A trip for a summer morning
A half-day outing to an area where Superb Parrots are often observed early and late on summer days.

If you are based in Echuca-Moama, travel north on the Cobb Highway (B75) for about 14km and turn right at Shepparton-Barmah Road. Follow this road for 14km to Barmah township. Continue through the township and turn left onto the Barmah-Picola Road. Follow Barmah-Picola Road for 7km, crossing over Broken Creek, and turn left on to Trickey’s Lane. Drive slowly along this gravel road, checking roadside vegetation for Superb Parrots. Upon reaching Vale Road, turn right and continue your search. Cross Corry’s Mill Road, travel 1.5km and veer left onto Picola North Road. Continue along Picola North Road to the B300.

- At the intersection of B300 (Murray Valley Highway), Picola North Road and Darlows Lane (where there is a 90 degree bend in Highway, north of Nathalia) pull onto the stack site. Park your vehicle and walk around the area. Superb Parrots and Grey-crowned Babblers can often be seen here, especially early of a morning.

- From here you can follow Yielema North Road into Barmah Forest. Then follow its continuation, Darlows Track, north until you see a fenced exclosure near the intersection with Bourke Street. Stop here to look for Painted Button Quail and bush birds.

- The Murray River is a short distance further north. You can either follow the riverside road back to Barmah or retrace your route back to Picola.

This is one of a series of bird guides produced by BirdLife Echuca District that can be downloaded from the branch’s website, a link to which is on the BirdLife Australia web site www.birdlife.org.au

Other local birding guides:
Bendigo
Deniliquin
Gulpa Island, Mathoura
Perricoota Road, Moama
Wyuna and Kanyapella
Cohuna & Gunbower Island
Echuca-Moama
Kamarooka Forest
Terrick Terrick National Park

For more information, email echuca@birdlife.org.au

When forest roads are dry and in good condition, it is possible to venture well into Barmah Forest.

Grinters Ridge: a dry-weather birding area
From Picola North Road, enter Barmah Forest via Murray’s Mill gate and follow Gulf Track to Grinters Ridge Track, stopping en route at the site of Murray’s Mill to look for robins. Grinters Ridge is a great spot for bush birds. After exploring Grinters Ridge, retrace your path or continue along Gulf Track or use a forest map to help you explore other areas of the forest.

Photographic credits:
Left panel: SUPERB PARROT (David Ong)
Front panel: EASTERN YELLOW ROBIN (Murray Chambers)

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A day birding in Barmah Forest

Before setting out on this tour, it is worth obtaining a map such as Hayman's Barmah-Shepparton-Deniilquin Adventure Map.

If you are travelling to Barmah Forest from Echuca-Moama, head north on the Cobb Highway (B75). About 5km beyond the railway crossing, turn off the B75 onto the Shepparton-Barmah Road. This turnoff is about 18km from Moama. Note the indigenous tree plantings alongside the Cobb Highway-Barmah Road and on adjoining farmland. Further along, the road cuts through sandhills that mark the edge of a lake that formed east of the Cadell Fault Line. Moira Forest is on your left.

Area One: Park alongside the Murray River, opposite the Barmah Hotel

Cross the Murray into Barmah and turn right into the park opposite the hotel near the bridge. Many birds are attracted to the trees and shrubs of this park. The Blue-faced Honeyeater is often observed here when the nearby Grevillea robusta trees are in flower.

Area Two: Broken Creek

Take the Picola Road from Barmah Town toward Picola. About 3km - immediately after crossing Broken Creek (Cemetery Bridge) - turn left and follow the creek downstream for about 2.5km, to a locked gate into Barmah Forest labelled “Management Vehicles Only”.

Park here alongside the creek. Sometimes a green plant grows on top of the water so that the water resembles a lawn.

Around 40 bird species can usually be sighted here over an hour or so, e.g. Darter, Little Pied Cormorant, Purple Swamp Hen, Whistling Kite, Red-rumped Parrot, yellow form of Crimson Rosella, Brown Tree-creeper, Rufous Whistler, Golden Whistler, White-plumed Honeyeater, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, Yellow (Little) Thornbill and Diamond Firetail. Koalas have been sighted here. With luck, the endangered Superb Parrot may be observed nesting in summer.

Area Three: Baxter’s Pit

Return to Barmah-Picola Road, turn left and continue towards Picola. Turn right onto James Bridge Road. Continue along this road until you see a water-filled quarry (Baxter’s Pit) on your left. This quarry usually affords excellent birding. Watch for crakes, White-backed Swallow and Red-kneed Dotterel.

In times of wet weather and slippery unssealed roads, you may wish to end the tour here.

In June and July, if forest roads are dry, it is suggested that you visit the site of Murray’s Mill instead of Trickey’s Lane and look for such bush birds as Flame Robin.

Area Four: Trickey’s Lane (Trickey’s Road)

Return to the Barmah-Picola Road and turn back toward Barmah. Turn right at the next road, Trickey’s Road. Watch for Grey-crowned Babblers and, if you are visiting between late November through to late January, check the roadside vegetation for Superb Parrots. It is worth a birding stop at Lyles Road, which is the first T-intersection. Grey-crowned Babblers nest in this area. Continue along Trickey’s Lane, past Vale Road and turn left at the next road to Trickey’s Gate. Enter Barmah Forest taking the right fork in the track. You may wish to have another birding stop before leaving Trickey’s Lane.

1 Trickey’s Road is unsuitable for high vehicles because of overhanging trees.
2 In summer, if you are looking for Superb Parrots, it is worth driving along the entire length of Vale Road.

Stop Five: Steamer Plain

Trickey’s Lane ends in a T intersection with Sandridge Road. Turn right and follow the Sandridge Road for just over a kilometre until where it crosses Rat Castle Creek (there are two parallel tracks just prior to the bridge). Leave your car alongside the creek near the fenced koori middens to the left of the road and find a short track that leads to Steamer Plain, a large plain of Moira Grass. The edge of the plain is a good spot for bush birds. A few decades ago, large areas of the Barmah-Millewa Forest were covered in Moira Grass plains like this one but river regulation has reduced the intensity of flooding and led to such plains being overtaken by saplings which, pre-regulation, would have been drowned before reaching any great height. Brolga were once common on such plains. In late spring, Steamer Plain may be flooded.

There is another midden on the opposite side of Sandridge Road. Koori groups had three nearby camp sites, one for families, one for single adult males and one for teenagers. Discarded shells and ash formed the mounds we see today.

In wet weather, a gate may prevent further travel along Sandridge Road, in which case turn and head for Area 7.

Area Six: Hut Lake

Drive along Sandridge Road for another 3km until the intersection with a track to Hut Lake. Follow Hut Lake track toward the lake (GPS 35° 53 45S; 144° 59 45E). As the track may be wet or rough, a short walk may be necessary. If you have a telescope, carry it with you because there are often many waterbirds on or about Hut Lake. Look for Emu, Black Swan, Grey Teal, Coot, White-faced Heron and Peaceful Dove.

Return to Sandridge Road and follow it back toward Barmah.

Area Seven: Barmah Lake

Follow the Sandridge Road until you see the Dharnya Centre. If it is open, check out the interpretive displays at the centre. Toilets are located here.

Proceed on for a few hundred metres and turn right to Barmah Lake. Check out the waterbirds on and around the lake. It is also worth walking downstream on the walking track to the confluence with Broken Creek, the watercourse you observed at Stop Two. Keen walkers may wish to follow the walking track alongside the creek and return via the Dharnya Centre (6km).

Return to Sandridge Road and turn right. Sandridge Road takes you back to Barmah Town. (End)