

Tasmanian mammal spotting holiday 28th Nov – 11th Dec 2015

I flew from my home state of WA into Hobart and picked up the hire car and straight away headed out with great anticipation to my first site

Mt Field National park – 2 nights (28th/29th Nov)

Accommodation – National park hotel 300m outside park entrance, where the owners have excellent advice on numerous local **platypus** viewing spots.

Platypus



Species – **Tasmanian pademelons** seen on Russell falls track early morning and late afternoon. Great views of **platypus** 1 hour before sunset on disused railway bridge just outside of national park. The real action however starts half an hour after dark on the grassy lawn immediately inside the park boundary (opposite the visitors centre) and included extremely numerous **pademelons**, **common brushtail possums**, **Eastern barred bandicoots** and **Eastern quolls** (both fawn and dark morphs.) In fact wildlife was so prolific I nearly fell over a **bandicoot** whilst trying to photograph a **quoll**! Both nights produced the same species listed above.

Eastern quoll (fawn morph)



Brushtail possum



Pademelon



Eastern quoll (dark morph)



Eastern barred bandicoot



An afternoon drive upto lake Dobson gave great views of **Bennett's wallaby (red necked wallaby)** on the circular walk around the lake. **Echidna** spotted late afternoon at ponds near National park hotel whilst looking for **platypus**.

Bennett's wallaby



Interestingly the **Western quoll (chuditch)** of WA are more arboreal than the **Eastern quolls** found in Tasmania which when pressed do not take to the trees and are therefore harder to view. This is probably an adaptation of the **chuditch** to the presence of the European fox in WA that is absent in Tasmania.

Maria Island National park – 2 nights (30th Nov / 1st Dec)

Accommodation – Convict penitentiary for which own bedding and provisions are needed as there are no shops on Maria Island.

Species – Stepping off the ferry it is impossible to miss the abundant wildlife of the island. I was extremely fortunate **Tasmanian devils** were denning under the penitentiary during my stay and the **devil cubs** were easy to photograph basking in the afternoon sun. I came across **devils** both nights I stayed at the penitentiary as they set out on their nightly foraging expeditions. In addition to **devils** **Flinders Island wombats** and **pademelons** were common around the penitentiary during the day, whilst at night **brushtail possums** were easily seen. The walk around the North of the island past the airstrip in the late afternoon produced **Eastern grey kangaroos (Forester kangaroos,) Bennett's wallaby** and **wombats**, whilst a day hike to the summit of Mt Maria gave views of **Bennett's wallaby** as well as numerous **echidna** foraging amongst the fallen timber of the sclerophyll forest in the warmer part of the day. Unfortunately a spotlight along the reservoir track looking for **long-nosed potoroos** was rained off during the second night on the island.

Tasmanian devil



Tasmanian devil



Forester kangaroo



Echidna



Mt William National Park – 2 nights (2nd / 3rd Dec)

Accommodation – Gladstone hotel the nearest town to Mt William.

Species – Mt William is definitely up there with the other Tasmanian National parks but unfortunately all the species viewed at Mt William had already been seen at previous National parks on the trip. **Brushtail possums** are common at the campgrounds and with a late afternoon drive around the roads in the park large numbers of **common wombat**, **Bennett's wallaby**, **Pademelons** and **Forester kangaroos** are easy to see.

Common wombat



Brushtail possums are also common on the C843 road into the park from Gladstone after dark. During a day drive in Mt William I came across researchers from the University of Tasmania trapping **devils** (they kindly showed me one in a trap from the previous nights trapping.) **Devils** are now being released into Mt William after their recent population crash due to devil tumor facial disease (DFTD.) Unsurprisingly this has resulted in a lowering of the both **Eastern** and **Spotted tailed quoll** populations at Mt William due to competition with the devils. However the local policeman at Gladstone occasionally still sees **quolls** on the Gladstone to Bridport road at night feeding on roadkill.

Narawntapu National park – 2 nights (4th / 5th Dec)

Accommodation - I stayed at Port Sorrell the nearest town to Narawntapu which is a 25km drive from the National park on the other side of the estuary.

Species – **Pademelons** can be seen during the day at Narawntapu on the track leading out from the visitors centre to the bird hide, but as usual dusk is the highlight of the day when **Forester kangaroos**, **Bennett's wallaby**, **pademelons** and **wombats** come out onto the open lawns around the visitors to feed.

Grazing macropods



Forester kangaroos sparring



A night drive on the C741 to Yorktown produced only **pademelons** but the real highlight of the area is the C740. A couple of Kilometers outside the national park I came across my first **ringtail possum** in Tasmania slowly crossing the road.

Ringtail possum



Also on the C740 there is a **Tasmanian bettong** colony about 2km from the intersection of the C740 with the B71 in the pine forest (from memory the 5th track into pine forest from the intersection.)

Tasmanian Bettong



Whilst the drive back to Port Sorell from Narawntapu is a long one at night going 60km per hour I did get to see a **Southern brown bandicoot** foraging just outside of the town. The following morning driving to Loongana I came across a freshly killed **spotted-tailed quoll** dead on the road (DOR) just outside Port Sorell that had not been there the previous night, as this was the second **spotted-tailed quoll** DOR I came across in the area I conclude that although I didn't see any live **quolls** this area must still be good for this species.

Loongana wilderness lodge (Leven canyon) – 3 nights (6th / 7th / 8th Dec)

Accommodation – Loongana where you can watch the wildlife feed directly from your cabin.

Species – All three nights at Loongana I had extensive views of multiple **platypus** in the river that runs through the property on a free guided tour by the very knowledgeable Len. Also on the guided tour we saw **pademelons** and **wombats**.

Platypus



Night 1 – 30 mins after dusk a **spotted-tailed quoll** came outside the cabin to feed on the chicken put out by Len, satisfied I had an early night. During the night I got up to find a **Tasmanian devil** feeding outside my cabin about 1am.

Night 2 –Unfortunately the second night was ruined for all by a guest running around outside with a flashlight, the owners suggest not leaving the cabin during the night as it will scare the wildlife it for good reason.

Night 3. – Again 30 mins after dark I was visited by a **spotted-tailed quoll** which fed outside my cabin for 2-3 mins then returned twice more to carry off more chicken before the arrival of the **devils** which arrived shortly after. I watched a beautiful **devil** (sadly with DFTD) feed outside my cabin for over 30 mins and wow could this little **devil** put it away. Two whole chickens later he waddled off into the night belly fully distended I assume very happy!

Loongana truly is a gem of a wildlife experience and although I didn't take any photos of the night feeding it is allowed it was just a personal choice.

Cradle mountain – 2 nights (9th / 10th Dec)

Accommodation – the aptly named ringtail cabin at Cradle valley mountain lodge.

Species – prime viewing of a **ringtail possum** from the balcony of my cabin both nights. **Echidna** on the pencil pine walk. Numerous **Bennett's wallaby**, **pademelons** on the cradle valley walk. Numerous **Bennett's wallaby** (including long haired form) and **wombat** in the tourist village where most of the accommodation is situated. **Brushtail possums**, **Bennett's wallaby** and **pademelons** on the drive upto Dove Lake spotlighting after dark.



Bennett's wallaby (long haired variety)

Ringtail possum



Sadly this was the end of my time in Tasmania and from here it was a short drive down to Devonport to catch my flights back to WA.