



*Newly arrived Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfishers were a grand finale to the Birdquest Eastern Australia tour 2016 (Andy Jensen)*

# **EASTERN AUSTRALIA**

**20 OCTOBER – 9 NOVEMBER 2016**

**LEADER: ANDREW JENSEN**

Eastern Australia is a highly diverse region with a range of habitats hosting a rich and varied avifauna. This tour covered a wide range of these habitats as is possible in three weeks, including eucalypt woodland, wet forests and sandstone country around Sydney, pelagic waters and coastal estuary around Newcastle, upland beech forest in northern New South Wales, rainforest in southeast Queensland, mangrove and dry sclerophyll around Brisbane and the tremendous diversity of habitats the Wet Tropics of north Queensland has to offer.

As is often the way with these trips, the weather plays a huge part in influencing the birds seen. Even conditions leading up to the trip exert an influence, inland rains earlier in the year resulting in waterfowl and many other species deserting the coastal strip, - however we did very well for these species, albeit in much reduced numbers. Despite conditions every leader dreads at Barren Grounds in New South Wales (wind and rain) we cleaned up at that site, and we successfully located the very restricted range Eungella Honeyeater through the dense cloud in central Queensland. Conditions ranged from around 1c around the higher parts of New South Wales, to sweltering in 37c heat waiting for finches to come in to drink in north Queensland, and by and large we were blessed with pleasant weather, enabling us to bird at most times, aside from the odd break in the middle of the day.

Three weeks offered a whistlestop tour of these habitats and the special birds they have to offer, and we recorded a tremendous total of 364 species (five heard only) in the three weeks. The trip started with a bang in Sydney with eye to eye views of a roosting Powerful Owl in Sydney, views of Rock Warbler (New South Wales' only endemic species) often too close to focus the camera on, cracking views of Bassian Thrush, Square-tailed Kite and Superb Lyrebird on the outskirts of Sydney all on the first day. The pace did not let up, with subsequent days bringing the specialities of the sandstone escarpment country, including great views of Pilotbird, Eastern Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristlebird and Southern Emu-wren – all traditionally skulkers - despite the conditions, and the birds came thick and fast in the iconic Capertee Valley including Plum-headed Finch, Crested Shrike Tit and Turquoise Parrot.

On to the central coast of New South Wales and as always the pelagic was a highlight of the trip, with three species of albatross and a number of other tubenoses seen. On land we had breathtaking views of Lewin's Rail, one of the hardest species to see well in Australia. North of Newcastle, the beech forests of Gloucester Tops provided a few local specialities including Red-browed Treecreeper, the delightful Flame Robin, Olive Whistler, and for a lucky few brief views of probably Australia's most elusive species, the Rufous Scrub-bird.

Having exhausted what New South Wales had to offer, it was on to Queensland, Australia's most bird rich state. The world-famous O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat proved to be a jam-packed couple of days, with all its specialities seen well, including Paradise Riflebird, the gaudy Regent Bowerbird and Noisy Pitta, fantastic views of two squabbling Albert's Lyrebird, often a hard bird to track down here, and Marbled Frogmouth, surely a candidate to be split from the Marbled Frogmouth of far north Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

Around Brisbane and southeast Queensland, key species such as Beach Stone Curlew, Mangrove Honeyeater, Grass Owl and Large-tailed Nightjar were all recorded. A short-stop off in central Queensland provided the restricted range endemic Eungella Honeyeater.

Finally it was on to the wet tropics of north Queensland – Australia's most bird rich region, where all the wet tropics endemics and more were seen including Victoria's Riflebird, Golden Bowerbird, Blue-faced Parrot-finch, Red-necked Crake, Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, Black-throated Finch, Lesser Sooty Owl and Southern Cassowary.

Throughout the trip, iconic Aussie species such as Laughing Kookaburra, Black Swan, Emu, Galah, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and Tawny Frogmouth all did not disappoint and showed incredibly well for the photographers. As well as the obviously very special birds, many special Australian mammal species were seen, including both its monotremes (egg laying mammals) – the Platypus and Echidna – and around Cairns, the fabulous Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo, a reminder of the close links of this region to Papua New Guinea.

The group assembled in Sydney in the afternoon and evening of 20 October, and met in the lobby of the hotel – it was already dark, but introductions made and plans formed for the next day, The first birds of the trip were still recorded – a pair of Welcome Swallow nesting above the security light next to the lobby!

Dawn the following day, and the group assembled eagerly in the carpark as it started to get light, before we took the short drive to our first birding in the nearby Royal National Park. There was a sense of relief for Andy in that the weather was markedly better than the previous tour in 2014 when heavy rain and floods had cut off access to the park!

All of the group had been to Australia at some stage before, however despite this the drive to the first stop at the Wattle Forest was punctuated with a few stops for roadside birds, although there was no need for such focus on some of the really common species! We arrived at the parking area and began the walk into the area of riverine forest in which we would hopefully find our target species. Many birds were calling around the car park area, and newly arrived summer migrants in the Sydney area; Sacred Kingfisher, Dollarbird, Spotted Pardalote and Olive-backed Oriole all showed well.



*Always popular, a stunning little Spotted Pardalote showed well in the Royal National Park (Andy Jensen)*

Along the Hacking River, the call of an Azure Kingfisher was heard and a flash of blue darted past us and thankfully settled on a branch in the channel for some views. A second bird was also seen.

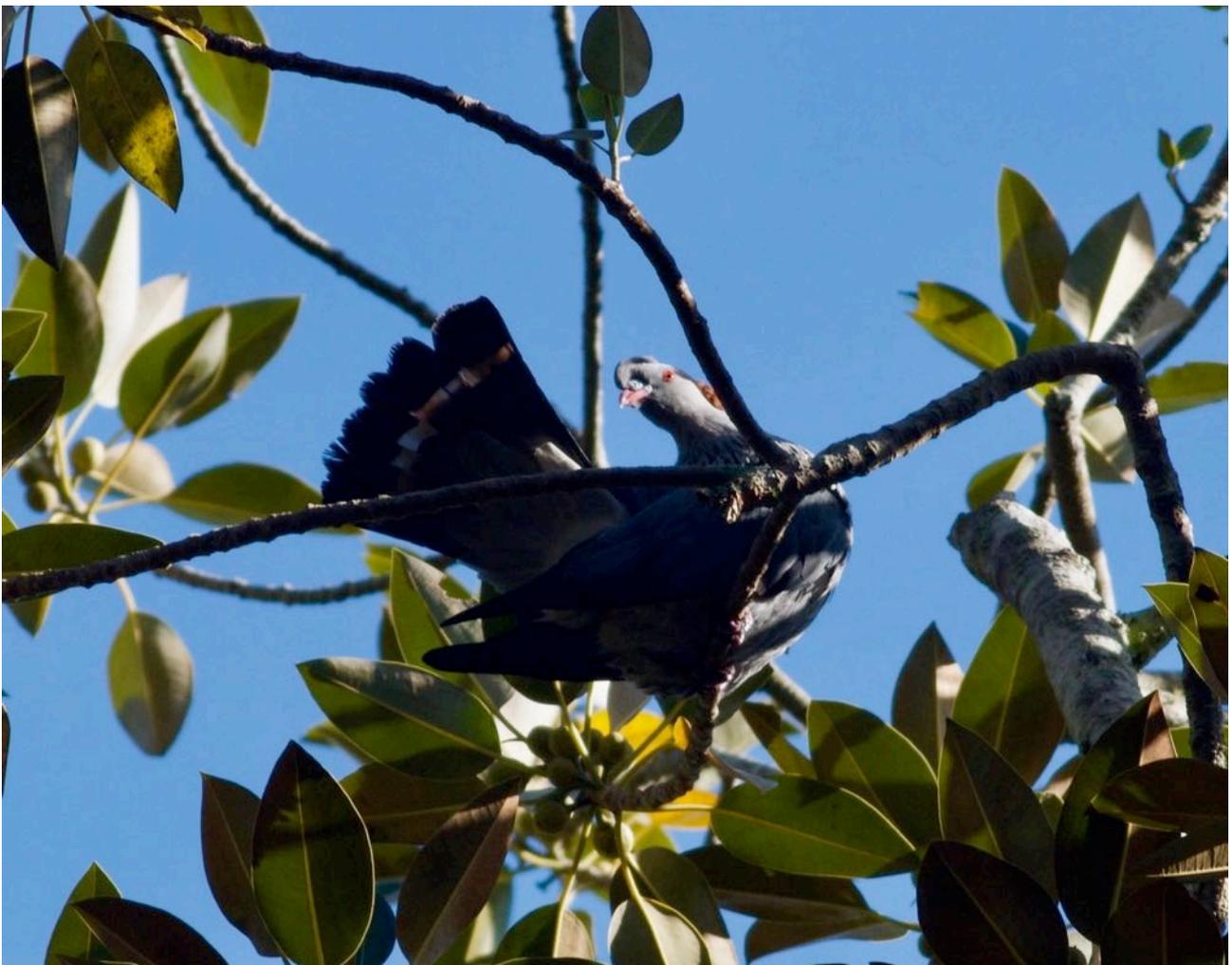
On the edge of the riparian forest, our first target was spotted before we had even got into the habitat – a normally skulking Bassian Thrush feeding on the edge of the scrub, unconcerned by our presence. Great views were enjoyed, and an additional two birds were seen further into the forest.

We continued further into the forest, and the distinctive calls of another target were heard – Green Catbird’s call really needs no explanation – it does what it says on the tin! Eventually a small group were tracked down and were popular with the group. They were less popular with the local bird populations as they feed on the eggs and young of many species. A couple of female/immature Satin Bowerbirds were also seen, but the males would have to wait for another day. Black-faced Monarchs were also found – another newly arrived summer migrant in the area.

Soon the rich and varied song of our main target here, Superb Lyrebird, was heard, and we eventually tracked one down in the dense undergrowth, but good views were obtained before it ran off up the slope never to be seen again.

Further species noted for the first time included King Parrot, Eastern Spinebill, Brown Gerygone, Grey Fantail, Grey Shrike-thrush, and the bizarre Channel-billed Cuckoo, a bird like a flying umbrella stand! On the river, Australian Wood Duck, Great, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants and Australian Swamphens were all recorded.

We crossed the river and began a short walk down Lady Carrington Drive to try a slightly more open area of woodland. A group of Topknot Pigeons were feeding on fruit in the trees of the car park, along with further Satin Bowerbirds, and the first Shining Bronze Cuckoo was seen.



*A group of the bizarre looking Topknot Pigeon fed in a fruiting tree in the car park (Andy Jensen)*

Shortly into the walk, the local cockatoos and corellas were heard making a racket – usually a good sign a raptor is about. Sure enough a bird was spotted quartering the ridge line over the river – lifting the binoculars

and expecting a Whistling Kite, or at best a Little Eagle, Andy was stunned to see the distinctive pale head and barred wingtips of a Square-tailed Kite – a raptor that was by no means guaranteed on the tour was the first raptor of the trip!

We watched it for some time as it worked the ridgeline, looking for an unsuspecting prey item in the treetops before it drifted out of view.

The walk down Lady Carrington Drive bought more of the species seen on the other side of the river, but Wonga Pigeon (a very attractive pigeon), Striated Thornbill and a distant group of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo were all added to the rapidly expanding trip list.

It was soon time for a change of tack though, as we had seen all there was to see in this habitat. We moved on a short distance to the sandstone seacliffs of the National Park, where hopefully a few new species could be found. New Holland Honeyeaters and Little Wattlebirds were common in the heath here, and after a short walk admiring the scenery of the seacliffs we reached our destination on the headland.



*The magnificent scenery of the Royal National Park – but there was no time to stop – birds to be seen (Andy Jensen)*

Initially there was no sign of the hoped for target – Rock Warbler – and none could be heard either. Eventually though a couple could be heard singing from further down the cliff face from the viewpoint. Thankfully to avert a potential health and safety issue, the birds came further up the cliff, and soon were performing fantastically at point blank range right in front of us. Too close to get the camera on at times!



*A New South Wales endemic, Rock Warbler, came too close to focus at times on the sea cliffs! (Andy Jensen)*

Buoyed by our success, and with views of the Rock Warbler that couldn't be bettered we headed back to the cars, and started on the drive into the Sydney CBD, and a parkland, hopefully to see a special resident of the park – Powerful Owl. Unfortunately leading up to the trip news was not promising – the male had been found dead, hit by a car, and the young in the nest was also suspected to be dead. The remaining female bird had left its normal roosts also.

During a bit of scouting the previous day, Andy had located the female bird in one of its favoured roost sites. With high hopes that the bird would still be in the same tree today, it was nevertheless a great relief to be greeted with the same set of piercing eyes looking down from the tree right above. It seemed like the local possums had been safe the previous night as it was not clutching the remains of the previous night's prey as they are often want to do. She sat there quietly as the group enjoyed great views of this magnificent owl, before we retired off for lunch in the nearby café, stopping first to admire a pair of Channel-billed Cuckoo sat in a nearby treetop.



*Its easy to see how this Powerful Owl got its name – as the possum population of Sydney would attest (Andy Jensen)*

Another nocturnal bird was also located in the park, with a family group of Tawny Frogmouths found at their day roost. The adults were obviously well used to people and remained asleep the whole time – the two young were a lot more alert and aware of their surroundings and kept an eye open to see what was going on.

Also in the park, a few Chestnut Teal were seen, although the ponds were remarkably quiet – further evidence of the exodus of wildfowl normally on the coast to inland areas to breed, taking advantage of the great conditions caused by the rains earlier in the year. Normally large numbers of Grey Teal, Hardhead and Coot would be on these ponds – today, nothing. A White-faced Heron, Darter, some Black Swans, Australian Pelicans and Silver Gulls were all seen but nothing particularly of note.



*A family of Tawny Frogmouths - with Dad just out of shot (Andy Jensen)*

We then travelled back south to Royal National Park, before the inevitable Sydney rush hour traffic halted our progress. Next on the agenda was an area of heathland to try for a few of its specialities. Initially just large numbers of New Holland Honeyeaters were recorded, but a large raptor was also seen – another Square-tailed Kite! This bird was a lot more fleeting in its appearance and was soon lost to view.

Carrying on down the firetrail, eventually two of our targets were found. Firstly a pair of Beautiful Firetail – an attractive little finch which were possibly nesting. Further on, the thin reedy calls of a Southern Emu-wren were heard, and most of the group had good views of this skulking species.

Dusk was drawing in, so after a long day, we retired back to the accommodation and dinner, to reflect on a successful day.

It was an early start the following day, to be on site at Barren Grounds for first light. The forecast was not promising with wind and rain predicted, and indeed the drive down in the dark was an unpleasant one. These are conditions the leader dreads at Barren Grounds – visits here in wet and windy weather are often barren in terms of species seen.

Barren Grounds is an area of heathland and woodland on a sandstone plateau. The site was so named by settling farmers who found the soils too impoverished to grow crops upon. This was fortunate for the local ecology however, and the result today is a wonderful rich heathland area full of native flowers, and a bird community which includes a few scarce species hard to see elsewhere.

We arrived at first light and it was still drizzling and generally murky with poor visibility. It would be a day when the camera would stay in the bag one suspects or risk an expensive day with some camera repairs for some poor record shots in the murk!

We sat in the vehicle waiting for the light to improve a little, the overcast conditions not helping. As we waited though the dawn chorus was getting into full swing, and close to the vehicle was a calling Pilotbird! This was too good an opportunity to miss, so we all got out and soon a Pilotbird was working its way back and forth close in front of us along the edge of the track. We enjoyed good views in the early morning light, before the bird moved off deeper in to the undergrowth, as is typical for this skulking species.

While we were watching the Pilotbird a Superb Lyrebird could be heard calling nearby and we were treated to a brief glimpse as it crossed the track, before disappearing off.

Having seen the target Pilotbird so early on, we continued the short distance further up the track to try for some of Barren Grounds heathland specialities. The view when we got there was not promising – low cloud and rain.



*The scene that greeted us at Barren Grounds – low cloud, wet and wind picking up - this could be hard work... (Andy Jensen)*

Barren Grounds is famous for its population of Eastern Bristlebirds. This site holds a significant proportion of the population of this threatened species. A shy and cryptic species, it sometimes shows well on the edge of the heathland in the short grass alongside the fire trails at Barren Grounds, on calm, sunny days – today was not such a day!

We walked a short distance from the carpark and after a couple of minutes the distinctive explosive call could be heard by the start of the track – surely we couldn't be so lucky. After a short while pinpointing the

source of the sound (they can be effective ventriloquists) soon an Eastern Bristlebird was seen working in the short grass on the edge of the denser vegetation. With patience, the whole group got great views as it moved up and down the heathland edge, before dashing across the path like a miniature roadrunner to the dense vegetation the other side. The relief was palpable – the main target seen within a few minutes and despite the conditions.

After further views of the bristlebird we continued on the track to see what else Barren Grounds had to offer. Birding was tough as predicted, with constant low cloud making viewing even the treetops hard, and occasional spells of rain. Despite this Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Black-faced Monarch, Striated Thornbill, New Holland Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill were all recorded in small numbers. Another Bassian Thrush was also seen.



*Fan-tailed Cuckoos were very vocal on the heath (Andy Jensen)*

Further Eastern Bristlebird could be heard calling and at one productive spot, tracking down the calls of Varied Sitella resulted in views of one or two birds – an odd looking bird similar to a nuthatch that can climb down tree trunks as well as up. Also here the thin reedy calls of Southern Emu-wren were heard, and we eventually got good views of a pair of this species. This species is relatively abundant in these heathland habitats, but never easy to see and the views obtained were a treat for this species. So named after their wispy, emu-like tail feathers, this species is reluctant to fly and has a weak flight and can be vulnerable to bush fires.

The weather was starting to close in further, and having seen the bristlebird and other heathland specialities either here or at Royal National Park the day before, we decided to retire back to Kiama to check in to our accommodation and have some lunch, in the hope the weather would clear up by the afternoon as forecast.

The drive down to Kiama was eventful to say the least – almost immediately after leaving Barren Grounds we had great, albeit brief views, of a Superb Lyrebird by the roadside, before it vanished into somebody's garden! Continuing down the mountain and into more open grazing country, a roadside raptor proved to be a Spotted Harrier. Very much a bonus bird given that species such as this were largely in inland Australia currently taking advantage of the boom conditions there, and there were very few recent coastal records. Sadly it did not hang about, but waiting to see if it returned was worthwhile, with a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle, two Long-billed Corella, a group of Eastern Rosella and some Red Wattlebirds feeding on flowering bottlebrush plants all new for the trip. Less excitingly for the Europeans on the trip, a Eurasian Goldfinch was also seen – one of many sadly introduced species in Australia, although this one is rather benign compared to the damage caused by many of the others.

After reaching Kiama, checking in, drying off and feeding up, we headed back up the mountain to see if conditions had improved at all. We walked the same track at Barren Grounds, with the cloud having lifted a little and the rain eased. The range of species were similar, and mid afternoon not a great time to be looking. That said, we bumped into an Echidna right on the path, which proceeded to put on a great show, feeding and very active. Normally they curl into a ball and wait for you to go away!



*A wonderful Echidna was well appreciated – a lot more active than the usual ball of spines! (Andy Jensen)*

We decided with evening approaching, to move on the short distance to Budderoo National Park, and try for the last species we were hoping for in the area, the elusive Eastern Ground Parrot. We began by walking around the area of heath next to end of the track, but there was no joy in locating Ground Parrot. It really is a needle in a haystack job here – the area of habitat vast and not too many needles to be looking for! We did encounter further Eastern Bristlebirds and Southern Emu-wren during the course of the search.

The Eastern Ground Parrot is one of a handful of ground dwelling parrots in the world – an attractive long tailed species which is not usually seen until flushed from cover. Walking the fenceline this tactic soon paid off as a Ground Parrot flushed at close range, then flew right past the group banking showing all the requisite detail, before landing a short distance ahead. The bird then flew once more allowing repeat views, for a reasonably long time for this species – normally views can be measured in the milliseconds but this bird even allowed time to get the ‘bins on it! Delighted with the views of this tricky species, and with the light closing, we had an al fresco dinner overlooking the heath, listening to the curious whistling call of the species and reflecting on what had been an extremely successful day with good views of all targets.

On our way back to Kiama, we stopped off for a spot of spotlighting. Generally it was quiet, but a pair of Southern Boobooks were heard, and eventually one was tracked down and allowed views.

Up early for another crack at Barren Grounds on our way to our next birding area. The previous day’s rain had cleared but in its place was even worse conditions for here – wind. As expected birds were keeping low, and it was difficult to hear anything above the din. Eastern Bristlebird was heard briefly but generally it was very quiet, so we called it a day here and moved on further west where hopefully conditions would be better. It was a good job we had been so successful in the rain the day before and didn’t “need” anything!

We drove for a couple of hours until we reached a couple of sites in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains bought us the first White-naped Honeyeater of the trip and another Bassian Thrush. We stopped at a lookout to enjoy the views of this magnificent National Park and its sandstone rock formations.



*Blue Mountains scenery (Andy Jensen)*

On the way, we stopped briefly at an old stakeout and sure enough a magnificent Scarlet Robin was present after a little bit of searching. The robin family in Australia has a number of exquisite representatives and this is one of the best.



*A stunning Scarlet Robin was seen in the Blue Mountains (Andy Jensen)*

After lunch it was off a short distance to Lithgow, our next overnight destination. After some shenanigans with the accommodation, and eventually getting in to the motel, we headed off to the local birding hotspot and the favourite of any tour – the local sewage works!

On arrival, the change in circumstance from the previous tour two years ago was striking – on that occasion the lagoons were full of wildfowl, including Pink-eared and Freckled Ducks, and Australian Shovelers. Today, the contrast could not have been more stark with a handful of Grey Teal, a lone Hoary-headed Grebe and a few Black-fronted Dotterel all it could muster. This was a prime example of the effects of Australia's recent weather with all the wildfowl currently far inland breeding on the ephemeral waterbodies formed by the rains earlier in the year.

Attention turned to the dry woodland behind the sewage works when it was clear not much was on the ponds, and a few Buff-rumped Thornbill were seen, at close enough range to see the distinctive pale eye, although some commented that the rump was more beige than buff, but each to their own.

Up until that point we had been seeing only Australian Raven, the common corvid around Sydney and in coastal New South Wales. However, in the Lithgow area, Little Raven are also present and soon the more clipped call than the mournful call of Australian Raven was heard and a couple of birds seen.

After such excitement of the Australian crow family, we headed off to nearby Lake Wallace to see what it had to offer. We were fully expecting low numbers of waterfowl here, and that proved to be the case, but hopefully a few of its specialities would still be present.

The area around the margins of the lake and the grassland was productive, with gangs of Red-rumped Parrot and Eastern Rosella foraging on the playing fields, and a few other new species including the attractive Yellow-rumped Thornbill and White-plumed Honeyeater also present. The reedy margins were full of Australian Reed Warblers, with some showing well, but most loudly croaking unseen from cover. A few Little Grassbird were heard, but frustratingly they would not emerge. One bird that did emerge was a Buff-banded Rail, which incongruously for that family was showing out in the open in a puddle.



*Red-rumped Parrots foraged at Lake Wallace – it was difficult to know whether to look at the lake or the shore at times (Andy Jensen)*

The main focus though was the lake – again the contrast from 2014 being noted. Where there had been thousands of Eurasian Coot, this year only a few. No Hoary-headed Grebes, and no Whiskered Terns, again all inland. Great-crested Grebe were still present, generally a more sedentary species here. This bird is a future split candidate surely, as the Australian version does not have a winter or non-breeding plumage.

The two main species for the lake – Musk Duck and Blue-billed Duck – were not immediately obvious. Soon though a few distant Musk Duck were located, all female types, but thankfully a male was also located and it was much closer, even indulging in the unusual bubbling and foaming display for which this species is known, and showing the flap of skin under its bill to full effect.



*The bizarre Musk Duck in display (Andy Jensen)*

Blue-billed Duck was proving much harder, and most recent reports from the site had not had much luck. There was much relief therefore, when, while we were watching a Reed Warbler, that a male Blue-billed Duck swam into view very close by in a small channel in front of the reeds, with a female also present too. The male even indulged in an encore performance to ensure all had obtained suitably good views of this cracking little stiff-tail duck, very similar to the Ruddy Duck.

With a busy day ahead of us the next day, and all the targets seen we returned back to Lithgow after another successful day.

The Capertee Valley has remnant areas of box-ironbark and eucalypt woodland, although large parts of the valley are cleared farmland. The valley is home to a mix of woodland and grassland species, and due to its location west of the Dividing Range, it also forms the eastern most edge of range for a number of species. The result is an extraordinary diversity of species, including many declining species.

The majority of the valley is private land, so the best birding is from the roadsides, at numerous spots down the valley. We aimed to be at the first birding spot for first light, and as we drove in a Wombat crossed the road before dawn – it was a good job it didn't walk out right in front of the vehicle – they truly are solid animals.

Dawn broke and we stood at the entrance to the valley and took in the dawn chorus. The dominant species was White-plumed Honeyeater and this proved to be the case throughout the day. However, many other species joined in, including both wattlebirds, Noisy and Little Friarbirds, Rufous Whistler and a distant White-

winged Triller which was sadly on private land and could not be pursued. In some springs this species is common in the valley, but this proved to be the only record of the day. Another summer visitor to the valley, Rufous Songlark was also heard and being close to the road, was tracked down and seen. Their melodious song provided a backdrop to our birding in the valley at most spots we visited.

Both Musk and Little Lorikeets zipped around, and we would get better views of both species later. Brown Treecreepers foraged on the ground nearby, and many more of this species would be encountered. Some of the true stars of the show in the valley started to appear as well – a pair of Hooded Robin being the first to be recorded, as we found a pair close to the road which showed well. Further pairs would be seen throughout the day – although definitely less abundant than previous visits – a worrying sign for this species which is under decline nationally.

We pushed on to the next site further down the road – it could be easy to spend too long at some sites in the Capertee and miss getting to some others entirely such is the richness of the birding here! The next site brought yet more new birds – brief views of Grey-crowned Babbler, Dusky Woodswallows, the wonderfully named Jacky Winter (an Australian flycatcher), perched views of Little Lorikeet and some Fairy Martins. Also seen was a Restless Flycatcher which truly lived up to its name by barely sitting still and singing constantly!



*Restless Flycatcher certainly lived up to its name – it barely sat still! (Andy Jensen)*

Also in this area was a Pallid Cuckoo, which was not well received by the local small bird populations, on account of it looking very similar to a falcon when in flight. Its distinctive call would be heard on further occasion during the day, but the views here were very nice indeed.

After an al fresco breakfast (with the Restless Flycatcher still going!) we carried on to a creek crossing further down the valley. This proved yet another productive spot, with the first White-throated Gerygone and

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater of the day recorded as well as a Common Bronzewing – a rather plump Australian pigeon. A small group of White-winged Chough were also seen – an odd looking species, one of the mud nest builders in Australia. These birds are a social species, with a group having a large territory of up to 1,000 hectares in size. Young birds assist the parents in nest building, incubation and raising of chicks.

We carried on further, eventually reaching some of the more open grassland of the valley where the species mix began to change. The first Black-shouldered Kite was seen, although Brown Falcons were conspicuous by their absence – another species that had temporarily moved onto greener pastures so to speak.

Another roadside stop illustrated the magic of the Capertee Valley perfectly – a small group of finches flew in front of the vehicle, and as we hadn't encountered any finch flocks up until that point, stopped to check them out. The first bird seen was a Diamond Firetail, one of the specialities of the Capertee and a beautiful little finch. While watching that a small group of Plum-headed Finch flew into view (the birds originally sighted) and showed well feeding on grass seed by the roadside. Again, a real bonus bird as they had reportedly been scarce in the valley of late.



*A roadside group of Plum-headed Finch was a bonus sighting – by no means a guaranteed species in the Capertee (Andy Jensen)*

While watching the finches, Erkki spotted a raptor overhead which proved to be a Little Eagle – a widespread but nowhere common raptor. This in turn was mobbed by a Collared Sparrowhawk!

After the raptors had moved on, we concentrated on the woodland on the other side of the road to where we had stopped. There were many friarbirds feeding on flowering eucalypts, although no scarcer honeyeaters could be found among them. A wonderful pair of Crested Shrike-tit were found though and they entertained the group calling loudly overhead, while ripping off bark from the trunks with their powerful beaks while looking for food. Again, not a species that was guaranteed by any means.

It was difficult to know where to look – an action packed few minutes, and a stop that only happened on the basis of a few birds flying across the road.



*A pair of cracking Crested Shrike-tit put on a show (Andy Jensen)*

We carried on further past Glen Alice, to the furthest spot to which we would travel in the valley. It was a thornbill hot spot, with Yellow, Striated and Buff-rumped all seen, as well as the first Weebill of the trip (Australia's smallest bird and aptly named!). We eventually found the star of the show, and a very cute little Speckled Warbler was located and showed well to all, before disappearing over the fenceline not to be seen again.

It was really starting to hot up, and not just the birding. Just as we were planning a mid afternoon break somewhere in the shade, we encountered a problem with the vehicle which necessitated an early finish to get repairs in nearby Lithgow – however, it was the heat of the day and activity was starting to wane, so after lunch we drove out of the valley making a couple of stops along the way. We would be back again the following morning.

After the impromptu repair job, we drove out to an area of woodland near Lithgow to see what we could see before dinner and calling it a day. A few smart Spotted Pardalotes were found, and eventually a pair of White-eared Honeyeater (a scarce honeyeater locally) were found and showed well.



*A handsome White-eared Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

The following morning we returned to the Capertee for another look – this time driving through the valley pre-dawn and working our way back out from the furthest site. This worked out well, as on the drive in we spotted a nightjar in the headlights of the car, and soon we were enjoying good views of a pair of White-throated Nightjar hawking above us just before dawn. The experience was accentuated by the bizarre call of the White-throated Nightjar in the background – a weird staccato laugh.

We started at Genowlan Bridge, a traditional Regent Honeyeater site but sadly none could be seen or heard, and none were found in any of the flowering trees we checked in the valley. A walk along the river here did produce a similar range of species to the previous day, but additionally an Azure Kingfisher, a Brown-headed Honeyeater unusually on its own and not in a noisy group and a day roosting Tawny Frogmouth. Also seen were a pair of Crested Shrike-tit.

After a picnic breakfast we moved on to the area we had so much success in yesterday to see if the flowering had attracted anything else. On the way another roadside stop proved productive with both Striped and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters seen.



*Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

At the flowering trees, aside from large numbers of friarbirds, the main highlight was large numbers of Musk Lorikeet. This area also proved good for finches again with a few Double-barred seen, and best of all a few Diamond Firetail which showed extremely well at close range.

A stop in Glen Alice did not produce too much of note, except for some unusual behaviour from a raucous group of White-winged Chough. There was such a racket and birds repeatedly flying from perches down to the ground, that we thought they must be mobbing a snake, but it appeared on closer inspection just to be birds feeding then returning to the trees. Also in the churchyard here a small group of Grey-crowned Babbler could be found. A few Zebra Finch were also seen on the roadside a little further along, but unfortunately they did not hang around.



*The dazzling Diamond Firetail (Andy Jensen)*



*Often scarce, several groups of Musk Lorikeet were found in the Capertee (Andy Jensen)*



*These White-winged Chough taking a break from foraging (Andy Jensen)*

Our last stop in the Capertee was a site which is often good for Turquoise Parrot, a bird we had not encountered so far. On stepping out of the vehicle, a pair flew immediately from the creek crossing and to a line of trees further down the road, but unfortunately on private land. Eventually one bird came back though showing very well as it flew past back down the river and away from view. Also here a Brown Falcon was seen overhead – a large raptor with powerful rowing wingbeats. It was surprisingly the only one seen in the valley

We had to drag ourselves away as we had a long drive to our overnight destination in Swansea, on the coast north of Sydney. A stop on the way in the Blue Mountains was productive with another White-eared Honeyeater seen and best of all great views of a singing Chestnut-rumped Heathwren. A scarce species and often hard to see, it regaled us with a bout of singing right next to the carpark and showed brilliantly- if only it was always that easy!

There was still some distance to travel so we pushed on in the heat of the day. Another stop on the way though bought us a pair of Pink-eared Ducks and a Yellow-billed Spoonbill in the Hawkesbury Valley west of Sydney, as well as a Common Sandpiper. Very much bonus birds given the wet conditions inland, these were the only Pink-ears even remotely near the coast judging by reports, so it was very handy to see them. Pink-eared Duck seems like such an obtuse name though – true they do have a pink tuft of feathering on the ears, but it is tiny and hard to see. That broad spatulate bill, the zebra striped flanks – so many more obvious features to choose a name from!



*Yellow-billed Spoonbill (Andy Jensen)*

We arrived in Swansea and met up with an old friend Phil, a local birder and discussed plans for the next day. After dinner, Phil took us to a few locations looking for some nocturnal species. Little was calling however, although we did see a Tawny Frogmouth, as well as hearing a frustratingly briefly calling Sooty Owl which sadly could not be located.

The day of the pelagic arrived, and just after dawn we ventured down the seaway towards open waters. Species such as Striated Heron, Far Eastern Curlew and Bar-tailed Godwit all noted along the shoreline of the bay, as well as a pair of Sooty Oystercatcher near the mouth of the inlet on a rocky island.

Upon crossing the bar, the first seabirds were immediately apparent with groups of Greater Crested Tern and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters milling around offshore. Further offshore the first Short-tailed Shearwaters were seen briefly, their shorter winged jizz obvious in the more rushed flight style. These birds were on their southward migration from wintering grounds off Alaska, back to their breeding islands off southern Australia. This species is often encountered in the thousands on its migration, even hundreds of thousands on peak days, and is prone to large wrecks. A few Sooty Shearwater were seen later in the morning also, another similar looking all dark shearwater but again surprisingly easy to pick out on jizz and the different flight style, being slightly longer winged than Short-tailed.

The first Australasian Gannets were also seen, their nearest breeding grounds in New Zealand, or western Victoria, showing just how far these birds forage from their breeding colonies on fishing trips.

Also in these inshore waters the first Fluttering and Hutton's Shearwaters were noted – both similar looking black and white shearwaters, with Hutton's having a duskier underwing and more hooded appearance. With all this activity it was no surprise to find a few jaegers (or skuas for the Europeans!) milling around seeking to exploit the situation. Most were Pomarine Jaeger, but a daintier Arctic Skua was also seen.

After the initial burst of inshore activity, as is the way with most pelagics, numbers dropped off as we began to cross the abyssal plain to reach our eventual destination of the continental shelf edge, and some canyons where upwelling water resulted in attractive foraging areas for pelagic species. Many species come no closer to shore than these canyons, save to breed, so we progressed on in the aim of maximising our time at these hotspots.

On reaching the shelf we began berleying a mixture of fish oil, mince and fish scraps and the revolting smell soon worked with the first pelagic species coming in – Wilson's Storm Petrel, and began daintily picking up scraps from the oily slick that began to form.

The highlight of these trips for most birders are the albatross, and we were not to be disappointed. Some of the mollymawks were seen – Shy, Black-browed and Campbell's – and allowed close examination of their salient features – the cleaner white underwing of Shy, versus the dusky underwings of Black-browed and Campbell's.



*A young Campbell's Albatross – you can just see the amber eye starting to develop (Andy Jensen)*



*Shy Albatross (Andy Jensen)*

These birds were a near constant accompaniment while we were at the shelf, and often sat at point-blank range right next to the boat. These were the first albatross for a few on board, so a real treat. Soon one of the big-boppers appeared – one of the Wandering Albatross family and as it came closer it could be identified as a “Gibson’s Albatross” – one of the Antipodean Albatross.

The bird made repeat visits throughout the morning. One surprise was the lack of pterodroma petrels, although the skipper informed us the water was abnormally warm. Eventually though a few Providence Petrels were seen. This species breeds on Lord Howe Island, and were named Providence Petrels due to them sustaining the first settlers on the island with an abundant food source in an otherwise barren landscape.

Eventually it was time to head back to port. The journey in was relatively quiet aside from a few birds following us back in hoping for further food to be provided! We disembarked back in Swansea and headed off to try and see some landbirds nearby.



*"Gibson's" Antipodean Albatross (Andy Jensen)*

We first headed off to a site near the mangroves in Swansea for one of Phil's stakeouts – stopping on the way to admire a male Pacific Koel in the top of a tall tree giving its distinctive call. The call is really rather loud and repetitive – and they often call at night. Having one in your garden would definitely require purchasing some earplugs!

In the lantana scrub behind the mangroves, we tried for Lewin's Rail – one of the hardest species to see well in Australia, and more often heard than seen. After a little while one was glimpsed briefly, and then proceeded to show brilliantly coming out into a small cleared area in the lantana and sitting in full view for short periods. By far the best views Andy had ever had of this species, and the group were thrilled.

On to another stakeout, this time hopefully for a roosting Australian Owlet-nightjar. At the site, the first Yellow-faced Honeyeater were seen, and a pair of Variegated Fairy-wren. Eventually we found the roost tree of the owlet-nightjar and it was seen sitting in the entrance watching the curious people standing below.

A relatively relaxed start after a long day at sea – the sea air always takes it out of you a little! Firstly we were out with Phil showing us around some of the sites in his local area. We began in the Kurri Kurri woodlands west of Newcastle, and some familiar village names for the English in the group – Hexham, Wallsend and Morpeth gave a northeast of England feel, the climate and landscape anything but, although this area does also have a rich coal mining history.

In the woodland, we were searching for some of the dry woodland species of the area. On the drive in we had nice views of a pair of Red-necked Wallaby – an attractive macropod.

Almost immediately after we got out the vehicle, the first Black-chinned Honeyeaters could be heard, and we were enjoyed views of this uncommon honeyeater. It actually proved to be quite numerous in the woodland. Also around were several groups of Fuscous Honeyeater, also new for the trip, and a few Striped Honeyeater. By far the most numerous species though was the gorgeous Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and it was a bittersweet presence – they truly are stunning birds, but they are also bullies and chased off some of the scarcer honeyeaters we were trying to see at times!



*A curious gaggle of stunning Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters (Andy Jensen)*

We also located a Painted Button-quail that was giving its monotonous low booming call in deep cover. Unfortunately, despite it seemingly being right in front of us at times, it always seemed to give the group the slip, and only Andy obtained views.

Groups of Little Lorikeet and Musk Lorikeet were also numerous in the woodland, and perched scope views of both were obtained. Other woodland species recorded included Peaceful Dove, Common Bronzewing, Dusky Woodswallow and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. An obliging and stately Little Eagle was located perched in a tree not far from the track, and we were able to watch it at close range as it was undisturbed by our presence.



*A majestic Little Eagle was tracked down after hearing its call (Andy Jensen)*

Back at the vehicle, and the distinctive bell-like calls of Bell Miner were heard and we found a group of this gregarious species.

They have an interesting ecology – they occur in colonies, and feed on psyllid insects and their lerps (a sugary secretion used as a protective casing by the insect). They maintain high levels of psyllid populations in their colony by driving off other birds from their territory, and effectively farm psyllids as a food source. As a consequence, they are often an unpopular presence in an area for birders, as they tend to result in depauperate ecosystems, with low diversity of insectivorous species such as honeyeaters.

We spent the rest of the morning driving around some of the local wetland sites looking for ibis and snipe, but none could be found – again many of these species were likely further inland. A Brown Falcon was a somewhat surprising species to find sitting in the middle of a reedbed but little else of note was seen.



*A Bell Miner near its colony (Andy Jensen)*

We moved on to the Hunter Wetland Centre for lunch where the group enjoyed their meal whilst sitting and watching the comings and goings on the lake outside the visitor centre. The first Magpie Geese were seen as well as Grey Teal, Royal Spoonbill, and many beautiful egrets with fine breeding plumes. There was also a raptor fest while we sat on the deck of the restaurant and ate a relaxing lunch, with Swamp Harrier, White-bellied Sea-eagle, Collared Sparrowhawk and Whistling Kite all seen. A Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo could be heard calling somewhere in the distance but didn't come in.

Following lunch we began our journey further north to our next overnight destination at Gloucester (Swansea, Gloucester, Newcastle – there was no danger of the Brits feeling homesick!). We stopped at a small pond on the outskirts of Newcastle first, but the usual Nankeen Night-heron were not home today. The islands of the pond held a noisy (and smelly!) colony of a couple of Grey-headed Flying-foxes – perhaps the night-herons didn't like noise, and I don't blame them! An Australian Hobby was seen only by Erkki, hopefully more would be seen later in the trip.

The drive to Gloucester was uneventful in the whole, although a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles were seen close to the road, and a small group of Tree Martins. The rather threatening skies building to the west threatened to scupper evening birding plans, and after arriving in Gloucester, we headed out to a local park to try for a couple of new species before the storm hit.

A little glitch with the sat-nav attempting to send him down a non-existent access track proved to be quite a bonus in the end, as in the process of turning round in a driveway, we noticed a group of White-headed Pigeons feeding down the driveway on the ground. We all bailed out of the vehicle, and enjoyed good views as they wandered around, before disappearing off behind a building. It was a good job, as this was one of

the species we were looking for in the park, and needless to say none could be found there, although it was rather busy and perhaps they had moved on to a quieter area.

As the thunder began in the distance, we tried for another of our targets here and a Brush Cuckoo was located along the riverbank, and sat obliging for all to see. With the thunder getting closer, and rain beginning, we called it a day and headed off for dinner, and ready for an early start the following morning. On the way out, several small groups of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo moved overhead, presumably off to roost nearby.

An early start – the reason for the early start being to give us as long as possible looking for one of Australia's hardest species – Rufous Scrub-bird. An incredibly elusive species – and often an incredibly frustrating one, as it calls loudly from the dense vegetation seemingly right in front of you while remaining out of sight.

The early start and drive up the mountain in the dark had an added benefit in giving a chance of some nightbirds on the drive. Two Tawny Frogmouth were seen, and best of all a Greater Sooty Owl was heard as we drove up the higher parts of the mountain, and came in to tape and sat at the top of a tree by the road, although sadly did not stay there for long.

As we got to the Gloucester Tops, it became clear that the weather would be a challenge also – we were essentially in the cloudbase, so visibility was not great, and there was occasional drizzle thrown in as well, although it was difficult to distinguish that and the general sodden nature of the cloud.

We began our search for the scrub-birds – the tactic essentially being locate a calling bird and then the game of cat and mouse begins trying to get a view. None were calling to start with – an Olive Whistler, another restricted range species in the area confined to these high tops – was heard, but could not be seen. Eventually a calling scrub-bird was heard just off the track, so we located the source of the call and attempted to get a view. The bird was seemingly moving round its territory calling, but true to form stayed hidden in the dense understory of ferns and grasses. Nick was lucky enough to get a view as it crossed over a log to get to another part of its territory but the rest of us drew a blank and eventually the bird went silent and had seemingly moved on.

We pressed on to try and find another calling bird. Firstly though we heard a Flame Robin calling, another speciality here, and one came in and circled us for a while flitting from tree to tree, but never staying still for long. A similar species to the Scarlet Robin seen a few days previous, with a few differences in colouration. A Black-faced Monarch and Bassian Thrush were also seen, and a pair of flycatchers once tracked down proved to be Leaden, and sadly not Satin, which can occasionally be found here in small numbers, but were perhaps not back from wintering grounds yet.

A little further along the track, and another Rufous Scrub-bird was heard so again we attempted to get a view. This one was quite responsive and came in for a look, very close in front of where we were standing with Andy getting a brief view, before it too stopped calling after a while and disappeared off into the forest.

Back to the main access road, and we went for a wander along the Circuit Track to see what we could see. A few King Parrot and Crimson Rosella aside, it was rather quiet. Crested Shrike-tit was heard, a few White-throated Treecreeper heard and seen, and a few Striated Thornbill, but no scrub-birds calling. Back by the vehicle, the distinctive call of Red-browed Treecreeper, an uncommon species for which Gloucester Tops is a good area, was heard. They were tracked down and allowed views of the darker underparts and smaller white throat than the commoner White-throated, and the subtle red brow.



*Crimson Rosella (Andy Jensen)*

With no scrub-birds calling here we tried some of the earlier sites we had heard birds, but no success, and few were calling today. Another game of cat and mouse with a calling bird close to the main access track had a sense of real déjà vu, as the owner of this territory had been equally frustrating in 2014!

A few Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo flew over the car park by the picnic site, and an Olive Whistler could be heard calling somewhere down the valley. We headed off in the direction of the sound. Eventually we located where it was calling in a gully leading down into a dense area of woodland, and we obtained views of this uncommon whistler, found in upland beech forests. A few Large-billed Scrubwren were also new for the trip.

Unfortunately, it was time to begin the long drive back to Newcastle. On the drive down, we located a couple of corvids in an area next to one of the river crossings, and as suspected they proved to be Forest Raven, with a distinctive powerful, deep call. The nominate race is found on Tasmania (and is the only crow there) and coastal Victoria. The northern race has an isolated population in northern New South Wales, and is sometimes treated as a separate species "Relict" Raven.

After the long drive back to Newcastle, the weather had really taken a turn for the worse. Attempting to navigate the one-way system around the hotel brought us past the rocky platform of the seafront, where a pair of Sooty Oystercatcher, a Turnstone and a few Common Tern were seen, but the rain had turned torrential so we called it a day and headed in to dry off and warm up.

Thankfully the following morning the weather had improved for our last morning in New South Wales. We started off at Hexham swamp to try for some wetland species. Along the track, we stopped at regular intervals with the sounds of Golden-headed Cisticola, Australian Reed Warbler and Tawny Grassbird a near constant accompaniment in the reedy areas, with occasional Little Grassbird also heard. Eventually we tracked a couple down and had good views. A few Yellow-rumped Thornbill were also seen. They build a double storied nest, with the top nest empty, and the reason for this is unknown. Perhaps a decoy for predators or parasitic cuckoos, or a practice nest for the helpers (this species breeds co-operatively).

The wetland areas held Chestnut Teal, and large numbers of Royal Spoonbill. One of the ponds was also an egret fest, with Great, Intermediate and Little allowing good comparison between the species. On the track, Nick's sharp eyes allowed the group to see a pair of Brown Quail trying to slip away from the vehicle unseen.

The ponds were also home to waders freshly back from northern hemisphere breeding grounds. A single Pacific Golden Plover, as well as small groups of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint. On the furthest pool, a high tide roost of Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwit, and Red Knot were present.

The main purpose of the visit was to try and locate White-fronted Chat, as this was the only possible site for the species on the tour. We located several birds, and had nice views close to the track including some smart males. Placed among the honeyeaters, they don't really behave like the other members of the family, feeding on the ground on insects. They do share the same brush tipped tongue as other honeyeaters.

With such a concentration of birds it was no surprise to find raptors present, with another Brown Falcon seen. An Australian Hobby dashed across the wetland, hoping to pick off an unsuspecting species. Several Swamp Harriers were in attendance and sat around on fenceposts taking off on occasional hunting sorties.

Heading off to have some breakfast and on to a high tide roost, we first made a stop for a pair of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo seen from the car, which were well appreciated.



*A roadside pair of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo were popular after several earlier flybys (Andy Jensen)*

At the Stockton high tide roost, we arrived to find many species already present, although there was little difference to the species at Hexham, with both godwits dominant. A large group of Far Eastern Curlew and Great Knot added some variety though and a few Little Tern foraged offshore. A Striated Heron was also

present. In the mangroves a Mangrove Gerygone proved to be uncooperative for that species, although we had further opportunities later in the trip. Unfortunately the roost is often subject to disturbance and today was no different with people walking along the foreshore behind the roost (an important staging site) and birds on the roost were constantly being spooked. A reminder of the difficulties faced by shorebirds – along with habitat loss on their migration, they are subject to high levels of disturbance when at wintering grounds.

After the roost, it was time to head to the airport and our flight to Brisbane. It was the end of our time in New South Wales and off to Queensland – Australia’s most bird rich state. After arrival and eventually getting the hire car, we began the journey back south a little way to the world-famous Lamington National Park and O’Reilly’s rainforest retreat. We had moved into Torresian Crow territory and the first of many records of this species were seen. Again, call was the main noticeable feature that this transition had occurred. Otherwise the drive was rather quiet, and we arrived at the guesthouse late afternoon. We tried an area by the guesthouse where friends of Andy had seen Albert’s Lyrebird recently, but this was a longshot and there was no joy – although views of Logrunner – a ground dwelling species – whet the appetite for the following day.

We enjoyed a fabulous meal in the restaurant, and after dinner, a few went on a spotlighting sortie to see what we could see. Greater Sooty Owl and Marbled Frogmouth were both heard, but could not be tracked down in the rainforest and would have to wait for another day.



*The striking Wonga Pigeon (Andy Jensen)*

Our first full day in Queensland, and unfortunately for the group an early start – Queensland does not have daylight saving time, so in the summer months there are some early starts required – the early bird gets the worm! Fortunately the birding was right on our doorstep, so this saved some time. Wonga Pigeons were

seen on the open grassed areas around the accommodation before the crowds were up to disturb them, and nervous Emerald Doves patrolled the forest edges. Topknot Pigeons and White-headed Pigeons flew overhead to find fruiting trees after departing their overnight roosts.

We started off on one of the trails leading out from the visitor centre, and soon we were encountering the species for which O'Reilly's is famous. Initially this included Golden Whistler, Large-billed Scrubwren, Brown Gerygone, Black-faced Monarch and both Yellow-throated and White-browed scrubwrens. Many Rufous Fantail were also seen.

After the previous evening's sighting, more Logrunners were seen, foraging in the leaf litter and tossing debris aside noisily often leading to their presence. Several Noisy Pittas were heard and after much searching a couple of birds were seen well. Always a popular family, this species is called the devil-devil bird by some Indigenous Australian groups, this species was believed to steal their children by luring them into the forest with their distinctive call.

Green Catbirds were also vocal, and a Paradise Riflebird was also heard, a harsh grating call. We located its display tree, high in the canopy but views were rather difficult. A few zoothera thrushes were also seen along the track. They proved to be Russet-tailed Thrush, with the key feature of more white in the outer tail feather noted, although the fact some were singing also helped! Despite what is often said about elevational ranges, both this species and Bassian overlap and occur in the area around O'Reilly's, although all thrushes seen on this walk were Russet-tailed.

It was time to drag ourselves away and we headed back for breakfast in the guesthouse – and again a magnificent feast that was hard to tear ourselves away from but there was more birding to be done!

Around the guesthouse, gangs of Crimson Rosella and Australian King Parrots were searching for food, even perching on the heads of unsuspecting guests who looked like they were carrying something to eat! The stars of the show were the bowerbirds though with both Satin and Regent bowerbirds seen – the latter species the logo of the guesthouse and one of the iconic species of the area. We found a couple of Satin Bowerbird bowers - these bowers were adorned with anything blue they could find – so sugar wrappers, bottle tops, straws etc! It is hard to imagine how they find sufficient blue things to satisfy their cravings away from human habitation – but I imagine berries and flowers do the job in such instances.

We went for another short walk after breakfast the opposite way from the guesthouse – more of the species seen before breakfast were found including particularly confiding views of Eastern Whipbird, Eastern Yellow Robin, all three species of scrubwrens and Rose Robin – another attractive member of the robin family in Australia.

Another Paradise Riflebird was seen – this time a strikingly marked female bird. We watched transfixed as it provided us with fabulous views as it tore away at the side of a low tree trunk looking for grubs hidden under the bark, or morsels in the thick lichen. More males could be heard, but remained unseen deep in the rainforest.



*The resplendent Regent Bowerbird – the logo of O'Reilly's (Andy Jensen)*



*A Satin Bowerbird inspecting his bower (Andy Jensen)*



*Carpet Python resting by the track (Andy Jensen)*



*A female Paradise Riflebird tearing apart the bark and moss with its powerful bill (Andy Jensen)*

After an early afternoon break, we took in another of O'Reilly's walking trails, although activity in the afternoon was greatly reduced. We received a tip off regarding Albert's Lyrebird, the only bird at O'Reilly's that was eluding us so far, and a tricky bird to see currently with many birders and groups struggling to see this bird on their visits. We tried an area at which they had recently been seen, but there was no joy, just another Russet-tailed Thrush, so we knew where we would be first thing the following morning.

After dinner we went out spotlighting where non-avian highlights included Mountain Brushtail Possum, and the bizarre Leaf-tailed Gecko – a large gecko normally found on fig trees.

Bird wise, we heard both Greater Sooty Owl and Southern Boobook, but best of all we had stunning views of a Marbled Frogmouth on a trail near the accommodation in the rainforest. The race in southeast Queensland, "Plumed" Frogmouth was once split as a separate species from the smaller race found in far north Queensland and Papua New Guinea. It had been a highly successful day though, and plans were laid for the morning to try for that one outstanding lyrebird.

Up out and early, straight down to try for the lyrebird at the spot where they had recently been seen. Initially there was no sign again, and we were resigning ourselves to a dip. Then out of nowhere a lyrebird dashed past us with another in hot pursuit – two rival males fighting over their territory. We had fantastic views as the birds were either oblivious or completely unconcerned by our presence, chasing each other round with their filamentous tails flowing behind them – they just would not stay still for photos! They chased each other round for a couple of minutes while the group sat spellbound watching them, and then just as quick as they arrived they were gone! Wonderful views though of a species which if you are lucky enough to see at all, views normally consist of a fleeting glimpse dashing off into the undergrowth.

With all of O'Reilly's specialities under the belt, it was time to head off. We had another quick wander to build up an appetite for one of the breakfast feasts we were served here, again seeing the male Paradise Riflebird on his display tree, and a little more open views this time.

After breakfast we began the drive north to Rainbow Beach, firstly seeing a Brown Cuckoo Dove on the way out close to the road. On the drive back down the mountain, we stopped at a likely looking spot and it proved to be worthwhile. A pair of White-eared Monarch were heard, and were soon showing very well right next to the track. Also in the area were a pair of Spectacled Monarch, another member of this attractive family.

A little further on a roadside clearing was seemingly full of the little jewel like Scarlet Honeyeaters – their tinkling calls echoing all around the clearing, and the birds seemingly adorning every tree.

Continuing on we stopped at a couple of mangrove sites north of Brisbane on our way north. The first had Whistling and Brahminy Kites, as well as a flock of White-throated Needletail overhead. In the mangroves, Torresian Kingfisher (a recent split from Collared) were heard calling and showed well by a channel edge. Also in the mangroves, a few Mangrove Gerygone showed a little better than down south.

On to our next site, and a high tide roost. There was nothing new among the waders, although over 1,000 Bar-tailed Godwit were an impressive sight with lesser numbers of Far Eastern Curlew and Whimbrel. Small waders were noticeable by their absence, although the first Great Knot of the trip were seen.

In the mangroves at this site, a Varied Triller was new for the trip, as were a small group of Mangrove Honeyeater, which are found in southern and central Queensland in mangrove habitats.



*White-eared Monarch (Andy Jensen)*

It was time to move on so we could hopefully get some birding in at Rainbow Beach that evening, and after arrival and checking in we headed out to see what we could see. At Inskip Point, a large group of Greater Crested Tern held a few Common Tern of the Asian race *longipennis*. On the sandbanks, numerous Red-capped Plover and Lesser Sandplover. In the scrub, Rainbow Bee-eater, White-throated Honeyeater and Noisy and Little Friarbird were all seen.

With dusk approaching we headed off to a stakeout for some nightbirding. After arriving at the site, we walked a short distance, played the tape, and almost after the first few seconds, a nightjar flew in almost taking Andy's head off and responding to the tape – Large-tailed Nightjar. This species is more widespread across northern Australia, and is at the very furthest extent south of its range here – indeed these are probably the most southerly birds in Australia. Known as the axe bird as their call sounds like an axe repeatedly hitting a tree. We had great views as the bird, or birds circled around us, showing the white in the tail distinctive of this species.

We started early again the next morning to be at our first stakeout ahead of the crowds of beach goers at Inskip Point, a popular area for campers, fishermen and off roaders taking the barge over to Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island. This is the main site for the endangered Black-breasted Button-quail. This species is becoming increasingly rare across its range due to habitat clearance and fragmentation, and Inskip Point is the site to see this bird. However, we had heard that sightings were increasingly tough here, with most people failing to see the bird on trips nowadays, although the odd few still got lucky.

We started to wander through the button-quails' habitat. The strategy with this bird is simple – walk slowly listening for the bird's low booming call, watch out for movement, and look for platelets (little bowl shaped

depressions formed by the bird when feeding) to indicate signs of recent presence in an area. However, few platelets could be seen and there was no sign of any birds either.

A number of other species provided a distraction from the hunt – large numbers of Bar-shouldered Dove were present, along with Rainbow Bee-eater which were hawking for insects from exposed perches. Little Shrike-thrush, Mangrove Honeyeater, White-cheeked Honeyeater, Varied Triller, and Leaden Flycatcher were all recorded in the scrub. A small group of Fairy Gerygone were heard, and showed well towards the tip of the point – this species is becoming increasingly common here, seemingly increasing its spread further south.

We decided to move on to another site where the button-quail had been seen a little more regularly recently, but again there was no joy here – it was just one of those days. Other birds seen here included the first Eastern Osprey of the trip, a beautiful Rose-crowned Fruit-dove and a pair of Spectacled Monarch.

Carrying on further south to be back in Brisbane for some evening spotlighting, we stopped at a few wetland sites on Bribie Island. First up at an undisturbed sandy beach, a pair of Beach Stone Curlew and their young chick gave good scope views at the end of the beach – we could not get closer as the beach is roped off for breeding shorebirds – a rare initiative here sadly. Also here was a striking Buff-banded Rail which seemed to have forgotten it was supposed to be shy, and showed well with a few young in tow.



*The splendid Buff-banded Rail (Andy Jensen)*

A nearby freshwater wetland also proved to be productive, with a family party of Magpie Geese present, along with a single Glossy Ibis, several Comb-crested Jacana and a Latham's Snipe. A group of White-throated Needle-tail also passed overhead.

Leaving Bribie Island to be back in Brisbane for dusk, the final bird of the afternoon was a handsome Pale-headed Rosella which was spotted sitting on a powerline as we drove along.

We arrived at our first spotlighting site just before dusk, which allowed us time to explore the grassland near the Brisbane airport. Black-shouldered Kite and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin were both seen before dusk took hold. As we waited to see if the star of the show would arrive, swatting away at the many mosquitoes which had discovered our presence, many flying foxes flew overhead leaving their day roosts. Just as it was not looking promising, we picked up a pale shape approaching us, and sure enough an Eastern Grass Owl flew in making a beeline right for us. With a bit of gentle squeaking the bird came right overhead, hovering to see what the strange noise was, giving us crippling views of this buffy coloured *tyto* owl. As it flew overhead, its distinctive long legs dangling underneath, we even forgot about the mosquitos for a while! The bird flew off to explore the rest of its territory, and sated with the views we had obtained, we headed off to grab a quick bite to eat and escape the mozzies.

After checking in to the hotel, and leaving a couple behind who wanted an early night, we carried on to our next nightbirding destination up the nearby Mount Glorious. The drive up was relatively uneventful, and after we had arrived at the spot, and walked a short distance to a rainforest gully, the distinctive gobbling call of Marbled Frogmouth could be heard. We located a pair which proceeded to show brilliantly at close range, their distinctive red eye, pale eyebrow and tuft of barred plumes above the bill obvious.



*Marbled Frogmouth gave point blank views on our spotlighting expedition (Andy Jensen)*

After a long day yesterday, there was a slightly more relaxed start to proceedings today, before our flight to Mackay in the early afternoon. We started off in an area of dry eucalypt woodland on the western outskirts of Brisbane where Andy had recently seen Spotted Quail-thrush. Today there was no joy however, although one bird was heard calling distantly. Generally the woodland was quiet, although a Common Cicadabird showed well and was new for the trip.

We carried on to nearby Lake Samsonvale after breakfast, although the lake itself was quiet unsurprisingly. In the surrounding scrub, a small group of the handsome Red-backed Fairy-wren were seen.

It was time to head off to the airport, and after a short flight to Mackay and picking up the vehicles, we began the drive up to the Eungella Range through the extensive cane fields of the coastal plain. Large groups of Magpie Geese milled about in these fields, and a single Straw-necked Ibis was seen, a rare bird in coastal parts at the moment. Many Black and Whistling Kites could be found by the roadside, looking for prey fleeing burning cane fields, or roadkill.

After the steep ascent up the escarpment to Eungella village, we drove into our accommodation just as the heavens opened, so called it a night there.

We ventured out of the accommodation the next morning and could barely see beyond our nose! Eungella is a local Indigenous word meaning "mountains of the mist" and on rising the following day it soon became clear why. The village was shrouded in thick fog and low cloud. We tried a site near the accommodation first, but the cloud was so thick we could barely see the tops of the trees, so we moved on to the nearby Broken River, stopping first to see a group of Plumed Whistling-duck by the roadside. Broken River was our stakeout to try for a rather special mammal!



*The iconic Platypus showed brilliantly at Eungella – perhaps four animals involved (Andy Jensen)*

We did not have long to wait, and we were treated to some point-blank views of up to four Platypus foraging in the stream immediately below us. The views were spectacular, so close and unconcerned by our presence. We could watch them lounging around in the water and their curious feeding technique sweeping the bottom of the channel with their bill full of electroreceptors. It was easy to see how the first specimens going back to Europe were treated as a hoax – thinking it was the body of an otter with the tail of a beaver and bill of a duck sewn on!

An Azure Kingfisher also zipped along the river. We dragged ourselves away from the Platypus and on to the main reason for the visit to Eungella - to see the endemic Eungella Honeyeater, which has a highly restricted range in the area. First discovered in the 1980s and initially passed off as a southern population of the more widespread Bridled Honeyeater around Cairns, this species is one of the last new species of bird to be discovered in Australia.

Initially there was no sign and more worryingly sound at any of the usual spots, and we were starting to get a little concerned. There was plenty of bird activity though particularly among the pigeons, with Emerald Dove, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Topknot Pigeon, Brown Cuckoo-dove and Rose-crowned Fruit Dove all seen.

Soon though the explosive call of the Eungella Honeyeater could be heard, and a pair of birds were located by the roadside. They then showed well for the next 10 minutes or so, often right out in the open – a real bonus as this can often be quite a shy bird, and views very brief.



*The eponymous Eungella Honeyeater – only recognised as a species in 1983 (Andy Jensen)*

We continued to watch the honeyeaters and located a couple more in another few spots, with a few Noisy Pitta also heard, but staying out of site. A male Regent Bowerbird was also spotted by Tom, and was right at the northern extent of its range.

We headed back to the Eungella Chalet for lunch, enjoying the views over the escarpment. A Grey Goshawk soared over the ridgeline while we enjoyed our refreshments. We had seen all of our targets at Eungella, so we headed back down the mountain to the lowlands, to be in Mackay for our late afternoon flight to Cairns. The drive was interspersed with some noteworthy sightings – a cracking perched Brown Falcon by the roadside being one, and a large group of 600+ White-throated Needletails seemingly on their southbound migration.

A stop for a soaring raptor proved to be worthwhile, as the paddle shaped heavily barred wings of a Pacific Baza could be seen. Whilst watching this striking raptor, a Little Bronze Cuckoo was heard, and it came in and showed well. The rufous wash on the upperparts and bronzed breast bars showed this bird was of the northern race *russatus*, often treated by many authorities as a species in its own right – Gould's Bronze Cuckoo.

The rest of the drive back to Mackay went without note, aside from the ubiquitous roadside groups of Magpie Geese. On arrival we popped into the botanic gardens, but it was rather hot and activity subdued, not just among the birds! We chose the more relaxing option of a coffee and a cake in the café watching the lagoon below, with its Comb-crested Jacana being the most notable birds. A pair of Pacific Baza were also seen overhead.



Comb-crested Jacana (Andy Jensen)

It was time to head to Cairns to continue our birding there. By the time we had arrived it was late and dark, so we checked into our hotel. The Cairns region is among the richest in Australia for its birdlife, and it would be a jammed packed schedule the next few days to see all of its endemics and specialities.

We started the following day at the Centennial Lakes in Cairns – a great spot to get into far north Queensland birding and close to our accommodation. It was very birdy – large groups of Torresian Imperial Pigeons flew overhead from overnight roosts. This species regularly commutes each night between the mainland to the Barrier Reef islands to roost and is an ever-present backdrop to birding in the Cairns area. Noisy groups of Metallic Starling zipped around looking for the prime areas to feed and eerie looking Bush Stone Curlew stood sentinel in the parks and on street margins.

We began by wandering around the margins of the freshwater lake, where Magpie Geese and a Nankeen Night-heron were recorded. Raja Shelduck were present on the lake – this species is a new colonist of the Cairns area, normally being found further north. Figbirds of the yellow-bellied northern race were seen and the first Orange-footed Scrubfowl of the tour.

In the gardens themselves a number of species were seen for the first time. Hornbill Friarbirds aren't going to win any beauty contests, particularly compared to the dazzling Olive-backed Sunbirds also present, but both were new for the tour, as were a group of Yellow Honeyeater, a north Queensland endemic. A few Gould's Bronze Cuckoo and Varied Triller were also heard.

We also encountered a Papuan Frogmouth on a nest, and had great views of Australia's largest frogmouth.



*Papuan Frogmouth on its rudimentary nest (Andy Jensen)*

The frogmouth is a regular in the gardens, but is more typically seen at night in the swamp forest, so it was a treat to see it in the middle of the day like this. The nest did not seem up to much – just a scatter of sticks in the crook of a branch.

Overhead, Australian Swiftlet foraged and attention was often drawn skywards as a few Double-eyed Fig Parrot bombed through the gardens, and eventually some were tracked down by their calls and gave good scope views. A few Black Butcherbird were also seen, the new species coming at a furious rate.

Also along the creekline, we began looking for our next targets which favour the mangroves in these areas. Eventually we heard the calls of fairy-wrens and we located a pair of Lovely Fairy-wren close to the path. Quite a skulker compared to other members of the family, and often hard to come across in the Cairns area, this was a pleasing sighting. It was also nice to see the female especially as unlike most other fairy-wrens, it has a distinctive female plumage with lovely pastel blues and whites. A pair of Large-billed Gerygone, were also found in the same area, showing the typical white spot at the base of the bill distinguishing it from the very similar Mangrove Gerygone.



*The aptly named Lovely Fairy-wren (Andy Jensen)*

After this, we departed for the esplanade to try for our next targets there. We could see the tide was coming in rapidly, but we made the decision to try for some of the mangrove specialities here first before it got too late in the morning and activity died down. In the grassland backing onto the mangroves, a few Scaly-breasted Munia were seen, an introduced finch that has become well established in north Queensland. Better still, a couple of the mangrove species we had been hoping to see were located – a few Varied

Honeyeater were spotted by David as we looked deep into the mangroves, and they showed well right above our heads. Then after a little waiting, we spotted the main prize of the elusive Mangrove Robin a little distance into the mangroves, but it came a little closer and showed well perched out in the open just in front of us, before vanishing off further into the mangroves.

With the mangrove specials under the belt, we wandered down the esplanade with the tide coming in and providing optimum viewing conditions for the waders here, feeding right below the footpath unconcerned by the huge numbers of tourists passing by.

Grey Plover, Lesser and Greater Sandplover, both Bar-tailed and Black-tailed godwits, Whimbrel, Far Eastern Curlew, Grey-tailed Tattler, Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Great Knot, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper and Black-fronted Dotterel were all noted – it read like the index of a wader guide! Best of all, a family group of three Beach Stone-curlew were spotted by Erkki at the mangrove edge before they moved off further into the mangroves.



*A group of Great Knot on the famous Cairns esplanade (Erkki Holopainen)*

Also present among the large throng of Silver Gulls were a few Little Tern and Gull-billed Tern. A smart dark morph Pacific Reef Heron also fished right in front of the group.

It was time to move on again – there was a lot to be seen today. Although it was the heat of the day, we decided to try the nearby mangrove boardwalk near the airport, for the last mangrove speciality, in the hope the mosquitos would be less fierce than a dusk visit. Unfortunately the mozzies hadn't read the script and were a little persistent – thankfully the spray seemed to work and the biting was minimised. Our prime target, the stunning Shining Flycatcher also decided to be very obliging and show almost straight away, and pleasingly a male and a female to illustrate the two very different plumaged birds. With this bird under the belt and some good views, it was time to get out and away from the mozzies. Also here were a few Lovely Fairy-wren but they were a lot less obliging than the morning's sighting.

After a spot of lunch, we headed off to some sites north of Cairns. First of all, we visited a small lagoon and encountered a couple of new species – Brown-backed Honeyeater and Green Oriole. This species was previously called Yellow Oriole, but the new name is far more appropriate.



*Green Oriole (Andy Jensen)*

In some nearby sugarcane fields, a few Crimson Finch were encountered. This species is widespread around north Queensland, but can be hard to come across around Cairns.

We finished the afternoon at a freshwater wetland north of Cairns. The ponds held Comb-crested Jacana and new for the trip, quite a few Green Pygmy Geese. After a while walking around the ponds with no success, the main target of the visit was found – White-browed Crake. One foraged along the edge of the reedbeds on some lily pads, showing for all of the group in the scope, before it retreated back into the reeds and was not seen again.

It had been an action packed and highly successful day in Cairns – tomorrow we would head north to the hinterland inland from Cairns to try for a different range of species again.

We started off early and began by birding along Black Mountain Road near Kuranda – to get an introduction to some of the upland rainforest specialities of North Queensland. There was the odd sharp shower that sent us scampering for cover on occasion, but the birds came thick and fast.

A few Forest Kingfishers were seen on the drive in sat on the powerlines. Large numbers of doves and pigeons were calling, including Topknot Pigeons and Wompoo Fruit-doves, and best of all a few Superb

Fruit-doves. A pair were located sat in the open, which was a bonus for this species which is often heard but seldom seen well – a typical view being a small dove zipping from one area of forest to another.

Honeyeaters were well represented with Dusky Honeyeater, Macleay's Honeyeater (a northern Queensland endemic) and the first of the confusing group of *meliphaga* honeyeaters – Graceful and Yellow-spotted. There is much overlap in the plumage characteristics of these and Lewin's Honeyeaters, but the calls are distinctive, so while we set about picking out the plumage features, these calls came in handy!

Other species seen included Spectacled Monarch, and a White-eared Monarch was heard. A small group of Barred Cuckoo-shrike (or Yellow-eyed Cuckoo Shrike – both apt names) were also found perched close to the road. Spotted Catbird could be heard but could not be found – they are much harder than their southern counterparts Green Catbird – and seeing them would have to wait to another day.

Soon we encountered a couple of the real specialities of the area – a dazzling pair of Yellow-breasted Boatbill – a small aberrant flycatcher put on a real show. While we were watching the boatbills, the rasping calls of Victoria's Riflebird could be heard nearby, and eventually we enjoyed good scope views of the male atop its display tree – showing its blueish throat and yellow gape among its glossy black iridescent plumage.



*The dazzling Yellow-breasted Boatbill (Andy Jensen)*

While we were having breakfast reflecting on a good morning so far – we got the call we had been hoping for – Southern Cassowary!



*The iconic Southern Cassowary (Andy Jensen top; Erkki Holopainen bottom)*

Ask any birder visiting North Queensland a species they wanted to see and 99 times out of 100 this species would come up – a prehistoric looking species with a bony helmet, bright wattles and fearsome claws.

We had arranged with a contact in the area to give him a call when the birds appeared at his house, a daily occurrence as they came looking for food. It is people like this whom the cassowaries are now so dependent – forest clearance, attacks by dogs and feral pigs and vehicle strikes have now reduced their population to perilous levels with only 1,000 birds estimated to be left in Australia. Their presence in the forest is crucial – they are a keystone species, required for dispersal of forest fruits. It is estimated up to 100 plant species rely on the cassowary alone to disperse their seeds.

We edged slowly down the side of the house to view the back garden and then had that heart stopping, almost primeval moment, of being face to face with a Southern Cassowary. – literally – the females stand up to 1.8m tall! This bird (a male – slightly smaller at 1.5m!) was enjoying its breakfast and feeding just feet away unconcerned by our presence. It then wandered over towards us (causing a few to take a step back!) and sat down and had a preen – it was a privilege to be so close to such an iconic bird.

After many megabytes of images and video were burned, we had to drag ourselves away. The other inhabitants of the garden – a female Victoria's Riflebird and some Musky Rat-kangaroos had barely gathered a glance, so transfixed were we by this magnificent species. We bade farewell, and headed off towards Mareeba and our next stop – just south of town a small group of Australian Bustard were a roadside surprise.

After a restorative coffee in Mareeba, we headed into the local wetlands. A roadside pool was chock-a-block with Magpie Geese. On the drive into the wetlands, a few Blue-winged Kookaburra were seen.



*Blue-winged Kookaburra (Andy Jensen)*

Also on the drive in a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle were soaring high in the distance – the heat was building and the thermals forming. On reaching the wetlands car park, we encountered a group of Emu in the nearby scrub. A small population lives at the wetlands.

Lake Mareeba itself was quiet – Comb-crested Jacana trotted on the lilies, and Green Pygmy Geese were present in good numbers. Alison's sharp eyes picked out a pair of the scarcer Cotton Pygmy Geese among them. One bird we couldn't count sadly was the Gouldian Finch in the reintroduction aviaries just outside the visitor centre – they are looking to re-establish the species in the area.

We enjoyed a relaxing lunch looking out over the water, and headed back to the vehicle, stopping to see a brief Northern Fantail on the way.

Next it was on to the nearby Granite Gorge – we first made a stop in some farmland nearby where we had heard there had been large numbers of cranes recently. Sure enough we encountered a large flock in the distance, and after some impromptu navigation to find a suitable farm track to get closer, we were able to get very close views of the flock right next to the track – the majority were Brolga (c.150) but a small number of Sarus Crane with their more extensive red down the neck and no dewlap, were also present. This species is more common in Asia, and until the 1960s was unknown in Australia, although it could have been overlooked.

At Granite Gorge, around the caravan park we found our target Squatter Pigeons without any difficulty as they were lazing about on the tracks crisscrossing the park – if only it was always that easy!



*Squatter Pigeons (Andy Jensen)*

We carried on, and stopped in at another wetland site, Lake Mitchell. The lake was full of Black Swan, Comb-crested Jacana and Green Pygmy Geese, and best of all a stately Black-necked Stork. A small group of Caspian Tern were present, and nearby a single Marsh Sandpiper was the only one of the trip.

On the margins of the lake, interest was provided by a small group of Red-winged Parrots and one male in particular put on a great display, perched up close, then a beautiful flyby with its red wing patches gleaming in the sun.

Carrying on further north still towards Kingfisher Park, we stopped at another stakeout in Mount Molloy, and another bower. Soon the owner was home – a smart Great Bowerbird, although its bower drew disparaging comments from some in the group, not living up to the high expectations set by the Satin earlier in the trip! It didn't seem to be up to scratch in the eyes of the local female bowerbirds either, as when one came in, and the male put on a great shot erecting its pink crest and displaying, the female showed no interest and disappeared!



*Great Bowerbird at his bower (Andy Jensen)*

Finally after a long day we arrived at the world famous Kingfisher Park and met our hosts Carol and Andrew. Kingfisher Park is a little oasis of lowland rainforest among the surrounding sugar cane fields and has a fantastic bird list to boot. After the group settled in and we caught up on the latest gen, we headed out for some evening birding around the lodge grounds. The first Pale-yellow Robin were seen, and nice views of Emerald Dove were obtained. A Leaf-tailed Gecko was sat quietly in a tree by the parking area.

The main target though was to spend some time waiting by the famous crake pool, to see if the species after which it is named, Red-necked Crake would come in. This forest rail is a real skulker, with many people

spending a week here and not seeing this species – a friend of Andy's has visited on multiple occasions and still drawn a blank!

It was with hope rather than expectation when we sat down to begin our vigil – and initially we drew a blank. After a while though we heard some rustling in the small patch of trees next to where we were standing that sounded worthy of investigation and sure enough, a pair of Red-necked Crake were wandering around foraging in the leaf litter. After all of the group got on the birds, we were treated to prolonged views as they moved back and forth in the scrub, before they retreated back towards the rear of the patch and off into the more extensive woodland behind. Great views, and a real bonus on our first night there!



*Red-necked Crake (Andy Jensen)*

After dinner at the nearby pub, a Northern Brown Bandicoot was spotted in the headlights on our way back in – Kingfisher Park is fantastic for mammals and we would try on subsequent nights – but after a long day, and with another big day tomorrow, it was time to hit the sack!

We began the drive up nearby Mount Lewis the following morning, to be at the famous clearing for dawn – Mount Lewis is a great spot for a number of localised endemics in the Wet Tropics, including a somef species that are only found at altitude. We eventually arrived and began birding the area around the clearing. A small group of Mountain Thornbill were present, the first of the endemic species to North Queensland, and like the name suggests found in higher country.

In the seeding grasses of the clearing a group of Red-browed Finches were present and it wasn't long before we located one of the main targets on Mount Lewis – a cracking Blue-faced Parrot-finch. The bird did not sit up long at first, as the finch flock was mobile, but a few more were found among the more common Red-broweds.

We were lucky to encounter this species, as they typically do not arrive at the clearing until later in the spring/summer, and not 'til Christmas in some years. They winter in lower areas, and between times it is a bit of a mystery, but they are presumably working their way back up to higher areas.

We enjoyed great views as the birds moved around the clearing – when we returned later after our walk there were none, so it was a fortuitous start to the day.



*We were lucky to find a few Blue-faced Parrot-finch – it was rather early in the season for them (Andy Jensen)*

We unpacked the delicious breakfasts that Carol and Andrew had prepared for us, and tucked in before heading off down the track for a walk to try for some of the other species of the area. The first new birds began to be seen with good views had of Atherton Scrubwren – a similar species to Large-billed Scrubwren, but with a few subtle distinctions. We were to see several birds throughout the course of the morning.

Other species encountered along the track included Grey Fantail, of the darker mountain race *kaesti* and Spectacled Monarchs. Honeyeaters included Graceful, Yellow-spotted, Lewin's and Macleay's, and best of all a few Bridled Honeyeaters – another of the Wet Tropics endemics. Its loud call was to be heard a lot that morning. Spotted Catbird and Victoria's Riflebird were both heard calling, but remained unseen.

We located a distinctive call from within the forest, and the source of the call was a Tooth-billed Bowerbird sat by his bower. There is not much to the bower of this species (maintaining a cleared "court" area at which they sing with some fresh wild ginger leaves) and this bowerbird is not the most attractive of the family, but it certainly has a restricted range being found only in the uplands of North Queensland.



*A Tooth-billed Bowerbird – an upland north Queensland endemic – was located at its display court (Andy Jensen)*



*Bridled Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

We carried on, finding another of the endemics - Bower's Shrike-thrush. This species is the high altitude equivalent of Little Shrike-thrush, although confusing Little Shrike-thrush does occur, and the race here also has a darker bill like this species. The first Bower's Shrike Thrush found were a little skittish, but we were able to get close views to see the streaked chest, and the slate grey mantle distinctive of this species.



Another of the wet tropics endemics – Bower's Shrike-thrush (Andy Jensen)

Carrying further on, the species kept coming – a Yellow-breasted Boatbill was seen, along with Pale-yellow Robins, and best of all the first Grey-headed Robins – a large headed robin, which is found in the region. We also encountered a pair of White-throated Treecreeper of the race *minor* – a smaller, darker subspecies found in northeast Queensland, and sometimes mooted as a potential split “Little Treecreeper”.

Two species were calling persistently yet remained stubbornly out of view – firstly the piercing plaintive whistle of the Fernwren which are skulkers on the forest floor in the highland rainforests of northeast Queensland. Eventually though we got good views of a couple of birds close to the track.

The second very vocal species which initially was not seen was Spotted Catbird – their cat like mewing call heard all along the track. Eventually we came across a group of birds in a fruiting tree, and obtained very good views close to the track.

Further on, we located our first Chowchilla. In the same family as the Logrunner which we had seen earlier in the trip, these birds had exactly the same modus operandi and were busy foraging through the leaf litter, tossing everything aside in the search for a tasty morsel. This was the last of the expected endemics to be seen up here – we had cleaned up in a short space of time.

We carried on birding down the track back towards the car, enjoying good views of many of the aforementioned species. Back at the clearing and with the finches having dispersed we drove back down the mountain, stopping at a few lower altitude spots along the way. A Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo was heard but did not come in, although the group saw a Grey Goshawk which may have put it off. Also in that area a Grey Whistler of the northeast Queensland race *peninsulae* was seen. This species is a dominant component of the dawn chorus up here, but seeing it is often a different matter, so it was nice to see it perched out in the open and showing well.

It was back for lunch at Kingfisher Park after a thoroughly enjoyable morning's birding, and a fruitful one at that. Over a middle of the day break, some of the group took the opportunity to relax, whilst others sat back and watched the comings and goings at the feeders outside our rooms, others going for strolls around the grounds. A keen group headed out to a nearby dam during the heat of the day, and found a group of Wandering Whistling-duck among some of the more common wetland species.

After the interlude, we went back out in the late afternoon to see what we could see around the grounds of Kingfisher Park, particularly looking for the bird which gave the lodge its name! In the orchard, we came across a nesting Papuan Frogmouth which was doing its best to remain unseen.



*Another nesting Papuan Frogmouth – their nests really are flimsy structures! (Andy Jensen)*

Some of the commoner species around the lodge were also seen – Emerald Dove, Brown Cuckoo Dove and a beautiful Wompoo Fruit-dove. We continued to familiarize ourselves with Yellow-spotted and Graceful Honeyeaters and a Brush Cuckoo was heard and then seen, and a Lemon-bellied Flycatcher was seen by the rooms. More unusual were the small numbers of Bridled Honeyeater seen behind the office – by this time

of year they should have gone up the mountain, but speaking with Andrew it was one of a number of strange events happening at the moment – maybe due to the dry conditions.



*The beautiful Wompoo Fruit-dove (Andy Jensen)*

A few Superb Fruit-dove zipped about the orchard where a Noisy Pitta was heard, but not seen. We had better luck with the Pied Monarch though and we obtained great views of this dashing species.

In terms of our main target there was some frustration – we had heard a few brief snatches of call from the Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfishers, but they were newly back in and not many birds were back yet. While they set up territories they often call motionless high in the canopy and can be very difficult to see unless they move. Later in the season when breeding is in full swing, they are lower down and attending nests in termite mounds.

We heard a few birds, but were unable to get views of any. It would have to wait until another day.

After dinner, we went back up Mount Lewis for some spotlighting, deciding to head for the clearing and slowly work our way back down. On reaching the clearing, we heard a Lesser Sooty Owl instantly on getting out of the vehicle – surely not. We followed the source of the call, and soon were having magnificent views of this beautiful silvery owl perched close to the track. It flew a short distance, then continued to give wonderful views, before it flew off deeper into the forest. What a start! It was only after these stunning views that Andy realised his camera had been on the wrong setting the whole time!

Aside from the Lesser Sooty Owl, it was quiet for birds, but the main target was in the bag. Other wildlife encountered included a Giant White-tailed Rat, several pademelons, and best of all a Daintree River Possum – a very restricted range species in the area. A Small-eyed Snake close to the track proved a reminder to keep our eyes on where we were stepping at times.

It had been another great day – albeit a long one. It was back to Kingfisher Park to rest up for the next day.

We started off with a relaxing wander around Kingfisher Park before breakfast. The dawn chorus was going off with the usual suspects leading the way – Grey Whistler and many species of honeyeater. Also chiming in were a couple of Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher but again they remained stubbornly out of sight.

After a magnificent spread of breakfast, we had to drag ourselves away as there was birding to be done on the Atherton Tablelands. On the drive down we saw a couple of Red-tailed Black-cockatoo cross the road. A large number were feeding loudly in some nearby trees, and flying around displaying their red tail panels.



*Noisy and raucous Red-tailed Black-cockatoos were seen on the drive south (Andy Jensen)*

After a while longer, we reached our destination at Mount Hypipamee. This old volcanic crater supports most of the high altitude forest specialities of the region, but we were after one in particular.

We went into the forest and sat and waited at an ornate structure in the forest. Initially there was no sign, just a couple of Crimson Rosella of the northern race. Then a flurry of activity and a golden flash illuminating the forest in front of us – the magnificent Golden Bowerbird. This species is endemic to North Queensland occurring only in forests above 700 m in the Wet Tropics. It became clear what the source of the commotion was – a plainer looking bowerbird was at the bower. Initially we thought it was a female, but judging by the male's aggressive reaction it was a young male and the owner of the bower was seeing off the upstart!

The rival seen off and the bird settled down, perched just metres away from us and having a preen to straighten himself out in case a female did come along. But before long the young intruder was back and it received the same treatment again! This time the male on returning victorious indulged in a spot of bower upkeep, adding some fresh moss to the structure.



*The stunning Golden Bowerbird tending his bower (Andy Jensen)*



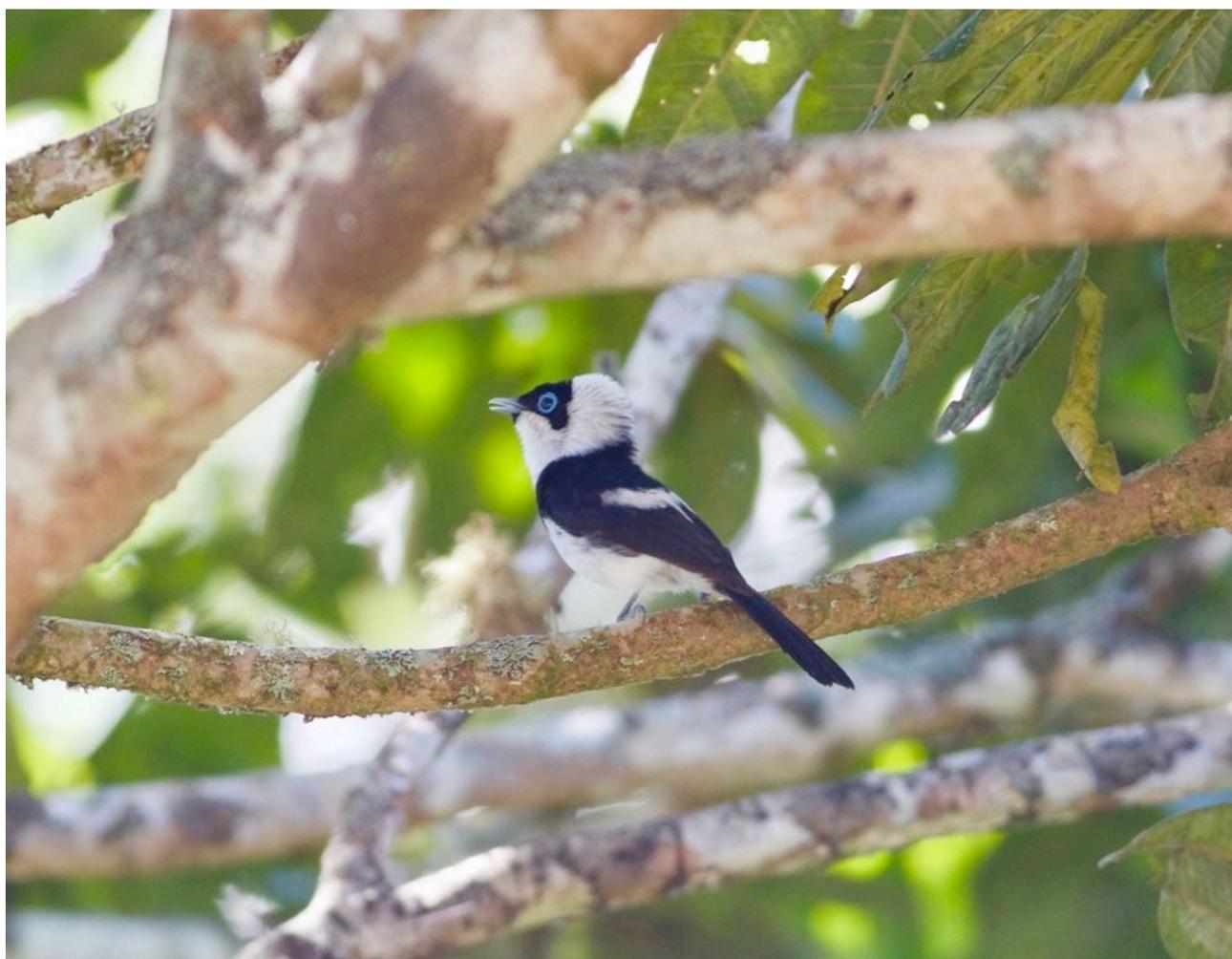
*The Golden Bowerbird's bower (Andy Jensen)*

Soon the bird moved off, no doubt not far away and watching in case the rival male returned. We headed off on a track down to the crater viewpoint. Along the track a few Atherton Scrubwren and Mountain Thornbill were seen and a Grey-headed Robin. Back at the carpark a Grey Goshawk soared overhead.

On to another site, and some eucalypt woodland around Herberton. A few Sarus Crane were at a small farm dam on the way in and a group of White-cheeked Honeyeater were found in a flowering tree. The main purpose of our visit here was to see a fascinating honeyeater, restricted to a small area on the southern Atherton Tablelands. This bird was treated originally as Yellow-tinted Honeyeater originally, but more recently was thought to be the northern yellow faced form of Fuscous Honeyeater.

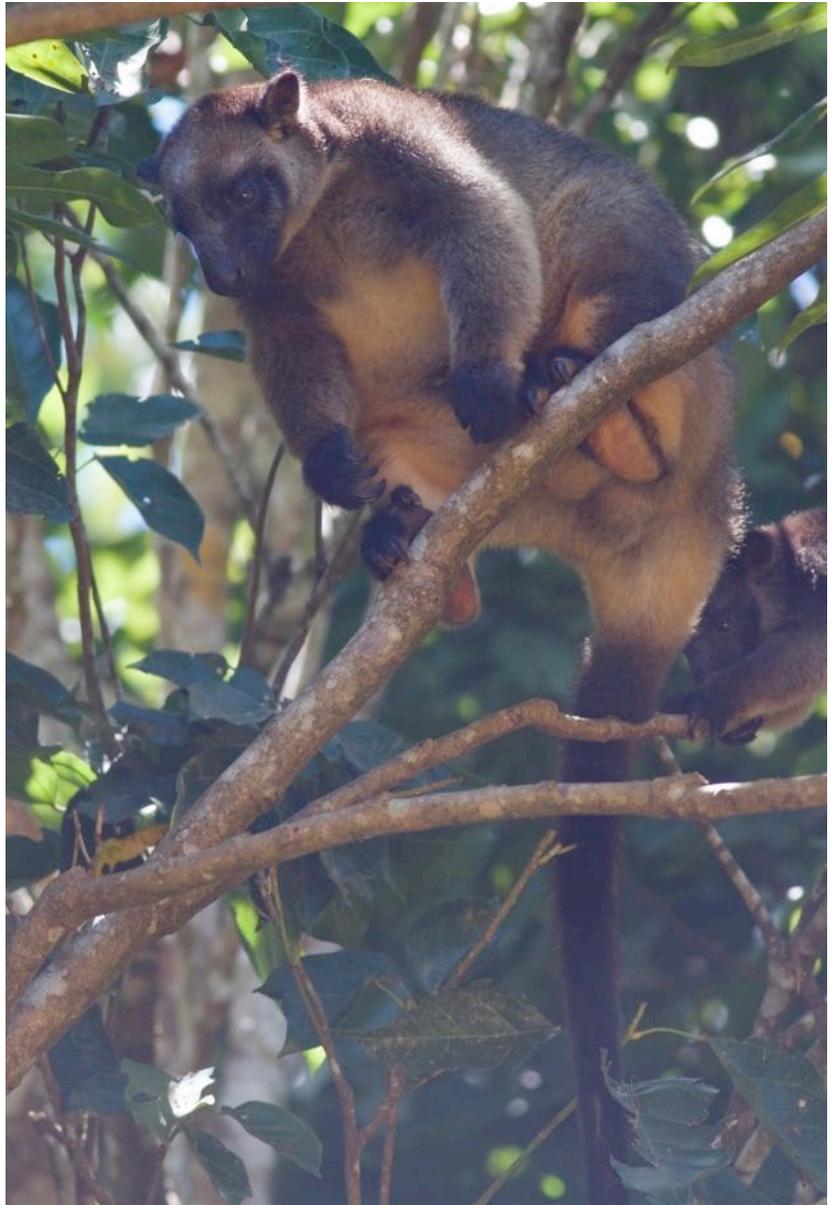
It differs from Fuscous in plumage, voice, and many ecological aspects such as habitat and nest type. It also does not undergo a change in plumage from breeding to non-breeding as Fuscous does. Superficially it resembles drab Yellow-tinted Honeyeater but also differs in voice. It is suspected by many that it may be an undescribed species – but more work is required so watch this space! We encountered a group of this honeyeater close to a creek crossing in a forested block where we were able to note the features – essentially a bird intermediate in appearance between Yellow-tinted and Fuscous.

We then moved on to the nearby Hasties swamp. The lake was deserted though – a far cry from the usual throngs of wildfowl, particularly whistling-ducks, that usually inhabit here. A single Black-necked Stork fishing in the shadows was the only bird of note. As it was quiet we departed to the nearby Nerada Tea Plantation – here Pied Monarch was a car park bird singing loudly and showing brilliantly.



*The handsome Pied Monarch (Andy Jensen)*

After a replenishing cup of tea, we had a look in the tiny roadside plantation for some rather special residents. Before long we were watching a pair of Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroos – one of only two species in this family in Australia, the remaining eight occurring in New Guinea. This species is only found in a small area of upland rainforest in the Wet Tropics. It previously used to occur in lowland areas but has now retreated to uncleared upland areas.



*Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo (Andy Jensen)*

After a spot of lunch, we decided to go on a long drive during the heat of the day to a completely different area of habitat. Passing the Atherton Tablelands, and heading further north and west, the countryside became noticeably drier and hotter (the thermometer saying 37c!).

We stopped off at a small farm dam, and waited to see what might be coming in to drink from the shade. A few species were coming in – a few Black-chinned Honeyeaters, a couple of Squatter Pigeon, some Double-barred Finch, a Great Bowerbird and a noisy gang of Apostlebirds – definitely more than 12 today as two groups approached from opposite sides of the dam – seemingly having an agreement that their territories shared this valuable water source in the middle!

Andy heard a Red-backed Kingfisher and Alison was lucky enough to catch a glimpse as it flew past but it could not be relocated – a lucky sighting of a species typically found in areas further inland than this. A few Brown Treecreeper of the northern race *melanotus*, aptly often named Black Treecreeper, were also in the area around the dam calling loudly.

The stars of the show though were a small group of nervous Black-throated Finch which dropped down from nearby shrub to have a drink. A scarce species in northern Queensland favouring grassy open woodland habitats.

We began to work our way back to Kingfisher Park, stopping at a river crossing on the way back. There is an isolated population of White-gaped Honeyeater past Mount Carbine – whilst this is a common bird around Townsville and other parts of North Queensland, it is surprisingly scarce in the Cairns region. After a bit of searching we had good views. A few Red-winged Parrot were also along the creekline.

Back further east, and the appropriately named Bustard Downs, where a pair of Australian Bustard showed well in the gentle evening light.



*A stately Australian Bustard (Andy Jensen)*

We dropped in at Abattoir Swamp where a few Brown-backed Honeyeater were present and best of all a Northern Fantail, although it kept its distance unfortunately. It had been a long day so it was back to quickly freshen up for dinner and off out again to the nearby Mount Molloy pub.

As we drove out of Kingfisher Park we spotted a Barn Owl sat on a fencepost in the car headlights. It sat long enough for everyone to get a view before it flew off ghostlike into the dark. The Australian subspecies is smaller in stature than its northern hemisphere counterparts. Another couple were seen on the short drive into Mount Molloy – obviously these cane fields had plenty of prey for them.

After dinner, and back at Kingfisher Park a couple of the group had a short walk around the grounds to see what we could see. A few Fawn-footed Melomys (an arboreal rodent) were taking advantage of scraps below the bird feeders. Around the wooded areas, a Red-necked Crake pair were calling boisterously and a Green Ringtail Possum was found.



*Green Ringtail Possum (Andy Jensen)*

The last full day of the tour, and trying to mop up the last species not seen – namely Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher. Before breakfast we had a stakeout at some of the spots we had heard calling birds – Andy caught a brief glimpse as one zipped through the canopy but no more were seen. A few Emerald Dove, Grey Whistler, Spectacled Monarch, Varied Triller and Pied Monarch were all recorded.

The vigil continued after breakfast but birds were not too vocal. It was time to try a different tactic and a different area, so we went for a short drive to the Mowbray State Forest. Along the road in, we pulled over and soon were hearing the distinctive call of Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher. Then one flew across the road, and settled into a nearby tree offering great views. A second bird was also flying around at the same time, streamers wafting in the breeze, and we enjoyed great views on several occasions of this gaudy kingfisher, with its bright orange underparts and red bill offset by the delicate white tail plumes and rump.



*Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher – well worth the wait! (Andy Jensen)*

Elated with the views, we soaked up more of these birds, before they moved off. Back at Kingfisher Park, a Pacific Baza was seen overhead, and we enjoyed an outdoor lunch watching the comings and goings at the feeders.

As we had cleared up in the area, and with an afternoon still free, we arranged a trip out on the nearby Daintree River with a local boat operator.

We enjoyed a relaxing late afternoon and evening cruising along the river with the knowledgeable boatman, as he pointed out the sights of the river, including a couple of Amethystine Python – a very large snake these particular individuals hunt roosting egrets!

Also along the river we saw Green Oriole, nesting Shining Flycatcher and Papuan Frogmouth, Large-billed Gerygone, Pacific Koel and Brown-backed Honeyeaters. A large group of Australian Swiftlet were also feeding low over the water.

The highlight of the trip was great views of two separate Black Bittern – one of which in particular sat in the open, rather unusual for this shy species.



*Black Bittern on the boat cruise (Andy Jensen)*



*Brown-backed Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

Back at the boat ramp, and a Pale-vented Bush-hen called from the opposite side of the river but there was no chance of sighting this bird – and there were no volunteers to swim back across the crocodile infested waters to try and flush it! On the drive back, a roadside Pheasant Coucal on a fence post was the only bird of note.



*A relaxing end to the tour (Andy Jensen)*

The final morning, we had one last look near Kingfisher Park before breakfast – a few Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher were heard, and many of the commoner rainforest species were seen, including another Spotted Catbird. We headed back for breakfast, and timed it well – walking in as a Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher was showing low down behind the gazebo in which we had breakfast – a great end to the trip. The drive back to Cairns saw nothing new, before we arrived back at the airport, where the group bade their farewells before catching flights back home or onto their next destination. It had been a great trip, full of many highlights.

### **TOP 10 BIRDS OF THE TRIP**

The top ten birds of the trip, voted for by all participants were as follows. Each person had five votes, and in total 20 species received a vote, showing how tough a decision it was to narrow it down to just five birds.

**1** Golden Bowerbird, **2** Buff-breasted Paradise-kingfisher, **3** Lesser Sooty Owl, **4** Southern Cassowary, **5** Albert's Lyrebird, **6=** Blue-faced Parrot-finch, Marbled Frogmouth, **8=** Antipodean Albatross, Regent Bowerbird, Noisy Pitta.

Honourable mention – mammals of the trip: Platypus, Lumholtz's Tree-kangaroo and Echidna.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

**Southern Cassowary** ◊ *Casuarius casuarius* A single male at Cassowary House – memories that will last a lifetime

**Emu** ◊ *Dromaius novaehollandiae* A small group at Mareeba wetlands

**Magpie Goose** ◊ *Anseranas semipalmata* First seen around Newcastle then common in north Queensland

**Plumed Whistling Duck** ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* A small group at Eungella then a few in north Queensland

**Wandering Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata* A few near Julatten the only record

**Black Swan** ◊ *Cygnus atratus* Seen on many wetland sites



*Emu (Andy Jensen)*



*Black Swan (Andy Jensen)*

**Raja Shelduck** ◊ (Radjah S) *Tadorna radjah* Several at Cairns Centennial Lakes

**Pink-eared Duck** ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* A pair in the Richmond lowlands near Sydney

**Maned Duck** ◊ (Australian Wood D) *Chenonetta jubata* Common and widespread

**Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* A pair on Lake Mareeba the only record

**Green Pygmy Goose** ◊ *Nettapus pulchellus* On many of the northern Queensland freshwater wetlands



Raja Shelduck (Andy Jensen)



Green Pygmy Goose (Andy Jensen)

- Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa* Common on wetland sites
- Grey Teal ++** *Anas gracilis* On a few wetlands – scarce as many moved inland
- Chestnut Teal** ◊ *Anas castanea* Seen on a few wetlands, including brackish sites
- Blue-billed Duck** ◊ *Oxyura australis* A pair on Lake Wallace near Lithgow were a lucky sighting
- Musk Duck** ◊ *Biziura lobate* Several on Lake Wallace, including displaying male
- Australian Brushturkey** ◊ *Alectura lathamii* Common in rainforest habitat, often near parking areas scavenging
- Orange-footed Scrubfowl** *Megapodius reinwardt* At several sites in forested habitat around Cairns region
- Brown Quail** ◊ *Coturnix ypsilophora* A pair at Hexham swamp near Newcastle were the only record
- Wilson's Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Numerous on the pelagic out of Swansea
- Antipodean Albatross** ◊ ++ (Gibson's A) *Diomedea [antipodensis] gibsoni* A single bird seen on the Swansea pelagic
- Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* A couple seen on the Swansea pelagic
- Campbell Albatross** ◊ ++ *Thalassarche impavida* A few on the Swansea pelagic
- Shy Albatross** ◊ ++ *Thalassarche cauta* A couple on the Swansea pelagic – New Zealand “White-capped” birds
- Providence Petrel** ◊ *Pterodroma solandri* Two on the Swansea pelagic – pterodromas were surprisingly scarce
- Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna pacifica* Numerous on the Swansea pelagic
- Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna grisea* A few among the Short-tailed Shearwaters on the Swansea pelagic
- Short-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna tenuirostris* Several groups of migrating birds, heading south on the pelagic
- Fluttering Shearwater** ◊ *Puffinus gavius* A few seen on the Swansea pelagic
- Hutton's Shearwater** ◊ *Puffinus huttoni* A few on the pelagic
- Australasian Grebe** *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* Seen on a number of wetland sites
- Hoary-headed Grebe** ◊ *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus* A single bird at Lithgow sewage works the only record
- Great Crested Grebe ++** *Podiceps cristatus* Several on Lake Wallace near Lithgow
- Black-necked Stork** ◊ *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* A single on Lake Mitchell, then another at Hasties Swamp, near Cairns
- Australian White Ibis ++** *Threskiornis moluccus* Common and widespread
- Straw-necked Ibis** ◊ *Threskiornis spinicollis* Scarce – only seen inland from Mackay and near Julatten – many moved inland
- Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* A single on Bribie Island near Brisbane
- Royal Spoonbill** ◊ *Platalea regia* Seen on several wetland sites, common at Hexham swamp
- Yellow-billed Spoonbill** ◊ *Platalea flavipes* A single in the Richmond lowlands near Sydney
- Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis* Two showed well on the Daintree boat trip
- Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous N H)** *Nycticorax caledonicus* A juvenile at Cairns Centennial Lakes
- Striated Heron (Mangrove H)** *Butorides striata* Seen at a few coastal sites, firstly at Swansea
- Eastern Cattle Egret ++** *Bubulcus coromandus* Common and widespread
- Great Egret ++ (Eastern G E)** *Ardea [alba] modesta* On many wetland sites
- Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia* On many wetland sites – the scarcest egret recorded
- White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae* Seen at many wetlands
- Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* On several wetland and coastal sites
- Pacific Reef Heron (Eastern R E)** *Egretta sacra* Dark morph bird at the Cairns esplanade
- Australian Pelican** ◊ *Pelecanus conspicillatus* On many wetlands and coastal sites

**Australasian Gannet** ◊ *Morus serrator* Several on the Swansea pelagic  
**Little Pied Cormorant** *Microcarbo melanoleucos* On many wetlands  
**Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Common and widespread  
**Australian Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax varius* The most coastal cormorant – seen on inshore areas  
**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* A few birds seen on freshwater  
**Australasian Darter** ++ (Australian D) *Anhinga novaehollandiae* Several seen  
**Eastern Osprey** ++ *Pandion cristatus* One at Noosa, and then a few around Cairns  
**Black-shouldered Kite** ◊ ++ (Australian K) *Elanus axillaris* A single in the Capertee and a couple on the drives  
**Square-tailed Kite** ◊ *Lophoictinia isura* Two birds seen in the Royal National Park on the first day  
**Pacific Baza** *Aviceda subcristata* A couple near Mackay then one near Julatten  
**Little Eagle** ◊ *Hieraetus morphnoides* Two seen well in the Capertee Valley  
**Wedge-tailed Eagle** ◊ *Aquila audax* Several birds at widely spread sites – often by the roadside  
**Grey Goshawk** ◊ *Accipiter novaehollandiae* First seen at Eungella, then a few at various sites in northern Queensland  
**Brown Goshawk** *Accipiter fasciatus* The only definite around Brisbane, although a few accipiters may have been this species



*Intermediate Egret (Andy Jensen)*



*White-faced Heron (Andy Jensen)*



*Pacific Reef Heron (Andy Jensen)*



*Australian Pelicans (Andy Jensen)*

**Collared Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter cirrocephalus* Seen in the Capertee and around Newcastle

**Swamp Harrier** ◊ ++ *Circus approximans* Several at Hexham swamp after one at Hunter wetland centre  
**Spotted Harrier** ◊ *Circus assimilis* One on the drive from Barren Grounds to Kiama was unexpected hunting over farmland  
**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Common around Cairns and Mackay  
**Whistling Kite** *Haliastur sphenurus* Widespread, less common than the previous species  
**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus* A few around Brisbane, then one on the Daintree River  
**White-bellied Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster* A few widespread single birds  
**Australian Bustard** ◊ *Ardeotis australis* Small group just south of Mareeba then two inland from Julatten  
**Red-necked Crake** ◊ *Rallina tricolor* Great views of a pair at Kingfisher Park  
**Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis* First seen at Lake Wallace, then brilliant views on Bribie Island  
**Lewin's Rail** ◊ *Lewinia pectoralis* Fantastic views at Swansea in the mangroves – normally a real skulker  
**Pale-vented Bush-hen** ◊ ++ (Rufous-tailed B-h) *Amaurornis moluccana* (H) Only heard on the Daintree boat trip  
**White-browed Crake** *Porzana cinerea* A single bird at Cattana wetland near Cairns  
**Australasian Swamphen** ◊ ++ *Porphyrio melanotus* Common on wetland sites  
**Dusky Moorhen** *Gallinula tenebrosa* Common on wetland sites  
**Eurasian Coot** ++ (Common C) *Fulica atra* Quite scarce – many inland. Seen at Lake Wallace and Mackay  
**Sarus Crane** *Grus Antigone* A few near Granite Gorge and Herberton around the Atherton Tablelands  
**Brolga** ◊ *Grus rubicunda* Large group near Granite Gorge then a few on Lake Mitchell  
**Painted Buttonquail** ◊ *Turnix varius* (LO) Heard in the woodlands near Newcastle – only Andy got a glimpse  
**Bush Stone-curlew** ◊ (Bush Thick-knee) *Burhinus grallarius* Common around Cairns CBD  
**Beach Stone-curlew** ◊ (Beach Thick-knee) *Esacus magnirostris* Pair with young on Bribie Island, then another pair at Cairns  
**Pied Oystercatcher** ◊ ++ (Australian P O) *Haematopus longirostris* A few at coastal sites  
**Sooty Oystercatcher** ◊ *Haematopus fuliginosus* A couple on the pelagic on way out, then a few at Newcastle  
**White-headed Stilt** ++ *Himantopus leucocephalus* Surprisingly scarce on freshwater wetlands  
**Masked Lapwing** *Vanellus miles* Common and widespread  
**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Single on Hexham swamp the only record  
**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* A few at Cairns esplanade  
**Red-capped Plover** ◊ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Several at Inskip Point then a few on Bribie Island  
**Lesser Sand Plover** ++ (Mongolian S) *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus* Several at Inskip Point and at Cairns esplanade  
**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultia* A few at Cairns esplanade  
**Black-fronted Dotterel** ◊ (B-f Plover) *Euseyornis melanops* A few on various waterbodies  
**Comb-crested Jacana** ◊ *Irediparra gallinacea* First seen on Bribie Island, then on various wetlands thereafter  
**Latham's Snipe** ◊ *Gallinago hardwickii* A single on Bribie Island the only record of this snipe that breeds in Japan  
**Black-tailed Godwit** ++ *Limosa limosa* First seen at a couple of sites around Newcastle then a few around Brisbane and Cairns  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Seen at a few coastal sites – most numerous at Toorbul near Brisbane  
**Whimbrel** ++ (Eurasian W) *Numenius [phaeopus] phaeopus* Seen at a few sites around Brisbane, and then in Cairns  
**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* Recorded at a few coastal sites – most numerous at Toorbul  
**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* A single bird on Lake Mitchell near Cairns  
**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* A couple at Cairns esplanade  
**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes* A small group on the Cairns esplanade  
**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Small numbers at Cairns  
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* One at Richmond lowlands near Sydney the only record  
**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* One on the rock platform at Newcastle  
**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* Medium sized groups at Toorbul and Cairns esplanade  
**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Approximately 50 at Hexham swamp high tide roost  
**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* At Hexham swamp then again at Cairns esplanade  
**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* At Hexham swamp then again at Cairns esplanade  
**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* Good numbers of this declining wader at Hexham then again at Cairns  
**Silver Gull** ◊ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* At various coastal sites  
**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* A couple on the Cairns esplanade  
**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* A couple on Lake Samsonvale, then a couple Cairns, with a small group on Lake Mitchell  
**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* At various coastal sites – large group roosting at Inskip Point  
**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* A couple at Stockton sandspit then a couple at Cairns esplanade  
**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* On the rock platform at Newcastle  
**Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua)** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Several on the Swansea pelagic

**Parasitic Jaeger (A Skua) *Stercorarius parasiticus*** A single on the Swansea pelagic

**Rock Dove (introduced) (introduced) *Columba livia*** Common and widespread

**White-headed Pigeon** ♦ *Columba leucomela* A small group in the park at Gloucester, then a couple of flyovers at O'Reilly's

**Spotted Dove (introduced) (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis*** Common and widespread

**Brown Cuckoo-Dove** ♦ *Macropygia phasianella* First seen O'Reilly's then common around Eungella and Cairns uplands

**Pacific Emerald Dove ++ *Chalcophaps longirostris*** First at O'Reilly's then common in Cairns area

**Common Bronzewing** ♦ *Phaps chalcoptera* A couple in the Capertee and then a single near Newcastle

**Crested Pigeon** ♦ *Ocyphaps lophotes* Common and widespread

**Squatter Pigeon** ♦ *Geophaps scripta* Several at Granite Gorge on the Atherton Tablelands then one inland of Mount Carbine

**Wonga Pigeon** ♦ *Leucosarcia melanoleuca* First seen at Royal National Park then at Gloucester Tops and O'Reilly's

**Peaceful Dove ++ *Geopelia placida*** First around Newcastle, then common in Cairns area

**Bar-shouldered Dove** ♦ *Geopelia humeralis* At Inskip Point, then common around Cairns

**Wompoo Fruit Dove** ♦ *Ptilinopus magnificus* A few seen at rainforest sites in Queensland

**Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*** A few near Kuranda showed well, then seen at Kingfisher Park

**Rose-crowned Fruit Dove** ♦ *Ptilinopus regina* First seen well at Noosa then a few around Eungella and Cairns

**Torresian Imperial Pigeon** ♦ ++ *Ducula spilorrhoa* First seen at Eungella, then common around Cairns especially lowlands



*Bar-shouldered Dove (Andy Jensen)*



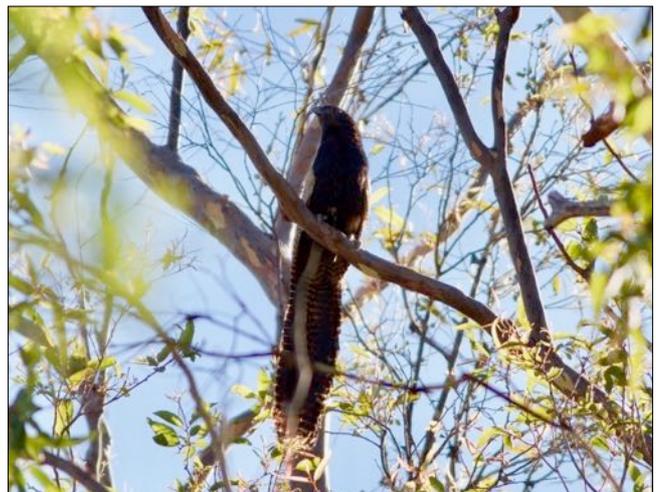
*Torresian Imperial Pigeon (Andy Jensen)*

**Topknot Pigeon** ♦ *Lopholaimus antarcticus* First seen in Royal National Park, then a number of sightings thereafter

**Pheasant Coucal** ♦ *Centropus phasianinus* One near Brisbane, then one near Mossman on the way back from boat



*Topknot Pigeon (Erkki Holopainen)*



*Pheasant Coucal (Andy Jensen)*

**Pacific Koel** ♦ ++ (Australian K) *Eudynamys orientalis* Seen in Swansea, then a few seen and more heard thereafter

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** ♦ *Scythrops novaehollandiae* A pair in Sydney, then seen at a number of sites afterwards

**Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** ◊ *Chrysococcyx basalis* (H) Heard at the Hunter wetlands centre near Newcastle  
**Shining Bronze Cuckoo** ◊ *Chrysococcyx lucidus* First in Royal National Park, and heard at many sites throughout  
**Little Bronze Cuckoo** ◊ ++ (Gould's B C) *Chrysococcyx [minutillus] russatus* One on way from Eungella, heard Cairns area  
**Pallid Cuckoo** ◊ *Cacomantis pallidus* A few in the Capertee Valley  
**Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo** ◊ *Cacomantis castaneiventris* (H) Heard at the base of Mount Lewis near Julatten  
**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** ◊ *Cacomantis flabelliformis* Seen and more often heard at a number of sites  
**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* First seen at Gloucester, then heard and seen a couple more times near Cairns  
**Greater Sooty Owl** ◊ *Tyto tenebricosa* Seen on way to Gloucester Tops, heard at O'Reilly's  
**Lesser Sooty Owl** ◊ *Tyto multipunctata* Great views on Mount Lewis  
**Eastern Barn Owl** ++ *Tyto delicatula* A few around Julatten in the cane fields  
**Eastern Grass Owl** ++ (Australasian G O) *Tyto longimembris* Fantastic views near Brisbane – worth braving the mozzies  
**Powerful Owl** ◊ *Ninox strenua* A female on the first day in Sydney at a daytime roost  
**Southern Boobook** ◊ *Ninox boobook* Seen near Kiama, heard in a few other spots  
**Marbled Frogmouth** ◊ *Podargus ocellatus* One at O'Reilly's, then great views of a pair on Mount Glorious  
**Papuan Frogmouth** ◊ *Podargus papuensis* Nesting birds at Cairns, Kingfisher Park and the Daintree boat trip  
**Tawny Frogmouth** ◊ *Podargus strigoides* Family group in Sydney, a couple around Newcastle and on way to Gloucester Tops  
**White-throated Nightjar** ◊ *Eurostopodus mystacalis* Good views of a couple of birds in the Capertee Valley  
**Large-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus macrurus* Showed well near Rainbow Beach at southern limit of its range – new for tour  
**Australian Owlet-Nightjar** ◊ *Aegotheles cristatus* One at a daytime roost in Swansea  
**Australian Swiftlet** ◊ ++ *Aerodramus terraereginae* Common around Cairns  
**White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus* A couple of sightings round Brisbane, then large group at Eungella  
**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* Small numbers throughout of this summer migrant to Australia  
**Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher** ◊ *Tanysiptera Sylvia* A few near Julatten – one of the highlights of the trip  
**Laughing Kookaburra** ◊ *Dacelo novaeguineae* Common and widespread  
**Blue-winged Kookaburra** ◊ *Dacelo leachii* A few in the drier country around Cairns  
**Forest Kingfisher** ◊ *Todiramphus macleayii* Common around Cairns  
**Torresian Kingfisher** ◊ ++ *Todiramphus sordidus* First in Brisbane, then a few in mangrove sites after  
**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* Small numbers throughout  
**Red-backed Kingfisher** ◊ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* (NL) One heard by Andy inland from Mount Carbine, seen by Alison  
**Azure Kingfisher** *Ceyx azureus* First in Royal National Park, then a couple in the Capertee, at Eungella and Julatten  
**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Seen in small numbers in Queensland  
**Nankeen Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides* Small numbers throughout  
**Australian Hobby** ◊ *Falco longipennis* Seen by Erkki near Newcastle, then one at Hexham swamp  
**Brown Falcon** ◊ *Falco berigora* First seen in the Capertee then a couple of subsequent sightings  
**Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** ◊ *Calyptorhynchus banksia* Large group near Mareeba  
**Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** ◊ *Calyptorhynchus funereus* A few sightings throughout New South Wales and Brisbane area  
**Galah** ◊ *Eolophus roseicapilla* Common and widespread  
**Long-billed Corella** ◊ (introduced) *Cacatua tenuirostris* A couple on the way from Barren Grounds  
**Little Corella** *Cacatua sanguinea* Widespread in the New South Wales section in small numbers  
**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita* Common and widespread  
**Australian King Parrot** ◊ *Alisterus scapularis* Small numbers in forest sites throughout



*Sacred Kingfisher (Andy Jensen)*



*Australian King Parrot (Andy Jensen)*

- Red-winged Parrot** ◊ *Aprosmictus erythropterus* A few in the drier areas around Cairns
- Red-rumped Parrot** ◊ *Psephotus haematonotus* Small numbers around Lithgow and the Capertee
- Crimson Rosella** ◊ *Platycercus elegans* Small numbers in New South Wales/southeast Queensland, two at Mount Hypipamee
- Pale-headed Rosella** ◊ ++ *Platycercus adscitus* One near Bribie Island, then a couple in drier areas around Cairns
- Eastern Rosella** ◊ ++ *Platycercus eximius* Small numbers around Lithgow, the Capertee Valley and Newcastle
- Eastern Ground Parrot** ◊ ++ *Pezoporus wallicus* Great flight views at Budderoo National Park
- Turquoise Parrot** ◊ *Neophema pulchella* A couple seen in the Capertee Valley
- Little Lorikeet** ◊ *Parvipsitta pusilla* A few in the Capertee Valley and woodlands inland from Newcastle
- Rainbow Lorikeet** ◊ *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Common and widespread
- Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** ◊ *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus* A few around Newcastle
- Musk Lorikeet** ◊ *Glossopsitta concinna* Large influx into the Capertee Valley and around Newcastle
- Double-eyed Fig Parrot** ◊ *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* Seen in Centennial Lakes Cairns and heard at other sites around Cairns
- Noisy Pitta** ◊ *Pitta versicolor* Seen well at O'Reilly's then heard around Eungella and Cairns uplands
- Albert's Lyrebird** ◊ *Menura alberti* Great views of two birds at O'Reilly's chasing each other oblivious to our presence
- Superb Lyrebird** ◊ *Menura novaehollandiae* First in Royal National Park, then around Barren Grounds
- Rufous Scrubbird** ◊ *Atrichornis rufescens* Seen by a couple of group at Gloucester Tops – a real skulker
- Green Catbird** ◊ *Ailuroedus crassirostris* First in Royal National Park, then several at O'Reilly's
- Spotted Catbird** ◊ ++ *Ailuroedus maculosus* Heard in many spots near Cairns, seen well on Mount Lewis
- Tooth-billed Bowerbird** ◊ (T-b Catbird) *Scenopoeetes dentirostris* Seen at the bower on Mount Lewis
- Golden Bowerbird** ◊ *Prionodura newtoniana* Great views at Mount Hypipamee – voted bird of the trip
- Regent Bowerbird** ◊ *Sericulus chrysocephalus* Several at O'Reilly's and a single seen later at Eungella
- Satin Bowerbird** ◊ *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* First in Royal National Park, then small numbers at various sites thereafter
- Great Bowerbird** ◊ *Chlamydera nuchalis* A few at Mount Molloy then inland from Mount Carbine coming in to drink
- White-throated Treecreeper** ◊ ++ *Cormobates leucophaea* Small numbers throughout, more heard than seen
- Red-browed Treecreeper** ◊ *Climacteris erythroptus* A few seen at Gloucester Tops
- Brown Treecreeper** ◊ *Climacteris picumnus* First in Capertee Valley, then some of the northern race in dry country near Cairns
- Lovely Fairywren** ◊ ++ *Malurus amabilis* Nice views in Cairns at a couple of sites
- Variiegated Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus lamberti* Seen at Swansea, a nice male
- Superb Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus cyaneus* Seen in small numbers throughout



Variegated Fairy-wren (Andy Jensen)



Superb Fairy-wren (Andy Jensen)

- Red-backed Fairywren** ◇ *Malurus melanocephalus* A small group at Lake Samsonvale near Brisbane
- Southern Emu-wren** ◇ *Stipiturus malachurus* A couple in the Royal National Park, then same at Barren Grounds
- Dusky Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela obscura* Seen at a number of sites around Cairns
- Scarlet Myzomela** ◇ *Myzomela sanguinolenta* Nice views of a group on the way down from O'Reilly's
- Eastern Spinebill** ◇ *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Small numbers throughout in rainforest habitats
- Brown Honeyeater** ◇ *Lichmera indistincta* Common around Brisbane, a few thereafter
- New Holland Honeyeater** ◇ *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* Common in Sydney area
- White-cheeked Honeyeater** ◇ *Phylidonyris niger* A few near Inskip Point, then a group near Herberton
- Striped Honeyeater** ◇ *Plectorhyncha lanceolata* First in the Capertee then a couple around Newcastle
- Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** ◇ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* A few in the Capertee Valley – new for the tour
- Macleay's Honeyeater** ◇ *Xanthotis macleayanus* Common around Cairns hinterlands
- Little Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon citreogularis* First in Rainbow Beach then a few around Cairns
- Hornbill Friarbird** ◇ ++ *Philemon yorki* Common in Cairns sites
- Noisy Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon corniculatus* Small numbers throughout, good numbers in the Capertee Valley
- Blue-faced Honeyeater** ◇ *Entomyzon cyanotis* Small numbers in Queensland
- Black-chinned Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus gularis* Common Newcastle woodlands, normally scarce. A few inland Mount Carbine
- Brown-headed Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus brevirostris* One in the Capertee Valley
- White-throated Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus albobularis* A small group at Toorbul – a few heard elsewhere
- White-naped Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus lunatus* A few in the Blue Mountains
- White-eared Honeyeater** ◇ *Nesoptilotis leucotis* A couple seen near Lithgow, one in the Blue Mountains
- White-fronted Chat** ◇ *Epthianura albifrons* Several at Hexham swamp – a reliable site for this scarce species in region
- Brown-backed Honeyeater** ◇ *Ramsayornis modestus* Seen at a few sites in the Cairns region
- Little Wattlebird** ◇ ++ *Anthochaera chrysoptera* Common and widespread in New South Wales and at Inskip Point
- Red Wattlebird** ◇ *Anthochaera carunculata* Small numbers throughout while in New South Wales
- Bridled Honeyeater** ◇ *Bolemoreus frenatus* Several on Mount Lewis and unusually a few at Kingfisher Park
- Eungella Honeyeater** ◇ *Bolemoreus hindwoodi* Great views of a couple of this restricted range species at Eungella
- Yellow-faced Honeyeater** ◇ *Caligavis chrysops* A few around Newcastle and Brisbane
- Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** ◇ *Lichenostomus melanops* Several in the Capertee Valley, and common in Newcastle woodlands
- Bell Miner** ◇ *Manorina melanophrys* Colony in the woodlands inland from Newcastle
- Noisy Miner** ◇ *Manorina melanocephala* Common and widespread
- White-gaped Honeyeater** ◇ *Stomiopera unicolor* One inland from Mount Carbine at a river crossing
- Yellow Honeyeater** ◇ *Stomiopera flava* Small numbers around Cairns in the lowlands and drier areas
- Varied Honeyeater** ◇ *Gavicalis versicolor* Several on the Cairns esplanade
- Mangrove Honeyeater** ◇ ++ *Gavicalis fasciogularis* A few at Toorbul near Brisbane, then at Inskip Point
- Fuscous Honeyeater** ◇ *Ptilotula fusca* Some near Newcastle, then birds currently treated as this species near Herberton
- White-plumed Honeyeater** ◇ *Ptilotula penicillata* Common in the Capertee Valley
- Graceful Honeyeater** ◇ *Meliphaga gracilis* Seen at a number of sites in north Queensland

**Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** ◇ *Meliphaga notata* Seen at a number of sites in north Queensland  
**Lewin's Honeyeater** ◇ *Meliphaga lewinii* Small numbers throughout  
**Eastern Bristlebird** ◇ *Dasyornis brachypterus* A few seen at Barren Grounds, despite the weather trying to defeat us  
**Spotted Pardalote** ◇ *Pardalotus punctatus* A few seen at various sites in New South Wales  
**Striated Pardalote** ◇ *Pardalotus striatus* Nice views in the Capertee Valley – a few heard at other sites  
**Fernwren** ◇ *Oreoscopus gutturalis* Eventually tracked down on Mount Lewis – nice view of this Wet Tropics endemic  
**Pilotbird** ◇ *Pycnoptilus floccosus* One showed well at Barren Grounds  
**Rockwarbler** ◇ (Origma) *Origma solitaria* Too close to focus on at times in Royal National Park  
**Chestnut-rumped Heathwren** ◇ *Calamanthus pyrrhopygius* A singing bird in the Blue Mountains showed very well  
**Speckled Warbler** ◇ *Pyrrholaemus sagittatus* A single bird in the Capertee Valley  
**Atherton Scrubwren** ◇ *Sericornis kerri* Several on Mount Lewis, then at Mount Hypipamee  
**White-browed Scrubwren** ◇ *Sericornis frontalis* Seen in small numbers throughout  
**Yellow-throated Scrubwren** ◇ *Sericornis citreogularis* First seen at O'Reilly's then a few near Cairns  
**Large-billed Scrubwren** ◇ *Sericornis magnirostra* First seen at Gloucester Tops, then at O'Reilly's  
**Weebill** ◇ *Smicronis brevirostris* A couple seen in the Capertee, heard in drier country inland from Cairns  
**Brown Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone mouki* Small numbers in all rainforest areas, common in places  
**Mangrove Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone levigaster* One at Stockton sandspit then a few around Brisbane



*Yellow-throated Scrubwren (Andy Jensen)*



*Brown Gerygone (Andy Jensen)*

**Large-billed Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone magnirostris* Seen at a few sites around Cairns, always close to watercourses  
**White-throated Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone olivacea* A few heard at various spots – nice views in the Capertee and near Brisbane  
**Fairy Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone palpebrosa* First seen at Inskip Point, also seen near Julatten  
**Mountain Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza katherina* Several on Mount Lewis and a few at Mount Hypipamee – a high altitude endemic  
**Brown Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza pusilla* Small numbers throughout  
**Buff-rumped Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza reguloides* Some at Lithgow sewage works, and a few in the Capertee Valley  
**Yellow-rumped Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* A couple at Lake Wallace, then a few at Hexham swamp  
**Yellow Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza nana* Several in the Capertee, and one at Stockton sandspit  
**Striated Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza lineata* First in Royal National Park, seen at a couple of sites subsequently  
**Grey-crowned Babbler** ◇ *Pomatostomus temporalis* A couple of small groups in the Capertee Valley  
**Australian Logrunner** ◇ *Orthonyx temminckii* Small numbers at O'Reilly's  
**Chowchilla** ◇ *Orthonyx spaldingii* A couple of groups seen up Mount Lewis near Julatten  
**Eastern Whipbird** ◇ *Psophodes olivaceus* More heard than seen – nice views in a couple of spots



*Grey-crowned Babbler (Andy Jensen)*



*Eastern Whipbird (Andy Jensen)*

- Spotted Quail-thrush** ◇ *Cinclosoma punctatum* (H) Heard near Brisbane, unfortunately couldn't be located
- Yellow-breasted Boatbill** ◇ *Machaerirhynchus flaviventris* Several nice views of this cracker near Cairns
- White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus* Seen in small numbers throughout
- Dusky Woodswallow** ◇ *Artamus cyanopterus* Several in the Capertee Valley
- Black Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus quoyi* At various sites around Cairns
- Grey Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus torquatus* Small numbers throughout
- Pied Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus nigrogularis* Small numbers throughout
- Australian Magpie** ◇ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Common and widespread
- Pied Currawong** ◇ *Strepera graculina* Seen on most days in small numbers
- Black-faced Cuckooshrike** *Coracina novaehollandiae* Small numbers throughout
- Barred Cuckooshrike** ◇ (Yellow-eyed C-s) *Coracina lineata* A few near Kuranda
- White-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina papuensis* A few seen around Brisbane, then common around Cairns
- Common Cicadabird** *Coracina tenuirostris* First seen in Brisbane then a few heard and seen around Cairns
- White-winged Triller** ◇ ++ *Lalage tricolor* (H) Heard in the Capertee Valley, but distantly and on private land
- Varied Triller** ◇ *Lalage leucomela* First seen around Brisbane, with small numbers seen and heard subsequently
- Varied Sittella** ◇ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* One seen at Barren Grounds
- Crested Shriketit** ◇ ++ (Eastern S) *Falcunculus [frontatus] frontatus* Great views at a couple of spots in the Capertee
- Olive Whistler** ◇ *Pachycephala olivacea* A few heard and one seen at Gloucester Tops
- Grey Whistler** ◇ ++ *Pachycephala simplex* Plenty heard around Julatten, a couple seen
- Australian Golden Whistler** ◇ ++ *Pachycephala pectoralis* Seen and heard in small numbers throughout
- Rufous Whistler** *Pachycephala rufiventris* Small numbers most days, particularly in drier habitats
- Bower's Shrikethrush** ◇ *Colluricincla boweri* A couple seen and more heard on Mount Lewis
- Little Shrikethrush** ◇ *Colluricincla megarhyncha* First seen at Inskip Point, then small numbers after that
- Grey Shrikethrush** ◇ *Colluricincla harmonica* Common and widespread



Varied Triller (Andy Jensen)



Grey Shrikethrush (Erkki Holopainen)

- Australasian Figbird** ◊ ++ (Green F) *Sphecotheres vieilloti* First seen in Swansea, then numerous thereafter in Queensland
- Olive-backed Oriole** ◊ *Oriolus sagittatus* Small numbers heard and seen up to Brisbane
- Green Oriole** ◊ (Yellow O) *Oriolus flavocinctus* Replaced the above species in the Cairns region, where a few seen
- Spangled Drongo** ++ *Dicrurus bracteatus* Small numbers seen daily after Brisbane
- Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Common and widespread
- Northern Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura rufiventris* One seen at Mareeba wetlands briefly, with another near Julatten
- Grey Fantail** ◊ ++ *Rhipidura albiscapa* Seen in small numbers almost daily, especially in rainforests
- Rufous Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura rufifrons* Several at O'Reilly's, and a few around the Cairns area
- Spectacled Monarch** ◊ *Symposiachrus trivirgatus* Small numbers at O'Reilly's, and quite numerous in rainforests around Cairns
- Black-faced Monarch** ◊ *Monarcha melanopsis* First in Royal National Park, then a few locations after that
- White-eared Monarch** ◊ *Carterornis leucotis* A pair showed very well on the descent down the mountain from O'Reilly's
- Pied Monarch** ◊ *Arses kaupi* Seen at a few locations in the Cairns hinterlands
- Maggie-lark** ◊ (Australian M-l) *Grallina cyanoleuca* Common and widespread
- Leaden Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra rubecula* First at Gloucester Tops, then a few at various sites after that
- Shining Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra Alecto* A pair showed well in Cairns, with another couple on the Daintree boat trip
- Restless Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra inquieta* A couple seen in the Capertee Valley
- Torresian Crow** *Corvus orru* The common corvid in Queensland
- Forest Raven** ◊ (Relict R) *Corvus [tasmanicus] boreus* A couple seen on the way down from Gloucester Tops – restricted range
- Little Raven** ◊ *Corvus mellori* A few seen in the Lithgow area
- Australian Raven** ◊ *Corvus coronoides* The common corvid in coastal New South Wales
- White-winged Cough** ◊ *Corcorax melanorhamphos* Several groups seen in the Capertee Valley
- Apostlebird** ◊ *Struthidea cinerea* Two groups seen at the dam inland from Mount Carbine
- Paradise Riflebird** ◊ *Ptiloris paradiseus* A few seen at Lamington, great views of a female, and a male on his display tree
- Victoria's Riflebird** ◊ *Ptiloris victoriae* Seen near Kuranda, then heard at a number of sites in the Cairns hinterlands
- Grey-headed Robin** ◊ ++ *Heteromyias cinereifrons* First seen on Mount Lewis, then a few at Mount Hypipamee
- Mangrove Robin** ◊ *Peneoenanthe pulverulenta* Nice views in the mangroves at Cairns
- Pale-yellow Robin** ◊ *Tregellasia capito* Common at Kingfisher Park, also on Mount Lewis and Mount Hypipamee
- Eastern Yellow Robin** ◊ *Eopsaltria australis* Small numbers throughout in forested areas
- Hooded Robin** ◊ *Melanodryas cucullata* Several birds seen in the Capertee Valley
- Lemon-bellied Flyrobin** ◊ (L-b Flycatcher) *Microeca flavigaster* One at Kingfisher Park
- Jacky Winter** ◊ *Microeca fascinans* Several in the Capertee Valley with plenty more heard
- Rose Robin** ◊ *Petroica rosea* A few seen and more heard at O'Reilly's
- Flame Robin** ◊ *Petroica phoenicea* One male at Gloucester Tops, a few more heard
- Scarlet Robin** ◊ *Petroica boodang* Lovely views of a stunning male in the Blue Mountains
- Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxena* Common and widespread
- Fairy Martin** ◊ *Petrochelidon ariel* Seen at Lake Wallace and in the Capertee Valley
- Tree Martin** ◊ *Petrochelidon nigricans* First on the way to Gloucester Tops, then a few locations after that – the commoner martin



*Pale-yellow Robin (Andy Jensen)*



*Eastern Yellow Robin (Andy Jensen)*

- Australian Reed Warbler** ◊ ++ *Acrocephalus australis* Common at Lake Wallace – heard at a few more locations thereafter
- Rufous Songlark** ◊ *Megalurus mathewsi* Common in the Capertee Valley – heard at most spots and seen well at a couple
- Little Grassbird** ◊ *Megalurus gramineus* Heard at Lake Wallace, then nice views at Hexham swamp
- Tawny Grassbird** *Megalurus timoriensis* First at Lake Wallace, then common at Hexham swamp
- Golden-headed Cisticola (Bright-headed C)** *Cisticola exilis* Seen at a few sites, common at Hexham swamp
- Silvereye** ◊ *Zosterops lateralis* Small numbers at a number of locations
- Metallic Starling (Shining S)** *Aplonis metallica* Common in the Cairns area, large groups zipping around
- Common Myna (introduced)** (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis* Common and widespread
- Common Starling (introduced)** (introduced) *Sturnus vulgaris* Common in New South Wales
- Russet-tailed Thrush** ◊ ++ (R-t Ground T) *Zoothera heinei* A few seen at O'Reilly's
- Bassian Thrush** ◊ ++ (Australian Ground T) *Zoothera lunulata* First Royal National Park, a few more New South Wales sites
- Common Blackbird (introduced)** (introduced) *Turdus merula* One in Royal National Park, another heard Lithgow
- Mistletoebird** ◊ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Small numbers throughout in drier areas
- Olive-backed Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S)** *Cinnyris jugularis* Small numbers most days around Cairns
- House Sparrow (introduced)** (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Small numbers on many days, most numerous Cairns
- Beautiful Firetail** ◊ *Stagonopleura bella* A couple on the first day in Royal National Park
- Diamond Firetail** ◊ *Stagonopleura guttata* A few in the Capertee Valley showed very well
- Red-browed Finch** ◊ (R-b Firetail) *Neochmia temporalis* Small groups at a number of different sites, common Julatten area
- Crimson Finch** ◊ *Neochmia phaeton* A few in the canefields north of Cairns
- Plum-headed Finch** ◊ *Neochmia modesta* A small group seen by the roadside in the Capertee Valley
- Black-throated Finch** ◊ *Poephila cincta* A small group drinking at a dam inland from Mount Carbine
- Zebra Finch** ◊ *Taeniopygia guttata* Just the one small group in the Capertee – usually more numerous
- Double-barred Finch** ◊ *Taeniopygia bichenovii* First in the Capertee Valley, a few groups thereafter
- Blue-faced Parrotfinch** *Erythrura trichroa* Four plus up Mount Lewis – nice views of a hard species
- Scaly-breasted Munia (introduced)** *Lonchura punctulata* A small group on Cairns esplanade
- Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** ◊ *Lonchura castaneothorax* First around Brisbane, then a few in the Cairns area
- Australian Pipit** ◊ ++ *Anthus australis* Small numbers at several widespread locations
- European Goldfinch (introduced)** (introduced) *Carduelis carduelis* A single bird on the drive down from Barren Grounds



*Metallic Starling (Andy Jensen)*



*Scaly-breasted Munia (Andy Jensen)*

## MAMMALS

- Platypus (Duck-billed P)** *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* Four seen at Eungella – wonderful views
- Short-beaked Echidna (Short-nosed E)** *Tachyglossus aculeatus* Fantastic to see one so active at Barren Grounds
- Northern Brown Bandicoot** *Isodon macrourus* Several around Kingfisher Park/Mount Lewis
- Long-nosed Bandicoot** *Parameles nasuta* One at Brisbane at the Grass Owl site
- Common Wombat** *Vombatus ursinus* One seen on the drive into the Capertee – a few more dead roadkill sadly
- Mountain Brushtail Possum** *Trichosurus caninus* A dark morph at O'Reilly's
- Common Ringtail Possum** *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* One near Kiama, and a couple at O'Reilly's
- Daintree River Possum** *Pseudocheirus cinereus* Great views up Mount Lewis – restricted range
- Green Ringtail Possum (G Ringtail)** *Pseudochirops archeri* One in the grounds at Kingfisher Park
- Musky Rat-kangaroo (Musk R-k)** *Hypsiprymnodon moschatus* A few at Cassowary House
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus giganteus* Common and widespread
- Whiptail Wallaby** *Macropus parryi* A few on the drive down from O'Reilly's
- Red-necked Wallaby** *Macropus rufogriseus* First around Newcastle woodlands, then some on way back from Gloucester Tops
- Red-legged Pademelon** *Thylogale stigmatica* Several in the Cairns region, particularly around Julatten
- Red-necked Pademelon** *Thylogale thetis* Common at O'Reilly's
- Black Wallaby (Swamp W)** *Wallabia bicolor* One inland of Newcastle and another on Bribie Island near Brisbane
- Black Flying-fox** *Pteropus Alecto* Lots in Sydney
- Spectacled Flying-fox** *Pteropus conspicillatus* Several sightings in north Queensland
- Grey-headed Flying-fox** *Pteropus poliocephalus* A large camp in the Newcastle area
- Little Red Flying-fox** *Pteropus scapulatus* One around Newcastle
- Fawn-footed Melomys** *Melomys cervinipes* A few scrounging around the feeders at Kingfisher Park
- Black Rat (introduced) (Roof R)** *Rattus rattus* One at O'Reilly's
- Giant White-tailed Rat (W-t Rat)** *Uromys caudimaculatus* One while spotlighting on Mount Lewis
- Red Fox (introduced)** *Vulpes vulpes* One at Hexham swamp
- Australian Fur-Seal (Afro-Australian F-S)** *Arctocephalus pusillus* One on the Swansea pelagic
- European Rabbit (introduced)** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Seen in small numbers throughout
- Common Bottlenose Dolphin (C Bottle-nosed D)** *Tursiops truncatus* One off Bribie Island close offshore