

TRIP REPORT
NORFOLK ISLAND
10TH TO 13TH MARCH 2021

With: Family
Guides: None



Norfolk Island Parakeet

OVERVIEW

With continuing international travel restrictions in Australia, we decided to take a short trip to Norfolk Island to pick up the four **endemic species** there and have a short holiday. There are direct flights most days from Sydney, taking around two and a half hours to get to the Island. Although you don't need passports if you are an Australian citizen, most people use them as a form of ID as you have to travel through the International Terminal at Sydney Airport. We stayed in a charming cottage, Tintoela, that came with a basic hire car.

The Island is tiny, 6 or 7km N to S and E to W with a National Park covering the hilly area in the N, preserving the remaining native vegetation on the Island. This comprises fairly dense subtropical rainforest interspersed with the eponymous Norfolk Island Pine. The excellent Botanical Gardens also preserves this natural habitat.

The rest of the Island is largely cleared and settled with small dairy/beef farms and the township of Burnt Pine. Boat access to the Island is difficult with small concrete jetties at Kingston in the S and Cascade in the N. Supply ships turn up every month or so and moor offshore and their cargo is brought in by long boats. As a consequence, supplies on the Island are limited. We ate out most of the time,

Bounty Grill and Hilli were good. Overall, I'd recommend the Island for a short break, very peaceful and relaxing.

Neither "harbour" is protected so the boats on the Island are small and have to be lifted in and out of the water. I didn't try to get to Phillip Island, an important seabird nesting site, but I imagine it wouldn't be straightforward although there are fishing charter operators on the Island. The weather was good when we were there, but it could easily limit the short passage.

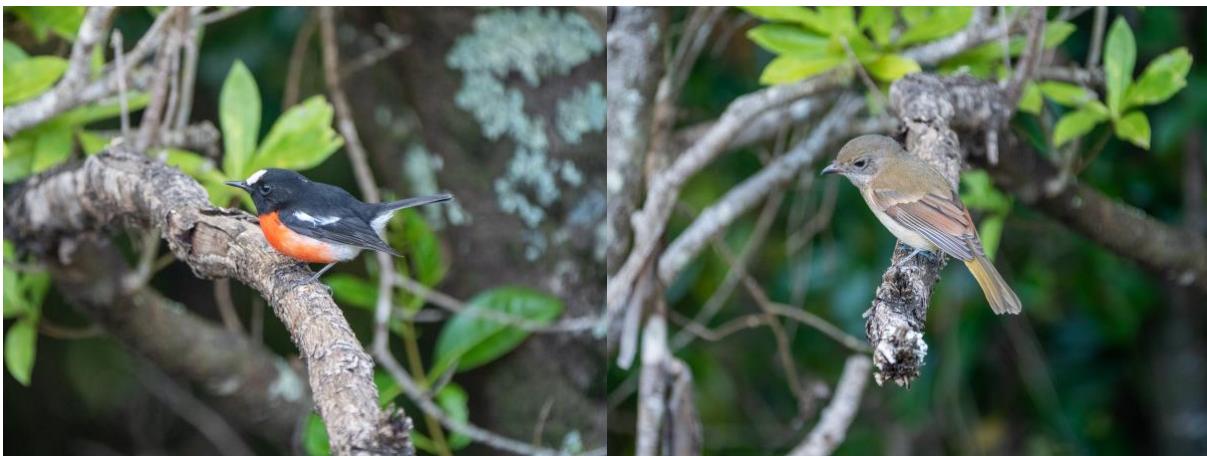
THE ENDEMIC BIRDS

The four **endemic species** are fairly common in the native bush and can all be found at several locations. I drove up to the Palm Glen car park at the edge of the National Park around 4pm on the day we arrived and saw all four within an hour: **Norfolk Island Gerygone; Norfolk Robin; Slender-billed White-eye and Norfolk Island Parakeet.**



Norfolk Island Gerygone and Slender-billed White-eye

The above two are very widespread and hard to miss, the Robin is a little less prolific and the Parakeet seems easier later in the afternoon and common in the Botanic Gardens. The Parakeet call is very distinctive, which helps to locate it.



Norfolk Robin and Golden Whistler (xanthoprocta)

There are also a number of endemic subspecies on Norfolk Island, the following of which are also widespread and were seen at palm Glen and elsewhere in the National Park: *Grey Fantail (pelzelni)*; and *Golden Whistler (xanthoprocta)*. The *Sacred Kingfisher (norfolkiensis)* is present throughout the Island but not really in the rainforest.

The remaining endemic ssp is really not a “pure” endemic. The *Morepork (undulata x novaeseelandiae)*, is a cross between the one remaining female on the Island in the mid-eighties and 2 male Moreporks introduced from NZ. They have now successfully bred and there are around 50 on the Island. Nevertheless, I spent a fair amount of time trying to see one. I failed on the first two nights: the first spent around the Palm Glen carpark where one was calling from close by but remained elusive; on the second a couple were calling from distance in the National Park but too far to chase; on



Morepork (undulata x novaeseelandiae)

the third and last night I was a bit more determined. I stopped on the parks access road 200m below the Mount Pitt summit and walked into the forest towards a calling owl. I finally found it tucked into the trunk and branch of a Norfolk Pine in the mid storey, where it remained, oblivious to me. I even went back to the car and got my camera, to find it obligingly calling from the same spot.

THE OTHER BIRDS

Apart from the sea, water and shore birds, most of the rest of the Norfolk Island avifauna is introduced. The only other notable forest bird I saw was a Shining Bronze-Cuckoo, *ssp (lucidus)* on its migratory path N from NZ.

We walked the track to Bird Rock, which is pretty steep, as are a lot of the National Park walks to the coast, but it passes through good forest and then opens up to the sea. The sea birds, however, are just as viewable at Captain Cook Lookout, which is accessible by car. White Terns, Red-Tailed Tropicbirds, Masked Boobys and Black Noddys were widespread, two Black-winged Petrels were a bonus below the Captain Cook Lookout where some still breed.

There were a few shorebirds around Kingston (worth a look as the very well-preserved early settlement on Norfolk Island and also the beautiful beach at Emily Bay).

THE TRIP LIST

California Quail	12-Mar-21	Anson Bay Reserve
Rock Dove	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
Pacific Emerald Dove	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock Track
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock Track
Australasian Swamphen	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock Track
Pacific Golden-Plover	13-Mar-21	Emily Bay
Double-banded Plover	13-Mar-21	Emily Bay
Eastern Curlew	13-Mar-21	Emily Bay
Ruddy Turnstone	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
Black Noddy	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
White Tern	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
Red-tailed Tropicbird	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
Black-winged Petrel	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Captain Cook Memorial
Masked Booby	11-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock
Brown Booby	13-Mar-21	Emily Bay
White-faced Heron	12-Mar-21	Anson Bay Reserve
<i>Morepork</i>	12-Mar-21	<i>Norfolk Island National Park--Mount Pitt</i>
<i>Sacred Kingfisher</i>	11-Mar-21	<i>Norfolk Island National Park--Bird Rock</i>
Nankeen Kestrel	12-Mar-21	Anson Bay Reserve
Norfolk Island Parakeet	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Crimson Rosella	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Norfolk Island Gerygone	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
<i>Golden Whistler</i>	10-Mar-21	<i>Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area</i>
<i>Grey Fantail</i>	10-Mar-21	<i>Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area</i>
Norfolk Robin	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Welcome Swallow	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Slender-billed White-eye	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Silvereye	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Common Starling	10-Mar-21	Norfolk Island National Park--Palm Glen car park and picnic area
Song Thrush	12-Mar-21	Anson Bay Reserve
Common Blackbird	13-Mar-21	Emily Bay
House Sparrow	12-Mar-21	Anson Bay Reserve