

A birdwatcher's guide to Australia

Top spots, migratory routes, tips and trips for seasoned twitchers and first-time birders.

PELAGIC TRIPS

The following pelagic trips are not-for-profit. Contact details and departure times may change. Make sure you book in advance.

SOUTHPORT, QLD

Day-trips on MV Grinner set off from Mariners Cove on The Spit on the Gold Coast, on the third Saturday of each month. See tropical species such as the Tahiti petrel. (07) 3391 8839.

NEWCASTLE, NSW

Between October and April, this is one of the best places in the world to see Gould's petrel at sea. Offshore takes day-trippers out from Queens Wharf, Newcastle Harbour, about seven times a year. For information email richard@birdingtours.com.au.

WOLLONGONG, NSW

More than 75 pelagic species have been recorded on trips from Wollongong – that's one-third of the world's total. Day-trips depart Wollongong Harbour on the fourth Saturday of each month. www.sossa-international.org

ST HELENS, TAS.

Nifty II departs St Helens Wharf at 6.30 a.m. three times a week in the winter months. Call Ian May on (03) 6312 1123 or (03) 6376 1966 or email birding@ozemail.com.au

PERTH, WA

Frank O'Connor organises trips from Perth aboard Blue Juice II, usually on the last Sunday in June and second Sunday in August. http://birdingwa.iinet.net.au

BROOME, WA

Keep an eye out for tropical species on a trip organised by Kimberley Birdwatching out to north-western Australian reefs and islands. www.kimberleybirdwatching.com.au

BIRD OBSERVATORIES

Visits to these observatories must be booked in advance.

1 EYRE BIRD OBSERVATORY, WA

Around one-third of Australia's total bird species can be seen here. Visitors can stay at the observatory and take part in a number of volunteer programs, including banding and birdcounts. www.eyrebirds.org

2 GLUEPOT RESERVE, SA

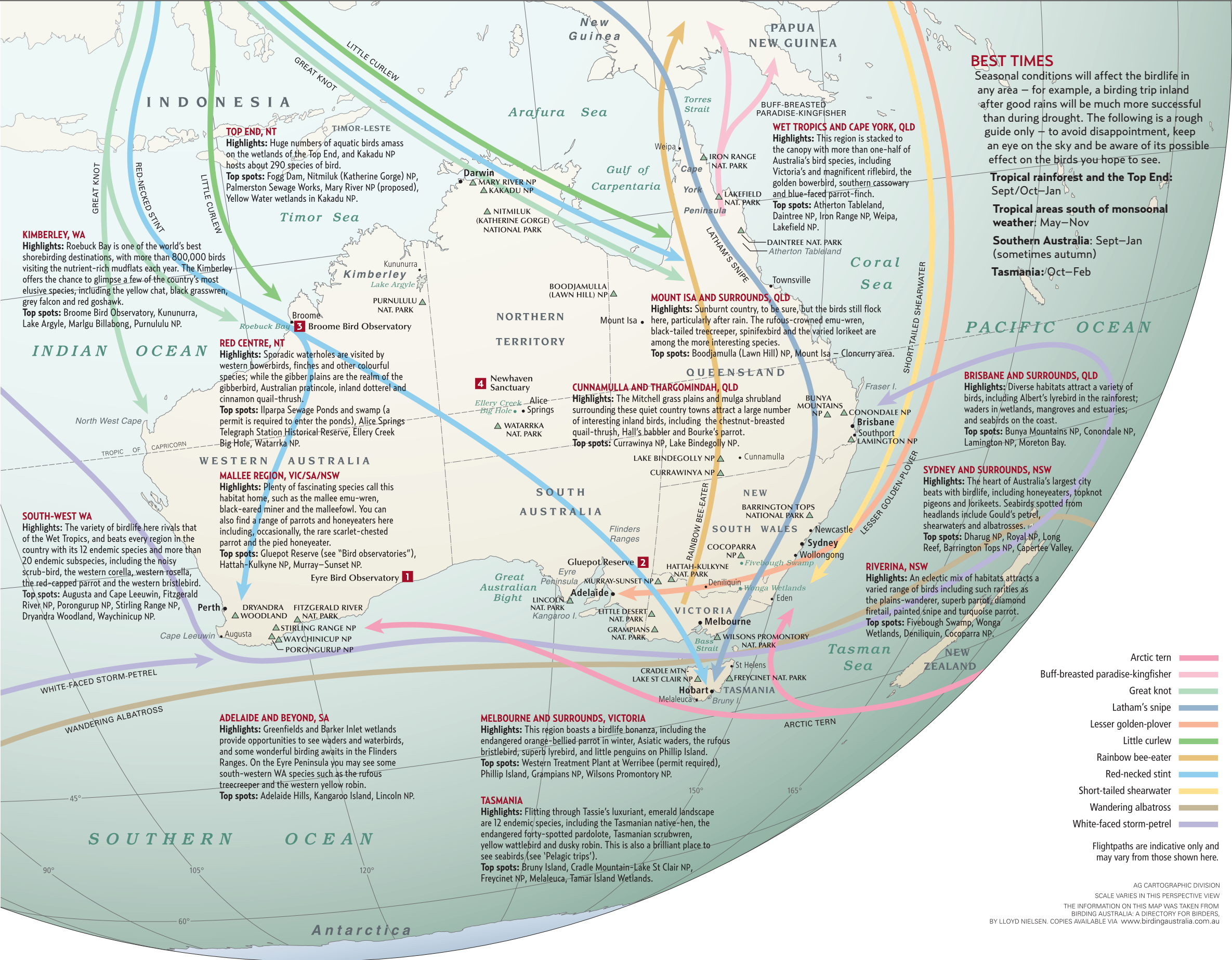
There are 181 species on Gluepot Reserve's bird list, including the largest remaining population of endangered black-eared miners. Visitors can camp here, but must be self-sufficient. www.riverland.net.au/gluepot/visitor.html

3 BROOME BIRD OBSERVATORY, WA

This is one of the best sites in the world for migratory waders. Visitors can camp or stay in the self-contained chalet. www.broomebirdobservatory.com

4 NEWHAVEN SANCTUARY, NT

Newhaven protects about 140 species of birds. There's a camping ground with toilets and showers; visitors must be self-sufficient. Open April–October. www.awc.org.au/newhaven.asp



BEST TIMES

Seasonal conditions will affect the birdlife in any area – for example, a birding trip inland after good rains will be much more successful than during drought. The following is a rough guide only – to avoid disappointment, keep an eye on the sky and be aware of its possible effect on the birds you hope to see.

Tropical rainforest and the Top End: Sept/Oct–Jan

Tropical areas south of monsoonal weather: May–Nov

Southern Australia: Sept–Jan (sometimes autumn)

Tasmania: Oct–Feb

WET TROPICS AND CAPE YORK, QLD

Highlights: This region is stacked to the canopy with more than one-half of Australia's bird species, including Victoria's and magnificent riflebird, the golden bowerbird, southern cassowary and blue-faced parrot-finch. **Top spots:** Atherton Tableland, Daintree NP, Iron Range NP, Weipa, Lakefield NP.

MOUNT ISA AND SURROUNDS, QLD

Highlights: Sunburnt country, to be sure, but the birds still flock here, particularly after rain. The rufous-crowned emu-wren, black-tailed treecreeper, spinifexbird and the varied lorikeet are among the more interesting species. **Top spots:** Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) NP, Mount Isa – Cloncurry area.

CUNNAMULLA AND THARGOMINDAH, QLD

Highlights: The Mitchell grass plains and mulga shrubland surrounding these quiet country towns attract a large number of interesting inland birds, including the chestnut-breasted quail-thrush, Hall's babbler and Bourke's parrot. **Top spots:** Currawinya NP, Lake Bindegolly NP.

BRISBANE AND SURROUNDS, QLD

Highlights: Diverse habitats attract a variety of birds, including Albert's lyrebird in the rainforest; waders in wetlands, mangroves and estuaries; and seabirds on the coast. **Top spots:** Bunya Mountains NP, Conondale NP, Lamington NP, Moreton Bay.

SYDNEY AND SURROUNDS, NSW

Highlights: The heart of Australia's largest city beats with birdlife, including honeyeaters, topknot pigeons and lorikeets. Seabirds spotted from headlands include Gould's petrel, shearwaters and albatrosses. **Top spots:** Dharug NP, Royal NP, Long Reef, Barrington Tops NP, Capertee Valley.

RIVERINA, NSW

Highlights: An eclectic mix of habitats attracts a varied range of birds including such rarities as the plains-wanderer, superb parrot, diamond firetail, painted snipe and turquoise parrot. **Top spots:** Fivebough Swamp, Wonga Wetlands, Deniliquin, Cocoparra NP.

MELBOURNE AND SURROUNDS, VICTORIA

Highlights: This region boasts a birdlife bonanza, including the endangered orange-bellied parrot in winter, Asiatic waders, the rufous bristlebird, superb lyrebird, and little penguins on Phillip Island. **Top spots:** Western Treatment Plant at Werribee (permit required), Phillip Island, Grampians NP, Wilsons Promontory NP.

TASMANIA

Highlights: Flitting through Tassie's luxuriant, emerald landscape are 12 endemic species, including the Tasmanian native-hen, the endangered forty-spotted pardalote, Tasmanian scrubwren, yellow wattlebird and dusky robin. This is also a brilliant place to see seabirds (see 'Pelagic trips'). **Top spots:** Bruny Island, Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair NP, Freycinet NP, Melaleuca, Tamar Island Wetlands.

- Arctic tern
- Buff-breasted paradise-kingfisher
- Great knot
- Latham's snipe
- Lesser golden-plover
- Little curlew
- Rainbow bee-eater
- Red-necked stint
- Short-tailed shearwater
- Wandering albatross
- White-faced storm-petrel

Flightpaths are indicative only and may vary from those shown here.