



The endangered monotypic Plains-wanderer is always a favourite on this route, and took out bird of the tour once again! JB

SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA

16 OCTOBER – 4/7 NOVEMBER 2017

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Australia simply has it all. It is difficult to accurately experience the true worth of this country in one single tour, but if anything our Southern Australia route comes close, offering a truly superb introduction to the diverse endemic avifauna down under. We saw representatives from all but one of the endemic Australian families, of course including the peculiar and highly endangered Plains-wanderer which took pride of place as bird of the tour. Starting in the wet forests near Melbourne, our first taste of Australia came in the form of brightly coloured birds like Crimson Rosellas, Eastern Spinebills and Eastern Yellow Robins, alongside ancient lineages of passerines like Superb Lyrebirds (one male doing his full vocal repertoire right in front of

us!), skulking Pilotbirds, active White-throated Treecreepers, loud Eastern Whipbirds, artistic Satin Bowerbirds, enormous Powerful Owls, elusive Gang-gang Cockatoos, and charismatic endemics like Crested Pigeons, Galahs, Australian Magpies, and Superb Fairywrens. Coastal areas held stonking Cape Barren Geese, cute Hooded Plovers, and at night Little Penguins paraded past us towards their burrows. Rufous Bristlebirds, Chestnut-rumped Heathwrens, Striated Fieldwrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, Brown Thornbills and a plethora of nectarivores like New Holland Honeyeaters and Red Wattlebirds kept us busy over our first few days. The sclerophyll woodlands and Eremophila stands of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales acquainted us with Square-tailed Kites, Common Bronzewing, Brown Falcons, Tawny Frogmouths, Superb Parrots, Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Speckled Warblers, Weebills, Red-capped and Scarlet Robins, Dusky, Masked and White-browed Woodswallows, Varied Sittellas, and a completely new set of honeyeaters including Painted, Yellow-tufted, Black, Pied, Spiny-cheeked, Striped, Black-chinned, Fuscous, White-naped, Brown-headed and White-fronted. White-browed Babblers and White-winged Choughs quarrelled noisily by the roadside as we headed out onto the open grasslands where Emus, Stubble Quail, Banded Lapwings, Inland Dotterels, Greater Bluebonnets, mighty Wedge-tailed Eagles, Black-shouldered Kites, Brown Songlarks and Zebra Finches were all but a supporting cast to the monotypic Plains Wanderer. Spotting provided everything we hoped for with Australian Owlet-nightjars, Southern Boobies, one Spotted Nightjar, and many Eastern Barn Owls showing perfectly. Large lakes and wetlands throughout the tour provided all the key waterfowl, with bizarre Musk Ducks, Blue-billed Ducks, Freckled Ducks, Pink-eared Ducks, Chestnut and Grey Teals, Australian Shelducks, Hoary-headed Grebes, Black-tailed Nativehens, Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels, Red-necked Avocets, Banded Stilts, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, stately Brolgas, and angry Black Swans. The arid mallee kept our flow of new birds coming, as Chestnut-crowned Babblers, Restless Flycatchers, Diamond Firetails, Brown Treecreepers preceded ridiculous views of the beautiful desert megapode – Malleefowl. Bouncy Southern Scrub Robins, friendly Shy Heathwrens, localised Mallee Emu-wrens, sneaky Striated Grasswrens, fabulous Pink Cockatoos, fluorescent Regent and Mulga Parrots, Crested Bellbirds, both Gilbert's and the difficult Red-shouldered Whistlers, endangered Black-eared Miners, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, ferocious Apostlebirds, exquisite Splendid Fairywrens, White-browed Treecreepers, Southern Whitefaces, Chestnut Quail-thrush, and the scarce Black-eared Cuckoo. Heading further still towards the centre of Australia, we progressed our tally with more new honeyeaters like Yellow-plumed and Grey-fronted, plus birds like White-backed Swallows, Black-faced Woodswallows, Pied Butcherbirds, Gibberbirds, Orange and Yellow Chats, Spotted Harriers, Black-breasted Buzzards, Nankeen Kestrels, Chirruping Wedgebills, Little Crows, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Australian Pratincoles, Australian Spotted Crakes, Flock Bronzewing, Banded Whitefaces, Red-browed Pardalotes, and the classic Australian favourite – Budgerigars. A number of specialties are rapidly becoming extremely rare in the outback due to feral cats and prolonged drought, but this year at least we were still able to connect with every major target, including all six possible grasswrens (Striated, Short-tailed, Thick-billed, Western, Eyrean and Grey), the elegant nocturnal Letter-winged Kite, and four different Grey Falcons. Back towards the Great Australian Bight, huge Pacific Gulls, lovely Adelaide Rosellas, and well-timed Sooty Oystercatchers were overshadowed by a quartet of Australian Painted Snipes, while some western mallee tracts gifted us with Rufous Treecreepers, Copperback Quail-thrush, Western Yellow Robins, Blue-breasted Fairywrens, and Purple-crowned Lorikeets.

The Tasmanian extension was no less memorable, and in just two full days we certainly did the island state justice. Bruny Island yielded all the endemics in one day, with the strange Scrubtit, Tasmanian Thornbills and Scrubwrens, Dusky Robin, Black-headed and Strong-billed Honeyeaters, the lovely Yellow-throated Honeyeater, gurgling Yellow Wattlebirds, Black Currawongs, Green Rosellas, endangered Forty-spotted Pardalotes, and comical flightless Tasmanian Nativehens. We also finally had views of bright Pink Robins, Olive Whistlers, Pallid Cuckoos, and Black-faced Cormorants. A day trip to the remote south west wilderness at Melaleuca was all that we had hoped for. Amidst possibly the most spectacular setting in Australia, we got up close and personal with the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot (only 14 wild birds returned from migration this year), aptly-named Beautiful Firetails, tiny Southern Emu-wrens, and had excellent views of an Eastern Ground Parrot.

Mammals were a constant company on this tour too of course, with 26 species seen, including plenty of kangaroos (eight different species no less) which had their fair go at making an acquaintance with the car.

Luckily none succeeded at this, and we had fine views of Red, Western Grey and Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Euros, beautiful Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies, Black Wallabies, Red-necked Wallabies, and Tasmanian Pademelons. In the land of the marsupials, Koalas were of course a definitive highlight, but Eastern Barred Bandicoot, a rare Ampurta, Common Brushtail and Ringtail Possums were enjoyed too. With some hard work, both Australian monotremes were eventually spotted in Tasmania, with Short-beaked Echidna and Platypus being particularly well received by the group.

Australia and New Zealand collectively are now thought to be the evolutionary source of *Psittacopasserae* (all modern parrots and passerines), and as such some of the oldest endemic branch families featuring birds like Superb Lyrebird and Rufous Bristlebird really do give avid birdwatchers a glance into the past as these special species run around your feet behaving like little dinosaurs. The continent has been in isolation for so long that, excluding introduced species, 185 of the 190 *Psittacopasserae* seen on this tour are either endemic to Australia, or only seen on one or two other Birdquest tours in neighbouring New Zealand or New Guinea. Overall we recorded 332 species, including three heard only. Always surrounded by spectacular scenery, we regularly found ourselves alone with the birds. On certain days, we only came into contact with one or two other cars! Birding in the land of plenty is always laid-back, easy and enjoyable. As the locals would say, "no worries mate!"



Truly the land of the parrots, this Crimson Rosella is one of the eight species seen on day one! JB

Colourful Rainbow Lorikeets greeted us at the airport, and Fred even saw his first wild kangaroo before we made it to the freeway. Only in Australia... It was going to be a wonderful tour! The first full birding day began in earnest as we ascended the eucalypt-adorned hills of Melbourne's Dandenong ranges. Outrageously clad Crimson Rosellas fed at arm's length while the curious Australian "little brown jobs" allowed close scrutiny, with White-browed Scrubwren, Striated Thornbill and Brown Thornbill being appreciated by all. The main draw card this morning though was of course the famous Superb Lyrebird, which did not disappoint! Although our first glimpse took some time, we all enjoyed seeing a female scratch around like a tiny dinosaur - if anything this species gives a true impression of how the first birds may have looked and behaved. Crescent Honeyeaters mostly stayed in the canopy as usual, but a superb male Rose Robin was more than happy to come down and perform at eye level. Laughing Kookaburras, Shining Bronze Cuckoos, Australian Golden Whistlers, Eastern Whipbirds and White-throated Treecreepers obliged before we moved to a touristy picnic ground complete with feeding stations for Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Long-billed Corellas, Galahs, King Parrots, and Rainbow Lorikeets. The trails were quieter, and Eastern Yellow Robins sat quietly, while Eastern Spinebills flitted about boisterously. The highlight was a male Superb Lyrebird giving his full vocal repertoire only metres away from us in clear view!



Honeyeaters like this Eastern Spinebill (left) and Australasian robins like this Rose Robin (right) featured constantly. JB

One last walk before lunch in an area for the elusive Red-browed Treecreeper was unsuccessful with regards to the target, but nest building Red-browed Finches, two Large-billed Scrubwrens, a pair of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, and some noisy Grey Shrikethrush were lovely consolations, as was a surprise male Satin Flycatcher.

A small park in Melbourne had a visiting Freckled Duck perfect for twitching the day before, but unfortunately not today! The pond held colourful Blue-billed Ducks and strange Pink-eared Ducks, while we were able to feast on an abundance of "garden birds" like Maned Duck, Noisy Miner, Bell Miner, Crested Pigeon, Magpie-Lark, Grey Butcherbird, and exquisite Superb Fairywrens.



This lovely Cape Barren Goose proved easy to find on Phillip Island. JB

The long drive to Phillip Island saw us watching a pair of bulky Cape Barren Goose on the roadside not long after crossing the bridge. Walking along a classic southern beach yielded a pair of smart Hooded Plovers, good looks at Silver Gulls, and the impressive Pacific Gull. Gardens on the main road acquainted us with Little Wattlebird and New Holland Honeyeaters, but the main event was after sunset. The Penguin Parade appears daunting at first when you pull up in the completely packed carpark with throngs of tourists

wandering around loudly, but seeing hundreds of Little Penguins waddling around next to the paths unconcernedly is a magical experience. The sky was full of Short-tailed Shearwaters, which were eventually found in the ground near their burrows.



Smart Hooded Plovers nest on pristine sandy beaches in southern Australia, and thus are always seen in lovely settings! JB

It was late when we got back to Melbourne, but by dawn we were already one bird up - a Tawny Frogmouth and chick accidentally found on its nest in the torchlight as the sun began to creep up on the horizon. Not long after the first rays hit us, Fred struck gold by spotting bird number two - the immense and aptly-named Powerful Owl. We admired this pair of beauties at length on their roost, and were able to appreciate their immense claws - all the better for grabbing fluffy little Common Ringtail Possums like those we had seen nearby only an hour prior in the darkness.



Powerful Owls prey on medium-sized marsupials like possums, and are most regularly observed in large cities where this food source is abundant. This is one of a pair well spotted by Fred in Melbourne. JB

Before making our way to a nearby bakery for breakfast (a common theme on this tour!), some of the common parkland birds of Melbourne were enjoyed in the soft golden light, with noisy Red Wattlebirds, Australian Magpies, and a flyby flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos stealing the show.

Onwards and upwards we continued, making our way to Toolangi State Forest on the outskirts of the city to get to grips with some more wet forest specialties. Primarily, we were searching for Pilotbird, which was eventually seen well by those standing in the right place after an extended tape duel with one responsive individual. Pink Robin was heard down a thick gully but refused to come closer, while a Lewin's Honeyeater (here at the edge of their range) performed briefly a few times in the carpark. A surprised Wonga Pigeon surprised us on the trail, while two Bassian Thrush, Rose Robins, Eastern Yellow Robins, Striated Thornbills and a colourful Tiger Snake showed their photographic sides.

Commencing the drive north towards NSW, a midday pause at Mangalore Flora and Fauna Reserve came as advertised - fresh Painted Buttonquail platelets were in abundance, yet no buttonquail could be located... The happy group was more than satisfied however, as walking around through the scrubby sclerophyll woodland yielded our first Crested Shrike Tit spouting his gaudy headwear, a flyby Collared Sparrowhawk, and the first "inland specialties" such as a Brown Treecreeper, White-browed Woodswallows and White-plumed Honeyeaters.

Roadside birding was largely quiet, but some Nankeen Kestrels and Rufous Whistlers at one stop were enjoyed. As we approached Deniliquin, a quick stop at Gulpa Creek Reedbeds quickly became an extended vigil after hearing several Australasian and Black-backed Bitterns calling not far from the hide at regular intervals. While none ever did pop into view, the supporting cast of birds was long. Raptors took the shape of a magnificent displaying Wedge-tailed Eagle, two Swamp Harriers, a Whistling Kite, and an Australian Hobby. Parrots were also represented well, with the local yellow form of Crimson Rosella competing for attention alongside equally vibrant Red-rumped Parrots and Galahs. On the water, a male Musk Duck swam into view after we had finished enjoying Little Grassbirds and Australian Reed Warblers, but a showy Baillon's Crake only metres in front of the hide may have stolen the show. Sacred Kingfishers and Little Friarbirds were also enjoyed before we left, as was a mother Eastern Grey Kangaroo with her pouched joey next to the road!

Soon after meeting with Deniliquin birding extraordinaire Phil Maher the following morning, we were watching a flock of stunning Superb Parrots feeding roadside from only a few metres away. Surely this species is one of the best Australian parrots, but only truly appreciable when you see them in the flesh! With his intimate local knowledge, Phil showed us bird after bird throughout the morning, with a pair of scarce Square-tailed Kites near a nest followed up by the adjacent pair of Little Eagles at their nest! In River Red Gum forest lining the Edward River, we appreciated bush birds such as Common Bronzewing, bizarre Noisy Friarbirds, Buff-rumped Thornbills, tiny Weebills (Australia's smallest bird), and an Azure Kingfisher sat above the river bank on a dead twig.

Moving out to the plains, we were discussing the current scarcity of Black Falcons throughout eastern Australia when suddenly one appeared directly in front of the car and circled for an extended period. The run of good luck continued at a stand of trees where we might have a small chance for Black Honeyeaters - it turned out there were dozens of them! At the same site we also saw beautiful Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, and had good looks at both White-browed and Masked Woodswallows. A Peaceful Dove was spotted sneaking around under one bush, and a male Pied Honeyeaters put in a brief appearance. The rest of the morning included a couple of stunners such as Striped Honeyeater and Australian Spotted Crake, while the remaining expected birds came one after the other - Rufous Songlark, Fairy Martin, Australian Raven, Australian Pelican, Yellow Thornbill, White-winged Chough, Brown Falcon and Black Kite all featured.



Absolutely breathtaking in the flesh, many regard Superb Parrots as one of the best in this large Australian group. JB



The nomadic Black Honeyeater is often difficult to find, but we saw them regularly this year. JB

Excitement was high for our evening session, and after a midday break we travelled north towards the Plains Wanderer paddocks. Along the way a stop at some of Phil's revegetation plots produced two cooperative Pied Honeyeaters with some White-fronted Honeyeaters, Greater Bluebonnets, outrageous Variegated

Fairywrens, a couple of distant Emus, and a cute little Australian Owlet Nightjar which flushed out of its hollow. As we drove across the Wanganella plain we could see nothing but endless flat grasslands all the way to the horizon in every direction. Many Horsfield's Bushlarks and Brown Songlarks were seen on the roadside, and multiple large groups of Banded Lapwings were enjoyed. White-fronted Chats, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Brown Falcons and Black-shouldered Kites kept us busy until sunset, after which we began our search. It didn't take long for a male Plains Wanderer to materialise in our spotlights thanks to Phil's superb abilities, and Christine later found us a coupled pair, so we truly were able to admire each sex of this peculiar monotypic species. It was sobering to hear stories about Phil's long history with these birds, and makes you realise that straightforward one-night excursions to find these birds may not be possible for much longer.

The night continued after our success of course, and while we didn't make it back until after midnight, dainty Inland Dotterels, a vocal Southern Boobook, and many Eastern Barns Owls were excellent to see. Stubble Quail took some hard work (and some impressive driving by Phil) but we finally had views of a lovely male on the deck before calling it a night.

A well-deserved sleep-in preceded our morning birding session, which began in the late morning at Kamarooka Forest. A stunningly vibrant male Red-capped Robin sat right on the branch we wanted it to for the cameras, and Spotted Pardalotes fed at eye-level closer than our binoculars could focus. A Red-backed Kingfisher perched up near some showy Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, however their Purple-gaped cousins refused to appear!



This male Plains-wanderer was the first one seen whilst out spotlighting. Continued efforts eventually resulted in the female illustrated at the beginning of this trip report. JB



Red-capped Robins often behave very well, and this stunning male was no exception! JB

At some dry woodland near Heathcote later in the day, a male Scarlet Robin performed just as wonderfully as the Red-capped Robin had earlier. Speckled Warblers took some finding, but eventually were seen very well by all, and a large selection of other new birds included Dusky Woodswallow, Fuscous Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, Black-chinned Honeyeater, Varied Sittella, Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, Leaden Flycatcher, and Olive-backed Oriole.



Olive-backed Orioles (left) are more often heard than seen, and Black-chinned Honeyeaters (right) rarely pose this well for cameras! JB

Musk Lorikeets bid us farewell from a flowering tree in our motel carpark today, and within an hour we were enjoying a fabulous Painted Honeyeaters at a small staked-out woodland patch. Many of the same species seen around Heathcote were in attendance, but some low down Dusky Woodswallows and two White-winged Trillers were thrilling.



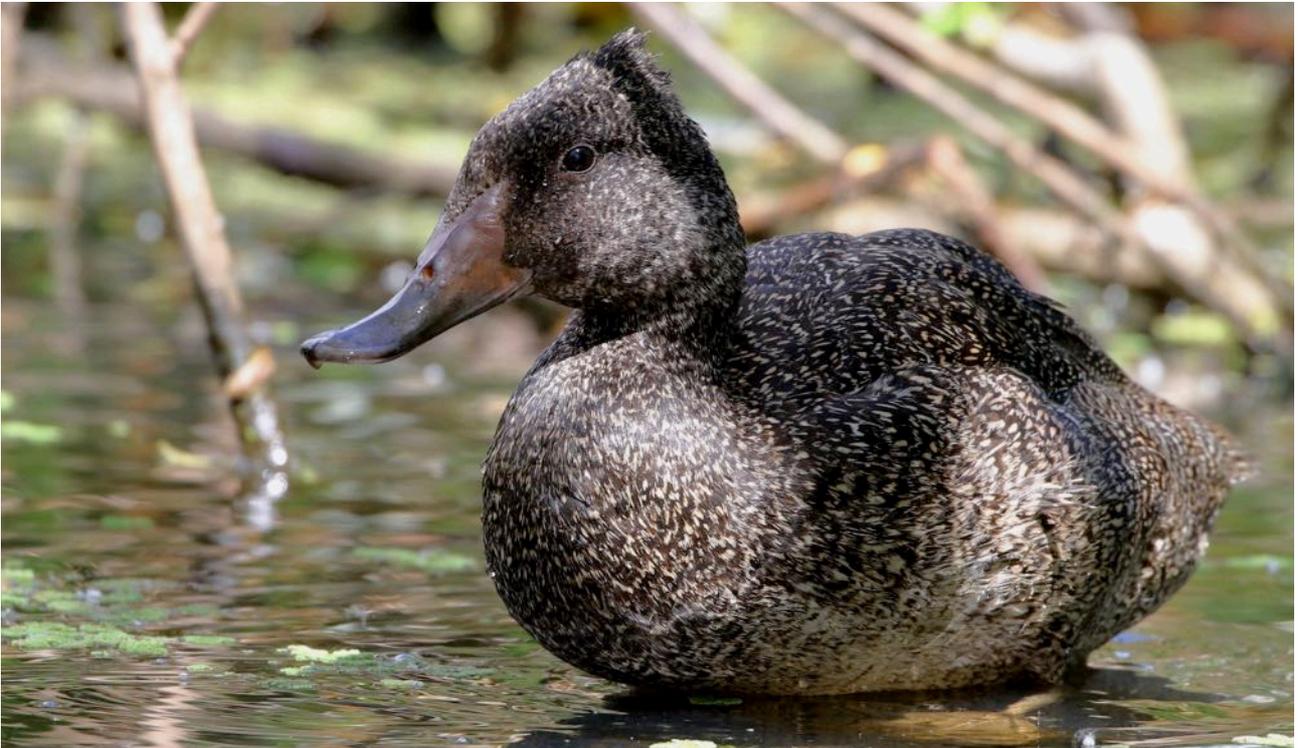
This male Painted Honeyeater was seen very well feeding in flowering mistletoe, and looks particularly spectacular in display flight. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

At Ballarat, we struck gold with a showy Black-tailed Nativehen on the grass where we parked the car. Lake Wendouree often hosts a plethora of great species, which all showed well today. Dusky Moorhens and Australasian Grebes were enjoyed, but overshadowed by Blue-billed Ducks and Great Crested Grebes at close range. A stupendous male Musk Duck was found loafing very close to shore, but had to stay out of the way of the many neighbouring Black Swans - Fred now knows what happens if you get too close! The visiting Freckled Ducks were eventually located and seen at length by all after some tense moments when a "Leader Only" fowl disappeared into some dense reeds before being seen by anyone else. It's not often that this rare crepuscular duck is able to be viewed at such close range, and the four showy birds we eventually located remain a highlight for all.



The bizarre prehistoric-looking Musk Duck is always a treat to see up close like this. JB

After lunch we found ourselves at Melbourne's famous Western Treatment Plant, but the birds we wanted could all be found without going inside. A breeding-plumage Fairy Tern performed a flyby at the boat ramp, while Australasian Gannets and Pied Cormorants passed offshore. Widespread species included Straw-necked Ibis, Pied Oystercatcher, Whiskered Tern, Little Tern, Greater Crested Tern, Red-necked Stint, Red Knot, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Golden-headed Cisticola, and Eurasian Skylark. Striated Fieldwren was found from the car nearby, and a multitude of White-fronted Chats flitted between bushes while large groups of Chestnut Teal swam offshore.



Freckled Ducks are the rarest of Australia's waterfowl, but can usually be found at a couple of small ponds and lakes on this route. JB

Nearby Avalon Beach sported smart Red-kneed Dotterels and Red-necked Avocets. One Australian Spotted Crake fed in the mud, and we were watching a Little Egret when suddenly to our right hundreds of Banded Stilts took flight from an unseen pond on a huge whirling flock. After they landed we enjoyed close up views before heading towards Geelong. In town, we flushed a handful of Latham's Snipe from a large swamp before calling it a day as the light faded.



Smart Banded Stilts are erratic and unpredictable, but we don't often see this many together! JB

Early the next morning we partook in an unsuccessful rail and crane vigil. We were consoled by an extremely responsive group of diminutive Southern Emu-wrens, our first Black-fronted Dotterel, and perched views of a Blue-winged Parrot (others flew over during the day, but this was by far the best view). We moved on to try for the always difficult Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, and somehow managed to get crippling views within minutes after leaving the car! A quick stop at Point Roadknight yielded no Sooty Oystercatchers, but extended looks at two Pacific Gulls were appreciated. The definitive highlight of our morning was definitely pulling up into a carpark and having at least four Rufous Bristlebirds run around our legs chasing each other, calling, and boisterously waving their tails around for half an hour. Truly special to observe!



Rufous Bristlebirds can be just as retiring as the other two species in the endemic Australian family, however at certain sites they have become quite accustomed to people. You can even see the bristles on this one! JB

Continuing down the famous Great Ocean Road, we made numerous stops and slow drives with the windows down in search of Gang-gang Cockatoos. No luck unfortunately, but a male Satin Bowerbird (plus his harem) was enjoyed in a small park. We hadn't even turned onto the Cape Otway road before we were sucking up crippling views of a Koala at the roadside, low down in a small eucalypt. Five more were seen during the mid-afternoon, and a male Crescent Honeyeater was enticed down to eye level. Still without Gang Gangs, we bid farewell to the forest and headed towards Port Campbell, stopping for roadside Australian Shelducks and the magnificent scenery at the Twelve Apostles along the way.



Jaw-dropping scenery at the Twelve Apostles near Port Campbell. No Apostlebirds yet... JB

Fred found a white morph Grey Goshawk going to roost near the hotel before dinner, and so we were of course all waiting at the spot come dawn. Luckily the bird performed for us, and soon we were on our way north, stopping for a few roadside Australian Shelducks and other goodies like Plumed Whistling Duck and Grey Currawong. In the town of Hall's Gap, extensive drive-by-birding finally resulted in perched views of Gang-gang Cockatoo, and the resident pair of Bush Stone Curlews in Horsham were positioned right next to road for great views. Some targeted searching in eastern Little Desert resulted in a pair of Diamond Firetails, and some Black-chinned Honeyeaters. Restless Flycatchers and Brown Treecreepers were also noted before we moved on to some nice mallee, where one of the first birds was... Malleefowl? Quite by accident we had stunning views of this rare and retiring megapode by the side of a random trail we had decided to walk, also spotting a slightly lost White-throated Gerygone, and numerous White-winged Chough. After dinner we searched successfully for Australian Owlet Nightjar, but the hoped for Echidnas could not be found.



Cute Australian Owlet-nightjars can often be found during the day when flushed from small hollows in arid Australia. JB

The sky was clear as we searched the heathlands of Little Desert for birds in the morning. Noisy Rufous Fieldwrens and shy Slender-billed Thornbills were enjoyed before our allotted appointment at the Malleefowl enclosure. We were of course treated to even better views of this special bird than the day before as a pair fed around us unconcernedly. The female even worked on the mound as we took selfies! While the area is fenced to keep out predators, the habituated birds are entirely wild, and often forage in the national park itself.



The world's only desert megapode – Malleefowl. Generally very difficult to see and approach, staked out mounds can result in excellent views as the birds scratch around unconcernedly by your feet! JB

The mallee inside the enclosure is in excellent condition, and we were able to find Purple-gaped Honeyeaters, a sublime Southern Scrub Robin, and some not-so-shy Shy Heathwrens before continuing on to Ouyen. In the afternoon, a quick jaunt to Hattah-Kulkyne National Park resulted in perfect views of a male Mallee Emu-wren within half an hour of parking the car! We were ecstatic to connect with this beautiful endangered species, which is now endemic to Victoria and only survives in three small populations under increasing threat from bushfires. Many other mallee species put in their first appearances, with Mulga Parrot, Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters and Crested Bellbird being most appreciated. Striated Grasswrens remained heard only for now...



Endangered Mallee Emu-wrens (left) and bubbly Crested Bellbirds (right) are not hard to find at Hattah-Kulkyne. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

But not for long! One of the first birds seen the following morning was a lovely male Striated Grasswren, which circled us at length and eventually provided excellent views and photographic opportunities. This was

the first of these highly cryptic and difficult spinifex-loving birds, and everyone was already looking forward to more! Truly one of the quintessential Australian bird groups, and always exciting to connect with!

With both of the main targets bagged, we spent the rest of the day exploring the rest of the park. A female Gilbert's Whistler was rather dull, contrasting with the striking colours of a nearby Pink Cockatoo, with its fiery crest and subtly salmon underparts. Chestnut-rumped Thornbills flitted above us with both Striated and Spotted Pardalotes, and the flooded Hattah Lake held numerous waterfowl, including Black-tailed Nativehens and Pink-eared Ducks, plus a bonus Nankeen Night Heron flying by. An Emu super-dad corralled thirteen chicks as watched from the car, and large flocks of the spectacular Regent Parrot flashed past, but to get good views we had to venture deep into the park later on to a large colony of breeding birds which posed nicely for us. Our first Tree Martins and a melodiously singing Western Gerygone were also found here, plus large groups of nesting Little Corellas. Rain curtailed the evening, but not before we ended our day with a downright ferocious group of Apostlebirds (for once, actually in a flock of twelve!) squawking and carrying on at us while we enjoyed their playful antics.



Apostlebirds (alongside White-winged Choughs) make up the family of Corcoracidae, Australian Mudnesters. JB

Our final morning in Hattah was decidedly quiet due to cold and windy conditions, but a lovely male Splendid Fairywren wowed us all with his spectacular colours, and we had improved views of Chestnut-rumped Thornbill. Two Pink Cockatoos were seen well by the roadside, and Greater Bluebonnets were numerous as we headed towards South Australia.

At a nice remnant patch of mulga, we walked around for a while before finally having exceptional views of our main target - White-browed Treecreeper. Southern Whitefaces and more Splendid Fairywrens were appreciated, as was a family of Varied Sittella with two downy chicks.

Lunch in Renmark netted us a Blue-faced Honeyeater, while an afternoon excursion around Waikerie resulted in Australian Shovelers, Buff-banded Rails and Caspian Terns amidst good views of many waterbird species we were already familiar with. Rainbow Bee-eaters and Fairy Martins hawked from the cliff above the Murray River next to our hotel for those keen enough to go birding straight after our long drive!

Early the next day we met with our local guide Peter Waanders, hoping to target some tricky species from the large tract of mallee in Gluepot Reserve. Red-lored Whistler are very rare nowadays, and we had to hike 2kms off the road before reaching the only known stakeout for this skulking species, which was not uncommon in the reserve up to a decade ago. Luckily it came in straight away, offering good views for everyone, but after disappearing seconds later, not a peep was heard for the rest of the morning!

Next up was Black-eared Miner, another severely threatened species. Largely the flocks in Gluepot today consist of hybrid Black-eared x Yellow-throated Miners (this cross-breeding being the main threatening process), and we sorted through at least two dozen birds over the morning before finding two individuals which satisfied the "pure-bred" characteristics of relatively dark rump and black moustache, which is deemed countable by Australian birders.



We were lucky to find the declining Red-lored Whistler, and perhaps even more fortunate to pick out two pure Black-eared Miners. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

The rest of the day was much more relaxed, and during lunch at a water trough we finally had perched sightings of the vibrant multicoloured Mulga Parrot, and point blank naked eye views of Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. In a good tract of mallee during the mid-afternoon, Peter found us a ridiculously confiding Southern Scrub Robin, two Chestnut Quail-thrush, and a much appreciated Black-eared Cuckoo - always rare and never guaranteed. Striped Honeyeaters, a male Gilbert's Whistler, and some more Splendid Fairywrens were seen here too before we called it a day.



Vibrant Mulga Parrots (left) kept our cameras busy, while Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies (right) were very showy in the Flinders. JB

The cackling call of Laughing Kookaburra accompanied us as we packed the car and returned to Gluepot the next morning. Peter had given us the approximate location of another miner flock with at least one definitively dark-rumped pure bird in it, and we were very lucky to connect with it soon after parking the car,

having excellent views. The subsequent long drive to Hawker was preceded by two pairs of Redthroat early on at the usual stakeout, but otherwise bird activity was low in the picturesque rolling fields we passed by on this very hot day.

A late afternoon excursion to Brachina Gorge in the Flinders Ranges resulted in Grey-fronted Honeyeaters as we had hoped, but was highlighted by multiple Yellow-footed Rock Wallabies feeding and drinking along the roadside, affording much better views than are sometimes garnered by scoping the cliffs. This endangered macropod is probably the most attractive of the whole kangaroo/wallaby group, and their antics were enjoyed at length. A large flock of Little Corellas, excellent views of Weebill, and noisy Australian Ravens were also appreciated.



Windswept gibber plains (top) were to become a regular sight over the next few days, however keeping a constant vigil eventually allowed us to see a couple of magnificent Gibberbirds (bottom), which specialise in eking out an existence in this desolate habitat. JB

Dodging Western Grey and Red Kangaroos in the dawn light saw us arrive at Stokes Hill just in time for sunrise, and it wasn't long before we located a pair of Short-tailed Grasswrens. This species is becoming

rarer every year, and we were lucky to connect without extensive searching this time. Banded Lapwings, smart White-backed Swallows, and mighty Wedge-tailed Eagles lined the roadside as we headed still further inland. An Elegant Parrot was flushed and seen by all briefly at a roadside stop, but the prize was three Thick-billed Grasswrens which were found despite the extremely windy conditions at midday! Our first Black-faced Woodswallows hawked from fence posts, and a large group of Zebra Finches sheltered from the sun in a dead bush.

In the afternoon around Lyndhurst, we found a small party of Orange Chats on the outskirts of town, including two spectacularly fluorescent males. Up the road, a Black-breasted Buzzard hunkered down low on her nest until the male flew in clutching food in his talons. This very unique raptor, somewhat reminiscent of Africa's Batelur, is now quite rare in most parts of its range, so good to see! The continued wind was challenging, but superb photo opportunities were eventually presented by a different pair of Thick-billed Grasswrens before we had to rush back to town for fuel before the shops closed! Sunset wasn't for another two hours, but that is the way in outback Australia. We all thought that was the end of the day, until I quickly rushed everyone outside to watch a splendid Spotted Nightjar hawking above the wetland behind our rooms just after dinner.

The Strzelecki Track beckoned us the following morning. Well known as one of Australia's truly remote adventures, we aimed to travel 340kms up and back today, seeing all the key birds along the way! The dawn light illuminated a male White-winged Fairywren in full glory, and nearby a Chirruping Wedgebill sat up in view. Emus paraded beside the track as dozens of lucky Little Crows and Wedge-tailed Eagles fed on unlucky kangaroos. Zebra Finches were abundant near water holes, but a good number of Cinnamon Quail-thrush were seen flushing off the road before one was eventually coaxed into full view. The barren rocky flats (known as gibber in Australia) soon yielded a pair of Gibberbird spotted near the road. As we sat still, the pair continued feeding unconcernedly, making their way towards us until they were almost too close for our cameras!

Two Dingoes were seen well, and soon after entering the sand dune country, we continued our grasswren quest with a pair of Eyrean Grasswrens proving easy enough. Another pair was seen soon after running across the road in front of the car - so much for difficult! Also flushed in the dunes was the rare Ampurta - a small predatory fox-like marsupial.

Raptors such as Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel were in abundance, but today there was one bird above all others - the rare Letter-winged Kite. It took 340 kilometres to get into range, but everyone enjoyed sublime views of this owl-like nocturnal raptor on a day roost. The population here has dwindled rapidly from feral cat predation, and the days where we used to regularly see dozens of kites on the Strzelecki are long gone. The two birds today were easy enough to find near their known nest, but if this bird of prey is high on your wishlist, make sure not to delay.

The return journey was long, and in the blustery 39 degree desert, few birds were in evidence. Considerable time was spent searching new sites for Chestnut-breasted Whiteface (which has disappeared from its usual haunts here), but to no avail.

The howling gales continued all night and into the next day, but nonetheless we birded our way north onto the Birdsville Track. More Gibberbirds and Cinnamon Quail-thrush entertained, while the small wetland around a bore held numerous Orange Chat, and offered good looks at Pink-eared Ducks loafing with a couple of Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterel. When two mighty Brolgas flew overhead and landed right in front of us, one participant in particular was extremely pleased!



Sadly, the beautiful and elegant Letter-winged Kite may not be around for much longer if the feral cat problem is not addressed. JB

After checking in to Mungerannie (truly holding the title of Australia's best outback pub), we searched some nearby wetlands, finding more Brolgas, and a large group of Australian Pratincole. Some scrubby vegetation towards Cowarie Station yielded Banded Whiteface, but the nearby radio tower did not hold what we were hoping for as the sun lowered. A quick drive back down the road to a different tower was a good decision, as two Grey Falcons peered down at us curiously while the wind threatened their tenuous grip. The grey ghost of the outback (often touted as Australia's rarest raptor) completed our possible set for the tour, and there was much rejoicing! A single female Flock Bronzewing flew parallel to the car in good view as we drove back for dinner after this difficult, but ultimately very successful day!



Dubbed the grey ghost of the outback by Australian birdwatchers who spend years looking for this elusive raptor without success, we were lucky enough to see four on the Birdsville Track over two days. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

A lengthy drive pre-dawn saw us arrive later than we had hoped at the Grey Grasswren site due to a flat tyre, and the wind was STILL howling away (as were some distant Dingoes). Undeterred, we searched diligently in the dried out lignum swamp, and eventually got reasonable views of two very sneaky birds. Always a hard

one, but Fred even managed a few photos! A nearby bore on private property held many Glossy Ibis, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, and a prized male Yellow Chat.

Our lunch stop was also enjoyed by a curious Australian Raven, and two Red-browed Pardalotes posed in a small eucalypt were enjoyed by us. Continued searching for more Grey Grasswren throughout the windy afternoon proved futile, but on the drive south in the evening multiple flocks of Budgerigars were found preparing to roost in roadside trees. A late evening was spent celebrating at the pub with some local characters.

A walk around the hotel early in the morning gave us excellent views of nesting Rainbow Bee-eaters and White-backed Swallows, but the local Eyrean Grasswrens stayed distant. The long drive to Port Augusta was not uneventful, but birding was mainly limited to photographing some Little Crows, and seeing a couple more Wedge-tailed Eagles.

Our full day around Port Augusta commenced with our final grasswren of the tour - Western Grasswren. Six for six, with good views of all species for the whole group! Some black headed Australian Ringnecks were seen here too, plus a noisy group of White-browed Babblers. The waterfront held Australian Pied Cormorants and Pacific Gulls, while the Arid Lands Botanic Gardens was alive with honeyeaters. Good photographic opportunities were presented for White-fronted Honeyeaters in particular, and two diminutive Purple-crowned Lorikeets fed in a small flowering tree.

With no remaining targets for the main tour left in the area, our afternoon was spent around Lake Gilles, picking up some write-ins at the far east of their ranges. First up was a ridiculously confiding family of Copperback Quail-thrush, which were followed quickly by a similarly friendly party of Blue-breasted Fairywrens. Subtly beautiful Western Yellow Robins sang at us from exposed branches, and Inland Thornbills flew around our heads, but it wasn't until the last minute that we finally bagged a pair of lovely Rufous Treecreepers in the soft light. Christine was particularly excited by the large Mulga snake seen crossing in front of our car!



The recently split Copperback Quail-thrush (which looks very similar to the Chestnut Quail-thrush seen earlier in the tour) was not expected on this route, but some spare time near Port Augusta allowed us to experience this ridiculous male at close range. JB

Driving down the coast towards Adelaide the following day allowed us to catch-up with a few extra species on prime coastal mudflats, including a much hoped for Sooty Oystercatcher, along with Grey Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Red-necked Stint, Red-capped Plover, Banded Stilt, and a couple of Spotted Harriers over nearby fields. One wooded roadside held a small flock of Adelaide Rosellas. After a clean up for both ourselves and the car, we headed to a small swamp on the outskirts of town for sunset where four twitchable Australian Painted Snipe had taken up residence in previous weeks. Hard to spot initially in the small patch of sedge, we eventually obtained wonderful views as they walked out to the edge of the water and began feeding. A marvellous end to our mainland travels!



White-winged Fairywrens were our constant companions on the outback, but this male in the morning sun was particularly good looking! Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann



The nomadic Australian Painted-snipe was only seen once in Australia during 2016, but a couple of twitchable birds appeared in Adelaide just in time for our tour! Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

The Tasmania extension began straight after a lengthy transit day, with everyone very keen to head out spotlighting. It was cold (indeed we had seen snow on some high peaks out of the plane window earlier), and the wind was no better than previous days. Despite a very long night, we unfortunately never even heard

Masked Owl or Morepoke. Mammals were well represented however, with Tasmanian Pademelons, Red-necked Wallabies, and one Eastern Barred Bandicoot found from the car.



Observing the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot in the remote wilderness of southwest Tasmania was one of our many birding highlights during the optional extension. This unbanded wild bird was photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

The much anticipated excursion to the far south-west corner of Tasmania proceeded today without a hitch, with the clear weather making for excellent flying in the 10-seater Islander, and of course fabulous scenery. Australasian Gannets, Short-tailed Shearwaters, and some Shy Albatross were tenuously identified from the air as we passed low over the southern ocean towards Melaleuca. This spectacular button grass valley is now the last remaining breeding area for the entire world population of 14 wild Orange-bellied Parrots (plus 23 captive releases the week prior to our visit). This pretty parrot was easily seen guarding nest boxes and coming to supplementary feed tables. Of course we were particularly pleased to spot some of the true "wild" birds which were not released from a rehabilitation centre! With only two wild females having returned this year at the time of writing, the future is looking grim indeed.

Our half day in the area was additionally highlighted by Beautiful Firetails (the name describes this species perfectly), and three Eastern Ground Parrots, one of which was seen very well on the ground as it walked in front of us. Southern Emu-wrens and Striated Fieldwrens were about, and a couple of Black Currawongs showed nicely.



Clockwise from top: a male Southern Emu-wren sitting with his namesake tail in full view (Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann), the strange Tasmanian endemic honeyeater Yellow Wattlebird (JB), and a vibrant Beautiful Firetail at Melaleuca (JB).

It was eventually time to leave this remote wilderness, and our afternoon was spent near Hobart in search of Platypus. No luck on the mammal front, but Yellow Wattlebirds and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters were seen well. Subsequent spotlighting once again failed to produce either of the specialty owls despite the wind having calmed down.

A full day on Bruny Island began with the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote being just about the first bird as we hopped out of the car! Working our way south, encounters with Black-headed Honeyeaters, Green Rosellas, Pallid Cuckoos, Sooty Oystercatchers, Pacific Gulls and Kelp Gulls were regular. Good views of well overdue Black-faced Cormorants and a very close Shy Albatross were highlights down in Adventure Bay, where Dusky Robins and Tasmanian Nativehens were easy to find. The wet forest around Mavista Bay produced a flurry of activity as we picked our way through a male Pink Robin, Tasmanian Scrubwrens, Tasmanian Thornbills, Olive Whistlers, and then the prized Scrubtit, which was seen very well! Excellent.

Strong-billed Honeyeaters were finally found in a birdy patch of woodland to complete our set of Tasmanian endemics. One of the local "white wallabies" was also lovely to see.



Endearing and endangered Forty-spotted Pardalotes (top) showed well on Bruny Island, while a Tasmanian Nativehen (bottom) struggled to get his chick to eat greens. JB

Try as we might however (which we did for the next 5 hours), Swift Parrots were not in evidence this year. Now a critically endangered species still declining rapidly, even breeding birds on their Bruny Island stronghold seem to no longer be a guarantee, and none have yet returned according to local birdwatchers.

After so many failed attempts on nightbirds, we decided to do something a little different for our final morning. Rising well before first light, we were precariously perched on a scrubby river bank before sunrise, waiting quietly. It didn't take too long for the star performer to arrive - a wonderful Platypus swam straight down towards us, and began to forage in shallow water only metres away! The day was not over yet

however, and after collecting Common Greenfinch and Mallard for the trip list, a flock of Far Eastern Curlew were found with some Bar-tailed Godwits near the airport to conclude this action-packed tour.



We saw all the possible grasswrens on this tour, and Fred managed a photo of all six! Clockwise from top left: Western Grasswren, Thick-billed Grasswren, Short-tailed Grasswren, Eyrean Grasswren, Grey Grasswren, Striated Grasswren. Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

Many thanks to my two wonderful guests who made this trip both easy, and successful! Bird of the trip was Plains-wanderer by a landslide (voted #1 by everyone), but out of the 12 remaining votes between us, 12 different birds were chosen! Surely the sign of a truly amazing birdwatching experience for all.



Our hire car after the Birdsville Track. Oops! JB

BIRD OF THE TOUR

- 1. Plains Wanderer
- =2. Malleefowl, Rufous Bristlebird, Splendid Fairywren
- =5. Musk Duck, Letter-winged Kite, Orange-bellied Parrot
- =8. Australian Painted-snipe, Copperback Quail-thrush, Beautiful Firetail
- =11. Crested Pigeon, Superb Parrot, Southern Emu-wren



Australia. There's nothing like it. JB

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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).

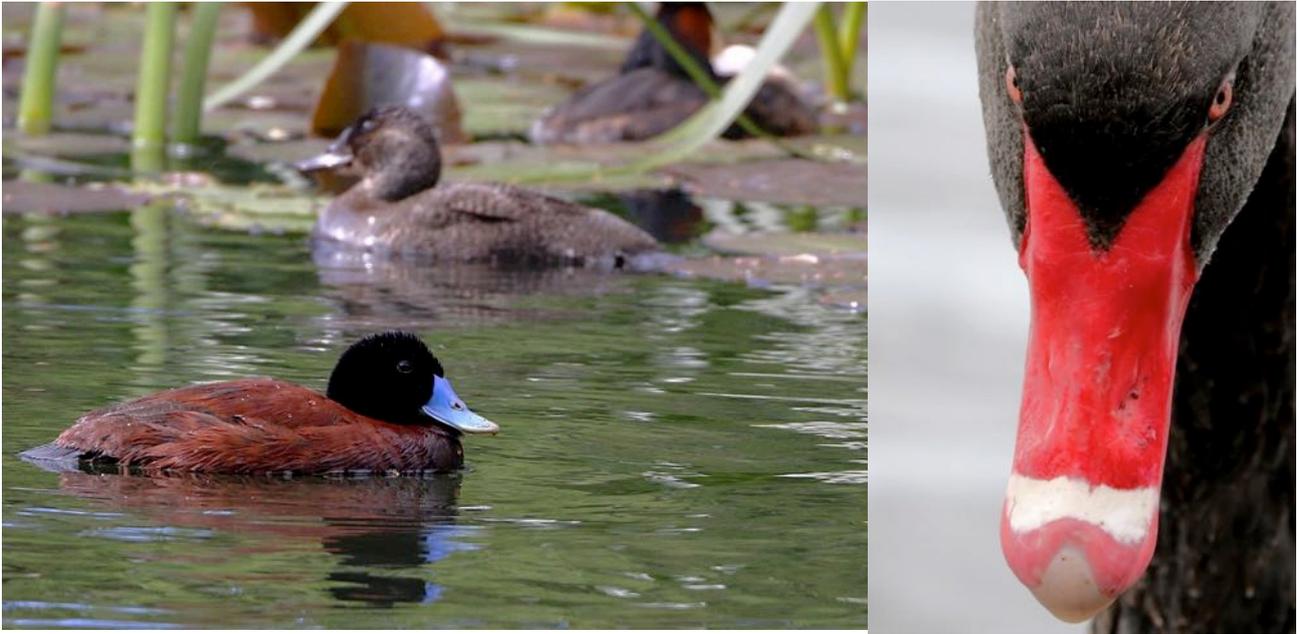
Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

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).



Emus are always lovely to see, especially in places like this! JB

- Emu** ◊ *Dromaius novaehollandiae* Abundant in the arid interior
Plumed Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* A couple seen by the roadside at various points
Cape Barren Goose ◊ *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Common on Phillip Island
Black Swan ◊ *Cygnus atratus* Regular, but seen extremely well in Ballarat
Freckled Duck ◊ *Stictonetta naevosa* Just a handful at various wetlands, but best views at Ballarat
Australian Shelduck ◊ *Tadorna tadornoides* Regularly observed in roadside fields in southern Victoria
Pink-eared Duck ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Many good views of this peculiar duck throughout
Maned Duck (Australian Wood D) *Chenonetta jubata* Noted regularly throughout the tour
Mallard (introduced) *Anas platyrhynchos* One good male at Gould's Lagoon in Hobart
Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Abundant and seen in most wetlands
Australasian Shoveler ◊ *Anas rhynchos* A couple in Waikerie, and one female in Hobart
Grey Teal ◊ *Anas gracilis* Common in most arid waterbodies
Chestnut Teal ◊ *Anas castanea* Common in most southern waterbodies
Hardhead ◊ *Aythya australis* Noted in many deep water lakes
Blue-billed Duck ◊ *Oxyura australis* The best views were at Ballarat, with a couple of males and females seen well



Blue-billed Ducks (left) sure are brightly coloured, but Black Swans (right) have the attitude to match. JB

- Musk Duck** ◇ *Biziura lobata* A superb male swam right up to us at Ballarat and posed at length in all his glory
- Malleefowl** ◇ *Leipoa ocellata* Scratching around our feet at Little Desert, plus others crossing roads and tracks
- Stubble Quail** ◇ *Coturnix pectoralis* Spottit on the way back to Deniliquin after our Plains-wanderer tour
- Brown Quail** ◇ *Coturnix ypsilophora* (H) Heard only at a park in Melbourne
- Little Penguin** ◇ *Eudyptula minor* Many parading up alongside the boardwalk on the Phillip Island Penguin Parade
- Shy Albatross** ◇ *Thalassarche cauta* One individual seen very close to shore standing on a Bruny Island beach
- Short-tailed Shearwater** *Ardenna tenuirostris* Seen in flight and on the deck at the Penguin Parade, Phillip Island
- Australasian Grebe** ◇ *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* Regularly noted in southern waterbodies
- Hoary-headed Grebe** ◇ *Poliocephalus poliocephalus* Regularly noted in arid waterbodies
- Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Seen a couple of times in deep water, with good views at Ballarat
- Australian White Ibis** ◇ *Threskiornis molucca* Noted around Melbourne and other cities
- Straw-necked Ibis** ◇ *Threskiornis spinicollis* Often seen in roadside paddocks or in flight. Good views at Werribee
- Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* A couple at flooded bores on the Birdsville Track
- Royal Spoonbill** ◇ *Platalea regia* Some lovely birds in breeding plumage on the Great Ocean Road
- Yellow-billed Spoonbill** ◇ *Platalea flavipes* Seen a couple of times on our mainland route
- Australasian Bittern** ◇ *Botaurus poiciloptilus* (H) Heard at Gulpa Creek near Deniliquin
- Black-backed Bittern** ◇ *Ixobrychus dubius* (H) Heard at Gulpa Creek near Deniliquin
- Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous N H)** *Nycticorax caledonicus* One flyby at Hattah Lakes
- Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* A couple roadside near Melbourne
- White-necked Heron** *Ardea pacifica* Surprisingly scarce this year, but good views at a few roadside stops
- Great Egret** *Ardea alba* A couple noted throughout
- White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae* Quite common throughout
- Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Noted at a couple of coastal wetlands
- Australian Pelican** ◇ *Pelecanus conspicillatus* Regular at coastal sites in particular
- Australasian Gannet** ◇ *Morus serrator* Seen from the plane to Melaleuca, and from various beaches
- Little Pied Cormorant** *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Commonly observed at water bodies
- Black-faced Cormorant** ◇ (B-f Shag) *Phalacrocorax fuscescens* A couple loafing offshore on Brunt Island
- Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Common observed at water bodies
- Australian Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax varius* A couple seen very well at a jetty in Whyalla
- Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Noted a couple of times on the tour
- Australasian Darter** *Anhinga novaehollandiae* Noted a couple of times on the tour



The rare Black-breasted Buzzard (left) is a lovely bird, but the mighty Wedge-tailed Eagle (right) takes some beating! Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

- Black-shouldered Kite** ◊ (Australian K) *Elanus axillaris* Seen roadside well near Deniliquin and Adelaide
- Letter-winged Kite** ◊ *Elanus scriptus* One adult and juvenile roosting near a nest on the Strzelecki Track
- Square-tailed Kite** ◊ *Lophoictinia isura* Pair seen circling near abandoned nest in Deniliquin
- Black-breasted Buzzard** ◊ *Hamirostra melanosternon* Pair on the nest near Lyndhurst
- Little Eagle** ◊ *Hieraetus morphnoides* Seen often on this tour, both light and dark morphs
- Wedge-tailed Eagle** ◊ *Aquila audax* Abundant, feeding on roadkill all the way up to Lyndhurst in particular
- Grey Goshawk** ◊ *Accipiter novaehollandiae* White morph found going to roost, then reformed the next morning
- Brown Goshawk** ◊ *Accipiter fasciatus* Only a few on this tour – surprisingly scarce this time
- Collared Sparrowhawk** ◊ *Accipiter cirrocephalus* Lots at various sites, although usually rarer than goshawk!
- Swamp Harrier** *Circus approximans* Good views at Gulpa Creek and in Hobart
- Spotted Harrier** ◊ *Circus assimilis* A few seen distantly, until finally excellent views on the way to Adelaide
- Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Common on the arid roadsides
- Whistling Kite** ◊ *Haliastur sphenurus* Also common on the arid roadsides, often on roadkill
- White-bellied Sea Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Single adult bird in the distance on Bruny Island
- Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis* One adult with chick at a wetland in Waikerie
- Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Superb views of one bird feeding in the open only meters away at Gulpa Creek
- Australian Crake** ◊ (A Spotted C) *Porzana fluminea* Seen a couple of times, with the best views around Deniliquin
- Australasian Swamphen** *Porphyrio melanotus* Regularly noted in swamps and ponds
- Dusky Moorhen** *Gallinula tenebrosa* Seen a couple of times around Ballarat and Melbourne
- Black-tailed Nativehen** ◊ *Tribonyx ventralis* Abundant this year in big numbers, including Ballarat and Hattah
- Tasmanian Nativehen** ◊ *Tribonyx mortierii* Excellent views of multiple birds with chicks on Bruny Island
- Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* Noted regularly in good numbers
- Brolga** ◊ *Antigone rubicunda* A handful of different pairs on the Birdsville Track
- Bush Stone-curlew** ◊ (B Thick-knee) *Burhinus grallarius* One pair on the roadside in Horsham at a regular roost
- Pied Oystercatcher** ◊ (Australian P O) *Haematopus longirostris* Often noted along sandy beaches
- Sooty Oystercatcher** ◊ *Haematopus fuliginosus* One on the way to Adelaide, and a couple more in Tasmania
- White-headed Stilt** *Himantopus leucocephalus* Regularly noted in shallow wetlands
- Banded Stilt** ◊ *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus* One huge and impressive flock at Avalon Beach, Melbourne
- Red-necked Avocet** ◊ *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* Some mixed in with the stilts at Avalon Beach
- Banded Lapwing** ◊ *Vanellus tricolor* Seen very well around Deniliquin, and also in the Flinders Ranges
- Masked Lapwing** ◊ *Vanellus miles* Common throughout, with one ssp *miles* seen near Goyder Lagoon



Comical Black-tailed Noddis were abundant this year, and we were lucky to see the one known pair of Bush Stone-curlews in western Victoria! JB

- Red-kneed Dotterel** ◇ *Erythronyctes alpinus* Good numbers this year, seen very well on the Birdsville Track
Inland Dotterel ◇ *Peltohyas australis* Spotted in the Plains-wanderer paddock, and one on the Birdsville Track
Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* Some distantly scoped out at Thompsons Beach near Adelaide
Red-capped Plover ◇ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Excellent views on the Birdsville Track, and elsewhere
Hooded Dotterel ◇ *Thinornis cucullatus* One pair on Phillip Island showed exceptionally well
Black-fronted Dotterel ◇ *Euseyonis melanops* Noted at many inland wetlands
Australian Painted-snipe ◇ *Rostratula australis* Four birds twitched in a small patch of sedge, suburban Adelaide



Good-looking Red-kneed Dotterels (left) shared this outback swamp with a pair of Brolga (right). JB

- Plains-wanderer** ◇ *Pedionomus torquatus* One female and two males on our evening out with Phil Maher
Latham's Snipe ◇ (Japanese S) *Gallinago hardwickii* A handful flushed from a swamp in central Geelong
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Three near the airport at Hobart
Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* Large group near the airport at Hobart – our final bird of the trip!
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* A couple along the Birdsville Track

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* A couple along the Birdsville Track
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* One at a bore up the Birdsville Track
Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Small numbers at Melbourne's Western Treatment Plant
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Seen well at the Western Treatment Plant
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Seen well at the Western Treatment Plant
Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Large numbers at various sites, including the Western Treatment Plant
Australian Pratincole ◇ *Stiltia isabella* Only a few this year up the Birdsville Track, but seen well!



There aren't many gulls down under, but you can't argue that Pacific Gull is a looker! Photographed by Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

Silver Gull ◇ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* Abundant along the coasts
Pacific Gull ◇ *Larus pacificus* Regularly seen both on the mainland, and in Tasmania
Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* Abundant along coastlines in Tasmania
Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* First seen at a wetland in Waikerie, then a few additional times
Greater Crested Tern (Crested T) *Thalasseus bergii* Regularly noted along the coast
Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* One or two birds flying past with Whiskered Terns at the Western Treatment Plant
Fairy Tern ◇ *Sternula nereis* One single breeding plumaged bird seen in flight after being flushed by a car
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Abundant at various sites
Pomarine Jaeger (P Skua) *Stercorarius pomarinus* One seawatched from the Western Treatment Plant
Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* Noted a few times in suburbia
Spotted Dove (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis* Noted regularly in suburbia
Common Bronzewing ◇ *Phaps chalcoptera* Seen very well a handful of times, best around Deniliquin
Brush Bronzewing ◇ *Phaps elegans* A few flushed off the road in Tasmania, with one male posing very well at length
Flock Bronzewing ◇ *Phaps histrionica* Excellent views of a female flying alongside the car on the Birdsville Track
Crested Pigeon ◇ *Ocyphaps lophotes* This funky bird is common throughout southern Australia, and always enjoyed!
Wonga Pigeon ◇ *Leucosarcia melanoleuca* A surprise find along the trail at Toolangi – seen well
Diamond Dove ◇ *Geopelia cuneata* Regular near small waterbodies along the Birdsville Track
Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida* Seen well a few times, including at Deniliquin



Clockwise from top left: Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo was seen a few times, but the scarce Black-eared Cuckoo was a great pick-up indeed. A showy Southern Boobook was seen in Deniliquin, and we found two different Tawny Frogmouth nests in suburbia. JB

- Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** ◇ *Chrysococcyx basalis* Great looks at Heathcote, and at Gluepot
- Black-eared Cuckoo** ◇ *Chrysococcyx osculans* Single bird calling and taped in for great views at Gluepot
- Shining Bronze Cuckoo** ◇ *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Heard a few times, but seen very well on the first day of the tour
- Pallid Cuckoo** ◇ *Cacomantis pallidus* Distant views on the mainland, but great looks on Bruny Island
- Fan-tailed Cuckoo** ◇ *Cacomantis flabelliformis* Heard regularly, seen on the Great Ocean Road and in Hobart
- Eastern Barn Owl** ◇ *Tyto javanica* Multiple seen concentrated in small areas around Deniliquin and Little Desert
- Powerful Owl** ◇ *Ninox strenua* Pair at their roost in Melbourne – an impressive owl indeed!
- Southern Boobook** ◇ *Ninox boobook* Spotlit at a small stand of trees near the Plains-wanderer paddock
- Tawny Frogmouth** ◇ *Podargus strigoides* Two different pairs with chicks in Melbourne, and in Deniliquin
- Spotted Nightjar** ◇ *Eurostopodus argus* One hawking above the wetland behind our hotel at Lyndhurst
- Australian Owlet-Nightjar** ◇ *Aegotheles cristatus* Flushed during the day a few times for great views, and spotlit
- Laughing Kookaburra** ◇ *Dacelo novaeguineae* The king of the kingfishers – seen a number of times, and heard too
- Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* Noted regularly at woodland sites
- Red-backed Kingfisher** ◇ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* Good numbers throughout the arid interior
- Azure Kingfisher** *Ceyx azureus* One alongside the river at Deniliquin
- Rainbow Bee-eater** ◇ *Merops ornatus* Common and very showy around Mungerannie on the Birdsville Track
- Nankeen Kestrel** ◇ (Australian K) *Falco cenchroides* A common roadside raptor
- Australian Hobby** ◇ *Falco longipennis* A less common roadside raptor, but seen a few times, and at Gulpa Creek

Brown Falcon ◇ *Falco berigora* Also a common roadside raptor, particularly on the Stzelecki Track
Grey Falcon ◇ *Falco hypoleucos* Two pairs at roosts near Mungerannie on the Birdsville Track
Black Falcon ◇ *Falco subniger* One bird passing above the car, then circling at length in full view nearby
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A pair on Phillip Island, and noted elsewhere
Cockatiel ◇ *Nymphicus hollandicus* (LO) Unfortunately a flyby flock was our only sighting on this tour
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo ◇ *Calyptorhynchus funereus* A very content pair perched on the first day, Dandenong
Gang-gang Cockatoo ◇ *Callocephalon fimbriatum* Flight views in Melbourne, and perched views at Hall's Gap
Galah ◇ *Eolophus roseicapilla* A true character, with their antics being observed regularly throughout
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo ◇ (Pink C) *Lophochroa leadbeateri* Excellent views of a couple near Hattah-Kulkyne NP
Long-billed Corella ◇ *Cacatua tenuirostris* Common along the roadside in southern Victoria
Little Corella ◇ *Cacatua sanguinea* Abundant along the Strzelecki Track
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo ◇ *Cacatua galerita* Common around Melbourne, and very loud!
Superb Parrot ◇ *Polytelis swainsonii* Stunning views of a feeding flock near Deniliquin
Regent Parrot ◇ *Polytelis anthopeplus* Excellent looks at some birds nesting along the Murray River near Hattah



Regent Parrots (left) breed in River Red Gums along the Murray River (JB). Eastern Ground Parrots on the other hand (right) nest in dense undergrowth in Australia's southern heathlands (Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann).

Australian King Parrot ◇ *Alisterus scapularis* A couple around Melbourne afforded good looks
Red-rumped Parrot ◇ *Psephotus haematonotus* Common inland, seen very well at Gulpa Creek
Eastern Bluebonnet ◇ *Northiella haematogaster* Difficult to see perched, but we succeeded a few times!
Mulga Parrot ◇ *Psephotellus varius* Excellent looks at this stunner at Gluepot Reserve
Green Rosella ◇ *Platycercus caledonicus* Regularly noted around Hobart and on Bruny Island
Crimson Rosella ◇ *Platycercus elegans* Common in the Dandenongs, even eating breakfast with us!
Crimson Rosella ◇ (Adelaide R) *Platycercus [elegans] subadelaidae* A handful by the roadside near Adelaide
Crimson Rosella ◇ (Yellow R) *Platycercus [elegans] flaveolus* Common around Deniliquin and the Murray
Eastern Rosella ◇ *Platycercus eximius* Regular in Victorian woodland, especially up towards Deniliquin
Australian Ringneck ◇ *Barnardius zonarius* Mallee form seen well in Hattah, and the Port Lincoln form at Whyalla
Eastern Ground Parrot ◇ *Pezoporus wallicus* Three seen at Melaleuca, including one on the deck
Blue-winged Parrot ◇ *Neophema chrysostoma* Seen flying over often on the Great Ocean Road, and perched once
Elegant Parrot ◇ *Neophema elegans* Flushed from saltbush near the Flinders Ranges
Orange-bellied Parrot ◇ *Neophema chrysogaster* Many seen at Melaleuca, including some proper wild individuals
Purple-crowned Lorikeet ◇ *Parvipsitta porphyrocephala* A couple at the Port Augusta Arid Lands Botanic Gardens
Rainbow Lorikeet ◇ *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Regularly seen in major towns in Victoria and South Australia
Musk Lorikeet ◇ *Glossopsitta concinna* Feeding above our hotel in Heathcote
Budgerigar ◇ *Melopsittacus undulatus* A couple of large flocks coming to roost next to the Birdsville Track
Superb Lyrebird ◇ *Menura novaehollandiae* Both females and males seen, with one even singing to us
Satin Bowerbird ◇ *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* A male and his harem of females enjoyed on the Great Ocean Road
White-throated Treecreeper ◇ *Cormobates leucophaea* Common in Victorian forests
White-browed Treecreeper ◇ *Climacteris affinis* A handful eventually locked down in some mulga near Mildura

Rufous Treecreeper ◇ *Climacteris rufus* Two birds right at the last minute at Lake Gilles Conservation Park
Brown Treecreeper ◇ *Climacteris picumnus* Common in the dry woodlands near Deniliquin and Heathcote



Rufous Treecreeper (left) was a write-in for this tour and is usually only seen on our Western Australia route. *White-browed Treecreeper* however (right) was much more important to connect with. JB

Variegated Fairywren ◇ *Malurus lamberti* Regularly seen throughout the tour, including spectacular males
Blue-breasted Fairywren ◇ *Malurus pulcherrimus* One small family party at Lake Gilles Conservation Park
Superb Fairywren ◇ *Malurus cyaneus* Common garden fairywren – what a bird to have feeding under picnic tables!
Splendid Fairywren ◇ *Malurus splendens* Possible the most spectacular of the fairywrens, seen well in Hattah
White-winged Fairywren ◇ *Malurus leucopterus* Many of these beauties around Lyndhurst seen well in good light
Southern Emu-wren ◇ *Stipiturus malachurus* Both on the Great Ocean Road, and down at Melaleuca
Mallee Emu-wren ◇ *Stipiturus mallee* Severely threatened by fire regimes, but we saw plenty at Hattah-Kulkyne
Grey Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis barbatus* It took some work, but a pair eventually showed at Goyder Lagoon
Short-tailed Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis merrotsyi* Seen well three times before disappearing in the Flinders Ranges
Striated Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis striatus* Hard work this year, but a male came in and sang at Hattah-Kulkyne
Eyrean Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis goyderi* Plenty around on the Strzelecki Track, with great views at two sites
Western Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis textilis* At Whyalla Conservation Park, one pair of these beauties showed well
Thick-billed Grasswren ◇ *Amytornis modestus* We succeeded in finding three groups despite trialing conditions
Black Honeyeater ◇ *Sugomel nigrum* Big numbers of this nomadic honeyeater feeding roadside near Deniliquin
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater ◇ *Gliciphila melanops* Noted at a few sites, but good views in Kamarooka
Eastern Spinebill ◇ *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Wonderful views on our first day in Dandenongs
Pied Honeyeater ◇ *Certhionyx variegatus* Just a couple seen near Deniliquin in revegetated Eremophila
Crescent Honeyeater ◇ *Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus* Commonly heard, and seen very well at Cape Otway
New Holland Honeyeater ◇ *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* The abundant heathland honeyeater
Painted Honeyeater ◇ *Grantiella picta* One of the rarest honeyeaters, found in flowering mistletoe near Castlemaine
Striped Honeyeater ◇ *Plectorhyncha lanceolata* A beautiful bird enjoyed several times, particularly at Gluepot



An abundance of flowering trees throughout Australia has led to a huge diversity of specialised honeyeaters. We saw every species possible on this route, including (counterclockwise from top left): Striped Honeyeater, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Red Wattlebird. JB

- Little Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon citreogularis* A couple in trees above the Gulpa Creek Reedbeds
- Noisy Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon corniculatus* Plenty around town at Deniliquin
- Blue-faced Honeyeater** ◇ *Entomyzon cyanotis* A few seen in small country towns along the Murray River
- Black-chinned Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus gularis* Excellent views in Little Desert, and also seen around Heathcote
- Strong-billed Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus validirostris* Our final Tasmanian endemic, located on South Bruny Island
- Brown-headed Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus brevirostris* Quite common in the mallee, with good looks at Kamarooka
- White-naped Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus lunatus* Taped in from distance while birding in the forest at Heathcote
- Black-headed Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus affinis* A noisy Tasmanian endemic, seen well in big flocks on Bruny
- White-eared Honeyeater** ◇ *Nesoptilotis leucotis* One of the most common woodland honeyeaters
- Yellow-throated Honeyeater** ◇ *Nesoptilotis flavicollis* This beautiful Tasmanian endemic adored at Peter Murrell
- Gibberbird** (Gibber Chat) *Ashbyia lovensis* One pair foraged their way towards us on the Strzelecki Track - wow
- Orange Chat** ◇ *Epthianura aurifrons* Plenty of these absolute gems along the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks
- Yellow Chat** ◇ *Epthianura crocea* One male located at a bore on the Birdsville Track
- White-fronted Chat** ◇ *Epthianura albifrons* Common around the Melbourne foreshore, and noted elsewhere
- Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** ◇ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* Abundant inland, but seen best at a bird bath in Gluepot
- Little Wattlebird** (Brush W) *Anthochaera chrysoptera* Only a couple on Phillip Island, and in suburban Hobart
- Red Wattlebird** ◇ *Anthochaera carunculata* Quite common in coastal areas, and seen well a few times
- Yellow Wattlebird** ◇ *Anthochaera paradoxa* A big honeyeater, often very skittish, but observed well on Bruny

Yellow-faced Honeyeater ◇ *Caligavis chrysops* A few noted throughout Victoria in woodlands
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater ◇ *Lichenostomus melanops* First views at Kamarooka, then near Castlemaine
Purple-gaped Honeyeater ◇ *Lichenostomus cratitius* Brief views of this tricky bird at Little Desert
Bell Miner ◇ *Manorina melanophrys* A couple of birds seen at a colony near our hotel in Melbourne
Noisy Miner ◇ *Manorina melanocephala* Common in southern towns, parks, and gardens
Yellow-throated Miner ◇ *Manorina flavigula* Common in desert towns, parks, and gardens
Black-eared Miner ◇ *Manorina melanotis* We worked through many hybrids at Gluepot before satisfying ourselves
White-fronted Honeyeater ◇ *Purnella albifrons* Quite common this year, and seen well at Port Augusta
Singing Honeyeater ◇ *Gavicalis virescens* Abundant on the Victorian coast in particular
Fuscous Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula fusca* Angrily chasing away all our other target honeyeaters at Heathcote!
Grey-fronted Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula plumula* Just a couple at Brachina Gorge in the Flinders Ranges
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula ornata* Lots in the mallee of Hattah-Kulkynne and Gluepot
White-plumed Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula penicillata* The common garden honeyeater of inland Australia
Lewin's Honeyeater ◇ *Meliphaga lewinii* Just one bird sneaking around the carpark at Toolangi State Forest
Rufous Bristlebird ◇ *Dasyornis broadbenti* Ridiculous views of these charismatic birds on the Great Ocean Road
Spotted Pardalote ◇ *Pardalotus punctatus* A male feeding at eye level in Kamarooka was well appreciated
Forty-spotted Pardalote ◇ *Pardalotus quadragintus* A couple seen almost straight away on Bruny Island this year
Red-browed Pardalote ◇ *Pardalotus rubricatus* Two vocal birds at a nondescript creek crossing on the Birdsville
Striated Pardalote ◇ *Pardalotus striatus* Often noted in woodland areas, and seen well a few times
Pilotbird ◇ *Pycnoptilus floccosus* One single bird responded at Toolangi, giving views to some of the group
Scrubtit ◇ *Acanthornis magna* Excellent looks at this often challenging Tasmanian endemic on Bruny Island



The endangered Scrubtit is a Tasmanian wet forest endemic which takes some effort to find (JB), whereas the beautiful Spotted Pardalote is widespread and often seen very well (Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann).

Chestnut-rumped Heathwren ◇ *Calamanthus pyrrhopygius* Three stars? Try three minutes near Anglesea!
Shy Heathwren ◇ *Calamanthus cautus* As usual, not very shy in the Little Desert mallee
Striated Fieldwren ◇ *Calamanthus fuliginosus* Both the mainland race and the Tasmanian race seen very well
Rufous Fieldwren ◇ *Calamanthus campestris* Early morning at Little Desert we watched a couple singing on bushes
Redthroat ◇ *Pyrrholaemus brunneus* Silent at first, we eventually had a strong response from a pair near Morgan
Speckled Warbler ◇ *Pyrrholaemus sagittatus* A small party found near Heathcote after a change of tactics!
White-browed Scrubwren ◇ *Sericornis frontalis* Common in the southern mainland forests
Tasmanian Scrubwren ◇ (Brown S) *Sericornis humilis* Common in the wet forests of Bruny Island
Large-billed Scrubwren ◇ *Sericornis magnirostra* Just one pair in the Dandenongs on our first day
Weebill ◇ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Australia's smallest bird, seen very well in low shrubs at Brachina Gorge
Western Gerygone ◇ *Gerygone fusca* Only one individual seen fortuitously along the Murray River
White-throated Gerygone ◇ *Gerygone olivacea* A slightly lost individual located in Little Desert National Park
Brown Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza pusilla* Common in the Dandenongs, and seen elsewhere in the south too
Inland Thornbill ◇ (Broad-tailed T) *Acanthiza apicalis* Regularly noted inland, with responsive birds at Lake Gilles
Tasmanian Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza ewingii* This long-legged forest thornbill was common in the wet forest on Bruny

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza uropygialis* Seen a couple of times in the mallee areas
Buff-rumped Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza reguloides* Some in the central Victorian forests, and in Deniliquin
Slender-billed Thornbill ◇ (Samphire T) *Acanthiza iredalei* A small group seen early in Little Desert National Park
Yellow-rumped Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* First seen at Avalon Beach, then on inland grassy lawns later!
Yellow Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza nana* Only a few around Deniliquin on this trip, but good views
Striated Thornbill ◇ *Acanthiza lineata* Common in the southern forests, particularly in the Dandenongs
Southern Whiteface ◇ *Aphelocephala leucopsis* Some in the mulga country of far north western Victoria
Banded Whiteface ◇ *Aphelocephala nigricincta* One small flock seen, then promptly not seen near Mungerannie
Grey-crowned Babbler ◇ *Pomatostomus temporalis* Just one family party north of Deniliquin
White-browed Babbler ◇ *Pomatostomus superciliosus* Common inland, but exceptional looks at Whyalla CP
Chestnut-crowned Babbler ◇ *Pomatostomus ruficeps* Also quite common inland, seen well at Gluepot



Speckled Warblers (left) and White-browed Babblers (right) are woodland specialists, often found in small family parties. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

Eastern Whipbird ◇ *Psophodes olivaceus* Two duetting and perched up early in the morning in the Dandenongs
Chirruping Wedgebill ◇ *Psophodes cristatus* Perched up nicely before the wind kicked in on the Strzelecki Track
Chestnut Quail-thrush ◇ *Cinclosoma castanotum* Brief views in Hattah, and excellent views at Gluepot
Copperback Quail-thrush ◇ *Cinclosoma clarum* A superbly cooperative family at Lake Gilles
Cinnamon Quail-thrush ◇ *Cinclosoma cinnamomeum* Many flushed off the Strzelecki Track, some tracked down
White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Breeding at Mungerannie, and seen mobbing raptors
Masked Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus personatus* Big numbers around Deniliquin and Hattah
White-browed Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus superciliosus* Mixed in with the big numbers of Masked Woodswallow
Black-faced Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus cinereus* Dozens of birds daily when north of the Flinders Ranges
Dusky Woodswallow ◇ *Artamus cyanopterus* Noted around Heathcote, and in Tasmania on Bruny Island
Australian Magpie ◇ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Common, but a lovely bird to listen to early in the morning
Grey Butcherbird ◇ *Cracticus torquatus* Seen first in a Melbourne park, but also in other more natural sites
Pied Butcherbird ◇ *Cracticus nigrogularis* One pair at Hattah Lakes sang atop a dead tree in the sun
Pied Currawong ◇ *Strepera graculina* Noted mainly around Melbourne in the wet forests and gardens
Black Currawong ◇ *Strepera fuliginosa* Many in flight at Melaleuca and Bruny Island, with one scoped nicely
Grey Currawong ◇ *Strepera versicolor* Difficult to get a good view of, but we saw many throughout
Black-faced Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina novaehollandiae* Noted regularly throughout the inland
White-winged Triller ◇ *Lalage tricolor* Only a handful this year, mainly around Deniliquin and Little Desert
Varied Sittella ◇ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* An active party at Heathcote, and a family with chicks near Mildura
Crested Bellbird ◇ *Oreoica gutturalis* Often tricky, but not this time! Multiple males and females seen around Hattah
Crested Shriketit ◇ *Falcunculus [frontatus] frontatus* One at Mangalore Flora & Fauna Reserve, others elsewhere
Olive Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala olivacea* A couple in the wet forest on Bruny Island towards midday
Red-lored Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala rufogularis* One male seen briefly in Gluepot after a long walk – getting hard!
Gilbert's Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala inornata* Both males and females chased down and observed at length in Gluepot
Australian Golden Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala pectoralis* Lots in the Dandenongs, including lovely singing males
Rufous Whistler ◇ *Pachycephala rufiventris* The common inland whistler, noted at most birding sites
Grey Shrikethrush ◇ *Colluricincla harmonica* Heard almost every morning, and seen well often

Olive-backed Oriole ◇ *Oriolus sagittatus* One seen well after taping at Heathcote, others heard at Casltemaine

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* A true Australian character, often running around our feet to catch insects!

Grey Fantail ◇ *Rhipidura albiscapa* Common in wet forests on the mainland and in Tasmania

Maggie-lark ◇ *Grallina cyanoleuca* Parks and gardens are well appreciated by Magpie-larks, where we saw many

Leaden Flycatcher ◇ *Myiagra rubecula* Only a few females at various dry woodland sites this year

Satin Flycatcher ◇ *Myiagra cyanoleuca* A male in the Dandenongs was a little early, but appreciated nonetheless!

Restless Flycatcher ◇ *Myiagra inquieta* Surprisingly, only two birds seen at Little Desert, with none elsewhere

Little Crow ◇ *Corvus bennetti* The common corvid of South Australia, particularly north of Hawker

Forest Raven ◇ *Corvus tasmanicus* Heard once near Melbourne, but everywhere in Tasmania

Little Raven ◇ *Corvus mellori* The standard corvid around Victoria, but they have to be checked carefully!

Australian Raven ◇ *Corvus coronoides* Small numbers usually mixed in with Little Crows and Little Ravens



The Australia corvids all look very similar, and require careful identification. This is the biggest of the five species, Australian Raven. Photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

White-winged Chough ◇ *Corcorax melanorhamphos* Often seen on the roadside in central Victoria

Apostlebird ◇ *Struthidea cinerea* One absolutely vicious group of twelve (!!!) at Hattah Lakes

Eastern Yellow Robin ◇ *Eopsaltria australis* One of the first birds we saw in the Dandenongs on our first day

Western Yellow Robin ◇ *Eopsaltria griseogularis* A bonus bird at Lake Gilles, here at their eastern limit

Hooded Robin ◇ *Melanodryas cucullata* Noted a few times, with a pair seen well in Little Desert

Dusky Robin ◇ *Melanodryas vittata* A couple on Bruny Island throughout the day

Jacky Winter ◇ *Microeca fascinans* Regular inland, particularly in central Victoria

Rose Robin ◇ *Petroica rosea* Came down low for us both in the Dandenongs, and at Toolangi

Pink Robin ◇ *Petroica rodinogaster* Heard only in Victoria, but seen superbly on Bruny Island

Flame Robin ◇ *Petroica phoenicea* A couple around in Tasmania, with some cracking males too!

Scarlet Robin ◇ *Petroica boodang* Noted regularly at various sites, including Heathcote, Little Desert, and Bruny

Red-capped Robin ◇ *Petroica goodenovii* A vibrant flash of red in the mallee was usually this species – lovely bird

Southern Scrub Robin ◇ *Drymodes brunneopygia* Noisy but often cryptic, one bird came bounding in at Gluepot



Australasian Robins are also found in New Guinea and the Pacific, but some of the best looking species are found right here in Australia. Clockwise from top, Western Yellow Robin (JB), Flame Robin (Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann), Southern Scrub Robin (JB).

- Horsfield's Bush Lark (Australasian B) *Mirafra javanica*** Just a single bird out on the Deniliquin plains
- Eurasian Skylark (introduced) *Alauda arvensis*** Plenty around Melbourne and Tasmania
- White-backed Swallow** ♦ *Cheramoeca leucosterna* Good numbers around sandy dunes on the Birdsville Track
- Welcome Swallow** ♦ *Hirundo neoxena* Common throughout
- Fairy Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon ariel* Common around southern Victoria in particular
- Tree Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon nigricans* Replaced most of the Fairy Martins as we headed inland past the Flinders
- Australian Reed Warbler** ♦ *Acrocephalus australis* Heard and seen in reeds on multiple occasions
- Rufous Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus mathewsi* Not abundant this year, but good views around Deniliquin and Little Desert
- Brown Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus cruralis* Plenty out on the plains north of Deniliquin
- Little Grassbird** ♦ *Megalurus gramineus* Quality views from the bird hide at Gulpa Creek Reedbeds
- Golden-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* One seen and others heard at the Western Treatment Plant
- Silvereye** *Zosterops lateralis* Regular in the southern forests of Victoria and Tasmania
- Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis*** Common in the southern cities
- Common Starling (introduced) *Sturnus vulgaris*** Common throughout the tour
- Bassian Thrush** ♦ *Zoothera lunulata* Three birds seen in the wet forest during our first two days around Melbourne

Common Blackbird (introduced) *Turdus merula* Common, especially around inland towns
Mistletoebird ♦ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* One male in particular at Heathcote was content to sit still in good view
House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Abundant, often picking insects off our car when parked in towns!
Beautiful Firetail ♦ *Stagonopleura bella* A truly wonderful bird, enjoyed from the hides at Melaleuca
Diamond Firetail ♦ *Stagonopleura guttata* Hard work, but a pair was eventually found in Little Desert
Red-browed Finch ♦ (R-b Firetail) *Neochmia temporalis* One pair nest building in the Dandenongs on the first day
Zebra Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia guttata* Stop at any water in the outback and you'll see a few hundred of these beauties
Australian Pipit ♦ *Anthus australis* Flushed often off the road, and viewed perched on occasion
European Greenfinch (introduced) *Chloris chloris* One last minute bird in Hobart before flying out
European Goldfinch (introduced) *Carduelis carduelis* A couple of small groups noted in Victoria and Tasmania



One of the most sought-after Australian mammals is the endearing Koala, which are easy to find in the wild along the Great Ocean Road. They look cuddly, but don't get too close to the claws! JB

MAMMALS

- Platypus** *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* One in the early morning along a scrubby Tasmanian river
- Short-beaked Echidna (S-nosed E)** *Tachyglossus aculeatus* Expertly spotted by Fred on Bruny Island
- Ampurta** *Dasyercus hillieri* Flushed on the Strzelecki while looking for Eyrean Grasswrens
- Fat-tailed Dunnart** *Smithopsis crassicaudata* A few spotted whilst looking for Plains-wanderer
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot** *Perameles gunnii* One near Port Arthur Penal Colony
- Koala** *Phascolarctos cinereus* Six individuals easily located at Cape Otway
- Common Brushtail Possum** *Trichosurus vulpecula* Regularly found at night whilst spotlighting
- Common Ringtail Possum** *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* Regularly found at night whilst spotlighting
- Western Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus fuliginosus* Plenty around Hawker and in the mallee
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus giganteus* Seen mainly around Deniliquin
- Euro (Common Wallaroo)** *Macropus robustus* Lots around the Flinders Ranges
- Red-necked Wallaby** *Macropus rufogriseus* Abundant on Bruny Island, and around Port Arthur
- Red Kangaroo** *Macropus rufus* The common macropod on the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks
- Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby** *Petrogale xanthopus* A beautiful mammal, seen at close range in Brachina Gorge
- Tasmanian Pademelon** *Thylogale billardierii* Lots and lots of these bouncy bundles of fluff in Tasmania
- Black Wallaby (Swamp W)** *Wallabia bicolor* Just a few seen at various points in Victoria
- Water Rat (Beaver-Rat)** *Hydromys chrysogaster* One flushed our nicely posed Freckled Duck off her log
- House Mouse (introduced)** *Mus musculus* Some on the plains north of Deniliquin
- Dingo (introduced)** *Canis familiaris* Two seen on the Strzelecki Track, others heard howling as we changed a tyre
- Red Fox (introduced)** *Vulpes vulpes* Too many of these seen in Victoria
- House Cat (introduced) (Feral C)** *Felis catus* Only one seen near Deniliquin, but there's a lot more out there!
- Australian Fur-Seal (Afro-Australian F-S)** *Arctocephalus pusillus* Loafing on the rocks offshore, Great Ocean Road
- Brown Hare (introduced)** *Lepus europaeus* Some running across the road near Little Desert
- European Rabbit (introduced)** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Often seen in grassy areas next to the road
- Goat (introduced) (Feral G)** *Capra hircus* A couple around the Flinders Ranges
- Bottled-nosed Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus* Some in the harbor at Whyalla, and from the plane to Melaleuca



Clockwise from top left: Red Kangaroo in the outback, a wild Dingo on the Strzelecki Track, and the furry Tasmanian form of Short-beaked Echidna. All photographed by tour participant Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann

REPTILES

Mulga Snake (King Brown S) *Pseudechis australis* One at Lake Gilles Conservation Park.

Eastern Brown Snake *Pseudonaja textilis* One at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park from the car.

Western Brown Snake (Gwardar) *Pseudonaja nuchalis* A couple in South Australia from the car

Red-bellied Black Snake *Pseudechis porphyriacus* One at Gulpa Reed Beds from the bird hide

Tiger Snake *Notechis scutatus* This beautiful elapid was seen at Toolangi State Forest

Lace Monitor *Varanus varius* A big one near Deniliquin crossing the road

Gould's Monitor (Sand Goanna) *Varanus gouldii* A handful seen throughout the mainland route

Central Bearded Dragon *Pogona vitticeps* Good looks at this spikey reptile in the outback

Mallee Military Dragon *Ctenophorus fordi* Common in spinifex country throughout the mallee

Shingleback *Tiliqua rugosa* This strange skink was quite common in arid zones

Blue-tongued Skink *Tiliqua scincoides* Seen near Deniliquin, and on Bruny Island.



The strange but harmless Shingleback (top) will try to scare you off with his bright purple tongue (JB), whereas venomous elapids like this strikingly smart Western Brown Snake (bottom) tend to run away quickly unless you approach slowly in the car for closer looks (Frédéric Pelsy-Mozimann). Due to their timid nature, it is a misconception that these deadly reptiles pose a significant threat to tourists in Australia, and usually only bite if you try to pick them up!