

ITINERARY
AUSTRALIA

Part I: September 27- October 17, 2024

Part II: October 15 - 30, 2024

Tasmania Post-tour Extension

October 30 - November 4, 2024



The Eastern Spinebill is a honeyeater found in the woodlands of southeastern Australia and Tasmania. This bird, and the similar Western Spinebill, are the only two members of their genus. Both spinebills feed primarily on nectar, which they glean from flowers with a brush-tipped tongue. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 Field Guides Australia tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Our tour is split into two parts for those who have less time at their disposal. Part I will cover the environs of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Alice Springs, Perth, and southwest Australia. Part II will begin in Darwin and continue to Queensland (Cairns, Atherton Tableland, and O'Reilly's Guest House). Both tours combine for a complete birding tour of Australia.

Australia, the “Island Continent,” is a great plate of Earth’s crust that has come to rest between the waters of the Indian and Pacific oceans. Isolated since the breakup of Pangaea, it is an old continent, unchanged by the catastrophic mountain-building forces that have so altered the others. Only in a narrow crescent in the far eastern region do low hills and mountains, cloaked in dripping rainforest, relieve the brushy woodlands and arid plains that stretch away to the western edge of the land. Interior Australia, the vast Outback, ranks among the world’s largest deserts; it imposes a further isolating force on the continent’s flora and fauna, for in this hard place, relatively few creatures have evolved the means of survival. The greatest diversity of Australia’s abundant wildlife, however, is beyond the edge of the deserts, in the deep rainforests of the east, the extensive woodlands and heaths of the southwest, wild swamps and forests of the humid north, and the riverine districts and eucalypt forests of the southeast.



Megapodes are represented by three species in Australia. The Malleefowl is found in scattered scrubby areas of southern Australia, and we'll seek them on Part I of the tour. Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.

Australia, far removed from the nearest continental land mass, has evolved a broad range of endemic flora and fauna during its long period of isolation. Of the seventy-six native families of Australian birds, eight occur only in Australia and seven are shared only with neighboring New Guinea. Some 300 of the 780 species known from Australia are endemic! There are huge Emus and the awesome Southern Cassowary; tiny fairywrens, among the world’s most vividly colored birds; handsome currawongs and odd mud-nest builders; bizarre frogmouths and Australian Owlet-Nightjars; lyrebirds, largest of all passerines and master singers at their display grounds on the forest floor; and strange kingfishers—including the giant Laughing Kookaburra—giving voice to haunting rolls, wild chants, and hair-raising cries from the middle of the desert to the canopy of the dark rainforest. And there are megapodes, buttonquail, woodswallows, parrots, pittas, pardalotes, fruit-doves, flowerpeckers, treecreepers, honeyeaters, thornbills, logrunners, and whipbirds, not to mention the birds-of-paradise and bowerbirds! Among the many families of mammals native to Australia are some of the most peculiar on Earth. A few of the special mammals we should see are Platypus, Koala, several species of kangaroos and wallabies, giant flying fox fruit-bats, and numerous possums and gliders.

Our tour will take us to wild places in each of Australia’s important geographic regions where we’ll see some 450 species of birds and a good variety of the larger mammals. We’ll pass through most of the country’s greatest cities along the way, beginning in Sydney, then traveling to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Alice Springs, Darwin, Cairns, Brisbane, and Hobart. Visits to several coastal areas of great scenic beauty will find us watching colonies of Little Penguins on the shores of Bass Strait and albatrosses off the rocky headlands of Torndirrup National Park. Indeed, Australia is home to one of the most exciting assemblages of native wildlife on Earth. Austral springtime brings out the best in a continent rich in natural wonders.

We also offer our popular post-tour extension to **TASMANIA**. We will search out all twelve of the endemic birds amid some of Australia’s most beautiful scenery.



Please see the back of this itinerary for a larger version of this map.

Australia is a vast continent and it presents the visitor with a daunting variety of new habitats and diverse landscapes. Throw in entirely different plants and animals and you have a good picture of the challenges involved with designing a “survey” tour. Though not designed to see every bird in Australia, our trip is intended to search for many of the birds endemic to the various regions we will be visiting. Many of Australia’s birds are common and widespread, but others are rare and/or very localized. We hope to see as many of these rarer birds as possible, while preserving the holiday aspect of the tour. Unless there are recent changes or a known nearby individual, no group effort will be made to see the Rufous Scrub-bird, an extremely difficult species that might entail most of a day. As we will be covering a lot of territory in a limited amount of time, we will use recordings at times in a responsible manner to lure certain species into view. While this is a birding tour, Australia has some of the

world’s most fascinating mammals, and we’ll make a point of searching for these as well. Lastly, Australia has a very rich assemblage of reptiles and amphibians and we’ll surely encounter a variety of these, too.

Since the country is so vast, it is necessary to do a lot of travel by plane and minibus to get to the appropriate habitats. While we have endeavored to find lodging as close to our birding sites as possible, in some cases this isn’t practical. As a result, there are some early starts to assure that we get to good birding sites at an optimal time. Further, we will have a number of picnic meals to maximize our time in the field. Whenever the schedule permits, we will take time off in the middle of the day to recharge.

Finally, all of our accommodations are quite comfortable. Some are roadhouses between remote towns, some others coastal resorts, or in the case of O’Reilly’s, a very fine guesthouse. Staying in step with its remote location in Tasmania, the cabins at Mountain Valley Lodge are more rustic than others encountered on the tour. There are wall heaters in the cabins in this sometimes chilly area, and the fireplaces and electric mattress pads make it quite comfy. There are five cabins so the number of participants taking the Tasmania extension will dictate the rooming situation, though it is unlikely single cabins will be available. Sharing accommodations here is a small inconvenience for having Tasmanian endemic birds right outside the rooms and being in one of the best places to see the Tasmanian Devil.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of rather easy walking (up to 3-4 miles per day), some of it on roads, some along lakeshores or on good trails. In some instances, we walk off trail into coastal heath, spinifex grassland, desert, or woodlands with grassy understory; such outings require attention to footing, but the terrain is usually not difficult.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We regularly drive long distances on this tour, and on several days we have very long drives, though usually on decent roads. Participants should be able to step (and step down) 10-12 inches to

get into and out of our vehicles. On the Tasmania extension, Mountain Valley Lodge cabins are rustic but comfortable and single cabins are usually not available.

- **PACE:** After breakfast (set for 5:30-6:00 a.m., sometimes earlier), we will bird until lunch time. We sometimes have boxed breakfasts or lunches to extend our time in the field (or when traveling). We sometimes have an after-lunch break at the lodge or hotel, but normally we bird after lunch or else continue traveling to our next destination.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the low 50s at night (low 40s on the Tasmania extension) to 90s F during the day, with the temperature rarely getting below 80 F in the Darwin area. Rain showers are a possibility in some montane and rainforest areas.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** We will take advantage of true restroom facilities where possible but participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on some sections of this tour's route.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides.



*The Crested Pigeon is one of the fancier pigeons we will see. This bird is common over much of Australia.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

About the Birding Areas

Sydney Area

Royal National Park, in a scenic setting of tall open forest and heathland, is an ideal location in which to acquaint ourselves with characteristic Australian bird families. Several of the common birds we'll find here are widespread in Australia, such as Sacred Kingfisher, Welcome Swallow, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Gray Fantail, Willie-wagtail, Rufous Whistler, Gray Shrikethrush (a beautiful singer), Spotted Pardalote, Magpie-Lark, and Australasian Magpie. Other species we can expect to see include the famous Laughing Kookaburra and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, striking Crimson

and Eastern rosellas, Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, Eastern Yellow Robin, Golden Whistler, Varied Sittella, Leaden Flycatcher, the beautiful Variegated Fairywren, Large-billed and White-browed scrubwrens, Brown Gerygone, Brown Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Red and Little wattlebirds, Yellow-faced and New Holland honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebill, Silveryeye, Pied Currawong, Australian Raven, Maned (Australian Wood) Duck, and perhaps the diminutive Azure Kingfisher. There are a few birds of restricted distribution that we'll also concentrate on locating in this area, one being the Superb Lyrebird, certainly among the most spectacular songbirds in the world. With patience and luck, we should be able to locate one. The Rockwarbler, confined to the sandstone country surrounding Sydney, is another priority, and we'll seek other such rarely seen birds as Pilotbird.

Melbourne Area

Western Treatment Plant and its associated lagoons lie west of Melbourne along the edge of Port Phillip Bay. One of the best birding areas near Melbourne, The Western Treatment Plant, aka Werribee, is attractive to waterfowl, shorebirds, some open-country raptors, and other coastal species. Among the possibilities here are several species of herons, large numbers of Black Swans, Australian Shelduck, Musk and Blue-billed ducks, Gray and Chestnut teal, the scarce Australian Shoveler, Black-shouldered (Australian) Kite, Swamp Harrier, Eurasian Coot, Banded Lapwing (rare), Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Fairy Martin, Golden-headed Cisticola, Little Grassbird, Striated Fieldwren, and White-fronted Chat. With a bit of luck, we might encounter the secretive Black-tailed Native-Hen and the very rare Freckled Duck.

St. Kilda Breakwater is located just outside Melbourne at the top of Port Phillip Bay and is home to a small colony of Little Penguins, as well as being a great site to see the endemic Water-rat. We will plan our visit near sundown in order to see some as they return from their feeding forays to the colony.

Melbourne to Adelaide

Great Ocean Road is a stretch of scenic highway running along the coastline of southwest Victoria. We will spend time searching for some Bassian specialties, including the Rufous Bristlebird, which is endemic to the coastal heathland of this region. Other targets include the lovely and endangered Hooded Plover, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Blue-winged Parrot, Olive Whistler, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Striated Fieldwren, and Forest Raven. In addition, this is an excellent area to see Koala.



*While we are in southwest Victoria, we'll watch for the Koala, an Australian icon.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

Grampians National Park is located about 150 miles northwest of Melbourne where the Grampians mountains rise dramatically above the agricultural fields and broken woodlands we will have seen thus far. This is the southern terminus of the Great Dividing Range and home to a fine variety of wildlife. Only in the 1980s did the area achieve full status as a national park. In tall eucalypt woodland here we'll seek out such birds as Long-billed Corella, Common Bronzewing, Laughing Kookaburra, Brown and Striated thornbills, and Crescent Honeyeater. This is also a good locality for the huge Eastern Gray Kangaroo and the Swamp (Black) Wallaby. Where there are small pockets of wetter forest, we could encounter Rose Robin.

On the west side of the Grampians, the open *Eucalyptus* forests with impressive stands of grass-trees (bizarre members of the lily family) provide habitat for the spectacular Gang-gang, White-winged Triller, Scarlet and Hooded robins, Buff-rumped Thornbill, Speckled Warbler (rare), Yellow-tufted and Fuscous honeyeaters, and Spotted Pardalote. We'll also keep an eye out for pairs or flocks of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. Much of the forest in the Grampians was burned in early 2006, so we will concentrate our efforts in the relatively unscathed open gum forest.

Little Desert National Park supports a slightly different shrub association than we will find elsewhere (dominated by Broom Honey-Myrtle, a species of *Melaleuca*) and consequently harbors a few special birds, such as Tawny Frogmouth, Red-rumped Parrot, Southern Scrub-Robin, Eastern (Crested) Shrike-tit, Gilbert's Whistler, White-eared and Purple-gaped honeyeaters, Diamond Firetail, and White-winged Chough, many of which are attracted to small ponds that have been developed to enhance wildlife viewing. This area is good for thornbills, with Yellow, Buff-rumped, Yellow-rumped, Inland, and Slender-billed all possible. With luck we could see a Short-beaked Echidna digging up the earth for ants and termites. Echidnas (or "spiny anteaters") are primitive, egg-laying mammals and the only living relatives of the Platypus.



Cockatoos are another group well represented in the Australian avifauna. The Pink Cockatoo is a nomadic species except when it is nesting, and we'll look for them in the woodlands of Wyperfeld and Hattah-Kulkyne.

Photograph by participant Backy Hansen.

Wyperfeld National Park lies in northwestern Victoria along the Wimmera River. Encompassing 100,000 hectares, Wyperfeld can be an excellent birding area. On route we'll watch for Spotted Harrier and Greater Bluebonnet. At the park we'll search for Regent Parrot, Mallee Ringneck, Little Corella, Pallid Cuckoo, Red-capped Robin, White-browed Babbler, Shy Heathwren, Southern Whiteface, and Masked and White-browed woodswallows (both nomadic and not present every year).

Other habitats in Wyperfeld, particularly eucalypt woodland and cypress-pine (*Callitris* spp.) and she-oak (*Casuarina* spp.) growing on sandy hills, attract different but no less exciting assemblages of birds. Among the species we'll hope to locate are the fantastic (but scarce) Pink (Major Mitchell's) Cockatoo, the incredibly blue Splendid Fairywren, Brown Treecreeper, and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater. With luck we might encounter a Chestnut Quail-thrush or Redthroat.

Hattah-Kulkyne National Park is an excellent mallee site along the NSW border, famous for being one of the few localities for the rare Mallee Emu-wren. The Yellow form of Crimson Rosella, Striated Grasswren, and Chestnut-crowned Babbler are all possibilities here. We'll have more chances of encountering Pink Cockatoo and Chestnut Quail-thrush, the beautiful and rather rare golden race of Regent Parrot, (elusive), as well as Australian (Mallee) Ringneck, Little Corella, Pallid Cuckoo, Red-capped Robin, Crested Bellbird, White-browed Babbler, Shy Heathwren, Southern Whiteface, and Masked and White-browed woodswallows.



*The Shy Heathwren is found in dense shrubby mallee woodlands, such as at Hattah-Kulkyne National Park.
Photograph by guide Chris Benesh.*

Adelaide Area

The Port Gawler Conservation Park and St. Kilda Salt Fields environs, on the shore of Gulf St. Vincent. The muddy ditches and pond edges, larger ponds, and fringing mangroves attract a great variety of birds. Species frequently encountered at St. Kilda are Hoary-headed Grebe, Australian Darter, Pied, Little Pied, Great, and Little Black cormorants, Royal and Yellow-billed spoonbills, Pink-eared Duck, Australian Crake, Dusky Moorhen, Black-tailed Native-Hen (irregular), Red-kneed and Red-capped dotterels, Pied Stilt, Banded Stilts (generally common here, but quite scarce or absent some years), the handsome Red-necked Avocet, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Whiskered Tern, Blue-winged Parrot (scarce), Superb and White-winged fairywrens, Singing Honeyeater, and Slender-billed Thornbill. The outer harbour area of Adelaide is a good spot for Black-faced Cormorant, a Bassian endemic.

The Outback

Alice Springs, situated in the lower Northern Territory, a region of over half a million square miles with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants (22,000 of whom are Aborigines), is as close to the proverbial "middle of nowhere" as a town can be. Indeed, Alice has the distinction of being set in the midst of the most sparsely populated patch of land on Earth, after the polar ice caps. Alice Springs is, however, a fascinating place: an oasis in the vast wilderness of the Outback, it is a thriving city of 30,000 with fine hotels, shops, and stores, comfortable residential areas, and paved roads (at least to the edge of town). Time permitting, we'll visit the Alice Springs sewage lagoons, which attract a fine variety of birds. Species often present around the lagoons include Plumed Whistling-Duck, Hardhead, Pink-eared Duck, and numerous other waterfowl, a variety of shorebirds (including Black-fronted Dotterel and Wood Sandpiper), Little Corella, Fairy Martin, and Little Crow.

Near Alice Springs possibilities include White-fronted and Black honeyeaters (nomadic; both sometimes absent if clumps of mistletoe are not in bloom) and Pied Butcherbird. We may also see Bourke's Parrot, the nomadic Budgerigar, and the scarce Gray Honeyeater, which favors Mulga woodland. The Wallaroo, or Euro, a kangaroo well adapted for desert life, also frequents the area. The Red Kangaroo, a gregarious species and the largest of the kangaroos can sometimes be found in the flatter, mulga rich country northwest and southeast of town.



*The Spinifexbird is a small warbler-like bird that can be difficult to see, but we will search for this skulker near Alice Springs.
Photograph by guide Jesse Fagan.*

MacDonnell Range—This rugged range represents the only topographic relief in the Alice Springs area. The range is a linear ridge of red rock, wrinkled and split with chasms and gorges. In this exceedingly arid region of rust-brown desert and clear blue skies, water is a most precious commodity, and vegetation is sparse and thorny.

In spite of (or in response to!) the harsh climate, an exciting bird life inhabits the Alice area. Our birding will take us to Simpson's Gap, Ormiston Gorge, and other scenic areas in the MacDonnell Range west of town. We will spend time looking for the Spinifexbird, which inhabits thick stands of spinifex, a grass that grows in radiating mats, bearing impenetrable, sharp leaf spikes. The Spinifexbird can be difficult to see, as are two other spinifex specialties, Spinifex Pigeon and the beautiful Rufous-crowned Emuwren. But we'll visit some prime areas for these species. Some of the other species we'll seek are Collared Sparrowhawk, Brown Falcon, the famous Cockatiel and Budgerigar (both highly nomadic, sometimes present in huge numbers, but often virtually absent), Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, Red-backed Kingfisher (in the desert!), Gray-crowned Babbler, White-backed Swallow (irregular), Rufous Songlark, Dusky Grasswren (rare), Redthroat (rare), Chestnut-rumped and Slaty-backed thornbills (rare), Southern and Banded whitefaces, Crested Bellbird, Gray-headed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, Crimson Chat (nomadic), Red-browed Pardalote, the handsome Painted Firetail (scarce; around waterholes), Zebra Finch (nomadic, sometimes many hundreds), Western Bowerbird, and Little Woodswallow. Mammal possibilities include Black-flanked Rock-Wallaby, which lives in boulder jams and clefts in the canyon walls. We may also see such interesting reptiles as the Central Bearded Dragon and Central Netted Dragon.

Western Australia

In **Dryandra Woodland** we'll travel a maze of back roads through well-developed scrubby Wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) woodland, with black-peppered trunks, and associated *Melaleucas*, York gums, and Jam tree wattles. Interspersed are areas of Brown Mallett and *Dryandra* heath. Bird possibilities include the elusive Painted Buttonquail, Purple-crowned Lorikeet, Australian (Port Lincoln) Ringneck, Western Rosella, Elegant Parrot, Common Bronzewing, Western Gerygone, Western Thornbill, Spotted Scrubwren, the local Blue-breasted Fairywren, Rufous Treecreeper, Western Spinebill, Brown, Yellow-plumed, Gilbert's, and perhaps White-eared honeyeaters, and Western Yellow Robin. Also found here are the highly endangered Woylie (Brush-tailed Bettong) and the strange Numbat. With great luck and sharp eyes, we may spot a Numbat foraging for termites in rotten logs.

Cheyne Beach is located about an hour east of Albany and is home to an assortment of interesting birds, some of which are quite rare. It has become known as one of the best places to search for Western Bristlebird and Western Whipbird. It is also home to a small population of Noisy Scrub-birds, transplanted from Two Peoples Bay (see below). The place can

be overrun with White-cheeked Honeyeaters and Western Wattlebirds, and is an excellent place to see both Brush Bronzewing and Brown Quail. We'll spend much of a day trying to see these species, along with hopes of Red-eared Firetail.

Two Peoples' Bay Nature Reserve is situated on the Gardner Peninsula east of Albany. The reserve was named "Baie des deux Peuples" by French seafarer Louis de Freycinet when he discovered an American vessel anchored in the bay. The reserve is famous among naturalists for harboring the only known native population of the Noisy Scrub-bird, and more recently as a refuge for Gilbert's Potoroo, a mammal long thought extinct but recently rediscovered on the slopes of Mt. Gardner. Until recent decades the Noisy Scrub-bird was believed extinct, as there had been no sightings of it from 1899 to 1961. Its rediscovery in 1961 came not a moment too soon, however, as the Gardner Peninsula was slated for development as a new townsite. Fortunately, the government was persuaded to establish this reserve of 4639 hectares on the site, and the scrub-bird was saved from immediate extinction. Today approximately 200 pairs survive at Two Peoples Bay and a total population estimate for the species is around 1300.

The Noisy Scrub-bird and the somewhat less-endangered Rufous Scrub-bird of Australia's far-eastern rainforests are the sole members of the relict family Atrichornithidae, the closest relatives of which are the two species of lyrebirds. This affinity is manifested most clearly in the incredibly loud and variable song of the Noisy Scrub-bird, which is a great deal smaller than the lyrebirds.

The Southwest Corner of Australia is a wonderfully scenic spot that also harbors a few highly sought after species. Near Cape Leeuwin or Hamelin Bay, we'll seek out the local Rock Parrot and keep a sharp eye out for the rare Hooded Plover, which nests at a few select beaches in this area. To the north, we'll likely visit Cape Naturaliste, where sea-watching can be productive. On our way back to Perth we will make a stop or two to seek out some shorebirds and Australian Fairy Tern.



Near Darwin, we'll visit the Fogg Dam, where we'll view numerous waterbirds, including large numbers of primitive Magpie Geese. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

Northern Territory (Darwin)

Fogg Dam and Buffalo Creek—We will arrive in this area early enough to see the multitudes of huge Black Flying-Foxes (fruit-bats of the genus *Pteropus*) swishing quietly and steadily overhead, returning to a remote diurnal roost after a night of feeding. It is a primeval spectacle. As the flying-fox movement subsides, we'll turn our attention to looking for pairs of Barking Owls from the dark forest edge; or a strange vocalization from the forest floor may disclose a singing Large-tailed Nightjar. As the sky brightens with the dawn, it can be filled with flocks of gabbling Magpie Geese. We'll continue onto a levee crossing the marsh for a picnic breakfast with a fine view. The marsh is alive with birds at this hour, and depending

on water levels, we're likely to see a tremendous variety of species, perhaps including Little, Plumed (Intermediate), and Great egrets, Pied Heron, the giant Black-necked Stork, Glossy, Australian, and Straw-necked ibises, Wandering Whistling-Duck, the tiny Green Pygmy-Goose, Australasian (Purple) Swamphen, perhaps Buff-banded Rail and White-browed Crake, the magnificent Brolga, Comb-crested Jacana, Australian Pratincole, and, perhaps, flocks of Little Curlews, recently arrived from their Asian breeding grounds.

In the dry woodland bordering the marsh we could see Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Little Corella, Red-collared (Rainbow) and Varied lorikeets, Little Bronze-Cuckoo, the huge Pheasant Coucal, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Varied Triller, Leaden Flycatcher, the vociferous Helmeted Friarbird, White-throated Honeyeater, Dusky Myzomela, Crimson and Double-banded finches, and with luck, the generally scarce Long-tailed and Masked finches. Mammals we could see here include Agile Wallaby (often in large numbers), Dingo (wild dogs introduced to Australia long ago by Aborigines), and Swamp Buffalo (introduced).

We'll also bird a more humid rainforest nearby, where we'll find a different group of birds: the gem-like Rainbow Pitta, Arafura and Northern fantails, Green and Olive-backed orioles, and Australasian (Green) Figbird.

In the mangroves near Darwin we will seek the very local Chestnut Rail, Torresian (Collared) Kingfisher, Gray Whistler (sometimes split from the Gray-headed Whistler of Queensland as Brown Whistler in the Top End), Broad-billed Flycatcher, Mangrove Gerygone, Red-headed Myzomela, and Australian Yellow White-eye. A walk along the beach should produce an impressive tally of waterbirds and shorebirds, probably including Siberean (Lesser) and Greater sandpipers, Terek Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Far Eastern Curlew, Gray-tailed Tattler, Great Knot (sometimes in the hundreds), perhaps Lesser Crested-Tern, and with a great deal of luck, perhaps a pair of rare Beach Thick-knees.

Manton Dam and Howard Springs—At Manton Dam, in well-developed paperbark forest, birds we could encounter include Brahminy Kite, the striking Red-winged Parrot, Northern Rosella, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Brush Cuckoo, Pacific (Australian) Koel (a shiny black cuckoo with a wonderful song), Dollarbird, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin and Shining Flycatcher, the fancy Red-backed Fairywren, Green-backed Gerygone, Silver-crowned and Little friarbirds, Brown, White-throated, White-gaped, Banded, and Bar-breasted honeyeaters and Torresian Crow.

Howard Springs is a public park preserving a small patch of rainforest around a clear-water spring and creek. The park is a good place to look for Orange-footed Megapode (a megapode like the Malleefowl), Pacific Emerald Dove, Azure and Little kingfishers (both usually hard to see), the recently split Arafura (Little) Shrikethrush, Large-billed Gerygone, Chestnut-breasted Munia, and Double-banded and the striking Crimson finches. Tawny Frogmouth occasionally nests in the park, and with a careful check of favored trees, we may locate one or both members of a pair of these fascinating birds. It is also a good place to search for a day roost of big Black Flying-Foxes.



The Orange-footed Megapode is one of our targets in the Darwin region. Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.



The diminutive Red-capped Plover is widespread, but we had some of our best views at the Cairns Esplanade in 2023. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

Queensland

The **Cairns** waterfront—the Esplanade—is surely one of the best shorebirding spots in the world. High tide pushes the birds in toward the elevated walkway by the hundreds, even thousands. There is an excellent assemblage of species, too, mostly of East Asian and Siberian origin. Among the species to watch for along the Esplanade are Pacific Golden-Plover, Red-capped Plover, Siberian (Lesser) and Greater sandpipers, Far Eastern Curlew, Common Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed godwits, Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed, Curlew and Broad-billed (scarce but regular) sandpipers, Yellow-billed and Royal spoonbills, Little Tern, the nearly cosmopolitan Osprey, and in trees along the coast, Varied Honeyeater and Sahul (Olive-backed) Sunbird.

In the mangroves and parks near Cairns we hope to see Bush Thick-knee, Little (Gould's) Bronze-Cuckoo, Mangrove Robin, and Brown-backed Honeyeater. Other birds in the vicinity include Rainbow Lorikeet, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Common Cicadabird, White-throated Gerygone, Yellow Honeyeater, and Lovely Fairywren.

Black Mountain Road—This area north of Cairns has been home to a family of cassowaries for a number of years, and Cassowary House Birding and Nature Lodge is one of the best places to see the species. We'll spend the morning birding the fine forest along Black Mountain Road looking for this and other species. The dense, humid forest here also shelters a number of other great birds such as Pacific Baza, Gray Goshawk, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, perhaps an early Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Azure Kingfisher, Gray (Gray-headed) Whistler, Rufous Shrikethrush, Macleay's, Cryptic (split from Graceful), and Yellow-spotted honeyeaters, the uncommon White-eared, Pied, and Spectacled monarchs, Mistletoebird, Metallic Starling, and Black Butcherbird.

Lakes Eacham and Barrine—Two of the finest rainforest preserves on the Atherton Tableland are around Lakes Eacham and Barrine, both of which occupy long-dormant volcanic craters. Some of the specialties we'll seek here include White-headed Pigeon, the showy Wompoo Fruit-Dove, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Pacific Emerald Dove, the noisy Eastern Whipbird, the odd Chowchilla (rare), Australian Brush-Turkey, Barred (Yellow-eyed) Cuckoo-shrike, Bower's Shrikethrush, several fancy flycatchers (Yellow-breasted Boatbill and Spectacled and Pied monarchs), Pale-yellow and Gray-headed robins, Noisy and Little friarbirds, Scarlet Myzomela and Lewin's Honeyeater, Spotted Catbird, the strange Tooth-billed Bowerbird (an evolutionary link between the catbirds and bowerbirds), and the exquisite (but shy) Victoria's Riflebird. With luck we could also see the Musky Rat-Kangaroo, a strange and little-known denizen of the northern Queensland rainforest depths.

We will also spend some time watching for the fabled Platypus in a nearby creek. We will study its behavior and learn of this egg-laying mammal's unusual life history.

A nocturnal foray in the area could produce Southern Boobook or, with luck, Lesser Sooty-Owl, recently lumped with the more widespread (but also rarely seen) Greater Sooty-Owl. Another attraction in this area are the mammals, several of which, like many of the Tableland's birds are of very restricted distribution, such as the giant White-tailed Rat, Long-nosed Bandicoot, Krefft's (Sugar) Glider, Common Brush-tailed Possum, Green Ringtail Possum, Striped Possum, and possibly Lumholtz's Tree-Kangaroo (yes, a kangaroo that clammers around in rainforest trees!).



The Victoria's Riflebird has a very small range in Queensland. We were able to watch this male when he performed his amazing display on a recent tour. Photograph by guide Cory Gregory.

The Crater-- a sheer-sided hole 200 feet wide and nearly 500 feet deep, is said to be the result of a single, violent volcanic eruption many thousands of years ago. The rainforest here is rich in specialties, including the skulking, monotypic Fernwren (rare), Atherton, and Large-billed scrubwrens, Mountain Thornbill, "Little" Treecreeper (the race *minor* of White-throated, a candidate for a split), Bower's Shrikethrush, Bridled Honeyeater and even a fabulous male Golden Bowerbird at its enormous "double-maypole" stick bower.

In the open country en route to The Crater we'll scan the grasslands for the beautiful Spotted Harrier and flocks of Sarus Cranes.

Georgetown—The "bush" near Georgetown, a town of only 300 inhabitants, consists of arid woodlands and shrub-desert dotted with high-density termite mounds. It supports a rich mixture of typical Outback species as well as certain local specialties, several of which we are unlikely to find elsewhere, such as Australian Bustard, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Spinifex Pigeon (scarce), Pale-headed Rosella, Ground Cuckoo-shrike (rare), the distinctive black-backed, white-browed Cape York race *melanota* of Brown Treecreeper, Red-browed Pardalote, Banded, Yellow-tinted, Gray-fronted, and Rufous-throated honeyeaters, Zebra and Black-throated finches and the strange Apostlebird. Great Bowerbird is fairly common in the area as well. A couple of isolated waterholes concentrate birds during the dry season and often attract Plumed Whistling-Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Australian Pratincole, Red-kneed and Black-fronted dotterels, Brown Quail, Common Bronzewing, Diamond Dove, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Red-winged Parrot, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Miner, Weebill, and a variety of other species. Even Pictorella Mannikin and Plum-headed Finch are outside possibilities. Previous years' groups have enjoyed the dramatic spectacle of swirling flocks of nomadic Budgerigars and Cockatiels coming in to drink.

Lamington National Park is about a two-and-a-half hour drive from Brisbane. O'Reilly's Guest House, our home while at Lamington, is a lovely, modern motel that was once a family farm. This is one of the birdiest places in all of Australia, and many of the usually shy forest species are common on the hotel grounds. Meal times and late afternoon are feeding time, and the lawns and feeding trays are usually alive with gaudy (and bold!) Crimson Rosellas, Australian King-Parrots, Wonga Pigeons, Australian Brush-Turkeys, Pied Currawongs, stunningly beautiful Regent and Satin bowerbirds (the latter

with bowers they adorn with blue objects), Superb Fairywrens, Red-browed Firetails, and a few mammals such as the little Red-necked Pademelon. A Sugar Glider occasionally visits the feeding trays by night—oblivious to the spotlights and the hordes of humans dining just inside the glass.

We'll have the better part of two days to wander the many forest trails near O'Reilly's, allowing us a nice amount of time to enjoy the region's special birds and a good variety of mammals. Ornithologically, the two real specialties in this forest are the Albert's Lyrebird and Australian Logrunner, both of very limited overall distribution. We'll make a concerted effort to see the lyrebird, concentrating in the early morning in favored forest ravines. The difficult-to-see scrub-bird inhabits a small area of mossy forest understory reached by a four-mile (one-way) hike along a dirt trail. Our time at O'Reilly's is not sufficient to make this trek.

In addition to rainforest habitats, we will also bird the drier *Eucalyptus* woodland just down the mountain from O'Reilly's. Other species that we may see at Lamington include the showy Topknot Pigeon, Glossy Black-Cockatoo (rare), Noisy Pitta, Russet-tailed and Bassian thrushes, Gray Shrikethrush (a beautiful singer), Rose and Eastern Yellow robins, the fabulous Australian Logrunner (which forages on the ground in groups, noisily kicking dry leaves out of the way at a ninety-degree angle from the body), White-throated and Red-browed treecreepers, Eastern Whipbird, Spotted Quail-thrush (scarce and secretive), Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Gray and Australian Rufous fantails, Eastern Spinebill, Bell Miner, Green Catbird, and the elusive Paradise Riflebird.

We'll also go afield by night in search of (Greater) Sooty-Owl (rare), Southern Boobook, frogmouths, Australian Owlet-Nightjar, and mammals. Among the several mammal possibilities are Common Ringtail and Short-eared (Mountain Brush-tailed) possums.



Bowerbirds are special members of the avifauna of Australia. The mature male Satin Bowerbird is satiny-black with a brilliant purple eye like that of this bird, which may be an immature male. We'll look for these interesting, artistic birds in eastern Australia at Lamington National Park. Photograph by participant Becky Hansen.

Tasmania

The "Island State" of Tasmania, formerly the terminus of a now-submerged peninsula off the southeast corner of Australia, is located 150 miles from the mainland. Its separation from an already isolated continent has allowed the speciation of several birds, all with close relatives on the mainland. We have a very good chance of encountering all twelve species restricted to the island: Tasmanian Native-Hen, Green Rosella, Dusky Robin, Tasmanian Scrubwren (split from White-browed Scrubwren by many), Scrubtit, Tasmanian Thornbill, Forty-spotted Pardalote, Yellow-throated, Black-headed, and Strong-billed honeyeaters, Yellow Wattlebird, and Black Currawong. The rarest is the Forty-spotted Pardalote, whose entire population is estimated at fewer than 2000 individuals. Beyond the endemics, Tasmania is also the place to find several species which are more easily seen here than on the mainland (Black-faced Cormorant, Hooded Plover, Olive Whistler, Forest Raven, and Beautiful Firetail), or those which winter on the mainland and breed mostly on Tasmania (Swift Parrot and Pink Robin).



The Yellow Wattlebird is Australia's largest honeyeater, and is endemic to Tasmania. Photograph by participant Max Rodel.

The human history of Tasmania is also one of isolation. Although Abel Tasman first sighted the island in 1642, Europeans did not land here until several years later. Many of the early settlements were penal colonies, and convicts were sent to Port Arthur (near Hobart, Australia's 2nd oldest city)—the island's most notorious prison—beginning in 1823. Immigration to Tasmania is still slow, though increasing recently as the secret has gotten out; among its 500,000 people is the highest percentage of inhabitants born in Australia of any state in the country.

Although the flora has many affinities to the mainland (eucalypt forests are widespread), the temperate forests of Tasmania are more extensive, with older and larger trees than on the continent, indicative of the cooler climate. With a southern latitude equivalent to Portland, Maine, or Eugene, Oregon, the capital city of Hobart experiences wonderful late-spring and summer weather. It has been known to snow at all times of the year on Tasmania (generally only in the mountains during the late spring and summer), and, as the license plates proclaim, Tasmania is Australia's Holiday State.

In addition to fabulous birding we have a chance to view the most famous of the island's creatures, the Tasmanian Devil, as well as kangaroos and other Australian marsupials during our stay.

Mountain Valley/Cradle Mountain—The scenery here is spectacular as the mountains rise abruptly from the surrounding landscape. Very large trees are conspicuous in the rainforests, and the deciduous beech, the only winter-deciduous tree in Australia and an indicator of Tasmania's colder climate, grows on the mountain slopes. Many of the endemic species can be found here as well as Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Superb Fairywren, Flame and Pink robins, Eastern Spinebill, and Crescent Honeyeater. Mountain Valley is a lower altitude sanctuary a little more than an hour from Cradle Mountain that is excellent for birds and also one of the last places to see two now-rare marsupial carnivores, the Tasmanian Devil and the Spotted-tailed Quoll, as well as Echidna and Platypus. The carnivores may come onto the verandas at night and can be seen at very close range. The Tasmanian Pademelon, an endemic small kangaroo, hops about in the open during daylight as well as at night. Local birds include Brush Bronzewing, Pink Robin, Scrubtit, Olive Whistler, and the elusive Beautiful Firetail.

Additional birding in the area could yield the rare and local race of Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black-faced Cuckooshrike, Satin Flycatcher (a bird which winters in New Guinea) and New Holland Honeyeater along with several of the island's endemics.

Hobart environs and Bruny Island—The numerous reserves and parks near Hobart and nearby Bruny Island are home to all of the island's twelve endemics as well as specialties that are very local on the mainland or more easily found on Tasmania. These include Swift Parrot (a species that winters on the mainland), Forest Raven, Pink Robin, the uncommon Olive Whistler and Crescent Honeyeater. We will spend our time here searching for these in addition to the endemic

Tasmanian Native-Hen, Green Rosella, Scrubtit, Tasmanian Thornbill, Yellow-throated, Black-headed, and Strong-billed honeyeaters, and Black Currawong.

Bruny Island, located a short distance from Hobart, is reached by a short car-ferry ride. On the 20-minute boat ride in the calm channel we will keep our eyes open for Black-faced Cormorant, the large and impressive Pacific Gull and Kelp Gull. The island is the best place to see several of the endemics including the rare Forty-spotted Pardalote. Along some of the sandy beaches we'll look for the increasingly rare Hooded Plover.



Tasmania is home to a number of endemic mammals in addition to its endemic birds. Here are two of these interesting creatures: left, the iconic Tasmanian Devil, and right, the Tasmanian Pademelon. Photographs by participants Brian and Ginny Murphy (left); David and Judy Smith (right).

As you are certainly well aware, huge tracks of forest burned in some pristine areas of southern, eastern, and western Australia in recent years, and the results will be distressing for many years to come. We have received several inquiries about the recent fires and if the devastation and recovery will affect our tours in October and November. We have been in touch with friends, contacts, our accommodations, and transportation companies in Australia who state that the areas we travel were mostly out of the path of the fires. We will undoubtedly see some consequences of the blazes on mountainsides and from the air, but our birding should be unaltered from the unfortunate situation.

Itinerary for Australia

Days 1-3, Fri-Sun, 27-29 Sep. Los Angeles to Sydney, Australia. Flights to Sydney depart Los Angeles on Friday, 27 Sep. Crossing the International Date Line en route, we effectively “lose” the day of Saturday, 28 Sep. Scheduled arrival is in Sydney in the morning of Sunday, 29 Sep.

Participants should plan to make their own way to our hotel, where rooms will be reserved in your name. We plan to meet in the lobby at 9:00 a.m. on September 29th to depart for some birding in the Sydney area. We'll check a park that abounds with several species of parrots and cockatoos, and has been a roost site for the huge Powerful Owl. We'll also visit a park with a large roost of Gray-headed Flying-Foxes, and gauge the rest of afternoon birding in search of other species still needed. Anyone who does not arrive at the hotel in time to meet us for our 9:00 a.m. birding departure should plan to meet in the lobby at 6:30 p.m. that evening for dinner. Night in Sydney.

Day 4, Mon, 30 Sep. Royal National Park. We'll have the day to explore beautiful Royal National Park just south of Sydney. Most of our birding will be along good trails or roads. Night in Sydney.

Day 5, Tue, 1 Oct. Flight to Melbourne; afternoon trip to the Western Treatment Plant; St. Kilda Penguins. We'll fly to Melbourne this morning, then drive to the Western Treatment Plant for an afternoon visit to this wonderful area. It should be a birdy time with lots to see at the farm and lagoons at Werribee's Western Treatment Plant before heading to the St. Kilda suburb of Melbourne this evening to observe a small colony of Little Penguins that breed there. Night in Melbourne.

Day 6, Wed, 2 Oct. Great Ocean Road. This morning we head west to explore one of the scenic stretches of coastline in southwestern Victoria. We will make a number of stops today in search of Rufous Bristlebird, Hooded Plover, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Blue-winged Parrot, Forest Raven, Olive Whistler, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Striated Fieldwren, and Beautiful Firetail. Night in Apollo Bay.

Day 7, Thu, 3 Oct. Great Ocean Road to Grampians National Park. This morning we will visit the Kennett River area seeking the iconic Koala at one of its local strongholds. We will continue birding a bit this morning along the Great Ocean Road and Skenes River Road before heading toward our afternoon destination of the Grampians. We'll make a couple of birding stops around some lakes and in eucalypt forest on the way. Possibilities in these areas include Olive Whistler, Crescent Honeyeater, Forest Raven, and Rose Robin. Lakes could produce Great Crested Grebe, the weird Musk Duck, Australian Shoveler, Long-billed Corella, Australian Reed-Warbler, and Little Grassbird. We will arrive at our motel by dusk. Night in Hall's Gap.

Day 8, Fri, 4 Oct. Grampians National Park; to Nhill. We'll have much of the morning to explore Grampians National Park and Wartook State Forest riches before continuing on to Nhill. Along the way, we may seek out Banded Stilts (if still needed), and make a stop at Mt. Arapiles in search of Gilbert's Whistler and Diamond Firetail. Our accommodations for the next two nights will be a lovely inn set in woodland at the edge of the Little Desert National Park. The grounds of the lodge include two waterholes that attract a fine variety of birds and house one of the very few captive Malleefowl breeding programs in existence. Night at Little Desert Lodge.

Day 9, Sat, 5 Oct. Little Desert National Park. There is some excellent birding around the Little Desert Lodge and this promises to be an exciting day. Our main focus will be the Malleefowl, and we will pay a visit to a Malleefowl sanctuary. In addition to the many possibilities mentioned in *About the Birding Areas*, watch overhead in all habitats for Little and Wedge-tailed eagles. Night at Little Desert Lodge.

Day 10, Sun, 6 Oct. Wyperfeld National Park. We'll head north today and visit this wonderful National Park set aside to protect the remaining mallee, watching for Bluebonnets and Spotted Harriers along the way. Possibilities here include Pink (Major Mitchell's) Cockatoo, Regent Parrot, Australian (Mallee) Ringneck, Shy Heathwren, Redthroat, and possibly Chestnut Quail-Thrush. In the afternoon, we'll drive a few hours to Mildura, set in the great Victorian mallee country. Night in Mildura.

Day 11, Mon, 7 Oct. Hattah-Kulkyne National Park. We'll head north today and visit this large national park set aside to protect the remaining mallee. Possibilities here include Major Mitchell's (Pink) Cockatoo, Regent Parrot, Yellow Rosella, Gilbert's Whistler, Shy Heathwren, Mallee Emuwren, Striated Grasswren, and possibly Chestnut Quail-Thrush. After lunch, we'll be traveling the rest of the afternoon in order to make it to Adelaide in time for dinner. Night in Adelaide.

Day 12, Tue, 8 Oct. Port Gawler Conservation Area and St. Kilda Salt Fields. Afternoon Flight to Perth. We'll have the morning to explore this bird-rich area before heading off to the airport for our afternoon flight to Perth. Night in Perth near airport.

Day 13, Wed, 9 Oct. Birding around Perth, and then on to Narrogin. This morning we will have a few hours to explore some birding sites near Perth where we will encounter some of our first western specialties. In the afternoon we will head southeast to Narrogin. Keep an eye out for black-cockatoos on the drive! Night in Narrogin.

Day 14, Thu, 10 Oct. Birding the Dryandra Woodland en route to Albany. We'll spend the morning searching for the numerous specialties in the wandoo woodland in the Dryandra Forest before continuing on to Albany. We will be keeping a sharp eye out for the rare Numbat which makes its home in the wandoo woodlands of Dryandra. Be on the lookout for Western Wattlebirds, White-cheeked Honeyeaters, Regent and Elegant parrots on the drive. Night in Albany.

Day 15, Fri, 11 Oct. Southern coast heathland. We'll have a full day to look for the heathland specialties east of Albany at Cheynes Beach. There are some tough birds today, but the scenery alone makes it worthwhile. Night in Albany.

Day 16, Sat, 12 Oct. Albany area; drive to Margaret River. After another morning in the Albany area, we'll head for Margaret River. Along the way we'll watch for three species of large black-cockatoos: Carnaby's, Baudin's, and Red-tailed. We'll also seek out Western Corella at one of its few strongholds. We'll visit a karri forest, which harbors

Australia's largest trees, attaining a height of more than seventy-five meters (245 feet!) before heading west to our accommodation in the town of Margaret River. Night in Margaret River.

Day 17, Sun, 13 Oct. Margaret River to Perth. This morning we will head to the beautiful coast to check some areas for Rock Parrot and the endangered Hooded Plover. Later in the morning, and time permitting, we may make our way north to scenic Cape Naturaliste and/or track down any black-cockatoos that may be eluding us. We'll continue on to Perth for the night. Night in Perth.

Day 18, Mon, 14 Oct. Flights to Alice Springs. Today will fly to Alice Springs in the morning, arriving at around noon. We will have lunch and do some birding before we check in at our hotel. Night in Alice Springs.

Day 19, Tue, 15 Oct. Birding the Macdonnell Range. We will want to be out early to beat the heat and visit several areas today. Starting at Simpsons Gap, we'll head west to Glen Helen. We'll head back to Alice Springs in the mid-afternoon, visiting the water treatment plant in the late afternoon. Night in Alice Springs.

*[Participants taking only **Part II** will depart from the States today, October 17, effectively "losing" one day when crossing the International Date Line and arriving in Australia on October 17]*

Day 20, Wed, 16 Oct. Santa Teresa Road. We'll be out early this morning after a picnic breakfast to explore the deserts southeast of town. This can be a great area for some tougher interior specialty birds such as Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Spinifexbird, and Dusky Grasswren. This afternoon we will explore some mulga country north of town in the hopes of seeing Bourke's Parrot, along with Slaty-backed Thornbill and Gray Honeyeater. Night in Alice Springs.

Day 21, Thu, 17 Oct. Flight from Alice Springs to Darwin. Participants continuing on to Part II will fly to Darwin on a mid-morning flight; you'll be met at the Darwin airport and begin birding straight away. Remember that Darwin is much more humid than Alice Springs. Participants not continuing on Part II can depart Alice Springs on Qantas flight 797 departing Alice Springs at 12:35pm and arriving Melbourne at 4:40pm, then Qantas flight 93 departs Melbourne at 9:25pm arriving in LAX at 5:45pm the same day (having regained our day over the International Date Line).

Participants taking only Part II will arrive in Darwin this afternoon in time for some local birding. We will likely bird some coastal area woodlands and the Darwin Botanic Gardens before heading to the motel. Night in Darwin.

[Arrival from the States on October 17 for participants taking only Part II; departure for home for participants taking only Part I.]

Day 22, Fri, 18 Oct. Fogg Dam and Manton Dam. We'll have an early departure to reach the Fogg Dam area just before dawn, then have the day to explore some paperbark forests south of Darwin. Expect warm, humid weather and dynamite birding. Night in Darwin.

Day 23, Sat, 19 Oct. East Point and Buffalo Creek; Howard Springs and Darwin area birding in the afternoon. We'll have this morning to explore these two areas near Darwin for some forest and coastal birds and mangrove sites for some of the area specialties. In the afternoon we might check some waterholes near Darwin. Night in Darwin.

Day 24, Sun, 20 Oct. Flight to Cairns and local coastal and woodland birding. We will take an early flight to Cairns this morning, arriving in time for some birding before lunch. After lunch and a check of the tide schedule we will visit a few nearby birding sites before checking in to our motel located right across the street from the Cairns foreshore. Night in Cairns.

Day 25, Mon, 21 Oct. Black Mountain Road and the Atherton Tableland. After breakfast we will drive up the slopes of the Atherton Tableland located just inland from Cairns. A host of rainforest species can be found along Black Mountain Road, sometimes including Wompoo Fruit-Dove and Lovely Fairywren. Later in the morning we'll make a few birding stops before continuing to our lodging near the small town of Yungaburra, which will be home for the next couple of nights as we explore the picturesque Atherton Tableland. We could see a Platypus this evening. Night near Yungaburra.

Day 26, Tue, 22 Oct. Lakes Eacham and Barrine; evening owling. We'll spend the day exploring the rainforest habitats of the Atherton Tableland, then have an evening outing for nightbirds and mammals. Night in Yungaburra.

Day 27, Wed, 23 Oct. Atherton Tableland to Georgetown. The base of the Cape York Peninsula lies in the rain shadow of the Great Dividing Range and is consequently much drier than the Atherton Tableland. We will travel west into this drier region, to the town of Georgetown. This is Outback Queensland, a land of vast cattle ranches where people are few and far between (and outsiders even scarcer!).

Crossing the low, rocky Newcastle Range as we near Georgetown, we'll proceed slowly, watching for flocks of huge Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos and small groups of Squatter Pigeons feeding on the ground. The flatlands west of the hills present a haunting aspect of overgrazed woodland and bare earth dotted with countless thousands of conical termite mounds up to about two feet tall. It is a most unusual landscape. Night in Georgetown.

Day 28, Thu, 24 Oct. Georgetown. Today will be spent exploring the drier woodlands and brush habitats of the Georgetown area. Dawn and dusk will be spent at waterholes to see what birds come in to drink in this arid country. After lunch we should have time for an afternoon siesta before venturing out again until sunset. Night in Georgetown.

Day 29, Fri, 25 Oct. Georgetown to Cairns. After some final morning birding near Georgetown, we'll drive to Cairns to do some local birding, checking the tide along the Esplanade. Night in Cairns.

Day 30, Sat, 26 Oct. Cairns area. Our final day in the Cairns area will be spent looking for any species that may have eluded us, with an emphasis on Southern Cassowary. We may leave early in the morning to go further afield to track down a local rarity or area stake-out. Night in Cairns.

Day 31, Sun, 27 Oct. Flight from Cairns to Brisbane; drive to O'Reilly's. Today we'll fly to Brisbane, then drive to O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, nestled in the forests of Lamington National Park. Depending on our flight schedule and arrival time, we will make a few stops along the two-hour+ drive up to O'Reilly's. Along this drive to Lamington we'll watch for Scaly-breasted Lorikeet and Australasian (Green) Figbird; mammals we could spot as we ascend the last few eucalypt-clad hills include Red-necked and Whiptail wallabies. It gets cool at night at Lamington. Night at O'Reilly's Guesthouse.

Day 32, Mon, 28 Oct. Lamington National Park. We'll have a full day today to explore the park and surrounding area. Night at O'Reilly's Guesthouse.

Day 33, Tue, 29 Oct. O'Reilly's; to Brisbane. We'll spend the morning birding at Lamington/O'Reilly's before driving back to Brisbane after lunch with some stops along the way. Night in Brisbane.

Day 34, Wed, 30 Oct. Flight to Los Angeles. Departing participants will take the QANTAS flight to Los Angeles from Brisbane or first take a domestic flight to Sydney to make the international connection. We will arrive in Los Angeles on the same day (having regained our day over the International Date Line) at around 7:00 a.m. Those taking the Tasmania Extension will take a morning flight to Launceston to start the extension.

TASMANIA EXTENSION:

Day 1, Wed, 30 Oct. Flight to Launceston. Depending upon our arrival into Launceston we may have some time for some afternoon birding in the Launceston area after our flight from Brisbane. Night in Launceston.

Day 2, Thu, 31 Oct. Launceston to Mountain Valley. We will make frequent stops on our way to Mountain Valley checking eucalypt forests for some of the endemics. The 150-plus km drive to Mountain Valley, located in the central highlands, will take a good portion of the day as we bird along the way. Temperatures in the mountains of Tasmania can be quite chilly with even a possibility of snow! Night at Mountain Valley.

Day 3, Fri, 1 Nov. Mountain Valley and towards Cradle Mountain National Park. We will have the entire day to explore the moss-laden forests of this beautiful area. Though concentrating on the endemic species of Tasmania, we will not forget the other interesting bird and mammal life of the area. Night at Mountain Valley.

Day 4, Sat, 2 Nov. Mountain Valley to Hobart. We'll have another early morning near the lodge, then head across the island to Hobart this afternoon with some birding stops along the way. There is a fair chance of Blue-winged Parrot and Banded Lapwing in some high altitude plateau country en route. Night in Hobart.

Day 5, Sun, 3 Nov. Bruny Island. We'll catch the early ferry to Bruny Island this morning where we will spend a chunk of the day exploring the forests, pasturelands, and beaches of this quiet island. Depending on our success, we might decide to head back to the "mainland" for some afternoon birding before returning to Hobart. Night in Hobart.

Day 6, Mon, 4 Nov. Departure for home. We will catch our flight this morning and then connect with our flight to Los Angeles. We'll arrive in Los Angeles the same day (gaining back our "lost" day over the International Date Line).

About Your Guides

Part 1

Chris Benesh grew up studying natural history in California, where he was inspired by his father to take up birding as a teenager. After earning a degree in zoology from UC Santa Barbara in 1987, Chris moved to Austin to join the Field Guides staff. Since then, his life has undergone a wonderful transformation. The intervening years at Field Guides have taken him to many corners of the world and across both the Arctic and Antarctic circles! Chris takes an interest in nearly anything that flies, and you might catch him sneaking a peak at a passing aircraft, stopping to examine a butterfly or odonate, or black-lighting for scorpions. You might also notice him getting especially excited at the sighting of a rare or wonderful mammal (heck, he can get excited about a squirrel).

Chris's passion for education has led to his serving on the Arizona Bird Committee, leading the occasional workshop, presenting at birding conventions, and—we must add—thoroughly explaining in admirable detail the nuances of flycatchers to tour participants and colleagues alike.

Jesse Fagan (a.k.a. the Motmot or just "Mot") has been passionate about birds since his teens, when he had an encounter with a flying Pileated Woodpecker. He has birded extensively throughout North America and in 2016 published the published [*Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Northern Central America*](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) with co-author Oliver Komar and illustrators Robert Dean and Peter Burke. In addition, Mot has experience in many other areas of Central and South America, Europe, and Africa. He likes to think he can bird anywhere at any time and still show you the birds, but most importantly, a good time.

Jesse holds a B.S. and an M.S. in mathematics from Texas Tech University. He is currently living in Lima, Peru with his wife, Rocio.

Part 2

John Coons combines birding excellence with a natural ability as a tour guide. He received his master's degree from Northern Arizona University for his research on variation in bird population densities on the San Francisco Peaks and presently resides at the foot of those mountains in Flagstaff, where he is working hard to sustain a yard of native plants.

John has been leading tours since 1985. Since then his great group skills, attention to detail, easy laugh, and unfailing sense to spot (and remember!) what's fascinating in things large and small have brought delight to innumerable Field Guides participants on tours from Hudson Bay to the tip of South America and throughout Australasia. John has guided numerous previous Field Guides Australia tours.

Cory Gregory, a lifelong addict of all things birds, started learning birds on flashcards at the age of three. Ever since he can remember, he knew he wanted to pursue his passion and work with birds. Cory earned a B.S. in zoology in Michigan, where he also worked for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for several seasons. He then furthered his education at Iowa

*"I would travel with **Chris Benesh** anywhere, any time. He is calm, pleasant, and good-humored. He is not only brilliant at finding and spotting birds, but equally brilliant at ensuring that every member of the group gets a great look at the bird..." B.M., Arizona's Second Spring*

*"**Jesse** is a fantastic guide. He really knows calls, infinitely patient in getting everyone on the difficult birds, fun to be with." L.F. Colombia: Bogota, the Magdalena Valley, and Santa Marta.*

*"**John Coons's** knowledge of Australia is thorough and extensive. He knows the habits of the birds and where to find them, making it much more likely that we will see them. E.T., Australia*

State University, where he earned a M.S. studying Long-billed Curlews in Nebraska. Still to this day, the prairie states mean a lot to him.

As an avian ecologist, Cory has worked with a wide range of birds including Steller's Eiders in Alaska, Laysan Albatrosses in Hawaii, Red Knots in Georgia, and Upland Sandpipers in Kansas. In 2014 and 2015, Cory served as a local guide on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs of Alaska and hasn't stopped guiding since.

Parallel to being a full-time guide, Cory still identifies as a lifelong biologist and will occasionally work field jobs when he can. As recently as 2022, he worked as an avian ecologist in northern Michigan where he captured, handled, and banded Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Cory has been based out of Hannibal, Missouri for some time and now serves on the Missouri Birds Record Committee. When not on tour, he and his partner Ashley pursue their interests in birding, traveling, and mostly recently, moths.

In North America, his stomping grounds, Cory has co-lead Field Guides groups to locales coast-to-coast, including Arizona, Alaska, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, Maine, and Newfoundland. Farther afield, Cory has also guided in Costa Rica, Mexico, Jamaica, Colombia, Peru, France, and Australia. He has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up thanks to adding Oregon and Michigan to his portfolio of tours. Be sure to take a look at his upcoming trips—folks have had a great time traveling with Cory, and we think you will, too!

“Cory Gregory ... is a world-class birder with exceptional sight, hearing, and bird knowledge. His personality is fantastic: very friendly, funny, witty, helpful.” C. B., Maine.

Take a look at <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete schedules for all our guides; just click on a photo.

Financial Information

FEE: \$18,950 from Sydney (Part I only—\$10,850; Part II only—\$8100)**

Tasmania Extension: \$2550 from Tasmania

Part 1 starts in Sydney and ends in Alice Springs

Part 2 starts in Darwin and ends in Brisbane, the Tasmania Extension ends in Hobart

DEPOSIT: \$1875 per person (\$1075 for **Part I** only and \$800 for **Part II** only)

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: March 31, 2024 (Full tour or Part I) and April 18, 2024 (Part II)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$2625 for the main tour (Part I only—\$1500; Part II only—\$1125;

Tasmania Extension—\$550 (singles are not available at Mountain Valley)

LIMIT: 12

****PLEASE NOTE THAT TOUR FEES DO NOT INCLUDE FLIGHTS WITHIN AUSTRALIA.**

See below for airfare estimates as of 4/24

AIRFARE: (All fares are as of 4/24 and are subject to change) **Internal flights** within Australia are as follows:

Parts I & II—\$2571.83

Part I only—\$1406.40

Part II only—\$615.80

Part II with Tasmania Extension—\$1558.80

Parts I & II with Tasmania Extension—\$3514.73

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one). Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

DOCUMENTS: A current **passport** valid beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Australia. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. In addition, US citizens must obtain an electronic travel authority (**visa**) which you can obtain with the Australian ETA app:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/electronic-travel-authority-601#HowTo>

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Australian consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. **Before booking your own flights, please contact our office for information on the flights that will work with the tour itinerary.** Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **combined fee for Parts I & II** is \$18950 for one person in double occupancy from Sydney. It includes all lodging from Day 3 through Day 33, all meals from dinner on Day 3 through dinner on Day 33, all ground transportation, boat trips, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). **The internal flights are NOT included in the tour fee.** Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The combined **single supplement** for Parts I & II of the tour is \$2625*.

The fee for **Part I** is \$10,850 for one person in double occupancy from Sydney. It includes all lodging from Day 3 through Day 20, all meals from dinner on Day 3 through dinner on Day 20, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). **The internal flights are NOT included in the tour fee.** Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The **single supplement** for Part I is \$1500*.

The fee for **Part II** is \$8100 for one person in double occupancy from Darwin. It includes all lodging from Day 21 through Day 33, all meals from dinner on Day 21 through dinner on Day 33, all ground transportation, boat trips, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). **The internal flights are NOT included in the tour fee.** Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field

Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The **single supplement** for Part II is \$1125*.

The fee for the **Tasmania Extension** is \$2550 for one person in double occupancy from Tasmania. This includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from breakfast on Day 1 to dinner on Day 5, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). **The internal flights are NOT included in the tour fee.** Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The **single supplement** for the Tasmania Extension is \$550* (singles are not available at Mountain Valley).

The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Australia, flights within Australia, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

*Please note that if you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$1895** (\$1075 for **Part I** only and \$810 for **Part II** only) per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by March 31, 2024 (Full tour or Part I) and April 18, 2024 (Part II). We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas

and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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