Papua New Guinea
New Britain III
31st August to 4th September 2018 (5 days)
Trip Report

Melanesian Megapode by Jonathan Russouw

Tour Leaders: Wayne Jones and Dušan Brinkhuizen

Trip report compiled by Wayne Jones
Tour Summary

New Britain is the largest island in Papua New Guinea’s Bismarck Archipelago. Renowned as a diving spot, with numerous WWII wrecks, it is also home to a number of endemics not found on the mainland. During our five-day sojourn on the island, we birded off-shore islands and the patches of accessible remnant forest, as well as the edges of the sadly extensive oil palm plantations. Highlights included the sought-after Golden Masked Owl, New Britain Dwarf Kingfisher, Knob-billed Fruit Dove, New Britain Boobook, Melanesian Megapode, Violaceous Coucal, Black-bellied Myzomela, and Blue-eyed Cockatoo. In addition, we had a magnificent sighting of a huge Leatherback Turtle and a wonderful assortment of reef fishes, the latter while snorkelling.

Following our afternoon flight and early evening arrival at Walindi Resort, our birding began the next morning. The sky was shades of brilliant pink and orange as those who would snorkel later selected their gear before we boarded the boat and headed out into Kimbe Bay. While heading to the islands, we encountered a few large feeding flocks of Black Noddy.

Our first stop was just offshore of the small, coral-ringed Restorf Island, where we saw Sclater’s Myzomela, Island Imperial Pigeon, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Brahminy Kite, a pair of beautiful Beach Kingfishers, and Melanesian Kingfisher.

We moved on to the larger Malu-Malu Island, but the island now has a small human population which disrupted our attempts to draw out birds. We did manage to see MacKinlay’s Cuckoo-Dove, but little else. We decided to try Little Malu-Malu Island, where we saw Mangrove Golden Whistler. We were still on the hunt for Island Monarch, so we returned to Restorf and walked into the forest, but unfortunately still came out empty-handed. Next up, some of us indulged in a spot of snorkelling around the island, where the coral reef held a dazzling array of colourful fish. After a delicious lunch on the boat, we started our way back to the lodge. What appeared to be a log floating in the water revealed itself to be a massive Leatherback Turtle when it raised its head. It remained on the surface for a good amount of time before dropping out of sight. Further along, little slivers of sand and reef held Ruddy Turnstone, Greater Sand Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whimbrel, and Black-naped and Greater Crested Terns, and, closer to shore, Pacific Reef Heron.

In the afternoon, we passed through the extensive palm oil plantations that unfortunately cover a lot
of this part of the island on our way to the banks of the Kulu River. The plantations weren’t totally devoid of life, however, as we had good looks at Black Bittern and Stephan’s Emerald Dove. At the river itself, we found Pacific Black Duck, Variable Goshawk, White-mantled Kingfisher, Nicobar Pigeon, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, White-necked and Violaceous Coucal, a trio of New Britain Boobooks, Eclectus Parrot, Purple-bellied Lory, Varied Triller, Metallic Starling, and Great Flying Fox.

That evening, we returned to the plantation in search of Golden Masked Owl. We found an individual quite quickly, but it only provided brief looks before it flew off into the night. Despite much searching thereafter, we could not obtain another sighting. A couple of people went out again the following evening and enjoyed much lengthier views of a sitting bird.

On day three, we left early to make the most of the relative cool of the morning at Garu Forest, a patch of untouched lower/mid-level forest. The highlight was watching Melanesian Megapode perched high up in the canopy, its outsized legs giving it an almost comical appearance. Most of the time we simply birded from the road, and our haul included Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove, Superb and Knob-billed Fruit Doves, Finsch’s and Yellowish Imperial Pigeons, Blue-eyed Cockatoo, Ashy Myzomela, New Britain Friarbird, Velvet Flycatcher, Long-tailed Myna, Red-banded Flowerpecker, and Black Sunbird. In the afternoon, we walked a trail up through Hela Forest, but the going was hard and the bird activity exceptionally quiet. We saw very little, but were thankful to find Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher, which we’d been struggling to see for two days, as well as Barred Cuckoooshrike.

On our last full day on the island, we set out on the nearby Volcano Trail, which passed through a lot of farm bush before reaching beautiful primary forest. As is often the case, the disturbed secondary and edge habitat was fairly productive, yielding Pacific Baza, Bar-tailed and Pied Cuckoo-Doves, Pacific Koel, Brush Cuckoo, Moustached Treeswift, Blyth’s Hornbill, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Black-bellied Myzomela, and Spangled Drongo; while the forest interior produced New Britain Dwarf Kingfisher and Northern Fantail. We also heard Bismarck Pitta, but could not coax it into view.

After lunch, we drove to the border of the Numundo cattle farm and watched for King Quail, Buff-banded Rail, and White-browed Crake as they crossed the dirt road from one grassy pasture to the other. We also spotted Australian Reed Warbler and Buff-bellied Mannikin. With time to spare, we returned to the Kulu River where the only new bird we saw was Common Kingfisher before the rain started pouring down and put an end to our day’s activities. We brought our island adventure to a close.
the next day, with an early-morning flight back to the mainland.

Annotated List of species recorded
Note: Number in brackets ( ) indicate number of days on the tour the species was recorded.
List powered through the report generator of our partner iGoTerra.

Birds (84 in total: 84 seen)
Status codes: E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced
IUCN codes: CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient

Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae
Anas superciliosa pelewensis
Pacific Black Duck (3) Kulu River 1.9, NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.

Megapodes Megapodiidae
Megapodius eremita
Melanesian Megapode (1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.

Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies Phasianidae
Excalfactoria chinensis lepida
King Quail (1) Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns Ardeidae
Dupetor flavicollis australis
Black Bittern (1) NBPOL Palm Plantations 1.9.
Nycticorax caledonicus
Nankeen Night Heron (2) Kulu River 1.9 and Kulu River 3.9.
Bubulcus coromandus
Eastern Cattle Egret (2) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9 and NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9.
Ardea alba modesta
Great Egret (3) observed 1.9, Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 3.9.
Ardea sacra sacra
Pacific Reef Heron (2) observed 1.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 3.9.

Frigatebirds Fregatidae
Fregata ariel ariel
Lesser Frigatebird (2) Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 1.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9.

Cormorants and Shags Phalacrocoracidae
Microcarbo melanoleucos melanoleucos
Little Pied Cormorant (1) Kulu River 3.9.

Osprey Pandionidae
Pandion cristatus
Eastern Osprey (3) Observed Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 1-3.9.
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**Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**

Pacific Baza  
Aviceda subcristata  
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

Variable Goshawk  
Accipiter hiogaster  
(2) Kulu River 1.9 and en route 2.9.

Brahminy Kite  
Haliastur indus  
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.

White-bellied Sea Eagle  
Haliaeetus leucogaster  
(2) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae**

Buff-banded Rail  
Gallirallus philippensis  
(2) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9 and Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

White-browed Crake  
Porzana cinerea  
(1) Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

**Plovers and Lapwings Charadriidae**

Greater Sand Plover  
Charadrius leschenaultii leschenaultii  
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

**Sandpipers and Allies Scolopacidae**

Whimbrel  
Numenius phaeopus variegatus  
(1) observed 1.9.

Ruddy Turnstone  
Arenaria interpres interpres  
(2) observed 1.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9.

Common Sandpiper  
Actitis hypoleucos  
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.

Grey-tailed Tattler (NT)  
Tringa brevipes  
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 3.9.

**Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Laridae**

Black Noddy  
Anous minutus minutus  
(2) observed 1.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9.

Greater Crested Tern  
Thalasseus bergii cristatus  
(1) observed 1.9.

Black-naped Tern  
Sterna sumatrana sumatrana  
(1) observed 1.9.

Common Tern  
Sterna hirundo longipennis  
(2) observed 1.9 and Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9.

**Pigeons and Doves Columbidae**

Amboyna Cuckoo-Dove  
Macropygia amboinensis  
(1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.

Bar-tailed Cuckoo-Dove  
Macropygia nigrirostris  
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

MacKinlay's Cuckoo-Dove  
Macropygia mackinlayi arossi  
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bird Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pied Cuckoo-Dove (NT)</td>
<td><em>Reinwardtoena browni</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Volcano Trail 3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephan's Emerald Dove</td>
<td><em>Chalcophaps stephani</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) NBPOL Palm Plantations 1.9, NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicobar Pigeon (NT)</td>
<td><em>Caloenas nicobarica nicobarica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Kulu River 1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superb Fruit Dove</td>
<td><em>Ptilinopus superbus superbus</em></td>
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<td>(1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knob-billed Fruit Dove</td>
<td><em>Ptilinopus insolitus</em></td>
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<td>(1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon (NT)</td>
<td><em>Ducula rubricera</em></td>
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<td>(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finsch's Imperial Pigeon (NT)</td>
<td><em>Ducula finschii</em></td>
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<td>(1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.</td>
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<td>Island Imperial Pigeon</td>
<td><em>Ducula pistrinaria</em></td>
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<td>(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.</td>
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<td>Yellowish Imperial Pigeon (NT)</td>
<td><em>Ducula subflavescens</em></td>
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<td>(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.</td>
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<td>Cuckoos <em>Cuculidae</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>White-necked Coucal</td>
<td><em>Centropus ateralis</em></td>
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<td>(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violaceous Coucal (NT)</td>
<td><em>Centropus violaceus</em></td>
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<td>(1) Kulu River 1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Koel</td>
<td><em>Eudynamys orientalis</em></td>
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<td>(1) Volcano Trail 3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brush Cuckoo</td>
<td><em>Cacomantis variolosus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Volcano Trail 3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barn-Owls <em>Tytonidae</em></td>
<td><em>Tyto aurantia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Masked Owl (VU)</td>
<td>(2) NBPOL Palm Plantations 1.9 and NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owls <em>Strigidae</em></td>
<td><em>Ninox odiosa</em></td>
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<td>New Britain Boobook (VU)</td>
<td>(1) Kulu River 1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treeswifts <em>Hemiprocnidae</em></td>
<td><em>Hemiprocnus mystacea</em></td>
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<td>Moustached Treeswift</td>
<td>(2) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.</td>
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<td>Swifts <em>Apodidae</em></td>
<td><em>Aerodramus spodiopygius</em></td>
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<td>White-rumped Swiftlet</td>
<td>(1) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uniform Swiftlet</td>
<td><em>Aerodramus vanikorensis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9, NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.</td>
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Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

**Black-capped Paradise Kingfisher**
*Tanysiptera nigriceps*
(1) en route 2.9.

**White-mantled Kingfisher (NT)**
*Todiramphus albonotatus*
(2) Kulu River 1.9 and Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.

**Melanesian Kingfisher**
*Todiramphus tristrami*
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

**Beach Kingfisher**
*Todiramphus saurophagus*
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

**Sacred Kingfisher**
*Todiramphus sanctus sanctus*
(1) Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 2.9.

**Common Kingfisher**
*Alcedo atthis*
(1) Kulu River 3.9.

**New Britain Dwarf Kingfisher**
*Ceyx sacerdotis*
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

**Rainbow Bee-eater**
*Merops ornatus*
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, en route 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Hornbills *Bucerotidae*

**Blyth's Hornbill**
*Rhyticeros plicatus*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Cockatoos *Cacatuidae*

**Blue-eyed Cockatoo (VU)**
*Cacatua ophthalmica*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Old World Parrots *Psittaculidae*

**Buff-faced Pygmy Parrot**
*Micropsitta pusio*
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Eclectus Parrot**
*Eclectus roratus*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Red-flanked Lorikeet**
*Charmosyna placentis*
(2) Kulu River 1.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Purple-bellied Lory**
*Lorius hypoinochrous*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Coconut Lorikeet**
*Trichoglossus haematodus*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Pittas *Pittidae*

**Bismarck Pitta**
*Erythropitta novaehibernicae*
(1) 1 Volcano Trail 3.9.

Honeyeaters *Meliphagidae*

**Ashy Myzomela**
*Myzomela cineracea*
(2) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Sclater's Myzomela**
*Myzomela sclateri*
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.
Black-bellied Myzomela  
*Myzomela erythromelas*  
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

**New Britain Friarbird**  
*Philemon cockerelli*  
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

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Barred Cuckooshrike  
*Coracina lineata*  
(1) en route 2.9.

Varied Triller  
*Lalage leucomela*  
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

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Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*  

**Whistlers and allies** *Pachycephalidae*  

Mangrove Golden Whistler  
*Pachycephala melanura*  
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

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Drongos *Dicruridae*  

Spangled Drongo  
*Dicrurus bracteatus*  
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

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Fantails *Rhipiduridae*  

Willie Wagtail  
*Rhipidura leucophrys melaleuca*  
(3) Observed Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 1-3.9.

Northern Fantail  
*Rhipidura rufiventris*  
(1) Volcano Trail 3.9.

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Monarchs *Monarchidae*  

Shining Flycatcher  
*Myiagra alecto*  
(1) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9.

Velvet Flycatcher  
*Myiagra hebetior*  
(1) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9.

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Crows, Jays, and Magpies *Corvidae*  

Bismarck Crow  
*Corvus insularis*  
(3) Walindi Plantation Resort, Kimbe 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

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Swallows *Hirundinidae*  

Pacific Swallow  
*Hirundo tahitica*  
(2) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9 and Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

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Reed warblers and allies *Acrocephalidae*  

Australian Reed Warbler  
*Acrocephalus australis sumbae*  
(1) Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

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Grassbirds and allies *Locustellidae*  

Papuan Grassbird  
*Megalurus macrurus*  
(1) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9.
Starlings *Sturnidae*

**Metallic Starling**
*Aplonis metallica*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

**Long-tailed Myna**
*Mino kreffti*
(2) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Flowerpeckers *Dicaeidae*

**Red-banded Flowerpecker**
*Dicaeum eximium*
(2) Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Sunbirds and Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae*

**Black Sunbird**
*Leptocoma aspasia*
(3) Malu Malu I and Restorf I, 1.9, Garu Wildlife Management Area 2.9 and Volcano Trail 3.9.

Waxbills, Munias and allies *Estrildidae*

**Buff-bellied Mannikin**
*Lonchura melaena*
(2) Numundo Cattle Farm 1.9 and Numundo Cattle Farm 3.9.

Mammals (1 in total: 1 seen)

**Status codes:** E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced

**IUCN codes:** CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient

**Old World Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae***

**Great Flying Fox**
*Pteropus neohibernicus*
(3) Kulu River 1.9, NBPOL Palm Plantations 2.9 and Kulu River 3.9.

Reptiles (1 in total: 1 seen)

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**Softshell Turtles *Trionychidae***

**Leatherback Turtle**
*Dermochelys coriacea*
(1) Kimbe Bay 1.9.

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