



BIRD TOURISM REPORTS 1/2017

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NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA



Fig. 1. A sunrise in Tomohon, Sulawesi, a tropical island with unique birdlife.

North Sulawesi, at the easternmost end of the Minahassa Peninsula, was visited between 5th to 11th July, 2016. I flew in on a direct Garuda Indonesia flight from Jakarta, Java, and departed to Makassar, South Sulawesi, again on Garuda, with my ultimate destination in Padang, Sumatra. The short visit was planned to be a reconnaissance one. I did not really know if the local conditions allowed an independent visit and therefore desired to test them, with a plan to return in the future, in connection with a visit to Halmahera, if possible. In Indonesia, travelling independently is more complicated than in the rest of Southeast Asia, primarily because car rental is only possible in few locations, e.g. in Bali. Based on a locally common misconception, tourists are not thought to be able to drive a car by themselves, unlike in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and New Guinea, for example.

The original plan was to visit Grand Luley Resort Jetty, Molibagu Road, Toraut, Tamboan, Gunung Mahawu, Temboan Hill and Tangkoko during the six days, but Ramadan changed the plans. Tamboan was about to close because of the end of Ramadan and the consequent staff vacation,

and therefore had to be visited at once. Toraut had no vacant accommodation for the same reason and the close-by Molibagu Road was not a good idea anymore, after one of its key species (**Sulawesi Myna**) had already been seen at Tambun and the Toraut (close to MR) visit had been canceled. **Sulawesi Streaked Flycatcher**, another Molibagu Road species, was fortunately seen (very well indeed) later, at Karaenta Forest, close to Makassar.

I deliberately decided to skip Gunung Ambang, a destination with some very interesting birds (**Cinnabar Hawk Owl**, **Matinan Flycatcher**, **Malia** and **Fiery-browed Myna**), but problems as well. Visitors have lost some of their things at their accommodation. More importantly, logging has advanced and the walking distance to the forest is getting too long (more than 3 km one way across potato fields etc.), especially in regard to the owls. The distance also makes one vulnerable to weather. All in all, the risks of failure are starting to get an upper hand over the site's potential. Lore Lindu was also skipped for summer 2016, because of fresh problems with islamistic insurgency, in hope that the security situation there would improve during the forthcoming years.

Overall, cultural borderlines created problems on the way and necessitated changes. In the predominantly Moslem areas (e.g. around Kotamobagu), the strict rules of Ramadan resulted in hunger, because one had to sleep at night and all the shops and stalls were closed during the day. Moreover, sleeping was difficult because of the overwhelming party and traffic noise at night, including loudspeakers blasting Allahu akhbar!. Especially on the 6th July, we were suffering from hunger. Driving east between Kotamobagu and Tomohon, we managed to find few bananas. The first open restaurant served dog meat and the second fish. The smoked and reheated fish I had at the restaurant caused severe diarrhea the next night, but at least there was something to eat.

In regard to target species, I had a very long list, because this was the very first visit to Sulawesi. There were no priority species, except perhaps **Maleo**, but I would try to locate as many endemic birds as possible, with plans to look for the rest on another visit. The identification of the species was a challenge in terms of preparations, because there are no comprehensive guidebooks for Indonesia at the moment. Even the Birds of Wallacea has been sold out several years ago. I therefore arrived in Sulawesi with a camera memory stick full of bird photos and texts, compiled from a large number of sources, species lists and lots of digital recordings, for the majority of which I am in debt to xeno-canto.org.

TRANSPORTATION

The local transportation was organized with Franky Sumampouw, the manager of Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto. The main deal included a car (a Toyota Avanza) and a driver for visiting the Kotamobagu and Tomohon areas, the first part of the trip. In addition to that, I needed transportation between Manado and Tangkoko, and for short trips in the Tangkoko area, notably two drop offs and pick-ups at the Temboan Hill viewpoint and one lift to the Tangkoko Reserve entrance and back – short local drives. These services were provided by either Franky himself or by

Ono Tinungki, a Tangkoko bird guide who had to adopt a role of a driver for me, as I did not desire to be guided, at least not when birdwatching! He met my expectations very well.

For the four days of long distance transportation, in the direction of Kotamobagu and Tomohon, the daily expense was around IDR 1.200.000 (€84), including car, gasoline and driver meals and accommodation. This is well in line with the cost of such services in respective destinations in the neighborhood. Locally, some service providers charge slightly more, some slightly less. Some understand that a birding tour knows no limits in regard to hours, some do not.

Before arrival, I had contemplated several other choices, including private car rental and the services of local bird tour companies, albeit only for transportation. Public transportation was not really a feasible option, because the locations of the sites and the timing of the visits did exclude them. In the end, the willingness of Franky to discuss the topic in detail, and well in advance, won the day and I decided to rely on his ability to organize the transportation.

My route and timetable was as follows:

5th July: Flight from Jakarta to Manado, North Sulawesi. Arrived on time and met Franky at the airport. He had, however, forgotten that I should go straight to Kotamobagu. We visited Santika Jetty and waited for Ono for an hour, before spending another hour at a supermarket and in a gas station line (gas may sell out in the end of Ramadan), before advancing towards Kotamobagu, in heavy traffic. The delays created considerable problems for the beginning of the journey. We 'slept' at Senator Hotel in Kotamobagu after arrival at 20.00. A group of 12 **Eastern Cattle Egrets**, a **Sulawesi Swiftlet**, a **White-rumped Cuckooshrike**, **Sooty-headed Bulbuls**, **Asian Glossy Starlings**, an **Olive-backed Sunbird** and a noisy roost of 30 **Grosbeak Starlings** were seen on the way.

6th July: Wake up at 02.40. Straight to Tambun, where we stayed till 11.00. A drive back to Kotamobagu and then to Tomohon, where accommodation was rented at Onong's Palace. Food proved difficult to buy before Tomohon. On the way, 250 **Eastern Cattle Egrets**, 5 **Intermediate Egrets**, one **Pacific Reef Egret**, a **Plaintive Cuckoo** and 3 **Black-faced Munias** were recorded. Onong's Palace had a **Sulawesi Nightjar**, a **Sulawesi Scops Owl**, a **White-faced Cuckoo Dove** and a **Crimson-crowned Flowerpecker**. In the evening, an owling visit to Gunung Mahawu was made.

7th July: The whole day at Gunung Mahawu and Tomohon, with a mid-day rest at Onong's Palace. A **Chestnut-backed Bush Warbler** was seen very well at the cottage, which also had **Sulawesi Babblers**. A lone **Yellow-crested Cockatoo** was seen between the mountain and the town.

8th July: Morning at Gunung Mahawu, with a mid-day transit to Tangkoko, via Manado and Bitung. Accommodation and the first delicious meal at Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto. At Tangkoko Road, the first **Spotted Dove** was, indeed, spotted. Up to four of them were seen at the same place during the forthcoming days. In the afternoon, a visit to the Temboan Hill viewpoint was made,

and after the sunset, a visit to meet a territorial **Sulawesi Masked Owl** followed. He responded, but not too keenly.

9th July: Morning at Tangkoko Reserve and afternoon at Temboan Hill, with a mid-day rest at Tangkoko Hill.

10th July: Morning at Tangkoko Hill and a transit to the Manado Airport, with an afternoon departure to Makassar. The Garuda Indonesia flight was supposed to leave at 15.20, after a change of schedule, but was delayed a bit, and therefore left at 15.40, according to the original schedule! Do not be late at the airport. The flight departure may occasionally occur earlier than the time printed on your ticket.

ACCOMMODATION

I stayed at three accommodations in North Sulawesi. One of them was really bad, one average and one very good indeed. As often is the case, a room rate was not an accurate measure of quality in Sulawesi. Especially in the long run, the quality of management makes a difference and attached services also play a very important part in customer satisfaction.

Senator Hotel, Kotamobagu (IDR 230.000, €16 for a 'new de luxe room', without breakfast): The small hotel is located in the center of Kotamobagu, a busy town of 110.000 inhabitants with exclusively local character. Their 'new de luxe room' was a joke on a grand scale.... The shed-like wing was about to arrive at the end of its life span and everything was consequently either broken or 'spotty'. The room had not been properly cleaned for ages. Still, this is supposed to be one of the more comfortable choices in Kotamobagu, according to Internet testimonials. We slept as much as much we could (two to four hours) in the Ramadan din, before continuing towards Tambun.

Onong's Palace, Tomohon (IDR 350.000, €25 for a cottage, without breakfast): The hotel is located in the northern part of Tomohon, a town of 90.000 inhabitants. Originally a rather romantic setting with its cottages with glass side walls, the facilities are already in need of renovation. The cottage was very dimly lit and there was only one source of electricity (difficult to charge anything, in darkness). The bed was however large and I was also happy with the spacious bathroom with a hot shower, a necessary feature in the cool mountain climate.

There were rather basic driver rooms under a separate restaurant, which served fairly good meals, e.g. IDR 40.000 (€2.80) for a plate of rice with pork. The access road was a problem, steep and narrow. We stayed there for two nights because I had booked and paid the accommodation beforehand at Agoda.com. The next door Highland Resort and Spa would have been a better alternative. Tour groups have already moved there, or to other resorts in the neighborhood.



Fig. 2. A towel at the Senator Hotel, torn with cigarette burns; an apt indicator of room standard.



Fig. 3. My romantic bed at Onong's Palace, Tomohon. The glass side walls may be curtained.

Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto (IDR 425.000, €30 with full board): One of the rare accommodations in Indonesia I may recommend without reservations. With full board, the rooms in double cottages are a good deal. The rooms are basic (no television), but clean and new, and with one-way see-through windows. The cottages are located downhill, by a parking space, whereas the restaurant is uphill, right next to them. The low hillock may be used as an observation point and birds may also be seen right by the cottages, in the thick bush next to them. It would

also be possible to construct a bird observation tower on top of the restaurant, to further enhance the views (cf. my records). Let's see if Franky realizes my suggestion...



Fig. 4. A Tangkoko Hill room; basic but clean and with everything one needs for a rest.

The meals, prepared by a small team of cheerful and skillful women, may be somewhat similar on a daily basis, but nevertheless so diverse, well prepared, fresh and tasty that it probably takes some time before a need to try something else may arise. The contrast between the starvation and 'diarrhea fish' of Kotamobagu and the ample fresh meals of Tangkoko could not have been greater. Tea and fruits were available any time, together with reference books etc. in case one has time for them.

As groups often stay at this accommodation, make sure to contact the manager, Franky, well ahead, at franky@tangkokohill.com or at +6281340302444. It is also important to remind him of the details of your contract, because he tends to be a bit forgetful, to a large part as a result of simultaneously organizing a number of functions. There are other choices in Tangkoko, but they do not have as tranquil a location and do not necessarily have the quality meals Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto has.

What is more, Ono Tinungki (see tangkokobirding.com), a well known local bird and photography guide, works in cooperation with the Tangkoko Hill. As explained, he acted as my driver during the Kotamobagu – Tomohon part of the visit and proved to be very reliable, knowledgeable and good company.

The transit to Manado cost IDR 400.000 (€28), one way. There is a good bakery in Bintung, right by the road, a place shown to me by Ono. I wish there were more people like Franky, Ono and Hery Kusumanegara, the Bali Bharat bird guide, in the Indonesian bird tourism scene!



Fig. 5. The pleasant interior of the Tangkoko Hill restaurant, with tea counter being attended.

BIRDS AND SITES

All in all, about 105 bird species were recorded during the visit. In the following section, all of them will be listed, site by site. For some of the key species, additional details will be given. The additional records, during transits, have already been mentioned, under route and timetable.



Fig. 6. An adult female **Sultan's Cuckoo Dove**, a recent split, according to IOC taxonomy.

The coordinates of each site have been provided to help in locating them. Place the numbers at the search function of Google Maps and press enter. The program will show the location. In some cases, Street View is also available, in addition to maps and satellite images.

Grand Luley Resort Jetty (1.578176, 124.809116)

This is a private resort with tight security and a permission to enter needs to be requested first at the gate and then at the reception. Fortunately, it was granted after a short wait. We walked to the jetty, which was also occupied by two guards. The site was visited only in an attempt to see a **Great-billed Kingfisher**, a species I knew I would not have time to try in Tangkoko. The kingfishers have been seen from the jetty, according to burung-nusantara.org. The Tangkoko mangrove tours (guaranteed **GBK**) can be expensive and long, and their timing did not agree with my other activities. Unfortunately, the trip started with a failure, as no kingfishers were seen at the site, despite careful scanning. The other birds of the jetty included two **Nordmann's Greenshanks**, rare visitors to Sulawesi, but nothing of real interest for me.

Bird list

Great-billed Heron	1
Striated Heron	3
Whimbrel	1
Nordmann's Greenshank	2
Uniform Swiftlet	50+
Pacific Swallow	4

Tambun (0.588885, 124.118924)

Tambun Reserve, 46 km west of Kotamobagu (turn left at Kinolontagan), is a well-known geothermal breeding site of **Maleo**, perhaps the most unique bird of Sulawesi. The reserve is located along a side road, not far from the highway Jalan Trans Sulawesi, and therefore easy to reach once spotted on a map. It is a gated area and entrance is only possible with a warden, after paying an entrance fee of IDR 100.000 (€7). There is a good variety of birds around and the reserve therefore deserves proper attention. I was hoping to spend a night there, but that was unfortunately not possible, because of Ramadan. The reserve was closed for the next two days.

The idea was to arrive at the site well before sunrise and in this we succeeded, thanks to Ono's driving and my orientation, with the help of a Google Maps. The warden was, however, late, and only arrived fifteen minutes after the sunrise, when we were already getting anxious. Fortunately, this was not too late for the **Maleo**. After an initial introduction to the grounds, including locating the star species, I requested to be left by myself, and birded the site for five hours, mostly from the best available vantage point, with the help of a scope. The many fruiting trees had attracted a

good variety of birds. The hours were among the most enjoyable of the whole trip, and I was very busy for the most of the time.

After the birding session, the warden and Ono arrived to take me to a spacious cage, where juvenile **Maleos** were looked after, as a part of a breeding program. It was an interesting volcanic habitat, with warm ground and steaming springs, ideal for incubating the **Maleo** eggs. The weather remained fine even though increasingly hot during the visit.

Bird list

Sulawesi Serpent Eagle	1 pair with an immature bird.
Spot-tailed Sparrowhawk	1 adult on top of a tree.
Black Kite	2
White-bellied Sea Eagle	1 adult fly-by.
Maleo	1 adult, close views at trees and flying, calls+ the chicks.
Red Funglewowl	1
Barred Rail	5, <i>celebensis</i> .
Pygmy Hanging Parrot	7, excellent views.
Sulawesi Hanging Parrot	30, excellent views.
Red Turtle Dove	2, introduced in Sulawesi.
Green Imperial Pigeon	30, <i>paulina</i> , excellent views.
White Imperial Pigeon	1
White-faced Cuckoo Dove	1
Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon	25, excellent views.
Oberholser's Fruit Dove	1
Black-naped Fruit Dove	5, excellent views.
Great Eared Nightjar	6, <i>macropterus</i> .
Sulawesi Scops Owl	3
Minahassa Masked Owl	1, close to the gate, towards the highway.
Little Bronze Cuckoo	1, <i>jungei</i> ?
Sulawesi Cuckoo	1, excellent views.
Black-billed Koel	10, only one seen really well (skulkers).
Yellow-billed Malkoha	2, excellent views.
Bay Coucal	15, skulkers, but several seen very well.
Hair-crested Drongo	30, <i>leucops</i> .
Ashy Woodpecker	5, excellent views.
Grey-rumped Treeswift	4
Purple Needletail	1
Asian Palm Swift	20; not supposed to occur in North Sulawesi!
Pacific Swallow	10
Glossy Swiftlet	100+
Sulawesi Swiftlet	100+

Collared Kingfisher	2, <i>chloris</i> .
Black Sunbird	10, <i>grayi</i> .
Olive-backed Sunbird	2
Grey-sided Flowerpecker	5
Pied Cuckooshrike	2, excellent views.
White-rumped Cuckooshrike	1
White-rumped Triller	6, excellent views.
Black-naped Oriole	4
Sulawesi Myna	12, on top of trees, high up.
White-necked Myna	6
Grosbeak Starling	400
Chestnut Munia	1
Slender-billed Crow	5

Gunung Mahawu (1.346941, 124.871271)

Due to involuntary changes in route and timetable, plenty of time was spent at the main, southern access route to the Gunung Mahawu crater. This was however not a negative feature, at least not for me, because the additional time eventually delivered the passerines I was looking for. I walked the road up and down, between the top trailhead gate and a downhill curve about 100 meters inside the forest. We also spent some time, on three occasions, at the well known but disturbed stake-out for some of the key species, a separate block of woodland at the beginning of the access road (at 1.342025, 124.870853), off Jalan Tomohon-Rurukan. Just before it, the open ridge had great views, all the way to Bitung harbor.



Fig. 7. The start of the Gunung Mahawu access road; fine as the roads tend to be in N Sulawesi.

Patiently, Ono took me up the road four times, sleeping in the car at times, when not checking out his **Scaly Kingfisher** stake-outs, or socializing with bird photographers from Manado. Both of the seen **Scaly Kingfishers** were spotted flying across a road. First, when approaching Tomohon, one crossed the road in front of our van and landed low, in some bamboo by the road. The second bird I saw at sunset, flying to its stakeout territory, half way up the Gunung Mahawu access road, well before the trailhead. Waiting at the stakeout territories did not result in any records. I believe the birds have been disturbed too much, probably by photographers, the usual culprits.

First, we went up in the evening, for owls. Then, a morning and an afternoon visit followed, the next day. Finally, a morning visit was made, before a transit to Tangkoko, via Manado. The weather remained sunny and calm and there was no rain at all. Unfortunately, hunting in the reserve was witnessed on each visit. Requests for selfies with me occurred, too, but I managed to decline them, as a Facebook boycotter.

Bird list

Vinous-breasted Sparrowhawk	1 adult, hunting by the road, great views.
Isabelline Bush Hen	4, one also seen by the viewpoint shelter, low down.
Barred Rail	4
Sulawesi Scops Owl	2, seen by the road.
Speckled Boobook	1, heard in the east.
Sulawesi Hanging Parrot	5
Sultan's Cuckoo Dove	29, <i>albicapilla</i> , common and easy to observe.
White-faced Cuckoo Dove	1
Common Emerald Dove	1
(Western) Superb Fruit Dove	4, top section of the road, excellent views.
White-bellied Imperial Pigeon	4, high up.
Green Imperial Pigeon	9, high up.
Rusty-breasted Cuckoo	1
Yellow-billed Malkoha	1, great view, low section.
Sulawesi Drongo	2
Hair-crested Drongo	6, <i>leucops</i> .
Scaly-breasted Kingfisher	2, both fly-bys, the first standing on a bamboo for 1 s.
Collared Kingfisher	3
Purple-winged Roller	2, well visible and audible.
Grey-rumped Treeswift	3
Glossy Swiftlet	50+
Sulawesi Swiftlet	50+
Asian Palm Swift	10+
Red-backed Thrush	2, secretive.
Pale-blue Monarch	2, low section.
Sulawesi Babbler	14, common roadside bird.

Chestnut-backed Bush Warbler	5, skulkers, but nevertheless seen well.
Mountain Tailorbird	3
Sulawesi Leaf Warbler	1, on top of the road, in a large mixed species party.
Sulawesi Blue Flycatcher	2, males, half-way up.
Rufous-throated Flycatcher	1, male, also half-way up, excellent afternoon views.
Citrine Canary Flycatcher	23, absent one day, very common on another!?
Island Blue Flycatcher	25, likewise?!
Sulawesi Myzomela	60, very common in the upper section.
Sulphur-vented Whistler	14
Mountain White-eye	500, especially by the crater.
Black-crowned White-eye	150
Lemon-bellied White-eye	46, lower levels.
Streak-headed White-eye	3, surprisingly scarce, easy to miss.
Black Sunbird	35
Crimson Sunbird	1, male <i>flavostriata</i> .
Yellow-sided Flowerpecker	50, mostly in the pine forest.
Crimson-crowned Flowerpecker	14
Grey-sided Flowerpecker	15
Slender-billed Crow	5

Tangkoko Hill (1.563626, 125.152580)

At the Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto accommodation, birding mainly occurred around meals and early afternoon siestas, at times not ideal for such an activity. The periods of birding also tended to be rather short. Only in the last morning, before a transit to Manado, the idea was to wake up early, for kingfishers, and stay the whole morning at Tangkoko Hill. Exhausted, I nevertheless overslept, getting up 30 minutes too late and therefore missing my chances with the resident **Green-backed Kingfisher**, for example.



Fig. 8. Another delicious meal (a lunch) at Tangkoko Hill Cottage & Resto.

The rest of the morning (till 11.15) was spent up by the restaurant, with a scope, sitting on chair, under a shadow, and with a cold drink at hand. The results were surprisingly good!

Bird list

Sulawesi Serpent Eagle	1 adult.
Sulawesi Hawk Eagle	1 juvenile, excellent, very close views!
Black Kite	1
Peregrine Falcon	1 adult, <i>ernesti</i> , a close fly-by.
Spotted Kestrel	2, a pair.
Sulawesi Scops Owl	1, one territory right by the hotel.
Isabelline Bush Hen	1, calling from the bush.
Green Imperial Pigeon	1
Black-naped Fruit Dove	2, tame by the restaurant.
Bay Coucal	1
Plaintive Cuckoo	1 juvenile, a giant baby fed by Olive-backed Sunbirds!!
Hair-crested Drongo	10, <i>leucops</i> .
Sulawesi Hanging Parrot	3
Collared Kingfisher	2, a pair.
Green-backed Kingfisher	1, territory across the road.
Sulawesi Dwarf Kingfisher	1, dead after a collision on a car (parked) side mirror!
Rainbow Bee-eater	7
Sulawesi Pygmy Woodpecker	2, a pair, excellent views for 50 minutes!
Ashy Woodpecker	2, a pair.
Uniform Swiftlet	20+
Sulawesi Swiftlet	400+
Pied Cuckooshrike	2, close views.
White-rumped Cuckooshrike	3, excellent views. People often miss this common species.
White-rumped Triller	4, close views.
Pacific Swallow	2
Pale-blue Monarch	3, easy to see behind the cottages.
Brown-throated Sunbird	9
Black Sunbird	10
Olive-backed Sunbird	6
Crimson Sunbird	2, <i>flavostriata</i> .
Grey-sided Flowerpecker	1
Yellow-sided Flowerpecker	6
White-breasted Wood Swallow	2, <i>albiventer</i> .
Sooty-headed Bulbul	2
Black-naped Oriole	2, <i>celebensis</i> .
Grosbeak Starling	82, mobbed the pygmy woodpeckers!
Slender-billed Crow	7

Tangkoko Reserve (1.569476, 125.162699)

Once, Franky took me to the reserve in the morning, in practice a bit too late but nevertheless early. With his help, an agreement had been reached that under his guidance, I would stay within 500 meters of the headquarters, and only pay the IDR 100.000 (€7) entrance fee. Going further in would have required proper guiding, partly because of the resident macaques, which may be aggressive. I had no interest in doing the long coastal hike. It is exceedingly hot and humid at the coast and any exercise is therefore an ordeal. What is more, an abandoned picnic area, on the right soon after the headquarters, is known to be good for birds. I stayed there from 05.30 to 10.30, with limited results.

Towards the end, the preliminary symptoms of an approaching heat stroke were observed. A heat stroke can be lethal. At Tangkoko Hill, the situation could be improved by drinking and resting in an air-conditioned room. It may only be 1.5 km from Tangkoko Hill to the reserve headquarters, but it is a long walk in the heat, if hours have already been spent in the forest. Long walks at the coast are not for people with health problems, even though the terrain is more or less flat.

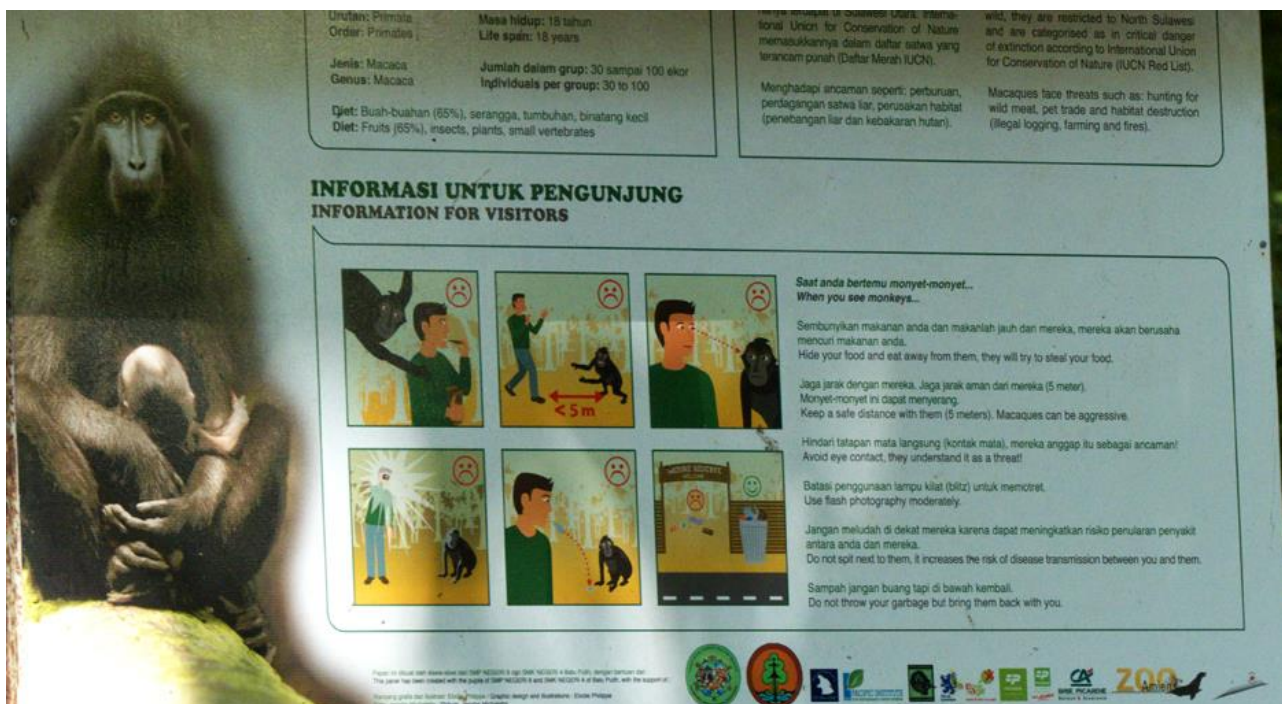


Fig. 9. Practical guidelines for encounters with **Sulawesi Crested Macaques**, at Tangkoko Reserve.

Bird list

Barred Buttonquail

1, *rufilatus*.

Barred Rail

1, *celebensis*.

Grey-cheeked Green Pigeon

2, hid in a small tree, feeding, tail to tail, very alert.

Pied Imperial Pigeon

8, one party, the only ones of the trip.

Ornate Lorikeet

8

Blue-backed Parrot	1, the only one seen.
Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher	1, right by the picnic area.
Purple-winged Roller	1
Bay Coucal	2
Uniform Swiftlet	+
Sulawesi Swiftlet	+
Cerulean Cuckooshrike	1, close views, the only one seen.
Golden-bellied Gerygone	1
Black-crowned White-eye	6
Black Sunbird	10
Olive-backed Sunbird	3
Yellow-sided Flowerpecker	3
Black-naped Oriole	1, <i>celebensis</i> .
Hair-crested Drongo	1, <i>leucops</i> .
Grosbeak Starling	3

Temboan Hill ('Km 10 Viewpoint'; at 1.520975, 125.137502)

At 9.5 km from Tangkoko and 8.1 km from Tangkoko Hill towards Bitung (and Manado), there is a forested ridge with a good observation point. Ono took me there twice. We tried couple of other spots by the road first, before ending up at this property, owned by a man he knew, but unoccupied for the most of the time.

According to Ono, the path to the off road observation point there was likely to be too steep for me. Instead, he organized a wooden bench next to the road, behind a fence line which indicated the private area. From there, a wide gap between trees allowed reasonable scoping views over the ridge below me. There was also a wooden platform for views, but its structures had become too rotten to be safe anymore.

The viewpoint proved to be quite good. I stayed there for a total of eight hours, twice from afternoon to sunset. After the first visit, Ono picked me up and we went to a nearby **Sulawesi Masked Owl** site, too. On the second visit, Franky forgot to take me there and Ono had to save the day. I therefore also had to wait 45 extra minutes for a pick up, in darkness by the road.

The weather remained fine for the most of the time during the both visits. Only on the second visit, approaching fog and clouds shortened the observation time by twenty minutes. The transportation to the site and back cost IDR 120.000 (€8.40). The lifts can sometimes be combined with the transportation of other customers to Manado or Tangkoko.

One of the funny features of the viewpoint were three chicken which occupied the property. When their owner was present, they kept silent and hid in tall grass. When they saw that there was only me, they arrived, sharing the bench, especially after they had learned that I was going to

serve them some tasty biscuits! The people on the road did not bother me much, and neither did the landowner, even though he was annoyed by the rubbish somebody (not me!) had left there.

Once, I had to give up and succumb to the demands of a group of six young women, who wanted to take selfies with me, both as a group and with each of them. Seldom do men resist a company of attractive women as hard as I did, to my defeat, but there were some interesting bird activity on the slope all the time, and my priorities were clear...

Bird list

Sulawesi Honey Buzzard	1, great views!
Ochre-bellied Boobook	1, at sunset.
Great Eared Nightjar	1, at sunset.
Sulawesi Nightjar	1, at sunset.
White-faced Cuckoo Dove	1
White-bellied Imperial Pigeon	27, congregated at fruiting trees.
Green Imperial Pigeon	210, congregated at fruiting trees.
White Imperial Pigeon	170, many fly-bys.
Grey-headed Imperial Pigeon	20, one party, congregated at fruiting trees.
Ornate Lorikeet	6, best views were had there.
Yellow-breasted Racket-tail	85, roost in the area.
Golden-mantled Racket-tail	24, roost in the area.
Pygmy Hanging Parrot	10
Sulawesi Hanging Parrot	40
Green-backed Kingfisher	2
Purple-winged Roller	1
Grey-rumped Treeswift	5
Glossy Swiftlet	50+
Uniform Swiftlet	20+
Sulawesi Swiftlet	300+
Knobbed Hornbill	63, common, pretty and noisy.
Sulawesi Hornbill	14 + calls, difficult to see, takes time.
White-rumped Cuckooshrike	4
Sooty-headed Bulbul	5
Black-naped Oriole	3, <i>celebensis</i> .
Sulawesi Drongo	3
Ivory-backed Wood Swallow	70, roost in the area.
Grosbeak Starling	6

IN RETROSPECT

All in all, North Sulawesi was a positive experience, not least because of the good people whom I happened to meet there. The birds were unique and spectacular, and provided the excitement of discovery. Each site added more and more species to a steadily increasing list of Sulawesi endemics. In regard to swiftlets, the literature appears quite confused, stating that neither **Uniform** nor **Sulawesi Swiftlets** occur in the Minahassa Peninsula, even though countless mid-sized swiftlets are there. I hope my to some degree guesstimate swiftlet identifications have not been quite as confused as the main references in the field! The swiftlets are difficult...

I also hope the report has encouraged you to travel there by yourself. Fly with Garuda Indonesia, if possible, or take the Silkair connection from Singapore. It would be easy to combine Sulawesi with other Indonesian, Malaysian and/or Filipino destinations, too. Make sure to reward people you can trust. I will certainly go there for a second visit, if somehow possible. With the current situation in Finland, and its reflections on my personal life, it is nothing but guaranteed, but as long as there is life, there is hope.

Good luck with your visit in North Sulawesi!



Fig. 10. Departure area, at the modern Manado International Airport. Indonesia has recently invested in its airports.

