Australia

Queensland Outback

Cape York Peninsula Extension



Spinifex Pigeon by Jonathan Rossouw

Our Queensland Outback birding adventure explores the remote and scenic corners of Western Queensland and the Gulf Country where many of Australia's most desirable and seldom-seen endemics await us.

This comprehensive tour targets all the region's specialties in the unique and fascinating spinifex-dominated, stunted-Eucalyptus woodland, arid plains and savannah that covers much of this part of the continent. The birding is truly fantastic and we'll be searching for a number of rare and little-known gems like Carpentarian and Kalkadoon Grasswrens, Masked, Long-tailed, Painted, Gouldian and Star Finches, Spinifex Pigeon, Spinifexbird, Grey and Black Falcons, Black-chested Buzzard, Red-backed Kingfisher, Ground Cuckooshrike, Purple-crowned Fairywren, Pictorella Mannikin, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Hall's Babbler and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush to mention just a few of the possible highlights we hope to encounter on this specialist Australian birding tour.

Our extension to the Cape York Peninsula focuses on the vast lowland rainforests of Iron Range National Park and surrounds, while also targeting the Atherton Tableland endemics and the arid woodlands of Lakefield National Park.

Cape York harbours a suite of more typical New Guinea species such as the impressive Palm Cockatoo, Red-cheeked and Eclectus Parrots, White-faced Robin, Yellow-billed Kingfisher and Magnificent Riflebird, as well as several species unique to the Peninsula like White-streaked Honeyeater, Northern Scrub Robin and Frill-necked Monarch. We also target the incredibly beautiful and localised Golden-shouldered Parrot, Golden and Tooth-billed Bowerbirds, the bizarre Chowchilla, the unique Fernwren, Spotted Catbird, Noisy Pitta, Bower's Shrikethrush and Grey-headed Robin amongst others.

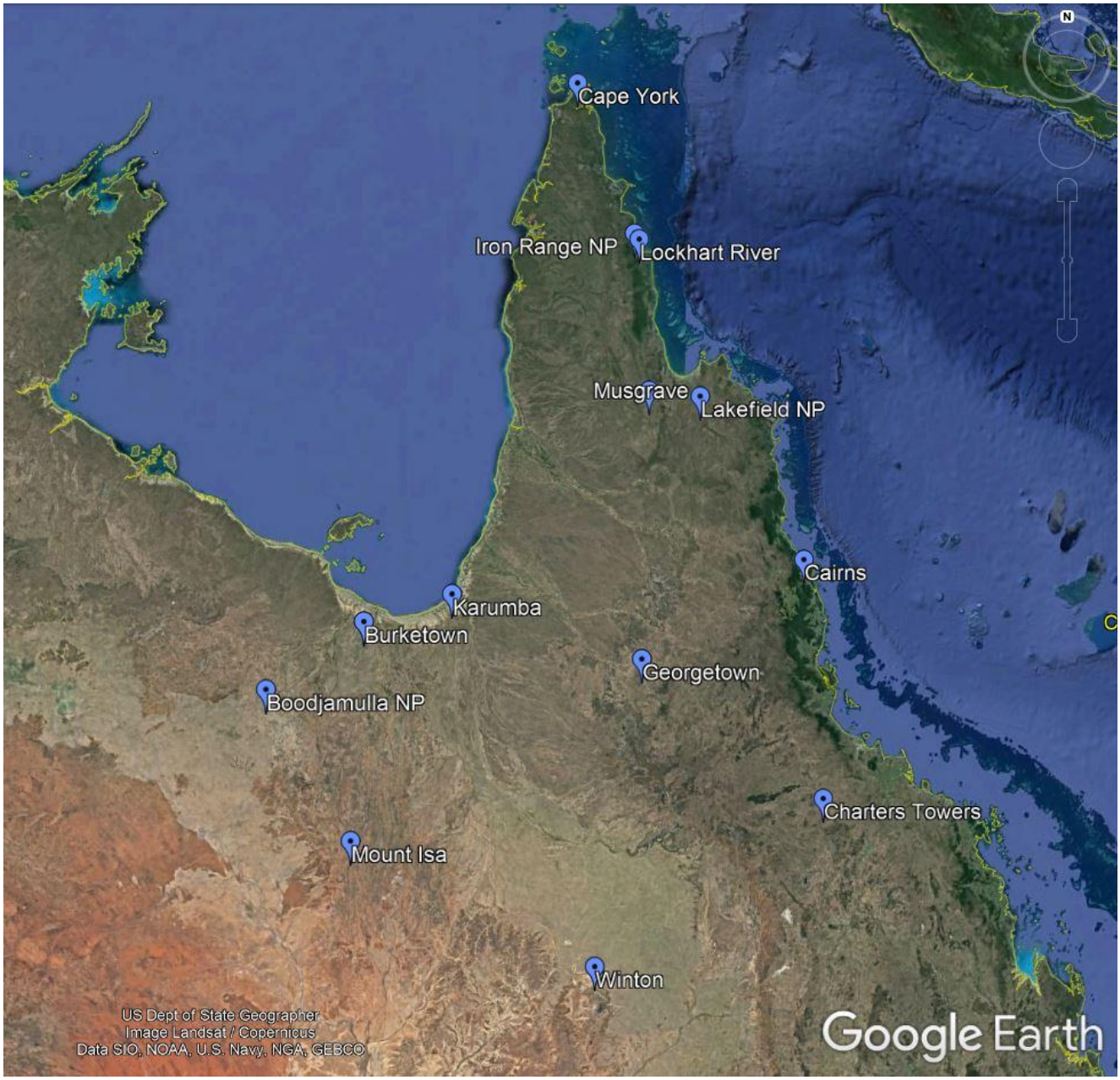
Itinerary & Map

Queensland Outback

Day 1	**Arrival in Cairns**
Day 2	**Cairns to Georgetown**
Day 3	**Georgetown to Karumba**
Day 4	**Karumba area**
Day 5	**Karumba to Burketown**
Day 6	**Burketown to Boodjamulla National Park**
Day 7	**Boodjamulla National Park**
Day 8	**Boodjamulla National Park to Mount Isa**
Days 9 & 10	**Mount Isa area**
Day 11	**Mount Isa to Winton**
Day 12	**Winton area**
Day 13	**Winton to Charters Towers**
Day 14	**Charters Towers to Cairns**
Day 15	**Cairns and depart**

Cape York Peninsula Extension

Day 1	**Arrival in Cairns**
Day 2	**Cairns to Musgrave**
Day 3	**Lakefield National Park**
Day 4	**Musgrave to Lockhart River, Cape York Peninsula**
Days 5 to 7	**Lockhart River, Iron Range National Park**
Day 8	**Lockhart River, flight to Cairns & final depart**


Cape York
Iron Range NP
Lockhart River
Musgrave
Lakefield NP
Cairns
Karumba
Burketown
Georgetown
Boodjamulla NP
Charters Towers
Mount Isa
Winton
US Dept of State Geographer
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Google Earth

Birding sites in detail



Apostlebird by Dennis Braddy

Cairns to Georgetown. This morning will be an early departure as we leave the city of Cairns behind for the time-being and begin the journey west towards Georgetown where we'll spend the night.

We will undertake some opportunistic birding along the route, as well as stopping at various sites for certain key species and highlights along the way could include the spectacular Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, the unique Apostlebird (placed in the endemic Mud-nester family along with the strange White-winged Chough), the nomadic Cockatiel, the handsome Spotted Harrier, the magnificent Wedge-tailed Eagle, herds of dinosaurian Emus, White-throated and Brown-backed Honeyeaters and Brown Treecreeper.

Georgetown to Karumba. We have a very exciting start this morning as we stake out a nearby dam that is usually an excellent place to see several beautiful and often-tricky finches. Here we hope to connect with Black-throated, Masked, Zebra and Double-barred Finches, as well as Pictorella and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins and if we are very lucky, perhaps even the very rare Gouldian and Plum-headed Finches.

Waterbirds may include Black Bittern, Comb-crested Jacana, Green Pygmy Goose, Hardhead, the elegant Plumed Whistling Duck and Australasian Grebe.

The general birding in the surrounding woodland should also prove to be productive, especially in the early morning. Mixed flocks (bird parties) will be particularly evident, and we hope to find a wide range of honeyeaters that could include Rufous-throated, Yellow-tinted, Banded, Bar-breasted, Grey-fronted, Black-chinned and Blue-faced. Other flock associated species we'll be on the lookout for include the arid-country-specialist Red-browed Pardalote, White-bellied Cuckooshrike, Brown Treecreeper and Paperbark Flycatcher. While searching for mixed species flocks, we'll also be looking out for Varied Lorikeet, the gorgeous Pale-headed Rosella, the immaculate Diamond Dove and the superb and habitat-specific Spinifex Pigeon.



Emu by Jonathan Rossouw

Thereafter we'll drive west from Georgetown along the Savannah Way towards the small town of Karumba, looking out for species such as Sarus Crane, the endemic Brolga, Black-necked Stork, White-browed & Masked



Masked Finch by Jonathan Rossouw

Woodswallows, Australian Pratincole and Emu, while the miniscule Weebill may also appear. We can expect to arrive at our accommodation in Karumba in the early evening.

Karumba area. Today will be spent exploring the extensive mangroves and swampy grasslands around Karumba. The habitat here holds several very special mangrove specialties such as White-breasted and Mangrove Golden Whistlers, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Silvereye, the musical Mangrove Gerygone, Arafura and Mangrove Fantails, Red-headed Myzomela (Honeyeater), Mangrove Robin and Rufous-throated Honeyeater.

In adjacent grassland flats we can expect to encounter the stately Sarus Crane and Tawny Grassbird, and with some luck, the rare, beautiful and difficult-to-find Star Finch, which is more tied to freshwater environments around Karumba.

Along roadsides and in wetlands and open habitats between Karumba and Normanton we'll search the grasslands and wetlands for Australian Bustard, flocks of Australian Pratincole, Raja Shelduck, Glossy Ibis and the possibility of an over-wintering Oriental Plover or two.

This evening we'll try to locate one of the resident pairs of Barking Owl.

Karumba to Burketown. After some early morning birding around Karumba, we'll set off again, this time heading for Burketown, and of course we will stop to bird along the way.

A few fabulous and rarely seen avian specialities are available on this picturesque drive, and we'll be on the lookout for these species that could include the rare, Black-breasted Buzzard, the lovely Red-backed Fairywren, Red-browed Pardalote, the erratic and elusive Ground Cuckooshrike and the nomadic and partially migratory Little Woodswallow. Other more widespread and regularly encountered species we can expect to see today include the stately Brolga and Sarus Cranes, Striated Pardalote (represented here by the black-headed *uropygialis* race that may be split in future) and White-throated Gerygone.



Black-faced Woodswallow by Glen Valentine



Grey-headed Honeyeater by Jonathan Rossouw

Burketown to Boodjamulla National Park. Today's drive through to the fabulous, bird-rich and extensive Boodjamulla National Park is not very long in distance but it will take around six hours to drive there due to the poor condition of the road. However, as always, we'll break up the journey by means of regular birding stops. We are likely to encounter many of the species seen yesterday along with a few new ones, as well as further chances for Black-breasted Buzzard and Ground Cuckooshrike, should we have missed them previously.

We can expect to arrive at Adel's Grove, our destination for today and our base for the next two nights, sometime in the afternoon. If there is time this afternoon we will begin our search for the area's many specialties that include the brilliant Purple-crowned Fairywren, the delicately-coloured Buff-sided Robin, Sandstone Shrikethrush, exquisite Long-tailed and Crimson Finches, Silver-crowned Friarbird, White-gaped Honeyeater, Pictorella Mannikin, Varied and Red-collared Lorikeets, Northern Fantail, Azure Kingfisher, Little Woodswallow and Paperbark Flycatcher.

Boodjamulla National Park. We have the entire day to explore and bird around this prime location, looking for the aforementioned species, as well as other stellar species like Northern Rosella, Red-winged Parrot, Great Bowerbird, White-throated, Grey-fronted, Grey-headed, Black-chinned (represented here by the gorgeous Golden-backed *laetior* race), Brown and Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters, the superb Variegated and Red-backed Fairywrens and White-bellied Cuckooshrike, as well as a distinct possibility of the very rare and elusive Grey Falcon.

Boodjamulla National Park to Mount Isa. After a final morning's birding in Boodjamulla National Park in search of any species we may still need, we'll commence our journey to the somewhat more arid country around the mining town of Mount Isa. Specialties here include the extremely range-restricted and highly threatened Kalkadoon and Carpentarian Grasswrens.

Mount Isa area. We have two full days to find the area's many specialties, top on the list being the difficult Kalkadoon and Carpentarian Grasswrens. Both species can be tough to find and may require a fair amount of effort and patience, as well as requiring very early starts to be in their unique and specific habitats before the heat of the day sets in.

The Kalkadoon Grasswren occurs in Spinifex-clad hillsides strewn with large boulders so some nimble-footedness will help here. With some luck we hope to see one singing from atop a boulder in the early morning. In this same area we also



Crimson Finch by Jonathan Rossouw



Great Bowerbird by Jonathan Rossouw

hope to find Grey-headed Honeyeater, Diamond Dove, the scarce and erratic Red-backed Kingfisher and Little Woodswallow.

Around midday we'll head back to town for lunch, after which we will drive to a nearby lake to look for a range of aquatic and woodland birds like Wandering Whistling Duck, Glossy Ibis, Black-necked Stork, Intermediate Egret, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Hoary-headed and Great Crested Grebes, Australian Pied and Great Cormorants, Australian Pelican, Maned Duck, Dusky Moorhen, Red-necked Avocet, Red-capped Plover, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Painted and Long-tailed Finches, Pictorella Mannikin, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Varied Lorikeet, Little Friarbird and Rainbow Bee-eater.

In order to find the critically endangered Carpentarian Grasswren, we'll need to drive north-west of Mount Isa to a well-known location for this increasingly difficult-to-find species. We'll try in several locations along the route and with some good fortune will have found the bird before the day begins to warm up.

Other noteworthy species we may encounter in this area include Grey-headed Honeyeater, the stunning and scarce Painted Finch, Hooded Robin, Brown Falcon, Crested Pigeon, Little Corella, Cockatiel, the nomadic Budgerigar, Pallid Cuckoo, Sacred Kingfisher, Variegated Fairywren, Yellow-throated Miner, Crested Bellbird, Black-faced and Little Woodswallows, Australian Raven, Zebra Finch and the rare and often difficult-to-find Square-tailed Kite.

Mammal-wise, we'll keep a lookout for the huge Red Kangaroo, the world's largest kangaroo species and a seriously impressive Outback specialty!

Mount Isa to Winton. We have the early morning to search for any species we may still be missing in the Mount Isa area. After what should have been a fantastic two-days birding around Mount Isa, we'll continue our adventure by making our way towards Cloncurry.

We'll make several stops along the way in search of species like Australian Ringneck (represented here by the local *macgillivrayi* race that is sometimes split as "Cloncurry Parrot"), Varied



Budgerigar by Jonathan Rossouw



Long-tailed Finch by Jonathan Rossouw

Lorikeet, Cockatiel, Little Corella, the ubiquitous but good-looking Galah, the unpredictable Budgerigar, the scarce and attractive Ground Cuckooshrike, Emu, Little Crow, Apostlebird, the striking Spotted Bowerbird, White-plumed Honeyeater and the rare Black Falcon.

Winton area. Today we'll visit a nearby national park in search of several Spinifex and arid woodland specialties.

Several of Australia's most special and difficult-to-access species occur in this uniquely Australian habitat that generally occurs in remote areas in the heart of the continent, and we'll have the entire day to search for a number of these highly sought-after species that reach the north-eastern-most part of their range in this corner of the country.

These include the strange Spinifexbird, Straited Grasswren (the *rowleyi* race that occurs here has been proposed as a split named Rusty Grasswren), the gorgeous Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Spinifex Pigeon, the extremely localized Hall's Babbler, the unobtrusive and intricately-patterned Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush, the stunning Painted Finch, rare and nomadic Black Honeyeater, Red-browed Pardalote, and if we are extremely fortunate, the very rare and elusive Grey Falcon and the crepuscular Bourke's Parrot that are both regular in this area.

Other more widespread and regular species we can also expect today include Yellow-throated Miner, the tiny Mistletoebird, the large and impressive Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, and depending on conditions and the amount of standing water in the reserve's seasonal pans, possibly Black-tailed Native Hen and Pink-eared Duck.

Winton to Cairns. We have a few long drive days to get back to Cairns, stopping en route for any species we still need or of which we require better views, and these could include rarities like Black-breasted Buzzard, Square-tailed Kite, Black Falcon and Ground Cuckooshrike.



Grey-crowned Babbler by Dennis Braddy



Macleay's Honeyeater by Glen Valentine

Cairns to Musgrave. We depart Cairns early this morning on a fairly long drive to reach the small town of Musgrave. Depending on our arrival time, we may have time for some initial exploration of the area.

Lakefield National Park. One of the main target species today will be the beautiful and extremely localized Golden-shouldered Parrot that occurs in the dry woodlands on the Cape York Peninsula. Our strategy to see this scarce and highly sought-after endemic is to meet up with a local cattle station owner who should be able to connect us with a number of these incredibly beautiful birds on her property.

After hopefully obtaining excellent views of one of Australia's most beautiful and range-restricted parrots, we'll continue birding the arid woodlands that dominate this wonderful and bird-rich region.

Notable species we hope to encounter in the wonderful Lakefield National Park and surrounds include Black-backed and Pied Butcherbirds, the impressive Pheasant Coucal, family groups of Grey-crowned Babblers, Black-faced and Little Woodswallows, Silver-crowned and Little Friarbirds, the diminutive but extremely attractive Masked, Double-barred and Black-throated Finches, the aptly-named Great Bowerbird, Diamond Dove, the boldly-patterned Squatter Pigeon, Bar-breasted, Banded, Rufous-throated, Rufous-banded, White-gaped, Yellow, Blue-faced and Yellow-tinted Honeyeaters, Red-browed and Striated Pardalotes, the nuthatch-like Varied Sitella, Common Bronzewing, Bar-shouldered Dove, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, Red-winged Parrot, Pale-headed Rosella, Laughing and Blue-winged Kookaburras, Forest Kingfisher, Oriental Dollarbird, Red-backed Fairy-wren, the tiny Weebill, Grey Shrike-thrush and Australasian Figbird.

Common and widespread Australasian species we are also likely to see today include Australian Magpie, Willie Wagtail, Torresian Crow, Magpie-lark, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Horsfield's Bushlark, Golden-headed Cisticola, Olive-backed Sunbird and Australian Pipit, while raptors are also well represented here and we are likely to find Whistling and Brahminy Kites, White-bellied Sea Eagle, the regal Wedge-tailed Eagle and Nankeen Kestrel. If we are extremely fortunate we may even encounter one or two of the area's very rare and seldom-seen raptors such as the extremely elusive Red Goshawk, Black-breasted Buzzard or Black Falcon.



Chowchilla (female) by Glen Valentine

Wetlands in the area may harbour Australasian Grebe, Australasian Darter, Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants, White-necked, White-faced and Pied Herons, Eastern Great, Intermediate and Eastern



Squatter Pigeon by Dennis Braddy

Cattle Egrets, Nankeen Night Heron, Glossy, Australian White and Straw-necked Ibises, Royal Spoonbill, Black-necked Stork, the large, impressive and monotypic Magpie Goose, Plumed and Wandering Whistling Ducks, Raja Shelduck, Green Pygmy Goose, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, Hardhead, Brolga, Australian Pratincole, White-headed Stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, Masked Lapwing and Comb-crested Jacana, depending on conditions at the time of our visit. This is also a good area to see the stately Australian Bustard striding across the grassy savannah.

Mammal possibilities include Antilopine Wallaroo, Agile Wallaby, and if we are really fortunate, the Cape York Rock Wallaby.

Musgrave to Lockhart River, Cape York Peninsula. This morning we can enjoy some final birding towards Lakefield National Park, searching for any birds we might be missing, such as the very rare Red Goshawk or perhaps one of the rarer finches or honeyeaters, before continuing our journey north towards Lockhart River, situated near the extreme tip of the Cape York Peninsula and the gateway to the fabulous rainforest reserve of the Iron Range.

Lockhart River, Iron Range National Park. Iron Range National Park harbours the most extensive example of lowland tropical rainforest remaining in Australia, and its avifauna is indicative of a time when Australia and New Guinea were connected during the last Ice Age. We will spend several days exploring this amazing area. The Cape York Peninsula supports several species that are endemic to this extreme tip of north-eastern Australia, as well as several species that otherwise only occur on the island of New Guinea, a stone's throw-away to the north.

Fabulous species that overlap with New Guinea but are restricted to this tiny corner of Australia include the magnificent Palm Cockatoo, the outrageously vivid Eclectus and Red-cheeked Parrots, Chestnut-breasted Cuckoo, the wonderful Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Green-backed and Tawny-breasted Honeyeaters, the beautiful but unobtrusive White-faced Robin, the scarce Yellow-legged Flyrobin, Trumpet Manucode, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, the very shy Black-eared Catbird (recently split from Spotted Catbird) and the incredible Magnificent Riflebird. Australian endemics that are restricted to this awesome part of the world are: White-streaked Honeyeater, the shy Northern Scrub Robin (recently split from Papuan Scrub Robin as an Australian endemic) and the exquisite Frilled-necked Monarch. The tiny and indistinct Tropical Scrubwren will be



Noisy Pitta by Jonathan Rossouw



Forest Kingfisher by Jonathan Rossouw

another major target here, as although this species does occur in New Guinea, it generally occurs out of the range of most tours that visit the island.

We will be on the search for all of these specialties, as well as a number of other range-restricted and sought-after species during our time in the area and these include the incredible Southern Cassowary, Double-eyed Fig Parrot (represented here by the distinctive *marshalli* race), White-eared and Spectacled Monarchs, White-browed Robin, the gaudy Rose-crowned, Superb and Wompoo Fruit Doves, brilliant-blue Forest Kingfisher, the dazzling Azure Kingfisher, the uncommon Grey Goshawk, the small, *didimus* race of Brown Goshawk, Pacific Baza, Collared Sparrowhawk, Australian Brushturkey, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Brown Cuckoo-Dove, Torresian Imperial Pigeon, Australian Swiftlet, Grey Whistler, the outstanding Noisy Pitta, adequately-named Lovely Fairywren, Fairy Gerygone, Helmeted Friarbird, Varied Triller, Little Shrike-thrush, Yellow Oriole, White-breasted Woodswallow, Black Butcherbird, Pied Currawong, Rufous Fantail, Shining Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, White-browed Robin, Silvereye, Metallic Starling, Mistletoebird and Red-browed Finch.

Scanning across the area's fresh-water and coastal wetlands and mudflats may turn up a flock of the rare, shy and unobtrusive Spotted Whistling Duck, Pacific Reef Heron, Pied and Striated Herons, Pied Oystercatcher and the low-density Beach Stone-curlew, while Sooty, Bridled and Black-naped Terns, Common Noddy and Great and Lesser Frigatebirds might entertain us offshore.

Stands of coastal mangroves may yield the hyper-active Red-headed Myzomela (Honeyeater), the musical Large-billed Gerygone, the furtive Mangrove Robin, Varied Honeyeater, the tiny, blue-and-white Little Kingfisher and the larger Torresian Kingfisher (split from the widespread Collared Kingfisher).

A night drive may reveal Marbled and Papuan Frogmouths, the rare Rufous Owl, seldom-encountered Australian Masked Owl and Large-tailed and Spotted Nightjars.

The lush forests of the Iron Range also support several great mammals, and we may be fortunate and find some of these that could include Common Spotted Cuscus, Striped Possum, Northern Quoll, Red-cheeked Dunnart, Rufous Spiny Bandicoot, Red-legged Pademelon and Cape York Melomys. We may even be lucky enough to see some of the tube-nosed and blossom-feeding bats around Portland Roads, as well as flying foxes of various species. Some encampments of Little Red and Black Flying Fox can number literally in the millions!



Beach Stone-curlew by Jonathan Rossouw

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Endemic and target focussed trip. Not suitable for dedicated photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Most species provide decent visuals in open conditions. But some skulkers and low-density targets.
Accommodation		Mostly comfortable, some lodges are basic but comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Easy to moderate walking. A few longer walks possible.
Vehicles / Roads		Several drives, some long. Comfortable vehicle. Roads vary, from sealed to dirt, but are mostly good and well maintained.
Photography		Good to good+. Some species distant, and bright light can be challenging. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Hot to very hot, very bright. Nights and early mornings can be cool to cold.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Temperatures in northern Australia can reach as high as 35˚C (98˚F), even in the middle of winter and nights can be cold in the dessert regions.
- The Queensland Outback tour involves a lot of driving and time in the vehicles to reach all the necessary birding sites. Several of the roads are rough and in poor condition and therefore require 4x4 vehicles. 4x4 vehicles are also required on the Cape York Extension due to the poor condition of the roads and the remote nature of the region.

Arrival and Departure Details

The Queensland Outback begins with a dinner on the evening of day 1 in Cairns and will conclude here after breakfast on day 15.

The Cape York Peninsula Extension begins with a dinner on the evening of day 1 in Cairns and will conclude here midmorning on day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Sydney International Airport, Sydney (IATA: SYD) is the main port of entry for international flights in Australia and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. Regular flights linking Australia's major cities are also available.

Cairns Airport (IATA: CNS) is well connected via Sydney International Airport (IATA: SYD).

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.