

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

SOUTHEASTERN AUSTRALIA & TASMANIA

3-22 NOVEMBER 2015

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: Chris Doughty

Our tour to southeastern Australia and Tasmania was without doubt, a highly successful and enjoyable tour, where we saw 264 species of birds and 18 species of mammals. Amongst the 264 species of birds recorded, we saw a number of outback specialities, including several highly-desired and unpredictable nomadic species and a good number of rare and seldom-seen endemics. Particular mention should go to the following: a very close Soft-plumaged Petrel and no less than four light-morph White-rumped Storm-Petrels, which we saw incredibly well, feeding right next to the boat during our pelagic off southeastern Tasmania; this species is only rarely encountered in Australian waters, a fine flock of rare Freckled Ducks, resting up on a small lake in Tasmania, good close looks at the very uncommon Square-tailed Kite, a stunning white colour morph Grey Goshawk, super close looks at a small flock of very uncommon and highly nomadic, Inland Dotterels, stunning spotlight views of the unique Plains-wanderer and close looks at the superb Orange-bellied Parrot, one of the world's rarest birds. Add to this a large number of seabirds, many of which, were observed feeding only a few metres away from the boat, an amazing array of colourful robins and fairywrens, no less than 28 species of honeyeaters, three species of Australian babblers, a superb male Orange Chat and the quality begins to shine through. However, it was not just the birds; mammalian highlights included a very close encounter with up to four Platypus, several Short-beaked Echidnas, Tasmanian Devils and a Spot-tailed Quoll from just a few metres away, a splendid Koala, a couple of Common Wombats and a fine selection of kangaroos, including a couple of albino Red-necked Wallabies.

Following a short flight from Melbourne, we arrived at Hobart Airport, on the beautiful island of Tasmania. A short walk around the carpark produced Masked Lapwing, Welcome Swallow, Noisy Miner, Australian Magpie, the near endemic Forest Raven and European Starling. The tour was off and running, we were on our way. A quick stop at the nearby River Derwent, provided us with good looks at several Hoary-headed Grebes, a couple of uncommon Great Crested Grebes, one or two Musk Ducks and both Kelp and Silver Gulls. Roadside birding during the drive to Eaglehawk Neck added Black-faced Cormorant, White-faced Heron, Black Swan, Pacific Black Duck, the endemic Tasmanian Native-hen, Pied Oystercatcher, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Laughing Kookaburra, Common Blackbird, the well named Superb Fairywren, Little Wattlebird, the endemic Yellow Wattlebird, Dusky Woodswallow, Grey Currawong, House Sparrow and European Goldfinch. While enjoying dinner at our coastal hotel that evening, an Australasian Gannet was observed flying just offshore.

The following morning, in the carpark of our hotel, we enjoyed good close looks at several Tree Martins and the delightful New Holland Honeyeater. We then drove to the harbour at Eaglehawk Neck and set out to sea, for a full days pelagic birding. On our way out to the edge of the continental shelf, we made a stop at a small island where we saw several Australian Fur Seals. Once off the shelf, in very deep, nutrient rich waters, we made two prolonged stops, where we cut the engines and threw scraps of food overboard in order to attract various species of albatrosses and other seabirds, and we made a slick from a concoction of cod liver oil and mashed up fish, in order to attract storm-petrels. In no time at all, we were surrounded by literally dozens of squabbling albatrosses, petrels, prions, shearwaters, and a flock of more than 50 storm-petrels, all within a few metres of the boat. We saw a single Wandering Albatross, a few Southern Royal Albatrosses, a single Northern Royal Albatross, dozens of Shy Albatrosses and a single immature Black-browed Albatross. We enjoyed watching a few Northern Giant Petrels, half a dozen or so beautiful Cape Petrels, scores of Fairy Prions, a dozen or so White-chinned Petrels, half a dozen Great-winged Petrels, a single Soft-plumaged Petrel, half a dozen Sooty Shearwaters, literally thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters, up to 30 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, perhaps a dozen White-faced Storm-Petrels, and best of all, four White-bellied Storm-Petrels, not more than a few metres from the boat. We also observed small numbers of Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns. Back at the harbour at Eaglehawk Neck, we added Great Cormorant, Sooty Oystercatcher and a stunning adult male Flame Robin, which was feeding along the tide-line. While having dinner that evening at our hotel, a small flock of Swift Parrots were observed in a eucalypt in the garden of the hotel. Following dinner we undertook a little birding at Port Arthur, where we added Cape Barren Goose, Australian Wood Duck, Tawny Frogmouth, Grey Fantail and European Greenfinch. We also observed small numbers of Rufous-bellied Pademelons, a Common Wombat and European Rabbit.

The following morning, after breakfast, we did a little birding close to the hotel and here we added Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, the endemic Green Rosella, the endemic Tasmanian Scrubwren, the endemic Tasmanian Thornbill, Silver-eye, the endemic Black-headed Honeyeater, Crescent Honeyeater and Eastern Spinebill. We then did some birding in the Wielangta Forest, where we found Bassian Thrush, Olive Whistler, Striated Fieldwren and Yellow-throated Honeyeater. Prior to lunch we did some birding on Mount Wellington, where a walk in the forest produced Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, a stunning male Pink Robin and a couple of endemic Black Currawongs. We then headed south and crossed the D'entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island. We immediately knew we were in luck when the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote popped up in front of us, right on queue. A drive across the island produced a wintering flock of Eastern Cattle Egrets, both Grey and Chestnut Teal, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Swamp Harrier, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Common and Brush Bronzewing, Blue-winged Parrot, Pallid Cuckoo, the endemic Dusky Robin, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, White-fronted Chat and Striated Pardalote. At dusk large numbers of Red-necked Wallabies were moving from the forest into open fields to feed and there were a couple of albino wallabies amongst the group.

We spent the following day birding at various places on Bruny Island, we observed a stunning white colour morph Grey Goshawk, for an extended period of time, we also saw Brown Falcon, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Australasian Pipit, Scarlet Robin, Golden Whistler, Grey Shrike-Thrush, a pair of endemic Scrubtits, Brown Thornbill, and the last of the Tasmanian endemics, the Strong-billed Honeyeater, and the simply stunning, Beautiful Firetail. We also saw our first Short-beaked Echidna of the tour.

The following morning we flew to Melaleuca, in the remote southwest corner of Tasmania. Our main target bird here would be the Orange-bellied Parrot, one of the world's rarest birds, which only breeds in this area. We were not to be disappointed; we enjoyed super close looks at this species both on the bird feeding table and in the bush. We also enjoyed the added bonus of an all too quick sighting, of the Southern Emuwren. All too quickly the time passed and we had to fly back to Bruny Island. After dark, while driving home from dinner we observed a couple of copper colour morph Common Brushtail Possums.

The following morning, while at the ferry terminal on Bruny Island, we were surprised to observe a solitary Arctic Tern, fly right past the ferry terminal. We then drove to a lodge deep in undisturbed forest in Tasmania's northwest. We broke the long drive, with a birding stop at Gould's Lagoon, close to Hobart, in order to observe a flock of a dozen or so Freckled Ducks, this very uncommon species, is a rare nomadic visitor to Tasmania. Other birds here, which were new for the tour, included Great Egret, Australasian Shoveler, Hardhead, Australian Swampheaven and Eurasian Coot. Other new birds during the long drive included Australian Pelican, Little Black and Little Pied Cormorants, Australian Shelduck, Galah and Eurasian Skylark. At dusk, we enjoyed the amazing spectacle of half a dozen Platypus swimming around in the local river and then retired to our cabins, already well primed for the evenings entertainment! After dark, we enjoyed prolonged views of up to half a dozen Tasmanian Devils coming to bait right outside our cabins, it was a thrilling sight, and some of us were lucky enough to also enjoy great looks at yet another nocturnal carnivorous marsupial, the splendid Spot-tailed Quoll.

An early start the following morning, saw us on the road heading for the airport at Burnie, on the north coast of Tasmania, but not before adding one more bird to our Tassie bird list, in the form of a Little Grassbird. A short flight took us to Melbourne, on the south coast of mainland Australia, where we had a whole new set of birds to add to our ever growing trip-list. Driving north, through the suburbs of Melbourne we noted fields full of Little Ravens, and plenty of roadside Magpie-larks and Common Mynas. We soon found ourselves in the vicinity of the scenic Melville Caves where new birds came with a rush. A pale colour morph Little Eagle flew overhead, an adult male Rufous Whistler was in full song, a couple of Buff-rumped Thornbills somewhat reluctantly, showed themselves, while a couple of Yellow Thornbills were more obliging, a delightful male Mistletoebird added a splash of colour to the proceedings and the honeyeaters were well represented, with good looks at Yellow-faced, White-eared, White-plumed, Brown-headed and Spiny-cheeked. In the grounds of our motel at Inglewood, we added Spotted Dove, Crested Pigeon, Eastern Rosella, (Australian parrots really are the best!) and Red Wattlebird.

Early the following morning we had not travelled very far, when the bus came to a screeching halt, and we were soon enjoying super close looks at the very uncommon Square-tailed Kite, skimming the tops of the stunted mallee trees. Here we also observed Willie Wagtail, a small flock of jaunty Varied Sittellas and a pair of decidedly uncommon Crested Shrike-Tits. The rest of the morning was spent birding in the Kooyoora State Forest, where new birds came thick and fast. They included Peaceful Dove, Long-billed Corella, Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, a flock of White-browed Babblers, both White-throated and Brown Treecreepers, Jacky Winter, the very attractive Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, the rather plain Fuscous Honeyeater, a small flock of brilliantly responsive and uncommon, Black-chinned Honeyeaters, a few stunningly attractive White-browed Woodswallows and a small group of colourful Red-browed Finches. We broke the long drive to Rainbow, with a lunch stop at St. Arnaud. Following lunch, as we were getting

into the bus, we found a large flock of colourful Musk Lorikeets, feeding on nearby ornamental trees, and while admiring them, we also saw a soaring Whistling Kite and a pair of Australian Ravens. We broke the afternoon drive, with a birding stop close to Donald, and here we added Straw-necked Ibis, Black Kite, Collared Sparrowhawk, Black-fronted Dotterel, Feral Pigeon, Red-rumped Parrot and Australian Reed-Warbler. As we neared our destination of Rainbow, we also saw our first Little Corellas and attractive Blue Bonnets. New mammals today included both Eastern and Western Grey Kangaroos.

The following morning we started the day off with a visit to a small farm dam, close to the motel where we were staying, and we watched with interest a family party of Australasian Grebes, where the parent birds were observed carrying the young ones under their wings. We then set off for a full days birding in nearby Wyperfeld National Park. On route to the park, we saw two different Spotted Harriers and a striking Pied Butcherbird. On reaching the park, we were introduced to the pleasurable concept of 'mallee-bashing' with spinifex (a delightful added ingredient) we then spread out in search of some of Australia's most elusive birds. In the cold early morning air we were soon brought to life by a displaying Yellow-plumed Honeyeater, and our first Weebills, of the tour. As we drove through the park, we picked up colourful Australian Ringnecks and a fine Grey Butcherbird. However, it was evident that the park was once again in a drought situation, which was severely affecting many species of both birds and mammals, numbers of Western Grey Kangaroos were very low and Emus, normally a conspicuous feature of the park, were non existent!

Unfortunately, due to global warming, the frequency of droughts in Australia is increasing, as is the severity of the droughts, and the birds and mammals do not have sufficient time to recover in numbers, in-between the droughts. Determined to find more of the special birds of the Mallee, we decided to do some more 'mallee bashing', which proved very popular with the group! It did pay dividends however, and new birds included Australian Kite, Australian Kestrel, the beautiful Red-capped Robin, Hooded Robin, Inland and Chestnut-rumped Thornbills and the attractive Spotted Pardalote. Unfortunately, our star bird of the day, did not show itself until well into the morning, but when it did, it was well worth waiting for. While we were walking through the mallee, we flushed an Australian Owlet-Nightjar out of its daytime roost, in the hollow, of a broken off branch. It flew from the hollow and sat in a small eucalypt, where it just sat there and gazed at us with its huge dark eyes! 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. In the afternoon we explored a nearby area where we soon found some stunningly beautiful Regent Parrots and had a close encounter with a bizarre-looking Shingle-backed Lizard. On arrival at our motel in Ouyen, we found that the garden hosted Singing Honeyeaters, a White-breasted Woodswallow and best of all, in an adjoining paddock, a pair of magnificent Major Mitchell's Cockatoos were nesting in a hole in a large eucalypt.

We then spent a full day birding in the second of the Mallee National Parks, Hattah-Kulkyne. Here we experienced our first day of rain on the tour, and it was heavy, torrential rain, which fell for most of the morning. For the rain to fall here was somewhat ironic, as the park was suffering seriously from drought conditions. As the lightning flashed, with ear-splitting thunder directly overhead, we continued our favourite pastime of 'mallee-bashing', and we hoped that the rain we were experiencing, would be beneficial to the birds we were searching for. We finally saw our first Emus here, unfortunately, it was only an adult male with one chick, the drought was really taking its toll. We enjoyed watching a couple of pairs of colourful Mulga Parrots,

beautiful Rainbow Bee-eaters, and somewhat surprisingly, we found an immature Fairy Martin, amongst a large flock of Tree Martins. A pair of Variegated Fairywrens, was a good find in this area, we saw small flocks of rather subdued plumaged Southern Whitefaces, we stumbled across a flock of Yellow-throated Miners and best of all, we were pleased to find good numbers of the highly nomadic Masked Woodswallows amongst the flocks of White-browed Woodswallows. We also stumbled across a den of the Red Fox, which sent small cubs scurrying in all directions. It was now time for lunch, and nursing prickled ankles, we enjoyed a dose of Aussie humour as we admired the various signs and notices at the Hattah Store, as we ate our well deserved lunch. The afternoon found us carefully picking our way through yet more spinifex, but it did pay dividends, as we very much enjoyed watching a family party of Chestnut Quailthrush, walking slowly through the mallee. Later in the afternoon, we visited a large open plain and here we watched a shy but fairly obliging group of Chestnut-crowned Babblers, here we also encountered a Feral Goat, accompanied by a small kid. A visit to Lake Hattah produced Australian White Ibis and beautiful Pink-eared Ducks, and a nearby campsite was home to yellow colour morph Crimson Rosellas and rather bizarre, but non the less attractive, Apostlebirds.

This was followed by a second morning of 'mallee-bashing' in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, which produced a female White-winged Fairywren and finally, good scope views of a superb male Crested Bellbird, which we had been hearing for a day and a half, before a bird eventually responded well to tape playback. In the afternoon we continued northwards, and spent the rest of the afternoon birding at Kings Billabong, on the outskirts of Mildura. New birds at the wetland included a few Pied Cormorants, a pair of Australian Darters, a splendid Australian Hobby which flashed by over our heads, there were several Whiskered Terns in attendance, and we saw a couple of Little Friarbirds, in the river red gums, which surrounded the billabong. On arrival at our resort in Mildura, we found Blue-faced Honeyeaters in the garden.

Before leaving Mildura, we did some birding at nearby Lake Ranfurley, where we encountered large flocks of Pied and Banded Stilts and Red-necked Avocets. One other bird which was new for the tour, was the attractive Red-capped Plover. Back in Mildura, we enjoyed great looks at a pair of very attractive Rainbow Lorikeets and during the drive to Lake Woorinen, we came to a screeching halt, to watch a Brown Goshawk circling overhead. The lake itself proved quite productive, and here we saw four species of migrant waders, which included a Latham's Snipe, Marsh and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and Red-necked Stints. Jan also pointed out our only Red-kneed Dotterel of the tour, this beautiful species is an uncommon nomad throughout Australia. Another birding stop at nearby Lake Boga, produced a small flock of Caspian Terns and our final birding stop for the day, at Lake Tutchewop, produced our first Royal Spoonbill. We then spent the night at Swan Hill.

The following day we spent the morning birding in the Goschen Bushland Reserve, where we enjoyed close looks at a pair of perched Cockatiels, which are right at the southern edge of their range here and we also tracked down a singing pair of Rufous Songlarks. We also saw a Brown Hare. The afternoon was spent birding a series of lakes, before overnighting in Kerang. At Lake Murphy, we found no less than half a dozen or so Yellow-billed Spoonbills and we found a Pacific Heron in a wet paddock, close to Kerang. A birding stop at an ibis rookery, produced a fine flock of Grey-crowned Babblers and a little birding in the Town and Back Swamp at Kerang, turned up a pair of Dusky Moorhens.

Much of the following morning was spent birding in the Appin State Forest, where the only new bird for the tour, was a pair of Singing Bushlarks, which we watched performing their ariel flight displays. While driving back to Kerang we found a small flock of Zebra Finches, perched on roadside fencing. We then undertook the long drive to Deniliquin, in New South Wales, during the heat of the afternoon. On our arrival at Deni, we checked out the Sale Yard Swamp, where we discovered a large flock of Plumed Whistling-Ducks, which are at the southern end of their range here. A spot of late afternoon birding in the Gulpa Forest, turned up three new birds for the tour, a Rufous Night-Heron, a Sacred Kingfisher and a pair of White-browed Scrubwrens. Deniliquin has become synonymous with Plains-wanderer and of course, this was our main reason for visiting the area. So later in the afternoon, we set off with world expert Phil Maher, to search for them. En route, we stopped at an area where Phil has been doing a great deal of tree planting and we watched a beautiful White-backed Swallow flying overhead. On our arrival at the sheep station where the Plains-wanderer occurs, we were shown a few Australian Pratincoles, large flocks of Banded Lapwings, a couple of very uncommon and difficult to locate Inland Dotterels and a stunning adult male Orange Chat, which has to be one of the most beautiful birds in Australia. We also observed several pairs of huge Red Kangaroos. 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 huge drop in the numbers of Plains-wanderers on the property, and as a result, Phil only new of one breeding pair! It was decided that Phil and Robert, the station owner, would look for the pair, on foot. What seemed like an eternity passed by, in reality it was only around ten minutes, before they located the pair and Phil called us over to look at them. In no time at all, relief turned to elation as we enjoyed great views of a pair of birds softly calling to each other and bobbing their heads in unison, as they performed a small part of their breeding ritual, we were watching one of the most highly-prised species of birds on the planet. Little wonder then that this bird was voted 'Bird of the Tour' by tour participants. Still not finished, the day was rounded off perfectly, by great scope views of a Southern Boobook, calling loudly, as it was highlighted in the spot-light.

The whole of the following day was also spent with Phil, birding around his beloved Deniliquin, and once again, we were not to be disappointed. New birds for the tour included a splendid Black Falcon flying overhead, a Baillon's Crake sneaking around along the edge of the reeds, an immature male Superb Parrot, the rather plainly coloured Western Gerygone, who's uninspiring plumage was more than compensated for, by its very beautiful call, we observed a few Noisy Friarbirds and a pair of uncommon Striped Honeyeaters.

The following morning we enjoyed an uneventful drive southwards, to Heathcote, in central Victoria. While enjoying lunch, we met up with Tom Smith, a local birder, who very kindly offered his services as local guide for the afternoon. He directed us to Green's Lake, where we found a flock of five Brolgas, feeding along the edge of the lake, and we even watched a pair displaying. A little roadside birding produced our only Brown Songlark of the tour, and we finished off the tour in the Heathcote and Greytown National Park, where we found our first flock of Striated Thornbills and our first Black Wallaby.

A little early morning birding with Tom, in the Heathcote and Greytown National Park, produced our first Eastern Yellow Robin of the tour, before we set off on the long drive to Melbourne. A short detour produced great views of an adult Koala, perched in a tree, together with the very attractive Australian King Parrot and a couple of Pied Currawongs. A quick stop at the Yea Wetlands served up a breeding colony of localised Bell Miners

and at the Gobur Flora Reserve, we enjoyed very close looks at a pair of beautiful White-throated Geryones. Following lunch, we went for a walk in the Christmas Hills, where we saw both White-naped Honeyeaters and Leaden Flycatchers very well indeed, and our final stop for the day, was the Maroondah Dam, where a small flock of delightful Gang-gang Cockatoos, gave themselves away with their squeaky door calls and settled in front of us, allowing super close views, and we also enjoyed the surprise find of an adult male Satin Bowerbird.

Much of the following morning 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 male Superb Lyrebird, in full song, imitating all the other birds of the forest, it was a real treat. An adult male Eastern Whipbird came into tape extremely well, an adult male Rose Robin performed very well for us, as did a pair of unobtrusive Large-billed Scrubwrens and a solitary Lewin's Honeyeater; the latter two birds were both at the extreme south-western edge of their ranges. Our next visit was to a small lake in the suburbs of Melbourne, where we greatly admired a few pairs of colourful Blue-billed Ducks. We then drove to Phillip Island where following dinner, after dark, we were thrilled to watch a large number of Little Penguins, come up out of the surf and waddle up to their breeding burrows, just a few metres away from us, completely habituated and unafraid of humans and totally habituated to the bright floodlights overhead.

Much of the following day was spent at Wilson's Promontory National Park, a stunning area of granite headlands and stunning white sandy beaches. The main reason for visiting here is to find the endangered Hooded Plover, this area being the main breeding area for this species. In no time at all we were enjoying good close scope views of this very special bird. Shortly afterwards, we flushed a flock of half a dozen Blue-winged Parrots, which we saw well in flight and perched.

Our final morning of the tour took place in the Tarra Bulga National Park, where our main target bird was the uncommon Pilotbird, we found it rather easily, it was waiting for us in the car park! We then drove back to Melbourne, where a short detour produced stunning looks at a huge Powerful Owl, and an accompanying fluffy white juvenile. It was a fitting end, to a very enjoyable and rewarding tour of Southeastern Australia and Tasmania.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

EMU *DROMAIIDAE*

Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* We enjoyed these flightless giants on several occasions, they were noticeably less common than in recent years, presumably due to the drought.

PENGUINS *SPHENISCIDAE*

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor* We watched large numbers come ashore on Phillip Island, and walk to their breeding burrows, completely habituated to the floodlights overhead.

GREBES *PODICIPEDIDAE*

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, at Rainbow.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus* Many great looks with notable close ups of breeding plumaged birds at Swan Lake, on Phillip Island.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* We enjoyed great views of this species at the River Derwent, close to Hobart Airport and at Lake Hattah, in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. Interestingly, the endemic form, *australis*, is permanently in breeding plumage, unlike its counterparts in the rest of the world, and I suspect that it may be split off, as a separate species, some time in the future.

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* One bird seen very well during the pelagic, out of Eaglehawk Neck. This species is classified as Vulnerable by Birdlife International.

Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora* This species only breeds in the sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand, we enjoyed good looks at a few birds who were feeding around the boat. This species is classified as Vulnerable by Birdlife International.

Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* This species breeds mainly in the sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand, one individual flew around the boat on one occasion. This species is classified as Endangered by Birdlife International. It is estimated that there are approximately 17,000 mature individuals, and unfortunately, it is declining.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* A single bird came in to feed alongside the boat, it was an immature bird, at this time of year, the adults are attending their breeding islands in sub-Antarctic waters.

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta* We enjoyed huge numbers of this locally breeding albatross squabbling for food, right next to the boat.

PETRELS and SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIIDAE*

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli* An uncommon non-breeding visitor to the waters of southern Australia. We observed a total of four individuals during the pelagic; as they fed right next to the boat.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense* Six individuals of this very attractive species were observed very close to the boat. Also known as the Pintado Pigeon, its scientific name is an anagram of Pintado!

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera* Up to half a dozen of these birds were observed very well, as they glided effortlessly around the boat.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* In Australian waters, this is an uncommon bird inside the continental shelf and then becomes quite common beyond the shelf. We observed a single bird, which flew right past the boat.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur* We observed large numbers of this locally breeding species, feeding close to the boat.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* We observed up to a dozen or so of this species, several of them, fed right next to the boat. This species is classified as Vulnerable by Birdlife International.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* This species breeds in very small numbers on islands off the coast of Tasmania. We saw half a dozen birds flying amongst the flocks of many thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* The sight of flocks of thousands of this inshore species flying around the boat, off the Tasmanian coast, was a truly memorable sight. We also watched small numbers flying to their burrows, on Phillip Island.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* At one time during the pelagic off Tasmania, we had up to 50 storm-petrels actively feeding around the boat, the bulk of them were made up of this species, which were on the final leg of their migration to their nesting grounds in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. Alexander Wilson (1766-1813) was a pioneering American ornithologist, and the first to study American birds in their native habitats. As such he is often called the Father of American Ornithology. Born in Scotland, Wilson was imprisoned for libel and following his release in 1794 he emigrated to the United States. From 1808-1813 he published seven volumes of his *American Ornithology*.

White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* A summer breeding visitor to the waters off Tasmania; we saw up to a dozen individuals feeding around the boat, they had just arrived back from their wintering grounds, off the coast of South America.

White-bellied Storm-Petrel *Fregetta grallaria* This species is a rare vagrant in Australian waters. The closest breeding islands are on Lord Howe Island, off the coast of New South Wales and on the Kermadec Islands, to the north of New Zealand. The non-breeding movements of this species are poorly understood, but they are thought to be sedentary. We observed four individuals feeding together, within a few metres of the boat, for an extended period of time.

PELICANS *PELECANIDAE*

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus* This superb species of pelican was observed throughout most wetland areas we visited.

GANNETS and BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator* Seen from the coastline of Tasmania on a number of occasions, but best of all, were those observed from the boat, during the pelagic off Tasmania.

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*

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

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Small numbers present, mainly along the coast.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius* Small numbers observed, both inland and along the coast.

Black-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscescens* Endemic to islands off the south coast of Australia and islands off the coast of Tasmania. We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* Without doubt, the most widespread of the Australian cormorants, equally at home on fresh or salt-water, where we observed it on many occasions.

ANHINGA AND DARTERS *ANHINGIDAE*

Australian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* Individuals observed well on a few separate occasions.

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERNES *ARDEIDAE*

Pacific Heron *Ardea pacifica* A species that was affected by the drought, normally a bird of central Australia, we found small numbers of this nomadic species, on a number of occasions.

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

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

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* Small numbers still present on their wintering grounds in Tasmania and southern Victoria. They would shortly be leaving to migrate to their breeding grounds in central New South Wales.

Rufous Night-Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus* Three individuals observed, all in full breeding plumage, while birding around Deniliquin.

IBIS AND SPOONBILLS *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

Australian White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* Common and conspicuous in most wetland areas we visited.

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* We enjoyed several sightings of this attractive species of spoonbill.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill *Platalea flavipes* Due to the drought, unusually high numbers of this species were observed throughout the tour, birds from central Australia, had moved south looking for areas of permanent water.

GEESE, SWANS AND DUCKS *ANATIDAE*

Plumed Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna eytoni* This species was also affected by the drought, they too had moved further south than normal, looking for areas of permanent water. We found a large flock of approximately 70 birds, at a small dam, on the outskirts of Deniliquin.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Amazingly common and widespread, particularly in the south.

Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* We saw a small flock, at Port Arthur, in Tasmania, and we had great views of a number of these rare and strange-looking geese on Phillip Island, an island that they have only recently colonised. They actually secrete salt through special glands in their bills, in much the same way as seabirds.

Freckled Duck *Stictonetta naevosa* We enjoyed full-frame scope views of a flock of approximately 12 of these rare nomads, on a small lake, close to Hobart. This species is a rare vagrant to Tasmania.

Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides* Commonly encountered throughout farmland areas.

Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata* This species favours small farm dams, where we enjoyed many good sightings.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* Small numbers present at most wetland areas.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea* Endemic to southern Australia, where we enjoyed some very good looks, at a good number of birds. The females are superficially very similar to Grey Teal.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Good numbers present in most wetland areas, it is the most widespread duck, in southern Australia.

Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis* A small flock of this species was present on Gould's Lagoon, close to Hobart and a second small flock, was observed on Lake Woorinen, close to Swan Hill.

Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* This stunningly beautiful species was also affected by the drought, we observed flocks of many hundreds at a number of lakes during the tour. These birds had also travelled south, looking for permanent water.

Hardhead *Aythya australis* We enjoyed several good looks at this Australian species of pochard.

Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis* Several pairs of this attractive species of stifftail, were present on a large lake in the suburbs of Melbourne, this was our only sighting of this species.

Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this species of stifftail throughout the tour. However, by far the most memorable sighting was of the displaying male, seen from the excellent hide, in the Murry Valley National Park, in New South Wales.

KITES, HAWKS AND EAGLES *ACCIPITRIDAE*

Square-tailed Kite *Lophoictinia isura* We very much enjoyed our sighting of this very uncommon raptor, skimming the tree tops, in central Victoria.

Australian Kite *Elanus axillaris* Only a handful of sightings of this widespread, but very handsome bird.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Common and widespread in northern Victoria and the Deniliquin area.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* We had scattered sightings of this scavenger, which is only common around wetland areas.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* We enjoyed a few sightings of birds in flight, including both adult and immature birds.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* Proved to be common in all of the wetlands we visited.

Spotted Harrier *Circus assimilis* We enjoyed three sightings of this stunning, but uncommon harrier, and they all occurred on the same day! The first two sightings were of birds flying over fields of wheat, in the Mallee, and the third sighting was of a bird flying over a field of wheat, close to the Murry River, in New South Wales.

Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae* Only the stunning white morph birds, occur in Tasmania, and we were incredibly fortunate, to watch one of these uncommon birds for an extended period, during our time on Bruny Island.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* A few birds were observed in flight throughout the tour.

Collared Sparrowhawk *Accipiter cirrocephalus* An uncommon species of accipiter, which generally prefers the more arid areas of Australia. We were fortunate to observe a bird in flight, while birding in central Victoria.

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax* We enjoyed many good sightings of this huge species of bird-of-prey, it is great to see that such a large eagle, is still a common bird.

Little Eagle *Hieraaetus morphnoides* We enjoyed a good number of sightings, of this handsome small eagle, all of the sightings, were of light colour morph birds.

CARACARAS AND FALCONS *FALCONIDAE*

Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides* We had several good looks at this common species.

Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis* We enjoyed three good sightings of this very dashing species of falcon.

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

Black Falcon *Falco subniger* A single bird, of this uncommon species of falcon, showed very well, as it circled above the rubbish dump, in Deniliquin.

CRANES *GRUIDAE*

Brolga *Grus rubicundus* We observed five birds feeding together, along the edge of Green's Lake, in central Victoria. We were fortunate, to be able to watch them displaying to one another.

RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS *RALLIDAE*

Lewin's Rail *Lewinia pectoralis* A single bird flew across the road, in front of the bus, as we were driving along, at Eaglehawk Neck, in Tasmania.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* We were able to watch a single individual feeding along the edge of a reedbed, at a dam, close to Deniliquin. Louis Antoine Francois Baillon (1778-1851) was a French naturalist and collector. He worked as an assistant at the Museum of Natural History in Paris (1798-1799).

Australian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Small numbers found at most of the wetlands we visited.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa* A fairly common and widespread species, which we saw well on a few occasions.

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.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Large numbers encountered, throughout most wetland areas.

OYSTERCATCHERS *HAEMATOPODIDAE*

Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris* We enjoyed many good sightings, of this coastal species, throughout the tour.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus* Less common than the previous species, even so, we enjoyed a few very good looks, at this species.

STILTS AND AVOCETS *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

Pied Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* Common, widespread and noisy.

Banded Stilt *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus* We were very fortunate to observe a few very large flocks of this uncommon species, all in full breeding-plumage, at Lake Ranfurly, near Mildura. They are nearly always seen in the company of Red-necked Avocets, it is an irruptive nomad, which is able to respond rapidly to climatic conditions.

Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae* This extremely attractive species of avocet, was observed very well on a few occasions, particularly so, at Lake Ranfurly.

COURSERS AND PRATINCOLES *GLAREOLIDAE*

Australian Pratincole *Stiltia isabella* We observed a few of these attractive long-legged plains inhabitants, on the Murry Valley floodplain, north of Deniliquin.

LAPWINGS AND PLOVERS CHARADRIIDAE

Banded Lapwing *Vanellus tricolor* We saw large numbers of Banded Lapwings, on the Murry Valley floodplain, north of Deniliquin.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* A common and widespread species, which we saw well on many occasions.

Red-kneed Dotterel *Erythrogonys cinctus* A solitary adult bird, of this highly nomadic and very beautiful species, was observed amongst a flock of migratory waders, at Lake Woorinen

Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus* Observed well on a number of occasions, this attractive species prefers salt lakes and coastal areas.

Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* We enjoyed excellent, close scope views, of a pair of these very uncommon birds on Derby Beach at Wilson's Promontory National Park. Under pressure from recreational beach use, this species is listed as Vulnerable by Birdlife International.

Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseyaornis melanops* One of the most attractive waders of the tour, we enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

Inland Dotterel *Charadrius australis* One of the great highlights of the tour, was our observation of an adult pair of these birds, on the Murry Valley floodplain, north of Deniliquin.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES SCOLOPACIDAE

Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* We flushed a single bird, along the edge of Lake Woorinen. This species is an uncommon summer visitor, from breeding grounds in northern Japan.

Dr. John Latham (1740-1837) was a British physician, naturalist and author. He played a leading role in the formation of the Linnean Society of London, in 1788, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was a practising doctor in Kent, England, until his retirement in 1796. He wrote *General Synopsis of Birds* from 1781 to 1785, contributed to the descriptions of birds in *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay*, in 1789, and wrote the *Index Ornithologicus*, in 1790 and the *General History of Birds* from 1821 to 1828, the last of which he started writing when he was 81 years old.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* We enjoyed watching a small flock of 10 or so birds, amongst a flock of waders, along the shoreline of Lake Woorinen.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* The commonest migrant wader in Australia; we observed a small flock of approximately a dozen birds at Lake Woorinen and this was followed by a flock of about 60 birds at Swan Lake, on Phillip Island.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* One of the commoner migrant waders in Australia, we watched a small flock of approximately 10 birds, which included several immaculately-plumaged juveniles, at Lake Woorinen.

PLAINS-WANDERER PEDIONOMIDAE

Plains-wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus* Following a brief search with Phil Maher near Deniliquin, we were treated to a fabulous pair of birds performing part of their mating ritual, in the spot-light, just a few metres away from us. This species is classified as

Endangered by Birdlife International. It is estimated that there are approximately 1,000-2,500 mature individuals, and unfortunately, it is declining.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

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 sightings.

Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae* Australia's commonest species of gull, we readily found it inland, on larger bodies of water and along the coast.

TERNs *STERNIDAE*

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Small flocks were present at Lake Boga, in northern Victoria, and at Green's Lake, in central Victoria.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* A summer migrant to the south, that had arrived in good numbers, most birds observed were in full breeding plumage.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* A very uncommon passage migrant in Australia, from breeding grounds in the Arctic and wintering grounds in Antarctica. This species has the longest migration of any bird on the planet, 20,000 kilometres each way! As a result, it sees more hours of daylight per year, than any other species on the planet. It normally migrates through Australian waters beyond the continental shelf, and therefore is rarely seen. Arctic Terns that are located in coastal areas are normally birds that are unwell, or that have been blown off course, from their normal migration route. Therefore we were extremely fortunate, to observe a single bird, which flew past the ferry terminal on Bruny Island, in Tasmania.

Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* Close encounters at a number of coastal sites in Tasmania, and on Phillip Island, in Victoria.

PIGEONS AND DOVES *COLUMBIDAE*

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* An introduced species, that is a common bird of most suburban areas.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* Another introduced species, which is also common in suburban areas.

Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera* Several roadside birds showed well and many more were flushed.

Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans* We enjoyed good looks at this uncommon species, during our time in Tasmania. We also saw one in flight, at Wilson's Promontory National Park, in Victoria.

Crested Pigeon *Ocyphaps lophotes* Frequently seen waving their tails in the air and calling from prominent perches.

Peaceful Dove *Geopelia placida* A few sightings in drier habitats, where its voice was a prominent feature.

COCKATOOS *CACATUIDAE*

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus* We enjoyed many great sightings throughout the tour.

Gang-gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum* We enjoyed great looks at both males and females, during the tour.

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* Commonly encountered in the drier areas of Australia, but it is not particularly popular when calling at 4 in the morning!

Major Mitchell's Cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri* Superb, prolonged looks, at a pair of birds who were nesting in a large eucalypt, next to our motel at Ouyen. We also saw one in flight, in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell (1792-1855) was a Scottish army surveyor and explorer. He was the Surveyor-General of New South Wales from 1828 until 1855, and led various expeditions into eastern Australia, between 1831 and 1836 and to tropical Australia, from 1845 to 1846. A very life-like coloured plate of his cockatoo appears in Mitchell's *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, published in 1838.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Another common, but very attractive species. Sadly, anywhere else in the world, they would all be in cages by now!

Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus* A pair seen in flight by some members of the group in central Victoria, and then we enjoyed great scope views of a pair of perched birds, in the Goschen Bushland Reserve, in northern Victoria.

PARROTS *PSITTACIDAE*

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus* Our first sighting was of a pair of birds perched in a tree, in the main street of Mildura, we then saw several in flight in both Melbourne and Gippsland.

Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna* We had a few good looks at this spectacularly attractive parrot, especially the flock feeding in the grounds of our motel at Heathcote.

Australian Ringneck *Barnardius zonarius* This handsome species is a common and conspicuous feature of the two Mallee national parks.

Green Rosella *Platycercus caledonicus* We enjoyed many good looks, at this Tasmanian endemic.

Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans* A beautiful and common species, which we saw especially well in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. The yellow colour morph, proved common in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius* Yet another gorgeous species of parrot, which was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Mulga Parrot *Psephotus varius* We saw small numbers very well, during our time birding in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

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

Blue Bonnet *Northiella haematogaster* We enjoyed many fine looks at this unusually plumaged parrot, in the Mallee region of Victoria and around Deniliquin, in New South Wales.

Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma* Great spotting by Jackie, enabled the group to admire a single bird as it sat on a fence post, on Bruny Island, in Tasmania. Later in the tour we observed a flock of half a dozen birds, both in flight, and perched, in Wilson's Promontory National Park, which we were able to inspect closely in our scopes.

Orange-bellied Parrot *Neophema chrysogaster* Our flight to Melaleuca was very enjoyable and also provided us with the opportunity to enjoy fantastic close views of this beautiful parrot, which is one of the rarest birds in the world. The entire world population breeds in this inaccessible region of southwest Tasmania. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by Birdlife International. It is estimated that there are less than 50 adult birds left in the wild, and unfortunately, their numbers are decreasing. During our visit to the area, only 17 had returned, so far!

Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor* We observed two small flocks of this species, while birding on Bruny Island, in Tasmania. This species is an endemic breeder on Tasmania, and they winter on the mainland. This species is classified as Critically Endangered, by Birdlife International, and it is estimated that there are approximately 1,000- 2,500 individuals, and unfortunately, they are decreasing.

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

Superb Parrot *Polytelis swainsonii* Our first sighting, was of an immature male, however, this was surpassed by a stunning full plumaged male, that sat in a River Red Gum, along the river, at Deniliquin. It is a stunningly beautiful bird.

Regent Parrot *Polytelis anthoepus* Many lovely looks in the Mallee country, especially the nesting birds at Wyperfeld National Park.

CUCKOOS *CUCULIDAE*

Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus* We enjoyed many good looks at this uncommon summer migrant to southern Australia, particularly during our time on Bruny Island.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cuculus flabelliformis* We enjoyed many good looks at this common summer visitor to southern Australia, and heard even more.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis* This diminutive species of cuckoo, was seen well in the Kooyoorra State Park and in Wyperfeld National Park. Dr. Thomas Horsfield (1773-1859) was an American naturalist. He was trained as a doctor but became an explorer and prolific collector of plants and animals. He began his career in Java while it was under Dutch rule, but then Napoleon Bonaparte annexed Holland. This enabled the British East India Company to take control over the island in 1811. In 1819 Horsfield's poor health made him seek other employment and he was moved by the company to continue his research under their direction, in London, as Curator and then Keeper of the Indian House Museum.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Another summer visitor to southern Australia, which we saw well on a few occasions and we heard even more.

OWLS *STRIGIDAE*

Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua* On the last day of the tour, we visited an inner-city suburb of Melbourne, where we enjoyed watching Australia's largest species of owl, at its daytime roost, in a tall pine tree. There was also a fully grown juvenile sitting close by. It was a very fine ending to the tour.

Southern Boobook *Ninox boobook* We enjoyed great close looks in the spot-light, at one of these birds, sat in a tree, calling away, during our time in the Deniliquin area.

OWLET-NIGHTJARS *AEGOTHELIDAE*

Australian Owlet-Nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus* While birding in the Wyperfeld and Hattah-Kulkyne National Parks, birds of this delightful species, flew from there daytime roosts, as we walked by, and we were able to enjoy super close looks at the one in Wyperfeld National Park.

FROGMOUTHS *PODARGIDAE*

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides* We observed three separate birds throughout the tour, however, it is hard to go past the adult bird sitting by a young bird, in a eucalypt, along the roadside on Bruny Island. It was simply stunning, and once again it was terrific spotting by Jackie, especially when it was spotted from a moving vehicle!

KINGFISHERS *ALCEDINIDAE*

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* A really classic Australian bird, perhaps the best encounter took place towards the end of the tour, when a group of birds sang in unison, while we were birding at the Maroondah Dam, to the north of Melbourne.

Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sancta* We enjoyed good looks at this species during our time around Deniliquin. This species is a summer migrant to southern Australia.

BEE-EATERS *MEROPIDAE*

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus* This stunning species of bee-eater, had recently arrived from its winter quarters in New Guinea, and we greatly admired them in the Hattah-Kulkyne and Murry Valley National Parks.

LYREBIRDS *MENURIDAE*

Superb Lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae* Following a great deal of searching, we enjoyed super looks at an adolescent male in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. He proudly sat in a small tree and very loudly serenaded us; the Superb Lyrebird is one of the world's most accomplished mimics, and this bird went through his full repertoire. David Attenborough's film of the one imitating various camera shutters was truly sensational, and it was filmed in the same area where we saw our bird.

LARKS *ALAUDIDAE*

Singing Bushlark *Mirafra javanica* We enjoyed watching a pair perform their ariel song display flight, in farmland, in northern Victoria.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* This introduced species was seen and heard close to Deloraine, in Tasmania and north of Wilson's Promontory National Park, in Victoria.

SWALLOWS *HIRUNDINIDAE*

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosternus* We enjoyed a close encounter with a single bird in the Deniliquin area, where it was nesting.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* Common and widespread everywhere, seen on every day of the tour.

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

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

PIPITS AND WAGTAILS *MOTACILLIDAE*

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

CUCKOO-SHRIKES *CAMPEPHAGIDAE*

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* Seen regularly, on most days of the tour.

THRUSHES AND ALLIES *TURDIDAE*

Bassian Thrush *Zoothera lunulata* We saw this species on three separate occasions, but all were of very shy birds, and like all birds of this genus, they do not like to be seen well!

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* This introduced species is very common and was observed on almost every day of the tour.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS *SYLVIIDAE*

Australian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus australis* A common summer visitor to southern Australia, we saw it at all of the reed-fringed wetlands we visited.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus* Somewhat surprisingly, we saw this usually skulking individual, on three separate occasions; once in Tasmania, once in Victoria, and once in New South Wales.

Brown Songlark *Cincloramphus cruralis* An uncommon summer visitor to southern Australia, we observed a single male, sat on a wire fence, close to Colbinabbin, in central Victoria.

Rufous Songlark *Cincloramphus mathewsi* We saw this fairly common summer migrant, on two separate occasions; the first sighting took place in the Goschen Bushland Reserve and the second occurred, close to Deniliquin.

FANTAILS *RHIPIDURIDAE*

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys* This species does not occur in Tasmania, however, it was then seen on every day of the tour, on the mainland of Australia.

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

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS *MONARCHIDAE*

Leaden Flycatcher *Myiagra rubecula* An uncommon summer visitor to southern Australia; we saw a few pairs very well in wet forest, in the Christmas Hills.

AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS *PETROICIDAE*

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 this species well in many of the drier woodlands and the Mallee.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor* A very handsome species, which we saw well, on many occasions.

Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii* A fabulous common inhabitant of the drier woodlands.

Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea* The most vivid of them all, we enjoyed many great looks at this attractive species, during our time in Tasmania.

Rose Robin *Petroica rosea* This superb species is a summer visitor to southeastern Australia, wintering further north in Australia. We saw two fabulous fluorescent pink males; the first was in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, and this was followed by a second sighting, in the Tarra Bulga National Park.

Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster* Yet another stunning species of robin, we saw a male exceptionally well on Mount Wellington, in Tasmania and this sighting was followed by a second encounter, this time, with a pair of birds, in the Tarra Bulga National Park.

Hooded Robin *Melanodryas cucullata* Seen very well in Wyperfeld National Park, and again in the Goschen Bushland Reserve. This is one of a number of dry forest species which have declined rapidly in numbers in the last 20 years, due to the more frequent occurrence of drought conditions.

Dusky Robin *Melanodryas vittata* We enjoyed a few good looks at this Tasmanian endemic, during our time on Bruny Island.

Eastern Yellow Robin *Eopsaltria australis* Seen well on a few occasions, in wet forest, towards the end of the tour.

WHISTLERS AND ALLIES *PACHYCEPHALIDAE*

Crested Shrike-tit *Falcunculus frontatus* This attractive and uncommon species, was seen very well in dry forest, close to Inglewood, in central Victoria. We then found a second pair, which were nesting along the river in Deniliquin.

Crested Bellbird *Oreoica gutturalis* This bird has a very distinctive call, which we heard on many occasions, while birding in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. However, it took us a day and a half, to finally track one down. We then enjoyed good scope views, of an adult male.

Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea* We enjoyed super looks at a singing male, who responded well to tape playback, in the Wielangta Forest, in Tasmania.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis* Somewhat surprisingly, we saw this common species on several occasions in the wetter forests we visited, but all sightings were of females or young males, unfortunately, we did not encounter any adult males.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris* A summer visitor to southern Australia, we saw it well on a number of occasions, in the drier areas we visited.

Grey Shrike-Thrush *Colluricincla harmonica* A fairly common bird, which we saw well on many occasions, and we heard far more than we saw.

PSEUDO-BABBLERS *POMATOSTOMIDAE*

Grey-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus temporalis* We enjoyed three separate flocks of this species throughout the tour, all were at the extreme southern edge of their range.

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

Chestnut-crowned Babbler *Pomatostomus ruficeps* We were pleased to see this species on two occasions in Hattah Kulkyne National Park. Both flocks were typically shy, but we were able to see the diagnostic pale wing bars and chestnut crown.

WHIPBIRDS AND QUAIL-THRUSHES *EUPETIADAE*

Eastern Whipbird *Psophodes olivaceus* This beautiful species has a classic call, hence the name. Unfortunately, it tends to be rather shy and secretive, and is seldom seen well. Fortunately for us, a male responded very well to tape playback, in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, where it showed particularly well.

Chestnut Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma castanotus* We were fortunate to find two family parties of this uncommon species, while birding in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

FAIRYWRENS *MALURIDAE*

White-winged Fairywren *Malurus leucopterus* A common bird of the dry plains, which we saw well on many occasions. The adult males are stunningly attractive.

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* We had a good showing, of three family parties, during our time in Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus* On a windy day at Melaleuca, in south-west Tasmania, a pair responded to tape playback, but stayed well down in the heathland, due to the strong winds.

AUSTRALIAN WARBLERS *ACANTHIZIDAE*

Pilotbird *Pycnoptilus floccosus* We saw a few birds incredibly well, during our time in the Tarra Bulga National Park.

White-browed Scrubwren *Sericornis frontalis* A common bird in the wetter areas of southern Victoria.

Tasmanian Scrubwren *Sericornis humilis* This is also a common bird in the wet forests of Tasmania.

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.

Scrubtit *Acanthornis magna* This uncommon species is endemic to the wet forests of Tasmania, where we observed two pairs extremely well, while birding on Bruny Island.

Striated Fieldwren *Calamanthus fuliginosus* Seen very well in tussock grass, on three different occasions.

Buff-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza reguloides* A small flock was observed briefly at Melville Caves, in Kooyoorra State Park.

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

Tasmanian Thornbill *Acanthiza ewingii* Common in the wet forests of Tasmania, it is identified from the previous species, by the plain rufous forehead and white vent.

Inland Thornbill *Acanthiza apicalis* We enjoyed very close looks at this species in both Wyperfeld and Hattah-Kulkyne National Parks.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa* We enjoyed several encounters with this ground-loving thornbill.

Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza uropygialis* Fairly common, though relatively inconspicuous, in the drier woodlands of Wyperfeld and Hattah-Kulkyne National Parks.

Yellow Thornbill *Acanthiza nana* Only seen on one occasion, two birds showed well at Melville caves, in Kooyoorra State Park.

Striated Thornbill *Acanthiza lineata* A few pairs showed well in the wet forests of the Heathcote-Greytown and Dandenong Ranges National Parks.

Weebill *Smicrornis brevirostris* This tiny species, often quoted as being Australia's smallest, was encountered in small flocks in the two Mallee national parks.

White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone olivacea* A pair of this attractive species was observed very well, in the Gobur Flora Reserve, in central Victoria, at the southern edge of this birds range.

Western Gerygone *Gerygone fusca* A single bird showed very well in dry forest, close to Deniliquin, where its distinctive song betrayed its presence.

Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala leucopsis* Several flocks observed well in the dry woodland of northern Victoria.

AUSTRALIAN CHATS *EPTHIANURIDAE*

Orange Chat *Epthianura aurifrons* We very much enjoyed the surprise find of a stunning adult male, on the Murry River floodplain, north of Deniliquin.

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

SITTELLAS *NEOSITTIDAE*

Varied Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera* We enjoyed great looks at a small flock, of this nuthatch-like species, close to Inglewood and this was followed by a second, larger flock, in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

AUSTRALASIAN TREECREEPERS *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 Wallace's Line (the ecological division that separates Wallacea from Australasia). Indeed only three species made it into Wallacea!

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

FLOWERPECKERS *DICAEIDAE*

Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Odd ones here and there, including some very handsome males.

PARDALOTES *PARDALOTIDAE*

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus* Commonly heard and many good views, in the two Mallee national parks, where the race *xanthopygus* has, in the past, been split off as a separate species, the Yellow-rumped Pardalote

Forty-spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus quadragintus* We were fortunate to enjoy excellent looks at a few breeding pairs, during our time on Bruny Island, in Tasmania. This species is classified as Endangered by Birdlife International. It is estimated that there are approximately 1,000-1,500 individuals, and unfortunately, it is decreasing.

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

WHITE-EYES *ZOSTEROPIDAE*

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis* Many flocks seen.

HONEYEATERS *MELIPHAGIDAE*

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 on several occasions throughout the tour.

Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus virescens* Pretty common and widespread.

White-eared Honeyeater *Lichenostomus leucotis* Several good looks in the dry forest and the Mallee.

Yellow-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavicollis* We enjoyed great looks at this species in the Weilangta State Forest and at Melaleuca; another fine Tasmanian endemic.

Yellow-tufted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus melanops* A few birds showed very well in the Kooyoorra State Forest, and in the Heathcote-Greytown National Park.

Fuscous Honeyeater *Lichenostomus fuscus* Common in the dry woodlands of central Victoria.

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.

White-naped Honeyeater *Melithreptus lunatus* Seen well in the Christmas Hills, close to Melbourne.

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

Black-chinned Honeyeater *Melithreptus gularis* A small flock responded very well to the tape in Kooyoorra State Forest, affording 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 saw a few small flocks in the dry woodland areas of central and northern Victoria.

Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis* Seen well, in dry forest on a few occasions.

Noisy Friarbird *Philemon corniculatus* Small numbers of this species were observed well, including a nesting pair, while birding in Deniliquin.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera* Seen well on a few occasions, during our time in Tasmania.

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae* Another common and particularly attractive species of honeyeater, which we saw well, on many occasions.

Striped Honeyeater *Plectorhyncha lanceolata* We enjoyed great looks at this uncommon species close to Deniliquin, in New South Wales.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Yet another good-looking representative of the honeyeater family, which we saw well on many occasions.

Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis*: One of the largest and prettiest of the honeyeaters, which we saw well on many occasions.

Bell Miner *Manorina melanophrys* Great looks at several individuals in the Yea Wetlands and in a colony on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala* Common and widespread.

Yellow-throated Miner *Manorina fulvigula* Observed well on a few occasions in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys rufogularis* Common in dry habitats, including the Mallee.

Red Wattlebird *Anthochaera carunculata* Common and conspicuous throughout the mainland, but absent from Tasmania.

Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera* Seen well on a few occasions in both Tasmania and southern Victoria.

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

MUDNEST BUILDERS *GRALLINIDAE*

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

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH and APOSTLEBIRD *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 camp-ground at Hattah Kulkyne National Park, where they were very tame.

WOODSWALLOWS *ARTAMIDAE*

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus leucorhynchus* We enjoyed several good sightings in northern Victoria.

Masked Woodswallow *Artamus personatus* Good numbers were present amongst the larger numbers of White-browed Woodswallows. It is a highly nomadic species.

White-browed Woodswallow *Artamus superciliosus* We saw several large flocks of this species in the mallee; this highly nomadic species often associates with the above species.

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

BELLMAGPIES and ALLIES *CRACTICIDAE*

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 observed on almost every day of the tour.

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

Black Currawong *Strepera fuliginosa* We observed this Tasmanian endemic on Mt. Wellington and on Bruny Island.

Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor* Seen well in both Tasmania and Victoria.

BOWERBIRDS *PTILONORHYNCHIDAE*

Satin Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* A male of this purple-eyed show-off was seen well at Maroondah Dam, and a female was also seen well in Tarra Bulga National Park.

JAYS, MAGPIES and CROWS *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.

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

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

STARLINGS *STURNIDAE*

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis* An introduced species, which is common around human habitation.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Another Introduced species, which is also common around human habitation.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS *PASSERIDAE*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Another introduced species, which we saw on every single day of the tour.

WAXBILLS and ALLIES *ESTRILDIDAE*

Beautiful Firetail *Stagonopleura bella* We enjoyed super looks at a small flock along the roadside, while birding on Bruny Island.

Red-browed Finch *Neochmia temporalis* This attractive species was first observed in Kooyoorra State Forest. It was seen a second time, in the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata* Observed along the roadside at Kerang and then again at Deniliquin.

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS and ALLIES *FRINGILLIDAE*

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* This introduced species was seen well on a few occasions, during our time in Tasmania.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* We saw this introduced species on several occasions, throughout the tour.

MAMMALS

Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* One of the best sightings of the tour was watching up to half a dozen Platypus, which swam around just a few metres away from us, before diving, and then floating to the surface again.

Short-beaked Echidna *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.

Tasmanian Devil *Sarcophilus laniarius* I am sure we all enjoyed our close encounters, with this near mythical carnivorous marsupial, what a thrill.

Spot-tailed Quoll *Dasyurus maculatus* Some of the group were fortunate to have a single Spot-tailed Quoll, come in to bait, just a few metres away from their hut.

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

Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus* Our first sighting was of one along the roadside, after dark, at Port Arthur. The second sighting, took place in daytime, in the grounds of Mountain Lodge, also in Tasmania.

Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* A few copper colour morph individuals were seen after dark, on Bruny Island, in Tasmania, and we also saw a grey colour morph individual after dark, close to Deniliquin.

Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus* We enjoyed scattered sightings throughout the tour.

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

Red Kangaroo *Macropus rufus* Several sightings enjoyed during our night excursion, north of Deniliquin.

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.

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

Rufous-bellied Pademelon *Thylogale billardierii* This small species of kangaroo proved common in Tasmania, it is now extirpated in Victoria and South Australia.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* An introduced menace!

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* Another introduced menace.

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* Another introduced species, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Australian Fur-Seal *Arctocephalus pusillus* Small numbers were observed at their breeding island, off Eaglehawk Neck, in Tasmania.

Feral Goat *Capra hircus* An adult with a small kid was observed in the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.