



## Inala Cape York Tour #3 Aug 7 - 14, 2023

Tour leader: Yu Ota

### Day 1 – 7<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Fly Cairns to Lockhart River.

The group arrived into Iron Range, Cape York a few hours earlier than planned due to a flight schedule change. After lunch & checking in to our accommodation, we went to a patch of rainforest I found recently to get our first few species. It didn't go as planned as the rain got heavy from time to time, we couldn't go far from the car. However our first bird was a pair of Red-cheeked Parrot perched. How good is that. Soon after we got a decent view of Trumpet Manucode, then we flashed something yellow from the roadside. It was Yellow-billed Kingfisher. Then male & female Eclectus Parrot circled above us few time. The magic continued, a male Magnificent Rifflebird perched on open dead tree,



stayed there for as long as half a minutes. Oh something is coming...It's Palm Cockatoo! and Trumpet Manucode again. I'm not joking, within an hour, we've got a pair of Red-cheeked Parrot, Tawny-breasted Honeyeater, Trumpet Manucode, a pair of Eclectus Parrot, male Magnificent Rifflebird, Yellow-billed Kingfisher and Palm Cockatoo. Lot's of hugs around. What do I do for another 3 full days?

### Day 2 – 8<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Lockhart River.

It was a perfect start to see two Palm Cockatoo were interacting while some of us were having breakfast at the garden. We departed reasonably early to see some tough rainforest species such as Northern Scrub-robin. Actually they were one of the first bird I saw but guest only heard them. Many Green Oriole and Rufous Fantail were seen this morning, as well as Shining Flycatcher, Fairy Gerygone. When we came out from the forest I noticed Yellow-legged Flycatcher was calling in the tree. This tiny, dull shy bird took us sometime to locate but it was seen well by everybody. It could be bird of the day!

After the excitement of Yellow-legged Flycatcher, only 1 guest was keen to follow me and others wanted to wait at the car. So just two of us continued a bit, seeing Tawny-breasted Honeyeater and a pair of Yellow-breasted Boatbill, but we ended up coming back to the accommodation well before lunch time.

After the lunch break, we headed off to Portland Road. We had a good short stop by the river where we saw Frill-necked Monarch, male Magnificent Rifflebird and obliging Little Bronze Cuckoo. After this, guests were again not keen to get out of the car so it was difficult to find many birds. We still saw a bit such as Brown-backed Honeyeater, Spotted Honeyeater both feeding on Grevillea flowers, Olive-

backed Sunbird was nesting beside the toilet, a small flock of Red-capped Plover flew by when we did beach driving.

Later on we enjoyed watching 1000 Metallic Starling swirling around in a spectacular display at dusk above the islands.

On the way back from a lovely dinner at the restaurant, we saw Nankeen Night Heron, Grey Goshawk, as well as Spotted Python and possibly Slaty-grey Snake.

### **Day 3 – 9<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Lockhart River.**

Not all of guest turned up for birding this morning, but our first bird was a flock of elusive Lovely Fairy-wren. The most difficult Fairy-wren by far. We heard Northern Scrub-robin again as well as Noisy Pitta but not seen. We also added Dollarbird, early for it's season. Yellow-billed Kingfisher was seen well by some. After a smoko some of us tried Tropical Scrubwren. We got a glimpse and heard the call but they are really shy sometimes. Our next destination was the nesting tree of Eclectus Parrot. Well we were there at the right time as 2 males were visiting the female, and we had a wonderful view of her through the scope sticking out her head from the tree hollow.

After the lunch break, we went to the bridge where a cool breeze as going through. We got White-eared Monarch, Frill-necked Monarch and Red-cheeked Parrot. We then heard Noisy Pitta's call close by. We tried to see one and the distance was only 6-7m away but not seen due to the thick vegetation. Our next stop was where I heard endemic White-streaked Honeyeater a few days ago. They are not common in Iron Range National Park however we could locate it and we all enjoyed 5 minutes view of this beautiful lifer for all guests. After the excitement we stopped over the beach & added Rose-crowned Fruits Dove and Double-eyed Fig Parrot. After the dinner we had both Marbled & Papuan Frogmouth.



### **Day 4 – 10<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Lockhart River.**



This morning we tried recapping all rainforest birds. We had improved views of Trumpet Manucode, Magnificent Rifflebird, Tropical Scrubwren and Eclectus Parrot perched. New bird for this trip was Barred Cuckoo-shrike. We needed to do some shopping afterwards, then we spent the rest of the morning at the restricted access dam. There we added Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, Little-pied Cormorant and Varied Sittella. After the lunch break we checked the boat rump & beach but it was very windy. We still got new spices such as Striated Heron, Australian Tern and Braminy Kite. In the

late afternoon we went to the sewage plant to see some waterbirds. There we got Pied Heron, Pacific Heron, Golden-headed Cisticola, Australian Reed-warbler, Red-browed Finch, Rarja Shelduck with ducklings. The surprising was we flushed two Latham Snipe. Very early return (too early).

In this trip we had early Dollarbird, early Imperial Pigeon, early Spine - not normal season. They might have misunderstood it's almost wet season as rain had continued since last December to north east Australia and PNG.

### **Day 5 – 11<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Lockhart River to Musgrave.**

We had our last breakfast in Lockhart River hearing Palm Cockatoo calling somewhere. Today was a big travelling day to Musgrave but before we headed off we went to the site where we missed Fawn-breasted Bowerbird. We finally got a good scope view of this endemic species, now we can leave Iron Range.

We didn't do White-streaked Honeyeater on the way out as we had already got them at Iron Range 2 days ago. Instead, we had a stop at a restricted access pond for some short birding. It was actually a great stop, where we added Banded Honeyeater, Red-browed Pardalote, Rufous Whistler and White-throated Honeyeater down low.



Travelling days can have a big list as we move from one habitat to another. We added Torresian Crow, Brown Falcon, Black Kite, Australian Darter, Australian Magpie, Pied Butcherbird, Great Bowerbird, Blue-faced Honeyeater, Red-winged Parrot and Galah. They were all new to this tour (Yellow-spotted Monitor too).



Arriving at the cattle station where we spend 2 nights, we were welcomed by endangered Golden-shouldered Parrot among the trees around the homestead. Later on they came down low and that gave us an excellent photo opportunity. What a beautiful species in the afternoon sun. We also saw endemic Black-backed Butcherbird, the natural predator of the parrot.

In the evening, we had a talk of the history of Golden-shouldered Parrot at the cattle station by the Shepard family who had been protecting their habitat for 50 years. It was an excellent talk, lots of new glazer point of views. We had the talk on the last Inala trip by a young scientist who is doing conservation work for the parrot too. This is the beauty of organised group trips, one not going to get those opportunity if they travel individually.

### **Day 6 – 12<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Musgrave – Lakefield National Park.**

Sometimes conversation with the Shepard family is too interesting and we got sucked at the homestead. Well this morning it happened and we left for birding as late as 8am. Anyway our first stop was a river crossing. We saw Lemon-bellied Flycatcher, our first Willy Wagtail, White-throated Honeyeater. Little Friabird was a new species as well as Bar-breasted Honeyeater (heard only).

Then we started searching Red Goshawk. We saw Little Woodswallow lined up on a branch. Yellow-tinted Honeyeater was a lifer to some of us. Someone said 'There is an old nest there' yes it looks old, half-collapsed. We didn't pay much attention to it and walked right underneath it. A few minutes later when I looked at the dodgy nest from the different angle, it was a Red Goshawk sitting on it! She wasn't here last week so it seems it's just started. After the excitement, another Red Goshawk flew in with prey in its talon and perched very open medium branch. What a view.



We were thrilled to see the big open grassland of Lakefield National Park, feel like Africa. We saw some good birds along the road such as Brolga, Emu, Brown Falcon and Black-faced Woodswallow (and Yellow-spotted Monitor) however the highlight was one of the billabongs off the main road. There we got up to 25 Star Finch, Black-throated Finch, Saltwater Crocodile, Black-necked Stork and Sarus Crane up close. At the shady lunch spot by the river we saw Fairy Gerygone, Green Oriole as well as Common Treefrog calling loud. We also added Plumed Whistling Duck and Comb-crested Jacana on the way home.

### **Day 7 – 13<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2023: Musgrave to Cairns.**

A member of the Shepard family took us deep inside their property this morning. We were excited to see Golden-shouldered Parrot's old nest, as well as some new birds along - such as Silver-crowned Friabird, Yellow Honeyeater, Wondering Whistling Duck, Green Pygmy-goose and Comb-crested Jacana. Then we stopped at another restricted access dam of the Shepard families where we added gorgeous Bar-breasted Honeyeater.

On the way to Cairns we incidentally found Eastern Barn Owl at the roadside, saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle scavenging, and enjoyed tame Great Bowerbird at a roadhouse among with Pied Butcherbird, Rainbow lorikeet and Blue-faced Honeyeater. We take a break every 1.5 hours or so and safely arrived in Cairns around mid afternoon. Despite the shower we got almost every day, one of the guest got 31 lifers, it must have been a good trip.