

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO AUSTRALIA - TASMANIA
Natural History Tour

30 October – 12 November 2011



Leader: Tonia Cochran

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A Personal Diary

Tuesday 1 November 2011

After several dramas associated with an industrial dispute by Qantas airlines, most of the participants managed to arrive at Hobart Airport on their scheduled flight and I met them at the airport. After viewing the Musk Lorikeets in the airport car park, we travelled to the lower slopes of Mount Wellington which was fairly quiet bird-wise except for a pair of Tasmanian Thornbill, a pair of Grey Currawong and a quick glimpse of Black Currawong. The drizzly overcast conditions were unsuitable for a view from the top of Mount Wellington, so we birded and had lunch in a nearby local reserve where we saw Kelp Gull, Australian Wood Duck, Hoary-headed Grebe as well as Superb Fairy Wren and nesting Striated Pardalote.

We then travelled towards Bruny Island, stopping en route at another small beachside reserve to see Common Bronzewing, Galah, Yellow Wattlebird, several Black Swans and Australian Pied Oystercatchers, before catching the 15.45 ferry to Bruny Island. Black-faced Cormorants were seen at the ferry terminal. We worked our way slowly down the island, arriving at our cottages on south Bruny Island late afternoon. After dinner we went on a short night drive en route back to our cabins.

Wednesday 2 November 2011

After an early breakfast at 'Inala', a 500 acre private forest reserve for wildlife owned by Tonia, we went for a short property walk where we watched a nesting pair of Forty-spotted Pardalote obviously feeding chicks in a hollow tree branch. Several other Tasmanian endemic species including Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Black-headed Honeyeater, Dusky Robin, Tasmanian Native-hen and Green Rosella, were also seen. Several Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby were also seen in the fields on the property, including an albino female with grey young in her pouch. The group also viewed two orphaned Bennett's Wallaby joeys which are being hand-reared at Inala - one of which was also a rare albino mutation.

A brief visit to Cape Bruny yielded very little because of the strong wind but we had more success at nearby Jetty Beach, with good views of Tasmanian Scrubwren. After lunch in Adventure Bay and better views of Tasmanian Thornbill, as well as Strong-billed Honeyeater, we travelled back to the Bruny Island ferry terminal to collect Connie, the last member of our group who joined us a day late because of the Qantas dispute. Along the roadside on the way back to the cottages on south Bruny Island, we had good views of two Short-beaked Echidna, one Wedge-tailed Eagle (an endangered subspecies in Tasmania), Australian Wood Duck and several Swamp Harriers as well as more Tasmanian Native-hens, Black-headed Honeyeater and Yellow Wattlebird. A male Flame Robin with a newly fledged youngster was also seen near a walking track.

After dinner, we visited a Little Penguin and Short-tailed Shearwater rookery to view these birds arriving back at their burrows at dusk. We saw at least one large group of around 20 penguins come ashore and followed these up to their nesting burrows. About 100 shearwaters circled overhead and crash-landed in the vegetation around us. We returned to our cabins at around 10:30pm.

Thursday 3 November 2011

Another visit to the nesting Forty-spotted Pardalotes at Inala yielded good results as we again watched the pair feed young in the nest. Striated Pardalote, Tasmanian Native-hen, Green Rosella, Brown Falcon and a male Satin Flycatcher were also seen on the property. We then travelled to Adventure Bay to join a cruise down the east coast of Bruny Island to the Friars. Several Australasian Gannet, Kelp Gull, Sooty Oystercatcher, Short-tailed Shearwater, a Shy Albatross and about 100 nesting Black-faced Cormorants were seen on the cruise and many Australian Fur-seals were hauled out at The Friars.

After a late lunch, we visited several beaches to get a range of shorebirds, including Hooded Plover, Pacific Gull and Crested Tern as well as a small flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. Brush Bronzewing was also seen en route back to the cottages.

A night drive after dinner proved very successful with sightings of around 12 Eastern Quoll (a carnivorous marsupial related to the Tasmanian Devil) of both pale and dark colour morphs. Several Tasmanian Pademelon, Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby and Common Brush-tailed Possum were also seen, including a rare golden mutation of the Common Brush-tailed Possum.

Friday 4 November 2011

We set off after breakfast to the Bruny ferry terminal, stopping en route to view an Australian Pelican, several Black-faced Cormorant, Chestnut Teal, Sooty and Australian Pied Oystercatchers and White-faced Heron. We travelled towards Mount Field National Park in overcast conditions, which quickly cleared to a warm and sunny day. Little Black, Little Pied and Great Cormorants, as well as many Black Swans (some with cygnets) were seen on the Derwent River, and at the National Park we had clear views of Tasmanian Thornbill. A magical moment was experienced by the group while watching a pair of Pink Robins and a feeding Platypus vie for our attention for a period of about five minutes. Two pairs of Scrubtit, a family group of Tasmanian Scrubwrens and four Black Currawong were also seen by the group, completing the search for the 12 Tasmanian endemic bird species. A common Wombat also joined us on the boardwalk as we looked for birds in the alpine area of the National Park. A flock of around 100 Sulphur-crested Cockatoo were seen while returning to New Norfolk for dinner and accommodation.

Saturday 5 November 2011

Today we travelled westwards towards Strahan on Tasmania's west coast in warm clear conditions. We passed several small lakes and farm dams, one of which yielded a good variety of waterbirds including several Hoary-headed Grebe, Australian Shelduck, Hardhead, Australasian Shoveler, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Eurasian Coot and Black-fronted Dotterel. A small diversion was made to view a male Musk Duck at close range on another large lake. We had lunch at Lake St Clair National Park where Black Currawong and Crescent Honeyeater were common. Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, Brown Thornbill, Australasian Pipit, a pair of White-fronted Chat and four more Short-beaked Echidna were seen along the roadside. Another short walk yielded more Tasmanian Scrubwren and excellent views of Scrubtit.

After dinner in Strahan, we visited some heathlands and heard three Ground Parrots calling, before watching the Short-tailed Shearwaters returning to shore as the sun set. On our return to our accommodation, we had brief views of a Southern Brown Bandicoot.

Sunday 6 November 2011

The group headed out on a cruise on the Gordon River after breakfast in very warm but windy conditions. Birdlife on the river was restricted to Great Cormorant, White-faced Heron and Pacific Duck, but a variety of interesting cool temperate rainforest flora comprised of many endemic species and Gondwana relicts was seen. Plant species included Whitey Wood and Huon Pine which is only found on the west coast of Tasmania, as well as Myrtle (*Nothofagus cunninghami*), and Celery Top Pine.

Another trip was made to the heathlands around Strahan on the boat's return to search for Ground Parrot and other heathlands species, but the wind was quite strong and it had started raining, making birding very difficult. Despite this, we managed to see Striated Fieldwren, Superb Fairy-wren and Brown Thornbill.

Monday 7 November 2011

After an early breakfast the group headed back out to the heathlands in more favourable weather conditions (clear with a light wind) with more success, finding two pairs of Southern Emu-wren, an adult and fledgling Dusky Robin and hearing two more Ground Parrots, one at close range but deep in the undergrowth. An Olive Whistler was also heard nearby. We then left Strahan and travelled north-eastwards towards Cradle Mountain National Park, stopping en route for lunch near a river bank. We then travelled into the National Park to view Dove Lake and Cradle Mountain while it was warm and sunny.

On the way to our accommodation at Loongana, we stopped to watch a young Short-beaked Echidna walking along the side of the road. It was interesting to watch it scratch itself with the long claws on its back feet

which are specifically designed for this purpose. We then saw another eEchidna as well as Chestnut Teal, Tasmanian Native-hen and Australian Wood Duck at a waterhole, and Black Currawong were again in evidence.

On arrival at our accommodation, we took a brief walk around the property where we viewed Eastern Spinebill, Brown Thornbill, Tasmanian Native-hen with three young chicks, and a pair of Grey Shrike-thrush with two newly fledged young which had nested in the building where our group ate dinner. We watched the parent birds feed the chicks while we ate dinner. After dinner we walked to the nearby river where two Platypuses were observed feeding. We then retired to our respective cottages at dusk, where the owners had placed pieces of road-killed pademelons to view the wild Tasmanian Devil feeding on the carcasses. All members of the group saw between three and five devils and two people had a quick glimpse of a Spotted-tailed Quoll.

Tuesday 8 November 2011

The group travelled to Cradle Mountain National Park again today in completely different conditions to the previous day. It had rained quite heavily during the night and we drove through frequent showers and fog. A group of five Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo were seen in some trees on the way. At the National Park, we started the Dove Lake circuit but quite heavy rain had us turning back and deciding to do some shorter walks closer to the vehicle! Those walks through cool temperate rainforest yielded a male Pink Robin, Tasmanian Thornbill and Tasmanian Scrubwren. A Common Wombat and two Bennett's Wallabies were seen as we left the park.

On the way back to our accommodation we saw a male Australasian Grebe in breeding plumage and a pair of Purple Swamphen with chicks on some farm dams and two Brown Quail flying across the road in front of the car. Shining Bronze-cuckoo was also seen at a reserve near the accommodation. The weather continued to improve during the afternoon and by late afternoon it was once again quite sunny with a few high clouds. What changeable weather we get here in Tasmania in spring! After a short break in the cottages, we had dinner (once again being entertained by the Grey Shrike-thrush feeding the two young while we ate), followed by another walk to the river where Platypus were viewed. Then back to the cottages for another night of Tasmanian Devil viewing, where up to four different individual devils were seen by all members of the group.

Wednesday 9 November 2011

We left the cottages after breakfast and travelled eastwards to a wildlife research and rehabilitation centre where we viewed a number of different Tasmanian native mammals and birds that they had in their care, including two orphaned Tasmanian Devil imps and a half-grown orphaned Common Wombat. We also viewed a female Spotted-tailed Quoll with five babies in a den, and Eastern Grey (Forester) Kangaroo. Wild birds in the park included a flock of around 20 Australian Shelduck, a pair of Cape Barren Goose with five almost mature young, Hoary-headed Grebe, Grey Teal, Black Swan and Hardhead. A pair of wild Grey Goshawk (white colour morph) were nesting in the park and we had good views through the scope of both members of the pair. We also viewed an adult Black-headed Honeyeater feeding a fledgling young. We had lunch by the Mersey River in Deloraine and then travelled to a reserve near Latrobe in northern Tasmania to look (unsuccessfully) for Platypus but did pick up another species in the form of Cattle Egret (some still in breeding plumage). Then we went onto Launceston and our accommodation for the night in a small B&B. We met up again for dinner and gained another new species - Spotted Dove!

Thursday 10 November 2011

The first stop this morning was the gorge near our accommodation in Launceston, where few birds were found. We then visited a wetland on the Tamar River, which was more productive. A range of waterbirds, including Australian Shelduck, Black Swan (some with cygnets), Chestnut and Grey Teal, Purple Swamphen, as well as Little Black Cormorant and Pacific Gull we found here. We also had glimpses and heard the calls of both Little Grassbird and Australian Reed Warbler although the windy conditions made good viewing difficult.

Friday 11 November 2011

The group returned to the wetland on the Tamar River again this morning for another try at decent views of Little Grassbird and Australian Reed Warbler as the wind had dropped considerably since the previous day.

We had success with a few good but quick views of Little Grassbird although the reed warbler was nowhere in evidence. The tide was lower today so we were also able to view Black-fronted Dotterel. We then searched unsuccessfully for Banded Lapwing, before returning to Hobart Airport where we said our goodbyes. A Noisy Miner was seen at the airport.

It had been a successful trip with a total of 108 bird species seen (and a further three species heard only) and 13 mammal species seen during the trip. A total of 2,541km was covered by land during the trip (plus around 150km of sea / river).

Party List

Connie Roessler of Billericay, Essex
Penny Chambers of Huddersfield, Yorkshire
Dave and Iain Elliot of Godalming, Surrey

Acknowledgements

Thank you all from managing to get to Tasmania for this trip despite the travelling difficulties. It was good to show you the birds and animals of Tasmania. A special thanks you must go to Penny Chambers for the photos used in this report.

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CHECKLIST OF BIRDS RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

No. of days recorded	Abundance Scale
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days	1 = 1-4 individual 2 = 5-9 3 = 10-99 4 = 100+

Tasmanian endemics in bold

SPECIES	No. of days recorded	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Brown (Swamp) Quail	1	1	<i>Coturnix ypsilophora ypsilophora</i>
Indian Peafowl (Peacock)	1	1	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Musk Duck	1	1	<i>Biziura lobata</i>
Cape Barren Goose	1	2	<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>
Black Swan	1	4	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>
Australian Shelduck	1	4	<i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>
Australian Wood (Maned) Duck	1	2	<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>
Australasian Shoveler	1	1	<i>Anas rhynchotis</i>
Grey Teal	1	3	<i>Anas gracilis</i>
Chestnut Teal	1	4	<i>Anas castanea</i>
Northern Mallard	1	2	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Pacific Black Duck	1	3	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>
Hardhead (White-eyed Duck)	1	3	<i>Aythya australis</i>
Australasian (Little) Grebe	1	1	<i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i>
Hoary-headed Grebe	1	3	<i>Poliiocephalus poliocephalus</i>
Great Crested Grebe	1	1	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	1	2	<i>Columba livia</i>
Spotted Dove	1	1	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Common Bronzewing (Pigeon)	1	1	<i>Phaps chalcoptera</i>
Brush Bronzewing (Pigeon)	1	1	<i>Phaps elegans</i>
Shy Albatross	1	1	<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>
Short-tailed Shearwater (Muttonbird)	1	4	<i>Ardenna tenuirostris</i>
Little Penguin	1	3	<i>Eudyptula minor</i>
Australasian Gannet	1	2	<i>Morus serrator</i>
Little Pied Cormorant	1	2	<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>
Great (Black) Cormorant	1	3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Black Cormorant	1	3	<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>
Black-faced Cormorant	1	4	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscescens</i>
Australian Pelican	1	2	<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>
Cattle Egret	1	3	<i>Ardea ibis</i>
White-faced Heron	1	2	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	1	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
Brown Goshawk	1	1	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>
Grey Goshawk (white morph)	1	1	<i>Accipiter novaehollandiae</i>
Swamp (Marsh) Harrier	1	2	<i>Circus approximans</i>
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	1	<i>Aquila audax</i>
Brown Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco berigora (tasmanica?)</i>
Purple Swamphen	1	2	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Tasmanian Native-hen	1	3	<i>Tribonyx mortierii</i>
Dusky Moorhen	1	1	<i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>
Eurasian Coot	1	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Australian Pied Oystercatcher	1	2	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>
Sooty Oystercatcher	1	2	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>
Red-capped Plover	1	1	<i>Charadrius ruficapillus</i>
Black-fronted Dotterel	1	1	<i>Elsayornis melanops</i>
Hooded Plover	1	1	<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>
Masked Lapwing (Spurwing Plover)	1	3	<i>Vanellus miles</i>

Crested Tern	1	1	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Pacific Gull	1	3	<i>Larus pacificus</i>
Kelp Gull	1	3	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Silver Gull	1	4	<i>Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae</i>
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	3	<i>Calyptorhynchus funereus</i>
Galah	1	3	<i>Eolophus roseicapillus</i>
Sulphur-crested (White) Cockatoo	6 1h	3	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>
Musk Lorikeet	1	2	<i>Glossopsitta concinna</i>
Green Rosella	1	3	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>
Swift Parrot	1	1	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>
Ground Parrot	- 2h	1	<i>Pezoporus wallicus</i>
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	1	<i>Chalcites basalis</i>
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	1 4h	1	<i>Chalcites lucidus</i>
Pallid Cuckoo	7 2h	1	<i>Cuculus pallidus</i>
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	3 5h	1	<i>Cacomantis flabelliformis</i>
Laughing Kookaburra	6 1h	2	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i>
Superb Fairy Wren	1	3	<i>Malurus cyaneus</i>
Southern Emu Wren	1	2	<i>Stipiturus malachurus</i>
Tasmanian Scrubwren	7 3h	1	<i>Sericornis humilis</i>
Scrubtit	2 1h	1	<i>Acanthornis magna</i>
Striated Fieldwren	1	1	<i>Calamanthus fuliginosus</i>
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	1	3	<i>Acanthiza chrysorrhoa</i>
Brown Thornbill	6 2h	2	<i>Acanthiza pusilla</i>
Tasmanian Thornbill	1	1	<i>Acanthiza ewingii</i>
Spotted Pardalote	1 5h	1	<i>Pardalotus punctatus</i>
Striated (Yellow-tipped) Pardalote	5 2h	1	<i>Pardalotus striatus</i>
Forty-spotted Pardalote	1	1	<i>Pardalotus quadragintus</i>
Eastern Spinebill	4 3h	1	<i>Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris</i>
Noisy Miner	1	1	<i>Manorina melanocephala</i>
Little (Brush) Wattlebird	1	1	<i>Anthochaera chrysoptera tasmanica</i>
Yellow Wattlebird	1	1	<i>Anthochaera paradoxa</i>
Crescent Honeyeater	3 5h	1	<i>Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus</i>
New Holland Honeyeater	7 1h	2	<i>Phylidonyris novaehollandiae</i>
Yellow-throated Honeyeater	7 2h	1	<i>Lichenostomus flavicollis</i>
Strong-billed Honeyeater	1	1	<i>Melithreptus validirostris</i>
Black-headed Honeyeater	2 3h	1	<i>Melithreptus affinis</i>
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	6 1h	1	<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>
Olive Whistler	- 1h	1	<i>Pachycephala olivacea</i>
Golden Whistler	7 4h	1	<i>Pachycephala pectoralis</i>
Grey Shrike-thrush	4 3h	3	<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>
Dusky Woodswallow	1	2	<i>Artamus cyanopterus</i>
Grey Butcherbird	1	1	<i>Cracticus torquatus</i>
Australian (White-backed) Magpie	1	3	<i>Cracticus tibicen</i>
Grey (Clinking) Currawong	5 1h	1	<i>Strepera versicolor</i>
Black Currawong	7 1h	3	<i>Strepera fuliginosa</i>
Grey Fantail	1	2	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>
Forest Raven	1	3	<i>Corvus tasmanicus tasmanicus</i>
Satin Flycatcher	2 2h	1	<i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
Scarlet Robin	1	2	<i>Petroica boodang</i>
Flame Robin	1	1	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i>
Pink Robin	2 1h	1	<i>Petroica rodinogaster</i>
Dusky Robin	1	1	<i>Melanodryas vittata</i>
Eurasian Skylark	2 2h	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Australian (Clamorous) Reed Warbler	- 1h	1	<i>Acrocephalus australis</i>
Little Grassbird	1	1	<i>Megalurus gramineus</i>
Silvereye (Grey-backed Silvereye)	5 3h	2	<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>
Welcome Swallow	1	3	<i>Hirundo neoxena</i>
Tree Martin	1	3	<i>Petrochelidon nigricans</i>
Common (Eurasian) Blackbird	1	3	<i>Turdus merula</i>

Common Starling	1	3	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House Sparrow	1	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Australasian (Richard's) Pipit	1	1	<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>
European Goldfinch	1	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Common Greenfinch	1	1	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
MAMMALS			
Platypus	1	1	<i>Ornithorhynchus anatinus</i>
Short-beaked Echidna	1	1	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i> (Tas. subspecies)
Spotted tailed Quoll (Tiger Cat)	1	1	<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>
Eastern Quoll (Native Cat)	1	3	<i>Dasyurus viverrinus</i>
Tasmanian Devil	1	1	<i>Sarcophilus harrisii</i>
Southern brown Bandicoot	1	1	<i>Issodon obesulus</i>
Common Wombat	1	1	<i>Vombatus ursinus</i>
Common Brushtail Possum	1	2	<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>
Tasmanian Pademelon (Rufous wallaby)	1	2	<i>Thylogale billardierii</i>
Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby	1	1	<i>Macropus rufogriseus</i>
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	1	3	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>
Australian Fur-Seal	1	4	<i>Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus</i>
Introduced species			
European Rabbit	1	2	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
REPTILES			
Metallic Skink	1	1	<i>Niveoscincus metallicus</i>
Copperhead Snake	1	1	<i>Austrelaps superbus</i>
AMPHIBIANS			
Green and Golden Frog	1	2	<i>Litoria raniformis</i>
Brown tree frog	- 4h	1	<i>Litoria ewingi</i>
Tasmanian Froglet	- 3h	1	<i>Crinia tasmaniensis</i>
Common Froglet	- 6h	1	<i>Cinia signifera</i>
INVERTEBRATES			
Macleay's Swallowtail Butterfly	1	2	<i>Graphium macleayanus</i>
Tasmanian Brown	1	3	<i>Argynnina hobartia</i>
Leech	1	1	<i>Philamaenon pungens</i>
Yellow Nemertean	1	1	

This list represents those birds and other animals as seen by party members of this tour.



Black Currawong



Black Swan



Australian Shelduck



Common Wombat



Tasmanian Devil



Tasmanian Devils



Short-beaked Echidna



Mount Field National Park

Front cover: Russell Falls, Mount Field National Park

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