

Mammalwatching in southern South Australia, August 2022

I was supposed to be exploring Sumatra about now, but with an unexpected yet understandable postponement, what could I do with my time instead? Well, staying on the S page of my atlas, there was South Australia! (OK, that wasn't quite how it went but anyway ...)

Flew into Adelaide and spent a few hours wandering along the bank of the Torrens River looking for **Rakali** (Water rat) where iNaturalist had a number of recent sightings but to no avail (perhaps Rakali has become my new nemesis species? – I will try again in Melbourne next month)

Picked up my hire car early next day and drove south to catch a ferry over to Kangaroo Island. Just the other side of the town of Myponga, I saw a small mob of **Western Grey Kangaroo** (also called the Black-faced Kangaroo) relaxing under trees in open view. Since the big macropods are all present in South Australia, seeing this species and the Red Kangaroo (see later) here in SA was a convenient way of ticking the remaining kangaroos on my list.



Western Grey Kangaroo

The ferry trip was smooth, and despite perching outside on the deck I wasn't lucky enough to see dolphins. (I did see bottlenose dolphins later at Victor Harbor but not with surety of species.)

Kangaroo Island is home to a subspecies of the Western Grey as well as the **Tammar Wallaby**. Both were visible at Baudin Conservation Park just east of the ferry terminal – the Tammars in good numbers. The Western Grey subspecies is common across the island, and is darker than its mainland counterpart, especially the underparts. The trail in Baudon CP was very slippery, especially at the beginning. I landed on my butt several times in the first five minutes.



Tammar Wallaby



Western Grey Kangaroo (Kangaroo Island subsp.)

Day 3, I drove a circuit of this huge island which is a full day endeavour. The big national parks on the western side of the island were closed for hiking, but the roads to Cape Borda (more western greys) and Cape Du Couedic (great spot to see **Long-nosed Fur Seals**) were open.

Heading back east along the southern coast of Kangaroo Island is the turnoff to Seal Bay where I saw **Australian Sea Lions**. While they can be seen from the walkway, I paid to take the ranger-led tour of the beach, getting much closer to the sealions who were sleeping amidst the dunes. Including this little fellow who came up to us to investigate and tick us off his mammalwatching list.



Australian Sea Lion pup

On the road into Seal Bay, I also saw the Kangaroo Island subspecies of **Echidna** which has notably more spines than the mainland version.

I was staying at a B&B in at Baudin Beach where some small creature was scurrying about in the flowering shrubs outside. Probably a **Southwestern Pygmy Possum** but I just couldn't get a light on it. Another miss.

Back to the mainland next day and across the coast to Victor Harbor to look for **Southern Right Whales**. Initially I climbed up The Bluff and sat in the sun scanning the ocean but no luck. I moved east to a wooden lookout platform just past Port Elliot with more success. The whales come close to the shore here (~200 m) and from the lookout I could see them clearly with my long-lens camera. Twice the size of humpback whales, they are not as energetic so while there was a bit of fin slapping, not much in the way of majestic leaps in the air. (By the way, I strongly recommend the Pork Belly and Onion Ring Burger at Cockles Café in Port Elliot!)



Southern Right Whale

The next plan was to drive inland northeast to look for **Southern Hairy-Nosed Wombats** at Brookfield CP. In hindsight, I should have booked longer than one night as once again I missed out here. I drove the park roads until park closing time, and again early the next morning and while there are plenty of obvious burrows, I couldn't score this much-wanted mammal. A return visit in the future is essential. There is a short loop of walking track in the centre of the park off the picnic area

which I later found out was the suggested wombat viewing site. Another dip, but a solitary **Mulga Parrot** did appear to grant me a consolation prize.



Deciding to stick to my itinerary, I drove up to Port Pirie and the Telowie Gorge CP to look for **Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby**. There is only one road into the park, and only one track into the gorge with a creek flowing through. About a km along the track, past the sign stating the trail ahead is uneven, I stopped at a small still pond under some rocky hillside thinking this was as good as anywhere and sat down to await dusk. Several younger walkers kept walking past me, until one hiker casually mentioned he'd seen wallabies just around the corner behind me. Sure enough, a few minutes later there was one on the summit above, and another one crossing the hillside in front. Difficult to see unless they are moving, they blend so well into the background. Unfortunately my best photo doesn't show the ringed tail. Feral goats here as well.



Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby

Last day so time to drive south again to catch my plane out. However some last minute research showed there was a good chance of seeing **Red Kangaroo** in the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Gardens an hour north at Port Augusta. So I'm driving in the dark at 5am heading north. The gardens did not open until 9am so I drove further north. No kangaroos near the road but I did score an **Emu** and her four chicks.



Back to the Botanic Gardens. The staff tell me the kangaroos are a bit of a nuisance as they eat and disrupt new plantings but they don't show any inclination to leave (the roos, not the staff!). I'm sure the big roos could clear that fence easily if they wanted.



Red Kangaroo

Then turn about and drive back to Adelaide. I didn't get the Rakali or the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat which was a shame as the chance to see the latter largely drove my decision to come here. But still a fun week, with some great animals. I'll be back.

In summary

Lifers

Echidna (KI subspecies)
 Western Grey Kangaroo (mainland subspecies)
 Western Grey Kangaroo (KI subspecies)
 Red Kangaroo
 Tammar Wallaby
 Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby
 Australian Sea Lion
 Southern Right Whale

Tachyglossus aculeatus multiaculeatus
Macropus fuliginosus melanops
Macropus fuliginosus fuliginosus
Macopus rufus
Macropus eugenii
Petrogale xanthopus
Neophoca cinerea
Eubalaena australis

Also

Long-nosed (New Zealand) Fur Seal
 Bottlenose Dolphin sp.
 Domestic goat (Feral)

Arctocephalus forsteri
Tursiops sp.
Capra hircus

Missed

Rakali
 Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat

Hydromys chrysogaster
Lasiorhinus latifrons