Inala Nature Tours

TRIP REPORT

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Group photo by Jane Blackwood

Grand Australia Tour

Day 1

18.09.26 Darwin

We met at the resort in Darwin to the evening sounds of **Red-collared Lorikeets**. Many of the group had experienced a very long day of travel, so we discussed a few initial details and found that the group had a broad range of interests. We outlined our plans for the journey ahead. The acoustics made it difficult to address the whole group, but some members had already seen **Bush Stone-Curlew** and **Straw-necked Ibis** walking in the nearby park.

Day 2

19.09.26 Darwin - Fogg Dam - Adelaide River -Mary River - Kakadu

After a brief look at some of the Darwin locals around the hotel car park, including **Brown Honeyeater**, **Torresian Imperial-Pigeon**, **Little Friarbird** and **Australasian Figbird**, we travelled briefly past a **Black Flying-fox** colony before heading off for our first stop of the day.

There were plenty of raptors in the form of **Whistling Kites** and **Black Kites**, while **Forest Kingfishers** sat atop the power lines. An **Antilopine Wallaroo** was seen on the edge of a cleared paddock, and a shy **Agile Wallaby** was waiting in the car park.

Our hopes of seeing a Rainbow Pitta soared as we heard its morning contact calls quite close by. Unfortunately, the Waterlily Walk was closed, so we took the Monsoon Walk instead. Although we could hear the calls in the distance, we were able to get good views of an **Orange-footed Megapode** deep in habitat dominated by paperbarks, vines

and Terminalia. We also enjoyed close-up views of a **Golden Orb Spider** weaving its enormous web across the track.

Varied Trillers were regular, and we were delighted to watch two young **Mistletoebirds** being fed by a parent. The treetops above echoed with the calls of **Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves**, and we were able to view a solitary bird after its partner flew off. A **Red-winged Parrot** sat quietly aloft, while the chortling call of a **Green Oriole** and the peeping whistles of kites overhead provided a constant audio backdrop.

We made our way slowly across the dam wall towards the hide, and everyone was stunned to see the floodplain in action. **Glossy Ibis**, **Plumed Whistling-Ducks** and **Cattle Egrets**, along with **Green Pygmy-Geese** and **Australasian Darters**, were readily observable. **Rainbow Bee-eaters** darted through the sky as waves of birds arrived on the plains. **Brolgas** and buffalo were easily visible, while along the roadside we sighted a **Paperbark Flycatcher** and a small group of **Crimson Finches** crossing the road. An **Estuarine Crocodile** was soaking up the sun in one of the larger pools.

After morning tea at the hide, with views of **White-throated Honeyeaters**, we headed on to the Adelaide River. The wind had picked up and we encountered a **Broad-billed Flycatcher** and **Lemon-bellied Flyrobin** feeding their young.

A drive-by sighting of a **Black-necked Stork** on the Arnhem Highway coincided with the heat of the day setting in, and a brief stop at the Mary River produced a view of a **Great Bowerbird**.

We continued to the South Alligator, where we stopped for a while to view a **Whistling Kite** on its nest. A **Brown Goshawk** showered the nearby **Red-collared Lorikeets** from the perches of surrounding Peltophorums. **Bar-shouldered Doves** were visible on the ground in the afternoon shade.

Mamukala was our final stop for the day. Here we saw **Dusky Myzomela**, **Paperbark Flycatcher**, **Broad-billed Flycatcher**, **Arafura Fantail**, **Northern Fantail**, **Brush**

Cuckoo and **Rufous-banded Honeyeater**. On the water, new waterbirds included **Magpie Geese**, **Purple (Australasian) Swamphen** and **Pacific Black Duck**.

We settled into our accommodation in Jabiru, with **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** and **Little Corellas** along the avenue and lining the trees.

Day 3

20.09.26 Jabiru - East Alligator - Yellow Waters

After the full-on soundscape of a Jabiru night – **Little Corellas** and **Black Flying-foxes** included – we gathered in the car park, where two pairs of shrieking **Channel-billed Cuckoos** were making their presence known. **Blue-winged Kookaburras**, **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** and **Pheasant Coucals** added to the incredibly voluminous bird soundscape around us.

Our first destination was the East Alligator region, where we enjoyed delightful views of male and female **Shining Flycatchers**, as well as a **Rainbow Pitta**.

Next, we visited an art-site walk, where we were early enough to enjoy the rock art depicting a range of styles developed over the past 20,000 years. Six **Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeons** were enjoying the early morning rays near the car park. **White-bellied Cuckooshrikes**, **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** and **Peaceful Doves** were common along the way.

We enjoyed lunch at Yellow Waters before our waterbird tour. **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**, **Torresian Imperial-Pigeons** and a small gecko kept us entertained while we waited for the bus.

On the water, we had views of **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, **Azure Kingfisher**, **Brolga**, **Wandering Whistling-Duck**, **Plumed Whistling-Duck** and **Paperbark Flycatcher**, along with a serendipitous **Buff-sided Robin** that was picked up later in a photograph.

In the heat of the afternoon, we returned to the hotel via the Black Flying-fox camp before heading out birding again in the early evening. Along a melaleuca-lined waterway, we picked up a plethora of honeyeaters, including **Bar-breasted Honeyeater**, **Rufous-throated Honeyeater** and **Rufous-banded Honeyeater,** and **Crimson Finch**.

While watching the honeyeaters, we encountered two **Barking Owls** deep in the foliage, their presence revealed by the agitated twittering of other small birds.

After dinner, we encountered **Bush Stone-curlews** and **Blue-winged Kookaburras** during our spotlight search.

Day 4

21.09.26 Jabiru - Darwin

An early start at an escarpment outlier gave us a head start on finding some of the sandstone endemics. The White-lined Honeyeater was heard immediately and throughout our stay, but we were unable to get close enough for a view.

Instead, we had two encounters with **Banded Fruit-Doves** and some great looks at **Silver-crowned Friarbirds** and **Helmeted Friarbirds**. A family of **Spangled Drongos**, along with **Little Corellas**, **Rainbow Lorikeets** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos**, made for a loud backdrop as we viewed the rock art and shelters tucked into the side of the stunning sandstone edifice.

The heat of midday set in and all went quiet. Guests had a short scout around the Bowali Visitor Centre and turned up a female **Red-backed Fairy wren.**

On our return journey, we had some good looks at a nesting **Red Goshawk**, actively feeding a fluffy white chick, while the male watched on from nearby. Further along the road, a father **Emu** and his brood of six chicks crossed the road on a woodland sand ridge.

A roadside break gave us looks at **Crimson Finch** and **Double-barred Finch**, as well as **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** in groups of three and four, chewing on ripening Bloodwood fruits.

A final stop on the outskirts of Darwin gave us **Masked Finch**, a host of **Double-barred Finches**, **Leaden Flycatcher** and **Lemon-bellied Flyrobin**.

Day 5

22.09.26 Darwin - Perth

We had a brief overview of the settlement and history of Darwin before moving on to a nearby creek for our first exploration of birds in the mangrove ecosystem. Greeting us from the beach hibiscus was a small group of **Red-headed Myzomelas** and **Canary (Australian Yellow) White-eyes**.

Moving to the boat ramp, we were lucky to see a small group of recent arrivals, including **Far Eastern Curlew**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, **Great Knot** and **Common Sandpiper**.

Back at the boat ramp, the **Chestnut Rail** made several furtive appearances onto the sandbank before quickly retreating into the shadows. We also encountered **Northern Fantail**, **Green-backed Gerygone** and **Grey Whistler**, along with **White-gaped Honeyeater** and **Rufous-banded Honeyeater**.

We took a quick trip to another site to look for a Rufous Owl, which unfortunately we didn't see, but we did come across a **Bush Stone-curlew** sitting tight on a nest. We had some good looks at the **Torresian Kingfisher** along the Mangrove boardwalk along with **Red-headed Myzomela.**

Our tour finished at the Darwin Botanic Gardens, where **Silver-crowned Friarbirds** and **Red-collared Lorikeets** were shrieking and feasting on a flowering Black Bean tree. Very loud birds in the Top End, as someone commented!

Arriving from Darwin into Perth (called Boorloo in the Noongar language) after a big day of birding and travel, we settled quickly into our hotel to rest up for the South-west adventure ahead of us.

Day 6

23.09.26 Perth to Cheynes Beach

Our first morning together in Perth and the weather was perfect. Our first official birds were some lovely **Laughing Doves** in the hotel carpark.

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 in nearby town, where we strolled along a lovely, vegetated street. We began with excellent views of **New Holland Honeyeaters**, endemic **Western Wattlebirds**, charismatic **Red Wattlebirds** and a stunning **Common Bronzewing**. In an area with many huge Grasstrees, we had a pair of **Western Gerygone**, a wee flock of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** and a beautiful male **Western Whistler**. Two **Gilbert's Honeyeaters** gave brief glimpses and a family of **Red-tailed Black Cockatoos** landed and gave wonderful views at the top of a dead Eucalyptus.

A short drive south to a rest stop was excellent with more **Gilbert's Honeyeaters** as well as a female **Rufous Whistler**, some additional **Western Wattlebirds**, a **White-breasted Robin** and a family of **Red-winged Fairywren** with at least two fabulous males in their full plumage. A morning-tea stop in Williams treated us to some lovely metal sculptures and a giant Numbat sculpture in the playpark with three new birds, a **Black-fronted Dotterel** and a **White-faced Heron** in the river and an explosion of blue colour, a male **Splendid Fairywren** drew cries of wonder as he showed himself right beside our picnic table.

At a nearby river, we found some **Grey Teal** and **Eurasian Coots**. Under the bridge, many **Welcome Swallows** were coming and going. A pair of tiny **Weebills** danced for us and charmed us all but then were rather upstaged by a pair of **Red-capped Robin** who arrived in a blaze of glory.

In Kojonup (meaning 'place of Stone Axes' in the Noongar language) we visited a local reserve and had a wonderful haul of new birds. A **Shining Bronze Cuckoo** and a **Striated Pardalote** both gave wonderful extended views and a **Shingleback Skink** (also known as a Bobtail) crossed the path right in front of us. Only a few hundred meters down the road we had **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, **Black-faced Cuckooshrike**, **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters** and very excitingly – great views of tiny, sweet, **Purple-crowned Lorikeets**.

Tearing ourselves away we had lunch down the road at a lovely little park before we zoomed over to Frankland River, pausing on a bridge to view the waterway we had **Hardheads**, **Australian Shelduck**, **Australasian Grebe** and **Chestnut Teal**. In Frankland River we paused for a possible raptor and immediately got onto a wonderful bird, the endemic **Western Corella**, sitting in perfect light at the top of a dead tree. **Galahs** and **Australian Ringnecks (**subsp. *semitorquatus* **'Twenty-eight Parrots')** added splashes of colour all around the **Western Corella** as it sat in its prime position.

As we pushed onward, side of the road sightings included **Australian Magpies**, **Magpie-Larks**, **Red-capped Parrots** and a few **Crested Pigeons**.

Our final big push south to Cheynes Beach took us along a stretch of road where many handsome **Western Grey Kangaroos** filled the fields. Arriving at beautiful Cheynes Beach we were at the perfect late afternoon time to try for one of the very elusive 'Big Three' birds – the **Noisy Scrubbird**. We could hear the bird singing its heart out very close by and after one exciting yet very rapid dash past, we had two more slightly longer views of a very rare and wonderful bird. We settled into our cottages, where we received a very warm welcome and delicious meal from the lovely owners.

Day 7

24.09.26 Cheynes Beach

On a pre-breakfast walk, our first bird for the morning was a beautiful **Sacred Kingfisher** outside our cabins and two darling **Brown Quail** walking along the road edge. **New Holland Honeyeaters**, and **Red Wattlebirds** appeared as we walked through the campsite and we spotted the large white cheek patch of several handsome **White-cheeked Honeyeater**. As we reached the heath, with stunning flowers like the scarlet *Banksia coccinea*, we could hear our targets, both the **Western Bristlebird** and the **Western (Black-throated) Whipbird**, calling beautifully. Creeping along looking for them we got wonderfully lucky with a **Western Bristlebird** walking down the trail in front of us, scooting along in such a charming manner. The whipbird did not show itself, but some **Red-capped Parrots** flew by and a single **Brush Bronzewing** showed its iridescent wing feathers in the sunshine.

After breakfast we headed to the beach where we spotted a **Southern Right Whale** and its calf basking calmly in the waters of the bay. As pair of **Spotted Scrubwren**

showed themselves under a bush and an **Osprey** soared overhead. We strolled up to the stunning granite rocks and beautiful ocean view from Tourist Rocks where we improved our view of the whales and added views of **Great Cormorants**, **Silver Gull** and four huge **King Skink** basking together. Next, we visited the salubrious 'Offal Pit,' where we had great views of a glorious pair of **Southern Emu-wren**, holding their long tails proudly in the air. Round the corner were some **Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters** who made us work hard but eventually let us have great views of their elegant features. Following our ears we found a male **Red-winged Fairywren** who delighted us with his colours, followed by an incredible view of both male and female **Western Spinebills**, so very handsome and incredibly fast.

Into the heath for a short walk up a fire trail and we found a close by **Western Bristlebird** who stuck its head out of the centre of a bush as well as more elusive **Western (Black-throated) Whipbird** who called but refused to show themselves. Purple Enamel Orchids and Sundews were amongst the many botanical delights surrounding us on our walk.

Next, we headed into nearby Waychinicup National Park. **White-breasted Robin**, **Spotted Scrubwren** and **Little Pied Cormorant** were all delightful, but the star of the show was a stunning **Heath Monitor** who greeted us showing its beautiful, elegant form and mottled markings while angry birds swirled above it – chipping their displeasure at its presence.

A final walk before lunch around the campsite gave us a large flock of **Carnaby's Cockatoo** feasting in the Eucalyptus trees. A lovely lunch at the campsite and we headed out for the afternoon.

A brief stop in Many Peaks where we saw **Australasian Shoveler**, **Black Swan** with **Cygnets**, an **Australasian Grebe** and a fabulous view of a nesting **Whistling Kite**. 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 pair of **Whistling Kite** on arrival and a **Square-tailed Kite** hunting low over the boulders.

Heading down to another nearby beach, the pretty flower filled walk through the heath first gave us a four **Musk Duck** right swimming in the rich tannin-stained waters of the river. From the viewpoint over the ocean, we saw two huge **Caspian Tern** and twenty handsome **Great Crested Terns** standing on the beach in the afternoon sun. A pair of **Pacific Gulls** stalked the seaweed line and out at sea were many juvenile **Australasian Gannets** diving spectacularly. Some blows far out at sea indicated a Humpback Whale was passing by.

Back at Cheynes Beach, a couple of us went back for second helpings of the **Noisy Scrubbird**, and after half an hour were rewarded with another dash across the road as well as a bolt from a solid wee **Quenda** (**Southern Brown Bandicoot**). To finish the day, we took a dusk drive in search of nocturnal birds and while the birds stayed hidden, we did here several **Spotted Nightjars** calling in the darkness. A further night walk after dinner allowed us to hear more nightjars and see many more **Western Grey Kangaroo**, some of which had lovely large joeys peeping out of the pouch. We tumbled into bed after a huge day of lizards, snakes, whales, birds and incredible landscapes.

Day 8

25.09.26 Cheynes Beach to Bremer Bay

A return trip to try for Western (Black-throated) Whipbird had many lovely aural experiences, yet sadly no visual ones. We did however have great success with a **Western Bristlebird** shimmying along the path in front of us.

Departing Cheynes Beach, we zipped across to Porongurup National Park, with wonderful Marri forest all around us. We began with a remarkable pair of **Scarlet Robin**

and a mob of **Western Grey Kangaroo** including several adorable joeys peeking out of pouches. We had barely started along the trail when we came across **Western Yellow Robin** perching and pouncing from tree to tree. The next colour on our birding pain-palette was blue, with an incredible **Splendid Fairywren** bouncing out in front of us. After three such fantastic birds we were then treated to a fourth, with a pair of **Spotted Pardalotes** digging their nest hollow in the ground right beside us, giving the most incredible views and such a fascinating view of their behaviour. The rest of the beautiful walk through the lush forest included **Grey Fantail**, **Inland Thornbill**, **Western Whistler** and **Gilbert's Honeyeater**.

Further north at Stirling Range National Park we had a quick morning tea, then took a walk where we enjoyed great views of **Yellow-plumed Honeyeater** followed by a wonderful **Restless Flycatcher**, jumping from tree to tree and making the most fabulous scissoring calls while flashing its deep blue feathers. The trees were full of **Purple-crowned Lorikeets** which were a delight to watch and to listen to. We found a pair of **Regent Parrots** sitting up high in a dead tree, and as we adjusted to better light we could see the beautiful red in the yellow wing. A **Carnaby's Cockatoo**, a **Sacred Kingfisher** and a hunting **Grey Currawong** added more delight to our walk, and we concluded with two new birds, a half dozen **Banded Lapwing** in the field with two chicks in tow, and a **Rufous Treecreeper** doing some excellent ground creeping.

As we made our way towards the mallee a huge squall of heavy rain and wind came in, so we pivoted our plans and headed straight to Bremer Bay (Banjelungup) for some shorebird exploration, pausing only for a **Black-shouldered Kite** and a field with a dozen **Emu** accompanied by some friendly **Australasian Shelduck**.

A first stop at the boat harbour began with a **Common Sandpiper** and a **Sooty Oystercatcher** whose black body blended well with the dark jetty rocks. A **Pied Cormorant** was eating a fish while swimming nearby. An offshore island had several hundred **Greater Crested Terns** nesting upon it, and we could see half a dozen

Australasian Gannets hunting just offshore. A second boat ramp in the tiny town of Bremer Bay allowed a vantage point out of the wind where we could see **Chestnut Teal**, **Australasian Darter**, **Little Pied** and **Little Black Cormorant** a distant **Pied Oystercatche**r and a flock of **Australian Pelican** who came soaring in defying gravity. A final stop at the beach entrance turned up two **Caspian Tern** and a fabulous view of a **Grey Currawong**.

Then to rest in our cabins with a hearty meal at the resort after another big day and some successful navigation of some challenging weather conditions.

Day 9

26.09.26 Bremer Bay to Narrogin

After breakfast we took a wee drive to the top of the hill above Bremer Bay to see the lovely panorama and from our birds-eye-view we could see a formation of **Australasian Pelicans** coming across the water.

Heading north we paused for a beautiful **Black-shouldered Kite** perched on the side of the road. Dodging showers, we headed for the Mallee and at our first site where we successfully found both our targets, three **Purple-gaped Honeyeaters** and several speedy **Southern Scrub Robins**. Just along the road we jumped back out to watch two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circling high above. While crawling along looking for **Malleefowl**, one was briefly spotted and when we pulled over another glimpse was seen but sadly not by all. We enjoyed watching a **Grey Butcherbird** as consolation and just as we were mulling over our disappointment, a second **Malleefowl** crossed the road on the road ahead allowing everyone to see the large turkey-like body, so wonderful to see such an endangered bird.

In Ongerup we walked a wee loop amongst some huge old Eucalyptus and had a view of **Regent Parrot**, **Red-capped Parrot** and **Galah**, all incredibly close together.

Surging north we paused at a lake, where in the bush along the shoreline, our patience was rewarded with great views of **Singing Honeyeaters** and **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater**. A quick stop at the Big Ram in Wagin before we covered our final leg to Yilliminning Rock, an isolated hill composed of granite rising abruptly from the surrounding plain and the George Brockway Tree, a memorial Salmon Gum (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*) named after a significant conservationist, where despite the high wind we still had one more wonderful new bird for the day – the endemic **Western Rosellas**, sitting high up in the Salmon Gums showing their wonderful red hues. Weebill and Rufous Treecreepers delighted us before we took a quick jaunt up onto the inselberg enjoying the expansive views over the surrounding countryside, a lovely end to another jam-packed day.

Day 10

27.09.26 Dryandra Forest

We had a whole day to spend in beautiful Dryandra Forest, so we set off bright and early. Our first walk was the Ochre trail where we immediately saw a **Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** showing its lovely stripes and shimmering green back. Starting along the trail we 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, and occasionally sitting long enough to see their beautiful colours. **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters** gave us continuous lovely views throughout, and we had fantastic views of two pairs of **Western Yellow Robins**, both with sweet wee chicks being fed. A **Western Rosella** delighted us with its gorgeous colours, and we had a back-lit view of our first gorgeous greeny-yellow **Superb Parrot**.

Two further new birds seen on the walk were a flock of **White-browed Babblers** grooving around on the ground and a pair of beautiful **Blue-breasted Fairywrens**, the males breast truly popping in the sun that was starting to push through the dark clouds.

A bathroom break allowed us to see the field full of **Western Grey Kangaroos** and many charming singing **Australian Magpies**. Next, we took a loop through a lovely section of forest full of Poison Pea (*Gastrolobium bilobium)* the most toxic in the genus that produce a naturally occurring toxin. A fabulous **Sacred Kingfisher** posed wonderfully for us and then we found a trio of gorgeous trio of **Jacky Winters** who showed us their lovely behaviour of re-adjusting their tail feathers each time they land. A pair of **Yellow-rumped Thornbills** were coming and going from their lovely hanging nest and as we returned to the bus a pair of **Restless Flycatcher** zipped past giving off their scissoring calls.

Driving out to Koomal Road we took a lovely walk through beautiful woodland and were fortunate to see our main target, an **Elegant Parrot** sitting in much better light. We walked through a spectacular section of the woodland full of mature Grasstrees.

Making our way through the park, looking carefully at the leaf litter and the fallen logs, we were so thrilled to find a glorious **Numbat** who stayed very close beside us for almost ten minutes – such a wonderful little mammal, and a true privilege to see. After lunch alongside some **Scarlet Robins**, we then spotted another incredible animal – a **Short-beaked Echidna**, a marvellous monotreme, who gave us great views of its very spiky bum as it swaggered along. A **Collared Sparrowhawk** was cooling its feet in a puddle in the middle of the road as we came along, remarkable to see a raptor so well and so close.

A walk from Old Mill Dam was lovely in the afternoon sunshine with thunder rumbling in the distance. Several **Laughing Kookaburra** sat out with their blue wings glimmering and a flock of **Grey Currawong** filled the forest with their clanking calls. We were watching **Dusky Woodswallow** circling nearby a **Restless Flycatche**r and after

hearing a big alarm call, we got to see a **Brown Goshawk** come in fast and close with its catch in its talons - it was then dive bombed by **Yellow-plumed Honeyeaters** and a very bold **Willie Wagtail** until it decided to leave for a more peaceful part of the forest. As we completed our circle we returned to the dam where two **Carnaby's Cockatoos** were all preening adorably next to the water.

Squeezing in a few more sites before dinner we found **Inland** and **Western Thornbills**, then incredibly another **Short-beaked Echidna** digging busily and then even more magically, a second **Numbat** right beside the road who jumped up on a log and gave us unbeatable views. An incredible way to conclude the diurnal section of the day.

After a light dinner in the forest, we headed to **Barna Mia** for a walk within an extensive fenced enclosure in Dryandra State Forest, pausing to smile at a third **Short-beaked Echidna** along the way. Here, thanks to the Department of Parks & Wildlife's amazing efforts, we saw **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** was also part of the night's incredible haul of mammals and an **Australian Boobook** sat on the tree above us and looked down with its big round eyes.

Day 11

28.09.26 Narrogin to 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 to Foxes Lair where we began with the incredible view of two **Square-tailed Kites** nesting in a close-by Eucalyptus. **Red-capped Parrots** and **Australian Ringnecks** were both busy in the tree tops and all the

small birds seemed to be hanging out together in one patch – **Brown Honeyeaters**, **Weebills**, **Inland Thornbill**, **Western Thornbill**, **Western Gerygone** and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**.

Heading north our next birding stop was Dwellingup. In a gorgeous green valley, we walked along the length of the road with 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. Two **Baudin's Cockatoos** landed and sat swaying on top of a bush, eventually allowing us to see their very long beak tips. A pair of **Red-winged Fairywrens** danced along the fence line as we made our way back along the road.

Some very tasty pies were had for lunch at the Pindjara bakery before we visited a stretch of coastline nearby. The tide was high, so the shore-birds were rather thin on the ground, yet we saw **Crested Tern**, **Australian Pelican** and **Little Pied Cormorants**. On the return path a pair of **Rufous Whistler** gave us great views of their colours

Jumping north again, we made our last stop for the day very close to our hotel at a nearby bird sanctuary. Driving in, there were **Maned (Australian Wood) Duck**, **Galah** and **Australian Ringneck** on the ground. Walking into the reserve there was a single **Great Egret** and several **Dusky Moorhen**. We were thrilled to see four **Blue-billed Ducks** out on the water; the reflection of their blue bills made them twice as beautiful. Nesting **Australian Ibis** were elegant and poised and concluded a busy day with a good number of new birds.

Day 12

29.09.26 Rottnest Island

A beautiful day for a trip over to Rottnest Island (Wadjemup). 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 two **Nankeen Night Heron** flew past us landing on port infrastructure. During the crossing we spotted **Australasian Gannet** flying and sitting on the water, **Pied Cormorants** and **Greater Crested Terns** perched on poles and a small pod of **Common Bottlenose Dolphins** as we came close to the island. 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. We encountered our first adorable **Quokka** roaming around the undergrowth including two females with tiny fluffy joeys.

A loop walk out to the lighthouse allowed us to see the whole resort area. In the trees above us several **Singing Honeyeaters** made their presence known and we had several great views of **Sacred Kingfishers.**

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 **Pied Oystercatcher**, a colony of **Silver Gulls**, **Grey Teal** and many families of **Australian Shelduck**.

Venturing away from the road to where the ponds' edges were wide and shallow, we encountered several **Pied Stilt** showing off its wonderful pink legs. Round the bend we discovered some lovely small shorebirds, **Red-capped Plovers**, a big flock of **Red-necked Stints**, and a half dozen **Ruddy Turnstones**, all feeding at the water's edges. An additional fabulous wildlife sighting was a **Dugite Snake** hunting along the edge of the sandy path, wonderful to witness the behaviour of it checking each hole it encountered for prey.

After a lovely day on Rottnest, we took the return ferry to Perth and sneaked in one more birding stop at Alfred Cove where we started with a tree full of noisy and charismatic **Rainbow Lorikeet** and **Long-billed Corella**. Out on the marsh area were some more graceful **Pied Stilt**, a handful of **Pied Oystercatchers** and **Australian White Ibis** with two **Common Sandpiper** and a **Common Greenshank**, just identifiable through the afternoon heat haze. The big highlight was great views of two adult **Buff-banded Rail** alongside two adorable black fluffball chicks. Back to the hotel after a huge day filled with sun, sand and wildlife.

Day 13

30.09.26 Perth City

Navigating through the busy Perth roads in the pouring rain we went north of Perth to Yanchep National Park where we fortunately coincided with a window in the weather to walk through the park. Many soggy **Western Grey Kangaroos** were gently grazing on the lawns and in the rushes a pair of **Splendid Fairywrens** popped up in a blaze of blue. As we walked through the native flower gardens **New Holland Honeyeaters** pinged all around us and a **Laughing Kookaburra** landed very close by. We then explored the koala sanctuary area of the park and was lucky enough to spot three **Koala** sitting high up in the Eucalyptus trees, all sleeping in pretty tight balls, but lovely to see before the next big downpour.

Next we headed to a lake nearby and had morning tea accompanied by **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Black Swan** and **Dusky Moorhen** as well as **Swamp Harriers** soaring over the wetlands Along the water's edge we came across several fantastic new birds, a pair of amazingly unique **Pink-eared Duck**, two **Great Crested Grebes** sporting their impressive mohawks and a **Little Egret** with lots of breeding plumes. Walking through the boardwalk section was so beautiful amongst the Paperbark trees – **Australasian**

Grebes, **Purple (Australasian) Swamphen**, a female **Musk Duck** and many busy **Australian Shelduck** and **Grey Teal** filled the area with movement and sound. An **Australian Reed Warbler** gave us incredible views, contrasting with speedy glimpses of a **Little Grassbird**. Three lovely green frogs were resting in amongst the rushes.

At one section of the lake, we pulled in and very rapidly spotted a **Buff-banded Rail** who strolled through the rushes allowing us fantastic views of the beautiful colours and markings. We also searched out a beautiful fluffy and sleepy **Tawny Frogmouth** perched just above head height, providing wonderful, unobstructed views.

While enjoying a delicious lunch selection eaten beside the water a wonderful **Snake-necked Turtle** walked past us showing its protruding long neck and strong body. Incredibly we had yet more **Buff-banded Rail**, this time a pair with a single chick that was being fed by both parents as it scooted between them. A huge **Australian Pelican** sat majestically resting on the edge of the wetland.

Our final location for the day was a lake and reserve, where we were greeted by a **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 **Great Egret**, **Purple (Australasian) Swamphen** and a family of **Maned (Australian Wood) Ducks.**

With a very early start for our flights the next day, we took a slightly early return to the hotel to rest and prepare, concluding our time in wonderful Western Australia.

Day 14

01.10.26 Perth to Hobart

An early start for a full day of flights across Australia, all went well and we arrived to lovely calm weather in Hobart, spotting our first **Masked Lapwings** in the dark on the way to the hotel.

Day 15

02.10.26 Hobart to Eaglehawk Neck

With glorious weather to start our introduction to Tasmania we made our way to Kunanyi, the huge, beautiful mountain under which Hobart (Nipaluna) is nestled. A tree full of **Black Currawongs** introduced us to our first Tasmanian endemic bird with a fierce yellow eye and a bold bill.From the top of Kunanyi we had epic views in all directions from Tasman Peninsula to Bruny Island. We were fortunate to see a pair of **Flame Robins** bouncing on the lichen-coloured rocks, the male orange glowing in the sun and the subtle elegant markings of the female nearby.

Pausing halfway down the mountain, we could see back up to the Organ Pipes of incredible Jurassic Dolerite. **Superb Fairywren** were bouncing around being an utter delight with the male's blue cheeks glowing. The soundscape was full of **Crescent Honeyeaters** singing their hearts out and we had some excellent views as individuals jumped up onto branches to show their wonderful yellow, black and white markings.

Our next stop was at a park near a nearby beach. We were treated to wonderful views of colourful **Eastern Rosella**. **Long-billed Corellas** were calling merrily and hanging out of a big hollow. **Rainbow Lorikeet** and **Musk Lorikeet** were shooting past at a million miles and hour with a few lovely **Musk Lorikeet** sitting out in the open for us to admire. **Noisy Miners** shot past us, confident and full of energy. **Masked Lapwings** and **Australian Magpies** strutted about on the ground, contributing to the lively symphony of sights and sounds.

The Hobart Botanic Gardens was where we were introduced to a great selection of bush birds including another charismatic endemic, the **Tasmanian Native Hen** (Turbo chook). **Little Wattlebirds** and **Yellow Wattlebirds** squawked from the tops of the trees and **Eurasian Blackbirds** scraped the leaf litter at the base of the huge old trees. Around the vegetable garden **European Greenfinches** were zitting and flitting from tree to tree. A wonderful surprise was a wee young **Southern Brown Bandicoot** who was snuffling amongst the bluebells. A **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** was hanging on a spruce tree eating the cones giving us wonderful views of its dexterity.

After lunch in Sorell, we made our way south and paused at the side of the road at a dam outside Copping which gave us a great view of a busy and diverse mix of **Maned (Australian Wood) Ducks**, **Australian Shoveler, Australian Shelduck**, **Pacific Black Ducks**, **Chestnut Teal** and **Black Swans** along with several **Musk Dusk** in the distance.

At the lovely tidal wetland we saw many **White-fronted Chats** amongst the Samphire as well as some familiar friends **Black Swan**, **White-faced Heron** and **Little Egret**. Two **Kelp Gulls** were sitting on the sand and a trio of **Red-capped Plovers** were visible scooting about the puddles. A **Swamp Harrier** was hunting over the fields and at the sound of a **Eurasian Skylark**, we spotted a climbing wee dot going higher and higher and higher until it fell suddenly towards the ground. From the bridge we could see a healthy section of the waterway heaving with crabs and fish. Past the tiny township, we climbed up to the viewpoint over Marion Bay beach and absorbed the stunning views, spying two **Hooded Plover** on the sand below.

Near Dunalley there was a pocket of birds standing on a sand spit including seven handsome **Caspian Tern** and several **Pied Oystercatcher**. At the Dunalley bridge there were many **Black-faced Cormorants** swimming and fishing in the tidal waters. **Little Black** and **Little Pied Cormorants** were also sitting on the jetty with the **Silver**

Gulls and **Common Starlings**. We had a quick glimpse of an **Australian Fur Seal** also out fishing under the bridge and a **White-bellied Sea Eagle** swooping over the water.

At Eaglehawk Neck we enjoyed the view over Pirates Bay and concluded our afternoon at The Blowhole where the water was gurgling in and out over the sandstone and siltstone formations. We could see a few **Australasian Gannets** far offshore and many **Kelp Gulls** circling the beautiful coastline. After a big first day we settled into our cosy rooms at Eaglehawk Neck.

Day 16

03.10.26 Tasman Peninsula

This morning we took a lovely cruise along the cliffs of the Tasman Peninsula where the tallest cliffs in Australia towered above us. There were **Australian** and **Long-nosed Fur Seals**, **Common** and **Bottlenose Dolphins** to enjoy throughout and the birdlife include all our regular shoreline friends as well as thousands of **Short-tailed Shearwater**, **Shy Albatross**, **Australasian Gannets** and **Greater Crested Terns.**

After lunch back on shore with a bold **Black Currawong**, we took a visit to the nearby caves enjoying the shorebirds along the way and a **Swamp Harrier** sitting on a fencepost glowing chestnut. The sun bounced magnificently off the towering columns of Jurassic Dolerite on Cape Raoul. We climbed down to the cave itself to be mesmerised by the ebb and flow of the waves through the caves pathway. The Jurassic Dolerite met the Triassic Sandstone on the walls of the gulch and the whole cavern was shady and beautiful. **Superb Fairywrens** pinged around the bushes and a **Crescent Honeyeater** sat up tall and proud on a Banksia.

After some people chose to return to the hotel to rest after so much fresh salt air, some of us headed back out for a few more hours birding. We saw a lovely pair of **Cape**

Barren Geese walking close together in a road-side field and while watching had a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** soar overhead, our first view of the larger Tasmanian subspecies.

At the Saltwater River Coal Mine site we began with more delightful **Superb Fairywrens** followed quickly by a **Grey Shrikethrush** and **Yellow Wattlebird**. Some **Tasmanian Scrubwrens** gave us brief glimpses amongst the foliage and a **Scarlet Robin** male wowed us with his bold chest of red. The sharp wind was bringing **Kelp Gulls** inshore soaring over our head as we walked through the ruins of the convicts' barracks. In the shelter of the bush once more we had fantastic views of a pair of **Eastern Spinebill** while **Grey Fantail** joined in the twirling and swirling. **Striated Pardalotes** sat up high in the canopy, yet once we had a clear view it was wonderful to see the behaviour of an individual spreading its wings toward another. As we concluded our loop the call of **Australian Golden Whistler** drew us to a great vantage spot to see his glorious yellow, black and white tuxedo. Back to the hotel for rest before an early start for Maria Island the next day.

Day 17

04.10.26 Maria Island

We got up early and zipped up from Eaglehawk Neck to Triabunna to catch the ferry across the Mercury Channel to beautiful Maria Island, full of history and wildlife. The crossing included **Great** and **Black-faced Cormorant** species on the jetties and flying past. As we crossed the Channel, we also saw a few elegant **Greater Crested Terns** and some **Australasian Gannets.**

On landing we began with **Cape Barren Goose** with their stunning lime yellow cere and their marvellous black webbed feet strutting confidently along. A **Hooded Dotterel** was sitting well camouflaged by driftwood on the beach. There were **Chestnut Teal** with

their green heads glowing in the sun swimming in the creek and **Pied Oystercatcher** and **Tasmanian Nativehens** strutting along the water's edge.

Up towards Darlington, we saw **Black Currawong**, **Australian Magpie**, **Grey Fantail** handsome **Green Rosella** and our first endemic honeyeater, the **Black-headed Honeyeater**. Pausing to scan the walls near the old convict buildings, we saw a pair of **Flame Robin**, with the female showing her subtle and beautiful details. There were also tiny **Yellow-rumped Thornbill** popping about on the ground.

Heading out of the settlement we spotted our first **Tasmanian Pademelons** feeding and resting under the tree line, both females with bulging pouches. Round the bend we were so thrilled to find two fluffy **Bare-nosed (Common) Wombats**, a mother and joey grazing adorably and allowing us to see their fluffy cheeks and wonderful angular backsides.

The sound of the bold endemic **Yellow Wattlebird**, drew us to the top of the hill where the light scent of the Blue Gums (Eucalyptus globulus) was a sweet addition to the beauty of the day and we stood amongst the towering trees and enjoyed the sight of **Yellow Wattlebirds** and **Tree Martins** tumbling and swooping from the giant branches above us.

Walking past the Oast House, we had a great view of a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** high above and as we walked the boardwalk through the Dogwood we found **Tasmanian Scrubwren** and **Tasmanian Thornbills**. We popped out at the beach beside the beautiful Painted which we achieved a great view of as we made our way back up the hillside. On the way back over the hill to Darlington we had a **Short-beaked Echidna** with lovely blonde hair and spikes.

After lunch at Darlington, we climbed the steep slope behind the settlement to look for **Eastern Grey Kangaroo** and got lucky with a single muscley male who gave us some great poses before he vanished into the Prickly Wattle.

After a smooth passage back to Triabunna we made one stop on our way to Hobart at Orford where we checked if the Fairy Tern colony was active yet for the season. No Terns could be seen, yet we had a lovely selection of shorebirds, with some tiny **Red-capped Plover** being new for the Tasmania tour.

Day 18

05.10.26 Hobart to Bruny Island

A beautiful day in Tasmania greeted us as we set out from our Hobart hotel. At a lovely reserve close to the city, we took our first walk. There were many **Black Currawong** and **Yellow Wattlebirds** jumping from tree to tree. **Superb Fairywren** were dancing around us at every turn and a **Laughing Kookaburra** was sitting fluffed up and proud on the playpark swings. Amongst the tree line we came across some **Tasmanian Scrubwrens**, **Crescent Honeyeater** and an **Eastern Spinebill.** Some adorable **Tasmanian (Red-bellied) Pademelons** were peeping at us from behind bushes and we had a brief view of our first **Bennett's Wallaby**. Walking back to the bus we had a first view of **Brown Thornbills** and a **Grey Currawong** with white fluffy bloomers flew overhead. The top water reservoir had been drained for maintenance yet still had a few **Masked Lapwing** and **Pacific Black Ducks** walking the edges, but all the action was in the lower reservoir where hundreds of **Kelp Gull** were washing and flapping in the water.

We made our next stop at another nearby reserve, where we were barely out of the van before we spotted two **Tawny Frogmouth** doing their very best branch impression and watching us through barely open eye-slits. We achieved several great views of our target bird the **Yellow-throated Honeyeaters**, two of whom were chasing a **Grey Shrikethrush** who may have been after their eggs or chicks. The forest was

reverberating to the sounds of **Forest Ravens** who seemed to holding some kind of conference, much to the disgust of the **Yellow Wattlebirds** doing their best to drive the Ravens away.

On the way south, we took a walk through the busy community area in Margate, with a trio of **Striated Pardalote** greeting us as they worked on gathering nesting materials. Even more **Superb Fairywren** were bopping about with a cluster of four bright blue males next to each other. **Brown Thornbill** giving us some brief views and a **Common Bronzewing** perched elegantly on a branch, yet the new highlight bird for the walk was a **Pallid Cuckoo** who gave us fantastic views of its banded tail and facial stripe.

We headed to Kettering spotting a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** on-route and caught the Ferry across the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island. Pausing for lunch at a campground along the way, we then took a short stroll through the lovely yet quiet forest spotting a few **Black-faced Cuckooshrike** and **Crescent Honeyeater** on the way.

Next we went to the Inala Conservation Reserve where we started in the Jurassic Garden with a walk amongst the Gondwana plant species. Moments after arrival we heard the calls of a **Grey Goshawk** (white morph) and after a quick dash, spotted it sitting up high in a Eucalyptus, glowing in the sun, glorious to see such a beautiful and endangered raptor. A couple of female **Flame Robin** were quickly followed by next endemic, a wee family of **Dusky Robin**. The garden loop also gave us views of three **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** flying past, a **Swamp Harrier** swooping in low and then a remarkable sighting of an **Olive Whistler** hunting in the grass.

Outside the garden there were lovely **Black-headed Honeyeater**, **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Striated Pardalote,** but we kept hunting our target and on reaching the platform area, we were lucky in our timing to see the crowning glory of a **Forty-spotted Pardalote** pair coming and going with great frequency from their nest box and

feasting on the Eucalyptus viminalis, giving us once-in a lifetime views of its delicate tiny features.

Heading to our cottage for a rest, we then went for dinner at the local hotel spotting a beautiful white **Bennett's Wallaby** next to the road on route.

As dusk crept in we finished dinner and made our way to The Neck to watch the incredible sight of thousands of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** coming to land on the hillside. It was mesmerising to watch them flapping and circling silently and wonderful to see them on the ground sitting quietly on the surface, or digging their burrows out - with puffs of sand appearing in the air as the kicked backwards down their burrow. The route home had many **Tasmanian (Red-bellied) Pademelons**, **Bennett's Wallaby** and **Brush-tailed Possum** along the road-side making for a slightly nerve-wracking drive.

Day 19

06.10.26 Bruny Island

With a classic Tasmanian day of changeable weather ahead of us we planned ahead and started the day with a drive down to the Bruny Lighthouse at the southerly most point of the island. The weather broke as we arrived and allowed us a window of time to explore. Near the volunteers houses we had **Brown Quail**, **Flame Robin** and **Superb Fairywren** mixed in amongst the ever-active **New Holland Honeyeaters**. A **Swamp Harrier** was soaring nearby and a **White-bellied Sea Eagle** sailed majestically by on the winds. After enjoying the many glorious views of the Jurassic Dolerite cliffs and the offshore islands we skipped back to the bus before the next squall.

We returned to Inala and started once more at the fabulous Forty-spotted Pardalote platform where the sunshine allowed us even better views than the previous day and

Black-headed Honeyeaters also sat in the sun and glowed. A walk through the wet areas at the back of Inala was cut short by another rain shower yet we got to appreciate the forest ecosystem in the rain as it is designed to be.

We next worked on seeking out **Swift Parrots** by finding flowering Blue Gums and when we did, we hit the jackpot with at least twenty-five **Swift Parrot** zooming from tree to tree and communicating in a merry chattering. After some hard work we finally got to see some in amongst the flowers, twirling and spiralling as they fed on the blossoms, just so incredible to see such a beautiful and endangered bird.

Making our way to Adventure Bay we paused at a beach along the way to spend some time with four handsome **Hooded Plovers** who were walking the white sands of the lovely curving beach. Lunch by the beach was followed by a walk through a temperate rainforest which gave us a cornucopia of mossy and ferny delights. **Tasmanian Thornbills** and **Tasmanian Scrubwren** were seen and enjoyed as they flitted around the Sassafras and the Nothofagus, but the explosion of brightness as a male **Pink Robin** arrived was the highlight of the walk and he gave us spectacular views of his unique colour.

Coming over the hill a **Grey Goshawk** (white morph) was feeding on a roadkill Tasmanian Pademelon and did not wish to leave its lunch, so we achieved lovely views as it sat in a tree waiting for us to leave.

On our way back, we spotted a **Beautiful Firetail** beside the road and admired their wonderful red bum, stripy chest and sweet red bill – a delightful wee finch. Our last new bird for the day was back at Inala where we found a flock of **Strong-billed Honeyeaters** who were working the tree trunks looking for insects amongst the bark. Fantastic to get our eleventh endemic species and to witness their specialist behaviour.

The day ended with incredibly high tides and gale force winds that were hopefully blowing through the last of the weather front.

Day 20

07.10.26 Bruny Island to Mount Field

A gorgeous day to wake up to after all the wild weather and we set out from Bruny Island almost immediately stopping to observe two incredible **Wedge-tailed Eagles** perched in a tree beside the road. Pausing at The Neck to climb to the top for the incredible views of North and South Bruny and to learn the history of Truganini, we saw many **Pied** and **Sooty Oystercatchers** on the beach and a **Swamp Harrier** and **Brown Goshawk** flew past while we were on the steps, giving great views of their different forms and colours.

A try for the only very recently migrated Blue-winged Parrots came up short but allowed us to see more of North Bruny before we caught the ferry back to the mainland.

A quick pause in a town along the way for morning tea by the river had us surrounded by hybrid **Pacific Black** / **Mallards** with a **Long-billed Corella** on a streetlight above us, **Chestnut Teal** in the river and **Little Wattlebird**s chasing the **Noisy Miners** through the suburban gardens.

At Goulds Lagoon we saw many of our familiar friends with particularly good views of **Great Egret**, **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **Purple (Australasian) Swamphen** and a tree full of **Great** and **Little Black Cormorants**. As we drove the roads past New Norfolk a roadside sighting gave us our best yet views of **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** munching on some pinecones.

At Mount Field we walked the magical Russell Falls walk through the temperate rainforest dominated by incredibly mature Antarctic Tree Ferns, hundreds of years old. The first half of the walk was fairly quiet with only a couple of **Tasmanian Scrubwren** and **Tasmanian Thornbill** popping up to say hello, but then we came to an area with a

great deal more sound and activity and it was here amongst the **Grey Fantails** we spotted a female **Pink Robin**, quickly followed by a male **Pink Robin** high above our heads, yet still allowing great views of the pink luminous tummy.

A wee bit further up the mountain we took a beautiful walk amongst the tallest Hardwood trees in the world, Swamp Gums *(Eucalyptus regnans)* This stroll also rewarded us with more **Pink Robins** as well as a great view of a juvenile **Crescent Honeyeater** pulling at the strips of bark on the Swamp Gums. Just before we almost reached the end of the walk, we heard and then saw two **Scrubtits**, our very final Tasmanian Endemic bird. At first all we had was fleeting views, but then we could see they were collecting materials for a nest and the views just got better and better as they posed on mossy trunks and sunlight branches right in front of us. **Tasmanian Thornbill** and **Tasmanian Scrubwren** also appeared in the same patch, making it possible to see all three endemic LBJ's in one glance, just incredible!

In that high, we headed for our accommodation for the night, pausing for a **Brown Falcon** hunting over a sheep field and enjoying the spectacle of over 400 **Eurasian Coots** on the Lake Meadowbank causeway. Over dinner we had the opportunity to bird at the dam on the property and were rewarded with a lovely selection of water birds including new-for-the-tour **Hoary-headed Grebes** flashing their sweet fluffy bums in our direction as they surfaced. Driving back to our cottages allowed us to see a family of **Banded Lapwing** in a sheep field, a **European Hare** bounding away through the farmland and wonderfully a **Short-beaked Echidna** feeding next to a fallen log, a perfect way to conclude the day.

Day 21

08.10.26 Hamilton to Cradle Mountain

Another beautiful day dawned and we were surrounded in thick atmospheric fog as we woke on the farm. With a big drive ahead of us, we set off north and our first pause at Bothwell allowed for our best views of **European Goldfinches**. As we drove the next section up to the Steppes a close by **Brown Falcon** caught our eye perched on a branch right beside the road. There were also **Banded Lapwing**, a **Yellow Wattlebird** on a gate and a new bird, a cluster of sweet **Australasian Pipits** tail bobbing in the grass.

At the Steppes sculptures we enjoyed the many interesting nature portrayals in the forest then drove to the nearby Lagoon of Islands to try to see a Bittern. Sadly, they were tucked away in the bushes, but four **Swamp Harriers** and a flock of **Black Currawong** and **Eastern Rosella** all gave us great delight in a beautiful, peaceful surround.

With morning tea on a dam wall, we then wound our way past the Great Lakes and fishing shacks. At the highest point on the highway, we reached Pencil Pine Lake, this beautiful walk had a diverse selection of wonderful plants amongst the Pencil Pines, such as Yellow Needlebush, Mountain Rocket, Cushion Plant and Pineapple Grass. Between the freeze-thaw rock scree slopes we spotted **Tasmanian Thornbill**, **Flame Robin** and a hunting **Nankeen Kestrel.**

A scrumptious lunch at Elizabeth Town was followed by a quick dash up the highway where we entered a reserve and headed straight to the dam in the centre of the gardens where we were incredibly fortunate to see fantastic views of a **Platypus** swimming very close to us, showing the broad bill, the flat tail and the glistening chestnut fur as it roll-dived.

After a winding drive and a pause to admire Mount Rolland and coo at a sweet **Echidna**, we checked into our lovely hotel and had a delicious dinner.

A night walk through a boardwalk section of the National Park gave us great views of almost thirty **Bare-nosed Wombats** feeding in the cool night air. Many **Bennett's**

Wallaby, **Tasmanian Pademelon** and a couple of dark and grey **Brush-tailed Possum** rounded out a lovely night walk with a star-studded sky above us.

Day 22

09.10.26 Cradle Mountain

Starting the day early to get ahead of the other guests visiting the region, our first walk at Cradle Mountain National Park was at Dove Lake with lovely atmospheric low misty clouds covering the mountain herself. We walked to Glacier Rock enjoying the great views of the low mountain slopes in all directions, watching **Tasmanian Thornbill**, **Green Rosella** and **Crescent Honeyeaters** as we went along. Taking a pathway in the opposite direction towards the boathouse we achieved fantastic views of a **Striated Fieldwren** who sat in a bush right next to the path and gave glorious views of the striations and their warm creamy colours.

At Gustav Weindorfer's Waldheim Cabin we took a walk through the twisted mossy magic of the Weindorfer's Forest with the glorious huge ancient King Billy Pines towering above us. A female **Pink Robin** and some glimpses of **Scrubtit** and **Tasmanian Thornbill** added glimmers of movement to the gloriously still and silent forest. We had morning tea overlooking the valley and spotted **Bare-nosed Wombats** from afar so we drove down to Ronny's Creek and walked the boardwalk track where we watched two lovely wombats munching peacefully on the slopes above us.

Walking the Enchanted Forest Walk with a beautiful waterfall, glorious Buttongrass moorland and a magical mossy forest we saw **Tasmanian Thornbill**, **Tasmanian Scrubwren**, **Scrubtit** and **Black Currawong**. So many beautiful plants along the way such as Eucryphia lucida (Leatherwood) mixed in with Pandani, Waratah and Celerytop Pin.

After lunch at our hotel we took a tranquil walk through the still and ancient Myrtle Beech and King Billy forest where it was cool and shady, our remaining target was **Bassian Thrush** and when we eventually saw one it was a glorious view as it was sitting on an open branch above us allowing full view of its chest with the patterning of crescent moon shapes. As we came back down the loop path from the 1000-year-old King Billy Pine, we had a spectacular clear view across to Cradle Mountain.

Continuing the epic views, we zipped up to the Black Bluff Range where we could see the rear side of Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff sitting tall and proud. Down in the Vale of Belvoir amongst the endless Button Grass, we spotted an **Australasian Pipit** amongst the elegant **Welcome Swallows,** who were swooping and dancing on the strong breeze. We also had a **Wombat** close to the bus, but it was rather shy compared to its Cradle Mountain neighbours and tried to hide behind a clump of grass, eventually deciding we were harmless and popping up to munch once more. Two **Wedge-tailed Eagles** circled rapidly and seemed to clash briefly in mid-air, so perhaps they were not a partnership. They concluded a wonderful day of exploration of the Cradle region and we enjoyed one final delicious evening meal together.

Day 23

10.10.26 Cradle Mountain to Launceston

Our final morning together and we departed beautiful Cradle Mountain and headed several hours drive East towards the city of Launceston.

On reaching the city we started at a lake where we saw a new bird, half a dozen handsome **Royal Spoonbills** who seemed to be nesting on an island in the dam amongst **Little Pied**, **Little Black** and **Great Cormorants**. The water below contained many lovely species, a group of **Hardheads** gave us much better views than those

previously seen, allowing us to see the rich dark chocolate-coloured head and bold white eye ring. A single **Pink-eared Duck** was sitting under the willows and **Grey** and **Chestnut Teal** swam amongst **Dusky Moorhen** and **Eurasian Coots**. A pristine **Great Egret** was hunting on the banks, and we could hear **Australian Reed Warblers** calling in the rushes.

A final stop was a visit to the Tamar Wetlands on the Tamar River and after seeing some lovely familiar friends such as **Black-fronted Dotterel**, **White-faced Heron**, **Black Swan** and **Welcome Swallow**, we then had an incredible view of two **Lowland Copperhead snakes** beside the boardwalk, one slightly extended and one curled up in circles digesting after a big meal. Fantastic to end with a beautiful reptile and our first Tasmanian snake.

With farewells at accommodations and airports we then departed off into the world after several huge weeks filled with incredible wildlife and glorious landscape. Thank you for birding with me in Australia and I hope we meet again in the bush somewhere, Cat Davidson.

On behalf of Inala - thanks for touring with us.

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