



## Eastern Australia Trip Report 2024

[Link: Eastern Australia Trip Report 2024](#)

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This 16-day birding tour through Eastern Australia was a rich journey across diverse landscapes, from Cairns' mangroves to the Great Barrier Reef, the Daintree River, and the Atherton Tablelands. Each location introduced unique bird species: Torresian Imperial Pigeons, Rainbow Bee-eaters, and the elusive Little Kingfisher in Cairns; and seabirds like the Sooty Tern on Michaelmas Cay. The adventure continued in Port Douglas, the rainforests of Lamington National Park, and O'Reilly's Guesthouse, where Albert's Lyrebird and Paradise Riflebird made appearances. Heading south, a pelagic trip from Sydney brought sightings of albatrosses and petrels, contrasting with the inland terrain of Barren Grounds and the Blue Mountains, home to Eastern Bristlebirds, Glossy Black-Cockatoos, and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. The journey concluded in the Capertee Valley with rare sightings, including the Regent Honeyeater—a perfect end to a spectacular birding adventure.

### Day 1: Touchdown in Cairns

We arrived in Cairns, excited to kick off this Eastern Australia birding adventure! This first day was all about settling into the new landscapes and soundscapes, and getting a feel for what the next two weeks would bring.

### Day 2: Exploring Cairns' Birdlife

We dove right in with a full day of birding in Cairns, from the Cairns Esplanade to the nearby mangroves, Centenary Lakes, and the Botanic Gardens. The Lakes were a buzz of activity, with Torresian Imperial Pigeons, Pacific Black Ducks and Mistletoebirds being sights to behold. The Botanic Gardens were rich with rainforest and wetland species, including the vivid Rainbow Bee-eater and the elusive Little Kingfisher. That evening, we returned to the Esplanade to spot Metallic Starlings—an unforgettable end to the day.



*Cairns Wetlands © Louis Masarei*

### **Day 3: Great Barrier Reef Birding**

Today was a real treat: a Great Barrier Reef cruise! We set sail on the Ocean Spirit towards Michaelmas Cay, where we found a sanctuary brimming with seabirds. Thousands of Sooty Terns and the striking Brown Booby were just a few of the species we saw up close. As a bonus, we also got a chance to snorkel in these incredible waters—a refreshing pause in our birding journey. We ended the day in Cairns, reflecting on both marine and avian beauty.



*Brown Booby © Louis Masarei*



*Michaelmas Cay © Louis Masarei*

#### **Day 4: From Port Douglas to the Rainforest**

Port Douglas is a birder's paradise, with access to mountain rainforest, wetlands, and tropical savannah within easy reach. We explored Port Douglas' surrounds, spotting species like Papuan Frogmouth, Wandering Whistling-Duck and the Magpie Goose.



*Papuan Frogmouth © Louis Masarei*

## Day 5: Daintree River Cruise

Today, we ventured down the Daintree River. Our boat wove through farmland and rainforest, offering us incredible views of Shining Flycatchers, Papuan Frogmouths, and Spangled Drongos. Stewart Creek Road offered some final treats with a diversity of Honeyeaters. We were delighted with our haul of sightings as we returned to our cozy spot in Port Douglas for the night.



*Daintree River cruise © Louis Masarei*

## Days 6-7: Atherton Tablelands - The Ultimate Birding Ground

Up nearby Mount Lewis, the wet tropics endemics awaited—among them Barred Cuckooshrike and Lemon-bellied Flycatcher. We were especially thrilled to catch a glimpse of the rare Blue-faced Parrot Finch. Julatten did not disappoint. The Atherton Tablelands delivered on its promise of stunning scenery and rich birdlife. The hills and lakes were home to spectacular species like the Tooth-billed Bowerbird and Rufous Fantail. Visiting scattered wetlands, we observed thousands of waterfowl. Our stay in Yungaburra even included a visit to the platypus platform—a quirky change of pace from our usual feathered companions. These two days were packed with unforgettable sightings.



*Birding in wetlands © Louis Masarei*

## **Day 8: Cairns Revisited**

Heading back to Cairns, we stopped to see Sarus Cranes and Brolga in the fields. A visit to the Cathedral Fig presented us with a sightings of Chowchilla. We wrapped up with a return to Cairns' wetlands, catching any species we missed on day two.

## **Day 9: Arrival in Lamington National Park**

After a very early morning flight to Brisbane, we headed to the Green Mountains in Lamington National Park, home to breathtaking rainforest and deep volcanic gorges. Our highlight? A chance to witness the Albert's Lyrebird. O'Reilly's Guesthouse was our charming home base, providing a cozy, bird-centric atmosphere for our stay.



*Australian King Parrot © Louis Masarei*

### **Day 10: Birding Around O'Reilly's**

Today, we spent a full day immersed in the birdlife surrounding O'Reilly's. Trails through lush forest led us to incredible finds like the Paradise Riflebird and the quirky Logrunner. The tree-top walk was a fantastic vantage point, especially for spotting the elusive Green Catbird.

### **Day 11: Flight to Sydney**

We left the mountains and flew to Sydney for our next adventure: pelagic birding. A quiet day of travel let us rest and prepare for the ocean trip ahead.

### **Day 12: Pelagic Trip from Sydney Harbour**

We set out from Sydney Harbour, aiming for the edge of the continental shelf. A day on the open water yielded seabird sightings: Wandering albatrosses, Petrels, and Shearwaters swooped across the horizon. It was a striking contrast to land birding, and we felt lucky to have been part of it.



*Sydney Pelagic © Louis Masarei*

### **Day 13: Barren Grounds Nature Reserve**

Barren Grounds brought us a chance to see the critically endangered Eastern Bristlebird and Gang-gang Cockatoos. We also saw a delightful variety of species like the Fan-tailed Cuckoo before heading inland to the Blue Mountains.

### **Days 14-15: Blue Mountains and Capertee Valley**

The Blue Mountains treated us to astonishing landscapes and fascinating birdlife. From Spotted Pardalotes to the superb Glossy Black-Cockatoo, every sighting felt unique. Capertee Valley was a showstopper, with wallabies and kangaroos joining us alongside birds like the Yellow-tufted Honeyeater and the striking Speckled Warbler.



*Blue Mountains © Louis Masarei*



*Birding in Capertee Valley © Louis Masarei*

## **Day 16: Farewell in Sydney**

Our last day was spent tracking down any species we missed around the Capertee Valley, with Red-rumped Parrot and Turquoise Parrot being a treat. A rare appearance from the much sort after Regent Honeyeater provided an incredible end to the trip. It was a fitting end to a journey that took

us through rainforests, coastal mangroves, high mountains, and the open sea, leaving us with memories of vibrant feathers and unique landscapes. [Eastern Australia 2024 bird list](#)