



## Northern Territory, Top End

Ian Reid and Paul Coddington, 7-16 Aug 2020

### Preamble

Six or seven years into our Australian sojourn I still had a few birds to collect in the south, but lifers close to home were becoming harder and harder to come by. In contrast, the far north still held bags of new birds. In fact even in pre-birding days growing up in Perth I had never been much beyond the Tropic of Capricorn, so there are vast swathes of Australia waiting for me to explore. In both 2018 and 2019 I had tentative plans to go to NT, but those plans were never realised. In 2020, I had a trip to Peru with UK birding mate Steve lined up, but that was cancelled in June because of covid. With very little birding in the first half of the year largely because of lockdown in SA, and my main birding event for the latter part cancelled, I began to wonder if I'd get any birding at all in 2020. But by early July the signs were good that SA, NT, Tas, WA, and maybe Qld had got their covid outbreaks under control and restrictions and border controls started to relax. The date for opening the NT border was set to 23<sup>rd</sup> July and I hatched a plan for a week of Top End birding in August once the border had opened and flights resumed. Paul Coddington, my traveling/birding companion on various SA twitches and a couple of outback camping trips, had birded NT in 2014 but missed quite a bit of stuff, so he was keen to join me.

We contacted a few tour guides in the hope of paying for a day's guiding to get some of the more sensitive species like White-throated Grasswren and Red Goshawk. But WTGW turns out to be inaccessible even to the guides, and we couldn't get availability for guiding for the Gos on the days we wanted it. Basically everything else seemed to me to be gettable with enough skill, persistence and some suitably injected local knowledge, so we settled on a fully independent trip. I set about genning up as much as possible, poring over Dolby and Clarke, contacting local birders through social media, and trawling ebird records. Disappointingly, in part because of lockdown, ebird coverage was very patchy.

Paul's knowledge of the lay of the land from his previous trip was invaluable for sorting out the itinerary, and we based our plans on a combination of what he had done in 2014 and the advertised itineraries of the tour companies. Originally we aimed for Saturday–Sunday (9 days and 8 nights) – but when Qantas cancelled our flight on Saturday we took the option of bringing our start date forward to Friday to give ourselves 10 days and 9 nights, rather than compromise on a 8/7 in which we would likely have to miss out one or more sites/destinations. Our aim would be to spend the first day in Darwin, then head south-east into Kakadu National Park for 3 nights before heading south-west to Pine Creek and Katherine, and then further west into Gregory National Park (Victoria River) towards the WA border, before a dash back up to Darwin for the final night.

TL;DR version is that we had a super-successful trip. In raw numbers we recorded just under 190 species, and I managed 51 lifers and 16 Australian ticks. Apart from the two sensitive species mentioned above, which we didn't have much hope for, we saw all but one of my lifer targets, and got decent photos of most. As well as our undoubted skill and persistence ☺, this is largely down to Paul's excellent planning and the generous assistance of friends and locals in helping with gen — notably Mike and Steve Potter who gave me various clues during the drive back from a Port Mac pelagic in July, Tom Tarrant who had birded the region just a few weeks before us, Katherine-based birders (and ebirders) Marc Gardner and Mick Jerram, Darwin birders Peter Brown and Peter Kyne, and an unknown Italian-Darwin local who helped us find our main target on Day 1.

Apart from our cancelled flight, which turned into a blessing because of the enforced extra day, all seemed well and our plans were coming together nicely, though we were still struggling for gen on a few key species, notably our #1 target Gouldian Finch, with almost nothing on ebird. Then three days before we were due to leave I got a text from Paul with a link to an article on the ABC news website: yesterday, on the back of 12 cases in Qld, the NT Govt had closed the border with Qld. In SA we had a cluster of about 6 in the western suburbs, and then 2 new cases were added, including one linked to community transmission. The Chief Medical Officer called it a pivotal day in the battle against the virus in SA, and it seemed to both of us that there was now a very high chance that the NT border would be closed, forcing us to cancel. I was in a very bad mood the rest of the day and all night. The next morning I cycled to work through Victoria Park as usual, but was forced to take a detour; a covid testing pop up facility had been erected overnight and there were queues of cars across the park and down Wakefield Street. My heart sank further and I arrived at work convinced that the SA/NT border would be closed within hours.

At lunchtime on Wednesday I got another message from Paul, again with a link to an article. I opened it with trepidation, expecting the worst. But in fact it was even better news than I could have hoped. The case that might have been the cause of community transmission turned out to be a false positive. The case numbers in SA for the day were actually adjusted -1 to account for this (and no new cases) and we were in the clear!

## Day 1

My taxi failed to show early morning Friday, and I endured an agonising wait for an Uber, finally arriving at the airport at 6.15, a mere 45 minutes before our flight. Fortunately this was still enough time for me to check my bags and I even had a few minutes to meet Paul in the Qantas Club (open but with lots of social distancing!) to grab a coffee and some muesli for breakfast. We donned face-masks and boarded for our flight to Darwin!

It's a bloody long way to Darwin from Adelaide – more than 3 hours' flight, so it was late morning by the time we had landed in Darwin, cleared the additional covid security, and picked up our Subaru Forester rental (FireFly, but actually Hertz), the only company that seemed to offer unlimited kms). We headed immediately for Lee Point. Midday and low(ish) tide was not a great time to arrive but it still seemed quite birdy and pretty soon I was racking up new birds. Almost instantly we had a **Little Bronze-cuckoo** and **Varied Triller** in trees by the beach for my first Australian ticks (I'd seen the former in West Papua two years ago, and the latter in PNG 12 years ago). **Bar-shouldered** and **Peaceful Doves** were prominent and would be present at almost every site we visited for the entire trip. In fact a bar-shouldered called from deep cover sounding for all the world like a Southern Boobook which are quite rare in the north. I was spared public embarrassment at declaring this on ebird by Marc Gardner who pointed out via Messenger that we were hearing BSD! Likewise **Orange-footed Scrubfowl** were unperturbed by human presence and easily found because they scratch away noisily in the leaf litter.







My first lifer of the trip was a pair of **Great Bowerbirds**, coming to a slightly leaky drinking fountain in the picnic area. Although they flushed before I could get photos, some patience staking out this spot paid dividends with some **Double-barred Finches**, **Crimson Finches** and a **Brown Honeyeater**. We noted a couple of **Forest Kingfisher** shuttling around the car-park before we left.

From Lee Point picnic area it is only a few minutes to drive around to the Buffalo Creek boat ramp. A **Striated Heron** flew past and within a few minutes of arriving we heard the clattering, barking sound of Chestnut Rail, a key target here. But it would not show itself and the rasping call stopped almost as soon as it had started. Passerines were more cooperative and despite the heat, in a short walk around the carpark and to the hide we noted several life-birds for me: **White-gaped Honeyeater**, **Red-headed Honeyeater**, **Green-backed Gerygone**, **Large-billed Gerygone**, **Yellow Oriole**, **Arafura Fantail**, **Mangrove Fantail**, **Northern Fantail**, **Lemon-bellied Flycatcher**, **Grey Whistler**, **Yellow White-eye**, **Double-barred Finch**, **Little Friarbird**, **Helmeted Friarbird**, and **White-bellied Cuckooshrike**. As usually happens when birding in a new area, lifers were coming thick and fast – for me all but the last 4 were completely new – and I failed to get adequate photos of several, something I would later regret.





We grabbed lunch at a Hungry Jack's then motored a short distance to Osterman St where Marc had sketched a mud-map for us showing a trail out into the mangroves. A small flock of **Chestnut-breasted Mannikin** and **Crimson Finch** were in the grass out the back of the suburban houses, several of which had elevated decks that would have afforded a spectacular view across the mangroves to the Timor Sea, especially at sunset! The walk through the mangroves and onto the mudflats is only possible at low tide, and we arrived as the tide was rising, needing to complete our birding within about 90 minutes or risk getting cut off by the rising water.



Our walk initially was largely birdless and we retreated somewhat dejected only to bump into local birder Peter Brown who had been on the flats and seen several White-breasted Whistler over the last few hours. He offered to take us back out since he had left his sunglasses and had to go back out anyway. Following his directions we walked on another 100m from where we'd stopped and almost instantly heard a WBW singing, but from a very dense clump of mangroves. As it flushed I got a glimpse of a bird flying low and fast, but totally unidentifiable on that view. We tried another spot but with the tide coming in and one more site to bird this afternoon we knocked it on the head. I harboured thoughts of a return the next day, but Paul wisely counselled that we'd be better off leaving this 'til our final morning if the tide was right (we checked that evening and yes, it would be).

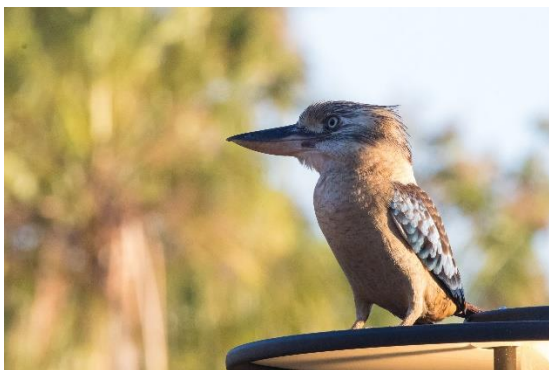
Next port of call was the George Brown Botanical Gardens. We had only one main target here, though a white bird that flushed low and fast was probably **Grey Goshawk**, currently nesting in the gardens; I was not on the ball enough at the time and since neither of us needed this pretty raptor we didn't chase it. In any case I was too fixated on finding our next target, one of my main objectives for the whole week, so we headed directly for the Rainforest Walk where our gen indicated we were most likely to find a Rufous Owl. Although it is a huge bird, scanning rainforest trees for a roosting bird seemed to be a fruitless task, so I was lucky to bump into a friendly local – an ex-pat Italian – who walks the gardens most days.

We got chatting and he told about 6 possible roost sites that he was happy to show me. I was losing faith after we visited five and all were empty, but the 6<sup>th</sup> produced the goods with a stonking – if sleepy – **Rufous Owl!**





On our way back to the car Paul pointed out another Australian tick for me in the form of **Blue-winged Kookaburra** and we also noted some **Torresian Imperial Pigeons** (another Aussie tick).



After this we drove the short distance into downtown Darwin, checked into our hotel then drove back out to a spot where there'd been ebird reports of **Large-tailed Nightjar** at 7pm each evening for the last several days. Soon after the sun went down we heard the characteristic "chop chop" of LTN and I saw two birds, about a minute apart, leave a tall tree in front of the block flats in the cul-de-sac in which we'd parked and swoop over to some rough open ground behind a 6ft fence. A minute or so later a chap arrived to the flats holding a pizza and asked if we'd seen the Nightjars.

Unfortunately at this point Paul had not, but on tip-toes I could sweep my wolf-eyes torch across the rough ground and somewhat to my own surprise I was able to pick out some eye shine. A few minutes later we enjoyed the spectacle as it left its perch and hawked elegantly across the field in my torch-light. A lifer for Paul and an Australian tick for me. As we pulled out of the cul-de-sac a message arrived from Marc Gardner:

*Marc:* "Are you at Guiseppe Crt looking for nightjars by any chance?".

*MeThinks:* Hmmm, how can he possibly know that?

*Me:* "Yes. Just seen a couple :-)"

*Marc:* "Ah just had a mate Peter Kyne message me saying there's 2 birders out the front probably looking for nightjars. Can't move sideways in Darwin lol!"

*MeThinks:* slowly puts two-and-two together – pizza bearer is Peter Kyne, also reporter of the ebird records we were following!

A meal and a few beers in a pub near our hotel rounded out a great first day.

## Day 2

We had designed an itinerary that tried to maximise time finding the birds we *both* needed, and that meant prioritising the sandstone specialists of Kakadu and finches of the interior. The downside of this was that we would be leaving Darwin by early afternoon today, not to return until our last night. Top target before we left Darwin, therefore, was Chestnut Rail and we worked out the best time to try (on a 4.5m falling tide) was around lunchtime. This meant we could look for a few waders Paul needed at the high-tide roost at Lee Point – about 9am – and have another crack at some of the mangrove specialists before that.

First port of call, then, was the East Point mangrove boardwalk. Sadly this would not be one of our best moves. Others had reported Mangrove Robin, but not only was the walk devoid of mangrove specialists, we saw very little at all. We had encounters with northern specialties **White-gaped Honeyeater** and **Green-backed Gerygone** that had been lifers for me the day before, and a nice appearance from a female **Shining Flycatcher** (Australian tick for me, in fact), but it turns out that the walk gets covered at high tide. As we reached the end of the metal walkway water was lapping at the base, and within minutes was rushing through to wet our boots. As we walked back to the car **Black Butcherbird** was the sole lifer of this visit for me, though I would not appreciate how similar to Australian Magpie this species is until our final day, when we saw some more. A coffee and muffin at the beachside pop-up café provided some welcome sustenance and lifted the spirits somewhat.

On our way to Lee Point for the waders we also decided to call in at Charles Darwin University which various sources, including Paul's 2014 visit, suggested could be good for honeyeaters. Disappointingly this was another site that failed to live up to its billing. There were few flowering gums and we noted only a few **Little Friarbirds** and one additonal (unidentified) honeyeater. We also added **Osprey** to our trip list, but by 9am it was time to move on.

At Lee Point, the rocks that we'd seen yesterday and supposed would be a good high-tide roost were completely covered by the tide, so we cut our losses and trundled around to Buffalo Creek to check out the screen. In fact the screen is a fairly useless bit of infrastructure, too far from the edge of the water for observing the birds and even it weren't, providing insufficient cover to avoid disturbance. After a quick scan with scope revealed a few sets of waders and terns by the water's edge some 200-300m away, we crossed the small tidal creek and walked out onto the beach to get better views. Although we remained too distant for decent photos, we connected with the key birds we wanted here, **Lesser Sandplover** and **Lesser Crested Tern**, both lifers for Paul and Australian ticks for me. We only found one or two unequivocal **Lesser SP** amongst dozens of **Greater Sandplovers**; one was a still sporting some summer plumage and was fairly obviously smaller billed and smaller bodied than the Greater it was next to. The LCTs were easily picked out by their orange bills and slightly smaller size relative to the (Greater) **Crested Terns**. Several **Caspian Tern** and a couple of **Whiskered Tern** were sitting with the mixed flock of Greater and Lesser Crested. Of course there was a good variety of other waders present including **Grey-tailed Tattler**, **Sanderling**, **Red-necked Stint**, **Red-capped Plover**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Great Knot** (and a few **Red Knot** mixed in with mainly Great). Further down the beach were some distant **Sooty Oystercatchers**.



The day was back on track, but we still had a couple of hours to fill before optimal Rail-viewing time. Mindful that Tom Tarrant had recorded Rainbow Pitta in the mangroves near the hospital, where there is boardwalk down to Casuarina Beach, I pushed for a visit there to “fill in” the time. We hoped this would also give us a shot at Little Kingfisher. Disappointingly a long walk through unattractive savannah and some mangroves down to the beach did not yield either of those targets. A distant **Gull-billed**



**Tern** was on the beach when we arrived and we spent some time getting to grips with **Leaden Flycatcher**. On the walk back as we passed some watered gardens at the back of the hospital, I had my first **Red-winged Parrot**.

We each grabbed a delicious takeaway salad at a food court in Orchard Grove and parked our arses on the boat ramp viewing back up Buffalo Creek. We made sure to be slightly further from the bank than one or two fisherman to ensure they would be first in line for any lurking, hungry crocs. A **Brahminy Kite** joined one or two **Whistling Kites** and the numerous **Black Kites** wheeling overhead, **Rainbow Bee-eaters** swooped across the creek from overhanging perches, and a couple of **Common Sandpipers** shuttled back and forth across the water. Just as I finished my lunch that rattling, quite aggressive territorial call of Chestnut Rail barked out across the creek. One burst of playback from me was immediately answered by two birds from the far bank, then another pair from further away, and then two more, seemingly from our side of the creek. I trained my bins on the far side and then a shape started to emerge through the mangroves. I could pick out a pair of **Chestnut Rail**, keeping largely hidden in the mangroves but moving towards us. Gradually they came closer, calling regularly and also gradually they started to pick their way through the slightly more open areas of mangrove roots by the bank, allowing great viewing, even if they were too far away for totally gripping photos.



A pair was still calling from very close to us and we decided to move into the mangroves on our side of the creek to see if we could find them too. Indeed I was able to get very close but obscured views of two birds before they became aware of our presence and slipped away through the mangroves much faster than we could follow.

At this point, smarting from yesterday's dip on White-breasted Whistler and with a favourable tide, I was keen to have another crack in the Osterman St mangroves. Rightly, Paul persuaded me this would jeopardise our time at another key site this afternoon, Fogg Dam, so we bade farewell to Darwin for the time being, headed south on Stuart Hwy then turned off at the marvellously and amusingly named Humpty Doo onto Arnhem Hwy. Just under an hour later we arrived at Fogg Dam, one of the most famous birding sites in/near Darwin. Fogg Dam was built to provide water for a rice project that failed, but within just a couple of years became an important dry-season wetland refuge for wildlife, especially thousands of birds. So by the end of the decade it was a "Bird Protection centre" and was declared a conservation reserve in 1982.





Although it was 14:30 the Woodlands to Waterlily Walk was quite birdy. Immediately we heard **Rufous Whistler**, found **Grey Whistler** and even better, an **Arafura Shrike-thrush** (or the local race of Little Shrike-thrush, depending on your favourite taxonomy). **Brown Honeyeaters** flitted about teasing us they might be something more special. The path and boardwalk travels through paperbark woodland and monsoon forest to three lake-viewing points. With the lake drying up towards the end of the dry season (following two of the driest wets on record in 18/19 and 19/20) all we could see from the first was dry mud and invasive reedy scrub (my plant knowledge is sadly lacking) that rose up above head height and blocked any view. A couple of **Magpie Geese** flew past but that was about it.



At the next viewing spot, the water was just receding, leaving a few small pools of water and revealing muddy fringes. Dozens of **Crimson Finch**, mostly juveniles, were drinking and feeding around the edge of the boardwalk. At a small hide we watched several honeyeaters flit about in the reeds and drop down to drink also. It took a while before we could work out what they were – **Rufous-banded Honeyeater** – because most were juveniles and barely showing their eponymous feature. Eventually we did see an adult with its rufous breast band.





Noises in the reeds made me think of crakes and I played a Spotless Crake call to no response. Paul reminded me we needed to be on the lookout for **White-browed Crake**, so I played that call as well. Immediately it was answered from three different directions! With patience, eventually we were able to spot movement at the base of the reeds, as the longer we kept still and quiet the bolder it became. Eventually we got decent views (if only record shots) of our second stonking member of the *Rallidae* today.

At the end of the boardwalk a platform gives 360 views of the surrounding lake and lilly-pads. Immediately Paul pointed

out a small group of **Green Pygmy Geese** swimming amongst the lillies for my next lifer. Around 50 **Magpie Geese** were gathered on the shore, and we were able to pick out a few distant **Comb-crested Jacana** (Australian tick) as well as lifer **Pied Heron**. This was a distant and slightly unsatisfactory experience for a great looking bird, but with lots of chances to rectify I was not perturbed. We also took the opportunity to sort out **Great** and **Intermediate Egrets**. The latter is rare (though semi-regular) in SA and without good views or lots of experience of the respective jizz, can be tricky to separate. Fortunately the close viewing from the platform and boardwalk meant we could definitively note the short gape-line on Intermediate (which stops before the eye) and match this up with other features, notably the shorter, less S-shaped neck.



As we retraced our steps approaching the car we could hear a couple of different low booming calls and worked out these were respectively **Torresian Imperial Pigeon** and **Rose-crowned Fruit-doves**, but we saw neither. A few minutes later and a double-whistle – wee-whit, wee-whit – jogged a signal in my brain that got the heart racing: **Rainbow Pitta**. Paul had not heard it, so we paused and sure enough, somewhat distant but unmistakable, a Pitta called again. We rapidly walked back to where it was coming from, but it stopped calling straight away and did not respond to a short burst of playback.

Back at the car we drove across the dam wall, scanning the shallow and drying lake on one side and the completely dry flood plain on the other. We added **Brolga**, various common waterbirds including **Darter** to the list, better, closer views of **Comb-crested Jacana**, some nice adult **Crimson Finch**, numerous **Masked Lapwing** and our first **Paperbark Flycatcher** (which needs to be read to the tune of *Paperback Writer*, even if it doesn't scan properly :-)), which is a split from Restless Flycatcher down south.

At the far end of the wall we scanned from the elevated viewing platform and noted 50 or so **Wandering Whistling Duck** (lifer) as well as several **Radjah Shelduck** (Australian tick for me, having only previously seen two on a small island in Raja Ampat). The cattle grazing on the now dry floodplain were a magnet for both **Cattle Egret** and **Brolga**.

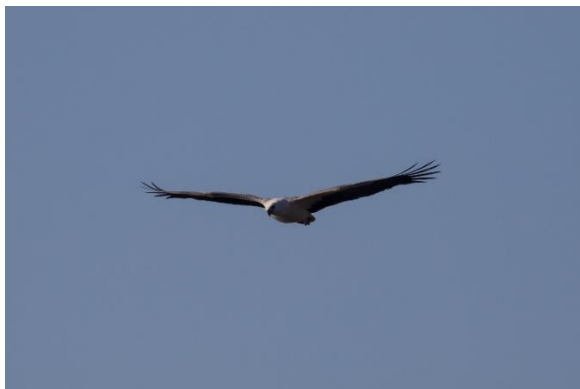
Late afternoon we arrived at Mary River Wilderness Retreat, our camping spot for the night. We set tents then walked up to the restaurant for very welcome beers and a delicious melt-in-mouth local steak. After a shower and back at the tent a **Barking Owl** called. It didn't call again, so although I walked about the campsite a bit and waved my torch around, pretty soon I was ready to turn in. It would be a restless night. Getting used to the heat, and my uncomfortable, inadequate, self-inflating mat was one thing. But in addition, a thirtieth birthday party (which we'd been warned about) ignored the curfew and revellers were still making noise and even honking car horns at 3am. Later, while still dark, very close **Bush Stone-curlews** called their mournful cry, and then several **Blue-winged Kookaburra** announced imminent dawn with their aggressive, intrusive laugh.

### Day 3





We started the day just a few km from our campsite with a gorgeous walk of 3-4km around the aptly-named Bird Billabong, suitably thronging with bird life as well as Agile Wallabies, and – disappointingly and worryingly – feral pigs. The numbers and diversity were impressive; all 3 **Ibis** species (**White**, **Straw-necked** and **Glossy**), 4 species of **Egret** (**Little**, **Intermediate**, **Great** and **Cattle**) and 3 species of **Heron** (**Pied**, **White-necked** and **White-faced**). In the beautiful morning light I particularly enjoyed improving on yesterday's views of the lovely **Pied Heron**. Hundreds of waterfowl dotted the water: we noted minimum counts of 50 **Wandering Whistling Duck**, a similar number of **Maggie Geese**, more than 40 **Green Pygmy Geese** and 25 **Radjah Shelduck**, as well as several **Pacific Black Duck** seeming somewhat out of place as familiar faces in a crowd of newbies. Most of them were very flighty, spooked either us even when we were still quite distant, or by raptors; as well as ubiquitous **Whistling Kites** we had **Swamp Harrier** and pair of impressive **White-bellied Sea-eagles**.





The surrounding savannah woodland was quiet in places, but we also accrued a nice list of woodland birds. Some flyover Lorikeets might have been Varied but were gone before we could get enough on them. Then we tracked down a couple of flycatchers: first **Paperbark** (cue Beatles harmonies again) then **Leaden Flycatcher**. A large pair of birds that flew over were big enough for raptors and took some processing by the grey-matter: **Channel-billed Cuckoo**! We also found **Black-faced** and **White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike**, and **Varied Trillers** were positively common. When we did find a few gums in flower there was quite a bit of activity with several **White-throated Honeyeaters**, **White-gaped Honeyeater** and a chance for us to get to grips with **Rufous-throated Honeyeater** (the juvs of Rufous-throated and Rufous Banded look very similar because neither have their rufous bits yet). A couple of **Forest Kingfisher** shared the same tree. On the return to the car we noted more feral pigs, as well as a few parrots with a red theme: **Red-tailed Black-cockatoo**, **Red-winged Parrot** and **Red-collared Lorikeet**.

At 9.30 we drove back towards the roadhouse, but pulled over when we saw a couple of birders, Darwin locals on a weekend trip down to Kakadu (I have promptly forgotten their names, but from their accents, both clearly ex-pat poms). It was a good job we stopped for a chat because they turned out to be watching a small flock of **Varied Lorikeet**. This flock was one of only two or three sightings all week, and our only perched birds!



Back at MR Wilderness Retreat we broke camp, grabbed breakfast in the dining room then hit the road for a 90 minute drive to Jabiru in the eastern part of Kakadu. The Arnhem Hwy crosses the South Alligator River en route, and we stopped here for 20 mins or so to stretch legs and check out the area around the boat ramp. A flock of 50 **Little Corellas** was making a racket, but late morning in 35 degree heat it was otherwise pretty quiet bird-wise. I managed to pull something out of the bag by finding a definitive **Broad-billed Flycatcher**; we saw two birds and were able to get unequivocal views of the bill-shape and the graduated under-tail feathers. We also noted **Lemon-bellied Flycatcher** and **Paperbark Fly** 🎵 before hitting the road again.



We drove directly to Border Store where we hoped to grab some lunch, but, like many other places, it was closed. This was presumably covid-induced, but there was no indication as to whether it was temporary or permanent. The middle of the day didn't seem like a particularly good time to be wandering about in the sandstone so Paul suggested we take a walk on the Manngarre Trail in a nearby small monsoon forest. He'd had Rainbow Pitta here in 2014!



At the boat-ramp in the carpark I had my first Saltwater Crocs; a big bastard was lazing on a mud-bank not far from the ramp and another drifted semi-submerged in the tidal current. Although it was a bit cooler in the shade of the monsoon forest, it was largely bird free. About 500m along the trail we'd barely even heard a bird, much less seen any, and Paul suggested I try some pitta playback. I wasn't too hopeful, but cranked up the app anyway, and to my surprise but excitement, within seconds it had been answered by at least two nearby **Rainbow Pittas**. They gave us the run-around for at least 20 minutes during which time I was rewarded initially with poor flight views as one bombed across the trail and promptly disappeared again, then various slightly obscured views. Eventually I was sated with my views at least. One of the pictures I did get is shite but quite atmospheric; a bird calling in dappled light making photography rather challenging, but very indicative of the typical pitta experience. Rainbow is my 12<sup>th</sup> of this iconic family.



We checked out Cahill's Crossing, a ford across the East Alligator river into Aboriginal lands, which looked like a real-life version of Frogger – crocs lined up across the river like logs.



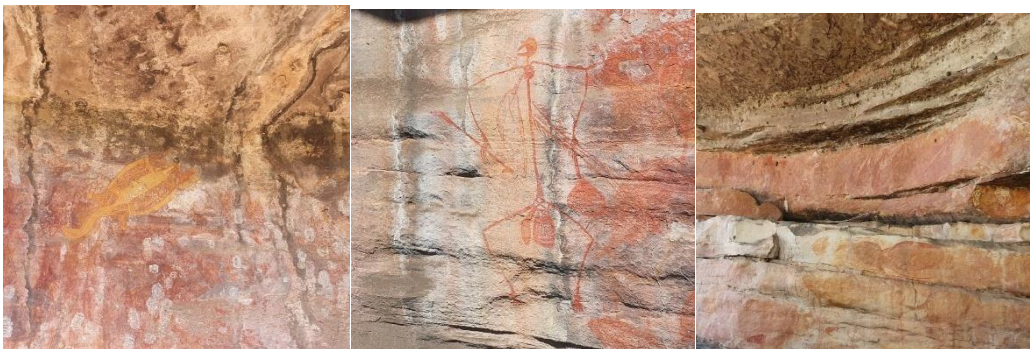


Afterwards we drove a short way to Ubirr, famous for its indigenous rock art and one of the iconic Kakadu sites featured on Crocodile Dundee. We were about to trek off to the rock art but I'd left something in the car. As I walked back to unlock, I vaguely recognised a soft cooing. I looked up and there were four **Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeons** on the large rock directly above our car!



The view across the East Alligator river flood plain is spectacular, and very famous for sunsets (we were too early), but a stunning pair of soaring **Black-breasted Buzzards** completed the experience for us.





On the road back towards Jabiru I spied something on the far verge and braked hard, swinging car around so we could view back along the road through the side windows. I was glad I did stop, because this turned out to be our only **Partridge Pigeon** of the week!



An hour later we arrived at Cooinda where we had a choice of campsites. Probably quieter, and certainly less busy, would have been the Mardugal Campground. However mindful of the joys of beer after birding I opted for the slightly more upmarket, and definitely much busier, Cooinda Lodge Caravan Park. Initially I regretted this but after I faffed quite a bit and we'd found a quieter bit of the unpowered section we set tents and assessed whether we had time for more birding. On this occasion, our judgement that we did was somewhat amiss; we drove 25 minutes back to Nourlanngie Rock (it was further than we remembered, but we did see a young Dingo by the roadside), arriving just before sunset. The 10 minute walk we had at the base of the rock was birdless and felt like a waste of a trip, especially because we were both fretting at the ominous "Open 9am-Sunset" sign by a gate across the road; we would not want to be locked in here miles from nowhere overnight. Fortunately our worries were misplaced, because the gate was open as we drove out with the light fading. Back at the lodge we showered then walked over to the bistro for dinner, and of course those beers.

On the way back to the tent a **Bush Stone-curlew** ran in front of us by the ablution block, and I would hear also **Barking Owls** before falling asleep. Despite the busy camp-ground, tonight the noises were wildlife and not human.

#### Day 4

The start of the day was structured around a pre-booked activity, a cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong. This cruise is justly famous for its proximity to nature, especially birds and crocodiles, and particularly at sunrise, mist hovering over the water and flood plains.







It was a fantastic experience, living up to billing, though we failed to see either of the unlikely but key targets I had for here, Little Kingfisher and Great-billed heron (both potential Australian ticks, but not lifers). Nevertheless a highlight for me was getting up-close-and-personal with **Jabiru** (Black-necked Stork), my first in Australia of this iconic northern bird.



Of course we also saw several crocs including one very big male, as well as Buffalo. Literally thousands of **Plumed Whistling Ducks** lined the edges of the waterway. Other avian highlights included **Brolga**, lovely close views of **Jacana**, **White-bellied Sea-eagle**, and **Azure Kingfisher**. As we were watching the latter, Paul called to me that he was onto a potential **Bar-breasted Honeyeater**. I lurched over to his side of the boat in time to find it in a tree top and note the key features, just in time for it to disappear, not to be seen again. When this happens with lifers it is extremely disappointing, and especially so this morning because we had been doing poorly with overall with the top end Honeyeaters.







After the boat ride we drove back to Nourlangie Rock, another spectacular local site. I found Kakadu to be a curious place, isolated places of incredible natural and spiritual beauty separated by endless kms of unattractive savannah of scraggy half-dead looking trees and dry grass, often with burnt understorey. Undoubtedly important habitat, but not much to look at compared with spots like Ubirr, Nourlangie and the various billabongs.



In the carpark we bumped into Stuart Hull, fellow SA birder and known to me primarily as the berley-master on Port Mac pelagics. He was on his own NT trip having driven from SA setting out a couple of weeks ago. After catching up with him we walked the trail that leads along the base of the rock and into a shady moist gully. We still needed three sandstone specialties but the only one we found this morning was **White-lined Honeyeater**. Now split from Kimberley Honeyeater, this fairly plain *Meliphaga* is a NT endemic! We scanned the rock-face hoping for either Shrike-thrush or more Rock-pigeons but without luck. I did pick up a couple of distant **Little Woodswallow**, a lifer!

From Nourlangie we detoured to nearby Anbangbang Billabong (another Crocodile Dundee site). A couple of **Jabiru** were stalking on the far edge and 100s of **Wandering Whistling Ducks** were resting on the water's edge as well as several of the other usual suspects at wetlands.



A **Brush Cuckoo** jumped about in the grass catching caterpillars and worms. We also drove along another track to get to Gubara, another famous rocky outcrop where we hoped for Sandstone Shrike-thrush. At the end of the track it became apparent that to “do” this site would involve a lengthy walk in the midday heat, so we scanned rocks by the carpark and clambered about on some close ones. We heard a **Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon** here, but we could not track it down. More **Little Woodswallows** and my first Australian **Pheasant Coucal** were the highlights here and at 13:00 we headed to Jabiru for some lunch.

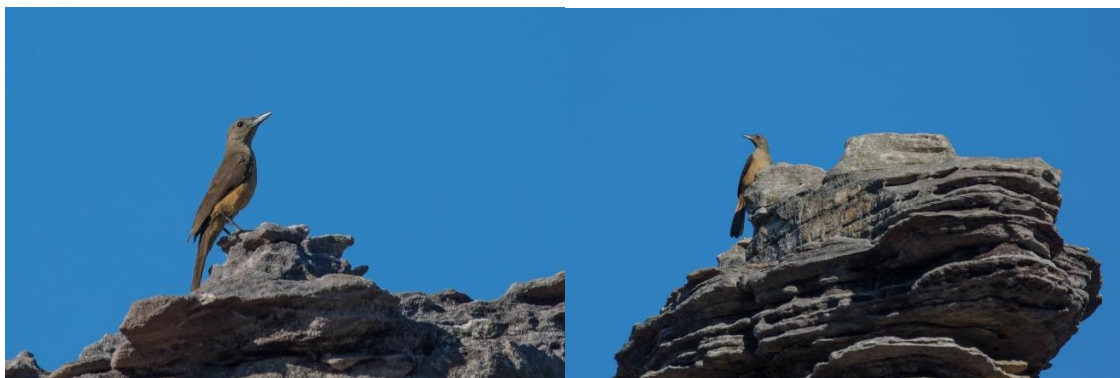
Jabiru is a god-forsaken place with few redeeming features. The Parks Australia website describes it very generously thus: “Jabiru is the main township in Kakadu National Park. It has all the services you’re likely to need and is a perfect base for exploring the park.” I had imagined this might lend it some charm, perhaps a street with some Indigenous art shops, tourist information and a few restaurants. But actually it was built not for tourism but to support the Ranger Uranium mine built in 1980s and now in the process of closing. There are a couple of hotels, oases in the savannah, but no discernible centre and nowhere we could find for lunch. The words “perfect base to explore” are presumably used in the same way that a town with nothing else to offer is described as “the gateway” to somewhere. One thing going for Jabiru is that it has Optus 4G reception, so we checked out Trip Advisor for where to eat; top recommendation was the social club. But we followed our GPS there to discover it is closed, boarded up and covered in graffiti! Next on the list was the Bowali Visitor Centre where there is a café, a few km out of town. But it was closed for “upgrades”. In the end we made do with sandwiches from the servo and a refreshing icy-pole! While we munched away I fired off some messages to Tom Tarrant to see if he could advise on our best bet for Sandstone Shrike-thrush.

In the heat of the day we decided our next destination would be Mamakula Billabong, about 30km back along the Arnhem Hwy. At the excellent hide we had some nice close encounters with **Magpie Goose**, **Paperbark Flycatcher** and **Rufous-banded Honeyeater** as well as enjoying sitting down in the shade to view for once instead of stomping about in 35 degree heat! A walk through the surrounding grasslands did not yield the hoped-for finches other than around 10 **Crimson Finches**, and a few **Red-backed Fairywren**.





By this time Tom had come through with some very promising sounding gen for the Shrike-thrush so we pointed the Forrester back to Border Store / Ubirr and parked up at nearby Bardedjildji where a scenic trail leads for a few km through paperbark woodland, sandstone outliers and pockets of monsoon forest. After a short walk through the bush we came to the first rocks and started scanning. I played the song a few times and all of a sudden I looked up to see a large slim **Sandstone Shrike-thrush** on top of a rock looking down at me. Paul was nowhere to be seen, having wandered off in a different direction. I called softly at first, then louder as the bird seemed to stay put, and eventually shouted at the top of my voice: "Paul: Where the f\*\*\* are you? I've got one!". Finally I could hear footsteps and Paul arrived just in time for it to fly off from its exposed rock-top to somewhere out of sight. Fortunately another burst of playback brought it back to the edge of another nearby outcrop and we both enjoyed great views of this northern sandstone specialist. Three out of four now down, and I texted Tom with a single word message: "Legend!". In retrospect I should have added an adjective starting with "F".



It remained very hot so we decided on another walk along the Manngarre Trail near border store. This was very successful, and we found a very cooperative and vociferous Pitta that was much easier to photograph than yesterday's birds.





We were also able to track down a stunning **Rose-crowned Fruit-dove** for my lifer!





Very satisfied with the day's birding, and also mindful that yesterday we had tried to cram too much in, we now drove back to Jabiru to the one restaurant, a Thai place called Anbinik where we enjoyed an excellent and very substantial green chicken curry. As we finished off our meals it was getting dark and a **Barking Owl** started calling. I grabbed torch and bins from the car and strode off in search. Even without the torch I could see a pair of silhouetted outlines on a large palm frond. I warned Paul I was about to turn on the torch and lined up my bins ready for my first ever views of this lovely Ninox (and in the process rectifying a 7 year itch after a heard-only dip in Chiltern). After soaking in this view and feeling smug at how well (how easily) I had found them, I ran back to the car to get my camera but the birds had gone by the time I returned.

We drove carefully in the dark back to Cooina where we hoped to catch up with Stuart for a beer. We managed beer for sure, but couldn't find Stuart and turned in early.

## Day 5

Starting the day today, the one omission from our four Kakadu sandstone specialists was Banded Fruit-dove. We had a number of sites to try throughout the day, but decided that Nourlangie rock was our best bet and headed there for 7am. A bench above the damp gully provided a good spot with a view into some of the bigger trees, and in 30 minute vigil we were rewarded as at least one **Banded Fruit-dove** flew into the high tree tops at eye level. I managed to mess up my camera settings (actually by not resetting them from my abortive owl photograph the previous night) so our views were rather better than my record shot would suggest. We enjoyed the view from the top of the loop walk and tracked down our first unequivocal **Silver-crowned Friarbirds**. A few **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos** joined us at the viewing point, and we also heard a Sandstone Shrike-thrush singing from far off, but could not locate it.



As well as the casque shape, the angle (instead of curve) at the top-left of the dark facial skin is key in separating this from Helmeted.

So 4 from 4 of the sandstone specialists in this eastern part of Kakadu and we were feeling pretty smug and pleased with ourselves (and also grateful to our friends and the birding community at large for the intel they had shared).

Back in Cooina we grabbed a coffee and breakfast before breaking camp. As I waited for Paul to finish off packing his tent away I wandered about behind our spot and found some **Red-tailed Blacks** and a **Shining Flycatcher**.

The nearby Mardugal campsite walk passes through paperbark forest to a scenic picnic spot by Jim Jim Creek.





A highlight here was finding another **Bar-breasted Honeyeater**, this time affording great views and decent photos and making up for the fleeting encounter on the cruise yesterday.



It is around 160km from Cooina to Pine Creek, our next overnight stop, and we travelled south-west keeping our eyes peeled for raptors (this stretch of road seemed to be our best bet for Red Goshawk, though ultimately we were unsuccessful) and stopping at various creek crossings, per Dolby. Our most productive stop came at Gerowie Creek, where we managed to find a stunning pair of **Buff-sided Robin**. Marc had tipped us off about this as a possible BSR site, but we were close to giving up after hearing nothing and getting zero response to playback. Clearly, however, the tape had brought them in

silently to check us out.

About 500m before Mary River Ranger Station we stopped by the water tower to check out a couple of tip-offs. One was that sometimes Red Gos sometimes roost on the tower. But not today, sadly. The other bit of gen was bang-on though, and we found 3-4 **Northern Rosellas** sheltering from the harsh midday sun under the water tank atop the tower. A **Silver-backed Butcherbird** was hopping around the car-park at the ranger station itself, and a quick walk through the savannah here yielded a few **Little Friarbirds** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**.







We'd hoped to have lunch at the Mary River Roadhouse, just 10km further on, but the roadhouse was closed, another victim of the pandemic. I had some fruit and some cheesy bread I'd picked up at a Darwin supermarket in case of emergency so we made do with that while sitting in the shade outside. A couple of **Northern Rosellas** were enjoying a shower under sprinkler in the deserted campground, and three **Great Bowerbirds** scuttled about the carpark.

Though we continued our raptor scanning, we didn't stop for birding until we reached Pine Creek at about 1530. As I set my tent in the campground behind the pub, my attention was drawn by an unfamiliar gentle twittering and I found a young **Hooded Parrot** feeding in the tree above my tent. If only all target birds would be so obliging! A walk through the water gardens in front of the pub in the centre of the town yielded a few more Hoodies, including my first smart male, and we also enjoyed some quiet moments watching various honeyeaters – **Blue-faced**, **White-throated** and **Rufous-throated** – in the ponds that give the gardens their name.



A visit to the sewage works and cemetery (somewhat bizarrely right next to each other) hoping for finches failed to produce finches but bolstered the trip list with **Black-fronted Dotterel** and **Pied Stilt**. Paul recognised a vaguely familiar squawky whistle as **Cocktiel** and we tracked down a flock of around 20 of these lovely outback parrots.



We failed to find any more Hoodies at known evening roost sites like the Enterprise Mine lookout and the nearby town water tower, but as we drove back into town we found several on wires and on the grass of the water gardens in the evening light.



After sunset Paul directed us back up Chinatown Rd where he had gen that **Ghost Bats** – Australia’s largest true bat species – leave their day roosts in a couple of old mine shafts. I’d expected a spectacle like the one at Naracoort where bats emerge in such numbers that it looks like small clouds of smoke drifting up into the air. We didn’t see a mass exodus from the mine shafts, but well after dark we were able to pick out several hawking Ghost Bats in the torch light. Back at the Lazy Lizard resort in Pine Creek we settled in for a decent pizza and of course a few beers in the western-themed bar.

## Day 6

Honeyeaters were not the only family with which we had been “underperforming” in the first half of the trip. The other – more important one – was the finches. I started the trip needing six lifer finches/munias and a further two potential Australian ticks. The lifer targets included Gouldian Finch, arguably the best



looking and most desirable of the family in the world! It features, for instance, in Chandler and Couzens "100 Birds to See in Your Lifetime" at number 14 (incidentally I have now seen 53 of their excellent, if very subjective, choices). By day 6 we had seen only Double-barred in a few places (lovely but not "needed"), Crimson (Australian tick) and Chestnut-breasted Mannikin (Aus tick). All six lifer targets remained, so today was set to be finch day with a lot at stake. We started early to make sure we arrived at the Edith Falls Rd at Dead Woman's Creek at 7am as prescribed.

Small trails through the long grass, made by previous birding visits, were a sure sign we had found the right place. We found some secluded spots from which to view the small remnant pools of fresh water, but they were worryingly devoid of birds, and there was little sign there were any waiting to come down to drink. After a while I walked a bit further down the creek in search of alternative, less watched spots but found only one further pool which was similarly quiet. Back at our original spot we were joined by NSW birder/photographer Chris Nixon who'd been here yesterday. He'd had a variety of finches, but it had been similarly quiet between 7 and 8 and he'd seen his birds later in the day, after 11am! In 30mins we observed one **Bar-shouldered Dove**, one **Blue-winged Kookaburra** and one **Paperbark Flycatcher**.

We decided to join Chris back up the road at a drying pool by the railway crossing where he'd also had finches yesterday. This was quite a good call because within minutes a **Masked Finch** had flown over our heads, into bushes, then down to the water's edge. Soon after I had my first **Long-tailed Finch**, surely a contender for best looking of the family if it weren't for Gouldian. In all we observed about 10 of each, along with a similar number of **Double-barred** and several of the usual suspects like **Rainbow Bee-eaters**, **Blue-winged Kookaburra** and **White-breasted Woodswallow**.



Back at the "main" stakeout on Dead Woman's Creek we observed a few **Masked** and **Long-tailed Finches** along with some **Red-tailed Black-cockatoos** which came down to drink, but nothing new and no great numbers

By 9:30 we gave up and trundled the half hour back up Stuart Hwy to Pine Creek to pack our tents away. As we drove north I noted two very large, long-necked brownish-grey birds flying on deep powerful wingbeats. My initial thought was Brolga, but these birds were not grey enough, nor did they have trailing legs. we were travelling too

fast to stop, but these must have been **Australian Bustard**, even if we are not sure enough to put a record on ebird.

After a decent coffee and bite to eat at Mayse's Café we retraced our path south, this time calling in at another spot suggested as a finch stake out in Dolby, Fergusson River crossing. Here we found a nice puddle with finches and honeyeaters coming to drink. We sat quietly on the sand in the shade near the puddle and observed various comings and goings. Several **White-throated Honeyeaters** gave superb close views and were joined by **White-gaped**, **Rufous-throated** and **Brown Honeyeaters**. About a dozen **Masked Finches** were also drinking from an unfeasibly small puddle when they were joined by a slightly larger dull grey-green bird. It was a while before I processed what was in front of me and realised this was a juvenile **Gouldian Finch**: an anticlimactic way to experience a lifer that some have suggested might be the 14<sup>th</sup> best bird in the world!





The young Gouldian flushed to bushes on the far side of the mostly dry riverbed before Paul could get on it but we were patient enough for it to return so we both got the underwhelming lifer, but our hopes it would be joined by an adult were in vain. By 11:30 we gave up. It was especially gripping to discover later on in the day that had we walked a further 200m up the creek bed we'd have come to a spot that SA birding mate Neil Edwards had found a flock of 40 Gouldians with several adults just the day before!

We gave Dead Woman's Creek one more shot, walking downstream several hundred metres in the hope of finding a more active puddle – we didn't – and then staking out another likely spot closer to the road. We saw no Gouldians but there was certainly more activity, with several **Long-tailed, Masked and Crimson Finches** coming to drink. Even better, we had our first **Banded Honeyeater**. A couple of this pretty, nomadic honeyeater, in the same family as Black and Pied, were coming to drink.





We took lunch at the excellent, highly recommended and suitably named, Finch Cafe in Katherine, then headed west towards Victoria River Roadhouse. We had a few sites to check out on the two hundred km drive. Our first stop was an unremarkable spot that Marc had recommended for Black-tailed Treecreeper. Despite visiting more than a dozen sites where this northern endemic can be found, and driving through 100s of km of suitable habitat we had still not connected. Our stop outside Katherine failed to break the duck, but I did get my first ever **Yellow-tinted Honeyeater** (another

species that we must have driven past 1000s). Getting this *Lichenostomus* was significant for me because it was the only single-observer bird seen on my 2008 PNG trip. One morning in Port Moresby one of the other punters took a tour of the hotel gardens and saw the only Yellow-tinted any of us had in 4 weeks. Twelve years later I finally clawed back the grip.

We saw little of note at a few other stops in a hot, unproductive part of the day; best birds noted were some **Cockatiel**, a few **Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo** and our first **Apostlebirds**, all at a farm waterhole about 50km from Victoria River Roadhouse.



It was very quiet at the roadhouse and we were warned that the kitchen was closing at 1830 – they usually cater for people coming to/from WA, but with the border closed to entry there were very few travellers like us, just coming as far as Timber Creek, and escapees from WA

had dried up to a trickle. We did notice there was at least one other punter in the campground; the name above ours in the visitor book was SA birder Neil Edwards (he of the gripping Gouldians). Once we'd set our tents we wandered over to his campervan to say hi, then joined forces for a quick trip down to the boat-ramp, another site featured in Dolby and where Paul had seen Purple-crowned Fairywren six years ago.

As we walked down towards the boat-ramp the track passed through tall cane-grass and pretty soon Paul and Neil had found some finches. I joined them (having returned to the car to pick up my phone which I'd forgotten) to find that they were looking at a couple of **Chestnut-breasted Mannikins**. But as I scanned the tops of the cane grass I noticed another different looking bird. At first I thought this was juvenile Chestnut-breasted, but as I got to see more of it I could see the tail was all ochre-yellow and the head grey. This was not a juv Chestnut-breasted, but an adult **Yellow-rumped Mannikin**, perhaps the most elusive of our finch targets!



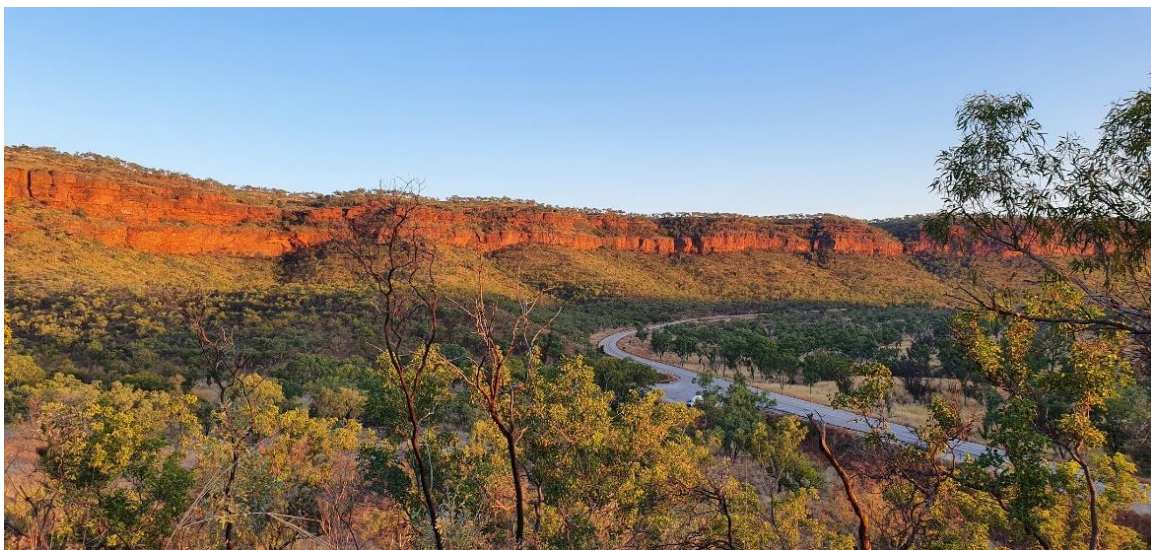
There were no Purple-crowned FW in evidence at first so we pushed our way through some tall cane grass to a small clearing where we were surrounded by head-high grass and I ran a short burst of playback. Instantly a male **Purple-crowned Fairywren** dashed from the dense cover behind Neil, giving tickable flight views and showing well enough that we could see his stunning purple crown without optics. Over the next few minutes he checked us out, but only at one point did he stay still in the open in the sunlight, and that

was for a mere 3-4 seconds. I was lucky enough to get my aim and focus sorted quickly enough to blast off a couple of shots in the narrow window of opportunity but I didn't hear the shutters of the others fire before he dropped out of sight.



On a high from our double score this evening, resurrecting a hot and largely birdless afternoon, we started back for the road-house. A **Spotted Harrier** kept us entertained hunting along the roadside for a few hundred metres, and I was happy to wash my schnitty down with some refreshing Great Northern lager. The proprietors had some unwelcome news from a birding perspective. A Barking Owl that had been a regular post-dusk visitor to their fuel pumps over several years had not been seen since a fire ripped through in September 2019.

## Day 7



We began the day with a superbly scenic walk up the escarpment at Victoria River Roadhouse. Prior to this trip I had no idea that Gregory National Park or *Judbarra* even existed but the scenery here was just superb. Starting at river level a trail leads up through the sandstone escarpment to the top, affording superb views of the wide canyon carved out by the Victoria River.





We saw few birds until, close to the top I heard a flutter of wings and an all-dark pigeon swooped around behind Paul and Neil and bombed out of sight. This had to be **White-quilled Rock-pigeon**, but my views were not great and I was not sure either of the others had seen anything. A few metres on another bird flushed and we all got decent looks in flight. It seemed as if it would stop on top of an outcrop to check us out but then at the last minute flapped once more and dropped behind the rocks. We clambered up to arrive at the spot it seemed to have gone to cover and moved carefully, but it flushed again. Obviously I was not moving cautiously enough! It was already quite hot even though we were walking soon after dawn, and we rested a few minutes at the end of the trail and admired the view before starting the descent to our cars. Out in front, on a hunch I scanned the edges of the rocks about 100m below me and realised that a small rock sticking out was actually the head and breast of a rock-pigeon.

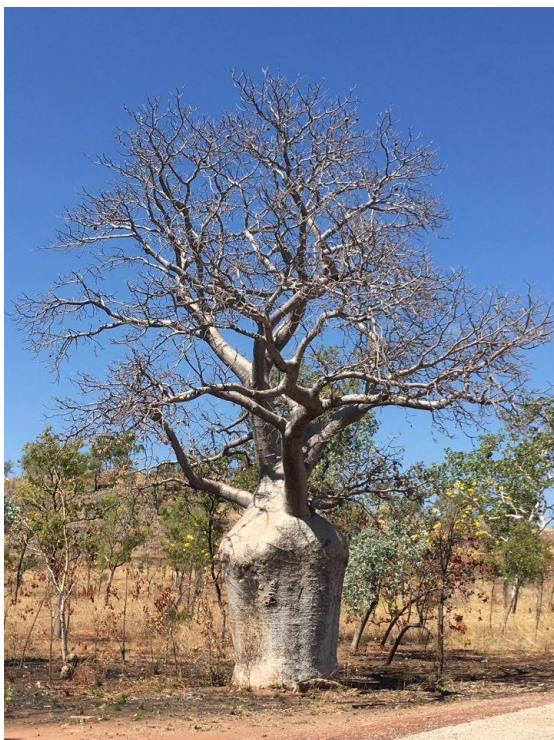


Paul stayed high to watch it while Neil and I carefully tried to get closer for a better view, but perhaps inevitably, it was aware of our presence and as I tried to pick my way down without stepping on a snake or plummeting to the road below, it slid away out of sight. As I tried to find another viewing spot the others both found Rock Wallabies, but I was too concentrated on re-finding the rock-pigeon and missed these, something I would later regret. I was keen to get even just one more view in flight because none of our views to date had enabled any of us to see the eponymous feature, the white-quills. Morecombe's app

helpfully shows a flight view with prominent white wing panels and we had not seen these despite several quite good flight views. Two more birds flushed for good flight views, and again I was unable to see any white in the wings. Surely these were not Chestnut-quilled this far west? I texted Marc to ask the question but before my text got through I was able to resolve the riddle back at the car with reference to ABG: we were seeing the dark NT race *Boothi* which has very little white in the wing.

We checked out the cane grass below the carpark, hoping for Purple-crowned Fairywren and finches. But we found only a few **Brown Honeyeaters** and some **Double-barred Finches**, before returning to VR Roadhouse for a late-ish breakfast.

Our next objective was to get to a site beyond Timber Creek that Tom Tarrant had told us about, where he'd had a number of finch species including Star Finch, still on our "needs" list. En route we stopped at a creek crossing on the Buchanan Hwy (a detour of about 10km south of Victoria Hwy). The creek bed was dry and hardly thronging with bird-life. **Diamond Dove**, **Great Bowerbird**, a few **Masked Finch** and three **Black-faced Woodswallows** (our first of the trip) were the main additions, but the "almost highlight" was when several small brown birds flushed from almost under our feet. They didn't fly far, and we got enough in flight to realise these were almost certainly Button-quails, maybe Red-backed or Little, but neither of us got enough on them for an ID, and they had sloped away undetected in the long grass by the time we arrived at the spot they'd seemed to land.



As we tracked further west we came across our first Boabs, amazing and distinctive bulbous trees characteristic of the north-west of Australia.

We arrived at the spot Tom had recommended late morning – about the same time he'd been there – but failed to find the small pool he'd described and pinned via GPS cords (!), despite driving back and forth along the same stretch of road and exploring a few possibilities on foot. On one such excursion from the car we came across a few **Budgies**, a score or more **Masked Woodswallows** and tracked down some juvenile mannikins for views good enough to conclude they were **Pictorella Mannikin**, the last of the set we needed. One bird was beginning to show its breast stripes confirming the ID.

It was mid-afternoon by the time we were finally re-approaching Timber Creek. A group of Brolgas in a drying roadside pool were notable on our way back.





We decided to take a small tourist/history detour to “Gregory’s Tree”. A.C. Gregory was the colonial explorer who first mapped out the Victoria River, and was camped here for 10 months between 1855 and 1856. His carved inscriptions on the tree are still visible more than 150 years later.



We also scoped out the airfield as we came back into Timber Creek, though our initial impressions were that it was not very birdy, at least not at 1530 in 36 degree heat. A couple of **Wedge-tailed Eagles** provided a minor highlight. The lack of birds in the afternoon heat convinced us our best move was to get back to Timber Creek and make our camp, so that the slightly cooler later afternoon light would be available to us for birding.

By 1700 we had checked in to the campground behind the pub and were back up the road checking out the cane grass at Bradshaw Bridge. We couldn’t work out how to gain access anywhere – there were no apparent tracks – so we did not stay long. But our short stay yielded some quality birds. **Rufous-throated**, **Yellow-tinted** and **White-gaped Honeyeater** were observed in the large gums, while in the cane grass a male **Purple-crowned Fairywren** responded to pishing and a couple of **Yellow-rumped Mannikin** showed themselves on the tops of the grass stems. There were presumably more lower down in the grass but impossible to see.





A drive down the track to Policeman's Point (scanning the grasslands for finches) was largely fruitless and at 1740 we found ourselves back at the airfield thinking that, if nothing else, we could use the last of the light for some photography. A group of 6 **Cockatiel** sitting nicely in a dead tree seemed a prime target for a pic so I stopped the car and fired off a couple of shots.



Wait a second! WTF is that out-of-focus flash of green, mauve and yellow bottom right of frame?? I immediately realised we had lucked onto our most-wanted, an adult male CMF **Gouldian Finch**! I may have let out a few expletives, but we now grilled the tree and discovered there were several more finches sharing their perches with the Cockatiel. We spent the next 40 minutes until sunset following the flock around counting around 20 individuals in the end, including 4 black-faced and 2 red-faced adult males.







After our usual pub meal and beer celebration back in Timber Creek we decided to sit in the bbq area near the swimming pool and crack open a bottle of red wine I had picked up in Darwin for just such an occasion. The free NT tourism wifi just reached here and we caught up on the day's bird count, did some "homework" on ebird, briefly checked social media and the online news (though I scrupulously avoided email). I was ready to turn in and getting my tent ready when I heard the woof-woof of a **Barking Owl** calling softly nearby. Remembering the advice of Robert Hutchinson who had taken the piss when I missed one near Chiltern in 2013 because I took too long to get dressed, I grabbed my torch and camera and strode off in my undies to look. The bird was calling softly — not a public announcement of presence and territory — more like a gentle "Hi Honey, I'm home!". I found him almost immediately quite high up and trying to eat what looked like a black rat, and a short while later he was joined by another to share the spoils. Without flash I used a technique Irene Dy showed me (see blog of my cheeky Manila stopover in 2019 [here](#)), balancing camera lens across the forearm of my torch-wielding hand, providing stability to the optics while also giving the flexibility to aim the torch with my cocked wrist. Sadly, I worked out the best place to view would have been by the bank of the small billabong, but since it was occupied by a sleeping croc I made do with a less-than-optimal angle.



## Day 8

Today we were due to begin the journey back to Darwin, so our first priority was "mopping up" remaining finches. In fact the previous two days had seen us pick up 5 of the 6 targets so that we now only needed Star Finch. A report of a few hundred on ebird from Amanda Lilleyman and Micha Jackson from a few days earlier seemed our best bet and had us heading back to the airfield for dawn.

I was up early, before light, to put my contact lenses in and freshen up in time to be out birding for dawn. As I waited for Paul I heard **Barking Owl** call again and this morning fairly easily tracked down 3 birds, two in the area from last night and one on the far side of the campground.

We decided to drive slowly, a full circuit around the outskirts. We picked up **Horsfield's Bushlark** and abundant **White-winged Trillers** on the near side, but it was not until we reached the far side edge that we started finding finches. Paul saw a couple of birds flush from grass near the boundary track to the top of a tree, and the very first one I landed bins on was green with a red face: adult **Star Finch**! I tried to get Paul onto it but he was viewing through the windscreen, and I found myself vassilating between

adjusting the car to improve Paul's view and grabbing a photo; I ended up managing neither before it flew a long way off and dropped out of sight. I did take pics of a few juveniles that hung about longer and discovered after the fact that there was another adult largely obscured that had crept into the edge of one of my photos.



Another dark group of munias flew from grass by the trackside to a dead tree and we counted about 15 **Pictorella Mannikins**, today having no difficulty picking these because most were adult or close to adult plumage



This was in contrast to the **Star Finches**; we saw a number of groups feeding on the track and in track-side grass, but these were all juveniles, probably more than a 100 in total. We also had **Chestnut-breasted** and **Yellow-rumped Mannikins** for a full-house of Mannikins at the airfield.





As well as the finches we accumulated a tidy list of other birds (though nothing new for the trip). Disappointingly we failed to find another adult Star Finch and at 8.30 opted for a change of scene. Near Bradshaw Bridge we had another nice encounter with a family of **Purple-crowned Fairywrens**, but again dipped on finches.



I'd seen a relatively recent ebird record of Black-tailed Treecreeper from Nackeroo Monument, so we made quick detour up there. The view was excellent and a **Brown Falcon** cruised by but there was no BTTC. After breakfast some **Great Bowerbirds** in the campsite kept me amused as Paul finished packing away his gear.



We had allowed most of the rest of the day to make our way back to Katherine, spending a bit of time at a few sites along and near the Victoria Hwy. First stop was another drive along the Bullita Access Rd. Marc had flagged this as a possible site for Spinifex Pigeon, a bird that would be a lifer for me but wasn't a *major* target because it is commoner in drier more central areas, so I hope to pick it up one day when I do the red centre properly. We didn't find any Spig Pigs, but did run into a nice flock of **Budgerigar** (about 20) and more than 60 **Masked Woodswallows**. We heard a **Pallid Cuckoo** some way off and its response to 3 seconds of playback was to come over and check us out instantly.



At Dingo Creek we followed a rough track down to a pandanus lined creek line, one of the few that still held water. As we approached a gap in the pandanus a **Back Bittern** flushed and flew down the creek into dense cover where we could not relocate it; a lifer for Paul and Australian tick for me, and exactly what we were targeting at this spot!





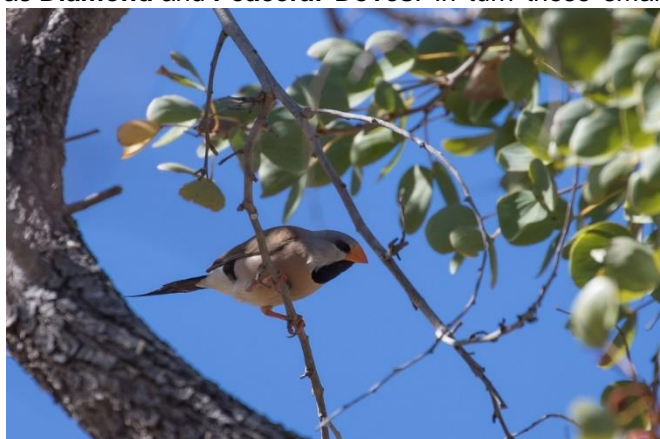
We detoured 10-15km south on the Buntine Hwy to a couple of creek crossings where we hoped for Northern Shrike-tit. We dipped in both spots, but did have some nice birds. The shady creek-line had some nice flowering gums attractive to honeyeaters and we had **White-gaped**, **Rufous-throated** and **Blue-faced Honeyeaters**. We also flushed a **Tawny Frogmouth** who looked none too pleased to be disturbed!



Our first **Red-browed Pardalote** put in an appearance here also. Near the second creek crossing a cattle water-trough and leaky tank created some puddles that were attractive to **Masked**, **Long-tailed** and **Double-barred Finches**, as well as **Diamond** and **Peaceful Doves**. In turn these small birds were probably what attracted a **Brown Goshawk** to the scene.

We had a few more stops but saw nothing of note. Worryingly, at every site throughout the day we had been on the look-and-listen-out for Black-tailed Treecreeper with no reward. I was getting concerned this could be a glaring hole in our lists!

For our final night out-back, we had a kind offer from Mick Jerram to pitch tents at his place, "Miniata", a property east of Katherine just outside Nitmiluk National Park. We grabbed a meal back in town at the Barrel and Cruse Bistro where my choice of steak and ribs played to the outback bistro's strengths and was quite good; Paul on the other hand knew he was taking a risk ordering a Vindaloo, but he was entitled to expect better than what was basically chicken in gravy with a slight curry flavour, even out here in the sticks. We returned to Mick's where we shared a few stories, a beer and a glass of port. He warned us that there were some frisky teenage buffalo in area, and they had ripped down his clothes line a couple of nights ago but reassured us that we'd "probably be ok in





our tents". It was a stunning night and I took the opportunity to try some star photography with my 14mm lens.



At what was probably 2am I was woken by the sound of galloping hooves as the young buffalo came charging up the track and past our little camp, worryingly close. With his tent in a slightly more exposed position Paul must've been in need of a change of underpants, but fortunately our tents did not prove as attractive as Mick's clothes line and they charged off to the other end of the paddock and we fell back to sleep.

## Day 9

Our final full day began in a civilised fashion with a coffee and deck chairs in Mick's garden watching **Gouldian Finches** coming to drink at a sprinkler. Other nice birds similarly taking advantage of the free drink included a few lovely **Banded Honeyeater**, **Red-winged Parrot**, **Silver-crowned Friarbird**, and abundant **Brown Honeyeater**. I tried hard to get a decent image of **Dusky Honeyeater** with a view to sending this to Steve in the UK. We had shared a joke prior to our 2008 trip to PNG that Dusky Myzomela was the quintessential list-padder: "Exactly *not* the reason to go to PNG" or words to that effect.







After we'd packed away our tents, Paul and I wandered down to the river where Mick had kindly let us take his small boat downstream. The previous evening he'd reassured us – casually, in the manner of the seasoned Territorian (much like with the Buffalo) – that there hadn't been a croc death in the Katherine River in years, and that there probably weren't any Salties in the stretch we'd be on. And even if there were we wouldn't see them! Initially we decided to take our chances with the crocs and unfamiliar craft, hoping for Great-billed Heron. But about half a km upstream, having noted a few **Intermediate Egrets** and **Tree Martins**, the river becomes shallower and we decided to turn around, partly so as not to push our luck, and partly to ensure we had some birding time in the cooler morning hours as we travelled north of Katherine. Paul had initially been a bit more cautious than me about the boat-trip and he had no need of our target, and for me it was only an Australian tick, but when I thought about this afterwards, I was more disappointed at leaving behind the opportunity for a fairly unique adventure than giving up on GBH. But in the end Paul was right to reign in my more extreme instincts (on this occasion, as on several others) and when I told Nikki the story afterwards she was in full agreement with Paul!

Before leaving Mick's I had noted a flock of **Varied Lorikeet** which flew over noisily and I tracked down to a large gum at the front of the neighbour's house, but they were flushed by the neighbour's frisky and noisy dog before I could get photos. At the other end of the paddock Paul noted some **Northern Rosellas** which had presumably come late to the drinks party, but which also flew off before he could get pics or alert me.

We continued to be on the lookout for Black-tailed Treecreeper but continued to dip. We had a coffee and late breakfast at the Finch Café then headed north. At Fergusson River crossing we walked the extra few hundred metres to the spot where Neil reported Gouldian's just a few days earlier. Our hopes were not high, because he had already reported to us that on his return yesterday, the attractive puddle was dry and he scored no further Gouldians. As expected, therefore, we also dipped. We saw small numbers of a nice array of species, the highlights being a **Black-chinned (Golden-backed) Honeyeater** and further **Banded Honeyeater**.

At Pine Creek we made a point of checking out the amazing Great Bowerbird bower out the front of the pub that we had unaccountably missed first time through (Neil told us about it) and then headed out to the cemetery for photos at the biggest termite mound we encountered anywhere. Based on a termite size of 4mm, and an estimate of the height of this huge bastard as 5.5m (I'm 183cm), scaled up to human-sized this mound would be about 2.5km high or more than 3 times the height of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the world tallest building. So two examples of nature's incredible architects!



We also had hopes of Star Finches (we saw no finch species at all) and another — perhaps final — crack at Black-tailed Treecreeper. We had a quick scan of the sewage ponds and saw a few **Rajdah Shelduck**, **Pied Stilt**, **Black-fronted Dotterel** and started to drive our way out when for some reason I stopped. I can't recall why but it may have been we'd seen some **Black-faced Woodswallows**. Whatever the reason, it was enough for us to pile out of the car to check out the spot. I accidentally left my phone in the car and returned for it, and then tried playing the BTTC song. It sounded different somehow and I alerted Paul. But then I realised I was having a Bluetooth moment and it was coming from my phone, not my speaker, hence the different sound quality. False alarm. But then, almost in the same breath I was declaring false alarm, we heard another call and realised this was neither my phone nor my speaker. BFTTFC, you beauty!! It was some way off so we walked quickly through ridiculously shite looking habitat, scraggy, half-dead trees, termite mounds and burnt ground and finally locked onto one, then two **Black-tailed Treecreepers**. A pair gave us the run-around, never coming close for great photos, but still incredibly satisfying and a great relief to connect with a fairly common bird I had almost resigned myself to missing. My last of the Australasian Treecreepers!



From here it was fairly solid flog north to Darwin with a couple of stops for refreshments and leg-stretches, but with BTTC under the belt we started planning whether there'd be time for birding in Darwin.

We decided on checking out the East Point mangrove boardwalk once again because the tide seemed more favourable than our morning trip a week ago. We noted **Collared Kingfisher** in the mangroves and **Pacific Golden Plover** out on the mudflats (both new for the trip) at the end of the boardwalk but didn't find any of the mangrove specialties. A **Black Butcherbird** showed well and it was only with this view that we noticed how similar structurally it is to Australian Magpie; perhaps a bit slimmer and larger,



but with that same the aggressive bill. Later reference to our field guides shows that the Butcherbird replaces Magpie here in the Top End.



Our final bit of birding for the day was to check out a spot higher up the tidal creek off Richardson Drive in Ludmilla. Somewhere near here a recent ebird report had great photos of all three of our remaining targets: Mangrove Robin, Mangrove Golden Whistler and White-breasted Whistler. We didn't have high hopes this evening but wanted to scope out access and likelihood in case we wanted to visit the next morning. As a scoping mission it was quite successful, but it was only when we checked tides and did some further detective work later that evening, that we realised this site is probably good on a very high tide but maybe otherwise not worthwhile (maybe some Darwin birders could comment?)

We spent our final night in the Darwin City Hotel which was reasonably priced, centrally located, had secure parking, and very helpful staff. For our final evening we found a Vietnamese restaurant and followed this up with a few beers in a Mitchell St pub.

## Day 10

Our flight was not until 1pm so we had the morning to bird. We had an excellent early breakfast directly across the road from our hotel at Ray's Patisserie, then we headed to the Osterman St mangrove walk where it was low tide and we hoped for an appointment with three mangrove specialists. Mangroves are not my favourite habitat, but it was surprisingly pleasant and scenic in the cooler early morning hours.



The tide was already quite far out and a couple of Far-eastern Curlew were walking about on the mudflats.



We walked immediately to the spot we'd heard and had untickable views of a White-breasted Whistler, and although we heard one, it was not cooperating. Likewise for the next two birds which gave us the run-around. Finally we found one that gave passable views, then as we relaxed a bit we got better views and saw a few more. In fact they seemed to become so easy they got in the way of our net two targets.



My next top target for this morning was Mangrove Robin. We heard nothing and had no response to any playback from the Morcombe app both during and after our WBW chase and I was beginning to wonder if we would dip. I was in the process of downloading some xeno-canto mp3s to my phone to check the calls and see if a different voice might elicit a response, when I looked up and sitting barely 2m in front of me was a stonking **Mangrove Robin**. He sat there without making a sound but apparently unperturbed by our proximity for about a minute. He then flitted off deep into the mangroves.





We enjoyed the sight of thousands of tiny crabs emerging onto the mudflats and marching in groups. these tiny creatures are also the reason that the Whistler and Robin are here. Both are equipped with larger-than-usual bills for their respective families, designed to catch and eat these abundant crustaceans.

We heard the final target of the three, Mangrove Golden Whistler, which sang from an inaccessibly deep pocket of mangroves but I could not coax it into view with either pishing or playback. Eventually we decided it was time to get back to the hotel where we would shower and pack in time for a (pre-arranged) late check-out at midday. MGW was the only one of my “serious” lifer targets we missed for the week.

On the walk back to the car we had a couple of final worthwhile encounters with first Helmeted Friarbird, then Red-headed Honeyeater.



It was all very easy dropping off the rental car and checking in at the airport. Our flight to Alice Springs, then Adelaide was delayed so I scanned the tarmac hoping for a final trip tick in the form of Australian Pratincole. Our brief stopover in Alice Springs was enlivened by the sight of as many as 40 wide-bodies passenger planes being stored here in the desert by foreign carriers, whose flight frequency has been

I ended the trip with 55 lifers and 22 Australian ticks, and of my targets, very few dips. Total (bird) species count was 187 for the 10 days, but we also had fantastic encounters with a range of other wildlife (in some cases, closer than we would have liked for comfort) and enjoyed some incredible scenery.



	Species	First location seen	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Magpie Goose	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x						
2	Plumed Whistling-Duck	Kakadu National Park--Yellow Water				x						
3	<b>Wandering Whistling-Duck</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve		x	x	x						
4	<i>Radjah Shelduck</i>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve		x	x	x	x				x	
5	<b>Green Pygmy-Goose</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x						
6	Pacific Black Duck	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x	x						
7	Orange-footed Scrubfowl	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x	x	x	x						
8	Australasian Grebe	Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant					x					
9	Crested Pigeon	Victoria Hwy at -15.43102, 131.47522								x		
10	<b>Partridge Pigeon</b>	Kakadu AU-NT -12.58175, 132.87603			x							
11	<b>Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon</b>	Kakadu National Park--Ubirr			x							
12	<b>White-quilled Rock-Pigeon</b>	Judbarra / Gregory National Park--Escarpment Walk							x			
13	Diamond Dove	Edith Falls Rd at -14.1871, 132.0824						x	x	x		
14	Peaceful Dove	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	Bar-shouldered Dove	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	<b>Banded Fruit-Dove</b>	Kakadu National Park--Nourlangie Rock				x						
17	<b>Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		h		x						
18	<i>Torresian Imperial-Pigeon</i>	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x	x							x	x
19	<i>Pheasant Coucal</i>	Kakadu National Park--Bardeldjilidji Sandstone Walk				x		x	x			
20	<i>Channel-billed Cuckoo</i>	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x							



21	Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	Timber Creek Airstrip									x		
22	<i>Little Bronze-Cuckoo</i>	Lee Point	x										
23	Pallid Cuckoo	Bullita Access Rd at -15.75921, 130.51633									x		
24	<i>Brush Cuckoo</i>	Kakadu National Park--Anbangbang Billabong				x							
25	Tawny Frogmouth	Buntine Hwy--Humbles Creek									x		
26	<i>Large-tailed Nightjar</i>	Giuseppe Court, Coconut Grove, Darwin	x	h									
27	<b>Chestnut Rail</b>	Buffalo Creek	h	x									
28	<b>White-browed Crake</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x									
29	Brolga	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Dam wall		x		x					x		
30	Bush Stone-curlew	Cooinda campsite			x								
31	Australian Bustard	Stuart Hwy							x				
32	Pied Stilt	Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant					x			x		x	
33	Sooty Oystercatcher	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
34	Masked Lapwing	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x	x	x	x	x						
35	<i>Lesser Sand-Plover</i>	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
36	Greater Sand-Plover	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
37	Red-capped Plover	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
38	Black-fronted Dotterel	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x		x					x	
39	<i>Comb-crested Jacana</i>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x							
40	<i>Whimbrel</i>	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	x										x
41	Eastern Curlew	Lee Point	x										x
42	Ruddy Turnstone	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
43	Great Knot	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
44	Red Knot	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
45	Sanderling	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
46	Common Sandpiper	Buffalo Creek		x									
47	Grey-tailed Tattler	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
48	Silver Gull	Lee Point	x	x									
49	Gull-billed Tern	Casuarina Coastal Reserve--Sandy Creek near Hospital		x									
50	Caspian Tern	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
51	Whiskered Tern	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
52	Crested Tern	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
53	<i>Lesser Crested Tern</i>	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x									
54	<i>Black-necked Stork</i>	Kakadu National Park--Yellow Water				x				x			
55	Australasian Darter	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Dam wall		x	x	x				x			
56	Little Pied Cormorant	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x	x						
57	Pied Cormorant	Buffalo Creek		x									
58	Australian Pelican	Lee Point Beach--shorebird roost lower only		x	x								
59	<i>Black Bittern</i>	Victoria Hwy at Dingo Creek									x		
60	White-necked Heron	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x	x				x	x		

61	Great Egret	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x	x				x		
62	<i>Intermediate Egret</i>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x							
63	White-faced Heron	Snake Creek at 15 54S 129 47E							x				
64	Little Egret	Buffalo Creek		x	x								
65	Eastern Reef Egret	East Point Mangrove Boardwalk										x	
66	<b>Pied Heron</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x							
67	Cattle Egret	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve		x	x	x							
68	<i>Striated Heron</i>	Buffalo Creek	x	x									
69	Nankeen Night-Heron	Kakadu National Park--Yellow Water				x							
70	Glossy Ibis	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x	x							
71	Australian White Ibis	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	x	x	x	x							x
72	Straw-necked Ibis	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x	x	x	x							x
73	Royal Spoonbill	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x								
74	Osprey	Charles Darwin University		x									
75	Black-breasted Buzzard	Kakadu National Park--Ubirr			x								
76	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Stuart Highway, AU-NT - 13.99749, 131.92732							x				
77	Swamp Harrier	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x									
78	Spotted Harrier	Victoria River Crossing--boat ramp							x				
79	Brown Goshawk	Edith Falls Rd at - 14.1871,132.0824							x				
80	Black Kite	Lee Point	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
81	Whistling Kite	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			
82	Brahminy Kite	Buffalo Creek		x									
83	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x	x							
84	<b>Rufous Owl</b>	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x										
85	<b>Barking Owl</b>	Jabiru		h	h	x		h	x				
86	Azure Kingfisher	Kakadu National Park--Yellow Water				x							
87	Blue-winged Kookaburra	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		
88	Forest Kingfisher	Lee Point	x	x	x								
89	<i>Torresian Kingfisher</i>	East Point Mangrove Boardwalk										x	
90	Sacred Kingfisher	Kakadu National Park--Nourlangie Rock				x	h						
91	Rainbow Bee-eater	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
92	Brown Falcon	Nackeroo Monument & Lookout (Timber Creek)									x		
93	Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x	x	x	x		x			
94	Galah	Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant					x	x	x	x			
95	Little Corella	Kakadu National Park--South Alligator boatramp			x	x	x	x		x			
96	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x						
97	Cockatiel	Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant					x	x	x	x	x		
98	<b>Red-winged Parrot</b>	Casuarina Coastal Reserve--Sandy Creek near Hospital		x	x	x	x	x				x	
99	<b>Northern Rosella</b>	Kakadu National Park--Mary River Ranger Station					x						



100	<b>Hooded Parrot</b>	Pine Creek Water Gardens						x					
101	Budgerigar	Bullita Access Rd at -15.75921, 130.51633								x	x		
102	<b>Varied Lorikeet</b>	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x							x	
103	<b>Red-collared Lorikeet</b>	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
104	<b>Rainbow Pitta</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		h	x	x							
105	<b>Great Bowerbird</b>	Lee Point	x			x	x			x	x		
106	<b>Black-tailed Treecreeper</b>	Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant										x	
107	<b>Purple-crowned Fairywren</b>	Victoria River Crossing--boat ramp							x	x			
108	Red-backed Fairywren	Kakadu National Park--Mamukala Billabong				x				x			
109	<b>White-lined Honeyeater</b>	Kakadu National Park--Nourlangie Rock				x	x						
110	<b>White-gaped Honeyeater</b>	Buffalo Creek	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
111	Yellow-throated Miner	Kakadu National Park--Mary River Ranger Station						x					
112	<b>Yellow-tinted Honeyeater</b>	Victoria Highway, -14.62304, 132.13243							x	x			
113	<b>Bar-breasted Honeyeater</b>	Kakadu National Park--Yellow Water				x	x						
114	<b>Rufous-banded Honeyeater</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x		x	x						
115	<b>Rufous-throated Honeyeater</b>	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x		x	x	x	x	x		
116	<i>Dusky Honeyeater</i>	Bukbukluk Creek Kakadu Hwy						x				x	
117	<b>Red-headed Honeyeater</b>	Buffalo Creek	x										x
118	<b>Banded Honeyeater</b>	Edith Falls Rd at -14.1871,132.0824							x			x	
119	Brown Honeyeater	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	x	x					x	x		x	x
120	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Kakadu National Park--Gubara carpark				x	x				x		
121	White-throated Honeyeater	Lee Point	x	x	x			x	x			x	
122	Black-chinned Honeyeater	Fergusson River (Stuart Hwy)--W of hwy										x	
123	Little Friarbird	Buffalo Creek	x	x	x			x		x	x		x
124	<i>Helmeted Friarbird</i>	Buntine Hwy--Humbles Creek									x		x
125	<b>Silver-crowned Friarbird</b>	Kakadu National Park--Nourlangie Rock						x				x	
126	Red-browed Pardalote	Buntine Hwy--Humbles Creek									x		
127	Striated Pardalote	Casuarina Coastal Reserve--Sandy Creek near Hospital		x									
128	Weebill	Kakadu National Park--Gubara carpark				x			x		x		
129	<b>Green-backed Gerygone</b>	Buffalo Creek	x	x									
130	<b>Large-billed Gerygone</b>	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong	x		x								
131	Mangrove Gerygone	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)											x
132	Grey-crowned Babbler	Pine Creek Water Gardens						x					
133	Black-faced Cuckooshrike	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x		x			x	x		
134	White-bellied Cuckooshrike	Buffalo Creek	x		x	x			x		x		
135	White-winged Triller	Kakadu National Park--Mamukala Billabong				x			x	x	x	x	x
136	Varied Triller	Lee Point	x	x	x								
137	Varied Sittella	Timber Creek--Bullita Access Rd.								x			
138	<b>Sandstone Shrikethrush</b>	Kakadu National Park--Bardedjilidji Sandstone Walk				x	h						

139	Grey Shrikethrush	Edith Falls Rd at - 14.1871,132.0824							x				
140	<b>Little (Arafura) Shrikethrush</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x				x					
141	Mangrove Golden Whistler	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)											h
142	<b>Grey Whistler</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk	x	x									
143	Rufous Whistler	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
144	<b>White-breasted Whistler</b>	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	h										x
145	Olive-backed Oriole	Mary River National Park--Bird Billabong			x								
146	<b>Yellow Oriole</b>	Buffalo Creek	x	x	x		x						
147	Australasian Figbird	Lee Point	x	x		x						x	x
148	White-breasted Woodswallow	Charles Darwin University		x				x					
149	Masked Woodswallow	Bullita Access Rd at -15.75921, 130.51633									x		
150	White-browed Woodswallow	Bullita Access Rd at -15.75921, 130.51633									x		
151	Black-faced Woodswallow	Buchanan Hwy at -15.77951, 130.65430							x	x	x		
152	<b>Little Woodswallow</b>	Kakadu National Park--Nourlangie Rock				x							
153	<b>Silver-backed Butcherbird</b>	Kakadu National Park--Mary River Ranger Station					x						
154	Pied Butcherbird	Kakadu National Park--Barramundi Creek					x	x					
155	<b>Black Butcherbird</b>	East Point Mangrove Boardwalk		x								x	
156	<b>Northern Fantail</b>	Charles Darwin University	x	x	x		x					x	
157	Willie Wagtail	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Dam wall		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
158	<b>Arafura Fantail</b>	Buffalo Creek	x										
159	<b>Mangrove Grey Fantail</b>	Buffalo Creek	x										
160	Spangled Drongo	Casuarina Coastal Reserve--Sandy Creek near Hospital		x	x		x						
161	Magpie-lark	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
162	Leaden Flycatcher	Casuarina Coastal Reserve--Sandy Creek near Hospital		x	x		x	x					x
163	<b>Broad-billed Flycatcher</b>	Kakadu National Park--South Alligator boatramp			x								
164	<b>Paperbark Flycatcher</b>	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Dam wall		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
165	<i>Shining Flycatcher</i>	East Point Mangrove Boardwalk		x			x						
166	Apostlebird	Victoria Hwy at -15.43102, 131.47522						x			x		
167	Torresian Crow	Buffalo Creek		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
168	<b>Lemon-bellied Flycatcher</b>	Buffalo Creek	x	x	x	x	x					x	x
169	<b>Mangrove Robin</b>	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)											x
170	<b>Buff-sided Robin</b>	Gerowie Creek Crossing (Kakadu Hwy)					x						
171	Australasian Bushlark	Timber Creek Airstrip									x		
172	Golden-headed Cisticola	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x		x		x			x		
173	Australian Reed Warbler	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve--Waterlily Walk		x									
174	Fairy Martin	Snake Creek at 15 54S 129 47E							x				
175	Tree Martin	Lee Point	x										
176	<b>Yellow White-eye</b>	Buffalo Creek	x										
177	Mistletoebird	Lee Point	x	x	x	x	x	x					
178	<i>Crimson Finch</i>	Lee Point	x	x	x	x		x			x		



179	<b>Star Finch</b>	Timber Creek Airstrip								x		
180	Double-barred Finch	Lee Point	x		x			x	x	x	x	
181	<b>Masked Finch</b>	Edith Falls Rd at -14.18405, 132.03819						x	x	x	x	
182	<b>Long-tailed Finch</b>	Edith Falls Rd at -14.18405, 132.03819						x		x		
183	<b>Gouldian Finch</b>	Fergusson River (Stuart Hwy)-- W of hwy						x	x		x	
184	<b>Yellow-rumped Mannikin</b>	Victoria River Crossing--boat ramp						x		x		
185	<i>Chestnut-breasted Mannikin</i>	Mangroves near Orchard Rd (Coconut Grove)	x					x		x		
186	<b>Pictorella Mannikin</b>	Timber Creek Airstrip							x	x		
187	Australasian Pipit	Timber Creek Airstrip							x			