

Tour Report Australian Wildlife Photo Safari 8-24 Feb 2025

Eastern grey kangaroo



Short-beaked echidna



New Holland honeyeater



Platypus



Compiled by Bret Charman

Saturday 8 February 2025

Day 1: Fly from London to Singapore

Half of the group flew from London Heathrow to Changi Airport on an overnight flight with Qantas.

Sunday 9 February 2025

Day 2: Fly from Singapore to Melbourne

After landing safely in Singapore, the group caught their connecting overnight flight to Melbourne.

Monday 10 February 2025

Day 3: Arrive in Melbourne

The group arrived in Melbourne bright and early where I met them at arrivals. We were soon met by our driver who whisked us from the airport to the Radisson Hotel. As we checked in, we met another two members of the group in reception.

Having the day to rest or explore the city, we agreed to meet back up for dinner in the hotel's restaurant. I met up with the final two members of the group in the hotel lobby, before reconvening with the rest of the group at dinner. It was here that we met up with Mark, our 'local' leader, who'd help us over the next two weeks exploring Victoria and Tasmania.

We discussed the coming days and made our plan for the following morning.

Tuesday 11 February 2025

Day 4: Serendip Sanctuary

After enjoying breakfast, we met up with all our luggage in the hotel lobby. It was here that we met with our driver Nick and made our way out of Melbourne towards Geelong. Close to the town of Lara, lies Serendip Sanctuary, a protected area which supports a remarkable amount of wildlife. With the expert guidance of local wildlife specialist Roger, we set about exploring the reserve and finding the wildlife that calls it home.

It was very warm, albeit slightly overcast, as we set out on foot. The first life we encountered was that of the resident birds, species such as the willie wagtail, Australian magpie and the largest bird in this vast country, the emu. The emus provided us with some fabulous photography opportunities. Roger explained that these were young birds and they were likely to be curious of us.

With the emus slowly making their approach, we settled into position and got down low to try and appear less threatening. It worked a treat. A couple of birds made a particularly close approach and allowed us to capture some stunning imagery.

These huge birds are known for their curiosity and it has enabled them to thrive across much of this harsh continent. We enjoyed some wonderful close views of these giants before they disappeared off into the surrounding scrub.



We did our best to find the kangaroo mob that is resident in the reserve, but despite our best (and determined) efforts, we were unable to get close to them. It seems something had spooked them and they were particularly skittish. And so, with the cloud cover starting to burn off, and the temperature on the rise, we headed back to the picnic area where a fabulous lunch had been prepared for us.

While we were enjoying our lunch, one of the park rangers introduced himself and also gave us insight as to where we could find the resident tawny frogmouths resting nearby. Feeling refreshed and refuelled, we headed off in search of the frogmouths and found them sitting in the scorching sunlight just a few metres from a track.

The photography opportunities were limited, but it was great for the group to see these bizarre, but particularly characterful birds. The sun was very strong by this point and it created dark shadows and harsh light. With everyone satisfied they could get the best images, despite the conditions, we moved on to the nearby

ponds where a huge flock of magpie geese were resting on the lake shore. Considering these birds nearly went extinct in the area, it was fabulous to see the species starting to make a much-needed recovery.

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We carried on and tried one more time to find the resident mob of kangaroos. We did find them, but they really were not playing ball. With the harsh sun, brutal heat haze and uncooperative individuals, the photo opportunities were next to nil.

Deciding to call it a day, we drove to Geelong and got everyone checked into our accommodation for the night. We agreed to meet shortly after, allowing us the opportunity to head to the nearby botanical gardens. The gardens are well known for the huge colony of grey-headed flying foxes that roost in some of the tall pines. We were blessed with some great views of the bats as they squabbled and slept, while others took flight and soared overhead.



The gardens also support a wealth of birds, with the eastern rosella providing a particular highlight for the group. We found a couple of pairs feeding on the ground (typical behaviour for rosellas) and they provided some great views, although the photography was a little limited. After an action-packed first day in the field, we returned to our accommodation. After a chance to freshen up, we met up and walked the short distance to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

Everyone returned to their rooms for a very well-deserved rest, with the plan to head out to the You Yangs the following day in search of koalas.

Wednesday 12 February 2025

Day 5: You Yangs

This morning we met up for breakfast before climbing back aboard the bus and driving the short distance to the sports oval at Lara – here we enjoyed good views of long-billed corella. It was then time to continue a little further up the road to the You Yangs. These granite hills emerge from the surrounding plains and are a sacred place for the traditional aboriginal owners of the land. This is one of the most important aboriginal areas in southern Australia.

As we made our way along the track towards the park, we spotted a huge mob of kangaroos resting in the shade of a large tree, right in the middle of a huge field. These were distant views, but it was a great way to start the day. Upon entering the park, we were informed that one of the researchers had found a young koala in a tree a couple of hundred yards from the road. Our first sighting in the area though, was a grizzled old wallaby. It slowly made its way off into the bush and so we alighted from the bus and followed Roger into the forest.

There, high in a eucalypt was a young koala. The researcher, and Roger for that matter, were unable to identify the individual, but it was likely the grown offspring of a resident female who typically resided here. Being so high, it was a challenge to get a clear line of sight, but the group did their best to photograph this iconic member of the marsupial family.

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We hoped that the researcher might find another individual as we photographed this koala, but on this occasion, it seemed that the heat might be making them a little trickier to track down. We decided to leave the koala in peace and head back down a nearby track to the waiting bus. Back aboard, Roger explained the cultural significance of the area to the aboriginal people and took us to see a giant sculpture of the deity Banjul (a wedge-tailed eagle).

We returned to Serendip Sanctuary for another delicious lunch, where we were able to escape the building heat of the day. After the fabulous refreshments, we planned to head up to the Big Rock – an area with expansive views over the surrounding landscape and a rich aboriginal history. Unfortunately, due to storm damage, we were unable to go there so we decided to head up to another viewpoint before calling it a day. The heat was building now and the wildlife was unlikely to be active. With that in mind, we boarded the bus and started to make our way back to Melbourne.

Arriving in the city in the mid-afternoon, there was a little time to take a wander before meeting back up in the hotel restaurant for dinner. This was our last night on the Australian mainland, catching a morning flight over to Tasmania the next day.

Thursday 13 February 2025

Day 6: Melbourne to Launceston, Tasmanian Arboretum & Mountain Valley

After enjoying breakfast at the hotel, we were met at reception by our airport transfer. Avoiding the worst of the rush hour traffic, we arrived at the airport with plenty of time. The group were soon all checked in and proceeded through security without any delay. It wasn't long before we were all aboard and enjoying a smooth flight across the Bass Strait.

Upon our arrival at Launceston, we were met by Mark's colleague Claire, who had driven the minibus up from Hobart. Claire would be with us for the rest of the trip around Tasmania.

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We were soon underway, heading west from Launceston towards the town of Deloraine. Here we had the opportunity to stretch our legs, use the facilities and grab a delicious lunch from the popular bakery. There was also a chance to buy some wine from the local 'bottleshop' as we would be staying at the remote Mountain Valley property for the next couple of nights.

Our next stop was the nearby Tasmanian Arboretum. This might not sound like a prime wildlife spot, but it is arguably the best place in Australia to see and photograph the bizarre platypus. As we drove across the cultivated landscape of northern Tasmania, we caught sight of our first Tasmanian native hens, an endemic waterbird which is found with ease across the island.

Upon entering the arboretum we were driven down to the lake and almost immediately had our first views of platypus. We were a fraction late for an individual as it crossed under a bridge, much to the delight of the people watching from above. There was no need to panic though, we had plenty of time to try and see these typically elusive mammals for ourselves. It didn't take long for us to get our first clear view of a monotreme (egg-laying mammal) and soon after the photography opportunities followed.



The whole group were treated to some truly exceptional views. What makes this particularly special, is that the majority of Australians will never even see a platypus in the wild, let alone photograph one. The highlight, was undoubtedly when one of the platypuses decided to swim right under the bridge we were all standing on and everyone was able to capture striking full-frame images of this remarkable member of the mammal family. I've been lucky enough to see platypuses on many occasions, but the thrill of getting so close to one (and enjoying such good views) will never get old. What a fantastic start to our time on the island of Tasmania.

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This was a bonus visit to the arboretum, knowing we would return in a couple of days, and so we set off to our destination for the day – Mountain Valley. We left the arboretum and as we were driving along the rural roads, three wedge-tailed eagles put on a show for us. Although they weren't photographable, to see such huge birds of prey soaring overhead was exceptional. A little further up the road, we had our first views of short-beaked echidna. This individual was particularly shy and as it was by the roadside, we did our best not to disturb it too much. There would likely be plenty more opportunities and we still had a bit of ground to cover.

Carrying on to Mountain Valley, we worked our way along winding roads before finally turning into the remote property. Here, five cabins provide comfortable accommodation in this wilderness area and offer a unique chance to enjoy views of some of Australia's rarest mammals.

With everybody settled in their rooms, we enjoyed a lovely meal in the dining area discussing our first few days together and enjoying the unique wildlife we had already encountered. For the guests, tonight would be the first chance to wait for the Tasmanian devil and spotted-tail quoll, as well as brushtail possum, pademelon and maybe even wombat.

Friday 14 February 2025

Day 7: Mountain Valley & Leven Canyon

We awoke to a beautiful, but cool morning in this magical part of Tasmania. Myself, Mark and Claire were unable to stay at Mountain Valley, due to the limited amount of accommodation, so we headed there after breakfast, hoping that everyone had enjoyed a night filled with exceptional wildlife sightings.

Tasmanian devils are known to travel large distances each night and we just had to hope that one had made an appearance. We found the group in good spirits outside of the cabins and quickly ascertained that half of them had enjoyed views of devils, while the other half had seen spotted-tail quoll – an incredible return.

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These are the two largest predatory marsupials left in Australia and to see them both in one night (albeit by different members of the group) was fantastic. Unfortunately, due to DFTD (Devil Facial Tumour Disease), the number of devils has collapsed in recent years and so any sighting is a blessing.

With everyone together, we headed for a walk within the private reserve, hoping we might come across some of the resident wildlife. The sound of forest ravens rang through the trees, while smoke from distant forest fires filled the air among the mountain peaks high above us. We headed down towards the banks of the river, and on our way back into the open meadow, Mark spotted an echidna. Carefully, the group got into position, trying to ensure that we didn't disturb it.

Everybody did exceptionally well to give the echidna space, letting it go about its business undisturbed. Their reward was some fantastic photography. It allowed us all to capture some fantastic images as it moved about in front of us.



It was amazing to spend such a prolonged period with such a character. As we watched and photographed, the echidna was busy searching for ants in the rich grassland. Eventually, we decided to leave the echidna in peace, watching it as it walked away with its peculiar gait.

Wandering back up towards the cabins, we stumbled upon a large black tiger snake. It quickly realised it had company and made for cover. Although deadly, tiger snakes are not typically aggressive and would much rather avoid any potential trouble. Some of the group were able to capture some images before it disappeared into grassy tussock. We had lunch on the benches outside the cabins with superb fairywrens and scarlet robins flitting about in the surrounding vegetation. The calls of black currawong travelled up and down the valley, while a wedge-tailed eagle soared overhead.

After lunch, it was time to head a little down the road to Leven Canyon. This spectacular site lies only a few miles down the road from Mountain Valley and provides great views across this wilderness area.

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There was still plenty of smoke in the air and it meant that there was a noticeable haze as we went up to the top, and then the bottom of the gorge. After a fabulous day in this beautiful and peaceful part of Tasmania, it was time to head back to Mountain Valley for a little downtime before dinner. We were treated to another fabulous meal before the group had another night where they hoped for glimpses of Tasmania's iconic predators.

Saturday 15 February 2025

Day 8: Mountain Valley to Cradle Mountain

We awoke to another lovely day, albeit noticeably cooler than the day before, and drove the short distance to meet the group at Mountain Valley. As per the night before, some of the group enjoyed views of the Tasmanian devil and spotted-tail quoll. We really couldn't have asked for more.

This morning we were leaving the area and heading south to Cradle Mountain. Firstly though, we headed north, up to the town of Burnie where we were able to grab some supplies and a cup of coffee. We enjoyed a smooth drive from Burnie up to Cradle.

Upon our arrival at Cradle Mountain, we were lucky that our hotel rooms were available and we were able to check in immediately. We agreed to have lunch in the lounge next to our rooms, with a plan to head to the Tasmanian devil breeding centre for a chance to understand the challenges facing the species (and other Tasmanian predators) and to capture some images in daylight.

After a hearty lunch, we drove the short distance to the centre, and enjoyed a very informative tour, while also photographing some of the resident devils. Disease-free, all the devils in captivity play a key role in ensuring that a healthy genetic diversity remains in place in case they go extinct in the wild (a realistic possibility until a cure can be found).

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It was a particularly wet afternoon and so we soon returned to the hotel where we could freshen up before meeting back up to discuss our plan for the next couple of days. With the weather at Cradle Mountain so unpredictable, we always allow an extra day to ensure we have a better chance of being able to explore the area and find the wildlife that calls it home. However, despite the next day promising to be cold, we were expecting to have favourable weather for the next two days we had here.

With our plans finalised, we headed from the bar to the restaurant and enjoyed a very good first meal in this beautiful part of Tasmania.

Sunday 16 February 2025

Day 9: Cradle Mountain

The weather forecast proved to be correct and we awoke to a cold morning. There was snow up on the mountain tops – quite unusual for a summer’s day. Knowing the weather was going to be on the cooler side of things, we had a relatively relaxed morning. Enjoying a hearty breakfast at the hotel, Mark and Claire whisked us down to the visitor centre and it was from here we could use the park’s bus service to head up to the areas of interest further up the valley. It is important to note, that private vehicles are no longer allowed up to Dove Lake (the famous lake beneath Cradle Mountain) and the bus service is the only way to move around the park.

We had planned to head up to Ronny Creek, an area that is particularly reliable for wombats and Bennett’s wallabies. We enjoyed an easy bus journey up to the stop, where we all alighted and started to wander along the boardwalk. To our surprise, there was not a wombat in sight. We assumed that, because of the exceptionally cold temperatures overnight, the wombats had yet to emerge from their burrows. We planned to spend a few hours enjoying the wildlife of the area, before catching a bus back down to the visitor centre and having lunch in the café.

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Despite a slow start, everyone explored the area from Ronny Creek, taking the boardwalk across the unique alpine landscape. The plant life here is unique and provides a rich habitat for several species that have learnt to survive in challenging weather conditions. Endemic button grasses, myrtle beech and eucalypt trees and pandani plants (*Richea pandanifolia*) all form a rich mosaic of habitats.



After a lot of searching, and as the day warmed up, some of the group finally stumbled across some wombats and some wallabies. With the location logged, we could share the information with the group for those who wanted to return in the afternoon.



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The majority of the group caught the same bus back to the visitor's centre and we all enjoyed a tasty lunch in the relative warmth of the café. I informed the group about the wallabies and wombats, and a particularly good spot from where we might be able to photograph them.

And so, suitably refreshed, we headed back up on the bus and headed up to the Waldheim Chalet – a historical house built on the edge of a myrtle beech forest. Sure enough, not far from where we had spotted the marsupials earlier on, there they were. We enjoyed excellent views and photographic opportunities of both wombat and Bennett's wallaby and had some particularly close approaches.



It was here that it was also possible to photograph the resident black currawongs, another Tasmanian endemic. As the afternoon progressed, and with the temperature yet to rise, the group dispersed and people caught the bus back at different times. Returning to the hotel, we had the chance to warm up before another enjoyable evening meal together.



Monday 17 February 2025

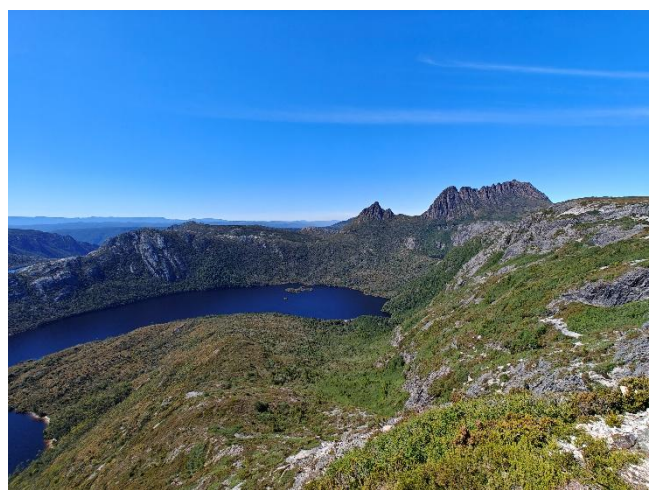
Day 10: Cradle Mountain

We awoke to a frosty but beautiful morning. It had been well below freezing overnight, well below the typical temperatures for a summer night. However, with clear skies, the sun soon brought a welcome warmth as it climbed higher in the sky. Today was a bonus day. We had been so lucky with the weather and wildlife the day before, so it was very much a free day to enjoy some walks and make the most of whatever presented itself.

The majority of the group decided that they would walk the Dove Lake circuit and enjoy the stunning clear views of Cradle Mountain. So after breakfast, we drove the short distance to the visitor centre and hopped aboard the bus up to Dove Lake. The water was almost flat and calm and the views of the surrounding scenery were exceptional. Days like this are exceptionally rare up at Cradle and we had been blessed with an opportunity to enjoy the fantastic weather and walking conditions.



Having packed lunches with us, meant there was plenty of flexibility for the group to enjoy the day and return to the hotel at their leisure.



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The skies remained clear and the sun was incredibly strong. It meant that wildlife photography opportunities were limited today, although some members of the group did enjoy good views of an echidna as it searched for ants. By mid-afternoon, all the group had returned to the visitor centre and then were driven the short distance back to the hotel for a relaxing afternoon.

We met up for our last dinner in this beautiful wilderness area and discussed the plan for the next day. After another filling meal, it was time to retreat to our rooms, pack our bags and enjoy a good night's sleep.

Tuesday 18 February 2025

Day 11: Cradle Mountain to Devonport (via Tasmanian Arboretum)

This morning couldn't have been more different, as we awoke to rain and low cloud cover. We had timed our visit to Cradle perfectly, it really couldn't have been any better. After breakfast, with all our bags loaded, we started to make our way back north, down towards the coast. Our final stop of the day would be the town of Devonport, but on the way we would be stopping at the Tasmanian arboretum once again, giving us another chance to see and photograph platypus.

As we worked our way down to a lower altitude, the weather started to improve as the sun seemed to keep the rain and clouds at bay. Arriving at the arboretum, everybody knew the score and headed to the bridge that crossed one of the shallow waterways linking the ponds and lake. We struck gold once again with multiple sightings as the platypus swam right underneath us. It's always such a joy to see these weird and wonderful mammals in the wild.



With another fantastic monotreme photography session, we walked the short distance to the café and enjoyed lunch in the warm afternoon sun. From here, we were heading to the nearby town of Devonport, where there was the chance to relax or go for a walk along the waterfront. After dinner tonight, we had a surprise in store for the guests.

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Dinner was at a local seafood restaurant and the group enjoyed a fabulous meal before we returned to our accommodation and had the chance to grab a few things for the evening excursion. We were near the designated viewing platform for little (or fairy) penguins and decided that it would be good to add another species that calls Tasmania their home. Upon our arrival, the sun was just setting and a pair of little penguins were standing right by the platform. We weren't allowed to use any lighting (even our red lights), but it was possible to watch and photograph these charismatic birds. The smallest of all the world's penguin species, the little penguin is in steep decline and so to see so many of them arriving on the beach was a real delight.

Wednesday 19 February 2025

Day 12: Narrawntapu National Park & Launceston

After a busy night, we met early outside our rooms and drove the short distance to a local café for a delicious breakfast. We then had time to freshen up a little before putting our bags in the bus and driving to Narrawntapu National Park.

Having not had much luck with eastern grey kangaroos on the mainland, this was our last chance to photograph the iconic mammals. We just had to hope they would cooperate. Once again, the weather gods had been kind to us and the sun was shining as we drove around to the national park. The park supports a good population of kangaroos, but it is also an excellent place to see snakes (both copperhead and tiger snakes) as well as a plethora of birds. The group were soon walking across the open grasslands, the type of habitat the kangaroos prefer, and we quickly stumbled across a pair of tiger snakes warming themselves in the morning sun. As the group had a mix of mobility levels, we split up and made our way in search of kangaroos and any other wildlife that might present itself.



Everybody was rewarded with some excellent photo opportunities. We had the kangaroos in some thicker vegetation, as well as out on the open grasslands, providing the group with a range of different options for photography. It's a wonderful habitat and the perfect place to capture these enigmatic mammals in the wild.

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What more can you ask for? Particularly after a slightly disappointing session back on the mainland at Serendip Sanctuary. The group headed back to enjoy another delicious lunch at the benches close to where we had parked the van.



It wasn't just the kangaroos that provided the group with some good views, we were also blessed with excellent views of a flock of yellow-tailed black cockatoo. The birds sat there, playing and making a lot of noise, providing a range of portraits and behavioural shots too. Other notable bird species we encountered included musk duck, white-fronted chat and superb fairywren.

After a fabulous morning and lunch at Narrawntapu National Park, it was time to head down to the town of Launceston, where we would be spending the night. We drove through some remote bushland, but except for some familiar bird species, we didn't have any notable wildlife sightings.

We eventually found ourselves working our way along the Tamar Estuary, heading south to Launceston. It was here that we stopped at the Tamar Island Wetlands. As soon as we were out of the bus, a white-bellied sea eagle soared overhead. We entered the wetland, with some of the group catching a glimpse of a royal spoonbill, before carrying on along the boardwalk to an open area where we had good views of plentiful chestnut teal, masked lapwing and a couple of Australasian swamphens. Photography opportunities here were limited and so we were soon driving the short distance into Launceston and to our hotel. It wasn't long before we

were all checked into our rooms and meeting for dinner in the hotel restaurant. It had been another excellent day, filled with great sightings and photography. Tomorrow would have us heading south, leaving

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behind the north of Tasmania, which had provided us with a fabulous first week on the island.

Thursday 20 February 2025

Day 13: Ben Lomond National Park, on to Hobart

It was another beautiful day, and after breakfast, it was time to head on the road once again. Driving for about an hour, we made it to the base of the Ben Lomond 'organ pipes'. This spectacular rockface, made up of igneous rock columns, dominates the skyline above the eucalypt forests and is a true wilderness area of Tasmania's north-east.



We carried on up the road, to Jacob's Ladder, a spectacular road that zig-zags its way up the near vertical cliff face to one side of the organ pipes. At the top is a lookout, situated on the edge of the plateau, with spectacular views across this forest-clad landscape. This high-altitude landscape supports surprisingly large mammals, including Bennett's wallaby and wombat, but it is only really the wallabies which are reliably seen. Bizarrely, at the top of the plateau is a ski area for many alpine clubs and their associated buildings.

There were a few wallabies scattered around the edge of the 'ski village', but we didn't spend long here with an afternoon's drive down to Hobart. Instead, we soon found ourselves nestled in the eucalypt forest, enjoying lunch and drinks.

From Ben Lomond, it was a couple of hours' drive down to Hobart, with a rest stop at the town of Campbell Town. Here there was a chance to use the bathroom facilities and grab an ice cream, making the most of the warm afternoon sun. We made good time, and despite some traffic around Hobart, we made it safe and sound to our comfortable hotel for the night. The group met up for dinner in the restaurant, where we were treated to a huge and delicious meal.

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Friday 21 February 2025

Day 14: Hobart to Bruny Island

For those who were interested, we awoke well before dawn and headed to the nearby Hobart Waterworks. The area around the reservoirs supports a wide array of native species including bettong and bandicoot. We hoped that by heading out while it was still dark, we would be able to see these elusive and increasingly rare mammals. Upon our arrival, we encountered countless pademelons as they grazed on the short grass, while a couple of wallabies also showed themselves. We conducted a walk around one of the reservoirs, with a torch in hand, doing our best to find one of our target species. Unfortunately, we didn't find any mammals, but we did find a new species of bird – a hardhead. For those early risers, we returned to the hotel where there was plenty of time for breakfast and to gather our things for the journey onto Bruny Island.

Everybody checked out of the hotel and we were soon aboard the bus, driving south to the town of Kettering. Here we caught our ferry across to Bruny Island, which only took around 15 minutes. We soon found ourselves heading south across the north of Bruny, driving on the main road toward 'The Neck'. This isthmus connects the north and the south of the island, and it was the southern half that would be our focus for the next couple of days. Driving across The Neck, we saw our first sooty and pied oystercatchers, while silver gulls and black swans sat on the shallow, calm water. With a little time before lunch, we drove down to Adventure Bay, a well-known spot for nesting hooded plovers. We were lucky as a couple of pairs seemed to be resident on the beach. Unfortunately, they only provided us with distant views, but it was wonderful to catch a glimpse of these rare birds.



Our main base for our stay on Bruny was the Inala Private Reserve, and it was here that we headed for lunch. We enjoyed another veritable feast, enjoying the gardens around the cottage and the warmth of the sun. With the weather forecast continuing to be kind to us, we decided to head south after lunch and visit South Bruny National Park. We headed up toward the lighthouse, and on our way came across an echidna busy feeding in the warm sun. It was a fabulous day and the views were spectacular.

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We then headed to the other side of the peninsula where we went for a walk searching for some of the birds that had so far eluded us in Tasmania. It was a warm day and it seemed to have driven most of the birdlife to the ground, but several members of the group saw a flame robin, silveryeye, scrub wren, another echidna and a scarlet robin.

With the day getting away from us, we headed back to drop the group at their accommodation (a wallaby hotspot) before heading to the island's pub for dinner. On our way (it was an absolutely beautiful evening), we kept our eyes peeled for the resident white wallabies. We saw a couple, but they were all quite distant so we promised the group we would make a more concerted effort on the way back to our accommodation.

The food at the Bruny Island Hotel is always a feast and everyone was very well fed indeed. It was an absolutely beautiful evening as the sun set over the western shores of Bruny and we were determined to find the group a more cooperative white wallaby. We found one in a field around 70 metres away, before finding another just off the side of the road. Some of the group were able to get out and take pictures of these uniquely coloured wallabies.

With the light fading fast, it was time to get the group back to the accommodation before there was too much wildlife on the roads.

Saturday 22 February 2025

Day 15: Bruny Island

Today would be our last full day in Australia and we had the day to enjoy the private surrounds of Inala Nature Reserve. This land has been purchased and then set aside exclusively for some of Australia's rarest bird species – the swift parrot and the forty-spotted pardalote. Both of these birds are considered critically endangered and rarely seen. Of the two, thanks to concerted efforts, the pardalote is starting to recover, but the swift parrot's survival still sits on a knife edge. In fact, due to their feeding and nesting behaviours, they need huge swathes of areas to be protected and a concerted effort needs to be made to protect them.

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And so, this morning started with breakfast at the communal area of the property, before going on a gentle stroll with local guide Don. We asked the group whether anybody wanted to try their hand in the purpose-built rapport photography hide and there were a couple of takers. A white-morph grey goshawk was busy tucking into a wallaby carcass and so many of the group wandered over to capture some images of this beautiful bird.



With some of the group remaining to watch the goshawk, the rest of us headed out to the Gondwana Garden. This garden features a wealth of plants that survive on the Gondwanan continent, and in turn, many of the plants are home to a wealth of wildlife. It is one of the best places to see small mammals including the cute swamp rat (it really is cute) and a couple of species of antechinus. It wasn't long before we had great views of our first swamp rat. It sat only a few metres away, happily feeding and posing perfectly for some images.

Due to their unfortunate name, the team at Inala are now trying to encourage people to refer to these charismatic little mammals as the velvet-furred rat. Personally, I think they need to change the name rat to vole or even mouse. Besides the less-than-desired name, they are incredibly cute and this individual put on an excellent show for the group.



feeding in the leaves of the white gums.

We continued through the garden, trying to see if we could spot one of the resident tiger snakes. However, today they seemed to elude most of the group (some of them did get a sighting later on). Leaving the garden before, Don explained about the required habitat for the forty-spotted pardalotes and the swift parrot, highlighting the issues that each species faces and what Inala are doing to try and help.

None of the group saw any swift parrots as this year they were not nesting on the property (entirely dependent on which areas of forest are in flower), but some of them did have views of the pardalotes

It was when the group started to explore in their own time that the photographic opportunities usually improved and it seemed that today was no different. The New Holland honeyeaters put on a particularly good show as they fed on banksias. The birds here can be particularly obliging if given space and they can pose perfectly. It was particularly pleasing when the honeyeaters fed on the kangaroo paw flowers, providing some wonderful photography.



Other highlights in and around the garden included the scarlet robin, the endemic green rosella, countless Tasmanian native hens and many more. It was an absolutely beautiful day, albeit a little too warm for many of the birds, and by the mid-afternoon, the majority of the group had returned to their accommodation for a little downtime before dinner (and the chance to pack).

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We picked up the group from their cabins and drove through the rolling hills on this gorgeous summer evening. Arriving at the pub (hotel), we settled into our seats and enjoyed another feast. On our last evening together, we all enjoyed some wonderful conversation, as well as the gorgeous sunset, before heading back for an early night. With an early start the next day and a very long journey home, we thought it best to do our best to get some rest.

Sunday 23 February 2025

Day 16: Bruny Island to Hobart; Fly to Sydney, Fly to Singapore

What a difference a day can make. We awoke to a thunderstorm early in the morning and met for breakfast as rain fell. The weather had been so perfect for us up until this morning, but we couldn't complain. After having breakfast, and some heartfelt thanks to all those involved in making the trip a success, we loaded up the van and set off to catch the ferry back across to the Tasmanian mainland. It wasn't long before we were driving back through Hobart and then at the airport.

The group were soon all checked in for the first leg of our long journey home. The flight from Hobart to Sydney was on time and we enjoyed a smooth flight. Upon our arrival in Sydney, we had to wait a little while for our transfer bus to the international terminal. It wasn't before we were safely waiting for our flight to London (via Singapore).

Unfortunately, there was a delay in our departure due to technical issues with the plane's auxiliary power unit. We took off around an hour later than planned, landing in Singapore late. It was a simple case of alighting the plane and then boarding once again around an hour later.

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Monday 24 February 2025

Day 17: Arrive London

We arrived in London around an hour and a half late, but we were all safe and sound. Everybody passed through immigration quickly before meeting up in the luggage hall. Our bags arrived and we were soon on saying our goodbyes and making our journeys home.

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Checklist for Australian Wildlife Photo Safari



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Day 16
	BIRDS														
1	Magpie goose	<i>Anseranas semipalmata</i>	✓												
2	Cape Barren goose	<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	✓												
3	Black swan	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
4	Australian shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>			✓					✓	✓				
5	Maned (wood) duck	<i>Chenoetta jubata</i>				✓					✓		✓		
6	Pacific black duck	<i>Anas superciliosa</i>	✓		✓					✓	✓				✓
7	Grey teal	<i>Anas gracilis</i>	✓												
8	Chestnut teal	<i>Anas castanea</i>	✓								✓				
9	Hardhead	<i>Aythya australis</i>											✓		
10	Musk duck	<i>Biziura lobata</i>									✓				
11	Little pied cormorant	<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>											✓		
12	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓									
13	Australian grebe	<i>Tachybaptus novaehollandiae</i>								✓	✓				
14	Little penguin	<i>Eudyptula minor</i>								✓					
15	Silver gull	<i>Chroicocephalus novahollandiae</i>	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
16	Pacific gull	<i>Larus pacificus</i>									✓		✓		
17	Kelp gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>											✓		
18	Great crested tern	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>											✓		
19	Pied stilt	<i>Himantopus leucocephalus</i>	✓										✓		
20	Pied oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>								✓			✓	✓	✓
21	Sooty Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>											✓	✓	✓
22	Hooded plover	<i>Thinornis cucullatus</i>											✓		
23	Masked lapwing	<i>Vanellus miles</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Black-fronted dotterel	<i>Elsayornis melanops</i>	✓												
25	Straw-necked ibis	<i>Threskiornis spinicollis</i>	✓												
26	Royal spoonbill	<i>Platalea regia</i>									✓				

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27	White-faced heron	<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>	✓								✓			✓	✓
28	Tasmanian nativehen	<i>Tribonyx mortierii</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Dusky moorhen	<i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>	✓												
30	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓		✓					✓			✓		
31	Australasian swamphe	<i>Porphyrio melanotus</i>									✓				
32	Emu	<i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i>	✓												
33	Common bronzewing	<i>Phaps chalcoptera</i>												✓	
34	Crested pigeon	<i>Ocyphaps lophotes</i>		✓											
35	Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	✓												
36	Whistling kite	<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>	✓												
37	Wedge-tailed eagle	<i>Aquila audax</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓			
38	Collared sparrowhawk	<i>Tachypiza cirrocephala</i>	✓											✓	
39	Grey goshawk	<i>Tachypiza novaehollandiae</i>												✓	
40	Swamp harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>									✓				
41	White-bellied sea eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga leucogaster</i>									✓		✓		✓
42	Brown falcon	<i>Falco berigora</i>	✓											✓	
43	Tawny frogmouth	<i>Podargus strigoides</i>	✓												
44	Welcome swallow	<i>Hirundo neoxana</i>			✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		
45	Tree martin	<i>Petrochelidon nigricans</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Dusky woodswallow	<i>Artamus cyanopterus</i>			✓		✓						✓	✓	✓
47	Black-faced woodswallow	<i>Artamus cinereus</i>	✓												
48	Fan-tailed cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis flabelliformis</i>												✓	
49	Yellow-tailed black cockatoo	<i>Zanda funerea</i>					✓				✓			✓	
50	Galah	<i>Eolophus roseicapilla</i>	✓							✓	✓		✓		
51	Long-billed corella	<i>Cacatua tenuirostris</i>	✓	✓						✓		✓			
52	Suphur-crested cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
53	Green rosella	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>			✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Eastern rosella	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>	✓												
55	Red-rumped parrot	<i>Psephotus haematonotus</i>	✓												
56	Rainbow lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus moluccanus</i>	✓							✓					
57	Laughing kookaburra	<i>Dacelo novaeguineae</i>	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓		✓
58	Australian magpie	<i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
59	Black currwaong	<i>Strepera fuliginosa</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
60	Little raven	<i>Corvus mellori</i>	✓	✓											
61	Forest raven	<i>Corvus tasmanicus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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62	White-winged chough	<i>Corcorax melanorhamphos</i>	✓	✓										
63	Flame robin	<i>Petroica phoenicea</i>										✓		
64	Scarlet robin	<i>Petroica boodang</i>				✓	✓					✓	✓	✓
65	Dusky robin	<i>Melanodryas vittata</i>										✓	✓	
66	Magpie lark	<i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i>	✓	✓					✓		✓			
67	Willie wagtail	<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>	✓	✓					✓					
68	Grey fantail	<i>Rhipidura albiscapa</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
69	Black-faced cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina papuaensis</i>							✓					
70	Bassian thrush	<i>Zoothera lunulata</i>				✓								
71	Red wattlebird	<i>Anthochaera carunculata</i>	✓	✓										
72	Yellow wattlebird	<i>Anthochaera paradoxa</i>						✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
73	White-plumed honeyeater	<i>Ptilotula penicillata</i>		✓										
74	White-fronted chat	<i>Epthianura albifrons</i>									✓			
75	Crescent honeyeater	<i>Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus</i>					✓	✓	✓					
76	New Holland honeyeater	<i>Phylidonyris novaehollandiae</i>		✓							✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Yellow-throated honeyeater	<i>Nesoptilotis flavicollis</i>						✓	✓					
78	Superb fairywren	<i>Malurus cyaneus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Tasmanian scrubwren	<i>Sericornis humilis</i>											✓	
80	Scrubtit	<i>Acanthornis magna</i>												✓
81	Tasmania thornbill	<i>Acanthiza ewingii</i>												✓
82	Silvereye	<i>Zosterops lateralis</i>											✓	✓
83	Australian pipit	<i>Anthus australia</i>									✓			
84	Red-browed firetail	<i>Neochmia temporalis</i>	✓	✓										
85	Forty-spotted pardalote	<i>Pardalotus quadragintus</i>												✓
86	Striated pardalote	<i>Pardalotus striatus</i>												✓
	Mammals													
1	Platypus	<i>Ornithorhynchus anatinus</i>				✓				✓				
2	Short-beaked echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
3	Spotted-tail quoll	<i>Dasyurinae maculatus</i>				✓	✓							
4	Tasmanian devil	<i>Sarcophilus harrisii</i>				✓	✓							
5	Dusky antechinus	<i>Antechinus swainsonii</i>												✓
6	Common wombat	<i>Vombatus ursinus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓				
7	Common brushtail possum	<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>				✓	✓							
8	Eastern grey kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>	✓	✓							✓			

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9	Red-necked wallaby	<i>Notamacropus rufogriseus</i>					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Tasmanian pademelon	<i>Thylogale billardierii</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Swamp (black) wallaby	<i>Wallabia bicolor</i>	✓	✓											
12	Koala	<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>		✓											
13	Swamp rat	<i>Rattus lutreolus</i>												✓	
14	Grey-headed flying fox	<i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	✓												

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