Eagle-Eye Tours



Eastern Australia Trip Report (Nov 14 - 30, 2022)

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Day 1 - Cairns

Our Cairns resort had a Balinese restaurant in house where we met for introductions and discussion of the tour plans.

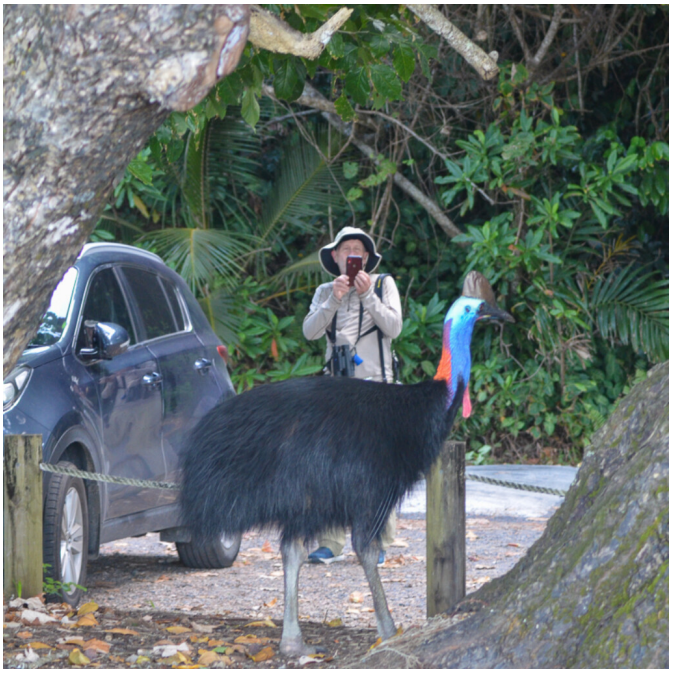
Day 2 - Cairns

Cairns is a birders ideal city with exotic tropical species like Torresian Imperial-Pigeon, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Australasian Figbird and Rainbow Lorikeet as common urban birds. It also has the Esplanade where parkland adjoins mud and sandflats and we quickly picked up many shorebird species here. A surprise were 3 Beach Thick-knees that flew in to join the others.



Birding on the Cairns Esplande © Rob Elvish

After a visit to the Botanic Gardens for Papuan Frogmouths at roost we moved down the coast to a site for Southern Cassowary. Here our initial disappointment was replaced with awe as we found not one but two of the stunning big birds; the first strolling along the beach. Later we stopped at a colony of nesting Metallic Starlings.



Taking a photo of Southern Cassowary © Rob Elvish



Southern Cassowary © Rob Elvish



Nesting Metallic Starlings © Rob Elvish

Day 3 - Michaelmas Cay on the Great Barrier Reef

Our day tour to Michaelmas Cay on the Great Barrier Reef to see nesting seabirds, and a chance to

try snorkelling or glass bottom boat coral viewing, had great weather. We had incredible close views of Brown Noddies, Sooty Terns, Great and Lesser Crested Terns, Brown Boobies all at various stages of nesting and visitors like Lesser and Great Frigatebirds, a Red-footed Booby and other terns and shorebirds.



Great and Lesser Crested Terns © Rob Elvish



Brown Boobies © Rob Elvish

Cairns resident pair of Rufous Owls had moved from their usual roost site, but following up on a local birder's suggestion at a new site quickly produced an adult and juvenile at dusk.

Day 4 - Cairns

More birding in the Cairns region produced Mangrove Robin and nesting Grey Goshawk, along with many more common species. Later we moved northwards to our new accommodation in Port Douglas.



Birding on a Cairns boardwalk © Rob Elvish

Day 5 - Daintree River

Another perspective on the tropical rainforests was explored today, on our boat cruise on the Daintree River, many birds allow a close approach when you are in a boat. Highlights were Black Butcherbirds and Black Bittern and nesting Large-billed Gerygones. After the cruise we searched for and found Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher.



Boat trip on the Daintree River © Rob Elvish

Day 6 - Mount Lewis

An early visit to the high altitude rainforests of Mount Lewis found us specialist species like Atherton Scrubwren, Mountain Thornbill, Tooth-billed Bowerbird and the elusive Chowchilla. Moving further West into drier country, we found Australian Bustard and Tawny Frogmouths nesting. Returning to the Atherton Tablelands, we settled into our rainforest lodge. Day 7 - Atherton Tablelands Early birding at the lodge produced many new species with some like Tooth-billed Bowerbird and Spotted Catbirds coming in to fruit we put out for them. Both male and female Victoria's Riflebird were seen well. Waiting at a Golden Bowerbird's bower we were disrupted and amused by a very curious immature Southern Cassowary. A day for unusual mammals; 3 Lumholtz Tree-Kangaroos near a tea plantation, sightings of Platypus in a local creek, and those that were patient enough at our lodge saw Striped Possum that evening.



Taking photos of Southern Cassowary © Rob Elvish

Day 8 - Atherton Tablelands

Today was a day for Australian icons with lots of Eastern Grey Kangaroos on a golf course and two Emus wandering down a side road. We made our way back to Cairns adding various birds at stops; like rare vagrant Oriental Pratincoles in a ploughed field and White-browed Robins by a stream.

Day 9 and 10 - Flight to Brisbane and O'Reilly's

After our flight to Brisbane we birded in the suburbs at a lake and a mangrove boardwalk, where we added Mangrove Gerygone. We then moved on to O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, our stop in the temperate rainforest for the next two nights. O'Reilly's is world famous for tame species allowing great views and photos which included Albert's Lyrebird, Regent and Satin Bowerbirds, Green Catbird, Noisy Pitta, Australian King Parrots, Crimson Rosellas, Wonga Pigeons, Grey Shrikethrush, White-browed, Yellow-throated and Large-billed Scrubwrens, Australian Logrunner, Paradise Riflebird, Eastern Whipbird and Rose Robin. The regular feeding of birds at this site means that many species will land on the visitors. Spotlighting after dinner we had several close views of 2 Marbled Frogmouths.



Albert's Lyrebird © Rob Elvish



Birding at O'Reilly's © Rob Elvish

Day 11 - Brisbane to Sydney

We reluctantly concluded our birding at O'Reilly's and made our way back to Brisbane for the flight

to Sydney.

Day 12 - Sydney pelagic

Our pelagic day trip out from Sydney had ideal conditions, not too rough and not to calm. We were able to find three species of Albatross, White-capped, Black-browed and Wandering, Wilson's Storm-Petrel and five different species of shearwaters. For some, the highlight of the day was a close sighting of a huge Sunfish or Mola mola relaxing at the surface.



White-capped Albatross © Rob Elvish

Day 13 - Barren Grounds Nature Reserve

Moving south from Sydney we visited Barren Grounds Nature Reserve, where we were lucky enough to encounter an Echidna and found Southern Emuwrens. Then after an unsuccessful search for Koala in Sydney's western suburbs, that produced Rock warbler, the region's only endemic, we moved on to our accommodation in the Blue Mountains.

Day 14 - Blue Mountains

An early visit to the stunning Three Sisters Lookout, followed by a walk in bushland nearby, revealed 3 Superb Lyrebirds, completing our set of both Lyrebird species. We visited several more spectacular Blue Mountains lookouts, and picked up new species like Brown-headed Honeyeater Variegated Fairywren. Then moving West and down from the mountains we went to Lake Wallace, where there were Musk and Blue-billed Ducks and Great Crested Grebes.



This Lyrebird just wouldn’t move!



Blue Mountain birding



Birding group at Blue Mountains lookout

Day 15 - Capertee Valley

A full day in the Capertee valley added many new species, which included White-eared, White-plumed, Fuscous, Black-chinned Honeyeaters, Jacky-winter, Dusky Woodswallow, Brown Treecreeper, Red-rumped Parrot, White-winged Chough, Restless Flycatcher, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Little Lorikeet and nesting Diamond Firetails. Two Australian Owlet-Nightlars watched us from their roosting hollow. A great day topped off with Little Eagle and Square-tailed Kite.

Day 16 - Lake Wallace

After an early return visit to Lake Wallace to see the Musk and Blue billed Ducks again, where we added Little Grassbird; we quickly returned to bushland near Sydney where our persistence paid off with great views of a Koala.

Day 17 - Departure

Our tour ended this morning with some of the group taking early flights on to Tasmania. We had seen 292 bird species, and heard an additional 8, and saw many of Australia’s iconic marsupials.