

AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY TOUR

REPORT 2023

28 September - 13 October 2023

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This year the Northern Territory tour kicked off in Central Australia in the town of Alice Springs with dinner at our accommodation. Next morning, September 29, we were all keen to make the most of the relative cool of the next two days, with temperatures predicted to only be in the low thirties, with a very hot 38-40 degrees being likely on the last three days of the Central Australian leg of the journey. We left our digs at 5 am to arrive in the pre-dawn cool at a location down the Santa Teresa Road among rugged low spinifex-clad hills hoping to get onto some of the difficult-to-find spinifex specialties.

First target to be acquired was the secretive Spinifexbird, an endemic to inland Australia and, as the name suggests, is exclusively found in the prickly tussocks of spinifex grass. Crested Bellbirds, another inland endemic, also came to the party along with some of the usual inland suspects. A little further down the road we were treated to the sight of a Cinnamon Quail-thrush, another of the key inland endemics. Nearby, another foray into the spinifex gave us good clear views of the only grasswren species for the tour—Dusky Grasswren. Further roadside stops on the road back to Alice put us in contact with the Chiming Wedgebill and some of the more common species such as Red-backed Kingfisher and Red-tailed Black-cockatoos.

In the afternoon we headed out to a couple of the local 'gaps.' Gaps are rocky gorges in outback ranges where watercourses have cut through the sandstone ridges. These gaps often retain small, but permanent waterholes, which are vital to the survival of parrots, finches and pigeons. Jessie's Gap did not disappoint with a party of Spinifex Pigeons seeking to slake their thirst, along with various honeyeaters and hundreds of Zebra Finches. All this activity attracted a Collared Sparrowhawk which ambushed and caught one of the hapless finches right before our eyes. A Western-bowerbird attending his bower was also a feature at this location. Only a few kilometres further down the road brought us to Emily Gap where we were treated to the sight of two Pink-Cockatoos and dozens of Rainbow Bee-eaters and two species of wood-swallow—Little and Black-faced.

Day two saw us heading out optimistically to a remote gap in the West McDonnell ranges to an area known to be the haunt of another of the inland specialties, the Painted Finch. A short walk into the gap in the pre-dawn cool had us arriving just as the local birds were beginning to stir and we had plenty to keep us occupied with dozens of Diamond Doves and various honeyeaters and Rufous Whistlers putting in an appearance. However, when we arrived at the waterhole, we discovered a pair of Peregrine Falcons patrolling the sky and making repeated stoops on passing flocks of Budgies, finches and doves. We thought that might ruin our chances but the local seed eating birds had no choice but to risk exposure to Peregrine attack to stave off the more urgent need to quench their thirst. An endless parade of finches, parrots, honeyeaters and pigeons hurriedly dashed to the shallow edges of the pool to take a drink before fleeing to safety. Eventually a party of Painted Finches joined to frenzy, and we were rewarded with some good views of these beautiful little desert jewels. Red-browed Pardalote were added to the list on the way back to the vehicles, by which time the heat was beginning to bite. The reprieve from the heat was to be short-lived however, as we had arranged to visit the Alice Springs sewage treatment works. As all birders know, sewage is birding gold, and the Alice STW gave us plenty to prospect for. Pink-eared Ducks, Red-necked Avocets, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-fronted Dotterels, Black-tailed Native Hens and Sharp-tailed, Wood and Common Sandpipers were among the highlights for water birds and waders, while Little Grassbird, White-winged and Purple-backed Fairywrens provided further diversions away from the water.

After lunch, we headed south of Alice to a Stuart Highway venue in Mulga woodland where we had stunning views of a fully coloured male Splendid Fairywren—splendid indeed. Mulga Parrots put in a colourful appearance and even more amazing was the sighting of

several Bourke's Parrots, a subtly coloured and elusive outback parrot that blends in perfectly with the blue-grey Mulga.

Next day's itinerary had us heading back down the Santa Teresa Road in hopes of winking out a Banded Whiteface, but alas it was not to be, though some consolation was offered as a flock of Crimson Chat brightened our day. Today was to mark the first of a spell of super-hot days with nothing below 38 degrees being predicted for the rest of our Central Australian leg of the tour. After lunch we headed South toward Eridunda, the geographical centre of Australia, where we would overnight before heading out to the Uluru-Kata Juta National Park. On the way down we stopped off at a remote waterhole, and despite the heat, plenty of water and bush birds were added to our list. We tried birding just north of Eridunda on the gibber-plains, but the heat was intense. Red-headed Robins, Brown Songlark and Common Bronzewing were, nevertheless, added.

Next morning, we headed west in the dark and flushed an Owlet Nightjar before taking a couple of roadside stops immediately after dawn. Our first break gave us great views of the uncommon Slatey-backed Thornbill and a Pallid Cuckoo, while another roadside pause put us in contact with Cockatiels, the smallest of Australia's cockatoos, along with White-winged Trillers and many hundreds of Budgies. Late in the morning we arrived just outside the resort town of Yulara where the habitat consists of rolling red sand dunes covered in spinifex, grevilleas, hakeas and other flowering vegetation. Fortunately, this year had been a relatively wet one, and the proliferation of nectar helped us to get onto the nomadic Pied and Black Honeyeaters, along with Rufous Songlarks and Masked Woodswallow. Again, the heat was intense, with 39 degrees and hot winds being predicted, and no sooner had we returned to the vehicles when the wind began to blow, and the birding essentially shut down—apart from a small squadron of White-backed Swallow. We used the middle of the day to visit the iconic landmarks of Kata-Juta and the famous Uluru before the long drive back to Eridunda.

The following dawn heralded another hot day, so we made the most of the morning cool to bird along the Stuart Highway on our journey back to Alice and were treated to excellent views of a Black-breasted Buzzard (now known as Black-breasted Kite). The heat was against us, but we did manage an Inland Thornbill at the Telegraph Station before checking into the Alice Springs Airport and ultimately ended the day in tropical Darwin.

The contrast between the arid outback and the tropical north was palpable. We began our Top End tour taking in a mixture of beach and monsoon forest birds at Leepoint just north of Darwin. Terek Sandpipers, Bar-tailed Godwits, Far Eastern Whimbrels, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Grey-Tailed Tattlers, Great and Red Knots were among the many waders, while Lesser and Greater Crested Terns, Australian Terns (split from Gull-billed), Little and Whiskered Terns featured along with Eastern Reef and Little Egrets on the beach. In the monsoon forest the highlights were Top End specialties such as Rainbow Pitta, Green-backed Gerygone, Arafura Fantail and Red-headed Myzomela.

After breakfast we headed off to another monsoon habitat on the edge of a black-soil flood plain where we for fortunate enough to find a pair of Barking Owls, along with Arafura Shrike-thrush, Rose-crowned Fruit-dove, Orange-footed Scrubfowl and various honeyeaters. By now the tropical heat was beginning to slow the birds down so we headed a little further down the road to a well-known freshwater wetland, Knuckey's Lagoon, where some rare waders had recently been reported. We did manage to get onto a pair of Little Whimbrel and were about to close in on the hotspot when a fire-fighter ordered us out of the reserve as a bushfire was closing in on our position. Clearly this guy had no idea that we were all more than ready to surrender our bodies to the flames for some serious wader action, but he was so insistent.

After a short afternoon break, we searched an urban park for Rufous Owls, the largest of Australia's tropical owls, and we eventually found an adult Rufous and its fledgling chick. In the late afternoon we decided to do a Chestnut Rail vigil in the mangroves which involves doing nothing, apart from scanning a stretch of mud at low tide in hopes of catching a glimpse of this secretive mangrove prowler as it hunts for crabs. No cigar on the rail but we did manage some other nice birds such as Little Cuckoo, Black Butcherbird and Azure Kingfisher.

Next morning required an early start to get us out to the famous Fogg Dam conservation Park before dawn where we were immediately rewarded with views of the Large-tailed Nightjar. However, our main target was the White-browed Crake which only shows in the predawn gloom. On the dam wall we soon heard their call and a little later we managed to have cracking views of a pair in the water lilies. The dam itself was festooned with all manner of water birds such as Nankeen Night-heron, Magpie Geese, Black-necked Stork, Royal Spoonbill, Pied Heron, Comb-crested Jacana, Australian Pratincole and many more. After the sun rose sufficiently, we headed into the nearby monsoon forest where we added Pacific Baza, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Fly-robin, Sacred and Forest Kingfisher, Oriental Dollarbird and a pile of honeyeaters to the list.

On our way back my attention was diverted by a flock of waders landing in the field near the vehicle and soon after we scoped a dozen

Oriental Plover—a great sighting in Australia. Buoyed by our success we returned to the scene of yesterday's fire, which had indeed been burnt, but the main portion of the wetland was, naturally, preserved by the water. Nevertheless, most of the waders had moved on but we did manage to get eyes on a Tawney Grassbird. Later that afternoon we headed into some serious mangrove forest in search of the mangrove specialties. After sloshing about in the mud and mosquitoes we repaired to the vehicle having seen Mangrove Robin, Mangrove Golden Whistler, and Mangrove and Large-billed Gerygone.

Next morning was the earliest of starts as we needed to traverse the 300 kilometres between Darwin and Kakadu, and still be there in time for some early morning birding. Kakadu is an extraordinary place and is World Heritage listed both for its natural and its cultural significance. Several species of bird can only be found within the boundaries of the park. Our first target was one such species, the Chestnut Quilled Rock Pigeon. We began our quest to find this bird on the Bardajidi walk but failed to find our target. Next attempt was to be at the Ubirr Rock area where the famous Aboriginal rock art can be found on the sandstone outcrops rising from the floodplains. Almost as soon as we had parked the vehicles a Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon appeared in a nearby cave. Within a few minutes more appeared and in the end we had around ten pigeons within easy distance. So-far-so-good but our next target, the Sandstone Shrike-thrush, can be a bit trickier. We scanned the nearby sandstone boulders, and we were eventually rewarded with a singing Sandstone Shrike-thrush. These guys are reputed to be among the best songsters, and this individual did nothing to tarnish that reputation. We rounded the morning off with several Partridge Pigeon roosting in the shade to escape the midday sun.

We checked in to our Coinda accommodation in the centre of the park, also the launching place for our Yellow Water boat cruise later that evening. The boat cruise is always a highlight on any Top End tour, and we were treated some magnificent scenery and spectacular wildlife, most especially by the healthy population of Saltwater Crocodiles that call Yellow Waters home. Not a place for a quick dip I can assure you. The birding was equally impressive with easy access to all the floodplain species including Broilgas, four species of egret, Green Pygmy-geese, and best of all a Large-billed Heron and Little Kingfisher.

Our last morning in Kakadu saw us heading to Nourlangie Rock in pursuit of two more local endemics, the White-lined Honeyeater, and the Black-banded Fruit-dove. Fortunately, given the hot humid conditions, we were able to get onto both species without needing to make the arduous climb to the top of the escarpment and we were back at the hotel in time for breakfast. From here we drove south, toward Pine Creek, with numerous roadside stops in search of other key species and by lunchtime we had managed to add Northern Rosella, Silver-backed Butcherbird, buff-sided Robin and a handful of honeyeater species.

Pine Creek is the epicentre of Hooded Parrot territory, and we had great hopes of them becoming active in the cool of the evening. We began birding at around five in the afternoon and added Pacific Koel and some other common species but ultimately, we found ourselves waiting for the Hoodies to come into town for their evening drink at the various leaking taps, puddles and gardens in the town. Eventually we saw three nicely coloured Hoodies and then some more, and a little later, even more, until we eventually tallied up around 60 Hooded Parrots in all.

Next day entailed an early start and another key species to target—this time the colourful Gouldian Finch. We staked out a local waterhole and waited. Our vigil was soon rewarded with the arrival of Long-tailed, Crimson, Masked and Double-banded Finches and soon after the surrounded trees began to gather bright little gems in the form of dozens of Gouldians—one of Australia's most sought after and popular birds. Hooded Parrots joined the party, along with Banded Honeyeater and various pigeons. With our Gouldian appetites well satiated it was time to move on. Just down the road from our Gouldian site is a popular swimming hole called Edith Falls and it's also a reliable site for Olive-backed Orioles. A quick sweep of the area revealed not only the Orioles but also a bonus White-throated Gerygone.

On to Katherine where we did an obligatory visit to the sewage treatment works before lunch and hotel check-in. The heat was again our ever-present companion and we sat out the early afternoon in the comfort of our accommodation as we made ready to go after one of the most elusive Top End targets—the Northern Shrike-tit. In the relative cool of the evening, we arrived at our site south of Katherine with high hopes but with only an hour to locate our objective. We headed into the woodland and off in the distance we heard the haunting call of the Shrike-tit. Previous experience has taught me that hearing and seeing this highly mobile species are two entirely different things. We homed in on the call-in double-quick time but it eluded us. Indeed, it had doubled back and was behind us. The Shrike-tit led us on a merry chase for thirty minutes but in the end, we had good clear vision of this striking bird. We were also fortunate to flush a Red-Chested Button-quail and were able to flush it again for better views. For some reason RCBQ are present in good numbers this year.

Next morning, we began our westward journey toward Victoria River and Timber Creek—finch country. A Channel-billed Cuckoo flew overhead, and we tried desperately to get a better view of it but it eluded us, Varied Lorikeets were some consolation. We attempted an organised buttonquail flushing session with a 'police-line' of birders walking through tall grass. Again, no cigar. Varied Sittellas, Jacky Winter and other bush-birds were to be had here, however. We arrived at Victoria River Crossing and checked-in to our accommodation before driving further west to Timber Creek in hopes of seeing some of the finch and honeyeater species we had yet to view. By the time we arrived it was four o'clock in the afternoon, but the mercury was still above 39 degrees. Consequently, it was like birding on the moon. Nothing stirred. I tried all my known productive venues. Eventually, at around five in the afternoon we finally had some success with a mixed flock of Star and Zebra Finch rising into a nearby tree. Time was running short, so we headed to our final venue on the banks of the Victoria River where we found an assortment of honeyeaters, most notably, the golden-backed subspecies of the Black-chinned Honeyeater. We also had good sightings of Chestnut-breasted Mannikin and Yellow-rumped Mannikin and Horsfield's Cuckoo.

Dawn on the following day saw us head back out to Timber Creek for another waterhole-stake out in hopes for finding the nomadic Pictorella Mannikin. Instead, we had a succession of Masked, Long-tailed and Gouldian Finches. Later that afternoon we visited the tall grass habitat along the Victoria River to search for the largest, and some would argue, the most beautiful of the fairywrens—the Purple-crowned—and we were handsomely rewarded with long clear views of a family of these magnificent birds.

Our next day's itinerary entailed an arduous climb up to the top of the sandstone escarpment behind our accommodation. To beat the heat, we began our walk at 5:30 am to arrive at the top with first light. Only two of the participants felt up to the challenge and we were rewarded with great views of the White-quilled Rock Pigeon and a roosting Spotted Nightjar. We were back in time for breakfast and the envy of the rest of the group.

We began our journey back to Katherine with some roadside stops along the way. At the first stop we witnessed a massive flock of Cockatiels numbering over a 1000 coming in to drink at a bore used to water cattle. Apostlebirds, waterbirds and other bush birds were also in attendance. Next stop was another attempt at flushing Button-quail and we ended up flushing up to a dozen, with Red-Chested and Chestnut Backed Button-quail being positively identified. Happy days.

After a short siesta we decided to mop up a few of the common species we had somehow missed and headed out to the nearby Nitmiluk National Park where we rounded up Weebill, brush cuckoo and we reviewed a Large-billed Heron as it grunted out its strange and eerie call.

Our penultimate day left us with few gettable targets, so we took a large detour on our way back to Darwin to track-down the rare Red Goshawk. All my previous RG sites had been destroyed by a cyclone last summer and this was, for me at least, an untried site. It turned out that the road into this site was a bit tricky, but thankfully we had robust 4x4 vehicles that allowed us to traverse the rough terrain. At one of the creek-crossings we managed to flush a Black-bittern. In the end we did, eventually, get eyes on a nesting Red Goshawk. Finally, we arrived in Darwin where we again mopped up a few of the more common, but yet-to-be-seen species, such as Black Oyster-catcher, Bush-stone Curlew and Torresian Kingfisher.

While the tour 'officially' finished at breakfast time on our last day we had one last ditch attempt to see the Chestnut Rail in the mangroves. Sadly, it was not to be, but we were slightly compensated with good views of a Grey Goshawk immediately overhead.

Overall, a successful and satisfying outcome with 266 species being identified—which included some of the more elusive of the Northern Territory's avifauna. The heat was a factor, to be sure, taking its toll on our endurance and the availability of the birds. There were many other diversions along the way which included Frilled Lizards, Western Brown Snake, Saltwater Crocodile, feral Water Buffalo, Common Wallaroo, three species of Wallaby, Brush-tailed Possum and a lone Northern Bandicoot. Birding in the Northern Territory will also expose you to some of the most rugged and beautiful places that Australia has to offer. Get on it!

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species and family sequence, taxonomy and species names follow the I.O.C. World Bird List which is available on-line at www.worldbirdnames.org/. Taxa which are split by the author of the principal field guide, but not by IOC, are noted.

Where species names followed by the diamond symbol (◊) indicated they are either endemic to the country, are range restricted or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g., only seen on one or two Birdquest tours, are 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.

BIRDS

Magpie Goose ◊ *Anseranas semipalmata* Commonly encountered throughout the Top End.

Plumed Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna eytoni* Frequently seen, particularly on boat tour.

Wandering Whistling Duck ◊ *Dendrocygna arcuata* Only observed on boat tour.

Black Swan ◊ *Cygnus atratus* One at Alice STW.

Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata* A write-in, observed on lawns around Alice Springs.

Radjah Shelduck ◊ *Radjah radjah* Commonly encountered throughout the Top End.

Pink-eared Duck ◊ *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Small group seen at Alice STW

Green Pygmy Goose ◊ *Nettapus pulchellus* Fogg Dam, Yellow Waters, and roadside wetlands

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Commonly seen in small numbers in Alice and Top End

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* Over 1000 at Alice STW

Hardhead ◊ *Aythya australis* 80+ at Alice STW

Orange-footed Scrubfowl ◊ *Megapodius reinwardt* Common around Darwin and any monsoon forest.

Spotted Nightjar ◊ *Eurostopodus argus* Flushed from roadside twice at night and seen close in daytime Victoria River escarpment.

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus* Spot-lighted at Fogg Dam.

Australian Owlet-nightjar ◊ *Aegotheles cristatus* Flushed from roadside near Erldunda.

Pheasant Coucal *Centropus phasianinus* Observed widely in Top End, especially Victoria River region.

Pacific Koel (Australian K) *Eudynamys orientalis* Heard often, seen in Kakadu and Pine Creek

Channel-billed Cuckoo ◊ *Scythrops novaehollandiae* Heard several times and was seen on road to Victoria River as a flyover.

Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo ◊ *Chrysococcyx basalis* Observed once at Timber Creek

Little Bronze Cuckoo ◊ *Chrysococcyx minutillus* Encountered in mangroves and monsoon forest.

Pallid Cuckoo ◊ *Cacomantis pallidus* Observed twice near Yulara.

Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* Heard often, seen near Katherine.

Spotted Dove (introduced) *Spilopelia chinensis* Commonly encountered in Alice Springs.

Pacific Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps longirostris* Heard and observed several times in monsoon forest.

Common Bronzewing ◊ *Phaps chalcoptera* Regularly observed in both inland region and the Top End.

Crested Pigeon ◊ *Ocyphaps lophotes* Abundant inland, uncommon Timber Creek.

Spinifex Pigeon ◊ *Geophaps plumifera* Found near water in inland regions.

Partridge Pigeon ◊ *Geophaps smithii* Some in Jabiru township and roadside in Kakadu.

Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon ◊ *Petrophassa rufipennis* Ubirr rock environs, 10 in all.

White-quilled Rock Pigeon ◊ *Petrophassa albipennis* On top of Victoria River escarpment.

Diamond Dove ◊ *Geopelia cuneata* Frequently encountered both inland and the Top End.

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida* Abundant in most areas.

Bar-shouldered Dove *Geopelia humeralis* Perhaps the most seen bird in the Top End.

Black-banded Fruit Dove ◊ *Ptilinopus alligator* 4 individuals observed at Nourlangie Rock

Rose-crowned Fruit Dove ♦ *Ptilinopus regina* Common in monsoon forest although difficult to see.

Torresian Imperial Pigeon ♦ *Ducula spilorrhoa* Abundant around Darwin and common in most Top End venues.

Black-tailed Nativehen ♦ *Tribonyx ventralis* Only observed at Alice STW.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Small numbers at inland wetlands.

Australasian Swamphen Porphyrio *melanotus* Only encountered Yellow Waters cruise.

White-browed Crane *Poliolimnas cinereus* 2 seen in dense water lilies at Fogg Dam early before sunrise.

Brolga ♦ *Antigone rubicunda* Heard often and seen well at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters.

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* Inland wetlands only.

Hoary-headed Grebe ♦ *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus* 100+ Alice STW.

Chestnut-backed Buttonquail ♦ *Turnix castanotus* several in grasslands roadside near Katherine.

Little Buttonquail ♦ *Turnix velox* Flushed in several inland grasslands.

Red-chested Buttonquail *Turnix pyrrhotorax* A 'write-in' seen in 2 locations in Top End grasslands, in good numbers this year.

Bush Stone-curlew ♦ (B Thick-knee) *Burhinus grallarius* Heard most nights in Top End and over 7 observed at East Point Darwin.

Pied Oystercatcher ♦ (Australian Pied O) *Haematopus longirostris* Lee Point beach, Nightcliff rocks, and East Point with other waders.

Sooty Oystercatcher ♦ *Haematopus fuliginosus* A pair at East Pointrocks.

Pied Stilt ♦ (White-headed S) *Himantopus leucocephalus* Alice STW and most Top End wetlands.

Red-necked Avocet ♦ *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* 80+ at Alice STW.

Masked Lapwing ♦ *Vanellus miles* Frequently encountered at both inland and Top End wetlands.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Lee Point beach and East Pointrocks.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Only 1 observed at Lee Point beach.

Red-capped Plover ♦ *Charadrius ruficapillus* Encountered at Alice STW and common at Top End coasts and wetlands.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultia* Common at Lee Point and East Point Darwin

Siberian Sand Plover (Mongolian P) *Charadrius [mongolus] mongolus* Uncommon at Lee Point and East Point Darwin

Oriental Plover ♦ *Charadrius veredus* Seen once in flock of 13 dry waterhole near Fogg Dam

Black-fronted Dotterel ♦ *Eseyornis melanops* Common on all freshwater wetlands inland and Top End.

Comb-crested Jacana ♦ *Irediparra gallinacean* Water lilies Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Encountered at Nightcliff Beach and Buffalo Creek in small numbers.

Little Curlew ♦ *Numenius minutus* 2 individuals at Knuckey's Lagoon.

Far Eastern Curlew ♦ (Eastern C) *Numenius madagascariensis* Uncommon at Lee Point and East Point Darwin.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Several at Lee Point beach.

Black-tailed Godwit (Eastern B-t G) *Limosa [limosa] melanuroides* Only 1 at Alice STW

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* In small numbers at Uncommon at Lee Point and East Point Darwin.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* 100+ at Lee Point beach and 18 at East Point Darwin.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Small numbers with Great Knots at Lee Point Beach.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* 4 at Alice STW and 12 at Lee Point beach.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* 20+ at Lee Point beach and at East Point Darwin.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* 20+ at Lee Point beach.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* 10 at Lee Point beach and 1 at East Point Darwin.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 2 at Alice STW and up to a dozen and Buffalo Creek and 2 at Nightcliff mangroves.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Several at Lee Point beach, Buffalo Creek, East Point and Nightcliff mangroves.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 2 at Alice STW, and small numbers at most freshwater wetland in the Top End.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* 1 at Alice STW and a pair at Buffalo creek.

Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella* 20+ at Fogg Dam, Yellow waters, and Knuckey's Lagoon.

Silver Gull ♦ ***Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*** Common at Lee Point and East Point Darwin

Australian Tern ♦ (Australian G-b T) ***Gelochelidon macrotarsa*** At least 10 at Lee Point beach.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* 6 at Lee Point beach.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* 10+ at Lee Point and East Point Darwin.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* 3 at Lee Point beach.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* 2 at Lee Point beach.

Common Tern (Eastern C T) *Sterna [hirundo] longipennis* 2 at Knuckey's Lagoon.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Commonly encountered at marine and freshwater wetlands throughout.

Black-necked Stork ♦ ***Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*** An individual or pairs at most freshwater wetlands in Top End.

Australasian Darter ♦ ***Anhinga novaehollandiae*** Small numbers at Fogg Dam, Knuckey's Lagoon, Yellow Waters and 1 at Alice STW.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* Small numbers at Fogg Dam, Knuckey's Lagoon and Yellow Waters.

Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* Commonly encountered in wetlands and grasslands around Darwin.

Straw-necked Ibis ♦ ***Threskiornis spinicollis*** Widespread and common in wetlands and grasslands across Top End.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* 20+ at Fogg Dam and a pair at Knuckey's lagoon.

Royal Spoonbill ♦ ***Platalea regia*** Several at Fogg Dam and Knuckey's lagoon.

Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* Only seen once in riparian forest Litchfield NP.

Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous N H) *Nycticorax caledonicus* Widespread in small numbers but common at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* Several at Lee Point and Buffalo Creek.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Abundant Fogg Dam and Yellow waters, also encountered at most freshwater wetlands in Top End.

White-necked Heron ♦ (Pacific H) ***Ardea pacifica*** 3 at inland wetland near Eridunda, and pairs and individuals Top End wetlands.

Great-billed Heron ◊ *Ardea sumatrana* Individual bird encountered at Yellow Waters and Nitmiluk NP in riparian forest.

Great Egret (Eastern G E) *Ardea [alba] modesta* 1 at Alice STW and 100+ at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters.

Intermediate Egret (Plumed E) *Ardea [intermedia] plumifera* Abundant at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters, widespread elsewhere in Top End.

Pied Heron ◊ *Egretta picata* 40+ at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters, small numbers elsewhere at Top End wetlands.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* 2 at Alice STW, inland wetland, and several at Top End wetlands.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 20+ at Fogg Dam and Yellow Waters respectively.

Pacific Reef Heron (Eastern Reef E) *Egretta sacra* Individuals at Lee point and Buffalo Creek.

Osprey ◊ (Eastern O) *Pandion [haliaetus] cristatus* A pair at Buffalo Creek.

Black-shouldered Kite ◊ (Australian K) *Elanus axillaris* Observed roadside near Alice Springs and Eralunda.

Black-breasted Buzzard ◊ (B-b B-Kite) *Hamirostra melanosternon* Encountered four times; twice roadside inland, once roadside Top End and seen at nest in Kakadu.

Pacific Baza *Aviceda subcristata* Seen twice in riparian forest in top end.

Wedge-tailed Eagle ◊ *Aquila audax* Roadside observations near roadkill near Katherine, Victoria River, and Timber Creek regions.

Red Goshawk ◊ *Erythrorchis radiatus* Observed at nest in Litchfield NP.

Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae* Only 1 individual overhead at Buffalo Creek.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* Occasionally observed throughout Top End.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrocephalus* Observed hunting finches near Alice Springs and occasional inland and Top End.

Spotted Harrier ◊ *Circus assimilis* Encountered roadside near Eralunda.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Abundant throughout inland and Top end.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* Commonly observed, especially in Top End.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* A pair at Buffalo Creek.

White-bellied Sea Eagle *Ichthyophaga leucogaster* 1 at Knuckey's Lagoon and a pair on Yellow Waters.

Rufous Owl ◊ *Ninox rufa* Adult and juvenile observed at Fannie Bay.

Barking Owl ◊ *Ninox connivens* Commonly heard at night in Top End and seen well at Holmes Jungle.

Oriental Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* Common in small numbers across Top End.

Blue-winged Kookaburra ◊ *Dacelo leachii* Common in woodland habitat across Top End.

Forest Kingfisher *Todiramphus macleayii* Common around Darwin and Kakadu.

Torresian Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus sordidus* Observed at Buffalo Creek and East Point mangroves.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus* Occasional observations in woodland in Top End.

Red-backed Kingfisher ◊ *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius* Commonly seen roadside at inland woodlands.

Azure Kingfisher *Ceyx azureus* Seen at most mangrove and riparian forests in Top End as individuals or pairs.

Little Kingfisher ◊ *Ceyx pusillus* 1 at Fogg Dam, and 2 seen on Yellow Waters.

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* Common both inland and the Top End.

Nankeen Kestrel (Australian K) *Falco cenchroides* Common roadside observations at inland locations.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis* Observed twice inland and once in the Top End.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora* Common roadside observations both inland and the Top End.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A pair actively hunting West Serpentine Gorge, West MacDonnell Ranges.

Cockatiel ♦ *Nymphicus hollandicus* Common arid inland and abundant near Victoria River.

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo ♦ *Calyptorhynchus banksia* Frequently encountered both inland and across the Top End.

Galah ♦ *Eolophus roseicapilla* Frequently encountered both inland and across the Top End.

Pink Cockatoo ♦ (Major Mitchell C) *Cacatua leadbeateri* A pair observed drinking at waterhole and roadside in West MacDonnell ranges.

Little Corella ♦ *Cacatua sanguinea* Uncommon inland and common in Top End.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Common around Darwin and Kakadu.

Red-winged Parrot ♦ *Aprosmictus erythropterus* Flocks of between 6 and 20 parrots frequently observed across Top End.

Mulga Parrot ♦ *Psephotellus varius* Small flocks in most inland locations.

Hooded Parrot ♦ *Psephotellus dissimilis* Up to 60 birds observed at Pine creek, also seen drinking at waterhole on Fergusson River.

Northern Rosella ♦ *Platycercus venustus* Uncommon and only observed in woodland in Kakadu and Victoria River on two occasions.

Australian Ringneck ♦ (Port Lincoln R) *Barnardius [zonarius] zonarius* Commonly encountered in woodland around Alice Springs and Erldunda.

Bourke's Parrot ♦ *Neopsephotus bourkii* Small numbers seen in Mulga woodland on three separate occasions.

Varied Lorikeet ♦ *Psitteuteles versicolor* Several flocks observed flying over but easily identified.

Red-collared Lorikeet ♦ *Trichoglossus rubritorquis* Common throughout the Top End.

Budgerigar ♦ *Melopsittacus undulatus* Flocks of up to 300 commonly encountered near Uluru and seen in smaller flocks near Timber Creek.

Rainbow Pitta ♦ *Pitta iris* Observed at Lee Point and Fogg Dam monsoon forest and heard elsewhere in around Darwin and Kakadu.

Western Bowerbird ♦ *Chlamydera guttata* Seen in five locations around Alice Springs.

Great Bowerbird ♦ *Chlamydera nuchalis* Common around Pine Creek, Katherine, and Victoria River/Timber Creek regions.

Black-tailed Treecreeper ♦ *Climacteris melanurus* Seen or heard on several occasions in open woodland across Top End.

Purple-backed Fairywren ♦ *Malurus assimilis* Relatively common at inland venues, especially the Alice STW.

Splendid Fairywren ♦ *Malurus splendens* Spectacular birds seen in Mulga Woodlands around Alice Springs.

Purple-crowned Fairywren ♦ *Malurus coronatus* Observed in 2 locations near Victoria River and Timber Creek.

Red-backed Fairywren ♦ *Malurus melanocephalus* Observed in woodland around Katherine and Timber Creek.

White-winged Fairywren ♦ *Malurus leucopterus* Commonly observed in low shrubs in arid areas inland.

Dusky Grasswren ♦ *Amytornis purnelli* Twice encountered in Spinifex grass on rocky hill sides around Alice Springs.

Crimson Chat ♦ *Epthianura tricolor* Seen on Santa Teresa Road and common in Uluru Kata-Juta NP.

Rufous-banded Honeyeater ♦ *Conopophila albogularis* Commonly seen in mangroves and monsoon forest around Darwin, Fogg Dam and Kakadu.

Rufous-throated Honeyeater ♦ *Conopophila rufogularis* Mostly observed south and west of Pine Creek down to Timber Creek.

Bar-breasted Honeyeater ♦ *Ramsayornis fasciatus* **Seen at** Holmes Jungle, Fogg Dam and Kakadu.

Pied Honeyeater ♦ *Certhionyx variegatus* Several near Yulara and roadside between Uluru and Kata-Juta.

Black Honeyeater ♦ *Sugomel nigrum* A handful observed on sand dunes near Yulara.

Dusky Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela obscura* Common in monsoon and riparian forest around Darwin and Kakadu.

Red-headed Myzomela ♦ *Myzomela erythrocephala* Frequently observed in mangroves in Darwin region.

Little Friarbird ♦ *Philemon citreogularis* Common in open woodlands throughout Top End.

Helmeted Friarbird ♦ *Philemon buceroides* Commonly encountered in wetter forests around Darwin, Kakadu Sandstone, Katherine, and Timber Creek.

Silver-crowned Friarbird ♦ *Philemon argenticeps* Commonly present in woodlands across the Top End.

Brown Honeyeater ♦ *Lichmera indistincta* Small numbers in ranges west of Alice Springs and common in Top End mangroves and closed forest.

Banded Honeyeater ♦ *Cissomela pectoralis* Mostly seen in riparian forest adjacent to dry woodlands in south of Top End.

Blue-faced Honeyeater ♦ *Entomyzon cyanotis* Commonly seen around urban environments and townships in the Top End.

Black-chinned Honeyeater ♦ (Golden-backed H) *Melithreptus [gularis] laetior* Only observed near Timber Creek.

White-throated Honeyeater *Melithreptus albogularis* Present in small numbers in most woodland habitats in Top End.

White-gaped Honeyeater ♦ *Stomiopera unicolor* Loud and easily observed in gardens and forests of the top End.

White-lined Honeyeater ♦ *Territornis albilineata* Heard commonly around sandstone escarpment in Kakadu but only one seen at close quarters at Nourlangie Rock.

Singing Honeyeater ♦ *Gavicalis virescens* Frequently encountered in arid inland regions.

Yellow-tinted Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula flavescens* Mostly found in the southern areas of the Top End especially along creeks.

Grey-headed Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula keartlandi* Eucalypt woodlands on rocky areas around Alice Springs.

Grey-fronted Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula plumula* Uncommon but found at creek lines near Victoria River.

White-plumed Honeyeater ♦ *Ptilotula penicillate* Common around Alice Springs and Eucalypt woodlands in arid zone.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater ♦ *Acanthagenys rufogularis* Frequently observed at most inland locations.

Yellow-throated Miner ♦ *Manorina flavigula* Abundant in Eucalypts along creeks and urban environments in and around Alice Springs and observed in drier regions of the Top End.

Red-browed Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus rubricatus* Observed in trees along creeks in the arid zone.

Striated Pardalote ♦ *Pardalotus striatus* Commonly heard both inland and in the Top End but only observed on two occasions in the Top End.

Weebill ♦ *Smicrornis brevirostris* Commonly heard around Alice Springs and across the Top End, observed near Katherine.

Mangrove Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone levigaster* Seen in mangroves at Buffalo Creek and Nightcliff.

Large-billed Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone magnirostris* Seen in mangroves at Nightcliff and Eastpoint.

Green-backed Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone chloronota* Observed at Leepoint monsoon forest and Holmes Jungle.

White-throated Gerygone ♦ *Gerygone olivacea* An individual seen at close quarters at Edith Falls and heard around Katherine.

Inland Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza apicalis* Observed in mulga woodland at Telegraph Station at Alice Springs.

Slaty-backed Thornbill ♦ *Acanthiza robustirostris* Several at roadside stop between Erldunda and Yulara.

Southern Whiteface ♦ *Aphelocephala leucopsis* Seen at several locations inland.

Grey-crowned Babbler ♦ *Pomatostomus temporalis* Commonly observed both inland and Top End.

White-browed Babbler ♦ *Pomatostomus superciliosus* Observed on several occasions in Mulga woodland near Alice Springs and Erldunda.

Chiming Wedgebill ♦ *Psophodes occidentalis* Often heard and observed well on Santa Teresa Road and near Erldunda.

Cinnamon Quail-thrush ♦ *Cinlosoma cinnamomeum* Noted twice on Santa Teresa Road and near Erldunda.

White-breasted Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus leucorhynchus* Common, especially in townships and urban environments.

Masked Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus personatus* Abundant at Uluru Kata-Juta NP.

Black-faced Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus cinereus* Frequently observed at all inland venues and in drier regions of the Top End.

Little Woodswallow ♦ *Artamus minor* At least 10 seen at Jessie's Gap and one at Victoria River escarpment.

Black Butcherbird ♦ *Melloria quoyi* Observed at Buffalo Creek and heard in other mangrove environments.

Australian Magpie ♦ *Gymnorhina tibicen* Only seen in small numbers near Erldunda.

Grey Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus torquatus* Uncommon but seen near Alice Springs on a couple of outings.

Silver-backed Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus argenteus* Seen well just north of Pine Creek.

Pied Butcherbird ♦ *Cracticus nigrogularis* Observed throughout inland and Top End.

Black-faced Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina novaehollandiae* Encountered widely across both inland and Top End locations.

White-bellied Cuckooshrike ♦ *Coracina papuensis* Seen on most days in Top End locations.

White-winged Triller ♦ *Lalage tricolor* Observed in the Uluru Kata-Juta NP and roadside near Erldunda.

Varied Triller ♦ *Lalage leucomela* Commonly heard and seen in all forest habitats in the Top End.

Varied Sittella ♦ *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* Roadside stop in woodland west of Katherine.

Crested Bellbird ♦ *Oreoica gutturalis* Frequently heard and seen in and around Alice Springs and other inland regions.

Northern Shrike-tit ♦ *Falcunculus whitei* One of the more difficult targets but eventually seen well south of Katherine.

Grey Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala simplex* Observed in monsoon forest around Darwin and Fogg Dam.

Mangrove Golden Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala melanura* Only one female seen in Nightcliff mangroves.

Rufous Whistler ♦ *Pachycephala rufiventris* Heard often and regularly seen in both the inland and Top End woodland venues.

Arafura Shrike-thrush ♦ *Colluricincla megarhyncha* Seen well at Holmes Jungle.

Grey Shrikethrush ◊ *Colluricincla harmonica* Seen and heard at inland and drier Top End locations.

Sandstone Shrikethrush ◊ *Colluricincla woodwardia* Good views at Ubirr Roack and Victoria River escarpment.

Australasian Figbird ◊ (Green F) *Sphecotheres vieilloti* Common in urban and forest locations throughout the Top End.

Olive-backed Oriole ◊ *Oriolus sagittatus* Good views at Edith Falls, Victoria River, and Timber Creek.

Green Oriole ◊ *Oriolus flavocinctus* Common in urban and forest habitats across the Top End.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus bracteatus* Frequently encountered in forest and woodland habitats of the Top End.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* Seen on every day and in most venues.

Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris* Occasional observations in monsoon forest and mangroves in Top End.

Arafura Fantail ◊ *Rhipidura dryas* Regularly found in monsoon forest around Darwin and Kakadu.

Magpie-lark ◊ (Australian M-I) *Grallina cyanoleuca* Seen every day and in most locations.

Leaden Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra rubecula* Seen well in several Top End riparian habitats and woodlands.

Broad-billed Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra ruficollis* Observed on several occasions in mangrove and monsoon forest around Darwin and Fogg Dam.

Shining Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra alecto* Noisy and easily found in monsoon forest and riparian habitats in the Top End.

Paperbark Flycatcher ◊ *Myiagra nana* In small numbers but widely spread throughout the Top End.

Torresian Crow ◊ *Corvus orru* Observed throughout the inland and Top End regions.

Little Crow ◊ *Corvus bennetti* Abundant around Alice Springs and other inland venues.

Apostlebird ◊ *Struthidea cinerea* These gregarious birds were encountered at several locations in the drier regions of the Top End.

Hooded Robin ◊ *Melanodryas cucullate* Mulga woodland near along Sant Teresa Road.

Mangrove Robin ◊ *Peneothello pulverulenta* Only one encounter with this secretive bird at the Nightcliff mangroves.

Buff-sided Robin ◊ *Poecilodryas cerviniventris* Great views of a pair of these attractive birds in riparian forest in Kakadu.

Lemon-bellied Flyrobin ◊ *Microeca flavigaster* Common in and around mangroves and monsoon forest in the wetter regions of the Top End.

Jacky Winter ◊ *Microeca fascians* Several observations in drier woodland in the Top End.

Red-capped Robin ◊ *Petroica goodenovii* These spectacular birds were seen in small numbers in dry woodland around Alice Springs and Erldunda.

Singing Bush Lark (Australasian B) *Mirafra javanica* Heard and seen roadside near Fogg Dam.

White-backed Swallow ◊ *Cheramoeca leucosterna* A small party seen hawking over sand dunes in Uluru Kata-Juta NP.

Fairy Martin ◊ *Petrochelidon ariel* Frequently observed inland and in the Top End especially at river crossings.

Australian Reed Warbler ◊ *Acrocephalus australis* 6 seen at the Alice STW and heard in other wetlands of the interior.

Spinifexbird ◊ *Poodytes carteri* First bird for the tour seen along the Santa Teresa Road in spinifex grasslands. Heard in other locations.

Little Grassbird ◊ *Poodytes gramineus* Only encountered in the Alice STW.

Brown Songlark ◊ *Cincloramphus cruralis* Regularly found in small numbers in grasslands for the arid interior.

Rufous Songlark ♦ *Cincloramphus mathewsi* Commonly heard and often seen in woodlands throughout the inland areas.

Tawny Grassbird ♦ *Cincloramphus timoriensis* Was seen well but only once at Knuckey's Lagoon near Darwin.

Golden-headed Cisticola (Bright-headed C) *Cisticola exilis* Often heard but seen at Fogg Dam and other grasslands near Timber Creek.

Canary White-eye ♦ (Australian Yellow W) *Zosterops luteus* Regularly found at all mangrove habitats.

Mistletoebird ♦ *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Frequently heard throughout the interior and the Top End and observed on several occasions.

Crimson Finch ♦ *Neochmia phaeton* Common in riparian habitats in the Top End.

Painted Finch ♦ *Emblema pictum* Small numbers of these colourful finches were clearly observed at a remote waterhole in the West MacDonnell ranges.

Star Finch ♦ *Bathilda ruficauda* After a long search these finches were located at the Timber Creek airport.

Double-barred Finch ♦ *Stizoptera bichenovii* Commonly found in small flocks in forest and near waterholes in the Top End.

Australian Zebra Finch ♦ *Taeniopygia castanotis* 1000s of these birds were at most locations throughout the arid lands and smaller numbers near Timber Creek.

Masked Finch ♦ *Poephila personata* Small flocks around pine Creek and everywhere west to Timber Creek.

Long-tailed Finch ♦ *Poephila acuticauda* Small numbers present at most water holes and in Litchfield NP.

Yellow-rumped Mannikin ♦ *Lonchura flaviprymna* Found in among Chestnut-breasted Mannikins at Bradshaw Bridge, Victoria River.

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax* Small flocks at Bradshaw Bridge on the banks of Victoria River.

Gouldian Finch ♦ *Chloebia gouldiae* Observed in good numbers at waterholes near Pine Creek and Timber Creek and occasional in woodlands around Katherine.

Australian Pipit *Anthus australis* Seen along the Santa Teresa Road.

MAMMALS

Northern Brown Bandicoot *Isodon macrourus* One in grassland west of Katherine.

Common Brush-tailed Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* One observed in mangroves on Eastpoint, Darwin.

Agile Wallaby *Notamacropus agilis* Frequently encountered across the Top End.

Common Wallaroo (Euro) *Osphranter robustus* Several seen in hill country west of Alice Springs.

Short-eared Rock Wallaby ♦ *Petrogale brachyotis* Observed in Kakadu and Victoria River escarpment.

Black-footed Rock Wallaby ♦ (Black-flanked R W) *Petrogale lateralis* A handful in sandstone outcrops near Alice Springs.

Grey Wolf (Dingo) *Canis lupus* Seen roadside near Alice Springs.

Domestic Horse (introduced) *Equus caballus* Wetlands in Kakadu.

Water Buffalo (introduced) *Bubalus bubalis* Wetlands at Fogg Dam, Victoria river and in Kakadu NP.

Black Flying Fox (Central F-f) *Pteropus alecto* Mostly encountered in wetter areas of the Top End, Darwin Kakadu.

Little Red Flying Fox *Pteropus scapulatus* Mostly observed in the Timber Creek and Victoria River region.