Welcome To The Darwin Birding Guide

Darwin and its surrounding area is a birdwatcher’s paradise. You have a range of habitats to choose from - the harbour, mangrove-lined creeks, billabongs, savanna woodlands and seasonal wetlands all of which nurture the diverse migratory and endemic species of the Top End.

Important information

The wellbeing of our birds is our top priority. Making a little impact as possible in these environments is of high importance for the future protection of these wonderful species. Although our land is vast, there are restrictions placed on certain areas where access is strictly prohibited.

- Please respect all landowners. Much of the Katherine region is held under traditional indigenous custodianship, by private landholders or managed conservation areas. Please keep to marked tracks and obey all signage. If you are unsure, please ask.
- Remain a safe distance (5m) from the water’s edge when you are close to any body of water as saltwater crocodiles are common and can be found in all natural waterways.
- Try not to disturb or feed any of the wildlife. Limit the use of recordings or ‘call-back’ and keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts and important feeding sites.
- Ensure you drink plenty of water and have appropriate clothing to protect you from the elements. Sunscreen and insect repellent are recommended.

Darwin Trails - Where to go and what to see

1 George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens
Gardens Road, Darwin
Wander through the George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens to see a rich collection of plants and flora of Northern Australia as well as some fantastic bird life. Species such as Northern Faltan, Varied Triller, Green-backed Gerygone, Orange-footed Scrubfowl, Mistletoebird, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Rufous-banded Honeyeater and Rainbow Bee-eater.

Top 3 Birds
- Rufous Owl
- Spangled Drongo
- Forest Kingfisher
- Bonus: Barking Owl

2 East Point Reserve
Alex Fong Lim Drive, Darwin
Just 8km from the CBD, East Point Reserve is home to abundant wildlife, including many birds. The Monsoon Forest walk is great for spotting species such as the Emerald Dove, Rainbow Bee-eater, Rainbow Pitta and Rose-crowned Fruit Dove. The Mangrove boardwalk gives easy access to Mangrove Golden Whistler, Crimson Finch, Mangrove Grey Fantail and Brown Goshawk. Between October and March many shorebirds share the shorelines with the Military Museum.

Top 3 Birds
- Lemon-bellied Flyrobin
- Rainbow Pitta
- Collared/Torresian Kingfisher
- Bonus: Little Kingfisher

3 Casuarina Coastal Reserve – Drippstone Cliffs To Lee Point Darbh Rd, Brinkin
Start this walk from the Drippstone Cliffs end and walk through some excellent birding environments. Winding your way along the coast, look out for Whistling, Black and Brahminy Kites as well as Pacific Baza (migratory) and Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos. Listen out for a variety of Finches such as Crimson and Double-barred. With a clear view on a high tide you’ll see many travel-weary waders (October – March) such as Eastern Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Great Knot and Crested and Gull-billed Terns.

Top 3 Birds
- Beach Stone-curlew
- Red-tailed Black Cockatoo
- Crimson Finch
- Bonus: Little Kingfisher

4 Casuarina Coastal Reserve – Lee Point To Buffalo Creek Lee Point Road, Lee Point
From the Lee Point end of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve, a short 1km walk leads you across a mangrove creek and through a monsoon forest towards a bird hide facing the shoreline. You may spot a Rainbow Pitta, Forest Kingfisher, Arfutura Fantail, Varied Lorikeet and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. When you reach the bird hide, look out for Grey-tailed Tattler, Great Knot and Eastern Curlew. If you continue your walk towards the Buffalo Creek, boat ramp on a dropping tide, you may even be rewarded with the elusive Chestnut Rail!

Top 3 Birds
- Forest Kingfisher
- Great Knot
- Red-headed Honeyeater

Darwin Trails - Where to go and what to see

5 Knuckey Lagoons Conservation Reserve
(June-Nov) Randall Road (Off Lagoon Road, Knuckey Lagoons
Located 8km from Darwin, this understated wetland provides a wide range of native wildlife. Migratory birds, waterfowl and waders congregate at the billabongs as the waters from the wet season begin to dry up. Look out for large flocks of Magpie Goose, Swoopwing Snipe, Australian Pratincole, Pacific Black Duck, Hornedlirns, Bronze-cuckoo, Black-winged Stilt and more.

Top 3 Birds
- Royal Spoonbill
- Brolga
- Red-kneed Dotterel
- Bonus: Eastern Yellow Wagtail

6 Nightcliff Foreshore
(Near The Mouth Of Rapid Creek) Travel just 10km out of the city and follow the coast around to the Nightcliff Foreshore. A beautiful place for a walk or a picnic with sea views, Nightcliff Foreshore doubles as a fantastic birding location. Visiting early in the morning or late afternoon, you’ll see a variety of Kingfishers including Forest and Sacred, as well as Red-collared Lorikeets, and Northern Fantail. There are also a few Finch species along with some birds of prey such as Whistling Kites, Brahminy Kite and Osprey. Heading along the foreshore in a southeasterly direction, towards Nightcliff Pier, is also a good spot to search for shorebirds during October – March.

Top 3 Birds
- Long-tailed Finch
- Masked Finch
- Osprey
- Bonus: White-bellied Sea Eagle

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Heading further out of darwin? Take in a couple of other outstanding spots under 1.5 Hrs from the Darwin CBD.

Howard Springs Nature Park
Corner Of Howard Springs Road And Gunn Point Road, Howard Springs
Around 40mins from Darwin City, Howard Springs Nature Park is an excellent place to spot some colourful and elusive birds. Head out on the Stuart Highway, turning off at the Howard Springs road and follow the signs to the Nature Park just 6km down the road. Here you will find species such as Rainbow Pitta, Spangled Drongo, Emerald Dove and the quick Shining Flycatchers.

Top 3 Birds
- Emerald Dove
- Rainbow Bee-eater
- Azure Kingfisher
- Bonus bird: Rainbow Pitta

Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve
Anzac Parade (Off Arnhem Highway)
Further out of town on the Arnhem Hwy is a perfect wetland environment with some great viewing platforms and a couple of good walks. Fogg Dam is just over an hour drive from Darwin off the Arnhem Highway. Here you will see wetland birds such as Comb-crested Jacana, Black-necked Stork and Plumed Whistling-Duck. On the walks, you can spot some Kingfisher species along with Rainbow Pitta and Rose-crowned Fruit Dove.

Top 3 Birds
- Black-necked Stork
- Rose-crowned Fruit-Dove
- Comb-crested Jacana
- Bonus bird: Buff-banded Rail

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Birds of Darwin Checklist

- Orange-footed Scrubfowl
- Magpie Goose
- Plumed Whistling-Duck
- Wandering Whistling-Duck
- Radjah Shelduck
- Green Pygmy-goose
- Brogla
- Chestnut Rail
- White-browed Crane
- Black-necked Stork
- Egret (lesser, intermediate, greater)
- Great-billed Heron
- Nankeen Night Heron
- Royal Spoonbill
- Eastern Osprey
- Pacific Baza
- White-bellied Sea-eagle
- Whistling Kite
- Brahminy Kite
- Black Kite
- Brown Goshawk
- Grey Goshawk
- Bush Stone-curlew
- Australian Pied Oystercatcher
- Black-winged Stilt
- Comb-crested Jacana
- Sooty Oystercatcher
- Swinhoe's Snipe
- Lesser Sand Plover
- Greater Sand Plover
- Black-tailed Godwit
- Bartailed Godwit
- Whimbrel
- Eastern Curlew
- Terek Sandpiper
- Grey-tailed Tattler
- Eastern Curlew
- Little Shrike-thrush
- Spangled Drongo
- Red-billed Flycatcher
- Broad-billed Flycatcher
- Leaden Flycatcher
- Paperbark Flycatcher
- Shining Flycatcher
- Lemon-bellied Flyrobin
- Mangrove Robin
- Golden-headed Cisticola
- Zitting Cisticola
- Australian Reed-warbler
- Yellow White-eye
- Mistletoebird
- Chestnut-breasted Mannikin
- Fairy Martin
- Masked Finch
- Long-tailed Finch
- Double-barred Finch
- Crimson Finch