

New South Wales 25th November – 6th December 2024

I was in Australia for just over 6 weeks from 5th November to 17th December 2024 and visited Tasmania; Victoria; New South Wales and Western Australia. The following trip reports cover each of the states visited.

Tasmania 5th November – 22nd November

Victoria 22nd November – 25th November

New South Wales 25th November – 6th December

Western Australia 6th December – 17th December

I visited New South Wales (NSW) for 12 days and met up with a long-time friend and expat Tim Jones who lives in Sydney. We planned to do some local wildlife sites and go on a mini road trip. Tim is a birder rather than a mammal watcher so nearly all the locations we visited were for birds, but we did try for mammals at those locations.

I flew from Melbourne to Sydney on Friday 25th November. Tim picked me up at the airport and drove to his house in East Killara, a very nice Sydney suburb. We arrived early in the evening and had a couple of beers and a catch-up chat.

Saturday 26th November - Sydney area

It was a very hot day, but nevertheless we took the short drive to Garigal National Park (NP) a bit later in the morning than would be desirable. So, it wasn't surprising that we didn't come across much and after an hour we gave up. In the evening there was an Eastern Ring-tailed Possum in his garden.

Sunday 27th November - Sydney, Blue Mountains

We had a lazy morning. In the afternoon we left for our first port of call on our road trip – Echo Point in the Blue Mountains. Very nice scenery, quite a few birds but no mammals not even on a 2-hour night walk.

Monday 28th and Tuesday 29th November - Blue Mountains, Capertee

We arrived in Capertee, via a stop in the Megalong Valley, around lunchtime and booked into our accommodation – The Royal Hotel for 2 nights. Over the 2 days we drove through Capertee Valley (Glen Davis Road), did a circuit via Rylstone and Kandos, taking in the Dunville Loop and Dunn Swamp. In deteriorating weather on the first afternoon at Wollemi NP we spent some time sheltering up in the Glen Davis campground. Here we watched Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Red-necked Wallabies. On the second day in the late afternoon, we were again in Wollemi NP and again drove around the Glen Davis campground and again saw Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Red-necked Wallabies. Just before dusk we drove towards Coorongooaba campground along Goora Street. On the left of the road on a rocky and wooded slope there were 3 male and at least 8 female Eastern Wallaroos. They were skittish and hopped back up the slope to the trees.

After dark on the drive back to Capertee we saw a Short-beaked Echidna, and singles of European Rabbit and Brown Hare.



Eastern Grey Kangaroo

John Wright

Saturday 30th November - Capertee, Gunnedah

A morning of prolonged heavy rain. We departed from the hotel around 10:00, heading for Gunnedah. About 6 Eastern Grey Kangaroos were in the fields behind the hotel.

We arrived in Gunnedah in the early afternoon, the best thing seen on route was a very wet Emu close to the road. On reaching Gunnedah we went to the Information Centre to find out where the best areas were to see Koalas. Gunnedah bills itself as the Koala capital of the world and a few years ago it probably was. However, we were told that sadly they had all but died mainly due to a prolonged drought. There had only been one sighting in the last 7 months! Nevertheless, we had to give it a try later that day.

Fortunately, it had stopped raining and in fact it turned out to be a nice sunny late afternoon and early evening. We walked the tree-lined streets and around the periphery of the golf course - all areas where Koalas were once easy to see. We didn't find any Koalas, but we saw quite a few Eastern Grey Kangaroos and 4 Brown Hares in the Wandobah Reserve on the western edge of the town. We drove up to Porcupine Reserve, a hilly area on the southeast side of Gunnedah, and took a short walk along the Advant Trail where we came across a couple of male Wallaroos which bounded off as soon as

they saw us. We got back down to the outskirts of Gunnedah just as it was getting dark and had a nice surprise as Flying Foxes started flying over the car. We got out and just watched the fantastic sight as more and more flew over us, some even landing in trees near where we stood which helped to confirm their identity – Little Red Flying Foxes.



Eastern Grey Kangaroo

John Wright

Sunday 1st December - Gunnedah, Gloucester

First thing in the morning we did another brief search for Koalas around the streets of Gunnedah but still no joy. We then drove to Vickery State Forest (SF) where there was an outside chance of finding Koalas - once again we drew a blank. On the drive to Vickery SF, it was becoming obvious that with so little continuous Koala habitat remaining, it's hard to see how they will ever return to Gunnedah unaided. We did see Grey Kangaroos on route as well as in the forest.

Leaving Vickery SF we headed for Gloucester, via Tamworth, crossing the Great Dividing Range and arrived at our accommodation in Gloucester in the late afternoon. We then drove up Gloucester Tops, part of Barrington Tops NP. We saw 4 Red-necked Wallabies and 3 Brown Hares.

Monday 2nd December - Gloucester, Sydney

We drove up Gloucester Tops first thing in the morning seeing 2 Red-necked Wallabies and a Rabbit. Late in the morning we headed southeast and joined the Pacific Highway north of Newcastle and then drove south back to Sydney where our 1000-kilometre road trip ended.

Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th December - Sydney area

It was a couple of very hot days. On the first day we visited Garigal NP but saw very little. We spent the morning on the second day at the Royal NP and walked along Lady Carrington Drive, some good birds seen but no mammals. The afternoon was spent in the Botany Bay area, but we didn't see a great deal there either. In the evening back at Tim's there was a Common Brush-tailed Possum with a joey in the garden.

Thursday 5th December - Sydney area

Tim was busy in the morning, so I had a wander in the Garigal NP on my own for a couple of hours and found a Swamp Wallaby. It was too hot to do anything for the rest of the day apart from lounging around and drinking a cold beer or two.

Friday 6th December - Sydney, Perth

Late morning Tim drove me to the airport where I was getting an afternoon flight to Perth, Western Australia.

Systematic List: 10 Mammals seen. Mammal names follow those in the single volume All the Mammals of the World (Lynx).

Short-beaked Echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>
Common Brush-tailed possum	<i>Trichosurus vulpecula</i>
Eastern Ring-tailed Possum	<i>Pseudocheirus peregrinus</i>
Eastern Grey Kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>
Eastern Wallaroo	<i>Macropus robustus</i>
Red-necked Wallaby	<i>Macropus rufogriseus</i>
Swamp Wallaby	<i>Wallabia bicolor</i>
Little Red Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus scapulatus</i>
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
European Hare	<i>Lepus europeus</i>

Selected Birds: 142 species seen. Emu, Brush Turkey, Topknot Pigeon, Tawny Frogmouth, Nankeen Night Heron, Brown Goshawk, Buff-banded Rail, Cockatiel, Azure Kingfisher, Superb Lyrebird, Green Catbird, Satin Bowerbird, Spotted Bowerbird, Variegated Fairy-wren, Rufous Fantail, Mistletoebird, Red-browed Finch.

Herps: Eastern Water Skink, Delicate Garden Skink, Eastern Water Dragon, Eastern Bearded Dragon, Eastern Long-necked Turtle, Murray Short-necked Turtle.



Emu

John Wright