

INALA NATURE TOURS

TAS ENDEMIC TOUR - TRIP REPORT

FEBRUARY 2024



Guided, written and images by Cat Davidson
(Pelagic Day guided by Paul Brooks)
(Office communication with Sophie)



Cat



Paul



Sophie

Day 1 - 15th February

We gathered together our merry gang at reception and exchanged names. Sadly the Melaleuca flight was cancelled due to bad weather in the south west wilderness, so we chose to explore areas around Hobart instead. It was a glorious weather day and we set off from Hobart to our first stop at Kingston. A lap around the wee waterhole gave us Superb Fairy Wrens, Yellow Wattlebird, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Brown Thornbill and Black-headed Honeyeater and a beautiful Scarlet Robin. In the water were handsome Chestnut Teal and Pacific Black Duck.



On to our next destination, we started with several Galah and Little Corella. Walking the dog-walking circle we had great views of Common Bronzewing and Brown Thornbill. Out in the channel there were Silver and Kelp Gulls, Pied Oystercatcher, Great and Little-pied Cormorant, White-faced Heron, a single Hoary-headed Grebe and one Little Egret. Three huge Australian Pelicans posed beautifully and high in a distant tree was a White-bellied SeaEagle.



We drove up into the forests and walking down the first section of the track with the glorious smell of the bush swirling around us, we could not hear many birds calling in the heat of the day, but then we got very lucky with a stunning male Pink Robin who spent almost ten minutes circling around us giving us fantastic views. A Green Rosella then appeared high above us and gave us great views of its mature yellow colouration.



A quick view of a Tiger Snake on the way back down led us to the river which was also quiet however we have great views of Little Wattlebird next to the beautiful bend in the river and many European Goldfinches zipping past

We drove up to some dry forest habitat and while it first seemed very empty, we then had a nice burst of activity with several Dusky Woodswallow wiggling their tails at us, some beautiful Spotted Pardalote giving us lovely views of their spotty head and colourful bums and a pair of Rainbow Lorikeet perched up high.



A quick stop on our way back to the city gave us a new bird with a Grey Currawong walking quietly along on a distant bank.

We finished the day at a city park and had some spectacular views of huge flocks of Galah, and Sulphur Crested Cockatoo. After enjoying the sights and sounds of the swirling flocks of mixed birds we enjoyed great views of the tiny emerald green Musk Lorikeet, the paint pot colours of Eastern Rosella and the cut-throat pink throat on a party of Long-billed Corella. A dozen or more Noisy Miners zipped about between the parrots adding to the cacophony of sights and sounds. We headed back to the hotel and had our first meal together while discussing plans for the upcoming tour.



Day 2 - 16th February

Our day on Maria Island dawned warm and clear and we got up early and zipped up from Hobart to Triabunna to catch the ferry across the Mercury Channel to beautiful Maria, full of history and wildlife.

The crossing began with seven Pelican on the shore and all four Cormorant species on the jetties and oyster ladders. As we crossed the Channel, we also saw a few elegant Great Crested Terns. On landing we began with a fabulous pair of Hooded Dotterel close by on the beach. There was also a confiding Pied Oystercatcher and a big Eel gliding sinuously through the water.



Up towards Darlington, Chestnut Teals were standing on the shire and Tree Martin's were swirling over the stream. Our first Wombat was spotted sleeping in the rushes and as we walked along the shade line, we spotted many Tasmanian Pademelon feeding and resting under the tree line. A party of Flame Robins arrived, and we had fantastic views of the male's fluorescent chest and the female's subtle and beautiful details. Several handsome Green Rosella treated us to great views in the air and on the ground. As we snuck up on another adorable Sleeping Wombat, we had the glorious treat of a tiny Brown Bandicoot out feeding, unconcerned about our presence. We then saw our next endemic, the bold and handsome Black Currawong. Walking up towards Darlington we saw Australian Magpie, Tasmanian Native Hens and watched tiny Yellow-rumped Thornbill popping about on the ground.



We began our walk down to the Painted Cliffs. Heading out of the settlement we spotted our first Cape Barren Goose with their stunning lime yellow cere and their marvellous black webbed feet strutting confidently along. Entering the forest we took our morning tea on a logs surrounded by the calls of Yellow Wattlebirds and spotted a small mob of Bennett's Wallaby.



Walking past the Oast House we had a great view of a Fan Tailed Cuckoo and in the next section of forest there were Black headed Honeyeater, Yellow-throated Honeyeater and the calls of the Laughing Kookaburra. We popped out at the beach beside the beautiful Painted Cliffs and in the final Eucalypt before the beach saw a Spotted Pardalote and excitingly a single Forty-spotted Pardalote. Cape Barren Geese and White-faced Herons led us back up the hillside. On the way back over the hill to Darlington we had a quick look in Mrs Hall's House before we made our way back down the slope. Lunch at Darlington before we spent the last hour exploring around the settlement and the jetty. A few of us made a quick dash to the top of a hill to spot a single Forester's Kangaroo. Then we boarded the ferry and waved goodbye to this magical island.



Landing back in Triabunna we drove smoothly south to Eaglehawk Neck stopping to enjoy a beautiful Short-beaked Echidna along the way. We headed for bed early to rest well before the pelagic in the morning.

Day 3 - 17th February

Bright and early the sailors hit the ocean wave. Here is Paul's [Trip Report and e-bird list](#) for the day.

Boat: The Pauletta, skippered by Michael Males with deckhand Stacey Beswick.

Activity and Conditions: There was low species diversity for most of the day today, although numbers of some species were high, so there was usually a bit of action around the boat. There was a tuna fishing comp on, so there were a lot of boats at the shelf-break, and a lot of berley trails around. While we made it to the shelf without dragging any gulls, we soon had a coterie, pulled from surrounding fishing boats. A Cookilaria petrel gave us the slip not long after we stopped to berley; it was probably a Cook's Petrel on the poor views we had. A few Buller's Shearwaters gave nice looks on multiple passes, and we ended up with a nice little train of White-faced Storm Petrels, and good numbers of Shy Albatross. Late in the day, a Cook's Petrel put in an appearance, but again didn't show well. The very unexpected highlight of the day came when, not long before reaching The Hippolytes on our way back to port, a dark Pterodroma with light underparts and shining upperwing flashes shot past: an intermediate morph Kermadec Petrel. This is possibly the eighth record for Tasmania and just the third for Eaglehawk.

We departed Pirates Bay at 0706 hrs, making for The Hippolytes. We passed by Cheverton Rock and circumnavigated The Hippolytes, before motoring south-east towards the shelf-break, pulling up to berley over 300 f at 0920 hrs, drifting slowly west to 250 f by 1055 hrs; interestingly, our slick drifted south away from us in the current. Finding little action, we moved to deeper water, berleying over 455 f from 1118 hrs. We drifted south-west to 400 f at 1259 hrs before making for port, docking at 1503 hrs.

It was mainly cloudy and cool in the morning, with 5 km south-westerly breeze, a low swell, and no sea. Offshore, the southerly swell rose to 1 m, with little sea in the 5-10 kn south-westerly. Past the shelf-break, the swell rose to ~2 m, and the breeze picked up to 10-15 kn, but seas remained below 1 m. After an hour, the breeze dropped to below 5 kn, and remained so for the rest of the day. Out wider, the swell approached 3 m, but was gentle with a long period and little sea. Water temperature was 18.8 deg C inshore, rising to 20.2 deg C in deep water. None seasick.

Mammals:

Brown/New Zealand Fur Seal: 18 (10) The Hippolytes/Cheverton Rock.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin: 8 (5) A loose pod inshore.



Image: Tom Dougherty - Kermadec Petrel



Picking everyone up at the jetty and with a quick break back at the hotel, we then headed out for a late afternoon jaunt to the incredible geological formations of the Tasman Arch and The Devils Kitchen. The birds were fairly quiet, however there were Tree Martin's zipping about around the arch and we all had good views of a pair of Brown Thornbills in the eucalyptus canopy. New-Holland Honeyeaters were bopping about, and we managed to get some decent views of a trio of Tasmanian Scrubwren.



Day 4 - 18th February

Leaving Lufra our first stop was to enjoy the view over Pirates Bay before jumping up to a bay where we saw Caspian Tern and a tiny Black-fronted Dotterel amongst the Black Faced Cormorant. Round the corner as we entered another bay we saw a tree full of Little Corella and a flurry of emerald Musk Lorikeets rising and falling amongst the undergrowth. We had a scan through the lovely tidal wetland and walked through the tiny township before we climbed up to the viewpoint over the beach and absorbed the stunning views. A quick walk to the beach gave us a lovely view of a Hooded Dotterel in the distance.



A side of the road dam stop gave us a great view of a pair of Australian Shelduck with their gorgeous chestnut and white markings. A female Musk Duck was bobbing in the distance and we got to enjoy a large flock of young cows who came down to drink and saunter past. Morning tea in Sorell before we walked across the sand flats to seek out some Shorebirds. We got very lucky with a flock of Golden Plovers and when we walked up a little closer we spotted Red Necked Stint amongst them. We did a U-turn in Midway point and re-crossed the causeway and pulled in to enjoy the Musk Duck and a Hoary-headed Grebe.



After lunch in Margate we headed to Kettering and caught the Ferry across the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island. We made a first island stop at the start of the Cape Queen Elizabeth track to try for Blue-winged Parrot and we got lucky with a flock of a dozen. Sadly they were a fair distance away and it was tricky even with the scope to see all their features.

Onward to a site where we glimpsed some bouncy wee Silvereyes, saw our first endemic Dusky Robin with its striking black face stripe and then had an incredible sighting of a Bassian Thrush who stayed out in the open and showed us all its very camouflaged angles. The site was full of Dusky Woodswallows, Black-headed Honeyeater and Tree Martins.



Heading to our Inala and Lunawanna cottages for a rest, we then met for dinner before heading out on a night tour, spotting a beautiful White Wallaby next to the road. At The Neck we enjoyed the incredible sight of thousands of Short-tailed Shearwaters coming into land on the hillside. It was mesmerising to watch them circling silently and wonderful to see them on the ground vanishing into their burrows to feed their chicks.

Driving north for a while, we were successful in spotting two pale morph Eastern Quoll who skittered quickly across the road but allowed us a view of their spots and their pointy noses. We also got a fantastic view of a Long-nosed Potoroo who was very obliging and ran along the length of the bus to give us all a view. On the way back to the cottages we saw several Brush-tailed Possum who swaggered away with their wonderful tails held high.





Day 5 - 19th February 2024

We met for breakfast at Inala prepared by the lovely Julie and had a chat with Tonia Cochran, the owner of Inala. Once fueled up we set off through the Inala Jurassic Garden and straight away got to see an adorable Swamp Rat. Green Rosellas and Dusky Robin joined our walk through the Gondwana plant families.



As it was so calm, the Tree Martins were sitting motionless on the fence lines as we walked under the *Eucalyptus viminalis* amongst the Forty Spotted Pardalote habitat and the platform that allowed us to watch the beautiful tiny Pardalotes busy at their work farming the tree for manna.



Taking a loop walk around the property we saw a fantastic selection of birds including views of one more endemics, the Strong-billed Honeyeater. More wonderful birds seen on the walk included Grey Shrike-thrush, Striated Pardalotes, Yellow-rumped Thornbill and Flame Robin. As we returned to the carpark we suddenly saw three raptors all at once. A gliding Swamp Harrier up high, then two Grey Goshawks (white morph) flew up in a flurry with a Brown Falcon also rising as part of the medley. We had fantastic views of the Goshawk then zipped down to Daniels Bay for morning tea by the ocean,



At Cape Bruny it was very quiet for birds however the landscape was breathtaking in all directions. We visited beautiful Jetty Beach and saw many thousands of busy wee Soldier Crabs on the beach.



Lunch at the pontoon was followed by an exploration into Adventure Bay. We tried several locations for Swift Parrots sadly without success however we did see another glowing White Wallaby on our way to some temperate rainforest. Amongst the stunning Treeferns and diverse Rainforest species we could hear a few species and caught a few glimpses, however in general the birds had decided to take the afternoon to rest.



A final stop for the day was a beach where we enjoyed the stunning views of the ancient Blue Gums and the white squeaky sand under our feet. Green Rosella flew by up high and New-Holland Honeyeaters skittered about through the foreshore. On the rocky section of the beach there was a pair of Sooty Oystercatchers and on the sandy section a pair of Pied Oystercatchers. We then saw not one but two White-bellied SeaEagles gliding right over our heads and down the length of the beach.



We finished the day with dinner and a lovely sunset as we headed home for the night.



Day 6 - 20th February 2024

We farewelled Tonia and set off towards the north of Bruny, stopping at The Neck for a quick climb to the top of the steps to enjoy the view and learn about Truganini. On the Neck there was a lovely selection of shore birds including three Grey Teal showing their lovely white throats. Another quick stop to retry for closer Blue-winged Parrots sadly came up short.



We caught the next ferry off the island across the calm waters of the D'Entrecasteaux channel and with a stop for Tasmanian Cherries we made our way to kunanyi, the huge, beautiful mountain under which Hobart (nipaluna) is nestled. We could hear the calls of the Crescent Honeyeater and after teasing us for a while, several of them popped out into the open to show us their lovely yellow wing, We then spotted several chocolate brown Tasmanian Scrubwren bopped past through the undergrowth who gave us the best views so far.



A short onward drive to the top of kunanyi gave us epic views in all directions from Tasman Peninsula to Bruny Island.

After lunch we reached a lagoon in the Hobart suburb of Glenorchy. We walked around the lagoon and got a lovely selection of water birds including new tour species Australian Swamp Hen, Australian Shoveller, three Great Egrets and very excitingly a Latham's Snipe and two incredibly relaxed Spotted Crake.



Following the River Derwent up through New Norfolk we made a final stop for the day at a dam. There were many lovely birds, but the one that was new for the tour was a solitary Hardhead floating far out, but visible in the scope with its white eye ring. We then headed for our lovely accommodation for the night.

After a delicious dinner, we all returned to rest in our cabin, seeing Bennett's Wallaby and European Hares along the route back.

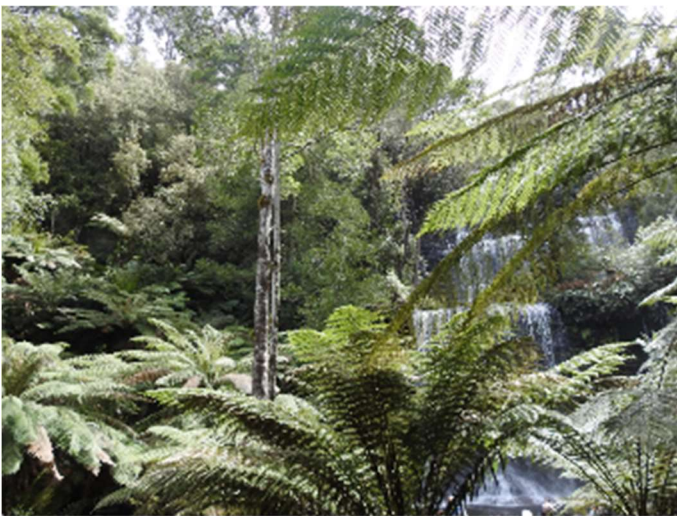
Day 7 - February 21st

We departed our beautiful cottages and immediately began with great sightings of a Brown Falcon and several close by Black-faced Cuckoo Shrike displaying their gorgeous grey, black and white markings. In a field of lucerne we had a fantastic sighting of a flock of Banded Lapwing with their upright posture and elegant red face marks, they are rarely seen in southern Tasmania, so a really excellent addition to the tour.





At Mt Field National Park we commenced with a walk down to Russell Falls. The falls themselves were spectacular and as we walked the trail we saw Tasmanian Thornbills, Tasmanian Scrubwren, several Bassian Thrush, a few adorable Pademelon and a male Pink Robin who gave us fabulous views. High above us were the raucous calls of both Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and we had great views as they balanced and massacred some high Eucalypt branches.



Our second walk was the Tall Trees Walk amongst the *Eucalyptus Regnans*, the tallest Hardwood and tallest flowering plant in the world where we marvelled at the magnificent trees.

Up the mountain at Mt Field for a dramatic change in habitat and landscape. Wonderful alpine plants including the Tasmanian endemic Snow Gums (*Eucalyptus coccifera*) with their incredible stripey trunks. Crescent Honeyeaters, Black Currawong and Yellow-throated Honeyeater calls drifted across the mountain air. At Lake Dobson we walked the loop track around the shore and there were many spectacular mosses

and lichens to enjoy as well as a selection of beautiful plants such as Pandani (*Richea pandanifolia*) and Pencil Pine (*Athrotaxis cupressoides*) and White Peppermint (*Eucalyptus pulchella*) all enhanced by the glorious sunshine.

We celebrated seeing our twelfth endemic species, the sneaky Scrubtit flitting around the back of the Lake and returned to the carpark to a handsome Black Currawong eating the pretty berries on the *Trochocarpa thymifolia*.



Lunch back down at the bottom of the mountain and a quick stop at a beautiful weir to try for Platypus. They remained elusive, however we had a lovely view of a female Golden Whistler.

A nearby cave track was cool and shady which was very welcome on such a hot day. We had two more fantastic sightings of male Pink Robins and enjoyed the cave entrance where the underground Junee River emerges and flows with incredible clarity and beauty through the Tree Ferns.



As we were departing Mt Field we had a lovely sighting of a small blonde Echidna and then made our way back to our cottages for the night where we were retired briefly to our gorgeous cabins. Popping down to dinner we scanned the dam and amongst the Grey Teal, Masked Lapwing and Maned Duck we spotted Black-fronted Dotterel strutting through the muddy edge section. A BBQ meal including many of the farm's

own produce, completed a very lovely evening.



Day 8 - 22nd February

Waking up in sunshine we had a new bird before we even packed our bags, a fantastic Hobby sitting high in a dead tree.



With a big drive ahead of us, we set off north and had a very successful first stop at a dam where we saw Musk Duck, Shovellers, Hoary-headed Grebe, Black Swans and a Swamp Harrier who landed near some very relaxed Masked Lapwings.

Next stop at the Steppes Sculptures we enjoyed the art and also had a lovely sighting of with a walk through the lovely dry forest to the Steppes homestead we had morning tea in the glorious sunshine.





The next section of road gave us not one but two young Wedge-tailed Eagles by the side of the road. We watched their magnificent wingspan as they took off across the heathland.

Winding our way past the Great Lakes we then climbed up a short steep hill and at the highest point on the highway we took a beautiful walk amongst a diverse selection of wonderful plants amongst the Pencil Pines, such as Yellow Needlebush, Mountain Rocket, Cushion Plant and Pineapple Grass.

Between the freeze-thaw rock scree slopes. We got great views of Striated Field-wren sitting up high and proudly singing.



Lunch was followed by a quick dash up the highway to the a fantastic site where we got very very lucky and saw three Platypus swimming around in the lake. Taking a wee birding loop through as many shady spots as we could find, we saw some lovely Little Wattlebirds and a handsome Grey Butcherbird.

We tore ourselves away from the Platypus and headed to our home for the night, a conservation reserve where we were given a friendly welcome and a delicious dinner. That night each person stayed up as late as their eyelids could handle to try and see wild Tasmanian Devils and possibly Spotted-tailed Quolls in this remote and fantastic valley.

Day 9 - 23rd February

A dose of rain and a dramatic drop in temperature overnight had freshened everything up for the morning. A small group of us met up for an early walk around beautiful Loongana. Some Tasmanian Thornbills, Laughing Kookaburra and a dozen fiercely beautiful Black Currawong were around to say good morning.



With the whole gang reunited at the bus we compared stories of the wonderful mammals the night before. There had been several very exciting views of a younger Joey Devil and one of an older Devil.

We drove towards Cradle Mountain National Park stopping along the way for a gorgeous view of Mount Rolland and a great view of a flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Arriving at the wet and windy weather pocket around Cradle, we took our first walk at Pencil Pine Falls followed by morning tea.



Working our way through the park we stopped at Ronny's Creek and we walked along the boardwalk to try and see Common Wombats, unfortunately there were none around in the challenging weather, however the landscape of Button Grass & Richea pandanus was incredibly beautiful and a flock of Australian Pipit skipped about in front of us.



We drove to Dove Lake where the squalls of rain and clouds blocked our view of the mountains, yet still created a very atmospheric scenario.

We explored Gustav Weindorfer's Waldheims Cabin after taking a walk through the twisted mossy magic of the King Billy Forest.



Our last walk at Cradle Mountain National Park was the Enchanted Forest walk with a beautiful waterfall, glorious buttongrass moorland and a magical mossy forest. We saw Tasmanian Thornbills and a Scrubtit along the way the Eucryphia (Leatherwood) was flowering magnificently with white petals scattered like confetti over the rocks in the river.



Driving home we had great views of a dark version of a Short-beaked Echidna and another flock of Pipits by the road.



Another delicious meal and we headed to our cabins with fingers crossed that we would potentially see some more fabulous nocturnal mammals.

Day 10- 24th February

Our last morning together and it was another beautiful day. More devils were seen by some the night before which was fantastic. We made a first stop at a northern beach where we saw a pair of Red-capped Plover on the shore line and a lovely big group of Ruddy Turnstones amongst the rocks and seaweed. A handsome Swamp Harrier was feasting next to the road as we departed.



A zoom from Devonport to Launceston with a brief stop to see a lovely pair of Australasian Grebe in a dam beside the road. At Tamar wetlands we saw an incredible THREE Spotted Crake, over a dozen Black-fronted Dotterel and some glimpses of a Little Grasswren.



One final lake was a fantastic finish to the whole tour with some more new birds. A Reedwarbler who popped briefly in and out of the phragmites, a single Dusky Moorhen and several well hidden Royal Spoonbill, one pair of which had a tiny fluffy white chick peeking out amongst the rushes.



Then to the sad business of goodbyes and we farewelled each other and separated out into the world once again.

Thank you all – it was a great pleasure to travel with you and show you around some of the wonders of Tasmania, many thanks for your support of Inala and I hope you continue to have wonderful birding adventures all over the world.

Best wishes,
Cat

