

BIRDWATCHING AROUND WYNDHAM

Wyndham and its surrounding district has an exciting list of about 200 bird species in a variety of habitats, many of which are difficult to see elsewhere in Western Australia. However, access to good birding sites can be difficult due to the wet season, few roads, tides or the presence of crocodiles.

A MARIGU BILLABONG (Parry Lagoons)

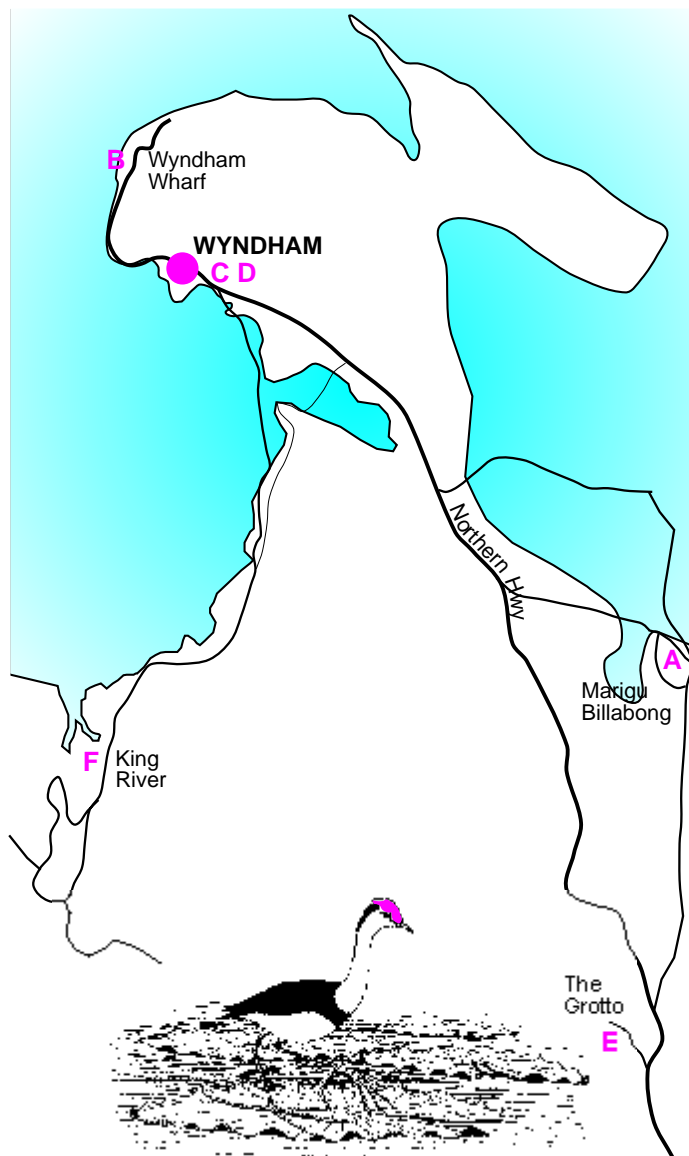
This site is a must for all birders. You can expect to see 60 to 80 species in this vicinity, provided that there is water remaining in the billabongs. Note that the black soil plains may be impassable during the wet season. At most times, 2WD access should be no problem, but 4WD is recommended for the track along Parry Creek.

Look for finches, Brown Quail and button-quails, Australian Pratincole, Australian Bustard, Horsfield's Bushlark, Golden-headed Cisticola, chance of Zitting Cisticola and Tawny Grassbird as you cross the grass plains. Binoculars are adequate, but a spotting scope is recommended for the main billabongs so that you can keep your distance without putting the large flocks into the air.

The lagoons can sometimes have thousands of Wandering or Plumed Whistling-Duck and Magpie Geese. There are usually also good numbers of spoonbill, ibis, egret, heron, Radjah Shelduck and other ducks, Red-kneed Dotterel, Brolga and Masked Lapwing. Also Comb-crested Jacana, Green Pygmy-Goose, Black-necked Stork and Nankeen Night-Heron can usually be found.

From September to April there are often good numbers of migratory waders, plus occasionally rare migrants such as Garganey and Ruff. Keep a frequent look out for raptors with more than ten possible species.

Apart from the abundant waterbirds, also be alert for the many species of bush birds such as finches (including the elusive *Pictorella Mannikin*), honeyeaters, Rainbow Bee-eater and flycatchers,



especially near the pools along Parry Creek. Eastern Yellow Wagtail and Barn Swallow are occasional wet season migrants, and Yellow Chat is a good chance along the edge of the wetlands.

Be very alert for saltwater crocodiles!

Check some of the tracks across the wide grass plain for Brown Quail, Little Button-quail, Golden-

headed and Zitting Cisticola, Horsfield's Bushlark and Yellow Chat.

B WYNDHAM WHARF

Walk about 5 metres into the mangroves near the parking area at the far end of the wharf to look for Yellow White-eye, Mangrove and Large-billed Gerygone, Mangrove Grey Fantail, Mangrove Golden Whistler, Broad-billed Flycatcher and Lemon-bellied (Kimberley) Flycatcher.

Near the start of the wharf look for Collared Kingfisher. Walk along the wharf looking for Striated Heron and a few migratory waders on the muddy shore. Brahminy Kite nest in the mangroves. Beware of crocodiles

C WYNDHAM TOWN

Look for Red-backed Kingfisher and White-breasted Woodswallow on the power lines. Look for honeyeaters and finches coming to drink at sprinklers and taps. Gouldian Finches have been recorded on the lawns of the hospital and in the caravan park. Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Great Bowerbird, Olive-backed Oriole and Jacky Winter might also be seen. Chestnut-backed Button-quail is possible on the way to the Five Rivers Lookout.

The town oval can have Little Curlew and Eastern Yellow Wagtail in the wet season and Australasian Pipit and Straw-necked Ibis throughout the year. The sewage ponds behind the oval can be worth a short look.

D GOLF COURSE

Ask for permission if anyone is at the club house. Walk around the course looking for a wide variety of bush birds such as finches, honeyeaters, Black-tailed Treecreeper, etc. Migrants such as Common Koel and Dollarbird and possibly Eastern Yellow Wagtail can usually be found from October to April.

E THE GROTTO

This popular tourist attraction is located about 30 km from Wyndham. The best time to visit is early in the morning before the heat and the tourists. The 2 km track from the highway is dusty and a bit stony, but should be no problem for a 2WD. An early morning visit is recommended to look for White-quilled Rock-Pigeon, Spinifex Pigeon, Leaden Flycatcher, Northern Fantail, Sandstone Shrike-thrush and possibly Pictorella Mannikin and Gouldian Finch. Common Koel is possible in the wet season. Black-breasted Buzzard is a good chance in the general area.

F KING RIVER

This road is quite rough. 4WD is required past the Moochalabra Dam turnoff and is recommended before this. In any case, you will need to take it fairly slowly. Look for possible Chestnut-backed Button-quail on the spinifex-covered stony slopes. The area around Singh's Garden is worth searching in the early morning. Look for mangrove birds and possibly Black Falcon along the King River. Chestnut Rail has been seen here at low tide and the right time of day.

The track to Moochalabra Dam is a good place to look for Black-chinned Honeyeater, Northern Fantail and possibly Gouldian Finch. Keep going about 20 km past the turnoff to Moochalabra Dam to the freshwater holes on the King River. White-browed Robin and Shining Flycatcher are among the possibilities here. Again, beware of crocodiles.

OTHER LOCATIONS

Check the pools in the creeks between Wyndham and the Great Northern highway for honeyeaters (including Bar-breasted Honeyeater and Silver-crowned Friarbird), finches (including Pictorella Mannikin), quail, possible Black Bittern, Black-tailed Treecreeper, cuckoos and Grey Butcherbird. Cheese Tin Creek and NAASRA Creek are two good sites.

Other recommended excursions include El Questro and Emma Gorge on the Gibb River Road, a boat trip along the coast and the rivers, and a trip to Kununurra (see separate brochure number 02a).

NOTES

WHAT IS BIRDS AUSTRALIA?

Birds Australia is a non-profit organisation working for the enjoyment, study and conservation of Australia's birds.

The Western Australian members of Birds Australia are state-wide and are offered a variety of activities and services including conservation and research projects, excursions, camp-outs, bird surveys and social activities.

We also have a library, books for sale and information about birds.

To view our full range of bird guides and bird lists, visit our web site.

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Magpie Goose

