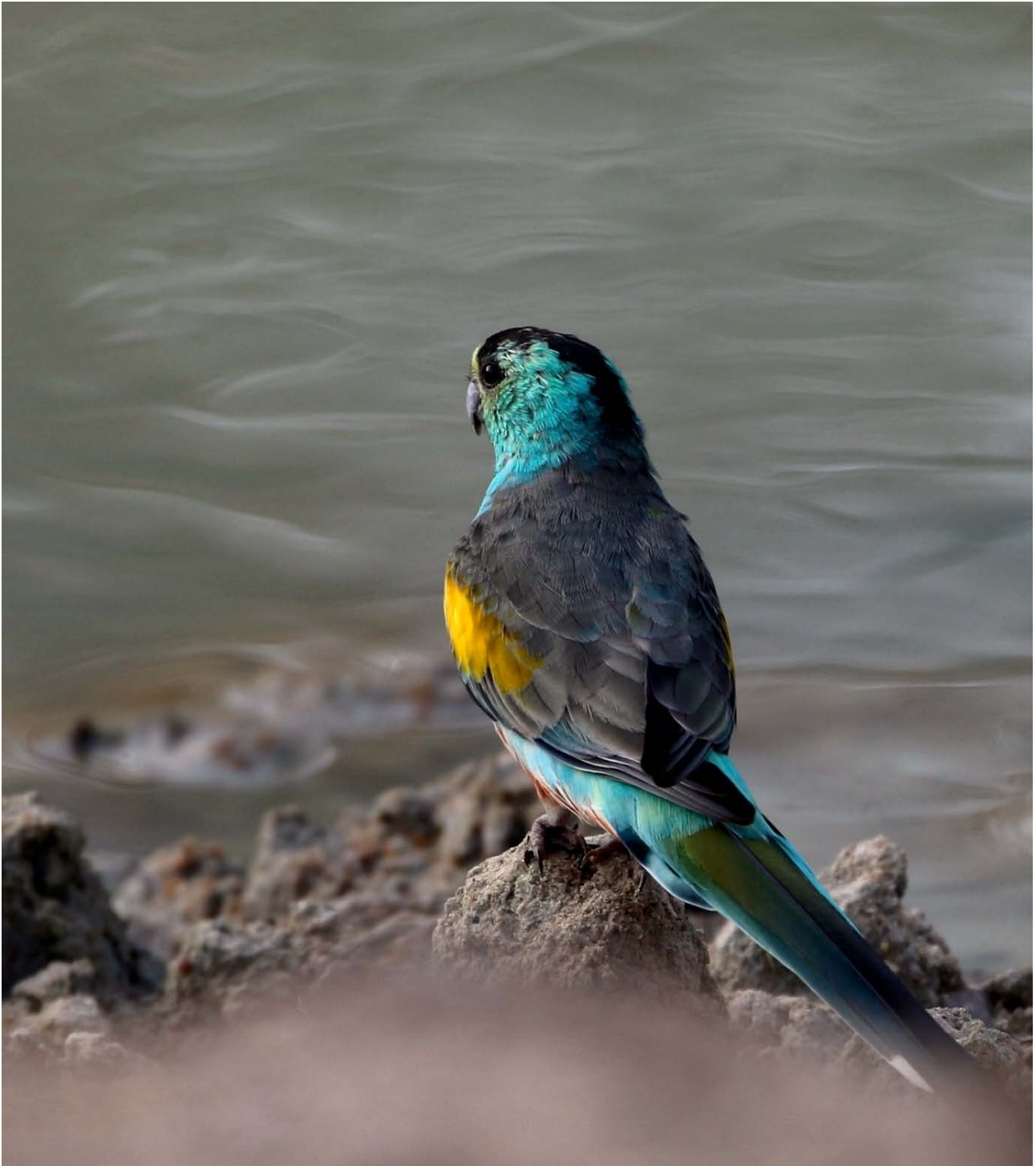


# OUTBACK QUEENSLAND

5 – 23 OCTOBER 2018

**LEADER:** JOSHUA BERGMARK



*A magnificent Golden-shouldered Parrot drinking at dawn in remote Cape York (all photos by Josh Bergmark unless specified)*

With a plethora of newly split species available, and some high quantity rainfall earlier in the year preceding the tour, this year's new-look itinerary was always going to be an exciting excursion into areas of Queensland much more remote than those usually covered on traditional birding routes. While traversing some of the most stunning landscapes in Australia, we once again connected with almost all of our usual targets, along with a couple of more unusual species, three of which were still Birdquest lifers until recently! After leaving Cairns and successfully navigating the first stretch of the Peninsula Development Road with a sneaky Squatter Pigeon spotted along the way, we had a memorable afternoon exploring the birdy billabong behind Lotusbird Lodge complete hundreds of strange Magpie Geese honking away, imposing Black-necked Storks and dainty Brolgas, localised Black-backed Butcherbirds, plus resident Southern Boobooks only a few trees over from the roosting Papuan Frogmouths! Endangered Golden-shouldered Parrots drinking only metres away from us the next morning with a covey of Masked Finches certainly took some beating for bird of the trip, and we enjoyed a plethora of diamond birds during the day as we explored the woodlands and nearby tropical grasslands. Hundreds of mesmerising Star Finches fed in the seeding vegetation with Black-throated Finches, and a rare Red-chested Buttonquail was put up in front of us giving good flight views. Spotting in the same area allowed us stunning encounters with a magnificent Eastern Grass Owl, some Red-backed Buttonquail, and another Red-chested Buttonquail, plus the crowd-pleasing Australian Owlet Nightjar.



*One of nine Grey Falcons which we found in the Diamantina region (Dave Williamson)*

Moving north, we dove straight into the pristine lowland rainforest of Iron Range, where the whole group had fabulous views of the newly split and highly localised Cape York endemics, Frill-necked Monarch and Northern Scrub Robin. Both played hard to get initially, but showed better than we could have hoped in the end! The region also hosts other desirables such as the stunning Palm Cockatoo, eclectic Eclectus Parrot, nesting Double-eyed Fig Parrots and Red-cheeked Parrots, bubbling Marbled Frogmouth, masterful Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Yellow-billed Kingfisher, localised Tropical Scrubwren, White-browed Robin, colourful White-faced Robin, challenging Yellow-legged Flyrobin, superb Magnificent Riflebird, the reclusive Black-eared Catbird, and of course our final Cape York endemic target, the subtle White-streaked Honeyeater. The coastline here also produced lovely Beach Stone-curlews, Lesser Crested Terns, Eastern Reef Egrets, Metallic Starlings and Torresian Imperial Pigeons in huge flocks, and nesting Bridled Terns on some small rocks offshore.





*This Carpentarian Grasswren was seemingly the dominant female of a family group which approached us to within metres!*

Visiting such remote areas of Australia obviously requires a substantial amount of driving across this huge continent, and indeed this tour we covered just a tad over 8000kms. A lot of time on the road, but our days in the car were truly far from tedious! Short stops on our way inland after Cape York allowed us to view not only monstrous Southern Cassowaries from only metres away, but also charismatic Spotted Bowerbirds and



Apostlebirds, pretty Pale-headed Rosellas, Australian Bustards, mighty Wedge-tailed Eagles, Brown Songlarks and Brown Falcons. After arriving in the outback town of Winton, we set our sights on a whole new suite of inland species, and over the following days notched up walkaway views of all three target grasswrens – Carpentarian, Kalkadoon, and Rusty. Birds of Australia's arid zone were easy to come by - flocks of Budgerigars hundreds strong in tightly-knit groups, Emus beside the road which dutifully appear perpetually disinterested, Inland Dotterels hiding amongst the saltbush, Spinifex Pigeons with comically tufted heads displaying to each other, and Australian Pratincoles standing all over the place proved to be favourites, all seen regularly, and often at point blank!



*We were treated to a very close encounter with this male Flock Bronzewing near Boulia, but he looked a little lonely!*

Specialty birds of the area were a key component of the trip too of course, with Flock Bronzewings seen well this year (appearing somewhat flockless) and Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens darting furtively between spinifex bushes before popping up on open branches right before our eyes, Hall's Babblers eventually appearing after an arduous search, and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush literally running circles around the very happy group. Finding no less than nine Grey Falcons, with one particularly stunning encounter with a male in the setting sun, was of course a big big highlight for everybody, but lucking across a group of extremely rare post-breeding Letter-winged Kites which burst out of a tree by the side of the road and hovered above us was unanimously accepted as the absolute trip highlight! We tried to improve on this by having fair crack at seeing Night Parrot, but no luck this time. Many of Australia's most exciting desert birds were observed regularly during our circuit of the remote Channel Country, having all bred up early in the year and not quite ready to disperse yet. Gaudy Crimson Chats were regular, but we also found Orange Chats, superb Yellow Chats, and possibly the best of the bunch, Gibberbird. Noisy Cockatiels and Budgerigars were a regular feature, while Black Falcon, Banded Lapwing and Yellow-billed Spoonbill remained somewhat elusive until the last minute! Plum-headed Finches, strange Pink-eared Ducks, Freckled Ducks, and speedy Black-tailed Nativehens obliged at the sewage works, and in some good woodland Masked Woodswallows mixed with Little Woodswallows, Black Honeyeaters, stunning Painted Finches, and two special Red-browed Pardalotes. Thousands of Galahs circled above us coming to roost in the remote settlement of Boulia where the Cloncurry form of Australian Ringneck was also present. To the south Red-necked Avocets were located on a drying pond, and White-backed Swallows circled above us as Little Crows and Australian Ravens



watched on. We had to wait until Mount Isa to notch up Long-tailed Finch and Pictorella Mannikin at some drinking pools, with Black-tailed Treecreeper and Varied Lorieet nearby.



*The range-restricted Hall's Babbler is one of the many regional specialties we target on this specialised tour.*

Short periods in Cairns as we passed through allowed us to get to grips with Mangrove Robin, Crimson Finch, Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Bush Stone-curlew, and a variety of lovely waders on the esplanade, but we also had time to indulge in some mammal watching during our time down under, and notched up an impressive list of Macropods (kangaroos, wallabies and allies) which included hulking Red Kangaroos, beautiful Purple-necked Rock-wallabies, adorable Rufous Bettongs and Spectacled Hare-wallabies, plus a bonus Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo! Short-beaked Echidna, Stripe-faced Dunnart, Northern Brown Bandicoot and Common Spotted Cuscus were also highlights. Some even found the time to form a fairly impressive butterfly list, while we also paid attention to some lovely reptiles and amphibians like the exquisite Black-headed Python and huge White-lipped Tree Frog. The tour ended with 318 birds having been recorded (only one of which was heard only, and one not leader sighting), along with 18 mammals, some excellent reptiles, and a couple of frogs to round off an eventful expedition into the outback, and beyond.



*There is always time to admire the wonderful marsupial fauna of Australia – this Spectacled Hare Wallaby was a great find!*



After assembling in Cairns early on the first morning of the tour, our intrepid group set off towards Cape York, but not before getting a head-start on some of northern Australia's savannah species. The entrance road to Mareeba Wetlands held a dozen stately Australian Bustards, making use of a small drainage channel to bathe right by the track. As we drove slowly along, a male Red-backed Fairywren perched up on a wire, a Pheasant Coucal showed well by the road, and one Azure Kingfisher was seen briefly. Our first proper stop came as we left the tropical lowlands and the landscape changed to the hot, dry woodland we would become familiar with over the coming days. Wandering around the thick creekside vegetation west of Mount Carbine, we quickly located our target, a White-gaped Honeyeaters darting between the trees, a species which would not be seen again on the route. Our first Yellow Honeyeaters, Brown Honeyeaters, White-throated Honeyeaters, Large-billed Gerygones and a roving flock of Fairy Gerygones were also seen here.

The day was already heating up (as it tends to do in Australia), so with haste we moved on to chase more birds. Suddenly, a Pale-headed Rosella crossed in front of us, and we made a quick stop to enjoy scope views of this lovely blue-breasted Cape York form. Driving slowly down a nearby dirt track through the barren grassy hillsides, everyone had their eyes peeled, scanning the shadows surrounding roadside trees for our target – the elusive Squatter Pigeon, these days found only in Queensland. The usual dam which we focus our search around was off-limits today as the station was mustering their cattle with trucks and helicopters, so instead we ventured further along the road. This proved to be a good move, as a Squatter Pigeon flew low across in front of the car and alighted under a tree. We jumped out and were able to slowly follow the bird on foot as it strutted through the dry woodland before escaping under a fence. Excellent stuff! We quickly nailed our third gerygone of the morning low down in a tree, the lovely White-throated Gerygone, before enjoying a large colony of Blue-faced Honeyeaters and Little Friarbirds. Some Pied Butcherbirds were spotted perching prominently by the roadside, calling Olive-backed Oriole was taped in, and one Brown Goshawk flew over, promptly being mobbed by twenty Blue-faced Honeyeaters all at once!



*We saw both subspecies of Squatter Pigeon on this tour – the red eyed race pictured here is found in the north.*

With our main woodland targets at this site under the belt, we began a long drive north along the Peninsula Development Road. Often regarded as one of the most formidable tracks in Australia, the PDR is usually closed for up to 4 months every year during the wet season as rain quickly turns the relatively well-built



three-lane road into a potted mess of washouts and ruts. Regularly we would pass the stripped shells of burnt-out cars, which are often dumped up here, as getting them towed anywhere of significance costs a small fortune for the many unprepared punters who come to grief on the rough, corrugated road. Just past Lakeland, we stopped for a regal Wedge-tailed Eagle circling over the car, and while having lunch at Laura were treated by dozens of cheeky Great Bowerbirds, our first Black-backed Butcherbirds, a specialty of the region. Pressing onwards, we slowed only for the billowing dust clouds expelled behind road trains, and two families of Brolga in their chosen roadside dams.



*Black-backed Butcherbirds are found only in the Cape York interior, and in small areas of Papua New Guinea!*

Passing through Musgrave, a roadside stop at the well-known Red Goshawk nest was predictably quiet on the raptor front. Sadly the male of this pair was struck by a car earlier in the season, and the female has since disappeared. Notably, the story was similar with the Rufous Owls around Cairns, which had abandoned their nest only days before we arrived. While we walked around checking the larger branches carefully for perched goshawks, large groups of Banded Honeyeaters were obvious, and we carefully inspected the local form of Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, which, truth be told, looks more like a Fuscous Honeyeater than anything else. It is certainly worth keeping an eye on this undescribed and highly range-restricted “Musgrave Honeyeater” as some are now calling it – stay tuned! Some Varied Sitellas showed well, while Striated Pardalotes and a male Mistletoebird stayed up in the canopy.



*The resident Agile Wallabies at Lotusbird Lodge always put on a show for us!*



Arriving at Lotusbird Lodge, our luxurious accommodation for the next two nights, we enjoyed the line-up of resident Agile Wallabies, and got up close and personal with the resident Black-backed Butcherbirds, roosting Papuan Frogmouths, bubbling Green Orioles, and Forest Kingfishers. Scanning the billabong from our balcony, we had our first looks at a large number of Australian waterfowl. Attention was quickly focused on the hundreds of gaudy Magpie Geese, which well and truly deserved the family split. Colourful and noisy Wandering Whistling Ducks stayed close to the shore allowing good views, and a few Plumed Whistling Ducks were picked up by before a Comb-crested Jacana (or Lotusbird, the namesake of our accommodation) was spotted hopping around on the floating vegetation right in front of us. A couple of Raja Shelducks stuck out like a sore thumb, while the dainty Green Pygmy Geese tried to blend in with the lotus stands. Five Pink-eared Ducks showed well enough that we could discern their delicate pink “ear”, while the usual Hardheads, Pacific Black Ducks and Grey Teals dabbled around. Some Australasian Grebes popped up every now and then, while the huge Black-necked Storks and beautiful breeding-plumage Royal Spoonbills were favourites. Many Great Egrets concealed one or two Intermediate Egrets, plus one Little Egret with some Cattle Egrets and an Australian White Ibis. The shoreline hosted some Red-kneed Dotterels, Black-fronted Dotterels, and White-headed Stilts, plus some Australasian Darters drying their wings. Some Australian Pelicans focused on fishing with Little Black Cormorants out in the middle of the water. One non-breeding “Australian” Gull-billed Tern was seen well enough to distinguish it from the more widespread “Asian” Gull-billed Tern (an excellent split candidate), and one Brahminy Kite appeared amidst the ever-present Whistling Kites. An excellent introduction to the typical billabong avifauna in this part of the world! As a bonus, we successfully kept away from the 4m crocodile which was lurking out of sight somewhere in the depths...



*It is easy to miss roosting Papuan Frogmouths in their favoured paperbark trees!*

We spent the final hour of daylight driving some backroads hoping for a Red Goshawk, but saw only Pied Currawong, Common Bronzewing, and two Australian Hobbies on our return. Or spotlighting session after



dinner was fairly busy however, which started well with a male Southern Boobook feeding frogs to his chicks at their nest hollow near the dining room. Eastern Barn Owls proved common this year out on the Nifold Plains, as did Feral Cats... We had at least two *Tyto* owls show distantly which were probably Eastern Grass Owl, but as they were not calling and seemed to be responding to the Eastern Barn Owl tape, clinching this one would have to wait. A beautiful Olive Python and a Burton's Snake-lizard rounded out the evening.

Our second day started with a predawn rise, before heading over to Artemis Station, owned by Sue Sheppard, known to many as the saviour of the Golden-shouldered Parrot. This magnificent Cape York endemic was decimated during the early years of Australian history for the wildlife trade, but owing largely to the remoteness of its core range, the species luckily did not go the same way as its nearest relative, the extinct Paradise Parrot. Sue owns a working cattle station, and through well-thought out practices, manages to keep the habitat in perfect condition for our quarry, with plenty of termite mounds for nesting and grass for feeding. Leading us down some back tracks to a small dam, Sue guided us to our position only a few metres from the water, and after a short wait, two Golden-shouldered Parrots appeared above us basked in sunlight. We were soon treated to perfect views as many of these beautiful but critically endangered parrots came in to drink right in front of us, while the following hour of relaxed birding sitting at the dam brought us parties of well-adorned Masked Finches of the chestnut Cape York race, Double-barred Finches, noisy Great Bowerbirds, Red-winged Parrots, hundreds of Diamond, Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves, plus some Galahs and another Olive-backed Oriole. Our short walk around the nearby woodland yielded a party of Grey-crowned Babblers building their communal nest, a lovely Great Bowerbird at his well-constructed bachelor pad, and some foraging Golden-shouldered Parrots. We had even better looks at this stunner while dropping Sue off back at the homestead, where some birds were sitting above the feeding station. Usually they move away from these handouts earlier in the dry season, but the few birds sticking around (specifically the well-plumaged male) provided excellent photographic opportunities and detailed scope studies!



*A more traditional angle on one of our fabulous male Golden-shouldered Parrots from Artemis Station!*

Back at Lotusbird everyone was treated to a lovely breakfast, followed by a walk around the wetland which backs onto the lodge. We observed many of the same species as the previous day, but additionally found ourselves a Bar-breasted Honeyeater, a family of Pale-headed Rosellas, and a Rufous Fantail passing through on migration south. Following a short siesta, we departed to explore the extensive vicinity of

Lakefield National Park (now officially named Rinyirru National Park, though still referred to by most birders as Lakefield). This culturally significant area of seasonally flooded grassland and paperbark swamps once held a flourishing group of Aboriginal clans who made use of the fertile coastal strip – much more enticing than the monotonous landscape just a few kilometres further inland. The park is managed with the original custodians in mind, and as such, one of the birding areas was off limits this year, being the sacred birthplace of an Aboriginal elder who had recently passed away. The entirety of Cape York (along with other remote areas in the NT and WA) still has an extremely strong connection to the resident Aboriginal people, and it is not uncommon to see locals going about their business hunting or collecting bush tucker in the scrub. Our first stop at a river crossing yielded fantastic views of a cooperative Rufous-banded Honeyeater, and a Little Bronze Cuckoo. Out on the Nifold Plains, we were greeted by a desolate landscape seemingly devoid of any life, but of course the birds were there, as always. A couple of Horsfield's Bush Lark were located on the deck, and some roadside Brolgas were seen before a swarming flock of small birds pulled us to a halt – Star Finches! Some three hundred birds were swirling around and alighting to feed in an area of seeding grasses – we managed to sneak up fairly close for some extended views! This stop gave us a few surprises too, with an Oriental Plover which flew over calling soon being overshadowed by good flights views of a rare Red-chested Buttonquail showing the diagnostic red flanks as it banked parallel to us. This one was a lifer for the happy leader! Unhappily however, completely unbeknownst to us at the time, this grass was infested with chiggers – the first time we have had this problem on an Australia tour...



*We worked hard for Black-throated Finch this year, but had superb looks at a feeding flock near Lakefield!*

A nearby waterhole held one non-breeding Pied Heron, and some colourful Galahs were watched as they quenched their thirst. Some more Rufous-banded Honeyeaters were seen in the surrounding trees, and yet another family of Brolgas were noted before we chose to move on, as the strong wind was whipping up the dusty topsoil. Black-faced Woodswallows were sitting prominently on termite mounds along the road, and we quickly got distracted from our raptor search when a small party of finches flew up off the roadside and perched in full view. We were all pleased to discover that they were all Black-throated Finches, one of our



last big targets in this area. Superb views were had as the finches allowed close approach right up to the small tree they were sheltering in, but the swaying branches made photography difficult! The atrocious corrugations eventually got the better of us, and we abandoned our plans to drive further along the road and instead focused on the plains as the sun set. At least ten Australian Bustards were enjoyed in the golden light, and a surprise Red-backed Kingfisher also posed for the cameras. We returned to Lotusbird for yet another five-star meal before some of us drove straight back to the plains for some spotlighting, but not before rescuing an adorable Southern Boobook chick which had fallen out of his nest hole! We got close to getting deck views of some buttonquail in the same area we had seen them in the afternoon, but after they had dropped in the torchlight we were never quite able to spot them before they flushed again and disappeared. We did however confirm our Eastern Grass Owl from the previous night, which once again came in and circled once in response to the Eastern Barn Owl tape, showing her long legs and dark breast well, before disappearing out over the grasslands. I wonder if she wanted to drive away the alleged Barn Owl, or just wanted to see what it might be hunting? On the return journey a quick stop in likely habitat produced the cute Australian Owlet-nightjar, this individual an uncommon rufous-collared morph, and as we passed the main crossing at Saltwater Creek, some large red eye-shine was seen disappearing into the murky depths, reminding us to stay away from all bodies of water during this part of the tour!

Back out in Lakefield the following morning we focused our efforts on the north coast mangroves near the boat ramp. Here we quickly pulled in a superb male Red-headed Myzomela showing off his jet black plumage and bright red face, while the steady throng of Spangled Drongo flocks passing overhead was an exciting migration spectacle which is not often seen in Australia. A single Black-faced Monarch passing by in the same direction was a surprise, and another Rufous Fantail was joined by two female Leaden Flycatchers in the mangroves, all clearly passing through. Good looks at a Torresian Kingfisher and Black Butcherbird wrapped up our mangrove birding before we turned our attention to the plains behind us. Many Brolgas and a White-bellied Sea Eagle were in evidence, and a number of the endemic Australian subspecies of Zitting Cisticola were identified (with very different calls to the birds in Asia) as they conducted song flights before perching up for detailed scope studies. Two Golden-headed Cisticolas were also found hanging around closer to the track before we called it a morning and began pushing northwards towards Iron Range.



*This gorgeous male Red-headed Myzomela was very happy to show off in the Cape York mangroves!*

On the way, we passed multitudes of roadworks, aimed at sealing the road all the way to Weipa. "Doing the Cape" has always been an aspirational 4WD adventure for many Australians, and the route truly takes you well off the beaten track through some beautiful country, but access looks to become much easier in the coming years! Some Silver-crowned Friarbirds crossing the road paused our journey, and while we worked on scope views of these strange honeyeaters a pair of Common Cicadabirds also popped up. More impressive was our roadside Noisy Pitta which appeared in front of the vehicle as we entered Iron Range, and the subsequent flurry of birds. The pitta disappeared before everybody had seen it properly, but a male Magnificent Riflebird suddenly called right in front of us, and appeared in full view showing off his iridescent breast while hopping around fairly low down in the trees. The calls of a Trumpet Manucode alerted us to our second Bird-of-paradise doing what else but building a nest! This was the last bird we expected to see during our first birding session, as last time it was the final target to fall after four days of searching! We returned our focus to the pitta, which was responding across the road. Some careful positioning and some quiet playback had the brightly coloured yellow ball of feathers bounding right in, much to the delight of Derek whom, with this bird, had now seen 50% of the world's species! Quite an achievement indeed, and what a set of birds to hit the milestone with! Also seen during our stop was a Wompoo Fruit Dove, Pacific Emerald Dove, a feeding group of Metallic Starlings, and one Little Shrikethrush. We checked in at Portland House, which was to be our home for the coming days, and enjoyed a huge White-lipped Tree Frog (the largest tree frog in the world) landing on our table during dinner, causing quite the commotion.



*We saw an abundance of Noisy Pittas in Iron Range (half of them on the road no less) - a special milestone for Derek!*

The following morning a Double-eyed Fig Parrot perched above his nest hole bid us farewell as we headed south into Iron Range. While much of Cape York consists of dry woodland and thick vine forest rendered largely inaccessible by the very limited road network, a combination of geological, topographical, and climatic factors has resulted in a localised patch of rich lowland rainforest in a narrow band stretching 175kms south from Portland Roads – the largest continuous tract in Australia. Only a small section of this extensive habitat is accessible to birders, in part due to the operations of the US army in the area during WWII, and the associated formation of an airfield. Despite a grizzly history of being used for weapons testing, today the national park protects this area, even though the effects of chemicals can still be seen in some areas, where substances like Agent Orange were put to work on the pristine rainforest. Luckily, most of the reserve was unaffected by such historical events, and the healthy forest even supports a good population of Southern Cassowary (though they are very hard to see here).





*I have always thought that the Cape York endemic purple-collared subspecies of Australian Brushturkey was the real looker!*



*After recent taxonomic revisions, this Northern Scrub Robin is now endemic to a tiny part of coastal Cape York!*

Our usual White-browed Robin site produced the goods fairly quickly, with two of these lovely birds coming straight in cocking their tails and calling strongly to ward off the unseen intruder from their little creek line. We arrived in the rainforest and set about finding the main target for our stay – the attractive Northern Scrub Robin. Following recent taxonomic revisions, this striking rufous-orange species is now endemic to the very



northern tip of Australia, distinct from the browner birds in New Guinea to the north. After walking around for a while we had only heard some distant calls, and I commented to the group that maybe we would have to go and try the other pair I knew about the next day... Hold on... There it is! The Northern Scrub Robin was feeding in the open forest just off the road, but seemingly he decided this was not good enough as he proceeded to in fact run out onto the road, and start feeding there instead! Phenomenal! It didn't take long for a Noisy Pitta to also start foraging on the road, but this one took us by surprise as suddenly it appeared when we looked behind us after watching another male Magnificent Riflebird rip apart some dead wood in the mid-canopy.



*The group birding in Iron Range on the Cape York peninsula.*

Our first Black-eared Catbird called in the distance, a Green-backed Honeyeater was lured in out of a Silveryeye flock, and an uncommon White-eared Monarch was spotted unobtrusively gleaning from the foliage. The main camping area at Cook's Hut played host to the boss around these parts – a very dominant Australian Brushturkey, here of the beautiful *purpureicollis* race. Moving down the road to Gordon Creek, another Cape York endemic appeared, this time the beautiful Frill-necked Monarch complete with vibrant blue eye ring and pied plumage. Along the creek itself, a party of Tropical Scrubwren were located hopping around in the scrub. While these are found in New Guinea to the north, we essentially never see it on the normal routes, making the species a major target on Cape York. We had our first looks at Yellow-breasted Boatbills calling overhead, and two White-faced Robins perching on trunks, posing for photos. A Little Shrikethrush dropped in, and we had excellent close-up views of both Yellow-spotted Meliphaga and Graceful Meliphaga, allowing us to discern the subtle differences in gape structure and colouration which structurally distinguish the species from each other (although generally, call is the most useful!). Moving down the road, we stopped quietly at an opening in the canopy, where a pair of Eclectus Parrots have nested for over a decade. This stunningly vibrant bird with such marked sexual dimorphism is always a pleasure to see perched in the scope, and the female tending to her hollow obliged!



Moving towards Lockhart River, a quick stop at the airport yielded no grassland waders, but a lucky Fawn-breasted Bowerbird was showing well in a fruiting fig. All three bowers I knew from my last visit had been destroyed in fires, so this chance sighting allowed us to relax a little. The sewage works were fairly quiet, but a number of Pied Herons, some Raja Shelducks, and two Green Pygmy Goose were good to see with three Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a first year Grey-tailed Tattler.



*Another endemic restricted to the northern Cape is this excited Frill-necked Monarch!*



*There are probably only two pairs of Beach Stone-curlew in the area around Portland Roads, but we found both!*

An excursion to picturesque Chili Beach nearby our accommodation in the afternoon had us scanning for waders on a beautiful white beach which we had pretty much to ourselves! The cool sea breeze blowing the coconut trees above the sandy bay stretching all the way along the coast as far as we could see made us very comfortable while we became acquainted with the local birds. The beach is excellent for a variety of shorebirds and terns - a pair of Bridled Terns were in fact nesting on a small rocky island just off the beach. The tide was low and the birds were correspondingly spread out, but we managed to explore far enough down the beach to have exceptional looks at the strange Beach Stone-curlew, as well as Pied Oystercatcher, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, the Australian endemic Red-capped Plover, Red-necked Stint and Whimbrel. A handful of Bridled Terns were spotted on the rocks just offshore where a few pairs breed each year, but otherwise the ocean seemed quiet. Back at Portland Road we worked most of the late afternoon unsuccessfully for Mangrove Robin, traipsing through the tangled roots and Green Ant swarms with little to show for our efforts! We didn't even hear this species call once during our stay at Portland Roads... Luckily it was not all in vain, as we did locate a fine bower, whose Fawn-breasted occupant was quite skittish and stayed out of sight. We admired his masterpiece, but having already seen this species earlier in the day we left him in peace. A bout of spotlighting after dinner fairly quickly produced the Cape York form of Marbled Frogmouth sitting unusually unobscured above us, and with such early success we spent some time looking for other critters. **A Carpet Python and ??? Legless Lizard** were spotted on the road, while a Giant White-tailed Rat, Cape York Melomys, and Northern Brown Bandicoots appeared on our mammal list.



*The Marbled Frogmouths in Iron Range look quite different to those in New Guinea...*

An early morning drive hoping for a cassowary crossing the road was continuously interrupted by loud and dust-billowing trucks ferrying gravel down to the local roadworks, so we changed our plans and stopped in a small parking area with some forest we had not yet explored. We quickly had a responsive Yellow-billed Kingfisher fly up for us, and had wonderful looks at this unique yellow species endemic to New Guinea and this tiny section of Australia. Some Black-eared Catbirds were calling across the road, and these also proved inquisitive enough that the whole group had quality binocular views, and we bagged a few photos of these diabolically skulky bowerbirds.

Another pitta bounced off the road as we drove out to the mountainous western section of the forest the next morning, finding ourselves up on the Iron Range itself. Here, we had an appointment with our final Cape York endemic target – White-streaked Honeyeater. Endemic to paperbark forest and tropical heathlands of the central peninsula, this beautiful and restricted species is a family favourite for many Australian



birdwatchers, including yours truly! We stopped a few times where the habitat seemed adequate, but even though we couldn't hear any honeyeaters calling, the imposing scenery in this part of the world is remarkable. The volcanic remnants forming Tozer's Gap rise above the plateau, and waterways which are flooded under metres of water in the wet season now just sandy flats with rich vegetation on either side. Brick red and sandy yellow soils with big grey termite mounds rise up out of endless sea of scrubby heath-like vegetation, which wouldn't be out of place in Tasmania, yet is clearly dominating the landscape up here in a tropical climate. We eventually found a creek crossing with some water still flowing through it, and in the flowering trees surrounding the causeway we could immediately hear White-streaked Honeyeaters, vocal as usual. Hornbill Friarbirds were seen flying around, and some Brown-backed Honeyeaters flitted around. Once we heard the calls, our quarry was located quickly, but we worked hard to find one low down for a better view.



*It is a treat to see some of the common New Guinea birds behave so calmly in Australia where there is no hunting pressure. This Yellow-billed Kingfisher was content perching right by the track as we walked past!*



*Wompoo Fruit Doves are certainly the ultimate rainforest pigeon!*

Returning to the cars, we took a short drive back to the forest and went for a walk along the old access road. It was late morning already, but nonetheless this didn't stop multiple Wompoo Fruit Doves perching beautifully in the open for photos, Orange-footed Scrubfowls wandering around like forest chickens, and some more Frill-necked Monarchs from performing low down, crests puffed and everything! Large flocks of recently-arrived Metallic Starlings fed overhead before we continued on. Our fuel stop in Lockhart later on saw us add Eastern Osprey, Australian Swiftlet and Little Tern to the tour list from the beachfront, however little else was in evidence until we checked the airfield, where two Oriental Plovers were scoped up not far over the tiny fence. We had excellent looks at their exceptionally long bills and legs before driving around the fence searching in vain for other birds - not something you can do in most western countries! Back at our favourite stretch of rainforest we had more views of the female Eclectus Parrot at her nest hole, and another Noisy Pitta literally hopped closer and closer until it was standing just about in the middle of the main road in front of us. The small party of Lovely Fairywren here was well appreciated, and a testosterone-fuelled Superb Fruit Dove sat anywhere but hidden in the leaves!



*Lovely Fairywren are much easier to see around Iron Range than in the Cairns region!*

Rising slightly earlier than usual we were on our way to a nice stretch of woodland where Palm Cockatoos have proved abundant in recent years. Some Lemon-bellied Flyrobins and Hornbill Friarbirds started our day off nicely, but Sue stole the show by suddenly realising that two phenomenal Double-eyed Fig Parrots were feeding quietly only a few metres away from us in an open fruiting bush! Easily the best views I have ever had of the *marshalli* Cape York subspecies! We continued into the forest, stopping for a calling Red-cheeked Parrot and then by chance a spectacular Palm Cockatoo was spotted perched off to the side! We additionally saw a flock of ten Palmies in flight, and scoped up a superb display where a male bird was leaning forward and arching his wings like a circus performer! It is usually hard to get proper looks at this extremely flighty parrot, but we were all happy today! On the way out, a male Red-cheeked Parrot perched up near a female in her nest hole was also appreciated, and a female Little Bronze Cuckoo was identified as the *Gould's* variety. Spending the rest of the morning back in the rainforest trying for some remaining species, all we managed to add was Grey Whistler, and a pair of Brown Cuckoo-Doves.





*Cape York also harbours several restricted subspecies, of which this Double-eyed Fig Parrot is a good example!*



*Another species which performs so much better in Australia than New Guinea – the magnificent Palm Cockatoo!*



While the leader went to tame his Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, the rest of the team sat on the balcony of our open-air accommodation in Portland Roads, enjoying the view out to sea while watching the birds (and butterflies) come and go from a variety of flowering and fruiting trees below the balcony. Common garden birds of our little hideaway included Varied Honeyeater, Rose-crowned Fruit Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove, Dusky Myzomela, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Mistletoebird, Olive-backed Sunbird (nesting above one of the rooms), Varied Triller, Australasian Figbird and Green Oriole. We even had a nesting pair of Double-eyed Fig Parrots which were seen on occasion entering and exiting their chewed-out hole at eye-level in a dead tree, and even a Beach Stone-curlew was spotted on the mudflats as we were preparing to leave on afternoon! What a great place to stay!



*Savouring the view out to sea from our balcony at Portland Roads was always refreshing! (Dave Williamson)*



*Two Large-tailed Nightjars were spotted by the roadside near Portland Roads on one of our many spotlighting trips!*





*Raging fires have cleaned out my usual Fawn-breasted Bowerbird pads one by one, so I had to find a new one this year!*

The afternoon saw us trying yet another section of rainforest where finally a party of Yellow-legged Flyrobins appeared, unusually low down for this canopy-loving species! We had excellent looks at the bright yellow bills and legs on these lovely robins which are only irregularly recorded on our New Guinea tours, but are much more of a sure bet in Australia! Nearby some Spectacled Monarchs appeared by the track, and some more Tropical Scrubwrens were watched feeding as we listened to the distant advertisement drumming of a Palm Cockatoo, beating a dead tree with a stick somewhere beyond the treeline! Our second bout of spotlighting gave us a Large-tailed Nightjar by the road, views of the uncommon Common Spotted Cuscus, another Carpet Python, and of course who could forget the aptly named and suitably plain Water Frog!

Our last full day in Iron Range was spent hoping for two uncommon migrants which did not seem to have arrived yet – Black-winged Monarch and Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo. Not a sniff of either, but some nice looks at Pacific Emerald Dove, White-faced Robin and Rufous Fantails were notable. Over on the Lockhart beachfront a school of fish was stirring up some activity, and a large feeding flock of terns contained the usual Lesser Crested and Bridled, but also Black Noddies and two Lesser Frigatebirds. On the shore, our first Ruddy Turnstones mixed with Red-necked Stints. Not much else was going on otherwise, so we bid the resident Silver Gulls farewell and returned to the forest. It was quite warm now and the birds were silent during our time sitting around (you can indeed sit down in Iron Range, since the complete absence of rain for most of the year means that leeches cannot survive here), but an Azure Kingfisher was found by the creek and Dave enjoyed himself chasing more butterflies around! Target birds were indeed becoming thin on the ground! We returned to Chili Beach later on and found ourselves an Asian *affinis* Gull-billed Tern, and some Sanderling. Spotlighting in the forest was snake focused, as we all wanted to see the sublime Green Python, however the weather may have still been a little cool this year for that one. We did however find a huge Black-headed Python, two Brown-headed Snakes, another Carpet Python, one each of White-lipped Tree Frog and Green Tree Frog, plus a cute little Short-beaked Echidna!





*The Cape York endemic White-streaked Honeyeater is one of our biggest targets on this tour near Iron Range!*

Some final trawling for those two pesky migrants turned up a blank as we began our long journey south the next morning, but boy did our spirits get lifted when a pair of gorgeous Palm Cockatoos came and landed above us on a dead branch in the sunlight! Phwoar! A big feeding group of Tropical Scrubwrens were seen nearby, and another Gould's Little Bronze Cuckoo was noted before we had a final view of White-streaked Honeyeater and returned to Lotusbird Lodge, stopping only for petrol, one or two new butterflies, and a Black-breasted Buzzard along the way. Our final buttonquail vigil out on the Nifold Plains in the evening was a great success for the leader who voluntarily ventured out into the chigger-infested grass and found no less than seven quail with deck views of two – one male Red-chested Buttonquail, and one male Red-backed Buttonquail. The latter bird stayed just long enough for everyone to wander over from the road and have quick views as it retreated into the thick vegetation, but probably more exciting for the participants was an Eastern Grass Owl which had hovered above them in response to some light squeaking while I had been out in the grass! Also seen along the road was a Brown Tree Snake and a number of dark Common Keelbacks (noteworthy as being one of the few species in Australia capable of consuming Cane Toads without harm).



*The grasslands of Lakefield held a good number of Red-backed Buttonquail this year – they show best at night!*



Making our way the next day down to Cairns we revisited our favourite dirt track and quickly tracked down a Brown Treecreeper of the Cape York race (which was once its own species, Black Treecreeper), and had an amazing Apostlebird experience with a whole family group flying in and carrying on all around us! There were thirteen birds in total, so one of them must have been Jesus... Continuing to the coast a quick stop at the reliable Crimson Finch site on Redford Road north of Cairns produced the goods, with some lovely male birds feeding with a couple of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins. The Rufous Owl roost was still deserted, but dodging some heavy we managed to connect with the smart Mangrove Robin at the esplanade mangroves. Very wheatear-esque in the tail, as the scientific name suggests! Some nice waders feeding in the mud included endangered Great Knot and Far Eastern Curlew, plus Sharp-tailed Sandpipers galore, and a few Pied Oystercatchers. Some further owl searching after dinner did not succeed, but our luck was being saved for tomorrow...



*Our route inland from Cairns took us past one of the prime Southern Cassowary stakeouts, so we had to drop in!*

Some were apprehensive about our early start, but such thoughts quickly abated when we reached Etty Bay at dawn, and an audible gasp was heard as the car rounded a corner to reveal a stonking male Southern Cassowary standing in the middle of the road with his young chick! We sat quietly with our cameras out as they made their way down towards us and passed by only a few metres away, giving tremendous looks at those dinosaur claws and brilliant neck wattles! We watched them for a while before the male grunted, turned to the left, and walked into the forest with chick in tow. They disappeared as soon as they stepped into the leaves! At the beach itself the resident female bird with her magnificent casque was walking around searching for any fruit which had fallen overnight from the foreshore trees – we had to pull ourselves away eventually! The drive to Winton was fairly long, but we saw enough birds that the mood in the cars was always cheerful, and the kilometres ticked down quickly! Our lunch stop in Pentland proved very birdy with our first Spotted Bowerbirds seen well at the caravan park (mixed in with a few Great Bowerbirds which are also here), and some Noisy Friarbirds were obvious in the surrounding trees.

Heading inland further still we passed hundreds of kilometres of open grassy plains which held a few Emus (not too shabby, picking up Australia's second *ratite* in the same day!), plus many Australian Pratincoles, Brown Songlarks, Horsfield's Bushlarks, some distant Cockatiels and Budgerigars. Just before reaching town Dave requests that we turn around to check out the funny looking grey raptor sitting on a telegraph

pole. The cocky leader mocked Dave in jest as the car was reversed, but then exclaimed "It bloody IS a Grey Falcon!!!" Sitting in the beautiful afternoon light low down on the power pole beside the road was an exquisite adult Grey Falcon! The reliable sites for this phantom of the outback are south of town, and the nests are usually fairly high up, so this was fantastic! We were so close that in the scope we could see Budgerigar feathers stuck to her talons! Quickly checking in and having a look at the tame Brolgas eating dinner on the front lawn of our hotel, we spent the final minutes of daylight at the sewage works where hundreds of Plum-headed Finches, Black-tailed Nativehen and Baillon's Crake performed, amongst two Freckled Ducks, Australasian Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Grey Teal, more Pink-eared Ducks and Hardheads. An unidentified snipe got away from us, but otherwise the shoreline held Australasian Swamphen, Black-tailed Nativehen, Red-kneed Dotterel and Black-fronted Dotterel.



*Australia's other big bird, the Emu, was regularly observed during our loop through Queensland's Channel Country!*



*We observed a number of Brolga throughout the tour, but a habituated family living on the streets of Winton provided the best photo opportunities. The two adults have been around for years, but this time they had two young birds with them!*



Winton is the dinosaur capital of Australia, emphasised by the colourful rubbish bins scattered around town. We were itching to get out and find some of their living relatives on our first morning, and as such were positioned at the crack of dawn in some stony jump-ups searching for the restricted Chestnut-breasted Quailthrush. This beautiful bird was quite common in our vicinity, but getting a view proved very tricky in the strong wind which was accompanying us today! Eventually a gorgeous male popped into view through a gap in some vegetation and we were all satisfied, moving on to look at some Little Woodswallows, Varied Sittellas, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters. The conditions were making things difficult, so we relocated to a gorge where multiple adorable Australian Owlet-nightjars were flushed up into full view as we walked along, seeing Grey-headed Honeyeaters, Black-chinned Honeyeaters (here of the Golden-backed form), a smart pair of Hooded Robins, and some Inland Thornbills. To top it off, as we crested a ridge a party of Spinifex Pigeons appeared, and one bird was more intent on displaying to his girl than on running away from us! As we headed back to town, we managed to find some roadside Crimson Chats including a few stunning males in full plumage, and some Masked Woodswallows mixed in with the regular Black-faced Woodswallows. One small flock of Cockatiels perched out the car window in full view, while three Inland Dotterels were spotted easily - made obvious by the one uncamouflaged bird standing on a cowpat!

We revisited to sewage works in town and had more views of the species from our evening vigil, plus Spotted Bowerbirds, Little Grassbirds, Australian Reed Warblers, and our second chat of the morning – some sublime Orange Chats, also in breeding colours! A party of White-winged Fairywren were also marvelled at (the male puffing up his white wings in display truly was a sight to behold!), but the unidentified snipe proved elusive once again.



*No wader enthusiast can leave Australia without connecting with the superb Inland Dotterel in the remote central deserts!*





*We were treated to a display by this male Spinifex Pigeon near Bladensburg – what a stunner!*



*Possibly the best place for Australian Owlet-nightjar is a small creekline near Winton. We flushed four roosting birds here!*



Our afternoon plans were interrupted by a rude thunderstorm which dropped splattering rain on us for a few hours, but some quick rescheduling saw us visit the spinifex and mulga country around Lark Quarry Conservation Park - conserved mainly for the fossilised dinosaur footprints, but superb for seeing their living relatives! As we pulled up the young Grey Falcons sitting at their nest on the radio tower hardly warranted a second glance after our sighting yesterday (but we still had a look in the scope of course) before we began our first round of spinifex bashing. Fairly soon we came upon one of our targets – the diminutive Rufous-crowned Emuwren. The male showed off his blue throat and brilliant cap while sneaking around through the spinifex. Nearby, a Spinifexbird appeared and was seen very well before it disappeared into some thick clumps of impenetrable spines, but the calling Rusty Grasswrens remained essentially unseen, keeping low to avoid the rain... Our spirits were lifted by a well-showing Crested Bellbird, and as the afternoon wore on finally a flock of Hall's Babblers were located in the nearby mulga woodland - the last of the family for some of our intrepid Birdquesters! A mulga specialty, this is the most restricted of the babblers with a tendency to be very secretive, even when you can hear them babbling away nearby. We followed the group for a while, and indeed this time had some intimate encounters as they came to check us out. The wind eventually died down to reasonable levels, and not long after we re-entered the spinifex a single Rusty Grasswren was spotted quietly hopping towards us, before he sat up on a dead branch and started to sing in the evening light. Lovely stuff! While still treated as a subspecies of Striated Grasswren in IOC, this split is sure to be ratified fairly soon. We ended the day staking out a waterhole vaguely hoping for Bourke's Parrots, but only Common Bronzewing came in to drink today.

Back at the quailthrush site in the morning, some strategic taping had first the female wander in and circle us, before the male suddenly appeared, fluttering in and landing in full view. We had a few seconds to enjoy the full-frontal showing as the bird showing off his magnificent chestnut band before he ran left and kept out of sight for the remainder of our stay. A Red-capped Robin was adored after the quailthrush had moved on, with this splendid male showing off on some dead sticks, however he was overshadowed by a particularly vibrant Splendid Fairywren which also performed on some open branches right before our eyes. A distant Western Gerygone was only heard before we moved on to some flowering trees, where Black Honeyeaters were abundant, mixed in with our first Rufous-throated Honeyeaters and some more Masked Woodswallows. Another big flock of Crimson Chats were hanging around here, and two Red-browed Pardalotes flitted about in a River Red Gum. We revisited the sewage works and had much of the same as previously, and sadly a quickly disappearing dark black falcon was a bit too distant to be sure of the alleged identification.



*No evidence of Night Parrots this year, but a cute marsupial Stripe-faced Dunnart on the return journey was of interest!*

Our evening session today had us trying something different. The recent discovery of a Night Parrot population 200km south of Winton has slowly been providing new information on how to search for them, and while the sites where they have been found so far are all strictly off-limits, this Birdquest leader has spent lots of time working on potential habitat models with GIS skills learned in his now irrelevant university degree. Our little adventure saw us making our way across some remote backroads to the largest and best patch of habitat which had been identified, and things looked good when we pulled up. Undisturbed unburnt spinifex adjacent to good feeding habitat in a place which nobody had looked before. Sadly we listened intently during the main calling period following sunset and heard not a single peep! Unsurprising really, but we had to try! It was not all in vain however, as we had some brilliant looks at Spotted Nightjar on the deck as we made our way back to Winton, along with a cute Stripe-faced Dunnart and an unidentified hopping mouse.



*We were pleased to find a large drinking congregation of Painted Finch in the Diamantina region on one scorching hot day!*

Heading deep into the Channel Country was on our agenda today, well and truly beyond the black stump. The region is named for the large streams which funnel water into Lake Eyre, hundreds of kilometres to the south, after periods of prolonged and heavy rain. We passed within ten kilometres of the roosting Night Parrots in restricted Pullen Pullen Reserve on our drive, and not long afterwards came upon yet more Grey Falcons, with this recently fledged pair of birds at their nest bringing our grey ghost tally up to nine! Pretty ridiculous how many birds were around this year when many people have been to arid Australia and checked dozens and dozens of radio towers over many years without success (people like Sue and Dave!). The active bore on the north side of Diamantina was pumping plenty water, and pumping with plenty of delightfully coloured Painted Finches! We drove slowly along the roads finding big flocks of Cockatiels, and Zebra Finches, but everything appeared to be in post-breeding mode, so little else was in evidence. We arrived in Boulia later that day - Australia's alien hotspot, and home of the mysterious min min light. Despite this, our keen birding eyes didn't pick out anything unusual in the sky, aside from hundreds of Galahs coming to roost in town. Some evening birding along the river provided us with some excellent looks at Budgerigar, a father Emu with his chicks, Rufous Songlarks, and, best of all, the localised Cloncurry form of Australian Ringneck. An early night followed as tomorrow was a big day.





*Baby Emus following da down to the watering hole near Boulia!*



*Last time I visited Boulia, swarms of Budgerigars were roosting in the town. This year, thousands of Galahs descended every night in huge flocks, adorning the powerlines and trees all down the main street!*

Our ambitious plan decreed that we loop hundreds of kilometres out into the middle of nowhere, and return in time for dinner. The reason for this was to cover as much ground as possible in the remote Channel Country to maximise our chance at various, thinly-spread targets, but also to explore a tract of Australia



which very few birders ever visit. We succeeded on both counts, and by the end of the day, a few beers certainly went down a treat. Starting pre-dawn, we were out on the plains of Coorabulka Station as the sun rose. Covering an area of over 6000km<sup>2</sup>, this working cattle station (run by about eight people) is bigger than the UK county of Norfolk! Almost entirely flat, the whole area becomes a floodplain following periods of heavy rain, with small drainage ditches channeling water through to the Diamantina River, and subsequently into Lake Eyre to the south west.

We first focused on finding a rather special honeyeater which inhabits the usually dry and desolate rocky gibber plains of central Australia. Often perching on large stones as a lookout post, they can be surprisingly hard to spot, being very well camouflaged when facing away. Luckily, they like to sit on roads, and so it didn't take long before a flash of yellow alerted us to a pair of lovely Gibberbirds which allowed quite a close approach, pausing on rocks long enough to even get scope views of this attractive chat, which in the flesh definitely gives it's more vibrantly coloured cousins a run for their money.



*Elegant Australian Pratincoles are quite common in the Channel Country!*

The Diamantina floodplain used to hold one of the highest densities of breeding Letter-winged Kites in the whole of Australia, and in good years there would be huge colonies with dozens of pairs breeding up before dispersing in the following years of drought. Their remote range combined with the natural boom and bust cycles regulating the population destined the serious decline of this beautiful bird to remain unnoticed for years. Until earlier in 2018, almost none had been recorded flocking in the Channel Country for a decade. Fortuitously, a small group had been found earlier in the year on one of the creeklines running through Coorabulka (whether they bred here during the March rains or not is uncertain), but the birds had not been seen in over a month. We dutifully scanned the trees as we followed the channel, and were so intently looking through our binoculars that only Sue noticed the fifteen kites which suddenly burst out of a tree in front of us! Luckily this beautiful raptor is not particularly shy, and they all circled back to land delicately in the low foliage nearby. What an unexpected treat this was, but bittersweet in that there many now only be a few hundred individuals left in the world. None of the juvenile birds reported earlier in the year were present.





*Once a stronghold for the endangered Letter-winged Kite, sightings like this are exceedingly rare nowadays in Queensland.*

Continuing through the plains we struggled to find much else. A few more Gibberbirds, Brolgas, Inland Dotterels and a Brown Falcon were noted, but otherwise the birds had moved on. Some Australian Pratincoles were quite showy, but we were most excited by a small flock of Little Crows at a carcass which showed well while making their distinctive call for ID purposes. Heading out of Coorabulka, we approached the heart of the Channel Country. The flat plains became rockier, before big rolling red sand dunes started to appear. We were well and truly *out the back* now! Two exquisite White-backed Swallows were nesting in the culvert as we crested one such dune, and we had some excellent looks at these beautiful birds swooping back and forth. Another Emu and one of the remotest dunnies in Australia were admired before we detoured south to visit the Eyre Creek crossing at Lake Machattie. There were still some nice puddles lying around here which held things like the bizarre Musk Duck, Maned Duck, Nankeen Night Heron, Australian Pied Cormorant, Great Cormorant, Common Greenshank and more Pink-eared Ducks. We ate out lunch while Zebra Finches swirled around us searching for shade in the midday heat. Bedourie petrol station was closed for some unknown reason, so the promise of an ice cream was withdrawn (luckily we still had plenty of fuel to return to Boulia!). The small ponds in between a pair of nearby sand dunes kept us happy however, hosting multiple Red-necked Avocets, and some more White-backed Swallows. We continued back to Boulia watching the roadside and any bodies of water carefully for extra birds, but this return leg was very quiet indeed.

Journeying north towards Mount Isa the following morning the roadside was littered with huge flocks of Galahs and dozens of Wedge-tailed Eagles feeding on Red Kangaroo carcasses (plenty of live ones were also seen of course). The major highlight was yet to come however, as we were finally extremely fortunate to score a family of rare and elusive Ground Cuckooshrikes! Scanning carefully and diligently pays off eventually.





*We were accompanied by Zebra Finches for the entirety of our time travelling through the arid zone!*

Well before arriving at the unremarkable mining town in the middle of nowhere, we could see the colossal processing towers for the mine with smoke billowing out from them. It seems like an unlikely place to find birds, however away from the town itself there is some excellent arid-zone habitat, filled with gum trees, spinifex, rocky outcrops and of course, birds! The introduced Indian Peafowl at a park in Mount Isa provided some entertainment for the avid Australian listers while we were eating lunch, but the localised Purple-necked Rock Wallaby and some Yellow-throated Miners felt a bit less plastic. We also got to grips with Australia's smallest bird, the diminutive yellow Weebill. Our afternoon session started off slow in the 38°C heat with only a few Grey-fronted Honeyeaters and Painted Finches seen, but after an ice cream freshened us up we quickly found two pairs of the restricted Kalkadoon Grasswren on some rocky slopes near town. We watched as these cute birds bounded along between clumps of spinifex much faster than we could ever navigate the prickly spines! Luckily from a high point we could see them moving around and going about their business without having to follow them off-track.

Our grasswren saga continued the following morning as we drove up the famous McNamara Road, heading to the special Birdquest pull-in for Carpentarian Grasswren. I had been realistically conditioning the group, explaining how on some of my previous attempts it had taken over 9 hours to get satisfactory views of what is often regarded as Australia's toughest and sneakiest bird. Unfortunately my credibility took a hit when in just 30 minutes everyone had crippling views of a stunning group of Carpentarian Grasswren, with the female's chestnut flanks and white chest delicately blending into rufous-brown wings with a cocked tail, bouncing around on termite mounds between the spinifex making sure to give everyone the best views they could ask for. Two males showed well soon after with their distinct orange wash also respected. Surely one of the best looking grasswrens! They slowly moved towards us feeding and calling, often sitting up in full view and running along the ground like little mice. What a magical encounter, my best ever with this elusive species! We found some Black-tailed Treecreepers nearby which posed well, and some Paperbark Flycatchers zitted around as we returned to Mount Isa.



Back on the east of Lake Moondarra, we checked all the usual finch drinking pools to find that most were dry, with one having lost the last of its water overnight (I had topped it up with our spare water the day before, but clearly this was not enough)! One culvert had a small pool remaining which was being visited by a few birds, so we sat down and waited. Spinifex Pigeons, Rufous-throated Honeyeaters and Grey-fronted Honeyeaters kept visiting, but few seed-eaters aside from Double-barred Finches. Exploring the eastern flats of the lake saw us having secondary viewings of many waterfowl species, but nothing substantially different to the previous days. We returned to the waterhole after a while, and immediately on exiting the car heard some Long-tailed Finches calling above us. We waited quietly and they soon came down to drink and feed around the edge of the pond, showing their little red bills and black wispy tails fantastically!



*Grey-fronted Honeyeaters make themselves fairly obvious in the rocky country around Mount Isa!*

Checking out the western shore of Lake Moondarra in the afternoon proved to be a great choice, as the undeveloped and pristine grassy flats which meld into the shallow bay were booming, and as we drove around the fringes new species popped up all over the place. One of the first birds we saw while driving across the grassy area towards the water was Yellow Chat! About twenty of these rare lemon coloured honeyeaters flushed up onto a log and gave fantastic views as they continued feeding after settling down. While this species has been known to occur around Mount Isa and the Channel Country, they have been predominately absent for decades – apparently the last confirmed record anywhere near Mount Isa was 40 years ago, so this was an exceptional sighting. Focusing our attention on the multitude of waders, we failed to pick out any particular rarities, but a flock of thirty Oriental Plovers which showed extremely well and hundreds of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers mixed with Red-capped Plovers, Red-necked Stints, Marsh Sandpipers, one Common Greenshank and some Black-tailed Godwits kept us busy. Waterfowl were abundant, with Brolgas, Grey Teal, literally thousands of Eurasian Coot, one sneaky Freckled Duck, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead and Australian Pelicans all putting on a show. Red-necked Avocets fed in the shallows as Caspian Terns flew overhead, while many Australian Pipits and Australian Pratincoles were dotted throughout the grass, and some Freshwater Crocodiles kept a watchful eye on us from the water. As



the sun set we optimistically did some loops through town hoping to find some Varied Lorikeets perched (all had been flyovers up until now). Somehow our luck held, and on a suburban street, we had a small flock appear in front of the vehicle, bank, and land in a low eucalyptus tree where we could admire them at length! What a great end to the day!



*Oriental Plovers had an unusual irruption to the east of Australia this season, and we saw a couple of groups!*



*We had to work hard for Pictorella Mannikin this year (pictured with Crimson Chats and a Zebra Finch), but it paid off!*





*We tracked down some splendid Varied Lorikeets in a flowering tree on transit through Cloncurry!*

Arriving fairly early at Chinaman Creek Dam near Cloncurry, we set our sights on the last key species for us in the region – Pictorella Mannikin. It took us a while, sifting through feeding flocks of Crimson Chats and drinking congregations of honeyeaters scattered along the shoreline, but after waiting at a suitable watering point for half an hour a small flock of superb Pictorella Mannikins came down amongst the Zebra Finches, showing excellently. Initially there were only juveniles (as is often the case with this species), but patience paid off as a full-plumaged adult appeared in our binoculars and there were smiles all round as we admired his black face and speckled breast pattern. We also lucked across a small group of Yellow-billed Spoonbills,



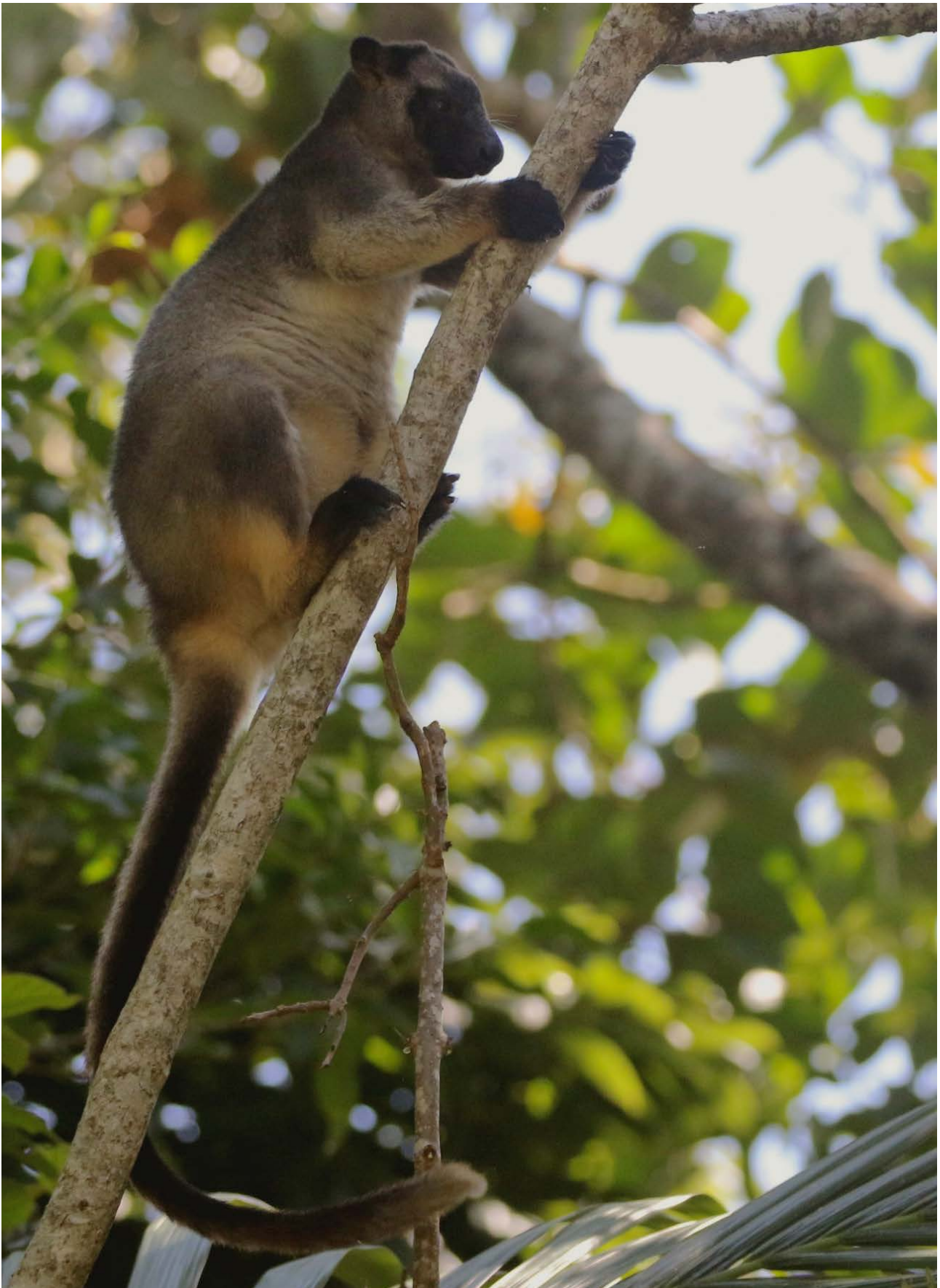
which we had been missing elsewhere and desperately wanted to catch up with. In the nearby town we had some more Varied Lorikeets feeding over our heads, even offering suitable photographic opportunities this time. Commencing the drive back east towards Cairns a Black Falcon was examined perched through the scope, giving frame-filling views of the subtle features which distinguish the species from dark morph Brown Falcons, which we had already seen plenty of! We passed through some of Australia's other premiere dinosaur towns complete with life-sized replicas lining the highway before arriving in Hughenden where we were to spend the night. Our quick spotlighting jaunt to Porcupine Gorge produced some absolutely magical encounters with the tiny and endearing but sadly declining Rufous Bettong bouncing along the road, as well as some gorgeous yet unafraid Spectacled Hare-wallaby, plus another Short-beaked Echidna. We couldn't find any live Little Buttonquail in the vicinity of a deceased individual spotted on the side of the road, but a lovely look at Eastern Barn Owl was welcome.

Our final big drive of the tour was undertaken the next day as we returned to Cairns for the end of the tour, but a few good species broke up the journey. Some southern blue-eyed Squatter Pigeons and Pale-headed Rosellas were admired on the roadside north of Hughenden before our only Banded Lapwing of the trip was almost run over as we crested a hill to see it standing in the middle of the track! Luckily I avoided it with centimetres to spare and we enjoyed watching the bird continue feeding next to the road unconcernedly! After a final visit to one of Australia's famous pie shops we agreed that we would continue Macropodquest after our success last night, with most of the group having dipped Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo on previous visits to the region. Suffice to say as we pulled up at the usual reliable spot for this crazy kangaroo, one was spotted sitting out in the open above the road! We proceeded to watch him slide down the trunk he was on like a fireman pole before switching trees and munching on some tasty leaves. A great animal indeed! Back in Cairns we focused on trying to find a Rufous Owl by checking dozens of different roosting areas, but added only White-throated Needletail and Curlew Sandpiper from the esplanade before our remarkable tour came to an end.



*No other bird is so reminiscent of the dinosaurs than a young Southern Cassowary!*





*With a little spare time we managed to squeeze in, we were able to detour for this lovely Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo which some participants had missed on previous trips to Cairns!*



The group were clearly all very happy, having been able to explore such a wonderful and diverse part of Australia so far off the beaten track, cleaning up on some of the most remote and special birds this outstanding country has to offer in the process. I must once again thank my lovely clients who helped make this tour so successful and enjoyable, all of whom I look forward to seeing again someday!

#### **BIRD OF THE TOUR (AS VOTED FOR BY THE GROUP)**

1. Letter-winged Kite
2. Southern Cassowary
- = 3. Grey Falcon
- = 3. Golden-shouldered Parrot
5. Carpentarian Grasswren

Rufous Bettong was voted for almost unanimously as mammal of the tour (sorry Sue!)



*The cute Rufous Bettong which we found near Hughenden during a final spotlighting vigil!*



## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRD SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Total of bird species recorded: 318

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

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

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

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

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

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from Threatened Birds of the World, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

**Southern Cassowary** ◊ **Casuarius casuarius** Male and chick plus adult female near Mission Beach  
**Emu** ◊ **Dromaius novaehollandiae** Numerous roadside birds west of Hughenden during our loop inland  
**Magpie Goose** ◊ **Anseranas semipalmata** Hundreds behind Lotusbird Lodge in the lagoon  
**Plumed Whistling Duck** ◊ **Dendrocygna eytoni** Small numbers on the lagoon behind Lotusbird Lodge  
**Wandering Whistling Duck** **Dendrocygna arcuate** Good numbers on the lagoon behind Lotusbird Lodge daily  
**Black Swan** ◊ **Cygnus atratus** Some noted on Lake Moondarra  
**Freckled Duck** ◊ **Stictonetta naevosa** Two at the Winton STW, and one on Lake Moondarra  
**Raja Shelduck (Radjah S)** ◊ **Tadorna radjah** Several small groups seen at various ponds on Cape York  
**Pink-eared Duck** ◊ **Malacorhynchus membranaceus** Many around this year throughout the tou  
**Maned Duck (Australian Wood D)** ◊ **Chenonetta jubata** Flock at Cuttaburra Crossing south of Bedourie  
**Green Pygmy Goose** ◊ **Nettapus pulchellus** Good numbers behind Lotusbird Lodge, and some in Lakefield  
**Pacific Black Duck** **Anas superciliosa** Noted multiple times throughout the tour at various wetlands  
**Grey Teal** **Anas gracilis** Low numbers of this common inland duck due to rainfall, but seen multiple times  
**Hardhead** ◊ **Aythya australis** Good numbers at Winton STW, and various small dams in the Channel Country  
**Musk Duck** ◊ **Biziura lobate** Single bird on the Eyre Creek south of Bedourie  
**Australian Brushturkey** ◊ **Alectura lathami** Many tame birds of the purple-collared race were seen in the north  
**Orange-footed Scrubfowl** **Megapodius reinwardt** Numerous in Iron Range, observed well at close range  
**Indian Peafowl (introduced)** **Pavo cristatus** Some self-sustaining birds by Australian rules at Lake Moondarra  
**Australasian Grebe** **Tachybaptus novaehollandiae** A common bird seen at most waterholes during the tour  
**Hoary-headed Grebe** ◊ **Poliocephalus poliocephalus** Quite regular this year on the inland waterbodies  
**Black-necked Stork** ◊ **Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus** Some lovely looks at the resident pair at Lotusbird Lodge  
**Australian White Ibis** **Threskiornis moluccus** A regularly observed bird at wetlands throughout the tour  
**Straw-necked Ibis** ◊ **Threskiornis spinicollis** Best seen in the vicinity of Cairns, but regular  
**Glossy Ibis** **Plegadis falcinellus** Seen feeding on the western shore of Lake Moondarra and at Lotusbird  
**Royal Spoonbill** ◊ **Platalea regia** Good numbers noted regularly at various waterholes  
**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** ◊ **Platalea flavipes** Almost missed, but one at Cloncurry  
**Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous N H)** **Nycticorax caledonicus** Some at night behind Lotusbird Lodge  
**Striated Heron (Mangrove H)** **Butorides striata** One flying past at the Cairns Esplanade  
**Eastern Cattle Egret** **Bubulcus coromandus** A common roadside bird throughout the tour  
**White-necked Heron (Pacific H)** ◊ **Ardea pacifica** Regular in the flooded interior, seen regularly  
**Great Egret** **Ardea alba** Regularly observed in small numbers throughout  
**Intermediate Egret** ◊ **Egretta inermia** Regular sightings of this potential split "Plumed Egret"  
**Pied Heron** ◊ **Egretta picata** Surprisingly common this year around Lakefield and Lockhart  
**White-faced Heron** **Egretta novaehollandiae** A handful during our inland loop  
**Little Egret** **Egretta garzetta** Singles seen a handful of times throughout  
**Pacific Reef Heron (Eastern R E)** **Egretta sacra** Two birds seen at Chili Beach



**Australian Pelican** ♦ **Pelecanus conspicillatus** Another common waterbird this year, big numbers at Lotusbird

**Lesser Frigatebird** **Fregata ariel** Two individual harassing terns off Lockhart River one day

**Little Pied Cormorant** **Microcarbo melanoleucos** Common at waterholes in the arid zone

**Little Black Cormorant** **Phalacrocorax sulcirostris** Common at waterholes in the arid zone

**Australian Pied Cormorant (Pied C)** ♦ **Phalacrocorax varius** A few on Lake Moondarra and Chinaman Creek

**Great Cormorant** **Phalacrocorax carbo** One on Lake Moondarra, a few at Lake Corella, and on Eyre Creek

**Australasian Darter (Australian D)** ♦ **Anhinga novaehollandiae** A regular bird on inland waterholes

**Eastern Osprey** **Pandion cristatus** One at nest near Lockhart River

**Black-shouldered Kite (Australian K)** ♦ **Elanus axillaris** Singles seen in a few places

**Letter-winged Kite** ♦ **Elanus scriptus** Small flock located near a breeding site on Coorabulka Station

**Black-breasted Buzzard** ♦ **Hamirostra melanosternon** Just one on our last day in Musgrave over the road

**Pacific Baza** **Aviceda subcristata** Noted near Lakefield and near Portland

**Little Eagle** ♦ **Hieraaetus morphnoides** Singles around Winton and Mount Isa

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** ♦ **Aquila audax** Noted regularly - an astounding 10 seen roadside on one memorable drive

**Brown Goshawk** **Accipiter fasciatus** Singles noted on multiple occasions throughout the tour

**Spotted Harrier** ♦ **Circus assimilis** Quite regular in the Mitchell Grass Downs near Hughenden

**Black Kite** **Milvus migrans** Common, abundant, in high numbers, prolific, and regularly encountered

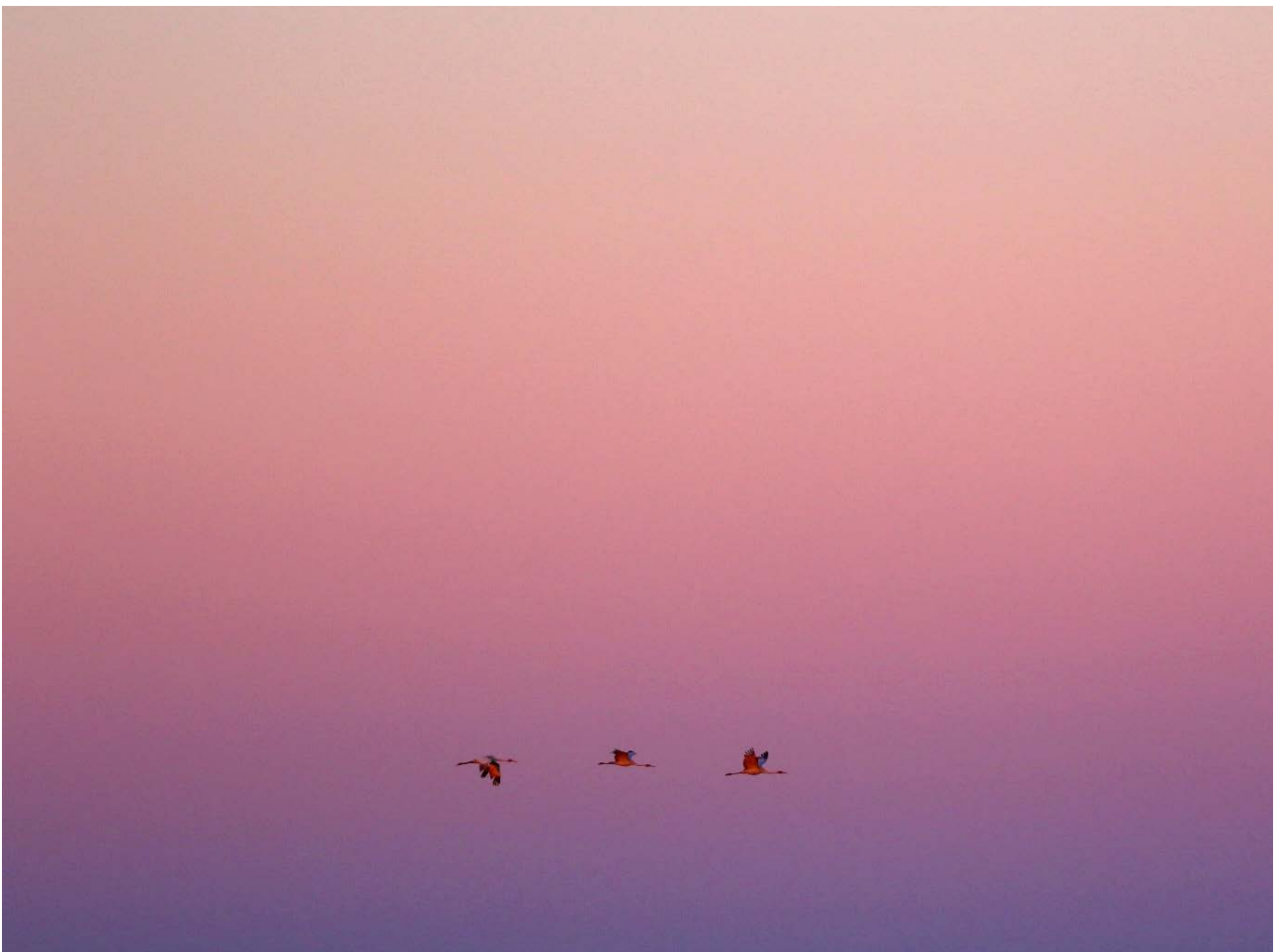
**Whistling Kite** **Haliastur sphenurus** Not quite as abundant as Black Kites, but close to it! Seen everywhere

**Brahminy Kite** **Haliaastur indus** Singles during our time up on Cape York

**White-bellied Sea Eagle** **Haliaeetus leucogaster** Adult at Annie River, and perched next to Lake Moondarra

**Australian Bustard** ♦ **Ardeotis australis** Multiple birds seen on Cape York, and good numbers inland

**Baillon's Crake** **Porzana pusilla** Some seen at the Winton STW



*Family of Brolgas passing by at dawn out on Coorabulka Station.*

**Australasian Swamphen** ♦ **(Australian S) Porphyrio melanotus** A handful inland, and around Cairns

**Dusky Moorhen** **Gallinula tenebrosa** Small numbers, specifically at Winton STW

**Black-tailed Nativehen** ♦ *Tribonyx ventralis* Some at the Winton Sewage Treatment Works running around  
**Eurasian Coot (Common C)** *Fulica atra* Abundant on all inland water bodies, thousands at Lake Moondarra  
**Brolga** ♦ *Grus rubicunda* Abundant on Cape York at multiple sites, and seen many times on the inland loop  
**Red-backed Buttonquail** *Turnix maculosus* Some flushed and two on the deck whilst spotlighting in Lakefield  
**Red-chested Buttonquail** ♦ *Turnix pyrrhorostris* One flushed in Lakefield, and also one LO while spotlighting  
**Bush Stone-curlew (B Thick-knee)** ♦ *Burhinus grallarius* Seen by all during our time in Cairns  
**Beach Stone-curlew (B Thick-knee)** ♦ *Esacus magnirostris* One pair seen excellently on Chili Beach  
**Pied Oystercatcher (Australian P O)** ♦ *Haematopus longirostris* Some seen well on Chili Beach  
**Pied Stilt (White-headed S)** *Himantopus leucocephalus* Regular inland at waterholes and sewage works  
**Red-necked Avocet** ♦ *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* Small numbers near Bedourie and at Mount Isa  
**Banded Lapwing** ♦ *Vanellus tricolor* One on the road north of Hughenden on our last full tour day  
**Masked Lapwing** *Vanellus miles* The distinctive northern race noted regularly throughout the tour  
**Red-kneed Dotterel** ♦ *Erythronyx cinctus* Noted quite regularly throughout – a good breeding year  
**Inland Dotterel** ♦ *Peltohyas australis* Many groups seen at Winton, Boulia, and Bedourie  
**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* Small numbers of Chili Beach  
**Red-capped Plover** ♦ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Some at Chili Beach, dozens at Lake Moondarra  
**Lesser Sand Plover (Mongolian S P)** *Charadrius [atrifrons] mongolus* A couple on Chili Beach  
**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Similar numbers mixed in with the Lesser Sand Plovers  
**Oriental Plover** ♦ *Charadrius veredus* One huge group of birds at Lake Moondarra was excellent to see  
**Black-fronted Dotterel (B-f Plover)** ♦ *Elseyonis melanops* Noted in Lakefield, numerous in Channel Country  
**Comb-crested Jacana** ♦ *Irediparra gallinacea* Naturally, lots and lots of 'lotusbirds' at Lotusbird Lodge  
**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Noted around Portland Roads and Chili Beach  
**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* One on the Cairns Esplanade  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Some on the Cairns Esplanade  
**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* Three on the shore of Lake Moondarra  
**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* Some on the beach near Lockhart River  
**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* Seen on the Cairns Esplanade one afternoon  
**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Hundreds at Cairns and at Lake Moondarra  
**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* One on our last morning in Cairns  
**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* Some near Lockhart, and at Lake Moondarra  
**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Small group found down Chili Beach near Portland  
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Multiple observations of single birds in Lakefield and around Lockhart  
**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Tringa brevipes* Handful on Chili Beach and at Cairns  
**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Some on the western flats of Lake Moondarra  
**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Noted at Lake Moondarra  
**Australian Pratincole** ♦ *Stiltia isabellae* Dozens seen most days in the Channel Country  
**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus* Distant off Lockhart River in feeding flock  
**Silver Gull** ♦ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* A few around Chili Beach and Lockhart  
**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Lotusbird had the Australian race, one Asian Gull-bill at Chili Beach  
**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* A couple on Lake Moondarra and distantly at Lake Corella  
**Greater Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii* Flyby at Chili Beach, and roosting at Quintel Beach, Lockhart River  
**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* Small numbers off Lockhart Jetty on multiple days  
**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* One noted off Chili Beach in flight  
**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* Good numbers off Chili Beach, two nesting close to shore on a rock  
**Whiskered Tern** *Childonias hybrida* Quite a few flying around at west Lake Moondarra  
**Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon, introduced)** *Columba livia* Common in country towns, but absent on Cape York  
**Spotted Dove (introduced)** *Spilopelia chinensis* Noted around Cairns  
**Brown Cuckoo-Dove** ♦ *Macropygia phasianella* A couple observed in the rainforest, Iron Range  
**Pacific Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps longirostris* Seen well in Iron Range  
**Common Bronzewing** ♦ *Phaps chalcoptera* Noted a couple of times throughout  
**Flock Bronzewing** ♦ *Phaps histrionica* Good looks at this special Australian pigeon on Coorabulka Station  
**Crested Pigeon** ♦ *Ocyphaps lophotes* Abundant on our inland route, particularly around the towns  
**Spinifex Pigeon** ♦ *Geophaps plumifera* Seen most days in the outback, with excellent views near Winton  
**Squatter Pigeon** ♦ *Geophaps scripta* One crossing the road and posing well near Mount Carbine



**Diamond Dove** ♦ *Geopelia cuneate* We regularly encountered this lovely dove on most days in the outback

**Peaceful Dove** *Geopelia placida* Noted on Cape York and inland – often seen coming in to drink

**Bar-shouldered Dove** ♦ *Geopelia humeralis* A common, yet delightful bird on Cape York, noted regularly

**Wompoo Fruit Dove** ♦ *Ptilinopus magnificus* Often heard in Iron Range, and seen well a few times

**Superb Fruit Dove** *Ptilinopus superbis* Some lovely males came in well at Iron Range

**Rose-crowned Fruit Dove** ♦ *Ptilinopus regina* Sublime views around Portland in the mangoves

**Torresian Imperial Pigeon** ♦ *Ducula spilorrhoa* An abundant bird, particularly around Portland Roads

**Pheasant Coucal** ♦ *Centropus phasianinus* Singles on some of our driving days, seen quite well on occasion

**Pacific Koel (Australian K)** ♦ *Eudynamys orientalis* Heard regularly, one seen in suburban Mount Isa

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** ♦ *Scythrops novaehollandiae* One of the first day of the tour in flight

**Little Bronze Cuckoo** ♦ *Chrysococcyx [minutillus] minutillus* One at a river crossing near Lakefield

**Gould's Bronze Cuckoo** ♦ *Chrysococcyx [minutillus] russatus* One female near Iron Range

**Pallid Cuckoo** ♦ *Cacomantis pallidus* One seen well in Bladensburg by the roadside

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* Single bird on the highway north of Townsville

**Eastern Barn Owl** *Tyto javanica* Multiple birds in Lakefield at night



*This Eastern Barn Owl was one of many seen throughout the tour!*

**Eastern Grass Owl** ♦ *Tyto longimembris* Phenomenal views hovering above us in Lakefield

**Southern Boobook** ♦ *Ninox boobook* Resident birds nesting at Lotusbird Lodge, including one lost chick!

**Marbled Frogmouth** ♦ *Podargus ocellatus* Stunning views of a bird calling at night in Iron Range

**Papuan Frogmouth** ♦ *Podargus papuensis* Regular encounters of this huge frogmouth at night on the Cape

**Spotted Nightjar** ♦ *Eurostopodus argus* On the road multiple times on the way back to Winton one evening

**Large-tailed Nightjar** ♦ *Caprimulgus macrurus* Spotlit without any trouble along the road in Iron Range

**Australian Owlet-nightjar** ♦ *Aegotheles cristatus* Spotlit at Lakefield, and a few perched in Bladensburg

**Australian Swiftlet** ♦ *Aerodramas terraereginae* Small flocks seen on Cape York and around Cairns

**White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus* Large flock of freshly returned birds near Cairns

**Oriental Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* Singles seen by the driving group returning to Cairns from Portland

**Laughing Kookaburra** ♦ *Dacelo novaeguineae* Thinly spread on driving days in the east  
**Blue-winged Kookaburra** ♦ *Dacelo leachii* Regularly heard on Cape York, and seen well a few times perched  
**Forest Kingfisher** ♦ *Todiramphus sordidus* Performed well at numerous sites  
**Torresian Kingfisher** ♦ *Todiramphus sordidus* Seen well in the Lakefield mangroves  
**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* Noted a few times throughout  
**Red-backed Kingfisher** ♦ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* Good numbers this year, and great looks in Lakefield  
**Yellow-billed Kingfisher** ♦ *Syma torotoro* Heard often in IR, with two seen very well on the Coen Track  
**Azure Kingfisher** *Ceyx azureus* Individuals near Mareeba, and on the creek through Iron Range  
**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Commonly recorded throughout the itinerary  
**Nankeen Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides* A regular roadside raptor, noted most driving days  
**Australian Hobby** ♦ *Falco longipennis* Pair circling in the evening over Lotusbird Lodge  
**Brown Falcon** ♦ *Falco berigora* Noted on most driving days inland, both very dark and very pale birds  
**Grey Falcon** ♦ *Falco hypoleucos* Nine different birds, including fledglings in low nest, and adult in the sunset  
**Black Falcon** ♦ *Falco subniger* One finally seen well enough to confirm as we were returning to Cairns  
**Cockatiel** ♦ *Nymphicus hollandicus* Common in the outback, with many large flocks seen on multiple days  
**Red-tailed Black Cockatoo** ♦ *Calyptorhynchus banksia* A few groups seen in the Musgrave area on roadside  
**Palm Cockatoo** ♦ *Probosciger aterrimus* Mind-blowing views of this amazing parrot near Lockhart River  
**Galah** ♦ *Eolophus roseicapilla* Common throughout, mind-blowingly abundant at Boulia



*Every morning the Galahs would leave Boulia in flocks of hundreds to go and feed in the surrounding fields!*

**Little Corella** ♦ *Cacatua sanguinea* Common throughout in big flocks, particularly around Boulia  
**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** ♦ *Cacatua galerita* Common and raucous throughout Cape York  
**Red-winged Parrot** ♦ *Aprosmictus erythropterus* Some around Musgrave, but noted elsewhere too  
**Eclectus Parrot** ♦ *Eclectus roratus* Often heard in Iron Range NP, but seen very well at a nest tree  
**Red-cheeked Parrot** ♦ *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* A few in flight, but one pair at nest on our last morning in IR  
**Golden-shouldered Parrot** ♦ *Psephotellus chrysopterygius* Drinking and feeding at close range, Artemis  
**Pale-headed Rosella** ♦ *Platycercus adscitus* Seen a few times on the Cape, and near Cairns  
**Australian (Mallee) Ringneck** ♦ *Barnardius [zonarius] barnardi* At least one pure individual in Bladensburg  
**Australian (Cloncurry) Ringneck** ♦ *Barnardius [zonarius] macgillivrayi* Some in Mount Isa and Boulia  
**Varied Lorikeet** ♦ *Psitteteles versicolor* In flowering trees around the towns of Mount Isa and Cloncurry  
**Rainbow Lorikeet** ♦ *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Abundant on Cape York, and around Cairns



**Budgerigar** ♦ *Melopsittacus undulatus* Hundreds in the outback, including wheeling flocks in a few places  
**Double-eyed Fig Parrot** ♦ *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* Pair at a nest, and another pair feeding in Iron Range  
**Noisy Pitta** ♦ *Pitta versicolor* Astoundingly common - eight observations from the moving vehicle alone!  
**Black-eared Catbird** ♦ *Ailuroedus melanotis* Two taped in near the Coen Track for excellent views  
**Great Bowerbird** ♦ *Chlamydera nuchalis* Common in the dry woodland around Musgrave and Artemis Station  
**Spotted Bowerbird** ♦ *Chlamydera maculata* Excellent views around Pentland en. route to Winton  
**Fawn-breasted Bowerbird** ♦ *Chlamydera cerviniventris* One observed around a bower, another in a fig tree  
**Brown Treecreeper** ♦ *Climacteris picumnus* The distinctive Cape York race seen at a dam near Mt Carbine  
**Black-tailed Treecreeper** ♦ *Climacteris melanurus* Excellent views of a pair off McNamara Road  
**Lovely Fairy-wren** ♦ *Malurus amabilis* Multiple flocks in Iron Range, with some great views  
**Variegated Fairy-wren** ♦ *Malurus lamberti* Regularly seen inland, particularly when looking for grasswrens!  
**Splendid Fairywren** ♦ *Malurus splendens* Small party found in the Bladensberg mulga  
**Red-backed Fairy-wren** ♦ *Malurus melanocephalus* Lotusbird Lodge, and in Iron Range  
**White-winged Fairy-wren** ♦ *Malurus leucopterus* Our best views were of a family party at Winton STW  
**Rufous-crowned Emu-wren** ♦ *Stipiturus ruficeps* Very close views of these delightful birds at Lark Quarry  
**Carpentarian Grasswren** ♦ *Amytornis dorotheae* Small group at our McNamara site, coming right up to us!  
**Rusty Grasswren** ♦ *Amytornis rowleyi* Last minute views in the sunset of one bird at Lark Quarry CP  
**Kalkadoon Grasswren** ♦ *Amytornis ballarae* Two pairs on some rocky slopes near Mount Isa seen well



*The strange Green-backed Honeyeater can only be found in Iron Range within Australia, often missed in New Guinea!*

**Black Honeyeater** ♦ *Sugomel nigrum* Multiple birds around some flowering trees in Bladensberg  
**Dusky Myzomela (D Honeyeater)** ♦ *Myzomela obscura* Reasonably common around Portland  
**Red-headed Myzomela (R-h Honeyeater)** ♦ *Myzomela erythrocephala* One stunning male in Lakefield  
**Green-backed Honeyeater** ♦ *Glycichaera fallax* A strange monotypic genus, just one in Iron Range  
**Banded Honeyeater** ♦ *Cissomela pectoralis* Common around the Musgrave area  
**Brown Honeyeater** ♦ *Lichmera indistincta* A few drinking at Artemis Station, and some more in Mount Isa  
**White-streaked Honeyeater** ♦ *Trichodere cockerelli* Good numbers around a creek in western Iron Range  
**Tawny-breasted Honeyeater** ♦ *Xanthotis flaviventer* Multiple individuals noted within the Iron Range rainforest  
**Little Friarbird** ♦ *Philemon citreogularis* Many sightings of this common and vocal honeyeater throughout

**Hornbill Friarbird** ♦ **Philemon yorki** Quite common in IR, but skittish – everyone had good views in Cairns  
**Silver-crowned Friarbird** ♦ **Philemon argenteiceps** Excellent looks at the Cape York race north of Coen  
**Noisy Friarbird** ♦ **Philemon corniculatus** Proved quite common around Pentland east of Hughenden  
**Blue-faced Honeyeater** ♦ **Entomyzon cyanotis** Abundant around Mount Molloy and Musgrave on the Cape  
**Black-chinned (Golden-backed) Honeyeater** ♦ **Melithreptus [gularis] laetior** Two in a gorge at Bladensburg  
**White-throated Honeyeater** ♦ **Melithreptus albogularis** A couple hanging around near Lotusbird Lodge  
**Gibberbird** ♦ **Ashbyia lovensis** Stellar looks at two birds in particular, running around the gibber at Coorabulka  
**Crimson Chat** ♦ **Epthianura tricolor** Abundant inland this year after a successful breeding season  
**Orange Chat** ♦ **Epthianura aurifrons** Large flock at Winton STW, but surprisingly not seen elsewhere  
**Yellow Chat** ♦ **Epthianura crocea** A surprise flock at Lake Moondarra, the first there in four decades!



Some of the Australian chats – Orange Chat (top) was found near Winton, Crimson Chat (middle) was abundant during our inland loop, and Yellow Chat (bottom) was a rare find near Mount Isa!



**Rufous-banded Honeyeater** ♦ *Conopophila albogularis* Some around the paperbark billabongs in Lakefield  
**Rufous-throated Honeyeater** ♦ *Conopophila rufogularis* Abundant around Lake Moondarra at watering holes  
**Bar-breasted Honeyeater** ♦ *Ramsayornis fasciatus* Just two birds hanging about around Lotusbird  
**Brown-backed Honeyeater** ♦ *Ramsayornis modestus* Abundant in open country around Lockhart  
**Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater** ♦ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* A fair few in Bladensburg and Lark Quarry  
**Yellow-throated Miner** ♦ *Manorina flavigula* Fairly common on this route, abundant in outback towns  
**White-gaped Honeyeater** ♦ *Stomiopera unicolor* Two along a small river just past Mount Carbine on first day  
**Yellow Honeyeater** ♦ *Stomiopera flava* A few at the Mount Carbine river, and around Musgrave  
**Varied Honeyeater** ♦ *Gavicalis versicolor* Close studies of this mangrove specialty in Portland  
**Singing Honeyeater** ♦ *Gavicalis virescens* Some seen south of Winton at various points  
**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** ♦ *Ptilotula flavescens* Saw the isolated Musgrave form at the Red Goshawk nest  
**Grey-headed Honeyeater** ♦ *Ptilotula keartlandi* Some mixed in with the Grey-fronted Honeyeaters around Isa  
**Grey-fronted Honeyeater** ♦ *Ptilotula plumula* Relatively common in the rocky spinifex around Mount Isa  
**White-plumed Honeyeater** ♦ *Ptilotula penicillata* Some around the Mount Isa in particular  
**Graceful Honeyeater** ♦ *Meliphaga gracilis* Noted in Iron Range, and at Portland Roads  
**Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** ♦ *Meliphaga notata* Common in Iron Range, outnumbering Graceful



*Telling apart the meliphagas is always a challenge, but this Graceful Meliphaga made it easy enough for us!*

**Red-browed Pardalote** ♦ *Pardalotus rubricatus* Showy individual feeding in low tree, Bladensburg  
**Striated Pardalote** ♦ *Pardalotus striatus* Three seen well at Musgrave in some low gum trees  
**Tropical Scrubwren** ♦ *Sericornis beeccarii* Multiple groups of three seen in Iron Range, foraging low down  
**Weebill** ♦ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Excellent looks at the yellow form around Mount Isa  
**Western Gerygone** ♦ *Gerygone fusca* Heard only in the Bladensburg mulga forest (**H**)  
**Large-billed Gerygone** ♦ *Gerygone magnirostris* Common around Portland, even seen from the balcony!  
**White-throated Gerygone** ♦ *Gerygone olivacea* A responsive pair bird tracked down near Mount Carbine  
**Fairy Gerygone** ♦ *Gerygone palpebrosa* Some near Mount Carbine, and more in Iron Range

**Inland Thornbill** ♦ *Acanthiza uropygialis* Seen while searching mulga for Hall's Babbler in Bladensburg  
**Grey-crowned Babbler** ♦ *Pomatostomus temporalis* Noted at various places on the Cape and in the outback  
**Hall's Babbler** ♦ *Pomatostomus halli* Big group found in the afternoon at Lark Quarry after dipping all morning  
**Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush** ♦ *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* Multiple birds seen superbly in Bladensburg  
**Yellow-breasted Boatbill** ♦ *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* Good numbers in Iron Range, seen very well  
**White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus* Abundant throughout the route  
**Masked Woodswallow** ♦ *Artamus personatus* Hundreds throughout the inland wooded areas  
**Black-faced Woodswallow** ♦ *Artamus cinereus* Noted on most days in arid areas, particularly in the south  
**Little Woodswallow** ♦ *Artamus minor* Small numbers on McNamara Road, and in Bladensburg NP  
**Black Butcherbird** ♦ *Cracticus quoyi* One bird came in to check us out at the Lakefield mangroves  
**Australian Magpie** ♦ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Commonly seen, and observed at close quarters in Winton  
**Black-backed Butcherbird** ♦ *Cracticus mentalis* Plenty around Musgrave, including tame pair at Lotusbird  
**Pied Butcherbird** ♦ *Cracticus nigrogularis* Noted regularly in the outback, including by their melodic call  
**Pied Currawong** ♦ *Strepera graculina* Some of the Cape York race seen near Coen  
**Ground Cuckooshrike** ♦ *Coracina maxima* Three picked up in flight and somehow refound one paddock over!  
**Black-faced Cuckooshrike** *Coracina novaehollandiae* Noted many times on the route, mainly inland  
**White-bellied Cuckooshrike** *Coracina papuensis* Common around Musgrave on Cape York



*A lovely singing White-throated Gerygone from up on the Cape.*

**Common Cicadabird** *Edolisoma tenuirostre* Pair on the way in to Lockhart River  
**White-winged Triller** ♦ *Lalage tricolor* Good views many many birds post-breeding in the outback  
**Varied Triller** ♦ *Lalage leucomela* Some hanging around in Iron Range  
**Varied Sittella** ♦ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* Two flocks encountered, near Musgrave and Winton  
**Crested Bellbird** ♦ *Oreoica gutturalis* An exception sighting of a male singing at Lark Quarry  
**Grey Whistler** ♦ *Pachycephala simplex* Heard often in Iron Range, two seen well on the Coen Track  
**Rufous Whistler** ♦ *Pachycephala rufiventris* Noted regularly in dry, open areas on the tour  
**Little Shrikethrush** ♦ *Colluricincla megarhyncha* Common in Iron Range  
**Grey Shrikethrush** ♦ *Colluricincla harmonica* Noted irregularly throughout  
**Australasian Figbird (Green F)** ♦ *Sphecotheres vieilloti* Common in Iron Range and at Portland  
**Olive-backed Oriole** ♦ *Oriolus sagittatus* Great views on Artemis Station, but noted elsewhere  
**Green Oriole (Yellow O)** ♦ *Oriolus flavocinctus* Abundant in Iron Range and at Portland  
**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus* High numbers overhead in visible migration, coastal Cape York  
**Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Lovely looks at this charismatic Australian bird regularly  
**Northern Fantail** ♦ *Rhipidura rufiventris* Single bird during some exploration around Lockhart



**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons* Singles in Lakefield and Iron Range  
**Spectacled Monarch** ♦ *Symposiachrus trivirgatus* Regularly encountered in Iron Range  
**Black-faced Monarch** ♦ *Monarcha melanopsis* Small numbers of migrating birds in eastern Cape York  
**White-eared Monarch** ♦ *Carterornis leucotis* One very good pickup for us by Dave in Iron Rang  
**Frill-necked Monarch** ♦ *Arses lorealis* Good numbers of this recent Birdquest lifer throughout the IR rainforest  
**Magpie-lark (Australia M-I)** ♦ *Grallina cyanoleuca* Seen almost every day of the tour, always a good bird!  
**Leaden Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra rubecula* Two definite females on Cape York, but no males anywhere!  
**Shining Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra alecto* Not uncommon on Cape York, seen in Lakefield and around Lockhart  
**Paperbark Flycatcher** ♦ *Myiagra nana* Around Mount Isa and Cloncurry, noted a few times  
**Torresian Crow** *Corvus orru* Many seen driving up and down the PDR on Cape York  
**Little Crow** ♦ *Corvus bennetti* Murder of six or so around a roadkill south of Coorabulka Station  
**Australian Raven** ♦ *Corvus coronoides* The common corvid from Mount Isa down to Winton  
**Apostlebird** ♦ *Struthidea cinerea* Several flocks of this communal mudnester, particularly around Winton  
**Trumpet Manucode** ♦ *Phonygammus keraudrenii* One of the first birds we saw in Iron Range, nest building  
**Magnificent Riflebird** ♦ *Ptiloris magnificus* Heard often, with some fabulous males seen well  
**White-browed Robin** ♦ *Poecilodryas superciliosa* Obliging pair in a creek bed near Portland Roads  
**Mangrove Robin** ♦ *Peneoenanthe pulverulenta* Group in the Cairns mangroves performed perfectly in the rain  
**White-faced Robin** ♦ *Tregellasia leucops* Seen most days in IR, usually perched silently on tree trunks  
**Hooded Robin** ♦ *Melanodryas cucullata* Some obliging birds including one adult male in Bladensburg  
**Yellow-legged Flyrobin (Y-I Flycatcher)** ♦ *Microeca griseocephala* Three finally seen well low down in IR  
**Lemon-bellied Flyrobin (L-b Flycatcher)** ♦ *Microeca flavigaster* Noted around Lockhart River  
**Jacky Winter** ♦ *Microeca fascians* A couple in Lakefield, and small numbers inland  
**Red-capped Robin** ♦ *Petroica goodenovii* Male in Bladensburg while looking for Hall's Babbler  
**Northern Scrub Robin** ♦ *Drymodes superciliosus* Three pairs of this attractive Birdquest lifer in Iron Range  
**Horsfield's Bush Lark (Australian B L)** ♦ *Mirafra javanica* Good numbers in Lakefield NP, and around Boulia  
**White-backed Swallow** ♦ *Cheramoeca leucosterna* Lovely looks around Bedourie in the sand dunes  
**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* One for Dave in the fields near Etty Bay while we were eating breakfast (NL)  
**Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxena* Noted commonly throughout the tour  
**Fairy Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon ariel* Seen at Lake Moondarra, and regularly on driving days  
**Tree Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon nigricans* Noted throughout our inland leg  
**Australian Reed Warbler** ♦ *Acrocephalus australis* Common at Winton STW  
**Spinifexbird** ♦ *Megalurus carteri* A handful of birds popped up in spinifex at various places inland  
**Little Grassbird** ♦ *Megalurus gramineus* Seen at Winton sewage treatment works by all  
**Brown Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus cruralis* Lots on full display traversing the open plains out the back  
**Rufous Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus mathewsi* Singles around Boulia only this year  
**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* A couple of this distinctive-sounding race in Lakefield  
**Golden-headed Cisticola (Bright-headed C)** *Cisticola exilis* Just two in grassland while in Lakefield  
**Silvereye** ♦ *Zosterops lateralis* A couple in Iron Range only in small flocks  
**Metallic Starling (Shining S)** *Aplonis metallica* A number of small flocks around Iron Range and Portland  
**Common Myna (introduced)** *Acridotheres tristis* Some in Cairns, but absent elsewhere  
**Mistletoebird** ♦ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Noted throughout the tour, with a few males seen well



*Female Olive-backed Sunbird guarding her nest next to our rooms at Portland House!*

**Olive-backed Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S) *Cinnyris jugularis*** Common, particularly around Portland Roads

**House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus*** A regular sight in outback country towns

**Painted Finch (P Firetail) ♦ *Emblema pictum*** Good numbers in Diamantina and around Mount Isa

**Red-browed Finch (R-b Firetail) ♦ *Neochmia temporalis*** One small flock in Iron Range

**Crimson Finch ♦ *Neochmia phaeton*** Small flock north of Cairns, and a few around Etty Bay

**Star Finch ♦ *Neochmia ruficauda*** Flock of about three hundred birds in Lakefield

**Plum-headed Finch ♦ *Neochmia modesta*** Hundreds at Winton sewage treatment works

**Masked Finch ♦ *Poephila personata*** Some coming in to drink with Golden-shouldered Parrots, Artemis Station

**Long-tailed Finch ♦ *Poephila acuticauda*** Some of the red-billed race coming in to drink near Lake Moondarra

**Black-throated Finch ♦ *Poephila cincta*** Two feeding flocks out on the Lakefield plains

**Zebra Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia guttata*** Abundant in the interior, with lots of nest building observed

**Double-barred Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia bichenovii*** Noted at Musgrave, with some coming to drink on Artemis

**Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*** Seen from the vehicle while travelling near Cairns

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin ♦ *Lonchura castaneothorax*** Two adults at our Crimson Finch site near Cairns

**Pictorella Mannikin ♦ *Heteromunia pectoralis*** Six birds eventually came in to drink at Chinaman Creek Dam

**Australian Pipit ♦ *Anthus australis*** Noted throughout the tour on regular occasions



## MAMMALS

Total of mammal species recorded: 18

**Short-beaked Echidna** *Tachyglossus aculeatus* One near Lockhart River, and one north of Hughenden  
**Striped-faced Dunnart** *Sminthopsis macroura* One by the side of the road whilst looking for Night Parrot  
**Northern Brown Bandicoot** *Isodon macrourus* A couple seen between Portland and Iron Range at night  
**Rufous Bettong** *Aepyprymnus rufescens* Quite common north of Hughenden, bouncing by the roadside  
**Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo** *Dendrolagus lumholtzi* Single at Nerada Tea Estate as we returned via. Atherton  
**Spectacled Hare Wallaby** *Lagorchestes conspicillatus* Good numbers north of Hughenden  
**Common Spotted Cuscus** *Spilocuscus maculatus* Single at night above the car in Iron Range  
**Agile Wallaby** *Macropus agilis* Plenty of them, feeding on grain left out at Lotusbird Lodge in the evening  
**Eastern Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus giganteus* Several north of Hughenden by the roadside  
**Euro (Common Wallaroo)** *Macropus robustus* Some noted on the rocky slopes around Isa and Bladensburg  
**Red Kangaroo** *Macropus rufus* Abundant in Bladensburg and further inland – some impressive males too  
**Purple-necked Rock-wallaby** *Petrogale purpureicollis* Two on some steep cliffs above Lake Moondarra  
**Little Red Flying-fox** *Pteropus scapulatus* Some feeding in flowering trees above Lotusbird Lodge at night  
**Cape York Melomys** *Melomys capensis* Two of these confiding and attractive rodents spotlighting in IR  
**Giant White-tailed Rat (W-t Rat)** *Uromys caudimaculatus* Running off the road while spotlighting in IR (LO)  
**Wild Boar (W Pig, introduced)** *Sus scrofa* Some on the roadside while driving around near Musgrave  
**Molucan Naked-backed Fruit Bat** *Dobsonia moluccensis* Just one individual while spotlighting in IR  
**Feral Horse** *Equus caballus* Some seemingly wild individuals noted near Musgrave

## REPTILES

Total of reptile species recorded: 14

**Saltwater Crocodile (Estuarine C)** *Crocodylus porosus* Some spots of eyeshine seen briefly on the Cape  
**Freshwater Crocodile** *Crocodylus johnsoni* Some lurking offshore at Lake Moondarra  
**Kreff's Short-necked Turtle** *Emydura krefftii* A couple loafing about on the lagoon behind Lotusbird Lodge  
**Asian House Gecko** *Hemidactylus frenatus* Abundant in most accommodations at night  
**Burton's Snake-lizard** *Lialis burtonis* Three quite different looking individuals seen across the Cape  
**Gilbert's Dragon** *Amphibolurus gilberti* Common in the outback – we did not see the similar Burns' Dragon  
**Ring-tailed Dragon** *Ctenophorus caudicinctus* Some noted around Mount Isa  
**Central Netted Dragon** *Ctenophorus nuchalis* Noted near Bladensburg and south of Mount Isa  
**Brown Tree Snake** *Boiga irregularis* Single spotlit on the road near Lakefield  
**Carpet Python** *Morelia spilota* Fairly regularly encountered at night near Portland Roads  
**Water Python** *Liasis mackloti* Single crossing the road near Lakefield whilst spotlighting  
**Black-headed Python** *Aspidites melanocephalus* One large adult spotlit near Portland Roads  
**Brown-headed Snake** *Furina tristis* Multiple individuals on a warm night near Lockhart River  
**Common Keelback** *Tropidonophis mairii* Quite a few in the grasslands of Lakefield.





*A selection of snakes from our spotlighting ventures – Black-headed Python (top) near Portland Roads, Water Python (upper middle) from near Lakefield, Brown-headed Snake (lower middle) near Lockhart, and Carpet Python (bottom) near Portland. All snake photos by Dave Williamson.*



## AMPHIBIANS

Total of amphibian species recorded: 5

**Cane Toad (introduced) *Rhinella marina*** All too common – plenty of this pest species most nights

**Australian Wood Frog (Water F) *Hylarana daemeli*** A couple near streams while spotlighting, Iron Range

**White-lipped Tree Frog (Giant T F) *Litoria infrafrenata*** Seen every night at Portland above out dining table!

**Green Tree Frog (Australian G T F) *Litoria caerulea*** Singles in the rainforest of Iron Range while spotlighting

**Roth's Tree Frog *Litoria rothii*** Some inside (!) our accommodation at Lotusbird Lodge



*A huge White-lipped Tree Frog near Portland Roads! (Dave Williamson)*

## BUTTERFLIES (by Dave Williamson)

Total of butterfly species recorded: 33

**Yellow Palm Dart *Cephrènes trichlopepla*** Musgrave Roadhouse

**Blue Triangle *Graphium sarpedon*** Ravenshoe

**Ulysses Swallowtail *Papilio Ulysses*** Iron Range

**Fuscous Swallowtail *Papilio fuscus*** Portland House

**Chequered Swallowtail *Papilio demolius*** Winton Cooling Ponds

**Red-bodied Swallowtail *Pachliopta polydorus*** Lockhart River

**Clearwing Swallowtail *Cressida cressida*** Ravenshoe

**New Guinea Birdwing *Ornithoptera priamus*** Iron Range

**White Migrant *Catopsilia pyranthe*** Richmond

**Lemon Migrant *Catopsilia pomona*** Ravenshoe

**Lined Grass Yellow *Eurema laeta*** Coen & Musgrave

**Pink Grass Yellow *Eurema herla*** Mount Isa

**Scalloped Grass Yellow *Eurema alitha*** Lockhart River Sewage Ponds

**Caper Gull *Cepora perimale*** Portland House

**Yellow-banded Jezebel** *Delias ennica* Mount Molloy  
**Red-banded Jezebel** *Delias mysis* Iron Range  
**Scarlet Jezebel** *Delias argenthona* Mount Tozer  
**Caper White** *Belenois java* Diamantina  
**Cedar Bush Brown** *Mycalesis sirius* Iron Range  
**Dingy Bush Brown** *Mycalesis perseus* Coen  
**Orange-streaked Ringlet** *Hypocysta irius* Iron Range  
**Bordered Rustic** *Cupha prosope* Iron Range  
**Varied Eggfly** *Hypolimnys bolina* Iron Range & Lockhart River  
**Meadow Argus** *Junonia villida* Ravenshoe  
**Blue Argus** *Junonia orithya* Coen  
**Black-eyed Plane (Cape York Aeroplane)** *Pantoporia venilia* Iron Range  
**Hamadryad** *Tellervo zoilus* Iron Range  
**Common Crow** *Euploea core* Musgrave & Townsville  
**Monarch (introduced)** *Danaus plexippus* Lotusbird Lodge  
**Small Dusky-blue** *Candalides erinus* Iron Range  
**Two-spotted Line-blue** *Nacaduba biocellata* Diamantina  
**Pale Cerulean** *Jamides cyta* Iron Range  
**Common Grass-blue** *Zizina labradus* Coen



*Yellow-banded Jezebel (top) and Fuscous Swallowtail (bottom) taken by Dave Williamson.*