



Bellbird

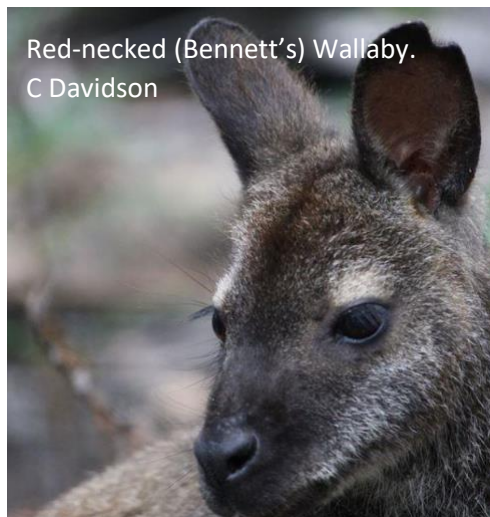
BIRDING, WILDLIFE & PHOTO TOURS

Trip Report

Bellbird tour of southern Tasmania

9–13 March 2023

by Dr Andrew Hingston



Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby.
C Davidson

Participants were collected from their accommodation on the morning of Thursday 9th March 2023. First stop was a visit to a reserve in Hobart where several endemic species were seen, including Tasmanian native hen, yellow-throated honeyeater, yellow wattlebird, and dusky robin. A black currawong was heard in the distance but did not show itself. Despite this, we did see many grey currawongs at close range. Other noteworthy birds seen included a juvenile shining bronze-cuckoo, spotted pardalotes, striated pardalotes, forest ravens, and a female satin flycatcher. Participants were also delighted to see their first macropods here, in the form of numerous rufous-bellied pademelons and a red-necked (Bennett's) wallaby.

We then travelled south, bought lunch at a bakery, and headed to a park on the D'Entrecasteaux Channel for a picnic. Here we saw our first green

rosella and black-headed honeyeaters, along with Australian pelicans, black-faced cormorants, common bronzewings, a juvenile fan-tailed cuckoo, musk lorikeets, and a female crescent honeyeater. We crossed the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island on the ferry and had a brief stop near the Bruny Island Neck where we spotted a flock of 12 blue-winged parrots, and saw a juvenile collared sparrowhawk make a mess of an attempt to capture one of a flock of silvereyes. We then drove to Inala reserve where participants could settle into their cottage accommodation in the reserve, before heading out to dinner. While driving to dinner a white morph of the red-necked wallaby was spotted in a paddock.



Day 2 (Friday 10th March 2023) began with exploring the reserve. Within a few metres of their accommodation, participants saw a large flock of black-headed honeyeaters, a forty-spotted pardalote, green rosellas, dusky robins, yellow-throated honeyeater, tasmanian native hens, and rufous-bellied pademelons. While on the pardalote viewing platform, the guide told participants about the threats faced by the forty-spotted pardalote and what is being done to try to save this endangered species from extinction. Walking further into the reserve, we had our only sightings of strong-billed honeyeaters, grey goshawks and brown goshawks for the tour, our first view of yellow-tailed black cockatoos, and again heard the black currawong which remained hidden from view. After lunch we drove to another part of south Bruny to see the nationally vulnerable hooded dotterel and learn of the threats faced by this beach-nesting species. Then, for

contrast, we walked through wet eucalypt forest where we came upon a mixed feeding flock of Tasmanian scrubwrens, Tasmanian thornbills, silvereyes, a golden whistler and a grey shrike-thrush. On this walk we also saw our first Bassian thrushes. Upon returning to our accommodation in the late afternoon, we spotted a female tiger snake about 1 m long.

After dinner we went on a night tour to see thousands of short-tailed shearwaters returning to their burrows at dusk to feed their nestlings, and to learn about the amazing life cycle of this long-distance migrant. After darkness fell, we drove on in search of mammals, and saw lots of eastern quolls of both colour morphs, even more brush-tailed possums including the golden morph, another white morph of the red-necked wallaby, and a long-nosed potoroo.



The next morning, Saturday 11th March 2023, was spent getting better views of forty-spotted pardalotes, and other species that inhabit this area including our first view of a pink robin (a female) and another view of that tiger snake. We then left the area and had a picnic lunch, and drove to the lower slopes of Kunanyi / Mt Wellington in search of the remaining endemic birds that we had not yet seen; scrubtit and black currawong. It was not long before we heard a black currawong and came upon a large group of Tasmanian scrubwrens which were joined by a pair of scrubtits. Many more scrubwrens, another pair of scrubtits, several male pink robins, Tasmanian thornbills, and a Bassian thrush were spotted as we walked, but the black currawong remained hidden from view. Returning to the car via a park for a toilet

stop, the guide spotted two currawongs on the ground, but all were disappointed when it was realised that they were grey currawongs rather than the missing endemic. We then drove along the Derwent River, with its vast numbers of black swans, to New Norfolk for the night.

On the fourth day of the tour (Sunday 12 March 2023), we headed off towards Mt Field National Park. We stopped beside a river to look for platypus without success, although we were rewarded with another view of the yellow-throated honeyeater. Reaching the National Park, we headed out for a morning walk and soon heard another black currawong. Alas, it could not be seen. But we did manage great views of pink robins, yellow-tailed black cockatoos, and a Bassian thrush. As we emerged from the forest at the Visitor Centre, we saw a white-bellied sea-eagle which disappeared very quickly when two wedge-tailed eagles appeared. After lunch we drove to higher altitudes in search of the black currawong and were finally rewarded with views of the last endemic. At Lake Dobson we explored an area of subalpine vegetation, to the fascination of participants. We then drove back beside the Derwent River to Hobart for the night.



On our final day (Monday 13 March 2023) we flew over Bruny

Island and along Tasmania's south coast to Melaleuca, where we soon came upon our first orange-bellied parrots. Although critically endangered, several large flocks of up to 50 individuals were seen. We then walked around in



Orange-bellied Parrot
C Magee

search of other birds that inhabit this area, being rewarded with views of a yellow-throated honeyeater licking sap from a tea-tree within a metre of us, flocks of beautiful firetails, two swamp harriers, crescent honeyeaters, and more dusky robins and Tasmanian thornbills. After lunch, we continued searching for other birds that inhabit this area, soon being rewarded with views of striated fieldwrens. Eventually, we came upon a ground parrot which flew from the guide past the others in the group and landed in an open area nearby. Here it was seen again before it flew away. We then flew back over the south-west wilderness, with views of mountains, tarns and waterfalls, before driving back to Hobart to complete the tour.

In five days, we saw 76 species of birds including all 12 Tasmanian endemics, and one breeding endemic. Highlights for the participants were the ground parrot, orange-bellied parrot, and yellow-tailed black cockatoo. Species seen on every day of the tour, included yellow-throated honeyeater, Tasmanian native hen, black swan, masked lapwing, and forest raven.