Trip Report

Naturalist Journeys Grand Australia Tour

Northern Territory

Guide: Steve Davidson | Sep 18, 2025, to Sep 22, 2025

Day 1

18.09.25 Darwin

Our group all convened in the restaurant at the hotel in downtown Darwin for a meet and greet, and to talk about how we would tackle the Top End's amazing birdlife. After some tasty dinner, we hatched a plan for a 6 am start and headed to bed.

Day 2

18.09.25 Darwin - Jabiru

With a hasty breakfast out of the way, we struck out east of Darwin, but not before stopping for our first Torresian Imperial Pigeons and a colony of Black Flying Foxes right alongside the hotel.

At a nature park nearby, we battled mosquitoes but came up absolute trumps with superb views of a major target here – a pair of stunning Rainbow Pittas that perched up beautifully for us – as well as Green-backed Gerygone, Shining Flycatcher, Pacific Emerald Dove, Orange-footed Megapode, Arafura Fantail, Varied Triller and Yellow Oriole. Our reptile representative there was a funky-looking Yellow-faced Turtle.

Continuing east, we stopped for Blue-winged Kookaburra, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Brown Goshawk and Forest Kingfisher. At a conservation reserve, highlights consisted of Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove, Bar-breasted and Rufous-banded Honeyeater, Paperbark Flycatcher, Black-necked Stork, Brolga, Comb-crested Jacana, many hundreds of Plumed Egret, Glossy Ibis, Royal Spoonbill, Pied Heron, White-necked Heron, Australasian Darter,

Australian Pelican and a couple of Magpie Geese. A Swamplands Lashtail (aka Northern Tree Dragon) continued the reptile theme.

Eventually we made it into the National Park, passing through mile after mile of picturesque floodplain and tropical woodland as we entered this vast and beautiful place. Pulling into our digs at the hotel, we piled out, relieved to be out of the bus for a little while. After checking in to the rooms and a short break, we ventured out late arvo to drive the nearby roads, where we once again scored with another target attained (easily and happily) – the rare and declining Partridge Pigeon. We had a small party of this odd but very attractive little pigeon on the edge of the hotel grounds, as well as some Grey-crowned Babblers, vivid-faced Blue-faced Honeyeaters, Red-winged Parrot, Great Bowerbird and a pair of Sacred Kingfishers. A short distance away came a complete shock when a white-phase Grey Goshawk was observed just sitting in a dead tree right by the road. The joys of birding!

Day 3

20.09.25 Jabiru & Yellow Waters Cruise, Kakadu National Park

A pretty snazzy buffet breakfast awaited these early risers today, and after satiating ourselves we headed off into the National Park once again, this time out to the edge of the escarpment, following the road as it traverses the narrow gap of land between the floodplain and the sandstone country. Stopping enroute, we picked up our first true Arnhem Land endemic in the shape of White-lined Honeyeater, plus a quick glimpse of a distant Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon high up on a rock face. A Black-banded Fruit-Dove also called from deep within a rainforest gully nearby, unfortunately forever unseen by us. However, Silver-crowned Friarbird, White-bellied Cuckooshrike and Leaden Flycatcher showed a lot closer and a lot better. Just up the road a bit, we had a magnificent pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles perched on a ledge, as well as White-throated Honeyeater and a fly-by Channel-billed Cuckoo. The day was heating up fast, and by the time we actually made it to the rock art site and headed off for a walk, it was stinking hot and muggy. The build-up to the Wet was well and truly underway.

We moseyed along slowly, seeking shade here and there and enjoying a bit of ancient rock art. Some Red-backed Fairywrens, Double-barred Finches and a fine Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo (also panting his little head off…) were worthwhile distractions. Purchasing some ice-cold soft drinks from a small store helped lower our elevated core temperatures, and we made our way back for lunch. Thereafter it was straight down to the wetlands for a cruise. Having to hurry just a tad meant we almost missed the boat – quite literally – however, all was well and we sailed serenely out onto the open water. Immediately we saw loads of Plumed and Wandering Whistling-Ducks, Magpie Geese, Radjah Shelduck, our only Pied Cormorant for the tour, an outrageously ultraviolet and beautiful Azure Kingfisher, and then another, followed by Sacred Kingfisher and some seriously cute baby Comb-crested Jacanas tucked up under dad's wing, as well as Australasian Swamphen and a beautiful pair of Black-necked Storks. Common Sandpiper and Black-fronted Dotterel represented the shorebird department very nicely, and raptors included a fine White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Brown Goshawk and a bunch of Whistling Kites. Other smaller buzzy birds included Paperbark Flycatcher, Arafura Fantail and Lemon-bellied Flyrobin. The major reptilian highlight here, of course, was several sightings of Estuarine, or Saltwater, Crocodile, with some of these ancient-looking pseudosuchians seemingly unfazed by our presence close by.

It had been a long and very hot day, and the rest of the afternoon slipped by in a fairly uneventful fashion, save for some of us gluttons for punishment who went out to watch a few thirsty bush birds come down for water at a rapidly evaporating puddle near the hotel. After dark fell, we ventured out with a spotlight, hoping to find a few nocturnal denizens. A pair of Barking Owls showed very nicely, as did the bizarre-looking Bush Stone-Curlew on the side of the road near our hotel. Then it was to bed.

Day 4

21.09.25 Kakadu - Darwin

Today we returned to Darwin, but not before visiting one of the more iconic locations here in the park – a sandstone outcrop known for its rock art. On our way in, we could see its imposing figure looming out of the landscape, and a stop to take in some Pied Butcherbirds singing in the still morning air added a touch of magic to the morning. Our walk along the base of the rock yielded a few nice birds like Olive-backed Oriole, Grey Shrikethrush and scads of Silver-crowned Friarbirds plundering the flowering eucalypts. Up at the lookout we managed to lock onto a couple of the sandstone subspecies of Helmeted Friarbird – this form is endemic to the escarpment country. A pair of Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeons then showed beautifully for us on a rock ledge across the gully.

A quick stop on our way out yielded a pleasant surprise with three Emus seen in tropical woodland by the roadside, and then a little further on we managed to track down a party of Black-tailed Treecreepers as well. Sadly, it was about time to leave this amazing place, and after a quick lunch back at the hotel, the rubber hit the road. Goodbye, national park – as usual, you were amazing.

Heading west, the cloud cover steadily increased, and some pretty substantial cumulonimbus clouds soon developed. The first light bit of rain helped clean our dirty windscreen, but within ten minutes we were fully immersed in a tropical deluge, with thunder and lightning and sheets of water cascading down. The outside temperature readout in the bus went from 37°C to 25°C in under ten minutes. It was pretty spectacular. By the time we made it back into Darwin it had largely cleared, and at a wetland we stopped for a few waterbirds, with loads of Magpie Geese as well as Little Black Cormorant, Whiskered Tern, Wood Sandpiper, Pacific Black Duck and Australasian Grebe – all new birds for us. Our final stop for the day involved an unsuccessful hunt (in oppressively humid conditions) for some resident Rufous Owls, although we did pick up Northern Fantail, Little Bronze-Cuckoo and Sahul Brush Cuckoo for our troubles.

Day 5

22.09.25 Darwin area

With one last morning to do some birding in the local area, our intrepid group headed out to a creek on the northern outskirts of town, where mangrove forest and littoral vine scrub meet shoreline and estuary. Things started well with a Pacific Emerald Dove foraging on the edge of the carpark and a glimpse of a Black Butcherbird. We made out some pelicans on the shore but noted the rather high tide; nonetheless a wander out to the sand gave us a few Silver Gulls and Crested and Caspian Terns. Then a huge flock of shorebirds was seen massed further along the beach, waiting for the tide to drop (which it very quickly commenced doing). At first a few small flocks of Great Knot flew past, seeking out the first exposed mudflats on which to feed. Within 20 minutes there were waves of shorebirds flying out and landing in front of us – feeding, preening, calling and very close indeed, and in good light. In no particular order we picked out good numbers of Great and Red Knot, Greater and Siberian Sand-Plovers, Far Eastern Curlew, Terek Sandpiper, Grey (Black-bellied) and Pacific Golden Plover, Red-capped Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Red-necked Stint, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Sanderling, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper and Common Greenshank. Terns were well represented too with the aforementioned Great Crested and Caspian, but also Australian, Little, Lesser Crested and Whiskered Terns all in attendance. Plus lots of pelicans, and Great and Little Egrets – it was a rather spectacular hour or so spent on the shoreline!

Another half hour birding the edges of the mangroves and coastal scrub gave us Australian Yellow White-eye, eye-catching Red-headed Myzomela, a brief Mangrove Gerygone, Northern Fantail, White-breasted Woodswallow, Tree Martin, the coastal subspecies of Helmeted Friarbird, sweet-voiced Grey Whistler and nice looks at White-bellied Cuckooshrike. It was a fun morning out there.

Heading back into Darwin we stopped for an Australian Hobby perched on a telecom tower, followed by retrieving some lunch and then heading out to another coastal reserve for a look in the mangroves along the boardwalk. Here we picked up a lovely Broad-billed Flycatcher, followed by a gorgeous female Shining Flycatcher, young Little Bronze-Cuckoo and a pair of vociferous Torresian Kingfishers. A Brahminy Kite out on the mudflats gave us another new raptor. And then, as we tried to locate a shady spot for our last supper, the bird gods smiled upon us once more when a Pacific Baza appeared in a tree right next to the bus!

And thus the first leg of this tour ended, with the guests winging their way to Perth for the next leg of their Australian adventure. My thanks go to all of the participants over these past four days for your good company, good humour and some excellent birding together. Go well everyone!

Steve's ebird list: https://ebird.org/tripreport/413304

Image: Group at Nourlangie Rock in Kakadu NP. Author: S. Davidson

Western Australia

Guide: Cat Davidson | Sep 22, 2025, to Oct 1, 2025

Day 5

22.09.25 Arrive in Perth

Scooping up the intrepid travelers after their 4hr journey from Darwin, we zipped to our lovely hotel, had a lovely dinner where we chatted about our plans for the tour and then took an early night after a big day of travel.

Day 6

23.09.25 Perth area

Meeting at the bus, we started birding before we even left the carpark, spotting Brown Honeyeaters in the Grevillea and Laughing Doves amongst the plant beds. Navigating through the busy Perth roads, we reached the Botanic Gardens and were welcomed by a pair of beautiful Galah on the grass. Walking a loop through a lovely section of the garden, where we saw many of the wildflowers that we hope to see in the wild, we enjoyed stunning views over the city of Perth and a delightful variety of birds darting around. Red Wattlebirds were abundant in the garden, croaking and cackling at each other as they squabbled amongst the blossoms. Rainbow Lorikeets zoomed overhead. A flock of Magpies fed on a lawn area and Australian Ravens strutted and called while being swooped by Red Wattlebird. We came across a tiny Grey Fantail who sang a unique regional call to us and several Black-faced Cuckooshrike high in the treetops. There were Maned Ducks with two ducklings in the water pool near the fountain with a few Pacific Black Ducks hanging out with them. Taking a stroll through the quiet native bush area, filled with beautiful orchids and grasstrees, we spotted Brown Honeyeaters and had two great views of two individual Western Gerygone.

We had morning tea at the Botanic Gardens and then headed across town to a wetland called Lake Monger Reserve where we were greeted by a Straw-necked Ibis, a flurry of Willie Wagtails, Red Wattlebird and Rainbow Lorikeet. Amongst the bushes, we spotted New Holland Honeyeaters with their beautiful yellow wing stripes. Along the water's edge we spotted Eurasian Coots, Pacific Black Ducks, and Australasian Swamphen. From the bird hide, Welcome Swallows watched us warily as we stood near their nest, occasionally perching on the wooden railings, allowing us perfect views of their colourful plumage. As we looped back, we first heard then saw two beautiful Laughing Kookaburra. While watching the Kookaburra there were many stunning Rainbow Lorikeet perched in great light, all their colours glittering. We found two Singing Honeyeaters gleaning amongst the Eucalyptus and Casuarina trees.

At the Moondine section of Herdsman Lake we pulled in and had not even fully dismounted the bus before we spotted an excellent bird, a Buff-banded Rail who gave us incredible views as it walked across the open grass and then strolled casually down the edge of the rushes allowing us fantastic views of the beautiful colours and markings. Walking the recently flooded areas that we could access we saw a flock of eight Hardhead Ducks crossing in the distance, a Great Egret in the rushes, Swamphen and a Dusky Moorhen strutting along the edges and we came across another lovely Laughing Kookaburra perched close in a tree. As we were driving out of the area, we spotted a family of fabulous Pink-eared Duck and pulled over to enjoy the tiny fluffy ducklings with their wonderful bill-shape. We also got lucky and spotted a beautiful pair of Tawny Frogmouth perched just above head height, providing wonderful, unobstructed views.

After picking up a lovely selection of lunch items at Herdsman Larder, we ate at Herdsman Lake, accompanied by Pacific Black Ducks and Great Crested Grebes sporting their impressive mohicans. Along the waters edge we came across several fantastic new birds. First a male Musk Duck with a fabulous lobe, a pair of Grey Teal, a pair of Black Swans and a trio of Australasian Shelduck with gorgeous chestnut colours. We also enjoyed a pair of Australian Reed Warblers who sang and sat out in the open for a surprisingly long time. As we departed, we spotted two Little Corella and a single Little Egret.

Our final stop of the day was Eric Singleton Bird Sanctuary, where a short walk brought us several delights, the first of which was an incredible cluster of Spitfires (sawfly larvae) working as a team to cross a pathway. These incredible wee larvae can bend themselves into a pretzel and spit noxious yellow liquid from their mouths when attacked. We returned home for dinner and rest before a big drive south in the morning. Several Singing and New Holland Honeyeaters gave great views and then as we came into the centre of the reserve, we found ourselves right next to a breeding colony of Australian White Ibis nesting on top of clumps of grass. We watched a family of three chicks being fed regurgitated food by their parents and a female with several very young chicks nestled under her wings. A Eurasian Coot with a tiny red-headed hairy chick was spotted inside a floating grass clump and then our last bird for the day was a beauty when a Blue-billed Duck was seen and we got to view his stunning blue bill in the brief seconds he would spend on the surface.

Buff-banded Rail - Cat Davidson

Day 7

24.09.25 Perth - Cheynes Beach

Today was a huge travel day to the south coast of Australia. We began making our way out of the Perth suburbs, it was a relief to reach quieter roads and more forested areas. Our first birding stop was in Bedfordale, where we strolled along two lovely, vegetated streets. We began with excellent views of New Holland Honeyeaters, Red Wattlebirds and a Common Bronzewing. In an area with many huge Grasstrees, we had a pair of Grey Fantails and a charming Inland Thornbill. The next street offered us many beautiful wildflowers, along with two Gilbert's Honeyeaters and in the calm and tranquil forest, a beautiful female Western Whistler. Before leaving, we had a delightful flurry of activity with Singing Honeyeater, Silvereyes, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Western Gerygone. A short drive south to a rest stop was fairly quiet for birds, but those we did see were fantastic: a male Western Whistler and one more Common Bronzewing posing beautifully on a branch. A quick bathroom stop in Williams treated us to some lovely metal sculptures and a giant Numbat sculpture in the playpark.

At the Beaufort River, we found some familiar favourites: Grey Teal, Pacific Black Ducks, Maned Ducks, and Eurasian Coots. Under the bridge, many Welcome Swallows were coming and going. The beautiful song of a Western Gerygone drew us into the bush, and while watching both the Gerygone and some Grey Fantails we had a low flyby from an Australian Ringneck. Lunch in Kojonup (meaning 'place of Stone Axes' in the Noongar language) at a lovely little park and then followed a flock of Baudin's Cockatoo out of town and had success discovering them feeding on the ground in a field of African Daisies. Pausing for a beautiful pair of domestic Emu, we then zoomed over to Frankland River. A lap around a town block yielded many lovely Australian Ringnecks along with sightings of a beautiful Regent Parrot, a dozen Tree Martins, and many New Holland Honeyeaters, and Red Wattlebirds. Another highlight was single stunning male Splendid Fairywren who gave us spectacular views. Side of the road sightings included several White-faced Heron, Magpies, Magpie Larks, Australasian Shelduck and a solo Pacific Heron (White-necked Heron).

Our final big push south to Cheynes Beach took us along a stretch of road where two handsome Western Grey Kangaroos crossed the road in front of us. As we turned onto the final road leading to the ocean, a flock of Red-tailed Black Cockatoo took off from the side of the road, and several Grey Currawong also rose into the thickets on the roadside. Arriving at our cottages, where we received a very warm welcome and delicious meal from the lovely owners, Joanne and Alan.

Western Whistler - Cat Davidson

Day 8

25.09.25 Cheynes Beach - Waychinicup Inlet

Following our ears, our first bird for the morning was a Fan-tailed Cuckoo, its merry descending trill echoing out over the campsite. A tiny wee Spotted Scrubwren popped up in front of us, vying for our attention. A single Brush Bronzewing, several Common Bronzewings, New Holland Honeyeaters, and Red Wattlebirds appeared as we walked through the campsite. As we reached the heath, with stunning flowers like the scarlet *Banksia coccinea*, we spotted several Western Grey Kangaroo enjoying the morning sun, we finally got our first good view of an elegant Western Wattlebird and spotted the large white cheek patch of several handsome White-cheeked Honeyeater. Another Fan-tailed Cuckoo sat beautifully in the open and sang its heart out. Up the slope through the Grasstrees we heard several Western Bristlebirds, but they refused to show more than glimpses, despite being only a meter away from us.

A quick morning tea by the ocean with Sooty Oystercatchers followed by enjoying the stunning rocks and beautiful ocean view from Tourist Rocks where we saw a King Skink basking on the warming Granite. Next, we visited the salubrious 'Offal Pit,' where we had great views of a glorious male Splendid Fairywrens. Spotted Scrubwren shouted at us and New Hollands and Red Wattlebirds chased each other through the trees.

Next we headed into nearby Waychinicup National Park. A large Monitor greeted us showing its beautiful elegant form and mottled markings. Our first bird was a fabulous male Blue-breasted Fairywren followed by a few females dancing through the undergrowth. A Black-faced Cuckooshrike was preening itself on the trunk of a tree and the call of the Western Whistler echoed around us. We walked down to the rocky shoreline, where we felt the temperature of the cool waters and enjoyed the crashing waves over the stunning red-lichen-covered boulders.

A lovely lunch at the campsite and we headed out for the afternoon. A brief stop in Many Peaks gave us Western Wattlebird, Ringneck Parrot and two brief Gilbert's Honeyeater and on the road we came across an intact but sadly deceased Shingleback Lizard. At the stunning landscape above Betty's Beach of huge granite boulders and Dr. Seuss-style grasstrees, we climbed a short slope to enjoy the view. It was very windy and the birds were lying low but we did spot a Dusky Woodswallow and another King Skink on a rock. Heading down to Norman's Beach, we had a Brown Goshawk and a wedge-tailed Eagle on the horizon. The walk through the heath first gave us a single male Musk Duck right below us in the rich tannin stained waters of the river. A Nankeen Kestrel and a Great Cormorant both flew by, but the jewel in the crown of the walk was a pair of Southern Emuwren who gave us several excellent views, allowing us to see the males beautiful blue colouration. From the viewpoint over the ocean we saw a dozen handsome Great Crested Terns standing on the beach in the afternoon sun.

A final stop before our cabin was the heath direct beside the beach. We spotted a White-breasted Robin almost immediately and then a large Bandicoot crossed in front of us giving great views of its long pointed snoot. We could then hear a Noisy Scrubbird, and it was singing tantalizingly close, but unfortunately did not appear before everyone got rather tired of waiting. To finish the day, we took a dusk drive in search of nocturnal birds and while the birds stayed hidden, we did see another Bandicoot and a slender snake, who was gone too quickly to identify. A further night walk after dinner allowed us to see many more Western Grey Kangaroo, some of which had lovely large joeys peeping out of the pouch.

Western Grey Kangaroo - Cat Davidson

Day 9

26.09.25 Porongurup - Stirling Range - Jerramungup

A return trip to the site of the Bristlebirds, this time yielded great success with one first crossing the path in front of us, then another sitting up in a bush and singing with great vigor and panache. A male Western Whistler and several Grey Currawong made the early start very worthwhile, but it was further enhanced by a pair of Red-winged Fairywren in the bushes, who shimmied in the sunlight for us. Heading down to the water following a tip that there may be Whales in the bay, we sadly failed to see any but did enjoy an Osprey passing overhead and a Great Crested Tern colony with a solo Sooty Oystercatcher.

Departing Cheynes Beach, we zipped across to Porongurup National Park, with wonderful dense Karri forest. We began with a White-breasted Robin and along the trail we had Grey Fantail, Inland Thornbill with its sharp stripes on its chest, Carnaby's Cockatoos and a female Rufous Whistler. We visited the fabulous ‘Tree in a Rock’ before departing. Further north at Stirling Range National Park we had a quick morning tea, then took a walk through the picnic area, where we enjoyed great views of Western Thornbill and Western Gerygone. Brown Honeyeaters merry song dragged our eyes back up from the ground where we were admiring the myriad Orchids and Sundews. A Grey Currawong flew in, giving us a great view of its large bill and yellow eye, while at the other end of the size spectrum, we saw a tiny charming Spotted Pardalote. Returning to the van we saw a Mistletoebird feeding in the Mistletoe high in a Eucalypt tree

We visited the Stirling Range Caravan Park and immediately saw a lovely new bird: the Yellow-plumed Honeyeater. Setting off on a walk we found a Sacred Kingfisher and a cluster of Dusky Woodswallows. While watching a Grey Shrikethrush we were distracted by a pair of handsome Red-capped Parrots showing their rainbow of bright colours. A section of the National Park had a pair of Restless Flycatchers zipped around, wagging their tails, giving the Fantails a run for their money. After lunch we returned to the National Park and were rewarded first with a Rufous Treecreeper,

then a fly by from a Regent Parrot before an incredible view of an Elegant Parrot who became illuminated by the sun and began to glow delightfully. After driving the back paddocks looking for elusive Emu and having a bonus flock of Yellow-throated Minors fly alongside the bus, we drove up Mt Trio to try for Western Fieldwren. While that bird did not grace us with its presence, we did see a half dozen Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters and a brief Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. Onward to our cabins in Jerramungup with a hearty meal from the local pub after another big day of glorious birds.

Red-winged Fairywren - Cat Davidson

Day 10

27.09.25 Jerramungup - Narrogin

Setting off before breakfast to a section of remnant Mallee we came across Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, many of whom were doing a fantastic rising and falling flight pattern reminiscent of Skylarks. We had a young Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo visit and a brief view of two Brown-headed Honeyeaters. A Kestrel went by low with a wee breakfast lizard in its claws. An Australian Pipit came out onto the pathway and watched us curiously for a while and several Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters scooted along the ground also, showing an interesting behaviour. Back to Jerramungup for breakfast before we headed for the Mallee. At our first site where the old Attenborough Malleefowl mound was and we quickly heard our target the Southern Scrub-Robin, but despite being right in front of us, we had to work very hard to get a few good looks as it ran around under the brush. While most of us were looking the other way, a Malleefowl sneaked behind us, only seen by one lucky person before it vanished.

Moving further along through the habitat we walked another section where the high wind definitely made our birding much more tricky. A calmer section proved fruitful with a family of Blue-winged Fairywren showing beautifully while several Weebill bounced around us. A third location was hopping with New Holland Honeyeater, but amongst them we could hear a Crested Bellbird and a Western Whistler, neither of while sadly wished to be seen. A Collared Sparrowhawk gave us two fabulous low flybys.

Over lunch in Gnowangerup we were joined by three plump adorable Magpie chicks. Surging north we paused at Lime Lake where we saw hundreds of Australian Shelduck with around twenty Black Swan out on the lake. In the bush along the shoreline we had a fantastic view of a Mistletoebird, a full song recital from a handsome Grey Shrike Thrush, and then a delightful visit from a female Red-capped Robin with her darling rusty head. A quick stop at the Big Ram in Wagin also gave us excellent views of White-cheeked Honeyeaters up close in the blossom. Arriving in Narrogin we visited beautiful Foxes Lair Reserve where we had our best views yet of a pair of Red-capped Parrots sitting high in a dead tree that looked full of hollows perfect for their nest. A Ringneck Parrot and several Galah added to the merry parrot cacophony. Two Weebill finished our lovely walk and we headed for our motel.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater - Cat Davidson

Day 11

28.09.25 Dryandra State Forest & Barna Mia nocturnal wildlife

We were going to spend the whole day in wonderful Dryandra Forest and we started with breakfast in the field accompanied by Magpie, Western Grey Kangaroo and very shouty Striated Pardalotes who refused to be seen. We could also hear the haunting sounds of Bush Stone-Curlew floating on the morning air. Our first walk was the Ochre trail where we immediately saw some beautiful Rufous Treecreepers both on the ground and creeping up the trees. Purple-crowned Lorikeets were pinging around the sky, letting us enjoy their speedy behaviour and chittery calls, but never pausing to give everyone long enough to see their beautiful colours. Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters gave us lovely views throughout, and the sweet song of Grey Shrikethrush led us back to the van.

Down the road we took a loop through a lovely section of forest full of *Gastrolobium bilobium* the most toxic in the genus that produce a naturally occurring toxin. Immediately we saw a stunning pair of Scarlet Robins, glowing in the sun. On our loop walk we had a family of Red-winged Fairywren, a hugely confiding Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo showing its lovely stripes and shimmering green back, and a gorgeous pair of Jacky Winters who showed us their lovely behaviour of re-adjusting their tail feathers each time they land. A little further along we walked through a thicket of Jam Tree (*Acacia acuminata)* enjoying the incredible diversity of tiny wildflowers at our feet and seeing Weebill, Western Gerygone and Grey Fantails.

A loop through the Arboretum section of forest began with Yellow-plumed and New Holland Honeyeaters in some beautiful red flowering Grevilleas. As we strolled the trail enjoying the forest, we came across a mixed feeding flock with Silvereyes, Western Thornbill and Scarlet Robin all in the one pocket of activity. A stunning male Western Whistler gave us great views as we departed the busy zone and made our way to lunch. A walk around the Old Mill Dam after lunch was very fruitful with the Striated Pardalotes finally giving us great views going in and out of their tiny wee nest hollow high up in the tree. We then had two fantastic birds, a Varied Sittella and a Brown-headed Honeyeater. Two Carnaby's Cockatoos flew past as we completed our circle and a brief Rainbow Bee-eater danced by.

Driving out to Koomal Road we took a lovely walk through beautiful woodland. We started with some Dusky Woodswallow and a fabulous Sacred Kingfisher who posed wonderfully for us. We spotted a pair of White-browed Babblers and while enjoying their antics our eye was caught by the stunning sunshine flash of yellow of a pair of Western Yellow Robins. As we walked through a spectacular section of the woodland full of mature Grasstrees we saw a Laughing Kookaburra and two Elegant Parrots, a great finish to a lovely walk.

Making our way through the park we began an incredible run of luck, finding a Numbat who was right beside the road, such a wonderful little mammal, and a true privilege to see. Then we came across a Short-beaked Echidna, a marvellous monotreme, who curled up into a ball giving us great views of its very spikey bum. Incredibly we then saw a second Numbat when we paused to enjoy a cluster of Babblers. An incredible way to conclude the diurnal section of the day.

After dinner in the forest, we headed to Barna Mia for a walk within an extensive fenced enclosure in Dryandra State Forest. Here, thanks to the Department of Parks & Wildlife's amazing efforts, we saw Bilbies, Boodies (Burrowing Bettongs), Malas (Rufous Hare-wallabies), Woylies (Brush-tailed Bettongs), and Quendas (Southern Brown Bandicoots), all thriving in a safe, cat- and fox-free environment. A lovely wild Brush-tailed Possum and her joey were also part of the night's incredible haul of mammals.

Mala - Cat Davidson

Day 12

29.09.25 Narrogin - Perth

We travelled between Narrogin and Perth today, trying to find as many new birds as possible that may have eluded us so far, or get better views of a few tricky ones. We began with breakfast in Narrogin before heading just out of town to Yilliminning Rock, an isolated hill composed of granite that rises abruptly from a surrounding plain due to differential erosion of surrounding softer rocks (know as an inselberg), and the George Brockway Tree, a memorial salmon gum (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*) named after a significant conservationist. Before we even began the climb a loud unusual call alerted us to a new bird which turned out to be the rare White-eared Honeyeater, which gave excellent views before it vanished. We enjoyed the lovely climb up the granite slope of the hill, the views getting more lovely and expansive with every step. From up high we saw Galah, Ringnecks and Ravens below us. As we returned to the ground we began spotting incredible orchids including two stunning Caladenia Spider Orchids in yellow and red, of which there are over 140 variations in species in the south-west area alone. A Robin caught our eye who turned out to be a Female Red-capped Robin, and then we spotted another and another and another - there were three Robin chicks in the area being cared for by their attentive mum. In the same busy patch was a Western Gerygone and a Yellow-rumped Thornbill. A cacophony of Australian Ringnecks and Galahs was ringing out as we made our way round the trails and while trying to spot a Western Spinebill who vanished into thin air, a gang of Regent Parrots swooped low overhead. A Galah was poking its wee face out of a perfect round hollow in a Salmon Gum giving us great photo opportunities of its charming demeanor.

Heading north our next birding stop was Dwellingup, but on route we came across a rich patch of wild Emus. In a gorgeous green valley we walked along the length of the road with lots of activity around us. We began with a stunning

male Splendid Fairywren, Willie Wagtail, Grey Fantail and Spotted Scrubwren followed quickly after. A pair of White-breasted Robin popped out along a creek line and just after a fly-by from a Red-capped Robin pair, we had fantastic views of a pair of one of our sought after targets, the darling Red-eared Firetail. The forest above us was full of the calls of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and soon we spotted then feasting on the gum nuts and flashing their bright tails at us. Inland Thornbill and a Laughing Kookaburra were also flying between the Grasstrees and the native climbing Clematis. Some very tasty pies were had for lunch at the Pindjara bakery before we visited a lovely Ramsar lake called Lake McClarty. Here we began with two great raptors, a swooping Swamp Harrier, and a handsome perched Osprey. At the lake, the hoped for Hoary-headed Grebes were present, but horribly far out in the lake, even with the scope. We were enjoying the ambiance of the lake, with the Black Swans floating by and the Little Corella above us, when an Australian Hobby arrived, soared by low several times and then perched above us to allow for magnificent views. We were not yet done with raptors, while watching some Pelican and Little Pied Cormorant fly by we had a lovely visit from a Whistling Kite. Red-capped Parrot, Crested Pigeon and domestic Guineafowl were seen as we left the shoreline.
Jumping north again, the King's Birthday holiday traffic was rather awful, so we freed ourselves from the motorway and paused by a random wetland where a Musk Duck and several Eurasian Coots for diving right next to the road. Our destination wetland turned out to be flooded so we sadly could not walk the water's edge path, however the ring path still gave us lovely selection including views of Rainbow Lorikeet, Splendid Fairywren and Red-tailed Black Cockatoos.

Splendid Fairywren - Cat Davidson

Day 13

30.10.25 Rottnest Island

A beautiful day for a trip over to Rottnest Island. We caught the ferry at Fremantle, spotting Rock Doves while we were waiting in the queue, and as we headed into the open ocean towards Rottnest, we spotted an Australasian Gannet sitting on the water. Pied Cormorants and Great Crested Terns were perched on poles and rocks as we were crossing. Upon landing on the island, we were greeted by many Silver Gulls around the shore and Laughing Doves walking through the grass. Our first stroll took us through the resort housing, searching for patches of foliage where Quokka may be found. In the trees above, several Singing Honeyeaters made their presence known and a pair of Sacred Kingfishers gave us wonderful views. Near the lighthouse we encountered our first adorable Quokka roaming around the undergrowth. A pair of Pied Oystercatchers were walking on the rocks and we had great views of Pied Cormorants drying their wings on an offshore rock while several Common Dolphins rose and fell offshore.
Purchasing lunch in the centre of the village was a rather hectic affair, with dozens of Australian Ravens and many Quokkas roaming about. Laughing Doves and Galahs added to the lively yet rather overwhelming scene. We began a walk amongst some of the salt lakes near the village, where we spotted a family of Pied Oystercatcher with an adorable fluffy chick. A colony of Silver Gulls with half a dozen Caspian Terns sat nearby. There were a selection of charming Grey Teal, and we spotted a pair of tiny wee White-fronted Chat.

Venturing away from the road to where the ponds' edges were wide and shallow, we encountered a Pied Stilt showing off its wonderful pink legs. Round the bend we discovered some lovely small shorebirds, Red-capped Plovers, Red-necked Stints, and Ruddy Turnstones, all feeding at the water's edge. Larger fabulous birds in the same area were Red-necked Avocets and Australian Shelduck. Walking our way back to the settlement after lunch by the lake we saw more White-fronted Chats amongst the samphire. A walk up to beach via the playing fields gave us many more adorable Quokka sleeping and feeding in the sunshine. As we approached the beach, we suddenly spotted a huge splash on the horizon line. As we rushed to get a better view we could see it was two Humpback Whale, breaching, raising their flippers, rolling right next to each other. We basked in the enjoyment of the scene, Whales, Quokkas and to round it out a visit from an Osprey and a pair of Sacred Kingfishers - just lovely! We took the return ferry to Perth after a huge day filled with sun, wind, and wildlife on our last day in Southwest Australia.

Day 14

01.10.25 Perth - Hobart

Farewell from Cat, it was a delight to bird with you all, thank you for your great energy, positivity and fabulous caring attitudes to nature, I hope we get to cross paths again one day in the field.
Cat's ebird list: https://ebird.org/tripreport/414426

Tasmania

Guide: Tracey Ann Hooley | Oct 1, 2025, to Oct 10, 2025

Day 14

01.10.25 Perth - Hobart

After flying from one side of Australia to the other today, the final stage of the tour brought everyone to the island state of Tasmania and its capital city, Hobart. The 'welcome bird' was the Tasmanian Native Hen, a fast-running, flightless endemic species locally known as the Turbo Chook. We spotted the first of these from the bus as we made our way from the airport to the hotel. Over dinner, we made plans for our Tasmanian adventures, including preparing for the variable weather conditions we were likely to experience. Advice to carry a raincoat, rain pants, extra warm layers, beanies, sun hats, sunscreen, gloves and scarves each day may have sounded a bit dramatic, but as it turned out, most days we ended up using all of these at once!

Image: There's every shade of green and lots of structural complexity in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage cool temperate rainforests. Also lots of actual rain…. Author: T. Hooley

Day 15

02.10.25 Hobart - Tasman Peninsula

Beginning at a rivulet in Hobart, we had an eye-level view of a brilliantly camouflaged Tawny Frogmouth. The raucous call of the endemic Yellow Wattlebird then caught our attention, and we had a great view of its bright yellow-orange wattles and yellow belly. Tasmanian Native Hens were feeding in the open areas along the rivulet and we spotted one pair with four quite newly hatched and very fluffy chicks. We spent some time on our first platypus hunt without success, but it was a nice, peaceful way to start the day.

With kunanyi/Mount Wellington in full view, we made a dash for the summit while it was still free of cloud. This allowed us to orientate and get a sense of some of the places we would soon be visiting, including the Tasman Peninsula, Maria Island, Bruny Island and Mount Field. It was rather windy though! The windchill factor brought the already low temperature down to around –2°C, so we soon retreated down the mountain to the relative shelter of The Springs.

Here we had some close-up views of Superb Fairywrens hopping around feeding in moss at ground level – eye-ball-popping iridescent blues against verdant greens. Crescent Honeyeaters then taunted us for a while, yelling "Egypt!" from all directions within the eucalypt foliage – small feathery ventriloquists. Our patience was rewarded when a couple eventually sat out in the open for us to admire their striking shoulder markings. Meanwhile, we heard our first Black Currawongs with their strident calls, and a Grey Currawong flew in as we were having morning tea.

Heading a little farther down the mountain, we enjoyed a short walk at Fern Tree. Enormous tree ferns were a highlight. We heard a Tasmanian Scrubtit calling and had a decent look at a Tasmanian Scrubwren bouncing around in the shadows. A young Black Currawong was whingeing for food and we soon had a good look at the adult bird as it came in with provisions.

After obtaining our own provisions, we headed to a reserve for a lunch break. Here we met some Hoary-headed Grebes and a good number of Kelp Gulls who were busy washing their feathers in the reservoir, possibly after a recent foraging trip to the tip. A couple of Laughing Kookaburras – a species introduced to Tasmania – popped down to ground level to see if we had accidentally dropped any sandwiches and, even though we hadn't, this turned out to be a good photo opportunity. Back in the bus (now named the 'bird-mobile'), we departed Hobart and made our way to the Tasman Peninsula, with a stop at Dunalley to watch an echidna and to see gulls, terns, oystercatchers and cormorants at the Denison Canal. We met our first Tasmanian Pademelon as we approached the hotel at Eaglehawk Neck, and then we arrived just as the rain set in.

Image: Dunnally – our first echidna sighting! Author: T. Hooley

Day 16

03.10.25 Tasman Island Cruise

Even before breakfast, the weather changed five times. We had blue skies, pouring rain, amazing clouds, blustery gusty wind and a couple of rainbows. We travelled to Port Arthur and joined a Pennicott's tour to explore the coastline of the Tasman Peninsula by jet boat. To avoid the worst of the gale-force winds and complex sea state, the boat stuck close to shore on the eastern side of the peninsula. This afforded amazing views of the complex geology along this rugged coastline. We spotted a Shy Albatross – a species that only breeds on three tiny islands off the Tasmanian coast – and some of the team caught a glimpse of a Short-tailed Shearwater. Honorary bird of the day was of course the Humpback Whale, and everyone enjoyed watching its spectacular breaching behaviour.

After warming up back at the hotel, we headed to a nearby river, stopping along the way to enjoy a fantastic look at a Swamp Harrier feasting on a dead pademelon. At a bay along the way, we had good views of Black Swans and White-faced Herons. Then at a historic site, we enjoyed a close encounter with a confiding Grey Fantail, watched Pacific Gulls in flight, noted the black tail band, heard lots of Striated Pardalotes calling (this would become a theme!) and had our first good look at a Green Rosella, the endemic Tasmanian parrot.

On the way home, we popped into Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen for an up-close look at the coastline we'd seen from the boat earlier in the day. It was quiet here bird-wise, but at least geology can always be relied upon to provide interest when the birds don't turn up. Just before dinner, some of us crossed the road and followed the track to see the Tessellated Pavement. Nice views of Australasian Gannets distracted us from the aforementioned geology. We also had our first encounter with the endemic Yellow-throated Honeyeater (we heard its machine-gun call and its resonant "Chock! Chock! Chock! Chock!" call) and we had a nice look at a Yellow Wattlebird foraging for insects under the bark on a tree trunk.

Image: About to set sail into the blustery Southern Ocean. Author: T. Hooley

Day 17

04.10.25 Maria Island

This morning we headed up the east coast to the little fishing port of Triabunna. Our unexpected raptor of the day was an osprey – in the form of *Osprey V*, the fast ferry that whisked us across the Mercury Passage from Triabunna to the island. On the 30-minute crossing, we enjoyed watching a White-bellied Sea-Eagle inspecting some little fishing boats and also saw Australasian Gannets. Our first close views of Maria revealed cement silos, a relic of one of many failed entrepreneurial ventures on the island. A party of Black-faced Cormorants were a nicer welcome, followed by our first encounters with dinosaur-like Cape Barren Geese. Then as we made our way off the jetty and up the track, a smudge of black and red on the beach hinted at Hooded Plovers.

Heading towards the little settlement of Darlington, we met a Tasmanian Scrubwren under the macrocarpa trees and heard, then saw, a busy, chiming group of Yellow-rumped Thornbills flitting between the low branches of some wattle trees and the marsupial-cropped lawns by the ranger station. Then we turned our attention to today's honorary bird, the Common Wombat – always a show-stealer and pleasingly easy to photograph.

After lunch we met a fluorescent orange-red male Flame Robin, helpfully perched on one of the national park signs. Not only did it afford us excellent views, but it also charmed us with its jingly call. Earlier in the day we'd had a Swift Parrot primer, so when those distinctive contact calls seeped out from the nearby Blue Gums, we were ready. Of course, that still didn't make it easy to find them, and it's always intriguing (and occasionally infuriating) that such brilliantly coloured birds can be so tricky to see when they tuck inside the canopy. We enjoyed their cheery chatter – long may it last – then eventually a couple of these tiny parrots shot out of the foliage like arrows from a bow, and we got to see exactly how they got their name. In warm, relaxing sunshine, we enjoyed a short loop walk through the forest where we had nice looks at Grey Fantails, Green Rosellas and Tasmanian Pademelons, and also saw some powdery, white, fur- and bone-filled Tasmanian Devil scats.

Heading back to the jetty, we made another Hooded Plover stop – this time with the pair of 'Hoodies' in clear sight. We watched them busily running around where the wet and dry sand met, foraging here and there. Keeping with the black-grey-white-red colour scheme, we also saw Pied Oystercatchers, two Caspian Terns on a fly-by and a stunning Silver Gull with absolutely perfect plumage – another reminder that when it comes to birds, 'common' and 'boring' are definitely not synonymous. A sighting of a Humpback Whale mum and her calf interrupted our ferry ride home, but of course no-one minded too much. We then headed back to Hobart in the warm afternoon sun.

Image: Osprey V at Maria Island. Blue skies today! Author: T. Hooley

Day 18

05.10.25 Hobart - Bruny Island

It was Daylight Saving today, so our 8am departure felt quite early! We headed south to a park, where we encountered a nice range of bush birds and coastal species. These included Australian Pelicans, some great encounters with Superb Fairywrens, both Long-billed and Little Corellas, a flotilla of Hoary-headed Grebes, Caspian and Great Crested Terns, lots of ducks (including Chestnut Teal, Pacific Black Ducks and a few interloping Mallards), and some very photogenic Kelp Gulls. We also finally got a good look at some Striated Pardalotes.

With the temperature climbing, we continued farther south to Kettering for our trip across to Bruny Island. It proved a popular choice, and we endured a long, hot wait for the ferry. After cooling down with some leatherwood honey ice-cream, we visited the Neck to see and smell the Short-tailed Shearwater colony and to watch a group of Sooty Oystercatchers. At a beach nearby, we were enjoying a nice view of two Pied Oystercatchers when we noticed three Bar-tailed Godwit neighbours alongside them. We're right at the southern end of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway here in Tasmania, so it's always special to see migratory shorebirds. We also enjoyed watching Australasian Gannets diving dart-like into the ocean.

We settled into our accommodation and then headed to Hotel Bruny for dinner. With the weather deteriorating, we made a slow drive home, spotlighting as we went. There were plenty of frogs hopping across the road, making driving tricky, and we had our first sighting of a white-morph Bennett's Wallaby - ghost-like in the gloom.

Image: The Neck. Author: T. Hooley

Day 19

06.10.25 Bruny Island

The weather was absolutely foul first thing this morning, so we sheltered in place a little longer than originally planned before gathering at Inala to learn more about the property and meet some very special wildlife. A white-morph Grey Goshawk made an early appearance, then we headed through the Jurassic Garden, where we watched New Holland Honeyeaters in sugar-fuelled overdrive and enjoyed nice views of Masked Lapwings and Maned Ducks by the pond. Then it was on to the pardalote platform for our much-anticipated meeting with the Forty-spotted Pardalotes. We heard the plaintive “where, where?” calls of these tiny birds, and eventually our patience was rewarded as we started to get some good looks at them working their way through the White Gum foliage, fastidiously farming the manna. We even got to see some nest box action as a couple of birds commuted back and forth.

While busily falling in love with the pardalotes, we also met some very active Black-headed Honeyeaters, another Tasmanian endemic. On several occasions they sat out clearly in the open, much to the satisfaction of the photographers. We also witnessed a loud and fascinating interaction between a Brown Thornbill and a Fan-tailed Cuckoo - the latter perched defiantly on a bare horizontal branch while the thornbill rushed angrily and noisily at it multiple times. “Big” seemed to prevail over “loud” on this occasion. We averted hypothermia with hot drinks back at the Inala shed before picking up lunches and calling into Loma, where we had a lovely clear sighting of a Pallid Cuckoo - a relatively enormous bird after our Fan-tailed Cuckoo earlier in the day.

For the afternoon, we aimed for the lee side of Bruny to avoid the worst of the wind. At Two Tree Point, we heard the now-familiar call of Swift Parrots coming from the Blue Gum canopy, but despite our best neck-craning efforts, we couldn’t get a good look. We enjoyed an afternoon stroll along the Mavista Falls track and, although the hoped-for Pink Robin didn’t materialise, the mosses, lichens and tree ferns were fascinating.

After dinner, we set off to the Short-tailed Shearwater colony at The Neck. With a full moon, our chances of meeting these birds seemed low, as they are particularly clumsy on land and therefore reluctant to return home without a decent cover of darkness. Nonetheless, we waited a while, then all but gasped in unison as one shot missile-like across the sky in front of the moon. Another ten or so followed, and we also heard one or two crash land and one call from its burrow - its special shearwater call causing a few giggles!

Leaving the colony, we switched to spotlighting mode and were lucky to encounter five Tawny Frogmouths along the road, all demonstrating their perch-and-pounce method of hunting. Some Brush-tailed Possums wandered along the roadside, including a mum with her joey on her back, and we had a nice clear look at another white wallaby.

Day 20

07.10.25 Bruny Island - Mt. Field

This morning we headed north to Roberts Point and took the ferry back across the D’Entrecasteaux Channel to Kettering. After the obligatory stop to pick up lunches, we drove up through Hobart to a nearby lagoon, a favourite birding spot for Hobart locals. Here we had fantastic views of Australasian Shovelers, Chestnut Teal and Grey Teal, gaudy Australian Swamphens and, to top it off, a lovely long look at a diminutive Australian Spotted Crake foraging out in the open. As we made our way back to the bus, a cacophony of Noisy Miners reminded us exactly how they got their name.

With the wind picking up, it was a relief to find that the Russell Falls Walk at Mount Field National Park was relatively sheltered today. We kept an eye out for platypuses and were awed by enormous swamp gums - the tallest flowering plants in the world. Then we heard that telltale electric-fence zap of a Pink Robin. We caught sight of a female first, with

her rich creamy-rufous wing markings. Over the next half hour or so, everyone managed to get a decent look at one of the several male Pink Robins calling along the track. Happily, there was enough light for the photographers to get some fantastic shots. Then came our surprise bird of the day - a Superb Lyrebird - which dashed out in front of us and foraged no more than a few metres away. Once it moved on, we continued to Russell Falls, which were absolutely raging after the recent rain and snowmelt.

After another search for platypuses, we made our way to our accommodation near Hamilton. We met a particularly furry echidna as we walked to dinner. With lots of old eucalypts around the accommodation, this was also a great place for hollow-dependent species, including Eastern Rosellas and more of those very charismatic Brush-tailed Possums.

Image: Searching for Pink Robins beside the enormous eucalypts. Author: T. Hooley

Image: A Superb Lyrebird completely ignoring us. Author: T. Hooley

Day 21

08.10.25 Mt. Field - Cradle Mountain area

After some time for everyone to enjoy a little birding around the accommodation this morning, we met Sophie at the main farm building and she showed us the way to a possible Banded Lapwing spot. Unfortunately, there weren't any in sight today, but we were regaled by Eurasian Skylarks spurting out of the pyrethrum crop and singing their way into the sky. Bouncy lambs and a nice fly-over by a White-bellied Sea-Eagle topped off our time at the farm and, once we got past the sheep blockade, we headed out the gate and northwards to the Central Highlands.

A rewarding stop at the Steppes Sculptures gave us a chance to enjoy the full suite of Yellow-throated Honeyeater calls. With favourable light, the photographers captured some great images of these birds showing their strongly marked plumage, including that striking throat patch. This species is the Tasmanian bird emblem.

Unfortunately, the forecast rain arrived a little ahead of schedule and our plan for a short walk at Pine Lake was thwarted. A few brave souls exited the bird-mobile to get a feel for 'proper Tassie alpine weather', but quickly and sensibly retreated back inside. Our third platypus hunt – this time at rainy Deloraine – was unsuccessful. It was a nice day for ducks, however, and also our first Dusky Moorhen. We made a quick stop to enjoy the scones, jam and cream that Sophie had kindly packed for us, then continued our journey north to our hotel. After checking in, a few of us visited the beach and saw dozens of Great Crested Terns flying back and forth to their breeding island. Frogs were in excellent form this evening and we heard Pobblebonk (Banjo) Frogs calling from all directions.

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Day 22

09.10.25 Cradle Mountain area

This was a day of pelting rain, pantaloons, peplums and platypuses. It began with the first of two huge cold fronts slamming into northern Tasmania bringing torrential rain and some challenging conditions. Nonetheless, we rugged up in all our warm gear and set forth for Cradle Mountain, enjoying spectacular cool temperate forests and button-grass plains along the way.

The Enchanted Walk was our first stop inside the national park, and it was here that we met a very chatty Tasmanian Thornbill wearing exceptional pantaloons. We all enjoyed the encounter and the photographers got some beautiful photos, once again proving that Little Brown Birds can be some of the very best. We warmed up and fuelled up inside the interpretation station before heading back out onto the boardwalk to explore the Rainforest Circuit. The abundance and vibrancy of the mosses and lichens was overwhelming. Then with temperature continuing to fall, we made one more brief stop to seek out the elusive Scrubtit before retreating to lower altitudes.

For the afternoon, we headed to a nearby reserve. A White-faced Heron posed elegantly on the arched wooden bridge, something akin to a Japanese painting, and we had a close up look at the very fancy peplum-like feathers of the Black Swans. Then our persistent platypus hunting was finally rewarded and we saw at least five platypuses swimming, diving and floating in the dam. Beautiful afternoon light (and warmth – finally!) gave us a chance to enjoy watching these intriguing animals at our leisure. Then we headed back to the comforts of our accommodation, and another enormous dinner.

Image: Finally, a warm sunny and not-too-windy afternoon – perfect for searching for platypus! Author: T. Hooley

Day 23

10.10.25 Cradle Mountain area - Launceston

A ‘birds flying backwards’ day. A second cold front absolutely smashed into the northern areas of Tasmania this morning, with severe weather warnings and wind gusts in excess of 130 km/h in some places. For safety reasons, we halted our birding endeavours today, except for a brief stop at a nearby wetland, where we had the chance to pop into the Visitor Centre for some bird-themed souvenir hunting. We also managed to hear and briefly see a windswept Little Grassbird that popped out above the reeds, plus some nice views of Black Swans, their peplum feathers very much astray in the wind.

After a café lunch, we explored the galleries of the Queen Victoria Museum. The mixed collections included taxidermy specimens of many of the bird and mammal species we’d encountered on our travels. Then we headed to Launceston Airport and wrapped up our 10-day Tasmanian tour. Thanks to everyone for exploring this very special part of the world with us. We hope you’ll be back in Tassie again before too long, and in less blustery circumstances next time.

Let’s leave the final word to Betty and her special weather song, a fitting theme tune for our adventure:

“Whether the weather is cold
Or whether the weather is hot;
We'll weather the weather,
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not!"

Image: Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle. Author: T. Hooley