



West Papua 25 Jan – 4 Feb 2026

My wife is a keen diver and so when she announced plans on a trip to Raja Ampat in West Papua, Indonesia, I thought this would be an excellent the opportunity to also find the Western Long Beaked echidna (*Zaglossus bruijnii*).

Long beaked echidnas are popular animals in my household. As a youngster visiting the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, one of the highlights for me was seeing JR, the Eastern Long Beaked echidna in the nocturnal house. Such a cool animal. Happily JR is still alive, over 60, and now my kids (all young adults) are as big a fan as I.

Suddenly Mum's diving trip had now been free loaded on by myself, a son and our daughter.

Anyway we flew into Sorong, West Papua after a 4 hour flight from Jakarta. From there we then spent the week on the island of Kri (around a 2 hour boat ride). To go to Kri is essentially all about scuba diving. We stayed at the Kri Eco Resort which was comfortable.

While I don't mind diving, I was really there to find a Waigeo cuscus. Day one the dive instructor made all the new guests at lunch receive a detailed (zzzzzz) briefing on the dive sites. Two Italian guests spied a mammal outside as she was talking and immediately myself, son and daughter were out of the classroom to see what it was. School had not been dismissed however, and we were told to take our chairs. Grrrr!!

Fortunately, upon tedious dive brief completion and, having avoided further detention, we were able to track down the mammal. A **Waigeo cuscus**! Turns out, of course, it always comes around at lunch to see if there is a spare banana or three.



Waigeo Cuscus loving a handout

Our stay on Kri was mostly diving and during the boat rides to the sites we saw **Omura's whale** and a **dugong** (allegedly).

On land, Kri had more than expected. Waigeo cuscus was easily seen at night and with the thermal scope we found a **Northern common cuscus**. There was also plenty micro bats and rats around the accommodation but I couldn't get an identification. Suspect the latter was *rattus rattus*.

While staying at Kri we also did a trip to Waigeo Island to see Wilson's bird of paradise. A boat ride and then several kms of hiking into the jungle to a hide overlooking their display area. We were at the hide before dawn, and with the thermal I spied a large stout rat. We had good views through the scope but annoying twitchers in the hide prevented me from bringing out the spot light for an ID. It could also have been a bandicoot (*echymipera*) but while it was around the same size, it had a rounder face.



Northern Common Cuscus

From Kri, we returned to Sorong for the main aim of the trip; finding a Zaglossus. We were met at the dock by our guide for the next few days, Laode from Raja Ampat Herping www.rajaampatherping.com

Finding a guide initially had not been straight forward. I had reached out first to the other local contacts previously used on this website, as well as a couple of birding companies, all to no avail.

Fortunately, I found Laode at Raja Ampat Herping through the internet. He was immediately responsive and came up with an itinerary and logistics to get us to Klalik, in the Vogelkop of West Papua.

Laode had organised a 4WD, Andi a Papuan guide and home stay with the village. It all worked fabulously well. I recommend them.

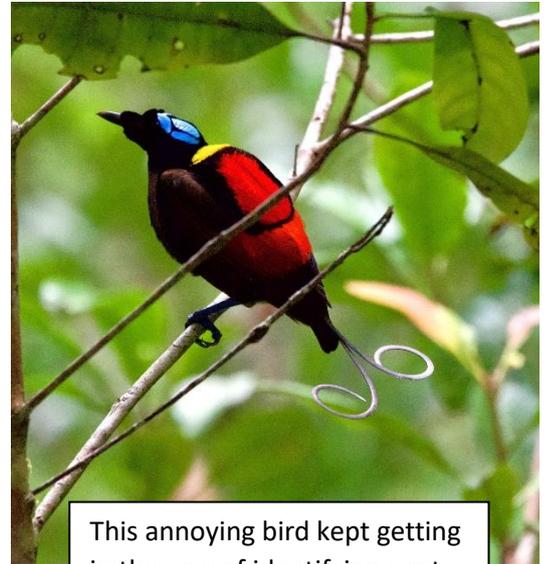
The road into Klalik is a little sketchy with planks across creeks etc. But it seemed safe enough and we got into the village after around a three-hour drive.

Klalik is really at the end of a road into the jungle. The people are great hosts and tremendously proud of the creatures in their forest and particularly the echidna. Accommodation is a basic homestay but comfortable enough. (they are currently making a purpose built lodge). There is a mobile tower, so despite the remoteness you can contact the outside world. The food was great and expertly prepared by a couple of the local women.

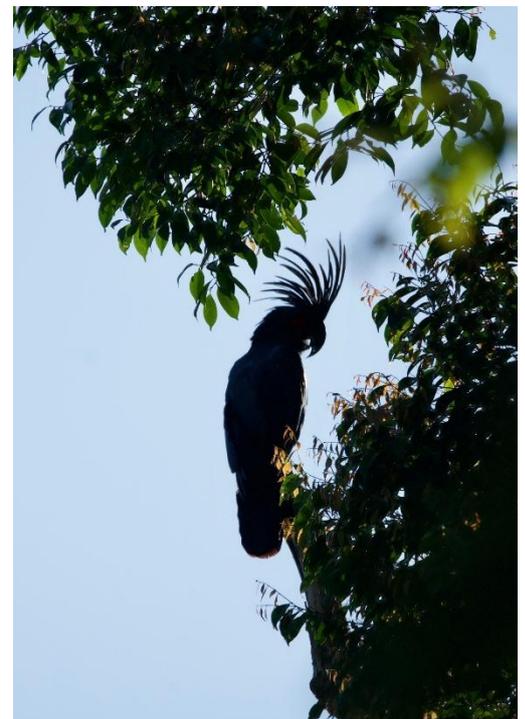
On arrival in Klalik we were welcomed by the locals. There had not been another visitor since late December and they were glad to see us. We had lunch and then set off for a hike around the forest with guides from the village. The bird life is exceptional (if you like that sort of thing). We saw Palm cockatoos, red bird of paradise, eclectus parrots, Papuan pitta and Blythe hornbill to name a few.

That evening we set off after dinner to search for our long beaked echidna. A number of local guides came from the village to help, and they informed us they usually would find it by 9 – 10 pm. By 2am we still hadn't found it. Still, we had found a bunch of interesting stuff; snakes, lizards, frogs and various sleeping birds. On the mammal front we had good views of **dark sheathed tailed bats**, **tube nosed bats**, and a couple of bandicoots (**common echymipera**). The next day we started early exploring new forest, but still no echidna. The birds were prolific but only a **big eared flying fox** was disturbed. On our last night in Klalik, it seemed half the village turned out to help us find our quarry. We started off well with a possible spot of a **Bruijins pogonomelomys**, another **echymipera** and a bunch more **sheath tailed bats** on roosting on leaves. I picked up a **common northern cuscus** with the thermal scope and then we found a **long fingered triok**, ticking off one of the big attractions. By 1am we began to wane and Laode suggested we turn in and they would continue and wake us if they found something. Sadly no call came. The next morning our disappointment on not finding the echidna seemed equally shared by the village. We felt very humbled that many of them had continued to search until dawn.

One last hike in the jungle before the drive back to Sorong and plane the next morning to Jakarta and then onto Sydney.



This annoying bird kept getting in the way of identifying a rat



Palm cockatoo

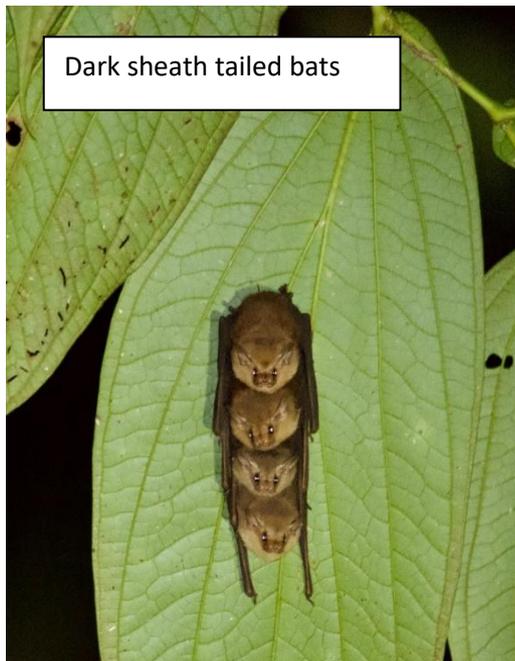
It's now been a few weeks, and not finding the echidna is still raw. Jon Hall very kindly sent me a list of mental health crisis lines. Well maybe not that raw 😊

Andi, a week later sent my kids some footage of one that he found several days after our visit – arghh!!! Its amazing how many people have since asked us if we found it – so at the very least we have raised the profile of the Western Long Beaked echidna.

Would we go back – of course. I need to get that echidna off my back!

Murray Thompson

1 March 2026



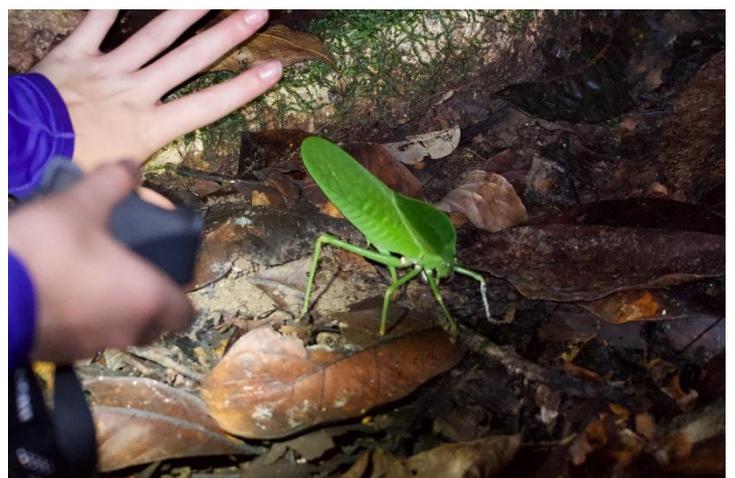
Dark sheath tailed bats



Long fingered triok (shot is a contender for the Pulitzer prize for photography)



Tube nosed bat



Not an echidna – but a cool bug. I've never seen a larger katydid