



Tropical Australia Trip Report (Oct 1 - 9, 2024)

[Link: Tropical Australia Trip Report \(Oct 1 - 9, 2024\)](#)

Day 1: Arrival

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 sunset and Blue-faced Honeyeaters and Red-collared Lorikeets moving into roost in palm trees. On a short spotlight walk after dinner we found Black Flying Foxes and 2 Common Brushtail Possum.

Day 2: A day exploring birding sites close to Darwin.

Starting at East Point where waders and terns were gathered for the high tide; here we found Whimbrel, Far Eastern Curlew, Great Knot, Pacific Golden-Plover and Great Crested Tern among many others. Then the mangrove boardwalk was visited for Black Butcherbird, Mangrove Robin and others. After lunch, we had a search for owls at the Darwin Botanic Gardens, finding Rufous Owl roosting, and many other birds including Orange-footed Scrubfowl.



Rufous Owl © Rob Elvish

Day 3: 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. Magpie Goose, Brolga, Comb-crested Jacana, Pied Heron, Australian and Straw-necked Ibis were just a few of the many species here. The riparian forest along the Adelaide River has long been a site for the Black-tailed Whistler. {Mangrove Golden Whistler}. But lately it has not been so reliable. Selecting a new piece of what look like ideal habitat we were quickly rewarded with great views of a female. 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. Anbinik resort in Jabiru was our accommodation for the next few days; where a Barking Owl roosts by our cabins!



Radjah Shelduck © Rob Elvish



Barking Owl © Rob Elvish



Comb-crested Jacana © Rob Elvish

Day 4: 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. Black-necked Stork, Plumed and Wandering Whistling Ducks were highlights before our breakfast at the Coinda resort, followed by birding in the surrounding parklands.



Wandering Whistling-Ducks © Rob Elvish



Black-necked Stork © Rob Elvish



Estuarine Crocodile and Nankeen Night-Heron © Rob Elvish



Water Buffalo © Rob Elvish



Australasian Darter with fish © Rob Elvish

After a visit to Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Center we returned to Cooina for lunch, then to Jabiru and a rest. Late afternoon saw us checking out the Flying Foxes at the football oval, the sewerage ponds, airport and the uranium mine tailings dam, adding bird species to our tally along the way.



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo © Rob Elvish

Day 5: Nourlangie Rock, Cahills Crossing and Ubirr Rock

Nourlangie Rock, an outlying rock massif from the East Arnhem Land Escarpment is usually a good site for the sandstone endemic birds. Here we climbed to a lookout and had the White-lined Honeyeater come to us for close views. We also visited some of the rock art sites. At nearby Narwulanja we found Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon. In the afternoon we drove to Cahills Crossing on the East Alligator River where we watched the crocodiles watching the crossing. We walked around some rock stacks finding Sandstone Shrike-thrush, before moving on to Ubirr rock art site for sunset.



Day 6: Pine Creek

An early return to Nourlangie Rock resulted in sightings of the elusive Banded Fruit-Dove. On the way to Pine Creek a stop for lunch at the ranger station resulted in views of Northern Rosella and a Silver-backed Butcherbird, a species that can be very hard to find. Birding around the town in Pine Creek is always worthwhile, with Black Flying Foxes 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.



Black-banded Fruit-Dove © Rob Elvish



Great Bowerbird's Bower © Rob Elvish

Day 7: Edith Falls

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 groups of Gouldian Finches moved overhead, some stopping at our chosen pools. We also saw Crimson, Double-barred, Masked and Longtailed Finches. Later birding around Edith Falls in Nitmiluk National Park, Umbrawarra Gorge and at some stops back in Pine Creek produced many more species including Weebill and Common Bronzewing.



Azure Kingfisher © Rob Elvish

Day 8: Adelaide River and Litchfield National Park

A morning walk through a patch of tropical savanna near Pine Creek gave us more species; views of Pallid Cuckoo, Jacky Winter, while the waste water ponds had Australasian Grebe 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. Our tour ended with a final dinner back where we started, at the Darwin Sailing Club, for sunset.



Sunset in Darwin © Rob Elvish

Day 9: Departure

Since we had time before flights a last look for birds was made before breakfast. At the Buffalo Creek mangroves, we heard the elusive Chestnut Rail and saw Red-headed Myzomela, Shining Flycatcher and Australian Yellow White-eye. Departure flights for those moving on to more birding adventures.



Tropical Australia Birding Group 2024

[Tropical Australia Bird List 2024](#)