

Experience the Wild TEN GRASSFINCH TOUR - Trip Report Day 1 Monday 22nd September, 2014



Sunday night pre-tour dinner at Stokes Hill Wharf. Left to right - Mike Jarvis (guide), Barry Venables, Phil Straw, Margaret Piefke, Brian Speechley, Paddy Donkin, Donald Findlater. Phil was not a participant on the tour, Neil Brown arrived in the evening so was not at the dinner. Photo taken by Jenny Jarvis.

DAY 1 - DARWIN to PINE CREEK

7.00am Pick up from Darwin accommodation

We started off at East Point and walked the Monsoon Forest track looking for Rainbow Pitta and other monsoon forest specialists. After great views of no fewer than five Rose-crowned Fruit-doves, all had good views of a Rainbow Pitta.



At Sandy Creek we had our first views of Long-tailed Finches and some of the group saw Crimson Finches as well.

We had a picnic lunch at McMinn's Lagoon where most of the likely wetland birds were present. A large group of participants from the Shorebird conference also arrived, ensuring that no feathered species in the vicinity could go unnoticed.

Then we drove down to Pine Creek and managed to find a Red-backed Kingfisher on powerlines in the town. The sports ground yielded one of the highlights for the day which was a pair of Hooded Parrots feeding on the grass. *Finch count 1/10*

Accommodation at Pine Creek Hotel and dinner at the Railway Resort.



Date: Monday, 22 September 2014 Location: East Point Reserve Lemon-bellied Flyrobin *Microeca flavigaster* Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii* Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela* White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina papuensis* Northern Fantail *Rhipidura rufiventris* Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta* Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra*

Date: Monday, 22 September 2014 Location: East Point Reserve continued ... Australian White Ibis Threskiornis molucca Forest Kingfisher Todiramphus macleavii Orange-footed Scrubfowl Megapodius reinwardt Magpie-lark Grallina cyanoleuca Shining Flycatcher Myiagra alecto Australasian Figbird Sphecotheres vieilloti Yellow Oriole Oriolus flavocinctus Bar-shouldered Dove Geopelia humeralis Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Pied Imperial-Pigeon Ducula bicolor Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove Ptilinopus regina Rainbow Pitta Pitta iris Masked Lapwing Vanellus miles Common Greenshank Tringa nebularia Grey-tailed Tattler Tringa brevipes Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus Bush Stone-curlew Burhinus grallarius Green-backed Gerygone Gerygone chloronota Large-billed Gerygone Gerygone magnirostris Grey Whistler Pachycephala simplex

Location: Sandy Creek

Torresian Crow Corvus orru White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike Coracina papuensis White-winged Triller Lalage sueurii Brown Honeyeater Lichmera indistincta Rufous-throated Honeyeater Conopophila rufogularis White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor White-throated Honeyeater Melithreptus albogularis Paperbark Flycatcher Myiagra nana Red-collared Lorikeet Trichoglossus rubritorquis Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos Tree Martin Petrochelidon nigricans Long-tailed Finch Poephila acuticauda

Location: McMinn's Lagoon

Australasian Darter Anhinga novaehollandiae Green Pygmy-goose Nettapus pulchellus Pacific Black Duck Anas superciliosa Plumed Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna eytoni Radjah Shelduck Tadorna radjah Wandering Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna arcuata Magpie Goose Anseranas semipalmata Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybrida Cattle Egret Ardea ibis Eastern Great Egret Ardea modesta Intermediate Egret Ardea intermedia Pied Heron Egretta picata Comb-crested Jacana Irediparra gallinacea Little Black Cormorant Phalacrocorax sulcirostris Little Pied Cormorant Microcarbo melanoleucos Magpie-lark Grallina cyanoleuca Buff-banded Rail Gallirallus philippensis Dollarbird Eurystomus orientalis Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus

Location: Pine Creek

Great Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis Little Corella Cacatua sanguinea Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis White-throated Honeyeater Melithreptus albogularis Straw-necked Ibis Threskiornis spinicollis Red-backed Kingfisher Todiramphus pyrrhopygius Magpie-lark Grallina cyanoleuca Paperbark Flycatcher Myiagra nana Hooded Parrot Psephotus dissimilis Red-winged Parrot Aprosmictus erythropterus Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Masked Lapwing Vanellus miles White-breasted Woodswallow Artamus leucorynchus



Experience the Wild TEN GRASSFINCH TOUR - Trip Report Day 2 Tuesday 23rd September, 2014

DAY 2 - PINE CREEK to KATHERINE - Breakfast with Gouldians

6.00am We checked out early from our accommodation at Pine Creek and head down to Edith Falls road. Enjoyed a bush breakfast while watching birds coming to drink from a creek. We saw Gouldians including a Red-headed male, Long-tailed, Double-barred, Masked and Crimson Finches as well as Hooded Parrots. At Edith Falls we saw the only Bar-breasted Honeyeater for the trip and had lunch at Katherine at the Hot Springs and saw Apostlebirds and Rufous-throated Honeyeaters.

After lunch we went to Donkey Camp Weir, hoping to see a Great-billed Heron. No GBH but first Banded Honeyeaters for the trip. Then we continued on to Nitmiluk where we saw Great Bowerbirds and a bower. Great Bowerbirds were one of the species we saw everyday.



Accommodation at the Beagle Motor Inn at Katherine and dinner at the Savannah Restaurant. Bird call back at our accommodation... Highlights for the day - the Gouldians at Edith Falls Road!! **Finch count - 5/10**



Date: Tuesday, 23 September 2014 Location: Edith Falls Road

Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus Great Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis Pheasant Coucal Centropus phasianinus Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae Brown Goshawk Accipiter fasciatus White-faced Heron Egretta novaehollandiae Blue-winged Kookaburra Dacelo leachii Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra rubecula Paperbark Flycatcher Myiagra nana Hooded Parrot Psephotus dissimilis Northern Rosella Platycercus venustus Bar-shouldered Dove Geopelia humeralis Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Weebill Smicrornis brevirostris White-throated Gerygone Gerygone albogularis Heard Crimson Finch Neochmia phaeton

Date: Tuesday, 23 September 2014 Location: Edith Falls Road *continued...*

Double-barred Finch Taeniopygia bichenovii Gouldian Finch Erythrura gouldiae Masked Finch Poephila personata Rufous Whistler Pachycephala rufiventris Black-faced Woodswallow Artamus cinereus

Location: Edith Falls

Great Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis Torresian Crow Corvus orru Spangled Drongo Dicrurus bracteatus Willie Wagtail Rhipidura leucophrys Black Kite Milvus migrans Collared Sparrowhawk Accipiter cirrocephalus Bar-breasted Honeyeater Ramsayornis fasciatus Brown Honeyeater Lichmera indistincta Dusky Honeyeater Myzomela obscura White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor White-throated Honeyeater Melithreptus albogularis Forest Kingfisher Todiramphus macleayii Olive-backed Oriole Oriolus sagittatus Red-collared Lorikeet Trichoglossus rubritorquis

Location: Katherine Hot Springs

Pied Butcherbird Cracticus nigrogularis Great Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis Mistletoebird Dicaeum hirundinaceum Black Kite Milvus migrans Blue-faced Honeyeater Entomyzon cyanotis Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis Rufous-throated Honeyeater Conopophila rufogularis Silver-crowned Friarbird Philemon argenticeps Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra rubecula Magpie-lark Grallina cyanoleuca Red-collared Lorikeet Trichoglossus rubritorquis Rufous Whistler Pachycephala rufiventris Apostlebird Struthidea cinerea

Location: Donkey Camp Weir

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus banksii Pheasant Coucal Centropus phasianinus Black Kite Milvus migrans White-faced Heron Egretta novaehollandiae Banded Honeyeater Cissomela pectoralis Blue-faced Honeyeater Entomyzon cyanotis Dusky Honeyeater Myzomela obscura Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis Rufous-throated Honeyeater Conopophila rufogularis Silver-crowned Friarbird Philemon argenticeps White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Australian White Ibis Threskiornis molucca Straw-necked Ibis Threskiornis spinicollis Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra rubecula Shining Flycatcher Myiagra alecto Red-collared Lorikeet Trichoglossus rubritorquis Black-fronted Dotterel Elseyornis melanops Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos

Location: Nitmiluk Gorge

Great Bowerbird *Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis* Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Blue-faced Honeyeater *Entomyzon cyanotis* Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*



Experience the Wild TEN GRASSFINCH TOUR - Trip Report Day 3 Wednesday 24th September, 2014

DAY 3 - KATHERINE to TIMBER CREEK - real outback country!

We departed early from Katherine along the Victoria Highway and had a bush breakfast at Chainman Creek. After breakfast we continued towards Timber Creek, stopping at King River and other likely birding locations along the way. One of the highlights was a fully grown Frilled Lizard standing in the shade of the TC 220km marker post.

We had lunch at the Victoria River Access, near Victoria River Roadhouse. Noteworthy sighting here was a Black Bittern.

After checking in at our accommodation at Wirib Tourism Park, Timber Creek we continued on to the Timber Creek Airfield where we saw flocks of probably 300+ finches. These include Yellow-rumped, Chestnutbreasted and Pictorella Mannikins and Star Finches. We called in briefly to Policeman's Point on the way back to Timber Creek and more finches, honeyeaters and two Australian Bustards.

Bill and Julie put on a very nice dinner and dessert for us back at Wirib Tourist Park. *Finch count - 9/10*



L to r: Brian, Neil, Margaret, Mike, Barry, Paddy and Don, after experiencing the finch flock at Timber Creek airfield

Neil and Paddy photographing finches feeding in the grass



Date: Wednesday, 24 September 2014 **Location:** Chainman Creek

Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus Pied Butcherbird Cracticus nigrogularis Golden-headed Cisticola Cisticola exilis Galah Eolophus roseicapillus Torresian Crow Corvus orru Varied Triller Lalage leucomela White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus Banded Honeyeater Cissomela pectoralis Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor White-throated Honeyeater Melithreptus albogularis Bar-shouldered Dove Geopelia humeralis Common Bronzewing Phaps chalcoptera Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Dollarbird Eurystomus orientalis

Black-faced Woodswallow Artamus cinereus

Date: Wednesday, 24 September 2014 continued...

Location: King River

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae White-faced Heron Egretta novaehollandiae Silver-crowned Friarbird Philemon argenticeps Red-collared Lorikeet Trichoglossus rubritorquis Common Bronzewing Phaps chalcoptera Grey-crowned Babbler Pomatostomus temporalis Black-faced Woodswallow Artamus cinereus

Location: Vic Highway, Flemington Yard Floodway

Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis* Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii* Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Red-backed Fairy-wren *Malurus melanocephalus* Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum* Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus* Banded Honeyeater *Cissomela pectoralis* Brown Honeyeater *Lichmera indistincta* Yellow-tinted Honeyeater *Lichenostomus flavescens* Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii* Red-winged Parrot *Aprosmictus erythropterus* Long-tailed Finch *Poephila acuticauda*

Location: Victoria Highway

Pied Butcherbird *Cracticus nigrogularis* Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus* Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis* Yellow-throated Miner *Manorina flavigula* Red-collared Lorikeet *Trichoglossus rubritorquis*

Frilled Lizard Chlamydosaurus kingii in shade of TC 220km marker

Location: Victoria River Access

Pheasant Coucal Centropus phasianinus Black Bittern Ixobrychus flavicollis Eastern Great Egret Ardea modesta Intermediate Egret Ardea intermedia Black-necked Stork Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus

Location: Timber Creek Airfield

Golden-headed Cisticola Cisticola exilis White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Horsfield's Bushlark Mirafra javanica Diamond Dove Geopelia cuneata Chestnut-breasted Mannikin Lonchura castaneothorax Masked Finch Poephila personata Pictorella Mannikin Heteromunia pectoralis Star Finch Neochmia ruficauda Yellow-rumped Mannikin Lonchura flaviprymna Black-faced Woodswallow Artamus cinereus

Location: Policeman's Point

Australasian Darter Anhinga novaehollandiae Australian Bustard Ardeotis australis Little Corella Cacatua sanguinea Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus banksii Red-backed Fairy-wren Malurus melanocephalus Intermediate Egret Ardea intermedia Banded Honeyeater Cissomela pectoralis Dusky Honeyeater Myzomela obscura Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Crested Pigeon Ocyphaps lophotes Diamond Dove Geopelia cuneata Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Black-necked Stork Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus Crimson Finch Neochmia phaeton Double-barred Finch Taeniopygia bichenovii



Experience the Wild TEN GRASSFINCH TOUR - Trip Report

Day 4 Thursday 25th September, 2014

DAY 4 - TIMBER CREEK to KATHERINE

We had a bush breakfast at Policeman's Point, four kilometres from Timber Creek, highlight here was the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren. After exploring the area we went back to the airfield, no finches this time but great views of Red-backed Fairywrens and Black-faced Woodswallows that practically came to our feet! On the nearby Escarpment Lookout we saw Black-tailed Treecreeper and Grey-fronted Honeyeaters. We heard Sandstone Shrikethrush but didn't see any.



Black-faced Woodswallow



We had lunch at the Victoria River Roadhouse and walked over the old bridge. No sign of Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens, no doubt the heat of the day made it unlikely to see them.

We continued straight through to Katherine, staying again at the Beagle Motor Inn and ate at the Escarpment Restaurant. We did the bird call back at the Beagle. Despite searching nearby powerlines around Katherine where I have seen them before, still no Zebra Finches. This is the one species all in the group have already seen in the wild, so we are all happy with the **9/10 final tally for finch sightings**.



Date: Thursday, 25 September 2014 Location: Policeman's Point Australasian Darter Anhinga novaehollandiae Buff-sided Robin Poecilodryas cerviniventris seen by Brian Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus Great Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus nuchalis Golden-headed Cisticola Cisticola exilis Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Calyptorhynchus banksii Brolga Grus rubicunda Torresian Crow Corvus orru Purple-crowned Fairy-wren Malurus coronatus Whistling Kite Haliastur sphenurus Banded Honeyeater Cissomela pectoralis Brown Honeyeater Lichmera indistincta White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Yellow-tinted Honeyeater Lichenostomus flavescens Blue-winged Kookaburra Dacelo leachii Little Pied Cormorant Microcarbo melanoleucos Pied Cormorant Phalacrocorax varius Red-winged Parrot Aprosmictus erythropterus Australian Pelican Pelecanus conspicillatus Bar-shouldered Dove Geopelia humeralis Crested Pigeon Ocyphaps lophotes Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Fairy Martin Petrochelidon ariel Weebill Smicrornis brevirostris Chestnut-breasted Mannikin Lonchura castaneothorax Crimson Finch Neochmia phaeton Double-barred Finch Taeniopygia bichenovii Masked Finch Poephila personata Rufous Whistler Pachycephala rufiventris

Location: Timber Creek Airfield

Golden-headed Cisticola Cisticola exilis Red-backed Fairy-wren Malurus melanocephalus Yellow-tinted Honeyeater Lichenostomus flavescens Black-faced Woodswallow Artamus cinereus

Location: Timber Creek Escarpment Lookout Black-tailed Treecreeper Climacteris melanura

Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus Grey-fronted Honeyeater Lichenostomus plumulus White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Grey-crowned Babbler Pomatostomus temporalis

Location: Victoria River Roadhouse Torresian Crow *Corvus orru* Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta* Little Friarbird *Philemon citreogularis* Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca* Red-collared Lorikeet *Trichoglossus rubritorquis* Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* Fairy Martin *Petrochelidon ariel*





Experience the Wild TEN GRASSFINCH TOUR - Trip Report Day 5 Friday 26th September, 2014

DAY 5 - KATHERINE to DARWIN

6.30am bush breakfast at Gouldian spot on Edith Falls Road. We were treated to some more views of Gouldians, Masked, Long-tailed, Double-barred and Crimson Finches. Hooded Parrots and Cockatiels flew over and a pair of Brown Goshawks were tending to a nest.



Instead of returning to Darwin via Litchfield National Park we went via the Marrakai track and Arnhem Highway in the hopes of seeing some more target species. On the Marrakai we saw a Black-breasted Buzzard. At our lunch location on the bank of the Margaret River we heard but did not see a Buff-sided Robin. At the lagoon near the Adelaide River we saw a 2.5m Johnstone's Crocodile. At the Adelaide River Bridge on Arnhem Highway we saw a female Mangrove Golden Whistler and Broad-billed Flycatcher.

After an unsuccessful search for a reported Rufous Owl at McMinn's Lagoon we returned to Darwin.

By my reckoning we saw a total of 139 species and heard but did not see an additional 7 species.



Our little group had a great time together, quickly settling into a great spirit of cameraderie that contributed greatly to the success and enjoyment of the trip by all.

'Hickey's Beach' Timber Creek - a manmade waterhole for birdwatching

Date: Friday, 26 September 2014

Location: Edith Falls Road Rainbow Bee-eater Merops ornatus Cockatiel Nymphicus hollandicus Galah Eolophus roseicapillus Pheasant Coucal Centropus phasianinus Black Kite Milvus migrans Brown Goshawk Accipiter fasciatus White-necked Heron Ardea pacifica Blue-faced Honeyeater Entomyzon cyanotis Little Friarbird Philemon citreogularis White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor Little Pied Cormorant Microcarbo melanoleucos Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra rubecula Magpie-lark Grallina cyanoleuca Paperbark Flycatcher Myjagra nana Hooded Parrot Psephotus dissimilis Northern Rosella Platycercus venustus Varied Lorikeet Psitteuteles versicolor Bar-shouldered Dove Geopelia humeralis Peaceful Dove Geopelia striata Crimson Finch Neochmia phaeton Double-barred Finch Taeniopygia bichenovii Gouldian Finch Erythrura gouldiae Long-tailed Finch Poephila acuticauda Masked Finch Poephila personata Grey Shrike-thrush Colluricincla harmonica Rufous Whistler Pachycephala rufiventris White-breasted Woodswallow Artamus leucorynchus

Location: Marrakai Track

Australasian Darter Anhinga novaehollandiae Buff-sided Robin Poecilodryas cerviniventris Heard Only Lemon-bellied Flycatcher Microeca flavigaster Black Kite Milvus migrans Black-breasted Buzzard Hamirostra melanosternon Whistling Kite Haliastur sphenurus Eastern Great Egret Ardea modesta Intermediate Egret Ardea intermedia White-gaped Honeyeater Lichenostomus unicolor White-throated Honeyeater Melithreptus albogularis Australian White Ibis Threskiornis molucca Straw-necked Ibis Threskiornis spinicollis Blue-winged Kookaburra Dacelo leachii Forest Kingfisher Todiramphus macleayii Little Pied Cormorant Microcarbo melanoleucos Leaden Flycatcher Myiagra rubecula Green-backed Gerygone Gerygone chloronota

Johnstone's Crocodile Crocodylus johnstoni

Location: Adelaide River Bridge

Lemon-bellied Flyrobin *Microeca flavigaster* Brush Cuckoo *Cacomantis variolosus* Heard Only Little Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites minutillus* Varied Triller *Lalage leucomela* Broad-billed Flycatcher *Myiagra ruficollis* Mangrove Gerygone *Gerygone levigaster* Heard Only Crimson Finch *Neochmia phaeton* Mangrove Golden Whistler *Pachycephala melanura*

