Western Australia
North of Perth

22-28 October 2008

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Introduction
After a business trip in Perth I decided to do one week of birdwatching before going back to Denmark and try to see some of the birds I was missing on my Australian list. My plan was to go north of Perth to the outback around Cue and Mount Magnet and up the west cost to Shark bay and Carnarvon. In the area around Cue and Mount Magnet it is possible to see some of the species that are special for the outback, such as Banded Whiteface and Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush. Carnarvon has some of the special mangrove species that are only found in the northern part of Australia and Shark Bay is a good place to find Thick-billed Grasswren.

To plan my trip I used the information about the birds in Western Australia found on Frank O’Connors excellent homepage http://members.iinet.com.au/~foconnor/ I also used the book The Complete Guide to Finding Birds in Australia by Thomas and Thomas. The trip report by Gary and Marlene Babic Western Australia June 2005 was also a great help since there are very few resent reports from this area of Australia.

Maps: I bought a 1:1,000,000 map at a petrol station in Perth covering the Mid West, which proved to be very useful.

Roads: The roads were generally fine and there was no need for a 4w drive, except for Francois Peron National Park in Shark bay where you can only go to the homestad in 2w drive, which does not really take you very far into the national park.

Remember to bring a mosquito/fly net to cover your head when going to the outback, because of the very annoying flies. Nets can be bought at many petrol stations. You will go crazy if you don’t have one!

Itinerary
22-10: Perth - Mount Magnet
23-10: West of Cue – Nallan Station – Cue
24-10: Nallan Station – East of Cue – West of Cue – Lake Austin – The Granites – Mount Magnet
25-10: Granites – New Beach – Carnarvon
26-10: Carnarvon – Rocky Pool – New Beach – Denham
27-10: Monkey Mia – Francois Peron National Park – Geralton
28-10: Geralton – Perth

22 October
Leaving Perth around noon and spending all afternoon driving to Mount Magnet.

23 October
In the morning I went to the site for Banded Whiteface west of Cue. The site was easy to find based on Franc O’Connors description. I saw 4 Banded Whitefaces right at the bend before the grid.
I continued toward Austin Downs and had **Western Bowerbird** just after the turn to the farm. About 10 km past Austin Downs there is an area of heath with small bushes, especially on the left side. Several **Crimson Chats** were in that area. On the left side about 100 m from the road next to the heat (further west) there are some larger bushes just before the ground becomes rocky. Here I had one **Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush**. Other birds were **Bourke’s Parrot** and **Masked Woodswallow**.

I went to Walga Rock and drove around the rock but did not see much of interest; best bird was **Wedge-tailed Eagle**. The area around the small windmill just before Walga Rock had many common birds and is worth a stop. On the way back between Walga Rock and Austin Downs I had two **Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes**.

In the afternoon I made a stop at Nallan Station. At the road that goes through the station (right track) there is a sign to a bower of Western Bowerbird, but I did not see the bird. I continued along the Cogla Downs Road for a few kilometres to Jackson’s Well. I checked out the place for White-browed Treecreeper mentioned by Franc O’Connor, but did not see any.

**24 October**
At sunrise I returned to Nallan Station and stopped at Jackson’s Well. In the area around the well were many birds such as **Mulga Parrot** and **Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater**.

I decided to try the site for Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush east of Cue mentioned by Franc O’Connor. Follow the directions by Franc O’Connor, at the first Y junction take the left road and at the second take the right, this is the road that is a little rough. Continue to the grid and the area on the left just after the grid holds the Quail-thrush. I spent about 2 hours in the area but did not see any Quail-thrush, maybe because of the heat with temperatures close to 40°C.

Went back to the site West of Cue but did not see much.

On the route to Mount Magnet I made a stop at Lake Austin (site by Franc O’Connor) but did not see much. Continued to The Granites just north of Mount Magnet but there were very few birds.

**25 October**
In the morning I returned to The Granites but besides two **Ground Cuckoo-Shrikes** seen very well, there were very few birds so I decided to begin the long drive to Carnarvon.

I made a few stops on the route to Carnarvon, but the best area was at Billabong Roadhouse where the small waterhole attracts many birds. Many **Diamond Doves**, **Cockatiels** and **Budgerigars** came to the waterhole to drink.

Around 4 pm I reached New Beach about 40 km south of Carnarvon. Along the dirt road after the turn towards the beach was 15-20 **Chiming Wedgebills**. At the beach is an area of mangrove where I saw **Dusky Gerygone**, **Mangrove Grey Fantail**, and **Yellow Whiteeye**. I parked the car at the beginning of the mangrove a walked the tracked along the mangrove. Just behind the coastline with mangrove is an area with scrub and small bushes. In this area were two **Slender-billed Thornbills** and a **Rufous Fieldwren**. Drove to Carnarvon just before sun set.

**26 October**
At sunrise I went to the Carnarvon Boat Harbour where there is a large area of mangrove. Drive to the end of the Harbour where the paved road ends. Here there is a track going down to the mangrove, park your car at the end of the paved road and walk down this track. From the track I saw one immature **White-breasted Whistler**, **Mangrove Grey Fantail** and **Yellow Whiteeye**. In
the area are also a lot of shorebirds, tern and gulls. Mangrove Golden Whistler should also be present in this area but I did not see any.

I left the harbour and turned right just after the harbour. This road follows the edge of the mangrove. I made a few stops to check the mangroves and had Dusky Gerygone.

Around noon I drove to Rocky Pool which is about 50 km East of Carnarvon. Take the Carnarvon Mullewa Road toward Cascoyne Junction and after about 40 km there is dirt road to the left the to the pool. The road is by Thomas and Thomas mentioned as a good place to see Redthroat. I made a couple of stops and had two Redthroats and Chiming Wedgebills. At the pool were Little Corella and 1 Black Fronted Dotterel.

In the afternoon I again made a stop at New Beach but did not see much new.

I then drove towards Denham. At the 26th parallel sigh 10 km south of Denham is a small parking lot where I made a stop. The area at the sign is mentioned by Thomas and Thomas as a place to look for Thick-billed Grasswren, but I did not see any. A Rufous Fieldwren was singing just at the parking lot. I arrived at Denham in the evening.

27 October
In the morning I drove to the parking lot at Monkey Mia which should be a good place to see Thick-billed Grasswren. Make sure to be there early in the morning before all the tourists arrive. Saw a Southern Scrub-robin in the parking lot and eventually found a Thick-billed Grasswren in the sand dunes just next to the parking lot. From the parking lot a trail goes up the hill to a small water hole and bird-hide. A map with the trail is shown in the brochure that you get when you enter the parking lot. At the beginning of the trail before reaching the bird-hide I had 2 Thick-billed Grasswrens and on the top of the hill after the bird-hide I had 4 Thick-billed Grasswrens, one of them seen very well on 3-4 metres distance.

Monkey Mia is famous for the wild dolphins that come into the cost and are being feed by the rangers from the visitor centre. The rangers pick a few lucky tourists to feed the dolphins (I was lucky to be picked!). The dolphins are feed 2-3 times between 8.00 am and noon. If you have time it is worth seeing the dolphins.

Between Monkey Mia and Denham is the road to Francois Peron National Park. You can only go to the homestead unless you have a 4w drive. According to information plates Mallefowls have been released in the park but I don’t know if they can still be seen in the park. I had a Brown Goshawk roosting in a tree at the homestead.

In the afternoon I drove to Geralton, again stopping at the 26th parallel sigh. Here I had a White-backed Swallow.

Looking back more time should have been used in the Carnarvon area and less time in the Denham area since the Thick-billed Grasswren seamed easy to find.

28 October
Driving all morning from Geralton to Perth and flying to Denmark in the afternoon.
Systematic list
This is not a complete list of species seen but only covers the uncommon and some of the common species seen.

**Emu** (*Dromaius Novaehollandiac*) – several seen in the outback and one Monkey Mia

**Striated Heron** (*Butorides Striatus*) – 1 mangrove at Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus Axillaris* – several seen around Carnarvon

**Brahminy Kite** (*Haliastur Indus*) – 1 Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

**Brown Goshawk** (*Accipiter Fasciatus*) – 1 Francois Peron National Park homestead 27/10

**Wedge-tailed Eagle** *Aquila Audax* – several seen in the outback, especially along the highways

**Brown Falcon** *Falco Berigora* – 1 west of Cue 23/10, 2 Nallan Station 23/10, 1 Nallan Station 24/10

**Pacific Gull** *Larus Pacificus* – Carnarvon Harbour 26/10, Monkey Mia 27/10

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna Caspia* – 1 Carnarvon Harbour 26/10, 2 Monkey Mia 27/10

**Diamond Dove** *Geopelia Cuneata* – common at Billabong Roadhouse

**Cockatiel** *Nymphicus Hollandicus* – common at Billabong Roadhouse

**Mulga Parrot** *Psephotus Varius* – 8 Nallan Station 23/10, 10 Nallan Station 24/10

**Bourke’s Parrot** *Neopsephoyus Bourki* – 10 west of Cue, 10 km past Austin Downs 23/10, 2 east of Cue at site for Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush 24/10

**Budgerigar** *Melopsittacus Undulatus* – common at Billabong Roadhouse

**Red-backed Kingfisher** *Todiramphus Pyrrhopygia* – 2 road between Carnarvon and Rocky Pool 26/10

**Thick-billed Grasswren** *Amytornis Textilis* – 1 at sand dunes next to Monkey Mia car park 27/10, 6 walking trail Monkey Mia 27/10

**White-browed Scrubwren** *Sericornis frontalii* – 1 New Beach 25/10, Monkey Mia 27/10

**Redthroat** *Pyrrholaemus Brunneus* – 2 along road to Rocky Pool 26/10

**Rufous Fieldwren** *Calamanthus Campestris* – 1 New Beach 25/10, 1 at car park at the 26th parallel sigh 10 km south of Denham 26/10

**Dusky Gerygone** *Gerygone Tenebrosa* – 2 New Beach 25/10, 1 mangrove at Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

**Inland Thornbill** *Acanthiza Apicalis* – several Nallan Station 24/10

**Slender-billed Thornbill** *Acanthiza Iredalei* – 2 New Beach 25/10
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza Uropygialis* – several Nallan Station 24/10, 2 Granites 25/10

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza Chrysorrhoa* – several Walga Rock 23/10, 5 Granites 25/10

Southern Whiteface *Aphelocephala Leucopsis* – several west of Cue at site for Banded Whiteface 23/10, 3 Granites 25/10

Banded Whiteface *Aphelocephala Nigricincta* – 4 at site west of Cue 23/10

Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater *Acanthagenys Rufogularis* – common around Nallan Station

White-plumed Honeyeater *Lichenostomus Penicillatus* – 4 mangrove at Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

Crimson Chat *Epithianura Tricolor* – 8 west of Cue 23/10

Red-capped Robin *Petroica Goodenovii* - west of Cue 23/10, Nallan Station 24/10

Hooded Robin *Melanodryas Cucullata* – 2 west of Cue 23/10

Southern Scrub-robin *Drymodes Brunneopygia* – 1 Monkey Mia car park 27/10

Chiming Wedgebill *Psophodes Occidentalis* – 15 along road to New Beach 25/10, 5 along road to Rocky Pool 26/10, 1 heard Monkey Mia 27/10

Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush *Cinclosoma Castaneothorax* – 1 area 10 km past Austin Downs 23/10

Crested Bellbird *Oreoica Gutturalis* - west of Cue 23/10

White-breasted Whistler *Pachycephala Lanioides* – 1 imm mangrove at Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

Mangrove Grey Fantail *Rhipidura Phasiana* – 3 New Beach 25/10, several mangrove at Carnarvon Harbour 26/10

Ground Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina Maxima* – 2 west of Cue between Walga Rock and Austin Downs 23/10, 2 Granites 25/10

White-breasted Woodswallow *Artamus Leucorynchus* – 1 Carnarvon Harbour 26/10, 1 New Beach 26/10

Black-faced Woodswallow *Artamus Cinereus* - west of Cue 23/10,

Western Bowerbird *Chlamydera Guttata* – 3 west of Cue 23/10, 3 Nallan Station 23/10, 1 Nallan Station 24/10

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca Leucosternus* – 1 west of Cue at the mine before the turn toward Austin Downs 23/10, 1 at car park at the 26th parallel sigh 10 km south of Denham 27/10

Brown Songlark *Cinclorhamphus Cruralis* – 2 road between Mount Magnet and Geraldton

Yellow White-eye *Zosterops Luteus* – common in mangroves at New Beach and Carnarvon