

Mammalwatching trip to Tasmania, March 18-27th 2022 : a novice goes mammalwatching

I have finally made an extended trip with the sole focus on mammalwatching. While much of this report duplicates the recent report by Brett Taylor (indeed, I used his trip report to plan my own extensively) I still feel I can add something and really wanted to make my first contribution to the mammalwatching website.

Some shorthand before we read on : an **L** means this species was a lifer for me, an **E** means this species is endemic to Tasmania. So off we go

Friday, March 18th : Flew into Devonport with my adult daughter (and vet nurse-in-training) who was willing to spend a long weekend in an isolated cabin staying up half the night to look at mammals. Picked up our hire car (no problem here, the airport is very small and roads are empty – a recurring theme throughout Tasmania), gathered some groceries from a nearby supermarket and headed to the Mountain Valley Wilderness Cabins at Loongana. Easy one hour drive.

The owner Len welcomed us with the news that (i) it was really the wrong time of year for Devils – they breed in March-April and take off for the more secluded bush, and (ii) being a full moon, the Quolls may not show either. Len leaves food (raw chicken wings) outside the cabins, which have large glass windows, to attract the wildlife into viewing distance.

At dusk, the **Red-bellied Pademelons (L, E)** were our first mammalian visitors. These little cuties are very plentiful all over Tasmania, so no surprise this was my first tick. We had about twenty outside our cabin.



Red-Bellied Pademelons

We also walked down to the creek (two minutes) at dusk where a **Platypus** could just be seen in the dark tannin-stained water.

We were the only guests, so had all the food outside our cabin. Len also stationed his trail camera outside our cabin to photograph whatever turned up. Which was largely **Common Brushtail Possums** – both the grey and chocolate forms - who feasted all night on the chicken, as well as a **feral cat** and two young sleek looking **black rats (L)**. Len had told me to watch for long-tailed mice (**E**) which have been recorded here, getting me excited when I saw the rats, until the cold light of iNaturalist shone upon me. Still a wild black rat was still a lifer, so hey?!!



Common Brushtail Possums (grey and chocolate)



Not a Long-Tailed Mouse

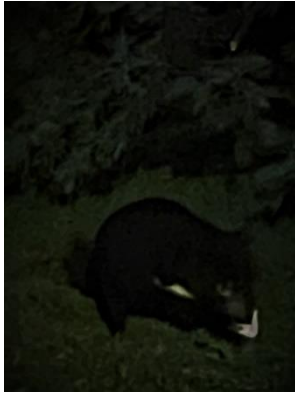
Saturday March 19th: The wifi being very indifferent, I bowed to my daughter's request to drive about the next day, ostensibly for coffee but really I think to locate some better wifi, and see a bit more of that part of Tasmania. Fish and chips at Penguin was a highlight, as well as just spending time with her of course.

Back to the cabin for our second night. Guests had moved in next door, so the animals had to visit both cabins to study the full menu. The possums seemed to still be full from last night's gorging and only gave a perfunctory look over the chicken pieces left out. But just after midnight, a solitary shadow emerged from the gloom and sidled over to investigate the pickings – a **Spotted Tail Quoll (L)** – one of my most wanted targets for the trip! Photography is not my forte, and this quoll only seemed to want to point their backside at my camera, but thankfully my daughter showed me how to take snapshots from my phone's video so some photographic evidence was secured – which is insanely important to me for some reason. Very pleased.



Spotted-Tail Quoll

About an hour later, another, darker shape separated from the shadows. Yes, we had a **Tasmanian Devil ! (L, E)**. It wandered around the cabin, inspected the chicken before selecting a piece and moving back out of sight. It returned several times in that hour before I gave up and went to bed around 2 am. Mission accomplished!



Sunday March 20th: Feeling much more relaxed after scoring the two carnivores, we slept in and spent the afternoon exploring short walks around the area. Wombat scat was quite evident but not fresh. I had seen the platypus again the day before when I went over solo a little earlier in the afternoon (4pm). Tonight the Devil came out much earlier (10.30 pm) with the quoll just after that (11 pm).

Also seen here : Birds included Tasmanian Native Hen (E) (like the pademelons, can be seen all over the eastern half of Tasmania), and Superb Fairy Wren. (I'm what you might call a low-effort birder but I do keep a list, because, you know ... lists!)

Monday March 21st: My daughter had to get back to Melbourne for work tomorrow, so it was back to Devonport airport. A young **Echidna** seen on roadside on the drive back was a nice farewell present. It had the thicker fur coat showing between the spines that is not often seen on the mainland version. Now on my own, I drove down to Port Arthur on the Tasman Peninsula. Reports of reliable sightings of both species of bandicoot took me out to the isolated and empty Tasman Golf Course after dinner, where besides large numbers of pademelons, possums and European rabbits, I saw no bandicoots but something which turned out to be a **Long-nosed Potoroo (L)** near the sheds across from the clubhouse. He obligingly sat next to some 20 x 20 cm concrete wire reinforcing grid which gave me a scale to judge size.



Long-nosed Potoroo

Tuesday March 22nd: The rain arrived, but I had planned to explore the World Heritage-listed Port Arthur convict settlement anyway so I made good use of the day. No mammals but endemic birds such as Green Rosella and Black Currawong as well as Masked Plovers, Australian Wood Ducks, Silver Gulls and Pied Cormorants were available. Back to the Golf Course tonight but nothing new.

Wednesday March 23rd: Off to catch the car ferry over to Bruny Island, driving through Hobart on the way. Dead **Southern Brown Bandicoot** at Dunalley gave a good visual guide to distinguish from other potentially similar species. Cape Barren Geese visible from car at Taranna.

Over on North Bruny which is abundant with Eastern Quoll, I had plenty of time to drive the backroads during daylight and become familiar with my planned route that night. Driving north on the main road with very little traffic I saw a dead wallaby in the centre of the road. Parking safely nearby, I moved it off the road to prevent quolls being hit (there is more roadkill in Tasmania than anywhere I have ever seen). Then it struck me that this wallaby presented “an opportunity”.

I relocated it well off the road to a spot where I could park and observe any visiting quolls up close from the comfort of my car. This proved a spectacular success. Returning just before dark and parking beside the carcass, the sun had barely set when the quolls were up and about. I had a glorious hour watching a rusty **Eastern Quoll (L, E)** feasting right beside me, crunching of bone and tearing of flesh, the carcass being too big for the quoll to drag away into the bush. After delicately washing her face and paws, she would still not allow other Quolls (another red and a black, and a wandering Brushtail) to move in on her meal. Turning away to drive back to my lodgings on South Bruny, the quiet roads were full of meandering quolls and possums so it was impossible not to see them.



Eastern Quoll

Thursday March 24th: Booked a boat cruise out of Adventure Bay with Pennicott Wilderness to go down to The Friars to see a bachelor colony of **Australian Fur Seals (L)**. Great 3-hour cruise looking at the cliffs and stacks, forest and finally the seals and Kelp Gulls. Nice to have an Australian mammal that is happy to sit out in plain view in daylight.



Australian Fur Seals

Speaking of, Adventure Bay is a good place to see **Bennett's (Red-necked) Wallabies**, including albino versions. Try Hayes Road, between the caravan park and the Cruise Boat terminal.



I should also mention that North and South Bruny Islands are separated by a narrow neck of land where Little Penguins and Sooty Tailed Shearwaters can be seen returning to shore at dusk.

Friday March 25th: Reluctantly leaving Bruny, my next stop was New Norfolk, a compromise accommodation choice within driving distance of both the Hobart Waterworks to the east and Mt Field National Park to the west. Some antiques shops to while away time. Reasoning that the Waterworks would be busy with picnickers on a Saturday evening, I elected to go there tonight and leave Mt Field for the next night.

After driving some narrow Hobart back-lanes, I reached the Waterworks area and parked at the second BBQ site. Lots of traffic back and forward further up the hill, I was glad I parked in an obvious spot to 'claim' my site and deter share-minded visitors. I had a stretch of 200 metres of woodland and stream bank in view, but with the gates to be locked at 9pm, I was eager again to look for bandicoots. After an hour of thermal scoping and only pademelons, I finally threw caution to the wind and started walking up and down spotlighting. I took some indifferent photos of anything smaller than a pademelon and left right on 9pm. I didn't realise it at the time but I actually scored a **Tasmanian Bettong (aka Southern Bettong, aka Eastern Bettong) (L, E)**. Insert crap photo here.



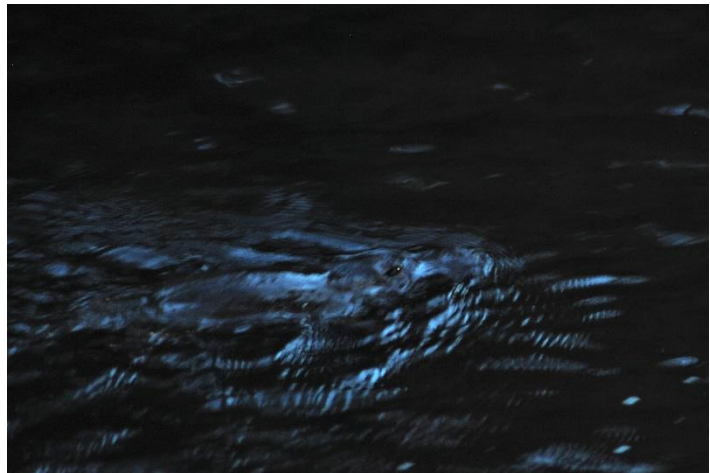
Tasmanian Bettong

BTW hundreds of Black Swans on Murphy Flat wetlands between Hobart and New Norfolk. There are safe places to park and watch.

Saturday March 26th: A day at Mt Field National Park. Got there early to walk the Three Waterfall Track (2 hours) and again saw lots of pademelons, but these were used to humans and gave some great photo opportunities. Lunch at the nearby National Park Hotel, then dozed in my car during the afternoon waiting for nightfall. Advised by park staff that the grassy oval between the campground and the BBQ area would be the best bet for those elusive bandicoots, I moved my car there and immediately found another young Echidna which gave me amusement while I waited for dark. Again, Platypus were in the nearby stream as well.



Echidna (Tas form)



Platypus

Once dark, I had my thermal scope out as dozens of pademelons emerged. One small orange blur scurried instead of hopping out of the way, and I had my **Eastern Barred Bandicoot (L)**. Difficult to photograph until I again put away the thermal scope and resorted to spotlighting. The bandicoot froze in the torchlight allowing me several photos before she realized she had another appointment elsewhere that night and bounded away.



Eastern Barred Bandicoot

Sunday March 27th: Time to make my way back to Devonport for tomorrow's flight. Visited the Bonorong Wildlife Park and Hospital to both financially support and get some daytime reference photos of Devils.

In summary

A hugely successful trip with 9 Ifers for me. Only endemic I missed was the Long-Tailed Mouse and even that gave me some amusement.

Native Mammals

Red-bellied Pademelon (everywhere : Loongana and Mt Field especially good) **L, E**
Platypus (Loongana and Mt Field, also at Devonport Arboretum according to all reports)
Common Brushtail Possums (everywhere, good photography at Loongana of both forms)
Spotted-Tail Quoll (Loongana) **L**
Tasmanian Devil (Loongana, possible roadside glimpse near New Norfolk) **L, E**
Echidna (random roadside but also at Mt Field campground)
Long-nosed Potoroo (Tasman Golf Course near Port Arthur) **L**
Eastern Quoll (both forms, numerous on North Bruny) **L, E**
Red-necked (Bennett's) Wallaby (North and South Bruny, albinos on South Bruny)
Australian Fur Seals (The Friars off South Bruny Island) **L**
Tasmanian Bettong (Hobart Waterworks, second campground in) **L, E**
Eastern Barred Bandicoot (Mt Field National Park grassy oval) **L**

Missed

Southern Brown Bandicoot (one dead on road, Dunalley)

Non-natives

Domestic cat (Feral)

Black Rat **L** 😊

European Rabbit

Birds

Tasmanian Native Hen **L, E**

Superb Fairy Wren

Green Rosella **L, E**

Masked Plover

Australian Wood Duck

Black Currawong **L, E**

Silver Gull

Kelp Gull **L**

Pied Cormorant

Black-Faced Cormorant **L**

Cape Barren Geese (Taranna on Tasman Peninsula) **L**

Pied Oystercatcher (North Bruny and Nebraska Beach, South Bruny) **L**

Black Swan (hundreds at Murphy Flat Wetland near New Norfolk)

Short-Tailed Shearwater (Bruny Neck) **L**

Scarlet Robin **L**

Missed

Little Penguin (wrong time of year?)