



Autumn Birding 2006

Autumn Birding 2006 was a resounding success, not only for what was seen but also for the fun had looking. In fact a comment was made that it was a wonder any birds were seen at all with the fits of laughter that so regularly erupted. Fortunately the most raucous occasions were on the bus heading towards the birding locations, the chief catalyst being a range of comments and ludicrous claims made by AB newcomer John Patterson. But this isn't to say the team wasn't serious about finding birds, as a tally of 167 species will attest to; even the cryptic and secretive were no match for their collective sharp eyes, led by spotter-of-the-week, Bird Week stalwart Marie Higgs.

The Lamington National Park specialities lined up well for us, but some did make rather brief appearances. Albert's Lyrebird was seen twice for a total of 2.7 seconds, although we did receive reports from a few others that had great views; some luck is required at this time of the year. Likewise the post-breeding pittas were typically contradictory of their moniker, but despite their silence a couple were glimpsed moving inconspicuously through the forest. Paradise Riflebird was more cooperative though, and a number of females and begging young were seen as well as one spectacular adult male. Logrunners were plentiful, Rose Robins were seen several times and of course there were plenty of bowerbirds, even though the signature male Regents displayed their usual autumn vanity and tried their best not to be viewed while looking scruffy in moult. However avoiding detection while adorned in vivid gold and black is not easy, and thankfully they weren't completely successful.

Our local nocturnal species performed well, although they were not all seen at night; an Australian Owlet-nightjar could be seen roosting in the famous old tree 200 metres along the Border Track, recognisable despite looking more like a fluffy toy than a bird. A pair of Marbled Frogmouths showed well, while Tawnys were numerous on guideposts on the mountain road on the way home from our dinner at Canungra Valley Vineyards. A couple of Boobooks appeared without challenging us too much, while the specialist skills of Jack (and Gill!) Love assured Sooty Owl was added to the list.

Of the eucalypt species, one incredibly accommodating Spotted Quail-thrush posed on a nearby log, proudly displaying all angles, while the noisy begging of a young Glossy Black-Cockatoo led to their only sighting of the week. And finally our sojourns into the surrounding valleys produced great numbers of bush birds in the dry forests, including our ever-reliable Speckled Warblers and Weebills. Our waterbird tally was a little down though, due to the abundance of choice from good summer rains, but we ended up with a reasonable list including Australasian Shovellers on the first pond at the Coombabah Sewerage Farm (I swear we only looked from outside the fence!).

All in all a fantastic week was enjoyed by all participants, and much of the credit must go to our super-regulars (Dorothy, Marie, Sue and Rosemarie) for making all the newcomers so welcome and cultivating such a great atmosphere. I look forward to seeing (and hearing!) you all again next year.

Tim O'Reilly