



A **Tropical Birding** Custom Tour

**Australia's Outback and Beyond: From Cairns to Melbourne**  
**- Birding Tour**

**11<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022**



**Carpentarian Grasswren** was one of the most wanted birds of the tour, and was found near *Mount Isa (Queensland)* -Sam Woods

*Guided by **Keith Barnes, Iain Campbell and Sam Woods**  
Report written by **Sam Woods***

*Birds in the photos within this report are denoted in **RED**.*

**INTRODUCTION:**

*This custom tour involved an epic road trip which started in the Wet Tropics of Cairns (Queensland) and ended in the temperate zones near Melbourne, more than 2800km/1740miles away! It took in a vast array of **birding sites** and **bird habitats**, including (but not limited to) **montane rainforest and lowland tropical rainforests, temperate eucalypt woodlands, gibber plains, desert sand dunes, lignum swamps, tropical wetlands, wet sclerophyll forest, Callitris woodland, mallee, mulga, rocky and dune spinifex, arid heathlands**, and much more besides. This trip focused on tracking down scarce and local Australian birds in some of the most remote parts of the country and Outback. To this end, we did very well, finding **SEVEN species of grasswren**, several **quail-thrushes**, **Malleefowl**, multiple **Letter-winged Kites**, a nesting **Gray Falcon** and **Rufous Owl**, **Ground Cuckooshrike**, **Rufous-crowned and Mallee Emuwrens**, prospecting **Pink Cockatoo (photo below)**, in addition to hundreds strong flocks of **Flock Bronzewings**. It was also good to experience the flush of **Budgerigars** following recent rains, with thousands seen during the trip, along with a wonderful abundance of **Crimson and Orange Chats**, in addition to stellar blossom nomads like **Pied and Black Honeyeaters**. It was a superb trip, which racked up plenty of miles and a dizzy array of sites to bird in.*



**Pink Cockatoos** are typically most abundant in *mulga* areas, although we found a prospecting pair in the *mallee* of Victoria's Hattah-Kulkyne National Park -Sam Woods



**SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL AREAS VISITED:****QUEENSLAND**

- Cairns
- Cattana Wetlands
- Mount Hypipamee
- Cumberland Dam
- Karumba
- Mount Isa
- Winton
- Lark Quarry
- Georgina River
- Birdsville Track
- Little Red Sand Dune

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

- Goyder Lagoon
- Lyndhurst
- Strzlecki Track
- Farina Station
- Wilpena Pound, Flinders Ranges
- Stokes Hill, Flinders Ranges

**VICTORIA**

- Billiatt Conservation Park
- Hattah-Kulkyne National Park
- Little Desert Nature Lodge
- Little Desert National Park
- Chiltern
- Toolangi State Forest



Dawntime searching for *Eyrean Grasswren* on the top of **Little Red** sand dune in the *Simpson Desert of Southern Queensland*

**TOUR SUMMARY:**

This epic Aussie-road-trip-tour started very differently, with only short trips in and around the *Cairns*. The city, and the region, of the Wet Tropics offer excellent birding in a variety of habitats all close at hand. We saw this firsthand, starting out in parkland, where **Bush Thick-knee**, **Australian Brush-Turkey** and **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** graced the lawns, while **Forest Kingfisher** and **Blue-winged Kookaburra** looked on from above. With the help of a local friend, *Shaun*, we were able to locate a pair of sleeping **Papuan Frogmouths** as an early highlight. A pair of young **Gray Goshawks** were on an active nest as hoped, and a short period of *Tropical Lowland Rainforest* birding produced a trio of both monarchs and fruit doves, with **Spectacled, Pied and White-eared Monarchs** (*photo below*), as well as **Rose-crowned, Superb and Wompoo Fruit-Doves**. Another park got us a roosting **Rufous Owl**, and a pair of **Lovely Fairywrens** provided the final stanza from the *Cairns* area. A stop in *Subtropical and Montane Rainforest* at *Mount Hypipamee* later, recorded specialties of the Atherton Tablelands like **Atherton Scrubwren**, **Mountain Thornbill**, **Gray-headed Robin**, and **Golden Bowerbird**, as well as **Victoria's Riflebird** to give us our only possible *bird-of-paradise* of the tour.



An hour or so along the *Lake Morris Road* on the outskirts of *Cairns* led to three different species of monarchs being seen, including this striking **White-eared Monarch** in the *Lowland Tropical Rainforest* there -*Sam Woods*



Heading due west, we stopped off at *Cumberland Dam* near *Georgetown*, where a waterhole within the *Open Eucalypt Savanna* was magnetic for songbirds in this parched area of Queensland's Outback. Chief highlights were several groups of the local **Black-throated Finch** (*photo below*), along with **Masked and Double-barred Finches**, and **Paperbark Flycatcher** and **Yellow-tinted Honeyeater**.



We successfully targeted the scarce and local **Black-throated Finch** at a small waterhole close to *Cumberland Dam* in northern Queensland -*Sam Woods*

Not long after we departed this area, Iain spotted a couple of **Ground Cuckooshrikes** (*photo next page*), a very rare inland wanderer, which was a real avian prize so early on the trip to find and that was by no means possible at any stage of the tour. Unbeknown to us at the time, we were to see another much more cooperative pair later on the tour in *South Australia*. Moving further west still, we pulled into *Karumba*, after picking up two species of crane on the way (**Brolga** and **Sarus Crane**). Following a viewing of *Karumba's* famous deep red sunset, we took a morning trip out for mangrove birds on a chartered boat, finding **White-breasted Whistler**, **Red-headed Myzomela**, **Australian Yellow White-eye** and **Mangrove Fantail**, among other mangrove species.



We were fortunate to bump into the highly nomadic and extremely unpredictable **Ground Cuckooshrike** on two occasions, with this being the best sighting of the two, in the *Flinders Ranges of South Australia* -*Sam Woods*

From the *Gulf of Carpentaria*, we headed south into the rockier Outback, making stops in Rocky Spinifex areas close to *Mount Isa (Queensland)*, where a brace of grasswrens featured; namely the rare and notoriously difficult **Carpentarian Grasswren** (*photo page 1*), and the marginally easier **Kalkadoon Grasswren** (*photo page 8*), which both put on a show to remember. During the first search for the former we managed to locate a couple of roosting **Australian Owlet-Nightjars** by checking likely hollows, and another nocturnal bird, **Spotted Nightjar** was seen during a dusk time drive too. Spending our first time in spinifex grasses also produced another specialist of this habitat, **Spinifexbird**, witnessed singing from one lush clump following a wet, wet season. *Mount Isa* was also a happy hunting ground for other birds, like **Little Woodswallow** and the handsome **Painted Finch** (*photo page 9*), some of which were seen with the first of many **Zebra Finches** to come. Some very cooperative **Spinifex Pigeons** (*photos next page*) were also enjoyed near *Mount Isa* too.

**PHOTOS NEXT PAGE:** **Spinifex Pigeons** were seen at several *Rocky Spinifex* sites in Queensland's Outback (*Sam Woods*)

**PHOTOS PAGE 8:** **Kalkadoon Grasswren** (TOP) in *Mount Isa* and **Plum-headed Finch** in *Winton* (*Sam Woods*)













Handsome **Painted Firetails** provided an impressive supporting cast to *grasswrens* in the spinifex areas around *Mount Isa (Queensland)* -Sam Woods

We departed *Mount Isa*, heading southeast to the sheep and cattle town of *Winton* in *Central West Queensland*. This happened to be the first place where Qantas airlines was also based. However, our main quarry here were waterbirds. A small sewage farm nearby brought a surprise flock of **Plum-headed Finches** (*photo page 8*), perhaps a harbinger of the good wet season just gone. The wetlands themselves also held a few dapper **Pink-eared Ducks**, a species we were only to encounter twice on this lengthy road trip. We headed southwest from *Winton*, passing through lush *mulga* during an impressive late afternoon flurry of activity that betrayed the fact that these areas had undergone massive inundation during the wet season, causing a flush of plantlife rarely seen in recent years, and a subsequent boom in birdlife. The main beneficiary of this lush growth seemed to be **Budgerigars**, which were seen in their thousands by the day's end and in the days following this too. They were abundant and conspicuous and continually passed by in noisy flocks. **Crimson Chats** were also unusually abundant, along with woodswallows, which were really common and involved three main species, **Black-faced, White-browed and masked Woodswallows**.

Heading southwest from *Winton*, we headed towards *Lark Quarry*, an area famous as one of few sites on the planet where a dinosaur stampede is said to have occurred, involving some 150 or so animals and thousands of footprints preserved in the alluvial floodplain. We did indeed find time to stand in awe of this remarkable paleontological feature.

However, we were in the vicinity for a very local, and only recently described bird species, the **Opalton Grasswren**, which was only formally described just before the turn of the century. We visited an area of *mulga* interspersed with stretches of rocky spinifex grasses, which were the focus of our time there.



**Rufous-crowned Emuwren** played hide-and-seek in the spinifex grasses close top *Lark Quarry (Queensland)*, also notable for its dramatic dinosaur remains (*Sam Woods*)

Firstly, we located a **Gray Falcon** standing sentry on a nesting pylon nearby, followed soon after by a pair of softly spoken **Rufous-crowned Emuwrens** (*photo above*), which emerged on to the tops of the spiky spinifex grasses for several memorable moments. As we wandered through taller areas of vegetation, where acacia-heavy *mulga* took a firm grip from the spinifex-dominated areas, we encountered a mobile party of **Hall's Babblers**, another major target bird in the area. Several **Black Honeyeaters** were also pinpointed by their distinctive two-note whistles, as they foraged in the abundant flowering trees there. This species is an erratic blossom nomad, only found during times of plentiful, nectar-loaded flowers, and roaming far and wide in pursuit of these. The species can appear abundant and plentiful during such times but may then disappear completely from that area until the blooms return, perhaps even years later. It is the classic boom and bust blossom nomad cycle. Finally, later in the morning, almost right where we started out looking, we located a pair of **Opalton Grasswrens** that were utilizing some of the taller bits of vegetation as convenient perching posts.



After enjoying the dinosaur footprints and this third *grasswren* of the tour, it was time to move west from there. The next, vast, stretch of habitat seemed initially less uninteresting, as we drove through miles of seemingly endless, flat *Tussock Grasslands* in the west of the state. For miles and miles, it appeared that there was nothing of interest there, birdwise. However, we knew this not to be true, for we were now in the primary habitat of a scarce and nomadic bird that is rarely found alone, hence its name **Flock Bronzewing**. We also knew that the best method for finding them was simply driving through these endless plains and looking for birds taking to the wing. This happened on several memorable occasions, when large flocks, sometimes numbering hundreds of birds, of **Flock Bronzewings** (*photo below*) would take flight and then drop back down just as quickly, when they would quickly evaporate from view in the long grasses following the recent rains. Our first flock numbered some 170 birds, but later groups surpassed 200 birds in number.



Flocks of hundreds of **Flock Bronzewings** were seen in the Tussock Grasslands of Western Queensland (*Sam Woods*)

Continuing our trajectory west through *Boulia*, we followed up recent news of a bumper year for *Letter-winged Kites* near Georgina River, a rare Australian raptor that considers the remote areas of Australia home. In dry times, like many desert birds, the range of this species contracts for years on end, only to expand again once rat plagues occur following wet, wet seasons. This odd Australian raptor of riverine wooded areas among the tussock grasslands, is also a nocturnal feeder, so our visiting time of late afternoon reflected that, although all we found during that search for their considerably more plentiful and abundant cousin, the **Black-shouldered Kite**. Not to be deterred, we returned to another site at dawn, when we were witness to at least 17 **Letter-winged Kites** (*photo next page*) on the wing at once, with a mix of adult and juvenile birds involved.



One of 17 **Letter-winged Kites** seen on the wing together at dawn (Sam Woods)

As dawn became day, they settled into some low trees to roost for the day. With this species we had already seen all but a few species of Australian raptor already. Our good fortune with raptors persisted when another large flocks of **Budgerigars** was dramatically spliced in two by a swooping **Black Falcon**. By now we had been traveling some considerable distances through the Outback but were still in *Queensland*! Our trajectory south continued, as we headed towards the famous Outback town of *Birdsville*, in the far south of the state, and at the north end of the *Birdsville Track*. On the way there were few other distractions save for some flowering *eremophilas*, which attracted another unpredictable and erratic blossom nomad, **Pied Honeyeater**.

As you may have noticed, *grasswrens* were a major focus of this tour, a group of iconic Australian birds that require forays deep into the Outback to find them in often very remote locations. The next day was no different, as we headed west of *Birdsville* to *Little Red*, a famous sand dune in within *Munga-Thirri National Park* in the *Simpson Desert*. Although named *Little Red*, as it is slightly shorter than the neighboring Big Red dune, which reaches well beyond 30 meters/100 feet in height, it is still a large dune that stands tall above the vast surrounding *Gibber Plains*. This ridge of sand provides habitat for the local *Eyrean Grasswren*, and we knew to find it we needed to scour *spinifex grasses* on the top of this great, sandy ridge. We got there for dawn and enjoyed seeing the sun rise over the surrounding *Gibber Plain*, a dramatic sight all of its own. After dawn we set about searching for another *grasswren*, finding no sign at first.



We did find another dune specialist in the form of a pair of **White-backed Swallows** that nest in sand dunes deep within the Outback. Eventually, an **Eyrean Grasswren** (*photo below*) broke cover, and revealed itself, and gave us some good looks. Moving over to *Big Red*, we came upon our only pair of **Banded Lapwings** (*photo page 15*) of the trip, and yet more **Emus**.



**Eyrean Grasswren** was seen on the top of *Little Red Sand Dune* in the *Simpson Desert* in far South Queensland (*Sam Woods*)

By the end of the day we had moved south once more, checking one of the least forgiving habitats in the Outback, *Lignum Swamp*, which was inundated with flies in this wettest of wet years, making our afternoon forays for birds tough work. However, a single **Gray Grasswren** was found, a specialist of this deep inland habitat. Unfortunately, though, this most difficult of *grasswrens* was far from cooperative, going to ground after being found and not showing for the rest of us. However, this area around *Goyder Lagoon* held a 13-strong flock of **Inland Dotterel** (*photo page 16*) hiding in plain sight on the *Gibber Plain*, and some blooming shrubs held yet more blossom nomads, with several more **Pied Honeyeaters**. **Crimson and Orange Chats** and **Australian Pratincoles** were also abundant in the area, as were **Black-tailed Nativehens**, which numbered in their hundreds.

**Photos Next Page:** *Little Red sand dune* in the *Simpson Desert* & **Eyrean Grasswren** in this habitat (*Sam Woods*)









A pair of **Banded Lapwings** were seen at the base of *Big Red Sand Dune* (Sam Woods)

With the lack of cooperation from the *Gray Grasswren* the day before, our next day was scheduled for further time to search for that species, which had to be abandoned when unseasonal weather hit the plains that day. High winds and rain, occurring in the dry season had us fleeing further south to escape this, and finally leaving *Queensland* in the rear-view mirror as we entered *South Australia* for the first time. We stayed at the famous *Lyndhurst Hotel*, billed as the “*end of the bitumen, and start of the Outback Tracks*”. Once the weather had eased by the next day, we made it out birding, to *Farina Station*, to the north of *Lyndhurst*. The weather was still windy, but we persevered on the *Chenopod Plains*, and were rewarded with another *grasswren*, this time **Thick-billed Grasswren**, in an area of the plains where dense low shrubs dominated the landscape. By the afternoon, the weather was better still, indeed *normal*, and so we birded some rocky ridges in the *Strzelecki Desert*, at the start of the *Strzelecki Track*. There, we were rewarded with superb looks at a calling **Cinnamon Quail-Thrush** (*photo page 16*) in this stony desert.

Our exploration of *South Australia* continued as we swapped the stark, desert landscape of the *Strzelecki Desert*, for the acacia-thick *mulga* and towering *River Red Gums* of *Ikara–Flinders Ranges National Park*, staying in *Wilpena Pound*. Our journey there took us through jagged, scenic gorges, and sparsely wooded hills in these ranges led us to near perfect views of a pair of **Ground Cuckooshrikes**. This area also provided us with our only **Redthroats** (*photo page 17*) and **Black-eared Cuckoo** of the trip.

PHOTOS NEXT PAGE: **Cinnamon Quail-Thrush** *Strzelecki Track* (TOP) & **Inland Dotterel** *Birdsville Track* (Sam Woods)









Emus in the *Simpson Desert* of Queensland and male **Redthroat** from near *Wilpena Pound Resort* in Victoria (Sam Woods)



We stayed a bit longer in this habitat than was probably necessary but did so as we were thwarted in our attempts to access the mallee of *Gluepot Reserve*, as it was inaccessible to all following recent rains, even us in our 4WD vehicle kitted out for all but the very worst that the Outback could throw at us. Therefore, we headed off to *Hattah-Kulkyne*, spending longer in the *mallee* there to compensate for missing out on *Gluepot*. This worked out very well. Within a few hours of arriving a luck encounter with a traveling birder, got us the difficult **Mallee Emuwren** (*photo page 19*) with remarkable ease. We followed this up with a stellar sighting of our seventh and final *grasswren* of the tour, **Striated Grasswren** (*photo page 19*), which featured on a dry morning that also had us seduced by a charming male **Chestnut Quail-Thrush** (*photo below*) that sung out in the open and had us scrambling for our cameras! We'd also been hoping to find the elusive *Malleefowl* and were buoyant on our chances after we met two others who had seen them in recent days. However, this did not happen for us, although during one "Malleefowl Run", we were suitably distracted by a popular pair of **Pink Cockatoos** (*photo page 20*).



This magnificent male **Chestnut Quail-Thrush** entertained us in the mallee at *Hattah-Kulkyne National Park in Victoria* (Sam Woods)





Mallee specialties from *Hattah-Kulkyne*: **Mallee Emuwren** (above) and **Striated Grasswren** (*Sam Woods*)







One of a pair of **Pink Cockatoos** in *Hattah-Kulkyne National Park* in *Victoria*. (Sam Woods)

From *Hattah*, we drove south, sticking to *Victoria* and sticking to *mallee* habitat, in making a short trip at *Little Desert Nature Lodge* in the middle of the day. The timing of the visit wasn't ideal and was coupled with dark skies gathering overhead. Thus, after an hour or so with nothing to show for it, we veered back towards where we came and the welcome sanctuary of a warm car. However, just as we were within about 30 meters of our vehicle, out stepped a **Malleefowl** (*photo page 21*) right next to us! We were chuffed to bits at getting this species at our final attempt. The open heathy mallee nearby there yielded **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** and **Shy Heathwren**, while wooded areas in *Little Desert National Park* brought us a party of confiding **White-browed Babblers** and some terrestrial feeding **Brown Treecreepers**.

We then drove pretty much straight east, finally leaving the *mallee* behind for good, and driving into more temperate eucalypt woodland in the *Chiltern Valley* of *Victoria*. We birded among the gorgeous *Box-Ironbark Woodland* that the area is famed for, where the *Ironbark* trees displayed the characteristic thick coat of dark, blackish bark with deep crevices that occasionally glistened to reveal veins of rich, rust-colored resin.





This **Malleefowl** appeared at the last minute at *Little Desert Nature Lodge* in *Victoria* (*Sam Woods*)

The valley is a known hotspot for honeyeaters in particular, boasting a rich diversity of this, the most diverse of all Australian songbird families. We experienced this firsthand, encountering **Painted, Fuscous, Yellow-tufted and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters** in our short time there. However, our best sighting in the *Mount Pilot* area was of a pair of vociferous **Spotted Quail-Thrushes**, which gave us repeated looks as they emitted their whistler-like calls.

Another interesting Australian *family* featured, with several **Eastern Shrike-Tits** (*photo page 22*) found beside one of the dams close to the town of *Chiltern*. This family had only recently been formally split into three species, *finally!* The end of the trip was nigh, with *Melbourne* now within reach. However, we had one important stop to make to the northeast of the city. We made our way southwest from *Chiltern*, moving into a wetter belt of habitat, which consisted of towering *Wet Sclerophyll Forest* and *Temperate Rainforests*, at *Toolangi State Forest*. The forests there are impressively tall, some giant mountain ash trees reaching more than 70 meters or 200 feet in height!

Our visit coincided with a chilly dawn on site there, but a dawn arrival aided us in finding one of its most famous avian residents, **Superb Lyrebird**, whose remarkable mimicry was part of the frigid dawn chorus that day. Other *songbirds* were slower to appear, but eventually we tracked down two very attractive robins, with several handsome **Rose Robins** in among the tower *eucalyptus* trees, and a marvelous male **Pink Robin** within a narrow sliver of dank, dark, temperate rainforest along a gully within this too. The tour finished with a drop off in *Victoria's* most populous city, *Melbourne*, having covered *thousands* of kilometers and a dizzy variety of bird habitats and birds along the way in this unique Aussie road trip.



**Eastern Shrike-tit** was seen in the *Chiltern Valley* of Victoria. (Sam Woods)



**SELECTIVE CHECKLIST OF THE KEY TARGET SPECIES RECORDED:****BIRDS**

The taxonomy of the bird list follows Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007. *This list is up to date with changes published by Cornell in October 2022.*

QLD-INDICATES THE STATE OF QUEENSLAND.

VIC-INDICATES THE STATE OF VICTORIA

SA-INDICATES THE STATE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**CASSOWARIES AND EMU: Casuariidae**

**Emu** *Dromaius novaehollandiae*: Recorded at a number of Outback sites (e.g. *Little Red* QLD).

**MAGPIE GOOSE: Anseranatidae**

**Magpie Goose** *Anseranas semipalmata*: A few groups were seen around *Cumberland Dam* in QLD.

**DUCKS, GEESE AND WATERFOWL: Anatidae**

**Plumed Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna eytoni*: A single group of 25 birds was seen in QLD.

**Radjah Shelduck** *Radjah radjah*: A few were seen at *Cumberland Dam* in QLD.

**Pink-eared Duck** *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*: Seen twice, once at *Winton Sewage Works* (QLD).

**MEGAPODES: Megapodiidae**

**Malleefowl** *Leipoa ocellata*: 1 was seen during the last few minutes of searching, at *Little Desert Nature Lodge* (VIC).

**PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae**

**Flock Bronzewing** *Phaps histrionica*: 3-4 flocks were encountered within the vast areas of Tussock Grassland in Western Queensland, on the drive south from *Lark Quarry* towards *Boulia*.

**Spinifex Pigeon** *Geophaps plumifera*: Seen on at least 2 days, in Rocky Spinifex near *Mount Isa* and *Lark Quarry* (both QLD).

**Squatter Pigeon** *Geophaps scripta*: A small group were seen at *Cumberland Dam* (QLD).

**Wompoo Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus magnificus*: 1 was seen near *Lake Morris* in *Cairns* (QLD).

**Superb Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus superbus superbus*: 1 was recorded near *Copperlode Dam* in *Cairns* (QLD).

**Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina*: 3 were seen in *Cairns* (QLD).

**Topknot Pigeon** *Lopholaimus antarcticus*: About 5 birds were seen in flight near *Lake Morris* in *Cairns* (QLD).

**BUSTARDS: Otididae**

**Australian Bustard** *Ardeotis australis*: A few were seen near *Mount Carbine* in NE QLD.

**CUCKOOS: Cuculidae**

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** *Scythrops novaehollandiae*: 5 birds were seen in *Karumba* (QLD).

**Black-eared Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx osculans*: A single calling bird was located in *Wilpena Gap* (VIC).

**FROGMOUTHS: Podargidae**

**Papuan Frogmouth** *Podargus papuensis*: A pair was seen during the day in *Cairns* (QLD).

**NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES: Caprimulgidae**

**Spotted Nightjar** *Eurostopodus argus*: A couple were seen during drives in darkness in N QLD.

**Large-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus macrurus*: Recorded in *Redlynch* close to *Cairns* (QLD).

**OWLET-NIGHTJARS: Aegothelidae**

**Australian Owlet-Nightjar** *Aegotheles cristatus*: A couple of day roosting birds were seen West of *Mount Isa* (QLD).

[RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS: Rallidae](#)

**Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis*: We found three foraging in farmland behind a gas station in *Atherton* (QLD).

**Rufous-tailed Bush-hen** *Amaurornis moluccana*: Heard calling in *Cairns* before we departed for the Outback (QLD).

**Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla*: A brace of them were seen in *Winton Sewage Treatment Plant* (QLD).

**Black-tailed Native-hen** *Tribonyx ventralis*: Hundreds were seen around *Goyder Lagoon* in SA.

[CRANES: Gruidae](#)

**Sarus Crane** *Antigone antigone*: A mixed species group of these and **Brolgas** were seen near *Atherton* (QLD).

**Brolga** *Antigone rubicunda*: Seen with the former species in farmland on the *Atherton Tablelands* (QLD).

[STILTS AND AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae](#)

**Red-necked Avocet** *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*: A pair were seen on the drive south from *Boulia* to *Birdsville* (QLD).

[PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae](#)

**Banded Lapwing** *Vanellus tricolor*: A pair were seen on the plains below *Little Red*.

**Inland Dotterel** *Peltohyas australis*: 2 groups were seen in the *Gibber Plains*, one near *Goyder Lagoon*.

[JACANAS: Jacanidae](#)

**Comb-crested Jacana** *Irediparra gallinacea*: A few were seen at *Cattana Wetlands* just north of *Cairns* (QLD).

[PRATINCOLES AND COURSERS: Glareolidae](#)

**Australian Pratincole** *Stiltia Isabella*: Extremely numerous in Western and Wouthern Queensland, in areas of the Outback with Tussock Grassland and on the *Gibber Plains*.

[STORKS: Ciconiidae](#)

**Black-necked Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*: 4 birds were seen during our mangrove boat tour in *Karumba* (QLD).

[IBISES AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae](#)

**Yellow-billed Spoonbill** *Platalea flavipes*: A single group of 3 birds between *Boulia* and *Birdsville* (QLD) was our only sighting.

[HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES: Accipitridae](#)

**Letter-winged Kite** *Elanus scriptus*: A group of at least 17 birds were seen at dawn near *Georgina River*.

**Black-breasted Kite** *Hamirostra melanosternon*: Just 2 were seen, on the drive south from *Karumba* to *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Gray Goshawk** *Accipiter novaehollandiae*: An active nest with an adult and two chicks was seen in *Cairns* (QLD).

[OWLS: Strigidae](#)

**Rufous Owl** *Ninox rufa*: A regular roosting adult was seen in a park in *Cairns* (QLD).

**Barking Owl** *Ninox connivens*: 1 was seen in *Karumba* (QLD).

[KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae](#)

**Red-backed Kingfisher** *Todiramphus pyrrhopygius*: A few random birds were encountered along the roadside, including in an area of mulga near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

[FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae](#)

**Gray Falcon** *Falco hypoleucos*: A singleton was seen perched on a radio tower near *Winton*.

**Black Falcon** *Falco subniger*: 1 was seen plowing into a large flock of budgies south of *Boulia* (QLD).

[COCKATOOS: Cacatuidae](#)

**Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** *Calyptorhynchus banksia*: A flock of around a dozen birds was seen at *Cumberland Dam* (QLD).



**Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo** *Calyptorhynchus funereus*: A single group was seen in lowland heathland like habitat in *Little Desert National Park* (VIC).

**Pink (Major Mitchell's) Cockatoo** *Lophochroa leadbeateri*: A prospecting pair was found in mallee at *Hattah-Kulkyne* (VIC).

[OLD WORLD PARROTS: Psittaculidae](#)

**Red-winged Parrot** *Aprosmictus erythropterus*: Several groups featured in Open Eucalypt Savanna around *Cumberland Dam* (QLD).

**Australian Ringneck** *Barnardius zonarius*: Scattered sightings, including the *Cloncurry form* in *Mount Isa* (QLD) and the *Mallee form* in *Hattah-Kulkyne* in VIC.

**Pale-headed Rosella** *Platycercus adscitus*: A few small parties were seen around *Cumberland Dam* in QLD.

**Greater Bluebonnet** *Northiella haematogaster*: Just a single group was encountered on the journey towards *Hattah-Kulkyne* in VIC.

**Mulga Parrot** *Psephotus varius*: A couple of birds were seen between *Winton* and *Lark Quarry* in QLD.

**Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** *Cyclopsitta diophthalma*: Several were seen in Lowland Tropical Rainforest on the outskirts of *Cairns* in NE QLD.

**Budgerigar** *Melopsittacus undulatus*: Thousands were seen on at least 3 different days, with these being particularly conspicuous and numerous between *Winton* and *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

**Varied Lorikeet** *Psitteuteles versicolor*: A small group were seen visiting some flowering trees west of *Mount Isa*.

[PITTAS: Pittidae](#)

**Noisy Pitta** *Pitta versicolor*: A singleton was recorded along the road to *Lake Morris* in *Cairns* (NE QLD).

[LYREBIRDS: Menuridae](#)

**Superb Lyrebird** *Menura novaehollandiae*: 1 was seen at *Toolangi State Forest*, north of *Melbourne* (VIC).

[BOWERBIRDS: Ptilonorhynchidae](#)

**Spotted Catbird** *Ailuroedus maculosus*: A few were heard in the Montane Rainforest at *Mount Hypipamee* (QLD), no efforts were made to see them.

**Golden Bowerbird** *Amblyornis newtoniana*: Recorded at *Mount Hypipamee* (NE QLD).

**Spotted Bowerbird** *Chlamydera maculate*: Recorded at a number of Outback sites (e.g. *Mica Creek*, near *Mount Isa* QLD).

[AUSTRALASIAN TREECREEPERS: Climacteridae](#)

**Black-tailed Treecreeper** *Climacteris melanurus*: A few were seen west of *Mount Isa* (QLD).

[FAIRYWRENS: Maluridae](#)

**Gray Grasswren** *Amytornis barbatus*: One was seen within a *Lignum Swamp* near *Goyder Lagoon* (SA).

**Opalton Grasswren** *Amytornis rowleyi*: 2 were seen near *Lark Quarry* in QLD.

**Striated Grasswren** *Amytornis striatus*: Found in the spinifex in the mallee at *Hattah-Kulkyne* (VIC).

**Carpentarian Grasswren** *Amytornis dorotheae*: After quite some effort, we found this one west of *Mount Isa* (QLD). Recorded at 2 different sites.

**Thick-billed Grasswren** *Amytornis modestus*: A few were seen near *Farina* (SA).

**Eyrean Grasswren** *Amytornis goyderi*: A singleton was seen in dune spinifex at *Little Red sand dune* (QLD).

**Kalkadoon Grasswren** *Amytornis ballarae*: A pair showed well in Rocky Spinifex within *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Rufous-crowned Emuwren** *Stipiturus ruficeps*: A small party was seen in mulga habitat near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

**Mallee Emuwren** *Stipiturus mallee*: A pair was located in an area of dense spinifex in the mallee at *Hattah-Kulkyne* (VIC).

**Lovely Fairywren** *Malurus amabilis*: A group was found just north of *Cairns* (QLD).

**Splendid Fairywren** *Malurus splendens*: A few were seen in the mallee at *Billiatt Conservation Park* in VIC.

**White-winged Fairywren** *Malurus leucopterus*: Numerous around *Goyder Lagoon* in SA.

**Red-backed Fairywren** *Malurus melanocephalus*: A few were seen in Open Eucalypt Savanna in *Cumberland Dam* (QLD).

#### [HONEYEATERS: Meliphagidae](#)

**Pied Honeyeater** *Certhionyx variegatus*: This blossom nomad was found in some flowering *eromophilas* near *Goyder Lagoon* (SA).

**Yellow-tufted Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus melanops*: Several were seen in the *Chiltern Valley* (VIC).

**Bridled Honeyeater** *Bolemoreus frenatus*: A couple were seen at *Mount Hypipamee* in NE QLD.

**Yellow-plumed Honeyeater** *Ptilotula ornata*: This mallee species was seen with some regularity in *Hattah-Kulkyne NP*, VIC.

**Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** *Ptilotula flavescens*: Some small groups were seen coming to drink beside *Cumberland Dam* in QLD.

**Fuscous Honeyeater** *Ptilotula fusca*: Recorded at 2 sites, near *Wondecla* in QLD, then in *Chiltern* (VIC).

**Gray-headed Honeyeater** Just seen on 2 days, in and around *Mount Isa* in QLD.

**Gray-fronted Honeyeater** *Ptilotula plumula*: Multiple birds were seen at sites around *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Brown-backed Honeyeater** *Ramsayornis modestus*: Only recorded in *Cairns* (NE QLD).

**Rufous-throated Honeyeater** *Conopophila rufogularis*: Seen at *Cumberland Dam* and *West of Mount Isa* (both QLD).

**Crimson Chat** *Epthianura tricolor*: Following a wet, wet season prior to this, they were incredibly numerous and abundant in some areas of the Queensland Outback (e.g. *between Winton and Lark Quarry*).

**Orange Chat** *Epthianura aurifrons*: Regularly encountered on the *Birdsville Track* (e.g. *Goyder Lagoon* area, SA).

**Black Honeyeater** *Sugomel niger*: Quite conspicuous (by sound at least) in mulga near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

**Dusky Myzomela** *Myzomela obscura*: Just a couple were seen; near *Lake Morris* on the outskirts of *Cairns* (NE QLD).

**Red-headed Myzomela** *Myzomela erythrocephala*: At least 6 birds were seen on our mangrove boat cruise from *Karumba* (QLD).

**Scarlet Myzomela** *Myzomela sanguinolenta*: A few were seen in northern Queensland, west of *Cairns*.

**Black-chinned Honeyeater** *Melithreptus gularis laetior*: The distinctive, "Golden-backed", form was seen in *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Tawny-crowned Honeyeater** *Gliciphila melanops*: Seen within the heathy mallee in *Little Desert NP* (VIC).

**Macleay's Honeyeater** *Xanthotis macleayanus*: A singleton was seen in Lowland Tropical Rainforest along the road to *Lake Morris* (QLD), close to *Cairns*.

#### [PARDALOTES: Pardalotidae](#)

**Red-browed Pardalote** *Pardalotus rubricatus*: 1 was seen in Open Eucalypt Savanna, *West of Mount Isa* (QLD).

#### [THORNBILLS AND ALLIES: Acanthizidae](#)

**Redthroat** *Pyrrholaemus brunneus*: Several were seen close to *Wilpena Pound Resort* (SA).

**Shy Heathwren** *Hylacola cauta*: Seen within the mallee at *Billiatt Conservation Park* and *Little Desert NP* (both VIC).

**Southern Whiteface** *Aphelocephala leucopsis*: 3 were seen in *Callitris Woodland* close to *Wilpena Pound* (SA).

#### [PSEUDO-BABBLERS: Pomatostomidae](#)

**White-browed Babbler** *Pomatostomus superciliosus*: A single group was seen in Temperate Woodland within *Little Desert National Park* (VIC).



**Hall's Babbler** *Pomatostomus halli*: A couple of parties were found within mulga near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

[QUAIL-THRUSHES AND JEWEL-BABLERS: Cinclosomatidae](#)

**Spotted Quail-thrush** *Cinclosoma punctatum*: A wonderful pair was found in the *Chiltern Valley* (VIC).

**Chestnut Quail-thrush** *Cinclosoma castanotum*: This mallee species was noted at 2 sites (*Billiat* and *Hattah-Kulkyne*). Some superb views and photos were had at the latter site.

**Cinnamon Quail-thrush** *Cinclosoma cinnamomeum*: A couple were seen on a ridge of Rocky Spinifex on the *Strzelecki Track* (SA).

[CUCKOO-SHRIKES: Campephagidae](#)

**Ground Cuckooshrike** *Coracina maxima*: Encountered twice, with a group near *Cumberland Dam* (QLD), and another pair in the *Flinders Ranges* of SA. Both in areas with very sparse tree cover.

[SITELLAS: Neosittidae](#)

**Varied Sittella** *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*: A singleton was seen in an area of mulga near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

[WHIPBIRDS AND WEDGE-BILLS: Psophodidae](#)

**Chirruping Wedgebill** *Psophodes cristatus*: Several were seen on the *Birdsville* and *Strzelecki Tracks* (QLD & SA).

[AUSTRALO-PAPUAN BELLBIRDS: Oreoicidae](#)

**Crested Bellbird** *Oreoica gutturalis*: Easily seen in the mulga near *Lark Quarry* (QLD).

[SHRIKE-TITS: Falcunculidae](#)

**Eastern Shrike-tit** *Falcunculus frontatus*: Some great looks in the temperate woodland of the *Chiltern Valley* (VIC).

[WHISTLERS AND ALLIES: Pachycephalidae](#)

**Bower's Shrike-Thrush** *Colluricincla boweri*: This Atherton Tablelands specialty was seen at *Mount Hypipamee* (NE QLD).

**White-breasted Whistler** *Pachycephala lanioides*: A couple of males were seen on the mangrove boat cruise out of *Karumba* (QLD).

[BOATBILLS: Machaerirhynchidae](#)

**Yellow-breasted Boatbill** *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer*: 1 was seen in Lowland Tropical Rainforest the *Lake Morris Road*, just outside of *Cairns*.

[WOODSWALLOW, BELLMAGPIES & ALLIES: Artamidae](#)

**Masked Woodswallow** *Artamus personatus*: Numerous in the Queensland Outback between *Mount Isa* and *Winton*.

**White-browed Woodswallow** *Artamus superciliosus*: A handful were seen in the Queensland Outback between *Mount Isa* and *Winton*.

**Little Woodswallow** *Artamus minor*: Seen on just a few days of the trip in areas of Rocky Spinifex in and around *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Gray Currawong** *Strepera versicolor*: A few were seen on several days within the mallee at *Hattah-Kulkyne* (VIC).

[FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae](#)

**Mangrove Fantail** *Rhipidura phasiana*: A singleton was found during our mangrove boat cruise from *Karumba* (QLD).

[BIRDS-OF-PARADISE: Paradisaeidae](#)

**Victoria's Riflebird** *Ptiloris victoriae*: A velvety black male was seen at *Mount Hypipamee* on the *Atherton Tablelands* of NE QLD.

[MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae](#)

**White-eared Monarch** *Carterornis leucotis*: Incredible looks of a responsive pair in Lowland Tropical Rainforest on the outskirts of *Cairns* (QLD).

**Pied Monarch** *Arses kaupi*: A pair was found within Lowland Tropical Rainforest near *Lake Morris* (NE QLD).

**Paperbark Flycatcher** *Myiagra nana*: Noted at *Cumberland Dam* and *Karumba* (both QLD).

[WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH AND APOSTLEBIRD: Corcoracidae](#)

**White-winged Chough** *Corcorax melanorhamphos*: Just seen on 2 days in Victoria, around *Little Desert* and *Chiltern*.

**Apostlebird** *Struthidea cinerea*: Particularly abundant and conspicuous around *Cumberland Dam* and *Mount Isa* (both QLD).

[AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS: Petroicidae](#)

**Jacky-winter** *Microeca fascinans*: A couple were seen close to *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Red-capped Robin** *Petroica goodenovii*: Recorded on at least 4 days, including in *Wilpena Gap* (SA) and in the mallee of *Hattah-Kulkyne* (VIC).

**Rose Robin** *Petroica rosea*: Some great looks at this handsome species in Wet Sclerophyll Forest at *Toolangi* (VIC).

**Pink Robin** *Petroica rodinogaster*: A marvelous male was located in a damp, dark gully of Temperate Rainforest in *Toolangi* (VIC).

**Hooded Robin** *Melanodryas cucullate*: A few were seen West of *Mount Isa* (QLD) and then again in *Hattah-Kulkyne NP* (VIC).

**White-browed Robin** *Poecilodryas superciliosa*: A single was found in a remnant gully of Monsoon Vine Forest in *Mareeba* in NE QLD.

**Southern Scrub-Robin** *Drymodes brunneopygia*: A mallee species recorded in Victoria at *Hattah-Kulkyne* and *Little Desert*.

[GRASSBIRDS AND ALLIES: Locustellidae](#)

**Spinifexbird** *Poodytes carteri*: Seen on two consecutive days, both within areas of Rocky Spinifex grasses near *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Little Grassbird** *Megalurus gramineus*: A few were vocal and seen in *Winton* (QLD).

**Tawny Grassbird** *Cincloramphus timoriensis alisteri*: Several displaying birds were seen in farmland near *Atherton* (QLD).

[SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae](#)

**White-backed Swallow** *Cheramoeca leucosterna*: A pair were found on the top of the dune at *Little Red* (SA).

[WHITE-EYES, YUHINAS, AND ALLIES: Zosteropidae](#)

**Australian Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops luteus*: About 10 birds were observed during our mangrove boat cruise from *Karumba* (QLD).

[WAXBILLS AND ALLIES: Estrildidae](#)

**Painted Firetail** *Emblema pictum*: Several groups were seen around *Mount Isa* (QLD).

**Plum-headed Finch** *Neochmia modesta*: A single group were found at *Winton Sewage Treatment Plant* (QLD).

**Masked Finch** *Poephila personata*: A few were seen at *Cumberland Dam* and in nearby *Georgetown* (QLD).

**Black-throated Finch** *Poephila cincta*: At least 3 small groups were seen at *Cumberland Dam* and *Georgetown* (QLD).