whistler Siffleur doré
Male: Black back, lemon belly, black chest band, white throat; female: duller.
More often heard than seen - shy, but common throughout.

Zosteropidae

48. Zosterops flavifrons Yellow white-eye Zosterops à front jaune Nalaklak
Common, in flocks, all yellow with white eye-ring. Endemic Banks to Anatom.
49. Zosterops lateralis Grey-backed white-eye Zosterops à poitrine grise
Yellow with grey back and breast. Tanna northwards.

Meliphagidae

50. Lichmera incana Silver-eared honeyeater Méliphage à oreillons gris Nalaklak
Common at flowers in gardens and bush, Malakula and Ambrym to Erromango.
51. Myzomela cardinalis Cardinal honeyeater Sucrier cardinal Redhed
Black and red. Gardens and bush. More common outside range of Lichmera.
Throughout.
52. Phylidonyris notabilis White-bellied honeyeater Méliphage à ventre blanc
Brown above, white below. Endemic, Banks to Epi.

Estrildidae

53. Estrilda astrild Waxbill astrild à bec de corail
Flocks of small red and brown birds in grassland. Efate. Introduced.
54. Erythrura trichroa Blue-faced Parrot-finch Diamant de Kittlitz
Blue face, green body, red tail. Grassland. Gaua to Anatom, not Santo.
55. Erythrura cyanovirens Red-headed parrot-finch Diamant à tête rouge
Red head and tail, bluish-green body. Forests. Gaua to Efate, and Anatom.
56. Lonchura malacca Chestnut munia Capucin à bavette
Brown and black, in flocks. Grassland. Introduced to Luganville area and Aore.

Ploceidae

57. Passer domesticus House sparrow Moineau domestique
Black and brownish. Central Vila only. Introduced.

Sturnidae

58. Aplonis santovestris Mountain starling Etourneau des montagnes
Endemic brown bird of the cloud forests of Santo, over 1000m.
59. Aplonis zelandicus Rusty-winged starling
Grey-brown bird of lowland forest, Paama-Lopevi northwards.
60. Acridotheres tristis Indian Myna Martin triste
Largish, brown, black and white with yellow eye-patch. Introduced and common
on Santo, Epi, Efate, Tanna

Artamidae

61. Artamus leucorhynchus White-breasted wood-swallow
Grey-black and white. Sits on dead branches and flies out with graceful,
acrobatic flight. Throughout.

SECTION B. Migrant Land Birds (1 species)

Cuculidae

62. Eudynamis taitensis Long-tailed cuckoo Coucou de Nouvelle-Zélande
Rare migrant visitor from New Zealand. March to October.

SECTION C. Birds of Sea and Shore

Procellariidae

63. Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed shearwater Puffin à queue pointue
Pijin blong hariken
Common all-brown shearwater, skimming between the waves.
64. Puffinus lherminieri Audubon's shearwater Puffin d'Audubon
Dusky above, white below.
65. Pterodroma leucoptera Gould's (Collared) Petrel Pétrel de Gould
Sooty-black and white gadfly petrel

Hydrobatidae

66. Nesofregatta albigularis White-throated storm-petrel
Small, fluttering seabird. Sooty-black and white, forked tail.

Phaethontidae

67. Phaethon lepturus White-tailed tropicbird Paille-en-queue à brins blancs
White with long white tail streamers.

Fregatidae

68. Fregata ariel Lesser frigate-bird. Frégate ariel ou Petite Frégate
Large dark 'W' shape in flight, white patches on sides of abdomen.

Charadriidae

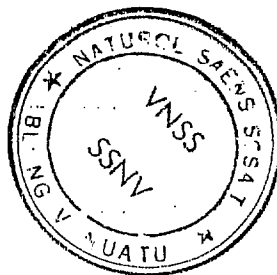
69. Pluvialis dominica American (Pacific) Golden Plover Pluvier doré du
Pacifique Sivi
Common short-billed shore bird. Brown, some with black bellies in March-April.
Small groups or flocks. Also on open areas of short grass inland.

Scolopacidae

70. Numenius phaeopus Whimbrel Courlis corlieu
Long, down-curved bill
71. Limosa lapponica Bar-tailed godwit Barge rousse Sivi
Long, slightly upturned bill, black bars on outer tail feathers.
72. Tringa hypoleucos Common sandpiper Chevalier guignette
Smaller than tattler, white wing-bar in flight. Bobs. Banks and Torres.
73. Tringa incana Wandering tattler Chevalier voyageur Sivi
Common, small long-billed wader of beaches and reefs. Brown, no wing bar.
74. Arenaria interpres Ruddy turnstone Tourne-pierre interprète
Characteristic brown, black and white pattern. Searching between stones on beach or reef.

Laridae

75. Sterna bergii Great crested tern Sterne huppée
Common, large coastal tern. Yellow bill, black cap, often in flocks. Rest on the buoys in Vila harbour.
76. Sterna sumatrana Black-naped tern
Solitary light-coloured tern, with black band across the back of the head.
77. Anous stolidus Common noddy Noddi brun
Dark brown tern with grey cap.
78. Gygis alba White tern Gygis blanche ou Sterne blanche
Small, snow-white tern, black eyes, bill and feet, forked tail.



A Plea.

Please let me have your comments on these names, and please send to the VNSS any information on the birds you see, even if it is only a list of names and where you saw them.

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Vanuatu Natural Science Society, P.O.Box 188, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

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ADDITIONS TO THE VNSS COLLECTION. Accession numbers in ().

- Books numbers 303 to 305 were presented to the VNSS by Mrs. Sue Antoniou of Hideaway Island Resort. The Society thanks her for her generous gift.
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APPENDIX. A Discussion of the Names.

A few of the English common names given here differ from those given in Mayr (1945) which are usually used in reference to Vanuatu birds. Flycatchers of the genus Myiagra are called 'broadbills' in other Pacific islands - e.g. M. albiventris, Samoan Broadbill; M. vanikorensis, Vanikoro Broadbill, etc. Gruson (1976) calls M. caledonica 'New Hebrides Broadbill' and I have updated this to 'Vanuatu Broadbill'. Gruson is also the source of the name 'Rainbow Lory' for Trichoglossus haematodus, which seems a much more appropriate name than 'Coconut Lory', as I have rarely seen one of these colourful little parrots in a coconut palm. Diamond and Marshall (1976) call it the 'Rainbow Lorikeet', but as members of the genus are variously called 'Lory' or 'Lorikeet' you can take your pick. The introduced Lonchura malacca is called 'Chestnut Munia' by Medway and Marshall (1975) and 'Black-headed Munia' by Gruson.

With the scientific names, I have avoided giving subspecies names. A glance at Mayr (1945) and Diamond and Marshall (1976) indicates something of the problem. Mayr has three races of Erythrura cyanovirens in Vanuatu, D. and M. have one; Mayr has two races of Myzomela cardinalis, D. and M. three; Mayr six races of Pachycephala pectoralis, D. and M. three, and so on. The habit of giving separate common names to different races or subspecies is now normally frowned upon amongst English-speaking ornithologists.

My generic and specific names follow Medway and Marshall (1975), whose choice of names seems to reflect those most widely accepted. An exception is the harrier, which they and some others, e.g. Gruson, regard as a race of Circus aeruginosus, but which others again (Mayr, Diamond and Marshall) regard as C. approximans. In this case I have given both names. Diamond and Marshall (1976) differ on three generic names of Vanuatu species from those given by Medway and Marshall. They have Tachybaptus for Podiceps; Gallirallus for Rallus and Vini for Charmosyna.

The order of the families and genera follows Gruson, which is for the most part the most widely accepted order. However, on the question of the family and subfamily status of those birds placed under the umbrella of the Muscicapidae, I have stayed with Medway and Marshall.