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

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 1223 or (03) 6376 1966 or email birding@ozemail.com.au.

PERTH, WA

Frank O’Connor organises trips from Perth aboard Blue Julee 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.

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

GLUEPOT RESERVE, SA

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

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

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

Tropical areas south of monsoonal weather: May–Nov

Southern Australia: Sept–Jan

Tasmania: Oct–Feb

A birdwatcher’s guide to Australia