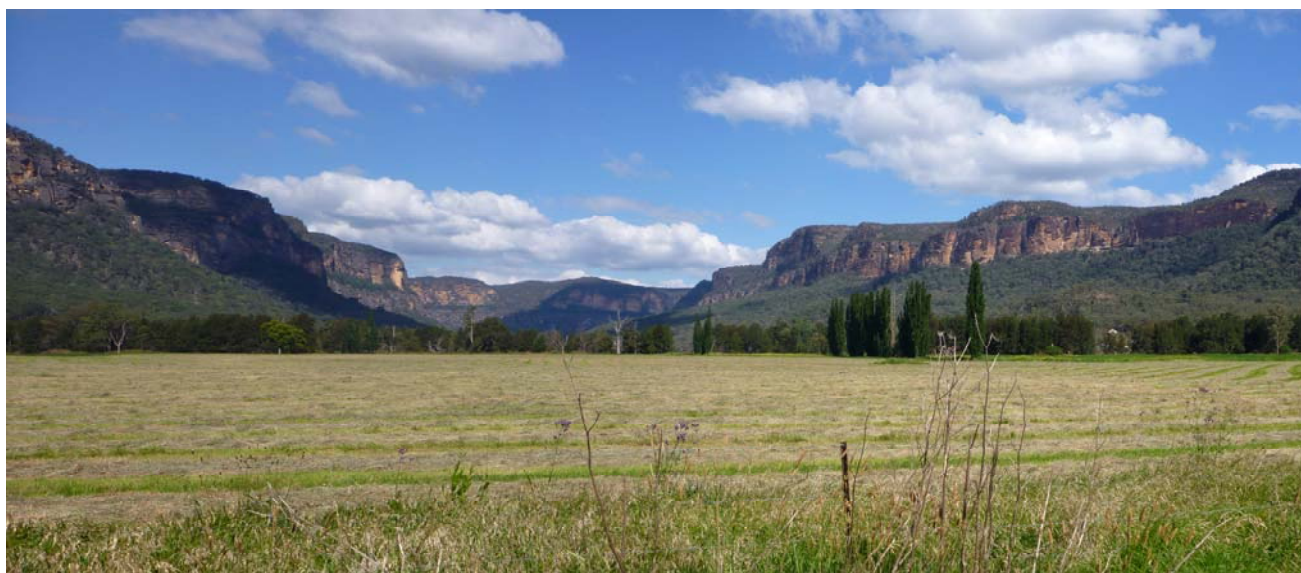


Trip Report: New South Wales, Australia
(including Sydney Region and Capertee Valley)
December 18th 2011 – January 6th 2012

Christmas holidays in Australia presented ample opportunity for birding in the Sydney region, including several early-morning visits to nearby suburban bush reserves and national parks around the city (Ku-ring-gai, Garigal and the Royal National Park). We also made trips further afield to the Southern Highlands, Kurrabung on the north-western edge of the Sydney basin, and across the Blue Mountains to spend two nights in the renowned Capertee Valley (including visiting Wollemi and Capertee National Parks). In total during the vacation I identified 137 bird species, of which 73 were Australian endemics and 64 were lifers. This report provides a brief summary of key birding sites, along with a selection of photos and an annotated bird list.



Painted Buttonquail [female] (Ku-ring-gai National Park)



View from Glen Davis towards Wollemi National Park (Capertee Valley)

This was the first Sydney vacation on which I have made a concerted effort to build a decent trip list, with some sort of birding activity (if only for a couple of hours) taking place on a majority of days that we were in Australia. Initially the birding was pretty tough going. Whether I was making a dawn visit to nearby suburban bush reserves, or to Ku-ring-gai or Garigal National Parks, I generally ran into the same twenty or so regular Sydney species. The window of opportunity each morning also seemed to be quite short, with bird activity dropping off significantly by 9am, despite the weather being relatively cool and damp for a Sydney summer. The hyper-active or simply skittish birds that I did see resulted in limited photographic success, interspersed with moments of good fortune. Most memorably, my persistence was rewarded during a morning spent in the Ku-ring-gai National Park near to the intersection of the Bobbin Head and Sphinx Tracks at the Bobbin Head Road entrance, where in one small area I had a marvellous encounter with a female White-throated Treecreeper that posed at waist height on a *Casuarina* trunk, whilst a pair of Eastern Spinebills brought food to their nest, a family of several male and female Superb Fairwrens were busy feeding their seemingly insatiably hungry nestlings, and a Painted Buttonquail performed its characteristic on-the-spot rotations as it dug through the leaf-litter on the trail.



Spotted Pardalote (Ku-ring-gai National Park); Red-browed Firetail (Royal National Park)



Tawny Frogmouth (Degotardi Park, Sydney); Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (Royal National Park)

Morning visits to Kurrajong (with the resonant calls of colonies of Bell Miners echoing through the trees), and the Royal National Park (for some rainforest and heathland specialties) added some diversity to my trip list, but the most significant contribution came from a two night visit to the Capertee Valley. Capertee really lived up to its reputation as a world class birding destination, being without doubt the 'birdiest' of all the locations that I have thus far visited in New South Wales. Despite sunny skies, birds kept flowing all day long in the valley, from pre-dawn until dark. As a result I saw almost 40 lifers there, with this success no doubt

attributable to having joined forces with Emma, David M-K and Ivan for this birding focused part of the holiday. Bruce and Donna Upton, our hosts at the excellent Lansallos Bed and Breakfast (www.lansallos.com.au) looked after us all in great style, presenting sumptuous late-breakfasts after each morning's birding and a lovely roast dinner at which to toast our successes after a full day in the field. Birding on the Lansallos property was very productive and sightings included Weebill (Australia's smallest bird), Diamond Firetail, several thornbill species and several honeyeater species amongst many others. We then visited both of the national parks in the valley, enjoying particular late-afternoon success in the Wollemi National Park where highlights included seeing multiple individuals of three species of cuckoo (Fan-tailed, Brush and Shining Bronze-Cuckoo) in adjacent shrubs and trees, whilst a platypus seen swimming in the Capertee River provided a momentary distraction from the dramatic golden sandstone cliffs that surrounded us at sunset.



Silver Gull (Whale Beach, Sydney); Sooty Oystercatcher (Long Reef, Sydney)

The breeding season of the Regent Honeyeater had finished and this emblematic Capertee Valley species eluded us (presenting a good excuse for a return trip in the Australian springtime), but our compensation included wonderful views of other species such as a family of Restless Flycatchers, a pair of Australasian Grebe, and several Red-rumped Parrots, Brown Treecreepers, White-throated Gerygones and White-browed Babblers. My favourites were undoubtedly the sophisticated looking White-browed Woodswallow seen near to the Capertee River catching insects for a fledgling, an inquisitive Crested Shrike-Tit seen at Glen Davis camp ground and the garrulous White-winged Choughs taking turns to sit on their single, clay cooking-pot of a nest. The final lifer that David M-K and I identified during our early-morning visit to the Capertee National Park on the penultimate day of the year was a Speckled Warbler, which represented my 2,000th lifer. A nice milestone indeed to have (finally) achieved during this Christmas vacation!



Weebill (Lansallos B&B, Capertee Valley) – Australia's smallest bird



White-throated Treecreeper [female]; Eastern Spinebill (both Ku-ring-gai National Park)



Superb Fairywrens [male and female] (Ku-ring-gai National Park)



Eastern Yellow-Robin (Ku-ring-gai National Park); Rufous Whistler (Kurrajong)



Brown Cuckoo-Dove (Degotardi Park, Sydney)



Restless Flycatcher and juveniles (alongside Capertee River, Capertee Valley)



Crested Shrike-Tit [female] (Glen Davis, Capertee Valley)



Lace Monitor (Glen Davis, Capertee Valley)



Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (Wollemi National Park, Capertee Valley)



Painted Buttonquail [female] characteristically rotating in the leaf-litter (Ku-ring-gai National Park)

Bird Trip List¹

Confirmed personal sightings only for DJS – excludes birds heard only unless otherwise indicated. As field guide I used ‘The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia’, by Pizzey & Knight (7th Edition, 2003). Some names have been updated since this guide was published, so birds in my trip list are identified as per ‘The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World’, Cornell, 2007 with updates through December 2010 (online version 6.5).

Locations where species were seen in order of travel:

S = Suburban Sydney.

DP = Degotardi Park in the Sydney suburb of St Ives, a local reserve comprised of forest and woodland with patches of rainforest.

NB = Northern Beaches, including rock platforms at Whale Beach and Long Reef.

GNP = Garigal National Park, including the Pipeline Track, Bungaroo Track and the Cascades Track in St Ives, comprised of open forest and woodland with patches of rainforest and heathland.

KNP = Ku-ring-gai National Park, especially the woodland and heathland near the Bobbin Head Road entry and Sphinx Track at North Turramurra, the Chiltern Track at Ingleside, and several tracks accessed from West Head Road (especially Salvation Creek picnic area) and McCarrs Creek Road.

SH = Southern Highlands around Sutton Forest, including roadside pasture and remnant patches of bush.

MNP = Morton National Park, principally open forest and woodland with patches of rainforest near the Bundanoon entrance in the Southern Highlands.

K = Kurrajong, including bush tracks through open forest on private property at Blaxlands Ridge that adjoins the south-eastern edge of the Wollemi National Park.

CV = Capertee Valley, including the grounds of the excellent Lansallos Bed & Breakfast (see www.lansallos.com.au); riverine forest along the Capertee River near to the Genowlan Road bridge; dry forest around the Glen Davis camp ground; open forest and woodland along the Capertee River inside the Wollemi National Park near to the Glen Davis entrance; riverine forest and woodland near to the Capertee River inside the Capertee National Park; and other roadside locations.

BMNP = Blue Mountains National Park, principally woodland around Pierces Pass picnic area on the Bells Line of Road.

RNP = Royal National Park, including the Lady Carrington Drive Track that follows the Hacking River through open forest and gullies containing subtropical and warm temperate rainforest, and the Mount Bass Track through heathland habitat.

MEGAPODES: Megapodiidae

Australian Brush-Turkey (*Alectura latham*) * [DP; GNP; KNP] **E**

DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS: Anatidae

Maned (Australian Wood) Duck (*Chenonetta jubata*) [NB; SH; CV; RNP] **E**

White-eyed Duck (Hardhead) (*Aythya australis*) * [SH]

Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*) * [KNP; SH; CV; NB]

Chestnut Teal (*anas castanea*) [NB; RNP] **E**

GREBES: Podicipedidae

Australasian Grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*) * [CV]

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS: Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [NB]

Little Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*) [NB]

Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax varius*) [NB; CV]

Little Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*) * [SH; NB]

SHEARWATERS AND PETRELS: Procellariidae

Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) [NB]

PELICANS: Pelecanidae

Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) [NB]

¹ **E** First sighting ever for DJS; **E** = Australian endemic species; * = photo available

HERONS, EGRETS AND BITTERNs: ArdeidaePacific (White-necked) Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) [CV]White-faced Heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*) [CV]**IBISES AND SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae**Australian (White) Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) [NB]**HAWKS, EAGLES AND KITES: Accipitridae**Australian (Black-shouldered) Kite (*Elanus axillaris*) [CV] ESquare-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*) * [K] EBrown Goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*) [CV]Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*) [CV]**FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae**Australian (Nankeen) Kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) [NB]**RAILS, GALLINULES AND COOTS: Rallidae**Dusky Moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) [NB; RNP]Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) * [K; NB; RNP]**SANDPIPERS: Scolopacidae**Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) * [NB]Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) * [NB]**BUTTONQUAIL: Turnicidae**Painted Buttonquail (*Turnix varius*) * [KNP]**OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae**Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus*) * [NB] E**PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS: Charadriidae**Pacific Golden Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) * [NB]Masked Lapwing (*Vanellus miles*) [NB]**SKUAS AND JAEGERS: Stercorariidae**Pomarine Jaeger (Skua) (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) [NB]**GULLS, TERNS AND SKIMMERS: Laridae**Silver Gull (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*) * [NB]Great Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bergii*) [NB]**PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae**Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) [K]Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) [S]Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia placida*) [K; CV]Bar-shouldered Dove (*Geopelia humeralis*) [CV]Brown Cuckoo-Dove (*Macropygia phasianella*) * [DP] ECommon Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*) * [K; CV] EWonga Pigeon (*Leucosarcia melanoleuca*) [MNP; CV] ECrested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) [GNP; K] E**COCKATOOS: Cacatuidae**Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) [RNP] EGang Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalen fimbriatum*) **beard only** [MNP] EGalah (*Eslophus roseicapilla*) [S; CV] ELong-billed Corella (*Cacatua tenuirostris*) [S] ESulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) * [DP; S; MNP; CV; RNP]**PARROTS: Psittacidae**Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) [DP; S; KNP; RNP]Australian King-Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*) [DP; MNP; RNP] E

Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) * [KNP; CV; BMNP] **E**
Eastern Rosella (*Platycercus eximius*) [SH; CV] **E**
Red-rumped Parrot (*Psephotus haematonotus*) [CV] **E**
Turquoise Parrot (*Neophema pulchella*) [CV] **E**

CUCKOOS: Cuculidae

Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) * [KNP; CV]
Brush Cuckoo (*Cacomantis variolosus*) [CV; RNP]
Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) * [CV]
Australian (Common) Koel (*Eudynamys cyanocephalus*) [GNP]

FROGMOUTHS: Podargidae

Tawny Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*) * [DP] **E**

KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae

Azure Kingfisher (*Ceyx azureus*) [CV]
Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo novaguineae*) * [DP; K; NB; CV; RNP] **E**
Sacred Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sanctus*) [KNP; RNP]

BEE-EATERS: Meropidae

Rainbow Bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*) [CV]

ROLLERS: Coraciidae

Dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*) [DP; CV; RNP]

LYREBIRDS: Menuridae

Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novahollandiae*) [MNP] **E**

AUSTRALASIAN TREECREEPERS: Climacteridae

White-throated Treecreeper (*Cormobates leucophaea*) * [KNP; MNP; BMNP] **E**
Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*) * [CV] **E**

FAIRYWRENS: Maluridae

Superb Fairywren (*Malurus cyaneus*) * [GNP; KNP; CV; NB; RNP] **E**
Variegated Fairywren (*Malurus lamberti*) * [DP; K; RNP] **E**
Southern Emuwren (*Stripiturus malachurus*) [RNP] **E**

PARDALOTES: Pardalotidae

Spotted Pardalote (*Pardalotus punctatus*) * [DP; MNP; CV] **E**

THORNBILLS AND ALLIES: Acanthizidae

White-browed Scrubwren (*Sericornis frontalis*) * [DP; MNP; K; RNP; KNP] **E**
Speckled Warbler (*Pyrholaemus sagittatus*) [CV] **E** Lifer number 2,000 !
Brown Gerygone (*Gerygone mouka*) [K; RNP] **E**
Western Gerygone (*Gerygone fusca*) [CV] **E**
White-throated Gerygone (*Gerygone olivacea*) * [CV] **E**
Brown Thornbill (*Acanthiza pusilla*) * [DP; KNP; MNP; K; BMNP] **E**
Buff-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza reguloides*) * [K; CV] **E**
Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) [CV] **E**
Yellow Thornbill (*Acanthiza nana*) * [CV] **E**
Weebill (*Smicrornis brevirostris*) * [CV] **E**

HONEYEATERS AND ALLIES: Meliphagidae

Little Wattlebird (*Anthochaera chrysoptera*) * [DP; RNP] **E**
Red Wattlebird (*Anthochaera carunculata*) * [DP] **E**
Little Friarbird (*Philemon citreogularis*) [CV; RNP]
Noisy Friarbird (*Philemon corniculatus*) [CV]
Bell Miner (*Manorina melanophrys*) [K; CV] **E**
Noisy Miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) [DP; CV] **E**
Lewin's Honeyeater (*Meliphaga lewinii*) [DP; RNP] **E**
Yellow-faced Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus chrysops*) * [K; CV] **E**

White-eared Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus leucotis*) * [K; BMNP] **E**
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus melanops*) * [GNP] **E**
Fuscous Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus fuscus*) [CV] **E**
White-plumed Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus penicillatus*) * [CV] **E**
Black-chinned Honeyeater (*Melithreptus gularis*) [CV] **E**
Brown-headed Honeyeater (*Melithreptus brevirostris*) [CV] **E**
New-Holland Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris novahollandiae*) * [GNP; K; CV; BMNP; RNP] **E**
White-cheeked Honeyeater (*Phylidonyris niger*) [GNP; CV] **E**
Eastern Spinebill (*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*) * [DP; KNP; K; CV; BMNP] **E**
Scarlet Myzomela (*Myzomela sanguinolenta*) [K] **E**

AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS: Petroicidae

Jacky Winter (*Microeca fascinans*) * [CV]
Eastern Yellow Robin (*Eopsaltria australis*) * [GNP; KNP; MNP; K; CV; BMNP; NB; RNP] **E**

PSEUDO-BABLERS: Pomatostomidae

White-browed Babbler (*Pomatostomus superciliosus*) * [CV] **E**

WHIPBIRDS AND WEDGEBILLS: Psophodidae

Eastern Whipbird (*Psophodes olivaceus*) [DP; RNP] **E**

WHISTLERS AND ALLIES: Pachycephalidae

Crested Shrike-Tit (*Falcunculus frontatus*) * [CV] **E**
Golden Whistler (*Pachycephala pectoralis*) * [DP; RNP; KNP]
Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) * [KNP; MNP; K; CV]
Gray Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*) * [CV; RNP; KNP]

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS: Monarchidae

Black-faced Monarch (*Monarcha melanopsis*) * [RNP]
Leaden Flycatcher (*Myiagra rubecula*) [CV]
Restless Flycatcher (*Myiagra inquieta*) * [CV] **E**

FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae

Willie-Wagtail (*Rhipidura leucophrys*) [KNP; S; CV]
Rufous Fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*) [DP]
Gray Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*) * [DP; K; CV; RNP; KNP]

CUCKOO-SHRIKES: Campephagidae

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novahollandiae*) [DP; CV]
Cicadabird (*Coracina tenuirostris*) [K]

OLD WORLD ORIOLES: Oriolidae

Olive-backed Oriole (*Oriolus sagittatus*) * [CV]

WOODSWALLOWS: Artamidae

White-browed Woodswallow (*Artamus superciliosus*) [CV] **E**
Dusky Woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*) * [CV] **E**

BELLMAGPIES AND ALLIES: Cracticidae

Gray Butcherbird (*Cracticus torquatus*) [GNP] **E**
Pied Butcherbird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*) [GNP; KNP; BMNP] **E**
Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*) [NB; S; SH; K; CV]
Australasian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) [S; SH; K; CV]
Pied Currawong (*Strepera graculina*) * [DP; RNP] **E**

CROWS, JAYS AND MAGPIES: Corvidae

Australian Raven (*Corvus coronoides*) [S; SH; RNP] **E**

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGH AND APOSTLEBIRD: Corcoracidae

White-winged Chough (*Corvorax melanorhombos*) * [CV] **E**

BOWERBIRDS: Ptilonorhynchidae

Green Catbird (*Ailuroedus crassirostris*) [K] **E**

Satin Bowerbird (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) [DP; RNP] **E**

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: Motacillidae

Australian Pipit (*Anthus novaseelandiae*) * [CV]

WAXBILLS AND ALLIES: Estrildidae

Double-barred Finch (*taeniopygia bichenovii*) * [K; CV] **E**

Red-browed (Finch) Firetail (*Neochmia temporalis*) * [DP; K; NB; RNP; KNP] **E**

Beautiful Firetail (*Stagonopleura bella*) [BMNP] **E**

Diamond Firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*) [CV] **E**

SISKINS, CROSSBILLS, AND ALLIES: Fringillidae

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) [SH]

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: Passeridae

House Sparrow (*Paser domesticus*) [SH]

FLOWERPECKERS: Dicaeidae

Mistletoebird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) * [K; CV]

SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae

Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*) [NB; SH; CV] **E**

Fairy Martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*) [CV]

GRASSBIRDS AND ALLIES: Megaluridae

Rufous Songlark (*Cincloramphus mathewsi*) * [CV]

WHITE-EYES: Zosteropidae

Silver-eye (*Zosterops lateralis*) [GNP; CV]

STARLINGS: Sturnidae

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [SH; CV]

Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) [S; SH]

Combined total: 137 species (136 seen, 1 heard only) including 73 Australian endemics and 64 lifers for DJS.

Mammal Trip List²

Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) [CV] **E**

Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) [S] **E**

Common Ringtail Possum (*Pseudocheirus peregrinus*) [S] **E**

Eastern Grey Kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*) [MNP; CV] **E**

Euro (Common Wallaroo) (*Macropus robustus*) [CV] **E**

Black (Swamp) Wallaby (*Wallabia bicolor*) * [DP; KNP] **E**

Gray-headed Flying-Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) [S] **E**

Common Wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*) [CV] **E**



New Year's Eve celebrations on Sydney harbour

² **First sighting ever for DJS**; **E** = Australian endemic species; * = photo available