

Guide to finding Birds around Katherine and the Victoria River, NT

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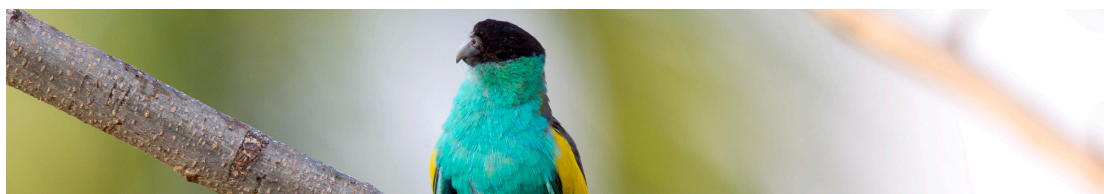


(Photo from left to right - Northern Shrike-Tit, Diamond Dove, Gouldian Finch & Hooded Parrot)

The Victoria River and Katherine Regions have to be a couple of my favourite places to go birding. Any free time I get I find my self-making the 500 km journey from Darwin to explore this area. Another great reason to head this way is there is the AMAZING fishing to be had at Victoria River. This fills in the hottest part of the day nicely when birds are least active.

The best time of year for birding this area is July to October as there is very little water around, If you can manage find any pools of water around at this time of year, you can usually find birds!

Here are a few of my secret spots to get you started:



PINE CREEK TOWNSHIP (Photo Above - Hooded Parrot)

GPS -13.822466, 131.834461 This is a great place to stop past in the late evening at the end of the dry season, September & October are best. There is a tree near the road which is filled with boots, the boot tree (**-13.819889, 131.831842**) this spot and on the sports oval are worth a look for Hooded Parrots as they come in to drink when the sprinklers have been on in the workers camp, they then sit in the boot tree to rest. I regularly see up to 50 birds here.

Other spots to check out at the park near the toilet block in the middle of town **GPS -13.822466, 131.834461** and also the water gardens over the road. Also check the sports oval for Oriental Plover which I have seen here a couple of time, sadly not in there stunning breeding plumage.



EDITH FALLS ROAD (Photo Above - Red-faced Gouldian)

GPS -14.186792, 132.084319

About 50 km North of Katherine is the turn off to Edith Falls. There are a couple of spots to check out along this road and this is by far one of the most reliable places to see both Gouldian Finch and Hooded Parrots, sometimes both coming down to feed and drink at the same time.

The early morning between July - October are best, make sure you go and scope the area out the evening before so you can find the best spot to sit in the morning. Check both North and South sides of the road for small shallow pools of water, this is where they come into drink.

Get to your spot nice and early as to not disturb the birds, I have found most of the activity happens here between 7.00 am and 8.30 am. Be patient because one minute there can be nothing around and the next you could have hundreds of birds coming into drink right next to you. This area is also good for Chestnut-backed Button Quail so keep your eyes peeled; you're most likely to flush one from the grass looking for Gouldians.



DONKEY CAMP WEIR (Photo Above - Leaden Flycatcher)

[GPS -14.416430, 132.321931](#)

Donkey Camp weir about 9.5 km NE of Katherine is a great place to visit, it's one of the best spots to see Great-billed Heron which can be found on either side of the weir, good luck getting close but you might see the back of one flying away! It is also a good spot for Black Bittern, Double-barred & Crimson Finch, Rufous Whistler, Shinning Flycatcher, Azure Kingfisher, Radjah Shield-duck and Tree Martin.



CHAINMAN & CHINAMAN CREEKS (Photo Above - Rufous Whistler)

[GPS -14.591317, 132.157238](#)

About 20 km west of Katherine you will find a creek named Chinaman Creek, between here and Chainman creek about 10 km further west is a great place to find both Gouldian Finches and the beautiful endemic Hooded Parrot. Check in the burnt areas (season permitting) or long seeding grasses for signs of bird life, also keep your eyes open for groups of Woodswallows and White winged Trillers. If you find a group of these there are usually Gouldians hiding somewhere close. This is also a great place for Black Tailed Tree Creepers, Rufous Whistler and Various Honeyeater species.



CENTRAL ARNHEM HIGHWAY (Photo Above - Northern Shrike-tit)

GPS -14.658560, 132.667345

This road can have some amazing birding at the right time of year. This is also the most reliable place to see the Northern Shrike Tit, the best place to start looking is between the 8 - 9 km mark, but anywhere along the road is worth looking. Drive to the 8 km mark and park up your car, quietly walk around the area listening for there unique, very soft call or the sound of them ripping bark off the trees. They are residents in the area but can still be very hard to locate so good luck..

This road is also great for Gouldians, which can be found around Humbles Creek and also the same area as the Shrike-tits. You also have a chance at seeing Star Finches and Pictorella Mannikins, these are usually found further East than the Shrike-tits.

Also keep an eye or ear out for Hooded Parrots which can be seen anywhere along that road.



VICTORIA HIGHWAY (Photo Above - Star Finch)

This is a spectacular stretch of road for birding, along the way keep your eyes peeled for Black Shouldered Kites, Wedge Tailed Eagles, Black Breasted Buzzards, Swamp Harriers etc. Also along the highway keep a lookout for any groups of Woodswallows or White Winged Trillers as finches are usually in these groups.

Any farmers dams you come across with water present is worth a stop to have a look around, you can sometimes find Star Finches, Yellow Rumped Mannikins and if your very lucky then Pictorella Mannikins resting in the dense trees usually close to the dam itself. Listening for the high-pitched calls is usually a give away and the easiest way to find where they are resting. Also keep an eye for any pools of water under the bridges you cross, if water is present then stop and check it out. You never know what might turn up at some of these remnant pools of water



BUNTINE HIGHWAY (Photo Above - Pictorella Mannikin)

[GPS -15.303051, 131.571616](#)

This is a very reliable place for all the finch species. Gouldian Finches, Long Tailed Finches, Masked Finches and Double Barred Finches, Yellow Rumped Mannikins and Pictorella Mannikins are all found here. Best spots to look are between the Highway turnoff and about 10 - 11 km down the Buntine Highway **[GPS -15.373572, 131.597988](#)**. I see Gouldian Finches frequently around Humbles creek to about 1 km past the creek.

Also keep an eye out right along this road for both Black-breasted Buzzard and Grey Falcon, which I have seen here a few times.



BUNTINE HIGHWAY (35 km Dam) (Photo Above - Variegated Fairy-wren)

This dam is located roughly 35 km from the Highway heading south towards Top Springs. The dam can't be seen from the road but there is a little farmer's track off to the right that takes you within 100 m of the dam itself. This is a great spot for wader species but you could see anything here from Australia Pelicans, Black Necked Storks, Red Kneed Dotterels, Black fronted Dotterels, Hard Heads, Whistling Ducks, Common Bronze-wings to Varied Fairy Wrens and Apostile Birds just to name a few.

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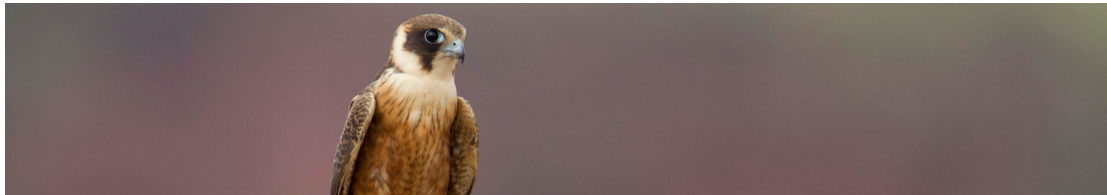


VICTORIA RIVER ROADHOUSE (VRD) (Photo Above - Purple-crowned Fairy-wren)

[GPS -15.615920, 131.127070](#)

This is the best spot around to find the stunning little Purple Crowned Fairy Wrens and a lovely spot to spend the night. The best time to look for these guys is first thing in the morning or late evening. They are found in the long grass next to the river (becoming familiar with it's call will help), they can also be found down by the boat ramp. The best place to find them is if you cross over the walking bridge to the Eastern side then head north under the traffic bridge and follow the river north searching the long cane grass and listening for their calls.

You should also find Striated Pardalote's here in large numbers, they nest in the riverbank here, **[GPS -15.612044, 131.129474](#)**. Also keep an eye out for Yellow-rumped Mannikin's which are sometimes found near the river side or feeding in the long grass with the Purple-crowned Fairy-wren's



VICTORIA RIVER BOAT RAMP (Photo Above - Australian Hobby)

[GPS -15.630126, 131.136645](#)

The farmland on the way to the boat ramp behind the Victoria River Roadhouse is a great place for birds of prey such as Australian Hobby, Black Falcon, Brown Falcon and Nankeen Kestrel, all of which can be found here. **[GPS -15.632170, 131.127901](#)**

Once you're at the boat ramp the area to the left is great early in the morning or late afternoons, look for Yellow-rumped Mannikins, which come in to drink here with lots of other species.



VICTORIA RIVER ESCAPEMENT WALK (Photo Above - White-quilled Rock Pigeon)

[GPS -15.606063, 131.115194](#)

This is located about 5 km west of the Victoria River Roadhouse and is well worth the effort of the steep climb. The view over Victoria River is stunning and also there is a high chance to see the White-quilled Rock Pigeon, which can be found hiding among the rocks on the way up.



TIMBER CREEK (Photo Above - Star Finch)

[GPS -15.647704, 130.475851](#)

Timber creek is one of the best places in the Northern Territory to see a massive variety of Finch species in one spot, Policeman's point (**[GPS -15.630632, 130.475842](#)**) near the Victoria River is fantastic in the morning for Star, Long-tailed, Crimson Finch and also Yellow-rumped Mannikin and maybe even a Gouldian Finch. Check the long grass next to the river for Purple-crowned Fairy-wren and surrounding areas for Buff-sided Robin, Red-winged Parrot, Red-backed Fairy-wren and Black-faced Woodswallow.

Timber Creek Airfield (**[GPS -15.621591, 130.453399](#)**) is another great place to check for all the finch species and if you're there in September - November check for Oriental Plover & Oriental Pratincole on the airfield.