

# NSWBA Grasswren Trip 2016

## - overview by Michael & Donna Moody

Donna and I have been enjoying birding for about 3 years now so we jumped at the opportunity to join this expedition when invited. The trip became a wonderful experience for us – one we would gladly participate in again should the opportunity come our way. As we had not been on a NSWBA trip or camp previously we did not know what to expect.



We met up with most of the group on Monday 21 March and travelled to our first campsite. The first of our regular evening discussions (happy hour and making plans for the next day) was held after setting up camp before all retired for the evening. Our group spent this first night in a beautiful setting on the banks of the Darling River (NE of Wilcannia).

The next morning after breakfasting and breaking camp we split into groups to record the birds we could find in our allotted 10 minute grids. We continued on as a group and noted any birds we spotted as we went. These were recorded within each 10 minute grid we went through. Our planned camp spot for the night (Bimbowrie Conservation Area) was, unfortunately, not available due to wild dog baiting being carried out by SA National Parks. This disappointingly also meant we could not complete our planned search for the Thick-billed Grasswren. An alternative camp site was found a short distance away and we were all set for another evening.

We made our way to the Flinders Ranges (recording birds along the way) staying at Willow Springs. Each day here we searched for the Short-tailed Grasswren – which was spotted by a few of our group near Stokes Lookout. In one of the gorges nearby some of us found Elegant Parrots. Many other birds were also seen and this was another wonderful area to explore.



We travelled on to Mount Lyndhurst Station where we had another great camp spot. Here we were searching for the Chestnut-breasted Whiteface – with no luck. Again there were many other birds to record. It was shortly after departing the Mount Lyndhurst area that a sensor failed in our Campervan. Nevertheless we continued to record birds as we travelled to Cameron Corner. Here Donna and I were obliged to leave the group for a few days (to have our van problem sorted out) – we missed the 3 day trip to Adelaide Gate and nearby locations: while we were away, the rest of our party saw Redthroats and Blue-winged Parrots.

Photos Darling R campsite - Dick Cooper: Short-tailed Grasswren - Pam Kenway: Elegant Parrot - Michael Moody



Photos top 2 and lower left - Dick Cooper: lower right Bruce Gilchrist & Pam Kenway



Adelaide Gate, NSW - looking west



Hawker Gate - NSW/SA Border

Donna and I rejoined the atlas group a few days later at Winnathee Station where we camped at the shearers' quarters for 4 nights to atlas the area around Hawker Gate. By then Kay and Bruce Gilchrist had also joined our party, swelling our numbers to 10.

For our first day here it was decided that we would atlas beside the Dog Fence searching for suitable habitat for, and a possible sighting of, the Eyrean Grasswren. This bird had not previously been recorded in NSW but our "Mission" was accomplished when we successfully recorded the Eyrean Grasswren at 2 locations. The 1<sup>st</sup> sighting enabled the whole group to observe the birds; the 2<sup>nd</sup> sighting was made by a smaller group of us as we broke into groups to search different areas. Other great birds in this area included Black-breasted Buzzard, Gibber Chat and a group of Banded Whiteface (only the 6<sup>th</sup> record in NSW).



Photos Eyrean Grasswren - Pam Kenway: Black-breasted Buzzard - Barbara Cooper

We then went south and stayed in the Lakeview Caravan Park, Broken Hill, for a couple of nights which provided a night out for most, the opportunity to replenish supplies and other essentials.



Photos Banded Whiteface and Female Redthroat - Pam Kenway

Our layover day was spent atlassing parts of the Barrier Range where we again found Redthroats.

We then drove to Wonnaminta Station – again staying at the shearers' quarters for a few nights. From here we visited Lake Bancannia and were surprised to find quite a decent amount of water in this lake. The lake was a refuge for a large number of waders, ducks and other waterfowl. It was great to see the water (and the birds) as many other lakes and dams were dry or nearly dry. There were also many other birds in the vegetation around the lake (including the White-fronted Chat).

We also searched different sections of this area intensely but failed to find our target bird (Thick-billed Grasswren) however Rufous Fieldwrens made our visit here worthwhile with their lovely singing. From Wonnaminta we made our way up the Darling River, celebrating Bob West's birthday along the way. We found 2 more wonderful campsites; the last on the banks of the Darling (once again) where the majority of our group had our last night together. The next day we made our way to Louth where we started to go our own ways.



Photos Rufous Fieldwren - Pam Kenway: Bob's Birthday - Dick Cooper

Whilst it may have been disappointing to miss out on a few of our target birds - there were just so many highlights for Donna and I that it is hard to put into words. We really enjoyed the company and the birding. Some hard yards may have been put in but the rewards were there. Too many great birds for us to list them all here and many of these birds we (Donna and I) sighted for the first time. We learned a great deal from the very knowledgeable birders in the group who were happy to help those of us that needed it.

A big thanks goes to those who organized this expedition. A wonderful trip!!