

## Central Australia and Queensland September-October 2023

Sarah and I had been to Australia several times and had visited most parts apart from the centre. So we planned a holiday that started at the Ayers Rock/Uluru area and finished with a longer stay in north Queensland, after a trip on the Ghan Train to Darwin. We also built in a couple of weeks in Southeast Asia on the way back, covered in a separate trip report (Laos and Thailand).

Australia is a big country and the range of many birds is fairly restricted, so there were many gaps in my species list, even for the parts I'd visited before. New life birds are written in **bold**. Like all our trips this was a general interest holiday with some birding; we visited some well-known sites but a lot of my birding was done in the early mornings or late afternoons near our accommodation, which was always near good bird habitat. As usual this worked out very well and some of my best memories are of great birds, often new to me, within a few minutes' walk.

### Monday 25 September – Ayers Rock Resort

We arrived at our hotel (Desert Gardens, part of the Ayers Rock Resort) mid-afternoon after a long journey from Dorset, which we'd left three days before. Our flights with Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines had taken us via Frankfurt, Singapore and Sydney to the little airport at Ayers Rock, where we picked up our hire car – a Mitsubishi Outlander booked with Thrifty via Red Centre Northern Territory. The hotel grounds contained a variety of trees and shrubs, mostly labelled, and here we saw our first desert specialist birds: Yellow-throated Miners, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Magpie-larks, Crested Pigeons and Little Corellas were abundant, and a bit of searching in the grounds and the nearby Pioneer Lookout also produced Common Bronzewing, Purple-backed Fairy-wren and **Grey-headed Honeyeater**.



Common Bronzewing and Crested Pigeon, Desert Gardens Hotel, Ayers Rock Resort

### Tuesday 26 September – Uluru

We were up early to see Uluru at sunrise. It was great to see the desert around the famous rock adorned with flowering plants, especially the Honey Grevillea that was abundant. Needless to say, there were a few birds to see too, especially close to the base of Uluru. We were too early for a coffee at the Cultural Centre, but did see a **Crested Bellbird** singing there. The Lungkata Walk around the southwest base of Uluru was particularly busy with birds – and with people too – including Little Woodswallows, more Grey-headed Honeyeaters, Singing Honeyeaters, Zebra Finches (our first of many!) and a **Rufous Songlark**. This face of Uluru is covered in tiny birds' nests which we attributed to the numerous Fairy Martins that buzzed overhead.

Back at Desert Gardens Hotel a **Black-breasted Buzzard** soared overhead, seen from our room. I was starting to get what I thought was a cold, so we largely stayed in our room out of the heat.



Honey Grevillea, Sunset Viewing Area, Uluru



Little Corella, Desert Gardens Hotel, Ayers Rock resort

After a rest we went back to Uluru to watch the other side at sunset. Various woodswallows were hawking insects above the bush but were just too distant to put a name to. Flies had been a minor irritant during the day but became a real nuisance here so we had to put on our fly hats to avoid them going in our mouths, ears and eyes.

### **Wednesday 27 September – Kata Tjuta**

Another early start to get to Kata Tjuta ('The Olgas') before it got hot. It was surprisingly cold and I was feeling decidedly groggy, so was quite relieved when Sarah said she'd seen enough and we could go back to the hotel. She had to take over the driving on the way back – I couldn't stay awake. But we did see a couple of flocks of **Budgerigars** and a Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike from the car, and a **Black Honeyeater** in bushes as we descended from the Valley of the Winds.

I didn't see anything new in a walk round the Ayers Rock Resort in the afternoon, nor at the sunset viewing area in the evening.

### **Thursday 28 September – drive to Erildunda**

Sarah was starting to feel unwell and it was only when she asked me to smell the Olbas Oil she was using to clear congestion (normally smells strongly of eucalyptus, cloves, juniper etc.) - and neither of us could smell anything – that the penny dropped. We'd both managed to catch Covid after 3.5 years without, and shortly after receiving our over-65 vaccine boosters! Fortunately we weren't too badly afflicted and remained determined to do the essentials while in this unique area we almost certainly wouldn't come back to.

Much of the day was spent on a drive to Erildunda, en route to Alice Springs. The drive was an enjoyable snapshot of the outback. Our first stop was at Curtin Springs for a coffee and a toilet break. Flies were bad here too, but the local Galahs, Magpie-larks and Little Crows were good to see. A flock of about 80 Budgerigars flew across the road near here.

We checked into the Erldunda Roadhouse with plenty of time to walk around the grounds. Some rainwater puddles were an attraction for the local Galahs, Little Crows and Magpie-larks and the bottlebrush bushes had Yellow-throated Miners and three Port Lincoln Ringnecks. We had an excellent meal in the roadhouse's restaurant/bar.

### Friday 29 September – drive to Ilparpa (near Alice Springs)

Early morning there were more birds around the roadhouse grounds, including an Australian Raven and 10 **Pink Cockatoos** as well as 50-60 Galahs.



Pink Cockatoos and Magpie-lark, Erldunda Roadhouse

North from Erldunda we were on the Stuart Highway and, perhaps surprisingly, we saw more birds from the car here than the previous day, including at least two Black-breasted Kites, at least one Whistling Kite (quite similar to my eye at distance so several birds had to go unidentified), two Brown Falcons and a Nankeen Kestrel. A coffee-and-loo stop at Stuarts Well provided more of the same species we'd seen elsewhere around habitation.



Whistling Kite (left) and Black-breasted Buzzard (right), Stuart Highway S of Alice Springs

Our self-catering accommodation at Ilparpa was within the grounds of a keen birdwatcher and his family, and I soon notched up a good list of dry country specialities here. A pair of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes spent most of the waking hours guzzling the fruit of a large mulberry tree outside the house; occasional Port Lincoln Parrots zoomed past; a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles displayed above the nearby escarpment; a Grey-Shrike-thrush hid in plain sight, blending with a mulga tree; and a Rainbow Bee-

eater chirruped overhead. Best though was an odd-looking bird perched on a telegraph wire at the gate: a **Western Bowerbird** – not behaving like we'd expect of a bowerbird!



Un-bowerbird-like Western Bowerbird and Grey Shrike-thrush, Ilparpa Retreat

### Saturday 30 September – Ilparpa and Alice Springs

A wonderful morning walk around the grounds and adjacent roads. First bird I saw was a **Red-backed Kingfisher** on a wire a little way down the road. **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters** were quite abundant and quickly became a favourite bird, with their weird looks and distinctive musical song. A family party of White-browed Babblers was near the house and another day I also saw **Grey-crowned Babblers** nearby. Zebra Finches, Black-faced Woodswallows, White-plumed Honeyeaters and Fairy Martins were always around too.

Olive Pink Botanic Garden in Alice Springs was rather quiet for birds, although we did see our first Spotted Doves here. However, there were two different marsupial species allowing quite close approach – presumed to be wild animals that were used to the human visitors; we thought two with black feet were Wallaroos (Euros) but we weren't sure about another two, which appeared to have darker fur and paler feet (although photos don't confirm this). We later learned that Black-footed Rock-wallabies can be seen on Annie Meier Hill but we didn't attempt the climb.



Wallaroo (left) and unidentified wallaby (right), Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Alice Springs

We pressed on to Alice Springs Telegraph Station before it got too hot. A great place for walks, centred around the historic telegraph station, with a variety of habitats. A female Black honeyeater was the best spot, but we also enjoyed good views there of Port Lincoln Parrots, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Black-faced Woodswallows.

In the afternoon I left Sarah to enjoy the air conditioning while I struggled round the clay pans (now dry) near our accommodation, not seeing much besides a Black Kite overhead and a Singing Honeyeater.



Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater and Rainbow Bee-eater, Ilparpa Retreat

### **Sunday 1 October – Ilparpa and Alice Springs**

A quiet day – it was oppressively hot (40 degrees C). We went round the Telegraph Station in the morning, learning about its establishment and occupation, and the relationship between the station and local indigenous people – a sad story that went from friendship and trust to forced separation of the resulting mixed-race children from their mothers in the name of ‘education’. When it cooled down a bit I went to the nearby Ilparpa Sewage Ponds to peer through the perimeter fence. On the advice of people I met here, I joined the Facebook Group BirdLife Central Australia Group. This was a mixed blessing because in the remaining time I couldn’t go through the on-line certification and permit issue, yet it allowed me (and still does!) to see mouth-watering photos of birds I’d love to see but couldn’t!

However, there was plenty of interest close to the entrance, including at least 12 Whiskered Terns, about 30 Red-necked Avocets, 6+ Pied Stilts, an Australasian Grebe with chicks, Grey Teal, Australian Wood Ducks, Masked Lapwings etc.

### **Monday 2 October – Ellery Creek, Standley’s Chasm and Simpson’s Gap**

We were both feeling better now and although the forecast was still hot, we set off for the West MacDonnell ranges. Our first stop was at Ellery Creek, where we started with the Dolomite Walk in the hope of seeing some of the spinifex specialities. We had limited success, with singles of Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Grey Shrike-thrush, Pink Cockatoo and **Spinifexbird**. But everything was extremely reluctant to come out and a glimpse of a skulking dark bird along the trail that could have been a Dusky Grasswren left me feeling rather frustrated. Back at the car park we found the Big Hole busy with swimmers and a drone enthusiast, but despite that the water held some Grey Teal and Australasian Grebes.

Back eastwards to Standley's Chasm where we gratefully dived into the café at the start of the trail for some ice cold drinks and a bite to eat. Too hot, and too full of people, to attempt the walk to the Chasm so we carried on to Simpson's Gap, where it was hotter than ever and no bird with any sense would show itself.



Dry riverbed, Ellery Creek



Grey Shrike-thrush, Standley's Chasm café. The object bottom right is Sarah's Feast bar.

### Tuesday 3 October – Alice Springs Desert Park

Not wishing to make the same mistake, we went to the excellent Desert Park where there was more opportunity to avoid the worst sun and heat. The birds displayed in the aviaries were all local to the area and gave a great opportunity to study them, although neither of us are very fond of seeing caged birds and animals. Apart from the collections, there is great habitat for birds, butterflies and lizards. Grey-crowned and White-browed Babblers, Brown and Singing Honeyeaters, Splendid Fairy-wrens and a pair of **Masked Woodswallows** were all conspicuous, and in the distance we also saw a couple of Wedge-tailed Eagles and one or two Black Kites.



Splendid Fairy-wren and Singing Honeyeater, Alice Springs Desert Park

I went back in the late afternoon, when nearly everyone had gone, and was treated to a fine view of a Collared Sparrowhawk.

### Wednesday 4 October – West MacDonnell Ranges

A forecast drop in temperature to a max in the low 30s meant we were ready to go back to the West MacDonnell ranges. En route from Alice Springs we saw Black, Whistling and Black-winged Kites and a Nankeen Kestrel. Our first destination was the westernmost one – Ormiston Gorge. We walked into the gorge and then up the west side to the Ghost Gum lookout, where the view is terrific. Birds were a bit thin on the ground but included a singing Rufous Whistler, a Western Bowerbird, and a few Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes and Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters.



Ormiston Gorge



Budgerigars, Ellery Creek Big Hole

On to Ellery Creek, where we managed to beat the crowds this time. We were the only people at the Big Hole when we arrived and it was really lively. A flock of about 50 Budgerigars zoomed around the lake and trees, and a mixed flock of Zebra Finches and **Painted Finches** came to the water near us to drink, followed by some **Diamond Doves**. A White-necked Heron stalked around on the far side.



Painted and Zebra Finches (left) and Diamond Doves (right), Ellery Creek Big Hole

Next stop as we headed back towards Alice was Standley's Chasm, where the temperature now was perfect for a sunny walk up the creek. The sounds of singing Grey-necked and White-plumed Honeyeaters accompanied us all the way, and there were several of the endemic MacDonnell Ranges Cycads – strange to see a kind of plant I associate with the wet tropics growing in this arid area.



White-plumed Honeyeater, Standley's Chasm

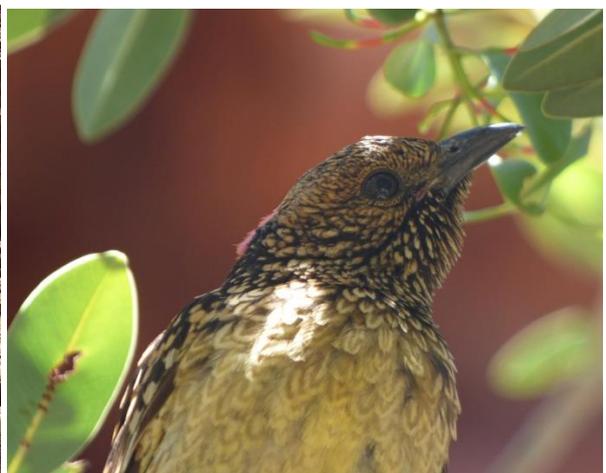


Standley's Chasm

Our final stop on the way back to Alice Springs was Simpson's Gap. This time it wasn't too hot and we enjoyed a pleasant walk to the pool at the Gap. Noises emerging from nearby scrub turned out to be two Western Bowerbirds, so engrossed either in fighting or getting friendly that they completely ignored me.



Simpson's Gap



Western Bowerbird, Simpson's Gap

#### **Thursday 5 October – Ilparpa, Alice Springs and Ghan Train**

A quiet last day near our accommodation. We had a couple of walks, made another visit to the Sewage Works, returned our hire car and we had an interesting walk around Alice Springs before boarding the Ghan Train. The nation was gearing up for the Indigenous Voice Referendum to be held the following week. We spoke to a few 'yes' campaigners and learned about the politics surrounding this issue. On our travels we saw a multitude of yes posters and only one no, and yet the people we chatted to were fairly certain the outcome would be negative.

Our northbound train left Alice Springs in the late afternoon and we settled into our cabin and enjoyed a meal.

## Friday 6 October – Ghan Train, Katharine, Nitmiluk and Darwin

We enjoyed our train journey, and appreciated the super-friendly and efficient crew. However, we both felt the Ghan Train seemed to be offering a cruise-like experience aimed at people wanting to have a good time with friends rather than wildlife-watching.

The train stopped at Katharine and we boarded one of the waiting coaches to Nitmiluk Gorge for our walk and boat tour in Nitmiluk Gorge. From the coach we saw some Black Kites and Pied Stilts and noticed how different the town was from the surrounding dry countryside, with tropical trees and plants in abundance. In the Gorge we noticed two White-bellied Sea-eagles in a tree across the water. From the boat in the first section of the gorge we saw another Pied Stilt and a White-faced Heron, and several Dollarbirds in the tops of waterside trees. The walk to the next section of the gorge was only about 300 metres and was organized with regimental efficiency to ensure our boat-load stayed together; not much chance to look at the birds, plants and butterflies. To be fair, our boat guide gave an interesting commentary about the gorge, its history, and the local people in the area, but I was frustrated that although she clearly knew about wildlife she didn't point it out until the very end. I know other people would have been interested to see the Sea-eagles, which she mentioned only after they had gone.

Then a group march to the Nitmiluk Centre for lunch – a massive place, big enough to accommodate the entire train of several hundred people. The food and drink was excellent but for some reason its total duration was something approaching four hours, during which we were sitting in a shaded terrace where the temperature was again approaching 40 degrees. Whinging poms aren't used to that sort of heat! BUT the saving grace was that there were at least two Great Bowerbirds kicking around outside, and even in the roof beams, trying to escape the heat, along with a Blue-winged Kookaburra!



Great Bowerbird and Blue-winged Kookaburra, Nitmiluk Centre, Katharine

## Saturday 7 October – Darwin

The Ramada Zen Hotel in Darwin was a short walk from the stop where the Ghan train coach dropped us. We got up early to make the most of the early morning cool, and walked to the Botanic Gardens. Along the way we picked up many new species for the trip including many Torresian Imperial Pigeons, Magpie Gees and Red-collared Lorikeets and small numbers of Helmeted Friarbirds, Blue-faced Honeyeaters and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes. In the gardens themselves we added Orange-footed

Shelduck, Radjah Shelduck, Dusky and White-gaped Honeyeaters, **White-winged Triller**, and a Lemon-bellied Flycatcher feeding young.



Radjah Shelduck, Darwin Botanic Gardens



Crested Tern, Stokes Hill Wharf, Darwin

From our hotel balcony we saw Brahminy Kites and distant Whimbrels, Silver Gulls and a Striated Heron. We walked to Stokes Hill Wharf for lunch on the pier, where a Crested Tern posed nicely for us. When it had cooled down a bit I went for an afternoon walk around the hotel and added Figbirds, Crimson Finches, Double-barred Finches and a Little Friarbird to the list.



Blue-faced Honeyeater, Darwin (juvenile with green face)



Red-collared Lorikeet, Darwin

### **Sunday 8 October – Cairns, Lake Barrine and Yungaburra**

Our Airnorth flight to Cairns stopped at a place called Nuhlunby (Gove airport), where most of the travelers got off with holiday gear and kids in tow. It's on the northeastern corner of Arnhem Land and sounds quite interesting as an easy place to get to from Darwin. Arriving in Cairns we picked up our rental car from Budget, a Renault Koleos which proved suitable. We had a quick look at the Lake Barrine teahouse and the two large Kauri trees before we settled in to our accommodation in Yungaburra, the 'Possum Pad', in a quiet road a short walk from the town. It was wonderful to be back in north Queensland. This was my fourth visit there and Sarah's fifth: her father came from Ingham, near Townsville and she's always loved the state.

## Monday 9 October – Yungaburra area

Yungaburra is still a charming old town, or large village, with beautiful flowering trees and shrubs everywhere and masses of birds. Right outside the house there were usually Rainbow Lorikeets, Hornbill Friarbirds, Masked Lapwings, Brown, Dusky, Scarlet and White-cheeked Honeyeaters and today I also saw Black-faced Monarch, Pied Currawong, Laughing Kookaburra and a calling **Pacific Koel** (split now from Asian Koel). Sarus Cranes and Magpie Geese flew over in groups most mornings and evenings, and Bush Stone-curlews called at night. Other birds I found later within a few yards included Emerald Dove, Black-shouldered Kite and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike.

The day turned out to be mostly wet (our only wet day of the trip) but we enjoyed rainy visits to Curtain Fig Tree, where we saw Grey-headed Robins feeding young in the base of the tree, and Cathedral Fig Tree. Coming out of there I noticed some birds feeding in a fruiting tree beside the road which turned out to be a nice mix, including Figbird, Spotted Catbird, Lewin's and Macleay's Honeyeater and a **Barred Cuckoo-shrike**. Lake Eacham in the rain was rather lacklustre but we did see a Rufous Shrike-thrush there.



White-cheeked Honeyeater, Yungaburra



Bush Stone-curlew, Lake Tinaroo

The rain eased off late afternoon so we drove down to the Avenue of Honour at Lake Tinaroo. This is an attractive and moving tree avenue created in 2013 as a memorial to the servicemen from the Atherton Tablelands who died in Afghanistan. Bush Stone-curlews found it so serene they were sitting down in the road. White-breasted Woodswallows and Black-faced and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrikes hung out on the wires with a Forest Kingfisher, while at the lakeside were a variety of ducks, including Plumed Whistling-ducks and Hardheads, and a small flock of Chestnut-breasted Mannikins.

## Tuesday 10 October – Yungaburra area

I went back to the Curtain Fig Tree early in the morning and saw another Grey-headed Robin; there was more interest along the road with Rufous Shrike-thrush, Lewin's Honeyeater, about 50 Australian Swiftlets (common everywhere) and the first two of many Metallic Starlings.

A walk eastwards from Yungaburra along Peterson's Creek was highly enjoyable. The trail has been carefully managed to improve habitat, with viewing points for wildlife lovers. The main bird interest was a couple of Spectacled Monarchs close to the first bridge, but the undoubted highlight was decent views of two or three Duck-billed Platypuses – including a large male right under our feet at a small bridge,

unfortunately too quick to catch on camera. The trail is a well-known place to see them; most people we met there had succeeded. There was also a daytime roost of Spectacled Flying Foxes above the path.



Grey-headed Robin, Curtain Fig Tree



Spotted Catbird, Malanda Falls Trail

In the afternoon we went to Malanda Falls and did the trail there, getting good views of Eastern Whipbirds (about six together), an Atherton Scrubwren and a King Parrot. Afterwards Broomfield Swamp was empty apart from a few Cattle Egrets and Purple Swampheens, but a roadside pond nearby held at least 10 **Cotton Pygmy-geese** among the Pacific Black Ducks. Later we went back to the Avenue of Honour at Lake Tinaroo, adding Little Pied Cormorant and the recently split **Sahul Sunbird** (formerly the race of Olive-backed that occurs in NE Queensland) to our trip list.

### **Wednesday 11 October – Lake Eacham, Mt Hypipamee/Crater National Park and Herberton**

Lake Eacham was much more attractive in the early morning sunshine. There seemed to be activity around the car park area so I stayed there rather than the surrounding rainforest. This certainly paid off: I had good views of Brown Cuckoo-doves, Varied Trillers, Lewin's, Macleay's and Scarlet Honeyeaters, White-throated Treecreeper and Wompoo Fruit-dove and amazing encounters with several Victoria's Riflebirds – a species I'd only seen a couple of times before, and only female/immatures. I lucked upon a male displaying, wings raised, just above my head, teaching its moves to two young males. Then a friendly couple pointed out a fruiting umbrella tree where they often feed, and obligingly another male dropped in.



Brown Cuckoo-dove and Victoria's Riflebird, Lake Eacham

South of Yungaburra on the way to Mount Hypipamee we kept seeing birds from the car: a couple of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos flew over then I noticed from a distance a flock of what looked like Rooks circling over a small copse. As we drew closer I saw that they had long wings and strange torpedo-shaped bodies. They continued circling so we pulled in and realised they were **Channel-billed Cuckoos** – this was not the behaviour I was expecting from them. I guess they were incoming migrants from their wintering grounds in New Guinea and Indonesia. An amazing sight and I managed to snap a few ‘record shots’ before they drifted off. While stopped a couple of Black-shouldered Kites flew over, one of which settled, followed by a Grey Goshawk.



Channel-billed Cuckoo and Black-shouldered Kite, south of Yungaburra

A walk around the Crater National Park at Mount Hypipamee was interesting. There was some frustration, as always in the rainforest, at hearing birds you couldn't see or identify by sound. Unfortunately the Merlin sound identification app had not yet been populated with sounds, so although my phone was hearing birds it couldn't tell me what they were. We did see and identify Pale-yellow Robin and **Bower's Shrike-thrush** but other small birds we glimpsed had to go unrecognized.

We moved on to Herberton, where we enjoyed a pleasant walk round the old town/small village, where every garden seemed to have a Jacaranda tree containing **Noisy Friarbirds**. It was only as we drove away that we realised that the historic village, the place we had come to see, was different. Should have done our homework! So we paid our fee and had a look round the displays. It's one of those places where they reckon everything they have salvaged from the past is worth displaying; some was interesting but there was too much to take in. More Noisy Friarbirds were in Jacaranda trees here.

Then on to Hasties Swamp, where the hide looked out over vast multitudes of waterbirds, mostly Magpie Geese and Plumed Whistling Ducks but in amongst those were several Wandering Whistling Ducks. A couple of yellow-faced Honeyeaters showed well near the hide.



Plumed and Wandering Whistling-ducks, Hastie's Swamp



Macleay's Honeyeater, Lake Eacham

**Thursday 12 October – Lake Eacham, Abattoir Swamp, Julatten and Newell Beach**

A final early morning look at Lake Eacham for two more Victoria's Riflebirds, a Spotted Catbird, a Brown Cuckoo-dove and a Weebill. Heading northeast towards the coast our first stop was Abattoir Swamp, which apparently used to be good but is now completely dry and empty apart from a couple of Brown and Dusky Honeyeaters, a Rufous Shrike-thrush and a Peaceful Dove - all common birds. Shortly after, we chanced upon the newly reopened Julatten Hotel where we enjoyed a delightful lunch on the terrace overlooking a sunny view of the forest, with massive bright blue Ulysses butterflies floating amongst the flowering trees below. Our destination was our self-catering place in Newell Beach, where we had a windy walk along the beach with Radjah Shelducks flying past offshore and Torresian Imperial Pigeons overhead.

**Friday 13 to Saturday 21 October – Newell Beach/Mossman/ Port Douglas/ Mt Lewis/ Daintree areas**

We settled on Newell Beach as our base for a lengthy stay for various reasons, and it proved ideal. From a bird point of view as well as being within close range of many important destinations, I could see from the map it had an extra advantage in being at the mouth of the Mossman River. Not a particularly well known birding spot but it provided some excellent birds within five minutes' walk from the house.



Grey-tailed Tattler, Newell Beach Boat Ramp



Shocking picture, but it is a Little Kingfisher! Newell Beach Boat Ramp

The first morning there was a large flock of over 100 Metallic Starlings at the end of our road, and I was at last able to pin down the birds I'd heard singing the night before as Green Orioles – a constant sound backdrop here. At the boat ramp at the mouth of the river were some Bar-tailed Godwits and Pied Oystercatchers, and a Striated Heron and a Little Egret fished in the shallows. Other waders there during our stay included Pied Oystercatchers, Grey-tailed Tattler, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and some Greater Sandpipers. The next morning a Great-billed Heron was flying on the far side, and I saw another (or the same) stalking amongst the mangroves there a few days later. The bird highlight for me here was a **Little Kingfisher**, way across in the mangroves on the far side, just a little blue or white dot through bins depending which way it was facing – but then it dived into the water, twice. Blurry photos confirmed I wasn't seeing things!



Sahul Sunbird (recent split of Olive-backed), Newell Beach



Great-billed Heron, Newell Beach Boat Ramp

The walk along the road to the boat ramp often took ages because the trees were alive with Metallic Starlings, Spangled Drongos, Rainbow Lorikeets, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Hornbill Friarbirds, Sahul Sunbirds, various Honeyeaters and a small flock of Double-eyed Fig-parrots. These particularly favoured a fruiting tree at the end of our road (Olive Street) and a few minutes' search there nearly always revealed one or two. One day seven flew out of the tree I'd been scanning!



Double-eyed Fig-parrot, Newell Beach



Laughing Kookaburra from our front porch, Newell Beach

During our stay we also saw Little Bronze-cuckoo, Barred Cuckoo-shrike, Leaden Flycatcher and Blue-cheeked and Brown-backed Honeyeaters near the house and, along the road to the golf course, Chestnut-breasted Mannikins, Australian Pipits, Bush Stone-curlews, Nankeen Kestrel, Golden-headed Cisticola and Pacific Baza.



Australian Pipit, Newell Beach



Barred Cuckoo-shrike, Newell Beach

Another reason I loved staying in Newell Beach was seeing visible migration, something I hadn't experienced in Australia previously. It was obvious that there were a lot more species present than on our last visits in October: Torresian Imperial Pigeons, Metallic Starlings and Spangled Drongos had not been around then in any numbers. But from near the house some mornings I would see flocks of Spangled Drongos heading south, and the first morning about 100 Metallic Starlings dropped into the Fig-parrot tree before moving north. I thought these might have been coming from a roost but there

was no doubt about the 60+ Rainbow Bee-eaters that streamed south over the garden on the afternoon of 19 October, or the 26+ on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup>, followed by a southbound Dollarbird.

### **Saturday 14 October: Mossman Gorge**

We had an enjoyable walk in Mossman Gorge, which is now a busy, extremely efficiently run indigenous ecotourism hotspot, with a large car park, shop, restaurant, shuttle bus to take you into the reserve and excellent new walkways and bridge – very different from before. The downside however is that it's popular and even though we were early it soon got crowded with visitors. Bird life in the forest was, as usual, tricky to connect with but we did see a Bower's Shrike-thrush and a Pale-yellow Robin. The ticket allows you to return the same day so I went back late in the afternoon when there were few people around, and did better, getting lucky with some **Superb Fruit-doves** beside the suspension bridge. It's a beautiful place so no wonder it's so popular – especially for swimming and bathing in the crystal-clear waters, much appreciated when you can't swim in the sea due to crocodiles and box jellyfish.



Superb Fruit-dove, Mossman Gorge – the best I could do!



Bower's Shrike-thrush, Mossman Gorge

The town of Mossman itself is was ideal as our local centre, with great shops and cafes and really friendly people. We'd been looking to stay in Port Douglas but actually preferred Mossman, which was much quieter and less of a tourist resort.

### **Sunday 15 October: Mount Lewis**

When I'd heard of this famous site before I'd always assumed it would involve rugged hiking and climbing, but I realised you can drive up it. So we drove back up into the hills, seeing a Pheasant Coucal near Mossman and a huge Hercules moth by the Julatten turn, and ascended along a decent track into the forest. We did quite well from the car, surprising roadside **Yellow-throated Scrubwrens** and Grey-headed Robins. The famed Blue-faced Parrot-finch clearing was obvious when we came across it but signage confirmed they don't arrive until November. A look around the lantana-filled scrub produced a Grey Fantail, a Mistletoebird, a Brown Cuckoo-dove and various singing birds we could hear but not identify. We stopped to walk along the track in a couple of places and had more frustration with hidden songbirds, especially one close by with a loud, clear song that I thought sounded like a bowerbird. Merlin would have been so useful! Walking back to the car we came upon a family party of **Chowchillas**

in the road edge – a bird I'd long wanted to see - and managed to get some shots before they disappeared.



Hercules moth at start of Julatten road



Chowchilla, Mount Lewis

Over lunch at the Julatten Hotel we watched Sahul Sunbirds, Dusky and McLeay's Honeyeaters and those gorgeous big blue Ulysses butterflies feeding at the garden shrubs.

### **Monday 16 October: Daintree River boat trip**

Remembering what a great trip we'd had some years back with his predecessor, we'd booked a river trip with the 'Daintree Boatman' Murray Hunt. This was just as good as we'd remembered, very relaxing, perfect weather and great views of some goodies like Great-billed Heron, Black-necked Stork, Buff-banded Rail, Rufous Night-heron, Shining Flycatcher and two different Papuan Frogmouths. I found Murray very helpful in pointing out some bird calls I hadn't yet worked out such as Large-billed Gerygone, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater and Black Butcherbird. My marked checklist that he gave out shows we saw 34 species from the boat and heard 2 more.

Afterwards on his advice we drove to the end of the Stewart Creek Road, which was quite busy with birds including Metallic Starlings, Figbirds, Brown Cuckoo-doves and a couple of Wompoo Fruit-doves. On a return visit a few days later in the hope of an early returning Buff-breasted Paradise-kingfisher (Murray said they often turn up here first) we saw Barred Cuckoo-shrikes, Koels and Pheasant Coucals in the same trees.

### **17 and 19 – 21 October: around Newell Beach**

During our stay we also visited Cooya and Wonga Beaches and Yule Point/Oak Beach a few times – all of them lovely and quiet, but with no species we didn't also see at Newell apart from a Far Eastern Curlew at Cooya. We also went back to Daintree village and Stewart Creek Road, but mostly on these days we just enjoyed the local area and the shops, market and cafes in Mossman.



Varied Triller, Yule Point



Far Eastern Curlew, Cooya Beach

### Wednesday 18 October: to Cape Tribulation

We made an early start to get across the Daintree River before the crowds. We didn't have much success at our first stop, the Jindalba Boardwalk, although we heard Wompoo Fruit-dove and saw a Spectacled Monarch. We were much luckier at the next place, Marrdja Boardwalk, where a Cassowary stalked past the boardwalk, intent on its mission and ignoring our presence a few metres away. A pair of Shining Flycatchers feasted on the plentiful insects in the mangroves.



Cassowary, Marrdja Boardwalk, Cape Tribulation



Shining Flycatcher, Marrdja Boardwalk, Cape Tribulation

The Dubuji Boardwalk was good for snakes and large lizards and the Kulki Trail gave us a nice view out from the Cape. Heading back south we stopped for lunch at Mason's Café, where there were some Spangled Drongos, followed by ice cream at both the Floravilla and Daintree Ice Cream places. The self-guided tour of the orchard at the latter is worth doing, to see the tropical fruits growing on fern-laden trees.

## Sunday 22 October: Newell Beach to Cairns

We arrived in Cairns with plenty of time before our evening flight to Singapore. A pleasant walk around the Botanic Gardens didn't turn up much of excitement, but it was late in the morning. I'd forgotten how lush the forest is here. In the afternoon we stopped at the Esplanade, where it was great to see some new waders for the trip – including about 30 Great Knot - and to have a good look at an **Australian Tern**. Now that they have been split from Gull-billed I probably paid this more attention, and it immediately struck me as altogether bigger, meaner and less elegant than the Gull-billeds we see in Europe. These impressions are confirmed in the write-ups and photos I've since seen on the internet.



Great Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit, Cairns Esplanade



Australian (formerly Gull-billed) Tern and Great Knot, Cairns Esplanade



Black-fronted Dotterel, Cairns Esplanade



Cairns Esplanade with some Silver Gulls

We'd had a wonderful time throughout our stay in Australia, even in the beginning when heat, flies and Covid could have been a problem if we'd let them. I did better for birds than I'd expected in Queensland, but not quite as well as I'd have hoped in the centre. In total I saw 188 species, of which a respectable 26 were new to me, or 28 including 'armchair ticks' thanks to recent splits of Australian Tern and Sahul Sunbird (from Gull-billed Tern and Olive-backed Sunbird).

We were sorry to be leaving Australia, but we weren't going home yet: we were off to Laos and Thailand for a few days for a touch of colour, culture and spice. There will be a separate trip report for that.

Geoff Upton, UK  
February 2024

**Birds seen in Australia, 25 September to 22 October 2023**

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Orange-footed Scrubfowl	-	-	-	c10 Darwin Botanic Gardens 2 Darwin waterfront	sev Lake Eacham 2 Peterson Creek	2+ Newell Beach 2 Daintree village	Sev Cairns Botanic Gardens
Australian Brush-turkey	-	-	-	-	2 Yungaburra Common Lake Barrine, Crater NP, Lake Eacham, Peterson Creek, Malanda Falls	Sev Mossman Gorge 1 Daintree	Sev Cairns Botanic Gardens
Australian Darter	-	-	-	-	1 Hastie's Swamp	1 Daintree boat trip 1 Stewart Creek Road, Daintree	-
Little Pied Cormorant	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Tinaroo 4 Hasties Swamp	4+ Daintree boat trip	-
Little Black Cormorant	-	-	-	-	-	1 Daintree boat trip	-
Australasian Grebe	-	5 (3 juvs) Alice Springs Water Treatment Works 2 Ellery Creek Big Hole	-	-	-	-	-
Cassowary	-	-	-	-	-	1 Marrdja Boardwalk, Cape Tribulation	-
Magpie Goose	-	-	-	c200 Darwin, near Botanic Gardens	Hundreds, constantly overhead around Yungaburra and in wetlands	Fairly common e.g. Newell Beach, Daintree boat trip	-
Wandering Whistling-duck	-	-	-	-	30+ Hasties Swamp.	-	-
Plumed Whistling-duck	-	-	-	-	c30 Lake Tinaroo 50+ Hasties Swamp	-	-
Radjah Shelduck	-	-	-	2 Darwin Botanic Gardens	-	10+ Newell Beach (over sea, several times) 6+ Daintree boat trip	-
Pacific Black Duck	-	-	-	-	c20 Lake Tinaroo 20+ Bromfield Swamp c100 Hasties Swamp	-	4 Cairns Botanic Gardens
Grey Teal	-	10+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works 8 Ellery Creek Big Hole	-	-	1+ Hasties Swamp	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Australian Wood Duck	-	10+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	2 Lake Tinaroo	-	-
Cotton Pygmy-goose	-	-	-	-	c10 near Bromfield Swamp	-	-
Buff-banded Rail	-	-	-	-	-	1 Daintree boat trip	-
Purple Swamphen	-	-	-	-	2 Peterson Creek Sev Lake Tinaroo	-	-
Eurasian Coot	-	2+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-
Great-billed Heron	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp (twice) 1 Daintree boat trip	-
White-necked (Pacific) Heron	-	1 Ellery Creek Big Hole	-	-	-	1 Julatten Hotel (flying over)	-
Cattle Egret	-	-	-	-	Common e.g. c10 near Cathedral Fig Tree	Common e.g. 100+ near Wonga	-
Great Egret	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Tinaroo	2 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 1 Daintree boat trip 1 Cooya Beach	-
Little Egret	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 1 Cooya Beach	-
Intermediate Egret	-	-	-	-	1 Hasties Swamp	1 Stewart Creek Road, Daintree	-
Striated Heron	-	-	-	1 Darwin (from hotel balcony)	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 1 Daintree boat trip	-
Rufous (Nankeen) Night-heron	-	-	-	-	-	2 Daintree boat trip	-
Australian White Ibis	-	-	-	2 Darwin Botanic Gardens	-	Common far north Queensland e.g. c20 Newell Beach	-
Straw-necked Ibis	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens	1 Herberton	Common far north Queensland e.g. sev Newell Beach	-
Royal Spoonbill	-	-	-	-	3 - 4 Hasties Swamp	-	-
Black-necked Stork	-	-	-	-	-	1 Daintree boat trip	-
Sarus Crane	-	-	-	-	Often flew over e.g. c50 Yungaburra daily	-	-
Far Eastern Curlew	-	-	-	-	-	1 Cooya Beach	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Whimbrel	-	-	-	2+ Darwin (from hotel balcony)	-	3+ Newell Beach Boat Ramp 1 Cooya Beach 1 Oak Beach	2 Cairns Esplanade
Grey-tailed Tattler	-	-	-	-	-	2+ Newell Beach Boat Ramp 4 Cooya Beach	-
Common Sandpiper	-	1 Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	2+ Newell Beach Boat Ramp	-
Greenshank	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp	-
Terek Sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	-	-	26 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 6 Cooya Beach	6 Cairns Esplanade
Great Knot	-	-	-	-	-	-	c30 Cairns Esplanade
Red-necked Stint	-	-	-	-	-	3 Newell Beach Boat Ramp	-
Bush Stone-curlew	-	-	-	-	6 Lake Tinaroo	1 Mossman 4 Newell Beach fields	-
Pied Oystercatcher	-	-	-	-	-	4 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 4 Cooya Beach	-
Masked Lapwing	-	10+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	Sev Katharine	c10 Darwin (incl juvs on roadside verge)	2 Yungaburra	Common far north Queensland e.g. sev Newell Beach	-
Pacific Golden Plover	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 Cairns Esplanade
Greater Sandplover	-	-	-	-	-	4 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 3 Cooya Beach	-
Black-fronted Dotterel	-	-	-	-	-	-	5 Cairns Esplanade
Pied Stilt	-	6+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	2 Katharine 1 Nitmiluk Gorge	-	1 Lake Tinaroo	-	-
Red-necked Avocet	-	20+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-
Silver Gull	-	-	-	c30 Darwin	-	20+ Newell Beach Boat Ramp 2 Cooya Beach	10+ Cairns Esplanade
Whiskered Tern	-	15+ Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
<b>Australian Tern</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 Cairns Esplanade
Crested Tern	-	-	-	1 Stokes Hill Wharf	-	8 Port Douglas 2 Wonga Beach 8 Newell Beach Boat Ramp 2 Cooya Beach 3 Thornton Beach, Daintree	-
Pacific Baza	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Golf Course	-
Australian Kite	-	1 from road Eralunda to Stuart's Well	-	-	1 or 2 Lake Tinaroo 2 W of Yungaburra	-	-
Osprey	-	-	-	-	-	2 Port Douglas 1 Newell Beach	-
<b>Black-breasted Buzzard</b>	1 Ayers Rock Resort	3+ from road Ayers Rock to Alice Springs	-	-	-	-	-
Black Kite	-	Sev from road Eralunda to Alice Springs Common around Alice Springs e.g. 5 Water Treatment Works	30+ Katharine	-	Sev Yungaburra	Fairly common e.g. 8 near Wonga	-
Whistling Kite	-	1+ from road Stuart's Well to Alice Springs 2 from road Alice Springs to West MacDonnell NP 1 Ilparpa	-	-	-	1 Cooya Beach	-
Brahminy Kite	-	-	-	2+ Darwin	-	1 Port Douglas refuse tip 1 Newell Beach 1 Wonga Beach 1 Stewart Creek Road, Daintree	-
White-bellied Sea-eagle	-	-	2 Nitmiluk Gorge	-	-	-	-
Wedge-tailed Eagle	-	2 Ilparpa Retreat 2 Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Collared Sparrowhawk	-	1 Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Grey Goshawk	-	-	-	-	1 by road Yungaburra to Crater NP	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Brown Falcon	-	2 from road Erldunda to Alice Springs					
Nankeen Kestrel	1 Uluru sunrise viewpoint	1 from road Erldunda to Stuart's Well 1 West MacDonnell ranges Sev Ilparpa	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach	-
<b>Superb Fruit-dove</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2+ Mossman Gorge	-
Wompoo Fruit-dove	-	-	-	-	1 seen Lake Eacham Others heard Curtain Fig Tree	Heard Daintree village, Stewart Creek Road, Dubuji Boardwalk	-
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	-	Sev Ilparpa	-	-	-	-	-
Spotted Turtle-dove	-	2 Olive Pink Botanic Gdn, Alice Springs	-	-	2 Herberton	2 Newell Beach	-
Brown Cuckoo-dove	-	-	-	-	3 Lake Eacham	1 Mt Lewis 1 Daintree boat trip 2 Stewart Creek Road	-
Peaceful Dove	-	1 Ilparpa	-	2 Darwin	Sev Yungaburra	Sev Newell Beach	-
<b>Diamond Dove</b>	-	4 Ellery Creek Big Hole	-	-	-	-	-
Bar-shouldered Dove	-	-	-	3+ Darwin	2 Yungaburra	Common Far North Queensland e.g. 10+ Newell Beach	-
Emerald Dove	-	-	-	-	1 Yungaburra	-	-
Common Bronzewing	1+ Ayers Rock Resort	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crested Pigeon	Very common		-	-	-	-	-
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo	-	-	-	-	1 from road W of Yungaburra	-	-
Port Lincoln Ringneck	-	3 Erldunda Roadhouse 5+ Ilparpa Retreat 2 Alice Springs Telegraph Station	-	-	-	-	-
Galah	c10 Ayers Rock Resort	50-60 Erldunda Roadhouse Common around Alice Springs	-	-	-	-	-
Pink (Major Mitchell's) Cockatoo	-	3 Erldunda Roadhouse 1 Ilparpa 1 Ellery Creek	-	-	-	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Little Corella	50-60 Ayers Rock Resort	4 Stuart's Well 3 Alice Springs	-	-	-	-	-
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach 1 Mossman Gorge 1 Mossman 2 Oak Beach 2+ Daintree boat trip	-
Red-collared Lorikeet	-	-	-	c20 Darwin	-	-	-
Rainbow Lorikeet	-	-	-	-	Common e.g. c30 Yungaburra c20 Cathedral Fig Tree	Common Newell Beach	-
Double-eyed Fig-parrot	-	-	-	-	-	7+ Newell Beach	-
Australian King-parrot	-	-	-	-	1 Malanda Falls	-	-
<b>Budgerigar</b>	2 Ayers Rock Resort c20 near Kata Tjuta	C50 from road Ayers Rock to Alice Springs 1 Erldunda	50+ Ellery Creek Big Hole c20 near Standley's Chasm	-	-	-	-
Little Bronze-cuckoo (Gould's)	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach	-
<b>Pacific Koel</b>		-	-	-	2 Yungaburra	2+ Daintree boat trip 1 Stewart Creek Road	-
<b>Channel-billed Cuckoo</b>	-	-	-	-	10+ W of Yungaburra	-	-
Pheasant Coucal		-	-	-	-	1 Mossman 1 Newell Beach 3 Stewart Creek Road	-
Papuan Frogmouth	-	-	-	-	-	2 Daintree boat trip	-
Australian Swiftlet	-	-	-	-	Common e.g. c50 near Curtain Fig Tree	Common e.g. 10+ Newell Beach	-
<b>Little Kingfisher</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp (twice)	-
Laughing Kookaburra	-	-	-	-	1 Yungaburra	2 Mossman 1 Newell Beach 4+ from road Newell Beach to Daintree Sev Daintree village	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Blue-winged Kingfisher	-	-	1 Nitmiluk Centre	-	-	-	-
Forest Kingfisher	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens	2 Lake Eacham	2 Stewart Creek Road	-
<b>Red-backed Kingfisher</b>	-	1 Ilparpa Retreat	-	-	-	-	-
Sacred Kingfisher	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens		1 Daintree boat trip 1 Newell Beach 1 Julatten	-
Rainbow Bee-eater	-	4 Ilparpa Retreat	1 Nitmiluk Gorge	1 Darwin	-	100+ heading S, Newell Beach	-
Dollarbird	-	-	2 Nitmiluk Gorge	-	-	1 heading S, Newell Beach	-
White-throated Treecreeper	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Eacham	-	-
<b>Sahul Sunbird</b> (Formerly Olive-backed)	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Tinaroo	4 Newell Beach 1 Daintree boat trip	-
Splendid Fairy-wren	-	6+ Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Purple-backed Fairy-wren	2+ Ayers Rock Resort	-	-	-	-	-	-
Atherton Scrubwren	-	-	-	-	2 Malanda Falls	-	-
<b>Yellow-throated Scrubwren</b>	-	-	-	-	-	1 Mt Lewis	-
Brown Gerygone	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Eacham	-	-
Large-billed Gerygone	-	-	-	-	-	3+ Daintree boat trip 1 Stewart Creek Road	-
Yellow-rumped Thornbill	-	1 Alice Springs Telegraph Station 1 Ellery Creek	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater</b>	-	Common e.g. 4+ Ilparpa Retreat Sev Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Helmeted Friarbird	-	-	-	c10 Darwin	-	-	-
Hornbill Friarbird		-	-	-	Sev Yungaburra	Common e.g. sev Newell Beach, Daintree, etc	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Noisy Friarbird	-	-	-	-	10+ Herberton	-	-
Little Friarbird	-	-	-	1 Darwin	-	-	-
Blue-faced Honeyeater	-	-	-	6+ Darwin	-	1 Newell Beach 1 Cooya Beach	-
Macleay's Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	1 Cathedral Fig Tree 1 Lake Eacham	1 Julatten Hotel	-
Yellow-throated Miner	Very common Ayers Rock Resort etc	2+ Erldunda 3+ Stuart's Well Common Alice Springs e.g. Botanic Gardens, Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-
Noisy Miner	-	-	-	-	6+ Herberton	-	-
Lewin's Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	1 Cathedral Fig Tree 1 Curtain Fig Tree 1 Yungaburra 1 Malanda Falls 1 Lake Eacham	-	-
Yellow-spotted Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	-	Common e.g. Newell Beach, Daintree boat trip, Mossman Gorge	-
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	2 Hasties Swamp	-	-
Singing Honeyeater	Sev Uluru	1 Ilparpa Clay Pans 3 Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grey-headed Honeyeater</b>	1 Ayers Rock Resort Sev Uluru	c20 Standley's Chasm	-	-	-	-	-
White-gaped Honeyeater	-	-	-	c20 Darwin Botanic Gardens 2 with juvs outside Zen Ramada Hotel	-	-	-
White-plumed Honeyeater	6+ Ayers Rock Resort 2 Uluru	Common e.g. 4 Stuart's Well, c20 Ilparpa Retreat, many Standley's Chasm	-	-	-	-	-
White-cheeked Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	4+ Yungaburra	-	-
Brown-backed Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	-	3+ Newell Beach	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Dusky Honeyeater	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens	3 Yungaburra 2 Abattoir Swamp	sev Newell Beach 1 Julatten	-
Scarlet Honeyeater	-	-	-	-	2 Yungaburra 1 Peterson Creek 1 Lake Eacham	-	-
<b>Black Honeyeater</b>	1 Kata Tjuta (male)	1 Alice Springs Telegraph Station (female)	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Chowchilla</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3+ Mt Lewis	-
Eastern Whipbird	-	-	-	-	Heard Curtain and Cathedral Fig Trees 6+ seen Malanda Falls	Heard Lake Eacham	-
<b>Grey-crowned Babbler</b>	-	3+ Ilparpa area 3+ Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
White-browed Babbler	-	6+ Ilparpa Retreat 2+ Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Eastern Yellow Robin	-	-	-	-	1 Peterson Creek	-	-
Lemon-bellied Flycatcher	-	-	-	2 (ad and juv) Darwin Botanic Gardens	-	-	-
Grey-headed Robin	-	-	-	-	2 Curtain Fig Tree 1 Cathedral Fig Tree	2 Mt Lewis	-
Pale-yellow Robin	-	-	-	-	2 Crater NP	2+ Mossman Gorge 1 Mt Lewis	-
Rufous Shrike-thrush	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Eacham 1 Curtain Fig Tree	1 Stewart Creek Road, Daintree 1 Marrdja Boardwalk	-
<b>Bower's Shrike-thrush</b>	-	-	-	-	1 Crater NP	2+ Mossman Gorge	-
Grey Shrike-thrush	-	1 Ilparpa Retreat 1 Ellery Creek 2 Standley's Chasm 1 Simpson's Gap	-	-	-	-	-
Rufous Whistler	-	1 Ormiston Gorge	-	-	-	-	-
Grey Fantail	-	-	-	-	-	1 Mt Lewis	-
<b>Crested Bellbird</b>	1 Uluru Cultural Centre 2+ heard Kata Tjuta	-	-	-	-	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Willie Wagtail	Common	Common	-	-	Common	Common	-
Leaden Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	1 female Newell Beach 1 female Cooya Beach Pair Syndicate Road, Newell Beach	-
Shining Flycatcher	-	-	-	-	-	Pair Daintree boat trip Pair Murrudja Boardwalk 1 Newell Beach Boat Ramp	-
Black-faced Monarch	-	-	-	-	2+ Yungaburra	-	-
Magpie-lark	Common	Common	-	Common	Common	Common	-
Spangled Drongo	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens	1 Lake Eacham 2+ Yungaburra	30+ Newell Beach Sev Cape Tribulation	-
Green (Yellow) Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	Common e.g. 4+ Newell Beach, Daintree etc	-
Olive-backed Oriole	-	-	-	-	-	1 juv Daintree boat trip	-
Figbird	-	-	-	6+ Darwin	Common e.g. 10+ Yungaburra, Lake Eacham	Common e.g. Newell Beach, Mossman Gorge etc	-
Victoria's Riflebird	-	-	-	-	4+ Lake Eacham	-	-
Spotted Catbird	-	-	-	-	2 near Cathedral Fig Tree 1 Malanda Falls 1 Lake Eacham	1 heard Mt Lewis	-
<b>Western Bowerbird</b>	-	1 Ilparpa Retreat 1 Standley's Chasm 1 Ormiston Gorge 2+ Simpson's Gap	-	-	-	-	-
Great Bowerbird	-	-	1 Nitmiluk Gorge 2+ Nitmiluk Centre	-	-	-	-
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1 near Kata Tjuta	2 Ilparpa Retreat 2 Ormiston Gorge	-	-	2 Lake Tinaroo	2 Newell Beach 8 Daintree boat trip	-
<b>Barred Cuckoo-shrike</b>	-	-	-	-	2 near Cathedral Fig Tree	2 Newell Beach 2+ Stewart Creek Road	-
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	-	-	-	2 Darwin	1 Lake Tinaroo 1 Yungaburra	1 Newell Golf Course	-
<b>White-winged Triller</b>	-	-	-	1 Darwin Botanic Gardens	-	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
Varied Triller	-	-	-	-	3 Lake Eacham	3 Daintree boat trip 1 Mossman Gorge car park Heard Newell Beach	-
White-breasted Woodswallow	-	-	-	-	2 Lake Tinaroo	3+ Newell Beach 2 Scamazon Road, Newell 2 Cooya Beach Sev Mossman 2 Wonga Beach	-
<b>Masked Woodswallow</b>	-	2 Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	-	-
Black-faced Woodswallow	-	6+ Alice Springs Telegraph Station c20 Ilparpa area	-	-	-	-	-
Little Woodswallow	c20 Uluru	-	-	-	-	-	-
Black Butcherbird	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach	-
Australian Magpie	-	Common	-	-	Sev Yungaburra	Sev Newell Beach	-
Pied Currawong	-	-	-	--	1 Yungaburra 1 Malanda Falls 2+ Herberton	-	-
Little Crow	-	Common e.g. 3+ Curtin Springs, c30 Erldunda	-	-	-	-	-
Torresian Crow	-	2+ Ellery Creek	-	-	-	-	-
Welcome Swallow	-	-	-	-	Common	Common	-
Fairy Martin	4+ Ayers Rock Resort 50+ Uluru	100+ Ilparpa Retreat 5 Alice Springs Water Treatment Works	-	-	-	-	-
Australian Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	4+ Newell Beach	-
<b>Rufous Songlark</b>	1 Uluru	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Spinifexbird</b>	-	1 Ellery Creek Dolomite Walk	-	-	-	-	-
Golden-headed Cisticola	-	-	-	-	-	1 Newell Beach (near golf course)	-
House Sparrow	-	-	-	-	1 Gordonvale 2 Yungaburra Sev Port Douglas	-	-
Double-barred Finch	-	-	-	2 Zen Ramada Hotel, Darwin	-	-	-
Zebra Finch	Fairly common e.g.	Common e.g. 50+ Ilparpa	-	-	-	-	-

	Uluru area	Alice Springs area	Ghan Train and Katharine	Darwin	Atherton Tablelands	Daintree and Far North Queensland	Elsewhere
	c10 Uluru, sev Kata Tjuta	area					
Crimson Finch	-	-	-	6+ Darwin	-	-	-
<b>Pained Finch (Firetail)</b>	-	3+ Ellery Creek Big Hole	-	-	-	-	-
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	-	-	-	-	c8 Lake Tinaroo	4 Scamazon Road, Newell Beach, 20+ Newell Beach	-
Sahul (Yellow-bellied) Sunbird	-	-	-	-	1 Lake Tinaroo	5+ Newell Beach 1 Julatten Hotel	-
Mistletoebird	-	2 Alice Springs Desert Park	-	-	-	1 Mossman Gorge 2 Mt Lewis 1 Newell Beach	-
Metallic Starling	-	-	-	-	2 near Curtain Fig Tree	100+ Newell Beach 10+ Daintree boat trip 20+ Stewart Creek Road	-
Common Myna		-	-	-	Common	Common	-

*Geoff Upton, Southern England  
February 2024*