



Australia: Tasmania Trip Report (Nov 2022)

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Day 1: Hobart We were up at 4 to get ready for a 7:10 flight to Hobart. We arrived at Hobart around 9am. Barry challenged the group in his vehicle to guess which endemic Tasmanian bird species we would see first. It didn't take long for them to spot a Tasmanian Native-hen. It was a beautiful day but still a bit cool for many of the group, so we parked at historic Salamanca Place near the boat harbour and walked into central Hobart to shop for warm clothes. After lunch, we checked into our Hobart accommodation, met up with new guests, and went birding. Unfortunately, the road up to our planned location on kunanyi/Mount Wellington was closed due to roadwork, so we went to the Derwent River, Gould's Lagoon and a small park at the junction of the Lyell and Midland Highways. Whilst still on the mountain road the front vehicle had a brief encounter with an Echidna which was crossing the road. There were thousands of Black Swans in the river and a solitary Australian Pelican. At Gould's Lagoon duck numbers and diversity was much lower than usual. Only the four resident species, Black Duck, Maned Duck, Chestnut Teal and Mallard were present along with two Australian Shelducks, which are rarely seen in Hobart. Could it be possible the message to fly to rich breeding grounds on the flooded mainland even reaches Tasmania?



Australian Pelican © MJ Hele

In the surrounding trees there were Musk Lorikeets, the endemic Green Rosella and Yellow Wattlebird, Galahs and Little Corellas. Introduced European Greenfinch and Goldfinch, Brown Thornbill and New Holland Honeyeater were recorded at the junction park. A total of 30 species were observed at these locations. A good start to our Tasmanian extension.



Yellow Wattlebird © Betsy

Day 2: Mount Field National Park We packed up and drove an hour west to Mt Field National Park. There was considerable bird activity around the visitor centre carpark including Tasmanian

endemics, Green Rosella, Black Currawong, Tasmanian Thornbill and Black-headed Honeyeater. A pair of Striated Pardalotes were feeding fledged young, but the wind made it difficult to see them. We went on the Tall Trees walk to see the magnificent *Eucalyptus regnans*, the tallest flowering plants in the world, and to Russell Falls for the tree fern forest and the most picturesque waterfall in Tasmania.



Russell Falls © Jean Leonatti



Russel Falls © J Leonatti



Tall Trees walk © Jean Leonatti

Back to the visitor centre for lunch (hot soup) then we travelled back through Hobart and down to the car ferry at Kettering for the short trip to Bruny Island. We checked in to our accommodation on South Bruny Island. **Day 3: Bruny Island** A visit to Inala Nature Reserve is an essential item on the itinerary of every birder's holiday on Bruny. The reserve is owned by Biologist, Conservationist and nature tour operator Dr Tonia Cochrane. The 1500-acre property is managed for its conservation values and is home to all 12 endemic Tasmanian species of birds. We arrived at 7.30am and met our excellent resident guide, Cat Davidson, for our 3-hour tour. Before we started a Shining Bronze-cuckoo called from high in a Eucalyptus tree. It stayed still long enough for everyone to see it through a scope. One of the highlights of Inala is botanical not ornithological. Ten years ago, Tonia and her amazing sidekick Borrie, started planting a garden that features plants from the southern supercontinent, Gondwana. All these plants have lineages going back to the Jurassic Period, the age of the dinosaurs. The garden has been spectacularly successful and is, not surprisingly, called the Inala Jurassic Garden. It is worth going to Inala just to see it. Our focus, however, was primarily on the birds, and the first one we saw was the pride of Inala, the endangered Forty Spotted Pardalote. The Forty Spots, as they are called locally, have been a focus of Tonia's conservation efforts for many years and she is rightly credited with saving the species on Bruny by planting the *Eucalyptus viminalis* trees they are dependent on, saving old growth forests that they and other species, including Swift Parrots, need to for breeding hollows and supporting research into all aspects of their ecology. As well as excellent views of Forty Spots we saw Flame, Scarlet and Dusky Robins, Tree Martins, Dusky Woodswallows, Grey Currawongs, Strong-billed Honeyeater and two Wedge-tailed Eagles.

A quick trip to Cloudy Bay in the wind and light rain gave us a view of the wild southerly ocean and a beach with hundreds of Kelp Gulls and Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers. During the afternoon we visited Bruny Island lighthouse, the second oldest in Australia. It was built by convicts in 1836. It was a windy day, so it was surprising there weren't any Albatross visible from the top of the cliffs. However, in the heath on the leeward side of the lighthouse we saw a beautiful male Flame Robin, White-fronted Chats, Superb Fairywren and Pipit.



Flame Robin © MJ Hele



White-fronted Chat © MJ Hele



Australian Pipit © MJ Hele





An after-dinner trip to “The Neck”, the narrow isthmus between north and south Bruny, took us to a boardwalk through a breeding colony of Little Penguins and Short-tailed Shearwaters. The shearwaters started arriving at dusk. About 25 million of them fly from Alaska to Tasmania to breed every year. When it was dark, Penguins came out of the sea and up to their burrows in the dunes. On the drive back we saw many very furry Brush-tailed Possums, Bennett’s Wallaby, including albinos, and Tasmanian Pademelons.



Pademelon © MJ Hele



Evening penguin watch at the neck

Day 4: Adventure Bay, Bruny Island Cruise and the Neck Our first stop this morning was at The Neck Game Reserve camping area. As we arrived a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew over and Gray Fantails swooped for insects in low bushes. Dusky Robins were feeding fledged young and Golden Whistlers were calling. A pair of Satin Flycatchers were moving quickly through the trees but stopped long enough for views and distant photos. They are summer migrants to Tasmania. From the beach we watched an Australasian Gannet dive to catch a fish in the perfectly calm sea. It was a glorious morning and looked like a perfect day for our boat cruise down the coast of Bruny except it might be too calm for Albatross. Heading towards Adventure Bay we stopped at Two Trees Point where a small creek flows into the bay. This historic location was where sailing ships from expeditions by the British and French stopped to fill up with fresh water. The most famous of them were Captain Cook, Captain Bligh on the Bounty and Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, after whom Bruny Island is named. Here we got our first close look at the massive beaks of the Pacific Gull and saw a pair of endangered Hooded Plover. A pair have nested on this beach for years but with the sea level rising the high tides are now flowing into the dunes and destroying their nests. Another endangered species, Swift Parrot, also calls Adventure Bay home in Summer but only if the eucalyptus trees are flowering. Fortunately for us, and them, there were, so we saw many of these aptly named, beautiful little parrots.



Pacific Gull © MJ Hele



Hooded Plovers © MJ Hele



Swift Parrot © MJ Hele

At 11.00am we started our Bruny Island cruise on a purpose-built boat operated by Pennicott Cruises. Everyone was dressed in long, red, wind proof coats and strapped into their seats for a 3-hour journey down the spectacular east coast of South Bruny Island.



Pelagic tour

It isn't a pelagic birding tour, but the crew try to find birds and other wildlife. As it was calm it wasn't looking good for pelagics, but we did have a close fly past by a Shy Albatross and saw two Shy Albatross sitting on the water next to a Fur Seal that was eating an eel. The albatrosses were

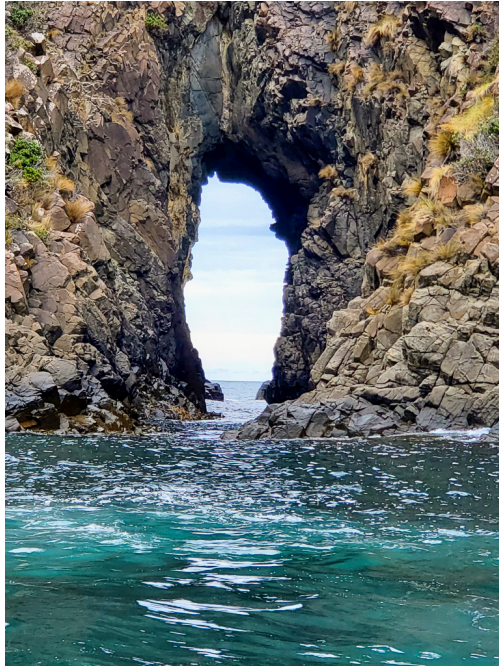
feeding on scraps of the seals meal. We were close enough for people to film the action on their phones. We also had close views of Australia's only endemic cormorant, the dapper looking, Black-faced Cormorant. After a late lunch at Pennicott's restaurant it was time to have a rest.



Shy Albatross © MJ Hele



Black-faced Cormorant © MJHele



Pelagic tour



Pelagic tour © J Leonatti

Day 5: Bruny Island to Hobart We packed up and gathered the group for our last breakfast together. An albino starling appeared amongst the dozens of other starlings and blackbirds. On our way to the ferry, we saw two Swamp Harriers. We arrived at the airport in time to fuel up, return the hire cars, and say a final goodbye to our guests, two of whom had been with us for the last 29 days. Our bird total for Tasmania was 83 species including 11 endemics. Total species for three tours

combined was 361. No playback was used on any of these tours.



EET group at Russel Falls