

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES,

QUEENSLAND AND TASMANIA



Powerful Owl (Barry Lancaster)

Thursday October 18th – Saturday November 3rd 2012 (ext to Tasmania Nov. 7th)
Leader: Mark Finn and local guides Carol Proberts, Phil Gregory and Tonia Cochran

Group Size: 8

Birds: 300-350

Australia has an amazing range of birds with no less than 330 endemic species. This Australian classic birding tour takes in some of the most well known sites within the country plus an optional extension to the island of Tasmania where another twelve endemics are possible. The tour starts in the New South Wales city of Sydney which is a handy starting point to visit the Blue Mountains and the Capertee Valley. From Sydney we fly north to Cairns where a host of new species awaits you at Julatten, the Atherton Tablelands and the bird-rich waterfront at Cairns. We have also arranged a boat trip out to Michaelmas Cay and the Great Barrier Reef, one of the natural wonders of Australia. The tour ends at the world

famous O'Reilly's in Queensland which offers us many forest species. Finally, there is an optional extension to Tasmania before returning to Europe.

This tour offers you some of the finest Australian birds in spectacular scenery.

Days 1-2: Fly London to Sydney where arrival is early on Day 3.

Day 3: On arrival in Sydney, we transfer to our hotel overlooking the harbour, bridge and Opera House. Later in the morning, we head south to visit Royal National Park with its varied habitats of coastal heathland, subtropical rainforest and open eucalypt woodlands. The park is home to Superb Lyrebird, Rockwarbler, Emu Wren and the localised Green Catbird. Other species present include Azure Kingfisher, Satin Bowerbird, Superb and Variegated Fairy Wrens, Chesnut-rumped Heathwren, New Holland and Tawny-crowned Honeyeaters, Brown Gerygone, Thornbill, Spotted Pardalote and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. Returning to Sydney, we visit an area for shorebirds. Overnight stay in Sydney.

Day 4: Today we leave Sydney. Our first stop is at Cumberland State Forest Park, a magic place for parrots and we should see Rainbow, Musk and Scaly-breasted Lorikeets, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Little and Long-billed Corella's, Galah, Eastern and Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrot. Other species in the park include Bell and Noisy Miners, Australian Raven, Pied Currawong, Grey Butcherbird and scarce species in Eastern Whipbird, White-browed Scrubwren and

Olive-backed Oriole. From Cumberland we cut across the north-western suburbs to Windsor. This is a good area for cormorants, egrets, wildfowl, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Laughing Kookaburra, Black-fronted Dotterel, Golden and Rufous Whistlers, Yellow-faced, Fuscous and Lewin's Honeyeaters, Red and Little Wattlebirds, White-winged Chough and Red-browed and Double-barred Finches. Later in the day, we head towards the Blue Mountains and make a stop at the turf farms near the Hawkesbury River for Australian White and Straw-necked Ibis, Swamp Harrier, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Magpie Lark and Fairy Martin. Transfer to Glen Davis for the night.

Days 5-6: We spend the next two days exploring the central region of the Blue Mountains and its wide variety of habitat. Birding in the Capertee Valley is a must, as several declining and rare woodland birds occur including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. Other species present within the valley include Turquoise Parrot, Black-chinned and Painted Honeyeaters, Hooded and Red-capped Robins, Speckled Warbler, Southern Whiteface, White-browed Babbler, Plum-headed Finch and White-backed Swallow. On the way to the Upper Blue Mountains, a stop at Lithgow may produce Blue-billed, Pink-eared and the very unusual Musk

Duck. On Day 5 we transfer to the town of Katoomba for two nights. On Day 6 we concentrate on Blackheath, Katoomba and Wentworth Falls areas searching for Rockwarbler, Pilotbird, Rose and Flame Robins, Bassian Thrush and Red-browed Treecreeper. We'll visit a Satin Bowerbird's bower and, perhaps, see the bird in attendance. Other specialities of the region are Gang-gang, Yellow-tailed and Glossy Black Cockatoos, Superb Lyrebird, Satin Flycatcher and Beautiful Firetail.

Day 7: This morning we head back to Sydney and fly to Cairns in Northern Queensland. On arrival a walk along the Mangrove Boardwalk, a short distance from the airport, may produce Collared and Little Kingfishers, Lovely Fairywren and Varied Honeyeater. The Esplanade is an exceptional site for waders with the light behind you in the afternoon. Waders occurring on a regular basis include Grey-tailed Tattler, Terek and Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Great and Red Knots, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers. Along the esplanade, fig trees attract Double-eyed Fig Parrot and New Guinea Friarbird. Cairns Centenary Lakes are close by with a range of honeyeaters, Black Butcherbird and Orange-footed Scrubfowl. If time permits, we will visit Redden Island with its Rose-crowned Fruit Doves and Little Bronze Cuckoos. Transfer to Cassowary

House in the cooler rainforest-clad hills above Cairns for a four-night stay.

Day 8: We start with one of Sue Gregory's legendary breakfasts which will be punctuated by stunning views of Black Butcherbird, Macleay's and Yellow-spotted Honeyeaters, Victoria's Riflebird, and Spotted Catbird from the veranda. If time allows we can explore the area around Black Mountain Road adjacent to Cassowary House. We drive south into the Atherton Tablelands. En route we visit Big Mitchell Creek which attracts Red-winged Parrot, Red-browed Pardalote, Banded Honeyeater, Silver-crowned Friarbird and Lemon-bellied Flycatcher. Hasties Swamp has Cotton Pygmy-goose, but honeyeaters such as White-cheeked, Scarlet and Bridled are a major draw here. Lake Barrine and Lake Eacham are crater lakes surrounded by some of the best rainforests in Australia. Walking along the trails, we may encounter Pacific Baza, Forest Kingfisher, White-throated Treecreeper, Tooth-billed Bowerbird, Large-billed Scrubwren, Spotted Pardalote, Chowchilla, Little Shrike-thrush, Black-faced and Pied Monarchs, Eastern Yellow and Grey-headed Robins, and Golden Whistler. The waters of the lakes hold Grey Teal, Hardhead, Australasian Grebe and other water birds.

Day 9: A full day visiting the world-famous Great Barrier Reef and the island of Michaelmas Cay. The cay is an exceptional area for seabirds including Great and Lesser Frigatebirds, Red-footed and Brown Boobies, Great, Lesser Crested, Roseate, Black-naped, Bridled and Sooty Terns and Brown Noddy. There is also an opportunity to snorkel over the reef or simply relax on the cay. There should also be time to check Cairns esplanade and other local sites en route back to Cassowary House for species such as Chestnut-breasted Mannikin, Yellow-bellied Sunbird, Australian Pipit, Golden-headed Cisticola, and the scarce Crimson Finch. Evenings around Cassowary House are a classic time to look for Red-necked Crake and to catch up on other forest species such as Wompoo and Superb Fruit Doves and Pale Yellow Robin which may have been elusive previously. Entertainment will surely be provided by Musky Rat-kangaroos even if the local Cassowarys may not always be present.

Day 10: Although superficially similar to the forest around Cassowary House, the woodlands on Mt Hypipamee in the Atherton Tablelands support a very different selection of birds. This is high altitude birding with the possibility of some local specialities such as Golden Bowerbird, Mountain Thornbill, Tooth-billed Bowerbird, Bower's Shrike-thrush, Fernwren and the much localised Atherton Scrubwren. Dry open woodland at



Rainbow Lorikeet (Barry Lancaster)

Wondecla again offers a different variety of birds such as Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, White-throated Treecreeper, Yellow-faced, White-naped and Fuscous Honeyeaters, Grey Butcherbird and a chance of Barking Owl. A wide range of species may be seen en route including both Laughing and Blue-winged Kookaburras. In the evening, we may witness Sarus Cranes coming to roost in a local swamp.

Day 11: Just as the open woodlands around Wondecla support a different range of birds than elsewhere, so do the superficially similar areas of forest around Mareeba. Various sites in this area can be expected to have Crested Pigeon, Fairy Gerygone, Noisy and Little Friarbirds, Yellow Honeyeater, Rufous Whistler, Olive-backed Oriole, Double-barred Finch and, with luck, Tawny Frogmouth. Mareeba wetlands is a very special place with a variety not only of wetland species, such as White-faced Heron, Australian Darter, Green Pygmy Goose and Comb-crested Jacana, but also scarce forest birds including Pale-headed Rosella, Apostlebird, Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Black-throated Finch, Varied Sitella, Brown Treecreeper, Weebill and Grey-crowned Babbler. There is also a chance of Australian Bustards as we drive in. Transfer to Kingfisher Park at Julatten for two nights.

Day 12: Today we visit Mt Lewis which is close to Julatten. Mt Lewis is an exceptional area for montane species and, with a little luck, we should locate Tooth-billed Catbird, Atherton Scrubwren,

Mountain Thornbill, Bridled Honeyeater and Bassian Thrush. The area is also famous for Golden Bowerbird and the rare Blue-faced Parrotfinch. Later, we bird along the road to Mount Carbine for Australian Bustard, Squatter Pigeon, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Pale-headed Rosella, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Great Bowerbird and Black-throated Finch. Abattoir Swamp is just to the south of Julatten and home to Blue-cheeked Honeyeater, the scarce Black-chinned Honeyeater, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Leaden Flycatcher, Dollarbird and Northern Fantail, plus waterbirds including Green Pygmy Goose, White-browed and Spotless Crakes

Day 13: An early start as we embark on a cruise down the Daintree River. Interesting birds that inhabit the area comprise Great-billed Heron, Black Bittern, Wompoo Fruit Dove, Pied Imperial Pigeon, Double-eyed Fig Parrot, Papuan Frogmouth, Australian Swiftlet, Azure Kingfisher, Graceful and Brown-backed Honeyeaters. Later in the morning, we transfer to Cairns for an overnight stay with visits to birding sites en route.

Days 14-16: Transfer to Cairns airport and fly south to Brisbane. From here we head inland to the cooler upland rainforests of Lamington National Park and the famous O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat for a three-night stay. Lamington National Park is simply one of Australia's best birding spots and during our stay we walk along the many trails searching for rainforest specialities. Among these are Wonga



Rock Warbler (Barry Lancaster)

Pigeon and Regent and Satin Bowerbirds which occur in the gardens. The environs of O'Reilly's attract Crimson Rosella, Bassian Thrush, Northern Whipbird and Grey Fantail. Further afield Duck Creek Road may be productive for Yellow-throated and White-browed Scrubwrens, Black-faced Monarch, Brush Cuckoo, Red-browed Finch, and Yellow-spotted Honeyeater. If we are fortunate, we may encounter the scarce Albert's Lyrebird. The Border Track near O'Reilly's often holds Yellow-browed Scrubwren, Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, Rufous Fantail and the enigmatic Logrunner. Commoner species include Topknot and White-headed Pigeons, Golden Whistler and Eastern Yellow Robin. Some of the other interesting species we hope to locate include Black-breasted Button Quail, Glossy Black Cockatoo, the skulking Rufous Scrub-bird, Olive Whistler, White-

eared Monarch and Paradise Riflebird. There are many birds to see in and around O'Reilly's over the three days we are present.

Day 17: A final morning birding around O'Reilly's before making our way back to Brisbane and onward connections to Europe where arrival is on the following day. Alternatively, if taking the extension to Tasmania, we fly to Hobart, the state capital, where we stay for two nights.

Day 18: Half day excursion by air to the South West World Heritage area of Tasmania. This provides the best chance to see the critically endangered Orange-bellied Parrot (now less than 50 left in the wild) and other specialties: Ground Parrot, Southern Emu-wren, Striated Fieldwren and Beautiful Firetail. The flight is weather dependant, so if it is

cancelled, we will try to reschedule it for the next day. In the afternoon we visit Mount Wellington which holds many of Tasmania's endemic bird species. Walking along trails through the wet sclerophyll forest we search for Pink Robin, Bassian Thrush, Scrubtit, Tasmanian Thornbill, Yellow-throated Honeyeater and Black Currawong. Other Tasmanian endemics present include Green Rosella, Tasmanian Scrubwren, Black-headed and Strong-billed Honeyeaters, Yellow Wattlebird and Dusky Robin. A visit to one of Hobart's parks for Swift Parrot a localised breeding endemic.

Days 19-20: Today we drive down to Kettering and take the ferry journey to Bruny Island where we have two full days searching for Tasmanian endemics. At Waterview Hill we search for Spotted and Striated Pardalotes. In the evening we visit a Little Penguin colony and Short-tailed Shearwaters at their burrows. Other species we may encounter around the coast include Black-faced Cormorant, Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers, Pacific Gull, Hooded Plover, Caspian Tern, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Olive Whistler and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater. Transfer to our base in south Bruny for two nights where the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote is present in the extensive grounds. On Day 20 we concentrate on the rainforest for all of the remaining Tasmanian endemics plus Tasmanian Native Hen which is found on most farm dams. Other species on the island include Forest Raven, Beautiful Firetail, Crescent Honeyeater, White-fronted Chat, Flame Robin and Satin Flycatcher.

Day 21: Return to Hobart and onward connections to Europe where arrival is on

Ground Price: £4760

*Air Fare: £1235

Total tour price: £5995

Tour Price Sydney/Sydney: £4760

Tasmania extension £:1500

Single room: £500

Deposit: £500

Single room: £150

*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights on pages 5 and 71

This holiday is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation and meals, transport, boat trips, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature, airport departure tax and fuel surcharges. A visa to enter Australia.

Good accommodation throughout with en-suite facilities. Packed lunches provided. Evening meals based on European cuisine.

Travel by minibus. Short walks at sea level and at elevation in Queensland and Tasmania. Stout footwear is recommended.