

**GRAND AUSTRALIA:
TASMANIA EXTENSION**

November 1-7, 2011



**Flame Robin at Cradle Mountain
Photo: Bill Clark**

Leader: Dion Hobcroft

Compiled by: Dion Hobcroft

**VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS, INC
2525 Wallingwood Drive, #1003
Austin, Texas 78746
www.ventbird.com**

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The success of this tour was beyond my already great expectations. Everybody saw all of the endemic birds of Tasmania, we had outstanding encounters with special mammals and superb wildflowers, and we enjoyed fine food and a relaxed itinerary.

After a short morning flight from Melbourne, we loaded up into our bus (taking time to get views of Musk Lorikeet) and then checked into the Grand Chancellor Hotel. We spent a splendid afternoon at the wonderful Peter Murrell Nature Reserve. In a 100-meter radius of the car park we enjoyed point-blank views of Green Rosella, Tasmanian Native-hen, Yellow Wattlebird, and Black-headed and Yellow-throated honeyeaters. A bonus was a chance sighting of a long-nosed potoroo, one of several marsupials for which Tasmania is a haven. A stop at a nearby wetland produced a Dusky Moorhen (rare in Tasmania) and both Australasian and Hoary-headed grebes.

After a relaxed breakfast the next morning, we made it in good time to Bruny Island via the ferry. It was to be an outstanding day with Swift Parrots, attracted to flowering eucalypts near the wharf, being the first important bird sighting of the day. After a bit of exploring we soon had great views of the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote feeding over our heads, closely followed by a superb Beautiful Firetail. At the next stop, the endemic Dusky Robin was on the list, but it was somewhat superseded by a glowing male Flame Robin. After a delicious lunch at a local café, we were distracted by a small flock of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, and then caught a lucky break when a Blue-winged Parrot perched long enough to be scoped by all. Walking on a white sand beach turned up the hoped for Hooded Plover, and then we were into the temperate rainforest. Before long we had great views of the Strong-billed Honeyeater, Olive Whistler, and Tasmanian Thornbill, and our “mission Bruny” was largely accomplished. A beautiful echidna topped off a superb day.

The next morning we spent a bit of time exploring coastal wetlands in southeast Tasmania. Plenty of good birds included flocks of Musk Lorikeets, beautiful White-fronted Chats, a vagrant Little Egret, and a handful of Red-necked Stints, Red-capped Plovers, and Greenshanks amongst numbers of Pied Oystercatchers and Pacific Gulls. A visit to Lake Dulverton at Oatlands produced fine views of Hardheads and Australasian Shoveler.

We drove north to Cradle Mountain with stops on the way for fallow deer. No fewer than four echidnas were found, while at Cradle Mountain our first of several wombats proved to be a big hit. Again the accommodations and food were first class.

The next morning our great weather continued as we drove to the west coast town of Strahan. Before lunch we walked into some heath and tried—successfully—to flush a Ground Parrot, which gave a good flight view. We enjoyed great views of Southern Emuwrens, Striated Fieldwren, and Tawny-crowned Honeyeater as a reward for our efforts. A major bonus was finding a Lewin's Rail vocalizing in a large tussock. With some playback in a gap in the tussock we had the rail walking around less than two feet away and too close for binoculars—amazing views of this mega skulker.

We returned to Cradle Mountain for a siesta and then headed out in the late afternoon to Burnie. As night fell, the first of the Little Penguins came ashore and we enjoyed excellent views. On the return drive we saw more wombats, brush-tailed possums, and red-bellied pademelons.

After a sleep-in, we commenced exploring Cradle Mountain. We enjoyed stunning views of platypus, Scrubtit, Crescent Honeyeater, and Pink Robin. After lunch we drove to Forth before exploring back up into the Mountain Valley. Satin Flycatcher and White Goshawk were both well-appreciated. Our host, Len, left morsels of road-killed marsupials next to our cabins. By 9:30 pm Tasmanian devils had arrived to take advantage of the easy protein. Participants were amazed to have this corgi-sized black and white marsupial carnivore bone-crunching away next to their doors; truly an exceptional natural history experience.

On our final day in Tasmania, the leader was hatching a plan to visit a coastal site near Launceston. The plan worked like a dream, and in quick succession we had excellent sightings of White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Cape Barren Goose, Fairy Tern, Little Tern, Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck, and Australasian Bittern. A lottery ticket should have been purchased such was our luck. Furthermore, we watched a gravid white-lipped snake and had an amazing chorus of endangered growling bell frogs at our feet.

It was time to head home, but not before one last final meal. We enjoyed lamb, oysters, and venison with fine merlot and Riesling before citron tarts with King Island crème cleansed the palate. A very fine tour indeed.

I would like to thank all the participants for a most enjoyable trip.

Great birding to all,

Dion Hobcroft

ITINERARY

1 November: Fly Melbourne to Hobart. PM: Birding at Peter Murrell Nature Reserve.

2 November: Bruny Island.

3 November: Hobart area then to Cradle Mountain via Great Lakes.

4 November: Cradle Mountain to Strahan and return followed by a trip to Burnie.

5 November: Cradle Mountain to Forth and then Mountain Valley.

6 November: Mountain Valley to Bridport to Launceston.

7 November. Fly Launceston to Melbourne with onward connecting flights to America.

ABBREVIATIONS

E=endemic to Tasmania

BI=Bruny Island

CM=Cradle Mountain

PMNR=Peter Murrell Nature Reserve

S=Strahan

LD=Lake Dulverton

* indicates an introduced species not native to Australia

Taxonomy follows **Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds by Les Christidis and Walter Boles CSIRO Publishing 2008**

BIRDLIST

119 species

Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*: (30) on 6 Nov gave great scope views but were wary of close approach.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*: Recorded on three days in Tas with max. (50) at LD.

Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*: Recorded on two days with max. (50) on 6 Nov.

Maned Duck *Chenonetta jubata*: Recorded on four days with max. (20) on BI.

Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchos*: (5) at LD and (1) on 6 Nov.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*: Recorded on three days with max. (20) Orielton Lagoon on 2 Nov.

Grey Teal *Anas gibberifrons*: (50) at Orielton Lagoon and (100) on 6 Nov.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos: (2-10) recorded on two days; mostly looking more like Domestic Ducks than pure Mallards.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*: Recorded on four days with max. (20) on 6 Nov.

Hardhead *Aythya australis*: (200) at LD and (100) on 6 Nov.

Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*: (3) one male and two females gave a great view on 6 Nov; rare in Tasmania.

Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*: (2) male and female gave a distant scope view on 6 Nov.

Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora*: (2) flushed in pasture at PMNR on 1 Nov.

Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*: (1) seen well near Kingston on 1 Nov was in breeding condition.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*: Recorded on three days in Tasmania, with (30) at Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov the high count.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: (20) at Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov.

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*: (10) at Burnie came ashore at night giving great views.

Australasian Gannet *Sula serrator*: (1) Burnie

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*: (4) on 6 Nov.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*: (3-30) recorded on three days.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: (1-10) recorded on four days.

Black-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscescens*: (4-10) recorded on three days.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos*: (10) Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov with (1-4) on 3-4 Nov.

Australasian Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus*: (1) showed well in the scope-well at least its head and neck late in the afternoon on 6 Nov. An endangered species that is rare in Tasmania.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: (2) on 6 Nov.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae*: (1-10) recorded on four days.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: (1) at Lauderdale on 3 Nov was a good record in Tasmania.

White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*: (2) near Tamar River on 6 Nov.

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*: (1-10) recorded daily.

White Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*: (1) male seen in flight near MV on 5 Nov.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*: (1) near Pipeclay Lagoon on 3 Nov.

Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*: (1-4) seen well on three days.

Lewin's Rail *Lewinia pectoralis*: (1) gave a great view in response to playback near Strahan on 4 Nov.

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*: (2-10) seen on three days.

Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*: (1) near Kingston on 1 Nov.

E Tasmanian Native-Hen *Gallinula mortierii*: (6-20) seen daily.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: (2-50) seen on two days with high count at LD.

Banded Lapwing *Vanellus tricolor*: (30) in one paddock on 6 Nov was a large aggregation in Tasmania.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*: Common in Tas with (10-50) everyday.

Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*: (5) at Orielton Lagoon and Lauderdale on 3 Nov.

Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseya melanops*: (1) Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov.

Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*: (2) Bruny Island on 2 Nov.

Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*: (2-100) seen well on three days with high count at Lauderdale on 3 Nov.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*: (1) Bruny Island and (2) Lauderdale on 3 Nov.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: (15) at a high tide roost at Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov was a high count in Tas.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*: (15) at Lauderdale on 3 Nov.

Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*: (1) seen in flight near CM on 4 Nov and (1) seen on 6 Nov.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*: Recorded on five days in Tasmania (10-200).

Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*: Recorded on three days with max. (50) Strahan.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*: Recorded on two days in south east Tas.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*: (2) on 6 Nov.

Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis*: (10) on 6 Nov.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: (1) on 3 Nov at Orielton Lagoon.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*: Recorded on three days with max. (30) on 3 Nov.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia (5) on 6 Nov.

Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*: (1) at PMNR on 1 Nov gave a good scope view.

Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*: Poor flight view on 6 Nov unfortunately.

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*: A wonderful encounter with (5) tame birds feeding on Pine cones at Bruny Island on 2 Nov and (6) on 6 Nov.

Galah *Eolophus roseicapilla*: Recorded on three days with max. (6) near Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*: (1-10) recorded on two days with high count near MV.

Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*: (10) at Hobart Airport on 1 Nov and (20) at Pipeclay Lagoon on 3 Nov.

E Green Rosella *Platycercus caledonicus*: Recorded daily in Tasmania with max. (10).

Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*: (15) BI on 2 Nov gave good views.

Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*: (1) BI on 2 Nov gave a good scope view.

Ground Parrot *Pezoporus wallicus*: (1) flushed in heathland near Strahan Airport on 4 Nov was seen well in its long flight.

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites lucidus*: (1) on both 5-6 Nov at MV gave good scope views.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites basalis*: Heard only at Strahan on 4 Nov but not responding to playback unusually.

Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis pallidus*: (1-2) recorded on three days in Tas; often sitting conspicuously on power lines.

Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*: (2) seen very well on Bruny Island and heard on three other days.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae*: (2-10) seen on three days; introduced in Tas.

Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*: Recorded daily in Tas. (4-10).

Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus*: (4) Strahan gave great views in perfect conditions.

Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*: (2) seen amazingly well on 5 Nov near Forth.

E Yellow-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavicollis*: (1-5) recorded on five days in Tas.

Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*: (10) seen on 3 Nov in southeast Tas.

E Yellow Wattlebird *Anthochaera paradoxa*: (1-5) seen well on every day with highest count on Bruny Island.

Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*: (1-4) seen on four days.

White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons*: (4) at Pipeclay Lagoon and (4) near Bridport on 6 Nov.

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater *Glyciphila melanops*: (2) Strahan gave a great view.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*: Recorded on three days with good views at Cradle Mountain.

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*: Recorded on three days in Tas with max. (20) on 2 Nov.

E Strong-billed Honeyeater *Melithreptus validirostris*: (5) at Bruny Island on 2 Nov and (2) on 5 Nov.

E Black-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus affinis*: Recorded on three days in Tasmania with max. (10) BI.

Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*: (1-4) seen well on three days with high count at BI.

E Forty-spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus quadragintus*: (4) BI gave repeat great views.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*: Seen or heard on SIX days. The subspecies in Tasmania *ornatus* has yellow tipping on the wing.

E Tasmanian Scrubwren *Sericornis humilis*: Recorded on two days with max. (4) at CM on 5 Nov.

E Scrubtit *Acanthornis magnus*: (2) CM gave great views.

Striated Fieldwren *Calamanthus fuliginosus*: (1) Strahan allowed everyone a great view.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*: (10) Bruny Island and (10) on 6 Nov.

E Tasmanian Thornbill *Acanthiza ewingii*: Seen on three days in Tas with max. (3) BI.

Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*: Singles seen well on two days in Tas.

Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*: Recorded on three days with max. (6) BI.

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*: Recorded on two days in Tas with max. (2) PMNR on 1 Nov.

Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*: (2-20) seen daily.

Black Currawong *Strepera fuliginosa*: Recorded on four days in Tasmania with max. (10) CM.

Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*: (1-2) recorded on four days in Tas with max. on BI.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*: (1-4) recorded on three days in Tas.

Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*: (1) BI on 2 Nov gave great views.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*: (1) male BI gave a great view and heard on three other dates.

Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*: Recorded on four days, all singles.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa*: (1-10) recorded daily in Tas.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca*: (3) on 5 Nov including a male gave an impressive view.

Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus*: (10-100) recorded daily in Tas.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang*: (1-2) seen on two days; high count on BI.
Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*: (1-2) seen on three days.
Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster*: (1-2) seen on two days.
E Dusky Robin *Melanodryas vittata*: (1) seen on BI.

***Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*:** (5) at Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov gave excellent views.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*: (10) recorded daily.
Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*: (10) at Bruny Island, (1) LD and (1) Strahan.

***Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*:** Recorded daily in Tas with max. (20).

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*: (5-10) seen or heard daily.

***European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*:** Recorded daily in Tas with max. (100).

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*: Recorded on five days mostly in small numbers in agricultural areas.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*: Heard only on 5 Nov on a farm dam near MV.

Beautiful Firetail *Stagonopleura bella*: (1) absolutely stunning at BI.

***House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*:** Recorded daily in Tas where it is still a common introduced species.

***European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*:** (2-4) seen on three days in Tas.

***European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*:** Recorded daily with max. (10).



Platypus at Cradle Mountain
Photo: Bill Clark

MAMMALS

Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*: (1) CM on 4-5 Nov, (1) near Forth and (2) MV on 5 Nov.

Short-beaked Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus*: A total of nine individuals encountered on four days with max. (4) on 3 Nov.

Tasmanian Devil *Sarcophilus harrisi*: (4) on 5 Nov at Mountain Valley; one of the great highlights of a great tour.

Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus*: A total of (3-5) seen in Cradle Mountain area on 3-4 Nov with (1) scoped in the distance on 6 Nov.

Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula*: Seen at both Cradle Mountain and Mountain Valley.

Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus*: (1) at PMNR on 1 Nov gave a brief good view.

Red-bellied Pademelon *Thylogale billiardierii*: Moderate numbers present at Cradle Mountain and Mountain Valley.

Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*: (1-5) seen on three days.

***Fallow Deer *Cervus dama*:** (30) seen near Great Lake on 3 Nov.

***European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*:** Moderately common and widespread in Tas.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Blotched Bluetongue *Tiliqua nigrolutea*: (1) Bl on 2 Nov and (1) 6 Nov.

White-lipped Snake *Drysdalia coronata*: (1) on 6 Nov gave a great view.

Tasmanian Froglet *Crinia tasmaniensis*: frequently heard near Strahan and Mountain Valley.

Growling Bell Frog *Litoria raniformis*: (4) seen well on 6 Nov; a threatened species.

Tasmanian Devil at Mountain Valley (Dion Hobcroft)

