Tasmania 5th November - 22nd November 2024

I was in Australia for just over 6 weeks from 5th November to 17th December 2024 and visited Tasmania; Victoria; New South Wales and Western Australia. The following trip reports cover each of the states visited.

Tasmania 5th November – 22nd November

Victoria 22nd November – 25th November

New South Wales 25th November – 6th December

Western Australia 6th December – 17th December

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Participants: Tim Bourne & John Wright

Photographs: Tim Bourne (TB) & John Wright (JW)

We had a night flight from London Heathrow on Sunday 3rd November and arrived in Hobart, Tasmania via Doha & Sydney, midday Tuesday 5th. This was the first time in Australia for both of us.

Background: We gleaned pre-trip information from mammalwatching.com trip reports and The Complete Guide to Finding the Mammals of Australia (David Andrew). We had with us A Field Guide to The Mammals of Australia (Menkhorst/Knight). We also had binoculars, thermal imagers and torches/spotlights. We used Tasmanian Odyssey as our ground agent to book the car hire, accommodation, boat trip and the local guides we had at three specific locations. To be honest you don't need a guide in Tasmania, but we knew the guides had access to some private areas which we hoped would prove useful. Tasmanian Odyssey contact details: susie@tasmanianodyssey.com. All the information gathered was fed into our final itinerary.

Itinerary: Hobart; Bruny Island; Mount Field; Cradle Mountain; Loongana; North Motton/Ulverstone; Scottsdale

Text Clarifications: In Tasmania the Eastern Grey Kangaroo is called Forester Kangaroo, the Red-necked Wallaby is called Bennett's Wallaby and the Rufous-bellied Pademelon is called the Tasmanian Pademelon. In this report, after the first sightings, I have referred to them as Kangaroo, Wallaby and Pademelon. Short-beaked Echidna is shortened to Echidna, Common Brush-tailed Possum is shortened to Brush-tailed Possum and European Rabbit to Rabbit.

Tasmanian Devil: We obviously wanted to see a Tasmanian Devil but knew how difficult it is now. We could have stayed on Maria Island, where cancer-free Tasmanian Devils were released some years ago. This was a precaution against the extinction of Tasmanian Devils on the Tasmanian mainland. All those on the island originated from captive stock. By all accounts they are thriving, in fact, they have eaten their way through a colony of 1000 pairs of Little Penguins! Even if Tim and I had seen them on the island we just couldn't bring ourselves to tick

them. This is our own standard of what is tickable and what is not (each to their own of course). So, we decided not to stay on Maria Island even if it meant not seeing a Tasmanian Devil.

Weather: Most days were warm to hot with plenty of sunshine, although it did rain on occasions, and we even had a brief hailstone shower. The nights were cool to chilly with one night being very cold, but we were at a high elevation. We had a couple of nights with torrential rain for a few hours.

Tues 5^h November – Hobart area

We picked up our hire car at the airport and drove to our hotel in Hobart – the Salamanca Inn. After checking in and dumping our bags we set off for the Cascade Gardens to look for Platypus. We walked slowly along the river up as far as the Female Factory (a former institution to hold women convicts and their children). This is where we found our first Platypus and the first mammal of the trip. We made our way back along the river to Cascade Gardens and found another Platypus in a settling pool which was drawing quite a few admiring observers.

In the late afternoon we drove to the Sewage Works Reserve. At dusk and into the night we found two Eastern Barred Bandicoots, Common Brush-tailed Possums, Red-necked Wallabies and Rufous-bellied Pademelons. We looked hard for, but didn't find, Eastern (Tasmanian) Bettong.



Platypus

Wed 6th November - Bruny Island

We drove from Hobart to Kettering and got an 11:30 ferry to North Bruny Island. We slowly made our way to Lunawanna in South Bruny as we were staying at Inala Bruny, a private wildlife reserve. We stayed in a cottage in the grounds for three nights.

Around the reserve and surrounding area there were Pademelons and Wallabies and in the fields just outside of the reserve we saw six white Wallabies amongst their more regular-coloured companions. A Swamp Rat (called a Velvet-furred Rat on Tasmania) showed well in our cottage garden. In the evening, we met up with Don, a local guide working for Inala who was taking us on a night drive. We said we wanted to do a drive on North Bruny for Eastern Quolls and that is what we did. After passing across the 'The Neck' taking us onto North Bruny we drove slowly as far as the ferry terminal and then back again. It was a good night with 11 Eastern Quolls, 4 of which were black morph, a Long-nosed Potoroo and the expected Brushtailed Possums, Wallabies, Pademelons and a few European Rabbits. Back at Inala, around 00:30, Tim and I used our thermal imagers to check out some flowering bushes in the hope of finding Pygmy Possums but no joy. In fact, we tried this for the following 2 nights but didn't find any. The windy, chilly conditions on those nights didn't do us any favours.

Thurs 7th November – Bruny Island

First thing in the morning Tim saw a Swamp Antechinus near the bird hide situated behind the reserve office. Unfortunately, I missed it by a couple of minutes. But a short time later as we wandered around the Jurassic Garden, we came across another Swamp Antechinus along with at least 5 Swamp Rats. For the rest of the morning, we explored the reserve grounds with Don, the Inala guide, but mammal wise at least, we didn't come across much at all just the odd Wallaby and Pademelon. In the afternoon we went for a drive with Don and explored some fabulous old growth forests.

In the evening, we were again with Don, and we decided to go back to North Bruny to look for Quolls again. We drove the same route as yesterday and then added a loop around the top of the island via Dannes Point. It was another good night drive we saw 12 Eastern Quolls (5 black morph), 6 Long-nosed Potoroos, plus many Pademelons, Wallabies, Brush-tailed Possums (including 2 golden morphs) and Rabbits. We said goodbye and our thanks to Don as we weren't seeing him again. We turned in at 23:30.



Long-nosed Potoroo TB



Rufous-bellied Pademelon

JW

Fri 8th November – Bruny Island

First thing in the morning Tim and I walked around the Jurassic Garden seeing 3 Swamp Rats and a Swamp Antechinus. Later we wandered around the reserve grounds but apart from Pademelons and Wallabies we didn't see a great deal. In the afternoon we went for a drive around parts of South Bruny such as Cloudy Bay and the Lighthouse in South Bruny National Park. On our way back to Inala in the late afternoon we came across our first Short-beaked Echidna at the side of the road. It showed remarkably well, even climbing over Tim's leg at one point when he was sitting down taking photos. At dusk there were plenty of Pademelons and Wallabies grazing in and around Inala. We then did a night drive around South Bruny seeing plenty of Pademelons, Wallabies, Brush-tailed Possums and Rabbits. As expected, we didn't see any Quolls. North Island is realistically the only place to see Quolls on Bruny Island. We were back at our cottage at 22:45.



Swamp Antechinus

TB

Sat 9th November - Bruny Island to Mount Field National Park

This was our last day on Bruny Island. In the early morning there were a couple of Swamp Rats and a Swamp Antechinus in our cottage garden. Nearby were the usual Pademelons and Wallabies. We departed Inala around 10:00 and made our way to Adventure Bay to the checkin office of Bruny Island Cruises. This was for our 11:00, 3-hour boat trip along the coast of South Bruny Island as far south as a small cluster of islands called The Friars. On one of these small islands there was a breeding colony of Australian Fur Seals and on another island a small non-breeding haul out of male New Zealand Fur Seals. On the boat trip back to Adventure Bay we came across a small pod of (Short beaked) Common Dolphins.

We got a 14:45 ferry off Bruny Island and made our way to Mount Field in the South-Central area of Tasmania. On route we saw an Echidna and a few Rabbits. At about 17:30 we arrived at our accommodation - Russell Falls holiday cottages - at the entrance to Mount Field National Park.

A couple of hundred metres from our accommodation there was a large open area, where we found an Echidna bumbling about. When it was dark using our thermals, we could see at least 100 Pademelons, plenty of Brush-tailed Possums and 2 Eastern Quolls which stayed at a distance, but we managed to spotlight them briefly. We stopped at 23:00.



Echidna TB



Australian Fur Seals TB



New Zealand Fur Seal TB

Sun 10th November – Mount Field National Park

We spent the morning exploring the area visiting Russel Falls, Horseshoe Falls and had a walk beside the Tyenna River to sus it out for likely looking Platypus spots. Later we left to get petrol and found 4 Echidnas in a field on the way. In the late afternoon, back at Mount Field, we found 2 Platypus in the Tyenna River and a third one in a flooded ditch. After dark on a night walk from 20:30 – 23:15 we found an Eastern Barred Bandicoot, we saw a second Bandicoot but only in the thermal, it was probably another Barred but it scooted off before we could get a light on it. Back at the large open field there were 2 Eastern Quolls – a light phase and a dark phase, presumably the same 2 as the night before. We did find a third Eastern Quoll in the field behind our cottage. We also saw many Pademelons and Brush-tailed Possums.



Eastern Barred Bandicoot

TB

Mon 11th November – Mount Field National Park to Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park

We departed Mount Field at 09:15. On route to Cradle Mountain we saw a couple of Wallabies, a few Rabbits and just as we entered the central highlands, a small herd of Fallow Deer. We arrived at our chalet in the Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village mid-afternoon.

Regulations imposed by the Parks & Wildlife Service mean that you cannot drive your car through the boom gate to the National Park during the hours of the shuttle bus (07:30 to 18:00 when we were there). The shuttle buses run a very regular operation from the Visitor Centre – there is a small monetary charge for this service. You can drive your own vehicle up/down the mountain once the shuttle buses have stopped or before they have started running. You can drive down the mountain during the day but must follow behind a bus going down.

In the late afternoon before we drove up Cradle Mountain, we stopped at the Cradle Mountain Lodge where we saw a Platypus in the small lake behind the lodge. We had heard that there had been some recent sightings of a Tasmanian Devil in the grounds. At 18:00 when the road up the mountain opened to vehicles, we drove up to Ronny's Creek. It was Wombat heaven with at least 30 grazing the grassland. There were also Brush-tailed Possums, Pademelons and Wallabies around the wooded areas. We started checking the area with our thermals at 20:30. It was a very cold night, in fact the coldest night we had on the trip. We spotlit an Eastern Quoll and Tim got a brief view of a Spot-tailed Quoll in his thermal only. It was so cold, and as we didn't find much, we drove further up the road to Dove Lake before turning round and driving down the mountain and out of the park. Just before midnight we checked out Cradle Mountain Lodge again and were amazed and extremely happy to find a Tasmanian Devil on the other side of the lake. It wasn't a bad view when looking at it in the spotlight through binoculars. But it was a bit far for a good photo and a rising mist over the lake didn't help photo quality either. But we're more than happy even with a record shot. It wandered off and out of sight and didn't reappear after 10 minutes, so we went for a short drive. We returned 20 minutes later only to find it in the same spot as before! Sadly, it didn't hang around and it soon made off. We hung around for some time, but it never reappeared. But we did pick up in our thermals a Water Rat (Rakali) swimming across the lake which we spotlit briefly before it went into thick bankside vegetation. We got back to our chalet around 01:15.

Tues 12th November - Cradle Mountain National Park

We were back at the Cradle Mountain Lodge at 07:10 where the Platypus was showing, but no sign of the Rakali. We then drove up Cradle Mountain before the road closed to vehicles at 07:30. On the way up we came across a Pademelon lying in the road that had been hit by a vehicle. I got out to move it off the road, it was a female that was still warm but dead. I checked the pouch and found a joey inside still alive. We left it in the pouch and took the body of the Pademelon back down to the ranger station. The rangers were going to take the joey to a wildlife rescue centre to rear it. We hoped it would survive.

By this time the road had been closed to private vehicles, so we went back up the mountain by the park shuttle bus and alighted at Ronny's Creek. We had a good walk around and saw a few Wombats and an Echidna before getting the bus back down at 11:00. A quick look in again at Cradle Mountain Lodge and once again the Platypus was motoring around the lake.

After a relaxing afternoon we went back to Cradle Mountain Lodge (it's on the way to Cradle Mountain National Park entrance road so it's not out of your way). This time we had good views of a Water Rat (Rakali) whilst it was still light, but there was no sign of the Platypus this time.

Up the mountain around Ronny's Creek we found the usual Wombats, Wallabies and Pademelons. We drove back down at 23:00 and at the Lodge the Platypus was showing again and a couple of Brush-tailed Possums were mooching about. We then did a night drive around the roads away from the National Park seeing a couple of Wombats, Wallabies and an Eastern Quoll. We got back to our chalet at 00:35.



Tasmanian Devil TB

Wed 13th November - Cradle Mountain to Loongana

We departed at 09:45 and headed for Loongana, in North Central Tasmania, arriving at 14:00. We saw an Echidna on route. We stayed at Mountain Valley Eco Retreats & Private Wildlife Reserve. We had a late afternoon walk around the grounds finding Pademelons and 2 Platypus in the river. The Loongana set-up has been run by Len and Pat for many years and was once THE place to observe Tasmanian Devils. They came right up to the huts for food that was put out for them. But since the infectious facial cancer decimated the Tasmanian Devil population

you really have little chance of seeing one let alone the multiple sightings of yesteryear. Having said that, one was seen on a trail cam a couple of days before we got there. Our chances of seeing one here were also lessened because there was a mass 'cull' of Pademelons and Wallabies going on in the surrounding forests and farms. This was apparently to protect newly planted trees and crops from being grazed. All of which meant that there was so much carrion around that a Devil would have no need to visit the food by the huts. So, our main target was now Spot-tailed Quoll.

Len put pieces of chicken out in front of our hut at 21:00 and threw some other food around for the Pademelons. There were plenty of Pademelons and Brush-tailed Possums around and then at 22:00 a Spot-tailed Quoll came to the chicken bits. It, or should I say they, as 2 Quolls visited, returned 6 times until the last piece of chicken was gone at 04:20. We knew the Quoll visits involved 2 different animals by studying the photographs taken. Tim and I turned in at first light around 05:30.

Thurs 14th November - Loongana

We slept for the rest of the morning but walked around the grounds in the afternoon and early evening. An Echidna, Platypus, Pademelons and Brushtail Possums were all seen.

The chicken bits were put down again at 21:00. The first Spot-tailed Quoll appeared at 22:20 and a second Quoll also joined in, but they never appeared together. The Quolls made 9 visits, the last one being 04:50. We went to bed at 05:30 again.



Wombat TB



Spot-tailed Quoll TB

Fri 15th November - Loongana

We got up around midday and strolled around the grounds. Seeing Platypus, Pademelons and a couple of Wallabies. The chicken bits were put out again at 21:00. It was a full moon, but it didn't have any effect on the Quolls nor the Pademelons or Brush-tailed Possums. The first Spot-tailed Quoll appeared again at 22:20. Both Quolls turned up and 7 visits were made till 04:20 when the last of the chicken bits were taken. We turned in at 05:30.

On all the nights we had a rodent dash out from under the chalet and take a piece of chicken, but it was so quick we never got a great view of it. We thought (hoped!) it was a Long-tailed Mouse but what we did get on it over the 3 nights pointed to an immature Black Rat. Rather worryingly, on 2 nights we had a visit from a feral cat. Len had caught it a couple of times on the trail cam and said he would be dealing with it.



Two Spot-tailed Quolls TB



Sat 16th Nov – Loongana to North Motton

We departed Loongana at 11:30 and headed north to North Motton, which is a few kilometres southwest of Ulverstone on the north coast. We saw 2 Echidnas on route. We arrived at Black Bluff View Retreat, at 12:30, which was to be our accommodation for the next 3 nights. Black Bluff View Retreat is a fantastic big, new, luxury house with all the mod cons you would ever need. In the afternoon we drove to Warrawee Forest Reserve where we saw 2 Platypus in the adjacent River Mersey.

Back at Black Bluff View Retreat in the late afternoon there was an Echidna and at dusk many Pademelons in the adjacent field. We then drove back to Warrawee Forest Reserve in the hope of finding Eastern (Tasmanian) Bettong but had no luck only seeing Pademelons and Brushtailed Possums. Although it was dark it wasn't late at night and there were still families and dog walkers strolling along the track. We decided not to wait around until things quietened down but return another night if necessary.

Sun 17th November - Northeast coastal areas

In the morning, we explored the wooded area around our accommodation and found an Echidna. In the afternoon we went to Devonport Arboretum and found 2 Platypus in the main lake. We spent a long time in the Platypus hide as it was pouring with rain. In the late afternoon when the rain stopped, we drove to Narawntapu National Park and stopped in the vicinity of the visitor centre. There were around 80 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, plus many Wallabies and Pademelons. It was a fine sight, seeing all those macropods grazing the open areas. No doubt it would have been an even better sight a few years ago when there would have been Wombats too. But they haven't recovered from the sarcoptic mange outbreak that wiped out the local Wombat population.

After we left Narawntapu we drove a few miles south to Dalgarth Forest Reserve and hung around until it was dark. We stayed in the car, as it was poring with rain again, and just drove back and forth along the road bordering the forest – Bakers Beach Road (the C740). Using a thermal and then a spotlight we found the species we were looking for – Eastern Bettong – two of them in fact. We also saw a single Eastern Barred Bandicoot, a Brush-tailed Possum and of course Pademelons. On the drive back to Black Bluff View Retreat we only saw Rabbits, we arrived back just before midnight.



Water Rat (Rakali)



Eastern Grey Kangaroo



Eastern Grey Kangaroos, female & joey



Eastern Grey Kangaroos and a Rufous-bellied Pademelon

JW

JW



Red-necked Wallaby

Mon 18th Nov - Northwest coast and inland areas

We had arranged to meet up for the day with Paul 'Basil' O'Halloran, the owner of Black Bluff View Retreat. We had a very interesting day and visited Fossil Bluff Beach to look at fossils and get an understanding of the ancient rock formations. We then went inland a little way to the Tarkine National Park where we came across a couple of Wallabies. The Tarkine is an amazing wilderness area with many ancient giant trees, sadly under threat of logging! We said thank you and goodbye to Paul as he dropped us back at the house at 17:30. An Echidna was snuffling around the field.

In the early evening, Tim and I drove the short distance to the north coast and as it got dark, we watched the Little Penguins returning to their burrows at Lillico beach just west of Devonport. There was also a Pademelon in the beach scrub. We then drove the roads south of North Motton and came across a few Brush-tailed Possums and Pademelons. Around 23:30 we went back to the house, in the adjacent field there were at least 40 Pademelons.

Tues 19th November – North Motton to Scottsdale

We departed Black Bluff View Retreat at 09:30 and made our way to Scottsdale in the Northeast of Tasmania. On route we called in again at Narawntapu National Park where there were a few Kangaroos and Pademelons loafing around.

We arrived at our B&B in Scottsdale late afternoon. We had arranged to spend some time with a local guide – Craig 'Bushy' Williams - as he had access to some private areas that we thought might prove worthwhile. Craig owns his own company Pepperbush Adventures (www.pepperbush.com.au). He is quite a character and regaled us with many tales, some being rather tall tales such as seeing a Thylacine on more than one occasion!

Craig picked us up at 17:00 and 10 minutes down the road we were watching 5 Platypus in two small adjoining ponds. Later in a private area of forest, where Craig had a hut, we had an outdoor evening meal whilst watching a Platypus in an adjacent pond. When it was dark we spotlit 3 or 4 Brush-tailed Possums and an Eastern Ring-tailed Possum with 2 youngsters. We got back to our B&B at 22:30.



Platypus



Eastern Quolls JW

Wed 20th Nov - The Northeast area

We spent the day with Craig and in the morning did the Scottsdale area. Our first port of call was the Platypus pools we visited yesterday afternoon - there were 2 Platypus on show. We then moved on to a farm Craig had access to, in a huge lake on the farm there were 5 Platypus. We went back to Scottsdale for lunch. After lunch we made our way to the Alpine Ski Resort near the summit of Ben Lomond National Park. Craig stayed in the car whilst Tim and I walked a short, marked trail. We found a Wombat and a few Wallabies. During the day we saw 9 Echidnas and 2 herds of Fallow deer totaling around 100 animals. In the late afternoon we drove through Roses Tier Forest to the Tyne Valley. We drove into a private area of the forest and to a big open area where Craig had a hut. As he started to prepare our outdoor evening meal we were joined by a big mob of Kangaroos plus Wallabies and Pademelons. Further out across the grassland there were 6 Wombats. However, best of all were 8 Eastern Quolls from 2 families that lived under the hut. There were 6 youngsters and 2 adults. The Quolls were habituated and literally ran around our feet munching on tidbits thrown to them by Craig. I think Craig said this was at least the 6th generation of Quolls raised under the hut.

After our evening meal and just as it got dark, we drove from the open area and along the road back through the Roses Tier Forest. We saw another 8 Eastern Quolls, 3 Wombats and the usual Wallabies, Pademelons, Brush-tailed Possums and Rabbits.



Eastern Quoll TB

Thurs 21st November - The Northeast area

Craig was picking us up at 10:00 so Tim and I went out earlier and visited the nearby Platypus ponds where we saw 3 Platypus. Craig picked us up at the allotted time and we drove to Mount William National Park in the far northeast of Tasmania. On route we saw 6 Echidnas and at Mount William a few Kangaroos and Wallabies and an Australian Fur Seal was flipper flapping/waving offshore. Craig dropped us back at the B&B late afternoon. We had our evening meal and at 21:00 Tim and I went for a night drive southeast of Scottsdale. We drove the Ringarooma to Mithinna road (the C423) which passes through forested areas including the eastern side of the South Esk Forest Reserve. It was a very good night drive as we saw 13 Eastern Quolls, 18 Wombats, 1 Eastern (Tasmanian) Bettong, 1 Echidna, 1 Eastern Ring-tailed Possum and many Brush-tailed Possums, Wallabies and Pademelons. We also had what was almost certainly a Little Pygmy Possum cross the road in front of us.

Fri 22nd Nov – Scottsdale to Launceston

This was our final day in Tasmania. We departed Scottsdale around 10:00 and drove to the Tamar wetlands on the outskirts of Launceston seeing 2 Echidnas on route. At the wetlands

we didn't see any mammals but there were plenty of birds. Eventually we made our way to Launceston Airport for a 16:00 flight to Melbourne. From Melbourne Tim got his flight back to London and I got a taxi to my hotel in Ringwood east of Melbourne for two days mammal watching in Victoria

Systematic List: 23 Mammals seen. Mammal names follow those in the single volume All the Mammals of the World (Lynx).

Short-beaked Echidna Tachyglossus aculeatus

Platypus Ornithorhynchus anatinus

Spot-tailed Quoll Dasyurus maculatus

Eastern Quoll Dasyurus viverrinus

Tasmanian Devil Sarcophilus harrisi

Swamp Antechinus Antechinus minimusi

Eastern Barred Bandicoot Perameles gunnii

Common Wombat Vombatus ursinus

Common Brush-tailed Possum Trichosurus vulpecula

Eastern Ring-tailed Possum Pseudocheirus peregrinus

Eastern Bettong Bettongia gaimardi

Long-nosed Potoroo Potorous tridactylus

Rufous-bellied Pademelon Thylogale billardierii

Eastern Grey Kangaroo Macropus giganteus

Red-necked Wallaby Notamacropus rufogriseus

Water Rat (Rakali) Hydromys chrysogaster

Swamp Rat Rattus lutreola

European Rabbit Oryctolagus cuniculus

Fallow Deer Dama dama

Australian Fur Seal Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus

New Zealand Fur Seal Arctocephalus forsteri

Common Dolphin Delphinus delphis

Notes: We saw micro bats at various locations, but all went unidentified. Currently Australian micro bats aren't covered on the Echo Meter Touch 2 Bat Detector.

Being as careful as we could be not to double count, we saw 30 Echidnas, 25 Platypus, 57 Eastern Quolls and around 60 Wombats.

Herps: Tiger Snake, Lowland Copperhead, Northern Snow Skink, Blotched Blue-tongued Skink.

Selected Bird Species: Little Penguin, Shy Albatross, Short-tailed Shearwater, Black Swan, Musk Duck, Tasmanian Native-Hen, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Grey Falcon (white phase), Morepork Owl, Tawny Frogmouth, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Swift Parrot, Forty-Spotted Pardalote, Superb Fairy-Wren, Strong-billed Honeyeater, Flame Robin, Bassian Thrush, Beautiful Firetail.



Short-beaked Echidna TB





