

# ODE TO TIM FISHER

A BIRDING TRIP TO MINDANAO. HOW IT WENT I'LL TELL YOU NOW.  
FIRST, THE PUNTERS ON THIS JOLLY, THE ONES THAT FORKED OUT ALL THE LOLLY.  
STARTING WITH THE FAMILY STEVENS, THEN, OF COURSE, THERE WERE THE LEVENS.  
THEIR MATE AL WAS THERE AS WELL, 'HOOTS MON THE NOO JOCK, WHO'S YA PAL?'  
TO LEAD THIS BAND YOU COULDN'T WISH A BETTER MAN THAN OLD TIM FISHER.  
LOCAL BIRDER OF RENOWN, SOME TWENTY YEARS HE'S BEEN IN TOWN,  
WITH TAPE AND MICROPHONE IN HAND, HE IS THE BEST ONE IN THE LAND.

AND SO TO START THIS EPIC THRILLER, WE GOT TOGETHER IN MANILA.  
0500 WAS THE FLIGHT, I BET WE LOOKED A SORRY SIGHT.  
TOO MUCH BEER, AN ACHING HEAD, AND ONLY JUST 3 HOURS IN BED.  
STILL, UP WE GOT (I'M NOT SURE HOW), AND OFF WE FLEW TO MINDANAO.

CAGAYAN D'ORO THE FIRST STOP, JUST AN HOUR OR SO'S HOP,  
WHERE A WAITING VAN WE HAD, TO DRIVE US ALL TO KITANGLAD.

THEN WE'RE OFF! A FOUR HOUR DRIVE; A CHICKEN FARM WE DID ARRIVE.  
THEN THERE WAS A 2 HOUR HIKE (I REALLY WISHED I'D BROUGHT MY BIKE)  
BUT IT COULD BE WORSE -- OF COURSE -- THE BAGS WERE CARRIED UP BY HORSE!  
AND AT THE TOP, WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT ON -- A WOODEN SHED -- THE FISHER HILTON!

OUT WE WENT, WITHOUT DELAY, "LET'S TICK THE EAGLE OFF TODAY"  
NOT EVEN TIME TO GET A BOOK OUT, WE'RE HEADING OFF TO FIND THE LOOKOUT.  
AND ONCE THERE, AT TIM'S BEHEST, WE FOUND A YOUNG ONE ON THE NEST.  
ECSTATIC NOISES COULD BE HEARD, LIKE "OOOH" AND "AHHH" AND "WHAT A BIRD!"  
THEN MOST SILENT WE DID KEEP, WHILE TIM LAY DOWN AND HAD A SLEEP.

DAY ONE OVER, T'WAS GREAT FUN, -- NOW LET'S GO AND DRINK THE RUM.  
BUT WHAT'S THIS? WILL TIM WE THROTTLE? WE COULD ONLY FIND ONE BOTTLE.  
"DON'T PANIC LADS, I'VE THOUGHT THIS THROUGH, WE HAVE ANOTHER ONE OR TWO".  
"ONE OR TWO?" WE SAID WITH SORROW, "WHAT WE GONNA DRINK TOMORROW?"  
SO, TO GET HIM FROM THIS FIX, TIM SENT OUT FOR BOTTLES SIX.  
AND, BECAUSE HE WAS SO FRISKY, MIKE DUG OUT HIS SCOTTISH WHISKY.

"WHAT TIME TOMORROW SHALL WE START?", SAID PETER, WITH A HAPPY HEART.  
HE WAS BROUGHT UP WITH A START --- WHEN FISHER SAID "AT SPARROW'S FART".

SO BREAKFAST AT HALF FOUR WAS TAKEN, TEA AND COFFEE, EGGS AND BACON,  
AND OFF WE WENT, BUT TIME WAS TIGHT, IT'S ALREADY FAR TOO LIGHT.  
"KNOW TOMORROW WHAT WE'LL DO? WE'LL START AT SPARROW'S FART, LESS TWO"

ALL DAY SPENT ON LOWER BITS, WITH LOTS OF BIRDS, AND SEVERAL TITS.

AND AFTER QUITE AN EASY HIKE, WE SAW MCGREGOR'S CUCKOOSHRIKE.  
WITH ALL THE BIRDS I WON'T ADORN THIS, -- EXCEPT TO SAY WE SAW RHABDORNIS -  
SEVERAL FANTAILS AND, MUCH BETTER, CRIPPLING VIEWS OF PYGMY 'PECKER.  
JUST WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GO WE ALSO SAW THE COLETO.

LUNCH WAS DISPATCHED BY THE COOK OUT -- INTO THE FIELD, THE EAGLE LOOKOUT.  
THERE WE HAD A HEARTY NIBBLE, WHILST OUR LEADER SNORED AND DRIBBLED.  
BACK TO CAMP LATE AFTERNOON, A SHOWER COULDN'T COME TOO SOON.  
ALTHOUGH IT NEVER WAS TOO PLEASIN', 'CAUSE THE WATER'S BLOODY FREEZIN',  
(EXCEPT FOR TIM, HE CAN'T BE BEAT, FOR HIM THE WATER THEY DID HEAT!)

EVENING CAME, WE WENT FOR BROKE, 'WHO CAN DRINK MOST RUM AND COKE?'  
AND ALTHOUGH IT WAS QUITE EVEN, THE CHAMPION WAS MICHAEL LEVEN.  
ALAN SAID HE'D HAD A WORSE DAY, BUT NOT A BAD PLACE FOR A BIRTHDAY.

AND, BEFORE YOU CALL THE COPS, I'D BETTER MENTION GIANT SCOPS.  
ALMOST NIGHTLY DID IT CALL --- BUT COULD WE SEE IT? --- NOT AT ALL!  
WE COULDN'T GET IT ON THE LIST,--- ONE OF VERY FEW WE MISSED.  
NIGHTJARS WE HAD IN ABUNDANCE, --- BUT WITH THE WOODCOCK HAD JUST ONE CHANCE  
OF GOOD VIEWS. QUITE A HIGHLIGHT, FLYING BY LIT BY THE SPOTLIGHT.

THE NEXT MORNING, TRUE TO WORD, WE GOT UP AT TIME ABSURD.  
TIM SAID THAT IT WOULDN'T HURT ME --- TO GET UP AROUND 3.30.  
AT 4'O'CLOCK WE WENT OWLING -- BY 4.30 WE WERE PROWLING.....  
IN THE DARK, THROUGH SOGGY GRASS, VERY NEARLY ON MY ARSE.  
THEN, AT DAWN, THERE'S NOT MUCH FINER THAN TO SEE AN APO MYNA.  
BUT IF YOU THINK THAT ONE'S A 'WISHER', YOU SHOULD SEE HOMBRON'S KINGFISHER!

UP AND UP, RIGHT TO THE TOP --- IT MUST SOON BE TIME TO STOP!  
THEN, HALF WAY UP, A SIGHT TO THRILL ALL, --- AN ADULT EAGLE WITH A SQUIRREL.

IN LITTLE BROWN JOBS TIM'S A DABBLER, BUT WE DIDN'T SEE BAGOBO BABBLER!  
DESPITE TIM'S VERY BEST ENDEAVOURS, WE DIDN'T EVEN FIND THE FEATHERS!  
HOUR ON HOUR SPENT ON ARSES, SENSES TENSE, HANDS ON GLASSES.  
AND WHEN IT SEEMED THE TIME WAS BEST, WE THEN DISTURBED A HORNETS NEST.  
STUNG AND STUNG (AND STUNG AGAIN) I REALLY DON'T REMEMBER WHEN  
I'D SEEN TIM FISHER MOVE SO FAST, LIKE A ROCKET UP HIS ARSE.

(THEN WE WENT TO PICOP)

A LONG, LONG HOT 10 HOUR DAY, WITH JUST A QUICK STOP ON THE WAY,  
NOT A ROAD I'D LIKE TO DRIVE, AND THEN AT BISLIG LATE ARRIVED.  
THE PAPER COUNTRY INN WE STAYED, AND HIT THE BAR WITHOUT DELAY.  
DESPITE THE THIRST AND RUM A PLENTY, WE WERE TO GET UP AT 03.20,

SO OFF TO BED WITH NO CONTRITION, (FOR THE ROOMS WERE AIRCONDITIONED)  
WHEN WE AWOKE, OH WHAT A PAIN, IT WAS POURING DOWN WITH RAIN.  
BUT OLD TIM FISHER WAS IN HEAVEN, SO OFF WE WENT AT 4.07.

ITS 5'O' CLOCK AT PICOP'S JUNCTION, ALL FINDING IT QUITE HARD TO FUNCTION,  
STILL RAINING HARD SO WE TOOK SHELTER ---, UNDER A HUT, ALL HELTER SKELTER.  
NOT TOO LONG HAD WE TO WAIT BEFORE THE RAIN IT DID ABATE,  
NEITHER DID WE HAVE TO GO FAR, TO SEE AND HEAR THE LONG-EARED NIGHTJAR.  
A MOURNFUL CALLING WAS THEN HEARD --- . 'AH HA' SAID TIM, 'I KNOW THAT BIRD'  
'WHERE'S THE TAPE? I DO RECALL, THAT IS THE CALL OF A COUCAL'  
AND HE WAS RIGHT! --- OH WHAT A SIGHT -- TWO BLACK-FACED ONES, JUST THERE, IN FLIGHT.  
AND -- JUST AS WE HAD HAD OUR FILL --- ACROSS THE ROAD -- TWO WRITHED HORNBILL.

WHAT A START! WHAT A DAY! AND OFF WE WENT ALONG THE WAY.  
"YOU KNOW?" SAID AL "THERE'S NO' MUCH BETTER THAN NOW TO SEE A SEXY PITTA".

RED-BREASTED CALLING, QUITE A NEAR BIRD.  
"RIGHT" SAID PETE, "THEN THAT'S THE BEER BIRD!"

INTO THE FOREST WE DID GO -- JUST LIKE THOSE DWARVES, 'HI HO, HI HO'.  
WE SETTLED DOWN AND PLAYED THE CALL; WITH BATED BREATH, ONE AND ALL.  
THEN OUT IT HOPPED INTO THE LIGHT ----- IN ALL THE WORLD THERE'S NOT A SIGHT  
SO WONDERFUL; SO FULL OF RED. I THOUGHT THAT I MIGHT DROP DOWN DEAD!

FOR ALAN, THOUGH, IT WAS MUCH WORSE. IN PITTA TERMS THIS WAS HIS FIRST.  
FOR ME AND HIM IT WAS QUITE CLEAR -- LETS BUGGER OFF AND GET THAT BEER!

DURING LUNCH, JUST BYE THE BYE, WE SAW A LITTLE SLATY FLY .....  
AND A RUFIOUS PARADISE, -----A LOVELY BIRD,----- SO VERY NICE.

BUT THEN A BIRD TO FLIP THE STOMACH ---- FANTASTIC SIGHT! CELESTIAL MONARCH!  
ITS CALL SO CLEAR AND SO DISTINCT --- JUST THINK THEY THOUGHT IT ONCE EXTINCT.

TIM SAID 'OH, AND BY THE WAY, THAT'S THE BEST BIRD OF THE DAY'  
'ITS BEATS, BUT ONLY BY A SMIDGIN, THE PINK BELLIED IMPERIAL PIGEON'  
'OH' I THOUGHT ' THE ONE THAT I LOVE IS THE YELLOW BREASTED FRUIT DOVE'  
NOT TO MENTION GUAIBERO. BUT YOU KNOW TIM, HE'S SUCH A HERO.

AS I SAID, THE DAY WAS HOT, BUT DIDN'T SAY THAT IT WAS NOT  
WITHOUT GOOD BIRDS. ----- FOR SO TO SAY WOULD BE ABSURD  
ON THE DAY THAT LEADER FISHER GOT US ALL SILV'RY KINGFISHER.

A LOVELY BIRD, AND RIGHT ON CUE, ONTO A LOG, STRAIGHT IN IT FLEW.  
BLACK AND WHITE, SO VERY SWEET, WITH SUCH CRIMSON LEGS AND FEET.  
I DON'T WANT TO SOUND TOO FLIP, BUT 'T WAS THE BEST BIRD OF THE TRIP.

SATURDAY, BECAUSE HE CAN, TIM TOOK US UP TO PASIAN.  
UP LOGGING ROADS, THRU' POURING RAIN, I THOUGHT THE EPISODE INSANE.  
UP WE WENT, ALONG THE TRAIL (DID I MENTION THE SPINETAIL?)  
THROUGH BITS OF FOREST STILL QUITE REGAL, WHEN SUDDENLY UP POPS AN EAGLE  
TIM'S EXCITED (NOT QUITE IN TEARS), HE'S NOT SEEN ONE UP THERE IN YEARS.

ON AND UP, RIGHT TO THE TOP, AND ONCE THERE -- TO GROUND WE FLOP,  
FOR WE HOPE TO SEE THE ONE BIRD -- THAT WE'VE COME FOR -- LINA'S SUNBIRD.  
BUT THAT'S NOT VERY HARD TO DO, FOR RIGHT IN FRONT OF US ARE TWO!

SO IT DAWNED, ON THE LAST DAY, AT 0'CHRIST HUNDRED WE'RE AWAY,  
ALONG THE ROAD WE DID STOP -- FOR SERPENT EAGLE (LOTS OF SPOTS),  
A TRERON POMPADORA TOO, PLUS A VIOLET CUCKOO.

I DON'T THINK I'VE MENTIONED YET, LOTS OF SCARLET MINIVET,  
AND ANOTHER FOR THE TRIP TICKS, SEVERAL HORNBILLS, TARICTIC  
ANOTHER BIRD WE SHOULDN'T MISS, ORTHOTOMUS FRONTALIS!  
AND SO FINALLY, BY GUM, JAVAN POND HERON AT TAGUM.

SO THAT BRINGS ME TO THE END ----- OF THIS TALE OF BIRDS, AND FRIENDS.  
A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL, TOO MANY LAUGHS HERE TO RECALL.  
UPS AND DOWNS, AS IN LIFE, BUT NEVER ANY WORDS OF STRIFE.

**POST SCRIPT** (24.07.2011)

AFTER THIS TRIP WE HAD A PLAN TO MEET AGAIN IN PALAWAN,  
MIKE, LIZ AND PETE, TIM FISHER TOO -----AND MAYBE EVEN SOME OF YOU.  
BUT SAD TO SAY WE ARE TOO LATE, FOR TIM IS GONE, SUCH WAS HIS FATE.

**JUST KNOWING HIM MADE MY LIFE RICHER ---- LET'S HOPE HE FINDS THAT GOD'S A TWITCHER!**