

# East Australia

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14<sup>th</sup> October - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2007

*Toby Austin, Cambridge, England*

## Introduction

This trip report covers a family holiday with my wife, Michelle, and two children Tom and Sam, aged ten and eight respectively. Tom is a keen (and rather good) birder, whilst Michelle and Sam are not, but quite willing to spend some time birding as long as it is not too early! It was far from an out-and-out birding trip, with less than half the time spent in the field. What follows is more of a diary of what we did, just as much for our own benefit as for others, but visiting birders might be able to get a general idea of what sites may be worth visiting and what they may likely see, particularly if they are also on a family holiday.

## Itinerary

- 14/10** Flight from Heathrow to Sydney via Hong Kong
- 15/10** Sydney Harbour, Botanic Gardens, and City
- 16/10** Manly beach and area, Sydney
- 17/10** Centennial Park and Bondi beach, Sydney
- 18/10** Katoomba area, Blue Mountains
- 19/10** Sydney Royal National Park
- 20/10** Early morning flight to Brisbane; ferry to Tangalooma, Moreton Island
- 21/10** Tangalooma, including Whale-watching trip
- 22/10** Morning ferry to Brisbane; Nudgee beach, Brisbane; drive to Noosa
- 23/10** Noosa (including National Park)
- 24/10** Eurundi Market; drive to O'Reilly's, Lamington
- 25/10** O'Reilly's
- 26/10** O'Reilly's; Canungra; afternoon flight to Cairns
- 27/10** Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef; Centennial Lakes, Cairns
- 28/10** Cairns Centennial Lakes and Esplanade; Junguburra
- 29/10** Skyrail to Kuranda; Cassowary House
- 30/10** Cassowary House; Mareeba; Abattoir Swamp; Red Mill House, Daintree
- 31/10** Daintree Boat Trip (morning for birds, afternoon for Crocodiles); Jindalba, Cape Tribulation; Port Douglas
- 01/11** Mount Lewis and Mareeba wetlands; Port Douglas
- 02/11** Mareeba wetlands; Mount Malloy; Abattoir Swamp; Port Douglas
- 03/11** Port Douglass; Cairns Esplanade; afternoon flight to Heathrow via Hong Kong

## Literature

Of the following, Slater was used in the field as it was the most portable. However, Pizey and Knight was the better of the two. The Mammal and Butterfly Guide were both purchased from Australian shops.

*The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Pizzey and Knight, 2003.

*Australian Birds*, Slater, 2003.

*A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Menkhorst and Knight, 2004.

*The Complete Field Guide to Australian Butterflies*, Braby, 2004.

*East Coast Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Lonely Planet 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2005

## Contacts

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Chris Dahlberg, Daintree

<http://daintreerivertours.com.au/>

Alan Gillanders, Yungaburra

<http://www.alanswildlifetours.com.au/>

Most travel arrangements were made through Trailfinders ([www.trailfinders.com](http://www.trailfinders.com)) who I thoroughly recommend. Internal flights and some hotel bookings were made by myself.

Sue Gregory was very helpful in organising not only Cassowary House, but also SkyRail, the Daintree river trip with Chris Dahlberg, and the Barrier Reef trip, as well as putting me in touch with Alan Gilanders.

Finally, Andrew and Trish at Red Mill House were very helpful in providing local knowledge as to where to see birds.

## Daily account

### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October

We arrived tired but excited in the early evening at Sydney where we jumped in to a cab to our hotel, the Crowne Plaza, with magnificent bed-side views over Darling Harbour. After freshening up we decided to go for something to eat and drink, and as the hotel bar was shut, strolled in to the harbour. Despite it being dark, we still managed to see the first 'official' birds (we'd seen Crested Myna – a tick, and Black Kite in Hong Kong.) These were **Australian White Ibis** followed by **Silver Gull** and were accompanied in the sky by huge Grey-headed Flying-foxes.

### Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October

We all slept well though I awoke at around 5am and so, whilst the others were sleeping, did some in-bed birding! I managed to see: **Pacific Black Duck**, **Great Cormorant**, **Feral Pigeon**, **Australian Raven** and **Tree Martin**. When the



others were awake we added **Common Myna** to the list before heading off for a very good hotel breakfast after which we again walked in to the harbour for a look around.

It was still early morning, but we could feel the heat already. Michelle had to struggle putting sun lotion on Tom as he was desperate to view the first parrots: **Rainbow Lorikeets**.

**Welcome Swallows** were soon added to the list as well as fly-over **Australian Pelicans** (though Tom kept missing them.) After a lazy couple of hours around the harbour (where we only added **House Sparrow** to our list) we went to get the ferry to Circular Quay. Whilst waiting for the boat to arrive a **Grey Teal** swam in to the terminal which turned out to be one of only three we would see the whole trip.



**Pied Cormorants** were seen en-route whilst the boat slowly passed by Sydney Harbour Bridge towards the Opera House. Upon disembarking we looked around the shops, and bored of this, myself and Tom decided to sit on the steps of the Opera House. Here we stared in to the Botanic Gardens and strained for distant views of a **Noisy Miner**. Little did we realise we would see thousands of these in the days to come, but for now we were happy with our first Australasian family tick.



Meeting up with Michelle we headed into the gardens (seeing **Australian Darter** on the way) and soon saw **Australian Magpie**, **Magpie Lark**, **Pied Currawong**, **Spangled Drongo**, **Masked Lapwing**, **Australian Wood Duck**, **Mallard** (only one of the trip), **Dusky Moorhen**, and very obliging **Buff-banded Rails**. However, the highlight for the children was the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** that were so

tame they could be hand-fed. Finally, we were told where to find a roosting **Tawny Frogmouth** which we saw, along with a huge roost of Grey-headed Flying foxes and a group of Queens Park Rangers supporters.

We left the park late afternoon for a walk around the Rocks where we had our evening meal before catching the ferry back to the hotel. The night views of Sydney were great, but particularly stunning were the hundreds of Silver Gulls flying above the bridge which when lit from below, looked like a huge swarm of fireflies.



## Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October

This morning we took the ferry to Manly in the north via Circular Quay. It was my understanding that there was a remnant population of Little Penguin still holding on at



Manly beach and this was to be our main target. However upon arrival I found out that the last penguins had disappeared the previous year and they could no longer be found here. So, rather disappointed, we gave up on the idea and Michelle went off to look around the shops (disappointing too apparently) whilst I went to the beach with the children, with the only new bird to be added being a

**Black-tailed Godwit.** After much swimming we met up with Michelle for lunch, and as she wanted to find a swimming costume to buy, we decided to go for a walk along the cliff path around the southern promontory. **Little Pied Cormorant** and **Little Black Cormorants** were seen as well as numerous Eastern Water Dragons. The children also managed to see a Southern Brown Bandicoot before we hit some scrubby area good for birds. Here we saw: **Laughing Kookaburra, White-browed Scrubwren, Eastern Spinebill, and Red Wattlebird.** At the top of the cliffs we looked out to sea, and with a strong easterly wind blowing (it had been picking up all morning) there seemed to be quite a lot of activity. Most of this was in the form of Silver Gulls and **Australian Gannets**, but I was also able to pick out three **Short-tailed Shearwaters**. Unfortunately we had no 'scope with us, and the children missed them, but only moments later they had very close views of Black-browed Albatross (Tom was very happy with this, his first Albatross, making up for the Penguin) and two more followed soon after.

By the time we had got back to Michelle it was beginning to get dark but, despite the chill wind, Sam insisted on a last swim in a pool that went in to the sea. He was the only one brave enough apart from a Little Pied Cormorant that swam next to him. The final bird of the day was a **Common Koel** seen at dusk on the walk back to the ferry. The ferry was delayed in leaving which meant we missed our connection back to Darling Harbour. However we found a great place to eat at Circular Quay before catching the next one. This time we sat inside as Tom was asleep and the wind was now very strong.

### **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October**

We skipped the excellent hotel breakfast as we were worried that, with the strong wind, we might be seeing it again soon as we were booked on a whale and bird pelagic leaving first thing. However, as I had feared, the wind was just too much and the boat was cancelled. We had no plan that day apart from the sea trip so Michelle took the children to Darling Harbour Wildlife World whilst I went to see if I could pick up the hire car early. I managed to get a car but needed to down-grade as the car I ordered was not going to be ready until the original afternoon time. This was fine, excepting that it was smaller which proved a problem with the luggage when driving to the airport later in the week! For now though, I drove to Centennial Park and birded on my own for a couple of hours. For a city park it was surprisingly good, providing the only **Hoary-headed Grebe** and **Fairy Martins** seen in the whole trip, as well as one of only two **Hardheads** seen. I also saw: **Eurasian Coot, Purple Gallinule, Grey Goshawk, Spotted Dove, Dollarbird, Willie-wagtail, Superb Fairy-wren, and Common Starling.**



Navigating back to the hotel through Sydney's one-way system was problematic to say the least! By the time I got back to meet the others I needed a drink or two and scrapped the previously made idea of driving to Bondi beach, instead taking the underground bus. We were going to Bondi beach just to say 'we've been to Bondi beach' and we actually spent about three minutes on the beach: It was freezing! Despite much protest we forbade Sam a swim in the sea and instead watched the surfers from a sheltered position on the cliff top. Whilst watching, Tom found our only trip **Eastern Reef Egret** (dark morph) and we also had our only **Little Raven**. We then went on a very scenic walk along the limestone cliffs to Clovelly Bay, on the way seeing **New Holland Honeyeater** as well as more Superb Fairy-

wrens (which Tom was desperate to see) and Laughing Kookaburras (which Michelle was after.)

It was early evening when we returned, and we finished the day at the wildlife park's aquarium (the ticket allowed for re-entry and I joined them) before eating at a 'food mall' serving just about every type of exotic take away dish imaginable.

### Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October

We woke early and headed for our first day away from the city. Two hours later we were there, at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains does apparently provide good birding; but not where we were, or at least we didn't find too much. Indeed the only bird we saw in our time there that was not seen elsewhere on the trip was **Australian Hobby** and that was seen on the drive up, not too far from Sydney. **Australian King-Parrots** used to be seen well around the visitors centre, but due to a bizarre law that effectively bans bird feeders from Australia (O'Reilly's seem to ignore this!), they no longer are. However, a few were seen, along with **Brown Cuckoo-Dove**, **Crimson Rosella**, **Cicadabird**, **Golden Whistler**, **Grey Shrike-Thrush**, **Eastern Whipbird**, and **Brown Thornbill**. Still, we enjoyed the morning, walking for several hours through some amazing scenery to the cable-car stop where we had lunch.



After taking the bus back to the car and going up and down the steps to the 'Three Sisters', I dropped Michelle and Sam off at the nearby village of Leura that she wanted to visit, whilst myself and Tom went to some suitable looking habitat in search of Rock Warbler. We failed in the hour or so that we were given, adding only **Galah**, and **White-throated Treecreeper** to our tally.

The drive back to Sydney was uneventful (I was the only one awake for the whole two hours) until encountering Sydney's one way system again where things got more interesting.

### Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October

After eating late the previous night, the children were tired so, despite my keenness to get to the Royal National Park I thought it best to allow them to sleep in. We then had a long breakfast at the hotel (it was good!) and so did not get underway until mid-morning. Tom eventually caught up with Australian Pelican whilst driving past Botany Bay before Sam, who had not been feeling too well that morning, decided to be violently sick in the back of the car! Fortunately the place where I immediately pulled over just happened to be a car-cleaners so, as we had a change of clothes anyway, nothing was lost apart from more time and a few dollars.

Upon arrival at the park, Sam's time-wasting antics were soon forgiven when he found a 'small yellow bird' which happened to be **Crested Shrike-tit**, a bird that many visiting birders fail to see; not bad for an ill eight-year-old non-birder! Also around the visitor's centre we saw our only trip **Chestnut Teal** as well as our first **Wonga Pigeon**.

Nearby was another trail which held Rock Warbler so myself and Tom tried (and failed) this whilst Michelle sat by the river with the recuperating Sam and watched the Laughing Kookaburras. When we returned to meet them I started to tell Tom to look out for other kingfishers but before I could finish the sentence he'd found **Azure Kingfisher!** After a short rest by the river - when we saw **White-breasted Woodswallow** - we headed to Lady Carrington's Drive for some serious birding.

Although in shade, midday was perhaps not the best time to be looking for our main quarry, Superb Lyrebird. However the birding was wonderful and as well as seeing **Rock Warbler** we notched up **Collared Kingfisher, Grey Fantail, Black-faced Monarch, Satin Flycatcher, Eastern Yellow Robin, Rufous Whistler, Variegated Fairy-wren, Striated Thornbill, Red-browed Treecreeper, Lewin's Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Noisy Friarbird, and Olive-backed Oriole**. Short-beaked Echidna was also seen and when it began to cool in the late afternoon, myself and Tom eventually found a female **Superb Lyrebird**. I left Tom watching whilst I ran down the track to Michelle and Sam who were about half a kilometre in front. Half way along I met Sam who had been sent back by Michelle to say that they had found a male!

It was now late in the day and we had not yet visited the heath area at Bundeena Drive, a place where I desperately wanted to go as it held a few good birds unavailable elsewhere. A frantic drive later and we were there. Guessing we had less than an hour of light we weren't too hopeful and, leaving Michelle and Sam by the car, myself and Tom went down the trail. After only a few metres however we had found **Southern Emu-wren**. These proved very difficult to see well, initially responding to playback, but keeping low and hidden and then not bothering to respond (perhaps being played out, being close to the car-park.) We moved on (and got better views later) to look for other birds such as **Tawny-crowned Honeyeater**, which we got one poor view of. It being nearly dark, we agreed to head back to the car when suddenly, the second 'difficult' bird **Chestnut-rumped Field-wren** popped up on a nearby bush and began singing.

Finally, we drove back to the carpark near to where the trail we walked earlier and played some Owl tapes. A **Southern Boobook** soon came in, responding to a Sooty Owl call! Tired but happy, we headed back to the hotel to freshen up and spend our last night at Darling Harbour.

## Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October

An reasonably early departure from the hotel to catch our flight to Brisbane. On the runway myself and the boys were wondering what our last New South Wales bird would be, when Tom found it: A new one - **Australian Black-shouldered Kite!**



Arriving in Brisbane we got a taxi to the quay where we had a couple of hours to kill before our journey across to Tangalooma, Moreton Island where we were to spend the next two nights. Luckily the driver had warned us that there was nothing at the quay and had pulled over at a garage to allow us to get some food and drink. Still, we were in a new location and there were a few new birds around: **Striated Heron**, **Brahminy Kite**, **White-bellied Sea-Eagle**, **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike**, and **Brown Honeyeater**. I'd expected the ferry journey to be fairly uneventful, but as it happened, Tom got his first ever Storm-Petrel: **Wilson's Storm Petrel**, and we also saw **Fluttering Shearwater** as well as **Crested Terns** and a **Caspian Tern**.

Tangalooma was a place where Michelle and the children had wanted to visit in order to feed wild Bottle-nosed Dolphins but I had nothing planned bird-wise, though **Figbirds** were outside the hotel window, and **Whistling Kites** were nearby. We spent the first day there not doing much but relaxing, swimming, and drinking, before we headed to the evening's dolphin feed and saw the eight that normally come in to feed. In the beach-bar that evening we were joined by a couple of **Bush Thick-knees**.



### Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October

Leaving everyone in bed, I went for an early morning walk along the beach, seeing **White- cheeked Honeyeater** (the only one of the trip) before remarkably seeing a **South-polar Skua** close in to the shore flying around the wrecks. We spent the morning relaxing, swimming, and walking along the beach, as well as watching the 'Pelican Feed', before boarding the boat for our pre-booked afternoon whale-watching trip.



There was little wind and the sea at first glance looked calm, but there was actually a huge swell. After feeding most of the passengers the included (and rather



good) sea-food lunch, the crew then spent most of the afternoon cleaning it off the floor. Even I (who am normally fine) felt a bit queasy, but it was worth it for the magnificent views of the Humpback Whales we saw (though Michelle may not be quite so ready to agree.) A single Common Dolphin was the only other cetacean seen and there were no new birds, the only other incident occurring when my sun-glasses fell overboard and Sam refused to get them for me.

Back on land, Michelle, still feeling rough, went back to the hotel to lie down whilst I went with the boys to snorkel (not great) and 'sand-slide'. Walking back to the hotel ready for the dolphin feed (where it was our turn to do the feeding) we saw our first **Channel-billed Cuckoos**.

### Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October

After breakfast (ours and the pelicans) it was time to board the ferry for the journey back to the mainland. This was less eventful from a birding point of view, though two Killer Whales

were seen and close inshore we had distant views of **White-headed Stilts**. After catching the courtesy bus to the airport and picking up our hire-car, we headed for nearby the nearby mangroves at Nudgee beach where the target species of **Mangrove Honeyeater** and **Mangrove Gerygone** were seen without too much bother along with **White-faced Heron**, **Far Eastern Curlew**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Whimbrel** (which Tom later told me was a tick for him!), **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Silver-eye**, and **Blue-faced Honeyeater**. I also caught up with **Crested Pigeon** (of which Tom had seen several times already.)

The drive to our next stop at Noosa was about an hour and a half away, and we arrived early afternoon. The apartment – Noosa Outrigger – was huge (slightly smaller than our house) and well furnished (slightly better than our house!) and we decided to do nothing but laze around and go to the shops to pick up some BBQ food for the evening, as well as some sunglasses for me! **Little Wattlebird** and **Australian Brush-turkey** were the only birds added from the hotel garden.

### **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October**

Fortunately nobody had food poisoning from my pool-side BBQ attempt the night before (a power-cut had meant the lights went and some of the food was rather under-cooked) so we spent a lazy morning watching the world go by (Noosa's a great place to do that) in the excellent restaurant-cafe adjoining the hotel. After that we headed to Noosa National Park where I had hopes of finding the Koala I had promised everyone. I passed the test, find one quite close to the visitors centre. Michelle suggested we go on a decent walk and so we set out on a four hour coastal and forest circular hike around the park. In addition to the brief views of **Little Corella** that we had seen before on the drive to the park, we saw **Rufous Fantail**, **Spectacled Monarch**, **Rufous Shrike-Thrush**, and **Mistletoebird** as well as disappointingly poor views of our only **Striated Pardalote**. We then headed back to the apartment for more doing nothing (except drinking and playing in the pool – even Michelle!) before going back to the adjoining restaurant-cafe for dinner.



### **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> October**

Saying goodbye to Noosa, we headed for the markets at Eurundi (about twenty minutes drive south) which Michelle wanted to visit, along with half of southern Queensland it seemed. Finding nowhere to park, I dropped everyone off to let Michelle get on with the shopping (I was keen to carry on as soon as possible!) and went to park the car. Fortunately, exactly where I'd chosen to park it, were a flock of **Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos**. They seemed to be feeding well, so I walked to the market, found the children, and walked back to show them the flock which were fortunately (being the only ones seen) still there. After the boys had played at a play-ground and watched a 'sand-carver' make an incredible sand-castle, we met with Michelle once more (who had just about finished) and had a brunch in the pie-shop before heading off on the three hour journey to O'Reilly's in Lamington National Park.



Rosellas and Australian King-parrots. Whilst myself and Michelle checked in and were given a guided tour, the boys had the time of their lives feeding the birds. We collected them (noticing also the flock of **Red-browed Firetails** feeding on the scraps) and, after unloading our luggage and allowing the children a ten-minute swim, we had just enough time to go on the Wishing Tree Trail which started right next to our suite.

The trail was superb and we followed it to the canopy tower, at the base of which was (after much scrutiny and deliberation) a **Bassian Thrush**. At the top of the tower we saw **Brown Gerygone** as well as a Brown Antechinus. Also on the trail were numerous **Yellow-throated Scrub-wrens** as well as **Southern Logrunners** and **Green Catbirds**.

We'd splashed out on the accommodation as this was to be one of the highlights of the holiday and whilst myself and Tom birded to dusk, Michelle was back sipping chilled O'Reilly's white wine in the king-size spa bath overlooking the mountain, just like she had seen the lady doing in the brochure! Sam later did the Sam, enjoying a bottle of lemonade tastefully placed inside a wine cooler.



Dinner in the evening was just as exciting, with Red-legged Padamelons and Ring-tailed Possums been seen on the walk to dinner and Mountain Bush-possums watched from the restaurant window during.

After dinner we searched for more possums and photographed the frogs in the pond before the children went to their room and we retired to our pre-made log-fire and four-poster bed!

### Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October

Myself and Tom went out at dawn, starting at the staff quarters. These are usually out of bounds but we had been given permission to go there as there had been an Albert's Lyrebird seen there the previous few days. We failed and so descended the Wishing Tree trail again. As is the norm in a rainforest environment, adding new species took time, but it was great birding all the same. A pair of **Noisy Pittas** were seen well, and Tom managed to find

**Paradise Riflebird** (and get to me – who had wandered off – in time for me to see it.) **Topknot Pigeon** was also added before we headed back up the steep trail for breakfast.

During breakfast, I found out that a Lyrebird had been seen on the main broad-walk and so we all decided to head for there, particularly as this joined the tree-top walk that we had wanted to do. We failed here to, adding only **Large-billed Scrubwren**, but the broad-walk does get busy with day-visitors as the day goes on so we weren't too surprised. After doing the tree-top walk (including the rather nervous ladder climb to the top of one of the tallest trees) we relaxed with an ice-cream and fed the parrots again. Tom had started to recognise and name some individually!

I'd also found out that Lyrebirds were occasionally seen in the afternoon along the Python trail and so we decided to spend the afternoon doing this walk. Before we arrived at the start we watched a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** soar over us and found another **Bassian Thrush**. On the trail we bumped in to a tour group who were looking for **Rose Robin**. Fortunately I had a recording and Sam managed to pick it out, much to the amusement (at the cost to the leaders) of the paying punters! Soon afterwards we had an amazing find (confirmed with call-back), **Olive Whistler**, which is unusual at the altitude.

Magnificent views over the valley were at the end of the trail and we rested here for a good while before a quicker walk back. Several more thrushes were found and, despite some initial excitement that one of them may be Russet-tailed, all turned out to be Bassian.

We were back (Lyrebird-less) before it was dark as we wanted to have an early dinner so as to go spot-lighting; I had information on Marbled Frogmouth, Owlet Nightjar and Sooty Owl and we had also missed the Sugar-gliders the night before. Dinner was enjoyed whilst watching a Long-nosed Bandicoot. However, as soon as we stepped outside the rain started (good for finding frogs!) and despite going through the motions for half an hour, nothing was found. In truth, we were very lucky as the rain was forecast to arrive much earlier in the day and it cleared fairly early the following morning.

## Friday 26th October

My birthday was awarded with dawn views of **Albert's Lyrebird**! Walking along the broad-walk I had to whisper to Tom to stop walking and look down as we were about to tread on it! It (a female) fed unconcerned by our feet for several minutes before running off in to the forest. Immediately afterwards the drizzle turned in to heavy rain and so, as we were both tired, and unlikely to see anything new, decided to go to back to bed! I slept, but Tom didn't as he was too busy feeding the Rosellas on the balcony.

After breakfast it was time to leave so Michelle and I packed whilst the children spent more time with the parrots. Joining up with them I needed to take Sam to the bathroom as a Parrot had left several deposits on his top! The two of us then decided, to quickly walk down the broad-walk to where the Lyrebird had been seen. Today was much quieter than the previous days so I had reasonable hopes and indeed, there it was, in exactly the same place. I left Sam watching it as I got Michelle for her first look and Tom for his seconds



Time to go and during a final feed of the parrots Tom was in tears as he really did not want to leave. He wrote about the parrots for days after in his journal, describing the individuals and their behaviour. However, we needed to get our plane to Cairns for the last leg of the trip so we had to say our fair-wells to O'Reilly's and the parrots.

Michelle suggested a lunch-time stop at the foot of the hills at Canungra and this turned out to be quite fortunate as we saw our only **Grey Butcherbirds** and **Pied Butcherbirds** of the whole trip whilst eating. We also saw our first **Pale-headed Rosella** and soon after, back on the road, the first **Pheasant Coucal**. We had planned to be in Brisbane with plenty of time to spare so, if possible, we could return to Nudgee beach (near the airport) where we had missed Collared Kingfisher, a lot of people see it there and nowhere else. As it happened, road-works near the toll bridge along with (very) early Friday rush-hour traffic meant that we only just made it in time for the plane.

After a very bumpy landing (for no apparent reason) in Cairns we immediately noticed, despite it being dark, the change in heat and humidity. After a short taxi ride to our hotel (Cairns Lakes) we cleaned up and celebrated my birthday in the resort's restaurant whilst watching the amusing efforts of a tired and confused Bordered Rustic butterfly as it attempted – successfully in the end – to avoid being eaten by a number of Asian House Geckos!

### Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October

We were had planned a lazy morning but were awoken by reception who informed us that the 'Ocean Spirit' bus was here as we were due to go a trip with them to the Barrier Reef. I'd got my days wrong (originally we had planned to go the following day but had to switch around.) Waking everyone up and getting whatever gear we needed together was performed at break-neck speed, followed by a rush to reception to order a taxi to the port as the bus had left without us. Fortunately we made it with time to spare and all settled down with time to spare whilst watching the flocks of **Pied Imperial-Pigeons** fly over.

The trip was to Michaelmas Cay, a marine reserve, on the inner reef with nesting Sooty Terns and Common Noddys. It was well organised and included time for a couple of hours (amazing) snorkelling, a ride in a semi-submersible boat (also amazing) and half an hour or so looking at the birds, as well as a great lunch. It really was one of the best days out we've ever had as a family and is thoroughly recommended.



Regarding the birds everything was seen whilst on the (completely calm) boat journey: Crested and (mostly) **Lesser-crested Terns** were around the port. Not too far out was a **Bridled Tern**, followed by numerous **Sooty Terns** and **Brown Noddys** as we neared the Cay. Four **Black-naped Terns** could be seen resting on the transfer boat and we watched

two **Great Frigatebirds** fly above nesting birds which included a single **Brown Booby** pair with a huge fluffy white chick.



It was all over too quickly and after thanking the crew for a great day out, we boarded the bus to the hotel. During the ten minute journey we managed to add the **Straw-necked Ibis** to the list, one of only two sightings. We arrived back late

afternoon and after dropping our gear off, the children went straight to the pool which was a few minutes' walk away. I went with them to supervise, on the way seeing a pair of **Yellow-bellied Sunbirds** (Tom's first of that family.) Michelle later came, freeing me up for a quick walk around the nearby Centennial Lakes. Here I managed to see **Collared Kingfisher** which we had missed earlier, as well as **Peaceful Doves**, **White-rumped Swiftlets**, **Helmeted Friarbirds**, and **Brown-backed Honeyeaters**. As I rejoined the family at dusk, a flock of **Magpie Geese** flew over the pool. We then took a taxi in to town where we spent the evening.

### **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> October**

Michelle and the boys were tired from the previous late night so we spent most of the morning around the pool before we took a stroll through the Centennial Lakes for some birding and lunch. Tom managed to catch up with the Collared Kingfisher and we added **Yellow Oriole**, **Black Butcherbird**, **Orange-footed Scrubfowl**, and **Nutmeg Mannikin** to our total. However it was much too hot by this point so we jumped in a taxi and went in to town to the Esplanade.

From the Esplanade we scoped **Great Egret**, **Intermediate Egret**, **Little Egret**, **Royal Spoonbill**, **Lesser Sandplover**, **Pacific Golden-Plover**, **Common Greenshank**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Terek Sandpiper**, **Pied Oystercatcher**, **Grey-tailed Tattler**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper**, and **Long-toed Stint** whilst an **Osprey** flew just above our heads. I left the family at the sea front whilst I went to pick up our hire-car to get to Junguburra where we were to meet Alan Gilanders for a couple of hours birding followed by a night-walk for mammals. Unfortunately we were already running late and after a delay in getting the car and then heading the wrong way when trying to find the family, plus a longer than expected drive to Junguburra (just over an hour away) and then failing to find the meeting point, we ended up about 45 minutes late, with Alan not there. I'd tried to contact him en-route but had no mobile reception. As I hadn't been in touch for several months he'd just given up assuming we weren't coming. Fortunately I did manage to get in touch with him later to confirm that we'd still do the mammal walk.

We cut our losses and went to do some birding on our own around the nearby Curtain Fig (which is an amazing tree to see.) Here we saw **Emerald Dove**, **Pale-yellow Robin**, **White-browed Robin**, **Mountain Thornbill**, and **Victoria's Riflebird**. We could have headed off elsewhere but Michelle was feeling unwell and wanted to rest in the car so we stayed around the area until just before dusk when we drove in to town to the Platypus viewing platform. With Michelle feeling better, we all managed at least one Platypus sighting as **Sarus Cranes** went over to roost.

After a hastily eaten meal we met up with Alan and a few others for our night-walk. No birds were seen (none were expected) but it was good all the same, with the boys doing particularly well to pick out wildlife with their torches. A **Barn Owl** was seen on the journey back to Cairns.

### **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October**

After a quick morning dip in the pool we checked out of the hotel and headed for the SkyRail (cable car) terminal for our 10am 'flight' to Kuranda. This was great fun for all, with magnificent views over the rainforest and the Barron River. An interpretive leaflet explains

the different habitats as they change with height and it is actually much easier to appreciate the differences above rather than in the forest. Two stops can be made along the way where it is possible to get out and walk around the short broad-walks. The first stop included an informative guided walk where we were told about some of the flora at that point in the forest, including a very impressive Kauri Pine. At the top we left Michelle to walk around the village whilst we went straight back down (non-stop, 45 minutes) to pick up the car. Just over an hour later we met up again with Michelle; we had lunch (during which we saw **Double-eyed Fig Parrot**) and drove to nearby Cassowary House where we were to spend the night and hopefully see Cassowary.



The Cassowary had apparently already been in once that day, much earlier in the morning. We hung around the house just in case, venturing only as far as a few hundred metres up the road whilst Michelle kept vigil at the House, enjoying some female company with Sue (the owner). They chatted with phone in hand, as apparently once seen it can normally be tempted to stay a while with the help of some fruit.

It didn't come in, but we did see **Wompoo Fruit-Dove**, **Yellow-eyed Cuckoo-shrike**, **Varied Triller**, **Pied Monarch**, **Yellow-breasted Boatbill**, **Chowchilla** (poorly but tickable), **Fairy Gerygone**, **Dusky Honeyeater**, **Graceful Honeyeater** and **Yellow Honeyeater**. At dusk we joined Michelle and Sue on the balcony to watch **Red-necked Crakes** feed with Rat-Kangaroos, before we drove off for something to eat.

### Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October

Sue had told me that there was no need to wake early as the Cassowary rarely came in first thing and commercial guides never started their tours before 6:30am. Having only one chance to see the prize bird, I took no chances and was sitting on the balcony at first light, sheltering from the torrential rain (that had started the previous night), ready to wake everyone if need be. It didn't happen, so after the family woke and we enjoyed Sue's breakfast on the balcony, I wandered further, in the hope of stumbling upon it. It still didn't happen.



About 10am I drove off with Tom to a spot three kilometres north where **Lovely Fair-wrens** could be seen. We quickly got these and headed back to the House. We carried on looking around the gardens, seeing **Grey Whistler**, **Macleay's Honeyeater**, and **Spotted Catbird**, as well as sorting out Graceful from **Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** (much easier when they call!) However, still no Cassowary. Our cut off points came and went several times, until 2:30, after we'd been at the house for twenty-four hours, we decided to

call it a day, with myself and Tom intending to forsake our non-birding last day and drive back.



I gave Sue my contact details as for the next hour we would be only ten minutes away as Michelle wanted to spend a bit more time in Kuranda and we needed a quick snack. However the phone call didn't happen so we headed towards Mareeba to see the Eastern Grey Kangaroos I'd promised everyone we would see at the golf-course. Kangaroos are easier than Cassowaries and we saw hundreds (and lots of 'boxing'), as well as **Scaly-breasted Lorikeets**, **Little Friarbirds**, and

a **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**. We also stumbled upon a **Red-backed Kingfisher** on wires in a nearby town and near to that a **Grey-crowned Babbler**. I was a bit fed as we continued the drive to Daintree; I don't normally get bothered about missing birds as long as I've given it a good go, but this was the main bird I (and all of us) wanted to see and as well as missing the it, I now had to speed past sites I'd planned to visit but now no longer had time to. The only place we stopped off at was Abattoir Swamp, but seeing nothing new, therefore making **Torresian Crow** and **Cattle Egret** the only new birds seen on the drive. Anyway we arrived at Red Mill House, Daintree and were greeted by Andrew who told us not to be too worried about the Cassowary as he knew where one could be regularly seen! He then told me to get the details later as the only restaurant in town would be shutting right now if nobody turned up. I therefore ran to the restaurant and told the owner he would indeed get some customers soon! After dinner, the boys were invited by Andrew and Trish to see (and hold) the White-lipped Tree-frogs that frequent the house, and also to watch the two Northern Brown Bandicoots feeding on the lawn.



### Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October

We started the day at Daintree on Chris Dahlberg's 6:30am river cruise. Whilst waiting we saw **Bar-shouldered Dove** and on the boat saw **Common Sandpiper**, **Forest Kingfisher**, **Great-billed Heron**, **Papuan Frogmouth** (great views of two), **Shining Flycatcher**, **Large-billed Gerygone**, and **Metallic Starling**. Unfortunately we

didn't see the expected Nankeen Night-heron, Little Kingfisher (more difficult this time of year apparently), or Black-fronted Dotterel, a pair of which were seen all of the few days before and after our trip! We did see a small (1.5m) Salt-water Crocodile that pleased Sam.

At breakfast at Red Mill House I got all the information I needed from the extremely helpful Andrew and Trish and headed via the car ferry across the Daintree in to Jindalba near Cape Tribulation. The broad-walk where the Cassowaries (male plus chick) were supposed to be seen was busy with tour groups and I did not fancy our chances, particularly when one of the wardens said he had had a good look around but with no success. The other target species was

### **Buff-breasted Paradise**

**Kingfisher**, and so after half giving up on the Cassowary, decided to see if they would respond to call-back. They did and several were heard immediately, before one was

soon seen from a side broad-walk, giving great views. Then, walking back to the main broad-walk, Tom suddenly said “**Cassowary!** There’s a Cassowary!” And there they were. From the safety of the broad-walk we got within touching distance of both birds, with the children actually feeding the chick Cassowary fruit, whilst the adult looked on and gulped down the huge fruits with one swallow.



Back across the river we decided to find out about the crocodile cruises run by ‘Bruce Belcher’ (his real name!) We were told that there was no chance of seeing large crocodiles at this time of year as the males were in their harems with the females; the one we had already seen at Daintree was bigger than we could expect to see. However, particularly as a Nankeen Night-heron had been seen on one of the trips, we decided at the last minute to give it a try. One crocodile was seen (about 30cm long) but no new birds, though it was still an enjoyable trip. Then, just as we were heading back, news came through on the radio that one of the males – ‘Scar-face’ – had left his harem and was heading up river. The boat quickly sped towards it and we were treated to close views of a fully grown male, which was just what Sam had wanted.

Apart from the *affinis* race of **Black Kite** and a fly-by **Scarlet Honeyeater**, no new birds were seen in the afternoon (we missed out on the hoped for Beach Thick-knee at Wonga beach) and arrived at our last destination, the Mandalay & Shalimar apartments at Port Douglas, soon after dark. The apartments were huge (bigger than our house), with huge walk in wardrobes, en-suite bathrooms, and a pool just outside; I calculated (sad that I am!), that with all the seats available in the kitchen, living room, and patio, that forty-two people could be seated at once! It was all tastefully decorated and a great place to end our stay.

Later that night we walked in to town where huge Spectacled Flying-foxes were seen as well as a large, noisy, and very messy roost of Metallic Starlings.

### **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November**

Myself and Tom left Michelle and Sam, to go to the Tablelands for the day. First port of call was Mount Lewis where near the foot we saw **White-throated Needletail**. Despite the

apparent requirement for a four-wheel drive, we made it through the low cloud, to the top. However, birding was very slow and although we could hear a lot of what we wanted to see (including constantly calling Fern-wrens), we struggled for good views of anything apart from **Atherton Scrubwren**. Slowly descending in the car and on foot we constantly tried and different altitudes until we realised we were out of range for most of the targets. Even the supposedly easy to see Bower's Shrike-thrush had been missed, but that's what happens sometimes with forest birding. We therefore had to make do with barely tickable views of **Tooth-billed Bowerbird** and **Grey-headed Robin** as time was pressing on and we were hungry. After a quick look at a **Bridled Honeyeater** at the foot of the mountain and then a stop at Mount Molloy for a bite to eat, we carried on south to the Mareeba wetlands, where I'd promised Tom we would probably see as many species in the first few minutes as we'd seen all morning.

We weren't disappointed and even along the track to the reserve entrance we had notched up **Little Eagle**, **Red-winged Parrot**, and **Squatter Pigeon**. At the reserve we scoped the water birds, seeing **Australasian Grebe**, **Black Swan**, **Green Pygmy-goose** and **Comb-crested Jacana**.

We then debated whether the **Black-barred Finches** Tom had found were wild as several could be seen in the cages of the Gouldian Finches that were being captive-bred for re-introduction. They were (we saw many later) so then started a new debate as to whether a distant, silhouetted, duck was a whistling duck (as I said) or a Hardhead (as Tom was insisting.) As there was a short boat trip around the lake costing only \$15 and leaving shortly, we decided to resolve the argument by going on it. This was a stroke of luck, not because it resolved the argument (Tom won, it was a Hardhead), but because the leader 'Chook' mentioned that he ran tours for only \$30 a person and, even though there wasn't one arranged for the following morning, he would be happy to take us out privately the following morning for the same price. After arranging the meeting time and place and giving him a tailored list of birds we were after, we left for the hotel.



On the return we had a quick stop at Lake Mitchell where we saw distant **Black Swans** (better views the following day) and I caught up with **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** (despite initially calling it as a Harrier!) which Tom had seen the previous day.

We got back to the hotel at dusk and cooled off in the pool before going out in to the town for the evening.

## Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November

Our 'non-birding' day started early for myself and Tom as we'd arranged to meet at 6:30am and had an hour to drive. We were a few minutes late as we stopped to find one of our targets (**Blue-winged Kookaburra**) en route but we'd managed to avoid the kangaroos. The birding was great, the first bird being **Great Bowerbird** actually at the bower and, whilst trying to get better views (which we didn't but saw another later), flushed two **Painted Button-quails**. As well as **Black-throated Finch** which is the reserve's main attraction for visiting birders, we saw **Brown Quail**, **Brolga**, **White-winged Triller** (found by us but a reserve first for Chook), **Golden-headed Cisticola**, **Leaden Flycatcher**, **Lemon-**



**bellied Flycatcher, Red-backed Fairywren, Weebill, Brown Treecreeper, Apostlebird, and eventually, Nankeen Night-heron.**

After thanking Chook, we started the dash home but quickly stopped when, amazingly, three **Emus** were seen near to the road. Stopping off briefly at Mount Molloy to look for Square-tailed Kite (we saw the nest but not the bird) and Abattoir Swamp where we saw **Northern Fantail**, we were finally in the pool, at the hotel by mid-morning.

The rest of the day was spent relaxing around Port Douglass, in the pool, and at the beach, before walking in to town to spend our last night in Australia.

### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November

After a quick final play in the pool, we packed, had breakfast in the town, and drove to Cairns. We had an hour to spare, so went looking on the Esplanade for the waders we were missing. I particularly wanted Beech Thick-knee (which we failed on) as well as good views of **Great Knot** as I'd only seen the 'Great Dot' in Cleveland. We also added **Wood Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, and Greater Sandplover** as well as **Varied Honeyeater** which we had realised at the last minute that we were missing!

After a brief stop at Centennial Lakes where we had heard there was often a Little Kingfisher (the only Kingfisher missing) we drove to the airport for our flight home, the last Australian bird to be seen being Welcome Swallow.



## Systematic Lists

### Birds

**Emu** – Three at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup> was a surprise find.

**Southern Cassowary** – After spending a whole twenty-four hours at Cassowary House and failing to see the usual female on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, it was a great relief to get amazing views of a male and a chick at Jindalba on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Orange-footed Scrub-fowl** – Common in northern Queensland.

**Australian Brush-turkey** – Common in Queensland.

**Brown Quail** – Three flushed at Mareeba on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Black Swan** – Two seen at Lake Mitchell (north of Mareeba) on 1<sup>st</sup> and twelve at Mareeba wetlands the following day.

**Magpie Goose** – A total of twenty birds (all flyovers) in northern Queensland.

**Green Pygmy Goose** – A total of eighteen birds seen at Mareeba wetlands.

**Australian Wood-duck** – Five at Sydney Botanic Gardens and twelve at the Royal National Park.

**Hardhead** – Seven at Sydney Centennial Lakes and one at Mareeba wetlands on 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Mallard** – A male at Sydney Botanic Gardens.

**Pacific Black Duck** – Common around all rivers and lakes.

**Grey Teal** – One at Sydney Harbour on 15<sup>th</sup> and two at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Chestnut Teal** – Male at Sydney Royal National Park.

**Hoary-headed Grebe** – One at Sydney Centennial Park.

**Australasian Grebe** – Nine at Mareeba wetlands on 1<sup>st</sup> and one the following day.

**Black-browed Albatross** – Three off Manly cliff tops and one off cliff near Bondi beach, Sydney.

**Short-tailed Shearwater** – Three off Manly cliff tops, Sydney.

**Fluttering Shearwater** – One seen by myself plus an additional one by Tom on the Whale-watching trip.

**Wilson's Storm-petrel** – One on the ferry across to Tangalooma.

**Australian Gannet** – About thirty five off Manly and Bondi cliffs.

**Brown Booby** – Two adults raising a chick at Michaelmas Cay.

**(Australian) Darter** – First seen by Sydney Opera House, thereafter in any suitable habitat.

**Great Cormorant** – Common along coast.

**Little Black Cormorant** – Fairly common in marine and fresh water.

**Pied Cormorant** – Fairly common in marine and fresh water.

**Little Pied Cormorant** – Fairly common in marine and fresh water.

**Great Frigatebird** – Two seen from the boat over Michaelmas Cay.

**Black-necked Stork** – two juveniles at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Australian Pelican** – seen most days.

**Great-billed Heron** – one flushed on Daintree river trip.

**White-necked Heron** – eight circling high seen whilst driving near Brisbane on 24<sup>th</sup> was the only sighting until a single was found at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**White-faced Heron** – Three at Nudgee beach; two on Daintree river trip; two at Mareeba wetlands(2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Cattle Egret** – one near Brisbane on 26<sup>th</sup>; c.20 around Daintree area; four Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Little Egret** – not seen until 22<sup>nd</sup>, thereafter almost daily.

**Eastern Reef Egret** – one found by Tom on Bondi beach.

**Great Egret** – seen most days from 23<sup>rd</sup> onwards.

**Intermediate Egret** – first seen on ferry returning from Tangalooma, then on most days.

**Nankeen Night-Heron** – three at a daytime roost at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Striated Heron** – singles on 20<sup>th</sup> (Brisbane), 27<sup>th</sup> (Cairns) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Cairns.)

**Black Bittern** – sub-adult flushed at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Glossy Ibis** – c.10 at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Straw-necked Ibis** – One in flight over Cairns (27<sup>th</sup>) and four at Daintree (31<sup>st</sup>.)

**Australian White Ibis** – first bird seen, and very common in most habitat.

**Royal Spoonbill** – Groups of c.10 birds on Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Australian Black-shouldered Kite** – Sydney airport upon departure. Later seen on both days at Mareeba wetlands.

**Fork-tailed (Black) Kite** – fairly common on agricultural land in extreme north.

**Brahminy Kite** – first seen whilst waiting at Brisbane for ferry to Tangalooma; three seen on 22<sup>nd</sup>; one near Noosa (24<sup>th</sup>) and two around Daintree (31<sup>st</sup>.)

**Whistling Kite** – first noted on at Tangalooma (21<sup>st</sup>) thereafter on most days.

**Brown Goshawk** – a single bird whilst en-route to O'Reilly's.

**Grey Goshawk** – Singles at Sydney Centennial Park, O'Reilly's (Tom on 26<sup>th</sup>), Cassowary House (29<sup>th</sup>) and Mareeba wetlands (1<sup>st</sup>.)

**Osprey** – One along Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup>.)

**White-bellied Sea-eagle** – from Brisbane, seen whenever at the coast.

**Little Eagle** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** – one at O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>) and a pair at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Nankeen Kestrel** – singles whilst driving on 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Australian Hobby** – One whilst en-route to Blue Mountains.

**Sarus Crane** – Six at dusk at Junguburra and three in flight at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Brolga** –Three at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Red-necked Crake** – two at dusk at O'Reilly's on 29<sup>th</sup> and one the following day.

**Buff-banded Rail** – Five in Sydney Botanical Gardens, and one at Abattoir swamp.

**Dusky Moorhen** – common at inland water sites.

**Purple Swamphen** – common at inland water sites.

**Eurasian Coot** – common at inland water sites.

**Bush Stone-curlew** – a pair at Tangalooma at dusk on 20<sup>th</sup>, and a different pair plus a juvenile the following day; a pair plus a juvenile at Cairns Centennial Lakes (27<sup>th</sup>); two squabbling pairs, one with a juvenile seen each evening outside the hotel at Port Douglas.

**Painted Button-quail** – two flushed at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** – c.20 at Nudgee beach and large numbers at Cairns Esplanade.

**Black-tailed Godwit** – one at Manly beach.

**Far Eastern Curlew** - one at Nudge beach and one at Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup>.)

**Whimbrel** – c. 20 at Nudge beach and two at Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup>.)

**Common Greenshank** – several on visits to Cairns Esplanade.

**Marsh Sandpiper** – several on visits to Cairns Esplanade.

**Wood Sandpiper** – one at Cairns Esplanade (3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Common Sandpiper** – two on Daintree river cruise.

**Grey-tailed Tattler** – a few on each visit to Cairns Esplanade.

**Terek Sandpiper** – singles at Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Great Knot** – only noted once at Cairns Esplanade (3<sup>rd</sup>) when there were many birds (100+)

**Red-necked Stint** – abundant at Cairns Esplanade.

**Long-toed Stint** – one at Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup>.)

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** – very common at Cairns Esplanade.

**Curlew Sandpiper** – a few always present amongst flocks of Red-necked Stints at Cairns Esplanade.

**Comb-crested Jacana** – common at Mareeba wetlands.

**Pied Oystercatcher** – a few on each visit to Cairns Esplanade.

**White-headed Stilt** – a small flock seen distantly from ferry on return trip to Brisbane then six at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Pacific Golden Plover** – several at Cairns Esplanade.

**Little Ringed Plover** – one at Cairns Esplanade (3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Lesser Sandplover** – singles at Cairns Esplanade (28<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Greater Sandplover** – one at Cairns Esplanade (3<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Masked Lapwing** – common; *novaehollandiae* in south and nominate *miles* in north, including a pair that bombarded us whenever we tried to walk from our hotel to the Centennial Lakes at Cairns.

**South-polar Skua** – one very close inshore seen on morning walk (21<sup>st</sup>) at Tangalooma was a surprising find.

**Silver Gull** – common.

**Caspian Tern** – one on ferry to Moreton then two at Cairns Esplanade on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Gull-billed Tern** – three at Cairns Esplanade on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Crested Tern** – Eighteen on Bondi beach, thereafter often seen on coast.

**Lesser-crested Tern** – c.40 seen on Great Barrier Reef trip.

**Black-naped Tern** – Four on 27<sup>th</sup> (Michaelmas Cay) and then 28<sup>th</sup> (Cairns Esplanade.)

**Sooty Tern** – several hundred nesting at Michaelmas Cay, plus more seen on way out and return.

**Bridled Tern** – seen before Sooty Tern on way to Michaelmas Cay, and two others later in the day.

**Common Noddy** – several hundred nesting at Michaelmas Cay.

**Spotted Turtle-dove** – fairly common.

**Feral Rock Dove** – common in urban areas.

**Peaceful Dove** – seen daily in northern Queensland.

**Bar-shouldered Dove** – fairly common in northern Queensland.

**Brown Cuckoo-dove** – one seen in Blue Mountains; fairly common in northern Queensland.

**Topknot Pigeon** – a flock of six at O'Reilly's on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Emerald Dove** – fairly common in northern Queensland.

**Wonga Pigeon** – two in Sydney Royal National Park; daily at O'Reilly's; one in Daintree on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Crested Pigeon** – seen twice by Tom in Sydney area (18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>) and I eventually caught up with it at Nudgee beach and later at O'Reilly's (26<sup>th</sup>.)

**Squatter Pigeon** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 31<sup>st</sup> and a flock of six there the following day.

**Pied Imperial Pigeon** – very common in northern Queensland.

**Wompo Fruit-dove** – two at Cassowary House (29<sup>th</sup>.)

**Red-tailed Black-cockatoo** – Tom had a single sighting at Daintree on 31<sup>st</sup>; then it was two birds were seen the following day at Lake Mitchell and the day after at Mareeba wetlands.

**Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo** – a flock of nine at Eurundi.

**Galah** – two in Blue Mountains; two on Moreton Island on 20<sup>th</sup> and eight there the following day; six seen at O'Reilly's on 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Corella** – one at Noosa on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo** – common, and often very approachable, particularly in Sydney Botanical Gardens, where Sam fed them by hand.

**Rainbow Lorikeet** – common, seen every day (often hundreds) except at Moreton Island where not seen.

**Scaly-breasted Lorikeet** – common in northern Queensland.

**Double-eyed Fig-parrot** – one at Kuranda, followed by four at Mareeba golf course the day after, then a nesting pair on the Daintree river trip the following day as well as one seen later the same day.

**Australian King-parrot** – two brief views of a couple of birds at the Blue Mountains, before we were feeding them by hand at O'Reilly's!

**Red-winged Parrot** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Crimson Rosella** – Fed by hand at O'Reilly's. Before that seen at Blue Mountains and Sydney Royal National Park.

**Pale-headed Rosella** – Five at Canungra; two at Cairns (27<sup>th</sup>); two at Daintree (31<sup>st</sup>); two at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**[Pallid Cuckoo]** – one seen only by Tom at Cassowary House

**Common Koel** – one Manly beach; one Bondi beach; common in northern Queensland.

**Channel-billed Cuckoo** – fairly common in southern Queensland.

**Pheasant Coucal** – single on drive from Brisbane to O'Reilly's; single at Cassowary House (30<sup>th</sup>); single on Daintree river trip; fairly common at Mareeba wetlands.

**Southern Boobook** – One at Sydney Royal National Park (responding to Sooty Owl playback!)

**Barn Owl** – one whilst descending from Junguburra to Cairns.

**Tawny Frogmouth** – one roosting in Sydney Botanical Gardens.

**Papuan Frogmouth** – two on Daintree boat trip.

**White-rumped Swiftlet** – common in northern Queensland.

**[Fork-tailed Swift]** – one seen by Tom only at O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>.)

**White-throated Needletail** – one at base of Mount Lewis.

**Azure Kingfisher** – two Sydney Royal National Park; two Daintree boat trip; one at base of Mount Lewis.

**Laughing Kookaburra** – common.

**Blue-winged Kookaburra** – two at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Forest Kingfisher** – common in northern Queensland.

**Sacred Kingfisher** – two at Sydney Royal National Park.

**Collared Kingfisher** – singles at Cairns Centennial Gardens on 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-backed Kingfisher** – one on wires near Mareeba on 30th.

**Buff-breasted Kingfisher** – one at Jindalba.

**Rainbow Bee-eater** – three at Nudgee beach; thereafter singles or pairs most days in northern Queensland.

**Dollarbird** – fairly common.

**Noisy Pitta** – a pair and a single seen well at O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>.)

**Albert's Lyrebird** – female at O'Reilly's eventually found on 26<sup>th</sup>, showing exceptionally well.

**Superb Lyrebird** – after much searching, a male and two females at Lady Carrington Drive, Sydney Royal National Park.

**White-throated Treecreeper** – fairly common.

**Red-browed Treecreeper** – singles at Sydney Royal National Park and O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>.)

**Brown Treecreeper** – four at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Superb Fairy-wren** – fairly common New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Variegated Fairy-wren** – a pair at Sydney Royal National Park; three birds at Nudgee beach; many seen at Noosa National Park.

**Lovely Fairy-wren** – a pair near Cassowary House (30<sup>th</sup>.)

**Red-backed Fairy-wren** – a pair at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Southern Emu-wren** – several found fairly easily at Bundeena Drive, Sydney Royal National Park.

**Striated Pardalote** – poor views of a single bird at Noosa National Park.

**Rock Warbler** – one at Lady Carrington Drive, Sydney Royal National Park.

**White-browed Scrubwren** – fairly common New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Yellow-throated Scrubwren** – abundant at O'Reilly's.

**Large-billed Scrubwren** – four at O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>.)

**Atherton Scrubwren** – two at summit of Mount Lewis.

**Chestnut-rumped Fieldwren** – one found at dusk at Bundeena Drive, Sydney Royal National Park.

**Brown Gerygone** – common at O'Reilly's.

**Large-billed Gerygone** – four on Daintree boat trip.

**Mangrove Gerygone** – four at Nudgee beach.

**Fairy Gerygone** – two at Cassowary house (30<sup>th</sup>.)

**Mountain Thornbill** – four at Junguburra and four (over two days) at Cassowary House.

**Brown Thornbill** – fairly common in New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Striated Thornbill** – four at Sydney Royal National Park and two at Noosa National Park.

**Weebill** – two at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Little Wattlebird** – three at Noosa (22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Red Wattlebird** – singles at Manly beech and the Blue Mountains

**Little Friarbird** – three at Mareeba golf course and three at the wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Noisy Friarbird** – common in New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Helmeted Friarbird** – common in northern Queensland.

**Blue-faced Honeyeater** – seen fairly regularly in Queensland.

**Noisy Miner** – common.

**Lewin's Honeyeater** – fairly common.

**Yellow-spotted Honeyeater** – several at Cassowary House on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Graceful Honeyeater** – Cassowary House from 29<sup>th</sup>; this and the above species were not really distinguished once they had been separated, but the two were common there.

**Bridled Honeyeater** – one on Mount Lewis.

**Yellow-faced Honeyeater** – one at Sydney Royal National Park.

**Yellow Honeyeater** – several birds at various places in northern Queensland.

**Varied Honeyeater** – last tick of the trip responded to playback on Cairns Esplanade (once it was realised we had not seen it and it was supposed to be relatively easy!)

**Mangrove Honeyeater** – two at Nudgee beach.

**New Holland Honeyeater** – common around Sydney.

**White-cheeked Honeyeater** – one bird at Tangalooma (21<sup>st</sup>.)

**Eastern Spinebill** – fairly common in New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Brown-backed Honeyeater** – common in northern Queensland.

**Macleay's Honeyeater** – common at O'Reilly's (though only seen by Michelle on first day!)

**Dusky Honeyeater** – a total of fifteen birds at O'Reilly's.

**Scarlet Honeyeater** – one in flight at Daintree village on 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Brown Honeyeater** – fairly common in Queensland.

**Lemon-bellied Flycatcher** – two at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Yellow-breasted Boatbill** – one at O'Reilly's on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Rose Robin** – one at O'Reilly's on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Eastern Yellow Robin** – fairly common in New South Wales and southern Queensland.

**Pale-yellow Robin** – common in northern Queensland.

**White-browed Robin** – one at Junguburra.

**Grey-headed Robin** – one glimpsed on Mount Lewis.

**Logrunner** – common at O'Reilly's.

**Chowchilla** – one at Cassowary House; seen poorly and did not respond well to playback (unlike previous species.)

**Grey-crowned Babbler** – one between Cassowary House and Mareeba wetlands.

**Eastern Whipbird** – very common in the right habitat.

**Crested Shrike-tit** – one Sydney Royal National Park

**Olive Whistler** – one at O'Reilly's (Python trail) was a surprise find.

**Grey Whistler** – singles at Cassowary House (30<sup>th</sup>) and on Mount Lewis (1<sup>st</sup>.)

**Golden Whistler** – fairly common in forested areas.

**Rufous Whistler** – one at Sydney Royal National Park.

**Grey Shrike-thrush** – singles at Blue Mountains and O'Reilly's (24<sup>th</sup>.)

**Little Shrike-thrush** – Three at Noosa National Park; three at Cassowary House (30<sup>th</sup>); two at Jindalba.

**Black-faced Monarch** – fairly common in forested areas.

**Spectacled Monarch** – a couple of sightings at Noosa (23<sup>rd</sup>) were the first, thereafter fairly regularly seen.

**Pied Monarch** – three at Cassowary House (29<sup>th</sup>.)

**Magpie-lark** – common.

**Leaden Flycatcher** – male at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Satin Flycatcher** – male at Sydney Royal National Park.

**Shining Flycatcher** – six on Daintree boat trip (including males and females on nests.)

**Willie Wagtail** – fairly common, although after Sydney area, not seen until Cairns.

**Rufous Fantail** – four at Noosa National Park; common at O'Reilly's.

**Grey Fantail** – four Sydney Royal National Park; five at O'Reilly's (25<sup>th</sup>.)

**Northern Fantail** – single at Abattoir Swamp.

**Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** – first seen whilst waiting for ferry to Moreton; thereafter fairly common.

**White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike** – one Mareeba golf course; four Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Barred Cuckoo-shrike** – a total of twelve birds seen around Cassowary House during stay.

**Cicadabird** – two at Blue Mountains, followed by one the following day in the Royal National Park.

**White-winged Triller** – two at Mareeba wetlands (2<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Varied Triller** – a total of six seen around Cassowary House.

**Olive-backed Oriole** – one at Sydney Royal National Park; two Noosa National Park; three in total at O'Reilly's.

**Yellow Oriole** – common in northern Queensland.

**Figbird** – common in Queensland, with a marked difference between males of the southern green form *vielloti* and the northern yellow form *flaviventris*.

**White-breasted Woodswallow** – one at Sydney Royal National Park; four at Nudgee beach; common in northern Queensland.

**Black Butcherbird** – one Cairns Centennial Lakes; one Cassowary House; two Daintree boat trip.

**Grey Butcherbird** – immature at Canungra.

**Pied Butcherbird** – two Canungra; one at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Australian Magpie** – common.

**Pied Currawong** – common, though less so in northern Queensland.

**Paradise Riflebird** – three at O'Reilly's on 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Victoria's Riflebird** – one Junguburra and four at O'Reilly's on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Spangled Drongo** – a few sightings to north Queensland, thereafter very common.

**Australian Raven** – common in New South Wales and Northern Queensland.

**Little Raven** – one at Bondi beach.

**Torresian Crow** – only three sightings: two near Cassowary House on 30<sup>th</sup> and one near Daintree the following day.

**Apostlebird** – a flock of nine at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Spotted Catbird** – nine at Cassowary House on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Green Catbird** – a total of ten seen during our stay at O'Reilly's.

**Tooth-billed Bowerbird** – one bird seen very briefly on Mount Lewis.

**Regent Bowerbird** – common at O'Reilly's

**Satin Bowerbird** – common at O'Reilly's, though less so than the previous species.

**Great Bowerbird** – two birds (and their bowers) at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Double-barred Finch** – common at Mareeba wetlands.

**Black-throated Finch** – a flock of c.20 birds at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Red-browed Firetail** – common at O'Reilly's

**Nutmeg Mannikin** – seventy one birds (Tom's count!) at Cairns Centennial Lakes.

**House Sparrow** – common around Sydney and two birds seen by port at Cairns on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Yellow-bellied Sunbird** – common in northern Queensland.

**Mistletoebird** – pair at Noosa National Park; male at foot of Mount Lewis.

**Welcome Swallow** – common, the only bird seen daily.

**Tree Martin** – common, seen nearly all days.

**Fairy Martin** – two birds nesting under bridge at Sydney Centennial Park.

**Golden-headed Cisticola** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Silvereye** – one whilst waiting for ferry to Moreton; singles at Cassowary House and Daintree (30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>) and two near Mount Lewis.

**Bassian Thrush** – a total of five at O'Reilly's.

**Metallic Starling** – common in northern Queensland, with a huge and noisy roost of mostly juveniles in Port Douglas.

**Common Starling** – fairly common in Sydney and one bird seen in Brisbane area (22<sup>nd</sup>.)

**Common Myna** – common.

### **Mammals**

**Short-beaked Echidna** – Two at Sydney Royal National Park, and one near Cassowary House (29<sup>th</sup>.)

**Platypus** – One at dusk, Junguburra.

**Brown Antechinus** – one seen high in a tree from canopy tower, O'Reilly's on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**[Southern Brown Bandicoot]** – one seen by Tom and Sam at Manly.

**Northern Brown Bandicoot** – two at Cassowary House, and two the following day on lawn of Red Mill House.

**Long-nosed Bandicoot** – one feeding by restaurant at O'Reilly's on 25<sup>th</sup>, and one at Junguburra.

**Koala** – one at Noosa National Park.

**Mountain Brushtail Possum** – three the first night and one the second night at O'Reilly's.

**Common Brushtail Possum** – a total of sixteen at Junguburra, with the majority (fourteen) being Coppery Brushtail Possum (ssp. *johnstoni*.)

**Common Ringtail Possum** – three the first night and one the second night at O'Reilly's.

**Green Ringtail Possum** – two at Junguburra.

**Musky Rat-kangaroo** – four at Cassowary House on 30<sup>th</sup>; one at Jindalba.

**Agile Wallaby** – two at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**[Whiptail Wallaby]** – one seen by Tom on journey from O'Reilly's to Canungra.

**Eastern Grey Kangaroo** – c.100 at Mareeba golf course, and several individuals seen on Tablelands afterwards.

**Red-legged Pademelon** – common at O'Reilly's.

**Spectacled Flying-fox** – Roosts in Cairns and Port Douglass, and many flying around during daylight on crocodile boat trip.

**Grey-headed Flying-fox** – First creature seen (after *homo sapiens*!) Roosts in Sydney, with large numbers in the Botanical Gardens.

**Eastern Horseshoe Bat** – of a number of bats seen at Junguburra, this was the only one identified.

**Bush Rat** – two at Cassowary House on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Dolphin** – one on whale-watching trip.

**Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin** – Eight seen during feeding sessions, including the two we fed: Young males named *Nari* and *Echo*.

**Killer Whale** – two females on return from Moreton Island.

**Humpback Whale** – a total of four seen, including close views of a mother and calf on whale-watching trip.

### **Butterflies**

**McLeay's Swallowtail** – Four in Sydney Botanical Gardens and several at various places thereafter.

**Blue Triangle** – one at Noosa (23<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Ulysses Swallowtail** – common in northern Queensland.

**Chequered Swallowtail** – one at Noosa (23<sup>rd</sup>.)

**Cairns Birdwing** – two at Cassowary House on 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Small White** – all whites looked at closely (around Sydney) appeared to be this species.

**Evening Brown** – One at night at Tangalooma.

**Varied Sword Grass** – several in Blue Mountains and Sydney Royal National Park.

**Black Jezebel** – one in evening at Junguburra.

**Scarlet Jezebel** – one at Kuranda.

**Spotted Jezebel** – one in Blue Mountains.

**Yellow Admiral** – one in Sydney Royal National Park.

**Australian Painted Lady** – common.

**Bordered Rustic** – common in Queensland.

**Monarch** – common in Queensland.

## **Reptiles and Amphibians**

**Salt Water Crocodile** – one about a meter long on the Daintree river trip; on the crocodile trip: one about 30cm long, followed by an unexpected sighting of a huge male

**Red-bellied Black Snake** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Eastern Water Dragon** – six at Manly.

**Asian House Gecko** – common in northern Queensland.

**Lace Monitor** – Cairns Centennial Lakes (28<sup>th</sup>.)

**Peron's Tree Frog** – two on each night stayed at O'Reilly's.

**Eastern Dwarf Tree Frog** – several on both nights stayed at O'Reilly's

**White-lipped Tree Frog** – five at Red Mill House that could be handled.

**Yellow-nosed Turtle** – one at Mareeba wetlands on 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Green Turtle** – four seen at Great Barrier Reef.

## **Other**

**White-tipped Reef-shark** – one, Great Barrier Reef.

**[Wobbegong Shark]** – seen on evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> by Michelle and the boys at the dolphin feed.

**Grey Huntsman Spider** – this impressive beast was found at Junguburra.