



**Eight day, seven night tour** starting with prime birding locations around Darwin's mangroves, monsoon forests and parklands, then open savannah country to Pine Creek. We follow the Victoria River through wide open plains and rugged escarpment ranges to Timber Creek, then Katherine Gorge in Nitmiluk National Park, then through to the dramatic sandstone escarpments and wetlands of Australia's largest National Park, Kakadu. Woodland and wetland country in Mary River National Park and then back to Darwin. Total distance covered - 2000 kilometres.

**Key species** - Gouldian Finch, Yellow-rumped and Pictorella Mannikins may be seen at various locations between Darwin and Timber Creek. Hooded Parrot, Northern Rosella, Red-winged Parrot, Cockatiel, Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, White-quilled Rock-pigeon, Buff-sided Robin, Partridge Pigeon, Purple-crowned Fairywren, Black-tailed Treecreeper and Sandstone Shrike-thrush. Red Goshawk, Black-breasted Buzzard. Kakadu escarpment endemics such as Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeon, White-lined Honeyeater and Banded Fruit-dove.

#### **Will this tour suit me?**

All accommodation is in comfortable air-conditioned rooms with ensuites. A (cheaper) 'thousand star' camping option is also available. We start before dawn and stop for a bush breakfast at beautiful locations surrounded by birdlife at its busiest. Lunch is enjoyed out in the field and dinners are ala carte menus at resorts or restaurants. Groups are small, with a maximum of only 6 enthusiastic fellow birders.

**Cost** - \$3995 per person twin share



**Inclusions** - Seven nights accommodation is all in comfortable air-conditioned rooms. Cold water, tea and coffee and refreshments available at all times. Meals are bush breakfast - choice of cereals, fresh fruit, yogurt, milk; lunch - salads with tinned fish or meat and breads; dinner - ala carte at restaurants.

**Exclusions** - Pre and post tour accommodation, beverages with dinner, purchases of a personal nature such as souvenirs, etc.

More information and booking details here - [www.experiencethewild.com.au](http://www.experiencethewild.com.au)

Photos kindly contributed by Marg Lacey from the July 2016 BOTEB

## Itinerary

### DAY 1 - DARWIN to PINE CREEK

6.30am Pick up from your accommodation in Darwin, bush breakfast at East Point.

We start off exploring some areas close to Darwin where we usually see Double-barred, Long-tailed and Crimson Finches and Chestnut-breasted Mannikins. Parrot species we may see include Red-collared Lorikeets, Red-winged Parrots, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos, Little Corellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

We have a picnic lunch at a wetland area on the outskirts of Darwin, affording great scope views of many species of waterbird, including Magpie Goose, Little Egret Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Pied Heron, White-necked Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Little Black Cormorant, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-necked Stork and Green Pygmy-goose, and then we head down to Pine Creek. There are some great areas around Pine Creek for birding, with potential to see Hooded Parrot, Grey-crowned Babbler, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Great Bowerbird and many other bush species.

We have dinner at our accommodation and compare notes on sightings for the day. Accommodation at Pine Creek.

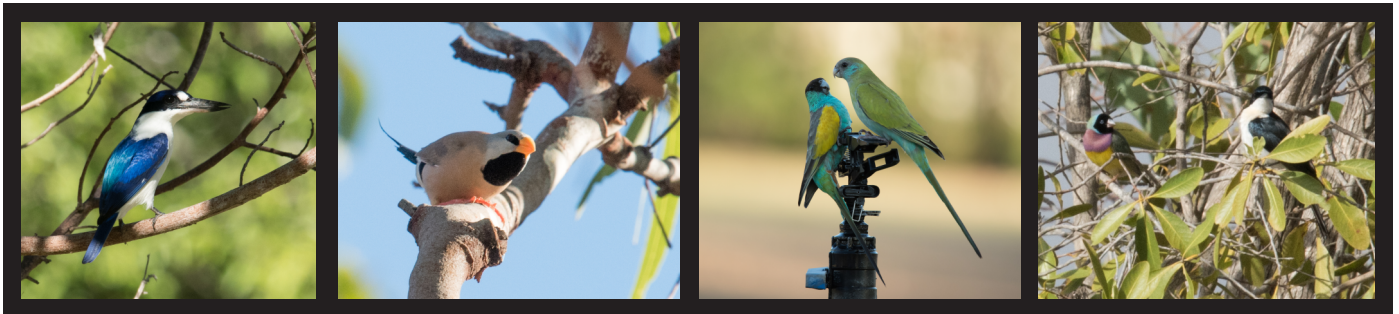
### DAY 2 - PINE CREEK to VICTORIA RIVER ROADHOUSE - breakfast with Gouldian Finches!

We check out early from our accommodation at Pine Creek and head down to a waterhole on the Fergusson River. Here we enjoy a bush breakfast while watching birds coming to drink from a creek. Here there are some reliable areas for Gouldian Finch and Hooded Parrot! Other target species here are Banded Honeyeater, Bar-breasted Honeyeater, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Cockatiel, Red-winged Parrot, Varied Lorikeet, Great Bowerbird, Grey-crowned Babbler and sometimes Budgerigar.

We then head south, bird around the Katherine township and have a picnic lunch at a park in Katherine. Great Bowerbirds, Blue-winged Kookaburras and Apostlebirds are regulars at the picnic spot.

We continue on to Victoria River Roadhouse, stopping to bird at some locations along the way. Near the Victoria River Roadhouse we explore the river's edge for Yellow-rumped Mannikin and Purple-crowned Fairy-wren.

Dinner, birdcall and accommodation at Victoria River Roadhouse.



### DAY 3 - VICTORIA RIVER ROADHOUSE to TIMBER CREEK - real outback country!

We depart early for a bush breakfast at Gregory National Park next to a very busy waterhole! We continue west where the habitat changes dramatically as we travel through magnificent escarpment country, trees here include the amazing Boab and Nutwood. Raptors including Wedge-tailed Eagle, Black-breasted Buzzard, Spotted Harrier and Square-tailed Kite are often seen here. There are records of the rare Grey Falcon in the area too.

There are many waterholes in otherwise dry creek beds that make this time of the year so productive for bird watching. We leave Victoria Highway and travel down some of the tracks that take us to some great little birding spots in beautiful rugged settings. Star, Zebra and Crimson Finches, Crimson Chat and Red-browed Pardalote are among the targets here. Flocks of Cockatiels and Budgerigars are sometimes seen overhead.

We have lunch at Policeman's Point and return to our accommodation for a siesta. At around 4pm we explore some areas close to Timber Creek in search of finches and the Purple-crowned Fairywren. Gouldian and Star Finches, Pictorella and Yellow-rumped Mannikins, Purple-crowned Fairy-wrens, Spinifex Pigeon, Diamond Dove, Yellow-tinted and Black-chinned Honeyeaters are among the species we may see here.



## Itinerary continued...

After exploring some walks here we go to the airfield nearby where we have more opportunities to see these species.

Bird call and dinner at the escarpment lookout and accommodation at Timber Creek.

### DAY 4 - TIMBER CREEK to KATHERINE

We check out early and have a bush breakfast at a nearby spring, and then look for birdlife along the Bullita Access Road.

Then we head back towards Katherine along the Victoria Highway, stopping at more good birding locations along the way. After a picnic lunch alongside a river bed, we head out to Nitmiluk National Park, take in some great scenery at Katherine Gorge. Our targets here are Great-billed Heron and Australian Bustard.

Bird call, dinner and accommodation at Katherine.

### DAY 5 - KATHERINE to KAKADU

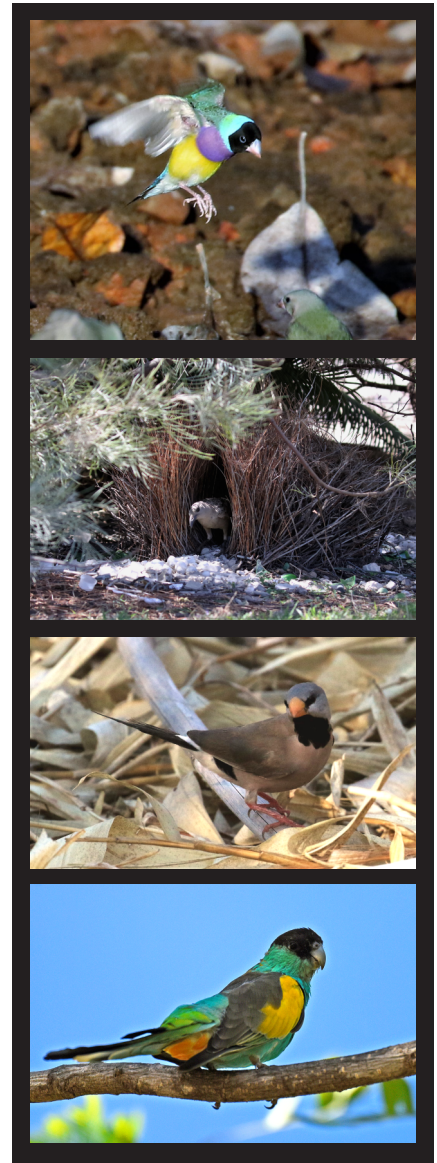
We check out early and head up to Kakadu, stop for a bush breakfast by a stream that is often visited by finches and parrots. Picnic lunch is at delightful location in Kakadu.

Then we have an hour or so to relax and browse the exhibits at the (air-conditioned) Warradjun Cultural Centre before we leave for the afternoon boat cruise.

The Yellow Water Sunset Cruise is a 'must do' highlight of Kakadu! It has been running for over thirty years, in most of that time the dry season schedule has been four boats, four runs a day (it continues to run in the wet). This means that all the wildlife on the river has grown up with these vessels in their habitat. Some will follow the boat for their own strategic reasons. No feeding or other interference takes place and all wildlife has right of way on the river. Expect to see all the regular water species and few surprises. This is the closest you will safely get to an Estuarine Crocodile in the wild.

We pause at sunset and take a few moments to absorb the splendour of the location as the sun dips below the horizon, often with hundreds of birds flying overhead to their night roosts. Then it's the short drive back to the resort to relax and have dinner.

Dinner, bird call and accommodation at Coinda.



### DAY 6 - EXPLORE KAKADU

Bush breakfast at Anbangbang Billabong and then explore Burrunggui, looking for escarpment endemics such as White-lined Honeyeater, Banded Fruit-dove and Sandstone Shrike-thrush and ancient rock art, and then head out to Ubirr, on the East Alligator River bordering Arnhemland. We have a picnic lunch and check out more rock art and amazing escarpment formations. Wilkin's Rock Wallabies and Chestnut-quilled Rock-pigeons are found here.

We do the Manggarre Monsoon Forest walk looking for Rainbow Pitta and then head back to Jabiru for the evening.

Dinner, bird call and accommodation at Jabiru.



## Itinerary continued...

### DAY 7 - JABIRU to MARY RIVER

We check out early and head down to Mamukala wetlands for a bush breakfast, do the easy four kilometre loop walk through floodplain scrub, seeing many bush birds and waterbirds, and then return to view waterbirds from the hide. We stop at the South Alligator River and look for mangrove species such as Canary White-eye and Red-headed Honeyeater, Spotted Harrier and other raptors that are sometimes seen in this area.

Then we continue on to the Mary River area, have a picnic lunch at Mary River billabong and then do a 4 kilometre (return) walk through bushland and floodplain to the Bird Billabong hide, with views of Magpie Geese, Intermediate Egret, Little Egret, Great Egret, Cattle Egret, Pied Heron, White-necked Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Little Black Cormorant, Black-fronted Dotterel, Black-necked Stork and often some Estuarine Crocodiles and many bush birds, including Rufous Whistler, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Gouldian Finch, Masked Finch, Double-barred Finch, Long-tailed Finch, Azure Kingfisher and Lemon-bellied Flyrobin. Alternatively we may choose to have a rest and then do the Bamboo Walk at Mary River.

Dinner, bird call and accommodation at Mary River Wilderness Retreat.



### DAY 8 - MARY RIVER to DARWIN

Bush breakfast at a lookout area on the Marrakai track and then we spend the rest of the morning exploring savannah woodland country along the track. This track is amazingly productive for bird sightings all along the track. Species we may see Gouldian, Masked, Long-tailed, Double-barred and Crimson Finches, Black-tailed Treecreeper, Varied Sitella, Diamond Dove, Channel-billed, Brush, Pallid and Little Bronze Cuckoos, Red-backed Fairy-wren, Northern Rosella, Varied Lorikeet, raptor species including Black Falcon and Black-breasted Buzzard, as well as many of the more common species.

We have morning tea on the banks of the Margaret River where we usually get sightings of Buff-sided Robin, Shining and Paperbark Flycatchers and Arafura Fantail. Mammal species in the area are Agile Wallabies, Antilopine Wallaroos and Dingoes.

On the way back to Darwin, we will visit Fogg Dam for waterbirds or Howard Springs Nature Reserve, which is a great site for Rainbow Pitta, Emerald Dove, Rufous Owl, Shining Flycatcher and other monsoon forest species.

We have our last dinner together as a group at a Darwin restaurant before returning to your Darwin accommodation.



#### Please Note:

The above itinerary is based on the outcomes of many previous tours to the areas described. Each season is different and as various wildlife observing opportunities arise and depending on the preferences of the group, adjustments will be made. June, July and August are the most comfortable months weather-wise and September/October slightly better in terms of bird numbers, but can be more hot and humid.