

South -East Tasmania - Nov / Dec 2017

The main activity on this two week trip to Tasmania was to spend a week rafting the Franklyn River, a dream of mine for 15 years. When the rafting was done I wanted to use my remaining week to visit a couple of mammal watching sites in SE Tasmania. Both Port Arthur and Melaleuca were new sites for me whilst Bruny Island I had visited earlier in the year. I try not to revisit sites but the sheer number of **Eastern Quolls** on Bruny was too much to resist. I used Dave Watts fabulous book "Where to see wildlife in Tasmania," David Andrews "The complete guide to finding the mammals of Australia" and of course Jon Hall's mammal watching website for information when planning the trip.

The Rafting Trip on the Franklyn River was with the company "Water by Nature" and comes highly recommended. The only mammals seen on this part of the trip was an **Echidna** crossing the road on the bus journey through the central plateau to the start point on the Collingwood River and three **Platypus** on the Lower Franklyn. Although **Quolls** and **Antechinus** are often seen at overnight camp spots. I was too exhausted after a hard day on the river to spotlight during this part of the trip.

Melaleuca – Sun 26th Mon 27th Nov.

Melaleuca is an isolated site on the South Coast of Tasmania. There are no roads so the easiest way to access this remote spot is by plane. I flew with Par Avion from Cambridge Airfield, Hobart into Melaleuca and the 40 minute flight is breathtaking passing over Mt Wellington and the South West of the state before descending through the middle of the Arthur Ranges into Melaleuca.

Mt Rugby seen from Melaleuca.



Accommodation was in walker huts in Melaleuca (this is the start/finish of the South Coast Track.) The huts were five stars being one of the few huts in Tasmania where the bunks have mattresses, there is a kitchen area for preparing food (although you would need to bring own stove,) but best of all for the two nights I was there I was the sole occupant!

Walker Huts Melaleuca.



The site is best known for its summer visitors the Orange-bellied Parrot and I wasn't disappointed with these birds seen at the bird hides regularly throughout the days.

Orange-bellied Parrot.



Other birds of note seen at Melaleuca during my stay were Beautiful Firetails and the endemic Green Rosella and Yellow-throated Honeyeater.

Green Rosella.



Mammals seen at Melaleuca were **Pademelons** and **Bennett's Wallaby** although **Common Wombats** were certainly also present from their scats. **Spotted-tailed Quolls** are regulars at the walker huts although none had been seen to date the season I was there.

Tasmanian Pademelon.



Swamp Rats, Swamp Antechinus and Pygmy possums are also present and the heath was in spectacular flower during my stay. Despite looking however, I didn't find any **Pygmy Possums**. I was successful with the **Swamp Rat** however with one individual reliably seen during the day beneath the bird feeder at the Deny King Museum Bird Hide.

Swamp Rat.



The first two days of my stay at Melaleuca were very wet which didn't allow me much mammal watching outside of the bird hide, although this wasn't entirely disagreeable after my hard exertions on the Franklyn and I consistently managed two naps a day in addition to great night's sleep! The final day was warm and I was pleased to see a Tiger Snake basking near the Deny King museum. Melaleuca is a wild frontier and a fabulous place to spend a few days, I think even a day trip with Par Avion would be worthwhile for a taste of the place.

Port Arthur – Tues 28th Wed 29th Thurs 30th Nov

After the return flight from Melaleuca I picked up a hire car from Hobart airport and made the short drive to Port Arthur. En route I saw a **Tasmanian Bettong DOR** in the first kilometre South of the settlement of Eaglehawk Neck so this would be a good area to try for this species. My accommodation was at the cosy Fox and Hounds Hotel. I had spent far too long in the wilderness and during my first night at Port Arthur all mammal watching was put to one side while I enjoyed the local "Moo Brew" a steak and a soft bed.

The following morning, I drove down to Fortescue Bay (unsealed but good road,) and had a look around the campsite with a view to a possible spotlight (that never happened.) The only mammal I saw was a **Bennett's Wallaby** loitering with intent.

That afternoon I drove down the C347 Safety Cove Road to see Remarkable Cave, returning I found an **Echidna** crossing the road. The C347 was to be my main focus or mammal watching during the time at Port Arthur.

Echidna.



Late afternoon I paid to enter the Port Arthur Historic site. I was disappointed that the public are required to leave the site by dusk, unless of course you want to do ghost tour where you are required to stay with the group, and to be honest I couldn't be less interested.

Port Arthur Historic Site.



Although it was too early for mammals there were some nice birds around the site late evening including Superb Fairy Wren, Green Rosella and Yellow Wattlebird.

Yellow Wattlebird.



It is possible to spotlight on the lawns East of the car park (outside the main site,) where there is a picnic area and it was here I found plentiful **Pademelons** and an **Eastern Barred Bandicoot with Joey**.

Eastern Barred Bandicoot.



The next site I had a look around the was the grounds of the Stewarts Bay Lodge where there were lots of **Pademelons** and a **Cat**.

When I drove the C347 South I found this a good road for mammals. There were **Pademelons** grazing inside the back perimeter of the Port Arthur Historic Site. I parked the car on the South West corner of the Historic Site and quickly picked up a **Ringtail Possum** given away by its twittering and a **Brushtail Possum**.

The road then descends through woodland to the settlement of Safety Cove and it was here I passed a **Long-nosed Potoroo** on the verge. I parked the car at the bottom of the hill and retraced the hill on foot. There are large numbers of **Potoroos** in this short stretch of woodland.

Further down the road towards Remarkable Cave there were additional **Pademelons** and **Brushtail Possums** as the road once again passes through farmland.

I booked on a 3 hour boat cruise with Pennicott Wilderness Journeys the following morning and it was great to see the mighty impressive sea cliffs of the Tasman Peninsula from the ocean.

Impressive Cliffs – Cape Pillar.



Dolphins and **Whales** are a possibility on the trip although we didn't see any, there were however plenty of **Seals**. The first species seen was a solitary **Long-nosed (New Zealand) Fur Seal** hauling out. The species seen most often and in colonies at the base of Cape Pillar and Tasman Island was the **Australian Fur Seal**.

Australian Fur Seals.



That evening when conditions were still reasonably light I returned to the wooded area of the C347 that I had found so productive the previous evening for **Long-nosed Potoroos** and even before dusk there were good numbers of this species foraging on the roadside.

Long-nosed Potoroo.



Back at the lawns outside the historic site the **Eastern-barred Bandicoot with Joey** was again present as well as large numbers of **Pademelons**.

Driving the C347 later the **Ringtail Possum** was in the same tree as the previous night, there were again large numbers of **Pademelons** then as I passed through the wooded area there was a **Southern Brown Bandicoot** foraging on the roadside quite unperturbed by the car engine and headlights.

Southern Brown Bandicoot.



The weather during the Port Arthur part of the trip had been fantastic even hot! The following day as I drove to Bruny Island the predicted large amounts of rain forecast hammered down. This was my second trip to Bruny Island this year and now both had been during inclement weather, damn.

Bruny Island Fri 1st Sat 2nd Dec

There was a brief break from the rain that evening, enough time to drive Lockleys Rd for the **Bennett's Wallabies** that are a regular feature of the rural properties on this road.

Bennett's Wallaby with Joey.



The rain then set in for the evening so I gave up on the idea of spotlighting.

The following night despite the wet conditions I elected to get out to North Bruny and brave the weather. The circuit I drove was Lennon Rd East, Bruny Island Main Rd North, Church Rd West and finally Missionary Rd South.

The first mammal I saw was an **Eastern Quoll**, the first of twenty animals that night, four of the twenty were the dark morph photographed below.

Eastern Quoll (Dark Morph.)



Over the course of the evening I saw ten **Brushtail Possums** (two golden morph,) four **Long-nosed Potoroos** (East of the junction of Lennon with Missionary.) **Pademelons** were also around North Bruny but in small numbers compared to the profusion of this species on South Bruny.

Brushtail Possum with Joey.



This was to be my last trip to Tasmania for the foreseeable future and I was pleased to be able to visit Melaleuca and Port Arthur both sites I had wanted to visit for some time. One day I hope to return to Tasmania and visit both King and Flinders Islands.

