

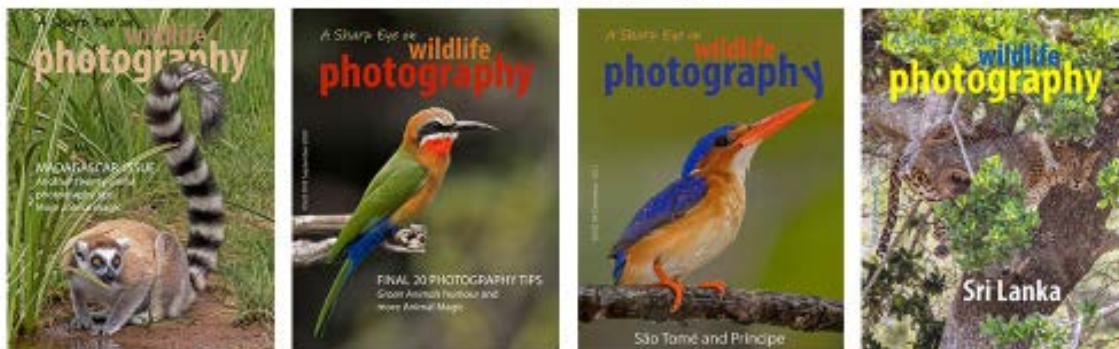
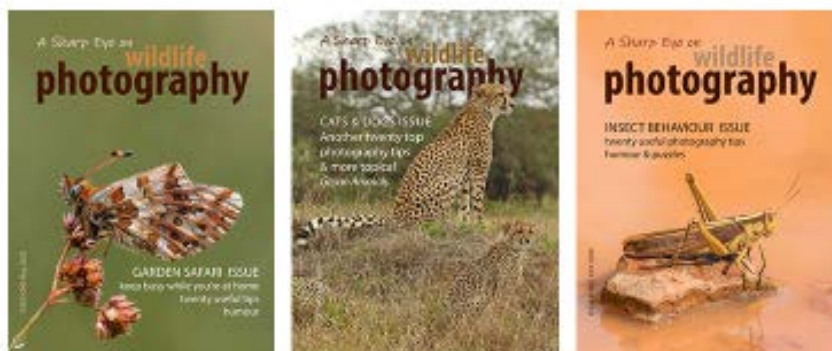
A Sharp Eye on

wildlife
photography

AUSTRALIA



ISSUE EIGHT February 2024

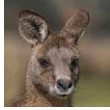


This is Issue Eight.
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Picture on front cover
 Eastern grey kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), Mount Annan, NSW
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F9, ISO 800

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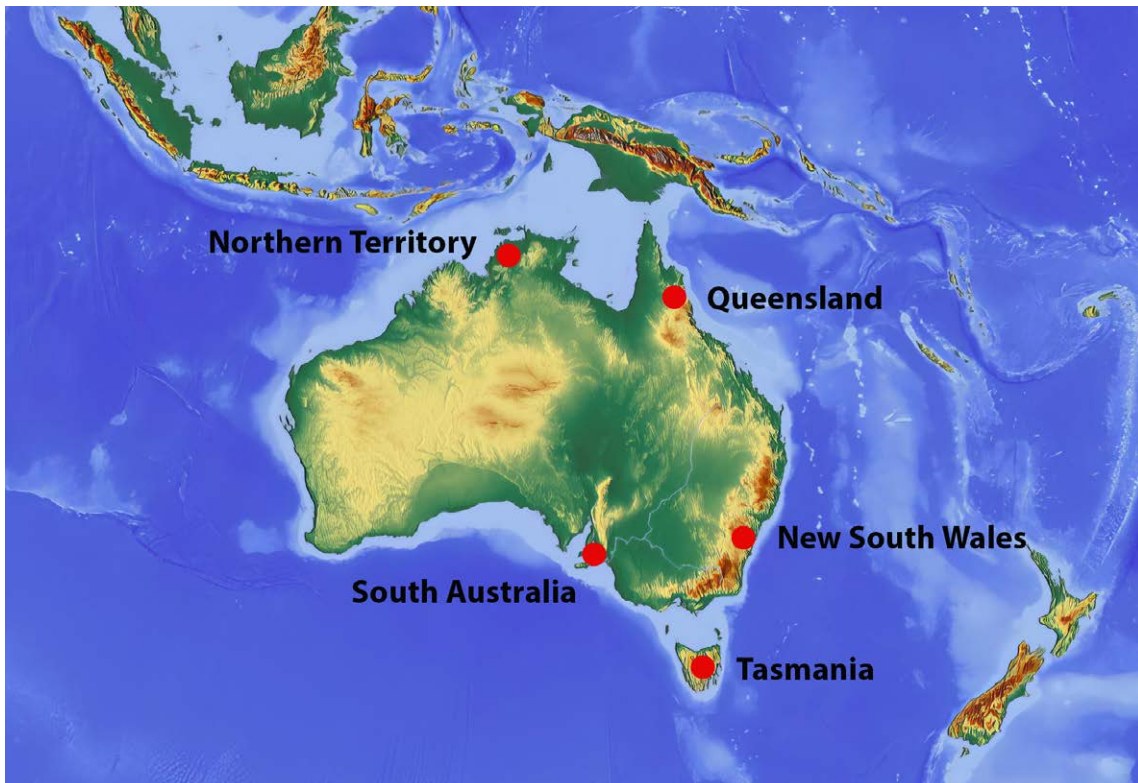
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Northern Territory

The cover design for this issue pays homage to the first stamp issued by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1913, known to philatelists as the 'kangaroo and map' design. The design managed 35 years in circulation. The stamp shows a white Australia, indicating the Commonwealth's desire for a whites-only population at that time.



Animal Magic

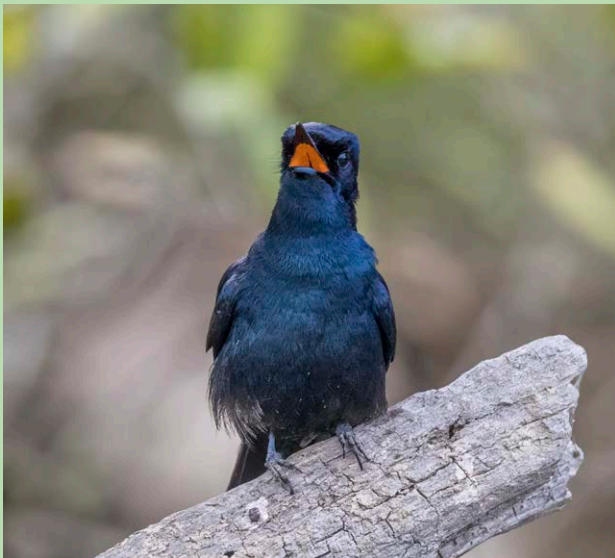
Most days, when the light is not too good, I would have taken the shot below and looked for something more interesting. But Murray Hunt was guiding us and he told me what to wait for.



Shining flycatcher (*Myiagra alecto wardelli*) male
Daintree River, QLD

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400

Sure enough, after waiting for several minutes while Murray kept the boat in the same place, I got the shot he had explained. The males of the *Myiagra* genus of flycatchers have bright orange mouths that you can only see when they start to sing.



Shining flycatcher (*Myiagra alecto wardelli*) male
Daintree River, QLD

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400

A Sharp Eye on WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

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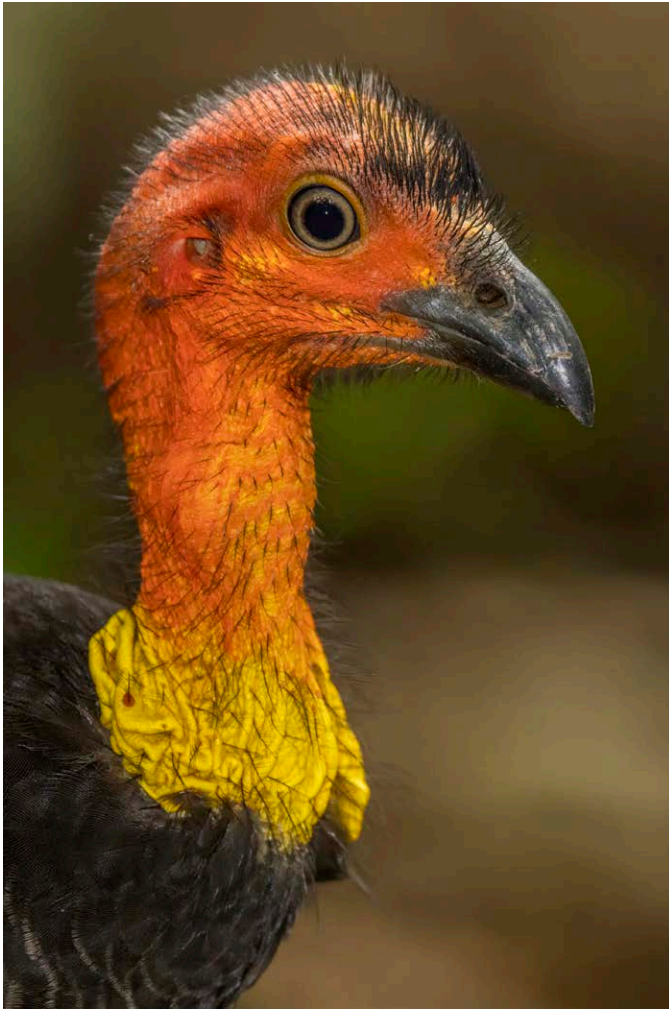
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Australian brushturkey (*Alectura lathami*) female
 Crater Lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 472mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1 ISO 1600



Critically Endangered (CR)

Extremely high risk of extinction

Endangered (EN)

Very high risk of extinction

Vulnerable (VU)

High risk of extinction

Near Threatened (NT)

Likely to qualify for a threatened category soon

G'day Australia

We spent the month of November 2023 touring Australia. You can cover a lot in four weeks, but not every State. Perth, Alice Springs, Brisbane and Melbourne are for another visit. Why November? Australia is so huge (the same size as the USA), you have to compromise. Early November at the Top End just avoided the rains. Queensland and New South Wales were sunny and warm, but poor for diving on the Great Barrier Reef and too late for whales. Late November in Tasmania wasn't too cold and we got lucky with the weather – lots of sun and no strong winds. South Australia let us down. Grey skies and rain except when we drove inland for two hours.

How to sum up Australia's wildlife? Slightly underwhelming to be honest. The marsupials are many and diverse. But they, and many of the birds, spend a lot of the time on closely-nibbled grass, making for uninspiring settings. And most of the mammals are crepuscular. Of course there were exceptions – the duck-billed platypus is amazing; the noisy parrots are brightly-coloured; snakes live in trees by the river. Although November is late spring-time, Australia does not offer flower-strewn meadows with pretty butterflies. The ground is dry and the butterflies wait until Autumn to emerge.

The Australian people were uniformly friendly, though we had zero interaction with Australians of aboriginal descent. They just weren't around except in Kakadu National Park. The cities were modern, the food excellent (try Quay in Sydney); but out in the bush, Australia can turn Third World – unmetalled roads, no phone connectivity, food stores from the 1960s (remember tinned veg?).

Thank you to the three guides we had. They were great: Bushie Williams in Tasmania; Murray Hunt on the Daintree River; Andrew Hingston on South Bruny. Private guiding is pretty expensive, so we guided ourselves most of the time. You see less, but *you* find the animals.

Charles Sharp

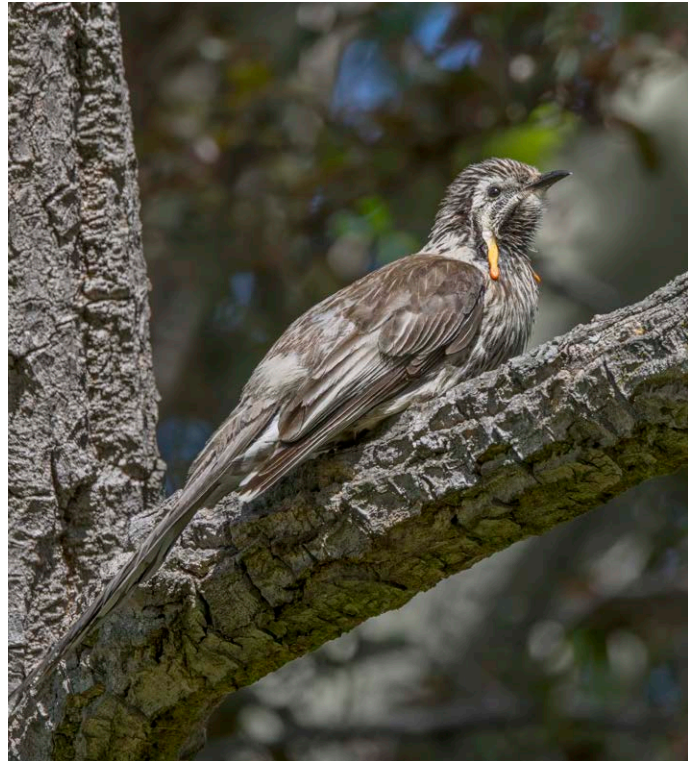
Tasmania

Hobart

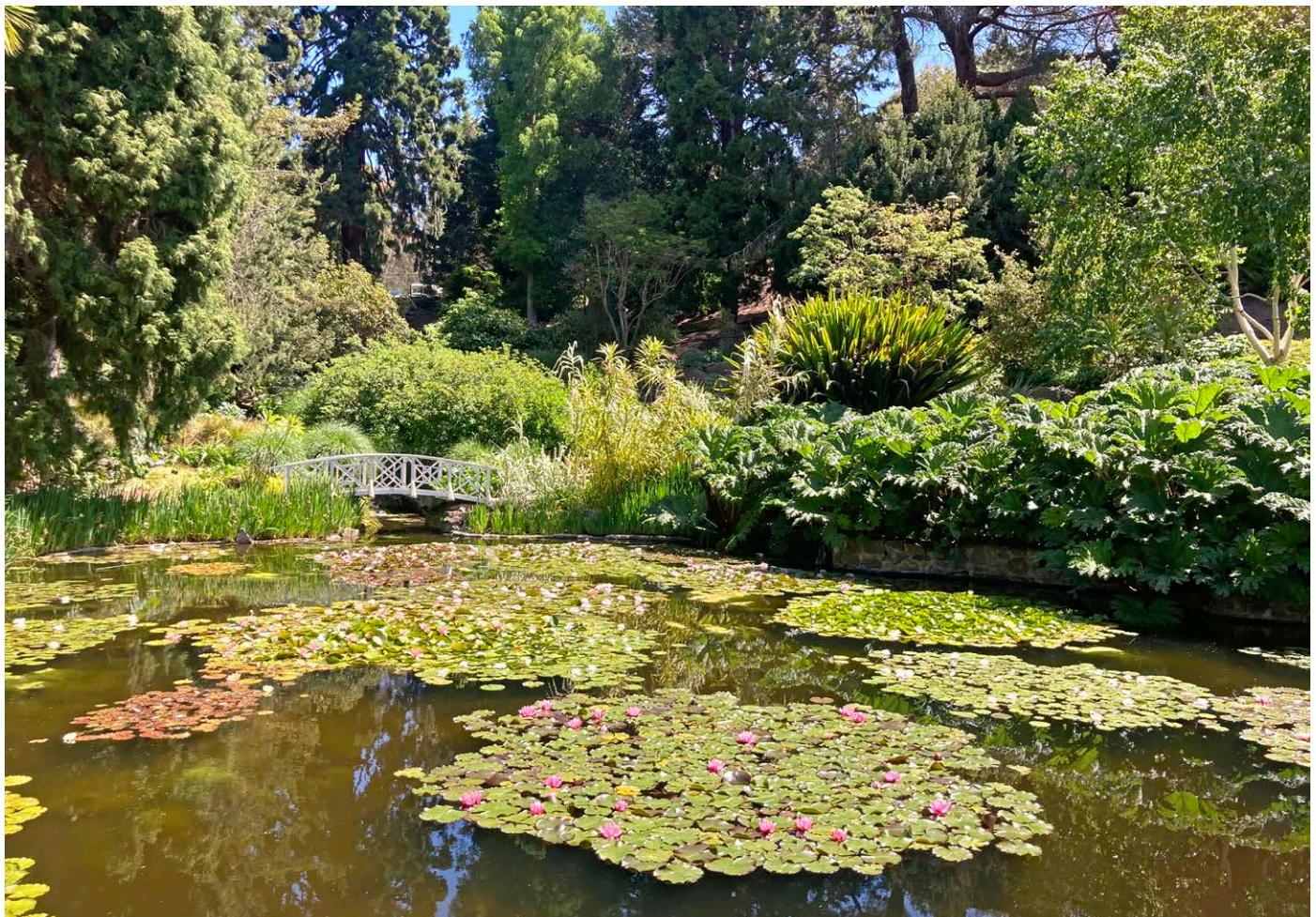
We didn't actually start our trip in Tasmania, but it seems logical to start talking about the south first in the Southern Hemisphere. Susie de Carteret of *Tasmanian Odyssey* sold us on Tasmania at the Rutland BirdFair. Tasmania can be cold and windy in November, especially in the West. Hobart has about the same latitude as Niagara Falls and Corsica in the Northern Hemisphere. So we stuck to the eastern half of the island and had sun most of the time.

The yellow wattlebird is one of twelve bird species that are endemic to Tasmania. The bird's specific epithet *paradoxa* (the second part of the scientific name) derives from Ancient Greek and means strange or extraordinary.

Subspecies often look quite alike, but the masked lapwings in the south of Australia are quite different to the ones in the north.



Yellow wattlebird (*Anthochaera paradoxa*)
Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Hobart, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 640



Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, Hobart. iPhone SE



River Derwent and Tasman Bridge, from Mount Wellington. iPhone SE



Masked lapwing (*Vanellus miles novaehollandiae*)
Waterworks Reserve, Hobart, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 400



Masked lapwing (*Vanellus miles miles*)
George Brown Botanic Gardens, Darwin, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 1250

Endangered Animals

The forty-spotted pardalote is one of Australia's rarest birds. Fewer than 1500 remain in colonies in Tasmania, predominantly on Maria Island and Bruny Island. The Inala Foundation on South Bruny protects one of the largest colonies.



Forty-spotted pardalote (*Pardalotus quadragintus*)
South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 1000

Inala has installed nest boxes in white gum trees. Forty-spots only nest in white gums. Although the leaves are the koala's favourite food, it is the sugary gum or manna that the nestlings need to survive. The bird pictured is nesting in a natural looking, but actually man-made, nest box on Inala's property.



Forty-spotted pardalote (*Pardalotus quadragintus*)
at nest, South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F7.1, ISO 800

The laughing kookaburra is a tree kingfisher. Unlike most kingfishers it does not hang around ponds and rivers. It is a carnivore but doesn't even like fish very much.

This one is a well-known sausage thief. Seeing me with large camera, teachers with a group of primary school children called us over. They were getting the barbecue ready and had, as usual, appointed a sausage-monitor to keep the thief away.

Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree

Marion Sinclair (1896–1988)

Kookaburra (1932)

The Tasmanian nativehen is a Tasmanian endemic. Although a flightless bird, the nativehen has managed to survive man's invasion. Perhaps it also helped that man quickly wiped out its natural predator, the Tasmanian tiger. It can manage a good turn of speed, having been recorded at 69 kph (43 mph).



Tasmanian nativehen (*Tribonyx mortierii*)
Maria Island, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 472mm, 1/1250 sec, F11, ISO 800



Laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae novaeguineae*) in the old gum tree (*Eucalyptus* sp.), Waterworks Reserve, Hobart, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 400

Animal Magic

The superb fairy wren was one of the first Australian birds to be described. A naturalist on Captain Cook's third and fatal voyage collected the first specimen in 1777 in Adventure Bay on South Bruny, which is where this male was photographed.



Superb fairywren (*Malurus cyaneus cyaneus*) male
Adventure Bay, South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 1250

Superb fairywrens are socially monogamous. A breeding pair will have up to seven helpers, often males that were raised in the same territory. All members of the family group help to feed the nestlings, rear the young and defend the territory. That's the good news. Although pairs bond for life, both males and females are promiscuous, regularly mating with other birds. Perhaps this explains why it was voted Australia's bird of the year in 2021.



Superb fairywren (*Malurus cyaneus cyaneus*) female
South Bruny, TAS

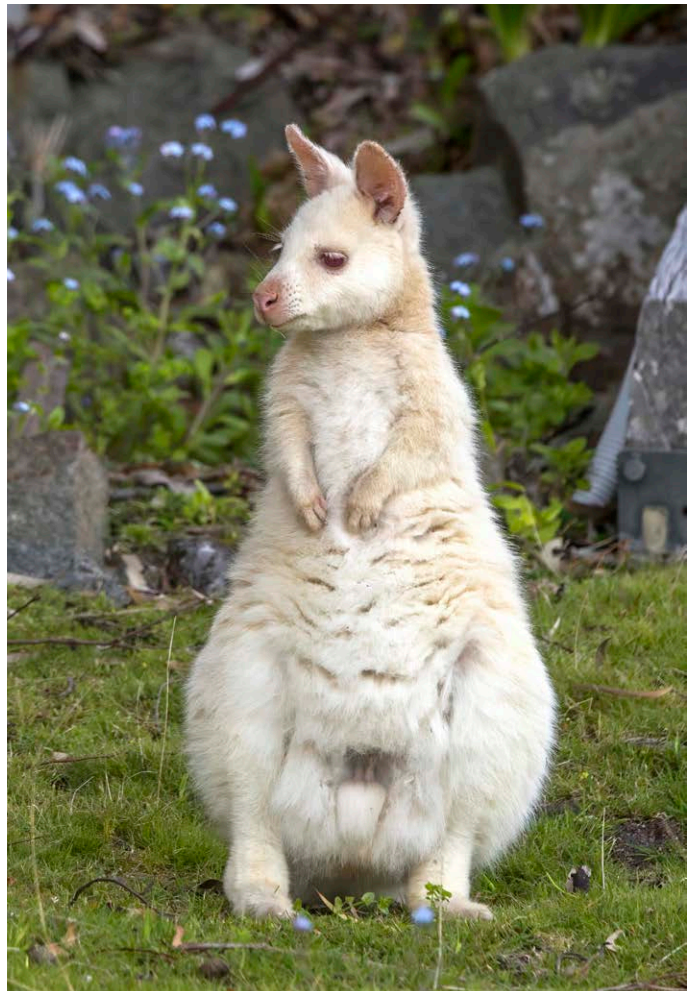
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F8, ISO 1250

Bruny Island

Bruny Island has a population of white Bennett's wallabies. They are happy around humans, often spotted in gardens and the caravan site at Adventure Bay. A rare genetic mutation gives them white fur. Some are albinos with pink eyes, ears and nose. They are sensitive to sunlight and prone to cancer.

The Critically Endangered swift parrot was voted 2023 Bird of the Year in BirdLife Australia's biennial poll. It is one of three species of migratory parrots in the world and only breeds in Tasmania. There are around 750 birds left in the wild. Experts predict that there could be fewer than 100 birds left in 2031.

Introduced predators around the world are devastating for many species. The sugar glider, a type of possum, was introduced into Tasmania in the 1800s and was only recently confirmed as the biggest threat to the parrots.



White wallaby (*Notamacropus rufogriseus rufogriseus*) albino female
Adventure Bay, South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 472mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Crepuscular rays over Tasmania; taken from South Bruny Island. iPhone SE



Swift parrot (*Lathamus discolor*), Adventure Bay, South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 500

Animal Magic

Jellyfish have been around for 500 to 700 million years. That makes them the oldest multi-organ animal group. Many Australians wear stinger suits when swimming to protect themselves against the box jellyfish, a known killer.



Hydrozoa jellyfish (*Aequorea sp.*)
off South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800

But one of the most deadly jellyfish is the irukandji. It is only 2cm across and almost invisible. In November 2016, a French couple in their 70s died from irukandji stings while snorkelling at Michaelmas Cay (see page 58). One was wearing a stinger suit. We only learnt of this danger when we got home. I wonder why?



Hydrozoa jellyfish (*Aequorea sp.*)
off South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800

We were looking forward to the Bruny Island cruise run by Pennicott Wilderness Journeys. Unfortunately, they spent far too long mucking around near the coast and hardly any time out at sea looking for seabirds and whales. We did have good sightings of seals, both the New Zealand and the Australian fur seal; the world's largest species of fur seal.

Only one albatross came anywhere near us. At least it was the shy albatross, Australia's one endemic albatross. It only breeds on three remote islands off Tasmania. It is classified Near-Threatened on the IUCN red list but the Australian government changed its status to Endangered in 2020. It is thought that the population of about 26,000 birds in 2007 is now below 15,000.

Climate change has increased temperatures at the breeding colonies and this has reduced breeding performance. And like most pelagic seabirds, the shy albatross is caught in trawler nets, or snared by hooks during long line fishing.

Shy albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*) off South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 428mm, 1/2000 sec, F16, ISO 800





Australian fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus*), South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 270mm, 1/2000 sec, F5.6, ISO 800



Animal Magic

The Black-headed honeyeater is endemic to Tasmania and a relation of both the pardalote and fairywren. It is called a honeyeater as it feeds on nectar from flowers. It has evolved to have a brush-tipped tongue to get at the nectar. The honeyeater also eats insects and spiders. After eating a spider, it will steal the webbing to help construct a nest.



Black-headed honeyeater (*Melithreptus affinis*)
South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 1250

Like other honeyeaters, it has a habit of feeding while hanging upside down. This makes it easier to access flowers that naturally require access from underneath. It also conserves energy.



Black-headed honeyeater (*Melithreptus affinis*)
South Bruny, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 800

The grey goshawk comes in two colour morphs. The white morph is not albino or leucistic. It appears to be the only bird of prey (or raptor) in the world with 100% naturally pure white plumage.

The goshawk is a regular at Inala's raptor hide. During our visit, it was the only raptor that could be bothered to turn up.

The Eurasian blackbird was introduced into Melbourne in the 1850s. It is described as a sedentary bird, rarely moving more than seven miles from home. Blackbirds are territorial, so will happily move away from conflict to new pastures. They have spread more than 1000 miles East and North at an average annual rate of five miles every year.

The female does all the work in building the nest; the only one to incubate the eggs and the only one to brood the chicks. Both male and female feed the chicks. Once the chicks have fledged, the male is the only one who feeds them. The female gets ready for the next brood and may produce two or three clutches back-to-back.

Morning has broken like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.

Eleanor Farjeon (1881–1965)
Morning has Broken (1931)



Eurasian blackbird (*Turdus merula*) female, South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 1250

Grey goshawk (*Accipiter novaehollandiae*) white morph
South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F8, ISO 500



Maria Island

Tasmanians pronounce the island ma-ry-a, to rhyme with the Spanish Maria or the police van. The original pronunciation was mar-ee-a; as in ‘How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?’

Oystercatchers are really misnamed. The beak has evolved to be a perfect tool for opening up bivalve molluscs like oysters, but they seldom eat oysters. The pied oystercatcher prefers to spend its days on the beach rather than on rocky foreshores where it would find oysters. The beach provides other molluscs like mussels and scallops as well as worms, crustaceans and insects.

Just because evolution has delivered a perfect mollusc-opener, that doesn't limit its use. Sometimes the oystercatcher will just bash a shell on a rock till it breaks. Much more satisfying.



Hooded plover (*Thinornis cucullatus*), Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F16, ISO 1600



Pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*) feeding its chick, Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F11, ISO 800



Hopground Beach, Maria Island. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*), Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F7.1, ISO 400

The wombat is the world's largest burrowing herbivore. Its bum is made up of fused plates covered in cartilage, fat, skin and fur. Wombats enter their burrows head-first, using their impenetrable backsides as a defensive shield.

There are significant numbers of wombats on Maria island; rangers patrol the island to stop the tourists interfering with the animals which are habituated to humans walking around and taking photos. We only saw them grazing, but they can run as fast as we can.



Common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus tasmaniensis*) mother with juvenile, Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 100mm, 1/1000 sec, F10, ISO 800 (focus stack)

Monday

Morning: Slept.
Afternoon: Slept.
Evening: Ate grass.
Scratched.
Night: Ate grass.

Jackie French (1953–)

Diary of a Wombat
(2002)



Common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus tasmaniensis*), Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 400mm, 1/1600 sec, F11, ISO 800 (focus stack)



Common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus tasmaniensis*) juvenile, Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 343mm, 1/1000 sec, F8, ISO 800

Animal Magic

The dusky robin is native to Tasmania. It is known by many other names including the sad robin or sad bird because of its 'mournful, melancholic' song. The adult lacks the bright colours of other robins in Australia (some are shown on this page).



Dusky robin (*Melanodryas vittata*) juvenile (with adult - top)
South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F16, ISO 800 (both)

The juvenile is not unlike a European robin.



European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) juvenile
Great Dixter, Sussex, England
Canon EOS 70D, 400mm, 1/320 sec, F5.6, ISO 400

The scarlet robin and the pale-yellow robin are both Australian endemics, but the grey-headed robin has the most restricted range – a 300 km stretch of Queensland. Most sightings are in the Atherton Tableland. It is classified as Near-Threatened.

The black currawong is a Tasmanian endemic.



Scarlet robin (*Petroica phoenicia*), South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 800



Pale-yellow robin (*Tregellasia capito capito*), Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 640



Grey-headed robin (*Heteromyias cinereifrons*), Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600



The reservoir on Maria Island. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Black currawong (*Strepera fuliginosa fuliginosa*) at the reservoir, Maria Island, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/800 sec, F14, ISO 800

Seagulls are not the most glamorous of birds but provide an easy way to annoy hardcore birders who will tell you they are gulls. The silver gull is the most common gull in Australia and the other two resident species are the kelp gull and the Pacific gull.

Kelp gulls in Argentina have learned to feed on Southern right whales by gouging chunks of blubber and skin from the whale's exposed back when they surface to breathe. Australia's kelp gulls have not learned this predatory behaviour.

Kelp gulls and Pacific gulls can be seen flying up in the air holding a crab, mollusc, or sea urchin. They then drop it onto a rock or concrete surface. The sooty oystercatcher uses another technique. It holds the shell in its beak and hammers it on the rock surface.



Silver gull (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*), Freycinet, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/800 sec, F14, ISO 800



Sooty oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus*), South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/800 sec, F14, ISO 800



Kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*), South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/800 sec, F14, ISO 800

Groan Animals

We had pelican curry in Mount Lofty.
It was OK, but the bill was enormous.

 A large Australian pelican with a very long, straight bill is shown in flight against a clear blue sky. Its wings are spread, showing dark feathers on the upper side.

Australian pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), Murray River, Blanchetown, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F14, ISO 800



Pacific gull (*Larus pacificus pacificus*), Freycinet, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/800 sec, F14, ISO 800

Endangered Animals

The Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle is endangered. Wedge-tailed eagles are the largest bird of prey in Australia. They are comparable in wingspan to Europe's white-tailed eagle but are outgunned by America's bald eagle and Africa's martial eagle. You wouldn't think it could be bullied.

Eagles can be mobbed by smaller birds at any time of the year, but this is especially common in the breeding season. These ravens are defending their breeding territory, their nest with eggs or their young chicks.



Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle (*Aquila audax fleayi*)
mobbed by forest ravens near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F10, ISO 200

The forest raven is a large bird, but smaller birds like blackbirds regularly mob eagles. If bird-watchers get too close, they too can be mobbed.



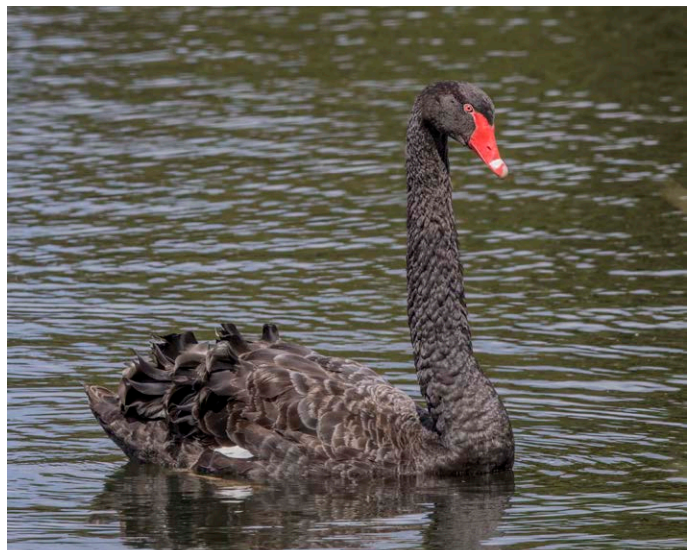
Forest raven (*Corvus tasmanicus*)
on pademelon carcass, South Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 2500

North East Tasmania

North East Tasmania is the place to find the three mascots for the 2000 Sydney Olympics – the duck-billed platypus, kookaburra and the echidna (pronounced eckidna). The platypus and echidna are the only two monotremes in the world; mammals that lay eggs instead of giving birth to live babies. Like all mammals, the mother nurses her young with milk. She does not have any nipples or teats so the baby has to crawl about sucking milk from the hair on its mother's belly. The baby ingests all sorts of nasty stuff but evolution has provided insurance. Monotreme milk contains a powerful antibacterial protein not found in other mammals. The echidna resembles a cross between a large hedgehog and a porcupine but is not closely related to either, nor to the anteaters of South America. Like the platypus, the echidna has electrosensors but manages with 400 compared to the platypus' 40,000. Toothless, the short-beaked echidna is a powerful excavator and feeds on ants and termites.



Scottsdale. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Black swan (*Cygnus atratus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 451mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus setosus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 270mm, 1/1250 sec, F5.6, ISO 1250 (focus stack)



Short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 1250

Craig 'Bushie' Williams was our guide and host and did a great job: finding the hard-to-find animals, showing us around and cooking excellent food as the sun went down.

We watched the platypus foraging for food. It closes its eyes, ears and nose when it dives. It digs in the mud with its bill, like a dabbling duck. Unlike the duck it uses electroreception to find its prey. Electroreceptors detect faint electric currents generated by the muscular contractions of small animals like insect larvae and freshwater shrimps.

The platypus bill has mechanoreceptors that give it tactile capability, not unlike the way our hands are

designed to feed information back to our brain. The platypus is a carnivore but has no teeth as an adult. It has to spend around twelve hours a day looking for food.

Do you think that God
gets stoned once in a while?
Look at a platypus... I think so...

Robin Williams (1951–2014)

From *Robin Williams: An Evening at the Met*, 1986



Duck-billed platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 363mm, 1/2000 sec, F6.3, ISO 1600



Duck-billed platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Duck-billed platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) near Scottsdale, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 223mm, 1/2000 sec, F5, ISO 1600

Animal Magic

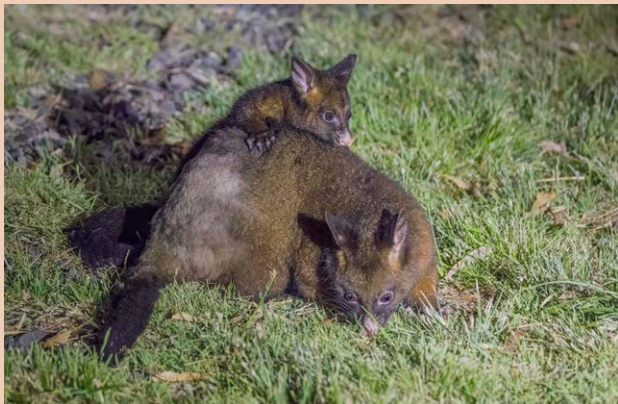
The common brushtail possum is nocturnal and we didn't see any during the day. It is the marsupial most often seen in Australian suburbs, but then we never had to put the bins out.



Common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)
near Scottsdale, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 300mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 6400

Among other food, the possum eats shoots and leaves. It is not like the panda of punctuation fame, which eats, shoots, and leaves. [Yes, I know there is another version of the shaggy dog story...]



Common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*)
with joey near Scottsdale, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 159mm, 1/250 sec, F5, ISO 6400

The common brushtail was introduced into New Zealand as a source of fur in the 1850s. Possum hair is like the hair of polar bears. It is hollow and very warm. Possum numbers grew to more than 60 million in the 1980s. Since then, pest control has halved the population. Meat from New Zealand's brushtail possums is considered a delicacy in some parts of Asia where it is sold as 'Kiwi bear'.

Ben Lomond is the main alpine skiing resort in Tasmania, accessed by a winding road through dramatic dolerite cliffs. The summit is at 1572m. By November, there is seldom any snow. The Bennett's wallabies are still wearing their warm winter coats and the joeys are getting ready to brave the world outside.



View from Jacob's Ladder, Ben Lomond National Park. iPhone SE



Bennett's wallaby (*Notamacropus rufogriseus rufogriseus*)
female and joey, Ben Lomond National Park, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Forest reserve near Scottsdale. iPhone SE



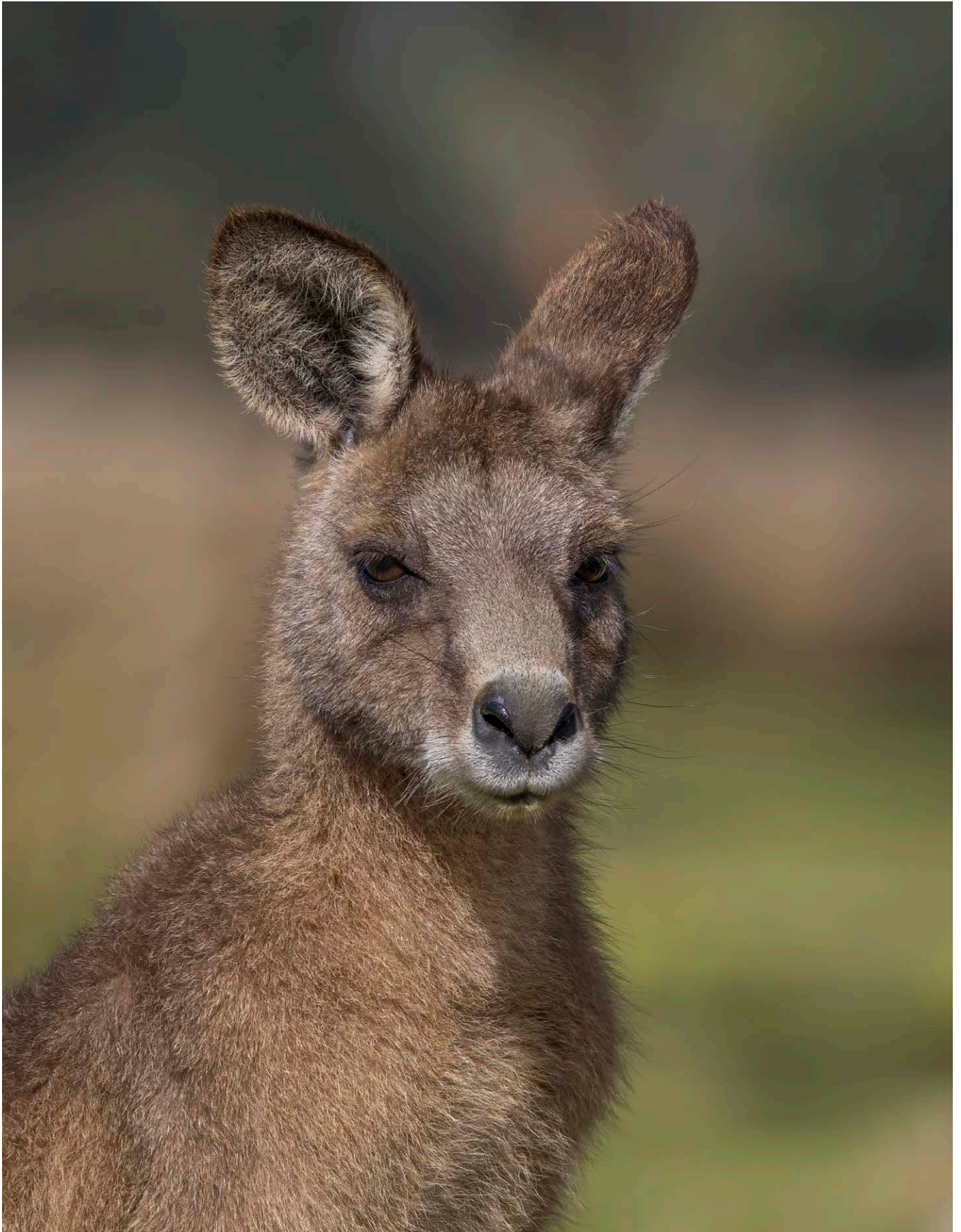
Tasmanian pademelon (*Thylogale billardierii*), Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 300mm, 1/1250 sec, F6.3, ISO 800



Forester kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus tasmaniensis*) female with joey, Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 223mm, 1/2000 sec, F8, ISO 800



Forester kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus tasmaniensis*) juvenile, Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 400mm, 1/2000 sec, F79, ISO 800



Forester kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus tasmaniensis*) male, Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F8, ISO 640 (focus stack)

Animal Magic

I love to ask my grandchildren to guess what an animal's name is:

'What would you call a lizard with blotchy markings and a blue tongue?'

'A blotchy blue-tongued lizard, Granddad.'



Blotched blue-tongue lizard (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)
near Scottsdale, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F8, ISO 800

I've read that blue-tongues hiss, open their mouths wide and stick out their big blue tongues when threatened, showing their pink mouth. We didn't observe this behaviour. Perhaps Granddad and Grandma aren't very threatening?



Blotched blue-tongue lizard (*Tiliqua nigrolutea*)
near Scottsdale, TAS

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F16, ISO 800

Although they walk on all fours, eastern quolls are marsupials like so many other Australian mammals. But like the cats they resemble, quolls are carnivorous. They are partial to mice, rats as well as rabbits that are almost as big as they are. Tasmania has the last remaining wild population; they became extinct on the mainland in the 1960s thanks to introduced foxes and cats. They are IUCN Endangered and their numbers have halved in the last ten years.

The female gives birth up to thirty babies. She has six teats. The first six babies who find a teat and attach themselves to it will be the only survivors. An extreme example of survival of the fittest. The babies remain attached to their teat for two months and open their eyes a couple of weeks later. They are fully weaned at five to six months – typically in November. There are three times as many fawn morphs as black morphs and a litter is usually a mix of the two. In the family we saw, the black morph juveniles were smaller and more timid than their fawn siblings.





EN

Eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) black morph, Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 135mm, 1/1250 sec, F4.5, ISO 800 (focus stack)



EN

Eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) fawn morph, Esk Valley, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 186mm, 1/1250 sec, F10, ISO 800 (focus stack)

South Australia

Kangaroo Island

The nankeen, or Australian, kestrel is not as fast a flyer as its Eurasian cousin. It uses different hunting techniques. It either perches out in the open on trees or posts to look for prey, or hovers above the ground.

Kangaroo Island has its own type of kangaroo. They are shorter and stockier than the mainland's western greys. Their fur is a dark chocolate-brown colour.

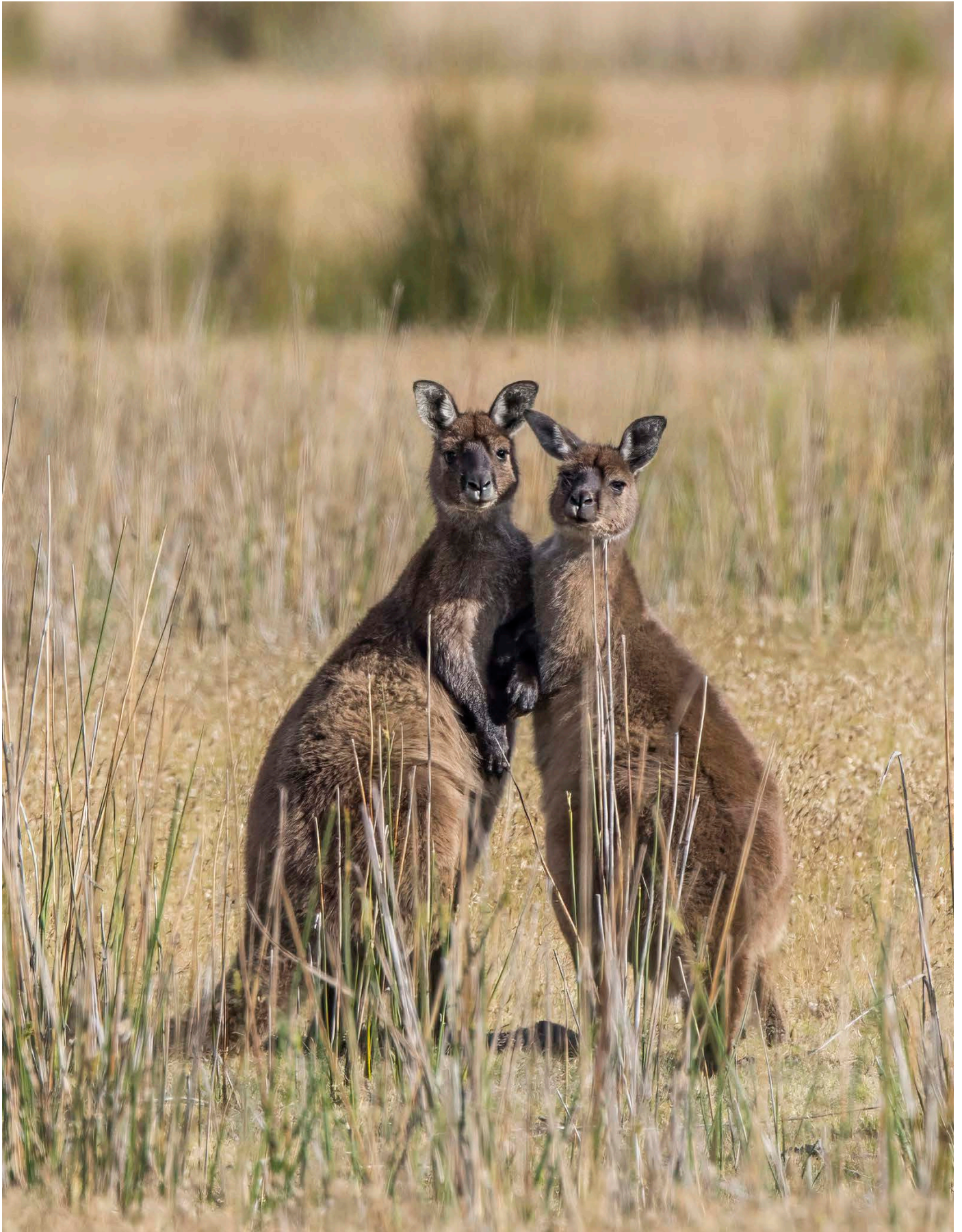
Why does the Australian countryside look like it has been mown by a lawnmower? The kangaroo has specialised teeth. Its incisors can cut grass and shrubs extremely close to the ground.



Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides cenchroides*) female, Penneshaw, North Bruny, TAS
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Remarkable Rocks, Flinders Chase National Park, Kangaroo Island. iPhone SE



Kangaroo Island western grey kangaroo (*Macropus fuliginosus fuliginosus*) female with juvenile, Hanson Bay, Kangaroo Island, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F8, ISO 500

About 40% of Kangaroo Island was burnt by the 2019 and 2020 bushfires. Around three billion animals died in southern Australia, including 143 million mammals. 60,000 koalas died and more than 40,000 of them were living on Kangaroo Island. Unfortunately, when the fire reached

their trees, the koalas climbed up and not down. They did not run away. The recovery of vegetation and wildlife has been incredible in the past three years and we found several healthy-looking koalas. Cape Barren geese are endemic to southern Australia. They are not the greatest flyers and are happiest grazing on grass.



Here we see them flying over a copse of trees burnt in the fires. Up until the 1960s, the geese had been hunted for food and were close to extinction. They benefitted from an early conservation programme that included introducing the species to Kangaroo Island. Cape Barren geese breed on Australia's islands but

many pop over to the mainland in the summer to feed. But they don't have to. The geese are able to drink brackish and salt water, so they can stay on offshore islands all year round if they choose to. Unlike many geese, they don't like swimming, but will quickly jump in if they have to protect their goslings.



Cape Barren geese (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*), Hanson Bay, Kangaroo Island, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F16, ISO 1600

Kangaroo Island has a population of New Zealand, or long-nosed, fur seals near Admiralty arch in the Flinders Chase National Park. We had intended to visit the park to look for the crimson rosella but unfortunately all the access roads were closed.

The National Parks website failed to mention the closures and none of the Kangaroo Island tourist websites did so either. The person at the ticket office didn't even mention it. When we travel a long way, we expect to find competent government organisations; but we did not in South Australia.

The weather was poor on Kangaroo Island and worse in the Adelaide Hills, so we decided to drive inland in search of sun. The skies started to clear as we reached the township of Mount Pleasant offering an opportunity to photograph birds in flight.

Cockatoos are the most numerous parrots in Australia. Galahs, sulphur-crested cockatoos and little corellas congregate in huge flocks, particularly when they are ground-feeding. The flocks move on when the food has gone. We found hundreds in the centre of Mount Pleasant in the morning. When we returned later in the day, they had all gone.



New Zealand fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) female with suckling pup, Kangaroo Island, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 451mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 400 (focus stack)



Galah (*Eolophus roseicapilla*) female, Mount Pleasant, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Sulphur-crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita galerita*), Mount Pleasant, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F14, ISO 800

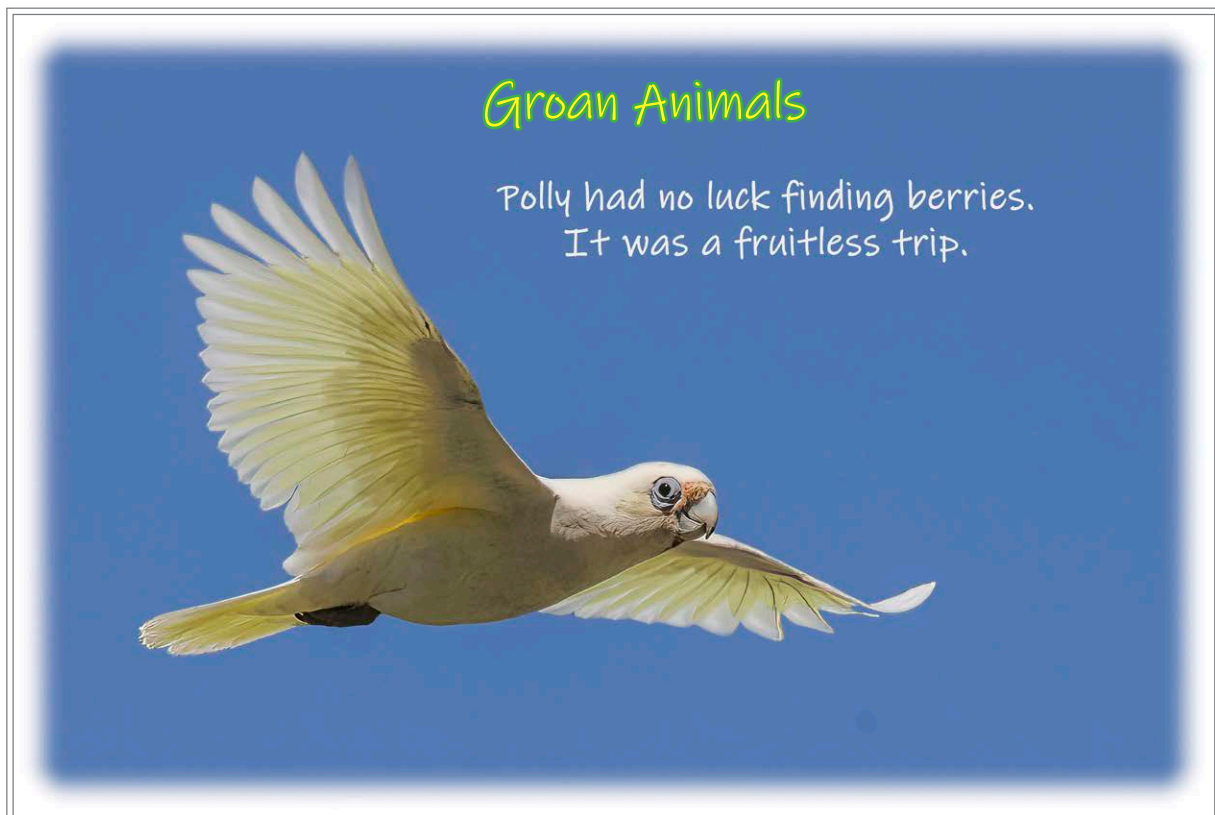
Blanchetown, Murray River

Passing through Mount Pleasant we headed for the Morgan Conservation Area for more blue sky. But what did we find? The access roads were closed, as they were on Kangaroo Island.

We returned to Blanchetown on the Murray River. It was teeming with birdlife, including hundreds of pelicans and cormorants. There was also a flock of the ubiquitous and noisy little corella.



Lock 1 at Blanchetown, Murray River. iPhone SE



Little corella (*Cacatua sanguinea gymnopsis*), Blanchetown, Murray River, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F14, ISO 540

Little corella (*Cacatua sanguinea gymnopsis*)
Blanchetown, Murray River, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F14, ISO 640



We chose to go to Kangaroo Island to have the best chance of seeing koalas in the wild. But we need not have bothered. A mother and joey had chosen a eucalyptus tree at the end of the Mount Lofty House drive as their home. We were able to check them out every time we came or went and, just once, there was a brief shaft of sunlight.

Yes, Koalas are stupid. They have one of the smallest brains relative to their weight of any mammal. Why else would they only eat eucalyptus leaves which have little nutritional value? Naturally, we didn't feed them, but it seems that if you pick a leaf and hand it to a koala, it will not recognise it as food.

We did observe another indication of their low intelligence. The koala does not understand what rain is; so when it started pouring, she did not head for shelter.

*I am an animal in bed.
More specifically, a koala.
I can sleep for 20 hours a day.*

Meme posted by *Reddit* user 4ppleseed

19 May 2013



Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) female, Mount Lofty Estate, Adelaide Hills, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F11, ISO 640



View from Mount Lofty House, Adelaide Hills. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) female and joey, Mount Lofty Estate, Adelaide Hills, SA
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 118mm, 1/1000 sec, F4.5, ISO 800

New South Wales

Sydney could never just be about wildlife but it is easy to find a hotel that is near to the botanic gardens as well as the amazing Opera House.

We found lorikeets in all the botanic gardens we visited – the rainbow lorikeet in southern Australia

and the very closely related red-collared lorikeet in Darwin (see page 65).

The end of the tongue is equipped with a papillate appendage which is adapted to gathering pollen and nectar from flowers. This is their preferred diet.



Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. iPhone SE



Centennial Park, Sydney. iPhone SE

Rainbow lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*)
on pine mountain coral tree (*Erythrina numerosa*)
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, NSW
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



The Eastern grey is one of Australia's largest and fastest kangaroos. It can reach speeds of up to 64 kph (40 mph) and hop more than 9 metres (30 ft). The hop shown below is a composite of three photos. The kangaroo is hopping slightly

downhill and the distance covered is around 6 metres. How does it do this? The kangaroo uses pentapedal (five-leg) locomotion. The bulky tail acts as a fifth leg. It provides power for lift and propulsion. The scientific name *Macropus* comes from the Greek for long foot.



The Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan is near Sydney. It is not a typical botanical garden. It has 416 hectares of rolling hills, lakes and gardens. You can drive around in your own car, get out and climb the hills. Mount Annan is fenced, but the fence is to keep

kangaroos out, not to keep them in. A family group broke through the fence a few years ago. Kangaroos are social animals led by a dominant male. He must have decided that there is no better place for a macropod family to live than a well-stocked botanic garden.

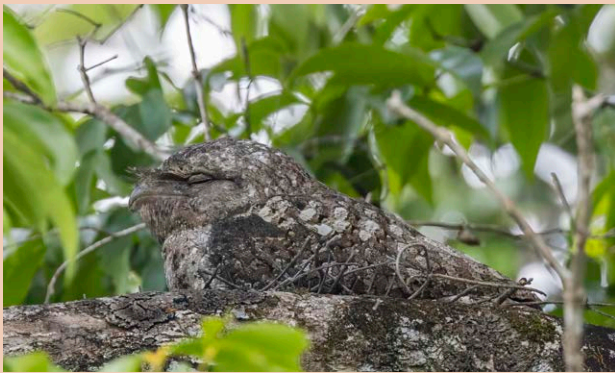


Eastern grey kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan, NSW
a composite of three images
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/2000 sec, F9, ISO 800

Animal Magic

One of the obvious benefits of guides is that they know where to look and recognise shapes and patterns. I don't think we've ever found a frogmouth on our own. They are nocturnal birds and sleep all day. They are masters of disguise with their cryptic plumage. They blend in on any branch that has similar colours to their feathers.

Frogmouths are related to nightjars and can be mistaken for owls. They do not have talons or a sharp beak like an owl. They have a huge mouth like a frog which is yellow inside to attract insects.



Papuan frogmouth (*Podargus papuensis baileyi*)
Daintree River, QLD

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F8, ISO 2500

Murray also spotted the double-eyed fig parrot in a nest hole on the bank of the Daintree River. Most parrots use existing holes in trees for nests, but double-eyed fig parrots excavate their own nest cavities; usually choosing a dead tree so that it is not such hard work. One of the advantages of this DIY is that the nest hole is just right: not too big and not too small.



Double-eyed fig parrot (*Cyclopsitta diophthalma macleayana*)
female in nest, Daintree River, QLD

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600

Queensland

Daintree Rainforest

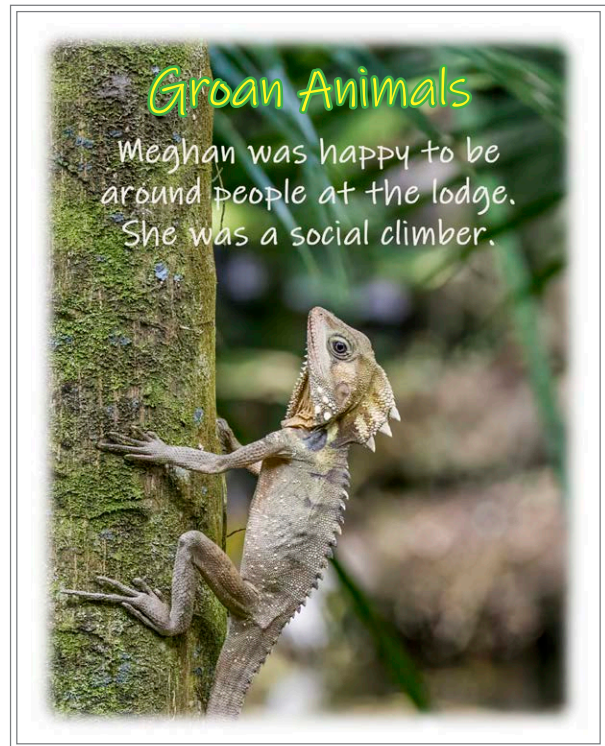
The Daintree is the largest area of tropical rainforest in Australia. It is one of the oldest rainforests in the world. It is 180 million years old, a little older than the Amazon rainforests. The forests have survived the last two ice ages, the extinction of the dinosaurs 66 million years ago and the deforestation that started in 1881.

Our guide for an early morning trip on the Daintree River was the friendly and knowledgeable Murray Hunt.

When the forest is felled and burned, the hard equatorial downpours quickly wash away the thin blanket of top soil... It is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook dinner.

E. O. Wilson (1929–2021)

Biophilia (1984)



Groan Animals

Meghan was happy to be around people at the lodge. She was a social climber.

Boyd's forest dragon (*Lophosaurus boydii*), Daintree Rainforest, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 186mm, 1/320 sec, F5, ISO 2500 (focus stack)



Daintree River. iPhone SE



White-lipped tree frog (*Nyctimystes infrafrenatus*), Daintree Rainforest, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/320 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400 (focus stack)

Common tree snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulatus*)
Daintree River, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F8, ISO 3200
(focus stack)





Animal Magic

Some of Australia's spiders are very dangerous so we cannot get up close and personal to take a photo. Jumping spiders are a much safer proposition. These are small spiders and seldom bite. Many photos you will see are of colourful 'pets'.

Jumping spiders have eight eyes which give them a sort of 360 degree vision. The rear-view eyes are fixed wide angle motion-detectors. The two large eyes at the front of the head provide the best vision and are the only pair that the spider can move. They are too close together to provide depth perception and the eyes at the side are wide angle. But the spider has evolved a solution.



Swifts' ant-hunter (*Zenodorus swiftorum*)
Daintree Rainforest, QLD (focus stack)

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 2500

Jumping spiders' eyes have a complicated set of receptor cells. Image defocus provides the depth perception (best to Google it). Just before the spider jumps it tethers a silk dragline. This acts as a brake and stabilizer, as well as a way to climb back when a jump misses the target.



Swifts' ant-hunter (*Zenodorus swiftorum*)
Daintree Rainforest, QLD (focus stack)

Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F8, ISO 2500

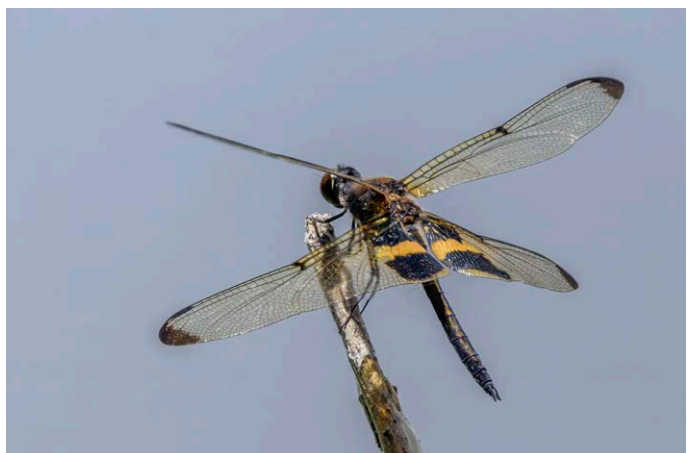
My macro lens did not see any action on this trip. When we did find insects and spiders, I was carrying my 100-500mm lens. There are five *Rhyothemis* dragonfly species in Australia. These three were all at the Cattana Wetlands near Cairns.



Jewel flutterer (*Rhyothemis resplendens*) male, Cattana Wetlands, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/320 sec, F8, ISO 6400 (focus stack)



Sapphire flutterer (*Rhyothemis princeps*) male, Cattana Wetlands, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F8, ISO 1000 (focus stack)



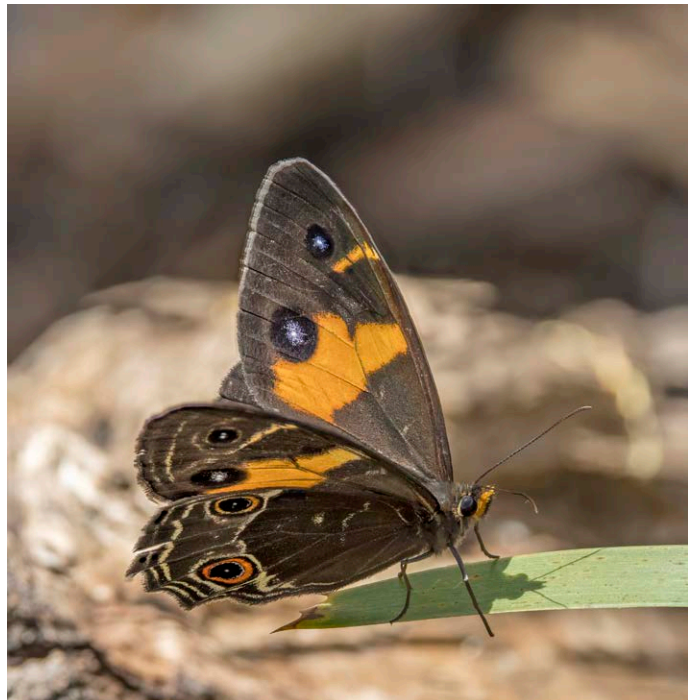
Yellow-striped flutterer (*Rhyothemis phyllis*), Cattana Wetlands, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F7.1, ISO 500 (focus stack)



Thornton Beach and Struck Island. iPhone SE



Green-banded line-blue (*Nacaduba cyanea arinia*), Daintree, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/320 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400 (focus stack)



Varied swordgrass brown (*Tisiphone abeona*), Blue Mountains, NSW
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F9, ISO 1000 (focus stack)

Animal Magic

The musky rat-kangaroo is the smallest of the 51 macropods that live in Australia, weighing about 500 gm. You can only find it in the remaining rainforests along a small stretch of Queensland's East coast. They are the only macropod with five toes on their hind legs.



Musky rat-kangaroo (*Hypsiprymnodon moschatus*)
near Crater lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 343mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 1600

As its name suggests, it gives off a musky smell, but we didn't notice it at 7.25 in the morning.



Musky rat-kangaroo (*Hypsiprymnodon moschatus*)
near Crater lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 186mm, 1/250 sec, F5, ISO 1600

Queensland

Atherton Tableland

It would be hard to exaggerate when praising the Crater Lakes Rainforest Cottages. The cottages are close to Lake Eacham and the small town of Yungaburra in the Atherton Tableland. They are a wildlife haven. The star attraction is the Victoria's riflebird but there many other animals who come and introduce themselves when you venture outside in the morning, including the inquisitive eastern whipbird.

Jenny is the perfect host. She even drove us into Yungaburra for supper when we arrived quite late.



CJS. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Eastern whipbird (*Psophodes olivaceus lateralis*) juvenile, Atherton Tableland
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 300mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 1600



Eastern whipbird (*Psophodes olivaceus lateralis*), Crater Lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 472mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 1000



Australian brushturkey (*Alectura lathami*) female, Crater Lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 200mm, 1/250 sec, F5, ISO 1000

The Victoria's riflebird is a bird-of-paradise endemic to the Atherton Tableland region of northeastern Queensland. It lives there all year. It was discovered in 1848 and is named after Queen Victoria who had recently come to the throne. The name riflebird comes from the bird's black velvety plumage. People thought it looked a bit like the uniform of the Rifle Brigade, the only British soldiers who were not redcoats.

To find most the world's forty-seven bird-of-paradise species you have to go to the island of New Guinea – the West is part of Indonesia and the East is Papua new Guinea. They are some of the more unusual birds you can find. They have bizarre plumage, with most species having more exotic plumage than the riflebirds. Birds-of-paradise have elaborate displays with the males performing a wide range of postures and dance movements.

Why do they act in this abnormal way? The females, who are not as pleased with themselves as the males, are very choosy about their mates. This has meant that the males have to show off and deliver a suitably extravagant display to prove they are suitable. Not so unusual then...

Some birds-of-paradise have bright pigments in the their red, orange and yellow feathers. The riflebird has green, blue and purple feathers, The shimmering colours are produced by microstructures in the feathers that refract and scatter light. The iridescence is very similar to what we see in hummingbirds. The geometry of layers of keratin, melanin and air in the feathers allows only certain wavelengths of light to escape. Depending on where you are standing, the feathers can appear bright cyan, blue, violet or black.

What we call 'normal' is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience.

R. D. Laing (1927–89)

The Politics of Experience/The Bird of Paradise (1967)

Ronald Laing was a Scottish psychiatrist and expert on mental illness



Victoria's riflebird (*Ptiloris victorise*) female, Crater Lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 300mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 1600



VU

Victoria's riflebird (*Ptiloris victorise*) male, Crater Lakes, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 270mm, 1/400 sec, F5.6, ISO 1000



VU

Victoria's riflebird (*Ptiloris victorise*) male, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 145mm, 1/250 sec, F4.5, ISO 1600



VU

Victoria's riflebird (*Ptiloris victorise*) male, Atherton Tableland, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 343mm, 1/250 sec, F5.6, ISO 1600

Michaelmas Cay is about 40 km north east of Cairns; part of Queensland's Outer Barrier Reef. It is a 18.8 hectare sand and coral island with some vegetation. The cay is home to 20,000 to 30,000 ground-nesting seabirds during nesting time; sometimes there are more than twenty different species. The cay is part of a marine National Park and most of the island is roped off, but there are booby and noddy nests very close to the ropes. They do not fear the inquisitive tourists taking selfies.

Do we really care so little about the Earth on which we live that we don't wish to protect one of its greatest wonders from the consequences of our behaviour?

Sir David Attenborough (1926–)
Great Barrier Reef
 (BBC, 2015–16)

The brown booby is the largest and most common of the booby and gannet families. You find them around all continents except Europe and Antarctica. They are the only ground-nesting boobies that build a nest. It is a very basic effort; just a few sticks, stones, shells and old bones.

The common or brown noddy has a similar distribution and they are often found nesting together. The booby lays two eggs every season and the noddy, just the one. Neither of these birds migrate and each have four subspecies that have evolved in different oceans.



Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus serrata*), Michaelmas Cay, QLD
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 428mm, 1/1600 sec, F11, ISO 400



Lesser crested tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis torresii*) in breeding plumage, Michaelmas Cay, QLD
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 428mm, 1/1600 sec, F11, ISO 400



Ruddy turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), Michaelmas Cay, QLD
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F9, ISO 400



Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster plotus*) male, Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 300mm, 1/1600 sec, F7.1, ISO 400



Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster plotus*) female feeding chick on Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 270mm, 1/1600 sec, F9, ISO 400



Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster plotus*) male, Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 428mm, 1/1600 sec, F8, ISO 400



Common noddie (*Anous stolidus pileatus*) with chick on Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 324mm, 1/1600 sec, F811 ISO 400



Common noddie (*Anous stolidus pileatus*), Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 400mm, 1/1600 sec, F8, ISO 400

Diving at Michaelmas Cay is pretty bad in November. Low visibility, a few small fishes, and unexciting coral that has been damaged by the thousands of divers and snorkellers who visit every day. The cay is however known for the number of giant clams. These are the world's largest bivalve molluscs. Several are known as giant clams. *Tridacna gigas* is one of the species whose existence is threatened. This one is about 1m across but they can grow to 1.2m and weigh 200kg (440 lb). The blue spots contain photo-receptors which sense movement and shadows. The clam will then retract its mantle and close up. The small giant clam is much smaller, about 20cm long. It is a protected species, but is a favourite of reef aquarists (the fancy term for people who have reef aquariums).



Staghorn damsel (*Amblyglyphidodon curacao*), Michaelmas Cay, QLD
GoPro HERO9



Staghorn coral (*Acroporidae sp.*), Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
GoPro HERO9



VU

Giant clam (*Tridacna gigas*), Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
GoPro HERO9



NT

Small giant clam (*Tridacna maxima*), Michaelmas Cay, Great Barrier Reef, QLD
GoPro HERO9

Animal Magic

The Australian ibis is known as the 'bin-chicken' or 'chip-turkey' in Australia. Normally pure white, many city-dwelling birds now have stained feathers. In recent years, thousands of these ibis have moved into city centres. They scavenge for discarded human food and enjoy ornamental water ponds in parks and gardens. Much of their natural wetland habitat has disappeared.



Australian ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*)
George Brown Botanic Gardens, Darwin, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 1000

In the 1960s, the white ibis was rarely sighted in urban areas and did not breed in the Sydney region. Now they are everywhere. The white ibis has entered the top 10 in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count. Some Australians love them; others hate them.



Australian ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*)
Centennial Park, Sydney, NSW
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 640

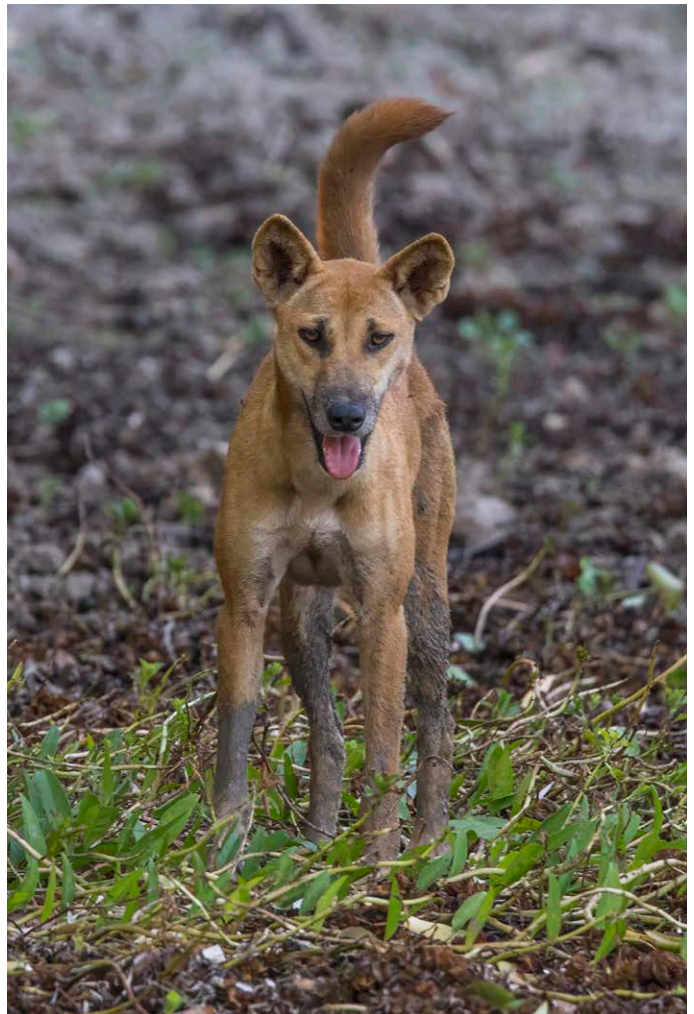
The Northern Territory

Darwin

We flew into Darwin to visit the Kakadu National Park. It takes three hours to drive there and there is not much to see on the way except road kill and the intimidating road trains. Darwin is the only city in the world that allows triples and quads (that's a double with two additional trailers) to get to within one kilometre of the city centre.

For many of us of a certain age, the word dingo is forever linked to the death of Lindy Chamberlain's baby. In 1980, nine-week-old Azaria was taken by a dingo from the tent she was sleeping in. Her mother spent three years in jail before she was pardoned.

Experts cannot agree whether the dingo is just a domestic dog or a different species. It is certainly not an ancient species; the oldest remains that have been found in Australia are only 3500 years old.



Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*), Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/320 sec, F7.1, ISO 1250



Red-collared lorikeet (*Trichoglossus rubritorquis*), George Brown Botanic Gardens, Darwin, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 428mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 5000

Fogg Dam and Adelaide River

Wild animals in the Northern Territory are likely to be near water. November is the hottest month of the year, before the rains come. There was an Extreme Heat Emergency Warning when we arrived (not that we knew) and the temperature touched 40 degrees. Lotus seeds can remain dormant



Lotus plants, Fogg Dam, NT
Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro

when water dries out so are well suited to extremes of rainfall and drought. The comb-crested jacana is also known as the lotus bird, lily trotter or Jesus bird – it seems to walk on water. Tiny chicks were finding their feet on the lily pads. It did not seem to be a problem with these muscular legs and huge feet.



Comb-crested jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*) chick, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 4000



Agile wallabies (*Notamacropus agilis*) male and juvenile, Fogg Dam, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F8, ISO 500



Black kite (*Milvus migrans affinis*), Adelaide River, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 200mm, 1/2000 sec, F6.3, ISO 200



Rainbow bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*), Fogg Dam, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F7.1, ISO 500

Animal Magic

The saltwater crocodile is the largest living reptile. Typical large males weigh over one ton and are over 5m long. They live in fresh water well away from the sea as well as in salt water. They regularly take livestock and pets and kill a couple of people every year in Australia.



Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Adelaide River, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 100mm, 1/2000 sec, F10, ISO 800

Salties have the strongest bite of any animal. The jaw is designed for clamping so that they can drown their prey. However their ability to open their jaws is very weak and, if you had nothing better to do while down by the riverside you could clamp a saltie's jaw shut with a few layers of duct tape. No crocodiles can chew, so this one is tossing the barramundi fish he has captured into the air before catching it again and swallowing it whole. The barramundi is known as one of the saltie's favourite food. This one would have been a female. Barramundi are born male then turn into females after three or four years.

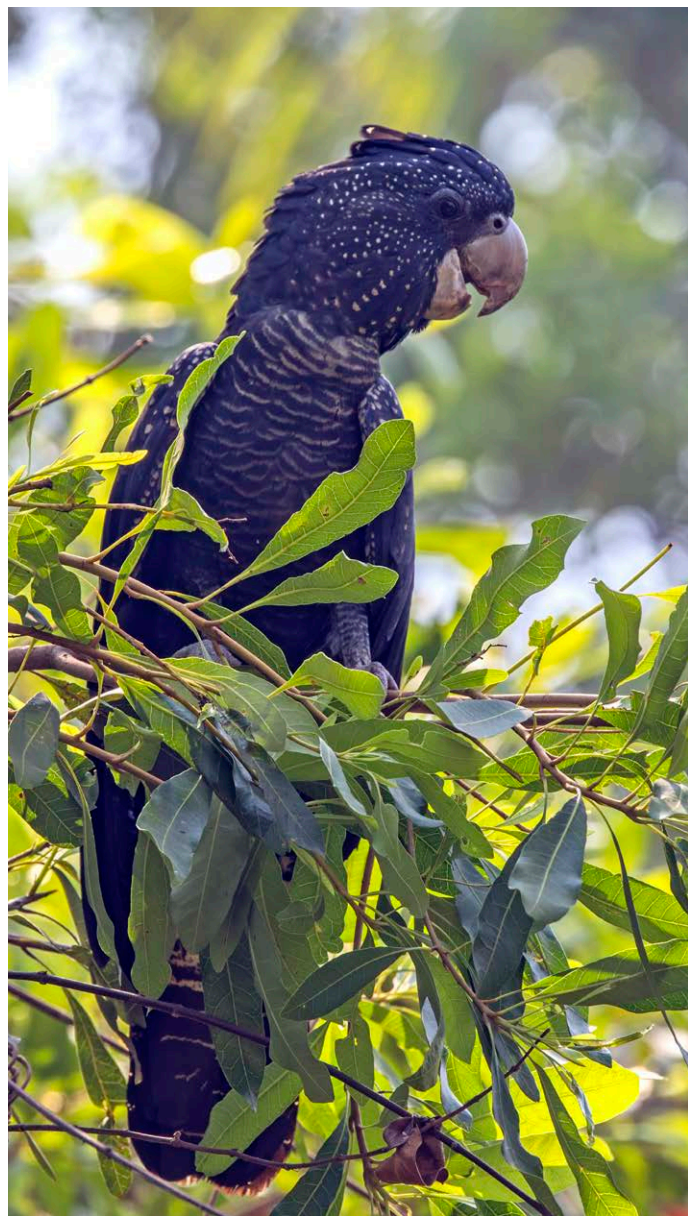


Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Yellow Water, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F8, ISO 5000

Kakadu National Park

Kakadu National Park is not a good place to go for a cooling dip. In January 2024, a nine-year-old boy was attacked by a crocodile while swimming. He survived. The ambulance spokesman stated the obvious, 'Probably a lucky escape I would suggest.'

The Yellow Water wetlands (see next page) are the place to go for saltwater crocodiles and many birds. We took the group boat trip in the evening, then again in the early morning. It was worth doing it twice. The guides know their stuff and make a great effort to position the boat for photos and talk about the wildlife.



Red-tailed black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii macrorhynchus*)
Cahill's Crossing, Ubirr, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F10, ISO 800



CJS on Cahill's Crossing, Kakadu National Park. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro

Cahill's Crossing in Kakadu National Park is a flooded causeway crossing. We made it across but it is known as one of the most dangerous crossings in the world. It is tidal and is subject to flood water so the water level can rise very quickly. If you get stuck and get out of your vehicle, several dozen saltwater crocodiles will be waiting for you. The sign says it all.



Azure kingfisher (*Ceyx azureus ruficollaris*)
 Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro





Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park. Photo by Valerie Goodchild. iPhone 13 Pro



Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 400mm, 1/1600 sec, F6.3, ISO 500 (focus stack)

Animal Magic

Cup nests are built by many passerine birds. They use different building techniques. The green oriole constructs a deep cup from strips of bark, leaves, moss and vines. The nest hangs down between leafy branches. When incubating its eggs, the parent is well hidden.



Green oriole (*Oriolus flavocinctus kingi*), Daintree River, QLD
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 3200

The willie wagtail is about 30% smaller than the oriole. It builds a tiny swallow cup nest around a tree branch. It chooses a branch that has few leaves and is in the open. It doesn't try to hide its nest and is quite happy building it near people. When the eggs hatch the chicks are not hidden inside the cup.



Willie wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys picata*), Yellow Water, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F8, ISO 2500



Whistling kite (*Haliastur sphenurus*), Yellow Water, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F16, ISO 800



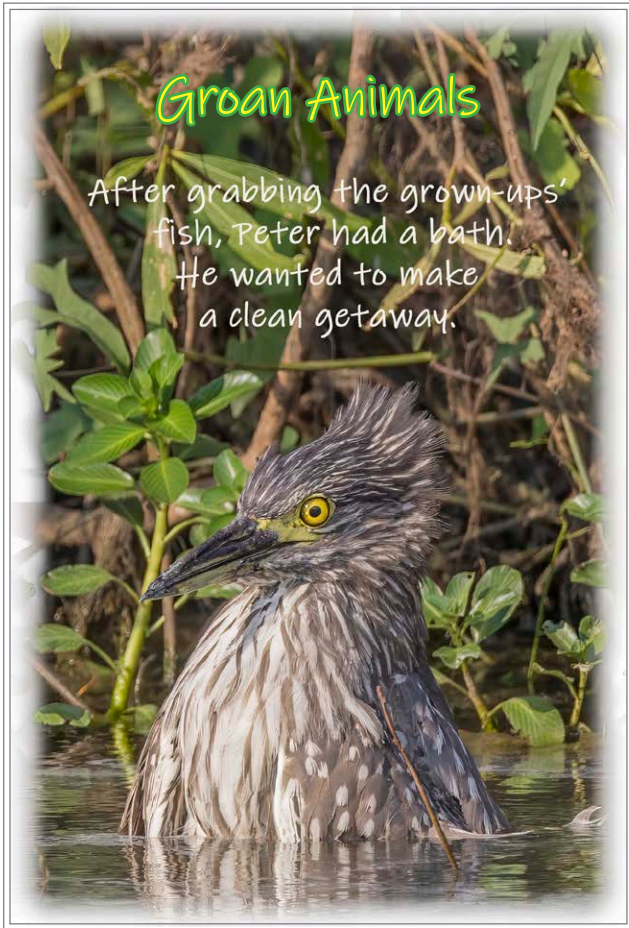
White-bellied sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), Yellow Water, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Wandering whistling duck (*Dendrocygna arcuata*), Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 2000



Magpie goose (*Anseranas semipalmata*), Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F14, ISO 800



Nankeen night-heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus australasia*)
immature
Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1 ISO 800

Groan Animals

After grabbing the grown-ups' fish, Peter had a bath. He wanted to make a clean getaway.

- A
albatross, shy 12 **NT**
- B
bee-eater, rainbow 67
blackbird, Eurasian 14
booby, brown 59, 60
brushturkey, Australian 5, 55
butterfly
green-banded line-blue 53
varied swordgrass brown 53
- C
clam
giant 63 **VU**
small giant 63 **NT**
cockatoo
red-tailed black 68
sulphur-crested 39
coral, staghorn 62
corella, little 40, 41
crocodile, saltwater 68, 71
currawong, black 21
- D
darter, Australasian 75
dingo 64
dragon, Boyd's forest 48
dragonfly
jewel flutterer 52
sapphire flutterer 52
yellow-striped flutterer 52
duck
wandering whistling- 73
- E
eagle
Tasmanian
wedge-tailed 24 **EN**
white-bellied sea- 72
echidna, short-beaked 25
- F
fairywren, superb 10
fish, staghorn damsel 62
flycatcher, shining 4
frogmouth, Papuan 48
frog, white-lipped tree 49
fur seal
Australian 12, 13
New Zealand 38
- G
galah 39
goose, magpie 73
goshawk, grey 15
gull
kelp 22
Pacific 23
silver 22
- H
honeyeater, black-headed 14
- I
ibis, Australian 64
- J
jacana, comb-crested 66
jellyfish 12



When the snake was measured at 3.142 metres long

Groan

K
 kangaroo
 eastern grey 2, 47
 forester 30, 31
 Kangaroo Island 35
 kestrel, nankeen 34
 kingfisher, azure 69
 kite
 black 67
 whistling 72
 koala 42, 43 **VU**
 kookaburra, laughing 9
 L
 lapwing, masked 7
 lizard, blotched blue-tongue
 32
 lorikeet
 rainbow 45
 red-collared 65
 N
 nativehen, Tasmanian 8
 noddy, common 61
 O
 oriole, green 72
 oystercatcher
 pied 16, 17
 sooty 22
 P
 pademelon, Tasmanian 29
 pardalote, forty-spotted 8, 14 **EN**
 parrot
 double-eyed fig 48
 swift 11 **CR**

pelican, Australian 22
 platypus, duck-billed 26, 27 **NT**
 plover, hooded 16 **VU**
 possum, common brushtail 28

Q

quoll, eastern 33 **EN**

R

rat-kangaroo, musky 54
 raven, forest 24
 riflebird, Victoria's 56, 57 **VU**
 robin
 dusky 20 **VU**
 grey-headed 20 **VU**
 pale-yellow 20

S

snake, common tree 50, 75
 spider, Swifts' ant-hunter 52
 swan, black 24

T

tern
 lesser crested 58
 sooty 58
 turnstone, ruddy 58

W

wagtail, willie 72
 wallaby
 agile 66
 Bennett's 28
 white 10
 wattlebird, yellow 6
 whipbird, eastern 54, 55
 wombat, common 18, 19

Groan Animals

Some Australians find all this talk of environmental catastrophe hard to swallow.



Australasian darter (*Anhinga novaehollandiae*) male with northern saratoga (*Scleropages jardinii*)
 Yellow Water, Kakadu National Park, NT
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F8, ISO 1600

Common tree snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulatus*), Daintree River, QLD
 Canon EOS R6 MkII, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 (focus stack)

Animals

Carol was pretty sure it was a Python



A Sharp Eye on **wildlife**
photography

Shy albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*)
off South Bruny Island, Tasmania
Canon EOS R6, 428mm, 1/2000 sec, F16, ISO 800



NT