

Australia. Part Three - Southeast Queensland.

Contributed by Jos

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Primary reason to visit this area was to spent several days in the legendary Lamington National Park, home to species such as Albert's Lyrebirds, Regent Bowerbird and Logrunner, plus an impressive selection of nocturnal mammals. I also added short trips to inland sites, namely the excellent Girraween National Park and to Lake Perseverance (for Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies), as well as a day in the Brisbane area, primarily looking for Koala.

DAY LOG

4 August. Girraween National Park. Flying into Brisbane at dawn, the basic plan for this part of the trip was to visit Lamington National Park, a biological hotspot of weird and wonderful birds and mammals. However, wishing to avoid the weekend, I basically had a couple of days to kill and, very much a spur of the moment decision, opted to head inland through the ultra-parched lands of south-east Queensland to the Granite Belt and Girraween National Park, arid eucalyptus forest set to a boulder-strewn landscape. Obscene quantities of roadkill en route, corpses of kangaroos and wallabies littering the road, many dozens per kilometre at times. Thundering roadtrains no doubt responsible, they rarely slowing for anything as they traverse the night. At Girraween however, perfect tranquillity, one of my favourite localities on this trip. A flock of about 70 Galah made for an impressive start, as did the marauding hordes of Pied Currawongs, Australian Magpies and Pied Butcherbirds hanging out in the picnic sitel, all waiting for handouts. One very fine Superb Bowerbird also sneaking in. After a few obligatory photographs, navigated past this welcoming committee and set off to explore. With trail twisting through mixed eucalyptus and open pasture, all dotted by humongous boulders, truly was a nice place and, as my first locality in southern Queensland, an almost entirely new range of birds too. Heading the list, several rather nice Red Wattlebirds, roving flocks of Striated Thornbills and Buff-rumped Thornbill, a couple of Spotted Pardalotes, my first flocks of Superb Fairywrens and a good mix of honeyeaters, White-eared Honeyeaters, White-naped Honeyeaters and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters among the more notable. Also here a number of White-throated Treecreepers, several Grey Shrike-Thrushes and, a top bird indeed, one Scarlet Robin, a classic male hawking from a low eucalyptus. Equally impressive, very good numbers of mammals, a bit of a head scratching initially with the Macropods as they went hopping off in all directions, yet more simply gawking as I strolled by. A bit of peering into the field guide however and I think I got them sorted - dozens of Wallaroos and Eastern Grey Kangaroos, oodles of Red-necked Wallabies! As evening approached, incredible quantities of all three seemed to emerge from everywhere.

Mammal of the day however was waiting back at the car park - one amazing Echidna trotting past without a care in the world. My only one of the whole trip, followed this spikey critter for a good while, certainly a good way to end the day. Except it wasn't the end of the day, a wander around the nearby campsite added two right cute Common Brushtail Possums appearing as darkness swallowed up the landscape.

Was just then the small matter of driving 30 km back to a hotel without hitting any of the numerous kangaroos playing suicide games on the road. Happy to report I added no further corpses to the road's sad tally. 5 August. Girraween National Park & Lamington National Park. Shock to the system, three degrees below freezing prior to dawn, a considerable frost on the car! Made my way back to Girraween as light crept back into the landscape, a pause at a feeding station some kilometres short a nice start to the day with a bunch of Australian King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas descending, plus four cracking Superb Bowerbirds. At Girraween, shivered in my sandals and shorts and awaited the sun to rise, Common Wallaroos and Red-necked Wallabies in abundance again, plus active flocks of Superb Fairywrens flitting about, Laughing Kookaburras also ensuring the cold. As sun finally broke the horizon and warmth flooded into the valley, I opted for a hike up Bald Rock Creek, a route more or less following a series of granite slabs marking the route of a dry river. Many birds here, including White-eared Honeyeater and Grey Shrike-Thrush, but even better, new for the trip, two Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos and numerous Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters. Soon however, with the temperature now a pleasant 20 C, it was time to depart and make the relatively long haul across to Lamington. Poor roads direct, the quickest option is basically to loop half way back to Brisbane and then cut across and wind up the escarpment, the latter section half closed due to renovation. Result, arrived at the legendary O'Reilly's pretty late in the afternoon, flocks of Crimson Rosellas dropping down onto persons' heads on the lawn outside, a little posse of Superb Fairywrens surveying around, gawky Australian Bush-Turkeys also plodding the turf. Checked into a rather plush apartment, home for three nights, then made the best of the remaining hours of daylight by venturing down the Border Track Trail. I am no fan of tropical forests, but in this one lurk some rather nice birds that I did fancy, pretty much top of

the list being Albert's Lyrebird, followed closely by Australian Logrunner.

A short stroll down the trail, Wonga Pigeon seen, then one of my main targets, a very nice Australian Logrunners rooting about on the ground! Amazing birds, they almost tunnel into the leaf litter, totally vanishing at times. And then more, a total of four seen in all. A few hundred metres more and a sudden exclamation ...truly taking my breath away, a splendid Albert's Lyrebird nipping across the track, long lanky legs carrying the bird across the path on a few short struts, full finery of tail wafting in the air. Sometimes a difficult bird to find, this was an excellent start to Lamington. No chance of a photo this day however and all too soon it had vanished into thick vegetation on the precipitous slope below, end of the experience. Wandered on as the light began to decline, new birds still appearing, Green Catbirds serenading, Brown Thornbills in mixed flocks, both White-browed and Yellow-throated Scrubwrens in the leaf litter. Night exploration failed to produce quite as mammals as I had expected, but no less than six cracking Common Ringtail Possums did show, as well as a Short-eared Brushtail Possum and both Red-necked and Red-legged Pademelons. 6 August. Lamington National Park. Whole day at O'Reilly's and the surrounding Lamington National Park - quite pleasant, but can't say it really say I thought it deserved the accolades paid by most visiting birders. The O'Reilly's area itself, rather commercialised and even sporting a replica plane and statue of past hero ancestor, was nevertheless pretty good for birding - flocks of Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrots dropping down to be fed, exquisite Superb Fairywrens hopping about on the lawn and Australian Brush-Turkeys sauntering around. In the adjacent campsite area, Red-necked Pademelons on the grass, Topknot Pigeons in tall trees, plenty of Eastern Yellow Robins, a very nice male Satin Bowerbird and, noisily rooting through the scrub edge, several Australian Logrunners. Also Brown Gerygones, Brown Thornbills and Lewin's Honeyeaters. In the wider forest however, things were fairly quiet for the most part, bar oodles of Yellow-throated Scrubwrens and White-browed Scrubwrens, several more Australian Logrunners. For for the more specialised birds, however, it was a bit of a slog - that said, I did encounter two more Albert's Lyrebirds, a couple of Bassian Thrushes and, after a lot of effort, my two main targets of the day - a male Paradise Riflebird along Python Rock trail and a female Regent Bowerbird quite near O'Reilly's. Rain in the early evening gave good excuse to call it quits, a brief wander around later in the night drew a total blank on any mammals. 7 August. Lamington National Park. Early morning back at the campsite. And nice it was, the main rewards a bunch of very nice Red-necked Pademelons ambling around, several Australian Logrunners in the scrub, a fantastic Albert's Lyrebird (fourth individual of the trip). Thereafter, we spent much of the rest of the morning in the lower altitude Eucalyptus forests on Duck Creek trail - primarily looking for a mother and offspring Koala that had been seen in previous days. Totally failed on that, but in the process did have a pretty impressive haul of birds - not least, my first Variegated Fairywrens, two Varied Sittellas, three Red-browed Treecreepers and a Golden Whistler. Having peered into seemingly every Eucalyptus tree in the forest, I deemed Koalas to be invisible, time to move on. No real desire to bird the forests around O'Reilly's again, so decided to leave Lamington for the day and explore more Eucalyptus areas on the steep slopes below. Good decision, lots of nice surprises - not least where a random roadside stop notched me up no less than four new species (compared to just three on the previous whole day in Lamington). First up were a bunch of Bell Miners in a fruiting tree, tinkling calls most pleasant, but then another rather weird noise began to grab my attention, a kind of quiet chomping noise. Soon tracked it down - a flock of Glossy Black Cockatoos devouring flower heads, showering the ground with detritus. This was good, not always an easy species to find. And then it got even better ...a very nice male Rose Robin on the slope just above, and to cap it all, a Pale-headed Rosella flying over! More luck later when popping into the small town of Canungra for coffee - two roosting Tawny Frogmouths, my only ones of the trip. Also found my first Whiptail Wallabies of the trip on the outskirts of town. Tried again for the Koalas in the evening, failed again, but staying till dark did pay dividends - one Australian Masked Owl, plus four Common Ringtail Possums. 8 August. Lamington National Park & Lake Perseverance. Final morning at Lamington - and a spectacular send off awaited. One of the key birds that I had hoped for at this locality was Regent Bowerbird, and although I had seen a female a couple of days earlier, the true glory is the male and that treat still eluded me. Lamington does however have a secret weapon for seeing this highly desirable bird - just need to hang around in front of reception in the early morning and wait for the dollopings of sultanas to be deposited by staff members ... and then, like magic, the birds should descend from the forest. And that is exactly what they did - quite wonderful, a grand total of four male Regent Bowerbirds in eyesore yellows and blacks, plus four females, and an impressive eight Superb Bowerbirds too! Add in a bunch of Crimson Rosellas and King Parrots and all was fantastic, I could now depart Lamington. A fairly long drive thereafter to the north-west for a colony of Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies that inhabit the dam walls at Lake Perseverance. Expected to have to wait until dusk, but no need - a rather pleasing 12 individuals were hiding out on the boulders when I arrived early afternoon ...that was nice and easy! Then headed back towards Brisbane, stopping at Lake Wivenhoe for the final hours of the day. Masses of waterbirds here - many thousands, Little Pied, Pied and Little Black Cormorants, countless Eurasian Coots, hundreds of Black Swans and Great Crested Grebes, etc, etc. Also here, Whistling Kites, Black-shouldered Kites, Nankeen Kestrels and an assorted passerines, including a number of Noisy Miners and Blue-fronted Honeyeaters. And with that, back to Brisbane we went. Discovered our booked accommodation was a Buddhist retreat, complete with pray mats in what appeared to be reception! Did a quick U-turn and vanished back into the night before anybody spotted us, found a motel nearby. 9 August. Brisbane. Day around Brisbane, beginning in excellent Eucalyptus woodlands at Daisy Hill - idea here was to find Koala, a healthy population inhabiting these extensive greenbelts. But oh boy, extensive is the correct word - bit like looking for a needle in a haystack, hectares and hectares of massive Eucalyptus! Circled the area for some hours, carefully scanning tree after tree - many birds, Grey Butcherbird included, five species of parrot, abundant Noisy Miners, etc, plus several Red-necked Wallabies. As for Koala, impossible! Eventually settled for the rehab centre in the centre of Daisy Hill where road casualty/injured Koalas sometimes end up - cracking views of a male and three females. Truly wild Koala would have to wait for another day! Thereafter, headed to the mangroves at Lytton Bay - an oasis in the heart of industrial area and sprawling port, this turned out to be quite a cracking little spot - plenty of birds on the mudflats, Royal Spoonbill, lots of

Gull-billed Terns, dozens of Black Swans, a mix of waders, but even better, three much desired birds on the mangroves - at least five Collared Kingfishers, four Mangrove Gerygones and two Mangrove Honeyeaters. Also here, Brahminy Kites, Whistling Kites and Brown Goshawk. Pushing deadlines, then scooted back to the airport an early evening flight to Sydney. For 'Part Four' of my trip, [CLICK HERE](#) New South Wales