

Queensland

Through The Lens

A Greentours Itinerary

The tour structure will be different from normal Greentours trips with more emphasis on being in the field at the best time for photography i.e. getting up early for the first couple of hours of light for landscapes, staying out later for sunsets, night walks. Most tuition will be in the field with the chance to review things in the evening on a laptop for those shooting digital. Since people will be of varying abilities rather than a formal series of lectures full of technical talk we'll be opting for a relaxed approach with Chris providing pointers 'in the field' as they are needed and holding sessions as and when we encounter suitable subjects. These will be aimed at improving technique in terms of composition, depth of field and exposure. However, to set the scene there will be a discussion at the start to ascertain abilities and go through various aspects at some stage during some days when appropriate.

Queensland is a superb location for photography. This is a 'no rush' tour concentrating on photographic subjects. Nonetheless always have binoculars handy as the bird and animal watching will still be good, it's just that building a big list is not the main aim with this tour.

It is important to be familiar with at least the basic operation of your kit. Endless fiddling as your subject slowly creeps away and other group members are waiting is not what you want, understand the buttons. There will be times where some of us miss out because a subject doesn't wait around, please be patient as this is unavoidable and we'll all get/miss our chances! Ideally we want to be concentrating on improving composition, exposure and sharpness not which button to press for this or that to happen.

Days 1-2 to Brisbane, Australia

Arrival and transfer to O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, two hours from Brisbane.

Days 3-5 Lamington National Park

Our hotel is superbly positioned to make the most of the abundant wildlife, situated adjacent to the fabulous Lamington National Park where we'll spend the next three days. The photography can begin at the bird feeders around the hotel where slick black-and-gold Regent Bowerbirds will even come in and feed from your hand. The dainty and dazzling Superb Fair-wren hops around just a couple of metres away. Crimson Rosellas fly in and perch on the balcony railing hoping for a spot of breakfast as stunning male Satin Bowerbirds sit on the roof gazing down at us with their amazing pink eyes. We'll be able to inspect the bower of these magnificent birds, they are often embellished with all manner of items and guess what colour they prefer their plastic to be? Of course, blue! Dapper Green

Catbirds are at feeders beside the dining room and Australian Brush Turkeys strut about on the lookout for scraps or perhaps working on their big (incubating) nest mounds. Many colourful Crimson Rosellas and Australian King Parrots come to a feeding area where they actually perch on people allowing wonderful though of course slightly contrived photographic opportunities. Pretty little Red-browed Finches gather underneath for the scraps. Other common smaller birds include the gorgeous Golden Whistler, Lewin's Honeyeater, Eastern Yellow Robin and Eastern Spinebills. Red-necked Pademelons are common along the forest edges. An extensive network of interesting trails enables us to better appreciate the importance of this area. The temperate rainforest has many superb buttressed trees, carpets of ferns and valleys of elegant tree ferns, amongst which we'll see the pink plume of *Helmholtzia glaberrima*.

These lush rainforests reverberate to the remarkable calls of Albert's Lyrebirds, and from time to time we'll come across these most distinctive and elegant of birds scratching away on the forest floor, Yellow-throated Scrub-wrens mopping up the insects missed by the larger bird. Amongst this verdant landscape we'll find Grey and Rufous Fantails, White-throated Treecreeper, Noisy Miners, and the piebald Wonga Pigeon. A trail takes us through the largest remaining stands of ancient hoop pines *Araucaria cunninghamii*, another through moss clad southern beech, whilst adjacent areas of tall eucalypts give us a good chance to see Koalas. Blue Spiny Crayfish, Red-eyed Tree Frogs, Richmond Birdwings and Cool Skinks add to a fascinating mix. And there's always the chance of a rare Spotted-tail Quoll too.

Days 6 & 7

Bunya Pines National Park

The journey to Bunya takes us through eucalypt forests and marshes. We'll keep an eye out for Eastern Grey Kangaroos, and amongst the wetland birds are both Straw-headed and Australian Ibises, White-necked Heron, Australian Wood and Pacific Black Ducks, and Australian Pelicans. There'll be flocks of Galahs as well as Red-rumped Parrots and Pied Butcherbirds. As the road begins to climb we'll enter a misty wonderland populated by the incredible spidery crowns of *Araucaria bidwillii*.

Bunya is a cool retreat. Frequent mists envelop the spectacular Bunya Pines *Araucaria bidwillii* that are preserved here in Queensland's most westerly subtropical forest. Some of these venerable giants are thought to be over 600 years old. Drier slopes also have that iconic Australian plant – the grass tree *Xanthorrhoea glauca*. Unconcerned and photographable Red-necked Wallabies are common, whilst Swamp and Black-striped Wallabies are very possible and we'll look out for Echidnas along the roadsides too. Spotlighting will see us meeting both Tawny Frogmouth and Common Brushtail Possum right by our rooms and further afield we might we'll see Northern Brown Bandicoot, Common Ringtail Possum and Giant Barred Frog. Also possible are Yellow-footed Antechinus, Bunya Mountains Ringtail Possum, Sugar and Squirrel Gliders. During daylight hours we'll have another chance of finding Koala. As we admire the pale yellow *Dendrobium speciosum* blooming in great clumps on cliffs and rocky outcrops we'll see Laughing Kookaburra and noisy Sulphur-crested Cockatoos flying about. The

bizarrely-hatted Topknot Pigeon perches in stands of Hoop Pine *Araucaria cunninghamii* looking atmospheric in the swirling mists. Noisy Pittas cross the path in a flash of green and electric blue. Other birdlife includes Varied Sitella, Superb Fairy-wren, Little Shrike-thrush, White-browed Scrub-wren and Bassian Thrush.

During the late afternoon of Day 7 we'll fly to Mackay Airport and transfer to Eungella for a two night stay.

Days 8 & 9

Eungella National Park

Further north we reach an important area for Duck-billed Platypus conservation and perhaps our best chance of seeing these unique mammals as they frequent well-known ponds in the lush palm-filled forests here. Interestingly, Azure Kingfishers have been known to fish alongside these bizarre mammals and glean the fish they disturb as they root about. Besides these there are endemic Eungella Honeyeaters, Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfishers, the rare Eungella Dayfrog and we'll search carefully for superbly camouflaged leaf-tailed geckos. The flora is rich too and includes not only more hoop pine, but also the localised giant fern *Angiopteris evecta* whose fronds can be thirty-feet long! During the evening of Day 9 we'll fly to Cairns.

Days 10-13

Atherton Tablelands

Our lodge is nestled in the forests around Lake Eacham, where wildlife feeders attract the shining Victoria Riflebird – that's right, a bird of paradise that dines outside your window! Along with these are Spotted Catbirds and with the right bait Laughing Kookaburras too. Around the property are Eastern Whipbird, Wompoo Fruit Dove and Red-browed Finches, and Lewin's, Macleay's and Scarlet Honeyeaters come to the flowering trees. Nocturnal searching gives us the chance of Boobook, Rufous and Lesser Sooty Owls as well as superbly camouflaged Papuan Frogmouths. One of the best features of our lodge is the chance to see nocturnal mammals. Over the years they have become well-habituated and we will have stunning views (and the chance to photograph) endearing Sugar Gliders, Uromys, Melomys, Antechinus, as well as the quite beautifully marked Striped Possum – a species which is normally very hard to observe in the wild. Red-legged Pademelons come out at dusk to feed around the lodge and Herbert River Ringtail Possums can be seen in the trees. There will be the opportunity for spotlighting tours further afield with local experts to find Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo, Green Ringtail, Lemuroid and Northern Coppery Brushtail Possums. Other mammal delights here include Musky Rat-kangaroo and another chance to see Duck-billed Platypus. If this was not enough we could also see Orange-thighed Frog, Green-eyed and Green Tree Frogs, Joseph's Coat and Atlas Moths and the amazing iridescent blue Ulysses Butterfly. Nearby Crater Lake has immense specimens of the Gondwanaland survivor *Agathis australis*, whilst huge Rainbow Pythons haul out to sunbathe along the lake edge. Nearby Hasties Swamp wetland offers the chance of waterbird photography from its large hide, with

Wandering Whistling Duck, Magpie Goose and skeins of hundreds of Sarus Cranes flying to roost in the evening.

Days 14 -17(am)

Daintree & Great Barrier Reef

The ancient lowland rainforests here are a vital repository of Australian wildlife and are brimming with architectural *Licuala* palms and tree ferns. They harbour many new bird species. Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfishers and Noisy Pittas nest around our lodge, and there is Red-necked Crake, Double-eyed Fig-Parrot, Great-billed Heron, Lovely Fairy-Wren, Barred Cuckoo-Shrike, Blue-faced Parrot-Finch, Grey Whistler, Superb Fruit-Dove and Pied Monarch to name but a few. There is plenty of other wildlife too, Long-nosed and Northern Brown Bandicoot, Yellow-footed Antechinus, Agile Wallaby and Spectacled Flying-Fox, White-lipped Tree-Frog, Major Skink, the impressive Boyd's Forest Dragon, Brown and Common Green Tree-snakes, Australian Scrub Python, whilst lepidoptera includes Cairns Birdwing Butterfly, Ulysses Butterfly, Blue Triangle and Ambrax Swallowtail. The nearby Daintree rainforests contain ninety percent of Australia's butterfly species as well as an important and thriving population of Southern Cassowary.

Days 17(pm) & 18

Departure

Or

Great Barrier Reef Extension

Call us and we'll discuss what would suit you best!

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the reconnaissance report from our visit to Queensland. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call us, or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

To Book on this Holiday please fill in the booking form which you can download from www.greentours.co.uk (also found in the Greentours brochure) and post/fax to Greentours, 8 Eliot Close, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UP, UK. Tel/Fax +44 (0)1298 83563. After booking your place you'll receive a confirmation letter and a detailed information pack will be dispatched twelve weeks prior to departure. Bird and mammal checklists are available.