



Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Galah

2024 Australia Birding

17 Nights/18 Days

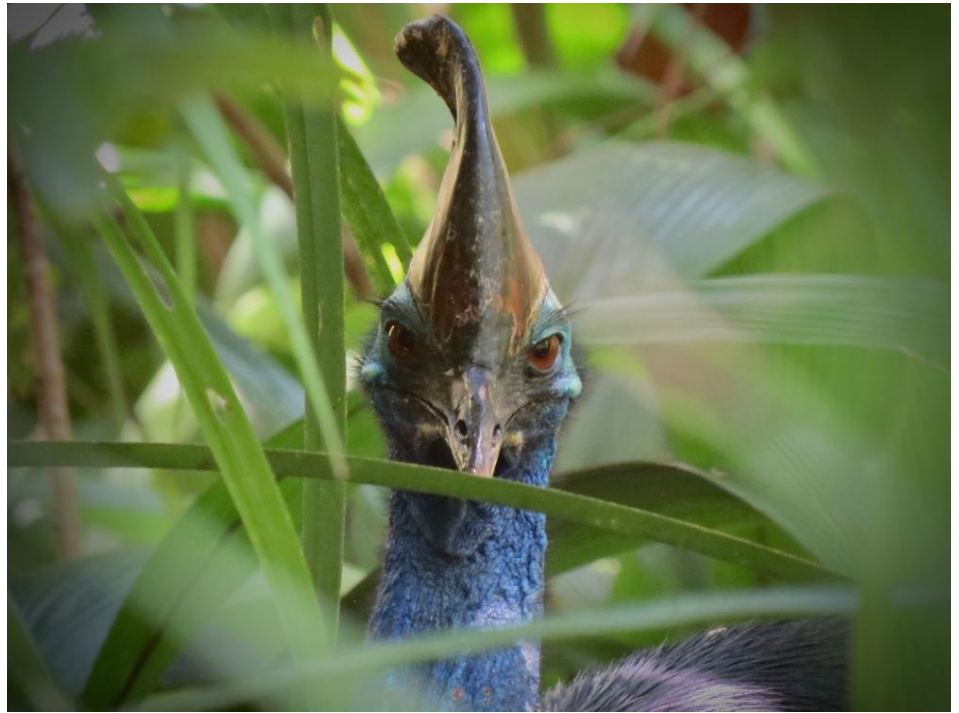
Australia sits in the enviable position of having over 360 endemic bird species, second only to Indonesia. It also holds the title of the most endemic bird families with 8. During our 18 days on tour to this ancient landscape we will encounter at least 100 endemic bird species and hope to see at least half of the endemic families. Expect to see around 300 species. Alongside fantastic birds we expect to see some of the iconic Australian mammals including Platypus, Echidna, various species of Kangaroos and Wallabies and if we're lucky perhaps even a Spotted Quoll.

The east coast of Australia is dominated by forests from the tip of Cape York to the bottom end of Tasmania. We'll spend time in various habitats, from the tropical rainforests around Cairns to dry savannah woodlands of the Atherton Tablelands down to the temperate rainforests of Tasmania. We'll stay in spectacular accommodations including Thala Beach Resort and O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat. To top off this incredible trip we'll also spend a day out at Michaelmas Cay on the Great Barrier Reef, where not only will you have the chance to snorkel amongst turtles and a myriad of colorful fish but also see the 20,000 seabirds at close range that call Michaelmas Cay home.

11 Nights/12 Days Itinerary

Day 1, Cairns

Today you will arrive in Brisbane/Sydney. After collecting your baggage, you will need to go through customs and immigration and then transfer to the domestic terminal for the flight to Cairns. What can be done today will depend on your arrival time, but most flights from the States have traditionally arrived early morning. Take the midmorning flight to Cairns arriving at around lunchtime. Take lunch in Cairns and have a quick look at some of the Cairns sites like the famous Esplanade, the Centenary Lakes and perhaps even Cattana Wetlands. The Esplanade is best watched in the afternoon when the sun is behind you and about 3 hours before high tide and from about 1 hour after high tide. The birds get pushed up towards the beach as the tide comes in and often fly off for a while during high tide. They then return as the tide goes down and the mud flats are revealed again. The Esplanade is famous for a variety of shorebirds, pelicans, gulls and terns. While the park along the seafront is good for Rainbow Lorikeets, a variety of honeyeaters and mangrove species such as Mangrove Robin inhabit the northern end. Centenary Lakes have a pleasant walkway around the Freshwater and Saltwater Lakes and there are usually very different birds on each one. It is also a good place for bush and garden birds. Cattana Wetlands is a lovely area with trails and hides overlooking several



Southern Cassowary

small wetland areas. It is a good place for kingfishers, ducks, White-browed Crakes, and tiny Blossom Bats. You will overnight in Cairns and get up bright and early for the cruise to Michaelmas Cay in the morning.

Accommodation: Cairns Plaza Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: L, D).

Day 2, Michaelmas Cay:

The best combined birding and snorkeling boat is Seastar which sails from Cairns and visits Michaelmas Cay where there is a large breeding colony of noddies and terns. You need to be on the boat by 0730. Michaelmas Cay is a divided islet with an area for breeding birds roped off from the area for snorkelers etc. If the tide is right birders can be taken round the back of the island to see better into the large colony of breeding Brown Noddies and Sooty Terns. 38 species of birds have been recorded on the Cay and several of

them nest there including Greater and Lesser-crested Terns. Brown Boobies, Silver Gulls, Black-naped, Bridled and perhaps Roseate Terns can also be found and with luck a frigatebird will be flying overhead. A semi-submersible boat trip at the Cay and snorkel gear are included in the trip. After time on the cay the boat moves out to another reef area for snorkeling (and diving if you wish but this will cost extra). You return to Cairns about 1600 and begin the drive north for about an hour along the coast road to Thala Beach. This is a beautiful area with access to the Great Barrier Reef. The property has kangaroos, a huge array of bird life, coconut trees, its own private beach, and an open-air restaurant in the tree-tops and has great views of both rainforest and the ocean!

Accommodation: Thala Beach (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 3, Daintree:

An early start today as you head up to Daintree Village for the Daintree River early morning bird cruise with Murray Hunt, "the Daintree Boatman". This leaves at 0630 and is about an hour drive from Thala. We will be looking for Little Kingfisher, Great-billed Heron, Black Bittern, and other waterbirds. If you are lucky, a Saltwater Crocodile will be seen. Today we hope to have Del Richards join as a guest guide.

Returning from the cruise you will have breakfast locally and then head up onto the Northern Tablelands to look for Australian Bustard at Mary Farms, and birds like Galah, Tawny Frogmouth, Apostlebird and a variety of parrots and finches up towards Mt Carbine before having lunch and returning to Thala Beach mid-afternoon for a much-needed rest after your very early start.

Accommodation: Thala Beach (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Sacred Kingfisher



Day 4, Atherton Tablelands:

Saying goodbye to Thala you will now turn south back towards Cairns where you will head up the Range towards Kuranda. Here you can stop and take a walk along a well-maintained pathway to see the Barron Falls, although at its best in the Wet Season, it can still be impressive at this time of year. Nearby there is a very good site for the beautiful Lovely Fairywren. Some people prefer to avoid the Range Road and take the Skyrail cable car up to Kuranda. With extensive views of the rainforest and out over the ocean, it is an enjoyable experience (unless you are worried by heights). The gondolas with glass floors are particularly interesting as you stare down into the canopy from above. There are two interesting "stations" along the way where you can get out and learn about the history and flora and fauna of the Tablelands area (this is an optional extra and would be an extra expense if required). Allow around 1.5-2 hours for a one-way journey which

includes time to look around the stations. Leaving Kuranda head towards Mareeba; the Emerald Creek Ice Creamery not only sells great ice cream but is also an excellent place for Red-winged Parrots.

As soon as you leave Kuranda you are out of the rainforest and into the dry sclerophyll zone. After having lunch in Mareeba you will head to Granite Gorge, a great place for dry country birds. Squatter Pigeon, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos and a variety of finches are all seen regularly here. In addition, the very appealing Mareeba Rock Wallaby has its home amongst the boulders and rocks that lie there.

Leaving Granite Gorge you will continue your journey south to Chambers Rainforest Lodge. Set in the rainforests of the higher altitude Southern Atherton Tablelands, this is another beautiful place to stay. It is set in its own area of rainforest and has pathways and tracks which are worth exploring, including streams with resident Platypus. It currently has no restaurant and so after a quick rest and clean up you will need to go out for dinner.

Accommodation: Chambers Wildlife Lodge (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 5, Atherton Tablelands:

Today you will spend the day looking around the mid-level Tablelands sites. The Curtain Fig with its boardwalk is a great place

to introduce yourself to mid altitude birds including a variety of monarchs, Bowers Shrike-Thrush, Wompoo Fruit Dove, and Eastern Whipbird. Hasties Swamp, with its magnificent 2 story bird hides, is great for wildfowl and other waterbirds and at this time the cut cane fields around Atherton are often visited by both Brolga and Sarus Cranes. The Crater Lakes have Tooth-billed Bowerbirds, Victoria's Riflebird, Chowchilla and if you are very lucky Australia's only diurnal macropod, the Musky Rat Kangaroo. Evening spotlighting for mammals and night birds can occur today. The Cranes coming into Bromfield at evening can be an impressive site as they come in with their bugling calls and then dance on the floor of the crater.

Accommodation: Chambers Wildlife Lodge (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 6, Atherton Tablelands:

Today you will visit the higher areas of the Southern Tablelands. Mt Hypipamee is usually the best place to see Golden Bowerbird at the bower and all the high-level Tablelands birds including a number of endemics such as Fernwren, Bridled Honeyeater, and Grey-headed Robins. It is also a good place to see Southern Cassowary if you are lucky. There is a male who often walk through the car park with his chicks early morning and around lunch time.

Accommodation: Chambers Wildlife Lodge (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).



Brown Falcon

Day 7, Brisbane:

Saying goodbye to North Queensland, the journey starts with travelling back to Cairns. You will drive down the Palmerston Highway and visit Etty Bay, which is one of the best areas to see Southern Cassowary. They can be seen in the caravan park, along the beach, in people's gardens especially when trees are fruiting and in the surrounding forest. Unfortunately, they do not follow timetables, so we need a bit of patience to see them. You will then head north again to Cairns airport in time for our afternoon flight back to Brisbane. If you have already seen Cassowary, then you can take a more leisurely trip back to Cairns and visit some other local sites you haven't visited yet.

Accommodation: Brisbane Pacific Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 8, Lamington National Park:

You start the day by visiting some of the coastal wetland areas where we will look for Wandering Whistling Duck, Comb-crested Jacana and possibly Baillon's Crake, and tidal flats where we can find Far Eastern Curlew, herons and terns, and the mangroves along the coast at Wynnum. Mangrove Gerygone is one of the birds we hope to see here. From here we will start our journey up to O'Reilly's, perhaps stopping at Daisy Hill Koala Sanctuary where a walk through the trees may allow us to see Koalas. From here you will slowly continue up to O'Reillys, stopping along the way at interesting places and for lunch. You will arrive at O'Reillys Rainforest Retreat around mid-afternoon in time to clean up and have a short rest before dinner.

Accommodation: O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).



Schul Sunbird

Day 9, Lamington National Park:

O'Reilly's is one of Australia's premier birdwatching locations. Situated in Lamington National Park in the Green Mountains of S.E. Queensland, much of the surrounding area is temperate rainforest which has a suite of birds all its own and we will indeed be looking for them. Before breakfast, you will quietly stroll paths near O'Reilly's Guest House in the hope of seeing Albert's Lyrebird working the leaf litter on the rainforest floor; Brush Turkey and Red-necked Pademelon (a small kangaroo) will certainly be encountered. Stunning male Regent Bowerbird (absent for a few months of the year), its relative the Satin Bowerbird and gaudy parrots should provide a riot of colour around the guest house. On further rainforest walks you will seek Southern Logrunner, Noisy Pitta and Zoothera thrushes on the ground and Crested Shrike-tit, Rose Robin and fruit-doves in the midstory and canopy. Night

viewing can also be productive both for birds and for mammals.

Accommodation: O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 10, Lamington National Park:

Today you have a full day birding the O'Reilly's area. You will go a bit further afield to look for Paradise Riflebird, one of Australia's 4 Birds of Paradise, and any birds you have not seen yet. On a side road you will break into tall, wet eucalypt forest where Spotted Pardalote, treecreepers and very occasionally Spotted Quail-thrush and Glossy Black-Cockatoo can be found. Again, night viewing can also be productive both for birds and for mammals.

Accommodation: O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 11, Brisbane:

You will check out and depart O'Reilly's straight after breakfast and descend to Canungra where a quick side track should place us in colonies of Bell Miner and (possibly) Grey-headed Flying-fox. A 1.5 hour drive follows, taking you past the outskirts of Brisbane and Ipswich to the Lockyer Valley. Here you will visit a selection of sites determined by season and weather. Short stops at small, permanent, artificial wetlands in farming areas around Gatton can yield Plumed Whistling-Duck, Magpie Goose, Pink-eared Duck and sometimes Blue-billed Duck and Freckled Duck. In shallow marshes and ponds we may encounter Royal Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis and Black-necked Stork and in some seasons also Australasian Shoveler, Yellow-billed Spoonbill, White-necked Heron and Red-kneed Dotterel, with a chance of Australian Painted Snipe. On one or more of the Valley's reservoirs, we should find Great Crested Grebe and Caspian Tern, with a good chance of Cotton Pygmy-Goose though this is increasingly rare in this area. In open habitats you may see White-bellied Sea Eagle, Black Kite and possibly Black Falcon as well as Cockatiel, Pale-headed Rosella and Red-rumped Parrot. Mid-afternoon you will continue to our Brisbane hotel.

Accommodation: Brisbane Pacific Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 12, Hobart:

An early breakfast sees you heading to the airport for the 0940 flight to Hobart. At present, on most days this is the only straight through flight, arriving in Hobart at 1330. By the time you have collected your gear and found your transport, you will not get to your hotel until mid-afternoon and the balance of the day can be spent exploring the Hobart waterfront area or perhaps if time allows visiting the Peter Murrell Conservation area for an introduction to Tasmanian birds or heading up Mt Wellington, well worth it for the view alone, or having a rest before an early dinner.

Accommodation: Hobart Travelodge Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 13, Eaglehawk Neck:

Eaglehawk Neck is a great place to watch for a variety of seabirds including several different albatrosses, shearwaters, petrels, storm petrels and even the odd jaeger plus some marine mammals including dolphins, whales and fur seals. We will also take time to visit a colony of Fairy Penguins which live nearby the best sea watch site. There is a possibility that we will be able to arrange a pelagic trip depending on the weather.

Accommodation: Hobart Travelodge Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 14, Bruny Island:

Another early start has you heading to Kettering for an early ferry over to the very scenic Bruny Island. All the 12 Tasmanian endemic birds including 40-spotted Pardalote, Scrubtit, Yellow Wattlebird and Tasmanian Native Hen can be found on Bruny Island plus lots of other birds and some great animals. Most of the animals are nocturnal and cannot be seen except in the evening but there is a breeding colony of fur seals. You will return to Hobart in time for dinner.

Accommodation: Hobart Travelodge Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 15, Melaleuca:

Today you take a scenic flight over to Melaleuca in the wilderness of southwest Tasmania. Here the Orange-bellied Parrots can often be seen at this time of year. This very rare parrot, with less than 100 wild

individuals remaining, starts returning from the mainland to breed in the tall wet eucalypt forests of this area and feed on the button grass and sedge plains from mid-September onwards. There will be plenty of time to explore the local area before returning to Hobart. We will take a packed lunch with us and will need walking shoes/boots, warm clothing and waterproofs in case of rain. We fly back to Hobart and have dinner before bedtime.

Accommodation: Hobart Travelodge Hotel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 16, Sydney:

This morning you say goodbye to Tasmania and head north to Sydney. There are regular flights and a direct flight will get you there in time for lunch. You will be able to leave your bags at your hotel and head out to visit the area around Circular Quay. The Opera House,

Tawny Frogmouth



the Harbour bridge, the ferry terminals and a host of restaurants are in this area and it is a great place to start your exploration of the city. A trip over the bridge to the Botanic Gardens can be very rewarding with Powerful Owls an impressive sight.

Accommodation: Novotel Sydney International (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 17, Royal National Park:

Today you will head out to Royal National Park. This is the world's second oldest National Park (second only to Yellowstone in the US). Royal National Park has a wealth of birds and animals including Superb Lyrebird, Chestnut-rumped Heathwren, Southern Emu-wren, Powerful Owl, Greater Sooty Owl and Little Eagle. It is also home to koalas, echidnas, dingoes, spotted quolls, wallaroos, wallabies and native honeybees. However, most mammals are nocturnal and not often seen by visitors to the park, though koalas can sometimes be seen sleeping in the trees.

Accommodation: Novotel Sydney International (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 18, Sydney:

Our tour will officially conclude following breakfast, your guide will be available to drop you at the airport or at a suitable location if you have arranged one of the many fantastic activities around Sydney.

Accommodation: (meals: B).



Pied Currawong

Included in this itinerary:

In-country accommodations, ground transportation, meals from dinner on first day to breakfast on last day, tour leader and guide throughout, all taxes and entrance fees.

Not Included:

Pre & post trip accommodation, meals and drinks other than those specified, personal expenses, personal travel and cancellation insurance, international and internal flights other than Melaleuca, visa fees, laundry, tips and anything else not specifically mentioned. Domestic flights CNS - BNE or BNE - HOB are not included in this pricing.

Travel Insurance is recommended for this and all travel. Please see <https://www.naturalselectionstours.com/travel-insurance/> for details.



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