

Birding

Eastern



Tropical Rainforest upstream Daintree Village

Australia

- with my family



Locations

We (parents and two kids) visited the following sites which encompasses the tropics, the subtropics and the temperate climate zone. In other words Australia from Southern Cassowary to Shy Albatross.

NORTHERN QUEENSLAND

The Esplanade, Cairns; Cassowary House, Kuranda; Mossman Gorge on the coast; Possum Valley; Crater National Park (NP); Malanda Falls Caravan Park; Hasties Swamp; Kingfisher Park Lodge; Mt. Molloy Town; Lake Mitchell, Mt. Carbine Dam; West Mary Road; Granite Gorge; Noah Beach; Red Mill House, Daintree; Daintree NP, Moore Reef (snorkelling trip).

SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Lamington NP; Girraween NP, Daisy Hill Forest Reserve, Brisbane; Tangalooma, Moreton Island.

TASMANIA

Mountain Wilderness, Loongana; Cradle Mountain NP; Strahan; Narawntapu NP; Bruny Island; Mt. Field NP.

VICTORIA

Hattah – Kulkyne NP; Grampians NP.

The two site guides for Australia mentioned below under Literature have many details on species and localities. Maps are also included. You need both books – they complement each other.



Australian Brush-turkey, Possum Valley



White-winged Chough, Hattah-Kulkyne NP

Timing

Australia 8. December 2006 – 10 February 2007 (Northern Queensland 11 Dec. – 2 Jan.; Southern Queensland 2. Jan. – 16 Jan.; Tasmania 16 Jan. – 3 Feb.; Victoria 3 Feb. – 9 Feb.). First time in Australia. Arrived in Melbourne 10 December in the early morning after a long exhausting journey. Slept in an airport hotel before the flight next morning to Cairns. Good decision.

We first went to Cairns to avoid the onset of the rainy, hot season which in 2006 started in the end of December – in other years in the beginning of December. However, it made Hattah - Kulkyne NP, Victoria an almost hopeless project in the beginning of February – the hottest period of the year where birds (and human beings) struggle to survive the high temperatures (43°C when we hit the park).

We didn't make any pelagic trips for seabirds – the season wasn't right and the kids were not happy about it. However, we saw a few seabirds on a snorkelling trip from Cairns to Moore Reef, which is close to the outer fringe of Great Barrier Reef.

Best time to visit the northern half of Australia is during the northern summer and southern Australia through the northern winter. It's difficult to get all localities at the optimal time for singing birds considering the extensive area that Australia covers, unless off course you have a full year available for the trip. September, October and November will probably be the best period with respect to singing birds in the majority of the localities that we visited.

Transportation

Star Alliance: SAS from Copenhagen – Frankfurt, Lufthansa from Frankfurt – Singapore (11hrs20min), Singapore Airlines from Singapore – Melbourne (7hrs). Singapore Airlines is a class better than

SAS and Lufthansa with respect to space around seats, food, wine, service, movies etc. Qantas from Melbourne – Cairns (3hrs30min), Cairns – Brisbane (2hrs), Brisbane – Sydney (1h30min), Sydney – Hobart (1h30min), Hobart – Melbourne (1h10min).

Domestic flights in Australia are relatively cheap if you can get the Red-E-Fare. You can book directly on the internet at www.quantas.com but do it at least 6 months before departure to secure the cheapest fares. December-January is the tourist high-season in Australia.

We rented full size family cars in Cairns at Sugarland Cars (recommended), in Brisbane Airport, Hobart Airport and Melbourne Airport (Hertz, Avis and Budget). A Toyota Camry Sedan is a suitable vehicle with a lot of space for kids in the back and a huge luggage room behind – other cars claiming to be full size are smaller than the mentioned vehicle.



Metallic Starling, imm., canopy tower, Daintree VC



Long-billed Corellas, Grampians NP

Safety

The only safety precautions to be taken in Australia seem to be the traffic, saltwater crocodiles and snakes. Australians have inherited the driving culture from England. They are sensible and considerate drivers. The only dangers in traffic seem to be left hand driving (if you are from a right hand driving country) and sleepy drivers in the other lane. The long uniform distances in Australia make drivers sleepy, and they lose concentration. Therefore, many road signs call on people to take a 15 minutes powernap to avoid accidents. And a powernap works perfectly.

There are warning signs all over north eastern Australia whenever there is a chance to encounter saltwater crocodiles – especially in estuary areas and rivers ‘a bit’ upstream from the estuary. Even in Daintree village you should keep away from the waterfront because of ‘salties’. Never swim in pools/streams that may contain ‘salties’.

Other precautions to be taken are the many deadly snakes occurring in Aussieland. On the top ten list of the most poisonous snakes in the world Australia has seven species. Never climb in rocky areas placing your hands on ledges that you can’t see. A snake may be sun basking there. Never put your hands into dense vegetation like e.g. fern thickets to pick up a football if you can’t see the forest floor. Such places are often frequented by snakes as a day roosting place. If you meet a snake at close distance stand still immediately – they hit at movements, not statues. Call for help – they are deaf – help that can distract the snake to face other directions away from you. Then slowly step backwards while the snake is occupied focusing on the new threat. It’s also a good idea to bring an elastic bandage like the ones used in sports when people get injured. If you are unlucky being hit by a snake this bandage may save your life. If you don’t

have a bandage tear your shirt into strips. If you plan to go alone into the bush remember to bring a mobile phone. Do not cut or clean the area around a bite. Poison on your skin can be used to identify the snake at hospital. Most people get bitten attempting to catch or kill the snake. And remember that snakes often strike to scare instead of injecting the precious poison. If bitten don’t move, relax, and place the bandage over the bite along the whole length of the limb. Tight, but not too tight – it must not prevent the blood from moving in the veins. Place two sticks along the limb to immobilise it.

Luckily, snake poison does not travel in the blood but in the lymph veins in the skin. It means that the pressure from your bandage will slow down the speed at which the poison travels. Normally a healthy person will have 8 – 9 hours before symptoms arise. So there is plenty of time for help to arrive. When all this is said about snakes, statistics are in your favour – you *will* leave Australia alive – on average there is only one fatal incident per year due to snake bites. Many more people die from allergic reactions to wasp stings.



Boyd's Forest Dragon, Mossman Gorge



Common Brushtail Possum, Girraween NP

Prices

Prices in Australia are a little less than prices in Denmark which means rather expensive, but not as expensive as e.g. Iceland, Norway and Japan. A few examples can give you an idea about the level. 1 AU\$ was 4.5 DKr when we visited the country.

Food and drinks: bottle of water (600 ml) 1 AU\$; can of Coca Cola 1 AU\$; good Australian beer shockingly 3,5 AU\$ per bottle/can (only available at Liquor Stores); ice cream between 1,5 and 3,5 AU\$; an okay burger at 6,5 AU\$ - but up to 10,5 AU\$.

Accommodations: fully equipped four person cabin at Brisbane Holiday Village 136 AU\$ per night; four person apartment at Tangalooma including breakfast buffet, transport with boat to and from the island and 3 ½ hrs sea cruise 700 AU\$ for one night; O'Reilly's Lodge at Lamington NP 250-290 AU\$ per night; four bed room with fan Hotel BellView, Cairns Esplanade 100 AU\$ (get one with aircon and windows); 4 person room at Red Mill House, Daintree 230 AU\$ per night including excellent breakfast. Both Cassowary House, Possum Valley and Kingfisher Park are reasonably priced.

Entrance fees: entrance fee for four including excellent lunch buffet at The Rainforest Habitat – Zoo near Port Douglas 97.5 AU\$; entrance four persons at Daintree Visitor Center (VC) 56 AU\$ (recommended; canopy midlevel boardwalk and excellent canopy tower for bird watching);

Trips: four persons with Sun Lover Cruises to Moore Reef from 10 – 17.30, large excellent lunch buffet included 350 AU\$. Semi-submarines and underwater watchtower available on the reef.

Car rental: mobile homes around 200-250 AU\$ per day (high season). Toyota Camry full size sedan around 100 AU\$ per day.

Food

Food is rather expensive in Australia, especially at restaurants. The cheapest way to get some decent food is to buy it in supermarkets and prepare it yourself. At Cassowary House, Possum Valley, Mountain Wilderness and Kingfisher Park you bring your own food and prepare it in your cottage kitchen. At Red Mill House a nice breakfast is included in the price, and two reasonably priced restaurants are available within walking distance. The best fast food you definitely get at Subway.

Accommodations

Our main accommodations in Australia are mentioned in the locality headlines below. From these accommodations we also made daily trips to other localities. They are briefly mentioned in the following text. During our 9 weeks long stay we used our tent on campgrounds for about 1/3 of the period to bring down costs. The rest of the time we spent in lodges, cabins, cottages etc.

For kids it's worth mentioning that Red Mill House, Daintree Village has a nice pool in their wonderful garden where nice birds and mammals can be seen.

The following list covers other accommodations usually used for one night e.g. near airports or in connection with other transfers: Ciloms Airport Lodge, Melbourne; Brisbane Holiday Village (cabin), New Norfolk Camping (cabin) near Hobart Airport, Barilla Holiday Park (cabin) near Hobart Airport.



Short-beaked Echidna, Bruny Island



Southern Cassowary, Cassowary House, Kuranda

Family and kids!

Our kids are like all other kids at their age (6 and 9) – they prefer swimming pools, snorkelling, ice creams, playgrounds, other children to play with etc. They do not see the beautiful landscapes as we – the adults – do, they do not find small, fast moving, brown birds interesting, a kangaroo is a kangaroo – in a zoo or in the wild; they prefer to sit instead of walking, to sleep instead of being up at dawn, they like animals at close distance – hate dots in the horizon or canopy etc.

How is it then possible to be birding Australia with kids? The answer is straight forward - it's probably one of the best places to go with kids because you get animals at very close quarters at most campgrounds in the national parks. And most campgrounds are situated in prime habitat. Aussies feed the animals at campgrounds despite that rangers from the parks ask them not to do so. It means that a lot of birds and mammals are very confident with human beings around. No matter what people do any campground situated in prime habitat will contain some leftovers from sloppy feeding people camping there. And Australians have a great tradition for camping and making barbecue meals outdoor.

Our kids had a great time in Australia watching many beautiful birds and otherwise hard to see mammals at close distance. First time ever during a holiday, just before we went home, we all felt that we could have continued for another three months without longing for home. And my son 6 years old claimed that he would like to live in Australia. Australia was great, Australia *is* great, and we look forward to come back some day to see the interior, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and the Southwest.

NORTHERN QUEENSLAND

Cassowary House, Kuranda

In the area around Cassowary House (see map) you bird the garden and surrounding forest, and the dirt road (Black Mountain Rd.) that leads to the site and beyond it. Nice birds seen in the lush rainforest around Cassowary House were e.g. *Southern Cassowary*, *Victoria's Riflebird*, *Forest Kingfisher*, *Double-eyed Fig-Parrot*, *Wompoo Fruit-Dove*, *Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove*, *Superb Fruit-Dove*, *Chowchilla*, *Noisy Pitta*, *Eastern Whipbird*, *Yellow-breasted Boatbill*. A nice daily encounter at Cassowary House was the strange-looking, aberrant **MUSKY RAT-KANGAROO** – the smallest of all *Macropodidae* (kangaroos, wallabies and tree-kangaroos).

Close by - at Barron Falls - we found *Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher*. Around Barron Falls you bird the trail from the parking lot to the viewpoints – everything is clearly signposted.

Our stay in and around Cassowary House, Kuranda included the following sites: Flecker Botanical Garden, Cairns; The Esplanade, Cairns; Kuranda Sky Rail and Barron Falls, Kuranda.

It's a 'must' to go with the Sky Rail from Kuranda to Smithfield and back. You are moving ahead in the canopy and just above it in cable cars with magnificent views on Barron River and the rainforest. There are two stations where you can walk birding with or without guides on rainforest trails. The end station at Smithfield is next to an Aboriginal Information Center and within walking distance from a big supermarket and commercial center (Woolworths). On your way you pass scrubby and grassy areas where we saw e.g. *Crimson Finch* and *Star Finch*.



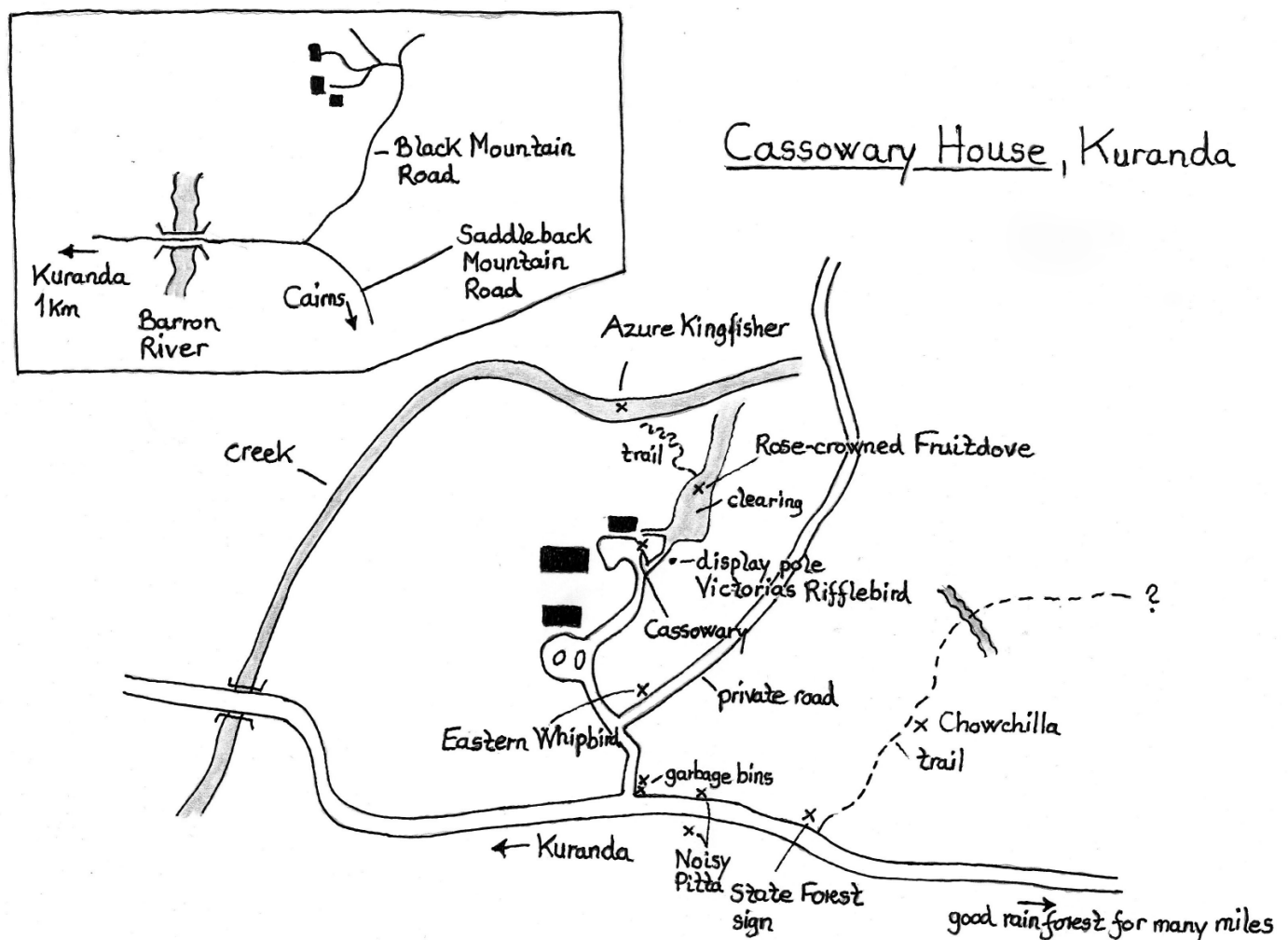
Bush Stone-Curlews, Wonga Beach, N of Mossman

At Cairns the Esplanade is the waterfront to the sea with a nice, very long and slender park area. Here you find barbecue places, playgrounds, a pool, shops and restaurants. And most important of all a lot of birds foraging right in front of you along the whole waterfront – some of them down to a few meters in distance. Here we had e.g. *Australian Pelican*, *Australian White Ibis*, *Royal Spoonbill*, *Eastern Curlew*, *Sharp-tailed Sandpiper*, *Great Knot*, *Grey-tailed Tattler* and many other waders.

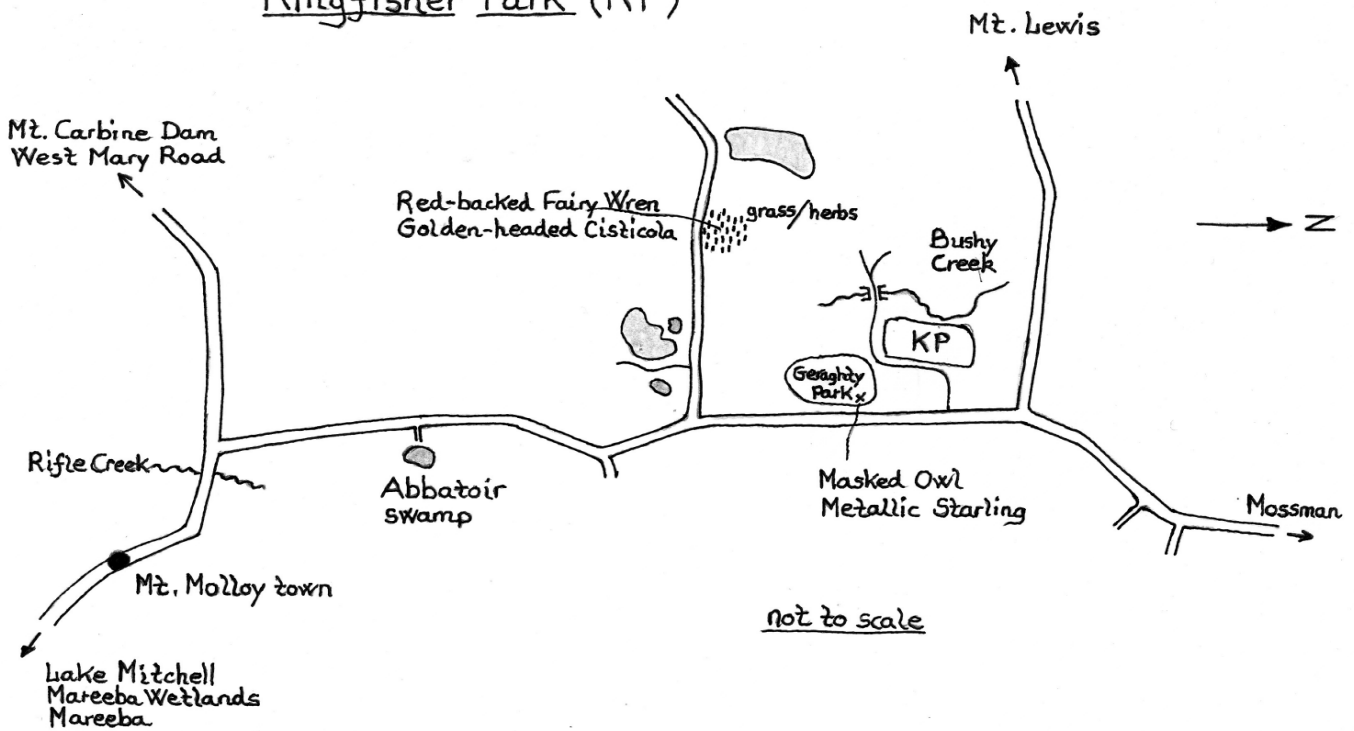
Flecker Botanical Garden in Cairns is worth a visit. There are nice birds to be seen in a landscape half culture, half prime swamp forest habitat and mangrove - e.g. *Black Butcherbird*, *Pacific Baza*, *Brown-backed Honeyeater*, *Dusky Honeyeater*, *Helmeted Friarbird* and many other species. The Botanical garden is easily found from the main road running North-South just behind the waterfront.



Musky Rat-kangaroo, Cassowary House, Kuranda



Kingfisher Park (KP)



Kingfisher Park

The park-like area of Kingfisher Park Lodge (KP), northern Atherton Tablelands, is close to primary rainforest on Mt. Lewis. In combination with other habitat types in the surroundings this produces many birds to the KP-list. Besides that you can expect some interesting mammals if you work with a spotlight just after dark. We had a wonderful stay here with many nice birds seen e.g. *Papuan Frogmouth*, *Channel-billed Cuckoo*, *Noisy Pitta*, *Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher*, *Red-necked Crake* (very shy - wait at waterhole in garden, but be patient), *Brown Goshawk* and *Masked Owl*. Mammals seen in the garden were much wanted nocturnal STRIPED POSSUM (listen for pieces of bark falling to the ground), FEATHERTAIL GLIDER and wonderful LONG-NOSED BANDICOOTS.

In the vicinity we saw e.g. the difficult *Blue-faced Parrot-Finch* (Mt. Lewis at 950 m a.s.l.), *Pheasant Coucal*, *Red-backed Fairywren* and *Buff-banded Rail* (roadsides nearby), *Australian Bustard* (West Mary Road), *Great Bowerbird* and *Red-winged Parrot* (Mt. Molloy town), *Brown Falcon* (Luster Creek, Peninsula Road), *Wedge-tailed Eagle*, *Magpie Goose* and *Green Pygmy Goose* (all Lake Mitchell).

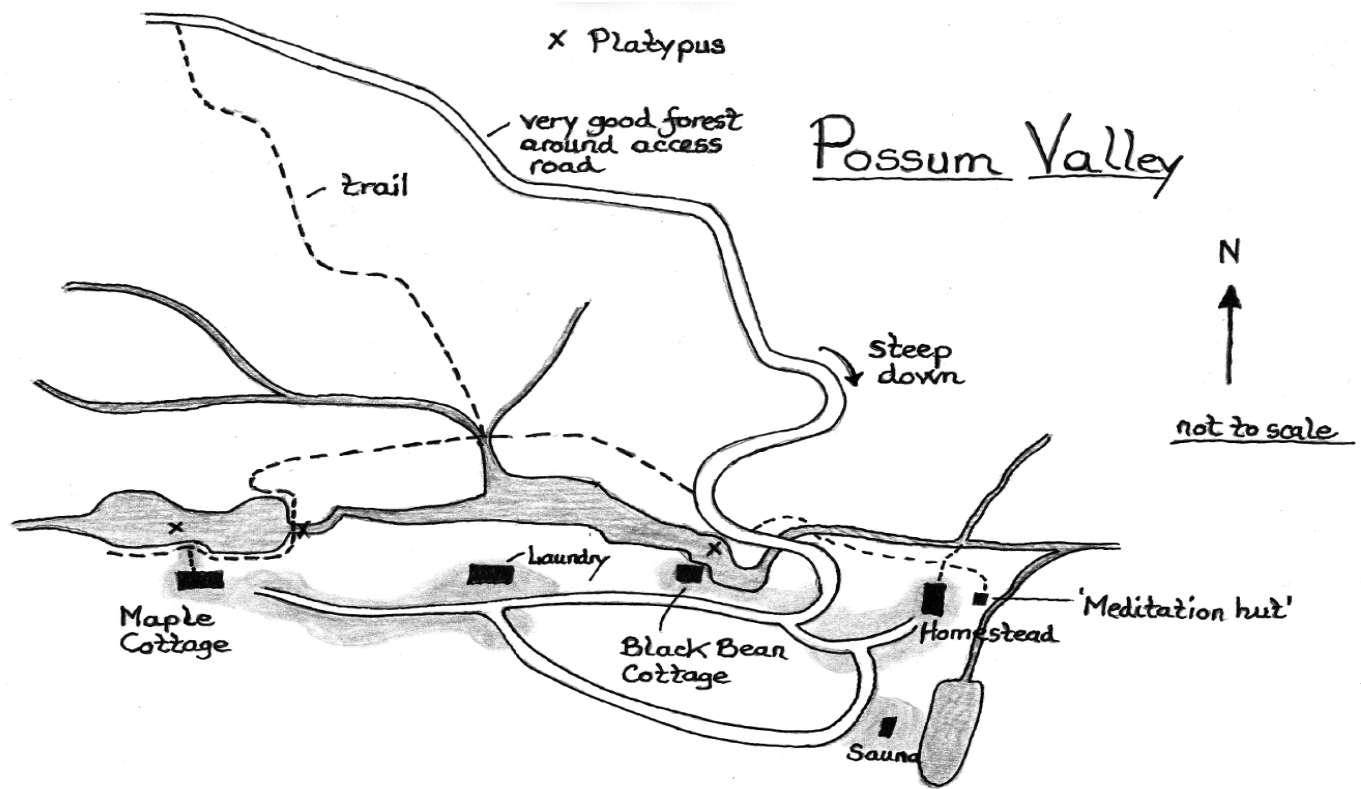
Ask the nice people at Kingfisher Park – they know all the good localities nearby and also have map copies. Another interesting wetland – Mareeba

Wetlands – was closed in December when we were there despite that they write in brochures that they are closed only in January, February and March.

Major dips in the area were Lesser Sooty Owl (thrown out by Masked Owl) and Golden Bowerbird on top of Mt. Lewis and Red-tailed Black Cockatoo which occur in flocks in the dry Mareeba area. The well known arena of Golden Bowerbird on Mt. Lewis was destroyed by the last very severe hurricane a year before our arrival.



Azure Kingfisher, Kingfisher Park



Possum Valley

This area is the highest place you can get in Atherton Tablelands. It is situated at around 1100 m above sea level in the south and is pleasantly cool compared to Cairns on the coast. If you urgently need to see Platypus this is the place to visit. Paul Tredgett, the owner of Possum Valley Rainforest Cottage, has it in the stream next to the lowest cottage for rent. You can get more information on www.bnbq.com.au/possumvalley, possumvalley@iig.com.au and 07 4097 8177.

Nice birds seen here included amongst others *Topknot Pigeon*, *Superb Fruit-Dove*, *Brown Cuckoo-Dove*, *Atherton Scrubwren*, *Eastern Spinetail* and *Tooth-billed Bowerbird*.

Birds seen at other localities in the area were e.g. *Southern Cassowary* (Crater NP), *Southern Boobook*, *Fernwren* (both Malanda Falls Conservation Park), *Brown Quail*, *Lewin's Rail*, *Nankeen Night-Heron* (all Hasties Swamp), *Blue-faced Honeyeater*, *Yellow Honey-Eater* and *Tawny Frogmouth* (all Granite Gorge near Mareeba).

We also ran into nice mammals like COMMON RINGTAIL POSSUM foraging on our cottage terrace after dark, HERBERT RIVER RINGTAIL POSSUM, PLATYPUS (all Possum Valley), GIANT WHITE-TAILED RAT and LONG-NOSED BANDICOOT (both Malanda Falls) and tiny MAREEBA ROCK-WALLABIES (Granite

Gorge). Don't expect that your kids will leave this place again after having fed these lovely creatures by hand. A major dip was Lumholtz Tree-Kangaroo which can be found at Malanda Falls Conservation Park with some luck. The only place we had the otherwise common AGILE WALLABY was at Hasties Swamp. This site has a nice observation tower, but bring a telescope.

I only know of one guide in the Atherton area – a professional birdwatcher Jonathan Munro that we met at Hasties swamp with a small group of tourists birding. How expensive he is I don't know, but the name of his company is Wild Watch: www.wildwatch.com.au, jmunro@wildwatch.com.au and Tel. 07 4097 7408 or Mob. 0429 438 064. I am sure that he can help you with Golden Bowerbird if you can't find it.

Another well known arena of Golden Bowerbird at Crater NP was also destroyed (we were told) by the same hurricane as the one on Mt. Lewis in northern Atherton Tablelands. We found it, and it was definitely abandoned.



Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, Barron Falls

Red Mill House, Daintree Village

A boat ride on the river Daintree is essential at this place, but there are also nice birds in the garden of Red Mill House, the Daintree Village and along the road that leads upstream River Daintree. There are at least two boat operators in Daintree village that are birdwatchers: Chris Dahlberg Tours and Dan Irby's Tours. We went with Chris, but Dan Irby produced more interesting species when we were there. However, on our boat trip we saw e.g. *Black Bittern*, *Black-necked Stork*, *Pied Imperial Pigeon*, *Papuan Frogmouth* and *Shining Flycatcher*. Other birds from the area were e.g. *Metallic Starling*, *Bush Stone Curlew*, *Black-fronted Dotterel* and *Blue-winged Kookaburra*. Major dips were Little Kingfisher and Great-billed Heron both possible on the river trip.

Within easy reach from Red Mill House you find a real kid attraction, The Rainforest Habitat located at the entrance to Port Douglas from Captain Cook Highway along the coastline. Here you walk among Australian animals, and it's highly recommended to buy a ticket including a very nice lunch buffet – everything reasonably priced. Our kids loved this zoo with its freely roaming animals and the many close encounters they got.

SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Lamington NP

We visited this famous and absolutely wonderful park in the days just after New Years evening. Fortunately I had booked and paid for a campground in advance from home. The campground was full all of the six days that we spent here. Booking can be

done over the internet from the home pages of the Queensland Government, Environmental Protection Agency. The address is <https://www.epa.qld.gov.au/parks/iaparks/gds/>

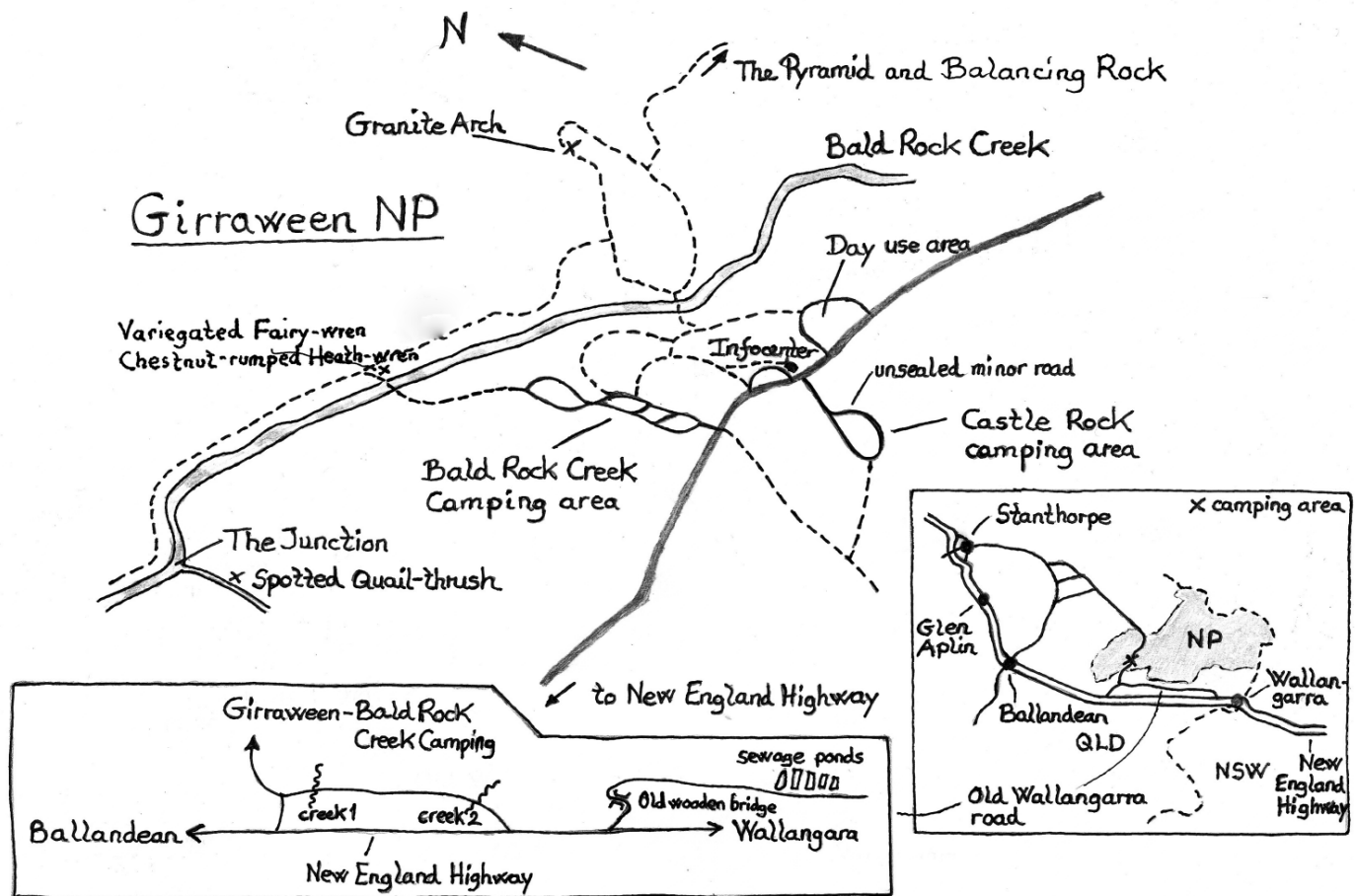
We had plenty of rain during our stay – the first three mornings were spoiled by mist and rain. If you can afford it O'Reilly's Lodge is an alternative to putting up a tent, but it is very expensive. One of the O'Reilly's can also be hired as a guide finding some of the more difficult species here like e.g. Marbled Frogmouth. But again – it's expensive. So we birded on our own. And the kids loved the place because of all the nearly tame parrots around

Among the many birds seen here, doves and pigeons were quite abundant. We had good sightings of *Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove*, *Wompoo Fruit-Dove*, *Top-Knot Pigeon*, *Brown Cuckoo-Dove*, *White-headed Pigeon* and *Wonga Pigeon*. Other highlights were the many *Crimson Rosellas* and *Australian King-Parrots* around. One early morning an *Albert's Lyrebird* was seen displaying at Python Rock trail. *Logrunner* was seen here too on several occasions by walking slowly and scanning the understorey along the trail. Both *Regent Bowerbird* and *Satin Bowerbird* were easy to see around the parking area and campground. But there was no sign of or vocalizations from Paradise Rifflebird anywhere.

On the mammal side it was great fun for the kids to be surrounded by RED-NECKED PADEMELONS on the campground in the late afternoon and having several close encounters with a MOUNTAIN BRUSHTAIL POSSUM attending our garbage in a tree behind the tent during night time. It finally accepted some fruit in exchange for the garbage bag. On our way up the mountain – in the dry lower parts – we stopped in a eucalyptus/pasture area. Here we found grazing WHIPTAIL WALLABY – our only sighting of this species.



Australian King-Parrot, Lamington National Park



Girraween NP

Girraween NP is situated on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range at an altitude of 900 m. above sea level. It is dry deciduous forest very close to the state of New South Wales. The park is full of granite rocks and huge boulders creating an absolutely stunning scenery. And there are great birds in this fine habitat. Despite the heat we had a wonderful stay here (Bald Rock Creek Camping Area) in this highly recommendable park. Among the parrots we had nice observations of *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo*, *Crimson Rosella*, *Eastern Rosella*, *Little Lorikeet* and the rare and beautiful *Turquoise Parrot* (Old Wallangarra Road). Along with the common *Superb Fairy-wren* on the camp ground we also found a nice family of *Variegated Fairy-wren* and skulking *Chestnut-rumped Heathwren* (see map). A little bit up the side creek from the Junction of the nearly dried out Bald Rock Creek a male *Spotted Quail-Thrush* luckily showed up with its juvenile. I was granted a few marvellous minutes of observation on this spectacular species resembling a Mesite from Madagascar. Also worth mentioning are *Little Eagle*, *Eastern Shrike-Tit*, *White-winged Chough*, *Plum-headed Finch*, *Chestnut-breasted Mannikin* and *Diamond Firetail* (all from the old Wallangarra Road that runs parallel to the New

England Highway). Look at creek 1 (see map) for the difficult uncommon *Speckled Warbler*. We missed it, but it should be there according to local birder.

During night time we met COMMON BRUSHTAIL POSSUMS on our table and had SUGARGLIDERS in the trees of the camp ground. During daytime we saw many EASTERN GREY KANGAROOS and RED-NECKED WALLABY.

Be sure that you climb the Pyramid – a huge very steep granite rock with great views over the scenic landscape. Look out for the nice CUNNINGHAMS SKINK which lives up here.



Red Wattlebird, Girraween National Park



Tawny Frogmouths, Daisy Hill Forest Reserve

Daisy Hill, Brisbane

Daisy Hill Forest Reserve is situated immediately south of Brisbane (25 km). We slept in a modern well equipped cottage at Brisbane Holiday Village for two nights (272 Au\$). This camping ground has a nice pool for the kids and is pretty close to Daisy Hill.

We started our first morning in the reserve scanning several thousand Eucalyptus trees for our main goal – koala, but with no luck. Returning from the 7 km long walk approaching the visitor center my wife found a KOALA at last. It was sitting high up – maybe 50m from the ground – in a huge Eucalyptus with a beautiful orange bark. It made our day!

But Daisy Hill is more than koalas. There are many birds as well. From our list I can mention e.g. *Tawny Frogmouth*, *White-throated Needletail*, *Scaly-breasted Lorikeet* and *Yellow-faced Honey-eater*.

Tangalooma, Moreton Island

If you are in the vicinity of Brisbane do not miss Tangalooma on Moreton Island (1hr by boat). Despite that it was the most expensive place that we visited, we got some memorable sightings of animals there. One night, almost two full days cost us 700 AU\$ including breakfast buffet and an Eco Tour Cruise (3hrs) to the southern end of this huge island. We stayed at the cheapest place, Kookaburra Lodge in a room on fourth floor. Despite being the cheapest place at Tangalooma it was a huge nice room with aircon, balcony, sea view, a wonderful bathroom, superb beds, fridge, tea/coffee and electric water boiler. The beach is excellent for swimming, and there are several pools available if you prefer that.

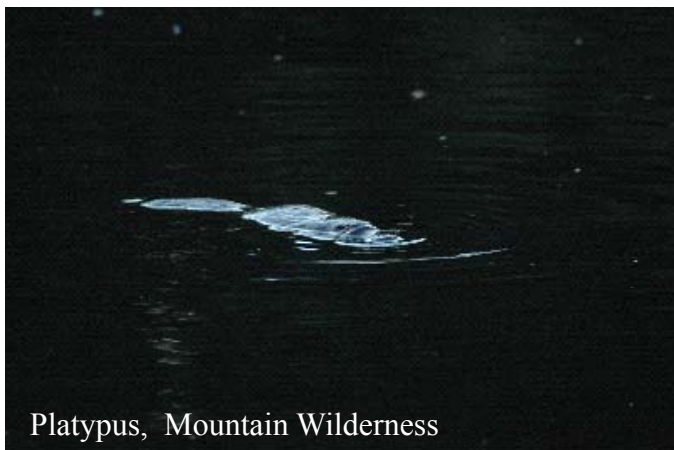
It is essential to secure that you depart from Brisbane on a day where they run the Eco Tour Cruise. They only do it every second day in order to avoid too much disturbance of the main target of the cruise – DUGONG. We saw two of these fantastic mammals, 15 GREEN SEATURTLES, two WHITE-SPOTTED EAGLE-RAYS, two EASTERN SHOVELNOSE RAYS and two COMMON BOTTLE-NOSED DOLPHINS and *White-bellied Sea-Eagle* on our trip. Two days before they found a flock of 40 dugongs! The dugong population in the bay between Moreton Island and Brisbane is around 600 animals. This is probably one of the best places in the world to see this animal.

From the pier at Tangalooma you see confident flocks of *Australian Pelican* and *Pied Cormorant* while *Whistling Kites* are soaring above your head. Flowering trees next to Kookaburra Lodge were full of *Brown Honey-eater* and *White-cheeked Honey-eater*.

Besides dugong there is a second reason to visit Tangalooma – a reason that you'll never forget. Every evening wild BOTTLE-NOSED DOLPHINS come to the pier to be fed by you and your family standing in the water holding a fish in your hand. A guide is securing that everything is performed correctly to secure that the animals are not disturbed unnecessarily or harassed. The number of dolphins that show up vary between 6 and 12 individuals depending on where they are in the bay at feeding time. The dolphins are offered only 10% of their daily needs. If you don't feed you get stunning views of the animals from the pier in the crystal clear water.



Regent Bowerbird, Lamington National Park



Platypus, Mountain Wilderness

TASMANIA

Strahan

One night only at Cosy Cabins Camping. Strahan is a real tourist place, but still nice and beautiful. One or two nights more would have been more appropriate considering the species around. Upon arrival birds were present immediately in the tall Eucalyptus on the camping ground and elsewhere in the village. Soon three new parrots entered my list – *Swift Parrot*, *Green Rosella* and *Ground Parrot*, the latter flushed twice in heathland just outside the village. However, it took a little work to ‘dig out’ *Southern Emu-wren* and *Striated Fieldwren* from the heath habitat. While doing so *Beautiful Firetail* and *Crescent Honeyeater* also came into sight.

Mountain Wilderness, Loongana

Mountain Wilderness is a wonderful remote place with the nearest grocery situated at Ulverston 35 km away on the north coast of Tasmania. However, we bought our food for the four night stay here at Strahan on the west coast. The best period for birds is October according to the owner – fledged juveniles also indicated that January was the post-breeding period. But birds were around and mammals too. Let me start with the latter group.

Bones with meat are put on your cottage terrace every evening. Spotlights are pointed on the terrace and away from you out in the dark night. You now have to wait in absolute silence in the dark inside the cottage, with the curtains down and windows a little bit open (photos!). Here is our experience on the very first evening upon arrival.

‘**A**fter a long time waiting the first shadow approached in the dark and soon started to walk up the few steps to the terrace – SPOT-TAILED

QUOLL – an up to 7 kg carnivorous marsupial. It was listening intensely all the time and it was obvious that it was afraid of something out there in the dark. An awful screech nearby suddenly made the Quoll run away – not down the stairs – too late – a TASMANIAN DEVIL was already at the beginning of the stairs. The Quoll escaped in a jump from the other end of the terrace as the devil entered the scene’.

This is what you can expect at Mountain Wilderness, and if you missed the PLATYPUS in the north it’s guaranteed every afternoon in the Leven River on the property – just 5 minutes walk away. And the lawn from the cottage down to the river is full of TASMANIAN PADEMELONS grazing.

We also had lovely birds here, e.g. the goose sized flightless *Tasmanian Native Hen*, white morph *Grey Goshawk*, *Brown Falcon*, *Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo*, *Strong-billed Honey-eater*, *Pink Robin*, *Flame Robin*, *Dusky Robin* and *Black Currawong* with its amazing voice.



Tasmanian Devil, Mountain Wilderness



Eastern Barred Bandicoot, Mt. Field NP

Mount Field NP

Mount Field National Park is situated only 75 km WNW of Hobart. It has a nice camp ground, toilets, showers, outdoor kitchens and powered sites. And the lawn which at first sight looks like the camp ground is retained for grazing mammals during nighttime. The avifauna is not particularly rich compared to other sites, but it's a wonderful place within easy reach of Hobart.

Nice birds seen here were e.g. *Yellow Wattlebird*, *Yellow-throated Honeyeater*, *Strong-billed Honeyeater*, *Black-headed Honeyeater*, *Eastern Spinetail*, *Pink Robin*, *Flame Robin*, *Scarlet Robin*, *Bassian Thrush*, *Fan-tailed Cuckoo*, *Wedge-tailed Eagle* and *Forest Raven*.

We used three nights (from 21.30 – 23.30) and early mornings to spotlight mammals on the lawn, forest fringe and the trail up to Russell Falls. Our efforts produced at least 14 individuals (including off-springs) of the rare and threatened EASTERN BARRED BANDICOOT, an EASTERN QUOLL, a SUGAR GLIDER, more than 200 TASMANIAN PADAMELONS, 26 COMMON BRUSHTAIL POSSUMS, two ECHIDNAS and a PLATYPUS foraging in the stream and across land at around 18.30.

Narawntapu NP

Springlawn is the campground to go to in Narawntapu NP – situated on the north coast of Tasmania between Port Sorell and George Town, both east of Devonport. This place is the Serengeti of Tasmania. Look for yourself in the evening between 19.00 and 21.30 o'clock. We counted on the grass steppe at Springlawn 50+ GREY KANGAROOS, 100+ RED-NECKED (BENNETS) WALLABY, 300+ TASMANIAN PADAMELONS and 15 VOMBATS – all grazing peacefully together

on the lawn.

Another reason to visit this site is the great chance of seeing the rare, vulnerable, endemic *Hooded Plover*. We found a pair of this beautiful wader on the beach by using a telescope. Besides the grass steppe Narawntapu also has dune forest and a big lake. The lake had many waterbirds like e.g. *Australian Shelduck*, *Black Swan*, *Australian Woodduck* and *Australasian Shoveler*. Other waders seen in Narawntapu NP were *Black-fronted Dotterel*, *Red-capped Plover* and *Sooty Oystercatcher*. It is also worth mentioning the beautiful *Brush Bronzewing*, *Little Wattlebird* and *White-fronted Chat*.

Cradle Mountain

We only had one night here in tent at the campground due to crowds of tourists. At other times of the year it must be a wonderful site. The landscape is marvellous and there are many interesting birds that can be found with some more time spent here. We concentrated our efforts on mammals the first afternoon visiting the boardwalk that starts just after the turn-off to Waldheim Chalet. Here we found VOMBAT and ECHIDNA between 17.00 and 19.30.



New Holland Honeyeater, Bruny Island



Little Penguin crossing dirt road, Bruny Island



Apostlebirds, Hattah-Kulkyne National Park

Bruny Island

Bruny Island is situated south of Hobart near the south eastern corner of Tasmania. The northern part is connected to the southern part by a very narrow strip of land – called the Neck. It was a fabulous experience to see hundreds of *Short-tailed Shearwater* flying forth and back along the west coast of the neck waiting for dark to arrive before they felt secure enough to attend their nests and young. Another great event here was the arrival of *Little Penguins* close to 22.00 o'clock. Bring a strong torch with red cellophane. You are not allowed to use white light and point the light directly on the penguins when they run over the beach. A ranger will secure that. At the rookery you see both penguins and shearwaters at distances down to 3 meter while observing from the boardwalk. Photographs at the rookery is not allowed. Drive very carefully on the dirt road in the dark – some penguins are crossing over the road from the east side.

Bring a telescope to the Cape Bruny lighthouse at the very south western end of the island. From here we saw several *Shy Albatros* foraging over the windy Southern Ocean. Other interesting birds found on the island were e.g. *Forty-spotted Pardalote* (McCracken Gully), *Olive Whistler* (Mt. Mangano trail) and *Double-banded Plover*. However, we missed the endemic *Scrubtit*, which can be seen on the Mt. Mangano trail situated on the way from Adventure Bay to Lunawanna.

Mammals seen on Bruny were four individuals of ECHIDNA and an EASTERN QUOLL at the southern end of the Neck.

VICTORIA

Hattah – Kulkyne NP

This national park is situated 460 km NV of Melbourne. The area features a series of billabongs and lakes on the Murray River floodplain between Ouyen and Mildura. The area is very hot owing to its inland location. Temperature has reached 50°C in Mildura in the past. Annual rainfall is no more than around 250 - 300 mm per year (semi-desert like). Much of Hattah – Kulkyne consists of sand with scrubby, malee eucalypts with patches of porcupine grass/spinifex (*Triodia irritans*).

Unfortunately we came at the worst time of the year to this wonderful habitat – the month of February where we experienced a temperature of 43°C. There were no other people on the campground during our stay. People wisely stayed in door in the shade. We only had one hour birding in the very early morning before all birds had gone for shade and shelter from the burning sun. The best time for a visit is September – November we were told. However, a few nice birds couldn't hide their presence during our short stay, e.g. *Blue-billed Duck* (Lake Hattah), *Little Corella*, *Regent Parrot*, *Australian Ringneck*, *Red-rumped Parrot*, *Yellow Rosella*, several hundred *Galah*, *Splendid Fairy Wren*, *Crested Bellbird*, the cute social *Apostlebird*, *Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater*, *Blue-faced Honeyeater*, the very common *Yellow-throated Miner*, *Yellow-plumed Honeyeater* and *White-plumed Honeyeater* (both common).

The reason for water in Lake Hattah at this time of the year was a rescue action to save the large Eucalyptus species along the lakes and billabongs. Rangers of the national park simply pumped in water from Murray River to prevent the trees to succumb from the 6 year long drought with no rain

at all. In the year of 2009 there are areas in southern Australia where no precipitation has occurred for the past 10 years! Farmers are about to give up agriculture and nature suffers.

Serious dips were Pink Cockatoo, Striated Grasswren, Malee Emuwren and Maleefowl. As a comfort we were lucky to run into a RED KANGAROO family (male, female, young). This impressive mammal has its southernmost distribution here in Hattah – normally being an animal of the hot interior.



Powerful Owl with possum, Grampians NP



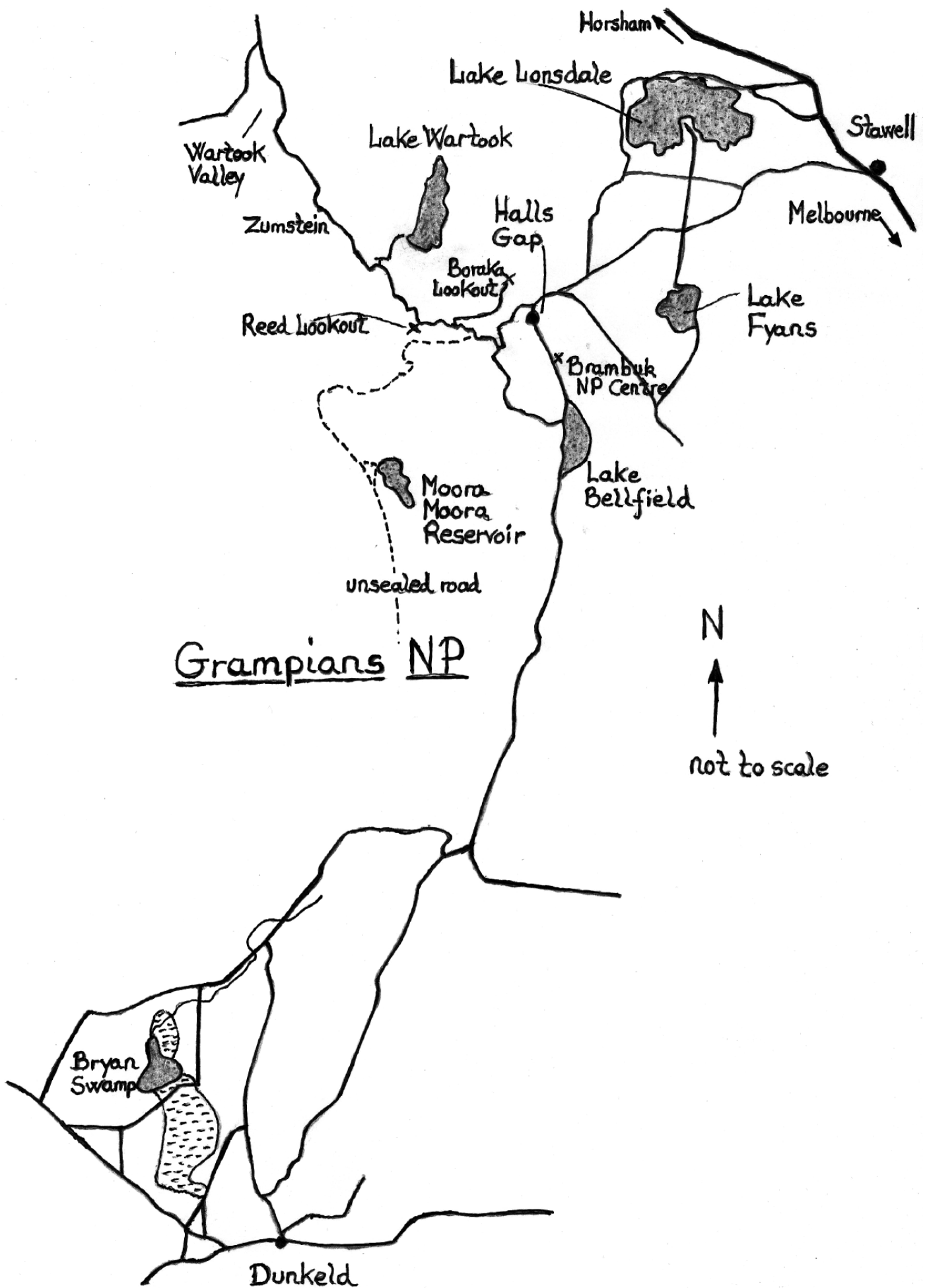
Galah, Hattah-Kulkyne NP

Grampians NP

We fled from Hattah and drove south to pleasant 33°C in Grampians National Park. Normally I would consider the latter temperature too high to be pleasant, but in comparison with Hattah it was a relief.

We rented a cottage at Halls Gap Camp ground. It was fully equipped with bath, kitchen and aircon, and reasonably priced. Grampians NP has great scenery, especially if you drive to some of the lookouts. We found e.g. much wanted *Emus* (especially along the road towards Zumstein and Wartook), *Musk Duck*, *Black-fronted Dotterel*, *Red-capped Plover*, *Brown Falcon*, *White-fronted Chat* (all Lake Fyans), *Gang-Gang Cockatoo* (look and listen for its creaky-door voice in the Botanical Garden at Halls Gap), wonderful flocks of handsome *Long-billed Corella*, many *Sulphur-crested Cockatoos*, a huge flock of *Musk Lorikeet*, *Powerful Owl*, *Southern Boobook* and many more species. Grampians has many visitors but it's easy to escape them driving a short distance away.

Every afternoon and early evening many EASTERN GREY KANGAROOS gathered around the cottages grazing peacefully paying very little notice to the human spectators around them. Normally Halls Gap Camp ground is one of the best places in Australia to see Koala, but the population has almost been wiped out due to a clamidia infection and a huge fire disaster that occurred before our arrival. Ask the rangers at the Brambuk National Park information center where you also find a nice arboriginee cultural center.



Species lists

The following species lists show the birds, mammals and reptiles seen on the trip. Introduced species have been excluded. I was not familiar with songs and calls of birds in Australia on arrival, and knew very few when I left because of post-breeding circumstances in the majority of localities. In only one occasion I managed to use the digital recorder bringing out birds in the open – Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove at Cassowary House, Kuranda. In this locality, however, some activity was present with e.g. vocal Victoria's Riflebird, Chowchilla and Eastern Whipbird, but they could all be seen with a little work and patience. I tried in vain to call in Paradise Riflebird in Lamington NP (January), but it appeared to have left the breeding ground when we were there (vertical migration?). Don't expect to make the same comprehensive species lists as twitchers do with or without professional leaders, but less can also do it with a family. Especially if you have luck with your list of target species. I choose species that are colourful, large, with interesting biology and/or weird morphology. Such species may also interest your family. And any mammal seen well will encourage them. Persuade your kids to make their own list of target species, e.g. parrot, bee-eater, bird of paradise etc.

Birds

Southern Cassowary
Emu
Orange-footed Scrubfowl
Australian Brush-turkey
Brown Quail
Little Penguin
Shy Albatross
Short-tailed Shearwater
Australian Pelican
Australasian Gannet
Brown Booby
Darter
Black-faced Cormorant
Pied Cormorant
Little Pied Cormorant
Great Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant
Great Crested Grebe
Australasian Grebe
Magpie Goose
Black Swan
Wandering Whistling-Duck
Australian Shelduck
Pacific Black Duck
Grey Teal
Chestnut Teal
Australasian Shoveler
Hardhead
Australian Wood Duck
Green Pygmy Goose
Blue-billed Duck
Musk Duck
Buff-banded Rail
Lewin's Rail
Red-necked Crake
Tasmanian Native-hen

Dusky Moorhen
Purple Swamphen
Eurasian Coot
White-faced Heron
Cattle Egret
Great Egret
Little Egret
Intermediate Egret
Eastern Reef Egret
Striated Heron
Nankeen Night-Heron
Black Bittern
Australian White Ibis
Straw-necked Ibis
Royal Spoonbill
Yellow-billed Spoonbill
Black-necked Stork
Australian Bustard
Eastern Curlew
Whimbrel
Wood Sandpiper
Grey-tailed Tattler
Common Sandpiper
Common Greenshank
Marsh Sandpiper
Terek Sandpiper
Latham's Snipe
Bar-tailed Godwit
Red Knot
Great Knot
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Red-necked Stint
Curlew Sandpiper
Comb-crested Jacana
Bush Stone-curlew
Pied Oystercatcher

Sooty Oystercatcher
Masked Lapwing
Hooded Plover
Lesser Sand Plover
Double-banded Plover
Red-capped Plover
Black-fronted Dotterel
Black-winged Stilt
Silver Gull
Pacific Gull
Kelp Gull
Caspian Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Black-naped Tern
Sooty Tern
Bridled Tern
Crested Tern
Lesser Crested Tern
Common Noddy
Pacific Baza
Black-shouldered Kite
Osprey
Square-tailed Kite
Black Kite
Whistling Kite
Brahminy Kite
White-bellied Sea-Eagle
Wedge-tailed Eagle
Little Eagle
Brown Goshawk
Grey Goshawk
Swamp Harrier
Australian Hobby
Brown Falcon
Nankeen Kestrel
Superb Fruit-Dove
Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove
Wompoo Fruit-Dove
Pied Imperial Pigeon
Topknot Pigeon
White-headed Pigeon
Brown Cuckoo-Dove
Peacefull Dove
Bar-shouldered Dove
Emerald Dove
Common Bronzewing
Brush Bronzewing
Crested Pigeon
Squatter Pigeon
Wonga Pigeon
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
Gang-gang Cockatoo
Galah

Long-billed Corella
Little Corella
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Rainbow Lorikeet
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet
Musk Lorikeet
Little Lorikeet
Double-eyed Fig-Parrot
Australian King-Parrot
Red-winged Parrot
Regent Parrot
Ground Parrot
Swift Parrot
Green Rosella
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella
Australian Ringneck
Red-rumped Parrot
Turquoise Parrot
Oriental Cuckoo
Brush Cuckoo
Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo
Gould's Bronze-Cuckoo
Common Koel
Channel-billed Cuckoo
Pheasant Coucal
Powerful Owl
Southern Boobook
Masked Owl
Tawny Frogmouth
Papuan Frogmouth
White-rumped Swiftlet
White-throated Needletail
Azure Kingfisher
Laughing Kookaburra
Blue-winged Kookaburra
Forest Kingfisher
Collared Kingfisher
Sacred Kingfisher
Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher
Rainbow Bee-eater
Dollarbird
Noisy Pitta
Albert's Lyrebird
Varied Sitella
White-throated Treecreeper
Brown Treecreeper
Superb Fairy-wren
Splendid Fairy-wren
Variegated Fairy-wren
Red-backed Fairy-wren

Southern Emu-wren
Spotted Pardalote
Forty-spotted Pardalote
Striated Pardalote
Fernwren
Atherton Scrubwren
Large-billed Scrubwren
White-browed Scrubwren
Yellow-throated Scrubwren
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren
Striated Fieldwren
White-throated Gerygone
Brown Gerygone
Mountain Thornbill
Brown Thornbill
Tasmanian Thornbill
Striated Thornbill
Buff-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Red Wattlebird
Yellow Wattlebird
Little Wattlebird
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater
Helmeted Friarbird
Noisy Friarbird
Little Friarbird
Blue-faced Honeyeater
Macleay's Honeyeater
Noisy Miner
Yellow-throated Miner
Lewin's Honeyeater
Yellow-spotted Honeyeater
Graceful Honeyeater
Bridled Honeyeater
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Yellow Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow-throated Honeyeater
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater
White-plumed Honeyeater
Strong-billed Honeyeater
White-naped Honeyeater
Black-headed Honeyeater
Crescent Honeyeater
White-cheeked Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater
Brown Honeyeater
Brown-backed Honeyeater
Eastern Spinetail
Dusky Honeyeater
White-fronted Chat

Logrunner
Chowchilla
Eastern Whipbird
Spotted Quail-Thrush
White-browed Babbler
Pink Robin
Flame Robin
Scarlet Robin
Hooded Robin
Dusky Robin
Eastern Yellow Robin
Jacky Winter
Grey-headed Robin
Pale-yellow Robin
Eastern Shrike-tit
Crested Bellbird
Little Shrike-thrush
Bower's Shrike-thrush
Grey Shrike-thrush
Golden Whistler
Olive Whistler
Rufous Whistler
Northern Fantail
Grey Fantail
Rufous Fantail
Willie Wagtail
Leaden Flycatcher
Satin Flycatcher
Shining Flycatcher
Yellow-breasted Broadbill
Black-faced Monarch
Spectacled Monarch
Pied Monarch
White-eared Monarch
Magpie Lark
Spangled Drongo
Yellow Oriole
Olive-backed Oriole
Australasian Figbird
Victoria's Rifflebird
Tooth-billed Bowerbird
Green Catbird
Satin Bowerbird
Regent Bowerbird
Great Bowerbird
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Barred Cuckoo-shrike
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike
Cicadabird
Varied Triller
White-breasted Woodswallow
Masked Woodswallow
Dusky Woodswallow

Black Butcherbird
Grey Butcherbird
Pied Butcherbird
Australian Magpie
Pied Currawong
Black Currawong
Grey Currawong
Australian Raven
Forest Raven
Torresian Crow
White-winged Chough
Apostlebird
Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin
Fairy Martin
Australian Pipit
Yellow Wagtail
Rufous Songlark
Brown Songlark

Australian Reed-Warbler
Golden-headed Cisticola
Tawny Grassbird
Plum-headed Finch
Crimson Finch
Red-browed Finch
Star Finch
Beautiful Firetail
Diamond Firetail
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
Blue-faced Parrotfinch
Olive-backed Sunbird
Mistletoebird
Silvereye
Bassian Thrush
Russet-tailed Thrush
Metallic Starling

320 species

Mammals

Short-beaked Echidna
Platypus
Tasmanian Devil
Spot-tailed Quoll
Eastern Quoll
Northern Brown Bandicoot
Eastern Barred Bandicoot
Long-nosed Bandicoot
Koala
Common Wombat
Mountain Brushtail Possum
Common Brushtail Possum
Feather-tail Glider
Striped Possum
Sugar Glider
Common Ringtail Possum
Herbert River Ringtail Possum
Musky Rat-kangaroo

Agile Wallaby
Whiptail Wallaby
Eastern Grey Kangaroo
Western Grey Kangaroo
Red Kangaroo
Red-necked Wallaby
Black Wallaby
Mareeba Rock Wallaby
Rufous-bellied Pademelon
Red-legged Pademelon
Red-necked Pademelon
Black Flying-fox
Spectacled Flying-fox
Giant White-tailed Rat
Common Bottlenose Dolphin
Dugong

34 species

Reptiles

Green Turtle
Burton's Snake-Lizard
Cunningham's Skink
Land Mullet
Eastern Water Skink
Tommy Roundhead
Boyd's Forest Dragon
Water Dragon

Lace Monitor
Gould's Goanna
Tiger Snake
Red-bellied Black Snake
Eastern Brown Snake

13 species

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26 September 2009, Bent Otto Poulsen (BOP)



Green Rosella, juvenile, Bruny Island



Grey Butcherbird, Hattah-Kulkyne NP