

SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA & TASMANIA

21 OCTOBER - 13 NOVEMBER 2005

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: CHRIS DOUGHTY

The 2005 Southern Australia and Tasmania tour was, without doubt, one of the most successful to date. Amongst the 291 species of birds recorded were a suite of outback specialities including many highly-desired, tricky nomadic species and a number of rare and seldom-seen endemics. Particular mention should go to the following: the fine male Red-lored Whistler that we saw incredibly well during our time in the mallee; the stunning spotlight views of the unique Plains-Wanderer; the fine flock of rare Freckled Ducks resting up on a small lake; super close looks at a flock of very uncommon and highly nomadic Inland Dotterels; the superb Orange-bellied Parrot, one of the world's rarest birds and a stunning white colour morph Grey Goshawk, which was seen on the last day of the tour. Add to this an amazing array of colourful robins and fairywrens, no less than four species of grasswrens and rarities such as Mallee Emu-wren, highly nomadic Black and Pied Honeyeaters, Chestnut-breasted Whiteface and Flock Bronzewing and the quality begins to shine through. However, it was not just the birds; mammalian stars included a couple of Koalas, the almost unknown Ampurta, several Short-beaked Echidnas and a fine selection of kangaroos including the delightful Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby.

Having endured the long flight from London via Singapore, we were all pleased to step into our first motel at Tullamarine, adjacent to Melbourne Airport. A couple of beers and a chat were all we had time for before our heads hit the pillows firmly. Moments later (or so it seemed) we were eating our first of many in-room breakfasts (a delicacy that happily -in my tour-leading career at least - is unique to Australia!). We were then on the road and steadily ticking off weird and wonderful new birds. As we made steady progress we noted fields full of Little Ravens, farm dams dotted with Maned Ducks, numerous graceful groups of gaudy Galahs and plenty of roadside Australian Magpies and Magpie-larks. We were clearly a long way from home! At our first serious stops we enjoyed a fine group of three very attractive Little Eagles, good numbers of fabulous Musk Lorikeets (Australian parrots really are the best!), a

singing Rufous Songlark and a pair of brilliantly responsive Black-chinned Honeyeaters. We soon found ourselves in the vicinity of the scenic Melville Caves where new birds came with a rush. Common Bronzewing, Yellow-tufted and Fuscous Honeyeaters were picked up nearby and on our short walk at the caves we saw, amongst others, Laughing Kookaburra, Superb Fairywren, Spotted Pardalote, Grey Fantail and more honeyeaters including a large number of Red Wattlebirds, several Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters, a few Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, a couple of White-eared Honeyeaters, large numbers of the aggressive but very attractive New Holland Honeyeater and a few delightful Eastern Spinebills. However, the highlight here was undoubtedly the very close looks at a group of four very uncommon Little Lorikeets. Most of the rest of the day was spent unsuccessfully searching for lakes (they were all dry due to the recent long drought) but we did bump into plenty of new species which included Australian Kite, displaying Brown Songlarks, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Willie Wagtail.

Our first day of 'mallee-bashing' was spent in Wyperfeld National Park. In the cold early morning air we were soon brought to life by a singing Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo and our first Rainbow Bee-eaters. Driving through we picked up colourful Mallee Ringnecks and Mulga Parrots but it was evident that the drought had affected many species, numbers of Western Grey Kangaroos being notably low. Fortunately our star bird of the morning obliged fairly quickly and we had one or two quick opportunities to watch the unique Southern Scrub-Robin, walking slowly through the mallee. However it was a common species that really stole our hearts as an electric-blue Splendid Fairywren serenaded us, puffing out his glistening silver-blue cheeks as he did so. Some obliging Shy Heathwrens and three single Chestnut Quail-Thrushes were also added before we took our picnic lunch in the company of Welcome Swallows. In the afternoon we explored a nearby area where we soon found some smart Regent Parrots and had a close encounter with some bizarre-looking Shingle-backed Lizards. An area of dry woodland yielded our first splendid Hooded Robins, the very uncommon Striped Honeyeater and a fine Red-capped Robin and on the way back to the hotel we notched-up Yellow-throated Miner and our first Singing Honeyeaters. Once back, we found that Rainbow hosted a small population of Purple-crowned Lorikeets, some of which showed well in nearby flowering shrubs. However, the real surprise, in the grounds of our motel, was a family party of Tawny Frogmouths, mum, dad and a full grown youngster, sat on the lawn, in full daylight!

Heading up to Hattah Lakes, a roadside stop produced a great selection of birds which included a small group of perched Cockatiels, which we observed perfectly in the scope, together with perched Blue Bonnets and a mixed species flock of highly nomadic White-browed and Masked Woodswallows. At Hattah, we were introduced to the pleasurable concept of mallee-bashing with spinifex (a delightful added ingredient) as we spread out in search of two of Australia's most elusive birds, the Mallee Emu-wren and the Striated Grasswren. An hour or so later, nursing prickled

ankles, we decided to return to the bus, wren-less. As we did so a high-pitched call announced the presence of a couple of pair of Emu Wrens. Seconds later we were watching two fairly tame pairs, who responded well to tape playback, posing on the top of spinifex bushes just a few metres away. Flushed with success, we visited a nearby plain, where we had a surprise find of a pair of gorgeous Crimson Chats, which do not normally occur this far south. We also enjoyed watching a White-backed Swallow flying overhead. It was now time for lunch and a dose of Aussie humour as we admired the various signs and notices at the Hattah Store. After lunch we visited a large open plain covered in gorgeous pink-flowering succulent plants, and here we watched a shy group of Chestnut-crowned Babblers. A nearby campsite housed White-winged Choughs, bizarre Apostlebirds and attractive Yellow Rosellas. The afternoon found us carefully picking our way through more spinifex where we amazingly encountered another immature Mallee Emu-wren, three beautifully plumaged Striated Grasswrens, who also responded well to tape playback, perching on the top of spinifex bushes and singing back to the tape. We were then very fortunate to find a Malleefowl walking through the mallee, as well as a pair of Dusky Woodswallows. On the outskirts of Red Cliffs, a final birding stop produced our only White-fronted Honeyeaters of the trip.

Thanks to some very helpful local birders, we set off in a convoy of 4WD vehicles into the Murray-Sunset National Park, in our quest for the rarely seen Red-lored Whistler. Heading further and further into the mallee, we paused to look at small groups of Emus, a couple of fine Gilbert's Whistlers and a smart Crested Bellbird, before finally being set free to mallee-bash. Our first attempt was unsuccessful, though a Pallid Cuckoo was a good find. After lunch, and less optimistic than before, we continued our efforts and much to our amazement, we all enjoyed good close looks at a gorgeous male Red-lored Whistler, which responded well to tape playback, enabling the whole group to watch the bird at leisure, as it fed quietly, in nearby stunted mallee. In a large stand of native pines, we enjoyed good close looks at the rare White-browed Treecreeper, who responded very well to tape playback. On our way back to Red Cliffs, we very much enjoyed watching a pair of Spotted Harriers, hunting over a wheat crop, with an Australian Hobby, flying above them, enjoying the benefits of working in a threesome, this rounded off what had been a long but highly successful day.

Leaving Red Cliffs behind, we paused at a couple of lakes (yes, we had at last found water!) where large flocks of Australian Pelicans, Black Swans, White-headed Stilts and Silver Gulls were found. There were also distant flocks of Banded Stilts and Red-necked Avocets. Other birds of interest included a small flock of Little Black Cormorants, several attractive Red-capped Plovers and a fine family party of White-winged Fairywrens. Pride of place however went to the flock of 15 Australasian Shovelers, which were the only ones we saw on the tour. Continuing towards Deniliquin, we arrived at a series of lakes between Mildura and Kerang. The most productive of these was Lake Wooraneen where migrant waders such as Marsh, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers and Red-necked

Stints were joined by Hoary-headed Grebes, Blue-billed and Musk Ducks and we were very pleased to find our first zebra-striped Pink-eared Ducks, along with good numbers of Whiskered Terns. The other lakes held impressive numbers of common species including huge ibis rookeries, our first Royal and Yellow-billed Spoonbills, a few Swamp Harriers, a White-bellied Sea-Eagle, numerous attractive White-necked Herons and a couple of Black-fronted Plovers. A birding stop at the mighty Murray River produced Australian Darter, Pied Cormorant and Australian Swamphen. We also admired the huge flocks of Long-billed Corellas and Galahs before arriving at our hotel in Deniliquin.

We then spent a very productive morning birding in Gulpa State Forest; the sun shone brightly and we were able to watch a pair of Rufous Night-Herons, a couple of Sacred Kingfishers and a fine Fan-tailed Cuckoo, who came in well to tape. It really felt like spring as many species sang, and we enjoyed watching a family party of Varied Sittellas, a solitary Western Gerygone, both Yellow and Buff-rumped Thornbills, Brown-headed Honeyeater, male Rufous Whistlers where in good voice and a pair of Mistletoebirds showed briefly. It was however the aptly named Superb Parrot that had lured us to this area and we were not to be disappointed, as we achieved fine scope views of a stunning male who sat motionless in a nearby River Red Gum, followed by great looks at an Azure Kingfisher, which was an added bonus. Deniliquin has become synonymous with Plains-Wanderer and of course, this was our main reason for visiting the area. So that afternoon, we set off with world expert Phil Maher. En route, we were extremely fortunate to locate a pair of very uncommon Black Falcons, which we saw very well. Stops at a couple of small marshes produced a few Hardheads, a Spotless Crake which came into tape, charismatic Black-tailed Native-hens, a solitary Glossy Ibis, some delightful Red-kneed Dotterels and a pair of Golden-headed Cisticolas, and best of all, a male Black Honeyeater, which was to be our only sighting of the tour. As dusk fell, we hungrily gobbled down our picnic dinner, excited about but apprehensive of what was to follow. We had been warned that the drought had caused a drop in wanderer numbers and as a result, our initial attempt was to locate a female Phil had seen recently on foot. This proved unsuccessful, so we transferred to the 4WD vehicles and began spotlighting. Several Banded Lapwings were admired and after not too long a wait, the big one was there - an immaculate female Plains-Wanderer spotlighted between the three vehicles, even calling as we watched her. Relief turned to elation and although we enjoyed great views of a male Little Buttonquail walking about and a couple of Barn Owls, nothing was going to eclipse the brilliant views we had already had of that most highly-prized species.

While filling the bus with diesel the following morning, in readiness for the long drive to Melbourne, we enjoyed good close looks at both Little and Noisy Friarbirds and Blue-faced Honeyeater. Most of the rest of the day was spent driving back towards Melbourne. A short detour produced great views of a couple of the very unique Koalas. Roadside pools held our first Australasian Grebe, a few Chestnut Teal and a Little Grassbird,

which responded well to tape playback, actually showing itself on top of the reeds. It was during this drive that we enjoyed our first look at the remarkable Short-beaked Echidna. This was a particularly tame individual, who spent much of the time with his face out in the open, not buried in the ground, which is their normal response, when humans approach.

Much of the following day was spent birding at various places in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, east of Melbourne. The park produced a good assortment of rainforest species including a brilliant pair of Superb Lyrebirds, a large flock of huge Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, a few Gang-gang Cockatoos gave themselves away with their squeaky door calls and settled in front of us, allowing good scope views. Flocks of gaudy Australian King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas came in to be fed. Our only Lewin's Honeyeater of the tour sat hopefully at the picnic tables, we enjoyed good looks at a pair of Large-billed Scrubwrens and a solitary Red-browed Treecreeper, which were both at the extreme south-western edge of their ranges, we also enjoyed a dazzling Shining Bronze Cuckoo and a few Bell Miners and White-naped Honeyeaters.

Our next port of call was Wilson's Promontory National Park where we spent a very productive morning, which included sightings of Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, the introduced Red Fox and the introduced Hog Deer, as well as numerous new birds. The latter included distant views of a group of Black-faced Shags, large numbers of goliath-billed Pacific Gulls and a few Blue-winged Parrots in flight, before great scope views of one feeding on the ground. A fine pair of Southern Emu-wrens, a very obliging Striated Fieldwren, a couple of Brush Wattlebirds, one or two Crescent Honeyeaters, a fine Olive Whistler, which responded well to tape playback, a couple of Grey Currawongs and large numbers of Forest Ravens. A long walk along a beach paid off with fantastic views of a few Sooty Oystercatchers and several endangered Hooded Plovers. We then headed west to Phillip Island to look for the endangered Cape Barren Goose and we were soon able to watch several of these rare and aberrant geese at close range. We then drove to Sorrento and took the ferry across Port Phillip Bay, to the Bellarine Peninsula. During the crossing we enjoyed close encounters with numerous Australasian Gannets and a few Crested Terns. Close to Sorrento we found a few Cattle Egrets, which at this time of year, should have already left for their breeding grounds in New South Wales.

A quick seawatch off Point Lonsdale the following morning was pretty good as we saw several Shy Albatrosses at reasonably close range. The nearby saltings held Little Egrets and Great Crested Grebes and we then crossed over to Swan Island, one of the few known wintering sites for the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. Soon after arriving, the distinctive call of a Lewin's Rail was noted and a battle of wits ensued with this notoriously furtive species. Taping the birds out was unsuccessful, flushing them was impossible and yet they were just there, calling just feet from us in deep, spiky, mosquito-ridden tussock grass (boy was I glad I'd put my shorts on for the first time that day!!). Eventually our determination led to success and we herded the rails repeatedly under a bush where everyone was able to view them at point blank range. An obliging Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo and some Pied Oystercatchers kept us amused for a bit but the lack of little green things was beginning to look ominous. By mid October, many of the parrots would be back on Tasmania but surely the odd one was left. Following a couple of mobile phone calls, and as the group flaked in the sun, I took one last determined walk along the edge of the saltmarsh. The buzzy call was instantly recognizable as an Orange-bellied Parrot flew up but it was soon lost from view. Much shouting and panicking ensued as the group reconvened and, after a concerted effort and a battle with some golfers, we were all able to enjoy sublime scope views of this rarest of parrots. Relieved, we headed for Drysdale where a small lake had become temporary home to c37 Freckled Ducks, including some fine males, and we were again enjoying one of Australia's toughest birds. We had rearranged the itinerary slightly so that we would stay further southwest on the Great Ocean Road, and we headed down this slow but scenic route, passing a field full of banded Lapwings as we went. A stop in the impressive forests at Cape Otway was most enjoyable, not only for the numerous tame Koalas, but also the fantastic pair of Gang-gangs which canoodled just above us. We eventually arrived near to our destination late in the afternoon and, after a couple of false starts, were soon watching a fine Rufous Bristlebird, a good way to round of the day.

A pre-breakfast sortie the following day was most notable for the repairs we had to make on the (non!) automatic door but we did eventually also find the hoped-for Blue-winged Parrot and also had some great views of a perched Peregrine. We then headed back to Geelong in rather inclement weather. Here, our first stop produced several Little Grassbirds whilst nearby, some Marsh Sandpipers and several Latham's Snipes were added to our tally. A final stop before heading up to Melbourne Airport was made at Avalon Saltworks and here, along with hordes of wintering waders, we were delighted to find some Fairy Terns, most of which were in smart breeding plumage. A violent electrical storm caused chaos at Melbourne Airport but we eventually boarded and flew into Adelaide, arriving well after dark.

Our outback adventure began the following morning as we boarded our outback truck/bus and headed north. With 600km to cover there was little time for stops but a brief detour to Port Gawler produced the hoped-for Slender-billed (or Samphire) Thornbill and a stop in Port Augusta produced the hoped-for (essential?) liquid supplies! As we travelled north, the landscape became more and more arid and we passed some huge mines around Leigh Creek. Eventually we reached our first campsite at the base of the Strzelecki Track, near to Lyndhurst, and enjoyed our first meal around the campfire. Out early, we were soon scouring the plains, which, at first glance, seemed very quiet. Gradually the birds fell, one by one. Some fine Rufous Fieldwrens were followed by an obliging pair of Thick-billed Grasswrens and finally, the main one, a trio of the rare and localized Chestnut-breasted Whiteface. We headed back to camp for breakfast and, with time on our hands, and thanks to the willing cooperation of our driver Paul, we decided to make a detour up the Strzelecki Track. The first stop produced more Thick-billed Grasswrens and a surprise Elegant Parrot and our first Australian Pratincoles soon appeared on the road. A little further along, on one of the numerous gibber plains, we admired our first Gibberbirds. Eventually we arrived at a permanent borehole where we ate lunch as hundreds of Zebra Finches flitted to and from the water to drink. A little further north, we stopped at an area where there was just a chance of that unmentionable rarity (we had been tipped off by friends in Red Cliffs but without precise details). Budgerigars and Black-faced Woodswallows were everywhere, Blue Bonnets flitted off and numerous Little Crows sat around the trees that were dotted with nests. A glimpse of grey and black led to the quick repossession of my telescope and we had indeed struck gold, for there, in my scope, was a fine Letter-winged Kite, adjacent to a (presumably its?) nest. We were able to study this mega at length and at very close range. As we explored the surrounding bush, one of the group was lucky enough to see a Grey Falcon. Faint whistles soon led to the discovery of several striking Pied Honeyeaters (another tough nomad), many of which were displaying and in the same area we feasted our eyes on Chirruping Wedgebills, vivid Crimson Chats and a Little Buttonquail. It really was hard to tear ourselves away from such a birdy area, but we did, and headed back south, camping at a creek that was also occupied by hundreds of noisy Little Corellas and Galahs (sadly they confused the moon rising at 0130 with sunrise!!).

Some roadside Cinnamon Quail-Thrushes kicked off the next morning and we then arrived in Lyndhurst where cold liquid refreshments were taken (by some) earlier than usual. We also paid a visit to Talc Alf. According to a website I found "Dutch born, self-taught Talc sculptor, artist, poet, bush philosopher and supporter of the new flag for Australia, Cornelius Johan Alferink, better known as Talc Alf, has carved himself a place in outback art and modern history". We were just glad he was happy!! We then began the long trek north up the Birdsville Track. A stop for lunch was uncomfortably hot and yielded more flies than average, but we also enjoyed our first Diamond Dove and a fabulous family of Broilgas. Further north, huge numbers of Australian Pratincoles, a smart Gull-billed Tern,

Black Falcon and several delightful Orange Chats obliged and numerous Wedge-tailed Eagles dotted the roadside. We arrived at our destination, the Mungerannie Roadhouse, in time to explore the nearby wetland. Here we watched another pair of Brolgas as well as more Red-kneed Dotterels and some fabulous Pink-eared Ducks. That night two things went horribly wrong. Firstly, the television at the roadhouse broke down so we could not watch the World Cup rugby (England against South Africa!) and secondly a gale whipped up, virtually blowing the more exposed tents over!

With little optimism in a howling gale, we made our way into some dunes the next morning, hoping for an Eyrean Grasswren. Much to our amazement we found some but they were incredibly elusive and after half an hour we changed tactic and moved on a bit, sat down and tried again. This time we were in luck as a cute pair of Eyrean Grasswrens ran right up to us and put on the best possible show. We then headed further north up to Koonchera Dunes, but with the wind still blowing, the Grey Grasswrens were not performing. Compensation came in the form of the amazing spectacle of c5000 Plumed Whistling Ducks that erupted noisily in front of us. We feasted our eyes on this virtually unique event (a local we met had never seen anything like it) and also picked out a pair of Freckled Ducks and saw more Eyrean Grasswrens. After lunch, a concerted effort produced the hoped-for Grey Grasswrens (scoped) and we decided to head back to the relative civilization of the Mungerannie Roadhouse. A stop in a windswept creek produced a fine Red-browed Pardalote and with the wind dropping, we made a speculative stop by a waterhole just before dusk and were delighted to see at least 20 Flock Bronzewing, a rare nomadic species that has been especially hard to find since the big drought.

Heading south to the Flinders Ranges, little new was added though we did see more Flock Bronzewing. Our day in the Flinders Ranges began in the north near to Angorochina where we found Grey-fronted and White-fronted Honeyeaters and admired an Elegant Parrot in the morning sun. Further south we explored a spinifex covered hill where, after a diligent search, we found the hoped-for Short-tailed Grasswren (now split from Striated), admiring a pair with recently fledged juveniles. Nearby, we studied Red Kangaroos and Euros (not the currency - another kangaroo!), but failed to find any quails. We ended the day at the delightful Warren Gorge where smart Adelaide Rosellas and delightful Yellow-footed Rock-Wallabies competed for our attention. That night, a Tawny Frogmouth visited camp but alas, the Southern Boobooks were only heard.

The following day we decided to try a new area to the west of Port Augusta to look for one or two mallee specialists. Rufous Treecreeper, Western Yellow Robin and Blue-breasted Fairywren were all added (three western species that we were not expecting to see) and we had more opportunities to study Chestnut Quail-Thrush and Crested Bellbird, but alas, still no Southern Scrub-Robins (presumably in decline due to the drought?) and no sign of Purple-gaped Honeyeater. We ended the day at Port Germein, where the following morning, the long jetty produced our

only Black-faced Shags of the trip. After a fine meal in an Irish pub in Adelaide, we headed for the airport to fly to Hobart via Melbourne. Once again, Qantas let us down, and it was late by the time we rolled into our hotel south of Hobart.

With just a day to 'clean-up' on Tasmania, we headed for Mount Wellington at the crack of dawn. Black Currawongs were the first to wake, soon followed by Green Rosellas and Black-headed Honeyeaters. Walks in the forest produced Tasmanian Scrubwrens and Tasmanian Thornbills (though not the hoped-for Scrubtit) and also a stunning male Pink Robin and some gorgeous Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. A foray to the top of the mountain produced an unbelievably bright male Flame Robin and a Yellow-throated Honeyeater performed on the way back down. We then headed south and crossed the D'entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island. We immediately knew we were in luck as the flowering blue gums had attracted great numbers of colourful Swift Parrots that were joined by ungainly Yellow Wattlebirds, whilst our first of three Short-beaked Echidnas wandered around in the adjacent field! Nearby, Forty-spotted Pardalotes eventually performed well for all as did some rather sombre Dusky Robins. A drive across the island produced plenty of Tasmanian Native-hens and, as the weather closed in, an albino Red-necked Wallaby appeared by the road like a weird apparition! Although we succeeded in finding a flock of endemic Strong-billed Honeyeaters, we were forced to head for the hotel, still short of a Scrubtit. A night drive that night was fun and produced Brush-tailed and Ring-tailed Possums, plenty of Tasmanian Pademelons (a small wallaby) and Red-necked Wallabies and an Eastern Quoll, but it was pretty late by the time we got to bed!

The final morning saw the final push and fortunately this time we were in luck as a furtive Scrubtit eventually showed to all, completing our set of Tasmanian endemics in a little over 24 hours! It was then time to begin our long journey home, a journey that would give us more than enough time to reflect back on our fantastic journey through southern Australia.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H)
Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL)

Note than nomenclature and order (including the family divisions) largely follow Simpson, K. & Day, N. (1998, 3rd edition): *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*.

Threat categories are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna.

DROMAIIDAE

Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae*: We had many first rate encounters, beginning in Murray-Sunset National Park where they were less common than in recent years, presumably due to the drought. We had many other opportunities to enjoy these flightless giants particularly during our time on the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks.

MEGAPODIIDAE

Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata*: Great looks at an individual in Hattah Kulkyne National Park, as it ambled through the mallee in front of us. A rare and declining species and the rarest and most attractive of Australia's megapodes. This species is listed as vulnerable in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

PHASIANIDAE

Stubble quail *Coturnix pectoralis*: 'Grass-bashing' paid dividends in the Flinders Ranges National Park, enabling us to flush two birds from cover. One individual we managed to flush on two occasions.

TURNICIDAE

Little Button-quail *Turnix velox*: Great views of a male in the spotlight at Deniliquin, while looking for Plains Wanderer.

SPHENISCIDAE

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*: We watched small numbers come ashore on Bruny Island, including a few seen very well in the headlights of the bus.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*: The sight of flocks of thousands of these birds flying just off Point Lonsdale, was a

truly memorable sight. We also watched small numbers flying to their burrows, on Bruny Island.

PELECANIDAE

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*: This superb pelican was widespread, often giving brilliant views.

SULIDAE

Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator*: Seen from the coastline on a number of occasions, but best of all were those around Sorrento and from the ferry between there and Queenscliffe.

ANHINGIDAE

Australian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae*: Just a couple of sightings, the best one being the individual swimming in the River Murray, at Mildura.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Black-faced Shag *Phalacrocorax fuscescens*: Distant views of a small group on Rabbit Island, off Wilson's Promontory National Park. Followed by much better views of a couple of birds on the structure at the end of the pier at Port Germein. We also enjoyed good looks at this species at the ferry terminal, in Tasmania.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*: Common and widespread along the south coast.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*: Probably the most widespread of the cormorants we encountered, equally at home on fresh or saltwater.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Only four single individuals observed.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*: Plenty of sightings, mostly inland.

PODICIPEDIDAE

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: Great views of this species on lakes in the Queenscliffe and Swan Hill areas. Interestingly, the endemic form, *australis*, is just about permanently in what we would call breeding plumage. I suspect that a three way split (the European, southern African and Australasian forms) could be on the cards.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*: Many great looks with notable close ups of breeding plumaged birds at a couple of lakes in the Swan Hill area.

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*: The scarcer of the two small grebes, we nevertheless had a few opportunities to study them. We enjoyed particularly good looks at a pair nesting on a small farm dam near Port Gawler.

ANATIDAE

- Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*: Amazingly common and widespread, particularly in the south.
- Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*: We had great views of a number of these rare and strange-looking geese on Phillip Island, an island that they have only recently colonized. They actually secrete salt through special glands in their bills in much the same way as true seabirds such as tubenoses.
- Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*: First seen on our first day as we drove away from Melbourne, this attractive species was reasonably common and widespread.
- Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*: The most common and widespread duck.
- Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*: Fairly common, with the greatest numbers being seen in the vicinity of Deniliquin.
- Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*: Some great looks especially in the south. The females are superficially very similar to Grey Teals.
- Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*: A single flock of 15 of these uncommon birds, was seen well, at Lake Ranfurly, near Mildura. It was our only sighting of this species.
- Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*: Some great looks at a couple of sites. At a small lake at the side of the Birdsville Track, the pink ears were clearly visible in the superb late afternoon light.
- Hardhead *Aythya australis*: A few good looks at this Aussie Pochard.
- Australian Wood Duck (Maned D) *Chenonetta jubata*: This species favours small farm dams, where we enjoyed many good sightings.
- Freckled Duck *Stictonetta naevosa*: We enjoyed full-frame scope views of a flock of approximately 10 of these rare nomads, at Lake Lorne, at Drysdale, on the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*: This attractive stiff-tail was first seen at Lake Woorinen, near Swan Hill, with small numbers present at Lake Lorne, Drysdale.
- Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*: Six female birds were seen well at Lake Woorinen, this was our only sighting of this species.

RALLIDAE

- Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (H): Responded to tape playback, by calling from deep in a reedbed, at a gravel pit near Deniliquin. Unfortunately, we could not coax it into view.
- Spotless Crake *Porzana tabuensis*: Always a difficult bird to see, a solitary individual responded well to tape playback, coming to the edge of a dense reedbed near Deniliquin. Unfortunately, only half the group saw the bird.
- Tasmanian Native-hen *Gallinula mortierii*: Proved to be common on Bruny Island and on the adjacent mainland. Many pairs of this flightless species had several small chicks with them.
- Black-tailed Native-hen *Gallinula ventralis*: A really charismatic inhabitant of swamps in the interior. We enjoyed our first views at Deniliquin and also saw small numbers along the Birdsville Track.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*: Fairly common and widespread. Similar to Common Moorhen but lacks the white flank line.

Australian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus*: This form is often lumped in Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio*. However, recent genetic studies have found that this form is more closely related to the Takahe *P. mantelli* of New Zealand than it is to some of the other 'Purple Swamphens'. As a result, it has been suggested that the original Purple Swamphen should be split into six (it was either that or lump Takahe!!).

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: Strange to see them so far from home! The endemic form concerned is *australis*.

ARDEIDAE

White-necked Heron (Pacific H) *Ardea pacifica*: Another nomadic species that we saw extremely well on a number of occasions.

Cattle Egret *Ardea ibis*: Half a dozen or so birds present in southern Victoria. It was surprising to see them at this time of year, as they are normally only winter visitors to Victoria, leaving in early spring to migrate to breeding grounds in central New South Wales.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: Regularly seen in small numbers in wetland areas.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*: This attractive heron showed very well on a regular basis.

Little Egret *Ardea garzetta*: Most common around the south coast.

Nankeen Night Heron (Rufous N H) *Nycticorax caledonicus*: A pair of birds, not quite in full adult plumage, were observed very well in Gulpa State Forest, near Deniliquin.

PLATALEIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: A single bird was observed well in wetlands close to Deniliquin. The Glossy Ibis is a very uncommon visitor to southern Australia.

Australian White Ibis (Australian I) *Threskiornis molucca*: A common and widespread ibis.

Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*: Another common species, the numbers around Swan Hill and Kerang (especially at the colony at Reedy Lake) were truly impressive.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*: Only two individuals seen throughout the whole tour. The first bird was observed roosting at the ibis rookery at Reedy Lake and the second bird was observed in wetlands next to our motel at Ocean Grove, on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill *Platalea flavipes*: We enjoyed two good sightings in Victoria, both were of pairs of birds.

GRUIDAE

Brolga *Grus rubicundus*: A pair of birds were observed very well at the wetland area at Mungerannie Roadhouse. We even watched them displaying to one another.

PEDIONOMIDAE

Plains-wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus*: After a relatively brief search with Phil Maher and friends near Deniliquin, we were treated to a fabulous calling female in the spotlight just metres away. This species is listed as endangered in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*: Four birds were present at a wetland area next to our motel at Ocean Grove, on the Bellarine Peninsula. This species is listed as near-threatened in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: A solitary individual was present at the wetlands at Mungerannie Roadhouse. It is an uncommon wintering bird in Australia.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (NL): A solitary individual was observed by Daniel, in the wetlands at Mungerannie Roadhouse, this species is also an uncommon winter visitor to Australia.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Good numbers of this common migrant were observed in coastal areas of Victoria and South Australia.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: An unusually large number of approximately 200 birds were present at the Geelong Saltworks.

Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*: We were fortunate to get extremely good flight views of approximately a dozen or so birds at the Geelong Saltworks. However, seeing them on the ground was a different matter, as they vanished without trace upon alighting!

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*: One of the commoner migrant waders with many confiding individuals showing well including some immaculately-plumaged juveniles.

Red-necked Stint (Rufous-necked S) *Calidris ruficollis*: The commonest migrant wader to Australia; up to 600 birds were observed roosting at a high-tide roost, at Werribee Sewage Farm.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: Approximately 15 at the high-tide roost at Werribee Sewage Farm, was the largest count.

GLAREOLIDAE

Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella*: Surprisingly few birds present on the Birdsville Track this year, only 20 or so of these long-legged plains inhabitants were observed.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*: One bird observed at a small wetland next to our hotel at Ocean Grove and up to 10 individuals present on Bruny Island, in Tasmania. Very similar in appearance to Eurasian Oystercatcher *H. ostralegus* with which it was formerly lumped.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*: Three individuals that showed very well on Derby Beach, at Wilson's Promontory National Park, were the only ones seen.

CHARADRIIDAE

- Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*: A common and widespread species.
- Banded Lapwing *Vanellus tricolor*: Several good sightings throughout the tour; the largest group noted being 11 birds, in the Flinders Ranges National Park.
- Red-kneed Dotterel *Erythrogonys cinctus*: A small flock of this strange (almost pitta-shaped!) and attractive plover was seen well at Deniliquin and an immature bird was present at the wetlands at Mungerannie Roadhouse.
- Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*: It took a fair stroll down Derby Beach at Wilson's Promontory National Park before we encountered a small flock of eight birds of this declining plover. Under pressure from recreational beach use, this species is listed as near-threatened in *Threatened Birds of the World*.
- Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*: Observed on many occasions, this attractive species prefers salt lakes and coastal areas.
- Inland Dotterel *Charadrius australis*: Undoubtedly, one of the highlights of the trip, twice we observed a flock of approximately 10 individuals, on the Birdsville Track that may well have been the same flock. There were a couple of full breeding plumaged birds in the flock, which were a real treat.
- Black-fronted Plover *Elseyaornis melanops*: A few good looks around the muddy edges of wetlands.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

- White-headed Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus*: Common, widespread and noisy. Not always split from Black-winged Stilt *H. himantopus*.
- Banded Stilt *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*: We saw a very distant flock of approximately 300 birds, at Lake Ranfurly, near Mildura. They are nearly always seen in the company of avocets and it is an irruptive nomad that is able to respond rapidly to climatic conditions.
- Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*: This fantastic avocet was seen well on a few occasions, it was seen especially well, on a small lake along the edge of the Birdsville Track.

LARIDAE

- Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*: Common on larger water bodies and along the coast.
- Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*: What a bill! Great views in coastal areas of Victoria and Tasmania.
- Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*: This species has recently colonised Australia, presumably by birds from New Zealand. They are now doing very well in Tasmania, where we enjoyed many good looks.
- Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: A summer migrant to the south that had arrived in good numbers, most birds observed were in full breeding plumage.
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*: Small numbers present in coastal areas of Victoria and South Australia.

Crested Tern (Greater C T) *Sterna bergii*: Close encounters at a number of coastal sites. The form concerned is *cristata*.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Australian Kite *Elanus axillaris*: Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*: Common and widespread.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*: Scattered sightings of this scavenger which was only really common in the wetlands between Red Cliffs and Deniliquin.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: Three sightings of birds in flight, including both adult and immature birds.

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*: Especially common in the outback where we were able to see up to 10 in a day, many at relatively close range. Great to see such a large eagle so common.

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides*: One of the highlights of the first morning was the group of three birds, including both dark and light morph birds that we enjoyed along the roadside, north of Bendigo. We also enjoyed several other scattered sightings throughout the tour.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*: Several birds were observed in flight throughout the tour.

Grey Goshawk (Variable G) *Accipiter novaehollandiae*: Only the stunning white morph birds, occur in Tasmania. Chris saw one circling above the trees during the flight from Bruny Island to Melaleuca. This was followed by a second sighting the following day, in the centre of Adventure Bay, on Bruny Island. Approximately half the group enjoyed brief but good looks at a solitary individual, while we were travelling from one accommodation to the other.

Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis*: A few good looks at this stunning harrier. We particularly enjoyed the pair hunting in tandem with the Australian Hobby, not far from Red Cliffs.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*: Common in wetlands near Kerang and in Tasmania, where we even saw one perched on a fence post.

FALCONIDAE

Black Falcon *Falco subniger*: A pair showed very well, on the outskirts of Deniliquin, allowing good close looks as they flew overhead, both birds were heavily in moult.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*: We enjoyed a total of five sightings throughout the tour. We very much enjoyed watching the bird working in tandem with the pair of Spotted Harriers. While eating dinner at our motel in Adelaide, we watched a bird chasing a starling just metres away, from where we were having dinner.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*: Many good views including pale, kestrel-like individuals and dark Black Falcon-like individuals.

Nankeen Kestrel (Australian K) *Falco cenchroides*: As is usual with kestrels, the common and widespread falcon.

COLUMBIDAE

- Feral Pigeon (introduced) (Rock Dove) *Columba livia*: Many opportunities to study this delightful creature!
- Spotted Turtle-Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia chinensis*: The common introduced dove in the cities - especially common around Melbourne.
- Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida*: A few sightings in drier habitats where its voice was often heard. Often lumped in Zebra Dove *G. striata* of southeast Asia, with the name Peaceful Dove being used for the enlarged species.
- Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*: Several great looks along the Birdsville Track.
- Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*: Several roadside birds showed well and many more were flushed.
- Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*: Two separate individuals seen in flight, during our time on Bruny Island, in Tasmania.
- Flock Bronzewing *Phaps histrionica*: A flock of approximately 20 birds flew in front of the bus, on the Birdsville Track.
- Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes*: Frequently seen waving their tails in the air and calling from prominent perches.

CACATUIDAE

- Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*: Many great sightings throughout the tour.
- Gang-gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*: Great scope views of both male and female birds in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, were very much enjoyed by everyone.
- Galah *Eulophus roseicapilla*: Common and widespread, it was seen every day on mainland Australia. Nevertheless it is an extremely attractive species of cockatoo.
- Long-billed Corella *Cacatua tenuirostris*: Now very common in Victoria and southern New South Wales. This species is rapidly expanding its range, due to the increased numbers of farm dams and introduced plants.
- Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea*: Common in the true outback. Not particularly popular when calling at 4 in the morning!
- Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*: Another common but attractive species. Anywhere else and they would all be in cages by now!

PSITTACIDAE

- Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*: Several pairs observed in flight in both Melbourne and Adelaide.
- Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*: Great views of several on our first day as we headed northwest out of Melbourne. A spectacularly attractive parrot.
- Purple-crowned Lorikeet *Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*: Seen well around the motel in Rainbow, in the Mallee.
- Little Lorikeet *Glossopsitta pusilla*: Super close looks at four individuals of this uncommon species, as they were feeding in a

flowering eucalypt, during our walk, at Melville Caves, on the first day of the tour.

Australian King Parrot *Alisterus scapularis*: This aptly named species was seen exceptionally well in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii*: We enjoyed many flight views of this species and a few perched ones. However, this was all surpassed by a stunning full plumaged male, that sat in a River Red Gum and posed for the photographers in Gulpa State Forest, near Deniliquin. This species is listed as vulnerable in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Regent Parrot *Polytelis anthopeplus*: Many lovely looks in the mallee country, especially the nesting birds at Wyperfeld National Park.

Cockatiel *Leptolophus hollandicus*: A dozen birds observed in northern Victoria, most sightings were of birds in flight but we did enjoy great scope views of four perched birds, south of Wyperfeld National Park.

Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*: Small numbers of this highly nomadic species were observed along the Birdsville Track where the hyperactive flocks whirred around, changing from yellow to green as the whole flocks twisted in unison.

Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*: We were delighted to find this attractive species in good numbers on Bruny Island, Tasmania. An endemic breeder on Tasmania, they winter on the mainland. This species is listed as endangered in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Green Rosella *Platycercus caledonicus*: Many good views of this Tasmanian endemic.

Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*: A beautiful, though common species, which we saw especially well in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Adelaide Rosella *Platycercus adelaidae*: Some lovely looks at Warren Gorge in the Flinders Ranges. Here the birds are at the yellow end of the spectrum.

Yellow Rosella *Platycercus flaveolus*: Great looks at this very range restricted species, particularly good looks were enjoyed in the campsite at Hattah Kulkyne National Park.

Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*: The first gorgeous parrot to draw 'oohs' and 'aahs' from the admiring group on the first morning.

Mallee Ringneck (Eastern R) *Barnardius barnardi*: Seen well during our time in the Mallee.

Port Lincoln Ringneck (Western R) *Barnardius zonarius*: Seen particularly well in the grounds of our motel, in the Flinders Ranges National Park. The Spencer Gulf (which Port Augusta is at the head of) is the dividing line between these two species.

Red-rumped Parrot *Psephotus haematonotus*: A common and widespread parrot.

Mulga Parrot *Psephotus varius*: Our best views were in the Murray-Sunset National Park but they were also seen in Wyperfeld National Park.

Blue Bonnet *Northiella haematogaster*: We first saw this species (the nominate subspecies) close to Wyperfeld National Park and again in the Murray-Sunset National Park and at Deniliquin. On the Birdsville Track we saw the subspecies *pallescens*, in good numbers.

Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*: A few seen in flight at Wilson's Promontory National Park, before finding one feeding on the ground, which we were able to inspect closely in our scopes.

Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans*: We enjoyed several good sightings, north of Adelaide, on the Birdsville Track and particularly in the Flinders Ranges National Park.

Orange-bellied Parrot *Neophema chrysogaster*: Our flight to Melaleuca, was very enjoyable and also provided us with the opportunity to enjoy fantastic scope views of this beautiful parrot, which is one of the rarest birds in the world. The entire world population breeds in the inaccessible southwest of Tasmania. This species is listed as critically endangered in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

CUCULIDAE

Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*: Good spotting by Joe, provided us with great views of a singing individual in the Murray-Sunset National Park. This species is an uncommon summer migrant to southern Australia.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cuculus flabelliformis*: First seen in Gulpa State Forest, with a few more seen and many more heard.

Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*: Seen well on five separate occasions.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*: Seen well on a couple of occasions and a few more heard.

TYTONIDAE

Masked Owl (Australian M O) *Tyto novaehollandiae* (NL): During a night drive in Bruny Island State Forest, Pat was fortunate enough to observe a Masked Owl flying through the forest.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: Three birds seen very well perched on fence posts, during the drive back to Deniliquin, after having seen the Plains-Wanderer.

PODARGIDAE

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*: We observed a total of eight of these large nocturnal birds, during the tour. This must be some kind of world record! However, it is hard to go past mum, dad and junior, sat on the lawn of our motel at Rainbow, in broad daylight!

APODIDAE

Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*: A huge thunderstorm passed over Mungerannie Roadhouse, during our stay there. This brought with it a large flock of approximately 70 Fork-tailed Swifts, a long distant migrant from eastern Asia. On arrival in Australia the movements of this species is effected greatly by meteorological activity, with flocks moving through on storm fronts, presumably taking advantage of large collections of insects, caught up in the storm. There are only a handful of sightings of this species, from this area.

ALCEDINIDAE

Azure Kingfisher *Alcedo azurea*: We enjoyed good scope views of a perched bird in Gulpa State Forest, near Deniliquin.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*: A really classic Australian bird, perhaps the best encounter was the roosting group at Warren Gorge in the Flinders Ranges, who were singing in unison.

Red-backed Kingfisher *Todiramphus pyrrhopygia*: First seen by Willemke in the Murray-Sunset National Park, we then enjoyed a few other good looks in the dry country, north of Adelaide. The red on the rump is not always easy to see.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sancta*: Best looks were in Gulpa State Forest; this bird is a summer migrant to the south of the country.

MEROPIIDAE

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*: These stunning bee-eaters had recently arrived from their winter quarters further north and were much admired at several locations.

MENURIDAE

Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae*: Great looks at both a male and female bird in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. We were also able to hear the fine song of this species, which is one of the world's finest mimics. David Attenborough's film of the one imitating various camera shutters was truly sensational and was filmed at the place where we saw the lyrebirds.

NEOSITTIDAE

Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*: We enjoyed great looks at a family party in the Gulpa State Forest, this was the *chrysoptera* form of this nuthatch-like species. This is the nominate race, which is colloquially known as Orange-winged Sittella.

CLIMACTERIDAE

White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaeus*: This widespread species occurs through the wetter areas of the south and east. We first saw it at Melville Caves. The scansorial Australian Treecreepers fill the niche of woodpeckers, a family that never made it beyond Lydekker's line (the ecological division that

separates Wallacea from Australasia). Indeed only three species made it into Wallacea!

Red-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris erythroptera*: Great looks at this uncommon species in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. This bird was at the south-western edge of its range.

White-browed Treecreeper *Climacteris affinis*: At the end of our day in the Murray-Sunset National Park, we enjoyed great looks at this casuarina specialist, in the Mallanbool Reserve, near Red Cliffs.

Brown Treecreeper *Climacteris picumnus*: The most common and widespread of the treecreepers, often seen feeding on the ground.

MALURIDAE

Superb Fairywren *Malurus cyaneus*: Common in the wetter environments in the south.

Splendid Fairywren *Malurus splendens*: Fantastic views on a number of occasions in the drier areas. The first performance at Wyperfeld National Park was simply stunning.

Variiegated Fairywren *Malurus lamberti*: Found in the drier areas. The first good males we saw were around the Mungerannie Roadhouse.

White-winged Fairywren *Malurus leucopterus*: Common on the dry plains. The first group we saw was at Lake Ranfurly, the males are particularly attractive.

Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus*: On a very windy day at Wilson's Promontory National Park, we located a pair that responded well to tape playback, but stayed well down in the heathland, due to the strong winds. A second pair at Melaleuca, in south-west Tasmania, showed much better, on a sunny, almost windless day.

Mallee Emu-wren *Stipiturus mallee*: We enjoyed amazingly good looks at this extremely range restricted species, in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. This spinifex-specialist is listed as vulnerable in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Striated Grasswren *Amytornis striatus*: A group of three birds responded very well to tape playback in Hattah Kulkyne National Park; sitting on the tops of stunted eucalypts for all to see and singing their heads off as they did so.

Short-tailed Grasswren *Amytornis merrotsyi*: A solitary, immature bird was eventually tracked down and after initially showing no response to the tape, ran straight to Chris and stopped within a couple of centimetres of his boot! We all enjoyed great looks at this bird in the Flinders Ranges National Park. It is a recent split (from Striated Grasswren *A. striatus*). It is however split in Marchant, S. & Higgins, P. (eds): **The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds**. 1991-?, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Eyrean Grasswren *Amytornis goyderi*: We were fortunate enough to get absolutely outstanding views of two pairs of this excellent dune-loving species, on one of the dunes, along the Birdsville Track.

Thick-billed Grasswren *Amytornis textilis*: Brilliant views along the Strzelecki Track of three birds; one bird was observed scurrying at great speed with its tail cocked, rushing towards Chris who was playing the bird's song.

PARDALOTIDAE

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*: Commonly heard and many good views. In the mallee we saw the *xanthopygus* form which has, in the past, been split off as a separate species, the Yellow-rumped Pardalote

Forty-spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus quadragintus*: We were fortunate enough to get excellent views of at least two individuals on Bruny Island, Tasmania. This species is listed as endangered in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*: The most frequently encountered pardalote.

Rufous Bristlebird *Dasyornis broadbenti*: Our long drive to coastal western Victoria, in search of this species. Proved highly successful, as we watched an obliging bird feeding out in the open. This species is listed as near-threatened in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Large-billed Scrubwren *Sericornis magnirostris*: A pair of birds were observed at very close quarters in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. These birds were at the extreme south-western edge of their range.

White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis*: Common in the wetter areas of southern Victoria.

Tasmanian Scrubwren (Brown S) *Sericornis humilis*: Very common on Mount Wellington. Formerly lumped with the previous species.

Shy Heathwren (S Hylacola) *Hylacola cautus*: We enjoyed several good looks during our first attempt at 'mallee bashing' in Wyperfeld National Park, we also saw it well on one occasion in the Murray-Sunset National Park.

Rufous Fieldwren (R Calamanthus) *Calamanthus campestris*: Great views of a few birds along the Strzelecki Track.

Striated Fieldwren (S Calamanthus) *Calamanthus fuliginosus*: A couple performed nicely for us in the tussock grass, in Wilson's Promontory National Park.

Weebill *Smicrornis brevirostris*: This tiny species, often quoted as being Australia's smallest, was encountered in small flocks on a number of occasions. It was first seen at Melville Caves on the first day.

Western Gerygone *Gerygone fusca*: One bird was seen well in Gulpa State Forest, where its distinctive song betrayed its presence.

Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*: Present in good numbers in the wetter areas of southern Victoria and Tasmania.

Inland Thornbill (Broad-tailed T) *Acanthiza apicalis*: We enjoyed very close looks at this species in Wyperfeld National Park

Tasmanian Thornbill *Acanthiza ewingii*: Common on Mount Wellington. Best identified from the previous species by the plain rufous forehead and white vent.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza uropygialis*: Fairly common though relatively inconspicuous, in the drier woodland. First seen well at Wyperfeld National Park.

Yellow Thornbill (Little T) *Acanthiza nana*: Only seen on one occasion, two birds showed well in Gulpa State Forest, near Deniliquin.

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata*: A few small flocks seen well in the wet forests of the Dandenong Ranges National Park, east of Melbourne.

Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides*: Small flocks were observed very well in Gulpa State Forest, where they were content to frequently flash their rumps!

Slender-billed Thornbill (Sapphire T) *Acanthiza iredalei*: A prolonged stop at Port Gawler eventually brought us good views of a couple of this sapphire specialist. The race concerned was *hedleyi*.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*: Several encounters with this ground-loving thornbill.

Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala leucopsis*: First seen at Hattah Kulkyne National Park, we had many opportunities to study this one.

Chestnut-breasted Whiteface *Aphelocephala pectoralis*: We all enjoyed great looks at a pair of birds feeding a young bird. This rare species is endemic to a very small area of South Australia and is only ever seen in this area. This species is listed as near-threatened in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

MELIPHAGIDAE

Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata*: Common and conspicuous and one of the first truly Australian species seen on the tour (once we'd noted Blackbird, Common Starling, House Sparrow etc!).

Yellow Wattlebird *Anthochaera paradoxa*: This long-tailed, almost cuckoo-like species showed well on Bruny Island where the long pendulous wattles were easily seen.

Brush Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*: Seen well on a few occasions in southern Victoria.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys rufogularis*: Common in dry habitats including the mallee, our first sightings occurred at Melville Caves.

Striped Honeyeater *Plectorhyncha lanceolata*: Great looks at this uncommon species in Wyperfeld National Park and along the roadside to the north of Wyperfeld National Park.

Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus*: Two birds seen well feeding on flowering shrubs, at Deniliquin.

Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis*: Only seen alongside the previous species, in Deniliquin.

Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis*: Our first sighting of this species, nesting in the grounds of our motel in Deniliquin, was the best sighting.

Bell Miner *Manorina melanophrys*: Great looks at several individuals in the colony on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*: Common and widespread.

Yellow-throated Miner *Manorina fulvigula*: A common bird of the dry country.

Lewin's Honeyeater *Meliphaga lewinii*: Great looks at this species in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, this bird was at the extreme south-western edge of its range.

Yellow-faced Honeyeater *Lichenostomus chrysops*: Seen well at Melville Caves and again in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus virescens*: Pretty common and widespread.

White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostomus leucotis*: Several good looks in the dry forest and mallee. First noted at Melville Caves.

Yellow-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavicollis*: Great scope views of one half way up Mount Wellington and another briefly on Bruny Island; another fine Tasmanian endemic.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops*: A few birds showed very well close to Melville Caves.

Fuscous Honeyeater *Lichenostomus fuscus*: Common in the dry woodland near Melville Caves but not seen elsewhere.

Grey-fronted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus plumulus*: A pair of this uncommon species, was seen well in a rocky gorge in the northern Flinders Ranges.

Yellow-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus ornatus*: The commonest sight and sound in the mallee.

White-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus penicillatus*: Another common honeyeater. It is often present close to human habitation.

Black-chinned Honeyeater *Melithreptus gularis*: A pair responded very well to the tape near Melville Caves and afforded us excellent views.

Strong-billed Honeyeater *Melithreptus validirostris*: A bark-stripping specialist and one of Tasmania's more elusive endemics. We eventually tracked down a flock on Bruny Island.

Brown-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus brevirostris*: We only saw this species on one occasion, a solitary bird was observed very well in Gulpa State Forest, near Denililquin.

White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus*: Seen well at the Dusky Miner colony, on the outskirts of Melbourne. Daniel also saw one individual at Warren Gorge, in the Flinders Ranges.

Black-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus affinis*: Seen well on Bruny Island, another of Tasmania's endemics.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*: First observed at Wilson's Promontory National Park, with further sightings in Tasmania.

White-fronted Honeyeater *Phylidonyris albifrons*: Two birds were observed together on the outskirts of Red Cliffs. This is one of the classic nomads; you never know where, or if, you will see one.

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*: Another common honeyeater that is often present close to human habitation.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater *Phylidonyris melanops* (NL): Audrey Baker was very fortunate to observe this species in coastal heathland, in western Victoria.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*: This sprightly little honeyeater was first seen at Melville Caves and we saw several more in the wetter forests of southern Victoria and Tasmania.

Pied Honeyeater *Certhionyx variegatus*: Without doubt, one of the tour highlights, was bumping into large numbers of this highly nomadic and uncommon honeyeater. We enjoyed great views of both male and female birds along the Birdsville Track.

Black Honeyeater *Certhionyx niger*: We enjoyed super looks at an adult male of this highly nomadic and uncommon species, feeding on flowering shrubs, close to Deniliquin.

Crimson Chat *Epthianura tricolor*: Our first surprise sighting, was of a pair of birds in Hattah Kulkyne National Park, this species does not normally occur this far to the south. Later in the tour we encountered good numbers of birds, including many splendid males, along the Birdsville Track.

Orange Chat *Epthianura aurifrons*: We enjoyed many great looks at both females, immatures and stunning adult males, along both the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks. In total we saw between 300-400 individuals, much larger numbers, than one would normally encounter.

White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons*: A fairly common bird, which we saw well on several occasions, it is closely associated with water.

Gibberbird (Gibber Chat) *Ashbyia lovensis*: We enjoyed a few really good looks at this 'outback' speciality.

CINCLOSOMATIDAE

Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus* (H): Heard at Wilson's Promontory National Park but it was never close.

Chirruping Wedgebill *Psophodes cristatus*: We enjoyed great scope views of a couple of pairs along the Strzelecki Track, it was also observed on one occasion along the Birdsville Track.

Chestnut Quail-Thrush *Cinclosoma castanotus*: Great looks on several occasions in the mallee, the first at Wyperfeld National Park being enjoyed by all.

Cinnamon Quail-Thrush *Cinclosoma cinnamomeum*: Great looks at several pairs along both the Strzelecki and Birdsville Tracks.

POMATOSTOMIDAE

White-browed Babbler *Pomatostomus superciliosus*: Several busy flocks seen.

Chestnut-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus ruficeps*: We were pleased to see this species in Hattah Kulkyne National Park. The flock was typically shy but the scope revealed the diagnostic pale wing bars and chestnut crown.

PETROICIDAE

- Rose Robin *Petroica rosea* (H): At least two birds were calling in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, unfortunately, they did not respond to tape.
- Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster*: Fortunately, this fluorescent species of robin performed brilliantly on Mount Wellington, in Tasmania.
- Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*: The most vivid of them all, we all got great looks at one on top of Mount Wellington, followed by many good sightings in farmland on Bruny Island.
- Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*: A surprisingly large number of up to 20 individuals, were seen well in farmland on Bruny Island, in Tasmania.
- Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii*: A fabulous common inhabitant of the drier woodlands.
- Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata*: Seen very well in the three mallee national parks. This is one of a number of dry forest species that seem to be in decline for no apparent reason.
- Dusky Robin *Melanodryas vittata*: A few good looks at this Tasmanian endemic, on Bruny Island.
- Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis*: Only seen on one occasion, in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.
- Jacky Winter *Microeca fascinans*: The name is probably more interesting than the drab-brown bird it describes. Fortunately the white in the tail gives it a distinctive feature. We saw them well in many of the drier woodlands and mallee sites.
- Southern Scrub-Robin *Drymodes brunneopygia*: Seen briefly on two separate occasions, once in Wyperfeld National Park, followed by a second sighting in the Murray Sunset National Park.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

- Crested Shrike-Tit *Falcunculus frontatus*: Seen briefly by Chris in the canopy of Mountain Ash forest, in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.
- Crested Bellbird *Oreoica gutturalis*: This bird has a very distinctive call, which we heard in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, before tracking down a solitary bird in the Murray Sunset National Park, which we saw very well.
- Grey Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*: Fairly common and many good looks, though more often heard than seen.
- Golden Whistler (Common G W) *Pachycephala pectoralis*: Seen well on two separate occasions; the first at Melville Caves and the second in Bruny Island State Forest, in Tasmania.
- Gilbert's Whistler *Pachycephala inornata*: A family party, of this particularly uncommon species, was seen very well in the Murray Sunset National Park.
- Red-lored Whistler *Pachycephala rufogularis*: One of the highlights of the trip was finding a male of this rare and seldom seen species in the Murray Sunset National Park. It responded very well to tape, enabling everyone to have a very good look at him. We are of course indebted to Alex and his team for getting us to the

right area. This species is listed as near-threatened in *Threatened Birds of the World*.

Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*: Fine views of a singing male, who also responded well to tape playback, in the Wilson's Promontory National Park.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*: A summer visitor to southern Australia, we saw it well on a number of occasions, we saw it particularly well at Warren Gorge, in South Australia.

DICRURIDAE

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*: Many sightings enjoyed in the Wet forests of the south.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*: Seen on almost every day of the tour.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca* (NL): An uncommon summer visitor to southern Australia; it was seen well by Daniel and Laurette in the grounds of their cottage, on Bruny Island.

Australian Magpie-Lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*: A very common and widespread species, with great vocalizations.

ORIOOLIDAE

Olive-backed Oriole *Oriolus sagittatus*: An uncommon summer visitor to southern Australia, we saw it very well on the first day of the tour, during our walk at Melville Caves.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*: Seen regularly after our first sightings on the first day.

White-winged Triller *Lalage tricolor*: Many good sightings throughout the tour, this is another highly nomadic species.

ARTAMIDAE

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus*: Good sightings at Gulpa State Forest and on the Strzelecki Track.

Masked Woodswallow *Artamus personatus*: Several small flocks were present in the mallee this year, of this highly nomadic species.

White-browed Woodswallow *Artamus superciliosus*: Also several large flocks of this species were present in the mallee this year, this highly nomadic species often associates with the above species.

Black-faced Woodswallow *Artamus cinereus*: Good numbers scattered throughout the Strzelecki Track.

Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*: Plenty of good sightings of this common summer visitor to southern Australia.

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*: Good numbers scattered throughout the tour.

Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis*: Several good sightings of this attractive species in northern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*: Common and conspicuous and seen every single day. The following forms were noted: *G. t. leuconota* 'White-backed' Magpie in southern Victoria which integrated with the smaller *G. t. tibicen* 'Black-backed' Magpie in northern Victoria and southwest New South Wales. In Tasmania the form was *G. t. hypoleuca* 'Tasmanian' Magpie.

Pied Currawong *Strepera graculina*: Common in the wetter forests in southern Victoria.

Black Currawong *Strepera fuliginosa*: This Tasmanian endemic, was only recorded in the Bruny Island State Forest and was not seen particularly well.

Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*: Two birds were seen well in Wilson's Promontory National Park; they were of the nominate race *A. v. versicolor*.

CORVIDAE

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*: The Australian corvids are all unbelievably close in appearance. Common and widespread, the long whining call and obvious throat hackles help with this one.

Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus*: Observed at Wilson's Promontory National Park and in Tasmania. Deep calls and range help with this one.

Little Raven *Corvus mellori*: Common in open country throughout most of the tour, best identified by voice.

Little Crow *Corvus bennetti*: The flocking crow of the real interior. Small size, call, range and habitat help in identification, as well as pale-looking underwings.

CORCORACIDAE

White-winged Chough *Corcorax melanorhamphos*: A common though charismatic species of the dry woodland and mallee areas.

Apostlebird *Struthidea cinerea*: Great views in the campground at Hattah Kulkyne National Park, where they were very tame.

HIRUNDINIDAE

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosternus*: The first was observed at Deniliquin, followed by a few more sightings of this delightful swallow, in the outback.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*: Common and widespread.

Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*: This tree nesting species showed well on a number of occasions.

Fairy Martin *Hirundo ariel*: Many great views of this summer visitor, they could often be founding nesting in culverts under roadways.

MOTACILLIDAE

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*: Common in grass-covered open country.

ALAUDIDAE

Singing Bushlark *Mirafra javanica*: A few good sightings in farmland, in central Victoria.

Skylark (Eurasian S) *Alauda arvensis*: This introduced species was seen and heard a few times in the south.

SYLVIIDAE

Rufous Songlark *Cincloramphus mathewsi*: Several great sightings of this summer migrant to the south.

Brown Songlark *Cincloramphus cruralis*: Great views of displaying birds, especially on our first day as we were heading for Rainbow around the non-existent lakes.

Australian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus australis*: Common at all reed-fringed wetlands visited.

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*: Good looks at a couple of birds displaying over reedbeds, north of Deniliquin.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*: Surprisingly, a bird responded well to tape playback at a disused gravel pit, at Deniliquin. Even posing for some time on the top of reeds.

PASSERIDAE

Tree Sparrow (Eurasian T S) *Passer montanus*: Introduced and only seen around the hotel at Tullamarine on our first morning.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Introduced.

FRINGILLIDAE

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: Introduced to keep the English immigrants happy.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: Introduced.

PLOCEIDAE

Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*: Very common around water along 'the tracks'.

Red-browed Firetail *Neochmia temporalis*: This attractive species was first observed during our walk at Melville Caves, on the first day of the tour. It was seen again in Gulpa State Forest, where we enjoyed prolonged views of a pair of birds nest building.

Beautiful Firetail *Stagonopleura bella*: One of the specialities of Malaleuca, in southwest Tasmania. We enjoyed super looks at a solitary bird perched on the bird feeding table, just a few metres away.

DICAEIDAE

Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*: A pair of birds were observed briefly in Gulpa State Forest.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*: Many flocks seen.

MUSCICAPIDAE

Bassian Thrush *Zoothera lunulata*: We enjoyed good looks at this species on Mount Wellington National Park, in Tasmania. It is so nice to see a relatively tame *Zoothera* thrush.

Blackbird (Common B) *Turdus merula*: Introduced.

STURNIDAE

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: Introduced.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Introduced.

MAMMALS

Short-beaked Echidna (S-nosed E) *Tachyglossus aculeatus*: We were all delighted to enjoy prolonged views at a particularly tame individual, along the roadside, north of Melbourne. We also enjoyed several more sightings of this unlikely-looking creature, on Bruny Island, in Tasmania.

Ampurta *Dasycercus hillieri* (NL): Joe was extremely fortunate to observe one of these seldom seen and nocturnal marsupials, which apparently crept out of a burrow in the sand dunes, in response to tape playback of the Eyrean Grasswren!

Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isoodon obesulus*: One individual ran across the road, in front of the bus, after dark one evening, on the Birdsville Track.

Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus*: We very much enjoyed watching a couple of these magical mammals, a little to the north of Melbourne.

Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*: Great spotting by Philippe, enabled the group to look into a tree hollow and observe bits and pieces of this species. They proved to be numerous, after dark, on Bruny Island, in Tasmania.

Western Grey Kangaroo *Macropus fuliginosus*: Confusingly named as this brown kangaroo was common in the mallee in eastern Australia!

Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus*: The best views were obtained during our visit to Wilson's Promontory National Park.

Euro (Common Wallaroo) *Macropus robustus*: Great views of this woolly species in the hilly areas of the Strzelecki Track and the Flinders Ranges.

Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*: Many observed at dusk and dawn during our time spent on Bruny Island, including three or four albino individuals. They looked like something a magician would conjure up.

Red Kangaroo *Macropus rufus*: Several sightings though best studied on the airfield in the Flinders Ranges where it was present in good numbers.

Yellow-footed Rock-Wallaby *Petrogale xanthopus*: The kangaroo of the tour? We enjoyed watching these crepuscular 'roos at Warren Gorge in the southern Flinders Ranges.

Tasmanian Pademelon (Red-bellied P) *Thylogale billardierii*: This small species of kangaroo was observed very well, at Melaleuca, in southwest Tasmania.

Black Wallaby (Swamp W) *Wallabia bicolor*: Some good looks in the Dandenong Ranges and Wilson's Promontory National Parks.

Dingo (introduced) *Canis familiaris*: Great looks at a solitary individual which approached our bus, looking for food, on the

Birdsville Track. The exact origin of these introduced predators is still disputed.

Red Fox (introduced) *Vulpes vulpes*: A few seen. An introduced menace!

Australian Fur-Seal (Afro-Australian F-S) *Arctocephalus pusillus*: Great spotting by Dave, enabled us to watch a few of these animals frolicking in the surf, off Point Lonsdale.

Hog-Deer (introduced) *Cervus porcinus*: One seen briefly at Wilson's Promontory National Park.

Brown Hare (introduced) *Lepus europaeus*: Introduced.

European Rabbit (introduced) *Oryctolagus cuniculus*: Introduced.