



*Chestnut-backed Button-quail in the north was a bonus, showing brilliantly for a long time – unheard of for this family (Andy Jensen)*

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**5/10 – 27 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**LEADER: ANDY JENSEN**

**ASSISTANT: STUART PICKERING**



*Western Shrike-tit was one of the many highlights in the southwest (Andy Jensen)*

Western Australia, if it were a country, would be the 10<sup>th</sup> largest in the world! The BirdQuest Western Australia (including Christmas Island) 2017 tour offered an unrivalled opportunity to cover a large portion of this area, as well as the offshore territory of Christmas Island (located closer to Indonesia than mainland Australia).

Western Australia is a highly diverse region with a range of habitats. It has been shaped by the isolation caused by the surrounding deserts. This isolation has resulted in a richly diverse fauna, with a high degree of endemism. A must visit for any birder. This tour covered a wide range of the habitats Western Australia has to offer as is possible in three weeks, including the temperate Karri and Wandoo woodlands and mallee of the southwest, the coastal heathlands of the southcoast, dry scrub and extensive uncleared woodlands of the goldfields, coastal plains and mangroves around Broome, and the red-earth savannah habitats and tropical woodland of the Kimberley.

The climate varied dramatically. Conditions ranged from minus 1c in the Sterling Ranges where we were scraping ice off the windscreen, to nearly 40c in the Kimberley, where it was dust needing to be removed from the windscreen! We were fortunate with the weather – aside from a few minutes of drizzle as we staked out one of the skulkers in the Sterling Ranges, it remained dry the whole time.

Three weeks offered a whistlestop tour of these habitats and the special birds they have to offer, and we recorded a tremendous total of 342 species (including four heard only) in just over three weeks. The trip started with a bang in Christmas Island where virtually the first bird seen after leaving the airport was the highly sought after Christmas Island Goshawk, which showed fantastically by the road side. By the time we

had reached our accommodation, a large number of the other endemics and numerous seabirds for which this island is so rightly famous had also been recorded. After dinner, a Christmas Island Boobook was soon in the spotlight literally feet from our faces. We were beginning to wonder whether there would be anything left for the next few days!

We needn't have worried – during our stay on the island we were entertained by a multitude of seabirds, from the prehistoric looking Abbott's Booby to the beautiful "Golden Bosunbird" (a golden morph of White-tailed Tropicbird). We even encountered a vagrant Tropical Shearwater, perhaps only the third or fourth record for Australia, in the incongruous setting of a residential street next to the local mosque! Landbirds are relatively depauperate on this island, however we readily encountered all the endemic species. Other interest came in the form of the endemic crabs for which the island is well known.

After Christmas Island, it was on to the temperate southwest. Around Perth and the woodlands to the southeast, we soon began to pick up the first endemics, with Carnaby's (or Short-billed) Black-cockatoo, Western Ringneck, Blue-breasted Fairy-wren, Rufous Treecreeper and Western Spinebill all along the species recorded. In the beautiful Sterling Ranges, we encountered the rare Hooded Plover breeding on an inland salt lake, unlikely its eastern cousins which favour ocean beaches. Flocks of both Baudin's and Carnaby's Black-cockatoo were recorded, as well as the delightful Western Yellow Robin, Western Fieldwren and scarce Western Shrike-tit. Best of all, we were treated to great views of the first of the big three skulkers in the southwest, as a Western Whipbird forgot to read the script and perched up brilliantly offering us prolonged scope views.

After finishing up in the inland woodlands it was on to the heathlands of the southern coast. Around Albany we picked up Western Rosella, White-breasted Robin and the handsome Red-eared Firetail. Our first full day bought the remaining two skulkers – the famous Noisy Scrub-bird and Western Bristlebird with marvellous views obtained of both species, as well as Southern Emu-wren, Square-tailed Kite and Red-winged Fairy-wren.

After the southwest we ventured into a new area for the Western Australia tour, heading into the goldfields region of Western Australia. Here we were targeting the rarely seen Copperback Quail-thrush and Western Quail-thrush, and we were not to be disappointed with stunning views of both species, as well as a host of other birds such as Western Bowerbird, Crimson Chat, Redthroat, White-backed Swallow and Hooded Robin making the long journey worthwhile.

It was on to the tropical northwest, where Broome bought a combination of some scarce mangrove dwelling species, including the endemic Dusky Gerygone, and the vast shorebird flocks of Roebuck Bay for which the area has been designated as a site of international importance. We drove the famous Gibb River Road deep into the heart of the breathtaking Kimberley region, where every corner produced another stunning vista. This region is home to some special species, none more so than the spectacular Black Grasswren – restricted to this corner of northwestern Australia and one of the most highly sought Australian birds. Other species included the endemic Kimberley Honeyeater, White-quilled Rock Pigeon and, in what was a real bonus, a small group of Chestnut-backed Button-quail.

After completing the Gibb, we concluded the tour in the agricultural land around Kununurra which is home to most Australian finch species, and we were not to be disappointed with all the finches possible seen. A boat trip on Lake Argyle, with a picnic breakfast was a nice change of pace, but the birding was still at the forefront, with cracking views of Baillon's and White-browed Crake, Yellow Chat and an unexpected group of Flock Bronzewing, another write-in - the 23rd of the tour.

After just over three weeks, with just about every target seen (including all the endemics), and fantastic views of most to boot, we were left with memories of some great birds seen in some spectacular landscapes as the tour drew to a close.

The group assembled in the International Terminal of Perth Airport, ready for the flight to Christmas Island. After the few hours flight, everyone was raring to go, although with a late afternoon arrival there was limited birding time left in the day. After getting through customs, we picked up the cars and were off. Literally only a few hundred metres down the road, a sudden stop was required, as sitting on a roadside wire was a Christmas Island Goshawk. This species is by no means guaranteed on the island, and along with the Christmas Island Boobook, one of the endemics which people sometimes miss, and here it was the first bird virtually! It is currently treated as a form of Brown Goshawk, however it has historically been put with Variable Goshawk. Probably the best solution for this isolated island form is species status, which is followed by some authors.

After a frantic bit of unpacking by the roadside (the intent was to go to the accommodation and get camera gear etc out from the luggage) we all enjoyed cracking views of this endemic subspecies. While we were watching, the first views of other endemics were also obtained, with a flyover Christmas Imperial Pigeon, a small group of Christmas Island White-eye flitting around in the adjoining forest, some of the recently split (from Glossy Swiftlet) Christmas Island Swiftlets fluttering around the canopy, and a brief Island Thrush.



*Christmas Island Goshawk (Andy Jensen)*

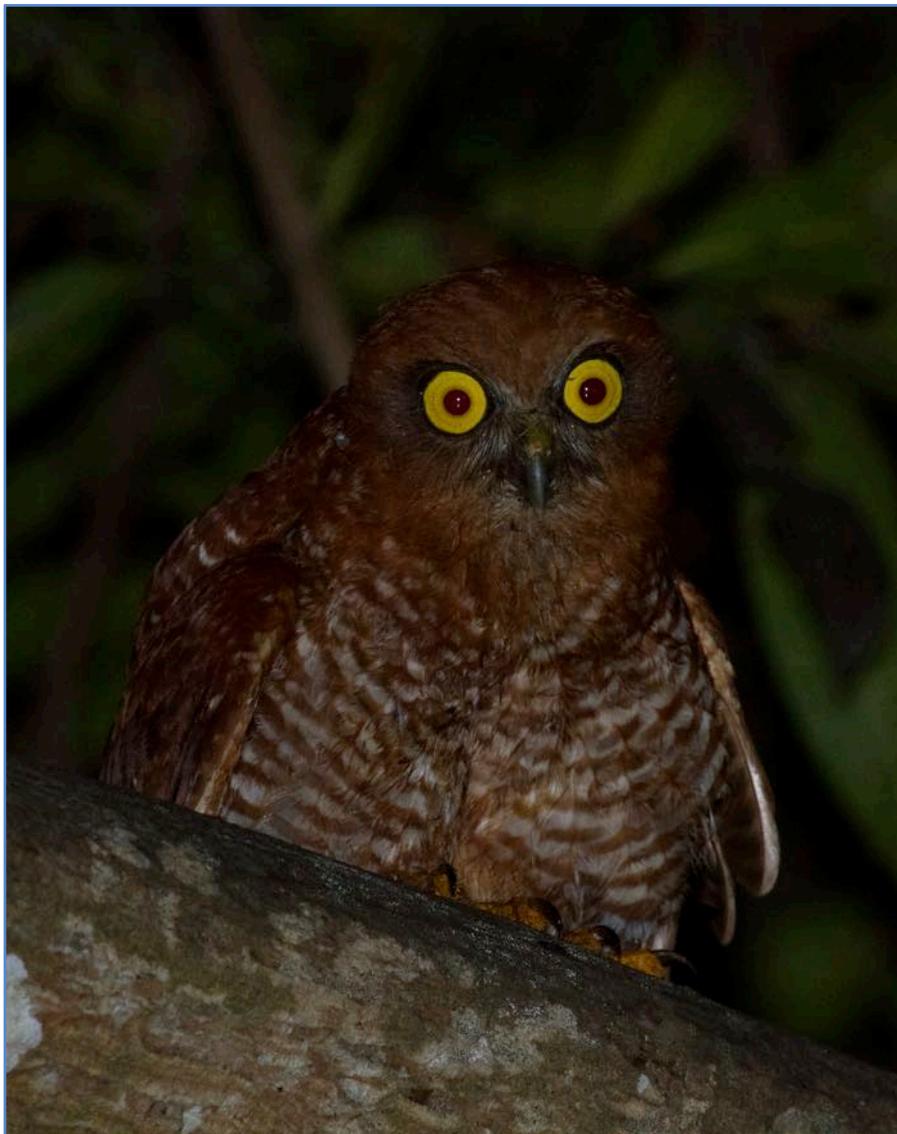
After having our fill of the goshawk, we continued on our way down off the plateau towards our accommodation in the coastal settlement on the north of the island. A couple of Nankeen Kestrel were seen

– a bird that has self-colonised Christmas Island, as well as some feral Red Junglefowl (a species which had rather more help to get here!).

On the drive down, the first seabirds for which this island is famed were noted, with fly over Great Frigatebirds, and as we got closer to the coast, Brown and Red-footed Boobies. It was getting late, so after watching the seabirds head off to roost past our seaview accommodation (including large numbers of Common Noddies and the first Christmas Island Frigatebirds) it was time for dinner.

After dinner we ventured a short distance in the Settlement for the first crack at spotlighting for the endemic Christmas Island Boobook. Often a few nights are required to see this species, and it is far more frequently heard in the inaccessible old growth forest of the island plateau than seen.

Initially there was no sign or sound, but after a while the distinctive notes of the Boobook were heard, first distantly, then closer, and before long it was in the canopy of a neighbouring tree. What happened next was beyond wildest expectations, as the bird flew past the group, and settled low into a tree right in front of us. We snuck up to where it flew in, and glaring down at us from literally a few feet away in the spotlight was a gorgeous Christmas Island Boobook. We sat down quietly and enjoyed spectacular views for the next several minutes.



*Christmas Island Boobook treated us to fantastic point blank views (Andy Jensen)*

What a spectacular first few hours – a lot of the pressure now off for the next few days as we had time to mop up the remaining endemics and specialities and enjoy the rest of the island.

With this in mind, we were up early the next morning to explore a woodland site close to the accommodation. Prior to leaving the accommodation, a calling Asian Koel was heard, but as dawn broke it fell silent and could not be seen. As we arrived at our site, we were greeted by a noisy group of Christmas Island White-eye, a couple of hulking Christmas Imperial Pigeon, and several Island Thrush. This subspecies is part of an assemblage of numerous forms of Island Thrush, but is unusual here in being present at near sea level. Nearby a few Common Emerald Dove foraged nervously around the forest edges at first but soon forgot their shyness, and were feeding around our feet. The tameness of many of the landbirds of Christmas Island was a noticeable feature throughout our stay.



*Island Thrush (top), Christmas Imperial Pigeon (bottom left) and Christmas Island White-eye (bottom right) (Andy Jensen)*

From the lookout at the park, we enjoyed spectacular views of Flying Fish Cove, and the coastline along the north of the island. Immediately below our vantage point, seabirds were nesting in the tall trees of the slope, with Brown and Red-footed Boobies and Great Frigatebirds the most abundant species, with the occasional views of the beautiful golden morph of White-tailed Tropicbird ('Golden Bosunbird') which is only found on the island. A couple of flyby Abbott's Booby were seen distantly, but we would try other sites for closer views later.



*A view of Flying Fish Cove and the Settlement in Christmas Island (Andy Jensen)*

After a spot of breakfast, we headed out along the east of the island to explore some of the sites. Seabirds were abundant all along the road. We began the process of buffing up on our frigatebird identification, with a variety of ages and sexes of all three species seen. Great Frigatebird were by far the commonest species, with good numbers of the endemic Christmas Island Frigatebird also seen. Lesser Frigatebird is only present in small numbers on the island, but nevertheless a few were seen. The coastline also gave us spectacular views of the beautiful Red-tailed Tropicbird which nests along the cliffs here.

We continued checking sites around the east of the island, including the dump (where a brief flyby Christmas Island Goshawk was seen), the golf course (which held Cattle Egret and Eastern Reef Egret), and the airfield.

A change of direction for the afternoon, as we headed to the northwest of the island, looking for one of its specialities. Abbott's Boobies nest in the mature forest in this area. This species only breeds on Christmas Island, and returns from feeding at sea to feed their chicks in the afternoon. We located several nests and were treated to seeing the adults and their chicks in the treetops. A truly bizarre looking seabird, almost like a cross between an albatross and a booby in terms of its stiff winged structure.



*The prehistoric looking Abbott's Booby showed well for us (Andy Jensen)*

After great views of the boobies, we descended down off the plateau for some late afternoon birding around the settlement. A tip off from a local resulted in some introduced Java Sparrows being found feeding in the garden of a house near our accommodation.

Upon dusk, it was off to another stakeout. In the previous few weeks, one of the Christmas Island birders had reported an unusual seabird call just after dusk in Flying Fish Cove. After a bit of trawling online for calls, and finally getting views of the bird in question, the source of the unusual call led to a Tropical Shearwater which had been arriving around dusk, calling while flying around, before disappearing inland, presumably to a burrow where it was prospecting for a mate. This was only the third or fourth record of the species for Australia.

After assembling in the spot around dusk, we were treated to one of the most surreal birding episodes I have experienced. As the Imam in the local mosque was leading prayers over the loud speaker, cars were driving down the seafront street and local children played along the foreshore, a distinctive call was eventually heard, and soon a crazy Tropical Shearwater was flying up and down the street under the streetlights calling out loudly, and dodging the passing traffic and gobsmacked birders. We watched it perform several passes close in front of us, before it disappeared and could be heard calling distantly up the slope towards the forested plateau, where it was presumably beginning the lonely vigil each evening of forlornly trying to attract a mate. A bizarre experience all round! With all our targets under the belt, the next couple of days were spent mopping up on a few of the other local specialities, doing some sight-seeing around the island, and trying to get photographs of the seabirds which offer spectacular opportunities here.



*Two of Christmas Island's beautiful seabirds - 'Golden Boobie' (left), and Red-tailed Tropicbird (right) (Andy Jensen)*



*Top - Christmas Island Frigatebird (female left, male right), bottom left Great Frigatebird (male), bottom right Lesser Frigatebird (male)*

We also enjoyed views of the other fauna on the island, including Christmas Island Flying Foxes (which unusually for this family fly during the day here - presumably due to the lack of predators). We also encountered huge Robber Crabs, and the Christmas Island Red Crabs which perform their spectacular migration after the first monsoonal rains coinciding with the spring tides.



*The menacing Robber Crab (Ian Lewis)*

Additional species recorded during this time included Intermediate Egret, Common Sandpiper, a brief flyby Sooty Tern, a vagrant Asian House Martin which fed over the escarpment early one morning with swiftlets, and seven White-breasted Waterhen. The latter species colonised Christmas Island in the early 1990s, and is now thinly distributed along the coastal fringes, although the local cat population keeps numbers down sadly. They are extremely elusive, and we were lucky to get some views eventually. The final morning also bought views of a few distant Australian Pratincole on the airport runway, just before we were due to take off.

With that our time on Christmas Island drew to a close. It was off to Perth and to see what the mainland had to offer, and to reflect on a successful and highly enjoyable few days on this tropical island paradise in the Indian Ocean.

## TOP FIVE BIRDS OF THE EXTENSION (CHRISTMAS ISLAND)

The top five birds of the extension, voted for by all participants were as follows. Each person had five votes, and in total seven species received a vote.

**1=** Christmas Island Boobook and 'Golden Bosunbird', **3** Tropical Shearwater, **4** Abbott's Booby, **5** Christmas Island Frigatebird.



*Joint winner of bird of the extension – Christmas Island Boobook (top) and 'Golden Bosunbird' (bottom)*

After arrival in Perth, it was late so we checked into the motel ready for an early start the following morning and a full day's birding. We gathered in the car park of the motel, with an array of new bird calls surrounding us. It was a short distance to our first stop, a suburban lake in Perth.

Perth had recently had some heavy rain, so the edges of the lake were swollen and many of the paths flooded. The common wildfowl were soon in the bag - Black Swan, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead and both Australasian and Great-crested Grebes. A few Yellow-billed Spoonbill were also present as well as a couple of stately Nankeen Night Heron. The swollen margins of the lake proved helpful in one respect, as an amazing eight Buff-banded Rail were seen, wandering around in the open at various spots, displaced by the higher water levels. A Spotless Crake was also heard, but sadly it did not emerge from cover.

Some of the scarcer wildfowl were picked up, with Australian Shelduck, several Pink-eared Duck, Australian Shoveler, the bizarre Musk Duck and the handsome Blue-billed Duck all recorded.



*Blue-billed Duck showed well in Perth (Andy Jensen)*

Red Wattlebird, Singing Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater and New Holland Honeyeater were all common in the surrounding shrub, and would remain so over the coming days in the south. Several Weebill (Australia's smallest bird) were also noted in the lakeside trees.

Some scarcer bushland species were also noted, with a couple of Shining Bronze Cuckoo first heard and then seen, although a Pallid Cuckoo was heard only. A couple of Western Gerygone were heard calling in the treetops, and eventually showed well, as did a Yellow-rumped Thornbill. In the reedy margins, many Australian Reed Warblers were heard, and a few were seen, although Little Grassbird remained frustratingly distant and out of reach due to the high water levels. A beautiful male Splendid Fairy-wren provided ample compensation however. Best of all, a Tawny Frogmouth was located on its rudimentary nest right next to the path, showing extremely well seemingly unconcerned by the comings and goings of cyclists and dog walkers. Lastly, a small group of Little Corella and then a noisy group of Red-tailed Black Cockatoo flew by.

Our next destination was the famous Dryandra woodlands a couple of hours southeast of Perth. After a slight delay, we were soon in the farmland that has fragmented this relatively small patch of remnant wandoo woodland which once covered much of the western wheatbelt.

In the farmland surrounding Dryandra, a few Black-faced Woodswallow and plenty of Australian Ringneck were seen by the roadside. Best of all, a flock of cockatoos flying distantly from the road, proved to be Carnaby's Black-cockatoo, and we soon obtained great views of this now threatened western endemic.



*Carnaby's Black-cockatoo were found near Dryandra (Andy Jensen)*

Into Dryandra itself, for some late afternoon birding. Several Red-tailed Black-cockatoo and some Inland Thornbill seen on the drive in.

First stop was an area of scrub surrounding a small dam, to see if anything was coming in for a late afternoon drink. A few noisy Grey Currawong patrolled the edges, but otherwise it was rather quiet save for a few White-browed Scrubwren and some Brown-breasted Honeyeater with their aviator style goggles. Best of all, a family of beautiful Blue-breasted Fairy-wren were located, and showed well despite some initial reticence.

On the tracks surrounding the dam, a Restless Flycatcher lived up to its name, while a group of Rufous Treecreeper did anything but - Rufous Groundcreeper would have been more apt. We would return the following day to see what Dryandra had to offer, but the initial flying visit had certainly whetted the appetite. A spotlighting expedition after dinner produced another Tawny Frogmouth, some distant heard only Southern Boobook and Australian Owlet Nightjar, as well as several Common Brushtail Possum.



*The delightful Blue-breasted Fairy-wren showed brilliantly in Dryandra (Andy Jensen)*



*Rufous Treecreeper were seen on the ground more often than in trees (Andy Jensen)*

An early start into Dryandra, to try a couple of different sites from the previous evening. Although it was very birdy at first, it seemed as though every bird was a Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, Weebill, or Australian Ringneck, and these species were ubiquitous throughout our time here. From the previous evening, further Shining Bronze Cuckoo, Western Gerygone, Brown-headed Honeyeater and Blue-breasted Fairy-wren were seen as well as more Rufous Treecreeper.

One by one, some of the additional local specialities began to fall. A Fan-tailed Cuckoo perched up well, and a few Jacky Winter and Striated Pardalote were seen, as well as Rufous Whistlers and a few Dusky Woodswallow. A beautiful Scarlet Robin was also located, with a slightly drabber female also in attendance. Some of the western endemics were also seen, with Western Rosella, Gilbert's Honeyeater, a smart male Western Whistler, and a small group of Western Thornbill which showed well in the low scrub.

Onto another spot in Dryandra before it was time to leave. A couple of cracking technicolour Western Spinebill were located in some banksia bushes. A group of White-browed Babbler were a major bonus, as this species has apparently been getting scarce in Dryandra in recent years.

While watching the babblers, a few Elegant Parrot were found feeding unobtrusively on the ground among the scrub, and we enjoyed good views of these parrots as they went about their business - far better than the normal views of the neophema family of parrots which involve a small parrot zipping past high overhead. Another couple of Elegants were seen which better matched this description.



*The endemic Western Thornbill showed well in Dryandra (Andy Jensen)*

It was on to our next destination in the Sterling Ranges, a few hours further to the south. The journey was relatively uneventful, being the middle of the day, and largely through farmland, but a few birds were seen nonetheless. The most common species was Australian Ringneck, as well as both Black-faced and Dusky Woodswallows. Best of all was a roadside stop next to a small dam, where we had good views of a couple of Red-capped Parrot, another of the western endemics, and a few Yellow-throated Miner.

Near the Sterling Ranges, we made a little detour to a salt lake for a special breeding resident. Hooded Plover breed on these lakes in southwestern Australia, despite breeding on ocean beaches elsewhere in southeastern Australia. The species is under increasing pressure from disturbance and becoming scarce, and it was a real treat to get good views of a pair, on this otherwise deserted salt lake.



*The rare Hooded Plover nests on salt lakes in southern Western Australia unlike its eastern cousins (Andy Jensen)*

In the surrounding heathland, the first Tawny-crowned Honeyeater of the trip were seen, among the more numerous New Holland Honeyeater, and a few of the group saw a couple of Red-winged Fairy-wren but they remained elusive. Overhead, three Wedge-tailed Eagle were a little far away, but still appeared huge!

Finally, we headed off to our accommodation overnight at the Sterling Range retreat. This is sited in an area of remnant woodland, surrounded by farmland and heathland. Just before arrival, we paused to see more Carnaby's Black-cockatoo, and around a hundred Purple-crowned Lorikeet zipping around. A Little Eagle soared overhead, and we would get further views in the same area over the next couple of days.

It was now getting dark, so it was time to reflect on a successful day. Tomorrow would bring new challenges, including the first of the famous, or should it perhaps be infamous, southwestern skulkers.

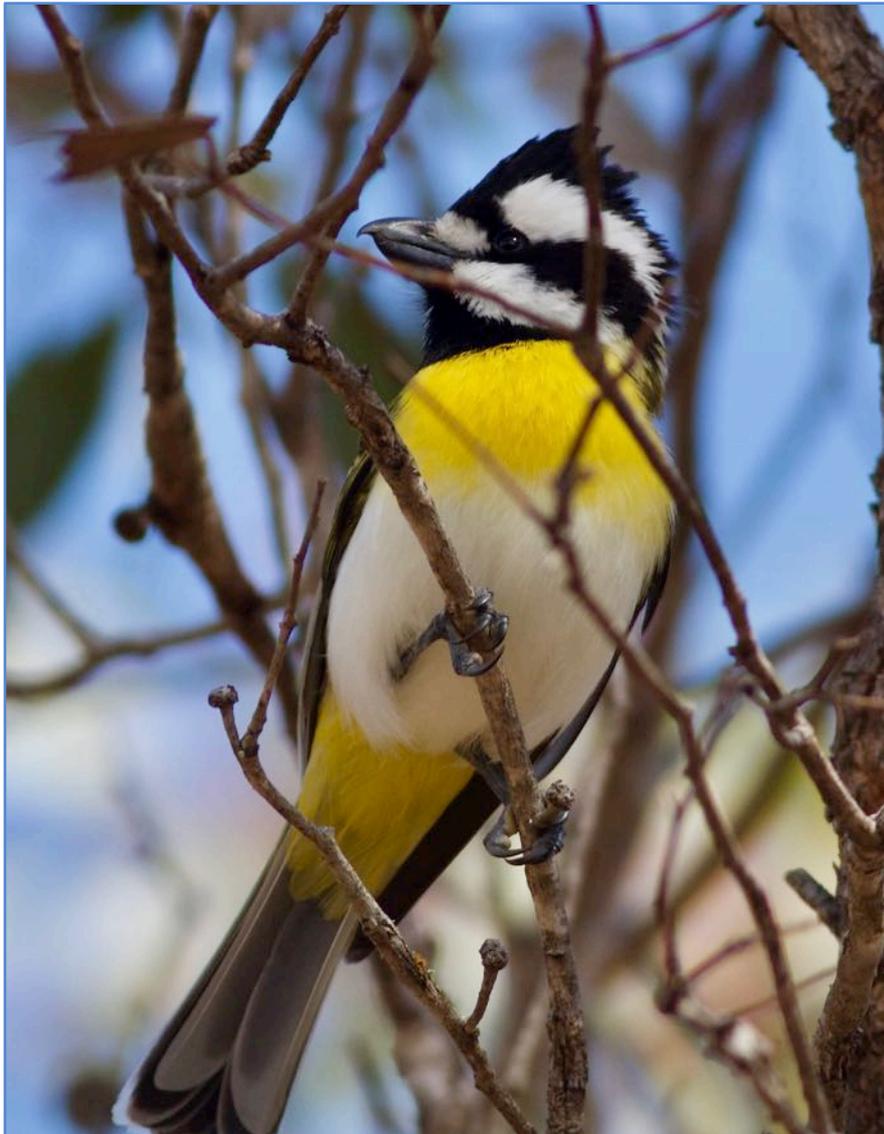
A dawn start to be up Mount Trio to try for Western Whipbird. This species tends to perch up in the middle of a bush distantly and sing for a short period, before dropping back down to the ground for half an hour or so. Whether you can ascertain the right bush (hard given its ventriloquial skills) and whether it is on the right side of the bush to which you are standing is a matter of luck!

Conditions were what every leader dreads when looking for this species - with some rain around (although thankfully this was the only rain of the tour!) and worst of all, windy. That said we were determined to give it a go, and soon we were rewarded with a (distant) snatch of song from the target species. Sadly, that was all it was to be at first. We were entertained by a number of honeyeaters (mainly New Holland, but also plenty of Tawny-crowned, White-cheeked and a few Gilbert's and Western Spinebill). A Peregrine Falcon called distantly and could soon be seen flying along a rocky crag.

The Western Whipbird called again, or more accurately a different bird the other side of the track and closer this time. We moved into position, and soon it called again and could be seen perched up in the middle of a bush in the middle of the heath. We hurried to get scope views and a couple also got it in the 'bins, but it soon dropped down, and with the wind picking up, we decided to call it quits for now and try again that evening. This is the mallee subspecies '*oberon*' which is a possible future split, so we would also try again in a couple of days' time for the race down on the coast near Albany.

After breakfast, we did a spot of birding around the grounds of the retreat and surrounding bushland. Parrots were prevalent - with Carnaby's Black-cockatoo, Red-capped Parrot, Elegant Parrot, Western Rosella and plenty of Purple-crowned Lorikeet all seen. The common honeyeaters were also seen, as well as another Western Whistler and a Scarlet Robin attacking its own reflection in our minibus' mirror!

We also picked up a calling Southern Scrub-robin, which was a little elusive at first but showed well at close range - surprisingly a write-in for this tour. And after a good deal of searching we also picked up our main quarry in the area - the gorgeous pair of Western Shrike-tit. A good candidate for splitting from its eastern cousins. Also around the retreat, we picked up another of the target western endemics, with a smart Western Yellow Robin seen. There were not many of the western endemics left to see now.



*The cracking Western Shrike-tit (Andy Jensen)*

After lunch, we tried a heathland spot a little further south to see what we could find. On the way, we picked up a very large flock of "white-tailed" Black-cockatoo which on closer inspection contained both Carnaby's and Baudin's (aka Short-billed and Long-billed). Supposedly these species do not mix, but outside the breeding season and with increasing land clearance pressures, this may be the reason why. Either way, it was a treat to see such a large flock at such close range.

The heathland site was a little quiet, which given it was middle of the afternoon was no great surprise. We flushed a couple of Brown Quail, and a few Purple-gaped Honeyeater were new for the list.



*Part of a large flock of Black-cockatoos which contained both Long-billed and Short-billed - inset (Andy Jensen)*

We headed back up Mount Trio for another crack at the Western Whipbird. A Brush Bronzewing was seen on the track on the way in. The wind had dropped and we were rewarded with brief views of a Western Whipbird close to the road. Better still, the original Western Whipbird we saw in the morning was located again, and we got prolonged views in the scope as it sat singing forgetting its time limit for sitting up in view!



*Western Whipbird sat up nicely and even let us get it in the scope (Ian Lewis)*

A chilly morning greeted us (-1c) - and the windscreen of the minibus even needed the ice scraping off before we could head off - an unusual occurrence in Australia!

We returned to the heathland spot from yesterday afternoon, hoping activity would be greater in the morning. We eventually tracked down a calling Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, and a pair of delightful Spotted Pardalote. There were numerous Tawny-crowned Honeyeater as well as the more common New Holland and White-cheeked. Eventually the main quarry was tracked down, and a Western Fieldwren (a species with a chequered taxonomic history but now split from Rufous Fieldwren) was singing at close-range in front of us.

After we had our fill of the fieldwren we carried on back to the accommodation to pick up our gear before heading on to our next major destination - Albany on the south coast. On the way back we encountered the same flock of black-cockatoos from the previous day and they showed well by the roadside, with Baudin's in particular at close-range.



*A pair of Baudin's (or Long-billed) Black-cockatoos (Andy Jensen)*

Back around the accommodation we encountered a pair of Little Eagle, as well as a group of four Regent Parrot, which sadly only flew through and could not be relocated.

We drove out of the Sterling Ranges through some agricultural land to the north and west. The first Emu of the trip were noted, and a total of 25 birds were seen. We saw the first Australian Pipit of the trip, and eventually we tracked down a family group of Banded Lapwing in a large grassy paddock, a speciality of the area.

On the way to Albany we detoured to a favoured area for one of the last of our southwestern targets - Western Corella. Soon we were enjoying good views of this threatened parrot, as well as another pair of Scarlet Robin.



*Western Corella (Andy Jensen)*

On some lakes nearby, we picked up some more wildfowl, including Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck, Australian Shelduck and Australasian Shoveler, although the main lake was disappointingly dry, and no birds present.

We arrived in Albany towards the late afternoon in time for some initial birding. A stop at the harbour, produced Caspian and Crested Terns, Pied Cormorant, Pied Oystercatcher, Eastern Osprey and some huge billed Pacific Gulls - all new for the trip. A large colony of Straw-necked Ibis and Australian Pelican were on an island in the harbour. On the grassy areas along the shore, Western Rosella and Red-capped Parrot showed well.

We also visited a lake on the outskirts of Albany, which again was rather high after some recent heavy rain, and the path required some manoeuvring to make it through. It was worth the effort though as we picked up two more of the southwestern endemics in the lakeside scrub - a smart White-breasted Robin, and a cracking Red-eared Firetail. Another bonus was a Spotless Crake foraging on the flooded path which showed well on a couple of occasions.



Top row Western Yellow Robin and White-breasted Robin, bottom left Western Spinebill, bottom right Red-eared Firetail (Andy Jensen)

Today was probably the day that had the most riding on it over the whole tour - or at least the day where there was potential for multiple dips if things didn't go our way. It was the day of the three southwestern skulkers - some of the hardest birds to see in Australia.

Unlike the Sterling Ranges, conditions were a dream. Clear skies, and not a breath of wind. The omens were looking good. After a Spotted Nightjar flushed off the road on the drive in to Cheynes Beach, we were in place just after dawn to try for the first of the three skulkers - Noisy Scrub-bird. An iconic Australian species. It was presumed extinct until it was rediscovered in the early 1960s. It is an extremely shy and elusive bird, that inhabits dense vegetation in a restricted area around Albany. The best (only) chance of seeing the bird, is waiting for one to cross a cleared area - but you'd better be quick to see it! We waited at a track down to the beach - a scrub-bird was calling as soon as we arrived. After a short wait, one dashed across the track a short distance in front of us, and continued on its loop of its territory, presumably to cross back some time later. When I say dash, it was a relatively sedate pace for this species, allowing us to even get bins on it.

We continued on to see what else we could see before coming back to try and catch it crossing back along the track. The beach scrub held a few White-breasted Robin, and a Western Whipbird could be heard calling, as well as three more Noisy Scrub-bird. After a short wait back at the scrub-bird track, as the bird still calling some way off, we decided to venture onto the heath before any longer, to try for some of the other specialities. A further two Noisy Scrub-bird could be heard singing distantly in the middle of the heath. Soon one of the other targets struck up a song - Western Bristlebird. After a waiting game, a pair popped up on to the low vegetation, with one bird in particular sat up for a short period of time showing well. We continued on and soon located the third of the holy trinity of skulkers at this site - with a pair of Western Whipbird located right next to the path. One in particular perched up for a period allowing good views to be had.



*Western Bristlebird eventually showed well in the heathland (Andy Jensen)*



*A pair of Western Whipbird sat up nicely close to the path (Andy Jensen)*

It was not even 9am and we had cleaned up - with great views of the skulkers. We also came across a couple of groups of the delightful Southern Emu-wren, which never seemed to rest but still offered some good views.

It was time for a bit of a change of pace - the caravan park owners had said there had been a couple of Southern Right Whales in the bay the day before, so we went down to the beach to see if they were still about. Sure enough, reasonably distantly offshore, a mother and calf whale could be seen regularly at the water's surface. On the beach itself, a flock of terns contained mainly Crested, but also a few Caspian.

It was also a great morning for raptors - while we were watching the whales, we picked up a couple of Swamp Harrier passing through, and better still a Square-tailed Kite - a rather scarce raptor by no means guaranteed on any trip. A Black-shouldered Kite was noted overhead, as well as two Brown Falcon and an Eastern Osprey.

On terra firma, we also enjoyed good views of both Common and Brush Bronzewing on the tracks around the beach and caravan park, as well as more White-breasted Robin. A few Carnaby's Black Cockatoo were recorded, and a large noisy flock of Galah. Finally in the beach scrub, we came across a pair of Red-winged Fairy-wren, which showed beautifully in the sunlight.



*The handsome Red-winged Fairy-wren is the largest Fairy-wren in Australia (Andy Jensen)*

After lunch, when a Red-eared Firetail was seen, we drove a short distance to a nearby beach to see what else we could find. On the drive there, a flooded field produced an assortment of wildfowl including Musk Duck, Australasian Shoveler, and several Pink-eared Duck as well as a large group of Grey Teal. At the beach itself, a few Australasian Gannet loitered offshore as well as a brief Black-browed Albatross, but conditions were so benign that seawatching was not going to be too productive. Instead on the rocks below, several Sooty Oystercatcher could be seen, while a Western Bristlebird called behind us unseen in the heath.

We decided to head back to Cheynes Beach for some late afternoon birding. The majority of the group decided to try again for the Noisy Scrub-bird.



*The group patiently waiting for the Noisy Scrub-bird with photo-bombing Western Grey Kangaroos (Andy Jensen)*

This proved to be a good move, as pretty much as soon as we arrived, the Noisy Scrub-bird crossed the track in front of us, closer still than before. We were then treated to a couple more crossings, and on the last occasion, the bird paused on the edge of the track in view, enabling us to get good views in the bins, before it remembered it was not supposed to sit still like this for so long, and scurried off across the track again. Rainer even managed to capture a photo of the bird as it ran across - an extremely rare event for this species!



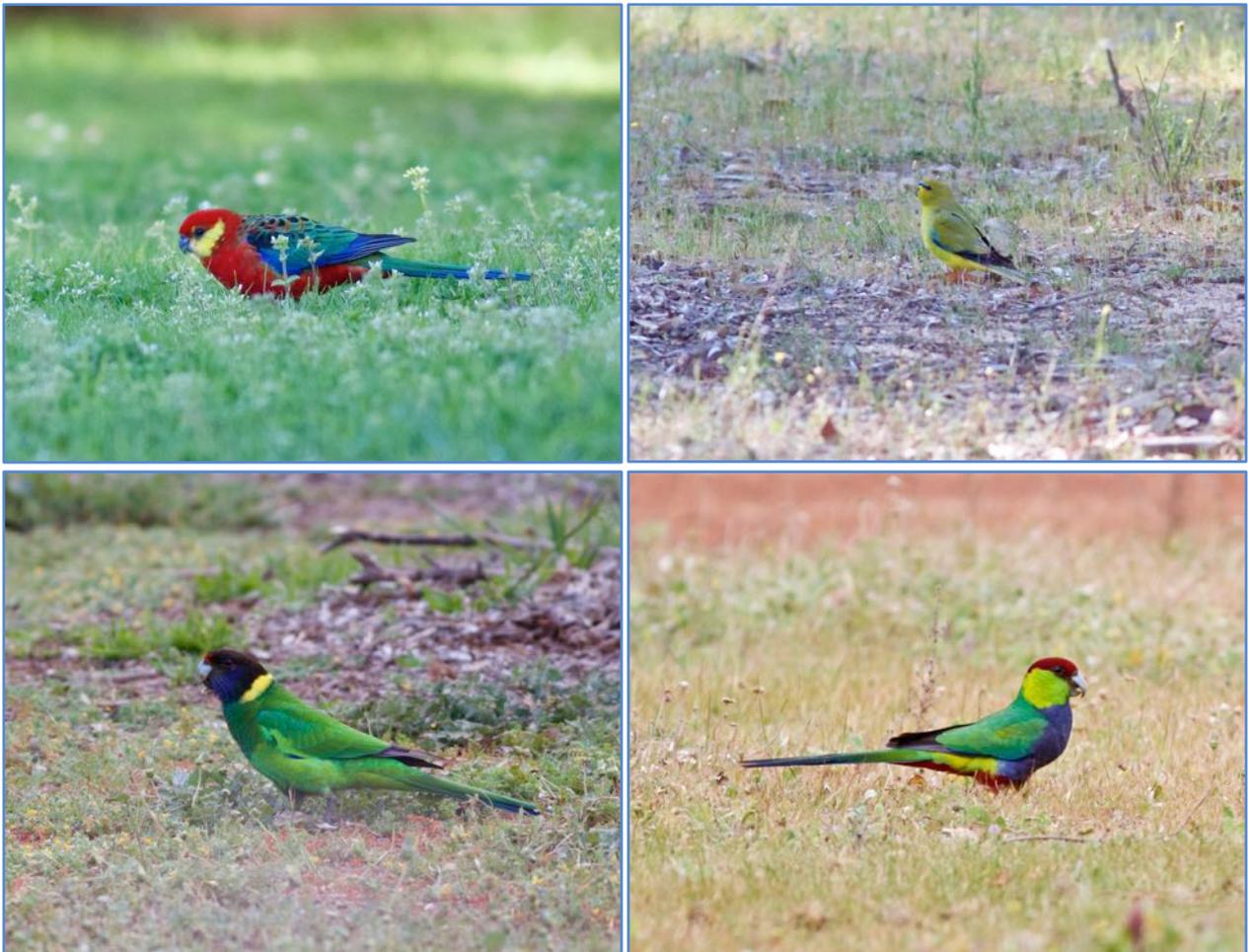
*Noisy Scrub-bird making a dash for it- Rainer did brilliantly to get a shot of this species! (Rainer Ertel)*

With walk-away views of the Noisy Scrub-bird, we continued to another nearby site, to try for the last remaining southwestern endemic we had not yet seen. With numerous honeyeaters around, it looked promising and after a while, we came across a group of five Western Wattlebird chasing each other around. The last southwestern endemic under the belt, it had been an extremely successful week or so in the southwest, with a day to spare!

After the previous day's successes, we were able to have a slightly more sedate day around some sites in Albany today. We had a seawatch off the coast, which was surprisingly productive despite the light winds. A steady stream of Flesh-footed Shearwater passed offshore, this species breeds locally.

A couple of mollymawks were also seen, with a Black-browed Albatross and a couple of Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross passing the viewpoint among the larger numbers of Australasian Gannet. A couple of scarcer species were also picked up, with a couple of small groups of Hutton's Shearwater (likely on passage) as well as a distant Brown Skua. A few whales were also seen offshore, with both Southern Right and Humpback recorded.

After we finished here, we continued on to try some of the other local sites, with little else of note other than a Little Grassbird. We tried again for Rock Parrot, which had eluded us to this point, but despite a check of several local sites there was no joy. We continued to enjoy good views of the local endemics however.



*Top left Western Rosella, top right Elegant Parrot, bottom left Australian Ringneck, bottom right Red-capped Parrot (Andy Jensen)*

The following morning, it was time to leave the far southwest and on to our next destination, where hopefully a swag more new species awaited. Firstly, we tried one of the Albany sites for Rock Parrot again, and were rewarded with views of a couple of birds circling round that had presumably been flushed off the beach - persistence paid off! Also in the beach scrub, we found another Red-eared Firetail.

With nothing more to see in the southwest and a long drive ahead of us it was time to head off. A pit-stop in the Sterling Ranges on the way through proved rewarding with a pair of Regent Parrot seen, improving on the flythrough a few days earlier. The drive to Hyden was uneventful, aside for a small wetland by the road outside of Lake Grace. Pink-eared Duck and Australasian Shoveler mingled among the throngs of Grey Teal, and a few new waders were seen - Red-kneed Dotterel, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and best of all some smart Red-necked Avocet. This species is highly nomadic in Australia, so picking some up is always pot-luck. A White-winged Triller was also seen briefly. Another roadside stop closer to Hyden produced a pair of Black-tailed Native-hen and these were the only ones of the trip. Again, a highly nomadic species, they can be in their hundreds at times, and zero the rest of the time.

We arrived in Hyden in time for some evening birding around the famous Wave Rock - a granite rock formation shaped like a breaking wave. Although there were plenty of tourists around, the birding was reasonable, with Chestnut-rumped Thornbill and White-eared Honeyeater new for the tour, as well as a few Elegant Parrot. Nearby we also picked up our first Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, and a very smart Mulga Parrot.



*White-eared Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

A very early start to be at our next destination (the remote McDermid Rock - a few hours from anywhere notable) for dawn. The dirt roads were largely better than expected, and we were in position having our picnic breakfasts just as first light began to emerge. We were birding in an area of the Great Western Woodlands - the largest intact area of temperate woodland left in the world. A 16 million hectare (a region larger than England!) swathe of woodland and mallee habitat, it is home to some special birds, which we hoped to see.

We started in area of mallee just off the road, and soon encountered several Purple-gaped Honeyeater, which were by far the dominant species of the area. A distant Crested Bellbird was heard, and it eventually came in closer giving us views. Other birds in the area included Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Brown-headed

Honeyeater and Yellow-throated Miner. Our main target was Copperback Quail-thrush - a recent split from Chestnut Quail-thrush in the east. There was no sign at our initial spot, so we tried another area closer to where we had breakfast. Pretty much as soon as we arrived, we heard the distinctive high pitched seeping notes of a quail-thrush, and we caught a glimpse of a pair of Copperback Quail-thrush running around in the mallee.

They came a lot closer, and we had fantastic views as they circled around us, calling all the while. Well worth the early start, and the long drive! Nearby we also picked up a couple of Redthroat - an attractive member of the thornbill family found in semi-arid areas of Australia.



*Copperback Quail-thrush (Andy Jensen)*

On the drive on from McDermid Rock, we picked up the first Cockatiel of the trip, as well as a few Regent Parrot. After the long drive, we arrived in time for some late afternoon birding. After a drive down to the dam, we took a wander picking up another Crested Bellbird (this time only heard) and more Mulga Parrot and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. We also connected with a couple of extra species for the trip list in the form of a cracking pair of Red-capped Robin, and some less cracking (only in female/eclipse plumage) White-winged Fairy-wren.

Driving back along the access road to the spot we were going to go for another search, when right by the side of the road, was our main target - Western Quail-thrush. We bailed out of the vehicle (which thankfully due to the lack of traffic could just be abandoned where it was!), and the birds continued to forage around close to the road.



*The fabulous Western Quail-thrush - male top, female bottom (Andy Jensen)*

We got to our accommodation, an Aussie style country pub, and it turned out to be a real one horse town, with the "pet" horse Willie, in attendance expecting a feed. We finished the day watching the International Space Station transit overhead, before retiring and reflecting on a successful two quail-thrush day!



*The charismatic Grand Hotel Kookynie - the only building in town virtually (Andy Jensen)*

The next morning, after a tip-off from Margaret at the hotel, we travelled a short distance to check out a possible spot for Western Bowerbird. This was a species that I had hoped for but had not really expected, as we were only dipping our toes into the range of this species. As we arrived, a Red-backed Kingfisher was perched up close to the road, and a group of Zebra Finch buzzed through. Soon, the target bird was heard and we tracked it down to an area of scrub, and found its bower. A rather plain bower compared to some of the Australian bowerbirds, but the bird itself was very smart, a rich buffy brown, and it occasionally raised its erectile pink crest to show off to any females that may be in the vicinity. After good views, we decided to leave it to continue its perhaps forlorn mission to attract a mate.

As is often the way with best laid plans, we took time reaching the planned site, for another helping of Western Quail-thrush. The way there was very birdy and we made several stops. First a spectacular pair of Wedge-tailed Eagle, more Zebra Finch, Splendid and White-winged Fairy-wren, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and best of all a cracking trio of White-backed Swallow. Again not a bird that was on the radar, and a real bonus to see so well. While watching the swallows, a bout of song drew attention to a Rufous Songlark - the first of the trip.

A few honeyeaters were passing through, and among them at least one White-fronted Honeyeater was seen. A blossom nomad, it can be locally common and moves in large numbers, or can be rather scarce. Unfortunately it did not hang around long on this occasion, but searches for it or others turned up a cute Little Woodswallow instead which showed well at extremely close range.



*Western Bowerbird (Rainer Ertel)*

At the previous evening's site, we instantly found a different pair of Western Quail-thrush. These were supposed to be hard! They showed well in the open mulga country, the rich red soils showing off their plumage further. A second pair was located close by, as well as a pair of Red-capped Robin, several Inland Thornbill, a couple of pairs of Redthroat and a fly-through group of Cockatiel.

With a long drive back to Perth ahead, we dragged ourselves away. We did not get far, as a short distance down the road we came across a small group of cracking Crimson Chat. They were a skittish, but good views were had, including a stunning male. Also in the same area, a male Hooded Robin was present.



*Crimson Chat (Rainer Ertel)*

The rest of the journey back to Perth was rather uneventful. Some corvids around Kalgoorlie proved to be Little Crow, new for the trip list. Several more would be seen, although as with all Australian corvids it was hard to get too excited, especially with memories of Crimson Chat, White-backed Swallow, Western Bowerbird and Western Quail-thrush fresh in the mind! This drew to a close the southern leg of the tour - we arrived back in our motel in Perth and prepared for the early flight to Broome the next morning. After arriving in Broome, and checking in to our hotel it was already hot and in the late 30's c, but there were birds to be seen! First stop were the town mangroves. Despite the time of day, we had an incredibly successful start in checking off the local mangroves specialities, with a stunning male Mangrove Golden Whistler seen almost immediately, as we sheltered in the shade of a building. A female was also seen later in the same area.

A few Canary White-eye flitted through the mangroves, and some gaudy Red-headed Myzomela drank from a dripping tap and showed very well. Down the jetty itself, a Broad-billed Flycatcher was heard and then seen, although it was rather elusive despite being very close. We also obtained views of both Mangrove and the local endemic Dusky Gerygone in the same area. A pair of White-bellied Sea-eagle were also noted overhead.



*Mangrove Golden Whistler (Stuart Pickering)*



*Red-headed Myzomela (Andy Jensen)*

After some lunch, where we were viewed a stunning male Mistletoebird, we headed to our next site. On the way we spotted a small group of freshly arrived Oriental Plover on one of the park areas in the centre of town. Great views were had, especially by those keen enough to walk in the midday sun to get closer views.

A trip to the sewage works was next, where a shaded viewing platform provided respite from the heat. A multitude of wildfowl included a large gaggle of Plumed Whistling-duck, as well as many Pink-eared Duck. Several Royal Spoonbill stood along the shoreline and many Black Kite circled overhead. There were also several species of wader, with both Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterel, a Wood Sandpiper, several Common Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a single Black-tailed Godwit.

Once it began to cool down, we headed on to try more mangroves. A stop at a small dam on the way was productive, with several Great Bowerbird, gorgeous Red-winged Parrot, Red-collared Lorikeet and Paperbark Flycatcher all coming down to drink. A few Pink-eared Duck were also on the dam.



*Pink-eared Duck (Andy Jensen)*

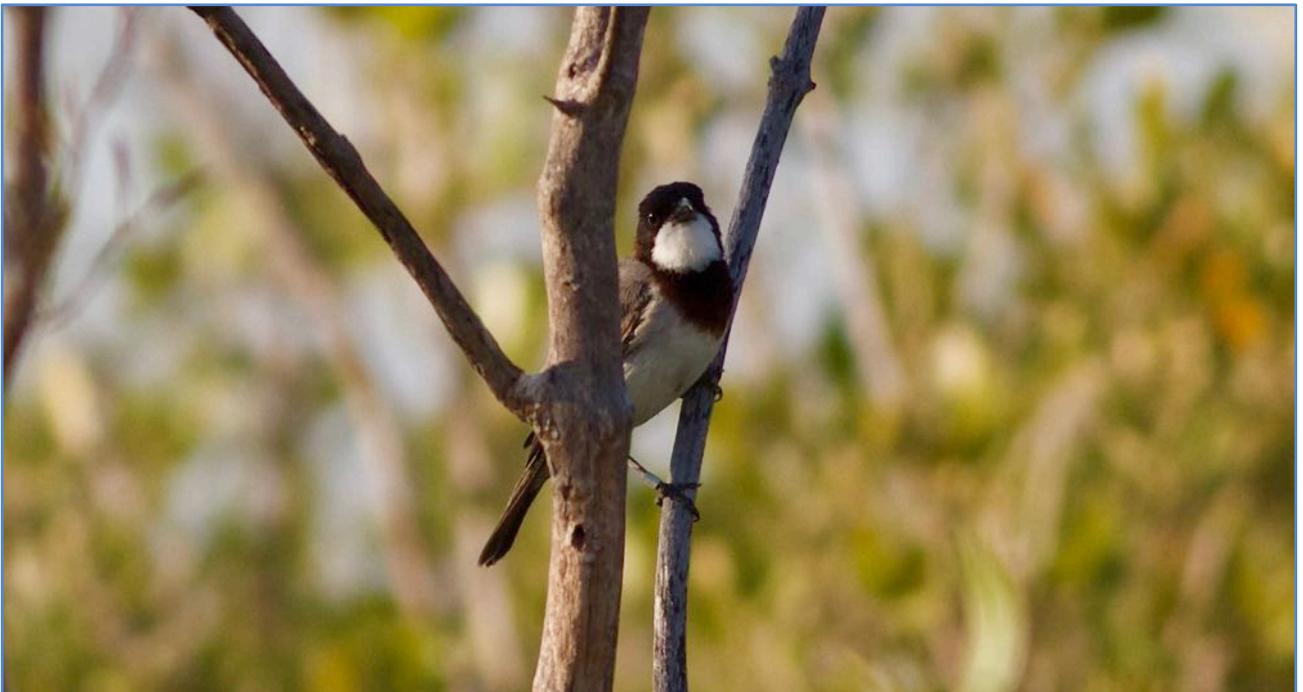
The mangrove site was a little quiet, although we had good views of Dusky Gerygone and Canary White-eye. We also found a female White-breasted Whistler which showed very well at close range, and after a bit of work a pair of Kimberley Flyrobin. This is currently treated as a subspecies of Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, but is very different in plumage (it lacks the lemon tones of the nominate race) and inhabits mangroves unlike its cousin.

Along the shoreline of the open sea, a few Lesser Frigatebird patrolled overhead and a Pacific Reef Heron stood on the rocky shore. On the sheltered estuary, a Torresian Kingfisher was picked out - quite a scarce bird in the Broome area, as well as a few shorebirds.



*Dusky Gerygone (Andy Jensen)*

The following day in Broome, was all about the other major attraction of the area - the multitude of migratory shorebirds that spend the summer months on the rich mudflats of the area. Firstly though we had a few remaining mangrove specialities to pick off. After a little bit of work in the mangroves around Roebuck Bay, we eventually were rewarded with good views of a smart male White-breasted Whistler (and heard a few more). We also picked up several of the last mangrove speciality in the area, the cute Mangrove Fantail.



*White-breasted Whistler eventually showed well in the mangroves (Andy Jensen)*



*Mangrove Fantail (Andy Jensen)*

Also in the mangroves we picked up another Mangrove Gerygone and Broad-billed Flycatcher, as well as a couple of Little Bronze Cuckoo which were an unexpected bonus. With the tide rising, and all the mangrove species, we turned our attention to the shorebirds. The rising tide pushed many birds which until now had been distant specks on the mudflats, into viewing range, and as it rose further large flocks began to congregate on the roosting beaches for miles along the coastline. It was a truly spectacular spectacle.

Although it was still slightly early in the season, the numbers were nevertheless impressive. Dominating the hoards were Great Knot (up to 10,000), Grey-tailed Tattler (c.3,000), as well as several thousand sandplover (mostly Lesser (Mongolian) but plenty of Greater) and Bar-tailed Godwit (c.4,000). Multitudes of smaller waders (including Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper) were also noted. Larger waders included Black-tailed Godwit, Far Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Red Knot, Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher and both Pacific Golden and Grey Plover.



*Roosting shorebirds (Andy Jensen)*

As is always the way with such a congregation, efforts were made to see if any more unusual species were amongst the flocks. A single Little Curlew was found, as well as a few Broad-billed Sandpiper among the stint flocks. A few Common Redshank were among the roosting flocks, which for a European birder doesn't raise the pulse, but they are a scarce bird in Australia.

Along the shorelines, several Striated Heron and Pacific Reef Heron were noted among the commoner egret species. Terns were well represented, including Little and Lesser-crested and many Gull-billed Tern, including at least one of the migratory Asian race *affinis*.

The rest of the day was a relatively sedate affair, after the morning's exertions. We revisited the roadside dam from the previous day, where similar species were noted as well as a few Red-tailed Black-cockatoo. After dusk, we picked up a couple of Bush Stone-curlew on the way back into town, after hearing their calls in the distance and tracking them down. The 28<sup>th</sup> wader species of the day, and we hadn't done any freshwater sites. A very distant Barn Owl was also heard in the same area, but too distant to call in and it soon fell silent.

We were done in Broome and it was time to hit the road (after viewing a pair of Pheasant Coucal in the hotel car park), for a long drive along the famous Gibb River Road, into the heart of the Kimberley. This dirt road is popular with 4WD enthusiasts, and gets into some of the most inaccessible parts of Australia. For a birder, it means several local specialities, which are seen nowhere else.

It was slow going at first - however, the reason for the tardiness was the sheer volume of birds by the roadside. Black-necked Stork, Glossy Ibis and White-necked Heron were all new for the trip, as were a pair of Australian Bustard drinking from a roadside billabong. A dashing Australian Hobby also flashed through.



*Drinking Australian Bustard (Andy Jensen)*

Also in the same area we picked up Little Eagle, a few Diamond Dove, several Zebra Finch, a Horsfield's Bushlark, and some Fairy Martin. Another roadside stop produced a fantastic flock of c.200 Budgerigar - a nomadic visitor to the area. We watched enthralled as the flock wheeled around feeding on seeding grasses.

After a slightly later than planned fuel and breakfast stop, we pushed on deeper into the remote country surrounding the Gibb River Road. The scenery was truly spectacular, although being the middle of the day there were few birds around. Around mid-afternoon we arrived at our overnight spot at Mount Elizabeth Station. On the access track in a group of finches flushed up from the roadside, which proved to be a group of 20 Long-tailed Finch. Whilst watching the finches, we also picked up a couple of Black-tailed Treecreeper.



*Black-tailed Treecreeper (Andy Jensen)*

Carrying on, a creek crossing proved productive, with several Little Friarbird, a few Silver-crowned Friarbird, some Grey-crowned Babbler and several Northern Rosella all coming down to drink. After a spectacular outback sunset, we birded the area around the station. A distant Southern Boobook was heard, and a couple of Australian Owlet Nightjar. We tracked one of the latter down, and got brief but good views in the spotlight.

A relaxed start with some birding around the garden of the accommodation before breakfast was productive. The first Yellow-tinted Honeyeater and White-gaped Honeyeater were found, and pleasingly a small group of the scarce Banded Honeyeater. A couple of White-bellied Cuckoo Shrike were also seen. After a fantastic cooked breakfast, we were on the road again to traverse more of the Gibb River Road to get to Drysdale River.

Before we were even back on the Gibb though, we had a couple of stops along the access track to the station, where we picked up White-throated Honeyeater, and a Northern Fantail. We also picked up a pair of Silver-backed Butcherbird, which is the northwestern equivalent of Grey Butcherbird. While we were watching the butcherbirds, the sweet song of White-throated Gerygone could be heard and we were soon watching a couple of these little gems flitting round in the tree tops at close range.

Back onto the Gibb, and a couple of roadside stops yielded some good results, with Rufous Songlark and more Banded Honeyeater. A non-descript looking creek crossing also produced a pair of the scarce Red-browed Pardalote.



*Silver-backed Butcherbird (Andy Jensen)*

Having turned off the Gibb to head north towards Drysdale River along an increasingly rough track, we picked up Azure Kingfisher and our first Rufous-throated Honeyeater at another creekside stop. On arriving at Drysdale River, our rooms were not ready so we birded around the river crossing, although it was extremely hot. By making the most of the shade, we saw our first Crimson Finch and Double-barred Finch, and after a little bit of searching, the main target - the beautiful Purple-crowned Fairy-wren. This species is a speciality of the area and frequents riverside pandanus thickets, although a recent flood had cleared out much of the vegetation so they are increasingly hard to find.



*The delightful Purple-crowned Fairy-wren (Brian Dyke)*

After dropping our bags off and freshening up, we headed back down to the river crossing before having dinner and getting an early night before our (extremely) early start the next morning (or practically later that night!). Aside from the above listed species, we also found a Nankeen Night-heron, and best of all, before dusk, a pair of Barking Owl which provided a real performance flying around and calling in the treetops around us.



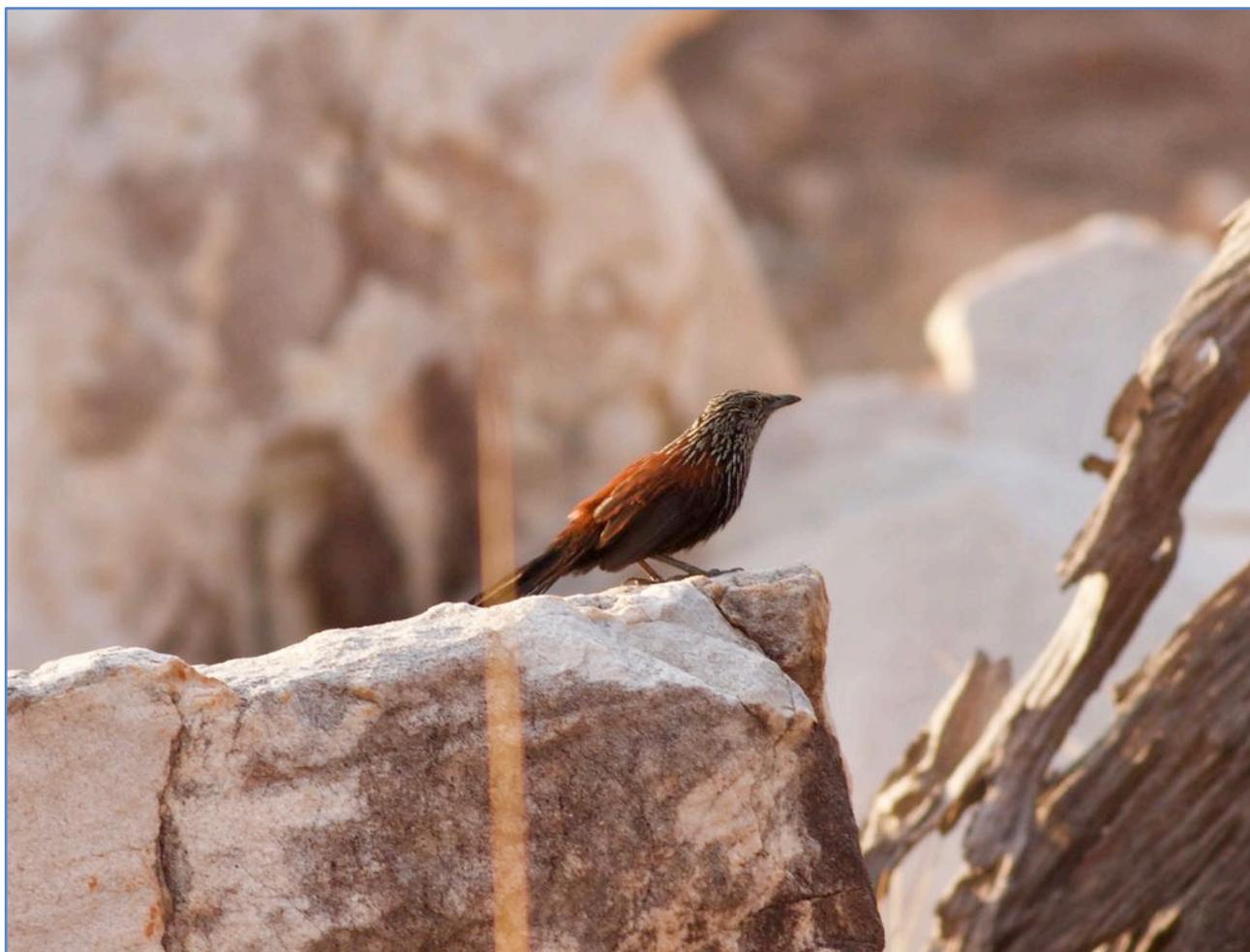
*Ian managed to get a shot of the Barking Owl despite the oncoming dusk and flighty birds (Ian Lewis)*

After we had grabbed a few hours' sleep, we gathered in the small hours for the drive to the Mitchell Plateau. This was one of the key days of the tour, with a host of species only found in this remote area. We had heard the access track was rough, and true enough it was slow going once we had turned off the main track, and the corrugations very rough in spots. A few small spot fires from a recent controlled burn off the track created a surreal atmosphere. The low speeds were fortuitous for seeing the Bush Stone-curlew with chicks sat in the track in the headlights, and we also had Australian Owlet-nightjar and Spotted Nightjar flush off the track.

We arrived at dawn, eager to see a swag of new birds that the area holds, such as the very restricted range Black Grasswren - one of the hardest birds to see in Australia not only due to its remoteness, but also once you get there, its skulking habit. Hopefully we would find it and the other local specialities before it got too hot. Searching in near 40c heat in the middle of the day in the open rocky landscape would not be much fun.

We headed up onto the rocky escarpment, and almost immediately heard a Black Grasswren. This was a very good start! What was even better was that within seconds it popped up on a rock immediately in front of us, and then another one, and proceeded to come even closer! We were spellbound by fantastic views of this species singing in the open immediately in front of us, and scrambling over the top of the rocks. Quite

often people hear them here, but seeing them is an entirely different matter. This pair were extremely obliging, and all the worries about spending hours searching for this bird immediately evaporated.



*What a bird - the magnificent Black Grasswren was well worth the early start (Andy Jensen)*

Sated by the fantastic views, we carried on exploring the escarpment. Several White-gaped Honeyeater were found, along with a few Bar-breasted Honeyeater. We also found a few Spangled Drongo and Figbird - familiar birds in eastern Australia but on the edges of their ranges here. A pair of Sandstone Shrike-thrush ventured around the escarpment, and offered good views when they perched up in some dead trees. And the second endemic to the area - Kimberley Honeyeater called loudly in the trees along the edge of the escarpment, and eventually showed well. After detouring back for second helpings of the Black Grasswren, when the same or another pair were located, we ventured down to the area around Little Mertens Falls and enjoyed the spectacular vista. A few Torresian Imperial Pigeon were seen in this area, as well as a noisy group of four Pacific Baza which showed brilliantly overhead even indulging in their tumbling display flight.

Sitting on the edge of the falls watching the woodland below just below eye level was productive, with magnificent views of Kimberley Honeyeater and Bar-breasted Honeyeater feeding on blossom in the treetops without having to strain the neck! Better still was a pair of Green-backed Gerygone which was a write-in for the tour. On the rocky area around the top of the falls, several White-quilled Rock-pigeon were found, another speciality of the area. It was not even 9am and we had pretty much cleaned up!

A couple of the mammal specialities of the area were also seen in this rocky habitat around the falls, with a Monjon (the smallest of the rock wallabies and endemic to the region) and a Kimberley Rock Rat also seen. We continue to do some birding in the shady areas, picking up Northern Fantail and Leaden Flycatcher, before it was time to start making our way back to Drysdale River before it got too hot in the middle of the day.



*The restricted range Kimberley Honeyeater showed very well (Andy Jensen)*



*White-quilled Rock-pigeon - on a rock (Andy Jensen)*



*Black Grasswren habitat in the beautiful and remote Kimberley (Andy Jensen)*

The drive back gave us the opportunity to take in some of the scenery which we could not see on the way in before dawn. A couple of roadside stops to stretch the legs (and take a break from the bumps!) were taken, and at one of these stops, we stumbled across a group of six Chestnut-backed Button-quail - another write in. Calling the group over, and fully expecting the birds to fly off as button-quail always do, it was a surprise when they just continued to forage around at close range in front of us, and spend time resting in the shade. A real treat to get sustained close-range views such, and another highlight of what was turning into a fantastic day.



*Stumbling across a group of fantastic Chestnut-backed Buttonquail was unexpected, as was them hanging around (Andy Jensen)*

We arrived safely back at Drysdale River, with some fantastic memories of some special birds, although a little tired after the early start. We stopped at the river crossing, where we heard the Barking Owls from the previous evening, an Azure Kingfisher showed well, and a small group of Varied Lorikeet flew through.

After dinner and a few celebratory drinks, it was time to retire, with the promise of a longer lie in the next morning! While we had dinner, a fortunate few saw a Southern Boobook feeding on insects in the spotlights of the roadhouse, but by the time we all got over to get a light on the area, the bird had unfortunately gone.

After a little early morning birding around Drysdale River, from which a flyover early returning Dollarbird, the same flock of Varied Lorikeet and a few Long-tailed Finch were the highlights, we started the journey along the rest of the Gibb River Road to Kununurra. Before leaving Drysdale River, we got permission to drive the airstrip, and after a very dark Brown Falcon on the drive in (briefly raising hopes of Black Falcon), we had very close views of 10 Oriental Plover by using the cars as a hide.



*Freshly arrived Oriental Plover were on the airstrip at Drysdale River (Andy Jensen)*

A short distance out of Drysdale River, a few promising looking birds flew across the road, and sure enough on stopping, proved to be a group of Varied Sittella, the first of the tour. On the drive to Kununurra, creeklines again proved a good hunting ground. One was very productive with our first Brolga, Radjah Shelduck, and some Grey-fronted Honeyeater - a bird the fieldguides don't really do justice to.

We made good progress, and mid-afternoon made the Pentecost River crossing - a focal point of the Gibb River Road. This tidal river is the main water crossing along the way. A few Magpie Geese and waders (including Greenshank and Common Sandpiper) fed in the shallows, and many doves (including Diamond and Peaceful) came down to drink. Best was a very striking Spinifex Pigeon which showed well as we were about to make the crossing. Just before we crossed, a Spotted Harrier high over was another distraction.



*The dashing Spinifex Pigeon (Andy Jensen)*

In the dry savannah country the other side of the river crossing, a group of approximately 20 finches flying along the roadside proved to be *Pictorella Mannikin* as suspected. This species is sparsely distributed across the top end of Australia, but is not easy to see anywhere across its range.



*Pictorella Mannikin (Ian Lewis)*

Kununurra is situated in an area of dry grassland and sandstone gorges - however a huge irrigation scheme has transformed the land around the town into a series of wetlands and irrigated fields. In addition, Lake Argyle (the largest manmade freshwater lake by surface area in Australia) is situated nearby. The lake is part of the irrigation scheme but is now recognised as a Ramsar site due to its importance for waterbirds.

A morning out cruising around the lake is always a highlight of this tour, and this year was no exception. A relaxing morning navigating the lake, with a picnic breakfast provided and sitting under the shade of the canopy is just what the doctor ordered after the long drive of the previous day through the dry country.

The waterfowl are very used to the boat, and we had excellent views of a multitude of Magpie Geese, Wandering Whistling Duck, Radjah Shelduck, Green Pygmy Geese, Great-crested Grebe and various duck. Herons and allies were well represented, with several Pied Heron, Glossy Ibis, a few Black-necked Stork (including a male on a nest). A Black Bittern in a secluded cove was a bonus.

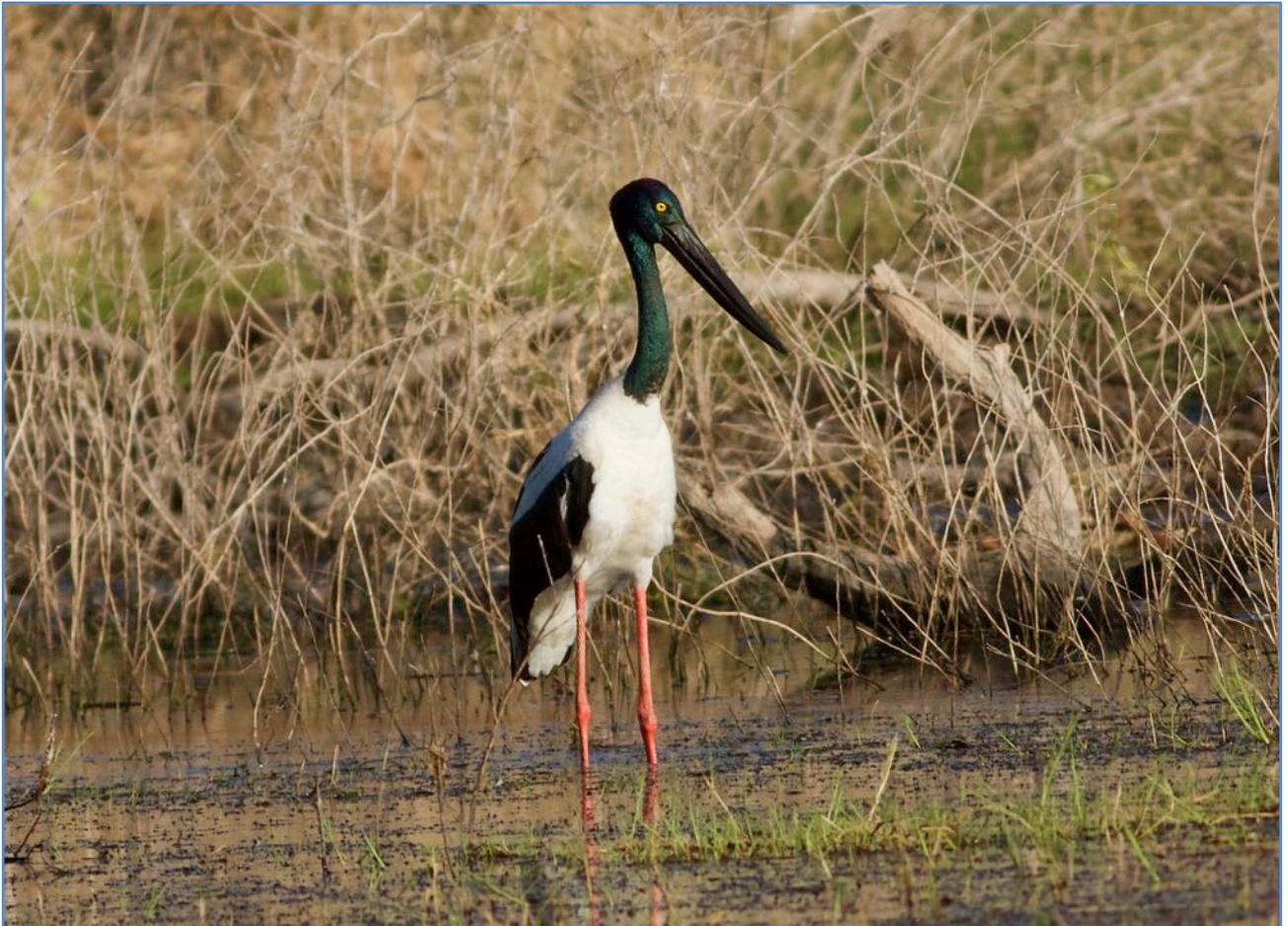


*Black Bittern skulked in the lakeside vegetation - good job there wasn't much! (Andy Jensen)*

We paused for breakfast in a shallow bay, where we had fantastic views of two species of crane - a couple of showy Baillon's and some obliging White-browed Crane, which foraged just metres in front of us.



*Baillon's Crane (left) and White-browed Crane (right) showed brilliantly while we had breakfast (Andy Jensen)*



*Female Black-necked Stork (Andy Jensen)*



*Lake Argyle wildfowl (Wandering Whistling Duck, Pied Heron, Glossy Ibis, Magpie Geese and White-headed Stilt (Andy Jensen)*

We were not the only things eating, as just by the side of the boat an impressive Freshwater Crocodile tucked into a rather large catfish. The lake is home to many crocodiles- it is a good job they have no interest in humans as we had a shin-high walk through the water to wander round one of the islands on the lake to come!

The lake is also home to thousands of shorebirds during the austral summer, and the first birds were starting to return. There were many Curlew Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Marsh Sandpiper. Several Wood Sandpiper were new for the trip. Both Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterel were on the shoreline in small numbers, and the grassy areas back from the shoreline held many elegant Australian Pratincole and smaller numbers of Oriental Plover. A few Australian Bustard were on the island, as well as several Black-tailed Native-hen which dashed for cover as we landed. Many Comb-crested Jacana delicately trotted around the lily pads. The islands in the lake are also well known for the localised Yellow Chat, and we had great views of a dozen or so of this attractive bird, which is actually categorised in the honeyeater family.



*Yellow Chat (Andy Jensen)*

What was less expected on the lake, was the group of Flock Bronzewing which we encountered. This species is very unusual in the area, and our guide explained that these were the first he had seen here, and they had been present a few weeks only.

Also present on the shorelines of the lake, were several White-quilled Rock-pigeon and a Sandstone Shrike-thrush - both of which we got fantastic views of by using the boat as a hide. Also above one of the rocky islands created when the land was inundated to form the lake, was a single Little Woodswallow, apparently unusual for the area. Several Short-eared Rock Wallaby were seen on our travels around as well - very cute animals indeed.



*An unexpected group of Flock Bronzewing was a bonus (Andy Jensen)*

Sadly it was time for our cruise to come to an end. The drive back out yielded a large group of Spinifex Pigeon that flushed from the road (over 20 birds).

After getting back to Kununurra and having some lunch, we headed out in the afternoon to try and pick up some of the finches, for which Kununurra is so justly famous. Driving around some of the agricultural areas north of town soon yielded results, and we came across a group of Star Finch alongside an irrigation canal. Carrying on, we soon came across a huge flock of mannikins, feeding in a field of maize and flying up into surrounding trees near water to drink. Most were Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, but among the throng were a few Yellow-rumped Mannikin - the finch for which most birders visit Kununurra. While we were watching the finches, a few Spotted Harrier were noted over nearby fields, no doubt trying to cash in on the bounty.

Finally, we birded the golf course to try some of the different habitats Kununurra had to offer. Our first Green Oriole were found, and more Crimson Finch showed well, and eventually after a lot of patience, a pair of Buff-sided Robin were seen in some waterside thickets.

The last full day of the tour, and there was only really one species we still needed - Gouldian Finch. With this in mind, we spent the day around Wyndham - a hotspot for this species. However, after the last wet season had such high levels of rainfall, there was still a lot of water throughout the region, and there was no reason for birds to visit normal late dry-season spots (such as Wyndham) they usually visit to drink at this time of year.

The drive to Wyndham was largely under darkness, but on the approach into town we saw a Brolga flying along the roadside. In Wyndham itself, we spent a lot of time around the caravan park, which often has finches coming in to drink throughout the day. Soon after we arrived, Stuart picked up a flyover Pacific Swift - probably the first record for the season in Australia. Alison also picked up a pair of Bush Stone-curlew in the scrub behind the finch drinking pool. A few Grey-crowned Babbler and Brown Quail were also seen.

We staked out the drinking pool for a while but it was generally quiet. A few Double-barred Finch buzzed around, and in the scrub behind a group of c.30 Star Finch were present. We swapped spots to an area in the shade by the caravan park office, where birds come into drink at birdbaths. This proved to be a good move, with several Masked Finch and Long-tailed Finch present, showing brilliantly at point-blank range. Other species coming down to drink throughout the day included Banded Honeyeater, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, White-gaped Honeyeater and Silver-crowned Friarbird.

The star of the show was not playing ball however, although this was not altogether unsurprising given the ample drinking sites still around the region. Eventually though, we did manage to connect with a couple of juvenile Gouldian Finch which came down for a drink on a few occasions during the middle of the day.



*Top: Long-tailed (left) and Masked Finch (right), Gouldian Finch (bottom left), Bar-breasted Honeyeater (bottom right) (Andy Jensen)*

The final morning of the tour, and some last-minute birding around Kununurra. We started off around the golf course, where we got repeat views of Buff-sided Robin in the same spot as a couple of days earlier. In the wetland areas, we recorded a few Green Pygmy-geese as well as some White-browed Crake. Less exciting although a rare bird in the area, was a couple of Dusky Moorhen.

The grassland and scrub areas of the golf course held a few species of interest. A few White-winged Triller were seen, as well as a couple of Brush Cuckoo. Many Crimson Finch were seen, and a couple of Masked Finch were unusual for the area. After a few heard only sightings earlier in the tour, two Pallid Cuckoo were a welcome sight. After finishing at the golf course, we tried another site north of town, at the Ivanhoe River. In the gallery forest here we picked up a pair of Shining Flycatcher, the last new species of the tour. From here we headed back to the airport and said our farewells, before going our separate ways. It had been a great trip through a variety of habitats, seeing virtually all of our targets and more.

## TOP TEN BIRDS OF THE MAINLAND (WESTERN AUSTRALIA)

The top ten birds of the Western Australia (mainland) BirdQuest 2017 tour:

- 1 Black Grasswren
- 2 Chestnut-backed Button-quail
- 3 Spinifex Pigeon
- 4 Noisy Scrub-bird
- 5 Western Whipbird
- 6 Purple-crowned Fairy-wren
- 7 Western Quail-thrush
- 8 Copperback Quail-thrush
- 9 Yellow Chat
- 10 Western Bristlebird

*Worthy winner of bird of the trip – the magnificent rare, elusive and remotely situated Black Grasswren - we were lucky to find this species within minutes of arriving at the site*

*(left Andy Jensen, top right Brian Dyke, bottom right Ian Lewis)*



## 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 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).

Species listed as being "throughout" refer to throughout the mainland - Christmas Island is specified as applicable.

**Emu** ◊ *Dromaius novaehollandiae* A small group in the Sterling Ranges.

**Magpie Goose** ◊ *Anseranas semipalmata* Common throughout the northwest around waterbodies.

**Plumed Whistling Duck** ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* Some large groups around Broome and Kununurra.

**Wandering Whistling Duck** ◊ *Dendrocygna arcuata* A couple of groups around Lake Argyle and Kununurra.

**Black Swan** ◊ *Cygnus atratus* Seen in small numbers in the southwest.

**Raja Shelduck** ◊ *Tadorna radjah* A few groups around Kununurra.

**Australian Shelduck** ◊ *Tadorna tadornoides* First seen in Perth then a few on other waterbodies in the southwest.

**Pink-eared Duck** ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* A few groups in the southwest, then some in the Broome area.

**Maned Duck** *Chenonetta jubata* Small numbers throughout.

**Green Pygmy Goose** ◊ *Nettapus pulchellus* First on Lake Argyle, also seen around Kununurra.

**Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa* Common throughout.

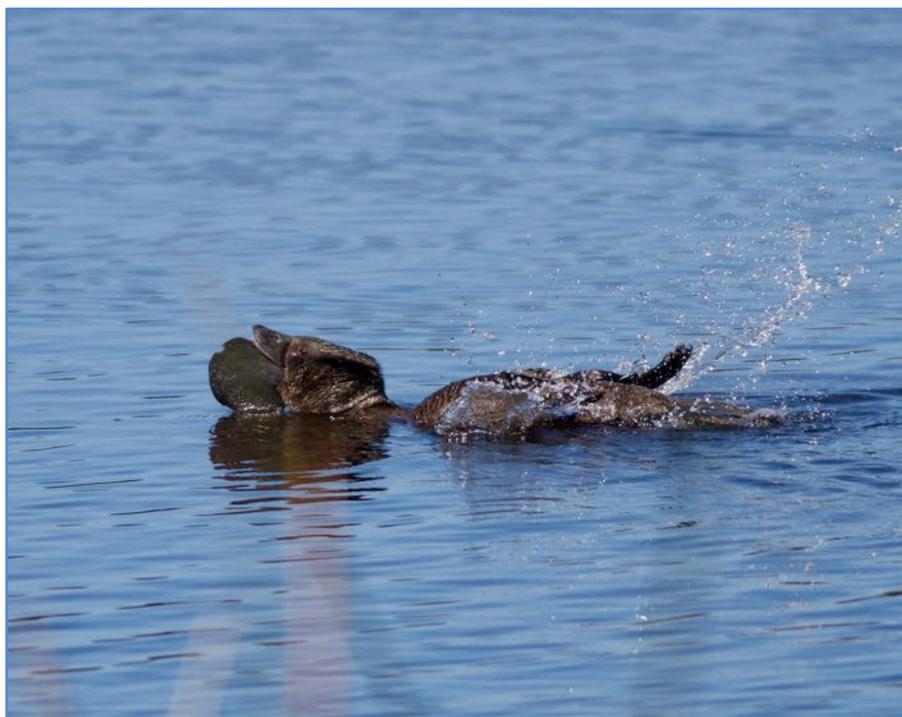
**Australasian Shoveler** ◊ *Anas rhynchos* First on Herdsman Lake, then seen around Lake Muir and Albany areas.

**Grey Teal** ◊ *Anas gracilis* Mainly in the south, some large groups around Albany and Hyden in particular.

**Hardhead** ◊ *Aythya australis* Small numbers throughout in various spots.

**Blue-billed Duck** ◊ *Oxyura australis* A few on Herdsman Lake, and some around Lake Muir.

**Musk Duck** ◊ *Biziura lobata* First on Herdsman Lake, then seen around Lake Muir and Albany areas.



*Musk Duck (Andy Jensen)*

**Brown Quail** ◊ *Coturnix ypsilophora* A few flushed in the Sterling Ranges, then some likewise in Wyndham.

**Red Junglefowl** *Gallus gallus* Common on Christmas Island where introduced - varying degrees of purity.

**Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* A couple off the Albany area.

**Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross** ◊ *Thalassarche carteri* Two seen while seawatching off the Gap, Albany.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** ◊ *Ardenna carneipes* Less than 100 flying past the Gap, Albany. Local breeders.

**Hutton's Shearwater** *Puffinus huttoni* Several past the Gap, Albany on passage.

**Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni* Vagrant on Christmas Island after dusk flying up and down road calling - bizarre!

**Australasian Grebe** *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* First seen in Perth, then small numbers in a few spots after.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Several on Herdsman Lake, then a few on Lake Argyle.

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* Small numbers daily on Christmas Island along the sea cliffs.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* Good numbers daily on Christmas Island of both golden and white morphs.

**Black-necked Stork** ◊ *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* A few sightings in the northwest of this magnificent stork.

**Australian White Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca* Common for most of the trip.

**Straw-necked Ibis** ◊ *Threskiornis spinicollis* First seen around Albany, where common, then seen most days after.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* First on way to Derby, then small numbers around Kununurra.

**Royal Spoonbill** ◊ *Platalea regia* Small numbers around Broome and Kununurra.

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** ◊ *Platalea flavipes* A couple in Perth then several around Albany.

**Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis* One on Lake Argyle was an unexpected bonus.

**Nankeen Night Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus* Two at Herdsman Lake in Perth, then a few singles in the north.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* A few around Broome, then a couple on the Pentecost River on the way to Kununurra.

**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* One on Christmas Island, a large group at Albany, and some in the north.

**White-necked Heron** ◊ *Ardea pacifica* First on the drive from Broome to Derby, then odd singles elsewhere in north.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Small numbers throughout.

**Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia* One on Christmas Island, then small numbers in the north.

**Pied Heron** ◊ *Egretta picata* Several on Lake Argyle, and a few around Kununurra.



Intermediate Egret (left), Pied Heron (right) (Andy Jensen)

**White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae* Small numbers seen throughout.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* One on Christmas Island, then a few on the mainland, particularly in the north.

**Pacific Reef Heron** *Egretta sacra* A couple on Christmas Island, then a few around Broome.

**Australian Pelican** ◇ *Pelecanus conspicillatus* First in Perth then small numbers here and there.

**Christmas Frigatebird** ◇ *Fregata andrewsi* Small numbers daily on Christmas Island.

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* The commonest frigatebird on Christmas Island, with hundreds seen daily.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* Several seen on Christmas Island, then a few around Broome on the mainland.

**Australasian Gannet** *Morus serrator* Several off the southwest coast.

**Abbott's Booby** ◇ *Papasula abbotti* Seen daily on Christmas Island, particularly in the northwest of the island.

**Red-footed Booby** ◇ *Sula sula* Very common on Christmas Island, all pale morphs.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Hundreds daily on Christmas Island.



*Abbott's Booby (left), Brown Booby (right) (Andy Jensen)*

**Little Pied Cormorant** *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Small numbers in suitable habitat throughout.

**Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Small numbers in suitable habitat throughout.

**Australian Pied Cormorant** ◇ *Phalacrocorax varius* Seen in small numbers around the Albany area, then Broome.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Odd individuals here and there.

**Australasian Darter** ◇ *Anhinga novaehollandiae* A few in Perth then widespread in the north.

**Eastern Osprey** ◇ *Pandion cristatus* A couple around Albany, then a few in the Broome area.

**Black-shouldered Kite** ◇ *Elanus axillaris* One over Cheynes Beach surprisingly the only record.

**Square-tailed Kite** *Lophoictinia isura* One over Cheynes Beach, then another over Middleton Beach in Albany.

**Pacific Baza** *Aviceda subcristata* A fantastic group of four over the Mitchell Plateau, calling and displaying.

**Little Eagle** ◇ *Hieraaetus morphnoides* A pair seen on multiple occasions in the Sterling Ranges, then one near Derby.

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** ◇ *Aquila audax* A few around the Sterling Ranges, a pair near Kookynie then several in the north.

**Brown Goshawk** *Accipiter fasciatus* Four sightings throughout the tour, mainly in the south.

**Christmas Island Goshawk** ◇ *Accipiter [fasciatus] natalis* Great views on Christmas Island day 1, then a couple after.

**Collared Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter cirrocephalus* Four sightings in the north.

**Swamp Harrier** *Circus approximans* A few in the Albany area.

**Spotted Harrier** ◇ *Circus assimilis* One over the Pentecost River, then a few in the farmland north of Kununurra.

**Black Kite *Milvus migrans*** Common in the north, hundreds in some spots.

**Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*** Widespread in the north, though less common than Black Kite.

**Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*** Several around Broome.

**White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*** A pair first seen in Broome, then three sightings after.



*Wedge-tailed Eagle (top left), Brahminy Kite (top right), Little Eagle (bottom) (Andy Jensen)*

**Australian Bustard** ◊ *Ardeotis australis* A pair on the way to Derby, then four on the island in Lake Argyle.

**Buff-banded Rail *Gallirallus philippensis*** Several around Herdsman Lake, then one at Kununurra golf course.

**White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*** Seven seen on two days on Christmas Island. Self coloniser.

**Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*** Two on Lake Argyle showed very well while we were having breakfast.

**Spotless Crake** ◊ *Porzana tabuensis* Heard in Perth, then great views in Albany around flooded margins of the lake.

**White-browed Crake *Porzana cinerea*** A few on Lake Argyle, then a few at Kununurra golf course.

**Australasian Swamphen** ◊ *Porphyrio melanotus* Seen on four dates, in suitable wetland habitat.

**Dusky Moorhen** ◊ *Gallinula tenebrosa* Seen mainly around Perth. A couple in Kununurra were unusual.

**Black-tailed Nativehen** ◊ *Tribonyx ventralis* A pair on the drive to Hyden, then several on Lake Argyle.

**Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*** Most common around Perth and Albany, a few in the north.

**Brolga** ◇ *Antigone rubicunda* One on the Gibb River Road, then a couple on way to Wyndham.

**Chestnut-backed Button-quail** ◇ *Turnix castanotus* Fantastic views of six on the Gibb River Road.

**Bush Stone-curlew** ◇ *Burhinus grallarius* A couple spotlighted near Broome, then another few birds after.

**Pied Oystercatcher** ◇ *Haematopus longirostris* First seen in the southwest, then some around Broome.

**Sooty Oystercatcher** ◇ *Haematopus fuliginosus* Several around Albany, then similar number near Broome.

**White-headed Stilt** ◇ *Himantopus leucocephalus* A few on way to Hyden, then small numbers in the north.

**Red-necked Avocet** ◇ *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* Five on way to Hyden were the only birds.

**Banded Lapwing** ◇ *Vanellus tricolor* Four in the Sterling Ranges was the only record.

**Masked Lapwing** ◇ *Vanellus miles* Common in the north.

**Red-kneed Dotterel** ◇ *Erythrogonys cinctus* A few on the way to Hyden, then four records in the north.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Approximately 50 noted around Broome.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* Small numbers on the wader beaches in Broome.

**Red-capped Plover** ◇ *Charadrius ruficapillus* A few around Albany, then small numbers Broome and Lake Argyle

**Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus* Common in Broome.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Several hundred in Broome.

**Oriental Plover** ◇ *Charadrius veredus* A few on the town oval in Broome, then several Drysdale River and Lake Argyle.

**Hooded Dotterel** ◇ *Thinornis cucullatus* A pair on a salt lake in the Sterling Ranges.

**Black-fronted Dotterel** ◇ *Elseyonis melanops* First seen in Broome, then others in north, including many Lake Argyle.

**Comb-crested Jacana** ◇ *Irediparra gallinacea* Small numbers on Lake Argyle and in Kununurra.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* Approximately 50 on the beaches in Broome.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Several hundred in Broome.

**Little Curlew** ◇ *Numenius minutus* One in a flock of Great Knot at one of the wader roosts in Broome.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Common around Broome.

**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* Small numbers in Broome.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* Four seen in the Broome wader roosts - unexpected.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* A few in Broome, then several on Lake Argyle.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Several hundred in Broome on the wader roosts.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* First at Broome sewage works, then several on Lake Argyle.

**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes* Common in the Broome wader roosts.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* A couple of hundred in the Broome wader roosts.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* First on Christmas Island, then several in the north.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* A few at Broome sewage works, then several in the wader roosts.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* Commonest wader in the Broome roosts.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Small numbers around Broome.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris falcinellus* Three found in the stint flocks in Broome - a scarce bird in Australia.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* A few in the south, then common around Broome and Lake Argyle.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* A couple of hundred around Broome, then several on Lake Argyle.

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* A few hundred around Broome, then a handful on Lake Argyle.

**Australian Pratincole** ◇ *Stiltia isabella* A few on Christmas Island, then nice views on Lake Argyle and near Kununurra.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* A couple of hundred daily on Christmas Island.

**Silver Gull** ◇ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* Common in all coastal areas.

**Pacific Gull** ◇ *Larus pacificus* Several seen around Albany and Cheynes Beach, with their huge bills!

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Many seen around Broome, including one of the Asian migratory race *affinis*.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* A couple around Albany, then a few around Broome and the Pentecost River.

**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* Common in coastal areas.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* Small numbers around Broome.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* A few around Broome.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* (LO) A brief flyby on Christmas Island - an unusual species here.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida* Common at Broome sewage works and on Lake Argyle.

**Brown Skua** *Stercorarius antarcticus* One flew past the Gap (Albany) on our seawatch.

**Rock Dove** *Columba livia* Introduced - seen.

**Spotted Dove** *Spilopelia chinensis* Small numbers in the south. Introduced.

**Laughing Dove** *Spilopelia senegalensis* A few around Perth and Albany areas. Introduced.

**Common Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica* A few daily on Christmas Island, where showed well at times.

**Common Bronzewing** ◇ *Phaps chalcoptera* Common throughout.

**Brush Bronzewing** ◇ *Phaps elegans* One in the Sterling Ranges, then a couple at Cheynes Beach.



Common Bronzewing (left), Brush Bronzewing (right) (Andy Jensen)

**Flock Bronzewing** ◇ *Phaps histrionica* Unexpected on Lake Argyle, out of range - 58 counted (from photos).

**Crested Pigeon** ◇ *Ocyphaps lophotes* Small numbers throughout.

**Spinifex Pigeon** ◇ *Geophaps plumifera* One at the Pentecost River showed well. Plenty on way out from Lake Argyle.

**White-quilled Rock Pigeon** ◇ *Petrophassa albipennis* A few around the Mitchell Plateau, then some on Lake Argyle.

**Diamond Dove** ◇ *Geopelia cuneata* Small numbers daily in the north.

**Peaceful Dove** *Geopelia placida* Small numbers daily in the north.

**Bar-shouldered Dove** *Geopelia humeralis* Small numbers daily in the north.

**Christmas Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula whartoni* Common on Christmas Island, where showed well.

**Torresian Imperial Pigeon** ◇ *Ducula spilorrhoa* A couple seen around the Mitchell Plateau.

**Pheasant Coucal** *Centropus phasianinus* Several seen (and more often heard) in the north.

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopaceus* (H) One heard in the Settlement on Christmas Island each morning before dawn.

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** ◇ *Scythrops novaehollandiae* (H) A flyover in Kununurra which was distant and unseen.

**Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** ◇ *Chrysococcyx basalis* Seen well in the Sterling Ranges, a few more heard elsewhere.

**Shining Bronze Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Several in various spots in the south, mostly heard, some seen well.

**Little Bronze Cuckoo** ◇ *Chrysococcyx minutillus* A pair in the mangroves at Broome.

**Pallid Cuckoo** ◇ *Cacomantis pallidus* A few heard only in the south, then a few seen on the final day in Kununurra.

**Fan-tailed Cuckoo** *Cacomantis flabelliformis* First seen at Dryandra, then a couple at Cheynes Beach.

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* A few around Kununurra.

**Barking Owl** ◇ *Ninox connivens* Great views of a pair at Drysdale River, calling and flying around before dusk.

**Southern Boobook** ◇ *Ninox boobook* Heard in Dryandra and at Mount Elizabeth, then one seen at Drysdale River.

**Christmas Boobook** ◇ *Ninox natalis* Magnificent views on our first evening on Christmas Island. Bird of the extension.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto delicatula* (H) Heard distantly around Broome.

**Tawny Frogmouth** ◇ *Podargus strigoides* On a nest at Herdsman Lake, then a few more sightings thereafter.



*Tawny Frogmouth (Andy Jensen)*

**Spotted Nightjar** ◇ *Eurostopodus argus* One on the way to Cheynes Beach (LO), another on way to Mitchell Plateau.

**Australian Owlet-Nightjar** ◇ *Aegotheles cristatus* A few heard only, before one seen at Mount Elizabeth Station.

**Christmas Island Swiftlet** *Collocalia esculenta* Plenty of this newly split species on Christmas Island.

**Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* An early returning bird seen over Wyndham.

**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* One at Drysdale River, then a few around Kununurra.



*Oriental Dollarbird (Ian Lewis)*

**Laughing Kookaburra** ◇ *Dacelo novaeguineae* Common in the southwest where introduced.

**Blue-winged Kookaburra** ◇ *Dacelo leachii* Common in the north. A spectacular kingfisher.

**Torresian Kingfisher** *Todiramphus chloris* One at Broome was a bonus - it is scarce in the area.

**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* Early returning bird in the Sterling Ranges, then small numbers in the north.

**Red-backed Kingfisher** ◇ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* A couple around Kookynie were the only records.

**Azure Kingfisher** ◇ *Ceyx azureus* A few seen at creek crossings on the Gibb River Road.

**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Common in the north.

**Nankeen Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides* Seen virtually daily on Christmas Island and in the southwest.

**Australian Hobby** ◇ *Falco longipennis* One on the way to Derby was the only record.

**Brown Falcon** *Falco berigora* One or two around Cheynes Beach then several sightings in the north.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* One in the Sterling Ranges.

**Cockatiel** ◇ *Nymphicus hollandicus* A handful of sightings around Hyden and Kookynie, and a few in the north.

**Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** ◇ *Calyptorhynchus banksii* Two races: *naso* in the south and *macrorhynchus* in the north.

**Baudin's Black Cockatoo** ◇ *Calyptorhynchus baudinii* A large group seen in the Sterling Ranges. Great views.

**Carnaby's Black Cockatoo** ◇ *Calyptorhynchus latirostris* First seen near Dryandra, several more sightings in south.

**Galah** ◇ *Eolophus roseicapilla* Seen almost daily on the mainland

**Western Corella** ◇ *Cacatua pastinator* A few of this scarce southwestern endemic around Rocky Gully.

**Little Corella** ◇ *Cacatua sanguinea* A few around Perth then common in the north.

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita* Some on the Gibb River Road, then a pair at the Mitchell Plateau.

**Regent Parrot** ◇ *Polytelis anthopeplus* A few flybys on the drives in the south, seen well in the Sterling Ranges.

**Red-winged Parrot** ◇ *Aprosmictus erythropterus* First near Broome, then several sightings in the north. Beautiful bird.

**Red-capped Parrot** ◇ *Purpureicephalus spurius* First on way to Sterling Ranges, then small numbers daily in south.

**Northern Rosella** ◊ *Platycercus venustus* Half a dozen drinking at a creek crossing near Mount Elizabeth Station.

**Western Rosella** ◊ *Platycercus icterotis* First in Dryandra, then plenty in the southwest - very showy around Albany.

**Australian Ringneck** ◊ *Barnardius zonarius* The southwestern form "Twenty-eight Parrot" - common in the south.

**Mulga Parrot** ◊ *Psephotellus varius* One near Hyden, then a few near Kookynie. A stunning looking parrot.

**Elegant Parrot** ◊ *Neophema elegans* First in Dryandra, then seen in the Sterling Ranges and near Hyden.

**Rock Parrot** ◊ *Neophema petrophila* A pair flew over the beach at Albany after much searching.

**Budgerigar** ◊ *Melopsittacus undulatus* Great views of this Aussie icon on the drive from Broome to Derby.

**Purple-crowned Lorikeet** ◊ *Parvipsitta porphyrocephala* Hundreds in the Sterling Ranges, a few near Norseman.

**Varied Lorikeet** ◊ *Psittaculopsitta versicolor* A group around Drysdale River on two separate dates.

**Rainbow Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Common around Perth (introduced).

**Red-collared Lorikeet** ◊ *Trichoglossus rubritorquis* Common in the north - another cracking Aussie parrot.

**Noisy Scrubbird** ◊ *Atrichornis clamosus* Fantastic sightings of this ultra-skulker at Cheynes Beach, even pictures!

**Western Bowerbird** ◊ *Chlamydera guttata* A cracking bird attending its bower in Kookynie. Very edge of its range here.

**Great Bowerbird** ◊ *Chlamydera nuchalis* Common in the north.

**Rufous Treecreeper** ◊ *Climacteris rufus* Cracking views in Dryandra, of this very terrestrial treecreeper.

**Black-tailed Treecreeper** ◊ *Climacteris melanurus* A few on the way in to Mount Elizabeth Station, more heard after.

**Blue-breasted Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus pulcherrimus* Great views in Dryandra of this very cute fairy-wren.

**Red-winged Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus elegans* The largest of its family in Australia - several in southwest.

**Splendid Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus splendens* A handful of sightings in the southwest - a dazzling bird.

**Purple-crowned Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus coronatus* A pair at Drysdale River in the riverside vegetation. Crackers.

**Red-backed Fairywren** ◊ *Malurus melanocephalus* First seen near Broome, then several further sightings in the north.

**White-winged Fairy-wren** ◊ *Malurus leucopterus* Several birds in the Kookynie area.

**Southern Emu-wren** ◊ *Stipiturus malachurus* Several at Cheynes Beach - tiny little birds, seemingly all tail!

**Black Grasswren** ◊ *Amytornis housei* Mega views on the Mitchell Plateau - a major highlight.

**Red-headed Myzomela** ◊ *Myzomela erythrocephala* Several in the mangroves around Broome.

**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** ◊ *Gliciphila melanops* Common in the heathland around Sterling Ranges and Albany.



*Tawny-crowned Honeyeater (Andy Jensen)*

**Western Spinebill** ◇ *Acanthorhynchus superciliosus* A few of this smart bird in Dryandra and Sterling Ranges.

**Banded Honeyeater** ◇ *Cissomela pectoralis* First seen at Mount Elizabeth, then a handful more sightings.

**Brown Honeyeater** *Lichmera indistincta* Common in Perth and the north.

**New Holland Honeyeater** ◇ *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* Very common in the southwest.

**White-cheeked Honeyeater** ◇ *Phylidonyris niger* Common in the heathlands of the southwest (Sterling Ranges etc).

**Little Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon citreogularis* Common in the north.

**Silver-crowned Friarbird** ◇ *Philemon argenticeps* Several sightings in the north.

**Blue-faced Honeyeater** ◇ *Entomyzon cyanotis* First seen on the Gibb River Road then regular there and Kununurra.

**Brown-headed Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus brevirostris* Good views in Dryandra, heard in the Sterling Ranges.

**White-throated Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus albogularis* First seen at Mount Elizabeth, several sightings in the north.

**Gilbert's Honeyeater** ◇ *Melithreptus chloropsis* First in Dryandra, then a few in the Sterling Ranges.

**White-eared Honeyeater** ◇ *Nesoptilotis leucotis* A pair showed well at Wave Rock, Hyden.

**Crimson Chat** ◇ *Epthianura tricolor* Several around Kookynie, including a stunning adult male.

**Yellow Chat** ◇ *Epthianura crocea* Ten or more on the island in Lake Argyle - brilliant views.

**Rufous-throated Honeyeater** ◇ *Conopophila rufogularis* Common in the north, first seen on the Gibb River Road.

**Bar-breasted Honeyeater** ◇ *Ramsayornis fasciatus* A few sightings in the north, best views on the Mitchell Plateau.

**Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** ◇ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* A few in the Hyden and Kookynie areas.

**Western Wattlebird** ◇ *Anthochaera lunulata* Four in the heathland near Albany were the only record.

**Red Wattlebird** ◇ *Anthochaera carunculata* Extremely common in the south.

**Purple-gaped Honeyeater** ◇ *Lichenostomus cratitius* First in the Sterling Ranges then common around Norseman.

**Yellow-throated Miner** ◇ *Manorina flavigula* A few in the Sterling Ranges, then regular around Hyden and in the north.

**White-fronted Honeyeater** ◇ *Purnella albifrons* A few passed through around Kookynie, but unfortunately didn't linger.

**White-gaped Honeyeater** ◇ *Stomiopera unicolor* First seen at Mount Elizabeth, several sightings in the north.

**Singing Honeyeater** ◇ *Gavicalis virescens* Common in the south, and around Broome.

**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** ◇ *Ptilotula flavescens* Common around the Gibb River Road and Kununurra.

**Grey-fronted Honeyeater** ◇ *Ptilotula plumula* A few at a creek crossing on the drive out from Drysdale to Kununurra.

**Yellow-plumed Honeyeater** ◇ *Ptilotula ornata* Extremely common (nuisance levels!) in Dryandra and Sterling Ranges.

**Kimberley Honeyeater** ◇ *Meliphaga fordiana* Several on the Mitchell Plateau, great views of this restricted endemic.

**Western Bristlebird** ◇ *Dasyornis longirostris* Good views of up to four at Cheynes Beach, with more heard.

**Spotted Pardalote** ◇ *Pardalotus punctatus* A gorgeous pair in the Sterling Ranges.

**Red-browed Pardalote** ◇ *Pardalotus rubricatus* A pair at a creek crossing on drive from Mount Elizabeth to Drysdale.

**Striated Pardalote** ◇ *Pardalotus striatus* Many sightings in the south, and a few at Wyndham. Two forms.

**Western Fieldwren** ◇ *Calamanthus montanellus* Great views in the heathland of the Sterling Ranges.

**Redthroat** ◇ *Pyrrhulaemus brunneus* First seen near McDermid Rock, then also at Niagara Dam.

**White-browed Scrubwren** ◇ *Sericornis frontalis* Seen daily in small numbers in the southwest.

**Weebill** ◇ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Common throughout the southwest.

**Mangrove Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone levigaster* Two sightings in the mangroves around Broome.

**Western Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone fusca* Several sightings in the southwest.

**Dusky Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone tenebrosa* A few seen in the mangrove sites around Broome - restricted range.

**Green-backed Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone choronata* A pair at the Mitchell Plateau were a tour write-in.

**White-throated Gerygone** ◇ *Gerygone olivacea* Great views of a pair on the drive out from Mount Elizabeth.

**Inland Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza apicalis* Common around Dryandra, Albany and the Hyden/Kookynie areas.

**Chestnut-rumped Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza uropygialis* A few around Hyden and Kookynie.

**Western Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza inornata* A small group in Dryandra, great views obtained.

**Yellow-rumped Thornbill** ◇ *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* Almost daily in small numbers in the southwest.

**Grey-crowned Babbler** ◇ *Pomatostomus temporalis* First around Broome, then several more sightings.



*Green-backed Gerygone (left) (Stuart Pickering), Grey-crowned Babbler (right) (Andy Jensen)*

**White-browed Babbler** ◇ *Pomatostomus superciliosus* A family group in Dryandra, great views of declining species.

**Western Whipbird** ◇ *Psophodes nigrogularis* Both forms seen brilliantly - in the Sterling Ranges and Cheynes Beach.

**Copperback Quail-thrush** ◇ *Cinclosoma clarum* Pair at McDermid Rock, a new area of tour itinerary - fantastic views.

**Western Quail-thrush** ◇ *Cinclosoma marginatum* Breathtaking views at Niagara Dam - cracking species.

**White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus* Common in the north.

**Black-faced Woodswallow** ◇ *Artamus cinereus* First near Dryandra, then many sightings after that.

**Dusky Woodswallow** ◇ *Artamus cyanopterus* Several around Dryandra and the Sterling Ranges.

**Little Woodswallow** ◇ *Artamus minor* First seen at Niagara Dam, then a couple in the north.

**Australian Magpie** ◇ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Common throughout.

**Grey Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus torquatus* Small numbers throughout the southwest.

**Silver-backed Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus argenteus* A pair at Mount Elizabeth, then a few around Drysdale River.

**Pied Butcherbird** ◇ *Cracticus nigrogularis* A few around Hyden/Kookynie then common in the north.

**Grey Currawong** ◇ *Strepera versicolor* Frequently seen throughout the southwest.

**Black-faced Cuckooshrike** ◇ *Coracina novaehollandiae* Common throughout.

**White-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina papuensis* Common in the north on the Gibb River Road and Kununurra.

**White-winged Triller** ◇ *Lalage tricolor* A couple around Hyden, then several in the north.

**Varied Triller** ◇ *Lalage leucomela* (H) Heard only at Drysdale River and Mitchell Plateau.

**Varied Sittella** ◇ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* A few flew over road near Drysdale, and showed well when we stopped.

**Crested Bellbird** ◇ *Oreoica gutturalis* First seen at McDermid Rock, then a few around Niagara Dam. More heard.

**Western Shriketit** ◇ *Falcunculus [frontatus] leucogaster* Spectacular views of a pair in the Sterling Ranges.

**Western Whistler** ◊ *Pachycephala occidentalis* A handful of sightings in the southwest - some cracking males.

**Mangrove Golden Whistler** ◊ *Pachycephala melanura* Great views around Broome, including a smart male.

**Rufous Whistler** ◊ *Pachycephala rufiventris* Small numbers throughout, mainly in dryer habitats.

**White-breasted Whistler** ◊ *Pachycephala lanioides* A female in mangrove north of Broome, then great views of male.

**Grey Shrikethrush** ◊ *Colluricincla harmonica* A handful of sightings in the south.

**Sandstone Shrikethrush** ◊ *Colluricincla woodwardi* Pair on the Mitchell Plateau, then great views round Lake Argyle.

**Australasian Figbird** ◊ *Sphecotheres vieilloti* A pair at the Mitchell Plateau.

**Olive-backed Oriole** ◊ *Oriolus sagittatus* One around Broome.

**Green Oriole** ◊ *Oriolus flavocinctus* A few sightings around Kununurra.



*Sandstone Shrike-thrush (left), Green Oriole (right) (Andy Jensen)*

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus* A few seen around the Mitchell Plateau, scarce in the northwest.

**Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Common and widespread.

**Northern Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura rufiventris* First at Mount Elizabeth, then great views on the Mitchell Plateau.

**Grey Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura albiscapa* Small numbers throughout the southwest.

**Mangrove Fantail** ◊ *Rhipidura phasiana* Several in the mangroves around Broome.

**Magpie-lark** ◊ *Grallina cyanoleuca* Common throughout.

**Leaden Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra rubecula* A fabulous male showed very well at the Mitchell Plateau.

**Broad-billed Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra ruficollis* A few in the mangroves around Broome, mostly heard.

**Shining Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra alecto* Great views of a pair north of Kununurra in riverine forest.

**Paperbark Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra nana* Common throughout the north.

**Restless Flycatcher** ◊ *Myiagra inquieta* Several around Dryandra and the Sterling Ranges.

**Torresian Crow** ◊ *Corvus orru* Common in the north.

**Little Crow** ◊ *Corvus bennetti* A few seen inland around Kalgoorlie - quite distinctive structure and jizz.

**Australian Raven** ◊ *Corvus coronoides* Common in the south.

**Buff-sided Robin** ◊ *Poecilodryas cerviniventris* Great views eventually at Kununurra on the golf course.

**Western Yellow Robin** ◊ *Eopsaltria griseogularis* A couple of sightings around Sterling Ranges - very nice views.

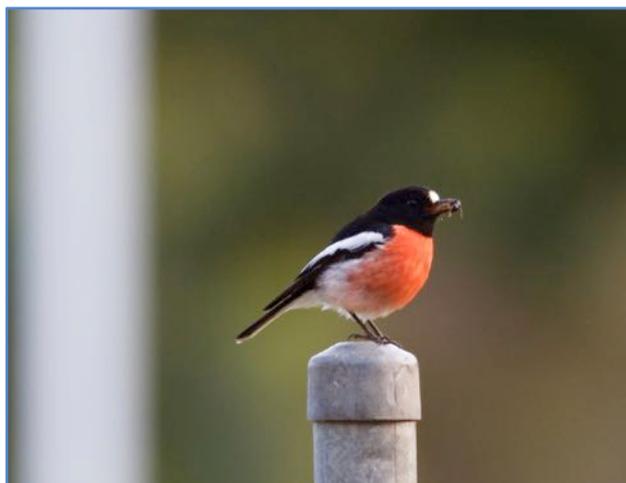
**White-breasted Robin** ◊ *Eopsaltria georgiana* First seen in Albany, then several at Cheynes Beach.

**Hooded Robin** ◊ *Melanodryas cucullata* A single male seen around Kookynie.

**Kimberley Flyrobin** ◊ *Microeca [flavigaster] tormenti* A pair in the mangroves north of Broome. A potential split.

**Jacky Winter** ◇ *Microeca fascinans* A few around Dryandra, then several on the Gibb River Road.

**Scarlet Robin** ◇ *Petroica boodang* A few of this cracking robin in Dryandra, then the Sterling Ranges.



*Leaden Flycatcher (left), Scarlet Robin (right) (Andy Jensen)*

**Red-capped Robin** ◇ *Petroica goodenovii* A few sightings around Kookynie of this stunning Australian robin.

**Southern Scrub-robin** ◇ *Drymodes brunneopygia* A bonus sighting in the Sterling Ranges, also at McDermid Rock.

**Horsfield's Bushlark** *Mirafra javanica* Just the one, on the drive from Broome to Derby.

**White-backed Swallow** ◇ *Cheramoeca leucosterna* Great looks at a few near Kookynie, a gorgeous hirundine.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* A couple of sightings on Christmas Island.

**Welcome Swallow** ◇ *Hirundo neoxena* Common on most days.

**Asian House Martin** *Delichon dasypus* A single bird seen briefly on Christmas Island with swiftlets. Vagrant here.

**Fairy Martin** ◇ *Petrochelidon ariel* First seen near Broome, then common around Kununurra.

**Tree Martin** ◇ *Petrochelidon nigricans* Common, mainly in the south.

**Australian Reed Warbler** ◇ *Acrocephalus australis* First seen at Herdsman Lake, then a few around Kununurra.

**Rufous Songlark** ◇ *Megalurus mathewsi* A couple near Kookynie, then a single bird on the Gibb River Road.

**Little Grassbird** ◇ *Megalurus gramineus* Heard only in Perth, then one seen at Lake Powell near Albany.

**Golden-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* First on Lake Argyle, then several around Kununurra.

**Christmas White-eye** ◇ *Zosterops natalis* Very common on Christmas Island.

**Canary White-eye** *Zosterops luteus* Common in the mangroves around Broome.

**Silvereye** ◇ *Zosterops lateralis* Numerous in the southwest.

**Island Thrush** ◇ *Turdus [poliocephalus] erythropleurus* Several seen daily on Christmas Island, very obliging here.

**Mistletoebird** ◇ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* First seen in Broome, then odd ones and twos in the north thereafter.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* Common on Christmas Island, where introduced.

**Red-eared Firetail** ◇ *Stagonopleura oculata* First seen brilliantly at Albany, a couple of further sightings in the area.

**Crimson Finch** ◇ *Neochmia phaeton* Small numbers on the Gibb River Road, then common around Kununurra.

**Star Finch** ◇ *Neochmia ruficauda* Several seen around Kununurra and Wyndham.

**Masked Finch** ◇ *Poephila personata* Great views coming in to drink at Wyndham, a couple in Kununurra.

**Long-tailed Finch** ◇ *Poephila acuticauda* A flock on the way in to Mount Elizabeth, a couple more sightings after.

**Zebra Finch** ◇ *Taeniopygia guttata* A handful around Kookynie, common in the north.

**Double-barred Finch** ◊ *Taeniopygia bichenovii* Several small groups in the northwest.

**Gouldian Finch** ◊ *Erythrura gouldiae* A couple of juveniles in Wyndham.

**Yellow-rumped Mannikin** ◊ *Lonchura flaviprymna* A few in the irrigated fields north of Kununurra.

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** ◊ *Lonchura castaneothorax* A large flock in fields north of Kununurra, with the above.

**Java Sparrow** *Lonchura oryzivora* A flock on Christmas Island in the Settlement feeding in a garden. Introduced.



*Java Sparrow (Andy Jensen)*

**Pictorella Mannikin** ◊ *Heteromunia pectoralis* A flock of c.20 on the drive back from Drysdale River to Kununurra.

**Australian Pipit** *Anthus australis* First in Sterling Ranges, and small numbers thereafter.

## MAMMALS

**Southern Brown Bandicoot** *Isodon obesulus* A single in Dryandra was the only one.

**Common Brushtail Possum** *Trichosurus vulpecula* Several in Dryandra, and a few in the Sterling Ranges.

**Agile Wallaby** *Macropus agilis* Small numbers throughout in the northwest.

**Western Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus fuliginosus* Small numbers throughout in the southwest.

**Euro** *Macropus robustus* A couple seen around the margins of Lake Argyle.

**Short-eared Rock Wallaby** *Petrogale brachyotis* A few around Lake Argyle on the boat cruise.

**Monjon** *Petrogale burbidgei* One of this cute rock-wallaby at Mitchell Plateau.

**Black Flying-fox** *Pteropus alecto* Several thousand leaving the roost in Kununurra on dusk.

**Christmas Island Flying-fox** *Pteropus natalis* Small numbers throughout on Christmas Island, unusually in the day.

**Kimberley Rock Rat** *Zyzomys woodwardi* Single at Mitchell Plateau while sitting at Little Mertens Falls.



*Short-eared Rock Wallaby (Andy Jensen)*

**European Rabbit (introduced) *Oryctolagus cuniculus*** A few seen in the Albany region.

**House Cat *Felis catus*** A real threat to Australian fauna - unfortunately seen on the drive to Mitchell Plateau.

**Horse *Equus caballus*** A slightly dubious introduced species - some feral looking ones around Lake Argyle.

**Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*** A few in Albany off Emu Point.

**Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*** A few of The Gap (Albany) while seawatching.

**Southern Right Whale *Eubalaena australis*** A few off Cheynes Beach and Albany.



*Obviously not a mammal but this Freshwater Crocodile on Lake Argyle offered spectacular views as it fed on a catfish (Andy Jensen)*