

AUSTRALIA: TASMANIA AND THE ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT – SET DEPARTURE TRIP REPORT

22 - 27 OCTOBER 2018

By Andy Walker



We enjoyed excellent views of several of the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Orange-bellied Parrots** during the tour.

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Overview

This short Tasmania group tour commenced in the state capital Hobart on the 22nd of October 2018 and concluded back there on the 27th of October 2018. The tour focused on finding the state's endemic birds as well as two breeding endemic species (both Critically Endangered [IUCN] parrots), and the tour is a great way to get accustomed to Australian birds and birding ahead of the longer East Coast tour.

The tour included a couple of days birding in the Hobart environs, a day trip by light aircraft to the southwest of the state, and a couple of days on the picturesque and bird-rich Bruny Island. We found, and got very good views of, all twelve endemic birds of Tasmania, these being Forty-spotted Pardalote, Green Rosella, Tasmanian Nativehen, Scrubtit, Tasmanian Scrubwren, Dusky Robin, Strong-billed, Black-headed, and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, Yellow Wattlebird, Tasmanian Thornbill, and Black Currawong, as well as the two Critically Endangered breeding endemic species (Orange-bellied Parrot and Swift Parrot), of which we also got excellent and prolonged views of a sizeable proportion of their global populations. Other highlights included Little Penguin, Hooded Dotterel, Freckled Duck, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Grey Goshawk, Laughing Kookaburra, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Blue-winged Parrot, Pink Robin, Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, Striated Fieldwren, Southern Emu-wren, and Beautiful Firetail. A vagrant Hudsonian Godwit was a rather nice bonus bird too.

A total of 110 bird species were seen (plus two species heard only), along with an impressive list of mammals including **Short-beaked Echidna**, **Afro-Australian Fur Seal**, **Tasmanian** (Redbellied) **Pademelon**, **Red-necked** (Bennett's) **Wallaby**, **Common Brushtail Possum**, and **Spotted-tailed Quoll**. Full species lists are provided at the end of this report.

Detailed Report

Day 1, 22nd October 2018. Arrival in Hobart

Tim, Kay, and Sandra arrived around midday and transferred to our hotel in Hobart, with the rest of the day at leisure.

Day 2, 23rd October 2018. Hobart environs

We spent the whole day birding to the west of Hobart. As we stepped out of the car in the parking lot we were immediately into it, with the first bird of the trip being the simply gorgeous **Superb** Fairywren – what a way to start the tour! It didn't stop there, and over the next few minutes we were watching Green Rosella, Black-headed Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Satin Flycatcher, Silvereye, Grey Currawong, Forest Raven, and nesting Striated Pardalote. Continuing out of the parking lot we found Masked Lapwing, Great Cormorant, Hoary-headed Grebe, Pacific Black Duck, and Eurasian Coot.

Entering the forest we were suddenly face-to-face with another Scarlet Robin and then had fantastic, prolonged views of a family group of foraging Strong-billed Honeyeaters. Here we also found Grey Fantail, Grey Shrikethrush, Brown Thornbill, Tasmanian Scrubwren, and Tasmanian Thornbill. A very showy Shining Bronze Cuckoo also gave great views, while Fantailed Cuckoo remained a heard-only bird.





The **Strong-billed Honeycreeper** can be a shy Tasmanian endemic, but not this one. It was part of a small family group that gave us some excellent views.

A small waterbody held our first Maned Ducks, Hardhead, and a flock of bathing Kelp Gulls, along with more Great Cormorants and Hoary-headed Grebes. Some further exploration resulted in finding a very showy Laughing Kookaburra, many of the aforementioned species, and our first mammals of the trip, several Tasmanian (Red-bellied) Pademelons (including a female with a very cute joey in her pouch) and a Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby.



The gorgeous Pink Robin, an instant favorite



After lunch (with **Superb Fairywren** and **Eastern Spinebill**) we took a walk along a river gorge. It was fairly quiet in general; however, we found our main target birds along the trail when we saw **Scrubtit**, an often-tricky Tasmanian endemic, along with **Black Currawong** and the stunning **Pink Robin**. We had further views of several mouse-like **Tasmanian Scrubwrens**, a brief **Brush Bronzewing**, and nesting **Spotted Pardalote** too. All of this ended what was an excellent first day's birding.

Day 3, 24th October 2018. Melaleuca Orange-bellied Parrot twitch

After breakfast we headed to the Cambridge Airfield near Hobart, where, full of anticipation, we boarded our small plane for our one-hour flight to Melaleuca in the southwest corner of Tasmania, all of this for our quest to find one of the rarest birds in the world. The flight is worth taking in its own right, as the views of the coast and Bruny Island (our destination for the following day) are absolutely spectacular. The flight back at the end of the day was equally impressive as we flew through the mountains on an overland route, several peaks still with snow present.

After we arrived on the small airstrip at Melaleuca we immediately set out birding, and after literally just stepping off the airfield we were watching an eye-level **Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo** in great light, followed by the stunning **Beautiful Firetail**, a particularly well-named bird.



Simply perfect, the immaculate **Beautiful Firetail** gave some excellent views.

Another hundred meters along the track we suddenly stood with several of the Critically Endangered **Orange-bellied Parrots** all around us! Just incredible, and over the next hour or so we sat in awe watching these birds tend their nests, foraging, and even bathing in a small puddle! We recorded at least twelve, possibly as many as fifteen birds during the time we were there. A definite highlight of the Tasmania tour that would prove hard to beat!





Great views were had of a large proportion of the global population of the Critically Endangered **Orange-bellied Parrot**; it's always a privilege to see this bird.

Although it was hard to take our eyes away from the parrots we did find a few other very nice birds in the area, including good looks at **Yellow-throated Honeyeater**, **Dusky Robin**, **Green Rosella**, **Black Currawong**, **Beautiful Firetail**, **Southern Emu-wren**, **Striated Fieldwren**, **Superb Fairywren**, **New Holland Honeyeater**, and **Swamp Harrier**. It was also wonderful to spend the day in such a remote and beautiful wilderness area, with the only sound being that of the birds. Exceedingly happy we jumped back on the plane and headed back to Hobart, where we had a lovely meal on the quayside, along with a celebratory nice bottle of wine!

Day 4, 25th October 2018. Hobart to Bruny Island

We had the full day birding on Bruny Island, and it was yet another wonderful day packed full of really exciting birds and other wildlife. Leaving Hobart after breakfast we headed toward the small town of Kettering, where we boarded the car ferry to cross the short distance to Bruny Island. Along the way we found our first **Black-faced Cormorants**, but the sea was very calm, so nothing else of real note was seen (except for a pair of much-enjoyed **Afro-Australian Fur Seals**), but the view was rather nice.

We spent the morning birding around the north of the island, where we targeted a few endemics and other species and in doing so found the rare Forty-spotted Pardalote with ease, which was very pleasing. Other birds we found included Dusky Robin, Flame Robin, Chestnut Teal, Hoary-headed Grebe, Common Bronzewing, Tasmanian Nativehen, White-faced Heron, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Yellow Wattlebird, Dusky Woodswallow, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, and Black-faced Cuckooshrike.

We had a great lunch at the Cheese Factory, and as we sat and ate we got some amazing views of a rather tame **Grey Butcherbird** that gave very close views, allowing a great study of all its features.





We then continued to the south of the island across 'The Neck', stopping to enjoy our first **Pied Oystercatchers**, **Sooty Oystercatchers**, and **Pacific Gulls** of the trip, and along the way we got very lucky with a brief glimpse of the shy **Bassian Thrush**.

Our afternoon was very successful too. We spent it around Adventure Bay (visited by both Captain Cook and Charles Darwin), and despite the cool conditions and increasing wind we found **Hooded Dotterel**, **Swamp Harrier**, **Brown Falcon**, **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, and, best of all, the Critically Endangered Swift Parrot. We did very well with the Swift Parrots, watching about a dozen birds feeding in a flowering eucalyptus tree.



We were happy to find a nesting pair of **Hooded Dotterel**, considered Vulnerable by BirdLife International, while in Tasmania. Given the Australians' love of the beach as a place to relax and exercise it's no wonder that beach-dwelling birds like these are under such pressure.

After checking into our rather novel accommodation (a converted church!), we enjoyed dinner and followed it up with a night walk and drive. This was also very successful and finished the day off in an excellent manner, with us watching several Little Penguins leaving the sea and walking up the beach to their burrows, after watching thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters flying around our heads as a huge full moon rose over the ocean. What a sight! After this we took a brief drive, finding Spotted-tailed Quoll, Common Brushtail Possum, Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby, and Tasmanian (Red-bellied) Pademelon. A Morepork was heard but was on private land, so we couldn't chase after it. But all in all, what a great day with all Tasmanian-endemic birds now firmly 'in the bag' for the trip!

Day 5, 26th October 2018. Bruny Island to Hobart

We awoke to a cool morning and made our way to Adventure Bay for breakfast, although nothing is done quickly on Bruny Island and it took us over an hour to cover the short distance as we kept finding great birds to look at along the way, such as **Grey Goshawk**, **Collared Sparrowhawk**, **Flame Robin**, **Scarlet Robin**, and many more birds we had enjoyed the previous day.



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Following our great breakfast in a beautiful setting we spent some time watching a foraging flock of **Swift Parrots**, getting better views than the previous day due to the wind finally having dropped a bit. Here we also had further good looks at **New Holland Honeyeaters** and **Dusky Woodswallows**. A short drive along the bay revealed **Tasmanian Nativehen** (our best look to date), a flock of gorgeous male **Superb Fairywrens**, stunning views of a family group of **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos**, and a lovely surprise in the form of a rather small (but hugely appreciated) **Short-beaked Echidna** (see picture at the end of the report). As we commenced our journey back to the north of the island we were distracted by a fly-over **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, which led to a U-turn. Suddenly we were watching and listening to both **Fan-tailed Cuckoo** (a pair) and **Pallid Cuckoo** sitting next to each other on overhead powerlines. Even with **Grey Fantail**, **Silvereye**, and a pair of **Scarlet Robins** trying to distract us, all kept an eye on the cuckoos. We also had a low flyover of a huge **White-bellied Sea Eagle** here.



Also Critically Endangered is the **Swift Parrot**. Tasmania is the only place where this species breeds (it winters on the Australian mainland), and we had great looks at a good number of these birds as they fed at the onset of their breeding season.

Finally getting to our target trail we took a brief walk, finding many of the birds we'd enjoyed over the previous days, such as **Shining Bronze Cuckoo**, another **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Australian Golden Whistler**, more close views of **Scarlet Robins**, **Yellow-throated**, **Black-headed**, and **New Holland Honeyeaters**, a flock of **Grey Currawongs**, and some distant **Australian Pipits**. After another enjoyable lunch we spent a while birding around the north, finding a repeat of the birds we had seen there yesterday with the added bonus of a **Blue-winged Parrot** along with **Dusky Robin** and probably our best views of **Green Rosellas** too (and another, much larger, **Short-beaked Echidna**). With that it was time to catch the ferry back to the Tasmanian mainland and drive the short distance to Hobart, where we enjoyed a lovely Thai evening meal to celebrate a wonderful day, but, more importantly, Kays birthday!



Day 6, 27th October 2018. Southeast Tasmania and tour concludes

We awoke to a windy and rather threatening overcast morning in Hobart and prepared for our final few hours of birding of the trip. We headed to a small waterbody near the city and found a nice selection of waterbirds new for the trip. With **Freckled Duck** being probably the most significant find, the high count of thirty birds was very good. Here we also found **Australasian Shoveler**, **Hardhead**, **Chestnut** and **Grey Teals**, **Mallard**, and several other ducks and similar species. **Great Egret** was busy hunting in the shallows, and **Latham's Snipe** was sitting stationary along the edge of the reedbed, displaying fantastic camouflage. **Tasmanian Nativehen** was fairly common, as too was **Australasian Swamphen**. Tim managed to get some incredible footage as he witnessed a swamphen catch and then drown a **Pacific Black Duck** duckling, which it then ate – not something you see every day! The trees and grassland nearby held **Musk Lorikeet**, **Galah**, **Eastern Rosella**, and **European Greenfinch**, all new birds for the trip. The wind was bitingly cold, and so we thought enough was enough and moved along.

Our next, and final, stop of the trip was at a lagoon near the airport. Here we found a flock of **Bartailed Godwits**, and within this flock was a vagrant **Hudsonian Godwit** – a really nice surprise addition to the tour list! Here we also had good views of **Eastern Rosella** and **Little Wattlebird** in the adjacent gardens, along with **Red Knot**, **Pied Oystercatcher**, **Musk Duck**, **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Great Crested Grebe**, and **Hoary-headed Grebe**. It was enjoyable watching these birds out of the increasing wind and a great way to end what had been an excellent and really enjoyable four-and-a-half-days' birding around the beautiful island state of Tasmania.

We headed back to our hotel, packed, and made our way to the airport, where the tour concluded. Luckily we were all about to commence the 16-day East Coast tour, so we were all very excited about the prospect of some more great birding and travel together as we boarded our flight to Melbourne, Victoria.



The Tasmanian-endemic **Yellow-throated Honeyeater** gave us some excellent views throughout *the tour.*



Bird List - Following IOC (8.2)

Birds 'heard only' are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen.

The following notation afters the common names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened. Australia-endemic birds are marked with (Endemic) after the common name, Tasmania-endemic birds are bolded, and Tasmanian-endemic breeding species are marked with * after the common name.

Common Name	Scientific Name		
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)			
Black Swan (Endemic)	Cygnus atratus		
Freckled Duck	Stictonetta naevosa		
Maned Duck (Endemic)	Chenonetta jubata		
Australasian Shoveler	Spatula rhynchotis		
Pacific Black Duck	Anas superciliosa		
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos		
Grey Teal	Anas gracilis		
Chestnut Teal (Endemic)	Anas castanea		
Hardhead	Aythya australis		
Musk Duck (Endemic)	Biziura lobata		
Penguins (Spheniscidae)			
Little Penguin	Eudyptula minor		
Petrels, Shearwaters, Diving Petrels (P	rocellariidae)		
Short-tailed Shearwater	Ardenna tenuirostris		
Grebes (Podicipedidae) Hoary-headed Grebe (Endemic)	Doliocontralug poliocontralug		
Great Crested Grebe	Poliocephalus poliocephalus		
Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus		
Herons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)			
Great Egret	Ardea alba		
White-faced Heron	Egretta novaehollandiae		
Little Egret	Egretta garzetta		
Gannets, Boobies (Sulidae)			
Australasian Gannet	Morus serrator		



Common Name	Scientific Name
Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracid	ae)
Little Pied Cormorant	Microcarbo melanoleucos
Black-faced Cormorant (Endemic)	Phalacrocorax fuscescens
Little Black Cormorant	Phalacrocorax sulcirostris
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Aquila audax
Grey Goshawk	Accipiter novaehollandiae
Brown Goshawk	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>
Collared Sparrowhawk	Accipiter cirrocephalus
Swamp Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	Haliaeetus leucogaster
Rails, Crakes and Coots (Rallidae)	
Australasian Swamphen	Porphyrio melanotus
Tasmanian Nativehen (Endemic)	Tribonyx mortierii
Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra
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Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)	
Pied Oystercatcher	Haematopus longirostris
Sooty Oystercatcher (Endemic)	Haematopus fuliginosus
Plovers (Charadriidae)	
Masked Lapwing	Vanellus miles
Hooded Dotterel (Endemic) - VU	Thinornis cucullatus
Sandpipers, Snipes (Scolopacidae)	
Bar-tailed Godwit - NT	Limosa lapponica
Hudsonian Godwit	Limosa haemastica
Red Knot - NT	Calidris canutus
Latham's Snipe	Gallinago hardwickii
Gulls, Terns and Skimmers (Laridae)
Silver Gull	Chroicocephalus
	novaehollandiae
Pacific Gull (Endemic)	Larus pacificus



Common Name	Scientific Name
Kelp Gull	Larus dominicanus
Greater Crested Tern	Thalasseus bergii
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove	Columba livia
Spotted Dove	Spilopelia chinensis
Common Bronzewing (Endemic)	Phaps chalcoptera
Brush Bronzewing (Endemic)	Phaps elegans
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)	
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx basalis
Shining Bronze Cuckoo	Chrysococcyx lucidus
Pallid Cuckoo	Cacomantis pallidus
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	Cacomantis flabelliformis
Owls (Strigidae)	
Morepork	Ninox novaeseelandiae
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Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Laughing Kookaburra (Endemic)	Dacelo novaeguineae
Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)	
Brown Falcon	Falco berigora
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus
Cockatoos (Cacatuidae)	
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	Calyptorhynchus funereus
(Endemic) Galah (Endemic)	Eolophus roseicapilla
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Cacatua galerita
	Cucultua guler tua
Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)	
Green Rosella (Endemic)	Platycercus caledonicus
Eastern Rosella (Endemic)	Platycercus eximius
Swift Parrot (Endemic)* - CR	Lathamus discolor
	Noonhoung changestoring
Blue-winged Parrot (Endemic)	Neophema chrysostoma
Blue-winged Parrot (Endemic) Orange-bellied Parrot (Endemic)* - CR Musk Lorikeet (Endemic)	Neophema chrysostomaNeophema chrysogasterGlossopsitta concinna



Common Name	Scientific Name
Australasian Wrens (Maluridae)	
Superb Fairywren (Endemic)	Malurus cyaneus
Southern Emu-wren (Endemic)	Stipiturus malachurus
Honeyeaters (Meliphagidae)	
Eastern Spinebill (Endemic)	Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris
New Holland Honeyeater (Endemic)	Phylidonyris novaehollandiae
Strong-billed Honeyeater (Endemic)	Melithreptus validirostris
Black-headed Honeyeater (Endemic)	Melithreptus affinis
Yellow-throated Honeyeater (Endemic)	Nesoptilotis flavicollis
Little Wattlebird (Endemic)	Anthochaera chrysoptera
Yellow Wattlebird (Endemic)	Anthochaera paradoxa
Noisy Miner	Manorina melanocephala
Pardalotes (Pardalotidae)	
Spotted Pardalote (Endemic)	Pardalotus punctatus
Forty-spotted Pardalote (Endemic) - EN	Pardalotus quadragintus
Striated Pardalote (Endemic)	Pardalotus striatus
Australasian Warblers (Acanthizidae)	
Scrubtit (Endemic)	Acanthornis magna
Striated Fieldwren (Endemic)	Calamanthus fuliginosus
Tasmanian Scrubwren (Endemic)	Sericornis humilis
Brown Thornbill (Endemic)	Acanthiza pusilla
Tasmanian Thornbill (Endemic)	Acanthiza ewingii
Yellow-rumped Thornbill (Endemic)	Acanthiza chrysorrhoa
Woodswallows, Butcherbirds and Allie	es (Artamidae)
Dusky Woodswallow (Endemic)	Artamus cyanopterus
Australian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>
Grey Butcherbird (Endemic)	Cracticus torquatus
Black Currawong (Endemic)	Strepera fuliginosa
Grey Currawong (Endemic)	Strepera versicolor
Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae)	



Common Name	Scientific Name
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Coracina novaehollandiae
Whistlers and allies (Pachycephal	lidae)
Olive Whistler (Endemic)	Pachycephala olivacea
Australian Golden Whistler	Pachycephala pectoralis
Grey Shrikethrush	Colluricincla harmonica
Fantails (Rhipiduridae)	
Grey Fantail	Rhipidura albiscapa
Monarchs (Monarchidae)	
Satin Flycatcher	Myiagra cyanoleuca
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
Forest Raven (Endemic)	Corvus tasmanicus
Australasian Robins (Petroicidae)
Dusky Robin (Endemic)	, Melanodryas vittata
Pink Robin (Endemic)	Petroica rodinogaster
Flame Robin (Endemic)	Petroica phoenicea
Scarlet Robin	Petroica boodang
Larks (Alaudidae)	
Eurasian Skylark	Alauda arvensis
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)
Welcome Swallow	, Hirundo neoxena
Tree Martin	Petrochelidon nigricans
Reed Warblers and Allies (Acroc	ephalidae)
Australian Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus australis
White-eyes (Zosteropidae)	
Silvereye	Zosterops lateralis
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Starlings, Rhabdornis (Sturnidae	
Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris



Common Name	Scientific Name
Thrushes (Turdidae)	
Bassian Thrush (Endemic)	Zoothera lunulata
Common Blackbird	Turdus merula
Old World Sparrows, Snowfinche	es (Passeridae)
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
Waxbills, Munias and Allies (Estr	ildidae)
Beautiful Firetail (Endemic)	Stagonopleura bella
Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)	
Australian Pipit	Anthus australis
Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)	
European Greenfinch	Chloris chloris
European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis
Total seen	110
Total heard only	2
Total recorded	112



The humongous Tasmanian Nativehen was a common sight near damp areas.



<u>Mammal List</u>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Eared Seals, Sea Lions, and Fur Seals	s (Otariidae)
Afro-Australian Fur Seal	Arctocephalus pusillus
Dasyurids (Dasyuridae)	
Spotted-tailed Quoll	Dasyurus maculatus
Kangaroos, Wallabies, and Relatives	(Macropodidae)
Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby	Macropus rufogriseus
Tasmanian (Red-bellied) Pademelon	Thylogale billardierii
Brushtail Possums and Cuscuses (Pha	alangeridae)
Common Brushtail Possum	Trichosurus vulpecula
Hares and Rabbits (Leporidae)	
European Rabbit	Oryctolagus cuniculus
Echidnas (Tachyglossidae)	
Short-beaked Echidna	Tachyglossus aculeatus
Total seen	7



Mammalian highlight was the monotreme (egg-laying) Short-beaked Echidna.

