



We can never start this report without a photo of the Critically Endangered Plains-wanderer - what an amazing bird! JB

SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA & TASMANIA

12 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER / 5 NOVEMBER 2019

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Australia simply has it all. It is difficult to accurately experience the true worth of this country in one single tour, but if anything our Southern Australia route comes close, offering a truly superb introduction to the diverse endemic avifauna down under. We even saw representatives from all but one of the endemic Australian families, of course including the peculiar and highly endangered Plains-wanderer which took pride of place as bird of the tour. Starting in the wet forests near Melbourne, our first taste of Australia came in the form of brightly coloured birds like Crimson Rosella, Eastern Spinebill and Eastern Yellow Robin, alongside ancient lineages of passerines like Superb Lyrebird (one male doing his full vocal repertoire right in front of us!), skulking Pilotbirds, active Pink Robins, enormous Powerful Owls, elusive Gang-gang Cockatoos, and charismatic endemics like Crested Pigeon, Galah, Australian Magpie, and Superb Fairywren. Coastal areas held stonking Cape Barren Geese, cute Hooded Dotterels, and at night we tracked down the elusive “Tasmanian Boobook”, currently assigned within Morepark. Rufous Bristlebird, Blue-winged Parrot, courting Fairy Terns, Striated Fieldwren, and a plethora of nectarivores like New Holland Honeyeater and Red

Wattlebird kept us busy over our first few days. The sclerophyll woodlands and Eremophila stands of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales acquainted us with Square-tailed Kite, Black-eared Cuckoo, Tawny Frogmouth, charismatic Cockatiels, the exquisite Superb Parrot, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Speckled Warbler, Weebill, Scarlet and Red-capped Robin, Dusky, Masked and White-browed Woodswallows, and a completely new set of honeyeaters including Painted, Yellow-tufted, Black, Pied, Spiny-cheeked, Striped, Black-chinned, Fuscous, White-naped, Brown-headed and White-fronted. White-browed Babblers and White-winged Choughs quarrelled noisily by the roadside as we headed out onto the open grasslands where Emu, Banded Lapwing, Inland Dotterel, gaudy Orange and Crimson Chats, Greater Bluebonnet, Brown Songlark and Australian Owlet-nightjar were all but a supporting cast to the monotypic Plains-wanderer. Spotlighting provided everything we hoped for with Southern Boobook, and many Eastern Barn Owls showing perfectly. Large lakes and wetlands throughout the tour provided all the key waterfowl, with bizarre Musk Ducks, Blue-billed Ducks, Freckled Ducks, Pink-eared Ducks, Chestnut and Grey Teals, Australian Shelducks, Hoary-headed Grebes, Black-tailed Nativehens, Red-kneed and Black-fronted Dotterels, Red-necked Avocets, nomadic Banded Stilts, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, stately Brolgas, and of course lovely Black Swans.

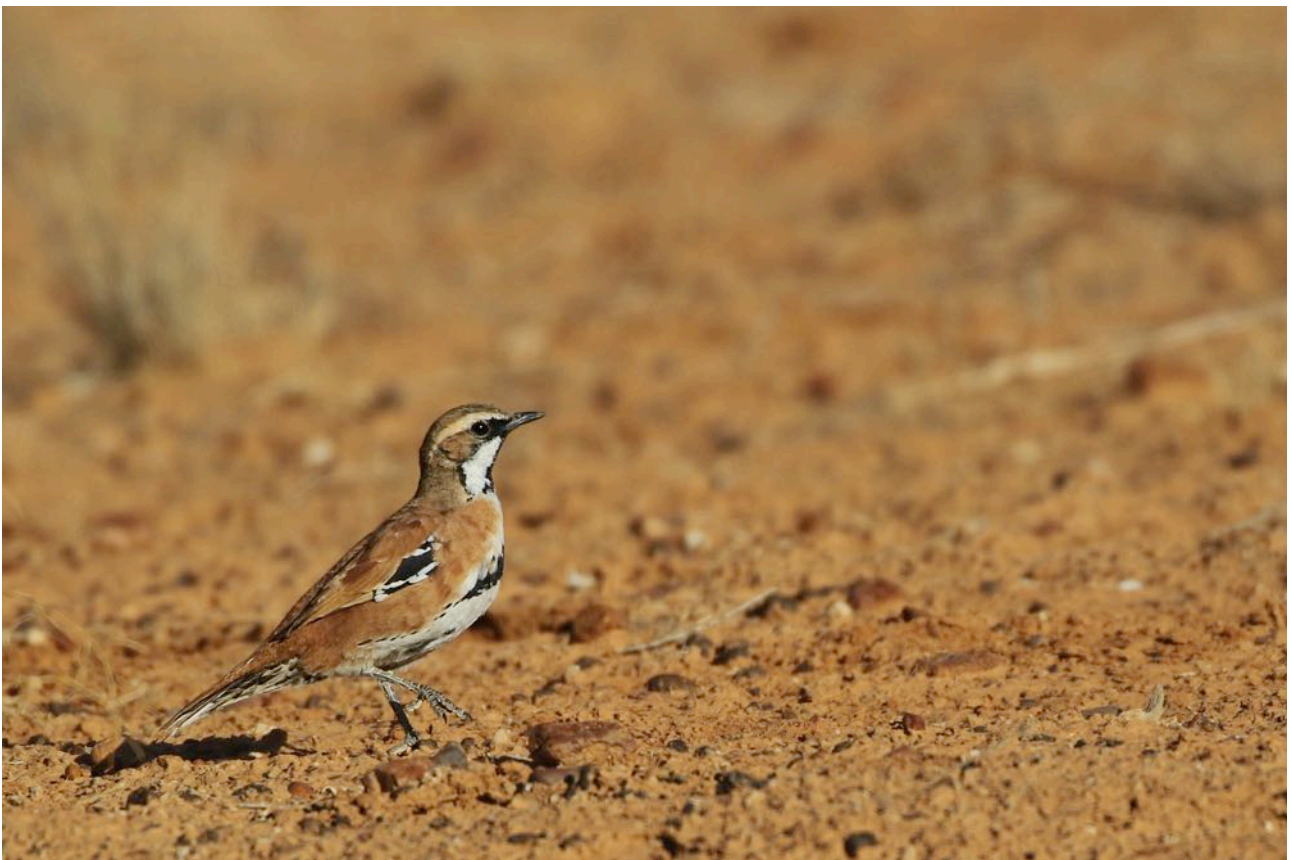


Orange-bellied Parrot is a stunning species, but this little guy (Silver Black N) is one of less than a dozen wild birds left. JB

The arid mallee kept our flow of new birds coming, as Chestnut-crowned Babblers, Restless Flycatchers, Diamond Firetails, Brown Treecreepers preceded excellent views of the beautiful desert megapode – Malleefowl. Bouncy Southern Scrub Robins, friendly Shy Heathwrens, localised Mallee Emu-wrens, sneaky Striated Grasswrens, fabulous Pink Cockatoos, Purple-crowned Lorikeet fluorescent Regent and Mulga Parrots, Crested Bellbirds, both Gilbert's and the Endangered Red-lored Whistler, some of the last remaining Black-eared Miners, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, Chestnut-rumped Thornbills, ferocious Apostlebirds, exquisite Splendid Fairywrens, White-browed Treecreeper, Varied Sittella, Southern Whiteface, and many Chestnut Quail-thrush. Heading further still towards the centre of Australia, we progressed our tally with more new honeyeaters like Yellow-plumed and Grey-fronted, plus birds like White-backed Swallow, Black-faced Woodswallow, Pied Butcherbird, a pair of elusive Gibberbird, Yellow Chat, Chirruping Wedgebill, Little Crow, Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Australian Pratincole, Australian Spotted Crane, Banded Whiteface, Red-browed Pardalote. The female Scarlet-chested Parrot on our car was also a surprise!



We had multiple encounters with Inland Dotterel this year, including a very showy family during the day. JB



Cinnamon Quail-thrush is one of the special species which ekes out an existence in the barren gibber plains. JB

Yet, as this tour was running, we were receiving daily updates about the disastrous bushfires all along the east coast, which only worsened as summer continued. The feral cats and rodents are wreaking havoc, and severe droughts are killing the flora throughout the desert. Spinifex is possibly the world's most drought resistant plant, but we could hardly find any that was alive in the Flinders Ranges. Australia may not have the same trapping and habitat destruction problems as other countries, but the days where all the targets are easy to see have sadly already passed. Despite these ongoing challenges, we still connected with all six possible grasswrens (Striated, Short-tailed, Thick-billed, Western, Eyrean and Grey) and five different Grey Falcons, although we could only find Letter-winged Kite feathers... Back towards the Great Australian Bight, excellent views of the declining Rock Parrot were certainly a highlight, along with many Purple-gaped Honeyeaters, Spotted Scrubwrens, and a small group of range-restricted Slender-billed Thornbill.

The Tasmanian extension was no less memorable, and in just three full days we certainly did the island state justice. Our charter flight to Melaleuca was cancelled two days running, but we made use of our time by birding around Hobart and to the south, where we found the strange Scrubtit, Tasmanian Thornbills and Tasmanian Scrubwrens, Dusky Robin, Black-headed and Strong-billed Honeyeaters, the lovely Yellow-throated Honeyeater, gurgling Yellow Wattlebirds, Black Currawongs, Green Rosellas, the comical flightless Tasmanian Nativehens, and a small group over very obliging Critically Endangered Swift Parrots. In the far south we searched a button grass swamp where we found a number of Eastern Ground Parrot, Beautiful Firetail, Southern Emu-wren, and some Satin Flycatchers, then behind Hobart again our first Flame Robin was located before we finally got the word that our flight was going. The short trip to the remote south west wilderness at Melaleuca was all that we had hoped for - amidst possibly the most spectacular setting in Australia, we got up close and personal with the Critically Endangered beauty, Orange-bellied Parrot. Sadly less than a dozen wild birds returned from migration this year, and despite lots of captive release efforts this species does not seem like it will last much longer in the wild. Lastly we spent a night on Bruny Island where the star Forty-spotted Pardalote was nailed down as our last endemic, and we had a chilly walk after dark to see Little Penguins and Short-tailed Shearwaters coming back to their burrows.



Another Critically Endangered species, the Swift Parrot is threatened by logging and predation by Sugar Gliders in Tasmania. JB

Mammals were a constant company on this tour too of course, with 24 species seen, including plenty of Macropods (kangaroos, wallabies, etc) which had their fair go at making an acquaintance with the car. Luckily none succeeded at this, and we had fine views of Red, Western Grey and Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Euro, beautiful Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby, Black Wallaby, Red-necked Wallaby, Tasmanian Pademelon, and the rare Long-nosed Potoroo. In the land of the marsupials, Koalas and Common Wombats were of course definitive highlights, but both light and dark morphs of Eastern Quoll in Tasmania was a great bonus. Both Australian monotremes were also seen very well, with a few Short-beaked Echidna in Victoria, and an obliging Platypus near Hobart. Finally, those who joined the Tasmanian Devil extension were treated to magnificent encounters with this strange carnivore to wrap up an amazing tour down under. Overall we recorded 318 species of bird, including two heard only. Always surrounded by spectacular scenery, we regularly found ourselves alone with the birds. On certain days, we came into contact with only one or two other cars! Birding in the land of plenty is always laid-back, easy and enjoyable. As the locals would say, "no worries mate!"



The gorgeous Crimson Rosella is a great endemic parrot! We saw three forms on this tour (Crimson, Yellow, and Adelaide). JB

We commenced the tour with a visit to the forested Dandenongs, where our main quarry was the incomparable Superb Lyrebird. Famous for their astounding mimicry, we were able to watch one cross the path a couple of times and scratching around in the wet understorey, showing off his impressive tail plumes! Our first flamboyant parrots appeared, with Crimson Rosella, the rainbow Eastern Rosella, and Australian King Parrot all being well appreciated! Australian Magpies chortled away, and in the forest we got to grips with both Brown Thornbill and Striated Thornbill, small groups usually accompanied by a Grey Fantail or White-browed Scrubwren. A male Australian Golden Whistler certainly made an impression, as did a male Rose Robin who chose to come down right in front of us! Two fancy nectarivores were up next - beautiful Eastern Spinebills hyperactively bounced all around us while a confiding male Crescent Honeyeater also came right in. Moving over to a different trail we had encounters with the uncommon Large-billed Scrubwren and Lewin's Honeyeater before a White-throated Treecreeper appeared. Eastern Yellow Robins proved brighter than the Little Ravens and Australian Ravens ganging about, and a few people got onto a single Brown Gerygone. Some of Australia's loud and raucous birds made regular appearances during the morning, including Rainbow Lorikeet, Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Red Wattlebird, and the fantastic Superb Fairywren.



The immense Powerful Owl specialises in hunting possums, and seems to be doing fairly well in Melbourne suburbia. JB

Back in suburban Melbourne we headed to a local park where we quickly located our quarry, two adults and two juvenile Powerful Owl, that gazed austerely at us from their day-roost above. On the path-side we enjoyed good views of Common Bronzewing, allowing all to see the iridescent wing-patch that earns them their name. Here we also got our first looks of Noisy Miner, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Grey Butcherbird, Magpie-lark, and vibrant Rainbow Lorikeets - all species that were to become very familiar over the coming days.



Freckled Ducks are the rarest of Australia's waterfowl, and are in fact the world's most primitive duck! JB

A brief stop nearby yielded our only Bell Miners of the trip, and later in the afternoon a small wetland gave us excellent views of Freckled Duck. Often difficult to pin down, it was great to see this primitive duck (the only in the world with an upturned bill), and one even showed a hint of remnant breeding-flush red at the bill-base. Other wildfowl here included Australian Shoveler, Chestnut Teal, Blue-billed Duck and Hoary-headed Grebe. Australian White Ibis and Great, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants lined the white-stained trees, and our first Australasian Darter circled overhead.



Known as Hooded Plover to everyone in Australia, I have to call these lovely shorebirds Hooded Dotterel to follow IOC! JB

A distant Shining Bronze Cuckoo was quickly called in and was soon whistling above our heads. During our walk back to the car, Steve spotted a Short-beaked Echidna running away from the path. We caught up to it and everyone enjoyed close views of this remarkable monotreme. Australia tours are always about much more than just the birds, and this was our first excellent mammal encounter of many to come.



The bizarre Cape Barren Goose has a face on a mother could love.... JB

We then drove down to Phillip Island where we picked up our first target - a flock of bizarre Cape Barren Goose - almost immediately by the side of the road. Moving onto a nearby beach, as Silver Gulls and Pacific Gulls flew around us, some initial apprehension at finding our main quarry due to the number of people was quickly allayed when wader-Dave found us two pairs of stunning Hooded Dotterel. This species' preference for long sandy beaches favoured by dog-walkers and 4WD enthusiasts means they are now classified as Vulnerable, and are absent from many areas they were once common. The dunes behind the beach offered our first New Holland Honeyeater and Swamp Wallaby as well as a frustratingly brief Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, whilst a quick stop in town bagged us Little Wattlebird calling from fence posts and shrubs. A scan of the mudflats opposite our chosen restaurant for dinner got us good if distant views of Australian Pelican, Australian Pied Cormorant, Australian Pied Oystercatcher and some Royal Spoonbill.



The Tasmanian form of Morepork is rightfully split by HBW as "Tasmanian Boobook" – best seen on migration in Victoria! JB

With everyone having seen Little Penguin before, and with the opportunity to see them again in Tasmania, we elected to change the itinerary slightly, and go looking for a taxonomically interesting owl! Traditionally treated as a subspecies of New Zealand's Morepork, "Tasmanian Boobook" is recognised as a separate species by Birdlife/HBW. Usually quite hard to see (especially on our Tasmania extension which runs about a month too early for the birds to be calling properly), the species has become very easy at a recently-discovered migration point in Victoria as they move back south from the mainland to breed in Tasmania. After a short walk, we had brilliant views of a Morepork down to five metres on the coastal heath, presumably feeding before embarking on its migration over Bass Strait. One leader was particularly happy, this being his #700th Australian bird! By now it was getting quite late, and we all agreed it had been a long but remarkably successful day. We drove back to our Melbourne hotel, but not before stopping for crippling views of Common Wombat and Koala by the road!

In the lovely forests of Toolangi we spent some time at first light searching for the uncommon Pilotbird. After several brief encounters, suddenly a responsive pair popped up and all but sat on the trail calling! This aberrant Australian warbler really is a good-looking bird when you see it so well, but the cameras were sadly not ready! Nearby, a stunning male Pink Robin with contrasting dark black and hot pink feathering stood out, while a Black-faced Monarch was great to see. Perhaps better still, a Red-browed Treecreeper suddenly

called above us and showed well feeding on a tree trunk! Heading off, those in the front vehicle saw our first Grey Currawong, and a short stop before lunch was very productive at a flowering patch of trees near Mangalore Reserve. Dozens of White-browed Woodswallow mixed with lesser numbers of Masked Woodswallow, and a pair of Black-chinned Honeyeater fed unconcernedly at eye-level. As we left a number of Musk Lorikeet showed beautiful in a low tree, while our first White-plumed Honeyeater and Rufous Songlark made appearances.

We spent the evening south of Deniliquin where our first stop was for a lovely trio of cute Cockatiels perched on the wires. Not long after some more denizens of arid Australia made themselves known - the noisy White-winged Chough moved by in flocks and an Emu walked around near where the cars were parked. We spent some time in the bird hide at Gulpa Reedbeds where Swamp Harriers quartered overhead, Little Grassbirds and Australian Reed Warblers skulked in the reeds below, and Anders spotted us a very cryptic Australasian Bittern sticking his head up through the reeds! In the woodland behind the swamp both Little Friarbird and Noisy Friarbird were obvious while a Sacred Kingfisher called overhead, but some lovely Brown Treecreepers stole the show. As we returned to town the roadside yielded a number of parrots, including some big flocks of Long-billed Corella, the ever-pleasant Galah, and one amazing flock of colourful Superb Parrot right as the golden sunlight was hitting the trees - what an end to the day!



Superb Parrots are definitely one of Australia's prettiest birds!! JB.

Meeting up with Deniliquin's very own Phil Maher in the morning, we got started immediately on our whirlwind day. First up was a Tawny Frogmouth on her nest in town, followed by some roadside Grey-crowned Babblers, Tree Martin, and a female Black Honeyeater. At Gulpa Island the influx of arid zone birds into this part of Australia at the present time was obvious. With conditions poor in the deserts, Crimson Chats and White-winged Trillers were abundant here, while Buff-rumped Thornbill and Yellow Thornbill twittered above. A musical Western Gerygone serenaded us while our first Weebill for the trip popped by. Returning Dollarbirds and Rainbow Bee-eaters were obvious amongst the numerous Dusky Woodswallows and Jacky Winters hawking from dead snags. A male Gilbert's Whistler was nice to see perched in the open singing stridently for once, and of course the more common Rufous Whistler was around also. Not only did a flock of White-browed Babblers appear, but a male "Eastern" Crested Shrike-tit came down to eye-level in a eucalyptus. Males of both Red-capped Robin and Hooded Robin were found eventually, and we all had a great time watching a flock of Superb Parrots feeding right in front of us.



Everyone is expecting the shriketit family to soon be split up into three species – this would be “Eastern” Crested Shriketit. JB

Back in town we checked “Raptor Corner” where a Collared Sparrowhawk was seen on her nest (but only standing up briefly), and one of the resident Square-tailed Kites made a pass overhead being mobbed by friarbirds. A pale morph Little Eagle came by too, and typically Whistling Kite and Black Kite were in evidence. Here we also had our first real looks at Grey Shrikethrush and “Yellow” Crimson Rosella before lunch.



Masked Woodswallows are a highly nomadic species which can disappear from entire states in search of good conditions. AB

A detour to the tip north of town was a good plan because two Black Falcon put on an immediate show for us overhead. The backroads nearby held Nankeen Kestrel, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Yellow-billed Spoonbill, but the flowering Eremophilas caught our attention in particular. First up, a beautiful Striped Honeyeater was coaxed into view for all of us. Then at Phil's revegetation patch, an abundance of Pied Honeyeater and Black Honeyeater calls filled the air around us. Both of these nomadic species were seen well, along with some Greater Bluebonnet.



The impressive Wedge-tailed Eagle (top) is a common sight on this route, but we only saw a few Pallid Cuckoos (bottom). JB

As we approached the Hay Plains the birdlife started to change, and stretches of saltbush yielded some spectacular Orange Chat, along with many White fronted Chat and some more Crimson Chat. Australian Pipit, Horsfield's Bushlark and Brown Songlark littered the sides of the road. Phil's staked out Ground Cuckooshrike family attending their nest were present, and all were happy to score great views of this scarce outback specialty. Nearby an Australian Hobby perched up, and a small wetland held numerous Red-kneed Dotterel and Black-tailed Nativehen running around the verges. Just as dark fell, the resident Australian Owlet-nightjar duly appeared in a tree hollow, before we went out for the main event.

After years of poor rainfall, the plight of Australia's Plains-wanderer is looking dire. Almost no sightings were made during 2018, but lucky for us the birds were back in their usual paddock after a small amount of rainfall earlier this year. Before long, Phil's sharp eyes picked out a glorious female sitting delicately in the spotlight, and everyone marvelled at this distinct and beautiful species, belonging to its own monotypic family. One participant remarked that seeing this species was "as good as seeing your child being born" - good thing it also won bird of the tour, or he might have been in trouble!!! Nobody knows how much longer this amazing Critically Endangered bird will be reliable at Deniliquin, but it certainly appears to be heading towards a precipitous cliff. Our continued spotlighting efforts found another Plains-wanderer (this time a more modestly-clad male), one Eastern Barn Owl, a pair of delightful Southern Boobook, with dozens and dozens of Banded Lapwing covering the shrubby plains. We spent a long time searching for Inland Dotterel, and we eventually succeeded in finding a few individuals late in the night. Some participants however were more excited by the cute Fat-tailed Dunnart which showed ever so well as he darted around between the vehicles!



Diamond Firetails are certainly a lovely little finch! JB

Following a well-deserved sleep-in we rechecked the Collared Sparrowhawk nest and were pleased to spot the male sitting on a nearby branch in the open, offering much better views than his hunkered-down female! We then took a detour to Mount Korong where the rare Painted Honeyeater was seen doing display flights overhead before perching in dead trees allowing us to scope up this beautiful bird with pink bill and yellow highlights. The declining Southern Whiteface was spotted feeding on the ground nearby, and we tracked down a Diamond Firetail giving his characteristic wheezing call. With northern Victoria pumping out the nomadic species this spring due to some good rainfall, it was unsurprising (but still exciting!) to find and have fantastic close views of White-fronted Honeyeater, along with more male Pied Honeyeaters and Black Honeyeaters.



The scarce Black-eared Cuckoo was an easy get in Victoria this year! JB

After checking in to our cosy retreat at Heathcote we set to work in the woodland where a whole swag of new species awaited us. It was certainly honeyeater central, with lovely Yellow-faced Honeyeater, chattering Brown-headed Honeyeater, and bossy Fuscous Honeyeater all obvious in flowering trees. Some scratchy notes alerted us to a cute Speckled Warbler, and a musical male Scarlet Robin serenaded us by the roadside. Our first good views of a male Spotted Pardalote and a nice Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo were overshadowed by a superbly confiding Pallid Cuckoo which sat on an open branch calling at length. We ended the day with a Chestnut-rumped Heathwren on the other side of town which showed well to those standing in the right place!



We had amazing views of Australasian Bittern as this one flushed up into a strong headwind and almost hovered in front of us! AB

An unusual cold front came through overnight which was going to make conditions difficult for the coming few days. Starting at a different patch of woodland near Heathcote we braved the cold wind and immediately scored the beautiful Yellow-tufted Honeyeater as our main target, alongside a handful of Peaceful Dove and a single Olive-backed Oriole. The highlight however was hearing a Black-eared Cuckoo just before we got in the cars to head south, and after a quick burst of the tape it immediately came straight in at eye-level to some dead branches - not the usual way with this scarce species!



The Rufous Bristlebird is probably the easiest of this cryptic endemic Australian family to see. AB

We had thought the blustery wind was bad this morning, but it was nothing compared to the conditions which greeted us near Geelong! Struggling to stand upright, we somehow managed to get a Striated Fieldwren to sit on top of a bush and sing at us, but other than the many Black Swan and Chestnut Teal bobbing around in the whitecaps offshore we saw very little here! Killing some time before check-in at the hotel, we had good flight views of a few Latham's Snipe at Belmont Common. After a break we returned to the cold and miserable coastal plains with little hope, but immediately found large numbers of Red-necked Avocets and a handful of associating Banded Stilt. Nearby half a dozen Fairy Tern in nice breeding plumage were seen courting each other on a sand bank, while our first waders included Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, and Red Knot. Pied Stilt, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and European Goldfinch were also seen before moving on. Back over at Werribee we were both surprised and ecstatic to flush up an Australasian Bittern from right next to us. The light was perfect, and the wind was so strong that all he could do was hover in the air and slowly move away before dropping into some reeds almost a minute later! Tucked away in a nearby pond we lucked across the vagrant Little Curlew which had not been seen for a week, and just off to the side our first group of Australian Shelduck sat quietly. We couldn't find any crakes or rails, but Hardhead, Australian Shoveler, a flock of Glossy Ibis, some Golden-headed Cisticola, and a few Eurasian Skylark were all noted before sunset.

The weather looked ominous as we rose and headed south along the picturesque Great Ocean Road, but despite the constant howling wind our first stop quickly found us White-naped Honeyeater, White-eared Honeyeater, and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo. Better yet, some soft calls alerted us to no less than eleven stunning Gang-gang Cockatoos feeding quietly in some low eucalypts. They flew across the road after a few minutes and many of the pairs started allopreening above us, keeping camera shutters busy! Moving on to the coast we eventually located the typically showy Rufous Bristlebirds running around near a car park, and nearby we rapidly came to a halt beside a large green paddock which had four Blue-winged Parrots feeding in it! They showed extremely well perched on fence posts and in the grass, while Rainer found us a Latham's Snipe sitting in the open next to a small pond. Singing Honeyeater, Red-browed Finch and some wonderful male Satin Bowerbirds were all targeted a little further down the road, and after quick successes we really had nothing left to see! Stopping off near Cape Otway, another four Koala were found (including a mum with her baby)! Arriving at the famous Twelve Apostles in the afternoon we enjoyed spectacular scenery and roosting Black-faced Cormorants before luring out a few Southern Emu-wren right before heavy rain set in for the evening!



An amazing experience with a flock of Gang-gang Cockatoos was a big highlight on the Great Ocean Road! JB

A large lake on our route inland was worth a stop before breakfast, as it held numerous Musk Duck (including a male showing off his bizarre lobe), the southern subspecies of Great Crested Grebe, and some of the most southerly Magpie Geese in Australia. We had plenty of time in the afternoon to explore Little Desert Nature Lodge, and despite the continued high winds not only did a pair of Shy Heathwren pop up, but a trio of Southern Scrub Robin ran circles around us on the path. We saw our first Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, and immersed ourselves in the booming spectacle of nomadic species which were present above our rooms. Dozens of White-winged Triller, hundreds of woodswallows, and a few Diamond Firetail were highlights, with Black Honeyeater and Pied Honeyeater hardly worth mentioning by this point! Under new ownership the Malleefowl feeding has ceased here for now, so we instead drove a few sandy tracks in search of this tricky desert megapode. No fowl, but we found a party of Purple-gaped Honeyeaters which could not have performed better, and for once we could all make out that little fleshy purple gape!



Koalas are easy to see in coastal Victoria, and we spent plenty of time observing this mum with her joey! JB



Purple-gaped Honeyeater is usually tricky to see well, but we found some very responsive individuals this year! AB



Southern Scrub Robins were very vocal and active this year! AB



This Purple-crowned Lorikeet showed very well while visiting her nest hole in the Victorian mallee! JB

The sky was clear and the wind was gone as we searched the heathlands of Little Desert for birds in the morning. Noisy Rufous Fieldwrens were enjoyed, but a mixed flock of Buff-rumped and Slender-billed Thornbill stayed too distant for anyone to really be sure which species they had seen. Heading north we stopped at Lake Hindmarsh where the lovely Regent Parrot was plentiful, and a pair of Purple-crowned

Lorikeet were nesting in a low hollow. Further on, a short stop revealed the sandy nest hole of a cute “Yellow-rumped” Spotted Pardalote, the male returning every ten minutes to dig a bit more sand out. After check-in at Ouyen we spent the latter part of the afternoon around Hattah-Kulkyne, where our first Apostlebirds carried on around us and a handful of Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters inspected the tape. Perhaps the highlight was when I rushed everyone out of the pub at dinner to see the Pink Cockatoo circling low overhead before going to roost across the road.



The male Crested Bellbird doesn't usually sit still for very long in the open, but we had lovely views of this one! JB

Our first assault on some of Australia's spinifex-loving species was much anticipated, and while I took the group along the road Alex went off track in search of our quarry. Before too long, we were called over and had a pair of Striated Grasswren performing impeccably, a real relief considering the rapid decline of this charismatic species in recent years. Nearby, a small family of the equally endangered Mallee Emu-wren was found hopping around in the spinifex tussocks, and we had fantastic views of the male with his pale blue throat and rusty cap. Two different pairs of attractive Chestnut Quail-thrush were uncharacteristically friendly, a Crested Bellbird posed nicely in full song, and our first perched Australian Ringnecks were appreciated. We spent some more time driving around looking for Malleefowl on the road again, but had no success... However! Returning in the afternoon to a mound which had showed signs of activity in the morning, we quietly snuck in and scoped it up through a window of vegetation. The flies buzzed around us and sweat dripped down our limbs, but suddenly through the gap a superb Malleefowl appeared in full view and commenced work on top of the mound for half an hour! We rotated through the scope and all enjoyed stupendous views of the world's only desert megapode! The last hour of daylight was spent searching for Splendid Fairywren, and eventually an impossibly vivid male appeared right in front of us – the blue feathering on this species really is something else!



Chestnut Quail-thrush (top) inhabitant the southern mallee, while White-browed Treecreeper (bottom) is a mulga specialist. JB

Next morning we spent half an hour trying to photograph Mallee Emu-wren back at Hattah, but couldn't find any this time! Moving towards South Australia we made an efficient stop and very quickly nabbed a pair of dapper White-browed Treecreeper and a little flock of the strange Varied Sittella in a nice stand of old mulga.

Nearby, what else did we find but Mulga Parrot, the male sporting an impressive array of different colours, plus our first good looks at the boisterous Chestnut-crowned Babbler. We made some stops on the road to inspect both Central Bearded Dragon and Shingleback Lizard - a sign that the weather was indeed starting to shift! A few more Greater Bluebonnet and Splendid Fairywren were enjoyed before our lunch in Renmark netted Blue-faced Honeyeater for the trip list. After meeting with our local guide Pete Waanders for the afternoon, we headed to a nice tract of mallee where a few Red-lored Whistlers still survive in moderate density. Despite the heat, we were soon having excellent views of a male softly singing as he hopped along the ground between spinifex clumps and up into small shrubs for brief periods. Some of us saw an oblivious Southern Scrub Robin calling his heart out, and a pair of Shy Heathwren darted around before we headed back to town.



Despite only being listed as Endangered, Red-lored Whistlers could now almost be wiped off the planet with a single bushfire. JB

Amy had found an Australian Crake the previous evening before dinner, and at first light he was there again for all of us! Meeting back with Peter we headed north to Calperum Station, situated within the Riverland Biosphere Reserve. This extensive tract of mallee was once a safe haven for many specialist species, but decades of management issues, bad droughts, and explosions of invasive species has caused immeasurable damage to the ecosystem, with most of these species now all but extinct both here and at the adjacent Gluepot Reserve. The Critically Endangered Black-eared Miner always had a stronghold in this area, but now after over fifty years of extensive hybridisation with Yellow-throated Miners, finding a pure bird is becoming a futile endeavour. We kept our reservations, given Pete had only seen two or three individuals this year, but during the day our targeted searching eventually found us one definitively pure-type Black-eared Miner, and another two which would be deemed tickable by the Australian standards. Sadly each of these birds were mixed individually into flocks of hybrids - the species is now functionally extinct and will essentially be gone within one generation. On a lighter note, we were all very happy when at one point during the morning we turned around towards the cars and noticed a little green parrot sitting on my roof. It took a few seconds for us to realise the bird was a female Scarlet-chested Parrot! An extremely tough one to find, usually requiring luck and very remote outback expeditions, this one had seemingly mistaken the shiny roof of our vehicle for a puddle, and was so intent on searching for water that she hardly cared when we walked right up to her - truly a once-in-a-lifetime encounter!



One highlight of the tour was when we spotted this female Scarlet-chested Parrot sitting on the roof of our car! JB

The long drive up South Australia's interior to Hawker through the rolling wheat fields and chenopod scrublands was punctuated only by a stop near the Murray River where a flock of Pink-eared Duck were inspected as they loafed on the water. Visiting the Flinders Ranges in the evening we became acquainted with the adorable Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby, and found a few Grey-fronted Honeyeaters as usual. The wind was ferocious, and the air was filled with dust as we made our way back to town, but it only worsened overnight! Unsurprisingly, we could not find Short-tailed Grasswren the next morning. None have been seen at traditional sites for over a year now, and the ongoing drought has had a disastrous effect on all the spinifex here. Despite extensive searching we could find nothing new which was suitable. We did enjoy a number of majestic Wedge-tailed Eagles throughout the morning soaring over the rolling hills, but otherwise it was quiet. After arriving at blink-and-you-miss-it Lyndhurst, we checked in before spending the evening searching for Thick-billed Grasswren. One eventually appeared right on dusk, but it was very shy and stayed far in front of us without affording any decent views.

Powering up the remote Strzelecki Track early the next morning saw us arriving at another patch of bluebush for sunrise. After some walking around another Thick-billed Grasswren was located, but again it somehow disappeared before everyone had seen it properly. Alex and I went off to try and relocate it, but after a few minutes Barbara noticed movement in a bush right behind the patiently waiting group, and it turned out the grasswren had been sitting quietly in there the whole time! We had marvellous views for a few minutes of the bird who didn't want to leave the relative safety of his chosen hideaway before we left him in peace. Further along a pair of Cinnamon Quail-thrush were initially proving sneaky, but by sitting in the cars and waiting both birds soon strutted out in the open showing off their glorious ochre colouration. We couldn't find any Gibberbird, but a small party of Inland Dotterel by the side of the road let us approach very closely! Next up we hit the dune country where a number of beautiful Eyrean Grasswren obliged for everyone, bouncing between clumps of cane grass and leaving their tiny footprints in the sand! We sadly had no luck with the endangered Letter-winged Kite this time, despite persistent searching - none had been seen in the region for

months prior to our visit. A short stop at one of the bores was productive however, with a number of lovely White-backed Swallows and a few Chirruping Wedgebills seen well here. After returning to Lyndhurst for some refreshing cold drinks we were able to wander out at dusk and have great views of two Spotted Nightjar hawking overhead. A fantastic end to the day!



We saw plenty of White-backed Swallows on the Strzelecki, and this young one circled us at length! AB



This sneaky Thick-billed Grasswren eventually gave itself up on the Strzelecki Track! JB

The Birdsville Track beckoned, and after stopping to study a confiding Little Crow, we were soon searching the stony plains once again for that elusive chat. Finally, after having driven dozens of kilometres between our three split up vehicles, my tape trawling finally brought in a pair of superb Gibberbird on a barren hillside. Once we had all reconvened the pair showed very well, with the bright yellow plumage of the male much more extravagant than field guides ever depict on this weird honeyeater! Passing some nice bore water swamps a pair of Brolga posed well, and nearby was a small flock of Oriental Plover - quite a rarity here! Pink-eared Duck, Australian Crake, and Black-tailed Nativehen were all seen well too. Soon arriving at Mungeranie (definitively Australia's best outback pub), we continued birding at a nearby bore which held dozens of Australian Pratincoles and thousands of Little Corella. Driving further still, we soon found a messy bundle of sticks with a very rare raptor precariously perched on top. The ghost of the Australian outback, this young Grey Falcon kept a wary eye on us as we savoured some superb looks through the scope. Checking the nearby dunes Alex quickly found us a trio of Banded Whiteface, and afterwards we returned to the tower and waited for the adult falcons to return for the evening. Sure enough, right before sunset two Grey Falcons appeared and flew right by us to perch up near the nest. Wonderful stuff, but so sad that even today they are still being trapped around Australia by wealthy falconers...



We once again made light work of finding the rare Grey Falcon on the Birdsville Track. AB

Following a particularly early start and a problematic tyre change (one of six for our four days in the outback!), some nice big clumps of lignum greeted us in the shallow depressions of Goyder Lagoon. Here, we split up and searched for Grey Grasswren, one of the most remote and difficult birds to see in Australia. Although we located a family showing well as they sunned themselves in the early morning light, they became nervous and dropped down before everybody had seen them. We spent a while trying to find them again, but didn't have much success in the strengthening wind. Most were pleased, but probably the biggest frustration of the tour for a few. We continued birding, but this difficult morning just wasn't giving us any breaks! Some of us saw Yellow Chat at a waterhole before it flew off, and some of us saw four distant Flock Bronzewing flying with purpose in the opposite direction. One of the drivers got their car spectacularly bogged too, but we won't name names. Yet more Oriental Plover and a Little Curlew were scoped up before our picnic lunch with Red-browed Pardalote for dessert! The rest of the day was very quiet, and despite checking many waterholes and dams (which were mostly dry) nothing new was added until we returned to Mungeranie and Dave found us a pair of Diamond Dove behind the rooms.



Two stunning birds from outback Australia – the comical Galah (top) and the sleek Australian Pratincole (bottom). JB

A long day driving back to the coast the next day was punctuated by a few unproductive stops, and the afternoon session was similarly frustrating. Three different Western Grasswren were unsatisfyingly glimpsed near Whyalla, and right at dusk we all had lovely views of Slender-billed Thornbill in the same area. We probably couldn't have asked for much more, having already seen essentially every other possible species in the area!



Somehow we did it! This Short-tailed Grasswren hopped around our feet feeding for as long as we wanted in the Gawler Ranges! JB

A dicey plan to claw back Short-tailed Grasswren the following morning involved us driving two hours inland to Mount Ive Station for a dawn arrival. Sceptical initially, we were all thrilled when a male grasswren bounced right over, completely unconcerned by our presence. Simply the best encounter I have ever had with this charismatic group of birds, he was close enough to touch several times! We then had time to try again for Western Grasswren near Iron Knob, and this time after one became accidentally trapped in a bush between us we were all able to have close-up views before leaving him in peace. We then made the long drive down to Marion Bay on the Yorke Peninsula, but despite a calm and picturesque afternoon we only managed to hear the endemic White-bellied Whipbird. The wind was gale force during our subsequent morning session, and sadly no more were in evidence. After some tough birding however, we were able to leave satisfied having had multiple Rock Parrots feeding right in front of us in the heath, a number of showy Spotted Scrubwren, and multiple Brush Bronzewing before a large flock of Pacific Swift passed through. We made it to Adelaide in the evening, and after quickly adding "Adelaide" Crimson Rosella along the way we were able to enjoy a relaxing and drink-filled dinner to celebrate our wonderful visit to the southern mainland.

A turbulent arrival into Hobart Airport was to be typical of our visit to Tasmania - lots of wind! Luckily it was calm in the evening, so after dinner we drove out of town to search for the Tasmanian form of Australian Masked Owl, and after a bit of waiting one responded well. We soon found it sitting politely in a dead tree, showing off his huge talons and lovely chestnut plumage. Our first morning on the island was spent at Mount Wellington (due to the cancellation of our flight to Melaleuca). Working in some gullies we located both Tasmanian Scrubwren and a very showy Scrubtit as our first two endemics, and as we drove uphill Black Currawongs were very evident alongside Forest Ravens. Then a big one - the leaders had been carefully threading the group between dangerously drab species, but when a gorgeous Yellow-throated Honeyeater popped up, it was time to mark down Steve's #7000th bird, and Bengt's #8000th bird! Some hearty cheers were heard before we continued birding, but the strengthening gusts forced us to retreat lower down.



The declining Rock Parrot (top) was one of our last birds on the mainland, while the endemic Black Currawong (bottom) was one of our first ticks on the Tasmanian extension! JB

We had some excellent views of another Tasmanian endemic, the bulky Strong-billed Honeyeater complete with a pastel-green eye crescent. Both Crescent Honeyeater and Brown Thornbill were enjoyed before a final stop netted us the quirky endemic Yellow Wattlebird with his dangling fleshy protrusions and explosive gurgling call. Platypus was on the agenda after lunch, and after arriving at the designated stakeout we were

soon enjoying point-blank views of this bizarre egg-laying monotreme as one fed almost direct under while we stood on the riverbank. We stopped for some proper looks at the flightless Tasmanian Nativehen nearby, and some saw their first Green Rosellas. The rain set in shortly afterwards so we called it a day.



The Platypus is a strange mammal indeed – one of Australia's two egg-laying monotremes. AB



The Tasmanian endemic Scrubtit can be tricky to find, but they usually perform quite well once located! JB

Early in the morning our flight was cancelled again, so we set about trying to find some of the birds from Melaleuca elsewhere. In the far south some stretches of button grass swamp yielded at least ten different Eastern Ground Parrot, some of which showed particularly well in flight with a bit of tactical positioning! Our Critically Endangered parrot of the day ended up being Swift Parrot, as we found two pairs seemingly prospecting nesting areas and sitting particularly low down for us to admire their amazing rainbow plumage. Nearby a lovely Green Rosella perched up, a few Beautiful Firetail and Southern Emu-wren moved through the heath, and a trio of Satin Flycatchers all performed well, while a family of endemic Dusky Robin were

great to see. Brown Quail, Striated Pardalote and Dusky Woodswallow were noted as we returned to the cars, and a few European Greenfinch were the highlight of lunch. We did a short outing in the evening behind Hobart which found us the lovely endemic Black-headed Honeyeater, and a few male Scarlet Robin. Eventually a few Tasmanian Thornbill popped by in a wet gully and showed their distinguishing pale vent, cocked tail and reduced breast streaking quite well to most of us!



Two of Tasmania's endemic honeyeaters – the Yellow Wattlebird (top) and the Strong-billed Honeyeater (bottom). JB

We returned in the morning and saw some much more obliging Tasmanian Thornbills, and eventually a female Flame Robin appeared in our binoculars - indeed this was to be Rainer's #8000th bird! Milestones were all around us this tour. Finally we received the news that our flight to Tasmania's remote south-west was a go, and we were soon flying low along the pristine coastline towards the spectacular button grass valley of Melaleuca. Now the last remaining breeding area for the entire world population of a dozen wild Orange-bellied Parrots (plus captive releases) - this pretty parrot was easily seen guarding nest boxes and coming to supplementary feed tables. Of course, we were particularly pleased to pick out the band combinations of some true "wild" birds which were not released from the breeding centre!



The bizarre Tasmanian Nativehen is a flightless species, which always has a funny look on its face! AB

Back in Hobart we made for Bruny Island, and after catching the ferry over it didn't take long before we were enjoying an Endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote which came right down out of a manna gum in front of us! After counting the spots we had a fantastic dinner with way too much food before spending a bit of time driving around looking for nightlife. At the rookery hundreds of Short-tailed Shearwaters careened overhead making their strange gurgling call, but it took a bit of waiting before a few Little Penguins appeared waddling up the beach. On the way back to our accommodation we had multiple encounters with both light and dark morphs of Eastern Quoll, Bruny being the best place to see this beautiful cat-like marsupial. Dozens of Tasmanian Pademelons and a few Long-nosed Potoroos were found as well, the latter species in particular being very hard to see elsewhere in Australia. We potted around the next morning looking for a few things, but the only real species of note was the Brush Bronzewing which sat so nicely on the path for us before we returned to Hobart.

After farewelling those not joining the extension extension, most of us did the shopping before heading to our chosen devil destination. As we walked around the accommodation, dozens of completely oblivious Common Wombats fed in the grass while Cape Barren Geese and Tasmanian Nativehens wandered around our feet! Flame Robin proved common in the grassy open areas, and a few friendly males were great to see after we had struggled to find one in previous days. Other birds seen included Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Green Rosella, Hooded Dotterel, plus a flowering tree with both Swift Parrot and Musk Lorikeet.



The amazing Tasmanian Devil was easily found without even having to spotlight for it on our extension extension! JB

Of course, the reason we were here was to see one of the weirdest and sought-after marsupials of Australia - the carnivorous Tasmanian Devil. Rapidly dwindling due to a deadly contagious facial tumour disease, there are only a few areas left which host viable populations. Although we were prepared for a long night of searching, a hot tip had us staking out the barbeque area. After a short vigil, we were immensely pleased when a phenomenal Tasmanian Devil came bounding over the hill and wandered around for a few minutes. We were a little spread out, and it disappeared before everybody had arrived, but ten stressful minutes later some honking geese alerted us to the devil's location, and we refound it slowly ambling up a nearby hillside - what a crazy mammal! We had an amazing dinner cooked by two absolutely masterful leaders-cum-chefs, and during the night a few lucky souls saw yet more devils (including one on the balcony which Steve nearly tripped over), and one or two more were seen early the next morning as we prepared to leave. A lovely experience in this magical place, and a great end to our tour. Thanks to our excellent group of punters for making it a bundle of laughs with lots of great birding in between!

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

1. Plains-wanderer
2. Short-tailed Grasswren
3. Grey Falcon
4. Scarlet-chested Parrot
5. Tasmanian Devil



A tired and dusty group having just spent a day birding the fabulous Strzelecki Track! JB

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRD SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Total number 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).

Emu ◊ *Dromaius novaehollandiae* Abundant in the arid interior.

Maggie Goose ◊ *Anseranas semipalmata* A few at a regular haunt in western Victoria.

Cape Barren Goose ◊ *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Common on Phillip Island.

Black Swan ◊ *Cygnus atratus* Regular throughout.

Freckled Duck ◊ *Stictonetta naevosa* Just a handful at a swamp in Melbourne.

Australian Shelduck ◊ *Tadorna tadornoides* Regularly observed in roadside fields in southern Victoria.

Pink-eared Duck ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Many good views of this peculiar duck throughout.

Maned Duck (Australian Wood D) *Chenonetta jubata* Noted regularly throughout the tour.

Mallard (introduced) *Anas platyrhynchos* A few 'proper' males seen in Tasmania.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Abundant and seen in most wetlands.

Australasian Shoveler ◊ *Anas rhynchos* Commonly noted throughout.

Grey Teal ◊ *Anas gracilis* Common in most arid waterbodies.

Chestnut Teal ◊ *Anas castanea* Seen very well around Melbourne.

Hardhead ♦ *Aythya australis* Noted in many deep water lakes.

Blue-billed Duck ♦ *Oxyura australis* The best views were in Melbourne.

Musk Duck ♦ *Biziura lobata* A superb male displaying near Hobart was sight to behold! Seen elsewhere also.

Malleefowl ♦ *Leipoa ocellata* Scratching around a mound deep in the mallee at Hattah.

Brown Quail ♦ *Coturnix ypsilophora* Two crossing the heathland trail south of Hobart.

Little Penguin ♦ *Eudyptula minor* A few parading past on Bruny Island.

Shy Albatross ♦ *Thalassarche cauta* A few seawatched off the Great Ocean Road.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris* Seen in flight and on the deck on Bruny Island.

Australasian Grebe ♦ *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* Regularly noted in southern waterbodies.

Hoary-headed Grebe ♦ *Poliocephalus poliocephalus* Regularly noted in arid waterbodies.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Seen a couple of times in deep water.

Australian White Ibis ♦ *Threskiornis molucca* Noted around Melbourne and other cities.

Straw-necked Ibis ♦ *Threskiornis spinicollis* Often seen in roadside paddocks or in flight.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Some coming in at dusk to roost at Werribee.

Royal Spoonbill ♦ *Platalea regia* Some lovely birds in breeding plumage on multiple occasions.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill ♦ *Platalea flavipes* Seen a couple of times on our mainland route, first at Deniliquin.

Australasian Bittern ♦ *Botaurus poiciloptilus* Seen very well at Werribee in the evening light.

White-necked Heron *Ardea pacifica* Surprisingly scarce this year, but good views at a few roadside stops.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* A few noted throughout.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* Quite common throughout.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Noted at a couple of coastal wetlands.

Australian Pelican ♦ *Pelecanus conspicillatus* Regular at coastal sites in particular.

Australasian Gannet ♦ *Morus serrator* Seen from various beaches.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Commonly observed at water bodies.

Black-faced Cormorant ♦ (B-f Shag) *Phalacrocorax fuscescens* A couple scoped up near the Twelve Apostles.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Common observed at water bodies.

Australian Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius* Noted throughout.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Noted a couple of times on the tour.

Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* Noted a couple of times on the tour.



The mighty Wedge-tailed Eagle was a regular companion! JB

Black-shouldered Kite ♦ (Australian K) *Elanus axillaris* Seen roadside in Victoria.

Square-tailed Kite ♦ *Lophoictinia isura* One seen circling near abandoned nest in Deniliquin.

Little Eagle ♦ *Hieraaetus morphnoides* Seen often on this tour, both light and dark morphs.

Wedge-tailed Eagle ♦ *Aquila audax* Abundant, feeding on roadkill all the way up to Lyndhurst in particular.

Brown Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter fasciatus* Only a few on this tour, with the best views around southern Victoria.

Collared Sparrowhawk ♦ *Accipiter cirrocephalus* Lots at various sites, although usually rarer than goshawk!

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* Good views at Gulpa Creek and in Hobart.

Spotted Harrier ♦ *Circus assimilis* One distantly for Dave near Deniliquin. (NL)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Common on the arid roadsides.

Whistling Kite ♦ *Haliastur sphenurus* Also common on the arid roadsides, often on roadkill.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Single adult bird on Bruny Island.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* One flushed while looking for snipe at Geelong.

Australian Crake ♦ (A Spotted C) *Porzana fluminea* Seen a couple of times, with the best views near Maree.

Australasian Swampphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Regularly noted in swamps and ponds.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa* Seen a couple of times around Melbourne.

Black-tailed Nativehen ♦ *Tribonyx ventralis* Very nice views near Deniliquin.

Tasmanian Nativehen ♦ *Tribonyx mortierii* Excellent views of multiple birds all over the place.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Noted regularly in good numbers.



Stately Brolgas were enjoyed on the Strzelecki Track, alongside visiting Little Curlew and Oriental Plover! JB

Brolga ♦ *Antigone rubicunda* One particularly confiding pair on the Birdsville Track.

Pied Oystercatcher ♦ (Australian P O) *Haematopus longirostris* Often noted along sandy beaches.

Sooty Oystercatcher ♦ *Haematopus fuliginosus* A few on Phillip Island, and a couple more in Tasmania.

White-headed Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* Regularly noted in shallow wetlands.

Banded Stilt ♦ *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus* A few birds searched out at Avalon Beach, Melbourne.

Red-necked Avocet ♦ *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* Good numbers at Avalon Beach.

Banded Lapwing ♦ *Vanellus tricolor* Seen very well around Deniliquin.

Masked Lapwing ♦ *Vanellus miles* Common throughout, with one nominate subspecies seen near Goyder Lagoon.

Red-kneed Dotterel ♦ *Erythronyctis cinctus* Good numbers this year, seen very well on the Birdsville Track

Inland Dotterel ♦ *Peltohyas australis* Spotlit in the Plains-wanderer paddock, and daytime views on the Strzelecki.

Red-capped Plover ♦ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Excellent views around Werribee.

Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* A few individuals at various bores on the Birdsville were a surprise!

Hooded Dotterel ♦ *Thinornis cucullatus* One pair on Phillip Island showed exceptionally well.

Black-fronted Dotterel ♦ *Elseyornis melanops* Noted at many inland wetlands.

Plains-wanderer ♦ *Pedionomus torquatus* One female and one males on our evening out with Phil Maher.

Latham's Snipe ♦ (Japanese S) *Gallinago hardwickii* A handful flushed from a swamp in central Geelong.

Little Curlew (L Whimbrel) *Numenius minutus* One vagrant at Werribee, and another on the Birdsville.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Small numbers at Melbourne's Western Treatment Plant.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* Seen well at the Western Treatment Plant.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Seen well at the Western Treatment Plant.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Large numbers at the Western Treatment Plant.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* A few roosting at Werribee.

Australian Pratincole ♦ *Stiltia isabella* Dozens of individuals were all along the Birdsville this year!

Silver Gull ♦ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* Abundant along the coasts.

Pacific Gull ♦ *Larus pacificus* Regularly seen both on the mainland, and in Tasmania.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* Abundant along coastlines in Tasmania.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Seen a few times around inland Australia.

Greater Crested Tern (Crested T) *Thalasseus bergii* Regularly noted along the coast.

Fairy Tern ♦ *Sternula nereis* Six breeding plumaged birds courting at Avalon Beach.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Abundant at various sites.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* Noted a few times in suburbia.

Spotted Dove (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis* Noted regularly in suburbia.

Common Bronzewing ♦ *Phaps chalcoptera* Seen very well a handful of times, best around Deniliquin.

Brush Bronzewing ♦ *Phaps elegans* A few near Marion Bay in the heath.

Flock Bronzewing ♦ *Phaps histrionica* Four seen in flight distantly by some of us.

Crested Pigeon ♦ *Ocyphaps lophotes* This funky bird is common throughout southern Australia, and always enjoyed!

Diamond Dove ♦ *Geopelia cuneata* A few along the Birdsville Track.

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida* Seen well at Heathcote.



The king of kingfishers! Australia's very own Laughing Kookaburra near Melbourne. JB

Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo ♦ *Chrysococcyx basalis* Great looks at Heathcote.
Black-eared Cuckoo ♦ *Chrysococcyx osculans* Single bird calling and taped in at Heathcote.
Shining Bronze Cuckoo ♦ *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Heard a few times, but seen very well on the first day of the tour.
Pallid Cuckoo ♦ *Cacomantis pallidus* Particularly nice views at Heathcote, also a few in Tasmania.
Fan-tailed Cuckoo ♦ *Cacomantis flabelliformis* Heard regularly, seen on the Great Ocean Road.
Australian Masked Owl ♦ *Tyto novaehollandiae* Eventually found a male of the Tasmanian form north of Hobart.
Eastern Barn Owl ♦ *Tyto javanica* Multiple seen around Deniliquin.
Powerful Owl ♦ *Ninox strenua* Pair at their roost in Melbourne with chicks – an impressive owl indeed!
Southern Boobook ♦ *Ninox boobook* Spotlit at a small stand of trees near the Plains-wanderer paddock.
Morepork ♦ (Tasmanian Boobook) *Ninox novaeseelandiae* One posed nicely on our late night south of Melbourne!
Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* One early returner at Deniliquin.
Tawny Frogmouth ♦ *Podargus strigoides* On nest at Deniliquin, spotlit in Tasmania.
Spotted Nightjar ♦ *Eurostopodus argus* Two hawking above the wetland behind our hotel at Lyndhurst.
Australian Owlet-Nightjar ♦ *Aegotheles cristatus* One in a nest hole near Deniliquin, others flushed during the day.
Pacific Swift (Fork-tailed S) *Apus pacificus* A fast-moving flock passed over us at Marion Bay.
Laughing Kookaburra ♦ *Dacelo novaeguineae* The king of the kingfishers – seen a number of times, and heard too.
Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Noted regularly at woodland sites.
Rainbow Bee-eater ♦ *Merops ornatus* Common and very showy around Mungerannie on the Birdsville Track.
Nankeen Kestrel ♦ *Falco cenchroides* A common roadside raptor.
Australian Hobby ♦ *Falco longipennis* A less common roadside raptor, but good views near Deniliquin.
Brown Falcon ♦ *Falco berigora* Also a common roadside raptor, particularly on the Stzelecki Track.
Grey Falcon ♦ *Falco hypoleucos* Two nests near Mungerannie were occupied, and the birds showed well!
Black Falcon ♦ *Falco subniger* One bird passing above the car, then circling at length in full view nearby.
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A handful noted on drives near Melbourne.



Related to the Superb Parrot, this male Regent Parrot showed very nicely near Ouyen! JB

Cockatiel ♦ *Nymphicus hollandicus* Lovely views of a trio near Deniliquin.
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo ♦ *Calyptorhynchus funereus* Great views a few times in Tasmania.
Gang-gang Cockatoo ♦ *Callocephalon fimbriatum* Fantastic encounters with a family group near Torquay.

Galah ♦ *Eolophus roseicapilla* A true character, with their antics being observed regularly throughout.

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo ♦ (Pink C) *Lophochroa leadbeateri* Excellent views of one in Ouyen before dinner.

Long-billed Corella ♦ *Cacatua tenuirostris* Common along the roadside in southern Victoria.

Little Corella ♦ *Cacatua sanguinea* Abundant along the Strzelecki Track.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo ♦ *Cacatua galerita* Common around Melbourne, and very loud!

Superb Parrot ♦ *Polytelis swainsonii* Stunning views of some feeding flocks near Deniliquin.

Regent Parrot ♦ *Polytelis anthopeplus* Excellent looks at some birds nesting near Ouyen.

Australian King Parrot ♦ *Alisterus scapularis* A couple around Melbourne afforded good looks.

Red-rumped Parrot ♦ *Psephotus haematonotus* Common inland, seen very well in Melbourne.

Eastern Bluebonnet ♦ *Northiella haematogaster* Difficult to see perched, but we succeeded a few times!

Mulga Parrot ♦ *Psephotellus varius* Excellent looks at this stunner near the South Australian border.

Green Rosella ♦ *Platycercus caledonicus* Regularly noted around Hobart and on Bruny Island.

Crimson Rosella ♦ *Platycercus elegans* We saw all three forms - Crimson, Yellow and Adelaide.

Eastern Rosella ♦ *Platycercus eximius* Regular in Victorian woodland, especially up towards Deniliquin.

Australian Ringneck ♦ *Barnardius zonarius* Mallee form seen well in Hattah.

Swift Parrot ♦ *Lathamus discolor* Superb eye-level views south of Hobart of this Critically Endangered parrot.

Eastern Ground Parrot ♦ *Pezoporus wallicus* Up to six individuals seen south of Hobart.

Blue-winged Parrot ♦ *Neophema chrysostoma* Four feeding in a field off the Great Ocean Road.

Rock Parrot ♦ *Neophema petrophila* This species is quite hard in the west now, but we saw plenty at Marion Bay.

Orange-bellied Parrot ♦ *Neophema chrysogaster* Many seen at Melaleuca, including some proper wild individuals.

Scarlet-chested Parrot ♦ *Neophema splendida* Astounded to turn around and see a female on the car near Berri!

Purple-crowned Lorikeet ♦ *Parvipsitta porphyrocephala* A couple nesting near Ouyen.

Rainbow Lorikeet ♦ *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Regularly seen in major towns in Victoria and South Australia.

Musk Lorikeet ♦ *Glossopsitta concinna* Feeding above us south of Deniliquin.



Another shot of that glorious male Short-tailed Grasswren - the leaders still don't know how it didn't win bird of the tour! AB

Superb Lyrebird ♦ *Menura novaehollandiae* Very nice views of a male crossing the track in the Dandenongs.

Satin Bowerbird ♦ *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* A male and his harem of females enjoyed on the Great Ocean Road.

White-throated Treecreeper ♦ *Cormobates leucophaea* Common in Victorian forests.

Red-browed Treecreeper ♦ *Climacteris erythrops* One feeding right above us at Toolangi.
White-browed Treecreeper ♦ *Climacteris affinis* Two locked down in some mulga near Mildura.
Brown Treecreeper ♦ *Climacteris picumnus* Common in the dry woodlands near Deniliquin and Heathcote.
Purple-backed Fairywren ♦ *Malurus assimilis* Regularly seen throughout the tour, including spectacular males.
Superb Fairywren ♦ *Malurus cyaneus* Common garden fairywren – what a bird to have feeding under picnic tables!
Splendid Fairywren ♦ *Malurus splendens* Possible the most spectacular of the fairywrens, seen well near Hattah.
White-winged Fairywren ♦ *Malurus leucopterus* Many of these beauties around Lyndhurst seen well.
Southern Emu-wren ♦ *Stipiturus malachurus* Both on the Great Ocean Road, and south of Hobart.
Mallee Emu-wren ♦ *Stipiturus mallee* Severely threatened by fire regimes, but we saw plenty near Hattah.
Grey Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis barbatus* It took some work, but most saw a family party at Goyder Lagoon.
Short-tailed Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis merrotsyi* Seen bouncing between our legs at Mount Ive Station!
Striated Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis striatus* Very nice views of this rapidly declining species near Hattah.
Eyrean Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis goyderi* Plenty around on the Strzelecki Track, with good views in the dunes.
Western Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis textilis* Briefly seen at Whyalla, but much nicer looks at Iron Knob the next day.
Thick-billed Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis modestus* We succeeded in finding two groups despite trialing conditions.
Black Honeyeater ♦ *Sugomel nigrum* Big numbers of this nomadic honeyeater feeding roadside near Deniliquin.



Brown-headed Honeyeater carrying nesting material. JB

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater ♦ *Gliciphila melanops* Noted at a few sites, but good views at Little Desert.
Eastern Spinebill ♦ *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Wonderful views on our first day in Dandenongs.
Pied Honeyeater ♦ *Certhionyx variegatus* A couple seen near Deniliquin in revegetated Eremophila.
Crescent Honeyeater ♦ *Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus* Commonly heard, and seen very well behind Hobart.
New Holland Honeyeater ♦ *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* The abundant heathland honeyeater.
Painted Honeyeater ♦ *Grantiella picta* One of the rarest honeyeaters, found in flowering mistletoe near Bendigo.
Striped Honeyeater ♦ *Plectorhyncha lanceolata* A beautiful bird enjoyed several times, particularly at Deniliquin.
Little Friarbird ♦ *Philemon citreogularis* A couple in trees above the Gulpa Creek Reedbeds.
Noisy Friarbird ♦ *Philemon corniculatus* Plenty around town at Deniliquin.
Blue-faced Honeyeater ♦ *Entomyzon cyanotis* A few seen in small country towns along the Murray River.

Black-chinned Honeyeater ◇ *Melithreptus gularis* Excellent views near Heathcote.
Strong-billed Honeyeater ◇ *Melithreptus validirostris* Great views of a foraging party up Mount Wellington.
Brown-headed Honeyeater ◇ *Melithreptus brevirostris* Quite common in woodland, with good looks at Heathcote.
White-naped Honeyeater ◇ *Melithreptus lunatus* Plenty around along the Great Ocean Road.
Black-headed Honeyeater ◇ *Melithreptus affinis* A noisy Tasmanian endemic, seen well on Mount Wellington.
White-eared Honeyeater ◇ *Nesoptilotis leucotis* Taped in down along the Great Ocean Road.
Yellow-throated Honeyeater ◇ *Nesoptilotis flavicollis* This beautiful Tasmanian endemic adored behind Hobart.
Gibberbird ◇ (Gibber Chat) *Ashbyia lovensis* One pair foraged their way towards us on the Birdsville Track.
Crimson Chat ◇ *Epthianura tricolor* Very common this year throughout our route.
Orange Chat ◇ *Epthianura aurifrons* Plenty of these absolute gems along the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks.
Yellow Chat ◇ *Epthianura crocea* One female located at a bore on the Birdsville Track.
White-fronted Chat ◇ *Epthianura albifrons* Common around the Melbourne foreshore, and noted elsewhere.



White-fronted Honeyeaters were all over the place this year in northern Victoria. JB

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater ◇ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* Abundant inland, but seen best at a bird bath in Calperum.
Little Wattlebird ◇ (Brush W) *Anthochaera chrysoptera* Only a couple on Phillip Island, and in suburban Hobart.
Red Wattlebird ◇ *Anthochaera carunculata* Quite common in coastal areas, and seen well a few times.
Yellow Wattlebird ◇ *Anthochaera paradoxa* A big honeyeater, often very skittish, but observed well near Hobart.
Yellow-faced Honeyeater ◇ *Caligavis chrysops* A few noted throughout Victoria in woodlands.
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater ◇ *Lichenostomus melanops* A few seen around Heathcote on a cold windy morning.
Purple-gaped Honeyeater ◇ *Lichenostomus cratitius* Fantastic views at Little Desert and near Marion Bay!
Bell Miner ◇ *Manorina melanophrys* A couple of birds seen at a colony near our hotel in Melbourne.
Noisy Miner ◇ *Manorina melanocephala* Common in southern towns, parks, and gardens.
Yellow-throated Miner ◇ *Manorina flavigula* Common in desert towns, parks, and gardens.
Black-eared Miner ◇ *Manorina melanotis* We worked through many hybrids at Calperum before satisfying ourselves.
White-fronted Honeyeater ◇ *Purnella albifrons* Quite common this year, and seen well near Bendigo.
Singing Honeyeater ◇ *Gavicalis virescens* Abundant along the Victorian coast in particular.
Fuscous Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula fusca* Angrily chasing away all our other target honeyeaters at Heathcote!
Grey-fronted Honeyeater ◇ *Ptilotula plumula* Just a couple in the Flinders Ranges.

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula ornata* Lots of these ones in the mallee of Hattah.
White-plumed Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula penicillata* The common garden honeyeater of inland Australia.
Lewin's Honeyeater ♦ *Meliphaga lewinii* Some individuals sneaking around in the Dandenongs.
Rufous Bristlebird ♦ *Dasyornis broadbenti* Ridiculous views of these charismatic birds on the Great Ocean Road.
Spotted Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus punctatus* Seen a few times, with the yellow-rumped form particularly showy!
Forty-spotted Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus quadragintus* A couple seen almost straight away on Bruny Island this year.
Red-browed Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus rubricatus* One vocal bird at a nondescript creek crossing on the Birdsville.
Striated Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus striatus* Often noted in woodland areas, and seen well a few times.



The "Yellow-rumped" mallee form of Spotted Pardalote. JB

Pilotbird ♦ *Pycnoptilus floccosus* Pair responded at Toolangi, giving fantastic views to all!
Scrubtit ♦ *Acanthornis magna* Excellent looks at this often challenging Tasmanian endemic behind Hobart.
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren ♦ *Calamanthus pyrrhopygius* A pair near Heathcote was a welcome surprise!
Shy Heathwren ♦ *Calamanthus cautus* As usual, not very shy in the Little Desert mallee.
Striated Fieldwren ♦ *Calamanthus fuliginosus* Seen very well in the wind at Werribee.
Rufous Fieldwren ♦ *Calamanthus campestris* Early morning at Little Desert a couple were singing on bushes.
Redthroat ♦ *Pyrrholaemus brunneus* Silent at first, we eventually had a strong response from a pair near Berri.
Speckled Warbler ♦ *Pyrrholaemus sagittatus* A small party found near Heathcote.
Large-billed Scrubwren ♦ *Sericornis magnirostra* Just one pair in the Dandenongs on our first day.
Spotted Scrubwren ♦ *Sericornis maculatus* This recent split was quite common around Marion Bay.
Tasmanian Scrubwren ♦ *Sericornis humilis* Common in the wet forests of Tasmania.
White-browed Scrubwren ♦ *Sericornis frontalis* Common in the southern mainland forests.
Weebill ♦ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Australia's smallest bird, seen very well in low shrubs a few times.
Brown Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone mouki* Some briefly in the Dandenongs.
Western Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone fusca* Only two individuals seen fortuitously along the Murray River.
Brown Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza pusilla* Common in the Dandenongs, and seen elsewhere in the south too.
Inland Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza apicalis* Regularly noted inland, best in the Flinders Ranges.
Tasmanian Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza ewingii* This long-legged forest thornbill was common in the wet forest in Tassie.
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza uropygialis* Seen a couple of times in the mallee areas.

Buff-rumped Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza reguloides* Some in the central Victorian forests, and in Deniliquin.

Slender-billed Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza iredalei* A small group seen well near Whyalla.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* First seen at Avalon Beach, then on inland grassy lawns later!

Yellow Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza nana* Only a few around Deniliquin on this trip, but good views.

Striated Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza lineata* Common in the southern forests, particularly in the Dandenongs .

Southern Whiteface ♦ *Aphelocephala leucopsis* Some in the woodlands near Bendigo.

Banded Whiteface ♦ *Aphelocephala nigricincta* One small flock seen near Mungerannie.

Grey-crowned Babbler ♦ *Pomatostomus temporalis* Just one family party south of Deniliquin.

White-browed Babbler ♦ *Pomatostomus superciliosus* Common inland, but exceptional looks at Deniliquin.

Chestnut-crowned Babbler ♦ *Pomatostomus ruficeps* Also quite common inland, seen well on the way to Berri.

Eastern Whipbird ♦ *Psophodes olivaceus* Heard well, and one briefly in Toolangi.

White-bellied Whipbird ♦ *Psophodes leucogaster* Only managed to hear this one near Marion Bay. (H)

Chirruping Wedgebill ♦ *Psophodes cristatus* Perched up nicely at midday on the Strzelecki Track.

Chestnut Quail-thrush ♦ *Cinclosoma castanotum* Excellent views of multiple birds at Hattah.

Cinnamon Quail-thrush ♦ *Cinclosoma cinnamomeum* Many flushed off the Strzelecki Track, some tracked down.



With persistence, we found this inquisitive Red-browed Pardalote on the Birdsville Track! JB

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Breeding at Mungerannie, and seen mobbing raptors.

Masked Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus personatus* Big numbers around Deniliquin and Hattah.

White-browed Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus superciliosus* Mixed in with the big numbers of Masked Woodswallow.

Black-faced Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus cinereus* Dozens of birds daily when north of the Flinders Ranges.

Dusky Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus cyanopterus* Noted around Heathcote, and in Tasmania on Bruny Island.

Australian Magpie ♦ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Common, but a lovely bird to listen to early in the morning.

Grey Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus torquatus* Seen first in a Melbourne park, but also in other more natural sites.

Pied Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus nigrogularis* A few on our inland travels.

Pied Currawong ♦ *Strepera graculina* Noted mainly around Melbourne in the wet forests and gardens.

Black Currawong ♦ *Strepera fuliginosa* Many on the roadside behind Hobart.

Grey Currawong ♦ *Strepera versicolor* Difficult to get a good view of, but we saw many throughout.

Ground Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina maxima* A family attending their nest near Deniliquin.

Black-faced Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina novaehollandiae* Noted regularly throughout the inland.
White-winged Triller ♦ *Lalage tricolor* Dozens around this year in Victoria.
Varied Sittella ♦ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* An active party near Mildura.
Crested Bellbird ♦ *Oreoica gutturalis* Often tricky, but not this time! Multiple males seen around Hattah.
Crested Shriketit ♦ *Falcunculus [frontatus] frontatus* Phenomenal looks at Deniliquin.
Olive Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala olivacea* We never even got close to this one in Tasmania – very unusual! (H)
Red-lored Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala rufogularis* One male seen superbly near Berri with Pete – getting very hard!
Gilbert's Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala inornata* Male observed at length near Deniliquin.
Australian Golden Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala pectoralis* Lots in the Dandenongs, including lovely singing males.
Rufous Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala rufiventris* The common inland whistler, noted at most birding sites.
Grey Shrikethrush ♦ *Colluricincla harmonica* Heard almost every morning, and seen well often.
Olive-backed Oriole ♦ *Oriolus sagittatus* One seen well after taping at Heathcote.



A common species, but it's always a joy to watch Willie Wagtails! Especially in the evening with a beer in hand... JB

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* A true Australian character, often running around our feet to catch insects!
Grey Fantail ♦ *Rhipidura albiscapa* Common in wet forests on the mainland and in Tasmania.
Black-faced Monarch ♦ *Monarcha melanopsis* One at Toolangi was a write-in for the tour.
Magpie-lark ♦ *Grallina cyanoleuca* Parks and gardens are well appreciated by Magpie-larks, where we saw many.
Satin Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra cyanoleuca* A cooperative trio south of Hobart were great to find!
Restless Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra inquieta* Surprisingly, only two birds seen at Little Desert, with none elsewhere.
Little Crow ♦ *Corvus bennetti* The common corvid of South Australia, particularly north of Hawker.
Forest Raven ♦ *Corvus tasmanicus* Heard once near Melbourne, but everywhere in Tasmania.
Little Raven ♦ *Corvus mellori* The standard corvid around Victoria, but they have to be checked carefully!
Australian Raven ♦ *Corvus coronoides* Small numbers usually mixed in with Little Crows and Little Ravens.
White-winged Chough ♦ *Corcorax melanorhamphos* Often seen on the roadside in central Victoria.
Apostlebird ♦ *Struthidea cinerea* One friendly group of eleven (!!!) at Hattah.
Eastern Yellow Robin ♦ *Eopsaltria australis* One of the first birds we saw in the Dandenongs on our first day.
Hooded Robin ♦ *Melanodryas cucullata* Noted a few times, with a pair seen well near Deniliquin.
Dusky Robin ♦ *Melanodryas vittata* A couple south of Hobart.



We only found female Flame Robins on the Tasmania extension, but this male obliged on the Devil extension. AB

- Jacky Winter** ♦ *Microeca fascinans* Regular inland, particularly in central Victoria.
- Rose Robin** ♦ *Petroica rosea* Came down low for us both in the Dandenongs.
- Pink Robin** ♦ *Petroica rodinogaster* A male seen very well in Victoria, but on females in Tassie!
- Flame Robin** ♦ *Petroica phoenicea* A couple around in Tasmania, with some cracking males on the devil extension!
- Scarlet Robin** ♦ *Petroica boodang* Noted regularly at various sites, including Heathcote and Bruny.
- Red-capped Robin** ♦ *Petroica goodenovii* Scarce this year, but a pair near Deniliquin was seen well.
- Southern Scrub Robin** ♦ *Drymodes brunneopygia* Noisy but often cryptic, we had marvelous views this year!
- Horsfield's Bush Lark (Australasian B)** *Mirafra javanica* A few birds out on the Deniliquin plains.
- Eurasian Skylark (introduced)** *Alauda arvensis* Plenty around Melbourne and Tasmania.
- White-backed Swallow** ♦ *Cheramoeca leucosterna* Good numbers around sandy dunes on the Strzelecki Track.
- Welcome Swallow** ♦ *Hirundo neoxena* Common throughout.
- Fairy Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon ariel* Common around southern Victoria in particular.
- Tree Martin** ♦ *Petrochelidon nigricans* Replaced most of the Fairy Martins as we headed inland past the Flinders.
- Australian Reed Warbler** ♦ *Acrocephalus australis* Heard and seen in reeds on multiple occasions.
- Rufous Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus mathewsi* Not abundant this year, but good views around Deniliquin.
- Brown Songlark** ♦ *Megalurus cruralis* Plenty out on the plains north of Deniliquin.
- Little Grassbird** ♦ *Megalurus gramineus* Quality views from the bird hide at Gulpa Creek Reedbeds.
- Golden-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* One seen and others heard at the Western Treatment Plant.
- Silvereye** *Zosterops lateralis* Regular in the southern forests of Victoria and Tasmania.
- Common Myna (introduced)** *Acridotheres tristis* Common in the southern cities.
- Common Starling (introduced)** *Sturnus vulgaris* Common throughout the tour.
- Bassian Thrush** ♦ *Zoothera lunulata* Heard around Melbourne, but common on Mount Wellington.
- Common Blackbird (introduced)** *Turdus merula* Common, especially around inland towns.
- Mistletoebird** ♦ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Lovely views on a few occasions.
- House Sparrow (introduced)** *Passer domesticus* Abundant, often picking insects off our car when parked in towns!
- Beautiful Firetail** ♦ *Stagonopleura bella* A truly wonderful bird, enjoyed from the hides at Melaleuca.
- Diamond Firetail** ♦ *Stagonopleura guttata* Plenty around this year at Little Desert, plus one near Bendigo.
- Red-browed Finch** ♦ (R-b Firetail) *Neochmia temporalis* Some great views along the Great Ocean Road.

Zebra Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia guttata* Stop at any water in the outback and you'll see a few hundred of these beauties.
Australian Pipit ♦ *Anthus australis* Flushed often off the road, and viewed perched on occasion.
European Greenfinch (introduced) *Chloris chloris* A few diligently searched out in Tasmania.
European Goldfinch (introduced) *Carduelis carduelis* A couple of small groups noted in Victoria and Tasmania.



A Common Wombat mowing the lawn one evening in Tasmania.

MAMMALS

Total number of mammal species recorded: 24

Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* One in the mid-afternoon along a scrubby Tasmanian river.
Short-beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus* Both on the mainland and in Tasmania.
Eastern Quoll *Dasyurus viverrinus* Quite a few of these attractive marsupials on Bruny Island.
Tasmanian Devil *Sarcophilus harrisii* We saw at least two individuals on our “devil extension”!
Fat-tailed Dunnart *Smithopsis crassicaudata* One spotlight whilst looking for Plains-wanderer.
Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* Multiple individuals seen all across Victoria.
Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* Regularly found at night whilst spotlighting.
Common Ringtail Possum *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* Just one for the leaders on Bruny Island. (LO)
Western Grey Kangaroo *Macropus fuliginosus* Plenty around Hawker and in the mallee.
Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* Seen mainly around Deniliquin.
Euro (Common Wallaroo) *Macropus robustus* Lots around the Flinders Ranges.
Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus* Abundant on Bruny Island.
Red Kangaroo *Macropus rufus* The common macropod on the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks.
Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby *Petrogale xanthopus* A beautiful mammal, seen at close range in the Flinders.
Tasmanian Pademelon *Thylogale billardierii* Lots and lots of these bouncy bundles of fluff in Tasmania
Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus* Not uncommon at night on Bruny Island.
Black Wallaby (Swamp W) *Wallabia bicolor* Just a few seen at various points in Victoria.
Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus* A few on the mainland, and plenty in Tasmania.

Dingo (introduced) *Canis familiaris* Two seen on the Birdsville Track in the pre-dawn darkness.

Red Fox (introduced) *Vulpes vulpes* Too many of these seen in Victoria.

House Cat (introduced) (Feral C) *Felis catus* Only one seen near Hawker, but there's a lot more out there!

Brown Hare (introduced) *Lepus europaeus* Some running across the road near Melbourne.

European Rabbit (introduced) *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Often seen in grassy areas next to the road.

Goat (introduced) (Feral G) *Capra hircus* A couple around the Flinders Ranges.



The rare Long-nosed Potoroo is essentially a tiny wallaby, and they are still fairly common on Bruny Island at night. JB

REPTILES

Total number of reptile species recorded: 6

Tiger Snake *Notechis scutatus* One seen by Alex near Geelong. **(LO)**

Lace Monitor *Varanus varius* A big one hiding up a tree near Little Desert.

Gould's Monitor (Sand Goanna) *Varanus gouldii* One near Hattah.

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

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

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



Tasmanian Pademelon showing off that unique marsupial pouch! JB