

# **BOCA – PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS**

## **CAPE YORK and the ATHERTON TABLELANDS**

7th – 26th NOVEMBER 2003

### **TOUR REPORT**

**LEADER:** CHRIS DOUGHTY

We began our Cape York adventure in Cairns, where we boarded the Trinity Bay cargo vessel and headed out into the Coral Sea and began a two-day cruise through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, enroute to Horn Island, off the northern tip of Cape York. There was a strong wind blowing from the south, which produced a choppy sea during both days. Our boat cruise provided us with a splendid opportunity to observe a range of tropical seabirds at close quarters. In the harbour at Cairns, we observed Brahminy Kite, Welcome Swallow and White-breasted Woodswallow. Not far into the cruise we found a solitary Australian Pelican sitting on the ocean. Inshore species included several Brown Boobies, Silver Gulls, a Caspian Tern, lots of Crested Terns and small flocks of Torresian Imperial-Pigeons, flying to nesting islands out on the reef. During the cruise we saw up to ten species of terns including Common, Black-naped, Sooty, Bridled, Little and Lesser-crested as well as Common and Black Noddies. We also enjoyed good, close looks at both Great and Least Frigatebirds. We also observed two species of dolphins during the cruise, the inshore Irrawaddy Dolphin and the more pelagic Bottlenose Dolphin.

We awoke the following morning, to find the boat moored at Horn Island, in Torres Strait. From the deck of the boat, prior to breakfast we observed small numbers of Darters sitting on a small jetty, a pair of Ospreys and several small flocks of Figbirds flying to and from fruiting trees. A large expanse of mudflats stretched before us, good numbers of birds were busily feeding on an incoming tide. These included White-faced Heron, Australian Ibis, Radjah Shelduck, Masked Lapwing, Red-capped Plover, Whimbrel, Common and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Common Greenshank, Bar-tailed Godwit and Red-necked Stint. While the boat's cargo was being unloaded, we spent the rest of the morning enjoying a bus trip around the island. Here we observed Peaceful and Bar-shouldered Doves, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Rainbow Lorikeet, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Varied Triller, Dusky Honeyeater, Olive-backed Sunbird, House Sparrow and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin. After lunch our boat tied up alongside the jetty at Thursday Island and we decided to take a walk to the main reservoir, at the far side of the island. At a small park, close to the jetty, we came across a Eurasian Tree Sparrow, which we saw very well. This sighting was quite a surprise, as there are only a handful of sightings of this species from northern Australia. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow was introduced to Melbourne in 1863, from here it has spread as far as the Riverina, of New South Wales. The origin of our bird is almost certainly Asia, rather than from southern Australia and there is the very real possibility that the bird was ship assisted. The reservoir yielded Little Black Cormorant, Great, Little and Intermediate Egrets, Black-necked Stork, Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Whistling Kite and Brown Goshawk.

We awoke the following morning, to find the boat moored at Seisia, the port for the town of Bamega, at the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula. We found a few Eastern Reef-Egrets on the mudflats alongside a couple of Grey-tailed Tattlers and several Black Kites circled overhead. We then disembarked from the Trinity Bay and met up with Tom and Ross, our very experienced outback safari operators and we set off in our 4-wheel drive vehicles, for Eliot Falls, where we would camp for the night. We broke the long drive, with a birding stop at Cowal Creek, where we found a pair of Lemon-bellied Flycatchers, a family party of Rufous Whistlers, a Grey Shrike-thrush, a pair of Leaden Flycatchers and a supporting cast of Silver-crowned Friarbird, Yellow-spotted, Graceful and White-throated Honeyeaters and Mistletoebird. On arrival at our campsite at Eliot Falls, we were pleasantly surprised to find the third member of the outback safari team, known as Chocko, had already erected our tents. Late afternoon birding around the campsite produced Great Cormorant, Australian Brush-turkey, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Spangled Drongo, Black Butcherbird, Pied Currawong and Torresian Crow.

After breaking camp we set off on the long drive to Iron Range, where we were to camp for the next five nights. During the drive we enjoyed great looks at the very uncommon Black-breasted Buzzard flying overhead. Australian Bustard was observed by some members of the group, as well as Wompoo Fruit-Dove and Yellow Oriole. A stop at Bramwell Station produced a pair of Black-backed Butcherbirds, in Australia these birds only occur in the northern half of Cape York Peninsula. They were attracted to a large water sprinkler, where they were enjoying a quick bath. Other birds seen here included Red-winged Parrot, Pheasant Coucal, Laughing Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Helmeted Friarbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater and Great Bowerbird. We also saw our first land mammal of the trip here, a lovely Agile Wallaby. Shortly before reaching Iron Range we had a brief sighting of a pair of Palm Cockatoos. On arrival at our campsite we enjoyed good looks at a pair of Orange-footed Scrubfowls.

The next few days was undoubtedly the highlight of the tour, four full-days birding in and around Iron Range. It is a tropical wonderland, we were surrounded by large expanses of dense tropical rainforest, giant trees festooned with creeping vines and aerial orchids. Much of the flora and fauna is unique, from giant epiphytes, rare ferns and moths to a spectacular variety of reptiles, birds, butterflies and animals. The flora and fauna is closely akin to that of New Guinea. Many of the birds found here are at their southernmost limit, while still others are summer migrants from New Guinea. We set up camp in a small clearing on the banks of the Claudie River, in the heart of Iron Range National Park. The good quality tents and camping equipment, which even included a hot shower and the copious and delicious meals prepared by our ground operators, provided us with a very comfortable base from which to do our birding.

As always, early morning was the time when forest birds were most active, so in the mornings we concentrated our efforts in the large stands of tropical rainforests, which radiated out from the river. As we quietly walked the narrow trails in the darkened interior and the wider, more open roads, we managed to observe a staggering array of colourful tropical birds which included Grey Goshawk, Superb and Rose-crowned Fruit-Doves, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Emerald Ground-Dove, Eclectus and Red-cheeked Parrots, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Australian Swiftlet, White-throated Needletail, Azure, Little and Yellow-billed Kingfishers, Noisy Pitta, Northern Scrub-robin, Yellow-legged and Shining Flycatchers, White-faced and White-browed Robins, Grey Whistler, Little Shrike-thrush, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Black-winged, Spectacled, White-eared

and Filled Monarchs, Rufous and Northern Fantails, Lovely Fairywren, Tropical Scrubwren, Fairy Gerygone, Tawny-breasted, Green-backed, White-streaked and Brown-backed Honeyeaters, Silvereeye, Spotted Catbird, Magnificent Riflebird and Trumpet Manucode.

In the more open forest away from the rivers we enjoyed watching a pair of Papuan Frogmouths and a couple of Olive-backed Orioles. During the searing, heat-stricken midday hours, we enjoyed a very welcome siesta, or a quiet stroll in the rainforest. At dusk we searched for nocturnal birds and after a great deal of persistence, we were rewarded with very close looks at a Large-tailed Nightjar sitting in the middle of the road. One afternoon, we made a special trip to a huge tree, which Eclectus Parrots had been nesting in for many generations. Many hundreds of Metallic Starlings also nest in the tree, as well as a pair of Grey Goshawks. Here we enjoyed great looks at both male and female Eclectus Parrots; hundreds of Metallic Starlings and some members of the group were fortunate enough to see a Grey Goshawk. Surprisingly, we also found a Spectacled Flying-fox, flying around in daylight, when it landed we managed to enjoy good scope views of it. One or two members of the group also saw a small party of Feral Pigs. We also found a couple of birds in the dense rainforest, which we were surprised to find in this habitat. The first, was an Australian Hobby flying just above the rainforest canopy and the second was a male Red-chested Buttonquail, sat in the middle of the road, nervously bobbing up and down, unsure of what to do next!

One afternoon we took a short drive to Portland Roads and Chile Beach on the coast, where we spent some productive hours observing a Rufous Night-Heron, an attractive White-bellied Sea-Eagle, an obliging Beach Thick-knee and good scope views of Pacific Golden-Plover and Large Sand-Plover. Small flocks of Tree Martin flew overhead and Yellow Honeyeater and Red-browed Firetail were found in nearby gardens. Returning to our campsite after dark, our drive was livened up by the sighting of the very range restricted Chestnut Dunnart, running ahead of the vehicle in the road.

The following morning we broke camp and readied ourselves for the long drive to Musgrave Station. We broke up the long drive with a couple of birding stops at two of the larger rivers on the journey. The first was at the Brown River, we added several new birds here, which included Little Pied Cormorant, Rainbow Bee-eater, Dollarbird, Large-billed Gerygone, complete with nest, Magpie-lark and Australian Magpie. Best of all, we managed to have good looks at a pair of secretive Fawn-breasted Bowerbirds, a bird we had been searching for during the last few days. We stopped for lunch at the Wenlock River, where we were rewarded with great looks at three new birds. We enjoyed great views of a pair of Pale-headed Rosellas and the very habitat specific Bar-breasted Honeyeater and last but not least, a small party of the highly nomadic Banded Honeyeater. On the way to Musgrave Station one of the vehicles had a close encounter with a pair of Emus. On reaching Musgrave Station we added Straw-necked Ibis and Galah. We also saw a small group of Eastern Grey Kangaroos. In camp that evening we enjoyed good close looks at a superb Tawny Frogmouth.

The following day had been especially set aside to search for the critically endangered Golden-shouldered Parrot. We had been given permission to search for this bird on Artermas Cattle Station, a large expanse of savannah grasslands, with scattered eucalypts, termite mounds and dry creek beds. We spent the morning at a small waterhole, hoping the parrots would come in to drink.

Unfortunately, they did not come in to drink on this particular morning. However, several other species did, we enjoyed very close looks at Little Friarbird and Double-barred, Masked and Black-throated Finches. During the heat of the day, we did some birding around our campsite where we added, Magpie Goose, Plumed Whistling-Duck, Comb-crested Jacana, the rarely observed Oriental Plover, Golden-headed Cisticola and a family party of Pied Butcherbirds harassing a hapless Little Red Flying-fox, which was roosting in a tree. The station owner gave us directions to a nest of the rare Red Goshawk, in the late afternoon we went to check it out. Unfortunately, the nest had been taken over by a pair of Brown Falcons, who were busy feeding young. In the dry forest at this site, we added more species to our ever-growing birdlist, we saw a pair of Brolgas, a Bush Thick-knee, we eventually located a singing White-throated Gerygone and a small flock of Varied Sittellas.

The following morning a Channel-billed Cuckoo was seen in the campsite, we then returned to Artermas Cattle Station, where Sue, the wife of the station owner, kindly agreed to help us search for Golden-shouldered Parrots. We walked around Sue's property for a considerable length of time without any success. Just as we were beginning to think we may not find them, we flushed a small flock of the parrots, which had been sitting quietly in a small tree. Fortunately, we managed to relocate them sitting together in a couple of small eucalypts, we then enjoyed very good scope views of both male and female birds. We were all very excited to find this beautiful but unfortunately very rare bird. During this time we also observed an Australian Kestrel and a family party of Grey-crowned Babblers. We then headed back to camp, on the way we enjoyed super looks at a large flock of Squatter Pigeons, who slowly crossed the road in front of us. As we were dismantling the camp a Wedge-tailed Eagle slowly circled directly overhead. We then made the long drive back to Cairns, we added several new species along the roadside, which included Cattle Egret, Common Bronzewing, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Common Mynah and Black-faced Woodswallow. On our arrival at Cairns we bid a sad farewell to those who were not doing the weeklong extension to Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands and to our marvelous outback Safari operators Tom, Ross and Chocko.

We spent the whole of the following day birding around Cairns, before driving up onto the Atherton Tablelands, for a five nights stay. As the tide at the Cairns foreshore was perfect in the early morning, we decided to start our birding there. Royal Spoonbills stood alongside a solitary Pied Oystercatcher, Mongolian and Black-fronted Plovers, Eastern Curlews and Terek and Curlew Sandpipers. Further along the foreshore a Striated Heron stood motionless amongst a group of Black-tailed Godwits and Red and Great Knots. Gull-billed Terns patrolled the mudflats, a solitary Buff-banded Rail was half-hidden in a patch of grass and in the parkland beyond the beach, we found Feral Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Willie Wagtail, Varied Honeyeater and Nutmeg Mannikin. Suddenly, all the waders took flight; we looked behind us to see a Peregrine Falcon flying swiftly past the rows of hotels. When the waders resettled, we noticed a small stint in full breeding plumage. This created quite a stir, detailed notes were taken and the bird was later identified as a Little Stint, a very rare vagrant to Australia. A stop at some nearby mangroves, produced a very obliging pair of Mangrove Robins. A short walk at Centenary Lakes and nearby Mt. Whitfield enabled the group to enjoy very good looks at Cicadabird and Brush Cuckoo, who both responded well to tape. A quick visit to the Mangrove Boardwalk, produced great looks at a Collared Kingfisher, who also responded well to tape. On the way up to the Atherton Tablelands we had a quick look at a turf farm, where we enjoyed good looks at a couple of Australian Pratincoles.

The next four days were spent birding the magnificent Atherton Tablelands, where we set about finding the many endemic birds to this area. Our first stop on the first morning was at the daytime roost of a large mixed group of Spectacled and Black Flying-foxes. We then stopped at a nearby large lake where we found Great Crested Grebe, Black Swan, Hardhead, Maned Duck, Eurasian Coot, Sarus Crane, Crested Pigeon, Fairy Martin and Australian Pipit. We spent the rest of the morning at Granite Gorge, where highlights included Australian Kite, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Australian King Parrot, Sacred Kingfisher, Lewin's and Scarlet Honeyeaters, and best of all the extremely localised Mareeba Rock Wallaby. In the afternoon, we had great views of Australian Koel and stunning views of Pacific Baza at the McLoud River. On the way back to our hotel we did some roadside birding, where we found a large group of raucous Apostlebirds.

The following day began with a pre-breakfast visit to a small river, where we watched from the bank as several Platypus dived around grebe-like, in the lazy river, surfacing for us to see just what strange creatures they really are. While here we also observed our only White-browed Scrubwren for the trip and the first of many Brown Gerygones. After breakfast we drove to the Crater National Park, on the way we added Tawny Grassbird and the superbly plumaged Red-backed Fairywren, which were flitting around in tall grass, along the roadside. At the Crater, new birds came thick and fast, a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo called from dense cover, as did a superb male Golden Whistler, a Grey Fantail flitted in the canopy, a White-throated Treecreeper climbed up the trunk of a tree and a family party of Tooth-billed Bowerbirds chased one another around in the undergrowth. There was also a supporting cast of Grey-headed Robin, Bower's Shrike-thrush, Atherton, Large-billed and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens, Mountain Thornbill, Bridled Honeyeater, Eastern Spinebill, Satin Bowerbird and Victoria's Riflebird. However, by far the best bird was a male Golden Bowerbird, who showed extremely well, when it came to check its amazing 'maypole-bower' inside the dark forest. In the afternoon we went birding at Tinaburra Waters, a part of the man-made Tinaroo Lake. After seven years of drought, the lake was at its lowest level ever recorded. Even so, there were large numbers of birds present, which included Australasian Grebe, Pink-eared Duck, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Purple Swamphen, White-headed Stilt, Marsh Sandpiper and Whiskered Tern. In a patch of tall weeds along the lakeside, we saw a few Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoos and a superbly plumaged, male White-winged Triller. Just before leaving the lake, a Black Falcon flew by us, showing very well. A quick visit to the Curtain Figtree National Park added a Black-faced Monarch and a pair of Pied Monarchs. An evening spotlighting produced great looks at a Barn Owl, as well as Green Ring-tailed Possum and Red-legged Pademelon.

A pre-breakfast visit to Lake Eacham produced good looks at Pale Yellow Robin and very close looks at the attractive Macleay's Honeyeater. The rest of the morning was taken up with a six kilometre walk around the rim of the volcanic crater of Lake Barrine. This walk through superb rainforest yielded 'kick-boxing' Chowchillas, a family party of surprisingly tame Eastern Whipbirds and great close looks at a Bassian Thrush. We also enjoyed many good sightings of Australia's smallest species of kangaroo, the Musky Rat-kangaroo. Along the edge of the lake itself, we found a small number of Wandering Whistling-Ducks and a couple of very tame Dusky Moorhens. In the afternoon we made a visit to the Mareeba Wetlands, where highlights included good close looks at a couple of stately Glossy Ibis, good numbers of Wandering Whistling-Ducks, several pairs of Green Pygmy-geese and good scope views of a couple of Latham's Snipe. In the car park, we enjoyed great looks at a solitary Brown Treecreeper.

The following morning we set off for Mount Lewis, at the northern end of the tablelands. On the way we made a quick roadside birding stop, in open woodland, close to Mount Molloy. Here we added a Spotted Harrier, a small group of Noisy Friarbirds and a few Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. In the rainforest on Mount Lewis, we had a Topknot Pigeon fly overhead and super looks at a male Australian Fernwren, who responded well to tape. But by far the best sighting here, was that of a superb Blue-faced Parrotfinch, feeding amongst a flock of Red-browed Firetails. In the afternoon we stopped to do some birding around the edge of Lake Mitchell, where we found a solitary Grey Plover. Grey Plovers are not often found inland, they occur mainly along the coast. A late afternoon visit to Emerald Creek Nature Reserve, produced good looks at a pair of Eastern Yellow Robins.

The following morning we had a very early start, in order to be at the Daintree River for a 6am boat trip. We had a great time with Chris Dalberg and saw lots of birds. Although only three of them, were new for the trip. Surprisingly, we saw six Black Bitterns during the cruise; this is very unusual, as this uncommon species is normally very shy and retiring. Yet another surprise, were three sightings of the Oriental Cuckoo, which is a very uncommon summer visitor to Australia, once again our luck was holding, as these were the first Oriental Cuckoo sightings of the year. The third new species for the trip, was a pair of Australian Reed-Warblers, which we were able to see very well. Following breakfast, we made the long drive to Mission Beach, arriving in the late afternoon. Just this side of Mission Beach we found an immature Southern Cassowary feeding along the edge of the road. Unfortunately, the bird walked into the forest and was not seen particularly well. We tried looking for it but were unable to relocate it. As this is a good area for Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Chris tried the tape and immediately a bird flew across the road and into the forest on the other side. Another burst of tape, brought the bird back across the road and it perched inside the forest, fortunately, it was in view and we all enjoyed great scope views of what must surely be, one of Australia's most beautiful birds.

A full day around Mission Beach, were we would hopefully have a good look at an adult cassowary. We were not to be disappointed, early in the morning after having driven only about 10 minutes, we found a full-plumaged adult Southern Cassowary, feeding along the edge of the road. We pulled over and enjoyed a very relaxed, long look at this very impressive bird. By this stage we were running out of birds to look for! In the late afternoon, we decided to try for Red-necked Crake, we found a small billabong surrounded by dense rainforest and decided to concentrate our efforts here. We positioned ourselves on the top of a 6 meter bank, looking down onto the billabong. To our surprise and concern, an immature, but almost full grown Southern Cassowary came walking along and decided to investigate this strange group of people, he approached within a couple of meters of the group, causing a great deal of consternation amongst the group. We could not retreat, as there was a 6 meter drop into the river behind us, we just had to hold our ground! The youngster bailed us up for about 30 minutes; at one stage he lowered his head and made strange noises at us. After a while, he decided he had had enough and wandered off into the forest. We tried some tape of the Red-necked Rail and although a couple of birds did respond to the tape, neither came close enough for us to see them.

The last morning of the tour was set aside to drive from Mission Beach to Cairns, which we duly did. However, there was still one common bird, which we had not seen, the very attractive

Crimson Finch. Frank and Wendy took us to an area close to Wooroonoorah National Park and sure enough there they were, feeding on seeding grasses along the roadside. As we were driving back to Cairns, Chris noticed a large raptor circling along the edge of Wooroonoorah National Park; a closer inspection showed that it was a Red Goshawk, one of Australia's rarest birds of prey. This was a fitting end to a very successful and memorable tour.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### CASUARIIDAE

**Southern Cassowary** *Casuarius casuarius* Super looks in the Mission Beach area of one adult and two immature birds, it was certainly one of the 'birds-of-the-trip'. Unfortunately, this species is declining rapidly in Australia and is in danger of becoming extinct in Australia.

## DROMAIIDAE

**Emu** *Dromaius novaehollandiae* Group members in one of the vehicles almost ran into a couple of birds on the drive from Iron Range to Musgrave Station.

## PODICIPEDIDAE

**Australasian Grebe** *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae* Seen well on a few occasions on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Good numbers present on a couple of the larger lakes on the Atherton Tablelands.

## PELECANIDAE

**Australian Pelican** *Pelecanus conspicillatus* Many good looks at what is without a doubt one of the world's most beautiful species of pelican.

## SULIDAE

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Many close observations during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

## PHALACROCORACIDAE

**Little Black Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Large numbers encountered throughout the tour.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* A very common cormorant throughout the old world, we saw it in most wetland areas.

**Little Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* The commonest and most widespread cormorant throughout the tour.

## ANHINGIDAE

**Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

## FREGATIDAE

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* Many good observations of these monstrously large birds, during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Least Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* We also enjoyed many good sightings of this sea pirate, during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

## ARDEIDAE

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Small numbers throughout most wetland areas.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* Once again; there were small numbers present at most wetland areas.

**White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae* Small numbers present in some of the wetland areas.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers present along the coast and in most wetland areas.

**Eastern Reef-Egret** *Egretta sacra* We enjoyed several good looks at birds in coastal areas, we saw both dark and pale morph birds.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Large flocks present on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striatus* A solitary bird was observed at close quarters, on the foreshore at Cairns.



**Rufous Night-Heron** *Nycticorax caledonicus* Small numbers observed throughout the tour.

**Black Bittern** *Ixobrychus flavicollis* Many good sightings of this seldom seen bird during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

#### CICONIIDAE

**Black-necked Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* Small numbers observed in some of the wetlands.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

**Australian Ibis** *Threskiornis molucca* Common and widespread throughout the tour.

**Straw-necked Ibis** *Threskiornis spinicollis* This species was particularly common throughout the Atherton Tablelands.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Small numbers present at the Mareeba Wetlands and nearby Lake Mitchell.

**Royal Spoonbill** *Platalea regia* Good numbers observed on the Cairns foreshore and at Lake Mitchell.

#### ANATIDAE

**Magpie Goose** *Anseranas semipalmata* Large flocks observed on the Atherton Tablelands, with smaller numbers in the Cairns area.

**Plumed Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna eytoni* A small flock was present at a small wetland area, at our campsite on Musgrave Station and larger numbers were present at Tinaburra Waters.

**Wandering Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna arcuata* Small numbers observed on wetlands on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus* Several good sightings of this impressive looking swan, during our time on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Radjah Shelduck** *Tadorna radjah* We saw this beautiful duck very well on the mudflats at Horn Island and at the main reservoir on Thursday Island.

**Green Pygmy-goose** *Nettapus pulchellus* This very handsome species of wildfowl was seen well at the Mareeba Wetlands and again at Lake Mitchell.

**Cotton Pygmy-goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* Unlike the Green Pygmy-goose; this species is found throughout Asia, as far away as India. We enjoyed good looks at Tinaburra Waters and the Mareeba Wetlands.

**Maned Duck** *Chenonetta jubata* Small numbers observed at a large lake near Mareeba and again at Tinaburra Waters.

**Grey Teal** *Anas gracilis* Good numbers present throughout the tour.

**Pacific Black Duck** *Anas superciliosa* Common and widespread throughout.

**Pink-eared Duck** *Malacorhynchus membranaceus* Great looks at a small number of birds present at Tinaburra Waters.

**Hardhead** *Aythya australis* Large numbers present on lakes on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### PANDIONIDAE

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Several good looks at this cosmopolitan species.

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

**Pacific Baza** *Aviceda subcristata* Brilliant looks at a couple of birds roosting in a large tree along the bank of the McLoud River.

**Black-breasted Buzzard** *Hamirostra melanosternon* Super looks at a solitary individual soaring directly overhead, during the drive from Eliot Falls to Iron Range.

**Australian Kite** *Elanus axillaris* Good numbers present on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Common and widespread throughout the whole tour.

**Whistling Kite** *Haliastur sphenurus* Many good looks throughout the trip.

**Brahminy Kite** *Haliastur indus* We enjoyed several good looks at this very attractive species.

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Several good looks at this very large species of raptor.

**Spotted Harrier** *Circus assimilis* Observed on two separate occasions, both in the northern end of the Atherton Tablelands. It is one of the most beautiful harriers in the world.

**Grey Goshawk** *Accipiter novaehollandiae* This uncommon raptor was observed on a couple of occasions at Iron Range and once on Mount Lewis.

**Brown Goshawk** *Accipiter fasciatus* This common raptor was surprisingly, only observed on two occasions. Firstly, at the main reservoir on Thursday Island and again at our campsite at Musgrave Station.

**Red Goshawk** *Erythrotriorchis radiatus* One of the rarest birds in Australia, we had a brief look at a bird soaring over Wooroonoorah National Park, near Cairns.

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** *Aquila audax* Once again, another common raptor which was surprisingly, only observed on two occasions. Firstly, flying over our campsite at Musgrave Station and again at Granite Gorge, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### FALCONIDAE

**Australian Kestrel** *Falco cenchroides* This species proved to be common on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Australian Hobby** *Falco longipennis* Seen well on two occasions, once at Iron Range and then at our campsite at Musgrave Station.

**Brown Falcon** *Falco berigora* This species was also only seen on two occasions, the first, was close to Musgrave Station, where a pair was nesting. We enjoyed watching them catching skinks and feeding them to their young birds in the nest. Our second sighting was at Lake Mitchell, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Black Falcon** *Falco subniger* Another uncommon raptor, a single bird flew past the group when we were birding at Tinaburra Waters.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* Observed only once, one bird flew along the foreshore at Cairns, causing all the waders to flush.

#### MEGAPODIIDAE

**Australian Brush-turkey** *Alectura lathami* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Orange-footed Scrubfowl** *Megapodius reinwardt* This species was also seen on many occasions throughout the tour.

#### TURNICIDAE

**Red-chested Buttonquail** *Turnix pyrrhotorax* A surprise sighting, of a solitary bird standing in the middle of the road at Iron Range, surrounded by rainforest!

## GRUIDAE

**Sarus Crane** *Grus antigone* Many good close looks at several flocks on the Atherton Tablelands; we even saw a few dancing.

**Brolga** *Grus rubicunda* One sighting of a couple of birds on Cape York, close to Musgrave. There were also larger numbers than usual, mixed in amongst the flocks of Sarus Cranes, on the Atherton Tablelands.

## RALLIDAE

**Buff-banded Rail** *Gallirallus philippensis* A few good looks throughout the tour, at what is a very attractive species of rail.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* Only observed on two occasions, at Tinaburra Waters and again during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Dusky Moorhen** *Gallinula tenebrosa* A tame bird was observed very well at Lake Barrine and we also saw several birds during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra* Good numbers present throughout all wetland areas on the Atherton Tablelands.

## OTIDIDAE

**Australian Bustard** *Ardeotis australis* Seen well on a few occasions, including a spectacularly displaying male at Mount Carbine.

## JACANIDAE

**Comb-crested Jacana** *Irediparra gallinacea* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

## HAEMATOPODIDAE

**Pied Oystercatcher** *Haematopus longirostris* One bird seen well on the mudflats at Cairns.

## RECURVIROSTRIDAE

**White-headed Stilt** *Himantopus leucocephalus* Small numbers present at Tinaburra Waters and again at Lake Mitchell, both sightings were on the Atherton Tablelands.

## BURHINIDAE

**Bush Thick-knee** *Burhinus grallarius* Several good sightings of this very impressive species of thick-knee.

**Beach Thick-knee** *Burhinus magnirostris* This endangered species was seen well on two separate occasions. The first, was a solitary bird at Portland Roads, followed by superb looks at a pair of birds at Yule Point, north of Cairns.

## GLAREOLIDAE

**Australian Pratincole** *Stiltia isabella* A bird more typical of the arid centre of Australia, we were very fortunate to enjoy good close looks at a pair of birds at the turf farm, at Cairns.

## CHARADRIIDAE

**Masked Lapwing** *Vanellus miles* Common and widespread throughout the tour.

**Red-kneed Dotterel** *Erythronyctes alpinus* Several good sightings of this very attractive species of plover.

**Pacific Golden-Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* We saw this species well on a few occasions, especially on the airstrip, at Lockhart River.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* A solitary bird; in non-breeding plumage was observed very well during the only rainstorm of the tour, at Lake Mitchell, on the Atherton Tablelands. Grey Plovers are not uncommon in coastal areas of Australia, but it is unusual to find them on inland lakes. It is the first time this species has been observed at Lake Mitchell.

**Red-capped Plover** *Charadrius ruficapillus* A handsome bird that we saw well on several occasions.

**Mongolian Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* A few birds observed on the foreshore at Cairns, amongst much larger flocks of Large Sandplovers.

**Large Sandplover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Several good sightings of this species on mudflats, throughout the tour.

**Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus* Good close looks at a solitary bird, on the airstrip at Musgrave Station. This very large, uncommon and interesting plover, had over-wintered, staying in Australia throughout the summer months in the northern hemisphere. This would indicate that the bird was a first winter bird and was too immature to breed.

**Black-fronted Plover** *Euseyornis melanops* We saw several of these attractive and nomadic birds, throughout the tour.

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

**Latham's Snipe** *Gallinago hardwickii* A uncommon summer visitor, which breeds in Japan. We enjoyed good scope views of a couple of birds at the Mareeba Wetlands.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* Small numbers of this uncommon migrant were observed on the Cairns foreshore, mixed in amongst the much larger flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits, this is an area where we would expect to find them. We also observed a small flock at Tinaburra Waters and again at Lake Mitchell, both places are on the Atherton Tablelands. This species is an infrequent visitor to these two areas.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* A few small flocks seen very well.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Good looks at this species on mudflats, throughout the tour.

**Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis* Seen well on the Cairns foreshore and again at Yule Point, north of Cairns.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Small numbers of this uncommon species were observed very well at Tinaburra Waters.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Good numbers wintering along the foreshore, at Cairns.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers observed on all mudflats, throughout the tour.

**Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heterosceles brevipes* These high arctic breeders, were present on all mudflats, throughout the tour.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* Almost the entire world population of this uncommon wader, winters in northern Australia. Large flocks were present, on the foreshore at Cairns.

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Much smaller numbers of this species winter in Australia, than Great Knots. We enjoyed good scope views of a couple of birds mixed in amongst the wader flocks on the Cairns foreshore.

**Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* Small numbers present on mudflats on Cape York and large numbers wintering on the foreshore, at Cairns.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* A rare vagrant to Australia, a bird in full-breeding plumage was observed very well, on the foreshore at Cairns.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Small numbers present on mudflats on Cape York and large numbers wintering on the foreshore at Cairns.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* Small numbers present on the Cairns foreshore.

#### LARIDAE

**Silver Gull** *Larus novaehollandiae* Common and widespread throughout all coastal areas.

#### STERNIDAE

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Good numbers present at the Cairns foreshore and at Yule Point, north of Cairns.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Good sightings at sea, along the coast and on inland lakes.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* Super looks during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Crested Tern** *Sterna bergii* Once again, super looks during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay and at Yule Point, north of Cairns.

**Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana* Super looks during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay and on a small islet off the coast at Chile Beach, on Cape York.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* A couple of very good sightings of this uncommon summer visitor, during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons* Commonly observed, throughout all coastal areas.

**Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* Large numbers observed during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* Once again, large numbers observed during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Small flocks of this marsh tern, were observed at Tinaburra Waters and the Mareeba Wetlands.

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus* Surprisingly large numbers were observed during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay, they outnumbered Common Noddies.

**Common Noddy** *Anous stolidus* Small flocks were observed during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

#### COLUMBIDAE

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* This introduced species was commonly observed throughout the towns and villages.

**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis* This introduced species is common around Cairns.

**Brown Cuckoo-Dove** *Macropygia phasianella* Commonly observed throughout all rainforested areas.

**Emerald Ground-Dove** *Chalcophaps indica* Again, this species was commonly observed throughout all rainforested areas.

**Common Bronzewing** *Phaps chalcoptera* Observed on two occasions, once on Artermas Station and again at Mount Carbine. Both these sightings were at the very northern edge of this bird's range.

**Crested Pigeon** *Geophaps lophotes* Observed on two occasions, once on Mount Carbine and again at Mount Molloy. Both these sightings were at the very northern edge of this bird's range.

**Squatter Pigeon** *Geophaps scripta* A few flocks of this attractive species were observed very well.

**Peaceful Dove** *Geopelia placida* Common and widespread throughout.

**Bar-shouldered Dove** *Geopelia humeralis* Also common and widespread throughout.

**Wompoo Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus magnificus* 'Magnificus' it certainly is, we saw it well on several occasions.

**Superb Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus superbus* We enjoyed a few good looks at this truly superb species of fruit-dove.

**Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove** *Ptilinopus regina* Not uncommon at Iron Range, it was also observed on Mount Lewis, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Torresian Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula spilorrhoa* Many good looks at this attractive species, which nests on offshore islands and makes daily flights to and from the mainland, to feed. It seemed somewhat out of context, to observe large flocks of this species flying low over the sea, during the boat trip on the Trinity Bay.

**Topknot Pigeon** *Lopholaimus antarcticus* Surprisingly, we only observed one bird and it was in flight, on Mount Lewis.

#### CACATUIDAE

**Palm Cockatoo** *Probosciger aterrimus* A New Guinea species, which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. Unfortunately, they proved very illusive. We had brief flight views of a pair of birds, not far from Iron Range.

**Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** *Calyptorhynchus banksii* One of the most spectacular cockatoos, we enjoyed watching several flocks, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Galah** *Eolophus roseicapillus* A common but very attractive bird.

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** *Cacatua galerita* Very common throughout.

#### PSITTACIDAE

**Rainbow Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus haematodus* Very common throughout, especially around Cairns.

**Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** *Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus* Several small flocks observed very well on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Double-eyed Fig-Parrot** *Cyclopsitta diophthalma* A few very good sightings of this diminutive parrot throughout the tour.

**Pale-headed Rosella** *Platycercus adscitus* Seen well on a few occasions.

**Golden-shouldered Parrot** *Psephotus chrysopterygius* This very attractive and critically endangered species has a very small, decreasing range, in central Cape York Peninsula. Changes in the burning regime and the introduction of cattle to the region, has resulted in the steady decline of this species, which unfortunately is continuing, despite intensive conservation efforts. Following a great deal of searching, we were very fortunate to be rewarded with great scope views of both male and female birds, at Artermas Station.

**Red-cheeked Parrot** *Geoffroyus geoffroyi* A New Guinea species, which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. Where we saw it very well, on several occasions.

**Eclectus Parrot** *Eclectus roratus* Another New Guinea species, which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. We also saw this species very well, on several occasions.

**Australian King-Parrot** *Alisterus scapularis* This beautiful parrot was seen well on a couple of occasions on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Red-winged Parrot** *Aprosmictus erythropterus* Several good sightings of these handsome parrots, which have a distinctive, slow flapping flight.

#### CUCULIDAE

**Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus* We were very fortunate to enjoy good sightings of this very uncommon summer visitor, during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Brush Cuckoo** *Cacomantis variolosus* A bird responded very well to tape and perched overhead during our walk on Mount Whitfield, at Cairns.

**Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx basalis* A small party of six birds, were flushed from tall weeds, along the edge of the lake at Tinaburra Waters, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Shining Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus* A solitary bird was observed briefly at the Crater National Park, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Little Bronze-Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx minutillus* A few good sightings throughout the tour, particularly during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Australian Koel** *Eudynamis cyanocephala* observed well on several occasions on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** *Scythrops novaehollandiae* Several good sightings throughout the tour, particularly at the McLoud River.

#### CENTROPODIDAE

**Pheasant Coucal** *Centropus phasianinus* Several good sightings, of this very large species of cuckoo.

#### TYTONIDAE

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* Super looks at a bird on a fence post near Yungaburra, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### PODARGIDAE

**Tawny Frogmouth** *Podargus strigoides* Great close looks at an individual in our campsite at Musgrave Station.

**Papuan Frogmouth** *Podargus papuensis* Great looks during the day of a bird close to Iron Range, followed by close looks at a bird sat on a nest, during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

#### AEGOTHELIDAE

**Large-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus macrurus* Great persistence by Tom finally paid off, some members of the group enjoyed very close looks at a bird sat in the middle of the road at Iron Range.

#### APODIDAE

**Australian Swiftlet** *Aerodramus terraereginae* Large flocks observed throughout the tour.

**White-throated Needletail** *Hirundapus caudacutus* Small flocks observed flying overhead on a few occasions, during the Cape York part of the tour.

#### ALCEDINIDAE

**Azure Kingfisher** *Alcedo azurea* We enjoyed several good sightings of this attractive kingfisher.

**Little Kingfisher** *Alcedo pusilla* A very dapper individual could be found fishing along the Claudie River, at our campsite at Iron Range.

**Laughing Kookaburra** *Dacelo novaeguineae* This is one of the world's largest kingfishers and was commonly encountered throughout the trip.

**Blue-winged Kookaburra** *Dacelo leachii* Prefers areas with less rainfall than the Laughing Kookaburra, it was common throughout the more arid areas of the tour, especially on Cape York.

**Forest Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus macleayii* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.

**Collared Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus chloris* Super looks at a solitary individual who responded very well to tape at the Mangrove Boardwalk, at Cairns.

**Sacred Kingfisher** *Todirhamphus sanctus* This summer migrant was only observed on two occasions. Firstly, a bird was seen well at Granite Gorge, on the Atherton Tablelands, followed by a second good sighting of an individual during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Yellow-billed Kingfisher** *Syma torotoro* Another New Guinea species which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range, where it is an uncommon bird. We were very fortunate that a bird of this species perched in front of the group while we were walking down the main road at Iron Range and we were able to enjoy super looks at it.

**Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher** *Tanysiptera sylvia* This incredibly beautiful species of kingfisher, breeds in low termite mounds, usually on the ground. They nest along the northeast Queensland coast and winter in New Guinea. We enjoyed very good looks at a solitary individual who responded well to tape, at Mission Beach.

#### MEROPIDAE

**Rainbow Bee-eater** *Merops ornatus* Many good looks at this very attractive species.

#### CORACIIDAE

**Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* Another very attractive species, which we saw well on many occasions.

#### PITTIDAE

**Noisy Pitta** *Pitta versicolor* We had a brief look at a bird which flew across the road in front of us, during one of our birding walks at Iron Range.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

**Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxena* We enjoyed many good sightings of this common species.

**Tree Martin** *Hirundo nigricans* Another common species, which we saw well on several occasions.

**Fairy Martin** *Hirundo ariel* Several small flocks were seen well during the tour.

#### MOTACILLIDAE



**Australian Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Commonly encountered on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### CAMPEPHAGIDAE

**Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina novaehollandiae* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive bird throughout the tour.

**Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina lineata* Far less common than the above species, this attractive species was seen very well on a few occasions on the Atherton Tablelands.

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina papuensis* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Cicadabird** *Coracina tenuirostris* Surprisingly, we saw this uncommon species very well, on several occasions around Cairns, on the Atherton Tablelands and during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**White-winged Triller** *Lalage tricolor* Predominantly a bird of the dry country, a male in full breeding plumage, was flushed from a dense patch of weeds, along the edge of Lake Tinaroo, at Tinaburra Waters.

**Varied Triller** *Lalage leucomela* Seen well on several occasions throughout the tour.

#### TURDIDAE

**Bassian Thrush** *Zoothera lunulata* A particularly tame bird was observed very well at Lake Barrine, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

**Golden-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* Seen well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

#### SYLVIIDAE

**Australian Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus australis* We enjoyed good looks at this summer visitor during the boat trip on the Daintree River.

**Tawny Grassbird** *Megalurus timoriensis* Seen well on one occasion, in long grass along the roadside, close to the town of Malanda, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### RHIPIDURIDAE

**Northern Fantail** *Rhipidura rufiventris* An individual was seen very well at the Eclectus Parrot nest tree, at Iron Range.

**Willie Wagtail** *Rhipidura leucophrys* Common and widespread throughout the Atherton Tablelands.

**Grey Fantail** *Rhipidura fuliginosa* This species was also common and widespread on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Rufous Fantail** *Rhipidura rufifrons* A few good sightings throughout the tour.

#### MONARCHIDEA

**Black-winged Monarch** *Monarcha frater* Another New Guinea species, which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. We saw this species very well but only on one occasion, close to our campsite on the Claudie River.

**Black-faced Monarch** *Monarcha melanopsis* Seen well on a few occasions on the Atherton Tablelands.

**White-eared Monarch** *Monarcha leucotis* One of Australia's least common birds, one bird was present at our campsite, on the banks of the Claudie River, at Iron Range.

**Spectacled Monarch** *Monarcha trivirgatus* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

**Friiled Monarch** *Arses telescopthalmus* Several good sightings at Iron Range.

**Pied Monarch** *Arses kaupi* This Atherton Tableland endemic, was seen well on several occasions.

**Leaden Flycatcher** *Myiagra rubecula* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Shining Flycatcher** *Myiagra alecto* Seen well on several occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-breasted Boatbill** *Machaerirhynchus flaviventer* This very attractive species was seen well at Iron Range and again at Lake Barrine, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### PETROICIDAE

**Lemon-bellied Flycatcher** *Microeca flavigaster* Seen well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-legged Flycatcher** *Microeca griseiceps* Another Cape York speciality, we saw it very well on several occasions, at Iron Range.

**White-faced Robin** *Tregellasia leucops* Another Cape York speciality, it was common and conspicuous at Iron Range.

**Pale-yellow Robin** *Tregellasia capito* Proved to be fairly common on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Eastern Yellow Robin** *Eopsaltria australis* A family party of this species was seen well at Emerald Creek Nature Reserve, on the Atherton Tablelands, at the northern edge of its range.

**Mangrove Robin** *Eopsaltria pulverulenta* Two birds popped out of their favorite habitat close to the Cairns foreshore, especially for our benefit.

**White-browed Robin** *Poecilodryas superciliosa* Super looks at this very striking species, close to our campsite on the Claudie River, at Iron Range and at Emerald Creek Nature Reserve, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Grey-headed Robin** *Heteromyias cinereifrons* Confiding as well as striking, we enjoyed numerous sightings of this Atherton Tableland endemic.

**Northern Scrub-Robin** *Drymodes supercilialis* Another New Guinea species, which just has a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. We were very fortunate, to see this bird very well, it can often be difficult to see.

#### PACHYCEPHALIDAE

**Grey Whistler** *Pachycephala simplex* Seen well both at Iron Range and on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Golden Whistler** *Pachycephala pectoralis* This very handsome species, was commonly encountered on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Rufous Whistler** *Pachycephala rufiventris* Many good looks throughout the tour, it is another impressive looking species.

**Little Shrike-thrush** *Colluricincla megarhyncha* Common and conspicuous throughout all rainforested areas.

**Bower's Shrike-thrush** *Colluricincla boweri* We enjoyed several good looks at this Atherton Tableland endemic.

**Grey Shrike-thrush** *Colluricincla harmonica* Observed on two separate occasions, the first, at Cowal Creek, at the northern end of the cape and secondly, at Granite Gorge, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### POMATOSTOMIDAE

**Grey-crowned Babbler** *Pomatostomus temporalis* Family parties observed on Artermas Station and on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### ORTHONYCHIDAE

**Chowchilla** *Orthonyx spaldingii* We enjoyed very good close looks at a couple of family parties of this uncommon 'kick-boxing' Atherton Tableland endemic, during our walk around Lake Barrine.

#### CINCLOSOMATIDAE

**Eastern Whipbird** *Psophodes olivaceus* The classic call of this species is very often heard but the bird is seldom seen. We enjoyed surprisingly good views of a family party at Lake Barrine, where a couple of immature birds had not yet learned to stay well clear of humans, we also observed the parent birds very well.

#### MALURIDAE

**Red-backed Fairywren** *Malurus melanocephalus* A couple of family parties seen well on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Lovely Fairywren** *Malurus amabilis* We enjoyed good looks at this Cape York endemic, during our time at Iron Range.

#### ACANTHIZIDAE

**Fernwren** *Oreoscopus gutturalis* After a great deal of searching, we enjoyed super close looks at a male of this Atherton Tableland endemic, who responded well to tape on Mount Lewis.

**Yellow-throated Scrubwren** *Sericornis citreogularis* Several good sightings on the Atherton Tablelands.

**White-browed Scrubwren** *Sericornis frontalis* We enjoyed a good close look at this species, while watching Platypus, at the Barron River, on the Atherton Tablelands. This is the extreme northern end of this bird's range.

**Atherton Scrubwren** *Sericornis kerri* We enjoyed several good looks, at this Atherton Tableland endemic.

**Tropical Scrubwren** *Sericornis beccarii* This Cape York speciality, proved to be common at Iron Range.

**Large-billed Scrubwren** *Sericornis magnirostris* Several small flocks observed well on the Atherton Tablelands, at the northern end of this bird's range.

**Mountain Thornbill** *Acanthiza katherina* Another Atherton Tableland endemic, which we saw very well.

**Fairy Gerygone** *Gerygone palpebrosa* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

**White-throated Gerygone** *Gerygone olivacea* This uncommon species was seen well near Musgrave Station, on Cape York and at Tinaburra Waters, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Large-billed Gerygone** *Gerygone magnirostris* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

**Brown Gerygone** *Gerygone mouki* Common in the rainforests of the Atherton Tablelands.

## NEOSITTIDAE

**Varied Sittella** *Neositta chrysoptera* Small flocks of this Aussie nuthatch were observed well on two occasions. Firstly, near Musgrave Station and secondly, at Granite Gorge, on the Atherton Tablelands.

## CLIMACTERIDAE

**White-throated Treecreeper** *Cormobates leucophaeus* Seen well on the Atherton Tablelands, at the northern end of this bird's range.

**Brown Treecreeper** *Climacteris picumnus* Only seen on one occasion, however, we did see it very well, in the car-park at the Mareeba Wetlands.

## NECTARINIIDAE

**Olive-backed Sunbird** *Cinnyris jugularis* This very attractive species was common and conspicuous throughout the whole tour.

## DICAEIDAE

**Mistletoebird** *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Another very attractive species which was also common and conspicuous throughout the whole tour.

## ZOSTEROPIDAE

**Silver-eye** *Zosterops lateralis* Common and widespread throughout the whole tour.

## MELIPHAGIDAE

**Green-backed Honeyeater** *Glycichaera fallax* Another New Guinea species, which has just a toehold in Australia, at Iron Range. We were very fortunate to enjoy good close looks at a bird that responded very well to tape; they can often be very hard to find.

**Brown Honeyeater** *Lichmera indistincta* This species proved to be very common on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Dusky Myzomela** *Myzomela obscura* Common and widespread throughout the whole tour.

**Scarlet Honeyeater** *Myzomela sanguinolenta* Several good sightings of this attractive honeyeater, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Banded Honeyeater** *Certhionyx pectoralis* We saw two small flocks of this highly nomadic species, the first, much larger flock was as the Wenlock River, on Cape York. The second, smaller flock was observed along the roadside, near Mount Molloy, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Graceful Honeyeater** *Meliphaga gracilis* Common and widespread throughout all rainforested areas.

**Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** *Meliphaga notata* Also common and widespread throughout all rainforested areas.

**Lewin's Honeyeater** *Meliphaga lewinii* This species is the highland equivalent, of the two previous species, it was common and widespread on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Bridled Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus frenatus* We enjoyed several good sightings of this Atherton Tablelands endemic.

**Yellow-faced Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus chrysops* Only observed on one occasion, a small flock was seen very well during a roadside stop, close to Mount Molloy, on the Atherton Tablelands, at the northern end of this birds range.

**Varied Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus versicolor* Seen well in trees along the foreshore at Cairns.

**Yellow Honeyeater** *Lichenostomus flavus* Seen well on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Tawny-breasted Honeyeater** *Xanthotis flaviventer* Another New Guinea species, in Australia it only occurs in the northern half of Cape York, where we found it to be common and conspicuous.

**Macleay's Honeyeater** *Xanthotis macleayana* This attractive species of honeyeater was seen well on the Atherton Tablelands and at Mission Beach.

**White-throated Honeyeater** *Melithreptus albogularis* Observed on most days of the tour.

**Little Friarbird** *Philemon citreogularis* Commonly encountered on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Helmeted Friarbird** *Philemon buceroides* Frequently encountered throughout the entire tour.

**Silver-crowned Friarbird** *Philemon argenticeps* Proved to be fairly common on Cape York.

**Noisy Friarbird** *Philemon corniculatus* Seen well at a roadside birding stop near Mount Molloy, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Brown-backed Honeyeater** *Ramsayornis modestus* Observed well on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Bar-breasted Honeyeater** *Ramsayornis fasciatus* This uncommon species which is confined to vegetation along water courses, particularly paperbarks, was seen very well at the Wenlock River crossing, on Cape York.

**Eastern Spinebill** *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris* Several good sightings on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Blue-faced Honeyeater** *Entomyzon cyanotis* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

#### ORIOLIDAE

**Olive-backed Oriole** *Oriolus sagittatus* Seen well on several occasions.

**Yellow Oriole** *Oriolus flavocinctus* This species was also seen well on several occasions.

**Figbird** *Sphecotheres viridis* Perhaps the commonest bird of the whole tour.

#### DICRURIDAE

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus bracteatus* Recorded on most days of the tour.

#### GRALLINIDAE

**Magpie-lark** *Grallina cyanoleuca* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

#### CORCORACIDAE

**Apostlebird** *Struthidea cinerea* We enjoyed watching the antics of a small flock, along the roadside near Mareeba, on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### ARTAMIDAE

**White-breasted Woodswallow** *Artamus leucorhynchus* Commonly observed throughout the whole tour.

**Black-faced Woodswallow** *Artamus cinereus* Observed along the roadside on one occasion close to the Palmer River Roadhouse, at the southern end of Cape York.

## CRACTICIDAE

**Black-backed Butcherbird** *Cracticus mentalis* Endemic to the savanna grasslands of southeast New Guinea and the northern half of Cape York Peninsula, in Australia. We enjoyed several good sightings on the cape.

**Pied Butcherbird** *Cracticus nigrogularis* Seen well at our campsite on Musgrave Station and several good sightings on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Black Butcherbird** *Cracticus quoyi* Many good sightings throughout the whole tour.

**Australian Magpie** *Gymnorhina tibicen* Encountered in open country throughout the whole tour.

**Pied Currawong** *Strepera graculina* Small numbers observed throughout the whole tour.

## PARADISAEIDAE

**Trumpet Manucode** *Manucodia keraudrenii* This New Guinea bird-of-paradise, just makes it to Australia, occurring in the rainforests along the northeastern coast of Cape York Peninsula. We saw it well on several occasions, at Iron Range.

**Magnificent Riflebird** *Ptiloris magnificentus* Another New Guinea bird-of-paradise, which just makes it to Australia, occurring in the rainforests in the northern section of Cape York Peninsula. We saw both male and female birds very well, at Iron Range.

**Victoria's Riflebird** *Ptiloris victoriae* This bird-of-paradise is endemic to the Atherton Tablelands, where we saw it well on a few occasions.

## PTILONORHYNCHIDAE

**Spotted Catbird** *Ailuroedus melanotis* Several good sightings throughout the tour.

**Tooth-billed Bowerbird** *Ailuroedus dentirostris* Endemic to the Atherton Tablelands, where we enjoyed a few very good sightings of birds at their bowers.

**Golden Bowerbird** *Prionodura newtoniana* One of the highlights of the trip, close to the Crater National Park, we enjoyed fantastic looks at a full-plumaged male, close to its 'maypole bower', it has the largest bower of any bowerbird. This very uncommon species is endemic to the Atherton Tablelands and there are only a handful of known bowers.

**Satin Bowerbird** *Ptilonorhynchus violaceus* We observed this purple-eyed show-off at the Crater National Park, we also observed its bower, filled with blue plastic straws and pen-tops.

**Great Bowerbird** *Chlamydera nuchalis* Commonly encountered throughout the tour, we found a fine example of its bower on Artermas Station, it was decorated with pieces of glass, bleached bones and snail shells.

**Fawn-breasted Bowerbird** *Chlamydera cerviniventris* Another New Guinea species, which just makes it to Australia, occurring in open areas along the northeast coast of Cape York. After a great deal of searching, we managed to find a pair at Brown River, where they showed fairly well.

## CORVIDAE

**Torresian Crow** *Corvus orru* Many sightings throughout the whole tour.

## STURNIDAE

**Metallic Starling** *Aplonis metallica* Observed on many occasions, including great looks at a few communal nest trees.

**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* This introduced species was common around Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands.

#### PASSERIDAE

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* We observed this introduced species on many occasions.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* The Eurasian Tree Sparrow is native to Eurasia.

Birds of Chinese origin are known to have been introduced to Melbourne in 1863, from here it has spread as far as the Riverina, of New South Wales. Sparrows arriving on ships in northern and western Australia are likely to be Eurasian Tree Sparrows, the 'house sparrow' of South-east Asia. Government authorities attempt to destroy any birds that are detected. Two birds that were found at Geraldton in 1966 and another found at Perth in 1970 were all shot, as was one in Darwin in 1981. We were very fortunate to find a Eurasian Tree Sparrow at a small park, close to the jetty, on Thursday Island.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

**Red-browed Firetail** *Neochmia temporalis* A small flock was observed in a garden at Lockhart River Mission, on Cape York and they were common on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Crimson Finch** *Neochmia phaeton* A small flock was observed very well feeding along the roadside on seeding grasses, close to Wooroonoorah National Park, south of Cairns.

**Double-barred Finch** *Taeniopygia bichenovii* Seen well on Artemas Station, on Cape York and on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Masked Finch** *Poephila personata* Good close looks at a small flock of this uncommon species, on Artemas Station, on Cape York.

**Black-throated Finch** *Poephila cincta* Another uncommon species of finch, it was seen well on Artemas Station, on Cape York and at the Mareeba Wetlands, on the Atherton Tablelands.

**Blue-faced Parrotfinch** *Erythrura trichroa* Another New Guinea species, with just a toehold in Australia. It is very rare in Australia; all recent sightings have been from Mount Lewis, on the Atherton Tablelands. We were very fortunate to observe a bird amongst a flock of Red-browed Firetails, towards the top of Mount Lewis.

**Nutmeg Mannikin** *Lonchura punctulata* This introduced species was common in the Cairns area.

**Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** *Lonchura castaneothorax* A few bird observed on Horn Island, in Torres Strait, with larger numbers observed on the Atherton Tablelands.

#### MAMMALS

**Platypus** *Ornithorhynchus anatinus* Brilliant looks in full daylight on the Atherton Tablelands.

- Chestnut Dunnart** *Sminthopsis archeri* Endemic to tall stringybark woodlands on red earth soils of northern Cape York Peninsula. We were very fortunate to observe one of these uncommon mammals in the headlights of our vehicle, as we were driving back from our visit to Portland Roads.
- Green Ringtail Possum** *Pseudochirops archeri* Splendid looks at this Atherton Tableland endemic, in the spotlight. It just sat there and looked at us.
- Musky Rat Kangaroo** *Hypsiprymnodon moschatus* Many good looks in the rainforests of the Atherton Tablelands and Mission Beach.
- Agile Wallaby** *Macropus agilis* Many good sightings along the roadside, of this common wallaby.
- Eastern Grey Kangaroo** *Macropus giganteus* Small numbers observed on Musgrave and Artermas Stations and at the Mareeba Wetlands.
- Mareeba Rock Wallaby** *Petrogale mareeba* Endemic to the Atherton Tablelands, we enjoyed watching and feeding a small group at Granite Gorge, close to Mareeba.
- Red-legged Pademelon** *Thylogale stigmatica* A nocturnal species of kangaroo, it was observed well in the spotlight, on the Atherton Tablelands.
- Black Flying-fox** *Pteropus alecto* Hundreds were observed shrieking and flapping at their day-time roost, near Atherton, on the Atherton Tablelands.
- Spectacled Flying-fox** *Pteropus conspicillatus* An individual observed in daylight at the Eclectus Parrot nesting tree, at Iron Range. Followed by a sighting of hundreds, mixed in amongst Black Flying-foxes at their day-time roost, near Atherton, on the Atherton Tablelands.
- Little Red Flying-fox** *Pteropus scapulatus* A solitary individual observed roosting in a tree during the daytime, at our campsite at Musgrave Station. A family of Pied Butcherbirds was harassing it but it managed to survive.
- Feral Pig** *Sus scrofa* Graham saw a family party, while birding at Iron Range.
- Irrawaddy Dolphin** *Orcaella brevirostris* A couple of individuals observed briefly from the Trinity Bay, not long after leaving Cairns. This uncommon species occurs inshore, in shallow waters.
- Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus* Seen briefly from the Trinity Bay, as we were sailing through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.