

Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd Australia-wide: Berri, SA – Stockton, NSW – Mildura, Vic Ph. 1800-BIRDING Ph. +61402 738855 www.bellbirdtours.com birds@bellbirdtours.com

Unique and unforgettable nature experiences!

Best of Top End 7<sup>1/2</sup> - day birding tour I

24 Aug - 1 Sept 2024

One of Australia's top birding destinations, the Northern Territory's 'Top End' includes tantalizing destinations such as Kakadu National Park, Nitmiluk National Park, Pine Creek, Katherine and Jubara / Gregory National Park (Timber Creek Region). A raft of wonderful birds inhabit this scenic area, including the sought-after Gouldian Finch, the rare Hooded Parrot, the localized Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon, the elusive Red Goshawk; the stunning Rainbow Pitta and many other specialties. In addition, we'll look for Saltwater Crocodile, the endemic Short-eared Rock-wallaby and other

macropods. During the tour we can expect up to ten finch species including Gouldian, Masked and Star Finches and Yellow-rumped and Pictorella Mannikins; parrots such as the endemic Hooded Parrot, Northern Rosella, Red-winged Parrot, Cockatiel, Budgerigar, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo; pigeons including Chestnutquilled and White-quilled Rock-pigeon, Partridge Pigeon; quails and button-quails; a variety of Honeyeaters; and a raft of waterfowl and good chance of Black Bittern and Great-billed Heron. This is also a very good time of the year to see raptors. Join us for this exciting tour in Australia's Top End!

#### Tour stars & finishes: Darwin, NT

#### Scheduled departure & return dates:

- 24 Aug 1 Sept 2024
- other times by private tour (subject to availability)

Price: AU\$5,599 all-inclusive (discounts available).

Leader: Michael Greenshields / David Kowalick

Trip reports and photos of previous tours: http://www.bellbirdtours.com/reports

"I am just home from my Top End birding trip with David. This was possibly one of the best trips I have ever done. David's attention to detail and thorough professionalism was outstanding." Robert, UK

Questions? Contact BELLBIRD BIRDING TOURS:

- Freecall 1800-BIRDING
- Email birds@bellbirdtours.com

#### **READ ON FOR:**

- Further tour details
- Daily itinerary
- Booking information





Tour starts & finishes: Darwin, Northern Territory.

#### Scheduled departure and return dates:

Tour commences with dinner on 24 Aug 2024. Please arrive in Darwin on or before 24 Aug. Tour finishes late morning of 1 Sep 2024. Please depart on or after 1 Sep. Itinerary contains further details.

Leader: Top End expert bird guide David Kowalick.

**Difficulty:** Low/Medium/High/Excellent level of fitness required. The tour has a relaxed pace and walks are on varying surfaces, from paved forest roads to uneven, slippery trails with some short climbs. We generally walk slowly, with lots of stops. You can opt out of any challenging walks.

**What to bring:** Please travel light. Binoculars, camera, mobile phone, chargers, power adaptors (if you're an international guest), strong insect repellent, sunscreen, personal medications, travel umbrella, hat, water bottle, hand sanitizer. Sturdy footwear recommended. Scopes, super-telephoto lenses with tripods, and heavy suitcases are discouraged.

**Clothing:** Lightweight long pants, t-shirt and long-sleeved shirt, over the top of which you can wear layers that can be taken off as necessary, including a rain-proof jacket. Neat casual attire for dinners. Shorts and sandals or thongs (flip-flops) are acceptable for non-birding time.

Group size: Minimum 4, maximum 8 participants.

**Cost:** AU\$5,599 per person including accommodation and all meals, based on double or twin-share occupancy. Single occupancy surcharge of \$790. Not included: drinks, tips, personal expenses. Earlybird discount of \$99 for bookings received up to 12 months before departure date. Return-client discount may apply. Check our website for discounts T&C's.

Bookings: Online at http://www.bellbirdtours.com/bookings - see last page of this brochure.



# ITINERARY

## Best of Top End 7-day birding tour I

Day 0: 24 Aug '24. Arrival. Make your own way to our hotel where we meet for introductions and dinner tonight. Accommodation: **Club Tropical Resort, Lee Point, Darwin** (en-suite room; meals: D).

Day 1: 25 Aug '24. Darwin to Kakadu NP. Our guide will pick you up after an early breakfast. We'll visit Buffalo Creek, where, depending on the tide, we have a chance of glimpsing the elusive Chestnut Rail. Other mangrove species here include Black Butcherbird, Green-backed Gerygone, Yellow Whiteeye, Mangrove Whistler and Azure Kingfisher. On the nearby beach we may see the huge Beach Thick-knee. We'll visit one of the local reserves containing Monsoon Forest to search for Grey Whistler, Arafura Fantail, Little Shrikethrush, Green-backed Gerygone, Rose-crowned Fruit-dove and our main target Rainbow Pitta. In the Darwin Botanic Gardens we will be looking for Rufous and Barking Owls on their day roosts and then we'll drive to the Fogg Dam wetlands, originally a rice-growing scheme, but thousands of Magpie Geese put an end to that and the area is now a nature reserve. The reedbeds and lilycovered ponds are home to birds like Brolga, Magpie Geese, Black-necked Stork, Royal Spoonbill, Comb-crested Jacana, White-browed and Baillon's Crake, Green Pygmy-goose, Broad- billed and Paperbark Flycatchers, Tawny Grassbird, and Golden-headed Cisticola. In the adjacent woodlands we have a chance of Rainbow Pitta and Lemon-bellied Flycatcher.

Towards the end of the day we arrive in Kakadu, Australia's largest terrestrial national park. Covering almost 20,000 sq. km, it is a place of great ecological and biological diversity. The rock escarpments are a treasure trove of Aboriginal rock paintings. And the birdlife and wildlife is spectacular! Along the way we visit one of Kakadu's finest wetlands, Mamukala, a large billabong that can hold thousands of waterbirds. From the bird hide we can see waterfowl such as Magpie Goose, Radjah Shelduck, Hardhead, Plumed and Wandering Whistling-Duck, Green Pygmy-Goose and egrets and herons include Little, Intermediate and Great Egret, Nankeen Night-Heron and White-necked and Pied Heron. After checking in at our hotel in Jabiru we will head South toward Nawurlandja to bird among the sandstone cliffs and watch the sunset. Targets here are Banded Fruit-dove, Partridge Pigeon, Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon, White-lined Honeyeater, Sandstone Shrike-thrush and the Sandstone race of Helmeted Friarbird. **Crocodile Hotel, Jabiru** (en-suite room; meals: B, L, D)..

Day 2: 26 Aug '24. Kakadu NP. An early morning to head north to Bardedjilidji for an early walk, here we will be looking for Chestnut-quilled Rockpigeon, Sandstone Shrike-thrush and maybe a Rainbow Pitta or Rose-crowned Fruit-dove. After the walk our next spot is Ubirr for the rest of the morning. This spectacular view over the floodplain can also be a great place for Chestnutquilled Rock-pigeon and Sandstone Shrike-thrush. Rocky escarpments such as Ubirr not only have Aboriginal rock art paintings but are also a good place to



Rufous Owl, Yellow-rumped Mannikin, Buff-sided Robin © Peter Waanders, Bellbird Tours



see White-lined Honeyeater, Chestnut-quilled Rock Pigeon and Sandstone Shrike-thrush, along with the newly split Wilkin's (Eastern) Short-eared Rock Wallaby. If the tide is right we will check out Cahill crossing to see its famous crocodiles feeding together then it will be time to head back for lunch. After a break in the middle of the day we will head to Nourlangie to clean up any of the endemics we have missed, this is also a great spot to see some Aboriginal artwork. There are also Black and Little Red Flying-Foxes here, as well as many exotic lizards, colourful turtles, and unusual butterflies.

We spend the night again in the township of Jabiru, in the heart of Kakadu. Accommodation: **Crocodile Hotel, Jabiru** (en-suite room; meals: B, L, D).

Day 3: 27 Aug '24. Kakadu to Pine Creek. We start the day early with a cruise on the Yellow Waters, one of Australia's important areas for waterfowl. Watch the sunrise over the water teeming with up to 70 species including Plumed and Wandering Whistling-ducks, Pacific Black Duck, White-necked and White-faced Herons, Rufous Night-heron, Australasian Grebe, Australasian Darter, Glossy, Arafura Fantail, Buff-sided Robin and Paperbark Flycatcher. Azure Kingfisher can be found along the river and we should see Forest and Sacred Kingfishers. Some of the rarer birds we may encounter include Great-billed Heron, Little Kingfisher and Black Bittern. After the cruise we will head back to the lodge to check out and have lunch before heading south to Pine Creek and our accommodation for the night, along the way we have a chance for Australia's rarest bird of prey: the Red Goshawk, which nests in the area. The afternoon is spent around Pine Creek tracking down the endemic Hooded Parrot, along with Red-winged Parrot, Northern Rosella, Varied and Red-collared Lorikeet. We'll also encounter Little Corella, Sulphurcrested and Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. Accommodation: Pine Creek Railway Resort (en-suite room; meals: B, L, D).

**Day 4: 28 Aug '24. Pine Creek to Victoria River**. Some early morning birding around Pine Creek to pick up any parrots we may still need, then we head south for our first chance to see the spectacular Gouldian Finch, other birds in the area include Hooded Parrots, Long-Tailed Finch, Masked Finch, Double-barred Finch, Banded Honeyeater, Great Bowerbird and Brown Quail. Along the way we'll witness the amazing magnetic termite mounds. These > 3m/10ft tall mounds are dotted throughout the savannah-like landscape. We will also be on the lookout for Dollarbird and Silver-crowned Friarbird and further chances of the rare Red Goshawk. After a morning around the beautiful Edith Falls on the Katherine River in Nitmiluk National Park (Gouldian Finch, Hooded Parrot, Northern Rosella and a nice selection of honeyeaters) we head south to Katherine for lunch before heading west to the Victoria River Region. Along the way we will stop at a few waterholes to see what we can



White-quilled Rock-pigeon, Hooded Parrot, Comb-crested Jacana, Blacknecked Stork © Peter Waanders, Bellbird Tours

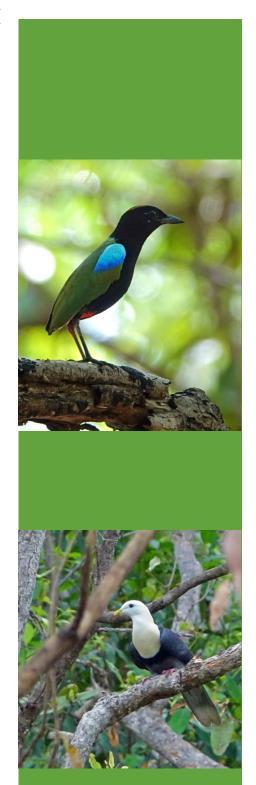


find: Gouldian Finch is high on the target list. The afternoon at Victoria River can be spent searching for Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens along the banks of the Victoria River or go looking for White-quilled Rock-pigeons which are found up on the escarpments. Accommodation: **Victoria River Road House** (ensuite room; meals: B, L, D).

**Day 5: 29 Aug '24. Victoria River to Timber Creek.** The morning will be spent around the roadhouse at Victoria River looking for Purple-crowned Fairy-wren, birds of prey and finches. Alternatively we may explore the escarpments of the Victoria River National Park which means a moderate hike with some steep sections. The rewards will (hopefully) be: White-quilled Rock Pigeon, Sandstone Shrikethrush, Little Woodswallow, Yellow-tinted and Black-chinned Honeyeater. Back around lunchtime and a short break then we'll head further west. The savannah-like landscape here is reminiscent of Africa, dotted with the odd-looking Boab trees. Arriving at Timber creek we start looking for the various finches that live in this habitat, such as Star, Double-barred, Zebra and Gouldian Finch, as well as Pictorella and Yellow-rumped Mannikin and with luck, Chestnut-backed Buttonquail. Accommodation: **Timber Creek Hotel** (en-suite cabins; meals: B, L, D).

**Day 6: 30 Aug '24. Timber Creek to Pine Creek.** This morning we will be up early again to bird another great area, where our targets will be Pictorella Mannikin, Budgerigar, Cockatiel and maybe another Gouldian Finch or two. We're sure to add more species to the list here, including Grey-headed and Grey-fronted Honeyeater. After a morning in the area we start heading back east and to our accommodation in Katherine for the night. After checking in we will bird one of the many sites around Katherine either looking for Chest-nut-backed Button-quail or head south to look for the rare Northern Crested Shrike-tit. There is also a nice selection of honeyeaters including Banded and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters. Accommodation: **Pine Tree Motel, Katherine** (en-suite room; meals: B, L, D).

**Day 7: 31 Aug '24**. **Pine Creek to Darwin**. Depending on what we are missing we will determine where to go this morning. Possibilities around Pine Creek include wetlands where Partridge Pigeon may come in to drink, while Olive-backed Orioles frequent the trees, Red-backed Kingfishers sit on the wires and various waterfowl forage on the wetlands although we should have picked up all waterbirds by now. Heading north we have further chances of birding rainforest patches looking for Buff-sided Robin, various honeyeaters, Silver-backed Butcherbird, Arafura Fantail and Varied Lorikeet. We'll bird our way back to picking up any birds that we may still need. Arriving back in Darwin by late-afternoon. Accommodation: Club Tropical Resort, Lee Point, Darwin (en-suite room; meals: B, L, D).



Rainbow Pitta, Banded Fruit-dove © Peter Waanders, Bellbird Tours



**Day 8: 1 Sep '24. Departure**. This morning we'll spend a few hours birding to pick up any species we still need. We'll finalise the bird list, and then it's time for goodbyes and drop everyone off at their respective hotels (own arrangements) in Darwin or the airport (meals: B). Please don't book flights departing before noon today.

### **Pre- and post-tour options:**

*This tour links seamlessly with our following* Comfortable Grasswren birding tour from Adelaide, SA (direct flight from Darwin), from 2-17 Sep 2024. *Check our website or contact us for details. You'll receive an instant discount!* 

If you would like us to arrange your stay in Darwin for one or more days before and/or after the tour, please tick the relevant box on the booking form. We can book this for you and add the cost to your tour price. We will be in contact to discuss options.

### **Price inclusions and exclusions:**

**Included:** All meals commencing with dinner on Day 0 and finishing with breakfast on Day 8, cold water, tea and/or coffee. Accommodation in private rooms, some with en-suites, although on some nights only basic rooms with shared facilities are available; upgrades to rooms with ensuites may be possible subject to availability. Transport using comfortable and reliable 4WD vehicle, expert guiding, any entry fees, taxes.

**Excluded:** Travel to & from departure and finish points, Pre- & post trip accommodation, any meals before dinner on Day 0 and after breakfast on Day 8, drinks except where provided, personal expenses, tips, insurance.

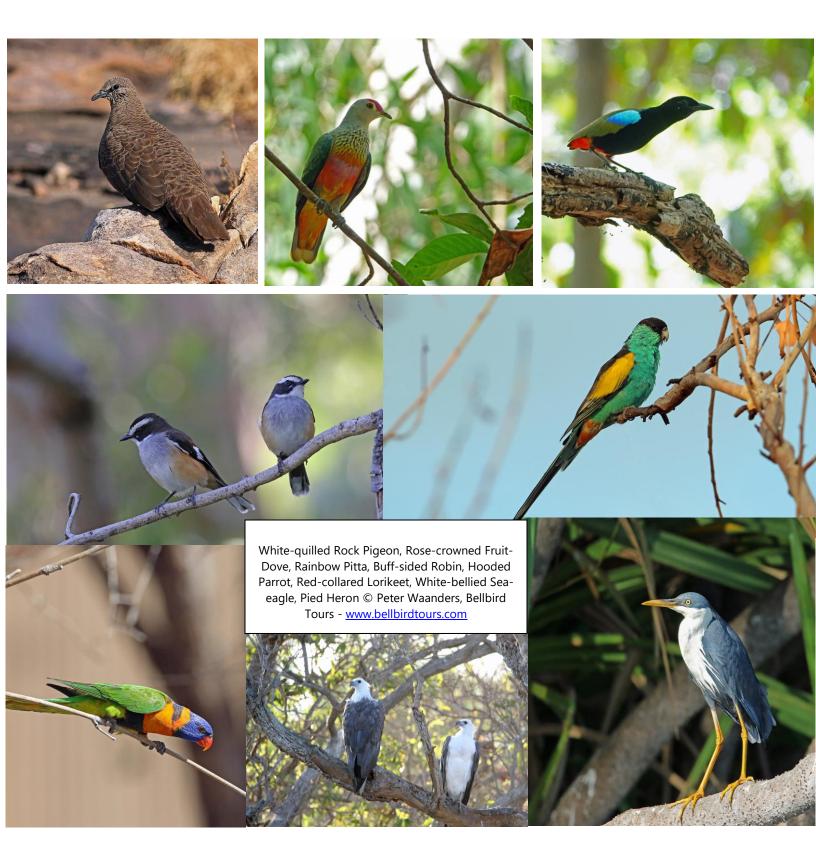
**Bookings:** Please book online: <u>http://www.bellbirdtours.com/bookings</u> - see the last page of of this brochure. We can also arrange your pre- and post-tour accommodation– please contact us for details.

### **Reports of previous tours:**

Reports of previous tours can be found here: <u>http://www.bellbirdtours.com/reports/</u>







# Possible species list

Emu	Banded Fruit-Dove	Straw-necked Ibis	Chestnut Rail	Common Sandpiper
Orange-footed Scrubfowl	Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove	Australian White Ibis	Buff-banded Rail	Grey-tailed Tattler
Brown Quail	Pied Imperial-Pigeon	Glossy Ibis	Baillon's Crake	Common Greenshank
King Quail	Tawny Frogmouth	Royal Spoonbill	Spotless Crake	Marsh Sandpiper
Magpie Goose	Spotted Nightjar	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	White-browed Crake	Common Redshank
Radjah Shelduck	Large-tailed Nightjar	Collared Sparrowhawk	Pale-vented Bush-hen	Wood Sandpiper
Black Swan	Australian Owlet-nightjar	Brown Goshawk	Black-tailed Native-hen	Ruddy Turnstone
Plumed Whistling-duck	Fork-tailed Swift	Grey Goshawk	Eurasian Coot	Asian Dowitcher
Wandering Whistling-duck	Wilson's Storm-Petrel	Red Goshawk	Australian Bustard	Great Knot
Freckled Duck	Streaked Shearwater	Pacific Baza	Bush Stone-curlew	Red Knot
Australian Wood Duck	Lesser Frigatebird	Swamp Harrier	Beach Stone-curlew	Sanderling
Hardhead	Great Frigatebird	Spotted Harrier	Pied Oystercatcher	Red-necked Stint
Pacific Black Duck	Masked Booby	Black Kite	Sooty Oystercatcher	Long-toed Stint
Grey Teal	Brown Booby	Square-tailed Kite	Black-winged Stilt	Pectoral Sandpiper
Chestnut Teal	Australian Darter	Whistling Kite	Red-necked Avocet	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Garganey	Little Pied Cormorant	Black-breasted Buzzard	Pacific Golden Plover	Curlew Sandpiper
Green Pygmy-goose	Little Black Cormorant	Brahminy Kite	Grey Plover	Broad-billed Sandpiper
Pink-eared Duck	Great Cormorant	Eastern Osprey	Little Ringed Plover	Ruff
Hoary-headed Grebe	Pied Cormorant	Black-shouldered Kite	Red-capped Plover	Red-necked Phalarope
Australasian Grebe	Australian Pelican	Letter-winged Kite	Lesser Sand Plover	Red-backed Button-quail
Great Crested Grebe	Black-necked Stork (Jabiru)	Little Eagle	Greater Sand Plover	Chestnut-backed Button-quail
Rock Dove	Great-billed Heron	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Oriental Plover	Red-chested Button-quail
Emerald Dove	Cattle Egret	Wedge-tailed Eagle	Black-fronted Dotterel	Little Button-quail
Common Bronzewing	Eastern Reef Egret	Brown Falcon	Red-kneed Dotterel	Australian Pratincole

Flock Bronzewing	Little Egret	Black Falcon	Masked Lapwing	Oriental Pratincole
Crested Pigeon	Intermediate Egret	Australian Hobby	Comb-crested Jacana	Little Tern
Spinifex Pigeon	Great Egret	Nankeen Kestrel	Snipe Sp.	Gull-billed Tern
Partridge Pigeon	White-faced Heron	Grey Falcon	Black-tailed Godwit	Caspian Tern
White-quilled Rock-Pigeon	White-necked Heron	Peregrine Falcon	Bar-tailed Godwit	Whiskered Tern
Chestnut-quilled Rock-Pigeon	Pied Heron	Brolga	Little Curlew	White-winged Black Tern
Diamond Dove	Nankeen Night Heron	Sarus Crane	Whimbrel	Common Tern
Peaceful Dove	Striated Heron	Dusky Moorhen	Eastern Curlew	Lesser Crested Tern
Bar-shouldered Dove	Black Bittern	Purple Swamphen	Terek Sandpiper	Crested Tern
Silver Gull	Blue-winged Kookaburra	Helmeted Friarbird	Arafura Fantail	Long-tailed Finch
Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo	Rainbow Bee-eater	Silver-crowned Friarbird	Grey Fantail	Masked Finch
Galah	Dollarbird	Little Friarbird	Mangrove Grey Fantail	Crimson Finch
Little Corella	Rainbow Pitta	Yellow-throated Miner	Northern Fantail	Star Finch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Black-tailed Treecreeper	Grey-crowned Babbler	Willie Wagtail	Painted Finch
Cockatiel	Great Bowerbird	Varied Sittella	Torresian Crow	Gouldian Finch
Rainbow Lorikeet	Purple-crowned Fairy-wren	Ground Cuckoo-shrike	Broad-billed Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Mannikin
Varied Lorikeet	Red-backed Fairy-wren	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Leaden Flycatcher	Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
Red-winged Parrot	Variegated Fairy-wren	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	Shining Flycatcher	Pictorella Mannikin
Northern Rosella	White-throated Grasswren	Cicadabird	Restless Flycatcher	Australasian Pipit
Hooded Parrot	Weebill	White-winged Triller	Magpie-lark	Eastern Yellow Wagtail
Budgerigar	Mangrove Gerygone	Varied Triller	Apostlebird	Grey Wagtail
Pheasant Coucal	Large-billed Gerygone	Crested Shrike-tit	Jacky Winter	
Eastern Koel	Green-backed Gerygone	Mangrove Golden Whistler	Lemon-bellied Flycatcher	
Channel-billed Cuckoo	White-throated Gerygone	Grey Whistler	Red-capped Robin	

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Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo	Red-browed Pardalote	Rufous Whistler	Hooded Robin
Black-eared Cuckoo	Striated Pardalote	White-breasted Whistler	Mangrove Robin
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	White-lined Honeyeater	Little Shrike-thrush	Buff-sided Robin
Pallid Cuckoo	Singing Honeyeater	Sandstone Shrike-thrush	Horsfield's Bushlark
Brush Cuckoo	White-gaped Honeyeater	Grey Shrike-thrush	Zitting Cisticola
Oriental Cuckoo	Yellow-tinted Honeyeater	Australasian Figbird	Golden-headed Cisticola
Rufous Owl	Bar-breasted Honeyeater	Yellow Oriole	Australian Reed Warbler
Barking Owl	Rufous-banded Honeyeater	Olive-backed Oriole	Tawny Grassbird
Southern Boobook	Rufous-throated Honeyeater	White-breasted Woodswallow	Brown Songlark
Masked Owl	Crimson Chat	Masked Woodswallow	Rufous Songlark
Eastern Barn Owl	Yellow Chat	White-browed Woodswallow	Yellow White-eye
Eastern Grass Owl	Dusky Honeyeater	Black-faced Woodswallow	Barn Swallow
Little Kingfisher	Red-headed Honeyeater	Little Woodswallow	Red-rumped Swallow
Azure Kingfisher	Banded Honeyeater	Black Butcherbird	Welcome Swallow
Forest Kingfisher	Brown Honeyeater	Grey Butcherbird	Fairy Martin
Red-backed Kingfisher	Black-chinned Honeyeater	Pied Butcherbird	Tree Martin
Sacred Kingfisher	White-throated Honeyeater	Australian Magpie	Mistletoebird
Collared Kingfisher	Blue-faced Honeyeater	Spangled Drongo	Double-barred Finch

**Disclaimers:** (1) itinerary may be modified slightly due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors; (2) until we've received your final payment, tour price may be subject to adjustment in the event of significant cost increases in ground arrangements. See the terms and conditions posted on our website

# Steps to book this tour:

#### Step 1: Essential reading

- Download, save and read the itinerary (this document)
- Read our <u>terms and conditions</u> and the <u>release of liability waiver</u> (both can be found on <u>https://www.bellbirdtours.com/terms-and-conditions</u>).
- Read our <u>health & safety information</u> page (<u>https://bellbirdtours.com/health-and-safety/</u>)

#### Step 2: Online booking

Head over to our secure online booking page: <u>https://www.bellbirdtours.com/bookings</u>. (Should you prefer a paper booking form, this can be downloaded from there).

#### Step 3: Pay the deposit

To secure your seat, a deposit of 20% of the tour price is required at the time of booking. Full payment is due 60 days prior to the departure date. Until full payment has been received, Bellbird Tours reserves the right to change the tour price (eg due to changing fuel prices). Payment options:

Domestic electronic funds transfer: please send funds to the following bank account:

- bank: Australia & New Zealand Bank (ANZ), 112 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000
- account name: Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd
- Branch No. (BSB) 015-140 Account No. 206136528
  - Please use your *surname* as the booking reference.

*Visa, Mastercard & Google Pay*: through Pin Payments (an easy, secure online payment system). They charge us a fee of ~3%, which we pass on to you. Please contact us to use this option, and we'll email you a secure payment link.

International electronic funds transfer: please send funds in Australian Dollars (+ bank charges or AU\$20 bank transaction fee, see notes below) to the following bank account:

- international swift code: anzbau3m (no IBAN codes are used in Australia)
- bank: Australia & New Zealand Bank (ANZ), 112 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000
- account name: Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd
- Branch No. (BSB) 015-140 Account No. 206136528
  - If possible, please use your *surname* as the booking reference.
  - If you are asked to provide our physical address, this is: 101 Chilton Road, Berri, SA 5343, Australia.
  - Please specify AU\$ as the recipient's currency, and the correct amount. Select the option for you to incur any charges at *both* ends; if no such option exists, please add AU\$20 to cover the bank fee at the recipient's end.

Any discrepancy between the amount payable and amount received will be added to the final balance, or payable in cash at the start of the tour. Prices and fees are not negotiable.

#### Step 4: You're done!

Sit back and wait for your booking confirmation to arrive (24-48 hrs). Meanwhile, should you have any questions, please contact us via: <u>https://www.bellbirdtours.com/about-us/</u>.