

OUTBACK AUSTRALIA 2008

August 30, 2008 to September 20, 2008

Guided by
Phil Gregory, Rex Ellis, Peter "Stoney" Stone

TBACK AUSTRALIA 2008 led by Phil Gregory; Rex Ellis Bush Safari Co. ground arrangements for the Desert sections.

This was the third time around for the revamped Outback tour, beginning in a for once quite pleasant early spring Melbourne, and heading up to Deniliquin in outback NSW to rendezvous with Phil Maher and enjoy some local birding before the big one, the iconic Plains-wanderer. We once again ran up a very fine list here, with great views- Black-tailed Native-hen, a large flock of Banded Lapwing, a perched Black Falcon, Superb Parrot almost as soon as we stopped the bus, and at point blank range, a daylight sighting of Southern Boobook, the scarce Eastern Shrike-tit and Striped Honeyeater being fine additions.

That night, we scored with a wonderful Inland Dotterel with chick, followed by Tawny Frogmouth and Australian Owlet-nightjar then spent an hour and 45 minutes hours quartering the paddocks in the trucks before we finally, with client anxiety levels steadily rising (I only start to worry once we pass the 2 hour mark!), found a superb female Plains-wanderer, with two males quite nearby. Magic.

Over to Adelaide, we met up with Rex, (regrettably sans an injured Patti this trip), and the excellent bushman and driver Stoney, and began our long haul north in the 3 vehicles. Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby was a major prize today, as was Slender-billed (Samphire) Thornbill. The night at Willow Springs was entertaining in the old shearing quarters, and next day in unexpectedly calm and sunny conditions for once, we scored brilliantly on the newly split Short-tailed Grasswren, perching up for scope views! Elegant Parrot was again found feeding nearby too.

Mt Lyndhurst shearing shed was the next base, sadly a bit dilapidated this year, but we persevered (and some of us even got hot showers!) and next morning it was tickarama. We got onto Thick-billed Grasswren, Chestnut-breasted Whiteface (thanks Stoney!), Orange Chat, Cinnamon Quail-thrush and Rufous Fieldwren very nicely, despite fierce drought conditions still prevailing.

The drive up the beautifully maintained Strzelecki Track (now renamed the Innamincka Freeway, it's so good!) got us into deep desert country and our first night of camping out complete with swags at the Eyrean Grasswren site, which caused a few dramas but overall went very well. We saw the grasswren that afternoon but got nice looks next morning, one of the great aussie enigma birds, which was unseen for nearly a century. The very dry conditions meant birds were scarce, but we had a pleasant starlit night at Strzelecki Creek with very nice Bluebonnets and Pied Honeyeater, although the Letter-winged Kites stayed out of sight despite a lengthy search.

Innamincka and Cooper's Creek were scenic with some nice birds like Budgerigars about; there are some amazing ancient rock carvings at a waterhole there. We also saw the poignant historic monument Dig Tree of Burke and Wills (disastrous) Expedition fame.

It was near here that we found the elusive Gibberbird and more Inland Dotterel, and we had a great group of Bourke's Parrot, not far away. The Grey Grasswren site of our first trip is still off limits to

birders, but sadly the new site was lushly vegetated this year, and despite a hard search we had no luck at all. Stubble Quail, Crimson Chat and a bonus Australian Bustard, were all seen in lovely morning light before most of the flies woke up!

Bowra shearing shed was another highlight, with Black-breasted Buzzard, Hall's Babbler and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, plus Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, Painted Honeyeater and nesting Black Honeyeater. Let's hope we can get a conservation body to buy the place, which is still on sale for Au \$1.5 million and a super site with great habitat for some restricted range species.

Coming back into the mallee country we had some early thunderstorms and an exciting crossing of the flooded Paroo River, before the night at the underground motel. We shopped for opals next day, with a very confiding Boobook sat outside, then ran into a phenomenal dust-storm with gale force winds across much of South Australia, and saw the birding strictly curtailed, I had to drive with headlights on at times, it was like the harmattan in West Africa and very unusual!

The finale at the huge mallee reserves of Calperum and Gluepot was good, with Southern Scrub-robin, Gilbert's Whistler, Shy Heathwren, a fantastic close Striated Grasswrens, Chestnut Quail-thrush and finally the rare Black-eared Miner, regrettably with a few hybrids for comparison. Our penultimate night saw the last camp complete with lovely campfire near Gluepot, with a Spotted Nightjar flying through at dusk and then calling for much of the night.

Stockyard Plains on the way back to Adelaide gave us a mega with Freckled Duck and also Blue-billed Duck, then it was farewell dinner time and the end of a memorable trip, with a section of the OKA transmission falling off not far out of Adelaide and meaning we had to limp in two wheel drive! Rex and Stoney are great story-tellers, and the group soon got onto that wavelength and enjoyed the yarns of various adventures over the years, some of which reduced us to helpless wrecks, the meteorite story especially again being a classic.

Rex and Stoney looked after us very well, and we soon got accustomed to the time consuming routine of making and breaking camp, morning smoko (coffee break, often productive for birds) and the night time fire and camp cooking scenario. It is a tour that is not just for birds, but also for the people, scenery and general adventures, a classic of its kind and a vanishing breed as experienced bushmen become a thing of the past. A little self-help goes a long way on this kind of trip too and folks did very well once they got used to it. Rex has 5 books to his name and is one of the most experienced guides for the Australian deserts and camel treks, so being with him is an experience in itself, and with Stoney along as the perfect foil we sure had an entertaining and fun trip as well as heaps of great seldom seen birds. His views about water make foil interesting discussions too! Do get him to tell his Night Parrot tale, only Rex would value wood above the parrot.....

My thanks to Rex and Stoney for looking after us, bearing with our odd demands and patiently setting up the cooking and lunches each day. Also to Karen at FG HQ and Sue at Cassowary House who did a fine job of getting the tour logistics in place. Thanks also to the group for getting into the spirit of the outback and taking it as it came, we sure had a fun time. Jeannie and Nancy were a great help at mealtimes, and thanks to Dave for help with the bags. Why not join us for the next extravaganza in 2010? Phil

List total: 217 bird taxa and 9 mammal taxa

*If marked to left of list, * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic,
N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant*

Out08-PG

Dromaiidae

E EMU (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

Quite a few sightings of small groups on the desert leg, after our first ones over at Deni. Two separate males with 9 then 4 striped juveniles in the Flinders Ranges were a nice sight. Stoney picked up a sun-bleached white egg of this bird at Mt Lyndhurst, normally the eggs are dark green.

Podicipedidae

AUSTRALASIAN GREBE (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)

Some at Avalon Swamp, then a few at Bowra, Broken Hill and Stockyard Plains.

E HOARY-HEADED GREBE (*Poliiocephalus poliiocephalus*)

Nice views of some at Deniliquin, then 5 more day records.

Pelecanidae

E AUSTRALIAN PELICAN (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

A few around Deni and at various wetlands.

Phalacrocoracidae

LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

A few around Deni and at various wetlands.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

The first were at Deni, then again at Stockyard Plains.

E PIED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax varius*)

Two at Menindee Lakes, and a few at Rufus River.

LITTLE PIED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*)

A few around Deni and at various wetlands later.

Anhingidae

"AUSTRALIAN" DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster novaehollandiae*)

A pair at Deni, then a female was seen at Menindee Lakes. Usually split these days.

Ardeidae

E PACIFIC HERON (*Ardea pacifica*)

Just a few singles, starting at Deni.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*)

A few around Deni and one at Menindee Lakes.

WHITE-FACED HERON (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)

A few around Deni and occasionals at wetlands later.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*)

Just 3 in the saltflats at Port Gawler.

Threskiornithidae

AUSTRALIAN IBIS (*Threskiornis molucca*)

Nice views of a few around Deni and at one wetland later.

E STRAW-NECKED IBIS (*Threskiornis spinicollis*)

Large flocks in the fields around Deni, and a few later in the trip.

E YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL (*Platalea flavipes*)

Just a single near Deni, with one at Broken Hill.

Anatidae

PLUMED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

Up to 150 at Bowra were unexpected this far south.

E BLACK SWAN (*Cygnus atratus*)

A few at Avalon swamp, and near Deni, otherwise at Broken Hill and Stockyard Plains. Great in flight!

E FRECKLED DUCK (*Stictonetta naevosa*)

A major crowd pleaser n'est-ce pas Dave? Finding 4 of these odd looking rare large ducks at Stockyard Plains was a big bonus and the last major addition of the trip. The males even had the beginnings of a pink base to the ski-jump bill, a great bird.

- E** AUSTRALIAN SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadornoides*)
A few at Deni SP and then at various southern lakes later in the trip.
- E** MANED DUCK (*Chenonetta jubata*)
Frequent between Melbourne and Deni, and quite a few later too.
- GRAY TEAL (*Anas gracilis*)
Small flocks around Deni and at many other wetlands.
- E** CHESTNUT TEAL (*Anas castanea*)
Ten at Deni and a male at Jackson Oilfield
- PACIFIC BLACK DUCK (*Anas superciliosa*)
A few around Deni and at most wetlands later.
- AUSTRALIAN SHOVELER (*Anas rhynchotis*)
A female at Jackson's Oilfield and a few at Broken Hill and Stockyard Plains.
- E** PINK-EARED DUCK (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*)
Nice scope views of this oddity at Broken Hill and Stockyard Plains, and two at Jackson's Oilfield, with 3 at the Grey Grasswren site on a quiet pool in the lignum. This is another irruptive of the interior and one of the world's most bizarre wildfowl. It has been again scarce this year generally.
- E** WHITE-EYED DUCK (HARDHEAD) (*Aythya australis*)
Nice views at Deni SP, then at a few wetlands later in the trip.
- E** BLUE-BILLED DUCK (*Oxyura australis*)
Three birds at Stockyard Plains on the last day were a good trip bird.
- E** MUSK DUCK (*Biziura lobata*)
A female of this bizarre prehistoric looking creature was at Avalon Swamp, 6 at Aroola Dam, a few at Broken Hill, and finally at Stockyard Plains.

Accipitridae

- E** BLACK-BREASTED KITE (=BUZZARD) (*Hamirostra melanosternon*)
One at Bowra, the long broad wings and short tail being very distinctive, as is the rocking Bateleur-like flight. This is another of the rarer Australian raptors, widespread but low density.
- E** AUSTRALIAN (BLACK-SHOULDERED) KITE (*Elanus axillaris*)
Good views near Deni and a few later in the trip.
- BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*)
Singles around Deni and widespread in small numbers later.
- WHISTLING KITE (*Haliastur sphenurus*)
A few near Deni and widespread in small numbers later.
- SWAMP HARRIER (*Circus approximans*)
Two birds at Avalon Swamp near Deni.
- SPOTTED HARRIER (*Circus assimilis*)
A good trip for this uncommon bird, we had five day records, the first at Montecollina Bore.
- BROWN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter fasciatus*)
Three day records, with a male and female near Quorn.
- COLLARED SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter cirrhocephalus*)
Just two near Broken Hill.
- WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE (*Aquila audax*)
Good views in the Deni area, this is a large and spectacular species. They were sparse on the desert stages, with just a few each day, but good round Bowra.

Falconidae

- E** AUSTRALIAN KESTREL (*Falco cenchroides*)
Widespread throughout on the trip.
- E** AUSTRALIAN HOBBY (*Falco longipennis*)
Three day records, with one at Bowra and one perched by the road near White Cliffs.

E BROWN FALCON (*Falco berigora*)
A few in the Deni area, both dark and pale phase birds as well as intermediates. Widespread in small numbers later.

E BLACK FALCON (*Falco subniger*)
A good perched view of this rather rare species at Deniliquin dump, the long pointed wings very distinctive.

Megapodiidae

E MALLEEFOWL (*Leipoa ocellata*)
We checked mounds at Calperum and Gluepot, but none showed any sign of recent usage. They seem to need rain to spark activity.

Phasianidae

E STUBBLE QUAIL (*Coturnix pectoralis*)
Great perched and flight views on the Plain-Wanderer drive, then 3 at the lignum swamp, and 8 at the Flock Bronzewing site. This was new for most folks.

Turnicidae

E LITTLE BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix velox*)
Dave had flight views of this tiny buttonquail at the lignum swamp, then we got 3 at the Flock Bronzewing site where the white at the sides of the under tail really showed up in flight. Also a single at Bowra.

Gruidae

BROLGA (*Grus rubicunda*)
One was stood by a creek as we came into NSW, a good pick up this far south.

Rallidae

BAILLON'S CRAKE (*Porzana pusilla*)
A great pick-up in the reeds at Jackson Oilfield, it allowed quite good views for most, at a singularly isolated site!

E AUSTRALIAN CRAKE (*Porzana fluminea*)
Fine views of two birds at Montecollina Bore, feeding out on the mud and poking about in shallow water. A good find by Dave, odd to see them way out in the desert.

PURPLE SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)
Good views of them lumbering about in the reeds at Avalon Swamp and a couple of sightings later.

DUSKY MOORHEN (*Gallinula tenebrosa*)
Just one at Chowilla this trip.

E BLACK-TAILED NATIVE-HEN (*Gallinula ventralis*)
Great looks at a few birds at Avalon Swamp, this is an irruptive migrant that can be elusive, but we had 5 day records later, with one at Bowra, 2 at Lake Menindee and a couple at Stockyard Plains.

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*)
Seen in a few of the wetland areas on 4 days.

Otididae

AUSTRALIAN BUSTARD (*Ardeotis australis*)
One near the lignum swamp in SW Queensland was a great find, as this declining species is now rare in the south of its range.

Recurvirostridae

WHITE-HEADED (BLACK-WINGED) STILT (*Himantopus leucocephalus*)
A couple at Avalon Swamp, then seen at Port Gawler, Montecollina Bore and Jackson's Oilfield.

E RED-NECKED AVOCET (*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*)
A large flock of 100 at Broken Hill Reservoir were a fine sight in flight.

Glareolidae

AUSTRALIAN PRATINCOLE (*Stiltia isabella*)
We ran into on gibber near Jackson's Oilfield, a great little bird. A single was in the dust-storm near Broken Hill too.

Charadriidae

- E** BANDED LAPWING (*Vanellus tricolor*)
My biggest ever flock was some 260 at the Plains-Wanderer site, and we heard them on two nights too when camping This can be a scarce and elusive bird at times.
- MASKED LAPWING (*Vanellus miles*)
The SE form known locally as the Spur-winged Plover (of the nominate race novaehollandiae) was widespread. We saw the northern form miles at Bowra, which lacks the black chest patches and is clearly an incipient species as the intergrade zone is narrow.
- E** RED-CAPPED PLOVER (DOTTEREL) (*Charadrius ruficapillus*)
Jeannie gripped us off with one at Montecollina Bore.
- E** BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL (*Euseyonis melanops*)
A couple at Avalon Swamp and widespread later, this is a striking shorebird.
- E** INLAND DOTTEREL (*Peltohyas australis*)
Fantastic views of this elusive nomad at the Plains Wanderer site, where one bird had a tiny chick and we spotted another fine adult on the way home. This is one of the world's great shorebirds, a really distinctive species and very hard to find. We later traversed thousands of km of suitable habitat and only saw them once more, just over the border in Queensland (yay!) where 4 birds were on the greened up gibber plain. One recent population guesstimate puts them at about 15,000 in total, so it's a rather rare bird and always a great prize.

Pedionomidae

- E** PLAINS-WANDERER (*Pedionomus torquatus*)
Fantastic views of a female and then two males of this strange species, spotted in a paddock after a lengthy spell, and just where we began the search! The continuing very dry conditions make it hard, many thanks to Phil Maher and the local landowner (in 2004 it took us 10 minutes....). The female and one of the males did not otherwise seem overly bothered by us, despite being ringed by searchlights. This is a blue riband species for sure and was understandably bird of the trip again.

Laridae

- SILVER GULL (*Larus novaehollandiae*)
Odd to see them inland along the Murray, and one at Montecollina Bore was well off track.

Sternidae

- CASPIAN TERN (*Sterna caspia*)
Just a singleton at Stockyard Plains this trip.
- WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*)
A few at the reservoir in Broken Hill.

Columbidae

- I** ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*)
The Feral Pigeon was frequent in the big urban areas and around grain silos.
- I** SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*)
A few in Adelaide only, it has not spread far inland.
- E** COMMON BRONZEWING (*Phaps chalcoptera*)
Small numbers at a couple of sites only.
- E** FLOCK BRONZEWING (*Phaps histrionica*)
A fantastic sighting of about 25 birds at a site north of Cunnamulla. There were hundreds here a few months back and it was great that a few stragglers were still about. This is a really tough bird to find.
- E** CRESTED PIGEON (*Geophaps lophotes*)
Seen almost every day of the trip, a beautiful bird.
- E** DIAMOND DOVE (*Geopelia cuneata*)
Widespread in the dry regions this trip, with 100 at Bowra the maximum, it is very nomadic.
- PEACEFUL DOVE (*Geopelia placida*)
Just one near Deni and a few at Cullymurra waterhole.

Cacatuidae

- E** GALAH (*Eolophus roseicapillus*)
This colourful cockatoo was seen on almost every day of the trip.

- E** LONG-BILLED CORELLA (*Cacatua tenuirostris*)
Great views of this localised species around Deni.
- LITTLE CORELLA (*Cacatua sanguinea*)
Good views in the outback with up to 100 near Broken Hill, seen on most days in the dry areas.
- E** PINK COCKATOO (*Cacatua leadbeateri*)
The Major Mitchell Cockatoo was again not surprisingly a trip favourite, it really is a fabulous creature. The first at Thargomindah showed briefly, and we had wonderful views at Bowra, perching up with their amazing crests often opened. Ten around the Broken Hill area were a nice sight too and a good count.
- SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO (*Cacatua galerita*)
Flocks of up to 150 near Deni and Adelaide, but none on the Outback desert leg of the trip.
- E** COCKATIEL (*Nymphicus hollandicus*)
Widespread in small numbers this trip, the first near Deni. Strange to think this is actually an aberrant cockatoo.
- Psittacidae***
- RAINBOW LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus haematodus*)
Nice views at Deni and Adelaide.
- E** MUSK LORIKEET (*Glossopsitta concinna*)
Nice looks en route back to Melbourne, and a couple of fly-bys in Adelaide.
- E** PURPLE-CROWNED LORIKEET (*Glossopsitta porphyrocephala*)
Sounds as if Joe saw this beautifully colourful diminutive short-tailed species in Adelaide.
- E** MALLEE RINGNECK (*Barnardius barnardi*)
Quite frequent around Thargomindah and Bowra, though the first were at Willow Springs.
- E** CRIMSON ROSELLA (*Platycercus elegans*)
Five as we headed out to Deni, this species inhabits the better watered hills, and also seen near Waikerie.
- E** YELLOW ROSELLA (*Platycercus flaveolus*)
This distinctive Murray-Darling endemic of the red gums was seen at Deni. Anywhere but Australia this would obviously be a good species, as per Clements but not the RAOU!
- E** ADELAIDE ROSELLA (*Platycercus adelaidae*)
This taxonomically challenged form gave nice views at the motel in Adelaide, then brief fly-bys near Quorn. They intergrade with both Yellow and Crimson Rosellas and seem to be some sort of stabilised hybrid swarm. A case can certainly be made for specific status as the identity is maintained, but being Australia, land of the lumpers, we lose out.
- E** EASTERN ROSELLA (*Platycercus eximius*)
Nice views of this gaudy job around Deni, and in Adelaide where it seems to be spreading.
- E** MULGA PARROT (*Psephotus varius*)
This is subtle and rather uncommon species, our only ones this trip being a pair at Bowra.
- E** RED-RUMPED PARROT (*Psephotus haematonotus*)
This small delicate parrot gave good views at Deni and again around Thargo and Bowra, where it was quite common.
- E** BLUEBONNET (*Northiella haematogaster*)
*A scarce and local species, we had lovely views of the yellow-vented nominate race at Deni and Bowra, and of the pale desert form *pallescens* at Strzlecki Creek. Also seen along the Darling River.*
- E** BOURKE'S PARROT (*Neopsephotus bourkii*)
We found about ten Bourke's Parrots en route to Tennaperra along a dry creek line. It is an elusive and uncommon nomad and readily missed, though we also saw two more next day. We had scope views of a very confiding adults and an immature and were really able to appreciate the subtle pink, blue and brownish-grey plumage.
- E** ELEGANT PARROT (*Neophema elegans*)
Great looks at three feeding on the ground at Stokes Hill, and another unexpected fly-by at the Chestnut-b Whiteface site.

- E** BUDGERIGAR (*Melopsittacus undulatus*)
The first were as we came into the better watered country of the Cooper Creek drainage, but only moderate numbers this trip, the last being 100 at Bowra. They are a brilliant little parrot, seeing them in the wild is always a treat.
- E** RED-WINGED PARROT (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*)
A couple of sightings at Bowra only, a spectacular bird.
- E** SUPERB PARROT (*Polytelis swainsonii*)
Fabulous looks by Gulpa Island near Deni, coming to drink at a puddle just as we stopped the bus. Both male and female showed really well here, but this was all we saw This is a vulnerable and restricted range species.

Cuculidae

- E** PALLID CUCKOO (*Cuculus pallidus*)
Some good views of a single bird at Deni and heard at Bowra.
- * FAN-TAILED CUCKOO (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*)
One was heard at Deniliquin.
- E** HORSFIELD'S BRONZE-CUCKOO (*Chrysococcyx basalis*)
The first sighting was a singing bird taped in at Gulpa Is, then nice views at Bowra and Calperum. What a shame none could be Black-eared Cuckoo, for which we tried really hard at Bowra.....

Tytonidae

- BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*)
*One at Bowra was nice, but longer views would have been good. This is now split as *Tyto javanica*, Pacific Barn Owl.*

Strigidae

- SOUTHERN BOOBOOK (*Ninox boobook*)
Phil Maher found one roosting in a hole near Deni which showed beautifully, much to Tom's delight as he'd missed it on several previous trips. Another very confiding bird was roosting by the opal shop at White Cliffs. A third was seen on the last night near Gluepot, a good trip for them.

Aegothelidae

- AUSTRALIAN OWLET-NIGHTJAR (*Aegotheles cristatus*)
Phil Maher again came up with one from a tree hole at a site near the Plains-wanderer, and this was a brilliant view of a really cryptic species, of an Australasian endemic family too. Bizarrely we then had another great view of one at Strzelecki Creek found by Ruth, and another at the Bourke's Parrot site.

Caprimulgidae

- E** SPOTTED NIGHTJAR (*Eurostopodus argus*)
We dipped on this large species at Bowra, after quite a bit of effort both day and night, but then one seen by most folks flew by the campfire at dusk near Gluepot and then sang for much of the night, albeit distantly.

Alcedinidae

- E** LAUGHING KOOKABURRA (*Dacelo novaeguineae*)
This quintessentially Australian bird is a fierce predator, and showed well around Deni, although absent from the drier areas.
- E** RED-BACKED KINGFISHER (*Todirhamphus pyrrhopygia*)
Just 4 in the semi-desert and desert country, our first was at Strzelecki Creek.

SACRED KINGFISHER (*Todirhamphus sanctus*)

This species is a migrant from the southern areas northwards to PNG, and a single at Cullymurra waterhole was likely an early returner

Meropidae

- RAINBOW BEE-EATER (*Merops ornatus*)
The first were at Strzelecki Creek, then a few returning migrants around Cooper's Creek, Thargo and Bowra.

Alaudidae

- AUSTRALASIAN BUSHLARK (*Mirafrja javanica*)
Fair views of a couple at Avalon Swamp near Deni and one at Tennaperra lignum swamp.

Hirundinidae

- E** WHITE-BACKED SWALLOW (*Cheramoeca leucosternus*)
This uncommon arid country species showed very nicely at Montecollina Bore.
- WELCOME SWALLOW (*Hirundo neoxena*)
Widespread away from the arid zone, though a couple at Jackson's Oilfield were in very dry country.
- TREE MARTIN (*Hirundo nigricans*)
Common in most areas.
- E** FAIRY MARTIN (*Hirundo ariel*)
Another bumper year for this species, they were at every road culvert east of Cooper's Creek and I've never seen so many, we were seeing hundreds each day out there. We saw the distinctive bottle-shaped mud nests at Bowra.

Motacillidae

- AUSTRALASIAN PIPIT (*Anthus [novaeseelandiae] australis*)
A few in the drier areas apart from those seen nicely at Deni.

Campephagidae

- E** GROUND CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina maxima*)
One flying away when we were admiring the camels at Blinman, the only one of the trip unfortunately. It is a scarce and local species throughout, easily missed.
- BLACK-FACED CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)
Small numbers on many days, they are strong migrants and are just returning from the north.
- WHITE-WINGED TRILLER (*Lalage tricolor*)
A few in the dry country but none round Deni.

Turdidae

- I** EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*)
A few around Deni and Adelaide.

Sylviidae

- AUSTRALIAN REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus australis*)
Seen nicely at Avalon Swamp.
- LITTLE GRASSBIRD (*Megalurus gramineus*)
Good views of this skulker at Avalon Swamp and also unexpectedly out at Jackson Oilfield.
- E** BROWN SONGLARK (*Cinclorhamphus cruralis*)
Seen nicely at the lignum swamp at Tennaperra near the PW site at Deni. The male and female size discrepancy is the largest of any passerine, and why they are lumped in with old world warblers is a mystery, new work puts them in their own family.
- E** RUFOUS SONGLARK (*Cinclorhamphus mathewsi*)
Conditions were good for this species and we saw them on most days of the trip in the drier country, especially common at Bowra.

Rhipiduridae

- WILLIE-WAGTAIL (*Rhipidura leucophrys*)
Recorded every day of the trip, in an amazing variety of habitats, and with an annoying habit of nocturnal singing.
- GRAY FANTAIL (*Rhipidura [fuliginosa] albiscapa*)
Just a few around Deni and near Thargomindah.

Monarchidae

- RESTLESS FLYCATCHER (*Myiagra inquieta*)
Good views at Deni, this southern form is sometimes split from the northern taxon nana, the Paperbark Flycatcher.

Petroicidae

- JACKY-WINTER (*Microeca fascinans*)
Quite frequent around Deni, at Bowra and in the mallee. The tiny nest was seen at Deni.

E RED-CAPPED ROBIN (*Petroica goodenovii*)
This eye-catching species was seen well at Willow Springs and at Bowra.

E HOODED ROBIN (*Melanodryas cucullata*)
Very nice views at Deni, Bowra, Calperum and Gluepot.

E SOUTHERN SCRUB-ROBIN (*Drymodes brunneopygia*)
Excellent views of a couple at Gluepot, they came in very well.

Pachycephalidae

E CRESTED SHRIKE-TIT (*Falcunculus frontatus*)
Fabulous views again of a pair in the woods along the Conargo Road near Deni, this is now often known as the Eastern Shrike-tit as the species is regarded by some as a three way split. Always elusive, we had great looks. May well be its own family too.

E CRESTED BELLBIRD (*Oreoica gutturalis*)
Very nice views at Bowra, where males showed exceptionally nicely. A great voice too, one of the characteristic sounds of the dry bush.

E GILBERT'S WHISTLER (*Pachycephala inornata*)
Another elusive skulker of the mallee, this showed well at Gulpa Island near Deni and again at Calperum Station and Gluepot. Females are remarkably nondescript but quite large for a whistler.

GOLDEN WHISTLER (*Pachycephala pectoralis*)
Very nice views of a female near Deni, a winter dispersive here.

RUFIOUS WHISTLER (*Pachycephala rufiventris*)
Common throughout the dry areas.

GRAY SHRIKE-THRUSH (*Colluricincla harmonica*)
Vocal but shy, we recorded them at lots of sites but saw very few.

Pomatostomidae

GRAY-CROWNED BABBLER (*Pomatostomus temporalis*)
Great views near Avalon swamp and again at Bowra Station.

E WHITE-BROWED BABBLER (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*)
The first were at Gulpa Island near Deni, where a small flock were called in, then we saw a few in the mallee.

E HALL'S BABBLER (*Pomatostomus halli*)
Our hard work at Bowra eventually paid off with cracking views of a small group in the mulga. The species was only described in 1963 and is very localized. The eye-brow is like that of the male White-browed Wood-swallow, broad behind the eye and quite diagnostic.

E CHESTNUT-CROWNED BABBLER (*Pomatostomus ruficeps*)
This attractive bird was quite widespread, showing well in the Cooper Creek drainage and at Bowra.

Eupetidae

E CHIRRUPING WEDGEBILL (*Psophodes cristatus*)
Fine views near Lyndhurst and heard at a couple of other sites including Broken Hill, it is a characteristic voice of dry eastern Australia.

E CHESTNUT QUAIL-THRUSH (*Cinclosoma castanotum*)
The first was a male that showed really well at Calperum, then we saw several at Gluepot including another fine male.

E CHESTNUT-BREASTED QUAIL-THRUSH (*Cinclosoma castaneothorax*)
Very nice looks at a pair at Bowra. This is the nominate eastern race, the western is highly disjunct and a possible split sometime.

E CINNAMON QUAIL-THRUSH (*Cinclosoma cinnamomeum*)
The only sightings this trip were nice looks at wary pair at the Mt Lyndhurst whiteface site, they seem to be less easy these days.

Maluridae

E WHITE-WINGED FAIRYWREN (*Malurus leucopterus*)
Great views, beginning at Port Gawler then a few in the arid country.

- E SUPERB FAIRYWREN (*Malurus cyaneus*)
Lovely views around Deni, then in the saltbush at Port Gawler.
- E SPLENDID FAIRYWREN (*Malurus splendens*)
This stunning species showed nicely at Bowra, where the males have a whitish belly and are of the race melanotus. One of the most beautiful of an outstanding family.
- E VARIEGATED FAIRYWREN (*Malurus lamberti*)
Quite widespread, even being out at Montecollina Bore in the desolate cobbler country.
- E THICK-BILLED GRASSWREN (*Amytornis textilis*)
Very nice views of at least five birds at three sites at the whiteface stakeout near Lyndhurst. Note that this is the race modestus and should be split from the nominate western form (as indeed it used to be), as soon as we get some taxonomic sense into the Oz list.
- E STRIATED GRASSWREN (*Amytornis striatus*)
Gluepot produced this at one site, and we had amazing views of the bird running like a miniature roadrunner across the sands between spinifex clumps, then sitting up and singing from low down in mallee. Much longer tailed than the Short-tailed Grasswren and with a black malar line and orangey lores. Although widespread, this can be a very tricky species.
- E STRIATED (SHORT-TAILED) GRASSWREN (*Amytornis striatus merrotsyi*)
We found them easily at Stokes Hill Lookout with amazing views of what is often a very tough bird, no doubt aided by the calm and sunny weather, a nice change from the customary gales. It is much shorter tailed than the Striated and has only a faint malar stripe. I also think the voice may be different but still lack tape! It is one of just two South Australian endemic. Yip yip.
- E EYREAN GRASSWREN (*Amytornis goyderi*)
Another ripper, some of us had brief looks on the first go out in the hideous sand dunes and nitre bush habitat of the cobbler country at a new site. Next day we fared quite well at the Bore, everyone getting reasonable views of this mysterious bird. This is a great aussie icon, being the species that was described in 1875 and was then not found again until 1961, and still seen by very few birders.

Acanthizidae

- E WHITE-BROWED SCRUBWREN (*Sericornis frontalis*)
One seen in the samphire at Port Gawler.
- E REDTHROAT (*Pyrrholaemus brunneus*)
We dipped in the mulga scrub at Bowra but picked this one up at Broken Hill, with fine views of a very tape responsive male.
- E RUFIOUS FIELDWREN (*Calamanthus campestris*)
Great views near Lyndhurst, running about on the gibber flats between shrubs, with plain rufous crowns and very marked supercilia, heavily streaked dark on the chest.
- E SHY HYLACOLA (HEATHWREN) (*Hylacola cauta*)
Great views of two at Calperum. The upper tail coverts were so rusty as to remind me of a Rufous Fantail, and they had cinnamon undertail coverts.
- E BUFF-RUMPED THORNBILL (*Acanthiza reguloides*)
Nice views in the woods near Deni.
- E SLENDER-BILLED THORNBILL (*Acanthiza iredalei*)
Good looks at the samphire inhabiting form rosinae at Port Gawler, a scarce and restricted range species. Stupid name though, Samphire Thornbill is far better!
- E INLAND THORNBILL (*Acanthiza apicalis*)
One at the rock wallaby site near Quorn, strangely none at Bowra, and a nice view at Gluepot.
- E YELLOW-RUMPED THORNBILL (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*)
Common around Deni but curiously not seen later in the trip.
- E CHESTNUT-RUMPED THORNBILL (*Acanthiza uropygialis*)
This was the default thornbill for much of the trip, first at Deni and then throughout the drier regions.
- E YELLOW THORNBILL (*Acanthiza nana*)
Good views at Deni. The orangey chin patch is a good feature.

STRIATED THORNBILL (*Acanthiza lineata*)
One at Deni was unexpected, it is more of an easterly species.

E WEEBILL (*Smicronis brevirostris*)
Widespread, this is Australia's smallest bird.

E WESTERN GERYGONE (*Gerygone fusca*)
A nice view of one at Deni, the smoky song a nice feature.

E SOUTHERN WHITEFACE (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)
Small numbers throughout the arid zone.

E CHESTNUT-BREADED WHITEFACE (*Aphelocephala pectoralis*)
This rare South Australian endemic gave us a hard time but eventually we got views of a wary flock of five that Stoney found out on the gibber near the old mine site- whew! It had rained just a little in this section and this was enough to hold it.

Epthianuridae

E CRIMSON CHAT (*Epthianura tricolor*)
This nomad was quite widespread, starting at Lyndhurst and going up through the desert. Quite a few were around at Bowra too.

E ORANGE CHAT (*Epthianura aurifrons*)
This striking and uncommon nomad showed up first at Mt Lyndhurst.

E WHITE-FRONTED CHAT (*Epthianura albifrons*)
Two were at Deni, then a couple at Stockyard Plains. DNA research seems to place the Australian Chats in Honeyeaters now.

E DESERT CHAT (GIBBERBIRD) (*Ashbyia lovensis*)
We scanned thousands of km of gibber plain without success, then got onto a very co-operative male on the drive east of the Dig Tree, where the gibber plains were well vegetated- way to go Bill! It is an elusive, nomadic and rather rare bird that many aussie birders have yet to see.

Neosittidae

VARIED SITTELLA (*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*)
Great views of a small twittering flock at Calperum, of the race pileata, it is a new family. Great to see them foraging like nuthatches.

Climacteridae

WHITE-THROATED TREECREEPER (*Cormobates leucophaeus*)
A couple seen near Deni.

E WHITE-BROWED TREECREEPER (*Climacteris affinis*)
This uncommon bird again showed very nicely at my mulga site at Bowra, the hardest to see of the Australian tree-creepers.

E BROWN TREECREEPER (*Climacteris picumnus*)
Common around Deni and at both Bowra and Gluepot-Calperum.

Dicaeidae

E MISTLETOEBIRD (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*)

Pardalotidae

E SPOTTED PARDALOTE (*Pardalotus punctatus*)
Nice looks at Deni. The race xanthopyge (Yellow-rumped) showed very well in the mallee. It has a different call and habitat to the nominate but apparently intergrades widely.

E RED-BROWED PARDALOTE (*Pardalotus rubricatus*)
This scarce species of the dry country showed beautifully for us at Strzelecki Creek. They are very tape responsive.

E STRIATED PARDALOTE (*Pardalotus striatus*)
Widespread, nice views at several sites.

Zosteropidae

SILVER-EYE (*Zosterops lateralis*)
Just a few around Deni this trip.

Meliphagidae

- E** PIED HONEYEATER (*Certhionyx variegatus*)
We were fortunate to see a few near Strzelecki Creek, and again at the lignum swamp, it is an erratic nomad and can be hard to get.
- E** SINGING HONEYEATER (*Lichenostomus virescens*)
Common in the arid zone, the first were near Deni, then at Port Gawler and points north.
- E** WHITE-EARED HONEYEATER (*Lichenostomus leucotis*)
Good looks in the mallee at Calperum.
- E** YELLOW-PLUMED HONEYEATER (*Lichenostomus ornatus*)
Common in the mallee as expected, though the first were at Parachilna gorge.
- E** WHITE-PLUMED HONEYEATER (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*)
The default honeyeater of the trip except in the mallee.
- E** BROWN-HEADED HONEYEATER (*Melithreptus brevirostris*)
Nice views near Deniliquin, then a few records from the mallee zone. This is a strong migrant and the klik klik call is a good indicator of its presence.
- E** LITTLE FRIARBIRD (*Philemon citreogularis*)
Seen at Deni.
- NOISY FRIARBIRD (*Philemon corniculatus*)
A couple of sightings around Deniliquin in the flowering River Red Gums.
- E** NEW HOLLAND HONEYEATER (*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*)
A couple of sightings in Adelaide, like a number of other honeyeaters this itinerary just skirts their range.
- E** WHITE-FRONTED HONEYEATER (*Phylidonyris albifrons*)
This is another elusive arid zone nomad, and I was pleased to find it at Calperum. It took Phoebe five trips to get this one!
- E** STRIPED HONEYEATER (*Plectorhyncha lanceolata*)
We had great views one day with Phil Maher. An uncommon species.
- E** PAINTED HONEYEATER (*Grantiella picta*)
I tried the tape in the best mistletoe area to no avail one morning, then later that day we got fine views there of an adult, which was very tape responsive. It has become quite rare and is very hard to catch up with these days. Yip yip.
- BLUE-FACED HONEYEATER (*Entomyzon cyanotis*)
Seen at our lunch stop on day one, and again in Thargomindah. A bizarre and striking large species.
- E** NOISY MINER (*Manorina melanocephala*)
Common around Deni, Adelaide and on the Murray at Wentworth.
- E** YELLOW-THROATED MINER (*Manorina flavigula*)
Common in the arid zone, a poorly named species as the yellow throat is not at all obvious and may be absent. Pale-rumped Miner would be far better.
- E** BLACK-EARED MINER (*Manorina melanotis*)
Dave spotted some miners in good mallee at Calperum, and we fortunately lured in a mixed flock of hybrids and a couple of good looking Black-eareds. I was again pleasantly surprised by how distinct it was, a pure type individual should be readily identifiable as they are very dark, lack a pale rump and pale tail tips, and have a dark sub-moustachial stripe. They reminded me of Red-billed Oxpecker with that dark rump, with Yellow-throated having the pale rump like Yellow-billed Oxpecker does! This taxon has a chequered taxonomic history, most these days viewing it as a good species. At one time it was meant to be down to just 7 birds, before Bob Goodfellow discovered the colonies in the mallee of S.A. where it seems there may be a couple of thousand birds in scattered colonies. The species hybridises with Yellow-throated Miners in disturbed habitats, and vanishes when the mallee is opened up. It is an Endangered species, so yip and yip again.
- E** SPINY-CHEEKED HONEYEATER (*Acanthagenys rufogularis*)
Common in the dry areas, starting at Port Gawler.
- E** RED WATTLEBIRD (*Anthochaera carunculata*)
A few around Deniliquin and again as we came down towards Adelaide. It has a great harsh voice.

Grallinidae

MAGPIE-LARK (*Grallina cyanoleuca*)

Seen on all but two days of the trip, lacking in deep desert and dense mallee only.

Corcoracidae

E WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH (*Corcorax melanorhamphos*)

This is a great bird, with a terrific eerie wailing whistled call. The nest is a huge cup of brown clay mud. We met with them at quite a few sites, including around Deniliquin, Bowra and Gluepot.

E APOSTLEBIRD (*Struthidea cinerea*)

We really did see twelve apostles near Deni, then smaller groups at Bowra, Thargo, Gluepot etc. Another mud nester that has helpers at the nest.

Artamidae

WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus leucorhynchus*)

Strzelecki Creek held this species, rather to my surprise so far out in the desert, and we saw small numbers on the SW Queensland and NSW leg of the trip.

E MASKED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus personatus*)

This is another highly nomadic species and is often found along with White-browed, as was the case this trip at Thargomindah only, where we got nice looks. It is usually far less common than the White-browed.

E WHITE-BROWED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus superciliosus*)

This delightful and highly nomadic species was first found around Thargo and then with nesting pairs at Bowra.

E BLACK-FACED WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus cinereus*)

The black-vented race was widespread throughout the drier zones.

E DUSKY WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus cyanopterus*)

Luckily for us, we scored two unexpectedly at Calperum, and this enabled us to complete the set of Oz woodswallows.

E LITTLE WOODSWALLOW (*Artamus minor*)

This smallest member of the family is an elusive nomad, so I was pleased to catch up with four of them at Bowra.

Cracticidae

E GRAY BUTCHERBIRD (*Cracticus torquatus*)

Good views around Deni, and a very tame one came to our camp at Chowilla.

E PIED BUTCHERBIRD (*Cracticus nigrogularis*)

A few around Deni and again as we came into the mallee.

AUSTRALASIAN MAGPIE (*Gymnorhina tibicen*)

Seen on every day of the trip except in the dense mallee, even out in the desert areas. The lovely fluting voice is a characteristic feature of the outback.

E PIED CURRAWONG (*Strepera graculina*)

One in Deni as we drove out was the only sighting, marginal on this tour.

E GRAY CURRAWONG (*Strepera versicolor*)

Quite vocal at Calperum and Gluepot this trip, of the dark grey mallee race melanoptera with very little white in the wing. I suspect some splitting could be in order with this complex.

Ptilonorhynchidae

E SPOTTED BOWERBIRD (*Chlamydera maculata*)

Very nice views in Eulo at a flowering tree, and at Bowra where a new bower was built by the cottage garden.

Corvidae

E AUSTRALIAN RAVEN (*Corvus coronoides*)

Common pretty much throughout once away from Melbourne and NSW, the bawling baby call is very distinctive.

E LITTLE RAVEN (*Corvus mellori*)

Frequent around Melbourne and up into NSW, with a few en route to Adelaide at the end.

Sturnidae

I COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*)

This vermin was seen in the Melbourne area, now at long last the subject of a control campaign.

- I** EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
Frequent in NSW, Victoria and southern SA. Also seen at Cunnamulla.

Passeridae

- I** HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)
Common in the cities and also at Merty-Merty, Innamincka, Thargo, Whitecliffs and Eulo.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*)
One was seen at our motel in Melbourne. It is quite local in Australia and is only found in scattered places in the SE.

Estrildidae

- E** ZEBRA FINCH (*Taeniopygia guttata*)
A few near Deni, then just a few out in the arid zone. Clements splits the nominate race guttata from the Lesser Sundas as Zebra Finch, so the race castanotis becomes an Australian endemic and we apparently now have something called the Chestnut-eared Finch. News to us, maybe the common names were corrected in an update?
- E** DOUBLE-BARRED FINCH (*Taeniopygia bichenovii*)
The white rumped nominate race was seen nicely at Bowra.

MAMMALS

- E** SHORT-BEAKED ECHIDNA (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*)
A great one on the track near Wentworth, a truly bizarre egg-laying mammal and a special delight for Jeannie as we'd dipped on it in Tasmania.
- FAT-TAILED DUNNART (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*)
We saw this diminutive marsupial at the Plains-wanderer site, a cute little guy with a dark facial stripe, although this one was very wary. They are quite common on the plains here.
- E** YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK WALLABY (*Petrogale xanthopus*)
This beautiful and endangered species gave very nice views near Warren Gorge near Quorn, amongst rocks and cypress-pines.
- E** EASTERN GRAY KANGAROO (*Macropus giganteus*)
A few around Deni.
- E** WESTERN GRAY KANGAROO (*Macropus fuliginosus*)
Fairly widespread in small numbers in the arid zone.
- E** COMMON WALLAROO (*Macropus robustus*)
Common in the Flinders Ranges and near Lyndhurst, kangaroo strike is a real danger at dawn and dusk on bush roads.
- E** RED KANGAROO (*Macropus rufus*)
A few around Deni and out in the dry country.
- I** OLD WORLD RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
The pest hangs on in the drier areas and we saw a few, though calicivirus has knocked them back their burrows are regrettably frequent.
- I** BROWN HARE (*Lepus capensis*)
They were quite common near Deni.

Additional Comments

Reptiles and Amphibians

Two quite large skinks near Quorn had rough tails, ridges on the back, some spots and a blunt face, length about 20-25 cm.

Shingleback (*Trachydosaurus rugosus*) A couple on the final day at Stockyard Plains.

Bearded Dragon sp. (*Pogona vitticeps*) A couple gave excellent views.

Central Bearded Dragon Great views of them sat on fence posts at Bowra.

Lace Monitor (*Varanus gouldii*) one came through our picnic site along the Darling R.

King Brown Snake (Mulga Snake) one as we came into Queensland along the Adventure Way.

Birds of the trip were predictably the sightings of the legendary Plains-Wanderer, and then the outstandingly beautiful Splendid Fairywren, followed by those fantastic and so unexpected Flock Bronzewings.

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