



FOUR SEASONS OF BIRDS ON KANGAROO ISLAND

Looking for a place with abundant birdlife and a good chance of seeing it in the wild? Kangaroo Island is a prime candidate. Along any walking trail, by any lagoon or coastal flat, on any beach or headland, keep your eyes and ears open and your binoculars handy – the birds are all around.

You don't have to be a twitcher to fall in love with island birdlife, whether you have a casual interest, or are an enthusiast with the latest field guide at the ready you're bound to enjoy the diversity and abundance of bird life with over 260 bird species known from Kangaroo Island! With eyes and ears open you will enjoy the richness of bird life as you travel the island's various habitats, where seclusion has provided a haven for some species now extinct on the mainland. Then there are those that have adapted to local conditions over time and are now recognised as sub-species of their mainland counterparts.

Several species are secure on Kangaroo Island but no longer the mainland, including the Southern Emu-wren, Shy Heathwren, Beautiful Firetail and Western Whipbird. The Kangaroo Island sub-species of the Glossy Black-cockatoo is endangered and with the support of a long-running recovery program is showing success in slowly increasing population numbers. Recent fires appear to have impacted on the widespread feeding and nesting grounds on the western end of the island, and efforts to assist the restoration of these critical habitats are continuing.

Australian Pelicans are plentiful year-round, Wedge-tailed Eagles soar above the landscape and an Eastern Osprey nest at D'Estrees Bay is in full view from a respectful distance. Black Swans, and Freckled, Blue-billed and Musk Ducks, are just a few of the resident waterfowl found on lagoons, sheltered bays and tidal flats.

Across the island, 15 species of honeyeater, including Purple-gaped, Tawny-crowned and Crescent-crowed, the bush alongside wrens, firetails, pardalotes and thornbills. Successful sightings are most likely in conservation and national parks, and along the many vegetated roadsides.

At night listen for the 'mopoke' call of the widespread Southern Boobook, the gurgling call of Little Penguins in coastal areas, and wailing Bush Stone-curlews in areas of bush and open pasture across the island. Nankeen Night Herons emerge from roosts along the American River foreshore and Chapman River at night.

Cape Barren Geese graze cleared areas, particularly visible in the western end of the island and likely seen near the salt pans of Wisanger. Brush Bronzewing occupy wattle bushland along the south coast; Australian Golden Whistlers call in mallee/broom-bush in Lashmar, Beyeria and Latham Conservation Parks; and Scarlet Robin song fills open woodland and mallee parks on the Dudley Peninsula, and at Duck Lagoon with fire-affected populations near Hanson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and in Flinders Chase National Park.

The endemic Kangaroo Island species of Crimson Rosella is readily seen along roadsides and in forested areas across the island – a search at Parndana heartland will reward those exploring. Black-faced and other Cormorants gather on coastal roosts, marked by copious guano (bird droppings), particularly in sheltered areas.

Autumn

Just as Double-banded Plovers arrive from New Zealand to settle in the tidal flats and brackish lagoon waters, Cape Barren Geese, Glossy Black-cockatoos and Little Penguins settle into nesting.

Several species of small plovers (or dotterels), including Hooded and Red-capped, scamper to and fro across island beaches. Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos form into feeding flocks of up to 200 to feed on native hakea and banksia and introduced pine trees.

Immature Rock Parrots occupy roadside strips, and feed on coastal plants such as samphire and sea rocket, through until July. The handful of sightings of the Rufous Whistler in late summer-autumn could be repeated with grit and dedication, try your luck searching in the Rocky Point area of Dudley Peninsula. Please report any sightings to the Kangaroo Island Landscapes Board in Kingscote.

Winter

Birds continue to abound in winter and can be seen and heard in many sheltered locations as the weather turns to mid-teen temperatures and winds increase bringing a wild liveliness to coastal areas.

Resident bushbirds, raptors, parrots, waterfowl and shorebirds go about their business in conservation parks, lagoon habitats and coastal inlets.

Strong southerlies driven by low pressure systems in the Southern Ocean often bring albatross and other pelagic species within sight from land – Cape du Couedic is a favourite location for local and visiting birders in the know.

Endangered Glossy Black-cockatoo are often encountered in their feeding areas near Penneshaw, American River and occasionally in the fire affected areas of Stokes Bay, as are Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Please avoid nesting areas in Sugar Gum forests as human presence often disturbs nesting pairs.

Cuckoos can start calling late July or early August in low open scrub and mallee, and continue through to summer, often seen perched in open areas on a fence post, atop a power line or within the treetops. Conspicuous in the Coastal Mallee settlement areas of Western Cove, Emu Bay, Island Beach and Vivonne Bay.

Spring

In spring the birds are loud and proud on Kangaroo Island. Most species are nesting, and the air is filled with birdsong calling for mates and to establish territory. Food is abundant and supports birds into good breeding condition.

Migratory shorebirds such as the Common Greenshank, Eastern Curlew, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, and Ruddy Turnstone begin arriving in August from northern hemisphere breeding grounds, some still with breeding colours. Tidal flats, sheltered coves, freshwater lagoons and brackish wetlands fill up with birds in a feeding frenzy.

Hooded Plovers are found across sandy beaches right around the island and can be safely viewed with binoculars. Seeking refuge, nesting above the high-water mark from spring through summer, when they are very susceptible to disturbance. Please keep a respectful distance as people, vehicles and dogs can cause nesting failure. A bi-annual census in November welcomes visitors – please contact the Kangaroo Island Landscape Board in Kingscote for further information.

Summer

Bird life remains plentiful in the bush during Kangaroo Island's mild summers. Migratory birds continue to fuel up at rich feeding grounds for the return to northern hemisphere breeding grounds.

Summer is prime nesting time for many of our small coastal birds. Please keep a close look out for these well camouflaged masters of disguise, particularly above the high tide line on our beaches, amongst the modest protection of seaweed washed high up in small scrapings in the softer sand. Keep a respectful distance, and dogs on a lead and if driving on our beaches travel below the high tide line to help these tiny warriors have the best chance of a successful family.

In summer, with the inevitable arrival of hot northerly winds look skyward for Pacific Swifts who arrive with the summer storm fronts from the mainland. In flocks of hundreds, their quick flickering wings beat as they expertly manoeuvre the skies feeding on flying insects.

Immature Elegant Parrots are regular visitors to the island, and while uncommon the best chances of observing this occasional visitor will be along roadsides in summer on the western end or grassy woodlands on the northern side of Murrays Lagoon.

As winter and spring freshwater wetland habitats retreat with the warmth of summer, large numbers of Black Swans congregate in Shoal Bay, Pelican Lagoon and along the American River shore and tidal marshes of the eastern end of the island. Watch from the camouflage of a bird hide in these areas to increase your chances of spotting an unusual species.

Discover more...

Chris Baxter's **Birds of Kangaroo Island: A photographic field guide**. Published in 2015 by ATP, Adelaide.

Glossy Black-cockatoo Recovery Program, or to report a rare bird sighting, please contact Kangaroo Island Landscape Board.

Find local bird watching group Birding Kangaroo Island on Facebook.

Three bird hides are available at Reeves Point near Kingscote, Duck Lagoon and American River. See birds of prey up close at Raptor Domain. Kangaroo Island has ample public areas for birdwatching. Please ask permission before entering private property.

Visit Kangaroo Island Tourism Alliance at **www.tourkangarooisland.com.au** for information on tours, locations, and much more.