



# Natural Selections

**BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS**



Galah

## Australia Birding

17 Nights/18 Days

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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.

## 17 Nights/18 Days Itinerary

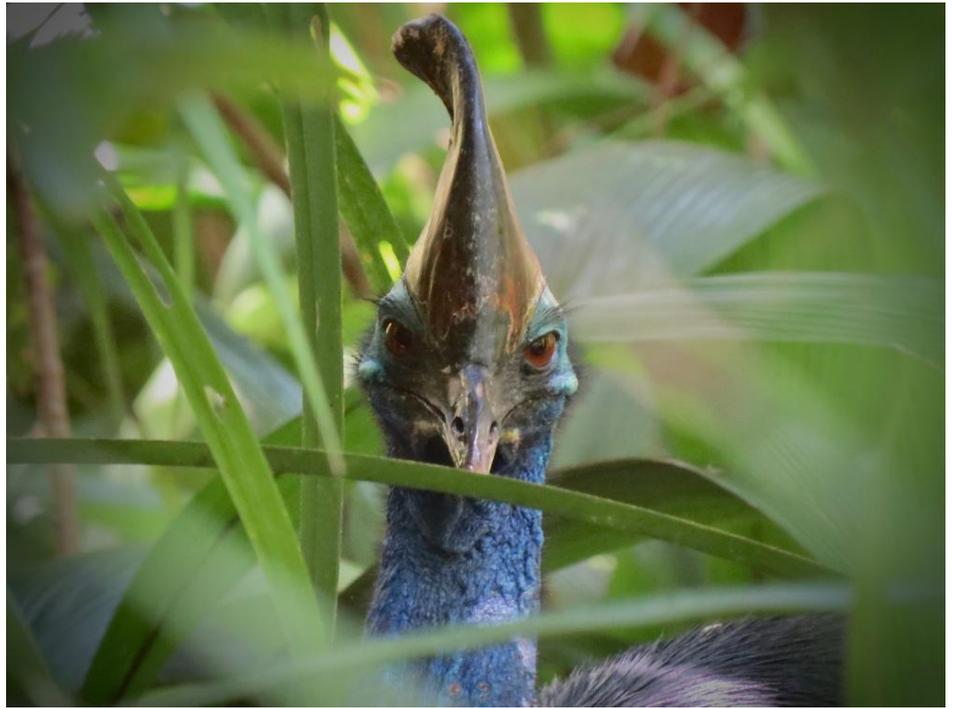
### Day 1, Arrival

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. We will take lunch in Cairns and have the afternoon to explore the area around the famous Esplanade. 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.

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

### Day 2, Cairns:

A full day around Cairns will give us a chance to explore some of the other great birding locations nearby.



Southern Cassowary

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 small wetland areas. It is a good place for kingfishers, ducks, White-browed Crakes, and tiny Blossom Bats.

A Cemetery in the centre of Cairns often has Grey Goshawk, Scaly-breasted Munia and Yellow Honeyeater as well as the very noisy Spectacled Flying-Fox. 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 3, Michaelmas Cay:

The best combined birding and snorkelling 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 snorkelling (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



Sacred Kingfisher

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 4, 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. 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.

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

#### **Day 5, Atherton Tablelands:**

Saying goodbye to Thala you will now turn south back towards Cairns where you will head up the Range towards Mareeba. A small park nearby is good for White-browed Robin and Cryptic Honeyeater. After 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 we will go out for dinner.

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

#### **Day 6, 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 7, 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).*

### **Day 8, Cairns to Lamington National Park:**

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. We will catch an early afternoon flight to Brisbane before driving out towards Lamington National Park for our next few nights at the fabulous O'Reilly's.

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



**Brown Falcon**

### **Day 9 and 10, National Park:**

2 full days in Lamington National Park are always special with birds like Albert's Lyrebird, Regent Bowerbird, Satin Bowerbird, Australian King Parrot, Paradise Riflebird and Eastern Whipbird all being present around our accommodation. We won't have to travel too far over the next 2 days which means we have more time to enjoy the birdlife and get some fantastic intimate encounters with them.

We'll eat and stay at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat today and tomorrow.

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

### **Day 11, Lamington National Park to Hobart:**

Today we end up in Hobart which gives us a little bit of time on our way back toward the Brisbane

airport to call into a great spot for coastal/mangrove species such as Mangrove Gerygone, Leaden Flycatcher, Buff-banded Rail, Sahul Cicadabird, Variegated Fairywren and Mangrove Honeyeater. We will catch a flight before finishing our day in Hobart. It's likely we'll see Forest Raven and Tasmanian Nativehen on our drive from the airport to our hotel.

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

### **Day 12 and 13, Bruny Island:**

Catching an early ferry across to Bruny Island will give us the maximum chance of encountering all of the endemic bird species in Tasmania on this one island as well as some great mammals. Dusky Robin and Tasmania Scrubwren will keep us company at a small carpark near the beach with Swift Parrots hopefully being found in flowering eucalypts. 40-spotted Pardalotes, Strong-billed



Sahul Sunbird

Honeyeater and Yellow Wattlebirds can all be found near the ferry landing.

At night we will wait to see if any Little Penguins come in on dusk while thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters come in to land in the sand dunes.

Spotlighting along the roadsides on the northern part of Bruny Island will give us a chance to see Echidna, Long-nosed Potoroo and the beautiful Eastern Quoll.

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

#### **Day 14, Bruny Island to Hobart:**

Depending on how our birding over the past 2 days has gone we have the opportunity to continue birding on Bruny Island or take the ferry back to the main island and explore other areas such as Mount Wellington with its famous view over Hobart and Crescent Honeyeater, Striated Fieldwren, Flame Robin and Scarlet Robin.

We finish our day in Hobart before our early morning to Sydney.

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

#### **Day 15, Hobart to 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, 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 16, Sydney to Capertee National Park:**

Heading west today we'll travel through the Blue Mountains on our way to Capertee National Park, officially the world's widest canyon! A couple of stops along the way should have us finding Eastern Spinebill, Lewin's Honeyeater, White-browed Scrubwren, Brown Thornbill, Brown Gerygone, Superb Lyrebird, Pilotbird and Rockwarbler which is New South Wales's only endemic mainland species (not including Lord Howe or Norfolk Island).

*Accommodation: Black Gold Motel (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).*

#### **Day 17, Capertee National Park to Sydney:**

An early morning around Capertee is always a rewarding one, with species such as Common Bronzewing, Brown Treecreeper, Yellow-tufted Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Eastern-yellow Robin and Shining-bronze Cuckoo. Some of the trickier species which we will spend some time looking for include Little Lorikeet, Turquoise Parrot and Speckled Warbler.

We'll drive back towards Sydney where we can stop off along the way for any Blue Mountain birds from yesterday evaded us.

We will spend our final night in Sydney going over the final checklist for the tour.

*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).*

### Included in this itinerary:

In-country accommodations, ground transportation, meals from lunch on first day to breakfast on last day, tour leader and guide throughout, all taxes and entrance fees, domestic flights after the tour starts in Cairns (Cairns to Brisbane, Brisbane to Hobart, Hobart to Sydney).

### Not Included:

Pre & post trip accommodation, meals and drinks other than those specified, personal expenses, personal travel and cancellation insurance, international flights, visa fees, laundry, tips and anything else not specifically mentioned.

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



Tawny Frogmouth



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