



BIRDING AUSTRALIA: TASMANIA BIRD TOUR – TASMANIAN ENDEMICS AND THE ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT TRIP REPORT

25 – 30 OCTOBER 2023

By Andrew Walker



***Orange-bellied Parrot** – what a stunner! Our trip to Melaleuca was a resounding success, with great looks at multiple parrots. The day spent birding at this beautiful remote site was a definite tour highlight, as were our scenic flights there and back.*

Overview

This short birding tour of Tasmania, Australia started in Hobart on the 25th of October 2023 and ended back there on the 30th of October 2023. The tour focused on Tasmanian endemic birds, as well as many more widespread Australian endemics. During this Tasmanian bird tour, we birded at Waterworks Reserve, Fern Tree Trail, Mount Wellington, Melaleuca, and several sites across Bruny Island.

We recorded 96 bird species on this short Tasmanian birdwatching tour, (two of these were heard only). Some of the tour highlights seen included some of the best birds in Tasmania, including **Musk Duck, Tasmanian Nativehen, Hooded Dotterel, Pacific Gull, Short-tailed Shearwater** (thousands!), **Black-faced Cormorant, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Green Rosella, Swift Parrot, Orange-bellied Parrot, Superb Fairywren, Southern Emu-wren, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Strong-billed Honeyeater, Black-headed Honeyeater, Yellow Wattlebird, Forty-spotted Pardalote, Scrubtit, Striated Fieldwren, Black Currawong, Olive Whistler, Australian Golden Whistler, Satin Flycatcher, Forest Raven, Dusky Robin, Pink Robin, Flame Robin, Scarlet Robin, and Beautiful Firetail.**

In addition to the great birds seen and photographed, we also found a nice selection of other animals, such as **Short-beaked Echidna, Red-necked Wallaby, and Tasmanian Pademelon.** Bird and animal lists for this Tasmanian birding tour follow the report.



Tasmanian Nativehen is usually the first Tasmanian endemic bird seen on arrival in Hobart.

Detailed Report

Day 1, 25th October 2023. Arrival in Hobart

We arrived in Hobart in the late afternoon and had a group welcome meal in the evening, discussing the plans for the coming week of birding in Tasmania, Australia.

Day 2, 26th October 2023. Birding in Hobart

We spent the morning birding at the Waterworks Reserve on the edge of Hobart city. It was a great location to start birding on the island, or the country, despite the poor weather. We found several Tasmanian endemic birds, as well as more widespread Australian endemic species. The Tasmanian endemic birds seen included **Tasmanian Nativehen**, **Yellow Wattlebird**, **Green Rosella**, **Black Currawong**, **Strong-billed Honeyeater**, and **Black-headed Honeyeater**. **Tasmanian Scrubwren** was heard only, keeping well hidden in the undergrowth at this time.

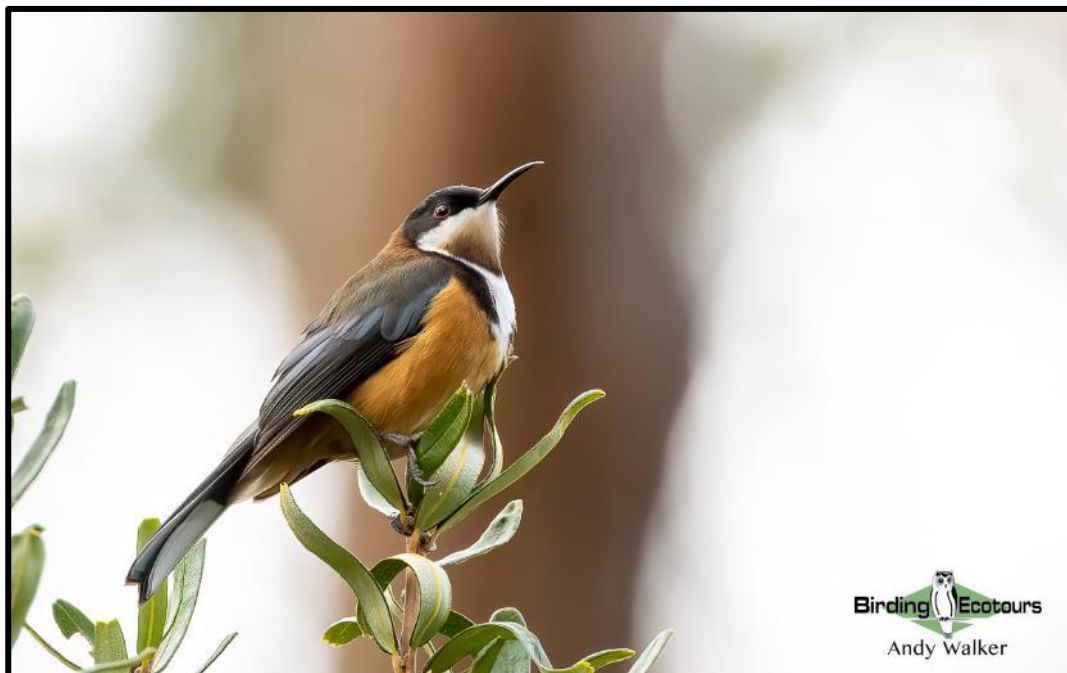


*A pair of **Black-headed Honeyeaters** were busily feeding their recent fledglings.*

Other species seen during the morning, of which there were many, included **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Crescent Honeyeater**, **Eastern Spinebill**, **Australian Golden Whistler**, **Silvereye**, **Grey Currawong**, **Forest Raven**, **Welcome Swallow**, **Tree Martin**, **Brown Thornbill**, **Spotted Pardalote**, **Striated Pardalote**, **Grey Fantail**, **Laughing Kookaburra**, and plenty of very popular **Superb Fairywrens**. Lots of waterbirds were attracted to the reservoirs and here we saw **Masked Lapwing**, **Kelp Gull**, **Eurasian Coot**, **Pacific Black Duck**, **Maned Duck**, and **Little Pied Cormorant**.



*We enjoyed multiple sightings of the gorgeous **Superb Fairywren** during the morning.*



***Eastern Spinebill**, a small and very attractive honeyeater, gave excellent views.*

In the afternoon we visited the Fern Trail on Mount Wellington, it was rather cold and windy but walking up the fern-filled valley, we got a little shelter and found some great birds. Top of the list of quality birds was the **Scrubtit**, a secretive Tasmanian endemic, quickly followed by other

Tasmanian endemics including **Tasmanian Scrubwren** and **Tasmanian Thornbill**. A female **Pink Robin** briefly showed, but there was no sign of the male today. Several other species recorded during the morning birding session were also heard or seen again.



*We enjoyed great views of **Scrubtit** today, a prized Tasmanian endemic.*

Day 3, 27th October 2023. Birding Melaleuca – Orange-bellied Parrot birding trip

What an amazing day! We took a scenic flight from Hobart down to Melaleuca in the far southwest of Tasmania. Our flight to Melaleuca took us out along the south coast as we flew between Tasmania and Bruny Island, enjoying the spectacular scenery along the way. Our journey back to Hobart in the late afternoon cut a more direct route as we passed over and through snow-capped mountain ranges, enjoying more equally spectacular scenic views along the way. After the pretty grim weather, endured over previous days across Tasmania, it was a great relief to enjoy a glorious, calm, and sunny day. The main reason for coming all the way to Melaleuca was to try and see the Critically Endangered (BirdLife International), Tasmanian breeding endemic, **Orange-bellied Parrot**, at the only known site that these tiny migratory parrots breed (with a global population estimated to be less than 30 mature individuals). We were not to be disappointed with the birding at Melaleuca, and had an awesome day. We spent the morning watching multiple **Orange-bellied Parrots** coming to supplementary feeding stations and visiting their nest sites, seeing a large proportion of the global population of this gorgeous but rare parrot.

Once we'd enjoyed seeing the **Orange-bellied Parrots**, we focused our attention on the other birds of the area during the rest of the day, getting great views of **Dusky Robin** and **Yellow-throated Honeyeater** (two new Tasmanian endemics for us, the latter pulling hair from a **Red-necked Wallaby** to use as nesting material!). Other top birds seen included **Green Rosella**, **Beautiful**

Firetail, Olive Whistler, Grey Shrikethrush, Striated Fieldwren, Southern Emu-wren, Brush Bronzewing, New Holland Honeyeater, and a brief (Eastern) Ground Parrot for some.



*Excellent views of **Orange-bellied Parrot** were the order of the day while birding at Melaleuca.*



***Beautiful Firetails** were very conspicuous during our visit to Melaleuca, and several birds were seen collecting nesting material and giving an entertaining courtship display.*

Some of the other birds noted through the day included **Swamp Harrier**, **White-bellied Sea Eagle**, **Great Cormorant**, **Little Pied Cormorant**, **Little Black Cormorant**, **Black Swan**, and the ever-popular **Superb Fairywren**.



*We enjoyed absolutely sensational views of a pair of **Southern Emu-wrens**, this is the male.*

On arrival back in Hobart we noted **Tasmanian Nativehen**, **Australasian Swamphen**, **Masked Lapwing**, **Kelp Gull**, **Silver Gull**, **Great Egret**, **Little Wattlebird**, **Noisy Miner**, **Australian Magpie**, **Galah**, **Eastern Rosella**, **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, and **European Goldfinch**.

Day 4, 28th October 2023. Birding Bruny Island

We left Hobart after breakfast, drove the short distance to Kettering harbor, seeing **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo** and several other species along the way, and then boarded the ferry for the short journey to Bruny Island. While on the ferry we saw our first **Black-faced Cormorant** and several **Silver Gulls**.

We arrived on North Bruny Island and commenced our birding. The wind had picked up and it was rather cool, but we found plenty of exciting species as soon as we got out of the vehicle, such as **Blue-winged Parrot**, **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, **Black-faced Cuckooshrike**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Dusky Robin**, and **Yellow-rumped Thornbill**. As we made our way to a patch of woodland, we were soon watching some stunning, and now Critically Endangered (BirdLife International) **Swift Parrots** (a Tasmanian breeding endemic). They were rather flighty at first, but eventually we managed to get some great views. Next up was a pair of the Endangered (BirdLife International) **Forty-spotted Pardalotes**, a highly localized and declining Tasmanian endemic. They came in and showed nicely for everyone, but got chased around variously by

Striated Pardalote, Spotted Pardalote, Black-headed Honeyeater, and New Holland Honeyeater, the latter also chasing off a gorgeous male **Satin Flycatcher** that made a brief appearance. **Swamp Harrier, Brown Falcon, and White-bellied Sea Eagle** were overhead.



*Following on from our excellent views of **Orange-bellied Parrot** on the previous day, we got similarly great views of the Critically Endangered ([BirdLife International](#)) **Swift Parrot** today. Both species of these declining and rare parrots are Tasmanian breeding endemics.*

As the tide in a nearby bay receded, we noted **Pied Oystercatcher, White-faced Heron**, and most spectacular of all, an adult **Pacific Gull** (which is saying a lot for a gull!). We then moved across to South Bruny Island via “The Neck”, spotting **Chestnut Teal** and **Sooty Oystercatcher** along the way.

After lunch at Adventure Bay, we walked along the beach, finding a pair of nesting and Vulnerable ([BirdLife International](#)) **Hooded Dotterels**. We also saw more **Kelp Gulls, Pacific Gulls, Silver Gulls**, and **Black-faced Cormorants**, with several **Greater Crested Terns** offshore. Flowering trees along the coast held **Yellow Wattlebird** and more **Swift Parrots**. We then drove across South Bruny Island, making a stop in some tall Mountain Ash eucalyptus forest, where we found our main target, **Strong-billed Honeyeater**, gaining much better and more prolonged views than we’d had earlier in the tour. As we checked into our quaint accommodation for the night, we found **Scarlet Robin, Australian Pipit, Beautiful Firetail**, and a couple of **Pallid Cuckoos**.

After dinner we went back to “The Neck”, where we watched an impressive moonrise and the incredible sight of hundreds of **Short-tailed Shearwaters** coming back to their nesting burrows, wheeling around right above our heads! Unfortunately, not long after the sun had set, a storm rolled in and we had even stronger wind and persistent heavy rain, which curtailed our evening activities, and resulted in the loss of power across parts of the island, which was a little unfortunate for some!



*After brief views earlier in the tour, it was good to get better views of **Strong-billed Honeyeater**.*

Day 5, 29th October 2023. Birding Bruny Island

We had a final day birding on beautiful Bruny Island and thankfully the storm that had caused a bit of chaos overnight had departed, and we were left with a dry and relatively mild day. **Pallid Cuckoo**, **Yellow-throated Honeyeater**, **Dusky Robin**, **Wedge-tailed Eagle**, **Pied Oystercatcher**, and **Greater Crested Terns** were all noted around our accommodations on South Bruny Island.

We moved across to Adventure Bay for our tasty breakfast and then birded in some nearby beautiful and ancient forest, noting **Tasmanian Pademelon** and **Red-necked Wallaby** along the way. Once inside the forest we found our main target, the simply spectacular **Pink Robin**. We had a pair of birds hanging around us for a while and giving good views. With these birds “in the bag” we started our journey back to North Bruny Island; however, we made a brief stop which turned into a longer stop, and we enjoyed watching pairs of both **Flame Robin** and **Scarlet Robin**, to go with the **Pink Robin** and **Dusky Robin** seen earlier in the day. **Dusky Robin** aside, it was a colorful morning! At the robin stop we also saw **Striated Pardalote** (probably our best views of the tour), a male **Australian Golden Whistler**, and a couple of small flocks of **Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos**.

We crossed “The Neck” again, back onto North Bruny Island, and walked a track down to a wetland. The walk was relatively quiet, it was getting to the hot part of the day, but we found **White-fronted Chat**, **Australian Pipit**, **Eurasian Skylark**, **Silvereye**, **New Holland Honeyeater**, **Grey Shrike-thrush**, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Black-faced Cuckooshrike**, and **Grey Fantail**. At the lake we had a surprise in the form of a **Pied Stilt**, an uncommon species in this part of Australia, but more expected were the numerous **Black Swans**. A few **Musk Ducks** were also a highlight. Around the edge of the lake, in some recently burnt areas, were over a dozen of

the attractive **Blue-winged Parrots**, which gave close views. A **Short-beaked Echidna** sighting here proved very popular. After a late and enjoyable lunch, we caught the ferry off Bruny Island, noting **White-bellied Sea Eagle** and **Black-faced Cormorant**, we then drove back to Hobart.



*The gorgeous **Pink Robin** (this is the male) showed nicely.*



*We had excellent views of many **Blue-winged Parrots** while birding on Bruny Island.*

Day 6, 30th October 2023. Departure from Hobart

The tour ended with our earlier-than-originally-planned departure from Hobart due to airline flight schedule changes. It had been an enjoyable tour of a beautiful part of Australia, seeing plenty of Tasmanian endemic birds, lots of Australian endemic birds, and with loads of great photo opportunities of many species, including two of the rarest parrots in the world.



*The rather brutish **Pacific Gull** was a popular bird with everyone.*

Bird List – Following IOC (13.2)

Birds ‘heard only’ are marked with (H) after the common name, all other species were seen. The following notation after species names is used to show conservation status following BirdLife International: CR = Critically Endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Ducks, Geese, Swans (Anatidae)	
Black Swan	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>
Maned Duck	<i>Chenonetta jubata</i>
Pacific Black Duck	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>
Grey Teal	<i>Anas gracilis</i>
Chestnut Teal	<i>Anas castanea</i>
Musk Duck	<i>Biziura lobata</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Cuckoos (Cuculidae)	
Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx basalis</i>
Shining Bronze Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx lucidus</i>
Pallid Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis pallidus</i>
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis flabelliformis</i>
Pigeons, Doves (Columbidae)	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Common Bronzewing	<i>Phaps chalcoptera</i>
Brush Bronzewing	<i>Phaps elegans</i>
Rails, Crakes & Coots (Rallidae)	
Tasmanian Nativehen	<i>Tribonyx mortierii</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Australasian Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio melanotus</i>
Oystercatchers (Haematopodidae)	
Pied Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>
Sooty Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>
Stilts, Avocets (Recurvirostridae)	
Pied Stilt	<i>Himantopus leucocephalus</i>
Plovers (Charadriidae)	
Masked Lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>
Hooded Dotterel - VU	<i>Thinornis cucullatus</i>
Gulls, Terns, Skimmers (Laridae)	
Silver Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae</i>
Pacific Gull	<i>Larus pacificus</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Greater Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Petrels, Shearwaters, Diving Petrels (Procellariidae)	
Short-tailed Shearwater	<i>Ardenna tenuirostris</i>
Gannets, Boobies (Sulidae)	
Australasian Gannet	<i>Morus serrator</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Cormorants, Shags (Phalacrocoracidae)	
Little Pied Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>
Black-faced Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscescens</i>
Little Black Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Hérons, Bitterns (Ardeidae)	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
White-faced Heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>
Kites, Hawks, Eagles (Accipitridae)	
Wedge-tailed Eagle	<i>Aquila audax</i>
Brown Goshawk	<i>Accipiter fasciatus</i>
Swamp Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>
Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)	
Laughing Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i>
Caracaras, Falcons (Falconidae)	
Brown Falcon	<i>Falco berigora</i>
Cockatoos (Cacatuidae)	
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	<i>Zanda funerea</i>
Galah	<i>Eolophus roseicapilla</i>
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>
Old World Parrots (Psittaculidae)	
Green Rosella	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>
Eastern Rosella	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>
Swift Parrot - CR	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>
Ground Parrot	<i>Pezoporus wallicus</i>
Blue-winged Parrot - VU	<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>
Orange-bellied Parrot - CR	<i>Neophema chrysogaster</i>
Musk Lorikeet	<i>Glossopsitta concinna</i>
Australasian Wrens (Maluridae)	
Superb Fairywren	<i>Malurus cyaneus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Southern Emu-wren	<i>Stipiturus malachurus</i>
Honeyeaters (Meliphagidae)	
Eastern Spinebill	<i>Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris</i>
White-fronted Chat	<i>Epthianura albifrons</i>
Crescent Honeyeater	<i>Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus</i>
New Holland Honeyeater	<i>Phylidonyris novaehollandiae</i>
Yellow-throated Honeyeater	<i>Nesoptilotis flavicollis</i>
Strong-billed Honeyeater - VU	<i>Melithreptus validirostris</i>
Black-headed Honeyeater	<i>Melithreptus affinis</i>
Little Wattlebird	<i>Anthochaera chrysoptera</i>
Yellow Wattlebird	<i>Anthochaera paradoxa</i>
Noisy Miner	<i>Manorina melanocephala</i>
Pardalotes (Pardalotidae)	
Spotted Pardalote	<i>Pardalotus punctatus</i>
Forty-spotted Pardalote - EN	<i>Pardalotus quadragintus</i>
Striated Pardalote	<i>Pardalotus striatus</i>
Australasian Warblers (Acanthizidae)	
Scrubtit	<i>Acanthornis magna</i>
Striated Fieldwren	<i>Calamanthus fuliginosus</i>
Tasmanian Scrubwren	<i>Sericornis humilis</i>
Brown Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza pusilla</i>
Tasmanian Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza ewingii</i>
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	<i>Acanthiza chrysorrhoa</i>
Woodswallows, Butcherbirds & Allies (Artamidae)	
Dusky Woodswallow	<i>Artamus cyanopterus</i>
Australian Magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>
Black Currawong	<i>Strepera fuliginosa</i>
Grey Currawong	<i>Strepera versicolor</i>
Cuckooshrikes (Campephagidae)	
Black-faced Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina novaehollandiae</i>
Whistlers & Allies (Pachycephalidae)	
Olive Whistler	<i>Pachycephala olivacea</i>
Australian Golden Whistler	<i>Pachycephala pectoralis</i>
Grey Shrikethrush	<i>Colluricincla harmonica</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Fantails (Rhipiduridae)	
Grey Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>
Monarchs (Monarchidae)	
Satin Flycatcher	<i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
Crows, Jays (Corvidae)	
Forest Raven	<i>Corvus tasmanicus</i>
Australasian Robins (Petroicidae)	
Dusky Robin - VU	<i>Melanodryas vittata</i>
Pink Robin	<i>Petroica rodinogaster</i>
Flame Robin	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i>
Scarlet Robin	<i>Petroica boodang</i>
Larks (Alaudidae)	
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Swallows, Martins (Hirundinidae)	
Welcome Swallow	<i>Hirundo neoxena</i>
Tree Martin	<i>Petrochelidon nigricans</i>
White-eyes (Zosteropidae)	
Silvereye	<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>
Starlings, Rhabdornises (Sturnidae)	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Thrushes (Turdidae)	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches (Passeridae)	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Waxbills, Munias & Allies (Estrildidae)	
Beautiful Firetail	<i>Stagonopleura bella</i>
Wagtails, Pipits (Motacillidae)	
Australian Pipit	<i>Anthus australis</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Finches, Euphonias (Fringillidae)	
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>

Total seen	94
Total heard only	2
Total recorded	96

Mammal List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Kangaroos, Wallabies, and Allies (Macropodidae)	
Red-necked Wallaby	<i>Notamacropus rufogriseus</i>
Tasmanian Pademelon	<i>Thylogale billardierii</i>
Echidnas (Tachyglossidae)	
Short-beaked Echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>
Hares and Rabbits (Leporidae)	
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>

Total	5
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Reptile List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Skinks (Scincidae)	
Tasmanian Tree Skink	<i>Carinascincus pretiosus</i>

Total	1
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