



Northeast Queensland, including the Atherton Tablelands and Great Barrier Reef

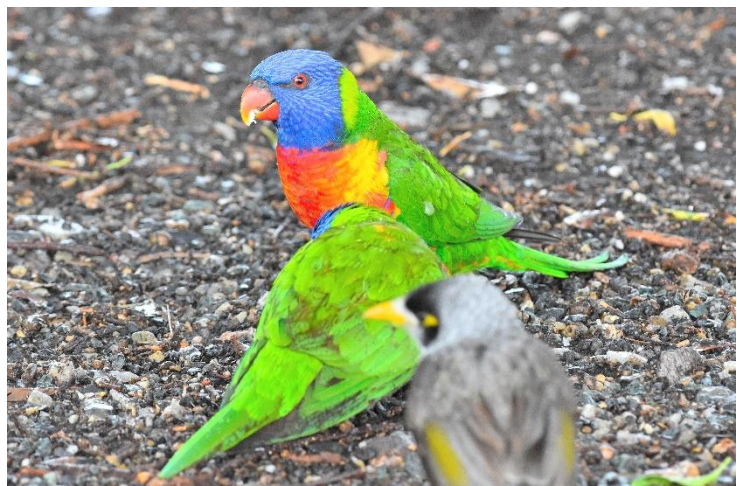
Day 1: Arrival in Cairns

The tour begins today in Cairns, where we will stay overnight.

Note: There are few international flights to Cairns, and most birders enjoying this north Queensland extension will likely be coming from Brisbane or another part of Australia to start this Australian birding module.

Depending upon flight arrival times, we will likely be able to get a bit of birding in Cairns today. No matter the day's plans, the group will have supper together, reviewing plans for an early birding start the next day.

Tonight, the group will spend the night in Cairns at one of our two choices (both four stars or higher).



Day 2: Birding in Daintree: Full Day

Today we will have an early start from our hotel and head north from Cairns for a full days birding at Daintree.

Wetland habitats along the route could yield Magpie Goose, Black-necked Stork and Latham's Snipe, and in the surrounding grasslands Emu, Diamond Dove, Squatter Pigeon, Apostlebird and Australian Bustard.

A cruise on the Daintree River through the winding mangroves will give us access to some unique habitats where we will look for the scarce Great-billed Heron, Black Bittern, Scaly-breasted Lorikeet, Rainbow Lorikeet, Papuan Frogmouth, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Pacific Koel, Pheasant Coucal, Shining Bronze Cuckoo, Little Bronze Cuckoo, Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo, Superb Fruit Dove, Little Kingfisher, Forest Kingfisher, Azure Kingfisher, Large-billed Gerygone, Metallic Starling and Shining Flycatcher. We may also see Spectacled Flying Fox and Estuarine Crocodile.



Birding on land around the village could also be productive, and we will look for Lovely Fairy Wren and Bush Stone Curlew among others. Other species found in the area include Australian Ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Welcome Swallow, Australian Darter, Australian Figbird, Brown-backed Honeyeater, Spectacled Monarch, Rufous Fantail, Emerald Dove, Fairy Gerygone and Macleay's Honeyeater.

Overnight at our hotel in Cairns.

Day 3: Full Day Birding Key Areas Near Cairns, including Centennial Lakes and the Botanical Gardens, Dry Savanna Habitat, Mareeba Wetlands, and the Cairns Esplanade

Depart early morning for a full days birding in Cairns. Sites we will cover during the day include Centennial Lakes and the Botanical Gardens, before heading west of Cairns through dry savanna habitat, Mareeba Wetlands and Cairns Esplanade.

We will start the day birding at the Botanical Gardens, looking for species such as Papuan Frogmouth, Australian Brush Turkey, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Magpie-lark, Grey Goshawk, Brown Goshawk, Black-backed Butcherbird, Common Cicadabird, Rose-crowned Fruit Dove, Helmeted Friarbird and Varied Honeyeater.



Birding around the Centennial Lakes, we also hope to find Pacific Black Duck, Radjah Shelduck, White Ibis, Dusky Moorhen, Little Kingfisher, Olive-backed Sunbird and Little Bronze-cuckoo.

Later in the morning we will head west of Cairns through dry savanna habitat looking for Crimson Finch and Chestnut-breasted Munia. At the Mareeba Wetlands we will take a short boat ride on the lake to look for Green Pygmy Goose and Black Swan along with Maned Duck, Australasian Grebe and others. Mareeba also makes a good place for our picnic lunch, often enhanced by finding Eastern Grey Kangaroo at a nearby golf course.

Other birds for the morning may include Black-Cockatoo, Galah, Green Oriole, Black Butcherbird, Varied Triller, Torresian Imperial-Pigeon and Olive-backed Sunbird. After lunch, we will return to the Esplanade, when the tide will be ideal for waders. Here, we may find White-bellied Sea Eagle, Silver Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Australian Pelican, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Pacific Reef Heron, Little Egret, and a variety of waders such as Little Curlew, Far Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Pacific

Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Great Knot, Red-capped Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Grey-tailed Tattler, Wandering Tattler and, if lucky, maybe even a Beach Stone-curlew.

Overnight at our hotel in Cairns.

Day 4: Explore the Marine Life of the Great Barrier Reef from Onboard the Sea Star; Includes Birding at Michaelmas Cay and Etty Bay After the Boat Trip.

During our boat trip today, we will be able to leave our luggage in storage at the hotel.

We will spend most of today out on the Reef at Michaelmas Cay, with a ride in a semi-submersible boat over the Great Barrier Reef to view a range of tropical fish, soft corals, and other spectacular invertebrates, such as giant clam. This will include the opportunity for those who are interested to snorkel from shore at the Cay.

Here we are likely to encounter Sooty Tern, Great Crested Tern, Black-naped Tern, Brown Noddy, Brown Booby, Great Frigatebird, Lesser Frigatebird, and Ruddy Turnstone. We will also be on the lookout for some of the rarer terns, such as Roseate Tern and Bridled Tern, which may show up here.



After enjoying our visit at the Great Barrier Reef, we will spend the late afternoon heading toward Etty Bay. Birding this afternoon will be limited to incidental stops looking for Agile Wallabies, where we may also come across Peaceful Dove, Bar-shouldered Dove and Double-eyed Fig-Parrot.

Overnight at Etty Bay.

Day 5: AM Birding Mourilyan Harbour and Start Rainforest Birding along Palmerston Highway, and Rest of the Day Birding Atherton Tablelands

Today we will spend the early morning birding at Mourilyan Harbour, looking for Lovely Fairywren, Crimson Finch, Brahminy Kite, and Southern Cassowary.

After-breakfast we will depart from Etty Bay. As we travel, we will stop along Palmerston Highway looking for rainforest birds including Black Butcherbird, Rainbow Bee-eater, Black-faced Cuckooshrike and White-bellied Cuckooshrike.

We will enjoy a picnic lunch at the scenic Illaa Falls before continuing to our eco lodge in the lush rainforest along the shore of Lake Eacham.



In the afternoon, we will begin exploring the Atherton Tablelands. Part of the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics Region, this area was once densely covered with high-altitude rainforest. Today, the area is one of upland dairy farming and rolling agricultural country, broken by pockets of remnant rainforest, deep volcanic lakes, and wetlands.

We will be looking for the North Queensland endemic birds found in this area, including Macleay's Honeyeater, Bridled Honeyeater, Gray-headed Robin, and Victoria's Riflebird.

In the eucalypt forest on the west side of the range we will look for Yellow Thornbill, Rufous Whistler, "Herberton" Honeyeater (this species is yet to be described), Little Lorikeet, Blue-winged Kookaburra, and Gray Butcherbird, with the chance to see Sarus Crane and Brolga if they are still around. We will stay out in the forest until after dark for Golden Bowerbird at its bower, Mountain Thornbill, Fernwren, Bower's Shrikethrush, and Atherton Scrubwren.

Where we eat dinner will depend on the group's choice to spotlight for mammals and/or owls. Barn Owl, Australasian Grass-Owl and Sooty Owl are the most likely owls followed by Rufous Owl, Barking Owl, Australian Masked-Owl and Southern Boobook. We might also see two out of a possible five species of gliding possum and two other possum species.

Overnight at the Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodge.

Day 6: Full Day Birding in the Atherton Tablelands

We will have a full day of birding in the Atherton Tablelands today. Starting early this morning at the Cathedral Fig Tree, we will listen to the dawn chorus comprising Chowchilla, Eastern Whipbird, Spotted Catbird, King Parrot, Barred Cuckooshrike, Red-backed Fairywren, Laughing Kookaburra, Golden-headed Cisticola, and Tawny Grassbird.

Next, we will travel to Lake Barrine. The area hosts a variety of water and forest birds, such as Tooth-billed Catbird at his court, Golden Whistler, Yellow-breasted Boatbill, Mountain Thornbill, and Atherton Scrubwren. We will continue searching this area for other North Queensland endemics including Bridled Honeyeater, Macleay's Honeyeater, and Gray-headed Robin. We may also find Eastern Whipbird, Yellow-throated Scrubwren, Spotted Catbird and Wompoo Fruit-Dove.



Later in the morning we will drive to Malanda to see Victoria's Riflebird. Our guide's sharing this bird with birding clients was featured in the 2017 edition of the BBC's Planet Earth.

After lunch and a bit of well-deserved rest, we will spend the afternoon searching a couple of wetlands and some forest patches for any rainforest birds we may still be missing.

We will return to the lodge for supper. Afterwards, there will be an optional night excursion to search for a range of mammals including some endemic to the area. These may include Coppery Brushtail Possum, Green Ringtail Possum, Lemur-like Ringtail Possum and Herbert River Ringtail Possum, with a chance of viewing Lumholtz's Tree-Kangaroo.

Overnight at the Chambers Wildlife Rainforest Lodge.

Day 7: AM, Tablelands, Anything We May Have Missed; PM, Cairns

Our morning birding will depend on species seen over the previous two days and those we may yet find in the Tablelands and/or close to the lodge. Our guide's judgment will be critical here and we will go with his advice.

Most likely, we will drive north to the dry country today for Green Pygmy-Goose, Squatter Pigeon, Tawny Frogmouth, Australian Bustard, Galah, Little Corella, Red-winged Parrot, Great Bowerbird, Northern Fantail, Lovely Fairywren, Blue-winged Kookaburra, the northern race of Brown Treecreeper. This would get us back to the hotel late afternoon.

Overnight at the hotel in Cairns.

