



Bellbird

PHOTO TOURS

Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd
PO Box 2008, BERRI SA 5343
AUSTRALIA
Ph. 1800-BIRDING
Ph. +61409 763172
www.bellbirdtours.com
info@bellbirdtours.com

Centralian Grasswrens photography tour

- ✓ All outback Grasswrens
- ✓ Small group: limit of 4!
- ✓ The best photo opportunities
- ✓ With Guide/Photographer: Laurie Ross

21 Jul – 4 Aug 2019, Mt Isa to Alice Springs

Kalkadoon Grasswren
© barraimaging.com.au

Bellbird Photo Tours is proud to announce a fantastic opportunity for a small number of privileged bird photographers. Based on the success of Bellbirds's flagship Nine Grasswren birding tours, one of Australia's epic birding adventures, we have totally redesigned this tour to allow for the best photographic opportunities of 9 of Australia's 13 -odd species of Grasswren: Kalkadoon, Carpentarian, Rusty, Eyrean, Grey, Western, Short-tailed, Thick-billed and Dusky Grasswren. Covering the Kalkadoon ranges around Mt Isa, the famous Birdsville track through the outback, the stark country around Boulia-Winton, the little-known Gawler Ranges and we finish in the Red Centre of Alice Springs. The focus will be to maximize photographic opportunities of each grasswren, and to do so, we have allocated one afternoon and one morning to each species. Timed to travel through the heart of the outback during the late Australian winter season, the time when Grasswrens are most

active, we will have plenty of opportunity during these 15 days to see and photograph many other good outback species. Besides the Grasswrens we have a good chance of sought-after birds like Banded and Chestnut-breasted Whiteface, Chestnut and Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Gibberbird, Yellow Chat, Inland Dotterel, Flock Bronzewing, Spinifex Pigeon, Painted Finch and even the enigmatic Grey Falcon. Accommodation will be of the highest available standard; the the food will be of the best available, and where we have to take a picnic lunch, it will be gourmet style. We have secured access to some new birding locations exclusively for this tour. The rewards will be some of the best photos of Australia's most sought-after species: Nine Grasswrens! Add to this wonderful scenery, great camaraderie and a highly recommended guide/photographer: Laurie Ross, seats on this tour are sure to sell out quickly!

Tour starts: Mt Isa, Qld

Finishes: Alice Springs, NT

Scheduled departure & return dates:

- 21 July – 4 Aug 2019

Questions? Contact BELLBIRD BIRDING TOURS :

- Freecall 1800-BIRDING
- email birds@bellbirdtours.com

Price: AU\$8,999 all-inclusive (discounts available).

Leader: Laurie Ross

Trip reports and photos of previous tours:

<http://www.bellbirdtours.com/reports>

READ ON FOR:

- Further tour details
- Daily itinerary
- Booking information

Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019



Tour details

Tour starts: Mt Isa, Qld (serviced by direct flights from Melb, Bris & Syd)

Finishes: Alice Springs, NT (airport, serviced by direct flights from all capital cities)

Scheduled departure and return dates:

Tour commences with dinner on 21 July 2019. Please arrive on or before 21 July. Tour finishes the afternoon of 4 Aug 2019. Please depart on or after 4 Aug. Itinerary contains further details.

Leader: Laurie Ross.

Difficulty: ~~Low/Medium/High/Excellent~~ level of fitness required. This trip, being a photography tour, is much slower paced than our regular Grasswren tours. Walking in uneven terrain will still be required to find the birds, but we have secured access to some new and exclusive (and easier) sites. There will be much patience required. There will be many early departures or late finishes, walking in uneven terrain, carrying your camera gear. We will drive up to 5000 km (a lot on unsealed roads). We can't control the weather but usually July/August is fine, sunny and cool to mild in the south to warmish in the north. We may encounter a frosty morning or an unseasonal rain downpour.

What to bring: Please bring all camera gear you may need, chargers, memory cards, laptop, cables, and a pair of binoculars, your, mobile phone, power adaptors if you're an international guest, insect repellent, sunscreen, personal medications, sun hat, water bottle, hand sanitizer. Sturdy footwear recommended. Equipment hire can be arranged on request.

Clothing: Lightweight long pants, t-shirt and long-sleeved shirt, over the top of which you can wear layers that can be taken off as necessary, including a warm jumper and a rain-proof jacket. Neat casual attire for dinners. Be prepared for the odd cool morning but gloriously sunny days.

Group size: Min. and max: 4 participants.

Cost: AU\$8,999 per person including accommodation and all meals, based on double or twin-share occupancy. Single occupancy surcharge of \$900. Not included: drinks, tips, personal expenses. Earlybird discount of \$99 for bookings received up to 6 months before departure date. Return-client discount may ply.

Bookings: Online at <http://www.bellbirdtours.com/bookings> or please complete the booking form in the back of this brochure.

Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019

ITINERARY

Day 1: 21 July 2019. Make your own way to Mt Isa (Qld), serviced by direct flights on Qantas, Virgin and Rex from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Taxi (own cost) to hotel for dinner and introductions. Accommodation: **Ibis Styles Verona, Mt Isa** (en-suite rooms; meals: D).

Day 2: 22 July 2019. We have a full day around Mt Isa, where we'll be photographing two Grasswren species: Kalkadoon and Carpentarian. Another drawcard here is Painted Finch which we've seen on prior visits. We'll also spend time photographing other good species of the local area, including Spinifex Pigeon, Little Woodswallow, Spinifexbird, Grey-headed Honeyeater and Black-throated Treecreeper. We'll spend most of the day out in the field photographing the target grasswrens. Time permitting we'll visit Lake Moondarra where have a good chance of Paperbark Flycatcher, Spotted Bowerbird, Plumed Whistling-duck, Painted Finch, Purple-necked Rock-wallaby and Freshwater Crocodile. Accommodation: **Ibis Styles Verona, Mt Isa** (en-suite rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 3: 23 July 2019. The morning will be spent photographing the grasswrens. After lunch we drive south, birding our way to the township of Winton, Australia's dinosaur capital. Species we're likely to encounter include Varied Lorikeet, Australian Bustard, Budgerigar, Brown and Rufous Songlark, Brolga, Black-tailed Native-hen, Plumed Whistling-duck and maybe even Ground Cuckoo-shrike. Arriving at sunset, we'll check the local dam for birds coming into drink. Accommodation: **Boulder Opal Motel, Winton** (en-suite motel rooms; meals: B, L, D).

Day 4: 24 July 2019. Travelling on red gravel roads through the area where Night Parrot has been recorded recently, we notice more and more spinifex around us until we arrive in the spinifex-covered plains of Lark Quarry. Here we search for Rusty Grasswren (former rowleyi ssp of Striated). Other species we are likely to come across include Grey Falcon, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Hall's Babbler, Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and Spinifexbird. We'll take lunch in the Dinosaur Trackways visitor centre, situated high up on a rugged jump-up plateau with spectacular views over the surrounding plains, while Spinifex Pigeons scurry around the surrounding undergrowth. Time permitting, there is the option for people to visit the dinosaur stampede fossils here this afternoon (own cost). Others may want to head back into the field after lunch for further photographic opportunities of the above-mentioned species. Accommodation: **Boulder Opal Motel, Winton** (en-suite motel rooms; meals: B, L, D).



Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019

Day 5: 25 July 2019. Another chance to photograph Rusty Grasswren, Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Grey Falcon, Hall's Babbler and Spinifexbird this morning. We then travel on outback roads to the isolated township of Boulia, located in the heart of outback Queensland, with further chances of Chestnut-breasted Quail-thrush and along the way hopefully picking up Brolga, Australian Bustard and possibly Inland Dotterel. Around sunset, we will have sundowners at a grassy plain outside Boulia to check for Flock Bronzewings coming in to drink. Accommodation: **Boulia Sands Motel** (ensuite motel rooms; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 6: 26 July 2019. At sunrise we find ourselves out on the plains again to photograph Flock Bronzewings before we bird our way to Birdsville, checking local wetlands and sand dunes for species like Budgerigar, Cockatiel, Australian Bush-lark, Brolga, Bourke's Parrot and Ground Cuckoo-shrike. We also have our first chance of Grey Grasswren here. We'll have a meal at the famous Birdsville Pub tonight before retiring to our accommodation in new ensuite cabins at the **Birdsville Caravan Park** (private en-suite cabins; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 7: 27 July 2019. A very early departure this morning for a big day on the famous Birdsville track. Our first stop is at a bore drain where the target is the very rare and localised Yellow Chat. Other species we've encountered here are Australian Pratincole and Flock Bronzewing. Next we'll arrive at a (sometimes dry) swamp where the constant chatter of bird calls provides a background chorus to our quest to photograph Grey Grasswren which prefers the dense lignum shrubs in the foreground. We'll spend most of the day out here getting images of this elusive species, and will also have further chances of Grey Falcon. Accommodation: **Mungerannie Pub** (a charming, rustic outback pub with basic but clean rooms and shared bathroom facilities; meals: B, L, D).

Day 8: 28 July 2019. Today is a back-up day for Grey Grasswren. If necessary, we'll head back to yesterday's swamp. We'll also check for Grey Falcon at first light and may see Flock Bronzewings heading for their early morning drink. Alternatively we'll visit neighbouring Cowarie Station which has resident Eyrean Grasswrens in the scenic sand dunes while along the Warburton River we often come across Red-browed Pardalote and Banded Whiteface. Crimson and Orange Chats are usually present too and on the gibber-strewn plains we look for Gibberbird. If we go after the Grey Grasswrens again today, we'll be back at Mungerannie late afternoon to photograph Eyrean Grasswrens in the adjacent dunes. Accommodation: **Mungerannie Pub** (a charming, rustic outback pub with basic but clean rooms and shared bathroom facilities; meals: B, L, D).



Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019

Day 9: 29 July 2019. We'll explore the sand dunes around Mungerannie this morning, photographing Eyrean Grasswrens, Budgerigar, Red-backed Kingfisher and Cinnamon Quail-thrush. Rufous An artesian bore overflow has created a nice wetland which usually holds Brolga and a raft of water-birds, including crakes—in amidst desert-like scenery. After lunch at Mungerannie we pack up and head south, to Lyndhurst for dinner and an optional night spotlighting session for Inland Dotterel. Accommodation: **Lyndhurst Hotel** (a typical outback pub with new, private en-suite cabins; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 10: 30 July 2019. We depart around sunrise for a visit to Witchelina Station to photograph Thick-billed Grasswren as well as Cinnamon Quail-thrush, Chirruping Wedgebill, White-backed Swallow and Rufous Fieldwren. Afterwards we'll continue exploring the Strzelecki track for some time, with good chances of Gibberbird, Inland Dotterel and nesting Black-breasted Buzzard and Little Eagle. Most Returning to Lyndhurst, we'll have sundowners at the old airstrip, marveling at the vastness of the landscape, the clarity of the sky while the sun sets and Inland Dotterels come out to forage. Accommodation: **Lyndhurst Hotel** (a typical outback pub with new, private en-suite cabins; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 11: 31 July 2019. A back-up morning for Thick-billed Grasswren or any other species we may wish to photograph; for example, the local dam often holds Freckled Duck, Pink-eared Duck, Black-tailed Native-hen, Australian Spotted Crake and White-backed Swallow. We'll pack up and head south. The Bluebush plains between Port Augusta and Whyalla are home to the Western Grasswren (formerly the *myall* race of Thick-billed). Other birds we are likely to come across here are the turquoise race of Splendid Fairy-wren, Black-eared Cuckoo and Redthroat, as well as Blue Bonnet, Chirruping Wedgebill and Rufous Fieldwren. Banded Stilts are often in a nearby coastal lake. Time permitting we may also check out the Arid Lands botanical gardens this afternoon or tomorrow, where an array of flowering native plants and shrubs attract a variety of birds including up to 5 species of Honeyeater, Mulga Parrot, Chirruping Wedgebill and Redthroat. The trees around the golf course usually have Purple-crowned Lorikeets. Accommodation: **Nuttbush Retreat, Port Augusta** (a working sheept station with resident Grasswrens; comfortable, private rooms with shared facilities; meals included: B, L, D).



Short-tailed Grasswren © Laurie Ross

Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019

Day 12: 1 Aug 2019 The morning is a back-up for any other local species we may still wish to photograph further, before we head into the Gawler Ranges, a gentle range of rolling hills and rock formations on the edge of the outback. This area of scenic beauty is home to the elusive Short-tailed Grasswren. We'll look for them on the spinifex-grass covered hill slopes and there'll be plenty of Red, Western Grey and Euro Kangaroos to see as well. We'll spend most of the afternoon with the Grasswrens before retiring at Mt Ive Station, a working sheep station where we overnight in comfortable quarters on the property. Accommodation: **Mt Ive Station** (private rooms with shared bathrooms; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 13: 2 Aug 2019. Another chance for the grasswrens in this ancient landscape of spectacular scenery. We then head north, exploring little-used bush tracks along the edge of the stunning Lake Gairdner. One of South Australia's vast outback salt lakes, and usually dry, this area has long been regarded as the jewel in the crown of Australia's scenic sights. The stark beauty of the landscape – expanses of salt, red sand dunes, gnarly old trees and seemingly endless plains - is full of contrasts and offers great photographic opportunities. There are signs of Aboriginal and European history throughout these ranges. Explorer's campsites, indigenous gravesites, ruins and homesteads are but a few of the reminders of bygone days. If good winter rain has fallen, there will be a profusion of flowering outback plants (including the rare Sturt's Desert Pea), birds such as Crimson and Orange Chat, Banded Whiteface, Inland Dotterel and a chance of the rare Bourke's Parrot, and wildlife including plenty of Red, Western Grey and Euro Kangaroos, and with luck the beautiful and endangered Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. At the end of the day we finally emerge from this area onto the Stuart Highway, which cuts through the centre of Australia, linking the south coast (Adelaide) with the north coast (Darwin). Tonight we overnight in the opal-mining town of Coober Pedy where the summers are so hot that residents have taken to living in underground dwellings; no matter how harsh the climate, the underground rooms maintain a comfortable, even temperature ranging from 23°C to 25°C day and night throughout the year. Here, a unique experience awaits us as we spend the night in an underground hotel, carved out of opal-bearing rock and complete with mining display and opal gallery. Above ground rooms are also available for those who don't fancy sleeping "underground" (just let us know at the time of booking). Accommodation: **Radeka's Underground Hotel, Coober Pedy** (en-suite rooms; meals included: B, L, D).



L: Thick-billed Grasswren © Laurie Ross; R: Spinifex Pigeon © P Waanders

Centralian Grasswrens bird photography tour 2019

Day 14: 3 Aug 2019. The morning is spent around Coober Pedy photographing the endemic and elusive Chestnut-breasted Whiteface, as well as Thick-billed Grasswren before we head north, visiting the Breakaways Reserve, colourful rocky hills that have separated from the adjacent range. As we travel, the passing of the sun changes the desert colours, creating surreal photogenic scenes. In all likelihood we will come across more Chestnut-breasted Whitefaces. We'll arrive in Alice Springs right on time for dinner. Accommodation: **Mercure Hotel, Alice Springs** (en-suite rooms; meals included: B, L, D).

Day 15: 4 Aug 2019 We'll end the tour on a high with our last Grasswren: the Dusky, not far from Alice Springs. We should have excellent photographic opportunities of this bird while there are plenty of other good birds to be had: Rufous-crowned Emu-wren, Spinifexbird, Slaty-backed and Inland Thornbill, Western Bowerbird and Painted Finch are on the menu for today. The tour finishes late in the afternoon of this day. You will be dropped off at the airport (no flights departing before 6pm please) or you may wish to stay on in Alice Springs. Thank you for joining us on this fabulous grasswren photography trip! (meals included: B, L). TOUR ENDS

Pre- and post-tour options:

If you wish to stay in Mt Isa for one or more days before the tour starts, or in Mildura or Adelaide for one or more days after the tour finishes, in the same hotel that we've been using there, please tick the relevant box on the booking form. We can book this for you and add the cost to your tour price – this way you can stay in the same room. We can also book your domestic or international flights and arrange travel insurance for you.

Price inclusions and exclusions:

Included: All meals commencing with Dinner on Day 0 and finishing with lunch on Day 15, morning tea/coffee, some snacks, some fruit, some drinks, unlimited drinking water refills. Accommodation in private en-suite rooms, although on some nights only basic rooms with shared facilities are available. Transport using comfortable and reliable 4WD vehicle, expert guiding, any entry fees, taxes.

Excluded: Travel to & from departure and finish points, Pre- & post trip accommodation, any meals before Dinner on Day 0, any meals after lunch on Day 16, drinks except where provided, personal expenses, tips, insurance.

Bookings: Please book online: <http://www.bellbirdtours.com/bookings> or complete the booking form in the back of this brochure.

Reports of previous tours:

Reports of our 2014 – 2018 Nine Grasswren tours can be found on:
<http://www.bellbirdtours.com/reports/>

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PO Box 2008
BERRI SA 5343
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www.bellbirdtours.com
birds@bellbirdtours.com
ABN 40 159 352 002

Tour Booking Form

This form contains 3 pages. Please print out and complete each page, and sign where indicated. Scan and email, or send by postal mail, with payment (see last page) to the address above.

Tour details:

Name of tour _____

Starting and Ending dates _____

Your details:

Name and address of the registrant(s) *(only 1 form is needed for people residing at the same address)*

Name(s) _____

Date of birth _____

Address _____

Identification document and number (passport for international visitors) _____

Telephone (Home) _____

(Work) _____ (Mobile) _____

Email _____

tick if you do not want to receive future updates, news and special offers from Bellbird Tours by email

Emergency Contact Name, relationship and telephone number *(required field)*

(continued on next page)

Accommodation requirements (please tick):

- Single Room (surcharge applies)
- Double Room (2 people, 1 bed, usually queen-size, but this cannot always be guaranteed)
- Twin Share (2 people, 2 beds) (If you are a solo traveller and want to share a room: we will try to team you up with another solo traveller, however this cannot be guaranteed. Single surcharge applies for single occupancy)

Medical conditions and dietary requirements:

Do you have any medical conditions (eg. disabilities, illnesses or allergies) that might restrict your full involvement in any aspect of the tour?

No / Yes

If Yes, please provide details: _____

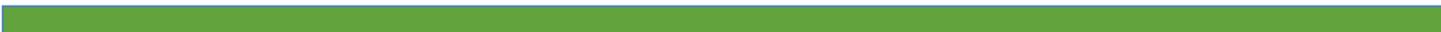
If you have other special requirements (eg dietary requirements), please advise. While we cannot guarantee to accommodate them, we will make every attempt to do so.

Optional extras:

Please indicate if you would like us to arrange any of the following (we'll contact you to discuss):

- Domestic flights
- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Pre and/or post tour hotel bookings

(continued on next page)



Terms and Conditions:

Please read the [terms and conditions](#) and the [release of liability waiver](#) (both can be found on <http://www.bellbirdtours.com/terms-and-conditions>), then sign below.

I/we agree to book this tour. I/we have read and understood, and accept the terms and conditions. I/we accept the release and waiver from liability.

Signature 1: _____ Signature 2: _____

Print Name 1: _____ Name 2: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

To secure a seat, a deposit of 20% of the tour price is required at the time of booking. Full payment is due 60 days prior to the departure date. Until full payment has been received, Bellbird Tours reserves the right to change the tour price (eg due to changing fuel prices).

Please tick which of the following payment options you will be using to pay the deposit:

Domestic electronic funds transfer: please send funds to the following bank account:

- bank: Australia & New Zealand Bank (ANZ), 112 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000
- account name: Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd
- Branch No. (BSB) 015-140 Account No. 206136528
 - Please use your *surname* as the booking reference.

Visa, Mastercard & Amex: through Pin Payments (an easy, secure online payment system). They charge us a fee of 2.95%, which unfortunately we have to pass on to you. Please contact us if you want to use this option, and we'll email you a link to a secure payment page.

PayPal & other credit cards through PayPal: They charge us a fee of between 2.6-3.6% to receive your money, which unfortunately we have to pass on to you. Please contact us if you want to use this option, and we'll email you a secure PayPal invoice.

International electronic funds transfer: please send funds in Australian Dollars (+ bank charges or AU\$20 bank transaction fee, see notes below) to the following bank account:

- international swift code: anzbau3m (no IBAN codes are used in Australia)
- bank: Australia & New Zealand Bank (ANZ), 112 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000
- account name: Bellbird Tours Pty Ltd
- Branch No. (BSB) 015-140 Account No. 206136528
 - If possible, please use your *surname* as the booking reference.
 - If you are asked to provide our physical address, this is: 101 Chilton Road, Berri, SA 5343, Australia.
 - Please specify AU\$ as the recipient's currency, and the correct amount. Select the option for you to incur any charges at *both* ends; if no such option exists, please add AU\$20 to cover the bank fee at the recipient's end.

Any discrepancy between the amount payable and amount received will be added to the final balance, or payable in cash at the start of the tour. Prices and fees are not negotiable.