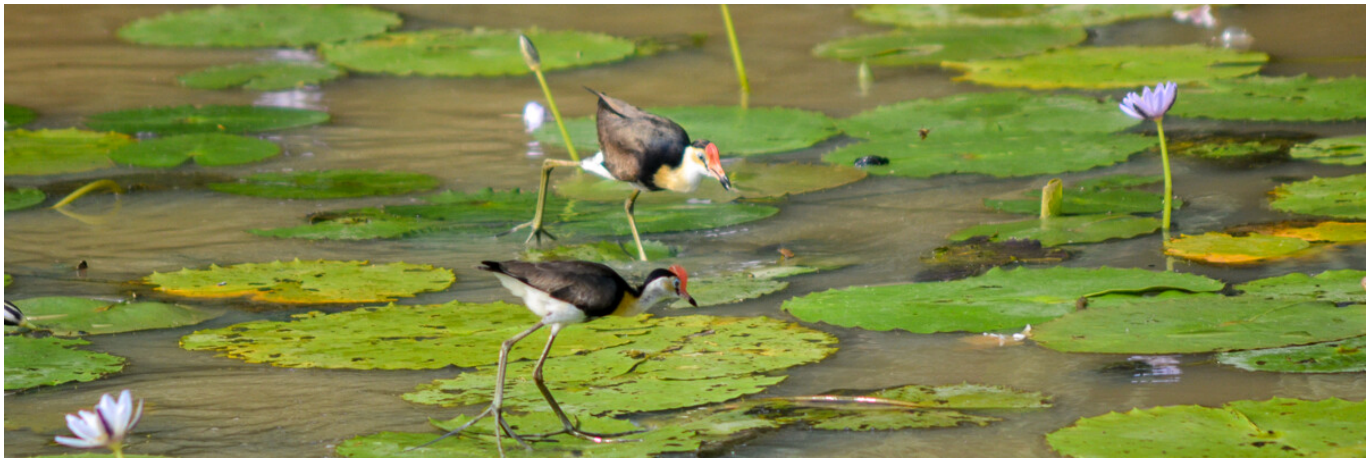
Eagle-Eye Tours



Tropical Australia Trip Report (Nov 3 - 10, 2023)

Link: Tropical Australia Trip Report (Nov 3 - 10, 2023)

Day 1 – November 2

After introductions in Darwin at our hotel we drove to the Darwin Sailing Club for an outdoor dinner at the waterfront bistro. Here we were entertained by the Red-collared Lorikeets moving into roost in palm trees. On returning to the hotel our first Bush Thick-knee called and wandered through the park over the road.

Day 2 - Nov 3

A day exploring birding sites close to Darwin, after checking the park by our hotel for a few of the common birds. Starting at Lee Point where waders and terns were gathered for the high tide; here we found Whimbrel, Far Eastern Curlew, Caspian and Gull-billed Tern among many others. Later at the Buffalo Creek mangroves, we heard the elusive Chestnut Rail and saw Red-headed Myzomela, Shining Flycatcher and Australian Yellow White-eye. After lunch at Eva's Café at the Darwin Botanic Gardens, we had a search for owls, finding Barking Owl roosting, and many other birds including Orange-footed Scrubfowl. Later in the afternoon a visit to East Point gave us views of the common Agile Wallaby and many shorebird species.



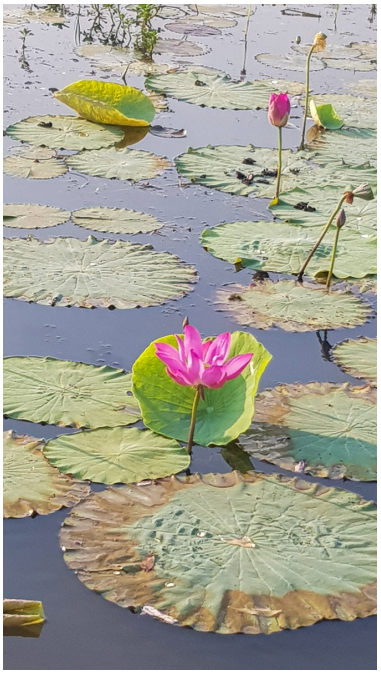
Barking Owl © Rob Elvish

Day 3 - Nov 4

Moving inland and east towards Kakadu National Park. Our first stop was Fogg Dam conservation reserve, where we started with a walk in the monsoon forest, revealing Arafura Fantail, Grey Whistler and the star attraction, Rainbow Pitta. Built in the 1950s to supply water for a now abandoned rice irrigation project, the dam has become a key water bird conservation area. Whatever the water level in the dam, there are always a range of habitats for water birds here, leading to a large diversity of species. Radjah Shelduck, White-browed Crake, Comb-crested Jacana, Pied Heron, Glossy, Australian and Straw-necked Ibis were just a few of the many species here. Our first stop in Kakadu National Park, Mamukala Wetlands, had similar species to Fogg Dam, but much closer views from the bird hide of many of them. A large resort built in the shape of a crocodile in Jabiru was our accommodation for the next few days.



Black-necked Stork © Rob Elvish



Water lily © Rob Elvish

Day 4 - Nov 5

An early drive to join the Yellow Waters cruise before breakfast. As the dry season progresses the water and wildlife are concentrated in the remaining pools. Here our boats were able to get very close to spectacular large saltwater crocodiles and many water birds. Brolga, Great-billed Heron and

White -bellied Sea-Eagles were highlights before our breakfast at the Cooinda Resort, followed by birding in the surrounding parklands.



Yellow Water boat ride © Rob Elvish

After a visit to Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Center where many birds were bathing in sprinklers in the gardens, including Rufous-throated Honeyeater and Masked Finch, we returned to Jabiru for lunch and a rest. Late afternoon saw us checking out the Black Fruit Bats at the football oval, the sewerage ponds, and Jabiru Lake adding bird species to our tally along the way.

Day 5 - Nov 6

Nourlangie Rock, an outlying rock massive from the East Arnhem Land Escarpment is usually a good site for the sandstone endemic birds. Here we climbed to a lookout and visited some of the rock art sites, but only heard the White -lined Honeyeaters, always calling somewhere out of reach. After breakfast we returned to nearby Narwulanja where we found Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon. A visit to Anbangbang Billabong for our picnic lunch gave us the surprise bird of the tour; 2 Emu strolling along the road and onto the dried out, grassy billabong. In the afternoon we drove to Cahills Crossing on the East Alligator River where we watched the crocodiles watching the crossing. We searched Merl campground for Partridge Pigeon without success, and walked the Bardedjilidji sandstone walk, finding Sandstone Shrike-thrush and more Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon.



Rock Art © Rob Elvish



Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon © Rob Elvish



Emus © Brian Puttock

Day 6 – Nov 7

An early return to Nourlangie Rock resulted in sightings of the elusive White-lined Honeyeater and Banded Fruit-dove, completing sightings of all the sandstone endemics. On the way to Pine Creek stops at Bukbukluk and for lunch at the ranger station resulted in close views of Silver-backed Butcherbirds, a species that can be very hard to find. Birding around the town in Pine Creek is always worthwhile, with Black Fruit Bats in the trees in the park, resident Great Bowerbirds with bowers and Hooded Parrots coming in to roost in the evening; even in palms in our accommodation's gardens.



Great Bowerbird bower © Rob Elvish

Day 7 – Nov 8

An early start took us to pools in a creek near Edith Falls where we hoped to find finches coming to drink. Recent rains meant the birds had lots of choices of places to drink. But eventually a group of Gouldian Finches arrived, along with Crimson, Double -barred, Masked and Longtailed Finches, also Red-backed Fairywrens. Later birding around Edith Falls in Nitmiluk National Park and at some stops on the way back to Pine Creek produced many more species, Northern Rosella, Weebill (Australia's smallest).

Day 8 - Nov 9

A morning walk through a patch of tropical savanna near Pine Creek gave us more views of finches, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Jacky- winter and Black-faced Woodswallow, while the waste water ponds had Common Greenshank and Black-fronted Dotterels. Today we returned to Darwin with birding enroute, with stops at Adelaide River and the magnetic termite mounds in Litchfield National Park. This species of termite builds tall wedge shaped nests with the long axis orientated North to South, to control the interior temperature.



Sunset © Rob Elvish



Magnetic termite nests © Rob Elvish

Day 9 – Nov 10

Early birding for some of the group at the East Point mangrove boardwalk produced a rush of new trip species, mostly mangrove specialists like Torresian Kingfisher, Mangrove Grey Fantail, Mangrove Gerygone, then we finish with a lovely pair of Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove. Departure flights to Cairns for those moving on to the Eastern Australia tour, and elsewhere for other Australian adventures.



Our Tropical Australia birding group 2023

Total tour bird species 167 including 3 that were heard only. Tropical Australia species list 2023