

ITINERARY

The Budgies of Boulia

23rd- 26th September, 2024



The specialty bird we'll seek is the Budgerigar (Melopsittacus undulatus). Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

This 3 night/4 day tour starts and ends in Mt Isa. The prime purpose of the tour is to see the budgerigars which visit the town, often in large numbers, during the dry spring months when the only water available is in the town dams and cattle troughs.

Anywhere west of the Great Dividing Range can be labelled as the Outback. Boulia is well into the Outback in the west of Queensland. It is an arid landscape with the seasonal rivers of the Channel country usually just dry depressions and gullies at this time of year. With its red, rolling grasslands, rocky outcrops and stunted bush, it can be surprisingly beautiful. It is big sky, cattle country, marginal land with long straight roads and a small population. Towns tend to be small and far apart, but many have very colourful histories and it is worth stopping off to look at local museums and places of interest.

On this tour we travel from the mining town of Mt Isa home of the southern hemisphere's largest rodeo south to Boulia a small Outback town famous for fossils and its mysterious Min Min lights.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: This is an easy tour which can be managed by anyone with only a moderate level of fitness. It will be very hot at this time of year but hotel rooms and vehicles are air conditioned and most birding will be done in the cooler parts of the day.

About the Accommodation: Accommodation is in the Australian Hotel Boulia . The rooms are spacious and all have private bathrooms.

About the Birding Areas



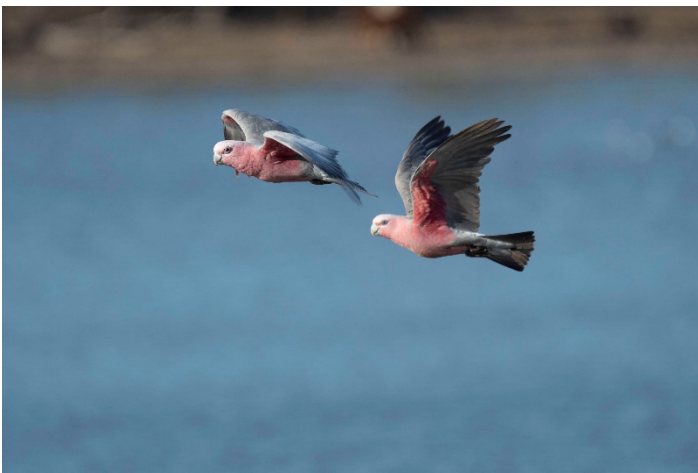
Mt Isa - Boulia

The area surrounding the mining town of Mt Isa in north-west Queensland is home to a surprising number of birds **Emu, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Galah, Common Bronzewing, Apostlebird**, a variety of **finches, fairywren's** and **honeyeaters** can all be seen along our route if we are lucky.

Boulia

Boulia's main claim to fame are the Min Min lights. These lights appear from nowhere and have been reported as having followed travellers for long distances before disappearing as mysteriously as they came. It is also known for its fossils of ancient sea creatures for more than a hundred million years ago what is now Boulia Layton the western edge of an inland sea.

We however have a very different reason for visiting this small Outback town. During the dry season, when there is no local standing water, the local birds and animals have to rely on the dams around the town to drink. Early morning and late afternoon are great times to see birds coming into drink. **Budgerigars** are amongst these birds and will roost in the trees around the town. In some years vast flocks of budgies come together but even in normal years it is possible to see small flocks wheeling above the town.



Galah (Eolophus roseicapillus).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.



Apostlebird (Struthidea cinerea).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

Itinerary for The Budgies of Boulia

Day 1 –Monday 23rd September 2024

Meet with guide, he arrives in Mt Isa with the people from Cairns at around 0835 and will pick up the car and be ready to start south to Boulia birding on the way. This is normally a 4 hour journey but with plenty of birding breaks it is likely to be much longer. We will stop and look for **Dusky Grasswren** and anything else of interest along the way. **Emu, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Australian Bustard, Cockatiel, Spinifex Pigeon, Purple-backed Fairywren, Galah, Budgerigar** and **Red-browed Pardalote** are all possible along the way. Boulia is on the banks of the Burke River named for the explorer who passed this way on his ill-fated expedition to the Gulf. *Accommodation: Desert Sands Motel. Meals included: Lunch & Dinner*

Day 2 – Tuesday 24th September 2024

Full day birding the Boulia area. Apart from our target **Budgerigar**, specialities of the area include **Australian Bustard, Cockatiel, Galah, Little Corellas, Spinifex Pigeon, Purple-backed Fairywren** and **Red-browed Pardalote**. Dusk and dawn are the best times for birding here when the dams around the town act as magnets to dry country birds when there is little standing water elsewhere. The middle of the day can be spent relaxing in the pool, visiting the town museum or exploring the local area. *Accommodation: Desert Sands Motel. Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner*

Day 3 – Wednesday 25th September 2024

A second day in the Boulia area. Birding around the town early morning and later in the day but in the hotter part of the day most birds will sleep so you can relax and explore Boulia's other attractions e.g. Boulia is famous for the mysterious Min Min lights. The Min Min Encounter Centre as is the world class Marine Reptile Fossil Display. *Accommodation: Desert Sands Motel. Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner*

Day 4 – Thursday 26th September 2024

Travel back to Mt Isa stopping at interesting spots along the way in time for your late afternoon flight out. *Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch*

Please note that depending on flight schedules you may need to overnight in Mt Isa.



Emu Chick (Dromaius novaehollandiae).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.



Australian Bustard (Ardeotis australis).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

About Your Guide



Jun Matsui - With a lifetime interest in wildlife in general Jun started bird guiding in 1993 when he worked as a volunteer ranger at the Hikarigaoka nature park in Tokyo, Japan. After working for the Japanese Environment Agency where he collected and managed data and at several reserves where he was involved in setting up environmental education projects and guiding as well as general management, he first arrived in Australia in 1999.

Spending a year traveling around and volunteering at various bird hotspots including Broome Bird Observatory he eventually took a job as a specialist

bird tour guide for inbound Japanese groups, based in the tropical Far North Queensland town of Cairns. He has been involved in several bird publications and is the author of the very popular Japanese language field guide to the birds and wildlife of the Cairns/Atherton Tablelands area. He provided most of the photographs for New Hollands Photographic Guide to Far North Queensland published in 2019. Jun joined Sicklebill Safaris in 2007. He regularly leads tours around Australia, to Japan, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and further afield.

Tour & Financial Information

DURATION: 3 Nights, 4 Days

FEE – 3 pax: AUD\$3,115.00 per person twin share (2023 cost.)

FEE – 4 pax: AUD\$2,540.00 per person twin share (2023 cost)

FLIGHTS: Flights are extra and the cost will depend on where you are coming from and returning to as well as what seat categories are available at time of booking.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT : AUD\$260.00

DEPOSIT: \$500.00 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: 60 days before departure

LIMIT: 4 + Guide



Purple-backed Fairywren (Malurus lamberti).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.



Spinifex Pigeon (Geophaps plumifera).
Photograph by guide Jun Matsui.

Other Things You Need to Know

Further information about this tour will be sent to people once registration is confirmed. This includes:

- General information for travellers to Australia
- Contact list
- Checklist of birds
- Trip Report on completion

Air Arrangements – We are happy to arrange flights for you if you would like. The tour starts early on Day 1 and ends mid-late afternoon on Day 4.

Airport Transfers – No transfers are included in this tour.

Smoking - As most of our clients and all of our guides are non-smokers, we would ask you to respect this and not to smoke in bedrooms, in vehicles or nearby on trails. We book non-smoking accommodation where it is available.

Tour Inclusions and Exclusions - The tour fee is in AUD and is based on twin occupancy. Cost includes accommodation as per itinerary, transfers (while on tour), meals as per itinerary, entry & site fees, guide services & bird list.

The fee does not include airport taxes, visa fees (you will need to check your visa requirements for Australia), drinks, snacks, meals before starting the tour, optional tips to local drivers and guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

Tour Registration – To register for this tour let us know you would like to join us and we will send you the Registration/Release and Indemnity forms and an invoice for your deposit. Please fill in the forms and return them along with a **deposit of the equivalent of AUD\$500.00** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 60 days out from the tour start date.

Trip Cancellation and Emergency Insurance - We strongly recommend you consider purchasing comprehensive trip insurance, which includes trip cancellation, loss or damage to baggage and property, missed flights and also medical insurance (including a medical evacuation option), to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund once we have paid for items.

When making a decision regarding health insurance you should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to your home country may cost well in excess of AU\$50,000. Uninsured travellers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

You are **strongly advised** to take out personal, health, baggage and holiday insurance before travelling. Please note Sicklebill Safaris does not accept responsibility or liability for any acts, omissions or defaults of service providers such as airlines, hotels, sightseeing, transfer, vehicle car hire services, or cruise lines and the like, whether negligent or otherwise, or for your acts, omissions, defaults, conduct, state of health, conditions or other circumstance or for any events beyond Sicklebill Safaris

control. We will prepay your tour in advance and are happy to provide documentation for insurance purposes to prove we have paid for these services but will be unable to reimburse you ourselves. We will have paid the money you paid us out in good faith and will no longer have it at our disposal to refund you.

Responsibility – For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Sicklebill Safaris, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Sicklebill Safaris acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour.

Sicklebill Safaris accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Sicklebill Safaris reserves the right to substitute hotels of a similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Sicklebill Safaris reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Sicklebill Safaris. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.