



## Autumn Birding 2005

Our Autumn Birding programme this year was our most successful to date, with a record number of species and great views of most of the special birds of this area. 180 were sighted all up, an excellent tally in the quieter post-breeding period of mid-March.

The benefits of birding in this season are that conditions are typically very comfortable after a long summer and many of the migrants are still present, but because the birds are not as vocal it just takes a bit more work to track them down. An Albert's Lyrebird was spotted by the sharp eyes of Barry Bucholtz as it foraged in almost complete silence on the Python Rock track, while a juvenile Noisy Pitta cooperatively hopped along beside the Booyong Walk on the first morning without making a sound. Riflebirds were also inconspicuous, seen on occasion feeding quietly in the canopy, but at least the Logrunners were their usual boisterous selves. Open country birds showed well, with Spotted Quail-thrush appearing on the Kurrajong road on the last morning and a few Glossy Black-Cockatoos observed munching away on the abundant fruit that the Forest Oaks were carrying.

Our ventures into the valley were particularly successful, with the Kerry trip easily exceeding our 100-species target and also producing a new bird for the O'Reilly's list, the Black-chinned Honeyeater. The abundance of activity in the dry woodland of Nindooinbah was a highlight, with Speckled Warblers proving particularly numerous.

Nocturnal birds were the outstanding group this year, with all the expected 'mountain' species putting in an appearance. The Australian Owlet-nightjar near the start of the Tree-top Walk boardwalk must've known that Autumn Birding was going on and accordingly sat out beautifully at the entrance of his favourite hollow for much of the week. A Southern Boobook beckoned from the garden to anyone that could be bothered getting out of bed to see it, while a strangely subdued Marbled Frogmouth could not resist sneaking in above the group for a look. A sleepy White-throated Nightjar was undoubtedly glad to see us leave after being flushed several times in the dry forest, giving good views as he flew lazily around. But for many the highlight was the first good showing during Autumn Birding of that mysterious dark owl of the rainforest, the Sooty. We felt privileged to have the binoculars on such an impressive and rarely-seen bird as he glared down the spotlight beam.

Yes the birding was excellent in March 2005, but it was the great crew of Autumn Birding participants that really made the week so enjoyable. It was a bit like a mini-Bird Week reunion, including Dave Stewart's expert guidance and sound recording, and I hope to see the same faces back for AB2006 to see if we can have as much fun trying to crack the 200 mark!

Tim O'Reilly