

TRIP REPORT

Guide Name CAT DAVIDSON | Sep 24, 2024

Naturalist Journeys Main Australian Tour 2024 – Tasmania



Wombat - Cat Davidson

Day 1

25th September 2024 Hobart - Tasman Peninsula

A cool, calm day greeted us as we stepped outside in Hobart to begin our Tasmania tour. We decided to zip straight to the top of kunanyi, and with blue sky in most directions, we had great views through the sharp, bracing wind. A wee bit of snow still clung to the summit.

We descended to the warmer layers at The Springs and began a loop through the Manuka and Melaleuca. Pausing in a clearing, we were surrounded by the calls of the Crescent Honeyeater, and after teasing us for a while, several of them popped out into the open to show us their lovely yellow wings. We then spotted a stunning alpha male Superb Fairywren, sitting proud on a bush, with other members of the family group bopping through the undergrowth. Three bold and striking endemic Black Currawongs sat and called at us from some beautiful lichen-covered branches.

We dropped down to Parrot Park in Sandy Bay and saw colourful Eastern Rosellas, tiny Musk Lorikeets, gregarious Galahs playing with sticks, shouty Noisy Miners, both Little and Long-beaked Corellas, and to complete our plethora of parrots, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos sitting up in a Eucalypt, and four slowly flapping Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos cruising across the bay.

A brief shower freshened up our arrival at the Hobart Botanic Gardens, where we started with a bang, spotting an endemic Yellow Wattlebird in the camellia flowers and a Grey Currawong showing great interest in some school kids' backpacks. Several endemic Tasmanian Native Hens strutted around the lawns amongst Pacific Black Ducks, Maned Ducks, scratching Common Blackbirds, and dancing Grey Fantails. The sunshine was pouring in as we departed the gardens, enjoying the marvellous spring flowers blooming around us.

A quick warm clothing "shopportunity" and lovely lunch at Cambridge saw us surge south down the Tasman Peninsula. An opportunistic stop at a dam at Copping gave us views of Hoary-headed Grebes, Australian Shelducks, Black Swans, and a solo Great Crested Grebe. A Brown Falcon sitting on a nearby power line perched long enough for a few photographs before soaring away.

Our next stop was Marion Bay, a lovely tidal wetland, where we saw many delightful White-fronted Chats, several pristine white Little Egrets, stalking White-faced Herons, a feeding group of Chestnut Teals, and another handsome blue Superb Fairywren.

Walking through to the beach, Little Wattlebirds and Noisy Miners zipped about amongst the houses of Marion Bay. A walk on the beach was well worth it, with two great new tiny birds: a Hooded Plover and a Double-banded Plover, scooting around amongst over 50 Pied Oystercatchers.

Heading further south, a Swamp Harrier and a White-bellied Sea Eagle zipped past us. As we arrived in Dunalley, we spotted a blonde Short-beaked Echidna down a side street and had wonderful views as it fed on the roadside verge. A stop at the Dunalley Bridge in the warm afternoon sun let us watch many Black-headed Cormorants with their wings outstretched, as well as several Little Pied and Great Cormorants. A pair of Pacific Gulls, with their huge red bills, sat on the wooden jetty next to a basking Australian Fur Seal, its flipper in the air like a solar panel.

We arrived at our hotel at Eaglehawk Neck and settled in, the rolling waves over the Tessellated Pavement soothing us to sleep after a big day full of wonderful new birds.



Double-banded Plover - Cat Davidson

Day 2

26th September Tasman Peninsula

Setting off from the Lufra Hotel, we made our first stop at 'The Dog Line' on The Neck, where we immediately spotted an incredibly bright Flame Robin glowing at us from a fence line. We were lucky when a female Flame Robin popped up nearby, allowing us to see her subtle colours. Little Wattlebirds darted about with New Holland Honeyeaters amongst the bushes, while Masked Lapwings shouted and strutted around the wet grass. Along the beachline, there were both Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, as well as several huge Pacific Gulls amongst the Silver Gulls and Black Swans.

We drove down towards Port Arthur and spotted some huge Cape Barren Geese in a field along the roadside. Following the shoreline, we saw Hoary-headed Grebes, Chestnut Teals, Great and Black-faced Cormorants on the water, and Dusky Woodswallows on the powerlines. A visit to the Remarkable Cave lookout offered stunning views and huge crashing waves.

Most of the group headed off to sea on the Tasman Cruise, while several of us visited the Saltwater River Coal Mine site. Out at sea, everyone enjoyed the stunning scenery and towering Jurassic dolerite cliffs. They saw Australian and Long-nosed Fur Seals, and spotted Australasian Gannets, with a single Shy Albatross as the highlight bird.

At the convict mine site, we saw Black-headed and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, Green Rosellas, and Striated Pardalotes, and had some lovely close interactions with stunning Superb Fairywrens.

After collecting the sailors from the jetty, who were a wee bit wet and cold from their adventure, we returned to the hotel to allow everyone some rest before heading back out.

The afternoon locations included the incredible geological formations at the Tasman Arch and the Devil's Kitchen, as well as a visit to the Soldiers Quarters at The Neck and the lookout viewpoint over Pirate Bay. New birds seen included Brown Thornbills and Tasmanian Scrubwrens, and we concluded the day as we started—with a large flock of luminous Flame Robins.



Superb Fairy Wren - Cat Davidson

Day 3

27th September Maria Island

Zippering from Eaglehawk Neck to Triabunna, we set off on the ferry in beautiful weather to cross the Mercury Channel to Maria Island.

We landed on Maria Island and immediately spotted a beautiful male Flame Robin beside the concrete silos. As we walked towards the Darlington settlement, we saw our first adorable wombat on the slope with its chubby cheeks and stocky little body. Amongst the trees, several Green Rosellas were sitting on the ground, displaying their mature yellow feathers. Black Currawongs arrived to greet us, offering their wonderful bold calls. Four Cape Barren Geese walked across the bridge towards us, giving us incredible close views of their green cere and red-and-black legs. Walking towards the settlement, we came across many more Cape Barren Geese, Yellow-rumped Thornbills, and a single Tasmanian Pademelon grazing on the grass.

A quick snack in Darlington, and we were ready for a walk to the Painted Cliffs. We made our way up the grassy slope past many more wombats, and as we entered the forest, we began to see Yellow Wattlebirds and the endemic Black-headed Honeyeaters, giving us great views of their green backs and handsome black heads. Near the Oast House, we saw a Fantail Cuckoo sitting in the open, allowing us to admire its stripy tail and peachy chest. Several Scarlet Robins were also seen, and just around the corner, we encountered a beautiful Eastern Spinebill.

After a speedy lunch by the beach with a view of the Painted Cliffs, we set off back towards the settlement. Along the way, we came across an adorable family of Cape Barren Geese with half a dozen fluffy, stripy goslings. Returning to the ferry, we enjoyed final views of many more sun-kissed, busy wombats, and spotted some Hooded Plovers on the shore next to the jetty. The return ferry journey concluded with a White-bellied Sea-Eagle soaring over the port. Upon landing, we zoomed south to Hobart and relaxed after a glorious day.



Cape Barren Goose Goslings - Cat Davidson

Day 4

28th September Hobart-Bruny

We woke up in Hobart to another beautiful day. Our first location was Peter Murrell Reserve in Kingston. We pulled into the eucalyptus forest and were immediately greeted by several beautiful bird songs, including the call of one of our target species, the Yellow-throated Honeyeater. We had several glimpses of it, along with sightings of Striated Pardalotes, while Yellow Wattlebirds and Grey Currawongs called and squabbled in the treetops. Rainbow Lorikeets shot around in bursts of bright colour. We completed a loop around the small dam, watching a beautiful family of Black Swans with their young, fluffy grey cygnets floating serenely on the surface. Chestnut Teals and Maned Ducks were also seen around the edges of the water, and Superb Fairywrens darted amongst the rushes. As we returned to the car park, we came across an Acacia bush with Brown Thornbills, and had a much better sighting of the beautiful endemic Yellow-throated Honeyeater.

Further down the channel, we arrived at Dru Point in Margate. This excellent birding site is a dog-walking area and children's play park, so the whole area was very active, yet amongst the human activity, we had incredible bird sightings. Along the ocean shoreline, we saw all three gull species, Great and Little Black Cormorants, Hoary-headed Grebes, White-faced Herons, a dozen huge Pelicans, and in the distance, a Swamp Harrier sitting amongst the rushes, waiting for its breakfast. Amongst the Casuarina and eucalyptus trees, there were many Yellow Wattlebirds, Black-headed Honeyeaters, Common Bronzewing, and Brown Thornbills, yet the highlight of the walk was a single, sleepy Tawny Frogmouth perched in the top branches of a Casuarina. The greatest excitement came as we returned to the start of the loop and heard the call of Swift Parrots. Picking up our pace, we turned the corner to find a flock of a dozen incredibly tiny, luminous green, highly endangered Swift Parrots. Magical!

Crossing the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island, we landed in the north and zoomed south through the open farmlands, making our first stop at The Neck campground. A walk around the campground was surprisingly quiet, though there was a very musical female Golden Whistler singing her heart out. Lunch in Adventure Bay was delayed by a stop to view a beautiful white Bennett's

wallaby near the road. This unusual recessive homozygous albinistic wallaby is found on Bruny Island due to the lack of predators that would normally target a white mutation. After a delicious lunch, we emerged to a burst of activity. Several wallabies were grazing near the bus, including one with a tiny joey popping out of its pouch. The sounds of more Swift Parrots drew us around the corner, where we not only viewed more parrots but also came across a new endemic, the Dusky Robin, several gliding Dusky Woodswallows, and a stunning male Scarlet Robin. Further along the road, following the sound of a Beautiful Firetail, we were lucky enough to see this scarce and beautiful finch.

Our next location for the afternoon was Mavista Rainforest, and as we walked through the beautiful temperate tree ferns and Nothofagus beech forest, we caught glimpses of Tasmanian Scrubwrens and Tasmanian Thornbills, and heard the elusive Eastern Spinebills. The beauty of the forest more than made up for the quiet birdlife. Our final stop for the afternoon was Two Tree Point, with beautiful views of the 250-year-old Blue Gums set against the curve of Adventure Bay.

After dinner, we took a night tour, beginning at The Neck rookery, where, to our great fortune, we were able to observe the very first of the season's Short-tailed Shearwaters, which had just flown in to Tasmania from the Aleutian Islands off Alaska. A short drive into North Bruny gave us a beautiful view of another Tawny Frogmouth, along with several Brushtail Possums swaggering along the road.



Swift Parrot - Cat Davidson

Day 5

29th September Bruny Island

After breakfast at Inala (and a welcome from Dr Tonia Cochran), we started with a bang, spotting a beautiful raptor, a Grey Goshawk (white morph), feeding on some roadkill wallaby. We walked through the beautiful Jurassic Garden and saw a selection of the classics: New Holland Honeyeater, Maned Duck, Masked Lapwing, and Yellow Wattlebird. Exiting the garden, we walked down the avenue of *Eucalyptus viminalis* and were very fortunate to see our first tiny Forty-spotted Pardalotes mining for manna. Climbing up the platform, we saw many more Pardalotes, several of which popped in and out

of their purpose-built nest boxes. Black-headed Honeyeaters and Brown Thornbills also gave us lovely views.

Taking a walk through the lower reaches of Inala, we observed many lovely birds, including Dusky Robin, Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Striated Pardalote, Tasmanian Thornbill, Golden Whistler, and Brown Falcon. While enjoying morning tea in the garden, a White-bellied Sea Eagle perched nearby, allowing us a lovely view.

A trip to Cloudy Bay Beach took us past fields full of Black Currawongs (as well as alpacas and llamas) before we arrived at the spectacular beach, where rolling and crashing waves hit the sand and black rocks. Silver, Kelp, and Pacific Gulls were numerous, and an elegant White-faced Heron stood staring out to sea. We stood at the viewpoint to watch the bold surfers in the very chilly water.

While picking up the lunches from Hotel Bruny, we heard the call of a Pallid Cuckoo and managed to spot two different individuals sitting on the power lines, along with a Fantailed Cuckoo.

Arriving at Cape Bruny Lighthouse, the weather was perfect, with big open skies and light winds, allowing us to see the beautiful landscape at its finest. Taking a short walk around the volunteer houses, we saw several Brown Quail scooting away amongst a lovely group of Tasmanian Pademelons and Bennett's Wallabies. Dusky Woodswallows and Flame Robins flitted around, and as we walked up to the lighthouse, we came across a blonde Short-beaked Echidna scruffling in the undergrowth. After absorbing all the wonderful views of the southern coast of Australia, we zipped around the corner to Jetty Beach campsite to have lunch. A stroll after lunch gave us great views of Yellow-throated and Black-headed Honeyeaters, but the Bassian Thrush eluded us.

The spot where Cloudy Bay Lagoon meets the ocean is a beautiful channel of brackish water, but with a rambunctious family already there before us, the birds had unfortunately been scared away. However, the views were still very glorious.

A final walk for the afternoon, with the target of spotting a Pink Robin, was very quiet in the forest. Yet the sunlight filtering through the trees was beautiful, and the whole forest atmosphere was very peaceful. We did see a female Pink Robin, but she gave us only fleeting glimpses. On the way to and from dinner in Alonnah, we were fortunate enough to see three more White Wallabies feeding near the roadside, glowing in the darkness.



Bennetts Wallaby Joey - Cat Davidson

Day 6

30th September Bruny - Mount Field

Breakfast at Inala was followed by our departure from Bruny Island, stopping only once along the way at The Neck rookery to enjoy the stunning view of the Tombolo between North and South Bruny and to observe the Short-tailed Shearwaters' burrows during the day.

After the ferry ride back across the channel, we travelled through Hobart, making our first stop at Gould's Lagoon. There was a lovely selection of water birds, including Australian Swampheaven, Australasian Shovelers, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Great Cormorant, Eurasian Coot, and a graceful Swamp Harrier hunting low over the wetlands. A short walk around half of the lagoon provided sightings of Eastern Rosella, Noisy Miners, European Goldfinch, and the tittering sounds of Musk Lorikeets. A lovely Magpie also gave us a beautiful rendition of its carolling song.

After a quick lunch in New Norfolk, we continued our drive to Mount Field National Park, with a flyby from a very low juvenile White-bellied Sea Eagle along the way, amongst the hop fields and cherry orchards. Our first walk was to Russell Falls. Along the way, we saw a pair of beautiful Pink Robins, a few Tasmanian Thornbills, a Tasmanian Scrubwren, a tantalising glimpse of a Bassian Thrush, and a flock of Black Currawongs. The waterfall itself was flowing beautifully, and the temperate rainforest, full of towering tree ferns, cast its magic on us all.

A second walk at Mount Field was The Tall Trees walk, amongst Eucalyptus regnans, the tallest hardwood tree in the world. The loop was very beautiful but quite quiet; however, we did see a pair of Scarlet Robins. Driving to our home for the night, Curringa Farm, we arrived to a warm welcome from Tim and enjoyed a delicious farm barbecue. As we drove through the farm in the dark, we saw Bennett's Wallabies and Brush-tailed Possums amongst the hundreds of White-faced Sussex sheep.



Brush-tailed Possum and joey - Cat Davidson

Day 7

1st October Hamilton - Leven Canyon

Waking up to sunshine at Curringa Farm, some of us took a short walk through the regeneration section of the farm, enjoying the views over the River Derwent. Amongst the morning birds were Grey Butcherbird, Striated Pardalote, Brown Thornbill, Eastern Rosella, a calling Pallid Cuckoo, and a distant Wedge-tailed Eagle. Popping down to the reception area, we scanned the dam and spotted Hoary-headed Grebe, Black Swan, and Chestnut Teal, as well as adorable floofy chickens and boofy-headed Alpacas.

With a long drive ahead of us, we set off north, making our first stop at the Steppes Sculptures. A walk through the beautiful dry forest was quite windy and quiet, but upon arriving at the Steppes Homestead, we had lovely sightings of Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, and Flame Robins.

Driving past the Great Lake in central Tasmania, we then stopped at the highest point on the highway and walked out to an alpine lake through the spectacular ancient Pencil Pines and the freeze-thaw rock scree slopes.

A quick drive up the highway to the Tasmanian Arboretum gave us an incredible opportunity to see over four Platypus swimming around in the lake. We also spotted a Black Swan on a nest and watched a family of gorgeous fluffy Native Hens. A walk into the native Tasmanian forest section of the arboretum provided great views of Beautiful Firetail, Eastern Spinebill, Tasmanian Thornbill, and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike.

After an hour of Platypus watching, we reluctantly tore ourselves away and headed to our home for the night, Mountain Valley Wilderness Lodge in Leven Canyon, where Len gave us a friendly welcome and Pat cooked us a delicious dinner.



Platypus - Cat Davidson

Day 8

2nd October Cradle Mountain

A small group of us met up for an early walk around Loongana. Black-headed Honeyeaters were mobbing a Grey Shrike-thrush high in a tree. A pair of Scarlet Robins were flitting amongst the trees, Superb Fairy-wrens were popping about in the undergrowth, and several Black Currawongs and Kookaburras were moving and posing beautifully throughout the area.

In the Leven Canyon, we walked up to Cruickshanks Lookout. From the lookout platform, we enjoyed the spectacular views of the incredible fault lines and lichen-covered pillars of rock rising from the fast-flowing river at the base of the canyon. On the way back to the car park, several people had views of Tasmanian Scrubtits, and we all had frustratingly short glimpses of String-billed Honeyeaters and juvenile Crescent Honeyeaters. Driving onwards, we crossed a steep ravine and made our way through the Wilmot 'valley of views', stopping for a view across to beautiful Mt Roland.

Arriving at Cradle Mountain National Park, we took our first walk at Pencil Pine Falls and saw some up-close cheeky Black Currawongs during morning tea. Continuing on to the Enchanted Forest Walk, we had wonderful encounters with Wombats and Short-beaked Echidnas, as well as Tasmanian Thornbills, Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, and, rather strangely, two Great Cormorants at the fishing dam.

At Dove Lake, we were incredibly lucky with the weather conditions, and we could see all of Cradle Mountain crystal clear. At Waldheim's Cabin, we had lunch in the day hut amongst the Pademelons and Wombats, and we had our most wonderful sighting of a male Pink Robin, who was very kind to us with its multiple poses on beautiful branches. We took a walk through the King Billy Forest with the incredible mossy trunks and twisted limbs of the King Billy, Celery Pine, and Myrtle Beech.

Before leaving the park, we stopped at Ronny's Creek, and from the boardwalk, we could see at least five adorable Common Wombats, including one with a joey popping out from between its legs. Back to Leven Canyon after a fantastic final full day in Tasmania.



Pink Robin - Cat Davidson

Day 9

3rd October Launceston

Meeting on our final morning, everyone swapped wildlife stories from their night missions, and amongst the Brush-tailed Possum and Pademelon viewings, there was excitingly one sighting of a rare Spotted-tailed Quoll.

We zoomed from Devonport to Launceston with a super quick stop for new birds: Eurasian Skylarks and Banded Lapwings along the way. We pulled into Tamar Wetlands, where we caught glimpses of Double-banded Plovers zipping around, a brief Australian Reed Warbler singing its head off, then zipping away, and many Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Australian Shelducks, and Black Swans. A Great Egret stood in a very poised manner, and several Swamp Harriers hunted above the wetlands.

Then came the sad business of goodbyes as we farewelled each other and separated into the world once again. Thank you, Bitty, Michael, Nancy, Jack, Katy, Maura, Jim, Bill, and Dana. It was a great pleasure to travel with you and show you around some of the wonders of Tasmania and Western Australia. Many thanks for your support of Inala, and I hope you continue to have wonderful birding adventures all over the world.

Best wishes,

Cat



Banded Lapwing - Cat Davidson



On behalf of Cat and the Inala team -
thanks for touring with us.

