

# Tasmania – The Wilderness Isle

Naturetrek Tour Report

3rd – 14th December 2022



Black-faced Cormorants



White Bennett's Wallaby, Bruny Island



Watching Echidna at Bruny Lighthouse



Eastern-barred Bandicoot

Tour report and images by Nick Mooney



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Nick Mooney (leader) with 8 Naturetrek clients

After a catch up and briefing at Salamanca Inn, Hobart on **3rd** we took several short walks on Mt Wellington/kunanyi, seeing Forest Raven, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Tasmanian and Brown Thornbill, Tasmanian Scrubwren, Black Currawong and Bassian Thrush for a start. We then visited the Waterworks Reserve on Hobart's rim seeing (raucous) Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Australian Wood and Pacific Black Duck, Tasmanian Native-hen, Kelp and Silver Gulls, Black-headed Honeyeaters, Striated Pardalotes, Grey Currawong, Grey Fantail, Australian Magpie, Galah and Grey Shrike-thrush. After an evening meal in Hobart, we again visited Waterworks for a spotlight walk to familiarize ourselves with marsupials seeing Tasmanian Pademelons, Bennett's Wallaby, Common Brushtail Possums, Eastern-barred Bandicoots and getting a glimpse of a Tasmanian Bettong. Many of these marsupials had large pouch young. This is a catchment reserve where dogs are not allowed, resulting in easily approached wildlife.

A civilized start on the **4th** amongst patchy rain showers got us to Kettering seeing many Masked Lapwings, European Blackbirds, House Sparrows, Common Starlings, European Goldfinches, Laughing Kookaburras and Forest Ravens en route. There we took the car ferry to Bruny Island, seeing Black-faced Cormorant and Great Crested Tern on the crossing.

At Bruny Island we first placed a trail camera in the bush. We then drove slowly south down to Cloudy Bay, there watching many Kelp and Pacific Gulls on the beach. Then to Inala Reserve where we were based for the next two nights. Driving carefully on Bruny Island, we netted many more species such as Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Green Rosella, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes, Masked Lapwings, Brown Falcon, Black Swan, Swamp Harrier and Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles, the latter doing territorial 'pot-hook' displays. In late afternoon we watched several of the island's famous white Bennett's Wallabies (most are albinos, some are leucistic) and had excellent views of White-fronted Chats. At last light that evening we visited The Neck shearwater and little penguin colony witnessing the arrival of hundreds of Short-tailed Shearwaters at last light. After full dark we headed north spotlighting from the minibus and to our delight saw at least 11 different Eastern Quolls of both tan and black morphs, together with numerous wallabies and possums.

The **5th** was rainy and cold but amongst sunny patches we first checked out the reserve's many birds. Shining Bronze-cuckoos, Superb Fairy-wrens, Tree Martin and Welcome Swallow and Dusky Robins to the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote (Bruny Island is perhaps the best spot in the world to see this tiny bird). We then visited a nature reserve looking for Pink Robins and Scrubtits, before moving on to Jetty Beach, seeing Strong-billed Honeyeater, Satin Flycatcher, Golden Whistler and a pair of White-bellied Sea-eagles disputing ownership of a hillside with a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles. We witnessed some spectacular flying with the latter species dominating. Moved onto the Bruny Lighthouse we got intimate views of a very pale Short-beaked Echidna, Flame Robin and New Holland Honeyeater. That night a few of us again went spotlighting, seeing more quolls and wallabies.

The next day we first visited Adventure Bay where we peeked through a telescope at a White-bellied Sea-eagle fledgling on a nest and saw critically endangered Swift Parrots feeding on blue gum blossom in company with many honeyeaters. Visiting the beach, we had excellent views of 3 Hooded Plover and White-faced Herons. The

sea conditions were rough – safe but spectacular - for our coastal boat tour late that morning and we focused on the immense dolerite cliffs and sea caves. Returning to the beach we got a look at a Beautiful Firetail.

The morning of the **6th** was a fine, warming day and early on we had excellent views from a bird hide of a white morph Grey Goshawk (the only pure white raptor in the world); a truly spectacular bird with snow white plumage, yellow feet and cere and red eyes. Retrieving our camera (which had recorded quolls, possums and Long-nosed Potoroo) and leaving the island we travelled northwest of Hobart to New Norfolk staying at the eccentric but very comfortable Junction Motel. That night, we again went for a spotlight walk near the motel, seeing Eastern-barred Bandicoots of all ages and placing a trail camera while we were there.

The morning of the **7th** we retrieved the camera and went to Mt Field National Park doing the beautiful walk to Russell Falls looking for Pink Robin and the spectacular Tall Trees walk, an awesome meander through 75+metre high eucalypt forest. We then had a long drive westward through increasingly wet forest, stopping at the Franklin River and nearby Falls where we had excellent views of Pink Robin, Green Rosella, Scrubtit and a newly fledged Forest Raven. Overnighting at Strahan, on the **8th** we went up the iconic Gordon River, site of the famous (and successful) 1982 protest to stop a dam. A magnificent, vast wilderness with many Great and Little Pied Cormorants.

That night we arrived at Cradle Mountain National Park, immediately getting close views of Bare-nosed Wombat; many close views of many wombats as it turned out. We even got fleeting,

‘teasing’ glimpses of a Platypus. Tasmania’s famous endemic waratah flowers (*Telopea truncata*) were in full bloom, adding great splashes of dark red on the green vegetation.

The morning of the **9th** we first did a short walk near the hotel, seeing Pink Robins and magnificent Tiger Snakes sunning. Then we drove north to a rehabilitated quarry that has become renowned for Platypus and waterbirds. We indeed got views of at least 4 different Platypus plus a White-bellied Sea-eagle, Swamp Harrier, Black Swans, Chestnut Teal and Australian Shelduck. Setting a camera, we left for Cradle and more wombat watching. The next morning, we left Cradle, retrieving the camera (which proved to

have intimately photographed Platypus) and visited a wildlife park where we had very close experiences with (you guessed it) wombat and Tasmanian Devil. In their excellent enclosures, the devils behave comparatively normally with less of the tension-based growling and screaming, supposedly a hallmark of the species. Then on to Launceston for the night of the **10th** and a visit to the Little Penguins on the nearby coast, also briefly deploying a camera there.

Early the next morning, a few of us travelled to some nearby townships to use a telescope to check several eagle’s nests within sight of the highway, seeing a fledgling at one of them. Returning to the hotel, we retrieved the rest of our friends and went to a nearby wetlands, getting superb views of the appropriately named Purple Swamphen and many Black Swan. Then onward, hoping for more eagles as rain set in, and east through the Fingal valley then south along the coast to Coles Bay. So different to the wet, dense vegetation we had been though, this dry forest

on pink granite hills under The Hazards (mountains) has a special charm. That night we went spotlighting and got excellent views of Tawny Frogmouth.

On the **12th** we went south by boat, east then north up the Freycinet Peninsula to Wineglass Bay (another Tasmanian icon) seeing spectacular cliffs with many waterfalls (due to the unseasonably heavy rain), Australian Gannets, White-bellied Sea eagles and Australian Fur-seals. Another beautiful evening at Coles Bay and on the **13th** south to Triabunna where we ferried in beautiful weather to Maria Island. The features here were Eastern Grey (Forester) Kangaroo, Flinders Island wombats and Cape Barren Geese. On leaving, the heavens broke, and we travelled to Hobart in heavy rain.

On the way to drop our friends at the airport on the **14th** we digressed to Richmond for a burst of sun and some Musk Lorikeets and Noisy Miners. Truly a very full week and a half in good company.

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