

THE BIRDS OF SW AUSTRALIA 2018



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We reached Perth around lunchtime, transferred to a small prop job and were on our way to Albany. Here we picked up our hire car, did some shopping and decided to head out to Torndirrup because the Rock Parrot was supposedly found near the light house there. Well we didn't find the Rock parrot but had nice views of Western Spinebill, reacquainted ourselves with New Holland Honeyeater, and found a nice little party of Red-winged Fairywrens.

We then had a 70 kilometre drive through to Cheyne's Beach our base for the next four nights. Arriving half an hour before dusk, what did we find on our piece of lawn outside our chalet - well the Rock Parrots of course.

Avid birders from around the world come to Cheyne's Beach for three serious skulkers which are found in the thick coastal scrub. The techniques for seeing them differ with each bird. The Noisy Scrubbird (2 species in the family) is perhaps the easiest to see if you know what you are doing. It has a loud explosive call given often just a couple of metres from you but you will never see it if you try to chase it through the scrub. Instead you need to find one of several spots where its territory covers both sides of one of the sandy tracks giving access to the beach. Then you simply sit down and wait for it to run across the track. We took plastic chairs from the chalet and sat for 1and1/2 hours on our first attempt. The bird crossed the track an unbelievable 8 times in that period. It scoots across the track so quickly it is impossible to get a shot. Best I got was the hint of a tail disappearing into the scrub. We tried again on our last morning there and the bird crossed just once in an hour

So every day is different.

The Western Bristlebird we were lucky to find on our first morning. He hopped out on to the track where we followed him for 50 metres as he stopped to feed just metres in front of us before hopping on for another 10 metres before stopping again. The Western Whipbird is the third of the trio and in my view is the most difficult to find. We had three of his calls on the ipod and never heard anything close to them, but were lucky to bump into a local birder. We told her we were looking for the Whipbird and she said listen- its calling right there. – a little contact call not on the tape. 30 seconds later it hopped on a bush very briefly and I got a shot as it flew down to its mate buried in the scrub.

There is good birding round the caravan park. Carnaby's Cockatoos roost in the trees and make lots of noise every morning. Red Wattlebirds, White-breasted Robins and White-browed Scrubwrens are common, as too are Bronze and Common Brushwings. Brown Quail forage around the fringes at dawn and dusk. But the bird I was really keen to see- the Red-eared Firetail (similar to one





of our twinspace) did not arrive on our lawn until day 3 and then again on day 4 along with the Rock Parrots and two Western Rosellas. The Honeyeaters were almost exclusively New Holland and White-cheeked but we did find a Tawny-crowned. We also picked up two Southern Emuwrens early one morning.

But there were other birds we needed to find so on day 2 we headed out into the Stirling Range. We stopped at a couple of spots and tried for Shy Heathwren with no response at all.

The people at the Stirling Range retreat were very friendly and showed us the Australian Owllet-Nightjar- some twenty metres from reception and we birded their grounds for a couple of hours shivering in really low temperatures. We had both Regent and Elegant Parrots but the Blue-breasted Fairywrens were not around. We then headed on to Ongerup to visit the Malleefowl centre. Found a Purple-gaped Honeyeater and some Ringnecks there but missed the Purple-crowned Lorikeets. All in all a nice days' outing.

We relaxed on our last day at Cheyne's Beach having nothing left to chase- We watched the Southern Right Whales in the bay and watched the Pacific Gulls chasing a White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

before opening our last bottle of wine to toast our final day in Australia. It was back to Perth in the morning- another overnight stop and then on to Jakarta to start our Indonesian tour with Rockjumper

