

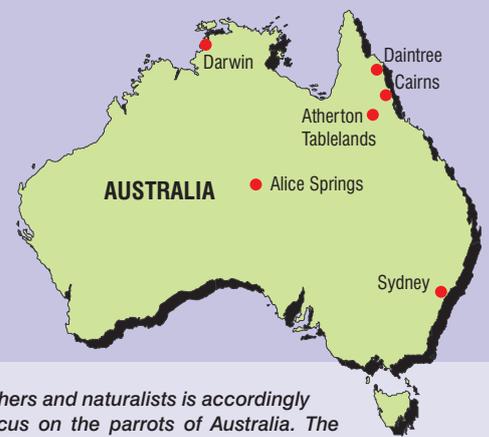
Australia

Eastern, Northern & Central

Tuesday 10 October – Friday 27 October 2017

Leaders: Nigel Jones and local guides

2017 Cost: £7,999 single room supplement £990



Australia is a vast country and the choice of suitable and rewarding itineraries for visiting birdwatchers and naturalists is accordingly wide-ranging. For 2017 we are offering three different itineraries, where two of them will focus on the parrots of Australia. The continent boasts over 50 species of parrot and we shall concentrate our attention on around 40 of them. However, while seeking out this noisy and colourful group, we shall also be watching a great supporting cast of honeyeaters, bowerbirds, fairy-wrens, kingfishers, raptors, shorebirds and, of course, marsupials.

This itinerary has been arranged to cover four major areas – Sydney, Cairns, Darwin and Alice Springs. Within each region there is a great diversity of country, such as the clear blue waters of the Great Barrier Reef, the rainforest 1,000m up on the Atherton Tablelands, the wetlands of Kakadu and the escarpment country of the Arnhem Land Plateau. On this tour there are three very different boat trips – on the Great Barrier Reef, the Yellow Waters at Kakadu and a sunrise cruise on the Daintree River, all relaxing ways of viewing the wildlife and offering great photographic opportunities. Besides seeing around 300 species of birds, we will be seeking out those restricted endemics that make birdwatching so exciting, such as the stunning Golden Bowerbird with its elaborate bower and the enormous Southern Cassowary.

Throughout the holiday Nigel will use a network of knowledgeable local guides, who will not only be showing us their local wildlife, but also informing us about the native culture, as well as plants, trees, reptiles and insects. We shall of course be sampling some fine Australian food and wines! It will also be possible to make various stopovers or extensions to this holiday. It can also be combined with either of our other Australian tours – Southern & Western or Tasmania & Southern Victoria.

ITINERARY

Days 1 & 2

We leave London Heathrow on a late evening flight and pass the second day in flight as we cross time zones.

Days 3 to 5

We arrive in Sydney in the morning, where we meet our local guide and transfer to our hotel for a short rest. We may visit Centennial and Bicentennial Parks to look for Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, King Parrot, Crimson Rosella, Galah and Red-rumped Parrot. We stay in Sydney for three nights. The next day we travel to the west of Sydney, to the lower Blue Mountains, looking

for Little and Long-billed Corellas, Scaly-breasted and Musk Lorikeets. Later, we visit the Barren Grounds, a sandstone plateau, overlooking rainforest and farmland. Here we can walk and look for Eastern Ground Parrot, Eastern Bristlebird and Beautiful Firetail. The following day we can visit the Blue Mountains and Royal National Parks to look for Gang-Gang Cockatoo and perhaps find a Glossy Black-Cockatoo.

Days 6 & 7

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Cairns, where we stay for two nights. Cairns' waterfront is still one of the best spots for waders in Australia. Grey-tailed and Wandering

Tattlers, Pacific Golden Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Great Knot, Eastern Curlew and Terek Sandpiper are all to be expected. Crested, Little, Gull-billed and Caspian Terns can all be seen here as well. The next day we have a complete change of scenery as we take a boat out to the Barrier Reef island of Michaelmas Cay where there are nesting colonies of Brown Noddies and Sooty Terns. We should also see Lesser Crested, Black-naped and Bridled Terns and if we are very lucky may pick up Black Noddy or Masked Booby, whilst both Great and Lesser Frigatebirds are possible. There is also the opportunity to snorkel in the tropical waters of the reef, seeing the colourful fish and corals at close quarters.



Crimson Rosella

Days 8 & 9

Today we travel to the central Atherton Tablelands region, stopping at birding sites along the way. Our accommodation, Rose Gums Wilderness Retreat, a 230 acre property with superb treehouse accommodation is located in a rainforest setting with spectacular mountain views. There is abundant wildlife here, which includes over 160 bird species as well as Duck-billed Platypus in the rainforest creeks. During our stay we walk on some of the property's tracks and look for Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Atherton Scrubwren, Victoria's Riflebird, Grey-headed Robin, Bower's Shrike-Thrush, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Golden Whistler, Red-backed Fairy-Wren and perhaps the white morph of a Grey Goshawk. The next day we visit some of the rainforest areas, including the beautiful crater lakes of Eacham and Barrine, home to some of the region's endemic birds and mammals such as the forest-dwelling Musky Rat Kangaroo, the smallest and most primitive of all the kangaroos. Other possibilities include: Southern Cassowary, Chowchilla, Tooth-billed and Golden Bowerbirds, Spotted Catbird, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Bridled and Lewin's Honeyeaters, Pale-yellow Robin, Australian Brush Turkey, Grey Fantail, Eastern Whip-bird, Brown Gerygone, Rainbow Lorikeet, Brown Cuckoo-Dove and White-headed Pigeon. We may also visit Hasties Swamp for its array of ducks including Pink-eared, Pacific Black and also Magpie Geese.



Double-eyed Fig-Parrot



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	In transit
Days 3-5	Sydney
Days 6-7	Cairns
Days 8-9	Atherton Tablelands
Day 10	Daintree
Day 11	Darwin
Day 12	Pine Creek
Day 13	Kakadu
Day 14	Darwin
Days 15-16	Alice Springs
Day 17	Depart Alice Springs
Day 18	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of nine clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms with private facilities.

Transport

By private coach and minibus.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

	Good
	300
	Warm to Hot
	Low
	Special
	Moderate
	Good
	Moderate
	Scheduled



Brush Turkey

Day 10

This morning we travel north to Daintree via Mt Carbine, where there is some dry savannah and we can look for Pale-headed Rosella, Galah, Apostlebird, Australian Bustard, Great Bowerbird, White-throated Treecreeper and Wedge-tailed Eagle. We may visit the Djindalpa section of the Daintree National Park, where the boardwalk winds through the rainforest and sometimes reaches four metres off the ground. There are excellent examples of king ferns and fig trees as well as colourful fungi to photograph. Birds which are possible in this area include Olive-backed Sunbird, Little Shrike-Thrush, Pied and Spectacled Monarchs, Macleay's, Yellow-spotted and Graceful Honeyeaters, White-breasted Woodswallow, Varied Triller, Fairy Martin and Forest Kingfisher. We stay at Daintree for one night.

Day 11

Early this morning we join a wildlife cruise exploring the Daintree River and its narrow tributaries, with a focus on birds, crocodiles and snakes. The cruise is in a small comfortable open vessel, which enables an intimate exploration of the river with clear view of wildlife in the trees and the sky above. We will look for Great-billed Heron, Little and Azure Kingfishers, Papuan Frogmouth, Shining Flycatcher, Wompoo Fruit-Dove, and Black Bittern. Later, we make our way back to Cairns where we catch the flight to Darwin, where we stay overnight.

Day 12

Darwin gives access to some of the most exciting bird spots in Australia. We search for the elusive Rainbow Pitta, as well as for Azure Kingfisher, Lemon-bellied and Shining Flycatchers and Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. Nearby wetlands give us the opportunity to search for local rarities such as Grey Whistler, Broad-billed Flycatcher, and White-browed and Baillon's Crakes. Later we travel to Pine Creek, where we stay for the night.

Day 13

Pine Creek has open areas of eucalyptus woodlands, dotted with termite mounds. It is within these mounds that the rare Hooded Parrot nests. Also in this region we will look for the bower of the Northern Bowerbird, as well as for Figbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Double-barred and Crimson Finches, Silver-crowned and Little Friarbirds, Varied and Red-collared Lorikeets,

Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves and many more. Later, we travel to Kakadu for one night.

Day 14

Kakadu is one of the finest parks in Australia and we take a morning boat trip on the Yellow Waters. Some of the birds to be seen from the boat include Magpie Goose, Wandering and Plumed Whistling-Ducks, Green Pygmy-Goose, Straw-necked and Glossy Ibises, Brolga, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Comb-crested Jacana, Black-fronted Dotterel, Azure and Little Kingfishers, as well as both Freshwater and Saltwater Crocodiles. Besides birdwatching we shall take time to see some wonderful Aboriginal artwork at Nourlangie Rock and so gain greater insight into the lives of these people. Later, we retrace our steps to Darwin but can birdwatch along the way looking for Figbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Double-barred and Crimson Finches, Silver-crowned and Little Friarbirds, Varied and Red-collared Lorikeets, Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves and much more. We stay overnight in Darwin.

Days 15 & 16

We depart early, for our flight to Alice Springs, where we stay for two nights. In the Mulga bushland that surrounds this area there are many dry-country birds that can be seen including Red-capped and Hooded Robins, Pied, Black and White-lined Honeyeaters, the stunning Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Ring-necked and Mulga Parrots, Budgerigar, Crested Bellbird, Grey Shrike-Thrush, Red-browed Pardalote, Variegated Wren, Little Eagle, the uncommon Black-breasted Buzzard and Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo. We can visit some local ponds, which can be good for many birds; species we have seen here include Hoary-headed and Australian Little Grebes, White-faced Heron, Straw-necked Ibis, Black Swan, Pink-eared, Pacific Black and Hardhead (White-eyed) Ducks, Australian Hobby, Brown Falcon, Black-tailed Native Hen, Masked Plover, Pied Stilt and White-winged Triller. In the evening we have our final farewell dinner.

Days 17 & 18

We have time for some early morning birding before we catch a flight from Alice Spring to Sydney to connect with our flight back to London where we arrive early the following morning. Those of the group joining a subsequent Australian tour will catch a flight from Alice Springs to Melbourne.