



AUSTRALIA'S OUTBACK QUEENSLAND & CAPE YORK TOUR REPORT 2023

14 October - 2 November 2023

BY MIKE WATSON

The 2023 Australia's Outback Queensland & Cape York tour marked our first return to some of the remotest corners of Australia after the pandemic lockdowns. Australia is very big! Our exciting 7000km road trip tracked down 130 of Australia's endemics but it was mostly focused on those tucked away in the top right corner of the continent. We saw 9 of the 10 birds not possible on any of our other tours: Golden-shouldered Parrot; Opalton & Kalkadoon Grasswrens; White-streaked Honeyeater; Hall's Babbler; Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush; Frill-necked Monarch; Northern Scrub Robin and Black-backed Butcherbird. We also recorded 64 regional endemics shared only with New Guinea, plus 7 of the 12 Queensland Wet Tropics zone endemics, as an unexpected bonus not usually included on this itinerary.

We started and ended our journey in the lovely city of Cairns, gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, first making our way north up Cape York all the way to the remote rainforests of the Iron Range – Papua New Guinea in miniature across the Torres Strait. A host of fantastic specialities on the Cape York Peninsula included Spotted Whistling Duck, Australian Bustard, Squatter Pigeon, Wompoo, Superb and Rose-crowned Fruit Doves, Palm Cockatoo, Papuan Eclectus and Red-cheeked Parrots, the endangered Golden-shouldered Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Papuan and Marbled Frogmouths, Eastern Grass Owl, Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Noisy Pitta, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, Black-eared Catbird, Tropical and Large-billed Scrubwrens, Lovely Fairywren, Bridled, White-cheeked, Lewin's, MacLeay's, Tawny-breasted, Graceful and Green-backed Honeyeaters, Hornbill Friarbird, Black-backed Butcherbird, Trumpet Manucode, Magnificent Riflebird, Yellow-legged Flyrobin, Black-faced and White-eared Monarchs, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, White-browed and White-faced Robins, Rufous Shrikethrush, Brown Treecreeper, Varied Sitella, Star, Masked and Black-throated Finches and, most notably, great views of the northern Cape York-only endemics; White-streaked Honeyeater, Frill-necked Flycatcher and Northern Scrub Robin. However, the most exciting encounter of this section of the tour was undoubtedly an off-trail encounter with the prehistoric and genuinely a bit scary Southern Cassowary that some of us had the privilege of setting eyes on deep in the rainforest of the Iron Range.

After returning to Cairns, we headed to the Winton region in west-central Queensland via another Southern Cassowary and then to the even more remote Channel Country of the far southwest. Here we scored with the range-restricted Opalton Grasswren, Hall's Babbler and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, as well as a wonderful supporting cast including Emu, Black Falcon and the rare Grey Falcon, Inland Dotterel, Bourke's Parrot, Mallee Ringneck, Flock Bronzewing, Spinifex

Pigeon, Spotted Bowerbird, Spinifexbird, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Orange Chat, Gibberbird, Plum-headed Finch and, bird-of-the-trip, a profusion of wonderful Letter-winged Kites.

Next, we explored the Mount Isa region in far western Queensland where we tracked down Kalkadoon Grasswren, the localized Cloncurry Ringneck and Spotted Bowerbird, Painted Finch and Black-tailed Treecreeper. The only significant blot on our copybook was missing Carpentarian Grasswren, whose favoured stakeouts had just been burnt to a cinder by cataclysmic bush fires days before our visit. We searched and searched old alternative sites to no avail.

On our return to Cairns, we completed our set of Australian Frogmouths with Tawny and then we made a short detour to add the unique Platypus to our lists, along with a selection of northeast rainforest birds including Grey-headed, Eastern Yellow and Pale-yellow Robins, White-throated Treecreeper, Scarlet Honeyeater, Spotted Catbird, Pied Monarch, Victoria's Riflebird, Eastern Whipbird and Atherton Scrubwren. Another couple of A-list Queensland Tropical Wet zone critters included Green Ringtail Possum and Boyd's Forest Dragon. What a fabulous journey it had been. We certainly felt like we had seen plenty of Outback Australia and its special wildlife!

High tide in the lovely, leafy city of Cairns was in the early morning so we decided to grab some action along its famous Esplanade before breakfast but not before we took a quick look at Centenary Lakes, where there had been a Little Kingfisher the previous day. Happily, this little gem was still sat on its favourite palm frond, an uncommon bird on this itinerary and of the deep blue northeast subspecies *halli*. A Pacific Baza here was the only one of the tour and Australian Brushturkey and Orange-footed Scrubfowl were the first of many. Hornbill Friarbird and Metallic Starlings too. The mudflats of the Esplanade itself were very productive with some Siberian shorebirds already in their winter residence, including around 150 Great Knot, as well as Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Grey-tailed Tattlers and massive Far Eastern Curlews. A couple of equally massive Channel-billed Cuckoos flew south, and other notable sightings included Australian and Caspian Terns, Torresian Kingfisher, Rainbow Lorikeet, Double-eyed Fig Parrot and Varied Honeyeater before we settled down to a classic breakfast at Muddy's, one of the world's top birding café locations!

After breakfast the temperature had already started to creep upwards, and we embarked on our long journey north up the Cape York Peninsula. It was a day of quick stops that broke up the long drive, the first at Jack Bethel producing the smart Black Butcherbird, Little Bronze and Brush Cuckoos, Laughing Kookaburra, Noisy Friarbird, Fairy Gerygone and Rufous Fantail before it was time to move on. The entrance road to nearby Mareeba Wetlands is still worth a look, even though the wetlands themselves are now off limits to the public and we added Pheasant Coucal, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, the lovely Red-backed Fairywren, Leaden Flycatcher and Australian Pipit here. Just a little further down the road at Big Mitchell River, Yellow and White-throated Honeyeater were added to our lists. Before lunch at the quirky Mount Molloy café (maybe the only Swiss-Mexican café in Australia? They modestly serve the 'best burgers in the world!' Definitely best in Mount Molloy at least) we checked a nearby dam where Wandering Whistling Duck, Green Pygmy Goose, Comb-crested Jacana, Wood Sandpiper, Little Pied Cormorant and Intermediate Egret were seen. A couple of roadside sightings included Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and some Australian Bustards.

We had a few other stops along the duty Peninsular Development Road (the PDR), including Laura where Great Bowerbirds were feasting on fallen mangos before we reached the remote Artemis Station. We figured we could save a long back-track the following morning if we could see the endangered Golden-shouldered Parrot this evening and sure enough, up to eleven of these fast-flying little parrots were on show as soon as we rolled up at their feeding station, including two males. I would usually say smart or something but at this time of year they are moulting and are looking their best. Surely the rarest bird of the tour, now in three figures they are very vulnerable in their tiny present range at the base of Cape York. They are slim and can be tricky to spot in foliage!

Calling in at a Red Goshawk nest we were disappointed to find the young had fledged and '*Elvis had left the building*' (we tried here and in the general area three more times during our stay in this area without any luck) so we continued to our accommodation for the next couple of nights, the awesome Lotus Bird Lodge. This is one of the nicest places I have stayed at anywhere! In an idyllic setting, a lovely veranda overlooks a large waterhole thronged with birds, surrounded by beautiful eucalypt savannah. The food was top class, the wooden chalets on stilts gorgeous (the whole area can be inundated in the rainy season) and the staff were incredibly helpful and welcoming! The mint tea on arrival was very welcome indeed! Among many others, of note on the water were Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling Duck, Radjah Shelduck, Royal Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, White-necked and Pied Herons. In the trees around the lodge were Red-winged Parrots and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and scores of Agile Wallabies were dotted around the lodge grounds – they get free meals here. Fab-u-lous! The first day of a tour in a new country is always full of new birds!

We had only scratched the surface of Lotus Bird Lodge's grounds the previous evening, so we took a short walk next morning, adding the sought-after Black-backed Butcherbird and Pale-headed Rosella. After a second strike for Red Gos we made our way out onto Nifold Plains, in Lakefield National Park, a terrific area of open grassland dotted with innumerable huge termite mounds and the occasional clump of trees and billabongs. At our first stop we added the leggy Australian Pratincole, Black-shouldered Kite and a nice selection of finches – Star, Double-banded, Masked and Black-throated. Australian Bustards sought shade behind the termite mounds and a flock of Brolgas visited one of the billabongs. A large Yellow-spotted Monitor crossed one of the graded roads and as the temperature soared into the mid-thirties Celsius we checked a few more shady spots adding White-throated, Bar-breasted and Rufous-banded Honeyeaters and Large-billed and White-throated Gerygones. Nearby water bodies held White-browed Crane, Nankeen Night Heron and a huge Saltwater Crocodile (a reminder, if one was needed, not to venture too close to any water's edge!).

We were back again after dark in search of creatures of the night and tallied at least 10 Eastern Barn Owls, four huge Papuan Frogmouths and a Spotted Python crossing the road. A very enjoyable day in a lovely landscape!

Next morning, we had another try for Red Gos, in the vicinity of their nest, again without success but we did see some good birds in the form of Varied Sitella and Little Friarbird, before it was time to continue on our journey. I can't say driving on the PDR is enjoyable, it just has to be endured to get to some incredible places. For the most part, driving the second Land Cruiser I was peering into a dust cloud wondering when the next bull dust hole would appear. Archer River is the gateway to the Iron Range, we stopped to eat our lunch and there was a lad from Chester-le-Street, County Durham on the till at the roadhouse! *Geordies here, Geordies there!* From here the road winds through hills clad with lovely eucalypt savannah until eventually the trees following the watercourses grow larger, the peak of Mount Tozer appears on the right, and we were in the Iron Range at last. Although it is a rainforest, the tropical vegetation is mostly restricted to the watercourses and between them, the hills remain savannah and tropical heath vegetation, it is far from endless rainforest as far as the eye can see, that I recall from flying over the Fly River region in Papua New Guinea 20 years ago. Birding here is essentially roadside apart from a few trails that penetrate the forest, and our first stop was very busy with our first Magnificent Riflebirds calling all around us. It was not long before we got some views of the electric blue of the male! The noisy Papuan Eclectus Parrot was added to our list (another bird shared with New Guinea) as was Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, a little further on. The Metallic Starlings appeared to be breeding in an old dead tree and a female Shining Flycatcher put in an appearance.

Our base for the next five nights was the delightful Portland House. Another great place to get away from it all situated overlooking an idyllic mangrove-fringed beach with the Great Barrier Reef beyond. There were a few birds around too, Brown Noddies were feeding offshore, with Lesser Crested, Bridled and Common Terns among them. At what remains of the WWII jetty, built when invasion by Japan was a grave concern, we added Common Sandpiper. A Grey-tailed Tattler and Eurasian Whimbrel were also here, and a Zebra Shark swam by close inshore, its weird double dorsal fin breaking the water's surface.

The next morning saw our first full day in the Iron Range, and we kicked off in style with three roadside Palm Cockatoos, some of our folks' most wanted! Some of us saw our first Cape York-only endemic Northern Scrub Robin but the other half of us couldn't manage a glimpse as it sang deep in a tangle of branches. However, a terrific Noisy Pitta was more accommodating, also singing not far away and everyone managed to set eyes on it without any difficulty. Rufous Shrikethrush (the recent split from Little) and White-faced Robin slipped by here as well. We added some new pigeons – Brown Cuckoo Dove, Wompoo and Superb Fruit Doves and some of us had a brief Trumpet Manucode. Honeyeaters abounded, with Graceful, White-throated, and Tawny-breasted all making appearances. A noisy Yellow-billed Kingfisher eluded us but the second Cape York-only endemic Frill-necked Monarch was spotted building a nest but was quite shy and the more widespread Spectacled Monarch was also seen. A very exciting start in the rainforest but we still had much to do. Swinging by Lockhart River itself we paused at a small dam where we counted 23 of the sometimes-elusive Spotted Whistling Duck among the commoner and more widespread Wandering. Brown-backed Honeyeaters foraged in the tree bark here.

After lunch a trip to the nearby Chili Beach allowed us to stretch our legs along its gorgeous sands, while watching a nice variety of shorebirds, including our first Pacific Golden and Red-capped Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers. A family of Little Terns was offshore here as an adult White-bellied Sea Eagle cruised down the beach. The wooded tangles inland from the beach produced Tropical Scrubwren (often missed in PNG apparently) and Varied Triller and the purple-wattled form of Australian Brushturkey followed us around. We had a night off this evening, after a couple of long days, there was plenty of time for spotlighting to come.

The following day was cloudy with a northeast wind and a rough sea! A Lesser Frigatebird was hanging in the wind over the hill behind Portland House. The skulking Northern Scrub Robin gave itself up in spectacular style today, affording walkaway views once we figured out it was signing at eye level not on the forest floor. While searching for the robin a Black-eared Catbird called nearby but we dare not give up on the robin again, so we let it go for the time being. Today we hiked a little further into the forest, crossing one of the streams to access some quieter habitat away from the endless roadworks, that stretched along the entire course of the rainforest. Yellow-billed Kingfisher also showed nicely for us today, the false eyes on the back of its ginger head were particularly striking. Finally, we managed to see the third Cape York-only endemic (well there is a fourth, but no-one sees Buff-breasted Buttonquail), the beautifully marked White-streaked Honeyeater, not far from where we had ticked off the bowerbird the previous day. We saw some nice butterflies too including Capaneus Swallowtail and Eastern Red Lacewing. Lunch by the sea at Lockhart River added Greater Crested Tern but nothing else. The evening spotlighting was productive with highlights Marbled and Papuan Frogmouths, Large-tailed Nightjar, Dingo and White-tailed Giant Rat. As we left our evening meal a pair of eyes watched us from under the mangroves in the bay, a Saltwater Crocodile. Sheree told us that three live here! Fancy a midnight skinny dip? No thanks.

We retraced our footsteps today but now focusing purely on birds we had not seen yet seeing the highly elusive Yellow-legged Flyrobin, which came in silently and high in the canopy! A pair of Lovely Fairywrens deep inside the rainforest and a couple of Little Bronze Cuckoos of the *russatus* subspecies (formerly split as 'Gould's') and Yellow-breasted Boatbill represented further progress today as was a bonus white morph Grey Goshawk, this stunning bird is a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo plumage mimic, in order to disguise its presence. It was quite shy though and did not pose for long! We also improved on previous views of such as White-faced Robin and Frill-necked Monarch – we found a second nest of the latter. However, prize of place today went to the fantastic Common Spotted Cuscus in the canopy at Cook's Hut.

A daytime view and even climbing down a branch towards us at one point! Another afternoon visit to Chili Beach did not add anything to our bird list, but we did see an impressive Saltwater Crocodile hauled out on the offshore rocky islet here.

The rainforest of the Iron Range takes its time to reveal its more secretive birds! Today's discoveries included White-browed Robin, Black-eared Catbird (generally thought to be the trickiest Cape York bird), White-eared Monarch and best of all, a Southern Cassowary, off trail and deep in the forest, expertly spotted by Michael. We were so lucky that it stood motionless and allowed everyone who had come on this slightly more intrepid hike to set eyes on it, before disappearing into a blur of tangled branches and tree trunks. One of the most exciting experiences of the whole tour!

Other notable sightings included a White-streaked Honeyeater in the rainforest, it is unusual to see it away from its preferred tropical heathland habitat and non-avian critters included Fiery Skimmer dragonfly, a Six-toothed Rainbow Skink on a fallen log and a Coastal Taipan, sadly moribund having been hit by the vehicle before us, its back broken. Probably just as well, as it is deadly venomous and can be aggressive, I am told. The diversity of wildlife in the Iron Range, and so much of it special to this area, is quite stunning. The last night drive did not produce the hoped-for Southern Green Python unfortunately, we left it for next time! It was probably too breezy and dry for it to be out hunting today. Instead, we had another four Marbled Frogmouths, including our best sighting so far of the distinctive little subspecies *marmoratus*. Our final morning here only added the lovely Rose-crowned Fruit Dove in the mangroves in front of Portland House and then we were off, back onto the PDR and south to the lovely Lotus Bird Lodge. The journey produced a couple of Pied Currawongs of note and this evening we had another try in Lakefield National Park for Eastern Grass Owl, success at last, with a bird hovering right overhead in response to some (pretty poor) squeaking. Eastern Barn Owl was again ridiculously common and also more approachable than the EGO.

Thankfully we would soon be rid of the dust and bumps of the PDR, there was just one more day to go. Another quick stop at Dave's Dam produced Brown Treecreeper this time, as well as an impressive 50 Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and then followed some very productive stops in the Mount Molloy area, it would have been rude not to! On our way to the famous café there we added Banded Honeyeater at one of Michael's hotspots as well as three point-blank Australian Bustards, gasping for air in the midday heat. We added Bridled and MacLeay's Honeyeaters and Bower's Shrikethrush (all Queensland Wet Tropics endemics) as well as Aussie endemics: White-cheeked and Lewin's Honeyeaters and Large-billed Scrubwren and Black-faced Monarch (shared with New Guinea) and Common Cicadabird and Silvereye (lowly regional specialities). A little further south we filled a pigeon gap in our list with Squatter Pigeon at a ridiculously easy spot for them, Granite Gorge, just walking around at close range in the open on the lawn of the nature park there. Some enormous Channel-billed Cuckoos were perched in the trees here as well, unusually not hastening on their way somewhere as we so often see them. Back in lovely Cairns a lonely Australian Pelican standing on the beach at Muddy's Cafe was a nice welcome back to our favourite spot.

Our tour continued to feel like a road trip the following day as with 950km ahead we started early with a brief stop at ETTY's Bay, the classic Southern Cassowary site but the closest we got were the numerous cassowary warning signs along the roads in this area. By a stroke of luck, a friend Laurie Ross rolled up while we were there and gave us a hot tip, another spot just down the road, which quickly came up trumps with this monstrous creature. One sauntered across an area of short grass between forest patches for all to see this time. Phew, that was a relief! The rest of the day was punctuated by rest stops here and there, a couple of bakeries, a Crimson Finch stakeout, and a rest area with our first of many Yellow-throated Miners, otherwise it was familiar Aussie roadside birds all the way out west to Winton, where we finally reached our destination in the early evening sunshine, to find three enormous Brolgas on the tiny strip of lawn next to our motel. They visit almost every evening to drink water put out for them as well as bird seed! It had been over 40 Celsius today in Winton, not unusual here of course.

The temperature was due to soar again the following day, so we made an early start, spending the morning in Bladensburg National Park. We were now in spinifex country! With a whole new set of birds to find. The park is an 85,000 hectares semi-desert grassland landscape with patches of mulga and gumtree woodland. We had four big targets in this region and the first of these, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush proved tricky today, with only some of us catching a glimpse of this shy songster that prefers to run away rather than fly and keeps its distance as a matter of course. We would have to wait for better views of this one. Easier additions to our list in this excellent park, empty of people, were: (Mallee) Australian Ringneck; Collared Sparrowhawk (the only one of the tour!); Purple-backed and White-winged Fairywrens; Crimson Chat; Grey-headed, White-plumed and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater; Inland Thornbill; Crested Bellbird; Rufous Whistler and the super-smart Red-capped Robin. We explored spots like Skull Hole (the site of a massacre of 200 aboriginal people in c.1872) and Engine Hole. Spinifex Pigeon was very common indeed here with more than 70 noted! On the outskirts of town, we came across a flock of around 50 Plum-headed Finches at a small dam, where Black-tailed Nativehen was also new for the tour. We frequented a splendid old bar during our time at Winton, the Australian Hotel, established in 1897 – a quintessential Aussie watering hole, complete with an incredible mural dating back to the 1920s featuring the locals of that time and said to have been painted by a guest in lieu of his keep. Joe kept us supplied with Lemon, lime and bitters, a particular favourite of Dave and mine. After a much-needed siesta in the 44 degrees Celsius today we ventured out again in the afternoon, keeping the 'tickometer' busy at the water treatment works with Australasian Swampphen, Baillon's Crane, Eurasian Coot, Great Cormorant, Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, Australian Reed Warbler and Little Grassbird. The nearby Long and Pelican Waterholes added Hardhead, Orange Chat (an inconspicuous female!), Singing Bushlark and a good number of Budgerigars (some of our folks' first outside captivity).

I also discovered that Kelly gets excited every time she sees a Cockatiel! 10/10 for enthusiasm. There were even flocks of them flying to roost over the high street as we sat outside for our evening meal.

The weather had changed today, apparently a product of what was happening almost 1000km away on the coast. It was cloudy and ten degrees cooler, with a wind from the southeast that picked up in intensity during the day, making birding in the spinifex country decidedly more difficult. The day started off very nicely with some live Emus (at last!) before dawn. Target number #2, Hall's Babbler was very co-operative, with a small party spotted by Michael from the moving vehicle! This is another smart and very range-restricted Outback speciality. The third of our four targets was also seen, the rare budgie-nemesis Grey Falcon! A pair was at a nest site on a sky-high telecom aerial, fortunately not too far up in the wind. We didn't realise how lucky we were as they weren't present the following day! A positively glowing male Splendid Fairywren performed beautifully for us, although for the photographers there was always something in the way! Three Rufous-crowned Emu-wrens were seen, they rarely leave the safety of their spinifex knitting needle clumps. Spinifex grass tips are reinforced with silica and can be troublesome if they enter your skin and break off. Other new additions included Spotted Harrier, Red-backed Kingfisher, Bourke's Parrot, Singing Honeyeater, Hooded Robin (one sat next to a Crested Bellbird) and Spinifexbird (one of which was an outrageously showy individual in a bare bush!). There was no sign of any grasswrens though, again! Time was ticking away.

What a relief it was to see Opalton Grasswren the next morning! It could have been more obliging, showing for only for a few seconds each time, probably owing to the wind, which was still blowing, but at least everyone got on them. We had resorted to checking a sighting from August this year and immediately got a bingo! It was interesting that they seemed to be in very old spinifex, where the expanding cushions had joined and become whirling alleyways of the spiky grass. We could now press on further into the Channel Country towards Boulia. We passed by typical birds of this open country such as Emu, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel until car no.#1 pulled up suddenly by some fleeing Red Kangaroos. Michael had only been saying moments before *'and this is the kind of landscape we see Gibberbird'*, the roos flushed one by the roadside. We could approach it closely too and give a good *'digiwasting'*. What a treat to see this enigmatic Outback special. The weird honeyeater that least likes trees, swapping them for desolate stony gravel plains. We continued to Boulia, population 301, stopping for a definite Little Crow and to pull some feathers out of a roadkill wedgie. Boulia's claim to fame is the Min Min light, thought to be an atmospheric refraction when cold air is trapped between warm air. It has become a tourist attraction with a take of a frightened stockman on horseback being chased by it and there is a Min Min Encounter Information Centre in Boulia! We had an enjoyable excursion along the Boulia River this evening, adding Little Eagle, which almost slipped by overhead among the ever present Black and Whistling Kites, as well as Varied Lorikeet and Rufous Songlark. A Spotted Bowerbird's bower was another interesting find, but its maker was not around this evening.

There are quite a few star attractions on this itinerary, but I had been looking forward to this day in particular, as we embarked on a big loop that would take us to the remotest point on our road trip, skirting the Diamantina National Park and deep into Channel Country where we would only be a stone's throw from the Simpson Desert. Heading southeast from Boulia we neared Coorabulka Station, where a lovely Inland Dotterel appeared by the roadside, unfortunately it did not pose for photos and flew away out of sight into the vast flatness, so we continued onwards. Such remote cattle stations usually have their own airstrip! Emus and Australian Bustards were noted here and there. A Spotted Bowerbird was seen by a small waterhole and a flock of around 100 Budgerigars was at another. A couple of close roadside Black Falcons, Wedge-tailed Eagle and Spotted Harrier were also seen. Leaving the gibber plains behind we joined the Diamantina Development Road and checked a tiny wetland, which held a few interesting birds notably our only Freckled Duck of the trip, an intricately marked female in the loose company of Grey Teals. Small flocks of Australian Pratincoles by the roadside kept us entertained and when we stopped to have a closer look, we noticed a good number of Orange Chats as well. By lunchtime we had reached the furthest southwest point of the tour, Cuttaburra Crossing, a connecting channel between Lakes Machattie and Koolivoo/Mipia. We were now only 110km north of Birdsville on the South Australia border. A Great Crested Grebe was a good bird for this part of Australia and other waterbirds were in abundance, including around 75 Maned Ducks. We paused for diesel and ice creams at the tiny hamlet of Bedourie (population 122), where there was a girl from Basingstoke on the till! Nice to see that some youngsters still have that wanderlust. We were now just 575km east of Alice! What a place to come and work. The outstanding highlight today (and of the whole tour for most) came at a stop just south of the Tropic of Capricorn at one of the many river crossings on this stretch of the Bedourie to Boulia road. We scoured the south side of the road, where Michael had some luck on his last visit a few months previously without any luck but almost as soon as we turned our attention to the north side there it was, Letter-winged Kite. Great big goggly eyes sitting in one of the low gum trees. Within minutes the kite broke cover and took to the air, followed by a flurry of others, at least 50 in total! They flew directly towards and over us, before towering high into the sky and then gradually descending back into their favourite trees, just like pal Pete said they would! What a terrific experience! The ground along the watercourse here was riddled with rodent burrows but when this food source runs out, the kites will pitch up somewhere else, maybe 1000km away! These breeding events usually follow good rains but they are unpredictable, so it was good to have the opportunity to see them here. Without the Letterwing experience, a gathering of around 3000 Flock Bronzings would have been the highlight. They packed every inch of shade under isolated gum trees and even blocked the road at one stage. This is another unpredictable Outback Enigma that you must go out of your way for! What a fabulous day, my favourite of this Australian adventure. We returned to some more lemon, lime and bitters at Boulia, population 301! As well as the Min Min light Boulia has a crater on Mars named after it.

It was time to drive north to Mount Isa, a worrying prospect as we had already heard that the roads around the town had been closed for the last few days owing to cataclysmic bush fires. However, lucky for us they had just reopened. We stopped off at a Kalkadoon Grasswren site near Dajarra. We quickly saw two of them on a rocky spinifex slope, but they did not linger for photos and disappeared in typical grasswren style. It's not easy to arrange photographic distance views with a large group. A little further Brown Songlark put in its first rather underwhelming appearance. Approaching Mount Isa there were still clouds of smoke whirling here and there and to the north and west was a wall of darkness, where the fires were most intense and still at least smouldering. We stayed near the city this afternoon, checking the water treatment plant first. Another two Baillon's Crakes were noted, as was new-for-the-tour Australian Spotted Crake. The Silver Gull colony here had around 10 well-grown youngsters, apparently the furthest inland breeding site of this mostly coastal gull. A Grey Shrikethrush was seen by the first vehicle and the marshes around the nearby horse paddocks added Red-kneed Dotterel and Marsh Sandpiper among the more familiar waterbirds. As we checked in at our hotel a party of Grey-crowned Babblers in the car park were also new. The afternoon excursion was to the Pamela Street Reservoirs, on the edge of town, where we saw another Kalkadoon Grasswren and added Black-chinned and Grey-headed Honeyeaters to our list. Common Wallaroo and Purple-necked Rock Wallaby were also noted here. As we gathered for our evening meal a steady exodus of Little Red Flying Foxes was heading south, numbering in the thousands! We were in Gulf Country now, where the water flows north again into the Gulf of Carpentaria. That sounds nice but Mount Isa (population 18,317) is far from nice. It is home to the most productive mineral mines in the world – lead, silver, copper and zinc and the mining infrastructure dominates the town in a 'Mordoresque' way. The 270m tall lead smelter chimney particularly. The town is divided by the Leichhardt River (after the 19th century explorer) into mineside and townside and another of its claims to fame is that it is the birthplace of golfer Greg Norman!

Now allowed out of town, we headed west next morning to find that all of Michael's Carpentarian Grasswren sites had been burnt to a cinder, what a mess! A real tragedy for these birds and all the other creatures of the spinifex country here. Spinifex burns very well. So, we were reduced to exploring historic sites and unfortunately came up with a blank after trudging around for hours. We did see the other more common birds of this area where there was still some habitat left untouched, such as Pallid Cuckoo, (Cloncurry) Australian Ringneck, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Weebill (which seems to be attracted by grasswren sounds) and the lovely Paperbark Flycatcher in a patch of Melaleuca Forest. There were a couple of Northern Water Dragons in the car park this afternoon. The temperature was still quite high at 37 Celsius today, and although we saw some dramatic storm clouds all they managed to produce were a few drops of rain on the windscreen.

Today was another big transfer day but before we left the Mount Isa area, we spent some hours at another suggested spot for the grasswren but all we could add here was Jacky Winter. It was quite common at this spot but was not seen anywhere else on the tour! A Frill-necked Lizard on the graded road was more exciting! We also called in at Moondarra Lake, now the road to the north of town had been reopened and luckily the fire had not quite reached the lakeshore, although much of the surrounding area had been burnt. The lake itself was great, with lots of waterbirds, The tame juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpipers along the shore deserve a special mention and Australian Pied Cormorant and (the feral) Indian Peafowl were new. Also new were Long-tailed Finch and the attractive Painted Finch along the rocky lakeshore. A couple of excellent reptiles were also here: Freshwater Crocodile (one cruising by in a sheltered bay) and Slater's Ring-tailed Dragon (*Ctenophorus slateri*). The seven hours journey to Hughenden seemed to pass by quickly, with stops in Cloncurry, Julia Creek and Richmond and we arrived with still some time to go spotlighting after evening meal. The landscape was on fire to the north of Hughenden as well! Fortunately, not close enough to stop us seeing a couple of Tawny Frogmouths, a Common Brushtail Possum and the range-restricted Spectacled Hare Wallaby very nicely! Hughenden (population 1136) is mostly a sheep and cattle grazing town, although it was settled by native people around 11,000 years ago! The town of Hughenden was established by European settlers in 1870 and is named after the Buckinghamshire manor of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli!

We had another seven hours of driving to get back to Cairns by nightfall so what to do? There was nothing new for us in the Hughenden area so we decided to go off piste and make a slight detour to the Atherton Tablelands. Arriving in the early afternoon we made a few whistle-stops for our folks who would not be returning to Australia, the first of these at Wurruma Swamp, where Black Swan and Cotton Pygmy Goose were common. The next spot was Mount Hypipamee, we were back in the Queensland Wet Tropics (QWT) again. As well as a few birds we had already seen in the Mount Molloy area, we added: Grey-headed Robin (a QWT endemic) and Pale-yellow Robin of the northern subspecies xxx; White-throated Treecreeper; Grey Fantail; Scarlet Honeyeater and in the crater here, Peregrine Falcon. The crater is worth a look in its own right, it is a 58m deep diatreme (a volcanic pipe created by a volcanic gas explosion) with a further 70m deep lake. Next came Curtain Fig Tree National Park, named after a very impressive 500 years old fig tree, with 15m+ tall roots. This session was very exciting with new birds and other creatures coming at us thick and fast. QWT endemics Pied Monarch, Victoria's Riflebird (nest-building) and Atherton Scrubwren as well as Australian endemics Spotted Catbird and Eastern Whipbird all obliged. We saw a couple of A-list QWT critters from the fig tree boardwalk – a roosting Green Ringtail Possum and the spectacular Boyd's Forest Dragon (*Lophosaurus boydii*). What a place! Our final excursion was to the very lovely Peterson's Creek, where the main reason for this detour, Platypus performed exceptionally well, swimming along the narrow creek only a few metres away. What a bizarre thing it is too, a monotreme with features shared with birds. No wonder it was first thought to be a hoax by 18th century scientists. We could watch it using its bill to forage in the shallows reminiscent of a spoonbill. We added our last two birds to the trip list here – the pretty Eastern Yellow Robin and the not-so-pretty Brown Gerygone. The many flying foxes here were also new – the range-restricted and endangered Spectacled.

Sadly, the tree kangaroo did not appear, it will have to wait until next time. We had a lovely farewell dinner at Yungaburra and made our way back to Cairns, where some of us went shopping at the famous night market. What a great way to end our amazing Aussie adventure! Thanks to all our very enthusiastic group and particularly to our main man Michael Greenshields for leading us so expertly around his home country. 7000 km to some of the remotest spots in Australia and not so much as a flat tyre! We will be back!

BIRD OF THE TOUR

- 1 = Letter-winged Kite
- 2 = Southern Cassowary
- 3 = Platypus
- 4 = Flock Bronzewing
- 5 = Gibberbird
- 6 = Grey Falcon
- 7 = Splendid Fairywren
- 8 = Purple-backed Fairywren
- 9 = Spotted Bowerbird
- 10 = Yellow-billed Kingfisher

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED

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).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follows Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P.(Eds). **2023. IOC World Bird List (v13.2)** (this was the current version when the checklist for the tour report was created).

Where the subspecies seen is/are known, these are often given in parentheses at the end of the species comment.

BIRDS

Southern Cassowary ◊ *Casuarus casuarus* Singles Iron Range & Mourilyan Harbour

Emu ◊ *Dromaius novaehollandiae* Endemic. 50+ sightings in the Outback

Magpie Goose ◊ *Anseranas semipalmata* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Spotted Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna guttata* 23 Lockhart River

Plumed Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* Endemic. 13 Lotus Bird Lodge

Wandering Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna arcuata* First noted Wetherby Dam

Black Swan ◊ *Cygnus atratus* Endemic. 30+ Wurrama Swamp

Freckled Duck ◊ *Stictonetta naevosa* Endemic. Female Diamantina Development Road

Radjah Shelduck ◊ *Radjah radjah* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Pink-eared Duck ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP

Maned Duck ◊ *Chenonetta jubata* Endemic. c 75 Cuttaburra Crossing

Cotton Pygmy Goose ◊ *Nettapus coromandelianus* 17 Wurrama Swamp

Green Pygmy Goose ◊ *Nettapus pulchellus* First noted Wetherby Dam

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* First noted Cairns

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Hardhead ♦ *Aythya australis* First noted Long Waterhole, Winton

Australian Brushturkey ♦ *Alectura lathamii* Endemic. First Cairns, ssp *purpureicollis* & *lathamii*

Orange-footed Scrubfowl *Megapodius reinwardt* First noted Cairns

Indian Peafowl (introduced) *Pavo cristatus* Male Moondarra Lake

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* Three sightings Iron Range NP

Marbled Frogmouth ♦ *Podargus ocellatus* Three sightings Iron Range NP

Papuan Frogmouth ♦ *Podargus papuensis* Eleven Lakefield NP, one Iron Range NP

Tawny Frogmouth ♦ *Podargus strigoides* Endemic. Two Porcupine Gorge

Australian Swiftlet ♦ *Aerodramus terraereginae* Endemic. First noted Cairns Esplanade

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* One Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.

Australian Bustard ♦ *Ardeotis australis* First noted near Mount Molloy, 32 sightings

Pheasant Coucal ♦ *Centropus phasianinus* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Pacific Koel ♦ *Eudynamys orientalis* Noted Etty Bay

Channel-billed Cuckoo ♦ *Scythrops novaehollandiae* Nine, the first Cairns Esplanade

Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo ♦ *Chrysococcyx basalis* Endemic. One Winton WTP

Little Bronze Cuckoo ♦ *Chrysococcyx [minutillus] minutillus* One Jack Bethel Park

Little Bronze Cuckoo ♦ (Gould's B C) *Chrysococcyx [minutillus] russatus* 2 Iron Range

Pallid Cuckoo ♦ *Cacomantis pallidus* Endemic. Noted at Mt Isa

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* One Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia* Small numbers noted

Spotted Dove (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis* Noted in urban Cairns

Brown Cuckoo-Dove ♦ *Macropygia phasianella* Endemic. Nine sightings Iron Range NP

Pacific Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris* Iron Range NP & Peterson's Ck

Common Bronzewing ♦ *Phaps chalcoptera* Endemic. Eight sightings in the Outback

Flock Bronzewing ♦ *Phaps histrionica* Endemic. c 3000 in the Bedourie area

Crested Pigeon ♦ *Ocyphaps lophotes* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Spinifex Pigeon ♦ *Geophaps plumifera* Endemic. c 130 noted in the Outback

Squatter Pigeon ♦ *Geophaps scripta* Endemic. Eight Granite Gorge and two N of Hughenden

Diamond Dove ♦ *Geopelia cuneata* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida* Small numbers from Cairns onwards

Bar-shouldered Dove ♦ *Geopelia humeralis* Common Cape York

Wompoo Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus magnificus* 2 Iron Range NP & 1 at Peterson's Ck

Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus* Three sightings Iron Range NP

Rose-crowned Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus regina* Noted Portland Roads, Iron Range NP

Torresian Imperial Pigeon ♦ *Ducula spilorrhoea* Abundant in Cairns

Australian Crake ♦ *Porzana fluminea* Endemic. One Mt Isa Water Treatment Plant

Black-tailed Nativehen ♦ *Tribonyx ventralis* Endemic. 17 sightings in the Outback

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa* Five sightings after the first at Lockhart River

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Two at each of Winton and Mt Isa

Australasian Swamphen ♦ *Porphyrio melanotus* Five Winton and c30 Mt Isa

Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla* Seven Winton and two Mt Isa

White-browed Crake ♦ *Poliolimnas cinereus* One Lakefield NP

Brolga ♦ *Antigone rubicunda* c80 noted including the surreal Winton Motel experience

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* c200 noted

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* One Cuttaburra Crossing

Little Buttonquail ♦ *Turnix velox* Endemic. Five sightings

Bush Stone-curlew ♦ *Burhinus grallarius* Endemic. Several in suburban Cairns

Pied Oystercatcher ♦ *Haematopus longirostris* Endemic. A pair Chili Beach, Iron Range NP

Pied Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* Very common

Red-kneed Dotterel ♦ *Erythrogonys cinctus* Endemic. Three Mt Isa

Inland Dotterel ♦ *Peltohyas australis* Endemic. A single bird near Coorabulka Station

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* 16 sightings

Red-capped Plover ♦ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Endemic. c10 Iron Range NP

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaulti* First noted Cairns, 14 noted Iron Range

Black-fronted Dotterel ♦ *Euseyornis melanops* Endemic. c55 noted

Comb-crested Jacana ♦ *Irediparra gallinacea* First noted Wetherby Dam

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Five sightings, Cairns and Iron Range NP

Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* Two Cairns Esplanade

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* c30 Cairns Esplanade, 1 Iron Range NP

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* One Cairns Esplanade

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* c150 Cairns Esplanade

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* c35 noted, the first at Cairns Esplanade

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* c10 Cairns Esplanade

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* 5 Cairns Esplanade & c40 Iron Range NP

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Five sightings Iron Range NP

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* c50 noted, the first Cairns Esplanade

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Two Mt Isa

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* One Wetherby Dam, One Mt Isa

Australian Pratincole ♦ *Stiltia isabella* First Lakefield, max. c50 Diamantina Dev Rd

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Some hundreds far offshore at Portland Roads

Silver Gull ♦ *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* Common at the coast & c110 Mt Isa

Australian Tern ♦ *Gelochelidon macrotarsa* One Cairns Esplanade

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* Four Cairns Esplanade

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* c20 Iron Range NP

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* Two Iron Range NP
Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* 1 sightings Iron Range NP
Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Six Iron Range NP
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* One Iron Range NP
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* One Lotus Bird Lodge, max c20 Moondara Lake
Black-necked Stork ♦ *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* 8 sightings, first Lotus Bird Lodge
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* One Portland Roads
Australasian Darter ♦ *Anhinga novaehollandiae* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* First noted Wetherby Dam
Australian Pied Cormorant ♦ *Phalacrocorax varius* One Moondarra Lake, Mt Isa
Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* c350 noted at Boulia
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Singles Winton and Boulia
Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
Straw-necked Ibis ♦ *Threskiornis spinicollis* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
Royal Spoonbill ♦ *Platalea regia* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
Yellow-billed Spoonbill ♦ *Platalea flavipes* Endemic. Two Boulia
Nankeen Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* First noted Lakefield NP
Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* A scatter of sightings
White-necked Heron ♦ *Ardea pacifica* c40 noted
Great Egret *Ardea alba* First noted Iron Range NP
Plumed Egret *Ardea plumifera* First noted Wetherby Dam
Pied Heron ♦ *Egretta picata* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge
White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* First noted Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* First noted Cairns
Pacific Reef Heron *Egretta sacra* Three noted Iron Range NP
Australian Pelican ♦ *Pelecanus conspicillatus* One at Muddy's Café, Cairns
Black-shouldered Kite ♦ *Elanus axillaris* Endemic. First noted Lakefield NP
Letter-winged Kite ♦ *Elanus scriptus* Endemic. Minimum 50 Between Bedourie and Boulia
Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata* One Centenary Lakes, Cairns
Little Eagle ♦ *Hieraetus morphnoides* Endemic. One pale morph Boulia
Wedge-tailed Eagle ♦ *Aquila audax* 21 sightings, mostly in the Outback
Grey Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter novaehollandiae* Two Iron Range NP, one a white morph
Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* Seven sightings, the commonest accipiter
Collared Sparrowhawk ♦ *Accipiter cirrocephalus* One Bladensburg NP
Spotted Harrier ♦ *Circus assimilis* Seven sightings, the first near Lark Quarry, Winton
Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Very common in the Outback
Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* Common in the Outback

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* First noted Lakefield NP

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Ichthyophaga leucogaster* Three sightings Iron Range NP

Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica* One Lakefield NP

Eastern Grass Owl ♦ *Tyto longimembris* 17 tallied on night drives at Lakefield NP

Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* Five sightings, the first Iron Range NP

Laughing Kookaburra ♦ *Dacelo novaeguineae* Endemic. First noted Cairns

Blue-winged Kookaburra ♦ *Dacelo leachii* 14, first Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.

Forest Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus macleayi* Nine, first Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.

Torresian Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus sordidus* Singles Cairns and Iron Range NP

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Noted at Boulia

Red-backed Kingfisher ♦ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* Endemic. Two in the Outback

Yellow-billed Kingfisher ♦ *Syma torotoro* One seen and five heard Iron Range NP

Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azureus* One Iron Range NP

Little Kingfisher ♦ *Ceyx pusillus* One Centenary Lakes, Cairns ssp hallii

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* First noted at Artemis Station

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides* Endemic. First noted Lakefield NP

Australian Hobby ♦ *Falco longipennis* First noted Mount Molloy area

Brown Falcon ♦ *Falco berigora* c30 sightings

Grey Falcon ♦ *Falco hypoleucos* Endemic. Pair south of Winton

Black Falcon ♦ *Falco subniger* Endemic. Three sightings

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One in the crater at Mt Hypipamee

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo ♦ *Calyptorhynchus banksii* Endemic. c80 noted

Palm Cockatoo ♦ *Probosciger aterrimus* Five noted Iron Range NP

Galah ♦ *Eolophus roseicapilla* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea* Common in the Outback

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Common

Red-winged Parrot ♦ *Aprosmictus erythropterus* A total of 22 tallied

Papuan Eclectus ♦ *Eclectus polychloros* Nine noted Iron Range NP

Red-cheeked Parrot ♦ *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* Five noted Iron Range NP

Golden-shouldered Parrot ♦ *Psephotellus chrysopterygius* Endemic. 11 (2 males) Artemis Station

Pale-headed Rosella ♦ *Platycercus adscitus* Endemic. Eleven, first at Lotus Bird Lodge

Australian Ringneck ♦ (Mallee R) *Barnardius [zonarius] barnardi* Endemic. Nine Winton-Boulia

Australian Ringneck ♦ (Cloncurry R) *Barnardius [zonarius] macgillivrayi* Endemic. Four Mt Isa

Bourke's Parrot ♦ *Neopsephotus bourkii* Endemic. Two Lark Quarry area, Winton

Varied Lorikeet ♦ *Psitteuteles versicolor* Endemic. c30 noted Boulia-Mt Isa

Rainbow Lorikeet ♦ *Trichoglossus moluccanus* Endemic. Common

Budgerigar ♦ *Melopsittacus undulatus* Endemic. Common in the Winton area

Double-eyed Fig Parrot ◊ *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* First Cairns, a few Iron Range NP
Noisy Pitta ◊ *Pitta versicolor* Four sightings Iron Range NP
Spotted Catbird ◊ *Ailuroedus maculosus* Endemic. 1 Curtain Fig Tree NP & two Peterson's Ck
Black-eared Catbird ◊ *Ailuroedus melanotis* 1 seen and another heard Iron Range
Great Bowerbird ◊ *Chlamydera nuchalis* Endemic. Maximum c10 Laura
Spotted Bowerbird ◊ *Chlamydera maculate* Endemic. Eight sightings Boulia – Mt Isa
Fawn-breasted Bowerbird ◊ *Chlamydera cerviniventris* Three sightings Iron Range
White-throated Treecreeper ◊ *Cormobates leucphoea* Endemic. One Mt Hypipamee
Brown Treecreeper ◊ *Climacteris picumnus* Endemic. One seen and another heard Dave's Dam
Black-tailed Treecreeper ◊ *Climacteris melanurus* Endemic. Five noted Mt Isa
Lovely Fairywren ◊ *Malurus amabilis* Endemic. Two Iron Range and two near Mt Molloy
Purple-backed Fairywren ◊ *Malurus assimilis* Endemic. Nine sightings starting at Bladensburg
Splendid Fairywren ◊ *Malurus splendens* Endemic. Five noted Bladensburg NP
Red-backed Fairywren ◊ *Malurus melanocephalus* Endemic. First Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.
White-winged Fairywren ◊ *Malurus leucopterus* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP
Rufous-crowned Emu-wren ◊ *Stipiturus ruficeps* Endemic. Three near Lark Quarry, Winton
Opalton Grasswren ◊ *Amytornis rowleyi* Endemic. Three noted Lark Quarry, Winton
Kalkadoon Grasswren ◊ *Amytornis ballarae* Endemic. Two Dajarra and one Mt Isa
Green-backed Honeyeater ◊ *Glycichaera fallax* One sighting Iron Range NP
Gibberbird ◊ *Ashbyia lovensis* Endemic. A great encounter Winton–Boulia
Crimson Chat ◊ *Epthianura tricolor* Common in the Winton Outback
Orange Chat ◊ *Epthianura aurifrons* Endemic. One near Winton and c10 Diamantina Dev Rd
Rufous-banded Honeyeater ◊ *Conopophila albogularis* One Lakefield NP
Rufous-throated Honeyeater ◊ *Conopophila rufogularis* Endemic. Six noted Mt Isa
Bar-breasted Honeyeater ◊ *Ramsayornis fasciatus* Endemic. One Lakefield NP
Brown-backed Honeyeater ◊ *Ramsayornis modestus* Several Iron Range NP
Dusky Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela obscura* Common
Scarlet Myzomela ◊ *Myzomela sanguinolenta* Endemic. Noted Mt Hypipamee & Peterson's Ck
Little Friarbird ◊ *Philemon citreogularis* First noted Lilyvale Road, Musgrave
Hornbill Friarbird ◊ *Philemon yorki* Endemic. Common in Cairns
Silver-crowned Friarbird ◊ *Philemon argenteiceps* Endemic. First noted Iron Range NP
Noisy Friarbird ◊ *Philemon corniculatus* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba
MacLeay's Honeyeater ◊ *Xanthotis macleayanus* Endemic. Mt Molloy & Curtain Fig Tree NP
Tawny-breasted Honeyeater ◊ *Xanthotis flaviventer* Six sightings Iron Range NP
White-streaked Honeyeater ◊ *Trichodere cockerelli* Endemic. Two sightings Iron Range NP
White-cheeked Honeyeater ◊ *Phylidonyris niger* Endemic. Six Mt Molloy
Brown Honeyeater ◊ *Lichmera indistincta* First noted Cairns
Banded Honeyeater ◊ *Cissomela pectoralis* Endemic. One near Mt Molloy

Blue-faced Honeyeater ◊ *Entomyzon cyanotis* Common

Black-chinned Honeyeater ◊ *Melithreptus [gularis] laetior* Endemic. Four noted Mt Isa

White-throated Honeyeater ◊ *Melithreptus albogularis* First noted Jack Bethel Park

Yellow Honeyeater ◊ *Stomiopera flava* Endemic. First noted Big Mitchell River

Yellow-spotted Honeyeater ◊ *Meliphaga notata* Endemic. First noted Iron Range NP

Lewin's Honeyeater ◊ *Meliphaga lewinii* Endemic. Noted Mt Molloy and in the Yungaburra area

Graceful Honeyeater ◊ *Microptilotis gracilis* Four sightings Iron Range NP

Varied Honeyeater ◊ *Gavicalis versicolor* First noted Cairns Esplanade

Singing Honeyeater ◊ *Gavicalis virescens* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater ◊ *Ptilotula flavescens* First noted Lilyvale Rd, Musgrave

Grey-headed Honeyeater ◊ *Ptilotula keartlandi* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP

Grey-fronted Honeyeater ◊ *Ptilotula plumula* Endemic. Common Mt Isa

White-plumed Honeyeater ◊ *Ptilotula penicillate* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater ◊ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* Endemic. First noted Bladensburg NP

Bridled Honeyeater ◊ *Bolemoreus frenatus* Endemic. Noted Mt Molloy and Mt Hypipamee

Yellow-throated Miner ◊ *Manorina flavigula* Endemic. First noted Hughenden

Red-browed Pardalote ◊ *Pardalotus rubricatus* Endemic. Noted at Boullia

Striated Pardalote ◊ *Pardalotus striatus* Endemic. One Lilyvale Road

Weebill ◊ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Endemic. Common Mt Isa

Large-billed Scrubwren ◊ *Sericornis magnirostris* Endemic. First noted Mt Molloy

Atherton Scrubwren ◊ *Sericornis keri* Endemic. Two Curtain Fig Tree NP

Tropical Scrubwren ◊ *Sericornis beccarii* Five sightings Iron Range NP

Brown Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone mouki* Endemic. Noted Peterson's Creek

Large-billed Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone magnirostris* First noted Lakefield NP

White-throated Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone olivacea* First noted Lakefield NP

Fairy Gerygone ◊ *Gerygone palpebrosa* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Inland Thornbill ◊ *Acanthiza apicalis* Endemic. Six noted south of Winton

Grey-crowned Babbler ◊ *Pomatostomus temporalis* Seven sightings Mt Isa

Hall's Babbler ◊ *Pomatostomus halli* Endemic. Five noted south of Winton

Eastern Whipbird ◊ *Psophodes olivaceus* Endemic. One Curtain Fig Tree NP

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush ◊ *Cinclosoma castaneothorax* Endemic. Four Winton

Yellow-breasted Boatbill ◊ *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* One Iron Range NP

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* Common Cairns

Masked Woodswallow ◊ *Artamus personatus* Endemic. Noted from Winton onwards

White-browed Woodswallow ◊ *Artamus superciliosus* Endemic. One sighting Mt Isa

Black-faced Woodswallow ◊ *Artamus cinereus* Several from Winton onwards

Little Woodswallow ◊ *Artamus minor* Endemic. First noted Lark Quarry near Winton

Black Butcherbird ◊ *Melloria quoyi* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Australian Magpie ♦ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Common even in the remotest Outback

Black-backed Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus mentalis* Five sightings Lotus Bird Lodge

Pied Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus nigrogularis* Endemic. First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Pied Currawong ♦ *Strepera graculina* Endemic. Several sightings, the first on the PDR

Black-faced Cuckooshrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* First noted Iron Range NP

White-bellied Cuckooshrike *Coracina papuensis* First noted Big Mitchell River

Common Cicadabird *Edolisoma tenuirostre* Three Mt Molloy

White-winged Triller ♦ *Lalage tricolor* First noted Lakefield NP

Varied Triller ♦ *Lalage leucomela* First noted Iron Range NP

Varied Sittella ♦ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* Endemic. c10 Lilyvale Rd, Musgrave

Crested Bellbird ♦ *Oreoica gutturalis* Endemic. Two sightings south of Winton

Grey Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala simplex* Several sightings from Winton onwards

Golden Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala pectoralis* Endemic. Heard at Mt Hypipamee

Rufous Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala rufiventris* First sighting Lakefield NP

Bower's Shrikethrush ♦ *Colluricincla boweri* Endemic. Abbatoir Swamp & Curtain Fig Tree NP

Rufous Shrikethrush ♦ *Colluricincla rufogaster* Several sightings Iron Range NP

Grey Shrikethrush ♦ *Colluricincla harmonica* Two sightings Mt Isa

Australasian Figbird ♦ *Sphecotheres vieilloti* First noted Cairns

Olive-backed Oriole ♦ *Oriolus sagittatus* First noted Iron Range NP

Green Oriole ♦ *Oriolus flavocinctus* Common Lakefield NP and Iron Range NP

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Noted from Cairns onwards

Grey Fantail ♦ *Rhipidura albiscapa* Two Mt Hypipamee

Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons* First noted Jack Bethel Park, Mareeba

Spectacled Monarch ♦ *Symposiachrus trivirgatus* First noted Iron Range NP

Black-faced Monarch ♦ *Monarcha melanopsis* First noted Mt Molloy

White-eared Monarch ♦ *Carterornis leucotis* Endemic. One Lockhart River

Frill-necked Monarch ♦ *Arses lorealis* Endemic. Seven sightings Iron Range NP incl two nests

Pied Monarch ♦ *Arses kampi* Three noted Yungaburra area

Magpie-lark ♦ *Grallina cyanoleuca* Ridiculously omnipresent, even at the airport

Leaden Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra rubecula* Male Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.

Shining Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra alecto* Five sightings Iron Range NP

Paperbark Flycatcher ♦ *Myiagra nana* Four sightings Mt Isa

Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Common

Little Crow ♦ *Corvus bennetti* Endemic. One definite near Boulia

Australian Raven ♦ *Corvus coronoides* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Apostlebird ♦ *Struthidea cinerea* Endemic. Common in the Outback

Trumpet Manucode ♦ *Phonygammus keraudrenii* 1 Iron Range – a poor showing

Victoria's Riflebird ♦ *Ptiloris victoriae* Endemic. A nest-building female Curtain Fig Tree
Magnificent Riflebird ♦ *Ptiloris magnificus* Common Iron Range NP
White-faced Robin ♦ *Tregellasia leucops* Four sightings of this little gem Iron Range
Pale-yellow Robin ♦ *Tregellasia capito* Endemic. One Mt Hypipamee
Eastern Yellow Robin ♦ *Eopsaltria australis* Endemic. Two Peterson's Creek
Hooded Robin ♦ *Melanodryas cucullate* Endemic. A female near Lark Quarry
White-browed Robin ♦ *Poecilodryas superciliosa* Endemic. Packer's Creek, Iron Range NP
Grey-headed Robin ♦ *Heteromyias cinereifrons* Endemic. Mt Hypipamee & Curtain Fig Tree
Northern Scrub Robin ♦ *Drymodes superciliaris* Endemic. Three sightings Iron Range NP
Lemon-bellied Flyrobin ♦ *Microeca flavigaster* Noted Lakefield NP
Jacky Winter ♦ *Microeca fascinans* Common Mt Isa but none elsewhere!
Yellow-legged Flyrobin ♦ *Kempiella griseiceps* Two Iron Range NP
Red-capped Robin ♦ *Petroica goodenovii* Endemic. Male Bladensburg NP
Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra javanica* A single sighting near Winton
Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* Common Cairns
Fairy Martin ♦ *Petrochelidon ariel* Endemic. Common in the Outback
Australian Reed Warbler ♦ *Acrocephalus australis* c10 Winton WTP
Spinifexbird ♦ *Poodytes carteri* Endemic. Three near Winton and two Mt Isa
Little Grassbird *Poodytes gramineus* Three Winton WTP
Brown Songlark ♦ *Cincloramphus cruralis* Endemic. Two Boulia
Rufous Songlark ♦ *Cincloramphus mathewsi* Endemic. One Mt Isa
Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* One Lakefield NP
Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis* Two Lakefield NP
Silvereye ♦ *Zosterops lateralis* First noted Iron Range NP
Metallic Starling *Aplonis metallica* Common Cairns and Iron Range NP
Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis* Common Cairns
Mistletoebird ♦ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Endemic. First noted Lilyvale Rd, Musgrave
Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis* First noted Cairns
House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* First noted Cairns
Crimson Finch ♦ *Neochmia phaeton* Five noted Tyto Wetlands
Painted Finch ♦ *Emblema pictum* Endemic. c15 Moondarra Lake, Mt Isa
Star Finch ♦ *Bathilda ruficauda* Endemic. c40 Lakefield NP
Plum-headed Finch ♦ *Aidemosyne modesta* Endemic. c50 Winton
Double-barred Finch ♦ *Stizoptera bichenovii* Endemic. First noted at Laura
Australian Zebra Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia castanotis* Endemic. Common in the Outback
Masked Finch ♦ *Poephila personata* Endemic. Five Lakefield NP
Long-tailed Finch ♦ *Poephila acuticauda* Endemic. Four Moondarra Lake, Mt Isa
Black-throated Finch ♦ *Poephila cincta* Endemic. Five Lakefield NP

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin ◇ *Lonchura castaneothorax* First noted at Laura

Australian Pipit ◇ *Anthus australis* First noted Mareeba Wetlands Entr. Rd.

MAMMALS

Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* One Peterson's Creek

Common Spotted Cuscus *Spiloglossus maculatus* One Iron Range NP

Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* Porcupine Gorge, Hughenden

Green Ringtail Possum *Pseudochirops archeri* One Curtain Fig Tree NP

Spectacled Hare Wallaby *Lagorchestes conspicillatus* Three Porcupine Gorge

Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* First noted Winton area

Agile Wallaby *Notamacropus agilis* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Common Wallaroo *Osphranter robustus* First noted Bladensburg NP

Red Kangaroo *Osphranter rufus* First noted Bladensburg NP

Purple-necked Rock Wallaby *Petrogale purpureicollis* One Mt Isa

Grey Wolf (Dingo) *Canis lupus* One Lakefield NP and another Iron Range NP

Domestic Horse (introduced) *Equus caballus* Sev. Lockhart River, probably owned?

Eurasian Wild Pig (introduced) *Sus scrofa* First noted Lotus Bird Lodge

Little Red Flying Fox *Pteropus scapulatus* First noted Laura

Spectacled Flying Fox *Pteropus conspicillatus* c200 Peterson Creek, Yungaburra

White-tailed Giant Rat *Uromys caudimaculatus* One Iron Range NP

REPTILES

Yellow-spotted Monitor *Varanus panoptes* Several sightings, first Lakefield NP

Frill-necked Lizard *Chlamydosaurus kingii* One Mt Isa

Northern Water Dragon *Lophognathus temporalis* Two Mt Isa

Boyd's Forest Dragon *Lophosaurus boydii* One Curtain Fig Tree NP

Slater's Ring-tailed Dragon *Ctenophorus slateri* One Lake Moondarra, Mt Isa

Six-toothed Rainbow Skink *Carlia sexdentata* One Iron Range NP

Taipan *Oxyuranus scutellatus* One, moribund, Lockhart River

Spotted Python *Antaresia maculosa* One Lakefield NP

Saltwater Crocodile *Crocodylus porosus* Noted Lakefield NP and 2 at Portland Roads

Freshwater Crocodile *Crocodylus johnstonii* One Moondarra Lake, Mt Isa



Rufous-throated Honeyeater (image by Mike Watson)



Tawny Frogmouth (image by Mike Watson)



Spotted Cuscus (image by Mike Watson)



Spinifex Pigeon (image by Mike Watson)



Southern Cassowary (image by Mike Watson)



Slater's Ring-tailed Dragon (image by Mike Watson)



Marbled Frogmouth (image by Mike Watson)



Weebill (image by Mike Watson)



Red-capped Robin (image by Mike Watson)



Yellow-spotted Monitor (image by Mike Watson)



Portland Roads (image by Mike Watson)



Pied Oystercatcher (image by Mike Watson)



Red-winged Parrot (image by Mike Watson)



Papuan Frogmouth (image by Mike Watson)



Southern Cassowary (image by Mike Watson)



Torresian Imperial Pigeon (image by Mike Watson)



Yellow-breasted Boatbill (image by Mike Watson)



Varied Lorikeet (image by Mike Watson)



Pacific Emerald Dove (image by Mike Watson)



Northern Water Dragon (image by Mike Watson)



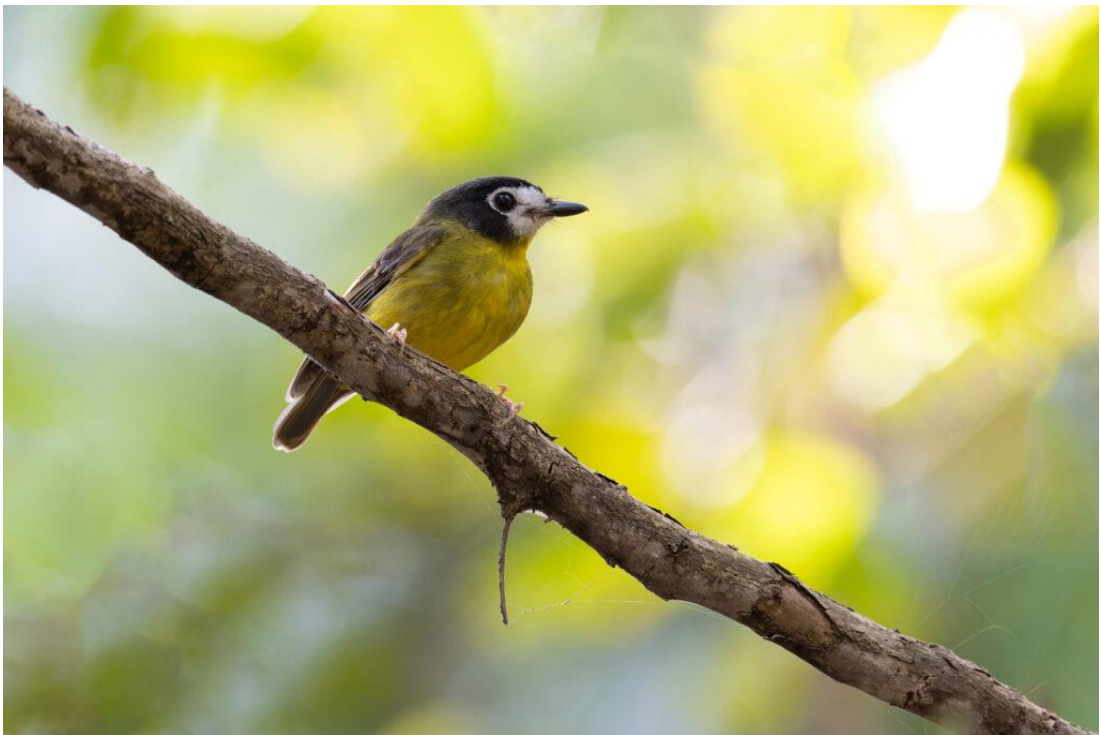
Peregrine (image by Mike Watson)



Little Kingfisher (image by Mike Watson)



Rufous-crowned Emu-wren (image by Mike Watson)



White-faced Robin (image by Mike Watson)



Papuan Eclectus (image by Mike Watson)



Pale-yellow Robin (image by Mike Watson)



Spotted Harrier (image by Mike Watson)



Large-tailed Nightjar (image by Mike Watson)



White-streaked Honeyeater (image by Mike Watson)



Platypus (image by Mike Watson)



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (image by Mike Watson)



Northern Scrub Robin (image by Mike Watson)



Noisy Pitta (image by Mike Watson)



Magpie-lark (image by Mike Watson)



Lotusbird Lodge (image by Mike Watson)



Spinifexbird (image by Mike Watson)



Squatter Pigeon (image by Mike Watson)



Letter-winged Kite (image by Mike Watson)



Little Woodswallow (image by Mike Watson)



Little Bronze Cuckoo (image by Mike Watson)



Lewin's Honeyeater (image by Mike Watson)



Spectacled Hare (image by Mike Watson)



Rainbow Bee-eater (image by Mike Watson)



Hardhead (image by Mike Watson)



Birding at Iron Range (image by Mike Watson)



Hall's Babbler (image by Mike Watson)



Freckled Duck (image by Mike Watson)



Gould's Little Bronze Cuckoo (image by Mike Watson)



Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (image by Mike Watson)



Grey Falcon (image by Mike Watson)



Green Ringtail Possum (image by Mike Watson)



Agile Wallaby (image by Mike Watson)



bower Great Bowerbird (image by Mike Watson)



Boyd's Forest Dragon (image by Mike Watson)



Frill-necked Lizard (image by Mike Watson)



Black-tailed Treecreeper (image by Mike Watson)



Lakefield NP (image by Mike Watson)



Black Falcon (image by Mike Watson)



Little Corella (image by Mike Watson)



Macleay's Honeyeater (image by Mike Watson)



Great Bowerbird (image by Mike Watson)



Golden-shouldered Parrot (image by Mike Watson)



Sacred Kingfisher (image by Mike Watson)



Eastern Barn Owl (image by Mike Watson)



Pied Butcherbird (image by Mike Watson)



Gibberbird (image by Mike Watson)



Frill-necked Monarch (image by Mike Watson)



Black-backed Butcherbird (image by Mike Watson)



Flock Bronzewing (image by Mike Watson)



Far Eastern Curlew (image by Mike Watson)



Bush Stone-curlew (image by Mike Watson)



Emu family (image by Mike Watson)



Brolga (image by Mike Watson)



Grey-crowned Babbler (image by Mike Watson)



Little Eagle (image by Mike Watson)



Great Crested Grebe (image by Mike Watson)



Grey-tailed Tattler (image by Mike Watson)



Common Wallaroo (image by Mike Watson)



Great Knot (image by Mike Watson)



Common Brushtail Possum (image by Mike Watson)



Cassowary watchers at Iron Range (image by Mike Watson)



Australian Bustard (image by Mike Watson)