

# **GRAND AUSTRALIA: TASMANIA EXTENSION**

**NOVEMBER 1-7, 2008**

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TOUR REPORT  
TASMANIA EXTENSION  
November 1–7, 2008

By Dion Hobcroft

Our 2008 Tasmania tour was successful beyond my already great expectations. Everybody saw all of the endemic birds of Tasmania, and we had outstanding encounters with special mammals and superb wildflowers. We enjoyed fine food, good wine, and a relaxed itinerary.

After a short morning flight from Melbourne, we loaded up into our van only to enjoy fine views of Musk Lorikeet in the airport car park. A quick exploration of Orielton Lagoon turned up great views of Great Crested Grebe. After settling into the hotel, enjoying some divine Tasmanian cuisine and a siesta, we opted for a “wild goose chase” in the afternoon—our target: the Cape Barren Goose. To make a long story short, a colorful conversation with a local farmer, who was disappointed we did not have a gun to remove said geese from his pasture, saw me driving the van cross-country to a small dam. Sure enough, ten Cape Barren Geese eyed us warily and allowed great scope views.

The next day we spent a splendid morning at the wonderful Peter Murrell Nature Reserve. In a 50-meter radius of the car park we enjoyed point-blank views of the threatened Forty-spotted Pardalote, several families of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos noisily demolishing Banksia seed cones, and a great view of the secretive marsupial known as the long-nosed potoroo. We took the ferry to Bruny Island where we saw all of Tasmania’s 12 endemic birds extremely well, and enjoyed a swag of other specialties including all four cuckoo species; stunning Pink, Scarlet, and Flame robins; the ethereal Olive Whistler; and the endangered Swift Parrot prospecting for nesting hollows.

A stunning White Goshawk female perched and in the scope was our best highlight the next morning during our exploration of wet forest near Mount Wellington. This is an absolutely cracking bird and, amazingly, the first of three we were to find during our stay in Tasmania. We drove north to Cradle Mountain with stops on the way finding Banded Lapwing with chicks and a couple of herds of introduced fallow deer. Some excited screaming from the back of the van saw me braking hastily: Blue-winged Parrots offered us beautiful views in the soft afternoon light. Fantastic! 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, good weather saw us on our way to the remote west coast town of Strahan. After lunch we walked into some heath, and after only a few yards we flushed a Ground Parrot that flew across the heath for more than a hundred meters, allowing all a good view of this rarely seen skulker. Striated Fieldwren, Crescent Honeyeater, and Brush Bronzewing made their debuts on our seen list.

After exploring Cradle Mountain in the morning and having stunning views of Scrubtit, Striated Fieldwren, and Tasmanian Thornbill, we journeyed down to the coast at Forth before exploring back up into the Mountain Valley. A short walk after our siesta turned up a stunning Beautiful Firetail. Hooray! As the afternoon light faded, we went to enjoy platypus foraging in the river next to our cabins. Our host, Len, left morsels of road-killed marsupials next to our cabins. By 9:30 p.m. 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.

Our final day in Tasmania saw us visiting a number of beautiful coastal locations including Port Sorrell with an Eastern Curlew, and Narwantapu National Park with a superb perched Wedge-tailed Eagle and diurnal wombats. Our last stop was the Tamar Wetlands. Hundreds of Black Swans, Australian Shelducks, Pied Oystercatchers, and a variety of different ducks saw us leave our Tasmanian birding odyssey behind in spectacular fashion. 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 and champagne sorbet cleansed the palate. A very fine tour indeed.

I would like to thank Nancy Brown, Patricia Carrington, Rachel Hopper, John and Molly Kaye, and Martha O'Neal for a most enjoyable trip.

Great birding to all

Dion Hobcroft

## ITINERARY

- 1 November:** Fly Melbourne to Hobart. Birding at Orielton Lagoon and Rheban.
- 2 November:** Early morning at Peter Murrell the rest of day on Bruny Island.
- 3 November:** Hobart area then to Cradle Mountain via Great Lakes.
- 4 November:** Cradle Mountain to Strahan and return.
- 5 November:** Cradle Mountain to Forth and then Mountain Valley.
- 6 November:** Mountain Valley to Port Sorell, Narawantapu National Park and Tamar Wetlands to Launceston.
- 7 November.** Fly Launceston to Melbourne with onward connecting flights to America.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BI=Bruny Island

CM=Cradle Mountain

PMNR=Peter Murrell Nature Reserve

S=Strahan

TW=Tamar Wetlands, Launceston

\* indicates an introduced species not native to Australia

## BIRDLIST

**114 species (2 heard only: both of these seen on previous tour)**

**Australasian Grebe *Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*:** (2) on a small pond north of Bothwell on 3 Nov.

**Hoary-headed Grebe *Poliocephalus poliocephalus*:** Recorded on 4 days in Tasmania.

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*:** (2-4) at Orielton Lagoon and (2) Tamar Wetlands.

**Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*:** Recorded on 3 days at Orielton Lagoon and Tamar Wetlands.

**Australasian Gannet *Sula serrator*:** (4) Bruny Island and (1) at Port Sorell.

**Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*:** (1-10) recorded on 5 days.

**Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*:** (4) Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov and (4) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Black-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax fuscescens*:** (1-10) recorded on 5 days.

**Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*:** (1-5) recorded on 4 days.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba*:** (1) Orielton Lagoon in breeding plumage on 3 Nov and (3) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*:** (1-5) recorded on 5 days.

**Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis coromandus*:** (8) on 5 Nov near Forth and (30) on 6 Nov near Ulverstone. Several in breeding plumage. This eastern subspecies is sometimes given full species status.

**Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*:** (1-3) at Orielton Lagoon on both visits.

**Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*:** Recorded on 5 days in Tas with max. (200) Tamar Wetlands.

**Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*:** (10) near Rheban on 1 Nov. were found with the assistance of a local farmer who was definitely not a goose enthusiast to put it mildly! We enjoyed great views.

**Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*:** Recorded on 3 days with max. (50) Tamar Wetlands.

**Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*:** Recorded on 4 days with max. (10-20).

**Australian Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*:** (2) Strahan on 4 Nov and (30) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*:** Recorded on 4 days with max. (50) Tamar Wetlands.

**\*Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*:** (2-5) recorded on 4 days.

**Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*:** Recorded on 5 days with max. (40) near Forth on 5 Nov.

**Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*:** (10) near Launceston on 6 Nov.

**Hardhead *Aythya australis*:** Recorded on 3 days with max. (20) near Launceston on 6 Nov.

**White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*:** (1) Bruny Island on 2 Nov and a pair perched near Mole Creek on 3 Nov allowed an excellent view.

**Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*:** Recorded on 6 days with max. (3) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*:** (1) Bruny Island.

**White Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*:** (1) Waterworks Reserve on 3 Nov and (1) on both days driving into and out of Mountain Valley on 5-6 Nov. All perched birds allowing great views.

**Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*:** (1) Bruny Island and (1) Narwantapu National Park on 6 Nov.

**Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*:** Singles seen on 3 days.

**Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*:** (1) near Nietta on 5 Nov and (10) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Tasmanian Native-Hen *Gallinula mortierii*:** Recorded on 5 days in Tasmania with max. (50) on both 5-6 Nov.

**Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*:** (2) near Forth on 5 Nov and (10) on a wetland near Launceston on 6 Nov.

**Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*:** Recorded daily in Tasmania with max. (20) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*:** Recorded on 3 days with max. (2) Rheban and Port Sorrell.

**Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*:** Recorded on 3 days with (3-5) at Orielton Lagoon, Forth and Port Sorrell.

**Black-fronted Dotterel *Elseornis melanops*:** (4) Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*:** (2) near Rheban on 1 Nov, (2) Bruny Island on 2 Nov and a distant pair at Port Sorrell on 6 Nov.

**Banded Lapwing *Vanellus tricolor*:** (10) near Bothwell on 3 Nov with (1) near Mole Creek on the same day.

**Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*:** Common in Tas with (20-50) everyday.

**Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*:** (30) Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov.

**Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*:** (1) Port Sorrell on 6 Nov.

**Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*:** (10) Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov.

**Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*:** Recorded on 4 days with max. (100) near Strahan on 4 Nov.

**Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*:** Recorded on 3 days in southeast Tasmania with max. (200) at Waterworks Reservoir on 3 Nov.

**Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*:** Recorded daily in Tasmania (20-100).

**Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*:** (1) Orielton Lagoon on 3 Nov with (2) at both Port Sorrell and Tamar Wetlands on 6 Nov.

**Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*:** Recorded on 6 days with max. (50) Port Sorrell on 6 Nov.

**\*Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*:** Recorded on 2 days with (10) birds seen.

**\*Spotted Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*:** (1) Hobart on 3 Nov.

**Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*:** (5) Rheban on 1 Nov and (1) near Mole Creek on 3 Nov.

**Brush Bronzewing *Phaps elegans*:** (1) near Zeehan on 4 Nov and (2) near Mountain Valley allowed a great roadside view. Also heard at Ferntree near Hobart on 3 Nov.

**Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*:** A wonderful encounter with (10) tame birds feeding on Banksia seeds at Peter Murell NR on 2 Nov.

**Galah *Eolophus roseicapilla*:** Recorded on 4 Days with max. (30) near Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov.

**Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita*:** (10-30) recorded on 3 days.

**Musk Lorikeet *Glossopsitta concinna*:** (2) Hobart Airport on 1 Nov. Also heard near Forth on 5 Nov.

**Green Rosella *Platycercus caledonicus*:** Recorded daily in Tasmania with max. (5) BI.

**Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*:** (2-10) recorded on 3 days in southeast Tasmania with max. (10) near Rheban.

**Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*:** (10) BI on 2 Nov included birds prospecting for nesting hollows.

**Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*:** (6) near Mole Creek gave fantastic views of this quiet and inconspicuous species.

**Ground Parrot *Pezoporus wallicus*:** (1) Strahan was seen in flight twice giving as good a view as you could expect.

**Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*:** (1-4) recorded on 3 days in Tas.

**Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*:** Seen on 3 days and heard on a further 2 with max. (2) Mountain Valley.

**Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*:** (1) Bruny Island on 2 Nov.

**Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*:** (2) gave great views at Bruny Island on 2 Nov. Heard and seen on a further 3 days.

**Southern Boobook *Ninox novaeseelandiae*:** Heard only CM.

**Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguinae*:** Seen on 4 days (2-6); introduced in Tas.

**Superb Fairy-wren *Malurus cyaneus*:** Recorded daily in Tas. (10-30).

**Southern Emu-wren *Stipiturus malachurus*:** (4) Strahan.

**Yellow Wattlebird *Anthochaera paradoxa*:** (2-10) on 4 days with highest count on Bruny Island.

**Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*:** (2-5) recorded on 4 days in Tas.

**Noisy Miner *Manorina melanocephala*:** (2-10) recorded on 4 days.

**Yellow-throated Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavicollis*:** (2-5) recorded on 5 days in Tas.

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

**Black-headed Honeyeater *Melithreptus affinis*:** Recorded on 2 days in Tasmania with max. (10) BI.

**Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera*:** Recorded on 5 days with good views at both Strahan and Cradle Mountain.

**New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*:** Recorded on 5 days in Tas with max. (50) on 2 Nov.

**Eastern Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*:** (1-2) seen on 4 days.

**White-fronted Chat *Epthianura albifrons*:** (2) Narawantapu NP on 6 Nov.

**Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*:** Seen or heard on 4 days.

**Forty-spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus quadragintus*:** (2) PMNR gave repeat great views.

**Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*:** Seen or heard on 5 days. The subspecies in Tasmania has yellow tipping on the wing.

**Tasmanian Scrubwren *Sericornis humilis*:** Recorded on 5 days with max. (10) at Ferntree on 3 Nov.

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

**Striated Fieldwren *Calamanthus fuliginosus*:** (2) Strahan and (2) Cradle Mountain with (1) Mountain Valley allowed everyone a great view.

**Brown Thornbill *Acanthiza pusilla*:** Recorded on 5 days in Tas.

**Tasmanian Thornbill *Acanthiza ewingii*:** Seen on 3 days in Tas with max. (3) Bruny Island on 2 Nov.

**Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*:** Recorded on 3 days in Tas with max. (10) Bruny Island.

**Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang*:** Recorded on 3 days in Tas with max. (5) Bruny Island.

**Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*:** (1-2) seen on 4 days with our first a stunning male on Bruny Island.

**Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster*:** Seen on 4 days with our first a stunning male on Bruny Island.

**Dusky Robin *Melanodryas vittata*:** (6) BI and (1) on drive out of Mountain Valley on 5 Nov.

**Olive Whistler *Pachycephala olivacea*:** (2) BI impressed all with its ethereal song and gave great views. Heard on 3 other days.

**Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*:** (1-2) DF, (1) BI

**Grey Shrike-thrush *Colluricincla harmonica*:** Recorded on 5 days with max. (4) DF.

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

**Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae*:** Recorded on 4 days in Tas.

**Dusky Woodswallow *Artamus cyanopterus*:** Recorded on 3 days with max. (10) PMNR.

**Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*:** Recorded on 2 days in Tas with max. (1) near Rheban.

**Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen*:** (1-10) seen on 4 days.

**Black Currawong *Strepera fuliginosa*:** Recorded on 5 days in Tasmania with max. (20) CM.

**Grey Currawong *Strepera versicolor*:** (1-5) recorded on 4 days in Tas with max. (2) Waterworks Reserve on 3 Nov.

**Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus*:** Recorded daily in Tas with max. (100).

**\*Common Skylark *Alauda arvensis*:** Recorded on 3 days in Tas. with max. (10) at Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov.

**Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*:** Recorded on 4 days mostly in small numbers in agricultural areas.

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

**Beautiful Firetail *Staganopleura bella*:** (1) absolutely stunning at Mountain Valley on 5 Nov.

**\*European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*:** (1-2) seen on 4 days in Tas.

**\*European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*:** Recorded daily in Tas. with max. (50).

**Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*:** Recorded daily in Tas.

**Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*:** (20) Bruny Island and (2) Mountain Valley.

**Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*:** Heard only TW-everyone having seen the species previously on the previous tours.

**Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis*:** Seen or heard on 5 days in Tas.

**\*Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*:** Recorded daily in Tas with max. (50).

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

## MAMMALS

**Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*:** (2) Mountain Valley gave some great views in the late afternoon of an overcast day.

**Echidna *Tachyglossus aculeatus*:** A total of 10 individuals encountered on 4 days with max. (4) on 3 Nov.

**Tasmanian Devil *Sarcophilus harrisi*:** (4) different individuals on basis of coat pattern watched demolishing a pademelon carcass at Mountain Valley. One of the great highlights of a great tour.

**Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus*:** A total of (6) seen in Cradle Mountain area on 3-4 Nov. gave some great views. A further (3) seen in the day at Narawantapu NP on 6 Nov.

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

**Common Ringtail Possum *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*:** (1) seen in the car park at Cradle Mountain.

**Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus*:** (1) gave a great view in the day at Peter Murrell NR on 2 Nov.

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

**Red-necked Wallaby *Macropus rufogriseus*:** Small numbers present at CM and Waterworks Reserve.

**Eastern Grey Kangaroo *Macropus giganteus*:** (5) Narawantapu NP on 6 Nov.

**\*Fallow Deer *Cervus dama*:** (50) seen near Bothwell on 3 Nov was a new feral for my Australian mammal list!

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

**\*House Cat *Felis catus*:** (1) black cat seen in remote heathland near Zeehan on 4 Nov.

## REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

**Blotched Bluetongue *Tiliqua nigrolutea*:** (1) near Orielton Lagoon on 1 Nov had to be rescued from a dog allowing everyone to have a pat of this spectacular giant skink.

**Metallic Skink *Pseudemoia metallica*:** (2) near the Mersey River basking on rocks and (1) under a piece of tin near Strahan.

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

**Brown Tree Frog *Litoria ewingi*:** frequently heard at Cradle Mountain.