

BIRDWATCHING AROUND BROOME

Broome is world famous for its spectacular birdlife, with over 310 species recorded in the region. Excellent birding can be had throughout the year. The wet season rarely affects access to the prime birding areas.

There are six distinct habitats in the region and all are relatively close to the town itself. They are mangrove, salt marsh, open plains, mudflats, pindan woodland and coastal scrub interspersed with vine thickets.

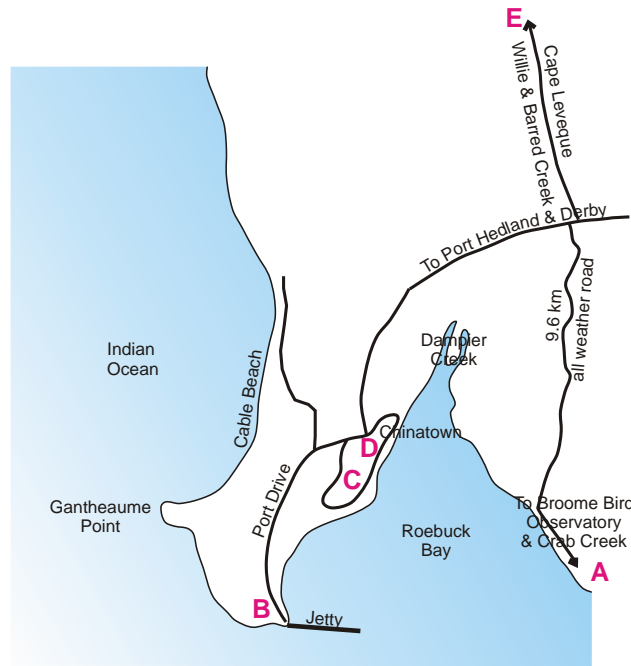
A Broome Bird Observatory, Roebuck Bay and Crab Creek

This is one of the best birding areas in Australia for transequatorial migratory waders and must not be missed by any birdwatcher. This coastal environment is an internationally recognised wintering area for tens of thousands of these birds from September to April. Many of these species stay through the Australian winter, appearing very different in their breeding plumage.

You will find a telescope very useful to identify and enjoy these waders. Near high tide is the best time to view the flocks as they roost on the beaches of the bay.

While summer is the best season to see the largest flocks of waders, several thousand can be seen throughout the dry season such as Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers, Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Great and Red Knots, Common Greenshank, Terek and Curlew Sandpipers, Red-necked Stint, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Grey Plover and Ruddy Turnstone.

Many sought after species such as Common Redshank, Asian Dowitcher and Broad-billed Sandpiper are often present including the dry season.



Broome Bird Observatory located on Roebuck Bay, was established in 1988 by Birds Australia as a base to research the many thousands of migratory waders that come to the north west of Western Australia each summer. It has chalet and other accommodation, camping facilities and a large kitchen and dining area.

There are conducted tours and walks. Day visitors are welcome. Ring the BBO (08 9193 5600) for full details, including tide times for viewing the waders.

Habitats in the area include intertidal mudflats, woodland, open plains, mangroves and salt marsh.

Malurus Trail leads from the observatory along the fence line for about 3 km to Crab Creek. Look for Black-shouldered Kite, Spotted Harrier, Brown Falcon, Nankeen Kestrel, Brown Quail, White-winged Triller, Grey-crowned Babbler, Singing Bushlark, Golden-headed Cisticola, Red-backed Fairy-wren, cuckoos, and button-quails.

Crab Creek Mangroves Many birds are here, but some are difficult to locate. Keep your eyes and ears peeled for Striated Heron, Mangrove Golden and White-breasted Whistlers, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Mangrove Grey Fantail, and Dusky and Mangrove Gerygone. Yellow White-eye is common. This is the best site to view the waders feeding close to the mangroves at low tide. You may be fortunate to see Common Redshank and Asian Dowitcher feeding here.

Dampier Creek Salt Marsh located at the start of the old Crab Creek can be very good for Richard's Pipit, Singing Bushlark and possibly Brown Songlark. This road is officially closed as it is impassible when wet or at very high tides, but you can still walk along it.

Common raptors are Spotted Harrier, Brahminy Kite and Nankeen Kestrel. In the wet season Black-necked Stork, Oriental Pratincole and Oriental Plover are regulars.

B Entrance Point and Deepwater Jetty

This is a good area for Singing, Brown, Rufous-throated and sometimes Grey-headed Honeyeaters. Red-backed and Variegated Fairy-wrens are common. Other species include Eastern Reef Egret, Grey-tailed Tattler, Sanderling and several terns.

The deep water jetty is worth a visit to look for Brown Booby, Darter, Osprey and Striated Heron.

C Broome Town, Golf Course and Ovals

There are several species worth looking for at the various town ovals such as Black Kite, Nankeen Kestrel, Masked Lapwing, Richard's Pipit and White-breasted Woodswallow. In the wet season several species of waders may be present including Little Curlew, Pacific Golden Plover, Gallinago sp. Snipe and Yellow Wagtail.

Birds of prey feature prominently in Broome. Twelve species have been recorded including Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Brown Goshawk, Collared Sparrowhawk and a good chance of Square-tailed Kite and Peregrine Falcon.

The pindan woodland holds many species including Red-winged Parrot, Black-chinned Honeyeater, White-throated Gerygone, Black-faced Woodswallow and Great Bowerbird. Look for Barn Swallow and Dollarbird (Oct to Apr).

The golf course is an excellent area of woodland. Do not disturb the golfers. The sewage ponds are close by. Access is restricted but you can see many birds from outside the fence.

In the town gardens look for White-gaped Honeyeater, Yellow-tinted Honeyeater, Rufous-throated Honeyeater, Brown Honeyeater, Double-barred Finch and Great Bowerbird. On the town's outskirts look for Bar-shouldered and Peaceful Doves, Pheasant Coucal, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Grey-crowned Babbler, White-throated and Mangrove Gerygones, Mistletoebird and Dollarbird (Oct to Apr).

D Town Mangroves

These areas should not be missed. They provide a challenge to the most avid birder. Look for Mangrove, Golden and White-breasted Whistlers, Mangrove Grey Fantail, Dusky and Mangrove Gerygones, Broad-billed Flycatcher, Red-headed Honeyeater and Yellow White-eye.

Osprey, Brahminy Kite and Gull-billed Tern are a few of the shorebirds patrolling the coastline.

E Barred and Willie Creeks

Travel 17 km north along the road to Cape Leveque and turn left along the dirt road and follow the signs. A 4WD is recommended unless

you are prepared to walk further. Both saltwater creeks are superb mangrove-lined areas that are alive with birds. Several species of terns, mangrove dwellers, raptors, waders and bush birds are in close proximity.

These are good areas to look for Lesser Frigatebird, Black-necked Stork, Beach Stone-curlew, Red-headed Honeyeater, Northern Fantail, the elusive Kimberley form of Lemon-bellied Flycatcher (*tormenti*) and a chance of Little Bronze-Cuckoo.

Broome Bird List

A bird list for the area with annotated details for each species can be purchased from the Broome Bird Observatory. There is also a checklist available online at broomebirdobservatory.com

WHAT IS BIRDS AUSTRALIA?

Birds Australia's national organisation is for the study, preservation and enjoyment of Australian birds. The WA group of Birds Australia has over 800 members statewide with a wide range of activities and services for members.

Programs include excursions, camp-outs, bird surveys and social activities. We 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.

INTERESTED?

Contact us at:
Birds Australia Western Australia
167 Perry Lakes Drive
Floreat WA 6014 Weekdays 9.30 - 12.30 pm

Phone: (08) 9383 7749
Fax: (08) 9387 8412
Email: mail@birdswa.com.au
Web: www.birdswa.com.au



Prepared by Birds Australia
Western Australia Inc.

BIRDWATCHING AROUND BROOME

Number 03a in a series of
Bird Guides of Western Australia



Eastern Curlew

